

teaching note

Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort

Summary

Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort (Aquis) is the largest single tourism development ever proposed for Queensland and Australia and is located 15 km north of Cairns in Yorkeys Knob. The site will cover 340.6 hectares in total and will accommodate a 40-hectare resort complex. The resort will consist of an agglomeration of 8 luxury hotel towers boasting 7500 rooms and suites in total, 1200 apartments, 135 villas, a convention and exhibition centre, cinemas, luxury shops, a sports stadium, one of the world's largest aquariums, an 18-hole golf course and a reef lagoon. It expects to attract 1 million guests per year. The Fung family, the investors behind the Aquis project, were not granted the license required for their envisioned casino. To avoid construction delays, they dropped their efforts for getting a gambling license. This raises the question of whether the project is still viable. From its conception, Aquis considered its main target group to be wealthy Chinese gamblers, with an average spending of USD 300 – 500 per played hand. According to Mr. Fung the lack of a casino should not be a problem, as the resort will still be located close to two protected heritage sites: The Great Barrier Reef and the Daintree Rainforest.

As regards the location of the resort, there are some socio-economic impacts to consider. Cairns has about 150,000 inhabitants and Yorkeys Knob counted a population of 2800 in 2011.

Cairns has been in a recession for much of the past decade, and has a comparatively high unemployment rate (7.85%). Furthermore, Cairns in general and Yorkeys Knob in particular have a comparatively low household income (20.5% low income households). Tourism and hospitality provide 11.7% of jobs, more than double the national percentage. From these figures, it can be concluded that the economy, and thus the livelihood, of the inhabitants of Yorkeys Knob and the Cairns region is fragile.

Though the benefits from employment should not be played down, people's quality of life depends on other factors as well and those factors could be negatively affected by a specific tourism development project. Therefore, any development initiative should not just focus on minimising negative impacts, but also on maximising the added value to the local community.

To create value for the local community, serious attention should be given not only to their needs but also to their views on the proposed development. A look into the report on 'Community Submissions and Issues' published by Aquis in response to the 'Environmental Impact Statement' (EIS), and into online discussion boards, such as the Facebook page of the Aquis Casino, shows that the local community's opinions on the project are mixed and somewhat contradictory.

The Aquis resort is planned in a breath-taking but highly sensitive natural environment: the Daintree Rainforest and Great Barrier Reef. The Daintree Rainforest, the single largest block of rainforest in Australia, is approximately 180 million years old - older than the Amazon rainforest. In the course of the centuries, it has developed a striking diversity of flora and fauna that can only be found in this area. Moreover, the Daintree Rainforest is home to one of the country's oldest indigenous people, the Kuku Yalanji. Threats to the Daintree Rainforest have long been a concern. The other natural area touched by the Aquis development, the Great Barrier Reef, is one of the most popular areas of Australia. However, it is also one of Australia's most endangered areas.

Since Aquis will be built in the Great Barrier Reef and Daintree Rainforest area, the building plans need to comply with the development criteria of World Heritage natural areas. In accordance with these criteria, Aquis has published an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This EIS covers the intent of the project and its environmental and social impacts. In the EIS Aquis dedicates a full chapter of 311 pages (Chapter 22, volume 3) to the analysis of the natural environment, highlighting special geographic characteristics of the area, referring to the indigenous flora and fauna and affirming the importance of protecting this unique natural environment. In this respect, Aquis plans to integrate all buildings into the natural environment and to ensure their smart positioning so that, for example, sunlight can be used to save energy.

There is, however, little evidence in the EIS for the use of bio-based materials and for the implementation of specific measures that are generally associated with environmentally friendly buildings and operations. On the other hand, the EIS does elaborate extensively on the positive economic impacts of the project.

The Aquis EIS report was published in June 2014, after which a period of 30 business days applied for agencies and citizens to respond. A period of 30 business days is the minimum time span required by law. Submissions had to be handed in to the Australian state's government Coordinator General and to Aquis, who evaluated and responded to the submissions. Aquis drew up three reports in response to the submissions, namely a report on 'Community Submissions and Issues', a report on 'Agency Submissions and Issues', and a report on 'Supplementary Information'. In these documents Aquis describes the reactions and proposes mitigations to address them.

As a result of this process, the state's Coordinator General gave the federal government's conditional approval to the Aquis EIS in December 2014, subject to 13 strict conditions (Accommodation Association of Australia, 2015).

