Which way do we go?

Finding
COLLABORATIVE
trajectory in the PLANNING
of a touristic nature trail

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Abstract

The point of departure of this thesis is an examination of the challenges tourism planners face, in the development of a long-distance nature trail. Due to the fragmented nature of tourism, this inter-local collaboration embraces a heterogeneous group of stakeholders. The various interests and opinions are unfolded in the actions and decisions taken by these composite entities, which consequently influences the process of collaboration. This is the heart of the investigation that questions how the collaborative process is influenced by the stakeholders.

The research bases on a qualitative strategy in order to examine the complex phenomenon of collaboration. Via the method of a multiple-case study a real-world perspective is obtained. Two cases of cooperative nature trail development are scrutinised and compared in a cross-national study conducted in Germany (Saar-Hunsrück-Steig) and Denmark (Hærvejen). Limited research is carried out in the tourism literature in regard to nature trail development, of which reason, the theoretical framework for the study bases on organisational literature.

The findings corroborate to a great extent with the existing literature within the field of collaboration. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, a new dimension is added due to the significant context of the cases. The two cases differ in the way they are orchestrated. The German collaboration focuses on the core product and constructs a new experience enhanced trail, which causes an increase of tourists and thereby empowers the commitment of the localities. The Danish collaboration focuses on developing the supporting services. The private actors, who are the object of change, are not interested in this action, meaning the goal of the collaboration is difficult to achieve and the commitment of the localities decreases. Concluding, the fundamental strategic decision concerning how to approach the product development, appears to determine the path creation of the partnership.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my father, Jochen Böttger
- who always had faith in me and taught me to
follow my heart.

I know he would have been proud if he was here
today.

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Although the research for this thesis is conducted single-handed by the author, the support of several persons has assisted to make it possible. Therefore, I would like to thank the main characters involved in the process.

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I wish to thank my mother Edith Böttger, for her loving support and kindness. Her and her partner Peter Kusk have rearranged their calendars several times, for me to have a vehicle to reach my numerous meetings in Denmark and Germany.

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Preface

Like many other young people I travelled the world before and during my studies, which made me curious of the mechanisms that spin the wheel of tourism. This was enhanced after I made travelling into my profession in 2008, as a freelance hiking and cycling guide for the Danish travel agency 'Topas'. Therefore, I started as a trainee at the local tourism organisation 'VisitHorsens' where my insight of the fragmented nature of tourism broadened and the complexity of destination development and cooperation was exposed. This was the process that led me to the master programme in Tourism at Aalborg University, where I could be absorbed in my interest and obtain knowledge within the field.

These various feedback loops have likewise influenced the choice of topic for this thesis. My previous projects have examined the motivation and experience of active tourists and thus focused on the demand side. This time, I wanted to gratify my curiosity of the supply side, as I have wondered why active tourism is not exploited to a greater extent in Denmark. Having experienced the difficulty of collaborative arrangements, especially when it crosses political borders, I set off to investigate how this may be challenged and influenced by various stakeholders in this thesis.

Horsens, June 2nd 2014

Kirsten Böttger

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
App.	Appendix
Cf	Confer
DMO	Destination management organisation
DW	Deutsches Wanderinstitut
E.g.	example given
EU	European Union
FDH	Foreningen Destination Hærvejen
I.a.	inter alia
I.e	Id est
Km	Kilometer
Kr	Danish kroner
LAG	Local action group
LTO	Local tourism organisation
MT	Midtjysk Turisme
NE	NaturErhvervsstyrelsen
P1	First project
P2	Second project
RM	Region Midtjylland
RN	Region Nordjylland
ROI	Return on investment
RS	Region Syddanmark
SHS	Saar-Hunsrück-Steig

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The tourism sector is increasingly challenged by international competition due to growing access to exotic and affordable travel offers in the globalised world (Halkier 2011; Hjalager 2010), which has led to changes in governmental policies and planning (Beaumont & Dredge 2010; Hall 2008). Conventionally, strategies have been oriented towards boosting tourism through international marketing activities and local promotion. However, merely promoting existing products may no longer be adequate, meaning additional approaches in the form of capacity development and innovation are needed (Beritelli et al. 2007; Hall 2008; Henriksen & Halkier 2009).

Nevertheless, the fragmented nature of tourism (Jamal & Getz 1995) comprises a complex system of numerous private and public actors that hold differing interests, priorities and perspectives (Bramwell & Pomfret 2007; Dredge 2006; Wang 2008a). Hence, operating in this turbulent environment calls for enhanced collaboration (Selin & Chavez 1995) in order to handle this demanding task. In the academic field it is stressed that cooperative arrangements uniting in collective actions are a prerequisite for destination development and innovation (e.g. Dredge 2006; Ness et al. 2014) especially for long-term planning of destinations (e.g. Beritelli 2010; Bramwell & Lane 2000).

Nature and active tourism is seen as a means to attract segments interested in i.a. hiking (Boller et al. 2010; Davies et al 2012; Hugo 1999; McNmara & Prideaux 2011; Palau 2012; Zoomers 2008), cycling (Cox 2012; Lumsdon 2000; Meschik 2012; Palau 2012; Ralston & Rhoden 2005; Ritchie & Hall 1999) mountain biking (Mason & Leberman 2000) or canoeing (Pollock et al. 2012). In this context, nature trails could be understood as the core product around which tourism planning and destination development revolves, comprising an amalgam of various stakeholders such as private actors, interest groups, foresters, local tourism organisations (LTOs) and municipalities. On a large scale in terms of long-distance nature trails the number of stakeholders increases, as the planning covers several localities and also regional and

national public actors can be included. Thus, cooperation and efficient coordination is vital (Bramwell & Pomfret 2007).

In Denmark some collaborative arrangements concerning development of long-distance nature trails for tourism exist, such as the River Gudenåen as well as various cycling trails. Nonetheless, hiking trails as a tourism product seem limited compared to those of our neighbouring countries. Hærvejen[1] that runs through the centre of Jutland is an exception, though also offered for cyclists and horseback riders, and since 2007 it has been the centre of an inter-local cooperation to attract tourists. The trail continues south to Hamburg in Germany but has barely been developed for tourism, and signs of cooperation are sparse. Nevertheless, the country appears to have experienced a boom in long-distance hiking trails elsewhere, which may have been invigorated by the quality certifications that have been introduced here. An example is the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig[2] in Southwest Germany, which opened in 2007 and since then has been called the best long-distance hiking trail in the country.

The starting point for this thesis was a curiosity of what challenges there may be in an inter-local collaboration (cf. the preface). Having noticed the sparse development of hiking tourism in Denmark and the recent expansion in Germany, this appealed to be the field of the research. Thus, a comparative study of the cases of Hærvejen and Saar-Hunsrück-Steig was chosen for further examination. To assist the reader with an understanding of the cases, descriptions are provided in the appendices 1 and 2.

1.2 Problem statement and structure of the study

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the field of nature trail development is yet relatively limited in the tourism literature. Perspectives of the potential economic benefits, and the importance of integrating consumer experiences and environmental considerations have emerged in academic research but aspects of collaboration appear to be unexplored (cf. sec. 3.1). However, the concept has been approached in various other tourism contexts (Fyall et al 2012), which will be adapted to this investigation of inter-local tourism planning of a nature trail. Existing research and theories reflect that

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[1] www.haervej.dk
[2] www.saar-hunsrueck-steig.de

the process of collaboration is dynamic and influenced by several variables (e.g. Caffyn 2000; Wang 2008a). Thus, it may be assumed that actions and decisions of stakeholders in the collaborative environment affect the evolution of the process.

This paper seeks to examine the challenges and outputs caused by sequential events traced in the period of cooperation concerning the planning of a touristic nature trail. By this means, the paper contributes to the sparse research within the field. The inter-local partnerships of Hærvejen and Saar-Hunsrück-Steig provide the empirical context of a multiple-case design (Yin 2014). These will be studied by *questioning* how the process of collaboration has evolved due to the actions and decisions of stakeholders with an explanatory study approach (Yin 2014). The overall question that guides this thesis is:

How do various stakeholders influence the process of collaboration in the inter-local planning of a long distance nature trail as a tourism product?

This chapter provides a thematic outline of the present study with a brief introduction to the theoretical and empirical context as well as a narrowing down of the focus. Subsequently, the philosophical stance and research design will be illuminated in the methodology chapter entailing considerations of what may have influenced the work. Moreover, the methods applied for the collection of data will be explicated. After the approach of the research is elaborated, existing literature will be scrutinised in chapter three to set the theoretical framework for assessing the empirical data. Primarily, a review of studies in regard to touristic nature trails is provided. Following this, the concept of collaboration and the components this embraces are investigated. Seeing as the stakeholders play a vital role in this context, and the process of collaboration is a focal point in the problem statement, theories in these fields are included. The chapter concludes with a theoretical scaffold to assess the case studies.

The fourth chapter presents the data while examining how the stakeholders have influenced the process of collaboration, by using the theoretical framework to orchestrate the analysis. The agenda will be supplemented with the following research questions to narrow down the focus.

- How does the geographical scope, the problem domain and shared rules, norms and structures evolve within this process?
- How are the actions and decisions of the stakeholders reflected throughout the process?

The primary question outlines the main elements of collaboration which will be examined in the cases. Geographical scope refers to the spatial area in which the tourism planning takes place, entailing the various stakeholders and political layers this may encompass. The problem domain is the purpose and focus of the partnership whereas the shared rules, norms and structures cover the organisational framework as well as idiosyncratic relations between the collaborators. The elements are believed to be influenced and change according to various actions and decisions, which will be examined by the second question.

The final chapter of this thesis extracts and compares the findings in the analysis of the two cases in a discussion. This will be summed up in the conclusion to answer the problem statement.

1.3 Delimitation and limitations

The research design of this work is based on a multiple-case study while evaluating similarities and differences. Hence, it could be questioned if two cases are adequate, as the results are not sufficiently representative and normative for a generalisation. Nonetheless, the aim of this work is not to conclude on operational models for successful cooperation but to gain an insight and understanding of the challenges cooperation may encompass. The choice of a Danish and a German case could be argued to be an impediment to the comparison due to different structures and approaches of the respective tourism sectors. However, this is perceived by the researcher as a factor which adds value and depth to the study, as these are caused by governmental decisions and thus may be an influential factor.

Upon selection of the respondents for the case of Hærvejen it was discovered that the tourism planning is divided into three different partnerships according to the regional borders. Including all would have been a multiple-case study in itself and not left space for the German case. Thus, it was decided to take the perspective of the

collaboration in Region Midtjylland where Viborg is located, as this locality is considered the gateway to the trail. Similarly, it appeared that the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig is being expanded, adding several localities to the partnership. However, since this happened relatively recently, focus will be on the preceding cooperation of the established section.

This thesis investigates the cooperative process of tourism planning concerning a nature trail and therefore the public actors are considered the main characters of the research. Though it could have generated a more nuanced picture to include private actors in the data collection, the extent of this paper would have expanded beyond its limits. Moreover, the latter are not part of the formal partnerships in the cases, and their viewpoints are thus not perceived as crucial. Nevertheless, their influence as well as the influence of additional potential stakeholders is considered through a critical examination of the narratives of the interviewees.

Due to the limited timing designated for this thesis, the investigation of the collaborations is momentary. This gives a static insight of what may be perceived as a dynamic process, and a full impression of the actions and events that have occurred is clearly impossible. Hence, the data collection relies on the interviewees that evidently are influenced by their subjective understanding and retrospective remembrances. Optimally the cooperation would have to have been studied over time but since this was not an option, it has been attempted to comprehend the cases through various viewpoints to draw patterns and enhance credibility.

2 Methodology

Several approaches could be taken for conducting this thesis and therefore, this chapter presents the philosophical stance of the study as well as the research design and methods applied for collecting the empirical data.

2.1 Philosophy of science

This section outlines the paradigm under which, this study is handled – meaning the worldview that led the researcher and consequently influenced the work. This is explained by Guba and Lincoln (1989:80) as "a basic set of beliefs, a set of assumptions we are willing to make, which serve as touchstones in guiding our activities". The current study is written with reference to the social constructivism, and the choices made throughout the process are accordingly affected by the nature of this paradigm. In order to elaborate on the characteristics which this philosophical stance embrace, it is necessary to answer "three basic questions" (Guba 1990:18) concerning the premises of *ontology*, *epistemology* and *methodology* (Denzin & Lincoln 2003; Guba 1990; Lincoln et al. 2011).

Ontology refers to the researcher's beliefs as well as perception of the world and responds to questions regarding the nature of the *knowable* and *reality* (Guba 1990; Creswell 2013; Lincoln et al. 2011). Constructivists tend to see ontology as *relative* (Denzin & Lincoln 2003), which means realities are co-created in an interaction between the social constructions. Hence, reality is contextual and coexists "in the form of multiple mental constructions" (Guba 1990:27) and thus constructivists do not believe in one single truth (Crotty 1998; Guba & Lincoln 1989; Lincoln et al 2011). As the researcher of this study, I acknowledge that my results base on multiple reality constructions and that no ultimate truth can be found. This means that the respondents influence the data gathered for the research due to their subjective opinions and past experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Similarly, my background in terms of personal and professional experiences (cf. the preface) as well as the way I interpret and understand reality has eventually affected the outcome of this thesis (Yin 2014).

The epistemological perspective explains the relationship between the investigator (inquirer) and those under research (the inquired) (Creswell 2013; Guba 1990). Moreover, it is the "branch of philosophy that deals with the origin, nature and limits of human knowledge" (Guba & Lincoln 1989). As a social constructivist I take a *subjective* approach and attempt to interconnect with the interviewees in order to comprehend the reality of the subjects studied (Guba 1990). This means that the findings are constructed in an interactive process between the interviewees and the inquirer (Creswell 2013; Guba 1990; Kvale 2007). Thus, in this research the respondents' remembrances reflect their perception of reality, which is reproduced in their narratives in interaction with the inquirer's pre-understanding and perspective (Creswell 2013; Guba 1990). As a result, the perceived influences of the stakeholders in the cases of Hærvejen and the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig are shaped in this specific context.

The Methodology of a study is constructed by asking the question: How should I as a researcher gather knowledge and how should my approach to collect data be? (Creswell 2013; Guba 1990; Lincoln et al. 2011). The response to this question is based by the ontological and epistemological stance, which for the current research is that of the constructivist paradigm. Accordingly, a *hermeneutical* and *dialectical* approach is chosen (Guba 1990; Guba & Lincoln 1989; Lincoln et al. 2011).

The hermeneutic endeavour in the research process is an on-going repetition of reflections and reconsiderations in the interpretation of the data material (Guba 1990; Guba & Lincoln 1989; Lincoln et al. 2011). This means that throughout the process of this study, the theory, data collection and analysis have been constantly revised and consequently, new considerations and understandings were produced. Moreover, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2003:39) the hermeneutical approach "stresses how prior understandings and prejudices shape the interpretive process". Thus, my preceding knowledge and pre-understanding of hiking tourism and collaborative destination development (cf. the preface) has likewise influenced the perception and interpretation of the research.

Via the method of dialectical inquiry, the goal is to extract the multiple realities by combining and comparing different constructions of the data (Guba 1990; Lincoln et al. 2011). The theoretical framework has been constructed by implementing the

same approach of going back and forth in accordance with the hermeneutics Furthermore, the dialectic approach was adapted for assessing the empirical data collection to achieve consensus of the interviews, as well as it was used in the analysis process to compare and combine the data with the theoretical knowledge.

2.2 Research design

The aim of this thesis is to provide a deeper comprehension of inter-local collaboration in the tourism planning of a nature trail and the challenges this may encompass. For this purpose, a case study is chosen for research, as it can be perceived to induce a real-world perspective of the managerial and organisational processes of this complex phenomenon (Yin 2014). Bryman (2008) as well as Yin (2014) differentiate between single and multiple-case studies. I have chosen a multiple-case design embracing a cross-national study, as it "implies that we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully cases or situations" (Bryman 2008:58). Furthermore, as enlightened in section 1.2, this is an *explanatory* study. Yin (2014:10) argues that "how" questions encourage research to be explanatory as they "deal with operational links needing to be traced over time". This goes in line with the focus of this thesis that questions *how* the stakeholders in the cases of Hærvejen and Saar-Hunsrück-Steig influence the *process* of collaboration.

This study seeks to examine actions and decisions taken over a longer period in the cooperative process as well as the challenges and outputs this may have caused. For this reason, the work is guided by a qualitative strategy, as it gives the opportunity of an in-depth understanding of the context (Bryman 2012; Jennings 2010; Yin 2014). According to Kvale (1996:11) "qualitative research involves alternative conceptions of social knowledge, of meaning, reality, and truth in social science research". Hence, this approach may reflect a greater diversity of the multiple reality constructions with less predefined categories as opposed to a quantitative method (Kvale 1996). Moreover, it allows leeway for reconsidering previous understandings and perceptions in the process of going back and forth in the hermeneutic circle due to a less structured approach. The procedural design of this study is illustrated in figure 1.
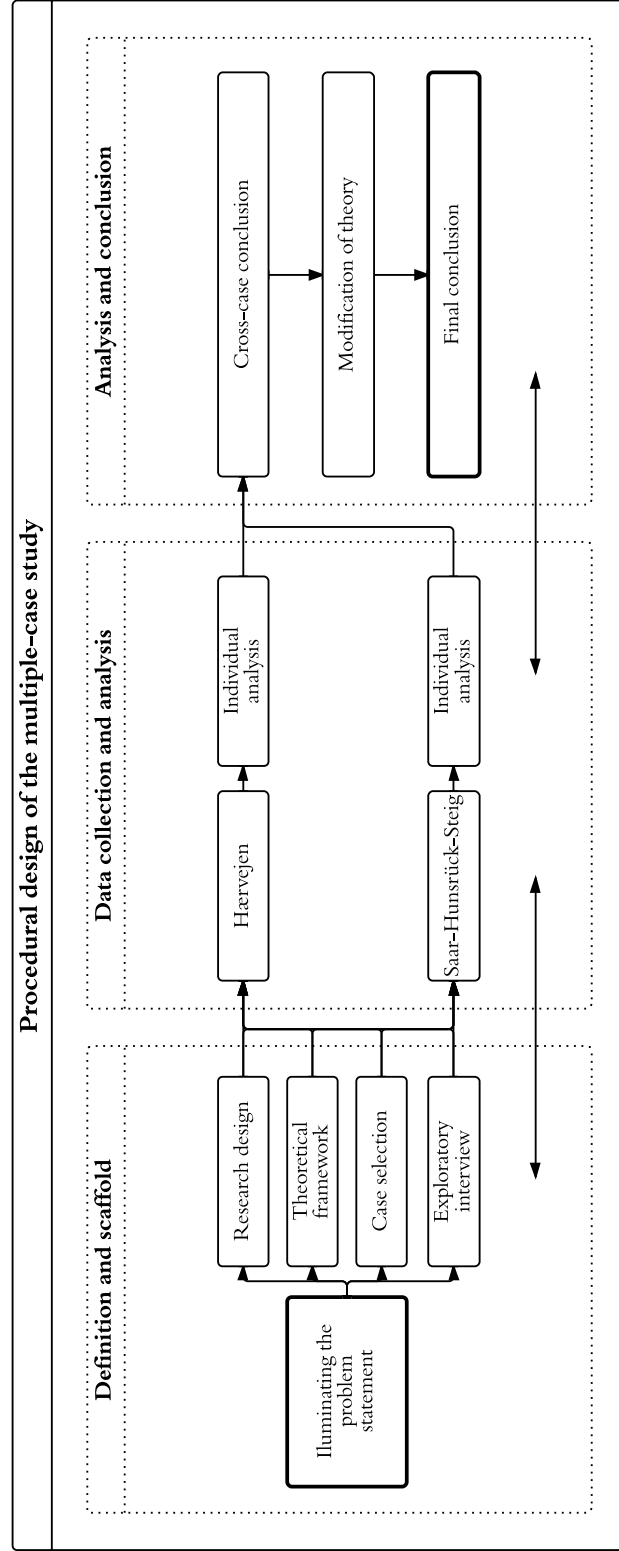
Figure 1: Procedural design of the multiple-case study (own creation inspired by Yin 2014)

For the collection of data, individual interviews are chosen as the main method "to explore the meaning and the conceptual dimensions" of the collaborative process in the cases (Kvale & Brinkman 2009:151). Furthermore, a qualitative content analysis of documentary sources in terms of websites and official documents available (i.a. project descriptions, applications and evaluations) will complement the research to gain a deeper insight of the partnerships (Bryman 2008). By this means, the multiple realities of the informants and additional sources of data will be combined with the theoretical perspectives and methodologies applied for the research, thereby creating a *triangulation* (Bryman 2008; Yin 2014). This will increase the probability that the case study has "rendered the event accurately" and thereby enhance the credibility of the research (Yin 2014:122).

2.3 Data collection

The cases for this thesis are carefully selected in conference with peers to "avoid incorrectly identifying the unit of analysis" (Yin 2014:33). Primarily an extensive desk research was conducted to obtain an overview of potential subjects. Following that, a personal contact at Midtjysk Turisme was consulted, who is considered to possess in-depth knowledge of contemporary partnerships in the region, and Hærvejen was then chosen. Moreover, a German colleague provided a lead to a Tourism Professor at the University in Trier, who assisted in the search of an appropriate case according to the scaffold of the research, which resulted in the choice of the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig.

As explained, the methods applied for the data collection of the qualitative research are individual interviews and qualitative content analysis. Due to the context of this research, the *sampling frame* of informants was more or less clear in terms of the case study (Bryman 2008) and thus the main partners of the collaborations were chosen as interviewees (cf. sec. 1.3). The documentary sources were selected by thorough desk research, and the key contacts of the cases provided documents upon request.

2.3.1 Individual expert interviews

Due to the nature of this thesis, it was decided to conduct semi-structured interviews, which "seeks to obtain descriptions of the interviewees' lived world with

respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale 2007:10-11). This approach encourages the informants to speak more freely by open-ended questions and allows latitude for the interviewer to ask further questions and thereby obtain a deeper insight of the perceived reality of the subject (Bryman 2008). This flexibility is considered important, as the preceding insider knowledge of the specific cases was limited. However, in the initial phase of the study an unstructured interview was undertaken with the project manager in the case of Hærvejen (cf. digital app.), to explore the context and gain a pre-understanding of relevant issues (Bryman 2008). Similarly, contacts for the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig were conferred with via telephone before the research trip. This embraces the hermeneutic endeavour of the study as it assisted in a re-evaluation of my preliminary assumptions. Before conducting the interviews, an interview guide was produced and set up in a matrix according to the theoretical framework (app. 3 & 4). Nonetheless, due to the semi-structured approach, this functioned more as a guideline of pre-defined issues to be covered to give the respondents leeway for reflections and elaborating answers.

Although it would have been far less time-consuming to do the interviews via telephone, it was chosen to conduct face-to-face interviews at the work place of the respondent. This induced a familiar atmosphere and strengthened the understanding of the individual's reality with observations (Bryman 2008). Likewise, the interviews were carried out in Danish and German to facilitate the respondents to speak more freely in their native language. They were audio recorded and then transcribed in an abridged form (Bryman 2008; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009) in a mix of summaries and direct quotes. Eventually, the data was decoded to find patterns in terms of similarities and differences by a comparing technique (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009) and arranged in a meta-matrix according to the theoretical framework. The original recordings are provided digitally in the appendices to ensure reliability.

2.3.2 Qualitative content analysis

According to Bryman (2008), content analysis is most frequently used for a quantitative approach, to systematically categorise raw material by specified rules. However, it can likewise be applied for a qualitative approach to find patterns with an open analysis and thereby interpret the meaning of the context (Jennings 2010). For

this research, it is considered an additional source for obtaining a deeper insight of the cases and for corroboration of the interview data to strengthen credibility (Yin 2014).

2.3.3 Role of the researcher

Holding a constructivist stance, it is my belief that my background will evidently influence this research in terms of personality, culture, opinions and past experiences, as previously emphasised. In accordance with this, Yin (2014) stresses that conducting a case study with a qualitative approach puts heavy demands on the researcher. Hence, I acknowledge the importance of constantly reflecting on my role as the researcher of this study as well as being critical of my "own presuppositions and hypotheses during the interview" (Kvale 2007:12).

To some extent, I had a pre-understanding of the context before starting the research due to my professional and personal experiences (cf. the preface). I perceive this as being an advantage, as it allowed me absorb into the topic more easily. Conversely, it likewise enhances a risk of being biased in a preconceived position and accordingly search for supportive evidence of my assumptions (Yin 2014). Thus, I have aimed at "being a good listener" and "staying adaptive" for new ideas and directions (Yin 2014:73).

3 Theoretical discussion

As stated in the introduction of this paper, planning in the tourism sector is an instrument to enhance destinations' attractiveness with the aim to increase its competitiveness and thereby maximise the economic returns. However, this is no easy task especially due to the fragmented nature of tourism (Bramwell & Pomfret 2007; Pavlovich 2003; Wang 2008a): the tourism product is an amalgam of various touristic offers such as the flight, hotel stay or eating out in a restaurant. In this regard, the need for collaborative strategies is widely recognised (Bramwell & Lane 2000). This chapter examines the concept of collaboration by reviewing previous research within the field. Primarily previous research in regard to collaboration in the tourism planning of a nature trail is scrutinised, followed by theoretical discussions of the main elements of collaboration. Finally, this results in a theoretical framework to guide the analysis of the empirical data for this study.

3.1 Literature review

A touristic nature trail could be seen as a type of tourism route, which in recent years has been recognised as a means for regional development and thus obtained prominence. This development is likewise reflected in the academic literature albeit it is yet in its embryo phase (Antonson & Jacobsen 2014). Some studies have been conducted to reveal the key factors for the success of establishing tourism routes, where collaborative planning and agreement is identified as paramount due to the voluminous and diverse stakeholders (e.g. Hardy 2003; Meyer 2004). Antonson and Jacobsen (2014) note in their research that previous studies regarding tourism routes are limited, though few have examined the routes per se as well as tourist experiences, but especially aspects of implementation and planning procedures are under-researched. Their study compares a top-down and a bottom-up approach of developing tourism routes, concluding that some form of official governmental strategy enhances the outcome. Nonetheless, the research within the field mainly focuses on tourism routes that are established to combine attractions such as local beverages in terms of a whisky trail in Scotland (Martin & McBoyle 2006), a beer trail in Canada (Plummer et al. 2006) or a wine route in Greece (Efstathios et al. 2009). The touristic nature trail differs from

these routes, as the attraction in these is usually the recreational movement on the trail and not driving from A to B.

