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Sustainable Tourism Regulation and Development

The Case of the Danish Coastline

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Sustainable Tourism Regulation and Development: The Case of the Danish Coastlines

Abstract

Tourism development at coastlines varies significantly across the globe; from areas where hotels and resorts crowd the coastlines to highly protected areas with restricted access. During the past 80 years, the coastlines in Denmark have been heavily protected from development and construction. However, in 2014 the Danish politicians opened up for softer regulation at the Danish coastline and invited municipalities and other actors to propose tourism development projects within this coastal zone. In the call for development projects, it was explicated that the projects should be sustainable. By comparing the approved projects to academic discourses of sustainability, this paper provides new perspectives on how sustainable tourism development was enacted by Danish tourism actors. The findings suggest that tourism actors do not necessarily take into consideration a holistic approach to sustainable tourism development. Longer-term perspectives are not emphasized whereas shorter-term economic effects and benefits are central to the discourse. The study also indicates a lack of political leadership in the envisaged transfer towards sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism Development, Coastal Tourism, Protected Areas, Tourism Policy, Denmark.

Introduction

During the last couple of decades, academics have discussed sustainable development of tourism (Butler, 1991; Font & Harris, 2004; Neto, 2003; Liburd & Edwards, 2010). Sustainable tourism development has been extensively researched (e.g. Buckley, 2012; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Miller & Twining-Ward, 2005; Neto, 2003; Saarinen, 2006) and a key theme is that tourism development should be based on the environmental, socio-cultural and economic pillars of sustainability (Buckley, 2012; Hall, 2000; Lansing & De Vries, 2007; Miller & Twining-Ward, 2005; Mowforth & Munt, 2016; United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) & United Nations World Tourism Organisation (WTO), 2005).

The concept of sustainable development is often pointed to as necessary tool for developing tourism in environmentally fragile and sensitive places, such as coastal areas (e.g. Butler, 199; Hopkins, et al., 2012; Mowforth & Munt, 2016) where a considerable part of tourism development takes places (Bramwell, 2004; Ong & Smith, 2014; Rajan, Varghese, & Pradeepkumar, 2013). Denmark is widely respected for its environmental standards (Bramwell & Alletorp, 2001) visible, among others, in its unspoilt and untouched coastal areas. Denmark has an 80 year-old tradition for protecting the coastlines through laws and policies that forbid, or at least heavily restrict development within 300 metres of the coastal zone. However, in 2014 the Danish government decided to encourage tourism development within the protected coastal zone (Danish Business Authority, 2014). A pilot scheme project was initiated to give municipalities and tourism stakeholders the opportunity to apply for dispensation from coastal zone protections in order to open up for new development projects at the coastline. The following criteria for selection of pilot projects were applied:

- 1. There must be a potential for developing coastal and nature-based tourism, attracting foreign tourists and the possibility to deliver this potential within the project.*
- 2. The construction of physical projects must be connected to existing tourism activities in the area to ensure the largest possible synergy and the project must adhere to other political considerations for tourism in the planning of the municipality to ensure a cohesive development of the area.*
- 3. The physical projects must be sustainable and architecturally adapted to match the surrounding nature and landscape” (Danish Business Authority, 2014: 13, translated by the authors).*

The three criteria require that pilot projects should develop coastal and nature-based tourism in a consistent manner (1 and 2), while the physical projects should be sustainable (3). The meaning of sustainable was not clarified any further in the call. Based on these selection criteria ten development projects were approved and looking both at the call and the ten pilot projects, this paper discusses the following questions: How do the tourism actors behind the ten projects view sustainability and does this view align with sustainability as a theoretical concept? Or is sustainability in the ten development projects fundamentally different from how academics define sustainable tourism development (STD)? The paper analyses and discusses how Danish tourism actors communicate STD in the ten approved project proposals and thereby add to existing knowledge on how STD is implemented in actual tourism project proposals. Hereby, the paper investigates how STD is understood and used to describe and plan new tourism development projects. The objective of the paper is therefore to establish what (if any) academic discourses of sustainability are communicated in the ten approved project proposals and how tourism stakeholders present their understandings of sustainability for tourism development in Denmark and to which degree this aligns with, or diverges from, academic understandings of the topic.