Target Audience

The target audience of this case study is graduate-level students whose course includes sustainability, centring on large hospitality development involving many stakeholders. Due to its complexity, we recommend that this case is used at a graduate level, which level touches on the basics of sustainability in hospitality and stakeholder analysis.

This case can also be provided at a bachelor's level, in which instance we recommend that only one stakeholder group is used for the stakeholder dialogue. A basic understanding of sustainability and the stakeholders involved in doing business are necessary to work successfully on the case.

Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of this stakeholder role play based on this case, students will be able to:

- Apply stakeholder analysis to challenges in the hospitality industry where one dimension of sustainability (e.g., environmental protection) conflicts with another dimension (e.g., economic development);
- Apply models for dealing with ethical cases (i.e., moral values and principles involved), e.g., the model of H. van Luijk;
- Understand, by experiencing a stakeholder dialogue, that the initial position stakeholders take is not a fixed standpoint;
- Explain and critically evaluate the role that organisations in general and the hospitality industry in particular can play in bringing about sustainability.

Lesson Plan

In order to hold a successful stakeholder dialogue meeting, two sessions must be dedicated to the case, the first being a start-up session, and the second being a stakeholder dialogue role play. Before the first session, students are asked to read the case and additional literature on what sustainability is, what the role of CSR is, and how stakeholder thinking is connected to ethical business decision making.

Students should have a general understanding of the following topics:

- Sustainability / Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
- Business ethics
- Stakeholder thinking
- Stakeholder analysis
- Analysis of moral dilemmas via a model (e.g., the 7 steps of Van Luijk)

Discussion Questions

Session 1:

- What does CSR entail? (at least covering Carroll, 1991 and Elkington, 1997)
- What does a stakeholder analysis entail in the context of sus-

tainability? (at least including Clifton & Amran, 2010; Mitchell et al, 1997)

- Which moral dilemmas can be identified on the basis of the case?
- Which stakeholders are involved?
- What are the needs of these stakeholders?
- What are the legitimacy, urgency and power of these stakeholders?
- If not yet covered in the course: Present and explain a model for dealing with (moral) dilemmas such as Van Luijk.

Session 2:

- How would you feel/behaviour if you were in the shoes of the various stakeholders?
- How do you feel about the Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort case?

Instruction

Session 1:

Introduce the Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort case, which students should have read before this session. During this introduction, students can ask open questions. After this, all stakeholders concerned with the case should be identified and listed. The discussion questions as listed above for session 1 can be used to structure this session. At the end of this session, the lecturer divides at least the roles of the key stakeholders between student groups. We suggest that at least four different groups with at least four students in each group are formed, so as to ensure a successful stakeholder dialogue. Students thus represent the key stakeholders in the case.

Key stakeholders that should be covered in any event are the Aquis Management, the local government, an environmental NGO, and locals without jobs. If more groups are available, additional stakeholders can be assigned, such as local tourism companies, national government, locals with jobs, local construction companies, etc. There should be enough time between session 1 and session 2 for students to prepare appropriately. Note: In our experience, students are better prepared when they are asked to hand in a draft of their report (as explained in more detail under Assessment) before session 2.

Note: We highly recommended that participants read through the three reports pertaining to the Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort which were drawn up in response to the submissions regarding the EIS. They are reports on 'Community Submissions and Issues', 'Agency Submissions and Issues', and 'Supplementary Information'. In these documents Aquis describes the reactions and proposes mitigations to address them. These documents are freely available online.

Session 2:

This session is dedicated to the role play. It is essential that the

role play is a stakeholder dialogue (i.e., to listen and understand) and not a debate or decision-making meeting.

During the role play, lecturer and students should act as if they are in an actual stakeholder meeting in which different parties are consulted so as to understand their position: are they pro socio-economic development / in support of Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort, or pro environmental protection / not in support of Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort?

Each student stakeholder group appoints a chairperson and a secretary. The chairperson reports to the plenary session; the secretary makes note of the discussion and at the end of the meeting helps to evaluate the learning effects of the discussion. The lecturer takes the role of an objective host/facilitator to the stakeholder dialogue.

