Abstract

This thesis is based on a single case study about a partnership in the city of Blokhus in North Jytland, Denmark. The partnership consists of 15 different actors, mainly SME’s except for one large company, an amusement park. The collaboration is dealing with exhibition collaboration and destination branding of the city of Blokhus. The partners are all from the private sector.

The main emphasis is on how partnerships function. The balance of power within, and how this power can shift between actors throughout different processes. There is also emphasis on trust and if and why trust is a key factor when engaging in a partnership.

The thesis takes it methodological stand in hermeneutics and goes on debating the generilsability, reliability and validity of the thesis.

The thesis takes of by setting a definition of destination. The importance of an efficient branding of destination is discussed and analysed from a concrete leaflet created by the actors in the partnership. It is analysed why private actors take over tasks that used to be of public matter, and the importance of an efficient branding strategy for controlling the development of a destination.

The most important factors of collaborations to occur is that the actors have a common idea or goal to make partnership an attracting way of achieving goals. Partnership is instigated by a crisis and or a common vision and there are several ways to proceed in a partnership. To have successful partnership in the long haul, the process must put into a system either unstructured or structured. The outcome is not the most important thing in a partnership, is the process and the individual achievement of goal and the obtaining of new knowledge.

The conclusion of the thesis is that an unstructured partnership is less like to succeed, if there are a large number of actors involved. The balance of power and trust among members of a partnership are crucial to for the ability to make decisions within a network, and the number of actors is making the decision-making process more difficult in an unstructured network.

The case study are at a difficult point in time there are analysed and concluded on the future for the network. The findings are, that the partnership is at risk for dissolving, as it is trying to move forward into a partnership of larger scope.

The Blokhus Group

* A single case study on partnership and collaboration in tourism



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# Introduction

Tourism is a significant industry responsible for 3,1 % of the Danish export and the industry employs more than 100.000 people in Denmark (Erhvervs- og vækstministeriet 2008). Like in many other destinations in rural Denmark, a number of summers with bad weather combined with the competition from low-fare airline companies and travel agencies in charter industry have made it difficult to attract customers and create a strong destination brand. This has resulted in a decline in overnight stays in rural areas of Denmark (Erhvervs- og vækstministeriet 2008). In Denmark, there is a significant difference in economic development and growth in rural and urban areas. Where the urban areas experience economic growth and prosperity, the rural areas have difficulties keeping up with the big cities in terms of preserving and creating jobs, causing an economic imbalance between urban and rural parts of Denmark. The Danish Regions have developed a strategy for economic growth in rural parts of Denmark, listing tourism as the most important industry for the effort to succeed (Danske Regioner 2010: 5). The focal point of the report from 2010 is that private businesses and public institutions should work together to ensure development in tourism e.g. costal tourism and creating ‘lighthouses’ for tourism from existing, rural tourism destinations by targeting funds to specific projects designed to improve the destination as a whole (Danske Regioner 2010: 12).

The concept of collaboration between different actors to achieve a common goal is familiar, and different researchers have been studying the concept of network theory as a marketing tool since the 1970’es, significant researchers from that time being Harrison White (e.g. White and Breiger 1975) and Werner Feld (Feld 1970). Feld’s (1970) research is concerned with transnational collaboration, whereas White and Breiger (1975) are studying the social relationship between individuals and groups. Parallels can be drawn from these early studies on social and fiscal networks and collaboration to the current research made by e.g. Hall (1999) and von Friedrichs Grängsjö and Gummeson (2005). According to Hall (1999):

“*Issues of coordination, collaboration and partnership are now at the forefront of much tourism research on finding new solutions to resource management and destination development problems*” (Hall 1999: 274).

Hall (1999) describes how private actors in some cases take over the role of the government in dealing with destination branding and development. This development is made to cut budget cost, but also to raise efficiency and secure investment returns (Hall 1999: 274). One could argue that the consideration of government investment concerned with public benefit in some way is disregarded to make room for commercial benefit when ‘outsourcing’ destination branding. Opposite one could argue that when local businesses thrive, the community benefits from the growth through job possibilities etc. This thesis will be dealing with destination branding from a private perspective and evaluate on the benefits from local business point of view.

It is not the purpose to study the change in public policy from being a government matter to being a private initiative from the individual’s perspective. Collaboration between public and private actors is a subject that is heavily discussed. The work of Jamal and Getz (1995) discusses the interdependency between public and private actors. Public actors are bound by an obligation to serve the public good as well as supporting private actors by securing attractive environment for businesses to prosper. The interdependency between private and public actors are showcased as government often relies on private investors when developing e.g. infrastructure, and the private actors depend on government to bear their interests in mind when planning development (Jamal and Getz 1995: 193).

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to existing research on partnerships and collaboration in the private sector. The starting point being destination development and destination branding and how the private sector in this particular case study have taken matters into their own hand. As stated above, the public sector often relies on the private sector as a partner in the development of a destination. In this study the collaboration between private businesses are not on request and not in collaboration with any public actors, although dealing with destination branding, an effort that usually lies with the DMO’s.

The case study is carried out on the basis of a collaboration concerned with destination development that has emerged in the small city of Blokhus in North Jutland. Several businesses in the tourism industry have formed an alliance concerned with marketing, and in specific exhibition collaboration. This was done to strengthen the destination profile, because there was a common understanding between the local business owners that the destination development in Blokhus had reached a deadlock (appendix). This thesis will investigate companies’ motives for forming such a partnership. The point of departure is to study a partnership as a cyclical process from idea to outcome, where outcome generate new ideas. This study is concerned with collaboration theory applied to marketing and common marketing strategies in tourism. In rural, Danish tourism destinations, the idea of engaging in a partnership to brand a destination is new and therefore has had little attention from researchers. It is the goal of this study to combine some of the existing amount of literature on network theory, partnerships, collaboration and destination branding to explore the functionality of such a partnership. Its point of departure is a concrete network example in the city of Blokhus in North Jutland, where several local business owners rooted in the tourism industry have joined forces to brand Blokhus as a destination and generate more visitors to the area as a whole.

With the Blokhus Group network as the focal study point, my problem formulation is:

**What motivates an individual, private actor to engage in collaboration of destination branding, and what are the pitfalls for a partnership of that type?**

**How do the balance of power and the individual trust amongst members of a partnership influence the decision-making ability and goal orientation of a partnership?**

**How can a multi-member partnership ensure an efficient decision-making process and achieve maximal actor satisfaction?**

## Motivation

My motivation for conducting a study on this matter is rooted in a profound interest in rural parts of Denmark and how the tourism industry can generate jobs and carry development to these somewhat neglected parts of Denmark. To be specific, I chose Blokhus and the network that arose there in 2010 because Blokhus is city with great prosperity and a history of an industrious tourism industry faced with great competition from the surrounding destinations, e.g. Skagen, Lønstrup, Løkken and Aalborg.

# Case description

The small city of Blokhus is located in North Jutland about 35 km north of Aalborg, directly at the North Sea coast. Since the mid 18th century it has been a beloved place of recreation and have attracted many tourist throughout the years, from prosperous people and artists to the mass tourism of the 1970es (Jammerbugt Turistbureau 2008:3).



At the turn of the millennium Blokhus struggled with attracting as many guest as before. Therefore in the year 2008, 5 investors founded Blokhus Sport & Fritid. Their strategy for branding Blokhus has been to invest aggressively in the properties in Blokhus. The goal was to create a modern city with a variety of events as well as a lively business environment with upscale boutiques and to redesign Blokhus as an attractive place for tourists (Gregersen 2009). Due to the fact that many stores remained empty during the financial crisis, partly also because of a steep rent increase, the investors had no other options than to split up their assets and in reality declare bankruptcy, leaving Blokhus with many empty buildings and distrust amongst the locals (Jensen 2010). It is often argued amongst locals that the branding of Blokhus is too unstructured and lack of vision and strategy.

