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Sustainable Tourism Heterogeneity: How stakeholders cope with tension during development of sustainable tourism

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate how stakeholders cope with tension during development of sustainable tourism. Based on Goffman's (1959) symbolic interaction perspective, we show the existence of different roles in Lofoten, and that tension in development processes are characterized by stakeholders who alter between various mindsets as they move between different roles in the destination. As previous research tends to focus on heterogeneity through the existence of conflicting mindsets of stakeholders in sustainable tourism development, our findings shows that change in context is causing stakeholders to struggle in-between roles and either taking distance from the role due to incompatible demands or live in a state of role coping by altering between mindsets. This paper contributes to a nuanced understanding of the concept of heterogeneity, and seeks to create a more enhanced view of the sustainable tourism environment.

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This thesis is written as the final part of Master of Science in Business at Nord University Business School with a major in International Trade and Marketing. We have at times experienced that the process has been challenging and demanding, especially considering the Covid-19 situation that put the whole world on hold for a while. The process has also been educational and have given us the opportunity to gain deeper insight into a field of research that we have found very interesting. The choice of writing our master thesis as an article is based on a desire to challenge ourselves and the opportunity to present our results in a scientific journal.

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Thank you.

We have chosen the Journal of Sustainable Tourism as the publication journal and the article is therefore formatted according to the journal's guidelines.¹

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to elaborate on theoretical and methodological aspects of our thesis through theoretical discussions and conceptualization of important terms. The chapter also consists of critical analysis of the methodological approach and reflections on the limitations of our research.

Theoretical Framework

In the following chapter we will present the theoretical framework for the thesis.

We are committed to sustainable development and want to further develop our knowledge in this area. We acknowledge that sustainable marketing would have been a more natural topic due to our major in International Business and Marketing, but we have chosen to focus on sustainable tourism, because sustainable marketing is not preoccupied with destinations as a marketplace, but mostly how businesses can become sustainable.

Sustainable tourism in destination development

A community-based perspective is different from the traditional way in which we view existence and organizational structure, and can instead be compared to the critical community practice where solidarity and social inclusion is emphasized (Murphy, 1988). In particular, this perspective emphasizes that order and knowledge is co-created through human coordination, as a natural result spiraling from how people interpret their experience and act in certain situations (Peralta & Murphy, 2014). When considering development from a community-based perspective, it is implied that the community is developed through human interaction and through the way people interpret and understand themselves, as well as understanding other people in the community. Through participation in value creation, the participants need to show responsibility in providing for the community and its needs (Murphy, 1988). In a community-based approach we must recognize the way humans interact, interpret and acknowledge the unique knowledge that exists in the community as a whole, and thus utilize it in a beneficial way (Peralta & Murphy, 2014).

The community-based perspective is a highly relevant concept when discussing sustainable tourism. Through the lens of the perspective, sustainable tourism is a dynamic process where the destination stakeholders become an important element in successfully

implementing sustainability in a tourist destination. Community stakeholders receive a central position where they can negotiate, and where their thoughts on the matter are considered to be of importance (Lindberg, Fitchett & Martin, 2019). Thus, a community-based approach to sustainable tourism, empowers the community stakeholders, where an effective process is characterized by stakeholders' ability to agree and participate. As a result, the process can yield progress in the quest of facing the issues at hand as a united force (Saarinen, 2006). Due to the nature of a community-based approach, the stakeholder concept gains a central role in understanding the dynamic relations in a community.

Stakeholder theory and sustainable tourism

The concept of stakeholders within an organization, or in our case within a destination, gained a broader acceptance with the publication of *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, written by Freeman (1984). He argued that stakeholders hold a significant role when discussing the organization's external environment. Building on this idea, researchers have sought out to develop the term in several contexts (Waligo, Clarke & Hawkins, 2013). From Stanford Research Institute it was alleged that in order for an organization to thrive or even survive, the support of all stakeholders had to be present, both internal and external. Research show that in order to achieve success in implementation of sustainable tourism, the wide range of individuals or groups that might be affected by the organizational affairs, must be taken into consideration, in contrast to the traditional way of understanding management (Waligo et al., 2013).

In the contexts of sustainable tourism, the stakeholder term, concerns all individuals or groups involved in tourism development. When discussing the objective of Lofoten as a sustainable destination, a stakeholder will be anyone who influences or is influenced by the decisions that are made and the consequences that follow. It concerns the wide range of groups that are affected by activities that are carried out in order to gain a strong tourism destination. In the recent years, collaboration between stakeholders has become a preferred approach to solving problems related to a common understanding of the desired outcome (Waligo, et al., 2013).

Research of the stakeholder concept has played an important role in the way we understand sustainable tourism and thus contributes to a more complex process (Waligo et. al., 2013). Research shows that it is necessary to create links between the different stakeholders, whereas

the result can be mutually beneficial for all parties involved (Waligo, et al., 2013). It is imperative to take stakeholder's different perspectives in consideration when managing sustainable tourism, to include them in the planning, and to treat them as active participants. This is a complex matter that often can be problematic due to the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders with different perceptions regarding what is of value and what counts. (Waligo et. al., 2013).

The role and power of the different stakeholders can vary, depending on their characteristics and their role in the community. For instance, large firms with extensive contacts are often considered to be a powerful stakeholder (Cooper, Scott & Baggio, 2009). The existing research of stakeholders show that they have a tendency to pursue their own interest above all, and tension often occurs in relation to elements that are difficult to reconcile, often related to priorities and legitimacy. It is also suggested that the inequalities among stakeholder is caused by differences in power, varying degree of legitimacy and perception of importance during collaborations (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997). When the attention is directed towards issues like sustainability, social welfare and business profits, some researchers believe that the complexity of the relationship and tension tend to increase (Lindberg et al., 2019).

The inability to make all stakeholders participate regarding sustainable tourism is a major obstacle (Waligo, et al., 2013), despite the amounts of research revealing that it is a crucial part in a successful implementation. Although stakeholders in relation to sustainable tourism are a research field that is well documented, the majority share of the research is related to the environmental and economic contexts of the matter. The lesser amount of research approaches the problem from a social aspect, in which this research paper aim to contribute to. With that in mind, our understanding and conviction regarding the stakeholder's participation is a key element in how we perceive socio-cultural interaction and what might be the breeding ground when tension arises.

Sustainable tourism destination

According to Eber (1992) sustainable tourism is defined as *“tourism and associated infrastructures that: both now and in the future operate within natural capacities for the regeneration and future productivity of natural resources; recognize the contribution that*

people and communities, customs and lifestyles, make to the tourism experience; accept that these people must have an equitable share in the economic benefits of local people and communities in the host areas” (Eber, 1992, p. 3). Despite the fact that Eber’s definition is almost thirty years old, and that research within the field has been greatly developed since then, it is still a highly relevant statement.

According to UNEP/WTO (2005), which still applies today and do not deviate much from Eber (1992), the definition of sustainable tourism is *"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"* (UNEP/WTO, 2005, p.12). Topical for this research is the nature-based experiences of Lofoten that relies on resources that belong to the commons. Tourism in such destinations demands a utilization that ensures preservation of natural, cultural and economic aspects, in order to still consist in the future (Lindberg, Fitchett & Martin 2019). According to UNEP/WTO (2005), the three aspects are equally important to maintain the destination's long-term safeguarding (UNEP/WTO, 2005).

Hardy, Beeton and Pearson (2002) argue that it is an uneven concentration between the three pillars, and state that the economic and environmental aspects receive the greatest attention regarding sustainable tourism, unlike local communities which include cultural aspects (Hardy et. al., 2002). Sustainable tourism depends on the ethical issue of right and wrong within an individual or a society in situations where decisions regarding tourism are to be made, which is built upon certain values, attitudes, knowledge and priorities in this specific community (Lindberg et al., 2019). In the discussion regarding nature-based destinations, much rely upon the criteria being used to measure the degree of environmental orientation as a justification for carrying capacity, which in turn are a contentious topic and an often-used argument in limiting the number of visitors to a destination (Saarinen, 2006).

Seen from a tourism-centric perspective the objective is to meet the industry's needs, while a resource-based perspective on the other hand, focuses on conservation and protection of nature and the community culture that exists within a destination. The result being that the sustainable criteria in regards to strategic direction is often not achieved through destination development (Ruhanen, 2004). Some researchers reveal a substantial absence of awareness towards the environmental impact of tourism, as well as the reluctance to make the necessary behavioral changes (Miller, Rathouse, Scarles, Holmes & Tribe, 2010). Others believe that stakeholders have a narrow vision regarding sustainable tourism, strategy and economy, and

this consequently prohibits the realization of sustainable goal development (Hatipoglu, Alvarez & Ertuna, 2016).

Sustainable development

The term “sustainable development” has evolved over the last decades as a multidisciplinary concept within research, but also as an important concept within modern society (Butler, 1999). The concept is discussed in media, highlighted on the political agenda and spoken by researchers. Despite the concept's widespread use, the significance or specific meaning behind it, is still questioned by several researchers (Hardy et al., 2002; Saarinen, 2006; Butler, 1999).