In the first plenary session, the chairperson of each group presents their negotiation statement which includes at least three key stakeholders, their role and at least two key interests/needs for each stakeholder and how the group will deal with these interests and needs. After the chairperson has presented the statement, the other stakeholder groups may ask clarifying questions (Remember: no discussion). Note that in this part of the seminar, it is neither necessary nor desirable that all participants repeat the case itself (45 minutes). Note: We highly recommend that Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort is asked to make their statement first, followed by the government. After these two stakeholders, there is no particular order. Sometimes, the negotiation statements are superficial and/or there are few questions from the floor. In this case, the lecturer, as host of the session, may ask clarifying critical questions on behalf of one or more stakeholder groups that were unable to attend.

After a short break (10 minutes), the groups have the opportunity to re-formulate their negotiation statement in accordance with the information received from the other stakeholders (20 minutes).

Note: Students tend to talk only within their own groups, rather than with each other. Experience teaches us that groups who do not consult with others, usually have a weaker negotiating statement.

In the second plenary session, the final negotiating statement is presented (30 minutes). At this point, there is no other question and answer round. Finally, time is set aside for personal reflection with the help of the discussion questions for session 2, and for evaluating the learning effect of this role play (30 minutes).

Agenda for the stakeholder dialogue, session 2:

- Welcome to the session (students are still in their student role)
- Opening of the plenary session (lecturer and students in their stakeholder role) during which the goal of the meeting is explained
- First round of negotiation statements by the stakeholder groups, followed by questions if necessary (45 minutes)
- Short break (10 minutes)

- Time for statement re-formulation (20 minutes)
- Second round of negotiation statements by the stakeholder groups (30 minutes)
- Personal reflection with help of the discussion questions and evaluating the learning effect of the role play (30 minutes)

Assessment

Both formative and summative assessments apply to this case. The formative assessment is used to support the students during the process. The summative assessment is the final grade for the end product.

During session 1, the case is started up and the context for analysing an ethical dilemma is set. In this particular case, the ethical dilemma is the conflict between (socio)economic development and environmental protection. There are several models to analyse ethical dilemmas, although the 7 steps by Van Luijk are used most often.

The end product is a written report on the dilemma analysis from the point of view of the appointed stakeholder. An example of instructions for such a report, including the grading sheet, can be found in appendix 2. Students are asked to hand in a draft of this report prior to session 2, upon which they will receive feedback in the form of a formative assessment from the lecturer. This draft report contains in any event the first steps of the dilemma analysis. If Van Luijk is used, this means at least steps 1 to 4.

After session 2, the report is finalised and handed in for summative assessment. The final report should include the full dilemma analysis and include a personal reflection (stepping out of the stakeholder role) on the case: What does their conscience tell them?

Analysis of Teaching Objectives

1. *Apply stakeholder analysis to challenges in the hospitality industry where one dimension of sustainability (e.g., environmental protection) conflicts with another dimension (e.g., economic development)*

CSR by definition looks at the responsibility of a company beyond its shareholders and investors. It is based on the idea that the wellbeing of both present and future generations depends on the wise use of scarce resources. Therefore, it should look at the needs of its stakeholders (Carroll, 1991). CSR argues that companies have power and that with power comes responsibility: companies can no longer operate in isolation to the rest of the world and focus on maximising profit only. Carroll states that stakeholder thinking and analysis helps in clarifying to whom a company is responsible.

Stakeholders are groups or individuals who can affect or are affected by the way an organisation does business (Freeman, 1984). In stakeholder thinking, a company tries to look at the stakes/interest (may it be human, natural or financial capital; voluntary or involuntarily; legal or moral) of groups or individu-

als beyond just the shareholders and investors. Stakeholder analysis helps to analyse in a structured manner what these stakes are and the degree of legitimacy, power and urgency each stakeholder group has with regard to the issues at hand. It helps corporations to define and evaluate their responsibilities towards the various stakeholders and define how their business may add value to the various stakeholders.

In the context of sustainability, Clifton and Amran (2010) make the point that there is an imbalance between power and legitimacy, surely from the perspective of management. This may lead to not considering stakeholders with low power but high legitimacy, such as the environment and poor people.

2. *Apply models for dealing with ethical cases (i.e., moral values and principles involved), e.g., the model of H. van Luijk*

The Van Luijk 7-step model is useful for analysing situations that contain a moral dilemma. It sets out not only to understand one's own need, but also requires that other stakeholders are considered. Which stakeholders are considered is already a first ethical decision and depends on the paradigm under which a company operates. If a company follows the CSR principles of Elkington, it will consider both people and planet and give voice to stakeholder groups that have no power but do have a legitimate interest in the case.