In regard of touristic nature trails, merely scarce studies of the supply side appear to exist. As far back as in 1969, Wilder investigated the outcome of the establishment of walking-trails for hunters in a forest in Wisconsin. He found that the trail development had several positive side effects, such as an increased public multiple-use of the natural area as well as improved coordination between the forest agency and the users. However, the latter research focused on a community and not a tourism perspective, which is not until the millennium that this academic interest blossomed. In 1999, Ritchie and Hall examined the economic potential in bicycle tourism and found that good infrastructure and information distribution is essential for maximising the economic benefits of this form of tourism. This is similar to the results of Pollock et al. (2012) who studied elements that influence economic development in regard of a canoe trail in the US. In line with this, Palau et al. (2012) investigated the return on investment in terms of maintenance costs versus cycling and walking tourist expenditure, and stated it to be highly cost-effective. Conversely to the latter studies where nature trails are enlightened as a means for regional economic development, Zoomers (2008) finds that the economic gain is not benefitting the local population, when examining the impacts of tourists walking the Inca trails in South America.

Other scholars have studied aspects of practical concerns when developing a nature trail in regard of i.a. ensuring the protection of natural areas through careful tourist trail designing and maintaining (Janockova et al. 2012), sustainable planning of hiking trails while considering the tourists experience (Boller et al 2010; Davies et al. 2012) as well as environmental protection (McNamara & Prideaux 2011) and the local community (Hugo 1999). Beeton (1999) examined the implications in a multiuse trail due to conflicting interests between the consumers that in her case were horseback riders and hikers, which should likewise be taken into account when planning a nature trail. Mason and Leberman (2000) investigated how mountain bike routes have been developed in N.Z. and found that governmental approaches lacked involvement of the consumers in the planning process to satisfy the needs of the consumer group and not politicians. In the research of Ralston and Rhoden (2005) the inclusion and

management of volunteers in the planning process was enlightened in regard of developing and maintaining cycle trails.

This literature review of academic research within the field of touristic nature trails reveals that merely few perspectives have been covered, and previous attention has been on the possible economic benefits of this niche tourism as well as environmental and consumer experience considerations for the planning. Neither of the assessed studies focuses on the various aspects in regard of inter-local cooperation in the planning of a touristic nature trail, nor what may influence this collaborative process. Hence, the current paper contributes to the existing research within the field.

3.2 Collaboration in tourism planning

Dredge and Jenkins (2007:22) refer to collaboration as "cooperation, support and mutual assistance between actors and agencies in the pursuit of common interests", which indicates a difference between the terms collaboration and cooperation. As noted by Bramwell and Lane (2000), several terms are used to describe the different collaborative arrangements, such as networks (e.g. Beaumont & Dredge 2010; Beritelli et al. 2007; Dredge 2006; Henriksen & Halkier 2009; Pavlovich 2003; Saxena 2005), partnerships (e.g. Dredge & Jenkins 2007; Selin 1999), cooperation (e.g. Beritelli 2011; Sheehan & Ritchie 2005), and collaboration (e.g. Bramwell & Pomfret 2007; Bramwell & Sharman 1999; Byrd 2007; Currie et al. 2009; Dredge & Jenkins 2007; Fyall et al. 2012; Hall 2008; Reed 1997; Sautter & Leisen 1999; Wood & Gray 1991). However, though distinctions between these could be discussed, they are narrowly related (Sheehan & Ritchie 2005) and will be used equivalently in this paper.

To define collaboration, the description of Wood and Gray (1991) is frequently referred to among scholars and provides a more inclusive definition than the above by Dredge and Jenkins (2007). Wood and Gray (1991:146) state that "collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain". Hence, they believe that the actors in cooperation "retain independent decision-making power" (ibid:146), but are linked by a common interest in addressing the issues of a common object. The definition by Wood and Gray (1991) is useful in regard to outlining cooperation, as it raises

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important questions such as: who are the private and public actors (stakeholders)? What is the purpose and focus (problem domain)? What is the collaborative process (interactive process)? What is the framework of the collaboration (shared rules, norms, and structures)? What actions and decisions have been made (act or decide on issues)? However, one element missing, especially in regard to the current research, is the spatial dimension. As the development of tourism trails often covers large areas, stretching over numerous municipalities, regions or even national boarders, a geographical limitation is useful and most likely necessary. The geographical scope could be understood to be in accordance with the problem domain, as the spatial delimitation may be part of narrowing the focus of collaborative arrangements.

The elements appointed by Wood and Gray (1991) will function as a skeleton for the following theoretical discussion, where studies within the field of collaboration are assessed.

3.3 Problem domain and geographical scope

The importance of cooperating towards a common goal in order to enhance tourism development is widely acknowledged in various studies (e.g. Araujo & Bramwell 2002; Dredge 2006; Ness et al. 2014; Saxena 2005). As stated by Wood and Gray (1991), a central element in this process is to work collectively on a mutual problem domain, which embraces the purpose of collaboration and thereby sets the trajectory. In order to achieve congruency of a shared problem domain, recognition of a certain degree of interdependency is necessary (Beritelli 2011; Jamal & Getz 1995; Saxena 2005; Selin 1999; Selin & Beason 1991; Wang 2008a; Wood & Gray 1991). This interdependence is especially evident in regard to the tourism industry, due to the fragmented and complex composition of the product (Bramwell & Lane 2000; Jamal & Getz 1995; Saxena 2005; Wang 2008a). Wang (2008a:151) agrees with this by underscoring that "no single agency can control and deliver a rich combination of tourism product and service portfolio at a destination". Furthermore, Jamal and Getz (1995) claim that a destination domain consists of multiple interdependent stakeholders whose individual actions may influence the rest of the actors in a destination. This is also noted by Fyall et al. (2012:10) who add: "common objectives must be defined and attained in a coordinated way". The recognition of

interdependency with other stakeholders within a destination may be the motivator to engage in cooperation, followed by an understanding that collaboration can serve as optimising own interests (Fyall et al. 2012; Saxena 2005). However, as argued by Jamal and Getz (1995), albeit stakeholders may acknowledge the importance of a problem domain, they might perceive other issues being more relevant or that another strategy than collaboration could serve self-interest better.

Selin and Beason (1991) stress the significance of effective communication, to achieve consensus of a common problem domain and obtain successful cooperative relations. This is in line with the perspective of Jamal and Getz (1995:192) who argue that problem domains become "underorganized when the boundaries of the domain are unclear, shifting, or in dispute". Thus, agreement of the context of problem domain in collaboration is essential (Bramwell & Sharman 1999). However, participants of cooperation are in most cases a heterogeneous group of stakeholders with a variety of different interests, opinions and ideologies (Currie et al 2009; Jamal & Getz 1995; Sautter & Leisen 1999; Selin & Beason 1991; Wang 2008a). This can complicate the process of agreeing on the problem domain and its focus. In addition, Sautter and Leisen (1999:316) note that stakeholders often act "in multiple roles within the larger macroenvironment", thus, tourism planners must consider the various perspectives and interests in regard to the role they serve in the specific collaboration. In the case of the development of a nature trail this could be e.g. a bed and breakfast host who is an accommodation provider, but may also possess a fulltime job as an electrician and be actively involved in a local sports organisation, meaning that "interests are not exclusively touristic" (Sautter & Leisen 1999:316). The same could be argued to account for a public stakeholder such as a local community council who may have an interest in enhancing tourism, but also needs to address attention to schools, hospitals, other industries etc. Thus, the problem domain may be evaluated as being more important for some than others.

Selin and Chavez (1995:845) note that tourism organisations are challenged, as they must navigate in a turbulent environment where "many economic, social, and political forces influence policy and management directions". This means that in order to create consensus of a common problem domain, governmental strategies and

policies need to be taken into account. As most tourism development projects are publicly funded (Sheehan & Ritchie 2005), planners must ensure political support and align the focus and character of the problem domain with political strategies in various governmental levels. In this matter, an example could be the supranational policies of the European Union (EU) that provide several structural funds, which are often utilised for local and regional tourism development projects. As stated by Hall (2008:157) "tourism planning at the local level in the EU member states is therefore clearly embedded within institutional arrangements and interests at higher levels". Hence, aligning the chosen problem domain according to contemporary political agendas is critical to ensure public subsidies.

Besides clarifying common grounds on the problem domain, the geographical domain should also be addressed to frame the area of cooperation (Wang 2008a). However, due to the fragmented nature of tourism (Bramwell & Pomfret 2007; Pavlovich 2003; Selin & Chavez 1995; Wang 2008a), not only the task of identifying potential stakeholders is complicated, but also determining the spatial extent in terms of geographical scope. Selin (1999) examines various types of tourism partnerships and includes geographic scale as one of the primary dimensions. However, besides defining it as comprehending community, local, regional or national scales he does not further elaborate on this measurement, but merely uses it to organise stakeholders in the study. Dredge and Jenkins (2003) however, address the issue of spatial boundaries of a tourism destination. They recognise that political strategies affect where the line is set, albeit this may not align with social factors such as regional identity. Similarly Beritelli et al. (2007) advocate for destination management organisations (DMOs) to be less restricted by borders and more driven by demand. Hence, it could be argued that the geographic domain of collaboration could be determined according to the interest and perception of the tourists, as development must be assumed to manifest in a desire of attracting more tourists. In the context of the current paper, this may be easier said than done as most touristic nature trails are planned and developed by public actors who are assigned and restricted to political boundaries. Nonetheless, this evidences the importance of inter-local and/or inter-regional collaboration in order to address the needs and desires of the target group.

3.4 Stakeholders of a problem domain

In 1984, Freeman stressed the need for organisations to adapt to changing times. He recognised that whereas products formerly had a simple value chain, the surrounding environment had become more and more complex. According to the latter, companies in the past merely had to satisfy the needs of customers, whereas in modern times the growing interests of additional stakeholders cannot be ignored. Furthermore, he stated that relationships with the stakeholders characterise an organisation (Byrd 2007), demanding "techniques for mapping stakeholders, understanding organizational processes, and analysing interactions with stakeholders" (Freeman 1984:2). Hence, he developed a stakeholder theory for managerial purposes, which is perceived as an important corner stone within the arena of organisational management (Fyall et al 2012; Phillips et al. 2003). Numerous scholars in various academic fields have since then applied, discussed, interpreted and/or referred to it (e.g. Donaldson & Preston 1995; Friedman & Miles 2002; Mitchell et al. 1997; Phillips et al. 2003;) as well as it has been adapted to tourism research (e.g. Beritelli 2011; Bramwell & Lane 2000; Bramwell & Sharman 1999; Byrd 2007; Currie et al. 2009; Fyall et al. 2012; Sautter Leisen 1999; Selin & Beason 1991; Sheehan & Ritchie 2005).

Freeman (1984:46) defines a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives", which may include customers, suppliers, employees, members of the communities and governments (Sautter & Leisen 1999). Donaldson and Preston (1995) stress that this definition is too broad and involves unlimited numbers of persons and entities, including i.a. competitors and media. The latter argue, that though competitors may be able to affect a firm by influencing the market environment, "competitors do not seek benefits form the local firm's success; on the contrary, they may stand to lose whatever the local firm gains" (ibid:86). Nonetheless, the scholars do recognise that in some cases, competitors do engage in collaborative activities on shared interests such as trade associations, but the competitive aspect is still evident. Conversely, it could be argued that though one firm does not directly benefit from a competitor's success, there may be intrinsic benefits. In regard of this study, this could be a tourist that chooses to stay

in one hotel, it dines at the restaurant of the nearby hotel or walk 20 km on the nature trail and spend the next night at the neighbouring hotel. By collaborating, the hotels (and additional service providers) can promote the destination altogether with a wide portfolio of offers. In a broader perspective, other nature trails could likewise be perceived as competitors. Equally, collaboration could bring mutual benefits, if e.g. an intra-regional or intra-national effort is made to brand itself as an appealing area for active tourists and thereby attracting a larger number of visitors for mutual benefits.

Donaldson and Preston (1995) emphasise that to be considered a stakeholder the interest in the organisation's activities must be *legitimate*. This means that stakeholders have an interest in the success of a firm or organisation and not the failure to enhance their own success. Nonetheless, the latter refinements are still very broad and do not further explain what distinguishes legitimate stakeholders from illegitimate ones and as stressed by Friedman and Miles (2002:2) "it is implicitly assumed that the boundary is obvious, clear-cut and stable, thereby precluding exploration of the boundary and consideration of how certain stakeholders may cross it". Currie et al. (2009) likewise criticise the stakeholder definition of Freeman (1984) for being too all-inclusive and not providing further tools of how to categorise potential stakeholders and evaluate their salience. Thus, the latter refer to and adapt the theory of Mitchell et al. (1997), which defines three attributes (*power, legitimacy* and *urgency*) that should be examined when identifying stakeholders. *Power* is here described as the stakeholders' ability to "impose its will in the relationship" (ibid:869), meaning the extent to which it can affect the organisation *Legitimacy* in this perspective, is the range to which the stakeholder itself can be affected by the organisation's actions. Thus, a legitimate stakeholder may be affected or have something at risk though it does not necessarily hold the power to influence, whereas other stakeholders are not necessarily affected but do hold the power to influence. The attribute of *urgency* refers to "the degree to which stakeholder claims call for immediate attention" (ibid:870), which adds the dynamic aspect. This is in regard to the level a stakeholder needs immediate attention in terms of time sensitivity and/or criticality (Currie et al. 2009). Mitchell et al. (1997:854) advocate that by evaluating these three attributes it can be clarified "to whom and to what managers actually pay attention [and to identify] those entities to whom

managers should pay attention". Mirroring this perspective to the current research, the example of EU subsidies and policies can be reused. The EU could be perceived a powerful stakeholder as the political agenda may affect the definition of a problem domain. Moreover, the EU's structural funds have a timeframe for application and use, thus time is a critical factor adding the attribute of urgency. On a micro level, landowners could likewise be powerful and legitimate stakeholders that need urgent attention, if the nature trail is planned to cross their ground.

Several scholars advocate for an extensive stakeholder involvement (e.g. Araujo & Bramwell 2002; Bramwell & Lane 2000; Bramwell & Sharman 1999; Czernek 2013; Donaldson & Preston 1995; Jamal & Getz 1995; Sautter & Leisen 1999; Selin 1999; Sheehan & Ritchie 2005; Timothy 2010). Bramwell and Sharman (1999), for instance, argue that through involvement, stakeholders may be more engaged in the tourism planning. The latter elaborate this, by stressing the importance of consulting stakeholder groups and ensuring information dissemination, which is "likely to increase the accountability of a collaborative initiative to relevant stakeholders" (ibid:398). They suggest the use of e.g. focus and working groups that facilitate "the opportunity for direct debate and consensus-building with other stakeholders" (ibid:398). Sautter and Leisen (1999:318) urge the need of involving stakeholders' interests in the early stage of planning, as not merely "congruency across stakeholder orientation increases, so does the likelihood of collaboration and compromise". Currie et al. (2009) agree with this viewpoint and elaborate that, potential conflicts in the future may be avoided. Also Byrd (2007) recognises the importance of reducing conflicts and even claims that "failure to identify the interest of even a single primary stakeholder group may result in the failure of the entire process" (ibid:10). He continues to reason that stakeholder inclusion facilitates discussion of various perspectives and disagreements, which may diminish conflicts and furthermore increase mutual trust and intensification of shared responsibility, advancing chances of tourism development to be sustainable. However, as appointed by Beritelli (2011:610), "gathering stakeholders at a round table is no guarantee for initiating collective action, launching joint projects or sealing alliances". Fostering trust and mutual understanding is important for collaboration, but accountability among stakeholders (Bramwell & Sharman 1999) as well as profound

engagement and active participation are likewise crucial elements for collaborative actions to take place, as stressed by Wang (2008a).

Transferring these perspectives to the case of planning a touristic nature trail, this could be involving various private stakeholders in the collaborative process and not merely public actors. Although DMOs and local politicians desire an increase of tourists to an area, the local community may not have the same interest. Involving them in the planning process and enlighten the mutual benefits could encourage their support. These could encompass improvements in the infrastructure, economic gains for local businesses, creation of jobs etc. The involvement of private actors could empower their participation and engagement in enhancing the products on offer and aligning these with public strategies. All together, this may improve the experience of the tourists arriving at the destination in terms of their meeting with the community and local suppliers.

Dredge (2006:278) appoints the issue that "local government can only represent what it perceives to be the issues and interests of the broader community and these might not necessarily be accurate". Byrd (2007) recognises this viewpoint, arguing that decisions are often not reflecting the interests and opinions of the local community. Hence, Byrd (2007) and Dredge (2006) likewise advocate for a community involvement in a wider aspect than local governments. In line with this, Currie et al. (2009) state that in most tourism projects it is the public planners and managers that define who the stakeholders are and their salience, addressing the issue that their perspective is not neutral. They claim that in some cases the stakeholders are mainly evaluated based on their possibility of financial contribution. Bramwell and Lane (2000:8) contest this while criticising certain collaborative arrangements, claiming "some social groups and individuals may find it difficult or impossible to gain access to these arrangements". In the context of the present study, this could i.a. be an interest group of birdwatchers from the community, who are not well organised but still perceive to have a legitimate stake in the development of a nature trail to attract further tourists (Bramwell & Lane 2000; Hall & Jenkins 1995; Reed 1997). At the same time, government officials may not value the inclusion of the latter in cooperation, as their attributes of power and urgency are evaluated as being low.

This raises the concern of inevitably power inequality, which has been widely discussed by peers (e.g. Bramwell & Lane 2000; Bramwell & Sharman 1999; Byrd 2007; Caffyn 2000; Currie et al 2009; d'Angella & Go 2009; Dredge 2006; Fyall et al 2012; Jamal & Getz 1997; Mitchell et al. 1997; Reed 1997; Sautter & Leisen 1999; Saxena 2005). Some scholars claim that the interests of all stakeholders should be balanced regardless their level of power (e.g. Byrd 2007; Currie et al. 2009; Donaldson & Preston 1995). Reed (1997) notes that it is often assumed that by including all stakeholders in a collaborative process, power imbalances can be overcome. Conversely, she does not agree with this perspective and highlights that "power relations may alter the outcome of collaborative efforts or even preclude collaborative actions" (ibid:567), emphasising the need to evaluate these when examining processes and outcomes of cooperation. Moreover, she stresses that power is often perceived as an instrument that can be managed and balanced, while opposing this view by claiming that in some cases a destination can be greatly affected by a single stakeholder, using the example of how Disney World in Florida is a powerful entity. However, this does not impede collaboration, but the way power relations between stakeholders operate should be noted to potentially affect the interactive process and outcome. Thus, "theories of collaboration must incorporate power relations as an explanatory variable that demonstrates why collaborative efforts succeed or fail, rather than as an instrumental variable that suggests how power can be balanced or convened" (ibid:589). Similarly, Dredge (2006) advocates for comprehension of power asymmetries between public and private actors and how planners should address this to affect engagement and contributions among these.

3.5 Shared rules, norms and structures

Structures in terms of collaborative arrangements and partnerships may vary greatly as they can take both timely limited and more permanent forms. Likewise, as they often evolve over time (Wood & Gray 1991) and can be of a more formal or informal character (Dredge 2006). Dredge (2006) elaborates on the structure of collaborative arrangements as comprising elements such as boundaries and size of a network, membership requirements, strength and density of internal relations, and reciprocity of interconnections. O'Leary and Vij (2012) believe it is a framework

encompassing shared rules, agreements of how to interact and communicate. This illustrates the complexity of organisational structures and the various features they may encompass. However, the explanation provided by Beaumont and Dredge (2010:9) may contribute to the understanding. They argue that "institutional structures are the formal and informal frameworks that create the organisation and shape autonomy, authority, internal coherence and discipline of an organisation". Furthermore, they stress that structures are designed via various decisions, making them dynamic and mutable according to changing values and practices.

Dredge (2006) claim that in the structure of a network, centrality in some form of leadership is useful, to enhance possibilities of gaining support and resources from different stakeholders of the problem domain. According to the latter, this centrality is influenced by the extent of "an identifiable vision, shared values and commitment" (ibid:272). Similarly, d'Angella and Go (2009) encourage the idea of a DMO as the central part of a collaboration, who orchestrates and coordinates the design and congruency of organisational structure in a partnership, which according to Dredge (2006) is often the case. Nonetheless, Fyall et al. (2012) note that collaborative arrangements and partnerships in a destination, do not always involve a DMO. In their research of destination collaboration, reviewing numerous previous studies, they recognise three overall dimensions in which cooperation may occur, which they refer to as *organic, mediated intra-destination* and *mediated intra- and inter-destination*. The organic collaboration takes place independently of a DMO and could, in this case, be if e.g. a local mountain bike club cooperates with a private forest owner and/or national nature agency to construct new trails. The mediated intra-destination collaboration happens within a tourism destination with the DMO often serving as facilitator. Finally, mediated intra- and inter-destination collaboration denotes major cooperation both internally of a destination as well as between two or more destinations. The latter structure concerns the current study, as planning a nature trail involves actors within local destinations as well as between them.

According to Wood and Gray (1991), it is important for the participating stakeholders within these structures to agree on shared rules and norms, as these function to administrate the interactive process. Thus, congruency is not merely

evident in regard of extracting a common problem domain and the geographical scope. Clarified responsibilities and roles of collaborators as well as clear structures and operational processes within the partnership must be attended for effective and beneficial cooperation (Beaumont & Dredge 2010; Wang 2008a). However, as argued by Bramwell and Pomfret (2007:62) "coordinated planning" between several actors creates an "organisational complexity", calling for efficient coordination. Nonetheless, the latter argue that spreading out responsibilities between various collaborators may enhance open discussion and add democratic decision-making. This is in line with the statement of Dredge (2006:278) arguing that "rules of conduct need to be openly discussed and negotiated". This reflects that it is not only about technicalities and in light of the great variety of interests and viewpoints as investigated earlier, this may not be an easy task to achieve and can be one of the obstacles to overcome in a partnership.

Besides having various interests in regard to a common problem domain, the issue of internal competition between stakeholders (Henriksen & Halkier 2009; Saxena 2005; Wang 2008a, 2008b) as earlier discussed, should likewise be addressed. The tourist, who is the target of organisational planning, does most likely not consider the complex system that embraces the intangible tourism product, but perceives this as unified. However, as addressed by Wang (2008a:163) "within the destination there is competition between the different elements of the tourist product". Hence, Wang (2008a; 2008b) claims that stakeholders in the tourism industry do not necessarily participate in either a cooperative or competitive relationship within a destination, but rather a simultaneous relationship referred to by the latter as *coopetition*. Thus, in collaboration the actors inevitably have own competitive advantages and benefits in mind when working towards congruency in regard of focus of problem domain as well as the shared rules, norms and structures. In terms of the current work where tourism development is taking place across political borders, the participants of collaboration represent different local destinations. Accordingly, a competitive relationship between the inter-local public actors may also occur within the collaborative relationship.

Another aspect of how relationships between participants may influence collaboration is *path dependency* (Bramwell & Pomfret 2007). In the research of Bramwell and Pomfret (2007:44) it is acknowledged that "history and past events in

that history are never 'forgotten'" in the social system of cooperation. Similarly, Reed (1997:588) observes that allying on a mutual vision for tourism planning may be hampered due to "idiosyncratic circumstances such as historical interactions". This means that path dependency, which could be seen as implicit norms, can complicate and affect cooperation both positively and negatively due to multiple feedback loops. Hence, in inter-organisational collaboration such as in this study, experiences from interactions and results in previous partnerships and projects may have an impact on the contemporary and future relationship and cooperation between actors. Another aspect concerning path dependency is that some stakeholders may be reluctant to collaboration due to inexperience in the past. Thus, they may fear loosing control or perceive that resources can be used more appropriately by working unilateral and choosing a familiar strategy (Jamal & Getz 1995).

Conversely, positive experiences of past cooperation and partnerships may advance the existing collaboration as evidenced in the research of Selin and Chavez (1995). Likewise, the collaboration may ignite a path creation for future cooperation, which could be one of the indirect benefits that does not necessarily relate to the actual problem domain. This could i.a. be the ties made through collaboration among various stakeholders, which according to Saxena (2005) could "be used to build a portfolio of interconnections for knowledge building within destination networks". In regard to the current study, this could mean that though various stakeholders engage in partnerships to develop and promote a nature trail, other networks are cultivated. As an example, this could be a group of B&B hosts who begin sharing experiences of how to improve the customer services. This again improves the general quality. Likewise, they could align to develop a joint booking system, which may not have been part of the problem domain of the primary collaboration efforts but assists the long-term sustainability of the problem domain.

In this matter, the achievement of mutual *trust* and *commitment* is significant, which by several scholars is recognised as one of the determinants for successful cooperation (e.g. Beritelli 2011; Bramwell & Lane 2000; Bramwell & Sharman 1999; d'Angella & Go 2009; Fyall et al. 2012; Henriksen & Halkier 2009; Saxena 2005; Wang 2008a). According to Wang (2008a) trust and long-term commitments are

evident factors in partnerships, together with clear roles and responsibilities, which all together strengthens collaborative empowerment. In the thorough review of previous scholarships examining collaboration, Fyall et al. (2012:22) testify that peers widely agree in the aspect of trust and commitment being "fundamental ingredients of collaboration". The latter stress that nursing and developing this ingredient serves to somehow level power differences and thereby creating "a culture of equity and fairness" (ibid:13). Hence, trust and commitment contributes to attaining common grounds and assembling shared rules, norms and structures, whereas internal competition and distrust may hamper collaborative actions (Saxena 2005).

