The Political Economy of Sustainability: The Case of Eco-certification

by

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- Abstract -

Since the release of the Brundtland Report in 1987, the concepts of sustainable development and sustainability have gained momentum, particularly with the onset of current social and environmental issues, including climate change. That said, more than 30 years later, there remains no consensus as to what constitutes sustainability. In particular, in tourism various discourses surrounding these concepts have emerged. Many scholars and practitioners see sustainable tourism as a means to address unsustainable activities in the industry. However, due to the vagueness of the concept, sustainability is difficult to navigate, and has led to confusion amongst social and political actors in this area. This has resulted in a plethora of articulations (for example ecotourism and Indigenous tourism), measurements (for example indicators and standards) and expertise. Given the multitude and complexity within the overarching discourse of green politics, this thesis sets out to explore how one particular discourse, namely eco-certification, was created and shaped over time. I use Discourse Theory and the Logics of Critical Explanation to examine the eco-certification process of Ecotourism Australia, a national certifying body in the Australasian region, to illustrate how accreditation and certifying bodies created sedimented practices ('rules of the game') and disseminated them amongst through the industry. The study finds that the concepts of sustainability and eco-certification have been redescribed to facilitate the subsumption of sustainability into the dominant economic system. Rather than seeing ecotourism as a new paradigm within sustainable tourism, certification bodies regard it as a new market opportunity to which eco-certification provides the necessary access. Eco-certification is a business development tool, adding value to businesses and more importantly permitting them to continue with business-as-usual practices. Thus, eco-certification and sustainability have been subsumed by the business case and legitimised by the tourism industry that shows little interest in recognising alternative pathways to social and environmental sustainability.

Keywords: sustainability, eco-certification, ecotourism, discourse theory, Logics of Critical Explanation.

N.B. All data in this thesis was collected and analysed prior to the outbreak of Coronavirus global pandemic (Covid-19). This does not alter the importance of the study, but the tourism industry has been significantly impacted by the pandemic.

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- Appendices -

1   Thesis overview

Over the past decades, the concept of sustainability has emerged globally as a buzzword in "all areas concerning economic activity and the environment", in the pursuit of a greener, more sustainable future (Godfrey, 1998, p. 213). Similarly, in tourism, the fastest-growing industry sector in the world (UNWTO, 2019), tourism ventures and other operators have increasingly adopted the concept of sustainability. Founded in environmentalism, sustainability came to prominence in the 1970s, as a response to growing environmental disasters and capped to unlimited growth (Meadows *et al.*, 1972). However, what started off as an environmental conservation concept was soon extended to include social and economic factors, such as social inequities and uneven distribution of economic benefits. The concept of sustainability is a complex structure with multiple facets. It now incorporates various elements, such as social, economic and environmental – also known as the triple bottom line (TBL) (Elkington, 1997) - as well as other aspects. For instance, Mowforth and Munt (2016) outline criteria that are often used to describe sustainability in tourism (see Figure 1.1 below).
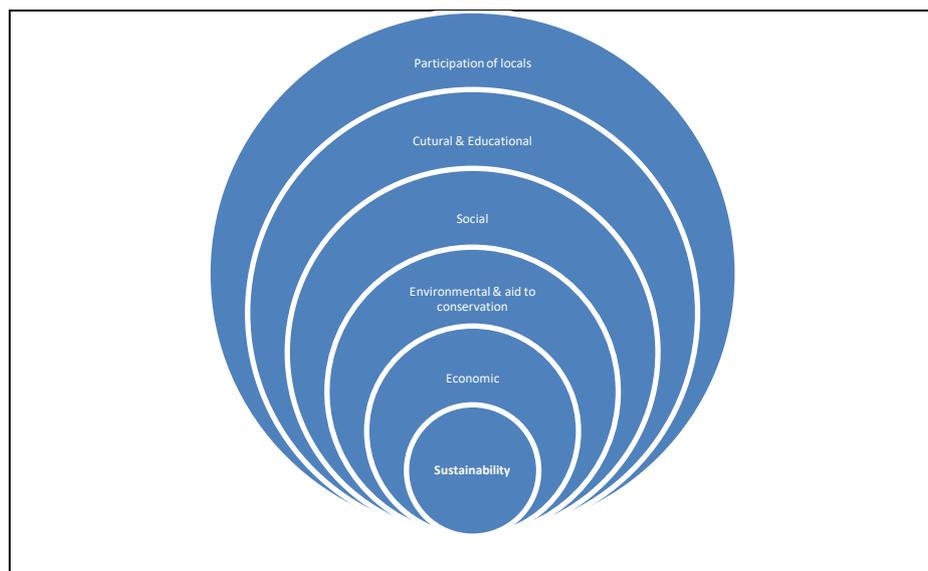
Figure 1.1: Sustainability Criteria Used in Tourism (adopted from Mowforth & Munt, 2016)

Thus, in tourism, sustainability and subsequently sustainable tourism sought to address the negative impacts associated with conventional mass tourism (Bramwell & Lane, 2012).

Following the release of *Our Common Future* (1987) (the Brundtland Report), the concept of sustainability challenged mass-scale tourism and, consequently, there was a renewed focus from the tourism industry on defining their ventures as 'sustainable' in many ways. This resulted in a proliferation of alternative approaches to tourism, including ecotourism, community-based tourism (CBT), Indigenous tourism, responsible tourism, low-impact tourism, pro-poor tourism and other forms that focused on environmental conservation and social justice (Butler, 1999; Weaver & Lawton, 2010; Mowforth & Munt, 2016). These multi-variant forms of tourism arguably contributed to sustainable development (Boyd & Singh, 2003; Tosun, 2006). Within the tourism context, a plethora of competing discourses surround the concept of sustainability and the complexity of these discourses is the focus of this thesis. Given the constraints of a doctoral thesis, I focus on the discourse of eco-certification in detail. Eco-certification is closely linked to ecotourism, where the preservation of pristine environments contributes to the social and economic well-being of host-communities (Goodwin, 1996). Eco-certification certifies tourism operators as 'eco'; what 'eco' in eco-certification signifies is a focus for this thesis. The eco-certification focus leads to the following research questions:

➢ *How does the tourism industry understand and interpolate the concept of eco-certification?*

➢ *How are the 'rules of the game' (sedimented practices of eco-certification) created and how do they transform and translate into practice?*

➢ *How has expertise around eco-certification emerged given the definitional lack surrounding the concept of sustainability?*

➢ *In eco-certification, what are the implications of equating sustainability with the business case?*

I explore eco-certification as a discursive practice to understand how this discourse has been created and shaped over time (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). Discourses never exist independently but are shaped by ideologies and hegemonies. Ideologies form the "bases and validity of our most fundamental ideas" (Mowforth & Munt, 2016, p. 53) and therefore play a vital part in the

creation of the eco-certification discourse. In tourism institutions electing to follow the eco-certification pathway, it seems that these institutions believe that eco-certification is a pathway to sustainability. However, this ideological belief disseminates through hegemony, which is a Gramscian concept that explains the power of persuasion (Mowforth & Munt, 2016). Through rhetoric, eco-certification persuades social actors that tourism ventures are more sustainable. Discourses reinforces ideologies and hegemonies by providing "the conditions, practice, rules and regulations on thought" (Mowforth & Munt, 2016, p. 54). These key concepts are crucial to my thesis and will be examined through the lens of Laclau and Mouffe's (2014) discourse theory. Subsequently, I present the thesis in three sections.

The first section explores the macro-politics of sustainability and how this influences the meso-politics concerning sustainable tourism and ecotourism. Chapter two reflects upon political tensions surrounding the discourse of sustainability. By examining the logics of sustainability, alternative theoretical approaches to sustainability and the impact of the Brundtland Report (1987), I examine how economic interests influence and affect discussions of sustainability. Based on the framework by Brown and Fraser (2006), the thesis argues that the current approach to sustainability (particularly as applied in tourism) aligns with the business case, where sustainability is understood as an investment decision to maximise shareholder wealth. Chapter two concludes that the ambiguity of sustainability makes it difficult to navigate and this openness (unfixity), at the macro-political level, results in the proliferation of competing articulations, measurements and claims to expertise with respect to sustainability. The focus of the literature then shifts to two chapters examining tourism-specific literature. Chapter three examines the meso-politics of sustainable tourism by examining different articulations under the umbrella term of ecotourism (including CBT, Indigenous tourism, responsible tourism and low-impact tourism) and the development and reliance upon measurement and indicator

systems relevant to sustainability (this includes carrying capacity, ecological footprint analysis, systematic indicators and key performance indicators). The focus of Chapter three is to illustrate how particular sedimented practices and assumptions have taken hold in sustainable tourism and ecotourism despite little reflection on the macro-political problems and lack identified in Chapter two. Chapter four takes an institutional look at ecotourism to examine how different actors instituted expertise with respect to ecotourism and became involved in eco-certification. Accreditation bodies, such as the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO), the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) and the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) and certification bodies, such as Ecotourism Australia and Green Globe, operate collectively to constitute the supply-side of eco-certification for ecotourism, by setting standards for eco-certification. These institutions control expertise and help tourism operators become 'eco' (the demand-side of eco-certification).

I present the second section of the thesis across three chapters that examine the theoretical and methodological influences of this thesis. Chapter five introduces Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory to illustrate the impact of the inherent openness of systems, such as sustainability. This openness allows for multiple articulations to emerge and shows that structure is both necessary and impossible. Key concepts such as dislocation, hegemony and articulatory practice (metaphor, metonymy and catachresis) are discussed. I argue that discourse theory provides as rich theoretical framework in which to understand Mowforth and Munt's *Tourism and Sustainability* (2016). Chapter six explores the research methodology of the logics of critical explanation (LOCE) (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). This approach demonstrates how sedimented social practices emerge, why they emerge and how they 'grab' subjects ideologically (Althusser, 1994). Furthermore, the chapter argues for an interconnected approach to the logics

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(Political logic-Fantasmatic logic-Social logic)[1], which deviates from the current view (Social-Political-Fantasmatic). Chapter seven outlines research methods used, focusing on a case study approach. Merriam's (1998) approach to qualitative case study research adds to the richness of the data in this post-structural work.

In the third section, I present the empirical material across three study sites. Chapter eight examines accreditation bodies that set the standards for eco-certification. I argue that the release of the Brundtland report was dislocatory and that through technical expert knowledge, these accreditation bodies legitimise standards necessary for eco-certification and 'set the rules of the game' (the political logic). Chapter nine investigates the certifying body, Ecotourism Australia, and its role in eco-certification. I outline how social actors are gripped by certain ideologies associated with eco-certification and demonstrate how organisations see 'the good' in their actions (the fantasmatic logic). Chapter ten examines the social practices of various tourism operators certified by Ecotourism Australia (the social). Chapter eleven discusses the empirical findings from the previous chapters and puts them into a theoretical context and concludes the thesis.

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[1] For readers unfamiliar with the post-structural discourse concept of fantasmatic, the idea of a fantasmatic logic is related to ideology, as the fantasmatic provides insights into "*why* specific practices and regimes 'grip' subjects" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 145).

- PART ONE -

The macro-politics of sustainability and the meso-politics of sustainable tourism and ecotourism

- Chapter Two -
The Politics of Sustainability

1 The Pluralism of Sustainability

This chapter examines the different facets of the concept of sustainability and provides a historical overview to outline the emergence of the concept. It studies the macro-politics of sustainability by examining the logics and rules of sustainability, illustrating how the Brundtland Report (1987) operated as a dislocatory moment to shape the discourse of sustainable development. As sustainable development involves society, the economy and the environment this "led to the concept of the TBL being used - quite incorrectly -interchangeably with 'sustainability'" (Milne & Gray, 2013, p. 18; see also Norman & MacDonald, 2004). One of the impacts of TBL within the sustainability discourse was to prioritise the financial and economic components of sustainable development (Elkington, 1997; 1998). However, given that sustainability has origins in capping unlimited growth, this might stand in opposition to capitalist priorities. Therefore, various approaches to sustainability exist ranging from a very weak approach to a very strong approach. A review of the tourism literature suggests that there has been widespread adoption of a 'business case' approach to sustainability, which would correspond with a very weak approach to sustainability. I apply a framework from the social and environmental accounting literature applied to develop the argument further. Brown and Fraser's (2006) conceptualisation of the 'business case' provides a valuable perspective to interpret the mainstream approach in the tourism literature. This chapter concludes by arguing that sustainability is often employed as a 'catchphrase' allowing businesses to articulate what they mean by the concept of sustainability in different ways, but most often this means 'business as usual'.

1.1 Historical overview

The concept of sustainability came to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s in response to environmental issues and population growth. Despite growing awareness of the need to

conserve natural resources, it is only since the 1980s that a proliferation of books using this phrase or concept emerged (Caradonna, 2014). Table 2.1 (below) provides a selected historical overview of key moments in the development of sustainability.

Table 2.1: Historical Overview of the Concept of Sustainability

Year	Events
1713	Hans Carl von Carlowitz first argued for a sustainable use of forestry and introduced the term to the Anglo-Saxon language
1776	Publication of Adam Smith's *'The Wealth of Nations'*
1892	Establishment of the Sierra Club (a conservation organisation) by John Muir
1920s to 1940s	Introduction of the carrying capacity concept (which has become a prominent measure of sustainability)
1968	Publication of Garret Hardin's *'The Tragedy of the Commons'*
1972	Publication of Meadow *et al.*'s report *'Limits to Growth'*
1973	Publication of E.F. Schumacher's *'Small is Beautiful'*
1984	Bhopal disaster
1986	Chernobyl nuclear disaster
1987	**Brundtland Report *Our Common Future***
1989	Exxon Valdez oil spill
1992	UN conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro
1997	Introduction of the Kyoto Protocol with the goal to reduce carbon emissions (climate change)
1998	Hurricane Mitch
2002	International Year of Ecotourism
2002	UN conference on Environment and Development in Johannesburg (Rio +10) and Millennium Development Goals
2005	Release of Al Gore's *'An Inconvenient Truth'*
2007	Hurricane Katrina
2010	BP Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico
2012	UN conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (Rio +20) and the Sustainable Development Goals

Table 2.1 (Adapted from Moscardo *et al.*, 2013)

Etymologically, the word sustainability derives from the Latin word 'sustinere', which means to maintain or sustain. In the 18th century, Hans Carl von Carlowitz introduced the term 'Nachhaltigkeit' to the Saxon language with respect to forestry management. This term translates as sustainability.[2] There are historical links to the discourse of sustainability, as well, to the 19th Century (Lumley & Armstrong, 2004). Concerns with limits to growth, green

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[2] The linking of limits to growth and green discourse, associated with sustainability in the English sense, seem only to have gained traction in the 1970s (Meadows et al. 1974; Lumley & Armstrong, 2004).

concerns and development culminated in the publication of *Our Common Future* by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987). The Brundtland Report provides the most well-known definition of sustainable development:

> Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable *to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits - not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organisation on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organisation can be both managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth. The Commission believes that widespread poverty is no longer inevitable. Poverty is not only an evil in itself, but sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a better life. A world in which poverty is endemic will always be prone to ecological and other catastrophes (WCED, 1987, p. 16; emphasis added).

The definition of sustainable development contains two key concepts:

- the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs (WCED, 1987, p. 41).

Although, the Brundtland Report's approach to sustainable development is complex, there are some definitional problems: For instance, it is not clear what the report means by 'needs' or who the 'present and future generations' refer to (does this means today's children, tomorrow's children or it is referring to infinite generations?). Furthermore, the report lacks a strategy for implementation of sustainable development. Unfortunately, as the concept of sustainability remains vague, the lack of one accepted definition allows for various meanings.

1.2 The Logics Around Sustainability

1.2.1 The Brundtland Report (1987) and Sustainable Development

The conceptual lack within sustainability permits different actors to articulate various interpretations of sustainability. Examples of these would include approaches such as resilient economies, low-carbon economies and peace and social justice movements. Over time, the economic component of sustainability has increasingly impacted various approaches to sustainability (see, for example, section 1.2.2 on the triple bottom line). While the origins of sustainability privileged environmental protection, a strong economic focus within the

sustainability discourse has constrained this characteristic, with different actors privileging economic viability alongside, or instead of, environmental conservation or social equality. This conceptual shift can be linked to the Brundtland Report (1987). Equally for tourism the release of the Brundtland Report (1987) constitutes a key dislocatory moment in equating sustainability with economic development. Saarinen (2006, pp. 1122-1123) states:

> The demand for more environmentally sensitive and sustainable practices in tourism grew rapidly in the 80s, on the strength of several long-term, interrelated processes in Western societies which were manifested during that decade. The term and idea of sustainability was transferred to tourism from the ideology of sustainable development following the publication of the Brundtland Commission's report Our Common Future in 1987 (WCED 1987). There had been some academic and policy discussions on sustainability and the limits of growth in tourism prior to the Brundtland report (Gössling and Hall 2005a), but ever since the report sustainability has been the central theme in discussions on tourism and policies for its management.

The equation of sustainability with (economic) development is central to the process of the subsumption of sustainability into the capitalist system. Choi and Sirakaya (2006, p. 1276) illustrate this by arguing that "there is no doubt that sustainable tourism must be economically feasible, because tourism is an economic activity". The World Tourism Organization (the UNWTO) reinforces the integration of economics in defining sustainable tourism, as:

> Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities.

Therefore, the Brundtland Report (1987) recognises that (economic) development was, and still is, the dominant paradigm through which sustainability development must be understood. Page and Dowling (2002, p. 15) assert:

> In the anthropocentric paradigm, development is frequently equated with economic growth and progress as well as an escalation in material consumption.

However, in times of increasing environmental awareness, the need for the incorporation of ecologically and socially sustainable characteristics into development was pressing. As McKercher (2010, p. 16) argues, "traditional approaches to economic development were not ecologically or socially sustainable in the long run". This marks the beginning of the subsumption of sustainability into the capitalist system by privileging development rather than

using sustainability as a cap on development. In particular, the development of ecotourism and eco-certification add to the problem as they provide "additional fixes for capitalism's so-called 'second contradiction' between the imperative of continual growth and finite natural resources" (Fletcher, 2011, p. 443) as well as enabling tourist operators to disguise their business-as-usual practices as being sustainable (Mowforth & Munt, 2016). This requires further investigation, and my study focuses on the problem of equivalency (between the economic imperative and sustainability) and its implications: few tourism scholars question the equivalency of sustainability with the business case (the political economy of capital) (see Mowforth & Munt, 2016).

1.2.2 Triple Bottom Line

The triple bottom line (TBL) is synonymous with sustainability. Sustainists such as educators, policy makers, governments, managers and tourism operators use TBL to *achieve* sustainable outcomes across the economic, social and environmental components. With the Brundtland Report (1987) paving the way for sustainable development in tourism, sustainability was integrated into the economic system by allowing economic interests to be privileged alongside social and environmental interests (Page & Dowling, 2002). Thus, social and political actors under the umbrella of sustainability are able to satisfy traditional economic commitments, such as increasing revenue, strengthening internal financial viability and maximising shareholder wealth, potentially at the expense of environmental or social concerns. Table 2.2, below, illustrates some of the components of the TBL:

Table 2.2: Components of the TBL

Economic	Social	Environmental
Revenue and internal financial viability	Human rights	Reduced usage of materials
Shareholder returns	Labor practices	Reduced energy consumption
Employee compensation	Society	Water use/ management
Donations and community investments	Product responsibility	Greenhouse gas emission

Table 2.2 (Sourced from Moscardo *et al.,* 2013, p. 20)

The objective of the TBL is to minimise economic, social and environmental costs while at the same time maximising organisational benefits. However, I argue that the equivalence of TBL with sustainability raises two problems:

1) As TBL is fundamentally a form of cost-benefit analysis, it privileges the economic imperative as costs ought not to outweigh benefits because investments would no longer be profitable; and

2) TBL is a form of 'natural capitalism', in which production is maintained through efficient use of resources (such as eco-efficiency in eco-certification). This is not necessarily about limiting growth, but rather about rendering growth more efficient.

Consequently, what has materialised in the sustainability space is a proliferation of alternative concepts. The following section examines these different articulations.

1.2.3 Different Articulations of the Concept – 'Fifty Shades of Green'

Today sustainability stands for many things, on a continuum from the TBL to small scale, anti-growth, resilient economies. Caradonna (2014, p. 5) as offers insight into the concept:

> To sustainists, sustainability means planning for the future and rejecting that which threatens the lives and well-being of future generations. It means creating a "green", "low-carbon", and "resilient" economy that runs on renewable energy and does not support growth that would impair the ability for humans and other organisms to live in perpetuity on the Earth. For many it has a utopic dimension: decentralised forms of democracy that support peace and social justice.

Although, there is some definitional guide regarding the concept, it is still susceptible to various interpretations that contain different levels of sustainability. Sustainists espouse and create different discourses depending on their individual agendas (Caradonna, 2014, p. 5). For example, policy makers and government officials often use the term sustainability interchangeably with climate change because climate change threatens damage to local and global economies. Clark and York (2005) and Diamond (2005) argue that climate change acts as a significant destabilising factor for human civilisation**.** Many nations commit to stopping global warming through limiting carbon emissions and adopting and developing renewable energy technologies such as solar, wind and geo-thermal energy sources (Dincer, 2000). Policy

makers articulate a sustainability discourse dominated by the idea of creating 'green' or 'low-carbon' economies. Germany, for instance, set a target to reduce its overall carbon emissions by 40 percent by 2020 (Bmu, 2019, p. 19).[3]

Scientists argue that sustainability is something other than a technocratic imperative. The science discourse is often centred on the belief that technological progress together with expert knowledge will solve problems such as climate change and global warming. This Promethean thinking (that human beings can master nature and that "technological change will outpace scarcity") is crucial to this discourse (Milne & Gray, 2013, p. 15; Dryzek, 2013).

Social and environmental activists, such as Vandana Shiva, construct another discursive articulation of sustainability centred on social justice. Not-for-profit organisations, such as Greenpeace, stand for environmental protection and conservation, while other NGOs stand for peace and social justice.

Theorists, such as Dryzek, define sustainability differently focusing on pluralism as an "imaginative and reformist discourse" (Caradonna, 2014, p. 12). Dryzek (2013) acknowledges that there is conflict between economic and environmental principles. However, he proposes a deliberative democracy approach (with dialogue between different social actors and industry) to work through such discrepancies.

Other social and political actors such as (ecological) economists articulate an understanding of sustainability with the objective of fostering resilient, sustainable economies where sustainable development leads to sustainable outcomes. The efficient and effective use of productive resources characterises these economies. Consequently, the focus on efficient production does not necessarily impact upon a consumption-based economy. This 'natural capitalism' is defined by a restoring ecology based on four pillars: de-materialisation, biomimicry, service and flow

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[3] However, some countries see no climate emergency. For example, Australia and the United States have limited their commitments to reducing carbon due to economic or other concerns. This reminds us that sustainability is inevitably connected to real politics.

business solutions as well as reinvestment in natural capital (Moscardo *et al.,* 2013). The most prominent advocate of this green capitalism is Paul Hawken's (2010) *The Ecology of Commerce*. Despite a green agenda, while the focus of natural capitalism concerns efficient and effective production, the consumption imperative is maintained or increased, and this potentially poses challenges from a sustainability perspective. Ecological economists focus on development, assuming growth can be sustained. To me, however, 'sustainable development' or 'sustainable growth' are oxymorons, as one could argue that growth and sustainability are mutually exclusive (see Bartlett, 1998). Certainly, many critics argue for an understanding of sustainability that seeks a different economic system from the current economic system, (Klein, 2014; Brown & Fraser, 2006; Fletcher & Neves, 2012).

The impact of a multitude of social actors articulating alternative perspectives on sustainability, aligned with their own belief systems and specific agendas, is that sustainability is a 'buzzword':

> It has become a commonplace in the literature on the subject to suggest that the definition is too vague and thus susceptible to exploitation and "greenwashing". It is certainly true that sustainability is a broadly conceived philosophy. In this sense, it is a bit like "democracy", "justice", or "community"' all of which are discursive fields that suggest a set of conditions rather than a specific outcome (Caradonna, 2014, p. 7).

Caradonna (2014) recognises that the conceptual and theoretical lack within sustainability allows disparate actors to articulate disparate approaches to sustainability. One impact of this is how many approaches to sustainability seem subsumed into the current economic system. This was reinforced, as argued above, by the release of the Brundtland Report (1987). The following section examines the rules of sustainability to illustrate how this subsumption into the current economic system is facilitated.

1.3 *The Rules of Sustainability*

1.3.1 *Green Politics*

Environmental reports, such as Rachel Carson's (1962; 2002) *Silent Spring* or the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* (Meadows *et al.,* 1972) state that there are costs to perpetual growth.

Notably, these reports also suggest that there are limits to perpetual growth. Despite this intervention, the Brundtland Report (1987) introduced a change in directions by claiming that "economic growth and environmental sustainability could be combined" (Næss & Høyer, 2009, p. 74). The Brundtland Report (1987) constitutes a key moment as the development paradigm has implications for both tourism and the wider business context. By determining that economic growth and environmental sustainability go hand in hand, the report equated sustainability with economic development and created a new paradigm: sustainable development. The Brundtland Report (1987) recognised that the growth imperative needed altering to work within the confines of ecological sustainability (Næss & Høyer, 2009). In other words, growth is achievable within the constraint of limited resource use.

This approach is based on the principle of eco-efficiency and substitution, which is affiliated with the parallel paradigm of ecological modernisation. In combination, sustainable development and ecological modernisation construct boundaries for continued growth, by decoupling economic growth from resource depletion and negative environmental impacts (Næss & Høyer, 2009; Wanner, 2015). The impact of this combination is to decouple growth from environmental deprivation. Similarly, eco-efficiency enhances production while simultaneously reducing resource use and minimising negative environmental impacts, such as waste or carbon emissions (see Næss & Høyer, 2009; Kershaw & Renouf, 2013; Wanner, 2015). This discourse, though, is challenged. Herring (2006), for example, argues that efficient energy use, for example, does not automatically lead to a reduced energy consumption. In fact, the opposite is the case. Rather than reducing consumption, energy efficiency leads to a reduction in the energy price, which makes it more affordable, and this leads to an increase in consumption (Herring, 2006, p. 10). What this example illustrates is that eco-efficiency is a powerful discourse within 'sustainability' discourses, as fundamental economic principles like growth and development continue (with some impacts on production). We will see that this

eco-efficiency approach impacts upon the eco-certification process in tourism. However, it is important to note that eco-efficiency is not necessarily the same thing as sustainability. Equally, eco-efficiency is not necessarily a means to achieve sustainability, because the objective is to decrease production costs with the impact of making products more affordable. Pesqueux (2009, p. 236) suggests that "the growth of technological efficiency tends to trigger an increase in unit consumption". The impact of eco-efficiency is to promote a form of development, as illustrated in the next section.

1.3.2 Limit to Growth

The concept of sustainability stands in stark contrast to traditional economic development. Sustainable development, which focuses on efficient resource use, resembles a form of neoliberal development, as traditional economic development and sustainable development are concerned with growth, particularly with respect to increased production. This results in increased consumption and revenue maximisation. This links traditional capitalism, based on the assumption of low-cost production, with development discourses by promoting increased consumption and growth (wealth maximisation).

Low-cost production concerns industrial capital in a Marxist sense (traditional material capital involving natural and social resources) but also knowledge capital and financial capital. Many companies outsource production lines or services to emerging economies to reduce costs, due to comparatively lower production costs. Furthermore, free-trade agreements, as espoused by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) or Export Processing Zones (EPZs) result in increased global development (Klein, 2010; 2014). Companies, such as Nike, can produce their products in low-cost countries, such as the Dominican Republic. For instance, in the Dominican Republic, Nike allowed a maximum of 6.6 minutes production time for a t-shirt, paying each employee "8 cents … for a shirt". Nike then sold these t-shirts in the United States for $22.99 (Bakan, 2005, p. 66). This is a prime example of low-cost production and increased

consumption, fostering growth for the companies (from advanced economies) taking advantage of the lower production costs in emerging economies. Business acts as a transfer mechanism to exploit natural and social resources (Marx, 1976) and expropriate knowledge (Hardt & Negri, 2001). The impact of this is to take surplus value from society and shift it towards investment (Lazzarato, 2012).

In contrast to the capitalist understanding of growth, sustainability seeks to limit growth due to resource scarcity and the impact of this would be to constrain the capitalist objective of maximising the wealth of shareholders and the company (Meadows *et al.,* 1972). Researchers see sustainability as requiring a cap on the use of natural and social resources and to population. For example, Meadows *et al*. (1972, p. 1) built a model "specifically to investigate five major trends of global concern – accelerating industrialisation, rapid population growth, widespread malnutrition, depletion of non-renewable resources, and a deteriorating environment". Although the model was incomplete and too simple, it has become an exemplar of sustainability. Meadows *et al.* (1972, p. 1) draws two major conclusions from the study:

1. If the present growth trends in world population, industrialisation, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years. The most probable result will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity.

2. It is possible to alter these growth trends and to establish a condition of ecological and economic stability that is sustainable far into the future. The state of global equilibrium could be designed so that the basic material needs of each person on earth are satisfied and each person has an equal opportunity to realise his individual human potential.

In response to the present approach to growth, Meadows *et al.* (1972) argue for an equilibrium between the stocks of capital and population, so that natural and social resources can continue for the foreseeable future. To achieve this, though, there would be a need to limit population growth and limit growth in capital stocks. Meadows *et al.* (1972) argue that rather than a capital maximisation imperative through the exploitative use of natural and social resources and the encouragement of consumption, capital should stay at a constant level with a consequent

positive impact on population levels (by limiting population growth). This conception of sustainability is illustrative of an economic system that is the antithesis of traditional capitalism by limiting resource use and argues against traditional capital growth. Meadows *et al.* (1972) conception of sustainability provides a *very strong* approach to sustainability and would represent a critical approach to traditional capitalism. This stands as a counter-narrative to a *weaker* approach to sustainability such as the business case approach (that seeks to fit sustainability into the current economic system) (Brown & Fraser, 2006). Chapter three will illustrate that a similar sustainability scale applies within the tourism literature. For Hunter (1997, p. 859) sustainability is "an over-arching paradigm within which several different development pathways may be legitimised according to circumstances". Hunter (1997) precisely reflects how different approaches to sustainability can be articulated in various ways depending on the context (I return to this thought in section 2 below in this chapter when I explore the Business Case in further detail).

1.3.3 Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is just as elusive conceptually as sustainability or TBL. CSR is a slogan used by companies to report on their commitment to society, the economy and the environment (de Grosbois, 2012). According to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD, 1999):

> CSR is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as the local community and society at large (cited in de Grosbois, 2013, p. 897).

However, the idea that business owes obligations to society is not particularly new. Throughout history, various cultures have constructs that look similar to CSR. In classical Greece, for example, firms were obliged to conduct business in a morally responsible manner. A failure to satisfy this 'moral' code resulted in offenders being expelled from the city of Athens by an ethics committee and had to continue life outside the city walls and community. In the Middle

Ages, industry and commerce were expected to follow the Catholic Church's code of moral conduct, as it represented the superior instance of moral and ethics at that time (Forsdyke, 2000).

However, together with sustainability, CSR is subject to growing interest in various fields and disciplines (Hemingway & Maclagan, 2004). The core foundation of CSR is an acknowledgment that business owes responsibility to society and the environment going beyond shareholder wealth maximisation (Font *et al.,* 2012; Frey & George, 2010). The idea is that companies use CSR to demonstrate their level of commitment to different stakeholders and the environment. In this, CSR is linked to sustainability due to CSR's four pillars: environmental, economic, social and governance. CSR incorporates "a branch of philosophy concerned with understanding of how we decide upon moral value of actions and what principles should guide us towards good behaviour" (Moscardo *et al.,* 2013, p. 71). However, an issue of what we consider to be moral or immoral emerges. Different stakeholders have different values. For instance, community members might consider that job security is a moral obligation that companies owe to employees; shareholders and managers, in contrast, might consider that immoral as they value job flexibility more than security. Friedman, for instance, illustrates this tension within the CSR discourse by arguing that every dollar spent on CSR is "theft of the shareholders' money" (Jahn & Brühl, 2018, p. 42; see also Friedman, 1970). The impact of the conceptual lack in CSR, in a similar way to sustainability, is that there is variable commitment to CSR (Spence, 2007). In the tourism context, there are significant variations in participant's commitments to CSR activities and those that disclose CSR activities do not necessarily demonstrate more responsible behaviour than those who do not (Frey & George, 2010). For many tourism and hospitality businesses, CSR represents a marketing tool for greenwashing purpose (Font *et al.,* 2012: van Wijk & Persoon, 2006; de Grosbois 2012). As disclosure is supposed to increase transparency to stakeholders, there also needs to be

transparency in reporting if businesses are to be held accountable for their activities (Font *et al.*, 2012). Otherwise, CSR is meaningless.

1.4 Different Approaches to Sustainability

Following the discussion of the logics and rules concerning sustainability, this section examines theoretical approaches to sustainability and evaluates how they fit into the current economic system. I use four examples from Shiva, Klein, Hawken and Dryzek to illustrate different approaches and different levels of sustainability. While Shiva (2005) and Klein (2014) argue that capitalism, the growth of corporations and globalisation are root causes of social injustice and environmental depletion, Dryzek (2013) and Hawken (2010) suggest that sustainability is achievable within the parameters of our current economic system through deliberative democracy or an altered industrial ecology. Each author presents a different approach to the same problem. Arguably, Shiva (2005) and Klein (2014) adopt a stronger approach to sustainability (a critical approach to understanding sustainability) while Dryzek (2013) and Hawken (2010) adopt a weaker approach to sustainability which is illustrative of a business case approach (I return to these concepts later in Table 3.2 below).

1.4.1 Vandana Shiva - 'Earth Democracy'

Vandana Shiva, one of India's leading physicists, became a renowned environmental activist. Shiva (2005) critically engages with the interface of capitalism, sustainability, social justice and peace and depicts how globalisation, corporate growth and free trade driven by neoliberal thinking reinforce social injustice, violence against the most vulnerable and planetary degradation (Shiva, 2005). Shiva illustrates how genetic food engineering, appropriation of social and cultural knowledges and the privatisation of natural resources (the commons) diminishes social value and the value of life itself. The extraction of surplus value and the depletion of natural resources by global corporations turns people into disposable objects. Shiva (2005) argues that ecological sustainability and cultural diversity cannot continue within our

current economic framework. As an alternative, Shiva (2005) proposes 'Earth Democracy' to offer an inclusive view embracing the interconnectedness of people with nature and fostering cultural diversity. 'Earth Democracy' is "both an ancient world view and an emergent political movement for peace, justice, and sustainability" which "connects the particular to the universal, the diverse to the common, and the local to the global" (Shiva, 2005, p. 1). Shiva's (2005) approach suggests that sustainability cannot be achieved by adopting a generic, universal stance but requires the embracing of particularities and recognition that issues are solvable on a local scale. As Shiva's (2005) response values the particular, it is a valuable post-structural contribution to my study. Furthermore, Shiva (2005) offers a definitional methodology, arguing that biological and cultural diversity are means to an end and entertain the necessary conditions for sustainability and peace. This approach corresponds with my personal view on sustainability because it does not incorporate any economic component. Shiva's approach to sustainability is a strong approach to sustainability.

There are ten foundational principles to 'Earth Democracy'. However, the focus is on living economies, living democracy and living cultures. Living economies are based on local market principles as opposed to the abstraction of 'the market' which needs more regulation (Shiva, 2005). The living economies approach critiques the current market efficiency economic system and corporate globalisation as responsible for social inequity. Moreover, 'Earth Democracy' adopts a democratic stance, as it "is based on local democracy, with local communities – organised on principles of inclusion, diversity, and ecological and social responsibilities" and in which "self-rule and self-governance is the foundation" (Shiva, 2005, pp. 10-11). There is an overlap here with Laclau and Mouffe's (2014) conceptualisation of real democracy, as real democracy is based on a set of individual/particular responses, rather than a democratic system dominated by one universal, economic purpose.

'Earth Democracy' also incorporates a concept of living cultures that "allow[s] cultural diversity to thrive from the ground of our common humanity and our common rights as members of an earth community" (Shiva, 2005, p. 11). All human beings, as subjects, are interconnected with each other and with nature and share integrity and identity. This differs from the current economic approach, which regards people as "objects of ownership, manipulation, exploitation or disposability" (Shiva, 2005, p. 11). The application of Shiva's approach in tourism, for example, would focus on small-scale, local development, where peoples are included, empowered and, importantly, does not exploit or appropriate natural resources and cultural identities. 'Earth Democracy' is a vivid concept that draws upon the knowledge, compassion and dignity of people and that acknowledges an interconnectedness between life and nature.

However, 'Earth Democracy' is not without critique. While Shiva (2005) articulates a 'radical' definition of what sustainability might look like and what it entails, Shiva fails to address how to get there. While 'Earth Democracy' is complex, this reflects all forms of social life. However, just because something appears radically different does not, by itself, rule out a deeper engagement with its objective: What, for instance, would common-managed resources look like? And how would we overcome the current economic system that we live? The challenge for 'Earth Democracy', without a concrete method for achieving these objectives, is that it remains a normative theorisation of sustainability.

1.4.2 Paul Hawken – 'The Ecology of Commerce'

Hawken's (2010) book '*The Ecology of Commerce*' depicts a gap between life on earth and the way we conduct business. Hawken (2010) raises concerns with the irresponsible exploitation and degradation of nature's resources by growing industry demands and the production of waste, such as CO_2 and other toxins. For Hawken (2010), these trends pose a threat to human health. Hawken's (2010) approach is known as natural capitalism. Hawken (2010) proposes

three restorative steps: the entire elimination of waste from production, a retreat from an economy based on carbon fuels and the creation of a system of accountability that supports restorative behaviour (including reporting on externalities).

This contrasts with Shiva (2005) in that Hawken (2010) provides practical steps to achieve a conceptualisation of sustainability within the business space. However, major concerns can be associated with Hawken's (2010) measures. The proposed steps do not reject capitalism *per se* but are slight modifications to the current capitalist system (to continue that system). Although businesses adopt 'green practices', the objective is still the fostering of growth. Lamberton (2013, p. 147) argues that natural capitalism "might be capitalism plus ecological wisdom, but it is still capitalism without significant change in political or corporate decision-making and power structures". Critics, such as Lamberton (2013, p. 147) see:

> natural capitalism as being the same economic system built on the (im)morality of self-interest, with insufficient change to the incentives, which drive current environmentally destructive and socially inequitable behaviour.

Hawken's (2010) conceptualisation of sustainability is situated within the current economic framework, as it proposes no radical change to organisational business practices, accounting and society, and thus, Hawken's (2010) framework integrates sustainability into our current economic framework.

Hawken's ecological modernisation is associated with the environmental Kuznet curve (EKC). Focusing on quantitative aspects of economic growth (Sumner & Tribe, 2008), the EKC hypothesis holds that development can be decoupled from negative environmental impacts (Næss & Høyer, 2009). However, Spangenberg (2001) argues that there is no evidence of the EKC due to the environmental costs associated with the use of resources such as energy, materials, and land.

From an accounting perspective, the problem with Hawken's (2010) approach is that there is no recognition of environmental costs (externalities). As accounting incorporates a "naïve economic belief", social and environmental costs bear little similarity with reality (Gaffikin,

2008, p. 205). There is always a lack in accounting, as, for example, it is impossible for accounting to account for social and environmental costs (such as BHP's Samarco dam failure in 2015) via a numerical representation. Consequently, through accounting, there is an accountability gap (Hines, 1988; Morgan, 1988).

Hawken's (2010) approaches constitutes an appeal to companies to make changes in elements of how they do business. It is a form of investment analysis (a core element of the business case), by illustrating growth opportunities through efficiency changes, but herein lies the problem: Without these financial incentives for businesses (such as cost-saving, risk-minimisation or increased reputation), it is unlikely that corporations would voluntarily engage in sustainable practices. Brown and Fraser (2006) argue that those companies that adopt a business case approach engage in CSR or social and environmental reporting (SER) if it provides sufficient additional wealth. Moreover, as businesses continue to grow, this economic size brings considerable power (Gaffikin, 2008; Bakan, 2005). Simultaneously, the omni-presence of neoliberal ideology fosters a pro-capitalist, pro-growth environment, and lobbying governments to support corporate interests is accepted business practice (Gaffikin, 2008). While potentially undermining political democratic values, these practices and asymmetric power relations impact upon attempts at a restorative economy. For example, in the tourism space, one could argue that more is needed than eliminating waste or efficiently using carbon-based fuel, as proposed by serval aviation associations (Gössling, Scott & Hall, 2013). This seems far removed from an accountability system that supports restorative behaviour. Air travel is a significant contributor to pollution in the tourism system, as airlines depend on fossil fuels. However, tourism is not more sustainable by shifting to biofuels or by offering consumers carbon-offset schemes. Carbon-offset simply shifts environmental responsibility from airlines to consumers and incorporates the environmental impact into a pricing decision. This is no different from the current economic system.

1.4.3 Naomi Klein – 'This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate'

Klein's (2014) '*This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate*' proposes a more radical model, as Klein (2014) argues that capitalism is the source of all economic, environmental and social problems. For Klein (2014, p. 82) climate change is an impact of deregulated capitalism, highlighting that the 'packaged deal' concerning the exploitation of workers and nature is the most significant threat to humans and the planet. Klein (2014) argues that organisations, such as oil companies Exxon Mobile and Shell, deplete natural resources and emit vast amounts of CO_2 and cause temperatures to rise. Climate change deniers support this resource depletion, and this poses a threat to societies, as groups such as the right-wing think tanks, the Heartland Institute or the Heritage Foundation, ignore all predictions and scientific warnings about climate change (Klein, 2014).

Furthermore, neoliberal institutions such as the WTO play a role not only in promoting capitalism on a global scale but also in accelerating climate change. The WTO is a powerful organisation which secures free-trade agreements for multi-national companies to produce and trade goods in any country, including developing countries due to cheaper production costs (see Shiva, 2005). These free-trade agreements exacerbate social inequity between rich and poor (between people and countries) and also increased pollution through trade and production (Shiva, 2005; Klein, 2014).

In rejecting capitalism, Klein's (2014) approach argues that sustainability exists as a separate system outside the current economic framework, as an antagonistic other in opposition to capitalism (see Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). However, like Shiva (2005), Klein (2014) does not provide any concrete solution on how to shift from capitalism. Although Klein (2014) argues in favour of local movements focused on social and environmental concerns, such as Blockadia or NIMBY (not in my back yard), these small-scale movements may not be enough to change the political landscape and bring about sustainability on a global scale. Klein (2014, p. 450) does warn against "alternative pathways to destinations that are safer" and reflects on "whether

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some countervailing power will emerge to block the road". '*This Changes Everything*' nudges us towards pseudo-revolution, providing a sound diagnosis of our current problem, and despite suggesting that sustainability is antagonistic to capitalism, there is no remedy provided to the problem. Nevertheless, Klein (2014) presents a critical perspective to the sustainability challenge.

1.4.4 John Dryzek - 'The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses'

Dryzek's (2013) '*The Politics of the Earth*' provides for a stakeholder-focused model to sustainability. Dryzek's (2013) approach arguably could be situated within our current economic framework, as it does not question the existence of capitalism *per se*. Dryzek's (2013) model based on 'ecological democracy' requires that business consult with all stakeholders, but consultation, while more costly and time-consuming does not necessarily alter the capitalist imperative. Dryzek (2013, p. 236) argues that within the sustainability discourse, the communicative aspect of democracy ("under the banner of deliberative democracy") will be more effective, as the deliberative democracy model enables subjects to make collective decisions and contribute to discussions and negotiations concerning decisions being made (Dryzek, 1994). Although deliberative democracy incorporates various views on complex issues (Dryzek, 2013), it is doubtful that communicating and negotiating with organisations and the state will result in the incorporation of sustainability into our democratic framework. Power remains in the hands of the establishment and it seems 'hopeful' that stakeholder communication will somehow overcome the oppression inherent within capitalism. Dryzek's (2013) approach contrasts with Laclau and Mouffe's (2014) conceptualisation of a radical democracy which is a representation of the plurality of individual struggles. In the tourism context, the deliberative democracy model would suggest that social actors within the tourism field should play a role in decision-making processes to achieve sustainable outcomes. Given the current economic discourse is premised on the idea that organisational growth has benefits

for the whole economy, it is difficult to envisage how this approach shifts our current economic framework and engenders significant change.

In summary, this section illustrates a range of theorisations concerning sustainability. Shiva (2005) and Klein (2014) present models in stark opposition to Hawken (2010) or Dryzek (2013). Hawken's (2005) 'green capitalism' and Dryzek's (2013) 'ecological democracy' both operate within the current economic system; Shiva (2005) and Klein (2014) situate sustainability outside the current economic system. I favour an understanding of sustainability like Shiva (2005) or Klein (2014), in that I do not believe that sustainability constitutes a mere modification of capitalism (such as shifting to more efficient production or less wasteful production and with little critique of consumption or the growth imperative) or the shift to a more inclusive communicative exercise (especially when technocratic elites or experts consult and advise on sustainability measures). For me, sustainability suggests an alternative economic framework. To understand further, how businesses respond to the sustainability challenge (and to situate these theoretical frameworks, I introduce Brown & Fraser's (2006) CSR framework, as it provides three distinct organisational responses to CSR and sustainability: the business case, the stakeholder-accountability case and a critical approach. I turn now to introduce the business case of sustainability.

2   The Business Case of Sustainability

This section builds on the themes of the previous section by applying a social and environmental accounting (SEA) framework to the tourism literature. Brown and Fraser (2006) provide a lens through which to examine sustainability and tourism literature. I employ concrete examples from the literature to illustrate that a significant amount of sustainable tourism examples and case studies align with the business case approach to sustainability. An overview of the different approaches to SEA, CSR and sustainability follows.

2.1 Different Approaches to CSR/Sustainability

From an accounting perspective, Brown and Fraser (2006) examine various perspectives on SEA and provide three heuristics to understand SEA, CSR and sustainability. I turn to the SEA literature for guidance, as there is comparatively more significant debate in the SEA literature concerning sustainability, CSR, as well as critical reflections than the tourism literature. I draw upon the heuristics of Brown and Fraser (2006) to understand different decisions and interventions within sustainability, tourism and, more specifically, ecotourism. As for CSR, the focus of SEA concerns accountability and transparency in reporting on business activities. The approaches to SEA/CSR presented in Brown and Fraser (2006) include the business case approach, the stakeholder-accountability approach and a critical approach.

2.1.1 The Business Case Approach

The business case approach represents the status quo end on the CSR continuum. Proponents of the business case approach see CSR/SEA initiatives from a business-centred perspective. The focus of the business case is: "What is in it for business?", and "How can the business enhance its shareholders' wealth?". The business case follows traditional investment analysis, focusing on generating increased capital for the company and its shareholders. Where CSR/SEA can enhance an organisation's value, this suggests that business managers are acting responsible, because CSR/SEA can assist with avoiding risks, protecting brand and corporate reputation and creating competitive advantage. Companies should engage in CSR behaviour when it achieves significant financial payback for the firms. Furthermore, managers see CSR/SEA as an opportunity to extend their tools in conducting business as usual (see Hawken, 2005). Businesses engage in CSR/SEA activities when it results in a "win-win" situation (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 105). For business case proponents, CSR/SEA is "voluntarist". There is no compulsion here, as CSR "requires more focus on 'technical' activities such as the development of performance measures and benchmarking techniques" (Brown & Fraser, 2006,

p. 114). This expert-led discourse aligns with Dryzek's (2013) conceptualisation of sustainability. The business case constitutes a weak form of accountability and sustainability, as the primary beneficiary of all CSR/SEA actions are shareholders. The business case means that business operates under the mantra 'what's good for business is good for society'.

2.1.2 The Stakeholder-Accountability Approach

The stakeholder-accountability approach differs to the business case approach because it goes beyond shareholder wealth maximisation. The stakeholder-accountability approach rejects the dominance of shareholders and capital markets (Brown & Fraser, 2006), by focusing on increasing the visibility of organisations and their actions to stakeholders. Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 114) argue that stakeholders have "informed rights" that must be recognised in the decision-making process (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 114). Proponents of the stakeholder-accountability approach call for regulation to ensure reporting transparency because companies are quasi-public institutions. The operationalising of the stakeholder-accountability approach moves beyond hard managerial techniques to focus on the inclusion of accountability measures. However, the extent and impact of stakeholder participation in companies' decision-making processes remains unclear. If the extent of stakeholder participation focuses on knowledge of the organisation, not all information is available, as businesses do not necessarily disclose all information about their actions (see the example of Nike's Dominican Republic activities above). Further still, given the plurality among stakeholders and their interests, it is unclear how to balance these interests. For example, a shareholder (as a stakeholder) holds a different interest than a stakeholder from a not-for-profit organisation. What is precisely meant by accountability is difficult to ascertain here and this imprecision resulted in the emergence of a critical approach.

2.1.3 The Critical Approach

The proponents of the critical approach argue that the foundations of capitalism impede accountability. SEA/CSR, for the critical approach, is an opportunity to reveal the exploitation of employees, society and the environment highlighting, in "anti-reports", social injustices and ecological deprivation (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 114). This contrasts with current SEA practice (which are organisationally-centric), as stakeholders would not rely on reports published by companies. The critical approach seeks 'full disclosure' and recognises that legislation is essential to secure stakeholder information rights. However, Brown and Fraser (2006) suggest that elites may interfere with regulatory processes and hinder the shift to governance structures and the current economic system. The current approach to CSR/SEA is a form of 'greenwashing'. The critical approach recognises that if the dominance of neoliberal thinking and its underlying capitalist orientation persists, the more likely it is for CSR/SEA to fail. The risk is that society becomes trapped in anti-pluralist capitalist system where CSR/SEA constitutes nothing more than greenwash for unsustainable business practices. While the business case approach represents a weak form of sustainability, the critical approach constitutes a strong form of sustainability.

Table 2.3, below, denotes a framework by which to understand different levels of sustainability:

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Table 2.3: Different Levels of Sustainability

Anthropocentric ← → Ecologically-centric			
Very weak - **Business case**	Weak – **Stakeholder accountability**	Strong – **Stakeholder accountability**	Very strong – **Critical theory**
Exploitation of resources to enhance shareholders wealth "What is in for business?" Voluntaristic approach to CSR Hard management techniques, e.g. performance measures Mantra: 'What's good for business is good for society'	Resource conservation CSR/SEA should increase accountability and transparency Stakeholders have 'information rights' Regulation is necessary	Resource preservation CSR/SEA should increase accountability and transparency Stakeholders have 'information rights' Regulation is necessary	Minimisation of resource use Sceptical about real accountability in the absence of radical social change Danger in 'acting as if' Current economic system needs radical change Preparation of 'anti-reports'
Economic growth/shareholder wealth maximisation	Managed growth	Zero economic growth (steady-state growth)	Anti-economic growth
Technological innovation (Promethean thinking-technological progress can save human mankind)	Common interpretation of sustainable development	Zero population growth	Limits to population growth - a deep green approach- biocentrism (Pepper, 2002)

Table 2.3 [Adapted from Brown and Fraser (2006) and Muscado *et al.* (2013)]

Considering Brown and Fraser's (2006) three CSR/SEA heuristics, the next section looks at selected articles from the tourism literature that are illustrative of these perspectives.

2.2 CSR/SEA Outlined in the Extant Tourism Literature

2.2.1 The Business-Case: Carbon-Offsetting Programs and Responsible Tourism Management

Carbon emissions represents one of the biggest problems in the tourism industry. A significant component of this is associated with air travel, but there are carbon issues in destinations. Hotels, for example, offer offset programs concerning their carbon impact on the environment (Dhanda, 2014). Virgin Australia claims to be the first carbon neutral airline, by working with

the government (Virgin Australia, 2015). Air passengers or hotel guests can choose from programs to offset their carbon emissions while on holiday. Virgin Australia's internal carbon-offset calculator, for example, allows for customers to calculate the financial value of their carbon emissions during the booking process. Virgin Australia donates the proceeds from the carbon-offset to the Tasmanian Land Conservancy to preserve native forests (Virgin Annual Report, 2015).

Virgin Australia outlines these programs in their 'glossy' annual reports. Virgin Australia offers tourists guilt-free travel in the knowledge that their emitted carbon emissions is accounted for and neutralised. The reality, however, is different. Not all greenhouse gases are absorbed by plants and trees and this contributes to climate change and environmental pollution (Hawken, 2010). In 2005, global tourism transport was responsible for 75 percent of total CO_2 emissions (40 percent is attributable to aviation), contributing between 5.2 percent and 12.5 percent to global climate change (Scott *et al*., 2010, p. 396). To reduce carbon emission in tourism, airlines and airline associations argue for the improvement of fuel efficiency or the use of alternative fuels (low-carbon fuels). However, Scott *et al.* (2010, p. 402) note that "emission reductions by further improving fuel efficiency in aviation are comparatively costly, [and thus] airlines will probably not reduce absolute emissions, but rather they will purchase emission permits from the market". Consequently, through carbon-offset there is little or no decrease in carbon emissions. Furthermore, Gössling and Peeters (2007) also note that Airbus, for instance, has no intention to invest in alternative fuels such as hydrogen in the next 30-40 years. This suggests that airline or tourist businesses avoid implementing necessary policies to reduce their environmental impact and pass on their responsibilities to consumers. Carbon-offsetting is an example of a greenwashing strategy to disguise self-centred 'business-as-usual' practices. Airlines and hotels employ CSR initiatives when they identify business benefits (Brown & Fraser, 2006). Initiatives like carbon-offsetting may protect the corporate image, provide a

competitive advantage or enhance the organisation's financial value. Tourist businesses act in their own interests while ignoring any conflict of interest between the interest of business and society/environment. Carbon offsetting creates a feel-good environment for the customer. This is a win-win scenario for the company: The organisation makes little or no change to their business practices, their reputation is enhanced, there may be financial return and the customer pays for the initiative (and the assumption is that customer feels that they have done something good).

In carbon-offsetting, organisations pass on their environmental impacts to customers: The organisation does not pay for their impacts. Dhanda (2014) studied that carbon offsetting and carbon neutrality within the hotel and resort sector and found significant evidence of greenwashing, as most hotels had no strategic plan nor proof of their carbon-offset schemes. Similar problems exist in the aviation industry. Despite ambitious goals set by global tourism organisations, there are no detailed plans or investment into how such emission pathways are achievable (Scott *et al*., 2010). The impact is that many of these programs are meaningless.

Hotels act as go-between between the customer and the carbon-offset provider (Dhanda, 2014). What is unclear for hotel guests in donating to offsetting projects is whether the hotel subscribes to the project. The lack of regulation of carbon markets is also problematic and certification standards within the hotel sector vary or are inappropriate (Dhanda, 2014; Dhanda & Hartman, 2011). The unregulated state of the carbon off-setters has resulted in greater numbers of unproven claims (Dhanda, 2014). Consequently, due to lacks in policy guidelines and incomplete reporting, carbon-offset schemes currently are used for marketing purposes. Dhanda's (2014) research demonstrates that hotels display varying levels of commitment to carbon neutrality and this confirms previous research by Chan and Wong (2006) and Bohdanowisz (2005) who argued that environmental endeavours (such as carbon offsetting) were employed to create a positive image and enhance economic growth. Carbon-offsetting in

the tourism industry is illustrative of a classic business case approach. It enables wealthy individuals or organisations to pass on responsibility: this is the purchase of mercy with money (Dhanda, 2014; Revkin, 2007; Russell, 2007). The fact that tourism operators focus on passing on responsibility illustrates their level of commitment to the problem: The investment decision not to pursue technologies like hydrogen-based air travel to reduce or eliminate carbon emissions is evidence for the business case. Gössling and Peeters (2007) are less optimistic about sustainable, carbon-free air travel in the foreseeable future. Given the perceived high costs of implementing sustainability and the profit–driven focus of the tourism industry, carbon neutrality in tourism is likely to remain discursive.

Another business case approach to sustainable tourism concerns responsible tourism management (RTM). Frey and George (2010) investigated why South African tourism demonstrated a low commitment to RTM. Despite many conferences on responsible tourism hosted in South Africa and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002, the tourism industry was reluctant to adopt responsible/sustainable tourism management practices. While tourism is a significant contributor to South African economic growth, there has been little inclusion of stakeholders such as local communities (Frey & George, 2010). The involvement of stakeholders is important in implementing sustainability in the tourism sector because sustainable/responsible tourism relies on community engagement. The results of the study indicate that companies would like to contribute to society and environment, but do not do so due to several obstacles. These obstacles included the competitive environment for hotels, lack of government support and the perceived cost of implementing RTM (Frey & George, 2010). The business case accounts for the lack of RTM in South African tourism, as the competitive environment and cost implications suggests that RTM may not lead to the necessary financial returns and does not provide for a win-win-scenario.

2.2.2 The Stakeholder-Accountability Approach: Community-Based Resort Tourism and Indigenous Tourism Development in Queensland

Richins (2009) uses a community-based sustainability framework to consider sustainability planning and implementation within the resort destination of Noosa in Queensland, Australia. The study highlights the importance of community-based strategies in responsive tourism decision-making processes. While the community of Noosa has a long history of sustainable tourism, the decision for a "long-term commitment to community interaction" was made in 2000 (Richins, 2009, p. 788). Subsequently, five community tourism boards involving various stakeholder groups have focused on sustainable development. Through stakeholder commitment, active engagement of the community in tourism decision-making processes, open communication between different stakeholders and identifying key community assets, the community of Noosa has fostered sustainable tourism development. This example of stakeholder participation goes beyond consultation, as it involves stakeholders in decision-making. The example of the community of Noosa illustrates the stakeholder-accountability approach.

The Indigenous tourism development in Weipa, North Queensland and the role of Rio Tinto Aluminium provides a further example. Buultjens *et al.* (2010) explain that Indigenous tourism in Weipa progressed slowly because many Indigenous people were unemployed, poorly educated and lived below the poverty line. Establishing tourism in remote Weipa was difficult. One major complication was a lack of capital and this hindered Indigenous peoples from opening small tourism enterprises (Buultjens *et al.,* 2010). Furthermore, there had always been conflict with local mining companies as their mines (for coal and diamonds) were located on or close to Indigenous land. Recently, mining companies took the initiative to focus more on the local community and focus on CSR strategies. For example, the Rio Tinto Comalco mine instituted an Indigenous workplace agreement. In 2006, 18 percent of the mine's workforce were Indigenous (Buultjens *et al.,* 2010). The mine offered training schemes for Indigenous

workers with the prospect of full-time employment after successfully completing training. As part of the Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA), local communities could use the mining company's infrastructure including roads, transport and power supply. This case provides an example of a stakeholder-accountability approach, as Rio Tinto moved towards being a stakeholder-oriented business in fostering relationships with local stakeholders and incorporated stakeholders' needs in helping to contribute to the development of Indigenous tourism in remote areas. Unfortunately, this situation may be a case of smoke and mirrors, as Rio Tinto's commitment to these CSR may be more passive than active. For example, there is a sense of irony in Rio Tinto reporting on allowing Indigenous peoples to use the roads and infrastructure built by Rio Tinto, when that infrastructure sits on land owned by those Indigenous communities. Furthermore, Rio Tinto was not able to meet its 2010 target of 30 percent Indigenous workforce (Buultjens *et al.,* 2010). It is also worth noting that Rio Tinto funded the study by Buultjens *et al.*, which suggests that the company's wants to present itself in a good light. This case provides evidence of a business-centred approach to stakeholders, as the primary beneficiary is the company and little 'real' attention is paid to local communities (a weak stakeholder-accountability approach).

2.2.3 Critical Theory Approach: The Hotel BAUEN in Buenos Aires

There is a lack of substantive tourism literature that explores critical approaches to sustainability in tourism. An hotel in Buenos Aires, Argentina provides one example of an anti-capitalist approach. Higgins-Desbiolles (2012) studies the Hotel BAUEN to provide an insight into how a business can transform itself from a traditional business model to an anti-capitalist organisation, by changing its internal and external operations and relationships (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2012). This is an unusual approach that challenges assumptions that there is no real alternative to the current economic system.

After Argentina opened up to international markets and privatisation, Argentina faced its worst financial crisis and thousands of workers were left unemployed. Decreasing wages and a lack of government assistance exacerbated the situation, forcing some workers to reclaim abandoned enterprises. In 2003, employees took over the hotel BAUEN (Buenos Aires Una Empresa National). Even though employees stated that their actions were not politically motivated, their reclaiming of the hotel symbolised the rise of the working class, reinforcing a workers' right to work (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2012). The workers justified their actions by saying that the former managers failed to pay the workforce, exploiting the capitalist system (Ranis, 2005). Since the take-over, the nature of the management of the hotel changed internally and externally. First, in a workplace "without bosses" ("sin patron"), the workers are in charge which reinforces a democratic environment as employees receive equal base wages, take equal responsibilities and are involved in the decision-making process (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2012, p. 630). This approach contrasts with traditional management approaches because it encourages higher human agency (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). As a meeting point, the Hotel BAUEN opened dialogues with its external community and built rapport with stakeholders to demonstrate accountability and transparency. Hotel BAUEN is an example of critical approach to CSR by exposing capitalist exploitation of employees and social injustices (Brown & Fraser, 2006). As capitalism decreases workers' wages and job security and creates an environment of insecurity for employees, there is a need for alternative ways of thinking that include "greater diversity, more humanistic options and a variety of alternatives that open up more equitable, democratic and tolerant spaces" (Giroux, 2008; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2012, p. 623). Hotel BAUEN illustrates an alternative ideology to neoliberalism (Giroux, 2008) because it puts the workers in the centre and gives them equal responsibility, which is reflected in the way they carry out business. From a CSR perspective, the Hotel BAUEN acknowledges its responsibilities towards society and environment and goes beyond mere capital maximisation for shareholders.

3   Conclusions from the Chapter

This chapter provided an overview of the pluralism of sustainability at the macro-political level. It discussed the logic and rules of sustainability, as well as different approaches to the concept. By focusing on the Brundtland Report (1987) and sustainable development, the chapter discussed a variety of articulations concerning sustainability ('fifty shades of green'). I argued that the release of the Brundtland Report (1987) helped with the incorporation of the sustainability discourse into the economic system. This in turn led to different conceptualisations of sustainability. For example, as the triple bottom line (TBL) (Elkington, 1997) emerged as synonym for sustainability, the economic component of the TBL demonstrates that the focus of sustainability shifted from responding to environmental or social problems to incorporate a discourse that emphasised the financial viability of organisations.

The discussion examined the rules of sustainability including green politics, limits to growth and different theoretical approaches to sustainability, as outlined in Shiva (2005), Klein (2014), Hawken (2010) and Dryzek (2013). I argued that one understanding of sustainability is concerned with limiting economic growth due to resource scarcity. This contrasts with traditional economic theory that promotes perpetual growth. Sustainability experts promote ecological modernisation such as eco-efficiency to address the problem of resource depletion and environmental degradation, while maintaining steady growth. The impact of this agenda is to increase production output through efficient resource use. Eco-efficiency does little to impact upon consumption (see Hawken, 2010). The discussion illustrated that different theorisations of sustainability can be understood as a continuum of sustainability, ranging from very weak to very strong commitments to sustainability.

The chapter discussed Brown and Fraser (2006), as it provides a useful heuristic for understanding sustainability. I apply this to the tourism literature for the first time and outlined the business case, the stakeholder accountability approach and a critical approach to CSR and

sustainability. The discussion focused on evidence from sustainable tourism literature to illustrate that the majority of tourism cases adopted a business case approach to sustainability (very weak). The discussion of carbon offset programs helped to illustrate that entities use CSR activities to conceal their business practices as 'business-as-usual'. This is a form of greenwashing. There are few examples of a critical approach (very strong) to sustainability in tourism. I argue that a critical approach is central to a better approach to sustainability (see Appendix one for an annotated bibliography of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism which categorises the articles published against Brown and Fraser's (2006) business case, stakeholder-accountability and a critical approach. This table illustrates the dominance of the business case approach).

Given the proliferation of approaches to sustainability, the chapter argues that sustainability is now a buzzword that operates as a floating or empty signifier (as discussed theoretically in Chapter five). The conceptual openness or vagueness within sustainability impact upon sustainable tourism and ecotourism at the meso-political level. Example of this include how certifiers, experts, tourist operators and consumers proliferate a range of articulations of sustainability (such as ecotourism, CBT, Indigenous tourism, responsible tourism and low-impact tourism) and create and adopt a variety of measurement and indicator systems to 'report' on sustainability (such as carrying capacity calculations, ecological footprint analysis, and key performance indicators and criteria). The range of articulations and the measurements is the focus of Chapter three, while Chapter four examines the institutional proliferation of expertise (to see how institutions like certifiers or accreditors set the 'rules of the eco-certification game' for ecotourism). Articulations of competing meanings of sustainable tourism and ecotourism, the manifestation of measurement and indictor systems and the claims to institutional expertise are three central pillars in the development of the eco-certification process for ecotourism. The

next chapter overviews the current sustainable tourism literature to examine the meso-politics

of sustainable tourism and ecotourism.

- Chapter Three -
The Politics of Sustainable Tourism

1 Literature Review of Sustainable Tourism

My thesis focuses on the emergence of the supply side of eco-certification for ecotourism. Figure 3.1 below, presents this emergence as involving three components. I structure my literature review across two chapters. Chapter three explores the proliferation of articulations of ecotourism (as depicted in level 1 of Fig. 3.1) and the adoption and development of measures and indicators of sustainability (as depicted in level 2 of Fig. 3.1). Chapter four examines the emergence of an 'expert' discourse concerning sustainable tourism, as 'expertise' is claimed by disparate actors in the establishment of eco-certification programs for ecotourism.

Chapter three overviews the current sustainable tourism literature to explore the impact of the macro-politics of sustainability on the meso-political articulations of ecotourism. The tourism literature uses the concept of sustainability in different ways (see Clarke, 1997; Tepelus, 2005). The key idea is that a range of articulations concerning sustainable tourism emerged subsequent to the release of the Brundtland Report in 1987. These articulations include, for example, ecotourism, community-based tourism (CBT), Indigenous tourism, low-impact tourism and responsible tourism. Each articulation fits under the umbrella term, sustainable tourism and to various degrees incorporate sustainable indicator systems, international standards on environmental management or eco-certification programs to measure sustainable outcomes. However, in the tourism space, some scholars take a critical perspective arguing that sustainability is a myth, suggesting that tourism debate concerning sustainability is inconsistent and lacks theoretical interrogation of sustainability (see, for example, Liu, 2003; Saarinen, 2014; Sharpley, 2009-2010; Mowforth & Munt, 2016). Liu (2003) and Saarinen (2014) argue for a multi-disciplinary approach that reframes the concept of sustainability to develop sustainable tourism.

Personally, the problem lies less in re-framing sustainability, but rather in recognising that: a) The concept of sustainability is so open that there is no right answer (it is impossible to navigate); b) this openness encouraged multiple articulations of sustainability and despite no theoretical or practical agreement as to what constitutes sustainability, 'experts' emerged to 'sell' their understanding of sustainability; and that c) the impact of this openness in the tourism system is the incorporation of sustainability into the current economic system without question (in accordance with the business case discussed above). My literature review critically examines the politics of sustainable tourism as evident in the variety of articulations under the umbrella of sustainable tourism. The employment of practices such as CBT or responsible tourism facilitates development in less developed tourism destinations. However, such development often benefits advanced capital countries as they finance and often control the tourist development (Sindiga, 1999; Akama & Kieti, 2007). This meso-politics of sustainable tourism is illustrative of the impact of the macro-political debate concerning sustainability.

