

Innovation network development in conflict dominated tourist destinations

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In many tourist destinations innovation network development is hindered because relevant actors have different interests in innovation and destination development. This paper reports the extreme case of a small tourist destination in which an innovation network took shape in spite of fierce conflict – even hate – between actors in the destination. The paper illustrates and discusses how different roles played by different actors made network development possible in this network-hostile environment, and how other network actor roles made the life of the innovation network troublesome. Thus, the paper contributes with new knowledge about the interplay of network actors' roles in destination network building.

1. Introduction

Innovation and development often rely on networks in which actors, their knowledge and other resources come together and jointly sustain innovation processes (Ahuja, 2000; Boschma & Frenken, 2010; Håkansson & Ford, 2002; Lee et al., 2010). In tourist destinations tourism businesses, other businesses, organisations, the local population and local authorities rely on a set of shared destination resources (Briassoulis, 2002; Healy, 1994). There are, consequently, benefits of having local destination networks, for example in terms of coordination, knowledge distribution and innovation (Sørensen & Fuglsang, 2014). However, tourist destinations are often characterised by conflict rather than cooperation because of competition among tourism companies and because shared resources are competed for by actors with different interests, goals and strategies (Bærenholdt et al., 2004; Haugland et al., 2011; Hjalager, 2000; Sundbo et al., 2007; Sørensen, 2007).

This paper reports on the study of an extreme case of a small tourist destination in which an innovation network took shape in spite of fierce conflict – even hate – between actors in the destination. The paper discusses how different roles played by different actors made network development possible in this network-hostile environment, and how other actors' roles made the life of the network troublesome. Thus, the paper focuses on two related network issues: Network dynamics and the role of different actors in such dynamics. On the one hand, network dynamics has been a neglected theme in much innovation network research (Ahuja et al., 2012) and in spite of the dynamic nature of tourism this neglect is also evident in tourism research (however see Gibson et al., 2007; Pavlovich, 2003; Sørensen & Fuglsang, 2014; Zehrer & Raich, 2010). On the other hand, different roles of specific actors in innovation networks and for the development of such networks have been investigated to some degree. Burt (1993, 1997, 2005), for example, has introduced the terms Network Entrepreneur, Network Broker and Tertius Gaudens. These are

individuals who connect different otherwise unconnected networks, mainly for their own benefits. However, little is known about how different actors performing various other network roles, and their interactions, influence innovation network development, not least in network hostile areas. The case reported in this paper exemplifies and discusses the roles of different actors for such network development. Thus, the research question of the paper is: How do different roles of actors affect innovation network development in tourist destinations dominated by conflict?

The paper begins with a presentation of the theoretical background, looking at innovation network theory and issues such as trust, exploration and exploitation. It goes on to look more specifically at theories within tourism development and networks. The case is then presented and analysed and the main findings from the case study discussed. Finally the main conclusions that can be made from the study are presented.

2. Theoretical background

Much innovation occurs in open processes in which knowledge comes from many sources (Chesbrough, 2003). In this line of thought, network theory argues that networks of relations between companies support innovation. Networks facilitate innovation by supporting knowledge distribution (Ahuja, 2000; Gilsing & Duysters, 2008; Saxenian, 1991) and coordination of development activities (Håkansson & Ford, 2002).

2.1. Structures, dynamics and roles in networks

Innovation network theory inspired by social network theory has emphasised how network structures are relevant for knowledge distribution (most notably Burt, 2000; Coleman, 1988; Granovetter, 1973) and related innovation processes (Ahuja, 2000). On the one hand, strong and dense networks are argued to be based on and facilitate trust (e.g. Coleman, 1988). Frequent contact among actors in such networks can result in the development of a common knowledge base and points of view which, together with strong structural interdependence, limit the benefits of opportunistic behaviour (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). On the other hand, less dense and less strong networks may not lead to the same type of trust, but may be utilised by actors to seek personal benefits and play other actors against each other (Burt, 2005). Thus, they can be characterised more by opportunistic behaviour. For the same reason the two types of networks may lead to different types of knowledge distribution and innovation processes. They have been argued to provide access to two general types of knowledge development and sharing: exploitation or exploration: Exploration is concerned with aspects of innovation such as search, variation, risk-taking, experimentation, play, flexibility and discovery, whereas exploitation is concerned with aspects such as refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation and execution (March, 1991). Strong ties, especially in cohesive and closed networks, are argued to support exploitation, and weak ties, especially in open network structures, exploration (Burt, 2000; Coleman, 1988; Gilsing & Duysters, 2008; Lavie & Rosenkopf, 2006; March, 1991).

