



## Research article

# Collective tourism social entrepreneurship: A means for community mobilization and social transformation☆



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## ABSTRACT

Communities depicted by lack of opportunities for development often look to tourism initiatives as a means to combine economic growth and community building. Such activity highlights a nexus between tourism, social entrepreneurship and community development. This nexus has been investigated somewhat in tourism literature, but lacks empirical backing, as well as theoretical refinement. We argue that a collective perspective on social entrepreneurship in the tourism context is needed, and introduce a concept and framework for 'Collective Tourism Social Entrepreneurship'. We investigate how these principles are utilized by local communities to combat depopulation and deterioration in two Danish destinations, and find that the proposed process can create (social) value even if the expected result is never reached.

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## Introduction

With mixed results, tourism has been applied as a development thrust in underserved communities around the world (Aquino, Lück, & Schänzel, 2018; Dredge, 2017; Kline, Shah, & Rubright, 2014; Scheyvens, 2002). A growing number of researchers have pointed out that to heighten the chances of success in such cases, economic ambition should be supplemented with aims to create social value and positive social transformation. Such calls have pointed to social entrepreneurship as an avenue for this change of perspective and a growing (albeit from a low base) body of literature is concerned with the nexus between tourism, social entrepreneurship and community development (e.g. Altinay, Sigala, & Waligo, 2016; Aquino et al., 2018). The existing literature covering this nexus has established that many examples of tourism social entrepreneurship "exist in and for marginalised communities" (Aquino et al., 2018, p. 24). Yet, it seems that a limited understanding of marginalised communities has been applied, since most existing research has been carried out in developing countries (Biddulph, 2018; Kokkranikal & Morrison, 2011;

☆ Author bio: The authors are all part of the research group Innovation in Service and Experience at Roskilde University, Denmark. The group is concerned with various issues relevant to the service and experience-phenomenon and economy. The overlap between tourism, social entrepreneurship, and community development that is the outset for this paper, is a good representation of some of the overlapping research interests within the group.

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Laeis & Lemke, 2016; Porter, Orams, & Lück, 2018; Sigala, 2016; Sloan, Legrand, & Simons-Kaufmann, 2014; Stenvall, Laven, & Gelbman, 2017). Because of this, it is unclear whether the findings of these studies are particular to marginalised communities in general, or only those in developing countries. A second aspect still underexplored, concerns whom the social entrepreneur is – a single internal or external community actor or the community itself. Most studies focus on the former whereas the latter – motivating community engagement in tourism social entrepreneurship, has gained less attention (Dahles, Khieng, Verver, & Manders, 2019). This paper aims to broaden the empirical research base and deepen our understanding of these key aspects by focussing on marginalised communities that use tourism as a means for collective action, in a developed country: Denmark.

We adopt a case study approach to investigate the tourism, social entrepreneurship and community development nexus with the aim of understanding how (tourism) social entrepreneurship principles are utilized by local communities, to combat depopulation and deterioration in two Danish destinations. The particular focus is the characteristics of this type of social entrepreneurship process, and our reasoning is based on a pragmatic abductive approach, iteratively visiting data and theory to develop a theoretical concept and framework for what we dub Collective Tourism Social Entrepreneurship. In doing so, we introduce the concept of collective social entrepreneurship to the tourism context, combine this with insights from the tourism specific social entrepreneurship literature, as well as ideas from the 'bricolage' approach to (social) entrepreneurship and innovation theory. We use two cases to exemplify how collective entrepreneurship is enacted by communities, rather than businesses or individuals. These cases are relevant because this process in both cases is collectively driven, the primary motivation is not profit, and because tourism, nor social entrepreneurship, is the end goal. It is a means to an end.

## Social entrepreneurship

The terms social entrepreneur and social entrepreneurship were first introduced in the 1960s and 1970s, but proliferated in the 1980s and 1990s, as a response to increasing signs of social inequity (Sheldon, Pollock, & Daniele, 2017). Sheldon et al. (2017) highlight how authors such as Chamberlin (1977) and Dees (1998) argued for alternatives to the free market model. Dees pointed to social entrepreneurship as a response to “the need for a substitute for the market discipline that works for business entrepreneurs” (Dees, 1998, p. 2), while Chamberlin called for an enhanced focus on “human relationships above task-efficiency” (Chamberlin, 1977, p. 2). As such, social transformation is at the core of social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship is defined as “individuals, organizations or initiatives engaged in entrepreneurial activities with a social goal” (Bacq, Hartog, & Hoogendoorn, 2013, p. 42).

It is widely agreed that the research field of social entrepreneurship is by nature cross-disciplinary, implying an on-going discussion of the field as either a field on its own terms (Dacin, Dacin, & Tracey, 2011; Wronka-Pośpiech, 2016) or a sub-field within mainstream entrepreneurship theory (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, J., 2006; Lortie & Cox, 2018). Despite these overall concerns regarding the status of the field, the shared understanding is that social entrepreneurship, and herein social enterprises, are characterized by hybridity. The concept of hybridity encompasses organizational forms that transcend the logic of the private, the public and the third sector and hence proposes a ‘fourth sector’, based on the dual bottom line i.e. striving for both social and financial value (Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014, p. 418). Social enterprises are entrepreneurial social ventures, whether for-profit, non-profit, governmental, or hybrid, which deliberately and explicitly address a social purpose and aim to create social value (Aquino et al., 2018; Defourny, 2001; Defourny & Nyssens, 2006).