My review continues by examining sustainability indicator systems and international standards associated with ecotourism and other articulations of sustainable tourism. I explore the carrying capacity, ecological footprint analysis and how scholars recommend different sets of indicators to report on sustainability. These indicator systems, measures and standards provide legitimacy for accreditation and certification purposes. However, I will argue that there is no clear link between measurement indicators and sustainability. Despite these measurement tools operating discursively as proxies for sustainability, practitioners do not know what or how to measure sustainability (as there is a lack of an agreed definition). The literature review chapters provide a set of clues that help construct answers to the overarching questions in this thesis as outlined in Chapter one. Figure 3.1 (below) depicts an outline of Chapters three and four, a hierarchical order of the three levels of sustainability in the tourism context and how they are interconnected.
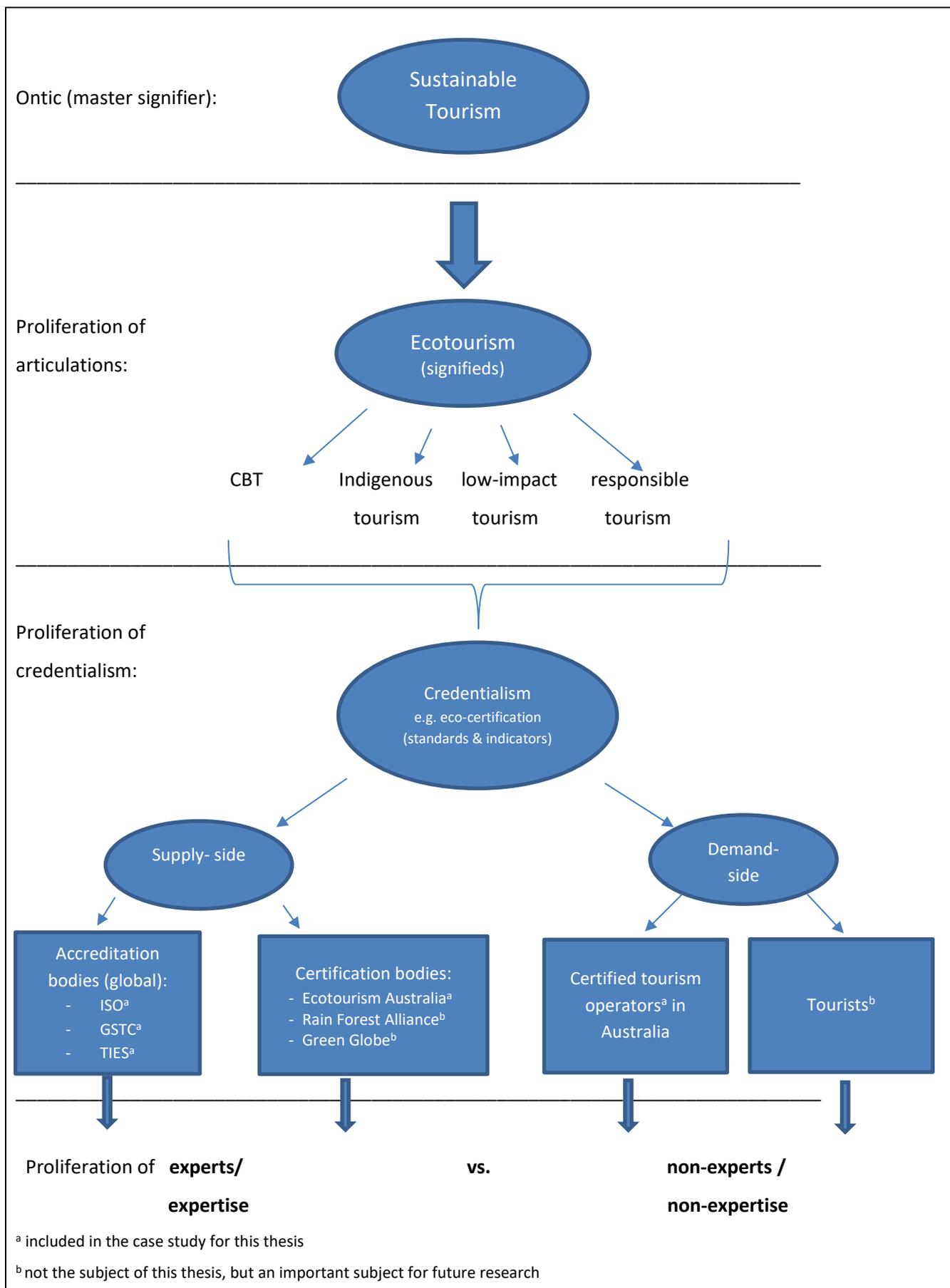
Figure 3.1: A Graphical Depiction of the Literature

2 Proliferation of Articulations of Sustainability Meanings in Tourism

2.1 The International Ecotourism Society

As argued in Chapter two (concerning the politics of sustainability), the conceptual openness of sustainability leads to confusion about what constitutes sustainability. The impact of this openness is that fixity within the (sustainability) system is impossible. The same problem applies to sustainable tourism, and the focus of my thesis is on the ecotourism articulation. There is no agreed definition of ecotourism. However, a variety of institutions and organisations have developed articulations of ecotourism. This reflects a central argument in my thesis as some organisations assume expertise over ecotourism and sustainable tourism even though there is no exact definition or perhaps no definition at all.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) is an example of one such organisation. TIES is a not-for-profit organisation that promotes ecotourism by providing guidelines and standards for sustainable tourism operators. It defines ecotourism as:

> …responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education (TIES, 2015).

TIES introduces a set of principles to guide participation in ecotourism:

- Minimise physical, social, behavioral, and psychological impacts.
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.
- Generate financial benefits for both local people and private industry.
- Deliver memorable interpretative experiences to visitors that help raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climates.
- Design, construct and operate low-impact facilities.
- Recognise the rights and spiritual beliefs of the Indigenous People in your community and work in partnership with them to create empowerment (TIES, 2019)

The TIES (2019) definition of ecotourism appears comprehensive (as tourism that focuses on the environment and local peoples). However, in examining ecotourism, it is apparent that ecotourism is similar to a variety of other articulations of what constitutes sustainable tourism. For instance, the focus on generating financial aid for both local people and private industry, as well as partnership in empowering local peoples resonates with the focus of CBT. Creating cultural awareness and recognising the rights and spirits of Indigenous peoples resonates with

the focus of Indigenous tourism. Raising consciousness and sensitivity concerning the political environmental and social climate is similar to responsible tourism. The minimisation of impacts and low-impact facilities is the focus of low-impact tourism. These overlaps suggest a lack of a clear definition for ecotourism, as these ecotourism principles extend to incorporate many of the competing articulations of sustainable tourism including the financial, the environment, cultural, an experiential component, minimising impact and empowering communities. In some ways, ecotourism could stand for anything. I argue that ecotourism is a floating signifier (an umbrella term) that incorporates various articulations of sustainable tourism including CBT, Indigenous tourism, responsible tourism and low-impact tourism. The floating nature of ecotourism makes it more difficult to understand what is meant by sustainability or sustainable tourism. Twining-Ward's (2002, p.3) definition of sustainable tourism is illustrative of this confusion:

> Sustainable tourism is interpreted … not as a new or alternative form of tourism such as ecotourism, but a way of ensuring all forms of tourism contribute as far as possible to sustainable development issues and priorities in a particular place (Twining-Ward, 2002, p. 3).

This definition offers few concrete clues on how to achieve sustainable tourism and what it might incorporate, other than operating itself as a collective term. The lack of precision within the tourism literature encourages a proliferation of articulations of 'sustainable tourism'. To dissect the politics of the articulations of sustainable tourism, the following sections examine each of these articulations to demonstrate similarities (and differences) and how they are linked to measurements and standards created by organisations that promote eco-certification programs and claim expertise in the field of sustainable tourism.

2.2 Ecotourism

The lack of consensus concerning sustainability is reflected in a lack of consensus as to what constitutes ecotourism. Weaver (2001, p. 12), however, disagrees and argues that "there is an extremely high agreement with the basic principle of sustainability", but recognises there is

ambiguity concerning the implementation of sustainability. Many tourism scholars (especially those writing for the Journal of Sustainable Tourism) and Weaver (2001; 2010) believe that alternative forms of tourism such as ecotourism, Indigenous tourism, responsible tourism and low-impact tourism can make tourism sustainable. It is unclear in each of these articles how these authors understand and define sustainability. There is a risk that the lack of a clear definitional framework for ecotourism leaves the concept vague and utopian.

Alternative forms of tourism emerged in the 1970s in response to conventional mass tourism and increasing awareness of environmental issues. Ceballos-Lascuráin was the first to frame the concept in 1987 (Fennell, 2003; Sharpley, 2006; McKercher, 2010), defining ecotourism as:

> … traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas (cited in Fennell, 2003, p. 18).

Medina (2005, p. 283) argues that ecotourism focuses not only on experiences by on impact:

> … [ecotourism] is 'qualitatively different' from other forms of tourism, including nature tourism; while nature tourism is defined on the basis of what travellers do, ecotourism focuses on 'the impact' of their travel on both the environment and the people in the host country.

We can see here two distinct approaches to ecotourism, with Ceballos-Lascuráin focusing on experiencing the environment and culture, while Medina focuses also on the impact of these experiences. At origin, ecotourism valued remote and undisturbed environmental settings in which tourists could immerse themselves. This involved experiencing flora and fauna and getting an insight into different cultures (interpretation) while minimising impacts on nature and peoples (Buckley, 1994). However, the concept of ecotourism has experienced significant change. Goodwin (1996, p. 288), for instance, defines ecotourism as:

> … low impact nature tourism which contributes to the maintenance of species and habitats either directly through a contribution to conservation and/or indirectly by providing revenue to the local community sufficient for local people to value, and therefore protect, their wildlife heritage area as a source of income.

Goodwin's (1996) incorporation of the economic elements of revenue and income has a drastic impact on the concept of ecotourism. What was fundamentally about experiencing nature and culture shifts to a focus on the means to provide such conservation efforts. In contrast to Ceballos-Lascuráin's conceptualisation of ecotourism, Goodwin suggests that ecotourism should bring economic benefits to local communities, as nature constitutes the main income source for host communities. This approach to ecotourism links to sustainable development (Epler Wood & Halpenny, 2001) by encompassing the economic component.

However, in contrast to Goodwin (1996), Wearing and Neil (1999, p. 140) reinforce the undisturbed or uncontaminated nature, by arguing that:

> … there is no general definition currently in circulation but any conception of [ecotourism] must involve travel to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the natural environment of that area.

In recognising that there is no accepted definition of ecotourism, Wearing and Neil (1999), rather than providing a new definition, refer to Ceballos-Lascuráin's approach to emphasise the nature-base and educational characteristics of ecotourism. However, Wearing and Neil (1999) do hold that travel to undisturbed nature and education are constitutive components of ecotourism. Weaver (2001) and Fennell (2003) both add their own articulations at to what constitutes ecotourism. Weaver (2001, p. 15) argues that:

> Ecotourism is a form of tourism that fosters learning experiences and appreciation of the natural environment, or some component thereof, within its associated cultural context. It has the appearance (in concert with best practice) of being environmentally and socio-culturally sustainable, preferably in a way that enhances the natural and cultural resource base of the destination and promotes the viability of the operation.

Fennell (2003, p. 25) argues that:

> Ecotourism is a sustainable form of natural resource-based tourism that focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, and which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive, and locally oriented (controls, benefits, and scale). It typically occurs in natural areas, and should contribute to the conservation or preservation of such areas.

Both Weaver (2001) and Fennell (2003) stress educational, cultural and conservational aspects associated with ecotourism. However, there are subtle differences: Fennell (2003) emphasises

low-impact, non-consumptive experiences, while Weaver (2001) argues that ecotourism should be best-practice oriented. It is unclear what Weaver (2001, p. 15) means by '[ecotourism] has the *appearance* … of being environmentally and socio-culturally sustainable', but the idea of 'appearance' without substance is an important idea in my thesis. Orams (2000, p. 318) recognises that there is no clear definition of ecotourism and includes a normative challenge to ecotourism:

> This plethora of definitions does little to clarify what is meant by the use of the term ecotourism … this view of the variety of ecotourism definitions shows that at a minimum, ecotourism is tourism which is based on the natural environment and seeks to minimise its negative impact on the environment. However, many definitions argue that ecotourists should attempt to do more than simply minimise impacts … It may be that one of the challenges for the ecotourism industry is to assist in moving ecotourists from a minimal 'passive' to a more active contribution to the sustainability of eco-attractions.

Orams (2000) suggest a need to shift ecotourism to actively contribute towards sustainability. In examining this variety of articulations concerning ecotourism there is no consensus as to what constitutes ecotourism, although the definition provided by TIES seeks to incorporate elements from all definitions. However, there is some agreement on two base principles concerning ecotourism: ecotourism takes place in undisturbed nature and should include an educational component. The certification body, Ecotourism Australia[4] reinforces this approach by emphasising the natural environmental and an educational component:

> Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation (Ecotourism Australia, 2019).

This shapes Ecotourism Australia's business mission, which seeks:

> … to promote ecotourism throughout Australia and its immediate region by creating partnerships, developing and encouraging quality ecotourism experiences and providing the industry with a clear voice. The organisation's main product development tools were the creation of certification programs that defined ecotourism (Ecotourism Australia, 2019).

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[4] Ecotourism Australia is the case study that I use in my thesis.

Ecotourism Australia focuses on facilitating sustainable and responsible tourism through their certification programs that define and promote ecotourism. This certification process is a vital component to the ecotourism discourse and is a key component of this thesis.

The shift to eco-certification involves an important contingent move, as there is a gap between ecotourism, as a new form of tourism lacking a settled definition, and eco-certification, which certifies operators as ecotourism. Eco-certification is product or business development tool that provides legitimacy to a tourism operator, improves the image of organisations and enhances cost savings through changing a few practices (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). Ecotourism Australia promotes ecotourism not as a new paradigm, but as an "industry" where tourism operators become "business members" through certification and offers tourist operators access to valuable, new markets (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). The facilitation of access to markets shifts the focus of eco-certification for ecotourism to a form of financialised capitalism, that turns all areas of life, including nature, into financial assets (Sayre, 2008). This financialisation has three elements: Eco-certification is a form of financialisation that operates in a captured market (ecotourism) and Ecotourism Australia acts as form of 'rating agency' (Papaikonomou, 2010; White, 2010). Eco-certification also financialises ecotourism as it constitutes a cost of access that has the impact of excluding other competitors (Foley & McCay, 2014). Finally, by certifying ecotourism, eco-certification has the impact of putting a price on *green* tourism (Ouma *et al*., 2018; Fairhead *et al.,* 2012; Sullivan, 2012). Ecotourism and going green is economically beneficial (see Bricker, 2017). The financialisation of ecotourism through eco-certification is a form of appropriation of common pool resources such as nature, knowledges and culture (see Snijders, 2012; Gardner, 2012; Ojeda, 2012). I return to this theme in Chapter eleven.

2.2.1 Community-Based Tourism

The model of community-based tourism (CBT) developed in the 1970s as a response to traditional mass tourism (Cater, 1993, Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2016). CBT is considered integral to sustainable tourism development (Simons & de Groot, 2015). Dernoi (1981) argues that small-scale tourism is an effective counter to unsustainable mass tourism. Advocates for CBT argue that it is an approach suitable for achieving sustainable tourism (see for instance, Boyd & Singh, 2003; Tosun, 2006; Okazaki, 2008). However, there is a lack of a coherent understanding as to what constitutes CBT (Kontogeorgopoulos *et al*., 2014). Zapata *et al*. (2011, p. 727) acknowledges the problems with CBT by arguing that "the definition of what CBT is, who defines it, or where the community ends, and the individual interests start, are questions of debate". The impact of the conceptual openness of CBT is for a range of definitions of CBT and pathways to achieving CBT to emerge. Initially, CBT programs related to small rural communities (Zapata et al., 2011) and ecotourism (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005; Scheyvens, 2002). Organisations outside the tourism space have also articulated CBT definitions. For example, the International Labour Organisation (2005) defines CBT as:

> … any business organisational form grounded on the property and self-management of the community's patrimonial assets, according to democratic and solidarity practices; and on the distribution of the benefits generated by the supply of tourist services, with the aim at supporting intercultural quality meetings with the visitors (cited in Zapata *et al.,* 2011).

According to Zapata *et al*. (2011), the current tourism literature identifies three main criteria associated with CBT. First, community participation and community empowerment are important (Okazaki, 2008; Stone & Stone, 2011). Second, a high degree of control and significant ownership remains in the hands of locals for decision-making processes (Scheyvens, 2002; Iorio & Corsale, 2014). Third, CBT is a bottom-up approach to community development due to the involvement of the local community in management (Zapata *et al*., 2011; Giampiccoli, 2015). The focus of CBT is on community development and empowerment and this could potentially conflict with ecotourism's focus on undisturbed nature and education.

The TIES (2019) approach to ecotourism sees no conflict though as community development and empowerment are principles five and eight in the TIES ecotourism definition.

2.2.2 Indigenous Tourism

There is no accepted definition of Indigenous tourism, which is similar to ecotourism. Weaver (2001, p. 22) defines Indigenous tourism as: "… a form of ecotourism, because links exists between [I]ndigenous cultures and the natural environment" (p. 22). Weaver (2001) considers Indigenous tourism to be a subset of ecotourism due to the intersection with cultural tourism. This might reflect that there are indistinct boundaries between the cultural and natural environments. However, Ryan and Aicken (2005) define Indigenous tourism by referencing the definition and key characteristics of Indigeneity as outlined by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2004). The UNDP (2004) defines Indigeneity as:

(i)   […] Self-identification and identification by others as being part of a distinct indigenous cultural group, and the display of desire to preserve that cultural identity;
(ii) a linguistic identity different from that of the dominant society;
(iii) social, cultural, economic, and political traditions and institutions distinct from the dominant culture;
(iv) economic systems oriented more toward traditional systems of production than mainstream systems; and
(v)   unique ties and attachments to traditional habitats and ancestral territories and natural resources in these habitats and territories (cited in Ryan and Aicken, 2005, pp. 9-10)

While recognising the link between culture and nature, Ryan and Aicken (2005) focus on the difference in Indigenous political and economic systems in comparison to mainstream Western and colonising systems. Butler and Hinch (2007) recognise that there is diversity in Indigenous tourism terminology that depends on context (for example, Indigenous, Aboriginal or native tourism). In adopting the UNDP's approach, Butler and Hinch (2007, p. 5) argue that "Indigenous tourism refers to tourism activities in which indigenous people are involved either through control and/or by having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction". There is a degree of overlap here with CBT due to the focus on local and Indigenous community

participation and involvement. The TIES (2019) definition of ecotourism reflects these principles of Indigenous tourism in principle two and eight.

2.2.3 Low-Impact Tourism

Low-impact tourism is another form of sustainable tourism. Low-impact tourism:

> … is about sustainable travel and leisure activities that directly benefit local communities and that are respectful of wildlife, local people and their cultures – including travel that minimises our negative impact on the environment and the places we visit (Lowimpact.org, 2019).

In a similar way to ecotourism, Indigenous tourism and CBT, low-impact tourism focuses on nature conservation and the respecting of local culture, as nature and local culture are assets essential to 'authentic' tourism experiences (Cohen, 2002). Consequently, nature and local culture should be protected from the impact of consumption. There are two crucial differences between low-impact tourism and ecotourism or CBT. Low-impact tourism emphasises the impact of consumption and not only focuses on the impact of tourism activities at destination, but also how tourists get to destinations. Ecotourism accounts for an ecological footprint at destination but excludes the ecological footprint of tourists getting to destinations, such as the impact of air travel. Low-impact tourism hopes to decrease the negative impacts of tourism: a tourist flying from Australia to Costa Rica for example has a negative environmental impact due to carbon emissions. To minimise this impact, low-impact tourism proposes travelling to closer destinations or reduce the number of holidays they take to far-away destinations. Low-impact tourism proposes the use of cleaner, alternative transport, including trains. Low-impact tourism embraces small-scale development where tourists stay with locals and buy local products. This potentially contrasts with CBT, as low-impact tourism purports that tourism dollars remain within local communities. This increases the direct economic impact on local communities and prevents the leaking of financial resources to external owners (as is alleged in CBT). Consequently, low-impact tourism seeks to minimise environmental impacts and increase economic benefits to local communities (Lacher & Nepal, 2010).

2.2.4 Responsible Tourism

The concept of responsible tourism emerged alongside ecotourism in the 1980s. Husbands and Harrison (1996, p.1) argue that responsible tourism is:

> … not a tourism product or brand. It represents a way of *doing* tourism planning, policy, and development to ensure that benefits are optimally distributed among impacted populations, governments, tourists, and investors (cited in Leslie, 2012, p. 20).

Responsible tourism, in contrast to ecotourism and Indigenous tourism, does not focus on cultural and environmental conservation, but rather, takes a holistic approach. Responsible tourism seeks to improve policies to assist all stakeholders in adopting responsible business practices in achieving sustainable tourism. The approach to tourism emphasises a responsive process to address the negative impacts caused by tourism. Leslie (2012, p. 26) argues that:

> … the fundamental principle of RT is that in every facet of tourism these [negative impacts] at least can be ameliorated through the adoption of more responsible practice, be it reducing consumption of non-renewable and limited resources in the destination, increasing local economic and social interrelationships, applying government-led planning controls, and in terms of access, reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

This taxonomy of the articulations of sustainable tourism provides a foundation that assists with determining similarities and differences. All articulations have a focus on the local community. CBT, low-impact tourism and Indigenous tourism especially focus on community involvement and community empowerment. Responsible tourism sees community participation as central to meaningful stakeholder engagement (Leslie, 2012). Ecotourism and Indigenous tourism recognise environmental and social components to sustainability. Wearing and Neil (2000) argue that ecotourism and Indigenous tourism are tourism philosophies and not tourism activities, due to their non-process-based motivation. This contrasts with responsible tourism, which provides a conceptual approach to sustainable tourism development. For Leslie (2012), what sets responsible tourism apart is the incorporation of all stakeholders (tourists, communities, tourism enterprises, governments and other agencies) in minimising negative and maximising positive tourism impacts (Leslie, 2012). Responsible tourism, though, is applicable to all forms of tourism, including traditional mass tourism (Krippendorf, 1987).

One obvious conclusion to note here is that no single articulation of sustainable tourism suggests that tourism itself should stop. All articulations promote tourism consumption, albeit in different ways and with a varying focus on the supply of tourism opportunities and the consumption of those tourism experiences. The impact of sustainable tourism might be to change how a tourist consumes tourism but does not suggest no tourism. Low-impact tourism goes the furthest here. As tourism philosophies, ecotourism, responsible tourism and Indigenous tourism did not focus on economics or economic development. These tourism philosophies became contestable in practice, as ecotourism and competing articulations were subject to criticism as critics questioned "how effectively [their] idealistic claims can be measured" (McKercher, 2010, p. 15). Weaver (2007, p. xxii) suggests that this is a "crisis". Ecotourism and competing articulations focus on minimising negative environmental impacts and boosting social and economic benefits for local communities. Such claims require evidence, and many researchers examine sets of indicators to measure the impacts of tourism and ecotourism. The proliferation of indicators claiming to measure sustainable tourism is the focus of the next section.

3   The Proliferation of Measurement: Measuring Sustainability in Tourism

Economic development is now a central component of sustainable tourism including ecotourism and its range of articulations. Choi and Sirakaya (2006, p. 1276) put the economic focus at the centre of their understanding of sustainable tourism:

> … there is no doubt that sustainable tourism must be economically feasible, because tourism is an economic activity. Economic sustainability, in this regard, implies optimising the development growth rate at a manageable level with full consideration of the limits of destination environment.

Many academics (see, for example, Crabtree & Bayfield, 1998; Mannings, 1999; Ko, 2005; Blancas *et al.*, 2010; Roberts & Tribe, 2008; Schianetz & Kavanagh, 2008) agree with Choi and Sirakaya (2006). Consequently, there is a proliferation of tourism literature concerning measuring sustainability and other indicator systems that supposedly contribute to sustainable

outcomes. However, I am critical of the argument provided by Choi and Sirakaya (2006) for it privileges the tourism interest above all other interests, including sustainability. In simple terms, their conclusion is a mere assumption that places economic interests above social or environmental interests and there is no justification provided as to why this should be 'natural' order of things. As I have argued in Chapter two, above, a critical approach to sustainability would challenge the assumption that economic interests stand above all other interests. Such unquestioned definitions of sustainable tourism provide evidence as to why sustainable tourism adopts a form of the business case, where the sustainable choice becomes an economic equation concerned with investment return, rather than substantive engagement with social, environmental or other sustainability concerns.

The next section critically examines Choi and Sirakaya's (2006, p. 1276) to explore the essence of their idea of 'development at a manageable level', how this has manifested in quantifiable approaches to measure 'sustainable development' and what links might exist to the sustainability discourse. I provide an overview of indicator systems before illustrating existing measurements from the tourism context. Whether quantifiable measures, such as key performance indicators, assist with achieving overall sustainable outcomes or whether they assist tourist operators achieving economic sustainability is questionable. It seems, then, that measurement tools and other indicators constitute business development tools and embeds sustainability into the capitalist system. I conclude this section by arguing that measurements, such as carbon measures, become proxies for sustainability. Such measurements are reductionist because they depict the concept of sustainability through one single lens. For example, the use of waste management indicators in eco-certification programs is misleading, because eco-certification of ecotourism ventures gives the impression that these ventures are sustainable. From a mathematical perspective, the definitional lack within sustainability (such as what does 'future generations' mean) renders quantification difficult if not impossible (Liu,

2003; Saarinen, 2014). Nevertheless, there is a proliferation of measurement tools and indicator systems employed in the tourism industry as proxy for gauging sustainable development outcomes. Promoters of these tools and indicators claim an expertise in 'mastering' the sustainable tourism challenge.

3.1 Historical Overview of Indicator Systems in the Tourism Literature

There was a proliferation of indicator systems and parameters that measure tourism impacts with regards to sustainable outcomes since the early 1990s (Butler, 1993; Wheeller, 1993). Butler (1999, p. 20) argued that the:

> … the greatest research need is to develop measures of sustainability and to apply these to existing and new forms of tourism development to help determine what affects sustainability and how it can be achieved.

Many authors argue that sustainable tourism requires indicators and measurement parameters because without indicators and measurement sustainable tourism, conceptually, is meaningless (see, for example, Wheeller, 1993; Hunter, 2002; Butler, 1999; Jovicic, 2014). This links the development of indicators to research and practice (Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2014). For example, the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in Rio stressed the need for an internationally applicable set of indicators to assess sustainable tourism outcomes (Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2014). Twenty years later, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio ('Rio+20') affirmed this focus on indicators (Jovicic, 2014). Think-tanks, such as the Wuppertal Institute (Spangenberg & Bonniot, 1998) and the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) helped build frameworks for globe-spanning indicators of sustainability (Ceron & Dubois, 2003). Governments, non-government organisations and international agencies, such as the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2004) translated these theoretical statements into practice (Ko, 2005; Jovicic, 2014). Initially, there were few measurement parameters directly related to tourism (Ceron & Dubois, 2003). However, there now exist a range of tourism-related indicators. Three main indicator systems

have the most impact on tourism, including the carrying capacity concept, ecological footprint analysis, and a range of systematic indicators/parameters. I examine each of these in turn.

3.2 Estimation of the Carrying Capacity

The estimation of carrying capacity is a dominant measure of sustainability within the tourism context: Since emerging in the 1960s, there are modifications to the original concept of the carrying capacity to calculate the maximum visitors that can be accommodated at a tourism destination (Butler, 1999). Mathieson and Wall (1982, p. 21) define the concept for tourism:

> Carrying capacity is the maximum number of people who can use a site [or area] without any unacceptable alteration in the physical environment and without an acceptable decline in the quality of the experience gained by visitors.

Jovicic (2014, pp. 297-298) link the concept to sustainable tourism by arguing that carrying capacity:

> … is a tool for measuring the impact of tourism development on the area and the environment, and it is, also, considered to be one of the key mechanisms when setting standards in sustainable tourism.

Despite recognising that the carrying capacity is a useful instrument, practically applying the concept is challenging and neglects other issues, including, the limits of acceptable change in tourism destinations (Jovicic, 2014). Despite Jovicic (2014) linking the concept to sustainable tourism, Butler (1999) worries that there is no conceptual link between carrying capacity and sustainable development. The underlying assumption of the carrying capacity is problematic, as it is unclear how limiting the number of visitors to a site is by itself sustainable. The carrying capacity tool provides no insight as to how many visitors are too many, as carrying capacity is not fixed (Weaver & Lawton, 2010) and it is not, *per se*, a measure of sustainability.

3.3 The Ecological Footprint (EF) Analysis

In addressing these limits, there was a search of acceptable tourism alternatives such as ecological footprint analysis. Ecological footprint analysis comes from environmental management and sustainable development (see the Wuppertal Institute). Hunter and Shaw

(2007) argue that it is key indicator of sustainable tourism. According to Hunter and Shaw (2007, p. 47), ecological footprint analysis:

> … provides an aggregate estimate of demands upon the biophysical productivity and waste assimilation capacity of nature imposed by human lifestyles.

Ecological footprint analysis draws on traditional environmental impact assessment tools including net primary productivity accounting, energy accounting, carrying capacity assessment and lifecycle analysis (Wackernagel & Yount, 2000). Wackernagel and Rees (1996, p. 9) define ecological footprint analysis as:

> … an accounting tool that enables us to estimate the resource consumption and waste assimilation requirements of a defined human population or economy in terms of a corresponding productive land area.

Hunter and Shaw (2007) do acknowledge that there were little efforts to scrutinise the suitability of ecological footprint analysis in the tourism context. However, in favouring its use, Hunter and Shaw (2007) suggest that ecological footprint analysis includes vital indicators including an indicative net ecological footprint value for international tourism transport to, from and within destinations.

Ecological footprint analysis is not without criticism. As a single indicator system, it is a simplistic measure of sustainable tourism outcomes. The ecological footprint calculation excludes, for example, energy usage, waste production and destination resource consumption (such as resources consumed in hotels, by tour operators or at attractions) (Hunter & Shaw, 2007). In favour of simplicity, ecological footprint analysis excludes these important local indicators and this renders ecological footprint analysis distorted and incomplete. It offers a partial view, common to accounting techniques (Hines, 1988).

A significant limit to ecological footprint analysis is that particular indicators such as total energy use per tourist in Mega Joules (MJ) or average carbon dioxide produced (tonne/km travelled) rely on estimates which vary according to data sources (Martín-Cejas & Ramírez Sánchez, 2010). By assuming the quantifiable consumption of resources, this renders the

ecological footprint analysis of a tourist to a destination incomplete and of limited informational quality. Despite these significant limitations, Hunter and Shaw (2007, p. 46), as proponents of ecological footprint analysis suggest that it provides "a unique [and] global perspective on sustainability".

3.4 Systematic Indicators and Other Parameters

A variety of sets of indicators, indices and monitoring systems embrace a local focus on sustainable tourism development. An indicator "… is, foremost, a variable which can take a certain number of values (statistical) … or states (qualitative) according to circumstances" (Ceron & Dubois, 2003, p. 56). Indicators might be time-based or place-specific are:

> … a tool used in monitoring and evaluation. Indicators help simplify complex issues by selecting and measuring one aspect as an 'indication' of the state of the whole (Twining-Ward, 2002, p. 4).

Most indicators derive from non-tourism related fields. Sirakaya, Jamal and Choi (2001, p. 418) define indicator attributes that distinguish conventional development from sustainable tourism indicators, as part of a holistic approach:

> … indicators of sustainability for tourism differ from traditional development indicators because they take into consideration the web of complex interrelationships and interdependencies of resources and stakeholders in the tourism system (see also Twining-Ward, 2002)

Few studies define sustainable tourism specific indicators (Hunter & Shaw, 2007). For example, Twining-Ward and Butler (2002) sought to monitor sustainable tourism development in Samoa, as sustainable tourism development in small island states or dependencies faced significant challenges (Weaver & Lawton, 2010). Britton (1982, 1987) argued that small islands states were prone to economic leakage due to dependence on foreign investors, reliance on imported goods and the need to employ foreign labour. Furthermore, ecosystems of small island states, particularly with respect to coastlines, are vulnerable to economic pressure (Farrell, 1986; Gössling, 2001). In this context, Twining-Ward (2002) and Twining-Ward & Butler, (2002) defined a range of sustainable indicators tailored to the economic, environmental and social

context of Samoa. Twining-Ward (2002, p. xiv) defined economic sustainable tourism indicators that focused on the "contribution of direct tourism businesses to GDP" and the "proportion of new businesses focused on tourism [and] hotel jobs in rural areas". Social sustainable tourism indicators in Samoa included the "proportion of traditional events in Tourism Festivals [and the] proportion of handicraft stalls in the market" (Twining-Ward, 2002; p. xiv). Environmental sustainable tourism indicators, in Samoa, focused on waste, sewage and water management, as well as land and marine conservation (Twining-Ward, 2002; p. xiv). Torres-Delgado and Saarinen (2014, pp. 38-40) review different sets of sustainability indicators and indices in the tourism context:

a) Choi and Sirakaya (2006) formulated a set of 125 indicators for managing community tourism, consisting of different subcategories including political (32), social (28), ecological (25), economic (24), technological (3) and cultural (13).

b) McCool (2001) determined 26 indicators relevant to the state, regional and local level, taking into account tourist expenditure per capita, resident attitudes towards tourism, traffic and water and energy consumption.

c) Moore and Polley (2007) defined six indicators concerning visitor experience including the number of parking bays, the number of camping sites and erosion.

d) Sánchez and Pulido (2008) identified 14 indicators across subcategories including driving forces, pressure, state and response indicators.

e) Castellani and Sala (2010) suggested 20 indicators in a process inspired by the Deming cycle (Deming, 1994). The cycle seeks to continuously improve quality by focusing on population, housing, the economy and labour.

f) Blancas *et al.* (2010) defined 32 indicators with respect to social (the ratio of tourists to locals), economic (daily average expenditure and occupancy rate) and environmental (waste volume produced in a destination or percentage of energy consumed) dimensions.

While these indicator systems take the local context into account, whether these systems are usable in more complex contexts is unclear. More importantly, these indicators still rely upon traditional tourism measures such as direct contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) or water usage per guest. This raises the question as to whether sustainable tourism indicators are different to traditional indicators of the impact of tourism. Furthermore, in each case, it is unclear what link there is to sustainable tourism

3.5 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Weir and Dickson (2011) propose key performance sustainability indicators for tourism organisations based on the TBL (Elkington, 1997). Economic sustainability indicators include financial performance such as net cashflow, return on investment and economic performance impacts on host communities (Weir & Dickson, 2011, p. 35). Social sustainability indicators comprise of "staff turnover rates and staff retention, safe and ethical work practises, impact on host communities such as noise, social impacts or use of scarce resources and support of social programs in host communities such as health, education, environmental" and environmental sustainability indicators include "energy consumption, use of renewable energies, water consumption and recycling and waste management" (Weir & Dickson, 2011, p. 35). Economic measures of sustainability match traditional economic performance indicators and are easily quantifiable. However, the measurement challenge results in environmental sustainability measures tending to focus narrowly on measurable concepts such as energy, water and waste management and includes carbon footprint measures. These quantifiable measures (such as overall water usage or overall energy consumption) fail to give a holistic view of environmental conservation. Even more challenges emerge in attempting to measure social sustainability, as it is difficult to quantify tourism impacts on host communities. This obsession with measurement, data and indicators fails to ask what the numbers mean. Ko (2005, p. 435) raises this concern:

> How do we measure areas which constitute sustainable development? How do we put numbers or colours or other descriptors to these indicators of the quality of life or of well-being? One answer to that is, perhaps, do we need to? Another question we must address is: Are there indicators that are not amenable to quantification? And, if we do try to quantify them, do we fall into the same trap as economists have fallen into for the last hundred and fifty years – that is, in believing that only things that have numbers mean anything? (this is attributed by Ko to Khosla, 1995).

The concern for Khosla (1995) and Ko (2005) is whether we need to measure sustainability in tourism and whether there is a link between measurement systems and sustainability.

3.6 Limitations of Measurement Systems

3.6.1 Missing Link between Measurement Systems and Sustainability

Without a clear understanding of sustainable tourism and, for that matter, sustainability, this renders each endeavour to *measure* sustainability ineffectual. Proposed measurements and indicators either assume what constitutes sustainability or sustainable tourism or make no explicit link to sustainability. Torres-Delgado & Saarinen (2014) argue that the lack of a concrete foundation concerning sustainability results in subjective constructions and interpretations of indicators. There is also no agreement as to how many indicators are necessary for a holistic depiction of sustainability (Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2014). However, even in light of these limits, Torres-Delgado and Saarinen (2014) propose a combination of sets of indicators as more appropriate than the simplicity of the ecological footprint analysis. Choi and Sirakaya (2006) recommend the use of both objective indicators (such as income and employment rate), and subjective indicators (such as attitudes and perceptions) in measuring sustainable community tourism. Castellani and Sala (2010) and Jovicic (2014) suggest strong stakeholder participation in selecting and evaluating indicators. Miller (2001, p. 361) argues that indicators may even help in defining sustainable tourism:

> … although it seems paradoxical to develop indicators for sustainable tourism when no satisfactory definition of the concept exists, the process of developing the indicators does help in determining the important tenets of the concept.

It is difficult to reconcile precisely what Miller (2001) means, but each study illustrates a fascination with indicator and measurement systems, even though the authors recognise a conceptual lack concerning sustainable tourism and the link between measurement, indicators and sustainable tourism or sustainability.

Furthermore, there are differences in the employment of indicators at global (Hunter & Shaw, 2007) and local levels (Twining-Ward & Butler, 2002). It is difficult to adjudge whether the sustainability concerns of small-scale, local projects can scale up to more complex projects on a larger scale. Another drawback of indicator systems is inadequate data which hampers the

effectiveness of the indicators (Wilson, Tyedmers & Pelot, 2007). There is little attention in the literature to the missing link between indicator systems and measures and sustainable tourism outcomes. The impact of this 'missing link' is that indicators and measurements are reductionist and become proxies for sustainability. This reductionism is dangerous because tourism operators often use these indicators and measurements to justify 'business-as-usual'.

3.6.2 Carbon Measurement as a Proxy for Sustainability

International organisations, such as the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), developed environmental management standards and sustainable tourism indicators (Vera & Ivars, 2003; Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2014). The UNWTO (2017) released a guidebook for tourism planners and managers that outlines a framework for measuring sustainable tourism. The sustainable tourism framework focuses on measurable environmental impacts including emissions, waste, water and energy requirements. As the most important tourism institution, the UNWTO influences lower ranking tourism bodies (within the supply chain) to adopt the definitions, frameworks and guidelines published by the UNWTO (see Table 8.5 in Chapter eight for an illustration of how the UNWTO approach influences other actors in the ecotourism eco-certification supply chain). The impact of interventions by academics and industry associations is to sediment certain sustainability parameters as prime environmental indicators including carbon emissions, waste and the consumption and reduction of water and energy.

3.6.2.1 Boundaries of Carbon Measurements

The use of carbon measurement as a proxy for sustainability makes it difficult to establish boundaries. Consider, for instance, what tourism activities should be included in the carbon footprint analysis of a tourist flying from Australia to South America for an eco-holiday. While the eco-holiday is likely to have a low carbon impact on the host countries, taking the long-haul flight to the destination into account drastically alters the ecologic footprint of the eco-holiday. As discussed earlier in this chapter, low-impact tourism was one of the only articulations of

sustainable tourism that considered the impact of travel to destinations. While Hunter and Shaw (2007) recognise that an eco-tourist travelling from London to the interior of Brazil would have a considerable ecological footprint, this is often excluded from carbon measures, as many studies focus on ecotourism activities at destination (see Sirakaya *et al.,* 2001; Schianetz & Kavanagh, 2008). Mowforth and Munt (2016) label this as the 'ecotourism development in faraway countries' paradox. By incorporating these incomplete ecological footprint analyses into sustainability indicators, eco-certification programs adopt these carbon measures. McKercher (2010, p. 17) critiques this arguing that rather than reconsidering the suitability of these measures, the tourism industry chose to reinforce these approaches through incorporating them into eco-certification approaches:

> The response by industry and many in the academic community was not to reconsider the ideological and philosophical foundation on which some of these false assumptions were based, but instead to call for the creation of various certification programmes, ecolabels and formal educational programmes to enforce the ideals.

The impact of this reductionist function of proxies is apparent in eco-certification.

3.6.2.2 Reductionist Function of Proxies

The reliance on indicators and measures has a reductionist impact, as the tourism industry promotes the belief that sustainability within tourism is achievable "via reducing energy use, switching to renewable or green energy sources, such as solar, increasing recycling initiatives, reducing water use and considering the use of low emissions vehicles" (Weir & Dickson, 2011, pp. 38). This is a reductionist view of sustainability as it condenses sustainability to environmental measures and excludes alternative qualitative characteristics and social indicators of sustainability. This reductionism allows indicators such as carbon emissions to become a vital "part of licensing or accreditation schemes, run by government or industry bodies" (Weir & Dickson, 2011, p. 34). Crucially, though, this reductionism is also illustrative of problems concerning the meaning of these measures and indicator systems. The adoption of these measures and indicators operates as proxies to cover the contingency inherent within the

macro-politics of sustainability, but they take on symbolic meaning. Theoretically, the variety of articulations of sustainability and the articulations of measures and indicators illustrate both the necessary and impossible of sustainability (I explore this in Chapter five).

4   Conclusions from the Chapter

In this first chapter of tourism-specific literature, I illustrate the impact of the macro-political lack within the concept of sustainability on sustainable tourism and ecotourism. I examined the proliferation in meso-political articulations concerning sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, CBT, Indigenous tourism, responsible tourism and low-impact tourism (this reflects level 1 of Figure 3.1 presented at the beginning of chapter three). I also explored the adoption, development and proliferation of measures and indicator systems for sustainability and indicator systems (this reflects the credentialism level in Figure 3.1).

What emerges in the analysis of the proliferations of sustainable tourism and ecotourism is that there are limited sedimentations concerning the focus of the tourism activity (namely in experiencing undisturbed nature and learning about cultures). However, what is also clear is that the significant overlaps between various ontic articulations of ecotourism begin to sediment the space of ecotourism. There is remarkably limited attention paid to exploring how these articulations of ecotourism link to sustainability and all of them continue to promote the underlying economic nature of tourism. No articulation suggests that sustainable tourism means no tourism and only one articulation, low-impact tourism, suggests that the consumptive nature of tourism (including travelling to and from destinations) is an element to be limited (but not avoided).

There is a human fascination with the seeming objective nature of measurement and this manifests in the tourism space with the adoption of a variety of measurement and indicator systems to 'measure' sustainability. This is a confusing literature, as proponents of one measurement system tend to favour a measurement system (such as ecological footprint

analysis) while engaging in critiquing other measurement systems (such as carrying capacity), without necessarily examining the limits of the favoured system. Furthermore, with the variety of measurement systems and set of indicators, the most significant gap is the lack of work that critically explores the link between the measure or the indicator (or sets of indicators) and sustainability. Some scholars, such as Miller (2001) and Torres-Delgado and Saarinen (2014), seem to recognise that there is an inherent contingency within the measurement and indicator approach to sustainability, but then rather than exploring the implications of the contingency, choose to reinforce the contingency through proposing sets of indicators and measurement systems.

I draw two principal conclusions from this chapter. First, the macro-political contingency within sustainability manifests in a meso-political contingency within sustainable tourism. The ontic of sustainable tourism manifests in a range of competing articulations related to ecotourism. Each articulation addresses different agendas, but there is a significant degree of overlap. The emergence of eco-certification for ecotourism equally covers over this underlying contingency by proffering a *legitimate solution* for tourism operators and for tourists. Second, the proliferation in articulations of sustainable tourism resulted in a proliferation in measurement and indicator systems employed in the tourism sector. This credentialism provides *concrete* evidence that has become a proxy for sustainability, despite there being no link between sustainability and these measurements and indicators. The adoption of measurement and indicator systems by accreditation and certification bodies is an important component of the eco-certification process. The impact of this is that eco-certification also becomes a proxy for achieving sustainability in tourism despite the limits to these measurements, indicators and standards. This literature review of sustainable tourism articulations and measurement and indicator systems employed within sustainable tourism

provides the foundation for examining important institutions in eco-certification on the supply

side, as well as to explore the concept of expertise. This is the focus of Chapter four.

- Chapter Four -
The Institution of Expertise for Eco-Certification

1   The Creation of the Eco-certification Space

Key institutions such as the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO), TIES or the Global Sustainability Tourism Council (GSTC) have developed standards and indicators that set industry benchmarks as part of accreditation processes for ecotourism. Equally, organisations such as Ecotourism Australia and the Rainforest Alliance adopt and adapt these criteria to construct certification schemes that enhance the environmental, social and financial sustainability of ecotourism business. My thesis focuses on the accreditation and certification process within the context of ecotourism to demonstrate the articulation of the meaning of eco-certification, the sedimentation of eco-certification and how these bodies become expert bodies (this is explored in the empirical Chapters eight, nine and ten). I explore how the concept of eco-certification is understood by the tourism industry, the sedimentation of the 'rules of the game' of eco-certification and how they are transformed and translated into practice and how expertise concerning eco-certification emerges, given the definitional lack surrounding sustainability. The focus of this chapter is on outlining the central social and institutional actors involved in the accreditation and certification processes for ecotourism in order to examine the concept of sustainability expertise in the tourism literature. As ecotourism focuses on minimising negative impacts, certification and certification programs have "the potential to reduce tourism's negative environmental and social impacts" (Font *et al*., 2003, p. 213). A variety of institutions adopt and adapt standards to measure the environmental and socio-economic performance of ecotourism operators (Rotherham, 2005; Esparon, Gyuris & Stoeckl, 2014). The following discussion, in examining the social actors involved in eco-certification and the eco-certification process, provides a useful context for the empirical focus of the thesis.

1.1 *The Eco-certification Supply Side*

The supply side of the certification process comprises a variety of accreditation and certifying

bodies. This was depicted as a portion of Figure 3.1 at the beginning of Chapter three. I have

copied that portion below, in Figure 4.1, to help focus this section:
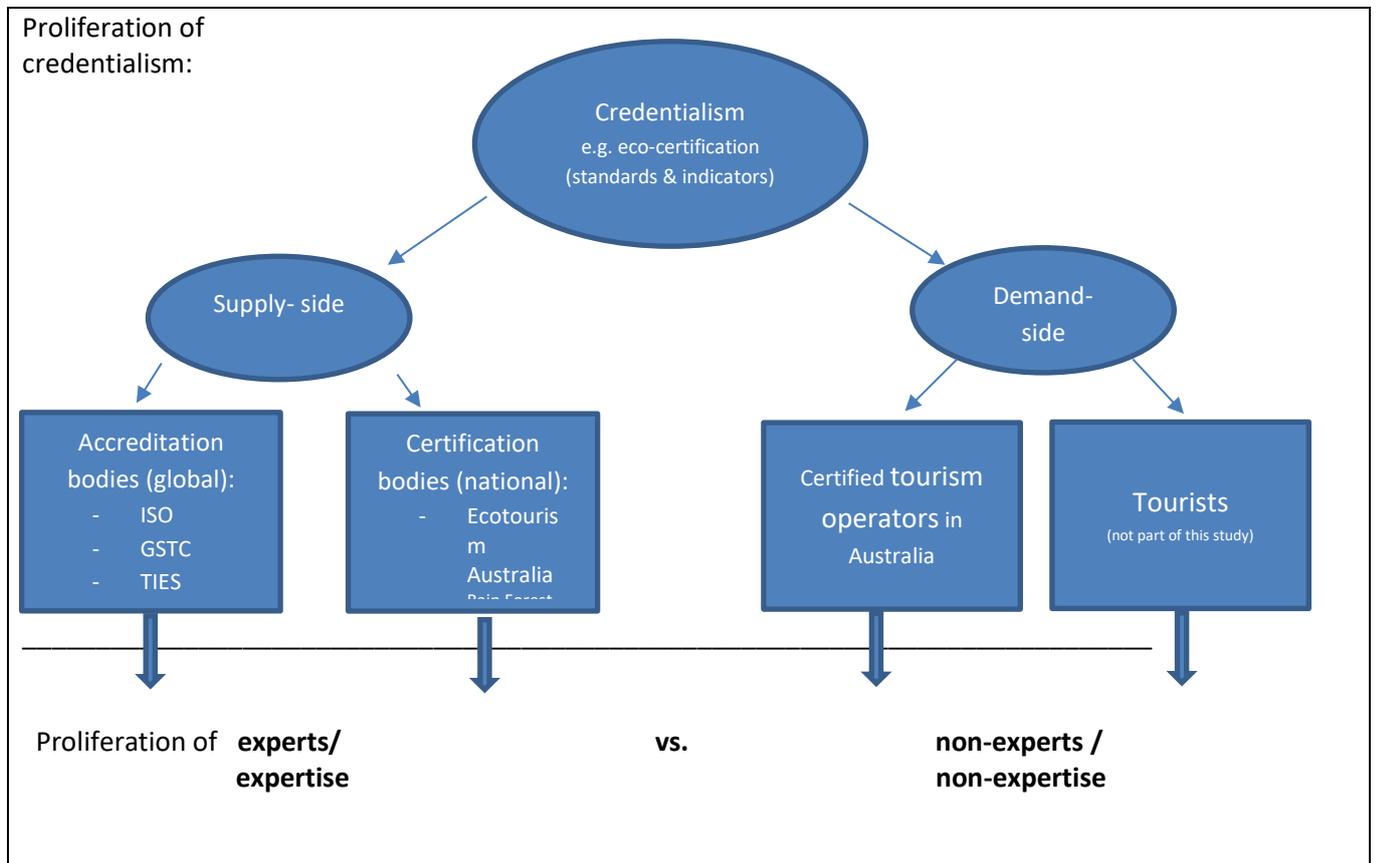
Figure 4.1: The Supply and Demand Side of Eco-certification

1.1.1 Accreditation Bodies

To ensure conformity to industry standards, industries have accreditation bodies to assess the

quality of standards internationally. In sustainable tourism, various accreditation bodies

emerged in the 1990s and early 2000s. The oldest and most recognised global accreditation

body is ISO. Founded in 1946, ISO facilitates "the international coordination and unification

of industrial standards" (ISO, 2019). ISO is not tourism-specific, but tourism operators

particularly in Europe, adopt ISO standards. For instance, Cinque Terre in Italy recently

achieved ISO 14001 certification and Spain, in 2006, certified tourism assets such as beaches

using ISO 14001. The Shangri-La Hotel Group in Malaysia and the Archaeological Park of Angkor in Cambodia adopted ISO 14001 in 2006 (ISO, 2007). ISO standards have wide applicability to tourism: for instance, relevant standards include ISO 9001 series on quality management, the ISO 14001 series on environmental management and tourism related standards, such as the ISO/TR 21102:2013 for adventure tourism and ISO 13687-3:2017 on tourism and related services) (ISO, 2019).

To facilitate the continued development of sustainable tourism, the GSTC was found. The GSTC (known previously as the Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria) began operating in 2007, as "the global Accreditation Body for Certification Programs that certify hotels/accommodations, tour operators, and destinations as having sustainable policies and practices in place" (GSTC, 2019). Green Globe is another sustainable tourism accreditation body that assesses "the sustainability performance of travel and tourism businesses" (Green Globe, 2019). Sustainable Travel International, a non-for-profit organisation, assesses whether tourism operators conform with the Sustainable Tourism Eco-Certification Program (STEP). The Voluntary Initiatives for Sustainability in Tourism (VISIT) and TIES are international accreditation bodies. VISIT focuses on Europe as "regional network of ecolabelling programmes" setting "standard[s] for tourism ecolabels in Europe" (Hamele *et al.,* 2007, pp. 476-477). In relation to my case study of eco-certification, ISO, GSTC and TIES are constituent components of my thesis and I discuss them in more detail in Chapter eight.

1.1.2 Certification Bodies

Certification bodies are central actors in eco-certification, because they certify tourism operators as 'eco'. While international accreditation bodies sediment the international space, certification bodies operate nationally and regionally. The Costa Rican organisation, Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) is committed to sustainable management with respect to culture and the environment. It focuses on certifying ecolodges in Costa Rica and in

the Americas (Font & Epler Wood, 2007). Ecotourism Australia is a national ecotourism certifier certifying Australian tourism operators. Smart Voyager, an Ecuadorian certifier, certifies tour boats in the Galapagos Islands (Sustainabletourism, 2019). The Rainforest Alliance is different as it operates internationally. Rainforest Alliance certifies both businesses and products in agricultural, forestry and tourism sectors. For the purpose of this thesis, I focus my case study of the supply side of eco-certification for ecotourism on Ecotourism Australia and I discuss this further in Chapter nine.

1.2 The Eco-certification Demand Side

The demand-side of eco-certification concerns those that seek eco-certification as tourist operators or tourists seeking ecotourism experiences.

1.2.1 Tour Operators with Eco-certification

In 2015, international tourism expenditure was US$1.5 trillion. With 1.8 billion international tourist arrivals forecast by 2030, the tourism industry continues to expand (UNWTO, 2019). Increasing tourists travelling to different destinations each year has implications. There are a range of economic benefits of tourism including tourist expenditure that contributes to local communities and domestic gross domestic product (GDP) and through employment associated with the industry. However, tourism also increases negative impacts on communities, cultures and the environment. One way to recognise these impacts is to develop ecotourism ventures that take place in nature and within cultures (the various articulations of ecotourism were explored in detail in Chapter three). Eco-certification has emerged as a way of signalling legitimate ecotourism activities and consequently, tourism operators seek eco-certification to "emphasis[e] performance in the domains of 'people, planet and profits' and ensures that sustainability criteria are satisfied by certified businesses" (Esparon *et al*., 2014, p. 148).

A significant proportion of international tourism operators are small-to-medium enterprises. The Australian tourism industry is similarly structured, with 205,879 micro-tourism businesses

(0-4 employees), 53,076 small tourism businesses (4-19 employees) and only 14,557 defined as medium or large businesses (defined as more than 20 employees) (Austrade, 2016, p. 2). This is illustrative of the potential certification market in Australia, as certification might legitimise the tourism initiatives of a variety of operators and create market opportunities for tourists. The last component of my eco-certification case study examines Australian tourism operators that obtained Ecotourism Australia's eco-certification. This is discussed in Chapter ten.

1.2.2 Tourists

A variety of stakeholders may have an interest in tourism operators being eco-certified. Employees may identify with a certified ecotourism business. Local communities may support eco-certified organisations due to the potential to be consulted and involved in decision making. Environment and cultural interest groups may support ecotourism. However, a focus of ecotourism, as an economic activity, is tourists. Ecotourism may accord with ethical, cultural, environmental or other interests relevant to tourists. Ecotourists (as a subset of tourists) tend to focus on ecotourist consumption, purchasing ecotourism products and experiences including accommodation, activities, tours and attractions (Esparon *et al.,* 2014). However, there is limited research on the purchasing decisions of tourists and whether the eco-certification is actually decision-relevant. A degree of ambiguity exists in the literature, and the current assumption (without evidence) seems to be that the consumption of an ecotourism venture is somehow reinforced by the eco-certification (see Esparon *et al.,* 2014; Karlsson & Dolnicar, 2016). However, my case study focuses on the supply-side of eco-certification and ecotourism operators. Due to word limits, I excluded the tourist demand side from this study, but I acknowledge that this requires further research.

1.3 International Ecotourism Standard for Certification (IESC)

Competition exists between eco-certification programs in the tourism industry. In the early 2000s, for example, there were 70 different eco-certification programs and over 100 eco-labels (Esparon *et al.,* 2014). However, there is little consensus between eco-certification programs and the programs lacked comparable standards and criteria (Font *et al.*, 2003). In November 2000, the US-based Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) and the Ford Foundation invited eco-certification experts, tourism operators, ecotourism bodies and researchers to discuss eco-certification in tourism (Buckley, 2002; Font, 2002). The aim was to create increased transparency in eco-certification. The meeting at Mohonk House (New York), produced three outcomes:

- A report entitled *Protecting Paradise: Certification Programs for Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism* (Honey & Rome, 2001)

- The Mohonk Agreement that sets principles for eco-certification schemes:

  … that include, but go beyond, the standards for sustainable tourism. These are directly linked to the principles that define ecotourism; they include 'economic, social, and cultural benefits for local communities', 'fostering of community involvement, where appropriate', 'minimal impact on and presentation of local (indigenous) culture', and 'interpretation and environmental awareness of nature, local society, and culture' (Medina, 2005, p. 285; see also Honey, 2002)

- A proposal for an accreditation body, namely the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC). This proposal was based on the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), an accreditation program run by Rainforest Alliance (Buckley, 2002).

The Mohonk Agreement laid the foundation for eco-certification processes, including roles for accreditation bodies and establishing eco-certification criteria used by certifying bodies.

In 2002, the International Year of Ecotourism, the World Ecotourism Summit was held in Quebec, Canada. One outcome of this summit was Green Globe 21 and the Ecotourism Association of Australia (now Ecotourism Australia) developing an International Ecotourism Standard for Certification (IESC) (Buckley, 2002). The IESC standard is based on Australian Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP). NEAP was the world's first eco-certification program launched in 1996 (Buckley, 2002; Ecotourism Australia, 2019). Crabtree,

et al. (2002) presented a paper that outlined the development the International Ecotourism

Standard (IES). The IES:

> … is being developed through integrating the fundamental principles for sound ecotourism certification assembled in the Mohonk Agreement, with criteria based principally on the highly-regarded Australian Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program and the latest Green Globe 21 benchmarking performance system (Crabtree *et al.*, 2002, p. 1).

Crabtree *et al.* (2002, p. 2) recognise that the IESC should encapsulate:

> … a core set of eight principles with specific performance indicators (i.e. the suggested Certification Standard). These are that ecotourism should:
> - have a natural area focus that ensures visitors have the opportunity to personally and directly experience nature;
> - provide interpretation or educational services that give visitors the opportunity to experience nature in ways that lead to greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment;
> - represent best practice in ecological sustainability practices;
> - contribute to conservation of natural areas and cultural heritage;
> - provide ongoing contributions to the local community;
> - respect and be sensitive to the culture/s existing in the area;
> - consistently meet consumer expectations; and
> - be marketed and promoted honestly and accurately so that realistic expectations are formed.

The principles of IESC and the Mohonk Agreement are important documents in sedimenting the approach to developing eco-certification schemes, ecotourism and sustainable tourism. These principles are central to many certification schemes.

1.4 Process of Eco-certification

Eco-certification, today, involves certification and accreditation, as accreditation processes emerged to minimise the risk of reputation-loss for ecotourism due to the proliferation of competing eco-certifications. The Mohonk agreement, the IESC and the emergence of eco-certification schemes based on the IESC sedimented the current accredited process to eco-certification. This was in response to ecotourism being criticised as 'greenwashing' (Font & Harris, 2004; Donohoe & Needham, 2006; Weaver, 2007) as eco-certifications and ecotourist operators lacked credibility. The self-regulatory nature of certification schemes was also a

problem (Mbaiwa *et al.* 2011). The accreditation process operates as an assurance of the quality of ecotourism products. Certification:

> … is the procedure by which a third party (i.e. the awarding body) gives written assurance to the consumer (and the industry in general) that a product, process, service, or management system conforms to specified requirements (Font, 2002, p. 202; see also Toth, 2000).

Buckley (2002, p. 197) reinforces focus of certification in the tourism context:

> Certification is a formal process under which a nominally independent body certifies to other interested parties, such as tourists, marketing agencies and regulators, that a tourism provider complies with a specified standard.

Rather than 'certifying compliance with standards', accreditors "'audit the auditors' [the certifiers] and their capacity to certify companies and/or products" (Font, 2002, p. 202, see also Crabtree *et al.*, 2002). Accreditation guarantees the quality of standards developed by certifying bodies, as eco-certification standards specify rules and requirements and accreditation allows these standards to be shared and re-used (Font, 2002). Tourism operators seeking eco-certification of their business or their products apply to certifying bodies: If the certifying audit determines that the tourism operators complies with the specifications of the eco-standard, then the tourism operators receive eco-certification. Certification usually includes the right to use a logo alongside the certified product or business. To obtain certification, tourism operators in Australia, for example, pay an application fee to have a product certified and then pay ongoing membership fees to the certifying body (in this case, Ecotourism Australia). The following diagram, Fig. 4.2, illustrates the certification process:

This space is left blank intentionally
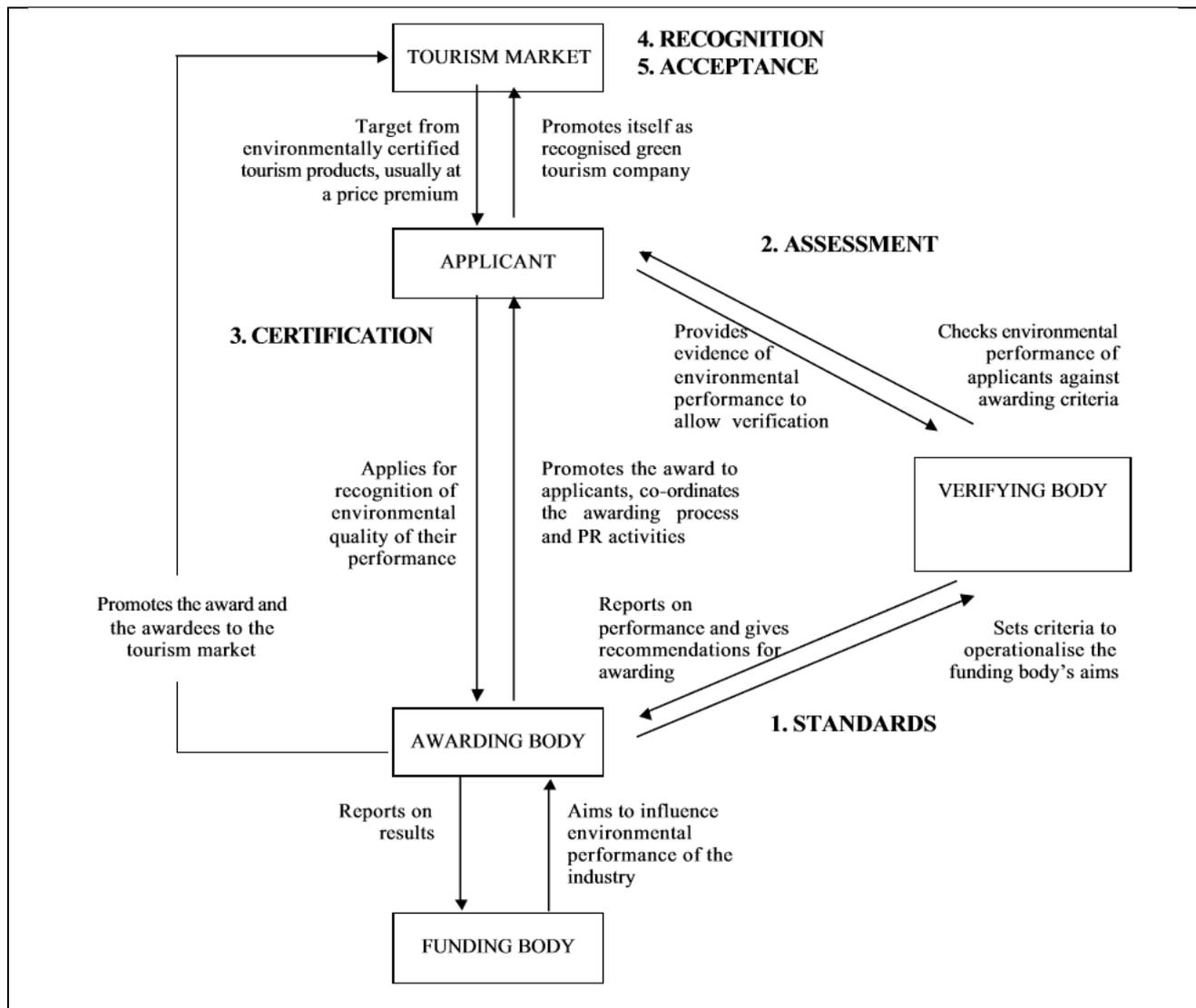
Figure 4.2: The Eco-certification Process (Font, 2002, p. 201).

1.5 Green Globe's Ecotourism Standards

Green Globe is a global tourism certifying body that co-developed the IESC with Ecotourism Australia. It certifies all segments of the tourism industry, including ecotourism, irrespective of size, turnover or the nature of the operation (Parsons & Grant, 2007). Green Globe's certification program and standards comprise three levels:

- Affiliates - tourism operators seeking eco-certification register with the company and learn about the program and its requirements.

- Benchmarking - tourism operators measure indicators for key performance areas and implement environmental management system (EMS).

- Certification – tourism operators are required to meet all standards set by Green Globe and on-site assessment (Parsons & Grant, 2007, p. 83).

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Green Globe's certification program offers varying levels of engagement: Affiliation involves learning about eco-certification; benchmarking requires tourism operators to achieve minimum standards; certification requires operators to satisfy the standards according to best practice. Green Globe applies different standards depending on what tourism operators want certified. This might be certification of a destination, a community or a particular tourism product. Green Globe's standard "includes 44 core criteria supported by over 380 compliance indicators. The applicable indicators vary by type of certification, geographical area as well as local factors" (Green Globe, 2019). Green Globe's standard draws from GSTC's Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism Criteria (STC Partnership), Agenda 21, the ISO series 9001 (quality management) and 14001 (environmental management) (Green Globe, 2019). It comprises of four key performance areas: "a) sustainable management, b) socio-economic, c) cultural heritage and d) environment" and includes sets of indicators to gauge sustainable outcomes (Green Globe, 2019).

The purpose for particular indicators in eco-certification standards varies. For instance, indicators might measure the impact of an ecotourism development on the environment, stress on systems (such as the carrying capacity concept) or environmental management efforts. Indicators can be quantitative or qualitative (Vereczi, 2007). Quantitative or hard measures include data such as visitor numbers to destination sites, energy or water usage per month and is expressed in a range of forms including in ratio and by percentage (Vereczi, 2007; Buckley, 2001). Qualitative or soft indicators are harder to benchmark, because these indicators might be normative or opinion-based, such as whether a destination or a tourist product was satisfactory (Vereczi, 2007; Buckley, 2001). The tourism sector (including academics, policy makers, accreditation bodies, certifying bodies and tourism operators) seem comfortable with the use of indicators. Indicators encourage tourism products, activities and experiences and well

environmental and socio-economic impacts from tourism to be measured, benchmarked and improved. The industry assumption is that this process contributes to sustainable outcomes.

1.6 The Benefits of Eco-certification

Proponents of eco-certification suggest that it is a demonstrable commitment by tourism operator to the continuous improvement of the quality of the tourism product (including destinations, activities or environmental impacts) (see, for example, Crabtree *et al.,* 2002; Parsons & Grant, 2007; Ingram, 2007; Crabtree & Black, 2007; Font & Clark, 2007; Thwaites, 2007). Eco-certification "can, in theory, assist tourism suppliers in the adoption of environmentally sustainably practices" (Karlsson & Dolnicar, 2016; see also Mihalic, 2000). Proponents of eco-certification tend, though, to focus on other benefits:

- *Environmental conservation*: this includes conservation through in-kind or cash support (Crabtree *et al.,* 2002, p. 2), improved environmental performance (Parsons & Grant, 2007; Ingram, 2007) and improved resource and environmental protection (Crabtree & Black, 2007).

- *Raising industry standards*: industry standards improve due to benchmarking (Crabtree & Black, 2007) and effective auditing (Ingram, 2007).

- *Marketing advantages*: eco-certification provides a marketing advantage vis-à-vis other tourism operators (Font & Clark, 2007; Crabtree & Black, 2007). Parson and Grant (2007) argue that that this advantage is improved for tourism operators with international eco-certification.

- *Enhanced competitive advantage and profitability*: benchmarking and certification facilitates competitive advantage and differentiates the tourism product, which increases profitability (Parsons & Grant, 2007; Thwaites, 2007).

- *Provision of a quality assurance framework*: improved quality management and communication (Font & Clark, 2007) and greater emphasis on risk management and safety (Ingram, 2007).

- *Stronger focus on stakeholders*: eco-certification improves relationships with the local community (Parson & Grant, 2007), fosters partnerships with local communities (Font & Clark, 2007) and enhances public relations (Crabtree & Black, 2007).

- *Consumer recognition*: customers value the provision of environmentally and socially responsible tourism choices (Crabtree & Black, 2007).

- *Improved environmental management systems*: eco-certification reduces cost through eco-savings for certified operators (Crabtree & Black, 2007) and contributes to improved eco-efficiency (Parsons & Grant, 2007).

- *Improved internal management processes*: eco-certification can improve staff commitment to the organisation and increase productivity (Parsons & Grant, 2007).

The irony of the focus of these benefits associated with eco-certification is the predominance of economic (fiscal) and business advantages. These seem contrary to the social and environmental foundations of sustainability and is illustrative of the hegemonic strength of the business case approach to sustainability.

1.7 The Drawbacks of Eco-certification

Given the nature of the eco-certification benefits proposed, I agree with the caution expressed by Karlsson and Dolnicar (2016) and Mihalic (2000) concerning the promise of eco-certification. When reviewing the eco-standards developed by accreditation and certification bodies, there is a lack of precise definition in standards, across indicators or in sustainability criteria. The measures tend to inexact and abstract. GSTC criteria provide a good example. One criterion concerns greenhouse gas emissions:

> The [tourist] destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, minimise, publicly report and mitigate their greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operation (including emissions from service providers) (GSTC, 2013, p. 8).

GSTC's (2013, p. 8) indicator for greenhouse gas emissions includes measuring, monitoring, minimising and publicly reporting on greenhouse gas emissions and includes systems to assist the organisation in mitigating emissions. The lack of precision here is problematic. Indicator should be feasible, comparable and clear (Vereczi, 2007). What precisely is meant by GSTC's focus on '*encouraging*', a 'program that *assists* the enterprise' or mitigation from 'all aspects of their operation' is unclear. There is no reference to measuring a tourist operator's performance against these indicators. A similar definitional lack exists in the Mohonk Agreement. Medina (2005, p. 285) expressed concerns as to "… how [the Mohonk Agreement's] abstract criteria may be defined or measured …". The definitional lack in

indicators concerning ecotourism may well replicate the definitional lack within the concept of sustainability, as argued in Chapters two and three.

A more fundamental concern might be the lack of a link between measuring ecotourism criteria and what these measures measure. As discussed in Chapter three, ecotourism may minimise negative environment impacts, enhance benefits to local communities and develop cultural understanding, appreciation and awareness (see Honey, 2002; Crabtree *et al*., 2002). There are two issues here with the measurements. First, there is no agreement on how to measure, for example, negative environmental impacts, benefits to local communities or increased cultural awareness. Environmental measures, for example, such as ISO 14001 are process-led. A tourist operator implements a process, system or program (such as GSTC's Tour Operator Criteria) to satisfy the anticipated outcomes. However, Crabtree *et al.* (2002) scrutinised process-led measures and concluded that many were not implemented in practice and therefore did nothing to impact performance. Crabtree *et al.* (2002, p. 5) proposed performance-based programs rather than process-led approaches, because:

> … performance-based programs that set specific performance indicators (criteria or benchmarks) that the product has to meet to attain certification have real value in allowing valid comparisons and judgment to be made between different companies or product against a common set of criteria.