3.6 Process, actions and decisions

The actions and decisions of participants in collaboration are made to address a mutual problem domain, guided by shared rules, norms and structures through an interactive process. In this perspective, the process may be comprehended as the scaffold in which various elements of cooperation are rolled out. Hall (2008) as well as Wood and Gray (1991) enlighten that rather than being an established state of organisation, collaboration is primarily an evolving process. Nonetheless, as stated by Wang (2008a:152) "collaboration is a complex and dynamic process that is difficult to capture" due to its idiosyncratic environment. Furthermore, it varies depending on the problem domain and circumstances. Consequently, numerous scholars have examined the process and its features to enhance the understanding of cooperation (e.g. Caffyn 2000; Gray 1989; Hall 2008; Jamal & Getz 1995; Pavlovich 2003; Saxena 2005; Selin 1999; Selin & Chavez 1995; Waddock 1989; Wang 2008a).

Several propositions of the different stages in a collaborative process have been made. As one of the pioneers, Gray (1989, in Hall 2008) is among those whose work has been frequently referred to by peers. The latter suggest that cooperation can be divided into three stages, comprising a *problem setting*, a *direction setting* and an *implementation* phase (cf. table 1). However, this theory does not embrace the full picture of a collaborative process, as it merely enlightens elements of the start-up of a partnership. Another frequently cited author is Waddock (1989). Her research extracts *an evolutionary model of partnership organizations* that identifies four stages of the collaborative process (cf. table 1), which she refers to as the life cycle of a partnership

and thereby implicitly indicating a certain termination (Caffyn 2000). According to the latter, the first stage of cooperation encompasses the context, which fosters the partnership. Secondly, there is a phase of initiation where the problem domain is set (*issue crystallisation*) and the legitimate stakeholders are gathered while trust is built and power balanced (*coalition building*). The third stage comprises the establishment of collaboration, where the rules and structures are determined (*purpose formulation*). The final and fourth phase is where the latter stage is re-evaluated in regard of the dynamic environment (*purpose reformulation*). Depending on the re-evaluation, the partnership may either broaden the purpose and prolong its existence or terminate if the goals have been achieved.

This early work was later adapted to the tourism field by Jamal and Getz (1995) as well as Selin and Chavez (1995). The theories of possible stages in a collaborative process are presented in table 1, which illustrates that the latter suggestions mainly focus on the practical features of the establishment of collaboration. The phase where the partnership is enrolling its cooperative work as well as the final part is only scratched upon. Furthermore, the proposed models indicate that collaborations go through sequential steps in a linear process, instead of being dynamic and changing arrangements influenced by various determinants.

Suggestions of stages in the collaboration process					
Gray (1989, in Hall 2008): The Collaborative Process					
Problem setting: Defining mutual problem, committing to collaboration, identifying potential stakeholders		Direction setting: Establishing rules and agreements for collaboration, exploring options and resources		Implementation: Assembling constituencies and external support, ensuring compliance, monitoring agreements	
Waddock (1989): An evolutionary Model of Partnership Organizations					
Context that fosters the partnership	Initiation: Setting the problem domain (issue crystallisation), gathering legitimate stakeholders, building trust and balancing power (coalition building)		Establishment of collaboration: determining rules and structures (purpose formulation)		Re-evaluation of the partnership (purpose reformulation): broadening the purpose and prolonging the partnership or termination
Jamal & Getz (1995): A collaboration Process for Community-Based Tourism Planning					
Problem-Setting: defining purpose and domain, identifying potential stakeholders, recognising interdependence and committing to collaboration, ensuring adequate resources to facilitate collaboration		Direction-Setting: Collecting information, appreciating shared values and establishing rules, collecting information and discussing options, arriving at shared vision through consensus		Implementation: Discussing means of implementation and monitoring, selecting structures for institutionalizing process, assigning goals and tasks, monitoring progress and ensuring compliance to collaboration decisions	
Selin and Chavez (1995): An Evolutionary Model of Tourism Partnerships					
Antecedents: Initiating partnership, agreeing on a common vision and shared interests	Problem-setting: recognising interdependence, defining common problem, realising benefits of collaboration	Direction-setting: Establishing goals and ground rules, searching information and exploring options, organising sub-groups	Structuring: Formalising relationship, assigning roles, elaborating tasks, monitoring and controlling designed systems	Outcomes: Tangible and intangible outcomes, improved relations, recognising collaborative work outcomes	
Caffyn (2000): Tourism partnership life cycle model					
Pre-partnership: initiating collaboration, detecting concerns, ideas and objectives, assuring commitment and finances	Take-off: Launching partnership, structuring, embedding congruency and mutual trust, strengthening support	Growth: Strengthening cooperation, executing primary objectives and activities, promoting common identity	Prime: Reaching maturity and stability, enhancing credibility, expanding administration and tasks	Deceleration: Stagnation of partnership, evolving of uncertainty re-evaluating partnership, deciding future	Continuation or After-life: terminating partnership or continuing partnership through reforming, merging or other
Wang (2008): Stages of Collaboration and level of involvement in Collaborative Destination Marketing					
Assembling: identifying issues, selecting partners	Ordering: establishing goals and developing programs	Implementation: Assigning roles and executing programs	Evaluation: Assessing predefined goals and expectations	Transformation: evolving into stronger partnership, spanning into other projects, continuing the same, continue in diff. form or finishing	

Table 1: Overview of suggestions of stages in the collaboration process (own creation)

In the work of Caffyn (2000), previous studies in both the tourism field and business management literature are reviewed, where numerous resemblances in terms of characteristics and phases are recognised. Caffyn (2000:202) likewise detects that most research addresses the processes without paying attention to the dynamics of collaboration and "how they may change as the partnership develops". Furthermore, she notes significant variations, especially in the final phase where several scenarios for collaborations are presented (or missing). Thus, she argues that what is lacking in most research is the attention to an exit strategy, which focuses on "why, when and how a partnership should finish and what happens to its role after it finishes" (ibid:200). Huxham and Vangen (1994, in Caffyn 2000) recognise the complexity of nurturing and maintaining inter-organisational relationships throughout the collaborative process, which is likewise acknowledged by Hall (2008). Consequently, depending on the collaborators' capability of navigating in this difficult environment, the partnership may either end due to problems of overcoming these challenges or develop and live longer if the task is successfully approached.

Based on the evaluation of the previous studies and empirical research, Caffyn (2000:225) develops a model that embraces the possible advances of a dynamic process of collaboration, which she refers to as "a typical life cycle trajectory" usually consisting of six stages (cf. table 1). Caffyn (2000) explains that the model is merely an outline of common features of collaboration as various factors can influence the dynamic process. Among these, critical factors could be e.g. shortage of funding, changing political structures, internal struggles and disagreements. Nonetheless, it may be questioned whether the proposed stages are typical steps of a partnership. The positive growth and maturity in the third and fourth phase, as proposed, are not assured merely by engaging cooperation. It could be argued that this depends on the influence of the various stakeholders in terms of e.g. commitment to resolving the problem domain, mutual trust among the actors, path dependency, and financial funding of the project. Similarly, the suggested fifth stage of deceleration may be supposed to not always take place in collaboration, depending on the interaction between the stakeholders and how they approach the common problem domain.

In a more recent study, Wang (2008a) acknowledges the theory of Caffyn (2000) and emphasises the understanding of the dynamic process of collaborative tourism development and planning to ensure effective cooperation. He refines Caffyn's (2000) model (cf. table 1) and likewise stresses the importance of attention to the final stage. However, when evaluating the propositions of collaborative processes, the theory of Wang (2008a) appears to resemble the previously discussed models of Gray (1989) and Waddock (1989) to a great extent, though entailing an elaborated final stage similar to Caffyn's (2000). The explanation may be that Wang (2008a:151) aims to "examine the process of collaboration formation", which indicates a focus on the establishment of a partnership and not the actual further cooperation. Nonetheless, in opposition to the other scholars, he acknowledges that a collaborative arrangement not necessarily evolves in a linear progression "but rather a dynamic and cyclical process whereby cooperation, conflict, and compromise coexist and various governance structures are negotiated" (Wang 2008a:162).

3.7 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical discussion in this chapter reflects the numerous dimensions embraced in cooperation, by exploiting the terms from Wood and Gray's (1991) definition of collaboration as a frame for investigating previous research. This reveals various aspects of the phenomenon that should be taken into consideration when examining collaborative arrangements. The focal point appears to be a dynamic process whereby the collaboration evolves. This paper does not aim to further examine and identify certain stages in a cooperative process, resulting in a refined model. However, drawing on the literature within the field and outlining overall phases in the progression of a partnership, may be useful to set up a scaffold for assessing the empirical data collection. The comparison of the theoretical proposals of stages in a collaborative process mirrors that albeit there are differences, especially concerning the ultimate phases, several resemblances can be drawn. To investigate the two cases chosen for this research, the process of these will be evaluated through four phases in a simplified figure as illustrated in figure 2.
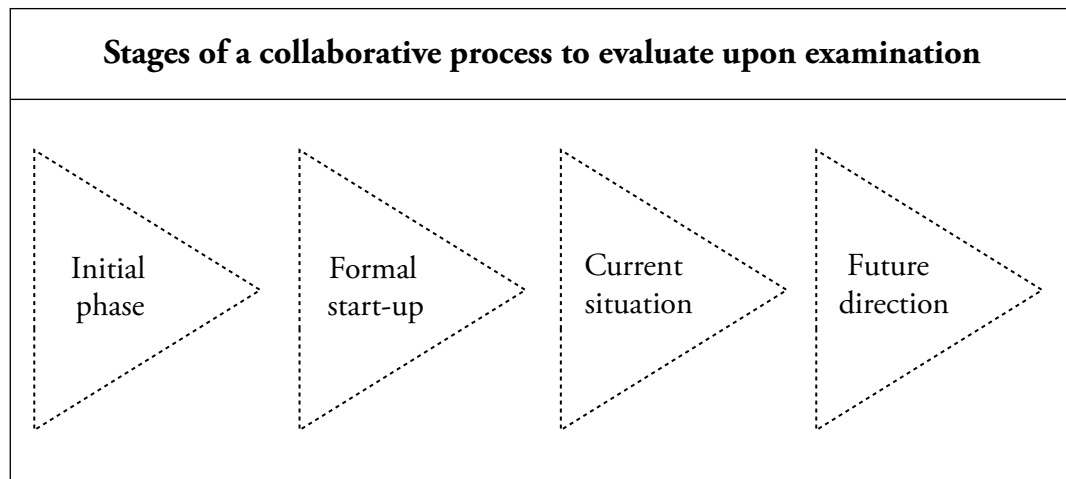
Stages of a collaborative process to evaluate upon examination

| Initial phase | Formal start-up | Current situation | Future direction |

Figure 2: Stages of a collaborative process to evaluate upon examination (own creation)

The *initial phase* is where the idea is ignited and potential collaborators are gathered to define the purpose and problem domain of the project. Furthermore, it entails the preliminary preparations in terms of ensuring financial support as well as agreeing on the organisational structure of the partnership. The *formal start-up* is here perceived as when the cooperation is formally launched and the cooperative partners start the operation of the project. For the practical use in the examination, this phase may differ in time and embrace additional steps depending on the case. The *current situation* refers to the latest progress of the collaboration. Finally, the possible *future directions* of the partnership are enlightened, considering how it is presumed to evolve (or terminate).

The analysis sets off to examine how the stakeholders influence the process of cooperation in the cases of Hærvejen and Saar-Hunsrück-Steig. For this purpose, the terms that are extracted from the theory of Wood and Gray (1991) could likewise be used in the theoretical framework to assess the empirical data. Throughout the collaboration, the process is influenced by the actions and decisions that are directly or implicitly taken, as well as those not taken, by various stakeholders. This is i.a. in terms of the geographical scope of the cooperation, which not merely defines where the nature trail is located but also the area where the project is enrolled, entailing private as well as public stakeholders and political borders. Also, the actions and decisions taken in finding common grounds of a mutual problem domain and agreeing on the purpose

of the cooperation. Furthermore, the operation of the project is organised through shared rules, norms and structures, which are set by the participating stakeholders. These elements compose the theoretical framework of the analysis and will be analysed according to the four phases (figure 2). Thus, the actions and decisions of the stakeholders are evaluated throughout the investigation of the phases, concerning the geographical scope, problem domain and purpose as well as the shared rules, norms and structures. The framework is abridged in figure 3.
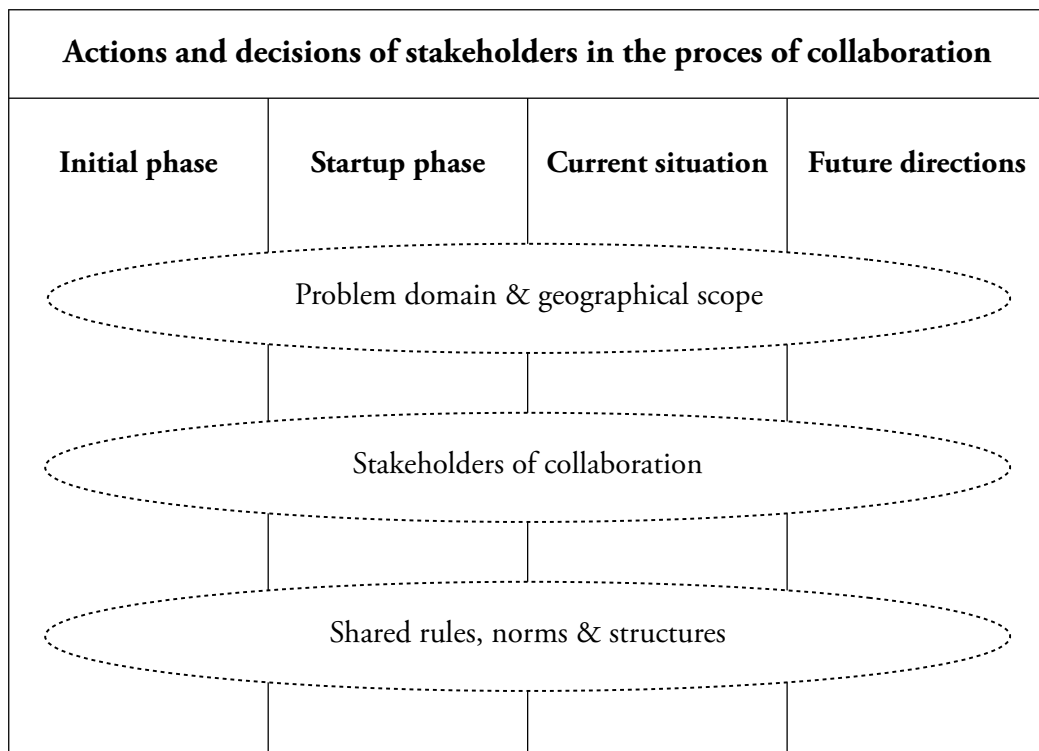

Figure 3: Actions and decisions of stakeholders ind the proces of collaboration (own creation)

4. Analysis

To answer the research questions in section 1.2, this chapter provides an analysis of the cases of Hærvejen and Saar-Hunsrück-Steig derived from the data collection. The cases are assessed separately in accordance with the theoretical framework. Firstly an overview of the selected interviewees for this research is given as well as a brief outline of the process of collaboration. Secondly the data will be presented and analysed chronologically according to the four phases of the process of collaboration.

Further descriptions of the interviewees (cf. app. 5 & 6) as well as an English translation (cf. app. 7) of the German quotations cited in the analysis are available in the appendices.

4.1 Collaborative process of Hærvejen Region Midtjylland

In order to obtain an insight through various perspectives of the cooperation of Hærvejen, nine interviews with the main partners have been conducted. This includes the board members of 'Foreningen Destination Hærvejen' (FDH), consisting of representatives from the three municipalities' business development departments, three representatives from the respective LTOs as well as an observer from Midtjysk Turisme (MT). Furthermore, the current project manager and a representative from Region Midtjylland (RM) were interviewed. Additionally, various internal documents of the partnership and local news articles have been assessed, and the researcher has participated in a board meeting of the FDH and an evaluation meeting with the main partners hosted by Rambøll (external consultant).

Figure 4: Map of Hærvejen (Own creation/ Google Maps)

The cycling and hiking trails of Hærvejen, which run from Viborg to the German border, were constructed in the late 1980's in collaboration between the counties, though not promoted for tourism. After the structural reform in Denmark in 2007, initiatives of inter-local collaboration to develop Hærvejen as a tourism product appeared. During the period July 2008 - January 2011 the first formal project (P1) in RM was carried out, followed by a second formal project (P2) starting in January 2013, which is still in operation. The majority of the interviewees, however, were not actively involved in the P1 and describe the P2 as the point when the cooperation actually started. Thus, the *initial phase* for the collaboration is here understood as the period up until the P2 was launched. The *start-up phase* embraces the following period up until

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approximately the turn of the year (2013/14) where the next phase, *current situation*, begins. The final phase, *future directions*, entails considerations of what is forthcoming according to the interviewees.

4.1.1 Initial phase

The collaboration to cultivate Hærvejen for tourism was initiated, as it was believed that it had the potential to advance growth, employment, development and new life in the peripheral areas alongside the trail, by exploiting "et velkendt men lidt støvet ikons oplevelsesmæssige potentiale" (app. 8). According to the project description the P1 aimed to rethink and further develop Hærvejen as an attractive and marketable product. This was to take place by means of creating networks between private and public actors at all levels as well as a joint Hærvejen identity and a cross-regional knowledge- and network secretariat. However, the interviewees refer to it as a pilot project where several analyses were undertaken to examine potential target groups and the possibilities of Hærvejen. Furthermore, private actors were identified and eight *experience realms* [oplevelsesrum; akin to micro destinations] along the trails were outlined and described. Also assignments of a more practical nature were undertaken, though the secretariat was not realised. This indicates that although the project aimed to further economic growth in the tourism industry, a return of investment (ROI) in this sense was not remarked. Thus, the outcome of the P1 may not have been as expected by the partners in terms of financial results.

After the reform, Hærvejen runs through three municipalities in RM and four municipalities in Region Sydjylland (RS). The P1 was a cross-regional cooperation, though it was divided into two formal projects with separate budgets that proceeded more or less simultaneously. The financiers of the project in RM were mainly the public institution RM and the local action groups (LAGs), who are responsible for distributing EU funding through the LEADER projects for rural district development. The tourism organisations were the main partners in the collaboration with the lead partner of RM being the LTO in Viborg where also a temporary project manager was situated, since many perceive the town as the gateway to Hærvejen. The steering group had representatives from the LTOs as well as the municipalities in RM where the LTO in Viborg held the position as chairman. External actors such as Dansk Vandrelaug,

Dansk Cyklist Forbund, and consultants were also involved to a certain extent. Private actors along Hærvejen were invited to participate in a kick-off conference as well as in the development of the local experience realms (Hird & Kvistgaard 2010). Some of the respondents state that the private actors seemed enthusiastic and positive about developing Hærvejen.

This reflects how the geographical scope of Hærvejen changed after the reform in terms of political borders. According to the interviewee from RM, the former counties solely managed the financing and maintenance of Hærvejen. Hence, the national strategic decision influenced the structure of the collaboration and complicated it due to the increase in the number of public stakeholders compared to the past (cf. sec. 3.5). Nonetheless, one could call into question whether or not the counties which were previously responsible for the trails would have taken the initiative to develop Hærvejen as a tourism product. Thus, the restructuring may have fostered new ideas and partnerships.

Most of the interviewees in this research were not involved in the P1. In all three LTOs the position as Head of Tourism is now undertaken by a different person than it was at the time of the P1, and out of the three respondents from the LTOs, only the interviewee from Viborg was employed during the period. However, at that time it was mainly the Head of Tourism who was involved in the project. Moreover, the respondent from the municipalities were employed at the time, but not actively part of the project as illustrated here:

> "[jeg] sad med i en styregruppe der, men altså det var jo, var det 2-3 gange om året vi mødtes (...) og så havde man glemt det når man var ude af døren igen. Det var Viborg der kørte det, fuldstændig beskæftigede sig med det. Så der var ikke nogen tråde ud i de andre kommuner (...) det var mere sådan information om hvor langt man var kommet (...) altså det var ikke, mener jeg, sådan nogen reel indflydelse vi havde. Men vi tog den så heller ikke skal det jo lige siges. Det var Viborg der kørte den og hvis vi havde ønsket mere indflydelse så skulle vi selvfølgelig have gået ind lidt mere aktivt"
> -L. J. Neldeberg, Ikast-Brande municipality

The data collection indicates that the collaboration to develop Hærvejen as a tourism product was initiated by the tourism organisations with the LTO in Viborg as the prime mover in RM, which aligns with the perception that Hærvejen is traditionally connected to this locality. However, as stated by Wang (2008a), a

destination cannot be controlled by one entity due to the fragmented composition of the tourism product. Thus, the decision to join the partnership could show recognition of interdependency. The extent of this may be questioned though, as the remaining localities in RM do not appear to have actively participated in the P1. The LTO in Viborg informed the partners of what was being done but did not strive to include them in the project, which could have enhanced their engagement as discussed in section 3.4. Conversely, neither did the partners take actions to become involved, exposing a low level of interest and commitment. Hence, it appears that the partnership had a structure with a steering group that officially possessed power to influence the project, though implicitly the shared rules and norms differed concerning how the roles and responsibilities were allocated. Thus, the main power was distributed to the LTO in Viborg.

At the end of the P1 a continuation of the collaboration in a P2 was sparked, when RM started planning a regional tourism strategy and announced the possibility of funding for inter-local projects to boost additional sales [mersalg]. Hence, an application was submitted. Primarily, the purpose of this was to establish a joint secretariat based at the LTO in Viborg, to assemble the various stakeholders in the seven municipalities along Hærvejen and further develop and market the product. However, a major disagreement regarding the focus and purpose of the project arose:

> *"Der har været det der stridspunkt omkring markedsføring. Store diskussioner fordi den tidligere turistchef i Viborg var af den opfattelse at hovedparten af budgettet skulle bruges på markedsføring, fordi produktet var klart, vi skulle sådan set bare i gang. Og så har der så siddet nogle, altså specielt kommunerne, som ikke har kunnet se, altså de har sagt er vi nu det? Er vi ikke stadig der hvor der stadigvæk er behov for noget produktmodning i forhold til virksomhederne?"*
> - K. B. Slæggerup, MT

This illustrates that although the municipalities had not interfered greatly in the P1, they became more involved in the decision making of the problem domain for the P2. This begs the question if the growing interest was due to the small profit in terms of ROI of the P1, which may have fostered doubt in the approach proposed by the LTO in Viborg. The representative from Viborg municipality implicitly confirms this:

"På en eller anden måde gennem de sidste 3-4 år, er der blevet en større bevidsthed om, at man i kommunerne betaler penge for turismefremme, og at man ønsker mere end blot brochurer på glittet papir. Så derfor går man ind og siger: 'vi vil simpelthen være med til at definere, hvad er det pengene skal bruges til'. Og i det her tilfælde bygger projektet på 25% kommunal finansiering. Så det er jo helt naturligt at man går ind, i højere grad vil man være med til at definere hvad er det for en retning projektet skulle tage"
\- P. Vestergaard, Viborg municipality

Here it is shown that the municipalities claimed a legitimate stake due to the co-financing of the project. As stated in the introduction of this paper, the traditional approach in the tourism sector has been to market existing products, albeit this is not sufficient in contemporary times (Beritelli et al. 2007; Hall 2008; Henriksen & Halkier 2009). The above statement reveals that the municipalities acknowledged this and thus found it necessary to develop the capacity of the industry. Furthermore, this interest could be stimulated by the fact that the partners representing the municipalities hold positions in departments of business development, comprising all industries and not only tourism. Hence, their interest is not exclusively tourism as highlighted by Sautter and Leisen (1999).

However, this perspective was neither shared nor accepted by the Head of Tourism in Viborg, causing a major conflict due to the disagreement on the problem domain. This may have been further ignited by path dependency. As discussed in section 3.4, the risk of conflict between collaborators increases if various stakeholder interests are not openly debated at an early stage to further consensus building. Thus, the sparse involvement in the P1, which was managed more or less unilaterally by the LTO in Viborg, hampered a mutual understanding of different perspectives and opinions. This could likewise have fostered distrust between the latter and the remaining partners, enhanced by the lack of results in terms of ROI, which could explain the greater interest of the municipalities in terms of affecting the trajectory of the P2.

A turbulent time followed, as several of the interviewees refer to it, which consequently lead to the dismissal of the Head of Tourism in Viborg in October of 2012. According to the respondents, she was the only partner, who opposed to mainly focus on maturing the product and less on marketing. Thus, after her dismissal the

collaborators agreed to change the problem domain to a focus on strengthening and professionalising the private actors in the tourism industry along Hærvejen. Accordingly, the description was converted and the funding reapplied. On January 10th 2013, the local press (Viborg Folkeblad) published a contribution to debate from the previous Head of Tourism in Viborg, where she among other things claimed in response:

> *"Det første Hærvejsprojekt havde vi så stor succes med, og på møde havde jeg fået tilkendegivelse fra alle kommuner og turistbureauerne langs Hærvejen om at bidrage økonomisk til at etablere et Hærvejssekretariat på Viborg Turistbureau i 2013 til driftsopgaverne. Nu har Viborg Kommune smadret dette og har tromlet ind over. Det er utroligt, at Viborg Kommune ikke selv kan opfinde deres succesprojekter"*
> - B. Leth

This indicates a sense of ownership of Hærvejen while it is argued that the municipality should come up with their own projects, revealing that interdependency was not recognised. The shared norms in the P1 indicated that she had the power to orchestrate the collaboration. However, the power and urgency of the municipality as a stakeholder was not acknowledged, although the financial and political support must be assumed to be important for the project to be undertaken. This is in line with the theories discussed in section 3.4, highlighting the fact that tourism planners should address not merely the interests of various stakeholders, but also the stakeholders' attributes concerning how they can influence. As stressed by Mitchell et al. (1997:854) it is essential to evaluate these attributes to identify "to whom and to what managers should pay attention".

Just before the internal power struggles in RM took place, RS decided to close down Syddansk Turisme - the leading partner in the RS project. The intention had been to continue the collaboration with two simultaneous projects, and according to the primary descriptions and applications all seven municipalities supported this idea. However:

> *"I bund og grund så var der et rigtig godt samarbejde, og der var et godt grundlag at arbejde videre med. Problemet var så bare at der gik rigtig meget tid og så på et eller andet tidspunkt så blev Syddansk Turisme jo nedlagt. Så havde man jo ikke noget dernede"*
> - K. B. Slæggerup, MT

Several of the interviewees describe that this decision caused a reverse of some of the localities in RS, reinforced by a regional tourism strategy yet in preparation. Eventually, the LTO in Vejle took the initiative to lead a similar project in RS and apply for subsidies similar to the construction in RM. In the same period, an initiative was taken in Region Nordjylland (RN) to establish an extension of Hærvejen, lead by Rold Skov Naturcenter in collaboration with the municipalities in the region. This project too was a separate and independent undertaking which had a different problem domain, seeing as the trails had to be constructed first.

