Creating and implementing a model for sustainable development in tourism enterprises

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Abstract

The quest for sustainable tourism presents a challenge to integrate economic, social and environmental issues in tourism planning and—in order to implement this—to change attitudes and traditions among the different stakeholders within tourism. This calls for involvement of the different stakeholders in the change processes towards sustainable tourism and, accordingly, the creation of new patterns of interaction and collaboration between the stakeholders. This paper analyses how a project on sustainable tourism development in Mid- and North Jutland, Denmark, has engaged 26 small and medium sized tourism enterprises in an incremental change process towards sustainable tourism.

Using the theory of collaboration, the paper analyses the process of identifying the common interests, defining the problems, setting the directions, and developing and starting the implementation of a four-step model for sustainable development in tourism enterprises. The question addressed is how to create a change process in the enterprises that is at the same time realistic and innovative.

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1. Collaboration and integrated tourism planning

Tourism operates in a field of competing interests where many economic, social and political forces influence policy and management direction, transcending traditional organisational boundaries and creating interdependence among a wide range of stakeholders [1]. This creates problems concerning co-ordination and management as tourism crosses fields of expertise and administrative boundaries in connection with almost everything else in the local community [2], and it also has several environmental impacts. Sustainability attempts to integrate the different interests concerning environment as well as social and economic development, in an effort to improve the long-term competitiveness of the tourism industry. The cross-sectional character of sustainable tourism development presents a complex "problem domain"[1]—a domain

where multiple stakeholders are involved, but no individual actor has the knowledge, power or legitimacy to institute the required system of comprehensive solutions [3]. Developing a tourism-planning framework that can handle the complex problem domain is necessary in order to make tourism sustainable.

Collaboration is a logical response to the turbulent conditions of changes in a complex problem domain. The turbulence of the domain creates interconnections between organisations as the ability of one organisation to accurately plan for the future is limited by consequences of (unpredictable) actions by other organisations. Collaboration creates a capacity to reduce the unintended consequences [4].

Managing the complex development process calls for integrated tourism planning, perceived as "...an interactive or collaborative approach, which requires participation and interaction between the various levels of an organisation or unit of governance and between the responsible organisation and the stakeholders in the planning process to realise horizontal and vertical partnerships within the planning process" [2: p. 277]. Such a partnership calls for the involvement of NGOs, resi-

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  [1] The term "problem domain" is used in the manner of Barbara Gray [4: p. 5] "to refer to the way a problem is conceptualized by the stakeholders".

dents and authorities as well as tourism enterprises. This paper regards the network between tourism enterprises and other stakeholders as an interorganisational collaboration network. An organisation is perceived as a system of a particular logic interacting with the society, either formally or informally, directly or indirectly. The tourism enterprises represent (small) organised units, whose interaction is directed by their own strategy/logic. The organisations have different resources and thereby different power to influence the policy planning processes. This aspect is especially important to emphasise as Michael Hall [2] criticises the typical portrait of network and partnership arrangements for perceiving those relations as interdependent, co-equal and patterned, whereas in reality "different policy actors occupy different positions and can carry different weight within networks" [2: p. 281].

Gray [4: p. 11] describes the collaborative approach[2] as "a process of joint decision-making among key stakeholders of a problem domain about the future of that domain". Due to the complex structure of the problem domain, the stakeholders need each other to advance their own interest towards sustainable development [6]. In this process, the pursuit of each stakeholder's interest turns into an advance of the collective good induced by the shared vision [4]. Collaboration can be said to create a "generative power", combining the skills and capabilities of individual stakeholders/interest groups towards collective action for the common good [6], thus presenting an effective tool for dealing with and—if successful—uniting the interests within the problem domain.

The need for an integrated collaboration process was a central theme at the debate on tourism and sustainable development at UNGASS[3] in 1997. Here, it was identified that developing sustainable tourism demands an innovative, integrated approach, flexible enough to build capacity and utilise the synergies in the region [7]. Such a process demands the stakeholders' realisation of a common interest, a reason to develop collaboration. This raises the following question:

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[2] Barbara Gray [4] and Michael Hall [2] distinguish between "co-ordination", "co-operation" and "collaboration". "Co-ordination" and "co-operation" are used to classify static patterns of interorganisational relations. *Co-ordination* "tends to refer to *formal* institutionalised relationships among existing networks of organisations, interests and/or individuals, while *co-operation* is 'characterized by *informal* trade-offs and by attempts to establish reciprocity in the absence of rules' (Mulford & Rogers, 1982: 13)" [2: p. 278]. These terms are used to distinguish between formal and informal relationships, but they do not hold the evolutionary character of *collaboration* which refers to a more dynamic, process oriented way of interaction [4]. The essential issue of the collaborative process is the problem of bringing various stakeholders and interests together, a problem that is not addressed by co-ordination or co-operation [2].

[3] United Nations General Assembly Special Session.

Is it possible to balance the economic, social and environmental interests in a change process towards sustainable tourism? And the sub-questions:

a. How does one engage the enterprises and other stakeholders actively in a collaborative change process?
b. How does one create a development model that is both realistic and innovative to the stakeholders?

These questions will be highlighted in this article based on the experiences from small and medium sized tourism enterprises participating in a regional project on sustainable tourism development in Denmark.

2. Critical factors of collaboration within tourism

Developing sustainable tourism always presents a process that is unique for the area, due to the multiple stakeholders and interests involved. In a unique process, there is no standard procedure to structure the problem solving. Hence, the process has to go through two phases, which can be described as the "target setting"—what do we want—and the "planning"—how do we get it [8]. Designing collaboration involves the same steps: the co-ordination of policies—agreement on objectives and goals—followed by administrative co-ordination, and the forming of tools to implement the goals [2]. Barbara Gray [4] includes another step, as she identifies three phases in the ideal collaboration process:

1. Problem setting, diagnosis of the problem and joint search for information;
2. Direction setting, achieving political consensus and a mutually agreed upon solution; and
3. Structuring, ratification of agreement and plans for implementation [3,4].

