The Importance of Networks and Cooperation in Wine Tourism- A Comparison of Touristic Stakeholders in the German Moselle and Franconia Wine Regions/Die Bedeutung von Netzwerken und Kooperation im Weintourismus – Ein Vergleich der touristischen Stakeholder in den deutschen Weinbauregionen Mosel und Franken

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Zusammenfassung

Haart (2003), Kagermeier (2011) und Schamel (2013) bezeichnen den Weintourismus dann als am ehesten erfolgsversprechend, wenn dieser in einer Atmosphäre der Kooperation stattfindet. Cambourne und Macionis (2000) stellen dies insbesondere für politische Entscheidungsträger und Repräsentanten offizieller Institutionen fest. Die Kultur- und Weinbotschafter, auch als „Weinerlebnisführer" bezeichnet, sind touristische Gästeführer in Weinbauregionen. Das Konzept wurde erstmalig ab der Jahrtausendwende in Franken umgesetzt und seither mit gemischtem Erfolg in vielen deutschen Weinbauregionen zur Anwendung gebracht. Während die Weinerlebnisbegleiter in Weinfranken sehr erfolgreich operieren, kämpft das Konzept an der Mosel um Erfolg. Als möglicher Grund hierfür emergierte in verschiedenen Studien (z. B. Harms et al. 2012) eine schlechte Vernetzung der Akteure. In beiden Regionen wurde eine qualitative, soziale Netzwerkanalyse durchgeführt, um die Strukturen der Netzwerke verschiedener Weinerlebnisbegleiter zu erarbeiten und in der Zusammenschau einen Überblick über die jeweiligen Gesamtnetzwerke zu generieren. Dazu zeichneten die Studienteilnehmer ihre persönlichen Netzwerkkarten während eines teilstrukturierten, problemzentrierten Interviews auf. Die Netzwerkkarten wurden digital visualisiert und kombiniert. Dazu wurde die Software „VennMaker" eingesetzt (Schönhuth

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2009). Die Methode lieferte letztendlich einen guten Überblick über die Strukturen vor Ort und vermochte gleichzeitig, Erklärungen für die beobachtbaren Phänomene zu generieren. Tatsächlich unterschieden sich die offiziellen Strukturen an der Mosel und in Franken nur marginal. In beiden Netzwerken steht ein staatlicher Akteur als Protagonist im Zentrum des Netzwerks. In Franken ist dies die „Landesanstalt für Wein- und Gartenbau", kurz LWG. An der Mosel ist dies das „Dienstleistungszentrum Ländlicher Raum (DLR)". Beide zeichnen für die Einführung und Ausbildung der Gästeführer verantwortlich. Während an dieser Stelle das Engagement des DLR allerdings weitgehend endet, übernimmt die LWG in Franken auch nach der Ausbildung eine wichtige Funktion in der Betreuung der Gästeführer und stellt zentrale Erfolgsfaktoren in Form von Marketingunterstützung, Legitimierung, Mittlerfunktionen zu wichtigen Behörden und Institutionen, Auftragsvermittlung sowie Weiterbildungsmöglichkeiten und Wissenstransfer zur Verfügung. Auf diese Weise konnten sich die lokalen Gästeführer komplett ihrer Aufgabe widmen und darüber hinaus lukrative und professionelle persönliche Netzwerke etablieren. In Ermangelung eines solchen starken Protagonisten im Zentrum des moselländischen Netzwerkes ist dieses deutlich von Kompensation geprägt. Einzelne etablierte Gästeführer treten notgedrungen an die Stelle des zentralen Akteurs und kompensieren diese Funktionen für ihre persönlichen Netzwerke. Die Verbindung zu diesen Akteuren ist für alle Gästeführer notwendig, um erfolgreich am Markt zu bestehen. Die Chancengleichheit der Gästeführer ist gegenüber Franken damit deutlich verringert. Als Erfolgsfaktoren wirken neben den Kontakten zu anderen Gästeführern damit klassische Faktoren, wie regionale Herkunft, Engagement in der Gemeinde und familiäre Bindungen.