Networks are collections of relationships – they are therefore fluid and in constant change (Pavlovich, 2003), and their structural characteristics may therefore change

over time. However, there is a lack of research knowledge about how and why networks evolve. Static research approaches to networks dominate and, consequently, understandings of the outcomes of networks suffer (Ahuja et al., 2012). Nevertheless, the dynamism of entrepreneurs' and start-up companies' networks has received some attention and such networks have been illustrated to vary by entrepreneurial phase (Jack, 2010). Elfring and Hulsink (2007) suggest how start-up companies' networks develop depending on whether the companies pursue a radical or incremental innovation. More radical innovations demand more loose networks in the start-up phase but such networks become stronger as the company and its innovation consolidates. The opposite sequence is observed in spin-offs pursuing more incremental innovations that rely on already established knowledge and where looser networks are built in the end of the innovation process to reach potential customers (Elfring & Hulsink, 2007). This also indicates how more radical innovation processes rely on exploration and loose networks in the beginning of innovation processes whereas exploitation and more cohesive networks take over as the innovation is being developed in detail and implemented. Exploration is the more relevant term describing the activities related to early stages (search and selection) of an innovation process, whereas exploitation best captures the activities of the later stages (development and implementation). Arguably this means that an innovation network related to a particular innovation process may evolve from an open and sparse configuration to a more closed and dense one during the innovation process (Sørensen & Mattsson, 2016).

While innovation networks provide innovation opportunities the effective collaboration in networks also entail challenges arising from actors' contrasting cultures, norms and values, cognitive and geographic distances, varying capacities and differing objectives among actors as well as 'system gaps', when there is a lack of fit of a proposed innovation and the broader system (Dooley & O'Sullivan, 2007; Klerkx & Leeuwis, 2009). Such challenges affect the efficiency of communication, knowledge development and learning in the network. The challenges may vary with the developmental phase of the network. Challenges encountered in the initial phases of network collaboration in an innovation project, often termed the 'fuzzy front-end' of innovation, may be particularly important. These challenges may arise because of lack of clear product concepts, uncertainties about customer needs, relevant technologies and a lack of trust (Colombo et al., 2011; Jörgensen et al., 2011; Kessler & Chakrabarti, 1999). Such challenges may eventually have an impact on the success and quality of the outcomes of innovation processes.

For these reasons, the roles of different actors can be argued to be of importance for network development, and in particular for initial network development. The network literature has indicated how different actors may play different network roles. On the one hand, Burt's (1997, 2000, 2005) network entrepreneur, for example, is argued to thrive on loose networks in which he/she can extract personal benefits and he/she may prefer to maintain a central and powerful position in a loose network. On the other hand, the product innovating entrepreneur will attempt to develop stronger networks to sustain his business development (cf. Elfring & Hulsink, 2007).

While studies such as the mentioned focus on the roles of actors seeking personal benefits from networks, other studies emphasise the roles of actors for the more collective benefits of networks. From this perspective, the role of a network manager has been emphasised. Such a network manager has the task of facilitating communication, ensuring trust, commitment and harmony as well as of securing coordination

of tasks and resources in the network (Landsperger, Spieth, & Heidenreich, 2012). In a similar vein, but with focus on the company as a network actor, Dhanarag and Parkhe (2006) emphasises how a hub firm has the responsibility of managing network design, structure and stability as well as knowledge distribution and appropriability. Also other organisations that may play similar roles but possess other positions in the networks have been emphasised in the literature. These include 'superstructure organisations' which provide collective goods and coordinate information flows (Lynn, Mohan Reddy, & Aram, 1996). Other such organisations include intermediary bodies or 'systemic intermediaries' including funding bodies and research institutions (Howells, 2006; Klerkx & Leeuwis, 2009). Such intermediaries facilitate initial network building, for example by bringing actors into contact with each other and by brokering relations and reducing uncertainty. They function as the glue that holds together the networks by enhancing trust and resolving conflicts (Klerkx & Leeuwis, 2009). Finally, at the individual level, similar roles have been attributed 'boundary spanners'. These are actors who are characterised by being diplomatic, tolerant, reliable and committed, and who have the capability of bringing unlikely persons together, seeing things in a different way, building trust (breaking down distrust and suspicion), and acting as an interaction co-ordinator.

While the literature suggests how different actors can perform different roles in network building and maintaining processes less has been said about actors who may perform more network hostile activities. However, it can be suggested that these may possess some of the opposite characteristics of boundary spanners, network brokers, intermediaries etc. This could include aspects such as intolerance, distrust, suspicion, as well as cultures and norms that are incompatible. However, the literature does not seem to have considered what roles they can play and how, for example in terms of deliberately working against network building.

Furthermore, little knowledge exists about how different types of actors' roles operate in concert and in this way affect network dynamics and innovation network building or disruption processes and how they may do so during different phases of the network development process. Nevertheless, understanding such roles and processes can be crucial in sectors such as tourism in which conflict often dominate in the tourist destinations where tourism products are produced and consumed.