However, in my opinion, performance-based indicators are similarly flawed because performance-based programs do not guarantee continued implementation or commitment to continuous reporting. The use of hard (quantitative) or soft (qualitative) indicators also raises concerns: Certifiers specify both hard or soft indicators, "because environmental and social indicators are not always quantifiable" (Epler Wood & Halpenny, 2001, p. 127). Vereczi (2007) suggests that hard measures are easier because economic and environmental data concerning tourism expenditure, waste and energy and water usage is readily available (Vereczi, 2007). However, what is unclear is how this measures actually enhance sustainability in and of themselves or whether some measures are more important than others. Often it seems that the

focus is to have a measure, rather than to critically examine what the measure measures. This is evident with respect to qualitative measures. There is a lack of clarity between sustainability and whether a tourist operator has a sustainable tourism development plan, whether the level cultural awareness of tourists is enhanced or whether sustainability enhances tourist satisfaction. It is unlikely that any of these measures in isolation or in combination give the 'full picture'. The environmental focus on energy, water, waste management and ecosystem conservation (Parsons & Grant, 2007), for example, constitute limited proxies that do not account holistically for the health of an ecosystem. Similarly, measuring the employment rate of locals by a tourist operator or consumption of local goods and services gives a limited view of the economic situation of a local community.

Furthermore, an important issue concerns the tension between global indictors and local indicators. The Mohonk Agreement resulted in the development of an internationally applicable standard (the IES) to ecotourism certification (Buckley, 2002; Font, 2002). This, however, contradicts with approaches to sustainability that focus on grassroot or local levels (Seyfang & Smith, 2007). Twining-Ward's (2002) study of appropriate indicators for measuring sustainability in the small-island state of Samoa illustrated that context matters in defining and setting standards. An indicator relevant to a community in Costa Rica may not be applicable to a local community in Botswana due to differences in cultural, environmental, economic or legislative contextual settings. Consequently, the focus following the Mohonk Agreement on 'global' standards applicable in to the vast range of contexts of ecotourism is likely to reduce the information quality of the indicator to the context, ignores the local context at the expense of global consistency and ignores the complexity of ecotourism operators in their local contexts (including their cultural, environmental, social, economic and other contextual specificities).

There is inconsistency between the object of certification. Some certifiers certify the whole tourist operation, while some schemes certify individual tourism product (Esparon *et al.,* 2014).

This inconsistency has the potential to confuse the certification message. Tourist operators should use the eco-logo or eco-label on certified products only but there is evidence that operators do not necessarily adhere to this practice and display the eco-logo or eco-label generally on a website, for example, which creates the impression that the whole business is eco-certified (Esparon *et al*, 2014; see also my observations of certified eco-tourist operators in Australia in Chapter ten). Irrespective, the difference between certifying products or operators must cause confusion for consumers. Certifying products rather than businesses is likely to have a halo-effect on the business generally, but this does not necessarily hold because one eco-certified product may have the effect of hiding or taking attention away from other elements of a business that are not sustainable. For example, an Australian tourist operator received eco-certification for its caravan park, but at the same time was offering 4WD-tours. There is a risk that eco-certifying one product suggests that other products are also eco-activities and if the eco-logo was placed generally on a website, eco-tourists may believe that the certification applies to all products or the whole operation.

The underlying question concerning these indicators and measures is whether we should measure sustainability in the first place. The lack of an agreed understanding of sustainability suggests that it cannot and should not be measured. However, the conceptual lack within sustainability resulted in the emergence of definitions: sustainability is defined by articulation. Our current obsession with measurement and quantification (perhaps associated with neoliberalism and market efficiency) covers over the theoretical contingency within economics concerning how to deal with externalities (Gaffikin, 2008, p. 205; Khosla, 1995; Hines, 1988). Gaffikin (2008) argues that this contingency problematises measurement and raises ethical concerns about reducing environment issues (as understood by the economic approach to externalities) to economic measures. In effect, the economic approach delimits environmental concerns to a simple cost-benefit analysis where certification schemes replicate "conventional

management concept[s]" such as "eco-justice" and "eco-efficiency" (which focus on cost saving through reducing resource use) (Gaffikin, 2008, p. 210). In short, there is little conceptual linkage between the range of indicators and measures and ecotourism and sustainability. However, while this discussion illustrates how the conceptual lack within sustainability has infected articulations like sustainable tourism and ecotourism, this does not prevent academics or professionals proffering suggestion as to what indicators or what measures should be employed for ecotourism under the umbrella of sustainability. In my opinion, this raises a further issue that needs exploration. Given these questionable links between sustainability, ecotourism, accreditors, certifiers, standards, indicators and measures, there seems no shortage of industry expertise concerning eco-certification schemes and indicators and measures. Where does this expertise come from and who are the 'experts' that create these sedimented 'rules of the ecotourism game'? This is the focus of the next section and I begin by briefly outlining the sociology of expertise in order to explore the application of the concept of expertise to sustainable tourism and eco-certification for ecotourism.

2   Proliferation of Expertise

2.1   *Sociology of Expertise*

The eco-certification process constructs accreditors and certifiers as experts with respect to sustainability and ecotourism with respect to standards, measures and indicators, while tourism operators are non-experts seeking knowledge concerning the implementation of sustainable practices and certification. Figure 4.1 (at the beginning of this chapter) presents this expert dichotomy as a supply-side/demand-side split. Before examining the logic of expertise with respect to sustainability and ecotourism, it is important to consider what is expertise. Evans (2008, p. 283) defines expertise as:

> … the result of successful socialisation within a particular community, which gives a sociological definition of expertise as social fluency within a form-of-life. Or, to put it another way, expertise is the ability to act naturally and appropriately in new and unexpected settings.

For Evans (2008), expertise results from a socialisation process as social actors gain expert status through interacting with community members. Traditionally, though, the socialisation approach to expertise was not perceived as legitimate: Collins (2013, 2016) explains that the concept of expertise was heavily influenced by a positivist approach that focused on explaining the phenomena of expertise, rather than understanding the phenomena. The sociology of expertise originally focused on a top-down process for acquiring knowledge and this emphasised knowledge-reinforcement (Collins & Evans, 2002). Collins and Evans (2002) suggest that Kuhn's (1970) paradigmatic critique in science influenced social scientists to argue that there was no clear distinction between experts and non-experts (Collins & Evans, 2002). In response to this critique, a third wave of social science emerged that rejection of the first wave (the positivist approach) but built on the second wave, as "something in addition to relativism is needed" (Collins & Evans, 2002, p. 241). Collins and Evans (2002, p. 240) argue that:

> … the Third Wave of Science Studies must emphasise the rôle of expertise as an *analyst's category* as well as an *actor's category*, and this will allow *prescriptive*, rather than merely *descriptive*, statements about the rôle of expertise in the public sphere (Collins & Evans, 2002, p. 240) [Rôle is the word used in the original quote from Collins and Evans].

The studies of expertise and experience (SEE) movement assumes that the development of expert knowledge is successful when an expert is immersed in a specific group of field experts (Collins, 2013; 2016). Figure 4.3 below depicts Collins' (2013) periodic table of expertise and outlines different levels of expertise:

UBIQUITOUS EXPERTISES					
DISPOSITIONS				Interactive Ability / Reflective Ability	
SPECIALIST	*UBIQUITOUS TACIT KNOWLEDGE*			*SPECIALIST TACIT KNOWLEDGE*	
EXPERTISES	Beer-mat Knowledge	Popular Understanding	Primary Source Knowledge	Interactional Expertise	Contributory Expertise
				Polimorphic / *Mimeomorph*	
META-	*EXTERNAL (Transmuted expertises)*		*INTERNAL (Non-transmuted expertises)*		
EXPERTISES	Ubiquitous Discrimination	Local Discrimination	Technical Connoisseurship	Downward Discrimination	Referred Expertise
META-CRITERIA	Credentials		Experience		Track-Record

Figure 4.3: Periodic Table of Expertise (Collins, 2013, p. 255)

Collins (2013, p. 254) suggests that development of all expertise:

> … depends on the acquisition of the tacit knowledge pertaining to the expert domain in question. Tacit knowledge can be acquired only by immersion in the society of those who already possess it. Therefore, […] Specialist Expertise […] depends on becoming socially embedded in the appropriate groups of experts so that one can acquire 'specialist tacit knowledge' (Collins, 2013, p. 254).

Socialisation with specialists is central to obtaining 'specialist tacit knowledge', while socialisation without interacting with existing experts results in the acquisition of ubiquitous tacit knowledge. Ubiquitous tacit knowledge concerns aspects of life that members of society learn by being a member of a certain culture or society (this includes for example, acceptable social greetings, acceptable dress standards and how to behave in public) (Collins, 2013; 2016). Figure 4.3 illustrates that ubiquitous expertise can exist at a range of levels from beer-mat knowledge through to primary knowledge, but for the purpose of this study, it is important to understand a clear distinction between ubiquitous and specialist expertise. This distinction determines labels such as experts, non-experts and lay experts (Collins & Evans, 2007). Specialist expertise is powerful knowledge because it is knowledge developed within a specific

cohort or domain of experts and a few have access to the knowledge to become the next experts. While Collins and Evans (2006; 2013) focus on the process of gaining expertise within a field, a further component of expertise is that members of the public or other groups, such as consumers, need to recognise these specialists as experts.

One method to achieve such recognition is to communicate one's expertise to an audience. Treem and Leonardi (2016, p. 2) argue that audiences look for cues in order to confirm expertise. In this, expertise is a communicative construct with two assumptions: a) some individuals have an idea of what expertise looks like; and b) people with exceptional objective skills "will communicate that skill, such that we have cues available with which to make inferences about their possession of expertise" (Treem & Leonardi, 2016, p. 3). These cues are particularly important because expert-knowledge is not observable and hence expertise is confirmed through mental cues including verbal and visual representations. The impact of this is to delegitimise some skills as not expertise: For example, as a farmer's work could be observable, they may not be considered 'experts'. Alternatively, there is a tendency to attach the label of expertise to more abstract and less tangible work: for example, financial analysts, accountants or academics are more likely 'experts', because they cannot communicate their expertise through work alone. Verbal cues to expertise include how an expert communicates and structures that speech, while visual cues, such as certificates, professional qualifications and education (such as doctorates) also help to convince audiences that an individual is an expert. In tourism, the claim to expertise is not directly observable and must be demonstrated. This is possible within sustainable tourism and ecotourism given the proliferation of information and definitions surrounding sustainability. Given the openness of the concept of sustainability, there is equally an open field with respect to expertise. In some ways, expertise in ecotourism and sustainability can be claimed and then demonstrated (as there is not necessarily a specialist group to learn from in a socialisation process). What effectively was

ubiquitous knowledge with respect to sustainability is perceived as specialist tacit knowledge when supported by the structures such as the Mohonk Agreement, the IES, accreditors and certifiers within ecotourism for eco-certification. These structures operate as 'cues' to support expertise. Treem and Leonardi (2016, p. 7) argue that, "paradoxically, within such an uncertain and dynamic information environment expertise is extremely valued". This observation is central to expertise in eco-certification and sustainable tourism, and this is the focus of the following section.

2.2 Expertise on Sustainability and Sustainable Tourism

Hukkinen (1999, p. 17) argues that conceptual shortcomings explain "the inability to agree on what sustainability is" and this lack impacts on achieving sustainability in tourism and other fields. These conceptual shortcomings manifest in complexities concerning expertise in sustainability-related fields. One example of this is the long-term vs short-term debate in sustainability. Due to the fascination with measurable, deliverable and demonstrable outcomes, much of the focus is on the short-term. This tends to favour simple measures and also seems to favour economic measures at the expense of longer-term objectives as they are less politically challenging. Hukkinen (1999, p. 26) argues that:

> .... institutional experts today eliminate long-term alternatives already at the cognitive level, giving sustainability proposals, unlike their competing short-term alternatives, little chance of ever being presented as concrete programs of action.

In Segalàs *et al*. (2012, p. 298) study of sustainability experts (in engineering education), they concluded that sustainability education experts argued that sustainability was focused more on institutional (32 percent) and social (30 percent) aspects with comparatively less focus on technological (21 percent) and environmental (16 percent) characteristics. Engineering students, though, tended to believe that sustainability was associated with technological and environmental considerations. Bäckstrand (2003) emphasises that sustainability expertise is traditionally associated with sustainable development, environmental science and global

environmental problems. An example of a significant global environmental problem faced by society presently is climate change. Climate change is a controversial topic because it is both a scientific phenomenon and a social construct. This tends to make climate change subject to political discussion. This particular field has seen a proliferation of experts and commentators that hold different 'opinions' about climate change. For example, a number of scientists state that climate change exists, it is happening and temperatures are rising due to increased carbon emissions. A counter scientific community, often in the employ of corporations involved in non-renewable energy such as oil or gas, argue that there is no evidence for climate change (see Klein, 2014; Oreskes & Conway, 2011; Washington & Cook, 2011). The scientific dispute influences the political and social discussion of climate change and erodes the status of expert knowledge (climate change vs climate change denial) and affects the legitimacy of scientific expertise (Bäckstrand, 2003). In a similar way, sustainability has become a political issue and expert-knowledge claims are incomplete and contestable.

Brown and Fraser (2006) suggest that expertise in sustainability is rooted in positivism and that resulted in applying traditional economic models to sustainable development and environmental science to solve sustainability problems. What is interesting about the sustainability discourse is the emergence of narrowly-defined technocratic experts, which seems to exclude alternative approaches to sustainability including a more democratic, transparent or inclusive concept oriented to the long-term. This technocracy, as evidenced by the limited scope of indicators and measures, tends to exclude local issues over globally consistent measures and might exclude the participation of interested stakeholders. Bäckstrand, (2003, p. 37) recognises that that sustainability "is still an expert-driven inter-disciplinary endeavour". However, there still exists communicative and inclusive dimensions to sustainability. This means that there is the potential for a range of experts in the politics of sustainability, despite the tendency to favour technocratic, positivistic knowledge.

Positivist, technical sustainability experts comprise:

> … natural scientists and engineers whose specialised knowledge stems from the formal study of a scientific or technical discipline. Subsequently, their social power is derived either from their professional status (as is the case with engineers) and/or from their adherence to a scientific method (as with natural scientists) (Brand & Kavonen, 2007, p. 22).

However, in a similar way to climate change science, a legitimacy crisis concerning scientific knowledge of sustainability has resulted in citizen experts in a civic, social approach to science emerging (Evans, 2008). Civic experts are located at the centre of a spectrum of expertise between technical experts and non-experts. This is relevant to ecotourism, eco-certification and sustainable tourism. Unlike scientific experts with formal knowledge (Brand & Kavonen, 2007), civic science is "… geared towards a participatory, reflexive and collaborative effort involving societal stakeholders" (Bäckstrand, 2003, pp. 37-38). There is an emphasis on experiential knowledge (Brand & Kavonen, 2007). The politicisation of sustainability (such as demonstrated in Chapter two) allows for competing expertise and knowledge-claims to emerge and increasing 'experts' in sustainability contribute to how to achieve sustainable outcomes. Citizen experts "are typically not granted a seat at the decision table due to favoritism for formal knowledge inherent in our decision-making institutions" (Brand & Kavonen, 2007, p. 23). Power is always a challenge in the politics of expertise.

Thus, the sustainability and ecotourism discourses in tourism are dominated by technocratic claims to expertise. However, these claims to expertise are not necessarily supported by science or by evidence. The technocratic expertise in ecotourism is structurally supported by institutions including the UNWTO, ISO and the GSTC. Accreditation bodies develop standards for eco-certification and these standards may borrow from other disciplinary approaches to sustainability, including scientific approaches to environmental and social problems. These standards and claims to expertise operate to sediment the space of eco-certification and create the 'rules of the game'. Eco-certifiers employ eco-auditors who profess expertise in determining whether a tourist operator is compliant with the requirements of standards and other

expectations. Although eco-certifying bodies adopt and apply accredited standards, they rely on expert knowledge to assess the performance of a tourism operators. For instance, Green Globe argues:

> [Our] auditors are professional environmental or sustainability consultants who have undergone Green Globe Certification training and are registered on an annual basis. The Auditor's role is to provide Green Globe clients with third party verification that certification criteria have been met. For Green Globe Certification, the Auditor provides an independent evaluation that ensures all Green Globe Members are performing to the highest standards (Green Globe, 2019)

The impact of this approach is that Green Globe structurally supports the claims to expertise. This structural support helps eco-certifying auditors to be experts, and the certification training helps auditors appear as experts by possessing the *appropriate* formal, technical knowledge with respect to sustainability and sustainable tourism. Their power is to determine whether a tourism operation is 'eco' or not. However, what is central to this process is that expertise is more apparent than real. The cues to expertise in eco-certification emerge not necessarily through technical socialised knowledge, but more from the structural environment of eco-certification. In sum, all claims to expertise in ecotourism are contingent because the discourse of sustainability is itself contingent. The irony though is that this contingency is seemingly not apparent to the ecotourism industry or that the economic advantages of ecotourism obscure this contingency. The central point though is that the contingency of sustainability infects and influences all levels of the articulation of eco-certification, including definitions of ecotourism, the uncertainty in measures and indicators, the institutions of eco-certification including accreditors, certifiers and auditors and within the claims to expertise in the industry.

3   Conclusions from the Chapter

The chapter focused on three areas and provided important contextual information concerning key institutional players on the supply-side of ecotourism and with respect to eco-certification. The chapter summarised the role of key institutions and showed a degree of vertical integration between international and transnational accreditation bodies, such as the GSTC, TIES and links

to ISO. The chapter also outlines the role of certification bodies including Ecotourism Australia and Green Globe and how they take guidance and seek accreditation from the global industry players. I briefly look at the demand side for eco-certification, including tourist operators and eco-consumers and other tourists. The purpose of this institutional account of the supply and demand-side of eco-certification is to provide context and provide a foundation by which to understand the emergence and processes associated with eco-certification.

The chapter then shifts to examine the emergence of eco-certification and particularly to see the origin story behind the international ecotourism standard for certification (IESC). The Mohonk Agreement was an important step in trying to protect the image of ecotourism, but also to sediment an accepted industry understanding of what eco-certification should look like. The roles of Green Globe and Ecotourism Australia in the development of the IESC is acknowledged. The chapter also outlines the perceived benefits behind eco-certification and argues that many of the benefits proposed are economic in nature. This section also outlines the process of eco-certification and the interaction between accreditors, certifiers, auditors and tourist operators. This contextualises the study of the eco-certification body, Ecotourism Australia later in the thesis.

I end the literature review section by focusing on the emergence of expertise in ecotourism, sustainable tourism and eco-certification. I suggest that the sociology of expertise, particularly with respect to the expertise of sustainability and sustainable tourism is vital to the process of eco-certification. Accreditation bodies, such as ISO or GSTC, established standards for sustainability. An example is the IESC. These standards set the 'rules of the game' for eco-certification. What is of interest is that despite the conceptual lack within definitions of sustainability and sustainable tourism, there is a dominant technical sustainability discourse. The impact of this is to treat measures and indicators developed by experts as a natural science reflecting a positivistic approach. In reflecting the incorporation of an economic component to

sustainability, institutional experts privilege short-term measures (such as reduction or efficiency-gains) and economic benefits over longer-term approaches to sustainability. A dominant component of the eco-certification discourse is eco-efficiency and this focuses on optimising resource use and cost savings. This supports the financial viability focus of tourism. However, what is important in eco-certification is that the indeterminacy of sustainability could threaten claims to expertise. As a result, the structural environment of eco-certification provides a community to support claims to expertise and is largely self-referential.

In summary, these articulations should prove useful in understanding current sustainable tourism debates, as most studies align with the business case approach (see Appendix One for a categorisation of Journal of Sustainable Tourism articles and Chapter two). The dominant approach in sustainable tourism is to present sustainability as a business development tool or investment opportunity for tourist operators in fostering growth or promoting economic viability (Brown & Fraser, 2006). I am concerned that much of this literature draws an (unproblematised) equivalency between tourism, economic viability and sustainability. Sustainable tourism, as an emergent discourse, involved the co-optation of sustainability into the capitalist system, which enables tourism to focus on continuing as an economic activity (Mowforth & Munt, 2016; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). The sustainable tourism label is employed to disguise 'business-as-usual practices' as sustainable. My concern is that alternative organisational forms or political economies were excluded through this co-optation and sustainability is not antagonistic to capital but has become a discursive component integrated into the capitalist tourism system. This concludes Part one of the thesis. There are some significant theoretical questions concerning discourse, emergence, hegemony, subsumption and the politics of antagonism and articulation. These concepts are subject to debate in the next chapter, which introduces Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory.

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- End of Part One –

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- PART TWO -

Theory and Methodology: Discourse Theory, the Logics of Critical Explanation and Merriam's approach to Case Studies

- Chapter Five -
Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory in the Context of Tourism

1   Chapter Overview

Chapters three and four reviewed current literature in tourism and examined a range of articulations under the umbrella of sustainable tourism and ecotourism. These articulations are ontic interpretations of the ontology of sustainable tourism and ecotourism and included CBT, Indigenous tourism, responsible tourism and low-impact tourism. Chapter three also illustrated how the proliferation of ontics with respect to ecotourism manifested in a range of competing measurement systems, standards and indicators. The conceptual lack within sustainability, sustainable tourism and ecotourism constitute 'floating or empty signifiers' (Laclau, 1996; Howarth *et al* 2000). At the ontological level, a multitude of social actors, including global tourism institutions, accreditation and certification bodies, international and national tourism operators, local communities, employees and not-for-profit organisations attach competing meanings to sustainability, ecotourism and eco-certification. The complexity of this interplay between disparate social actors with different interests illustrates how the discourse of eco-certification is a political discourse, especially in the post-structural sense of political. Newman (2005, pp. 153-154) states:

> Post-structuralism … is immanently political. This is because [post-structuralism] challenges the discourse and theoretical coordinates through which we normally approach politics, thus allowing new political meanings and practices to be conceived … We can say, then, that a post-structuralist approach to politics points always to a certain void that makes social and political identities indeterminate.

The indeterminacy of sustainability allows for new social practices and politics concerning the discourse of eco-certification to emerge. In light of this indeterminacy, this chapter argues that Laclau and Mouffe's (1987; 2014) discourse theory is an appropriate theoretical lens for this thesis (see also, Laclau, 1996; Howarth *et al.*, 2000). The following factors are important considerations in the appeal in this thesis to discourse theory:

i. In the current tourism literature, few studies explore the implications of post-structural theory and there seems a lack of studies that examine Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory within the tourism context.

ii. The discourse of eco-certification involves disparate social actors from multidisciplinary backgrounds. Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory focuses on the complexity of the interactions of multiplicities.

iii. The nature of eco-certification within the sustainable tourism context is political and the emergence of expertise, structures and competing interests concerning eco-certification resonates with the approach to hegemony developed by Laclau and Mouffe (2014).

iv. Eco-certification, due to the conceptual indeterminacy within sustainability, is articulatory and the politics of articulation is central to discourse theory.

The following chapter unpacks the theoretical and conceptual links to eco-certification to justify the application of discourse theory in this thesis. Discourse theory is a political theory that is post-Marx, post-structural and post-analytical. The central question is the political process that brings together different disparate social groups in pursuit of a political goal. This chapter explores the core constituent elements of discourse theory and highlights how it is relevant to my study of the political economy of sustainability in the context of eco-certification within ecotourism. The discourse theory lens focuses the thesis on two questions:

a) How do tourism operators understand and interpolate the concept of sustainability and eco-certification? and

b) Within the context of eco-certification, what are the implications of the equation of sustainability with the business case approach?

The next section overviews current theoretical approaches employed in the tourism literature to set the scene for the application of discourse theory.

2 Current Theorisations in the Tourism Literature

Discourse theory developed in the field of social and political studies as a critique of prevailing structural and essentialist attempts to explain social phenomenon in this political space. Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is both a political and democratic theory concerning the articulation of political projects and social meaning (see, Laclau & Mouffe, 1987, 2014; Laclau,

1990, 1994, 1996, 2005; Howarth, 2000; 2004; Norval 1996; Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Griggs & Howarth, 2002). The application of discourse theory continues to expand and business disciplines increasingly have incorporated discourse theory, particularly within management studies (see, for example, Hardy & Clegg, 1997; Contu & Willmott, 2003; 2005; Deetz, 2003; Willmott, 2005; Bridgman & Willmott, 2006; Spicer & Böhm, 2007; Bridgman, 2007; Kenny & Scriver, 2012; Glynos, Klimecki & Willmott 2015; Dey, 2016; McLaughlin & Bridgman, 2017) and accounting (see, for example, Mouk, 1995; Otto & Böhm, 2006; Spence, 2007; Spence & Carter, 2011; Frezatti *et al.*, 2014; Carter & Warren, 2019a; Ashraf, Muhammad & Hopper, 2019; Warren, Carter & Napier, 2019).

Despite this, there is little evidence of the application of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory to tourism studies. There is a critical tourism literature (see, for example, Butler, 1999; Sharpley, 2009-2010, Liu, 2003; Manyara & Jones, 2007; Tribe, 2006; 2008; Bianchi, 2009; Jamal *et al.*, 2013; Saarinen, 2014; Moscardo & Murphy, 2014; Koot, 2016) but comparatively few of those studies explicitly adopt a post-structural position (examples would include Aitchison, 2001; Dredge & Jamal, 2015). The search of five major databases under the terms 'discourse theory and tourism' or 'Laclau and tourism' led to few results (these databases included Science Direct, Emerald, Taylor & Francis, Sage and Google Scholar). Chambers (2007) does call for more research in tourism into Laclau and Mouffe, but it seems that this call to action has not necessarily generated significant literature. Ayikoru, Tribe & Airey (2009), for example, used Laclau and Mouffe to study the association of neoliberal ideologies with tourism education. Laclau and Mouffe's approach to identity has been drawn upon in four studies and the idea of 'otherness' is important in this work (see, Ballesteros & Ramírez, 2007; Wearing & Wearing, 2006; Del Casino & Hanna, 2000; and Galani-Moutafi, 2000). It is fair to conclude that the employment of discourse theory is not extensive in tourism literature. There are a significant number of studies that do use the term, 'discourse', but they use 'discourse' in

different ways (see, for example, Hannam & Knox, 2005; McGehee & Santos, 2005; Kuhn, 2007; Santos *et al.*, 2008; Yan & Santos, 2009; Jóhannesson & Huijbens, 2010; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2011; Chaney, 2015; Aall *et al.*, 2015; Fazito *et al.*, 2016; Hanna *et al.*, 2016; Muldoon & Mair, 2016). Santos *et al.* (2008) analyse the discourse of neighbourhood tours organised by the Chicago's Tourism office drawing on both Fairclough and Foucault's notion of discourse. The "paper illustrates how current tourism representations of Chicago's Chinatown are constructed through a process of negotiation and with the infamous past imagery of this ethnic enclave" (Santos *et al.*, 2008, p. 1002). A range of tourism studies employ a Foucauldian conception of discourse (see, for example, Hanna, 2013; Hanna & Rowley, 2015, Hollinshead, 1999; Hollinshead & Kuon, 2013; Cheong & Miller, 2000; Franklin, 2004; Liljeblad, 2015). In sum, various scholars use critical theory approaches to address current issues in tourism.

Mowforth and Munt (2016) employ a political economy approach as a theoretical framework to analyse power relationships in tourism. Mowforth and Munt's (2016, p. 51) approach derives from neo-Marxist dependency theory and argues, "that the political economy approach is one of the few attempts to illustrate the way in which control of tourism development is held primarily in the First World". Elements of this work overlap with discourse theory, and its critical stance towards development, globalisation and new sustainable forms of tourism particularly in the Third World is an important foundation for my thesis. As stated, I see significant overlaps with discourse theory: For example, the section concerning power relationships in tourism employs concepts such as ideology, discourse and hegemony to understand the contemporary tourism system in the Third World, as well as reflecting on relationships between tourism and its disproportionate development (Mowforth & Munt, 2016, p. 84). Mowforth and Munt's (2016) approach to discourse employs a Foucauldian approach, in which competing discourses/relationships produce knowledge relevant to hegemony.

However, Mowforth and Munt (2016, p. 85) acknowledge that there are theoretical explanations needing development with respect to ideology, discourse and hegemony, as they argue that "that these relationships cannot be fully explained simply by the notions of dependency and domination". I argue that discourse theory provides a broader account of how these inter-relationships and the interplay of disparate interests manifests in discourses concerning eco-certification within the broader sustainability context, given the multitude of social actors and political relations within tourism systems. In this sense, the application of discourse theory theoretically develops the important insights of Mowforth and Munt (2016). I see this as a valuable contribution to current theorisations in tourism literatures.

3   Discourse Theory in Critical Management Studies

Despite comparatively little application in tourism studies, there has been significant application within the broader context of critical management studies and geography (see Willmott, 2005 and Müller, 2008 as examples). Since the 1970s and 80s, tourism emerged "as a legitimate field of study" by drawing on other disciplines such as "economics, sociology and geography" (Pritchard & Morgan, 2007, pp. 11-12). Given the contextual links of management studies to tourism, this next section examines how Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory scholars employ discourse theory and why discourse theory is appropriate for management studies and then argue the conceptual links to the tourism context.

Willmott (2005), for example, critiqued the strong positivism rationality evident in management and organisations research, as well as the employment of structuration theory and actor-network theory (Bridgman & Willmott, 2006), arguing for the application of a discourse theory approach. Such critiques resulted in the proliferation of critical management studies (see the annual Critical Management Conferences and examples such as Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Alvesson, Bridgman & Willmott, 2006; Spicer, Alevesson & Kärreman, 2009; Alvesson &

Spicer, 2012). The implication of critical management studies is to re-examine and reconceptualise the notion of power and control within organisations.

Wilmott (2005) contrasts critical realism and discourse theory to explore theorisations of control in organisations. Willmott (2005, p. 770) contends that Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) 'politics of the economic space' is an important question for organisational study:

> For Laclau and Mouffe … 'the space of the economy is structured as a political space' (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: 76–7). This means that 'interests' are socially organized and identified rather than conceived as an 'external force' that is given by the occupation of positions. Through a fundamentally political process of identification, people are understood to attribute interests to themselves and to others …
>
> Appreciating the politics of economic space is important for understanding how relations of subordination—where human beings can exert little or no control over decisions that affect them—can develop in which there is an acceptance of their existence because some other identification and associated obligation (e.g. with the community, with God, etc.) effectively diffuses the potential of relations of subordination to be transformed into relations of oppression.

Bridgman and Wilmott (2006, p. 112) critique how organisational studies tended to study technology and control, as tools "independent of the social context, [in] which they are developed and used" (Bridgman & Willmott, 2006, p. 112). Willmott (2005, p. 750) illustrates how management studies employ an "ontology which divides the real structures and mechanisms of the world and the actual patterns of events that they generate". The implication of these critiques is that certain approaches to management studies fail to consider the social context in which meaning is created through articulatory practices. By focusing specifically on the contexts in which social meaning emerges and the interplay of disparate actors, discourse theory challenges traditional assumptions in management studies. A similar ontological problem exists in tourism, particularly with respect to sustainability. Much of the current sustainable tourism literature is developed normatively (assuming what sustainability is or should be) and then proceeds from a positivistic approach to outline what must be done and how it should be done in achieving sustainable outcomes. The impact of this (in a similar way to Bridgman & Wilmott, 2006) is that the concept of sustainability is a tool or technology that exists independent of any social context. From a critical perspective, sustainability has "a

materiality, […] [that] cannot be studied independently of their articulation in discourse" (Bridgman & Willmott, 2006, p. 120). This suggests that there is value in studying sustainability in tourism (or eco-certification) as a component of a hegemonic construction that highlights mechanisms of control (Willmott, 2005; Bridgman, 2007). According to Laclau and Mouffe (2001), hegemonic articulation attempts both the necessary and impossible closure of meaning, in order "to construct stable systems of identities that function as collective wills and yet have no essential or a priori origins" (Bridgman & Willmott, 2006, p. 114). Individuals and organisations articulate these concepts in different ways (Bridgman, 2007) and the outcome of this practice is conceived as autonomous, "with which actors become identified, and not as an effect of generative mechanisms that are conceived to be productive of autonomy" (Willmott, 2005, p. 750). Therefore, discursive hegemony encourages social actors to identify with various autonomous beliefs that help social actors justify their social practices. Discourse theory embraces the plurality of social actors.

The discourse theory concept of empty signifiers or floating signifiers also assist in developing a deeper understanding of social phenomena in organisations and management studies. Kenny and Scriver (2012) examine the impact of the Irish government's articulation of the signifier 'entrepreneurship' during the Global Financial Crisis in 2007. One impact was to legitimise the continuation of neoliberal politics and the maintenance of the *status-quo*. A similar argument is relevant to the use of sustainability in tourism, as it might be understood as an empty or floating signifier, as actors have attached different meanings to the concept. One impact of this would be how the attachment of 'economics' and 'development' to sustainability results in the articulation of sustainability to the business case approach, where 'business as usual' has dominated what could be a change agenda. The application of these theoretical tools in management studies are helpful in the context of tourism studies as they assist in understanding how sustainability is used in tourism and the emergence of eco-certification in the ecotourism

context. The sedimentation power of tourism, from the perspective of power and control, is central to the applicability of discourse theory. Tribe (2006, p. 375) identifies with this theoretical challenge:

> … tourism research carries with it a subtle power to define: to skew: to objectify: to foreground some issues leaving others untouched: to legitimize some methods casting others to the periphery: to privilege some groups while excluding others and to tell stories in particularistic ways. This is not to say that lies are being told about tourism, nor is it sought to denigrate positivist or applied research: Both make significant contributions to the developing canon of knowledge. Rather it is concluded that research has the generative power to construct and to frame tourism.

Consequently, the ability for tourism to sediment meanings, exercise power and control, the disparate nature of social and political actors impacted by tourism provide a solid foundation on which to explore the implications of discourse theory in the tourism context. There seems value in exploring the conceptual impact of concepts such as hegemony and empty or floating signifiers as a discursive intervention in tourism.

This section outlined why Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is appropriate in the context of critical management studies and articulates why that might be relevant in the tourism context. As I have introduced key discourse theory concepts in brief, the following sections provide discussion as to the key components of discourse theory and commences with why discourse theory is post-Marxist, post-structural and post-analytical.

4   Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory

4.1 Why is Discourse Theory Post-Marxist?

To understand the post-Marxism of discourse theory, I need to first explain certain key Marxist elements. The focal study of Marx was on two inter-related components of a system, namely a structural and a humanist element. In simple terms, the structural component is comprised of the base, namely economic production, industrial capital, knowledge capital and financial capital as well as superstructures, such as governments, laws, education and religion and other structures that support the capital system. The structural components provide a framework in which agents operate (the humanist element). Marx argues that in relation to private property,

there is a conflict between the working class (proletariat) and owners of the means of production (the Bourgeoisie). Mechanisms, such as surplus-value, allow capitalists to make profit, as "the extraction of surplus-value by the capitalists from the worker" means that the Bourgeoisie hold power, reinforcing capitalist structures and class struggles (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987, p.103). For Marx, this endemic economic conflict results from an imbalance in power structures. For post-Marxist, the universality of the economic problematisation is subject to critique. For example, Laclau critiques the traditional politics of Marxism, as "discourse theory challenges the class reductionism and economic determinism" (Howarth *et al.,* 2000, p. 8; Griggs & Howarth, 2013). Despite what some commentators mistakenly suggest, post-Marxism does not reject Marxism, but rather, discourse theory develops Marxist politics primarily through the integration of disparate interests and multiple approaches to politics. In this, discourse theory illustrates issues that derive from simplistic understandings of a system to develop "an analytical framework that embraces the political plurality of the 'new political movements' and the contingency involved in articulating any view of social reality" (Mouck, 1995, p. 536).

In particular, discourse theory problematises the political project within Marx due to its universality: Laclau and Mouffe (1987) argue that Marx's focus on the working class results from an oversimplification of social structures under capitalism (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987), as Marx locates political struggle within capital relations and the change agent is working class. For Laclau and Mouffe (1987), this is class reductionism. A further issue is around the homogenous nature of the working class assumed by Marx. This oversimplification impact on the ability to take a plural view to a social situation and has the potential to ignore possible sources of conflict. The exploitation of surplus-value provides an example that illustrates Laclau and Mouffe's concerns, as the most important and "basic antagonism of a capital society is constituted around the extraction of surplus-value by the capitalist from the worker" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987, p.103). In Marx's analysis, the relationship between the proletariat and the

owners of the means of production reflects a natural order of subjects, in a similar way to the historical relationship between peasants and landowners. The relationship does not originate in issues concerned with social identity (see Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 111-112). However, this constellation does not explain the emergence of antagonism, as antagonisms inhere in the system of wage-labour-capital forms. The impact of Marx's approach is that only physical or real opposition can develop, "but they will not be seen as political antagonisms without the notion that the relationship could be different than it is" (Mouck, 1995, p. 543). Antagonisms are thus socially determined relationships, as opposed to relationships determined by the physical order of nature. For the antagonism to become real and to be situated outside the defined system, the member of the working class needs to resist the extraction or exploitation of their surplus-value and seek an alternative (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987).

This explains a lack in Marxist theory, which focuses on change but does not account for how that change might materialise. For Laclau and Mouffe (1987), the focus on socially determined relationships allows antagonism to become powerful and also allows for antagonisms to be changed by political actions. Marx's political focus on the level of real opposition between the proletariat and the Bourgeois limits the notion of politics, as they are totally fixed in a system. For Laclau and Mouffe (2014), the political relation or political identity central to hegemony is that it is discursively constructed and as the constructed identity is overdetermined, it is never totally fixed. "*This field of identities which never manage to be fully fixed, is the field of overdetermination*" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 97, emphasis in original). It is through overdetermination that hegemony becomes a flexible, in contract to Marx or Gramsci's static concept of hegemony.

However, Laclau and Mouffe suggest that antagonisms exist across all social identities and are not defined through their relationship to capital. Such examples might include sustainability, gender rights, environmental pollution or poverty reduction. This is not to say that class struggle

may not be relevant to the political antagonism, but that struggles can be found outside the wage-labour sphere too. Discourse theory rejects Marx's economic determinism (Howarth, 2013), which argues that all social problems are rooted in economics, which operates at the universal level. Laclau and Mouffe (2014) develop Marx's theorisation in a way that enables discourse theory to move to a pluralist approach to politics by discarding fixed definitions of society (focused around class struggle) and political structures, and advocate for spontaneity, flexibility and openness in social systems including political movements. Therefore, discourse theory draws inspiration from Marx, but is post-Marx, in a similar way to Williams (2005, p. 21) who argues that poststructuralism "does not promise a pure state, free of current evils; it advocates working for the openings within current states to allow them to change with and for their limits". This proliferation of plurality involves a celebration of differences.

4.2 Why is Discourse Theory Post-structural?

This section illustrates how discourse theory is post-structuralist. Structuralism emerged in a variety of fields including anthropology, sociology and psychology. French intellectuals, including the anthropologist, Levi-Strauss and the linguist, de Saussure are key figures in structuralism. Structuralism, as a methodology, suggests that elements of human culture should be understood regarding their relationship to a larger, overarching system or structure. Structuralism argues that all human actions and activities have underlying structures that impact on the way people feel or think. Such structures become manifest in repeated patterns of behaviour. Law, politics or even language are structures which determine humans' actions and help people navigate within a system.

However, this structural approach and system's thinking was criticised by intellectuals including Foucault and Derrida. Derrida, in particular, argues that structures become constraints over time, recommending "a reconstruction of the concepts and logics in de Saussure's theory

of language" (Howarth, 2013, p. 44). A good example of this is Berlin (1962, p. 19), who argues:

> The history of thought and culture is, as Hegel showed with great brilliance, a changing pattern of great liberating ideas which inevitably turn into suffocating straitjackets, and so stimulate their own destruction by new emancipatory, and at the same time, enslaving conceptions.

The political argument for post-structuralists concerns the constraints that manifest in structuralism, as they reject the closed nature of systems. I illustrate this through an example of structuralism and language.

de Saussure (1983) distinguishes between 'langue' (an idealised abstraction of language) and 'parole' (language spoken in daily life) (Howarth, 2013). For de Saussure (1974), language involves a system of signs, where a sign encompasses a signified (an abstract concept or idea) and a signifier (the perceived sound corresponding to the sign). However, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, as different languages have different words to describe the same objects or concepts: for example, there is a similar concept of a table across Europe, but signifiers 'table', 'la table', 'uma mesa', 'der Tisch', 'il tavolo' suggests that arbitrariness. From a structuralist perspective of language every term is related to other terms in the closed system and this fixity facilitates meaning. The structural approach becomes "a search for the underlying structures constituting the inherent law of any possible variation", which constitutes a form of essentialism (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 99).

Laclau and Mouffe's (2014) approach is influenced by Derrida's work on the deconstruction of structural linguistics. The discourse theory position is that it is impossible to achieve the total fixity of linguistic meaning because of overdetermination. In illustrating the foundations of a post-structural approach, overdetermination allows "neither absolute fixity nor absolute non-fixity" within a system (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 97). This "characterise[s] the multiplicity of potential meaning that is inherent in language" (Mouck, 1995, p. 540). In this, language is not a closed system, but rather there are a variety of possible meanings that could emerge. The

language system is flexible and open. The openness of systems leads Laclau and Mouffe (2014, p. 98) to argue that, "the impossibility of an ultimate meaning implies that there have to be partial fixations – otherwise the flow of differences would be impossible". Structure, then, is necessary (human nature needs a degree of fixity) and impossible (meanings are not absolutely fixed) and this is the foundation of discourse theory's appeal to post-structuralism.

4.3 Why does Discourse Theory Adopt a Post-Analytical Philosophy?

This section outlines how and why discourse theory adopts a post-analytical philosophy approach. Post-analytical philosophy develops a critique of Freud's psychoanalysis and draws on the influential work of Lacan. Although Lacan's earlier work was influenced by Freud, Lacan's is critical of Freud in later work. Lacanian theory is "conceptualised as the disruptive presence of 'the real' in any symbolic order, that is, a presence that marks the impossibility of a putative fullness of being, whether at the level of structures, subjects and discourses" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p.11; see also Lacan, 1977; 2006). Parker (2005, p 167-176) suggests seven elements to Lacanian theory:

      i.   Formal qualities of text

     ii.   Anchoring of representation

    iii.   Agency and determination

    iv.   The role of knowledge

     v.   Positions in Language

    vi.   Deadlocks of perspective (The Real)

   vii.   Interpretation of textual material.

In opposition to communication theory, Lacan suggests that communication/language is always marked by a failure, and in fact, must be a failure (Carter, 2008; Verhaeghe, 1995). In this, Lacan's analysis of language emphasises form over content (Parker, 2005), as "Lacanian

discourse theory has to be understood primarily as a formal system" (Verhaeghe, 1995, p. 4).

Parker (2005, p. 167) further states:

> The interpretation of a text does not aim to uncover unconscious meaning that lies hidden beneath the surface, or even to retrieve the 'signified' content, the 'concepts' that Ferdinand de Saussure (1974) assumed to be attached to the 'signifiers' (the sound images). Rather, it is the organisation of these signifiers in the text as such that is the object of study, and the formal structures of a text are decomposed by treating language, as Saussure did, as 'a system of differences without positive terms' (Saussure, 1974, p. 120).

Lacan's perspective is also a critique of de Saussure's structural linguistics. For de Saussure (1983, p. 15), "language is a system of signs expressing ideas" and the aim of the sign is to unite a sound-image (signifier) and a concept (signified) (Howarth, 2000; 2013). In returning to the example of table: the table sign (in English) includes the signifier sound-image of table and the signified concept of a table. This, however, necessitates that "speakers and writers share an underlying social system of language" (Howarth, 2013, p. 25) which assumes a self-contained representation of the sign, in which the signifier and the signified should be considered separately. de Saussure (1974, p. 121) argues:

> When we compare signs – positive terms – with each other, we can no longer speak of difference; the expression would not be fitting, for it applies only to the comparing of sound-images, e.g. father and mother, or two ideas, e.g. the idea 'father' and the idea 'mother'; two signs, each having a signified and signifier, are not different but only distinct. The entire mechanism of language, with which we shall be concerned later, is based on oppositions of this kind and on the phonic and conceptual differences they imply.

However, Lacan challenges this view by emphasising the "incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier" (Lacan, 2006). Lacanian theory opens up the possibility for a multitude of significations and meanings in relation to a signifier, but also permits that a multiplicity of signifieds can be attached to a central or master signifier (Carter, 2008; Parker, 2005). This has implications on the subject as well, as subjects also are unable to achieve closure in identifying their subjectivity (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). Parker (2005, p. 168) argues:

> … for Lacanians this variability is not itself traced only to the creative activity of a subject who is attempting to communicate to another subject and then finding that language gets in the way; 'A signifier is that which represents a subject' […], but this signifier is neither something that is given meaning by concepts that lie inside the head of the author or

speaker nor is it something that can be discovered and taken up by another subject as addressee, because when a signifier represents a subject it is 'not for another subject, but for another signifier'.

Lacan's critique of structural linguistics demonstrates the complexity of dialectic structures between the fixity and unfixity of a system and this enables subjects to account for shaping social relations, using hegemonic practices (Howarth, 2000). This suggests the key role of language and social relations. Language, like art, is 'perceptive', informed by individual, family, community and other social influences. The impact of this is that language is never fully accessible to all, nor accessible fully to one individual, as a range of information accompanies language. As illustrated above, a range of meanings can be attached to a language signifier and equally, a range of competing signifiers might be attached to a signified. For Wittgenstein, this is the scope of 'language games' and for Laclau and Mouffe (2001, p. 108, state that, this is discourse:

> 'I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the "language game"'. It is evident that the very material properties of objects are part of what Wittgenstein calls language game, which is an example of what we have called discourse.

Discourse theory reinforces the key role of language in philosophy and political action and this helps to explain the emergence of political movements that bring together disparate interests around a central signifier. I argue that this is an appropriate theorisation for the emergence of eco-certification, which operates to draw together a range of different positions and competing knowledges, in spite of the underlying contingency and indeterminacy within ecotourism, sustainable tourism and sustainability. This foundation in post-Marxism, post-structuralism and post-analytical philosophy invites a deeper analysis of Laclau and Mouffe's (2014) approach to hegemony and politics.

5 Deconstructing the Systematicity of Systems

5.1 Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse: Object-Subject Relation (Ontology)

In Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, there are two important parts to discourse. First, all systems within a social system are socially constructed consisting of systematic sets of relations between different agents. Secondly, every "social configuration is meaningful" and included linguistic and non-linguistic elements (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987, p.87). Within these sets of structured totalities, discourses are constructed as a result of articulatory practice (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 91). Thus, for Laclau:

> … but what must be from clear from the start is that *by discourse we do not mean a combination of speech and writing, but rather that speech and writing are themselves but internal components of discourse totalities* …this systematic set of relations is what we call discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987, p. 82) [emphasis in original].

Consequently, this approach to discourse theory differs to other approaches to discourse including Fairclough or Foucault due to the systemic approach. For discourse theory, all discourses constitute social reality, as "*all* objects are objects of discourse, as their meaning depends on a social constructed system of rules and significant differences" (Howarth *et al.*, 2000, p.3). In other words, objects can exist independent of our knowledge, however, their meaning cannot. Laclau and Mouffe (1987, p. 82) argue that:

> … the *physical* fact [of the object] is the same, but its *meaning* is different. The object is a football only to the extent that it establishes a system of relations with other objects, and these relations are not given mere referential materiality of the objects, but are, rather socially constructed.

Only after establishing a set of relations (rules), the meaning of objects can be determined, and this suggests that meaning is contextually dependent. Laclau and Mouffe (2014, p. 94) suggest that:

> The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God', depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence.

Although discourse theory rejects the traditional positivist subject-object notion, this is not a rejection of the existence of objects (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987; Carter, 2008).

5.2 Social Meaning as a Social Construct

For Laclau, an ontological event, such as an earthquake or a brick falling to the ground is understood (its meaning) dependent on context and may differ between different people. Contextual meanings may be social, cultural or economic. A discursive event brings disparate group together and provides the opportunity to coalitions. This centrality of discourse is outlined by Howarth *et al.* (2000, pp. 3-4):

> At this lower level of abstraction, discourses are concrete systems of social relations and practices that are intrinsically *political*, as their formation is an act of radical institution, which involves the construction of antagonisms and the drawing of political frontiers between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. In addition, therefore, they always involve the exercise of *power*, as their constitution involves the exclusion of certain possibilities and a consequent structuring of the relations between social agents. Moreover, discourses are contingent and historical constructions, which are always vulnerable to political forces excluded in their production, as well as the dislocatory effects of events beyond their control.

The event or dislocatory moment brings disparate groups together, and at the same time creates oppositions. Both components are important for hegemony. For instance, Obama's 2008 election campaign slogan 'Yes we can' was hegemonic because it had the potential to unite different groups of people (such those that wanted to stop war in Iraq or Afghanistan or that wanted public healthcare provision), but at the same time created oppositions that *might* explain the election of Trump, for example. However, opposition to discourses creates antagonisms between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' and this creation of antagonisms (problematising outside of a discourse) is an element that Foucault's discursive approach fails to address. Thus, discourse theory differs from Fairclough's and Foucault's discourses, as it redresses their limitations, by offering "an inclusive 'discourse' in which all social configurations are meaningful and discursively constructed" (Carter, 2008, p. 166; Frezatti *et al,* 2014). This is an important point in the tourism context, as with respect to sustainable tourism and eco-certification, there are a number of competing articulations and perspectives.

Dislocatory moments disrupt identity and discourses. A central example in the sustainable tourism context in my argument is the release of the Brundtland Report (1987) by the WCED. One impact of the Brundtland Report's (1987) focus on development economics was to sediment an economic component within the sustainability discourse, and the Brundtland intervention brings these discourses (economics and sustainability) together, creating an equivalency. The impact of equating sustainability with development (and development economics) marked the beginning of a process of subsumption whereby sustainability is progressively incorporated into the economic/capitalist system, where it may have operated outside of these constraints. This synergy allowed for the emergence of a new discourse of sustainable tourism.

While sustainable tourism seeks to incorporate various elements of social, environmental and economic, including development and capital interests into its discourse, this also creates opposition. Klein's (2014) work, for example, is firmly rooted as a critique of the impact of capital and short-term profit orientations. In the tourism context, disparate but interested groups attach different meanings to sustainable tourism focusing more on economic, social, environmental, ecological, socio-cultural, political or legal interests. Sustainable development and sustainable tourism operate as signifiers to which increasing signifieds (meaning) are attached. This might suggest that sustainable tourism is a form of a floating signifier. However, the more particular signifieds are attached to one signifier, the more likely it is for the signifier to become empty of particular concrete meaning as it is progressively emptied of particularity. The theoretical concept of an empty signifier is important to Laclau and Mouffe's (2014) hegemonic politics. An illustration of this is Laclau and Mouffe's critique of structural linguistics.

6   Laclau's Critique of Structural Linguistics

The critique of the systematicity of structure is at the core of Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical

component of discourse theory in analysing the social world. There are five central points:

i.   Within a system, for meaning to exist, the system requires more than internal opposition. It requires an element to lie outside the system (as an antagonism) to demonstrate the limits of this system.

ii.   External elements, as antagonisms, provide identity to a system.

iii.   All social structure is contingent due to the impact of dislocations and antagonisms name the 'lack' within systems while at the same time creating relations of equivalence.

iv.   Through relations of equivalence, multiple signifieds attach to a signifier and this signifier becomes increasingly empty of any particular meaning.

v.   Floating signifiers (where multiple signifiers attached to a signifier) and empty signifiers (a signifier empty of particular content) are important in the hegemonic politics.

The following discussion elaborates further on these theoretical points.

Discourse theory develops a critique of the systematicity of structure. This critique does not

deny the importance of or existence of structures and systems, but rather discourse theory

recognises that structures are both necessary and impossible. Laclau critiques structural

tendencies which suggest that systems are "self-evident" and "complete" (Carter, 2008, p. 157)

and challenges aspects of de Saussure's linguistic analysis on the assumption that systems are

closed entities. de Saussure's analysis of language is based on the principle of values, where

everything within a given system has a value. These values are relative to each other and thus,

are self-referential. The relativity of values therefore illustrates how in this systemic approach,

the value of an element of a system depends on another element (its necessity) in a synchronous

system (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). Laclau and Mouffe (2014, p. 92) argue:

> … that all values are values of opposition and are defined by only by their difference …
> If language is something other than a fortuitous conglomeration of erratic notions and
> sounds uttered at random, it is because necessity is inherent in its structure as in all
> structure.

The impact of this is that de Saussure's analysis of language is based on "a system of differences without positive terms" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 99). As the meaning of a term is relational, value and meaning are "determined only by its opposition to all the others" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 99). In other words, de Saussure tries to present language as a closed system, in which meaning can be created by a system's internal oppositions. This suggests that language is "a *closed* system: only within it is it possible to fix in such a manner the meaning of every element" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 99). This systematicity of systems is focus of Laclau and Mouffe's critique. One interpretation of eco-certification is that system appears self-referential in that each element defines another element. The need for accreditors suggests the need for certifiers and this suggests the need for eco-auditors and this suggests the need for standards, indicators and measurement systems. Eco-certification, perhaps in an attempt to sediment meaning, equally appears closed, through drawing equivalences to acceptable approaches to ecotourism and creating relations of difference to other approaches deemed inappropriate.

Laclau (1996) criticises the idea of closed systems, despite the human tendency to want to fix or close systems. Laclau argues that something must exist outside a system that operates to give meaning to what lies inside the system. This external element is antagonism. One example illustrative of Laclau's argument is the social structure of a 'family'. The traditional 'family' structure in law and policy was husband, wife and two children, comprised of father-mother-brother-sister. Linguistically, though, the meaning of this system is not represented within the social structure because the 'family' lies outside of the system. The external element makes the system possible but at the same time, it illustrates its potential limits and thus the system is both possible and impossible at the same time (the external 'other' prevents the system from being closed) (Carter, 2008, p. 157). Laclau and Mouffe's (2014, p. 99) critique of structuralism:

> … involved a break with this view of a fully constituted structural space; but it also rejected any return to a conception of unities whose demarcation was given, like a nomenclature, by its reference to an object, the resulting conception was of a relational space unable to constitute itself as such – of a field dominated by the desire for a structure

> that was always finally absent. The sign is the name of a split, of an impossible suture
> between signified and signifier.

The critique of the systematicity of structure illustrates that antagonistic elements external to systems that both antagonise the system and give the system meaning. The combination of the critique of the systematicity of systems and the role of floating and empty signifiers suggests a role for hegemony.

7 Exterior Elements of Discourse Theory

7.1 Concept of Hegemony

Discourse theory develops the concept of hegemony by opening up Gramsci's approach to hegemony beyond the focus on the State and moves away from an inherent economic determinism. Thus, for discourse theory, the focus of hegemony is the joining together of disparate perspectives and groups.

7.1.1 Empty Signifiers as a Necessity for Hegemony

Laclau and Mouffe (2014, p. 112) argue that a system can never reach full closure due to the existence of an external antagonistic element that illustrates the limits of or lack within a system:

> Antagonism, as a witness of the impossibility of final suture, is the 'experience' of the
> limit of the social. Strictly speaking, antagonisms are not internal but external to society;
> or rather, they constitute the limits of society, the latter's impossibility of fully
> constituting itself.

This suggests that social order and structure is contingent, and antagonisms have an important role, as they result from hegemonic politics as social actors try to incorporate antagonisms into systems. As an example of hegemonic politics, Obama's 2008 election campaign slogan ('Yes we can') operated hegemonically to bring disparate groups together under the campaign signifier with each articulation of meaning attempting to incorporate antagonisms. As social actors attached significance (e.g. better healthcare or stopping the war in Iraq) to the antagonism, the emptier the slogan became of particular meaning. A proliferation of competing articulations increasingly eliminates particular meanings and the signifier increasingly takes on

a floating 'meaning' and shifts towards becoming an empty signifier. This is a necessary process for hegemony.

In tourism, the conceptual lack within sustainability, sustainable tourism and eco-certification could be examples of signifiers that have become progressively empty of particular meaning. Equally, the incorporation of sustainability into the prevailing economic system is an example of hegemony, as the sustainability discourse had a potential relation of difference concerning a politics of limited growth were integrated into a business-as-usual economic approach. This influenced tourism as various social and political actors in the tourism space (hotels, airlines, policy makers, governments, academics, accreditation and certification bodies, tourism operators amongst others) attach competing meanings to sustainable tourism (including ecotourism, responsible tourism, community-based tourism and many others). This proliferation of articulatory practices operated to empty sustainable tourism of particular content, and it operates as a floating or empty signifier.

7.1.2 What is Hegemony? Logics of Equivalence

In discourse theory, hegemony manifests as a process that draws together equivalent signifiers in chains of equivalence. Laclau and Mouffe (2014, p. 120) argue:

> The general field of the emergence of hegemony is that of articulatory practices, that is, a field where the 'elements' have not crystallised into 'moments'. In a closed system of relational identities, in which the meaning of each moment is absolutely fixed, there is no place whatsoever for a hegemonic practice. A fully successful system of differences, which exclude any floating signifiers, would not make possible any articulation; the principle of repetition would dominate every practice within this system and there would be nothing to hegemonies.

Floating or empty signifiers play an important role in hegemony, as the production of antagonisms creates relations of equivalence. Antagonisms result from actors' attempts to incorporate different signifiers into systems. This is relevant to the literature on sustainability because of the proliferation of definitions and approaches applied to the concept and in relation to sustainable tourism through the proliferation of alternative approaches to sustainable tourism.

As social groups attach competing signifieds to a signifier, the emptier of particular meaning it becomes. However, each new articulation attached to the signifier introduces contingent into the social order or structure and antagonisms operate to name the lack within the system. To overcome this antagonism, there are attempts to name the antagonism and incorporate it within the system (this is similar to Gramsci's approach to accommodation) (Carter, 2008, p. 159). The increasing detachment from the system and the more empty of particular content a signifier becomes, the more this empty or floating signifier names the present incompleteness of a social movement.

Floating or empty signifiers are necessary for the articulation of political discourses (Howarth *et al.*, 2000, p. 13). Laclau (2003, p. 312) argues that "politics is possible because the constitutive impossibility of society can only represent itself through the production of empty signifiers". At the ontological level, I argue that with respect to the political economy of sustainability, sustainability takes the role of an empty signifier, as is evident in the associated discourse of sustainable tourism.

Despite attempts to close the 'openness' within systems (due to the antagonism that names a lack), total fixity of a system is impossible (Howarth *et al.*, 2000, p. 12). Laclau (1996, p. 44) argues:

> [I]n a situation of radical disorder "order" is present as that which is absent; it becomes an empty signifier of this absence. In this sense, various political forces can compete in their efforts to present their particular objectives as those which carry out the filling of that lack.

In this, the empty signifier names the lack of the system or a discursive structure, but not the system itself. As tourism is fundamentally capital accumulating, sustainability has the potential to acts as an antagonism to the system because certain articulations of sustainability propose caps on growth due to resource scarcity or suggest an organisational system different to capital (see Klein, 2014; Shiva, 2005). These articulations of sustainability operate antagonistically. However, by proposing an economically-oriented articulation of sustainability with elements

that point to social and environmental concerns, there is an attempt to incorporate sustainability into the current economic system and to reduce the antagonism within sustainability. However, this is a contingent process and I expect that Chapters two, three and four have indicated the indeterminacy and contingency within sustainability, the business case, sustainable tourism, ecotourism and eco-certification. In some ways, the current understanding of sustainability, as illustrated by the business case (the investment approach to sustainability) signifies not what it is but rather what it is not. The impact of this politics is to empty sustainability of much of these alternative meanings in incorporating elements of economics alongside or in place of environmental, social or alternative social forms.

Laclau (1990) suggests that dislocation is a process by which the contingency of discursive structures is made visible. The Brundtland Report (1987) operated to draw different discourses together in an interwoven manner, especially the discourses of sustainability and economic development. This drawing together of disparate discourses provided a role of hegemonic politics, as the intersection of two discourses involved disparate groups and the proliferation of ontic understandings of sustainability and sustainable development. The increasing proliferation of ontic understandings of sustainability make it more difficult to know what sustainability means with any certainty. This role of equivalency is to empty out the signifier of particularities in attaching signifieds to the master signifier. Laclau and Mouffe (2014, pp. 113-114) argue:

> Thus, equivalence creates a second meaning which, though parasitic on the first, subverts it: the differences cancel one other out insofar as they are used to express something identical underlying them all […] If, through the chain of equivalence, all differential objective determinations of its terms have been lost, then identity can only be given either by a positive determination underlying them all, or by their common reference to something external.

In summary, the more extensive the chain of equivalence, the less particular the content of the master signifier. The Brundtland Report (1987) presented a dislocatory opportunity in tourism for the proliferation of different ontic interpretations of sustainable tourism and the

incorporation of a range of disparate social and political actors within tourism. This process challenges alternative meanings or differences and consequently, sustainability and sustainable tourism were not able to exist as environmental, social or economic discourses independently. The success of sustainable tourism may well be that it represents everything and nothing at the same time; a necessary impossibility. The logic of equivalence allows opposing positions to be incorporated into the master signifier.

However, extending the chains of equivalence also creates less exact demands. In a situation where sustainable tourism could stand for anything, the discourse satisfies all particular demands. If, alternatively, the signifier of sustainability was narrowly defined as environmental protection or social justice for host communities, certain particular interests (such as economic viability) may not be satisfiable. Equally, a sustainability discourse narrowly defined as economic profit maximisation would struggle to incorporate a discursive demand focused on lowering the carbon footprint of a boat cruise in the Kimberley (Western Australia). Chains of equivalency are important in hegemonic politics, as hegemony "supposes the incomplete and open character of the social, that it can take place only in a field dominated by articulatory practice" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 120). Hegemony is therefore a form of politics (articulatory practice) in which one particular articulates a floating or empty signifier that is representative of disparate interests or groups within a system.

In tourism, powerful social and political actors including the UNWTO, WTTC, tourism accreditation and certification bodies and multinational tourism entities successfully attached the signified economic viability to the master signifier of sustainable tourism. Given the prevalence of the business case interpretation with the discourse of sustainable tourism, the success of the attachment of economic viability is that it appeals to the underlying capital function of tourism. For many tourism companies, sustainability itself or sustainable actions involve a focus on financially viability (which privileges economic concerns over

environmental or social approaches to sustainability). Therefore, hegemony is also a political process with influences from power organisations and social actors.

Discourse theory assumes that all social relations are subject to re-negotiation as interests change over time. Alternative articulations or new antagonisms emerge to challenge the discourse. This suggests that dominant signifiers are contingent and they can be threatened. Economic interests in sustainability successfully float as a meta-signifier within sustainable tourism and this results in neoliberal processes such as measurement and indicator systems to dominate the current discourse of sustainable tourism in the articulation, for example, of eco-certification for ecotourism. This 'economic' signified permeates the political and social practice of eco-certification and takes prominence over other particulars. The dominance of the eco-efficiency discourse seems to be similar to Hawken's (2010) approach to sustainability as it often allows tourism operators to articulate how their 'business-as-usual' is sustainable. The benefit of this approach to sustainability is that in enables tourism, as an economic activity (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006) to be integrated into sustainability and shape the production of meaning in contrast to other antagonistic approaches to sustainability that propose major system shifts in the name of social or environmental interests. This illustrates a process of subsumption of sustainability into the traditional economic/capital system through the hegemonic equivalence of sustainability with economic development. The result seems to be business case of sustainability (Brown & Fraser, 2006).

7.1.3 Hegemony: A Development of Gramsci's Theorisation

Gramsci conceptualised hegemony as a way of understanding the prevailing class struggles in Italy. Gramsci recognised a disparity between the wealthy, industrial north of Italy and the poor, peasant-based south of Italy. This disparity caused uneven wealth distribution and a class struggle in the industrial north, but the nature of the economic disparity was different between the land-focused south. Gramsci theorised how control was maintained by a dominant political

group over disparate political interests, but also wanted to provide for an alternative political project. Although Gramsci's challenged Marx's economic determinism in the definition of class struggle, Gramsci's work falls back on a class essentialism by suggesting that the working class would be the site of change. Laclau and Mouffe reject Gramsci's economic determinism and recognise that politics lies outside a 'class' system. Laclau and Mouffe (2014, pp. 123-124) argue:

> This is the point where the Gramscian view becomes unacceptable. As we pointed out earlier, the proliferation of these political spaces, and the complexity and difficulty of their articulation, are a central characteristic of the advanced capitalist social formation. We will thus retain from the Gramscian view the logic of articulation and the political centrality of the frontier effects, but we will eliminate the assumption of a single political space as the *necessary* framework for those phenomena to arise. We will therefore speak of *democratic* struggles where these imply a plurality of political spaces, and of *popular* struggles where certain discourses *tendentially* construct the division of a single political space in two opposed fields. But it is clear that the fundamental concept is that of 'democratic struggle', and that popular struggles are merely specific conjunctures resulting from the multiplication of equivalence effects among the democratic struggles […] we have moved away from two key aspects of Gramsci's thought: (a) his insistence that hegemonic subjects are necessarily constituted on the plane of the fundamental classes; and (b) his postulate that, with the exception of interregna constituted by organic crisis, every social formation structures itself around a single hegemonic centre.

These rejections render Laclau and Mouffe's concept of hegemony more dynamic, as opposed to Gramsci's static approach to hegemony. While Gramsci argues for a hegemony that is founded on internal differences within a system, Laclau and Mouffe contend that hegemony needs external structure and antagonism to exist. The proliferation of the political terrain and the proliferation of political actors within Laclau and Mouffe's hegemony makes it more inclusive. In the tourism context, multiple actors including international tourism organisations, accreditation and certification bodies, tourism operators, local businesses, employees, local communities, tourists and other stakeholders play a role in the political terrain of sustainable tourism and the articulation of the social practices of eco-certification. The next section examines the logic of articulation (in order to understand the emergence of eco-certification).

8 Dislocation, Political Subjects and Undecidability

8.1 Laclau and Mouffe's Dislocation and Political Subjects

For Laclau and Mouffe (2014, p. 108), antagonisms threaten discourses as they exist as

"oppositions" and "contradictions" to prevailing systems. Laclau (1994, pp. 170-171) argues:

> Each signifier constitutes a sign by attaching itself to a particular signified, inscribing itself as a difference within the signifying process. But if what we are trying to signify is not a difference but on the contrary a radical exclusion which is the ground and condition of all differences, in that case no production of one more difference can do the trick. As, however, all the means of representation are differential in nature, it is only if the differential nature of the signifying units is subverted, only if the signifiers empty themselves of their attachment to particular signifieds and assume the role of representing the pure being of the system – or, rather, the system as pure Being – that such signification is possible. What is the ontological ground of such a subversion, what makes it possible? The answer is: the split of each unit of signification that the system has to construct as the undecidable locus in which both *the logic of difference and the logic of equivalence* operate. It is only by privileging the dimension of equivalence to the point that its differential nature is almost entirely obliterated – that is, emptying it of its differential nature – that the system can signify itself as a totality.

Therefore, the logic of equivalence functions "by creating equivalential identities that express

a pure negation of a discursive system", while the "logic of difference consists in the expansion

of a given system of differences by dissolving existing chains of equivalence and incorporating

those disarticulated elements into an expanding order" (Howarth *et al*., 2000, p. 11). Through

the expansion of a system or a specific discourse, it is possible for subjects to integrate an

antagonistic other in attempts to cover over contingent gaps exposed by the antagonism.

Howarth *et al*. (2000, p. 13) emphasises that "the actions of subjects emerge because of the

contingency of those discursive structures through which a subject obtains its identity". The

discourse of sustainable development operates to cover over contingencies within capital (the

risk of unlimited growth) by attaching economic viability to the floating signifier of

sustainability. Floating or empty signifiers, within the space of a hegemonic practice, are turned

into moments by disparate social interest (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). The following diagram,

Figure 5.1, visualises the impact of this dislocatory moment in tourism which led to sustainable

tourism and the articulation of the discourse of eco-certification:
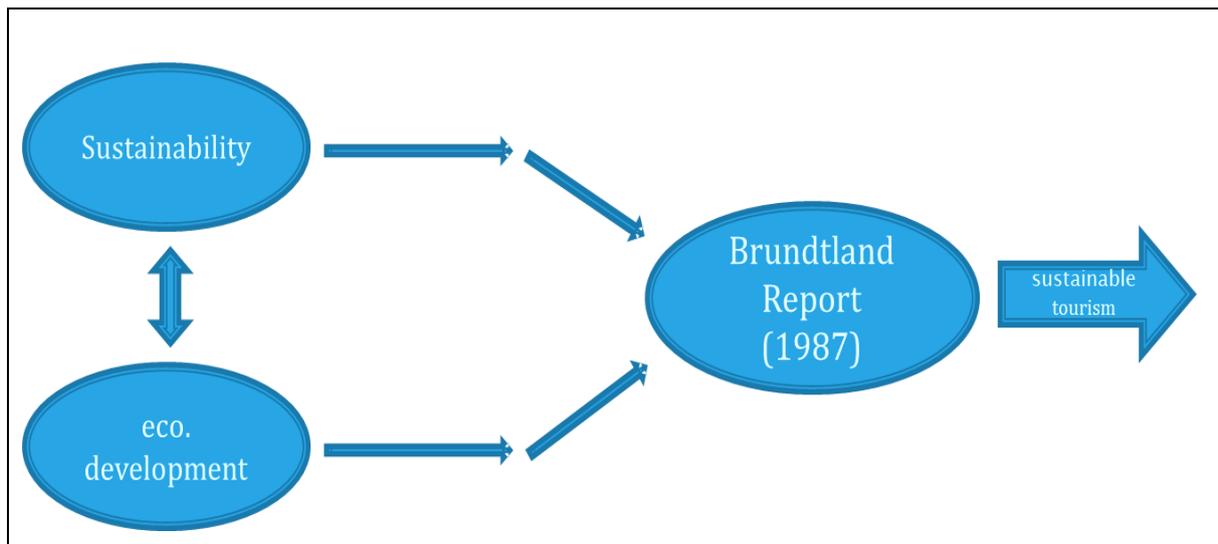
Figure 5.1: The Brundtland Report (1987) as a Dislocatory Moment

8.2 Derrida's Concept of Undecidability

Derrida's (1981) concept of undecidability assists in understanding how discourses, such as eco-certification, are shaped. During the development of standards for eco-certification processes, tourism institutions and accreditation bodies emphasised performance measures, such as waste reduction. One explanation is that within the articulation of eco-certification, this exposed an undecidable or contingent terrain concerning the immeasurability of sustainability in its current form. A *solution* to this indeterminacy emerged in the adoption of positivist, technocratic perspectives on measurement which avoided grappling with the deeper political lack in the current understandings of sustainable tourism. Derrida's (1981) undecidability provides a theoretical understanding as to why performance measures have become the preferred way of determining whether an operation is sustainable.

