



**LUND UNIVERSITY**  
School of Economics and Management

# **The Social Constructs of Natural World Heritage**

*An Ethnographic Investigation into the Conflicts of a Danish  
UNESCO Destination*

Master Thesis from Lund University, School of Economics and Management  
MSc in International Marketing and Brand Management

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## Abstract

This paper will investigate the conflicts that can arise during destination development following a World Heritage inscription. Previous literature mentions that conflicts arise, but focuses on a more managerial perspective, and fails to account for the characteristics of those conflicts. The aim of the paper is to account for the characteristics of the conflicts that arise, by trying to grasp how various stakeholders in the destination development process have different understandings of the destination, and how these understandings are undergoing negotiation after the destination has received the World Heritage inscription. The paper is thus focusing on Consumer Culture Theory and Cultural Geography, thereby adding a sociocultural perspective to the strongly managerial perspective on destination development.

The paper is based on an ethnographic field study of the Nature World Heritage destination Stevns Klint, Denmark. After interviews with various stakeholders about the development processes that the area had undergone since being inscribed the UNESCO World Heritage label, it became clear the locals of Stevns embedded meaning into the landscape, thus the term *appropriating space* becomes relevant. According to this result, conflict arises in Stevns from differentiating meaning embeddings, but mainly because certain development initiatives contradict the commonly accepted identities of various areas along the cliff. Which leads us into the second conflict, which is based on the power structures that arise in commodification processes. Only those in charge of destination development get to manifest the aforementioned appropriations of space, creating politics of representation. From these results, it becomes clear that there is a need for a sociocultural perspective on destination development in order to understand why conflicts happen in recently inscribed World Heritage destinations.

**Keywords:** appropriation, spatial consumption, commodification, politics of representation, power, spatial conflicts, destination development, Stevns Klint, UNESCO, Nature World Heritage

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Frank Elmer	

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## **Disclaimer**

We know that many people in Stevns are excited to read this paper. It is the product of many, many hours of conversation and reflection, by the authors as well as different stakeholders within the destination. However, this also makes it important to mention how you, as a stakeholder, can use this paper:

This paper contains statements from various people whom you might know well or know off. These statements were given for the sake of research, and are not to be used for any other purpose. Instead, use the paper to have a reflective thought about what "Stevnsness" is, and how others might have a different interpretation. And really try to grasp the point of this paper:

We all love Stevns Klint. We do, with all of our hearts.  
But love can be expressed in many ways.

Lund, Sweden, 15th of August 2017

Alicia Katharina Schneider

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# 1. Introduction

World Heritage destinations have been inscribed in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for their "outstanding universal value" (UNESCO, 2017, a). Being granted such an inscription to the World Heritage list is a great honour, as it validates the cultural and/or natural uniqueness that the site possesses. Besides the honour, the UNESCO brand brings universal recognition and attraction. The brand thus creates many opportunities for the site, especially in tourism. The status will give new opportunities for destination marketing (Lai & Ooi, 2015), and promotes the potential for local economic development if used and managed properly (Lai & Ooi, 2015; Ryan & Silvanto, 2010; Terlouw et al., 2015).

To carry the capacity of tourism, there is a need to develop initiatives of physical attributes and structures, such as the development of infrastructure, facilities, attractions supports systems etc. (Caust & Vecco, 2017; George et al., 2009; Lai & Ooi, 2015), which further on will be referred to as *destination development*. According to UNESCO, each World Heritage destination is responsible for this destination development to be undertaken with concern of the conservation and management of the heritage in accordance with the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (WH Convention, UNESCO, 2013, in Ryan & Silvanto, 2010). This means to ensure authenticity, integrity and preservation of the site, whilst still making it available for heritage tourism, so the tourists can visit and appreciate the site (Ryan & Silvanto, 2010).

In the process of destination development, destinations often experience local conflict (Caust & Vecco, 2017; George et al., 2009; Hannam & Knox, 2010; Lai & Ooi, 2015, Oakes, 1999; Ryan & Silvanto, 2010). This also counts for World Heritage destinations, often in relation to differing opinions about the best way to develop the destination, and the locals that are affected by it (Lai & Ooi, 2015; Ryan & Silvanto, 2010).



## 1.1 Aim & Research Question

The aim of our paper is to account for these conflicts that arise in a specific World Heritage destination, by trying to grasp how various stakeholders in the destination development process have different understandings about the destination. Also, how these understandings are undergoing negotiation after the destination is inscribed to the World Heritage list. We are looking at a Nature World Heritage destination from a sociocultural perspective, accounting for individual understandings of a space, in order to address a social construction of natural landscapes.

We have chosen Denmark's coastline Stevns Klint for our field study. It is a 15 km-long, fossil-rich, limestone cliff south of Copenhagen, that shows evidence of the impact of an meteorite crash into the planet about 65 million years ago (Damholt & Surlyk, 2012). Despite its historical and natural importance, the site only was inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2014, making it a rather new recipient. The site at hand has been around for longer than human existence, with great local historical and recreational importance. If we apply the problematisation mentioned above about arising conflicts, what is interesting to study is the transformation process of this rural destination into a world-renowned heritage site, with *global* importance for the preservation of proof for the development of life itself. From a sociocultural perspective, it is interesting to investigate how the residents of Stevns Klint, who have a stake in the destination development, then negotiate what the site *is*, and how the space *should be used* (Högdahl, 2003).

Deriving from those aforementioned thoughts we formulated the following research question:

***Why does destination development in a newly inscribed WH destination create conflict between stakeholders?***

## 1.2 Contribution

To a large extent, the previous literature within World Heritage destination development focuses on how authorities and destination managers (DMOs) should try to manage the destination and the stakeholders (Caust & Vecco, 2017; Lai & Ooi, 2015; Ryan & Silvanto, 2010). This will be further discussed in previous literature later in the paper (3.1). The pre-existing theory thereby offers a more managerial perspective to the conflicts that arise in World Heritage destinations. However, the literature does not account for the origin or characteristics of the occurring conflicts. Our paper will try to address this gap by accounting for the conflicts, which previous literature fails to. This is our empirical contribution.

Our theoretical contribution will consist of an understanding of how there is a need to address more sociocultural theories such as Consumer Culture Theory and Cultural Geography, in order to fully understand why conflicts happen in destination development. There is arguably a need to synchronise the managerial perspective with a sociocultural perspective, in order to understand the conflicts. This paper creates a dialogue between the two. Thereby, we are theoretically contributing with a cultural approach to destination development theory, through applying CCT and cultural geography to the conversation. It will become evident by reading the upcoming Theoretical Approach how we link the managerial side of destination development with CCT and Cultural Geography.

The contribution of a cultural approach becomes especially relevant when studying a *natural* World Heritage site, of which there are only about 203 worldwide (there are about 814 cultural sites) (UNESCO, 2017, b). Usually, it is the cultural sites that are studied from a sociocultural perspective, whereas natural sites are more likely to be studied from a natural/geological/preservation perspective. We hope this paper will offer a bridge between the often dialectical cultural and natural heritage, meaning it will show how a natural heritage site also possesses cultural value for the local population, and how culture can be manifested in the natural heritage site. Cronon (1996) has written a book about the culture of natural sights, arguing how natural sites, with all its geology and geography, cannot exist outside a sociocultural construct. The long and complicated cultural history of nature has led to different human beings understanding this

natural world very differently. And if one idea is as good as another, how can we defend some uses, or non-uses, of nature over others? Cronon thus offers an account on how the people, who live in nature, understand their homes differently.

### **1.3 Thesis Structure**

This paper is structured in consideration of our abductive approach. The research started with few predefined literature streams. Once the field study started, and first observations were undertaken, the theoretical framework was adjusted in accordance to the empirical findings. We have thus structured our thesis starting with the method chapter, before introducing theory. Throughout the method chapter, we will further discuss our research strategy, design, and analysing methods.

The literature review starts off with introducing previous literature on destination development. The second part of the literature review focuses on the relevant theoretical approach, that relates to the emerging themes we found when gathering our data.

We start our analysis chapter by introducing our field, Stevns Klint, through a thick description of the area. Afterwards, the empirical findings are presented in the structure of three conflicts happening in the destination. An analysis follows, where these conflicts are analysed by applying relevant theory. This offers a deeper understanding of the presented findings and themes. The paper concludes with a discussion related to our aim and contribution, and a suggestion for possible further research.

### **1.4 Delimitations**

Throughout the paper, we use some terms that are either used synonymously, or terms that should be clearly defined in certain ways. Thus, it is important to delimit the following terms:

- When talking about the *Destination Development Organisation* (DMO) we refer to the people responsible for the management and development of the site: the people in municipality/council, politicians as well as those in charge of the World Heritage site management and the tourism development.

- A definition for "destination development" will be given in the Theoretical Approach.
- *Locals* are people living at Stevns Klint, without any managerial responsibilities of the destination development, but who still have a stake in the development, whether it be their love, pride or understanding of what Stevns is or how it should be used.
- When talking about the *Conservation Act*, terms such as *conservation*, *preservation* and *safeguarding*, are used interchangeably - all meaning the act of sustainable protection of a site.
- UNESCO is the organisation, and World Heritage is the label which a site receives.

## 2. Method

*In the following Method chapter, we will present and argue for our research methods, and our abductive approach in our field study. We will introduce our respondents to our interviews, and account for the need for observations. We then argue for our data analysis. The chapter ends with a reflection on the limitations of the chosen methodology, as well as possible ethical and political considerations.*

### 2.1 Research Philosophy & Strategy

Given the study purpose, the required data, and the research nature, this thesis is guided by a qualitative research design. The problematisation of this paper is based on the premises that the development of a rural area to become a destination may cause conflict among the stakeholders. The idea that the world can be understood and interpreted differently by individuals argues for our constructionist epistemological standpoint (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

*“The social world is already defined and interpreted by social actors before the social scientist enters into their social life”* (Blaikie, 2000, p. 116 in Ong, 2012, p. 423). Therefore, the researchers *“need to discover and describe this ‘insider’ view”* (Ong, 2012, p. 423), meaning to take an ethnographic approach. Looking at how different stakeholders interpret the place differently and why those voices might differ, will help to understand how people construct the meaning of the place. It should be clear that our investigation is not an attempt to sum up the generalised opinions of different types of stakeholders, but instead how different *people*, who happen to have different roles in the community, make sense of the world in which they interact and how they space can carry different meaning. Which also argues for our constructionist epistemology. *“In order to understand these meanings, researchers must get into this world and learn the knowledge and skills social actors use to construct and reconstruct their life”* (Ong, 2012, p. 423). Meaning, the researchers are taking an ethnographic approach in order to understand these social constructs.

### 2.2 Research Approach

The study is organized as an abductive study, departing from the empirical work of a field study. Within research methods, three approaches are distinguished: induction, deduction and abduction. *„Deduction involves going from a general premise to a particular conclusion”*

(Mingers, 2012, p. 860). „*Induction goes from particular cases to a general conclusion*” (ibid.). Abduction is a method of reasoning in logic and “*the missing link between deduction and induction*” (ibid.). The pragmatist and philosopher C.S. Peirce developed the approach of abduction. Abduction is also known as retroduction, recently it „*has been adopted as the heart of the philosophy of science known as critical realism (CR)*” (Bhaskar, 1978; Bhaskar, 1979 & Mingers, 2000 in Mingers, 2012, p. 860). „*Abduction is intended to help social research, or rather social researchers, to be able to make new discoveries in a logically and methodologically ordered way*”(Reichertz, 2009, online). Studies using an abductive approach start with the researcher encountering an empirical phenomenon, which cannot be explained by existing theories. Reichertz (2009) describes abduction as a sensible and scientific form of inference, which „*reaches the sphere of deep insight and new knowledge*” (Reichertz, 2009, online). „*The aim of abduction is to describe and understand social life in terms of social actors’ motives and accounts*” (Ong, 2012, p. 424). To do so the researcher discovers „*everyday lay concepts, meanings and motives*” and produces a technical account from those concepts, motives and meanings (ibid.).

“*The main objective of any research is to confront theory with the empirical world*” (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 555). For our study, it was important to do a field study with very little pre-defined knowledge and no bias. However, a set of concepts and theories was setting up a preliminary theoretical framework. After the first data collection, we reflected on the data and from there decided what aspects would be interesting to have a closer look on and to whom we would need to talk to for further insides. Thus, the theoretical framework was adjusted as well as expanded through the data that emerged from the field study. To some extent we were „*weaving back and forth between data and theory*” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 13). This method helped to deeply analyse, gain a deep understanding and to create thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973).