These phases often form a repeated cycle, as the implementation of intended strategies raises new problems, which create the need for re-defining the problem and re-structuring the plan, and hence a repetition of phase 1, 2 and 3. The three phases might furthermore take place in different orders or at the same time—often phase 2 will take place before the problem is properly diagnosed (phase 1). The preliminary project design is based on the expectations and knowledge at the time of formulating the objective, but often the conditions change during the development process due to new insights and unexpected problems. Hence, it is most important to keep the possibility of re-designing and re-directing the process live [8]. Collaboration is an emergent process that evolves over time. New ideas are developed and new challenges arise to which the stake-

holders must respond. This distinguishes collaboration from the static patterns of formal relationships [4], e.g. co-operation.

Gray [4] and Jamal and Getz [9] have defined the conditions facilitating interorganisational collaboration. Table 1 is developed from these studies. The table connects the critical factors of collaboration identified by Gray and Jamal and Getz with the three phases of the collaboration process presented by Gray.

From the very beginning, a *legitimate convenor has to be appointed in order to initiate and facilitate collaboration*. The initiative to create a partnership can come from any of the stakeholders, but it is up to the convening organisation to identify other participants and persuade them to join the partnership. Furthermore, the convenor must keep any one interest group from dominating the process and keep disagreements on interests from destroying the purpose of the collaboration. In order to do so, the convenor requires convening power and must be able to ensure the trust of all involved stakeholders, who have to believe that the convenor has legitimate authority to organise the domain. A formal authority, an umbrella organisation or one or more of the relatively powerful stakeholders may serve as convenors [4].

The *inclusion of key stakeholders* is the second critical factor to successful collaboration. Identification and co-ordination of a diverse set of stakeholders is necessary to approach the shared vision [2,10], as each of the stakeholders in question holds some of the necessary resources to reach the vision [4]. The selection of key stakeholders includes or excludes certain organisations or individuals from influencing the policy making pro-

cess. An inclusive collaborative approach clearly has the ability to create social capital and thus contribute to develop more sustainable forms of tourism. It is therefore necessary for the partners to recognise that the opinions, perspectives and recommendations of non-industry stakeholders are just as legitimate as those of the planners, the experts or the industry. A planning process that involves a broad range of stakeholders may well be more time consuming, but the results of the process have a far greater likelihood of being implemented, as the stakeholders have a greater degree of ownership of the plan and process [2].

Recognising the mutual benefits and a *high degree of interdependence* are the keys to secure the stakeholders' interest in finding a mutually beneficial solution [4], but also a way of ensuring that no single group holds the balance of power [10].

Solutions based on mapping of and constructive dealing with differences: Differences between the stakeholders yield multiple perceptions about what is possible and what is desirable, often concerning different ideas of how the goal can be achieved and how the plans must be implemented. Those differences can add to the process as they hold a creative potential towards constructing mutually beneficial solutions [4]. If the differences are not taken into account they may cause problems to the process, as the stakeholders might be working against each other's interests. It is therefore important that collaboration allow a constructive confrontation of differences, in a debate where diverse visions and viewpoints are aired [4].

The debate created by the *joint formulation of aims and objectives* uncovers the complexity of the problem, forming the basis for envisioning alternative solutions and promoting strategic long-term thinking. Often the results are flexible and innovative, producing policies that integrate the different stakeholder needs [10].

Joint ownership of decisions and collective responsibility for future development: Collaboration creates a self-regulation of the domain. The participants impose decisions on themselves, based on joint ownership, thereby creating collective responsibility [4]. A natural consequence is the *perception that decisions arrived at will be implemented*; otherwise there is no foundation for further collaboration. In the following, we will apply the model from Table 1 to a study of the change processes in 26 tourism enterprises participating in a project on developing sustainable tourism in the mid-northern region of Denmark—the counties of Viborg and North Jutland (Fig. 1).

Table 1
Critical factors of collaboration during the three phases of the collaboration process (own elaboration based on Gray [4] and Jamal and Getz [10])

Phases in the collaboration process	Factors critical to successful collaboration
Problem setting, diagnosis of the problem and joint search for information	1. Appointment of a legitimate convenor to initiate and facilitate collaboration 2. Inclusion of key stakeholders 3. Recognition of individual/mutual benefits from the process
Direction setting, achieving political consensus, inventing mutually agreed upon solution	4. Recognition of high degree of interdependence in planning and managing the project 5. Solutions based on mapping of and constructive dealing with differences 6. Joint formulation of aims and objectives
Structuring, ratification of agreement and plans for implementation	7. Joint ownership of decisions and collective responsibility for future development 8. Perception that decisions arrived at will be implemented

3. Sustainable tourism in Mid- and North Jutland

The counties of Viborg and North Jutland host most of the tourists in Denmark, apart from Copenhagen.
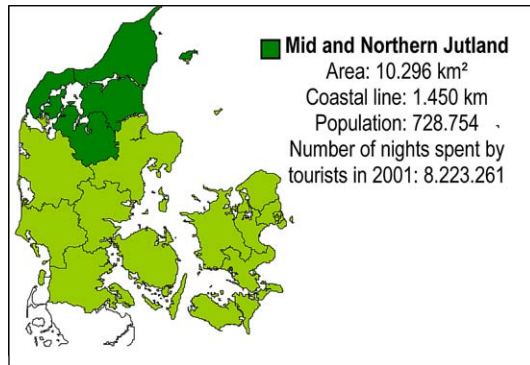
Fig. 1.   Map of Denmark.