Thirteen actors have therefore since 2010 been engaged in a collaborative partnership working together under the slogan: ‘ Blokhus – det bedste sted at være’, informally referred to as the Blokhus Group. Up until now the collaboration has been limited to exhibition participation, meaning that they have a shared a stand on all the big exhibitions and that the companies should take turn staffing the stand. Payment is made with regards to income and size of every participating company. There have been some starting issues that needed solving. Expectedly, the payment has been up for debate many times. Also, latent, local actors such as the local carpenter and some smaller shops, subsidize the network, even though they are not directly linked to the tourism industry, while some actors who do have an interest in the work made by the group, are not interested in participating. This issue will be elaborated on later. Their payments are small scaled in comparison to the participating actors of the group, though.

Another issue is the participation, who, when and how long. Some of the smaller actors have complained that it was irrelevant for them to be on some of the foreign exhibitions, as they have no customer base outside Denmark, and also that a stay during an exhibition in a foreign country, such as Germany, Sweden and Norway was not only a time consuming, but also a costly affair. No one have been in charge directly for gathering material and information, this has changed from time to time, concerning who could see off time to take on the different tasks in the preparation phase. The lack of leadership and a general manager of the project have been a critique point in the evaluation. Knowing that outside contractors for this task will be very costly, this issue has been left unresolved up until today. The network has a steering group consisting of four actors: Fårup Sommerland, Jambo Feriepark, Feriepartner Jammerbugten and Saltum Strand Camping.

## Actors

In the following paragraph, a short description of the actors will be presented. The actors are listed alphabetically.

### Blokhus By Camping

The campsite is located directly in Blokhus, and is owned by a couple. It has round 250 unitsfor caravans and tents and cottages for rent. The site is mainly for families, who need a place to stay while engaging in activities in the local area.

### Blokhus Klit Camping

A small campsite for families and children, located 2 km outside Blokhus. The site is family owned. Activities for children and units for caravan and tents as well as caravans and cottages for rent.

### Danland – Feriecenter Nordsøen

Appartments for rent. Located in Blokhus, 500 m from the beach. Activities are water world, wellness- and fitnesscenter and playground.

### Dayz Grønhøj Strand

Appartments for rent. Located in Grønhøj, 10 km outside Blokhus. Offers a great variety of activities for families: water world, different sport facilities both indoor and outdoor, indoor and outdoor playground.

### Feriehotel Tranum Klit

Apartments for rent. Indoor and outdoor swimmingpool and playground. Located in Tranum, 23 km south of Blokhus.

### Feriepartner Jammerbugten

Feriepartner Jammerbugten is a part of the national chain Feriepartner Danmark. The company rents out private holiday homes and has offices in Blokhus, Løkken, and Lønstrup.

### Fårup Sommerland

The biggest company in the network regarding turnover and number of employees. Fårup Sommerland is an amusement park located just outside Blokhus. The park is family owned and had over 640.000 guests in 2011. In the summertime, Fårup employs appoximately 450 people and offers a variety of rollercoaster’s, playgrounds, water world, restaurants etc.

### Fårup Camping

A small family owned campsite with units for caravans and tents, as well as cottages and apartments for rent. Located in Saltum, 5 km from Blokhus.

### Jambo Feriepark

Campsite, owned and run by a family. The site was elected best campsite in Denmark four years in a row, and has approximately 600 units for caravans and tents, as well as caravans and cottages for rent. In the summertime, the site has round 40 employees and offers activities for children, wellness, crazy golf, restaurant etc. It is located in Saltum, 5 km outside Blokhus.

### Jammerbugt Ferie - Feriehusudlejning

Bureau that rents out holiday homes. Local and family owned. Located in Fjerritslev, 35 km from Blokhus, but has many holiday homes for rent in and around Blokhus.

### Klim Strand Camping

Campsite located in Klim, 30 km south of Blokhus. Offers wellness, indoor and outdoor playground, swimmingpool, horseback riding and restaurant. Units for caravans and tents as well as cottages for rent.

### Saltum Strand Camping

This campsite offers active holiday and healthy living, activities are running and Zumba as well as a variety of activities for children. It is owned and run by a family and is located in Saltum, 5 km outside Blokhus. The site offers units for tents and caravans, as well as tents and cottages for rent.

The actors all have similarity with the exception of Fårup Sommerland. Fårup Sommerland has a larger marketing budget and revenue than the other businesses that can all be characterized as SME’s (definition of SME follows in the theory section). Therefore Fårup Sommerland is also the main economic contributor to the collaboration, spending over six times more on the partnership, than the other contributors. Other contributors to the collaboration are a.o. Hune Tømmeren, and the local grosser shop, Eurospar, in Saltum. Visit Nordjylland also plays a role in the collaboration, as they are handling the money that the contributors invest. They also contribute with a small amount of money. Due to pressure of business, three of the actors could not find time to participate in an interview, Dayz, Danland and Blokhus By Camping. Dayz and Blokhus By Camping were represented at the evaluation meeting.

# Methodology

This chapter is concerned with the methodological approach of the study. Here, I will discuss the chosen approach to data and theory and argue for the choice of methods used in collection of data. Moreover, I will apply Kvale’s methodological theory in a discussion of validity, reliability, and generalisability in qualitative research.

## Philosophy of science

In the following, I am going to elaborate on the philosophical background. I will thoroughly explain how and why I believe it to be useful to study the topic in-dept and answering the problem formulation.

### Epistemology and Ontology

Because of the fact that this study is concerned with interaction and collaboration, my epistemological standpoint is that of interpretivism. To understand why collaboration occurs there is a need to understand the human behaviour (Bryman 2008: 15). I argue that collaboration is a product of interaction and free will and should be researched from a perspective of empathic understanding of actions.

The ontological assumption in this project is that everything is a result of social construction i.e. that there is no unitary truth or reality apart from the individuals own cf. social constructivism (Bryman 2008: 19-20). This also applies to myself as a researcher, as I as a researcher also represent a specific understanding of the world (Bryman 2008: 19). This notion can be identified in e.g. the interview guide or pre-assumptions of the respondents. This will be elaborated on in the latter.

### Hermeneutic

The hermeneutic tradition is used to interpret a meaning. When researching people and their actions, hermeneutic interprets their intentions based on what people say, think and feel, and what they actually do. (Collin and Køppe 2006: 140-141). The hermeneutic circle teaches that no object is free of external influences. This means that the researcher analyses and interprets on the object as an individual element of a larger whole, which the researcher is also a part of (Føllesdal 2005: 87). As I was conducting the analysis of my interviews, I was therefore very conscious of analysing individual statements in relation to the interview as a whole and the particular interview situation.

Within the hermeneutic circle lies the notion that the researcher carries presuppositions and pre-understandings that influence the way the researcher understands and analyses on the subject (Bryman 2008: 87). In other words, the researcher sees the world through his or her own optic and makes sense of it drawing on own past experiences and knowledge. Moreover, the researcher is part of a larger social and historical context, which also influences the researcher’s understanding of him- or herself and the research object. However, the researcher, and the larger context s/he is a part of, is in a dialectic relationship in an ongoing process of influence and development. As a researcher I have had to struggle with objectivity, as I have been employed by a member of the network and through this employment have a prehistory with some of the actors, but not all. I will elaborate on this issue later.

Hermeneutic tradition states that a when an individual faces the world, s/he does so on the basis on subjective pre-understandings, the understanding of the world as seen from a subjective point of view. Interpretation must have a place to derive from (Gilje and Grimen 2002: 171). These pre-understandings have been part of the process i.e. when I created the interview guide and conducted the interviews these pre-understandings were part of the questions I chose to pose. A tangible result of my pre-understandings where that I had to adjust my interview guide after and even during first interview as the respondent opened up for some categories which I had not foreseen. However, I am aware that these pre-understandings are only the ones that I am conscious of and that there may be many more which are unconscious but that still influence my investigation. This is the dialectical relationship between pre-understandings and knowledge gained i.e. that the pre- understandings are challenged as more information and experience is gathered.

Similarly, the research object is in a dialectical relationship – not only with the surrounding world, but also with the researcher as they engage in a process of meaning negotiation (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 233-235). E.g. in the interview situation I would at times ask questions in relation to the respondents previous statements in or to clarify their meaning. In other words, this is a negotiation of meaning between the respondents and the interviewer. This action contributes to the analysis, as the objective is to understand actions. The researcher and the respondent creates a common point of understanding, to make it possible for the researcher to understand and analyse actions (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 235).