### *Creating social innovation and social value*

As mirrored in the definitions, the social enterprise is not simply a socially responsible organization or an organization that operates in the social sector; rather it must have positive social change at the core of its mission (Buzinde, Shockley, Andereck, Dee, & Frank, 2017; Dees & Anderson, 2003). Social entrepreneurship is also asserted as a form of ‘social innovation’, understood as the adoption of creative ideas with the purpose and potential to solve social problems (Pol & Ville, 2009). There are different takes on how the aspect of ‘social’ in social innovation is to be understood. A typology of social entrepreneurship proposed by Sanzo-Perez, Álvarez-González, and Rey-García (2015) stresses that “social innovations may refer to new products/services (e.g. car sharing); new organizational forms (e.g. social franchising); new processes of social production, such as co-creation (e.g. crowdfunding); marketing innovations (e.g. social sponsorship); and organizational innovations (e.g. micro-financing)” (Sanzo-Perez et al., 2015 in Sigala, 2016, p. 1247). In this perspective, social innovation is primarily related to new forms of organizing.

At another level of abstraction, the EU-project TEPSIE focusing on social innovation defines social innovation as: “New approaches to addressing social needs. They are social in their means and in their ends. They engage and mobilize the beneficiaries and help to transform social relations by improving beneficiaries' access to power and resources” (TEPSIE, 2015). In this definition, the main focus is not solely on outcome and organization, but rather on empowerment of the people concerned by supporting relational changes. As such, social innovation is in itself an emancipatory process leading to social transformation. Thus, it becomes relevant to dive into whom the key actors are, the distribution of actor roles and relevant management competences.

### *The social entrepreneur as individual or collective actor*

Much literature has focused on the *individual* entrepreneur, and often the social entrepreneur is referred to as a sort of ‘heroic’ actor that enables social change (Montgomery, Dacin, & Dacin, 2012). A focus of this literature has been to discuss to what extent

the social entrepreneur resembles entrepreneurs in general, and especially literature that sees social entrepreneurship as a sub-domain of entrepreneurship theory argues that the traits are quite similar. What is added, besides the entrepreneurial mind-set and the capacity to balance a dual purpose, is that the social entrepreneur should be able to creatively and innovatively combine existing resources or create new ones – oriented towards a social goal (Lortie & Cox, 2018). Perhaps this is what has spawned the collective perspective on social entrepreneurship, which is increasingly emerging. This perspective is based on the argument that social entrepreneurship is inherently collective-oriented and collective-driven, since social entrepreneurship is considered to rely on collaboration and alliances. The implication is a focus on stakeholder groups, which are seen as an essential element to the governance of social enterprises. However, the collective perspective goes beyond stakeholder involvement as solely strengthening the legitimacy and mission of social enterprises, to emphasize that collaborative action is often paramount for solving wider societal challenges. This has led to the concept of collective social entrepreneurship, which is defined as: “collaboration amongst similar as well as diverse actors for the purpose of applying business principles to solving social problems” (Montgomery et al., 2012). Collective social entrepreneurship may leverage existing organizational forms such as cooperative models, cross-sectorial collaboration and the resources of social movements. Hence, it is argued that collective social entrepreneurship is managed in collaboration, based on three interconnected activities: the application of framing techniques to obtain a shared understanding and mission, convening of different participants and actor groups, and managing multi-vocality to ensure diversity regarding views, culture and social aspects (Montgomery et al., 2012). These activities are key to our understanding and analysis of what we label Collective Tourism Social Entrepreneurship.

### Social entrepreneurship and tourism

Studies that focus on social entrepreneurship and social innovation in the tourism context are scarce. Calls have been made for studies that aim to theorize social entrepreneurship through tourism and investigate how tourism social entrepreneurship can act as a community-centric form of social innovation (Aquino et al., 2018; Sheldon & Daniele, 2017). Because of this, the literature that treats tourism as a vehicle for social entrepreneurship is also scarce (Buzinde et al., 2017; Day & Mody, 2017; Kline et al., 2014; Thomas, Shaw, & Page, 2011). Sheldon et al. (2017) define tourism social entrepreneurship as “... a process that uses tourism to create innovative solutions to immediate social, environmental and economic problems in destinations by mobilizing the ideas, capacities, resources and social agreements, from within or outside the destination, required for its sustainable social transformation.” (p. 7).

A challenge that research on tourism social entrepreneurship has inherited from the broader social entrepreneurship research is a tendency to ask “the wrong questions” (Sigala, 2016). Ormiston and Seymour (2011) claimed that the research has been too concerned with who the social entrepreneur is, how (s)he can be characterized and on the motivations, motives, goals, drivers and impacts of social entrepreneurship, rather than focusing on “how social entrepreneurs and enterprises act and create social value” (Sigala, 2016, p. 1248). Buzinde et al. (2017) makes a similar argument as they argue that scholastic endeavours should “go beyond idealizing examples of social entrepreneurship in order to critically examine the sustainability (social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental) of such initiatives.” (p. 321). Following this, it can be argued that research on tourism social entrepreneurship should be concerned with three of its main features as outlined by Sheldon and Daniele (2017), namely how it:

- marks an ethical shift in the way that we define responsibility as it calls us to care about things less and to care for others more.
- incorporates social benefit as a central mission of the business, as it invites us to think differently about the value created from investment.
- seeks to propagate an ecology of social benefits that extends well beyond the individual social enterprise (p. vi).

Together, this suggests a need for studies of what tourism social enterprises or entrepreneurs do rather than of what they are. It also calls for studies concerned with sustainability, ethics, responsibility, care, social benefit and value (co-)creation that goes beyond the individual entrepreneur or enterprise. This suggests a stronger focus on what social entrepreneurship does for and with communities. Tourism scholars have mainly focused on the first, as they have studied the link between tourism social entrepreneurship and community development. These studies have found that tourism social entrepreneurship may contribute positively to community development by enhancing job creation, increasing income, increasing use of local suppliers, improving livelihoods, developing local skills and increasing community pride (Aquino et al., 2018; Kokkranikal & Morrison, 2011; Laeis & Lemke, 2016; Sloan et al., 2014; Stenvall et al., 2017; Weppen & Cochrane, 2012). However, it seems that a specific collective focus on what tourism social entrepreneurship can do *with* communities and on *how* communities may use tourism social entrepreneurship as a path to social change, is largely missing from the literature.