According to Butler (1999), some researchers uncritically accept the concept of sustainable development without being critical of its specific meaning, and therefore also any variables that may exist and thus influence meaning in context. He also points out that the same researchers do not question whether the concept itself is inherently good, and whether the term thus fits the given field of research, arguing that they often identify the term as a solution to negative impacts associated with tourism. On the contrary, other researchers believe that sustainable development is not possible in every context or place, simply because one shoe does not fit all sizes. It is stated that the concept itself seems to have outspoken support, but is apparently based on pure optimism (Butler, 1999).

The Brundtland Commission was the first to provide a definition of the term and claim that sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, WCED, 1987). Some of the available definitions do, however, not grasp the complexity of the term, and the appropriate definition needs to be considered through the context in use.

Tourism destination

One of the most essential elements when discussing tourism and sustainability, is the destination in which tourism actually takes place. There is an ongoing debate regarding the existence of an acceptable definition of the concept among researchers (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011). According to Bornhorst, Ritchie & Sheehan (2010) a destination can be defined as a

distinct “*geographical region, political jurisdiction, or major attraction, which seeks to provide visitors with a range of satisfying to memorable visitations experiences*” (Bornhorst et al., 2010, p. 2). Burkart & Medlik (1981), on the other hand, use an entirely geographical approach to the term by defining destination as “*a self-contained center, a village or a town or a city, a district or a region, an island, a country or a continent*” (Burkart & Medlik, 1981, p.46).

The diversity in which these definitions are constituted enhances the complexity of the term and might be affected by situational context and scientific disciplines. Framke (2002) questions if the wide range of definitions can be meaningful in its use, and claims that the concept generates confusion rather than create a conceptual meaning. Opposed to Burkart and Medliks (1981) definition, we know today that the destination requires more than a physical space. It consists of the activity that relates to tourism, but also the resident population, the community or the businesses that operate in an economic market. They are all a part of a sociocultural environment that characterizes a specific destination, and are bound to the processes that a social community consists of. In order to develop a destination, it is important to emphasize how the different stakeholders coordinate and influence each other and how the creation of identities affect destination development in both negative and positive senses (Viken & Granås, 2014).

Saraniemi and Kylänen (2011) also draw a similar conclusion to the term by including activities of stakeholders in a destination. They claim that a tourism destination consists of institutions and stakeholders stationed in a physical or virtual space, in which transactions and activities related to marketing challenges the traditional perspective of production and consumption (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011). The development of a tourism destination thus cannot be seen solely without including the negative environmental impact it might represent, including the challenges regarding the cultural aspect of the matter, as well as the already existing business models present in the destination. In the context of sustainable tourism, it is thereby implied that increased supply of tourism in a destination also represents challenges that affect the community, which does not rely upon the tourism industry itself, but merely coexist in an interconnected relationship (Bornhorst, Richie & Sheehan, 2010).

The concept of tourism destination is an ever-evolving concept, and the competition is steadily increasing among the different tourism destinations as they develop through their competitive advantages. The challenges following an ever-growing activity concerns

management of several aspects in a destination and the different stakeholders involved. The result is that many destinations have decided to create a governing body, destination management organizations (DMO's), to ensure the successful development of a destination, achieving common goals and to systematically structure the tourism destinations (Bornhorst et al., 2010).

Symbolic interactional perspective

To understand the various stakeholders that coexist in a tourist destination, and further interpret how interactions and roles affect sustainable tourism development, we apply Goffman's (1959) symbolic interaction perspective. Erving Goffman (1959) summarizes the symbolic interactional tradition in his book "Presentation of self in everyday life". The book discusses how individuals act in social interactions, where Goffman (1959) uses a dramaturgical approach to describe the theory. He claims that individuals play a "performance" of themselves in any given situation and defines performance as "*all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants*" (Goffman, 1959, p. 22). This implies that individuals always play a version of themselves in any social interaction that will depend on the social setting the individuals find themselves in. The role can change depending on the audience present and the interaction that exists between the actor and its audience.

Goffman (1959) argues that actors are engaged in the process of impression management during interactions with other actor's and that impressions are given in two ways; an active impression where the actor communicates what she wants to be portrayed as, and a passive impression that the actor herself is not aware of giving. The actor will always try to convey that she has control over the situation, and that the audience should position themselves according to the active impression that the actor gives. The active and the passive impression combined constitutes the actual impression that the audience perceives, and can convey information that the actor herself is not aware of. Therefore, Goffman (1959) believes that any social interaction acts as a negotiation based on the audience's willingness to recognize the individual's definition of the situation.

Goffman (1959) argues that the actor's impressions are the physical performance given to the audience, which allows the audience to confirm the actor's identity in a certain situation by

adding meaning to the performance. Setting and scenery of the situation will also affect the interpretation of the audience and performance of the actor, and will thus entail that a change in scenery will require a change in performance of the actor (Goffman, 1959). The concept of “front” is according to Goffman (1959) the part of the actor’s performance that seeks to define what the audience perceives of the situation, and can be characterized as certain normative definition that the audience recognizes as familiar to a certain type of role. The actor is therefore obliged to fulfill the role expectations in order to maintain a compelling front (Goffman, 1959).

The concept of front is closely linked to what Goffman (1959) refers to as the actor’s regions, which consist of a front stage, backstage and an outside stage performance. An actor's front stage conveys formalities required by the active role, where she uses a presentation of herself expected of the role content and of the audience present. In this performance, the actor is fully aware that she is being interpreted by others and will therefore act accordingly. The backstage performance shows the actor's sincere “self”, where role expectations are set aside, and where the actor allows herself to behave differently and front opinions that do not emerge in the front stage region. Finally, the outside stage performance entails the interaction and performance that occurs when the actor meets the audience independent of the front stage performance, which may involve different performances by the actor (Goffman, 1959).

All individuals have complex roles in their existence, which, according to role theory, indicate a change of performance in different contexts (Goffman, 1959). Roles are a point of contact between the individual's action system and the socially constructed system of society, and each role is based on a set of associated role expectations. Role conflicts arises when individuals experience conflicting or incompatible expectations of one or several roles (Garsjø, 2007). Through Goffman's (1972) contribution, it is implied that a shift in performance between the different roles or scenes can be characterized as role conflicts or ways of coping with the incompatible expectations. However, in some cases the individual feels a certain dislike or disagreement towards some or all of the aspects of a role. In that case, the individual will not deny the role, but the virtual self that the role implies.

Goffman (1972) refers to such a maneuver as role distance; "*Actions that effectively convey some disdainful detachment of the performer from a role he is performing*" (Goffman, 1972, p. 110). The individual actor takes on role distance by considering her role as something outside herself, which allows the actor to cope with the role and thus minimize role conflicts

(Garsjø, 2007). Taking distance from aspects of the role is based on the individual's perception of threat to the self-conception or image, where role distance becomes a coping mechanism to maintain self-respect in the fulfillment of the role obligations (Stebbins, R, 2013).

By applying Goffman's (1959) symbolic interactional perspective, it allows us to interpret how stakeholders cope with tension during development of sustainable tourism, which can provide us with a more nuanced understanding of the concept of heterogeneity.

Methodology

In the choice of methodology, the research question calls attention to a qualitative approach because our study seeks to investigate perceptions and views of individual actors of sustainable tourism. The research is exploratory, in which we have to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships among stakeholders in a tourism destination. The aim of the research is to contribute to fill a theoretical gap in tourism marketing related to how stakeholders cope with tension during sustainable tourism development.

Epistemology can be described as ways of enquiring into the physical and social world; the study of the nature of knowledge. In the aim of understanding how we know what we know, scientists have approached the field from the two contrasting views; positivism and constructionism (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

Positivism versus Social Constructionism

Positivism's view revolves around the social world existing externally and rejects all metaphysics. The approach emphasizes the belief that sensory and empirical observation is the only way to achieve recognition and knowledge. It also suggests that scientists are objective in their activities and therefore value-neutral, which in turn implies that subjective interpretation and social conditions will not influence the research. Over the last 150 years, the philosophy has developed into a distinct paradigm. Paradigms were introduced by Thomas Kuhn, which through his work used paradigms to describe the process of scientific discoveries (Easterby-Smith et.al., 2015).

Social constructionism is a new paradigm that has been developed through the last half century. The idea behind social constructionism is that reality is socially constructed and given meaning through people's daily interactions in relation to others, rather than being objective and external. It is referred to as “interpretive methods”, and can be understood through the belief that social reality is determined by people. A scientist must not only measure patterns and behavior, but also understand and appreciate how people construct their reality and give meaning to their experiences. When applying a social constructionist approach, the focus should be aimed at how people are thinking, both individually and collectively and how communication occurs in human relations (Easterby-Smith et.al., 2015).

Our research is in appliance with a social constructionist approach because we investigate the roles of individuals and social interactions in a tourism destination. In that regard, we need to understand people's perception of reality and the expectations they set for themselves, as well as others. How the individual perceives themselves and their roles is shaped by the situation they are in and who they interact with, which implies that interactions arise through active interpretation.

In depth-interviews

In the aim of gathering information, and resulting from the nature of our problem statement, we conducted in-depth interviews in order to gain a deeper understanding of both internal- and external motivations for relevant informants within our topic. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) emphasize that qualitative interviews are intended to highlight descriptions of the informant's everyday world in order for the researcher to interpret the meaning behind the phenomena described. Given the complexity of the chosen problem definition, it was of importance to distinguish the general in the problem from the specific questions asked in the interviews. The justification for using interviews as grounds for information in this thesis, can be explained through the need of informants to have a greater opportunity to express themselves freely. Social phenomena are complex, and through interviews it is possible to identify nuances and other elements that can act as descriptive factors, essential for understanding both interpretive abilities and personal motivations (Johannessen, Christoffersen & Tufte, 2011).