Derrida's concept of undecidability, an element in the practice of the deconstruction of language (Bates, 2005), helps to understand why accreditation and certification bodies in eco-certification adopted a technocratic view on sustainability and how expertise is claimed. Bates (2005, p 4) argues:

> … undecidability [is] a way of explaining a very specific structural condition at the heart of language. Undecidability was what preceded and therefore made possible the production of any of the determinate meanings that then had to be ''decided'' for meaning

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> to unfold in any particular reading [which made possible the generation of very particular,
> often opposing meaning (Bates, 2005, p. 4).

Derrida (1990) employed undecidability in the legal context to argue that law (droit) does not necessarily lead to justice because there is a gap between rules (regulation or law) and a specific situation (Derrida, 1990). This *gap* allows for different interpretations to emerge. This suggests that undecidability:

> … is always a determinate oscillation between possibilities (for example of meaning, but
> also of acts). These possibilities are themselves highly determined in strictly defined
> situations (for example, discursive … but also political, ethical, etc.) (Derrida, 1977; cited
> in Bates, 2005, p. 5).

This gap is visible, for example, in a legal situation where the rule suggest you should not commit murder and a specific situation where someone was murdered through the shooting of a gun. The rule outlines generic pronouncements about what a subject should or should not do. The rule does not state, 'do not shoot another person'. The issue of undecidability is that decision makers, such as judges make a decision about whether the rule envisioned this particular scenario (Derrida, 1990) and challenges traditional logics of justice. Derrida (1990, p. 961) states that "each case is other, each decision is different and requires an absolutely unique interpretation, which no existing coded rule can or ought to guarantee absolutely".

Undecidability is applicable in the tourism context, as such a gap exists between sustainable tourism and eco-certification. Certain tourism scholars and institutions argue that the TBL model (Elkington, 1997; 1998) best describes the concept of sustainability. Assuming this is correct, there is a gap between TBL (as a theoretical construct) and an organisation's interpretation of TBL (in their accounts). The TBL approach to sustainability focuses on financial, environmental and social components, but there are no specific suggestions about what to include within a TBL. Thus, energy reduction through eco-efficiency or the employment of local staff could be within the conceptualisation of TBL, but this requires the organisation to make a decision that this was envisioned within the TBL concept. This undecidability gives flexibility to decision-makers to decide what should be included in

particular articulations and this allows social actors to articulate new meanings (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). This also explains why expertise is valued in sustainable tourism, as rather than navigating the undecidable terrain themselves, tourist operators rely on 'experts' who have navigated this space. Thus, in tourism, neoliberal, technocratic approaches including eco-efficiency performance measures dominate the understanding of sustainability and this suggests that eco-efficiency becomes a metaphor for the sustainability and serves as a proxy. In this, the undecidability of sustainability stems from an indeterminacy within the concept and eco-efficiency acts "as an oscillating floating signifier" within the articulatory practice of sustainable tourism (Carter & Warren, 2019a, p. 19).

9 Articulatory Practice

9.1 Politics of Articulation

As illustrated above, this suggests an important role for articulation. Howarth *et al.* (2000, pp. 10-11) explain:

> […] Discourse theory investigates the way social practices systematically form the identities of subjects and objects by articulating together a series of contingent signifying elements available in a discursive field. Moreover, while discourse theory stresses the ultimate contingency of all social identity, it nonetheless acknowledges that partial fixations of meaning are both possible and necessary. In this way, it provides an account of social change that neither reduces all discontinuity to an essential logic, nor denies any continuity and fixity of meaning whatsoever.

All structures and systems exist because of contingent articulations that form and determine social practice. Laclau and Mouffe (2014, p. 79) argue:

> From everything said so far, it follows that the concept of hegemony supposes a theoretical field dominated by the category of *articulation*; and hence that the articulated elements can be separately identified.

This partial fixity is the foundation for articulation, as explained by Laclau and Mouffe (2014, p. 91):

> … any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call *discourse.* The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call *moments.* By contrast, we will call *element* any difference that is not discursively articulated [emphasis in original]

Howarth *et al.* (2000, pp. 7-8) recognise a paradox due to contingency: "If all social forms are contingent, if the 'transition from 'elements' to 'moments' is never complete' how then is any social formation possible?". Laclau and Mouffe (2014, pp. 98-100) suggest that social transformation is possible through the articulation of nodal points:

> The impossibility of an ultimate fixity of meaning implies that there have to be partial fixations – otherwise, the very flow of differences would be impossible. Even in order to differ, to subvert meaning, there has to be *a* meaning. If the social does not manage to fix itself in the intelligible and instituted forms of a *society*, the social only exists, however, as an effort to construct that impossible object. Any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre. We will call the privileged discursive points of this partial fixation *nodal point*.
> […]
> *The practice of articulation, therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity* [emphasis in original].

There is good evidence of this articulatory process within sustainable tourism, particularly with respect to ecotourism and its range of ontics such as responsible tourism or low-impact tourism and the articulation of eco-certification standards, processes, indicators and measures in attempts to sediment meaning and create frontiers between what is and what is not considered appropriate. Sustainable tourism embraces a number of social actors (reflecting the openness of the social) and the multiplicity of alternate articulations of ecotourism, for example, resulted in an overflow of different discourses including eco-certification. As I have illustrated, certain social actors favoured the integration of economic and neoliberal elements into the sustainable tourism discourse and this economic viability became a nodal point in attempts to sediment and control the 'appropriate' articulation of meaning of sustainable tourism with respect to eco-certification for ecotourism. Howarth *et al.* (2000, p. 9) argue further, that:

> … the articulation of a political discourse can only take place around an empty signifier that functions as a nodal point. In other words, emptiness is now revealed as an essential quality of the nodal point, as an important condition of possibility for its hegemonic success.

This illustrates Laclau and Mouffe's focus on language and meaning, given the impossible fixity of systems (Wittgenstein, 1967). The attempts at fixity with respect to eco-certification

are political and reflect a human tendency towards an impossible but necessary structuralism. This suggests an important role for the politics of rhetoric because rhetoric plays a vital part in the creation of meaning and shaping of discourses.

9.2 Rhetoric

This section focuses on an understanding of rhetoric that operates ontologically and politically. This differs to epistemological approaches to rhetoric. The ontological approach to rhetoric is based on Greek and Roman philosophers including Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. For Laclau and Mouffe (1987) language is a vital illustration of the process of meaning-making and knowledge creation as articulatory practices. For my study, three rhetorical devices including metaphor, metonymy and catachresis are relevant to the articulation of the eco-certification discourse in the tourism context.

9.2.1 Metaphor

The first rhetorical device is metaphor, which derives from the ancient Greek work 'metaphora'. The concept explains the process where one word is used to designate another word to make an implicit comparison, and the significance of one word is transmitted because of a common 'tertium comparationis' (e.g. a green mountain). Metaphor involves the transfer of meaning through one word to another and at the same time, a transfer of quality takes place. A tourism operator claiming that their business is eco-certified seeks to transfer qualities in that metaphor, including, but not limited to being sustainable, green, ecologically-friendly and responsible. This might invoke within a tourist a sense that consuming the eco-certified tourist product is 'good' for the environment, for local communities, for society and for the planet.

9.2.2 Metonymy

Metonymy is a rhetorical device whereby a word is employed to replace or refer to something with the name of something else with which it is associated (literary devices.net). Thus, a single attribute is used to identify more complex objects (as an act of renaming). For instance, the

Kremlin is a common metonym for the Russian Government. Note that there is no transfer of quality with metonyms. Sustainability also acts as a metonym and represents all the competing articulations relevant to sustainability including economic, environmental or social sustainability, the TBL and all the ecotourism concepts discussed in Chapter three.

9.2.3 Catachresis

Catachresis refers rhetorically to the improper or incorrect use of a word in a process that names the unnameable. An example of this would be 'the foot of the mountain', for example. This illustrates the inventiveness of language as a 'foot' is a human concept applied to name a natural concept. Catachresis suggests an inconsistency and may include a metaphorical component. Eco-certification is a good example of a catachrescial moment because it involves an attempt to name the unnameable, and covers over the indeterminacy within sustainability, sustainable tourism and ecotourism. Whenever there is a lack, social actors try to cover this contingency by sedimenting meanings where possible (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). Rhetoric is an important device in tourism and plays a vital role in creating meaning and sedimenting discourses. Different social and political actors in the tourism industry employ rhetorical devices to articulate meanings of the concept of sustainable tourism. The role of standards in eco-certification play an important rhetorical and political role in sedimenting meaning. They take on a regulative capacity (for further information on this see Appendix two for a discussion explaining links to regulation literature).

10   Conclusions from the Chapter

This chapter illustrated how discourse theory was the appropriate theoretical framework in which to investigate the interface between the political economy of sustainability and capital in the context of tourism. Discourse theory depicts the complexity of the problematised phenomenon and offers pluralistic and democratic accounts. In this, discourse theory explains political realities as well as social practices and examines the discursive and hegemonic role of

disparate social actors in the articulation of nodal points and political signifiers. I also made a case throughout the chapter as to why discourse theory would be appropriate for the study of tourism, given the lack of theoretical studies in the tourism literature that adopt this position. I present a set of important notes that justify the employment of discourse theory in this research:

i.   In current tourism literature, few studies invoke a post-structural theoretical approach. Given the complexity of the tourism phenomenon and the emergence of eco-certification, the focus of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory on plural, discursive and contingent insights is an appropriate theoretical framework. I see this as a continuation of Mowforth and Munt's (2016) work, but also as a distinct theoretical contribution to the literature.

ii.   The multifaceted nature of my study examining the emergence of the discourse of eco-certification involves disparate actors. Ontologically, with respect to the political economy of sustainability, discourse theory provides a theoretical toolkit to examine the different ontics of eco-certification. This is critical for addressing my research questions.

iii.   The concept of sustainability and eco-certification are discursively shaped and thus, I need to draw on a theoretical framework that focuses on language and articulation. At the interface of the political economy of sustainability and capital, eco-certification is fundamentally a political discourse, as disparate social actors are drawn together in its hegemonic processes.

iv.   Laclau and Mouffe's (2014) discourse theory offers a model of political interaction through which complex structures can be explained. It suggests that a) all systems within society are socially constructed, and every "social configuration is meaningful"; b) subjects and the meaning of objects are contingent and context-dependent; c) dislocations function to make this contingency (the lack) visible; and this d) this contingency allow subjects to articulate new meanings and articulate identity.

v.   Articulatory practices explain how social actors participate in the construction of discourse and how they are shaped by discourses.

This chapter argued that discourse theory is an appropriate theoretical framework for this thesis. The next chapter looks to operationalise the theoretical framework and Chapter six introduces the logic of critical explanation (LOCE) by Glynos and Howarth (2007) as a methodological framework. The LOCE includes social, political and fantasmatic logics as framing device for understanding discursive articulations, their sedimentation, emergence and their impacts on subjects.

- Chapter Six -
Research Methodology: Discourse Theory and the Logics of Critical Explanation

1   Overview

Chapter five explored how Laclau and Mouffe's (2014) discourse theory is an appropriate theoretical framework for my thesis, and I illustrated its applicability to the articulation of eco-certification for ecotourism within the context of sustainable tourism. In the chapter, I discussed the core assumptions of discourse theory and applied them to a tourism context. Core concepts relevant to the emergence of eco-certification include, that:

a) Social relationships and discourses are articulated and contested by social practices in a meaningful way;

b) Meaning within a system is socially constructed by social and political actors which introduces the importance of politics, context and contingency;

c) Discursive exteriors such as antagonisms play an important role in the creation of politics through hegemony, as do nodal points and empty signifiers. Antagonistic 'others' show attempts to close systems, make the lack visible and help to give identity to systems; and

d) The articulation of floating or empty signifiers, dislocation and the logics of equivalence and difference are importance in forming political hegemonies, through which discourses are articulated.

The question that follows the articulation of the relevant theoretical framework for this thesis is to examine how to operationalise discourse theory, especially due to its theoretical complexity. This chapter addresses the following questions concerning a methodological framework for this thesis:

- What are the methodological limitations of discourse theory? Which methodologies are appropriate in supporting a discourse theory study?

- How and why do Glynos and Howarth's (2007) Logics of Critical Explanation (LOCE) offer an appropriate framework for studying the emergence of the eco-certification discourse?

The traditional presentation of the LOCE suggests that the logics take the form, social, political and fantasmatic. For the purposes of this thesis, I focus on the interactivity of the logics as well as suggesting that this interactivity affects eco-certification in a different order from the

traditional order of the logics. The chapter introduces Glynos and Howarth's (2007) LOCE for social and political theory as a methodological framework. The framework encompasses five moments (problematisation, retroduction, the logics [social, political and fantasmatic], articulation and critique). These elements address normative and methodological critiques charged against discourse theory (Howarth, Glynos & Griggs, 2016). The chapter concludes by discussing an appropriate order for the logics within the LOCE especially in examining underlying assumptions about practices that allow social actors to see 'the good life' in their actions and 'doings'.

2   The Research Methodology Implications of Discourse Theory

2.1 Addressing the Critics: Articulating an Appropriate Framework for Discourse Theory

Discourse theory is a post-structural theory of articulation, as it argues that no system can be closed, despite social actors' attempts to do so. Meaning for Laclau and Mouffe (2014) is always socially constructed and is political, contextual and contingent. It is conveyed through social practices that articulate and contest discourses. Contingency and the openness of systems challenges traditional approaches to framing methodology and collecting and analysing data. Discourse theory does not prescribe any method for inquiry, as it is not a theory of application. Laclau (1990, p. 235) carefully defends the choice not to prescribe method, by arguing that, "it is only through a multitude of concrete studies that we will be able to move towards an increasingly sophisticated theory". Neither a positivistic nor interpretivist methodological approach is sufficient an approach to facilitate discourse theory, as positivism's causal laws in explaining social and political phenomena are limited as is the interpretivist's contextualised self-interpretations.

Social and political science, management and tourism research have long been dominated by a positivistic/scientific paradigm that explains social and political phenomena through causal laws and predicting outcomes. Different models, such as the hypothetico-deductive or deductive-nomological model, assist in producing these casual laws. In this process, the

'explanans' (the law) explains the explanandum, the event or process. However, the event "is explained by facts which, had they been known in advance, would have allowed us to predict it" (Lessnoff, 1974; cited in Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 23). This illustrates that the uncertainty of knowledge about an event makes predictions difficult. For instance, many polls in the 2016 US election campaign predicted that Donald Trump would not win the Presidency. However, there are limits to the 'scientific' approach to polling including that not all pollsters will necessarily be truthful about their political beliefs or views. Thus, the polls suggest that Donald Trump's election as President was a surprising results or unexpected result. In discourse theory, the contingent nature of discursive articulations, the role of antagonisms and the ability to only temporarily close a system suggests that a positivist approach would be inappropriate to explain social and political phenomena such as the emergence of the articulation of eco-certification.

Equally, an interpretivist/hermeneutical approach to social science is also insufficient for the nature of my study. While an interpretivist/hermeneutical approach offers a significant critique of positivism, the nature of the interpretivist study is limited, especially on ontological grounds. There is a risk that the interpretivist/hermeneutical approach runs "the risk of reducing explanation to the contextualised self-interpretations of social actors" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 51). In another way, the focus of hermeneutics does not sufficiently give "account of the relationship between theoretical concepts and phenomena under investigation" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 80), which suggests that an interpretivist/hermeneutical approach struggles to understand the complex political structures of reproduced social practices. In this, an interpretivist/hermeneutic approach does not satisfactorily support the discourse theory intervention, nor is it able to "elaborate a convincing logic of critical explanation" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 51).

Consequently, traditional positivist and interpretivist methodological frameworks are not appropriate to address the complex social and political structures concerning the emergence,

institution and impacts of discursive interventions, such as eco-certification (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). The issue of contingency provides a difficult challenge for methodology. To address this problem, Glynos and Howarth (2007) introduce the LOCE to provide an alternative framework to understand social phenomena. In outlining the methodological framework, it also addresses criticisms of discourse theory including that discourse theory has normative and methodological deficiencies. Critchley (2004) raises the issues of a normative deficit by suggesting that there is a theoretical gap within discourse theory, as he "questions the capacity of poststructuralist discourse theory to evaluate and transcend the existing order of things in the name of something new" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 6). Critchley (2004, p. 117) argues:

> If the theory of hegemony is simply the description of a positively existing state of affairs, then one risks emptying it of critical function, that is, of leaving open any space between things as they are and things as they may otherwise be. If the theory of hegemony is the description of a factual state of affairs, then it risks identification and complicity with the dislocatory logic of contemporary capitalist societies … The problem with Laclau's discourse is that he makes noises of both sorts, both descriptive and normative, without sufficiently clarifying what it is that he is doing. This is what I mean by suggesting that there is the risk of a kind of normative deficit in the theory of hegemony.

Torfing (1998) raises concern with a perceived methodological deficit by arguing that discourse theory struggles to move beyond 'thick descriptions' of the social and political world due to empirical redescriptions failing to reflect adequately upon causality and explanation. Torfing (1998, p. 198) suggests:

> (a) Discourse theory must demonstrate the analytical value of discourse theory in empirical studies that takes us beyond the mere illustration of the arguments and concepts. (b) It must address the core topics and areas within social and political science and not be content with specialising in allegedly 'soft' topics such as gender, ethnicity, and social movements. (c) It must critically reflect upon the questions of method and research strategy.

Glynos and Howarth (2007) LOCE respond to these critiques in identifying an appropriate methodological framework for addressing an empirical study that draws upon discourse theory. The following sections elaborates on the five key elements of the LOCE and reflects on how the LOCE overcome the allegations of normative and methodological deficits (Howarth, 2000;

2002; Howarth & Torfing, 2004; Glynos, 1999; Howarth & Glynos, 2007; Howarth *et al.*, 2016).

2.2 The Five Moments: Developing the Logics of Critical Explanation

To move beyond mere 'thick description', Glynos and Howarth (2007) develop the LOCE around five central elements, including *problematisation, retroduction, social, political and fantasmatic logics, articulation* and *critique*. These moments centre around the inter-relationship between subjects and objects to understand the sedimented rules of social structures and relationships, how these structures and relationships come into existence and these interactions help the subject with identity. Furthermore, in order to address Critchley's (2004) normative criticism, Glynos and Howarth (2007) privilege the idea that researchers are also political actors and suggest the importance of critique to examine and expose contingencies and gaps within social practices. The first element is problematisation.

2.2.1 Problematisation

Glynos and Howarth's (2007) draw upon Foucault's concept of problematisation. For Foucault (1984, p. 384), problematisation is "the development of a domain of acts, practices, and thoughts that seem […] to pose problems for politics" and it relates to an undertaking of critical analysis with a goal of seeing how social actors created different solutions to specific problems, and furthermore, how these different solutions are a result from an explicit form of 'problematisation' (Foucault, 1984). Foucault (1988, p. 257) further states:

> The notion common to all the work that I have done since Madness and Civilisation is that of problematisation, though it must be said that I never isolated this notion sufficiently. But on finds what is essential after the event; the most general things are those that appear last. It is the ransom and reward for all work in which theoretical questions are elaborated on the basis of a particular empirical field…Problematisation doesn't mean representation of a pre-existing object, nor the creation by discourse of an object that doesn't exist. It is the totality of discursive and non-discursive practices that introduces something into the play of the true and false and constitutes it as an object for thoughts (whether in the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis etc.).

This approach to problematisation focuses on present social problems rather than hypothetical problems. Glynos and Howarth (2007, p.11) argue:

> Leaning on Foucault, we begin with the idea of a problem-driven approach on social and political analysis. This involves constructing theoretical and empirical objects of investigation, in which the latter arise from pressing practical concerns of the present.

Discourse theory research should address present social and political problems, rather than focusing on method-driven research as conceived by positivist and normative research. The object of investigation becomes understanding the problem, at necessary levels of abstraction and complexity (Howarth *et al.,* 2016). The focus on present problems, as a political actor, also addresses concerns from Critchley (2004) and encourages the researcher to reflect on historical and discursive practices that help to construct institutions and practices in a particular context. The present problem in my thesis is the emergence of the articulation of eco-certification and the impacts of the discourse of eco-certification for ecotourism or sustainable tourism being co-opted into the traditional economic system, as understood by the neoliberal languages of the business case. The equation of sustainability with economic viability is concerning as it appears to help tourist operators continue existing practices under a new name despite continuing 'business-as-usual'. Issues include that there appears to be little call for less tourism, limiting growth or reducing short-term profit orientations for the benefit of shareholders (as and against other stakeholders). The subsumption of the discourse of sustainable tourism into the capital system seems to be at the expense of environmental protection discourse (such as discourses of deep greens, ecofeminists or environmentalists) or social sustainability interests (including social justice, safety or security). The articulation of eco-certification is influenced by strong neoliberal rationality including a focus on eco-efficiency. Powerful industry players, including accreditation and certification bodies, transnational tourist regulators and with the support of Governments and other stakeholders, play a central role in articulating the meaning of eco-certification. The Mohonk Agreement and the international ecotourism standard for

certification (IESC) operate as key articulations in sedimenting the 'rules of the game' of eco-certification, as well as operating as nodal points. The eco-efficiency focus on economic viability helps actors in tourism, such as tourism operators, to focus on developing and optimising their business operations and increasing revenue. This eco-certification discourse legitimises the business activities of those that receive certification and provided certain economic benefits including access to new markets (including ecotourists, responsible tourists, or low-impact tourists) but also to cover over traditional business practices ('business-as-usual') with a 'green shield'. Terms, such as eco-efficiency and waste reduction tend to favour an economic focus within sustainability at the expense of other interests. The 'greenness' of waste reduction measures obfuscates the economic advantages through efficient production and reduced waste costs. This systematisation of economics interests within eco-certification constitutes a present problem that grounds my study. The following textbox illustrates the fundamental research problem concerning the thesis:

Problematisation:
- ➢ **The Brundtland Report (1987) marked the beginning of a process of the subsumption of sustainability into the traditional economic/capitalist system through the equation of sustainability with economic development (and a capital imperative).**
- ➢ **The impact of this in tourism, as illustrated through the eco-certification discourse for ecotourism privileges the continuation of tourism as economic activity (Mowforth & Munt, 2016; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). Ultimately, this operates to 'disguise' 'business-as-usual' practices as sustainable.**
- ➢ **The process and impact of this subsumption (in the eco-certification for ecotourism context) is the focus of my research**

I illustrate the problem through a case study of Ecotourism Australia and vertical integration on supply-side and its impacts on tourist operators (across three study sites):
- ➢ **Accreditation bodies including the ISO, the GSTC and TIES**
- ➢ **Certification bodies focusing on Ecotourism Australia: Ecotourism Australia's eco-certification program is a form of *credentialism (through the ontic of indicator systems)***
- ➢ **Tourist operators**

2.2.2 Retroduction

Glynos and Howarth (2007) argue that retroduction is an important approach to focus research. Retroduction responds to paradigmatic challenges within traditional approaches to research. Glynos and Howarth (2007) argue that deductive explanations include a risk of subsumption, while inductive explanations also has issues with respect to the strength of inductive reasoning. Consequently, both deductive and inductive reasonings are problematic. In deductive reasoning, "empirical objects are […] subsumed under the theoretical concepts, and do not modify or transform the latter" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 210). With deductive reasoning, conclusions may incorrect, but it is difficult without further investigation where errors come from. Contrastingly, inductive reasoning including contextualised self-interpretations seek to explain social phenomenon from repeated experience. However, this approach is limited because individuals cannot observe what cannot be seen. Peirce (1960 cited in Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 25) refers to the problem of induction as follows:

> [Induction] is that mode of reasoning which adopts a conclusion as approximate, because it results from a method of interference which must generally lead to truth in the long run. For example, a ship enters port laden with coffee. I go aboard and sample the coffee … I conclude by induction that the whole cargo has approximately the same value per bean as the hundred beans of my sample.

The approximation of the value of the coffee may be accurate or it might be inaccurate. This approximation problem, caused by an inability to observable all phenomena, is illustrated by the inductivist Turkey problem:

> A turkey receives grain on the first day at 6 am. On day two it is fed grain at 6 am. On day three it receives the grain again at 6 am. On day 364 it is fed grain at 6 am.

The inductivist, based on observable data and sense experience would project that the turkey would be fed grain on day 365 at 6 am. Unfortunately, on day 365, the turkey loses its head and is served as Christmas Dinner (Russell, 1912, p. 63). In this, induction is limited as the individual cannot observe what it cannot see and this leaves a chance that the next observation could disprove the general law.

Glynos and Howarth (2007) promote retroduction as it provides an appropriate foundation for grounding social inquiry. They argue that retroductive explanation goes beyond subsumption and description, as it offers an "articulation of different theoretical and empirical elements" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 211, Carter & Warren, 2019a). Retroduction 'amounts to … observing a fact and then professing to say what … it was that gave rise to the fact' (Sayer 1979, 116). Glynos and Howarth (2007, 47) suggest that retroduction is articulatory 'in which the sense and meaning of explanatory categories grow organically and contingently in the very process of their application'. The focus of retroduction is to make problematised phenomenon intelligible. Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 213) propose 'pass[ing] through' contextualised self-interpretations, as they:

> … run the risk of over-valorising the virtues of historical context and concrete particularity, thus precluding the development of critical explanations that can somehow transcend the particularity of a given situation both explanatorily and critically without, however, risking a kind of imposed normativism.

This responds, in part, to the concerns of Torfing (1999) concerning mere thick descriptions. In my study, I focus on understanding why the articulation of eco-certification subjected environmental and social interests to dominant economic interests. The following textbox depicts how retroduction continues to frame my study:

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> **Problematisation:**
> - **The Brundtland Report (1987) marked the beginning of a process of the subsumption of sustainability into the traditional economic/capitalist system through the equation of sustainability with economic development (and a capital imperative).**
> - **The impact of this in tourism, as illustrated through the eco-certification discourse for ecotourism privileges the continuation of tourism as economic activity (Mowforth & Munt, 2016; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). Ultimately, this operates to 'disguise' 'business-as-usual' practices as sustainable.**
> - **The process and impact of this subsumption (in the eco-certification for ecotourism context) is the focus of my research**
>
> **I illustrate the problem through a case study of Ecotourism Australia and vertical integration on supply-side and its impacts on tourist operators (across three study sites):**
> - **Accreditation bodies including the ISO, the GSTC and TIES**
> - **Certification bodies focusing on Ecotourism Australia: Ecotourism Australia's eco-certification program is a form of *credentialism (through the ontic of indicator systems)***
> - **Tourist operators**
>
> - **How has this current state of affairs come to be?**
> - **This is expressed through logics (including social, political and fantasmatic logics) to illustrate how the ideological beliefs of subjects allows them – even when faced with competing contingencies - see the 'good' in eco-certification and justify their role within the eco-certification system.**

2.2.3 Logics

To examine social phenomena retroductively, some presuppositions are necessary and Glynos and Howarth (2007) draw upon the concept of logics to support this process. For Wittgenstein (1967), the 'essence of a practice' is what is suggested by logics. Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 135) suggest this approach to logics "seeks to investigate the ''possibilities' of phenomena' – 'the kind of statements that we make about phenomena – in various spatial and temporal contexts' (quoting Wittgenstein, 1967: §§ 90, 92). This is not an essentialist process, as Glynos and Howarth (2007, p.135) argue the employment of logics "penetrates below the surface to its singular ground". Consequently, logics move away from being a:

> … formal analysis of propositions in order to determine their validity or truth-value, or to establish the logical essence of a practice […] Equally, a logic is not a causal law […] nor are logics synonymous with tendencies that are conceived as weak or 'soft' laws […] finally, logics are not reducible to contextualised self-interpretations (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 135).

Therefore, the focus on logics opposes the generalising and universalising properties of causal laws within positivism, as well as rejecting the particularistic propensity of contextualised self-interpretations. Logics offer an insight into social phenomenon that helps to understand those rules and practices that establish certain practices, how those rules and practices emerged from contestable terrain and how rules and practices influence subject positions. Logics also assist in understanding the nature and conditions of rules and practices that materialise in articulations and how this creates subject positions in relation to objects.

The ontological approach addresses two dimensions with respect to the concept of subjectivity: a) a hermeneutic-structural and b) a post-structural dimension. The 'hermeneutic-structural' illustrates the centrality of a subject's contextualised self-interpretation in the manifestation of a social practice (the social logic). The 'post-structural dimension' illustrates that circumstances are always contingent, and this contingency makes possible the emergence of political subjectivity (the political logic). Laclau (2000, p. 76) supports this understanding of logics by arguing that the ontologically understanding of social logics consists of "a rarefied system of objects, as a 'grammar' or cluster of rules which make some combinations and substitutions possible and exclude others". To retroductively explain a particular discourse or problem, Glynos and Howarth (2007) propose three inter-linked logic.

2.2.3.1   The Social Logic

Social logics are centred around sedimented rules, concepts and social practices that influence social interactions and relationships between subjects within particular social contexts. However, Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 140) warn that "social logics cannot move from context to context" (Glynos and Howarth, 2007, p. 140). Sedimented social practices are context-specific and not generalisable (in the positivistic sense). This relates back to Laclau's (2000) explanation of social logics as "rarefied systems of objects" that account for the historicity of social practices but do not explain the emergence or sedimentation of these rules. This process of emergence and contestation is the domain of the political logics.

The social logics of tourism are dominated by powerful institutions including professional bodies such as the UNWTO, the WTTC, accreditation bodies, destination marketing organisations, governmental institutions including local and national governments and educational institutions as they assist in sedimenting rules and practices that influence tourism discourses with respect to sustainability and sustainable tourism. Key elements in sedimenting the current approach to eco-certification include the Mohonk Agreement, the International Ecotourism Standard for Certification (IESC) and the role of accreditors, certifiers, auditors and experts. This sedimentation sees tourism operators adopt certain social practices in the name of ecotourism or sustainable tourism including, but not limited to, indicator and measurement systems for carbon-neutrality, zero-waste or low–impact suggesting a certain measurability within the logic of sustainable tourism and ecotourism. This will be further explored in my case studies of the supply-side of eco-certification.

2.2.3.2 The Political Logic

The focus of political logics is to "provide the means to explore the conditions of possibility and vulnerability of social practice and regimes by focusing on the latter's *contestation* and *institution*" (Glynos and Howarth, 2007, p. 15). Political logics consider social spaces where new forms and rules are created and where social practices are contested, which reflects many of the central concepts of discourse theory, such as discourse, articulation, elements, moments, nodal point, empty and floating signifiers, the logic of equivalence and difference and dislocation. Each of these theoretical elements play a role in attempts to fix social systems and sediment social practices. This attempt at fixity or sedimentation gives insights into political contestations. For Glynos and Howarth (2007), political logics explain events that lead to dislocatory moments and illuminate political struggles that manifest in contingencies within social practice. This provides an opportunity to see processes by which political frontiers are created, sustained, or weakened. Glynos and Howarth (2007, p.143) explain that:

> … political logics thus formalise our understanding of the ways in which dislocation is discursively articulated or symbolised. Taken together, political logics, dislocation, and the political dimension help us to redescribe the ontical level in terms that emerge out of our poststructuralist ontology of social relations.

This reaffirms Laclau's (2005, p.117) argument that "whereas social logics consist in rule-following, political logics are related to the institution of the social". Political logics make the emergence of political subjectivity possible, allowing us to examine and understand how social actors act (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000). Laclau (2005) further argues that due to the contingency of structures or discourses, this affords an opportunity to study the political actions of social actors. I have illustrated how the Brundtland Report (1987) operates as a dislocatory moment in sustainability more generally, as it equated sustainability with economic development (sustainability = economic development) and this equation disrupted alternative approaches to sustainability and allowed for new articulatory practices emerged. The impact of this on sustainable tourism involves the proliferation of new approaches to tourism, including ecotourism, Indigenous tourism, responsible tourism, CBT and low-impact tourism. The continued proliferation of tourism signifiers indicates that this a contested terrain. The articulation of the eco-certification discourse through events such as the Mohonk Agreement and the IESC illustrate attempts to sediment elements of eco-certification again within a contested terrain. Chapters three and four examined the impact of this dislocation to illustrate how economic components were incorporated into sustainable tourism and eco-certification in supporting growth, economic viability and environmental and social interests (like waste reduction) with thinly veiled economic advantages such as cost savings. In eco-certification, new norms emerged in a contested space around measurement practices, appropriate indicator systems, the structure of eco-certification with accreditors, certifiers and auditors and the social and economic value of eco-certification.

2.2.3.3 Fantasmatic Logic

The focus of fantasmatic logics adds another layer to the critical investigation of social phenomena and focus on subjects. Fantasmatic logics are related to ideology, as they provide insights into "*why* specific practices and regimes 'grip' subjects" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 145). Laclau (2005, p. 101) suggests that while political logics focus on signification, fantasmatic logics address forces that lie behind the impact of signification. A study of the fantasmatic can provide insights as to why there is, in some cases, resistance to changing social practices and it helps to understand the impact of change when change occurs (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). The focus on fantasmatic logics (on ideological fantasy) provides evidence of the engine for political practices. Moreover, fantasmatic logics consider elements at the subject-ideological level. By drawing upon Lacan and Zizek, fantasmatic logics influence social practices. Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 147) argue:

> In this respect, logics of fantasy have a key role to play in 'filling up' or 'completing' the void in the subject and the structure of social relations by bringing about closure. In Zizek's words, they 'structure reality itself' or, as he puts it in his rephrasing of Lacan's formulation, fantasies are 'the support that gives consistency to what we call "reality"'.

The focus of fantasmatics is on the subject and subject identity, and how politically, ideology operates as a fantasy to cover over a radical contingency within the subject and social relations (Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Carter, 2008). Fantasmatic logics function to allow subjects to see the 'good life' and covering over contingencies. The study of the fantasmatic looks at how subjects are gripped by ideologies, the effects of these ideologies, why certain discourses are more appealing than alternatives and how subject positions are sustained or developed. This subject focus is also important in my study of eco-certification as a range of ideological apparatuses are at play to sediment subject positions in relation to the contingent discourse of eco-certification and sustainable tourism. Key questions include: do subjects see any concerns or contradictions with the equation of sustainability with the business case approach and its economic imperatives? In eco-certification, what about short-term measures and indicators and the economic viability components 'grip' us and sustain the obvious contingencies of tourism

as an economic practice? In another sense, what occludes ecotourism subjects from the contradictions suggested by low-impact tourism, for example, where eco-certification seems to focus on the tourist activity rather than a holistic view that includes carbon emissions in flying to an ecotourist destination? Why are we so convinced with or captured by measurements and indicators as proxies for sustainability? Ultimately, the key fantasy at play is with respect to the signification of eco. Each question gives a glimpse into the range of ideological apparatuses at play with respect to eco-certification and the operate to sustain vertical positions in the eco-certification supply chain, including accreditors and certifiers, as well on the demand-side with respect to tourist operators and tourists.

2.2.4 Articulation

Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 165) draw upon the interplay of the social, political and fantasmatic logics to examine articulation, which "serves as a means to conceptualise the way we conduct research in the social sciences, while also contributing to our overall understanding of the logic of critical explanation". Articulation, as Laclau and Mouffe (2014, p. 99) explain relation to identifying nodal points that operate as "privileged discursive points of this partial fixation". Howarth *et al.* (2000, p 8) further suggest that nodal points are "privileged signifiers or reference points ('points de capiton' in the Lacanian vocabulary) in a discourse that bind together a particular system of meaning or 'chain of signification'". The practice of articulation brings together both theoretical and empirical elements reflecting the sedimented social practices, the contested terrain of emergence and the creation of subject positions and associated ideological apparatuses to provide a critical explanation of phenomenon at the social, political and fantasmatic level (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). All the elements I have discussed so far both theoretically and with respect to sustainability materialise in the articulation of 'eco-certification'. It is important to note that articulation requires the researcher to exercise judgement within the particular research context, keeping in mind that researchers are also

political actors to respond to the perceive normative deficit alleged by Critchley (2004). Articulation links the logics in a 'non-subsumptive and non-eclectic fashion' to account for the problematised phenomenon (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 208). This also responds to Torfing's critique of discourse theory for lacking a methodological grounding to move beyond thick descriptions and suggests the prominence of the political. Eco-certification is fundamentally a political discourse concerning the contested terrain of sustainable tourism.

2.2.5   Critique

The final element of Glynos and Howarth's (2007) LOCE is critique, which is important in privileging the critical study of social phenomena. Connolly (1995, p. 36) defines critique as the "contestable character of your own projections, by offering readings of contemporary life that compete with alternative accounts, and by moving back and forth between these two levels". However, critique is not detached or separable, but rather it is with problematisation, characterisation and political engagement (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). The combination of political and fantasmatic logics provides opportunities for critique, in particular due to the role of contingency in the emergence of discourse, structures and systems and how subjects articulate meaning and identify to those structures and systems. Dislocations, in that sense, help make 'the lack' visible. This also involves examining attempts to fix or perfect subject positions with respect to ideologies and the exclusion of alternative knowledges or approaches. The role for critique takes discourse theory and the LOCE beyond descriptivism and answers Critchley's (2004) suggestion of a normative problem.

These five moments provide the foundation of the LOCE and this provides the opportunity to reflect on the implications of LOCE as a methodological framework and this is the focus of the next section.

3 Interactions between the Logics within the Logics of Critical Explanation

Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 133) present the LOCE as "units of explanation" through the use of three distinct logics (the social, political and fantasmatic). The logics help to explain how regimes and social practices manifest, stabilise and are maintained within discursive system, give an account of problematised phenomenon and allow for a critical engagement with social practices under investigation. Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 152) argue:

> As our ontological framework implies, our different sorts of logics always work together in the practices under investigation. This means that any 'logic of critical explanation' involves the linking together of different logics, along with the empirical circumstances in which they occur, in order to construct an account that is descriptive, explanatory, and critical. More specifically social, political, and fantasmatic logics come together to elucidate processes of social change and stabilisation within a general theory of hegemony [...] In short, social, political, and fantasmatic logics are articulated together in an overarching explanatory logic that combines descriptive, explanatory, and critical aspects.

To investigate the problematised phenomenon of the articulation of eco-certification, a little more time reflecting on the different logics and their function is useful. Although Glynos and Howarth (2007) suggest that there is an interrelationship between the logics in LOCE, there also appears a distinct, linear order through which processes are made 'intelligible'. I focus on this 'order' in the next section.

3.1 A Current Perspective on the Logics of Critical Explanation (An Inherent Order)

Despite suggesting interactivity, and whether intended or not, the presentation of the logics in the LOCE seems to assume a distinct order: first, the identification of the social logic of the object; second, the diagnosis of the political logic concerning the emergence of the object; and third, a look at the subject to identify associated fanatasmatic logics. This suggests a social-political-fantasmatic (S-P-F) approach. Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 154) explain:

> ... as we have stressed, our different types of logic enable us to describe and explain social practices by setting out their social, political and fantasmatic conditions of possibility. In the first instance, social logics enable us to specify the rules governing a particular social practice, as well as associated features and phenomena. But in addition, political and fantasmatic logics provide the resources to account for the emergence, formation, and maintenance of particular social practices, focusing especially on their political constitution and the ways in which subjects are gripped by certain discourses and not others.

I wish to stress that Glynos and Howarth (2007) never explicitly state that there is an order to the presentation of the logics, but they also present the logics in the social, political and fantasmatic order (see, for example, Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Griggs & Howarth, 2006, 2013; Howarth, 2013; Glynos, Klimecki & Willmott, 2015; Howarth, Glynos & Griggs, 2016). Perhaps as an indication of structural and institutional tendencies of human beings, those that adopt or discuss the LOCE tend also to present their work employing the social, political and fantasmatic order (see for example, West, 2011; Clarke 2012, Thompson & Willmott, 2016; Hoedemaekers, 2018, but there are many others. I also note that some scholars focus on the social or fantasmatic logic in isolation). The impact of all of this is that there seems an inherent, assumed order in the interaction of the three logics. Identify and articulate social rules, practices and processes first (the social logic of the object); identify and interpret the social spaces in which social practices emerged and contested (the political logic of the object) and then turn to examine how subjects are influenced by associated ideologies associated with social practices (the fantasmatic logic of the subject). This may not be the intent of LOCE, but it does suggest a chronologic or procedural structure to understanding social phenomena. By and of itself, this may not be problematic, but I take issue with the suitability of the social, political and fantasmatic order for my study of the emergence of the articulation of eco-certification.

3.2 A Continuity of Interactions for the Logics of Critical Explanation

I wish to emphasise that as a case specific logic of critical study, there is likely to be alternative interpretations of the order of the logics relevant to individual articulations of the LOCE including *political, fantasmatic and social*, or *political, social and fantasmatic* respectively (see Figure 6.1 below). The key message of Figure 6.1 is that logics are interactive; they are not ordered or linear. In my study of the articulation of the discourse of eco-certification, it makes sense to start with an examination of the political logic, to "allow us to account for their historical emergence and formation by focusing on the conflicts and contestations surrounding

their constitution" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 213). In the case of eco-certification, contestation at the political logic level had significant impacts at both fantasmatic and social logic levels. The story of the contested emergence of discourses also impacts on the sedimentation of social rules and practices and reflects the impact of contingent discourses, which enables social actors to sediment the rules and regulative approaches to social practices in strategic and political ways. Furthermore, this illustrates an important interactivity between each element. The following figure, Figure 6.1, illustrates the interactivity of the logics within LOCE and suggests that each application of LOCE should identify an appropriate approach to the three logics relevant to the concrete case of application (the interactivity is not set, but is fluid).
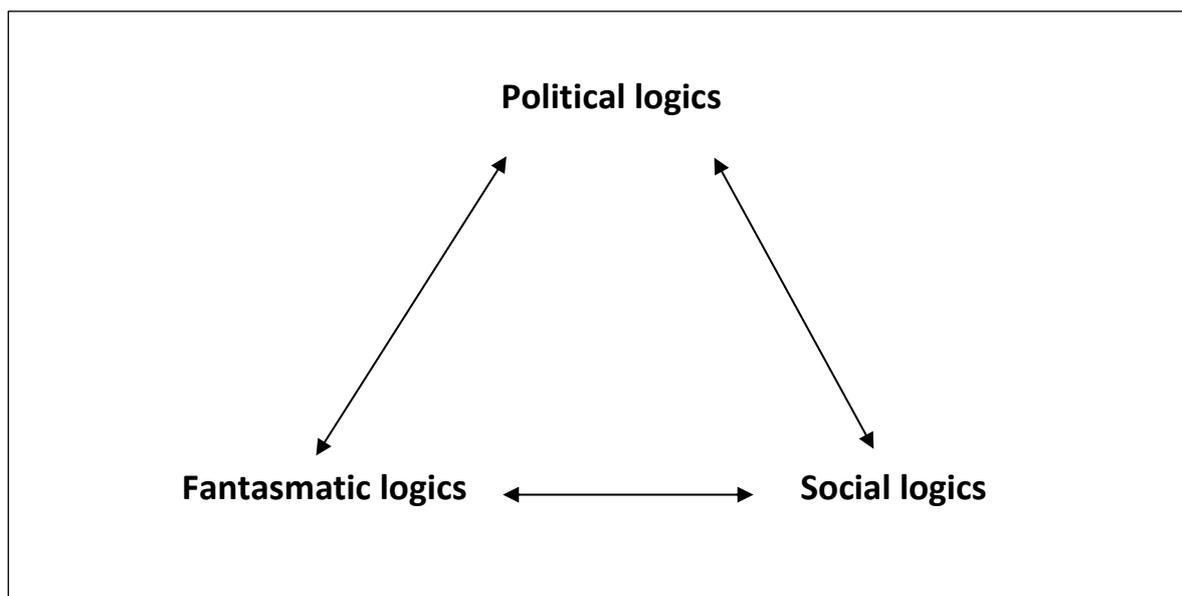
Figure 6.1: Emphasising an Interactive Approach to the Logics of Critical Explanation

I explain my approach in more detail through examining the logic of the logics to eco-certification. The social logic accounts for sedimented rules, concepts and manifest social practices that structure and inform social interactions and relationships between subjects within particular social contexts. In the tourism context, the response to the challenges of climate change and sustainability resulted not in a decline in tourism, but rather a focus on eco-

efficiency including fuel efficiency, waste reduction and tourism operators offering products and practices labelled 'sustainable'. The study of the social logic would identify and examine the rules and practices that facilitate the focus on eco-efficiency and the incorporation of neoliberal measures and indicators that are associated with sustainability in the tourism context. Core sedimentations revolve around the assumption to limit the scope of the measurement, in most cases, to the tourism product, experience or practice (and to exclude the whole-of-lifecycle tourism activity, including the impact of getting to and returning from the activity) and redescribing the sustainable tourism to incorporate the economic imperatives of tourism. The foundations of this were explored in Chapters three and four.

The impact of these sedimentations, for example, is the incorporation of the measurement of carbon as an indicator of impact and sustainability. Tourism Australia, for example, the official tourism authority in Australia supports a focus on measuring carbon and offers an industry tool kit that guides tourist operators in how to measure their carbon emissions and offers suggestions concerning emission reduction. While the social logic many account for the establishment of these social practices, it does not necessarily provide an account for how and why these practices are internalised by social actors. Crucial questions about what motivates subjects in the tourism industry to see carbon measurement as an 'essential' or 'effective' sustainability practice remain.

Upon accounting for sedimented social practices, Glynos and Howarth's (2007) LOCE approach suggests focusing on the political logic to explore the creation and contestation of the articulated social practices. This could include the identification of dislocatory moments that disrupt existing practices or rules and require re-articulation and re-identification through contestation. I have indicated how the Brundtland Report (1987) constitutes an important dislocatory moment for tourism as it provided a foundation for linking tourism as a neoliberal economic activity to sustainability (which could have been a threatening discourse). The

subsequent reification of the sustainable development discourse (with its seamless integration of economic interests) was important for the re-identification of tourism, which integrated the equivalency of capital and sustainability into its discourse through sustainable tourism. In applying this to Laclau and Mouffe (2014), hegemonic politics accounts for the integration of the sustainability concern into traditional economics interests and how the articulation of sustainable tourism operates as floating or empty signifier, due to the range of signifieds attached (with origins in economic, social, environmental or socio-cultural interests). In the production of a new discourse, tourism subjects formulate new practices and rules, such as eco-certification and the integrated sustainable development discourse and this has resulted in the privileging of the business case approach to sustainability and its associated economic focus. The development and integration of the triple bottom line (TBL) approach as an approach to reporting on sustainability was an emergent practice. However, the TBL approach privileges economic aspects of sustainability above all other interests in is construction and presentation: Note the order of presentation – economic, social and environmental – but also note that actors account for social and environmental impacts measured through economic impacts (see, Henriques, 2013). The question then is why, for example, are subjects gripped by regimes such as the TBL approach. This fantasmatic question relates to ideology and Glynos & Howarth, (2007, p. 145) focus on understanding "*why* specific practices and regimes 'grip' subjects". This suggests a need to examine the concept of ideology, which I discuss from a subject position as well as an institutional perspective.

The subject level of ideology concerns the how subjects appeal to ideology to cover over or to fix inherent contradictions or contingencies within their subject positions. This approach to ideology examines underlying belief systems of subjects that allow them, despite contingencies, to see the 'good life' and continue to justify how they act. This functioning of ideology may or may not be conscious. An example of this would the ideology of meritocracy (Young, 1958)

which suggest the logic that everyone can get to the top (succeed) (Solt *et al.,* 2016), based on the merits of the subject (McNamee & Miller Jr., 2004) provided they work hard enough. Althusser's (1994) theory of ideology suggests that overdetermination is important in the process of subject positions and ideology plays an important role as it completes the subject. Ideological apparatuses cover over cracks and contingencies in subject positions.

From an institutional or structural perspective, Althusser's (1994) development of Marx's theory has the benefit of illustrating how institutions, such as the UNWTO, WTTC, Tourism Australia, ISO, GSTC, TIES and Ecotourism Australia 'use' ideology to establish certain practices, such as carbon measurement within the eco-certification articulation to 'convince' social actors that these practices are appropriate, effective and the right pathway.

Mowforth and Munt (2016) discuss ideology in reviewing tourism and sustainability and suggest that ideology was first introduced as a theory of fundamental ideas. Marx, however, developed this notion by taking current economic circumstances and political struggles into account. Ideology, for Marx, "is the system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group" (Althusser, 1994, p. 120). The impact of Marx's intervention is to link ideology to economic practices. Althusser (1994, pp. 123-125) draws on these foundations to presenting a theory of ideology with two propositions that determine the structure and the function of ideology:

a) "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence"; and

b) "Ideology has a material existence".

The first proposition extends Marx, who argues that the function of ideology masks exploitative arrangements, while the second proposition suggests that ideology manifests. This suggest that it does not occur only as ideas or in subjects' minds, but rather that ideology manifests in actions and practices. Althusser (1994, pp. 130-131) introduces the notion of interpellation to help explain the functioning of ideology:

> … ideology "acts" or "functions" in such a way that it "recruits" among the individuals (it recruits them all), or "transforms" the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: "Hey, you there!"

> Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognised that the hail was "really" addressed to him, and that "it *was really* him that was hailed" (and not someone else) (emphasis in original).

Althusser (1994, p.127) notes that:

> … the ideological representation of ideology is itself forced to recognise that every 'subject' endowed with a 'consciousness' and believing in the 'ideas' that his 'consciousness' inspires in him and freely accepts, must '*act* according to his ideas', must therefore inscribe his own ideas as a free subject in the actions of his material practice (emphasis in original).

What this suggests is that ideology manifests in social practices, as explained further by

Althusser (1994, pp. 127-128):

> I shall therefore say that, where only a single subject (such and such an individual) is concerned, the existence of the ideas of his belief is material in that *his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject* […] Ideas have disappeared as such (in so far as they are endowed with an ideal or spiritual existence), to the precise extent that it has emerged that their existence is inscribed in the actions of practices governed by rituals defined in the last instance by an ideological apparatus. It therefore appears that the subject acts in so far as he is acted by the following system (set out in the order of its real determination): ideology existing in a material ideological apparatus, prescribing material practices governed by material ritual, which practices exist in the material actions of a subject acting in all consciousness according to his belief [emphasis in original].

Therefore, ideology manifests both in subject practices, social practices and in the creation of subject positions in covering over contingencies. This helps to account for how carbon measures, short-term economic viability and waste reduction under logics of eco-efficiency sustain the imagery of eco-certification for ecotourism. As a component of Althusser's ideological state apparatus, this imagery within eco-certification facilitates knowledge and practices concerning sustainable tourism (as ideologies). Transnational institutions, such as the UNWTO, the WTTC, accreditation bodies, certification bodies and other national or regional tourism bodies are powerful facilitators of certain knowledges and practices and help to shape certain ideologies about sustainability. The vertical integration of the supply-side of tourism

with respect to eco-certification is an important element in reinforcing important ideological positions at macro-, meso- and micro-levels. The UNWTO sustainable tourism definitions focuses on taking "full account of current and future economic, social and environmental impacts". This serves thought to reinforce concerns with economic interests (and might privilege those economic interests as discussed with respect to the TBL framework). The UNWTO sets standards for the entire tourism industry and a variety of tourism bodies incorporate UNWTO guidance and standards into their practices (see the influence of the UNWTO on tourism bodies in Table 8.5 in Chapter eight). This reflects Althusser's (1994, p. 125-126) argument that ideology is grounded in a material existence:

> I said that each of [ideological apparatus] was the realisation of an ideology […] and ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices.

In the institution of industry-wide practices, such as carbon measures as an eco-efficient measure of environmental sustainability) or community-based tourism (as a means of achieving social sustainability), the adoption and implication of these practices by subjects also involves the adoption of certain facilitating ideologies. However, these ideologies not only manifest in the social practices, but they also function by giving identity to subjects through interpellation. Interpellation allows subjects to identify with a certain identity and with a certain role in society, through unconscious practices, beliefs and rituals based on recognition and misrecognition (Howarth *et al.,* 2000). Althusser (1994, pp. 129-130) illustrates this through the example of 'knocking on a door':

> To take a highly 'concrete' example: we all have friends who, when they knock on our door and we ask, through the door, the question 'Who's there?', answer (since 'it's obvious') 'It's me'. And we recognise that 'it is him', or 'her'. We open the door, and 'it's true, it really was she who was there'. To take another example: when we recognise somebody of our (previous) acquaintance [*(re)-connaissance*] in the street, we show him that we have recognised him (and have recognised that he has recognised us) by saying to him 'Hello, my friend', and shaking his hand (a material ritual practice of ideological recognition in everyday life – in France at least; elsewhere, there are other rituals).

The process by which ideology helps to perfect subject-positions also fashions subjects as-always-ready subjects (Althusser, 1994, p. 130). This links Althusser's work to Freud's conceptualisation of overdetermination.

Howarth *et al.* (2000) emphasise that subjects are not homogenous, as individuals take up an array of dissimilar subject positions at the same time (Howarth *et al.,* 2000). For instance, a social actor might be 'female', 'middle class' and 'environmentally conscious'. However, at a particular point moment in time, one of these subject positions might conflict with another or take precedence and overdetermination explains how subjects focus on one particular identity when necessary to cover over contingency (Laclau, 1990; Howarth *et al.,* 2000). Laclau and Mouffe's (2014) focus on subject positions does however reject the "deterministic connotations of Althusser's theory", as all "identities of subjects are discursively constructed" (Howarth *et al.,* 2000, p. 13).

In the tourism context, as institutions re-shaped and created new rules concerning sustainable tourism outcomes, including the articulation of eco-certification, these shifts necessitated the ascription to or modification of subject positions. Thus, ideologies impacted both on the contest concerning the articulation of sustainable tourism and in subject position that influenced the sedimented practices of eco-certification. Ecotourism Australia were able to adjust subject position to respond to the emergence of a new structure to eco-certification (such as vertical accreditation), but also to incorporate what was seen as industry 'best practice' (Ecotourism Australia – or its predecessor – were involved with Green Globe as authors of the International Ecotourism Standard for Certification, the IESC). The associated ideologies of eco-efficiency, neoliberalism and economic development gripped the supply-side of tourism largely due to their replication of existing conditions, covered over the contingent approach to sustainability and manifested in the social articulation of eco-certification, including rules and practices including carbon measurement, waste reduction, recycling programmes and a range of indictors

systems. This example illustrates the interactivity of the three logics. There is no linear relationship here, as the fantasmatic influences and is influenced by the political logic and the fantasmatic influences the social logics, which in turn reinforces the fantasmatic. There is no determinism in that one logic necessitates the other; rather an appreciation of the logics as interactive would suggest a more dynamic approach to understanding the impacts and emergence of the logics. This dynamism helps to illustrate new understandings of how subjects understand and interpret concepts, such as eco-certification, how new social rules emerge and are translated into practice and how subjects cover over contingencies, by allowing subjects to identify their manifest actions as the 'good life'.

4   Conclusions from the Chapter

This chapter presented Glynos and Howarth's LOCE as an appropriate methodological framework for studying the articulatory discourse of eco-certification for ecotourism within the context of sustainable tourism. I outlined the five moments of LOCE and focused on the social, political and fantasmatic logics. Key arguments included:

- Discourse theory does not prescribe methods, as Laclau (1990, p. 235) suggests that each use of discourse theory requires the researcher to identify contextually with what methods for collecting and analysing research data makes sense. However, the choice not to specify method leads to particular criticisms of discourse theory. Principal amongst those are Critchley's (2004) critique of discourse theory's normative deficit while Torfing (1998) suggests that discourse theory lacks a methodological pathway to move beyond thick descriptions.

- In response, Glynos and Howarth (2007) introduce the LOCE as a framework to assist with empirical work in discourse theory. Five moments are important to the LOCE:

    i.   Problematisation: Discourse theory research should address present problems of the social and political world rather than focusing on method-driven research. I argued that the problem in the context of my thesis was the subsumption of the concept of sustainability into a development capitalist system and the emergence of eco-certification enables tourism to continue as primarily as an economic activity (Mowforth & Munt, 2016; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006) that disguises 'business-as-usual' practices as sustainable.

    ii.   Retroduction: To avoid the pitfalls of deduction and induction, retroduction is a methodological approach focusing on making problematised phenomenon more intelligible. The technique investigates what gave rise to a social problem. In my

study, I seek to understand how the articulation of eco-certification, in its current form, emerged.

iii. Social, political and fantasmatic logics:

- Social logics examine the sedimentation of rules, norms and social practices that organise social relations. In my study, institutions such as professional bodies including the UNWTO, the WTTC, accreditation and certification bodies, destination marketing organisations, local and national governmental institutions and educational institutions including universities help to sediment central practices that make the reproduction of the eco-certification discourse possible. This includes indicator systems for measuring sustainable tourism outcomes and policies and strategies focusing on ecotourism.

- Political logics consider social spaces in which new discourses and rules emerge through contestation. The Brundtland Report (1987) is a key dislocatory moment in tourism due to the role played in emergence of sustainable tourism. The integration of sustainability into traditional capitalist tourism led to the emergence of new articulatory practices, such as eco-certification.

- Fantasmatic logics consider how subjects are gripped by ideologies that help them continue with particular social practices. In particular, this might include covering over contingencies and functions to grip subjects with ideological apparatus that helps them to see the 'good life'. In my study, the issue at hand is how ideology helps to overcome contradictions of economic viability and sustainability.

iv. Articulation: is concerned with the identification of nodal points. Eco-efficiency, for instance, acts as a nodal point in the discourse 'sustainable tourism'.

v. Critique: Political and fantasmatic logics protects space for researchers, as political actors, to engage in critique, especially by illustrating radical contingencies embedded within structures and systems (to help make the lack visible).

- I take issue with the apparent linearity in the way that the logics within the LOCE seems to be applied. There seems almost a structural rigidity around the application of the logics in the order, social, political and fantasmatic. I argue that it is important to remember that the logics are interactive and dynamic. I illustrated this by drawing on different moments, events and practices present in the tourism literature to show, for example, how the fantasmatic logics played a role both in instituting sedimented social practices, but also in the contestation concerning the emergence of eco-certification with respect to the political logic (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). I explored the interactivity of ideology in detail in the chapter.

In summary, my study concentrates on the discursive articulation concerning eco-certification and how this is equated with the business case approach in the context of tourism. The main

focal point is on how tourism operators understand and interpolate the articulation of eco-certification. To do this, though, I need to identify appropriate research methods for the study of the interactivity and dynamism of social-political-fantasmatic logics and to understand the emergence of the vertically integrated articulation of eco-certification. This is the focus of Chapter seven, which introduces Merriam's approach to the case study as an appropriate method.

- Chapter Seven -
Research Methods and Design

1   Chapter Overview

Chapter six introduced Glynos and Howarth's (2007) LOCE as the appropriate methodological

framework for understanding articulation of eco-certification for ecotourism in the Australian

context, focusing on the vertical integration between accreditors at the transnational level,

Ecotourism Australia as a certifier at the regional level and tourist operators seeking

certification at the local level. I also discussed the importance of understanding the interactivity

between the three logics (social, political and fantasmatic) as a dynamic process. In light of this

methodological frame, this chapter outlines an approach to case study research (I present the

vertical-integration concerning eco-certification as a case study). I also explore the methods for

data collection and analysis to study the discursive articulation of eco-certification for

ecotourism. The following data collection and analysis questions focus the discussion in this

chapter:

- Why is Merriam's approach to case study research appropriate for LOCE?

- What approaches to data collection and what techniques of data analysis are appropriate
  for the levels of inquiry in the thesis?

- How is the combination of research methods (within the case context) appropriate for
  the theoretical analysis developed by discourse theory?

- Why does rhetorical redescription offer a useful approach to data analysis?

The study is focused on the particular case study of Ecotourism Australia's eco-certification

programme recognising the vertical integration of eco-certification and structured across three

study sites including the proliferation of articulations concerning sustainable tourism and

ecotourism, the proliferation of credentialism and the proliferation of associated claims to

expertise (see Figure 3.1 in Chapter three). The concrete nature of the case study aligns with

the principles of discourse theory and the LOCE and I argue that Merriam's approach to case

studies is a helpful case study heuristic to focus my study on the articulation of the discourse of eco-certification.

2   Case Studies in Organisations and Management

The term 'case studies' is over-employed in research into organisations and management, or more specifically, researchers claim to employ a case study methodology but provide few clues as to how they conceive of a 'case', why the study is a study of a 'case' or whether they are informed by a case study methodology (for example, in the context of health research, in a survey of 34 case studies, 26 had no reference to any particular approach to case studies, see Hyett, Kenny & Dickson-Swift, 2014). Traditional research into organisations and management was dominated by influence of a strong economic rationality and the adoption of the positivist paradigm (Willmott, 2005). However, the implications of positivism in the production of knowledge is not without challenge, especially reflecting changes to the landscape and context of organisational and management research (Andriopoulos & Slater, 2013). Traditional approaches to theory-testing focus on explaining phenomena rather than understanding phenomena and there are limits to the nature of theory-testing. Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007, pp. 26-27) argue that traditional methods do not provide sufficient insights into complex phenomena across multidisciplinary settings with the impact that the "'how' and 'why' in unexplored research areas" remain unanswered. A consequence of the changing practice and research landscapes are increasing calls for the employment of different research methodologies (see, for example, Barratt *et al.,* 2011; Andriopoulos & Slater, 2013; Guercini, 2014).

The employment of case study methodology is popular. However, case studies are a contested domain with positivist or post-positivist approaches (see, Yin, 1984; 2003; Eisenhardt 1989) and social constructionism approaches (Stake, 2000; Merriam, 1998; 2009). Merriam (1998, p. xi) warns that researchers are often confused "as to what a case study is and how it can be differentiated from other types of qualitative research" (Merriam, 1998, p. xi). Debates about

case studies reflect paradigmatic arguments across organisational and management studies. For example, Runfola *et al,* (2017, p. 116) present two definitions of case study research that demonstrate an affinity with positivist or post-positivist approaches to knowledge:

> … a qualitative case study can be defined in many ways: two well-known definitions are a "detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalisable to other events" (George & Bennett, 2005:5) and "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1994:13).

Eisenhardt (1989) reflects the varied objectives that can be achieved through case study research, including the provision of descriptions, the generation of theory through induction, the explanation of phenomena, or to collect data for deductive testing to test hypotheses and generate generalisable outcomes (Eisenhardt, 1989). From a positivist or post-positivist perspective, Yin (1984) promotes that use of multiple cases to provide strong evidence, while Barratt *et al.* (2011, p. 332) argue that while "a single case is possible, multiple case are more compelling and make the research more robust". These approaches to case study research focus on traditional positivist outcomes, including generating quantitative outputs and "specifically investigat[ing] rival hypothesis" (Barratt *et al.*, 2011, p. 332). Andriopoulos and Slater (2013) reviewed 79 case study methodology papers published in the International Marketing Review (IMR) between 1990-2010. Their analysis reveals that 17 papers employed qualitative case study methodology for the purposes of theory generation, while the remaining 62 papers focused on theory development or theory testing. Runfola *et al,* (2017) studied 352 qualitative case study articles published in twenty of the top business and management journals. This represented less than five percent of all articles published in those journals across the time. Barratt *et al.* (2011, p. 334) argued that "qualitative case studies constitute a very small portion of the published papers" in management journals.

Case studies, though, are a powerful technique for collecting and organising a site of study. Yin's work focuses on generating comparable data in the positivist sense, as multiple sources

of evidence are required for replication purposes (Yin, 2003), but case study approaches by Stake (2000) and Merriam (1998) focus on in-depth studies of particular phenomena for interpretive, critical or post-structural study. In contrast to Yin, Stake's approach to case studies focuses on the "study of the particular" and focuses on a single site case study (Stake, 2000, p. 438). Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 25) suggest that a case is the study of "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context". The complexity of case studies may explain why it is a comparatively under-utilised methodological framework in organisation studies and management or why, when it is employed, there is arguably insufficient attention paid to what is a case and what approach to case studies is being employed.

The current state of tourism research reflects a similar situation with respect to paradigmatic research and the use of case studies. As a multidisciplinary field of research, tourism draws upon different disciplines including business, management, geography, economics, marketing and policy making. Many of these disciplines are also influenced by strong, positivist traditions. Xiao and Smith (2006) found that nine percent of articles employed case study approaches across five years in top tourism journals (Tourism Management, Annals of Tourism Research, Journal of Travel Research and Tourism Analysis). Only 24 papers used a qualitative approach to case studies, and 71 papers (nearly three times as many) used case studies to generate quantitative information following "scientific research procedures with sound analytical techniques" (Xiao & Smith, 2006, p. 747). Xiao & Smith (2006) do note that the majority of case studies in tourism used a single-case approach. However, in reviewing the use of case studies in tourism, there seems to be some confusion between focusing more on internal validity or on external validity and reliability. Xiao & Smith (2006) note that there is a concern with replication and researchers employed various 'tactics' within the single case study for this purpose, including using multiple sources of evidence, pattern matching and the use of logic models. This suggests a preoccupation either with positivist research or an overarching

influence of the language of positivism on the employment of the qualitative research approach to data collection.

However, paradigmatically, I wish to employ the case study approach for the purposes of collecting information for the LOCE from a post-structural perspective. As I would like to understand how industry actors understand and interpolate the concept of eco-certification and the resulting impacts, my aim is to let accounts speak for themselves. I am not interested in comparing and contrasting or testing data for replication. In reflecting all arguments, I propose to employ Merriam's (1998) case study approach, and this is the focus on the next section.

3 Research Design and Methods

3.1 Case Study Design – Merriam's (1998) Approach to Qualitative Research

Given the site of my research concerns the discursive articulation of eco-certification for ecotourism, it is important from a method perspective that I am able to understand how discourses are created, sustained and transformed by different social agents. I also need a technique that allows me to examine the interaction between different social and political actors including accreditation and certification bodies, tourism operators, governments and policy makers. Laclau (1990, p, 235) emphasises that discourse theory is advanced through appropriate "concrete studies" that deliver a deep understanding of phenomenon under investigation offering plural insights (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). In the chapter on articulation in the LOCE, Glynos and Howarth (2007, pp. 201-207) reflect on research strategies and argue for the use of case studies due to the significant role of articulation in discourse theory.

Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 208) reflect on issues concerning the limitations of case studies and suggest that they not be regarded as "dispensable prolegomena" or as "self-sufficient unities that speak for themselves", but rather that case studies should *always* be embedded in a broader theoretical context (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 208). My proposed case study methodology takes guidance from Glynos and Howarth (2007) and employs Merriam's (1998) approach to case studies (see Yazan 2015 for a helpful comparison between the approaches to case study

research from Yin, Stake and Merriam). Table 7.1 below gives a short overview of the key characteristics of Merriam's (1998) approach to case studies.

Table 7.1: Case study characteristics according to Merriam (1998)

Epistemological underpinnings: Merriam's (1998) approach to case study is founded in constructivism with the assumption that "all types of qualitative research are based [on] the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6) and that "that reality is not an objective entity; rather, there are multiple interpretations of reality" (Merriam, 1998, p. 22). The focus of this thesis is to understand the meaning of eco-certification for ecotourism as constructed by interactions between social actors.
Case and case study definitions: A **case** according to Merriam (1998, p. 27) is "a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries" which can be a person, a program, a group, a specific policy etc. Thus, the **case study** is "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (Merriam, 1998, p. xiii). To achieve this, a case study should be *particularistic* (by focusing on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon), *descriptive* (by developing a thick description of the phenomenon under investigation) and *heuristic* (by helping the reader to understand the phenomenon under investigation). My case study examines the process of eco-certification at three levels of a vertically integrated framework from standard setters and accreditors to Ecotourism Australia (as a certifier) and tourist operators with eco-certification to understand how social actors create, maintain and act in relation to the articulation of eco-certification.
Case study design: When designing the case study, the review of appropriate literature is important, as it "is an essential phase contributing to theory development and research design" (Yazan, 2015, p. 149). In this study, the literature review examines key decision moments with respect to eco-certification, including the impact of different articulations from sustainability into sustainable tourism and ecotourism, key issues relevant to indicators, measurements and indicator systems, the roles of experts and expertise and identifies the key players involved in the eco-certification process. Given the range of social actors, the eco-certification process is political and articulatory, and this provides a justification for employing discourse theory as a theoretical framework.
Gathering data for the case study: To fulfil the particularistic, descriptive and heuristic requirements of a case study, the data should be obtained through *interviews, observations and document analysis.* However, observations were not possible in my case study. Interviews and documents as data collection techniques resonate with the LOCE and discourse theory.
Analysing the data: I use the LOCE framework to frame my data analysis, but there are elements in common with Merriam's (1998, p. 178) approach to analysis, which is "the process of making sense out of the data ... [and this] involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning". For this research project, document analysis and rhetorical redescription are used to make sense of the data and to put them in a theoretical context.