We argue that to understand the hybridity (Doherty et al., 2014) that depicts tourism social entrepreneurship, and to answer calls for studies that aim to theorize social entrepreneurship through tourism (Sheldon & Daniele, 2017), examples of collective forms of entrepreneurship need to be brought to the fore. With an outset in Montgomery et al.'s (2012) definition of collective social entrepreneurship, we define this as: The process of using tourism activities as a means for collaborative social problem solving between similar and diverse actors. To develop a theoretical frame for analysing these collective processes we suggest applying the ‘bricolage’ construct, which has been used to explain how social and other entrepreneurs survive and create change in resource-poor environments (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Di Domenico, Haugh, & Tracey, 2010; Witell et al., 2017).

## Bricolage and collective tourism social entrepreneurship

Lévi-Strauss (1966) introduced the concept of 'bricolage', and describes the 'bricoleur' as someone who "makes do with whatever is at hand". The 'bricoleur' solves problems on the spot by applying tools with no specific relation to any particular project; they are retained and accumulated over time on the principle that 'they may always come in handy' (Lévi-Strauss, 1966: 17–18). Theoretically, the 'bricoleur' has been depicted as a pragmatic figure (Carstensen, 2011) who solves problems by the best available means.

In entrepreneurship research, the bricolage-construct has been used to explain how actors in resource-poor environments identify and apply resources (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Di Domenico et al., 2010; Witell et al., 2017). Similar to our cases, small businesses and social entrepreneurs often operate in areas where there are few market resources, thus, in order to survive and innovate they must seek to identify and mobilize available unused resources (Di Domenico et al., 2010). Bricolage is also described as a path to innovation (Senyard, Baker, Steffens, & Davidsson, 2014), as it denotes a practice-based approach to innovation, emerging from habits and everyday actions (Fuglsang, 2010; Fuglsang & Sørensen, 2011; Skálén, Gummerus, von Koskull, & Magnusson, 2015).

To build a connotatively clearer bricolage construct relevant for analysis, it is necessary to operationalize and decompose the construct into analytical dimensions. Since there is no precise definition of bricolage, this has been done in varied ways (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Di Domenico et al., 2010; Krontoft, Fuglsang, & Kronborg, 2018; Senyard et al., 2014; Witell et al., 2017). In the present paper we find it relevant to build on Di Domenico et al.'s (2010) construct of social entrepreneurship and bricolage. Elaborating on Baker and Nelson's (2005) research on small businesses survival and growth, they subdivide the bricolage construct into three dimensions: 1) making do (using resources at hand for new purposes – i.e. using available materials, skills, networks, unused capital), 2) refusal to enact limitations (actively rejecting constraints, such as resource limitations), and 3) improvisation (improvising how to solve problems or tinker on the spot). These dimensions reflect Lévi-Strauss' original ideas, but have also grown out of empirical research. Since we also include social innovation in our analysis, we add a fourth dimension, which is 4) building structures from events, to indicate that small acts and events of bricolage can add up to larger and more durable changes and innovations over time (Fuglsang & Sørensen, 2011).

Based on the above and the results of our abductive work with our cases, a collective tourism social entrepreneurship framework is suggested (Fig. 1). The framework serves both as a proposition for an overview of the processes involved and as an analytical tool to examine them.

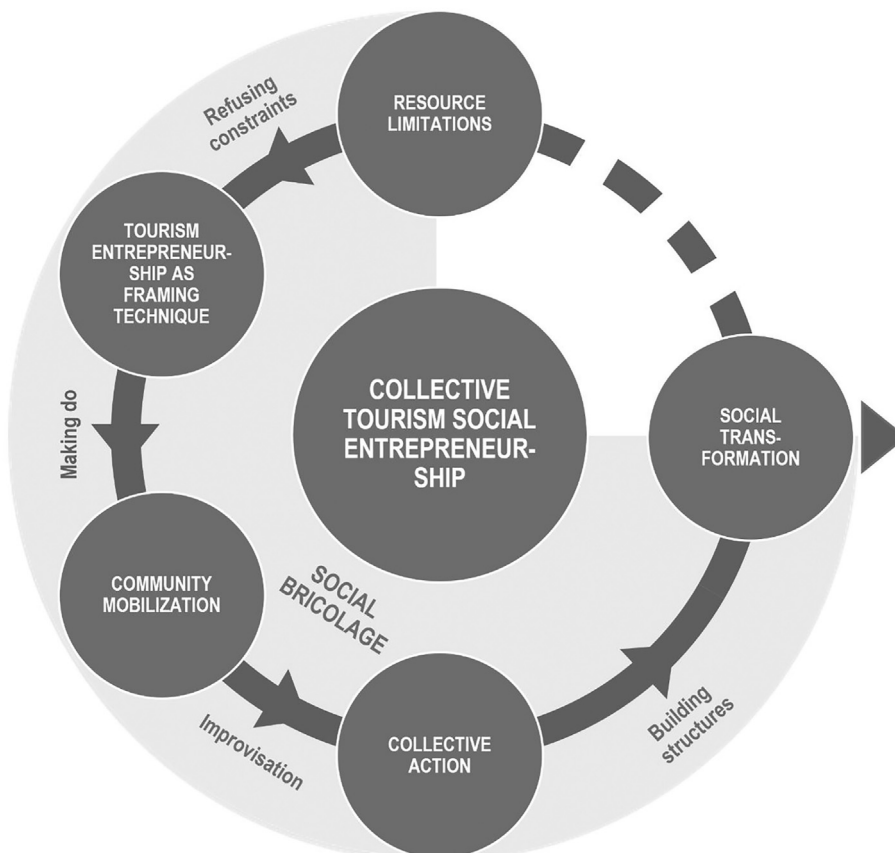


Fig. 1. Collective Tourism Social Entrepreneurship (CTSE) process and analysis framework.

