ENABLING SUSTAINABLE VISITS

Editors Mathias Cöster, Sabine Gebert Persson & Owe Ronström

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PART III VISITED

Enabling sustainable visits. Introduction

Mathias Cöster, Sabine Gebert Persson & Owe Ronström

To visit and be visited

Visits and visiting are imperative. Cultures and societies have evolved from, and rest on, the laurels of human encounters. Human history teaches us convincingly that who we are today has developed through our ability to move and meet. However – no matter how much the visits and meetings are imperative – the ever-increasing number of people on the move round the world now challenge the social, cultural, and ecological systems of whole societies and, ultimately, the entire global ecosystem's sustainability.

One example of the challenges that many destinations are now facing is Gotland, Sweden's largest island, in the middle of the Baltic Sea. Here, as in most of the Baltic region as a whole, tourism has increased rapidly during the past decades[1]. In an islanded and marginalised region such as Gotland, visitors come with a number of positive effects for economy, jobs, welfare, and more. At the same time, as for a large number of destinations all over the world – not least islands – the ever-increasing number of visitors also poses serious challenges. With more visitors come increased risks for the permanent residents, their environment and cultural heritage. With less or no visitors, the visited risk stagnation or depletion of local culture and society. Therefore, a challenge that many destinations are facing is to develop visits and a tourism industry infrastructure

1 The number of guest nights per inhabitant in Gotland (2019) was 16.25, which can be compared to Stockholm with 6.42 and Sweden's average of 6.52. (Tillväxtverket, 2023-01-27)

that is sustainable in terms of technology, economy, society, culture, and ecology. The challenge this book addresses is how to enable the transition to a more sustainable development in the tourism industry and thereby enable sustainable visits.

Enabling sustainable visits – a grand challenge

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries. Since the 1950s, the growth of the tourism industry has been explosive, to say the least.

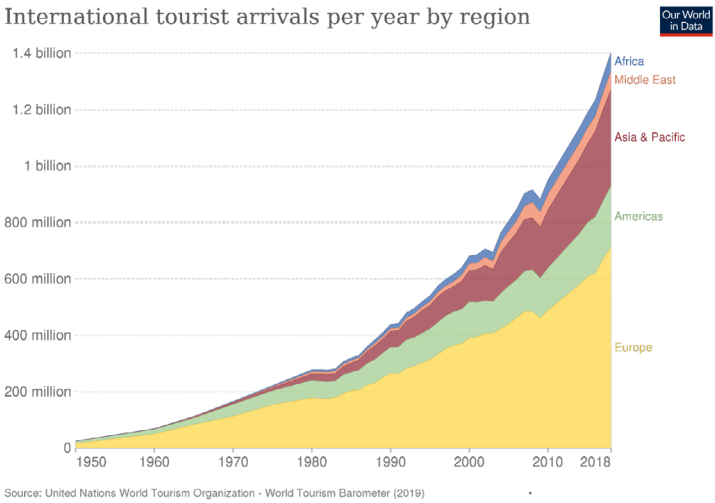

Figure 1: The global development of international tourist arrivals. Licensed under CC. Image source: Our World in Data: https://ourworldindata.org/tourism.

As illustrated in the figure, an increase from tens of millions of international tourists in 1950, to 1.4 billion in 2018, is indeed a dramatic development. Still, this is just a small breeze compared to the increase of domestic tourists, especially in Europe, America, and parts of Asia. The variation is of course great: in Sweden 2018 there were four times more domestic than international tourists, in Canada nine, the US 14, and in China 43 times more domestic tourists,

which counts to around 5.5 billion.[2] Taken together, all these tourists make up a mighty flood of people on the move.

The growth in tourism came to a dramatic turn with the pandemic outbreak in 2019, which has considerably affected the development of tourism. This is evident in the GDP statistics. Before the pandemic, tourism on average contributed 4.4% of the GDP and 6.9% of employment, and constituted more than 20% of service-related exports of OECD countries.[3] During the pandemic, these figures were halved. Although tourism has been bouncing back at an increasing rate, the industry is now facing new challenges due to growing geopolitical uncertainties and conflicts worldwide, such as the Russian military invasion of Ukraine and the risk of armed conflicts between several countries in the South China Sea. The growing unpredictability of tourist flows poses new challenges for destinations to balance between the risk of over-tourism and the risk of stagnation or depletion of local culture and society.

What Figure 1 also indicates is that since the 1950s tourism has become an integral part of the lifestyles in a large part of the world. Tourism is not just about going somewhere and seeing something, it is a potent game-changer that turns places, heritages, and culture into destinations (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). Tourism researcher Dean MacCannell (2013) argues that 'the tourist' is a powerful, widespread model for modern mankind and a major consensus and stabilising force in Western society. The effect is, as Culler (1981, p. 9) already noted 40 years ago, that 'one might be uncertain as to what people ought to think about capital punishment but one knows what they ought to see in Paris'. Even if people are aware of some of tourism's negative consequences on society, culture, and nature, it may in the end be too dear, important, and meaningful to them to just discard the whole idea and stay at home (Grinell, 2004).

2 UNWTO: Compendium of Tourism Statistics. Data 2014-2018. The number of guest nights in Sweden was 67.8 million, of which the Swedes themselves spent just over 70%. Canada registered 31 million inbound arrivals, and 278 million domestic tourists, the US 169 million international and 2.3 billion domestic tourists, and China 128 million foreign tourists, and 5.5 billion domestic tourists.

3 OECD (2022). *OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2022*. OECD Publishing, Paris.

But – staying at home is most likely what many or most of us will have to consider in the near future, if we are to honour the Paris climate accords (2015) and the agreements of the Glasgow Climate Pact (2021). The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) states that global greenhouse gas emissions will have to fall by 7.6% each year up to 2030.[4] By 2030, we must produce below an average of four tons of CO_2 per person in order to reduce our ecological footprints and the risk of irreversible climate changes that may threaten the world's habitability.[5] By 2045, each of us must not emit more than one ton of greenhouse gases, in order not to exceed the amount of emissions the planet can absorb.[6] Even if that happens, the world will still not be close to sustainability.

Tourism is of course only one of many causes of increasing greenhouse gas emissions, neither the biggest nor the most important, and CO_2 is just one of many greenhouse gases, some of which are considerably more potent. Still, according to Climate Watch, in 2020 the US and Canada emitted around 15 metric tons of CO_2 per person, Germany 7.9, France 4, and Sweden 3.4.[7] When the annual CO_2 budget for each and every one on planet Earth in only 20 years' time will have to be just one ton, and when this sole ton equals a single round trip from London to New York by air,[8] then it will inevitably have severe consequences for the kind of tourism that the Western world has become accustomed to over the last half century.

4 https://unfccc.int/news/cut-global-emissions-by-76-percent-every-year-for-next-decade-to-meet-15degc-paris-target-un-report

5 See Wackernagel, Beyers & Rout (2019); https://www.footprintnetwork.org/our-work/ecological-footprint; https://www.footprintcalculator.org.

6 Ministry of the Environment and Energy: The Swedish climate policy framework: https://www.government.se/495f60/contentassets/883ae8e123bc4e42aa8d59296ebe0478/the-swedish-climate-policy-framework.pdf

7 https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC?locations=-US-SE-CA. When also emissions from consumption of public services are included, the figures are substantially higher; for Swedes about 9 ton per person and year.

8 According to the CO_2 calculator at https://klimatsmartsemester.se it would take an acre of forest a year to absorb the same amount of CO_2 emissions of a one-way flight from London to New York. That is about the same amount of emissions that the average person in Zimbabwe generates over an entire year. https://sustainabletravel.org/issues/carbon-footprint-tourism/

Echoing a long line of researchers and activists since the 1970s, it seems safe to conclude that this will change everything, in ways we can yet only vaguely imagine.[9] All of us will have to ask ourselves time and again what footprints we can afford, ecologically, socially, and culturally. CO_2 emissions and possible upcoming climate changes are but one part of the challenges. Other pertinent issues around tourism range from overcrowding ('people pollution'), waste, food and water consumption, overheating of economies and gentrification, to marginalisation, othering, and alienation. In some places, tourism in effect threatens to wear down the local cultures and heritages it thrives on, affect the social contracts that regulate the relations to others and to nature, and contaminate the very fabric of life. Given the tight connection between destination production and marketing, place branding and tourism in today's world, we will have to ask ourselves to what extent tourism is part of the solution or of the problem. What room is there for tourism as we know it? Are sustainable visits possible and how can such visits be enabled?

Towards sustainable visits – defining a concept

Any research is dependent on a language that does not predetermine what can and cannot be said (cf. Kirshenblatt Gimblett, 1992, p. 52). For our purposes 'tourism' and 'tourist' are terms that come not only with too many accumulated meanings but also, and more importantly, with a prominent capacity to produce what they name: a ritualised series of comings and goings framed by a number of given positions, perspectives, and understandings.

According to the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), a tourist is any person who travels to a destination away from their residence, and stays there for at least 24 hours for personal or business/professional purposes.[10] This is a very broad definition, to say the least. And it is by applying this now commonly used and almost all-inclusive definition that it has become possible to come up with the fantastic figures of arrivals, guest nights, financial flows and revenues that support the image of tourism as one of the world's largest

9 See for example Fuller 1969; Meadows, Randers & Behrens 1972; Schumacher 1973, Klein 2014.

10 https://www.unwto.org/glossary-tourism-terms

and most important industries, which in turn is used to legitimise the idea that for marginalised places, like Gotland, tourism is the saviour, by providing the only road to a viable future.

If one problem with 'tourism' is the broad and all-inclusive definitions of 'tourists', another is a well-established and effective disregard for other kinds of people on the move. In an overview of global mobility, the geographer Ronald Skeldon (2018) criticises the tendency to consider international migration separately from other forms of mobility and argues that human mobility 'is best conceived as a system that integrates internal and international migration within a single framework' together with 'mass mobility in the form of tourism' (Skeldon, 2018, p. 7). What tourism statistics tend to disclose is precisely how tourism is closely linked to, and overlapping with, other circular forms of mobility and population movements, not least internal and international migration.

Whilst some arrive comfortably by air, bus, or on board large exclusive cruise liners, others arrive as refugees by foot, or in overfilled trucks and rubber dinghies, seeking a better future elsewhere, or fleeing from war, oppression, and poverty. Together, all of these form a steady and massive stream of people constantly in motion, billions of people that feed the world's economies, but also consume increasing parts of its physical, social, and cultural resources. Tourism therefore needs to be built into the global framework of migration, and particularly into the debates on migration and development and on policies to manage migration:

> Tourism is embedded in a complex matrix of other forms of human movement, thus making it difficult for policy makers. Migration policy, complicated enough as it is, cannot be separated from policies that contribute to the emergence of other forms of human movement and the interrelationships need to be appreciated if effective approaches are to be introduced to "manage migration". (Skeldon 2018, p. 7)

Skeldon's main point is simply that the 'idea that most people do not move or are fixed at a specific location might be appealing but is wrong. Mobility is an inherent characteristic of all populations unless specific policies or other factors are in place that limit or control that mobility' (Skeldon 2018, p. 4).

For our purposes it has been necessary to distance ourselves from established tourism discourse and instead introduce terms and

notions that would let us discuss tourism and destinations from local perspectives. Taking such considerations into account, 'sustainable visits' seemed as a notion that would let us consider both local, emic perspectives and global sustainability issues.

The core of 'sustainable visits' is the roles and positions of the visited and the visitor. In English, 'visit' (derived from Latin *videre*, to see, notice, or observe) is to 'come to a person to comfort or benefit', 'friendly or formally call upon someone', or a 'short or temporary trip to some place'.[11] In Swedish 'to visit' is *besöka* (cf. English 'beseech', 'beseek' and Scots *beseik*), but 'visit' has also been in use since the 19th century, for shorter stays and, more generally, for more or less ceremonial courtesy visit prescribed by convention, e.g., to initiate contact with a family, in response to an invitation. Thus, in both languages, 'visit' entails a certain kind of stay and a certain kind of relation between two parties, the visited host and the visiting guest. In the research programme, it is these connotations that we wanted to build on. Guest-host relationships are among humanity's most widespread and cherished, next to husband-wife, parent-child, sibling, family, relative, and some others. Throughout millennia, such relations have made a core upon which human civilisations around the world have been founded. Guest-host relations are generally based on mutual politeness, courtesy, recognition, and respect, involve ceremonial gift exchanges, and entail a certain amount of reciprocity. You are expected to pay a visit back, and to return gifts. 'Visit' is also a broader concept that entails tourism but includes other visits. Going back to the UNWTO's definition of tourism,[12] we find visits as more encompassing than tourism:

> Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure. (UNWTO, 2023)

11 https://www.etymonline.com/word/visit; https://www.saob.se/artikel/?unik=B_1729 -0135.l8Q2

12 https://www.unwto.org/glossary-tourism-terms

In this sense, 'a visit' and 'to visit' imply, or even require, face-to-face encounters between the two parties. In many places, and certainly in Gotland, there is a whole repertoire of emic terms for travellers and temporary guests, based precisely on how they relate to, and engage and interact with the local community: family, relatives, and friends; students, conference guests, business people, mainlanders, tourists. While some of these visitors activate a set of reciprocal guest-host relations and therefore are not commonly recognised as tourists, others activate formal transactions that position the locals as an anonymous, faceless 'mass-host' ready to meet the demands of the visitors, and the visitors as an equally anonymous, faceless mass of tourists of a few stereotyped types, for which the emic terms in Gotland typically entail a distanced position in relation to the visitor: bus tour and cruise ship tourists, 'party people', 'pleasure seekers', 'walking wallets', 'Medievalists' (taking part in an annual Medieval festival week), 'heritage tourists', 'summer Gotlanders', '08-ers' (the trunk code of the Stockholm area) or simply 'ignorant mainlanders'.

All these different terms denote roles or positions that involve processes of negotiations on inclusion and exclusion, and an interpretive dialogue on the relation between the parties involved and on their relation to the place. Through the negotiations, and to what extent the interaction builds on dialogue, respect, and reciprocity between the visitors and the visited, the local place can become related to in many different ways, such as a home, a workplace, or a destination.

A set of relations

Throughout the research programme and in this book, we have taken off from the idea of 'sustainable visits' as a set of relations between people, and between people and places. In Figure 2, some of the fundamental relations involved are illustrated:

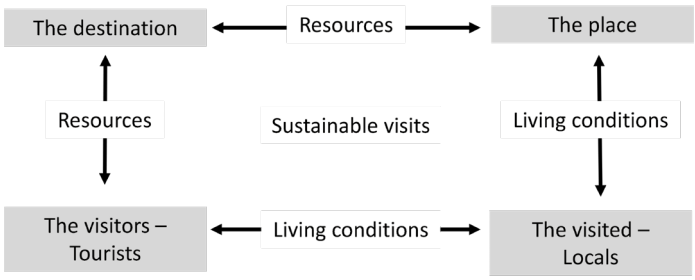

Figure 2: Fundamental relations for enabling sustainable visits.

The place is where *the visited hosts* live their everyday lives and by doing that they may also be regarded as *locals*. The relation between *locals* and the *place* is, to a large extent, defined by the living conditions. These conditions can be physical and tangible, such as seasonal variations, wind, temperature, or access to decent and affordable housing. There are also intangible conditions, such as common history (e.g., generations of ancestors that have lived there before oneself) and cultural experience (e.g., local traditions). For the individual, the experience of the relation to the place is often of fundamental importance for how the quality of life is perceived.

From the perspective of the visitor, *the place* can be experienced as a *destination*. People may come to and take part of a *place* for a multitude of reasons, as will be described in several chapters in the book. When *visitors* come as tourists, the *place* transforms into a *destination*. Visitors' relations to *the destination* are not primarily based on the living conditions, but on images, stories that are available beforehand, and on carefully selected artifacts, symbols, and *resources* provided at *the place*. Just as in the case of living conditions, these resources can be tangible (water, food, buildings etcetera) or intangible (nature sceneries, past and present stories of the place).

At *a destination,* certain types of visitors come as *tourists*, thereby invoking a typified, derived version of the guest-host relation. In this relation there are expectations on *the visited locals* to act as hosts and provide *the tourists* with the *resources* needed to fulfil their expectation of *the place*, but without considering how *the living conditions* are influenced.

In the following chapters of this book, we give many examples of unbalance in the relations between *the place*, *the destination*, *the*

visitor, and *the visited*. For example, it is often taken for granted that if we use resources to create *the destination*, the *living conditions* for *the locals* will automatically be improved. As is shown, there are many cases when this has been proven wrong. In well-known tourist hotspots, such as Tenerife, Mallorca, Venice, or Barcelona, the efforts to create a destination and the resources necessary to uphold the expectations of the place as a destination, have made the living conditions harder for the locals. Affordable housing is nowhere to be found and the service enabling a decent everyday life (grocery stores, schools, hospitals etcetera) is less prioritised. Such places risk a transformation from local *place* to a reproduced image of itself as a *destination*.

To us, 'sustainable visit' is a searchlight for other ways of visiting, ways that consider the balance between the factors and the relations in Figure 2. Such a balancing will have to consider both the visitors and the visited, the place and the destination, as well as the use of and the preservation of resources. In this book we approach these factors and relations in broad terms, and with the enabling of sustainable visits as the core of the contributions.

The starting point for the book

The aim of the book is, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, to contribute to the conversations around enabling sustainable visits – for practitioners, researchers, students, and anyone interested. The idea was formulated in 2014 at Uppsala University Campus Gotland, in Visby, Sweden. Thirty researchers from 13 disciplines came together in the multi-disciplinary long-term research programme, Sustainable Visits, focusing on the relation between destination production, local life and sustainability, and building on 'sustainable visits' so as to envision a tourism with minimal ecological, social, and cultural footprints.[13]

13 See https://www.campusgotland.uu.se/sustainvisits/

Using Gotland, the well-known tourist destination in the Baltic Sea, as a point of departure,[14] the aim of the programme was to explore sustainable visits from local, regional, national and global perspectives, and to contribute to the development and establishment of sustainable perspectives in the tourism and hospitality industry. To enrich the programme, national and international researchers were invited to participate. In close connection with the research programme, a multi-disciplinary, two-year master's programme, Sustainable Destination Development, with students from all over the world, was initiated at Campus Gotland, Uppsala University, in 2016.

In 2020, a number of the researchers involved in the Sustainable Visits programme decided to assemble an anthology of texts on enabling sustainable visits. In the following years, themes and arguments were discussed, and drafts were reviewed and revised over a series of academic workshops. The chapters that follow are the result.

In the light of increasing sustainability issues affecting all aspects of life on planet Earth, and the problems inflicted by booming tourism, this anthology addresses how tourism, culture, economy, businesses, and more can contribute to sustainable visits, and how we as researchers can contribute to enabling destinations, visitors and the visited locals to become active agents in the transition to sustainability in society at large while allowing for new visits.

The content of the book

Through 10 chapters, experienced researchers from different disciplines and universities discuss empirical studies of *visits* in the broad sense. The book is divided into three sections.

14 Gotland is Sweden's largest island. Its area is 3,140 km² (0.8 per cent of Sweden's area) and its coastline is about 800 km. Around 60,000 people live and work on Gotland all year round, of whom around 25,000 live in the city of Visby. The island has been habituated since the Stone Age (around 10,000 years ago) and has a rich cultural heritage, seen in, amongst others, the Visby city wall and the 92 medieval churches, built between the 12th and 15th centuries (Uppsala University, 2023).

In part I – **Place**, Griggio & Ronström illustrate in Chapter 2 how the location of the Medieval Week festival taking place on the island of Gotland moved from a geographical place into an online space, as it transitioned into a digital event, due to the restrictions under the COVID-19 pandemic. In their chapter, Griggio & Ronström highlight how digitalisation of events can create new social spaces and be an alternative way to achieve sustainable visits.

In Chapter 3, Farsari & Elbe continue the discussion of what a place is as they analyse how deviating perspectives on sustainable visits are drawn upon by opponents and proponents in relation to the construction of a new airport. They raise a critical voice and question whether growth is the way forward for sustainable tourism.

In part II – **Destination** and the **Visitor,** the focus shifts to how places are socially constructed to become destinations. Who is represented and who is excluded in the construction of a destination is the question raised by Lönnroth & Ronström in Chapter 4, as they discuss how a place is promoted in tourist brochures.

In Chapter 5, Nordvall illustrates how visitors tend to reproduce stereotypical images of a destination, and discusses the role that such reproduction plays in the social construction of a destination, and in the end for the possibilities of attaining sustainable visits.

In Chapters 6 and 7, the focus shifts from the visitor to local actors that enable a destination. In Chapter 6, Cöster & Skoog describe how a public organisation (Region Gotland) can contribute to making a destination more sustainable. They emphasise that it is not enough to address sustainability in organisational goals and strategies, and that there is also a need to develop management control processes and systems that facilitate sustainability.

While Chapter 6 illustrates the internal complexity in a public organisation's sustainability work, in Chapter 7, Sjöstrand, Gebert Persson & Ågren illustrate the history of organising a heterogeneous landscape of actors on the island of Gotland. They also critically discuss the UNWTO's strategic view of the Destination Management Organisation's role in organising a place into sustainable destination.

In Part III – **Visited**, Heldt Cassel & Stenbacka demonstrate in Chapter 8 how different practices develop through social dynamics in a peripheral area. While some visitors are welcomed, others are perceived as more problematic, and locals rather try to cope with different tensions that arise as a result.

In Chapter 9, Oxenswärdh turns the focus towards the entrepreneurs and their role as co-creators of local sustainable tourism. Although entrepreneurs are innovative and creative, they commonly struggle to make a living from their businesses. An argument put forward in the chapter is the role that academia can play in facilitating interactions between entrepreneurs while playing a part in individual and collective learning on sustainability.

Learning and education is also a theme for Chapter 10, where Kelman discusses how disaster visits can serve as a possibility to learn from the causes of previous mistakes and can create awareness of the necessity to understand that nature and humanity are co-dependent and co-existent.

In Chapter 11, Hylland Eriksen discusses what happens when tourism abruptly halts and how the absence of tourism impacts small societies. Hylland Eriksen compares different small island developing societies (SIDS) and their vulnerability in relation to tourism, in his discussion of how to ensure sustainable hospitality.

In the final Chapter 12, we present some insights and conclusions based on the content of Chapters 2-11, and where to go from here to enable sustainable visits.

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PART I PLACE

i. Griggio & Ronström
ii. Elbe & Farsari

Mingling absence and presence in Visby: the Medieval Week 'Plague Edition' 2020

Consuelo Griggio & Owe Ronström

Abstract

Since the beginning of the pandemic in spring 2020, new digital and hybrid solutions for meetings, events, concerts, and festivals have been introduced as an opportunity to continue cultural activities during lockdown. Pressure was put on festival organisers, forcing the entire industry to adapt and find new solutions to survive. On the island of Gotland, *Medeltidsveckan* (Medieval Week), the largest medieval festival in the Nordic region, successfully launched a fully digital version in 2020, aptly called 'The Plague Edition'. This chapter discusses the digitisation of Medeltidsveckan and argues that the digitalisation of large events might not only represent a novel chance to enable sustainable visits in the future but also an opportunity for the creation of new social spaces and places in which presence and absence are mingled and negotiated in new ways.

Introduction: scope and aims of the study

The camera slides smoothly over the stately knights attending to their pawing horses; the anticipation for the beginning of the much awaited and loved tournament is palpable. *Medeltidingar*, committed 'medievalists', are also preparing for the event with excitement, calling to family and friends to join them. Many are wearing their medieval attire for the occasion, as they always do when in Visby

during Medieval Week. The camera zooms in on a horse's steaming muzzle. Children jump up and down with unstoppable exhilaration: "Look, Mummy, the horses, the horses are coming!". The knights enter the field, and the cheering begins. People are loud, joyful, and extremely engaged. Medieval Week is in full swing. The only difference this year is that all of this is happening in the distant comfort and confinement of viewers' homes. Welcome to Medieval Week Plague Edition 2020.

Medieval Week (MW) is one of Europe's most prominent medieval festivals and one of Sweden's largest cultural events. Since 1984 it has been held in the medieval town of Visby, a World Heritage site and one of Sweden's most popular tourist destinations. Built around participation, inclusivity, playfulness, sustainability, historical education, and an intensively affective medieval presence, the festival has experienced a steady growth in fame and attention. Around 40,000 national and international participants make up the core, and to that is added a fair number of additional visitors.[1] Nearly 80% are returning 'medievalists', locally named *medeltidingar* and, among the organisers, those known as *trogna,* loyal, or *investerade*, invested, underscoring the strong connection many guests have with the festival.

In early spring 2020, faced with the global spread of Covid-19, the organisers decided to launch an exclusively online festival: Medieval Week – Plague Edition. The pandemic forced the organisers to rethink and restage the festival's content, its places, core values, and marketable assets. The digitalisation of the event gave organisers and participants a unique opportunity to jointly try out new ways to meet and create shared experiences and, not least importantly, to examine the conditions for arranging large festivals with less ecological footprints.

In this chapter, we focus on the making of the digital Medieval Week (DMW) in Visby 2020 as one pertinent example of how festivals and large events, traditionally held *in situ*, can be successfully translated into their digital version. The DMW is a case that illustrates larger trends and current changes that the tourism and hospitality industry is undergoing, breaking away from the unsustainable global paths followed so far and towards economic, social,

1 The number of additional visitors reached around 50,000 in the late 1990s but has since then dropped to between 10,000 and 20,000.

The Medieval Week Plague Edition. Photo: Medeltidsveckan.

and environmental opportunities that may eventually be more sustainable. To what extent can online events enable sustainable visits? How can digital visits interact with physical ones? And, ultimately, what exactly is a 'visit'?

In the chapter, we examine how the organisers have dealt with mediated presence and physical absence. What became of Visby as a destination and the overall medieval experience in the new online format? How did the organisers manage to carry MW's core values into the online edition? Which online interfaces and platforms provided the best experience for guests, and which ones did not work and why? What lessons for the future emerged from the online edition? In the next three sections relevant research on festivals, digitalisation and placemaking is discussed. Thereafter follow sections on the Medieval week in Visby and the making of the digital version 2021," The Plague Edition". To end we discuss how the mingling of presence and absence in new forms affected the experience of place and interaction, and to what extent digital and hybrid festivals can enable sustainable destination development and sustainable visits.

Researching festivals, place, digital medialisation and sustainability

The emergence of digital media in the past 20 years has revolutionsised tourism landscapes and consumers' engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2016a, 2016b). Digital media has become an outlet for consumers' engagement and an efficient tool for placemaking, destination branding, and marketing (Chalip & Costa, 2005; Lee & Arcodia,

2011). Digital social media are active interfaces that build relationships between a place, its locals, histories, heritages, and visitors. One way these relationships are created is through events such as Medieval Week. The pandemic and the increasing use of social media call for novel interpretations of event tourism and placemaking. This is particularly relevant in a case like DMW, when the essence of the physical experience of place and its cultural, social, and environmental manifestations is built on something as distant and absent as the Middle Ages in digitally mediated form.

Festivals like MW have a long tradition as being social arenas where people of different classes and backgrounds meet, engage with each other, and momentarily escape their daily life. Festivals are also often important platforms for creative experimentation, and cultural and social innovation (Duvignaud, 1976). Originally produced and celebrated by local people, festivals in modern society have become increasingly commodified as marketplaces and touristic attractions, boosting the local tourist season. Since the 1990s, festivals of all kinds have become a major form for cultural production in the Western world (Yeoman et al., 2004; Armbrecht et al., 2020), a phenomenon many scholars refer to as 'festivalisation'. This term, that incorporates many aspects of society at large, such as food, sports, music, city development and tourism, is often accompanied by product marketing and artistic and identity expressions (Ronström, 2016b; Woodward & Taylor, 2014). Today, festivals are an integral part of the tourism industry, which, in turn, is dependent on destinations, attractions, and something to see and experience. While festivals provide the attractive experiences, the tourism industry provides the audiences. The result is an impressive festival calendar: thousands of events flourish yearly across northern Europe, most of them during two or three short summer months (Ronström, 2016b).

Despite a growing interest in festival research, there is still a need for more studies, not least of event tourism and sustainability. In the past decades, several studies have examined the impact of festivals on the economic and environmental sustainability of destinations and host communities (Picard & Robinson, 2006; Mair, 2019). Event research has yet to dedicate more attention to the social aspects of

sustainability and how festivals can promote and produce social sustainability through the establishment of a sense of community for participants (cf. Hassanli et al., 2020; Quinn, 2019; McClinchey, 2020). Another area of interest concerns the relevance and challenges for festivals and event tourism in the digital age. Digitisation is a growing trend in the world of festivals and events. Although MW turned all-digital only in 2020, the festival has had a strong online presence for years. For some time, MW's official website (in Swedish and English) has been paired with social media channels such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. MW's Wikipedia page is regularly updated by engaged volunteers coordinated by the chancellery. What needs to be more consistently studied is the interaction between digitisation of festivals and placemaking, destination development, consumer engagement and tourism, as well as the interplay between different social media platforms and destinations. One of the few studies in this direction is Laurell & Björner's (2018) on eight Swedish digital festivals. The authors conclude that the festivals were effective as a means of place branding, that they aroused high levels of engagement through social media, and that the ongoing digitisation of the event sector needs to be further explored. The pandemic has ignited new research on festivals and their online transformations, bringing to the centre questions about the meaning and form of social closeness, presence and absence, placemaking, branding, tourism, and sustainability.[2]

Digitalisation and the restructuring of social life

The MW in Visby is part of a growing global tourism industry that markets aspects of locality and local heritage. The globalisation of the tourism and heritage industry has been a rampant phenomenon since the 1960s. It has been accompanied by what Manuel Castells (2010) viewed as one – if not *the one* – defining characteristic of

2 Cf. The Open University's online conference on Festivals Research and Covid 19, Sept. 20 https://fass.open.ac.uk/festivals-research (accessed 11/01/20). See also Davis, 2020; Banke & Woodward, 2020; Rowen, 2020.

late modernity, namely digitalisation.[3] The digitalisation of society has restructured large parts of social life around digital communication and media and transformed the relation between media and communication, on one hand, and culture and society on the other (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016, p. 560; Kaun & Fast, 2014, p. 8). Media, in particular social media, have had a substantial impact on a range of cultural phenomena in the past decade. As Danish media researchers Stig Hjarvard & Line Nybro Petersen (2013, p. 54) observe:

> In addition to a globalization and commercialization of culture, we are also experiencing a mediatization of culture, which has brought both everyday culture and high arts into new social contexts. This not only makes them available to a larger portion of society but also transforms the very nature of these cultural practices.

This is particularly true in Sweden. Over the past two decades, the Swedish government has invested massively in information technology (IT) infrastructure, resulting in widespread usage of digital tools among the population (Findahl & Davidsson, 2015). In an OECD report on island economies, it is noted that 'islands in northern Europe tend to have high percentage of households with broadband connections and their population uses the Internet more often' (OECD). This is certainly the case for Gotland. The island has been at the forefront of investment in IT infrastructure since 2010 (Region Gotland, 2017). Today, most of the island is connected through high-speed fiber, thus making Gotland one of the best digitally connected parts of one of the world's best digitally connected nations.

Statistics show that global engagement in social media rose considerably during the pandemic. A study on the usage of social media among Swedes shows that 'under the pandemic, internet users' use

3 It is commonplace in media studies to distinguish analytically between *medialisation* (or mediation), which refers to the distribution of messages through public media, and *mediatisation* (or mediaisation), which refers specifically to the process of adapting the communicated messages to the medium (Kaun & Fast, 2014). Correspondingly, *digitisation* refers to the technological methods of converting analogue material into digital bits, whereas *digitalisation* refers to 'the way in which many domains of social life are restructured around digital communication and infrastructure' (Brusila 2021:1).

of social media increased by a total of 2%, from 87% in the first quarter of 2020 to 89% in the third quarter. Compared with 2019 (82%), this is an increase of as much as 7%' (Internetstiftelsen, 2020, p. 105). Swedes are thus digitally well-connected and very active users of social media, which makes a study of user-generated content for online festivals not only possible but also highly relevant.

Place and placemaking

A key question in the digital era concerns the relation between experiences of physical presence, social interaction, and meaning. It has long been commonplace to understand place and placemaking as tightly linked to physical space, sensory experience, and activity practices. The idea is that to 'be somewhere', to create and experience a place, one needs to be physically present (Ghavampour & Vale, 2019). Globalisation and digitisation have, however, substantially affected the nature and practice of such experiences. Along with German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1976), we approach place and placemaking as those practices and relations that people create and engage with to make the world meaningful to them. In this regard, issues of absence and presence in the digital dimensions appear to take on new forms and meanings. Presence in the digital age is no longer 'subjected' exclusively to physicality, but it is rather the result of practices through which people engage relationally with their environment.

According to British sociologist Anthony Giddens, the expansion and radicalisation of modernity in the second half of the 20th century are the results of the reorganisation of social relations, along with the separation of time and space, and the disembedding of social systems. For Giddens, a major consequence of globalisation is 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which links distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa' (1990, p. 64). Artifacts, behaviours, social relations, and entire social systems are to increasing degrees disembedded, uncoupled and lifted out of their local and physical contexts of interaction, and are restructured across indefinite spans of space and time (Giddens, 1990, p. 21). The result is that proximity and distance are now conjoined in ways that have few parallels in prior ages (Giddens, 1990, p. 146).

Without doubt, many still feel familiar with their local contexts. But that feeling, Giddens argues, is no longer created by the local peculiarities of a place. It is rather conveyed over great distances in time and space. The ideas of local identity as important and desirable are globalised, as are many of the expressive forms used to shape such local identities:

> The local and the global have become inextricably intertwined. Feelings of close attachment to or identification with places still persist. But these are themselves disembedded: they do not just express locally based practices and involvements but are shot through with much more distant influences. (Giddens, 1990, p. 108f)

It is in this light that we approach the Plague Edition of Medieval Week, not as a distancing from the physical place, but rather as an extension and complement of it through visitors' online engagement. It is likely that some aspects of 'being there', of experiencing and making sense of a place, requires bodily presence. However, it is also possible that what might emerge in a process of digital medialisation is in fact a heightened sense of other aspects of place, and of the subjective and emotional attachment people have to it. The issue thus becomes not that of fixing the meaning of place but rather that of disclosing the potential and the possibilities of place.

In the case of DMW, the global pandemic prompted novel ways for organisers, participants, and visitors to interact with each other and with the places that constitute the unicity of the MW, namely the medieval town of Visby and the island of Gotland. The organisers were forced to try out new practices of building relations with their audiences online – from social media to live online events, which have, in different ways, affected both the digital and physical place. Presence and absence were no longer understood as solely dependent on physical presence in a place, but rather approached as a question about relationality, or more specifically, the quality and intensity of the interaction between the organisers, the participants, and the visitors.

The digitalisation of MW is, then, about the ways digital participation in the festival has transformed some of the previous relations between place and visitors and how these new relations can impact the future of the festival and its core values to create a more inclusive and sustainable event. These themes and results then prompt new

questions and possibilities for the understanding of how a place can be sustainably produced, experienced, and even branded digitally which, in turn, may enable new opportunities for a successful transition into sustainable visits.

The place: Visby, the Middle Ages, and the birth of *Medeltidsveckan*

The initiative to establish a historical festival celebrating Visby's rich history and heritage, and using the once prosperous and powerful medieval Hanseatic Town of Visby as its main stage, came from a group of local intellectuals, most of whom were incomers from the mainland. The members of this group not only shared a deep interest in showcasing medieval Visby, but they also had personal access to local, regional, national, and even international professional networks and political elites that they were able to activate to realise their vision (Ronström, 2008, p. 141). The starting point of MW was a cultural project entitled *Medeltidsmänniskans liv och tro* (The Life and Faith of the Medieval Man), in early 1984. In August of the same year, the first edition of MW was launched. Since then, it has been held annually during the first week of August up to 2020. A main goal from the very beginning was, and still is, pedagogical.[4] The ambition was to teach the visitors about the Middle Ages, to give value to the past in the present, and thereby to foster local pride. For Wiveka Schwartz, by many considered the Great Mother of MW, the festival was created by and for the inhabitants of Gotland: 'The goal is popular education! /…/ MW is for the inhabitants of Gotland by the inhabitants of Gotland, so that they can learn about their own history' (Johansson et al., 2000, p. 95).[5]

Soon, however, growing numbers of young Middle Age enthusiasts started to use MW as a novel stage on which they could realise and display their fantasies and tale worlds. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, the island saw a wave of interest in the Middle Ages, as a part of a comprehensive trend throughout the Western world. Through this wave, medievality became a matter not only for the

4 As stated in the MW foundation's 1998 Annual Report.

5 All translations from Swedish to English are by the authors.

academic 'knowers', but even more so for young enthusiastic 'doers' – enactors, performers, and live role players (Lundberg, Malm & Ronström, 2003, p. 309-333). Within just a few years, they carved out a place of their own as a major part of the event. A true passion for socialising, and engaging with and performing the past, became major features of MW for these youngsters in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. Rita has been involved with the festival from the very beginning in 1984, when she was just a teenager:

> I had my friends who would come here and wanted to 'play the Middle Ages'. At the beginning it was a little bit against a headwind …. The regional administration of Gotland feared that young people would just find cheap accommodations …we made them understand that we were looking for …we wanted to play Middle Ages for real, it was a serious idea. […] It was much about playful learning … and it still is this aspect that drives me … to spark interest in history.[6]

The Gotlandic youth movement that rose from MW in the 1980s was, from the very start, closely connected to international youth groups with a sparkling interest in fantasy worlds and role playing, such as the British Tolkien Society, founded in London 1969, and the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), founded in Berkeley in 1966 (Gustafsson, 2002, p. 92). In 1985, Rita and her friends decided to establish their own branch of SCA called *Styringheim*, which over time would become the largest SCA branch in Europe. Within only a few years, the passionate engagement of Styringheim members, and the playful atmosphere that it created, became a trademark of the festival. Rita thinks that MW has been important for Gotland's inhabitants, making them proud of their own island, their own place and local identity, their own history and culture.

Early on, MW already attracted almost 100,000 visitors. The immediate success inspired the initiators to take the next step, namely, to have Visby's inner town nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. If the first proponents of the 'The Hanseatic town of Visby', inscribed as a World Heritage in 1995, were at first intellectuals and professionals in Visby and Stockholm, with the antiquarian authorities as their official spokesmen, soon also the young

6 Names of interviewees have been changed.

re-enactors and live role players engaged in MW took the World Heritage designation to their hearts. In the years to come, MW went through a transition from an informative – learning about the Middle Ages – into a performative festival, emphasising learning by doing through playful engagement. This enabled the creation of new 'heritage interfaces' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995), which in turn made the festival increasingly popular for a growing and diversified range of participants and visitors from all over the world. A particularly strong and unique feature of the festival is that it is based on a close cooperation between the chancellery, the performing artists, and the 'invested' returning participants. Organised as a platform or creative frame, '*ram',* as Rita says, the festival provides plenty of room for both artists and visitors to express and develop their own skills and initiatives. While the chancellery organises the event, a substantial part of the content is arranged and performed by a large variety of visiting groups of musicians and artists. Lisa points out that the employed staff in the chancellery are merely '*medarrangörer',* managing middlemen. This makes for a decentralised format that allows an essential symmetry and a mutually beneficial interdependency between the organisers and the artists.

The making of the Digital Medieval Week

In March 2020, the Covid pandemic had already spread around most of the globe. New health and travelling restrictions were put in place everywhere. The very day the first case of Covid-19 was detected in Gotland, the chancellery had a meeting with local tourism businesses and the county administrative board (*Länsstyrelsen*) to discuss the future of the festival and of the local hospitality and tourism industry. Lisa, current operations manager, describes the three possible outcomes for the festival that were discussed in this early, frantic phase: a) the festival will carry on as usual, b) the festival will be in hybrid form, c) the festival will be only digital. At that time, Lisa remembers, the third possibility was not an option: 'We did not consider that we needed to do it only digitally'.

Given the increasing uncertainty caused by the ramping pandemic, the organisers finally decided to go fully digital, and launch the first online edition, the 'Plague Edition'. Rita recalls that the decision was amply supported by the realisation that the festival


Nygöy
Apothek
HÄR FINNS
INGET
ATT SE

← The entrance to the 'studio', nested inside the Old Pharmacy.
Photo: Wikimedia, Medieval Week on Gotland 2020.

was an important economic source for all the performing artists taking part in MW year after year. Fundamental to the festival's decentralised format was the need to develop an economic strategy that would encompass the festival's core values such as camaraderie, playing, education, and sustainability. How could the chancellery support artists and itself as an institution and an enterprise, and still deliver a festival which was true to its origin and core values, and was meaningful to visitors?

The organisers understood that they had to develop a new online marketing strategy for DMW to create a sense of expectation and value co-creation among participants and visitors. For this reason, as Lisa explains, the chancellery first started marketing via its YouTube channel directly to all the festival enthusiasts, the great majority of which are returning visitors. Lisa underscores the importance of the festival for many people around the world as a way to socialise, strengthen their identity, and recharge their batteries, and how the news of the festival's digital version was very well received in those times of uncertainty. Social media such as Facebook and Instagram became essential platforms for easy and efficient communication with visitors about the online events that would be taking place during the week. As reported on the festival's website (*En prisvinnande digital medeltidsfestival*), 'Visitors this year enjoyed 150 artists, lectures, workshops, virtual pubs, online market, and parties. […] The result was over 70,000 visits'. Furthermore, the same digital platforms, in addition to YouTube chats, offered visitors the opportunity to communicate with the organisers and each other in real time.

The financials of DMW was a main concern for the organisers. Many artists were preoccupied with missing annual revenues if the festival did not take place in presence. Organisers understood from the very beginning that in order to finance the festival and its artists it was necessary to include participants and visitors in the making of DMW. Various digital strategies were used to finance the festival, from Kickstarter to Patreon, thus enabling visitors to become part of the making of the festival. Digital technology enabled both visitors and artists to connect and to continue feeding the sense of community

and belonging they used to experience during the place-based festival. At the end, 500,000 SEK was collected, which enabled the organisers to pay for many artists' commissions, the technical part of DMW, and the development of a rich online programme, as they had already decided that DMW would run for eight days, around the clock.

The making of DMW had an impact on the organisers as well. Their traditional roles changed considerably since they all had to adapt to the new digital challenges they were faced with. Their roles became more fluid, as they could no longer rely on many volunteers and other stakeholders. New skills needed to be learned and mastered. Lisa and Maria recall how they had to learn about live streaming and how to pose and prepare for the camera, find the right angle, and wear makeup for shooting. Live streaming and recorded events were delivered from the DMW's hub, called 'the studio'. Nested inside a medieval house in Old Town Visby, it became the front stage that connected the place Visby and MW with thousands of visitors worldwide.

Some features of MW, however, could not easily be digitised because of diminished personnel during DMW and restrictions due to Covid-19. This meant that the medieval pubs, the market, the camping outside the city's walls, the beer tent, the souvenir and information center, and the tournaments all had to become not only digitised, but also digitalised, in various ways adapted to the digital format. Large posters saying '*Här finns inget att se*!' (Here's nothing to see!) were displayed where these events would usually take place, informing visitors that this year they would take place online only.

For the medieval market, one of the most popular features of MW, a digital market via Zoom was created. Here, visitors could meet vendors and buy products on the vendors' online boutiques: 'MW is very much about meeting … if we take that away, what's left? But we tried to solve this through the digital market' Lisa tells us.

'Nothing to see' sign. Photo: Wikimedia, Medieval Week on Gotland 2020.

A new place

The broadcasting of live events during DMW and the online participation of many of the viewers forced the organisers to deal with mediated presence and physical absence in unprecedented ways. As mentioned, MW was initially conceived and framed as a museal learning project. During a summer week, museum practices and display techniques were moved into the streets and squares of medieval Visby to attract people to watch as artisans, vendors, and actors staged condensed versions of medieval life. The immediate success depended on the way the festival managed to establish a new connection between the town's absent and abstract medieval history and its present life as a tourist destination. While one part of the week continued to center around the abstract and absent, as in lectures and seminars on aspects of medieval culture, another and growing part centered on sensuality, play, fun, and community making in the present. With the shift followed a change of the temporal focus of the entire event, from the historical Middle Ages, to what could take place here and now in the MW itself. Within the medieval frame, it became possible for the medievalists to establish collective experiences of *närhet*, closeness and intimacy, an intense transformative experience that not only made the most 'invested' return year after year, but that also, at least for some of them, made the rest of the year seem like a protracted prelude to next year's MW.

For the organisers of DMW, it was necessary to preserve and convey this sense of closeness, intimacy, and devotion. How did these features find their way into the digital version? Visitors and organisers tried out different and novel ways to be present, involved, and active online. Concerts and jousting were filmed with multiple cameras and large PA systems. Live streamed features from the studio in the head office were broadcast around the clock, together with prerecorded concerts, shows, and lectures from various locations. In a format reminiscent of large sports' TV broadcasts, the various programmes were introduced, and their content, performance, and mood commented upon by an invited studio audience.

To further strengthen the sense of presence and participation, some events, such as concerts and lectures, were broadcast via Zoom. Live chats gave participants an opportunity to be present by commenting live, often sharing their screen, and showing themselves

'On air'. Live streaming in the 'studio'. Photo: Wikimedia, Medieval Week on Gotland 2020.

during the event. The technological platforms thus enabled communication not only from the studio to the viewers, but also vice versa and between viewers.

Broadcast tournaments turned out to be among the most loved events during DMW. Harald and Lisa were surprised to learn that many visitors found the online version of the tournaments even better than the ones in loco: 'Many commented that watching the tournaments online gave them the opportunity to come closer to the horses and the knights, something that is usually not possible when someone sits in the stands in the arena'. The camera zooms and close ups gave viewers the rare opportunity to get close in ways that would

be impossible during the *in loco* tournaments: 'It felt like I could almost touch the horse … it was nice for my children to get so close to the horses …' one female visitor commented on MW Facebook page. The virtual proximity enabled by close ups enhanced visitors' experience of the festival by creating an unprecedented degree of emotional *närhet*.

Another example of how DMW created a new and enhanced sense of place was during the daily streamed concerts. Many commented on social media that interviews and informal chats following the artists' performance, a novelty of the digital version, were an effective way to get closer to the artists and to 'get to know them at another level'. Digitalisation and medialisation made it possible not only to alter but also to give those feelings new, global platforms.

Time and again, our informants emphasise how DMW became an important platform for visitors and organisers 'to keep close and in contact with each other' through social media and the internet during the raging pandemic. The digital platforms through which the festival reached its visitors supported creation and sharing of a communal and inclusive atmosphere that touched the lives of those participating. Lisa was pleased that many visitors commented on DMW's Facebook page that the online version 'had been one of the best MW ever'. The participative and supportive atmosphere created through the digital form of MW points to the continuation of the quality of social relations and the prominent presence that has evolved during MW since 1984.