2.2. Tourism innovation networks and actor roles

Some attention has been paid by tourism research to network structures (McLeod et al., 2010; Pavlovich, 2003), geographical distribution of networks (Sørensen, 2007) and especially to destination networks (Baggio & Cooper, 2010; Gibson et al., 2007; Pavlovich, 2003). Destinations contain interdependent firms within one 'sector' of the economy, and the proximity and common interests of these firms, it has been argued, enable destination networks to form (Baggio & Cooper, 2010; Milne et al., 1998). Such local destination networks are considered of importance, especially for smaller tourism firms (Gibson et al., 2007; Hjalager, 2010; Zehrer & Raich, 2010), which often populate rural destinations, because such networks sustain local knowledge distribution, learning (Gibson et al., 2007; Halme, 2001; McLeod et al., 2010) and innovation (Buhalis & Cooper, 1998; Milne & Ateljevic, 2001; Tremblay, 1998). Network literature in general has underlined the benefits of such local networks, which are argued to facilitate face-to-face contacts enhancing distribution of tacit knowledge and exploitation (e.g. Boschma & Frenken, 2010; Breschi & Lissoni, 2001; Camagni,

1995). Similar benefits have been found to arise from local tourism destination networks. From this point of view tourist destination networks are considered to evolve almost naturally because of the unique business configuration that characterises destinations.

Furthermore, tourism networks are dynamic and constantly evolving. For example, Sørensen and Fuglsang (2014) have demonstrated this to be the case at the focal tourism company level at which companies' weak networks are observed to facilitate idea generation and exploration, whereas companies' stronger networks of close collaboration facilitate development of innovations and exploitation. These networks of tourism companies evolve as the needs for exploration and exploitation change (Sørensen & Fuglsang, 2014). Also at the destination level it has been argued that strong networks can facilitate exploitation and weaker networks exploration (Sørensen, 2007). Destinations go through 'destination life-cycles' (Butler 1980) and throughout these life-cycles destination networks will develop and change (Pavlovich 2003, Zehrer and Raich 2010). Destinations may therefore experience periods of close collaboration and destination-based innovation and other periods characterised by less networking and destination based innovation. Some studies have for example observed close collaboration and networks at some destinations (e.g. Eide & Fuglsang, 2013) while others have argued for the opposite. The latter studies have emphasised different challenges to network formation in destinations. These include that the particularities of tourism firms erode destination networks (Bærenholdt et al., 2004) because especially smaller tourism firms focus on day-to-day tasks, not on building local networks (M. T. McLeod et al., 2010; Zehrer & Raich, 2010). Such companies have also been argued not to realize that their product is part of a larger experience (Tremblay, 2000). Additionally, different types of firms, for example hotels and attractions, possess and need different types of information and knowledge for innovation (Sørensen, 2007) and firms from the same sub-sectors, for example hotels, may perceive each other as competitors rather than co-operators (A. Hjalager, 2002). Thus, the potential for different destinations to form close collaborative networks vary (Tremblay, 2000; Zehrer & Raich, 2010) depending, for example, on homogeneity, size and type of tourism firms, spatial concentration, type of destination and the competitive situation (Ioannides & Debagge, 1998; Tremblay, 2000). Innovation network development at tourist destinations can be further complicated because tourism affects local populations as well as actors in other industries. Local population interest groups (e.g. second homeowners associations) as well as other businesses and business organisations (e.g. retail) have interests in tourism or in using the same resources as tourism for other than tourist purposes. Thus a variety of actors with different and potentially conflicting interests can be part of – or have an interest in influencing – innovation network building processes.

The above indicates how some destinations may be characterised by distrust among actors who have different interests, norms and cultures, etc. which may result in that network building can be complicated. In such cases there may be a particular need for, for example, boundary spanners (e.g. tourism consultants), superstructure organisations or intermediary bodies (e.g. destination management organisations) or network brokers (e.g. tourism entrepreneurs). Such actors and the roles they play may be particularly crucial in the exploratory phase, or the fuzzy front-end, of a tourism innovation process in which the development of consensus and trust is crucial for the tourism innovation network to form and be able to enter a more exploitative phase. Other actors playing other roles, thriving on distrust, conflicting interests, norms and cultures, may on the other hand limit the innovation network building potential in the

destination and act more or less directly and consciously as network breakers or inhibitors.

The above suggests how a complex combination of actors' roles can play together and favour or hinder innovation network development in tourist destinations. The following case study shows how different network actors' roles impacted on innovation network dynamics in a small destination which was characterised by conflict and distrust, but which in spite of this, succeeded in building a (partly successful) innovation network.

3. Method

The case study concerns a small Danish summer holiday destination. The case can be considered an extreme case (Flyvbjerg, 2006) because the destination is characterised by fierce conflicts, even hate, between a number of actors (including businesses, local organisations and the local population). In spite of this, a group of actors managed to form an innovation network that involved many of the disagreeing actors.