## The qualitative research method

The qualitative research method stands in contrast to the natural scientific model and positivism as it focuses on the individual’s interpretation of the world (Bryman 2008: 22-23). The distinction from positivism becomes clear through the fact that I will not apply behaviorism or reductionism (Colling and Køppe 2008: 81-83), but analyse the results of the interviews by taking the respondents’ statements for face value. It is my belief that ‘reality’ is an ongoing process of negotiation between social actors, the reality and perception of a collaboration is in my opinion subjective and there are as many agendas within the network as there are actors. However, in my analysis I have tried to go beneath these statements to establish which identity performances and roles the actors (unconsciously or consciously) ascribed to and through that gain a better understanding of the Blokhus Group and generate a universal understanding of the dynamic of a network as a unity.

### Interview Guide and the Interview Situation

In the pursuit of grasping the respondents’ relation and understanding of the Blokhus Group network and the function of the network as such, I set up interviews where I asked questions to clarify and elaborate on that (appendix). The interview-guide consisted of questions on specific topics, but the interview was conducted as a semi-structured interview, leaving. The semi-structured interview allows the researcher to ask questions along the way, if an answer needs to be elaborated of a new line of thoughts occur (Bryman 2008: 438). The questions were specific questions to the function of the network, how it started, what has been achieved within the network and also questions about cost and benefits of participating as well as questions about motivating factors for joining a network as such and the relationship amongst the actors. I sought to combine these very direct questions with more informal questions about trust and satisfaction, the balance of power and the decision-making process within the network as well as questions about the informal structure of the network. To round of the interview, questions about the future and sharing of experiences were asked (Appendix I-IX). Purposely, I started out with questions that were easy to answer and ended with the more complex ones, both to match the course of the collaboration, but also to build up a trust between me as interviewer and the respondent, in order to create an informal feel to the interview situation. The interviews were conducted at the respondents’ place of business, in many cases also the respondents private home. As I was conducting the interviews, I was very careful to dress in an informal yet professional way.

### Sampling Method

As the purpose of this project is to investigate a network, the Blokhus Group, and the different dynamics between the members of the network, the entire sampling frame was interviewed. The sampling frame and the chosen respondents were every member of the Blokhus Group, to enclose all points of view and enlighten all interaction and collaboration within the Group as a whole.

## Generalisability, Reliability, and Validity

In this section I will discuss the concepts of generalisability, reliability, and validity. I will draw on Kvale (1995) as I believe he provides a critical view of these concepts that are well suited for such a discussion.

### Generalisability

According to Kvale, analytical generalisation is based on “reasoned judgment” (Kvale 1995: 233) i.e. that findings from one study can be used in another. The notion is that there is a logic, which can judge if a study is generalisable or not. However, according to Kvale, this leaves the issue of who should conduct the analytical generalisation – the researcher or the reader? (Kvale 1995: 234). I have some considerations as to why the Blokhus Group network is not thoroughly generalisable, though. A bias to the generalisability was the fact that there was no clear goal of the group, and also no formal structure. In regards to other studies of partnerships, this was a separation factor. It is my perception that the informal or even non-existing structure within a partnership is not uncommon within the tourism industry, but there is still a gap in the research specific to tourism partnerships. The lack of a common goal and thereby a common success criteria I find to be more unlikely to occur in other similar partnerships. This will be elaborated on in the analysis. The analytical generalisation I therefore leave to be conducted by other researchers who believe that parallels can be drawn to their study. The argument for this is that they will have better understanding of their study and the context in which it is situated, and they will thereby have more “reasoned judgment” (cf. Kvale as previously mentioned).

What also affects generelisability is the fact that this is a single-case study. However, according to Flyvbjerg (2006), single-case studies can be seen as a force of example and is generelisable as a suppliment to other research methods (Flyvbjerg 2006: 229).

### Reliability

Reliability is concerned with the consistency of the research findings (Kvale 1995: 235). One can speak of reliability of the interviewer in the sense that leading questions will influence the answers and will therefore not provide consistent findings. Kvale provides the example of different wordings of questions in relation to car speeds that lead to different answers (Kvale 1995: 235-236). When I conducted the interviews I had an interview guide, but the exact wording of the questions have not always been consistent, as some of the questions in the interview guide have been incorporated in the conversation and answered ever before they were asked. Also in some cases I found it natural to ask the question in another context, concerning the statements made by the respondent. This could have caused unreliable findings. However, I learned that there where patterns of behaviour and attitudes towards the network as a whole as well as towards other actors, which indicates that the differences in wordings have not had major influence on the respondents’ answers. Therefore I argue that there are benefits to this loose manner of using the interview guide. I believe that it allowed the respondents to introduce categories by letting them tell stories. Moreover, if the respondents answered a question and then introduced more categories I would follow up on these regardless of the interview guide. I believe that this would allow me to learn more about the subject and in this manner try to escape the pre-understandings (as described in the previous section). However, the fact that some of the actors knew me even though I did not know them was a problem for the reliability of this study. In some situations I had the feeling that the respondents were holding back on answering some questions as they saw me not as a researcher, but as an employee of a competing company. I made many efforts to avoid this perception by explaining the purpose and nature of the study.

In a broader perspective; qualitative studies differ substantially from natural science studies also in relation to reliability in the sense that findings from one study cannot be expected to be generated similarly in another study. In qualitative research the influence of the researcher and the respondents come more into play as the focus is on the individual respondents’ understanding of the world and thus the result will alter from study to study but patterns may be found.

### Validity

According to Kvale: *“The concept of validity as quality of craftsmanship is not limited to a postmodern approach, but becomes pivotal with a postmodern dismissal of an objective reality against which knowledge is to be measured” (Kvale 1995: 241).* As there, in my opinion, is no objective reality (as previously discussed), I agree that the process by which you generate your findings must be transparent, and validity therefore becomes a question of craftsmanship i.e. to what extent can we rely on the researcher to at least try to be objective and conscious of his or her pre-understandings and prejudice so as to minimise the effect on the findings. Before and during the interviews I have experienced some factors to bias the interview situation and thereby the validity. The biggest issue I have had was the fact that I knew some of the respondents beforehand. Since I am an employee and personal friend to one of the respondents, I had many considerations on preparing that particular interview. Therefore, before the interview took place, I informed the respondent on answering the questions as openly as possible without regarding our prehistory. All respondents were presented with the purpose and nature of the study before the interview and due to my relationship with some of the respondents, I sought to emphasise the rules of confidentiality and accessibility of the interviews. I also gave all respondents the possibility to see and edit the transcript of the interview, recognizing the sensitivity of statements concerning other members of the network. All respondents declined this offer.

In relation to this study I believe that the findings are valid (knowing that they can never be universally true), because I have applied the qualitative research method, and therefore have repeatedly questioned my findings, followed up on any surprises in the respondents’ answers, and read other studies on collaboration to see how my findings could contribute to existing research. I believe that I have succeeded in making the process transparent by stating my pre-understandings and by being conscious of the relationship between knowledge and pre-understandings (as discussed in the section on the qualitative research method). Moreover, I have made the interview guide available in the appendix along with transcriptions of the interviews so that the reader may judge the validity of them for himself.

# Theory

In this section I will discuss my theory of choice. The section is started of with a definition of destination and a paragraph on destination branding. The follows a definition of SME’s in tourism and after that comes the part concerned with partnerships and collaboration, starting with a revolutionary model by Kavaratzis & Ashworth (2005).