Background of the Pilot Scheme

In order to communicate how the Danish politicians were willing to open up for a few development projects, but not encouraging massive development and construction along the coastline, the politicians introduced the pilot scheme initiative as follows:

"... a pilot scheme that will give selected destinations the opportunity to establish sustainable physical tourism projects with future development opportunities and perspective, in order to improve coastal and nature-based tourism in Denmark" (Danish Business Authority, 2014: 13, translated by the authors).

The idea behind the pilot scheme seems to be to facilitate sustainable physical tourism projects that would ensure growth and development in the Danish tourism sector, especially in the rural areas along the Danish coast.

Researchers and other actors in the Danish tourism sector have noted that tourism is an increasingly important element in the Danish economy (e.g. Eriksen & Ahmt, 1999; Halkier, 2014; VisitDenmark, 2015) and several studies (e.g. Centre for Coastal Tourism (CKT), 2013; Halkier, 2014; Lyck, 2002) document and analyse declines in tourism arrivals and international competitiveness in Denmark. The pilot scheme project gave municipalities and tourism stakeholders the opportunity to propose plans for projects along the coastline, hereby facilitating new tourism development and hopefully turning the decline into growth. In October 2015, permission was given to ten development projects (Danish Business Authority, 2015a). When the approval of the ten projects was announced by the Danish Business Authority, the word "sustainable" was nowhere to be found (Danish Business Authority, 2015b). Instead, the third criterion was rephrased as follows:

3. The physical projects must be adapted architectonically to match the surrounding nature and landscape (Danish Business Authority, 2015b: 2, translated by the authors).

No explanation of why sustainable was omitted from this criterion was provided by the authorities. However, as far as the researchers know, the ten projects were developed with the original criteria in mind and should thus indicate how tourism actors in Denmark suggest how to implement sustainable tourism development in the pilot projects in the coastal zone. The ten development projects are briefly summarized in table 1 below.

Table 1: Overview of the ten approved development projects

	Project Name	Full Project Descriptions	Short Description
1	Blaavand Beach Park	(Varde Kommune, 2015)	Construction of wellness facilities, luxury vacation apartments, restaurant, shops and a nature promenade/boardwalk connecting Blaavand beach and Hvidbjerg beach.
2	Soendervig Holiday Park	(Ringkjoebing-Skjern Kommune, 2015)	Construction of 500 holiday houses, the largest indoor waterpark in Northern Europe and wellness facilities. Expected yearly increase of foreign bednights up to 620,000. Focus on new energy saving technology.
3	Dune hotel in Loekken	(Hjoerring Kommune, 2015)	Construction of a new hotel, conference facilities and restaurant, a wellness centre, pathways and viewpoints among the dunes, 10 new beach houses on the beach and rebuilding an old water tower.
4	Beach life Fjellerup	(Norddjurs Kommune, 2015)	Construction of 4 connected activity points on the 2.5 km beach/coast line of Fjellerup.
5	Nordals Holiday Resort	(Soenderborg Kommune, 2015)	Construction of 2 hotels, 400 holiday homes, 2 campsites, water experiences, marina for 100 boats, shops and restaurants and trail and hiking paths. The project is expected to attract up to 560,000 guest on a yearly basis.
6	Island Center at Christiansminde	(Svendborg Kommune, 2015)	Construction of building with room for activities such as teaching and a cafe, water sports, a promenade, biking trail, facilities for outdoor life and new hotel rooms at the existing hotel Christiansminde. The project is expected to create 10,000 extra bednights.
7	Safari Lodge Knuthenborg	(Lolland-Falster Kommune, 2015)	Construction of 200 theme based accommodation units combined with conference and dining facilities.
8	Aquapark Moen	(Vordingborg Kommune, 2015)	Construction of 500 holiday houses, experience centre based on water, nature/outdoor activities and industrial culture. The project is expected to attract 13,000 weekly guest.
9	Visitor Center at Stevns Klint	(Stevns Kommune, 2015)	Construction of a Visitor centre about Stevns Klint a UNESCO World heritage site, new parking facilities, a nature playground, pathways, new stairs to reach the cliff and improvement of existing viewpoints. The project is expected to attract 50,000 tourist a year.
10	New Nordic Coast	(Gribskov Kommune, 2015)	Construction of a new beach hotel, beach pier with sea bath, rebuilding of the existing piers, broader sand beaches, sauna and an activity area. The project is expected to attract 30-40,000 more visitors a year.