A surprising aspect of DMW was how the chancellery was faced with several challenges of a social nature. Already beforehand, DMW organisers were aware that the festival was an important locus for social interaction, relief, and comfort, a playful escape from the realities of ordinary everyday life. Jane and Lisa, however, noticed that the online version, along with life's unpredictability during the pandemic, exacerbated mental health issues and requests for help among many of the returning visitors. The situation reached a point where the organisers decided to put out an official statement concerning mental health support during DMW: 'We are not trained, we cannot handle these things, but here is a list of qualified experts'. The response was positive. DMW chats and social media became a new, inclusive platform on which visitors could breach the physical distance and absence through online *närhet,* closeness, and presence.

What then became of Visby's old town in the new format? During DMW, the exclusive centre of the medieval experience had to become both a background for current events and a promise for a better future ahead. Although it was no longer possible for participants to physically enjoy the medieval town, DMW was able to create presence and participation by presenting a more intimate image of the town using the studio as the central stage for most events, from live concerts to live interviews. The focus thus shifted from the town's well-known medieval wall, church ruins, winding nooks and crannies, to a more enclosed, virtual 'medieval' space that few had experienced before. What emerged was a specific version of the town's destination image, a mix of the visitors' previous experiences, memories and perceptions, images in tourist brochures, social media, TV, and the carefully selected images mediated by the festival organisers. Although a 'destination image' by default hovers freely above the physical location it refers to, it can still be made to appear with a strong presence. Since most participants were returnees that had already experienced Visby and MW physically in previous years, it became possible for them not only to recognise the place, but also to develop a sense of participation and intimate presence throughout the mediated festival.

Mingling absence and presence

How did the organisers manage to digitalise MW, and carry its core values into the online edition? Despite all initial uncertainties and difficulties about digitalising a longstanding, widely popular, place-based festival, the organisers were pleased with the success of DMW and the around 70,000 online visitors. Many programmes were well suited to the new digital format. Concerts, lectures, and talks could easily be broadcasted, recorded or live streamed. As mentioned, also the tournaments were successfully adapted to digital media. As many media technologies were also available for invested artists elsewhere, they were able to provide their prerecorded or streamed features to the overall programme.

Although there had been some initial difficulties due to technical issues and the inexperience of many of the organisers and participants with live streaming, Lisa was surprised how quickly they all learnt. Besides the technical aspects of DMW, certainly pivotal for

the delivery of an online festival, organisers mainly measured the success of DMW through visitors' participation and attendance. They believe that many of the online platforms were able to carry on the most important core values the festival: commitment, comradery, a place for escaping 'regular life', and enjoying different social relations.

During breaks between events, through screen sharing and chats, visitors were able to create and share a participatory relational space (Massey, 2005) that felt like the MW they knew and loved. Through the mediatised events and chats, DMW was able to create a new 'place' where some of the core values of MW could be enacted. Lisa recalls how visitors were able to create an inclusive, relaxing, and participatory online 'place' between events:

> It was surprising and exciting at the same time. People would go online before a live streamed event or during breaks and connect with each other by sharing their screens. They were all dressed in medieval clothing, sitting on the couch with friends and family, enjoying the events, and connecting via chat with other medeltidingar. They would comment on the events and their clothes …

Furthermore, DMW was also able to connect visitors and artists in novel ways, bridging some of the distances characteristic of MW and establishing new places of connection and closeness. During DMW, events such as concerts and tournaments were inextricably linked to the physical places in Visby, from the ruins for the concerts to the grounds for the tournaments but filmed and broadcasted online for everyone to see and enjoy.

The apparent success of DMW, however, did not come without some failures and obstacles. The organisers agreed that the less successful online events were the pub evenings and the market. The failure of the online market and online shop became a serious concern for the festival's financial situation. Harald recalls how difficult it became to control cost management, especially when the traditionally lucrative medieval market did not work well online at all. Apparently, the online market and shop were unable to reproduce the conviviality and closeness of the in-place market. This does not mean that organisers will give up the online market. In future hybrid festivals, they believe that the online market might become a complement to the in-place market for those who are not able to attend

in person, and thus represent a step towards a more sustainable and inclusive festival, as wished by the organisers.

All organisers agree that DMW was a thoroughly valuable experience. They are also of the opinion that future editions of the festival will be hybrid – both in loco and online. They understand that the next editions will still be a sort of ongoing experimentation. The festival's hybrid format is also meant to represent a platform for further growth. As Lisa details, one of the goals of future editions is to reach out to new groups of visitors, from families with smaller children to millennials. A challenge thus lies in finding new in-presence and online solutions and offers that bind together the original core values of the festival and the physical place – Visby and Gotland – to the new places and interactive spaces created during future hybrid editions of the festival.

Other challenges presented by the online version of the festival pertain to technology. It was a huge endeavor for the organisers to set up all the technology needed to deliver a successful online festival. Lisa was pleased that many of those working for DMW, as well as most visitors online, were familiar with or skilled in IT. Since digitisation requires technology and technical expertise that can be costly and difficult to access, this may become a real problem for future online editions. While it may be possible to attract such expertise to stand up voluntarily in an exceptional situation such as during the Covid pandemic, or when trying out new exciting technology, it is reasonable to believe that it will be more difficult to get them to stay on without sufficient financial resources. Yet another challenge for upcoming versions of DMW, as for most digitalised events, is establishing accepted payment systems. Digitisation obviously affects the willingness to pay both among visitors and sponsors. Local sponsors may question their participation when visitors are no longer physically present.

Answers and reflections

DMW shows that several aspects of a place and a destination can be successfully digitalised. This is made possible to a large extent by the fact that those aspects that make up a destination, such as pictures, symbols, imageries, and narratives are anyway representations that have already been disembedded and uncoupled from the physical place to be marketed to far-away audiences. What the digital version

of the festival produced was in many ways a new place. This was made possible by using selected parts of Visby's medieval old town and presenting them in a way that allowed new opportunities to interact with them online. Participants might not have been physically in Visby, but they were still present and close. In that respect, DMW represents a shift from closeness and participation as a physical avenue to closeness and participation as the ability to connect with others, which shows the complexity of concepts such as place, closeness, and participation.

DMW also illustrates how the digitalisation of festivals and events can become a relevant platform and channel through which cultural practices and differences can be expressed in novel ways. This is achieved mainly by renegotiating ideas and practices of closeness and distance through their medialisation. Online public arenas such as live chats and social media facilitated, but also changed, the nature of engagement for the medievalists, enabling them to sustain close and meaningful social exchanges. Digital events are thus not simply mediated versions of in-place events. Even when they try to resemble in-place events, they are of a different kind altogether. Recalling Giddens, they are bound to deal with how to mingle presence and absence in historically new ways. It is reasonable to assume that future editions of the MW and other digital and hybrid festivals can potentially create novel interactive platforms in which visitors can deal with issues of presence and absence in a mutually intelligible and beneficial dialogue during the events, and at the same time enhance life outside of it.

As pointed out by Australian events and tourism researcher Jennifer Laing, it is necessary to focus on the role of festivals for changing behaviour, and 'not just environmental behaviour, but perhaps the way we interact and embrace difference' (Laing, 2018, p. 166). MW is well known for attracting and embracing people with various socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds and various lifestyles, experiences, and interests. Main issues for the organisers of DMW became precisely how to deal with one of the festival's most significant features, diversity, and how to convey to the online edition its core values – inclusivity, sustainability, camaraderie, commitment, education, and creating a space for escaping 'regular life' and enjoying different social relations.

Clearly, the online version made it harder for the organisers to apprehend and handle the diversity of the visitors. Especially difficult was how to manage the wide range of mental health issues encountered during DMW, from anxiety to depression. Those issues, as the organisers admitted, were exacerbated by the impossibility to meet face to face. On the other hand, DMW came to represent a sort of 'anchor' that participants could rely on to fend off the isolation, insecurity, and loneliness caused by the pandemic. Online chats, live streaming, social media, as well as organisers' direct involvement and commitment to help participants become socially included made it possible to create a festival in which the main core values of MW were kept alive. By creating inclusivity, social closeness, and a sense of belonging, while still being able to finance itself and survive as an enterprise, DMW contributed to social sustainability, an important component of sustainable visits.

As Harald and Lisa candidly admit, not every interface and platform put in place during DMW worked as they envisioned at the beginning. In essence the festival is an enterprise that needs to finance itself to be able to survive and continue to be an important social and cultural outlet for its audience. The organisers successfully raised enough money to arrange the online festival and financially support the organisation and most of the artists. Many online events, such as the tournaments, the concerts, and the various interviews with artists and other personalities, worked well and were well attended. Visitors could not only watch but often also interact live and thereby become active participants. Other events did not pull through their digitalised versions. The medieval market especially was a disappointment. Organisers and vendors lamented the fact that the market was not profitable for them, whereas participants felt that the camaraderie and social interactions they were used to experience at the market and in the pub did not translate well digitally. Organisers concede that part of the problem was also technical and are committed to finding new and more advanced online solutions for the future.

Towards sustainable visits

Sustainability and sustainable development are undoubtedly the most pressing and urgent issues the hospitality and tourism indus-

try needs to tackle. Extensive multidisciplinary research has shown some of the negative environmental consequences tourism has in affecting climate and causing the biological and social collapse of tourist destinations due to overcrowding, resource depletion, and social and cultural exploitation (Viken, 2022; Scott et al., 2012; Gössling, 2011).[7] The global and rapid spreading of the pandemic throughout 2020, anticipated by Michael Hall 2015 as 'the perfect storm', has had devastating economic consequences for the industry (UNWTOb, 2020). A fork in the road has been reached where at least two general outcomes are possible. A first, based on extrapolations of past recovery history, is that the sector will gradually revert to the pre-crisis unsustainable growth-oriented trajectory. An alternative scenario entails a transition towards a radically different way of doing things.

As it is often pointed out, the pandemic, during which mainstream tourism practices literally disappeared in front of our eyes, may have constituted a unique opportunity for society at large to pause, ponder the way forward, and ask itself how a more sustainable hospitality industry can be achieved globally. A new and more sustainable future for tourism needs to be understood and articulated in novel ways. It will be necessary for the industry to reformulate its reasons for existence to enable a transition from 'an experience economy' to a 'transformative economy' (Kline Hunnicutt, 2020). This substantial shift requires more concrete measures such as synergetic collaborations between policy makers and stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industry, along with a great deal of innovation, creativity, and ingenuity from all involved, including the visiting tourists and the visited locals in tourist destinations worldwide.

It is precisely in this respect that DMW presents a promising case. Having been one of the largest festivals in Sweden for decades, arranged annually in one of Sweden's most popular tourist destinations, MW has become a well-established feature of the national and international event tourism industry. The organisers are well

7 Our approach to sustainability is informed by UNESCO's 17 Sustainability Goals, and UNESCO's definition of sustainable tourism: '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' (https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development). Accessed 01/09/22.

informed, knowledgeable, highly reflexive, and aware of the many pertinent issues around sustainability, both locally and globally. Taken together, as we have underlined in this chapter, the festival presents a chance to investigate questions about how a 'grand' and complex notion such as sustainability is understood, translated, and handled in a concrete setting.

What the case of DMW shows is that digital and hybrid festivals can enable sustainable destination development. It is obvious that a digital festival will mean less in-place visitors and that this might affect the local economy negatively. The DMW's digital medieval market, for instance, was a financial flop for most vendors. Research shows that, to ensure economic growth and sustainable development, festivals require a professional marketing structure where producers and distributors meet for commercial purposes (Salvador et al., 2022), something that DMW probably did not sufficiently focus on. Local economy, however, can be negatively impacted by festivals in surprising ways. In their recent study of Mexican religious festivals, Montero & Yang (2022) argue that 'agriculturally coinciding' festivals, (those coinciding with peak planting or harvest months) lower agricultural and, consequently, economic productivity. A main problem for DMW, as for most digital events, is how to establish reliable payment procedures and new ways of financing. But it is equally obvious that less in-place visitors will have a number of positive effects for the local community, from reduced travel and CO_2 emissions, less consumption of water and other scarce resources, to less refuse and less overcrowding of local living spaces. Perhaps less obvious is how events such as DMW can contribute to maintaining a calendar of publicly available and accessible cultural events in destinations situated in small and sparsely populated areas and also contribute to maintaining and strengthening social interaction, group building, and social identity through various forms of virtual participation, from chats to live events. The overall cost-benefit calculations in terms of the sustainability of these aspects taken together have yet to be made.

Lessons for the future

In this chapter, we have highlighted the case of DMW as a relevant example of how festivals can be digitalised, attract visitors,

and still maintain their core values and main features. We have seen that events like DMW can become an important interactive platform through which visitors can temporarily escape the uncertainties of life during a global pandemic.[8] Online social interaction and well-being during DMW became central for participants trying to deal with the pandemic and the impossibility of participating physically (Lomanowska & Guitton, 2016). The digital festival and the social support that emerged spontaneously in online chats and social media came to represent new ways to recreate some of the most beloved features of the in-place event, such as participation and social interaction. In addition, organisers started to rethink the future of the in-place festival and its impact on the town of Visby and its environment. Maria and Lisa recognise that the festival has done a lot over the years to become more sustainable, from banning plastic where possible to making use of natural materials and products such as ceramic mugs. But they also acknowledge that DMW forced them to think differently about sustainability and inclusivity.

Can future hybrid editions become more sustainable and inclusive by not only limiting the number of participants travelling to the island and thus reducing their carbon footprint, but also by giving people with health issues and young families that might not be able to afford the trip to Gotland the opportunity to become part of the Medieval Week experience online?

To address those questions, we returned to MW in 2021. The post-pandemic edition, building upon the experience of the previous year, promised to be hybrid. The chancellery developed a brand-new programme in which in-place and digital events not only coexisted but also intermingled in novel new ways. The results of our study will soon be published.

Regardless, the case of DMW shows that digital and hybrid festivals have the potential to become important platforms for researchers, as well as for organisers and participants for exploring the nature and development of a place beyond its mere physicality.[9] Presence

8 As stated in UN's Agenda 2030, good mental health and access to mental health facilities is indispensable for a sustainable society. The UN lists mental illness and mental health as a priority for global development for the next 15 years (Votruba et al., 2016).

9 In the summer of 2021, we returned to MV to study its hybrid version. The results are forthcoming.

and absence are lifted from the physical realm and acquire new forms and meanings. Place becomes a 'social construct', an arena for the creation of meaning. Meaning is the product of interactive processes that involve the individual visitors, their social world and physical setting, and it is largely independent of the physical attributes that define the setting (Kyle & Chick, 2005). Hence, Visby online is also (a form of) Visby, in the same way as an online visit to the MW is also a visit.

Questions for discussions

- Think of some of the events and festivals you are familiar with. Do you think they contribute to sustainable visits? How so?
- What are the main features that an event or festival of the future needs to develop to become holistically sustainable?
- DMW's organisers had to deal with a few mental health issues during the festival. How can the hospitality and tourism industry satisfactorily address social sustainability in the future?
- How can digitalisation contribute to sustainable visits?

Notes on method

All data for this study was collected from March 2020 through January 2021. Primary data consists of semi-structured interviews with five key informants, namely MV organisers, conducted via Zoom from November 2020 through January 2021. MV's project manager was interviewed twice, in November 2020 and January 2021. The aim with the second interview was to recapitulate and further discuss some of the main points that had emerged from the study. From March through July 2020, we collected data produced by the chancellery to advertise its digital turn. Data includes videos, messages, and pictures on MV's social media (YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook) and website (medeltidsveckan.se). At the same time, secondary data such as regional and national newspaper articles was also consulted. During the festival other secondary data, such as publicly posted user-generated content, was collected through MV's

official social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube: *Medeltidsveckan på* Gotland). In addition, chats' transcripts as well as newspaper articles were also consulted. From mid-August through November 2020, generated-users content on social media (Facebook and Instagram) about DMV was used in the analysis to integrate data and results gathered through key informants' interviews.

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Do we need a new airport in the mountains? An analysis of soft and strong sustainability arguments

Jörgen Elbe & Ioanna Farsari

Abstract

Late 2019, a new airport was inaugurated in Sweden. This airport was built in the mountains of Sweden's largest ski area, Sälen. The planning of the airport went on for over 10 years and during this process there was a debate in the media between proponents and the opponents. Included in this debate were businesses, politicians, interest groups and individuals. The arguments were about whether a new airport would hinder or contribute to sustainable development at this destination. Interestingly, both sides claimed that their point of departure was to safeguard a sustainable development by either suggest an increase or a decrease of the number of visits to the area. In this chapter, the arguments in this debate are analysed by using the idea that the sustainability concept can take different forms. The material for the analysis was taken from articles in the news media during the planning period. A conclusion drawn from the analysis is that to understand discussions and conflicts regarding our common future, we must take values, interests, and power relations into account to understand how these reflects the attitude and interpretation of the meaning of sustainability.

Introduction

On Sunday, 22 December 2019, the first plane landed at the newly built Scandinavian Mountains Airport, the first new airport in Swe-

TUI aircraft landing. Photo: Scandinavian Mountains Airport, with permission.

den in over twenty years. On board the plane, which came from Malmö in southern Sweden, were 112 passengers who were looking forward to a week of skiing in the Swedish mountains. The construction of the airport, which is in the middle of the mountain landscape near northern Europe's largest ski area, was preceded by a process lasting over 10 years, in which individuals and groups argued for and against the construction. Basically, the arguments were about whether a new airport at this destination would hinder or contribute to sustainable development.

The advocates argued that an airport built in an already exploited ski area would contribute to the concentration of visits there and not burden more untouched areas. Furthermore, it was argued that the possibility of travelling to the destination by plane meant that car traffic in the area could be reduced and finally that tourists from new markets to the area would also mean positive effects for long-term economic sustainability. In short, the proponents believe that growth is not the problem, as it enables more sustainable visits which continue to economically develop a tourist destination in the periphery.

The opponents, on the other hand, believe that a new airport only means negative effects for the environment and that it is crucial to think about how a fundamental change in our behaviour is needed to create long-term sustainability. In this perspective, making sustainable visits is only possible through reducing the number of visitors and ensuring that travel takes place in a way that does not accelerate climate change. This implies non-growth or rather degrowth. How sustainability and the number of visits is viewed is thus a matter of values and interests, but also something that reflects the attitude and interpretation of the meaning of sustainability, of science and of the hopes for new technology.

In this chapter, we focus on why both proponents and opponents may claim that their point of departure is safeguarding sustainable development. We have analysed the arguments by using the idea that arguments for sustainability can take different forms, from weak to strong forms (Turner, 1992). By this analysis, we want to contribute to a better understanding of the conflict between economic growth interests and interests in promoting non-growth/degrowth as expressed in a concrete situation that significantly affects a local community. The material for the analysis was taken from news articles and debate articles, mainly from local papers, for the duration of the period from the announcement of the project in 2008 to the inauguration of the new airport in December 2019.

The rest of this chapter is organised as follows. In the next section, the theoretical perspectives on weak and strong approaches to sustainability are presented. Thereafter follows an introduction to the case. The case study area is presented, followed by an overview of the entire planning process. The findings are then presented, which consists of a selection of quotes taken from the news media during the period. Next follows an analysis and discussion based on theory and findings. Finally, the chapter ends with a reflective conclusion.

Weak and strong approaches to sustainability

The term sustainability is used in a number of different contexts and often with completely different meanings. Engelman (2013) introduced the concept 'sustainababble' to capture just that and he argued that 'we live in an age of *sustainababble*, a cacophonous profusion of uses of the word *sustainable* to mean anything from

environmentally better to cool'. Sustainability may, in other words, have a multitude of meanings depending on interests, values, and perspectives. Sustainable development has been discussed as a contested value-driven concept for a long time (Lélé, 1991; Richardson, 1997; Mebratu, 1998; Redclift, 2005). Ideology and ethical discourses have become central to that. This was epitomised even in the early discussion of sustainable development, and approaches to sustainability were considered to be in a continuum, varying from very weak to very strong approaches to sustainability (Turner, 1992).

Although 'sustainable development' has been accepted as a dominant developmental paradigm directing debates and political agendas for action (Sharpley, 2020), it has been criticised for being *a weak form of sustainability* emphasising economic growth rather than environmental sustainability (Cotterell et al., 2019). Weak forms of sustainability allow substitution between natural and human-made capital (Hansson, 2010). Sustainability in that sense is reduced to the management of different forms of capital between generations (Buijtendijk et al., 2018). A central point of departure in the arguments based on weak forms of sustainability is that sustainability and economic growth are compatible. This is something that is often insisted on by the established groups in society which have an interest in maintaining the prevailing social order and, consequently, see a fundamental change as utopian.

Strong forms of sustainability, on the other hand, treat natural and human-made capital as two separate forms of capital that both need to be sustained (Hansson, 2010) with the natural one being given an intrinsic value. Sustainable development as defined in Brundtland report does, for instance, imply a weak form of sustainability emphasising growth (Hansson, 2010; Neumayer, 2003 as cited in Cotterell et al., 2019) and the role of technological developments to counteract the natural capital used (Sharpley, 2020). Believing that technology will be able to solve the issue of population growth and the necessary related per capita use of (limited) natural resources is strongly questioned (Ludwig et al., 1993). On a similar note, some of the more recent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have also been criticised as promoting economic growth to alleviate poverty, thus reflecting weak approaches to sustainability (Becken, 2017; Sharpley, 2020). For Ludwig et al. (1993, p. 17) the accumulation of wealth that an economic growth model implies 'generates political

and social power that is used to promote unlimited exploitation of resource'. Nature is reduced to natural resources and thus is perceived as a precondition for the well-being and development of societies, thus indicating an instrumental value attributed to it.

Obviously, greater attention has been paid to the need to reconsider and transform our understandings and practices around sustainability (Higgins-Desbioles, 2020; Lundmark, Zhang & Hall, 2020). For example, research on sustainable tourism has recently expanded from visitors' satisfaction and economic sustainability to a focus on communities and the potential of tourism to contribute to quality of life (Weaver et al., 2022), and to aspects of climate change and (un)sustainability of tourism (Bramwell et al., 2017). Resilient, adaptative, hopeful, regenerative, and transformative tourism are some of the concepts used lately to reframe and discuss *stronger forms of sustainability* with an emphasis on the evolving character of tourism and its potential for positive impacts for the host communities (Ateljevich, 2020; Duxbury et al., 2021). Stronger forms of sustainability may include policies aimed at degrowth, or non-growth and rightsizing (Hall, 2009) to emphasise the need for limits to growth for a sustainable future.

Central to degrowth debates is its relation to capitalism and to the role of civic movements. Degrowth has been defined as a re-envisioning of the political, social, and economic system outside capitalism, which consequently mean that degrowth and capitalism is an 'impossibility theorem' (Foster, 2011). Although degrowth implies an utopia outside of current economic and political structures, it does involve a very much needed debate on changes needed to address ecological limits in the Anthropocene (Kallis et al., 2018). Hence, those who argue for a strong form of sustainability see no other solution than that the existing social order must be fundamentally reformed if the future is to be socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable. Radical political change is consequently a necessity.

What is illustrated in the case presented in this chapter are arguments put forward from different interest groups – businesses, politicians, activist groups, and individuals – varying from strong emphasis on weak forms of sustainability based on continuous economic growth, to strong forms of sustainability arguments favouring nature protection and anti-growth which requires fundamental

change. The purpose is to show that what is perceived and described as sustainability and sustainable visits is not unproblematic. Critical reflection is always required to understand which underlying interests and values as well as assumptions of reality characterise how these concepts are used.

Sälen – Northern Europe's largest ski area

Sälen is the name of a village in the middle western part of central Sweden, near the border with Norway. It is in the northern part of the Dalarna region; a region with an area as large as the entire Netherlands but with a population of only about 300,000. About 100,000 of that population lives in the two main towns of Falun (the regional capital) and Borlänge, which both are located some 160 km south of Sälen. Dalarna consists of fifteen municipalities and they are represented by local politicians on the regional board of Region Dalarna. The politicians on the board represent eight different political parties. Sälen belongs to the municipality of Malung-Sälen.

The village, which has less than 1,000 inhabitants, is located in a narrow valley surrounded by mountains. Sälen is not just a village. It is also a destination comprising many ski resorts that exist in this mountain area. This area is often referred to as northern Europe's largest ski area. There are no less than six major ski and accommodation facilities, four of which belong to the multi-national company Skistar. In addition to these facilities, there are also many holiday homes in the area for rent. In total, the number of guest nights annually amounts to 5.2 million (www.salenfjallen.se). This means that during the high season there are approximately 100,000 visitors per day. Less than an hour away on the other side of the border is Norway's largest ski area, Trysil. The main ski resort in Trysil is also owned by Skistar.

Sälen attracts mainly Swedish visitors. It is approximately 500 kilometers from large Swedish population centres such as Stockholm and Gothenburg. Until the airport was put into use in 2020, it was only possible to reach Sälen by car or bus. The last 200 kilometers of the road from these population centres are narrow and heavily trafficked during the high season. The closest airport for international tourists, except for the new one, is in Oslo, Norway, 260 km southwest of Sälen. There is also a small local airport in Mora, 100

Scandinavian Mountains Airport. Photo: Scandinavian Mountains Airport, with permission.

km southeast of Sälen. There used to be a railway to Sälen, but it was closed as early as 1969 during a period when motoring was seen as the future. Plans to improve accessibility to Sälen have been around for a long time. Despite discussions about resuming rail traffic, this was never realised due to the excessive investments required. Instead, interest has been directed towards aviation. The arguments put forward were that an airport would contribute to increasing the area's international competitiveness as well as increasing the conditions for being able to attract more visitors even outside the high season. After many years of planning, discussions and debates, the new airport – Scandinavian Mountains Airport - Sälen, Trysil – was inaugurated in late 2019.

The planning process of the airport

The plan to build an airport in Sälen was announced in September 2008.[1] The announcement was made at a public meeting held at

1 Sälen skall vara året-runt destination [Sälen must be a year-round destination]. (2008, September 27). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

Sälen's Högfjällshotell, one of the oldest and most prestigious ski facilities in Sälen. Behind the meeting was a local development project called 'World Class Sälen'. In the arguments presented in favour of building an airport, it was highlighted that an international airport will be decisive for the Sälen and Trysil area in terms of future competitiveness on the international market. The total investment was said to amount to 300 million SEK with an annual operating cost of the order of 25 million per year. In the coming years, intensive work was being done to arrange financing and to apply for permits so that the airport could be built.[2]

In February 2013, the Swedish Environmental Court gave the permission to build the planned airport.[3] Shortly after the decision to allow the construction of the airport, it was announced that it would not be enough to only build an airport to achieve financial profitability in the long term. Plans were presented to also build a shopping centre in connection to the airport to increase border trade and create a new centre for tourism. At this time, new cost estimates for the project also appeared. The investment cost for the airport was now estimated at 600-800 million SEK and in addition another couple of hundred million was estimated to be required for the shopping centre. It was also expected that 300 new annual jobs would be created in Sälen, most of them related to the shopping centre.[4] In the work to secure funding, the project applied for government support, which also had to be approved by Region Dalarna. Region Dalarna recommended that the Swedish government should contribute with 250 million SEK to the investment in September 2013.[5]

In May 2016, it was reported that the project had secured 680 million in private funding. A government decision was awaited regarding the proposed 250 million SEK from public funding, which

2 Söker regeringens stöd för charterflyg till Sälen-Trysil [Seeking government support for charter flights to Sälen-Trysil]. (2009, January 22). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

3 Ett steg närmare charter till Sälen [One step closer for charter flights to Sälen]. (2013, February 23). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

4 300 nya jobb vid flygets köpcentrum [300 new jobs at the airport shopping centre]. (2013, June 3). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

5 MP enda parti mot flygplatsen [MP enda parti mot flygplatsen]. (2013, September 12). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

also required approval from the EU.[6] A year later, in May 2017, the project, which now went by the name Scandinavian Mountains Airport, was granted 250 million SEK. All funding was now secured, and the construction of the airport and the shopping centre could begin.[7]

The official start of the construction took place in October 2017, although the construction work had already started. Present at the official start was, among others, the Swedish Minister of Industry.[8] In December 2018, it was reported that the plans to build a shopping centre next to the airport would not be realised and that the number of new jobs would dramatically decrease as a result.[9] In May 2019, it was announced that the airport would open to traffic in December the same year and that there would be traffic from five Swedish cities: Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, Ängelholm, and Växjö. In August, it was also clear that the Scandinavian airline, SAS, would start flying directly from London, Copenhagen, and Ålborg, Denmark, to Sälen.[10] On Saturday, 21 December 2019, the Scandinavian Mountains Airport was inaugurated and the following day the first flight landed – a plane with 112 passengers from Malmö.[11]

Findings: The voices of different stakeholders

The findings in this section consists of quotes taken from articles in the news media which were collected for this chapter. In total, almost 150 articles were collected for period covered the years 2008 to the end of 2019. The vast majority of these consisted of articles in the local press, exclusively in the two newspapers *Dalarnas Tidnin-*

6 Flyget finansierat – får 680 miljoner [The airport is financed – gets 680 million]. (2016, May 31). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

7 Klartecken från EU – nu kan Sälens flygplats byggas [Clear sign from the EU – Sälen airport can be built]. (2017, May 30). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

8 Snart kan de första flygen landa i Sälen [The first flights can soon land in Sälen]. (2017, October 11). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

9 Jättesatsning vid flygplatsen i Sälen stoppas [Giant investment at the airport in Sälen is stopped]. (2018, December 18). *SVT Dalarna*.

10 Tre internationella flyglinjer till Sälen [Three international flight routes to Sälen]. (2019, August 13). Dalarnas Tidningar.

11 Flygplatsen i gång [The airport is up and running]. (2019, December 23). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

gar and *Dalademokraten*.[12] Quotes in the data were selected for this chapter that we perceived as typical, representative as well as illustrative. All quotes were translated and personal names were removed personal names from them.

The quotes are divided in three parts based on three categories of stakeholders. In the first one, the perspectives of the businesses are presented. This is a category of proponents that have a direct interest in the investment being carried out. The second category consist of politicians, who, depending on their political position, have different interests and opinions. The final category consists of opponents which are made up of activist groups and individuals.

Perspectives of businesses

The plan to build an airport was initiated by the businesses in the Sälen area. The dream of realising such a project was something that had existed for a long time. It was seen as an investment to attract new markets and continuous growth. After the public meeting in Sälen in September 2008, when the project was announced, a spokesperson for the businesses told the following to the press:

> … the plans for an international airport, Sälen-Trysil Airport, will be decisive for the Trysil and Sälen area in terms of future competitiveness on the international market. This requires an investment of 300 million and an annual operating cost of the order of 25 million per year.[13]

The same spokesperson also appeared on local public TV and emphasised that road and train traffic was not enough for Sälen's expansion:

12 *Dalarnas Tidningar* is a collective name of five local newspapers in Dalarna (*Falu-kuriren, Borlänge Tidning, Mora Tidning, Nya Ludvika Tidning, Södra Dalarnes Tidning*) that have the same owner. The content is largely the same in these newspapers but there may be local features that differ. We use the collective name *Dalarnas Tidningar* regardless of whether an article was published in one or more of these newspapers.

13 Sälen skall vara året-runt destination [Sälen must be a year-round destination]. (2008, September 27). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

> We see that many people want to come here from Holland, Germany, Latvia, Estonia, and Russia and then the connections on the roads, buses, and trains are very bad.[14]

The businesses did not play a prominent role in the media reporting during the process. Although the government funding, as well as the future environmental impact of aviation, was discussed and criticised by others in the media, this was largely not commented on by the businesses. It was only during the latter part of the process, when the media at national level started to take an interest in the project, that representatives of the businesses came forward. In the spring of 2019, *Svenska Dagbladet*, one of Sweden's largest and most important daily newspapers, began reviewing the airport project in a series of articles. It was implied in an article that the government subsidised the possibilities for the multi-national ski giant Skistar to grow:[15]

> But what does one do to expand a saturated Scandinavian ski market? Yes – you build an airport in the middle of the deepest forests. Then the Swedish state is persuaded to pay for it.

In response, the CEO of Skistar confirmed and defended the contribution of public means for the project in the same article:

> It was absolutely crucial that we received the investment support, without which the project would never have happened. But you can't think of it as just an airport. This is a completely unique infrastructure investment that will generate money in a sparsely populated area. The total contribution of the investment is much more extensive than just the airport.

The environmental impact was first commented on by the businesses as the inauguration approached. The newly appointed CEO of the airport gave his view on the issue in an interview in which he claimed that technological development speaks for reduced emis-

14 Storflygplats planeras i Sälenfjällen [Major airport planned in Sälenfjällen]. (2008, September 10). *SVT Dalarna*.

15 Här byggs en ny flygplats – mitt i klimatförändringarnas Sälen [A new airport is being built here – in the middle of the climate change in Sälen]. (2019, March 2). *Svenska Dagbladet*.

sions and that the danger of increased flying should therefore not be exaggerated:

> A significantly more difficult issue is the environmental impact that the flight brings with it. It's something we have respect for, but at the same time a lot has happened in just the last few years when it concerns the environmental impact of air traffic and more will take place, says the CEO. …
>
> The airline BRA recently flew from Halmstad to Bromma and could then show a reduction in emissions by 46 per cent of carbon dioxide. The net emission then remained at 34 grams per passenger kilometer compared to 63 grams from one ordinary flight with fossil fuel, so of course there are possibilities to reduce emissions, he continues.[16]

Perspectives of politicians

Several politicians from the established political parties expressed early on support for what was considered as a much-needed development, a project which was necessary to bring more visitors which would mean more jobs. An airport was perceived as a development for a hopeful future in the mountains. A Member of Parliament from the area, representing the (at the time) ruling Social Democratic Party, expressed his support for a new airport in the local media:

> The area can increase the number of visitors to Sälen from the current two million per year to three million. In order to achieve such an increase, the mountain facilities must find new markets and new visitors, for example in England, Holland, Germany, the Baltic countries, and Russia. Today it is practically impossible for international guests to come to Sälen, simply because the travel time is too long, and flying is the solution to that problem.[17]

At the same time as the process was underway to create the conditions for building an airport in Sälen, the Swedish government

16 Snart öppnar Sälens flygplats [Sälen airport will open soon]. (2019, September 5). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

17 Söker regeringens stöd för charterflyg till Sälen-Trysil [Seeking government support for charter flights to Sälen-Trysil]. (2009, January 22). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

discussed the possibilities of introducing a national aviation tax. For the proponents of the project, the future seemed threatened if an aviation tax was introduced. Another Member of Parliament from Dalarna, this time from the Conservative Party (*Moderaterna*), submitted a letter to the editor of the local paper with the title 'Flight tax ruins holiday plans', clearly stating their faith in the project while seeing the tax as punishment for this visionary investment. But, at the same time, it was pointed out that the climate is also of importance and that it could be saved by improved technology:

> Yet another negative aspect of a punitive tax on aviation is that it will hit the country's airports and thus jobs and growth. An airport is planned in Sälen that will be able to receive tourists. It is an important investment to further develop the tourism industry in the mountains. In this context, an aviation tax would constitute a tangible obstacle to new jobs. Of course, high climate ambitions are also of central importance. Work with improvements is already underway in the aviation industry.[18]

A leading Social Democratic politician on the regional board, Region Dalarna, who was a proponent of the project, argued in an article that the investment might actually be positive also for the environment:

> I do think that the airport can be good for the environment if more people take a flight to Sälen… The average family that goes to Sälen spends 6.5 hours driving. In parallel with the airport plans, the municipalities in the area are discussing developing public transport. If more people travel by plane and public transport, the project can get an environmental plus, I hope…[19]

The conservative Member of Parliament from Dalarna went on in the same vein, after having been criticised for taking the project's environmental consequences too lightly. Hence, the political proponents expressed their trust in technology to ameliorate and solve

18 Flygskatt grusar semesterplaner [Flight tax ruins holiday plans]. (2012, June 26). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

19 MP enda parti mot flygplatsen [MP enda parti mot flygplatsen]. (2013, September 12). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

the impacts of flying on climate. He wrote the following in a letter to the editor:

> In connection with the growing tourism industry and more people wanting to visit Sälen and nearby ski resorts, there is a great risk of very large problems with car queues. In addition, aviation has reduced its environmental and climate impact. The technology is continuously improving; lighter aircraft, better aerodynamics and more efficient engines reduce emissions.[20]

However, not all political parties were in favour of a new airport. The local branch of the Green Party (*Miljöpartiet*), environmentalists, declared its position against the project, although at the national level the party had reluctantly voted in support of the state financing of the project:

> It is obvious to us that air traffic should not be subsidised with public funds. It should cover its own costs, but most preferably it should be replaced with fast train connections. Many people already make conscious choices to live in solidarity and environmentally friendly ways. However, politics must take its share of the responsibility and show the way to a sustainable society. Modern ecotourism, organic production, expansion of renewable energy sources, new energy technology, and a unique culture can contribute to a thriving business life in Dalarna's countryside. Global warming is already evident even locally in Sälen with temperature changes (2 degrees in 50 years) which in the long term also threaten the nature in the mountains, which is a prerequisite for the development of the entire tourism industry in the area.[21]

Later on, the Left Party (*Vänsterpartiet*), socialists, also took a stance against the project. At a meeting in Dalarna, the national leader of the party admitted that he was ashamed because he previously voted in the parliament to support the construction of the airport and for

20 Flygplatsen i Sälen. En långsiktig satsning som leder till fler jobb [The airport in Sälen. A long-term investment that leads to more jobs]. (2014, June 19). *Dalademokraten.*

21 Enögd moderat landsbygdspolitik [One-eyed conservative rural policy]. (2013, September 21). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

the approval of the funding of SEK 250 million in support from the government. This was something he now regretted:

> In these times, we should think about the climate much more than we do. It is absurd that we build an airport so that people can travel to snow and cold by air while, at the same time, the air traffic contributes to making the snow disappear.[22]

At the local level in the Left Party, however, the issue of the airport was sensitive, and it had been difficult for the local representatives to take a clear stand against it. This was expressed in an article in the national magazine *Dagens ETC*, which stands on the left and for a sustainability perspective. A local representative in the municipality commented in the magazine:

> I can say that the party locally is a bit divided. There are no clear yes and no sayers, so we have decided to have a low profile …
>
> In general, I think that everyone in the Left Party's local association has a negative attitude to an airport, but to be honest, I don't think that we will get all the members with us if we go out and say that we are against it. There are 300-500 jobs, which makes a big difference to a sparsely populated municipality. It's not something you look at simply.[23]

In 2019, the airport project received increasing national attention. One of the main national newspapers, *Svenska Dagbladet*, interviewed the Social Democratic Minister of Economy in order to get answers to questions regarding the decision to partially finance the airport with public funds. The Minister justified the necessity of the project and argued that growth and sustainability are compatible, but this requires technological development:

> The tourism industry is an important industry for Sweden, where Dalarna is the fourth most popular destination and where Sälen is an attractive destination. Well-functioning communications are an important part of attracting tourists and continuing to develop

22 Sjöstedt (V): Jag skäms över flygplatsen i Sälen [Sjöstedt (V): I am ashamed of the airport in Sälen]. (2017, November 10). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

23 Sälen borde satsa på miljön i första hand [Sälen should invest in the environment in the first place]. (2017, July 27). *Dagens ETC*.

> the hospitality industry in the region. The EU Commission concluded in its review that the public co-financing was a necessary and proportionate part for the investment to take place at all. We have high climate ambitions, which also include emissions from aviation, therefore we must, for example, find new fuels to make it possible to fly because ultimately, the mountains are located where they are located.[24]

Perspectives of activist groups and engaged individuals

In conjunction with the Swedish Environmental Court giving permission to build the planned airport in February 2013, critical features began to appear in the press. These were mainly in the form of submissions from individuals in Dalarna who were concerned and upset that the project was now coming to fruition. Here is an example from a submitter:

> Who would even think of building an airport on the Great Barrier Reef? Let's preserve our pristine, beautiful mountain area in Sälen, otherwise it will be completely destroyed from an environmental point of view.[25]

Here is another example:

> A report from SMHI[26] on climate change in Europe states that the temperature in winter increases most in northern and eastern Europe. Precipitation increases in northern Europe in both summer and winter… You contribute to a worse climate, which in turn undermines the conditions for your own business.[27]

And here is some of the content of yet another one:

24 Per Bolund: Stödet till Skistars flygplats var en kompromiss [Per Bolund: The support for Skistar's airport was a compromise]. (2019, May 8). *Svenska Dagbladet*.

25 Sunt bondförnuft räcker långt [Common sense is needed]. (2013, February 23). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

26 The Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute.

27 Öppet brev till Region Dalarna och Skistar [Open letter to Region Dalarna and Skistar]. (2014, April 22). *Dalademokraten.*

> Perhaps the number of jobs can increase in the Sälen area, but that is an extremely uncertain forecast, because what happens when the climate gets warmer? There is a high probability that the precipitation will come in the form of rain even in Sälen in the winter and it may not be cold enough to make artificial snow. Who then wants to visit Sälen? … The concern for future generations is almost equal to zero.[28]

Later, the local branch of The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (*Naturskyddsföreningen*), joined the debate and spoke out in an article:

> The plan to build the airport is based on a continued confidence in the growth economy, that increased production and consumption will improve our lives, and that technological development can solve the problems. It is time to question that assumption. Constant growth on a planet with limited resources does not work.[29]

In 2017, a group called Protect our Winters sent a letter to the editor at *Dalarnas Tidningar* in which they pointed to the climate consequences of aviation and criticised the investment of the airport. They wrote:

> With the help of climate research, we can predict what winters will look like in the future depending on how quickly we manage to limit climate change. If we continue to live as we do today and allow global warming to continue, Sälen and other southern ski resorts are threatened by increasingly shorter winters… Building an airport in Sälen is an investment that clearly symbolises the short-sightedness and narrow-mindedness behind climate change and other sustainability challenges. We focus on the corporate profits, jobs and tax revenue that can be created today, not realising that we have to pay back many times more tomorrow.[30]

28 Svar till Ulf Berg om flygplats i Sälen [Reply to Ulf Berg about the airport in Sälen]. (2014, June 13). *Dalademokraten.*

29 Utsläpp från flyg är hot mot vinter [Emissions from aviation are a threat to winters]. (2015, March 5). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

30 En flygplats i Sälen är ett stort steg mot mindre snö och kortare vintrar [An airport in Sälen is a big step towards less snow and shorter winters]. (2017, June 1). *Dalarnas Tidningar*.

Inauguration. Photo: Scandinavian Mountains Airport, with permission.

On Saturday, 21 December, the Scandinavian Mountains Airport was inaugurated and the following day the first flights landed. The passengers were met by protesters from the group Protect our Winters. The following was reported in the *Dalademokraten* on the day before the inauguration:

> Protect Our Winters will gather on Sunday to mark the newly built Scandinavian Mountains Airport in Sälen. On Facebook, the group writes: 'Despite an ongoing climate crisis and a promise that Sweden will fulfill its part in the Paris Agreement, Sweden's politicians and important players in the Swedish business and ski industry have chosen to build and open an airport intended to function for ski tourism – on a place where, according to SMHI's climate scenarios, there won't even be natural snow in a couple of decades if we don't succeed in slowing down global warming sharply.'[31]

31 Flygplan vinkas av och möts med demonstration [Airplanes are waved off and met with demonstrations]. (2019, December 20). *Dalademokraten*.

Analysis and discussion

On an overall level, the media quotes in the previous section may be interpreted as being about what the future should look like and what effects the proposed investment will have. There are clearly two opposite perspectives here. The dominant one, which is emphasised by businesses and the established political parties, except the Green and the Left parties, is based on the idea that growth creates faith in the future. The overall and important effect is that the investment – and its co-funding from public funds – is justified as it means for new business opportunities, more tourists and thus more jobs, and economic development to counterbalance the shortcomings of being on the periphery.

Indeed, the opportunities created by tourism for job generation to mitigate the challenges of peripherality is often the carrot of pro-growth (Bertella, 2022). It creates optimism and forward thinking. Internationalisation of the destination becomes central in these debates to continue the growth in an otherwise stagnating domestic skiing tourism market. It is obvious that the destination is locked in a pro-growth developmental path, as happens in many other destinations in the world. As a comparison, Prideaux & Pabel (2020, p. 124) discussed tourism development in the Great Barrier reef in Australia and how that destination is still trying to attract more international tourists and continue to grow despite the obvious environmental problems that threaten the reef.

However, negative environmental effects, especially on climate, are not ignored by the ones who advocate continued growth but these are rather seen as a side effect that can be solved with technological innovations. Proponents do not even hesitate to argue that flying could be positive for the environment compared to long car queues that an increased car traffic would create. Hence, it is suggested that flying helps make visits more sustainable.

Strong reliance on technology to mitigate the impact of increased aviation on the climate is characteristic of weak approaches to sustainability, related to a neoliberal, pro-growth model of development (O'Riordan, 1981; Turner, 1993, cited in Sharpley, 2000). Central in this weak approach to sustainability is that it is subordinate to the pursuit of continued growth. This approach advocates that economic growth and environmental protection can be compatible,

with environmental technologies bringing further economic growth while ameliorating environmental and climate problems. (Bailey & Wilson, 2009; Barry 2003).

These discourses of a hopeful future based on growth are not new. Growth is considered as something necessary and inherently good and hopeful, and it is implicitly associated with 'progress' in the globalised world of free market, competition, and development (Torkington, Stanford & Guiver, 2020). This perspective reflects a weak approach to sustainability, and is the dominant one in our study, supported by all established political parties – only the Green Party and, to some extent, the Left Party criticised it but still did not vote it down. This is indeed the reality of many destinations worldwide where tourism practitioners and decision makers focus on aspects of economic growth, technological innovations, eco-modernism, and the supportive politics (Becken, 2017).

The other perspective, which in this context can be seen as the challenging perspective opposing the project, is based on an idea that a different social order is required. This, in turn, requires a break with, and complete change from, prevailing systems and structures. Sustainability can only be created by changing our way of life and that requires us to accept and adapt to the fact that the Earth's resources are limited, and this requires a system based on non-growth or even degrowth. In short, Sälen needs less visitors rather than more if a sustainable future should be achievable. Furthermore, it can also be stated that the two approaches are based on different time perspectives. In the dominant weak approach, the time perspective is narrow and deals with years or even decades, while the challenging perspective looks at several generations and focuses on the long-term negative environmental effects of investing in aviation.

The cost of growth and economic development is perceived as exceeding, by far, the more short-term positive economic effects that the investment is assumed to generate. That effect is irreversible, and it is assumed that it will have devastating consequences in the longer term as it means that climate change and depletion of nature destroys the very conditions for the activities that are conducted in Sälen. Strong sustainability stands for more eco-centric values and questions the justification of exploiting nature on the grounds of economic benefits together with social justice (Cotterell et al. 2019;

Sharpley 2000). Strong sustainability approaches favour reduced energy use and emissions, and are considered to reflect social values as opposed to economic incentives for more energy-efficient technologies embraced by technocentric, weak approaches (Bailey & Wilson, 2009). Although social values are emphasised, the difficult trade-off between getting more jobs and accepting more emissions, which the local association of the Left Party needed to deal with, is often disregarded.