Photo 1: Section of Hærvejen near Vrads - note the sign

This mirrors how the political borders, layers and strategies within the geographical scope define the collaborative structure, creating three separate partnerships (cf. sec. 3.3). However, as stated by Beritelli et al. (2007) it is important for tourism planning to operate according to demand and less by political boundaries. In the P1 this challenge was somewhat overcome, as discussed earlier. With the decision to shut down Syddansk Turisme it can be argued that the centrality in RS was lost (cf. sec. 3.5). To some extent, this was also the case in RM after the dismissal of the Head of Tourism in Viborg who played a central role in the P1. Thus, after the termination of the formal partnerships, the cross-regional cooperation and communication was further complicated. Furthermore, the partners in RM had their internal struggles to handle: RS were restructuring their partnership and the project in RN was in its embryonic stage where not only the trails had to be established but also the cooperative organisation. This confirms that tourism planners operate in a turbulent environment where several forces, including social and political influences, affect tourism management (cf. sec. 3.3).

The action of RM to formulate a tourism strategy and offer funding for inter-local collaboration appears to be the motivator for the P2. Thus, the problem domain had to be aligned with the regional policies, which did not seem to be an issue though, as the focus was similar to the existing vision for Hærvejen. However, according to the interviewee from Viborg municipality, RM was engaged in the configuration of the P2 and demanded ambitious goals. Additionally, the previous Head of Tourism in Viborg had highlighted extensive potential in terms of an increase in the number of tourists and job positions in the tourism industry. Based on this, a performance contract was established with RM, outlining the profit goals of the P2. These required a 7% growth in the tourism revenue in the region, 75,000 additional overnight stays, 100,000 extra day-tourists per year and a creation of a minimum of 120 fulltime jobs derived from tourism during the project period.

In this example the power imbalance between the stakeholders in the geographical scope is clearly uncovered (cf. sec. 3.4). The main partners recognised their dependency on the subsidies and political support to accomplish the project and would thus be affected by a refusal of funding by RM. Hence, they agreed with the

requirements although the performance contract may have appeared challenging to fulfil. Conversely, RM was not dependant on the collaborators and would not be greatly affected. Hereby the norms in the unequal relation are reflected, as RM indirectly decided the rules governing the cooperation.

RM encouraged the partners to apply for EU subsidies through NaturErhvervstyrelsen (NE), which could double the budget. This action was taken but it meant further delays as the problem domain first had to be aligned with strategies of each of the LAGs in the three municipalities, who also had to approve the project before NE could be applied to for subsidies. Accordingly:

> *"Pengene ville ikke blive bevilget fra de lokale LAG'ers budgetter, men fra de her Grøn Vækst midler. Så man kan sige, det var bare endnu et administrativt led i den her ansøgningsproces"*
> - P. Vestergaard, Viborg municipality

This shows that the problem domain had to be aligned with additional strategies in different political layers within the geographical scope, which entangled the organisational structure as well, as the number of powerful stakeholders of the P2 in RM increased.

The partners in RM decided to establish Foreningen Destination Hærvejen (FDH), which was intended to function as the lead organisation of the P2 with a board consisting of representatives from the three municipalities and LTOs as well as members in the form of private actors. This idea did not last though, as it was difficult to recruit members for FDH, and the lead partner had to disburse the financing – something which FDH did not have the capital to do. Hence, Viborg municipality was finally chosen as lead partner. This mirrors the complexity of organising the structures of the partnership, as the stakeholders within the geographical scope influenced this decision in various ways. The political rules of the financiers hampered the possibility of a joint lead organisation. Moreover, the attempt of actively involving the private actors in the cooperation was influenced by a lack of interest among the target group. This shows how institutional structures are mutable, as discussed in section 3.5.

After a round of applications a new candidate who had the desired competences was selected as project manager. However, due to the slow progress of ensuring funding before the P2 could be propelled, this person accepted an alternative job position in the

meantime. Hence, the numerous powerful stakeholders that were included in the structure also influenced this action.

Several of the interviewees describe the initial period as long and challenging, and this is exemplified in a statement from the Head of Tourism in Ikast-Brande, who started in the position during the initial phase of the P2:

> *"Sådan som jeg oplever det, der har det været en lang og trang vej at komme hen til. Jeg kommer fra en anden branche, så for mig der har det her været tungt, tungt. Altså hvor man ikke rigtig har kunnet træffe nogle beslutninger og ikke kom videre. Tingene blev skudt til hjørnespark hele tiden. Så det har været mange møder, sådan lidt ørkesløs vandring kan man sige"*
> - J. Nielsen, Head of Tourism Ikast-Brande

4.1.2 Start-up of the partnership

Eventually, the partners in RM decided to launch the P2 in the beginning of 2013 when the municipalities, RM and the LAGs had pre-approved the project, and the funding from NE had been applied for. The collaborators in RS, however, decided to wait until all subsidies were ensured. The main purpose of the P2 was to strengthen the private actors along Hærvejen and thereby create more jobs in the rural areas through additional sales. The method to achieve this was outlined, and it included individual meetings with the local companies to discuss their possibilities of development and growth as well as joint workshops with various topics. Furthermore, the aim was to develop networks within the industry and unite the value chain of the Hærvejen product, to offer packages to potential tourists. The execution of the tasks was delegated to the three LTOs in cooperation with the new project manager who was hired in the position by March 2013. The board decided that he should work one day per week in each organisation and that the operating *team*, as the partners refer to it, would meet once a month. The intention behind this structure was:

> *"Man har jo bestemt sig for en lokal forankring i de tre forskellige områder. For at det skal køre videre bagefter, så det ikke bliver sådan et projekt der dør, når projektperioden udløber og projektlederen stopper. Det giver jo god mening"*
> -J. Nielsen, Head of Tourism Ikast-Brande

The decision to apply this division with shared responsibilities could also stem from past experiences. As previously noted, the P1 seemed mainly anchored in the

LTO in Viborg and the partners may have realised that it was necessary to encourage engagement in the remaining localities. As mirrored in the statement, it was acknowledged that the LTOs had to be actively involved to change the path dependency and ensure sustainability. However, it also indicates that the LTOs were not part of the decision-making process for this shared rule. This decision appears to have been made at a higher political level in the geographical scope, which reflects the hierarchical order of power among the stakeholders (cf. sec. 3.3).

The interviewees consider this constellation to be one that creates synergy between the LTOs. Nonetheless, the representative from the LTO in Ikast-Brande says that it has been challenging to coordinate responsibilities and tasks, as there has not been a clear structure of how these should be assigned within the team. The project manager also labels this as a challenge and elaborates further, that it has been uncertain whether the LTOs would have their working hours refunded from the project budget. This made it difficult to motivate the LTOs to take on assignments:

> *"Og hvor jeg nok har følt at, jamen jeg har jo ikke turistviden vel (...) Så jeg har nok sådan forventet mere indspil fra turistorganisationerne til, hvordan er det opgaven skal løses. At jeg havde den mere overordnede, men jeg er blevet mere hands-on og praktisk løsende på det. Og det har ikke været meningen. Og det har jeg så taget på mig, fordi de i en periode ikke rigtig tog fra"*
> *- S. Ancher, project manager*

Hence, the partners have decided on the overall structure and division of tasks in the collaboration but it appears that the roles and responsibilities in terms of the operational process have not been clarified. The organisational complexity of the partnership demands efficient coordination (Bramwell & Pomfret 2007) and as stressed by Dredge (2006:278), cooperative structures are not only about technicalities, as "rules of conduct need to be openly discussed and negotiated". The representatives of the municipalities desired a greater focus on business development, which should be executed by the LTOs. However, as discussed earlier, this approach is new compared to the traditional way of working, and this may have caused hesitation among the LTOs, who were uncertain as to how to handle this task. Moreover, the ownership of Hærvejen in RM had been anchored in Viborg, and the representatives from the other LTOs had come into the project at a late stage. Thus, although the municipalities

decided to anchor the project in all three LTOs, it may be presumed that this required that all the collaborators took an active part in the project, which could have occurred if there had been greater involvement and direct debate (cf. sec. 3.4).

According to the representatives from the LTOs, they have several other assignments in their respective organisations and are involved in other time-consuming projects as well. Furthermore, the project is prioritised differently by the LTOs, which according to the respondents is openly discussed and accepted. The majority of tasks seem to be handled by the project manager and the LTOs in Viborg and Ikast-Brande. In Silkeborg, the LTO executes what is necessary but it has several other ongoing projects in the town which are prioritised because they are believed to yield higher results – something which the municipality demands of their work. This is in line with the statement of the representative from the municipality, who elaborates that the attractions in the town can be used to attract e.g. cruise tourists from Aarhus and have a larger financial potential than Hærvejen. Additionally, the LTO representative from Silkeborg explains that there have been several staff turnovers in the managing positions over the past three years, which has left precious little time for immersion into the Hærvejen project.

Thus, the interests of the LTOs differ. It is clear that the partners in Silkeborg do not expect the project of Hærvejen to create great ROI and thereby serve their own interest, and this results in a low commitment to the cooperation. However, the stakeholders of a destination, in this case Hærvejen, may be influenced by individual actions due to their interdependency, as argued by Jamal and Getz (1995). This means that the decision to not actively participate because other issues are perceived as more relevant, affects the other partners and stakeholders of the cooperation and potentially the outcome. Reflecting on path dependency this could likewise indicate an internal competition between the localities. As stated earlier, Hærvejen is traditionally associated with Viborg, as it is perceived to be the gateway to the trail. Accordingly, Silkeborg may believe that the cooperation is more beneficial to the latter, and so other attractions and projects which enhance own competitive advantages are prioritised. Some of the respondents describe Ikast-Brande as not having other significant

attractions apart from Hærvejen, which could explain why the above prioritisation does not appear to find relevance in this locality.

The overall purpose of the P2 is to engage the private actors in the development of Hærvejen and foster growth in the industry. A means for this task is personal visits to the companies, offering a business evaluation and suggestions on how to develop, and this is undertaken in collaboration between the LTO and the business council in the municipality where the company is located. This approach is new, as the LTOs have had a different focus in their relationship with the private actors, and the business councils have not previously addressed the tourism industry.

The goal is to conduct at least 100 visits during the P2. However, the interviewees state that when this task was commenced, they realised that the number of businesses along the trail is actually limited. Furthermore, most are hobby-based micro enterprises such as B&Bs, which are driven by other motivators than money, and one-man enterprises, which claim to have enough business. Thus, they are not interested in expansion, even though the LTOs detect several factors that could improve the quality and service level. Consequently, it was considered to incorporate the towns' private actors but they do not identify themselves with Hærvejen, and moreover, the funding from NE does not allow for this, as it is designated for rural area development. Accordingly, a mere 30 visits were conducted in RM, although the visits were perceived as fruitful by the LTOs.

This reveals that the stakeholder identification was not conducted efficiently in the P1, as the scope of private actors is less than assumed. This action influenced the goals that were described accordingly in the initial phase of the P2, though these appear to be difficult to meet. Additionally, the interests of the private actors had not been investigated beforehand – a factor which in this case is crucial in terms of the purpose of the project. If the private actors are not interested in development then growth is difficult to foster. This confirms that "local government can only represent what it perceives to be the issues and interests of the broader community and these might not necessarily be accurate" (Dredge 2006:278). Moreover, the subsidies from NE were appealing as the budget of the P2 could be boosted. However, this affected the problem domain that had to be aligned with their strategy, which now hinders the execution of

one of the major tasks, due to the restriction to operate in the rural areas. Thus, although the partners agreed on a mutual problem domain, which was also aligned with political strategies, a profound investigation of the private stakeholders was not ensured within the geographical scope.

Another approach to involve the private actors is to organise educational workshops. The interviewees express that it has been difficult to motivate the local businesses to participate, although they seem to show an interest in the project. The explanation from the private actors has often been, that it is a matter of limited available time or that the suggested date is not possible. The first workshop was conducted recently, where a mere 5 participants attended, though numerous were invited, and this appears to astonish the partners.

> *"Jeg havde ikke nogen der ønskede at deltage. De havde nogle ude i Ikast-Brande, og det var gratis den dag. Og det var så også det, vi sendte ud og sendte reminder ud, og jeg ringede til dem; 'nej, men det, nej…'. Så de er sgu svære at trække op, og du kan jo ikke, det kan godt være, du kan hive dem til truget, men du kan jo ikke tvinge dem til at drikke"*
> - B. C. Nielsen, Tourist office manager Silkeborg

This supports the assumption that the interest of the stakeholders was not identified before describing the problem domain of the P2. The public planners set out with the intention of strengthening and professionalising the private actors, but it appears that this was not what the target group wished. However, this begs the question as to whether or not the private actors were encouraged to participate in deciding the content of the workshop, and thereby were given the possibility to have influence. If this action was taken their engagement may have been reinforced, and accountability could have factored in (cf. sec. 3.4). One interviewee similarly notes this issue:

"det der med sådan bare at sige til de her turismevirksomheder: 'nu har vi altså fået den her bevilling, nu har vi det her projekt, hvad tænker I vi skal gøre? Hvad kunne hjælpe Jer på vej?' Altså den der sådan åbne invitation og så sige: 'jamen kom og vær med til at forme projektet'. Det har sådan været lidt, hvad skal man kalde det, i hvert fald ikke lyst til at gøre det på den måde (…) det er jo de virksomheder som jo egentlig udgør kerneproduktet. For mig at se så er det dem der selv skal være rigtig aktive og selv være meget bevidste om og have en idé om, hvad er det der skal til for at deres virksomhed skal udvikle sig. Det er det der skaber det nye. Ikke at der er nogle projektmagere der fortæller dem: 'altså hvis nu I gør sådan og sådan, så får i det og det ud af det'"
- A. S. Juhl, Silkeborg municipality

This implies path dependency in terms of idiosyncratic norms in the relationship between the private stakeholders and the LTOs. As discussed in section 3.5 the past inexperience with cooperation may lead to fear of loosing control, which could be the underlying reasoning of the LTOs.

In the start-up phase, further activities of a more practical nature have been carried out. This includes the installation of eight electronic touch-screens, which are meant to resemble gateways, along the route in RM where the visitor can search for local information, e.g. nearby attractions, eateries, and accommodation. To ensure food supplies in the most sparsely populated areas, stalls have been set up in cooperation with locals. The project manager mainly handled these activities.

Photo 2: Electronic touch-screen at Super Brugsen Nørre Snede

4.1.3 Current situation

A third method to activate the private actors is by stimulating networks in the experience realms. Recently, two local community meetings were held, to discuss how Hærvejen could be integrated and developed in the respective localities. The first was held in a community in Ikast-Brande, and it had been announced in the local newspaper resulting in 35 participants. The second was held in a locality in Viborg where the local council of the area had been contacted to identify potential stakeholders. Here, 60 persons were invited of whom 20 attended.

Apparently these were more successful in terms of participation compared to the individual meetings and workshops. This displays that there is indeed and interest in developing Hærvejen among the private actors. What is notable is that the community meetings were not purely focused on business, like the two previous approaches were, and this may have been the reason for the larger local involvement. As stated by the interviewees, most of the private actors are neither motivated by money nor interested in growth. However, the latter examples indicate that a passion or pride in their local area and Hærvejen may encourage the private actors. Furthermore, the open invitation in the local newspaper nearly doubled the number of participants compared to the personal invitations. This could reflect that not all legitimate stakeholders were identified in the geographical scope of the second meeting.

The representatives from the board of FDH emphasise that there is a good relationship between them. As the collaboration in the P2 has evolved, the partners have become better acquainted with one another and the respondents from the team believe that this has fostered a collegial feeling among the LTOs. This illustrates that the collaboration has furthered mutual trust among the partners although commitment varies, as previously highlighted. Furthermore, especially the representatives from the municipalities emphasise that cooperation on the project has yielded a stronger focus on business development among the LTOs. The representatives from the municipalities expressed scepticism towards the traditional methods used by the LTO for tourism development, and this scepticism appears to have been reduced through the cooperation as shared norms and rules are agreed upon to a greater extent. This also reveals a reinforcement of trust between the organisations.

Nevertheless, the interviewees highlight the importance of a greater collaboration with the municipalities outside of RM. In the beginning of 2014 the P2 in RS was launched with a new project manager as coordinator and in RN, the expansion of the trails is currently being established in another project with its own project manager. Several of the respondents describe the cooperation between the regional projects as limited, apart from a joint webpage and an upcoming application for smartphones which is developed in RN. The three project managers remain in contact, albeit not very often, to exchange experiences, and a meeting to discuss future branding is being organised. The representative from MT explains:

> *"Der er gode takter i forhold til at få det til at spille sammen (…) jeg er koblet på for ikke at de skal begynde at opfinde den dybe tallerken igen. Fordi dem [the project managers] der sidder der nu, har jo ikke været med i det tidligere"*
> - K. B. Slæggerup, MT

This evidences that Hærvejen is split into three projects by the regional borders in the geographical scope, leaving the projects with different foci and tempi. Although the interviewees acknowledge the need for greater cooperation, the creation of shared rules and structures appears to be a complicated task. Besides the political boundaries, path dependency could have further hampered it. In the P1, RM and RS cooperated but after the internal disagreements in RM and the shutdown of Syddansk Turisme in RS, the centralities were gone and the communication between the regional partnerships minimised. The project in RN was initiated during this turbulent time, which could explain why a closer cooperation was not established. In the start-up phase of the P2 in RM, the internal roles were unclear and the responsibilities of the project appear to have been placed with the new project manager. Thus, he was occupied with getting acquainted with the project and executing practical tasks, leaving sparse time for further coordination. Moreover, during the first year of the P2 in RM, the project in RS was at a complete standstill.

Notably, the temporarily employed project managers – not the main partners – handle communication and coordination between the regional projects. By placing the main responsibilities with the project managers, previous knowledge and experience is not utilised. Similarly, the knowledge and experience gained during the period will to

some extent vanish after the projects terminate, whereby the process is reset and actions can be repeated. This rather contradicts the intention of anchoring the project in the LTOs to enhance ownership and similarly reflects a lack of commitment among the partners. Thus, the sustainability of the project is endangered.

The interviewees consider the restrictions of the subsidies from RM and NE to be the main challenge of the cooperation between the projects, as these must be applied and used within the respective regions in the geographical scope.

> *"Det er fordi igen de der åndsvage pengekasser, hvis man kan sige det, altså de kører indenfor en geografi, du får midler indenfor en region. Altså Region Midtjylland har nogle midler, og så kommer der nogle strukturfondsmidler fra EU, som skal bruges i den region, de nu er givet til"*
> - L. J. Neldeberg, Ikast-Brande municipality

Additionally, the main financier, NE, had a list of minor objections to the budget when assent of the application was given, though with a cut down in funding, almost one year after the P2 started. The objections are perceived as obscure by the project manager and the representative from Viborg municipality, for which reason they subsequently filed a protest. Nevertheless, a reply had not yet been received at the time of the interviews. The latter considers the response time to be unreasonably long and also highlights that the funding of the project causes an extraordinary amount of administrative work as well as uncertainty of reimbursement of the project financing. Several attempts at contacting NE via telephone or email have been made to align the understanding of the problem domain concerning the budget, however, it was not possible to reach NE. This illustrates that NE is a powerful stakeholder whose (non-)actions influence the process and the remaining stakeholders' collaboration, which is in line with the theoretical discussions in chapter 3.

Moreover, RM participated in the initial phase when the focus and goals of the P2 were decided, though in the further planning their engagement has been lacking according to some of the respondents. The interviewee from Viborg municipality explains that he and the project manager contacted them when the three regions in Jutland discussed how they could increase their cooperation in general. They proposed that the regions assist them in gathering the various actors of Hærvejen to strengthen collaboration across the borders:

> *"Der fik vi sådan et frygteligt politisk svar af dem: 'det kunne være interessant og vi skal lige.. og bla bla'. Altså fuldstændig intetsigende. Så det fik vi ikke noget ud af. Og det har vi så prøvet af nogle omgange: 'kan vi ikke drøfte det her' men det har vi fået sådan lidt en kold skulder i forhold til. Jamen, det var man ikke klar til, eller man havde lige noget andet"*
> - P. Vestergaard, Viborg municipality

The representative from the region explains that their responsibility is to *"få nogle aktører til at samarbejde om nogle ting, eller få noget destinationsudvikling på nogle områder"*. However, he considers it unclear how this should be done, and since the structural reform the roles and responsibilities are not clarified between the different political layers. He acknowledges:

> *"den [tourism] er bare skrevet ind i loven, som blev lavet sådan meget hurtigt, og kompromisernes kompromis. At regionen skulle bare arbejde med turisme også, af en lang række indsatsfelter (...) Altså det er jo ikke fokusområder, sådan, Hærvejen. Slet ikke"*
> - S. Brandstrup, RM

This illustrates a neglect to agree on the roles and shared rules in the structure of the collaboration within the geographical scope. In the view of the board of FDH, the region has an interest in the collaboration, but the above statement reflects that different focus areas are more important and thus the project is not a priority. This aligns with the discussion in section 3.3, highlighting the heterogeneousness of stakeholders, holding varying interests, opinions and priorities. RM were assigned to work with tourism by the national government, which indicates that the involvement in the project was due to an obligation of incorporating tourism in the overall regional strategy. Hence, although the P2 was co-financed by the latter, active participation in the collaboration did not take place.

The economic results which appear not to be realised could be an explanation of why the project is not prioritised. Nonetheless, RM used their power to influence the problem domain and set the rules in the relationship between themselves and the main partners in terms of ambitious goals of the project. This contradicts the subsequent failure to commit to the partnership and the project. The majority of the interviewees highlight that the goals were unrealistic from the beginning. This shows that RM was considered an urgent stakeholder, as the demands were still accepted to make the collaboration possible. Thus, it may have fostered distrust of RM to the

tourism planners and vice versa due to the low level of commitment, since the performance contract between them may not be honoured. Consequently, it begs the question if RM will support the collaboration in the future.

4.1.4 Future of the collaboration

The P2 was originally set to end in October of 2014. However, the main partners have decided to extend the project period until June 2015. More time is needed to accomplish further tasks and anchor Hærvejen locally. This demands a restructuring of the budget, which requires approval by the financiers. The city councils of the municipalities as well as RM have accepted this. Nonetheless, due to the absent response from NE in regard to the latest approach concerning the budget, these have not yet been requested. Thus, at the time of writing, it is still unknown whether the extension will be possible.

This mirrors the numerous stakeholders in the geographical scope of the collaboration, who all have to be heard in the decision making to achieve congruency of larger actions concerning the project. However, although the major investor has great power to affect the cooperation they do not seem to prioritise it. This could be because NE do not recognise the urgency of their actions in regard to the project, which is further complicated as there is no direct contact person involved to whom the partners can address the issue. Consequently, the main partners of the collaboration are greatly influenced by the action of NE, but not vice versa.

The main partners have discussed an exit strategy after the P2 terminates concerning the future of Hærvejen. Initially, it was believed that the private actors would be encouraged to get involved and further development together with the LTOs. However:

> *"Vi kan bare konstatere, at det vi jo lidt havde håbet næsten ville skabe en skov af alle de private aktører, der er langs ruten, kunne tænke sig at deltage i det her. Den har vi ikke oplevet. Og at der skal, der er nødt til at være en eller anden offentlig involvering og finansiering af fremtidig udvikling også. Man er ikke et samlet erhverv, man er for små, og man har for lidt power i forhold til at kunne drive den her udvikling selv"*
> - P. Vestergaard, Viborg municipality

Hence, the interdependency with the private actors was recognised by the main partners when the problem domain of the collaboration was established, though they were not involved to align the focus and agree on the structures. Again it reflects that the interest of the local businesses had not been investigated beforehand, which now affects the partnership, as they do not consider themselves as interdependent with the collaborators. Thus, they do not commit to the cooperation and thereby become powerful stakeholders that influence the path creation. As elaborated on earlier, this might have been different if there had been effective communication and a democratic debate had been facilitated to further consensus building (cf. sec. 3.4).

Photo 3: Section of Hærvejen near Kjellerup

In August 2013 a strategic seminar was held in FDH in cooperation with MT to discuss possible future directions. Subsequently, MT composed a memo that outlines the status of the project and proposes three models of how the collaboration can continue. These are: a joint DMO, an outsourcing of the commercial performance, or a lead partnership where the municipalities with the highest interest continue the development supported by the remaining actors. MT predominantly emphasise that either option requires a strong commitment from all associated partners.

In the beginning of March 2014 the main partners met again to debate the future of the collaboration based on the memo. Several of the participants, in particular participants from Silkeborg, expressed doubts on the potential of Hærvejen and whether or not it is worth the investment. The representative from the municipality in Ikast-Brande highlighted that growth in the tourism industry has not appeared as a result of the project. Moreover, uncertainty on how to lift the quality and service level of local businesses as well as their engagement was a major reason expressed by the participants. The representative from Viborg municipality underscored that the partners still have a commitment towards the collaborative project and that the future must be considered. However, no decision was made, which was also confirmed to be the case during the interviews.

This indicates a lack of commitment among the main partners that could be caused by doubts that a continuing collaboration will optimise own interest (cf. sec. 3.3). Notable is also the relatively long time period between the first and the second meeting, which reflects that the project is not prioritised by the collaborators. Past experiences may influence the low level of engagement as the initial phase of the P2 seemed troublesome and the partners could fear a similar situation. Also, the missing results could explain the lacking motivation.

Another concern discussed at the meeting regarding the future, was the newly published national growth plan for tourism, which was likewise reflected in the interviews. Hærvejen is situated in the centre of Jutland, but the governmental strategy for the future has its main focus on coastal tourism and the capital of Copenhagen. This causes a fear of difficulties in terms of gaining political support and further subsidies. Moreover, the organisational structure in the public tourism sector is unknown and some of the respondents explain that the future of MT may be in danger. Hence, uncertainty of political influences in the future is revealed among the collaborators, which exposes the power inequity in the various layers within the geographical scope.