The framework suggests how the process begins with resource limitations (funds, knowledge, human resources etc.). In cases where the community is unwilling to accept these constraints and employ tourism as a framing technique to deal with the challenges, a collective social entrepreneurship process may be set into motion. Making do with the means available, the community can be mobilised to come up with solutions, which are carried out through collective action (importantly participation in this type of collective action may in and of itself be a motivation for community members to participate). If successful, the process can create permanent changes (structures) in the community, and some level of social transformation is achieved. The process can be considered as a one off, but may also be part of a recurring pattern of processes aimed at a broader (social) goal.

## Methodology

To empirically explore these processes, an embedded multiple case study, encompassing two cases, was conducted (Yin, 2014). The selection of the two cases was based on several factors. First, the cases can be considered critical cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006) that represent examples of ongoing projects thus, allowing for an analysis of social entrepreneurship as it unfolds in real time. Second, the cases represent two peripheral areas of a developed country. Both areas are characterized by depopulation and economic marginalisation. Third, in both cases tourism development is a locally initiated strategy to counteract local deterioration. Yet, fourth, while the cases share these similarities, as described below, they also represent different organizational setups in contexts of different historical, natural and economic conditions. Thus, the cases allow for tracing and analysing possible similarities under varying contextual conditions.

In both cases an element of "convenience sampling" (Patton, 2002) of cases was at play, as the researchers were invited in, given access to, and asked to join the cases as participant observers in the development process. The latter means that our research shares traits with engaged research i.e. research which through collaborative engagement with communities seek solutions to real life issues (Van de Ven, 2007). With this approach in mind, the research was founded in a contemporary pragmatic research philosophy in which the choice of data collection methods are not rooted in incommensurable philosophical traditions. Data collection methods are instead chosen and developed with the aim of building relevant answers to real life issues through abductive reasoning (Morgan, 2007), also taking advantage of data collection opportunities as they arise during the course of fieldwork (Patton, 2002). Consequently, both case studies are based on a pragmatic, qualitative, abductive and participatory approach, with slightly differing data collection methods in each case (as described below) due to the differing collaborative setups and contexts.

Case 1 is an example of social enterprise, as the community will directly apply business principles to solve the problem, by making a "diffused hotel". Case 2 is an example of a broader form of social entrepreneurship, where various entrepreneurial activities are initiated in order to frame Lildstrand as a nature-based tourism destination. As such, they demonstrate different community building practices and different approaches, while still applying the same overall logic; what we refer to as Collective Tourism Social Entrepreneurship.

### Case presentations

#### Case 1. A 'diffused' hotel.

The case concerns a tourism initiative in the small town Rødby (see Fig. 2) with approximately 2000 inhabitants located on the island of Lolland in the southern part of Denmark. Originally, it was a harbour and merchants' town but after the building of coastal dams and drainage of the surrounding area, the town has been characterized by depopulation and closing of shops and businesses. In 2016, a group of local residents decided to change the situation. Their idea is to develop a diffused hotel based on voluntary activities. Empty shops in the shopping street are to be transformed into themed hotel rooms, which mimic original shops of the town, such as barbers and clockmaker shops. A reception will be installed in the old town hall, and plans to serve breakfast for the visitors in another abandoned building have been considered. It is the aim of the project that the local population will be ambassadors of the hotel and the new tourist destination. Schoolchildren in the town are also involved in the project and considered as potential local authentic tourist guides.

The local residents behind the idea initially formed a board of five persons, which has been collaborating with the municipality, with the school and with the residents in general. The group has attracted a limited amount of funding and has developed collaboration with different external partners including research institutions. The goals of the project are to create a unique tourism service and initialize a process of urban renewal; revitalizing the town, especially its shopping street. By attracting visitors to the town, derived benefits in terms of more business activities and a general economic development are expected. In addition, it is expected that local pride will develop and that new residents will be attracted to the town.

#### Case 2. Nature-based tourism.

The fishing village Lildstrand is a small town in Northwest Jutland in the municipality of Thisted (see Fig. 2). Fishing with net from characteristic clinker-built sea boats has taken place for almost 150 years. However, after a reform of Danish fishery with the introduction of a quota system in 2007, the fishermen sold their boats and quotas, and fishery now seems gone for good. Today only around 35 permanent residents are left in the town, a steep decline from the 1980s, where approximately 140 people lived there. More than 100 people have a second home in Lildstrand.





Fig. 2. Case locations in Denmark.

Residents and second homeowners now have a common interest in bringing the village back to life by creating new activities and attracting visitors. Therefore, residents and second homeowners have organized in a residents' association and initiated dialogue with local authorities about the area's development. In 2015, the development group 'Hawboerne' was created, and in March 2017, a local development seminar facilitated by three researchers was held to initiate a development process meant to position Lildstrand as a destination for nature-based tourism. 60–70 locals attended the seminar. As a result of the seminar, a wider circle of people became involved in local development work. They now collaborate on different tourism initiatives based on the nature and the historical culture of fishery.