The case study was longitudinal and was carried out between 2013 and 2015 during the innovation network development process. Data collection consisted, first, of qualitative semi-structured interviews made with key persons in the network as well as with persons representing different other private and organisational actors in the destination. Eleven recorded interviews, each with duration of 1 to 1½ hour were carried out in the spring and summer of 2014. While the questions in the interviews varied slightly according to the type of informant, the main themes of the interviews were: 1) the informant's perception of the characteristics of the destination and its development possibilities; 2) the perception of the collaborative atmosphere at the destination; 3) the perception of the innovation network, its characteristics, successes, potentials and barriers and its future organisation. Second, data collection consisted of passive observation at several meetings and seminars. These included two network meetings, a public information meeting in the destination and a public development seminar in the destination. Third, there was an ongoing informal dialogue during 2013 and 2014 with a consultant (and now co-author of this paper) which had the role of network manager and liaison between a university and the destination actors. This facilitated a continuous access to information about the progress in the destination, including securing three informal follow-up interviews carried out in June 2015. Finally, while the consultant was not involved as an active researcher during most of the process investigated, she became involved in the final process and in the process of writing this paper. Thus a kind of retrospective active participant observation constitutes the final data collection method. This active participant observation has brought further in-depth knowledge about the process and its actors.

To secure the trustworthiness of the findings, these have been presented for the central network members and other actors in two occasions (small seminars). The prolonged engagement and interaction with the respondents and the 'testing' of the findings, soliciting reactions from the participants, are all aspects that sustain the trustworthiness of findings in naturalistic enquiries, such as qualitative case studies (Lincoln & Guba, 2007). While the retrospective active participant observation could cause bias this is largely avoided in this study due to the triangulation of methods

and interpreters. Nevertheless, the findings of the case study presented in the following are, like those of other naturalistic studies, not context-free truth statements that can be generalised. In the concluding section we discuss the external validity, or transferability (Morgan, 2007), of the findings to other contexts, i.e. to other types of tourist destinations and, for example, other types of location bound services.

4. Case study

The destination is a small village and tourist destination with about 2.300 inhabitants and 2.000 privately owned holiday houses. It has an idyllic harbour by which are situated a number of restaurants (primarily fish restaurants), a café and a hotel. A few additional restaurants, a campsite and a holiday house centre are scattered in the vicinity of the harbour and close to one of the two beaches of the destination. There are a few shops in the village (primarily groceries and clothes shops). One of the beaches (the most visited) is situated just south of the harbour. The other beach, which is barely used by visitors, is located less than a kilometre north of the harbour. The destination mainly attracts tourists (and one day visitors) from the surrounding area, to some extent from Copenhagen, and the international market is limited.

The interviewees characterise the destination as idyllic and surrounded by lovely nature and good beaches. However, it is also characterised as a destination that lacks development: “... *nothing has been developed during the last 20 years. Not a single thing! Nothing has been built. Nothing has been changed*” (café owner and foreman of the Business Association). Furthermore, while being idyllic the destination is argued to lack class, it does not have a high quality or iconic hotel, and the gastronomy is dominated by a 'fish and chips culture'. Additionally, the destination is, like many other Northern European beach destinations, characterised by an extremely short season of about 7 weeks during which most tourist earnings are concentrated. As a reason for, and consequence of this, most restaurants and shops are closed from October to April, and the offer of activities for visitors is nearly absent outside the high season. However, the interviewees emphasise that also during the high season the offer of activities is limited. Finally the service level of the destination is said to be too low. Overall, the destination may be perceived to be in a declining phase in its tourist destination lifecycle (c.f. Butler, 2006).

4.1. The collaborative environment

The state of the destination is, by the interviewees, argued to be a result of a lack of collaboration and of conflicts among different actors. The central actors at the destination consist of different local tourism companies, the harbour (which owns most of the areas at the centre of the destination), holiday homeowners associations (nine in all), the Business Association, the Local Council (which is composed of various local non-business actors and has no official political mandate), the municipal tourist organisation, the municipality, and a few other associations such as a nature protection organisation and a sports association.

In terms of opinions about tourism development the mentioned actors can, broadly speaking, be divided in those that seek to maintain status quo in the destination and those that are very development oriented. The holiday homeowner associations, for

example, seek to protect the existing. They are mainly located along the beach that is not used intensively by the tourists, in part because of lack of tourism infrastructure and in part because it is difficult to access. The holiday homeowners associations have a role to play in this and are accused of deliberately obstructing the access to 'their' beaches: *"They don't want too many people over there. So everything is being fenced in with stones and closed with chains so that it is impossible to park a car anywhere"* (social entrepreneur). Also the local council belongs to this group of 'protectors': *"The local council has sometimes taken a critical stance towards the Business Association's suggestions and said ... do we need more cafés or how should it look?"* (foreman of holiday homeowner association and member of the local council). These and other actors, who mainly represent the older generation, prefer to protect what they characterise as the idyllic character of the destination rather than sustaining development initiatives: *"The strength [of the destination] is that it is the way it is ... people enjoy to simply sit and look at what is going on ... There doesn't have to be an amusement park everywhere ... there are just some things you shouldn't change"* (Grocer). Protecting the existing also involves not attracting the younger generation to the destination: *"... there is nothing for the young people ... I think we have a reasonable level now ... I don't think there is any interest in a noisy pub"* (foreman of holiday homeowners association). Generally those actors do not see a need to attract more tourists: *"I don't think we necessarily need more tourists. But I accept that we can try to spread out the season"* (foreman of holiday homeowners association).