Instead, critical voices questioned the short-term economic benefits and the actual impact of job generation, as well as the dominant narrative of the need for international tourism to have a hopeful future through the public funding of a private airport. These arguments for strong sustainability are part of the degrowth or non-growth debates arguing for a containment of growth and a disconnection from GDP as the ultimate progress indicator. Political and economic elites often use arguments about job generation and peripherality to neutralise pro-growth debates and mitigate conflicts to pass their agendas (Valdivielso & Moranta, 2019). Mega-projects favouring the growth of tourism and the attraction of international tourists have been criticised as largely pro-growth (Ballantine, 2020). From a strong sustainability perspective, international tourism is unsustainable due to carbon emissions and therefore flight degrowth is highly relevant (Valdivielso & Moranta, 2019). Part of degrowth debates has developed along the line of growth containment in terms of limitation on transport by not favouring the development of relevant infrastructure or by the introduction of special aviation taxes (Canada, 2021). As our analysis has shown, the introduction of an aviation tax to limit air travel at the same time as inaugurating a new airport, instead of investing in a railway, was considered a highly controversial issue.

Enabling sustainable visits – the necessity of understanding different values, interests, and power relations

Indeed, as our analysis and discussion showed, there were great controversies around debated issues with proponents and opponents holding diametrically opposing views on fundamental aspects such

as the future, the benefits, the environmental consequences of the airport, or the role of public funds and public policies. Conflicting views on environmental matters are not new and are well documented in the literature. Adityanandana & Gerber (2019) discussed the value discourses of conflicts and concluded that conflicting groups may hold different values of nature and hold different valuation languages. In our study, although both proponents and opponents acknowledge the issue of climate change, they used different language to eventually form different arguments on the impacts of the project on it.

The first used a hopeful language, as discussed earlier, which underlines the view of nature in its instrumental value while the latter used a language of urgency to underline the acuteness of the matter and their different valuation of nature. These valuations ultimately reflect different valuations of what constitutes a 'good life' and it is a matter of conflicting values and contrasting visions over what the future should look like (Adityanandana & Gerber, 2019). In Sälen, the conflicting views concern the valuation of a hopeful future based on growth and new opportunities vs. the valuation of climate protection to protect the destination but also the place and the people who live there. In short, the proponents mean that enabling more visits would contribute to a more sustainable future in an already developed destination, while the opponents main argument is that sustainability can only be reached by reducing the number of visits.

These valuations are also evident in power relations with powerful actors aligned with modernisation and pro-growth technocentric valuations favouring economic revenues. Other actors communicate the importance of nature, living conditions, or human rights, thus expressing fundamentally different value systems. In Sälen, there were noticeable tensions not only in the different communications around climate change and environmental matters of aviation, but also regarding power relations and the role of big corporations in the area dictating the agendas with the support of established political parties.

What this case tells us is that it is not fruitful to use the concept of 'sustainability' when we discuss how we want to shape our future. The concept has lost it distinct meaning, if it ever had one, and its much-quoted definition, that a sustainable development 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future

generations to meet their own needs' can be interpreted differently depending on values and interests. Hence, sustainability is used as a concept today regardless of whether we are convinced that we can continue with undiminished economic growth or whether we realise that we must adapt our lifestyle through non-growth or degrowth based on the limited resources we have access to. To understand discussions and conflicts regarding our common future, we must take values, interests, and power relations into account. There is, in other words, a need for more critical evaluations and understandings of underlying meanings and assumptions, and this calls for a need to engage with theoretical ideas that contribute to the discussion of what is important and what is not in sustainable development (Bramwell, 2015).

Notes on method

The data for this study was retrieved from news media and mainly newspapers, and it was taken from the Swedish digitised media archive, Retriever. The search term 'Airport' was used in combination with 'Sälen', and with 'Skistar', 'Trysil', and 'Scandinavian Mountains'. The search period covered 2008 to the end of 2019. The searches yielded just over 200 hits and the final selection, after a screening, ended with 148 hits. These were distributed unevenly over the period with a small number during the first five years and with a peak in the last years. About 80 per cent of the hits were found in local news media and the rest on local TV and radio, national newspapers and other press and media.

Questions for discussions

- Do you think it is a good idea to concentrate visits to an already exploited area, or is it better to try to reduce the number of visits to such areas?
- There is an inherent conflict, on the one hand, creating economic development and jobs in peripheral areas in the short term and, on the other hand, the need to preserve natural values and coun-

teract climate change in the long term. How do you think this conflict should be handled?

- Do you believe that the existing social order must be fundamentally changed if the future is to be socially, economically, and environmentally 'sustainable'?
- In this chapter, the sustainability concept has been questioned since it seems to have lost a distinct meaning. Do you agree, and if so, what concepts or ideas do you think can replace it?

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PART II DESTINATION & THE VISITOR

i. Lönnroth & Ronström
ii. Nordvall
iii. Cöster & Skoog
iv. Sjöstrand, Gebert Persson & Ågren

Imagining Destination Gotland

Jenny Lönnroth & Owe Ronström

Abstract

This chapter examines Gotland's destination image through a number of Gotlandic tourist brochures produced between 1973 and 2016. After sections on theory and method follows a discussion of how visitors, visited, and the destination are constituted in mutual relationships, and how imageries, artefacts, and activities shape and organise these relations. The analysis focuses on how Gotland is produced as an attractive destination, how the visitors are constituted by the destination, and how the islanders are constituted by the visitors. We argue that tourist brochures need to be understood as active agents that play a crucial part in the formatting of island destinations, islanders, and visiting tourists.

In the final section, destination images are discussed in relation to sustainable destination development, and to sustainability more generally. We conclude that to enable sustainable visits, the tourist industry should invite both visitors and the visited to take active part in the image production of destinations in order to produce less stereotypical and more inclusive destination images and thereby to contribute to improved conditions for locals, visitors, and destinations.

'Gotland – the land of discovery' is a series of tourist brochures from the Gotland Tourist Association from the 1980s and '90s. Photo: from Tourist Brochure.

Introduction

In tourist brochures like this, the many faces of destination Gotland are presented in flowery terms, as different and distinctive,

remote, and yet accessible. It is old-fashioned and yet modern. It is picturesque, small-scale, friendly, open, and inviting: 'Gotland is made for holidays and leisure!' As readers, we are invited to a rural summer landscape of a recent past: 'like the summer holidays of childhood', and to a small town positioned in a distant past: 'Visby – a journey in the Middle Ages', and in a vivid present: 'Today Visby is a modern shopping city with picturesque souvenir stalls and boutiques, market stalls and restaurants – a meeting place for modern leisure people'. A consistent message throughout is that the destination is open and welcoming: it's 'all yours to discover!'

Gotland is perhaps a unique place, but the destination it not. What is immediately striking about tourist brochures like this one, is that we somehow have seen them before, although about other and deceivingly similar destinations. Tourism is a set of highly redundant ritualised practices of coming and going, of what to see and how, of what to expect and what to experience, of purchasing souvenirs, creating memories, stories, and images. In the midst of these practices, we find a limited number of constantly repeated phrases and motifs, words and pictures: the picturesque street, the church, the square and the local market; hotels, restaurants and bustling street life; sea, sun and swimming; scenic views and historic sites.

Tourist destinations may build on actual physical places, but they are constructed from images and stories about such places, produced and distributed by locals, visitors, newspapers, TV, radio, social media and, not least, the postcards, videos, and tourist brochures of destination marketing organisations (DMOs). Such images and stories form ready-made expectations that the tourism experience is measured and evaluated against. As any business, the tourist industry is dependent on its ability to deliver and fulfil the promise that 'what you see is what you get'. The result is destination places formatted to comply with the images, stories, and expectations that the visitors bring with them when they arrive.

Purpose and content of the chapter

In this chapter, we examine Gotland's destination image through a selection of tourist brochures targeted to a Swedish-speaking audience, in practice people from the Stockholm area, since long the main target group for Gotland tourism. In the following section the theoretical ideas and concepts that underpin the analysis are

presented. The main part of the chapter contains an analysis of how visitors, visited, and destinations are constituted in mutual relationships, and how imageries, artefacts, and activities shape and organise these relations. Our focus is on how the active presence of certain recurring tropes and motifs relate to the equally active absence of other possible motifs, and how such tropes and motifs relate to destination images and tourism at large. In the concluding section, we discuss destination images in relation to sustainable destination development, and to sustainability more generally.

A global genre

Modern tourism has old roots. There is a clear and strong continuity over time. In tourism studies, the concept 'path dependence' has been used to explain why tourists tend to follow similar paths over the years, and why tourism in general tends to develop in similar ways around the world (Ma & Hassink, 2014).[1] Also representations of tourists, destinations and locals are strongly path dependent and follow well-trodden paths, as in the incessant repetitions of unspoiled beaches, blue skies and seas, and exotic foods. Today's tourism is clearly nourished by travel literature, adventure films, comics, TV, social media, and other popular culture of recent decades. Also 18th and 19th century colonialism and imperialism have left noticeable traces, from gated all-inclusive resorts for visitors only, to how visitors and locals are positioned hierarchically. Even if rejected economically, colonialism 'continues to exert cultural power in terms of how tourism imagery constructs peoples and places' (Pritchard & Morgan, 2001, p. 167).

Marked by all these influences, tourist brochures and other images used in destination marketing representations are neither objective, value-free expressions of a place's identity, nor simply reflect the views of destination marketers and creative ad agencies. Tourist brochures shape visitors' imaginations of places, their willingness to go there, and their expectations when they arrive. Thus, as Pritchard

1 'Most generally, path dependence means that where we go next depends not only on where we are now, but also upon where we have been' (Liebowitz & Margolis, 2000, p. 981). In physics and social sciences, path dependence is a common concept to explain why systems tend to reproduce themselves.

and Morgan (2001, p. 177) conclude, the 'cultural significance of language and imagery is far wider than merely the impact of seeing a photograph in a brochure since tourism images do not merely depict destinations and peoples'; they in fact produce 'destinations and peoples'.

Tourist images – similar and different

> Nothing *may* be photographed apart from that which *must* be photographed. The ceremony may be photographed because it is outside of the daily routine, and must be photographed because it realises the image that the group seeks to give of itself as a group. What is photographed and what is perceived by the reader of the photograph is not, properly speaking, individuals in their capacity as individuals, but social roles, the husband, first communicant, soldier, or social relationships, the American uncle or the aunt from Sauvignon (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 24).

In his much-read study from 1965 about photography, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu explores the use of cameras among the French middle-class bourgeoisie. He underscores the ritualistic and repetitive aspects of photographing, and how the photos taken are not simply representations of some reality as it is, but rather presentations of it as it should be. The unique and individual is transformed into the similar and recurring and there we stand, as in a ritual or ceremony, immortalised in front of the Eiffel Tower, Big Ben, the Statue of Liberty, or the bridges of Venice or Stockholm. We have seen them many times before, and we will see them again: almost identical photos in almost identical albums, digital folders, in social media, or in the cloud (also discussed in the chapter by Nordvall). Tourist images is a repetitive genre. Tourists tend to be highly path dependent, following similar paths and routes, and photographing the same kind of motifs.

Then again, it is not the specific place or the individual tourists that emerges on the photos, it is *the image* of the place and of the tourists. Tourist images, just like tourism at large, is metacultural production that separates individuals and places from the images of themselves and make the latter appear on behalf of the former. What thus emerges is a meta-place, a destination: 'The tourist industry is an experiential industry that is unequivocally visual, where visual

representations functionally transform places into destinations and teach visitors how to experience and remember them' (Picazo & Moreno-Gil, 2019, p. 2). As a result of highly redundant ritualised practices, such teaching and the visitors' experiences and memories are profoundly path dependent.

The interface of tourism

Tourist brochures come with a power to produce what they depict or describe. Together with postcards, travelogues, travel magazines, programmes on tourism and travel on TV, radio, Internet and social media, the brochures form an interface to a hyper-reality of powerful images, ideas, and conceptions. The interface is an important part of tourism as social practice and cultural experience, an active agent that not only presents, but also produces and stabilises, ideas, perspectives, subjects, actions, positions, and holdings. Thereby the tourism interface contributes to the formatting and structuring of destinations, and of the visitors and visited locals.[2]

What is produced and disseminated by tourist brochures and other media is thus not only destinations, but also sights to visit and consume. An array of well-rehearsed rhetorical techniques and conventions, recurring motifs, images, tropes, and expressions, form and reproduce mindscapes and establish a clearly distinguishable 'tourist gaze'. The tourist gaze is a primarily visual gaze that isolates its objects, exercises power over them by setting up the typified positions, activities, roles, and hierarchically-structured relations that constitute what it is to be a visiting tourist and a visited local (Grinell, 2004; MacCannell, 2013; Morgan & Pritchard, 1998; Urry, (1990) 2002).

The obvious rationale behind tourist brochures is to sell destinations to presumptive visitors. Designed as actively productive models *for*, rather than passively depicting models *of*, a certain place, experience, or reality (Geertz, 1975), their contents can be described

2 Drucker (2011, pp. 3, 7-8) describes the interface as a dynamic space of relations, 'a zone of affordances organised to support and provoke activities and behaviours probabilistically, rather than mechanically' and underlines that an interface is not so much an 'in between' space as it is a mediating environment and a critical zone that constitutes a user experience. Thus, she contends, it is necessary to understand the structure of an interface as information, and not merely a means of access to information (Drucker 2011, p. 10).

Visby: the medieval city wall, one of the top ten sights to photograph.
Photo: Wikimedia.

as 'targeted self-presentations' (Järlehed, 2015, p. 72). Such presentations build on a double position or gaze that casts the own, familiar, and near as foreign, different, and distant. Texts and pictures seem to speak 'from within' the island space but are in fact directed towards an audience from the outside. It is their supposed interests, ideas, and preconceptions that are addressed.

Circles of representation

Tourist images operate in long chains of feedback loops, closed circles of visual representations that involve 'projection, perception, and perpetuation of particular photographic images' (Jenkins, 2003, p. 305). Sights and attractions presented in tourist brochures and ads are defined by applying the tourist gaze; tourists visit these same sights and attractions and take pictures to confirm that they have been there and seen that. In her studies of how Visby is represented in photos, ethnologist Carina Johansson (2009) shows how a handful of motifs – the medieval wall, the church ruins, the roses, the sunsets and more – have been constantly recurring over time

and how they continue to be reproduced by visitors, the Gotlandic DMOs, and the regional administration. The result is an imagery that overwrites other representations of the place. This raises ethical and political issues about inclusion and exclusion. Who can control the image of a place?

This circularity of representations is a main factor behind the well-known paradox of tourism: a destination must be presented as unique, but this uniqueness must be formatted in the same way as other unique destinations. The result is that it is no longer difficult to find a unique place to visit, since there are so many of them to choose from. This applies not least to islands.

Over the world, islands have long been produced as tourist destinations. For several millennia, a fascinating genre of words and pictures has been woven around islands. It is a uniform, globalised discourse that seems to hover rather freely over the islands it is supposed to refer to (Baldacchino, 2005, 2007; Gillis, 2004; Ronström, 2016). 'Island speech' is a strongly emotionally-charged genre, which gains effect by contrasting and combining selected unspoiled, enchanting, and magically distinctive traditions, histories, and heritages with the bustling streets, shops, restaurants, and beaches of a modern urban lifeworld. It is an effective trick that reduces the amazing diversity of islands in the world and compresses them into a few highly typified 'islands of the mind' and presents them as commodities for sale and consumption on a global tourist market.

Studying island tourist brochures

The notion of 'destination image' was introduced into tourism studies in the 1970s and has since become a major strand in tourism research (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010). Most of this research has concerned images in the broader sense – views, ideas, perceptions – of the visiting tourists. In their overview of destination image studies dealing with photographs, Picazo & Moreno-Gil find that most of this research is characterised by an inductive approach to content analysis. Since there are no standardised criteria for measuring images, the photographical content is analysed according to three large dimensions: the subjects depicted (people), the actions represented (activities), and the contextualisation of the physical space (places, objects). The subjects are in turn classified in several categories: 'presence-absence, number of people, relevance of subject

in the image (primary or secondary), gender, ethnicity, type (tourists, locals, and employees), age, and travel group' (Picazo & Moreno-Gil, 2019, pp. 13, 16).[3]

In a study of images in brochures from the Australian air company Qantas, Edelheim (2007) adds a classification of actions in active and passive, and messages in an overt or extrinsic dimension, focussing upon the relation between an image and the represented reality, and a hidden or intrinsic dimension, focussing upon format, style, motifs, content, and structure, as well as upon views, perspectives, and underlying messages.

Here, we apply these dimensions and categories and focus on the representations of visitors and visited, their positions and actions, as well as the space where this takes place, 'the island'. In line with Stuart Hall's argument that language 'operates as a representational system' communicating certain 'concepts, ideas and feelings', we examine the production and circulation of meaning through language (Hall 2013, p. xvii). As Hall (2013, p. xvii) states: 'It is by our use of things … how we represent them – that we give them a meaning' but also through the 'frameworks of interpretation which we bring to them'. From a literature review of island studies literature, we compiled a list of recurrent tropes, positions, and images concerning islands.[4] With this as a checklist of sorts, we analysed texts, pictures, and relations between text and pictures, as well as mode, tone, style effect, and affect. How is Gotland produced as an attractive destination?

3 Echtner (2002) classifies the visual content according to the attractions (natural and artificial), participants (hosts and tourists), actions and atmosphere; Macionos (2004) focuses on place (the location of shooting), performance (staging plot, story's timeline), and the personality (actors, characters).

4 See references in Baldacchino (2007); Gillis (2004); Ronström (2016). Among the most common constructs are islands as paradise, utopia, dystopia, hermitage, mystic/magic, fragment, microcosm, hub, factory, lieu de memoire, experimental space. Among the most common features of islandness are homogeneity, continuity, stability; boundedness, distinctiveness; remoteness (cultural, spatial, temporal); small scale, transparency, a tendency of diminution, sacrality, spirituality, magic, enchantment; naturalness, authenticity, originality, archaism, a stress on the archaic, authentic, conservative and backwardness; endemism, a stress on independence and self-sufficiency, isolation, inbreeding and narrowness; birth, new start, tabula rasa and terra nullius; ambivalence.

In which contexts and with which messages, values, and expressive forms (colours, motifs, words, symbols) are 'the island', 'islanders' and 'visitors' played out and activated? How are the visitors constituted by the destination, and how are the islanders constituted by the visitors? What in the Gotlandic brochures is highlighted and what is hidden?

Tourism in Gotland

Gotland's destination image has evolved over almost two centuries. Tourism in the island began in the early 1800s. At first it was a pastime for the few rich and adventurous travellers. With the first regular steam boat service from the mainland in the mid-1850s the number of tourists grew. By the end of the century, through a number of new organisations, such as Sweden's first local tourist association founded in Gotland in 1896 (see the chapter by Sjöstrand et al.), tourism became an institutionalised possibility for parts of the upper middle-class in the growing urban centres. Today, tourism is one of the largest industries in Gotland, occupying around 12% of the islanders. For a number of years, Gotland has been the fastest growing destination in Sweden.

Most visitors are from mainland Sweden. Around 10% are foreign, most of whom are from Germany. A new cruising pier in Visby 2018 brings in a further 100,000 or more visitors to the island during two or three intensive summer months. This increases the local economy, but also the strains on the island's natural and human resources, its cultural, social, and ecological systems. Among the most acute are the strains on health care, fresh water supplies, sewage, and refuse.

Besides a number of attractions commonly attributed to islands, such as hospitability, heritage, and harmony, this cold-water island has over the last half century also become equipped with many of the attractions of warm water islands, most notably the well-known s's: sun, sand, sea, shopping, and sex. To this list have also been added, in recent years, security and safety. These qualities, generated by the island's perceived boundedness, isolation, and remoteness, have become underscored as more and more other destinations over the world are seen as increasingly unsafe and insecure.

Recently there has also been a growing appeal of island destinations, a trend that can, at least partly, be explained by intensive marketing and place-branding campaigns, promoting a generic image of islands as different and unique (Grydehøj, 2008; Gössling & Wall, 2007). Island researcher Godfrey Baldacchino contends that islands today have become the object of what appears to be the most lavish and extensive global branding in human history. Islands, he writes, 'find themselves presented as locales of desire, as platforms of paradise, as habitual sites of fascination, emotional offloading or religious pilgrimage' (Baldacchino, 2010, p. 373f.).

In Gotland, during the first years of the 21st century, the old slogans, such as 'Gotland – a different land' and 'Almost abroad!' were replaced by a new official brand: 'Magical Gotland: the Baltic Sea's most creative and magical place'. During the same period, the destination's 'tourist-scape' was completed with an ever more elaborated history-scape: in few places has cultural heritage been produced with such energy and success (Johansson, 2009; Ronström, 2007, 2008). Today, tourism and cultural heritage are generally seen as Gotland's main or even only road towards a viable, sustainable future for the islanders. As landlords, service personnel, guides, etc., a growing number of islanders have been drawn into the promotion of the island as a tourist destination, as an image of place of its own, unique, remote, and different (Ronström, 2013, 2016).

Same, same – and different

Their most salient feature of the brochures is similarity. They come in a standard format, contain from 25 to 50 or more pages, are filled with short text entries, ads, and pictures. The same slogans, rhetorical phrases, even the same texts and photos are reproduced year after year. This redundancy may establish a sense of stability, continuity, and a certain timelessness: the island out of time.

In some respects, however the brochures differ. The older ones are thin, and their layout, design, and printing are cheap and simple. The result is a certain transparency: it is the destination that is foregrounded, while the brochures themselves stay in the background. The newest are more expensive, thicker, and slicker, with highly profiled layout and design, much in the style of trendy lifestyle or travel magazines. To a much higher degree, they point to themselves as if self-consciously aware of being a part of a global market of

island destinations. A recurrent feature that serves to underline this aspect is comparisons with other destinations, as in 'Gotland, Sweden's Mallorca!' (or Crete, Rhodes, Ireland, even Scotland!). Such comparisons are commonly deployed in tourism ads, to transfer symbolic value from a high order destination to a lesser known or valued. In the past years, this has been even more strongly accentuated by a prize-winning ad campaign, '*Jorden runt på en ö*' '(Round-the-world in an island'), presenting pictures from Gotland as if were they from Krabi, Ibiza, or Easter Island.[5]

Round-the-world in an island. Photo: Owe Ronström.

The message is simple: why take the trouble to go to these distant places, when you can find much of the same in this nearby, generic, and principally exchangeable island? The combination of generic placelessness and timelessness produces the island destination as a pure sign, a simulacrum or floating signifier, open, malleable, adaptable to the shifting interests and desires of the visitors.

Another common motif in the brochures, perhaps one of the most common in island marketing, is 'Far away, but nearer than you think!' Phrases and slogans such as 'almost abroad', 'a differ-

5 Destination Gotland, 2013.

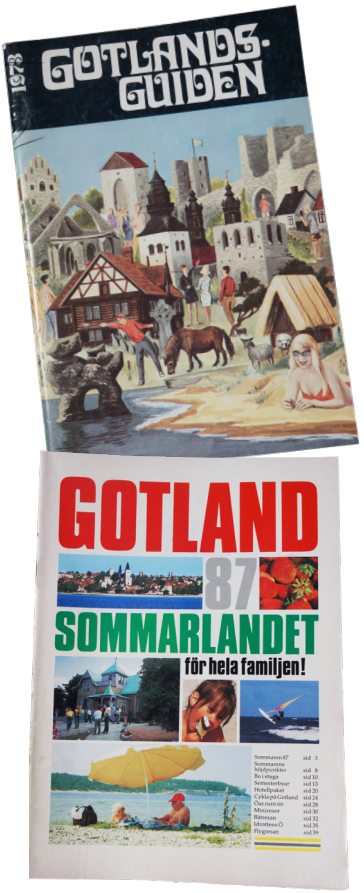

Photo: from Tourist Brochure.

ent land' and 'As a mainlander you travel abroad when you travel to Gotland' underline the island's intrinsic remoteness as a positive value and selling point, while at the same time asserting that this value is comfortably within reach. Remoteness, a constitutive feature of islandness, is not so much dependant on long distances as on relative inaccessibility and inconvenience. The more stops, the more waiting, and the more means of transport, the more remote the destination (Gillis, 2001; Ronström, 2021). Although ferries and aeroplanes to Gotland are both fast and frequent, as is often underlined in the brochures, they still contribute to establishing a sense of remoteness by inducing wait and changes of transport. Like bridges, ferries and aeroplanes are as much concrete manifestations of connection as of difference and distance. Each time the sea is crossed, the boundary, the distance, and the connection are simultaneously marked and confirmed.

Pictures fill the larger part of the brochures. Their role is decisive, effective by being purposely affective. Some pictures in the older brochures are markedly documentary, but most pictures are overtly and affectively aestheticised. As expected, sun, history and nature make up a core: the sea at sunset, the empty beach, the old farm, medieval church, city wall, ruins, '*raukar*' (limestone pillars typical of Gotland), lamb chops and saffron pancake (typical Gotlandic dishes). As also expected, another common set of motifs focus on swimming, eating, and shopping: crowded beaches and restaurants, souvenir shops, narrow cobblestone streets, a harbour full of small boats.

A common technique is to arrange a collage of such pictures on the cover, in a dense display of the destination's main attractions. The obvious idea is to strike a chord that introduces an easily recog-

nisable mindscape – the summer island destination – and to introduce certain subject positions, roles, activities, and affective modes that constitute what it is to be a visitor.

Appearances of the island and the visitors

When and how does the island of Gotland itself appear? Not surprisingly, as a place in the sun. Eternal summer is also a core of island mindscapes in this part of northern Europe. Only in the past few years, winters have also been represented, but as a secondary alternative, in the last pages or on the back cover. Not surprisingly, a major part of the island appears as coasts, shores, and beaches. A connection to the sea is ever-present, either as the main focus or as background accompaniment. The emphasis on coasts and seas, as also the foregrounding of ferries and airplanes as means of access, serves to underline the island as bounded and separate, isolated and remote.

Visby, Gotland's only town, is well represented. Especially in the later brochures, the urban space appears as default category: it is from town you make daily excursions to nature, beaches, and sights. The town is represented either by especially picturesque parts of the medieval inner city, exhibited as in an outdoor art gallery and generally without people, or by a few typified urban arenas and events with crowds of people clearly positioned as visitors: the bustling shopping street, the summer restaurant or bar, the outdoor concert.

In general, 'the island' stands out as empty, uninhabited. As just noted, when there are people in pictures of beaches, cafés, or shopping streets, almost all appear as tourists. Their presence is important as objects of identification for the presumptive tourist. The message seems to be that the place is open, you are also invited, there is really nobody else there.

A common motif in tourist brochures is the 'rear view': lightly dressed women, photographed from behind, in backlight, in front of surging seas and sunsets in scenic places (cf. Jenkins 2003, p. 317). Open landscapes, 'groomed spaces', empty and untouched, designed to invite the behold-

Photo: from Tourist Brochure.

Photo: from Tourist Brochure.

ers to fill the space with their own needs and desires, is standard in many kinds of tourist brochures (Järlehed 2015, p. 76; Grinell 2004:190f; Dann 1996; Picazo & Moreno-Gil 2019).

Visitors are regularly invited to hidden hotspots, unspoiled villages, secret beaches untouched by other tourists. For island tourism, such spaces play an especially decisive role, by appealing to old and widespread images about the island as a tabula rasa, a terra nullius ready for the tourist to occupy and explore, an empty stage without prehistory, thus the perfect venue for the great adventure – images and ideas dependent on and nourished by a colonial past and hegemonic (male) positions such as the explorer or the coloniser (Gillis, 2004; Ronström, 2016).

In general, 'the island' is designed as a place for experiencing the distinctively different, archaic, and endemic. One of the brochures reads: 'Gotland is abroad in Sweden, not just geographically. Experiences that are not available anywhere else in Sweden. This is how it is with islands – the surrounding water both preserves and gives new life. History lives, life is good, especially in the summer' (1992).

A recurrent motif is the island as microcosm: in Gotland you will find everything you need, in small format, near and accessible. In other contexts, islands are often represented as fragmented and incomplete, lacking people, competence, modernity, industries, development, and education. Underlined here instead is Gotland as a world of its own: 'There is something here for everybody!'. If anything is lacking, it is what the mainland urban tourist might want to flee from, the hustle of big city life, stress, and pollution: 'Leaving work and everyday thoughts on one side of the sea and meeting the

different nature, freedom and relaxation on the other side is a wonderful experience that easily becomes a habit' (1994).

… and islanders

When, where, and how do the islanders appear? The short answer: almost not at all. With a few notable exceptions (the beach, the busy street, the restaurant), there are not a lot of people in the brochures. This can perhaps be explained with reference to a well-known underlying paradox: although what is offered and can be consumed is tourism, too many tourists constitute a potential threat to the 'originality' and 'authenticity' of the visitor, of the destination, and of the visiting industry as a whole.

In the brochures, most people appear as tourists, all of whom are white, young or middle-aged, come in couples or groups and are occupied with a limited number of typical 'touristic' activities: relaxing, swimming, bicycling, riding, walking, sightseeing. Also, for the few islanders, there are only a limited number of typical positions available: 'the servant', typically in a restaurant, café or hotel; 'the local artisan', a potter or a stone mason; or 'the Gotlandic athlete', performing one of the old traditional Gotlandic 'folk games'.[6] All are grown-ups, and while the servant can be male or female, the artisan and the athlete are generally male. While the visitors appear as common people, inviting the beholder to share their experiences, the locals appear as thematised, exoticised, and localised objects in the background (cf., Järlehed 2015, p. 75).

Tropes and themes

The main trope at work in the brochures is synecdoche, a type of metonymy in which the part stands for the whole. As coasts and beaches stand for the island as a whole, the selected streets of the old town for Visby as a whole, the few islanders for all the islands 60,000 inhabitants, and the tourists for the potentially millions of visitors. In several respects, tourism builds on metonyms, tropes with a high capacity to produce what they name or depict. Destinations are dependent on selected landmarks that serve as trademarks and sell-

6 Among these are *stangstörtning* ('tossing the rod'), *pärk* (a ball game, reminiscent of rounders or cricket) and *varpa* (a game similar to petanque/boule, using flat, rounded stones or metal equivalents instead of balls).

Find your holiday

OASIS

White roadways, windswept trees, sweeping fields and lambs grazing on pastures alongside Viper's Bugloss, poppies, small, intimate fishing villages, beautiful beaches and vibrant restaurants, cafés and flea markets. It's easy to find your way around Gotland, and you'll never run out of places to visit. Here are a few accommodation options for your visit to the island.

ing points – Big Ben for London, the Eiffel Tower for Paris, roses and ruins for Visby (Johansson, 2009, p. 235f). Such symbols are produced by a radical reduction and compression of both space and place, and an equally radical exclusion of the everyday life of local residents. Thereby metonyms contribute effectively to the 'grooming' of the island space so typical for Gotlandic tourist brochures.

Overall, for the islandness of Gotland, five interconnected themes stand out as more common as well as more significant: *smallness* (although Gotland is quite large, the twentieth largest island in Europe); *remoteness*, the island as distant in time and space; *archaism*, the island as in or of the past, where things are as they used to be; *boundedness*, the island as isolated and separate; *endemism*, the island as distinctively different and unique, with a nature, heritage, culture, and language of its own (Ronström 2016). As a destination, Gotland is clearly equipped with many of the features and distinctive niche attractions that commonly characterise cold water islands, such as relative isolation, pristine nature, and wide open spaces. However, Gotland also comes with a number of the typical characteristics of warm water islands, such as warm climate, nice beaches, and a slower pace of life (Baum, 1997; Gössling & Wall, 2007, p. 430ff.). Combined, these themes and features produce the island's *naturalness*, its *authenticity* and exclusive *magic fee*l or, as expressed in one of the brochures: 'Gotland is beyond the horizon, it is another country, where the day breaks and the rainbow ends' (1990).

What there is not

What is not found in destination Gotland? To begin with, there is not a lot of people, and there are notably more tourists than locals. Secondly, there are almost no cars. 'Welcome into the nature, by foot or bicycle' is a common phrase. Cars are problematic perhaps by their persistent use as symbols for modernity, while bicycles, boats, horses, ferries and even a museum train are means of transport that better fit the presented image of the island in a past where 'everything is near'.

Thirdly, there are few traces of military presence. That there may be shooting at a firing ground near the island's most famous beach is mentioned in some of the older brochures, and that the northern part of the island was closed to foreigners for military reasons for many years is noted in passing in some brochures in German.

Otherwise, the fact that Gotland, up to the late 1980s, was one of northwest Europe's most heavily militarised zones, with five permanently stationed regiments and detachments is passed over in silence.

Except for two brochures from the 1980s showing a modern combine and offering guided tours to Visby's 'modern industry' (an Ericsson telecom factory), there is also a striking absence of ordinary islanders leading ordinary modern lives. The islanders' lifeworld is simply non-present. The destination is presented as out of the ordinary, in many ways an opposite mirror image of the lifeworld in urban centres on the Swedish mainland, from which most of the visitors come. The result is a divide between a life sphere of work and industry during autumn, winter, and spring, and a leisure sphere during a few intensive summer months. In the island, this has produced a spatial divide in two distinct zones, well known to visitors and locals in islands and coast towns around the world: the coasts, beaches and the old town that comprise the core of the destination for the visitors; the inland, modern houses, farms, factories, workplaces, and ordinary shops for the islanders.

Also, there are almost no old people, no disabled people, or people of colour other than white. When islanders, disabled and non-whites, are excluded, or when they are represented only in a limited set of roles or positions (such as a waiter, a cleaner, a local 'ethnic' or artisan) hegemonic hierarchies are reproduced. By ascribing certain subject positions and activities to the visiting tourists and other to locals and non-whites, the tourist interface contributes to and reinforces a split world: one for the white, middle-aged tourists, another for the non-whites, elderly, and locals. However, these positions are not necessarily separated from one another, as one person can obviously embody more than one or all of them, depending on the situation.

The connection between a service position and non-whites/ islanders/ locals takes many forms. In a picture from the earlier mentioned prize-winning ad campaign, '*Jorden runt på en ö'* ('Round the world in an island'), a dark skinned/non-white person (the only one we have found in our material) appears as a bartender. The heading reads 'Jamaica?' to which the rhetorical answer is an obvious: 'No! Gotland!' The dark-skinned servant is represented neither as a tourist nor as a Gotlander, but as a sign of foreignness, in this case Jamaican-ness.

Although presumably not by intention, the image builds on and reproduces a colonial discourse through the connection between

Photo: Courtesy of Destination Gotland.

brown bodies, foreignness, and (subordinate) service positions. At the same time, it also implies a connection between white bodies and tourists (to Gotland and Jamaica), as well as a perhaps more subtle connection between islanders, foreignness, and subordinate positions (in present day Sweden and certainly in Gotland).

Island speech

Although in some respects Gotland specific, the brochures we have examined could have been from just about any island tourist office in the northern hemisphere. And although in some respects time specific, the overall impression is continuity – the brochures could have been from just about any of the last fifty or so years. The brochures are examples of a generic island speech, a well-established, tenacious, uniform, globalised discourse with colonial, imperialistic roots that hovers rather freely over the islands it is supposed to refer to.

Island speech is a strongly affective genre that builds on contrasting an enchanting, magically distinctive and different 'there-and-then' with an unspoken but still clearly present 'here-and-now'. Images, tropes, motifs, and symbols are reproduced over and over again, in similar contexts and with similar meanings, to the effect that the islands and islanders become in principle interchangeable. It is a clearly path-dependent genre, constituted by circles of representation at many levels or, perhaps better, spirals of representation, since the feedback loops are constantly expanding (Jenkins, 2003, p. 305). As a whole, the genre is energised by many of modernity's inherent ambivalences and characterised by high redundancy and intersubjectivity: as presumptive visitors, we are expected to rec-

ognise what we see in these brochures, to accept that we have seen it before, and to overlook these generalities of the presentation in favour of the particularities of the presented destination.

Therefore, it should be of no surprise that many of our observations above have been made also by others, in studies of destination and tourism imaginaries in Sweden and elsewhere.[7] Tourist researchers have argued that tourist brochures tend to reproduce and consolidate hegemonic ideas about the world, ideas that other parts of the tourist industry stand ready to install to make the place match the destination's image or brand (Edelheim, 2007; MacCannell, 2013; Urry, (1990) 2002). The argument is also valid here, as is clearly stated in one of the brochures: 'Gotland is truly a place made for vacation and leisure'. And it should also be of no surprise that many of the observations are made in studies of tourist photos in the digital platforms that have replaced the now more-or-less obsolete printed tourist brochures. In the following chapter, Anna-Carin Nordvall finds that while Instagram users visiting Gotland strive to publish unique photos of their tourist experiences, still the content is strikingly repetitive and similar: the same kinds of people (young, white, couples, families), in the same kinds of settings (beaches, restaurants, picturesque streets and natural sights), occupied with the same kinds of activities (strolling, shopping, swimming) as in the tourist brochures. One would perhaps think that the explosion of publicly available tourist photos that followed from the introduction of smartphones and social media would have increased the diversity of motifs, subjects, situations, and activities in the photos. What we see is instead more of the same; incessant repetitions of unspoiled beaches, blue skies, exotic foods …

So, again, it is not the specific place that emerges in the photos, it is the destination image. What the Gotlandic brochures and their contemporary social media heirs present to the reader is 'the island', a phantasmagoric space disembedded from its local or regional setting, ready for immediate consumption on a global market. But at the same time, it also shows this same island as re-embedded, localised, and formatted as an island destination, with all the qualities

7 Björkstedt & Dielemans (2006); Dann (1996); Edelheim (2007); Grinell (2004); Gössling & Wall (2007); Järlehed (2015); Johansson (2009); Myte & Lindh (2009); Mattsson (2016); Ronström (2016); Saltzman (2007); Salazar & Graburn (2014).

that come with such: smallness, boundedness, difference, remoteness, archaism, endemism, and magic (Ronström, 2016, 2021). In such a light, the brochures, and the production of 'the island destination' in general, can be seen as an instrument to produce remote pasts in carefully selected parts of the peripheries.[8]

At the end of the day, you might ask how it has been at all possible to continue to produce brochures such as those studied here, in a Sweden that during the past half-century has seen an intense debate about diversity, and a notably heightened sensitivity and anxiety around issues of (mis)representation. In newspapers, radio, TV, and social media there are repeatedly heated public debates concerning the number of women on boards, the representation of immigrants in the political sphere, the image of Muslims in the news, ethnic and race stereotypes in children's books, how people with disabilities are represented in public life, the role of aged people in society. These debates clearly illustrate the dilemmas concerning the ethics and politics of representation and how images produce as well as reproduce power relations (Hall, (1997) 2013). Today, many individuals and groups (ethnic, social, religious, or other kinds of belonging/identification) claim recognition and influence from marginalised positions. They expect or demand representation on par with the privileged majority, and resist exclusion and stereotyped reduction in media, ads, and popular culture (Habel, 2012; Hübinette & Lundström, 2020; Muftee & León Rosales, 2022).[9]

Despite all this, it is still hard to find a public debate about representation in the field of tourism, notwithstanding a number of attempts by journalists (e.g., Dielemans, 2008), and public debaters and academic scholars (e.g., Grinell, 2004; Mattsson, 2016; Syssner, 2011). Given the politicisation of representation in general in today's Sweden, it is hard to imagine that there are so many other contexts where such humanly suspect, and politically incorrect representations would pass unquestioned. What mechanisms make it possible

8 By implementing not only a re-homogenisation, but also a re-hegemonisation of selected parts, of the world, the brochures in this light stand out as part of a radical counterforce to the increasing cultural diversity of the large urban centres.

9 See also the Swedish website: *Bilders makt* (The Power of Images): https://bildersmakt.se. The website functions as a knowledge bank about the reproduction of racist stereotypes, their history, and colonial context.

for the tourist industry to continue to produce and present destinations, visitors, and visited in such a stereotyped and reducing way? What is it about tourism that so effectively silences questions and makes criticism seem irrelevant?

A global industry with global sustainability challenges

Tourism is a major global industry. In marginalised places around the world, and certainly in many islands, tourism is often seen as the only viable possibility for future development. It is, however, a well-established fact that with tourism also comes a number of sustainability challenges that threaten that very same future, from CO_2 emissions, water shortage, overflows of waste and sewage, to overheating of local economies, overcrowding, and gentrification. This chapter raises further pertinent questions about the social and cultural dimensions of sustainable tourism, about equality and inclusion, reciprocity and participation. When browsing through brochures like the ones we have studied, having seen similar images in brochures from other destinations a hundred times before, it is all too easy to forget to ask some necessary questions. What is actually presented? What is missing and why? And at what cost?

Throughout the chapter, we have shown how Gotland is produced and re-produced as a flourishing *destination* and selling point by repetitive use of selected images, narratives, and historical pasts with a performative power to attract a certain kind of visitors, tourists. Presented are the eternal sun, the sandy beaches, the vast blue sea, the empty landscape ('terra nullius'), and an exciting medieval heritage. We have discussed the representation of the *visitors* and demonstrated the biased and normative representations of certain (white) bodies and positions, and the absence of others. What are the consequences of presenting most visitors as middle-aged, able, and white? We have pointed to the stereotyped representations of the *visited*, the islanders, portrayed as traditional and exotic – if visible at all. Why, one must ask, are the hosts being excluded from the representations of the place they inhabit, the place they call home? How is it at all possible to almost erase their presence? And at what cost?

Our answer to these questions is that the stereotypes and skewed representations are fed by, and continue to feed into, larger processes of social exclusion and marginalisation, by making certain ages, bodies, and identities invisible and by communicating normative messages of ageism, sexism, ableism, and racism. In the same manner, modern objects, artefacts, and buildings, and locals leading ordinary, modern lives, are more or less absent in the brochures. Thus, what tourism produces is not only destinations, but also 'tourists' and 'locals', and to that a set of relations framed by certain types of transactions that reduce and restrict what can and should be visualised.

Tourist images are powerful and performative. Approached as part of the tourism interface, tourist brochures, the same as all sorts of tourism advertisements, including internet and social media platforms, must be understood as active agents that contribute to the formatting of *destinations* (like Gotland), as well as its *locals* (islanders) and *tourists*. When images and texts work together, they will shape peoples' perceptions of reality in certain directions. And as we have shown, the path dependency is strong and stable over time. Image production works as a powerful tool for maintaining unequal power relations, simply through the repetitive use of certain motifs and genres, paired with the oblivion or veiling of certain others (Hall, 2013).

Enabling sustainable visits

Sustainable tourism is defined by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 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'.[10] How can such a wide and all-embracing goal be achieved? While Agenda 2030 mentions sustainable tourism only four times (in sections about economic growth, consumption and production, and use of oceans and marine resources), UNWTO nevertheless holds that tourism has a potential to contribute, directly or indirectly, to all of the Agenda's SDGs.

Tourism experts and practitioners have criticised both Agenda 2030 and UNWTO on the grounds that what has been hitherto

10 https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development

presented as 'sustainable tourism' is not enough. In the Berlin Declaration on Transforming Tourism (2017:1.4), a number of experts argue that a fundamental transformation of tourism is essential and urgent, because 'only tourism that contributes to the improvement of the well-being of local people, dignity of workers, environmental integrity as well as the elimination of exploitation, inequalities and poverty, is a meaningful option for sustainable development'.

We agree. The level of consistency in the representations of Gotlandic tourist brochures over time surprised us. Over nearly half a century, not much has changed. The same kinds of stories are constantly repeated, and the same kinds of images of the destination, the visited, and the visitors. To enable sustainable visits, we argue, it will be necessary for the tourist industry to: 1) take a considerably greater ethical responsibility for its image production and the messages produced, 2) to anticipate the potential intrinsic, hidden messages, and 3) to provide others, more varied, that include images and stories that do not contribute to hegemonic hierarchies.

Three steps towards broader representation

Broader representations. As mentioned, in some respects the Gotlandic brochures have changed. In more recent years, a campaign to expand the image of Gotland as an exclusively summer destination also included pictures of the island in autumn, winter, and spring. In the same way, it should be possible to expand the images of everyday life by representing a larger variety of bodies, subject positions, identities, and activities of both islanders and visitors. An important step is to mirror the heterogeneity and complexity of today's society more reflexively, through a broader and richer representation of different ages, skin colours, genders, sexualities, religions, and diverse abilities. To be able to challenge the unsustainable, hegemonic norms of the tourism mindscape, it is urgent to represent hitherto excluded groups in a multitude of settings, embodying a variation of positions, on par with young/middle-aged, middle-class whites. A critical gaze should, in a similar manner, be turned towards the representation of other social categories and categorisations. Traditional representations of gender, sexuality, and family should be completed with images that mirror today's diversity of gender, sexuality, and family structures, and thus portray also single parents, expanded families, including grandparents and same-sex parents.

Avoid reproduction of stereotypical representations. Sustainable image production requires awareness of the different meanings and historical discourses embedded in the representations of certain bodies and positions. One aspect of diversity is how dominant norms regarding ethnicity in countries like Sweden shape and reproduce white normativity. The tourist brochures we have examined are, in other words, clearly 'colour blind' (Hübinette & Lundström, 2020): white Swedes and tourists are, with one exception, the only bodies represented, and the only non-white person is represented as a sign of foreignness/Jamaican-ness. To enable sustainable visits, DMOs simply must actively and purposefully avoid the reproduction of stereotypical representations of gendered and racialised bodies.

Collaboration and dialogue with the locals. To become sustainable, tourism must be grounded in collaboration and cooperation between all parties involved. In other words, the tourist industry must invite both visitors and the visited to take an active part in the production of destination images and brands, as well as in the production of the tourist interface at large. More specifically, sustainable visits must build on ongoing dialogues with the locals who live their everyday lives at the destination and consequently are the most affected by tourism. In practice, this means that the tourist industry should arrange specific events and meeting points for dialogues with local citizens *before* decisions are taken. The imageries produced to market destinations, in tourist brochures, newspaper ads, and social media, could and should portray destinations as places permanently inhabited by people living their everyday lives, places that are 'home' to them, and to which you may be invited as guests in a respectful manner.

Questions for discussions

- What values and mechanisms govern the representations of destinations and their inhabitants?
- What are the consequences of the absence of local everyday life in the brochures, for visitors and visited?
- How can less stereotypical and more inclusive destination images contribute to improved conditions for locals, visitors, and destinations, and enable sustainable visits?