## Defining a destination

There are many ways to define a destination. It can be seen purely geographical e.g. regional or municipal bound. It can be characterized from a resort terminology, as more attractions that link together creating an interesting area for tourists to visit or the more vague cognitive definition e.g. what outsiders or insiders feel link together. What the DMO’s or the locals see as a destination, will not necessarily make sense to outsiders/tourists. This study operates with Blokhus as a destination and the collaboration within and around Blokhus. As I have learned studying the destination, even the local business owners are not clear on the boundaries of destination Blokhus (Appendix II-VIII). Therefore I feel it is necessary for this study to make a clear definition of the destination in question. Several researchers have made a definition (Medlik 1993, Gunn 1994, Papatheodorou 2006). Without setting specific boundaries, the definition of Papatheodorou (2006) is that a destination is an area, where tourism is the predominant activity, both in terms of visitors, local companies and attractions (Papatheodorou 2006: xv). The problem with a destination being defined without territorial boundaries is when dealing with local public actors that these actors have no jurisdiction outside a politically set boundary. Territorial borders thereby necessarily bind collaboration between public and private actors. Medlik (1993) defines a destination from its’ tourism qualities, if an area is visited by tourists and have attractions, amenities and adequate accessibility it can be defined as a destination (Medlik 1993: 148). The problem with both definitions is that they have no regard for the local residents and culture. It is not possible to define a destination without regarding the host community (Davidson and Maitland 1997: 4). No clear definition of a destination can be made from previous studies, as a destination is complex and the understanding of it lies in the eye of the beholder. A definition should therefore fit the current need without interfering too much with other definitions. Meaning; local residents may very well have another understanding of definition not corresponding with private actors, as they are bound by history, personal attachment and sense of place (Hall 2008: 192) whereas private actors have commercial objectives. Public actors in this case serve as the link that is responsible for these two actors to co-exist, or at least should do so. The importance of destination understanding will be elaborated on in the latter.

## Destination branding

The increasing competition within the tourism industry and the rise in the importance of tourism as an economic growth catalyst has forced the industry to incorporate new marketing possibilities. A relatively new way of doing marketing in tourism is to view destinations as brands, and market destinations as a common brand. This has been given much attention from scholars, and much literature is to be found on the subject (e.g. Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005). To create a strong destination brand, marketers must see the brand from the consumer’s point of view (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, p. 507). In tourism, the consumer or guest will interact with the local residents and encounter the place much like the residents. To be considered is how the place look physically, how the local residents use the place and how the place is being presented, how people relate to hearing the name of a place (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, p. 507). For brand owners, place branding starts with creating a good environment for the local residents, as they are responsible for the foundation of a good image and positive perception of a destination. Kavaratzis & Ashworth (2005) provides a simple model of constructing a brand image.



Kavaratzis & Ashworth (2005) p. 508

Kavaratzis & Ashworth (2005) argue that to brand a place, the place needs to have a distinct and unique identity (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005: p. 509). To sum up, destination branding can only be successful when the creation of identity and the positioning is corresponding with the physical settings of a place (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005 p. 512). The perception of a brand from the guest’s point of view is dependent both on local residents, physical settings and the communication and identity created by marketers, and that’s what makes destination branding a much more complicated venture that product branding, where marketers can control the product.

Morgan et al. (2003) argues that creating identity for a destination is increasingly difficult in a globalized world. The places can no longer use nature or architecture as a way to differentiate themselves from others, as there are so many similar destinations offering the same kind of product (Morgan et al 2003, p. 285-286). Branding separates from marketing by image creation based on social and emotional values of a place, turning a destination into a brand is about appealing to the lifestyle choices of the consumer (Morgan et al 2003, p. 286). This is in correspondence with Kavaratzis & Ashworth (2005), but what I feel lack in the work of Kavaratzis & Ashworth (2005) is the concern for politics. When branding a place or destination, the level of brand control is low, and it is important to make the distinction between private and public marketers, since in place branding these actors often have to work together or at least have a common understanding of the brand identity for a place branding to be successful. Public marketers e.g. DMOs’ are forced to regard the local and regional interests and must see that a branding process is in correspondence with local residents and long term strategies for destination development whereas private companies tend to work on a shorter time perspective (Morgan et al. 2003: 287). Public actors often have an interest in private actors taking over some of the functions that were previously a public matter.

## Challenges facing SMEs in tourism

The definition of a SME in tourism is in the literature somewhat unclear. SMEs are most generally defined by number of employees (Thomas et al. 2011, p 965), but to be considered as an SME, the company needs to be characterized as an enterprise in the first place. The European Commission defines an enterprise as *“any entity engaged in an economic activity,*

*irrespective of its legal form”* (European Commission 2005, p. 5). Further the Commission defines SMEs as companies with less than 250 employees.



European Commission 2005: 14

All of the companies in this project are by that definition SMEs except for Fårup Sommerland, most of them are family-owned and this also is true for the biggest company. It is important to realize that not all SMEs in tourism are driven by the goal to generate income, or at least this is not the only goal. There is also the factor of lifestyle of the owner/manager to consider. The family-owned businesses are also driven by lifestyle motivators, meaning that concern for environment or concern for the local community is also a motivating factor for many of the SMEs in tourism and should be recognized as equally important to economical drivers (Thomas et al. 2011, pp 965-966). Therefore for a network of collaborative marketing efforts to function with as many stakeholders as possible, it should take all the different needs and goals of each SME into account (Thomas et al. 2011, p. 966). SMEs generally dominate the scene in tourism (EUBusiness 2006). As this scene is facing globalisation and increasing competition, the challenge of staying in business and attract more tourists increases concurrently with the increase in competition due to the globalised world and a rise in man’s ability to travel further in a shorter period of time. To attract tourists, it is important to offer a variety of leisure experiences, such as events or theme parks and to combine these offers with a high quality product and excellent service level, both in terms of accommodation, goods and cuisine (Smeral 1998: 379). This challenge is a public as well as a private matter, as the public sector is responsible for creating an environment, where the private sector can thrive.

## Defining collaboration

The purpose of this study is to understand why private actors participate in collaboration. It is a given that private businesses need to make money to survive. Optimal revenue starts with the customer, as many as possible. As tourism businesses are place-bound, having one unique and appealing product is seldom enough to attract visitors and make them come back, at least not for SME’s. They rely on the destination to create an environment that makes tourist want to stay longer and ultimately revisit. Globalization causes increased competition between places as new places become available for the consumer and increase the number of places the consumer can choose among (Hall 2008: 194). Through this logic, businesses cannot solely rely on their own product, but are dependent of the destinations ability to attract tourists as a whole.

There are almost as many definitions of co-operation and collacoration as there are researchers. To understand how and why different actors work together to achieve a common goal or interest, it is necessary to define collaboration in this particular context. According to Wood and Gray 1991:

*‘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 the domain.’*

(Wood and Gray 1991: 146)

More stakeholders can have relation to a domain without engaging in collaboration, and collaboration can occur even though stakeholders have different interests (Wood and Gray 1991: 146). Collaboration can be both long- and short termed and vary in its formality, as the stakeholders agrees on what level of autonomy they should have within a collaboration. This varies from type and formality of collaboration (Wood and Gray 1991: 148). As collaboration occurs as an interactive process towards an objective, Wood and Gray (1991) states that even when collaboration fails to achieve an objective the collaboration can still be successful, when the actions made within collaboration benefits or satisfy the stakeholders (Wood and Gray 1991: 148). Issues within collaboration must concert the future of the domain, but can vary in scope (Wood and Gray 1991: 148).

## Motives for collaborative destination marketing

Marketing a tourism destination is a process that involves many different stakeholders and a great variety of products connected to the destination. The stakeholders are therefore somewhat interdependent and this dependency often results in marketing alliances (Palmer and Beyou 1995, p. 616). Marketing alliances are beneficial in many ways; first and foremost the financial benefits come into play. For SMEs, collaborative marketing gives the possibility to pool the marketing budget and thereby increase the spread of the campaign massage and attract more visitors (Palmer and Beyou 1995, p. 617). To understand the drivers for developing partnerships, the model of tourism partnerships by Selin and Chavez is an excellent tool and starting point.