To the development oriented group of actors belongs, first of all, the more entrepreneurial tourist businesses: *"We have to lift the area. We need to attract some more tourists"* (café owner and foreman of Business Association). These businesses see a need to take on new development initiatives: *"There should be some more business ... If we have to ... keep them [the tourists] here for a bit longer then we have to offer them something"* (campsite manager). However, this development-oriented group of actors is itself not homogeneous and different interests are represented. A big player in this sense is the harbour. Though the harbour supports tourism development its main interest is the harbour business: *"Our activities in [the destination] are very tourist-oriented, but we maintain that it is an industrial harbour"* (harbour manager). This creates certain conflicts such as when the harbour manager renewed part of the harbour during the short peak tourist season. Thus, there are several interests at play making matters complex: *"We have a special challenge because it is a place where people live and, at the same time, we need as many tourists as possible. And it is also a harbour that also has a function. Those are some focus areas that often clash and result in conflicts about the development of the place"* (manager of children activities centre and representative of nature protection organisation). Many of the lifestyle entrepreneurs have yet another agenda. They are argued to 'mind their own business' and to not involve themselves in different initiatives with other actors: *"The restaurants have their own agenda ... They have enough in their own [business]"* (hotel manager).

The different views on the possible developments of the destination have led to various open conflicts among the actors in the destination. The harbour manager, for example, is disliked by many of the non-tourism actors in the destination: *"There are some of the holiday homeowners associations that hate [the manager] from the harbour. They literally and personally hate him"* (consultant). As indicated, some of the tourist businesses also sometimes have conflicts with the harbour. Conversely, the harbour manager has little empathy with all those who do not think in business terms, or who has a more communitarian, non-liberalist approach to life. In the case of the

development-oriented tourist businesses they dislike the holiday homeowners associations for being against development. A conflict between the Business Association and the Local Council is also evident: *"In terms of tourism it is kind of a fight between the Business Association, who wants tourism because it brings in money, and the Local Council who simply prefers to maintain status quo"* (tourist organisation manager). Conversely, the holiday homeowners dislike those businesses that create change and aim to attract more tourists. The development-oriented tourist businesses also criticize the small life-style tourism businesses for not delivering quality food, good service and for not being interested in the development of the destination. Some of these tourism businesses also think of the nature organisation being left wing (which in their terms is thought of as a negative thing). Also the more business-oriented actors have little faith in the municipal tourism organisation: *"The tourism organisation is a dry-stick-association. Nothing happens"* (harbour manager). The only organisation that seems to have a certain distance to the controversies is the municipal authorities though they are criticized for not taking the business of tourism seriously but instead favour other economic activities (e.g. the harbour). Also the businesses have little sympathy with the local inhabitants of the village in general: *"All the local inhabitants, as they have gotten older, think that they should relax and that there shouldn't be too much 'fairground entertainment' and noise. ... They have finished their work life and now they just want peace and tranquillity"* (campsite manager). The perspectives of the different actors lead to fundamentally different approaches to the future development of the destination: *"Where we have seen conflicts, it has basically concerned the definition of the development of the area because there are some different interest groups"* (manager of children activities centre and representative of nature protection organisation).

The lack of development, the controversies and their disagreements all relate to a lack communication and collaboration between actors in the destination. Communication often is indirect, hostile, and occurs through local media. An example concerns when the café owner built a small terrace along the harbour bank: *"That ... terrace out there, there have been so many protests ... They [the Local Council] have been invited down here but they didn't want to meet me and then they write letters to the newspaper instead"* (café owner and foreman of business association). In such indirect dialogue, accusations and criticisms predominate. It was the harbour manager that gave permission to build the terrace: *"I have almost been executed and shamed in all the newspapers and on the internet and many other places as a criminal because I let him do that"* (harbour manager).

4.2. The destination innovation network initiative

The innovation network initiative was taken to create another and more collaborative development in the destination. The initiative was initially established between 6 actors (in the following termed 'the Development Group'): the café owner/foreman of the Business Association, the hotel manager, a campsite manager, the harbour manager, as well as the member of the local representative of a nature protection organisation and manager of the children activities centre and, last, the event and tourism manager of the municipality. As indicated above these actors represented different interests and had not always agreed about development initiatives.

The collaboration was related to a larger tourism development project run by the regional tourism organisation and the regional university. To establish a group from the

destination that could participate in this project, the foreman of the Business Association and café owner was given the responsibility to ask different actors to join a development group. His first move was to deliberately ask various persons who he knew would disagree about most things and have different political opinions. In this way it should be possible to take development initiatives that could gain broad support in the local community: “ *it should be a broadly combined group that included both the green and the very blue [i.e. the full political spectrum]. They can't be too similar the persons you ask. And I promise you: they are not!*” (café owner and foreman of Business Association). Thus, he acted as an initial boundary spanner, though he had by many locals often been considered a controversial conflict seeker.