Notes on method

A common assumption in studies of tourist brochures, and of tourist images generally, is that a main characteristic of such images is repetition and redundancy, and therefore necessarily also a high degree of consistency over time. To examine the degree of consistency, we have analysed twenty-two tourist brochures produced between 1973 and 2016 by four Gotlandic DMOs. The DMOs are *Gotlandsresor, Gotlands turistservice, Gotlands turistbyrå*, and *Inspiration Gotland*. Tourist brochures have been produced in Gotland since late nineteenth century (Scholz, 2018). After a reorganisation of the DMOs in Gotland in 2015-16, the production of tourist brochures came to an end. Few of the large number of brochures produced over the years have remained. From a private collection, nineteen brochures covering 1973 to 1999 were first selected. Three turned out to be German translations of brochures in Swedish and were excluded. The rest were included in the sample, together with six brochures produced 2000-2016.

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The Instagram locked-in effect and sustainable destination development

Anna-Carin Nordvall

Abstract

This chapter examines what kind of posts Instagram users publish during their visit at Gotland collected from #gotland during July and August in 2021. After a section on theory, the posts, captions and hashtags are analysed focusing on how the users show similarity in the photographs with small variation in motifs and clichéd activities. The text and hashtags also work as a reinforcing element to strengthen the destination image. Instagram users follow homogenised behaviour standards but at the same time strive to be unique. We can call this the Instagram paradox – the Instagram user is unique despite nonunique content. Instagram need to be understood as a social media metaculture, where the culture is the production of the value experience and ideal self-roles.

In the final section, Instagram usage is discussed in relation to sustainable destination development. It is suggested that Instagram paradox can be used: make Instagram users unique through non-unique sustainability content but with a twist making the Instagram user feel unique within the framework of the value expression that prevails. Further, as the content on Instagram has a long lifespan, where new users find old posts and like them, participants on the platform can contribute to create images of sustainable visits. Here, with someone taking the lead in order to create such images over time.

Introduction

Using social media is an activity that many dedicate themselves to every day. On these platforms, individuals can be members of dif-

ferent communities and have contact with family and friends. Here, experiences, preferences, what horrifies or fascinates may be posted. In many ways, the use of social media, the activities that take place there, and the content that is posted are reflections of our society, the values that exist, and the development that is taking place, such as issues related to sustainability. In several ways, the individual is free to choose how they wish to use social media. Based on how the individual wants to be perceived and seen, an image of the self, whether true or not, can be created and result in attention and approval from other users. On the other hand, this can also cause a so-called locked-in effect, i.e., a reduced possibility, inclination, and desire to change that image of self. This can become a limitation in what is considered appropriate to post, show, or do on social media, due to the wish to fit in and to avoid being different from everyone else. Due to this effect, issues may be omitted or not given space on the platform. For example, sustainability initiatives or sustainability work that exists in a destination may not be portrayed in social media as it is too far from the general content frame or image of the user in their role as a tourist. In this chapter, I will examine posts on Instagram from #gotland to see how Gotland is portrayed by tourists during their visits to the destination. It is of particular interest as the use of social media is large and carries a great opportunity for a destination's development work at the same time that challenges, such as the locked-in effect, exist. When users post content similar to other users' images of the destination, in order not to stand out and to maintain the image themselves, a narrow view of the destination that only displays limited parts of the place is maintained. A question that becomes relevant is: Despite the locked-in effect, how can Instagram be used to enable sustainable destination visits?

Based on a report from the Internet Foundation (svenskarnaochinternet.se), 95% of all internet users use some form of social media, with people born in the 1990s being the most frequent users of these media. The most popular social media are Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where two out of three have used Instagram in the past year and where almost half of them visit Instagram every day. The report also shows that there are differences in the use of social media among different age groups where the younger (8-11 years) are diligent users of YouTube, while the older users (30 years and older) mainly use Facebook and Instagram. Using powerful and startling

posts on Instagram makes it a perfect platform to spread one's message. In this chapter, what kind of posts Instagram users publish during their visit to Gotland is examined, and how the Instagram behaviour could enable sustainable destination visits. In the sections below, an introduction to Instagram is presented.

What is presented on Instagram?

Instagram was originally launched for iOS in 2010 and established for android equipment in 2012. In internet terms, it is an 'old' product that has managed to keep a firm grip on its users. Today 1,386 billion individuals have an Instagram account and 95 million posts are published daily worldwide. On Instagram, users can create their ideal self, create a persona that allows them to present themselves as they wish, and choose to only show the image or representation of themselves as they want others to perceive them, i.e., users consciously exclude parts of themselves that they do not want to show on Instagram, as a cultural statement. Instagram posts have an incredibly wide content from pets to various hobbies, and can be posted by individuals, organisations, and companies. A common factor is that Instagram accounts often focus on a theme or a certain profile. The posts, to a large extent, use hashtags which enable a large spread of popular themes, and enable other users to find and suggest posts with themes based on common interests and previous searches. This allows communities with similar interests and lifestyles to develop and grow. It also means that posts do not lose their relevance after a day, a few weeks, or months but can be seen, noticed, and receive likes several years after they are posted; for example, by new followers having found the account through hashtags.

Instagram of everyday life

Instagram impacts people's everyday lives on several different levels: socially, culturally, politically, and economically. The social effect is perhaps the most obvious (Kang & Wei, 2020). The user can spend many hours a day creating content for their account to receive positive attention from other users (Dumas, Maxwell-Smith, Davis, & Giulietti, 2017), while also spending a lot of time looking at all the posts for the accounts they follow, verifying their sociocultural val-

ues, beliefs, and standards (Chua & Chang, 2016) Likewise, special 'cultural rules of the game' are also developed between the users. For example, what is appropriate behaviour? What is allowed to be posted? How should expressions and text be formulated? All these informal Instagram rules are based on the political and religious culture that the individual comes from (Lehto, 2022; Novak, Haselbacher, Mattes, & Limacher, 2022). Further, the financial influence on Instagram users has many faces; for example, in consumer behaviour. Consumers are inspired by other Instagram accounts in terms of trends, fashion, and beauty, which is shown to a large extent in their shopping and consumption patterns. The impact of Instagram on the social, cultural, political, and economic levels can strongly promote or inhibit sustainable behaviour. New positive sustainability behaviours, and changes in attitudes, can arise and become widespread. At the same time, the inhibition of these behaviours can likewise take place. Based on a sustainability context, overconsumption can be promoted and given great focus, and attitudes and values about sustainability can be strengthened or ignored. The purpose of this chapter is to examine what kind of posts Instagram users publish during their visit to Gotland and how Instagram behaviour could enable sustainable destination visits.

Below, the content of Instagram posts collected from the hashtag #gotland are introduced and analysed, followed by an analysis relating the posts to the literature on tourism, self-identity, and social and culture formation, finalised by a discussion. All, but a few, Instagram posts used in this chapter are recreations by the author of original Instagram posts. Those posts that are created by others than the author, are provided with the photographer's name and are specified below the image. In the latter cases, the photographer has given consent for publishing.

Photographs and text in social media

Photography is associated with an objectified space and delivers a number of values, both the feeling of experiencing the special moment and also of taking the photographs, sharing them, and building social and self-image values with the participation of having actually been at the destination (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016). The performative view of the photo session integrates with the individual's identity building and contains epistemic and emotional aspects; for example, by

showing their knowledge of an excursion destination, or joy during a dinner with friends. Image 1 shows an example of a common post on an Instagram account, where the user's interest in outdoor life is combined with a proud moment after a surfing course. Due to the way in which the picture is presented, both identity and community strengthening occur, and can strengthen the user's social status.

Image 1. Picture of common Instagram post and profile. Photo: Anna-Carin Nordvall

More picture-perfect occasions often occur because of important changes in technology that affect *how* photography is practiced. With smartphones, a large number of photographs can be taken, which offers the opportunity to be pickier. This means that the photograph needs to be perfect in terms of right poses, light, and background, lacking spontaneity and capturing the moment. Also, capturing the best content in terms of status markers can occur. Image 2 shows an example of this practice, where the photos are staged but also aim to show the everyday life of the Instagram user where work life, interests, and family life are mixed with the same aim as Image 1; that is, with identity- and community strengthening to improve their social status.

As reinforcement to the image, and to express descriptive or emotional information, a short text often follows the photographs in Instagram posts. This information could also be a teaser for an upcoming event or situation to make the followers interested or curious. Hashtags, another format of text message, facilitate users to find specific posts and recommend them to other users with shared interests. They can also be used to strengthen an emotional expression in addition to the posted text. In the long run, this would mean that Instagram users, who succeed in publishing strong posts where the image and text interact, can build and develop their account, getting more likes and acknowledgement from other Instagram users

Image 2. An example of everyday life with more-or-less staged posts. Photo: Marlene Olsson.

(Zappavigna, 2016). In tourism contexts, the traveller can easily use their mobile phone to increase content communication and content creation (Lalicic & Weismayer, 2016, p. 154) in the moment.

Tourist value experience on Instagram

Social media platforms allow tourists to share knowledge (Buhalis & Law, 2008), emotions, and experiential moments (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012) online, more extensively than before. A large number of studies have examined the effect of user-generated content in tourism (see for example, Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides, 2012; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010), explained by tourists' perception of its high value. The purpose of the perceived value could be of a functional or utilitarian purpose, and could be based on emotional or social grounds. The emotional grounds and the values become visible through social status and the self-image that the individual strives or wishes to achieve, due to either self-centred or community-related motivations (Hsu, Ju, Yen, & Chang, 2007). In this social media community, increased social interaction, trust, identification, reciprocity (Chang & Chuang, 2011), and individual expectations about positive online effects on other social media, such as more followers etc., (Williams, 2009) play an important role. Research shows (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011) that tourists are mostly motivated by individual, altruistic, and hedonic benefits when

sharing content of their vacation activities. Further, for tourists, beliefs are of major importance because they allow them to reflect on, act upon, express, and transform themselves personally and collectively (Kozinets, 2019). In this way, tourists must be seen as active sightseers (Baka, 2015; Ek, Larsen, Hornskov, & Mansfeldt, 2008; Ren, Petersen, & Dredge, 2015) and that they, during their visit, develop, emphasise, and show their 'utopian' self (for example, in their experiential activities or consumption) in a more explicit way than they can at home. Conti & Lexhagen (2020) show new dimensions of experience value, which exists beyond single tourism experiential encounters, but critically contribute to an iterative experience valuation and creation of social status. Today, the social construct of sustainability and its underlying motivation is ambivalent. Instagram users want to show a glamourous and consumption-oriented lifestyle with long distance travel, shopping, and daily restaurants visits. In contrast to individual, altruistic, and hedonic benefits, the social construct of sustainability emphasises the users' concern for the overconsumption problem by selling the clothes or products that they no longer want or need through a second-hand business. The status markers of sustainability seem to be in line with the functional and utilitarian motives the tourist have. Based on this, Instagram is a place that is constantly changing, and where trends and societal change can flourish and develop, and it can also be a breeding ground for changing attitudes and values.

Image, image on the Instagram wall, who has the fairest social status of us all?

Photography content

Analysing the content of Instagram users' posts about their vacation stay at Gotland, it is striking how similar the photographs are. The posts show only a small variation in motifs – alleys with roses and the medieval wall, restaurants at the square in Visby, rocks and beaches, and sunsets by the sea all constantly recur. Also, many of them show pictures of the individuals in beautiful and attractive surroundings doing the same activities, something fun or satisfying (by themselves or in social contexts). That the Instagram users have been there, doing the same activities, maybe also experiencing the same pleasant feelings, may function as a way of making a social rela-

tion between the user and the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Painter, Martin, & Unsworth, 2013), which they do by posting similar content. It looks as though the Instagram user follows homogenised behaviour standards but at the same time strives to be unique. The homogenised standards set up informal social rules that the user needs to follow. In some senses, this makes the individual feel safe and allows them to receive affirmation and appreciation from followers, but at the same time they are free to create their uniqueness or self-image within this frame. We can call this the Instagram paradox – the Instagram user is unique despite non-unique content. Lönnroth & Ronström (2023) discuss this repetitiveness of images as a meta-cultural production that produces images of individuals and places in the role of themselves. Here, the value expression and self-based ideal (for example, Hsu et al. (2007), can be seen as an Instagram meta culture, where the culture is the production of the value experience and ideal self-roles.

From this perspective, the photos show different dimensions of value experience. For example, authenticity, and the value of self-based idealised and imagined ways of 'being there' (Conti & Lexhagen, 2020), are based on Instagram ideals where being mainstream strengthens one's belonging in the community. This is evident when photos of the sunset and the sea can be found in other Instagram account. The same patterns are also seen in the dining posts, often showing pictures of the dishes, drinks, and trendy furnishings, combined with selfies or group photos of the dining company. The activity posts varied mainly between beach, city (Visby), strolling, and well-known excursion destinations, and showed a high degree of homogeneity of photographed motifs among the users. Image 3 is an example, showing how the self-based ideal, the aura of being there in a Visby strolling excursion, is practised. The feeling that the photo wants to convey is also emphasised by the post text: *'Stroll around the alleys of Visby and buying sweets in the caramel shop, just like in the Pippi Longstocking series'*. These posts' stereotypical characteristics are very similar to the patterns shown in Lönnroth & Ronström's chapter, where the brochures demonstrated a common clichéd image of Gotland. In the same way as Lönnroth & Ronström emphasise clichéd images, it could be argued that clichéd activities exist in the Instagram context within the homogenised frame.

Image 3. Instagram post with common strolling picture in Visby.
Photo: Elin Nilsson.

Similar to the dining posts, the activity posts were commonly combined with selfies showing, for example, an outfit, a funny face, and a happy mood on the beach. The accommodation photos often showed beautiful window views, surroundings of the rented house, or a hotel interior, confirming Jacobsen & Munar (2012) suggestion of emotional and experiential moments asserted in the photos. It

Image 4. Example of restaurant post. Photo: Marlene Olsson.

could be argued that the outfit, the funny face, the happy mood, or the sparkling glass of wine act as accessories to strengthen the uniqueness and self-identity, based on the assumption that the Instagram users also have an image of themselves that they want to reinforce. Further, the photographs seem to have both self-centred and community-related motives. Individualism, altruism, and hedonism are strong drivers, as earlier stated by Yoo & Gretzel (2011), where the Instagram users need confirmation from their followers to both strengthen their self-image and their social status in the Instagram community. Confirmation is shown by the number of likes on the posted content and work as a rewarding power (Martinez-Pecino & Garcia-Gavilán, 2019). Overall, the Instagram accounts analysed in this study show a high number of likes when the users strongly express themselves, acting according to their Instagram profile description. For example, "interested in clothing and fashion" shows many selfie posts posing in a fashionable outfit, as a way of strengthening the reward power and the self-image.

One way in which Instagram users express and transform themselves, and act as the base for their values, according to Kozinets (2019), can be seen when showing off restaurant visits where food and drink are depicted. The Instagram user in Image 4 describes, in their profile, their interest in food and dining, which is also a very common post theme for her during the Gotland visit. Both Painter et al. (2013) and Kozinets (2019) argue for the connection between the Instagram users happening through their joint interests and values. The photo in Image 4, showing a nicely prepared meal, is accompanied by tips on where to find this restaurant with this beautiful lunch, in the text 'today's food tips :-)'. 'Ate at #sallypasudret

yesterday in a wonderful environment at #vamplingboprastgard. Incredibly tasty! #gotland'. This suggests that these actions are an example of the connection between the Instagram users, both in their appreciation of a good meal but also as an expression of the preferences or interests they have.

Text and hashtag content

Zappavigna (2016) explains the text as activating a discourse of self, and signalling the photographer's subjectivity. On Instagram, this subjectivity could be linked to the self-image the user strives for or the target self-presentations. Further, subjectivity can be seen as a relationship of 'imagining oneself as being' or 'being in fusion with' the image producer, and the concept can be strengthened by the captions. In other words, the caption explicitly inscribes the Instagram users' attitudinal reaction to the image, performing the semiotic work of sharing this user's personal experience.

Overall, the post captions in the study could be divided into three categories: emotions, descriptions, and reinforcements-oriented texts. In Table 1 below, the most common expressions of each category are shown.

Table 1. Most common caption expressions in the posts.

Expressions	
Emotions	wonderful, beautiful, enjoyable, stunning, dazzling, gorgeous, happy
Descriptions	walk, stroll, bath, sunset
Reinforcement	luxury, soothing, peaceful, silence, comfort, leisure

In Image 5, a case in point can be seen; the user posted a text to express the subjectivity and their state of mind in the moment: *'Gotland is an absolutely wonderful place on earth… love it …'*

The number of hashtags is usually between one and three, but can extend to five or more. The hashtags are often informative and indicate location, e.g., #fårö, #hoburgen, #toftastrand, but can also indicate an emotion, similar to the captions presented above: #happy, #quality of life etc. (see Table 2).

Image 5. Example of text expression in Instagram posts. Photo: Anna-Carin Nordvall.

Table 2. Most common hashtags in the posts.

Expressions	
Location	#fårö, #hoburgen, #ljugarn, #sudret, #toftastrand, #tofta, #visby
Emotions	#cheerful, #delighted, #happy, #joyful, #peaceful, #thrilled
Descriptions	#beach, #beauty, #luxury, #qualityoflife, #sunset

Both text and hashtags act as reinforcement for the photos, as Kim, Cho, & Kim (2021) suggested, and affirm the emotional state of the

moment. The captions and hashtags also act as clarification marks for the excursion destination. The clarification marks seem also to act as a simplifier, allowing the viewer to accompany the journey that the Instagram user experiences by making the viewer use their own imagination to form an idea of what the journey is like. This could also work as a reinforcing element to strengthen the destination image (Smith, 2018) for the viewers, especially with captions like 'The most beautiful sunset ever experienced'.

Image 6. Example of text and number of hashtags in Instagram post. Photo: Marlene Olsson.

The results also show that there is a homogeneity in the captions about which words are used and that the users, to a large extent, want to convey an emotion or their mood. For example, 'Life can never be better than this', 'Enjoying life', 'Feeling fortunate'. The post caption is often combined with emojis to enhance the caption; for example, 'In love' followed by heart emoji or 'Full speed' followed by a surfing emoji. Another common caption style is to enter an adjective that reinforces what the user thinks the image represents, such as 'luxurious', or 'soothing'. The captions are in some cases purely informative, such as 'Walk in Visby', or 'Beautiful sunset on Gotland'. These captions are then often combined with vivid photos that convey an immediate emotion, as in Image 6. The more informative captions are usually found in the posts that show the users' activities, while the emotion-oriented captions recur in all types of posts. Hashtags seem to be used for the same purpose as emojis. Similar to the photographic content, the text and hashtags indicate some kind of self-identity building which, for example, Conti & Heldt Cassel (2020) emphasise as a

reason for these kinds of posts. Prebensen (2014) designates both expertise and emotional aspects to captions and hashtags, differing from this study in which only emotional aspects were present. The existence of only emotional aspects is a bit surprising, as Gotland is a highly historic place where Instagram users have the opportunity to use expert approaches to capture the interest of followers. At the same time, it reflects the patterns of behaviour that exist on Instagram, where the social and self-centred motives dominate.

Enabling sustainable visits – using Instagram

The purpose of this chapter is to examine what kind of posts Instagram users publish during their visit to Gotland, and how Instagram behaviour could enable sustainable destination visits.

Getting confirmation is important to us, both from IRL and the social media used. Instagram is no exception. However, the affirmation Instagram users need is not completely without responsibility, but seems to be governed by social informal rules and patterns. One of the most prominent patterns seen in this study is the homogeneity found in the posts, both in image and text, and simultaneously a striving toward being unique. The uniqueness is found in doing the same things at the destination as everyone else, visiting the same places, walking in the same alleys in Visby, doing the same activities, but then making something original or extraordinary out of it. For example, this could be by portraying something from a completely different angle than usual, or doing something unexpected, funny, or crazy as a complement to the activity. Thus, users try to be unique enough to be noticed in the volume of Instagram posts, but remain within the framework of what is accepted, while also being so interesting that their followers reward with likes, affirming comments, or emojis, and they become interested in experiencing the same thing. Maybe that is the real purpose of Instagram posts: to make followers want to do and experience the same thing as the Instagram account user, and then be able to tick it off their bucket-list. This then is some kind of a locked-in effect.

What is seen as desirable, and what one wants to experience in a destination, can change quickly on Instagram. Something that was not given attention one day can, through 'an original use', suddenly become something aspirational, hip, and desirable so that everyone

wants to experience or do the same thing. Through these rapid fluctuations, the homogeneity pattern seen in this study can be interpreted as both positive and negative in terms of sustainability and sustainable development in a destination. We start with the negative, which is that the image of a destination is maintained through unsustainable structures, and stays for an unnecessarily long time. It is difficult to predict what will garner attention. At the same time, it is positive that apparently small sustainability initiatives for a destination can gain widespread attention, and the destination can become something to be aspired to as soon as it is noticed, and the content becomes attractive, unique, and original. In cases, e.g., where users post pictures of sustainability initiatives on Gotland, a wide sharing/reach and large amount of attention could be created, and the homogenous Instagram behaviour could lead to sustainability getting more attention through the followers who repeat the behaviour/visit at the same destination, doing the same activities. Perhaps this is how the Instagram paradox can be used: make Instagram users unique through non-unique sustainability content but with a twist, perceived by the followers as something within the framework of the informal rules; something that makes the Instagram user feel unique within the framework of the value expression that prevails.

Despite the challenges that exist with Instagram, where self-realisation is important among users, there is great potential in how the platform can be used to enable sustainable visits. In their chapter, Lönnroth & Ronström emphasise the importance of inviting visitors and the visited to take an active part in creating the image of the destination. Similarly, Instagram can be used for this purpose. As the content on Instagram has a long lifespan, where new users find old posts and like them, participants on the platform can contribute to create images of sustainable visits. Still, someone may have to take the lead in order to create such images over time. Here, a DMO like the ones described in the chapter by Sjöstrand, Gebert Persson & Ågren can take on such a leading role. Therefore, a DMO may have to consider a communication strategy on social media that is founded in, and proceeds from, a concept of sustainable visits.

#selfconfirmation#contentattractive#homogeneity#lockedineffect
#unique#sustainabledestinationvisits#DMOcommunicationstrategy

Questions for discussions

- How should social media be used to enable sustainable visits?
- Which actors are most important to make social media useful for enabling sustainable visits?
- What Instagram content would attract visitors to behave sustainable at the destination long-term?

Notes on method

Instagram post search and sampling

For the present study, netnography was used, inspired by Kozinets (2002) and Liburd (2012). The Hashtag #gotland was chosen, contained in 982,000 posts. After cleaning the data to exclude posts by companies, duplicates, and reposts, there remained 1,572. Ensuring that only posts from tourists were left, the 1,572 posts were judged by the posts including photos of the ferry or flight to Gotland, or captions such as 'finally visit my beloved island again'. The data set of the study comprised 200 Instagram posts (12%) of the tourism destination of Gotland, with 35 personal accounts randomly chosen by the program APIFY, scraping Instagram data. The research process is presented in Figure 1 below.

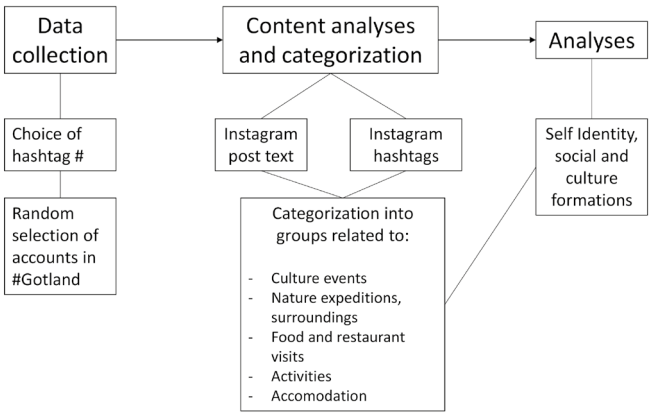

Figure 1. Research procedure with content analysis.

The data was collected during July and August in 2021 and the Instagram accounts were selected randomly through the sampling function in Excel. Content analysis (Stemler, 2015) was used to interpret the meaning of the content of text data categorised into five categories: cultural events, nature expeditions, food and restaurant visits, and accommodation, based on the occurrence of the words and language used in the posts (Step 2 in Figure 1) (Weber, 1990, p. 37). The focus on self-identity, self-image, value expression, and social and cultural formation in the analysis is based on studies and literature from social psychology and social media. In these domains, these aspects are strongly argued for as bringing value to individuals and users, as well as explaining the motives behind their posts (Step 3 in Figure 1).

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Controlling for sustainability – the role of a public organisation in enabling regional sustainable visits

Mathias Cöster & Matti Skoog

Abstract

Enabling sustainable visits requires contributions from various actors in a local society. In this chapter, we explore how a local public organisation may contribute. We do so by using the theoretical concepts and perspectives of accounting and management control, an academic sub-discipline within the field of business studies. The case presented in the chapter is Region Gotland. It is a public organisation that, among others, is responsible for initiating a sustainable development of the local hospitality industry. Nonetheless, many of the society services that Region Gotland provides are also of fundamental importance for the hospitality industry. This means that if the hospitality industry on Gotland is to realise sustainable visits, the organisation Region Gotland has to contribute in more ways than just being an initiator. Two main conclusions are presented. The first is that it is necessary for Region Gotland to develop an internal management control system that integrates and addresses sustainability in all of its operations. We conclude that currently that is not the case, but it can happen if Region Gotland embraces and balances the financial and non-financial logics of its control system. The second conclusion is that if Region Gotland does that, it may also contribute to local sustainable visits as they inspire companies in the hospitality industry. For example, it can demonstrate how companies can integrate sustainability in the control of their businesses.

Introduction

The responsibility for local regional development in Sweden is divided between 21 regions. A region is a public organisation that consists of several municipalities, except for Region Gotland. It contains only one municipality that provides society services and development for the approximately 61,000 people that live year-round on the island of Gotland. During summertime, the population more than doubles as Gotland (as described in several other chapters in this book) is one of Sweden's most popular summer destinations. Region Gotland has three main tasks overall: municipal operations, county council operations, and regional development (Region Gotland, 2023a).

Region Gotland's current regional development plan describes how the society shall develop until the year 2040 (Region Gotland, 2023b). The plan clearly states that a sustainable region is dependent on the integration and support of initiatives and actions that address social, economic, and environmental goals. To accomplish regional sustainable development, a constant integration of different kinds of sustainable activities is necessary in order to reach relevant and sustainable outputs and outcomes. This also holds true for the development of the hospitality industry on Gotland.

A subsection of the regional development plan is the document 'Regional hospitality industry strategy for Gotland' (Region Gotland, 2019). Region Gotland's vision for the hospitality industry is that Gotland should become northern Europe's most sustainable and attractive destination by 2027. Still, in the strategy there is a significant focus on the growth of the tourist industry. Travel by air and ferry shall increase by 20 per cent, the number of guest nights by 20 per cent, and international guest nights by 30 per cent. This shall be accomplished by increasing the number of visitors during off-season, i.e., September to May. At the same time, the tourist industry should be able to accomplish this without e.g., increased environmental impact. Furthermore, the document states that sustainable tourism is not only about environmental sustainability, but also about economic, cultural, and social sustainability.

Implementation and continued development of the hospitality industry strategy is supposed to be managed by the local hospitality

The inner harbour of Visby, crowded with visiting sailing boats. The experience of visitors that arrive Visby by boat is very much dependent upon the harbour service that Region Gotland provides. Such as shower and toilets facilities, re-cycling stations, access to fresh water etcetera. Photo: Mathias Cöster.

industry organisation GFB.[1] The strategist at Region Gotland who has been responsible for the strategy document truly emphasises this:

> …we [the Region] have taken the initiative to formulate the strategy, but in order for it to be realised, the operators in the hospitality industry need to do the work, so that it comes from below.

The quote indicates that the organisation Region Gotland will act as an initiator, but the execution of the strategy requires that the work being done by the many businesses that together constitute Gotland's hospitality industry. Still, taking the role of the initiator does not mean the organisation Region Gotland is not involved in executing the sustainability goals in the hospitality strategy. Many of the society services that Region Gotland provides, for example water and sewer, parks and recreation areas, health care, or harbour services (illustrated in image 1) are of fundamental importance for the hospitality industry. This means that if the hospitality industry

1 GFB = *Gotlands Förenade Besöksnäring* – Gotland's United Hospitality Industry. For a description of GFB's origin and role, please see chapter by Sjöstrand, Gebert Persson & Ågren.

on Gotland is to realise sustainable visits, it is of great importance that Region Gotland contributes in more ways than just being an initiator.

Goals such as the ones in the development strategies described above are important in order to define development directions for the society of Gotland and for its hospitality industry. Still, the goals and the strategies are not enough if Region Gotland is to realise a sustainable development. To do that it also needs to develop an internal organisational control that enables it to influence employees' activities as well as to measure and follow up on whether sustainability goals and strategies are achieved. Or in other words, it needs to develop internal management control systems and practices that also address sustainability.

Accounting is a broad discipline that, among others, includes management control studies. One of the first definitions regarding what management control is about was stated by Anthony (1965, p. 17): 'the process by which managers assure that resources are obtained and used effectively and efficiently in the accomplishment of the organisation's objectives'. At the time this was written, and in the decades that followed, the resources in focus were synonymous with financial ones. Today though, management control as an academic discipline and an organisational practice (which you will see examples of later in this chapter) also emphasises the importance of non-financial organisational resources in the development, implementation, and accomplishment of an organisation's objectives. In accordance with this, Bebbington & Thomson (2013) argue that accounting can enforce organisations' sustainability endeavours. Well-designed management control systems and management control processes contribute to the handling of challenges regarding sustainability goals and strategies – as well as the realisation of operational activities that enable sustainability goal achievements (Beusch, Frisk, Rosén, & Dilla, 2022).

With the above as a background, the question addressed in this chapter is: How can management control systems contribute to the development of sustainable visits in a region?

The chapter is organised as follows. The first section highlights some fundamentals of management control, followed by examples of conclusions from research on management control systems and sustainable development. Then we return to the case of Region Got-

land and a description and analysis of its management control system with a focus on how well (or not) sustainability is represented in it. The chapter ends with a discussion of how sustainability-oriented management control systems may contribute to enabling sustainable visits.

Management control fundamentals – financial and non-financial logics

From a management control perspective, all types of organisations have two different, and to some extent overlapping, control logics. One is strictly financial and the other is non-financial.

Financial control logic is about capturing organisational activities in monetary terms. The most common way to manifest and display financial logic is to divide it into an income statement, a cash flow, and a balance sheet. The income statement holds information about the organisation's revenues, its costs, and a financial result for a defined period (revenues minus costs). Cash flow consists of various in- and outgoing payments and creates liquidity, i.e., short-term ability to pay various stakeholders. The balance sheet holds information about the assets the organisation possesses to create value and how the assets are financed with own funds (equity), or borrowed funds (liabilities).

Another important aspect of financial logic is profitability analysis. Its purpose is to evaluate the financial result in the income statement in relation to the value of the assets in the balance sheet (total capital and equity). The analysis is expressed as key ratios such as return on investments (ROI) or the more ownership-oriented return on E=equity (ROE). However, financial logic also has more forward-looking perspectives represented in different types of control tools such as budgets, and investment and product calculations. A budget is a financial plan in terms of results, cash-flow, or investment. Since most organisations do not really know what will happen in the future, there are obviously relatively large uncertainties in financial budget plans and long and short-term calculations. This uncertainty is rarely highlighted though, which means that budgets as well as calculations are often regarded as objective truths and hard facts when they are used by e.g., managers in their decision making.

But those managers seldom know the assumptions on which these budgets and calculations are based. A reason for this is often that other co-workers have created them, most likely with support from digital systems that collect, process, and store large amounts of data. This means that the assumptions behind budgets and calculations are seldom transparent and therefore organisational members and units must often interpret them in their own subjective way.

Non-financial control logic is about capturing historical developments, current positions, and future needs and goals of employees, customers, processes, quality and sustainability (social and ecological). When these needs and goals are expressed in non-financial terms they are often referred to as 'soft values' and thus often not taken as seriously as the financial values. However, the non-financial factors are of great importance to an organisation as they may enable e.g., higher quality of products and long-term revenue and value generation. Still, it is rare that organisations present budgets or calculations that capture and clarify these non-financial values for decision makers in the organisation.

The connections between the two control logics can be illustrated as different cause and effect relationships. For example, a higher level of employee competence may cost more in the short term, but can also provide opportunities for greater revenue generation and new market shares in the long term. Sustainability aspects in an organisation have similar challenges if one considers the connections between the two logics.

Requirements and demands regarding sustainability from partners and customers can initially affect financial profitability in a negative way, as they will generate costs before any revenues occur. However, if the organisation applies a nuanced cost perspective, it may conclude that these costs will pay off relatively soon through larger and more sustainable long-term revenues and values. This example illustrates that non-financial logic often requires the organisation to include a perspective beyond the present accounting period (up to a year) and challenge the financial logic's short-term cost and revenue-oriented perspectives (Johanson & Skoog, 2015). This is especially important and relevant in public organisations such as Region Gotland, which has a long-term commitment regarding sustainable societal development. In management control and sustainable development practices, there are several examples of control

systems and tools that organisations use and which include financial as well as non-financial logics (Cöster, Isaksson, & Skoog, 2023).

Sustainable development in management control systems

Lueg and Radlach (2016) claim there is a tension between the traditional, financial-oriented understanding of management control and the goals of sustainability. According to them, management control represents a focus on growth and profitability, while sustainable development is concerned with e.g., the maintenance of natural resources. However, this represents a quite narrow view of what management control may consist of. Awareness of the need to include other perspectives than purely financial has been around for quite a long time in the management control literature (see e.g., Johnson and Kaplan (1987) as well as in practice. Therefore, the concept of management control can have an important role as an enabler that contributes to the integration of sustainability in organisational goals, strategies, indicators, and everyday operations. And thereby it can push organisations in the direction of sustainability (Guenther, Endrikat, & Guenther, 2016).

In research literature (e.g., Malmi & Brown, 2008; Simons, 1990, 1994), management control is often described as a system of various control tools. Such a management control system (MCS) includes formal as well as informal control tools. The formal tools can be:

- Long- and short-term planning (including calculations)
- Budget
- Financial and non-financial performance indicators
- Reward and compensation programmes
- Organisational policies
- Governance and organisation structures

The informal control tools are connected to organisational culture as expressed in:

- Values
- Symbols
- Professional groups or clans

In management control systems, there seems to be a dominance of formal controls as the main type of sustainability control (Burritt, Hahn, & Schaltegger, 2002; Guenther et al., 2016; Lueg & Radlach, 2016). One reason is that organisations already use these types of controls to measure financial performance. Three major types of formal control tend to be recurring: flexible budgeting systems that assess environmental indicators; balanced scorecards (financial and non-financial performance indicators) that include sustainability perspectives; and sustainability accounting and reporting. A challenge regarding sustainability-oriented formal control is that the establishment of social and economic key performance indicators (KPI) can lag behind the establishment of environmental KPIs. It is also important that formal controls are accompanied by other informal ones if a sustainability MCS is to become effective (Lueg & Radlach, 2016).

Furthermore, research shows that long- and short-term sustainability planning can provide meaningful direction and, together with informal cultural controls, may contribute to lowering employees' resistance towards adopting sustainability initiatives in their operative activities (Guenther et al., 2016). The integration of sustainability in the planning process can fail though, if specific sustainability action plans are not established, or if strategic planning is not adapted to local circumstances.

A formal control tool, such as reward and compensations for sustainability, is not very common. A main reason is that it is hard to assign and assess responsibility for sustainability in an organisation. The influence of formal administrative control (such as organisation and management structures and various policies) on sustainability performance is very much dependent on how top management commitment raises awareness and provides a vision that is transformed into sustainability goals. To make policies effective, training and learning support is of great importance for changing behaviour toward sustainability goals (Lueg & Radlach, 2016).

Crutzen, Zvezdov & Schaltegger (2017) observe that organisational cultural control is represented mainly through sustainability initiatives, communications, and engagement by top management and employees. In the cultural controls, gradual inclusion of sustainability seems to be a way to avoid resistance from employees who may feel overwhelmed by radical change. In their study, they

summarise sustainability-oriented management control by defining four different control patterns.

Management control and sustainability – four control patterns

According to Crutzen et al. (2017), an organisation's management control activities can be defined as four control patterns that enable analysis of sustainability management control in organisations. These are represented as pattern A, B, C, and D in Figure 1. Also, in the figure, cybernetic controls include budget together with financial and non-financial performance indicators.

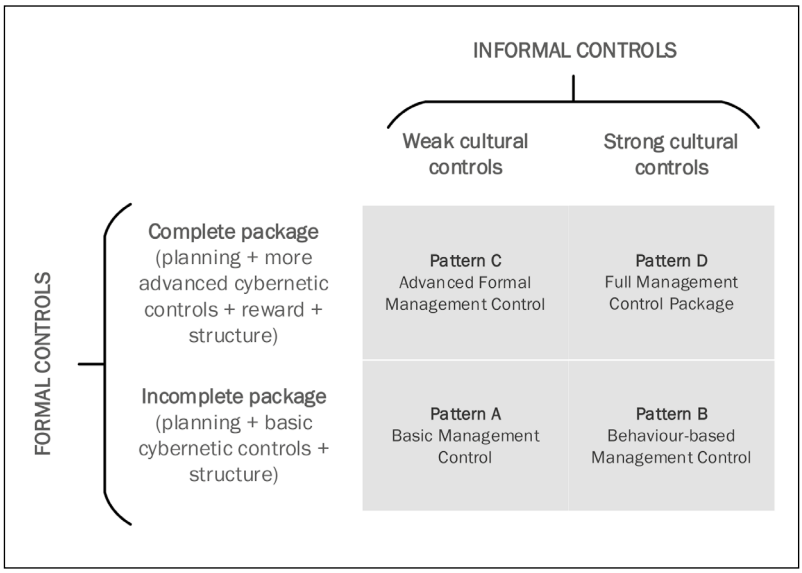

Figure 1. Sustainability management control patterns. Drawings by Cöster & Skoog, based on Crutzen et al. (2017).

Pattern A is characterised by incomplete formal controls as well as weak informal cultural controls. In such an MCS management, awareness of the relevance of deploying control for achieving sustainability objectives is low. Furthermore, management is not willing to design strong control mechanisms. If an organisation holds this control pattern, sustainability strategies tend to become more

of a window-dressing function. In pattern B, the formal controls are still incomplete but cultural controls are strong. Managers try to motivate and involve employees rather that emphasising sustainability through more formal controls, but the lack of formal controls may create conflicts. A reason why this control pattern may occur is that the organisation finds it hard to measure and formally manage sustainability.

Pattern C has an emphasis on formal control such as dedicated organisational structures, clear responsibilities, clear objectives, and available resources, reinforced by budgeting and planning. The cultural controls are weak though and hereby the organisation may rely too much on formal controls, and underestimate the relevance of cultural controls to engage employees in all parts of the organisation. Pattern D features both strong formal and informal controls. In their research, Crutzen et al. (2017) notice that none of the organisations they studied had this pattern. Instead, they conclude that organisations that show strong formal controls tend to have less developed cultural control and vice versa.

Although the content of Figure 1 may indicate it, Pattern D is not what every organisation should strive for. The reason is that there is no one-size-fits-all control system. On the contrary, the content of an MSC is very much dependent on conditions such as which environment the organisation operates in, and its choice of goals and strategy. Still, strong cultural controls combined with a complete formal package may provide good conditions for successful development and execution of organisational sustainability strategies.

With this as a starting point, let us move to the next section where we explore sustainability control practices at Region Gotland. In the following section, we will present the organisation and management control system of Region Gotland and relate it to the regional tourism strategy.

Sustainability management control practices in a public organisation

Region Gotland has an organisational structure of twelve political committees that control eight administrative departments. It is within each of these departments that the great majority of the approximately

6,800 co-workers are organised. The management control system of the organisation Region Gotland consists of three main parts: a budget, a balanced scorecard, and activity plans (see Figure 2).

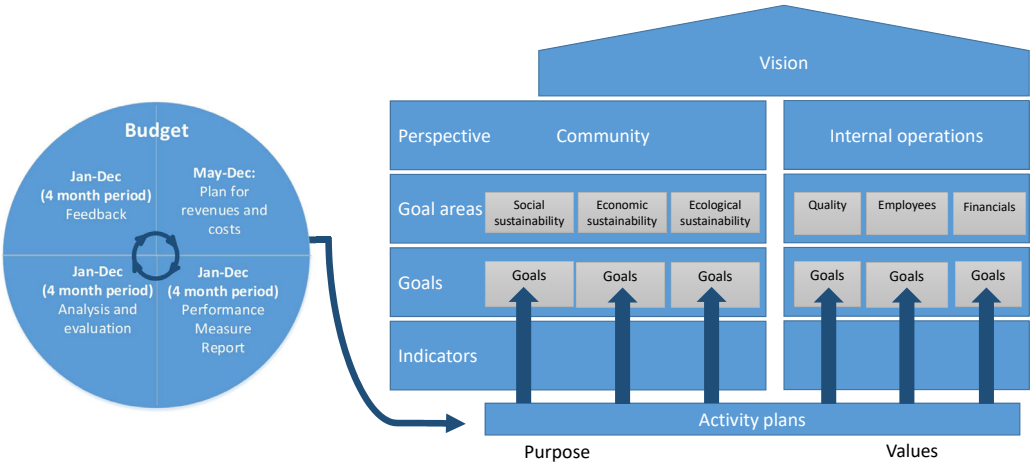

Figure 2. The two main parts of Region Gotland's management control system: a financial budget and a balanced scorecard. Drawings by Cöster and Skoog.

The budget (left part of Figure 2) is purely financial and consists of a recurring budget cycle divided into four phases:

- Between May and December, revenues and costs for the forthcoming year are established. In this first phase, the organisation puts forward a main budget, which, during the planning period, is divided into a budget for each of the eight administrative departments.
- In the next phase, during January to December, the forthcoming year (in interactive four-month periods) real revenues and costs occur as a consequence of performance of organisational activities. These are measured and reported.
- Based on the reports, analysis and evaluation are performed in the third phase as the real revenues and costs are compared to the planned ones
- Finally, during the budget cycle, the outcome of the analysis is communicated as feedback to the organisations, e.g., with requirements regarding the need for reducing costs during the next four-month period

A flag fluttering in the wind is a national symbol and continuously since 1645 the Swedish flag has been raised on top of Visby's city wall. Today, Region Gotland is responsible for raising and lowering the flags. Photo: Mathias Cöster.

In the budget cycle, as illustrated in Figure 2, two parallel budget processes co-exist. This is potentially very problematic from a sustainability perspective, since the new financial budget is mainly developed based on the previous one and not on actual results and effects. Therefore, there is a risk that insights from the current year are not integrated into the planning of the forthcoming. This is a typical example of when the short-term financial logic 'colonises' the control logic of an organisation and never allows for any types of long-term sustainability effects to be included in the formal control process.

The other part of the control system is a balanced scorecard. It is a control tool that, among others, includes financial as well as non-financial performance indicators (see e.g. Kaplan & Norton, 1996). The scorecard (the right part of Figure 2) has two perspectives that are grounded in Region Gotland's overall *vision*. The *community perspective* addresses what should happen in the society of Gotland and the *internal operations perspective* contains information regarding what should happen in the Region Gotland organisation. For each perspective, three *goal areas* emphasise what the organisation should focus on. In the community perspective, *social*, *economic*, and *ecological sustainability* are goal areas, but these are not present in the internal operations perspective. Here the three goal areas instead are *quality*, *employees*, and *financial performance*. Altogether, the goal areas are further divided into 18 goals that Regional Gotland is to achieve in societal development as well as internally within the organisation. To measure if the goals are achieved or not, several indicators (financial and

non-financial) are defined for each goal. An analysis and evaluation regarding goal completion are done once a year and then also communicated to the organisation.

To further specify what activities each administrative department plans to perform in the coming year, a short-term yearly *activity plan* (the lower part of Figure 2) is also presented. These plans contain descriptions of prioritised activities and goals that are to be performed. In terms of activities, these may form the basis for daily basis actions, such as rising flags on Visby's city wall during official flag days (see image 2). An action that can influence among others the experience of those that visit Visby during these days.

The goals in the activity plan are the same as in the scorecard and hereby the activity plan becomes a description of how department activities will contribute to realisation of the scorecard goals. The activity plan also holds information about the department budget (hence the arrow from budget to activity plan), and thus connects the other two main parts of Region Gotland's management control system.

A deficiency with the current management control system is that it only addresses sustainability in the scorecard perspective on regional development, not in the internal operations. Furthermore, the 18 goals in the scorecard are rather overarching and possible to interpret in various ways. In the financial budget, sustainability is not present at all. The chief financial officer (CFO) of Region Gotland admits that sustainability is not very present in the control system:

> I honestly think we are groping in that regard. As humans, it [sustainability] is present with us, but there is not so strict control regarding it. We have not succeeded in operationalising the sustainability management control so that you can see traces of it in the organisation.

The CFO quote illustrates that in the two main parts of the control system (budget and balance scorecard) sustainable development has no prominent role. One reason is that financial and non-financial control logics are handled in various professional ways within Region Gotland. Something that may create barriers that make it difficult for the organisation to achieve their sustainability goals. For example, one barrier is between investments in long-term sustain-

able solutions that, according to the financial logic, do not qualify as assets and therefore must be dealt with in the yearly financial budget. Due to this, the short-term income statement logic becomes a barrier for long-term sustainable solutions that do not qualify as assets from an accounting perspective.

The control pattern concept presented by Crutzen et al. (2017) allows us to further discuss what Region Gotland's control system should contain to support the sustainable development of Gotland's hospitality industry.

Control patterns in Region Gotland's MCS

Returning to Crutzen et al, we will below discuss how well the informal and formal parts of Region Gotland's management control system fit the sustainability ambitions of the regional tourism strategy.

In relation to Crutzen et al, it is mainly formal tools such as planning, budget, financial and non-financial performance indicators that are present in Region Gotland's MCS. It is, however, questionable how the budget and scorecard are related and prioritised in operational terms. It is also questionable how the long-term development plan Gotland 2040 is integrated into the budget and scorecard. Furthermore, by being a public organisation, the governance and organisation structures at Region Gotland are, to a high degree, regulated by law. For example, the political committees and administrative departments cannot be re-organised without palpable restrictions. Each department has its own budget and runs its own operations in a down-pipe organisational structure. Especially regarding sustainability, this can be seen as negative, as sustainability initiatives may require extensive horizontal cooperation between the departments.

Many of the operations that the administrative departments perform, such as elderly care, water and sewer etc., are also restricted by law and therefore organisational policies are very present in the MCS. What is missing to create a complete formal package, according to Figure 1, is some form of reward and compensation programme. However, such a programme is not allowed, since the organisation is a public one financed by citizens' taxes. Of course, there exist rewards, e.g., a yearly dinner in each of the administrative departments, but it is not a reward that contributes to the control of the organisation. But most of all, sustainability is not present in

all these formal controls so therefore it's possible to conclude that the MCS of Region Gotland has an incomplete package of formal sustainability controls.