The tourism is primarily located in the coastal areas, where the tourists stay in summer cottages, holiday centres or at campsites. The tourism industry consists mostly of enterprises lodging the tourists or tourist attractions, e.g. amusement parks or museums. There are very few tour operators. Since the late 1990s, there have been several more or less successful attempts to promote sustainable tourism development in Denmark as well as in Mid- and North Jutland, ranging from large scale projects involving several municipalities in the development of sustainable tourism destinations[4] to smaller projects carried out by tourism enterprises trying to save resources and thereby protect the environment [11]. The different initiatives prove an interest in sustainable tourism development from the tourism sector as well as municipal and regional authorities and local/national NGOs. At the national level, there has been some political change since the last election in November 2001, showing a deterioration of the environmental discourse of the previous government. This implies that sustainable development and thereby sustainable tourism no longer has political priority and there is no longer governmental pressure or financial support to enhance the development. The lack of governmental support makes it harder to develop sustainable tourism, but some tourism enterprises, NGOs, municipalities and counties continue their joint efforts.

In Mid- and North Jutland, there have been several initiatives towards sustainable tourism, but they have failed to enhance the general development of sustainable tourism in the region due to a lack of co-ordination and collaboration between the different stakeholders. In 2001, the counties of Viborg and North Jutland began a regional three-year project "*Sustainable Tourism in Mid and North Jutland*". The main objective of this project is for the region to become a sustainable tourist destination where the

focus on the natural and social environment improves the competitiveness of the tourism industry. The project aims at promoting co-operation and networks among the different stakeholders as a way to integrate environmental, social, cultural and ethical aspects in tourism development. Furthermore, it aims at developing and testing models for sustainable tourism development, which can be used by the tourism enterprises and the municipalities [12].

"Sustainable Tourism in Mid- and North Jutland" was initiated by Mid-North Tourism[5] and NIRAS,[6] who recognised the common interest in trying to create a change towards sustainable tourism in this part of Denmark. They involved the two counties in the region and researchers from Aalborg University[7] and invited a broad range of tourism enterprises to participate.[8]

4. Methodology

Researchers from Aalborg University and employees at Mid-North Tourism and NIRAS formed the team of project managers, co-ordinators and advisers of the development process. Networks and tools to promote sustainable tourism development were created and developed together with the stakeholders. The process reflects a combined inductive/deductive methodology. The practical work of implementing sustainability takes place along with the theoretical reflections upon sustainability and participation. In this way, the theoretical and empirical studies are allowed to influence each other in an ongoing, interactive learning process.

Integrating the stakeholders in the process and refining the research focus along with the development of the case are the major points of the research methodology. Action research has been chosen as a research discipline that suits this purpose: "The research needed for social practice can best be char-

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[4] Information about those projects can be found at www.destination21.dk

[5] Mid-North Tourism are the tourism development and marketing organisation of Mid- and North Jutland.
[6] NIRAS is a consultant firm with experience in implementing environmental management in enterprises and municipalities.
[7] Aalborg University, Department of Development and Planning, is involved in research regarding different aspects of sustainable development.
[8] Thirty-five tourism enterprises signed up for the project in 2001. Since then, some of the enterprises have abandoned the project either due to new management/owners, who do not prioritise sustainability, or because they are too pressured by lack of money or time to continue. Twenty-six "pilot" enterprises have participated in the development and implementation of the tools during 2001 and 2002. In 2003, nine new tourism enterprises joined the project. The 26 enterprises that have participated during 2001/2002 are the ones referred to in this paper. This group consists of small and medium sized enterprises, primarily tourist accommodation centres but also a few tourist attractions. Appendix A contains a list of all enterprises and their sizes.

acterized as research for social management or social engineering. It is a type of action-research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action'' [14: p. 203]. This implies that an action researcher takes part in the process while studying the development and the impacts of actions taken by the different stakeholders. Action research means developing knowledge about and changing the research field at the same time [15].

The rooting of sustainable tourism development takes place at the local level: within the tourism enterprises, the tourism organisations and the municipalities [16]. This paper explores how the project has engaged 26 tourism enterprises in a change process towards sustainable tourism.

The collection of data is a continual process. In the preliminary phase, we interviewed 34 tourism enterprises participating in the project. These semi-structured interviews[9] were recorded and the main topics were extracted. The establishment of development groups for the tourism enterprises followed these interviews. The data from these development groups include minutes from the monthly meetings and questionnaires concerning the actions of each enterprise—filled in twice, at the first meeting and after six months. Various documents are also part of the empirical material, e.g. the application describing the purpose and goals of "Sustainable Tourism in Mid and North Jutland" [12], minutes from meetings in the steering committee, the annual status report [13] and a report concerning the status and goals of the 34 tourism enterprises [11].

The design of the case study makes it possible to obtain knowledge about the general characteristics and difficulties of working with sustainable tourism among different enterprises, due to the differences or likeness in their approach to sustainability and their interests in the development.

5. The project design

The process in Mid- and North Jutland was designed to ensure long-term sustainable development through co-operation with the tourism industry and local authorities. In order to facilitate the process, the current planning practice for tourism development must be shaped to fit the stakeholder involvement. In Denmark, the planning system operates with three units of governance: the national, the regional and the municipal level. The regional and municipal development strategies are substantial for tourism development, but the

municipal authorities are not obliged to involve tourism in their planning strategies. Hence, the quality of the tourism planning often depends on co-operation between tourism organisations and the authorities. The project in Mid- and North Jutland operates on three levels: the region, the communities and the private tourism enterprises (Fig. 2). Each level represents different constellations of stakeholders. The enterprise level focuses on tourism enterprises. The municipality level applies to the tourism industry—tourism enterprises and organisations, the municipal authorities and stakeholders from the local community. The regional level applies to regional and municipal authorities and tourism organisations.

The ambition is to create networks between stakeholders at each level referring to a steering committee with delegates representing these stakeholders. Aalborg University, Mid-North Tourism and NIRAS are involved as project managers, co-ordinators and advisers. Aalborg University is carrying out the research regarding the process of involving the stakeholders. At this stage, the partners of the project represent the tourism organisations, regional and municipal authorities and private tourism enterprises.

The stakeholders can be separated into two groups: those who have to implement the changes—the tourism industry and the regional and local authorities, and those who are influenced by the tourism in the region and therefore should be involved—the citizens, the NGOs and the local trade. The first step in the development process was to ensure collaboration with the tourism enterprises and the regional and local authorities, as they have to implement most of the changes. The steering committee consists of representatives of these primary change agents that took part in the overall design of the project.