“*Once the phase of theoretical reflection on a set of data has been carried out, the researcher may want to collect further data in order to establish the conditions in which a theory will and will not hold. Such a general strategy is often called iterative: it involves a weaving back and forth between data and theory*” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 13).

Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) explain that in order to understand processes of change over time it is necessary to adopt longitudinal designs (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Especially when following a constructionist research approach, “*where repeated visits are made to the same individual or*

companies over months or years, or when the researcher conducts an ethnographic study working continuously in the same location”(Easterby-Smith et al., 2015, p. 100). Abduction involves forming a conclusion from the information that is known, leading to the best explanation. The positivist view of finding truth and proof has also been illustrated by the distinction between verification and falsification, introduced by Karl Popper (1959). When applying the falsification theory to constructionist research, *“then one should look for evidence that might confirm or contradict what one currently believes to be true”* (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015, p. 101). Dubois and Gadde (2002) describe falsification as an important element of abductive research (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Falsification emphasizes ways of generating new theory rather than either confirm or disconfirm existing theory (ibid.). However, the methodological approach which aims at coming up with new theory is described as an inductive approach. Thus, understanding the characteristics and consequences of a specific case (field study) based on abduction requires what Dubois and Gadde (2002) describe as an integrated approach (ibid.).

Dubois & Gadde (2002) have found that the researcher, *„by constantly going ‘back and forth’ from one type of research activity to another and between empirical observations and theory, is able to expand his understanding of both theory and empirical phenomena”* (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 555). The aforementioned preliminary theoretical framework is later used as an analytical framework. It consists of pre-interpretations and explanations. Throughout the empirical data collection, as well as throughout the data analysis and interpretation process the framework will be developed and adjusted. *„This stems from the fact that theory cannot be understood without empirical observation and vice versa”* (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 555). This process is what Dubois & Gadde (2002) refer to as systematic combining, as illustrated in the following figure.

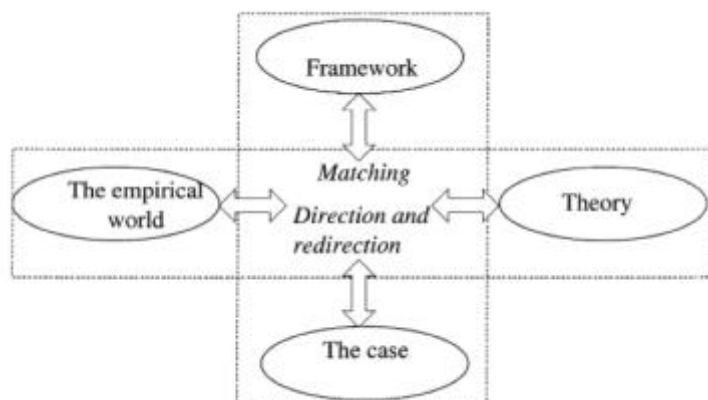


Figure 1: Systematic Combining (Source: Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 556)

The research is influenced by the previously set preliminary framework, the specific case (field study), the empirical world as well as theory. One of the foundations of systematic combining is matching. Matching is about going back and forth between framework, data sources, and analysis (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 556). Sources of evidence influence the research results and emerging theory. While collecting data and going back and forth between theory and the former, the relevant theory, analysis and interpretation shifts and develops (ibid.).

## **2.3 Research Design**

We decided to do a field study, as it would give us the best opportunity to submerge ourselves in the subject of study; a destination that has just been inscribed to the World Heritage list. Case studies, respectively field studies, *“provide unique means of developing theory by utilizing in-depth insights of empirical phenomena and their contexts”* (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 555). A field study is undertaken in the „real world”, thus belonging to the category of non-experimental designs. *„These studies include the case study—an in-depth observation of one organization, individual, ...”* (Salkind, 2010). The choice of a field study was especially made in order to look on a case in-depth, and capture the essence, which further argues for our constructionist epistemology (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

### **2.3.1 Why a field study about Stevns?**

We chose to make Stevns Klint and the surrounding area the object of study for two reasons: First, by wanting to study the process of change that UNESCO label creates, it was obvious to choose a destination which had been granted the label rather recently. Only being inscribed the UNESCO label in 2014 means that Stevns Klint is still in the middle of this changing process, making it *“transparently observable”* (Eisenhardt, 1989). Chances are, that there are more diverse translations among the different stakeholders of the label at an early stage, rather than if the destination had been UNESCO certified for a long time, so that the *“new brand”* was no longer new. Second, one of the authors happens to personally know Head of Stevns municipality’s Nature-, Leisure- and Culture committee, who is also the chairman of the board of Stevns Klint World Heritage, Bjarne Østergaard Rasmussen. He kindly agreed to help us with our investigation.



### 2.3.2 Ethnography and thick descriptions

It has been very important to us throughout the entire data collection, as well as through the analysis, to be very investigatory. We wanted to uncover and unravel "how things are" to use Högdahls expression (Högdahl, 2003) in an almost Sherlock Holmes-like manner. Ethnography is about understanding complexities, and thick descriptions are the writing of these experiences (Geertz, 1973). Ong (2012) describes the aim of the abductive research strategy as „*the construction of theories that are grounded in everyday activities, in the language and meanings of social actors*” (Ong, 2012, p. 422). „*Therefore, the abductive strategy entails ontological assumptions that sees social reality as socially constructed by social actors, where there is no single reality but multiple and changing social realities*” (Ong, 2012, p. 424). In order to understand how people construct meanings the researcher must emerge into the world of its' social actors to better understand „*the knowledge and skills the social actors use actors use to construct and reconstruct their life*” (Ong, 2012, p. 423). Abduction combines two forms of reasoning, namely insight and inference.

*”In ethnography, this means arriving at an educated guess and then explicating that insight with theoretical reasoning. The warrant is in the ethnographic detail and the theoretical reasoning which explicates it. This open up the possibility of an open-ended process of knowledge creation so that validity of this combined reasoning is in its lack of closure, that is, its on-going possibility of reinterpretation”* (Bajc, 2008, p.1).

Geertz points out that a phenomenon can be interpreted in many ways, and ethnography is about understanding these complexities. Abduction „*reaches the sphere of deep insight and new knowledge*” (Reichertz, 2009, online). Thick descriptions account of the details of a culture. It is our *own* construction or comprehension of the experience. So, the words written down are our own construction of other people's constructions. At the core, we are explicating explications (Geertz, 1973).

## 2.4 Data collection

Our empirical material was gathered through visiting Stevns first for 5 days, then 2 days one week later, to add further depth to our knowledge. With this approach, we were able to see how things are and „*allow ideas to 'emerge' from the data*” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015, p. 92). Further, by visiting Stevns twice, the first visit and interviews gave us a better overview of the relevant topics,

themes and different stakeholder to talk to. As previously mentioned, those adjustment and revision methods help to develop what Geertz (1973) described as thick description. Data was collected through the use of both interviews and observations. The procedures of the data collection will be explained in the following sections.

#### **2.4.1 Interviews**

As a main instrument, interviews were held. That was in order to understand the different voices and underlying reasons why the place is interpreted and understood differently. Interviews are especially useful when researchers try to understand people's motives to act and think in a certain way, to understand how people make sense of the world and also to ask for underlying reasons, such as asking for "why" (Creswell, 2009; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). We conducted face-to-face interviews with different stakeholders in the destination, as well as two phone interviews. Several interviews were conducted in our respondent's homes, which we felt gave us more value and depth in our interviews, as the respondents seemed more comfortable and could open up to a larger extent. Conducting interviews in the respondent's natural environment allows them to feel homelier, thus it is more likely that they answer freely and open up (Elliot & Jankel-Elliot, 2003; Geertz, 1973).

The participants were chosen through "convenience"- and "snowball sampling" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015, p. 82). Convenience sampling was used in the sense that one of the authors knows people that live and work in Stevns, who made the entry for research easier and helped with getting in contact with more stakeholders, - as described by Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) as the snowball sampling technique (ibid.). After defining themes to talk about and choosing a set of different stakeholders to talk to about those certain themes, the number of stakeholders was only limited due to time reasons. Through recommendations and ideas of the respondents the so called "snowball effect" was reached, meaning that different respondents suggested other contacts to us who might be relevant to talk to (ibid.).

We conducted two different types of interviews: First, one highly *unstructured conversation* with Anni at the lighthouse. The interview was spontaneous, meaning no interview schedule or guide had been made beforehand, which according to Easterby-Smith et al. makes the interview highly unstructured (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Further, we conducted 11 *semi-structured interviews*, lasting somewhere between 30 minutes and almost 2 hours. Conducting semi-structured interviews

means having prepared a list of questions and a "topic guide", to allow a guided but open interview that covers a selection of relevant and predefined topics (ibid.) We prepared questions relevant to the particular participant and his/her position. We did not necessarily follow the structure that we had prepared, but rather followed the natural structure of the conversation. In total 11,5 hours of interviews were recorded. Besides two phone interviews, all interviews were held as face-to-face conversations.

Overall the semi-structured interviews were held as rather easy-going conversations with open questions. By employing the technique of "laddering up" we dig deeper, aiming to get more information from the respondents (Easterby-Smith et al, 2015, p. 142). For example, we asked very open questions such as: "Why is that so?" or "Can you tell us more about that?".

We conducted interviews with the following people:

1. Anni, caretaker of Stevns Lighthouse. She and her work place is affected by the staircase initiative, that will bring tourists at eyelevel with the fish clay.
2. a) Naja Habermann, Site Manager, and responsible for seeing through that UNESCO ruling is carried out.  
b) Ditte Winther, Communications Manager, responsible for both internal communication between local stakeholders, and public relations, making them both important DMOs.
3. Kathrine Hendriksen, Head of the Stevns Klint Board, as well as the owner of Rødvig Kro and Badehotel, making her both a key member of the DMOs as well as a local business owner.
4. Thomas Christensen, Business Manager within the Professions Council, helping local business owners grow in the rather rural area of Stevns, making him a spokesman for the local business owners.
5. Bjarne Østergaard Rasmussen, Head of the Nature, Leisure and Culture Group in the local government/municipality, which has been in charge of the Conservation Act following the

UNESCO label. Bjarne was our gatekeeper, and helped us to get in contact with the majority of our participants.

6. Helle Johannsen, a science teacher, and a secretary at Stevns Erhvervråd. She was recommended to us by an old friend of one of the authors. She is also a ranger, and runs her own business offering private tours along the cliff. Helle later put us in contacts with several participants. She was interesting to us, both as a naturalist, a local from Højerup, and as a business owner within the tourism sector.
7. Michael Loft (phone interview), land owner in Stevns. Owning land along the cliff site makes him a stakeholder representing the farmers, who are especially being affected by the developments of the cliff site in regard to the Conservation Act that followed the World Heritage inscription.
8. Peer Nørgaard, pensioner who used to work for the Nature Centre. Founded the walking path Trampestien in 2003. His knowledge about the nature and geology of Stevns makes him a stakeholder with concern in nature and preservation, as well as a retired DMO.
9. Thor Nielsen, Tourism Consultant at the professions council, in charge of uniting the locals around the new brand, creating reasons to go and reasons to stay. A very important DMO.
10. Kirsten, local house owner of Højerup. Her family has owned a farm in the town for generations, giving them a particular local interest a town which is the most visited part of the cliff site.
11. Claus Ravn, son of Kirsten, local house owner in Højerup. Previous board member of Højerup Lund, which cares for the church in Højerup and the surrounding park area. Lives on the same farm as his mother as the new owner.
12. Frank Elmer (phone interview), land owner in Stevns. He is the head speaker on behalf of the land owner association, which Michael Loft is also a part of. He speaks on behalf of almost every land owner along the cliff site who has been affected the Conservation Act.

The following table gives an overview of all conducted interviews, the type of interview as well as the total duration.

#	Name	Type of interview	Duration
1	Anni	Unstructured, face-to-face	15 minutes
2 a)	Naja Habermann	Semi-structured, face-to-face	103 minutes
2 b)	Ditte Winther		
3	Kathrine Hendriksen	Semi-structured, face-to-face	27 minutes
4	Thomas Christensen	Semi-structured, face-to-face	60 minutes
5	Bjarne Østergaard Rasmussen	Semi-structured, face-to-face	60 minutes
6	Helle Johannsen	Semi-structured, face-to-face	75 minutes
7	Michael Loft	Semi-structured, phone interview	35 minutes
8	Peer Nørgaard	Semi-structured, face-to-face	76 minutes
9	Thor Nielsen	Semi-structured, face-to-face	58 minutes
10	Kirsten	Semi-structured, face-to-face	30 minutes
11	Claus Ravn	Semi-structured, face-to-face	90 minutes
12	Frank Elmer	semi-structures, phone interview	52 minutes
<b>Total</b>		1x highly unstructured interview, 11 semi-structured interviews (including two phone interviews)	<b>11:35 hours</b>

*Table 1: Overview of interviews*

Since we aim to understand the contrasting voices of different stakeholders we chose respondents that have different roles as stakeholders of Stevns Klint. The following table gives an overview of all people we talked to and their role as stakeholders.