Schlüsselwörter

Networks and Cooperation · Wine Tourism · Touristic Stakeholders · Qualitative Social Network Analysis

Inhaltsverzeichnis

15.1   Objectives

Wine cultivation and tourism do often go hand in hand. Wine tourism, as the outcome of this liaison, can usually be named especially fruitful in an atmosphere of cooperation, as described by Haart (2003) or Kagermeier (2011) and Schamel (2013) and prominently includes political and official policy makers as well, as Cambourne and Macionis (2000) point out. Most German wine regions do put considerate efforts into the establishment of a successful wine tourism, producing very different results. This can prominently be monitored when two regions do put the same tourism product into force. One of these products are the "Wine Experience Guides" in the regions Moselle and Franconia. While the Franconian guides seem to flourish, many guides in the Moselle region do experience considerate problems establishing their products on the regional tourism market. In an earlier study by the author (cf. Harms et al. 2012) one reason for this was identified. Even though the Moselle guides where trained following a modified curriculum from Franconia, a lack of knowledge in the field of marketing was discovered. This could not account for all cases, looked into, though. Another possible reason emerged which was a lack of cooperation on all levels. Therefore, the objective of the presented study at hand was to compile information on the networks and cooperation of the "Wine Experience Guides" in both regions. Furthermore, key factors for success and failure in both networks were established.

15.2   Methodology

Human cooperation and interaction is rarely simple and static but multilayered and subjective. While many studies, using the tool of the social network analysis, can be characterized by a quantitative approach in order to work out the structure of networks, this approach did not seem to be suitable for the study at hand. An approach that was able to work out the context of human cooperation seemed to be necessary. For this reason, the very open method of the qualitative social network analysis, as described by Hollstein (2006) and Schönhuth and Gamper (2013), was chosen. The study combined personal ego-centered network maps (Hollstein and Pfeffer 2010 or Straus 2013) of "Wine Experience Guides" with in depth, problem-centered interviews in accordance to Lamnek (2010), Witzel (1982) or Reuber, Pfaffenbach and Mattisek (2013). In order to put the results into perspective, guided interviews with tourism officials in both regions were conducted as well (Diekmann 2012). The gained information was evaluated and analyzed using the method of qualitative content analysis, as introduced by Gläser and Laudel (2004). In order to gain a visual overview, regarding the networks at hand, all personal network maps were combined and visualized using the program Vennmaker. Vennmaker is a software tool that allows the combination of aspects qualitative and quantitative network analysis (Schoenhuth 2009). It also supports the free-hand construction of networks, offering a large variety of visualizations. The combined network maps of both
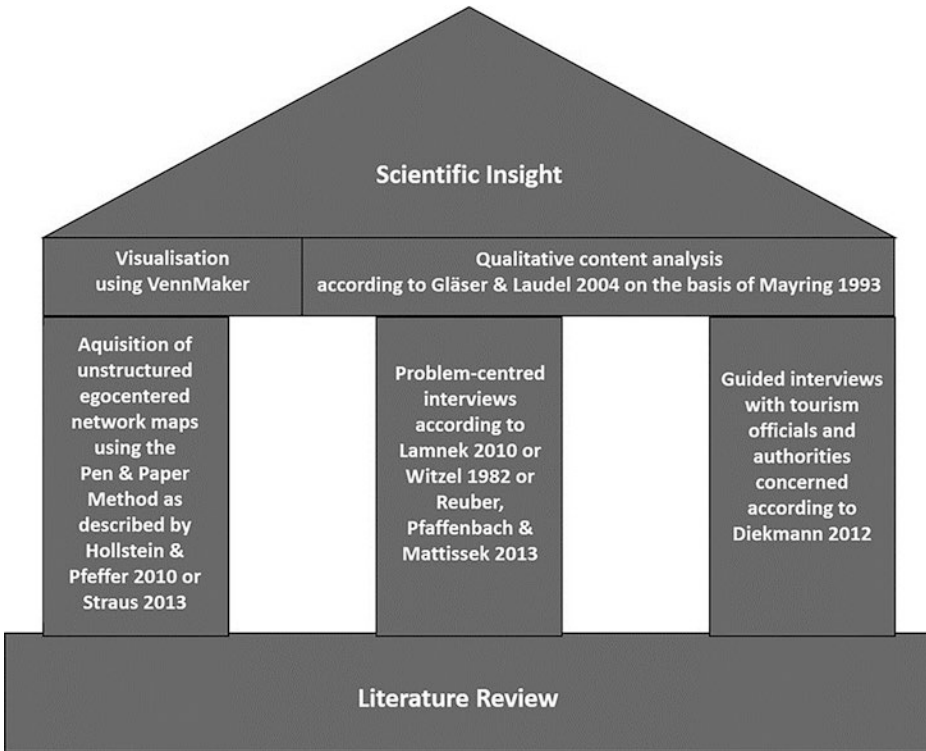
Fig. 15.1 Methodology. (Source: Authors own 2014)

regions in interaction with the results of the analysis of all interviews did produce relia-
ble and significant information not only on the networks structures but also on the moti-
vation, extend and nature of the cooperation and therefore on the success and failure of
the stakeholder of interest (see also Fig. 15.1).