4.2 Collaborative process of Saar-Hunsrück-Steig

In order to comprehend the collaboration in the case of Saar-Hunsrück-Steig through several perspectives, ten interviews with main partners have been conducted. Primarily, a full day was spent with the current manager of Deutsches Wanderinstitut to obtain a profound understanding of the 'Premiumwanderwege' concept. Then interviews were conducted with half of the Head of Tourism in the 14 LTOs involved in the partnership. Moreover, the current project manager (likewise Head of Tourism at an LTO), the manager of Naturpark Saar-Hunsrück (formal lead partner) and the manager of Saarschleifenland Tourismus (regional DMO of Wadern-Merzig in the federal state of Saarland) were interviewed.

Photo 4: The area that now constitutes the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig

The original idea to establish a long-distance hiking trail emerged in 2002, and it evolved in the following years during which the cooperative partners were assembled. As the formal partnership began in 2005, the intervening period is here understood as the *initial phase*. The *start-up phase* embraces the time of the development of the Saar-

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Hunsrück-Steig as well as the following years in which affiliating loop trails were constructed. In this case the *current situation* covers the last two or three years of the collaboration until the time of the data collection (April 2014). *Future directions* are the considerations that are detected in the interviews of what may happen next.

4.2.1 Initial phase

The area that now constitutes the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig (SHS) destination did not previously have significant input from tourism in the rural parts according to the respondents. Merely a few localities attracted a minor number of niche tourists such as hunters and health visitors, although the larger towns of Trier and Idar-Oberstein attracted tourists. Some of the interviewees from the tourism organisations explain that they were employed in the late 90's. The Head of Tourism in Kell am See (Kell) describes that she started in a newly established position in 1999 when the municipality noticed a stagnation in tourism in the locality: "*Und dann hat man sich von politischer Seite aus gesagt, wir wollen dem Tourismus neue Impulse geben*" (W. Meyer, Kell). Hence, the municipality in Kell acknowledged the fact that it was not enough to market existing products. An intervention of the traditional strategies and planning in terms of tourism was needed, which goes in line with the discussion in section 1.1. Thus, the municipality decided to act and alter their path dependency.

During the same period, a university sociologist conducted a major consumer study of hikers and came up with the idea to develop an academic tool for composing the perfect hiking trail, based on his findings of the growing segment. Together with colleagues, he founded the association Deutsches Wanderinstitut (DW) to conduct further research in this field and offer consulting as well as commercial certifications. They designed a concept named Premiumwanderwege to construct high quality trails according to various criteria[3] concerning the optimal experience. This entails i.a. assurance of varying nature and scenery, small trails designated for hiking and a minimum of stretches on roads accessible for vehicles as well as extensive signage.

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[3] www.wanderinstitut.de/deutsches-wandersiegel/kriterien

The Head of Tourism in Kell and a few of the surrounding newly established LTOs invited the DW to a seminar, as they believed the area could be exploited for hiking tourism. Several previous local attempts and investments had been made, but they failed to attract visitors or advance growth (e.g. the Sironaweg, cf. app. 2). Likewise, collaboration between the localities was limited and contact between LTOs across the federal state border of Saarland and Rheinland-Pfalz was rare according to the interviewees. The DW argued that the potential to become a hiking region existed, but that in order to succeed the localities had to join forces on a macro scale and construct a high quality long-distance trail.

This reflects that the interest of the tourists may not have been scrutinised and incorporated in the former development projects, since the target group was not appealed to. The DW recognised that this could be of importance if hiking should be developed as a tourism product. Furthermore, the shared norms among the localities had been to operate unilaterally, which shows that interdependency was not recognised within the geographical scope at the time. This seems to be different among the newly started Heads of Tourisms who attended the seminar.

At this time only a few LTOs in the federal state of Saarland and one in Rheinland-Pfalz were involved. The interviewees were aware that they needed an outstanding product in order to be competitive with the better-known hiking destinations in Germany. Hence, they adapted the suggestions of the DW and further discussed possibilities of collaboration and the trail's location. Then the chosen localities were approached to propose the idea. However, as elaborated by the Head of Tourism in Losheim am See (Losheim): "*alle haben gesagt, 'oh, brauchen wir nicht, ist eigentlich nicht interessant, wir sind davon nicht überzeugt*" (A. Laub). The towns focused on different segments and identification with hiking tourism was missing – the rural localities doubted it would create ROI. According to the Head of Tourism in Losheim some of the persons who were interviewed for this study were also sceptical

in the beginning. This included the Head of Tourism in Wadern, who explained, however, that it was the municipality that was against it.

> *"dann habe ich im Stadtrat gesessen und die haben gesagt 'ja, wandern bringt doch nichts' (...). Und dann war noch mehr Vorbereitungsarbeit, um nochmal klar zu machen: 'es wird umgesetzt, wenn wir nicht dabei sind, dann sind wir selber schuld. Dann verlieren wir den Anschluss, wir sind nicht dabei' (...) 'ja, was Ihr denn da rechnet wer da kommt und was für Umsatz gemacht wird, das glauben wir nicht' hat der Stadtrat gesagt"*
> - H. P. Ebert, Wadern

Here, it could be path dependency that caused the hesitation, seeing as several actions had already been taken to enter the hiking scene without visible results. Thus, the municipalities did not believe it could create ROI. Similarly, collaboration as a means to optimise own interests and interdependency with the surrounding localities was not recognised, which could be due to inexperience of cooperating as discussed in section 3.3. Moreover, it reveals that the municipalities are powerful stakeholders in terms of deciding on the geographical scope as they have the right to approve or reject the project. Disagreement about the problem domain existed, as the municipality may have preferred a more conventional approach towards tourism. Furthermore, the Head of Tourism in Wadern was also only hired in 1999. This may have influenced the relation between the LTO and the municipality, as trust primarily had to be built.

The Head of Tourism in Losheim and the manager of the regional DMO Saarschleifenland Tourismus explain that they realised that in order to convince the other localities of the project they first had to demonstrate the opportunities by "organising a success". In close cooperation with the DW, a 13,4 km loop trail was meticulously planned according to the Premiumwanderwege concept in the locality of Losheim, which they refer to as the pilot trail. A long process followed to ensure public funding and political support as well as approval of the public forest organisation and 30 private landowners. Eventually, the trail was constructed and in May 2005 the manager of DW certified the "Felsenweg" with an outstanding score of experience-points according to the criteria.

The commitment is clearly evidenced in this action. The Head of Tourism in Losheim and the manager of Saarschleifenland Tourismus were convinced of the problem domain and managed to ensure local support for the pilot trail. The

recognition of interdependency with the remaining localities appears to be one of the motivators for the decision, which they hoped would promote trust and mutual agreement within the geographical scope of the propositioned long-distance trail. Similarly, it could be said that the DW recognised the interdependency with the partners, as a successful pilot trail would verify and empower their concept. Thus, their commitment to the project and cooperation was strong.

Photo 5: Traces of the history near Losheim am See

On the opening day, the manager of the DW declared it to be the best hiking trail in Germany –a statement which was published in the headlines the following day by the media that had been invited. This caused an extraordinary increase in visitors according to the Head of Tourism in Losheim and the manager of Saarschleifenland Tourismus, and this was the decisive factor to encourage the remaining public actors to enter a partnership of the long-distance trail. This illustrates that not merely the commitment and recognition of interdependency influenced the process of collaboration. The media appeared to be a stakeholder with great power to affect the process (cf. sec. 3.4). Valuable attention was paid to the pilot trail, which ignited a curiosity among the target segment that thus decided to visit. Hence, the group of

stakeholders in this case is wide-ranging, and this contradicts the arguments of Donaldson and Preston (1995), who claim that e.g. the media is no stakeholder.

The area of the SHS expands through two federal states, as the size of Saarland is too limited to host a long-distance trail. To guarantee a minimum distance it was necessary to include further localities in Rheinland-Pfalz. The lack of tradition for cross-border cooperation appeared to be a challenge for the collaborators to overcome.

> *"Wenn Sie nach der größten Herausforderungen fragen, dann war es zunächst 'mal Gemeinsamkeit herzustellen. Dieser Gedanke von Unity, von Einigkeit, den zu kreieren, das war relativ schwierig. Und die Leute zu überzeugen: 'wir sind keine Konkurrenten, wir ergänzen uns und wir machen ein gemeinsames Projekt'. Denn hier im Saarland und Rheinland-Pfalz ist das Konkurrenzdenken noch relativ groß. Es ist nicht so, dass man sich hier als Region versteht und sagt 'wir müssen uns auch als Region vermarkten, nicht nur einzeln als Kommune, sondern alle zusammen' (...) Es ist ganz anders, also eine ganz andere Geschichte"*
> - M. Diversy, Weiskirchen

The path dependency regarding the relations and shared norms between the localities within the geographical scope is uncovered here. This is in line with the discussion in section 3.5, stressing that stakeholders inevitably have competitive advantages and own interests in mind. Thus, although the tourists do not recognise the borders and fragmented nature of the tourism product, there will most likely be internal competition in a destination as argued by Wang (2008a), creating the continuum of competition. Moreover, the statement reflects that the recognition of interdependency was low and so trust had to be built.

The respondents describe how numerous meetings were held with the municipalities, LTOs and the federal state DMOs to draw up the final agreements of the cooperation. Eventually, the partnership of the SHS project was formed – an achievement for which the majority of the interviewees acknowledge the efforts of the Head of Tourism in Losheim. Nevertheless, the organisational structure of the collaboration presented a challenge. Primarily the state DMO of Saarland insisted on running the project but the partners in Rheinland-Pfalz refused:

"Weil es sich eben verfestigt hat, diese Wahrnehmung ‚'das ist ein saarländisches Projekt und wir in Rheinland-Pfalz hier werden da irgendwo stiefmütterlich am Rande, am Katzentisch sitzen wir. Und dürfen zwar mitmachen, aber haben letztlich nichts zu sagen'. Und aus diesem Grund hat dieses Konstrukt auch nicht funktioniert"
- P. Klein, Saarschleifenland Tourismus

The statement shows that the political borders in the geographical scope divided the partners to some extent. Although the primary initiative occurred in Kell, located in Rheinland-Pfalz, the project appeared to be anchored in Saarland, which could be due to the pilot trail in Losheim. It is clear that the collaborators in Rheinland-Pfalz feared a loss of power, if the state DMO of Saarland became lead partner. Likewise, a sense of distrust is indicated. This could have been enhanced by the path dependency in terms of the past inexperience with collaborating across borders.

According to the respondents they realised that a neutral organisation representing both states was needed. The manager of the Naturpark Saar-Hunsrück explains that her organisation was established in 2004 when two associations from the respective states merged. Thus, they were brought into the cooperation and asked to be coordinator and lead partner. Several of the interviewees describe how this constellation worked well between the localities, though the state DMO of Saarland was discontented. Consequently:

"Die haben eine eigene Marke entwickelt (…)'Das ist unsere Saarland Marke. Die Tafeltouren'. Die wollten eine Marke entwickeln, an der sich alle anderen orientieren, also auch wir hier vor Ort. Und dann haben wir gesagt: 'das Konzept ist nicht gut'"
- H. P. Ebert, Wadern

Apparently, the state DMO of Saarland disagreed with the shared rules and structures which the remaining partners had mutually decided on, and this mirrors the internal competition within the geographical scope, as earlier revealed. It could indicate a hierarchical order between the public actors in the political layers, where the DMO previously had control and power over the destination. The new collaboration between the LTOs empowered their authority and changed the norms of the relationship with the DMO, as they joined forces.

4.2.2 Start-up of the partnership

Once the structure of the partnership was established, the next step was to agree on where exactly the trail should run. At this point the local hiking associations were invited to participate. However, the data collection reveals their reluctance while praising the existing trails, which some of the respondents perceive to be out of jealousy. The manager of the DW explains that this has likewise been a problem between them and the national hiking association which had developed a trail certification of its own. According to the latter though, their certificate is not based on academic research, meaning the standards are not as high, and the commercial aspect to use it for tourism development is not comprehended. The manager of Saarschleifenland Tourismus explains that in the beginning the hiking associations were involved, but since they only criticised and complained during the meetings the decision was made not to invite them.

This exposes a competitive relationship (cf. sec. 3.5). Conventionally the hiking associations may have been considered the experts but with the new initiative, the tourism planners entered the field and threatened their position. Although the hiking associations were considered legitimate stakeholders they did not have an interest in advancing the success of the collaboration, as they could lose what the main partners gained (Donaldson & Preston 1995). Thus, interdependency was not recognised by the latter who wished to remain in control, which appears to traditionally have been the norm in the geographical scope. Nonetheless, it seems that the collaborators did not perceive them as being stakeholders possessing attributes of power or urgency and since the main partners decided on the rules and structures the hiking associations were excluded.

The initiators of the project emphasised that the trail had to be of high quality in terms of the Premiumwanderwege criteria, meaning that the interest of the tourist concerning the hiking experience had to be in focus. However:

"Es gab ja auch Kommunen, einige wollten dann alle Ortsgemeinden mit, also dann wäre es so ein Schlangenweg geworden. Alle sollten dann in der Gemeinde mit, durch jedes Dorf sollte der Weg gehen. Das geht ja nicht. Interessiert doch keinen Wanderer. Und dann gab es auch Schwierigkeiten (...) Bei uns gibt's so einen Spruch; 'Der Wurm muss den Fisch schmecken und nicht den Angler'. Wenn man einen Fisch fangen will, muss der Wurm den Fisch schmecken, nicht den Angler. Aber das hat gedauert. Und es war dann ja auch politisch Poker zum Teil (...) das war schon schwierig. Also es hat manchmal dann schon auf der Kippe gestanden"
- G. Rau, Naturpark Saar-Hunsrück

Here, a disagreement regarding the mutual problem domain is reflected. As highlighted in section 3.3, collaborators are often heterogeneous in terms of varying opinions and interests, and this is also demonstrated in this case. Although the localities may have recognised a degree of interdependency, own interests were still prioritised. Some of the municipalities wanted to link the various private actors with the trail but as elaborated on in section 3.1, this would have created a tourist route where it is not the actual hiking experience that is in focus, and this was acknowledged by the LTOs. However, the financial and political support of the municipalities seems to have been important, and this made them powerful stakeholders. They attempted to use this to change the problem domain that was chosen by the initiators.

At some point the collaborators agreed upon and defined where the trail should go. It was decided to establish numerous 'Traumschleifen' (hiking loops) near the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig to satisfy the stakeholders who were located further away from the trail. This too was perceived as an improvement of the tourism product as the consumer study of the segment revealed that many hikers prefer daytrips. The federal states granted 70% of the financing for the construction of the trail through EU subsidies and the remaining 30% had to be covered by the respective municipalities. However, some of the interviewees describe how, when the partners were more or less ready to commence building, the municipality in Birkenfeld refused to contribute financially. Furthermore, the local forester opposed to the construction of new trails according to the manager of Naturpark Saar-Hunsrück. This caused internal problems among the partners, as it was necessary to go through this locality. After several meetings and discussions a compromise was found to resolve the situation. Birkenfeld

agreed to let the trail run through existing gravel roads and the remaining 13 municipalities decided to finance this part.

Clearly this evidences a lack of commitment in the locality of Birkenfeld, as they did not believe the collaboration would result in ROI and thereby serve self-interest. As emphasised by Jamal and Getz (1995), individual actions may affect the other stakeholders of a mutual problem domain, and this is reflected in this situation. Moreover, it illustrates the turbulent environment of tourism planning which is influenced by various political and economic forces (cf. sec. 3.3). It could be questioned whether or not the conflict could have been avoided if an open debate and consensus-building had taken place early on in the cooperation (cf. sec. 3.4). Nonetheless, it appears that the commitment of the remaining localities had increased, indicating a transformation of the shared norms when the parties recognised their interdependency within the geographical scope. The discussions and democratic decision-making to resolve the issue that could hamper the project, reflects a shared responsibility in the cooperation and an enhanced sense of trust.

The various tasks involved in the development of the trails were agreed to be the responsibility of the respective localities of the stretch within their borders. The interviewees explain how the Naturpark Saar-Hunsrück managed the coordination to ensure congruency, and how the Head of Tourism in Losheim and the DW assisted in safeguarding the high quality. However, before the actual construction of the trails could take place the numerous landowners first had to approve it, which all respondents highlight as an enormous challenge.

> *"Oft liegt der Teufel auch im Detail. Da muss man sich einfach mit ganz vielen Leuten an den Tisch setzen und mit denen reden, ja. Denken Sie nur mal an den Fall, Sie haben irgendwo nur 100 Meter auf den Weg. Das ist Privateigentum, das gehört einer Erbengemeinschaft, einer von dieser Erbengemeinschaft lebt in Amerika, einer in Afrika, einer in Australien ja. Da müssen alle Eigentümer ja ihr Einverständnis geben"*
> - D. Brunk, Idar-Oberstein

Several of the landowners declined to grant permission for the trails to cross their property and in some of the public areas the forester also impeded the actualisation. Hence, the trails were either established on existing trails or redirected in these parts, which meant that further landowners had to be asked for permission.

This shows that the main partners had come to an agreement in terms of the shared rules and structures of the cooperation. It appears that higher political layers in the geographical scope were not actively participating in this part, which may have eased the process as the LTOs had the power to make their own decisions. Here the fragmented nature of the tourism product is revealed in terms of the various private stakeholders who had to be involved. As discussed in section 3.5 this calls for efficient coordination among the collaborators, which seems to have occurred and empowered by the centrality in form of the Naturpark Saar-Hunsrück and the Head of Tourism in Losheim. However, the partners relied on the approval of the landowners, making them powerful stakeholders, and since not everyone had an interest in the project the problem domain was affected. The local communities do not appear to have been involved in the initial planning phase and it begs the question as to whether or not this would have increased their accountability (cf. sec. 3.4).

Eventually the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig was completed and it opened in May of 2007 after the DW had certified it as a Premiumwanderweg. Since the Naturpark Saar-Hunsrück does not usually operate with tourism, the partnership had to be reorganised for the marketing part although the organisation continued as formal project holder. Once again the state DMO of Saarland offered to take the lead role, which was attempted. However, according to the interviewees this structure only lasted a few months due to distrust between the partners, and eventually an alternative solution was needed. Thus, it was decided to establish a project agency in Losheim, as all partners considered the Head of Tourism to be experienced and reliable.

> *"Das Konstrukt sieht denn eben vor, dass wir sagten 'wir müssen, um dieses Vertrauen aufzubauen, brauchen wir eine Struktur in der alle gleichberechtigt sind'. Das heißt, das Projektbüro, ein Projektbüro wird konstituiert, wird gegründet durch die am Steig liegenden Städte und Gemeinden"*
> -P. Klein, Saarschleifenland Tourismus

As evaluated by the interviewees, the mutual trust between the partners was to a certain extent still fragile. The relationship to the state DMO of Saarland may evidently have been influenced by the idiosyncratic circumstances due to previous actions and experiences (cf. sec. 3.5). Internal competition grew when the DMO decided to develop their own hiking trails thus revealing their lacking commitment to the

partnership of the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig. The partners may have feared a loss of power and control over what they had developed when the DMO was given a central role, which likewise reflects a sense of shared ownership among the LTOs. The commitment and actions of the Head of Tourism in Losheim appears to have increased his trustworthiness and placed him as the centrality of the collaboration. Moreover, it confirms that structures are dynamic and influenced by values and practices, which here was the recognition that democratic decision-making was needed (cf. sec. 3.5).

Photo 6: Typical gateway to the loop trails

The respondents describe the opening of the trail as a great success with approximately 70.000 hikers the first year; a success which was further strengthened when it was rewarded as the best long-distance trail in Germany. The interviewees consider this to be the turning point for the collaboration. They describe how the main partners knew each other well after having worked closely together, and furthermore, the municipalities saw the ROI of the project, and after that it was much easier to convince them to support further loops and financing for the marketing activities. This also included the locality of Birkenfeld which entered the partnership. Here it is

mirrored how the trust between the main partners had increased and the primary success of the collaboration may have ignited a new path creation (cf. sec. 3.5). It appears that the trust from the municipalities was built whereby the LTOs gained more power in terms of political support for their decisions. This was clearly influenced by the growing number of tourists, who thus could be said to be a valuable and powerful stakeholder. The interaction between the tourists and the partners may not have been direct but the partners had been involved in the planning through the DW's concept, which was based on the interest of the hiker.

However, there was one interest group which was not pleased with the increase of tourists. The Saar-Hunsrück-Steig and the loops are located in various forest areas which have been leased to hunters who perceived the tourists as a threat to the game. Some of the hunters took the issue to the municipalities and filed a complaint. The interviewees explain though, that due to the late timing there was not much to be done, seeing as the municipalities were now more focused on the ROI of the tourists, and after a while the objections died down. This aligns with the discussion in section 3.4 as it illustrates that the tourism planners did not identify the hunters as legitimate stakeholders although the latter perceived themselves as having a stake in the matter. In accordance with the statement of Bramwell and Lane (2000) it is shown here that not all groups or individuals have access to collaborative arrangements, evidencing the inequality of power within the geographical scope. Nonetheless, you could question if this would have turned out differently if the hunters had filed their complaint at an earlier stage of the process when the municipalities might have been more open to a debate.

After a while, where marketing and the settlement of the project agency had been in focus, the partners discussed an eastward expansion of the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig. At that time it ended in Orscholz, 30 km from the German town of Perl by the Mosel River and the national border crossings to Luxembourg and France. Some of the interviewees explain that if they continued the trail to Perl and made a circuit through the two other countries and back, it would give it an international perspective. They believed it would attract a wider segment and increase the uniqueness, which could bring new marketing opportunities. The Head of Tourism in Losheim and the

manager of Saarschleifenland Tourismus explain that over a longer period they worked for the realisation of this idea. The Luxembourgers were open to it, however, the localities in France were reluctant and though they finally agreed to the cooperation, politicians in Paris were against it and overruled the decision. Ultimately, the trail was merely extended to Perl, and the extension opened in 2012.

This shows how the differences in opinion and interests among the stakeholders complicated achieving congruency. Although the German partners recognised interdependency in terms of benefitting their own interest, as did the Luxembourgers to some extent, this did not appear to be the case for the French localities. Moreover, the differences in power between the different political layers in the geographical scope are clearly exposed (cf. sec. 3.3). Although the stakeholders in the localities came to an agreement about the problem domain, the national public actors hampered the potential cooperation by exerting their power, which reveals that political forces influenced the management directions (Selin & Chavez 1995). The reason for this action is not revealed in the data material but it could be due to other priorities in governmental strategies or past inexperience with cooperation.

4.2.3 Current situation

The cooperation and relationship between the partners is described by the interviewees as being good and stable over the last years. They consider the roles and responsibilities in the partnership as being clear, and they explain how every locality contributes financially to a joint budget of which the project agency administrates the overall marketing. The manager of Saarschleifenland Tourismus emphasises the importance of the agreement according to which the localities finance the project as well as the importance of not being dependent on ephemeral EU subsidies. He argues that the funding was useful for the practical construction of the trail but for the partnership to be long-term it must be sponsored by the respective localities. This evidences an increased recognition of interdependency and commitment among the collaborators, which appears to have evolved throughout the process and thereby altered the path dependency. The municipalities were reluctant to give their political and economic support to the LTOs but after the visible increase in tourists the reciprocity of the collaboration is acknowledged by the localities. Hence, the norms

between the collaborators changed, which made it possible to agree on shared rules and structures within the geographical scope.

In recent years the point of focus has been to improve the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig as well as the development of further loop trails, which according to the interviewees is now much easier due to the general support behind the project. This task is handled by the LTOs in cooperation with the project agency. Several of the respondents explain how the local communities are becoming more engaged by pointing out the most interesting stretches for new trails and in some areas locals sponsor or maintain parts of the loops. However, after the hiking tourism boomed in the area the partners realised that the local businesses did not match the quality of the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig and loops.

> *"Wir haben das Problem am Anfang gar nicht erkannt. Uns war gar nicht bewusst, dass die Betriebe, wenn man das Thema Wandern jetzt entwickelz, das erstmals als fremd wahrnehmen. Also nicht als etwas, das zu ihnen gehört. Sie haben bemerkt, es kommen viele Leute, aber wussten nichts damit anzufangen. Weil wir waren am Anfang natürlich sehr stark auf den Wegebau konzentriert und haben es erst so in den Dick bekommen, als die Wandergäste uns gesagt haben 'ja, der Weg ist sehr schön, aber ich bin Heute gewandert und alle Restaurants hatten zu, hatten geschlossen'. Das war der zweite Schritt erst"*
> - A. Laub, Losheim

Hence, the public tourism planners assumed that the project was also the interest of the private actors, though they did not involve them in the initial decision-making and planning process. This goes in line with the discussion in section 3.4 where it is addressed that the decisions and actions of public actors may not necessarily align with the opinions of the private stakeholders. This does not appear to have been an issue with the local communities, but since the local businesses are part of the composite entities which create the tourism product it turned out to be a problem. The above statement reflects that the private actors within the geographical scope did not identify themselves with the tourism development. Moreover, the shared rules and norms do not seem to have been agreed upon with the latter, as the partners merely assumed that the local businesses would adjust to the change. If there had been a greater involvement of the latter it could have furthered an active participation and a shared sense of responsibility (cf. sec. 3.4).

One of the challenges according to the respondents was that several stretches of the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig are located in areas without access to amenities. For the long-distance hiker this was a particular issue, as it was not possible to find accommodation. When the LTOs acknowledged this they approached the hotels in the nearby areas to encourage them to offer shuttle transfer in order to solve the problem. Some of the interviewees describe how the response was not positive though and how various hotels were critical and rejected the idea. As expressed by the manager of Naturpark Saar-Hunsrück: *"einige waren zu elitär, oder die waren sich zu fein: 'Wandere abholen!? Wandere sind ja das unter Volk' und etwas"* (G. Rau). Again, the lack of involvement of the private actors at an earlier stage appears to have affected the collaboration. If this action had been taken, the businesses may have recognised their interdependency and thereby been encouraged to participate more actively (cf. sec. 3.4). It seems that a mutual understanding was not reached in terms of the target group, which reflects that the tourism planners had not examined the interests of the private actors. This indicates that the main partners had not evaluated them as legitimate stakeholders, though it could be argued that they possessed the attributes of power and urgency (Currie et al. 2009; Mitchel et al. 1997).