The number of informants required to gather sufficient information is difficult to predict in advance. We planned to collect data from 15-20 informants, but due to the Covid-19 situation,

it was necessary to cancel some interviews. However, we experienced reaching a saturation point in the data collection before conducting the 14 scheduled interviews, which often indicates that more interviews may not be expedient (Johannessen et al., 2011). Despite the fact that we did not complete all planned interviews, the informants nevertheless provided a representative sample of various stakeholders and roles in Lofoten. Each interview lasted for about 60 minutes.

Based on the nature of our problem statement, a semi-structured interview was the appropriate choice. A semi-structured interview allowed us to create an interview guide in advance, which provided us with the possibility to move freely through the guide, and adapt accordingly to how the interview degenerated. Semi-structured interviews are the most widespread form of qualitative interviews (Johannessen et al., 2011), and combined with the use of an organized interview guide it is possible to construct the interview according to the theme in which the problem statement seeks to investigate.

In order for the informants to provide us with deeper information, we identified key sub-themes within the problem statement and sectioned the interview guide accordingly. Our key sub-themes were; sustainable tourism, tension in between actor's and sustainable development. It is necessary to specify subcategories within the various themes in order to ensure that all aspects are taken into account (Johannessen et al., 2011). We expected, to a certain extent, that topics and problems we had not considered, might appear during the interviews, which in turn emphasize the importance of flexibility in the collection of data and our choice of structure.

Design of interview-guide

Designing the interview guide can be an important tool for gathering valuable information, which will serve as the basis of the analysis. In order for the informants to be able to provide sufficient information, the planning and preparation of a good interview guide is decisive for information obtained (Johannesen et al., 2011).

Although our interviews were semi-structured, there were certain structural refinements, consisting of different parts. In an introductory part, we presented ourselves and the project we were working with, the significance of the interview in relation to the project and other formal purposes regarding documentation and use. Nevertheless, we tried to be vague when

explaining our research so that revealed information was not to affect the informant's answers, hence, the problem statement was not mentioned, but we rather elaborated on the topic of sustainable development. Furthermore, we tried to define the informant's role in society, family status, hobbies and other relevant areas that may provide information regarding the informant's perceptions and views. These were simple factual questions with the intention of achieving an understanding of the informant's life situation and to get the conversation started.

The main section of the interview dealt with issues related to sustainable tourism, tension in between stakeholders and sustainable development. These questions dealt with the informant's own views on the topics, but also their knowledge of other views existing among stakeholders in Lofoten. We managed to establish a pleasant dialogue with the informants where they seemed relaxed and comfortable, which made it easier to create a trusting relationship.

In the final section, we encouraged the informants to take initiative to elaborate on topics they considered to be of relevance when discussing sustainable tourism development. Most of the informants elaborated further on aspects they were enthusiastic about, which provided us with a more nuanced understanding of the informants.

Criteria-based sampling

The idea behind criteria-based sampling is that the researcher first and foremost decides which target group that can provide necessary data, and will further select informants within the chosen target group. What forms the basis for recruiting an informant is not based on representativeness, but rather on expediency. Depending on the given issue and the context in which the research takes place, an appropriate approach is selected (Johannessen et al., 2011)

For our research, criteria-based sampling was the most expedient approach because our objective was to identify informants with specific knowledge and informants in a specific geographic area. Our informants were to represent different roles within Lofoten, both from a professional context, but also actor's that were not directly linked to the tourism industry. In order to gain relevant information for our study, we formed criteria determining how informants were chosen. The informants should have:

1. Knowledge of current challenges in the destination of Lofoten

2. Knowledge of the relevant measures up for debate in Lofoten
3. Historical knowledge of Lofoten
4. Must be a stakeholder of the destination

Recruitment of informants

Prior to the recruitment of informants, a number of decisions had to be made according to the study of choosing. Based on the nature of the thesis, we were dependent on a relatively large number of informants that possess knowledge which is both specific and relevant. In the purpose of obtaining such information, we reached out to contacts who possess in-depth and experience-based knowledge on the topic, but also information about informants that might be of value in this particular study. Another valuable resource within information gathering is the North Norwegian Tourist Board, who offered assistance in terms of professional discussion and in general by providing information on the topic.

In order to get in touch with the selected candidates compatible with our selection criteria, we contacted the candidates per email with information about the project combined with an interview request. Second, we contacted the candidates by phone to confirm and schedule a time frame. We were prepared for the possibility that we would not achieve recruitment of the entire selection of informants, and therefore planned for a larger selection of candidates in advance. This strategy proved to be useful and made us able to proceed as planned when some of the informants had to cancel at the last minute.

Data analysis

According to Malterud (2001) meaning condensation entails that meaning expressed from informants in interviews, are formulated into shorter phrases where the meaning is preserved. By using meaning condensation in the analysis, it is possible to reduce the amount of text and simultaneously extract the meaning behind each part of the interview. Malterud (2001) suggests that the researcher read through the texts in order to gain a holistic understanding of the content and further determine natural “meaning units” within the text. The meaning units are rephrased as simply as possible while still retaining the meaning of the section, and further categorized into specific themes lining up with the research topic. In the final step, the

essentials in each theme are connected into a descriptive statement, whereas the meaning in each section is demonstrated (Malterud, 2001).

When analyzing the collected data, we chose to use meaning condensation as our unit of analysis. Due to our large amount of data, we needed to extract the essence of the information in a systematic approach. Shortly after each interview, we discussed the material in plenary in order to explore interesting findings. Throughout the interview process, we have transcribed all interviews continuously, which has allowed us to create detailed descriptions of each informant. Based on these descriptions, we categorized information into specific themes and further extracted meaning units based on these themes. Finally, we condensed the meaning units while essential elements were preserved.

Validity

The validity of a research refers to the correctness or strength of a statement. It can also refer to the degree in which a research actually measures what it seeks out to measure (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Researchers are concerned about how to ensure validity in constructionist designs, although the term itself is rarely mentioned. Golden-Biddle and Locke (1993) identify three key criteria to demonstrate validity: *authenticity, plausibility and criticality*. Authenticity refers to the researcher's process, which emphasizes the researcher's ability to demonstrate possession of a deeper understanding or detailed knowledge about the various aspects of the study. Plausibility refers to the researcher's ability to link one's own research to previous or ongoing research within the research field. Finally, criticality suggests that the researcher challenges assumptions taken for granted, by offering something original through the research (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 1993).

To ensure the validity of our research, we have worked extensively to understand existing theories on the topic, as well as to understand theories related to the topic. We have done this by reading previous research and through discussions within our educational environment. The process has at times been time consuming due to the complexity of certain theories, whereas some have required time to mature. By re-reading the different theories, we managed to grasp the content step by step. This process has allowed us to link our research to previous research, and as a result enabled us to discover a more nuanced view in our research. Finally, through the symbolic interactional perspective, we provide the opportunity to explore

sustainable tourism in a way that previous research has not investigated, and thus contribute to a new understanding of how tension arises and are managed within the various roles of sustainable tourism development.

Methodological reflections and criticism

Ethical responsibility of the researcher

In the quest of recruiting informants for the research, it was not possible for us to share our specific problem statement with the informants, as this could have influenced the responses or information given by the informants, and further weakened the reliability of our research. We therefore chose to talk only about the topic of "sustainable tourism development in Lofoten" and the challenges each informant had or was aware of. However, we have been occupied with securing the anonymity of our informants both before, during and after the research, and information that can be linked to individuals is therefore communicated in anonymous forms.

Bias

Since we both have attachment to Lofoten, we have been conscious regarding objectivity in the research to ensure that interpretations do not reflect our personal views. Our attachment to Lofoten, however, has made it easier to connect with the various stakeholders of our study and we believe that it has to some extent contributed to their willingness to share information.

Weaknesses in our research

The collection of data for our thesis was largely based on interviews with stakeholders in Lofoten. In retrospect we have realized that our findings could have benefited from a combination of interviews and observation of the different informants, preferably in multiple roles and contexts. We acknowledge that conducting only one interview with each of the stakeholders and therefore only one context, might have given us a less nuanced understanding than several interviews and observations might have provided us with.

The information we have received has been largely dependent on the informant's ability to express themselves clearly. This implies that our findings are characterized by our interpretation of information provided by each informant.

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ARTICLE

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM HETEROGENEITY: HOW STAKEHOLDERS COPE WITH TENSION DURING DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate how stakeholders cope with tension during development of sustainable tourism. Based on Goffman's (1959) symbolic interaction perspective, we show the existence of different roles in Lofoten, and that tension in development processes are characterized by stakeholders who alter between various mindsets as they move between different roles in the destination. As previous research tends to focus on heterogeneity through the existence of conflicting mindsets of stakeholders in sustainable tourism development, our findings shows that change in context is causing stakeholders to struggle in-between roles and either taking distance from the role due to incompatible demands or live in a state of role coping by altering between mindsets. This paper contributes to a nuanced understanding of the concept of heterogeneity, and seeks to create a more enhanced view of the sustainable tourism environment.