To some degree, this constellation resembles the triangular alliance of policy specialists, executive agencies and interest groups that Michael Hall [2] describes as
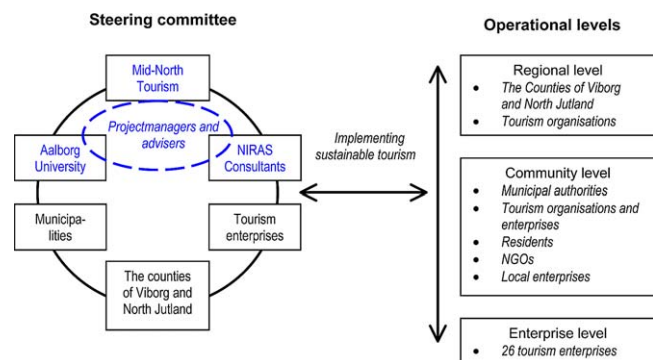

Fig. 2. Stakeholders in "Sustainable Tourism in Mid- and North Jutland".

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[9] Using the interview technique described by Steiner Kvale (1994).

"sub-government". This may influence the development of sustainable tourism profoundly, as a sub-government with stable relationships between the partners is relatively impervious to outside influences on policy formulation and implementation. Thus, the policy formulation would be greatly influenced by the tourism industry, in which case the values of business (employment, prices, production, growth) become a success criterion and thereby end up shaping the political orientation. Narrowing the policy advise by focusing on the tourism industry and excluding other stakeholders may end up reducing the capacity of the tourism organisations to be responsive to the turbulent interorganisational environment they operate in [2]. This does not imply that a government–business constellation is necessarily a problem, but it emphasises the importance of analysing the interests behind the policy formulation as well as which stakeholders are involved in the planning process and which are left out.

In this case, the constellation of regional/local authorities and business suits the purpose very well as long as the focus is on environmental changes within the tourism enterprises, whereas a wider scope of stakeholders must be involved when the focus is outside the enterprise, on the local community or the destination. Fig. 2 illustrates the ambition of incorporating inputs from relevant stakeholders at the operational levels, whereas only the primary change agents participate in the steering committee, which outlines the overall design of the project. The overall design involves the first two phases of Gray's model for collaboration: problem setting and direction setting. The design of the project places the third phase—planning the implementation—at the operational levels. Furthermore, the project design requires a repetition of the first two phases at each operational level in order to deal effectively with the problem understanding and differences of the stakeholders at each level and to develop an approach that the stakeholders find both realistic and innovative. The intentional repetition of all three collaboration phases at the operational level is to create interactive development networks that are able to incorporate a wider range of issues in the policy making, rather than let the more limited scope of the steering committee govern the development process.

6. Experiences from the tourism enterprises

The work with sustainable development in the tourism enterprises has gone through three phases, which resembles Gray's model:

1. Identifying the "problems": Interviews and meetings with enterprises to identify general problems and expectations towards the project.
2. Direction setting and building mutual agreement upon solutions: Developing a tool for implementing the policies—the step model.
3. Structuring the implementation: Working in development groups.

6.1. Phase 1: Identifying the needs and expectations of the tourism enterprises

6.1.1. Appointment of a legitimate convenor to initiate and facilitate collaboration

The project for developing sustainable tourism in Mid- and North Jutland was initiated by Mid-North Tourism and Aalborg University. Being the umbrella organisation for the tourism industry in the middle and northern part of Jutland and the most powerful organisation among the participants, Mid-North Tourism naturally obtained the role of convenor in collaboration with Aalborg University, representing the "expertise" on sustainable development. The role of the convenors was defined at the first meeting with the enterprises, where the design of the development process was discussed. The enterprises wanted the convenors to be responsible for initiating and coordinating the process and provide expert knowledge, guiding and educating them in becoming more sustainable. The enterprises are responsible for implementing the initiatives. This design has proved to be efficient, but it has also left the enterprises only partly responsible for the project, as they are only partly involved in the design; this is a limitation of creating joint ownership and collective responsibility.

6.1.2. Inclusion of key stakeholder groups

A broad range of tourism enterprises in Mid- and North Jutland were invited to participate in the project "Sustainable tourism in Mid and North Jutland". Twenty-six enterprises decided to join the project.[10] These enterprises consist of hotels, hostels, holiday centres, campsites, a zoo, a marine museum and an amusement park, located in all parts of Mid- and North Jutland. The size of the enterprises ranged from a small hostel with 21 beds run by one person/family to a large holiday centre with 252 cottages and a large number of employees.

The participants represent a broad variety of the tourism enterprises in Mid- and North Jutland, considering type as well as size. However, one thing makes

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[10] Approximately 5% of all tourism enterprises, counting hotels, hostels, campsites, bureaus renting out summer cottages, amusement parks, zoos and museums. The numbers can be found at www.visitdenmark.com.

them stand out: they have already indicated an interest in a proactive strategy towards the environmental and social challenges of the future by joining this project on sustainable tourism. As such, they fit the role of test pilots very well, as they are motivated to develop and test a new concept. On the other hand, they cannot be said to represent the approach of the average tourism enterprise, and it will be somewhat more difficult to transfer their experiences when dealing with less proactive enterprises.