(All material translated by the authors)

Methodology

This paper examines the ten approved development projects by subjecting data from the project proposals to a qualitative content analysis. It is important to note that this article is only based on data available from the written project proposals. Consequently, the

paper is not based on deeper insights into the rationales, considerations or motives behind the proposals, but only relies on the presentation of the projects in publicly available documents. The content analysis entails systematic readings of the body of texts, images, and symbolic matters included in the project proposals and entails analysis of the meanings, means of communication, messages and symbols in the documents (Krippendorff, 2013). Every content analysis requires a context within which the texts are examined (Krippendorff, 2013) and this paper uses sustainability as the theoretical framework and context for the analysis.

There are considerable differences in both length of, and level of depth in, the ten project proposals and consequently, the extent to which sustainability is addressed differs significantly. As this paper examines the *written* proposals and thereby sustainability as communicated herein, the actual implementation of sustainability is not included in the analysis. Instead, the purpose of the analysis is to investigate how the concept of sustainability is articulated and communicated in these ten project proposals. As researchers we acknowledge that sustainability is a long-term process, and not a short-term goal (Miller & Twining-Ward, 2005; Liburd & Edwards, 2010; Mowforth & Munt, 2016) and therefore, the intention of this paper is not to assess the how the ten proposed projects effect tourism development in Denmark or the (non)sustainability hereof. Instead the intention is to analyse to what extent a series of proposed and approved tourism projects incorporate sustainability given the rather vague articulation of sustainability in the original call.

Theoretical Framework

STD is not a novel phenomenon or a ‘new’ theoretical concept. Yet, actual tourism development does not necessarily align with textbook versions of sustainability. There is little doubt that STD is a congested subject and it has proven difficult to translate its theoretical construct into practical development practices (Buckley, 1996; Buckley, 2012; Font & Harris, 2004; Hall, Gössling, & Scott, 2015; Lansing & De Vries, 2007; Mowforth & Munt, 2016; Richards & Hall, 2000; Saarinen, 2006; UNEP & WTO, 2005). STD has, nevertheless, been acknowledged as an important socio-economic driver (Dahles, 2000; Moscardo, 2005; Nyaupanea, Morais, & Dowler, 2006; Ong & Smith, 2014; Sneddon, Howarth, & Norgaard, 2006; UNEP & WTO, 2005) and as an environmental management tool (Buckley, 2012; Butler, 1991). Sustainable development was defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED] in the Brundtland report (WCED, 1987) and has since been adapted to tourism. Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry recognises tourism as:

“a model form of economic development that should improve the quality of life of the host community, provide a high quality of experience for the visitor, and maintain the quality of the environment on which both the host community and

the visitor depend” (UNWTO, World Travel and Tourism Council and the Earth Council, 1997).

The definition of sustainability in Agenda 21 incorporates the three main pillars of sustainability and emphasizes socio-cultural and environmental issues as integral parts of tourism development. However, for tourism to become sustainable a suitable balance between economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects is essential (Hall et. al., 2015; Neto, 2003; UNEP & WTO, 2005). In order to achieve this balance, STD should be seen as continuous process requiring the participation of all relevant stakeholders, strong political leadership and consistent monitoring of effects (Miller & Twining-Ward, 2005; UNEP & WTO, 2005). As a result, the justification for STD is a long-term and optimal use of economic, socio-cultural and environmental resources for the greater benefit of not only tourists or tourism organisations, but also the host community (Richards & Hall, 2000). As a result, several researchers (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Hall, 2000; Mowforth & Munt, 2016; Simpson, 2008) recommend that governments should prioritise sustainable development for tourism, as they control a wide range of instruments that can influence the sustainable development of tourism.