Keywords

Sustainable development, sustainable tourism heterogeneity, community-based approach, stakeholder, role theory

Introduction

Sustainable tourism is a precondition for destination development in most Nordic contexts today, which calls attention to tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts (UNEP/WTO, 2005). The intensive growth in tourism worldwide increases the pressure on the triple bottom line of sustainability (Saarinen, 2013). The concentration of the three pillars is, however, claimed to be uneven in practice, and Saarinen (2019) argues that sustainable tourism development projects often end up being tourism-centric, which means that strategies and actions mainly focus on the needs of the industry (Saarinen, 2019). A community-based approach, on the other hand, emphasizes tourism stakeholder participation in sustainable tourism development, which call attention to the needs of the local community and the environment (Peralta & Murphy, 2014). The question remains, however, how stakeholders involved in tourism development, such as tourism providers, tourism organizations, local government and local communities, cope with the co-presence of economic, social and environmental concerns.

Diversity between tourism stakeholders tends to complicate the process of sustainable development (Waligo, Clarke & Hawkins, 2013). According to Dwyer (2018) the different stakeholder groups tend to be characterized by a neo-liberal mindset, where he suggests a necessary shift away from an economy and growth driven paradigm within key tourism stakeholders. Lindberg, Fitchett and Martin (2019), on the other hand, call attention to three mindsets when discussing sustainable tourism heterogeneity, where a professional market mindset, a welfare mindset and an activist mindset characterizes sustainable tourism development processes. This stream of research implies that stakeholders involved in destination development processes face different mindsets, but more research is needed on how stakeholders cope with heterogeneity during sustainable tourism (Dwyer, 2018).

The aim here is to investigate how sustainable tourism heterogeneity influences stakeholder roles during destination development. We ask the following question: *How do stakeholders cope with tension during development of sustainable tourism?* A thesis of this work is that stakeholders are involved in complex negotiations of sustainable tourism under the condition of a community-based approach with high degree of stakeholder participation. Stakeholders are thus assumed to mobilize different judgments about what is valuable and what counts during debates of sustainable tourism (Lindberg et al., 2019), and that tensions and conflicts might be challenging for individuals within contexts and situations with varying mindsets.

We are inspired by sociology, and rely mainly on the interactional performance perspective of Goffman (1959) which calls attention to how individuals cope with social interaction and self-representation through a dramaturgical performance. The perspective refers to a distinction between the individual's front stage, which consists of the desirable expression the individual wishes to give, and the backstage, which consists of the individual's actual self. Through the lens of interactional performance perspective, we want to interpret how stakeholders cope with tensions which can lead to role conflict and role distance within and between stakeholder roles.

This paper sets out to study stakeholders in Lofoten which is a world known tourist destination, and the most popular destination of Norway (Aalmo, 2018). Norwegian Statistic analytics report a visiting number of 363 000 tourists in 2017, which implies almost fifteen times the resident population (Egeberg & Hjorthen, 2017). Lofoten does not currently have the infrastructure or resources to handle such a volume of visitors (Fabritius & Sandberg, 2012). Sustainable tourism has thus become a central topic of the agenda for stakeholders in Lofoten. As a destination primarily for hiking and nature-based experiences, the greatest challenge is to preserve natural habitat from destruction (Mørk, 2016; Johansen, Ødegård, Sørgård, 2016). The resident population also feel neglected as the tourists do not respect the boundaries and values of the host community, which causes tension along the social pillar of sustainability (Johansen et.al., 2016).

Theoretical Framework

Tension in community-based developments

Community-based perspective emphasizes human interaction in the construction of the society, where inclusion of all stakeholders and active participation is required (Peralta & Murphy, 2014). This implies that development of sustainable tourism is co-created through stakeholder interaction where stakeholders contribute with their ontological understanding of situations and actions required in the process. A community-based approach is assumed to facilitate a greater focus on the host community and its needs, and further recognizes that local knowledge and understanding is an important factor in tourism development in order for it to be sustainable (Saarinen, 2006). Some researchers point out the importance of adopting a

resource-based view which focuses on the protection of the natural environment and local culture and heritage in sustainable tourism development (Saarinen, 2006). However, what dominates the market in many destinations is a tourist-centric view that constitutes a greater economic focus in sustainable development (Lindberg et al, 2019).

In a destination consisting of various stakeholders, discussions are characterized by different perceptions and values, making it challenging to satisfy all parties involved. Freeman (2010) points out that stakeholders have a central role in discussions of the external environment of organizations, or in this case, of the destination (Freeman, 2010). Waligo et al. (2013) claims that stakeholders can be categorized into two groups; individuals or groups that are affected by tourism development, and the individuals and groups that directly affect tourism development. Research indicates the importance of establishing links between the various stakeholders in order to achieve results that are mutually beneficial to all parties. However, the task is challenging because of the stakeholder's different views on what is of value and what counts (Waligo et al., 2013).

The distinction between stakeholder groups seems to be an underlying cause when tension arises. Cooper, Scott and Baggio (2009) points out that larger firms or individuals with extensive networks and prominent characteristics are powerful stakeholders in sustainable tourism development. Tension in community-based developments also concerns the distribution of power and what Jordan (2007) refers to as the core-periphery power structure where the decision-making authority lies with stakeholders with administrative, cultural and economic power. Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) points out that tension can arise as a result of power differences, stakeholder legitimacy and the sense of urgency in the development process. Hence, community-based development with extended stakeholder participation, tends to increase the complexity and tension as more criteria must be taken into account in the process of sustainable tourism development (Lindberg et al., 2019).

Dwyer (2018) points out that the existing neo-liberal mindset focuses on short-term profits and economic growth, which creates challenges for sustainable development because the process is expected to be built on the same criteria's that create problems with sustainable development in the first place. A neo-liberal mindset that favors powerful stakeholders is thus incompatible with community-based development which emphasizes all stakeholder participation, and can lead to tension between destination stakeholders. Lindberg et al. (2019), on the other hand, argues for sustainable tourism heterogeneity where tension is a result of

how stakeholders legitimize what is of value and what counts during debates of sustainable tourism. Their research further identifies the existence of three mindsets of sustainable tourism; professional market mindset that emphasizes professionalization of industry and market development, welfare mindset which argues for tourism that improves society and citizen welfare, and an activist mindset that prioritizes nature's carrying capacity in tourism development (Lindberg et al., 2019).

This brief review shows that tension in sustainable tourism depends on varying logics between tourism-centric views and resource-based views. It is further implied that a neo-liberal mindset dominates the market, while other researchers point out that sustainable tourism environments are more complex and that various mindsets are in play during processes of sustainable tourism. We believe that tension in sustainable tourism occurs at a stakeholder level and that stakeholders must be seen in the context of their role and associated expectations.

Role tension in sustainable tourism

Goffman's (1959) symbolic interaction perspective provides an interpretation of how individuals act in different roles of themselves, and how tension can arise as a result of moving between these roles. The theory is based on the assumption that all individuals play a performance of themselves in any social interaction and that the performance will depend on the social setting the individuals find themselves in. The role can thus be changed according to the audience present and the interaction that exists between the individual and its audience (Goffman, 1959). The individual's presentation is nevertheless two-fold, and Goffman (1959) refers to the different performances as front stage and back stage, whereas the front stage represents a preferred self with certain role obligations, while the backstage represents an individual's actual self.

Stakeholders in a tourist destination will have several roles in the local community based on how they act in their front stage and backstage roles. Goffman (1959) provides an example of how a waitress will play a completely different role (front stage) in her communication with the guests than she plays in communication with the chefs in the kitchen (backstage). All individuals have complex roles in their existence, which, according to role theory, indicate a change of performance in different contexts (Goffman, 1959). Through the three pillars of

sustainability, stakeholders are to a greater or lesser extent within the social, economic or environmental perspective. Where the various stakeholders are located depends on how they legitimize what is right and wrong in social situations and what they consider to be important (Lindberg et al., 2019). The fact that change in context can cause individuals to be torn between perspectives can be characterized as a conflict that leads to distancing in the dominant role (Goffman, 1972).

Roles are a point of contact between the individual's action system and the socially constructed system of society, and each role is based on a set of associated role expectations. Role conflict arises when individuals experience conflicting or incompatible expectations of one or several roles (Garsjø, 2007). Through Goffman's (1972) theory, it is implied that a shift in performance between the different roles or scenes can be characterized as role conflicts or ways of coping with the incompatible expectations. However, in some cases the individual feels a certain dislike or disagreement towards some or all of the aspects of a role. In that case, the individual will not deny the role, but the virtual self that the role implies. Goffman (1972) refers to such a maneuver as role distance; "*Actions that effectively convey some disdainful detachment of the performer from a role he is performing*" (Goffman, 1972, p. 110). The individual actor takes on role distance by considering her role as something outside herself, which allows the actor to cope with the role and thus minimize role conflicts (Garsjø, 2007). Taking distance from aspects of the role is based on the individual's perception of threat to the self-conception or image, where role distance becomes a coping mechanism to maintain self-respect in the fulfillment of the role obligations (Stebbins, 2013).

To sum up, the theory shows how individuals move between the so-called front stage and backstage of a role, and how this maneuver can cause role conflict and role distance with stakeholders of sustainable tourism development. Rather than focusing primarily on existing mindsets that can contribute to heterogeneity in sustainable tourism development as existing research implies, we will use the theoretical perspective of symbolic interaction to explore the roles that exist and how these can contribute to tension within and between stakeholder roles.