<b>Name</b>	<b>DMO</b>	<b>Business owner</b>	<b>Nature, Geology</b>	<b>Local</b>
Anni				x
Naja Habermann	x			
Ditte Winther	x			
Kathrine Hendriksen	x	x		
Thomas Christensen	x	x (representative)		
Bjarne Østergaard Rasmussen	x			
Helle Johannsen		x	x	
Michael Loft				x
Peer Nørgaard			x	x
Thor Nielsen	x			
Kirsten				x
Claus Ravn				x

*Table 2: Overview of stakeholder roles*

The category *Local* describes people that are in some way affected by the development initiatives of the destination (like land owners, farmers or people in Højerup). The category *DMO* sums up all people that work within the destination development. With *business owners*, we mean all people that are local business owners and Thomas, who is a representative of those. The category *Nature, Geology* describes people who work(ed) for the Nature Centre and/or are educated about the cliffs nature and geology.

We also talked to *tourists* visiting Stevns, since they are as much consumers of the site as the other stakeholders are. In fact, they are the main consumers of Stevns as a tourist destination. Even though, the tourist's understandings and interpretations of the area are not object of our study and thus not incorporated in the analysis, it was important to us to listen to all voices: local residents, the DMO, politicians as well as tourists. This data collection was therefore only for the authors' interesting is grasping the whole situation.

### **2.4.2 Observations**

We decided to expand our data collection by also doing observations besides the interviews. Oakes (1999) argues that consumption of places cannot be understood without a *”more careful examination of how places and landscapes are prepared, by locals, for consumption by outsiders”* (Oakes, 1999, p. 128). We spent a total of 7 days at Stevns (5 days one week, 2 days another week), staying with local friends of one of the authors, conducting unstructured observations throughout the entire time, as well as making structured observational descriptions of certain areas along the cliff site, and taking photos. We chose to do observations, to experience the area we are studying, and to be prepared with an understanding of the geographical layout, to be prepared for interviews. But also by taking the roles as tourists ourselves, and to experience the site and the destination first hand. In that sense, we took the role of *”complete participants”* when observing the area (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). We used the observations to experience as *”tourists”* the initiatives that have been implemented to the area; such as information boards, signage, walking paths, access to the cliff site etc.

## **2.5 Data Analysis**

The applied method for the data analysis was consistent with our research philosophy and methodology (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The use of semi-structured interviews produced an abundance of language data on people's' understanding of both the destination Stevns Klint as well as on the process of becoming a UNESCO site. In order to avoid possible loss of information but also to ensure that we listened and analysed the respondents' insights in a more accurate way, we recorded all interviews that were later on transcribed for the analysis. The transcriptions were done in English, the same language that was used during most interviews. The interviews were transcribed respected the exact words and constructs used by our respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interviews with Frank, Claus, Michael, Kirsten and Anni were held in Danish, and thus had to be translated.

Analysis is about structuring the constructions that have been written down in the thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973). The word *”coding”* is misleading, but categorising or framing the interpretations is better. A good idea is to show why, at the time, in that place, the situation unfolded like this (Geertz, 1973). Therefore, our analysis of the transcribed data (i.e. words) was followed by a categorisation of themes and interpretations. This approach was taken to get a deep understanding

of the collected data, so that we could properly account for people's understandings of the space and why these understandings may differ. Researching different understandings,- how people construct their world and make sense of things, is what Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) and Bryman & Bell (2011) described as discourse analysis.

For each comment and sentence used by the respondents, the original context in which they were expressed was respected in order to understand their real meaning, and to avoid any hasty and false interpretations. Part of an ethnographic approach are narrative methods. By applying narrative methods, the researchers can collect stories, i.e. through interviews. Those stories often express the participant's feelings and thus allow a more in-depth analysis for the researcher (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Ong (2012) explains that the distinctive features of the "*abductive strategy are 'its view of the nature of social reality; the origin of answers to "why" questions; and the manner in which those answers are obtained'*" (Blaikie, 2000, p. 116 in Ong, 2012, p. 423). For our research using narrative methods meant to be able to explain *why* there are discourses, *why* do people have different understandings of Stevns Klint.

The categorisation helped to identify themes. Whenever respondents talked about the same topic as other respondents those statements were collected under the developed themes. At the end of this process, we jointly discussed the collected data and selected the most interesting and relevant data. Our data collection offered many interesting findings. However, we chose to concentrate on findings that contribute the most to our research question and aim of study.

Since we are studying both context, and the people who interact within the context, Arnould et al. (2005)'s article about Making Context Matter becomes relevant. The researchers argue how concepts can never fully grasp the complexity of context, and their article offers a way to make context theoretically relevant. They talk about foregrounding or backgrounding a) variations in consumers and b) variations across spatial circumstances. The point of their matrix is that context can either be a tool for framing the theoretically interesting phenomena, or be the actual phenomena that is being studied, in order to provide new theory. The context and theory should be examined systematically through identifying groups and subcultures to find patterns, as well as identifying processes (Arnould et al., 2005). Our paper foregrounds both variations in consumers, and variations in space, because it both focuses on different types of stakeholders and different types of spaces. This means that we are studying the interaction of consumers and spatial conditions in which they take place, as Arnould et al. puts it (ibid.).



The interaction between consumers and context is then analysed with the use of our theoretical framework, which will be introduced in the following chapter "Literature Review". This in order to argue for the socio-cultural gap in destination development literature, which we also argue for in the Literature Review.

The theoretical framework, functioning as an analytical framework, is of great importance in the systematic combining process. Bryman and Bell (2011) suggest that concepts and theories should be used carefully and the framework provides a set of general guidelines. Thus, with the abductive approach the framework is rather loose and is supposed to evolve during the research process (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). According to Strauss and Corbin (2008), it is important to enter into the research situations with some background knowledge, however, they argue that there is no need to review all of the literature beforehand (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). „*The reason the framework should evolve during the study is because empirical observations inspire changes of the view of theory and vice versa*” (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 558). The developed themes were analysed and interpreted through the use of the analytical framework. However, during the data analysis and interpretation process the framework was developed and adjusted through systematic combining.

*„An abductive approach is fruitful if the researcher’s objective is to discover new things — other variables and other relationships. Similar to ‘grounded theory’, our main concern is related to the generation of new concepts and development of theoretical models, rather than confirmation of existing theory”* (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 559).

As suggested by Dubois and Gadde (2002) the main objective of the abductive approach is to discover "new things", concepts and theoretical models (ibid.). Throughout the analysis we are trying to account for the characteristics of the conflicts that arise, by trying to grasp how various stakeholders in the destination development process have different understandings of the destination, and how these understandings are undergoing negotiation after the destination has received the World Heritage inscription. For our thesis, the discovery of "new things" lies within the novel attempt to merge the destination development thoughts with the socio-cultural aspects of spatial production. The focus of the theoretical/analytical framework lies on Consumer Culture Theory and Cultural Geography.

## **2.6 Reflection**

### ***2.6.1 Political and ethical concerns***

Reflecting on the ethical and political considerations of our study the aim to identify different understandings of the destination and why there are different voices might be a crucial topic to talk about as possible conflicts could be unveiled and made "public". We decided to be explicit and open about our resources and research. To what extent the research participants are informed about the consent of study largely depends on the ethical decision making of the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith, 2015). We did not hide our intentions to anyone we met along the way. Our intentions of conduction research were transparent to everyone. For transparency reasons the interview participants could not be anonymous. However, all participants were informed that:

- the interview would only be used for academic purposes
- their interview would be part of empirical material in a paper that would be published at Lund University
- the interview/transcript would only be available to us and our supervisor, or our examiner if needed
- they can receive a copy of the transcription, and let us know if there was any content they wished for us not to use

One of the authors grew up not too far from Stevns Klint, and has visited many times as a kid, but not for the last many years. The other author has never visited. In any case, whether having visited before or not shall not affect our experience as "tourists" visiting the site at this point in time. (Nor did she have any recent contact with respondents, making her able to keep a professional distance as a researcher, rather than an acquaintance). Another point to add to the ethical considerations of the observations is that they were undertaken in public spaces, so there is no need for ethical considerations, such as interfering the privacy of the observed.

### ***2.6.2 Space dependency***

The findings of this paper are arguably completely time- and space-dependent. The understanding of a place is negotiated continuously, which means that our findings at this particular point in time would most likely not have been the same about three years ago. This argues for a processual change. Also, all destinations are unique, so if a rather standardised label is granted to unique

places, the interpretations will be different at Stevns than for other World Heritage sites. This argues for a space dependency. As a result of this time and space dependency, our contribution will consist of a peek into destination development, at a given time in a process, at a particular place, making it a context based contribution to theory within destination development of heritage sites, and tourism-based Consumer Culture Theory.

### **2.6.3 Quality of study**

Within constructionist research designs there is much concern about ensuring and demonstrating the quality of study. The quality and strength of explanations are usually measured by a study's validity, reliability and generalizability (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) argue that terms such as "reliability", "validity" and "generalizability" mean different things depending on the different research approaches (ibid.). Within constructionism validity means to ask oneself whether "*a sufficient number of perspectives has been included*" (ibid., p. 103). For our study we identified different stakeholder roles and choose a variety of respondents from different stakeholder groups in order to include a sufficient number of different perspectives. In order to argue for the reliability of the study the researcher needs to consider whether similar observations would have been reached by other observers (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). For the chosen field, it is likely that other observers would reach similar observations, provided the observation and analysis is carried out under the same premises, such as a similar analytical framework with comparable theory and concepts as a guideline. In order to question the studies generalizability Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) suggest to scrutinize the diversity of the sample so that it would allow inferences to other studies (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

Some authors have criticized that qualitative studies are being judged in the same way as quantitative studies and thus suggested alternative evaluations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) for example propose "*two primary criteria for assessing a qualitative study: trustworthiness and authenticity*" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 395). By demonstrating a deep understanding of "*what has taken place in the organization*" (ibid., p. 88) and thus providing the reader with a thick description we are demonstrating the authenticity of our study. Further, by taking a more objective stance we avoided to have pre-defined opinions or prejudices.

Moreover, qualitative research methods have often been criticized for generating results that are less generalizable than those of a large-sample, such as quantitative methods (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Geertz, 1973). However, qualitative and especially ethnographic research methods allow the researcher to gain in-depth understandings and thus offer thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973).

*“There is no reason why the conceptual structure of a cultural interpretation should be any less formulable, and thus less susceptible to explicit canons of appraisal, than that of, say, a biological observation or a physical experiment ...”* (Geertz, 1973, p. 24).

This is exactly what we are aiming for: to offer a deep understanding of the different understandings of the world heritage site Stevns Klint and account for why conflicts arise.

One of the problems with case studies/field studies is that *„they have to rely on analytical inference”* (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 559). When studying a specific case, it is hard to make generalizations (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Especially when studying destinations, one has to consider that destinations are unique, because they are all diverse in terms of location and cultural heritage. Thus, results from one destination cannot be fully replicated on another case, however, the theoretical outcome can still be valid and reliable. In fact, *„case studies provide unique means of developing theory by utilizing in-depth insights of empirical phenomena and their contexts”* (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 555). The use of narrative methods, as part of the ethnographic approach, offers those in-depth insights. When looking at phenomena and the social constructs the researcher needs to take into account the subjectivity of interpretations. Individuals are making subjective interpretations of both the land and the people. Bearing the aforementioned considerations in mind we believe our study to be valid, reliable and trustworthy.

### 3. Literature Review

*The following literature review will consist of two parts: We start by introducing previous literature on destination development of World Heritage inscribed sites and areas. We then introduce the gap in the literature, as well as our contribution to the field of destination development. Our contribution is very much linked to the paper's theoretical approach, which is introduced next. At the end of the chapter, we sum up the operationalisation value of the theoretical approach, and introduce the way we have applied it to our empirical data.*

#### 3.1 Previous Literature

Previous literature on the topic of UNESCO and World Heritage destinations focuses to a large extent on the economic changes that follow the inscription of a site as World Heritage. The World Heritage label promotes the potential for local economic development if used and managed properly (Lai & Ooi, 2015; Ryan & Silvanto, 2010; Terlouw et al., 2015).