6.1.3. Recognition of individual/mutual benefits from the process

During the preliminary interviews with the tourism enterprises, their needs and expectations towards the project were explored as well as the common push/pull motives for getting involved in sustainable development. The motives seem to be partly a personal position on tourism development, partly the economic advantage of saving resources co-existing with the hope of gaining more influence on tourism development and maybe getting a competitive advantage in the future. Most enterprises have already taken actions towards sustainability, but lack of inspiration, knowledge and tools to continue the progress are a common problem, which formed the following expectations:

I expect exchange of knowledge, help to clarify certain issues, co-operation partners, creating a network of sustainable tourism. (Nordsømuseet—museum)

I see this project as kind of a network for sharing experiences and knowledge. (Sæby Søbad Holiday Centre)

Actually making changes at the camp-site. Develop a useful tool-box describing: How do we get started and where can we get funding? (Løkken Strand Camping)

The economic aspect concerning sustainable tourism development is another mutual interest important to the enterprises. These expectations refer to the marketing of sustainable tourism by the tourism organisations, which might add a positive economic advantage to the environmental activities. The enterprises believe that a regional effort on sustainable tourism may have a positive effect on the market whereas a tourism enterprise working with sustainability alone will not change the number of tourists they attract.

It is a good idea for the region to go in front and there might be an economic advantage. Sustainability won't attract more tourists right now—but it can't hurt. (Rødhus Klit Holiday Centre)

I believe sustainability will become a competitive advantage in the future. (Rimmensgaard Camping)

Environmental work must be done, but it isn't an important sales argument. However if all of North Jutland advertise environmental issues it might have a positive effect. (Rold Gl. Kro—hotel)

The prospects of being part of a regional project that provides knowledge/tools and markets sustainable tourism encourages the enterprises to obtain eco-labels like the Green Key[11] or the European Flower.[12] Only three out of 26 enterprises had an environmental label (the Green Key) at the beginning of the project, although all enterprises had taken environmental actions. Alone, the enterprises find the workload of achieving an environmental label too overwhelming and too expensive, as there is little demand for eco-labels among the tourists today. As part of the regional project, 23 enterprises expressed an interest in working towards obtaining an environmental label.

Several tourism enterprises expressed a need for better co-ordination of the different stakeholder interests. Apart from creating networks and sharing knowledge among tourism enterprises, many enterprises would like to gain influence on local tourism development and to co-operate with other stakeholders regarding this development.

I would like to extend and support a network between the tourism enterprises. Promote new ideas and new attractions, crossing the municipal borders. Constructive co-operation with the municipality. (Blomstergården—flower garden, attraction)

To gain more influence on the local tourism development. (Løkken Strand Camping)

Visions of coherent actions for the municipality as well as the county are missing. I would like decisions about where tourism is desirable—and where it is not. (Fårup Sommerland—amusement park)

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[11] The Green Key is an eco-label for tourism enterprises, targeting hotels, youth hostels, conference and holiday centres, campsites, holiday houses, leisure facilities and restaurants. The Green Key has secretariats in Estonia, Sweden and Denmark. More information can be found at www.dengroennenoegle.dk

[12] The European Flower is an eco-label with environmental criteria developed to cover everyday consumer goods and services (with the exception of food, drink and medicines). At present, the EU Flower can be awarded to 21 product groups, including tourist accommodation. More information can be found at http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/ecolabel/. The amusement parks and museums would have to work towards an ISO certification, as the other labels only apply for tourist accommodation.

The tourism enterprises are interdependent, because of their mutual gain from sustainable tourism: saving resources and money, green image of the region and influence on development. Furthermore, they are aware of the interdependence among local tourism enterprises, authorities and tourism organisations in developing sustainable tourism. This raises a new challenge, since the idea of developing tourism and the local community together often lacks a forum where the stakeholders can discuss and realise their common visions.

6.2. Phase 2: Designing a mutual framework: the step model

The "problem identification" in phase one suggests two necessary lines of action for enhancing the activities of the enterprises towards sustainability: developing a comprehensive model for implementing sustainable development and implementing collaboration networks among the enterprises and with the municipalities.

6.2.1. Basing the solutions on mapping of and constructive dealing with differences

All enterprises have indicated their proactive strategy to keep up the momentum in the environmental activities by joining this project. Still, the tourism enterprises have different preconditions regarding their approach to and experience with sustainability work as well as different resources (finances, labour, time, information and expertise) according to their size. Some of the enterprises are "newcomers" and have no previous experience with preventive activities. Most of the enterprises have made the most obvious and cost-effective improvements, like saving water and energy and recycling waste, etc. Some tourism enterprises have gone a step further and have chosen indicators and systematic preventive activities for all main uses of resources and important environmental impacts. A few have implemented all the main activities in an environmental management system, setting up targets and actions plans and making a green account every year in order to secure continuous improvements. A couple of the enterprises, like Aalborg Zoo, have even gone a step further and implemented a certified ISO 14001 system and have also integrated health and safety issues.

The different preconditions of the tourism enterprises suggest the development of a step-by-step model that allows an individual approach to the change processes towards sustainable development, at the same time ensuring continuous improvement. Since the late 1980s, cleaner technology has been essential in Danish environmental policy. Environmental problems in the industry have been managed by introducing new approaches, systems and strategies and gradually a broad range of actors and patterns have emerged,

linking technological/institutional innovations and economic/environmental issues in new ways. Today, the greening process involves changes in the production, products and environmental strategies of companies [17]. The step model in Fig. 3 is developed from experiences with "the greening of industry".

The steps represent the steps of developing cleaner technology, from cleaner production processes (step 1) to environmental management (step 2) to cleaner products (step 3 and 4) [17]. The understanding of the problem—the impact of the tourism industry on the environment and the local community—becomes more comprehensive from step to step as do the applied strategies and policies. And at the same time, the number of incentives and actors involved increases. Focus changes from within the enterprise (step 1 and 2) to the complex problem domain of tourism interacting with society (step 3 and 4). The first steps of this model are tools for implementing existing certification systems, thus helping the enterprises to obtain the Green Key/ European Flower and ISO/EMAS. The next steps challenge them to go further than the eco-labels by involving social aspects and integration in the community. The four steps make the progress of different enterprises comparable. Each step is rewarded with a four-step graduated labelling for sustainable tourism, in order to make the results visible to the public.

Table 2 shows the complete step model for sustainable development in tourism enterprises. The model has been developed over the last two years in collaboration with the steering committee and the enterprises, who would discuss the drafts made by the project managers. When the enterprises started implementing the model, new problems were discovered and the model was changed once more.