Methodology

Research setting

Lofoten is one of Norway's most popular destinations and attracts visitors from all over the

world. With steep mountains surrounded by magnificent scenery, Lofoten is constantly promoted as a unique gem through media and other digital platforms. With its old fishing traditions, Lofoten offers well-preserved and nostalgic fishing villages which provide visitors with an authentic experience.

The current situation in Lofoten can be regarded as challenging due to factors such as lack of infrastructure, structural weaknesses, degradation of natural environment and increased negative impact on the local community (Steen, 2020). Small scale and weak economies of the municipalities in Lofoten prohibits necessary tourism facilitation which accelerate the frustration of the local community (Røsvik, 2017). Through the project “Sustainable destination development Lofoten 2018-2020” (Antonsen, 2018), it was identified six consequential categories of increased tourism in Lofoten, such as tourism misbehavior, traffic challenges and lack of skills, sanitary challenges, lack of respect for privacy, waste and degradation of nature. The report is based on feedback from the local community, where 65 % have negative experiences with tourism; e.g. tourists showering in graveyards, tourists ignoring danger warnings, tourists leaving garbage and feces in nature and tourists entering private homes (Antonsen, 2018).

In the wake of the tourism challenges, collaborations have been initiated between DMO’s, local politicians and tourism stakeholders to deal with the situation in 2014. Projects such as the “Master Plan Lofoten” (Steen, 2017a) involved a number of private and public representatives, where project groups were formed to work on specific topics. The “Master Plan Lofoten” provided the background for the preparation of the “Strategic Plan Lofoten 2017-22” (Steen, 2017b), which further included a description of specific measures and associated time perspectives.

Our study stems from the challenges in Lofoten that are outlined above and the involvement of stakeholders who in different ways argue for what is important when developing the destination. We have visited Lofoten over two weeks to investigate the attitudes and tensions that characterize the destination, where the aim is to interpret the stakeholder roles of the sustainable tourism environment.

Data collection and participants

The data collection is largely based on in-depth interviews with various stakeholders in

Lofoten. Stakeholders with different geographical distances, and thus different degrees of tension from tourism, are included to ensure a broader perspective on perceptions of increasing tourism and the future of Lofoten. The study also uses archive data which includes newspaper articles and collaborative projects in sustainable tourism development, such as *Masterplan Lofoten* and *Handlingsplan for bærekraftig reisemålsutvikling i Lofoten*. The choice of informants is established through community-based perspective, which emphasize involvement of different stakeholders in a host community (Saarinen, 2006).

The 14 informants in the research are based on a strategic selection with given criteria's. The initiators behind *Masterplan Lofoten* have been the starting point for informant selection, in addition to advice from our supervisory professor, contacts in the Nordland County Council and NordNorsk Reiseliv, all of whom have in-depth knowledge of sustainable tourism development in Lofoten. All informants have been contacted by email or telephone, and all interviews have been recorded and transcribed. To ensure the anonymity of the informants are mentioned only by the use of category; Accommodation, attraction, guide, tourism organizer, DMO, citizen and local government. The interviews are mainly conducted in Norwegian, with the exception of one interview performed in English.

Stakeholder/role	Mindset	Involved in STD	Age	Sex
Accommodation manager 1 (AM 1)	Professional market	No	Early 60s	Male
Accommodation manager 2 (AM 2)	Professional market	Yes	Early 50s	Male
Guide 1	Activist	No	Mid 30s	Male
Attraction manager 1 (ATM1)	Professional market	Yes	Late 50s	Male
Tourism organizer manager 1 (TO1)	Professional market	No	Early 50s	Female
DMO1	Professional market	Yes	Mid 50s	Female
DMO2	Professional market	Yes	Late 30s	Female
DMO3	Professional market	Yes	Mid 40s	Female
Citizen 1	Welfare	No	Early 30s	Male
Citizen 2	Welfare	No	Early 60s	Female
Citizen 3	Welfare	No	Late 60s	Male
Local government role 1 (LG1)	Professional market	No	Late 50s	Male
Local government role 2 (LG2)	Welfare	Yes	Mid 30s	Male
Local government role 3 (LG3)	Activist	Yes	Early 50s	Female

Table 1: Participants

Interviews and analysis

The aim during our interviews was to investigate perceptions and attitudes related to the present situation in Lofoten and potential concerns for the future of the destination. Our objective was to gather information that could provide understanding of the different stakeholders' ways of coping in their various roles of sustainable tourism.

Throughout the interviews we focused on sustainable development, both in a professional context and on a more personal level. We asked questions related to the informant's opinion and understanding of the different perceptions that exist in the local community, how the different mindsets cause conflicts between different stakeholders and how they cope with tension. Our questions sought out to clarify how the informants perceive their role within the destination and how the different conflicting views causing tension are handled, both by themselves and others.

In order to obtain a deeper understanding of the situation in Lofoten, we analyzed the interviews and compared them to each other and available archive data. This allowed us to understand some of the contradictory perceptions which contributed to a broader knowledge when interpreting possible findings. Meaning condensation has served as the practical tool in the interpretation process (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) with the aim of obtaining meaningful elements from each of our informants seen in relation to the research's purpose.

Findings

The findings section is organized as follows: First, we address the situation of sustainable tourism development in Lofoten. Second, we identify the roles that are present in the destination. Finally, we answer the research question focusing on how stakeholders cope with tension in and between roles of sustainable tourism development.

Roles in tourism development in Lofoten

Sustainable tourism development in Lofoten is characterized by a community-based approach where many stakeholders are involved in the development process, and the stage where the development takes place is therefore characterized by a co-existence of different roles. Destination marketing organizations (DMO's) play a key role in development of tourism, where the goal is to coordinate tourism across the involved tourism stakeholders and at the same time promote Lofoten as an attractive destination (Steen, 2017a). DMO's have a professional market mindset where they are to ensure that Lofoten has a strong market position in tourism, but is also responsible for development in line with the three sustainability pillars (DMO1, 2 and 3).

Other stakeholders in the destination are directly linked to tourism activity through offering accommodation and experiences. These are stakeholders that are largely characterized by a professional market mindset, where economic focus and industry development is central in the discussion of sustainable tourism (AM 1 and 2, ATM 1 and TO 1; Lindberg et al., 2019). An activist mindset is also present in the industry, but in contrast to other industry stakeholders, an activist mindset considers nature's carrying capacity to be the highest priority during tourism development (Guide 1; Lindberg et al., 2019). In opposition to the professional market mindset, the citizen role is characterized by a welfare mindset that emphasizes tourism that improves society and citizen welfare (Lindberg et al., 2019), and are considered to be stakeholders that are affected by tourism development, rather than active participants (Citizen 1, 2 and 3; Waligo et al., 2013).

In recent years, the municipalities have taken a more active role in the development of Lofoten in terms of visitor management projects and improvement of tourism facilitation (Steen, 2017a). These stakeholders are expected to focus on each of the three sustainability pillars, whereas the interests of the local community, nature and local businesses are taken into account (LG2). The different stakeholders, however, argue through conflicting mindsets of sustainable tourism development, where a professional market mindset (LG1), a welfare mindset (LG2) and an activist mindset (LG3), are all present within the local government role.

Although it is possible to identify different roles in tourism development in Lofoten, each role will still be based on individual performance depending on the position and mindset of the role holder, where the latter in many cases appears to be a situational factor.

Citizen role

Citizens 1, 2 and 3 argue according to what we have called the "citizen-role" in the discussion of sustainable tourism development in Lofoten. A precondition for the citizen role is that stakeholders can live and thrive in the community they are established. The role implies that stakeholders have a social and environmental perspective considering sustainable tourism development (Citizen 1, 2 and 3) and one could argue that the role is characterized by a welfare mindset (Lindberg et al., 2019). The role shows a clear tendency to put the social perspective first when arguing, while an environmental perspective is applied to support social arguments (Citizen 1, 2 and 3). Citizens 1 and 2 believe that the needs of the local

community must be taken into account to a greater extent, arguing that businesses and development stakeholders tend to exclusively focus on economic activity and growth in the development process.

The citizen informants 1, 2 and 3 are not critical to tourism in Lofoten per se, however, citizen 1 and 2 describe a fear of losing the identity and cultural conditions in the place they consider as home. They fear that the local community will cease to exist and thus be replaced by a destination that is solely existing for tourism. This is clearly stated in the discussions around the increasing use of AirBnB in Lofoten, where tourism has contributed to local citizens and businesses exploiting the opportunity for increased earnings:

It is heartbreaking. Every house used to be lit up the day before Christmas eve, but now every house is dark because they are only rented out in the summer months. It's like a ghost town. The young people who want to establish themselves in the municipality, either cannot afford or find a vacant house and are forced to move away from the community (Citizen 2).

Some of the citizen informants (Citizen 1 and 3) appreciate the benefits that tourism contributes to and acknowledge the positive effects of year-round restaurants and a wider range of transportation and communication. On the other hand, they express a concern about the growing number of expected tourists because of poorly constructed freeways, destruction of hiking areas and the lack of service facilities. According to Goffman (1959), this is a clear distinction between backstage and frontstage performance for citizen 1 and 3, where the given situation will determine which performance the citizen puts on. Citizen 2 on the other hand, is consistent in the backstage role, claiming the negative impacts of tourism has exceeded its limits.