*The UNESCO World Heritage (WH) site recognition assures cultural value and quality by branding the place as highly worthy of conservation and visit. The WH brand offers many advantages, especially in tourism development and destination marketing. (Lai & Ooi, 2015, p. 276).*

From a brand management perspective, UNESCO and the World Heritage have often been described as a brand itself (Ryan & Silvanto, 2010). Thus, Caust and Vecco (2017) argue that *"being in the UNESCO List is highly desired by many actors as it brings prominence and monetary revenue"* (Caust & Vecco, 2017, p. 2). Different case study approaches explain the brand usage by sites and their stakeholders (Terlouw et al., 2015; Ryan & Silvanto, 2010). The processes of making and managing a World Heritage destination, in the sense of doing brand management, are mostly described as co-production processes (Bourdeau, et al. 2015; Lai & Ooi, 2015). Thus, once a place is granted the UNESCO label and in succession branded as a World Heritage site it is not solely an act of the main authorities (i.e. the DMO) but rather a co-production by the site and its stakeholders. Further, previous literature discusses the overall purposes and politics of branding World Heritage sites (Lai & Ooi, 2015; Ryan & Silvanto, 2010).

Another literature stream focuses on the politics of the World Heritage inscription and the possible conflicts involved in that. The focus lies especially within the sustainability and preservation intention versus the economic and financial interest. It creates a paradox of trying to earn money, by attracting more tourists, while the UNESCO label has the contradicting purpose of preserving a heritage site, - meaning not to create mass tourism (Caust & Vecco, 2017). However, once a site has been granted the UNESCO label this *"immediately bestows a national and international profile on the site or practice"* (Caust & Vecco, 2017, p. 2), meaning that the uniqueness of the place, which the UNESCO label entails, will consequently draw more attention to the site (Caust & Vecco, 2017). Attracting mass tourism is one of the things that UNESCO has often been criticised for (Hunt, 2012). Caust and Vecco (2017) describe the dilemma of ensuring that authenticity is not lost in commodification:

*"So here is the dilemma. While there is the acknowledgement of the need to 'protect' the tangible and intangible cultural heritage in this clause, at the same time there is a desire to make it 'viable' and 'revitalise' it. This could be seen as a way of making a site/culture come alive and not be a 'museum' or it could be interpreted as a way of economically exploiting the site/culture while trying to maintain its unique characteristics"* (Caust & Vecco, 2017, p. 1).

Caust & Vecco thus bring up the dilemma of preservation versus promotion, and how it can be seen from a more or less critical perspective. Further, the impact on the natural resources has been discussed in previous literature. The inscription of a place as a World Heritage site and with that the promoted tourism will change the nature of the place *"dramatically and probably irreversibly"* (Caust & Vecco, 2017, p.2). For poorer destinations, the tourism sector constitutes a rather vital source of income and thus the UNESCO "fame" might be needed. However, local communities might not always be in favour with the new fame that the UNESCO label brings to a destination.

There are different conflicts that might arise, such as political conflicts, conflicts between different stakeholders and contrasting views on how to use the destination, or if it should be used at all (Lai & Ooi, 2015; Ryan & Silvanto, 2010). Lai & Ooi argue that contestation in understanding, interpreting and recognizing the UNESCO brand belongs to national political posturing (Lai & Ooi, 2015). This affects *"local communities and transmits particular ideological messages in internationally sanctioned heritage"* (ibid., p. 276). Thus, finding an *"appropriate equitable balance between conservation, sustainability and development"* for the heritage site is to some

degree dependent on the *“degree of engagement and awareness of the local community”* (Caust & Vecco, 2017, p. 2).

## **3.2 Theoretical Approach**

*In the following chapter, we will introduce the concepts of Consumer Culture Theory and Cultural Geography, introducing concepts such as appropriation of space and cultural landscapes. This is done in relation to the more managerial perspective of destination development, involving concepts such as commodification and representation, and the power structures of these processes. At the end of the paper, an operationalisation of the theoretical approach will be offered, in order to account for the connection between the literature streams. This operationalisation will be used to analyse our data, and argue for our contribution of a sociocultural perspective on natural World Heritage sites.*

### **3.2.1 Consumer Culture Theory and meaning construction**

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) is a postmodern perspective on consumer behaviour, and focuses on the consumer as a social being. In this context, culture is regarded as the fundamental determinant of a person’s wants and behaviour (Ekström, 2010). There is a general consensus within Consumer Culture Research that the consumer can use goods as an aid to explore alternative ways of seeing oneself and the world (Sassatelli, 2015; Ekström 2010; de Certeau, 1984; Crouch, 2006).

One of the most central themes of CCT is the individual’s active participation in constructing own identity (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). de Certeau argue that consumers use commodities and their meanings in personal ways, sometimes even subversively. They appropriate the products and brands they consume, thus making them similar to themselves (de Certeau, 1984, mentioned in Sassatelli, 81). People identify with their possessions as if they were embedded in them (Ekström, 2010). The consumer can use commodities in many ways, thus transform its original meaning. Consumption of products and brands can thus also be a form of production, making the act of appropriation a reconceptualization of commodities (Sassatelli, 2015). This idea was presented by de Certeau who, in his book *Consumption of Everyday Life*, explain how consumers interpret commodities in a personal way, giving way to *“innumerable and infinitesimal transformations’ of the dominant cultural order”* (de Certeau, 1984, p. xiv). De Certeau thus argues that products can be understood in as many ways as there are individuals to make sense of them. Appropriation is

thus a production-process, whereby consumers become co-creators of meaning (ibid., 1984; Sassatelli, 2015).

### *The consumption of brands*

According to Ekström (2010), we live in a world where production and consumption are increasingly concerned with brands. Brands may differ more on a symbolic level than a functional, meaning that brands express meaning and value that is consumed by people. Ekström argues that the choice of brands is the mean by which people produce identities and create ‘the story about me’ (Ekström, 2010). In other words, a brand can be used as a tool for identity-building and storytelling. On a larger, social level, the branded world forms the culture in which we live:

*”The branded world is where images, myths, ideals and values blend together in a system of signs that form our culture. When brands are employed by consumers in everyday life, new stories emerge, identities are created and the brand becomes meaningful” (Ekström, 2010, p. 531).*

Ekström argues that the *meaning* which the brand conveys must be culturally significant, and thereby become a ”cultural artefact” that is employed by the consumer’s ongoing construction of expressive meaning which the brand represents. So, by constantly negotiating the meaning of a brand that affects a larger society, it becomes an important part of it. It can go so far that the conversation around the brand detaches from the original physical product, because it has been used and re-used as an expressive activity rather than original purpose (Ekström, 2010). When taking Ekström’s words and applying them to UNESCO, and other space-dependent brands such as Culture Capital, it is arguable that the consumption of a somewhat standardised brand such as World Heritage would become part of the society, thus ”appropriated” by the culture. The label becomes culturally significant, because of the constant meaning construction. Maybe even to the extent, Ekström says, where it is no longer about the brand (UNESCO), but about the conversation around it. However, to understand the consumption of this particular type of space-dependent brand, it is necessary to also understand the physical space to which it was given. A certain branch of literature focuses on understanding spaces: Cultural Geography.



### 3.2.2 Cultural geography and appropriation of spaces

According to Paterson (2006), Cultural Geography is about how *space* is negotiated through everyday life. In other words, how the meanings are constructed, and then re-constructed, within the physical context in which we interact. This happens socially, through the production of power relations, subjectivity and identity, which make up the culture within the space (Paterson, 2006). According to Stedman (2003), a place is a meaning-based concepts, meaning it is socially constructed. And that these meanings derive from the interaction with the physical landscape. The level to which people are attached to the landscape may differ, he argues: "*one may be satisfied with the setting but not particularly attached, and the reverse may also be true. Sense of place is therefore conceived of as encompassing meanings, attachment, and satisfaction*" (Stedman, 2003, p. 672).

Like Paterson and Stedman, Högdahl (2003) also assumes a highly sociological position in the way spaces are understood by the people interacting within them. Each space consists of different people, physical elements and history. Through ethnographic investigations, Högdahl questions *how things are*, in the sense that people have different understandings of how a place *should* be used. She gives examples of how spatial development strategies are challenged by the locals, whereby conflict can rise in the local democracy between the citizens, and those in charge (Högdahl, 2003).

*Spatial consumption* is a tricky concept to understand. Appropriation and negotiation of meaning are cultural activities that happen within a context of a space, but when the very thing that is being consumed in the physical surrounding in which appropriation and negotiations are taking place, it starts to become a very complex sociological concept. Hopefully the train of thought will become clearer in the following paragraphs:

First, a description of contextual consumption: When looking at sociocultural practices that happen within a space, consumption is one of them (Paterson, 2006). As mentioned earlier, appropriation means to take a product and filling it with personal meaning, thus embedding identity into it. The spatial context helps structure and frame the activity happening within it, meaning that consumption is framed by the area in which it takes place, and the people within it. Paterson (2006) calls it a

production of culture, meaning that culture (thereby also appropriation and negotiation of meaning) is constructed within the context of space (Paterson, 2006).

But we are not talking about consuming products within a context, we were talking about consuming the actual, spatial context itself. Paterson (2006) argues that by consuming spaces, the consumer creates his or her own meaning of the space. But even more interesting, the consumer is also given the platform for challenging his or her normative ideas of how things should be, which may change the original purpose of the space. As Högdahl puts it, spaces are used to create truth, and negotiate individual differentiations of our world (Högdahl, 2003).

If we sum this up into simpler words, it means that individuals consume spaces just like they consume products - by embedding them with meaning. Phillips brings up the expression *cultural landscapes*, which refers to a cultural linkage to a specific, natural location. He argues that practically all natural landscapes are culturally attached, through spiritual connection and cultural importance. The idea that natural sites are socially constructed is nothing new, but taking it into account in World Heritage destinations, is (Phillips, 1998). We will later refer to this as *spatial appropriation*: Embedding cultural meaning into the physical landscape.

Now, what happens when all these people with all their different appropriations meet? It creates what Högdahl calls *spatial conflict* (Högdahl, 2003), meaning a conflict about what the space is and how it should be used. It is within the space *itself* that the spatial appropriations are negotiated.

When applying the idea of spatial appropriation to a specific spatial context, such as a rural tourist destination, it means that the destination is understood differently by each individual, whether it be a tourist, business owner, politician etc. Through interaction, and negotiating meaning of the space, the destination becomes an object for individual, as well as social, consumption. According to Saraniemi & Kylänen (2011), places receive their meaning only through concrete production and consumption processes, because it is a way to contextualise the experiences in the world. The researchers argue that due to this fact it is necessary to engage in holistic planning, which includes inviting different parties to participate in the process (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011).

### ***3.2.3 Commodification, re-presentations and destination development***

What is interesting with destinations is that these spaces are per definition supposed to be consumed by tourism. A destination is a space that is *made* consumable through the practice of commodification - it is *created* to be a sellable object, or at least consist of sellable objects. Rural landscape and local rural communities, with their distinct ways of life and culture, are increasingly the targets for new tourism destinations and markets (George et al., 2009).

Hannam & Knox (2010) believe that in order to understand tourism processes and practices, it is important to understand the process of commodification (Hannam & Knox, 2010). Per definition, commodification means adding an exchange value to an object, beyond its use value. Commodification is a practice of production – of changing the original value of a space to becoming exchangeable (Hannam & Knox, 2010). This can be done through development of infrastructure, facilities, attractions support systems etc. (George et al., 2009; Lai & Ooi, 2015). George even goes as far as to declare these changes critical components in order to sustain any successful tourism development (George et al. 2009). This means that development initiatives of physical attributes and structures of a destination must be seen through, in order to carry the capacity of tourism. When this paper refers to *destination development* as a concept, it is the abovementioned researcher's definitions we refer to: The need to develop initiatives of physical attributes and structures, such as the development of infrastructure, facilities, attractions supports systems etc., in order to sustain and carry the capacity of tourism.