Another central person in the network building process was the tourist consultant who quickly became connected with the Development Group. This consultant had not had relation to the destination or to the actors involved in the development group before. This status as an independent actor was essential for making the collaboration successful: “*Otherwise it wouldn't have been possible ... She has ensured that we have been able to talk together in a relatively decent way*” (representative of nature protection organisation and manager of children activities centre). The different interests would have made the collaboration impossible if it had not been for the outsider who could function as a boundary spanner: “*It has been a strength to have so many different interests involved but it has also resulted in some big fights and then it has been an advantage to have somebody from the outside that could say 'ok – now we have to speak properly to each other and sit face-to-face and find out what we can agree upon*” (consultant). The consultant was important in order to keep work going in the group: “*She has been able to puncture some conflicts. She has been able to keep people on the track. She has been good at finding the right direction and keeping it*” (café owner).

When established, the Development Group made a strategy plan and invited local organisational actors to give their feedback. In this process, the consultant held separate meetings with the holiday homeowners associations and in this way continued to function as boundary spanner and ice-breaker that could establish an initial dialogue, as direct dialogue was thought not to be a possibility at that point due to the distrust among the actors. Subsequently a public meeting was held to which everybody in the village was invited. In all, 250 persons participated, having the opportunity to discuss the strategy plan as well as listening to words of encouragement and advice from the Mayor and a tourism expert from a successful destination. At the public meeting, especially the holiday homeowners associations' disinterest in development became clear, especially such development that would increase the flow of visitors to 'their' beach. A representative of a second-homeowners association, for example, made it clear that there would never be a toilet building or any other amenities at their beach (as a reaction to the development group's suggestion to improve facilities at the beach). However, at the meeting many other participants supported that actions had to be taken in relation to the development of the destination.

Based on the many meetings the strategy was slightly adjusted and a plan-of-action seminar was held in which all interested persons in the village were invited to participate. About 50 persons from various groups in the destination participated, including also representatives from some of the holiday homeowners associations and the Local Council. At the seminar, the participants were divided in sub-groups with different themes. The seminar resulted in a number of development ideas. At the end of the seminar, the participants voted for the best ideas and project groups were estab-

lished to carry on working with these ideas. The project groups included representatives of those that had developed and suggested the ideas as well as a member of the Development Group. Projects included such that should increase access to the less used beach, improve infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, renew a central square, create events, and more.

Thus, until this point the development had been one of network creation that favoured exploration and idea generation at the 'fuzzy front end of destination innovation'. However, with the establishment of specific workgroups that should carry on working with more specific ideas the network became more focused on exploitation and development of specific innovations. The network became configured with a core consisting of the members of the Development Group, and a number of specific development project networks attached to the core.

As indicated, the initial network development and exploration phase was one that favoured inclusion and dialogue which was considered crucial for the success of the process: *"I think the co-determination has made a difference"* (consultant). The meetings, the inclusion of the local population and the dialogue in general resulted in that different actors who had been disagreeing for many years were now working together with the aim of developing the destination. *"Earlier very few persons made development projects that nobody heard about before they were almost realised ... so dialogue has never been tried before in a proper way"* (representative of a nature protection organisation and manager of the children activities centre). Even the holiday homeowners associations became part of the network: *"During the process they found out that it was not dangerous ... but about creating good conditions for families with children"* (consultant). The potential to influence the process made the actors that were initially unlikely to participate choose to participate: *"... if you want to influence something at all and not just sit back and criticize afterwards, then of course you have to participate actively ... Some misunderstandings have been removed so we have gone from saying 'what the hell is going on'? To think that it generally sounds positive"* (holiday homeowners association).

Though the process could be seen as a success and though different unlikely actors were now working towards a common goal, the network faced serious future challenges. First of all, when the development programme ended funds for the consultant as well as the support from the superstructure organisation and the university also disappeared. Also, some of the knowledge that the programme supplied the network, for example support for writing funding applications for the different development projects, would disappear. Thus, in order to keep the dynamics going within the development group, the harbour and the Business Association decided to finance a short-term contract with the consultant. The aim was to reconfigure and broaden the destination development network in order to cement cooperation among the different actors and drive forth tourism development in accordance with the new strategy and cooperative spirit. The approach had always been to further cooperation through dialogue and the new network configuration was therefore established to include all central stakeholders at the destination. At the founding meeting in January 2015, more than 25 people from the different stakeholders showed up – this was initially thought to be a positive sign of involvement but the result, however, was that old controversies surfaced and an unconstructive pointing of fingers, not the least from the Local Council. As a result, it was decided to reduce the network to only include nine persons, each representing different stakeholders: the tourism organisation, the

campsite, the hotel, the green NGO, the café/Business Association, the harbour, the Local Council, a holiday homeowners association and the sports association.