All citizen stakeholders point out that destination development needs to be better organized, so that the pressure of tourism can be distributed spatially in Lofoten. Citizen 2 refers to a lack of competence and an overall plan, which prevents sustainable development and claims that tourism industry and development stakeholders need to recognize that capacity goes beyond accommodation capacity. Nature is suffering due to excessive pressure on popular hiking areas, and the destruction becomes even more extensive as new paths are formed. They further point out that littering in terms of feces and paper is a problem that many people face when they are hiking (Citizen 2 and 3). Citizen 1 and 2 experience the high season as unbearable, and express a concern for lack of governmental regulations:

We are being invaded. It is not to endure and is directly damaging to our wellbeing (Citizen 1).

The citizen role is based on what each actor considers to be important when they are part of a local community. Based on different premises, citizen 1 and 3 experience role conflict between their frontstage and backstage performance due to incompatible expectations in the citizen role. Citizen 2 disagrees with the content of the citizen role, not because she rejects the role itself, but rather rejects the virtual self that the role implies (Goffman, 1959). By being consistent in her backstage role she copes with tension by taking role distance from the front stage role. When the condition of welfare is not fulfilled as a result of e.g. over-tourism, stakeholders (Citizen 1, 2 and 3) will experience tension between their front stage and back stage performance (Goffman, 1959). All citizen informants experience tension within their role, but have different ways of coping dependent on the degree of dissatisfaction.

Guide role

The guide role implies being involved in the tourism industry by providing services related to nature experiences. Interaction with the visitors is a large part of the role as it is necessary to share knowledge and physically spend time with the customers outdoors. The role entails business activities, while the focus, however, is not on profitability and economic growth, but rather a concern towards carrying capacity of nature which is consistent with an activist mindset (Lindberg et al., 2019; Guide 1).

Guide 1 argues that development in general, rarely can be regarded as sustainable, but rather more or less sustainable dependent on the considerations at play. For example, he argues that if someone offers kayaking lessons, these are made of plastic and can therefore not be regarded as sustainable. Still, if one is concerned about preserving each kayak to extend its lifespan, it could be considered as more sustainable (Guide 1). He expresses frustration towards other businesses who exclusively focus on economic gain and show little or no responsibility towards the environment in which they operate. However, he points out that it is understandable that businesses need to make money:

You sell rib-tours and have done this all your life. You used to have three trips a day, but now eight trips are demanded per day, why would you say no? I know why I would [refuse expanding], but why should other actors say no when they can make more money. Then they can live better themselves and maybe travel more (Guide 1).

The problem often revolves around how tourism is organized, or according to Guide 1, how tourism in Lofoten lacks an organized structure. He refers to the “Public Access Law”, where adventure providers mostly can do as they please. In addition, he emphasizes that satisfactory tourist infrastructure must be a prerequisite, which is not the case in Lofoten at the moment. He highlights that places that once were unique in Lofoten, have now become tourism territory and are directly destroyed as a result. He portrays situations where the role as provider of experiences conflicts with a desire to reprimand tourists who exhibit bad attitudes during their guided tours. As a result, the manager feels stuck between his role as a professional stakeholder (front stage) where profits are bound to the visitor’s experience, and the role as a nature enthusiast (backstage) with a wish to respect and care for nature (Guide 1).

When I'm working as a guide, I can't tell people to behave properly when they are misbehaving. When I'm not working, I always try to tell people off in a respectful manner, if they do things they should not do. When you spend a lot of time in nature, the bigger the chances are to come across stupid people (Guide 1).

The guide acknowledges that he associates the current situation in Lofoten with concern, to an extent that it is an option for him to leave if it escalates further. When other companies approach him in the quest of obtaining information about undiscovered areas to visit in Lofoten, Guide 1 avoids sharing his knowledge in fear of damaging those places as well. However, he is expected to behave professionally as a provider of experiences and tries as far as possible to hold on to personal values, which becomes challenging since these are largely based on an environmental perspective on sustainable development. Hence, one can assume that it is easier for the guide role to keep distance from other roles related to Lofoten’s nature, the lack of sustainable development and more general concern for the environment, in order to endure the professional role and cope with the conflicting mindsets these represent, which leads to him taking role distance (Goffman, 1972; Guide 1).

Accommodation manager role

Accommodation manager 1 and 2 argue according to what we refer to as the “accommodation role”. The role implies that stakeholders provide accommodation to visitors of the destination and are dependent on a consistent level of visitors in order to maintain operations (AM1 and AM2). Accommodation manager 1 and 2 recognize that their businesses are largely dependent on other tourism stakeholders who offer services and experiences, in order for

tourists to make use of accommodation in the destination. Both accommodation managers tend to argue through an economic perspective regarding sustainable tourism development, and claim that the destination needs to develop through professionalization and structuring of the market to facilitate tourism increase that would strengthen the industry, indicating a professional market mindset (Lindberg et al., 2019):

Reinebringen [local mountain] can handle at least 2-3000 tourists more each day if only we could charge the hikers. I do not think it is a problem for any of the visitors to leave a small amount of money at a popular hiking route, when they know that the money will be spent on maintenance of the area. In that case, the problem of destroyed hiking areas is solved (AM1).

AM1 shows through the quote that he acknowledges the negative impacts of increased pressure on natural habitat and local community (back stage), on the other hand, he argues that the problem can easily be solved through organized facilitation (front stage). AM2 experiences that his role contains high expectations from other stakeholders to address the three sustainability pillars in terms of contributing to economic growth in the municipality, to safeguard the local community's interests in development and to ensure environmental consideration within the company's operations. AM2 tends to argue for sustainable tourism through social welfare argumentation (Lindberg et al., 2019), but often by suggesting measures that benefit the industry economically and structurally. When confronted with issues regarding littering and degradation of nature, he claims that it does not exist in Lofoten and that the extended use of AirBnB is rather causing the unsustainable direction for tourism development. What is interesting with AM2, is that he is consistent in his front stage performance, and never step out of his role as an accommodation manager:

In August last year when there was a lot of focus on littering and over-tourism, I went for a few hikes. I'm not typically going for hikes, but I went to Fløya and Djevelporten [mountains in Lofoten], and based on what I had heard, I was expecting to walk in a queue. But it was not like that and I was almost alone. I did not see a single piece of rubbish, no stools or paper. I only saw nature as it should be.
(AM2)

The quote shows that he does not change role or perspective in situations where it would have been natural e.g. when he is hiking in nature (backstage), but rather view his surroundings through the accommodation manager (front stage) role, and draws conclusions that meet the expectation of the working role. One could argue that this maneuver allows him to “free” himself from disagreeable aspects of the role in order to cope with tension. Being consistent

within a role (role distance) can be favorable because it minimizes role conflicts and contributes to maintaining self-image in the front stage role (Goffman, 1972).

Attraction manager role

ATM1 argues through what we have labelled the “attraction manager role”. The role implies that the stakeholder (ATM1) provides attractions for visitors as the main business activity, which involves active interaction with the audience through guided tours of the attraction. The informant (ATM1) is thus largely dependent on tourism activity and local community to utilize the service in order to exist in the destination. An economic perspective characterizes the stakeholders view of sustainable development, defining sustainable tourism as “the ability to charge visitors” (ATM1). In discussions of destination development, the informant claims that the destination needs to control “gazing tourists” and rather target a quality segment that ensures profitability while addressing the issue of carrying capacity at the same time. One can thus argue that ATM1 is characterized by a professional market mindset (Lindberg et al., 2019) in his front stage role as a manager:

I want to regulate the number of tourists through higher prices in the destination (ATM 1).

However, the informant (ATM1) tend to support the economic argumentation by applying a welfare mindset (Lindberg et al., 2019) claiming that citizen wellbeing and heritage preservation is a precondition for sustainable tourism:

We need to ensure that the local community does not feel neglected. If somebody feels invaded in their private property, we have to find a way to channel the tourists somewhere else. I also want the visitors to pay for services and places they use in the destination, but I do not want the local people to pay for using their own community. My business offers the local community to use the attraction at very discounted prices. That is the least we can do (ATM 1).

The quote shows that the ATM informant does not deny that Lofoten is struggling, and acknowledges the frustration of the local community and the concerns associated with the expected tourism increase (backstage). He also conveys a tension with other tourism stakeholders (e.g. AM role) who do not share his view of contributing more to the welfare of the local population. The informant is alternating between his front stage role as an attraction manager and the backstage role (Goffman, 1959) through welfare argumentation (Lindberg et al., 2019) depending on the discussion at hand, because the different roles require different

performances. The shift of performance between the front stage and backstage role, entails role conflict within the attraction manager role (Goffman, 1972).

Tourism organizer role

What we have labeled as the “tourism organizer role”, are stakeholders that base their organization on selling packages and experiences offered by other tourism stakeholders in the destination. This implies having a wide range of contacts within the tourism industry and maintaining these relations in order to provide quality deliveries. However, it will also be necessary to establish a good reputation among potential customers (TO1). When discussing tourism development, TO1 argues through an economic perspective and claims that tourism is the foundation of the economic activity in Lofoten, and further argues that services available for the local community would not exist otherwise. She refers to service offerings, transportation options and year-round restaurants, which creates a metropolitan feel in a small community (TO1):

When people tell us that they are critical to all the tourists coming to Lofoten, I tell them that they need to consider all the facilitation, restaurants and other positive effects the tourism industry brings. They need to understand that it would not be possible to keep businesses open if not for tourism activity. The local community needs to understand that this is what they want (TO1).