However, even though commodification processes are necessary in the quest of tourism, from a critical point of view, commodification processes are created in order to provide spaces, frames, and experiences, but as idealised as they might be, they are not real (Sassatelli, 2015). Sassatelli argues that tourism is built on the commercialisation of feelings and cultures, that have been pre-packaged in order to be consumed by foreigners (ibid). Paterson argues how commodification processes can never result in anything but artifice:

*"Only through artifice can the locals meet the tourist demand for authenticity. If tourists demand to see authentic nature, it will be an artificial form of authentic nature, since only through pre-packaging as a tourist site or node are tourists confident that a natural site is worthy of attention"* (Paterson, 2006, pp.135-36).

Rurality is thus packaged and sold through the use of commodification processes, produced by those in power to represent the values of the destination in easily consumable mouthfuls. It thus becomes an artificial form of authentic nature, because it was produced only to be consumed. Ryan and Silvanto (2010) point out the choosing what is being commodified is particularly important, as the consumers (tourists) are not only seeking visual satisfaction, but also intellectual satisfaction deriving from the integrity and authenticity of the commodified site (Ryan & Silvanto, 2010). This means that even though commodification is by definition creating artifice, the tourists demand authenticity and integrity. It shows how there is a fine balance of choosing the right development processes.

#### **3.2.4 Who decides destination identity?**

Those who decide what and how to commodify have power. Power to decide what is should be commodified, what the destination *is*, and how the space *should* be used (Högdahl, 2003). Commodification is an important ingredient in the creation of structures of power in that it is selective, exclusionary and regulative (Hannam & Knox, 2010). The following quote from Lai & Ooi is highly relevant for our paper, as it argues for how those in power get to choose what is being promoted, and how these choices might not be coherent with what the locals think:

*“Commercialization becomes a staple issue in World Heritage Sites. For example, local residents may have developed emotional ties and have personal stories about a site that branding authorities, foreign tourists and businesses may not appreciate. Like all place brands, a World Heritage stamp of approval can be interpreted differently by diverse audiences... What is promoted and celebrated can and will be criticized by different parties” (Lai & Ooi, 2015, p. 279).*

In other words, Lai and Ooi bring forward the likely consequence of development: When DMOs engage in development initiatives of a destination due to a World Heritage inscription, they argue that conflicts will rise between different stakeholders. The reason for conflict is, according to the researchers, that by choosing the things that should be promoted and celebrated, the locals' emotional ties and stories might not be considered. There can thus be an incongruence between the story that is being told by the DMO and the story of the locals. In such way, this paper will lean very much upon this problematization, but will offer accounts of these personal stories, and offer

more thorough explanation as to why *the promoted and celebrated* is being criticised. Lai & Ooi (2015)'s quote above shows how even though a destination becomes World Heritage, it does not necessarily translate into coherency (Lai & Ooi, 2015). This matter is further discussed in the following paragraphs in terms of politics and power, and how different stakeholders have different levels of power to manifest the identity of the destination.

### **3.2.5 Power structures**

One may wonder how destination development, with branding and commodification processes, affects the meaning of the area on which it is bestowed.

*"When a space first makes the transition into a commodity, there is often confusion, incredulity or just plain resentment, largely because of the process of exclusion that sets in"* (Hannam & Knox, 2010, p. 39).

The quote by Hannam & Knox explains what happens when a space becomes a destination. As talked about earlier, the commodification processes might not represent the emotional ties and stories of the locals. Hannam & Knox here explain the consequences of that; how the commodification of a place often results in a feeling of incredulity and resentment.

Crouch (2006) also sees the conflicts that may arise when becoming a destination, considering how a destination is *created* by those in power, in terms of meanings. It should be considered that the consumption of these representations may have an impact on identity and power within the rural culture, and the society within the destination (Crouch, 2006). This means that he is critical to the (negative) sociocultural impact that commodification has on the local society of the destination. The commodification reconfigures the area through the manifestations of discourses. Meaning that when an area becomes a destination, its original, cultural value is changed. This process does not account for subjectivity and reflexivity of the individual consumer. The individual is in fact a significant actor in constructing and making sense of the rural, and the subjective understanding of an area is lost once it undergoes commodification processes. Crouch (2006) thus means that commodification and representations, created by those in power, are supposed to represent the understandings of the

individual, but it does not (ibid.). It represents the way DMOs and politicians would like the destination to be perceived, which does not necessarily reflect the individual consumer.

In such way, several theorists agree that there is a hierarchical difference between locals and DMOs, and how one stakeholder has power to manifest certain understandings of the space (Crouch, 2006; Hannam & Knox, 2010; Högdahl, 2003; Lai & Ooi, 2015) through the choices made for the development of tangible and intangible commodification processes, i.e. attractions and storytelling. It shows how development processes are highly political. Lai and Ooi (2015) explain how this distance between the two stakeholder groups differ in experience, which is problematic when applying for a UNESCO inscription. The world heritage organisation demands local support for the inscription, but extensive communication between locals and DMOs is not a requirement. As a result, often little information about the negative impact of the UNESCO inscription is given by the DMOs (Lai & Ooi, 2015). In such way, the locals are not informed about what to expect once the area becomes a World Heritage destination. This may result in a misalignment of residents' expectations (ibid.), followed by resistance. Saraniemi & Kylänen (2003) *"encourage researchers and practitioners to ponder the relationship between production and consumption and consider how they become intertwined in the context of tourism destinations"* (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2003, p. 140). The researchers thus advocate an awareness with DMOs that also locals are part of the construction process of the destination that they are trying to develop.

### **3.2.6 Co-creation**

This far, the argument from existing literature is based on a discrepancy between those in power, and everyone else, in defining what a destination is and how it should be used. A contrast to this train of thought is Sassatelli (2015), who brings up a more sociocultural perspective that incorporates the meanings of locals in the definition-process:

*"Even in traditional and tribal societies, the members of a group don't share a single or uniform set of understandings: Culture is not something that social actors inherit as an undifferentiated block from their forebears. Culture, including culture of consumption, is a social practice which is continually accomplished in various ways by social actors who thereby overcome some differences and create others. Facing globalisation, local cultures of consumption offer both possibilities of empowerment and development, and occasions for the reproduction or creation of exclusion or disadvantage"* (Sassatelli, 2015, p. 181)

Sassatelli (2015) thus offers an explanation that accounts for differentiating understandings, which parallels with the CCT perspective. But she also mentions how social practices such as consumption are liquid and movable, because the culture we live in is continuously negotiated. It solves differences, and creates others, endlessly. This theory thus offers a new perspective to the previously mentioned theory: that understandings are provisional. So, where Oakes' prediction of the consequences of development are less than bright, Sassatelli offers a much more dynamic and forgiving future for destinations undergoing tourism development. But yet again, it is relevant to mention how Saraniemi & Kylänen (2003)'s paper concludes how there are many voices in destination development, and those in power should be aware of it. All stakeholders engage in a co-creation process, which is made complex from the variety of roles: producers, consumers, local people, and authorities. This cultural approach to tourism development *"calls for joint forums and innovative interfaces where different actors can meet each other and activities can interconnect"* (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2003, p. 140). The researchers thus point out the necessity for authorities to be aware of this interconnected production of meaning.

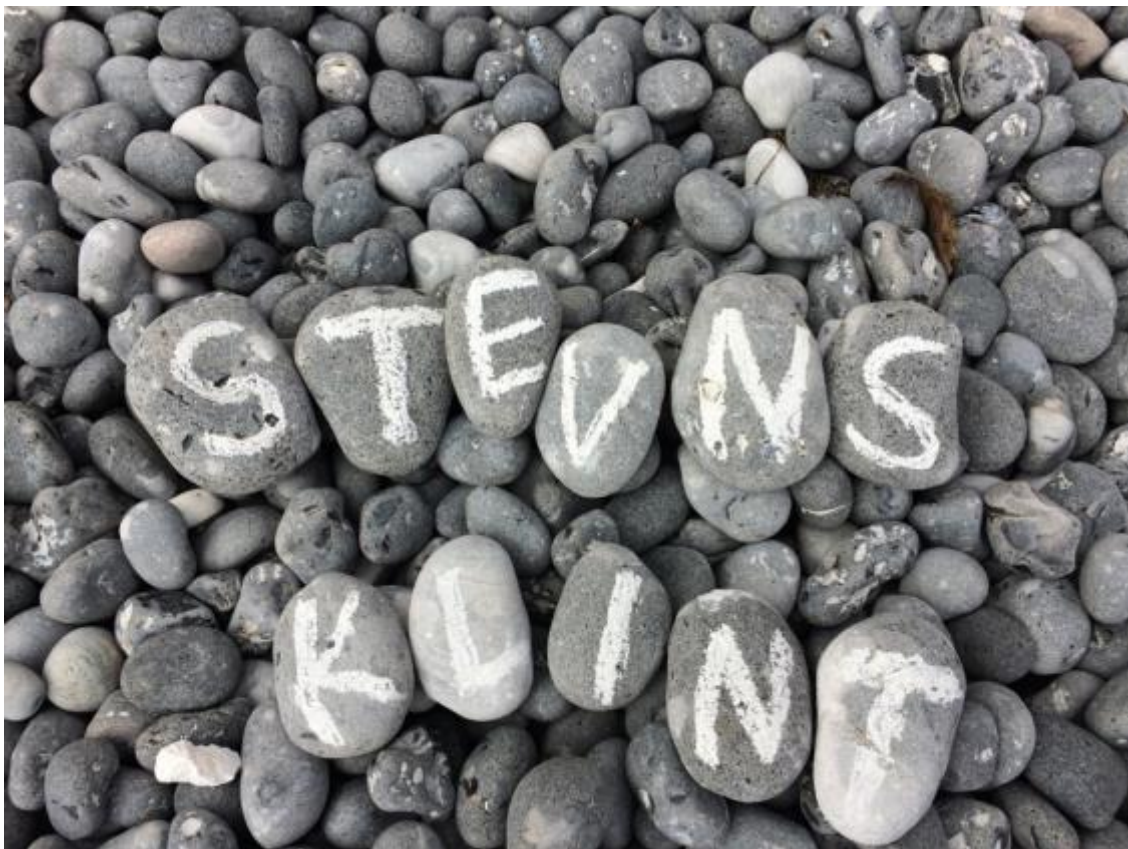
### **3.3 Operationalization of Theory**

If we sum up the train of thought in the abovementioned theoretical approach we see that destinations are spaces that have been developed and commodified. From a CCT angle, spaces are like products, meaning they are consumable. Consumers individually appropriate products by embedding meaning to them. Thus, spaces are being appropriated too, they are socially constructed through ongoing negotiations.

Now, what makes destinations special or different from spaces is that they are produced for consumption. They are produced through processes of commodification and representations. Those who develop a destination are usually DMOs, meaning they are the ones representing the space and commodifying it. They have the power to define and select the destinations meanings and can thus ultimately manifest their appropriations. This results in a hierarchical difference in between those who have power to commodify and represent, and those who merely get to embed meaning, showing the politics of representation.

Destination development theory has a much more managerial approach that does not consider the sociocultural aspects of spatial production and consumption. Our contribution is therefore the way we have approached theory within destination development; including the co-creation processes of those who do not have the power to commodify or represent. This theoretical approach will help to understand destination development from a sociocultural perspective, as it illuminates the role of locals as producers of meaning in space. It is *this* approach that guides the analysis chapter, which follows this section; the use of important concepts such as appropriations of space, cultural geography, commodification, power of representation, will create the framework from which the analysis will take place. The focus of the theoretical framework lies on Consumer Culture Theory and Cultural Geography. It consists of pre-interpretations and explanations.

It is important to mention that the theoretical approach was not fully established until after the data was gathered. The framework functions as an analytical tool and was developed and adjusted throughout the analysis and interpretation process. The theoretical approach is therefore a reflection of the findings of the paper. Our findings have thus been operationalised by theory, and not that our theory has been "proven" by our findings. It is truly a theoretical *approach* to our empirical data.