Table 1 – An Evolutionary Model of Tourism Partnerships



 (From: Selin and Chavez 1995, p. 848)

### Antecedents

As the model states, crisis or need for collaboration, when a stakeholder is unable to solve a problem alone, the obvious solution is to turn to others in a similar situation or with a similar problem (Selin and Chavez 1995, p. 848). Another motivator is a common want or vision (Selin and Chavez 1995, p.848). SMEs have because of their size limited resources at hand and may see an advantage in working in collaboration with other stakeholders, even direct competitors, to achieve their goals and strategies faster. For a collaboration to take off, existing network may play an important role. Familiarity and pre-history, professional as well as social, with other actors makes the leap to working together somewhat easier (Selin and Chavez 1995, p. 849). Yet other reasons to launch a partnership could be a strong leader arguing the upsides to collaboration and thereby persuade other stakeholders to engage in partnership as well as economic incentives, grants and cost-share possibilities, from governmental or private organisations (Selin and Chavez 1995, p. 849). As stated above, many SMEs are family owned and feel a strong attachment to the place of business and to the business itself. This will often lead to the stakeholders operating within the same area to have a vested interest in that area, leading them to be more open to collaboration benefitting the area as a whole (Selin and Chavez 1995, p. 849).

### Problem-setting

At this stage the stakeholders recognize that they are interdependent and that involving other actors could best solve an existing problem, crisis or even vision. To initiate a partnership the benefits of participation should outweigh the costs (Selin and Chavez 1995, p. 849).

### Direction-setting

This stage is about appreciating and identifying a common purpose (Selin and Chavez 1995, p. 849). The participants will match their expectations and establish common goals and ground rules, the outcome of the effort is discussed and subgroups arise (Selin and Chavez 1995, p. 850).

### Structuring

The partnership takes it form and a framework for future collaboration is acknowledged. The formal structure is systemized, roles are assigned and binding agreements are made (Selin and Chavez 1995, p. 850). The formalisation and structure may wary from creating articles of association to unwritten agreements.

### Outcomes

Outcomes can be both tangible and intangible regarding the structure of the partnership. Intangible outcomes are e.g. improved relations between competitors and groups, and recognition of the effort of other stakeholders (Selin and Chavez 1995, p. 850). A successful outcome often leads to more collaboration as the model shows. In some cases where there is an unsuccessful outcome or the problem was simply solved, there can be demise in future collaboration due e.g. split coalitions and loss of interest (Selin and Chavez 1995, p. 851).

## Challenges facing collaboration

Tourism is a very fragmented industry consistent of several different businesses varying in size, variety of products and having different agendas (Fyall and Garrod 2005: 142). Because of the diversity in product range, a certain degree of interdependence rises. As established, it is often this kind of interdependence of the realisation of a common vision that instigates collaboration. Because of the fragmentation, the number and range of actors wishing to take part in a collaboration is fairly large, and challenges of collaboration tend to increase proportionally with the increase in number of participants (Fyall and Garrod 2005: 143).

### Trust

For collaboration to be successful, the actors have to trust in each other. It is very time-consuming to control every action taken by every actor; this must be seen as almost an impossible task. Trust is earned through actions and through time (Hall 2008: 220). If within a partnership one or more actors loose trust in another, it will effect the interaction and willingness to make an effort and share knowledge (Hall 2008: 221). The actors within a partnership are likely to start out by being suspicious of one another, trust is build along the process (Huxham 2003: 408). To instigate collaborative action based on trust, actors must either take a risk of trusting other actors or build trust on reputation or behaviour (Huxham 2003: 209). Either way, for collaboration to be rewarding and even make sense, some level of trust is needed.

### Power balance

Within a partnership, there are bound to be some actors that have greater power than others. The power relationship can be more or less obvious, as there will be actors that take more responsibility than others, e.g. the instigators of collaboration are bound to be more powerful in the first stages of a partnership (Reed 1997: 569). In a well-functioning partnership, the balance of power should be recognized as an instrument to steer towards a goal and it is helpful to delegate power to minimise friction (Reed 1997: 569).



 (Reed 1997: 568)

The table assumes that balance of power is a given. This is not to be taken for granted. In a partnership, power can be a lot of things; money, knowledge, willingness to work for the common good etc. Although dispersion and distribution of power makes sense when considering the common goal, it is not a given that the one’s that have power are willing to disperse it (Reed 1997: 569). At a local scene such as a destination, the familiarity of the actors can block an actor’s access to power. An actor can be highly skilled and able, but personal grudges or perception of character from other actors can stand in the way of an actor’s access to power (Reed 1997: 588). Huxham (2003) states that an actor will always have the ‘power of exit’ (Huxham 2003: 407). Reed (1997) points out that actors should be aware of the power relation, but Huxham (2003) believes the balance of power to be less obvious in a partnership (Huxham 2003: 407). Other indicators of an actor’s power within a partnership are naming, choosing who should join, determining communication etc. (Huxham 2003: 407). To examine the balance of power, one needs to examine the interactions and decision-making within a group (Huxham 2003: 407).

## Effectiveness of collaboration

It is difficult to determine success or failure of a partnership, as actors will judge outcomes individually. Even if not all goals are met, collaboration can still be seen as successful, it depends on the individual actor’s objective (Fyall and Garrod 2005: 188). Fyall (2003) presents a list of determinants of collaborative effectiveness:

* Involvement of key stakeholders
* Good interpersonal relationships and development of trust between participants
* Inclusive management style and organisational culture
* Domain similarity and goal compatibility among participants
* Duration and nature of previous relationships among participant organisations
* Effective contractual condition and exit barriers
* An equity share agreement
* Balance of management resources and power
* Well-planned project, carefully chosen partners, balanced structure and high potential payoff relative to cost
* Decisive leadership
* Sound administrative support
* Tight focus
* Transparent implementation of policy

 (Fyall (2003) in Fyall and Garrod 2005: 189)

To measure success, at least some of the determinants must be fulfilled. They are not all equally important, and as mentioned above, success will be determined individually. Success can also be determined by the fact that there has been no failure. Again, it is rather subjective, but overall can be determined that factors that threaten a successful outcome are lack of objective, lack of staff, changes in personnel, lack of capital and communication and a slow decision-making process (Fyall and Garrod 2005: 190-192).

# Overview of theory

Having a strong destination, and not just a strong product is more important than ever. Due to this fact, collaboration on making a strong brand for destinations occur numerously in the tourism industry. Competitors become partners, and the common base of competing businesses has become even more important than the individual products. Having a unique product of high quality is of little effect, if the destination is not attracting tourists to an area. With that in mind, destinations are being branded with marketing tools former used on single products. As most businesses in the tourism industry are SME’s, the task of branding a destination is too great to take on alone, and through that recognition, collaboration occurs.

The need for collaboration is relatively new in the tourism industry, and participating in partnerships presents to be a challenging task. In order for collaboration to be successful there must be some sort of formalization and recognition of power within a partnership. But equally important is communication, building of trust, and choosing the right partners. To connect a fragmented industry, like tourism, a great deal of drive and goal orientation is needed. Equally as important is the evaluation and outcome of collaborating efforts. On the basis of the theory, I will now start my analysis.

# Analysis

This section of the thesis will analyse and evaluate the findings from the interviews by applying the chosen theory. The analysis starts with defining destination and analysing the chose material distributed on exhibitions. There will be analyse on motivation factors of joining a partnership and the possible pitfalls. Furthermore there will be elaborated on the balance of power and the importance of trust in a partnership.

## Destination Blokhus

The collaboration is located in and around Blokhus. The actors both are seeing Blokhus as a destination and as a physical place, the city of Blokhus. Their definition also follows Papatheodorou (2006), because when talking about Blokhus, the businesses not located directly in Blokhus are also considered part of the city. The definition of Blokhus is almost equal to the Municipality Jammerbugten.