In the discussion of sustainable tourism development, TO1 claims that the existing tourism system is ineffective and believes that the destination needs to attract more profitable segments in order to be sustainable. This implies that TO1 is characterized by a professional market mindset (Lindberg et al., 2019), and claim that the tourism industry is exclusively positive for Lofoten. However, she acknowledges that some areas are experiencing greater pressure from tourism, but argues that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages (TO1). The argumentation shows that the informant is consistent in her front stage role as a TO manager and distances herself from aspects of the role that entail focus on local community frustrations, in order to cope with tension. This maneuver allows her to fulfill the role obligations while maintaining self-conception and image (Goffman, 1972).

DMO role

DMO1, DMO2 and DMO3 argue through what we have labelled the "DMO role". The role

describes tourism stakeholders who have a key function in destination development and strategic planning to strengthen the tourism industry. It involves conducting targeted marketing and promotion of Lofoten in order to attract the right tourists. DMO companies are partially financed through tourism stakeholder membership, and must attend to the interests of the members in their operations. The stakeholders (DMO1, DMO2 and DMO3) are characterized by a professional market mindset (Lindberg et al., 2019) and argue that the existing tourism system is ineffective and needs infrastructure improvement (e.g. road network and larger airport) in order to facilitate a more productive tourism destination.

We can accommodate far more tourists in Lofoten, even in the summer season, it is just a matter of managing the areas we have available in a sensible way. We have not worked actively with visitor management in the past, but rather uncritically allowed tourists to use the destination as they want. Maybe it is about time that we make a parking lot outside Henningsvær [a fishing village] and offer shuttles to the place instead. We all welcome tourism to the destination, but if we do not make any changes, this will be Lofoten's failure (DMO1).

The statement shows the DMO role's view regarding the existing tourism system, where they nonetheless recognize the need for developing in line with the three sustainability pillars by addressing the concerns of the local community and nature's carrying capacity. The informants (DMO1 and DMO2) point out that tension arises as a result of tourism stakeholders (DMO members), not fully recognizing the effort they put into promotion of the destination. The DMO role often ends up at the intersection of strengthening the tourism destination on one hand, and tourism management that allows co-existence with local community and nature's premises, on the other hand. One could argue that the DMO role is constantly experiencing role coping within the working role (front stage).

The backstage role of the informants (DMO1 and DMO2) appears through their acknowledgment of acquiring a certain performance to obtain the role obligation as DMO's, and admit that in their role as citizens they experience some concerns of tourism development strategies, but accept it because it is part of the job description. This indicates that conflict within the DMO role concerns the incompatible expectations from industry development based on a professional market mindset and the citizen expectations based on a welfare mindset. One could argue that the DMO stakeholders (1, 2 and 3) cope with tension by actively participating in sustainable tourism projects to accommodate conflicting expectations.

Local government role

The “local government role” implies being employed in different departments within the six municipalities in Lofoten. The responsibilities and expectations regarding sustainable tourism development will vary accordingly, which entails a broader focus area and implicates a lower direct involvement in tourism development (LG1, LG2 and LG3). LG1 argues according to a professional market mindset where he emphasizes the importance of economic growth and tourism development to strengthen the industry. LG2 on the other hand, is more concerned with the social aspect of the development in Lofoten, and argues that social welfare in tourism development requires more attention due to its complex nature. In contrast, LG3 advocates that investment in nature conservation and facilitation is the most urgent measure for further development of Lofoten.

We are experiencing major traffic challenges and littering the entire year around. It has come to the point that you are almost expecting to step into feces or used tissues if you stop to take a picture somewhere in Lofoten (LG3).

LG3 further argues that all degradation of nature is self-inflicted as the destination itself decides what the tourists are offered, and further claims that due to poor regional cooperation, development processes proceed too slowly. However, she acknowledges that DMO’s have a more visible role in the discussions and believes this is important in further developments. On the other hand, LG2 complains over a nonexistent overall plan for how tourism facilitation should be done and who should be responsible. He criticizes the municipalities for being passive in the discussions of tourism development, and the travel industry for having too much focus on the economic perspective of sustainability (LG2). As a contrasting contribution to the discussion, LG1 rejects the existence of problems related to tourism, further arguing for a destination expertise that has great competency and is expected to handle the alleged problems themselves (front stage).

It's not possible to satisfy everyone. Some might even believe that a number of ten tourists are enough. Problems and conflicts exist, so that we can solve them. We create the negativity ourselves (LG1).

The different stakeholders within local government roles have different convictions regarding how sustainable tourism development in Lofoten should proceed (LG1, LG2 and LG3). However, in debates of sustainable development, tensions occur when the individuals move in-between different selves (front stage and backstage) (Goffman, 1972). For example, LG2 who’s employment implies a nature-based perspective, tends to argue through welfare

argumentation (Lindberg, 2019). LG1 trivializes the challenges Lofoten is experiencing and argues that the challenges of over-tourism are not that severe (front stage). On the other hand, the LG informant 1 tends to argue differently depending on the discussion at hand, and further claims that Lofoten will not be able to handle an increase of tourism given the current situation (backstage).

Coping with tension in-between roles

We asked the following question “*How do stakeholders cope with tension during development of sustainable tourism*”? Our findings show seven types of roles with varied views as related to sustainable tourism development in Lofoten (*Table 2*). Existing research indicates that the mindset of key tourism stakeholders in the destination often is dominated by a professional market mindset (Dwyer, 2018; Lindberg et al., 2019). However, our findings indicate that there exist variations within each of these roles as well. The citizen role argues for social welfare in their local community, and claim that over-tourism is damaging to their wellbeing (*Table 2*). Wellbeing is thus a precondition to fulfill citizen role “obligations”, and when this practice is not possible, tension arises as the citizen stakeholders are not able to embrace all the aspects that the role implies, which force the citizens to live in a state of role coping, that in some cases, lead to role distance.

A professional market mindset is common within the AM role, ATM role and TO role, who claims that the tourism industry needs to be more efficient and facilitate for more profitable tourist groups in order to be sustainable. They do, however, experience different expectations in their roles that create different types of tension and coping (*Table 2*). The ATM role experiences tension with other tourism stakeholders (AM, TO and DMO) that do not acknowledge the social perspective of sustainable development (*Table 2*). AM role and TO role, on the other hand, distance themselves from disagreeable aspects (over-tourism, littering) of their roles in order to cope with tension arising from expectations from the citizen role and ATM role (*Table 2*).

The DMO role has similar argumentation to other tourism stakeholders (AM, ATM and TO role), regarding sustainable tourism, and emphasizes tourism development to be more professionalized (*Table 2*). However, the DMO role experiences a greater pressure to address all the sustainability pillars in their operations, which causes tension within the role. All the tourism stakeholders with a professional market mindset are in opposition to the citizens

welfare mindset due to different perceptions of what is of value and what counts during debates of sustainable tourism (Lindberg et al., 2019). The citizen role bases their role content on identity and belonging to the local community (backstage), while tourism stakeholders exercises their role performance based on a professionally composed self (front stage).

The guide role, on the other hand, represents an activist mindset of sustainable tourism development (*Table 2*), which causes tension to other tourism stakeholders due to their professional market mindset that does not legitimize the “environment-first” argumentation. The local government role represents stakeholders that possess different mindsets regarding sustainable tourism, and experience tension within the role as a result of different mindsets in their front stage and backstage role, but also between other local government roles that do not share the same mindset of sustainable tourism development (*Table 2*).

	1. Guide	2. Accommodation managers	3. Attraction managers	4. Tourism organizers	5. DMO's	6. Local government	7. Citizens
Characteristics	Tourism stakeholder and nature enthusiast. involvement in tourism activities in terms of nature-based experiences	Tourism stakeholder, direct involvement in tourism activities in terms of accommodations and in destination development.	Tourism stakeholder, involvement in tourism activities in terms of attractions.	Tourism stakeholder, direct, involvement in tourism activities in terms of organizing packages and experiences.	Actively working on destination development and tourism promotion. Intermunicipal scale.	Employed in the municipality. Varying degree of involvement in tourism development.	Stakeholders that are a part of the local community, No direct involvement in tourism development.
View on sustainable tourism	Activist mindset	Professional market mindset and welfare argumentations.	Professional market mindset and welfare argumentation	Professional market mindset	Professional market mindset; welfare and activist argumentation	Professional market mindset, welfare mindset and activist mindset	Welfare mindset
Role tension	Between front stage (prof. market mindset) and backstage (1 activist mindset). Tension with professional market mindset stakeholders in the destination.	AM1: Between front stage (prof. market mindset and backstage (welfare mindset). AM2: Do not experience tension in the representative role. Tension with citizens (use of Airbnb).	Between front stage (prof. market mindset) and backstage (welfare mindset). Tension with other professional market mindset stakeholders in the destination.	Do not experience tension in the representative role. Experience tension with citizens (ignorance of tourism contribution).	Between front stage (prof. market mindset) and backstage as (welfare). Tension with other tourism stakeholders (do not acknowledge their efforts).	LG1: Between front stage (prf. market mindset) and backstage (welfare mindset). LG2: Between front stage (activist mindset) and backstage (welfare mindset). LG3: with tourism stakeholders (prof. market mindset)	Prevented from embracing the content of the citizen role (due to high tourism activity). Tension with tourism stakeholders (prof. market mindset).
Coping with tension	Role distance from the backstage role as a nature enthusiast.	AM1: Alter between mindsets dependent on role performed. AM2: Taking role distance by being consistent in the working role.	Alter between mindsets dependent on role performed	Taking role distance by being consistent in the working role.	Alter between mindsets dependent on role performed.	Alter between mindsets dependent on role performed.	C1, C3: Alter between mindsets dependent on context. C2: Taking role distance from front stage role by being consistent in backstage role.