## 4. Empirical Findings

*The following text will account for our empirical findings. We start with a description of the field followed by the section "The Connection to Stevns" where we are trying to give justice to the connection between the cliff and the locals. This is necessary in order to understand why conflict arose in Stevns when it became a World Heritage destination. Later, we will try to detangle the three most heavily debated themes of development. The three conflicts are undergoing negotiation amongst the different stakeholders and the local society of Stevns. We have chosen to focus on these three examples of conflict, as they were mentioned several times in our empirical material. The following text will include statement from our respondents about their experience the development that Stevns is undergoing. But as we further analysed the narratives of these conversations, it became clear that the three development plans are the physical "objects" around which sociological conflicts are created. So, in the following part of the analysis, we will walk the reader through how these development plans are talked about, and later discuss what the conflict is based on, using theory.*

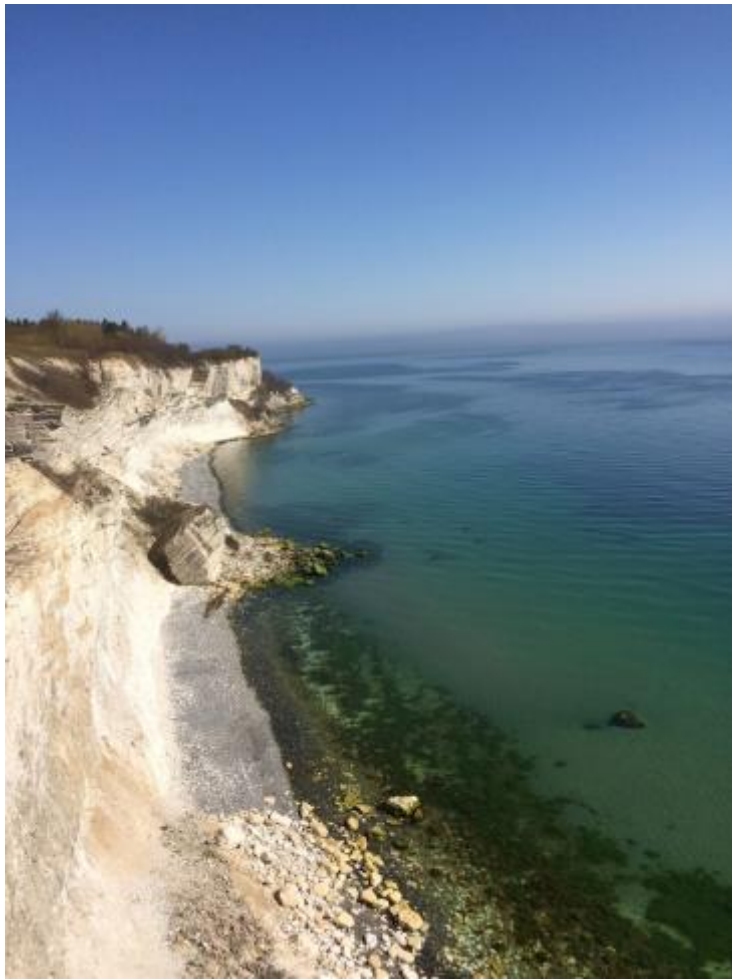
### 4.1 The Field

In order to get an idea of the context of our study and to better understand the layout of the landscape and history of the field, the following section will describe Stevns Klint.

An hour's drive south of Copenhagen, upon leaving the freeway, you feel like you are leaving one world and entering another. You drive through small villages and rural towns, in an endless net of irrational road systems. The further you go, the further it seems that you are leaving behind your everyday life, and get an escalating sensation of escapism. You cruise along a flat agricultural landscape of wheat and canola fields, with one crooked barn after another on the side of the road. There is a special light at Stevns. Somehow softer than it was just 20 km ago. Or maybe it is just me. But the further I go, the prettier things seem, and the more at peace I feel. Once in a while, the ocean shows itself, but only for a glance, then it disappears again behind a forest or a small farm. It is like the landscape is teasing you with the anticipation of what is coming.

And then you get there. The little rural town of Højerup which poses and the epicentre of the spectacle that you came here to see. And as you park the car, and walk out towards the water, it becomes quite clear just how spectacular this place is. But it is not until the landscape ends, and you find yourself standing on top of a thirty-metre-tall cliff site, and overlook the turquoise ocean, that your breath is taken away, and a feeling of grandeur overwhelms you.

(Field notes, Signe, 3rd of April 2017)



Stevns Klint is a 15 km long and up to 41-metre-high rugged coastal cliff, according to the official World Heritage Nomination written by Damholt & Surlyk (2012), Stevns Klint has the best exposed Cretaceous-Tertiary boundary in the world (Damholt & Surlyk, 2012), which means it contains the

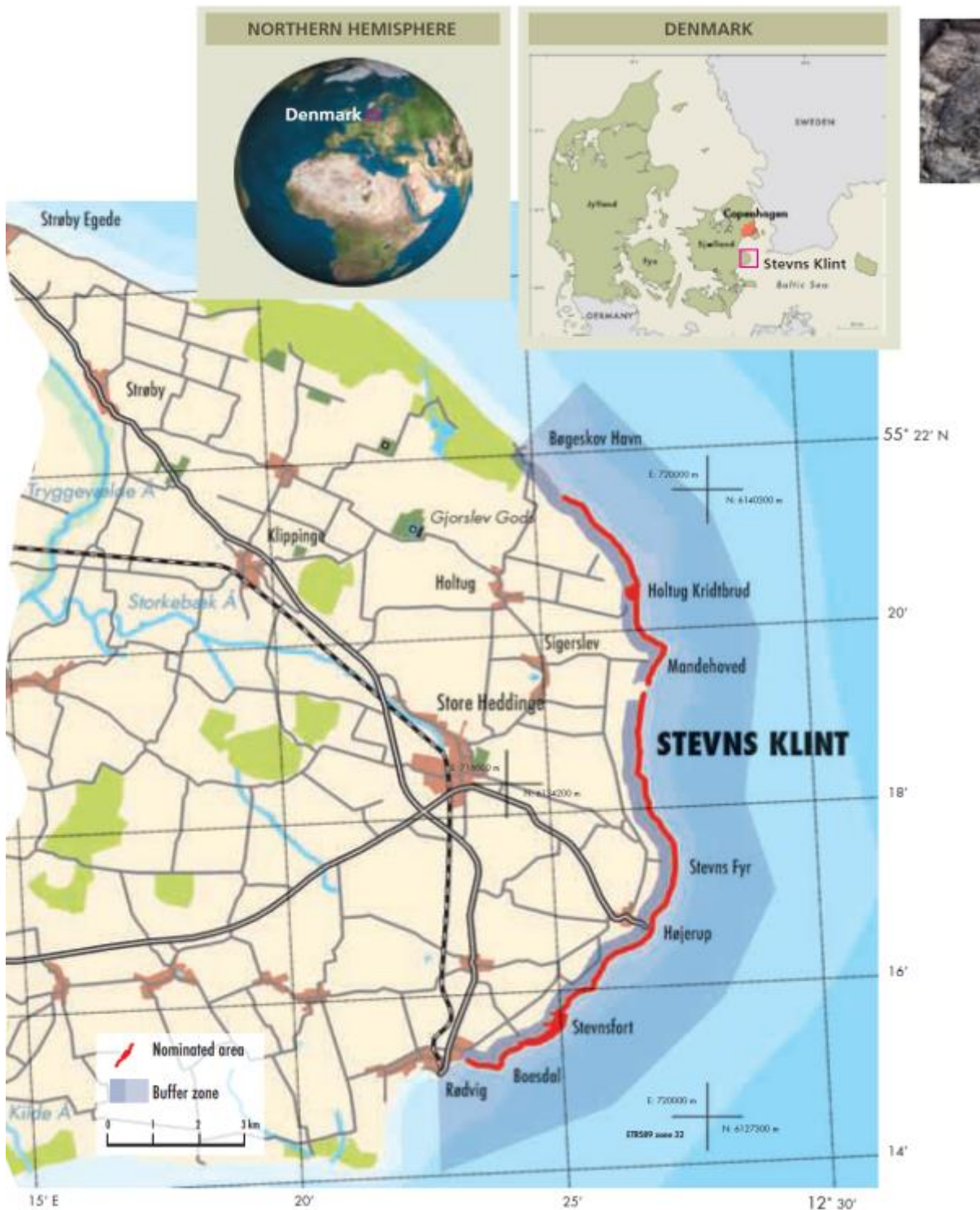


Figure 2: A map of Stevns Klint (Source: Damholt & Surlyk, 2012)



most visible proof worldwide of a meteorite hitting earth 65 million years ago, that resulted in a mass extinction. Besides this very important fish clay-layer that proves the history of life, the cliff also shows other geological boundaries and layers of both older and younger character. Helle, who is a ranger and tour guide, told us that human existence is maybe only the top centimetre, and the cliff is 40 metres high in some places - just to put things in perspective.



The inland area consists of a few small villages, and agricultural land which often been passed on within the same family for generations. Stevns itself is, as you can see on the map, a peninsula located about one hour south of Copenhagen. The main tourism stream are day tourists, bicycle tourists travelling on the Berlin-Copenhagen bike trail, and summer campers visiting some of the camping sites close to Rødvig where the cliff turns into a sandy beach. Rødvig is a small town with an idyllic harbour, where you can buy a traditional Danish ice cream cone in the summer, or enjoy some smørrebrød and a cold beer. Like in many other countries, the local harbour cities poses as a local watering hole during the summer, and Rødvig is no exception. The "capital" of Stevns is St.

Heddinge, where the offices of the municipality, DMOs, and World Heritage Secretariat is also located. The town also has a few clothing shops, some super markets, a bakery, and a train station. North of Rødvig, the limestone quarry Boesdal is located. It is not functioning as a quarry anymore, but poses as a site for role plays, fire festivals, and the location of the soon-to-be Stevns tourist Centre.

Next stop along the cliff is Højerup, where day-trippers are most likely to start their cliff-experience. Højerup is, according to the official World Heritage Nomination, the classical tourist site of Stevns Klint (Damholt & Surlyk, 2012). It is no wonder that the cliff site of Stevns Klint, and the rural town of Højerup has been the destination for many day excursions in centuries. Upon entering the town, you pass a big pond before coming to the parking lot and the cliff site. During the summer, there are several ice cream shops open, and the local restaurant is well liked by tourists. Then there is the famous church on the edge of the cliff. Centuries ago, it was actually situated far



inland, but as time passed, and the ocean devoured the cliff bit by bit, the church came nearer and nearer the edge. In 1928, the wall facing the sea dramatically plunged into the abyss, and several lives were lost. Today, the church is still almost hanging off the edge, but is supported by a concrete fundament, and the waves are kept at bay with a stone barrier in the water. It is therefore safe to enter the church, although one does feel a slight chill of fear as you enter. The feeling is though quickly replaced with awe, upon looking out the open door at the alter that leads to a small balcony, and all you can see is crystal clear blue water and blue sky. Just a little north of Højerup one finds the Stevns Fyr (lighthouse), and the remanence from a Cold War

fortress and installations that were running until 2002. It is very easy to walk along the cliff site all the way from Rødvig in the south, to the lighthouse further north (where a staircase will be build, letting tourists have a close look layers in the cliff). One can even to continue all the way up to Bøgeskoven, where Stevns Klint ends, along a walking path of 15 km, called Trampestien. The path

takes you along great fields of wheat and potatoes, farms, and rugged viewpoints over the ocean without any safety installations. There are 5 official staircases down to the water along this stretch, but the most used one is in Højerup. Following is an extract from one authors description of the cliff:

The cliff is stunning and since there are almost no other people around us it gives an immediate feeling of relaxation, it makes you want to think big thoughts. Two people are kayaking and it looks like the best thing to do here - exploring the cliff from the seaside and enjoying the calm and idyllic scenery. Two other people are walking along the cliff with their dog but besides that there are no more people around. It is exactly this loneliness and relaxing silence that make the impression so stunning and the experience as a whole very authentic. Closed to the edge of the cliff is a bench that overlooks the sea and cliff site. We sat there in silence and enjoyed the view for a while. Being so close to the sea, the cliff and all of that in a very vast, authentic setting makes you want to sit there forever.

(Field notes, Alicia, 3rd of April 2017)

The description of the field and the map given above will hopefully help the reader understand which places are mentioned during the analysis, as well as give the reader a feeling of the destination.



## 4.2 The connection to Stevns Klint

It is important that the reader understands what this place means to the people who live along the edge of the cliff, and even quite far inland. During our field study in the area along the cliff site, it became very clear from the stories we heard, that the cliff site has an important place in the locals' hearts. Many have lived here all their lives, taken over the family farm, or have moved back here after some time on the "outside".

Helle        "[The cliff] was our playground. We were up and down and we would have ropes, we were climbing up and down, we slipped down there and ... I've slipped there so many times underneath Højerup Lund north of the church. And we have been biking! If you go maybe five or six hundred meters south of the church there was some hills, Seven Hills we call them. Because it has been an old limestone quarry, and all the leftovers were there. So, it was the Seven Hills and we biked there. It was halfway down the cliff, you know, down there, and we imagined that if we ever come up behind the seventh hill, maybe there was a troll or something. So, for us children it was like, a little scary and we were not allowed to do it for our parents when we were small. And they have been doing exactly the same thing, and they were not allowed when they were children."