The Role of Governments in Facilitating STD

Governments play an important role in STD through policies and laws that frame tourism development (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Halkier, 2014; Hall, 2000; Ruhanen, 2013). Governments generally take an interest in tourism issues such as policy making (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Farmaki, 2015; Regeringen, 2014; Simpson, 2008), collaboration among stakeholders (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Dredge, et al., 2011) and tourism development in general (Farmaki, 2015; Moscardo, 2011; Simpson, 2008). Tourism researchers agree that it is necessary to integrate STD into all levels of policymaking on local, regional and national levels, supporting the role of governments as a major actor in STD (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Farmaki, 2015; Ruhanen, 2013). Governments often see tourism as a way to foster economic growth and development (Hall, 2000; Mowforth & Munt, 2016; Simpson, 2008) and traditional planning approaches to tourism span from boosterism, economic industry-oriented, physical/spatial, community-oriented and sustainable approaches (Getz, 1986; Hall, 2000). According to Hall (2000), boosterism is the planning approach dominating tourism and this approach defines ‘all tourism’ as ‘good’. The notion that tourism development is inherently and only good is, however, questioned by many researchers (e.g. App & Crompton, 1998; Bramwell, 2004; Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997; Getz, 1986; Hall et. al., 2015; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Lansing & De Vries, 2007; Nyaupanea et al., 2006; Richards & Hall, 2000; Simpson, 2008). Hall (2000; 2008) argues that a truly sustainable approach to planning entails integration with other planning processes, preservation of nature and ecological processes, protection of human heritage and biodiversity and holistic planning approaches. Governmental approaches to planning can thus determine whether tourism development is solely seen

as an economic growth factor or if more long-term approaches to development, and thereby sustainability, characterise the planning processes. However, Sneddon, Howarth, & Norgaard (2006) argue that there is a fundamental lack of progress in how governments deal with sustainable development and Choi & Sirakaya (2006) argue that many countries have no clearly defined national policies or procedures to facilitate sustainable development.

Measuring STD

There are various ways in which to operationalise and measure sustainability and thus many approaches suiting different development processes or projects (Hall et al., 2015; Lansing & De Vries, 2007; Sneddon et al., 2006). Therefore, in order to determine STD several measurement tools and assessment methods are available. Many researches (e.g. Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Schianetz, Kavanagh, & Lockington, 2007; UNEP & WTO, 2005; Zeppel, 2015) have investigated how STD can be operationalised and one tool often recommended for measuring sustainability is the use of indicators.

Sustainability indicators are one of the most used and most widely recommended tool to assess the sustainability of tourism projects and destinations (Butler, 1991; Miller & Twining-Ward, 2005; WTO, 2004; Zeppel, 2015). According to Miller and Twining-Ward (2005), indicators should measure different aspects of sustainability considering ecological, social, economic, institutional, cultural and psychological dimensions. There are many ways to group indicators, but the most commonly used in sustainable tourism is to group them into economic, social, cultural and environmental indicators (Miller & Twining-Ward, 2005). Within these groups, there are many possible measures and the list of indicators varies depending on different aspects such as, for example, the specific destination, tourism policy, involvement of stakeholders and involvement of the local community (Miller & Twining-Ward, 2005). As the Danish politicians did not, to the authors' knowledge, define or communicate which areas of sustainability were considered relevant in regard to the pilot scheme, the grouping applied in this paper will be based on the most commonly used indicator areas: environmental, social and economic. Some of the environmental indicators of particular relevance in coastal areas are the loss of biodiversity, erosion, pollution, protection of nature, waste management and degradation of ecosystems (App & Crompton, 1998; Atik, Altan, & Artar, 2010; Font & Harris, 2004; Hall, 2009; Neto, 2003; Rajan et al., 2013). Socio-cultural effects from tourism are well documented and concerns regarding local communities seem imperative in sustainable tourism development (e.g. App & Crompton, 1998; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Cole, 2006; Dahles, 2000; Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997; Getz, 1986; Richards & Hall, 2000). Important socio-cultural effects and indicator areas are community participation/involvement, local empowerment, protection of local heritage, community wellbeing and quality of life (Benckendorff, et al., 2009; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Cole, 2006; Dahles, 2000; Liburd, Beckendorff & Carlsen, 2012; Nyaupanea, et al., 2006; Simpson, 2008; Tosun, 2006). Finally, economic effects are among the most

well documented in tourism (Neto, 2003; Pratt, 2011) and key economic indicator areas are economic growth, employment, new investment opportunities, leakages and multiplier effects (App & Crompton, 1998; Eriksen & Ahmt, 1999; Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997; Pratt, 2011).