Informal controls are based upon various cultural controls. Sustainability is clearly on the cultural and symbolic agenda of the Region, as e.g., expressed in the 2040 development plan. But it is questionable how strongly these informal processes influence and integrate with the formal controls linked to the budget and the balanced scorecard. Therefore, according to Figure 1 the informal controls can be considered as weak. Altogether, this means that Region Gotland's MCS fits into control pattern A. Hereby, the current control pattern does not, in a tangible way, support the regional strategy for sustainable development and the enabling of sustainable visits. What can be done about that?

Enabling sustainable visits – management control for sustainability

Finally in this chapter, let us return to the question stated in the introduction:

- How can management control systems contribute to the development of sustainable visits in a region?

As a start, successful integration of financial and non-financial logics is of great importance if sustainability is to be integrated in organisational control activities and performance indicators. Otherwise, there is a chance that sustainability will only be dealt with in conceptual terms formulated and discussed at strategical levels within the organisation. An important factor for succeeding in controlling sustainability, in more tactical and operational terms, is to state clear and controllable parameters for how Region Gotland should manage and control sustainability. Doing this may contribute to sustainable visits in two ways.

First, as mentioned in the introduction, a lot of the societal services that Region Gotland provides, such as water and sewer, parks and recreation areas, health care etc., are of great important for a hospitality industry if it is to enable sustainable visits. If Region Gotland can elaborate its formal controls by including sustainability

into them, and at the same time also strengthen informal controls, it may develop towards control pattern C or D. If that happens, it would most likely influence the administrative departments responsible for the societal services to develop more sustainable operations, and thereby also indirectly contribute to sustainable visits.

Second, Region Gotland has a role as an initiator for sustainable visits, manifested among others in the regional hospitality industry strategy. If Region Gotland manages to integrate sustainability in its MCS, it can initiate and inspire companies in the hospitality industry. For example, it can demonstrate how companies can integrate sustainability in the control of their businesses. Hereby, Region Gotland has the possibility to set the sustainable visits agenda relatively clearly for the future. But a prerequisite for this is that it starts to include the sustainability agenda in its own internal operations in a more systematised way and operationalise the targets linked to sustainable visits.

These two potential contributions can be related to the ongoing transformation of institutions in today's society, where 'mirroring' and 'coupling' become more frequent and relevant, especially within the field of sustainability. If the hospitality industry mirrors what other organisations, such as Region Gotland, do, they may become less de-coupled from the ongoing sustainable development in society at large. And if that happens, the hospitality industry may increase its relevance as it identifies and creates sustainable visits.

Questions for discussions

- In the chapter, financial and non-financial logics are presented as fundamentals in an organisation's management control system. Give examples of what you believe these logics consists of.
- A management control system can be divided into formal and informal controls. Why can it be hard for an organisation to find a constructive balance between these two types of controls?
- How can sustainability be represented in formal as well as informal control?
- What roles may a public organisation have in enabling sustainable visits?

Notes on method

The empirical material this chapter rests upon was collected during a research project on sustainability and management control. The research methods encompassed semi-structured interviews with managers at Region Gotland. Furthermore, documents were collected from the Region's web site as well as delivered in relation to the interviews.

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Destination governance as meta-organising

Fredrik Sjöstrand, Sabine Gebert Persson & Karin Ågren

Abstract

This chapter examines the organising of a destination and the challenges of enabling sustainable visits. The purpose of the chapter is to discuss the prerequisites of an assigned DMO so as to take on the responsibility of enabling a sustainable destination by applying the concept of meta organisation. The recommendations by the UNWTO for how destinations should be governed, and its strategic view, are discussed and an alternative view of meta-organisations is presented. Through a case study of a destination, the challenges of organising and managing a destination with multiple and heterogeneous organisations are illustrated. Based on the discussion on organising, the chapter contributes by elaborating on factors enabling sustainable visits.

Introduction

Organising a place as a tourist destination in a sustainable way is a balancing act for stakeholders, due to the dual complexity inherent in the hospitality industry. On one hand, tourists visiting a destination contribute to the economy through their expenditure, which in turn can contribute to regional development, employment, and growth in general (economic sustainability), i.e., developing the living conditions. On the other hand, is the risk of visitor overcrowding that instead contributes to pollution (not environmental sustainability) and socially negative impacts on inhabitants (not social sustainability) (Milano, Novelli, & Cheer, 2019). These issues are also related to discussions about carrying capacity, sustainable use of

natural resources, and how to balance these in relation to tourism (Mandic & Kennell, 2021). It has, more or less, become a norm that the governance and organising for sustainability in a tourist destination is assigned to an organisation called a Destination Management (or Marketing) Organisation (DMO). According to the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2019), these DMOs should play an essential role in coordinating the flow of tourists while attending to challenges related to sustainable goals:

> DMO as the leading entity in the tourism destination has a crucial role in promoting a greater engagement of the tourism sector, its industries, as well as policy and decision makers with sustainable development. DMO's should align their policies and actions with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).1 This will allow them to maximize tourism's contribution to all the 17 Goals, and in particular to the SDGs where tourism is specially included. (UNWTO, 2019)

In the quote above, the UNWTO states that the DMO's role should be to establish a coherent strategy for the destination so as to facilitate and enable sustainable visits. Even though the number of DMOs is increasing, research shows that the tourism and hospitality industry is fragmented, consisting of different stakeholders having deviating goals and expectations (cf. Wang & Fesenmaier, 2007; Fyall & Garrod, 2020). Coordination of actors and activities in these types of industries thus poses a significant challenge. This is especially important considering that coordination of, and cooperation among, stakeholders, is defined as an essential part of the SDG in relation to tourism. Although DMOs are expected to work towards common goals, there may still be implicit and ambiguous goals, roles, and decision-making structures when different stakeholders collaborate. One reason for this can be found in the characteristics of DMOs, as some of them are organised in the form of membership organisations, consisting of representatives of a diverse set of public organisations, private companies, or community representatives (Fyall & Garrod, 2020). In this sense, a DMO is in many ways not a traditional organisation but can instead be understood as being in line with what Brunsson & Ahrne (2005; 2008) call meta-organisations, i.e., organisations organising organisations. As this type of organisation consists of members with a diverse set of goals, expecta-

tions, and resources, there are commonly different views on how to organise a destination than the views often presupposed in the more idealised and often rational stance represented by the UNWTO. In their definition, the DMO should have a leading role and control over its resources, and could act intentionally and deliberately, as stated in the quote below.

> Ensuring sustainability: Sustainable tourism development with proper planning and management ensures that the destination maintains its economic viability and its environmental, social and cultural integrity, as well as the authenticity, resources and character of the destination that made it attractive in the first place are protected. Good planning and management also help to avoid social and cultural conflicts and prevent tourism from effecting negatively local lifestyles, traditions and values. (UNWTO, 2019, p. 16)

It is common to assign the overall responsibility for an issue, in this case, sustainability, to one organisation with the expectation that it can be governed appropriately. Although this approach may seem idealised, it is still common for this discourse to be used in the initially expressed objectives of establishing the DMO. The idealised view is also mirrored in the UNWTO's formulation, as in the previous quote, where the DMO is not only to promote engagement and align policies and actions but also to achieve optimal management:

> […] optimal management of the destination which ensures that the various authorities, all relevant stakeholders and professionals are coordinated by a leading entity under a coherent strategy and a collective vision pursuing a common goal: the competitiveness and sustainability of the destination. (UNWTO, 2019)

These definitions by the UNWTO of what a DMO is, and should be, indicate a perspective of a DMO as being a conventional organisation. This chapter argues that DMOs, as often conducted in practice, cannot be equated with a conventional organisation. The reason behind this argument is that a DMO often has the characteristics of a membership organisation, and as such has limited responsibility and lacks several prerequisites for managing and controlling. Does this then imply that organising for a sustainable visit and destination is out of reach? This chapter argues that it is possible to enable

sustainable visits, but that a rational planning approach may not be the solution. The purpose of the chapter and the contribution to the anthology is to discuss the prerequisites of an assigned DMO so as to take on the responsibility of enabling a sustainable destination by applying the concept of meta organisation; the chapter illustrates this with an empirical case.

As this chapter sets out to discuss the attributes and expected conditions for the DMO to take on the responsibility for sustainable visits, it is necessary to start by clarifying what a DMO is. Different theoretical models are thereafter presented to provide insights into different views on organising and strategy. To illustrate the complexity of coordinating destinations, a case with many different organisations is presented, followed by a discussion on enabling sustainable visits.

DMO – One acronym with many connotations

Within research as well as in practice, the view of what a DMO's role should be has changed over time and has been highly debated (cf. Reinhold, Beritelli & Grünig, 2018). Dating back to the early 1970s, when the first research articles used the concept of DMOs, the emphasis was on the marketing function of destination organisations, defined as Destination *Marketing* Organisations, and how they could position a place and develop competitive advantages in relation to other destinations (Pike & Page, 2014). Over the years, though DMOs typically undertake marketing activities, their expected mandate has expanded, as has their strategic role. The role of the DMO has become far broader as over the years the mandate has moved from the strict marketing function towards a strategic role as a destination leader responsible for the coordination of different stakeholders in a designated destination, incorporating common goals, strategic planning, coordination, and managing activities (Reinhold, Beritelli & Grünig, 2018). The role has thereby shifted to one where the focus is on organising a governance structure that is effective and efficient (see Bornhorst, Ritchie & Sheehan, 2010; Pike & Page, 2014; UNWTO, 2019). This is also evident in the change of the connotation of DMO, with *marketing* replaced by *management*, i.e., Destination *Management* Organisation. It has even, for some destinations, come to the point where DMOs are no

longer responsible for marketing the destination, as will be shown in the case presented later in this chapter.

Just as the function of a DMO may vary between marketing or managing, so may its structure and financing. The variation in how DMOs are organised is diverse, and includes DMOs organised within a governmental authority, such as a department within a municipality or as a division of a regional authority. Other structures can be a joint public-private organisation, a non-profit membership-based organisation, or a private organisation (Presenza, Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). Depending on its structure, a DMO can be funded by several different sources. Examples of this are when a DMO is part of the municipality or a regional level, where they can be financed through the allocation of public funds, fees paid by tourism organisations, commissions for bookings and sales, or similar activities. The DMOs formed as non-governmental organisations can also have a variety of funding alternatives, for e.g., through membership fees paid by tourism organisations, hotels, interest organisations, sponsorship, promotional activities, or other forms of funding. As the DMOs shall represent many different stakeholders, they are in many cases formed as joint public-private organisations where the funding is a combination of public funds, membership fees, and other sources (Presenza, Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). Within organisational research, there are different approaches to strategy; these will be discussed next in relation to the quote from UNWTO.

Different approaches to organising and strategy

Ideal models – rational planning

The UNWTO quotes in the introduction align with what organisational research defines as the rational planning approach. According to this, the organisation obtains its profit-oriented strategy goal through long-term planning and rational analysis. The rationale is that managers of the organisation are considered to have the authority to formulate and control the strategy (Chandler, 1962).

In this view, organisations are assumed to be guided by maximising their return on investment through rational planning. Strategy is considered to be planned, formulated, and controlled by the organisation's management and then hierarchically communicated

and implemented top-down. This approach to management was particularly prominent during the 1950s and 1960s with representatives such as Alfred Chandler and Alfred Sloan. Over time, it has been shown to be based on an ideal assumption that is not consistent with empirical findings. Despite this inconsistency, the approach has proven to be enduring (Whittington, 2001).

The rational planning approach to strategy can be identified in various descriptions of what a DMO is supposed to accomplish at a destination. Apparent in much previous research addressing DMOs, as well as in the UNWTO quotes above, is an emphasis on the functions of DMOs as identifying and managing factors that create success or competitive advantages (see Volgger & Pechlaner, 2015; Pearce, 2014; Bornhorst, Ritchie & Sheehan, 2010; Pike & Page, 2014; Rheinhold, Laesser & Beritelli, 2015; Volgger, Erschbamer & Pechlaner, 2021). The critique against this management view of a DMO is that it assumes that the DMO is *one* organisation, where the DMO has often been put forward as an ideal type of organising, for coordinating, and controlling the tourist destination based on a rational view of organisations (see Bornhorst, Ritchie & Sheehan, 2010; Pike & Page, 2014; Volgger et al., 2021). The critique against a rational idealised view towards organising lies, among other things, in the complexity of coordinating actors who also belong to external organisations, as is the case in membership organisations. Another aspect is that the context in which these organisations are embedded is highly affected by the political sphere, as the DMOs represent both public and private interests, as well as organisations and citizens. Practical limitations of the idealised approach lie, among many other things, in disregarding the uncertainty of events and the possibility of the actors not being this knowledgeable and rational in their planning. Since one of the roles a DMO can take on is the coordination of different stakeholders, the rational view can be criticised as it does not take this complexity into consideration. This indicates/shows that it may be more complex to organise different stakeholders in a destination than assumed within the rational management planning perspective.

From rational assumptions to process and embedded institutional context

In the chapter, several points critiquing of an idealised rational view are raised, and are in line with those raised by, for example, Mintzberg (1995) in his questioning of realism in rational long-term planning. Mintzberg (1995) instead argues that strategy should be understood as an emergent process of adaptation and learning. Instead of formulating strategies before implementation, a process approach emphasises strategy as discovered through daily action. The argument is that individuals bring their objectives and cognitive biases, so that competence or knowledge is obtained through experience and continuous learning. This indicates that learning and experience over time need to be considered. In this alternative perspective on strategy, there is no single clear point that gives the direction; rather, the strategy consists of ongoing micro-processes, where strategy formulation and organising are the results of a bottom-up approach (Mintzberg, 1995). Although the internal aspect is in focus, the organising of a destination can also be influenced by institutional changes, which in turn can have effects on the roles that different actors play in a tourist destination.

Another aspect that idealised rational assumptions on organising has been criticised for is that it does not consider the context. Moreover, it presupposes the assumption that the organisation's environment is predictable and that it is possible to implement the strategy in a predetermined and rational way. However, considering the context, managers cannot be regarded as objective calculating actors in a separate sphere disconnected from the rest of society; instead, they are people involved in closely intertwined social systems, i.e., *social embeddedness* (Granovetter, 1985). Economic activity is not conducted in a decoupled sphere; instead, the human is embedded in interconnected social relations of family, professional roles, class, and ethnic background. These connected relations influence actors' goals and means, and prescribe specific behaviour. By also taking into account the organisation's surrounding and institutional conditions (North, 1990), an overall picture of strategic opportunities is created. Here, a parallel consideration of the environment, economy, and social aspects can be understood in relation to the individual and the place. The economic historian Lars Magnusson states that '[…] the market is a formal *and* informal institution that

is shaped historically *and* consists of individuals who tend to fall victim to illusions and euphoria; it is hardly difficult to imagine that the market can also be irrational' (Magnusson 2020, p. 15). This means that the historical context and the institutions are important for understanding the prerequisites of DMOs to act on sustainable goals, and their abilities to work as one organisation.

The local social system and the social context in which the organisation is acting also predict the process and subsequent outcomes of the ambition to govern a destination. Specific organisational practices and goals depend on the social systems where they take place. The discourse surrounding today's organisations is the norm in a particular institutional environment and focuses on the social pressure to follow local forms of rationality and language in a specific context (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The organisational field and norms predict the organisation's path-dependence. The importance of DMOs' social embeddedness is also emphasised by Volgger & Pechlander (2014, p. 66) stating that 'a DMO is evaluated successfully by its stakeholders if: (i) it demonstrates networking capability (i.e., the ability to interact and collaborate effectively with stakeholders in the destination, which includes developing and sustaining inter-organisational relationships) and promotes internal stakeholder relations'. This leads to the next part of the chapter, where the DMOs' role as facilitators of relationships is discussed from the perspective of meta-organisation.

Meta-organising

A meta-organisation is a specific form of organisation whose members belong to other organisations, i.e., organisations-of-organisations (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005; 2008). The member organisations keep their autonomy and identity, and are free to leave at any time. A business firm has owners and employees arranged in a hierarchical structure, while a meta-organisation has members. Another distinction between a business firm and a meta-organisation is that the latter is an association where members participate on a voluntary basis and in a horizontal structure, rather than in a vertical one based on a hierarchy (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2008)

The characteristic of meta-organisation is that its members are organisations in themselves that differ hugely from one another in many respects: they vary enormously in size, for e.g., the EU, FIFA,

and regional DMOs; have different administrative structures, overlapping identity, levels of status, control of resources, and different ideological or institutional logics (read public vs private). 'All such differences create a strong potential for conflict among members' (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005, p. 440). Meta-organisations then differ from individual-based organisations. It is the kind of members that distinguish meta-organisations from other types of individual-based organisations. Hence, differences between individuals and organisations are based on distinctions that regard identity, size, lifespan, resources etc. The organisation's members have a similar interest that '… generates a particularly high potential for competition in the meta-organizations between itself and its constituent members' (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005, p. 433). The majority of DMOs established in Sweden and other countries seem, in practice, to be made up of representatives belonging to other organisations. Representatives can be members such as private actors from local tourism companies, as well as representatives employed by local authorities etc. Consequently, the type and role of members in meta-organisations differ from individual-based ones in regard to the authority that the organisation can impose on them. This affects how conflicts arise and how they are handled compared to in a conventional individual-based organisation. In principle and formally, '… no members are "above" any other in hierarchical terms' (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005 p. 434) This is typically true for many DMOs, which consist of members from other organisations; some are big, others small, some are private, and others public. Moreover, in meta-organisations, the membership fees are often tiny relative to the member's own resources. Some … 'members of meta-organizations often have far more resources, a much greater action capacity and higher status than the meta-organization itself. The members are potential competitors of the organization' (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005 p. 435).

According to the UNWTO (2019), the broader scope of the DMOs can be explained by the need to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of destinations.

> These developments stem from the urge to achieve an optimal management of the destination which ensures that the various authorities, all relevant stakeholders and professionals are coordinated by a leading entity under a coherent strategy and a collective vision pursuing a common goal: the competitiveness and sustainability of the

> destination. This approach should also engage the residents and the local community in the tourism policy and decision-making process and its implementation in a truly Public (P) – Private (P) – Community (C) approach. (UNWTO, 2019, p. 8)

Whether the DMO is a private or a public organisation or a combination of both may have implications for its role and responsibilities (cf. Elbe et al., 2009; Elbe et al., 2018). The variety of public and private interests in the same organisation could create tension if one perspective has precedence over another. This tension can be even more intense when different aspects necessary for sustainability are taken into consideration. For instance, if a publicly-funded organisation considers its mission is only to enhance businesses, stakeholders such as permanent residents, community services, and other sectors of industry could be overlooked.

The meta-organisation concept describes the differences between the formal individual-based organisation and the meta-organisations, since the members are not formally structured in a hierarchical order. The complexities described above are also illustrated in the case presented below.

Understanding the multiple and shifting forms of organising a destination – the case of Gotland

As will be shown in this chapter, many actors throughout history took on the role of coordinating activities related to developing Gotland into a destination. One could then expect that this would be an example of a problematic destination. However, Gotland is Sweden's most visited location.[1]

The story of Gotland Tourist Association

Sweden's oldest regional DMO, Gotland Tourist Association, was founded at the end of the 19th century, situated on the island of Gotland. This organisation lasted for more than 100 years and it all

1 The number of guest nights per inhabitant in Gotland (2019) was 16.25, which can be compared to Stockholm with 6.42 and Sweden's average of 6.52. (Tillväxtverket, 2023-01-27)

started in 1889, as De Badande Wännerna[2] (DBW) formed a committee for handling tourism-related issues within the philanthropic association. When they decided to form the tourism committee, they were the pioneers of the regional tourism associations in Sweden. Only seven years after, in 1896, the founding of the tourism committee, it broke away and formed Gotland's Tourist Association. The association was member-driven with representatives from many different organisations and companies in the hospitality industry. The history of organising Gotland's hospitality industry thus extends far back. As the story reveals, it also entails several different actors taking on the roles of marketing and managing the destination. In the case illustrated in this chapter, there is not *one* DMO, as the literature and the UNWTO prescribe, but a number of them, depending on whether the focus is on the formal organisation or on the informal organising, and whether considering the marketing or the management roles.

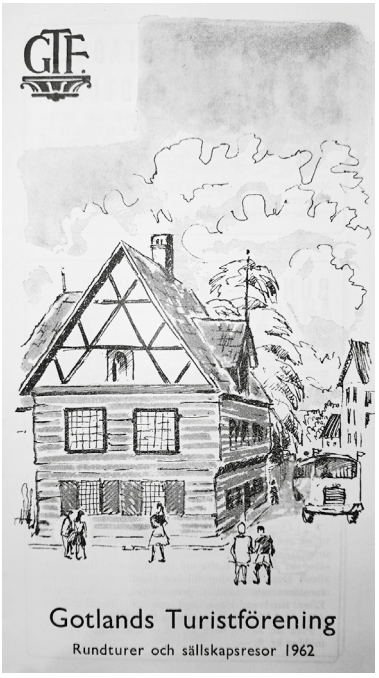
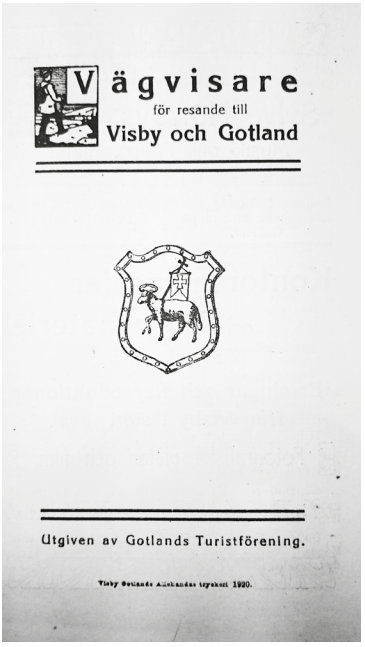


Image showing Gotland Tourist Association's brochure from 1962. Photo: Karin Ågren.

An expanding hospitality industry

During the first half of the 20th century, the most common way for people to spend the night when they visited the island was in private rooms or private cottages. After the Second World War, when tourism began to expand in Europe, there was an increased interest in Gotland to make further investments in the industry. With new laws in many industrialised countries, where employees gained the

2 De Badande Wännerna translated into English means 'the swimming friends'.



Road guide for visitors in Visby and Gotland. Photo: Karin Ågren.

right to paid vacation, more individuals started travelling. In comparison with the rest of Sweden, Gotland developed a hospitality industry comparatively early. During most of the 20th century, the Gotland Tourist Association worked on informing visitors about private rooms and cottage rental opportunities. It printed road maps of the island with suggestions of places to visit, where to eat, and guided tours. In its annual reports, it presented statistics on visitors' stays and travels. In 1952, a municipal reform was implemented in Sweden, and many small rural municipalities were merged into larger ones. In connection with the increase in tourism and the merging of small municipalities, almost all the new larger municipalities on Gotland built holiday villages, campsites, or both. With a new municipal reform in 1971, the whole of Gotland became one single municipality. It inherited the holiday villages and campsites, and had about 15 different tourist facilities to handle. At that time, the municipality requested help from the Gotland Tourist Association to organise the renting business.

In order for the municipality to be able to manage the operations around all the holiday villages that were now under their auspices, the company GotlandsResor AB was created one year after the municipal reform. The company was owned by Gotland Tourist Association but was considered a municipal company because GotlandsResor AB's main task was to rent out the holiday villages and cottages owned by the municipality. GotlandsResor AB was then assigned the role of handling the accommodations, while the Gotland Tourist Association instead started to focus on producing printed materials to market Gotland as a destination, i.e., taking on the role of a Destination Marketing Organisation. The above shows

the historical development of a collaboration between the privately-owned Gotland Tourist Association and the municipality; one that would continue and leave traces in the function, structure, and funding of the Gotlandic DMO until this day. This also illustrates collaboration between different types of actors, private and public, and that their roles shifted over time. The tourist association's role shifted from a focus on *managing* holiday villages to an emphasis on *marketing* the island, and the municipality also took part in marketing and managing the destination. That role would shift again as the tourist association became a coordinator, as described below.

Gotland Tourist Association's role shifts once again – the role of the coordinator

During the second half of the 1980s and the first part of the 1990s, most of the municipality-owned holiday villages were sold to private actors. Gotland Tourist Association, which until then had been responsible for the company GotlandsResor AB, followed the trend and ended its holiday village rental service. This reflected the discussion taking place during this period in Sweden and concerning whether state and municipal actors should compete with private companies. With the sale, the Gotland Tourist Association's focus shifted from *marketing* the destination and renting out the holiday villages *to a focus on collaboration* during the mid-1990s. In 1991, a CEO of the association was hired, with the task of working collaboratively and getting the various actors to communicate better with each other. The association expanded, and more people were recruited. With the Swedish EU membership in 1995, not only did the number of employees increase, but the focus changed as more and more tasks with different types of project applications were included. During this time, the municipality developed a document called Vision 2020, expressing a need for a common hospitality industry strategy, i.e., an expression for a more unified strategy for the hospitality industry. Gotland Tourist Association took on the task, and with, among others, the CEO of GotlandsResor AB, the strategy was developed.

In this period, there was also a new ambition regarding starting a collaboration with Gotland's various actors. Gotland Tourist Association's task was to support the business community, to get relevant stakeholders to communicate with each other, and to create net-

works and thereby grow a more robust business community. Since it was a member-driven association, many of the different organisations and companies in the hospitality industry were members and already had contact with each other. The conditions were thus in place for Gotland Tourist Association's new role. The number of members grew and, when the association was at its greatest size in the early 2000s, it had just over 300 fee-paying members. During this period, it was also co-financed by the municipality of Gotland. The co-funding was based on a system where the municipality contributed with financial resources that increased in relation to increases in membership. At the beginning of the 2000s, membership income was approximately SEK 1 million per year, in addition to the municipality's contribution. During this period, there was a shift in ambition and an early attempt to form a destination management organisation rather than a destination marketing organisation, and a co-financing between the public and the private sectors. Although the future looked bright, things would turn again.

Frustration – Gotland Tourist Association slowly moves towards the grave

Around 2008, the CEO of the Gotland Tourist Association expressed how he felt frustrated that nothing was happening with the association's operations: – 'there is no will to change', he said. He believed that the chairman was squeezed between the association's board and its members. 'The members said: this. The board said; no, you should not do that if you do not have the finances for it.' The municipality had had a majority on the board of Gotland Tourist Association until the late 1990s. But the members had the desire to be more independent from the municipality and wanted more freedom for the association. This eventually resulted in the municipality being excluded from the board. The issue of who should be on the board was only one of the issues, according to the former CEO of Gotland Tourist Association. Another matter related to the board was that there was a discrepancy among the board members regarding the common agenda. There were expressions from employees in the organisation that there was a lack of support from the board.

Around 2010, the municipality of Gotland showed interest in a changed relationship with Gotland Tourist Association and wanted to procure the association's services. Still, opinions within Gotland Tourist Association differed with some in favour of such development, while others were opposed to it. In addition, there was a feeling among the employees in the association that the region could make decisions that were actually on the Gotland Tourist Association's table without talking to the association. Even the legitimacy among business actors seemed to be decreasing as there was a sense that the business actors ignored the association and went directly to the region. This reflects the issues discussed earlier in the critique against the rational idealised model, as there is uncertainty regarding the authority over decision-making and a lack of control and legitimacy.

The case above describes how specific municipality reforms affected the development of destination marketing and governance, leading a non-profit association, Gotland Tourist Association, to start a company named GotlandsResor AB to coordinate accommodation rentals. Although it was a private association, many considered it a public company. Perceptions of the desirability of private or public control have been shown to change over time, which in turn has had concrete, practical consequences for operations.

Liquidation of one DMO – new meta-organisations arise

Inspiration Gotland and GFB

In March 2011, with debts amounting to three million (SEK), the members decided to liquidate the Gotland Tourist Association (www.epochtimes.se). The region took over the little that was left of Gotland Tourist Association, and on the first of January 2012, Inspiration Gotland (see figure 1 below) was created as a part of Region Gotland. Inspiration Gotland's role was to 'market, strengthen, and develop Gotland as a destination'. The organisation was focused on working with current visitors, entrepreneurs, and residents, but also potential newcomers, and an important part of the company's work was to coordinate and lead the work with the brand of Gotland.

Almost in parallel and in the wake of Gotland Tourist Association's disappearance, various entrepreneurial people gathered, and plans began to start Gotland's United Hospitality Industry (GFB, Gotlands Förenade Besöksnäring) Association. In this way, it hap-

pened that almost simultaneously, two organisations with similar roles were initiated, one as a private hospitality industry initiative (i.e., GFB), and one as a public initiated organisation (i.e., Inspiration Gotland).

And one more organisation – Gotland Cruise Network

In 2017, a new initiative to form a meta-organisation that could be partly defined as a DMO was founded: Gotland Cruise Network (GCN), see figure 1 below. It was a meta-organisation formed as a consequence of Region Gotland's decision to construct a cruise quay. With the new quay, the number of tourists was expected to double from 50,000 cruise tourists to 100,000 per year. Both the regional authorities and the industry realised the necessity of cooperating to be able to present a destination that would be attractive to the visitors and address their needs. An international consortium, Copenhagen Malmö Port (CMP), which runs ports all around the Baltic, has rented the quay for a couple of decades to come. As a prerequisite for signing the contract to lease the quay, the international consortium required that a cruise network be formed. To meet these requirements, the local authorities, together with GFB, founded a member organisation financed through a combination of public and private actors. The aim of the network was to provide the members with information related to the new cruise quay, and it was also communicated to potential members that they would have the opportunity to influence decisions related to the infrastructure around the quay. The network was expected to have an impact on how the industry and regional authorities would cooperate. The aim of the network was formulated as: 'Through active cooperation with all relevant actors, Gotland Cruise Network will create the conditions for developing Gotland into an even more attractive, well-functioning cruise destination' (GCN website, 171220). This new meta-organisation was designed as a DMO with a focus on a specific niche: cruise tourism.

When establishing the network, it was decided that CMP and Region Gotland would equally contribute economically. Other stakeholders, private companies, and organisations that wanted to become members paid different member fees in relation to their possibility or the size of their organisation. GCN was formally organised as being a part of the GFB.

GFB's role grew stronger in relation to tourism activities while Inspiration Gotland was liquidated. It was also the former organisation that later on was assigned by Region Gotland to be the new DMO and to be responsible for the strategic work of developing the destination Gotland (Besöksnäringsstrategi, 2019). All in all, the continuous changes in the governance of the tourism organisations in Gotland, with new actors entering and leaving, emphasise how complicated initial straightforward statements, such as those proposed by the UNWTO, can become.

The shipping company Destination Gotland

Even though the Gotland Tourist Association and lately GFB have a long tradition in organising the destination, there are also other actors with an even more extended history and that play a role similar to a DMO. One of these is the shipping company called Destination Gotland, which is a subsidiary of the company group Rederi AB Gotland. Its history started with the company called Rederi AB Gotland, which was formed in 1865, a couple of decades prior to the birth of the Gotland Tourist Association. This makes it one of the world's oldest passenger shipping companies.

The complexity of organising a destination, and the fact that there are several actors taking on different roles of a DMO, is illustrated by the quote below. A former chairman of a meta-organisation that was focused on facilitating collaboration among companies and organisations in Gotland, was asked to answer what she considered to be the DMO on the island. She provided the following answer:

> If it is the Destination Marketing Organisation – then it is Destination Gotland. It has an enormous amount of public money for marketing Gotland. […] But if we instead refer to the Destination Management Organisation, there are two [organisations]. (Former chairman, 17 February 2017)

Destination Gotland, mentioned above, is the shipping company responsible for the ferries trafficking the route between the island and the mainland. This quote illustrates that what is considered to be a DMO could be perceived as different things: the marketing organisation (in this case indicated to be the shipping company)

or the management organisation, where the latter, according to the respondent, could be different organisations. As noted in the quote by the former chairman above, its influence on marketing the destination is still having a high impact, it is referred to as the Destination *Marketing* Organisation of Gotland.

To summarise the above, it is evident that through the history of the destination of Gotland, there has been a number of different actors taking on the roles of being the Destination Management or Marketing Organisation of Gotland. The different actors are illustrated in Figure 1 below, which also illustrates how GTA's role was split among different actors.

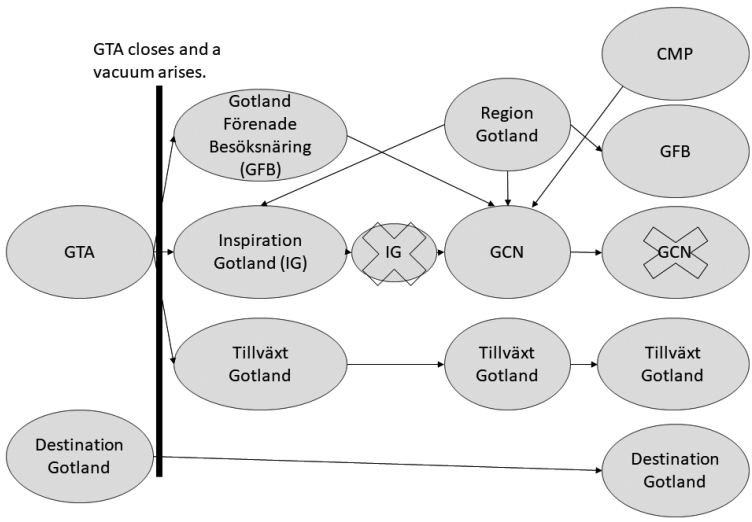


Figure 1. Schedule of the organisations. Source: Based on empirical data analysis.

Towards enabling sustainable organising of destinations

At the beginning of this chapter, the arguments of the UNWTO for how to attain a sustainable tourist destination were introduced. Let us return to one of these quotes:

> These developments stem from the urge to achieve an optimal management of the destination which ensures that the various authorities, all relevant stakeholders and professionals are coordinated by a leading entity under a coherent strategy and a collective vision pursuing a common goal: the competitiveness and sustainability of the destination. This approach should also engage the residents and the local community in the tourism policy and decision-making process and its implementation in a truly Public (P) – Private (P) – Community (C) approach. (UNWTO, 2019, p. 8)

Considering the historical practice of organising a destination, as presented in the case of Gotland, there are, in comparison to the coherent strategy and unified vision to ensure sustainability sought after by the UNWTO, a number of discrepancies. In the quote, it is stated that there shall be one leading entity. As seen in the case, it is noticeable that there seldom has been *one* single organisation or DMO that has had overall control to formulate a mutual strategy or has had access to enough resources to implement it. There have almost always been parallel actors with overlapping missions and goals. At different times in history, there has been a private or non-profit organisation that has held the coordinating position in parallel with a public actor. In other cases, it has been a mixture and, in some cases, it has been a purely public actor, such as in the case of Inspiration Gotland. The initiative of managing or marketing the destination has alternated between the public and the private organisations and, throughout Gotland's history, independent actors on the side have taken on different initiatives. One such, described in the case, is the Destination Gotland with a marketing role. The balancing of different goals and visions, and the negotiations between private and public interests, is recurrent in the presented case and there are a number of different actors taking on the role of the DMO, with different goals in terms of marketing or managing the destination.

The interaction between the actors can take on different forms. Sometimes these actors collaborate, whereas at other times they are in direct competition. The attempts to be a DMO or many competing nodes of DMOs illustrate that the power of control may be dispersed and that this type of organisation does not always have the control power to govern. This, in turn, indicates that a meta-organisation, as the DMO(s) in Gotland, could be characterised as seldom having the final power of decision. They do not control essential

resources, since these are rather in the member organisations' control, which is typical for a meta-organisation. There could also be multiple associations with partly overlapping responsibilities and roles. Members of meta-organisations have somewhat mutual interests and partly common goals but, at the same time, could be competitors or could have diverse interests. All this creates a complexity for a single DMO to handle. Thus, there are several challenges, which the quote from the UNWTO does not reflect.

One aspect that has been reflected on in this chapter relates to the context of the DMO referred to as embeddedness. The shifts in public ambition and political will, the changing habits of vacation, and norms around travelling, are also likely to add to the explanation of the development that can contribute to understanding a DMO. DMOs are established to coordinate ambitions to attract tourists to the destination as well as to develop the destination in order to meet politically defined goals (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). Due to the great variety of interests that are to be balanced in managing a tourist destination, there are also a number of issues that need attention. Issues that can arise could, for example, be related to which aspects are the most important for all stakeholders to participate in destination planning, such as the balancing between reducing the negative environmental impact of tourism or creating a long-term and sustainable economic condition for the local population.

The attempts to be a DMO or many competing nodes of DMOs show that the power of control may be dispersed, and that this type of organisation does not always have it. The name and the role indicate that ability but, as shown in the case, a DMO may not even have formal authority over its members. This, in turn, indicates that a meta-organisation, which the DMO in Gotland could be characterised as, seldom has final decision power. It does not control essential resources since these resources are rather in the member organisation's control, which is typical for meta-organisation. There could also be multiple associations with partly overlapping responsibilities and roles. The members in the meta-organisations have somewhat mutual interests and partly common goals but, at the same time, could be competitors or have diverse interests. All this creates a great complexity for a single DMO to handle. At the same time, this is also something that is a strength with the meta-organisation as it

includes different stakeholders and in that different interests are represented. This in turn is a vital aspect for achieving sustainable goals.

Enabling sustainable visits

The question asked in the beginning of this chapter was if organising for a sustainable destination is out of reach given the complexity of organising a destination and stated that even though it is hard, it is possible. Organisational research in general, and research on meta-organisations specifically, provides a possible answer for how to enable sustainable organising of destinations. These different aspects can be divided into internal ones for the organisation, and external ones residing outside of the meta-organisation. Internal factors relate to the mandate, role, resources, and shared goals. No matter if it is a membership-based, a business, or a public organisation, it is necessary for the organisation to have the mandate and authority to act and that the role assigned is clear. Without a mandate to act, the organisation will only be a platform for information and unable to act on decisions or, furthermore, be responsible for sustainable development. A mandate, however, is not enough as there also needs to be resources to act on and with, in terms of financial resources and in terms of knowledge, influence, technology, or what is needed for action. The second aspect relates to the external conditions that affect the abilities for a DMO to handle sustainability. The political environment is an important aspect for the financial situation of DMOs, as they are, in many instances, co-financed organisations receiving funding from members while simultaneously receiving funding from public finances.

Ideally, a destination organisation should not only look to its own interests but rather to broader community interests (Bornhorst, Ritchie & Sheehan, 2010). Moreover, from this perspective, there cannot be only one single organisational type that fits every destination since the institutional settings differ; the relation between public and private will be contingent on the context. Furthermore, a DMO in the form of a meta-organisation does not, by its very nature, have direct control over the activities it is expected to coordinate. It then has to act through others, which requires exerting indirect influence. In other words, it cannot rule through orders but through indirect influence.

Consequently, for a member organisation in the form of a DMO to meet long-term sustainability goals, it does not in itself matter if there are several parallel groupings or if they are private or public. However, if we are to achieve sustainability, which is by definition long-term, it is crucial that regardless of the number and domicile, it should be made clear who has what responsibility, which includes the mandate and resources to act. So, the roles must be specified. Similarly, strategies and objectives should be shared regardless of which units are involved, as well as having developed arrangements for shared decision-making that consider all stakeholders and what mandate they have to act upon.

To conclude, based on the nature of the meta-organisation, to enable sustainable visits it is required that all relevant stakeholders are represented as members, their roles and responsibility are clarified, they are given the mandate to exert influence over the organisation's decisions, and the opportunity and resources to implement and be responsible for mutual ambitions.

Questions for discussions

- In enabling sustainable visits, how can the local society be represented in DMOs? Experiences from Venice and Barcelona show how the sought-after tourism has negative effects on living conditions for inhabitants, i.e., the visited. Property prices rise to levels that are unaffordable for those living in the visited places, a form of gentrification. The question is to what extent representation in a DMO can enable or hinder sustainable visits.
- A meta-organisation, different from a traditional organisation, is characterised by a vertical non-hierarchical structure with members instead of employees. The member organisations may have stronger loyalties towards their own organisations than the meta-organisation, which can be challenging for mutual decisions and commitment. Another complexity relates to the diversity of members ranging from large to small actors, from public to private organisations, some with strong financial resources while others are not as strong financially. How could decision structures for an organisation with a meta character be suitably designed? Which aspects or actors should have precedence over the other,

and how could a DMO be financed to facilitate the process of enabling sustainable organising?

- A meta-organisation consists of a diversity of organisations with deviating goals, so how can a DMO prioritise among these? The meta-organisation should, according to the UNWTO, coordinate different actors towards a common goal. A question then is whose interests should be prioritised? How can one ensure that a DMO establishes mutual goals that satisfy both the visitor and the long-term interests of the visited without unilaterally prioritising one side?

Notes on method

The research was based on a single case study (Yin, 1994) with a longitudinal approach, where the aim was to explore the historical organising of a destination to enable sustainable visits. The empirical material was mainly retrieved through an interview study, combined with participation in events and stakeholder meetings, as well as written material in the form of protocols, webpages, old archive documents, and media articles. The collection of empirical material for this chapter was carried out during the period from 2016 to 2021. Hence, the research approach taken in this ongoing multi-disciplinary case study was longitudinal and interpretative. Most of the interviews were conducted with two researchers present, one asking questions and the other taking notes. All interviews were recorded. In preparing for the interviews, interview guides based on broad themes were developed, allowing for the respondents to reflect on their experiences. As the empirical data were gathered, a complex picture emerged, which led to the insight that the historical organising took part in different parallel and entangled constellations that embraced complex relationships of private associations, publicly-funded units, and informal networks. It became apparent that the unit of analysis had to be enlarged to encompass the context of the more complex structure of relationships and its interaction with not only the officially designated DMO but also other stakeholders.

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PART III VISITED

i. Heldt Cassel & Stenbacka
ii. Oxenswärdh
iii. Kelman
iv. Hylland Eriksen

Materiality, mobility, and practices of hospitality and care – coping with (un)voluntary visitors in rural Sweden

Susanna Heldt Cassel & Susanne Stenbacka

Abstract

This paper takes its starting point in a local village in Bergslagen, Sweden and discusses how industrial transitions and external economic and political forces shape the local social relations and the potential for social sustainability over time. The focus in the chapter is on the different waves of visitors to the village, such as tourists, refugee migrants and socially displaced citizens looking for housing, and how these visitors are welcomed, cared for or coped with by local actors. Sustainable visits, we argue, is a concept dependent on how we perceive those who visit and those who get visited in specific places. How do so called hosts and guests interact and relate and how are practices of hospitality and care developed or contested when the well-being of the residents is put under pressure? Through interviews, observations and analysis of media documents we investigate and unpack the social dynamics in Fredriksberg shaped by materialities and mobilities related to its peripheral location in both economic, social and geographical terms. The results show how local actors reflect on their possibilities and obligations to contribute to a more socially sustainable local community.

Introduction

Setting the scene

The village of Fredriksberg is a place of depopulation, as are many other similar small industrial towns and villages in the central region of Sweden, the former industrial district of Bergslagen. The region has been called the Swedish 'rust belt' and many small municipalities struggle to maintain public services and infrastructure, and to attract new inhabitants. At the same time, this particular village has a flourishing tourism sector in the form of a skiing resort that attracts national and international visitors, including hikers and mountain bikers in summertime. The resort is focused on nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation and is dependent on its remote location and the connection of the tourism brand to vast forests and wilderness.

The population has decreased in the village of Fredriksberg since the closure of the paper mill in the 1970s. Before this, the village had a large industrial plant with hundreds of employees. The path through a transformed industrial structure has also led to series of job losses in other sectors, with out-migration as a result. Several of the empty apartment buildings have been left empty but were temporarily rented again by the Swedish Migration Agency to accommodate asylum seekers during the increased in-flow of refugees during 2015-2016. The school got more pupils and local sports clubs were flourishing; this period is described as bright in the village biography. After the period of receiving asylum seekers, these buildings were suddenly emptied again due to national policies of refugee settlement, and after a few years private landlords could buy the estates cheaply and continued to offer the flats for rent. Almost all of the refugees had moved on, and housing estates were left empty.

However, the flats were in poor shape and in urgent need of upkeep and renovation. Despite the poor maintenance, the houses have, in recent years, received new tenants. This time it is households that may come from municipalities in other parts of the country, mainly metropolitan areas with a housing shortage and who have no other alternative. Municipalities in the metropolitan areas actively encourage households to move to a municipality far away because of their immediate access to a dwelling. This is sometimes referred to as 'social dumping', because of the households' social position, lack of resources, and social vulnerability.

At the same time as the tourists sip their drinks on the sundecks of the resorts, tenants of the apartment blocks are struggling to try and heat apartments sometimes lacking electricity and other facilities of modern homes. The village also caters to other mobile individuals that come to cross the roads in Fredriksberg. In summer the village hosts berry pickers from Eastern Europe or Asia who stay in empty buildings formerly belonging to the factory. There are also the second homeowners that recently bought some of the villas in the residential areas in the village. All of these more-or-less mobile and (un)voluntary individuals co-exist and form the current population of the village. In this contribution to elucidate the prerequisites for sustainable visits to places, we use concepts related to the development of places and caring practices.

Aim and study approach

Our starting point for this chapter is that places, like Fredriksberg, are constantly in transition and undergo slower or sometimes quicker transformation processes, depending on how they are connected to global flows and markets, and how different resources are valued in different time periods. These external conditions shape both the material landscape of places and the social relations and strategies of different groups of people when they relate to, and find ways of benefiting from or coping with, the transformation. We use Fredriskberg as an example of processes and practices that are general and affect many similar rural regions and localities, and at the same time, we unpack the specific features of Fredriksberg related to recent events and current reshaping of this particular place.

When we think about Fredriksberg from the perspective of 'sustainable visits', the theme of this book, we would like to take as the starting point the understanding of the place as a destination to visit from the point of view of those who get visited, the hosts, local stakeholders and actors. The visitors that we might think about immediately when studying Fredriksberg are the tourists coming to the skiing and outdoor resort, second homeowners, and perhaps also the seasonal workers. If we take the perspective of the visited village in a broader sense, the place also gets visited by migrants who temporarily or more permanently need accommodation, seasonal workers in the berry picking business, and lately also displaced homeless persons from other municipalities. With an even wider

perspective in terms of temporalities, the village has also been visited by different companies and industrial operations, engaging and employing inhabitants and new in-migrants, disappearing again and leaving material remains, adding layers of heritage to the landscape over time.