15.2.1 Network Maps

Due to the fact that network maps are visuals, they usually take a rather prominent spot
on every publication regarding network analysis, while in fact being not much more
than a visualization of the results of the conducted interviews. In the case of this pub-
lication the network maps do visualize vividly the outcome of the interviews and func-
tion as a synergy of the ego-centered network maps, produced by the interviewed guides.
During the phase of data collection the network maps did prove valuable as reminders
and showed themselves as very helpful to the guides as an aid to structure their thoughts.
Painting those maps furthermore proved as a rather good way of distraction, oftentimes
creating an atmosphere of self-absorption in which the tested subjects did slowly forget
that they were being recorded and interviewed, concentrating mainly on the aspect of

completing their own networks as accurate as possible. By reaching this state of mind answer became much less reflected and more spontaneous and therefore unfiltered.

15.2.2 In-depth Interviews

While the network maps did function as a reminder and even to a certain extend as a distraction from the situation of being questioned, the in-depth interviews did function as the core of the qualitative social network analysis at hand. Mimicking a situation of a relaxed talk between people involved in the field of wine tourism in the Moselle-Valley, not putting any pressure on the interviewed, those did provide the researcher with valuable and private insights into the personal thoughts and perspectives of the guides. The interviews did not only provide the researcher with the true nature of the structure of the personal networks and as a synergy of the networks of both regions as a whole but did also provide subjective explanations of the situation at hand. Through combining the gained data an objective picture of the complete situation within the two regions emerged. Furthermore, the interviews did produce very valuable other information regarding the situation of wine tourism in general but also about the life of tour guides in the two regions that were not expected beforehand. It must be stated at this point that this information is far more detailed in the case of the Moselle region which can be attributed to the fact that the researcher is a known figure in the wine tourism scene in the Moselle region and therefore could rely on a bonus of trust that was awarded that could only be compensated to a certain extend through the use of a gatekeeper in Franconia.

15.3   Results

15.3.1 Results Directly Derived From The Network Maps

A glance at the two network maps does give a good impression of the situation of the two groups of wine experience guides in both regions.

The network maps (cf. Fig. 15.2 and 15.3) also already do shed light on the problem at hand. The regional network in Franconia profits largely from a strong hero in the center (as seen in Fig. 15.2). This hero is the state-run "Agency for Wine and Garden cultivation" (LWG) of the state of Bavaria. This, in cooperation with the "Association of the Franconian Wine Experience Guides" (slightly smaller box also in the center of the network in Fig. 15.2), does not only provide training and information to the guides but also conciliates working opportunities, provides legitimacy and acts as gatekeeper to institutions, the media and otherwise for the single guide not reachable contacts. It also does take care of the necessary marketing and generally creates an, as fruitful sensed, working environment that allows the single guide to fully concentrate on the touristic task (Fig. 15.2) and on the formation of smaller, lucrative, local professional networks (Fig. 15.2).
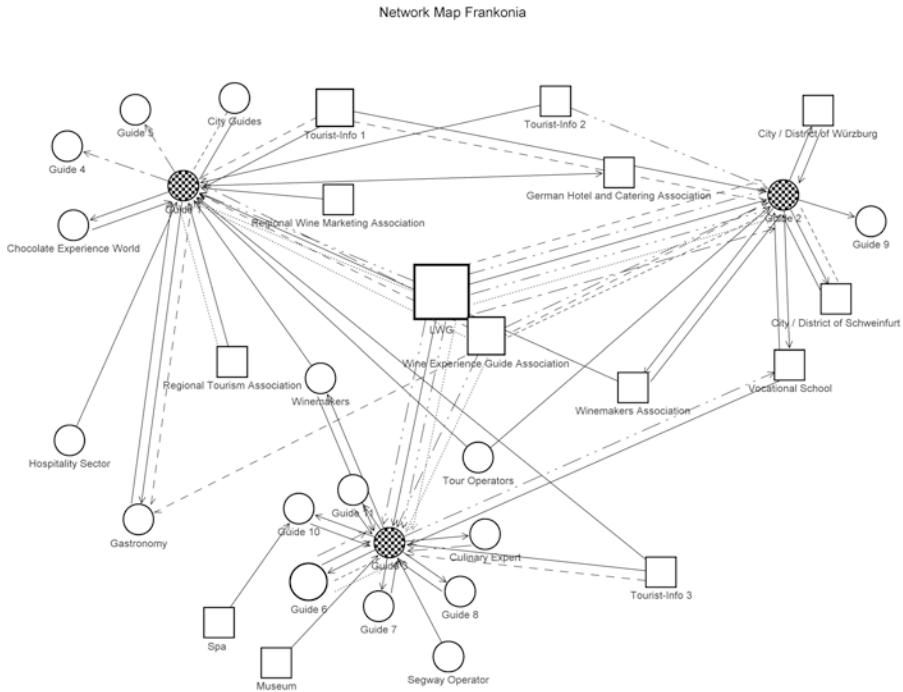
Fig. 15.2 The network of the Franconian Wine Experience guides. (Source: Authors own study 2014 and design using Vennmaker 2016)