In order to further determine how sustainability is communicated in the project proposals, well-established baseline issues and indicators are of relevance. Baseline issues identified by UNEP & WTO (2005) are relevant for all tourism development (Miller & Twining-Ward, 2005; UNEP & WTO, 2005) and consequently also for the ten development projects. These baseline issues are local satisfaction with tourism, effects on local communities, economic benefits of tourism, tourism seasonality, energy management, user intensity of the area and development control of the area. The remaining baseline issues of water availability and consumption, drinking water quality, sewage treatment and solid waste management (UNEP & WTO, 2005) are not deemed relevant, predominantly because Denmark is a country with advanced, integrated systems that already address these issues. Finally, it is important to note that this paper only examines the project *proposals* and not the actual implementation of the projects.

Although indicators are among the most commonly used tools, they have also been subject to criticism. For example, Hall (2000) argues that there has been a tendency to choose the indicators easiest to measure, or the ones with the most visible and tangible effects, which are often economic in nature. Zeppel (2015) further argues that social and community issues are often overlooked. Nevertheless, indicator areas are a viable tool in order to address sustainability issues in tourism development (Miller & Twining-Ward, 2005). The theoretical framework in this paper is thus built around the three pillars of STD and relevant baseline issues as identified by UNEP & WTO (2005). The ten projects are still at the planning phase and the analysis seeks to detect and discuss representations of STD by looking at the areas and indicators outlined above in the written project proposals. In the subsequent section, we account for the ten project proposals through the lenses of the theoretical framework on sustainability.

Findings

As for the presentation and articulation of sustainability in the ten project proposals, table 2 (next page) presents an overview of the results of our qualitative content analysis. As such, the table shows the relationships between the theoretical framework and the ten project proposals and the remainder of this section is dedicated to deeper explanation and investigation of these relationships.

Table 2: Evidence of STD in the ten development project proposals (see references in table 1)

Words or phrases communicated in the ten project proposals	Project no.										No. of projects
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Times the word sustainability is mentioned	0	2	9	0	11	6	0	0	8	3	6
Explanation of sustainability	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	2
Use of indicators as tool to address sustainability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Environmental Awareness											
Environmental sustainability	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	2
Protection of the local environment	+	-	++	-	-	-	-	-	+	++	4
Effects on protected areas	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	4
Action plan to deal with possible environmental effects	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	2
Nature interpretation/education	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	4
Use of natural/sustainable building materials	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	4
Use of renewable energy	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	3
Total out of 7	3	2	6	1	3	3	0	0	2	4	
Social Awareness											
Accessibility for all (guests, locals & disabled)	-	++	++	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	5
Involvement of locals	-	-	+	-	++	+	-	-	++	-	4
Local pride & identity	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	2
Local heritage & culture	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	++	-	5
Community wellbeing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	1
Authenticity	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	3
Social sustainability	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total out of 7	0	2	3	2	3	3	0	0	6	1	
Economic Awareness											
Development potential from tourism	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	+	++	+	10
Increase in revenue from tourism	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	9
Increase in no. of bednights/tourists	+	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	10
Jobs created by tourism	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	+	5
Economic growth/value from tourism	+	+	+	+	++	+	++	-	++	+	9
Economic sustainability	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	3
Total out of 6	3	5	5	4	6	5	4	3	6	5	
Time Aspect											
Long-term 5+ years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Short-term 3-5 years	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	8

Explanation of table 2: - indicates no mention in the written project proposal, + indicates mention in the written project proposal and ++ indicates mention more than twice in the written project proposal.