#### Data collection method

The case studies are comprised of data material collected between 2015 and 2019. The main data sources are participant observation, direct observation, interviews and documentary materials. The researchers have been involved in development processes in both cases, as participants, facilitators and organizers. This allowed for participant observation when the researchers were involved directly, as well as for direct observation at meetings, site-visits and informal conversation. Field visits to relevant locations with members of the community allowed for basic insights on the process and a deeper understanding of the physical, cultural and social context. In addition to these, communication between researchers and relevant community members took place at meetings, workshops and informal conversation. Here the initiative was discussed, barriers to its development identified and possible solutions approached. Through these ongoing conversations, the development process was followed and documented as it unfolded.

In *Case 1*, participant observation largely took place at development meetings that were characterized by in-depth communication between researchers and members of the development initiative. Thus, a longer series of interviews was not deemed necessary for data saturation in this case and only two qualitative interviews with key persons were made. Conversely, in *Case 2*, seven such interviews complemented the other data collection techniques to support the needed depth and richness of the data. The interviews focused on issues related to potentials and barriers in the process of involving the volunteers, on the purposes and missions of the initiatives, the structure of the process and its organizational characteristics. In both cases, the analysis was supplemented with documentary materials, both as background resources and as material for analysis. In [Table 1](#), the data material of each case is presented.

Observation notes as well as video and photo documentation were taken at meetings and workshops. All interviews have been audio-recorded and relevant sections transcribed. Observation notes, interview transcriptions and documents have been subject to thematic analysis ([Silverman, 2006](#)). Following the abductive and pragmatic approach, the research process was a recursive

**Table 1**  
Overview of data material.

Type of data	Case 1: The diffused hotel initiative	Case 2: Nature-based tourism in Lildstrand
Participant observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Three development meetings between researchers and the board about the development initiative, its potentials and barriers, and the development process.</li> <li>- Development workshop focusing on the design of the first hotel room.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Three development workshops between researchers, the development group and members of the local community about how to develop tourism activities in the area.</li> </ul>
Direct Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Three field visits to the town and to buildings of the town, led by the board.</li> <li>- Observation at development workshop for local inhabitants focused on collecting development ideas.</li> <li>- Ongoing communication via project Facebook Messenger Group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Three field visits to conduct the development workshops and make participant observations.</li> <li>- Direct observations during six other field visits.</li> <li>- Ongoing communication via project Facebook Messenger Group.</li> </ul>
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One semi-structured interview with the key person behind the initiative.</li> <li>- One semi-structured interview with the person responsible for involvement of local school children in the project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seven interviews with workshop participants that represent different people in the local community.</li> </ul>
Documentary materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Various relevant reports, project plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Various relevant reports, project plans (including the master plan that emerged from one of the workshops)</li> <li>- Daily diary entries written by the development group about the project activities.</li> </ul>

process between methodology, data collection, data analysis and literature (on social innovation in tourism, social entrepreneurship and later bricolage), which resulted in an eclectic theoretical framework and in conceptual categories that evolved both during and after fieldwork. Cross-case comparison of the evolving conceptual categories was an inherent element in this process. The combined use of participant observations, direct observations, interviews and documentary material sustained data triangulation which helped form, confirm and validate evolving analytical categories while also enriching the analysis, providing broader as well as deeper insight in the cases.

## Analysis

The presentation of the analytical findings across the two cases is structured according to the model (Fig. 1) and its key components.

### *Resource limitations and refusing constraints*

Both cases are communities in small remote towns facing resource limitations and similar issues of deterioration and depopulation. Rødby (Case 1) is characterized by closing of shops and other businesses and, in general, of diminishing development resources with tourism, service, technological and industrial development taking place elsewhere. In Lildstrand (Case 2), fishery, which used to be the key industry, is almost gone, and unlike similar communities in the area, the town has, so far, missed out on tourism development. The initiators in both cases represent a part of the community that refuse to accept these constraints and use tourism as a framing device to deal with the challenges.

In both cases, the initiators have limited access to financial resources, as well as limited knowledge about developing and running a tourism service: the tasks involved, potential relevant visitor segments, demands and so on. Whereas Lildstrand (Case 2) has the natural resources needed to develop the nature-based attractions they aim for, the situation in Rødby (Case 1) is more complex. Here, the socio-economic challenges interrelate with other sets of resource limitations specific to the tourism initiative. These include negative externalities of the surroundings, especially the worn-down main street with its closed-down shops, which may impact the potential to attract visitors to the hotel in the first place. Resource constraints in terms of lacking tourism knowledge and competence are also more pronounced here, because the establishment of a distributed hotel requires specific knowledge about business models, service blueprints, strategy plans etc. Thus, resource limitations in Case 1 consist of structurally imposed local socio-economic limitations combined with physical limitations of the town-scape, and financial and knowledge based limitations of the board. The limitations imposed by the town-scape, are not ignored by the board, but it is believed that establishing the hotel will ignite a local development process, which will help rejuvenate the surroundings, and help later apply for funding to accelerate this rejuvenation process. "How do you develop a town when everybody is shopping on the internet and there is no need for shops? Then you need to use the shops for something else. It is a new way to use the buildings and create some life in the town" (interview, initiator). Furthermore, tourism, rather than other development initiatives is chosen partly because of the perceived cultural and natural attractions of the surrounding area: "We think we have something to offer ... when you go for a drive [in the country side] you can see it yourself. We have so much to offer" (interview, school project responsible).

*Tourism as a framing device and making do*

The board of the diffused hotel (Case 1) frames tourism as a source of local development at several levels. First, it is expected that it will contribute with direct income in the towns' few remaining shops and restaurants. Second, the hope is that it will create increased awareness among outsiders and locals about the positive (and not only negative) aspects of the town and its surrounding area. In turn, the expectation is that this may reignite local pride, which has been lost with years of deterioration. Third, all of this is considered sources of attraction for new potential inhabitants. Finally, the involvement of schoolchildren in the project is considered both an educational project in its own right (teaching children about the local area and its history) and a social project of making practice oriented teaching that favour students who struggle with traditional teaching activities. There is also a hope, that the involvement of the schoolchildren will incite more of them to stay in the area or come back after they finish their education elsewhere. "The overall aim is to connect the young people to the development of their own town, also because many of the young people never leave the area ... we want to engage them to take responsibility for their town" (interview, school project responsible).