Nevertheless, the interviewees state that in contemporary time it is clearly noted among the private actors that tourism has increased – a fact that is documented by the extra jobs it has furthered as well as a few new businesses in the region, such as a hotel in Losheim. Accordingly, their engagement has grown. Moreover, some of the private actors are now innovative and expand their services to the new audience by e.g. offering luggage transfer, shuttle to the trails, lunch packs, guided hikes etc. Hence, the norms and shared structures between the private and public actors seem to evolve slowly together with an alignment of the mutual problem domain. Though they are a heterogeneous group they have recognised their interdependency and are thereby motivated to cooperate as it is perceived to advance own benefits, as discussed in section 3.4.

However, many have not adapted to the new situation and the service quality of i.a. accommodation and restaurants is described as poor and the opening hours as inconvenient. The Head of Tourism in Weiskirchen also addresses this issue and

elaborates further that it is very difficult for the LTOs to influence this development, which takes time in a relatively young tourism destination. He expresses that their only option is to continuously contact the private actors to discuss the opportunities and encourage innovation. Similarly, the majority of the respondents underscore that personal communication and relations is the key to somehow affect the development of the local businesses.

> *"Es geht nur über Gespräche. Gespräche mit den Gastronomen immer wieder. Dass man sagt 'Ihr, die Ihr jetzt im Abschnitt sowieso liegt, alle an einen Tisch und wir überlegen miteinander, du machst auf von Freitag bis Montag und du von Samstag bis Dienstag und und und'. Kriegen wir es so hin, dass jeden Tag in der Woche, mindestens einer irgendwo geöffnet hat. Dass der Gast irgendeinen Ansprechpartner hat, auch wenn etwas passiert oder so, dass man nicht vor den geschlossenen Tür steht"*
> -S. Wenz, Birkenfeld

This shows that the LTOs acknowledge the importance of involving the private stakeholders in the cooperation and thus take action to facilitate direct debate between them. As argued by Bramwell and Sharman (1999), this may increase accountability and consensus-building. It could be argued that although the Head of Tourism in Losheim appears to be the centrality of the partnership, the LTOs ensure the centrality in the localities by taking leadership with respect to the local businesses. Thus, the shared responsibilities and commitments of the partners are mirrored as are rules and structures within the geographical scope.

Furthermore, the interviewees explain that in order to address the issue of the low quality of the local businesses, they decided to encourage the private actors to be quality certified as well. Earlier on, the national hiking association had introduced a certification, 'Qualitätsgastgeber Wanderbares Deutschland', for eateries and accommodations which offer special hiking services. Similar to the trail certification it entails various criteria concerning the needs and desires of the hiker. Some of the respondents express how many of the private actors were sceptical in the beginning and did not consider it relevant. However, the benefits were noticed when the certified businesses experienced an increase in the number of customers, and now the concept is slowly spreading.

Here it is reflected that the local businesses have not all reached congruency with the problem domain of the collaboration, which the LTOs attempt to influence with the introduction of the certification. As stated earlier, the private actors did not identify themselves with the hiking theme and were inexperienced with the segment, meaning that the norms had been to offer them existing products though this may not have been sufficient in terms of the demands. With the certification it could be argued that a type of network is built and the interdependency becomes more visible while commitment is affirmed. This also creates shared rules and structures between the stakeholders. The private actors are stimulated to cooperate as they acknowledge the fact that this may enhance their own benefits.

Photo 7: Signage of the new food network - Hotel Zum Post Kell am See

The most recent approach to strengthen the tourism industry and lift the quality was the establishment of a food network with regional products, which was primarily initiated by private actors. The partners realised that the tourists do not merely want good hiking trails but also require local experiences, and several of the interviewees express that this issue must be addressed if they want to stay competitive. They consider it a challenging task as this requires not only the involvement of restaurants and hotels but also local food producers.

"Das ist eine Initiative, die dieses mal aus Rheinland-Pfalz kam (...) Also dann hat dort ein Vorort ein paar Betriebe beworben von einem Erzeuger, und jetzt sind wir da, als Touristiker mit ins Boot gekommen. Ist auch okay, das ist, wir brauchen um die hohe Qualität unseres wandertouristischen Angebots noch mit einen Mehrwert zu verbinden auch mit hoher Qualität, brauchen wir ein regionales Produktthema. Und dieses 'Ebbes von Hei!' [dialect for etwas von hier] kann der Partner sein, um unsere Betriebe, unsere Gastronomiebetriebe kulinarisch aufzurüsten, mit regionalen Angeboten"
- P. Klein, Saarschleifenland Tourismus

This mirrors the complex system of the numerous stakeholders who construct the tourism product, as it is not merely the traditional tourism businesses who need to be involved. However, the new initiative illustrates that the relations built from past experiences of cooperation between the localities have created bridge ties that foster new networks within the geographical scope (Saxena 2005). Moreover, it reveals a growing engagement among the private actors who participate actively in the cooperation. As unravelled earlier, the partnership was mainly fostered in Saarland and the statement above exposes the fact that the partners are still divided by the state borders in the geographical scope of the cooperation to some extent. Nonetheless, this appears to be overcome due to the recognition of interdependency.

The majority of the interviewees state that the project has turned out more successful than they had imagined. They have noticed a major difference in the region in terms of tourists as the segment was converted and there was a high increase in the number of visitors. According to the Head of Tourism in Losheim they estimate that 100.000 visitors hike in parts of the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig on a yearly basis and five times as many in the loops of which they have constructed approximately 90. What appears to be most remarkable, and this is also testified to by all of the interviewees, is how this has affected the residents in the area. They say that before the project, hardly anyone would go hiking and no one considered their nature and region as being unique. However, when the tourists appeared they too became curious and a local trend of hiking the trails was formed, according to the respondents. Several attest to a new sense of pride that has arisen among the locals, who now value their origins to a greater extent.

"Ein positiver Nebeneffekt (...) also, das wandertouristische Empfinden einer kompletten Region, hat sich total geändert ja, auch die Leute die hier wohnen nehmen jetzt Ihre eigene Region als Wanderdestination wahr. Und das ist auch sehr wichtig. Nach meiner Einschätzung, und ich mache jetzt schon über 20 Jahren diesen Job, gibt es bisher keine vergleichbare touristische Entscheidung, die einen größeren Identifikationsprozess in der eigenen Region ausgelöst hat"
-D. Brunk, Idar-Oberstein

Section 3.4 illustrates how the stakeholder segment includes individuals or groups that are "affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (Freeman 1984:46), which clearly appears to be the case with the local communities. Though they were not involved in the initial planning according to the interviewees, the actions and decisions of the public actors have influenced the norms in the region. Hence, the political strategies, initiated by the LTOs, have induced a new path creation. The private stakeholders seem to align with the problem domain and are indirectly participating in building mutual trust and commitment as well as knowledge sharing within the geographical scope.

4.2.4 Future of the collaboration

Some of the interviewees likewise note the strengthened relationship between the public actors as having an impact on the future. They describe how, through collaboration, networks and relations have been built between the public actors of the localities and mutual trust has grown. According to the manager of Naturpark Saar-Hunsrück: *"jetzt gibt's ganz andere Möglichkeiten über die Ländergrenzen in weg Projekte zu machen"* (G. Rau). The interviewees all acknowledge the efforts made by the Head of Tourism in Losheim and emphasise that he has a great share in the success of the collaboration. However, some address the issue of what will happen when he retires.

"Er [Achim Laub] ist so 'jo, das machen wir jetzt', und das ist wichtig. So jemanden braucht man, also so einen Zugpferd. Ich glaube, dass dieses ganze Projekt im Moment steht und fällt ein Stück weit mit dem Herrn Laub. Er wird jetzt hinkriegen das ganze, wenn er in den Ruhestand geht, auch in andere Hände abzugeben. Ich glaube dieser kritische Punkt ist überschritten, aber ich glaube es gab einen Punkt, wo es ohne ihn nicht geklappt hätte (...) Den Menschen braucht man, der immer sagt 'wir machen das jetzt, wir setzen uns auch mal über eine Regel hinweg'"
- S. Wenz, Birkenfeld

This confirms the fact that centrality in some form of leadership is vital in order for collaborative actions to take place, as highlighted by Dredge (2006). The Head of Tourism in Losheim appears to have been committed to the project from the beginning and has facilitated discussions between the localities to achieve congruence and mutual trust. Nonetheless, due to his important role in the partnership it could be put into question whether or not the remaining collaborators will be able to agree on shared rules and structures when he is no longer part of the equation.

Currently the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig trail and the loops are being expanded westward, which will double the length of the main trail. Most of the respondents describe this as a positive development as it adds new perspective to the trail and enlarges the hiking destination. However, some also seem uncertain of how the cooperation will be affected, with twice as many municipalities taking part in decision-making processes.

> *"Dann gibt es zum Beispiel Beschlüsse über die Verlängerung des Steiges, ist ja noch nach Boppard am Rhein. Das zieht sich jetzt schon etwas länger, das müssen denn, also das ist alle bisherigen Mitglieder müssen noch entscheiden, wer darf dazu kommen. Das war ganz am Anfang schon so, wir haben jetzt investiert und dann kommen alle ‚ja wir kommen mit' und, gibt's denn einen Betrag den die Leute einbringen müssen, in das Projekt als Einstiegsgeld"*
> - H. P. Ebert, Wadern

The decision to expand the geographical scope of the partnership appears to be motivated by the possibility of optimising own interests of the main partners (sec. 3.3). Thus, they may recognise their interdependency with the new partners to actualise this action. However, the statement indicates a sense of ownership of the project, which has developed throughout the current collaboration. The main partners have obtained congruency of the problem domain as well as mutual trust and it may be a challenge to fuse the new collaborators into the structure and agreeing on shared rules if interests and opinions are not the same. In the current area of the trail a new regional identity has evolved and the question is, if the partnership could be divided by these idiosyncratic circumstances, as the new localities most likely do not identify themselves with the trail. This could create a competitive relationship between the 'old' and the 'new' partners. Moreover, they may have been motivated to join the cooperation when

the increase in the number of tourists was noticed, but it is not a given that this will result in a commitment to the partnership and shared responsibilities.

Some of the respondents highlight another factor that may affect the future situation of the partnership. Within recent years the Premiumwanderwege certification has become increasingly popular, meaning that also the well-known hiking destinations in Germany are starting to make use of this brand, as they are experiencing a higher degree of competition. Since the natural surroundings of the area is not perceived as being a unique selling point in itself, they realise that they must continuously ensure the extra high quality as well as be innovative in order to stand out. The juxtaposition is that it is likewise believed that the growth of the certification as a brand may enhance their competitive advantages. According to the interviewees, it has fostered a whole new segment in Germany that 'shop' between the various Premiumwanderwege while it is also spreading to the Belgian and Dutch markets.

This evidences that the continuous commitment of the partners is important for the collaboration. If the area should experience a decrease in the number of tourists, it begs the question if the municipalities in the geographical scope will still contribute with financial and political support to the project. Similarly, strategies may change if other issues are perceived as more relevant (cf. sec. 3.3). This is captured in the statement of the Head of Tourism in Birkenfeld:

> *"Das ist im Prinzip der Tourismus in generellen ist eine freiwillige Aufgabe, das heißt wenn die Gemeinde gar kein Geld mehr hat, dann ist mein Job der erste der weg ist, ja weil den braucht man nicht unbedingt"*
> - S. Wenz, Birkenfeld

5 Conclusion

This thesis examines two cases of inter-local planning concerning the development of a long-distance nature trail as a tourism product. The main focus is to illuminate the decisions and actions of various stakeholders and evaluate how these may have influenced the collaboration. Thus, this section presents and compares the main findings in the empirical research of the cases and seeks to answer the overall problem statement that guides this work:

How do various stakeholders influence collaboration in the process of inter-local planning of a long distance nature trail as a tourism product?

5.1 Discussion of the two cases

The analysis shows that the process of cooperation in the two cases has been affected by various determinants due to actions and decisions of the public as well as the private stakeholders, which will be discussed and compared in this section.

5.1.1 Problem domain and geographical scope

In both cases it appears to have been acknowledged that it was no longer adequate to market the existing product on offer and therefore a focus on further development to attract the target segment was chosen. Hence, a similar overall problem domain is indicated. However, the approaches taken vary to a great extent. In the case of Saar-Hunsrück-Steig the partners decided to focus on the core product and construct new trails that were experience enhanced, by meticulously following the criteria of the Premiumwanderwege concept. Hence, to a large degree they had control and could mutually start creating a tangible product once the approvals for funding and land use were secured. Furthermore, the initiative came from the LTOs who convinced the municipalities and the federal states to go along with the project, reflecting a bottom-up process – something which may have increased a feeling of ownership and commitment among those executing the tasks.

In the case of Hærvejen, however, it was decided to develop the local businesses, meaning the supportive services (e.g. accommodation and catering) of the actual trail. The collaboration was fostered by the influence of possible funding from Region Midtjylland and thus, the regional strategy of additional sales shaped the

problem domain. The municipality representatives who work in the business development departments sanctioned this. The former centrality in the preceding partnership, the Head of Tourism in Viborg, disagreed with this perspective and argued for a marketing approach, which was overruled though. This implies top-down decision-making as the LTOs do not appear to have had great influence on the problem domain, which may have decreased a sense of shared responsibilities and commitment in relation to the project. Moreover, the purpose was to make the private actors become actively engaged in developing the product, meaning the tasks were intangible and difficult to accomplish. As the local businesses were not interested in growth and have independent power of own actions and decisions, this was beyond the control of the partners.

The political borders within the geographical scope seem to have been an obstacle in both cases. To the partners of Hærvejen, the subsidies, which were applied for the two formal projects, were restricted for use within the region although the trails also run through Region Syddanmark and Region Nordjylland. In the first project this challenge was to some extent overcome, however, during the subsequent period the regional projects were operating at differing paces and, similarly, with irregular foci depending on regional strategies. Consequently, cross-regional collaboration of the central tourism product barely exists, which exposes the extensive influence of political stakeholders. In the case of Saar-Hunsrück-Steig macro scale funding is not addressed as an issue even though the trail was established across the federal state border of Saarland and Rheinland-Pfalz. Nonetheless, path dependency in terms of past inexperience with cooperation as well as a competitive relationship between the states appears to have been an issue. This influenced the first years in the process of collaboration, as trust had to be built in order for cooperative actions to take place.

Moreover, the plan to expand the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig across national borders was impeded due to national governance decisions made in France, though the localities had come to an agreement. This reveals the imbalance of power between different political layers which influence the cooperative actions, and, similarly, the complication of cooperation when additional public actors are involved. For the main partners this was comparably a challenge as the state DMO of Saarland attempted to

acquire the project. However, this does not seem to have hampered the process, as the localities had the power to take control and to some extent circumvent the latter. The municipalities were powerful stakeholders though, seeing as the LTOs initially had to convince them of the relevance of the project to ensure political support and financing.

With respect to the collaboration of Hærvejen, the imbalance of power among the public actors is likewise displayed. The focus of the problem domain was clearly influenced by actions and decisions at higher political levels. Moreover, Region Midtjylland set the internal rules in the form of goals in the performance contract. Accordingly, the LTOs' tasks in the cooperation were difficult to accomplish – the method of achieving the ambitious aims concerning an increase in the number of tourists and jobs in the tourism industry relied on actions of the private actors. However, the private actors were not interested in the proposal of business development. Hence, the main partners will most likely not be able to keep their part of the bargain, which may have consequences for possibilities of future funding. Additionally, NaturErhvervstyrelsen is a powerful stakeholder, which further challenges the future collaboration, as it is yet uncertain if the entire funding will be reimbursed, and an approval of the extension of the current project is delayed due to their long response time. This uncovers that the more political layers that are involved in collaboration, the more complicated it may be.

The national governmental decisions on political restructuring are also shown as having an influence. In the case of Hærvejen, the reform in 2007 could have ignited the idea to develop the trails for tourism. Nonetheless, whereas formerly it was only the counties that had to cooperate, this changed accordingly, and the data collection indicates that the roles and responsibilities of the respective public actors have not been clarified. Furthermore, the announcement of the new national growth plan for tourism seems to affect the partnership as a restructuring in the tourism sector may cast a shadow of uncertainty over the future situation. The data material of Saar-Hunsrück-Steig does not reveal indications of similarities in this regard, as the political structures appear to have been stable and clarified, which may have eased the process for the collaborators. However, it could be argued that the early decision of the municipalities

to establish LTOs caused a chain reaction of circumstances that eventually lead to the construction of the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig, as reflected in the analysis.

5.1.2 Stakeholders of the problem domain

The private stakeholders were not involved in the decision making and planning of the project in either case. For the collaborators of Hærvejen this had a major impact on the process, as they were the target group and it was presumed that the development would be taken over by them. However, the local businesses were not interested in that, and this fact had not been clarified beforehand. Consequently, the partners find it difficult to reach their goals and the initial exit strategy of the cooperation is unfeasible. In the case of Saar-Hunsrück-Steig, it complicated the process of constructing the trail, as it was not the interest of all landowners and foresters, though the challenge was overcome through open discussions and the commitment of the LTOs. Furthermore, the private actors were not prepared and to some extent not interested in the change, which juxtaposed the high quality trails for the full tourism product. However, it appears that the latter are slowly adapting to the situation as they see the benefits of the increase of tourists interested in hiking. Additionally, the partners somehow handled this with the tangible certifications, which seem to encourage the local businesses to conform to the criteria and thereby development.

Hence, the tourists were powerful stakeholders in the German case, as they stimulated the innovation and growth of the local businesses. Most influential though, was how the increase of tourists created a boomerang effect and thereby a means to obtain political and financial support for the project. In this matter, the media was likewise a powerful stakeholder, as the chain reaction was invigorated when they publicly praised the first loop trail. Conversely, these stakeholder groups do not appear to have taken action in the Danish case, which seems to have had a negative effect on the collaboration. The financiers expected to see return on investment and since an increase in the number of tourists is not noted the political and financial support decreases. Moreover, it appears that the partners themselves are starting to have their doubts about the project, which affects the commitment to the collaboration and makes the future of the partnership fragile.

5.1.3 Shared rules, norms and structures

For the Hærvejen partnership the commitment of the collaborators appears to vary. The data material indicates that in the first project the Head of Tourism in Viborg was strongly committed to the project and took a leading role in the collaboration. However, the remaining partners do not seem to have been actively participating, which reflects a lack of commitment and recognition of interdependency. The shared norms changed during the formation of the second project though, which caused disagreements on the problem domain and resulted in the loss of the centrality in the structure. It seems that the commitment among the main collaborators increased to some extent and the leading role was given to Viborg municipality, even though the representative is not part of the operating team. Thus, a central partner to drive the full cooperative actions is not detected.

The centrality in the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig cooperation is clearly the Head of Tourism in Losheim. Throughout the process he appears to have been committed to the project along with a few other main partners and to have motivated the remaining. Hence, commitment was lacking in the majority of the participants in the beginning of the project but this slowly changed, especially influenced by the notable increase in the number of tourists visiting the area. Similarly, interdependency was not recognised by the majority of the localities in the initial phase. This was enhanced by path dependency through competition rather than cooperation as well as diverging interests, though an intervention came about as an effect of the success.

In the case of Hærvejen the differing interests also seem to affect the varying recognition of interdependency. The trails are traditionally anchored in Viborg, which is why this locality has a high level of interest in developing the product. Ikast-Brande appear to have an interest as the locality does not have other significant attractions, whereas Silkeborg is showing the least interest in the cooperation and thus minor recognition of interdependency. Consequently, this influences the partnership as it is prioritised differently, meaning the responsibilities are not shared and ownership is mainly located in Viborg.

Moreover, the changes in personnel involved in the project appear to have a disruptive effect on the collaborative arrangement. Formerly, the municipalities were

not actively involved, and in the three LTOs the Head of Tourism has been replaced as has the representatives in the cooperation. Hence, the experience and knowledge obtained vanished in some degree together with the sense of ownership and commitment. This is further enhanced by the fact that the partnership is organised according to structural funding, with temporary project managers attached to coordinate and manage the tasks. In addition, this created ephemeral projects with a minimum of collaboration in the intervening period where the development of Hærvejen was passive. Again, this confirms the lacking commitment of the localities as the project is only prioritised when external subsidies can be gained, which endangers the long-term possibilities of the collaboration.

The situation with the organisational structure in the cooperation of the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig appears to be the reverse. Only a few of the Heads of Tourism have been replaced over the past 15 years and the majority were involved more or less since the initial phase of the collaboration. Thus, the knowledge and experience gained during the project was set in play throughout the process as well as relations, and trust could grow between the localities. Furthermore, albeit structural subsidies have been applied, these were used for specific assignments concerning the primary establishment of the trail. The municipalities finance the remaining assignments as well as the LTOs, which execute the majority of the tasks do this as part of their regular work. The incorporation of the Saar-Hunsrück Naturpark to coordinate in the start-up phase ensured knowledge dissemination as well as equality among the localities. The roles and responsibilities appear to have been clear, which was also the case after the establishment of the joint project agency. This seems to have influenced a contemporary stabilisation and permanence of the partnership.

Nonetheless, with the expansion of the trail the number of stakeholders will rise and approximately double, and this is something which could challenge the future collaborative process when further actors are involved in the decision-making. In addition, though commitment and trust has been built between the current partners, this process may need to be repeated with the new-coming localities to avoid potential conflicts and internal competition. Furthermore, a trustworthy replacement of the

centrality when the Head of Tourism in Losheim retires may prove to be a complication, as it appears that his personality plays a crucial role.

In the case of Hærvejen, the future of the cooperation seems very uncertain, as an exit strategy has not been decided upon for the current project, nor has the possible expansion yet been clarified. It appears that the partners are unsure of how to alter the curve and create a return on investment, as the possibility of influencing the private actors is beyond their power. This may further decrease the priority and commitment given to the partnership. Similarly, the possibility of political and financial support is shrinking and the new national growth plan seems to enhance this. Moreover, the corresponding projects in Region Syddanmark and Region Nordjylland could influence a potential attempt at finding a collaborative trajectory.

5.2 Concluding considerations

The findings of the multiple-case study in this thesis corroborate several of the considerations in the theoretical discussion of existing tourism literature (cf. chapter 3). It is shown that tourism planners operate in a turbulent environment due to the fragmented nature of tourism as well as the influences of various social, economic and political forces. The stakeholders of the nature trails mirror a heterogeneous group holding varying interests and opinions which influence the collaborative process through their actions and decisions. The major influence of the collaboration in the tourism planning of a nature trail appears to be the fundamental strategic decision concerning the problem domain. In both cases it is recognised that the tourism product is in need of development in order to be able to increase the number of tourists. However, the examination of the partnerships exposes differing approaches, which seem to have led the cooperative process in diverse directions in terms of achieving the primary aim. Accordingly, it appears that three main determinants influenced the collaboration in the cases of Hærvejen and Saar-Hunsrück-Steig: the timing, the object of change and the top-down versus bottom-up decision-making.

In the case of Hærvejen the focus of the collaboration was to improve the basic amenities of the trail and thereby grow the tourism industry. Hence, it was believed that the core product was ready and the timing of the tourists depended on the supporting services. The assignment of the LTOs may thus be argued to be intangible

and challenging as the object of change was the private actors. These seemed neither to recognise interdependency nor show interest in business development, meaning the foundation of the cooperation was uncontrollable. Moreover, the political actors had a stake in the collaboration as financiers, which provided them with the power to influence the problem domain although they were not actively participating in the operational part. The execution of the tasks was delegated to the LTOs, despite the fact that they had not been part of the decision-making in designing the project. Thus, the top-down approach seems to have influenced a lack of commitment among the partners and ownership of the project was missing.

In the case of Saar-Hunsrück-Steig the focus of the collaboration was the construction of a new and experience enhanced trail to attract tourists interested in hiking. Thus, the timing of the tourists was believed to depend on the core product. Thereby, the object of change was tangible as it was the physical product in the form of the trail which was the main assignment. Due to the criteria in the concept developed by the Deutsches Wanderinstitut, the task of the project was predefined as well as controllable once the approval of the landowners and financiers was secured. The collaboration was initiated by the LTOs who also designed the project, and this strengthened a sense of ownership and commitment due to the bottom-up approach. Furthermore, though the private actors initially did not recognise interdependency and seemed to have a low level of interest in the hiking tourists, the potential benefits altered their commitment to some extent and the growth of the tourism industry slowly appeared.

This thesis reflects that numerous decisions and actions taken by various stakeholders influence the collaborative process in the tourism planning of a nature trail. As stated, the findings align with existing research within the field of collaboration. However, what was not encountered in the literature review was the dimension of the great influence the fundamental strategic decision has on the cooperation. Moreover, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the field of tourism planning in regard to nature trails appears to be largely unexplored. Hence, this work may contribute to the existing tourism literature.

6 Appendices

Appendix 1 - Case description of Hærvejen

The cycling and hiking trails of Hærvejen are based on a historical route, which for thousands of years has been used by i.a. pilgrims, tradesmen, merchants, nobles and kings. In southern Jutland and in Germany it is likewise called the ox road, as it to a great extent was used to drift cattle to the harbours in Northern Germany. Traditionally it consisted of several roads that were situated on what is known as the backbone of Jutland, a ridge created during the ice age. However, in the late 1980's, one route was chosen for the establishment of the current cycling and hiking trails to encourage physical activities as well as nature and heritage protection. It runs 290 km from Viborg and southward to the German border where it continues to Hamburg. In the time of writing, an extension of the trails has just been constructed approximately 200 km northward to create a connection to Norway, which opened for the public in May 2014.

Initiatives for developing Hærvejen for tourism started in the beginning of this millennium. In 2007 two simultaneous partnerships in Region Midtjylland and Region Syddanmark began, including the seven municipalities where the trails run. The projects were time limited and ended approximately at the turn of the year in 2009/2010. Subsequently negotiations of how the collaboration should continue between the partners followed. Meanwhile, the initiative to prolong Hærvejen northward was taken in Region Nordjylland and in 2012 a formal partnership for the construction started. In the beginning of 2013 the three municipalities in Region Midtjylland continued their collaboration in a second project and one year later the municipalities in Region Sydjylland followed.