The dual understanding of places as both complex social realities, including lack of resources and the negative consequences of being a place on the margin, parallel to the role as leisure and pleasure peripheries for visitors, constitutes the backdrop of this study. We approach issues of structural changes and intersections of mobilities in rural areas from a perspective of hosts and guests/visitors, including caring, responsibility, and hospitality, challenging and re-conceptualising the concept of 'sustainable visits'. Through this case study, we contribute with an empirically-driven general conceptual discussion of the challenges and paradoxes that places and rural communities face when trying to cope with, and care for, more or fewer voluntary visitors over time. We base our analysis on fieldwork, observations, and interviews with local stakeholders as well as on a review of media articles reporting on the recent problems regarding housing and infrastructure in the area. The analysis focuses specifically on the way in which the place and its local actors develop strategies of coping with, and caring for, the social development of the village.

Conceptual background and perspectives

In the following section, we present a theoretical background that introduces concepts relevant to understanding the case study as a place of materialities, mobilities, and practices of hospitality and care. We set the scene of the place and how to understand it, and how to analyse and interpret the strategies and practices developed by the local actors in Fredriksberg.

Places of flows and materialities

Global economic, political, and social processes have always been transforming and shaping the local geographies of places in different waves of booms and busts. This is particularly evident in small towns and rural places dependent on single industries such as min-

ing and manufacturing, and on natural resources such as forests. By looking at places as localised expressions of globalisation, or as alternating winners and losers in pursuit of capital flows, we can create an understanding of how and why places turn out differently and how the value of resources fluctuate depending on the spatio-temporal context. These valuations of, for example, natural resources, buildings, and infrastructure, also form social relations and social practices connected to how work and leisure is organised in different time periods.

Following Doreen Massey (2004) and her writings on place and how places are constituted and reproduced, we acknowledge that places have often been defended from a position where they are seen as opposed to the global or to the non-local. This view of places as closed local entities depicts them as victims of global capital or consumer trends, that impose new structures, policies, or material conditions from above, without the possibility of any agency for local actors. However, as Massey stresses, global economic processes are always taking place somewhere, which means that places and localities are not only fields of play for external forces, but also actually constituting these forces through the groundedness of identities and specific sets of social relations where global and local processes intersect. Through the conceptualisation of (the local) place as a shaped relational, and as interconnected with other places through flows and relations rather than as a unique (static) container of culture and traditions, it is also possible to open up the understanding of how places may become sites for caring practices and responsibility beyond the borders of the locality. When connecting and acknowledging the specificities of space and time in the current, everyday material, imagined, and lived practices of place, there is also a potential for caring about the distant, those who were here before us, those who happen to co-exist in time-space, and those in different places who are to arrive or visit.

Places are, accordingly, made through socio-spatial connections between people where the material and physical structures, such as houses, infrastructure, and natural environments, are interpreted and made meaningful. Industries, businesses, migrants, displaced citizens, second homeowners, and temporary tourists passing through or staying longer may all be seen as different kinds of visitors to the place. From a historic and geographical perspective, each period

of structural changes creates and leaves material remains, as well as memories and practices of social organisation. When industries leave and new waves of visitors come and go, the local population somehow needs to adjust, find solutions, and develop practices of caring for each other, for well-being, for coping, and to be able to prepare for and welcome new visitors.

Visitors and the visited

The concept of visitors is a frequently discussed term in tourism and hospitality studies, and the concept is the foundation of the understanding of the so called 'host-guest encounter' (the space in which the host and the guest meet and create social relations), which has yielded vast theoretical discussions in recent decades. From the ideas of John Urry, who described a separation and an uneven relation between the hosts and guests through the concept of 'the tourist gaze' (1990) these ideas have been developed further. Urry's conceptualisation of the 'gazing tourists' was implying a form of superiority of the guests as outsiders gazing at local people and their life.

If we expand our perspectives beyond the host-guest encounters in tourism, we may also acknowledge the meaning of visitors in the co-production and evolution of places, as the visitors may stay and become locals, as well as move in and out of places on a regular basis as temporary migrants, second home dwellers, or seasonal workers. By looking at these kinds of phenomena through a lens informed by the mobilities paradigm in social science (Sheller & Urry, 2006) may change places and be either or both at the same time, the boundaries between the hosts and the guests become blurred. If the world is constituted by different forms of mobilities of people, objects, and ideas, then how is it possible to draw lines and talk about places, communities, or visitors? This perspective, implying that everything and everyone is temporary at some point, gives us a new and fruitful perspective when trying to understand the development and social relations in specific places.

To be mobile and to travel, for shorter or longer periods of time and for different reasons, is always in some sense connected to the meaning and concept of home. In tourism and hospitality studies, the creation of a feeling of home (yet away from the permanent residence) is discussed as an important quality of tourism accommodation. In the presentation of the service quality of hotels, the feeling

of being welcomed and the feeling of home are closely connected to a framework of hospitality in the host-guest encounter (e.g., hotel service). So, home is not just a geographical location where one resides as opposed to being away or on the road, but it can also be a feeling of home that is connected to other social and individual values. Home may well be a simple space where people feel at ease, which has been found to be very different depending on cultural and social context. Studies of second homes and lifestyle mobilities have shown that the permanent residence is not equal to home in terms of feeling of belonging and identity, but being mobile and travelling may also be part of feeling socially and emotionally connected and grounded in a space, creating a feeling of ease (Cohen, Duncan, & Thulemark, 2016). These conceptualisations of mobilities and identity connected to being a host or a guest, being home or being away, are important not least as markers of how groups and individuals in a certain place interpret their own role in shaping it and relating to each other.

Hospitality and care

Hospitality as a concept has long been used to describe the social relations between hosts and guests in commercial service encounters, but has also been used more widely as a way of describing relations and what it means to be a host from a more philosophical and societal point of view (Blain & Lashley, 2014). Hospitality is closely related to concepts of sustainability, particularly socially sustainable visits, since being hospitable is being caring and responsible towards others, with a focus on visitors of different kinds.

Hospitality is generally defined as the idea of voluntary sharing of one's own home with others who need care and protection. Telfer (2000) discusses these relations from a philosophical and historical perspective and notes that in earlier times, obligations of hospitality had a religious dimension and included obligations to unselfishly care for and protect visiting guests. However, hospitableness involves offering hospitality in a generous way, not because it is a social obligation or expectation from others, but because the host wants to, and feels an inner desire to, help others and be generous, without expecting anything in return.

Blain and Lashley (2014) discuss how hospitality has been dealt with and conceptualised as more-or-less genuine and true by differ-

ent authors and in different historical and cultural contexts. They draw parallels between the religious obligations to care for and help strangers in need that have been formative for many societies in earlier times. This kind of hospitality is genuine in the sense that the person truly confessing to a specific religious belief takes the obligation of hospitableness for granted and makes it part of their own identity and understanding of self. On the other hand, obligations that come from the outside, and are seen as something you ought to do by leaders or hegemonic powers, can never be entirely genuine. Connecting to Derrida's work on hospitality (2000, 2002) and discussion around the concept of hosts and hosting (*hôte* in French), Blain and Lashley conclude that an explicit point that Derrida is making is that true hospitality is hosting and caring without expecting anything in return, and he makes a distinction between the act of hospitality towards invited versus uninvited guests. Blain and Lashley (2014, p. 3) write:

> …while cultural and historical norms make it possible for most 'hosts' to be hospitable to invited guests, it is only those that are also hospitable to the unexpected guest who are genuinely hospitable in what he [Derrida] terms 'radical hospitality' (2002, p. 360).

Arguments are put forward that commercial hospitality cannot offer hospitableness since it is conditioned through payment, whereas others (e.g., Telfer) claim that this is too simplistic and those working in the hospitality sector, such as in bars and hotels, may well have chosen these jobs just because they feel a genuine reward in serving and pleasing others (being hospitable). Hospitality then has a wide range of meanings and is fruitful when discussing the relation between visitors and those who feel or define themselves as hosts or 'locals'. When it comes to [involuntary] visitors, such as refugees and asylum seekers, or individuals trying to earn a living by seasonal work away from home, such as berry picking, or those who are displaced for social and economic reasons, they are all somehow going to meet with, encounter, and interact with people already residing in the destination community: others who were already residing in the destination community before they came to visit. It is in such relations that true hospitality finds expression, according to Derrida. To elaborate on these relations, and on the societal dimension of the host-guest encounter, we turn to the concept of care. In local

(global) caring practices, 'care is not solely private or parochial; it can concern institutions, societies, even global levels of thinking' (Tronto, 1995, p. 45).

Everyday life entails continuous reflections and negotiations in relation to caring and responsibilities for others. Sayer (2005) elaborates on the moral dimension in people's everyday lives ('lay normativity'), and states that it is effectively acquired through ongoing social interaction, building relations of recognition, care, and friendship (Sayer 2005, p. 951). There is also a spatial dimension, since repeated interaction affects the rise of morality. This spatial dimension is implicitly understood in terms of physical distance and separation (Chiotis, 2015). Caring for someone or something often takes place in the immediate vicinity of an individual, but it is of course possible to also care about places or people who are at a distance. It might be reasonable that it is sometimes easier to care about what is close while the distant is harder to grasp or simply arouses less interest and emotion. Going back to Doreen Massey's discussions of place as social interactions connecting the local with the global in-flows of relations and transactions, care of those in close proximity does not have to be only those geographically or physically close, but those who you, through place-based connections, build relations with across space.

The definition of care developed by Fisher & Tronto (1990) does not limit caring to human interaction; it includes, for example, objects and the environment. Caring may also involve more than two individuals or entities and has a social and political function. Their definition implies that caring should be viewed as 'a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our "world" so that we can live as well as possible' (Fisher & Tronto 1990, p. 40). According to Joan C. Tronto, being caring also includes 'the acceptance of some form of burden', while in its most general sense, it means being engaged. (Tronto, 1993, p. 102f.). There is thus a geographical but also a social dimension to caring practices. A fundamental question is how people relate to, and care about, those who are not like themselves, or who are 'other'. 'The other' might be spatially near, but socially distant (Tronto, 1993).

Tronto's ideas are developed by Morgan (2010) who advocates a new politics of care that includes two features: (1) it defines care first and foremost as a function of the public sphere rather than the

private sphere, and (2) it applies the ethic of care globally as well as locally, challenging the traditional identification of care with the proximity principle of 'nearest and dearest' (Morgan 2010, p. 1860). These features mean, first, that care is a central element in the public space and, second, that the range of care goes beyond the close and contiguous. Morgan continues these arguments by stating that the development of a public ethic of care must face, first, how we individuals get along with 'others' who are not like 'us' – 'others' who may be geographically close to us, but whom we perceive as socially remote (Morgan 2010, p. 1861). Since 'caring' is referred to both indirectly and directly in the interviews, it is relevant to discuss such practices within the framework of a public ethics of care – and ask whether and how such an ethics can be understood with regard to the Fredriksberg example – where geographical proximity leads to repeated interaction and encounters with 'the other', as well as with the 'near and dear', on a daily basis.

Results and discussion

Materiality and mobility – the inherited landscape

The village of Fredriksberg is, as described earlier, a former industrial town, where different waves of industrial development and decline have left remains in the physical landscape, such as urban town structures, housing blocks, and abandoned industrial sites. These material structures and buildings not only form a physical and material foundation for potential and possible future developments but also for how the place is interpreted and perceived by both more permanent and more temporary inhabitants or visitors. This means that the formations and transformations of the place over time are not only a matter of simple locatedness of specific activities, such as iron ore foundries or convenient waterways for energy, but also of the making of meaning and identity in relation to these by different groups of people, passing by or staying longer.

The industrial site of the paper mill is currently, as this chapter is being written, under a process of demolition and reconstruction, where brick walls and chimneys are being torn down piece by piece. The symbolic starting point of this took place in the summer of 2021 when the main chimney, which for several decades served as

a landmark, was taken down by using explosives. A large crowd, including media reporters, gathered in the open space in front of the gates to the industrial site to watch it happen. On local television and in newspapers, the event was covered through interviews with people who used to work in the mill, as well as people living in the area who just wanted to look at the spectacular falling of the chimney. Voices from the interviews told stories about how it used to look at the site in the days when the factory was operating, and how great and prosperous the place once was. Some expressed sadness and bitterness over a lost period when the village was booming and flourishing. The chimney had been the symbol for this period. Others expressed relief that the old, rough, and worn constructions were finally going to be removed and hopefully replaced by something more functional and attractive. The mill remains were ugly and only reminded everybody of how left-behind and down-prioritised the village was and had been for years (DD, 20210820; SVT Nyheter, 2021). This view was also expressed in one of the interviews with a local actor who commented on the demolishing of the mill and said that that should have happened long ago (interview with local actor). The industrial site had been a dangerous place that attracted youngsters who were intrigued by the fact that the buildings were abandoned and dangerous to visit. The current municipal plan for the area is, according to news articles, to cover the remains with new soil and construct an artificial hill on which to build tracks for skiing and biking. So, the site of the paper mill, which was earlier the site of old steel works from periods of early industrialisation, is now turning into a leisure space for visitors in a different type of economy, the experience economy.

Another example of the material and temporal landscapes of a transforming village shaped by industrial booms and busts is the empty apartment buildings, with overgrown lawns and broken toys, and demolished swings at the playground. The obvious abandonment and the lack of people in the area, together with the lack of upkeep and care for the buildings and the neighbourhood, creates a feeling of insecurity and despair (field notes). The lack of care for the houses implicitly invokes a feeling that the inhabitants who actually do reside in these ruins are not so well taken care of either. The apartment buildings that were built when the paper mill was booming and the village was growing have been abandoned several times,

← The old industry building in Fredriksberg. The factory chimney used to be an attraction for so-called urban explorers, but was demolished because it posed an accident risk. Photo: Susanne Stenbacka.

then temporarily filled again with residents, such as the wave of refugees in 2015-2016. Since 2020, the buildings have become homes for displaced citizens from other municipalities lacking a place to live and being directed to Fredriksberg by social services officials. The material remains from earlier periods – when the village had more inhabitants, more jobs and a higher level of services – stand out and become reminiscent of former glory days and resources (field notes). The housing estates are talked about by the interviewees as horrible and as a disgrace, due to the bad upkeep and the social problems that have become attached to them. The apartment blocks are almost invisible from the main road through the village and it is possible to visit Fredriksberg without seeing them, even though the tourists from the nearby resort facilities may accidently cycle through on their way to the local bakery.

An empty apartment building with overgrown lawns and demolished swings at the playground. Photo: Susanne Stenbacka.

The industrial buildings from the 20th century paper mill that shut down in the 1960s has a former entrance building which has been

The paper mill office building has served as housing for both asylum seekers and berry pickers. Photo: Susanne Stenbacka.

empty and abandoned in different periods, then suddenly functioned again as different visitors have needed access to somewhere to stay. The entrance, which was previously fenced with a gate and where the mill workers registered and clocked in each time they started or ended a shift, is now broken and parts of the fence have been knocked down or removed. During the boom of asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016, a large group of people came to Fredriksberg and the office spaces close to the gate were filled with bunkbeds and kitchen tables. In the yard in front of the building, playground equipment in the form of a small wooden horse is still standing but looks very lonely and displaced (field notes). By the main entrance, some letters and envelopes from the migration authorities lie around as they did not reach the recipients they were aimed for, and were not returned to sender either. The bunkbeds, later abandoned as the asylum seekers moved out and left Frederiksberg, came in use a few years later when groups of berry pickers were looking for places to

stay. For a couple of berry seasons, the office building of the paper mill was squatted in by berry picker seasonal workers, before they were finally kicked out and the building closed by local authorities for sanitary reasons, due to the lack of heating, water, or functioning toilets in the building (interviews with local actors). On the entrance door there is a poster saying 'accommodation in this building is forbidden'.

Caring – a basis for development and sustainability

The peripheral location of Fredriksberg in both geographical and social terms shapes not only access to resources but also the ways in which people talk about social life in the village. Several informants in our study mentioned that in this community people care for each other because they have to and that it is part of life, and they also exemplified this with certain events when caring for others has been expressed and made visible.

One such occasion was when people with connection to the worn-out apartment blocks started to use the bus, a bus whose primary task is to drive school children to specific school classes in Ludvika. In small schools like the one in Fredriksberg, there are not enough teachers or resources to give all subjects and classes locally, so the school children need to commute to other schools, in this case one that is an hour away. The situation on the particular bus went messy, since the adult passengers were under the influence of drugs, and the children expressed fear and anxiety, as did the parents who wouldn't let the children travel on the bus as the situation got worse. It went so far that the bus company cancelled the bus trips altogether, because the rides to and from Fredriksberg entailed a work environment risk for the drivers. The local interest group, Aktivitetsbyrån, that arranges a lot of different activities and local events, and provides services through voluntarism, then took the initiative to pay for a chartered bus that could take the children safely to school. One informant summarised this collective effort: 'You get desperate in the end. We all know each other, and the children'. It has also happened that parents have picked up their children who got off the bus when they experienced fear: 'They drive their children a lot. /… / I have said that I will go and pick them up. /… / If it is not possible to let those who are the problem get off' (interview with local actor).

Informants often referred to the strength they experience when people do things together, like this collective initiative to provide bus rides for the school children. Another example is swimming lessons for children in summer. Ludvika municipality funds the swimming teacher, and the local association Aktivitetsbyrån handles the organisational issues. The swimming lessons are thought of as something that the children need and that the school is not providing any more due to cuts in resources. The initiative is highly dependent on parents taking time off from work to help out. One of the parents has a sauna that has been brought down to the lake for chilly summer days. This is, of course, a very positive thing for the children and parents, but it also contributes to a sense of community and belonging. However, there are also statements expressing the opposite view, that people are not engaged enough in their community and that they expect someone else to solve problems and improve the situation. The burden or choice to care for each other and the collective in the village is perceived differently but talked about by several informants as a necessity and a reason for people to stay or choose to move to the village.

The school bus is an example of care related to public space, involving society rather than a personal situation, and including individuals beyond 'the nearest and dearest'. On the other hand, it involves caring for the ones who are already included in society and part of the same group, rather than caring for 'the other', in this case the displaced individuals. This example shows that both specific situations and long-term processes contain several actors, with different – and conflicting – needs, as p.168) summarises: 'Determining needs is complicated. This is, among other things, because individual needs change over time, as do definitions of what should be cared for in a society' (Tronto 2010, p. 168).

Radical or conditioned hospitality?

The care for those in need was expressed in different ways in the interviews. One way of looking at the situation was that the village has undergone several waves of change and different groups of people have come and gone over time. Sometimes the village and its current inhabitants have found solutions by helping each other and showing hospitality to newcomers themselves, and at other times this hospitality has been restricted due to the vulnerability of the

community and lack of energy to help others when support from the wider society has failed.

When the refugees arrived, the village was not prepared for a sudden massive influx of people in need, but it did not take long before many different volunteering initiatives were set in place. The respondents talked about how local organisations and sports clubs mobilised to try and integrate the refugee children, and many activities took place in local associations to activate and include the immigrants in the village's community life. Examples mentioned were how sports associations and the church collected clothes and toys for the children, and how the refugees were invited to various activities to try and integrate the children and to help with learning Swedish. The engagement and hospitableness described is close to what could be interpreted as a radical hospitality in Derrida's (2000) terms, since it seems to have been hospitality towards the unexpected, without asking for anything in return, more than possibilities for the village to thrive and to get a larger population (which may be interpreted as a possible motivation).

The period of the asylum seekers was talked about in positive terms, as a boom and a period of flourishing in the village. Inhabitants became hopeful that the newcomers would stay and that their presence could bring other resources or a minimised risk of losing more resources, such as the elderly care home and the primary school. Thus, the refugees were seen as a resource, and their presence in the community abolished social as well as geographical distances (see Morgan, 2010). However, the sudden decision by national migration authorities to move all the new asylum seekers to another town, in just a few weeks a couple of years later, was seen as a hard hit, and many of the local stakeholders and voluntary workers of the civil society expressed disappointment. The investment in being hospitable and offering support and care was in vain, since keeping the new inhabitants was outside the control of the village.

These in-migrants were displaced from the start and had to move to Fredriksberg involuntary. However, they accepted their new home and started to appreciate it (interview with local actor). One of the respondents referred to news articles reporting from the filled buses travelling up in the forest. One example was the story of an old man (asylum seeker from Syria) who refused to get off one of the first buses to the village, when it stopped in the middle of the dark forest

on a late November night. He thought that he had been brought to the middle of nowhere, and was scared and frustrated. This story was circulated and re-narrated in local as well as national media and created debate about why he refused to leave the bus and how it made the village look in media (SVT Nyheter, 2015a). However, according to the respondent and media, this particular man was actually one on the ones who stayed longest and wanted to continue living in the village after a few months (SVT Nyheter, 2015b).

The displaced citizens from urban areas currently residing in the worn out apartment blocks are talked about almost solely in terms of problems and discomfort, and as an issue that needs to be dealt with, both by the authorities and municipality, but also something that is concerning to civil society and the local businesses in the village. There are examples of how individual business owners tried to introduce a few of them to work in retail, but how these efforts were not long term since the individuals did not stay for long enough. The caring practices and hospitality towards visitors were obviously challenged by frustration over the feeling that the villagers are being left behind by the rest of society and the broader municipality, and abandoned without tools or resources to practice the care that they could have provided. This is particularly clear when comparing attitudes towards types of visitors and the practices of care and hospitality that were shown in the case of the asylum seekers vs. the socially displaced. There is a strong narrative in the interviews that many of the key actors within business and civil society took pride in their joint collaboration and efforts to integrate the asylum-seeking newcomers in sports, culture, and working life.

There may be many reasons for this difference in general hospitableness and attitude towards different visitors. One aspect of this is the speed of the process of current population change in the village that was referred to; suddenly there were around 40 individuals with diverse kinds of social problems showing up, visible drug abuse, and accompanying threatening practices leading to feelings of unsafety in the central parts of the village. They (the displaced) were described as 'new' and different from the asylum seekers and other temporary immigrants in how they behaved and how they contributed (or not) to social life in the village.

The 'new' inhabitants of the worn out apartment blocks were also visible in the village in a new way, according to the informants. Most

of them did not have access to a car and were often talked about as 'those who hang out at the bus stop'. Another aspect is the lack of expected mutual contributions to the community. One informant who is engaged in several projects regarding the school, the local business life, and sports, argued that there is a clear distinction between those who have been redirected or displaced in the village and those who contribute to the well-being of the place. This may be interpreted as meaning that the expected contribution is related to whether the migration was an informed choice or a necessity due to lack of other options.

> Those people /… / These are no people who are part of the social picture, they do not participate in anything or contribute in any way. They just are, live, and take a bus to Ludvika. To Systembolaget and their friends and replenish with what they need. (Local actor and entrepreneur)

That does not mean that everyone else is contributing to activities and processes that relate to local development, but rather that it could not be expected from this group – and that their practices are working in the opposite direction, creating environments of fear and insecurity, suspiciousness, and feelings of abandonment.

At the same time, the informants also expressed concerns for the people who moved in involuntarily and reflected on what kind of help they could possibly offer. 'What they need is all kinds of support and this is not offered in Fredriksberg' (interview with local actor). The support referred to is mainly public welfare services, such as social services, healthcare, public transport as well as decent housing provision. One respondent talked about how she regrets that the displaced people do not get proper information on the conditions in the village and what life there is like before they move: 'It is not easy for them [the socially displaced] when they realise that public transport hardly exists and that children will have to travel for hours to get to the upper secondary school'. The socially displaced people need care, and it is society which must contribute to catering for their needs (interview with local actor).

The frustration and feeling of being left behind by society, as was expressed in interviews, is closely related to the displacement of the socially-vulnerable displaced groups. These individuals and families were obviously and visibly in need of a lot of support and resources,

which were not available in the village, and neither the previous inhabitants nor the existing institutions and structures could accommodate all the needs. This feeling of being left behind is framed in a narrative that is also visible in the media reporting from the village, focusing on the problems caused for school children who could not get a safe bus ride to upper secondary school. Since the resources are scarce and the village is (according to interviewees) not prioritised in terms of public services or infrastructure, it is also difficult to organise support and care for the new inhabitants in need.

It is also possible to discern an expectation that the inhabitants of the village should contribute to the good of all and that they have an obligation to be hospitable and welcome those who need somewhere to stay. Again, the period with the large group of asylum seekers is mentioned as a comparison. Here, geographical conditions are made visible that contain political dimensions and an underlying critique is evident of how society, or those in power, distribute resources and residents without any dialogue or the involvement of local actors. Interview respondents expressed frustration over the village being left to cope with, and solve problems of, the temporary and involuntary visitors, at the same time as they want to run their businesses and provide hospitality for the tourists in the area. This ambiguous relationship between different actors and types of visitors in the village is present, and a frustration was seen among some of them as they talked about how insecure and unfriendly the village has become at night and at the same time how important it is to try and create an attractive environment for visitors who come for leisure purposes. As one respondent put it:

> We work with great things here. /… / And how wrong it gets when we get these criminals, this negative /…/ the actual housing, but how the media blows up… versus how hard we work – to increase in-movers, to keep the school, to keep the elderly care, all kinds of community service. And then we get this setback when they come here /…/ look up Fredriksberg online and here are these articles. How do we get people to move here? And that's what's needed. /… / And above all, we need to keep those who grew up here and have had children. /… / How do we get the families with children to stay? /… / Regardless of the drug abusers, that's what's important. (Local key actor and entrepreneur)

Voluntary visitors and spatial separation

The second homeowners were talked about in the interviews as good for the village in terms of consumption and bringing money in, but also, and actually mostly, spoken of as trouble, since they block potential housing for young people looking for a permanent place to live. In a regular street with villas in the central parts of the village, one informant showed us how several houses were turned into second homes and that this creates problems for those who live there all year round. The street is dark, no one is clearing snow on a regular basis and, most importantly, there is a shortage of all-year-round housing for those who want to have a permanent residence. The seasonal workers at the tourism resort also stay in the central parts of the village, renting apartments or rooms with private landlords. However, they are not so visible in the village and socialise mainly with other tourism workers at the resort. One of the informants talked about how important it is to have the tourism resort and how it brings jobs to youngsters and also possibilities for a more varied supply of commercial services, such as cafes and restaurants. But other narratives give us the image of a clear separation between the resort and the village of Fredriksberg.

The separation between the village and the tourism resort in marketing images, storytelling connected to tourism, and also in the narratives of the interviewed local stakeholders could be interpreted as a way to distinguish the tourism destination from the local village. Since Fredriksberg has been connected to problems and a negative image in media, respondents expressed a fear that this will affect the tourism resort negatively. Instead, the resort company has chosen to display and present the destination of Säfsen in a way that gives tourists the impression that they are travelling to the resort, nothing else. Fredriksberg is not even mentioned in marketing material and brochures, other than in a few sentences describing the services offered there. The village of Fredriksberg actually offers services, such as a grocery shop, which is the only facility for groceries within around 40 minutes' drive by car. So even if most tourists bring their own food to their cabins or eat at the restaurant, some of them also find their way to the village centre, mainly to visit the shop or to eat at one of the restaurants.

Contemporary conditions such as lack of certain services might make it difficult for the development of the tourist destination as

well. This can apply to access to services such as health care, but also to housing. The recruitment and retaining of labour in the village and its businesses is related to the supply in the local community, in turn related to the long-distance commute to more urban or densely populated areas. For Säfsen Resort, it seems important to separate the brand Säfsen from the place name, Fredriksberg. This separation has potentially become more important as a consequence of the negative media image related to the industrial dumpsites and the socially displaced people. Referring to the situation in Fredriksberg, Statskontoret (2020) writes that: "Whether active redirection [of households] is a problem or not is related to the host municipality's structural conditions, such as size, finances, unemployment and the housing market.' It should be added that whether it is a problem or not also relates to the socio-economic position of the people who change their residential municipality, and where in the host municipality they settle. As shown in the example of Fredriksberg, lack of public transport contributes to the problems, as do drug problems and accompanying criminality.

According to the representative from the tourism resort, most tourists do not associate their perception of the tourism resort with the village. Some might not even know that they are in Fredriksberg. The tourism industry is thereby, to a large extent, separated from daily life in the village. One reason for this separation is the image of Fredriksberg and place brand that has evolved over time. From the beginning, the tourism resort was an initiative to replace jobs at the paper mill and also later at the big laundry facility that used to be one of the main employers (interview with local stakeholder). However, since the ski resort and its facilities were sold to a private owner, the integration between the village and the company has not been implemented in the same way. Some of the respondents mentioned attempts that have been made from time to time over the years to recruit local residents from the village, and specific projects to get unemployed people in work at the resort, but it seems these projects never really succeeded and the main feature of the resort is that it is separated and made for visitors, not locals. Even if it is not the tourist activities per se that constitute a threat towards sustainable visits in Frederiksberg, the tourism resort is an important component in the way the village is seen and perceived by the inhabitants and by outsiders, through the media images.

Concluding discussion

By studying the case of Fredriksberg, it is possible to analyse and discuss the challenges that rural and peripheral places face, related to both material resources and temporalities of mobile people and visitors. The social dynamics of the place is shaped by three aspects: materialities of the place, social relations and mobilities, and the role of images and imaginations that are created in narratives and media reporting. Through analysing these aspects, we get a broader and more complex understanding of challenges as well as practices to cope with them.

The social relations specific to Fredriksberg are also closely connected to its peripheral location, and its ongoing structural transformation, something that many places are facing. Industrial booms and busts have severe consequences when the place is both remote and small. Concrete examples are challenges related to the planning for infrastructure and public transport as well as the planning for housing provision and supply of services. As housing is a core issue in the well-being of people and of social sustainability, any instability in the housing situation, such as a surplus of unwanted housing or a shortage of specific types of housing, creates social problems of different kinds. A high demand for second homes in tourism places creates a shortage of housing for those who want to reside permanently, and consequently this pushes out potential labour and service providers in the tourism destination. This means that second homes in previously permanent housing in peripheral places are blocking development and affecting the well-being of others. Similarly, when empty apartment buildings are left to deteriorate and people with a lack of resources and support move in, this puts pressure on the limited number of permanent residents who need to cope and find solutions to common problems that are no longer handled by public welfare state actors. The peripheral location means limited options concerning commuting, and make it almost impossible to find housing in an area nearby. The specific issues and challenges discussed and analysed in the case study of Fredriksberg are then not specific as such, but general and typical for the specific temporal and spatial conditions of this type of place. The problems are not caused by internal dynamics, but by external pressure and

extra-local decision making, and policy and planning at regional and national levels.

The tourism industry may serve as a basic support structure that makes it easier for the community to bounce back and keep up despite various social and economic challenges related to lost industry jobs, lack of service, and housing problems. The tourism resort in the village, separated from it by name, image, and imagined space, constitutes both a sort of lifeline that the village and its inhabitants may lean on for job opportunities and a solid market for the local businesses. However, the potential lifeline that tourism provides is also ambiguous and paradoxical, since the relationship between the tourism resort and the village is uneven and spatially separated. If the village's name and its people are not visible or interesting for the tourism industry and the tourists, this risk creating feelings of exclusion and of being peripheral, also locally, for the inhabitants. Tourism has the potential to be a source for local and regional development, and this requires awareness and strategic work from the tourism companies as well as from public actors and planning. If tourism takes place in bubbles or enclaves, it does not contribute to social sustainability in the way it could if integrated and locally embedded.

The attitudes towards being hospitable and caring towards visitors of different kinds are conditioned by the feeling of support from society and from the outside. When there is a sign of hope and a feeling that visitors may contribute to the good of the village and to well-being in the long run, support and care seems close and easy to offer. A discourse of abandonment is taking over, as can be seen in the interviews as well as in the media narratives produced about Fredriksberg in recent years, and connected to both decay of housing and the industrial site as well as the displaced individuals. These seem to make it more difficult to keep up the social bonds of collective caring and hospitableness in the village.

Our findings show that a strong sense of community, local engagement, and care for others is present and an important feature of social relations in the village. There is a tradition of taking care of, and catering for, the needs of various visitors and guests over the years. The willingness to help others in need and to cooperate to solve common problems is also present. However, the caring practices and hospitality is not universal and limitless. To be hospi-

table and try your best to help vulnerable people, and at the same time cater for customers to your tourism business, is a difficult and demanding balance. The hosts of the host-guest encounter are not able to show universal and borderless hospitality, but are dependent on each other, the feeling of mutual contribution and support, and not least, that they are seen and acknowledged by society. When the public support system and welfare services are disappearing, it is much more demanding for local actors, both business actors and civil society, to be generous and offer support and hospitality to others, both tourists and other visitors. The ability of the community to cope with visitors and to care for them and offer hospitality is thus conditioned by the structural and social support that individuals and groups experience.

Enabling sustainable visits – a path towards a sustainable future

Sustainable visits is thus a concept that can be interpreted in various ways. One way of approaching it is to look at a specific place and its different types of visitors and how they relate to each other and how different social practices evolve around them. Visits are not only tourism visits, even if they are the ones that we perhaps think about first and foremost. Visits may also be longer and they may be voluntary as well as involuntary, and take the form of social and geographical displacement. In a place where different types of visitors meet or co-exist, the social fabric and the way in which caring and hospitality is evolving are also key features of social sustainability.

Places that are peripheral in economic and geographical terms may become attractive sites for visitors and tourism development. For a destination to be socially sustainable, however, the host community needs to support and facilitate the development of the tourism sector through infrastructure, service provision, and as a source of recruitment of labour. Socially sustainable tourism in rural locations means contributing to attractive living environments and the well-being of inhabitants.

In Fredriksberg, it is made clear how the local entrepreneurship dependent on tourism is threatened by societal processes that indirectly affect their opportunities for development. Besides the fact that the households with social problems contribute to an unsafe environment, the side effect caused by the attention paid in media makes the situation even harder to handle.

The population in Fredriksberg, as in several other places with similar experiences, is showing a resilience to transformations and problems arising. This is partly because they can look back on a history where each era represents a new challenge and recognise that the place has lived on and endured. Such reflections contribute to confidence and belief in a future. In the contemporary era, all kinds of visitors are active in the local narrative and have a position within the framework of resilience during transformation.

Questions for discussions

- From a historic and geographical perspective, each period of structural changes creates and leaves material remains, as well as memories and practices of social organisation. How can material remains in the landscape affect a local community, socially and economically? What challenges are associated with handling of material remains?
- How does a functioning housing market relate to sustainable visits? Which needs must be met and which actors are involved and influence the supply?
- Caring for visitors might be expressed in diverse ways and to different extent. What factors might impact caring practices in a local community?

Notes on method

This study was conducted as a case study with fieldwork consisting of semi-structured interviews with key informants, and observations and analysis of media texts and visual material. Interviews were conducted with local representatives from NGOs, local politics, tourism businesses, and local services. These interviews, with one exception, were made during visits to Fredriksberg in August 2021. Interviews with representatives from the municipality's social service department were held digitally via Zoom in July 2021. All the interviews were carried out as conversations guided by a thematic interview guide and the informants were asked to tell their story and talk about the village, its development, and how they perceived the

current development, both in relation to tourism and to the local community in general. The interviews lasted between 50 minutes and two hours each, and all interviews were recorded.

The observations were made during two separate visits to the village in the summer of 2021. The visits included walking around and taking photos, reading signs, and viewing the landscape.

The analysis of the media texts was made through a collection of articles in news media as well as social media posts and information on websites. The news media articles were downloaded from the database retriever with the keywords Säfsen and Fredriksberg, from the years 2018-2021, and were analysed by identifying thematic threads and topics forming narratives about the village and by connecting these to the themes and topics of the interviews as well as to the conceptual framework.

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Small tourist entrepreneurs on their pathway towards sustainable practice

Anette Oxenswärdh

Abstract

The biggest challenge for future tourism is to achieve local, sustainable development. Entrepreneurs play an essential role in contributing to stable and sustainable social and economic community development, especially within the tourism sector. An issue, though, is that many of the small entrepreneurs within tourism can be defined as life-stylers or bricoleurs; that is, small entrepreneurs who often have a clear orientation towards non-economic motives. To survive economically, they usually have several occupations simultaneously. Still, their services, solutions, products, and world views can be seen as a venue for creating sustainability values. However, this informal sector of entrepreneurship is growing, which means that many providers are outside municipal supervision and support. This chapter aims to share some of the research findings on how education for tourist entrepreneurs can be organised, especially regarding, and with a particular focus on, sustainability issues. Entrepreneurs also need to network with each other, giving support and sharing knowledge about sustainable solutions in their businesses. The study concludes that entrepreneurs need efficient help to move towards sustainable businesses that contribute to sustainable visits. The study promotes learning and networking to foster the sustainability of small entrepreneurs working with tourism.

Introduction

Tourism, one of the major industries in the world, has seen a constant increase in the past decades in Sweden and not least on the

island of Gotland. The island has been a popular resort since the middle of the 1800s, and the tourism industry has been an important economic factor (Scholz & Wegener Friis, 2013). As a constantly growing industry, tourism has also had increasing importance for employment on the island. These facts have also increased the demand for more sustainable solutions. Entrepreneurs have an essential role in contributing to stable, sustainable, social and economic community development, not at least in the tourism section.

The biggest challenge for tourism in the future is to achieve local, sustainable development. Many small entrepreneurs on Gotland can be defined as life-stylers and bricoleurs. Small entrepreneurs often have a clear orientation towards non-economic motives and several areas of expertise in their working repertoire. Their services, solutions, products, and world views can be seen as a venue for creating values of sustainability. However, this informal sector of entrepreneurship is growing, which means that many providers are outside municipal supervision and support. Municipalities have not yet had the capacity to take care of the growing number of these diverse and small tourism entrepreneurs (Oxenswärdh, 2017).

Nevertheless, their entrepreneurial role in building communities has gained insufficient attention from communities and research. Entrepreneurship has been mainly considered an economic, rather than a human and cultural behavioural, concept. To become a successful entrepreneur today demands sustainable solutions, services, and products (Hassanli & Ashwell, 2020). There seems to be a vast need for education on sustainability issues among tourist entrepreneurs (Oxenswärdh, 2017). Research shows that they are interested in sustainability issues but do not have enough knowledge of them. They also have difficulty following formal training initiatives on sustainability. They want practical learning based on their organisations and businesses. This chapter aims to share the research findings on how education for tourist entrepreneurs on the island of Gotland can be organised, especially regarding, and with a particular focus on, sustainability issues. Furthermore, how this can contribute to enabling sustainable visits. The chapter is organised as follows: first the theoretical problems involved in the processes of learning sustainability are presented, followed by a discussion of the future possibilities in organising education for small entrepreneurs. Lastly, the benefits of this kind of educational approach for the whole society,

and specifically for Gotland as a local society and a developing sustainable resort, are highlighted.

Who are the entrepreneurs/learners?

This chapter includes the research retrieved from primarily small tourist entrepreneurs on the island of Gotland. Many entrepreneurs involved in the research deal with accommodation businesses, such as BnB and renting small cottages to tourists. However, some entrepreneurs also organise different events, tours, and excursions. Still, what is common to all of these entrepreneurs is that they can be called bricoleurs. A bricoleur is an entrepreneur who earns a living through several different occupations (Baker & Nelson, 2005).

For example, in addition to their tourism activities, these entrepreneurs may hold several other occupations such as farmers, teachers, nurses, clerks etc. This way of organising one's livelihood also seems to be historically and culturally conditioned on the island. Swedish historian Dick Harrison describes this way of living by the farmers as something that already took place 1,000 years ago. In those days, the peasants traded with bypassing ships and bought and sold their goods (Harrison, 2020, 2021). They also sailed abroad themselves. These so-called sailing farmers (*farbönder*) were descendants of the Vikings and sailed around the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, selling and buying different goods.

Many of these small tourist entrepreneurs can also be classified as so-called life-stylers. There are numerous definitions of lifestyle entrepreneurs (for a brief literature review of reports used for lifestyle entrepreneurs, see Saleilles & Gomez-Velasco (2007). According to (Burns, 2001), lifestyle entrepreneurs are primarily motivated to undertake an enjoyable activity and provide adequate income. Morrison complicates the conceptualisation of various forms of entrepreneurship by formulating three main features of entrepreneurship: social, economic, and psychological, followed by the description of paramount entrepreneurial manners. Her results show that for the lifestyle entrepreneurs the primary motivation for starting a business is non-economic (Morrison, 2006).

Most importantly for the conclusions of this chapter, a majority of the lifestyle entrepreneurs have a higher degree of awareness of, and are willing to run their business by tackling, sustainabil-

A dog joining a fika. As small entrepreneurs within tourism can be defined as life-stylers or bricoleurs. The business they run tend to involve not only the entrepreneur, but also her family and friends. And from time to time, maybe a dog. Photo: Anette Oxenswärdh.

ity issues, from environmental sustainability (Dantas & Carvalho, 2020) to social and cultural sustainability (Keen, 2004; Morrison, 2006). The literature on the sustainability behaviour of small enterprises proposes numerous internal factors that affect behaviour, including cost orientation and lifestyle (Font, Garay, & Jones, 2016b), attitudes (Tilley, 1999), values (Williams & Schaefer, 2013), sustainability empathy (Font et al., 2016a), and self-efficacy (Kornilaki, Thomas, & Font, 2019). Self-efficacy implies people's judgments of their capabilities to organise and execute courses of action required for attaining designated types of performances, according to Bandura (1986). Some studies on small businesses suggest that self-efficacy beliefs are something which mediate an individual's intentions and actual behaviour with owner/manager capabilities, which are determined by factors including awareness of problems and knowledge of alternatives, a sense of responsibility, perceived task difficulty and effort, and support or lack of support (Kornilaki et al., 2019). The lack of knowledge of sustainable tourism has been shown in recent research as something challenging for small tourist entrepreneurs (Hassanli & Ashwell, 2020; Oxenswärdh, 2017, 2018, 2020). Nonetheless, the literature is unclear on the role sustainability knowledge plays in the self-efficacy beliefs needed to engage in sustainability behaviour (Agyeiwaah, 2020).

Processes towards learning and acting sustainably

Sustainability has become one of the most widely used and discussed concepts (Appelbaum, Calcagno, Magarelli, & Saliba, 2016; Dobson, 2008; Rambaud & Richard, 2015) starting with The Brundtland Commission (1987), which defined *sustainable development* as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Definitions of sustainability can vary, but the widely held standard model for sustainable development consists of three, partly overlapping, perspectives: economic viability, environmental protection, and social equity (Appelbaum et al., 2016; Dobson, 2008; Rambaud & Richard, 2015). To produce goods and services that meet our needs and remain within the limits of the carrying capacity of our planet's ecological systems, as well as contribute to economic and societal development, the balanced integration of these three perspectives is essential (Appelbaum et al., 2016; Dobson, 2008; Rambaud & Richard, 2015). This model has been adopted as the basis for several Swedish environmental policies. Sustainability has also become a significant quality marker and value for a large number of tourists, where it refers to results of the process of co-creation with different actors and stakeholders, which in turn becomes a crucial factor in developing products and services for the tourism industry (Thrift, 2006; Matthing, Sanden & Edvardsson, 2004).

Learning and group processes are interdependent and interwoven. Nevertheless, collaboration is a complex multidimensional competency, and its development must be planned carefully. In any group work context, good communication skills, the ability to set goals, solve problems, and resolve conflicts can benefit the group. Group diversity can be regarded as a positive factor.

However, there is always a risk of conflict in groups with communicative, cognitive, and cultural differences. Each group member influences the group process and is affected by what happens (Haslett & Ruebush, 1999; Schultz, 1999; Sunwolf & Seibold, 1999).

How do we learn to become more sustainable?

Learning, as a concept, has been looked at from various disciplines and perspectives throughout history, including cognitive psychol-

ogy, social psychology, education studies, management studies, innovation studies, policy science studies, development studies, and complex systems thinking. As a result, the concept of learning is used to cover 'a wide society of ideas' (Minsky 1988, p. 120). In this chapter, there is no attempt to give a complete overview of the results of conceptual richness (for an overview, see, e.g., Lundgren et al., 2014). Instead, the focus here is on theories that can relate to the perspective on learning sustainability. Exciting perspectives address joint processes of learning that take place in regular organisational contexts rather than informal educational settings. Organisational contexts, where different professional groups and individuals with different experiences meet and share their knowledge, are probably the most favourable for learning about sustainability. They include learning processes of both an individual and a collective nature; this is explored next.

Learning individually

Theories of individual learning are crucial for understanding collaborative learning processes. Concrete experience is often emphasised in ideas about individual education. Experiential learning by Kolb is one of the theories. An individual experiences a situation, analyses it, and understands the meaning and value of the particular situation. The experience is cognitive, affective, and behavioural (Kolb et al., 2001). Experiential learning theory (ELT) can be seen as a complete, comprehensive learning method. It's about how people learn, grow and develop, and accentuates the importance of experience in learning.

Experiential learning theory is established on the fundamental concept of practical, straightforward, and personal experiences (Corbett, 2005; Kolb, 1984; Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001). Kolb (1984) argues that it can be defined as a cyclical process where individuals move back and forth between opposing modes of reflection versus action and feeling versus thinking. Learning sustainability favours this perspective because it focuses explicitly on the relationship between cognition and action, rather than on the increase of an individual's stock of knowledge. This commuting can thus help the individual to fill in their knowledge gaps. Kolb's theory has, though, limitations. The approach focuses on learning from and through (primarily) individual experience. The idea does not consider the contextual aspect, i.e., how social settings influence learn-

ing. It also overlooks the role of values and interests that influence human action. It is essential to consider these issues (Corbett, 2005).

Schön (1995) is an author who integrates values and beliefs in a theory on learning. According to Schön, cognition cannot be separated from values and beliefs, nor can cognition and action. The importance of illuminating the relationship between education and activity, that is, between thinking and doing, by Schön (1995) sheds light on the nature of the changes that an innovative project must seek to provoke. Changes in so-called theories-in-use are often tacit and remain implicit and unnoticed. To challenge them requires bringing them to the surface: people must be made aware of their tacit rationalities and be tempted to reconsider them. A second relevant aspect of Schön's insights is that, even though theories-in-use play a role in the actions of various actors in a similar way, they differ in terms of content depending on professional training and experience, social background, upbringing, and so on. Because of their intrinsic and fundamental divergence, the theories-in-use that people from different professional and cultural backgrounds hold will influence the possibility of learning collectively (Schön, 1995), a topic to be discussed next.

Learning in group

Group learning is more complex and dynamic than a mere magnification of individual learning. The level of complexity increases tremendously in the change from a single individual to an extensive collection of diverse individuals. For instance, issues of motivation and reward, which are an integral part of human learning, become doubly complicated within groups. Collective, collaborative, and collegial learning are theories often used in discussions of group learning processes. Cooperative learning again can be considered a particular type of phenomenon, where the starting point is that all learning is based on social activities (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 2008). According to (Granberg & Ohlsson, 2016), there is a difference between collaborative and collective learning. In collaborative learning, individuals try to learn something together without specifying or clarifying the social context. However, to achieve a common understanding in collective learning it is imperative to find common solutions in practice (Ohlsson, 1996). Action learning is an approach pioneered by Revans (1998). According to him, learning can be

witnessed only through noticeable behavioural change. Change is essentially a process involving learning and action. Action learning has become one of the most widely used instructional methods, not least in public and private organisations (Boaden, 2006).