In the Moselle region the former higher land consolidation agency does fill the center of the network (Fig. 15.3). While it also does provide the basics in form of training and information to a certain extent, it does not provide further services, as one can see when comparing (Fig. 15.2 and 15.3). The final network of the guides in the Moselle region can be characterized more as a compensatory network in which less successful or not yet established guides are looking towards more established and individually successful guides to compensate the lack of support from the hero in the center of the network. These mentors do become the real hero's within the Moselle region providing a wide range of information and even services (Guides 1 and 4 in Fig. 15.3) that in Franconia is being provided by the state agency (Fig. 15.2). For this reason, one main result of the study at hand is that while the official structure of the networks in both regions is rather alike, the true structure of the individual networks is very different due to the need to compensate missing services and relations (Fig. 15.3). The fact that these compensatory network actions are not only very challenging for some guides (see also Chap. 15.2) but also time consuming, does only worsen the economic situation of the stakeholders and explains the initial problem of many guides to act successfully on the market. But the results of the study do go much further and the network maps show many more details:

Both networks do show the formation of cliques. Those are in most cases and both networks based on geographical closeness. The main difference that becomes very obvious, when looking at the details of the connections, lies in the motives that stand behind the cliques. The connections in Franconia are mostly based on a common business interest and work in both directions. Hard business relations are dominating the interactions between the members of a clique (uninterrupted arrows). Furthermore all guides seem to operate on the same or similar level and consider the others as equals and themselves as successful (checkered circles as symbols). In a few cases one can find mentoring taking place in between the individuals in a clique (arrow interrupted by a short dash – as in Guide 1 and 4 in Fig. 15.2). The main source for information (line of points), marketing (arrow of short dashes) and training (arrow interrupted by two and three short dashes) remains the LWG and its connected Wine Experience Guide Association, though.

When looking at the network map of the Moselle region (Fig. 15.3), the picture is rather different.

Business cooperation seems to be much less dominant within the cliques than in Franconia. The motivation for cooperation seems to lie in other fields. Mentoring and knowledge transfer (Information) as much as organizational functions, functions that are provided by the hero of the Franconia network but not by the hero in the Moselle region, play a way more important role when joining a clique. A good example for this is Guide 5 (small striped circle in Fig. 15.3), who has an extensive informational network but cannot apply this in order to form hard business contacts from that. Also a clear hierarchy is visible between the Moselle guides. Those which are established on the market function as heroes themselves (Guide 1 and 4 – checkered circles), substituting the missing elements of the network to a certain extend.

The biggest visible difference between the Moselle and Franconia networks, considering the guides, lies in the nature of their contacts. While in Franconia the central state agency as a hero which acts as gatekeeper to most associations, the media and official institutions makes direct contact to those stakeholders for the local guides superfluous, the Moselle guides cannot rely on such a service. Here the guides represented by larger icons (Guide 1 and 4) differentiate themselves not only through the number but also the quality of contacts. While the rather unsuccessful Guide 5 can only rely on contacts within the own clique and a few associations, Guide 4 managed to form relationships with the hospitality sector, tour operators, the media, most important associations of the wine and tourism industry and even the regional tourism board by himself. Guide 1, is, in addition to that, involved in projects which bear a large media interest like the children vineyard project and has close ties to local schools and museums. These contacts enable those two to act much more successful on the market and put them in the position to be valuable and interesting as connections and possible gatekeepers for other guides in the region.