For each step a "toolbox" was developed, where the objectives have been turned into exact criteria, concerning e.g. separation of waste. This toolbox also contains the necessary information for fulfilling the goal, e.g. descriptions of the contents of an environmental policy and examples of environmental policies from other enterprises.

Step 1 gets the enterprises started and creates a basic level of environmental effort. When the enterprises fulfil step 2, they comply with "The Green Key" and
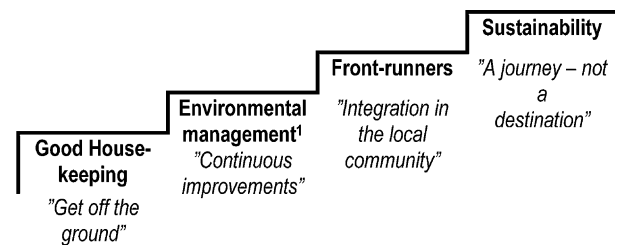
Fig. 3. The four steps of sustainable development in enterprises.

Table 2
A journey towards sustainability for tourism enterprises

	Step 1 Good house-keeping	Step 2 Environmental management	Step 3 Front-runners	Step 4 Sustainability
Activity indicators	• Make environmental policy • Designate a person responsible for the environment • Compliance with regulations • Systematic recycling of waste and composting of organic waste	• Implement systematic environmental management (simple model with new targets and action plans every year) compatible with the Green Key • Eco-friendly maintenance of green areas • Develop green shopping policy • Offer organic food	• Implement certified environmental management system compatible with ISO or EMAS • Eco-friendly building and construction • Extended green shopping policy	• Sustainability is integrated in the vision and development plans of the enterprise • Making customer investigations (focus interviews)
Performance indicators (review+key figures)	• Review and begin to reduce use of electricity, water, heating and disposables • Management of cleaning and washing	• Reduce use of electricity, water, heating, disposables and waste • Review health and safety • Management of noise and air emissions	• Management of health and safety and indoor climate • Make a review of important environmental impacts • Management of own transport • Management of environment- and health-damaging substances	• Make indicators based on a life cycle assessment • Social and ethical indicators
Communication	• Internal environmental report (green account)	• Green account, including green areas • Tourist information on green services, activities and public transport • Initiating eco-friendly behaviour by tourists	• Green account, including transport • Health and safety account • Green and socio-cultural activities for tourists in the local community	• Economic, environmental and social account (triple bottom line: profit, planet and people)
Stakeholder relations	• Employee participation in the environmental activities	• Involvement in local networks • Employees have had an introduction to environmental management	• Green demands to suppliers	• Surplus on the "ethical balance" in local community

"The European Flower". In step 3, the enterprises head towards certified environmental management and expand their environmental activities from within the boundary of the single tourism enterprise to include demands to suppliers. These activities are expanded in step 4, which integrates the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the concept of sustainability—by including more social and ethical aspects. The model clarifies for the tourism enterprises that the challenges are manifest to all of them. Even the ones already having some activities related to step 4 face several new tasks in order to have dynamic activity in this area. The step model is of course cumulative in the sense that the enterprises have to continue most of the activities in step 1 when they move on to step 2, and so on. The step model helps the tourism enterprises reach the levels of environmental labelling (step 1 and 2) and

charts the course of further progress towards sustainability (step 3 and 4).

The collaboration process has focused on involving the enterprises in designing a model that can handle the differences between the enterprises. The dialogue in developing the model seems to have effectively dealt with "*mapping of and constructive dealing with differences*"—one of the critical collaboration factors in this phase. The other critical factor is the "*joint formulation of aims and objectives*". The overall objective is to provide the enterprises with a tool to implement sustainable development. To reach this objective, it was necessary to decide upon the aims and objectives of each step in the model, and to plan how to implement the steps. The formulation and prioritisation of aims and objectives have taken place both in the steering committee and at the enterprise level. The collaboration between the enterprises and the project managers has been organised at monthly meetings in "development groups", where the work has been structured and prioritised and the step model developed and changed. The development groups are described in the next phase.

6.3. Phase 3: Implementing sustainable development in the enterprises

During the preliminary interviews, the tourism enterprises expressed the need for creating networks between the stakeholders. The first attempt to organise new collaboration networks focused on networks between the tourism enterprises. The tourism enterprises have been organised in three development groups, according to their location (north/south) and the stage of their environmental work (step 1 and 2 or step 3 and 4). The purpose of these groups is to promote sustainable development in each enterprise by implementing and developing the step model, educating the representatives from the tourism enterprises and sharing experiences and knowledge concerning sustainability actions.

From December 2001 to May 2002 and again from October 2002 to May 2003, there have been monthly meetings within the groups. The first meeting was aimed at designing the following meetings to suit the needs of the enterprises in this group. However, it turned out to be the same basic knowledge about environmental management and green accounts that was needed in the first place. In general, the tourism enterprises at this stage need a framework to get an overall idea of where they are now and what they need to do next. The impression is that they have plenty of ideas on things they would like to do, but need knowledge or resources to carry these ideas through. As such, the development groups support the development from good intention to best practice. Each meeting

focuses on a topic from the step model, e.g. "green accounts" or "working environment". The enterprises have to apply this knowledge before the next meeting, e.g. by making a green account for the last six months. The results are presented at the next meeting. Hence, the enterprises get inspired by each other's work and also get a chance to discuss the problems of applying the knowledge. This process has also been used to adjust the step model, increasing or decreasing the objectives for each step.

The progress of the enterprises is documented through questionnaires. The results of the first questionnaire considering the step model showed that only one out of the 26 tourism enterprises was in compliance with step 1. Hence, the first six months were spent achieving this level. Twenty-three out of 26 tourism enterprises received the award for fulfilling "Step 1" in September 2002.[13] This was covered by the media and used for marketing, thus creating an incentive for the enterprises to comply with the criteria. Furthermore, the award makes their effort visible to their guests, showing that they are working towards sustainability although they have not yet reached the level of e.g. the European Flower. All enterprises have taken further steps towards sustainable development, but they are still following their own pace, some moving slow and others fast. Twenty-six enterprises are working towards achieving the award for "Step 2" in September 2003 and a large number of those are interested in applying for the European Flower.