The growth of action learning is attributable to the notion that participants best learn new behaviours and problem-solving skills through real-world issues (Bowerman, 2003). In the action learning approach, developed by Revans (1998), it is crucial to examine the learning cycle. This approach facilitates people and organisations to change by creating a social approach to learning. It is an effective learning process that helps participants find a satisfactory answer to complex unsolved problems. In action learning, participants typically work in small groups to meet regularly to solve their issues. They analyse, develop solutions, choose the most appropriate, and implement their recommendations. Throughout the process, learning and task achievement go hand in hand. Action learning is primarily a way of managing change through a learning process. Learning consists of programmed instruction and questioning insight (Revans, 1998).

Collaboration, teamwork, networking

Teamwork as a way of working has been extensively studied by professionals and scholars from various perspectives. Teamwork competencies include knowledge, principles, and concepts of the tasks, and operation of an effective team. Furthermore, the skills and behaviours needed to perform duties effectively are essential and there must be respect for each team member's attitudes (Guzzo & Salas, 1995).

Teamwork can be seen as a critical competency and a prerequisite for entrepreneurs, so they can train in analytical and systematic thinking and thus collaborate with other entrepreneurs and participate in decision-making (Oxenswärdh, 2017; Salas, Dickinson, Converse, & Tannenbaum, 1992).

There are several important classifications regarding the concept of teamwork, such as individual skills and abilities. Knowledge, skills, motives, and traits are teamwork dimensions that Schamber and Mahoney (2006) point out.

Knowledge includes team process development, self-awareness, organisational roles of team members, and management knowledge (Schamber & Mahoney, 2006). Teamwork abilities can also

be divided into affective, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions. The cognitive part includes learning and innovation. The affective dimension comprises satisfaction with the team, viability, cohesion, and identification with the team. The behavioural extent regards concepts of quality and quantity of work, and achievement of objectives (Humphrey, Karam, & Morgeson, 2010). Learning is a natural part of teamwork within a practical educational setting. Learning and group processes are interdependent and interwoven.

Communication skills in the group are essential. Basic features of teamwork, such as goal setting, problem-solving, conflict resolution etc., cannot be attained without well-trained individual communication skills. The membership diversity in the group or team is widely recognised as a factor of success. Heterogeneous groups with a variety of skills promote creativity in problem-solving. However, communicative, cognitive, and cultural differences increase the potential risk of conflicts. Each group/team member influences the group process and vice versa. There are numerous ways by which group composition might be customised either to benefit members with particular needs or to emphasise specific outcomes (Brown, 2009; Chai, Koh, & Tsai, 2013; Kurokawa, 2013).

Co-creation of values

Sustainability can be seen as a value we co-create in groups and teams by taking care of our planet, sharing our natural and economic resources, and having and demanding trust in our sociocultural systems. The creation or co-creation of values are two concepts often used in business and management literature and research. Today's consumers can be regarded as co-producers, creating meaning for the products, and at the same time, their consumption can be seen as an identification marker. Furthermore, this process adds sense to the development and makes the active customers into participants in the product experience. This, again, transforms consumers into co-creators of values (Vargo, Maglio, & Akaka, 2008).

The relationship between the customer and the product provider can also describe the relationship between several entrepreneurs working in groups or networking with each other or with university students. In this relationship, the project owner, the entrepreneur, invites partners into the learning process, offering them real-life challenges and continuously following up on the process.

This co-creation of values emerges in practice, including processes of both individual and collective art. An example of this is the hotel guests' reviews of the accommodation, which create value for both visitors and hosts. Both meaning-making and sense-making are seen as processes involved within the interaction between members of the team/group. Meaning-making is described in psychology as a process through which people construe, understand, or make sense of life events, relationships, and themselves (Ignelzi, 2000). The method of meaning-making helps retain, reaffirm, revise, or replace elements of a person's orienting system towards more nuanced, complex, and valuable (e.g.,Gillies, Neimeyer, & Milman, 2014). The term is widely used in constructivist approaches and educational psychology (Ingelzi 2000; Mortimer & Scott 2003). One way to create value between two different parties, e.g., entrepreneurs and students, is to pursue sustainability in practice. Value creation can lead to more viable tourism practices, thus contributing to a sustainable society. This does not happen without participation in collective and collaborative learning, where both meaning and sense-making occur, and knowledge sharing and learning take place.

Interacting with diverse co-learners often creates a discontinuity (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002) which reveals hidden assumptions and helps to impart a broader view of the whole learning process (Coser, 1977). This active and effortful practice improves learning and makes learners more inclusive and democratic (Gurin et al., 2002).

Furthermore, the motivation to learn can be enhanced through the social contexts of collaborative learning as partners work together to overcome challenges to complete an assignment (Järvelä, Volet, & Järvenoja, 2010). Learners engaging in group work are simultaneously developing their self-regulation skills in their learning by increasing their mastery of meta-cognition, motivation, and behaviour (Zimmerman, 2008).

Despite these benefits, challenges also exist with implementing collaborative learning structures.

When learners are assigned unstructured collaborative tasks, they work independently, and then bring together their functions at the end to finish the product, according to (Cohen, 1994). Slavin (2011) noted that when the group task is to do something rather than learn something, less active learners' participation may be seen as interfer-

ence rather than help. If lessons are not structured, and learners are not given clear expectations and instructions, collaborative learning may not lead to successful outcomes.

These above-described processes can be considered a framework for understanding the complexity of innovative problem-solving in sustainability issues in any group context. It is also assumed, in this chapter, that the creation of values is a learning journey. To implement values in an organisation, it is necessary to tag on to collaborative culture. The design of collaborative culture requires creative thinking in solving problems, leadership, knowledge management, institutionalised learning, experiential learning, communication, quality management, and continuous improvement in an organisation (Roser, DeFillippi, & Samson, 2013).

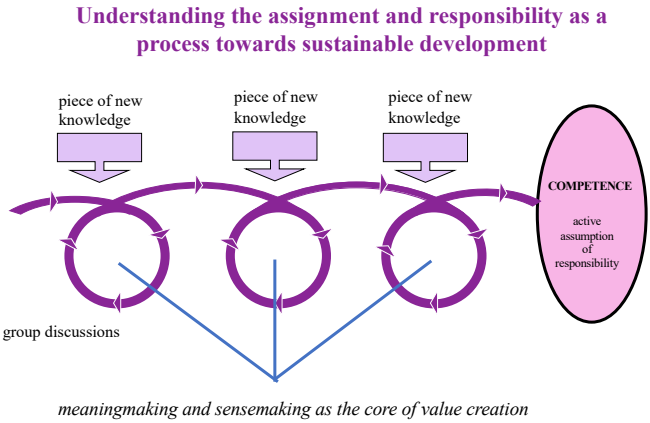

Figure 1. Learning processes including processes of meaning- and sensemaking. Drawing: Anette Oxenswärdh.

To summarise the sections above, it can be stated that learning is valued by incorporating both individual and collective learning processes, preferably in balance (see Figure 1). There seems to always be a need for individual learning to begin with, but to maintain deeper learning outcomes and collective learning, a sustained common understanding must be added.

Action learning again helps the learners to fulfil the learning processes in practice. Group learning and cooperation in groups can then be seen as one of the tools and an arena for acquiring knowledge and skills. Sustainable knowledge can even be seen as the creation of sustainable values.

Outcomes from studies on entrepreneurs and sustainability issues

Entrepreneurs in my studies seem to be aware of sustainability issues and define the concept as aspects of ecological, economic, social, and cultural aspiration to act within our planet's framework. They talk about the climate threat, water shortages, electricity use, waste management and the disappearance of Gotland's genuine cultural heritage, etc. (Griggio & Oxenswärdh, 2021; Oxenswärdh, 2020). However, they have mainly applied solutions to varying degrees in their companies, primarily due to their different organisational nature. Some of them talk about certifications they already use in their companies; others refer to the global environmental goals they want to implement practically. Some describe the practical measures they have already taken in their operations. Again, others link sustainability goals to their business goals to strengthen competitiveness through value proposition. Some of the standards are pretty concrete, while others are difficult to implement in daily life at the companies (Griggio & Oxenswärdh, 2021; Oxenswärdh, 2017, 2020).

According to the results of my studies, students' involvement in cooperation can be considered beneficial to both them and entrepreneurs. Both parties can engage in the co-creation process, enacting the collaborative (social) dimensions of new knowledge construction. Collaboration between local societies and higher education institutions is something that organisations have been striving for, to a greater extent, in the past decades. Nevertheless, there is also a great need among university students to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice.

Starting cooperation with companies, having their practical problems and challenges in focus, can open the door to favourable collaboration between the parties. This also enables research initiatives for university teachers. This presupposes a dialogue in which both parties meet on equal terms. The condition here is reciprocity (Oxenswärdh, 2018, 2020; Oxenswärdh & Persson-Fischier, 2020). These collaboration demands at the universities are also expressed in different policy documents (Uppsala University, 2018). Nevertheless, collaboration has often worked only on university terms unilaterally. Besides, it has often used different companies and business organisations to collect data for students in other subjects and as sources

for researchers in their research. Seemingly, there has not been much genuine cooperation with similar conditions, giving and taking, i.e., reciprocity between the parties. My studies show that this type of collaboration is vital for entrepreneurs and can be achieved through careful planning in dialogue with universities. Destination entrepreneurs need new knowledge and support, not least in sustainability issues (Oxenswärdh, 2020; Oxenswärdh & Persson-Fischier, 2020; Oxenswärdh et al., 2021). The entrepreneurs can offer practical challenges for university students to solve, enabling collaboration to emerge in different value-creating processes. Understanding and learning processes, both the individual and the collective, become activated by all parties. Thus, the challenge functions as an engine that drives the process by creating new questions and solutions.

The hedgehog is the official province animal of Gotland. The baby hedgehogs are blind at birth and totally dependent on their mother as they start to leave their nest. During intensive summer months they have a steep learning curve in order to manage themselves before winter comes around. Photo: Anette Oxenswärdh.

This, in turn, seems to increase the entrepreneurs' understanding of the value of change. At the same time, they become confirmed as active actors in destination development. This also creates value for their businesses. These destination entrepreneurs, bricoleurs, and life-stylers will be an entire group to develop destinations. With their different areas of activity and dedication, they can spread knowledge about sustainability further in the local society. The critical issue

here is confirmation of their essential role in destination development (Oxenswärdh, 2020; Oxenswärdh & Persson-Fischier, 2020; Oxenswärdh et al., 2021).

Enabling sustainable visits – knowledge sharing and interactions between entrepreneurs and students

This chapter aims to share the research findings on how education for tourist entrepreneurs on the island of Gotland can be organised, especially regarding, and with a particular focus on, sustainability issues. Furthermore, how this can contribute to enabling sustainable visits. The results of the studies show the importance of paying more attention to the role of small entrepreneurs in the development of sustainable visits. Cooperation between universities and entrepreneurs should be nuanced by highlighting these entrepreneurs' practical needs. The following presents a summary of some aspects that need to be considered in organising successful learning for entrepreneurs.

1. Both individual and joint learning processes are needed and essential to involve in these kinds of educational approaches.
2. Co-creation of values (both meaning-making and sensemaking) supports learning. Entrepreneurs should be offered opportunities for education on sustainability issues where both individual and collective learning processes can occur. These learning processes lead to value-creating methods that emphasise and discuss sustainable solutions.
3. Cooperation, team building, and networking with other entrepreneurs are crucial processes in motivating and promoting learning as well as spreading knowledge over the practical solutions on sustainability.
4. New knowledge on the issues of sustainability can be shared through collaboration with universities, organising study circles, networking, learning by doing.

Entrepreneurs' ability to contribute to sustainable visits should not be underestimated. This power or ability should be better noticed and further developed. Entrepreneurs testify to their loneliness as small entrepreneurs without large companies with resources to con-

sult with for assistance, etc., for solving sustainability challenges. They need training in networking with other entrepreneurs to find practical solutions to their problems. The great asset here is their commitment (Oxenswärdh, 2020; Oxenswärdh & Persson-Fischier, 2020; Oxenswärdh et al., 2021).

My studies show that destination entrepreneurs are optimistic about using university students in organisational change approaches. Also, the students fill the gap for the needs of theoretical and practical knowledge of the challenges. The exchange of knowledge, not least in sustainability, is of great importance to both parties and promotes learning. Entrepreneurs need reciprocity of relationships and collaboration with universities. They need to be confirmed as essential and valuable resources, and committed as actors in developing destinations.

Last but not least, the commitment of these entrepreneurs as bricoleurs and life-stylers should be taken seriously. They have their roots in the local community and are happy to share their knowledge. This is beneficial not only for the local tourist industry but also for society as a whole. The share of these entrepreneurs is constantly growing worldwide.

Questions for discussions

- How can university students help entrepreneurs become more sustainable?
- What can entrepreneurs in turn contribute to the students?
- How can collaboration between different stakeholders be organised for more sustainable practice?

Notes on method

This chapter is a qualitative literature study that focuses on tourist entrepreneurs and their learning processes regarding sustainability issues. The empirical part is based on several earlier studies of small entrepreneurs' knowledge and needs, processes and pathways, both in theory and practice, in regard to sustainability issues, are used as empirical sources (Oxenswärdh, 2017, 2018, 2020).

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Could and should disaster visits enable sustainable visits?

Ilan Kelman

Abstract

This chapter examines the relevance of, and possibilities for, disaster-related visits within wider contexts of sustainable visits. People go to see disaster-related sites and situations for many personal and professional reasons, yet a lack of work exists investigating how such visits contribute to, or detract from, sustainable visits. Consequently, this chapter explores the question: Could and should disaster visits enable sustainable visits? Understandings of disaster visits are explored within the foundations of disaster research that disasters are caused by human actions, not by environmental hazards. This baseline leads to discussions of layers of sustainability for disaster visits followed by examining Gotland, Sweden as an example for determining the potential sustainability, or lack thereof, of disaster visits. The key to sustainability is emphasising disaster risk reduction visits rather than disaster visits, which would help disaster visits to potentially enable sustainable visits. This chapter provides some examples. Care is needed in attempting to do so, especially for respecting disaster-affected people and asking what 'sustainability' aspects are aimed at and how they would best be achieved.

Introducing disaster visits

A standard aphorism of calamity is that 'Every disaster begins with a warning ignored'. On 26 July 1566 in the Baltic Sea, a fleet from Denmark and Lübeck fought a group of ships from the Swedish navy. Lübeck's admiral asked to sail south to land for repairs, but his

Image 1. Visby Cathedral, Gotland.
Photo: Ilan Kelman.

counterpart from Denmark had ultimate authority and insisted that they head for Gotland to bury an upper-class Dane who had died in the battle. They anchored off Visby (Gotland's capital) in what, the Danish admiral was repeatedly warned, were dangerous waters, but he insisted that they remain even as a few ships in his fleet headed for more sheltered abodes. On 28 July, the Dane received his burial and that night a storm blew in, sinking fifteen of the three dozen ships and killing thousands of sailors including three admirals.

Thus, did a warning scorned lead to disaster, producing a heritage story and a site for people to visit, including a tomb and epitaph in Visby Cathedral (Image 1). Centuries later, the sinking and its location remain of interest, not just for historians and locals keeping alive their own heritage, but also for different types of visitors, ranging from curious to investigators. This volume explores 'sustainable visits' and how to enable them, considering a two-pronged process to examine which visits are sustainable and which visits create sustainability. Within this context, what roles might exist for disaster-related visits and what are the advantages and drawbacks of these roles?

Science, policy, and practice debates have long continued on the sustainability of different reasons for visits, covering personal and professional purposes (Fennell & Cooper, 2020; Graci & Dodds, 2010; Swarbrooke, 1999). The term 'sustainability' is also a subject of intense discussion regarding its meaning, interpretation, implementation, and outcomes (Costanza & Patten, 1995; Özkaynak et al., 2004; Ramsey, 2015). Within this context, people's visits to disaster-related sites and situations have not been extensively explored. Examples are:

- Professional visits, such as to give or receive disaster-related aid or to promote and enact disaster prevention.
- Personal visits, such as memorialising, learning about a disaster, or watching rescues or reconstruction.

Significant ethical concerns about, and practical approaches for implementing, disaster visits as sustainable visits need to be addressed. Baseline questions are 'Sustainable for whom?' and 'Why seek sustainability in this context?' How appropriate is it to seek income and pleasurable visits based on the tragedy and pain of disasters, even with outcomes that include awareness, education, and the reduction

of disaster risks? These are some of the questions which might not be answerable—or, at least, not answerable to the contentment of all those involved—yet they must be raised and discussed as part of the process of understanding elements of sustainability sought from disaster visits. There is also a wealth of experience to draw on from those who have grappled with these questions, theoretically and operationally. Examples are war tourism (Bigley et al., 2010) and visiting sites associated with World War II's Holocaust (Hartmann, 1989).

This chapter examines the relevance of, and possibilities for, disaster-related visits within wider contexts of the two prongs of sustainable visits. It does not adopt a disciplinary perspective, instead being structured to answer the title's question 'Could and should disaster visits enable sustainable visits?' to ensure a substantive contribution to this volume. First, this chapter defines and frames understandings of disaster visits leading to discussions of layers of sustainability for disaster visits. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) is introduced as the process by which disaster risk can be reduced and disasters averted, such as not anchoring ships in a place known for tempests and lacking shelter. Other than 1566, Gotland is used as an example to examine the sustainability links with disaster visits. The final section explores how disaster visits might enable sustainable visits, but care is needed in attempting to do so, especially with respect to disaster-affected people.

Disaster visits

One aspect of visiting places where disasters have happened is disaster tourism as a subset of dark tourism that refers to visits to sites of death and tragedy (e.g., Foley & Lennon, 1996; Seaton, 1996; Stone et al., 2018). Neither dark tourism nor disaster tourism are new or particularly contemporary. As one example, Atherton & Morgan (2013) cover centuries of battlefield memorialisation and visits to those memorials. In the modern era, some disaster tourism examples of visitors soon after immediate damage stopped are the 2009 L'Aquila earthquake in Italy (Wright & Sharpley, 2018) and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005 (Robbie, 2008). Serendipitous visits occur when people are passing by and happen upon a disaster site, such as a gas explosion or vehicle crash, and then choose to detour, delay, or watch. The term 'rubbernecking' refers to people turning their heads to look as they pass by, so their necks twist and

stretch like rubber in order to watch a catastrophe. As such, some disaster visits are happenstances and others involve deliberate travel to a particular disaster-related site.

While bodies were still being recovered from the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988, queues formed on roads as people tried to glimpse the site (Blom, 2000). Now, the memorials are visitor sites (Frew, 2016). Others head into zones evacuated as a hurricane bears down, to experience a storm for 'fun' or to surf the waves, both of which are extremely dangerous. Equally perilous is the hypocrisy of media putting themselves in harm's way to tell their viewers to stay out of harm's way and the glamorising of scientists going into a hurricane to research it (Normile, 2014)—or into the crater of an active volcano despite dubious research value (Bruce, 2001). On Montserrat in the Caribbean (Erfurt-Cooper & Cooper, 2010), eruptions started in 1995 and destroyed most of the island, not settling down fully until almost twenty years later, leaving ample and continuing opportunity for dark tourism (Skinner, 2018).

Many visits are about historical disaster sites, such as to Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan regarding the 1945 nuclear bombs (Yoshida et al., 2016), to Johnstown in Pennsylvania, USA for the 1889 dam-break flood (Godbey, 2006), and to Pompeii and Herculaneum in Italy for the AD 79 eruption of Mount Vesuvius (Erfurt-Cooper, 2011). People are interested in learning about the history which might or might not be linked to their own heritage and ancestry. Another motivation for disaster visits is for professional reasons to assist; for instance, providing technical expertise and equipment for search-and-rescue (Sydnes et al., 2017), conducting loss and damage assessment (Fujita, 1973), or completing consultancies and research projects for better disaster prevention (Gane, 1975).

Analysing disaster-related visits contributed to one of the foundational ideas in disaster research, termed 'convergence' (Fritz & Mathewson, 1957). The idea is that people tend to converge voluntarily on disaster sites for many reasons including curiosity, rubbernecking, offering to help, self-deploying services, seeking friends and relatives, and looting (which is less common than typically assumed; Quarantelli, 1978). Convergence on disaster sites occurs for less voluntary reasons, as part of job-related expectations or much-needed help, including rescuers, media, politicians, and clean-up crews.

Image 2. Mt. St. Helens, Washington. Photo: Ilan Kelman.

Convergence need obey no time bounds. In the 1960s, divers discovered and salvaged objects from Visby's 1566 disaster, leading to renewed interest in it. The 400th anniversary witnessed an exhibit in Gotland Museum and a memorial service in Visby's church. Could the tragedy, and others around Gotland (Uziallo, 2019), be brought to modern visitors through further exhibitions, memorials, and signposts to relevant sites? Should this be done or might shortcomings emerge from instigating disaster visits?

Detrimental aspects of disaster visits

Many detrimental aspects of disaster visits have been described. Examples are interfering with operations, placing people in danger (both visitors and those from the locations), and disrespecting disaster-affected people and property. Medical personnel and rescues were inhibited by spectators after a 1952 Arkansas tornado (Fritz & Mathewson, 1957) and after the ferry *Herald of Free Enterprise* sunk in 1987 soon after leaving Zeebrugge, Belgium (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1991; Rojek, 1993). When Mt. St. Helens in Washington state, USA (Image 2) exploded on 18 May 1980, over one-third of

the approximately five dozen fatalities were tourists hoping to see the eruption. One scientist and two photographers monitoring the volcano and watching for the explosion were also killed. The volcanic eruption could have had limited human impact, with fairly straightforward reconstruction afterwards, but it instead became a disaster with visitors being a large component of the disastrous outcome. Similarly, tsunami warnings have led to people being killed after they travelled to the coast to watch the waves come in (Bolt et al., 1977) while war visits put everyone at risk, not just of physical harm but also by supporting and glorifying militarisation and securitisation (Mahrouse, 2016).

Other detriments can be using disaster visits:

- To spread misinformation or disinformation. An example is developing and disseminating a misleading narrative of the 1994 Rwandan genocide so that externals coming in to enable reconstruction bought into the narrative and were less effective than they could have been (Pottier, 2002).
- To make political points. Japanese politicians court controversy by visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, established to honour Japanese war dead, some of whom are convicted World War II war criminals (Shibuichi, 2005).
- To vandalise and disrespect. The memorials to the 7 July 2005 terrorist attacks on public transport in London, UK have been vandalised on anniversaries. For the tenth anniversary of the bombings, a continual police guard was mounted.

Positive aspects of disaster visits

Positive aspects of disaster visits have been identified, such as enabling livelihoods in damaged locales, giving disaster-affected people a chance to tell their stories, being able to memorialise and remember a terrible situation, and teaching history and disaster prevention (Kelman & Dodds, 2009). Recent disasters often draw in visitors, since the locations are in the news, the destruction can be easy to see, and enabling recovery and reconstruction might add interest. Past disasters often appeal to tourists because they are set up as historical or heritage sites, with memorials, reconstructions, formal tours, and information panels. If presented respectfully and educationally, while giving people the opportunity to mourn, and including suitable

Image 3. The memorial to Norwegians killed in the 26 December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Photo: Ilan Kelman.

debates and accurate alternative perspectives, former battlefields and war cemeteries can be especially powerful in covering many of these positive aspects. Examples from World War II are Normandy, France (Bird et al., 2017) and Pu'uloa/Pearl Harbor, USA (Gonzalez, 2017).

To achieve gains from disaster visits, museums, plaques, and memorials might be on-site or off-site. The visitor centre of Titanic Belfast is near the location where the ship *Titanic* was built in Northern Ireland, in comparison to the Titanic museums in Missouri and Tennessee, which have limited geographical proximity to sites associated with the ship. Exhibits can roam far from a disaster site, with the 79 AD eruption of Mt Vesuvius having been the subject of temporary museum exhibitions around the world. Memorials and ceremonies also do not need to take place on-site. The memorial to Norwegians killed in the 26 December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami (Image 3) sits in an obscure location just outside of Oslo, along some walking paths with a view of the fjord. Sometimes, being on-site presents impracticalities. On 28 September 1994, 852 people died when the ferry *Estonia* sank in fairly deep water in the middle of the

Baltic Sea, making the site difficult to reach. Memorials in Sweden, Finland, and Estonia sit on land.

Given the possible benefits, if managed properly, disaster-related visits are not inherently disrespectful, problematic, or unsustainable. Nor are disaster-related visits necessarily inherently respectful, helpful, or sustainable since difficulties can and do arise. Consequently, the crux of examining disaster visits for enabling sustainable visits is if, and how, disaster visits could improve in this regard.

Disasters – a social process

The dangerous forms of, and detriments from, disaster visits exemplify the understanding of what a disaster is, based on decades of disaster research (Hewitt, 1983, 1997; Lewis, 1979, 1999; Wisner et al., 2004). Disasters do not arise from nature producing potentially dangerous phenomena, termed 'hazards', such as earthquakes, floods, droughts, tornadoes, and tsunamis. Instead, disasters are caused by 'vulnerability' through social processes which determine where and how people live, along with why these vulnerabilities arise and are not addressed. People are often forced to live and work in dangerous places within infrastructure which cannot withstand typical environmental forces and without resources to help themselves, such as through retrofitting, evacuation, insurance, and ability to work while rebuilding. Other examples of vulnerabilities leading to disasters are:

- Breaking planning regulations and building codes or not having them.
- Not receiving warnings because they are not issued or people do not understand the language or context.
- Not being able to evacuate because people are sick or have mobility difficulties.
- Fearing assault while evacuating or while in an emergency shelter.

Many other such long-term social processes and conditions can make it difficult to deal with a hazard even when information and interest in applying the information are both available. The dangers do not really come from the hazards, which society could deal with if the resources and options to do so were made available. The dangers come from how human beings treat themselves and each other,

making disasters about humanity, not about nature. This ethos does not insinuate, support, or construct a nature-culture or human-environment dichotomy, as their integration and interconnectedness is well-established (Descola, 2013) including through acceptance within disaster research (Donovan, 2010; Krüger et al. 2015). Disaster visits for enabling sustainable visits can actually help to overcome the myth of these dichotomies by presenting the accepted science that disasters are not natural, but are caused by vulnerabilities, and reducing vulnerabilities entails working within and living with nature, not separating from it.

Continuing research, policy, and practice (Gaillard, 2022; Lizarralde, 2021; Mika, 2019) support these foundational conclusions from disaster research. Consequently, the term 'natural disaster' is a misnomer, because disasters result from society's actions, not from nature's properties. Since vulnerabilities take a long time to accrue through social processes, disasters are said to take a long time to happen. They take a long time to happen through politics, behavioural change, and infrastructure development creating vulnerabilities which are ripe for a disaster. For instance, building a city takes a long time and it is often completed in a seismic zone without earthquake resistance, setting up the location for a disaster involving an earthquake. Thus, Haiti's 2010 earthquake disaster is said to have occurred over the previous centuries which were required to oppress its people and bleed the country's wealth to the point that buildings were not constructed to withstand the known earthquake hazard (Mika, 2019). Meanwhile, impeding girls' education over a generation or more means that half the population does not have the knowledge, ability, wisdom, or opportunity to contribute to stopping disasters. The generally higher death toll for females than for males in many disasters in Bangladesh is partially attributed to such factors (Juran & Trivedi, 2015).

These analyses show that disasters are not events. Disasters are processes which always happen slowly through the creation and perpetuation of vulnerabilities, irrespective of nature's forces and energies experienced through hazards.

Similarly, sustainability cannot and does not happen overnight, but is a long-term process across generations, as is evident from the debates surrounding its definition (Costanza & Patten, 1995; Özkaynak et al., 2004; Ramsey, 2015). In considering sustainable visits, and

whether or not they can or should be enabled by disaster visits, the processual aspects underpin the search for answers. Time and space scales meld into each other to create disasters, sustainability, or lack of each, so this interlocking needs to be peeled back to analyse the different layers embodying the social processes of disaster visits and sustainable visits.

Layers of sustainability

Within the positive and negative aspects of disaster visits, different sustainability layers emerge. At a conceptual level, disaster visits mean that memories and education can be sustained and enabled, hopefully to enable recovery. Mutual survivor support and storytelling have demonstrable results after hurricanes in the USA (Lindahl, 2017). Yet one contested discourse suggests that doing so can potentially reignite trauma, as indicated for children (Gibbs et al., 2013). Keeping memories alive and educating others can unfortunately morph disaster-affected people's ordeals—at the time of the disaster and continuing long after—into voyeurism to bolster visitors' own memories and narratives. At a policy level, decisions are required regarding destination promotion, access, and interpretation in terms of the level of prominence and sensitivity to give to the disaster and to the affected people and places. What should be enacted regarding disaster visits and how would that actually enable sustainable visits?

Disaster history, and such heritage's disaster visits, sit within dark tourism and thanatourism, which create visiting-related livelihoods from death, dying, and tragedy (e.g., Foley & Lennon, 1996; Seaton, 1996; Stone et al., 2018). One aspect which rarely appears in the products and services for disaster visits—or for wider dark tourism and thanatourism—is the understanding about disasters from disaster research. Frequently, the phrase 'natural disaster' is used while the presentation for the public is along the lines of 'nature's power' and 'unstoppable forces'. Rather than using dark tourism (or other visits) involving disasters as an opportunity to educate visitors that disaster vulnerability could be tackled and that disasters are not natural, the ethos tends to be viewing disasters as unusual, unpredictable, and unavoidable events, contrasting with long-standing (Hewitt, 1983; Lewis, 1979) and contemporary (Gaillard, 2022; Lizarralde, 2021; Mika, 2019) disaster research articulating exactly the opposite.

Disaster visits failing to present basic disaster research conclusions for actions is inherently unsustainable, since opportunities have been lost to educate about the real causes of disasters and hence how to stop them. Research and researchers should play a major role in guiding this material away from the hazard-focused and 'natural disaster' ethos. Science can provide new knowledge on presenting disaster history and heritage while collaborating with the venues and operators to present their material to visitors in a scientific manner. Open discussion among everyone could ensure that disaster visits do present research-based understandings and do contribute to sustainability.

Within the ethos that disasters are not natural and should be represented as coming from societal decisions and activities, another aspect of disaster visits is considering the future. 'Last-chance tourism' promotes certain destinations as the last chance to see them before they will allegedly be irrevocably ruined by social shifts or anthropogenic environmental changes including climate change (Lemelin et al., 2012). Yet tourism itself contributes to climate change, leading to ethical discussions about pursuing visits to places which are being harmed by the act of visiting (Becken, 2013; Scott & Becken, 2010). This situation represents a parallel concern within the long-standing debate in tourism and hospitality about the industry's sustainability when tourists bring in income and enable livelihoods while harming local resources, environments, and cultures (Fennell & Cooper, 2020; Graci & Dodds, 2010; Swarbrooke, 1999). Nevertheless, last-chance visiting could raise awareness of disasters and their root causes, including the contribution of human-caused climate change to influencing some weather hazards, alongside other impacts such as sea-level rise, ocean acidification, and species extinctions (IPCC, 2021).

Whether or not awareness is raised, and whether or not this leads to changes in action, would need to be determined. Past work is not optimistic that knowledge and awareness lead to behaviour change in such circumstances, especially regarding human-caused climate change as shown by studies covering the relatively high fossil fuel consumption of some scientists who advocate for reducing fossil fuel use (McKercher et al. 2010; Stohl, 2008). Similarly, a systematic review of efforts to increase teenagers' information and understanding about disasters concluded that little behavioural change resulted (Codreanu et al., 2014), as paralleled in another sustainability

endeavour when having information about nutrition was deemed necessary but not sufficient for changing food-related behaviour (Worsley, 2002). Sustainability entails multiple layers with complicated interactions among factors leading to behavioural responses, and these layers need to be accounted for when seeking opportunities for disaster visits to enable sustainable visits.

Disaster risk reduction visits

If inspiring constructive action for sustainability could be galvanised, disaster visits could play a useful role by creating sites and services for disaster risk reduction. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) is the phrase used by disaster-related research, policy, and practice for activities which tackle vulnerability and mitigate hazards in order to either reduce disaster impacts or stop the disaster from happening. Examples are land use planning to enable locally run and diverse livelihoods, ensuring that infrastructure is not wrecked by nature's processes, reducing inequity and inequality, providing preventative health care, enabling lifelong education for everyone, and tackling discrimination and oppression (Hewitt, 1997; Krüger et al., 2015; Lewis, 1999; Wisner et al., 2004).

Some disaster risk reduction processes are long-term, fundamental changes to engrained social characteristics, such as supporting gender, racial, and resource equity, thus linking directly to the wider scope of Agenda 2030 and related documents including the Sustainable Development Goals, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the New Urban Agenda. A major difficulty with these wider, top-down agendas is that they can be counterproductive to key notions of sustainability while missing the localised granularity of action necessary for success. An example of the former is the absence within the Sustainable Development Goals of substantive targets and indicators to counter the massive, unsustainable expenditure on fossil fuel subsidies, the military, and corruption. Addressing just these three points would free up money that is an order of magnitude greater than the money being asked for, and spent on, all development and disaster tasks, including climate change. Examples of local action come directly from disaster risk reduction: visible, technical decisions such as nailing a house's roof to its walls or enforcing detailed zoning regulations for building (or not) in floodplains.

Image 4. A base isolator underneath Wellington's Te Papa Tongarewa, the National Museum of New Zealand. Photo: Ilan Kelman.

Te Papa Tongarewa, the National Museum of New Zealand, in Wellington, is constructed with seismic resistance measures including base isolators (Connolly, 1997; Image 4). Rather than being built directly on the ground, the museum's structure rests on subsurface systems which dampen earthquake shaking and reduce damage. Typically, being below ground, the base isolators are not visible or accessible to visitors. Te Papa Tongarewa has constructed a staircase down below ground level to a small viewing area for people to see a base isolator and read some information panels. An operational disaster risk reduction measure, which is usually out-of-sight, is made visible as part of the education and information process aimed mainly at visitors. Furthermore, Te Papa Tongarewa sits within the post-earthquake flood zone (Connolly, 1997): a phenomenon called 'seiching' can occur during an earthquake when a body of water, such as Lambton Harbour alongside the museum, sloshes back and forth during the shaking.

Te Papa Tongarewa further exemplifies limitations in current disaster risk reduction tourism and other displays related to disaster risk reduction visits. The most prominent information is focused on dealing with hazards, in this case earthquakes. Wider measures

for vulnerability reduction, such as other aspects of the museum's structure, and in particular what people and families ought to do for themselves in order to be ready for earthquakes, are not always as detailed as the information provided for the technical aspects of base isolators. And if visitors survive in the museum during a massive Wellington earthquake, what should they do afterwards?

Similarly, the Thames Barrier downstream from London, UK and associated walls and barrages along the river, form a system which stops many North Sea storm surges and rainfall extremes from inundating areas of central London. Beside the Barrier, a visitor centre provides indoor and outdoor information displays describing floods in London and the Barrier's operation. The assumptions in this information are that the Barrier and related structures 'protect' London and are an impressive feat of human engineering dominating nature. Visitors receive little information on possible Barrier failure modes or how flood-vulnerable development—including one of the world's major financial centres, Canary Wharf—has increased substantially due to assumptions that the Barrier will always provide 'protection'. Information is prominent on the 1953 storm surge (Image 5) which devastated coastlines around the North Sea and inspired the Barrier's construction as well as the Netherlands' coastal 'protection' system.

Image 5. The Thames Barrier of London, UK. Photo: Ilan Kelman.

Many disaster visitor sites do include disaster risk reduction information. A useful approach to evaluate this work and to seek improvements would be to examine how much more material would be helpful in terms of emphasising the science that disasters are not natural, but are caused by human choices leading to vulnerabilities. Examples are:

- Meteor Crater Natural Landmark in Arizona. Some information is provided on the detection and monitoring systems for space objects heading toward Earth as well as options for deflecting or destroying any such objects (Schmidt, 2019). The information and visitor experience could be enhanced with much wider and deeper exploration of disaster risk reduction for space object collisions with the Earth.
- Dr Jenner's House, Museum and Garden in England. It celebrates Edward Jenner's contribution to developing the smallpox vaccine in the late eighteenth century and highlights his lifelong campaign for vaccines as a preventative measure. The museum also documents impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic starting in 2020 and thus could examine actions for preventing disease outbreaks within disaster risk reduction.
- The Roman aqueducts at Pont du Gard, France. Information provided to visitors explains the importance of the system for water management linked to drought prevention, demonstrating the long history of disaster risk reduction while also raising questions about the wisdom of expanding populations in naturally arid locations, especially given short-term and long-term climate fluctuations.

Some visitor sites, such as the USA's Hoover Dam, Singapore's Marina Barrage (Image 6), and China's Three Gorges Dam (as well as the UK's Thames Barrier), are not likely to ever wish to describe fully and honestly the flood risks and flood vulnerabilities they create by controlling aspects of the flood hazards, so that people have a false sense of security of 'protection' from floods (Criss & Shock, 2001; Fordham, 1999; Ward & Smith, 1998). Instead, the educational component of many disaster risk reduction visitor sites tends to push people toward hazard-focused paradigms with limited support for the wide-ranging and long-standing disaster science exploring the depths of vulnerability manifestation and existence.

Image 6. Singapore's Marina Barrage. Photo: Ilan Kelman.

Highlighting hazards might be sustainable from the perspective of encouraging visitors and not generating public antipathy against structures such as the Thames Barrier and the Hoover Dam. It is not sustainable from the perspective of long-term disaster risk reduction (Criss & Shock, 2001; Fordham, 1999; Ward & Smith, 1998) since it encourages a focus on controlling nature through hazard management, with nature separate from society, rather than on reducing vulnerabilities, with nature and society integrated. This focus is illustrative of the frequent fragmentation of sustainability endeavours, which Agenda 2030 and parallel initiatives produce through separate processes and documents for climate change, disaster risk reduction, development financing, humanitarianism, and urbanism. The Sustainable Development Goals even have a completely separate goal for climate change—Goal 13, which explicitly identifies a separate United Nations agency as being responsible for addressing climate change, whereas no other goal accords responsibility to another

agency. Conversely, disaster risk reduction is integrated throughout the Sustainable Development Goals, exactly as it should be, showing how disaster visits could be integrated within sustainable visits.

Consequently, layers of sustainability emerge regarding disaster visits. Interconnections and incompatibilities among the layers of sustainability impact locations as sites for:

- **Visiting**, especially aiming for sustainable and sustained income.
- **Educating**, including through virtual visiting, so that visitors might be inspired to seek further information for their own action.
- **Memorialising**, noting that not all the examples of disaster risk reduction visitor sites represent catastrophe or emerged from a specific disaster; e.g., Meteor Crater Natural Landmark.
- **Operating**, with the dams and floodplains still being used for disaster-related activities, although the aqueducts are not.
- **Reducing disaster risk**, by ensuring an understanding of, and shift toward implementing, actions by everyone for reducing vulnerabilities.
- **Enabling sustainable and constructive memory and values** that highlight appropriate actions to avoid disaster rather than generating terror about, or intimidation by, past horrors.

These layers of sustainability must work in tandem so that the visitor does not see themselves as being separate from the visited location or from the people and places which the disaster or disaster risk reduction affects. The visitor would accept themselves as being part of the visited, so that the visitors and the visited want to be involved in sustainable disaster risk reduction.

While adding base isolators or aqueducts to houses might not be a priority or particularly useful, analogies, parallels, and engaging visitors in understanding their own vulnerabilities could be ways forward to turn an informational display at Te Papa Tongarewa or Pont du Gard into a visit which creates positive change for individual and collective disaster risk reduction. Disaster risk reduction tourism could go beyond information and viewing to working on local projects for disaster risk reduction, further integrating the visitor into the visited while also entailing the usual cautions documented for wider sustainability 'voluntourism' (Sin, 2009). Thus, the visits

will become more sustainable while outcomes from the visits will enable wider sustainability—as can be illustrated by Gotland.

Sustainable disaster visits for Gotland

Having been inhabited for millennia with peoples moving in and out (Svedjemo, 2014), Gotland like most places around the world, has a long history of disasters and efforts to avoid disasters. Conflicts tend to be the most documented, such as civil war in the thirteenth century (Peel, 2015) and the destruction of the capital Visby in 1361 (Schmidt, 1966), with limited details available to evidence the presumption of never-ending disasters associated with storms, floods, droughts, vegetation fires, building fires, climatic shifts, and disease. As an example of the latter, the fourteenth century's Black Death was first reported on Gotland in 1350 (Benedictow, 2004) and the island must have experienced many other outbreaks, locally (perhaps seasonal flu or measles) or more widespread (perhaps other plagues or as part of the 1918 influenza pandemic).

In fact, Visby effectively became a World Heritage Site in order to avoid a disaster of conflict. The construction of the walls (Image 7) that characterise the heritage started in the 13th century as a protective fortification—although they created tension sparking war in 1288—and then led the beginning of Medieval Week in 1986 followed by the drive to preserve and display this heritage (UNESCO, 1995). Depending on the vague boundary between dark tourism visits and disaster tourism visits, Bronze Age and Viking Age cemeteries would be of interest, although not all of those buried necessarily died due to conflict. Other Gotlandic combat history relevant for disaster visits include the plaque commemorating the World War I German cruiser *SMS Albatross* that was beached after being damaged; shipwrecks from World War II, such as the *Ada Thorthon* and the *SS Hansa*; the Baltic Sea sites of chemical weapons dumping after World War II; and Lärbro Church's cemetery with the graves of many who died during World War II including in the Holocaust.

Within wider conceptualisations of 'disaster', a large-scale exodus from Gotland in the nineteenth century, for mainly economic reasons, devastated those left behind, crushing local communities and economies. Americans, in particular, now pursue ancestral tourism or genealogical tourism, travelling to Gotland to trace their history. While the migration created numerous opportunities for the Got-

Image 7. A wall of Visby, Gotland.
Photo: Ilan Kelman.

landers leaving and their descendants, visiting the locations hurt by the population movement could be deemed to be disaster visits (Olsson, 1982).

Contemporary times have brought more information available on disasters affecting Gotland, including the radiation cloud from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in April 1986, several forest fires with a recent one being in July 1992 (Johansson, 2021), an oil spill in the sea in May 2005, two ferries colliding near Stockholm in July 2009 which disrupted services to Gotland, a volcanic ash cloud from Iceland grounding most European flights for several days in 2010, Storm Alfrida in January 2019 knocking out communications, and the COVID-19 pandemic starting in 2020. Potential future hazards which might input into disasters are being considered, such as sea-level rise (Ebert et al., 2016) and responses to it and other climate change impacts (Burns & Machado Des Johansson, 2017). Limited scientific research has been completed for tsunamis and land movements, among many other hazards

Visitors to Gotland encounter questions regarding sustainability that are similar to those posed in many other locations (Baum & Hagen, 1999; Eken et al., 2019; Lordkipanidze et al., 2005; Poort et al., 2021; Twining-Ward & Baum, 1998). Should cruise ship visits be curtailed? How does the gig economy, namely for accommodation and transport, impact local and visitor experiences? What are the advantages and disadvantages of UNESCO World Heritage status, which Visby has? What role does private entrepreneurship play in enabling sustainable visits? How does the seasonality of visits affect income and livelihood opportunities? Should there be a focus on domestic, other Nordic, or foreign visitors—or a balance sought among them? Parallel questions apply to visitors with different economic interests; for instance, those seeking luxuries compared to backpackers.

Within these discussions, disaster visits are not prominent around Gotland, tending to be melded into cultural, historical, and natural visiting interests. One admiral who died in the 1566 storm remains buried in Visby's main church, with a small epitaph to him. In one of Visby's parks, an oak tree was planted to commemorate those affected by Chernobyl's radiation release. Based on these small sites and information about the island's history, it would be fairly straightforward to tap into dark tourism by constructing a disaster tour of Visby or

Gotland—perhaps adopting another variation on this theme such as a ghost tour, a tour of death (which could include murder and execution sites), or 'Haunted Gotland'. Examples are already happening, as Uziallo (2019) documents for Gotland Museum's exhibition and city tour focused on the Battle of Visby in 1361, in which Danes defeated locals. Rather than focusing on death and destruction, such as the disaster of war, an alternative or additional possibility could be pursuing disaster risk reduction tourism through 'Vulnerable Visby' and what could be done to reduce vulnerability for avoiding disaster.

The key word in pursuing these forms of potential sustainable visits is 'constructing'. Disasters and disaster risk reduction around the island are not especially prominent, while Gotland's heritage and tourist appeal are not particularly developed around dark, thana- (death), or disaster tourism. This situation does not preclude doing so nor is it necessarily detrimental to pursue new pathways. As with all other forms of tourism—notable for Gotland would be cruise tourism—the gains from, and limitations of, disaster-related tourism would need to be examined and expressed honestly to understand the sustainability consequences, especially given the current pace of rapid social and environmental changes.

Whither sustainability?

As shown by Gotland, many issues regarding disaster visits as part of sustainable visits are local. People directly affected by disasters, by disaster risk reduction, and by visits must be involved in decision-making, recognising that no group of people is homogeneous, so differences of opinion will emerge which might be irreconcilable. Transparent mechanisms for resolving difficulties and for moving forward, even without agreement, are needed from the beginning, which could mean arbitration processes. Examples where sites for disaster visits led to divergences of opinion among people affected on the usefulness of such visits include reconstructing and memorialising the destruction of New York City's World Trade Center in terrorist attacks in 2001 (Sorkin & Zukin, 2013) and whether to raze or restore the cathedral in Christchurch, New Zealand after the 2011 earthquake disaster (Westgate, 2020).

Much of this work will be a process. Disaster-affected people might never before have been asked what their interests are, what they wish to communicate and how, the manners in which they

would wish to be involved, and how to monitor, evaluate, and update—especially for disaster risk reduction. If people involved wish to sanitise or embellish their stories, as part of constructing memories, who has any right to mediate these processes? What happens when people directly affected differ in the memories they express or in the representations they seek? When major differences emerge, as with New York City and Christchurch, how sustainable is any decision? Often, the process of consulting, communicating, and discussing is a major step forward, even if agreeing to disagree, and in recognising that a decision must be made which cannot appeal to everyone (e.g., Seidman, 2013 for New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina). Still, it will be hard to satisfy all those affected, especially with differential disaster-related and disaster risk reduction impacts, so being up-front about decision processes and conflict resolution in advance is needed as part of enabling sustainability for disaster visits—most importantly, for sustainability for those who are visited.