At the following network meeting, the dialogue flowed well and important issues such as income generation for local projects were discussed. However, when the representative of the Local Council informed the other members of the Council, this once again resulted in slander in the local Press and a personal attack on the harbour manager. Consequently, the harbour decided not to continue as part of the network. Furthermore, due to lack of funds, the consultant was no longer responsible for facilitating the network. Instead, the campsite manager took upon himself to continue as facilitator. Though a difficult task to assume, it can be considered a favourable development towards embedding the network in the destination.

Today (June 2015) the destination development network is not fully active. According to the campsite manager: *"We need a facilitator for the destination development network. Otherwise it will fall apart – interest is diminishing"*. In another informal follow-up interview, the Business Association reflected upon the process, stating: *"The Local Council should never have been part of the group – they have a completely different agenda"*. He concludes that it is best to build development through those that support it rather than focusing on including all stakeholders: *"Maybe we can only include a few but then this should be our point of departure and we should work on from there"*. This may be what is currently happening in the destination. Of the seven proposals voted on in the action plan seminar held in March 2014 two are currently being launched for the summer and autumn 2015. Not all stakeholders are included but those that chose to be part of the process are working hard to ensure continual development.

5. Discussion

The destination was characterised by the presence of a number of different actors with different objectives, norms, cultures and values. Due to these differing objectives and cultures the environment was one of distrust, conflict and lack of collaboration all of which complicated the development of innovation networks in the destination. The conflicts existed because the different actors use shared resources for different purposes, e.g. for running tourism businesses, running other types of businesses, for everyday living and for owning private holiday homes. These actors belong to different lifeworlds between which communication is complicated. In particular, the tourism development initiative clashed with a more protective approach towards the 'authentic' and 'idyllic' atmosphere of the destination.

In spite of the different actors' perspectives the case illustrates how a destination network development took place in the destination. This development involved an initial exploration phase in a loose network that included many different actors and which later turned into a more exploitative phase. In the process different actors were of importance. Initially a superstructure actor (regional tourism body) launched the initiative in collaboration with a systemic intermediary (university) and asked a local actor to establish a local network group. Furthermore the superstructure and systemic intermediary actors provided support, mainly in the shape of a consultant. The local actor can himself be considered an initial boundary spanner who brought different actors together and attempted to create trust among different actors. After the first

initial formation of the group this boundary spanner function was dedicated the consultant, who as an outsider had particular potential for doing this. The diplomacy, dialogue, communication and incipient trust that this boundary spanning facilitated made inclusion of unlikely actors possible; actors who had earlier disagreed about most things but among whom consensus about development initiatives were reached during the process. This made the establishment of, first, a loose exploration network supporting a fuzzy front-end innovation process possible and, second, facilitated the development of a network with several stronger clusters that supported exploitation. This has currently resulted in the actualisation of two specific innovation projects.

For this to be possible some of the members of the innovation network had to change perspectives and therefore also network roles, and in this way become more oriented towards the collective network benefits and less ego centred. As such, they changed from being *tertius gaudens* (in the terms of Burt, 1993) who seek personal benefits mainly to become more focused on the overall benefits of the network: *"... people like [name] from the nature protection organisation ... He is ... kind of a hippie ... A contradiction to me ... it's good because it would be too much if someone like me could just move fast forward. Then there would be concrete and entertainment everywhere"* (harbour manager). This also counts for a number of other actors, such as holiday homeowners associations. All in all, this was achieved and facilitated by boundary spanning, communication and inclusion of different actors in the process.

Thus a combination of different actors and network roles they performed facilitated network development. However, while the different values, norms, agendas etc. of the different actors were partly overcome due to the different roles performed by different actors, in the end the networks' success remains unsure. This is because of other roles performed by some actors and because of the absence of other actors and their potential roles. First of all the superstructure agents played an important role, especially during initial development of the network as did the external funding of the consultant and her performed boundary spanning role. When the roles of these actors were no longer performed the network ran into a process of disintegration. This disintegration was partly due to that the network never managed to include and reach consensus with a strong actor in the area: the Local Council, which kept acting as a 'network breaker' and work against the development initiative – they were successful in doing so. They were the strongest proponents among those actors who sought to protect the 'authentic' and 'idyllic' character of the destination.

Trust is key to success in using networks for furthering development and innovation. Despite differences of perception and needs, the original six members of the development group managed to obtain consensus on the identity and strategy of the destination. They were able to keep focus on the collective benefits of cooperating in a network and were, through their cohesive stance, able to convey this to a larger group of actors during the public meeting and the following action plan seminar. Trust was also the reason these six actors chose to continue collaborating with the consultant in establishing an official network, relying on this person to extend the dynamics to include other actors in the network. Lack of trust and a strive for personal benefits were what impeded success of the network after it was extended to include the holiday homeowners associations, the sports association and the Local Council. The Local Council managed to seriously damage the collaboration established among the stakeholders in just a few weeks by using the media for personal attacks.