The development groups have proved to be a useful tool for implementing the objectives from the step model at the tourism enterprises. The process was designed to fit the needs of the tourism enterprises and the project co-ordinators from Mid-North Tourism and Aalborg University, which have taken care of the daily management, facilitating the development groups and the needs of each enterprise, thus functioning as convenors. This structure has been necessary in order to initiate the process, but it has also created a power balance where the project co-ordinators become designers and managers of the development process. This has an effect on one of the critical collaboration factors: "*joint ownership of decisions and collective responsibility for future development*". The tourism enterprises are consulted at the meetings, but they do not seem to feel responsible for the overall objectives of "Sustainable tourism in Mid and North Jutland"; they primarily consider their responsibility to be the development of their own enterprise. Hence, the joint ownership and collective responsibility is mostly based on the project co-ordinators' ability to pick up the signals of the enterprises and implement them in the project design,

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[13] The table in Appendix A shows the progress of the enterprises.

hence making sure that the process reflects the stakeholders' interests and not only the interests of the co-ordinators.

This leads us to the last critical collaboration factor: "*a perception that decisions arrived at will be implemented*". The process in the development groups has been designed to implement the step model; the participants become educated about a certain topic and use this knowledge in their enterprise. The tasks are not always solved immediately, but most enterprises are motivated to fulfil the tasks in order to receive the award: Each of the four steps in the model is rewarded with a labelling once a year. Most enterprises catch up on the missing tasks before the awards. The co-ordinators and the steering committee also have to fulfil the obligations imposed on them by the enterprises: to create a useful tool for implementing sustainability at the enterprises, to create networks among stakeholders and to market the results. Those obligations have been fulfilled at the enterprise level, whereas the creation of networks at the municipality level is still a challenge.

7. Conclusion

This paper explores the work on creating a model for sustainable tourism development in Mid- and North Jutland, based on collaboration between the tourism development organisation, Mid-North Tourism, Aalborg University, environmental consultants from NIRAS, the two counties, representatives from the municipalities and 26 tourism enterprises. The ambition of the project is to develop sustainable tourism in this region through integrated tourism planning, based on vertical as well as horizontal partnerships between the stakeholders. The vertical partnership includes representatives of the groups mentioned above. These partners have designed the overall framework of the project. The main purpose of the vertical partnership is to ensure development of and co-operation between the three levels of horizontal networking: the tourism enterprise level, the community level and the regional level (Fig. 2). It is at these levels that sustainability must be developed and implemented.

The only horizontal level that has been fully developed is the tourism enterprise level. The motivation of the tourism enterprises to get involved in sustainable development is partly a personal position on tourism development, partly the economic advantage of saving resources—and then the hope of gaining more influence on tourism development and getting a competitive advantage in the future. The last remark is especially interesting as the tourism enterprises claim that sustainable actions usually will not attract tourists. However, being a part of sustainable development on a regional scale combines sustainability and marketing in a way that might bring profit in the future. This way, the project adds new drive to sustainable development at the tourism enterprise level.

The tourism enterprises joined this project because they were interested in becoming more sustainable. They expected the project to offer the following benefits:

- Create networks between the tourism enterprises and the project managers/consultants in order to share experiences, gain knowledge and develop practical tools.
- Promote the green image of the region—a regional effort on sustainable tourism may have a positive effect on the market.
- Enhance influence on local tourism development.

Developing and partly implementing a model for sustainable development of tourism enterprises has fulfilled the expectation of gaining knowledge and developing practical tools. The rapid progress of developing cleaner production and implementing environmental management at the enterprises is primarily due to the construction of the "step model", which divides the path towards sustainability into four steps. The gradual improvements make the tasks less demanding and easier to grasp and carry out. The establishment of "development groups" has provided networks for gaining knowledge and sharing experiences with other tourism enterprises, which has been especially important for the smaller enterprises, as they might not themselves have time or resources to engage in sustainable development.

The second expectation was to improve the green image. Compliance with each step of the step model is awarded with an environmental label from Mid-North Tourism in order to make the results visible to the guests. The media covered the first round of awards given in September 2002 and the event was used to market sustainable tourism and the green image of the enterprises. This award is not an alternative to existing environmental labels; instead, the first two steps of the step model serve as tools for implementing existing certification systems, thus helping the enterprises to obtain the Green Key or the European Flower.

The third expectation refers to collaboration and influence at the municipality level. Tourism enterprises usually have very limited influence on the local policy towards tourism development, depending on the existence of a local network with this focus. The step model addresses this problem as its focus changes from within the enterprise (step 1 and 2) to the complex problem domain of tourism interacting with society (step 3 and 4). The two last steps aim at sustainable development beyond cleaner production and environmental management by encouraging the enterprises to join or create

local networks between the stakeholders, as such networks might be able to collaborate with the municipality. This encourages them to enter the next horizontal level in Fig. 2: the municipality level. At the moment, the enterprises are still focusing on implementing environmental management. The next challenge is to expand focus from sustainable enterprises to sustainable tourism development in the local community. The enterprises have expressed an interest in collaborating with local stakeholders, but creating a local network for sustainable tourism development takes too many resources for a small or medium sized tourism enterprise. The enterprises may be able to initiate collaboration, but if any progress reaching beyond the limits of a single enterprise is to be made, one or more of the relatively powerful stakeholders— e.g. the local (tourism) organisation or the municipality—must serve as convenors of the process.

7.1. The collaboration process of the tourism enterprises

The interviews made it obvious that the tourism enterprise leaders believe they have mutual interests and gains from collaborating, and they acknowledged the interdependence of the stakeholders in the process of developing sustainable tourism. Thus, the basic factors for successful collaboration seem to be in place.