This story by Helle is especially wonderful, because when reading it, you can almost feel the sun in your face and the tickles in your belly. One can hear how these happy memories are, and what they mean to her. From a more ethnographic perspective, it describes a ritual and a story that has been repeated in generation, making it thick with authenticity. Helle is not the only one who told stories like this. When the locals were asked about how the cliff was special to them, many of them told stories about how they would go swimming in the ocean many times a day during summer with the neighbour kids, or how they tied ropes to the small oak trees on the top, and free climbed down the limestone cliff site, and had fallen down and scraped their knees in the attempt. New-comers explained how they had chosen to give up life in busy Copenhagen for the beauty and solitude of Stevns, because it was so far away from everything else. It goes to show that there is a deep, almost spiritual connection to the cliff and the surrounding land. This is common for all locals, not dependent on their role in the community: whether they are working for the municipality, whether they have recently moved to the area, or lived there all their lives. It is *very* special to all of them.

And therefore, it comes as no surprise that the same people felt very proud when the world-renowned conservation organisation UNESCO also saw the cliff site as something special from a

geological perspective, and granted it the title as a World Heritage site of natural importance. The community were very excited, and hosted a big party, with about a 1000 tourists. Naja told us that it showed her that it had connected the people of Stevns:

Naja                    This is something to be very proud of. And that Stevns people in general think it's very important that everybody wanted to join this celebration of „yeah, we made it” and we had a lot of singing and dancing and music and World Heritage beer, World Heritage Hot-dogs. It was just a wonderful day and I think this is just a tiny sign of how that can lift a whole society. And as you, Ditte, said „to create something new to gather around.

Naja speaks about how the united front on the UNESCO pride showed her that we can lift the whole society together. There are two interesting aspects in that. First, she talks about UNESCO being the incentive for destination development, which several theorists agree with her in. Several of the other respondents mentioned the same; How UNESCO would be a lever for economic development (Bjarne, interview), how it will hopefully help small business settle in the area (Kathrine, interview), how tourism in general will contribute to the growth, wealth, profit and pride of the region (Thor, interview), and the start of creating a good experience for the tourists (Claus, interview; Helle, interview).

So, following the World Heritage inscription, and the exposure that the area undergoes, the politicians in the municipality and the DMOs decided to consider development initiatives that would benefit the experience that the tourist has when visiting Stevns. The second aspect that Naja mentions in the statement above is how they believe UNESCO could create something new to gather around. How UNESCO would unite Stevns around a common theme. This is, however, where things did not unfold as planned.

We knew when we chose Stevns as the object of our field study that the area had undergone a political storm, but did not fully understand why, so we actually did not think it too relevant for our paper. It was not until we came to Stevns, and talked with politicians, business owners, locals, land owners, and DMOs that it became evident how the conflicts that the area had experienced had changed the very foundation of the World Heritage pride. The conflicts described were diverse, and heavily loaded with personal opinions, relations, and a desperation for communication. We could



not overlook how the data that we came home with was infused with frustration from all sides of the discussion. How complex it all was.

And so, this leads us to a thick description of how the meaning of the land is socially constructed in the means of appropriation, identity, power, politics and legitimacy, in an account of differentiating opinions on what the land should be used for. How disagreement has led to broken friendships and relations. And how the cliff is appropriated by many, but only manifested by few. It is very important to mention that this paper is not a published description of diverse arguments. It is neither a political debate. And it is certainly not a normative argument on how to go about destination development. The reader should instead see it as an account of understandings, of how much people care for the land, and how much they are willing to sacrifice for its safe-keeping. Only safe-keeping has a different meaning depending on who you ask. So, to sum up, we went to Stevns with the very inductive intention of studying what happens when a rural community is turned into a World Heritage destination. It turned out that constructing a new identity, and uniting people behind it, does not exactly happen overnight, and even after three years, the storm still has not settled. This means that this paper has turned out to be an ethnographic account of the change process, whereby the already established meanings of a space are in the midst of being negotiated. A local paradigm shift, so to say. The paper will therefore be an attempt to, through thick description, account for these negotiations.

### **4.3 The Visitor Centre**

One of the development initiatives is to build a Visitor Centre, in order to provide a place where tourists can be informed about the uniqueness of Stevns Klint. It is not a novel idea, in fact it was already considered back in the 90's when the little local museum in Højerup bought the land surrounding the museum, in order to build a large construction with underground tunnels, that would allow very close views of the different cliff layers. The debate about where the Visitor Centre should be started off with thinking of Højerup. Thomas talked about how everyone expected it to be in Højerup, because the museum was out there and the whole communication about Stevns Klint has always gone out from there. Most locals describe Højerup as the centre of Stevns Klint as it is the place people would visit when wanting to see the cliff. *"Because when people come here they come because of the cliff site and the old church, they won't come because of a Visitor Centre"* (Kirsten, interview).

It was then decided that the Visitor Centre should be in Boesdal. Many people reacted surprised and angry. Helle mentioned how she thinks it is "completely wrong, because that is a scar in the landscape (Boesdal is), they do not have fish clay unless you go 5 metres down, 3 metres... so it is not naturally created! Højerup is" (Helle, interview).

Frank, Helle and Claus told us that there were a few people from Højerup who were not so happy with the thought of a Visitor Centre there. However, these very few voices were completely misunderstood by the municipality, as being representative for the whole town. It ended up as being interpreted that the Højerup-locals in general are against a Visitor Centre in Højerup, which supposedly affected the decision of putting it in Boesdal instead. Since many mentioned how is not „true" that the people in Højerup did not want the Visitor Centre there, they were actually upset and confused that it would not be there. Claus even referred to a survey that stated how 80% of the locals would vote for a Visitor Centre in Højerup.

Claus            It is NOT like locals don't want the Visitor Centre to be in Højerup! But if you look at the survey which was done about the matter, 80% of people want it in Højerup, that we always want tourists and it is good for the 'pulse'.

Kirsten feels that a Visitor Centre in Boesdal would *"move the focus from what is important*. The people we talked to, that think Højerup would have been the right place for the Visitor Centre, also feel that the municipality does not see the "grandeur" of Højerup and that Boesdal is missing the *"waow-effect"* (Helle, interview) that Højerup would offer, which Claus also talks about:

Claus            I believe they should have focused on the grandeur of this part of the cliff, and think Louisiana, and unlimited possibilities.

The Visitor Centre is planned as a quite big one. Peer on the contrary, thinks that Stevns Klint does not need a big Visitor Centre, but if there should be a big one then it should not be in Højerup. *„I would like a very beautiful, little tourist Shop/Office in Højerup. And it should be very beautiful made, fantastic architecture, not big but enough to give the interesting information"* (Peer, interview). He believes that a bigger Visitor Centre in Højerup would risk destroying the feeling that you get when you go there.

One year after the UNESCO inscription the municipality arranged a World Heritage Day that served as an open dialogue about different matters concerning Stevns and the development plans. Everyone was able to hand in questions and topics they would like to be discussed. The mayor was the representative to answer those questions. Naja and Ditte told us how people spoke up especially regarding their anger about the decisions on where to build a Visitor Centre. Overall the whole decision has been a massive debate and locals felt that it had *"just been decided"* without letting people have a say in that matter (Helle, interview and Kirsten, interview).

The politicians and DMO however believe that the Visitor Centre will be great in Boesdal, *"it is where the opportunities are"* (Thomas, interview). There are also some local events arranged in Boesdal. Naja sees this as an opportunity to fit in many interest of what people would like to do along the cliff (e.g. biking, diving, paragliding etc.). Thor emphasised the beneficial infrastructure and surroundings of Boesdal.

Thor                    I like to think as the World Heritage as being the whole cliff – [...] not just the Visitor Centre. They talk about pearls on a string: If you take the beginning in Boesdal Visitor Centre then you have a possibility of visiting other pearls later and visiting the whole cliff.

This DMO sees Boesdal with its' own limestone quarry history as well connected to the overall story of Stevns Klint. In such way, there are different ideas as to where it would make most sense to put the tourist Centre.

#### **4.4 The staircase at the lighthouse**

A staircase is planned to be built on the same ground as the lighthouse, and the Cold War installation which was functioning until 2002. The initiative to build a staircase is led by a big Danish foundation that has a programme which picks ten places in the outskirts of Denmark that they want to improve as a site. Thus, it is not the DMO or municipality itself who is implementing the staircase.

There are two conflicts connected to the staircase. First, we will talk about how locals have felt frustrated to not be part of the conversation, and afterwards we will account for how some locals think a World Heritage staircase in a Cold War memorial is contradictory.

The process for making a staircase has been kept behind closed doors, and this has made several locals express a feeling of decisions being made "behind the back" of the locals, no one actually got to have a say in this. Peer for example mention how there was an information meet with more than 80 attendance saying they do not want a staircase, but "they said it is not a discussion meeting it is an information meeting." The decision was made and the official meeting for this was an information meeting, but not open for discussion anymore. But what is interesting is that the local DMOs were not included in the conversation either:

Naja ...We didn't even know about it, we couldn't get any updates. So, it was like local people had no chance to know what was going on...I think the major problem was, I think if I would have been a local, that everything was closed. No dialog at all until it was ready.

Naja described how these kinds of conflicts have been really frustrating because they make people lose their trust in the DMO and the municipality. She pointed out how it made locals suspicious that they did not know what was going to happen with the staircase. It affected her work in Højerup, and her legitimacy. The locals could not tell apart the big external foundation who did not disclose any information, and Naja who works locally. It was hard for the locals to differentiate between "*us and them - because we are not them*" (Naja, interview), meaning "they", those who make the decisions without the local society is not the DMO but it is the aforementioned Danish foundation. She is frustrated because even though she and the rest of the team really try to communicate that they are protectors and developers, with consideration to sustainable development, some of the trust is lost in lack of communication (Naja, interview). Especially Claus pointed out that he had felt how the DMOs had not listened, but that they did not have to, because they are so powerful.



There is a second conflict surrounding the staircase. The staircase should allow tourists to have a closer look at the different layers of the cliff, especially the layer of fish clay. From the point of the DMO the staircase is a good way to tell the story and to let people experience the geology and to let them see the layer of fish clay. However, Peer think that this man-made lookout point is not needed to achieve this close view, but there are many other places along the cliff where people could just walk a few meters and have the same experience. Further concerns regard the place where the staircase should be. The area of the lighthouse is a Cold War memorial, actually one of the last ones left in Denmark. Thus, building a staircase there would mix up identities, and even worse "overshadow" the Cold War history.

Naja            There is a very strong connection with the Cold War and people working there in the area with the Cold War history. [...] It's not that long time ago that it was still working as a lighthouse, it had a very different role.

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Peer            you take away an authentic Cold War monument and it should be forbidden [...]. All this funny things they will do out at the Fyr (lighthouse) is for me to see as a total mistake.”

Both respondents point out how the location of the staircase has a strong identity as a Cold War memorial, that is fresh in people's minds. Peer wants to preserve this authenticity, can therefore believe it to be a mistake to build a World Heritage-related staircase there. Anni, who works at the lighthouse, is very fond of her little piece of heaven on earth, because she is in touch with the beautiful nature. *“It is what we like here”* she told us, but did not wish to give her opinion about the new development initiative (Anni, interview).

Others, however, are very verbal in their frustration, like Peer was. Claus called the staircase a monster (Claus, interview). The stretch of cliff between the lighthouse and Højerup has been described as one of the most stunning parts of the cliff, especially when seeing it from the seaside (Helle, interview and Peer, interview). Peer is concerned that a staircase right at the cliff would destroy this great view and the authentic moment. Another issue is the material of the staircase, as it will be made of steel which will eventually rust and cover the white cliff. *“They want to make the staircase out of iron – which will make rust, and rust on a white cliff...will make it ‘the red cliff of Stevns’?”* (Peer, interview). So, the way he enjoys experiencing and using the cliff might be affected by this new staircase.