In step 1 of Van Luijk (defining the moral issue) the moral issue is described from the point of view of the particular stakeholder group. Important here is that it has to be a 'good' versus a 'good': If one of the sides of the moral issue is a 'bad', then actually there is no dilemma as you should not do bad things. They should be two universal values that clash with each other. Here is an example of what could be the moral issue for the local government: Improved living standards for local people due to more jobs and higher tax income versus preserving the environment for future generations so as not to diminish their chance of a good quality of life. Students sometimes forget in step 3 to mention themselves as being responsible for this decision and only point to others (usually the government and Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort). This is incorrect as they are responsible for this moral dilemma no matter what stakeholder group they are.

Step 4 is where the students need to do background research on the case. Finding facts and figures helps students to better understand the impacts of whatever negotiation position (in support or not in support of the Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort) they will take, and will make it easier for them to connect to the needs of the other stakeholder groups. Step 5 asks them to consider what will happen and to justify their choice of negotiation position using ethical theories like contract theory, utilitarianism, due care, etc. The other steps are considered

more straightforward for the students.

3. *Understand, by experiencing a stakeholder dialogue, that the initial position stakeholders take is not a fixed standpoint*

Stakeholder analysis postulates that stakeholders' positions are not fixed and that managers or the ones making the analysis should make allowances for changes. For example, powerful but not urgent stakeholders may acquire a sense of urgency due to external circumstances.

Our fifteen years of experience in working with stakeholder dialogues based on a case as a teaching instrument has shown that this is a good venue to let students experience that stakeholders' position may indeed shift quite quickly. For example, when one or more of the other stakeholders are very convincing due to their research on the positive and negative impacts connected to the case company and/or present skills that connect to the needs of the other stakeholder groups.

Facts and figures and good argumentation of how to meet the needs of different groups of stakeholders may induce stakeholders to change their position on the dilemma. If this happens (a group changing position in the 2nd round of negotiation statements) it is especially valuable in assessing the learning effect of the stakeholder dialogue. It shows the usefulness of performing sound research when analysing stakeholder needs, level of power, legitimacy and urgency, and of taking this into account when formulating one's own opening statement.

4. *Explain and critically evaluate the role that organisations in general and the hospitality industry in particular can play in bringing about sustainability*

Companies, hospitality or otherwise, decide whether to consider sustainability (i.e., adding value to people, planet and profit) as a core goal based on the paradigm under which they operate. If a hospitality company operates according to the paradigm that profit cannot be true profit if there was an adverse effect on the people and planet needed to create it, it will consider how to add value in all their business decisions. Making use of stakeholder analysis helps companies understand which groups and individuals are affected by the company's business, and thus a value proposition can be created for each stakeholder group.

Statements	Counts	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The stakeholder discussion seminar helped me to better understand the implications of the Aquis case for the different stakeholders	29	20.7%	51.7%	17.2%	6.9%	3.4%
2. Thanks to the Aquis case, I have a better understanding of stakeholder thinking in the context of sustainability	29	20.7%	55.2%	13.8%	6.9%	3.4%
3. The Aquis case was interesting and useful for my studies	29	6.9%	65.5%	10.3%	13.8%	3.4%
4. The stakeholder discussion seminar was interesting and useful for my studies	29	20.7%	58.6%	13.8%	3.4%	3.4%

Feedback from Students

The stakeholder dialogue role play has been included in a module in the Master programmes for 15 years, during which time various cases have been used for this purpose. This case was used for the first time in academic year 2016/2017. The notes in the above text reflect our experience with this teaching method and we provide below the case evaluation of the first cohort that used the Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort case. Because this is only the first cohort, the sample size is rather small.

The results (above) show that for all four statements 72.4 percent to 79.3 percent of students strongly agree or agree that the Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort case and the corresponding stakeholder dialogue role play are interesting, useful and beneficial for their studies. Therefore, students agree that the learning outcomes as stated previously were reached.

Additional Reading Assigned

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Appendix 1

Instruction for case report

Explanation of the assignment:

Participants are required to write an essay about the case pertaining to the Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort in Australia as if they were one of the key stakeholders in 2016, before the Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort was built. They are then asked to evaluate the general question of how someone who looks back on the events can evaluate this case in moral terms.

The first results are presented to the teachers and the group during the stakeholder dialogue session.