In the tourism space, a limited number of studies employ Merriam's (1998) approach to case studies (Beeton, 2005). For example, Rønningen (2010) uses Merriam's methodology to study

innovation by tourist operators in a Norwegian context. Hritz and Cecil (2008) take Merriam's approach to study sustainability in the context of the cruise ship industry centred around Key West. Wray (2009) studies an integrated issue lifecycle approach to policy in the community network of Byron Bay in Australia, while Gjerald (2005) studies the socio-cultural impacts of tourism on the small community of North Cape in Norway. Iorio and Corsale (2010) engage Merriam's (1998) case study approach to gain in-depth understandings of rural tourism in Romania. This overview illustrates the diversity of the application of Merriam's (1998) approach in tourism. Helpfully, many of the elements studied including sustainability, innovation, communities, policy, networks, economic impacts and socio-cultural implications of tourism are elements relevant to my study. I consider Merriam's (1998) approach to case studies to be appropriate for the LOCE framework.

For Merriam (1998, p. 27), the context of cases could be a specific person, program, group, single policy, process or event (Yaran, 2015). A qualitative case study offers "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or a social unit" (Merriam, 1998, p. 21). Harrison *et al.* (2017, Article 19) suggest that Merriam has pragmatic approach to case studies:

> Merriam does not stipulate prioritizing a particular method for data collection or analysis, she does emphasize the importance of rigorous procedures to frame the research process. Advocating for careful planning, development, and execution of case study research, Merriam (1998, 2009) discusses the pragmatic structures that ensure case study research is manageable, rigorous, credible, and applicable.

Brown (2008) suggests that Merriam's approach focuses on the practical application of a range of pluralistic strategies that suit a pragmatic approach to research. It is clear that the key characteristic of the case studies lies within its focus on a single case set within a particular context (Smith, 1978; Merriam, 1998). This aligns with Glynos and Howarth's discussion of case studies (2007, p. 208) who argue:

> … the case study is only significant in relation to the connected practices of problematization, retroductive explanation, critique and persuasions, in which the latter three moments provide the overall context and conditions for its construction, conduct and

contribution to knowledge. This means that case studies are always immersed in a broader theoretical context, where they are informed by more general concepts.

For Glynos and Howarth (2007), the choice of research method is strategic, and supports the decision to use Merriam (1998) vis-à-vis Stake's (2000) constructionist approach to case studies. Yazan (2015, p. 139) argues:

> … the definition [Merriam] presents is broader than Yin's and Stake's and provides flexibility in utilizing qualitative case study strategy to research a much wider array of cases. … Merriam stresses its unique distinctive attributes: Particularistic (it focuses on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon); Descriptive (it yields a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study); Heuristic (it illuminates the reader's understanding of phenomenon under study).

This is important for my research because I have illustrated the connections of the articulation of eco-certification for ecotourism within a range of broader theoretical debates. My case study centred around Ecotourism Australia's eco-certification process focuses on the vertical integration between accreditors, Ecotourism Australia as a certifier and those seeking certification. The distinct focus on vertically-integrated process provides a specific context to reflect discourse theory's plural, democratic focus.

Glynos and Howarth's (2007) approach is similar to Merriam (1998, p. 29-30) as Merriam (1998) stresses three distinctive attributes of case studies including that case studies are particularistic in nature and are grounded in a particular situation, event or phenomenon; case studies offer rich and thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation and case studies are heuristic, as they deepen our understanding of phenomenon within a context but linked to broader theoretical debates. Merriam (1998) and the LOCE (2007) both suggest that problematisation is a starting point for case study research (although Merriam is not drawing on Foucault here). Glynos and Howarth (2007) and Merriam (1998) both highlight the methodological importance of studying positions of individual subjects. Case studies should "concentrate attention on the way particular groups of people confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of the situation" (Shaw, 1978, p. 2).

Merriam's (1998) approach to case studies complements the LOCE, especially as it is suitable

for a vertical case study and the examination of the supply and demand side of eco-certification

concentrated on Ecotourism Australia. The vertically-integrated study of interrelated social and

political actors involved in eco-certification is appropriate for case study research as it is based

on interconnections within a broader theoretical and practical context (Miles & Huberman,

1994). I see this choice as 'information rich':

> the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for
> study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about
> issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. (Patton, 1990, p. 169, emphasis
> in original).

The impact of accreditation bodies including the ISO, GSTC and TIES is to establish

international standards concerning certification and eco-certification that are then drawn upon

by certification bodies, such as Ecotourism Australia, who in turn certifies tourism operators as

'eco'. In Merriam's (1998) terminology, this represents my "select[ions of] the units of

analysis" (Merriam, 1998, p. 60). The interconnected nature of the case study is depicted in

Figure 7.1:
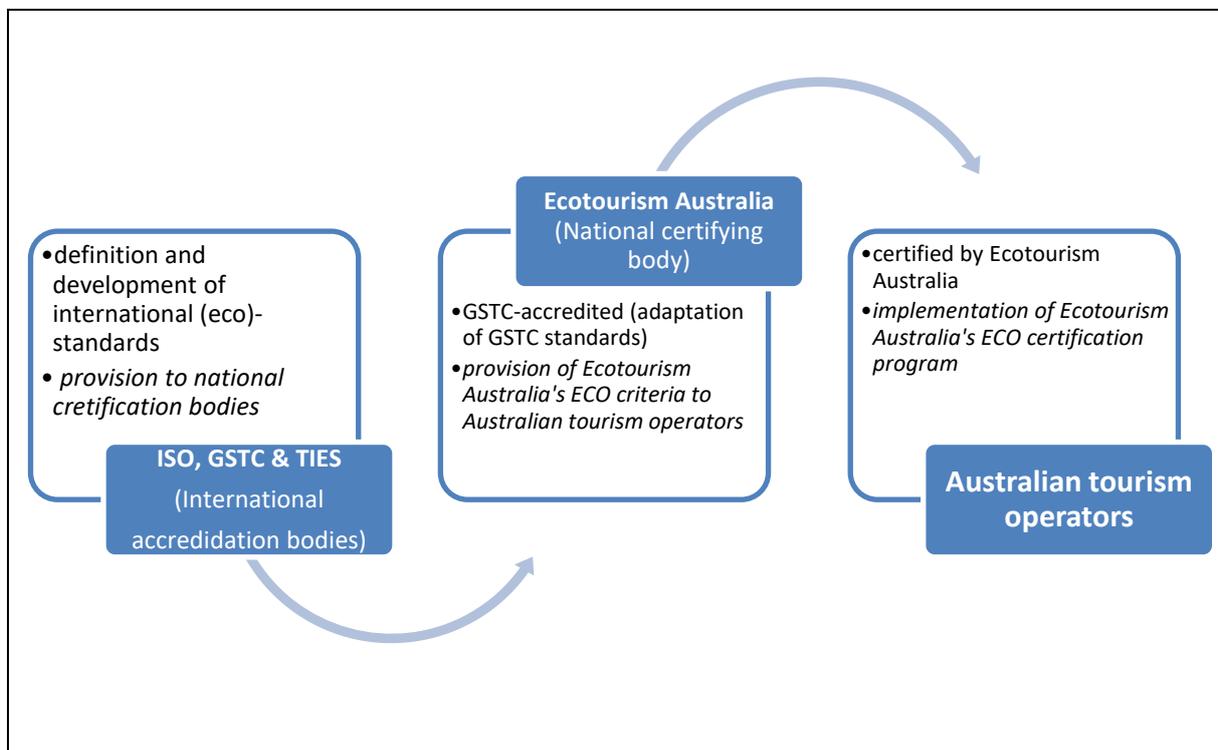
Figure 7.2: Relationships Between Different Study Sites within my Case Study

My case study seeks a holistic insight into the articulatory practices of the discourse of eco-certification for ecotourism as evidence of a broader theoretical and practice debate concerning the meaning of sustainable tourism.

Merriam's (1998) approach to case studies is a pragmatic constructivist approach to research and Merriam (1998) emphasises the suitability of data collection methods such as interviews and document analysis. These research methods are suited to my study because they provide a holistic and particularistic insight into phenomenon. This approach to case studies reflects data collection methods used within post-structuralist discursive interventions using case studies (see, for example, Aitchison, 2001; Zeddies & Millei, 2015; Frezatti *et al.*, 2014). Within the case framework, I collect data through interviews and document analysis and my approach is discussed in the next section.

3.2 Research Methods - Collecting Data

The case study of the discursive articulation of eco-certification for ecotourism is the study of an articulation concerning sustainable tourism that draws together a range of expert-approved indicators and measurements as a form of credentialism. Figure 7.2 illustrates this ontic focus in the study of eco-certification:

Figure 7.3: The Different Ontics Framing my Study of Eco-certification

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To understand how the tourism industry understands and interpolates the concept of eco-certification, how expertise around eco-certification emerged, and how the 'rules of the games' were created and how they translate and transform social practices, I use interviews and document analysis.

3.2.1 Interviews

The employment of ethnographically-informed techniques including interviews and document analysis is for the purpose of developing a deep understanding of research phenomenon. Howarth (2005, p. 339) evaluates the use of interviews and document analysis in discourse theory:

> In short … we are confronted with the difficulty of validating and corroborating what is said in interviews, of analysing information which we believe either to be true or false, and of accessing information what remains deliberately or unintentionally hidden … comparing different sorts of data (quantitative or qualitative, primary and secondary) and different types of method (for example, interviews and textual analysis) to see whether they support one another … is useful in validating evidence obtained during interviews. Moreover, material which is shown to be false, distorted, or partial can and ought to be analysed precisely because of their inaccuracies and concealments … they may themselves constitute important windows 'into actors' understandings and interpretations of events. Hyperbolic representations, omissions, over-wording, slips, and unusual collocations thus constitute valuable points of condensation in an interview, which require closer inspection and analysis … Finally, it is important to acknowledge the limits of information gleaned from interviews … and thus to supplement interview data with other sources such as primary documents … secondary interpretations, interviews from different places of enunciation, and so on.

My study begins with a thick understanding of how particular operators within the tourist sector construct discourses concerning eco-certification within the sustainable tourism debate and then moves on to interrogate the impacts of these articulations (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). This aligns with Merriam's (1998) approach, which seeks a deep and meaningful description and understanding of social phenomena. In relation to the case study, I employ focused, in-depth interviews with subjects from Ecotourism Australia and with certified Australian tourism operators. Jennings (2005, p. 106) explains that focused interviews are a form of unstructured interviews, in which "specific information is required from all participants" and notes that they are appropriate for tourism research. In tourism research, there is number of studies that use

focused, in-depth interviews within a case study design (see, for example, McCamley & Gilmore, 2017; Dickinson, Lumsdon & Robbins, 2011; Rogerson, 2002; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2011; Urbano, Toledano & Ribeiro, 2010). May (1997) argues that focused, unstructured interviews are appropriate for general exploratory, phenomenological or ethnographic work because they do not necessarily limit the scope of the nature of the discussion from the participant (depending of course on the skill of the interviewer). Focused, in-depth interviews embrace flexibility which allows the exploration of how participants understand their social world: this encourages greater qualitative depth than alternative forms of data collection (Pahl, 1995; Fontana & Frey, 2000). For Howarth and Torfing (2004, p. 338), interviews constitute:

> … an approach that stresses the importance of subjectivity in explaining social reality, and which seeks to provide 'thick descriptions' of events and processes … in-depth qualitative interviewing is an important way of generating primary texts.

Interviews are particularly important when gathering data or information from different social agents and parties as they allow for individual understanding of their social world to emerge. This is important given the multi-faceted and inter-disciplinary nature of my study. I conducted interviews for two components of my research. The first interview cohort concentrated on Ecotourism Australia, while the second sets of interviews discussed eco-certification with eco-certified Australian tourism operators. At Ecotourism Australia, I interviewed staff members from Ecotourism Australia and other associated interested parties to understand how an industry bodies understands the concept of sustainability within the context of the sustainable tourism and their approach to eco-certification. In interviewed ten individuals involved and interested in the eco-certification process at the certifying level. In relation to eco-certified Australian tourism operators, I conducted interviews with participants from a range of Australian tourism operators that had obtained Eco-certification from Ecotourism Australia to gain insight into the process of obtaining eco-certification, as well as to understand the why these operators wanted eco-certification. The majority of these interviews were conducted face-to-face, but due to difficulties in accessing certain of the tourism operators (given the vastness of Australia), I had

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to send an email with my interview questions. As I also engaged in an analysis of the operator's website, I selected operators with a well-presented website with links to their sustainability practices as interview participants. To invite interview participants, I analysed Ecotourism Australia's website for the nature of tourism products certified (see Appendix six for more information). The top five certified tourism products including tours, accommodation, cruises, wildlife and hiking and I invited a range of participants from each category. Some invitations were declined, while some indicated they would be willing, but it was not possible. In the end, I managed to interview five tourism operators from each category mentioned above for a total of twenty-five tourist operators (including the three responses to the email-based questions). Each interview was digitally recorded and lasted between 34 and 120 minutes. As focused, in-depth interviews, I had two or three focusing questions for each cohort to encourage participants to respond in ways that they decided and allowed participants to reflect on their experiences. Deep reflective narratives emerged in the majority of cases. To keep the interviews flowing and to clarify ideas and assumptions, I asked follow-up questions based on the interview responses. I received ethics approval to conduct interviews from the University of Canberra ethics committee and I provided information overviews to all interviewees prior to my interviews during recruitment and my interviewees also signed information consent forms prior to the interview commencing. I also promised confidentiality and anonymity to my interviews as far as was possible.

Post-interviews, I transcribed my data, but I elected to engage in a selective transcription process. Many books on interviews and research methods almost take-for-granted the process of transcription and there are resources that strongly suggest that transcription *must* be complete (see Davidson, 2009). I take issue with the idea of a complete transcription, as all transcription (turning a recorded conversation into text takes the interview out of context and therefore is an interpretation and incomplete). Davidson (2009, p. 37) argues that "transcription as a process

… is theoretical, selective, interpretive, and representational". Czarniawska (2000) reflects this by arguing that transcripts decontextualize research data context and requires recontextualization. Davidson (2009, p. 38) argues for embracing the selectivity of transcription:

> Rather than being a problem to overcome, selectivity needs also to be understood as a practical and theoretical necessity (Cook, 1990; Duranti, 1997). Because it is impossible to record all features of talk and interaction from recordings, all transcripts are selective in one way or another. Selectivity needs to be acknowledged and explained in relation to the goals of a study rather than taken to be unremarkable. As Ochs (1979) put it, "A more useful transcript is a more selective one" (p. 44).

In describing my transcription as selective, this is not to suggest that I did not take into account as much information as possible. My transcription process began with listening to my interviews in their totality. I listened to each interview a second time and started to take notes around interesting moments in the discussion. I listened a third time and begun to take time signatures. It was not until the fourth listen that I started to transcribe key sections of the interviews. Although interviews were an important data source, documents formed the foundation for much of my study and I outline the importance of documents in the next section.

3.2.2 Documents

Discourses are a powerful source of information and in my case study, documents provided the foundations to my empirical analysis (supported by interviews). Derrida's (1974, p. 158) argues that "there is nothing outside the text" and this helps to reinforce the importance of documents as powerful tools that help understand the phenomenon under investigation. May (1997, p. 157-158) that:

> Documents, as the sedimentations of social practices, have the potential to inform and structure the decisions which people make on a daily and longer-term basis; they also constitute particular readings of social events.

Howarth (2004) argues that documents are a useful information source, providing non-reactive, linguistic research data for discourse theory research. Howarth and Torfing (2004, pp. 336-337) argue that:

> Discourse theory needs … to guard against charges of linguistic reductionism, in which practices are merely the effects of texts, while … it must not conceive texts as purely epiphenomenal – as the effects of more objective and deeply rooted logics … the researcher is compelled to make decisions about the appropriate level and degree of contextualisation and must establish the limits of any particular project.

In my study, I used publicly available and accessible information and analysed documents collected from websites including ISO, GSTC, TIES, Ecotourism Australia, Green Globe, Earth Check and Australian tourism operators, as well as other publicly available material on eco-certification including news feed, publications, handbooks, brochures, information material, fact sheets and PDFs from these organisations. I also collected PDF copies from each website and of document for my document archive, which totalled approximately 1500 pages of information. The documents provided valuable insight into the development, process, application and logic supporting the articulation of eco-certification for ecotourism. I organised each one of chapters to represent a particular component of the eco-certification process and each empirical chapter focuses on one of the particular logics (political, fantasmatic, and social) to illustrate the interconnectivity between the logics in the LOCE. For instance, the accreditation focus addresses the political logics, examining how the impacts of dislocatory moments and the exposure of contingencies resulted in new rules and practices around eco-certification emerging. Some of this relates to the literature chapters, as well, and in particular, moments including the Brundtland Report (1987) and the Mohonk Agreement are important political moments in the development of eco-certification. The study of the fundamental assumptions and embedded practices within Ecotourism Australia's eco-certification process provides me with an insight into how certain ideologies, used by tourism officials, promote sustainable tourism development and how and why social actors (including tourist operators) are gripped by certain regimes or practices including the measurement of sustainability and associated indicators become proxies for achieving 'sustainable outcomes' in tourism.

4   The Combination of Different Research Methods

The combination of interviews and document analysis allows for a deep and meaningful contextualised understanding of a problematised phenomenon. Due to the ethnographically-informed approach to my study, the study and the meaning of data emerged and evolved as part of an iterative process and that these will be my own representation. Czarniawska (2000, p. 19) thus argues:

> …the 'voices of the field' do not speak for themselves; it is the author who makes them communicate on his or her conditions. Therefore, it is more adequate to speak, in line with Bakhtin […] about 'variegated speech' of the field, about leaving traces of different dialects, different idioms, and different vocabularies, rather than homogenising them into a 'scientific text'.

This multi-voiced story approach informs my research (Czarniawska, 2000). As Frezatti *et al.* 2014, p. 438 argue, "contextualisation provides the discourse theory justification for reading through texts, in a deconstructive approach to the re-interpretation and representation" of the eco-certification discourse. As I worked through my data, the principal information source for my empirics was the information covered in documents. The interviews operated to confirm the ideas presented in the documentary record and to aid in the interpretation of documents. Thus, documents are the predominant empirical source presented in the empirical chapters, but interviews supported the interpretation and argument presented. This illustrates how I reflected on my data and my role as researcher throughout the process:

> … a critical reflexivity about one's theoretical assumptions and research project, while adopting an 'ethos of openness' to the other, are useful ways of guarding against the temptation to reduce the other's discourse to familiar and self-serving purposes. In short, it is to view the dialogical relationship between interviewer and interviewee as … an encounter in language with all the attendant difficulties post-structuralists have noted about communication in general (Howarth, 2005, pp. 339-340).

The combination of interviews and document analysis are common methods in discourse theory research, as they are useful techniques in the process of articulation (Howarth, 2000; Stavrakakis, 2000; Griggs & Howarth, 2006; Griggs & Howarth, 2013). Useful examples of applied discourse theory work employ this combination of interviews and document analysis (see for example, Frezatti *et al.,* 2014; Carter, 2008; Griggs & Howarth, 2013; 2017). This

approach to data collection also aligns with Merriam's approach (1998) to qualitative research, who suggests that a combination of interviews and document analysis are appropriate as methods for case studies. In light of the data collected, I turn attention to the analysis of data in the next section focusing on rhetorical redescription.

5   Data Analysis

Traditional approaches to interpretive research seek to be atheoretical, in the sense that a goal is to present information while minimising explicit theoretical judgments that reflect the researcher's relative positions. However, in the critical space, theory plays a more explicit role in informing analysis. Discourse theory operates as a heuristic for understanding social phenomena and the LOCE, as a framework, structures the presentation of data centred around the current social problem under investigation. As Glynos and Howarth (2007) argue the image of the detached researcher is inappropriate, as the researcher is a political actor, and this will impact upon the study. As mentioned, Merriam's (1998) approach to case studies influenced my study, as Merriam's (1998) approach focuses on meaningful descriptions of the problematised phenomenon (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). For Merriam (1998, p. 178), who takes a pragmatic, constructivist epistemology, data analysis is:

> … the process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of the data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning.

For Merriam (1998, p. 155), there is flexibility as data collection and analysis inform each other, as "qualitative [research] design is emergent" (Yaran, 2015; Merriam, 1998, p. 155). Merriam (1998) proposes six approaches to analysing data including ethnographic analysis, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis, the constant comparative method, content analysis and analytic induction. Ethnographic analysis focuses on the study of culture and social practices, through thick descriptions of the phenomenon. Narrative analysis focuses on "the stories people tell and how these stories are communicated" (Merriam, 1998, p. 157). Phenomenological analysis extracts the essential structures of social phenomena (which is in contrast to discourse

theory which rejects this notion of structural social essentialism). The constant comparative method is based in grounded theory enabling the researcher to compare different categories, themes and hypotheses. Content analysis and analytical induction are inductive analytical methods. LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p. 267) conclude, that researchers who:

> … simply describe what they saw … fail to do justice to their data. By leaving readers to draw their own conclusions, researchers risk misinterpretation. Their results also may be trivialised by readers who are unable to make connections implied, but not made explicit, by the researcher.

This aligns with those that critiqued discourse theory for the perceived methodological weakness of remaining descriptive. However, for the purpose of my data analysis, I am not convinced by Merriam's data analytical approaches, as none of the strategies take a critical stance, a political stance or take power into account. For the purposes of my study, a politically-informed discourse analysis is appropriate. Shaw and Bailey (2009, p. 413) argue that:

> Discourse analysis is the study of social life, understood through analysis of language in its widest sense (including face-to-face talk, non-verbal interaction, images, symbols and documents). It offers ways of investigating meaning, whether in conversation or in culture. Discourse analytic studies encompass a broad range of theories, topics and analytic approaches for explaining language in use. They ask 'What is social life like?' and 'What are the implications for individuals and/or wider society?'.

The political in discourse analysis concerns how social agents constitute knowledge, and the hegemonic focus of discourse theory examines how disparate subjects from different social spaces and with different interests are brought together. In this, the analytical task of discourse is a 'reading' of text and includes elements of deconstruction, interpretation and reconstruction (Czarniawska, 2000). Discourse analysis is not constrained to pure 'text', but rather it invokes the concept of 'textuality' to understand different social practices into account (Derrida 1981; Griggs & Howarth, 2013). Discourse analysis is flexible and reflective and encourages the researcher not only to see how meaning is constructed but also how meanings affect subject and the political space. To understand the meaning of discourses, it is important to understand the words employed in the account, what is not said (including silences), extra-linguistic and non-verbal cues including context (Ball, 1994). This allows the researcher to identify and

examine the holistic impacts of discursive systems including where and how social actors are positioned (Griggs & Howarth, 2013). Given the discursive nature of this study, the analytical approach includes dislocation and rhetorical redescription, and these techniques are subject to discussion in the following section.

5.1 Analysing Empirical Data: Dislocation and Rhetorical Redescription

5.1.1 Dislocation and the Construction of Nodal Points

Chapter three and four examined in detail the literature foundation of the challenge posed by eco-certification for ecotourism within the sustainable tourism context. The discussion presented the basic overview of the structural interconnectedness of the supply side of eco-certification from standards to accreditors to certifiers. As detailed, the Brundtland Report (1987) acted as an important dislocatory moment in the sustainable tourism debate. I also suggested that the Mohonk Agreement and following discussions concerning standards were a central moment within the eco-certification discussion. The impact of these dislocatory moments is to make visible the contingencies concerning sustainability, sustainable tourism, ecotourism and eco-certification. Making visible these contingencies encouraged the sedimentation of new discursive identities and social practices. Social and political actors interested in eco-certification (such as Green Globe and Ecotourism Australia) seek to articulate and control new discourses concerning the certification of ecotourism centred around specific nodal points such as eco-efficiency, other measurements and indicators and with the impact of acting as eco proxies for 'sustainability'. However, identifying nodal points is not without challenge or limitation. First, social and political actors that may have been participants at crucial moments may have different interpretations of the events from other actors. Consequently, what may appear as a disclocatory moment by researchers or by other actors may not seem that important to actors involved in the process. This is not to suggest that actors must 'see' the dislocation, as they may not necessarily be obvious – there is a role here for

researchers to exercise their judgment in reading social situations. Second, there is a hermeneutic challenge as the history and context in which dislocations occurred should be taken into account. A traditional hermeneutic challenge here is how social and political actors interpret their own memories of history and context and how the researcher makes sense of those different perceptions. Equally, what may appear as dislocatory, may not lead to any substantive change. The first step is to reflect on whether the moment was actually dislocatory.

A second explanation (in some ways drawing on Gramsci) is that the dominant hegemony, such as the capitalist system, operates to 'accommodate' the dislocatory challenge resulting in the continuation of the dominant hegemony (an example of this might be the GFC and the lack of substantive changes to financial capital practices). Stavrakakis (2000, p. 100) recognises the difficulties concerning dislocation in terms of the emergence of 'Green' ideology:

> A theory of dislocation … focuses on the element of negativity inherent in human experience, on the element of rupture and crisis threatening and subverting our social – ideological – forms, the field of social objectivity … [the] theory of dislocation belongs to a type of theorisation and political analysis which is based on the assumption that understanding social reality is not equivalent to understanding what society is … but what prevents it from being. What prevents it from being what it promises to be is the force of dislocation; which is also – this is the crucial part for the analysis developed here – what generates new ideological attempts to reach this impossible goal.

Stavrakakis (2000) reflects on the emergence of Green politics and a Green ideology in Europe through the 1990s. The complexity of identifying dislocations with respect to Green politics, for example, concerns linking the emergence of the 'green' signifier to environmental crisis. The development of 'green' involves a multi-various set of interactive moments. I have not engaged in trying to understand how and why the sustainable tourism debate emerged *per se*. That is outside the scope of this thesis, but what I do focus on is the articulation of the eco-certification for ecotourism that we know today centred upon an analysis of Ecotourism Australia. The thesis examines how different actors within the vertically-integrated supply side of the eco-certification discourse successfully equated sustainability with the business case approach to sustainability to incorporate economic viability and eco-efficiency principles. The empirical chapters (Chapters eight, nine and ten) examine the impacts of these dislocatory

moments and how social and political actors in tourism formulated new articulations with respect to eco-certification.

5.1.2 Skinner's Rhetorical Redescription (Paradiastole)

The logic of articulatory practice invokes a need to examine rhetoric (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 91). Political practices, as rhetorical exercises, seek to persuade social actors, such as understanding how tourism operators and the wider community embedded in tourism understands the concept of sustainable tourism and identifies with the articulation of eco-certification for ecotourism. For this purpose, rhetorical redescription is an appropriate analytical method. In a contemporary context, Skinner (2002, p. 183) argues that paradiastole is a form of rhetorical redescription, which, at its core is:

> … said to consist of replacing a given evaluative description with a rival term that serves to picture the action no less plausibly, but serves at the same time to place it in a contrasting moral light. You seek to persuade your audience to accept your new description, and thereby to adopt a new attitude towards the action concerned.

For Skinner (2002) what is important is not the simple description of events and practices at the ontological level, but rather what is the conceptual changes to meanings as a result of a political debate (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 187). Skinner (2002, p. 186) argues that this suggests that:

> … the more we succeed in persuading people that a given evaluative term applies in circumstances in which they may never have thought of applying it, the more broadly and inclusively we shall persuade them to employ the given term in the appraisal of social and political life.

The technique of rhetorical redescription may be a study of hegemony in the sense of the study of Laclau and Mouffe's notion of the logics of equivalence as the recruitment logic concerning persuasion and inclusion seems to reflect the idea of extending chains of equivalence to include disparate interests and groups. Carter (2008, p. 220) explains that rhetorical redescription, in reflecting Quintillian's explanation of the technique, involves four strategies, including the revision of meaning (a re-conceptualisation), a change of the name (a renaming), a move in significance (a re-weighting) and an alteration to the normative implications of the concept (a re-evaluation) (Carter, 2008, p. 220). Howarth and Griggs (2006) and Carter and Warren (2019)

both illustrate the use of the rhetorical redescription technique. Howarth and Griggs (2006) study the Freedom to Fly coalition with respect to airport expansion, while Carter and Warren (2019) examine how the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) restates and renames their understanding of the public interest.

These papers illustrate how redescriptions play a vital role in politics and their influence over and with respect to hegemonies. For example, Carter and Warren (2019) show how the notion of the public interest was redescribed by the IASB to include key concepts with respect to procedural due process, substantive due process and an outcome-focused approach to the public interest. The purpose of these redescriptions according to Carter and Warren (2019) was for the IASB to protect its technocratic position from attack and critique by using the nodal point of the public interest as a floating signifier. For Laclau and Mouffe (1987; 2014), rhetorical redescriptions play an important role in the formation, conservation, disruption and shifting of hegemonies and hence the study of rhetorical redescriptions is valuable in examining hegemonic struggles that involve a continuous framing and re-reframing of practices and processes (Howarth, 2013). Rhetorical redescription relies on the practice of persuasion (see Quintilian, where the technique has origins in legal argument and with respect to oratory). Argumentation is a skill associated with rhetoric and is employed to include or exclude certain demands and interests held by different social actors. Howarth (2013, p. 201) argues:

> To adopt Schattschneider's marvellous phrase, all forms of argumentation exude a partiality in favour of exploiting certain kinds of conflict and supressing others. This is because argumentation is and rhetoric is 'the mobilisation of bias': some issues and arguments are organised in politics whilst others are organised out (Schattschneider, 1960, p. 71).

This helps to explain how hegemonic discourses around eco-certification involve negotiation and persuasion by different interest groups in the supply chain, such as ISO, GSTC, TIES (at the macro-level) with respect to setting eco-certification standards) or by Ecotourism Australia and Green Globe (as certifiers at an intermediate or meso-level) and how this plays out with respect to tourist operators. The implications of this persuasion involve how certain elements

of the discourse of sustainability are reified (including eco-efficiency, measurements, indicator systems and economic viability) and others perceived as inappropriate (including deep green approaches, restrictions on growth and profits or limits to tourism activity).

Howarth and Griggs (2006, p. 29) do suggest caution in the employment of rhetorical techniques, suggesting that "discourse theorists need to guard against charges of textual and linguistic reductionism, and they need to deal with rhetorical forms at the appropriate levels of abstraction". To avoid this rhetorical reductionism, Skinner (2002) suggests the use of rhetoric concepts including metaphor, metonymy and catachresis in analysis. If the premise of the thesis is valid, namely, that eco-certification for ecotourism through privileging the eco-efficient equates sustainability with the business case, then this is an example of rhetorical redescription. Eco-certification involves a reconceptualization of sustainability for sustainable tourism by focusing on eco-efficiency measures; it involves a renaming, as eco-certification for ecotourism becomes a proxy for the business case for sustainable tourism; it re-weights concepts of sustainability by promoting eco-efficiency over deeper, more critical environmental interests and it normatively alters the concept of sustainable tourism to incorporate an interest in economic viability of tourism operators. In every sense, eco-certification is a radical rhetorical redescription. This study of the techniques of rhetoric and rhetorical redescription help to understand the politics concerning the articulation of eco-certification for ecotourism.

5.1.3 Empirical Analysis: Research Validity

Validity is a complex rhetorical device, as it is often understood to mean positivistic measures of external validity. As a critical, post-structural study, the notions of validity relevant to my research are not generalisation or representation in a positivistic sense, but rather through the ontological position, transferability with respect to the methodological frameworks, methods of data collection and methods of data analysis, as well as reflexivity with respect to my role as a political actor in the research (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). The LOCE approach seeks to

understand social actors' ontic interpretations at the social, political and fantasmatic level and discourse theory focuses on the implications of dislocation and rupture and how subjects respond through meaning making. This involves studying how social actors employ rhetorical strategies to sediment certain discourses and exclude other discourses. This process is influenced by a high degree of subjectivity, in the sense of how social actors see, understand and interpret their social worlds. There is no objectivity in this research in the sense of a positivistic standpoint, especially as the researcher is embedded in the research process and thus cannot and should not be detached from it. Post-structuralists use ontology differently to other paradigmatic positions by focusing on how social actors see, understand and interpret ontological categories, such as sustainability, sustainable tourism and eco-certification and how they respond given their disparate interest. The study of the interactivity of actors in the supply chain of eco-certification reflects the discourse theory position that, "*all* objects are objects of discourse, as their meaning depends on a social constructed system of rules and significant differences" (Howarth *et al*., 2000, p.3). The meaning of the articulation of eco-certification is constructed and articulated by disparate actors in different ways, depending on individual subject positions. Although the aim of this study is not to create an account of the phenomenon that is comparable, reliable or generalisable in positivist terms, I do seek internal validity. The details about my research sites, websites and other documents in my document archive supports a methodological commitment to transferability in articulation a clear pathway to data collected, its analysis and its applicability.

Given my ontological position with respect to the study, my methodological approach to collecting and analysing data is appropriate from an internal validity perspective. Merriam (1998, p. 202), from a case study perspective discusses the logic of validity:

> One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research.

Merriam (1998, p. 199) further states that "the qualitative study provides the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author's conclusion 'makes sense'", proposing multiple methods of data collection, participatory research and disclosure of the researcher's own position for internal validity. This is not the search, though for the perfect representation of the social world encountered – that is impossible. As Czarniawska (2000, p. 19) argues:

> 'The voices of the field' do not speak for themselves; it is the author who makes them communicate on his or her conditions. Therefore, it is more adequate to speak … about 'variegated speech' of the field, about leaving traces of different dialects, different idioms, and different vocabularies … It is never a question of 'authenticity'; it is always a question of creating an impression of authenticity, of recontextualization that is interesting ('novel'), credible and respectful).

In sum, I am comfortable that my research exhibits deep internal validity from a post-structural research perspective in the study of the eco-certification process of Ecotourism Australia and the supply chain of eco-certification.

6 Conclusions from the Chapter

This chapter focused on my case study research design and explained the data collection and analysis techniques employed to study the articulation of eco-certification for ecotourism. I argued that Merriam's (1998) approach to case study was an appropriate framework for a discursive intervention resonating with the LOCE. Key conclusions included:

a) Merriam's (1998) approach to qualitative research offers "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or a social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p. 21). Furthermore, for Merriam (1998) case studies are: i) particularistic in nature, thus focusing on a particular situation, event, phenomenon, or process; ii) descriptive in offering rich and thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation and iii) heuristic as they improve the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study, uncovering how new meanings are created and how social actors confirm these social practices. This aligns with the LOCE outlined in Chapter six.

b) For the purposes of collecting empirical data, I conducted interviews and collected documents within the setting of the three case study sites (standard setters and accreditors; Ecotourism Australia as a certifier; and tourism operators with certification in Australia). Focused, in-depth interviews constitute a form of reactive, linguistic research, while document analysis of publicly available and accessible information allowed for a critical engagement as a form of non-reactive, linguistic research.

c) The combination of interviews and document analysis are frequently employed data collection techniques in discourse theory.

d) Data analysis tools included dislocation, nodal point analysis and rhetorical redescription. I analysed how social actors constructed the articulation of eco-certification around the 'nodal point' of sustainability following key dislocations (including the 1987 Brundtland Report and the Mohonk Agreement). In particular, I wanted to understand how social actors saw, understood and interpreted sedimented practices concerning eco-certification for ecotourism. Rhetorical redescription was a useful technique and concepts including metaphor, metonymy and catachresis inform my analysis.

I believe that my methodological and analytical approaches constitute an appropriate level of abstraction to study the articulation of eco-certification, as they resonate theoretically with discourse theory, methodologically with Glynos and Howarth's (2007) LOCE, methodically with Merriam's (1998) approach to case studies and with my ontological and paradigmatic position.

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- End of Part Two –

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- PART THREE -

Empirical Analysis, Discussion and Conclusions

Empirical Data Analysis:
Accreditation Bodies and Standard Setting for Eco-certification (Supply-Side Part One)

1   Overview

To study the inter-related, vertically-integrated articulation of eco-certification, I draw upon three groups to illustrate and question the discourse of eco-certification for ecotourism. In this, I examine the interested parties involved in the process including accreditation bodies (ISO, GSTC and TIES) at the macro-level, a certification body (Ecotourism Australia) at the meso-level and Australian tourism operators with eco-certification at the micro-level. The choice of these study sites allows for a credible, logical study of eco-certification and increases the opportunity for insight. I organise the empirical sites in different chapters. This first empirical chapter, Chapter eight, focuses on organisations at the macro-level that determine standards for certification schemes and the chapter focuses on the impact of the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO), the Global Sustainability Tourism Council (the GSTC) and TIES (The International Ecotourism Society). While these bodies set standards they also operate as accreditation bodies and outline environmental management systems (EMS) and tourism-specific standards for the industry. In sum, I chose the ISO, the GSTC and TIES as these organisations both set the 'rules of the game' for eco-certification processes and play a central role in accrediting certifying bodies. This dual role has a significant impact on shaping what constitutes eco-certification for ecotourism and, for that manner, sustainable tourism. To obtain relevant data, I focused on collecting and analysing publicly available and accessible documents, including websites for the ISO, the GSTC and TIES and other materials and documents (see Chapter seven for more details on the case). This chapter, in the specific context of eco-certification for ecotourism, reflects literature discussions in Chapter two and three. The economic and financial focus within the standards has the impact of condensing the logic of sustainability to the business case as the approach to ecotourism institutes an eco-efficient,

neoliberal sustainability model, with a core focus on cost-savings and competitive advantage. The eco-certification standards focus the 'rules of the game' on enhancing the economic benefits of ecotourism for operators.

2   Study Site One – Accreditation Bodies

2.1   *International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)*

The ISO is a leading organisation in standard-setting for a wide range of industries and contexts. The logic of ISO is enhancing harmonisation and unifying industry standards. As outlined in Chapter four, ISO offers a variety of standards focusing on in quality management (ISO 9000), environmental management (ISO 14001), risk management (ISO 31000), energy management (ISO 50001) and social responsibility (ISO 26000). Chapter four provided a foundation to the sociology of expertise (see Collins & Evans, 2002; Evans, 2008; Collins 2013; 2016). This logic of expertise is important in the standard-setting process (especially with respect to building and maintaining legitimacy), but it is valuable to consider in more detail how the ISO develops its standards. To this, I examined the ISO's website and analysed relevant ISO publications. The following sections outline the technical processes that ISO follows to develop its standards. The ISO outlines four key principles in standard development (ISO, 2019):

> ### *Principle 1: Standards respond to market needs*
>
> The ISO states that it does not initiate standard development from a supply-side perspective. Rather, the ISO explains that it is demand-driven, as it responds to industry requests as well as requests from other stakeholder groups, including consumers. The ISO receives these requests from industry sectors, who communicate the need for a new standard to national members, such as the Deutsches Institut für Normung (DIN) in Germany or Standards Australia (SA) in Australia. These peak bodies then approach the ISO with the proposals for further actions.
>
> ### *Principle 2: Standards are based on global expert opinion*
>
> In the development of standards, the ISO relies on groups of global experts. The experts are part of technical committees (TCs) and the TCs are responsible for negotiating multiple aspects of a proposed standard.
>
> ### *Principle 3: Standards are developed through a multi-stakeholder process*

The ISO uses a stakeholder approach with respect to standard development. This is similar to the International Accounting Standard Board's 'due process' (Botzem, 2014), which is discussed in brief in Appendix Two. While the development of standards is expert-based, the ISO's TCs also includes a variety of other stakeholders, such as consumer associations, academics, non-for-profit organisations and governments interests.

Principle 4: Standards are consensus-based

The involvement of different stakeholders in the standard development process encourages comments and feedback from all stakeholders to be considered and taken into account. Thus, standards reflect a consensus-based approach.

As indicated in the principles, the initial request for the development of new standards emanates from industry sectors and filters through national peak bodies to the ISO. The impact of this is that the ISO responds to market demands for standards, rather than pushing standards onto the market. The ISO presents standard development and standard setting as consensus-based and expert-based, but they also reflect the viewpoints of multiple stakeholders involved in the process. Figure 8.1, below, depicts the ISO's standard development process:

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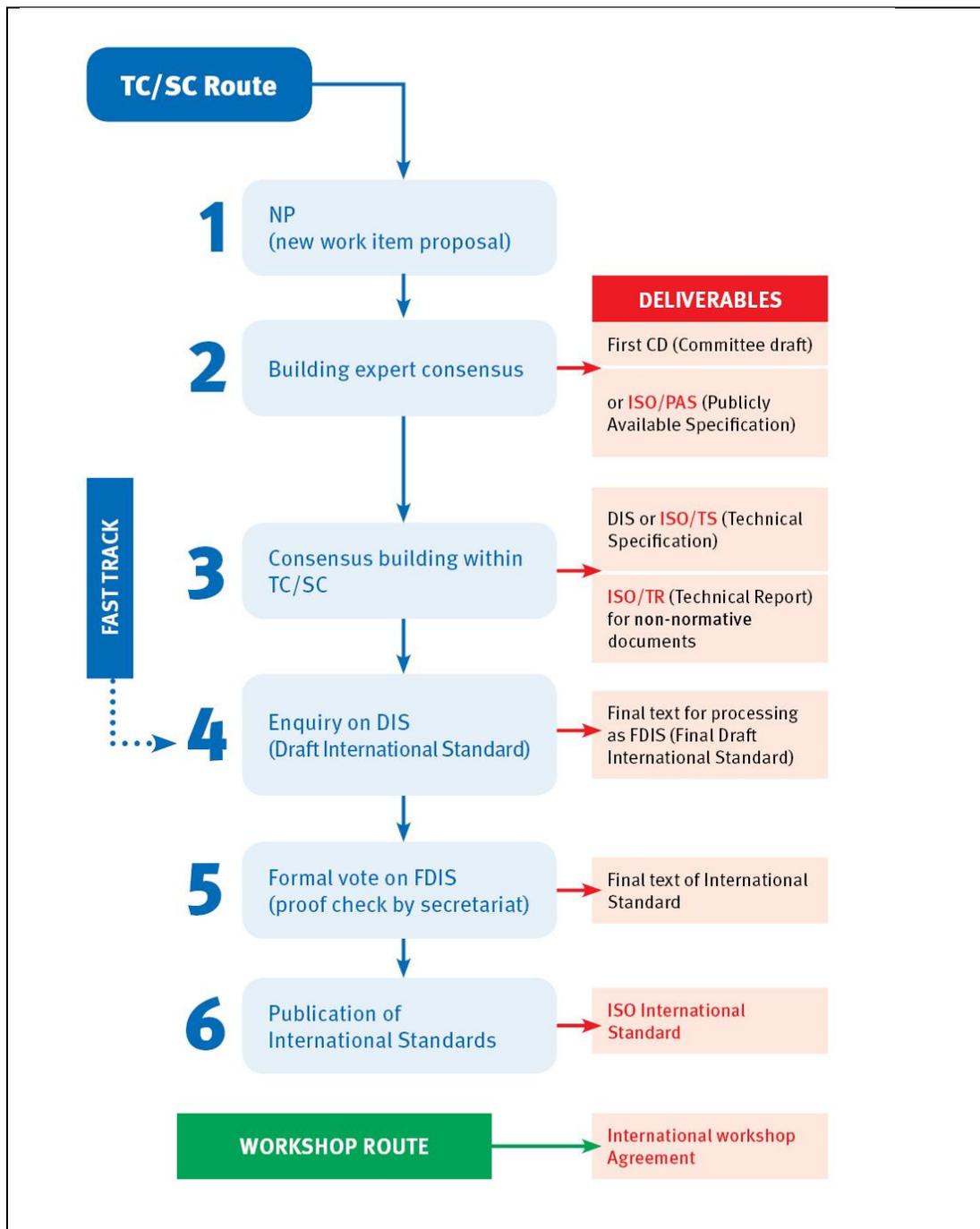
Figure 8.1: ISO Standards Development Process (ISO, 2019)

With respect to standard-setting, the ISO has two different methods to the development of standards. The first method for developing standards involves the Technical Committee/Standards Committee (TC/SC) route. This approach to involves drafting standards through the four-stage consensus-building approach outlined in Fig. 8.1 above. Once a draft is approved, it is published as an ISO International Standard (stages five and six). The second

method for developing standards follows a workshop route, which results in an International workshop Agreement. The workshop route differs as the focus is on the quick production of standards through workshops open to all stakeholders. The workshop route is appropriate for standards to address particular market issues not covered by formal standards. Standards developed via the TC/SC route receive the ISO designation; the workshop route results in the International workshop Agreement designation. Currently, there are only a few ISO standards relevant to tourism. The environmental management standards are relevant to the tourism industry and incorporate the ISO 14000 family of standards. The most recognised environmental standard is ISO 14001 – environmental management system (EMS). Further relevant standards to tourism include "ISO 14031 – environmental performance, ISO 14064/65/63 greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting and verification, ISO 14045 – eco-efficiency assessment, ISO 14067 - carbon footprint of products and ISO 14069 – calculation of carbon footprint" (ISO, 2007, pp. 6-7). Despite the standards designed as a 'family-group' of standards, all standards can be used separately and allows a company to tailor their environmental goals. However, all standards are "designed to be implemented according to the same **Plan-Do-Check-Act** (PDCA) cycle underlying all ISO management systems standards" (ISO, 2007, p. 8). When employing the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle (also known as the Deming-cycle – see, Blackman & Guerrero, 2012)), businesses seeking certification in environmental management must first define an environmental management strategy. Following the development of a strategy, a concrete plan or process is defined (the '**Plan**'). Businesses then need to implement the plan and document outcomes through processes such as lifecycle assessments (the '**Do**'). In step three, the business monitors and evaluates its environmental performance through internal audits (the '**Check**'). If discrepancies between actual performance and targeted outcomes emerge, corrective action is necessary for continual improvement (the '**Act**') (Blackman & Guerrero, 2012, p. 258; ISO, 2009, p. 9; ISO, 2007). The ISO's approach to standard

implementation is process-led rather than performance-based and this limits the scope of the standards, as is illustrated in the following table, Table 8.2, which accounts for the differences between a process-based and a performance-based certification program:

Table 8.2: Differences Between Process-based and Performance-based Certification Programs

Process-Based Certification Program	Performance-Based Certification Program
Environmental Management Systems (EMS) including ISO 14001 and related programs	Tangible criteria that permit comparisons between certified businesses
Business establishes systems for monitoring a chosen environmental aspect	Focus on measuring achievement and results, rather than on business intent
Usually requires outside consultants and is relatively expensive for small and medium businesses	Can include check-list intelligible to both business and consumers
Emphasis on internal cost savings and environmental impact mitigation	Arguably more transparent and less expensive
No universal standards, so no comparison across businesses	Can include environmental and socio-economic criteria within and without business
The right to use the standard logo reflects the establishment of a process, rather than actually achieving a particular goal	Can involve variety of stakeholders
Best suited for large businesses, as it is cost-effective and offers economies of scale	Can offer different levels of logos reflecting different levels of performance
	Suited for small, medium & large businesses

Table 8.2 (Source: CESD, Handbook I, n/d)

ISO standards are based on classical management techniques, but the impact of this is to reduce environmental performance outcomes to a 'tick the box' approach focused on process. The ISO's approach is similar in style, as an eco-efficient approach, to Hawken's (2010) ecology of commerce discussed in Chapter two. The impact of this administrative approach to environmental issues is that this management-based, process-led, technocratic approach to sustainability disseminates across industries, including the tourism industry and influences the thinking and behaviour within industries towards sustainability (such as favouring a process-led, checklist approach). Given this example of standard-setting, the next section shifts to focus

on how accreditation bodies 'accredit' certification bodies by focusing on the tourism accreditation body, GSTC and its integrity training.

2.2 Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)

As a global organisation, GSTC establishes and manages sustainable standards (GSTC criteria) in tourism. The impact of these criteria is to set a baseline for what constitutes sustainability in tourism. The GSTC and Assurance Services International (ASI), its partner organisation, accredit national and regional certification bodies such as Ecotourism Australia. The GSTC-approved process suggests that a certifier embraces the criteria set by the GSTC (they are not necessarily accrediting Ecotourism Australia as 'eco'-appropriate, but that they satisfy the GSTC criteria). However, with this accreditation, Ecotourism Australia is then able to certify hotels, tour operators, tour guides and destinations as 'eco' for ecotourism. The GSTC promotes their accreditation role as "the most reliable and cost effective way to ensure confidence and credibility of sustainable tourism certification, and worldwide acceptance" (GSTC, 2019). The GSTC currently has three separate standards that establish industry criteria for hotels, for tourism operators and for destinations. These criteria were developed in accordance with the standard-setting code of the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance (the ISEAL Alliance), which is a global association focused on sustainability standards across industries. The ISEAL Alliance, in turn, follows ISO standards such as ISO 17000 and ISO 17011 (conformity assessment) (GSTC, 2019). This reinforces the significant role that ISO plays in standard-setting, as it informs businesses seeking certification, but it also influences accreditation bodies from the perspective of conformity in developing their own standards:

> These and many other generally accepted guidelines and definitions for how to certify, are based on guidelines established by consensus among the members of the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) (CESD, Handbook I, n/d, p. 13)

The GSTC criteria focus on sustainable management and socio-economic, cultural and environmental impacts of tourism activities. These criteria are important with respect to accreditation of certifying bodies, such as Ecotourism Australia. The GSTC's integrity training, outlines two approaches for certifying bodies to receive accreditation, as certification bodies can either adopt GSTC-criteria and indicators without change use their own standards considered the equivalent of the GSTC's criteria. A certification body that adopts the GSTC's standards receives accreditation immediately, while a certification body that uses its own standards must first have the GSTC assess the certifying body's standards to recognise them as equivalent (designated as GSTC-recognised). Once the certifying body's standards are 'recognised', the GSTC *may* accredit the certification body, as:

> GSTC-Recognised does NOT mean that the Certifying Body using the standard is accredited. This designation relates only to the words included in the standard, and NOT how the standard is applied (GSTC, 2019).

In seeking recognition of certifying body's standard, the GSTC uses an independent accreditation panel to review and assess the certifying body's standards. Figure 8.3, below, illustrates the two approaches to receiving GSTC-accreditation:
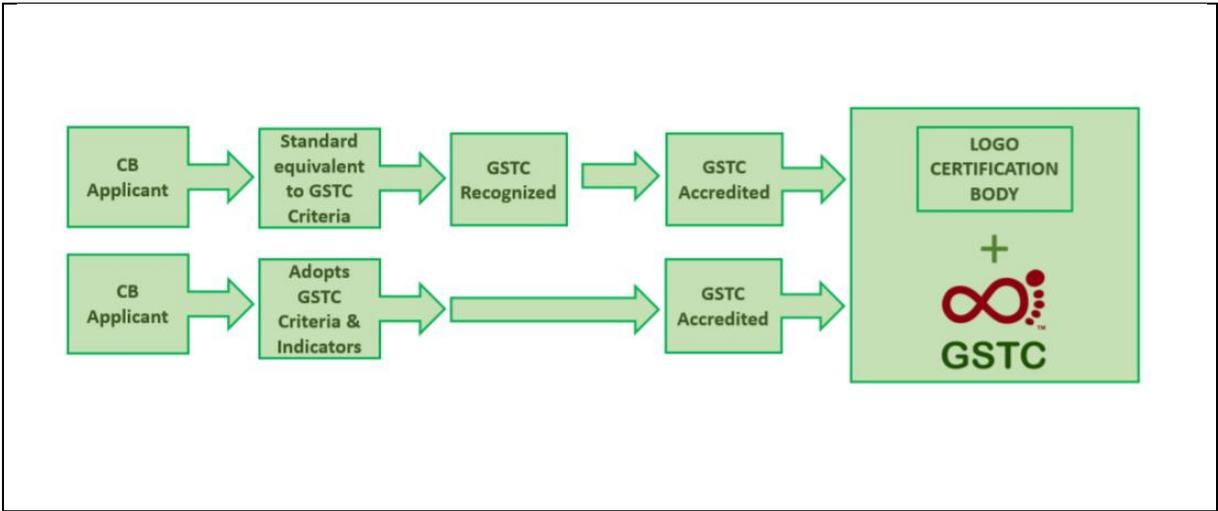
Figure 8.3: The GSTC Accreditation Process (GSTC, 2017, p. 6)

Figure 8.3 depicts the two pathways for certification bodies to receive accreditation from the GSTC – both GSTC-recognised and GSTC-approved – and it illustrates the influence of accreditation bodies on the practice of certification bodies, as the GSTC criteria for

sustainability are effectively industry rules concerning sustainability. The GSTC criteria are either adopted unreservedly or the recognition process deems the certifiers standards as 'equivalent'. In theoretical terms, this illustrates the spread of a hegemonic approach concerning sustainability, reinforced through the link from the ISO to the GSTC. The following diagram, Figure 8.4, below, illustrates the hierarchical structure of the GSTC, including illustrating the role for the accreditation panel responsible for accreditation.
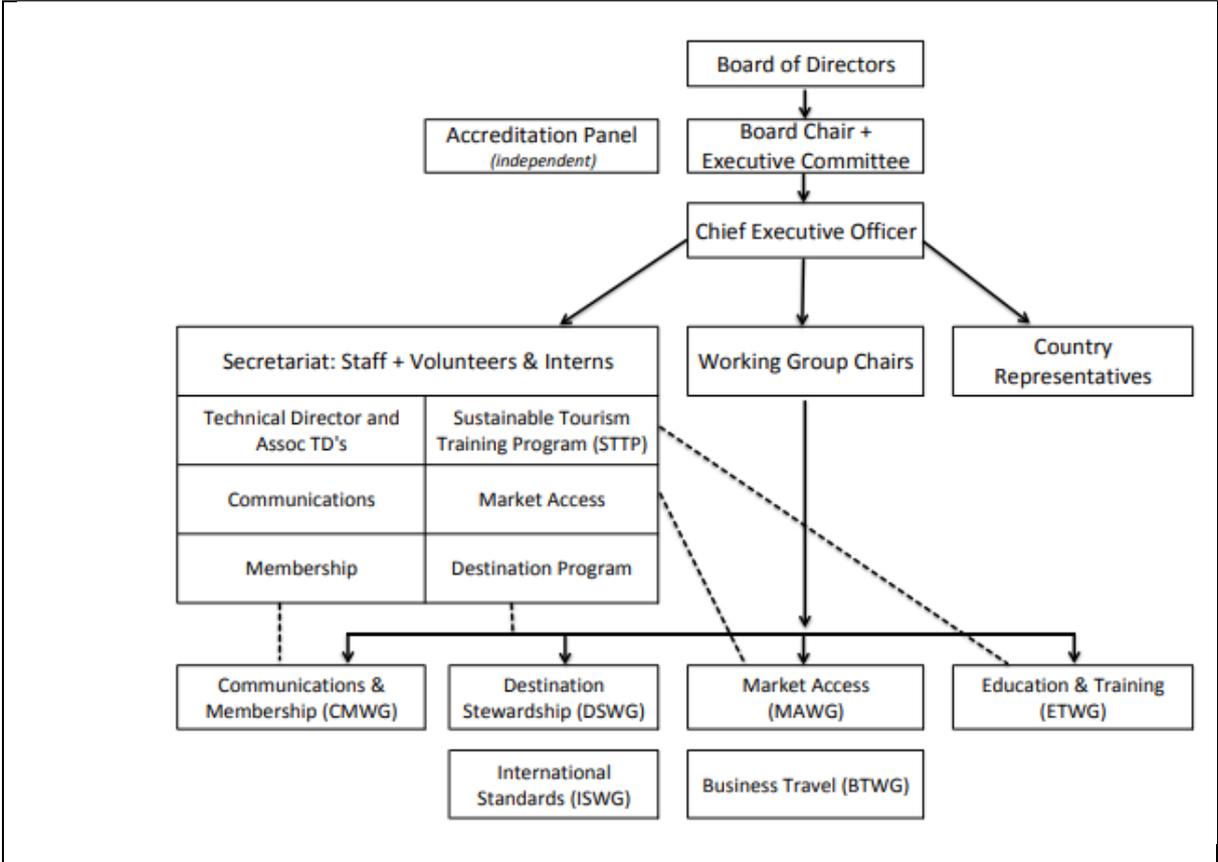
Figure 8.4: Organisational Structure of GSTC (GSTC, 2018, p. 3)

For certification bodies that certify regionally or internationally, Assurance Services International - ASI administers the accreditation process of the certification body (GSTC-accredited/ASI-administered), while certifying bodies operating in a single country receive accreditation via the GSTC (GSTC-accredited/GSTC-administered) (GSTC, 2018, p. 4). In the case of Ecotourism Australia, its eco-certification standards are both GSTC-recognised and GSTC- accredited. The impact of this is that tourist operators in Australia that receive eco-certification from Ecotourism Australia are able to display logos from both Ecotourism

Australia and the GSTC. From an investment and marketing perspective, Australian tourist operators receiving certification from Ecotourism get the rights to use two symbols for their eco-status for the price of one.[5]

2.3 The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)

Another player in the sustainable tourism space is TIES. TIES promotes "ecotourism as a tool for conservation and sustainable development" (TIES, 2019). TIES begun operating in 1990 and disseminates a broad range of material including conference materials, meeting records, guidelines and publications. For example, TIES published a four-volume Handbook series on standards and eco-certification. The Handbook was developed in collaboration with the Rainforest Alliance and the Centre for Ecotourism and Sustainable Development. The influence of TIES in eco-certification is less on standards and criteria and more on sustainability practices and guidance concerning ecotourism.

Following this outline of the different approaches to sustainability, ecotourism, accreditation and standard-setting, the focus from this point on is how the institutions such as the ISO, GSTC and TIES created new structures and rules concerning sustainability and ecotourism. In particular, this includes identifying the incorporation of neoliberal models into sustainability and ecotourism, such as eco-efficiency. I employ the political, social and fantasmatic logics to critically explain the emergence, sedimented practice and impact of the rules that dominate eco-certification discourse.

3 Dislocation – Articulating the Political Logics of Standard Setting

The discussion concerning the politics of sustainability in Chapter two and three outlined a range of understandings and approaches around sustainability. A central idea in this thesis is

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[5] However, Ecotourism Australia's eco-certification criteria do differ from GSTC's sustainability criteria (which I discuss as a direct comparison in Chapter nine), as Ecotourism Australia's eco-certification criteria are GSTC-recognised (as equivalent to the GSTC-criteria) and then accredited.

the impact of current economic logics on sustainability and especially how the impact of neoliberalism favours the business case approach with the (economic) interests of the company at the forefront. While Chapter three illustrated the association between sustainability and the business case, the chapter did not explore the legitimation of the business case. I employ rhetorical redescription to examine the processes of legitimation and the 'greening' of the business case, particularly, in the tourism context. Equally, dislocatory moments and articulation inform the rhetorical redescription to explain how organisations including the ISO and the GSTC created structures that delimit 'acceptable' sustainability. Given the floating nature of sustainability and ecotourism, these structures influence the sedimented practices of sustainability and ecotourism. This chapter focuses on the political logics (as a story of emergence) concerning ecotourism structures (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). The subsequent empirical chapters focus on the fantasmatic and social logics of eco-certification. The interrelated study of the logics of critical explanation help to provide answers to my research questions:

> *How does the tourism industry understand and interpolate the concept of eco-certification?*

> *How are the 'rules of the game' (sedimented practices of eco-certification) created and how do they transform and translate into practice?*

> *How has expertise around eco-certification emerged given the definitional lack surrounding the concept of sustainability?*

> *In eco-certification, what are the implications of equating sustainability with the business case?*

From a discursive perspective, these questions concern how social actors, such as accreditors, certifiers and tourism operators understand and articulate their interpretations of sustainability. The impact of this is to show how actors (through alliances and coalitions) try to fix meaning around sustainability and ecotourism, despite contestation over macro-level meanings of sustainability, ecotourism and eco-certification (this illustrates a level of impossibility within the system). In attempting to cover over this lack (the impossibility within sustainability),

different social actors in the ecotourism system articulate interconnected (and self-referential) interpretations of sustainability. Accreditation bodies develop frameworks or rules (such as standards for certification concerning sustainability) that limit the social practice of eco-certification. Certification bodies, in the name of ecotourism or sustainability, institute structures typically associated with eco-efficiency including measuring or reducing carbon emissions, increased recycling activity or improved waste management. The impact of certification bodies (accredited by accreditation bodies) helps to sediment particular practices into ecotourism and eco-certification, as these structures and practices influence tourism businesses. These research questions illustrate how within the context of ecotourism, through hegemonic processes, sustainability redescribed into the capitalist system and the legitimation of the business case, as a dominant ontic, as 'green' (the fantasmatic logic).

The political logics, according to Glynos and Howarth (2007), study social spaces for the contestation and creation of new structures, hegemonies, rules and social practices. The study of the political logic incorporates many of the central concepts of discourse theory, including discourse, articulation, elements, moments, nodal points, empty and floating signifiers, logics of equivalence and difference and dislocation. As the focus of the political logic is on institution, then each of these elements from discourse theory exemplify attempts to fix social systems and provide insights into the politics of institution (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). I have argued in this thesis that the Brundtland Report (1987) was an important dislocation, as it allowed social and political actors to articulate sustainability and ecotourism in various ways that emphasised the business case. This was due to the Brundtland Report (1987) recognising that economic development, in the neoliberal sense of development, is a dominant paradigm for sustainability. The extension here was politically palatable as in a time of increasing environmental awareness, there was a pressing need to incorporate a combination of ideas

concerning ecological or social sustainability (McKercher, 2010). However, this also marks a process of subsuming sustainability into the dominant economic system, as this privileging of development suggests that sustainability operated as a limit to development, rather than considering sustainability as an alternative economic system. In the tourism context, many institutions, including the UNWTO, the WTTC, the GSTC, the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program (ATAP), and even the ISO adopted the Brundtland Report (1987) baseline definition towards sustainable development into their sustainable tourism development definitions, as evidenced through the triple-bottom line focus on economic, social and environmental impacts or benefits. The sustainable tourism standards and 'best practices' of the UNWTO and the GSTC, for example, align with the Brundtland Report's (1987) sustainable development goals. According to the GSTC, their criteria:

> … serve as the global baseline standards for sustainability in travel and tourism. The Criteria are used for education and awareness-raising, policy-making for businesses and government agencies and other organisation types, measurement and evaluation, and as a basis for certification (GSTC, 2019).

Consequently, national tourism certification organisations, such as Ecotourism Australia, adopt and implement these standards and practices in their eco-certification processes. The following table, Table 8.5, demonstrates how the definition of the Brundtland Report (1987) was adopted and incorporated by organisations in the tourism context and how this encouraged and sustained new forms and rules concerning sustainability and ecotourism to emerge in the tourism space, such as economic measures of sustainability and neoliberal ideas associated with eco-efficiency.

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Table 8.5: The Incorporation and Continuation of Sustainable Development

Core criteria of the WECD's sustainable development definitions:

- "Protection of **environmental** resources
- Management and improvement of technology and **social organisation** to make way for a new era of **economic growth**" (WECD, 1987, p. 16)

⬇

UNWTO's sustainable tourism development definition:

Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.

Thus, sustainable tourism should:

1) "Make **optimal use of environmental resources** that constitute a key element in tourism development, **maintaining** essential *ecological processes* and helping to **conserve natural heritage and biodiversity**.

2) Respect the **socio-cultural authenticity of host communities**, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and *contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance*.

3) Ensure **viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits** to all *stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities*, and contributing to poverty alleviation" (UNWTO, 2019).

⬇

GSTC's criteria for sustainability in tourism based on four pillars:
1. "Sustainable management
2. **Socioeconomic** impacts
3. **Cultural impacts**
4. **Environmental impacts** (including *consumption of resources, **reducing pollution**, and conserving biodiversity and landscapes*)" (GSTC, 2019)

⬇

Ecotourism Australia' s definition of Ecotourism:

"Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation.

- provide a high-quality recognisable product to consumers, whilst increasing your sustainable development
- *creating cost savings*
- improving the image of your organisation and *establishing closer connections with your local tourism and protected area management* organisations
- *environmentally responsible* choices for your business make good *economic sense – significant cost savings can be made by changing just a few simple practices*" (Ecotourism Australia, 2019)

The political logics concerning sustainability and neoliberalism shaped a set of new discourses concerning tourism and ecotourism as evidenced by the emergence of the eco-certification discourse. In this, tourism social actor and institutions, such as the UNWTO, the ISO and the GSTC, played a central role in contesting new sustainability structures and institutions. Examples of this include the adoption and adjustment for the tourism context of sustainability measures including the carrying capacity (Butler, 1999), ecological footprint analysis (Hunter & Shaw, 2007), KPIs (Weir & Dickson, 2011), indicator systems (Twining-Ward & Butler, 2002; Twining-Ward, 2002; Miller, 2001; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Vera & Ivars, 2003; Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2014; McCool *et al.,* 2001; Moore & Polley, 2007; Sánchez & Pulido, 2008; Castellani & Sala, 2010; Blancas *et al.*, 2010) and eco-certification (Buckley, 2001; Font & Buckley, 2001; Font, 2002; Font *et al*., 2003). Many of these sustainability structures and institutions have a focus on eco-efficiency, emerging as primary instruments in demonstrating sustainable tourism outcomes. Tourism businesses seeking certification follow the instituted sustainability rules and pursue optimised environmental performance including water efficiency, waste management, recycling and carbon-offsetting (for more of the impact of the social logics of eco-certification please refer to Chapter ten). Evidence for the adoption and adjustment of these sustainability measures comes from analysing publicly available and accessible documents of the ISO, the GSTC and TIES. A set of key 'claims' or themes emerged in the reading and re-reading of these documents.

1.	Claim – Standards bring economic benefits

In the review of ISO publications, the ISO's standards and certification processes are oriented towards the achievement of certain economic outcomes, reflecting the economic component of the TBL (Elkington, 1997). The ISO (2014, p. 9) identifies three main economic benefits associated with its standards, including: 'streamlining internal operations; innovating and

scaling up innovations; and creating or entering new markets'. The ISO suggests that the adoption and implementation of the ISO's standards help businesses to reorganise internal processes and communication and that this results in cost-savings, as processes are incorporated into management systems. The biggest benefit from certification, for the ISO, is the possibility of accessing new markets, including ecotourism, as this offers growth potential for tourism businesses. In particular, the ISO argues that SMEs would profit from "the opening up of export markets" (ISO, 2013, p. 8) and consequently, it makes good business sense to obtain certification.

In a similar way, the GSTC's 2018 strategic plan reflects particular economic benefits from sustainable tourism. The GSTC prioritises greater market access and economic benefits from the increased market exposure for sustainable tourism products. The GSTC's 2018 (p. 2) strategic plan emphasises: "Maintain[ing] the GSTC Criteria for relevance to current market conditions […] Encourag[ing] greater market access to certified sustainable travel product". The GSTC also states that:

> [the GSTC] promotes the development of broad market adoption and application of the GSTC Criteria. With the ultimate goal of increasing demand for sustainable travel and tourism offerings and building trust amongst travellers, [the GSTC] works to identify opportunities and solutions for alignment greater market potential (GSTC, 2019).

The push for standardisation and certification of sustainable tourism and ecotourism is to create greater market demand. This is a primary goal of many of the accreditation bodies as it makes good business sense to these institutions. Sustainability, in this market sense, is used as a metaphor for business opportunities and market growth (which aligns with the neoliberal approach to economic development). In contrast to certain approaches to sustainability (Shiva, 2005; Klein, 2014), the economically-aligned approach to sustainability within the accreditation bodies does not cap growth but sees sustainability as growing the market. This is identifiable in the GSTC's mission statement which seeks: "To improve tourism's potential to be a driver of positive conservation and economic development for communities and businesses

around the world and a tool for poverty alleviation" (GSTC, 2018, p. 9). While this mission statement refers to all tourism activities, the GSTC argues that sustainable tourism and eco-certification are appropriate for enhancing traditional economic development. This is reflected in the GSTC's explanation of the mission statement: "The GSTC fulfils its mission by fostering increased knowledge and understanding of sustainable tourism practices and the adoption of universal sustainable tourism principles" (GSTC, 2018, p. 9). This illustrates that an underlying logic associated with the standardisation of 'sustainability' measures for tourism and accrediting eco-certification bodies is that sustainability becomes a tool to increase demand and generate money. This links sustainability to the business case and firmly embeds the accreditation bodies approach within the classic neoliberal development paradigm.

It is possible to identify similar economic growth preferences within ISO 14000. Even though ISO 14000 is primarily geared towards the optimisation of environmental performance, the ISO believes that the adoption of ISO 14000 should also bring economic benefits to certified companies: "ISO International Standards constitute a toolbox not only for the environmental integrity of the planet, but also for economic growth and social equity – in other words, for all three dimensions of sustainable development" (ISO, 2007, p. 6). This was reflected in Table 8.5, above, as Table 8.5 illustrated how institutions and organisations incorporated the core principles of sustainable development into their definitions. Although most institutions suggest a focus on environmental protection, there seems to be an inherent cost-benefit trade-off, so that environmental protection should be a benefit but not at a cost to the organisation. The argument presented for environmental activity is that it should be done in a way that creates cost-savings for a company (see for instance Ecotourism Australia's statements in Table 8.5: "environmentally responsible choices for your business make good economic sense – significant cost savings can be made"). Thus, cost reduction or cost savings is a consistent message.

2.   Claim – Standards reduce costs (cost-savings)

Standard accounting advice is that to enhance profitability, a business should minimise costs. However, there is a risk associated with sustainability as there is a perception that implementing sustainability is costly, as it involves regulatory compliance, significant changes in business practices, human resource implications including staff training, stakeholder involvement in decision-making and comprehensive business reports with full disclosure. The basic argument associated with sustainability is that business wanting environmental or social sustainability must accept additional business costs associated with seeking the concept of sustainability. However, Brown and Fraser (2006) illustrate that businesses manage to employ sustainability in such a way as to decrease costs. Brown and Fraser (2006, pp. 110-111) cite from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development:

> [This] ecomodernist paradigm comfortably appropriates aspects of the shift to sustainable development – those that concern business risk and 'eco-efficient' use of resources that cut business costs – deflecting demands for more radical change and subsuming into the traditional business model the rhetoric of greener business as usual . . . (WBCSD, p. 74).

Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 114) further argue that businesses engage in CSR activities, pursuant to the business case approach to sustainability, if those activities engender financial payback and "provide additional 'wealth'" to shareholders. In this sense, the addition of the eco-modernist and eco-efficiency approaches to the discourse of sustainable development discourse provide significant support to the business case approach to sustainability, as this encourages the adoption of sustainability measures against a promise of cost savings. The ISO reflects this logic by including the comments of a Managing Director from an Austrian company certified by ISO:

> Without standards I would have had to close down … Not taking part [in standardisation] would have cost me my company and my livelihood… What does it cost me if I do not get involved and others define rules that are out of line with my needs, interests and experiences, but which I have to comply with because they are laid down in a standard? Hence, it is best to join in right at the start (the company specialises in training recreational divers and diving instructors) (ISO, 2019).

Institutions, such as the UNWTO, the ISO, the GSTC, and Ecotourism Australia are first-mover organisations and in that sense, set the scene for sustainable tourism and ecotourism. The approach to standards, accreditation and certification has actively incorporated the logic of the eco-modernist and eco-efficient approach to sustainability. ISO pronounces, with confidence, that they: "… have no doubt that ISO 14001:2004-based EMS implementation" […] "reduce[s] operational costs and potential liability" (ISO, 2007, p. 26, p.48). These operational cost savings are due to the ISO's standards adopting an eco-efficiency approach. CESD and TIES promote this approach to eco-efficiency in their first handbook, entitled, *A Simple User's Guide to Certification for Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism*'. The handbook suggests:

> Certification tends to reduce operating costs. This has been found in almost every type of business certification. In tourism, it has been shown to dramatically reduce the costs of water, electricity and fossil fuels without reducing the quality of service (CESD, n/d, p.11).

This quote illustrates the degree of integration with respect to the eco-efficiency, business-case approach to sustainability within tourism at the standard-setting level. These standards impact upon accreditation and this eco-efficiency approach consequently impacts upon processes for eco-certification.

3. Claim – Standards enhance eco-efficiency

In referring to the "economic dimension", the ISO (2007, p.7) argues that, "ISO standards for products, services, materials, systems and good practice promote efficiency and effectiveness" helping to "provide a competitive and financial advantage through improved efficiencies" (ISO, 2015a, p. 4). Brown and Fraser (2006) identify a competitive advantage as a key logic associated with the business case. The two concepts of efficiency and effectiveness are an important message for the ISO and its standards, as it is repeated across various publications and on their website. ISO 14000, a common standard in the tourism context, states that:

> … together, these tools can provide significant tangible economic benefits, including the following:
> - Reduced raw material/resource use

- Reduced energy consumption
- Improved process efficiency
- Reduced waste generation and disposal costs
- Utilisation of recoverable resources

[…] This is the contribution that the ISO 14000 series makes to the environmental and economic components of sustainable development and the triple bottom line (ISO, 2009, p. 8).

A similar eco-efficiency influence is evident in the GSTC criteria. The GSTC criteria focus on four areas: sustainable management, the socio-economic, cultural impacts and environmental impacts. The eco-efficiency focus on minimising negative impacts and maximising benefits is illustrated in measures concerning energy conservation, water conservation and pollution reduction including carbon emissions, waste and wastewater (GSTC, 2016). The focus of standards on efficiency with respect to resource use sets the scene for certification bodies who promote eco-efficiency to their tourism operator-client who incorporate this neoliberal eco-efficient approach to sustainability in daily business practices. For instance, in the GSTC's promotion of the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the GSTC focus on eco-efficiency benefits. For example, the GSTC explains the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions:

…. significant greenhouse gas emissions from all sources controlled by the organisation are identified, calculated where possible and procedures implemented to avoid or to minimise them. Offsetting of the organisation's remaining emissions is encouraged (GSTC 2016, p. 10).

The GSTC then proposes a set of greenhouse gas emission indicators, which include:

- total direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions from the organisation's operations and those over which it has direct influence/control are monitored and managed
- carbon footprint per tourist/night is monitored and managed
- carbon offset mechanisms are used where practical (GSTC, 2016, p. 10)

While at first glance, these indicators appear comprehensive, the focus here is not actually on reduction. The focus of the GSTC's approach to greenhouse gases is on identification, calculation and monitoring. These factors alone do not reduce greenhouse gases. What needs to be included here, and which is missing in all of the GSTC and Ecotourism Australia's criteria are concrete methods on reduction and how to go about achieving these objectives. In that sense, the focus from the GSTC is not necessarily on measurable difference, but seemingly more on

measurement itself. Furthermore, the approach of the GSTC-criteria focuses more on self-regulation, as the GSTC only ever suggests recommendations with respect to tourist operators. The GSTC encourages intervention where possible and practical. Thus, the actual environmental impact is potentially negligible. Being aware of an organisation's impact is sufficient for the GSTC. For example, if a tourism operator takes count of its operation-related carbon emissions and monitors them, it ticks the box for reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emission without actually having done anything to reduce its carbon emissions. Thus, compliance with the GSTC encourages a form of administrative 'tick-the-box' compliance.

Furthermore, the GSTC criteria are only concerned with the company's "direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions […] and those over which it has direct/indirect influence/control" (GSTC, 2016, p. 10). The greenhouse gas indicator focuses on carbon emissions that are generated through the tourist operator's output. It has chosen, as an indicator, not to take into account the emissions caused by tourists to travel to experience the tourist operator's tourism experience. What this illustrates is that indicator systems and eco-efficiency measures have the effect of creating boundaries around the organisation (drawing a fence, so to speak). Such issues of what to include or exclude from the carbon count is reflected upon in the Conclusion Chapter to the thesis as it argues that through eco-certification (and through ecotourism), tourist operators draw 'the fence' around their organisation and this has the impact of limiting responsibility, but is also a subjective, contestable process (Hines, 1988). The impact of concepts like efficiency or eco-efficiency is that they do not require businesses to substantively change business practices, but rather they allow tourist operators to continue to conduct business as usual, while claiming that the organisation is an eco-certified ecotourism organisation (Mowforth & Munt, 2016; Brown & Fraser, 2006). Thus, continuing to conduct 'business as usual' allows the business to capitalise on benefits associated with reducing energy, water or resource consumption and the competitive advantage of certification. Ultimately, this

business case approach to efficiency may have little to do with a substantive commitment to sustainability.

| 4 | Claim – Standards mean no alteration to business practice |

In a similar sense to how eco-efficiency ultimately is redescribed to mean 'business as usual' (Mowforth & Munt, 2016; Brown & Fraser, 2006), standard setters and accreditors also argue that the adoption of standards should not necessarily require a business to change its business practices. The adoption of standards is largely 'business as usual'. I use KLM, a Dutch airline, as an example. In 1999, the KLM adopted ISO 14001. KLM claimed that the adoption of ISO 14001 resulted in the reduction of "noise, in-flight water consumption and use of toxic dry-cleaning chemicals, 40 percent of cabin paper recycling, improved wastewater quality and 1.6 million kilograms of fuel saved in a year" (ISO, 2007, p. 16). However, the cost savings associated with 1.6 million kilograms of fuel resulted from lighter aircraft, as ISO 14001 helped each aircraft to weigh less. KLM did not change its basic operations – it still flew planes. A further example is Munich Airport. Munich Airport received DIN ISO 14001:2015 and EMAS 1221/2009 certification in 2018. On its website, Munich Airport management outlines an ambitious environmental objective to becoming carbon-neutral by 2030. In 2016, Munich Airport produced 101,591 tonnes of CO_2. The goal is to reduce this to zero by 2030 (Munich Airport, 2019) (see Appendix Three for more information). The Airport states that it will achieve this objective by reducing 60 percent of its direct carbon emissions, related to energy supply, vehicle fleet/mobility and its buildings using strategies such as e-mobility, changing to LED lighting and using renewable energy (Munich Airport, 2019). The remaining 40 percent of indirect emissions will be offset through regional climate projects (compensation) (Munich Airport, 2019) (see Appendix four). However, while these initiatives are concerned with Munich Airport itself, they have no concern with the airport's core business: aviation. It excludes from its carbon footprint calculations the carbon from aircraft landing and taking off

from its runways. The arbitrariness within sustainability indicator systems and the ability for organisations to choose what to include or what to exclude (drawing the fence around the organisation) allows for Munich Airport to report the goal of carbon neutrality to its stakeholders and market this to airlines and travellers as a form of competitive advantage, but it is only a partial, created measure. In effect, Munich Airport may improve its carbon efficiency, but this effort does not require the airport to make significant alterations to its core business practices. Alternatively, eco-certification legitimises and permits companies to follow efficiency logics without necessarily significantly changing the status quo. In all of the organisations studied in this thesis, no standard setter or accreditor suggests that tourism operators should abandon their core business in the name of sustainability. That is, the ISO, the GSTC or TIES do not indicate that they have a problem with tourism as a contributor to environmental or social crises. In effect, the ISO, the GSTC or TIES do not point to the contradiction in tourism or travel and thus, do not recommend that airlines or airports serious about sustainability should consider stopping flying or stopping the facilitation of flying. That is, there is a general approach within the sustainable tourism community to conduct 'business-as-usual' or business with as few changes as possible. This is business as usual with legitimation from sustainability. The focus on efficiency does little to require organisations to change their business practices but facilitates businesses continuing with their impactful operations. Evidence that supports this idea comes from TIES, who argue that "when we talk about "sustainable" activities, it usually means that we can do the activity in the same or similar way for the indefinite future (sustainable in time)" (CESD, Handbook I, n/d, p. 4). This statement illustrates the crux of how sustainability has been redescribed as business case appropriate for institutions, organisations and tourism operators. However, I argue, that this is a constrained approach to sustainability that puts business at the centre and in control. An approach to sustainability that puts the interests of the environmental or social systems above the interests

of business would suggest that we cannot sustain current activities in the same or similar way into the future. This is illustrative of the degree of redescription to incorporate an eco-efficient understanding of sustainability into the business case. It is perverse, at the political level, to suggest that sustainability means 'business as usual', but this is how it has been redescribed into the tourism space. This will be further discussed in Chapter ten, which examines the sustainability practices of 25 Australian tourism operators.

In concluding the arguments, the incorporation of a neoliberal approach to development within sustainability (in the construction of the hegemonic discourse of sustainable development), as evidenced by the Brundtland Report (1987) constitutes a dislocation. The impact of this dislocation resulted in the emergence of a strong business case approach to sustainability within the tourism space in the form of sustainable tourism and ecotourism and is evident in eco-certification. Industry leading institutions, including the UNWTO, the ISO, the GSTC and TIES adopted a neoliberal economic approach to sustainability focused on eco-efficiency as an 'accepted' technology with the associated belief that this approach will assist with achieving sustainability. The impact of this technocratic approach assumes that current business practice in tourism can be sustained indefinitely, with little substantive change. These sets of beliefs inform the approach to certification, as certifying companies, such as Ecotourism Australia, are influenced by the standards created by accreditors and these standards inform tourism operators. As an example of contestation relevant to the political logic, key moments such as the Mohonk Agreement and the development of standards illustrate how the institutions of the accreditation industry created the 'rules of the game' concerning sustainable tourism and ecotourism against alternatives. The impact of this was manifest: it may have altered the perceptions of social actors in tourism, including tourists and tourist operators as to what constitutes sustainability and how it is demonstrable; or perhaps this approach was able to cover over any contingencies within the accreditation approach to sustainable tourism and ecotourism; or perhaps this aligned with

the industry's expectations concerning sustainable tourism and ecotourism as there ultimately was little change for tourist operators and tourists may have 'bought' into the ecotourism labels associated with the tourism activity. Consequently, with the focus on eco-efficiency, cost-savings and economic benefits such as new market opportunities and competitive advantages, the accreditation bodies, as industry standard-setters and leaders, played a central role in shifting the understanding of sustainability towards and economic development activity for tourist operators with associated cost-savings and other economic benefits to tourism businesses concerning development and growth. Sadly, little of this focus is deeply concerned with the environment or the social.

4   Interpreting the Data – Rhetorical Redescription (I)

This chapter focused on the political logics, which "allow us to account for their historical emergence and formation by focusing on the conflicts and contestations surrounding their constitution" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 213). The political logic helps to explain a key component for my thesis concerning the process of subsuming sustainability for tourism into the dominant neoliberally-informed economic system. This discussion (in association with the two subsequent empirical chapters) seek to provide evidence to answer the overall empirical questions that are the focus of this thesis. The ultimate point of this chapter was to illustrate the initial steps taken by accreditation bodies in the tourism industry concerned with sustainable tourism and ecotourism to rhetorically redescribe the concept of sustainability so that it was compliant with, acceptable or non-challenging to the current neoliberal economic approach known as the business case. Rhetorical redescription is a discursive intervention that guards against rhetorical reductionism by focusing on: a) re-conceptualisations, b) renaming c) re-weighting and d) re-evaluating a term such as sustainability (Skinner, 2002; Carter, 2008, p. 220).

Rhetoric, more generally, is crucial in politics as it influence the construction of hegemonies and discourses (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). The dislocatory impact of the Brundtland Report (1987) from a rhetorical perspective is that it impacted upon the concept of sustainability in a number of ways, including enabling a re-conceptualisation of sustainability, re-weighting central elements within sustainability and re-evaluating the concept. For example, the shift in sustainability involved a revision of the meaning of sustainability. The traditional conception of sustainability was focused on responding to environmental disasters. It took on a broader application in the early 1970s, as it focused on environmental protection including decreasing the degradation of the planetary resources through exploitation and pollution. A social component was added to the concept through concerns with poverty and by questioning whether there were sufficient resources available for future generations. However, the Brundtland Report (1987) engenders a revision (or at least perfects the revision of the meaning of sustainability) by adding the economic pillar to sustainability and further still, this revision was attached to a traditional economic idea concerning development. Within the context of tourism, this resulted in the emergence of two discourses concerning sustainable development and eco-certification for ecotourism. Although the Brundtland Report (1987) does recognise that "traditional approaches to economic development were not ecologically or socially sustainable in the long run" (McKercher, 2010, p. 16), the impact to sustainability was evident as the redescription drastically curtails approaches to sustainability deemed appropriate and affirms that economic development was, and still is, the dominant paradigm through which sustainability is implementable. Figure 8.5, below, illustrates the redescription of sustainability, enabled through the Brundtland Report (1987) as a key dislocatory moment.

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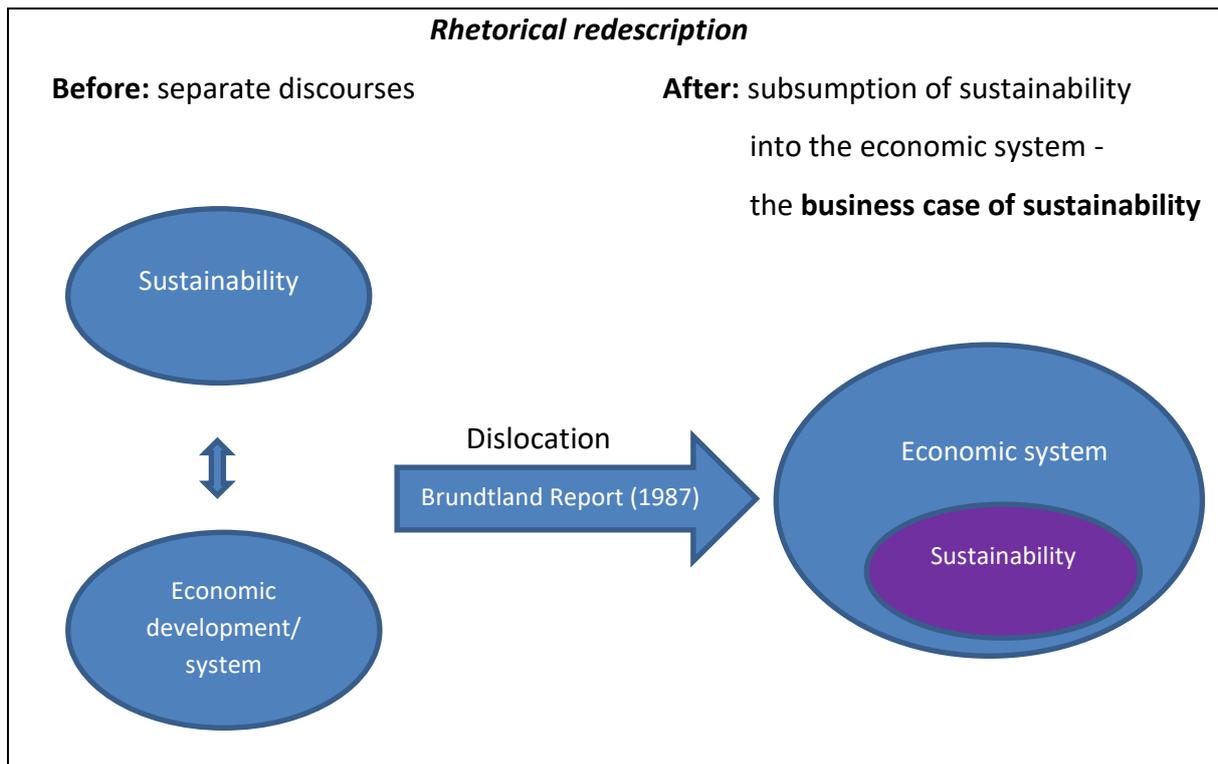
Figure 8.6: The Rhetorical Redescription of Sustainability

The emphasis on economic development within sustainability – as a dislocatory moment – was contingent and it allowed social actors to form new meanings such as instituting a business-as-usual, business case approach to tourism (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). The impact of the dislocation was to shift the focus away from traditional sustainability concerns with environmental conservation or limits to economic growth due to scarcity and constraint (Meadows *et al.,* 1972). The logics of equivalence and difference (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014), related to the political logics, permitted a new technocratic position concerned with economic development models, such as eco-efficiency to be preferred over deep green or deep social positions concerned with poverty or environmental conservation. The logic of equivalence "create[es] equivalential identities that express a pure negation of a discursive system", whereas the logic of difference tries to dissolve existing chains of equivalence by integrating "disarticulated elements into the expanding order" (Howarth *et al*., 2000, p. 11). Through expanding the system (the addition of the economic pillar of development within sustainability) industry-leading social actors in tourism, such as the ISO, the GSTC and TIES were able to

increase the relations of equivalence within sustainability by appealing to eco-efficient norms within neoliberalism. By drawing on acceptable indicators for sustainability within a business case framework, sustainability operated as a floating signifier within tourism and ecotourism. Accreditation bodies occupied a dominant hegemonic position of power as they controlled the exclusion of alternative approaches to sustainable tourism through moments like the Mohonk Agreement (in the name of excluding 'rouge' approaches to ecotourism) and instituted an acceptable approach to sustainable tourism and ecotourism through a language of eco-efficiency and neoliberalism. In particular, efficiency prevailed and permeated the political and social space of ecotourism including eco-certification. This is illustrative of a "radical contingency associated with the original institution of practices and regimes" that allowed the accreditation institutions within tourism to redescribe and accommodate the concept of sustainability into a non-threatening business-first technology (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 15). In particular, by drawing on technical expert knowledge concerning indicators and measures of sustainability, this legitimated the technocratic approach to sustainable tourism (through standards) and it accounts for the redescription of sustainability towards neoliberal models concerning eco-efficiency. As this chapter illustrates, the accreditation bodies repeatedly emphasised positive economic outcomes associated with sustainability such as cost-savings, competitive advantage, new markets and business-as-usual. Little of the concern from accreditation bodies was with environmental or social change. This is an example of catachresis, as accreditation bodies redescribed sustainability to name the unnameable, as tourism actors can act in the name of sustainable tourism without having to know what sustainability might mean. The model developed in the tourism industry reifies the logic that classical eco-efficient, neoliberal business economics is the definition of sustainability. The GSTC (2018, p. 1) summarises this redescription perfectly: "Tourism fulfils its potential as a

vehicle for social, cultural, and economic good while *removing and avoiding any negative impacts* from its activities in terms of environmental and social impacts" [emphasis added].

5   Conclusions to the Chapter

The chapter examined three accreditation bodies relevant to tourism – the ISO, the GSTC and TIES. The purpose of studying these accreditation bodies was to understand how they approach the question of setting standards and institutions concerning sustainability, sustainable tourism and ecotourism. The chapter outlined the ISO's process for standard development, as well as the GSTC's accreditation procedures that accredit certifying bodies, such as Ecotourism Australia. This information offered an understanding of the practices of accreditation bodies. In conjunction with a document analysis, it provided a deep insight into how accreditation bodies relevant to the tourism industry set and establish the 'rules of the game' for sustainable tourism and ecotourism. In analysis the documents, four themes or claims emerged that emphasised a neoliberal relationship between sustainability in tourism and accreditation standards. These four claims included that:

   a. Standards bring economic benefits

   b. Standards reduce costs (cost-savings)

   c. Standards enhance eco-efficiency

   d. Standards mean no alteration to business practice

Through analysis of the political logic and rhetorical redescription, the chapter argued that following the release of the Brundtland Report (1987), the concept of sustainability for tourism and eco-certification for ecotourism were redescribed towards a neoliberal eco-efficient approach to sustainability dominated by economic development. This allowed accreditation bodies to construct new rules concerning sustainable tourism and ecotourism and resulted in a technocratic, economic approach to sustainability (as an example of political logics). This is an example of catachresis as the tourism accreditation bodies named the unnameable by

emphasising a business-as-usual business case approach that emphasised economic logics such as eco-efficiency. These institutions, measures and indicators become the 'new rules of the sustainable tourism and ecotourism games' and influenced the practices of certification bodies, tourism operators and tourists. While this chapter focused on the political logics concerning the institution of the rules of the game concerning sustainable tourism and ecotourism, the next chapter focuses on the fantasmatic logics and examines Ecotourism Australia, as a certification body (Glynos & Howarth, 2007).

- Chapter Nine -
Empirical Data Analysis:
Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification Process (Supply-Side Part Two)

1   Overview

Chapter eight focused on the accreditation and standard-setting supply side concerning sustainable tourism and ecotourism. This chapter continues to focus on the supply-side of ecotourism and eco-certification by examining the eco-certification process developed by Ecotourism Australia. There is a logic to choosing this study site as Ecotourism Australia is accredited by the GSTC, but also played a central role following the Mohonk Agreement in setting the scene for ecotourism and eco-certification. The study of Ecotourism Australia helps to provide a concise space for the developing meaningful insights into the eco-certification discourse. In 2015, Ecotourism Australia received accreditation for its eco-certification programme with GSTC-approved status, which means that Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification criteria are recognised and approved by the GSTC (please see Chapter eight for a reminder of the process). It is important to note that Ecotourism Australia refers to its eco-certification programme as ECO certification and I use the phrase 'ECO certification' to refer to Ecotourism Australia's eco-certification approach. Ecotourism Australia's criteria form the basis for an ECO certification process and tourism operators must demonstrate that they satisfy these criteria in seeking certification. With respect to ideology, Ecotourism Australia uses eco-certification in ecotourism (a prevailing identity) to cover over contingencies concerning the economic activity of tourism and challenges with sustainability. Furthermore, Ecotourism Australia employs ECO certification ideologically as a mechanism to 'grip' certain subjects (both tourist operators and tourists) through certain attached ideologies to eco-certification that enables tourist operators, employees and tourists to see the 'good life' in their actions. This suggests that there are fantasmatic logics at play concerning the eco-certification for ecotourism supply chain (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). I chose to focus on Ecotourism Australia to gain

deeper insights into the certification process and help to explain how certifying bodies claim expertise with respect to ecotourism, sustainable tourism and sustainability, more generally. The information used in this chapter derives from a close analysis of publicly available and accessible documents from Ecotourism Australia, including Ecotourism Australia's website, PDFs, brochures and news feeds, and a set of focused interviews with Ecotourism Australia.

2 Study Site Two – Ecotourism Australia

2.1 ECO certification Types

Ecotourism Australia was founded in 1991 as the Ecotourism Association of the Indo-Pacific Region and launched one of the first ecotourism certification programmes in 1996 with the National Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP) (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). In 2002, the organisation was renamed to Ecotourism Australia. Ecotourism Australia's primary aim is the promotion of ecotourism on a national level by establishing partnerships with tourism business and other industries to promote high-quality ecotourism experiences and presenting a 'clear voice' for the tourism industry (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). Ecotourism Australia is a leading industry figure providing guidelines for the tourism industry in Australia and beyond and it assists with facilitating sustainable principles for tourism. The organisation's main product tools are "the creation of certification programs that defined ecotourism" as well as the hosting of the annual Global Eco Conference (Ecotourism Australia, 2019).

With respect to ECO certification, Ecotourism Australia currently provides four certification programs with different targets, including ECO certification, which replaced the NEAP (introduced in 2003, with distinctions between nature tourism, ecotourism and advanced ecotourism), Climate Action certifications (introduced from 2008 for climate action businesses, innovators and leaders), Respecting Our Culture (ROC) (which was transferred from Aboriginal Tourism Australia in 2008), and EcoGuide certification (2000) (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). Ecotourism Australia also certifies destinations with an Ecotourism Destination Certification and gives an 'award' of Green Travel Leader to businesses that have

had eco-certification for over ten years. The following diagram, Figure 9.1, illustrates percentages associated with these ECO certification types provided by Ecotourism Australia (see Appendix five for the statistical information).
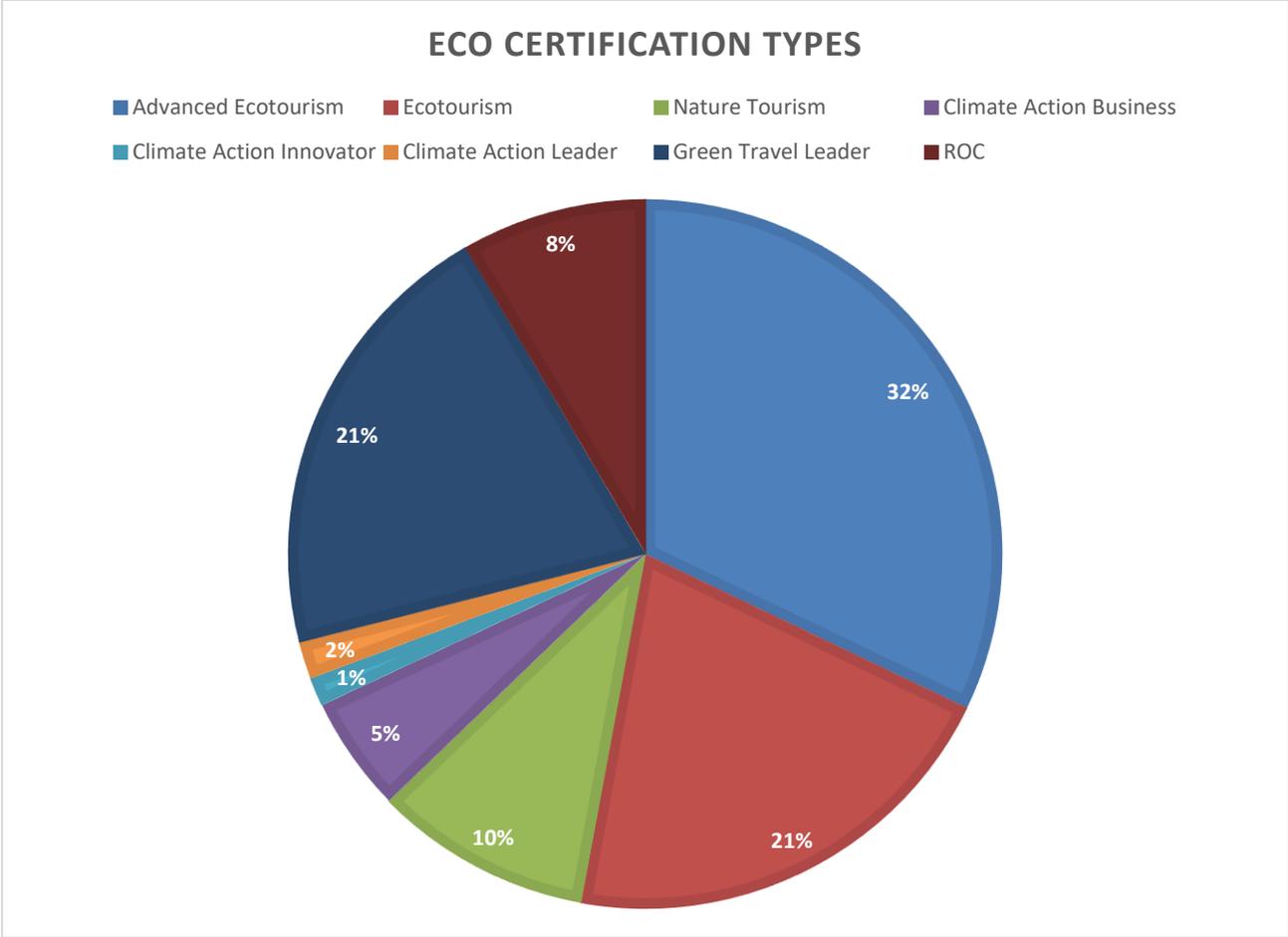
Figure 9.1: ECO certification Types

2.2 ECO certification Process and Fees

Although there are various types of ECO certification offered by Ecotourism Australia, the process for tourism operators seeking certification is the same irrespective of the award. The following diagram, Figure 9.2 illustrates Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification process.
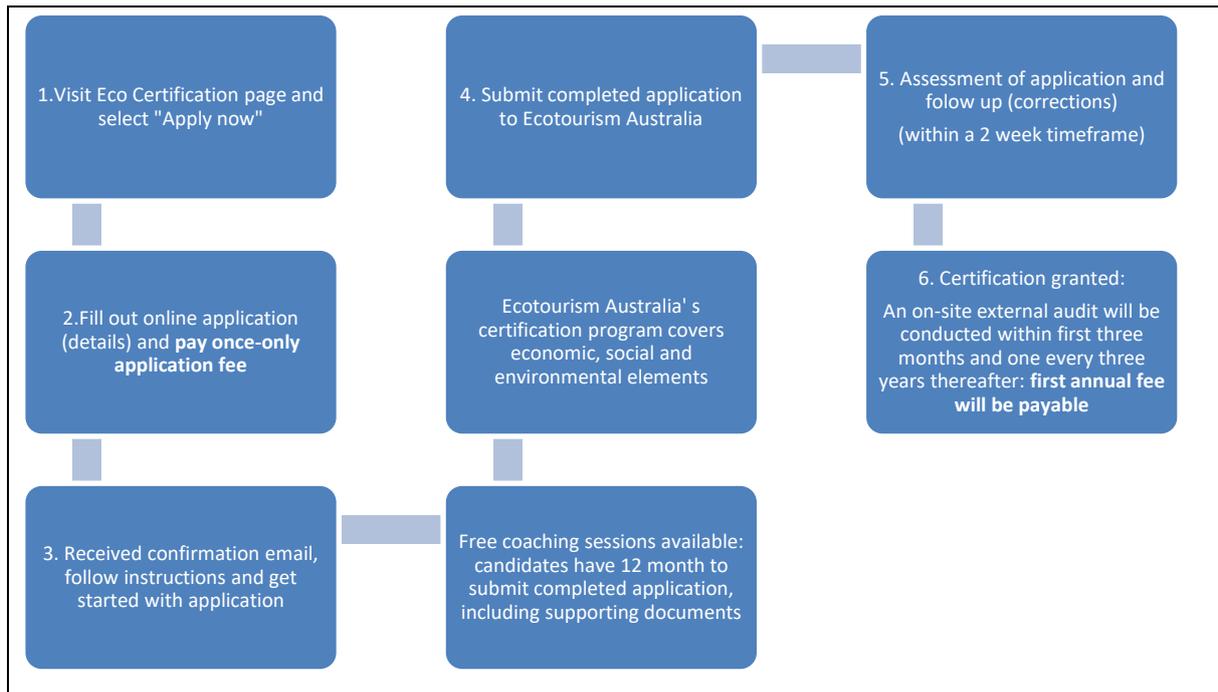
Figure 9.2: Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification Process (Ecotourism Australia, 2018, p. 8)

Ecotourism Australia's newest program, 'Climate Action Certification', is obtainable in conjunction with the ECO certification program. Climate Action Certification is very similar to Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification process with the difference that the application is sent to external, independent assessors. Climate Action certification focuses on business details, business relationships and communication, business operations, climate change risk assessment and adaptation, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and benchmarks for innovative practices regarding climate change (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). The flagship ECO certification program comprises three categories: a) eco-certified (nature tourism), b) eco-certified (ecotourism) and c) eco-certified (advanced ecotourism). The eco-certified (nature tourism) program is designed for tourism enterprises operating in "natural areas that leave minimal impact on the environment" (level one) (Ecotourism Australia, 2018, p. 3). The eco-certified (ecotourism) program is designed for tourism enterprises taking place in "natural areas that focuses on optimal resource use, conservation practices and helping communities" (level two) (Ecotourism Australia, 2018, p. 3). The final eco-certification, eco-certified (advanced ecotourism) concerns tourism enterprises "with strong interpretation values and a commitment

to nature conservation and helping local communities" (level three) (Ecotourism Australia, 2018, p. 3).

To apply for any of eco-certification program with Ecotourism Australia, tourism operators must satisfy certain requirements, which help to determine the appropriate level of certification. For instance, a tourism business with a product that is only 50 percent nature-based is ineligible for level three advanced eco-certification (level three). The following table, Table 9.3, outlines the requirements for an eco-certification application:

Table 9.3: Requirements for Application for Eco-certification

✓	The products subject to certification offer at least 50% nature-based focus to customers, such as accommodation in a natural area or outdoor tours. Advanced Ecotourism certification requires a minimum of 75% nature-based focus.
✓	Attainment of all necessary operating licenses, permits and approvals from relevant authority, which will be verified as part of the application process.
✓	Demonstration of commitment to Business Ethics practices (PDF version is available from the Ecotourism Australia website), as well as meeting these practices.
✓	Demonstration of business operations meeting customer service expectations and that operations have defined customer service procedures.
✓	Commitment to delivering quality tourism experiences.
✓	Economic, social and environmental sustainability principles are core to the operations.

Table 9.3: Adopted from Ecotourism Australia, 2018

Businesses that meet these criteria are eligible to apply for certification. To obtain ECO certification from Ecotourism Australia, eligible tourism operators must provide significant documentation, including business or marketing plans. In essence, the more advanced the level of certification sought, the more information is required upon application, although there are a different information requirements for different certifications. Table 9.4 illustrates the different levels of certification and information requirements upon application, relevant to the ECO certification from Ecotourism Australia.

Table 9.4: Different Levels of ECO certification

	Nature Tourism	Ecotourism	Advanced Ecotourism	ROC	Climate Action Business through ECO
Business plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Marketing plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Operations plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Environmental plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Interpretation plan			✓		
Climate Change action plan			✓		✓

Table 9.4: (Ecotourism Australia, 2018, p. 7)

In sum, the greater the level of certification (level 1, 2, 3), the more extensive the application process. However, in addition to the application, tourist operators are required to certification fees. The fee is dependent on financial criteria of the business seeking certification with a principal focus on turnover. The fee comprises two parts: a once-only initial application fee for certification; and an ongoing annual membership fee. Table 9.5 outlines the costs for ECO certification that tourism operators must pay to Ecotourism Australia. It should be noted that Ecotourism Australia is an independent not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation.

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Table 9.5: Cost of ECO certification in AUD

Turnover	Once-only application fee	Ongoing annual fee	Discounted annual fee (if combined with Climate Action)
< $250.000	395	555	130
$250.001 - $1.000.000	455	795	194
$1.000.001 - $5.000.000	575	1,110	264
$5.000.001 - $10.000.000	695	1,315	320
>$10.000.0001	925	1,485	374

Table 9.5: (Ecotourism Australia, 2018, p. 9)

2.3 Certified Products and Operators

Ecotourism Australia, however, does not certify whole businesses or operations. It is fundamentally important to understand that Ecotourism Australia only certifies individual, standalone products and these certifications do not certify the business as a whole (Esparon *et al.,* 2018). For example, a hotel that offers ecotourism accommodation alongside other non-ecotourism options can seek certification of its ecotourism accommodation. The certification applies only to that accommodation product. Equally, a business that has multiple ecotourism experiences, including reef diving, hiking and accommodation options is not able to get certification for the business as a whole. It must seek certification for each product. Ecotourism Australia has "certified over 1500 products of 476 members" (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). The following two diagrams, Figure 9.6 (see Appendix six for more statistical information) and Figure 9.7 (see Appendix seven for more statistical information) below outline the different certification categories regarding tourism products and the geographical distribution of tourism operators in Australia who have received a form of ECO certification:

CERTIFIED PRODUCTS

Legend:
- Tour/Guided Tour
- Accommodation
- Attraction
- Wheelchair accessible
- Adventure
- Bus/4WD
- Snorkelling/Diving
- Camping
- Cruise/Boat
- Food/Wine
- Hinking/Walking
- Scenic Flight
- Wildlife Experience
- Education & School Groups
- National Park
- Cultural

Pie chart labels: Horse/Camel/Riding 1%, National Park 1%, Cultural 4%, Tour/Guided Tour 29%, Accommodation 8%, Attraction 4%, Wheelchair Accessible 2%, Adventure 5%, Bus/4WD 6%, Snorkelling/Diving 6%, Camping 3%, Cruise 13%, Voluntourism 1%, Hiking/Walking 7%, Education and School Groups 1%, Wildlife Experience 9%

Figure 9.6: Ecotourism Australia's ECO certified Products

The range of tourism activities that have eco-certification from Ecotourism is impressive (with over 1500 individual certified products). The range of products (discussed in Chapter ten) suggests that the definition of ecotourism activity continues to expand and there are some surprising products deemed worthy of eco-certification.

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CERTIFIED TOURISM OPERATORS

NSW/ACT Tasmania NT VIC SA QLD WA

14% — 17% — 3% — 7% — 11% — 8% — 40%
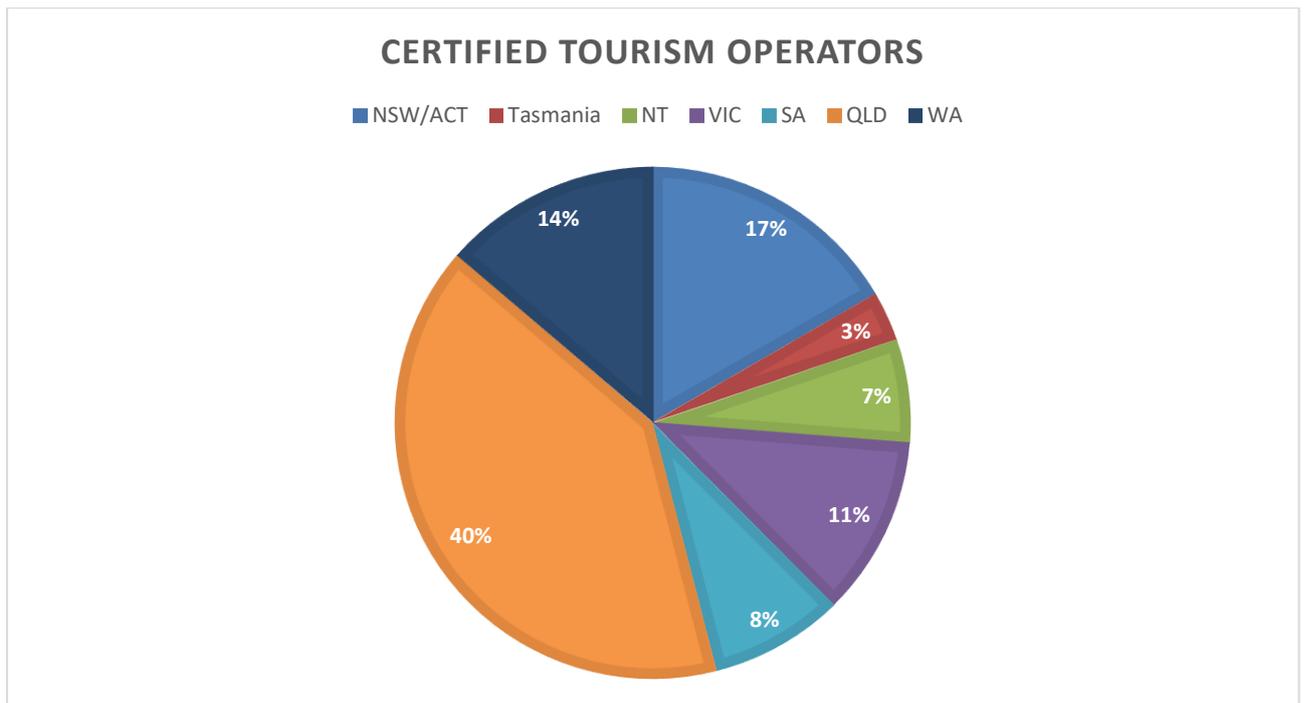
Figure 9.7: Ecotourism Australia's ECO certified Tourism Operators

Geography is interesting here. There are two brief observations worth making. First, Ecotourism Australia is based in Brisbane in Queensland and that may help to explain the disproportionately high number of Queensland-based tourist operators. It might be the case that given the nature-based tourism in Queensland, that eco-certification has a marketable value in this contested market. The other slightly confusing statistic here is the small number, comparatively, of Tasmanian tourist operators with certification, given that Tasmania is marketed as an undisturbed nature-based destination. Again, one might argue that the marketable value of certification in Tasmania is less given that the nature of many tourism products in Tasmania are nature-based.

2.4 Assessments and Auditing

In light of the detail concerning the ECO certification options, the next section focuses on Ecotourism Australia's approach to determining suitability for certification. Central to this is the assessment and auditing process, as:

> … audits are not just a necessary process to ensure standards are met, but are also very much an operation enhancing process with an ideal opportunity to meet with an experienced and knowledgeable industry professional (Ecotourism Australia, 2019).

To become eco-certified, tourism operators submit an application including operational plans focusing on the business, on marketing and/or on risk management. The application is initially reviewed by Ecotourism Australia's certification coaches who check that the application is complete. Following this initial assessment, a complete application is submitted to Ecotourism Australia's certification assessors who determine the outcome of the application typically within a two-week timeframe (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). If the certification assessors deem that corrective actions are required or if the application is incomplete, then the assessment process and the granting of ECO certification by Ecotourism Australia might take longer. Initially, the assessment process for certification is completed internally by Ecotourism Australia staff and no external or independent auditors are involved in the process. Within three to twelve months following the grant of ECO certification, external auditors (on behalf of Ecotourism Australia) will conduct an on-site audit. These auditors are members of a "contracted panel of independent, qualified and experienced auditors" from Conservation Volunteers with which Ecotourism Australia recently launched a partnership (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). Not all of these auditors, however, exclusively work for Conservation Volunteers and the degree of independence of these eco-certification auditors is questionable. For example, one of the external auditors contracted to Conservation Volunteers and who holds a management role at Conservation Volunteers was one of the founding directors of Ecotourism Australia. Three other members of Conservation Volunteers hold positions with Ecotourism Australia including the current chair of Ecotourism Australia's Board of Directors, a Director on the Board of Directors for Ecotourism Australia and one of the Certification Managers at Ecotourism Australia. The remaining three 'external' auditors of Ecotourism Australia either work for Conservation Volunteers or for other organisations within the ecotourism space. Despite questions over the 'independence' of this group of external auditors, the external

auditors "have a wealth of practical tourism experience, have successfully completed Ecotourism Australia Ltd's Auditor Training Program and have detailed knowledge of the Ecotourism Australia Ltd's Certification criteria and processes". For Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification process, the auditors play an important role (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). When conducting an on-site audit, Ecotourism Australia requires that tourism operators provide auditors with unfettered access to both staff and facilities, including accommodation and vehicles. The exact form of access depends on the product subject to audit. The purpose of the external audit visit is for the auditors to determine if the claims made by the tourist operator in the initial application regarding the operator's eco practices were accurate and whether particular eco practices are implemented. This form of audit involves target-performance comparison. Consequently, if performance does not align with the claimed target, the auditor requires that the tourist operator employs appropriate corrective measures necessary for maintaining certification status. Following the completion of the on-site audit, the auditor provides Ecotourism Australia with a detailed outcome report. Based on the audit report, Ecotourism Australia determines the audit result and suggests any further corrective actions that the tourist operator must implement if it wishes to maintain its certification status (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). Following the initial audit, Ecotourism Australia plans for operators to be audited within three years (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). However, in addition to regular scheduled audits, Ecotourism Australia also conducts three other forms of audits: random audits, targeted audits and mystery-shopper style audits are conducted throughout the year, especially in a case where ordinary audits are insufficient (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). In light of this outline of the assessment and auditing elements of the eco-certification process, I discuss a set of issues.

First, it is unclear what is the purpose of the claim to independence in the audit process, when the actual independent status of the auditors is questionable. Perhaps this is more about

appearances than reality, as each external, 'independent' auditor has strong connections or links to Ecotourism Australia. The panel of external auditors associated with Conservation Volunteers have all been trained as auditors pursuant to Ecotourism Australia and act either as Board members, directors, ex-directors or are also employed as a certification manager within Ecotourism Australia. The purpose of this analysis is not to challenge their knowledge or professionalism as eco-auditors *per se*, and for all intents and purposes, we can assume that they bring relevant knowledge and experience to the certification process (whether this makes the experts according to the expert literature is a different line of inquiry). However, it seems difficult for Ecotourism Australia to defend their independence, when they are so closely related to Ecotourism Australia. There is some potential here for a conflict of interest as while auditors (at least in theory) should be neutral and unbiased, these auditors also have an interest in Ecotourism Australia (and this might extend to favouring eco-certification status for tourist operators).

Not only is there potentially a problem with respect to the independence of the auditing practice, but Ecotourism Australia is heavily involved in both the assessment and auditing processes concerning certification. The assessment process and the initial granting of ECO certification happens internally within Ecotourism Australia. That is, there is no external assessment or auditing until after certification is granted. This also must put pressure on the auditors in that the logic of the audit is about maintaining the certification, rather than adjudicating whether the certification is warranted. Moreover, while the external auditors conduct the audit, their role is constrained further as they do not determine the final outcome of the audit. They can give advice to the tourism operator and they report to Ecotourism Australia, but it is Ecotourism Australia that takes the final decision regarding the outcome of the audit. This further challenges the claim that Ecotourism Australia's auditing process is independent. This has the potential to affect the credibility of the eco-certification program, and although in a different context, starts to look a

little like audit challenges that emerged in the accounting industry post-2000. The initial certification process created by Ecotourism Australia's consisted of tourist operators conducting a self-assessment and oversight due to the appointment of two referees for consulting purposes concerning certification (Haaland & Aas, 2010). Ecotourism Australia changed its governance framework in 2001 to incorporate the inception of "separate independent auditing groups" (Haaland & Aas, 2010, p. 379) where each "assessor and auditor [was] usually an ecotourism professional (academic, consultant or public service) rather than a tourism operator" (Chester & Crabtree, 2002, p. 177). What this analysis indicates, with the relationship with Conservation Volunteers, is that there remains a strong tie within the audit process to Ecotourism Australia. Thus, having examined Ecotourism Australia, its ECO certification processes and critically evaluated questionable elements of the process, the next section focuses on Ecotourism Australia from the perspective of the fantasmatic logics cover over the contingent nature of their ECO certification process to understand how Ecotourism Australia is able to see the 'good life' in their practices.

3   Dislocation - Articulating the Fantasmatic Logic of ECO certification

Chapter eight examined political logics to illustrate how accreditation and standard setting bodies in the sustainable and ecotourism fields constructed contestable practices during a period of dislocation and contingency. The impact of this resulted in the institution and sedimentation of eco-efficient and business case appropriate constructs that privileged the economic within the ecotourism activity. This chapter develops this idea further in the space of eco-certification. Ecotourism Australia is impacted by the eco-efficiency and business case models concerning ecotourism. This hegemonic development, is of course, contingent and this section focuses on how Ecotourism Australia ideologically covers over this contingency and *how Ecotourism Australia justifies their actions and how this helps them to see the good in their actions* (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). I look at how particular eco-certification practices adopted by Ecotourism

Australia, such as measuring carbon emissions, provide an ideological and subject-position justification for Ecotourism Australia (the fantasmatic logic).

As discussed, there has been a range of influences over the current approach to ecotourism and eco-certification, including the Mohonk Agreement, the Brundtland Report (1987), international accreditation and standard setting bodies (such as the ISO, the GSTC, the UNWTO), national tourism bodies, educational institutions and tourism researchers have helped to sediment a set of rules, standards and 'best practices' influencing the eco-certification discourse. Ecotourism Australia incorporated a range of influences into its approach to eco-certification including carbon-neutral, zero-waste, low–impact, sustainable management, social and economic practices, cultural respect and conservation. The single most significant influence is the GSTC, widely seen as the standard-setting leader in the tourism industry and responsible for many industry 'best practices'. Thus, many of the GSTC's criteria are evident in Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification processes and the GSTC accredited the GTSC. There are differences. Ecotourism Australia includes criteria concerning responsible marketing and customer satisfaction and the environmental criteria are more comprehensive when compared to those required by the GSTC. To some degree, this is explained by the narrower focus of Ecotourism Australia. The GSTC is concerned with all sustainable tourism, while Ecotourism Australia is ecotourism focused. Ecotourism Australia defines ecotourism as a tourism product that is at least 50 percent based in nature and hence, there is a more specific focus in their ECO certification process on the environmental and environmental management (but still from an eco-efficiency perspective). The key criteria for Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification include business management and operational planning, marketing and customer satisfaction, environmental management and interpretation and cultural education. The following table,

Table 9.8, outlines the similarities and differences between Ecotourism Australia ECO certification criteria and GSTC's criteria for tourism and travel:

Table 9.8: Comparing GSTC's Sustainability Criteria for tourism and travel with Ecotourism Australia's Criteria for Eco-certification

Ecotourism Australia	GSTC
1. Business management and operational planning Legal compliance	**A. Effective sustainable management (A)** Legal compliance
✓	✓
Insurance details	Legal compliance
✓	✓
Business plan	Reporting and communication
✓	✓
Marketing plan	Staff engagement
✓	✓
Human resources	Customer experience
✓	✓
Operational management and business systems	Accurate promotion
✓	✓
Customer service	*Buildings and infrastructure*
✓	
Risk management	➢ Compliance
✓	✓
	➢ Impact and integrity
	✓
	➢ Sustainable practices and materials
	✓
	➢ Access for all
	✓
	➢ Land water and property rights
	✓
	➢ Information and interpretation
	✓
	➢ Destination engagement
	✓
2. Responsible Marketing	
✓	
3. Customer satisfaction	
✓	

4. Environmental management	B. Natural environment (maximising benefits to the environment and minimise negative impacts) (D)
Environmental management procedures	*Conserving resources*
✓	✓
Suppliers and business partners	➤ Environmentally preferable purchasing
✓	✓
The changing climate	➤ Efficient purchasing
✓	✓
Business vulnerability and adaption to climate change	➤ Energy conservation
✓	✓
Location	➤ Water conservation
✓	✓
Construction methods and materials	*Reducing pollution*
✓	✓
Site disturbance and landscaping	➤ Greenhouse gas emissions
✓	✓
Drainage, soil and water management	➤ Transport
✓	✓
Lightning	➤ Wastewater
✓	✓
Wastewater	➤ Solid waste
✓	✓
Noise	➤ Harmful substances
✓	✓
Air quality	➤ Minimise pollution
✓	✓
Waste minimisation and management	*Conserving biodiversity, ecosystems and landscapes*
✓	
Energy use and minimisation – buildings and equipment	➤ Biodiversity conservation
✓	✓
Energy use and minimisation – transport	➤ Invasive species
✓	✓
Minimal disturbance to wildlife	➤ Visits to natural sites
✓	✓
Minimal impact nocturnal wildlife viewing	➤ Wildlife interactions
✓	✓
Minimal impact marine and aquatic animal viewing	➤ Animal welfare
✓	✓
Minimal impact walking	➤ Wildlife harvesting and trade
✓	✓
Minimal camping, including regular rest stops for tours	
✓	
Minimal impact vehicle use	
✓	
Minimal impact power boat use	

✓	
Minimal impact non-powered boat use	
✓	
Minimal impact aircraft use	
✓	
Minimal impact rock climbing and abseiling	
✓	
Minimal impact caving – show caves	
✓	
Minimal impact caving – wild caves	
✓	
Minimal impact snorkelling and scuba diving	
✓	
Minimal impact trail riding and animal tours	
✓	
Minimal impact fishing	
✓	
Minimal impact houseboat use – inland waters	
✓	
Minimal impact houseboat use – marine	
✓	
Animals in captivity	
✓	
5. Interpretation and education Interpretation planning	
✓	
Opportunities for interpretation	
✓	
Credibility of interpretation and education information	
✓	
Staff training, awareness and understanding	
✓	
6. Contribution to conservation Conservation initiatives – local	
✓	
Conservation initiatives – national/global	
✓	
7. Working with Local Communities	**C. Social & economic practices** (maximise social and economic benefits to the local community and minimise negative impacts) **(B)**
Provision of local benefits	Community support
✓	✓
Minimal impact on local communities	Local employment
✓	✓

Community involvement	Local purchasing
✓	✓
	Local entrepreneurs
	✓
	Exploitation and harassment
	✓
	Equal opportunity
	✓
	Decent work
	✓
	Community services
	✓
	Local livelihood
	✓
8. Cultural respect and sensitivity	**D. Cultural respect & conservation** (maximise benefits to cultural heritage and minimise negative impacts) **(C)**
Consultation and training	Cultural interactions
✓	✓
Visitor information	Protecting cultural heritage
✓	✓
Indigenous arts, crafts and goods	Presenting culture and heritage
✓	✓
	Artefacts
	✓

Table 9.8 (adapted from GSTC and Ecotourism Australia)

Following interviews with officers from Ecotourism Australia and the analysis of over 500 pages of publicly available and accessible documents (websites, brochures, news feeds and PDFs), two principal themes emerged in reading and re-reading the information set focused around business and operational concerns and environmental management. Many of Ecotourism Australia's practices are informed by a commitment to business and environmental management motivations and these influence the interactions and relationships between Ecotourism Australia and tourism operators (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). The underlying questions here are what does Ecotourism Australia do and how do they do it? With respect to business management, for Ecotourism Australia, the idea of a 'going concern' business is important. The purpose of the documentation supplied at application for certification concerning marketing plans, environmental management plans and risk management provides

critical information pursuant to the success of small tourism operators. Of prime importance though is the tourist operator's business plan which should account for the way a tourism operator conducts their business. A driving logic underneath all of this focus is that economics matter and the impact of this is for Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification process to privilege the economic elements of sustainability. Ecotourism Australia seems more like a business coaching arrangement rather than an organisation predominantly concerned with environmental or social elements concerning sustainability and ecotourism. An interviewee from Ecotourism Australia explains the role of the financial information and other economic information in eco-certification:

> One of the keys of sustainability is you make a profit, because otherwise you are not going to be here next year, what's the point! … Sustainability is really this financial sustainability, you make a profit! … If you don't have your finances sorted you can have the best environmental plan in the world, but you can't fund it … and then you go broke (Interviewee, 2017).

The interviewee reinforces that tourism is an economic activity and that in the space of ecotourism an issue of principal importance is the financial stability and ongoing financial viability of the tourist operation. There is no doubt that this interviewee is passionate about Ecotourism Australia and understands this through the lens of Ecotourism Australia, but the single-minded focus on profit reinforces the argument that eco-certification organisations such as Ecotourism Australia function an approach to ecotourism that subsumes the concept or brand of sustainability into the existing economic system by emphasising the business case, eco-efficiency and other economic elements into the definition of sustainability. Several arguments follow:

1. Claim – Prioritisation of the economic component

Ecotourism Australia *prioritise the economic component* of sustainability. Sadly, there is no surprise in this, as much of the literature illustrates how organisations redescribe sustainability through the classic TBL approach, by over-emphasising the economic or financial elements of

sustainability before environmental or social issues pertinent to sustainability (Elkington, 1997; Mowforth & Munt, 2016). This business case approach is quite deliberate and the relationship to sustainability is claimed rather than demonstrated in focusing on TBL (Milne & Gray, 2013, p. 18; Norman & MacDonald, 2004). Ecotourism Australia justify their focus on the economic and financial elements of businesses seeking certification due to the need to know the structure of the business, including cash-flows and return on investment. However, while this may be valuable information from a 'business coach' perspective, it is difficult to reconcile the link to the certification at hand, which is an indicator or mark (or metaphor) for the ecological nature of the tourist venture (not a certification of its economic viability). Perhaps Ecotourism Australia has become captured by an alternative logic that involves evidence of the economic viability of ecotourism as an activity and hence that focus means that its certification is more aligned with economic viability rather than ecological sustainability. It seems that the brand value of eco-certification is secured if every tourist operator that receives eco-certification is financially viable. Hence, the basic focus in each certification is can this tourist operation generate sufficient income to stay financially viable. The reason for this is that without sound finances, and other components of ecological sustainability for ecotourism cannot be implemented:

> You need to be able to understand cash flows, you need to able to understand your finances … understand how your business works. … You can't implement the others unless you are making a profit. You just can't. How can you do it? We need to make sure that you are doing all these things well, but the finances are the corner stone. If you are not making money, you cannot do these other things (Interviewee, 2017)

From the business case perspective and from an economic point of view, Ecotourism Australia is logically correct. However, from a sustainability perspective, this is evidence of how sustainability has been redescribed to privilege the economic and the economic viability of the organisation. An alternative approach might hold, for example, that no tourist activity in that pristine nature environment would be preferable, unless the tourist operator could demonstrate how they are enhancing the social or environmental conditions at the site. The problem with

what Ecotourism Australia's approach represents is that the economic lens dominates measures and impacts in and around ecotourism. One of Ecotourism Australia's eco-certified tourism operators, for example, is "donating 5% of their profits from every booking" to preservation of the environment where they host their tourism activity (Ecotourism Australia, News from 29 October 2015). I am not necessarily arguing that this is a bad outcome *per se*, but this is a direct impact of privileging the economic lens. Sustainability activities concerning the social or the environmental are understood economically or financially. The tourism operator is contributing to environmental preservation following an income less expenses logic. This may continue with tourist operators re-invest costs-savings from optimised performance into the community or the environment. There is a 'good' in this, but it is dominated by the focus on the economic lens. Equally worrying, though, is that in studying eco-certified organisations and Ecotourism Australia, the tourist operator donating five percent of profits was the only example of that approach that I could find. It seems that very few operators give financially back to their local communities or the environment by using their own finances for social or environmentally motivated projects. This suggests a traditional business case logic focused on profit-making and profit retention (I recognise that there are indirect social benefits through employment and the tourist activity), but this helps to illustrate the issue of taking the economic as the starting point in discussions around sustainability (see, Crabtree & Black, 2007 and Parsons & Grant, 2007 for this eco-efficient approach to the business case).

A number of tourist operators do focus on their local communities and on the environment. There are four separate newsfeeds on Ecotourism Australia's website (News from 2 June 2015; 18 December 2014; 8 January 2018 and 3 March 2015) that promotes how eco-certified tourist operators were using local fund-raising to generate money for particular for social and environmental projects. Four tourist operators were "donating time and raising funds" for local communities. While this is to be appreciated and the objectives may well be valuable, this

further illustrates the impact of taking economic viability as the starting point. Each of these tourist operators benefits from their local communities and environmental context. However, from a critical perspective, these tourist operators engaging in fund-raising is not impacting upon their core business in any way at all. In fact, these operators are passing on social or environmental responsibility to consumers and the local community. One example on Ecotourism Australia's newsfeed was a tourist operator that asked customers to donate for the planting of trees. The tree planting was paid for by donations and the tourist operator donated time in order to conduct the planting. This is similar to an airline offering carbon-offsetting for a fee. The airline creates the system by which customers can pay for offsetting, while the airline claims CSR benefits from the activity. Here, the tourist operator has set up the tree planting system and while the customer funds the activity, the tourist operator claims 'credit' for enhancing the local environment. This, however, is not an approach to sustainability that reconciles with the original approaches to sustainability that privileged the environment, but rather this is a redescribed version of sustainability in the business case sense. The economic bottom line of the tourist operation is barely impacted (perhaps a time cost) in the sense that consumers pay for the trees, while the tourist operators claim credit and kudos for the fundamental environmental activity (the planting of trees). The fact that there are four such cases on Ecotourism Australia's website suggests that this a form of promoted activity and is evidence of the redescription of sustainability into the business case within the dominant economic system (Mowforth & Munt, 2016; Bebbington, 1997; Fletcher & Neves, 2012). The fantasmatic impact of Ecotourism Australia's approach is impacted further by Ecotourism Australia disseminating its eco-efficient, economic-dominant practices through its ECO certification model and thus, as the most recognised eco-certification in Australia, the hegemonic impact is that tourist operators adopt the business case model concerning

sustainability and believe it to be appropriate or correct, seemingly without question (Glynos & Howarth, 2007).

2.   Claim – Sustainability is a 'value-add'

Ecotourism Australia presents sustainability as a business opportunity, but focusing on ecotourism as a 'value-add':

> By following the best practice standards offered by Ecotourism Australia you will be able to provide a high-quality recognisable product to consumers, whilst increasing your sustainable development - creating cost savings, improving the image of your organisation […] Environmentally responsible choices for your business make good economic sense – significant cost savings can be made by changing just a few simple practices (Ecotourism Australia, 2019).

The impact of this statement is manifest. First, the focus is entirely economic. Good ecotourism practice equates to a quality product ('a high-quality recognisable product'), it creates market recognition ('a high-quality recognisable product to consumers'), an improved market image ('improving the image of your organisation' translating to increased demand), and economic benefits through an eco-efficiency lens ('creating cost savings'). In this statement, Ecotourism Australia redescribes the case for eco-certification for ecotourism as not moral or ethical but as economic (it 'make[s] good economic sense'). This approach reinforces how sustainability is incorporated into the traditional business case (as opposed to operating as a competing or an alternative system). For ecotourism (and eco-certification), links to sustainability provide value-add opportunities to save money (reducing costs) and make money (through new markets opportunities and a market premium reflecting quality). This reduces sustainability to a business toolkit through eco-efficiency for cost saving, opportunity costs and potentially increased revenue through messaging to the market. This highlights how sustainability is redescribed so that is compatible with the traditional business case and how it has incorporated neoliberal principles such as efficiency. There is a remarkable consistency in messaging here from a business case perspective. For example, the WBCSD (2003, p. 15) suggests that the range of identified business benefits from sustainability include the creation of financial value; attracting

long-term capital and favourable financing conditions; motivating and aligning staff and attracting talent; improving management systems; improving risk awareness; encouraging innovation; encouraging continuous improvement and enhancing reputation. Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 105) quote from the consultancy firm Deloittes (2002, p. 2) who promote the logics of sustainability as economically-sound: 'Business leaders are increasingly acting upon this responsibility [to report] because it makes good business sense. It helps companies to mitigate risk, protect corporate brand, and gain competitive advantage. . . .'. The justifications presented by both Deloittes and the WBCSD are similar to how Ecotourism Australia presents the benefits of eco-certification. A similar approach is how companies such as the Munich Airport (2019) argue that their definition of an objective for carbon neutrality is a long-term goal that innovatively harmonises the benefits associated with the economy and ecology.

The impact of the treating the case for eco-certification for ecotourism and sustainability as an 'value-add' is that it ultimately becomes a logic for allowing tourism operators to continue operate without substantially having to change business practices:

> As I said [eco-certification for ecotourism] is a value-add. It is not the silver bullet that is going to solve the world's problem, but it certainly adds to it … So, a lot of it is just adding value, as supposed to radically changing a business. … You need to be sure every year that this is adding value to my business (Interviewee, 2017).

The fantasmatic impact of treating eco-certification as a value-add is that it constrains the degree of change associated with sustainability in tourism. It becomes legitimating of the current way of doing practice. As the interviewee from Ecotourism Australia accounts, eco-certification 'is not the silver bullet' or is it 'radically changing a business'. What the interviewee fails to recognise in this is that the way that Ecotourism Australia, as a certifier alongside accreditors and standard setters, sedimented the practices of ecotourism and defined and delimited the degree of change. Whether by choice, by necessity or by what is deemed normatively acceptable to businesses, the eco-certification industry has limited the meaning of sustainability by focusing their efforts on the eco-efficient, business case approach. Ultimately,

eco-certification becomes a cover to legitimate the current way of doing things with small, peripheral, non-threatening 'value-adds' to business practices. This includes, for example, practice such as switching from conventional light bulbs to LEDs, establishing carbon-offset schemes, recycling or giving hotel guests the option to not have their towels washed every day. As indicated in the above quote, these practices are not fundamental changes to business practices, but are an eco-efficient cost benefit analysis that has the potential to save costs for the organisation and capitalise on a consumer premium for ecotourism. This illustrates an inherent contradiction in the tourism industry: for sustainability and tourism to make sense, one of the two socially constructed systems had to change. In their traditional states, these systems are largely incompatible. Only two options were available: adjust the sustainability to continue and legitimise tourism as an economic activity (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006) or eradicate tourism in the form that we know it as it is impactful causing environmental and social harm. What the study of Ecotourism Australia illustrates is how the elements of the business case have redescribed sustainability for ecotourism to both legitimise tourism as an economic activity and position ecotourism as an enhanced form of this activity. Sustainable tourism and ecotourism have both been circumscribed and redescribed as an enhanced eco-efficient business case.

Thus, eco-certification for ecotourism operates fantasmatically, as it is unclear from my analysis as to whether the tourism industry (including standard setters, accreditors, certifiers and tourism operators) and tourists are aware of the inherent contingencies in the construction of sustainable tourism and ecotourism. It is unclear whether tourism operators identify morally, ethically or otherwise with ecotourism, whether tourist operators fail to see the limits to the definitions of sustainability and ecological management within eco-certification or that tourist operators do see the inherent contradictions but continue through with eco-certification because it makes business sense. Chapter ten looks at tourist operators with eco-certification, but operators tended to give the same set of answers to these questions (almost as if by rote, rather

than reflecting any deeper on the issue – the contingencies were present). What is clear is that over 470 tourist operators see value in the eco-certification process (please note that I am not contesting that some or all of these tourism operators are morally or ethically committed to sustainability in a deeper sense). The same set of questions could apply to tourists who consume these tourist opportunities (but that is outside the scope of my study). The impact of equating sustainable tourism and ecotourism as a *business case* legitimates tourism as a social practice, irrespective of its inherent contradictions, and illustrates how easy it is to 'green' the business case without substantive change.

Furthermore, for Ecotourism Australia, sustainability is a toolkit that is comprised of a range of practice options that help to reinforce the business case approach to ecotourism. Ecotourism Australia regards its ECO certification as a process that "provides a valuable product development tool, a clear customer choice and links to international standards and recognition" (Ecotourism Australia, 2014/2015, p. 9). In this, this redescribes sustainability instrumentally as a set of tools for diversifying existing product ranges, catering to customers' expectations around tourism experiences (the green market) and reinforces the linking of sustainability to standards, indictors and benchmarks (performance measures). This is reflected in the earlier literature on sustainability measures (see, for example, Twining-Ward & Butler, 2002; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Castellani & Sala, 2010). As quoted above, Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification brochure reinforces that their 'best practice standards' provide the operator with a quality product, with market opportunities, market recognition for consumers and cost savings (Ecotourism Australia, 2018, p. 2). In reviewing ECO certification process, performance measure including standards, best practice indicators and benchmarks drive the eco-efficiency model:

> In [Ecotourism Australia's] application there are eight sections, and these are divided into three sections: economic, environmental and social sustainability. So, these are really the three pillars of sustainability, and I guess if you are not meeting the criteria that is in the application, or if you are meeting the criteria that is in the application, then you are meeting standards that are sustainable […] (Interviewee, 2017).

However, with the focus on standards, a range of issues emerge here concerning who institutes the standards, who interprets the standards, how data is collected as evidence for the standards and how performance is measured in and against the standard. Standards may suggest a degree of objectivity, but what is clear is that Ecotourism Australia plays a significant role in setting and measuring what criteria matter to the claim to eco within sustainability. This emphasises the high degree of subjectivity for each certifier and for tourist operators within the eco-certification process and is evidence of contingencies and contradictions within eco-certification.

3.	Claim – Sustainability as 'right way' to do business

As a business development tool, Ecotourism Australia normatively argues that its ECO certification process helps tourism operators operate their businesses in a proper manner. Ecotourism Australia maintains that it is common that small tourism businesses are operated by people who lack basic business knowledge and skills and thus, ECO certification is a form a business coaching for operators without significant business experience to learn how to successfully run a business:

> We really focus on [the business-side of it] … and certainly a lot of people come into the tourism industry, they haven't come from a business background … So, the more support we can put around these people, the better it is for everyone, and that's what we are trying to do. … Working with applicants to get them through this journey. When they finished the application, they should have the fundamental building blocks of who to run ecotourism business … All the evidence shows that if you want to be a successful, sustainable, financially sustainable business you need to be organised, you need to plan for things … that's what … it's more likely you'll be successful if you do these things (Interviewee, 2017).