“kommer de fra Ålborg, og spørger om de kan være med, så ville vi nok sige ahh, er I sikker på det, eller men man kan sige, det som vi er enig om nu og det er det, vi kommunikerer, der er Blokhus og Fårup Sommerland, så hvis dem i Løkken, ja nu siger jeg dem, det lyder sådan lidt, men dem fra Løkken Klit var med sidste år også, men hvis hvis hvis en eller anden eller i Brovst ville være med, siger jeg vil gerne være med til at kommunikere Fårup Sommerland/Blokhus, så kunne jeg, kunne vi måske nok godtage det og sige, det er fair nok, bare vi er enige om, hvad det er, vi kommunikerer, det andet det er ikke vigtigt, tanken er at skabe et resort” (Appendix II: Section 28)

In the effort to be clear about the destination Blokhus, several respondents mention Blokhus as being an area with certain tourism qualities, in correspondence with Medlik (1993). The notion is that the physical boundaries are less important than the feeling of Destination Blokhus and creating a ressort around the tourism qualities that the area has. What is frequently mentioned, as a quality is Fårup Sommerland

… hvor vi har vores aktiviteter æhh omkring Blokhus og Fårup Sommerland øhh men nu siger vi Blokhus og Fårup Sommerland, det er for at være så klare i spyttet som muligt overfor kunden (Appendix IV: Section 10, Line 6-8)

Blokhus? Øhh mit postnummer det er Brovst.. Så sagde Laila: ja, men du er en del af Fårup, af de overnatningsmuligheder, der er i Fårup… egentlig dengang der lød det sådan, men nu er det jo allerede udvidet.. (Appendix VI: Section 17, Line 2-4)

From these statements it can be drawn that in the minds of the actors the physical area is of less importance. Many of them are leaning towards Fårup Sommerland and using the name Fårup to define the destination. The feeling of belonging to Blokhus is not easy to grasp for the businesses outside the city, because the physical city borders bind their mindset. Naming the destination Blokhus *and* Fårup Sommerland makes the feeling of a resort destination be more evident and makes the physical boundaries of a city less important both to local businesses and tourists. The evaluation of this years result in the Blokhus Group resulted in a discussion whether or not to bring Løkken into the group. The coordination group came up with the suggestion, but it was not well accepted by the business owners located outside the physical city of Blokhus.

”hvis de går mod løkken, så melder jeg mig ud. Jeg mener klart at det er Jammerbugten og det skal vi holde inden for Jammerbugten æhm Løkken er slet ikke en del af Jammerbugten også har noget med hensyn til drivkraft med navnet, hvor Blokhus også er et brand” (Appendix VI, section 71)

” det jo bedre at man kaldte det det, som det egentlig er, altså fårup… jeg ka ikke se hvorfor vi skal have en masse badebyer koblet på…” (Appendix VI, section 72)

With these statements they show that the understanding of the destination is very different in deed. The first quote has the belief that Blokhus and Jammerbugten are the same, one destination, whereas the second comment goes to the tourism quality with Fårup Sommerland as the lighthouse for the destination.

## Branding Efforts

In the pursuit of branding Blokhus, the brand owners, in this case the Blokhus Group has the feeling that Blokhus already is a strong brand.

vi har ikke et brand ligesom Legoland har, slet ikke, men vi har et (Appendix I: Section 20)

det føler vi godt, vi kan gøre ved at deltage i en branding af Blokhus som feriedestination og også som branding af Fårup Sommerland og knytter de to ting sammen, så at vores målgrupper tænker de to ting som en del af hinanden, så motivationen har været at samle nogle kræfter til at lave en stærkere markedsføring af området, end vi selv kan gøre alene. I sagens natur, når vi markedsfører os, så er det vores egen virksomhed, vi markedsfører, men vi ved også godt, at når vores målgruppe skal vælge feriested, så vælger de ikke kun et godt overnatningssted, så vælger de også et område og en destination, så derfor er vi også interesseret i at være med til at styrke brandingen af vores område (Appendix II: Section 18).

The effort was also to give more thourght to the ressort idea. In correspondence with Kavaratzis & Ashworth (2005), the tourist should see Blokhus as a family ressort with both a beautiful costal line, a friendly local community and a place that has appealing attractions like Fårup Sommerland.

For the purpose of the exibition collaboration, a passport for Blokhus was made. It is a small leaflet with a short description of Blokhus and a presentation of the actors in the group (Appendix XI). The purpose of the passport was to portray the brand identity of Blokhus as a cosy vacation city with both sandy beaches, shopping possibilities and action and adventure in Fårup Sommerland, as well as to display the products of all members of the group.

så var det jo så de der pas der blev produceret, og det syntes jeg var genialt, og det hørte vi også mange gæster sige at det var genialt, for der var vi så alle sammen repræsenteret (Appendix VII, section 16)

 Also the weight of the marketing material is on the local community, *“come and meet the friendly locals”* (Appendix XI, pp 4-6). Morgan et al. (2003) states that nature and architecture are no longer adequate as marketing tools, and by making the passport, the group links another aspect to the brand identity, the amusement park Fårup Sommerland that already have a well-established name in tourism. The creation of identity is three-part, designed to preserve the old attractions, such as the coast as well as appealing to the lifestyle choices of the tourist by connection Fårup Sommerland to the destination and respecting the locals and their lifestyle. The tourists are invited to come and experience a complex destination of old values as well as one with all modern accommodations.

The perception of the Passport is difficult to evaluate on yet, as the brand control is very low for the Blokhus group. The lack of collaboration with public actors such as the DMO makes the branding effort difficult, since there is a lack of correspondence in positioning efforts made by the DMO and the Blokhus group.

## The Blokhus Group

All of the companies in the Blokhus group are SME’s with the exception of Fårup Sommerland. In the current economy and the still more globalized world, SME’s have difficulties positioning themselves when working alone. Therefore it is not uncommon to see this type of collaboration. Without exception, all actors have mentioned that the main reason for participating in the partnership is to generate income and get more customers.

altså motivationen det var jo helt klart mere salg… flere kunder i butikken. Øhh… men det er også for vores butik, som jo som sagt har de her 75% tyskere og vi har kun en messe i Hamborg… Vores motivation er også samarbejdet.. (Appendix III: Section 18)

for mig er intet lysegrønt.. altså øh jeg driver en virksomhed og det er da ikke nogen hemmelighed at… jeg vil rigtig gerne lære de andre at kende og jeg vil rigtig gerne tjene en masse penge øhm.. eller hvad man kan sige altså drive en sund virksomhed som jeg kan udvikle som jeg har lyst til (Appendix IV: Section 58)

But the all but one states that after two years of collaboration, participation cost more than the income it generates. In accordance with the definition made by Wood and Gray (1991) the partnership is generally considered a success, even after 2 years of not fulfilling its original purpose.

## Motivating factors

In this paragraph, the work of Selin and Chavez (1995) will be applied.

### Antecedents

The Blokhus group was created in fall 2009. The instigators of the collaboration are not fully disclosed, as some of the respondents believe it to be Fårup Sommerland alone. Others state that the partnership arose between Jambo Feriepark, Fårup Sommerland, Feriepartner jammerbugten and Saltum Strand Camping. I believe the latter to be correct as the original members of the group, the ones that have been involved from the beginning, make these statements. In accordance with Palmer and Beyou (1995), the main instigating factor for participation are for the SME’s to broaden their marketing potential and reach new customers.

så motivationen har været at samle nogle kræfter til at lave en stærkere markedsføring af området, end vi selv kan gøre alene (Appendix II: Section 18)

Jamen, der var flere ting. For det første, når man er flere så kan man komme bredere ud, det er jo det, ik’. Det økonomiske aspekt gør jo at jo flere du er, jo bedre kan du komme ud (Appendix VIII: section 20)

Selin and Chavez (1995) have created an evolutionary model for tourism partnerships. The model lists different motivation factors that can cause a partnership to occur. When the Blokhus group started it was already rooted in other partnerships of a more loose form.

I:øhh kriterierne for at være med er at man ikke skal sidde og diskutere om øhh om man vil være med eller ej… kriterierne er, at når an siger ja, så deltager man ud fra de vilkår som er aftalt og man betaler den pris som er aftalt… der er ikke nogen diskussion der…

I: nej?

Jh:fordi det var nemlig det der ødelagde samarbejdet før… (Appendix IV: Section 30-32)

”… samarbejdet startede sådan set før vi gik i gang med messerne hvor vi sammen med Jambo Feriepark, Saltum Strand Camping, daværende Jammerbugtens feriehusudlejning der var jeg på Danland på det tidspunkt der, Danland i Blokhus… æhh og Fårup Sommerland. Det var de 5 virksomheder der gik sammen på for.. hvad er det så? 4-5 år siden omkring det her med at lave et samarbejde omkring vores katalog for Jammerbugtens Turistbureau” (Appendix III. Section 8).