The term sustainability is introduced and applied very differently in the ten project proposals. Only projects 3 and 9 (Dune hotel in Loekken and New Nordic Coast) offer terminological explanations. Projects 3, 5, and 9 use the word more frequently than the rest of the projects (9, 11 and 8 times respectfully). Four projects do not mention sustainability at all, thereby leaving sustainability unaccounted for (see table 2). The remaining proposals show substantial difference in the depth of describing, defining and applying sustainability. Projects 2, 3, 5, and 6 predominantly relate sustainability to the use of building materials (e.g. natural and certified wood).

None of the projects refers to the use of indicators as a measurement tool and the content analysis points to economic issues dominating all ten project proposals. This is in line with previous findings on public approaches to tourism as a means to economic development (Hall, 2000; Hall et. al., 2015). All ten proposals emphasise positive local economic effects, connoted by words and phrases such as economic growth, economic development potential, economic value, number of jobs, tourism revenue and increase in revenue from tourism (see table 2). All project proposals mention how the projects will increase overnight stays and visitation to the area. Projects 2, 5, 6 and 9 include calculations of the expected increases in bed-nights. Project 3 (Dune hotel in Loekken), 5 (Nordals Holiday resort) and 9 (Visitor centre at Stevns Klint) apply the term 'economic sustainability'. The total expected increase in numbers of tourist pr. year for the ten projects is around 2,175,000. This includes both increases in overnight stays and excursionist. Furthermore, as most of the ten projects require considerable financial investments, calculations of investment needs are included in some of the proposals.

Seven of the project proposals display awareness of socio-cultural effects, using words and phrases such as accessibility, community wellbeing, local heritage and culture, local pride and identity, and use of local resources. Project 3 (The dune hotel in Loekken) mentions social sustainability. Furthermore, nine of the project proposals point to local environmental effects by using words and phrases such as protection of the local environment, nature interpretation/education, effects on protected areas and use of natural/sustainable building materials. Project 3 (The dune hotel in Loekken) and Project 5 (Nordals Holiday resort) mention environmental sustainability directly. As opposed to the calculations of visitor numbers and estimated profit included in many of the proposals, there are no specific calculations of socio-cultural and environmental effects or their intrinsic worth. Although many of the project proposals display some awareness of these issues, few of them describe how to deal with and handle adverse effects. None of the project proposals point to long-term aspects and effects of the projects as they frame the proposed projects within a period of three to five years. Project 3 (the Dune hotel in Loekken) displays awareness of environmental effects most directly and points to an already established action plan regarding the project's possible environmental effects. Furthermore, the municipality's tourism policy states:

“Tourism must be developed on a sustainable platform with respect for values in the surrounding environment and cultural heritage and under consideration of the local community” (Hjoerring Municipality, 2015; 40, translated by the authors).

The municipality of Stevns (Project 9, Visitor centre at Stevns Klint) also describes a tourism policy with visible elements of sustainability stating that:

“An increase in tourism must not damage or exploit the values of Stevns Klint and must consider the wellbeing of the local community” (Danish Heritage & Absolut Landscape, 2015; 26, translated by the authors).

Several baseline issues are included in the project proposals. Economic benefits of tourism are clearly communicated in all ten proposals whereas issues regarding what percentage of the area is used for tourism purposes and issues regarding controlling the number of tourists and thus the intensity of usage were not directly addressed or detectable in the proposals. Six project proposals communicate awareness of the effects tourism could have on the local community, but only three proposals mention local satisfaction with tourism as a subject relevant to the quality of life of local residents. Five of the project proposals mention tourism seasonality as an issue that the projects will help minimise. None of the project proposals go into depth with tourist satisfaction, or provide proof of demand for the individual projects e.g. through market surveys. Lastly, four project proposals address the use of sustainable or renewable energy e.g. solar and waterpower.

In conclusion, the linkages between the theoretical framework and the ten project proposals are rather weak, indicating that sustainability as communicated in the ten development projects is rather different from how academics define sustainable tourism development (STD).

Discussion

The ten project proposals relate to sustainability in differing details and forms. Overall, commitment to STD and evidence of advanced understandings of sustainability are rather weak across the ten project proposals. However, to some extent, the ten proposals address the main pillars of sustainability (i.e. environmental, socio-cultural and economic principles). Project 3 (The dune hotel in Loekken) communicates environmental issues and is the only proposal that points to an existing action plan addressing environmental effects of the project. Many of the proposals have little or no mentioning of environmental effects, especially in the long-term.