This helps to explain that eco-certification for Ecotourism Australia is effectively a business coaching environment and why many of the certification processes require detailed business plans, marketing plans, risk assessment plans and operating information. In effect, the focus is not on ecotourism per se, but on the viability of the economic activity and assisting these small businesses with doing business better. Another interviewee from Ecotourism Australia reinforces this logic:

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> And that's in a way a business development tool, because a lot of people don't write their business plan or marketing plan and that's something that you have to do … and having those documents ready for either new staff or new owners or new management is so helpful, because if you don't have anything and you get a new manager, you're going to lose that information … so I learnt a lot about business development being in this. So, I think the whole process is really helpful, if you really engage with it … If we weren't here, there wouldn't be an ecotourism certification in Australia. … So, we put that out there, because that is a really good statistic, because a lot of businesses, especially in tourism don't last … So, is our certification a tool for economic sustainability or is it that the businesses who are engaging in it, have just happened to be successful businesses … We like to think that the certification is a tool for economic sustainability (Interviewee, 2017).

What becomes evident is that Ecotourism Australia has a strong focus on coaching, on business development and on the financial viability of the activity. However, working on developing business plans and focusing on financial sustainability has little do with environmental or social sustainability in its own right. This may also explain why the audit concerning certification takes place three months after certification, as the principal assessment is business planning and financial viability (supported by business coaching when and where necessary) and the secondary assessment concerns the environmental or social audit for the purposes of maintaining eco-certification. In this, the ECO certification process seems overdetermined by the focus on the economic and worse still, the social and environmental components are further constrained by the overall eco-efficient indicators and measures implemented in the name of sustainability for ecotourism. In a way, Ecotourism Australia is a consultancy organisation operating a small business clinic for small tourism operators with a focus on how to operate a tourism business from a classic business case perspective, and secondly, how to improve the financial fundamentals of the business. To me, the privileging of the business case and economics crowds out alternative approaches to sustainability.

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4.   Claim – Ecotourism Australia as a business consultant

With respect to environmental management, Ecotourism Australia, when consulting with small tourism operators takes no stance on what form of ECO certification is appropriate for applicants. In this, Ecotourism Australia leaves it to applicants to make the decision as to

whether they should seek nature certification (the lowest eco standard for products that are at least 50 percent based in nature, such as accommodation in a natural area or outdoor tours), eco-certification or advanced eco-certification (both of these require businesses to offer tourism products with at least a minimum of 75 percent based in nature). However, tourism operators can apply for certification for individual products, "even if not all of your products are nature-based", as "ECO Certification is product-specific" (Ecotourism Australia, n/d, p. 1). From this, two issues emerge. First, these quantifications as to how much of a product needs to be based in nature to qualify for nature certification or eco- or advanced eco-certification is entirely arbitrary. What really is the difference between a tourism product-based 45 percent in nature as opposed to a product 52 percent based in nature. Equally, why should a product 70 percent nature based not qualify for eco-certification. In that sense, this may encourage creative counting in how exactly a business or Ecotourism Australia for that matter determines how much of a product (a tour or accommodation for that matter) is nature-based. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it is questionable why a four-wheel drive-tour through an Australian dessert (one of Ecotourism Australia's eco-certified tourist operators) constitutes eco-certifiable ecotourism just because it takes place in nature. This arbitrariness is reflected by Cohen (2002, p. 268), who argues that:

> … just as any trekking or nature tour in remote areas in developing countries, on foot or
> by vehicle, tends to be re-christened as 'ecotourism', so any tourist enterprise penetrating
> a new area, can be called 'sustainable' as a promotional gimmick.

In my opinion, this in-nature classification misses the environmental and ecological elements within tourism, as it has the impact of legitimating impactful tourism activities including ecolodges in pristine conservation areas and boat tours on the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) as eco-certified and sustainable. A further issue concerns that problematic distinction between tourism product and tourism operation. Ecotourism Australia certifies products and not organisations, but the logo from Ecotourism Australia is often displayed on a tourist operator's website. It must be difficult for tourists to understand the meaning of the ECO certification from

Ecotourism Australia. A tourism operator may operate a conventional hotel in the middle of a city, for example, but also offer a nature-based walking tour. The hotel operator may obtain certification for this walking tour, but other tourist activities or products offered by the hotel do not necessarily satisfy environmental, ecological or any sustainable standards. The distinction may well be misleading and confusing to customers, but also seems to be missing the point of environmental management and protection. Why Ecotourism Australia feels it is able to isolate a particular product for certification and ignore the whole business is difficult to justify.

5.   Claim – Carbon is a proxy for sustainability

Ecotourism Australia's environmental management has a strong focus on measuring sustainability and the primary measure is through carbon-footprint monitoring and reduction, recycling and waste management. The tourist industry, like many others, have focused heavily on developing measures and indicators of environmental sustainability through adopting and adapting various tools including the carrying capacity (see, Butler, 1999: Mathieson & Wall, 1982), ecological footprint analysis (see, Hunter & Shaw, 2007) and other indicator systems for 'measuring' sustainable outcomes (see, for example, Twining-Ward & Butler, 2002; Vera & Ivars, 2003; Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2014; McCool *et al.*, 2001). The proliferation of indicator systems focused on environmental measures might be because it appears easier to create indicators or measurement systems regarding the environment. This might be because social issues of sustainability have comparatively received less attention and potentially are more difficult or political. It is far less contentious to measure spending on whale conservation, for example, than to discuss poverty eradication. For instance, waste or energy consumption per hotel guest is direct and quantifiable, while the impact of tourism on the community well-being is inherently complex to reconcile and some measures may conflict with other measures. I am not suggesting that environmental measures are not without controversy or that they have

any significant relationship to sustainability, but they are a technology favoured by eco-efficiency. Indicator systems and measures concerning environmental impacts are still limited:

> I think advanced ecotourism operators have to partially offset, that's actually something that's in the criteria review. You know the word partially doesn't actually give you a definite idea of what you have to meet. So, that's something we are looking at is trying to quantify that (Interviewee, 2017).

Despite this lack, the eco-efficient logic of measurement and monitoring is pervasive in the environmental management elements of eco-certification for Ecotourism Australia. The dominant measure is carbon, and carbon, consequently, emerges as a proxy for sustainability and carbon neutrality emerges as the gold star objective:

> Again, there are three levels, so you've got climate action business, and you have adapted a set of carbon emission reductions, but not necessarily measuring carbon footprint … The innovator is that, but you're measuring the carbon footprint, and the leader you have incorporated strategy, strategic climate change response across all levels or relevant levels. Business and planning, they are measuring and auditing their carbon footprint via a credible system, high level of adaptation, emission reduction and offsetting towards becoming carbon neutral. So, they don't necessarily have to be carbon neutral, but that's something they aim to be (Interviewee, 2017).

There is a significant literature in critical social accounting that illustrates the subjectivity associated with carbon measurement (see, for example, Brown & Fraser, 2006; Spence, 2007; Spence *et al*., 2010). Fundamental issues in the counting process include what to count (direct, indirect, whole of lifecycle, full product or service experience), when to count (at consumption, post-consumption, averaged) and how to count (which carbon accounting is accurate). While Ecotourism Australia is focused on measurement, it does acknowledge that measurement is contentious and complex. One member of Ecotourism Australia was reflecting on a recent experience at a GSTC conference concerning carbon measurements:

> … we measure ... So, I just returned from a GSTC conference and they've mapped all the delegates' travel and purchased carbon credits to make the delegates carbon-neutral … When we registered, we had to say where we travelled from and so they got a tool that measures how much we travelled, and it is pretty easy to work out … So, we are starting to have a look at that (Interviewee, 2017).

With respect to the TBL (Elkington, 1997), it is generally accepted that the financial line is easily measurable, but that there are some issues with measuring social and to a lesser extent,

with measuring environmental lines. At least two principal challenges emerge in attempting to measure environmental impact: What should be included? And how should it be measured?

A UK tourist on a holiday in Australia using public transport to travel around the country may well have small carbon footprint from the in-country tourism activities, but if the flights to and from the UK are included, then the calculation of the overall carbon footprint looks different. This is similar to debates in the low-impact tourism movement (Lowimpact.org, 2019; Cohen, 2002; Lacher & Nepal, 2010). Similar complexities exist for Ecotourism Australia and tourist operators operating ecotourism activities. However, there is comparatively less focus on these boundary issues (from a calculation perspective) in the publicly available material from Ecotourism Australia. Hines (1988) from a critical accounting perspective, argues that the true hidden power in measurement is the ability to choose where the boundaries fall. There is evidence in the interview quote above concerning the GSTC conference and the calculation of carbon miles for delegates that members of Ecotourism Australia are aware that there are different choices available as to where boundaries concerning carbon calculation could fall (including in activity; in activity plus employee travel; in activity plus customer carbon miles in getting to and from the activity, for example). However, this contention is not publicly acknowledged. Ecotourism Australia focuses on carbon neutrality for ecotourists while enjoying ecotourism experiences in Australia, but it has chosen not to include travel to and from the tourist experience (be those flight, ship, road or other tourism miles). This drastically changes the 'picture' of the impact of the tourism activity, and it does so in a way that is clearly advantageous to Ecotourism Australia. Where to draw boundaries in calculative practices is political and the ability to influence industry participants as to where to draw those boundaries is powerful (Hines, 1988). Ecotourism Australia includes international travel in calculating its own carbon footprint and does purchase carbon-offsets. In the sustainability section on Ecotourism Australia's website, Ecotourism Australia explains that air travel accounts for the

largest percentage of their carbon emissions (26,75 tonnes, accounting for 76.41 percent of Ecotourism Australia's overall carbon emissions). However, due to the purchase of carbon offsets, Ecotourism Australia suggests that "any emissions from flights are negligible" (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). Ecotourism Australia is excluding their customers emissions from their calculation and this is what they propose for the 'best practice' carbon measure for tourist operators. One could argue that while offsetting is one pathway, an even better pathway might be to avoid the carbon emission in the first place. Ecotourism Australia, through their Climate Action Leader certification, does set tourism industry benchmarks by setting specific measurable criteria for the reduction of carbon emissions (Ecotourism Australia, 2018). The impact of all of this is the carbon measurement and carbon reduction or offsetting is reified in environmental management for Ecotourism Australia. This reification seems to redescribe sustainability towards carbon and the set of indicators, measures and actions in relation to carbon. This is evident in 'best practice' recommendations with respect to reducing energy consumption (measured in carbon), by switching from conventional lightbulbs (with their pollutants) to energy-efficient LEDs and the purchase of carbon offsets. The ideology here is sustainability is manageable, because it is measurable, and for Ecotourism Australia this manifests in environmental management as a focus on eco-efficient performance measures and best practice benchmarks. This constitutes the driver of many of the cost-saving measures proposed in the business case for eco-certification.

6.   Claim – Ecotourism Australia as expert

A second issue concerning environmental management is that there is no agreed indicator system or measurement approach with respect to the environment in the tourism industry (see, Twining-Ward, 2002; Sirakaya, Jamal & Choi, 2001; Ko, 2005; Jovicic, 2014; Ceron & Dubois, 2003). Ecotourism Australia sets measurement targets for members (as best practices), but does

not advise members on how to implement the measures or how they should go about achieving the measures:

> They see it as a massive big contribution to the environment. So, how do you assess that?
> So, we are really struggling with this, we are trying to do a fair bit of work on guidelines,
> so we say 'You have to do this, but we don't tell you how' (Interviewee, 2017).

This approach is not without precedent in the tourism sector, as both the UNWTO and the GSTC suggest particular indicator systems for measure tourism impacts on natural and social environments. However, both indicator systems have limited detail about how to employ the measurement system. Despite the challenges of creating integrated indicator and measurement systems, the UNWTO, the GSTC and Ecotourism Australia all claim that their indicator systems are best practice and claim expert-status with respect to their indicator system. This fosters a technocratic focus within sustainability as a certain group of elite experts govern the tourism sector with respect to sustainability by creating rules, indicator systems and establishing best practices. Central to this is an ideological function that covers over the contingency of these best practice systems and claims to expertise, so that both the institutions and their supporters (tourist operators) see the 'good life' in their actions.

Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 145) explain that the fantasmatic logics provide insight into "*why specific practices and regimes 'grip' subjects*" and this manifests as ideology. The fantasmatic focus illustrates how subjects 'buy' into practices as subjects – despite the prevailing contingencies concerning practices - to see the 'good' and how these practices serve as a justification for their actions, as a form of 'ideological cover' (Howarth & Griggs, 2006). Chapter six discussed the political role of ideology and argued that ideology operates on two levels. The first level of ideology concerns the creation of subject positions and illustrates how subjects use ideology to cover over inherent contingencies and contradictions. The second level of ideology concerns how certain ideological institutions or apparatuses 'use' or attach ideology to practices to 'convince' social actors that particular practices are correct or appropriate (Althusser, 1994). The above discussion concerning how Ecotourism Australia presents eco-

certification for ecotourism is illustrative of both levels of ideology. The challenge concerning tourism is how to convince tourism consumers, tourist operators and other related actors that the impactful and consumptive activity that is tourism could be considered sustainable. The Brundtland Report (1987), the Mohonk Agreement and other dislocatory moments relevant to tourism provided ideological clues for how to cover over these contingencies and how to convince social actors in the industry that sustainable tourism and ecotourism were images of the 'good life' in the face of disrupted social norms and discursive and professional uncertainties and a lack concerning sustainability (the interaction between neoliberal economic development, the business case and the eco-certification discourse for ecotourism emerged as discussed in Chapter eight). The eco-certification discourse concerning ecotourism is an attempt by social and political actors to close the system as a form of an integrated nodal point (from a supply side perspective concerning standard setting, accreditation, certification and tourist operators and for the demand side as well) (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). However, each attempt at 'fixing' meaning creates contingencies and my analysis of accreditation, standard setting and certification has identified contingencies and over-determined elements in the eco-certification for ecotourism industry. Sets of ideological elements concerning neoliberalism, measurement, expertise, auditing, trust and associated apparatus concerning tourism are attached to the eco-certification for ecotourism discourse to cover over contingencies and contradictions within the practice of eco-certification. The example concerning a tourist operator fundraising from consumers for tree planting is an excellent example and it reflects the contingent impact of the economic focus within the eco-certification discourse and its relationship with business, management, the business case and neoliberal approaches such as eco-efficiency. The integration of the business case and the privileging of the economic pillar explains why institutions including the UNTWO, the ISO, the GSTC, and TIES (as accreditors and standard setters) and certifiers such as Ecotourism Australia have reified eco-efficiency

indicators, measures and practices concerning environmental management, risk management, carbon, environmental indicator systems and standards, industry benchmarks and eco-certification programs. The impact of this integrated business case is to redescribe what constitutes sustainable outcomes and covers over or crowds out other deeper socially- or environmentally-focused alternatives to sustainability (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). Ideologically, there is little public opposition to the eco-certification discourse and thus, the appropriateness of the eco-efficient measures and indicators and the business case approach to sustainable tourism largely operates without contestation despite the range of contingencies and contradictions. The risk here is that tourist operators, tourists and local communities see the 'good life' in the compromise that is the business case for ecotourism. The power of Ecotourism Australia (within the vertical supply chain) is to have the ability to (with support from accreditors and standard setters) rhetorically re-described the concept of sustainability as the business case for ecotourism, as a form of ideological cover (Howarth & Griggs, 2006). In this, Ecotourism Australia emerges as the industry leading expert on sustainability. This lends itself to a form of technocracy.

Technocrats, such as Ecotourism Australia, are "propelled by an elite of policy makers, experts and scientists that imposes its definition of problems and solutions on the debate" (Hajer, 1996). The contingency in the ecotourism space is that the definitional lack concerning what constitutes sustainability or sustainable outcomes creates a potential challenge to any claim to expertise. During moments of uncertainty, human nature is to turn to experts. This is what has emerged in the eco-certification for ecotourism space, in that the technocratic expertise in ecotourism is vertically supported by institutions such as the UNWTO, the ISO, TIES or the GSTC, as accreditation bodies develop standards and best practices for eco-certification and such standards and best practices sediment the space of eco-certification creating the 'rules of the game'. Certifiers like Ecotourism Australia rely on this social structure and their

certification processes, including auditors, to legitimise their claims to expertise, even in the face of uncertainty, contingency or contradiction.

There was evidence with respect to boundary-setting concerning calculating carbon footprints that illustrated gaps within Ecotourism Australia's practices. Another similar moment emerged during interview, when a member of Ecotourism Australia acknowledged concern with measuring carbon:

> How you can measure it? Because we can't find anyone who knows how to do this. So, that's the big challenge we have at the moment … You see a lot of people doing a lot of work, it's actually making no difference (Interviewee, 2017).

The claim to expertise here is interesting in that Ecotourism Australia believes that they will find the right individual or organisation to solve their measurement problem. A similar argument emerged in relation to the subjectivity concerning positionality with respect to impact and the institution of the expertise discourse:

> If you are not meeting the criteria that is in the application, or if you are meeting the criteria that is in the application, then you are *meeting standards that are sustainable or what we consider sustainable*" … ""Yeah, I think the textbook kind of pillars are … [long pause] … I think it is consultation with community, it is not having a negative impact on, or it is minimising a negative impact where possible. So, community, environment and economically and socially. So, I think that might just … or that's quite broad as well, saying where possible, but not having a negative impact where possible and where you are having a negative impact you are measuring it and doing everything you can to address it. But then I guess you *say 'What's a negative impact?' …. That will be different for everyone*, but I guess that's what our programme is about. *It is saying what we consider is ecotourism*, because we have got our definition of ecotourism (Interviewee, 2017).

This quote illustrates how Ecotourism Australia claims expertise despite the contested positions within the sustainability or ecotourism discourse. Ultimately, the argument presented is that we are the experts in ecotourism. Thus, while the eco-efficient business case was overdetermined through the emphasis on measurement and performance, as a part of privileging the economic ["*One of the keys of sustainability is you make a profit, because otherwise you are not going to be here next year, what's the point*!*" (quoted above by Interviewee, 2017)], the eco-certification discourse relies on a certain ideological form of 'trust us, for we are the experts'. This technocratic thinking is evident in the entire supply chain supporting sustainable tourism and eco-certification and infects Ecotourism Australia, the ISO, the UNWTO, the GSTC and TIES.

There is a collective claim to expert status concerning sustainable tourism and ecotourism and coupled with the ideologies of the business case, neoliberalism and eco-efficiency, this manifests in best practices that privilege the economic viability of the tourist operation and seek to measure environmental performance concerning carbon and other metrics in the name of sustainability. This is the ideological 'good life' and it helps Ecotourism Australia to justify their existence:

> We do get a lot of start-up businesses wanting to do the certification, so they want to do everything at the start to have the high standard at the beginning of their business, and if they want to be an ecotourism business, *then I think we are the organisation to go to* for that. *And I guess having our expertise, and the application process is a one of a kind* that they can choose to do (Interviewee, 2017).

This expertise manifests in the form of business coaching or business incubation and Ecotourism Australia seems convinced that its ECO certification program, as "a business development tool" (Ecotourism Australia, n/d, p. 1) is the right answer for ecotourism.

In a different context concerning technocracy, Carter and Warren (2019) focus on accounting to argue that the International Accounting Standards Board (the IASB) rely on a technocratic expert status in developing international accounting standards. The problem with technocracy though is that it is a political discourse, that expertise is not neutral and that it is not possible to escape analysis focused on power and politics. Carter and Warren (2018, p. 94) identify the political impact of accounting regulation:

> The IASB have aligned accounting rules with capital market needs, creating transnational, "technocratic", regulation […] [T]he IASB and IFIs acted in a manner to obfuscate as much as possible the deeply political impact of the IASB's agenda behind a veil of technocratic expertise. This illustrates the scope of the power and influence of the IASB and is illustrative of the "hidden" geopolitical power of the IASB, as a transnational policy maker.

Although this concerns the accounting space, a connection to ideological institutions in tourism can be made. Accounting rules and regulations are no less of a social construction than the rules for eco-certification. In that sense, Ecotourism Australia, just like the IASB, is a powerful institution that governs and controls the ecotourism sector in Australia and has international influence including in the Asia Pacific. Ecotourism Australia certifies an economic powerhouse

in the Australian economy, as: "in 2013/14, the combined annual turnover of all Ecotourism Australia certified tour operators exceeded $1billion, demonstrating how ecotourism is no longer a niche but has become the mainstream" (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). Ecotourism "is one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry" (Ecotourism Australia, 2018, p. 2). The scope of influence of Ecotourism Australia continues to grow, as Ecotourism Australia looks to expand its influence into the Pacific and into Asia, as it makes good business sense: "We would seek to move into the South Pacific more broadly. We see that as a logical extension of our market" (Interviewee, 2017).

In this, Ecotourism Australia is emerging as a formidable 'regional powerhouse', and the vertically integrated sustainable tourism and ecotourism industry sector holds significant 'geopolitical power'. The impact of these interrelationships is a hidden power concerning national and international economic agendas and interests clouded by the shield of sustainability and ecotourism. Hajer (1996, p. 253) argues:

> An empirical example is the UN Brundtland Report. It is a 'nice try' but, as the Rio Conference and its aftermath show so dramatically, it falters because it is only able to generate global support by going along this main institutional interests of national and international elites as expressed by nation states, global managerial organisations like the World Bank or the IMF, and the various industrial interests that hide behind these actors […] Behind the official 'rhetoric' of ecological modernisation one can discern the silhouette of technocracy in a new disguise that stands in the way of implementing 'real solutions' for what are very 'real problems'.

It is doubtful that real and meaningful change is emerging in this eco-efficient, business case approach to eco-certification for ecotourism, despite as Hajer (1996) suggests, there are 'real problems'. Space for a 'real' debate about these 'real' problems has been ideologically and practically crowded out. The retreat to technocracy enables powerful elite institutions, such as the UNWTO, the GSTC, the ISO, TIES and Ecotourism Australia to push a particular eco-efficiency, business case tourist agenda as a solution to the world. Within the ecological modernisation discourse (Dryzek, 2013), a technocratic focus that relies on experts is a weak approach to sustainability. A stronger approach to sustainability would involve open democratic decision-making along with substantive citizen participation (Dryzek, 2013). Thus, the eco-

certification discourse is a good example of how institutions such as Ecotourism Australia follow the weak approach to ecological modernisation. The privileging of elites in the eco-certification discourse and the incorporation of the eco-efficient, business case redescription of sustainability for sustainable tourism and ecotourism is unlikely to lead to substantive change. Recognising the sets of ideological apparatus attached to expertise and to the eco-certification discourse is an important starting point in recognising and disrupting how current social norms and rules concerning eco-certification for ecotourism have emerged and their impact.

4 Interpreting the Data – Rhetorical Redescription (II)

The combination of the focus in Chapter eight on the political logics alongside this chapter focus on the fantasmatic logics helps to explain the emergence of the eco-certification discourse and how subjects in the industry are gripped by the ideologies associated with the subsumption of sustainability into the eco-efficient, business case system that dominates sustainable tourism and ecotourism. These two chapters in combination have helped to unpack elements relevant to the empirical questions of this thesis. The vertical supply chain from standard setters to accreditors to eco-certifiers to eco-auditors helps to cover over contingencies in the contingent discourse of eco-certification that privileges economic viability and delimits environmental management to eco-efficient opportunities for cost-savings and efficiency gains. The emergence of the sedimented eco-certification discourse with indictor systems and measures incorporates a series of rhetorical redescriptions that support how the business case, eco-efficiency of neoliberal has subsumed sustainability into its system. The impact of this redescription is that it allows tourism operators to continue effectively as usual, with little substantive change, except that eco-certification provides some legitimation of their business activities. This hegemonic dominance, although contingent, has been largely successful in crowding out any alternative voice with respect to sustainability. These contingencies are evident, for example, in the discussion around carbon footprints and boundary setting (what

carbon to include) and in discussions around low-impact tourism. However, radical proposals concerning the eradication of tourism as a consumptive, pollutive activity are rarely heard, as the dominant neoliberal logics of progress and growth continue to control the messaging in sustainable tourism and ecotourism. A prime example of this was the discussion in the second claim of this chapter that argued that sustainability is used as a 'value-add'. Instead of challenging the fundamental logics of tourism and the economic foundations of growth, sustainability is redescribed as a toolbox that when employed appropriately, it can add value to a tourism operation. This delimits the scope of sustainability to 'business as usual'. As some critical scholars in tourism have argued, the problem with this resdcription of sustainability is that it enables tourist operators to disguise 'business as usual' or peripheral changes to practices as sustainable (Mowforth & Munt, 2016; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). Re-conceptualising the concept of sustainability to privilege economic viability has created a powerful discourse. The business case, eco-efficiency lens legitimates tourism as an economic activity, allows tourism operators to hide behind the 'eco-certified' label and created business opportunities through presenting a product to consumers that might appeal to their moral, ethical or personal preferences as tourists. The focus is cost savings, economic viability and market opportunities. Brown and Fraser (2006, p. 104) argue that sustainability is "primarily viewed as extensions of management's existing toolkit for enhancing shareholder wealth: offering 'a new generation of business opportunity'". The WBCSD (2003, p. 15) similarly explain that the sustainability discourse introduces a range of business opportunities that primarily add economic value to the organisation. Securing the economic viability of tourist operators seems to drive the business coaching components of the Ecotourism Australia. One interviewee commented:

> … If we go to the bank and say 'Can you give us 1,000,000 dollars to buy a new boat', they would say 'What is your security of the business?' So, if we have a one-year permit, they would say 'See you later'. If you say, 'We've got a 15-year permit', they'd say 'Are you sure you don't want to have 5 million?'(Interviewee, 2017).

Ecotourism Australia's focus is a consultancy focus on developing business models by focusing on business, marketing, operational, risk assessment and environmental management plans. A goal is to help tourism operators to become and maintain financial viability. Consequently, Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification process is itself a redescription as the certification is more an *economic* certification rather than an *ecological* certification of the business. Ecotourism Australia's certification makes 'good business sense' as it represents an opportunity for "[s]ignificant financial payback" (Brown & Fraser, 2006, p. 104).

Finally, what this illustrates, from a redescription perspective, is a re-evaluation of the concept of sustainability that has altered the normative implications of sustainability. This is evident in how the normative challenges associated with resource and eco-system depletion have been resdescribed by the obsession with measurements concerning waste, carbon, efficiency and a myriad of techniques and toolkits. Each of these measures impacts upon sustainability as they operate to define sustainability without necessarily being linked to sustainability. That carbon footprints seem to operate as a metaphor for sustainability is an example of this problem. Each new indicator system or measure includes an articulation of an element of sustainability, but the veracity of each articulation is not necessarily tested. Rather, another measure is something to aspire to. I illustrated this in the chapter by examining the contingent practices concerning carbon measurement. Ecotourism Australia highlights carbon footprint assessments and reducing carbon emission as an element of its environmental management, particularly in its ECO certification and Climate Action certification. However, the focus on carbon limits our understanding of sustainability and there are risks with carbon measurement and management being used as a proxy for sustainability. The complexities of what to include, when to include elements and how to do the counting are all contingencies threatening carbon measurement. However, Ecotourism Australia claims a technocratic prerogative concerning their expertise (despite Ecotourism Australia internally recognising the limits of carbon management). The

fantasmatic impact of the eco-certification discourse is that Ecotourism Australia has attached the quality of sustainability to business development and coaching.

5   Conclusions to the Chapter

The chapter examined the social practices and the fantasmatic impact of the certification body, Ecotourism Australia, by studying its range of ECO certification types, processes, certified products and the role of auditors. This chapter helped in providing an understanding of the practices of Ecotourism Australia and offered deep insights into how Ecotourism Australia (as a certification business within the ecotourism supply chain) justifies its approach to ecotourism, sees the 'good life' in their approach to certification and how it covers over contingencies that emerge in relation to eco-certification practices and sustainable tourism. Ultimately, the chapter illustrated how Ecotourism Australia redescribed the concept of sustainability and ecotourism (and certification) into a business development and business coaching role. The chapter provided evidence to support this by focusing on six claims concerning the approach to certification embodied by Ecotourism Australia:

a) Prioritisation of the economic component;

b) Sustainability is a 'value-add';

c) Sustainability as 'right way' to do business;

d) Ecotourism Australia as a business consultant;

e) Carbon is a proxy for sustainability; and

f) Ecotourism Australia as expert

These nature and impact of these claims relate to Chapter eight, which focused on standard-setting and accreditation. This illustrates the power of the political logics in helping to sediment the understanding of sustainable tourism and ecotourism and how the eco-efficient, business case approach to sustainability, ecotourism and eco-certification is spread throughout the industry.

What the example of Ecotourism Australia illustrates though is the rhetorical re-description of the concept of sustainability for the purposes of certifying ecotourism. The impact of the redescriptions of sustainability for eco-certification is that sustainability is understood as a 'value-add' within the traditional constraints of the business case. One of the impacts of this is that Ecotourism Australia legitimates an approach to ecotourism that reifies what the tourism operator was already doing and thus, small peripheral changes are often all that is necessary. This has the effect of allowing tourism operators to continue with a 'business as usual' approach. The 'value add' of eco within the ecotourism moniker is that peripheral changes around environmental management are likely to lead to cost savings. Associated with this is the marketing associated with an eco-certification label and the legitimation of the current business model. This might lead to increased market opportunities or the ability to charge a premium for the 'eco' experience. Sustainability, for Ecotourism Australia, becomes a metaphor for business development and Ecotourism Australia are the expert business coaches. Based on articulating an understanding of the political and fantasmatic elements associated with standard setting, accreditation and certification, the following chapter, Chapter ten, examines the sedimented ecotourism practices by studying a range of Australian tourism operators who have received or achieved eco-certification from Ecotourism Australia. This study of their sedimented social practices also provides insight into why these particular tourism operators decided to seek certification (Glynos & Howarth, 2007).

- Chapter Ten -
Empirical Data Analysis:
ECO Certified Tourism Operators (Demand-Side)

1   Overview

This chapter focuses on a third cohort involved in the ECO certification process, by studying Australian ecotourism operators with eco-certification from Ecotourism Australia. The choice of tourism operators is to illustrate the degree of vertical integration on the overall supply side concerning from standard setter, accreditor, certifier and ecotourism business. However, I refer to ecotourism operators as belonging to the demand-side, as they seek the certified 'tick' from Ecotourism Australia. For the purposes of this chapter, I have only discussed Australian tourism operators with Ecotourism Australia's ECO certifications. Chapter four argued that tourism operators were demand-side for the purposes of this study as Australian tourism operators sought ECO certification from Ecotourism Australia for the benefits associated with certification. The way that tourism operators understand and interpret Ecotourism Australia's process for seeking certification helps to illustrate the sedimented practices concerning sustainable tourism and ecotourism as the tourist operators reflect the 'rules of the game' established by standard setters, by accreditors and by certification bodies in obtaining eco-certification. This chapter focuses on the social logics, as a study of sedimented social practices concerning ecotourism. I have included in my study 25 Australian tourism operators (from 476 members of Ecotourism Australia). I chose 25 certified tourism businesses to ensure that my study was manageable. Although I had no statistical approach in determining this number, I did study the nature of Ecotourism Australia's certifications. Since inception until 2019, Ecotourism Australia, has certified over 1500 products from 476 tourism operators in Australia. In analysing all the tourism products certified by Ecotourism Australia, 29 percent were tours/guided tours, 13 percent were cruises or boat trips, nine percent involved wildlife experiences, eight percent were forms of accommodation and seven percent were

walking/hiking experiences. These represent the top five tourism products certified by Ecotourism Australia (this represents 66 percent of all certified tourism products). I also focused on examples from these tourism experiences because these products are associated with principles of ecotourism, as they take place in (undisturbed) natural settings for the purposes of experiencing wildlife normally with low environment impact (Goodwin, 1996; Weaver, 2001; Page & Dowling, 2002; Fennel, 2003). Hence, across these five products groups (tours/guided tours, cruises or boat trips, wildlife experiences, accommodation and walking/hiking experiences), I selected five tourism operators from each category from across Australia. I also focused on particular examples of eco-certification that had quality accessible information, including a well-presented website with a clear link to their ecotourism or sustainability practices. The purpose of the inquiry was to understand why these tourism operators sought certification (to understand how these tourism operators understood the benefits of eco-certification). Thus, I collected two forms of data here: a) I conducted a document analysis of publicly available and accessible information presented on the tourist operator's websites, in PDFs and other information such as brochures; and b) I sent a set of written questions by email (as a form of interview) to the tourism operators to ask more specific questions concerning why the particular tourism operator sought certification. I choose to email questions to tourism operators as these tourism operators were spread right across Australia and that would have made it difficult to conduct site visits. Furthermore, some of these operators are really small tourism organisations and asking for a sit-down interview would have been difficult given the demands on their time as employees of the business. I recognise that this may have limited the nature of the responses received and the degree of reflexivity of the responses, but it made more sense, in discussions with my supervisors, to collect some data on reasons for seeking certification than having no information. Some operators offered the opportunity for a follow-

up conversation by telephone, but this was not an option offered by all operators. This flexibility in data collection was an interesting lesson.

2 Articulating the Social Logic of Eco-certification for Tourist Operators: Sedimented Practices

2.1 Analysing Operators' Sustainable Tourism Practices (Discursive Mapping)

In reflecting the interest in the LOCE as a methodological framework, this empirical chapter concerns the social logics that characterise "a particular social practice or regime" (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 137). The purpose with the social logic is to understand the rules, concepts and sedimented social practices that influence social interactions and relationships between subjects within a particular social context (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). Australian tourism operators, who want to be considered as 'eco' from an ecotourism perspective and those that wish to contribute to the sustainable tourism discourse (for a whole range of reasons), need to conform with the rules for ECO certification set by Ecotourism Australia. Laclau (2005, p. 139), conceptualises that "social logics consist in rule-following". Thus, each tourism operator in this study conformed with the certification processes established by Ecotourism Australia with respect to business planning, economic viability and environmental management including the rules around eco-efficiency to achieve certification. The claims to eco-practice were also audited by an external auditor, as outlined in Chapter nine. This certification process, followed by at least 476 tourism operators in Australia, illustrates a form of sedimented practices emerging as characteristic of the ecotourism eco-certification discourse. Glynos and Howarth (2007, p. 139) state that "rules are not reified entities that subsume practices and discourse; instead, they enable us to describe and characterise [these practices and discourse]".

To study this, I focused on two avenues of inquiry in establishing how tourism operators understand and interpolate the concept of eco-certification for ecotourism. I was interested in how tourism operators translated the concept of sustainability, sustainable tourism and eco-certification into their practices and whether (and how) they demonstrated this commitment to

ecotourism. I was also interested in understanding why tourism operators sought ECO certification from Ecotourism Australia and how the tourism operators articulated the associated benefits attached to eco-certification. The document analysis of the tourism operators' practices followed a three-step process:

a) First, I examined the claims to sustainability for each of the 25 ecotourism operators by examining their websites and documents. I also examined Ecotourism Australia's website for any comment on the practices of the operators.

b) Second, I classified each operator's sustainability practices against the four rubrics, outlined in Table 10.1 below:

Table 10.1: Sustainability Rubrics

Level of commitment to sustainable practice:	Little reference	Provision of generic information (no focus on what they are doing)	Provision and discussion of one or two sustainable practices	Provision and discussion of three or more sustainable practices
Number of operators:	1	5	5	14
Percentage:	**4%**	**20%**	**20%**	**56%**

The assessment of the ecotourist operators revealed that one (four percent) of the 25 operators made almost no reference concerning its commitments to sustainability. What was most interesting about this operator is that it had received 'Advanced Eco-certification' from Ecotourism Australia. The reasons for this could either be interpreted as a form of 'greenhushing' (Font *et al.*, 2017) or as this business offered luxury tours, the nature of the particular business might not comply with traditional principles of ecotourism (see, Weaver, 2001). Ten operators provided some information, but not a significant amount. Five operators provided generic information about their sustainability commitments without outlining any particular practices that they employed (20 percent), while another five operators outlined one or two particular implemented sustainability practices (20 percent). However, over half of the tourism operators studied outlined three or more sustainable practices on their websites (56 percent). In general, it was possible to conclude that this group had a demonstrable commitment to sustainability in the public domain. I was surprised that this was only 56 percent though!

c) In the third step, I analysed the content disclosed in relation to each sustainability practice to develop a discursive map to illustrate how these 25 eco-certified ecotourism operators depict their understanding of sustainability.

Unsurprisingly (but also as an indicator of the sedimented nature of the discourse of sustainability), the tourist operators depicted their understanding of sustainability against three

signifiers: the environmental, the social and the economic. This rubric reflected the TBL approach (Elkington, 1997). The TBL, though, prioritises the economic (as a form of eco-efficiency) and this sedimentation was reflected by tourism operators in ecotourism. However, given the ecological element of ecotourism (and the eco-efficiency principles presented as a component of environmental management), the most common depiction of sustainability concerned environmental management, followed by social issues concerning communities. The economic component was the least common representation of sustainability (if I ignored the links to eco-efficiency and cost savings associated with environmental management). Figure 10.2 presents the sustainability rubrics and key signifieds attached to each signifier (see Appendix eight for more information and a more detailed account of the signifieds).

Sustainability rubrics and key words

- Environmental management: waste/recycling, monitoring water/energy consumption and reduction, carbon footprint/offset
- Social: community, participation, charity/donations, culture and interpretation
- Economic: local suppliers/purchases, local employment, financial benefits
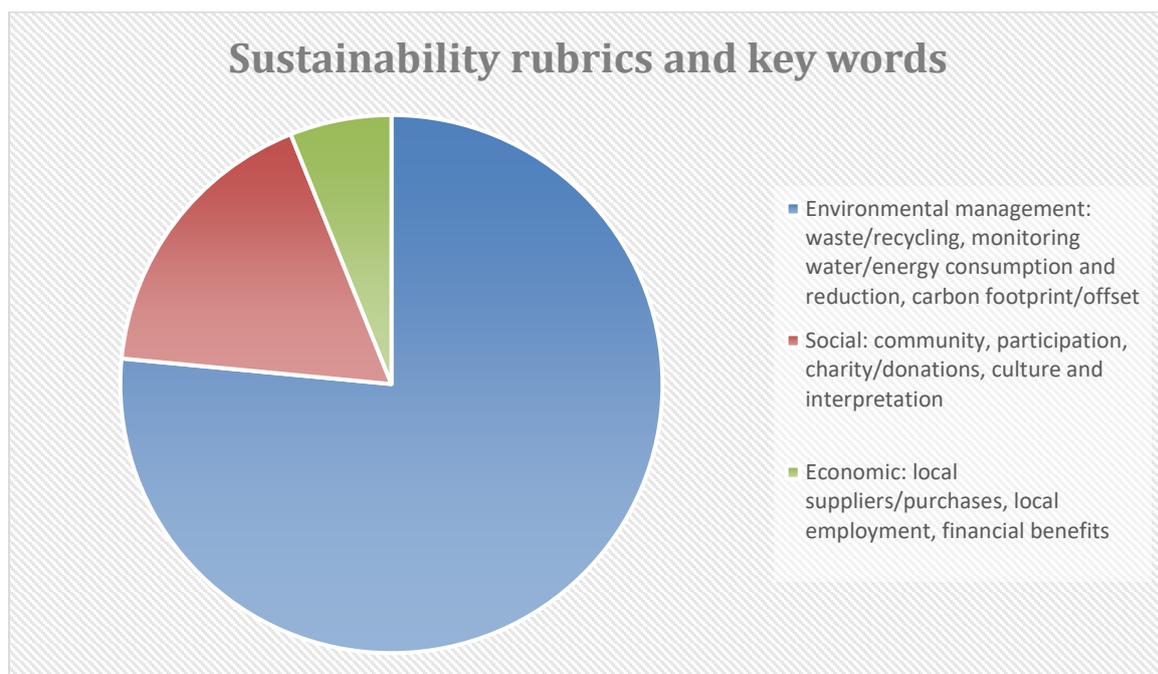
Figure 10.2: Discursive Map of Rhetoric Used by Tourism Operators

Given the focus of Ecotourism Australia's ECO certifications and that these tourist operators were eco-certified ecotourism operators, it is unsurprising that the environmental signifier was strongly represented in the analysis. This indicates a degree of sedimentation concerning the social logics of ecotourism and eco-certification. The discursive map of signifieds attached to the signifiers suggest that most tourism operators interpolate their understanding of ecotourism

and sustainability practices through the environmental signifier (with 77 percent of disclosures concerning the environment). Key signifieds attached to the environmental signifier included 'environmental management', 'environmental conservation', 'environmental impacts' (including 'minimising impact' and 'low impact') and 'education about environment'. The dominant concerns with respect to 'environmental management systems' included waste, water, energy and recycling. Furthermore, those operators that offered guided tours, hikes and walks emphasised that their activities involved the introduction of small numbers of tourists into the pristine nature area and this reduced the impact on the environment. This reflects a carrying capacity focus as a sustainability measurement system (Butler, 1999; Mathieson & Wall, 1982). The accommodation sector focused on commitments to monitoring or reducing water and energy consumption. Examples of reducing consumption highlighted fitting low-water shower heads or switching to LED lightbulbs. There was also a concern with waste recycling and re-using wastewater in gardens or for green space irrigation. In addition, across all tourism operators and tourism products, there was a focus on reducing the organisation's carbon footprint through offsetting carbon and using renewable energy, such as solar. One operator claimed that its tours were 100 percent carbon offset and another operator claimed that it purchased 100 percent green power. However, the carbon measure was narrow focusing only directly on what the organisation was responsible for and no organisation looked at broader approaches to carbon measurement (such as the focus of low-impact tourism on carbon emitted in travelling to experiences).

The imagery of disclosures concerning environmental sustainability revolved around minimising environmental impact with an objective of leaving 'no trace'. However, much of this environmental focus is presented by the accreditors and certifiers as having positive, measurable economic returns and thus, it is difficult to separate these disclosures from the associated eco-efficiency of the business case. The focus of eco-efficiency is to minimise

resource use (with or without improved productivity), which leads to cost-savings for the operator (Herring, 2006). As Ecotourism Australia suggest, these economic benefits make good business sense. However, this discursive map concerning environmental management illustrates the degree to which the eco-efficiency discourse is embedded within 'sustainability' practice, to the point that the cost savings and other economic benefits constitute a measure of sustainability. The eco-efficiency approach was the dominant message employed by almost all tourism operators. All the tourism operators in the accommodation sector emphasised these benefits. The sedimentation concerning ecotourism is the privileging of the neoliberal concern with resource-use optimisation. This does not, however, affect the consumption side of the tourism sector (increased consumption). Those operators that suggested that they take low numbers of tourists into natural environments to minimise impact still took tourists into those natural environments and charged a premium for the right to experience those environments with fewer fellow tourists (a premium for a personalised experience). That the vast majority of the tourism operators focused on eco-efficiency is illustrative of sedimented social practices concerning eco-certification for ecotourism (Laclau, 2005).

A significantly smaller number of disclosures (17 percent) by tourist operators emphasised a social aspect concerning sustainability. Key signifieds attached to the social signifier included 'community', 'participation', 'heritage', 'visitor experience', 'culture/interpretation', 'charity/donations' and 'transparency'. One signified that was not by any tourist operator used was 'accountability'. Engagement with local communities was important for some of the tourism operators', especially in rural or remote areas. In this, engagement with Indigenous community groups in the Northern Territory or Western Australia was important. In my sample, tourism operators that offered guided tours or hikes to sacred sites, such as Uluru and the surrounding Kata Tjuta National Park, or to remoter places in Australia, such as the Kimberley region, emphasised their commitment to and involvement with local, Indigenous communities.

These operators emphasised information about these areas, so that involvement extended beyond just working with tourists but extended to providing tourists with insights into local and Indigenous culture and interpretation so that local community members controlled the education of tourists about the cultural and spiritual significance of their local spaces. This focus on indigenous communities is featured in Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification with respect to cultural respect and sensitivity. A different social disclosure focused on the donation of time or money to charity organisations or local projects as good business practice. The most common social activities disclosed were volunteering and tree planting (see Appendix eight for more detailed information).

Only six percent of disclosures by tourism operator concerning their sustainability practices emphasised an economic aspect of sustainability. Four operators suggested that their purchase of products from local suppliers contributed to the local economy. One operator emphasised that local employment contributed economically to the community. However, this six percent measure is misleading. As the vast majority of the environmental management disclosures are dominated by the eco-efficiency, business case logic, they manifest as economic benefits in the form of cost savings and market opportunities. Thus, while only six percent explicitly presented disclosures from an economic perspective, the real percentage is closer to 80 percent, when we properly account for the eco-efficiency environmental management disclosures. This is not to belittle the commitment of the tourism operators to environmental management, but rather it is to reflect the overemphasis on the economic component of sustainability by accreditation bodies and certification bodies, such as Ecotourism Australia. Ultimately, from an economic perspective, each tourism operator wants to be financially viable, and this is achievable through various ways, including capitalising on economic opportunities that emerge through environmental management and eco-certification.

Of most interest though, was the lack of detail on how tourism operators were delivering on their disclosures. There was a lot of information disclosed by tourism operators concerning *what sustainability practices they were doing*. However, there was a significant lack of detail on *how they were acting.* Most operators disclosed their sustainability practices, and many disclose some measure or indicator, but there was little disclosure on how these practices actually impacted upon or changed usual business practices. An example would be a tourism operator offering day cruises through the Great Barrier Reef. As the activity takes place in a fragile marine ecosystem, the focus of the tourism operator was on education and environmental protection. The operator emphasised having a low carbon footprint. For example, this operator's website emphasised that to reduce its carbon footprint, the company does not provide plastic to its customers (no plastic straws, cups, plates or cutlery). Secondly, the company disclosed that it offered recycling bins on board the boat. Thirdly, the company disclosed (rather non-descriptly) that it re-cycles and re-uses as many 'things as possible'. The issue here is not that it takes these actions, but that the tourism operations does not explain how these actions are sustainable. This illustrates the sedimentation in eco-certification for ecotourism as there is no need to link an action to impact. This cruise business in the Great Barrier Reef focuses on 'low impact' but does not account for how tourists get from their home countries or cities to its operation and neither do these disclosures change their core business which involves cruises with large carbon-emitting marine vessels cruising through pristine natural reef environment while disturbing coral with vibrations and underwater turbulence caused by propellers. One could argue that if the principal concern was environmental protection, other options, including not cruising through the reef might be available.

In concluding this section, it is obvious how the tourism sector (represented in this study of ecotourism) has redescribed sustainability to suit seeking economic returns and eco-efficient cost savings. This is a dramatic delimitation of the change logic in sustainability and suits the

maintenance of a business case approach. Ultimately, what these tourist operators are doing in seeking certification is seeing market value in eco-certification or in business coaching from Ecotourism Australia. Many of the changes in the name of sustainability are for environmental eco-efficiency and window-dressing. Furthermore, there seems to be a logical leap between the tourism operators' sustainable practices and the products certified by Ecotourism Australia. This is explainable through the object of certification as Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification schemes certify products as 'eco' rather than the whole business (Esparon *et al.,* 2018). Despite the insistence from Ecotourism Australia that a product certification is not a certification of the tourism operator as a whole, it is difficult to completely disassociate the impact of certification from the business. An interesting follow-up study would be to see the impact (in purchasing decisions) of consumers of the eco-certification – did it inform the purchasing decision? How and why? And what did the consumer think the certification was for and what does the certification represent? One issue in certifying only products is whether tourism operators are doing enough to warrant the eco-certification logo, as there is a risk of greenwashing here (Self, Self & Bell-Haynes, 2010; Smith & Font, 2014).

2.2 *The Perceived Benefits of Seeking ECO certification*

While the previous section examined how tourism operators interpolated the rules of the ecotourism eco-certification game into their practices, this section focuses on understanding why these tourism operators choose to seek certification. In Chapter four in section 1.6, I provided a comprehensive overview of how the literature perceives the benefits to tourism businesses from eco-certification. This section seeks to evaluate the benefits of certification as understood by a group of 25 eco-certified ecotourism operators certified by Ecotourism Australia. Ecotourism Australia believes that the benefits associated with its certification include:

➢ *Operator credibility and recognition*

As Ecotourism Australia's certification program is assessed by independent, third party auditors, it ensures high levels of quality and commitment and this is beneficial when operators apply for grants and permits (licenses and permits issued by national parks in Australia).

➢ *GSTC approval*

Ecotourism Australia's eco-certification scheme is approved by the accreditation body GSTC ("achieved GSTC–approved status"). This means that Ecotourism Australia's eco-certification criteria are themselves independently assessed, reviewed and approved by GSTC's technical experts and its accreditation panel and thus Ecotourism Australia's eco-certification is deemed to be in accordance with the GSTC's criteria for sustainable tourism.

➢ *Marketing and promotion*

Once a tourism operator has received eco-certification, this operators is listed on Ecotourism Australia's online and web marketing outlets, including social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and green expos, as well as receiving a free listing on Ecotourism Australia's partner websites including Our Planet Travel and Coastal and Marine Eco Tourism Corporation (COMET).

➢ *Green Travel Leader*

There is the opportunity for enhanced status with different levels of accreditation and tourism operators that hold eco-certification for more than ten years are awarded Green Travel Leader status, which includes premium advertisement opportunities.

➢ *Trip Advisor Green Leader*

Ecotourism has a special partnership with TripAdvisor. This allows accommodation providers that hold an Ecotourism Australia's eco-certification to be recognised on TripAdvisor as a Green Leader.

➢ *Participation in Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) and Australian Tourism Award*

Members of Ecotourism Australia are entitled to participate in the Australian Tourism Exchange, an annual b-2-b forum where eco-certified tourism operators can promote their products.

➢ *Membership with Ecotourism Australia*

After receiving eco-certification, operators receive full membership with Ecotourism Australia (at an ongoing fee). This provides tourism operator with opportunities for learning and for media exposure.

➢ *Operator discounts on memberships and conferences*

Businesses who received certification are eligible for a variety of discounts, including Tribe membership and at the Global Eco Asia-Pacific tourism conference.

➢ *Sharing best practice and continuous improvement*

Another benefit that derives from certification is that businesses with certification demonstrate a higher level of commitment by continuously improving their business practices and environmental performances (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). This also provides a forum for sharing best practices and learning from each other.

The majority of the benefits as suggested by Ecotourism Australia relate to marketing and promotion activities. Of interest is that there is no mention of anything to do with environmental management, development or sustainability. There might be some scope for this in seeking continuous improvement and sharing best practice, but Ecotourism Australia tends to focus on enhanced certification. There are a range of economic benefits suggested here: marketing leading to increased customers through increased visibility, opportunities to promote the tourism opportunity through website, conferences and by associations (with TripAdvisor) and a range of access and pricing discounts including conferences and memberships. The primary benefit of eco-certification focuses on advertising. Table 10.3, below, lists what Ecotourism Australia considers to be the key benefits of certification for commercial tour operators:

Table 10.3: Key Benefits of Eco-certification of Commercial Tourism Operators

1. Provision of assurance that the protected area in which the commercial business operates is managed professionally and to a high quality
2. Demonstration of industry leadership and initiative
3. Demonstration of support for best practice minimal impact operating standards within protected areas
4. Assistance with competitor advantage through national and regional consumer recognition
5. Esurance of a deeper understanding by a broader range of protected area staff of the value and importance of tourism and thus more support for commercial tour operations
6. Contribution to a more sustainable and competitive tourism industry
7. Increased exposure and increased marketing leverage

Table 10.3 (Ecotourism Australia, 2017, p. 8)

This review of benefits from certification resonate with the nature of the benefits outlined in Chapter four, as the focus is on industry leadership, competition and competitive advantage, best practice, increased market exposure and eco-efficiency. These reflect the prevailing ideologies associated with eco-certification for ecotourism. However, all the benefits are benefits claimed by Ecotourism Australia. This is problematic as it only represents the view of the certifying body in illustrating the benefits of their certifications. To delve deeper into how

tourism operators understood the benefits of certification, I conducted email interviews with

the 25 selected eco-certified tourism operators and asked them why the sought certification and

the associated benefits from that eco-certification. The range of responses were not extensive

(and this might reflect the small size of the tourism operators and time available), but there were

a set of consistent themes that emerged concerning the benefits of eco-certification.

2.2.1 Benefits of ECO certification

1.   Claim – national and international recognition

The principal benefit from eco-certification for tourism operators was the national and

international recognition within the ecotourism community. A number of respondents

suggested that as they were highly committed to sustainable practices, eco-certification aligned

with their approach to tourism as Ecotourism Australia's certification officially recognised the

tourism operator as "a genuine nature and ecotourism operator" (Eco-tourism interviewee 2,

2017). The tourism operators suggested that certification gave them the opportunity to attract

new customers, including eco-travellers and ecotourists that "seek out products that are certified

and committed to sustainable practices" (Eco-tourism interviewee 18, 2017). The national and

international recognition associated with eco-certification provided tourism operators with

opportunities to develop a new market presence and increase exposure in existing markets. This

aligns with benefit four in Table 10.3 above.

2.   Claim – assistance with managerial processes

A further benefit that derives from ECO certification is that it assists businesses with internal

managerial processes including with staff training:

> … certification assists us to ensure that our staff are professional, have the training and
> skills that guarantee we are focused on providing the highest standards in customer
> service, are providing sustainable, minimal impact nature-based activities and are
> following a set of recognised eco certified principles in our management and experience
> delivery processes (Eco-tourism interviewee 11, 2017).

This is important, as a lot of tourism operators rely on the delivery of quality ecotourism experiences especially on tours or cruises. Training is important here as such ecotourism experience requires high degrees of interpretation and fluid cultural awareness. Furthermore, eco-certification assisted by providing formal recognition of a quality management system:

> Eco-certification provides recognition that we have quality management systems in place that support environmental preservation when developing and providing nature-based visitor experiences (Eco-tourism interviewee 7, 2017).

Again, recognition of a quality management system increases visibility and legitimates the tourism operator in the eyes of other tourism industry participants and for tourist as well. This reflects positively for visitor experiences and gives a degree of assurance that the venture is concerned and appropriately managed with respect to the protected nature area where the tourism business operates. This allows businesses to benchmark "experiences, services and programs against a set of quality, professional and relevant criteria" (Interviewee, 2017). This claim reflects benefit one, three and four in Table 10.3 above.

3.	Claim – provision of knowledge and expertise

Another benefit from eco-certification is that tourism operators themselves obtain knowledge and expertise with respect to how to run a business sustainably. The sharing of business practices and access to experts is valued: "Ecotourism Australia's certification process gave us the knowledge and expertise to achieve our goals" (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). Best practice models help to fill in the gaps between being concerned for the environment and putting it into action. While tourism operators may focus on environmental sustainability, tourism operators lack the knowledge "on how to 'green' [the business]" (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). The benefits of sharing knowledge with Ecotourism Australia's experts, auditors and with certified members is that eco-certification offers guidance particularly with respect to environmental management. There are a range of best practice models for waste and water reduction, environmental impact minimisation, carbon footprint reduction, as well as recycling. These are

all important components of the eco-certification criteria and assistance from tourism operators through learning and from sharing best practice is essential to successfully implementing these eco-efficient techniques. Financial sustainability was a message that emerged as important, as economic viability is the bottom-line, literally, for business. One tourism operator argued:

> From humble beginnings in 1989, DDC is the ultimate 'rags to riches' story. Despite a crippling 9 month-long pilot strike (6 weeks after we opened), 22% interest rates, sky rocketing fuel prices, international conflict, industrial unrest, frightening pandemics[6] - topped off by the latest economic turmoil, we have survived! Over the past 22 years we have learnt a lot (Ecotourism Australia, 2019).

The sharing of knowledge and the focus on business planning and marketing is important in seeking financial viability. This is where Ecotourism Australia manifests as business developer and business coach, as their experts share knowledge around financial structure including capital, cash-flows and return on investments. As the eco-certification process demands tourism operators to develop and provide detailed business management plans, this knowledge is useful in helping businesses to ride out economic viability and for economic planning. Furthermore, this knowledge assists tourism operators with "regional tourism destination development and growth" (Eco-tourism interviewee 6, 2017). Interestingly, this does not align directly with claimed benefits in Table 10.3. The next section examines the reasons why tourism operators decided to seek eco-certification (and there is some overlap here with perceived benefits).

2.2.2 *Reasons for ECO certification*

When asked about the reasons for seeking Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification, many participants gave similar answers to the benefits associated with eco-certification. It was difficult for respondents to separate the benefits from certification from reasons for seeking certification may reflect a hegemonic message from Ecotourism Australia or it may be that these parties had received eco-certification and this explained the blurring of the lines between

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[6] This was collected prior to the current Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. Unfortunately, the impact of the pandemic is likely to have decimated many of eco-certified tourist operators that were my research subjects. The impact of the pandemic and issues post-pandemic pose interesting questions concerning ecotourism.

the benefits from certification as and against the reasons for seeking certification (it was not possible to identify tourism operators that were considering certification, but that would be an interesting angle to pursue in further research).

1.	Claim – official recognition/credibility

The first reason that tourism operators gave for seeking recognition through eco-certification was that they these ecotourist operators were committed to ecotourism experiences and were committed to sustainable practice. Thus, the operators wanted official recognition for the commitment to delivering a "high standard of operations" (Eco-tourism interviewee 24, 2017) and "environmental best practice, quality experiences and customer service" (Eco-tourism interviewee 2, 2017). The participants suggested that recognition impacted positively on the credibility of the business within the ecotourism community. Thus, the achieved recognition from peers. At the same time, the tourism operators suggested that the official recognition of their commitments helped with attracting more customers (e.g. eco-travellers and ecotourists). Again, this corresponds with benefit four claimed on Table 10.3 above. What was not explained in these responses, though, was why external recognition of their commitment to ecotourism and sustainable practices was necessary (in other words, what does the certification add to their commitment to ecotourism and sustainable practices). There does seem an instrumentality (potentially, *ex post* rationality) in this reason, as the certification led to economic gains.

2.	Claim – provision of sustainable opportunities

Tourism operators with eco-certification provided them with 'sustainable opportunities' (Eco-tourism interviewee 14 2017). These opportunities included the delivery of 'best environmental practices', 'quality experiences', 'eco-friendly visitor experiences', 'high quality/standards' and guidance on 'how to 'green' the business (Eco-tourism interviewees 1, 6, 7, 11, 15, 19, 24, 2017). In terms of best practice, tourism operators suggested that following the environmental management criteria as outlined by Ecotourism Australia pursuant to applying for certification

gave insights into opportunities to improve sustainable practices. Most of these measures for waste, water and energy management were represented in the sustainable practices outlined on the tourism operator's website. Again, there is an element of instrumentality in this response, as it seems that the certification process provided these tourism operators with a set of environmental practices and indicators that formed the basis of claims to eco-efficiency. This is different to the first claim, which focused on external recognition. This claim is about accessing a toolkit.

The tourism operators also suggested that eco-certification helped them with the delivery of "exceptional" customer service through quality experiences and eco-friendly visitor experiences (Eco-tourism interviewee 3, 2017). In contrast to traditional tourism experiences (hotel service or visiting an attraction), the ecotourism sector focuses more on the value of experience including a focus on education concerning the environment and culture where the tourism experience is located (see Table 9.8 in Chapter nine). Tourism operators pointed out that the application process and certification was helpful in focusing attention on training staff towards these issues. This helped to improve the service offered to ecotourists and eco-travellers by providing quality and in-depth information on the environmental and cultural benefits. This argument aligns with benefit three presented on Table 10.3 above.

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3.   Claim – building relationships with Ecotourism Australia

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A further reason for ECO certification is that through certification, tourism operators enter into and continue to build a mutual relationship with Ecotourism Australia. One operator states that:

> … the [centre] has had a long and very enjoyable working relationship with Ecotourism Australia - one which has not only provided international credibility to DDC's tourism product but also widespread recognition of our continuing achievements in environmental conservation and rehabilitation (Ecotourism Australia, 2019).

The ecotourism operator points to international recognition with certification (reflecting the argument in Claim 1 above), but also stresses the importance of the relationship with Ecotourism Australia. This seems to suggest that this is more than just receiving recognition,

but that Ecotourism Australia supports the tourism operator in achieving their sustainable and environmental objectives. This relationship to Ecotourism Australia is important for the individual ecotourism operators, but the role extends to Ecotourism Australia facilitating connections to the wider ecotourism community. One operator mentions:

> … the best relationships are those that are mutually beneficial, and we believe that, despite being a small, privately funded interpretive facility, located in the heart of a tropical wilderness, the [centre's] incredible success story has been being able to contribute something to the Ecotourism Australia community in return (Ecotourism Australia, 2019).

This eco-certified operator points out that seeking certification enabled them to act as role model to inspire other tourism operators to seek certification. This seems more altruistic rather than instrumental but does not really seem to provide a rationale for seeking certification (it may be better described as a benefit of certification). Eco-certified operators can provide help to other tourism operators seeking ECO certification in a mentorship capacity, which increases the network of like-minded individuals and businesses in the tourism sector fostering a stronger eco-community.

3 Interpreting the Data – Rhetorical Redescription (III)

What is interesting about exploring benefits from eco-certification and reasons for seeking eco-certification was the limited nature of the responses. This might reflect the fact the interview data was collected through email (as explained above), but what seems most interesting here was what was not said by tourism operators. Ecotourism Australia highlights the development of a competitive advantage, market opportunities and cost savings from eco-efficiency measures, but most tourism operators that I interviewed did not emphasise the economic side of eco-certification. It was evident, as a related benefit or reason, but it was not presented as a driver. However, the responses highlighted two major aspects of eco-certification. First, businesses with eco-certification are influenced by Ecotourism Australia's eco-efficiency focus. As Ecotourism Australia (as an agent in the eco-certification supply chain) instituted eco-efficient approaches to environmental management, these 'rules' of ECO certification

influence ecotourism operators in Australia and delimit alternatives (as ECO certification legitimates certain practices but also takes attention away from alternative practices). It should be noted that one of the impacts of these eco-efficient practices is economic, but this was not explicitly recognised, which may indicate how the environmental management practices were used to mask economic benefits. The majority of the sustainable business practices emphasised by these ecotourism operators were eco-efficient indicators and may not actually impact on how the operator conducts the tourism business. This is evidence of a sedimented set of practices concerning ecotourism, as suggested by the theory around the social logic.

The second aspect that emerged was to illustrate how eco-certification presented significant opportunities for marketing and promotion. Eco-certification provided ecotourism operators with legitimacy by officially recognising their commitment to sustainable practices and the environment. Ecotourism operators with certification highlighted this increased credibility, as well as suggesting that the certification resulted in increased market exposure and the opportunity to attract new customers. In particular, membership with Ecotourism Australia opened up opportunities for tourism operators to participate in exhibitions, national and international conferences and the Australian Tourism Exchanged at a discounted rate. These platforms provided enhanced access opportunities for ecotourism operators to promote their products and experiences. Tourism operators also pointed to the relationship with Ecotourism Australia and the associated benefits that derive from the interaction including access to environmental management expertise and business support (especially concerning financial and economic viability). The business development, business planning and financial viability components were emphasised by Ecotourism Australia in Chapter nine.

The business case casts a long economic shadow across much of this conversation. Not only is the shadow evident in the eco-efficiency conversations, but ecotourism operators focus on attracting customers with certification and growing their business. While Ecotourism Australia

emphasise eco-efficiency economic benefits, business development and business coaching, tourism operators identify marketing and promotion opportunities associated with Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification program. Both elements illustrate the sedimented redescription of sustainability for ecotourism, as sustainable tourism and ecotourism are redescribed through eco-certification as a metonym for a range of environmental eco-efficiency practices and some social community interests for the tourism sector including waste, water, energy, recycling, carbon footprints, efficiency, performance, community, participation, heritage, charity/donations, education, cultural interpretation, and local employment or supply (see Figure 10.1 above). Thus, the impact of the resdescription from eco-certification is to limit the interpretation and interpolation of sustainability to a business case approach and the role of eco-certification to business development and business coaching. The eco-efficiency focus renders sustainability a mere toolkit and tourism operators draw on the toolkit to optimise their tourism operation, enhance cost savings through environmental management, create market opportunities for attracting tourists, provide an opportunity to charge a premium for the enhanced and legitimated eco-experience and to expand marketing and promotion opportunities. With a sense of irony, eco-certification for ecotourism is about strategic growth opportunities for ecotourism operator.

4   Conclusions to the Chapter

This chapter shifted the focus from the supply side of certification to the demand side for certification by examining the sustainability practices disclosed by 25 Australian ecotourism operators certified by Ecotourism Australia. In addition, I also examined how these ecotourism operators understood the benefits from certification and reasons for seeking ECO certification from Ecotourism Australia. This information helped to illustrate the sedimentation of eco-efficiency, business case approach to ecotourism (the social logics) (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). The information provided evidence that tourism operators do not question the rules and

practices concerning eco-certification and, in fact, many welcomed the legitimation and recognition that came with certification and embraced the eco-efficiency logic. With respect to the justifications for ECO certification, six arguments were presented:

Benefits of ECO certification:

    a) national and international recognition;

    b) assistance with managerial processes; and

    c) provision of knowledge and expertise

Reasons for ECO certification:

    a) official recognition/credibility;

    b) provision of sustainable opportunities; and

    c) building relationships with Ecotourism Australia

As a study of vertical integration from accreditation to certification to tourism operator, there is a strong hegemonic discourse concerning eco-efficiency within the eco-certification discourse for ecotourism. The discussion of tourism operators illustrates the impact of the re-description of the concept of sustainability and eco-certification, as tourism operators see eco-certification and environmental management as an opportunity for business growth. In this, tourism operators adhere to the accepted 'rules of the game' (eco-efficiency, business case) as there is little significant change to existing business practices, but eco-certification adds a layer of (perceived) legitimacy that is marketable, promotable and opens avenues to increased eco-consumer opportunities. This reflects the economic sedimentations within sustainable tourism and ecotourism as the economic focus driving eco-certification manifests with concerns around economic viability.

Thus, the final chapter focuses on drawing contributions and conclusions from the empirical discussion in Chapters eight, nine and ten and reflects further on the theoretical implications. The chapter then moves to conclude the thesis.

1   Empirical Discussion

1.1 The Definitional Lack within the Discourse of Green Politics

Chapters eight, nine and ten presented three interconnected study sites related to the vertical case study of eco-certification. The levels studied included macro-level standard setters and accreditation bodies (ISO, GSTC, TIES) that inform the meso-level certification bodies (such as Ecotourism Australia), who in turn certify Australian ecotourism operators offering ecotourism experiences at the micro level (this reflects Figure 8.1 in Chapter eight). The purpose of examining the integrated model concerning eco-certification at the political, fantasmatic and social logic was to demonstrate an industry hegemony concerning sustainable tourism and ecotourism. This hegemony is focused on incorporating an eco-efficiency, business case approach to sustainability that privileges the economic activity within ecotourism. The purpose of the study was to illustrate how at each level (with accreditors, certifiers and tourist operators), there is space for articulation and interpolation concerning what is meant by sustainable tourism and ecotourism within the ecotourism supply chain. The accreditors and standard setters introduce a redescription of sustainability to reflect the eco-efficient, business case approach to ecotourism, where economic benefits and cost savings are suggested. This involved the removal of alternative (and antagonistic) eco-certification and ecotourism approaches (such as through the Mohonk Agreement) and to reflect the discursive opportunity posed by the Brundtland Report (1987). Certifiers require accreditation and hence this link constrains what is perceived legitimate in the ecotourism eco-certification space. From a certification perspective, the eco-certification process from Ecotourism Australia prioritises economic benefits from certification including cost savings, market opportunities and competitive advantage through business and environmental management focus. The impact of this articulation is that Ecotourism Australia focuses on business development and business

coaching, as sustainable ecotourism is a 'value-add' and eco-efficiency and environmental management tends to focus on carbon, which emerges as a proxy for the environment, efficiency and sustainability. Ecotourism Australia presents itself as business consulting experts, as their expertise extends beyond best practices for environmental management, as they certify business planning processes concerning marketing, risk and financial planning for each tourism operator. Due to their 'expertise' (both internally and the ability to draw on certifying auditors), the role of the certifying body is to legitimise the fantasmatic image of the 'good sustainable life' as an eco-efficient, business case tourism entity. The final step focused on evidence of sedimented social practices concerning sustainable tourism within eco-certified ecotourist operations. The broad-based consensus concerning employing environmental management eco-efficiency practices and the reasons for, and benefits from, seeking certification provide strong evidence of sedimented eco-efficiency within the eco-certification supply chain.

While there were clear theoretical links identified throughout the empirical chapters, I want to use this space to draw three distinct conclusions concerning eco-certification for ecotourism with respect to discourse theory. This study examines the cascading impact of political contestation at the macro-level and how decisions concerning sustainability, eco-efficiency, neoliberalism, tourism, sustainable tourism, ecotourism and legitimacy spread through the meso-level of eco-certification through to the micro-level of tourism operators. This, of course, is a contingent discourse. Chapter two illustrated this contingency by examining the definitional and conceptual lack with respect to the discourse of sustainability. The immediate impact of this in the tourism space was the articulation of a variety of approaches to sustainable tourism. As Mowforth and Munt (2016, p. 104) suggest, "… there is no unarguable, comprehensive and all-encompassing definition [of sustainability] that is accepted by all […] except in terms of the context, control and position of those who are defining it". What this illustrates is that

articulations concerning what is sustainable tourism are inherently political. Thus, this definitional and conceptual contingency resulted in social actors attaching a range of different meanings to sustainable tourism (as depicted in Figure 1.1 in the Introduction Chapter):

> … as with any activity which involves many groups, the terms mean different things to different people, according to the role they have within the activity. Protagonists perceive and portray the activity they are involved in as 'sustainable', 'no-impact', 'responsible', 'low-impact', 'green', 'environmentally friendly' or use some other suitable term to convey the message (Mowforth & Munt, 2016, pp. 101-102).