There was created a coordination group consistant of the first four instigators. The coordination group have contacted the partners currently involved in the collaboration and four have remained in some sort of leadership role. In the interviews, it is never called leadership. When asked, the respondents answer that there are a coordination group that takes care of all formalities and are responsible for communication, logistics in connection to exhibitions. It is also this group that have the final say when it comes to making of marketing material, they contact advertising agencies and have control over the material. The coordination group also have the role of secretary, taking minutes of meetings and making sure, communication flows within the group.

”nej jeg tror faktisk egentlig at man går ind og giver styregruppen det ansvar at… uden at de bestemmer specifikt.. men der er nogle ting som ligger ovre på os som de andre siger at.. jamen det må i gerne styre…” (Appendix IV: section 52)

### Problem Setting, direction setting, Structuring and outcome

There is a clear common purpose in the group. The vision is to make Blokhus more appealing to tourists by communicating the existing brand of a coastal city for recreation with more emphasis on Fårup Sommerland as a part of Blokhus as a ressort. The coordination group has been responsible for making new members join by sharing the common vision of the first four members of the group. based on this vision, a common problem definition has been made, to steer through a difficult economic situation by helping and supporting each other in a patnership. The benefits are clear to all members, and one member says

men sådan er marketing.. du tager nogle chancer eller du lader være æhm og jeg frygter lidt hvis jeg ikke havde været med, hvordan det så kunne have været endt… (Appendix VI: section 85)

The SME members had all anticipated a growth in customer base as the sole base of a collaboration. Through participation it has become evident to the SME’s that the benefits of joining a partnership lies beyond economic factors. The personal relations made within the group are listed as a very important factor as to why they stay in the group even though revenue does not match the economic contribution. The interdependency lies equally in the advantages of having colleagues to discuss business with.

”Det tror jeg er meget vigtigt, ellers bliver man meget ensom i den her branche, for man går, der er jo ikke så mange at tale med af kollegaer ellers, hvis ikke man taler med dem, der også er i branchen, ik’” (Appendix VIII: section 107)

The goals of the partnership is again to save money on marketing, re-brand Blokhus in accordance with the ressort idea, connecting with peers and share knowledge. There are no ground rules as such other than the fact that each member should contribute equally, and when going to exhibitions, the leaflett is the material that should be distributed, not personal brochures unless upon request. The subgroups of the partnership are the individuals chosen to go on exhibitions together. They are not as such subgroups, as they can freely choose in which exhibitions they wish to contribute. Of course there is the obvious subgroub consistant of the original instigators.

There is no obvious formality of the group. No structure or regulations are written down, but as in all human interaction, there are percieved to be a lot of unwritten rules.

”neeej… jeg tror ikke der er nogen på skrift sådan.. der er de regler med at vi skal hjælpe hinanden og vi skal ikke.. altså det som jeg sagde tidligere.. vi sælger området vi sælger ikke hinanden… altså i første omgang er det området, men selvfølgelig er det da også sig selv” (Appendix IX: section 14)

What the partnership lack in regard to Selin and Chavez (1995) are tools to monitor and control the work of the partners, when they are out on exhibitions. Because of the change in actors present at the different exhibitions, it is safe to say, that different actors have different approaches. The only way to measure the success of an exhibition is to examine visitor numbers and valuating how many leaflets have been passed out. In the leaflet the group have made an ad saying that tourists will get a free icecream in Blokhus, if they bring the leaflet with them (Appendix XI: page 2).

The outcome of the icecream give away have been disappointing, many of the actors was expecting this, not many tourist will save a leaflet for months only to get a free icecream. Other than that the benefits of the partnership has been overwhelming, according to the respondents. A direct advantage of the partnership is the decrease in number of exhibitions that the actors have to go to.

Ellers skal alle deltage hver gang og det gør alle jo ikke. Og det var også egentlig det, der skulle være fordelen med at vi behøvede ikke alle sammen at være alle steder” (Appendix VIII: section 83)

The impacts of the collaboration have not yet been measured. Not all members ask new guests where they have come across their business and the benefits of exhibitions are very difficult to measure. Nonetheless most SME’s in the tourism industry goes to these exhibitions anyway, it is a form of tradition. A tradition that the group are planning to break. The consensus of the group is that the money spent on going to exhibitions could be better spent of another form of marketing, such as TV commercials or radio spots. Perhaps the most important outcome is that the common exibition stand will be cancelled, which is exiting to many members and some are sceptical of the development. A scepticism that is revealed in the interview situation but not on the evaluation meeting, where there seemed to be common consensus about trying out new ways of marketing (Appendix X).

Another outcome that was discussed in evaluation was the need for a secretary function, as the coordination group feels that the workload has grown too much in number of hours spent. The DMO was invited to the meeting, and it was decided that the DMO should act as the secretary to support the group and relieve the coordination group of a significant workload (Appendix X).

### Challenges

The partnership consists of members that are all involved in the tourism industry, and are all except for Fårup Sommerland in the business of accomodation, be it camping, holiday homes or hotel. This is a clear advantage as the similarity of the actors ensure a common goal, getting more tourist to come and stay overnight i Blokhus. This is also in the interest of Fårup Sommerland. The longer guests stay, the more times they are likely to visit Fårup Sommerland more than once. But the similarity also have some obvious pitfalls.

”De synes dette er for diffust og for omfattende at kalde det jammerbugten.. jamen så kan jeg ikke se at det gør det bedre at kalde det løkken blokhus.. så er det en inderkreds deroppe, der skal have noget op at stå… så er det ikke os” (Appendix VI: section 75)

The similarity in product can cause fear of not getting enough customers when the place of business is further from Blokhus. The actors located outside geographical Blokhus have difficulties in accepting a further enlargement of the group, as it was suggested on the evaluation meeting (Appendix X). The main issues are naming of a partnership and what message should be conveyed, if the partnership extended to Løkken. The fear also lies in the notion that when the message is Blokhus/Løkken instead of Fårup/Blokhus the guest will centre around the accomodation possibilities in those cities and not spread out to the actors further away.

## The balance of power

It is clear that in the problem- and direction setting phases, the coordination group have been the most powerful members of the collaboration. The interesting fact is that it seems as if no other actors are interested in gaining power from the coordination group. One reason for this is that the actors suspect that having power means having to work harder within the partnership.

”så er jeg sikker på at man havde fået det… jeg ønskede ikke mere arbejde på det tidspunkt.. jeg synes det er glimrende at der er nogen der gider at påtage sig opgaven.. for de får ikke noget for det.. fandme knap nok tak fra vi andre.. æhm men øh men jeg synes det er fint at de gider at sidde og arbejde med det, og den ros skal de have, jeg synes de har været rigtig dygtige” (Appendix VI: Section 49).

hvis ikke jeg har haft indflydelse nok, så har det været min egen skyld, kunne bare have råbt højere…” (Appendix IX: Section 58)

There have been no redistribution of power, the power balance have been maintained throughout the duration of the partnership.

## Trust

The trust between the actors are strong, according to their statements. Noone have issues with trusting other actors to give out the right material on the exhibitions. There is an expectation that everyone works very hard at making the partnership a success and it is equally important for the actors to be trusted by others in the pratnership.

”jamen begge dele altså vi har sgu tillid til dem øhh jeg synes der er altså vi kan bare sige de andre aktører de lever sgu også af det her de er dybt dybt afhængige af turisme også øhh og hvis de ikke tog deres opgave seriøst så så så ville de ikke have været i området så lang tid…” (Appendix 1: section 52)

”jeg tror, man brugte den første del til at pudse nogle fordomme af om hinanden, både fra de små mod de store og de store mod de små, og dem i midten overfor alle, og jeg syntes at lige præcis på den front har samarbejdet haft en positiv indvirkning på det, fordi at man har kunne bruge det, at vi var fælles om noget konkret, fælles om atløse en opgave, vi var enige om opgavens formål, jamen det har jo også bygget en tillid op, men som det altid er i sådan nogle grupper, er der nogen dynamikker, der udvikler sig mere positivt end andre, men helt overordnet set, så syntes jeg der er et stærkt sammenhold partnerne imellem.” (Appendix III: Section 32)

Therefore the actors make great effort to be liked by other actors in terms of working hard and contributing to the common good. The amount of respect for one another and the work the different actors perform is great. The only problems with trust is the line of communication. as e-mails are send back and forward, the coordination group complains that the time used to answer is too long and there is too little respect for deadlines.