Thus, tourism is framed as having all-encompassing and far-reaching impacts that intersect the social, cultural and economic spheres, while any negative externalities of tourism are not taken into consideration. Tourism is expected to initiate a chain of changes, which are considered to benefit the town and its population. "The diffused hotel is town development and the hotel is the future of Rødby" (interview, initiator). By using closed shops, involving schoolchildren, and as illustrated below, collecting other local resources, the initiative attempts to make do with the locally available means.

In Lildstrand (Case 2), tourism is framed as the solution because it is believed that it can make the area more lively and attractive, while still remaining a 'peaceful and quiet' area. The ambition as formulated in the master plan is to "to attract permanent settlement to Lildstrand, so that the fishing village will continue to form a framework for life and community among both residents and second home owners". The idea is to "develop quiet tourism and, through co-creation, promote modest development in respect of the local wishes and Lildstrand's DNA: tranquillity, nature, dark skies, coastal fishing culture and authenticity in nature's quiet cabin" (Masterplan). Focusing on tourism in the shape of "small tourism" and "quiet tourism" enables the community to make do with resources at hand. "From the start, we agreed on the goal, what we wanted to accomplish and what we didn't want. There has been no disagreement that Lildstrand is a place where there is peace and quiet and that it is the nature and the experiences that one can get in nature, that it is about" (workshop participant 1). The belief is that Lildstrand is a relatively unknown destination and receive only few visitors, which is why more tourists can be attracted without changing the basic impression of a peaceful environment. Inclusion into the bordering Thy National Park is seen as a key strategy to achieve this goal. "There is agreement that the process around the national park is the most important piece of the masterplan" (workshop participant 1). In this way, tourism is integrated in a wider communitarian strategy for sustaining the local community by using and recombining resources at hand to increase social and cultural value for the community.

*Community mobilization and improvisation*

The board of the diffused hotel (Case 1) is driven, to a large extent, by the enthusiasm and efforts of the person behind the idea of the hotel, who is also the most active person in the group. In line with the definitions of tourism social entrepreneurship, she is the main person responsible for mobilizing the ideas, capacities, resources and social agreements and the one bringing the vision and ideas to solve the local social problems. Nevertheless, other roles are played by other members of the board. For example, the first hotel room (a closed-down clock shop) has been acquired by one of the members of the board and another member possess some tourism specific knowledge. Thus, the board unites entrepreneurial enthusiasm, with (at least to some degree) financially capable actors and relevant knowledge (observation notes; interview, initiator). The unification of these competencies has spurred other parts of the community to participate and support the establishment of the hotel, by contributing material and work force. An example concerns the preparation of the first hotel room. It has been decided (collectively) that the room shall be designed as an old clock shop to reflect its former use. Several volunteers have aided with workforce for restoring the shop (e.g. tearing down the ceiling, papering and painting the walls), and with the collection and supply of furniture, pictures, old clocks, a counter, bed, etc. The work has been orchestrated through a Messenger group with 10 members. These are the main active persons involved in the work with the hotel room but they have mobilised a larger network, for example to collect knowledge about old clock shops, such as furniture, clocks etc. (observation notes; posts on messenger group).

This community mobilization has only succeeded through a focused effort. According to the initiator, challenges of getting locals involved in the project have mainly been due to scepticism about the project from parts of the local community and efforts to "sell" the project to the local population were initially needed. Maintaining locals' interest when involved presents another challenge, especially because the process has taken longer than expected and some volunteers have lost some of the interest given the slow progress of the project. "The energy that was there at the beginning I have not been good enough at maintaining. And when practical things need to be done some have allergies and others have something else to do" (interview, initiator). Thus, in this case community mobilization needs to be continuously nurtured.

The community mobilization extends also to the town school, and its schoolchildren (who cannot be considered volunteers in the true meaning of the word) and to local politicians and authorities. Through networking efforts by the primary entrepreneurial person in the board, municipal politicians and authorities have been motivated to help establish the hotel, for example by handing over the rights for using a building to the board for different purposes, including running a hotel reception (observation notes; interview, initiator). Numerous meetings, connections with the right people in the right places, and a local development initiative



in a town whose development had otherwise been given up by politicians, has favoured a positive attitude and a helping hand from municipal authorities. Thus, mobilization of different parts of the community has brought access to different kinds of internal and external resources needed.

In Lildstrand (Case 2), the development workshops mobilised the community around a common goal that all could support. "We have experienced that the locals and second home owners merged into a group ... co-ownership and the feeling that you are part of a community is important" (workshop participant 2). The development group is organisationally placed within the residents' association Hawboerne. It has six core members who are either permanent residents or second homeowners. They work on a mandate from the community as a whole, a mandate, which was established as the result of three development workshops. These workshops resulted in a masterplan, which ensures that the community has a shared understanding and sets a clear direction for future activities.

Second homeowners are described as a strong asset for the community. They live in Lildstrand part of the year and seldom rent their houses to tourists from the outside, so they know the community very well. "What I think makes it such a success is the relationship between the second homeowners and the residents. We get to know the second homeowners; these are people we meet on the landing site and in the city" (workshop participant 3). However, these are also external/new actors. As such, they extend the social dynamics and network relations of the community. They also bring new ideas for community development to Lildstrand and contribute to the overall collective knowledge and energy of the community. The involvement of the second homeowners has thus been important for creating, selecting and implementing ideas. The development workshops involving three researchers were important for prompting the development process. Through a structured process, it enabled improvisation, since ideas were brought to the table, discussed, and reiterated, and responsibility for them distributed. The development workshops with invited tourism and policy actors from outside the community were eye-openers concerning the need to network with local actors and as inspiration for the community to improvise new solutions on the spot during the workshops.