A map of the trail is provided in the analysis (cf. sec. 4.1).

Appendix 2 - Case description of the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig[4]

The area were the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig now runs is situated in the South-western part of Germany on the border to Luxembourg and France, why it is also called "Dreiländereck" by Germans. Previously the rural areas only had sparse income of tourists and were mainly dominated by heavy industry such as coal and steel. The towns at the start-/ending points did attract tourists, though not for hiking. Trier is known as one of the oldest towns in Europe and is situated right at the Mosel River, which is an attraction in itself, whereas Idar-Oberstein is located near the Nahe River and draws attention due to its history of gemstones.

Several hiking trails existed in the area, such as the thematic 107 km Sironaweg that links various Celtic and Roman sites. However, in the beginning of the millennium it was decided to construct a new long-distance hiking trail across the Naturpark Saar-Hunsrück (est. 1980), which opened in 2007. At the time, it started in the town of Orscholz near the Saar River, running to Kell am See where it divides into two and continues to respectively Trier and Idar-Oberstein. In 2012 it was prolonged approximately 30 km from Orscholz to Perl at the border crossing and Mosel River, creating a total of 218 km trail. In the time of writing, a 197 km extension westward to

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4 Sources for the description entail the webpages www.saar-hunsrueck-steig.de, www.naturpark.org and www.sironaweg.de as well as the informants for the data collection.

the town of Boppard at the Rhein River is under construction and will open in 2015. Besides the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig, numerous interconnected loop trails called "Traumschleifen" have likewise been built for day-hikes of 6-18 km stretches. Currently 90 loops exist and more are in the planning until the number 111 is reached.

The formal collaboration for the project set off in 2005, consisting of 13 municipalities, the Naturpark Saar-Hunsrück as well as the two federal states of Saarland and Rheinland-Phalz in which the trails are located. Since then it has expanded to entail 15 municipalities and with the prolonging to Boppard the numbers will almost double. The partnership has been consecutively since the beginning.
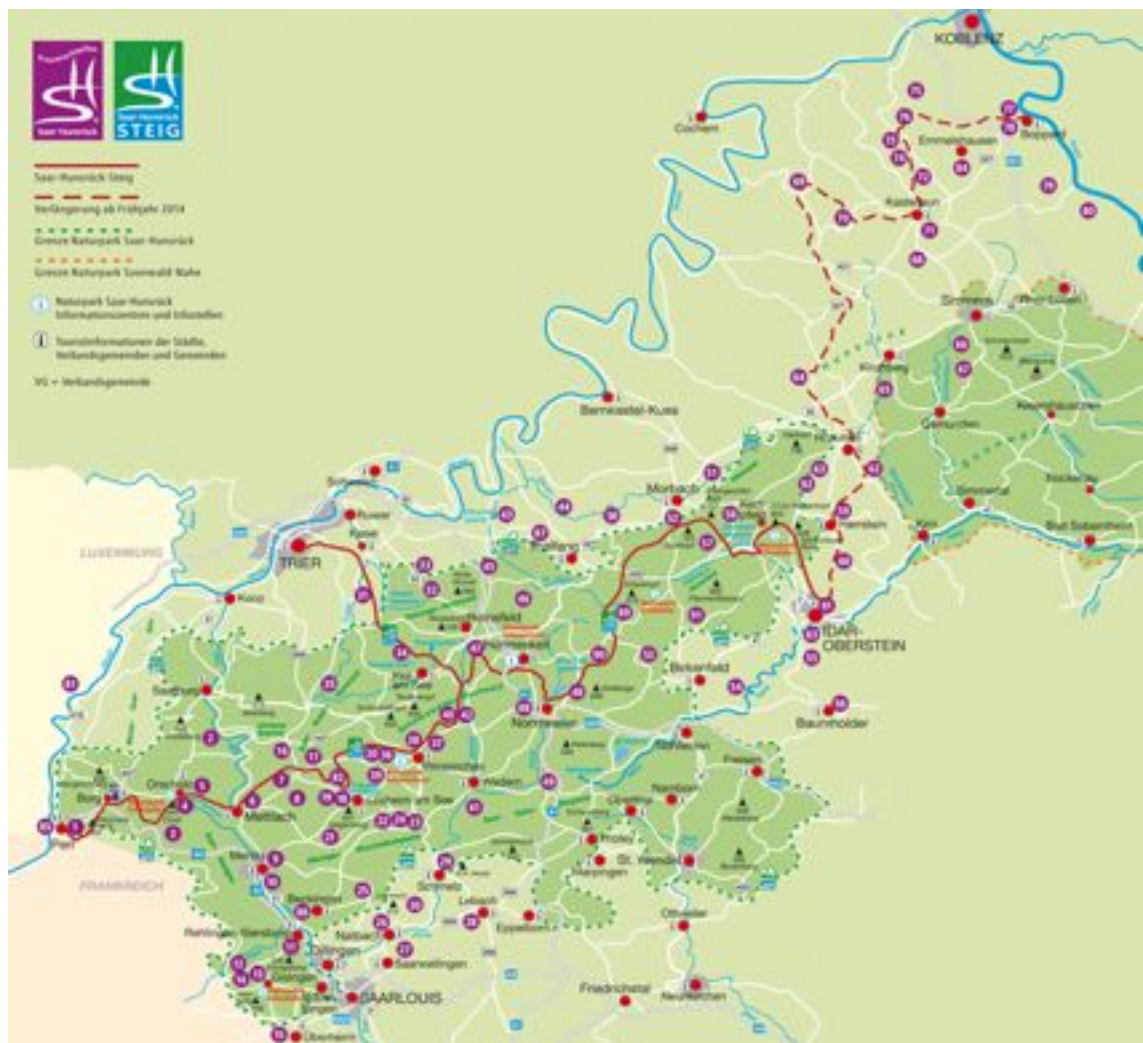
Appendix 3 - Danish interview guide

Introduction	Hvad er din stilling?	Hvornår blev du involveret i projektet?		
	Idea phase	**Start-up phase**	**Current situation**	**Future situation**
Stakeholders	Hvem kom på ideen?	Hvordan blev mulige interesenter og aktører identificeret?	Er der kommet ny samarbejds-partnere til eller nogle der er sprunget fra?	Hvem er de fremtidige samarbejdspartnere?
	Hvem var involveret på daværende tidspunkt?	Blev de involveret?	Er der nogle som ønsker at deltage, men som ikke anses som relevante? (hvorfor?)	Vil øvrige partnere blive inviteret til at samarbejde?
	Var der nogle der var særligt engagerede på dette stadie?	Var nogle mere interesserede end andre?	Er der nogle som er mere proaktive end andre?	
	Var der modstandere af forslaget?	Ansås nogle som vigtigere end andre? Var der kriteier for at være med? Hvordan blev det besluttet hvem der var hovedpartnere?		
Geographic domain	Hvordan blev det geografiske område for samarbejdet defineret?	Ændrede det geografiske område sig i starten?	Har det geografiske område ændret sig til nu?	Er der planer om at udvide/ begrænse det geografiske område?
Problem domain	Hvorfor startede projektet? Hvad var Ikast-Brandes interessse i at samarbejde? Hvad var målet med projektet /hvad ønskede man at opnå? Var der udfordringer i at komme til enighed? Havde lokale, regionale eller nationale politiske strategier indflydelse?	Blev den oprindelige ide med samarbejdet ændret i opstartsfasen?	Er formålet med samarbejdet fortsat det samme? Er der enighed om fokus?	Hvordan ser du det fremtidige mål for projektet og samarbejdet?

Shared rules, norms and structures	Hvordan ønskede man oprindeligt at organisationen af samarbejdet skulle struktureres?	Var organiseringen i starten som ønsket?	Har man sidenhen ændret på strukturen af organisationen?	Hvordan skal den fremtidige organisering være? Ændringer fra nu?
	Var der enighed om dette?	Var der organisatoriske udfordringer i starten?	Hvordan er rollefordelingen i øjeblikket?	Ser du nogle udfordringer i den fremtidige strukturering?
	Hvordan ønskede man at rolle- /ansvarsfordelingen skulle være?	Hvordan var rolle- /ansvarsfordelingen i starten?	Hvordan er rolle- /ansvarsfordelingen nu?	
	Hvem var beslutningstagerne?	Hvordan koordineredes opgaver?	Hvem træffer de overordnede beslutninger på nuværende tidspunkt?	
	Hvilke typer af aktører (offentlige/ private) var involveret på dette stadie?	Hvilke typer af aktører (offentlige/ private) var involveret på dette stadie?	Hvilke typer af aktører (offentlige/ private) er involveret nu?	
Actions and decisions	Hvilke aktiviteter var det meningen at samarbejdet skulle udføre?	Hvilke aktiviteter blev udført i starten?	Hvilke aktiviteter er der gennemført siden starten?	Er der planer om fremtidige aktiviteter?
	Hvem var involveret i udførelsen af disse?	Kan du beskrive, hvem der gjorde hvad i forbindelse med disse?	Kan du beskrive, hvem der gjorde hvad i forbindelse med disse?	Hvem er målgruppen?
	Hvem var målet for disse?	Var der nogle aktiviteter der forløb bedre end andre? Hvorfor?	Har målgruppen ændret sig?	
Sucesses and challenges	Hvad varmest positivt ved idéfasen?	Var der nogle særlige sucesser i opstartsfasen?	Er der noget som har udviklet sig anderledes end forventet?	Har samarbejdet medført gavn på sigt?
	Var der udfordringer i idefasen?	Var der særlige udfordringer i opstartsfasen?	Er der nogle sucesser/ udfordringer pt.?	Hvad er den største styrke i projektet?
	Mødte projektet modstand?	Mødte projektet modstand?	Møder projektet modstand?	Hvilke fremtidige udfordringer står projektet overfor?

Appendix 4 - German interview guide

Introduction	In welcher Position arbeiten Sie?	Seit wann sind Sie im Projekt involviert?		
	Idea phase	**Start-up phase**	**Current situation**	**Future situation**
Stakeholders	Wer ist auf die Idee gekommen? Wer war zu diesem Zeitpunkt involviert? Waren einige besonders engagiert? Gab es Gegner des Projekts? Gab es in der Vergangenheit bereits eine Zusammenarbeit?	Wie wurden potentielle Interesenten/Kooperationspartner identifiziert/ausfinding gemacht? Waren einige mehr interessiert als andere? Wie wurde die Schlüsselpartner festgelegt? Gab es Kriterien, um aufgenommen zu werden? Welche Arte von Akteuren waren involviert (private/öffentliche)?	Sind neue Partner dazu gekommen oder sind einige zurückgetreten? Gibt es einige die gerne teilnehmen möchten, die aber nicht als relevant betrachtet werden? Warum? Sind einige aktiver als andere?	Wer sind die zukünftigen Kooperationspartner? Werden weitere Akteure eingeladen, der Kooperation beizutreten?
Geographic domain	Wie wurde das Kooperationsgebiet definiert?	Gab es zu Anfang Änderungen bei der Festlegung des Kooperationsgebiets?	Gabe es bisher Veränderungen bei dem Kooperationsgebiet?	Gibt es Pläne das Kooperationsgebiet auszuweiten oder zu verkleinern?
Problem domain	Was war der Anlass für die Kooperation? Was hat Ihre Organisation motiviert die Kooperation einzugehen? Was wollte man mit der Kooperation erreichen? Gab es Schwierigkeiten, sich zu einigen?	Hat sich die Kernidee/der ursprüngliche Fokus nochmals geändert in der Anfangszeit?	Ist der Fokus der Kooperations/Kooperationszweck der gleiche geblieben? Besteht Übereinstimmung über den festgelegten Fokus/ Kooperationszweck?	Was sind zukünftige Ziele und Projekte für die Kooperation?

	Hatten lokale, regionale oder nationale politische Strategien Einfluss? Wie hat man sich am Anfang die Organisierung der Kooperation vorgestellt?			
Shared rules, norms and structures	Wie sollte die Verantwortung verteilt werden? Gab es Einigkeit? Wer waren die Entscheidungsträger? Welche Aktivitäten waren geplant in der Vergangenheit?	Gab es organisatorische Herausforderungen am Anfang? Wie war die Verantwortung verteilt? Wie hat man die Aufgaben koordiniert?	Hat sich der an der Art der Organisierung der Kooperation seit Beginn etwas geändert? Wie ist die Verantwortungsverteilung im Augenblick? Wer trifft die übergeordneten Entscheidungen?	Wird die zukünftige Form der Organisierung sich ändern? Gibt es Schwierigkeiten mit der Struktur?
Actions and decisions	Wer war bei der Ausführung beteiligt? Was war die Zielgruppe? Wie wurden Entscheidungen getroffen? Was war das positivste in der Ideenphase?	Welche Aktivitäten wurden am Anfang ausgeführt? Wer war für diese verantwortlich? Sind einige Aktivitäten besser verlaufen als andere? Wie wurden Entscheidungen getroffen?	Welche Aktivitäten hat man in letzter Zeit ausgeführt? Wer war für diese verantwortlich? Hat die Zielgruppe sich verändert? Wie werden Entscheidungen heute getroffen?	Gibt es Pläne für zukünftige Aktivitäten? Was ist die Zielgruppe? Wer wird zukünftige Entscheidungen treffen?
Sucesses and challenges	Gab es Schwierigkeiten in der Ideenphase? Gab es Widerstand?	Gab es besondere Erfolge am Anfang? Gab es besondere Herausforderungen am Anfang? Gab es Widerstand?	Hat sich etwas anders entwickelt als erwartet? Gibt es besondere Erfolge oder Herausforderungen im Augenblick? Gibt es Widerstand?	Hat das Projekt weitere positive Effekte? Was ist die größte Stärke des Projekts? Welche zukünftige Herausforderungen kann es geben?

Appendix 5 - Interviewees in the case of Hærvejen

Peter Vestergaard, Chief consultant in the department of Business and Development at the municipality of Viborg, which is currently the official lead partner. He has been involved in the project since 2009 and holds the position as chairman of FDH.

Anne-Mette Skovgaard Juhl, Development consultant at the municipality of Silkeborg, in the department of Analysis and Development. She has been involved marginally in the first project of HRM and actively since the formation of the second project.

Lone Jager Neldeberg, Business consultant at the municipality of Ikast-Brande. She has been involved marginally in the first project of HRM and actively since the formation of the second project.

Majbritt Præstegaard Theunissen, Tourism consultant at the LTO of Viborg. She has been involved in HRM since she was employed in the current position five years ago, though most actively in the second project.

Birgit Cornelius Nielsen, Manager of the tourism office in Silkeborg. She has been involved in the project since her employment in the current position in August 2012.

Jette Nielsen, Head of Tourism at the LTO of Ikast-Brande. She has been involved in the project since she was employed in the current position three years ago.

Karin Buhl Slæggerup, Deputy manager and head of communication at MT. She has been involved since the formation of the second project.

Steen Ancher, Current project manager for HRM. He was employed in the temporal position for the second project since March 2013.

Sven-Henrik Brandstrup, Development consultant at RM and B&B owner in Viborg since 2007. He has been more or less involved in Hærvejen since the trails were planned, at which time he had been employed at Sønderjyllands Amt.

Appendix 6 - Interviewees in the case of Saar-Hunsrück-Steig

Klaus Erber, Manager of Deutsches Wanderinstitut. He has been involved since the start-up of the SHS.

Gudrun Rau, Manager of the Saar-Hunsrück Naturpark. She has been involved since the initial phase of the collaboration.

Peter Klein, Manager of Saarschleifenland Tourismus. He has been involved since the initial phase of the collaboration and has a central role in the marketing of SHS.

Achim Laub, Head of Tourism in Losheim am See and project manager of SHS more or less since the opening of the long-distance trail. He has been involved since the initial phase of the collaboration.

Hans Peter Ebert, Head of tourism in Wadern. He has been involved since the initial phase of the collaboration.

Walburga Meyer, Head of Tourism in Kell am See. She has been involved since the initial phase of the collaboration.

Sandra Wenz, Head of Tourism in Birkenfeld. She has been involved in the project since she was employed in the current position one year ago.

Michael Diversy, Head of tourism in Weiskirchen. He has been involved in the project since she was employed in the current position seven years ago.

Dietmar Brunk, Head of tourism in Idar-Oberstein. He has been involved since the initial phase of the collaboration.

Daniel Thiel, Head of tourism in Thalfang. He has been involved in the project since he was employed in the current position in 2006.

Appendix 7 - Translation of the German quotes

"And then from a political stance it was said: We want to give the tourism new impulses"
- Ms Meyer, Kell

"I wanted to prove that my studies wasn't a spinning mill of some scientific hiking freak, but that it could be turned into jingling coins"
- Mr Brämer (quote in Wagner 2012)

"Everybody said, 'oh, we don't need that, is really not interesting, we are not convinced of it'"
- Mr Laub, Losheim

"then I sat in the city council and they said 'well hiking is not going to bring anything' (…) And then I had even more preparations to once again make it clear 'it is going to create return on investment, if we are not part then it is our own fault- We are going to miss the opportunity, we are not part of it' (…) 'Yes, who do you think is going to come and what turnover is it going to create, we don't believe in it' the city council said"
- Mr Ebert, Wadern

"When you ask for the biggest challenges, then was it first of all to create this togetherness. This thought of unity, to create that, that was relatively difficult. And to convince the people, we are not competitors, let's join forces and make a mutual project. Here in Saarland and Rheinland-Pfalz is the competitiveness still quite big. It isn't so that people think of it as one region and say, we have to market as one region, not only individual localities but all together (..) it is a completely different story"
- Mr Diversy, Weiskirchen

"Because it just settled has, this understanding that it is a Saarlandish project and we in Rheinland-Pfalz are going to sit there, stepmotherly at the edge of the cat table. And we are allowed to take part but in the end have nothing to say. And for this reason this construction did not work either"
- Mr Klein, Saarschleifenland Tourismus

"They created a brand (…) That is our Saarland brand. The gourmet tours. They wanted to create a brand of their own, that everyone else could align even us. And then we said: the concept isn't good"
- Mr Ebert, Wadern

"There were also localities, some wanted all the small districts included, but then it would have been such a snake trail. Everyone had to go through the villages, all the trails. That doesn't work. Doesn't interest the hiker. And then there was trouble (...) We have such a saying: the worm has to taste the fish and not the fisherman. If you want to catch the fish, the worm has to taste the fish not the fisherman. But that took a while. I mean, it was really close at a time"
- Ms Rau, Naturpark Saar-Hunsrück

"De devil is often in the details. You just have to talk to a whole lot of people at the table and talk. Consider if you have somewhere 100 meter of the trail and it belongs to a family where one lives in America, one in Africa, one in Australia. Then everybody has to agree"
- Mr Brunk, Idar-Oberstein

"The construction is, we said, if we want to build trust, we need a structure were everyone is equal. That is, a project agency, a project agency is constructed, is established by the localities along with the trail"
- Mr Klein, Saarschleifenland Tourismus

"We didn't recognise the problem in the beginning. We weren't even aware that the businesses, when we introduced the hiking theme, that it would be strange to them. Meaning, not something that had to do with them. We noticed that many people came, but weren't aware in the beginning. Because we were so focused on constructing the trail and then it wasn't till later that it came to our minds, when the hiking tourists sais, yes, the trail is nice but I hiked today and all the restaurants were closed. That was the second step"
- Mr Laub, Losheim

"Some were to elitist, felt to fine: picking up hikers? Hikers are the lower people and something"
- Ms Rau

"It only works over conversations. Conversations with the eateries, always and again. That you say: You, all of you at this stretch at the same table and then we will discuss, you will stay open from Friday to Manday and you from Saturday to Tuesday and and and. That way we will ensure that every day of the week there is at least one place open. So that the visitor has someone to approach, also if something happens, that you don't stand in front of a closed door"
-Ms Wenz, Birkenfeld

"That is an initiative that came from Rheinland-Pfalz this time (...) then a few businesses over there were convinced and then we, as the tourist people have joined the boat. That's ok, we need an offer that creates additional value to keep up the high quality of the hiking tourism, we need a regional product theme. And that is "Ebbes von Hei! [dialect for something from here], they can be the partner to boost our eateries culinary with regional products"
\- Mr Klein, Saarschleifenland Tourismus

"A positive side effect (...) the hiking tourism invention of a complete region, it has totally changed, also the people who live here consider their own region a hiking destination. And that is very important. In my opinion, and I do this job in more than 20 years now, there is so far no comparable decision in tourism that has ignited a greater identification process in a region"
\- Mr Brunk, Idar-Oberstein

"He [Achim Laub] is like 'yes, let's do it' and that is very important. You need someone like that, such a prime engine. I think that this project to some extent is depended on Mr Laub. He is going to organise it all, and then when he retires, he can also pass it to someone else. I think the critical point has passed, but I think there was a point, where it would not have worked without him (...) You need someone like that, who always says 'let's do it, we're just going to overlook this rule'"
\- Ms Wenz, Birkenfeld

"As an example there are decisions regarding the extension of the trail, it's going to Boppard now. It drags out a bit, it has to, that is all the current partners have to decide who can join. It was like that from the beginning, we have invested and now everybody comes 'yes we want to join as well' and then there is a fixed amount that the people have to pay, into the project as enter-money"
\- Mr Ebert, Wadern

"Principally tourism is a voluntary assignment, that is, when the municipalities are out of money, then my job is the first to go. Yes because it is not truly necessary"
\- Mr Wenz, Birkenfeld

Appendix 8 - Regionalt oplevelsesprojekt

Regionalt oplevelsesprojekt
Beskrivelse af initiativ, prioriteret af Vækstforum

Projektets titel:

"Hærvejen – et moderne oplevelsesrum med historiske rammer".

Resume:

Projektets målsætning er at videreudvikle Hærvejen som et attraktivt og salgbart turismeprodukt for vandrere, cyklister og ryttere – såvel grupper som individuelle. "Hærvejen – et moderne oplevelsesrum med historiske rammer" skal tilbyde oplevelser, ruter og faciliteter til såvel dagsturisterne som de, der vælger de lange strækninger.

Hærvejen udgør et godt og attraktivt rutenet, men har et langt større potentiale end det hidtidig udnyttede. Store dele af Hærvejen ligger i landdistriktsområder med risiko for affolkning, dårlige transportforhold mv. Dette projekt vil fremme vækst, beskæftigelse, udvikling og nyt liv i periferiområdet til selve Hærvejen ved at udnytte og udvikle disse steders særlige erhvervs- og turismemæssige styrker og potentialer.

Projekt Hærvejen opererer med et kerneområde og et periferiområde. Det er målet med projektet at inddrage periferiområdet i en række oplevelsesrum langs Hærvejen. Disse oplevelsesrum skal øge Hærvejens tilgængelighed og danne udgangspunkt for turistens oplevelse. Her kommer turisten til – enten som vandrer, cyklist, rytter, i bil eller som del af busselskab/gruppearrangement for at opleve Hærvejen. Både formidling, faciliteter og oplevelser knytter sig til den fælles Hærvejsidentitet, der bunder i det kulturhistoriske og det autentiske, *"Back to culture"*. Det er oplagt at placere velkomstcentre i tilknytning til de nyetablerede herberger langs ruten.

Projektet er et samlet tværregionalt samarbejde mellem regionerne i Midtjylland og Syddanmark med vægt på at lade hærvejsruten og dens oplevelsesmuligheder fremstå som en helhed fra Viborg i nord til Padborg i syd. Projektet fremmer nye samarbejder mellem erhverv og kreative kompetencer samt offentligt/privat samarbejde både internt og på tværs i Region Midtjylland.

Initiativet har et stærkt internationalt perspektiv, da det er planen på sigt at knytte projektet tæt op af de internationale projekter vedrørende Pilgrimsruten fra Trondheim til Santiago de Compostella.

Projektets formål:

Formålet med Projekt *Hærvejen – et moderne oplevelsesrum med historiske rammer* er at udnytte et velkendt men lidt støvet ikons oplevelsesmæssige potentiale ved at sætte fokus på både soft og hard core målgrupper (vandrere, cyklister og ryttere) i ind- og udland, som opfordres og inspireres til aktiv ferie og aktiv fritid på

Viborg Turistbureau

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Hærvejen med vægt på det kulturhistoriske, det autentiske miljø og naturen, der kendetegner dette område.

Hærvejens identitet er sammenfattet i nedenstående værdisæt, der skal udgøre fundamentet i projektet.

Hærvejen - back to culture

Værdier:
* Aktivitet og oplevelse
* Kontinuitet – et rum flere tider
* Autenticitet
* Nærværende oplevelse
* Fremtiden tættere på fortiden
* "Identitet" som menneske
* Ro og fordybelse

Netop "indlands-kommunerne" i Region Midtjylland har et behov for, at det turist-mæssige potentiale udvikles og dermed skaber omsætning og arbejdspladser. Her ligger Hærvejen som et oplagt vækstpotentiale. Projektets målsætning er via privat/offentligt samarbejde at videreudvikle Hærvejen som et attraktivt og salgbart turismeprodukt primært for vandrere, cyklister og ryttere. "Projekt Hærvejen" skal tilbyde oplevelser, information og viden, ruter og faciliteter til såvel dagsturisterne som de, der vælger de lange strækninger. Gode faciliteter, overnatningsmuligheder og et højt serviceniveau vil give sig udslag i længerevarende ophold og sæsonudvidelse.

Projektets mål:
Projektet har konkret som mål at udvikle og optimere turistens oplevelsesmuligheder på og i relation til Hærvejen i 3-4 oplevelsesrum (jf. side 3), herunder at
1. skabe netværk på alle niveauer (turismeaktører, interesseorganisationer, lokal- og landsbyråd, lokale aktionsgrupper, kommuner og regioner).
2. udvikle salgbare pakkerejser og online bookingsystem inden for både cykel-, vandre- og rideferie.
3. udvikle en fælles hærvejsidentitet ("Back to Culture"), der favner alle aktører.
4. udvikle et fælles servicekoncept til formidling af Hærvejens natur- og kulturhistorie på www.haervej.dk.
5. udvikling af "on location formidling" til 6-7 formidlingscentre langs Hærvejen[1].
6. oprette velkomst- og formidlingscentre langs Hærvejen.
7. etablere et videns- og netværkssekretariat i 2009.
8. markedsføre Hærvejen nationalt og internationalt.
9. udvikle årlige events, fx fælles marcher, vandringer, cykelløb, agning med stude m.v.