”Det har foregået, jamen det med at overholde deadlines, det har fungeret rigtig skidt fra alle parter stort set og sådan tror jeg at det er svært at have det anderledes i sådan nogle grupper, der er altid nogen, der er klassens duks og altid afleverer tingene til tiden og så har der også været en del, som ikke har kunnet aflevere tingene til tiden, og det har både været styregruppen, vi har ikke altid leveret de oplæg og det arbejde, som vi skulle til tiden. Det vil jeg gerne føje noget til, for det er noget af det, der kunne skabe frustration, når folk ikke har overholdt deadline, og det er også det, der gør, at man godt kunne ønske sig en ekstern styring af samarbejdet, hvor at parterne ikke er direkte impliceret i den der proces som jo så for eksempel kan blive forstyrret af at folk ikke kan overholde deres deadline.” (Appendix III: Section 38).

On another note the actors that are not involved in the structuring and planning of exhibitions argue that the deadlines at times have been impossiible to meet.

”det var været nogen af dem vi har svaret på i ordentlig tid og andre som har haltet lidt… nej vi havde en æh… vi skulle lige pludselig komme med en tysk i løbet af to dage.. så er det… det er altså ikke nemt så… så der var altså også nogle deadlines, der var temmelig korte… ja, så det var sådan noget med at vi havde to dage før sidste afsendelsesdag. Den er ikke nem, når man skal ud af huset og have den lavet, så der kunne vi ikke overholde deadline” (Appendix IX: Section 44)

it is the hope of the partnership and i particular the coordination group that the help of an extern secretary will make keeping deadlines easier and strenghten the communication between the actors.

## Evaluation

To sum up on the success of the partnership in Blokhus, I will use Fyall (2003). The collaboration is in my opinion very successful and have up until now fulfilled its purpose. All actors have been given the chance of high amount of influence and it according to the members, it would have been easy to gain more power, it anyone had wanted to do so. This can not be validated as noone has made that effort, although I suspect that the coordination group will not be willing to give away too much influence, even as they state, the workload have been too high. It will be interesting to study the role of the secretary in the future. The secretary will be given no power, but she will have to co-ordinate many loose ends in regards to communication.

The relationship between the actors are very good, there is much respect between the actors. This is likely due to prior relationships and that the businesses they run have a good reputation i the local community.

Management of the partnerhip is controlled from the top by the coordination group. Not necessarily by want, but for the reason that noone has challenged their position in the partnership. There is some tendency to lean back and let others do the most of the work, but as the coordination group does not seem to mind, this constellation works for this particular partnership at the moment.

The domain is somewhat unclear and undefined. This has lead to some dissatisfaction between some of the actors, especially as the debate on whether or not to include actors from Løkken, north of Blokhus. This is an issue that urgently needs attention, to secure a future solid relationship and trust between the partners. It the coordination group chooses to exercise power and add actors from Løkken, it will be a threat to the stability of the network, and the endresult will most like be that the unsatisfied actors choose to exercise their exit power by leaving the partnership. The goal of the partnership is clearly acknowledged and defined. The goal is to brand Blokhus and bring more tourists to the area. Actors can agree on this goal. The goal has some way along the road also become to find peers and have collegial debates, which the partnership has succeeded in doing.

Many actors were acquainted or even friends before instigating in the partnership. The benefits of familiarity is overwhelming, as it is this familiarity that have solved many small issues along the way, clearing a path for an open and honest dialogue between the actors.

What the partnership still needs is a structure. This was also discussed on the evaluation (Appendix 10). There is a need to formalise the partnership if new actors should join in. as we see now there are already some dissatisfaction between the members and therefore a clear and formal structure and explicit exit barriers could be recommended. This could have an effect on the familiarity, but as the partnership grows in number of members, the possibility for discussion and disagreeance grows, and so it will be helpful to have a contract of partnership.

The new venture that the partnership is planning should be as planned and structured as the current exhibition participation, to guarantee maximum payoff and the integration of new actors in the partnership. The coordination group will probably have to continue as the leaders of such a structure, and there is certainly a willingness to do so.

The partnership will in the future get support from a secretary at the local DMO, and this is just what the partnership needed. It will remove some of the administrative tasks from the coordination group and thereby giving the group more time to spend on planning and structuring to keep at tight focus and ensure a successful partnership in the future.

The transparency in decicion-making have been very high, and there is no need to change anything, because the members are assured that they can gat more influence on the partnership, should they wish to have so.

# Conclusion

The collaboration in Blokhus has been very successful it the two years it has existed. It has fulfilled some of its goals; other goals are still on the planning board. There is a general eager to continue collaboration and a good and friendly tone amongst the members. Collaboration occurred as several actors saw the possibilities in joining forces and collaborate on common goals. There have throughout the lifespan of the partnership been successful ventures, and it has been attractive to join, because of the good tone and friendliness internally. Individuals are motivated to join a network when they can see it benefits them personally and benefits their business. The most important factor in this case study have been the possibilities of economic gain and generating more tourists in the area. Along the way the actors have realized several positive allocations from being in a partnership.

To meet colleagues and actually define them as colleagues and not competitors have been the most evident positive outcome. The actors have gained knowledge by being willing to share knowledge with their peers, and so the motivating factors of engaging in a partnership have shifted from purely economic reasons to reasons of more personal and intellectual character. The sharing of knowledge has benefitted the actors own companies in terms of trade deals within actors of the partnership, but also on a more personal level.

The clear pitfalls of the partnership it the lack of structure. The informality has caused some actors to be left with an excessive workload that have been overwhelming at times. Also the need of a management has caused discussions to be left unsolved and the new idea of expanding the partnership is yet to be resolved. It is not to be foreseen how it will end up, but I anticipate a great deal of discussion and ultimately this disagreement can cause the partnership to loose actors, actors that choose to leave as a result of the expansion.

The trust among the members is still intact even after the issue of expansion was left unresolved after the last meeting. This can be ascribed to the lack of power balance in the partnership. The fact that the group was unable to come up with a solution to an issue at hand will undoubtedly be caused by the lack of structure and formality, leaving no one in charge and making it impossible for an actor to exercise power. The group as a whole has been used to being in agreement of new suggestions and ideas, as the partnership has not changed notable since the beginning of collaboration.

The goal orientation is also affected by the lack of ability to make decisions. Some actors are interested in changing the foundation of the partnership, and as the notion to no longer go on exhibitions was widely accepted, the proposal to expand the partnership was not. This means that there no longer is a clear goal of the partnership. The problem with this fact is, that the agreement on goal-direction is the glue that holds the partnership together; there lays a great amount of work ahead to be discussed and agreed upon. The trust within the partnership is likely to be affected if and when one actor chooses to exercise power, either by taking charge or leaving the partnership. As of now the decision-making process of the network is not functioning and with no clear goal orientation, it is difficult to anticipate, what is going to happen within the partnership. The fact that the partnership should be dissolved is rather unlikely due to the interdependency especially between Fårup Sommerland and the SME’s. the SME’s rely on Fårup Sommerland to be the instigator of collaboration, because they are the biggest actor and thereby the most independent.

For future purposes it is strongly advised that the partnership creates a structure and some sort of formalisation. The satisfaction of the members has been high up until this point. This is due to the level of agreement within the partnership and the common goal orientation. The decision-making process is complicated by the lack of management. The informal management in form of the coordination group must take action on creating an environment where actors have a concrete contract or at least guideline as to where the network is going, otherwise the partnership are likely to split up in subgroups or even dissolve itself as a consequence of management issues and disagreement. This becomes even more important if the partnership decides to enlarge the number of members, as more members will result in more opinions. For the fairness and future satisfaction of the network, clear guidelines as to purpose, direction and goal will secure higher degree of satisfaction, even if this is done at the risk of losing existing members.

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