One important aspect is the time element. For how long do individual and collective memories last? Is making memory sustainable, especially of trauma, a relevant component of sustainable visits? At what point do memorialisation and remembering shift more into history, archiving, and education? When do salvaged and preserved objects become artefacts? At what time point after an experience or a construction of an experience does it become heritage? From the beginnings of Visby's walls in the early sixteenth century until the city was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in the late twentieth century, and until now when approaching the 500th anniversary of the burning, visiting and visitors have changed drastically and continue to do so at various time scales, such as the rapid change following the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Ultimately, over what timeframe should sustainable visits be sustainable and over what timeframe can they realistically be sustainable?

To aim for the longest time period feasible for sustainability outcomes, disaster visits, including disaster tourism, should better incorporate disaster risk reduction visits, including disaster risk reduction tourism. This approach would build on existing initiatives while emphasising the vulnerabilities causing disasters and how to solve them, rather than the hazards and how to manage hazards. The message that disasters are human caused rather than natural processes is therefore emphasised and reiterated, helping to interpret

Image 8. A tour of a wildfire-resistant home near Nederland, Colorado. Photo: Ilan Kelman.

historical as well as ongoing situations. Sites for disaster visits could delve deeply into their past—what disasters in Visby and Gotland have not yet been fully documented or even noted in histories?—and be responsive to emerging situations, as with Dr Jenner's House documenting the lived experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, which Visby and Gotland could also do.

Implementing sustainable disaster risk reduction as a pivotal part of sustainable visits yields other possibilities for creating and enhancing sites for disaster visits. Examples include large avalanche barriers surrounding Icelandic towns; Bangladesh's cyclone evacuation routes and shelters; traditional seismic-resistant engineering and architecture in Iran; the collection and preservation of foods for times of drought among the Sahel's pastoralists; and tours of wildfire evacuation routes and wildfire-resistant homes in Colorado (Image 8). What measures could be highlighted around Gotland?

Vulnerability as the cause of disasters, and explaining the importance of prevention over cure, are two core disaster risk reduction principles (Gaillard, 2022; Hewitt, 1997; Lewis, 1999; Mika, 2019; Wisner et al., 2004) drawing on and applying to many wider analyses within sustainability, such as health (Warner & Warner, 1993) and conflict (Brown & Rosecrance, 1999). Focusing on and achieving these principles should contribute toward reducing the detrimental aspects documented for disaster visits. At minimum, this would push forward a research and action agenda for determining how disaster visits, especially disaster risk reduction visits, could in practice better serve people affected. The process should produce sustainable visits for everyone, visitors and visited, while recognising that these two categories of people are not always mutually exclusive.

Enabling sustainable visits through disaster visits?

In summary, to enable sustainable visits, disaster visits would need to:

- Educate on disaster causes.
- Support action for vulnerability reduction in the context of enabling sustainability.
- Avoid contributing to or causing disasters.
- Avoid separating nature and humanity.

These points are no different to other sustainable visits which would be characterised by, as discussed in the chapter by Oxenswärdh:

- Educate on sustainability.
- Support action for sustainability.
- Avoid contributing to or causing unsustainability.
- Avoid separating nature and humanity.

Bringing in disaster research thus adds little that is fundamentally new. It does introduce and integrate a supplementary aspect, the specificity of disaster- and DRR-related findings, into the wider field of sustainable visits.

Ultimately, could and should disaster visits enable sustainable visits? Yes, when enacted carefully.

Questions for discussions

- At what point does disaster memorialisation change into disaster history and heritage?
- How worthwhile would it be to try making disaster visits sustainable visits?
- How might disaster visits be discouraged, if that were preferred?
- People seem to prefer disasters to disaster risk reduction. How might sustainable visits switch this preference or could attempts to do so backfire?

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Scale, speed, and sustainability in the tourist industry

The possibility of cooling down an overheated world

Thomas Hylland Eriksen

Abstract

The pandemic seemed to be good news for the environment, but bad news for those who rely directly or indirectly on tourism for a living. According to the UNWTO, an estimated 10 per cent of the global economy is directly related to tourism. In some countries and regions, it is far higher.

This chapter looks at the dilemmas of small-scale island societies dependent on tourism at the time of the Coronavirus. The main case is Seychelles (pop. 95,000), which is totally dependent on tourism for its economy, and was economically devastated by the onset of the pandemic. Mauritius (pop. 1.2 million) was also seriously affected, but has a substantial non-touristic economic sector (sugar and manufacturing). Other SIDS (small island developing societies) are also visited briefly.

The research question is: How dependent are small island societies, with a considerable tourism infrastructure, on tourism; and, given that transnational mass tourism is ecologically and culturally unsustainable, what does it take for a tourist-dependent island society to wean itself of the addiction or to make its tourist industry sustainable? Both Seychelles and Mauritius rank above continental African countries on the UNDP's HDI (Human Development Index). Could this level of human development be maintained without the tourism industry? The answer is presently no, but the industry may change towards more sustainable practices. Slower travel, a closer relationship between tourism and the local communities and longer stays may provide a solution.

Tourism and sustainability

Some of the most striking images from the early days of the pandemic, in spring 2020, were photographs from airports. Usually bustling hubs of activities, with human bodies moving around, shiny machines rolling slowly and noisily across the tarmac, brightly decorated shops and tempting eateries, they now came across as virtually stills from post-apocalyptic movies. Lights were dimmed, planes grounded, shops closed behind shutters, and there were only a few handfuls of people to be seen, many of them cleaners and security personnel. In only 15 years, between 2004 and 2019, the number of flight tickets sold in the world more than doubled from two billion to four and a half billion (Mazareanu, 2021). From April 2019 to April 2020, the number was reduced by 90 per cent (ACI, 2021).

Many of the missing passengers were tourists. Although virtually no economic activity in the world was entirely unaffected by the global pandemic, the tourist industry may have been the most severely struck of all major economic sectors. In this chapter, I will discuss consequences of the pandemic in small-scale societies relying on tourism for employment and revenue, exploring the interrelationship between scale, vulnerability, and tourism; asking in particular what the recent experiences can say about flexibility, sustainability, and the politics of scale.

The pandemic has been the most dramatic global event experienced by the vast majority of people presently alive. Using the term 'crisis' about the condition into which we unwittingly stumbled is almost an understatement. There are nearly eight billion of us, and very few, if any, were completely unaffected. In spring 2020, shops and restaurants were forced to close; the freedom of mobility was severely restricted from Argentina to Zimbabwe; large corporations were struggling and many smaller ones vanished; mortgage payments were overdue; lectures and conferences went online (and postgraduates in anthropology were barred from fieldwork); precarious workers in the informal sector became even more precarious; and people were instructed to keep at least a metre away from each other. There were no more handshakes, no more friendly hugs. Our nerves were raw, and many saw clearly (or dimly) for the first time how the global system works with its densely woven fabric of invisible filaments connecting us, through chains of production, distribu-

tion, and communication, and which are never stronger than their weakest link, but which have grown very quickly, unbeknownst to most, in only the past few decades (Eriksen, 2016).

The era of 'the great acceleration' (McNeill & Engelke, 2016), beginning after the Second World War, seems to have given way to an era of accelerated acceleration since the end of the Cold War (Eriksen, 2016). Growth in trade, production, consumption, environmental destruction, and leisure activities, such as surfing the Internet or going on holiday, have all accelerated very perceptibly since around 1990. This frantic growth has serious side-effects in the shape of environmental destruction and climate change. World leaders like the UN General Secretary now state as a matter of fact that human activities on the planet need to change direction, slow down, and become environmentally responsible lest we destroy the very foundations of our own lives (Eriksen, 2022).

In a thought-provoking contrast to the neoliberal ideology which has dominated the past four decades, people were asked or forced by their governments to do as little as possible. Most activities in the physical world slowed down in spring 2020, while virtually everything online accelerated. Smoke ceased to come out of Chinese chimneys; tourist resorts in Yucatán were obliged to send their employees home; and on my daily evening walks in my Oslo neighbourhood, I rarely met anyone, except perhaps a local resident walking her dog while warily keeping her distance from me. Almost from one day to the next in March 2020, it became difficult to find a Zoom meeting, a media outlet, or a casual encounter at safe distance with an acquaintance where the pandemic was not the main – or indeed the only – topic. It seeped into and contaminated almost every human endeavour. In rural Tanzania, rhino poaching decreased owing to disrupted supply chains, whereas hunting for bushmeat increased since many had lost their income. In the Amazon rainforest, indigenous groups were exposed to the virus because the unlawful encroachment by loggers and goldminers, encouraged by the federal government, was no longer kept in check by bushrangers.

Unemployment numbers soared around the world; remittance payments to struggling families in Bangladesh and the Philippines dried up; many farmers in rich countries complained that there were suddenly no armies of competent, affordable labour arriving

from other countries that summer; restaurants closed, re-opened and re-closed; and international tourism, which may account for as much as 10 per cent of the global economy, all but vanished overnight.

Tourism typically involves cruise ships or airplanes, and massive infrastructural developments. As an example of the overheated growth in infrastructure, it may be mentioned that global cement use grew from 1,100 million metric tons in 1990 to 4,370 million tons in 2020 (Statista, 2022). The tourist infrastructure – ports and airports, hotels and restaurants etc. – is, to a great extent, made of concrete. Tourism also typically entails lavish consumption leading to considerable waste production. Several factors, including emissions from transportation, contribute to making most tourism ecologically unsustainable. As Abbas et al. point out, '[a]ny rise in the number of tourist arrivals requires an increase in energy demand to support the change' (Abbas, Mubeen, Iorember, Raza, & Mamirkulova, 2021, p. 4). It may therefore be argued from an environmental point of view that the full stop was a blessing in disguise. Seen from the perspective of tourists, it may indeed be one of the first activities to be curbed in a planetary campaign to reverse climate change. It is an unnecessary luxury; pleasant and enriching, but not essential. However, seen from the perspective of those persons, families, communities, and countries that depend on incoming tourists for a source of livelihood, the picture looks different, and the pandemic has been a catastrophe for millions of people making their living in the global tourist industry. Other sectors of local and national economies have also been affected, in a reversal of the Keynesian tools used by governments since the New Deal in the USA of the 1930s to stimulate demand and thereby accelerate the economy. At the time of this writing in 2022, there are still serious delays in the global transport infrastructure, which has led to unemployment, economic slowdown, and increasing commodity prices.

It is against this backdrop of instability, uncertainty, and deceleration that we now turn to an examination of tourism during the pandemic, with a focus on small societies relying on tourist income. The significance of scale, global dependence, and resulting vulnerability have enforced a rethinking of the hitherto largely unquestioned dependence on fast mass tourism in some of these societies.

A global industry in free fall

Statistics indicating the size of the tourist industry may be deceptive. According to the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourist Organization):

> [t]ourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure. (UNWTO, 2021a)

This wide definition covers people, such as academics on conferences or business travellers, who are not usually designated as tourists. Distinguishing between categories of travellers may nevertheless be impossible in practice.

According to UNWTO, tourism accounts for about 10 per cent of the global economy. Owing to its excessively wide definition, this figure is de facto an exaggeration. On the other hand, the proportion is much higher than 10 per cent in many countries. Some of them had a nominal decline in GDP exceeding 20 per cent in 2020, while the actual recession is likely to have been even deeper, since a vast number of persons engaged directly or indirectly in the industry work in the informal sector and make their living without leaving a trace in the national budget.

Again according to the UNWTO, international tourist arrivals declined by about 75 per cent for the whole of 2020, including the 'normal' months of January and February. 'This would mean', the organisation states, 'that international tourism could have returned to levels of 30 years ago' (UNWTO, 2020).

The figures from 2020 do not only reveal an industry in free fall, but also indirectly says something about the accelerating and unchecked growth in international tourism in the decades before the pandemic. The number of tourist arrivals worldwide increased by a factor of seven in just 40 years, from 1980 (200 million) to 2019 (1.4 billion). Indeed, many locals began to feel that they were getting too much of what was initially a good thing, and the 2010s saw an unprecedented appearance of activism targeting excessive tourism in

cities like Venice and Barcelona. The activists claimed that tourists ruined the cityscape, polluted the environment, drove prices up thus making the cities unaffordable for locals, and that the Airbnb system, in particular, turned residential areas into transitory spaces for visitors. Locals who continued to live in the city centre risked being photographed by foreign visitors seeing them as authentic tourist attractions.

In July 2021, the UNWTO (2021b) painted an even grimmer picture (seen from the perspective of the industry, not of planetary ecology) by asserting that international tourism had declined by 85 per cent between Jan–May 2019 and Jan–May 2021. There were by then many reports available not only about bankruptcies, relief packages, deserted beaches, and struggling governments, but also about the people who were affected adversely; for e.g., Nepalese forest guides had lost their jobs and were forced overseas to work as almost indentured labourers on construction projects in the Persian Gulf. Despondent owners of souvenir shops in Malawi were unable to buy tomatoes in the market or pay school fees for their children. Hotel staff in Vanuatu had returned to the subsistence horticulture on which their ancestors had relied. In some parts of Papua New Guinea, it was reported that people had shifted, presumably temporarily, to barter and shell money as means of exchange, owing to the partial collapse of the formal economy.

In Mauritius and Seychelles, the sudden decline was dramatic. Before the pandemic, Mauritius could receive as many as 150,000 tourists in a month, while the figure in June 2020 was nine. By 2022, there were signs of recovery, and November 2021 saw the arrival of 66,000 tourists (Trading economics, 2022a). In the case of Seychelles, an all-time high was reached in December 2019, with 38,910 tourist arrivals, reaching a low in April 2020 with just 22 (Trading economics, 2022b). Like in Mauritius, the industry seemed to be recovering in 2022.

An opportunity for sustainability?

Some would identify opportunities in this situation for a shift away from fast, standardised, and unsustainable tourism, seeing the pandemic as a magnifying glass revealing the asymmetries of the past and as a catalyst for change in a more sustainable direction. The global asymmetries which frame the postcolonial world are nowhere

more immediately visible than on the cruise ship or the snorkelling boat, or at resorts. In tropical settings, former colonial subjects are once again reduced to servitude, while the descendants of the colonial masters emulate their forefathers while speaking of the experience as a holiday, an asymmetry which is exquisitely satirised in Mike White's miniseries *The White Lotus* (White, 2021).

There is a real dilemma here. When Seychelles, an archipelago in the western Indian Ocean, achieved independence in 1976, the airport on the main island Mahé was just four years old. Tourism was seen as the key to a prosperous future for the fledgling island-state, not least by its first president, James Mancham. However, his successor Albert René, who seized power in a bloodless coup in 1977, thought otherwise. A socialist, René was profoundly ambivalent about tourism, reluctant to allow the sector to flourish unchecked, since he regarded it as a form of neocolonialism. His only problem was that tourism, in this tropical archipelago of unparalleled natural beauty, would be more profitable than any other imaginable economic activity. The compromise consisted in restricting the number of beds, ensuring partial local ownership, and limiting the sector to a relatively modest number of upmarket, expensive resorts. Although the sector has subsequently expanded and was the main source of foreign revenue until the onset of the pandemic, traces of this policy are still easily discernible. Seychelles never evolved into a backpacker destination.

There is little overt discontent with tourism in contemporary Seychelles, unlike in some other so-called tropical island paradises. In the culturally and geographically neighbouring state of Mauritius, activist groups have protested against the loss of beach access and scenery owing to the development of properties and other infrastructure for tourists and absentee expats in some of the few remaining truly public beach areas; for example, at Flic-en-Flac on the west coast (Ramtohul, 2016). The main difference may be that Mauritians are in a better bargaining position than Seychellois owing to its larger social scale (1.2 million as opposed to 95,000), more diversified economy, and less one-sided dependence on tourism.

It is not only in postcolonial societies that locals react against the transformations imposed by tourism. The introduction of cruise tourism to Gotland, dealt with elsewhere in this book, has led to local reactions comparable to those in Mauritius. While some sec-

tors of the population see the potential benefits in expanding the infrastructure for tourism, others see unwelcome effects on community life and the possibility that upscaling of tourism would contribute to undermining the very qualities of Gotland that made it attractive as a destination, and as a place to live, in the first place.

In addition to such inequalities and exclusions, environmental side-effects, both on a local and a global scale, are also a matter of concern. While local opposition to excessive tourism here typically focuses on its tangible dimensions – littering, algae, coral reefs etc. – climate change must also be taken into account. Until carbon-neutral modes of long-distance transportation are available, even ecotourism is anything but ecologically sustainable. Scaling down to a concrete example, I served some years ago on the board of a small ecotourism business, which tried to do everything right by employing locals and drawing on their skills, engaging in community work, planting endemic shrubs and trees, serving local produce, and filtering water from nearby streams for the solar-powered showers. We nevertheless agreed, over a cold drink on the veranda of one of our prime destinations, that the most sustainable and ecologically responsible form of tourism, at the end of the day, would have been to avoid the airplane and the cruise ship, although the accumulated global climate effects of these modes of travel are less than those of industrial meat production and container ship trade (aviation contributes just 2.4 per cent to greenhouse gas emissions worldwide).

The significance of scale

These are some of the parameters framing the contemporary discourses on tourism from a sustainability perspective. The virtual disappearance of international tourism during the pandemic has had different effects in different countries, from almost negligible to cataclysmic, and its consequences depend on the scale of the community or country, as well as the relative importance of tourism for employment and sustenance. Scale obviously makes a difference. Small-scale societies are more vulnerable than the larger ones since they often lack the range of alternatives offered in more diverse places. However, small-scale societies can also be more flexible, just as a sailboat can easily avoid crashing into a suddenly appearing reef by changing direction in seconds, while a supertanker may take a day or more to change course. My main case in this section is Sey-

chelles (see also Eriksen, 2020), but there will be sideways glances to other small-scale societies with an important tourism sector as well.

The category of countries designated as SIDS (small island developing states) by the United Nations is diverse, but shares the common predicament of dependency on the outside world; the states depend entirely on imports for consumer goods, including food. If the ships and planes do not arrive with cargo, citizens are deprived of commodities on which they depend. Incidentally, obesity and diabetes are now major health issues in many small Pacific island societies, owing to the change in diet resulting from integration into a global monetary economy and the higher income resulting not least from the growth in tourism. The tighter integration into large-scale networks thus creates new forms of dependency.

Although resilience is sometimes posited as a contrast and an alternative to vulnerability in the study of small island states (Philpot, Gray, & Stead, 2015), vulnerability in the realms of livelihood and security remains endemic to small-scale societies, which lack the diversity and robustness of more differentiated societies. This concerns endogenous factors such as the likely over-dependence on one or a few economic pursuits, but in the contemporary world of transnational integration, events in the outside world also have a very pronounced influence. As summed up succinctly by Godfrey Baldacchino:

> The smaller the state or territory, the greater the likelihood that its domestic, internal affairs will be dominated, responsive to and driven by exogenous factors (including terms of trade, tourism trends and receipts, migration flows, remittances, aid flows and other rentier income) rather than endogenous ones. (Baldacchino, 2019)

As mentioned, smaller societies are generally less differentiated in terms of specialised labour and economic activities than larger ones. On the other hand, they may also be more flexible in some respects, their inhabitants having acquired more diverse skills, than in more specialised societies. The comparison between the sailboat and the container ship suggests that the resilience often associated with SIDS is a result of flexibility, which is weakened when the small-scale society is integrated at a higher systemic level through exchange and communication. When, in January 2022, the internet cable connecting Tonga to the outside world was broken, the island-state was

almost completely cut off from instantaneous communication with the outside world – an option which barely existed a generation ago, and which is now considered essential. Let us now move back to Seychelles, before taking a closer look at scale, tourism, and the pandemic.

A small cog in an imperial world-system since it was first settled in the 18th century, Seychelles has no pre-modern history and has evolved as a society under the bright floodlights of modernity. Connectedness to metropolitan centres and integration into the world economy have thus always been taken for granted there, from the time of colonialism, when the islands supplied copra and vanilla, and the capital Victoria served as a trading port for colonial vessels, until the present age, beginning in earnest with the opening of the airport. Today, the Seychellois economy relies almost exclusively on tourism and tuna fishing, although the importance of offshore banking is increasing, and during the Panama Papers revelations in 2016, Seychelles featured among the designated tax havens and sites for whitewashing illicit funds. A comparison with other small-scale island societies shows some relevant similarities and differences.

First, like small Caribbean island-states, Seychelles were created by colonialism. This creates a different social dynamic from that in other small island states such as Vanuatu, Malta, most Pacific island states, and the Comoros, which have a pre-colonial history and an indigenous population.

Second, although Trinidad & Tobago, Jamaica, and Mauritius are also considered small-scale island states, Seychelles is much smaller in terms of population, qualifying as a micro-state, whether the limit is set at a million or at 300,000 (both have been proposed as criteria). The former, with populations of a million or more, have a sufficient domestic market to make many industries profitable; often established as import substitution enterprises during colonialism, factories producing consumer goods ranging from soap to biscuits have proved viable in these larger societies. This is generally not a viable option in Seychelles (although to be fair, it has a brewery and a domestic beer brand, Seybrew).

Thresholds for viability apply in sectors such as book publishing, production of various consumer goods for the domestic market, international football (with decent results), and media, and although there are interesting exceptions (e.g. Iceland, pop. 330,000, has a

lively publishing industry and a reasonably good national football team). Seychelles is below the threshold in most of these areas and, as I argue below, the terms of competition have changed as a result of reduced freight costs and the neoliberal ideology preventing the protection of domestic industries.

Globalisation, Kleiber's law, and the politics of scale

As mentioned, the population of Seychelles is less than 100,000. By comparison, the Faroe Islands has a population of 53,000, Gotland 61,000 and Åland 30,000, while the population of Greenland is 56,000.[1] Of these Nordic examples, it could be argued that only Greenland, which has been negotiating the possibility of full independence from Denmark for years, is in a directly comparable situation to Seychelles, since the others form part of larger political entities. However, smallness does apply in a number of domains regardless of political integration at higher scales, notably with regard to social and ecological sustainability. The controversies over cruise ship tourism in Gotland easily mirror similar concerns in some Caribbean islands, and the lack of occupational specialisation affects the Faroe Islands just as it does Seychelles. If you have a complicated chronic disease requiring regular check-ups and treatments, you may not be able to live in either place, since medical services in the islands are not sufficiently specialised. Regarding the economy, many small island communities in Europe have gradually been depopulated, mainly owing to a lack of relevant job opportunities, again resembling the situation in Pacific island states associated with New Zealand, where outmigration is significant for similar reasons. Thus, the politics of scale applies in island communities everywhere, with comparable but not identical effects, although a differentiating factor is the form of political integration at a higher scale – whether or not the society is independent or forms part of a larger state – and other forms of connectedness in larger systems. On the other hand, some island communities, such as Åland and Gotland, are in fact growing in population, since they have been capable of creating niches which are not easily available in metropolitan areas, such as affordable housing and a convivial lifestyle.

1 Population numbers as of 2022. Source: WorldBank, https://databank.worldbank.org/ and national data for Gotland and Åland.

Since Seychelles achieved independence in 1976, the world of communication, production, and consumption has changed quickly, with important consequences for everyday life in the archipelago as elsewhere. The rise of the East Asian and in particular Chinese economy is reconfiguring global economic power rapidly; seven of the 10 busiest ports worldwide, measured by TEU (tonnage) turnover, are now in China, and the phenomenal growth in tourism since the mid-1970s is partly attributable to the growth of the East Asian middle classes.

World trade has increased by a factor of seven since the 1970s (Ortiz-Ospina & Beltekian, 2018). The growth in trade has far exceeded the growth in global GDP (ibid.).

Owing to the containerisation of shipping and more recently automation in certain ports, the cost of transport has decreased by more than 80 per cent since the mid-20th century. The logic of the comparative advantage, first described in the early 19th century by David Ricardo and later elaborated by John Stuart Mill, is much disputed but remains a premise for the neoliberal economic world order, and it dictates that any product should be grown or manufactured where it can be obtained and shipped at the lowest cost. With the decline in transportation costs, this logic, underpinning the ideology and practice of the current era of global deregulated markets, is believed to imply that cheap labour and large-scale operations outcompete the smaller and more expensive enterprises regardless of geographical location. In Seychellois groceries, accordingly, it is not uncommon to find imported fruit which could have been grown locally, but in much smaller volumes and therefore at a higher cost to the consumer. Partly because local produce generates local jobs as well, this reliance on import is the source of some concern. The apparent advantages of economies of scale are given free rein, but at the cost of making local economic activities unprofitable.

The principle of economies of scale has, interestingly, been formulated in comparative physiology as well. Kleiber's law, discovered by the biologist Max Kleiber in the 1930s, shows that in a mammal, if mass increases by a factor of 100, metabolic rate increases by a factor of 32. This means that a cat which weighs 100 times as much as a mouse needs only 32 times as much energy to sustain itself (West, 2017).

Put differently: imagine two circles, one large, one small. The surface is less in relation to mass in the large than in the small cir-

cle. The surface is relatively much larger in a small circle. Thus, it may be comparatively expensive to run the institutions of a small state, which needs many of the same functions and institutions as larger states, but without the benefits of economies of scale. This simple mechanism can explain why small operations tend to lose in competition with larger ones, unless they occupy a niche which cannot be scaled up, such as a unique scenery, locally grown food, or personalised services.

The accelerated integration of human activities worldwide produces prosperity, vulnerability, and dependency, and closes the gap between places in the sense that local events often have transnational causes and global effects. The pandemic immediately comes to mind, but other examples are just as telling. For example, the burning forests of the Amazon that have regularly made world headline news, defended by President Bolsanaro as a domestic matter, are directly connected to the growing prosperity and widespread affordability of beef in China. (Unlike the pig, which is another animal first domesticated in West Asia, the cow never became dominant in Chinese farming.) The forests are removed in order to create pastures for cattle or cleared land for soya plantations, and the soybeans are in turn transformed into animal fodder exported to cold countries where cattle have to be kept in the barn most of the year. The sense in which people in communities may feel overrun and disempowered by their involuntary integration into large-scale economic, demographic, political, or cultural configurations is a key factor in understanding the rise of the new anti-elitist political movements in many places. Seychellois may, perhaps paradoxically, be in a better position than most to cope with the new situation, since they have always been entangled with larger systems in most respects, so isolationism has never been an option.

To sum up the argument so far: at a time of runaway globalisation, large-scale operations are favoured over small-scale production in the main domains of the economy. This has political effects in that domination by the big over the small is sought in both old and new ways; and cultural effects that exert influences from outside – Netflix, tourism, travel abroad etc. – are all intensified and magnified in the globally integrated information society. This in turn affects the media, language, and self-identity, as well as being decisive for

strategies in diplomacy, human security (including food security as well as protection from invasions), planning, and domestic politics.

During the pandemic, the asymmetry of power affecting small states adversely prompted new ideas about tourism and the wider economy. In Seychelles, some protective measures were, as noted, already in place. In order to ensure some control of land and domestic wealth, restrictions on foreign ownership in the tourist industry dictate that establishments of 15 keys (or rooms) or fewer are reserved for Seychellois only; for establishments between 16 and 24 keys, a non-Seychellois may own up to 80 per cent of the shareholding; and for establishments with 25 keys or more, non-Seychellois may own 100 per cent, but they are encouraged to have Seychellois partners/shareholders. Although these rules encourage proxy ownership, they also indicate that there is a real concern and anxiety about the most valuable chunks of land ending up with foreign ownership. Since citizenship can be obtained at a premium, like in several other small island states, land grabbing is becoming an issue in Seychelles as elsewhere. Pressure from the outside world is growing as foreigners buy property, and competition skews the Seychellois economy towards services and experiences which cannot easily be outsourced or provided elsewhere. This is a viable recipe for an economy dependent on tourism and offshore banking, since small countries may find specialised niches and thrive on exploiting them.

I shall return to Seychelles after a few sideways glances to other small countries dependent on tourism, and which have found themselves in a comparable situation during the pandemic.

Flexibility and vulnerability

Upscaling and standardisation are not new, but due to the pandemic they may accelerate, since smaller enterprises usually have less financial flexibility than larger ones. Put differently, a large transnational corporation can afford to lose money for years before making a profit; this is not the case for a tour guide in Kenya or a family-owned cafe in Fiji. In a (self-) critical memoir, the travel writer Elizabeth Becker describes a meeting in Venice with a former proprietor of a small shop catering to tourists:

> Then he walked out on the street with us and pointed out the stores that had been pushed out by the high-fashion stores on his street.

> 'That first alley on the left—it used to have a butcher, a florist and a bread shop. All disappeared. It's only the international fashion people who can afford the rents.' (Becker, 2013, p. 84)

This kind of standardisation and upscaling can be discerned in many other destinations, and is naturally caused by price increases following intensified tourism.

Vulnerability and flexibility can be two sides of the same coin, and in the present context, both apply. Both small businesses and small countries have experienced vulnerability and mobilised flexibility during the pandemic.

The Cook Islands, a Polynesian archipelago, may illustrate this point. An independent country in an associated state relationship with New Zealand and with a population of 17,000, it has 22 doctors and a grand total of two ventilators. It thus makes sense for the community to keep the virus out, but two-thirds of the revenue of the islands is related to tourism. In 2019, the number of tourist arrivals was almost exactly 10 times its population. While this sounds dramatic, it must be kept in mind that tourists typically stay for less than two weeks. Supposing that the average length of a visit is 10 days, there would, at any time, be an average of about 5,000 tourists in the islands. This would still amount to nearly a quarter of the total number of people.

Owing to the collapse of tourism, hundreds of Cook Islanders have left for New Zealand in search of work. Among those who have stayed, some see advantages in the loss of tourist income. Florence Syme-Buchanan, the leader of a citizen action group, said to *The Guardian* following more than a year of no tourism that the absence of foreigners had been beneficial for the environment, pointing out that the tourist dollars come with a price tag (Samoglou, 2021). Prime Minister Mark Brown argued that the sudden restructuring of the economy had led to a stronger community spirit: 'People taking care of each other, looking out for their neighbours, their relations, sharing food they have grown: the creativity of our people has re-emerged with a vengeance.' Keep in mind, though, that he is the prime minister of a country with fewer than 20,000 citizens.

Mauritius, also a SIDS, is a different kind of society, with a population more than 10 times that of Seychelles and almost 70 times that of the Cook Islands. In terms of population, Mauritius is to

Seychelles as Sweden is to Mauritius, and to the Cook Islands as Mauritius is to Germany. Simplifying somewhat, one may say that the Mauritian economy stands on three legs of comparable financial importance – sugar, manufacturing, and tourism – but it should be added that the two former employ far more workers than tourism. The country has not been able to avoid the recession, but unlike in the former two island-states, most of the Mauritian economy continued to function after March 2020. However, it is still interesting to engage Mauritius in this exploration because tourism has had a massive impact on the material infrastructure of the coast (while its effects are almost invisible just a few kilometres away from the beach), and because there are rising concerns among activists and NGOs, but also in government agencies, about tourism being environmentally unsustainable. Time and time again, it is pointed out that mass tourism in its vulnerable coastal ecosystem is a contradiction in terms, since through their activities, tourists destroy what it was that made Mauritius such an attractive destination for them in the first place.

There are rising concerns about tourism being unsustainable, destroying its own foundations through environmental degradation. Hammond et al. (2019) concluded a study of tourism, urban development and the environment in Mauritius by indicating that:

> many landscape and marinescape features in Mauritius are under threat of loss or degradation from urban expansion, particularly those that contain significant social value through their provisioning of, or proximity to, natural assets that underpin a burgeoning tourism industry. These threats are centred currently on the beach and dune, coral reef, and coastal marshland ESA [Environmentally Sensitive Area] types (Hammond et al., 2019, p. 233).

The Mauritius Tourist Authority has, through funding from the European Union, established a sustainable tourism project (SUS-Island) which promotes less destructive forms of tourism – walking tours rather than bus tours, bicycle rather than car rentals, ecotourism in designated natural reserves etc. Before the pandemic, the number of tourist arrivals per year roughly equalled its population of 1.2 million. In the months following March 2020, the numbers were barely above nil, the airport remaining closed for eight months.

During the quiet period in 2020, another organisation, Mauritius Conscious Travel, took initiatives to support a reshaping of tourism strengthening local nature and cultural heritage. Their 'Gift Card'

> features an array of immersive activities to choose from such as wild adventures, local guided tours, epic island getaways and immersive learning experiences. It is an initiative that encourages travellers, both locals and global citizens, to support small Mauritian tourism businesses, to preserve the local expertise and reactivate the economy (Ragoobur, 2021, p. 5).

In Seychelles, tourist arrivals dropped by 70 per cent in 2020, actually 100 per cent from March onwards as the government effectively sealed off the country in March. However, as early as March in 2021, the archipelago opened up for tourism again. At that time, nearly the entire adult population had been vaccinated.

Although the Seychellois government is determined to return to pre-pandemic levels of tourism, the exceptional period of income loss and reduced contact with the outside world has served as a catalyst for a project which had been planned before March 2020, but which was subsequently refined and sharpened in order to respond to the crisis. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, Seychelles has become increasingly dependent on the outside world for its sustenance, not just through tourism, but also by importing most of its food. As a result, the country is highly vulnerable to global crises, but it is also a fact that various forms of skills and knowledge that were common a generation or two ago have been lost to most Seychellois. Among them is knowledge of the traditional *moutya* music and oral literature (Choppy, 2021), but food production on a small scale has also become rare, and along with it the necessary skills. As shown by Glimmann (2017), few young Seychellois see a future for themselves in farming. It is possible that the pandemic can lead to a change in this domain, through a revitalisation of the *zarden kreol* or Creole garden (University of Seychelles, 2021).

A pilot project funded by UNESCO, the Creole garden aims to recover knowledge about crops and foods that can be grown locally. Ironically, the Creole garden arose from plantation slavery, but was deemed uninteresting by the plantation owners, although essential for the slaves, who grew a variety of crops for subsistence on their tiny plots.

However, as the project report explains, and I quote it at some length, with modernity and the advent of supermarkets, and flats and housing estates replacing the traditional creole community, the Creole garden has lost ground and is not being transmitted to the younger generation.

> And yet, the Creole Garden provides sustenance, traditional creole culinary skills and ingredients which are the basis of the celebrated creole cuisine in tourism, as well as medicinal plants that reduce the need to go to the doctor. During the Covid-19 lockdown period in Seychelles, our dependency on imported goods became glaringly clear as planes suddenly reduced to essential cargo, and certain fresh vegetables that were flown in every day became scarce. People started planting in pots if they lived in flats, and those who had land began planting typical creole foodstuff such as plantains, dessert bananas, yam, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and herbs. (University of Seychelles, 2021)

During the pandemic, inflation was at least 11 per cent, an inflation rate that continued in 2022, and Seychellois report that everything except fresh fish (caught in local waters) has become difficult to afford for many locals owing to disruptions in supply chains. With the loss – temporary or permanent – in the tourism sector, many Seychellois have found themselves in a situation familiar to millions in less fortunate parts of the world, with a shortage of money and a surplus of time. At the time of this writing, the outcome cannot be assessed, but this project is in itself interesting as an attempt to counter an unsustainable, dependent, and standardised lifestyle.

Conclusion – Enabling sustainable visits

In a review article about tourism research during the pandemic, Persson-Fischer and Liu (2021) refer to research investigating whether it would be feasible and desirable for tourism-dependent countries to 'reorganize its tourism products, re-adjust its products to adapt to new (possibly domestic) markets, or exit the tourism industry completely to adapt to the changing needs of tourists after COVID-19'. Another option, also discussed in some of the articles reviewed, consists of redefining markets by targeting domestic customers rather

than foreign visitors. This alternative is nevertheless only realistic in affluent societies, and would not be an option for any of the societies I have described in this chapter, where domestic purchasing power is far less than that of the typical visitors from overseas.

More radical proposals consist of reimagining 'a regenerative economy and a resilient ecology, so that these economies and resilience can be based on fairer mobility and connections' (Cave & Dredge, 2020), or reshaping tourism by paying serious attention to alternatives based on indigenous rights, nonracist tourism, environmentally sustainable tourism and 'diverse economies' (Lew, Cheer, Haywood, Brouder, & Salazar, 2020). Sigala argues, along similar lines, that at 'a micro-level, COVID-19 tourism research should question and reset why tourism is viewed, practised and managed as a way to 'escape', 'relax', 'socialise', 'construct identities/status', 'learn' and reward themselves from a routine, unpleasant and meaningless life (Sigala, 2020, p. 314). She also argues that the pandemic could give an impetus to reforming the 'gig economy' in the tourist industry (Uber, Airbnb etc.) and the vulnerability of the millions who make a living from tourism in the informal sector.

Considering the economic importance of tourism in many countries, not least SIDS, relinquishing 'the tourist dollar' is not realistic at the moment, but as the many creative responses to the crisis have indicated, there is no reason to assume that mass tourism of the kind to which we have been accustomed – and which has grown enormously since the 1970s – by necessity will continue indefinitely. The pandemic has opened a window of opportunity, showing that things could be otherwise. Tourism will not go away, but it may return in a new guise: slower, less crowded, and less busy. Tourists may travel shorter distances, more slowly, and/or stay in their destinations longer. These developments would contribute to increased sustainability.

There are also reasons other than those of social and ecological sustainability for mass tourism not to return in its previous form. French Polynesia had already re-opened its borders and abandoned quarantine in July 2020, in order to reignite a stalled tourism-dependent economy. At the time, the French territory had just 62 confirmed cases. A year later, it had more than 15,000 and 91 deaths.

Pandemics come and go, but wariness associated with travel may persist. As noted by Abbas et al. (2021, p. 4), for 'fear of the risks,

tourists cancel their planned travel plans as it looks challenging to avoid virus infection during travel time'. This general statement may retrospectively prove to be prophetic. In a near future, the main fear preventing people from careless travelling may not be the Coronavirus or even another virus, but could take the form of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. This growing risk may well make the Covid-19 pandemic come across as a mere test ahead of the real thing, and just as AIDS led to massive changes in sexual practices, the danger represented by antibiotic resistance could turn those societies which have explored survival strategies without tourism into exemplars and role models for others.

The pandemic has served as a reminder of the extreme vulnerability of tourism-dependent small states, and has accordingly inspired alternative thinking and practices striving to make the tourist industry more ecologically sustainable, but also more socially sustainable through scaling it down and drawing more systematically on local knowledges and practices. Should the governments of countries like Mauritius and Seychelles so wish, their future tourist industries can be slower, deeper, and less disruptive, both socially and economically. This may yet be an initially unanticipated outcome of the fears, anxieties, and enforced slowing down resulting from the Covid-19 outbreak, contributing to the cooling of an overheated world that is so urgently called for in an era of unintended and potentially catastrophic Anthropocene effects.

Questions for discussions

- Which are the main features of the great acceleration? To what extent has the great acceleration been superseded by 'an acceleration of acceleration' since around 1990?
- What are the main conditions for tourism to become socially and ecologically sustainable?
- To what extent did the pandemic provide local experiences in this field that could be applied elsewhere?
- Many popular tourist destinations are small scale societies, typically islands. Discuss the pros and cons of small scale in a situation of transition to a more sustainable forms of tourism.

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Concluding remarks. Towards enabling sustainable visits

Mathias Cöster, Sabine Gebert Persson & Owe Ronström

As highlighted in the introductory chapter, tourism and visiting, in the forms we see around us today, must change fundamentally if we are to honour Agenda 2030, Paris Climate Accords (2015) and the agreements of the Glasgow Climate Pact (2021). Without doubt, now is the time to consider how we can continue to meet without the devastating ecological footprints caused by today's tourism. To meet and interact as guest-host and visitor-visited needs to continue, as such meetings are essential for human civilisations all around the world. The question raised in this book is how these interactions and relations can be facilitated while prioritising the sustainability challenges we currently are facing.

Considering the variety of actors presented in the book – from the small bricolage entrepreneurs and the voluntary organisations such as the association behind the Medieval Week, to the large publicly financed organisations – the interests and perceptions of what is important in societies vary, and are at times in stark contrast to each other. Who shall be given voice when the ideas of what sustainability is can be interpreted and voiced in so many different ways? Hence, how can sustainable visits be enabled and by whom?

One way is to promote the efforts of actors who consciously work with sustainability in different ways to become role models for others to mimic. Through mimetic behaviours, other actors can mirror these actors' ways of addressing sustainability goals and strategies. It is critical though that actors who work in the form of organisations not only develop strategies but develop management control sys-

tems if they wish to address and integrate sustainability within the entire organisation.

Another important aspect when enabling sustainable visits is how the destination is organised and how the resources in a place are managed and governed. Here, a public organisation may be involved as an initiator, but one actor is not enough if we are to reach an inclusive society that enables meetings and interactions in a place. Initiatives from local entrepreneurs that strive to run sustainable business are crucial, as well as inclusion of private organisations, citizens, and non-profit organisations. In that process, there is a need to balance the managing of a destination with the preservation and protection of cultural heritage. Furthermore, it is of great importance that destructive exploitation of resources is not allowed.

While mirroring can function as a channel for transferring best practices, in the book we have also argued for another form of mirroring. Entrepreneurs can, through cooperation, share experiences and learn from each other. Here, academia can become a facilitator by offering education on sustainability-related issues. Such education should emphasise the co-creation of knowledge through collaborations between academics and entrepreneurs. Furthermore, knowledge and learning can also play a key role in facilitating informed visits. Dark tourism is one example. Through educational learning visitors at disaster-related sites can become more aware of the interdependence between humanity and nature and create respect for the experiences people have of these disasters. Such informed visits can also be translated into other contexts and influence visitors' images and reproductions of a destination.

So where does this leave us? Are sustainable visits possible? A conclusion of this book is: yes, they are. Sustainable visits need to be based on an informed understanding of alternative routes forward. Co-creation of places into destinations through interaction between visitors-visited can enable us to choose paths that are different from stereotyped, undemocratic, and destructive visits.

Since destinations are produced, not discovered, tourism cannot be discussed without addressing ethics and moral issues about ownership, control, rights, exclusion and inclusion, us and them. In their different ways, the chapters in this anthology argue that to continue moving and meeting will require more of encountering, interacting, and listening, and less of gazing, reduction, stereotyping, and com-

modification, of destinations, visitors, and locals. This will require that both the visitors and the visited have enough power to control the narratives and images of themselves, which in turn will require profound changes in the industry that produce these narratives and images.

Fundamental conditions for enabling such changes are highlighted in Figure 2, in the introduction chapter. To enable sustainable visits, it will be necessary to initiate a dialogue that:

- focuses on how the visited, the locals, experience the place. These experiences are, to a large extent, defined by the living conditions, physical and tangible, as well as intangible.

In order to create an informed understanding, the dialogue also needs to address how visitors experience a place as a destination and how that may influence locals. Especially important is to highlight:

- when visitors come as tourists, they experience a place as a destination. Their relation to the destination is formed by images, stories, carefully selected artefacts, symbols, and resources provided at the place. The utilisation of these resources influences living conditions for the locals in several, and sometimes negative, ways.

This kind of dialogue can challenge the commonly dominant discourse of the need for growth. More tourists is not a way forward. On the other hand, a total stop or degrowth may also be devastating for some societies, especially for small developing societies that are dependent on visits. Alternative routes forward need to be found and defined. This will require dialogue and active decisions on how resources, intangible as well as tangible, are distributed in an inclusive way, yet safeguarded from exploitation of visitors and visited. To enable sustainable visits, a balance between the locals and their living conditions, and the visitors' expectations of a destination, must be established. Stereotypical images of destinations as escapes, remote pleasure peripheries and leisure heavens, need to change if gentrification, exploitation, or other negative effects of tourism are to be avoided. Going back to the beginning of this chapter, it is necessary to change the way people travel and consume destinations in order reduce the ecological footprints of people on the move. If this requires less in situ visitors, there will still be visitors! (And as is

argued in the book, since online places are also places, online visits are also visits!)

Where to go from here?

Without doubt, transition to sustainability is the great challenge of our time – and a bigger step for humankind than any moon landing. Sustainability is a powerful concept, difficult and ambiguous, globalising and totalising, with an unusual agency and a pronounced moral, ethical and political charge. A core of its agency is a moral imperative that sets up the world as one, establishes a totalising "we" and compels us all to "act NOW or it will be too late"! This is a risky position. It is well known how such "we's" and the impetus to "act now!" only too easily sets reflection aside, reduces complexity and turns a blind eye to the consequences.

Still, as concerned individuals and researchers we believe that it is now due time to assume a more proactive approach and ask where to go from here and what to do. We need to find ways to be able to move and meet also in the future. "Sustainable visits" is intended as a reminder that in the transition to a sustainable world there are things to lose – and to win. In the same way as we will have to refrain from using antibiotics unless it is absolutely necessary, it seems likely that we all will have to refrain from mass tourism as we know it in order to cherish our ability to move and meet.

Today there is a growing resistance towards certain forms of tourism in more and more destinations, Visby and Gotland included. Venice, Mallorca, Barcelona and the Seychelles have recently introduced regulations of tourism, for the benefit of the locals and the environment. In many places in the Western world there is an even greater resistance towards other kinds of visitors, such as refugees and work migrants. What this tells us is that to be able to encounter people also in places where we may not be invited, or even wanted, we will need to engage with the locals and their understandings of what constitutes hosts and guests, and establish a social contract that not only regulates rights and obligations but also stipulates mutual recognition and respect.

A striking example doing just that is the Palau Pledge. Palau is a republic of around 340 islands in the Western Pacific, inhabited by 18,000 people.

Palau. Image courtesy of Sea Legacy, Cristina Mittermeier.

In 2017 Palau became the first nation to install immigration laws to protect its environment and culture.[1] Upon entry, visitors are requested to watch a short animated video and sign a passport pledge based on Palauan traditions and written with the help of Palau's children:

> Children of Palau, I take this pledge as your guest,
> to preserve and protect your beautiful and unique island home.
> I vow to tread lightly, act kindly, and explore mindfully.
> I shall not take what is not given.
> I shall not harm what does not harm me.
> The only footprints I shall leave are those that will wash away.

In condensed, poetic language this pledge summarises what a 'sustainable visit' can entail: to preserve, to protect, to explore mindfully, and to leave no remaining footprints.

1 https://palaupledge.com/; https://www.palaureg.com/the-palau-ship-registry/the-republic-of-palau/tourism/palau-pledge/

A large number of destinations around the world are struggling with the delicate balance of developing tourism and the hospitality industry in a sustainable way. The challenge for many destinations is to find a way forward, for existing and new jobs, to contribute to economic growth and for the preservation of the cultural heritage. At the same time, with more visitors there are increased risks of negative impact on society, the environment, and, not least, on the cultural heritage that for many visitors is a reason to travel.

This anthology approaches the challenges facing tourism and the hospitality industry by emphasizing insights that can enable the necessary transition to sustainable visits. Through twelve chapters, experienced researchers from different disciplines discuss empirical studies of visits in the broad sense. Their analyses cover central themes in tourism and hospitality studies, i.e. tourism, destinations and destination management, host-guest relations, imageries, representation, and sustainability.

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