### *Collective action and building structures*

In Case 1, the entrepreneurial enthusiasm characterizing the initiator, combined with other capabilities in the board, development goals, networking and the resulting outreach of collective action, inclusion of volunteers, and the support from local authorities are all actions and characteristics associated with the collective social entrepreneurship of the case that favours its development process. Thus, in spite of constraints, the initiative has been taken forward through an entrepreneurial process that has framed tourism as a solution, mobilised the community and created collective action.

As described, the hotel is considered to have significant externalities for the town and therefore it is seen as a first trigger that can initiate further change for the better. "I think it is the best idea in the world and if anything can change Rødby that is it. To do something completely different. A normal quiet development of the town won't happen" (interview, school project responsible). However, the establishment of the hotel is only a first step in this process. Running the hotel is a completely different challenge. The hotel is considered non-profit and volunteers will carry out daily tasks, but it still shares characteristics with a traditional hotel business in that there will be establishing and running costs (constant and variable) and a need for paying customers to make the business economically viable, even when not for profit. Because of the social focus and the fact that the hotel is created and run by volunteers, these economic aspects have so far been neglected. In other words, certain managerial capabilities are needed but these needs are not yet at the forefront of the considerations of the organization. "What do we do about that? Because we need someone to change the bed linen and so on... this will be a challenge" (interview, initiator). Solving this will require new actions that come to grips with the limited resources, a new mobilization of the community and a new organization of collective action. Thus new circles of bricolage based social entrepreneurship will have to follow, to finally allow for the tourism based social transformation that they aim for.

In Lildstrand (Case 2), the community realised that individual interests and motivation needed to be transformed into collective action. "The task is to renew the entrepreneurial spirit of individuals and make them feel co-ownership; this is an important part of it" (workshop participant 2). "It can only be done when there are some entrepreneurial people" (workshop participant 4). Collective action was ensured by focussing on specific areas of development: embeddedness into Thy National Park, boat landing development, nature restoration, and local history communication. Members of the project groups have been assigned in development seminars based in interest. This ensures alignment of interests in the project groups and spurs collective action. Whereas the case is a move towards collective tourism social entrepreneurship, it relies on processes of alignment of a collage of individual interests around shared goals and sub-goals. The ambition of a holistic transformation process that builds coherent structures from ideas and events is ensured through a masterplan: "The master plan has created a common understanding of what direction we want to go ... so we have a common branding, a common identity" (workshop participant 5). Momentum is created by further linking projects with municipal plans and lobbying for the project among local stakeholders and policy-makers. "It [the masterplan] is strong because it is based on the municipality's plan, which is already there" (workshop participant 6).

Many of these collective actions have proved successful, which has ensured that further collective action is possible. The success of these many smaller activities or events have been transformative and empowered the community, through increased access to resources, including funding and knowledge: "Suddenly we are presented with the entire circle of all the established networks that are located throughout the wider area" (workshop participant 7). The challenges in the process have mainly been to get clearance from external actors (including the national park organization and the municipality) for various developments. Overcoming these challenges requires hard and long-standing efforts from the local entrepreneurs, as well as political

lobbying. It also requires funding. However, perhaps due to the empowerment of the local community and its entrepreneurs, they have been quite successful in overcoming these limitations so far.

### *Social transformation*

Despite the challenges in reaching the long terms goals, there have been positive outcomes from the collective entrepreneurship process in the case of the diffused hotel (*Case 1*). Knowledge has developed and accumulated during the process: “I have learned a lot about tourism, about architecture, about town development, I have learned a lot about volunteers” (interview, initiator). The qualities and potentials of the town has been highlighted, formulated, and distributed among the local population and politicians. Finally, social capital has developed that may favour the future development of the hotel and lead to other local initiatives in the future.

In Lildstrand (*Case 2*) the process has been transformative as it created a feeling of empowerment in the community. They have moved from a situation of low optimism, believing that it was not very likely to change basic living conditions, towards achieving a stronger, more self-assured approach to community development, encouraged by funding obtained for sub-projects and the perceived ability to navigate in a local political environment. According to the interviewees, the development projects have transformed social relations by improving peoples' access to power and resources, and have made Lildstrand a more exciting place to live. Extrovert projects such as creating an orienteering event for 500 participants further strengthens the positive self-image of the community.

In both cases, it remains to be seen whether the stated goals of making respectively a successful non-profit hotel (*Case 1*) and a nature-based tourism destination (*Case 2*) will be reached. However, making do, rejecting constraints, mobilizing actors in collective action, improvising and building structures appears to have a value in itself. “You get to know a lot of people by joining this work. You enter into new relationships and do a whole bunch of exciting things. You get together, meet a lot of people, it is a lot of fun” (workshop participant 6).

### **Discussion**

The analysis reveals that both cases are examples of collectives that come together and use tourism as a driver for social transformation. As such, tourism activities are used to combat depopulation and degradation of local communities marked by the negative impacts of urbanisation. Thus, the motivation to engage in tourism activities is founded with a purpose that reaches beyond the solely economic. In *Case 2*, the masterplan is a key document that ensures a common understanding of the initiative, while in *Case 1* the focus on ‘selling’ the idea to the locals has proved fruitful. As such the tourism initiatives of respectively ‘nature-based tourism’ and ‘a diffused hotel’, with a transparent double goal, can be seen as framing techniques (Montgomery et al., 2012) to address local challenges that emerge from resource constraints.