In addition to visualizing the advantages, problems and structures within the two networks, the study was also able, due to the applied interviews, to explain some of these facts further.
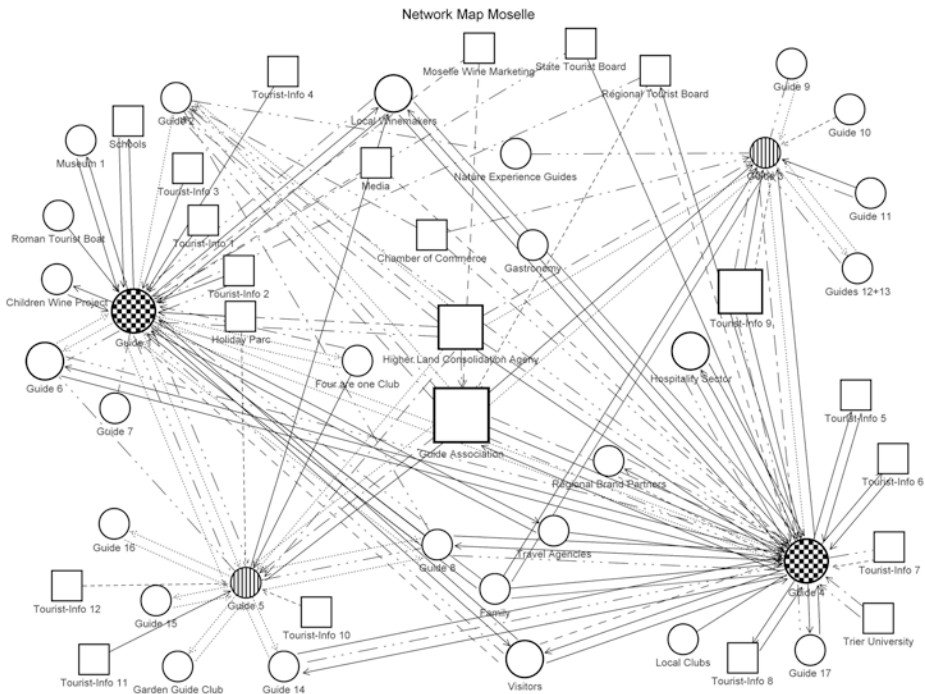
Fig. 15.3 The network of the Moselle Wine Experience guides. (Source: Authors own study 2014 and design using Vennmaker 2016)

15.3.2 Results Derived From The In-Depth Interviews

15.3.2.1 Franconia

As depicted from the two regions network maps, the wine experience guides in the Franconia region were profiting largely from a variety of services that were provided by the "Agency for Wine and Garden cultivation (LWG)", which acted as the hero in the center of the network. This state-run agency does not only provide initial and further training but many vital services that have been mentioned by all interviewed guides:

1. Marketing
2. Provision of legitimacy
3. Gatekeeper services
4. Job provision
5. Further training and transfer of knowledge

Marketing, in the form of direct marketing through the provision of a homepage but also the inclusion of the guides into the regions official tourism marketing strategy by the regional and national tourism boards (which can be attributed to the pressure of the agency through funding and political power) was mentioned by all wine experience guides. In addition to that most experience guides did also mention the aid through indirect marketing by enabling them to attend marketing opportunities i.e. major fairs or political and social events, wine-related presentations and alike. Through its marketing support the agency does provide a key success factor while compensating usually existing weaknesses in self-marketing within the group.

Directly connected to the field of marketing is the second very vital service that was mentioned by all interviewed guides. This service can best be described as provision of legitimacy. As mentioned earlier, the wine experience guides of the Franconia region have been included into its tourism strategy by naming them the official tour guides and ambassadors of the region. There is no event and no campaign that is launched within the region or regarding it, that takes place without these guides which does not only offer support through legitimization but much more through empowering them. Thanks to this kind of legitimacy the guides were enabled to get direct and indirect access to institutions and services in a spectrum a stand-alone tour guide can never get access to. Since most events, the guides have been embedded into did usually come with pay, the agency did even provide support in the form of direct bookings. A last factor that was mentioned by all interviewed was the provision of further training opportunities. Due to its own involvement into the wine industry and its research, the agency does provide its guides with the newest trends within the wine making and drinking community, keeping them right at the pulse of time. All these factors did finally create a working environment that allows all guides alike to flourish and concentrate fully on the task of customer satisfaction and general representation while leaving enough time for taking part in offered further training and modern product development as much as own local network creation for economic purposes.