Requirements:

- The essay should give an elaborated answer to each of the seven steps or questions formulated by Van Luijk. The questions should be answered from a specific stakeholders' group using 2016 as a reference date and should be founded upon sound arguments and relevant data.
- When answering step 2, participants should use a stakeholder analysis.
- Participants are required to do their own research on the case and to incorporate the research results in their essay. This is necessary when answering step 4 of Van Luijk's model, for example.
- Participants are to take into account the ethical theories and concepts (as presented in the lectures and literature) and must be able to relate these theories and concepts to the case, especially when reflecting upon and giving an evaluation of the arguments presented in step 5 of Van Luijk's model.
- Participants must formulate their own conclusions about the case. In their final evaluation of the case, participants should assess responsibilities at the governmental, organisational and individual level of sustainability.
- Participants must hand in their essay on Friday of week 8 before 12 noon to the secretary's in the master office. Students are required to start working on the essay based on the case directly after the lecture on the case and the stakeholder meeting. They will use their first result in the seminar.
- The essay is to be written by a group. This is the same group as the stakeholder group represented during the stakeholder dialogue session.
- The essay comprises a maximum of 6 A4 pages, excluding attachments and literature list.

Homework: Start working on the case and be ready to present your opening statement during the seminar (see next page for more information).

b. Assessment form

Pre assessment check	-4	Clear structure (IBC); APA referencing style; filled in quick scan handed in; Grading Sheet present; Ephorus scan; easy to read			If one or more of the items is missing the essay is sent back to the student for review and 4 points are subtracted from the total		
	Max	Outstanding 86%-100%	Good 70-85%	Sufficient 55%-69%	Requires improvement 0%-54%	Points	Remarks
Overall assessment, The essay gives an elaborated answer to each of the seven steps or questions formulated by Van Luijk.	5	All steps of Van Luijk model are properly applied to the case; more literature is used than strictly required and is properly integrated in the critical reflection throughout the case critical discussion and analysis	All steps of van Luijk model are properly applied to the case; more literature than strictly required is used and there is an attempt at integration of the literature in the critical discussion	All steps of Van Luijk model are properly applied to the case; reference to academic literature is exactly what is required; no or very limited attempt at integration of the literature in the critical discussion	Not all steps of Van Luijk model are applied or there are major mistakes in the application of one of the steps, e.g., no value conflict is mentioned in step 1		
In answering step 2, the participant makes a thoughtful stakeholder analysis using one of the studied theories	10	A complete stakeholder analysis is present; the explanation of the choice made is in line with step one and extensively supported by literature and by reference to data	A complete stakeholder analysis is present; the explanation of the choice made is in line with step one and supported by literature and by reference to data	The stakeholder' analysis is present and the choice made is explained at least partially in line with step 1	No or very limited stakeholder analysis		
In applying step 4 of Van Luijk's model, the participant has incorporated findings from his or her own research (a minimum of 2 extra sources – of which at least 1 not from the internet - are quoted).	10	Extensive (more than 2) academic literature is quoted; literature is relevant to the dilemma as stated in step 1 and to the SA in step 2; findings are integrated in the discussion throughout the case work; critical reflection is supported by findings	Academic literature has been found that is relevant to the dilemma as stated in step 1 and to the SA in step 2; findings are integrated in the discussion and critical reflection is present	Academic literature has been found that is relevant to the dilemma as stated in step 1 and to the SA in step 2; findings are not completely integrated in the discussion and critical reflection is till embryonic	Hardly any or no use of findings from (academic) literature; if present, it is irrelevant for or not connected with the dilemma in step 1 and SA in step 2		
In step 5 of van Luijk's model, the participant makes use of the ethical theories and models discussed in the lectures and seminars	10	Two ethical theories are properly applied; the choice is justified with reference to step 1; literature is properly quoted and supports critical reflection.	Two ethical theories are properly applied and their choice justified with reference to the issue as presented in step 1.	At least one ethical theory is properly applied. E.g., if consequentialism is chosen, a reference is made to the needs of the stakeholders individuated in step 2.	Hardly any or no use of discussed ethical theories; if used, theory is incorrectly understood and applied		
Final assessment of responsibilities at governmental, organizational and individual levels.	5	Present; discussion supported by literature; all levels and responsibilities are addressed; the discussion is situated as an extension of the case work	Present; discussion supported by literature; all levels and responsibilities are properly addressed	Present; discussion supported by literature but not all levels and responsibilities are properly addressed	Not present or shallow discussion		
	40				Total:		