The impact of this is that sustainability for the purposes of tourism and ecotourism progressively becomes emptier of meaning due to the attachment of, and reliance on, different, rival interpretations. In discourse theory terms, sustainability for tourism and ecotourism operates as a floating signifier (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). This was the focus of Chapter two. As a nodal point, sustainability for tourism and ecotourism can be understood from strong, biocentric approaches (such as environmentalists or deep greens) but also from weak, anthropocentric approaches (e.g. neoliberalist or (ecological) economists). In the hegemonic struggle over meaning, the economic nature of the tourism activity seems to be privileged in the particulars taking up leading positions as master signifier concerning sustainable tourism and ecotourism. At the political level, tourism is perceived as so essential that very few sustainability discussions regarding tourism propose ending or drastically reconsidering tourism as a leisure activity. In many ways, only low-impact tourism as a movement suggests taking into account the whole of tourism experience impact. The importance of tourism to national economies, local economies, local communities, employment and for leisure-seekers seems to dominate the political with respect to sustainability in the tourism space. Consequently, most institutions and social actors (either because of what is politically palatable or because of their own economic interests) argue for a weak level of progression with respect to sustainability. This provides some explanation as to why eco-efficient, business case models emerged as the norm. However, as this is a contingent approach to sustainable tourism and ecotourism, institutions and actors try to cover over the contingencies. Consequently, standard setters, accreditors and certification bodies seek

to legitimise their interpolation of the eco-efficient, business case model for sustainability in tourism and ecotourism. Two interrelated techniques for this include a reliance on indicator systems and measurement techniques that reify the eco-efficient approach to environmental management and a reliance on claim to expertise (in a technocratic manner). The act of delimiting the definitions and mechanisms for sustainable tourism at the macro-level, through the Mohonk Agreement, through standards and through the accreditation process, resulted in meso-level certification approaches emerging. Ecotourism Australia's eco-certification discourse interprets the accreditation frameworks and interpolates a particular approach to ecotourism that focuses on business acumen and environmental management deeply embedded in eco-efficiency signifiers including cost savings, competitive advantage and market opportunities. The perceived value of eco-certification, the promise of these eco-efficiency benefits and attached fantasies shape social practices at the micro-level tourist operators.

This hegemonic process should not be understood as perfect or smooth. There have been disagreements and false starts that account for the current approach to eco-certification for ecotourism. The purpose of the Mohonk Agreement, for example, was to weed out 'rogue' eco-certifications and ecotourism operators. The hegemonic story concerning the hegemonic articulation of eco-certification for ecotourism includes 'winners', excludes 'losers' and is illustrative of a social order and structure that is contingent. Examples of this contingency includes the closeness of Ecotourism Australia's independent auditors, that Ecotourism Australia gives certification prior to the conduct of an 'independent' audit, and Ecotourism Australia and not the auditor make the final determination concerning audit outcomes These contingencies have the ability to lead to deeper antagonisms. There is a sense of a 'house of cards' logic in relation to eco-certification. However, the flexibility and vagueness within sustainability as a floating signifier do help to cover over these contingencies at least temporarily. The ultimate impact of the hegemonic politics was for a range of interested social

actors to redescribe the meaning of sustainability (including the more threatening, radical interpretations of sustainability) into an accepted and acceptable eco-efficient, business case approach to ecotourism as illustrated through Ecotourism Australia's ECO certifications (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). Figure 11.1 depicts the discursive influence of the contingent nature of the sustainable tourism and ecotourism discourse, as a study in the emergence of hegemony

Macro level
- *Discourse of green politics*
- Due to a definitional lack, many articulations within this master discourse emerged -> sustainability as *floating signifier*

Meso level
- *Definitional contingencies continue* which allow accreditation and certification bodies to *legitimise a 'business case'* for sustainability, using expertise
- *Eco-certification as one particular discourse* emerged

Micro level
- Within this particular eco-certification discourse, *tourism operators articulating 'green activities'*, such as recycling and carbon-offsets

➔ *Eco-certification for ecotourism emerged as a discourse due to a definitional lack at the macro level, reflected by a lack of 'green' and eco-efficiency at the meso level, cascading down to the micro level*
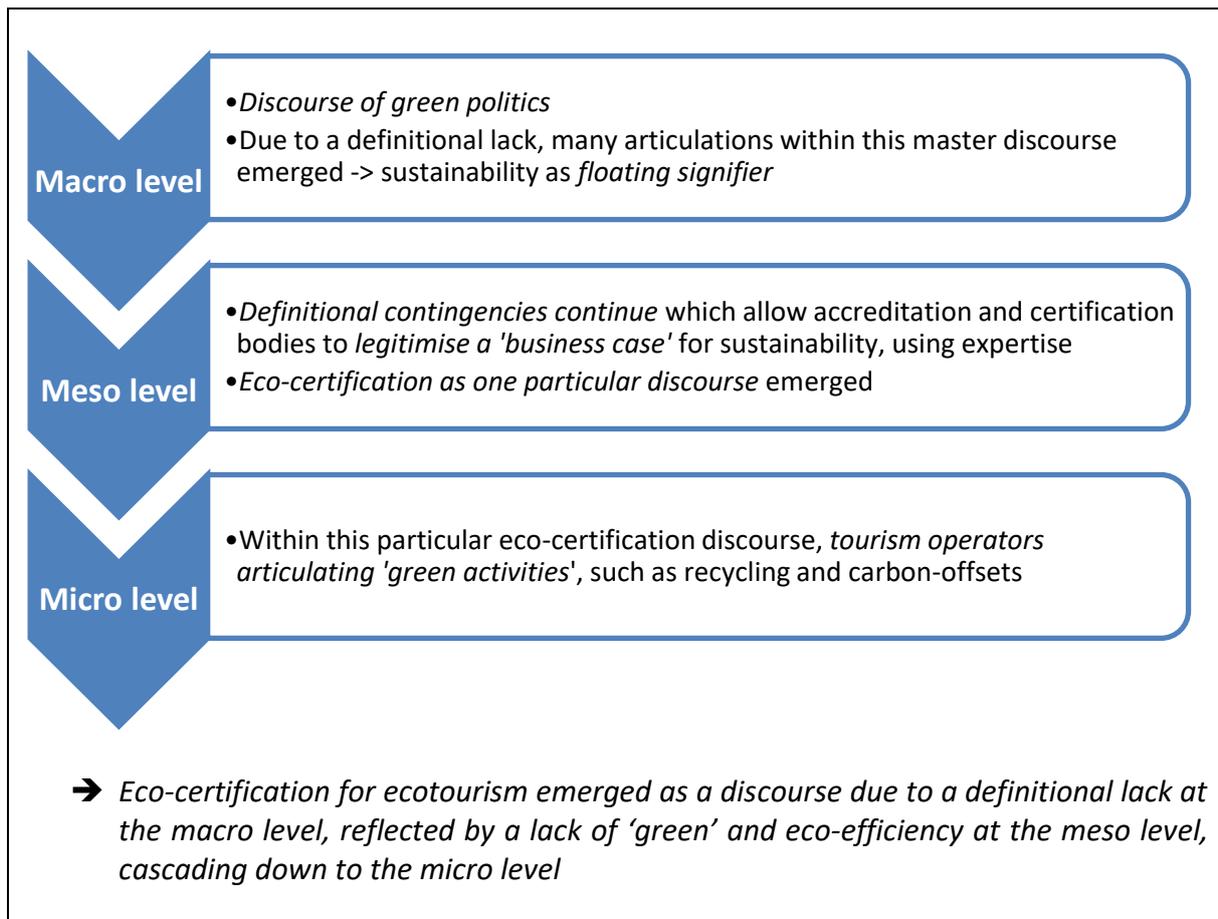
Figure 11.1. Emergence of the Eco-certification Discourse

Consequently, this study has illustrated the hegemonic transition of sustainability for tourism and ecotourism towards the eco-efficient, business case, which in turn allowed social actors to redescribe eco-certification as primarily 'economic' (even within the environmental management concerns).

1.2 Eco-certification as Financialisation

The impact of eco-certification for ecotourism is to redescribe eco-certification as a form of *financialisation* used by social actors politically to capture market control, restrict access to the

ecotourism and sustainable tourism markets and increase industry influence. However, the eco-efficient logics identified in the thesis illustrate how eco-certification for ecotourism seeks to capitalise on opportunities for financial gain by putting a price on 'green'. Thus, I explore the impact of financialisation in three ways: how Ecotourism Australia operates as a rating agency in a captured market, how eco-certification puts a cost on access to the ecotourism market (to the exclusion of others), and how eco-certification for ecotourism puts a 'value' on green (as a form of appropriation).

1.2.1 Ecotourism Australia as a Rating Agency

Eco-certification both establishes a particular market and then functions within that captured market to protect and enhance the competitive advantage of ecotourism. As the certifying institution in Australia, Ecotourism Australia has an effective monopoly over ecotourism certification and reflects the growing interest in ecotourism and the symbolic market value concerning a market for eco-certification in particular. With respect to the demand side, tourists that enter the ecotourism market tend to do so because they are morally and ethically motivated by the messaging associated with ecotourism experiences (Cruise Malloy & Fennell, 1998). In a similar way, ecotourist operators have limited options for recognition and they seek eco-certification due to the perceived range of benefits that come with being 'eco'. However, when an ecotourists makes the decision to participate in the ecotourism market, these tourists expect that certified tourist products are trustworthy and worthy of the certification (that eco-certified and logos attached are meaningful). This is especially so as ecotourism ventures to be priced higher due to the eco-premium (Ecotourism Australia, 2019).

One way of understanding the eco-certification process is that Ecotourism Australia's ECO-certification program is a form of ratings agency with respect to Australian tourism and particularly within ecotourism. They play a role similar to conventional credit ratings agency such as Moody's Investors Service, Standards & Poor or Fitch Ratings in financial markets or

Times Higher Education with respect to university rankings. Each of these areas seeks to construct legitimacy around an effectively unregulated, subjective process that has gained perceived value within a market. Credit ratings agencies, for example, play two roles within financial markets. They seek to assure the quality of its ratings service for financial products including derivatives and credit bonds. These ratings are "… a global benchmark for credit-risk assessment in capital markets" and provide investors with information regarding financial products (Papaikonomou, 2010, p. 166). In that, ratings become a proxy for value and risk. At the same time, credit ratings agencies also play a vital regulatory role in the financial markets and in sovereign debt markets for governments. However, crises including the global financial crisis exposed the contingency of this regulatory role as ratings agents 'give' opinions about financial safety and risk and in that sense, ratings agencies have no formal regulation. The call for increased regulation of credit ratings agencies emerged long before the global financial crisis and followed significant corporate failures including the collapse of Enron and WorldCom in the early 2000s (White, 2010). Credit ratings agencies created a self-regulatory approach to credit ratings, which was both insufficient and ineffective (Papaikonomou, 2010), especially due to the shift from an 'investor pays' approach to an 'issuer pays' model. In this, the issuer of investment opportunities pays a fee to the ratings agency. The argument is that the desire to maintain future relationships (the desire for future income) resulted in ratings agency providing better ratings to financial investment product. As White (2010, p. 213) argues: and thus "*the creditworthiness judgments of these third-party raters had attained the force of law*" (emphasis in original). A similar self-regulatory approach exists in the eco-certification for ecotourism (with perhaps the addition of the support of a vertically-integrated accreditation process that is also self-regulatory). The same regulatory problem (the issuer pays conflict of interest) emerges with eco-certification. In Ecotourism Australia's ECO-certification process, the tourism operator seeking certification pays an application fee and then subsequent annual

fees to Ecotourism Australia (see Figure 9.5 in Chapter nine). In turn, Ecotourism Australia certifies the tourism operator as eco-certified, in the same way as rating given to a financial product credit ratings agency. The eco-certifications also have a sliding scale from nature to eco- to advanced eco-certification, which has affinity with the sliding scale with credit ratings from AAA to junk status. The higher the eco-certification the higher the quality and nature of the environmental commitment to ecotourism (from 50 percent to 75 percent nature based). As White (2010, p. 220) explains how this self-regulation led to a trust dilemma and how this was especially problematic leading into the global financial crisis:

> … generally favorable reputations that the credit rating agencies had established in their corporate and government bond ratings meant that many bond purchasers - regulated and nonregulated - were inclined to trust the agencies' ratings on the mortgage-related securities.

A further example of this self-regulation problem with respect to Ecotourism Australia would be how Ecotourism Australia awards eco-certification even before environmental auditors conduct a site visit. This self-interest paradox is increased in magnitude when one considers that Ecotourism Australia's auditors all belong to Conservation Volunteers (who Ecotourism Australia have an alliance with) and further that all the individual auditors have an existing working relationship with Ecotourism Australia (in a range of forms beyond being trained by Ecotourism Australia).

To maintain this self-regulatory status and to enhance this perceived legitimacy of the ratings, both credit ratings agencies and eco-certifiers, such as Ecotourism Australia, seek to highlight their legitimacy by involving experts (Botzem, 2014). Thus, ratings (either for financial products or for ecotourism) appear technocratic and this perception of expertise shapes how actors behave and increase the appearance of 'regulating' the particular markets (Collins, 2013). Foley and McCay (2014, p. n/a) argue that the:

> … uptake and compliance with rules and standards administered by the [Marine Stewardship Council] and similar organizations are designed to be driven not by legal or regulatory power and authority of state sovereignty, but by the power of market incentives, i.e., market actors using tools of certification and ecolabels to verify the

Thus, it is clear that there are challenges with respect to the self-regulation approach, as it predominantly relies on technical expert knowledge. The impact of this is a narrow 'expert-led' discourse concerning eco-efficient environmental management and a certification process that focuses on certifying the business (planning, marketing, risk) instead of a substantive focus on claims to sustainability. Ecotourism Australia instituted a set of arbitrary definitions concerning 50 per cent or 75 per cent in nature to define ecotourism and provided little guidance as to how to interpret 'in nature'. In a way, Ecotourism Australia passes on the ecotourism decision to the ecotourism operator. This is reflected by Ecotourism Australia focusing on an application process requiring the tourism operator to provide detailed planning detailing "business and marketing plans and operational strategies" (Ecotourism Australia, 2018, p. 11). Another issue is that Ecotourism Australia certifies single tourism products and not tourist operators (Esparon *et al.,* 2018). It is suggested that this is due to the complexity of certifying an entire company (Esparon *et al.,* 2018). However, the business planning information certainly is about the business (although focused on the product). However, what is unclear is that status of the certification, as it is not an indicator of the tourism operator's whole operation. There is a question here concerning the link between the ECO-certification and the organisation's sustainable practices. The Marine Stewardship Council, a certification body for sustainable fisheries, acknowledges this dilemma:

> … assuming the assessment is successful, what and/or who will be certified? […] The answer to the question of whom or what will be certified in a fishery is not necessarily obvious because of the common pool nature of many fisheries resources (Foley & McCay, 2014, p. n/a)

Thus, the sedimented practices of certification bodies involve subjective choices and the institution of value-laden choices that emerge due to contingencies within the sustainable tourism and ecotourism fields. These contingencies help to explain how the eco-certification process reflects arbitrary choices by standard setters and tourism accreditation bodies to

emphasise an eco-efficient, business case approach to ecotourism and how this influences and constrains both tourist operators and tourism consumers. The vertically-integrated link between accreditors and certifiers is illustrative of the self-regulating approach for ecotourism and thus, this group sets the rules of the game and also decided on what participants are certified and are able to access the economic benefits and opportunities promised with certification.

1.2.2 The Cost of Access to the Ecotourism Market

Ecotourism Australia is a not-for-profit entity. However, Ecotourism Australia do put a price on eco-certification and in that sense, they put a price on ecotourism. This is comprised of an initial cost of access to seek certification and an ongoing annual membership fee (which is the cost of maintaining eco-certification). The fact that Ecotourism Australia is a not-for-profit does not detract from the cost of access argument and this is another form of the financialisation. Despite Ecotourism Australia (2019) claiming that "ecotourism is no longer a niche but has become the mainstream", there is a cost of access to seek eco-certification. Given that many of Australia's tourist businesses are small operators and eco-certification is an extra cost when compared to conventional tourism, the cost of access constitutes a barrier for entry. The cost may be as low as A$395 for the application fee with an annual fee of $555, but that is the cost of entry to 'legitimate' ecotourism.

Furthermore, there is an impact on ecotourists as well, as Ecotourism Australia suggests that eco-certification provides tourist operators with a competitive advantage and allows them to charge premiums for their certified products and experiences. Equally, small group holidays in remote areas tend to cost more than conventional tourism. Arguably, this higher price limits the number of eco-tourists experiencing ecotourism. Thus, the impact of the cost of eco-certification helps to protect the status of eco-certified ecotourism as a remain 'luxury product'. ECO-certification, as a form of club, sets a membership fee that privileges those tourism operators with adequate financial means to pay the entry cost. While Ecotourism Australia may

use the money to cover their expenses, the cost of access takes the attention away from the contingency concerning sustainability.

This cost of access can be considered similar to the privatisation of the commons. The impact of various social actors in tourism including governments, accreditors, certifying bodies, policy makers and tourism organisations accepting a price access to ecotourism constitutes a third argument concerning financialisation. The privatisation of common resources, as a precondition to financialisation, has several implications. In particular:

> … privatisation concerns two distinct processes. First, it involves the privatisation of public assets from the state to private companies. For example, states once held nature in trust for the people they represent, but now privatize and sell it as stock to private companies. We see this, for instance, in the sale of grazing land to foreign wildlife and ecotourism companies […], and of farm and forest land to mining companies" (Fairhead *et al.,* 2012, p. 243).

The privileged label of 'eco-certification' within pristine nature sites around Australia seems to have the effect of privatising these nature sites, as certification gives particular operators a comparative competitive advantage over other tourist operators. This 'dispossession' through competitive advantage opens the way for the financialisation of nature (see, Sayre, 2008). According to Ouma *et al.* (2018, p. 501):

> … this entanglement continues to expand both geographically and sectorally, as the industry has helped produce financial assets in diverse fields such as carbon markets, ecosystem services compensation and mitigation schemes, water rights, agricultural microinsurance, and agri-food chains. Given the breadth of engagement, we conceptualize the financialization of nature – linked to the more general assetization of almost everything – as a process of ontological reconfiguration through which different qualities of nature and resource-based production are translated into a financial value form to be traded in specialised markets.

Therefore, financialisation of eco-certification for ecotourism is a process through which:

> … the financial system itself has become a centre of redistributive activity, drawing into financial circulation aspects of life that previously lay outside it. […] This creates a market for different elements of valued ecosystems, which in turn creates the opportunities for financialization (Sullivan 2011), creating in turn 'fictitious conservation' intimately linked to the circulation of capital in new economic systems (Fairhead *et al.,* 2012, pp. 243/244).

Putting a price on eco-certification has the impact of putting a price on legitimate ecotourism and this has the effect of putting a price on pristine nature sites and excluding others from

accessing these nature sites for tourism opportunities. This is a form of enclosure and this leads

to a third implication that arises from the process of financialisation in tourism.

1.2.3 Putting a Value on 'Green'

The ultimate impact of eco-certification for ecotourism and issues concerning price of access

and enclosure is that putting a price on 'green', including the environment and ecosystems, is

that we turn nature into a tradeable commodity that represents new opportunities for capital

accumulation. Examples of this in relation to environmental management include trading rights

regarding carbon, sulphur and pollution activity. A redescription associated with the sustainable

tourism and ecotourism debate is the shift in the focus from environmental degradation to

environmental management. Options concerning carbon trading and other derivative pollution

rights illustrate how the financialisation of environmental conservation created opportunities to

generate money. Sullivan (2013, p. 200) reflects on the impact of treating carbon rights as a

tradeable commodity:

> … the financialisation of environmental conservation is further rationalising human and
> nonhuman natures to conform to an economic system that privileges price over other
> values, and profit-oriented market exchanges over the distributive and sustainable logics
> of other economic systems.

The shift from environmental degradation to environmental management resulted in "the global

offsetting trade in carbon [represents] a means of generating finance" (Sullivan, 2013, p. 204).

Carbon offsetting (as discussed in Chapter nine) has emerged as a new currency in eco-

efficiency, as various carbon emissions schemes and carbon offsetting businesses help

organisations trade in carbon. Often small changes in business practices result in reductions in

carbon emissions and such organisation seek to sell excess carbon quotas to other businesses

with excess carbon emissions. The motivation is slightly different in tourism, but the perception

is that carbon offsetting constitutes a legitimate response from tourism operators as it allows

them to continue to offer their tourism activities and it gives an appearance of the organisation

taking responsibility for its carbon impacts. For example, airlines offer carbon offsets options

to consumers when purchasing flights tickets. In Chapter nine, I discussed an example of an eco-certified operator asking for donations from its customers to plant trees in the local community. Both of these examples illustrate the nature of the discourse concerning carbon offsetting, as the cost of these offset activities is passed onto the consumer (through the choice to purchase the offset or donate to the tree planting cause). The organisation can claim a measure of good CSR media, but the actual bearer of the substantive cost was the consumer. Eco-certification has incorporated this eco-efficient financialisation logic through the focus on environmental management, especially as Chapter nine illustrated that the focus on carbon emissions emerges as a metaphor for sustainability.

Another implication associated with financialisation is property rights and access to common pool resources. The price of access to eco-certification has the impact of legitimising certified tourist operators as *real* ecotourism and as these tourism activities normally require access to common pool resources such as pristine nature environments, eco-certification has an exclusionary impact by excluding other tourist ventures (who may be eco-motivated, but may not be able to afford access to certification) (Foley & McCay, 2014). Foley and McCay (2014) analysed the relationships between privatisation and collective actions in common pool resource situations with a particular focus on the Marine Stewardship Council, which is a non-governmental, multi-stakeholder institution (similar to Ecotourism Australia). Foley and McCay (2014) illustrate the challenges concerning sustainability within the fisheries industry and there are parallels to my study of ecotourism eco-certification. Due to contingencies concerning sustainability and fishing, the self-regulating Marine Stewardship Council operates as a form of privatised governance institution. Foley and McCay (2014, p. n/a) argue:

> … in the Marine Stewardship Council, and similar organizations like the Fisheries Stewardship Council and Aquaculture Stewardship Council, rule-making authority is not formally derived from nation-state sovereignty, but from nongovernmental organizations administering third-party standards (Cashore 2002). In this way, Marine Stewardship Council certification and eco-labeling privatizes fisheries governance in nonstate multi-stakeholder institutions.

The same argument applies to Ecotourism Australia, who effectively privatise ecotourism governance in Australia through its ECO certification program and eco-labelling processes. However, due to the definitional lack within sustainable tourism and ecotourism, Ecotourism Australia draws on 'expertise' concerning eco-efficient environmental management (as discussed in Chapter nine) and this passes on interpretation and implementation through eco-certification to tourism operators. The impact of eco-certification for ecotourism is to create a property right:

> … certification and licensing confers a property right to the use of a label, which can open access to market and increase values […] in certain situations, effectively constituting a license to market (Foley & McCay, 2014, p. n/a).

Ecotourism Australia celebrates this property right as licence to eco-efficient opportunities including cost savings, a recognisable, marketable label, competitive advantage and access to new markets. However, this property right not only gives privileged access to new markets, but it also has an impact on common pool resources, including physical and non-physical resources. That is, it attaches recognisable property rights to physical common pool resources, including nature, land, animal and water rights, but it also attaches recognisable, individualised property rights over non-physical common pool resources such as Indigenous knowledges, cultures and identities. This propertisation is a form of appropriation of environmental and social life (Fairhead *et al*., 2012).

I examine three tourism-based studies that study the phenomenon of appropriation. These studies explore the nexus of international tourism, conservation agencies and governments in the encouragement of ecotourism arrangements in South Africa, Africa and South America (Snijders, 2012; Gardner, 2012; Ojeda, 2012). Snijders (2012) outlines how the South African government renegotiated private property rights to wildlife through the Game Theft Act in 1991. The impact of the law was to strengthen the connection between wildlife ownership and land ownership, with the impact of turning wild animals into valuable financial resources. Prior to the legislation, wildlife including elephants, lions and rhinos were part of the commons with

no owner. However, the Game Theft Act 1991 enacted a form of enclosure as landowners saw the wildlife on their property as assets and turned "individual landowners into wealthy game owners overnight" (Snijders, 2012, p. 507). The impact of the law was to turn wildlife into a valuable commodity which "facilitated the privatization of a vast amount of land and natural resources by making it possible for 'wild property' to be absorbed into financial markets" (Snijders, 2012, p. 504). Gardner (2012) similarly examines land rights with respect to two tourism arrangements in Loliondo, Tanzania. One arrangement concerned game hunting licences negotiated between Maasai villages, ecotourism companies and an international investor group. The arrangement guaranteed that "land and resources remained property of villagers" (Gardner, 2012, p. 383). However, in another document, the investor was granted "exclusive rights to hunt in this area" and this 'exclusivity' deprived local Massai of access to resources (Gardner, 2012, pp. 383-385). In the South American context, Ojeda (2012) investigates how ecotourism projects covered up the violence of exclusion and appropriation to reshape resource politics in Colombia. What this literature illustrates is how the granting of property rights (and the role of ecotourism organisations) involves appropriation and the violence that follows from exclusivity.

Another form of this with respect to eco-certification for ecotourism relates to situations where local Indigenous knowledge is a component of the ecotourism experience. The granting of a property right, in the form of a certification, runs the risk of the commodification of local knowledge. This commodification is then expropriated as tourists pay for the 'right' to experience the certified cultural experience. As ecotourism relies on natural and social resources, ecotourism experiences require natural environments and cultural experiences, such as ceremonies or dances, as this constitutes an 'authentic' experience (Cohen, 2002). However, the impact of eco-certification is to commodify and expropriate these local knowledge and cultural resources for financial gains. Thus, the impact of appropriation and expropriation is to

exclude, by delegitimising alternatives or depriving alternative experiences of market access. All of these arguments illustrate the role of financialisation associated with eco-certification for ecotourism.

1.3 No Consumer Participation in the Eco-certification Process

The last conclusion to draw from the empirical chapters is supply-side dominance concerning the eco-certification for ecotourism discourse, as the power is principally held by accreditation and certification bodies (see Figures 3.1 and 4.1). The accreditation bodies delimit what is meant by sustainable tourism and ecotourism and certification bodies, such as Ecotourism Australia, shape the particular ecotourism discourse. There is little to no involvement of consumers in the articulation of the eco-certification discourse and tourist operators (as consumers of certification) are constructed as passive receivers in the certification process. While accreditation bodies, such as the ISO, follow 'due-process' in developing standards, there is little evidence that interested eco-consumers are aware of the impact of the ISO on sustainable tourism and ecotourism. Participation in standard setting tends not to extend beyond the involvement of 'experts' (see, Botzem, 2014). Thus, while consumers, as a stakeholder, might participate in 'due process' development. However, such participation is not extensive. Equally, Ecotourism Australia does not consult with consumers concerning eco-certification. As outlined in Chapters four and eight, Ecotourism Australia adopted a definition of ecotourism that influences the development of the criteria for their ECO certification program. Part of the reason for excluding broader stakeholder participation, including consumers, was the assumption by Ecotourism Australia of a position of technocratic expertise (Collins, 2013). Taking an expert position helps to avoid exposing the range of contingencies with respect to the emergence of the discourse of sustainable tourism and eco-certification for ecotourism. This claim to expertise allows Ecotourism Australia to advise tourism operators what they should do (in the name of business development and eco-efficient environmental management), but it is

for ecotourist operators to interpolate how to put this advice into practice. As a result, tourism operators adopt environmental management practices including recycling, waste reduction or purchasing carbon-offsets as these are legitimised through eco-certification criteria as 'green' and appropriate. On the other side, Ecotourism Australia promotes to tourism consumers that their eco-certifications are appropriate ecotourism experiences. These consumers play no role in the articulation of what constitutes appropriate ecotourism, and it would be interesting to study what is signified to tourism consumers by the name Ecotourism Australia or what they believe a certification means or represents. Thus, for ecotourism operators, Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification is a product development tool that assists operators with developing their business plans but promises certified operators access to new and enhanced tourism markets (Ecotourism Australia, 2019). This delimits what is ecotourism as a commodity and eco-certification for ecotourism is a neoliberal discourse that offers development strategies that may benefit national or regional tourism and a toolkit of business development strategies for tourism operators.

However, this emphasis is possible, in part, due to the exclusion of alternative voice and this includes the exclusion of the demand-side (consumers, environmental interest groups, deep greens) from the eco-certification process. However, the dominance of the supply-side of ecotourism helps to explain the focus on the eco-efficient, business case approach to ecotourism and sustainability. Consequently, a more open consultative, inclusive process may arguably have resulted in the emergence of different ecotourism discourse. The power to choose who participates is under-recognised in the tourism literature, as is how the political impact of this exclusion continues to have impacts as the eco-certification for ecotourism discourse unfolds. These conclusions, which constitute new research directions concerning eco-certification and the politics of ecotourism, provide an opportunity to reflect on the substantive contributions in my work.

2   Summarising the Key Empirical Contributions

In summary, the thesis makes novel contributions to extant literature in tourism through the mobilisation of discourse theory, in methodology through the use of the vertically-integrated case study in association with the LOCE and in the empirical material presented work. What is largely missing from the current tourism literature (and by extension from literature on sustainable tourism and eco-certification for ecotourism) is a critical review that examines the politics of the emergence of the sustainability-informed eco-certification discourse. The politics examined focuses on the construction and institution of an industry-specific reading of sustainability that reflects an eco-efficient, business case approach to sustainability. In this, the discussion examined how key actors at the macro- and meso-levels of sustainable tourism and ecotourism rhetorically redescribed the concept of sustainability and ecotourism in favour of an eco-efficient, business case approach that is reflected at all levels of ecotourism. Thus, this study is important in illustrating the level of integration and links between standard setters, accreditors and certifiers in the institution of eco-certification for ecotourism as an interpolation of sustainable tourism. The benefit of the study is by stepping back and looking at the integrated whole, the discussion traces how decisions at the macro-level limit and constrain actions at the micro-level of ecotourism. There have been studies in tourism literature that examine elements of ecotourism, but no study has examined ecotourism as an integrated case study. This is not necessarily a critique of extant work in tourism, *per se*, but I am arguing that from a political perspective, the integrated picture is helpful in identifying sedimented processes, ideological impacts, constraints and an overall industry-held, politically-palatable approach to eco-certification for ecotourism. Individual reviews or studies of ecotourism certification (see, Esparon *et al.* 2014) and those that discuss and debate definitions of ecotourism (see, Weaver, 2001; Fennell, 2003; Wearing & Neil, 1999) have already accepted the sedimented practices concerning the articulation of sustainability within ecotourism. Equally, studies of indicator and

measurements systems overlook the broader politics concerning sustainability and ecotourism, with the impact of focusing on the technical and making minor adjustments to processes or measures (see, Twining-Ward, 2002; Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2014). All of this has the impact of reifying the status quo and avoiding (perhaps unintentionally) the broader politics of sustainable tourism and the discourse of eco-certification for ecotourism. This was further reflected in my review of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism presented in Appendix 1, where a remarkably small number of papers were critical in a substantive sense questioning the interrelationship between sustainability and tourism as an economic activity (the idea of 'critique' with a big 'C'). Most papers in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism focused on reflecting business case principles within the research agenda or small-scale iterative additions or adjustments to sustainability measures or indicator systems. The argument seeks to position the emergence of this approach to eco-certification for ecotourism and the broader limits concerning a politics of sustainability that benefits the status quo and economic interests over all other concerns. The ultimate impact of the vertical-integration is to cloak traditional economic concerns with a hint of green so that little of traditional business practice changes, that the principle benefits of ecotourism are considered economic and it becomes increasingly complex to identify what elements of ecotourism are ecological or sustainable rather than purely economic. This is the study of rhetorical redescription as sustainability represented as economic: 'Being green is profitable' (Bricker, 2017, p. 2). This redescription shifts any focus concerning the political, the moral, the ethical or any other issue to the economic.

In reflecting on my thesis, the theoretical contribution is two-fold. The obvious contribution concerns the substantive employment of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory. Few studies in the extant tourism literature employ a discourse theory approach (see, for example, Chambers, 2007; Ayikoru, Tribe & Airey, 2009; Ballesteros & Ramírez, 2007; Wearing & Wearing, 2006;

Del Casino & Hanna, 2000; and Galani-Moutafi, 2000). The work builds on this small base by explicitly drawing out the implications of discourse theory in the eco-certification for ecotourism case. This differs to the studies referenced above, as they explore the phenomenon of 'otherness' in the tourism context as informed by discourse theory. They have not taken a full discourse theory approach to the tourism context and not to accreditation and certification process for eco-certification. The thesis applies a fuller articulation of discourse theory based around concepts including hegemony and articulation in a vertically-integrated case study. The discussion has also focused on the political implications of the hegemonic project concerning eco-certification for ecotourism. In that sense, my work is trans-disciplinary by examining the socio-political construction of the eco-certification discourse by examining a range of social and political institutions and actors at the macro level (accreditation bodies including ISO, GSTC and TIES), at the meso level (by focusing on the certifying body, Ecotourism Australia) and at the micro level (by studying Australian tourist operators who have received eco-certification). The theoretical benefit of exploring the vertically-integrated case study of eco-certification for ecotourism is to illustrate how hegemony and ideology cascade and transform as the discourse shifts from macro-industry levels to inform eco-certification practices of tourist operators in Australia (through the mediator of Ecotourism Australia). In this, it was interesting to examine how various social actors identified with and reinforced the eco-certification discourse concerning eco-efficiency and the business case logics. The explanatory power of discourse theory, in my case study, was to illustrate the interconnectivity and interactive nature of different institutions and different social actors involved in eco-certification.

The second substantive theoretical contribution is a form of revision concerning the important work of Mowforth and Munt (2016). The implications of the employment of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is to illustrate an expansionary potential in developing the political economy approach employed by Mowforth and Munt (2016) to analyse power relationships in

tourism. There are important elements of the political economy approach that overlap with discourse theory including its critical stance towards development, globalisation and new sustainable forms of tourism employed in emerging economies and this foundation is important for my thesis. In a similar sense, it is possible to diagnose ecotourism and eco-certification as new 'forms' of tourism, and there is a clear overlap with ecotourism often being situated in emerging economics in Africa and South America. In a similar vein to Mowforth and Munt's (2016) application of political economy theory, the nexus of the eco-certification relationship is reflected in uneven power relationships between accreditor and certification body and certifier and tourist operator. Mowforth and Munt (2016, p. 85) acknowledge that there is a need to develop deeper theoretical explanations with respect to ideology, discourse and hegemony, as they argue that "that these relationships cannot be fully explained simply by the notions of dependency and domination". Thus, this study responds to this call for deeper development, as my discourse theory-informed vertically-integrated case study provides a theorised account of how these inter-relationships and the interplay of disparate interests manifests in discourses concerning eco-certification within the broader sustainability context, given the multitude of social actors and political relations within tourism systems. The study contributes an expanded understanding of the role of ideology, discourse and hegemony in the development of these uneven power relationships to contextualise, explain and politicise contemporary tourism concerning sustainability, ecotourism (eco-certification) and the discourse of development. What this work also illustrates is that eco-certification operates to reify power structures and might help explain unequal development (although not explicitly in my case study) (Mowforth & Munt, 2016, p. 84). In this sense, the application of discourse theory theoretically develops the important insights of Mowforth and Munt (2016) and these developments constitute a valuable contribution to current theorisations emphasising political relationships and processes within tourism.

Furthermore, the thesis contributes a new methodological framework for the substantive analysis of tourism-based research with Glynos and Howarth's (2007) logics of critical explanation. In particular, the choice of a vertically-integrated case study from accreditation to certification to tourist operators to study the emergence and practices of eco-certification for ecotourism provided an opportunity to methodologically trace the intertwined and integrated hegemonic movements concerning eco-efficiency and the business case approach to sustainability. Through the employment of the LOCE, this provided a framework to actively study the interactions and interconnections between the different levels of the case study, but also to draw out the interactivity and interconnectivity within the LOCE approach. In the context of my study, I challenge an apparent linearity in the way that the logics within the LOCE seem to be applied and the seeming structural rigidity in applying the logics in the order of social, political and fantasmatic. The empirical work in my thesis is a reminder that the interaction between the political, social and fantasmatic logics are dynamic. Methodologically, my study illustrated the multi-level, interconnected articulation of an eco-certification for ecotourism discourse and how this emergence was equated with the eco-efficiency and the business case approach in the context of tourism.

Methodologically, I also challenged the use of the term 'case study' within tourism research. The thesis argued that closer attention is required in employing the term 'case study' and to focus on the implications that flow from different approaches to case studies. In adopting the approach from Merriam (1998), I argued that it aligned with the LOCE methodological framework. The impact of Chapter seven is to illustrate the determination of the vertical case study that integrated macro-, meso- and micro-levels concerning eco-certification for ecotourism. The discussion presented why Merriam's (1998) approach to case study was an appropriate framework for a discursive intervention resonating with the LOCE. As Merriam's (1998) approach to case studies was particularistic in nature, offered rich and thick descriptions

of phenomenon and sought to provide a broad-based heuristic of the case to uncover how meanings are created and how social actors confirm these social practices, this approach held to operationalise the methodological framework of LOCE. The collection of documents and focused interviews with key actors provided the data for the empirical analysis and was analysed using data analytical tools including dislocation analysis, nodal point analysis and rhetorical redescription. The approaches helped understand how social actors (accreditors, certifiers and tourism operators) saw, understood and interpreted sedimented practices concerning eco-certification for ecotourism. The principal argument was that the discourse of eco-certification for ecotourism was an act of rhetorical redescription that redescribed sustainability and ecotourism as eco-efficiency and the business case for sustainability. The methodological, method and analytical approaches constituted an appropriate level of abstraction to study the articulation of eco-certification, as they resonated with discourse theory, methodologically with Glynos and Howarth's (2007) LOCE, methodically with Merriam's (1998) approach to case studies and with my ontological and paradigmatic positioning.

As indicated above, the empirical chapters lead to three overall empirical arguments. First, that within the discourse of green politics, the definitional openness within the concept of sustainability influenced the emergence of a discourse for eco-certification for ecotourism. In particular, the discourse of eco-certification manifested with a shift to focus on the business case and eco-efficient economic devices, such that eco-certification for ecotourism was redescribed as a development tool for business growth. The vertical alignment in the case study illustrates how technical expertise and authority is employed to legitimise this neoliberal approach to green politics. Consequently, rather than seeing ecotourism as a new paradigm within sustainable tourism, certification bodies regard ecotourism as a valuable market opportunity accessible via certification. The second argument suggested than an associated impact of the neoliberal agenda in green politics and the implications of eco-certification for

ecotourism is that access to this market constitutes a form of financialisation used by social and political actors to restrict access to markets, to increase their influence in the industry (as pseudo-regulators), and also to capitalise on financial opportunities by putting a value on 'green' (Ojeda, 2012). The third empirical conclusion is that the eco-certification discourse is supply-side driven (as a form of technocracy). The impact of this is to crowd out any opportunity for alternative approaches to emerge, and this is evidenced through the closeness between eco-auditors that work for Conservation Volunteers and Ecotourism Australia. The impact of the supply-side technocratic dominance discourages an active involvement of other stakeholders, such as tourism operators and tourists from the construction of the eco-certification discourse.

3   Overall Conclusions to the Thesis

Through illustrating the interconnected nature of the political, fantasmatic and social logics from LOCE within the eco-certification discourse for ecotourism, my study illustrates the extent of the redescription of sustainability that reifies the eco-efficient, business case approach to sustainability. This approach is broadly politically palatable, as it does not radically alter already existing business practices, promises eco-efficient returns through cost savings and promises new market and business opportunities. From an eco-efficient logic, this approach to sustainability is non-threatening, but it has the impact of delivering little change to underlying tourism practices. Each level of my vertically-integrated case study (from accreditation bodies to certification bodies to tourism operators) illustrated how eco-efficient, business case meanings were attached to the articulation of sustainability to shift the discourse the eco-certification for ecotourism discourse to incorporate eco-efficiency, business development (coaching) and 'value-add' logics. This is a redescription, as the concept of sustainability embedded within the eco-certification discourse is reconceptualised (to reflect the focus on eco-efficiency and the business case), renamed (eco-certification becomes a trope for

sustainability), re-weighted (by reifying a focus on business development, cost savings, measurement, indicator systems, the business case and opportunities for new markets, with the effect of changing the significance of the concept) and re-evaluated (as the concept reflects this eco-efficient approach to sustainability) (Howarth and Griggs, 2006; Carter, 2008, p. 220). The impact of this rhetorical redescription is illustrative of the centrality of discourse within politics and my thesis traces out these tensions in the emergence of eco-certification for ecotourism (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014).

Furthermore, the empiric chapters provided answers to my research questions. With respect to Question 1 (*How does the tourism industry understand and interpolate the concept of eco-certification?*), accreditation bodies employ approaches to eco-certification that reify an eco-efficiency approach that redescribes sustainability by exposing the discourse to the colonising demands of neoliberalism. Certifying bodies articulate their understanding of ecotourism and sustainability, as Ecotourism Australia, for example, articulates that eco-certification constitutes a business development tool that adds value to tourism businesses. The impact of the eco-efficient approach is that it effectively encourages tourism operators to continue with 'business as usual' practices, but also suggests minor operating changes for cost saving benefits associated with eco-efficiency. The impact is that Ecotourism Australia effectively becomes a business mentor/business coach and this illustrates the redescription of sustainability towards the business case approach, as sustainability is used in eco-certification as a metaphor for business development. Tourist operators accept the sedimented rules of eco-certification, as the eco-efficiency logic is embedded into the discourse of eco-certification. The impact of the eco-certification discourse is that eco-certification is a metonym for business development and new or enhanced market opportunities (see Figure 10.1).

In effect, these responses provide insights into Question 2 (*How are the rules of the game (eco-certification) created and how do they transform and translate into practice?*), Question 3 (*How*

has expertise around eco-certification emerged given the definitional lack surrounding the concept of sustainability?) and Question 4 (*In eco-certification, what are the implications of equating sustainability with the business case?*). Following central moments, including the Brundtland Report (1987) and the Mohonk Agreement, accrediting and certifying bodies instituted rules that incorporated eco-efficiency into the emerging eco-certification for ecotourism discourse. The eco-certification mark has associated economic value associated with attracting tourists, opening up market opportunities and business development. Consequently, tourism operators act in accordance with the 'rules of the game' instituted by certifiers (such as Ecotourism Australia), who equally act in accordance with the 'rules of the game' instituted by accreditation bodies. As suggested above, the resulting eco-certification for ecotourism discourse embeds a politically acceptable hegemony that incorporates a neoliberal eco-efficiency. This is a safe form of sustainability within the political economy of capitalism, centred on the harmonisation of economy and ecology within the business case.

However, there are significant unanswered questions that emerge from my analysis. For example, while I illustrate the integration between the supply and demand side for eco-certification, deeper issues concerning how and why it is possible for social actors to believe or hold that a business case approach to sustainability is appropriate to resolve substantive sustainability concerns at the macro-political level. This assumes that actors see sustainability as a problem requiring resolution and also that eco-certification is something more than a business development opportunity. That requires further study outside the scope of this thesis. It might be that actors choose to see past the articulation of the problem. Alternatively, another possible answer could emerge from a study in the SEA space that investigates various discourses surrounding social and environmental reporting. Just like sustainability, the potential within social and environmental reporting has been eroded by political antagonism so that much

of this reporting conforms with business case scenarios (Spence *et al.*, 2010). Spence *et al.* (2010) link this to the phenomenon of the cargo cult that emerged in the Pacific Islands following the Second World War. Certain Pacific Island communities abandoned belief systems and converted to Christianity to receive more cargo, such as food and tools, left by the White men (Feynman, 1997). Similar arguments could apply to the way that tourism operators and regulators reify their belief in the economic system as embedded within eco-efficiency. The reification might be such that social actors within tourism do not see any contradictions between this eco-efficiency and sustainability. Spence *et al.* (2010, p. 86) state:

> The fact that these theories are treated radically differently outside of the SER archipelago is something that has never dawned on the inhabitants who continue to make mock airstrips and produce radios out of coconuts and straws. Cargo cult science (Feynman, 1997) might follow all the basic precepts of scientific study, but still there is something fundamental missing because the planes do not land and the coconuts do not play any songs.

A possible conclusion is that the tourism industry, alongside other industries, have adopted the 'god of efficiency' as a pathway to sustainable outcomes. During the discursive ceremony of eco-certification, all social actors play a role to reify eco-certification for ecotourism as a 'way' to this 'thing' called sustainability. However, this ideological grip is alluring and dangerous and the harmonisation of economy and ecology is a powerful political tool. We likely need new tools to embrace the political. Just as Spence *et al.* (2010, p. 85) argue in the SER context, we need a new direction:

> … any attempts at engagement must go further than simply organisational management and connect with activists, social movements and other grass roots actors in their own realm. Then we might just be able to witness the death of the 'death of politics' and contribute in some small part to the birth of an age where everything becomes political. For this, SER needs some new cargo.

The impact of eco-efficiency has been to depoliticise the political, as eco-certification reified a 'business as usual' approach. This has allowed for tourism, as a key economic driver in many advanced and emerging economies, to avoid obvious criticisms and focus on the marginal. For

example, airlines talk about more efficient planes and less fuel use (as indicators of sustainability). A different focus would be to question the very logic of long-distance tourism.

In eco-certification, accreditation and certification bodies focused on adapting appropriate indicator systems used by tourism operators to measure performance and to determine whether their practices are 'eco'. This manifests in tourist operators measuring their carbon footprint, water or energy consumption, while at the same time, not including the environmental and social impacts associated with transporting the tourist to the eco-experience, including carbon miles, waste and energy consumption. The eco-experience might be eco-efficient, but the tourism activity itself raises substantive issues.

My analysis illustrates that eco-certification discourse and much of the tourism industry ignores the carbon footprint of a tourist travelling to a destination and focuses on the carbon footprint of the tourism operator seeking eco-certification. One example of this is GSTC's criteria regarding greenhouse gas emissions, where a business should identify "all sources *controlled* by the organisation [and] calculated where possible and procedures implemented to avoid or to minimise them" (GSTC, 2016, p. 10). The meaning of 'control' does not extend to include a tourist's emissions in travelling to embark on an eco-experience. In this, accreditation and certification bodies create the opportunity for tourist operators to draw a boundary around what they will take responsibility for and manage. The impact of this is to exclude environmental, social and sustainability measures that do not suit the interests of the tourist operator. This choice means that tourist operators do not account for all their externalities, including social costs associated with water pollution, air pollution and environmental impact. In an accounting article concerned with accounting practice, Hines (1988, p. 254) outlines the power of being able to determine what an organisation should account for:

> The fence does not designate the organisation. We [the accountant] do that. We [the accountant] designate it, by deciding what things will be part of the organisation, and by deciding how big or small these things will be: 'recognition' and 'measurement'... Come over here... You see that murky brown in the river, downstream of the plant? What would you say of that?" "It's pollution." "Yes, but do you think it is part of the organisation?

> Now try to forget about the fence." "Well, ordinary people would say it is... So, ughm, perhaps an accountant would say it is not.

This illustrates the impact of reporters determining the boundaries around what an organisation will hold itself responsible. We saw similar problems in how Munich Airport designates 'the fence' around its organisation in determining which activities it will include and hold itself responsible in relation to its goal to become Germany's first carbon neutral airport. We saw, for example, that Munich Airport chose to exclude the runways from their responsibility. The impact of this is that Munich Airport excludes aviation, one of the principal activities responsible for carbon emissions, from its core practice. The impact of the emergence of the eco-certification for ecotourism discourse is to draw similar boundaries.

The power to determine boundaries and 'responsibility' allows for eco-certification to represent "reality in limited and one-sided ways" with an impact on how the organisation presents itself (Morgan, 1988, p. 477). If a tourist operator chose to include the environmental and social impacts of long-haul flights of its tourists – for example, a German tourist flying to Australia to enjoy an eco-cruise in the Great Barrier Reef or undertake a hiking tour to the Red Centre - then the carbon impact of the boat cruise or the hike *could* not be classified as 'eco' anymore. In this, eco-certification allows tourism operators to portray a reality that makes them look 'eco' or sustainable due to their definitional boundaries, where it is likely that they are not 'eco'. This is the power of definition, 'a hidden power', as Hines (1988, p. 254) argues:

> We communicate reality: that is the myth; that is what people believe. It is even what most of us believe. And, in a sense, we do communicate reality. There is something there: bricks and people and so on. And the organisation can, say, be 'doing well', or 'doing badly', in whatever sense you take that to mean. And it is our job to convey it. But what is 'the full picture'? There is no full picture. We make the picture. That is what gives us our power: people think and act on the basis of that picture! Do you see? Are you beginning to see?

Thus, eco-certification focuses us on particular elements of the tourist operators' activities that are self-serving, convenient and politically palatable. This is the meaning of 'eco-certification' reifying a 'business as usual' approach. The eco-certification 'picture' is at best a partial view

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of the reality of the tourist operator, especially as Ecotourism Australia's ECO certification only certifies specific products within a business and not the business as a whole (Esparon *et al.,* 2018). However, this partiality is not recognised within the tourism industry.

To conclude, I believe that sustainability in tourism is currently impossible. Moreover, while I recognise that I do present solutions to this challenge, I do hold that the issue is irresolvable within prevailing capitalism. The power of the tourist dollar to countries, to economies and to communities is reified in the expectation of 1.8 billion tourists travelling the world by 2030 (UNWTO, 2019). This is in comparison to 1970 with 166 million tourists (Weaver & Lawton, 2010). More than ten times the number of international travellers will use aircrafts and other means of transport to get to desired destinations, with an even bigger environmental and social impact. It seems paradoxical that moving ten times as many tourists is associated with labels like sustainability, given that traditional mass tourism is considered unsustainable (Saarinen, 2006). In short, this is absurd.

A starting point might be to radically alter our modern lifestyles, and this likely requires a radical shift in what constitutes tourism. Trainer (2010) argues that we might have to discard mass tourism altogether and focus on local holidays. The global impact of the Coronavirus pandemic does at least illustrate that we can relook at tourism where necessary, but there is a sense that many social actors, including governments, airlines, consumers and tourist operators wish to return to 'mass tourism' as soon as possible. The search for vaccines is at least in part associated with a desire to restart mass tourist economic activity worldwide. Consequently, a radical overhaul of tourism (towards the local and away from global mass tourism) is unlikely to be politically palatable to social actors. I do recognise that there are positive contributions associated with tourism, as tourism is a powerful capital accumulating technology, generating economic returns for economies and communities. The direct contribution of tourism to GDP in 2018 in Germany was US$ 344.8 billion; in Australia, it was AU$ 54.5 billion in 2017.

(WTTC, 2019; WTTC, 2018). Furthermore, I do acknowledge that there are tourism actors (including operators) that do their best to minimise their ecological footprint and help local communities. However, I do believe that we must abandon the myth of sustainable tourism (Sharpley, 2009-2010). Not only is eco-certification for ecotourism a partial eco-efficient view, it obscures the underlying nature of the tourist activity. We should abandon the myth of eco-certification and sustainability and start with an honest conversation concerning this economic activity. Let's just call it by its name: tourism.

-Appendices-
-TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS-

CBT: Community Based Tourism

CESD: Centre for Ecotourism and Sustainable Development

CPR: Common Pool Resource

CRA: Credit Rating Agency

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

CST: Certification for Sustainable Tourism

EKC: Environmental Kuznet Curve

EMS: Environmental Management System

EPZ: Export Processing Zone

FSC: Forest Stewardship Council

GBR: Great Barrier Reef

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GFC: Global Financial Crisis

GSTC: Global Sustainable Tourism Council

IASB: International Accounting Standards Board

IESC: International Ecotourism Standard for Certification

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IPS: Institute for Policy Studies

ISA: Ideological State Apparatus

ISO: International Organisation for Standardisation

IT: Indigenous Tourism

KIPs: Key Performance Indicators

LIT: Low Impact tourism

LOCE: Logics of Critical Explanation

MJ: Mega Joule

MST: Measuring Sustainable Tourism

NEAP: National Ecotourism Accreditation Program

NGOs: Non-Government Organisations

ROC: Respecting Our Culture

RSA: Repressive State Apparatus

RT: Responsible Tourism

SA: Stakeholder Accountability

SCOPE: Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment

SEA: Social and Environmental Accounting

SEE: Studies of Expertise and Experience

SER: Social and Environmental Reporting

SISODs: Small Island States or Dependencies

STEP: Sustainable Tourism Eco-Certification Program

STSC: Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council

TBL: Triple Bottom Line

TC: Technical Committee

TIES: The International Ecotourism Society

UNWTO: United Nations World Tourism Organisation

WBCSD: World Business Council for Sustainable Development

WCED: United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development

WTO: World Trade Organisation

WTTC: World Travel and Tourism Council

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- APPENDIX 2 -

Theoretical and practical links to regulation and legitimacy through articulatory practice

As outlined in Chapter three, accreditation bodies, such as ISO, GSTC and TIES created international standards for the tourism industry used by certifying bodies, such as Ecotourism Australia, to certify tourism operators as 'eco'. In setting these standards as to what constitutes a sustainable operation or a good environmental performance, accreditation bodies act as transnational regulatory bodies for the industry (Black, 2002). This form of regulation is decentred as there is no legislative body concerning eco-certification and the regulative capacity is transnational. The 'buy-in' from industry social and political actors within the tourism industry is central to the maintenance of legitimacy of these regulating bodies.

Legislation, according to many definitions, is the process of creating or endorsing law which includes "constitutions, parliamentary laws, subordinate legislation, decrees, orders, norms, licences, plans, codes and even some forms of administrative guidance", passed by governments or state authorities (Black, 2002, p. 12). Law enacted by state administrations on citizens is a centralised process of regulation. Politics, state administration or law for Black (2002, p. 5) are "autopoietically closed sub-systems" that:

> … construct their images of other subsystems only through the distorting lens of their own perceptual apparatus, that is through experiences of their environment and in terms of their own binary oppositions.

Regulation, in contrast, is different. As opposed to legislation, Black (2002, p. 8) suggests:

> … 'happens' in the absence of formal legal sanction - it is the product of interactions, not of the exercise of the formal, constitutionally recognised authority of government.

As regulation is not enacted by governments or state administrations, it is decentred. Due to this, various social and political actors play a role as regulators. This might involve national, international and transnational state and non-state institutions. The lack of formal authority suggests that articulation is central to the politic of regulation (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014) as this is important to legitimacy.

In relation to discourse theory, as different actors articulate interpretations of sustainability, these concepts are considered legitimate when a variety of disparate interests draw on that articulation. For example, where multiple actors draw on eco-efficiency concepts or the eco-certification standards, this increases its regulative capacity as it appears legitimate. In sustainable tourism, this relates also to the adoption of an economic component to sustainability, as the economic imperative is important in tourism as a fast-growing global sector driven by economic agendas (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). Hence regulatory bodies, such as ISO, GSTC and TIES, construct eco-certification discourses based on normative concepts, such as eco-efficiency and influence the development of standards. The eco-certification discourse becomes process-led and outcome-orientated, such as the quest for better environmental performance as defined by indicators such as waste reduction or emission reductions. The legitimacy attached to these process-oriented approaches helps to shape social norms and shape the culture concerning eco-certification. In drawing on the study of transnational regulation in accounting, the establishment of expertise-based self-regulation depends on the creation and management of legitimacy (Botzem, 2014).

From a political and sociological perspective, legitimacy is not neutral, but is a socially produced construct (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014; Scott, 2001; Black, 2008). To be legitimate, social actors must trust the institution to enhance levels of acceptability (this is a form of credibility). Suchman (1995, p. 574) defines legitimacy as:

> … a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.

In tourism, the legitimacy of accreditation bodies, such as ISO, GSTC and TIES, "rests on the acceptability and credibility […] of those it seeks to govern" (Black, 2008, p. 144). Therefore, the outcomes and actions of these institutions can be legitimised if certification bodies and tourist operators alike accept the 'rules of the game', as defined through eco-efficiency or environmental performance measures. The inclusion of an economic imperative here is

valuable in the business case form because it allows social actors to focus on the economic (and sometimes continue business as usual) but also rhetorically claim that they act sustainably or in an 'eco' manner. Institutions can manage legitimacy using various legitimacy strategies. Suchman (1995, p. 587) differentiates between three types of legitimacy: cognitive, moral and pragmatic legitimacy. According to Black (2008, p. 147), cognitive legitimacy suggests that there is only one way of dealing with certain situation (such as eco-certification to achieve sustainability), moral legitimacy justifies one single approach (that is, eco-certification is "the right thing to do"), and pragmatic legitimacy rests on "self-interested claims of legitimacy communities" (see also Suchman, 1995). The following figure, Figure A2.1 depicts different types of legitimacy:

	Actions	Essences	
Episodic **Continual**	Exchange Influence	*Disposition* Interest Character	Pragmatic Legitimacy
Episodic **Continual**	Consequential Procedural	Personal Structural	Moral Legitimacy
Episodic **Continual**	*Comprehensibility* Predictability Plausibility *Taken-for-Grantedness* Inevitability Permanence		Cognitive Legitimacy

Figure A2.1: A Typology of Legitimacy (Suchman, 1995, p. 584)

Based on the various types of legitimacy, Botzem (2014) identifies strategies for managing legitimacy linked to inputs, throughputs/procedures and outputs. Input legitimacy considers stakeholder participation in the development of standards. Throughput legitimacy pursues

acceptability through the processes of consultation, and output legitimacy is concerned with contractual recognition by third parties.

Botzem (2014) examined changes in governance of the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), as transnational, non-for profit, private accreditation body that sets international accounting standards. The governance changes in the IASB followed the Global Financial Crisis. The study found that the IASB's "due process", a consultative device, was key to obtaining credibility, but also in maintaining its self-regulatory position (Botzem, 2014, p. 939; Carter & Warren, 2018). The IASB employed this 'device' to manage legitimacy in time of crisis. Similarly, in tourism, accreditation bodies, such as ISO or GSTC, consult with stakeholders in the process of standard developments and eco-certification. The ISO reinforces this idea of 'due process' in its 2016-2020 vision statement, where it states: "effective and wide-reaching stakeholder engagement is essential in order to maintain ISO's credibility and the relevance of International Standards" (ISO, 2015b, p. 9). However, the level of engagement in the standard setting process can vary, as ISO members can chose whether they want to be part of a specific technical committee (TC). O-members, for instance, are able to oversee the standard development process and provide feedback, while P-members participate in the standard development process at numerous stages (ISO, 2019). Crucially, though, the ISO ensures that environmental or quality standards are legitimate as they appear, "desirable, proper, or appropriate" (Suchman, 1995, p. 574; Botzem, 2014, p. 939; Parsons, 1960). The consultative procedures with stakeholders help ISO to manage its legitimacy and help it to maintain its position as an international standard setter (Botzem, 2014).

However, consultative devices and stakeholder engagement (input and procedural legitimacy) are only one component of managing legitimacy. Ultimately, the involvement of experts is central to maintaining legitimacy and often this invokes a form of technocracy. Botzem (2014, p. 939) therefore states:

> … linking organisational dynamics with professionalism unravels the significance of knowledge and expertise as core elements for securing legitimacy with respect to organisational activity and rhetorical skills.

The ability to link work to professionals and expert advice is crucial in managing legitimacy for transnational or decentred regulators, such as the IASB or ISO. This is linked to output legitimacy (Botzem, 2014). This links to the discussion in Chapter four, which looked at the sociology of expertise and argued that sustainability tourism and the eco-certification discourse is dominated by technical experts.

Due to their specialist knowledge, these institutional experts are perceived as trustworthy by social actors. In developing standards, the ISO, for instance, relies on global expert opinions. Depending on the standard being developed (e.g. quality or environmental standard), international, independent experts come together in technical committees to discuss aspects of the standard, including definitions, scope and content (ISO, 2019). Specialists with their expertise, and associated with their professionalism, play an important role in creating legitimacy and play a vital part in the legitimacy of self-regulation (Botzem, 2014). Black (2008, p. 153) concludes:

> Frequently, in order to satisfy the legitimacy claims of those they are seeking to regulate, regulators' main decision-making bodies need to be comprised solely or mainly of representatives of those regulatees or those with considerable technical expertise (or both).

In sum, technical expertise helps organisations including the IASB, the ISO and tourism regulators to continue to regulate, as this expertise sustains asymmetric power relations (in technocracy) and legitimacy. Often, international regulators, such as ISO, the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have significant financial means and resources (access to expert knowledge) that puts them at the top of the economic system and assists these organisations in maintaining legitimacy but also in developing their special interest agendas (Black, 2008).

Botzem (2014, p. 946) argued that the IASB's professional staff was "not only a core resource in standards-setting but has led to the creation of a new power-base that derives its influence from practical expertise and knowledge assembled within the IASB". The expertise displayed by accreditation bodies is often unquestioned. Social actors tend to follow rules or standards, particularly when it is in their economic interests and hence, uneven power relations also assist institutions in maintaining legitimacy.

Legitimacy is also a communicative device. Once social actors recognise the validity of experts, institutions maintain their legitimacy status by claims that they possess relevant knowledge to achieving a particular outcome, such as international accounting harmonisation for the IASB or for supporting sustainable outcomes through eco-certification for TIES, the GCTC or the UNWTO. For Black (2008) this is normative legitimacy.

As legitimate and legitimised institutions, regulators influence and alter the behaviour of social actors. Regulatory institutions, such as accreditation bodies, create standards that assist with the achievement of desired outcomes (such as eco-certification for a competitive advantage) and these standards are used by certifying bodies to establish eco-certification processes (this appeals ideologically to actors, as explored in the fantasmatic logics section in Chapter eight). Through this, institutions make claims that eco-efficiency processes, for example, assist with accomplishing sustainable tourism. This might also appeal to changing tourists' perceptions (from a demand perspective). Due to this, regulatory bodies change the concept of sustainability both in tourism, but also across other industries, as the eco-efficient approaches to sustainability reflect an underlying economic lens that reflects a 'business-as-usual' approach.
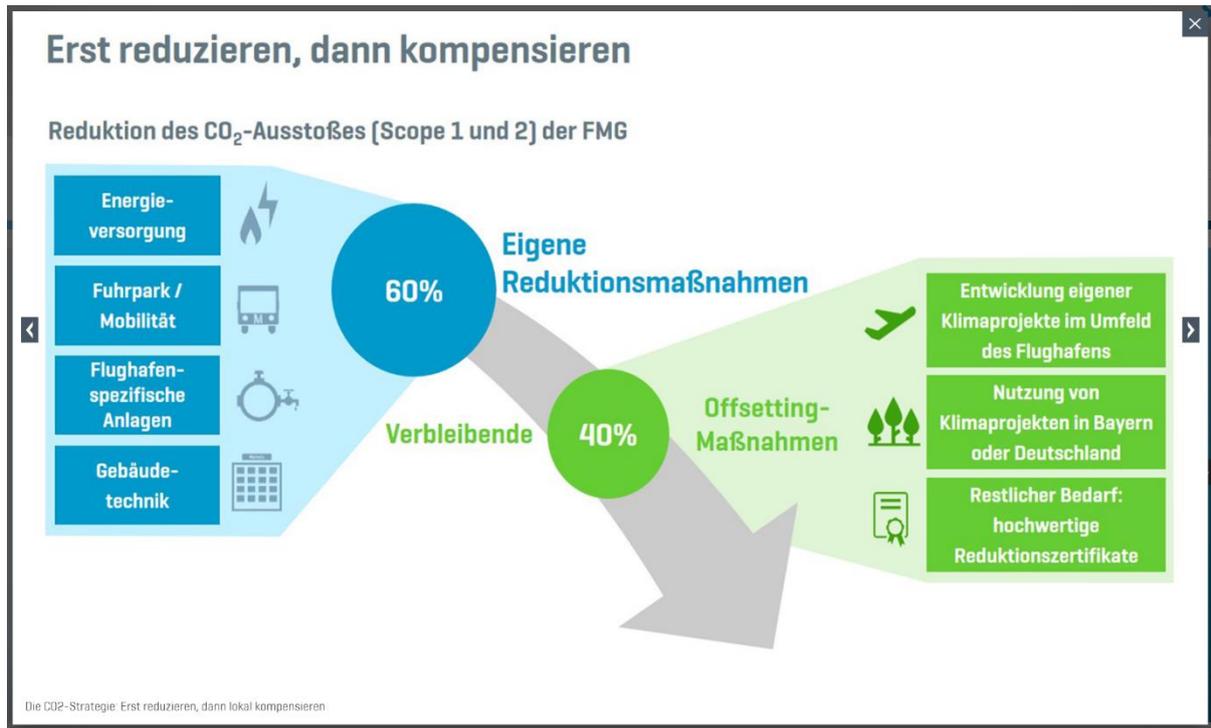
- APPENDIX 3 -

Munich Airport's CO_2 emission balance

- APPENDIX 4 -

Munich Airport's reduction and compensation strategies

- APPENDIX 5 -

ECO certification types (Figure 9.1)

Certification types: States:	Advanced Ecotourism	Ecotourism	Nature Tourism	Climate Action Business	Climate Action Innovator	Climate Action Leader	Green Travel Leader	ROC	Ecotourism Destination Certification
NSW	39	22	18	7	0	2	14	9	2
Tasmania	9	4	2	0	0	0	4	2	0
NT	19	9	2	3	0	0	9	20	0
VIC	26	20	10	2	1	0	25	7	0
SA	22	9	10	5	2	3	12	6	0
ACT	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
QLD	101	73	20	21	7	8	72	15	0
WA	29	20	13	2	0	0	21	5	0
Total:	**245**	**158**	**75**	**40**	**10**	**13**	**157**	**64**	**2**

Total of certification types: 764

- APPENDIX 6 -

Certified products (Figure 9.6)

Products: States:	Tour	Accommodation	Attraction	Wheelchair Accessible	Bike/ Motorcycle	Adventure	Bus/4WD	Snorkelling/ Diving	Camping	Cruise/Boat/Water- Based
NSW	37	25	13	9	3	11	13	6	9	22
Tasmania	10	4	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	4
NT	24	5	4	2	0	3	12	0	7	11
VIC	29	13	5	1	2	7	14	4	5	13
SA	20	19	5	3	1	6	15	5	10	8
ACT	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
QLD	100	39	25	8	3	29	57	57	10	104
WA	23	16	6	6	2	11	18	18	9	35
Total:	243 (1)	121	60	31	11	69	82	90	50	197 (2)

Products: States:	Food& Wine	Guided Tour	Hiking/ Walking	Horse/ Camel/ Riding	Scenic Flight	Wildlife Experience	Education& School Groups	Voluntourism	National Park	Cultural
NSW	5	41	27	2	3	19	5	1	5	10
Tasmania	0	8	7	0	1	2	0	0	0	1
NT	1	20	18	2	1	9	1	0	0	19
VIC	1	25	17	2	0	19	1	0	1	8
SA	0	16	8	1	1	18	1	0	1	4
ACT	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
QLD	4	65	29	1	5	54	5	1	4	14
WA	2	21	8	0	4	23	1	0	10	3
Total:	13	196 (3)	114 (5)	8	15	145 (4)	14	2	12	59

Total of products: 1530

- APPENDIX 7 -

Certified tourism operators in Australia (Figure 9.7)

Tourism operators per state	NSW	Tasmania	NT	VIC	SA	ACT	QLD	WA	Total:
Number	78	15	31	54	40	1	192	65	**476**

-

Discursive map of rhetoric used by tourism operators (Figure 10.1)

Key words associated with sustainability	Number of tourism operators that used it	
Environment/environmental	11	Environmental management & performance, environmental conservation (2), environmental impacts (3), minimal/low impact on environment (2), education about environment, environmental policy, environmental standards
- waste	17	Waste output, waste system, waste water (2), waste reduction, minimising waste (2), preventing waste (4), waste management (6)
- sewage	2	Sewage facilities, sewage treatment
- water	14	Water consumption, rain/waste water for irrigation (6), water recycling/re-use (2), water monitoring, minimise water wastage, water conservation, waste water treatment/desalination (2)
- energy/power	15	energy use, passive energy design, energy systems (2), energy monitoring (3), green energy (4), energy consumption, own power generation, green power, power conservation
- solar, renewable	7	Solar powered energy, solar energy/power (2), solar panels (2), renewable energy (2)
- recycling	6	Recycling of paper (2), recycling of rubbish, recycling (2), green waste recycling
- carbon (footprint/emissions/offset/neutral)	10	Carbon offset (3), carbon emission/reduction (2), carbon neutral, carbon footprint/reduction (4)
- biodegradables/composting	5	Biodegradables (2), composting apparatus, self-composting (2)
- wildlife/biodiversity	4	Wildlife protection/conservation (2), wildlife & biodiversity, biodiversity protection
- efficiency	4	Improving efficiency (2), maximising efficiency (2)
- Performance	1	environmental performance
- best practice	3	Best practice (2), better than best practice
- standards	2	Best practice standard, environmental standards
Subtotal:	*101 (76.52%)*	

Social	0	
- community	3	Contribution to community, local community, community & economy
- participation	2	Local community participation
- heritage	1	heritage
- visitor experience	2	Developing visitor experience, positive visitor experience
- culture/interpretation	6	Indigenous culture, culture, cultural awareness, socio-cultural policies, strong interpretation (4)
- charity/donations	8	Support of charity activities, charity, donation to conservation/restoration (2), donations (4)
- transparency	1	transparency
- accountability	0	
Subtotal:	*23 (17.42%)*	
Economic/economy	2	Economic policies, community & economy
- local supplier/products/purchases	4	Local supplier, local products, locally sourced products, local purchases
- local employment	1	Local employment
- financial viability	1	Financial benefits
Subtotal:	*8 (6.06%)*	
Total:	***132 (100%)***	

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