15.3.2.2 Moselle

The in the preceding chapter illustrated vital services were exactly what was identified as missing by the wine experience guides within the Moselle region. While their Franconian counterparts were able to fully concentrate on their work as tour guides and the establishment of reliable and lucrative business contacts, these guides did have to spend much more time on compensating for the absence of such a service. Therefore success was much more difficult to acquire, while the prerequisites were far from the same for every guide. A rather large gap between those successful and those rather not did emerge vividly. Due to the open setting of the interviews and the venues that those were conducted in, possible reasons for failure and factors of success were identified.

Reasons for failure:

1. Missing strong official caretaker and gatekeeper
2. Missing permanent marketing support
3. Missing legitimacy

Other than in Bavaria, the Moselle guides were all missing three vital elements within their network. The first is the absence of a truly strong and officially responsible caretaker. While the state of Rhineland-Palatinate does provide initial and on an irregular basis even further training, the guides are afterwards directly released into work life. The responsible state agency is even instructed not to get involved after the training process in order not to intervene in the business of the regional and local destination management organizations (DMOs) and the wine marketing agencies, as being stated by a representative. Even though the DMO and the wine marketing agency clearly pledge their support in theory, in reality the regional guides perceive the situation as these usually rely on the other, to take care of them, which in the end leaves them alone. Since no agency does act as gatekeeper, many contacts are out of reach for the guides as well. An association that was formed by the guides does rely on voluntary support by its members and has therefore often proven rather ineffective. A second point mentioned by all interviewed was a lack of marketing support. While the regional DMO did provide marketing support as long as European funds for the guides were still available, this support did run out as soon as the money did. Since the curriculum of their training did not even cover the basics of self-marketing, many guides often lack basic knowledge in this field. If this pairs up with a lack of a strong personal professional network, business failure often seems to be inevitable. A last main reason for failure can be attributed to the problem of lacking legitimization. Since the Moselle brand is still not too far from its fledgling stages and there is no official commitment by the governing bodies to the guides, many local DMOs do still rely rather on self-trained staff than the wine experience guides, creating further competition.

There were however guides in the Moselle region that can be considered highly successful. While these guides (Guide 1 and 4 in Fig. 15.3) oftentimes became the actual heroes of the network, providing the services that many guides would expect from the local agency, their success could often be attributed to specific factors of success. Three emerged as very important:

1. Family involvement in tourism and/or wine production
2. Nativity to the region
3. Other community involvement

The most important success factor that emerged during the interviews in the Moselle region was that many successful guides had family ties into the tourism industry. The more ties there were and the stronger these were interconnected, the better. One guide

developed a whole business model mainly based on family and in part on friends, including an hotelier, a restaurant owner, a winemaker, the guide and people involved in a tourist information and a river cruise supplier, covering the whole tourist supply chain. Also, as in rural tourism in general, nativity to the region and the ties into the community proved very helpful to establish oneself. In fact, those guides who had moved into the region (like Guide 5 in Fig. 15.3) did clearly communicate how difficult market penetration was to reach, baring the malus of being an outsider. A last factor that is rather self-explanatory is community involvement. The most successful guides in the Moselle region were active in many more areas than just tour guiding but also in other various tourist but also societal fields. The gained contacts proved lucrative to all of them as well.

15.4   Conclusion

Networks and cooperation are truly immanent to the complex of wine tourism. This can only be fruitful if all stakeholders do work together. Especially a strong caretaker, or hero, plays an important role and seems to be able to make a difference between success and failure. This goes double for policy makers, as this study has shown vividly. A network without a strong caretaker is likely to become unstructured and ineffective and does not offer equal chances to all stakeholders within the markets environment. It does more likely lead to the dominance of certain cliques within the network. Area-wide success under these circumstances is far more difficult to reach and demands much more involvement and effort by all stakeholders.

The method of qualitative social network analysis has proven to be flexible and open enough to grasp not only the nature and motivation of human cooperation but can also offer explanations for these. Using the program Vennmaker to visualize these complex relations allows the researcher to picture these relations in detail as well.

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