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Justifying Collaborative Economy and Local Development in Tourism

Jane Widtfeldt Meged
Roskilde University, janevm@ruc.dk

Lars Fuglsang

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Title: Justifying Collaborative Economy and Local Development in Tourism

Author: Jane Widtfeldt Megeed & Lars Fuglsang

Affiliation: Roskilde University

Contact: janewm@ruc.dk

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Abstract:

This paper presents some findings from a collaborative innovation effort in tourism called 'The Camøno'. The Camøno is a 175 km long new pilgrimage and hiking trail on the islands of Møn, Bogø, and Nyord in southern Denmark, which is based on local collaboration and sharing of available resources. The Camøno has been initiated with private funding, and the project is organized and run by the public institution Møn Museum and the municipality of Vordingborg, with the scope of regional and local development.

The project has managed to mobilize a large number of local residents in a network of passionate local volunteers, along with small scale entrepreneurs, and various local authorities like the churches, the harbors, etc. Through social media the wanderers themselves are central in the marketing and the development of the trail.

Local and non-local collaboration and networking has been seen as a major challenge for tourism firms in order to develop local areas and attract tourists. Yet participatory and collaborative approaches to development and innovation are faced with many problems of engagement and legitimacy, as many small tourism businesses or local residents cannot see themselves in such developments, or lack resources and time to participate (Fuglsang & Eide, 2013). The paper examines barriers and drivers of the collaborative effort of the Camøno to understand how problems of collaboration and interaction were solved to enable innovation. First, the paper explores some of the drivers and barriers involved in creating the Camøno from scratch. We divide these into especially three areas, which are the engagement, the appropriate relationships in the community, and the heterogeneity of resources. Then we explore how the project developed further and was in the end successfully launched. We use the notions of gaining legitimacy and providing justification actions related to institutional theory and institutional work theory to analyse this (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999; Suchman, 1995; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006).

Our results show that actors talk from a number of interrelated worlds (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999) when addressing key values, the tourists, and various practical challenges. The paper sets forth to identify discursive nodes in and between the worlds that have led to the project's initial success, as well as identifying conflicts and potential future dangers that can jeopardize the development of the trail, and we will thus contribute to the body of justification theory. Especially discourses of the reknown, inspiration, civic society, market, and domesticity have been used to mobilize actors for the project. The investigation shows that actors draw on different discourses of legitimation and justification and that respectful treatment of these varieties can be seen as resource for collaborative innovation rather than only a barrier. Nevertheless, these different discourses still tend to place some actors in roles and positions that appear unrealistic, and therefore ideological and manipulative.