How did one actor with no official political power manage to act as such a significant network breaker? Christensen & Daugaard Jensen (2008) argue that influence is given to those that assume it. Power was previously connected to land ownership, money and the Church – in the case of the destination, traditionally the harbour and the Business Association. However, internet-based communication has offered a new sphere of influence unattached to official power. Media such as local newspapers, websites and social media are sources of distribution for public opinion, many times with little editing. Communication is a process of negotiation and by continually repeating their personal attacks and fearful images of development (Haslebo, 2004) the Local Council has been very successful in using such platforms to extend their influence.

Power can also be seen as the ability to influence agendas (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2008). By being persistent, using extensive time and resources, the Local Council has managed to strengthen their position through a discourse not connected to the development strategy and plan of action but rather on personification of the 'enemy' through the Business Association and the Harbour. Modern power is a system of discourses that affects actions (Holmgren, 2011). The Local Council has dominated the discourse, ensuring strength in the validity of their argumentation by repeated hostility and retaining public attention. Thus, while being a network breaker, the Local Council was, at the same time, efficient in utilizing their own network to fight the new network, which had a development agenda they were opposing.

Involving stakeholders was a key element in the destination development process but in this case may have been extended too far. Rather than contributing to collaboration, widening the development group to include other actors, not the least the Local Council, diminished the influence of the original development group, weakening network relationships and innovation.

Also several other related reasons for the partly disintegration of the network may be suggested. One interpretation is that not enough trust and consensus about development trajectories was created when entering the more exploitative development phase in which trust, common norms and goals are even more important than in the exploration phase. This meant, for example, that the Local Council kept on performing its role as a network breaker and that it had a large power to do so. Thus, perhaps the development process was accelerated too much, partly as a result of the time-restricted external funding and superstructure support for the project. Other reasons include a lack of a strong destination management organization (e.g. at the municipal level) who could have taken on the long term responsibility of a superstructure organization as well as boundary spanner both of which roles are now absent from the network. Another limitation of the innovation network may be that there was no strong single network manager in the network. Instead management was largely the responsibility of a group of actors (the Development Group) who themselves were constituted by actors with different interests.

Finally, in this paper, its theoretical set-up and analysis it has been somewhat implicitly assumed that tourism development, and the Development Groups' initiative is favorable. Nevertheless many of the disagreements, of which some were not concealed in the network, could also be interpreted to be due to system gaps between the suggested tourism innovations and the broader 'system' of the destination which includes many non-tourism interests.

6. Conclusion

The case reported in this paper illustrates how the life of a network in a conflict dominated tourist destination depended on a number of different actors, their network roles and on how they interacted. For network building different actor roles were necessary for overcoming distrust and for building, first, an exploration and, later, an exploitation network. In the destination this could probably not have been achieved by the efforts of a single actor mainly but only by a number of actors performing different roles in concert. However, the case also shows how fragile networks as agencies of development are in destinations where multiple interests seek to utilise the same set of shared resources. This results in that different actors may choose to fight against innovation network development, for example as network breakers.

Thus different network roles in terms of for example tertius gaudenses, boundary spanners, network managers, superstructure agents, systemic intermediaries, and network breakers influenced innovation network development in the destination in both positive and negative ways. The complex interplay of roles suggests how network building in tourist destinations are far from simple processes. Likewise, network management and the combination of different complementary actors and roles must be done with care and must secure that a number of central actors and roles are present during the process. Especially when destination networks develop from exploration to exploitation focus should be on securing that a sufficient amount of trust and consensus exist among all relevant actors.

In destinations such as the analysed the time-limited nature of externally funded crucial actor roles, e.g. of superstructure agencies, systemic intermediaries and boundary spanners, pose a threat to the survival of network initiatives. Crucial actor roles may disappear from the network before the network is mature enough to sustain itself or before new actors have been found or developed who can perform the needed roles. The time-limited nature of externally funded network actor roles may also, as in the case analysed, mean that innovation processes may be fast forwarded and that the necessary trust is not developed before moving into the exploitative phase. A crucial superstructure task and focus area in destination innovation network building should therefore be the training and development, not only of networks as such, but of actors who can perform the needed roles in the long term perspective. In the case analysed this task was not carried out. Instead crucial roles disappeared from the network when the funding ended and the innovation process was speeded up and entered an exploitation phase before the network had 'matured' enough to do so.

The case also suggests how new types of power structures need to be taken into account in tourist destinations. Networks are increasingly influenced by outside factors, e.g. discussions on social media and the influence of the (local) press. This cannot be fully controlled and exerts additional pressure on the relationships between network actors. It is therefore of utmost importance to establish and maintain openness, dialogue and trust among the actors. It can also be conducive for the network to supply stories of success through social media and the press – i.e. it is important to be able to present results reasonably quickly.

Considering that many destinations face similar problems as the case discussed in this paper (though it may be considered an extreme case), the findings are of interest for other destinations. However, every destination is unique and has its own configu-

ration of actors and conflicting or complementary interests. Thus more research about the interplay of different network actors' roles for destination innovation network building will be beneficial to get a fuller and more complete understanding of how different network actor roles can beneficially operate in concert in tourist destination innovation networks.

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