Tourism Research in the Wadden Sea

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Presentation outline

1. Discourses on tourism and heritage in the development of the Wadden Sea National Park

2. Tourism and quality of life in the Wadden Sea

3. - Questions/discussion

“... a greater understanding of the national park concept and hence its future, including its viability, will arguably depend as much on social scientific understandings of its environment as its natural scientific.” (Hall & Frost 2009, 309)
The weight of tourism in national park discourse

Local development a central issue
– the promise of tourism

- **Background:** National park development traditionally contested – not least with a “new protected areas paradigm” (Hall & Frost 2009; Mose & Wixlbaumer 2007)
Research aim:

- Descriptive/explorative approach to understanding meanings attributed to tourism in popular discourses on the development of the Wadden Sea national Park.

Questions:
- How is tourism integrated into discourses on national park development?
- How do local stakeholders construct meaningful connections between tourism, local development and natural and cultural heritage?

Focus on popular discourses in the establishment phase of the Wadden Sea national park 2003-2011.
Methodology

- Discourse theory focusing on the openness of discourse and hegemonic struggles crystalizing in e.g. nodal points, theoretical inspiration from Laclau & Mouffe (1987) and Mouffe (1990; 1993)
  - tourism as metaphor

- Critical discourse analysis (CDA) inspired operationalization of the analysis with focus on Faircloughs three dimensional model and discursive colonising theory (Fairclough 1992; 2010)
  - local development as colonising discourse

- Empirical material in the form of official and everyday texts - perceived as “traces”, textual acts with discursive effects and expressions of power structures (Fairclough 1992; 2010; Stillar 1998).

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Newspaper, TEXT official reports, popular texts (ideas)

DISCOURSE PRACTICE
production, distribution, consumption

SOCIAL PRACTICE
A new protected areas paradigm

Faircloughs three dimensional model (Fairclough 1992)
Local development and tourism  
- as colonising discourses

A few examples

- “The theme of the meeting was to consider advantages and perspectives for tourism and discuss possibilities of business development within the frame of the national park” (JV 22.9.2004)

- “A national park will mean growth in tourism and it will increase settlement in the area” (JV 9.9.2005)

- “Calculations have been made that show, that a national park will attract tourists and money but others fear that a national park will circumscribe existing industry and agriculture” (JV 18..2005)

- “I think there are many possibilities of development within nature culture, outdoor recreation, nature interpretation and business development. You should not let your selves be limited by the ideas of others on what a national park should be. You should see your own possibilities to develop the national park and make it and the whole area attractive to tourists as well as business life” (JV 8.4.2008)
Tourism and heritage as metaphors

- Example 1: “Today the Wadden Sea is a big tourist attraction with many exciting offers […] With the establishment of the Wadden Sea National Park there will be opportunities for increasing the flow of tourists from here and abroad”
  http://www.danmarksnationalparker.dk/Vadehavet/Nationalparkplanen/

- Development function (as economic opportunity in a competitive market)

- Example 2: “The Wadden Sea National Park is to contribute to creating growth and development for tourism. So how can the village of Hjerpsted contribute? [with, LAH] A unique situation on a small hill with a view of the Wadden Sea. Some of the best kept houses in the building style of Western Schleswig. Apart from that we will probably have to recognize that we do not have facilities that can contribute to an expanded tourism.”
  http://www.danmarksnationalparker.dk/Vadehavet/Nationalparkplanen/

- Development function (as missed economic opportunity and internal competition)

- Example 3: “It is my impression, from my work at the Skibbroen in Ribe, that the town’s guests, apart from seeking general knowledge about the town’s history and “grammar”, to a greater extent seek out atmospheres and interaction in town, than look for professionally disseminated factual data. I assume that this wish will also come to apply to future guests of the national park.” […] that the national park will come to brand itself as a place where visitors are not conceived of as tourists but as guests e.g. as whole people
  http://www.danmarksnationalparker.dk/Vadehavet/Nationalparkplanen/

- Cultural function and Local landscape and place function (tourism as metaphor for community building and affirmation)

- Example 4: “The Wadden Sea interpretational forum work together on giving locals and tourists better opportunity to experience and become more knowledgable on the nature and history of the Wadden Sea. We contribute to the possibilitiy of experiencing the Wadden Sea all year round by everybody and in a way that considers the environment, history and local interests

- Information function (education and training), but also recreation function

- Example 3: “We are convinced that many tourists would like to experience a trip on the Wadden sea while experiencing how to catch mullet, which is a fantastic eating fish”
  http://www.danmarksnationalparker.dk/Vadehavet/Nationalparkplanen/

- Development function (as cultural function)
Preliminary findings and further perspectives:

- The discourses on tourism and heritage in the Wadden Sea National Park both complies with and exceeds the elements often connected with the establishment of protected areas.