A study conducted by VisitDenmark (2015) presents the top ten reasons for tourists visiting Denmark as follows: open access to the coastline, sea and beaches as number 1, nature as number 4 and clean and environmentally friendly as number 6 out of 10. This

suggests that tourists visiting Denmark value pristine and unspoilt nature and especially coastal areas, thus pointing to these issues as focal to the attractiveness of Denmark as a holiday destination. Consequently, it would be reasonable to expect that environmental concerns and awareness were high on the agendas for the ten development projects, especially in the planning phase, in order to preserve Denmark's position as a coastal and nature destination. However, very few project proposals show high levels of commitment to environmental issues, such as loss of biodiversity and degradation of beaches and coastal zones, although these issues are well-documented internationally in coastal zone development areas (Bramwell, 2004; Hopkins et al., 2012; Rajan et al., 20012; Wesley & Pforr, 2010).

Policies or plans to address long-term effects or how to control user intensity steaming from the proposed increase in tourist numbers are not communicated in any of the project proposals. In regards to socio-cultural effects of tourism, the project proposals do not address this issue, with the exemption of project 9 (Visitor centre at Stevens Klint), which mentions social concerns of the local community. Generally, the ten proposals do not address aspects of quality of life or subjective wellbeing of locals and tourists, even though these have been found to be a critical part of STD (Bramwell & Sharman, 2000; Cole, 2006; Liburd, et al., 2012; Simpson, 2008; Tosun, 2006). Local support, involvement and environmental preservation appear to be, by large, missing if the ten development projects are to contribute to a sustainable development of tourism in the selected coastal areas of Denmark.

Other baseline issues and indicator areas, although identified and adaptable to local scales by UNEP & WTO (2005), were absent in the ten proposals whereas issues relating to tourism's economic benefits were strongly communicated. Larger-scale tourism development often needs substantial external funding, as local capital is rarely sufficient (Nyaupanea et al., 2006). This is the case for several of the ten development projects. Tourism affects local communities and although many of the project proposals point to new local job creation, there is little mentioning of how the projects are otherwise to deliver positive effects. By relying on external investments, many of the benefits from tourism will not necessarily benefit the local community as leakages can arise. Economic leakages are often a large problem for tourism development (Dahles, 2000; Eriksen & Ahmt, 1999; Mowforth & Munt, 2016) and although there is no proof of wether this might be the case for the ten development projects, the project proposals do not display awareness of this issue.

A strong discourse of economic measures and goals characterises all ten proposals and this indicates a boosterism approach to planning, as opposed to a more sustainable approach. Hall (2009) argues that we need to challenge the economic discourse in tourism, which is a well-established critique of tourism as a means to development (Liburd, 2010). However, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability are not as evident in the proposals as economic issues. Notably, the proposals aim to attract more tourists, increase tourist capacity and other, positive economic effects, seemingly at the

expense of a more holistic understanding of STD. According to Hall et. al. (2015) STD requires a steady state economy with limits to growth and expansion, meaning that tourism cannot forever expand. Steady state tourism is a tourism system that encourages qualitative development, but not aggregated quantitative growth (Hall, 2009). If this argument holds, then the proposed total increase in number of tourists based on calculations in the ten proposals is a threat to the very development of sustainable tourism. The total increase in quantity proposed and predicted in the project proposals in a small country as Denmark, raises concerns about the sustainable development of tourism. Additionally, the ten project proposals work with rather short time frames, failing to document long-term planning or reflections concerning the quality and values of nature and socio-cultural aspects. Halkier (2014) argues that short-term thinking of both public and private stakeholders is well known in destination development across Europe. The economic discourse and shorter-term planning periods communicated in the ten project proposals could be seen as limitations to sustainable development of tourism in Denmark and points to enactments of sustainability that do not correspond well with theoretical understandings of sustainability.