In terms of organizing, the mix of actors is also key in both cases. The main persons behind the initiatives have been able to both mobilize the community, as well as certain actors with access to resources (knowledge, funding, power etc.). In this manner the collective entrepreneurial process does not only ensure a level of multi-vocality (Montgomery et al., 2012), but does also create value in itself, since it provides access to various (combinations of) resources not otherwise accessible. Hence, empowerment of the community and herein an increased ability to manoeuvre and take action is part of the social value creation, as also suggested by Altinay et al. (2016).

Another aspect relative to actor roles is the intertwined role of individuals and the collective. In both cases, but especially in *Case 1*, the process depends on individuals as a driving force – hence acting in some ways as classical social entrepreneurs. However, the initiatives of these individual social entrepreneurs are dependent on and pointless without mobilization of a number of other social actors, who are involved through an inclusive process, making both cases clear examples of collective (tourism) social entrepreneurship (Montgomery et al., 2012). An important point here is that for these individual actors, the collectiveness of the social entrepreneurship process is an important part of the motivation to do it. In both cases, the initiatives have established new social relations, which in and of themselves, has a value for the participants. In this manner the cases reveal a more nuanced understanding of the division between a more traditional understanding of the lonely heroic entrepreneur and (collective) tourism social entrepreneurship, as it is shown that individuals depend on the collective and vice versa – if the processes are to make sense. Thus, the spirit of individuals can play a crucial role in collective social entrepreneurship especially as a trigger for the change process itself, while the collectiveness of the process gives it meaning, as well as access to otherwise inaccessible resources.

This more radical collective perspective on tourism social entrepreneurship – where tourism is not the end goal but rather means to achieve social transformation – also raises critical questions regarding the role of tourism as the ‘answer’ to community challenges. The unanswered question in both cases, since they are still ongoing processes, is if the collectives will actually succeed in creating social transformation. It is not clear if the expected outcomes will be reached and hence if the process will succeed in changing future conditions. In *Case 1*, a potential challenge in reaching the intended outcome is the lack of critical reflection on whether tourism is actually the answer to the challenges the community faces. Tourism is considered the saving grace, despite the fact that tourists, as well as resources to attract them and competencies to sustain tourism, are currently lacking. Should the community succeed in attracting and catering to tourists, one can also question whether tourism is actually able to bring about the changes that these communities are hoping for in a sustainable way, as this has been questioned in previous research (Dredge, 2017).

However, while the grand scheme may never materialise, we have seen that the social entrepreneurship process may in and off itself bring about elements of positive social transformation within the communities. In both cases the process united the local

communities around common goals, sparked discussion about the place-bound qualities, changed relationships and self-perceptions, and planted the idea that things may be changed for the better, at least in parts of the community. Thus creating a platform for engagement, empowerment and outcomes that reaches beyond the touristic activities.

## Conclusion

With our outset in the nexus between tourism, social entrepreneurship and community development, we have investigated how (tourism) social entrepreneurship principles are utilized by local communities to combat depopulation and deterioration in two Danish destinations, as well as the characteristics of this type of social entrepreneurship process. We have argued that a more collective perspective on social entrepreneurship in the tourism context is needed and defined Collective Tourism Social Entrepreneurship as: the process of using tourism activities as a means for collaborative social problem solving between similar and diverse actors. This definition entails social enterprises as exemplified in *Case 1* and social entrepreneurship in a broader sense as exemplified in *Case 2*. Based on this definition, the literature on which it is based, and additional perspectives drawn from the literature on 'social bricolage', we present a framework (Fig. 1). To represent and analyze collective social entrepreneurship processes in tourism

In both cases, tourism activities are used as framing techniques to create a shared understanding and address local challenges. That is, as a means to mobilize communities around entrepreneurial projects with the purpose of creating social transformation. Concretely, the aim in both cases is to combat depopulation and degradation of local communities marked by the negative impacts of urbanisation. The work towards the stated goal of respectively a diffused hotel (*Case 1*) and nature-based tourism (*Case 2*) has shown some results so far. This progress includes establishment of steering groups with a local mandate that combine competencies, while ensuring multi-vocality; securing support from local authorities; and securing some level of funding. Despite this progress, it is uncertain whether the projects will succeed, as they are also challenged by lack of further funding, and falling interest and support from the local community over time. In addition, there is also the question of whether tourism is actually the right answer to the problems faced in these communities. It remains to be seen whether this is the case.

However, even if the target is never reached, we find that the collective process creates (social) value in and of itself. It mobilizes, connects, and in turn, empowers the community by combining local competencies, also allowing the community access to outside resources (economic, knowledge, etc.) and support not otherwise accessible. It creates awareness of and discussion about the place-bound qualities, thus changing self-perceptions. Finally, it plants the idea that things may change for the better, at least in parts of the community and acts as a platform for engagement and outcomes that go beyond tourism development. This indicates that the social transformation, which is the primary goal of these types of initiatives, may emerge (at least partly) from the process, suggesting that the end result is less important than in traditional (social) entrepreneurship, where a successful (social) business model is a key success criteria.

For the individual actors involved, including the initiators, who in a more traditional social entrepreneurship understanding would be regarded as *the entrepreneur*, the collectiveness of the process is a key motivation. This suggests a more nuanced understanding of the division between the traditional conception of the lonely heroic entrepreneur and (collective) tourism social entrepreneurship, as it is shown that individuals depend on the collective and vice versa, if transformation is to materialise, but perhaps more importantly, if outcomes are make sense for the individuals participating. Thus, the spirit of individuals can play a crucial role in collective tourism social entrepreneurship especially as a trigger for the change process itself, while the collectiveness itself gives meaning, as well as access to otherwise inaccessible resources.

## Declaration of competing interest

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