- Tourism is invoked, by local stakeholders, as a nodal point and floating signifier continuously infused with meanings depending on strategy (Mouffe 1990; 1993) - rather than one colonizing discourse on tourism?

- A need for managers to invest in continued dialogue and involvement of all stakeholders – combined with a vision for interpretation in a tourism context.
Further perspectives

- **A need for continued research on:**
  - Local perceptions of tourism within the national park (quantitative and qualitative measurements)
  - Further exploration and monitoring of interpretation initiatives, innovative potentials and their effects (quantitative and qualitative measurements)
  - Monitoring of tourists perceptions of the national park - the success of interpretative measures for sustainable developments
Enhancing the Quality of Life through Cultural Events: The Case of the Danish Wadden Sea Festival

Dr. Janne J. Liburd & Anja Hergesell, Ph.D. student
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QoL Research

To measure the effects of tourism on life quality, both objective and subjective indicators are needed.

Objective Indicators
- Economic development

Subjective Indicators
- Subjective Wellbeing

Quality of life
Research Objectives

- Exploratory research

- Investigate how a cultural event in the case of the August 2008 Wadden Sea Festival influences participants’ Quality of Life (QoL)

- Examine organizers’ expectations as well as immediate impact on participating artists’ and visitors’ short-term subjective well being

- Probe how a cultural event may sustain or enhance QoL and focus on possible drivers in the process
Study Background

- Pilot Project *Spring Tide (Springflod)* 2006

- Collaboration between Wadden Sea municipalities: Tønder, Esbjerg, Fanø, Varde

- Mandate:
  to strengthen, develop and call attention to the very special cultural heritage, nature and identity of the Wadden Sea

- Music, dance, visual arts, story telling, architecture and regional cuisine
Methodology

- Qualitative and highly contextualized focus, participant-observation

- Three-tiered approach to understanding:
  - Organisers’ expectations and underlying motivations
  - Artists’ perceptions during the festival
  - Visitors’ perceptions during and after the festival

- Focus group with key stakeholders on festival evaluation Sep. 4, 2008
- Examination of print, web and audio visual media coverage 2006 and 2008 festivals
which stakeholders?

ahergesell; 24-09-2008
Sum up of findings

- Many artists, visitors and organisers experienced how immediately subjective well-being was enhanced through creativity and positive energy.

- Money can’t buy happiness (BEST EN Think Tank 2008). But lasting experiences can!

- Many of the experiences may be rooted in cultural creativity and uniqueness and, perhaps ironically, in vanishing art.

  “I only had time to come out to see Footprints this afternoon and then it was all gone. Very disappointing!”
Concluding Remarks – Further Research

- Wadden Sea festival exemplifies how contemporary art can address what we take for granted e.g. natural and cultural heritage

- Challenge to position the festival for residents and tourists alike, which calls for strategic communication and holistic event management

- Longitudinal study is needed for better understanding of the immaterial aspects, existential qualities, the lasting effects on identity, wellbeing and the sustainable development of the Wadden Sea region
Further inquiries

- For more information on Centre for Tourism, Innovation and Culture [http://www.sdu.dk/om_sdu/institutter_centre/c_tik](http://www.sdu.dk/om_sdu/institutter_centre/c_tik) (Head of Centre lektor Janne J. Liburd 2813 9918, liburd@sdu.dk)

- For the many aspects of tourism research in Denmark see also the White Book on Tourism Researchers in Denmark [https://conference.cbs.dk/images/generelt/WHITE_PAPER_FINAL.pdf](https://conference.cbs.dk/images/generelt/WHITE_PAPER_FINAL.pdf) (Chair of Steering Committee, lektor Janne J. Liburd 2813 9918, liburd@sdu.dk)