Policy and Government Roles

The role of governments as catalysts for incorporating sustainable principles and measures is widely recognised (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Hall, 2000; Mowforth & Munt, 2016; Simpson, 2008). As mentioned in the introduction, the criteria for being selected as part of the pilot scheme originally were:

- 1. There must be a potential for developing coastal and nature-based tourism, attracting foreign tourists and the possibility to deliver this potential within the project.*
- 2. The construction of physical projects must be connected to existing tourism activities in the area to ensure the largest possible synergy and the project must adhere to other political considerations for tourism in the planning of the municipality to ensure a cohesive development of the area.*
- 3. The physical projects must be sustainable and adapted architectonical to match the surrounding nature and landscape” (Danish Business Authority, 2014: 13, translated by the authors).*

The qualitative content analysis of the ten proposals shows that criteria one is present in all the project proposals. Most proposals point to issues such as attracting more tourists, increasing the number of foreign overnight stays and economic potential of the projects. Criteria two is also visible across all ten proposals as the project proposals mention, for example, the municipalities’ current tourism policies, other development projects and matches between development projects. There is, however, little mentioning of how the ten projects align with other plans for e.g. local infrastructure. Criteria three is also, to some extent, visible as all ten proposals address how the projects will be adapted to align with the existing landscape.

However, the use of the word sustainable differs significantly across the ten project proposals. The three criteria are the instrument the Danish government chose in order to foster and evaluate tourism development. Halkier (2014) argues that weak directions and guidelines are often offered by policy makers, hereby leaving tourism actors with vague ideas about desirable forms of tourism development. The facts that the call did not define or explain the meaning of sustainability, and that it was later deleted as part of criterion three, leave the ten project proposals with varying interpretations and visible evidence of sustainability as an integrated part of the projects, as the project proposers are left to define and clarify sustainability in coastal development themselves.

The analysis suggests that without a proper definition of sustainability offered by policy makers, tourism actors focus on traditional approaches to economic growth such as job creation, increased revenue and visitor numbers, approaches very much in line with what previous studies have shown (Hall, 2000; Zeppel 2015). The analysis further suggests that the approach to tourism planning taken by the Danish government is very much in line with boosterism (Hall, 2000) and the pilot scheme therefore does not inspire coastal tourism development in Denmark to be particularly concerned with sustainability. Hall et al. (2015) argue that STD is a serious policy problem posing a challenge for authorities, who need to select the best possible set of policies and tools for development. It is unclear how the Danish policy makers envisaged the sustainable development of tourism in the coastal areas or why sustainability vanished from the final selection process. What is clear, though, is that without a clear definition or explanation of what kind of STD was intended, there are no clear guidelines for tourism actors to follow when attempting to integrate sustainability into project proposals. The result of this, it seems, is that the definitions of sustainability used when proposing tourism development profoundly differ from how academics define sustainable tourism development (STD).

Conclusion

The understanding of sustainability by stakeholders in the Danish tourism industry, as communicated in the ten project proposals, do not align well with the holistic approach augmented for in academic discourses. Tourism is often promoted as a means to help protect the environment and raise support for conservation (Buckley, 2012; Saarinen, 2006). Therefore, softening up the protection of coastal areas in order to facilitate tourism development mainly focusing on economic aspects, contradicts not only academic research arguing that tourism should always be developed on sustainable principles (Butler, 1991; Hall et al., 2015; Liburd & Edwards, 2010), but also some of the fundamantal justifications for using tourism as a development tool. Additionally, weak political leadership and guidelines for tourism development do not foster or inspire a sustainable approach to tourism planning. Other examples of tourism development in coastal areas have shown that barriers to STD are connected to the absence of proper governance and that stronger government commitment can help

facilitate more holistic sustainable tourism development (Caffyn & Jobbins, 2003; Hopkins et al., 2012; Ong & Smith, 2014). Tourism development and sustainability in Denmark could thus be a long way from forming symbiotic and supporting relationships. If tourism is to make a genuine contribution to sustainable development it is vital that tourism is enacted as a part of larger socio-economic and bio-physical system (Hall, 2009). Sustainability must be taken seriously as a holistic concept by policy makers, setting the scope for tourism development and thus having the ability to foster and facilitate more sustainable development of tourism.

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