Working Title*: From destination management organisations to destination organisations in Scotland and Denmark: multi-level governance versus localism.*

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Abstract

Although a lot of previous research on destination management had focused on the relevance of destination marketing organisations in improving destination competitiveness (Pike & Page, 2014), increasingly reforms on destination governance have shifted the onus of destination-level organisations from marketing to management (MacLellan, 2011). Such changes have in some circumstances been motivated by revisions in public policy management and administration arrangements (Henriksen and Halkier, 2009) while other times they have been stimulated, by public spending cuts to reduce deficits (Coles et al., 2012).

Research by d'Angella et al., (2010) suggested that the determinants of destination management organisation success include supplier relations, effective management, strategic planning, organizational focus and drive, proper funding, and quality personnel. Derco (2013) reviewed destination management organisations in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia in terms of issues such as building trust, tasks, and initiative in the formation of destination management organisations, legislative aspects, membership, funding and the decision-making process of destination management organisations (DMOs).

Coles et al., (2012) studied the impact of public sector reforms in England and argued that new localism, sub-regional bodies, and a desire in central government to reduce public contributions to a minimum have introduced complexity to the tourism system in England. In addition, they argued the importance of developing a deeper understanding of what happens at the destination level as public sector support is withdrawn in other countries.

Following a reform of VisitScotland in 2006 to compete more effectively on the international stage, Scotland abolished its area tourist boards (ATBs) which were replaced with an integrated VisitScotland network. These were replaced by a network of partnerships that brings together local players from the private and public sectors such as tourism operators, local tourism groups, Chambers of Commerce, Local Authorities and VisitScotland called Area Tourism Partnerships (ATPs), as well as local destination management and marketing organisations. Such is the variety of the types of organisations that have been created (in terms of composition, management, size and priorities) that VisitScotland describes them as destination organisations (VisitScotland, 2013). However, little is actually known about how these organisations are funded, organised and evaluated in terms of their performance.

Similarly in Denmark, Henriksen and Halkier (2009) and Halkier (2013) suggested that decreasing market shares and numbers of international visitors to the country have necessitated reforms to product development through innovation. However, reforms of subnational and sectoral governance had not stimulated innovation adoption as had been initially anticipated as short-term and localist interests tended to dominate tourism- related policy networks. As a result, destination performance tended to vary significantly.

The aim of this project was to carry out a comparative study of the adaptation of destination organisations to their policy and operating environment in Scotland and Denmark with the view of identifying best practice.

Following a systematic review of the literature a survey instrument was designed that was distributed to destination organisations in both countries to establish as their composition, style of decision and policy making, division of labour with local, regional and national partners and policy formulation processes. The population sample in each country was identified through desk and internet search and the paper presents the initial findings from the research project and identify possible areas for future research.

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