Table 2: How stakeholders cope with tension during development of sustainable tourism

Discussion and conclusions

This study contributes to sustainable tourism literature by investigating how stakeholders cope with tension when they perform their various roles during development of sustainable tourism. WTO (2005) refers to a logic consisting of three elements (economic, social and environmental) of sustainable tourism and assumes that each element is based on individual constructions that do not depend on each other. We add new knowledge to the field by presuming that the tourism environment is more complicated due to several roles in play, consisting of their own versions of sustainable tourism development, which further changes with the representative roles.

We argue that Lofoten can be considered as a rural area, an island where stakeholders are both citizens, employees or possess other roles they need to address, which also means that every stakeholder has an active role in several areas of a local community, compared to other destinations. When stakeholders perform their role as a citizen, for example, they will be inclined to express frustration over the negative impacts of tourism, which represent the stakeholders backstage. However, as role and context change, the front stage emerges through a shift in performance in order to adjust to a tourism stakeholder role. As a consequence of the expectations and demands required by a tourism stakeholder role, the less satisfactory aspects of tourism development will be set aside.

Previous research on sustainable tourism development tends to categorize people into groups based on views and mindsets. However, this classification is not corresponding with how negotiations of sustainable tourism development are carried out in practice, where our findings indicate that negotiations are contextually contingent. Goffman's (1959) symbolic interaction perspective allows us to interpret sustainable tourism heterogeneity through a sociological approach, and view tourism heterogeneity as a function of the individuals performance of themselves during debates of sustainable tourism development. Through Goffman's perspective (1959), we have investigated how tension occurs in-between roles of sustainable tourism, and further how tourism stakeholders cope in their various roles as tension arise. By applying the symbolic interaction perspective, we have discovered that sustainable tourism development is a complex composition of expectations, self-image and role coping on an individual level.

The perspective indicates that heterogeneity is more complex than negotiations of what counts, and rather demonstrates that stakeholders often find themselves in multiple roles,

which represents conflicting expectations. The expectations and obligations associated with the individual role will therefore determine how individuals argue in debates of sustainable tourism development. Stakeholders of a tourism destination represent conflicting mindsets in debates of sustainable tourism (Lindberg et al., 2019) and adjust their performance dependent on the audience present and the interaction that exists between the individual and its audience (Goffman, 1959). Our investigation shows that change in context is causing stakeholders to struggle in-between roles and either taking distance from the role due to incompatible demands, as exemplified through the guide role, or live in a state of role coping, as exemplified through the ATM role (*Table 2*) which Goffman (1972) refers to as role conflict.

The symbolic interaction perspective allowed us to uncover tensions within stakeholder roles, and insight into how stakeholders cope with tension in multiple roles in a tourism destination. Our investigation revealed, however, that certain stakeholders (AM2 and TO1) acts consistently in a front stage performance and does not enter other roles, regardless of audience or context. This maneuver implicates a role distance according to the symbolic interaction perspective. Our findings suggest that role distance complicates sustainable tourism development when conflicts and challenges caused by tourism activity are not being properly recognized, because the front stage performance is constantly being maintained. Nevertheless, this is an interesting area that needs more research in order to gain a holistic understanding of the implications of stakeholder roles in destination developments.

Cooper, Scott, Baggio (2009) and Jordan (2007) describe power differences of stakeholders as implications of power-position in discussions of sustainable tourism, either due to extensive networks and prominent characteristics of individuals, or as a result of power structure and decision-making authority of certain stakeholders. Our findings however, points towards an alternative understanding of the term, and we suggest that power of stakeholders are contextual, meaning that power depends on the role performed. This challenges Mitchell, Agle and Woods (1997) understanding of power, whereas it refers to power-periphery or power structures implicating that power depends on the type of stakeholder. Through the lens of symbolic interaction perspective, power rather depends on what a role requires of stakeholders, such as in the guide role. When the backstage role is incompatible with the frontstage role, this forces the guide to separate from important aspects of his beliefs when performing the front stage role, which leaves the customers (e.g. tourists) in power.

Saarinen (2006) argues for tension between stakeholders with opposite logics of tourism-centric views or resource-based views. We extend this research by claiming that Saarinen's (2006) contribution is too limited, and that stakeholders are not exclusively bound to one view, but rather move between multiple views depending on the role they hold or parts of the role they perform. Our research shows that tourism stakeholders do not exclusively consider sustainable tourism, either through a tourism-centric view or a resource-based view, but change their view as they move from one role to another. Attraction manager 1, for example, maneuvers between a tourism-centric view in his profession, and a resource-based logic in his role as a citizen. Another example is Guide 1, where the stakeholder plays the role as an environmental activist, however, his working role requires him to hold a tourism-centric logic where he is profiting from tourism activity.

Dwyer (2018) argues that a neo-liberal mindset dominates tourism development, where powerful stakeholders characterize development processes through focusing on economic growth. He criticizes the neo-liberal mindset and argues for the necessity of a "political economic perspective" which emphasizes that economic processes cannot be regarded independently of social and political processes, as people hold multiple roles and participate in many different interactions. We acknowledge the presence of the two mindsets, but our results extend this dichotomy because sustainable tourism heterogeneity is more complex in its form, where stakeholders in different roles have both perspectives and experience tension between different performances of themselves in the same role. Accommodation manager 2 for example, puts great effort in avoiding conflict in different performances of himself and therefore holds on to a neo-liberal mindset independent of context.

Lindberg et al. (2019), on the other hand, argues for the existence of three different mindsets in Lofoten, which are based on negotiations of sustainable tourism where multiple cultural-based justifications are present between perspectives of sustainable tourism. The research implies that heterogeneity is caused due to how stakeholders legitimize what is of value and what counts during debates of sustainable tourism (Lindberg et al., 2019). We extend the research of Lindberg et al. (2019) by arguing that stakeholders in a tourism destination are experiencing tension mainly as a result of possessing multiple roles, and dependent on context, stakeholders move between competing mindsets of sustainable tourism.

Our research contributes to a nuanced understanding of the concept of heterogeneity, and seeks to create a more enhanced view of the sustainable tourism environment. More research

is, however, needed on the contextual approach to stakeholder roles in sustainable tourism development. Future studies could fruitfully explore this issue further by gathering larger observational data and using longitudinal study to observe informants in multiple contexts and roles in the destination over time.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guide

BAKGRUNNSINFORMASJON	
1. Alder og sivilstatus?	2. Hva er dine viktigste arbeidsoppgaver?
3. Hva er ditt yrke og lengde på arbeidsforhold?	4. Hvordan har du det på jobb? Trivsel?
5. Hvilken utdanning har du?	6. Har du noen fritidsinteresser eller driver med noen fritidsaktiviteter?
BÆREKRAFT	
7. Hva legger du i begrepet bærekraftig utvikling?	8. Vil du si at Lofoten er en bærekraftig turistdestinasjon? • Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?
9. Tar du del i noen annen arena i samfunnet utenom jobb? • Diskuteres Lofotens fremtid på de ulike arenaene? • Ser du ulike grupper i noen av «dine arenaer» hvor det oppstår konflikter eller uenigheter rundt Lofotens fremtid mtp. bærekraftig utvikling?	10. Etter din oppfatning, hva må skje i næringslivet eller lokalsamfunnet for at Lofoten skal bli en (mer) bærekraftig destinasjon – både nå og i fremtiden?
TURISME	
11. Hvordan oppleves Lofoten for deg som fastboende i høysesongen for turisme?	12. Hvordan oppleves Lofoten for deg som fastboende i lavsesongen for turisme?
13. Kunne du noen gang tenkt deg til å flytte fra Lofoten?	14. Etter din mening, er turisme positivt eller negativt for Lofoten? • Dersom du måtte trekke frem positive følger av turisme, hva er de? • Dersom du måtte trekke frem negative følger av turisme, hva er de?
15. I hvilken grad vil du si at Lofoten er avhengig av turisme (de ulike bedriftene i næringslivet)? • Dersom de aktører som er avhengig av turismen ikke hadde eksistert, hva tenker du dette vil innebære for Lofoten i form av trekraft for fastboende? Ville det vært like attraktivt?	16. Tror du det er mulig å øke/ta imot et enda større volum av turister, uten at dette får negative konsekvenser for både lokalbefolkningen og miljø?
17. Hva er dine tanker rundt turistskatt? Kunne dette vært aktuelt for Lofoten?	18. Har du kjennskap til samarbeid i næringslivet som skal fremme en bærekraftig destinasjon?
19. Etter din oppfatning, lykkes de ulike aktørene i næringslivet å samarbeide mot en mer bærekraftig destinasjon? • Hva er din definisjon på å ha lyktes med det?	