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[1] Der planlægges 6-7 velkomst- og formidlingscentre langs hele Hærvejen, heraf 3 i Region Midtjylland.

Et særligt fokus i projektet er i dialog med kommunerne at sikre følgende infra-strukturelle mål:

- fastholde Hærvejens forløb via varige aftaler med lodsejere.
- sikre en minimumskvalitet/-beskaffenhed af hele strækningen.
- opgradere Hærvejen til internationalt anerkendt cykel-, vandre- og riderute.

Baggrund og indhold:

Projektets baggrund

Hærvejen består af et spændende rutenet, der bruges alt for lidt. Siden 1989 har amterne i Jylland investeret millionbeløb i Hærvejens infrastruktur som cykelrute, den nationale rute 3 fra Viborg til Padborg. I 1992 etableredes vandreruten og se-nere er også en riderute fra Viborg til Bække kommet til.

Selve vejforløbet er godt skiltet og løber gennem et smukt og varieret landskab. På den fælles hjemmeside for Hærvejen, www.haervej.dk, findes beskrivelse af ruten på dansk, tysk og engelsk, og i 2006 udgav det tyske forlag Esterbauer et professi-onelt cykelkortmateriale over Hærvejen på dansk og tysk. Hærvejen udgør således et godt og attraktivt rutenet, men har et langt større potentiale end det hidtidig udnyttede.

Der mangler ejerskab og en fælles identitet omkring Hærvejen som produkt for fremtidig udvikling af Hærvejen som attraktivt turismeprodukt. Desuden mangler der overnatningsfaciliteter til et bredt publikum og - i forhold til rutenettet - mang-ler der at blive udviklet vandre- og rideruter. I de seneste år er der generelt sket en revolutionerende udvikling inden for cykelturismen, og der kan konstateres et til-svarende potentiale i vandreturismen. Rytterturismen er endnu generelt set et stort set uopdyrket område. Vedligeholdelse af Hærvejen (skiltning, veje og stier) er nu overgået til kommunerne (Viborg, Silkeborg, Ikast-Brande, Vejle, Vejen, Haderslev og Aabenraa), og et fælleskommunalt samarbejde til sikring af en ensartet beskaf-fenhed er kun i sin vorden. Endvidere baseres vejforløbet på meget forskellige afta-ler med lodsejere, nogle på årsbasis, andre via fredning. Kommunerne skal således arbejde for en mere permanent sikring af vejforløbet.

Der er for nuværende ikke taget stilling til den fremtidige koordinering af hjemme-siden www.haervej.dk (Vejle Kommune har påtaget sig opgaven indtil videre).

Projektets indhold

Med inspiration fra det nationale arbejde med etablering og udvikling af landets kommende Nationalparker skal projekt Hærvejen som produkt operere med et ker-neområde og et periferiområde. Kerneområdet udgøres af selve Hærvejen. Det er målet med projektet at inddrage periferiområdet i 3-4[2] oplevelsesrum[3] langs Hær-vejen. Disse oplevelsesrum skal øge Hærvejens tilgængelighed og danne udgangs-punkt for gæstens oplevelse af Hærvejen. Her kommer turisten til – enten som vandrer, cyklist, rytter eller i bil/anden transport - for at opleve Hærvejen. Ved at operere med både et kerneområde og et periferiområde udnyttes og udvikles Hær-vejen som selvstændigt produkt, men samtidig udnyttes også Hærvejens nærvær til øget indtjening og vækst i de landområder Hærvejen bevæger sig igennem.

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[2] Der planlægges i alt 6-7 oplevelsesrum langs Hærvejen, heraf 3-4 i den midtjyske del. Den endelige placering af disse oplevelsesrum vil bero på nærmere analyse.
[3] Se definition af et oplevelsesrum i bilag 1

De 6-7 oplevelsesrum etableres som oplevelsesruter af varierende længde og henvender sig således både til hard core turisten og dagsgæsten, der kommer i bil og blot ønsker at trække i vandreskoene eller hoppe på cyklen for en kort bemærkning. Både formidling, faciliteter og oplevelser knytter sig til den fælles Hærvejsidentitet, der bunder i det kulturhistoriske og det autentiske, "Back to culture". Oplevelserne i de enkelte oplevelsesrum er forskellige og afspejler noget karakteristisk for et lokalt sted (naturmæssigt, historisk, gastronomisk etc.). Samtidig er de forskellige oplevelsesrum også bundet sammen af en række tværgående Hærvejstemaer.

Eksempler på tværgående Hærvejs-temaer – "de gode historier":
- Historiske steder (broer, vejsten, sagn og myter, Grathe Hede, Kong Knaps Dige, Jellingstenen, slagmarker, hjulspor, vadesteder)
- Klosterlund-kulturen fra jægerstenalderen
- Spor i naturen (geologi, istid, vandskel, Hald, Vrads Sande)
- Naturcentre og naturoplevelser
- Natur-kultursammenstød (heden, egekrattet, nåleskoven, landbruget, tørvegravning, højmoser, naturgenopretning, fx Bøllingsø)
- Aktiviteter (prærievognsferie)
- Kvalitetsfødevarer/åbne landbrug /studedrivere
- Kunsthåndværk
- Markeder/handel
- Kroer
- Kirker
- Forfattere, fx St. St. Blicher, Jeppe Aakjær m.fl.

(Udvælgelse af temaer vil ske efter nærmere vurdering af potentiale.)

I oplevelsesrummene kan du opleve Hærvejstemaerne bl.a. gennem guidede ture enten med lokale historiefortællere, som kan formidle Hærvejens historie, eller med naturvejledere, der kan åbne op for alsidige naturoplevelser. Etableringen af forskelligartede bespisningsmuligheder i de enkelte oplevelsesrum - men også langs selve Hærvejen - skal desuden tilbyde turisten gastronomiske oplevelser med autentiske og lokale Hærvejsfødevarer. Museer og lokalhistoriske arkiver i geografisk nærhed med Hærvejen skal indgå i den kulturhistoriske formidling af Hærvejen. Velkomstcentre, der enten er placeret nær Hærvejen på eksisterende turistbureauer eller på de nyetablerede herberger langs Hærvejen, skal være med til at formidle de tværgående Hærvejstemaer.

Der skal udvikles pakketure af varierende varighed inden for både cykelferie, vandreferie og rideferie, der kan bookes via nettet. Ud over overnatning vil det også være muligt at bestille/reservere øvrige oplevelsesprodukter så som madpakkeservice, specielle fødevarer, guidede ture, rundvisninger og elektroniske guidebøger om de mange temaruter, der øger gæstens oplevelse. Produkter med relation til den fælles Hærvejsidentitet vil blive udviklet og udbudt via de forskellige temanetværk.

Et autentisk oplevelsesrum kunne være at byde turisten på lokale kvalitetsfødevarer og et besøg hos producenterne. Det bliver muligt at få lokale kvalitetsbrød til madpakken, med gode lokale oste, pølser, lokalt brygget øl, hyldeblomstsaft, friske grøntsager, bær og frugter i sæsonen, hærvejssalt mv. Lokale gårdbutikker langs ruten fokuserer på temaet og man kan booke sig ind på at besøge udvalgte "åbne

landbrug" med klappedyr for børn, hos bryggerlaug, urtegartnerier eller gårdmejerier.

Overnatningsfaciliteterne på og i nærheden af Hærvejen skal præsentere et bredt udvalg af overnatning på vandrehjem, herberger, kroer og B&B til landbocamping, overnatning på lokale gårde eller i shelters og læhytter. Dette skal yderligere udvide turistens oplevelsesrum og forøge kendskabet til en nærværende lokal- og kulturhistorie langs hele Hærvejen.

Et eksempel på et oplevelsesrum nær Hærvejen er Hald-området, hvor en række temaer omkring Hærvejen er koncentreret i forhold til kultur, natur og historie. Her kan man bl.a. opleve formidling af naturen og istidslandskabets geologi. Forfattere har benyttet Hald Hovedgård som inspiration for deres værker, stedets historie er rig på personligheder, der har benyttet Hærvejen og både kro og kirke vidner om en spændende fortid. Det nye herberg er placeret i tæt tilknytning til stedets Naturskole og udstilling.

Vision:
Et eksempel på en turists oplevelse på Hærvejen anno 2010

Wolf Uhre fra Neustadt har læst om Hærvejen på nettet, hvor han har søgt information om vandreture, og han faldt her for en færdig pakketur på Hærvejen fra Viborg til Padborg. Hele turen blev købt via nettet, hvor han selv valgte, hvilke temaer, han ønsker at følge og hvilke steder, han ønsker at overnatte undervejs. Med hjælpsom assistance fra turistbureauets medarbejder har han modtaget informationer og turbeskrivelse til turen, og der er ligeledes sørget for bagagetransport langs ruten. Wolf har valgt en kombination af ophold på kroer med spændende egnsretter, privat overnatning med mulighed for at høre områdets lokalhistorie samt enkelte nætter på de primitive herberger, hvor han kan møde andre vandrere.

Ved ankomsten til Viborg følger han den udførlige beskrivelse, og finder hurtigt til Hald, hvor det første, der møder ham, er det unikke landskab, som han kan søge viden om i Hald-Ladens udstillinger, der gennem plancher og billeder fortæller om områdets geologi og natur. Han vælger at søge ly for natten på herberget, hvor han møder en række andre vandrere, der færdes langs Hærvejen. I samme bygning møder han områdets naturformidlere, der tilbyder guidede ture i området. Her vælger han at koble sig på turen om de fem Hald'er, der finder sted samme aften.

Efter et godt tip på webbloggen vælger han at spise på den nærliggende Niels Bugges Kro for at smage stedets specialiteter med lokale råvarer. - Han har allerede bestilt madpakke til næste dag samme sted. Næste dag begiver han sig af sted gennem istidslandskabet og slår vejen omkring den lille kullede Dollerup Kirke fra 1200-tallet – kirker er Wolf's store passion, og han har via den elektroniske temafolder om Hærvejens kirker nøje udvalgt hvilke kirker, han ønsker at se på turen. En anden passion er spor i landskabet, og den videre rejse går derfor via GPS-guiden omkring Kong Knaps Dige, hvor han glæder sig til at se de tusindår gamle spor af Hærvejen.

Projekt- og tidsplan:

	2008 1. kv	2008 2. kv.	2008 3. kv.	2008 4.kv.	2009 1. kv.	2009 2. kv.	2009 3. kv.	2009 4. kv.
Overordnet projektledelse								
Indgåelse af partneraftaler	X							
Etablering af styregruppe	X							
Analyse og konceptudvikling								
Foranalyse	X							
Konceptudvikling af oplevelsesrum	x	X						
Aftaler med lodsejere om fastholdelse af Hærvejens forløb		X	X					
Fastlæggelse af minimumskvalitet/ -beskaffenhed af hele strækningen og udmøntning heraf		X	X	X	X			
Opgradering af Hærvejen til internationalt anerkendt - cykelrute		X	X	X				
- vandrerute			X	X	X			
- riderute				X	X	X		
Formulering af konkrete investeringsforslag					X	X	X	
Netværksdannelse								
Identifikation af samarbejdspartnere	X							
Opbygning af temanetværk	X	X						
Dialog med kommunerne		X	X					
Afholdelse af Hærvejskonference		X						x
Workshops			X	X	X	X		
Opbygning af internationale relationer				X	X			
Synliggørelse og formidling								
Udvikling af fælles hærvejsidentitet	X							
Udvikling af et fælles servicekoncept til formidling af Hærvejens kulturhistorie			X	X				
Udvikling og koordinering af informationsmateriale og hjemmeside	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Markedsføring af Hærvejen				X	X			
Etablering af videns- og netværkssekretariat				X	X	X		
Oprettelse af velkomstcentre langs Hærvejen						X		
Udvikling af fælles elektronisk bookingsystem til ture på Hærvejen			X	X	X			
Uddannelse af guider		X	X		X	X		
Udvikling af pakkerejser inden for - cykelferie		X	X	X	X			
- vandreferie				X	X			
- rideferie				X	X			
Guidede gruppearrangementer, herunder busselskaber				X	X	X		
Udvikling af årlige events		x	x	x	X	X	X	
Evaluering								
Styregruppemøde	x		x		x		x	x
Brugerundersøgelse							X	X
Afrapportering							X	X

Relation til de 6 kriterier i Erhvervsudviklingsstrategiens handlingsplan:

- Projekt Hærvejen er et nytænkende initiativ, der bygger på samarbejde mellem mange forskellige brancher og fag på tværs af både kommuner og regioner.
- Projektet tager afsæt i opkvalificering af eksisterende initiativer med fokus på innovativ erhvervsudvikling af nye turisme- og oplevelsesprodukter i Hærvejens nær- og periferiområde.
- Hærvejen ligger som et centralt yderområde midt i Jylland og er i mange henseender et rigtigt landdistriktsområde med risiko for affolkning, dårlige transportforhold mv. Initiativ Hærvejen vil fremme vækst, udvikling og nyt liv til yderområderne ved at udnytte og udvikle disse steders særlige erhvervs- og turismemæssige styrker og potentialer.
- Initiativet har et stærkt internationalt perspektiv, da det er planen at knytte projektet tæt op af de internationale projekter vedrørende Pilgrimsruten.
- Projekt Hærvejen gennemføres i tæt samarbejde mellem mange forskellige aktører fra både det private og det offentlige, fx kommuner, turistbureauer og LandboMidtØst. Endvidere er det projektets klare styrke og forudsætning, at det bygger på innovativ erhvervs- og turismeudvikling på tværs af fagområder, som alle vægter et velfunderet kompetence- og vidensgrundlag. Sparring, netværksdannelse og samspil mellem fagområder er helt grundlæggende elementer i alle faser af projektet.
- Initiativet finansieres gennem såvel nationale som regionale offentlige midler, gennem private virksomheder og gennem kommuner (LAGer) i regionen. Desuden har RST[4] sendt en koordineret ansøgning til Vækstforum, Region Syddanmark.

Overvågning af projektets fremdrift:

Der afholdes regelmæssige statusmøder i projektets styregruppe med henblik på overvågning og justering af projektets faser og opgaver.

I projektets handlingsplan indlægges milepæle, der skal sikre projektets målopfyldelse.

Der laves midtvejsrapport til Vækstforum pr. 28/2 2009 samt slutrapport til Vækstforum pr. 30/4 2010 (se også afsnit om evaluering s. 11).

Afdelingen for Regional Udvikling, Region Midtjylland, er ansvarlig for at orientere Vækstforum om projektets fremdrift.

Målgruppe:

Hærvejen som projekt henvender sig primært til målgrupper på aktiv ferie og til både soft-[5] og hard core[6].

Slow adventure – jo langsommere, desto større oplevelse.

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[4] Region Sydøst- & Sønderjyllands Turismeudviklingsselskab
[5] Soft core = de, der vælger at være aktive som en del af deres ferie
[6] Hard core = de, der holder ferie for at være aktive og har denne aktivitet som det primære.

Som gammel kulturhistorie er Hærvejen udtryk for det at bevæge sig (langsomt) gennem landskabet. Vurderingen er derfor, at det er den måde nutidens Hærvej skal opleves på: Fremadskridende *langsom* bevægelse under åben himmel.

Der er derfor valgt tre målgrupper for projektet
- Vandrere
- Cyklister
- Ridende

Alle tre målgrupper rejser både individuelt og i grupper. Det er derfor vigtigt, at der udvikles produkter og pakketilbud til såvel individuelle turister som grupperejsende/selskaber. Blandt andet grupper fra udlandet vurderes at udgøre et væsentligt potentiale.

Vandrere: Bevæger sig langsomt og oftest uden al for tung oppakning. Efterspørger overnatningsmuligheder, vand, god skiltning, bagagetransport og indkøbsmuligheder inden for overskuelige intervaller. Er afhængige af rigtig godt kortmateriale samt ruteforløb i fredelige omgivelser - på et ikke al for løst underlag.

Cyklister: Bevæger sig hurtigere og med mulighed for noget tungere oppakning. Efterspørger overnatningsmuligheder og indkøbsmuligheder inden for rimelige intervaller samt bagagetransport. Er afhængige af god skiltning, brugbart kortmateriale samt ruteforløb på ikke al for trafikerede veje - med fast underlag.

Ridende: Bevæger sig "mellemhurtigt" og med ikke al for tung oppakning. Efterspørger overnatningsmuligheder, indkøbsmuligheder og - essentielt – indhegninger, høhoteller eller tøjremuligheder til hesten inden for rimelige intervaller. Er afhængige af brugbart kortmateriale samt ruteforløb på fredelige veje - med ikke al for fast underlag.

Bilen eller motorcyklen anses som et *middel* til at nå til Hærvejen: Man kører til Hærvejen, og når man stiger ud af sin bil for at opleve, bliver man aktiv - enten som vandrer, cyklist eller rytter.

Organisering/aktører:
Projektet er ét tværregionalt projekt, der deles op i to dele, matchende Region Midtjylland og Region Syddanmark. De to parallelle ansøgninger indgives til de respektive regioner af de projektpartnere, der har det naturlige tilhørsforhold til den pågældende region. Nærværende ansøgning vedrører den midtjyske del.

Koordineret ansøger:
Viborg Turistbureau
Nytorv 9
8800 Viborg
CVR nr.: 40 44 39 59

Medansøgere/projektpartnere:
Brande Turistbureau
Højderyggens Turistforening
Silkeborg Turistbureau
LandboMidtØst

Side 8 af 12

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Aktiv Danmark

Samarbejdspartnere:
Ikast-Brande Kommune
Silkeborg Kommune
Viborg Kommune
Fonden Midtjysk Turisme
Skov- og Naturstyrelsen
Museer og lokalhistoriske arkiver
Naturcentre og naturvejledere
RST (Region Sydøst- & Sønderjyllands Turismeudviklingsselskab)

Endvidere vil interesseorganisationer som Dansk Vandrelaug, Dansk Cyklistforbund,
Dansk Landboturisme, Friluftsrådet mv. blive involveret samt udbydere at tu-
re/rejser på Hærvejen, fx Vagabond Tours.

Projektledelse:
Viborg Turistbureau er tovholder på den midtjyske del af projektet og er ansvarlig
for koordination i forhold til den syddanske del af projektet/RST.
Der ud over nedsættes en fælles, overordnet styregruppe med deltagelse af alle
projektets partnere.

Styregruppe:
Ovennævnte projektpartnere samt udvalgte eksperter vil indgå i en styregruppe.
Viborg Turistbureau har formandskabet for styregruppen.

Styregruppen afholder regelmæssige møder og følger op på projektmål, budget,
regnskab og godkender evt. ændringer i arbejdsplan og budget.

Styregruppen vil på sigt forankre sig i det planlagte videns- og netværkssekretariat,
der skal drives af projektets turismeaktører (regionsselskaber og turistbureauer).
Aktører og formidlere i de enkelte kommuner og regioner vil gennem det fælles se-
kretariat få et overblik over de nutidige tilbud og behov for forbedringer langs hær-
vejen samt få en platform for et fælles udviklings- og markedsføringssamarbejde.

Tema- og netværksgrupper
Projektets aktører, dvs. udbydere af faciliteter og oplevelser langs Hærvejen vil
gennem tema og netværksaktiviteter blive inspireret til at danne en forening som
vil kunne videreføre netværket og videreudvikle nye initiativer efter projektbevillin-
gens ophør.

Tidsplan:
Projektet er to-årigt. Projektperioden er 1/1 2008 – 31/12 2009.

Se projekt- og tidsplan ovenfor side 5.

Effekt:
Jobeffekt

Det er målet, at projektet skal generere nye arbejdspladser og udvikling i et landdistriktsområde samt give mulighed for fastholdelse af erhverv i Hærvejens nærområde (guider, overnatningsvirksomhed, bespisning, salg af ydelse og oplevelser.)

Bæredygtighed
Projektets sociale bæredygtighed opnås gennem tætte netværk og partnerskaber mellem de mange private og offentlige aktører.

Projektets økonomiske bæredygtighed vil muligvis kræve yderligere investeringer og nyudviklinger med input fra andre finansieringskilder, fx de involverede kommuner, De nyetablerede Lokale Aktionsgrupper, private investeringer, EU-midler osv.

Miljøeffekt
Et af projektets mål er at øge borgernes adgang til naturen og dermed bidrage til at udvide kendskabet til og forståelsen for samspillet mellem mennesket og naturen gennem årtusinder.

Fremme af forskning og udvikling
Projektet gennemføres i tæt kontakt med Aktiv Denmark, der arbejder professionelt med oplevelsesturisme inden for aktiv ferie. Projektet vil bygge på erfaringerne fra et forsknings- og udviklingsprojekt om "Udvikling af vandreferie i Danmark", som Aktiv Danmark afslutter primo 2008.

IT/IKT
Projektet vil i videst muligt omfang udnytte moderne teknologi inden for information, kommunikation, navigation, online booking m.v.

Turismefremmende effekt
Projektet vil primært give effekt i turistbranchen, men med afsmitning i andre brancher som bl.a. detailhandlen, transportsektoren og landbruget.

Effekt i yderområder:
Iflg. foreløbige undersøgelser (se fremme af forskning og udvikling) rejser både vandrere og cykelturister oftest i grupper à 2-4 personer. Da disse målgrupper har yderst begrænset bagageplads er døgnforbruget højt. Omsætningen og dermed jobeffekten vil derfor ligge i umiddelbar tilknytning til Hærvejen, som primært ligger i yderområder/landdistrikter.
Hærvejen ligger som et 'centralt yderområde' midt i Jylland og er i mange henseender et rigtigt landdistriktsområde med risiko for affolkning, lavt uddannelsesniveau, dårlige transportforhold mv. Projektet vil bidrage til at skabe nyt liv og omsætning.

Fremme af grænseoverskridende samarbejde
Hærvejen deler stiforløb med Pilgrimsruten, der løber fra Trondheim til Santiago de Compostela. Det er visionen med projektet at udbygge den danske del af dette stiforløb, og derved skabe direkte forbindelse både nordpå og sydpå.

Projektet understøtter Syddansk Turismes grænseoverskridende projekt omkring Pilgrimsruten – Hærvej/Ochsenweg fra Vejen til Rendsburg, som finansieres af EU's INTERREG IIIA-program.

Endvidere er det planen at knytte projektet tæt op af et kommende projekt vedr. videreførelse af Pilgrimsruten nordpå via KAST-programmet i samarbejde med Region Nordjylland.

Budget:
Se bilag 2 og 3.

Det samlede tværregionale projekt har et budget på kr. 5,5 mio., hvoraf den midtjyske del udgør kr. 2,6 mio. og den syddanske del kr. 2,9 mio.

Region Midtjylland ansøges om kr. 1.200.000 mio.
Region Syddanmark ansøges om kr. 2.175.000 mio.

Finansiering:
Samlet finansiering for den midtjyske del:

Kilde:	I kr.
Region Midtjylland	1.200.000
Kommuner via LAG	300.000
Indenrigsministeriets landdistriktsmidler	200.000
Grønne partnerskaber og Friluftsrådet/tips- og lottomidler	500.000
Virksomheder/partnere	400.000
Total	**2.600.000**

LandboMidtØst har pr. 2/11 2007 ansøgt Indenrigsministeriets Landdistriktspulje om kr. 400.000 til det samlede projekt. Midlerne ansøges primært til den netværksskabende del af hovedprojektet med vægt på udvikling af nye oplevelser og produkter samt nye jobmuligheder i landdistrikterne omkring Hærvejen. Dette skal bl.a. ske via netværksdannelse og workshops på tværs af brancher og kommuner.

Se i øvrigt bilag 2 og 3.

Forankring efter projektperioden:
Det fremtidige omdrejningspunkt for Hærvejens aktiviteter vil ligge i det nydannede og tværregionale videns- og netværkssekretariat, hvor professionelle aktører (turismeudviklingsselskaber og turistbureauer) via styregruppen vil varetage det overordnede ansvar for udvikling og koordinering af Hærvejen.

Sekretariatet skal være selvfinansierende via salg af pakkerejser m.v.
Driften af velkomstcentrene skal indgå i den almindelige drift af turistbureauer/velkomstcentre i regionen.

Det er hensigten, at projektets tema- og netværksinteressenter forankres i en forening, der efter projektperioden skal sikre fortsat udvikling af aktiviteter langs Hærvejen. Foreningen koordineres af videns- og netværkssekretariatet.

Formidling:

Omdrejningspunktet for projektets formidling og udadvendte aktiviteter er den fælles hjemmeside www.haervej.dk.

Sitet deles i en intern og en ekstern del. Den eksterne del er henvendt til almenheden (potentielle turister), der søger information om Hærvejen. Sitet kan udvides med webblogs, nyhedsmails m.v.

Den interne formidling forankres i et lukket netværk på hjemmesiden, hvor de mange aktører kan søge information om igangværende projekter, udveksle erfaringer m.v.

Efter en grundig foranalyse og udarbejdelse af status over oplevelsesmuligheder, igangsættes projektet med afholdelse af en workshop for både aktører og interessenter, hvor disse inddrages.

Der vil løbende blive udsendt pressemeddelelser fra det fælles videns- og netværkssekretariat.

Evaluering:

Styregruppen er ansvarlig for udarbejdelse af midtvejs- og statusevaluering.

Både midtvejsevaluering og statusevaluering vil indeholde styregruppens evaluering, suppleret med
- Status for udvikling, etablering og test af pakker og bookingsystem
- Opgørelse af antal udviklede oplevelsesrum
- Opgørelse over etablerede netværk
- Opgørelse af antal afholdte studieture med antal deltagere
- Opgørelse af antal afholdte seminarer og konferencer med antal deltagere
- Opgørelse over nyudviklede produkter
- Status på udvikling og etablering af netværkssekretariat og velkomstcentre
- Status på samarbejde med kommuner
- Status på samarbejde med RST, Region Syddanmark, vedrørende et samlet tværregionalt Hærvejsprojekt
- Opgørelse over besøgstal på hjemmesiden www.haervej.dk

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