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INTRODUCTION

Innovation and Tourism Destination Development

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Tourism is a central part of regional development strategies in many localities around Europe, not just in traditional coastal or mountain resorts, but also in areas without a strong track record with regard to visitor economy (Anastasiadou, 2006; Hall, 2008; Halkier, 2010a). Traditionally strategies for developing tourism have relied heavily on marketing the experiences currently available to new potential customers. However, in a globalizing world, destinations can no longer take their traditional visitors for granted and escape growing competitive pressures, because increasingly experienced, specialized and demanding travellers now have a vastly greater number of potential destinations to choose from (Weaver & Lawton, 2002; Hall & Page, 2006; Halkier, 2010b), and hence both well-established and would-be emerging tourist destinations are under pressure to be innovative to increase their attractiveness in the globalizing visitor economy. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that in the increasingly competitive market for leisure and business travel, more attention is now being given to innovation in experiences and services (Hall & Williams, 2008; Hjalager, 2010; Halkier, 2011), and that the growing awareness of tourism's economic growth potential has also lead policy-makers to search for more comprehensive approaches to the development of the sector, as evidenced in reports by, for example, the OECD (2006), UN's World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2005), and the EU (European Commission, 2006).

The academic literature on innovation in tourism is small but growing, and in a recent review Hjalager (2010) identified a number of gaps in the existing body of literature, including innovation processes in enterprises and organizations, and the interplay between these processes and the wider governance contexts in which they take place.

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The contribution of this Special Issue of *European Planning Studies* focuses on the role played by tourist destinations—conceived as multi-layered and functional governance structures (Weaver & Lawton, 2002; Hall, 2008)—are playing in stimulating or complicating the development of new tourist experiences. The complex relationship between the firm-level and territorial development dynamics is, of course, by no means confined to tourism development, but has also been intensely debated in the general literature on, for example, clusters and regional innovation systems (Amin, 1999; Martin & Sunley, 2003; Asheim *et al.*, 2006; Olsen, 2012). Recent contributions have focused in particular on the relationship between local processes and global knowledge flows (Asheim *et al.*, 2007; Crevoisier & Jeannerat, 2009; Cooke *et al.*, 2010), a theme particularly pertinent in the context of an increasingly global industry like tourism—and hence, hopefully, the contributions of the current Special Issue will also be of a more general relevance for research into spatial development dynamics.

The relationship between the development of a tourist destination and innovation within individual enterprises is explored in the first article where Anders Larsson and Kristina Nilsson Lindström focus on the difficulties in creating synergies between tourism development strategies and potential providers of new attractive tourist experiences from private actors in other sectors of the economy. Adopting an evolutionary perspective, the authors examine how a destination with a relatively immature tourism sector, Orust on the west coast of Sweden, attempts to mobilize somewhat conservative leisure boat manufacturers to spur innovation in experience production, and the article identifies both obstacles for collaboration and some interesting possibilities for future intersectoral knowledge sharing.

The issue of crossing boundaries in innovative destination development is further developed in the article by Eva Gustafsson, Mia Larson and Bo Svensson which analyses an attempt to establish a regional destination brand, “Delightful Christmas” that covers both the Aare ski resort and the city of Östersund, Sweden. Focusing on the network dynamics of the process, the text explores how continuous efforts in a weakly resourced multi-project network eventually find it difficult to create a geographically innovative place brand that spans two well-established and adjoining—but in terms of experience offer rather different—tourist destinations.

The third article, by Bodil Stilling Blichfeldt and Henrik Halkier, focuses on the interplay between creating activities that may attract visitors and the wider issue of creating a place brand with extensive involvement of the local community. Set in a small rural town in North Jutland, Denmark, the analysis focuses on the relationship between stakeholders and branding strategies, and in particular aims to uncover the role of the signature food festival in aggravating or alleviating inherent tensions between different internal and external stakeholders and target groups.

In contrast to the relatively positive Danish experience, the article by Marek W. Kozak underlines the difficulties that can be faced by non-state actors in integrating their activities in official tourism development agendas. The article analyses the emergence of the Palaces and Gardens Valley project in the south-west of Poland which has transcended the traditional emphasis in Polish destination development on natural or cultural heritage and created a multidimensional and innovative product which, however, now may be faced with constraints on further development due to generally limited cooperation between public and private bodies.

The issue of heritage as a tool for destination development is pursued from a different perspective in the article by Susanna Heldt Cassel and Albina Pashkevich, who discuss

the issues raised when an attraction receives World Heritage status and becomes part of a global brand. Focusing on Swedish experiences and the Great Copper Mountain in Falun in particular, the article explores the extent to which World Heritage status changes the preconditions for destination development in terms of product development, marketing and collaborative networks through new ways of interacting with local community stakeholders.

The theme of external sources of innovation in tourist destinations is pursued from a different angle by Ingeborg Nordbø in her analysis of the role of second-home owners as competence brokers for entrepreneurship and innovation in two destinations in rural Norway. The study demonstrates that many second-home owners are both interested in and, in practice, willing to contribute to the development of the destination in which their second-home is located, and that they have the skills and experiences required to further entrepreneurship, innovation and development in the host community.

The importance of governance structures for destination development policies is the focus of the article by Henrik Halkier on the difficulties of placing innovation at the centre of the tourism policy agenda. Despite stagnating numbers of international visitors, destination development initiatives and national tourism policies in Denmark have continued to rely on traditional efforts like collective marketing and local visitor information services, while giving limited priority to innovation-oriented measures that could renew the tourist experiences available. The article examines the role of governance structures in explaining the slow adoption of new destination development strategies and points in particular towards the continued domination of tourism-related policy networks by short-term sectoral and localist interests.

The importance of governance structures and processes is also stressed by the final contribution to the Special Issue by Markus Pillmayer and Nicolai Scherle which focuses on the role of lobbying in the development of tourism in Bavaria, Germany. Tourism in the region is characterized by a curious coexistence of diminishing competitiveness due to a persistent investment backlog on the one hand, and exceedingly ambitious tourism policies on the other. The article argues that in the case of Bavaria, more professional forms of tourism lobbying could act as a mediator between public and private actors and lead to more realistic long-term strategies for the development of the region as a tourism destination.

The guest editors hope that the articles, emanating from a workshop organized at Mid Sweden University in Östersund organized on behalf of the Regional Studies Association research network on *Tourism and Regional Development*, have helped to illuminate the interplay between innovation processes in tourism enterprises and organizations, and the wider governance contexts in which they take place. In particular, taken together, the articles would seem to suggest the importance of understanding the development of tourist destinations as a relational process, not just within the locality between public and private actors, but also set in a wider geographical context both in terms of visitors and governance structures.

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