The recurring work on the three phases—diagnosing problems, setting directions and implementing solutions—has ensured the influence of the enterprises on the development process. Still, the responsibility of the project shifted from the tourism enterprises towards the steering committee and the convenors. Most tourism enterprises gladly propose ideas and discuss aims and objectives, but clearly regard the planning and management as the responsibility of the steering committee and the convenors. This influences one of the critical collaboration factors: "*joint ownership of decisions and collective responsibility for future development*". The enterprises mostly consider themselves responsible only for changes in an individual enterprise, while the steering committee "owns" the overall development. On the other hand, the distinct casting has accelerated the implementation process. Implementing sustainable tourism is not a clearly defined process; hence, it is the ad hoc management in the different phases that creates results by keeping the enterprises in a purposeful— although not well-defined—development process. The design reflects the goal: to design a collaboration process that creates sustainable development in the tourism enterprises without too high a workload, and to get results within a reasonable amount of time, thus encouraging the enterprises to continue. This demands a certain degree of management from the convenors, in order to allow the enterprises to influence the process and at the same time keep their direction. The progress of the enterprises, outlined in Appendix A, reflects the success in reaching these goals. The efforts of the enterprises after this project has ended will reflect how well we have succeeded in creating a feeling of joint ownership and collective responsibility for future development.?????[5]

Acknowledgements

Appendix A.

Tourism enterprises participating in "Sustainable Tourism in Mid- and North Jutland"

	Type	Name	Size
Enterprises participating since 2001			
1.	Tourist attraction	Blomstergården	2800 visitors in 2002
2.	Tourist attraction	Fårup Aquapark og Sommerland	444 600 visitors in 2002
3.	Tourist attraction	Nordsømuseet	266 000 visitors in 2002
4.	Tourist attraction	Aalborg Zoo	363 800 visitors in 2002
5.	Campsite	Camping Aalbæk Strand	600 tent/camper sites
6.	Campsite	Kystvejens Camping	30 tent/camper sites
7.	Campsite	Sindal Camping	172 tent/camper sites, five cabins
8.	Destination	Destination Skive-Egnen	–
9.	Green guide	Grøn Guide i Salling	–
10.	Holiday/sports centre	Danhostel Sæby Fritidscenter	32 rooms, 166 beds
11.	Holiday centre	DanParcs Rønbjerg Feriecenter	275 cottages

12.	Holiday centre	Feriecenter Slettestrand	53 apartments
13.	Holiday centre	Skallerup Klit Feriecenter	222 cottages
14.	Holiday centre	Sæby Søbad Feriecenter	100 cottages
15.	Holiday cottages	Toppen af Danmark Feriehusudlejning	Advertising 900 private cottages
16.	Hotel	Quality Hotel Scheelsminde	100 rooms
17.	Hotel	Rold Storkro	59 rooms
18.	Hotel	Sanden Bjerggaard	22 rooms
19.	Hotel	Strandgaarden	17 rooms
20.	Hotel	Aalborg Sømandshjem	54 rooms
21.	Hotel	Aalbæk Gl. Kro	51 rooms
22.	Tourist office	Skagen Turistforening	–
23.	Hostel	Feriecenter ved Karup Å	24 beds
24.	Hostel	Danhostel Rebild Vandrerhjem	100 beds
25.	Hostel	Danhostel Thisted Vandrerhjem	88 beds
26.	Hostel	Danhostel Viborg Vandrerhjem	112 beds

The following enterprises have joined the project in the first half of 2003

27.	Hostel	Danhostel Blokhus-Hune Vandrerhjem	100 beds
28.	Hostel	Danhostel Hobro Vandrerhjem	108 beds
29.	Hostel	Danhostel Hirtshals Vandrerhjem	73 beds
30.	Hostel	Danhostel Aalborg Vandrerhjem	140 beds
31.	Conference centre	Himmerlandsfonden Tranum Strand	42 rooms
32.	Hotel	Hotel Klitrosen	53 rooms
33.	Hotel	Nors Kro	Nine rooms
34.	Restaurant	Restaurant Købmandsgården	–
35.	Hotel and restaurant	Skyttehuset	Three rooms

Appendix B.

Compliance of the 26 tourism enterprises with the criteria of step 1 before and after working in the development groups from January to September 2002

	Criteria		Before	After	Difference
1.	Does the enterprise record the consumption of electricity, water and heat at least once a month?	☺	17	23	+6
		😐	3	1	−2
		☹	6	2	−4
2.	Has the enterprise implemented routine inspections of the consumption?	☺	6	23	+17
		😐	10	0	−10
		☹	10	3	−7
3.	Does the enterprise use environmentally labelled cleansing agents?	☺	13	23	+10
		😐	1	0	−1
		☹	12	3	−9
4.	Does the enterprise use environmentally labelled detergents?	☺	20	25	+5
		😐	0	0	–
		☹	6	1	−5
5.	Reduced use of disposable items?	☺	11	25	+14
		😐	12	0	−12
		☹	3	1	−2
6.	Does the enterprise collect used batteries?	☺	19	24	+5
		😐	1	0	−1
		☹	6	2	−4

(continued on next page)

7.	Does the enterprise separate paper, cardboard, glass and organic waste from the rest?	😊	16	24	+8
		😐	9	2	−7
		😟	1	0	−1
8.	If the enterprise separates organic waste, is it used for compost?	😊	11	23	+12
		😐	1	0	−1
		😟	14	3	−11
9.	Does the enterprise have an environmental policy?	😊	12	23	+11
		😐	1	0	−1
		😟	13	3	−10
10.	Does the enterprise have a person responsible for the environment?	😊	15	23	+8
		😐	0	0	−
		😟	11	3	−8
11.	Has the enterprise educated the employees on environmental questions?	😊	12	24	+12
		😐	1	0	−1
		😟	13	2	−11
12.	Does the enterprise have a green account?	😊	3	23	+20
		😐	0	0	−
		😟	23	3	−20

😊 Compliance; 😐 not good enough; 😟 no progress.

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