## 4.5 Trampestien & the Conservation Act

*Note for the reader: This case has become a legal matter, and it is therefore important to mention that the following description is nothing but an analysis of the understandings that we have encountered from various stakeholders in the case. It is not an account of legal arguments. It is an analysis of spoken words, and should be read for the sake of discussing the possible underlying reasons for the conflict from a sociocultural perspective.*



The walking path called Trampestien is a narrow trail that runs along the cliff site from Rødvig in the south, all the way to Bøgeskoven in the north. It was founded back in the 1990s by Peer Nørgaard, who is one of our respondents. Visiting as a tourist, the authors of this paper enjoyed a walk on Trampestien, as it led us into unspoiled landscape, with fields on one side, and the cliff and the water on the other, creating a sense of escapism, and getting in touch with nature and self. However, even though Trampestien is a wonderful opportunity for the tourists to get in touch with the nature and wildlife of Stevns, it has been a topic of conflict from time to time for several decades. Peer told us how he has struggled getting the initiative

going, as there are many locals whose house is located on the edge of the cliff, meaning that the path would walk through their gardens. In the end, he managed to make an agreement with all land owners, who signed a contract stating that the walking path was allowed to cross their land (Peer, interview, supported by stories by Frank and Michael, interview). It is this contract that has ensured Trampestiens existence until today.

Stevns municipality has now applied for safeguarding the cliff through the Danish Society for Nature Conservation (Dansk Naturfredningsforening), as an addition to being a World Heritage site. Bjarne has been in charge of the application process of the Conservation Act of the cliff, including 25 metres of the agricultural land, to be safeguarded. The arguments for the safeguarding of the cliff

and the land just above it, are mentioned on the municipality's website (Østergaard Rasmussen, 2017), and could be summed into 5 main points:

- Safeguarding the geological value of unique global importance
- Ensure a well-kept diversity of animals and plants in their natural habitat
- Ensure that the public has good access to the abovementioned geological and natural values. This includes bettering recreational activities and experiences connected to the cliff.
- Safeguarding the cultural heritage of the site, through proper communication with the tourist.
- All in all, "general sustainability and good management of the exploration, the public access, and the communication of the values of the cliff" (Østergaard Rasmussen, 2017).

(Bjarne is listed on the website as the spokesman, and has therefore been cited as the author of the points above). The points argue that the Conservation Act should be accepted because it would ensure that the natural and cultural values cannot be tampered with, and that they can be enjoyed by tourists for all future generations. Once a Conservation Act is granted, it cannot ever be repealed. This means that long as the state of Denmark exists, Stevns Klint will be safeguarded from all human tampering. Bjarne told us that he feels it is necessary to apply this ultimate safety insurance to the cliff, to ensure that it can be enjoyed by others for many years to come. Specifically, he was concerned that the land owners might go back on their word, and not let the tourists walk on their land, meaning that Trampestien would disappear, and how *"that would be terrible"* (Bjarne interview)

However, there are many people who do not share his vision for the Conservation Act. Specifically, the land owners who have their land and even their house located on the edge of the cliff would be bothered if too many tourists would not follow the rules (Frank, interview), for example by walking through their gardens or using their private staircases down to the water. Frank told us that he actually does not mind the tourists, but in our interpretation, he meant that they are welcome as long as they do not cause trouble, or bother the residents. He therefore sees it as a problem that the municipality, in his eyes, has not been very efficient in ensuring proper signage and rules of conduct for the tourists. This means that some land owners are affected by tourism as things are today. In such way, there were two larger concerns expressed by the two land owners we talked to (Michael, interview and Frank, interview): The first was that their feeling of ownership would be lost (which



Bjarne confirmed, interview), and the second was the fact that their privacy would be lost. With the Conservation Act, they would lose all power over parts of their land, in such a way that they could not even cut down a tree without formally applying for it. And that tourists would walk around their house, but cut the trip short through the garden, making the women sunbaking topless highly uncomfortable (Frank, interview).

And these two feelings could have been avoided, Frank said, if the municipality had kept the previously signed agreement. In our understanding, the land owners are very frustrated that they need to have this uncomfortable fight, because things worked out just fine before. And especially because they feel that their support of the UNESCO inscription is now being used against them. Here we touch upon an interesting (second) conflict: Our respondent generally brought up the Conservation Act conflict in relation to the UNESCO inscription. Meaning, when we asked our respondents about the development that the area had undergone since the inscription, this particular topic was brought up by no less than eight out of eleven. But depending on who you ask, there are different arguments on whether the two are actually connected or not.

Bjarne                    UNESCO asked why it had not been safe guarded. Why do you not do it? And we said to UNESCO we want to have the yes from you first, because we knew the problem would start when we started the conservation process of klinten. And maybe it would disturb so much that we could not have the yes from UNESCO

Bjarne thus argues that UNESCO had wondered why the area was not already safeguarded by a Conservation Act, to which he replied that they needed UNESCO to be sought out first. However, Michael and Frank believes that UNESCO is being used as an illegitimate argument in the matter. Michael believes that the municipality and the DMOs and using the World Heritage label as an excuse to develop a public walking path and let the tax payers pay for it. *”Actually, the Conservation Act is irrelevant in relation to UNESCO. But the Conservation Act has come in because UNESCO is a horse you can ride for other purposes”*. In this case, a) to force the development of a public walking path, and b) for political positioning (which this paper does not concern itself with).

The land owners were actually proud that Stevns was considered by UNESCO, and they had openly supported the notion. UNESCO therefore got a feeling of unified local support. And this is why,

Michael said, that the land owners now feel great bitterness, because they felt that it was, afterwards, used as a weapon against them. (Michael, interview). Frank supports this feeling by saying that the general thought is that it is very unfair, almost an assault of people's privacy, and the treatment has been so bad. And what is at stake is their way of life:

Frank                We WANT to live there. We chose to live far out. To be able to walk around butt naked. We established a life where others would not dream to live. It is our place. And yes, we are very happy with it. I swim in the water 3 times a day during the summer.

The three abovementioned conflicts were the most referred to by our respondents, independent on stakeholder role. Arguably, we have accounted for the most debated development strategies of Stevns. They show how there are very differentiating ideas on how to develop Stevns into becoming a World Heritage destination, and how several locals are frustrated with how these development initiatives affect their way of life. Also, the conflicts have taken up a large portion of attention. Thomas also points this out, by stating that specifically the conflicts about the Visitor Centre and the Conservation Act as the *"two trees that broke out the whole forest"*. He told us how these two issues run the whole debate, they are the core of occurring conflicts.

Thomas              I actually don't think that, you know, in itself becoming a UNESCO world site and that others things that happen with more tourists and that interests have had significant influence on people's perception. I think those two political discussion have had a lot. But also, it could be that I miss the details because of these two really big trees that broke out the whole forest. But it was more or less like that I think. That really build up a lot to argue, I guess you know that and you can see the press on it, and people have been writing letters and meetings and all kind of things...

His statement is interesting, because it argues that the conflict is actually not related to UNESCO, but to the development strategies that were developed after. And how conversation has become about these two conflicts *only*, so it is hard to see any other points.

Almost all respondents mentioned how the conflicts and discussions have been very emotional, and how politics are always about feelings (Claus, Helle, Bjarne, Thor interview. It has created many controversies, and several bonds have been broken. Bjarne gave up his political position for his belief in the need of a Conservation Act. Several respondents told stories about how friendships

have broken, how many people still cannot stand the sight of each other. Claus tells us that he does not greet people in Højerup who do not want tourism development in the little village:

Claus                    There is animosity, hatred, there are people here in town who have been against the development, and we do not even say hi anymore. And it is very sad. It is so much emotion.

The narrative amongst the DMOs is about how it has been hard in the municipality to agree on the right development. And they are feeling that the big challenge has been to unite all locals around the same identity. Thor wants locals to realise we all want the tourists to have a good experience, that we are not competition but collaboration, we need to work together so that the tourists *meet Stevns*. Ditte thinks local people need to know that we are a united voice talking. "*So that everybody has said 'yes, this is what we do'*" (Ditte, interview). But amongst the locals, the narrative is different. Thomas perceives the local's frustrations as being due to the way the municipality and the political system has handled the destination development. It has been heavily influenced by disagreement, as the DMOs mentioned themselves. And this is also our perception from the interviews: The locals are frustrated with the mismanagement by "those in charge".

With the abovementioned three conflicts, we have introduced the reader to the fact that three different destination development initiatives, created by the DMOs, have been received with different reactions by the locals and stakeholders. It becomes clear that there are different, and sometimes opposing ideas about how to develop Stevns with tourism in mind, depending on who you ask. Therefore, it becomes clear that our research question is still relevant: Destination development does create conflict. Our abovementioned empirical findings support this notion. However, our research question asks *why* this happens. *Why does destination development in a newly inscribed WH destination create conflict between stakeholders?* Specifically, why can the stakeholders in Stevns not agree on where the Visitor Centre should be? Why are people so upset about the staircase being built next to the lighthouse? And why are the land owners upset that the municipality wants to safeguard and expand Trampesten? The following section will hopefully answer this, by operationalising the existing theory of destination development, but also incorporating theory from CCT and Cultural Geography.

## 5. Analysis of the conflicts

*The three abovementioned conflicts are to serve as foundation for discussing the reasons for why the conflicts happened, as stated in our research question. By using theory, we will try to unravel the underlying themes that the three cases have in common, in order to be able to lift the result of our field study to a level where it can be applied to UNESCO destination research in general. Through applying CCT and Cultural Geography to the conversation the analysis synchronises the managerial perspective on destination development with a sociocultural perspective, in order to understand the conflicts. First, we introduce our empirical result, which is the narratives of our respondents, in the way they talk about Stevns, the cliff, and the people they share it with. After, we will use theory to analyse it. We will start by talking about "Appropriation of Space", arguing for why conflicts have risen due to meaning and identity being embedded into the cliff. This is followed by a discussion. The second part "Power, Representations and Exclusion" offers an understanding of the power relations when negotiating the meaning of space, the commodification process and representation of space. This part is followed by a discussion. The third section will show how the arising conflicts are about so much more than UNESCO.*

### 5.1 Stevns residents embed their identity in the cliff

All three aforementioned conflicts show opinions and ways of thinking which can be related to the thought that our respondents engage in the consumption activity of appropriation of space. As mentioned earlier, appropriation refers to how consumers interpret commodities in a personal way, giving way to "innumerable and infinitesimal transformations' of the dominant cultural order" (de Certeau, 1984, p. xiv). *Appropriation of space* thus refers to the process of adding individual meaning to the space that is being consumed.

Kirsten captured appropriation perfectly, by expressing how she finds the currently decided location of the Visitor Centre (in Boesdal) silly and sad. She thinks it will result in people not visiting it, "because when people come here they come because of the cliff site and the old church, they won't come because of a Visitor Centre [in Boesdal]... That would lose sight of what is important" (Kirsten, interview). Her statement is highly interesting for several reasons. First of all, she states that the reason to come to Stevns is to see the cliff and the church. And both these things are in Højerup. She thereby states that the only reason to come to Stevns can be found in Højerup. She is referring to her understanding about Højerup being the real place to see the cliff, and that *this* experience is what tourists come for.

Second, Kirsten also explains how tourists do *not* come to Stevns to see a Visitor Centre in Boesdal. A Visitor Centre is supposed to be a consumable representation of Stevns Klint, and she thereby refers to the falseness of a re-presentation.

If we put these two things together (which places that are real, and which experiences that are false) Kirsten's narrative shows how there are places that shows off Stevns Klint better than others. She does not think Boesdal is the right place for a Visitor Centre, because it is not what people want to experience, in her mind. It is not what is *important*. This shows us that, in her mind, Højerup is more legitimate in expressing the "true" identity of Stevns Klint. Putting the Visitor Centre in Boesdal affects the authenticity of the experience, specifically because it does not possess the same level of authenticity that Højerup does - which she thinks will maybe result in a loss of interest from the tourists. She thus thinks that tourists are not interested in visiting what she thinks is an inauthentic representation, when the realness is placed somewhere else. She is referring to what she thinks is the legitimate, *true* experience. As Högdahl puts it, spaces are used to create truth (Högdahl, 2003).

This is further strengthened by Thomas saying that the Visitor Centre was *expected* to be in Højerup, making it clear that there is a general consensus about Højerup being the centre for tourism consumption. Putting it in Boesdal has created *confusion* (Helle, Frank & Claus, interview).

If we apply a CCT perspective on this, it becomes clear that Kirsten, along with Thomas, Helle, Frank and Claus have conceptualised Højerup to be the true identity of Stevns Klint. It relates to Paterson (2006)'s statement that by consuming spaces, the consumer creates his or her own meaning of the space. They understand Højerup as the epicentre of the cliff site. They have embedded Højerup with authenticity, to an extent that other places cannot match. This becomes clear in narratives such as Helle seeing it as a better representation of nature, because Boesdal is man-made. Thomas sees it as the centre of communication, because the museum has always been in Højerup, so the communication about the cliff and its geological value has always come from here.

But this is interesting, because that means that even though they agree on the location, it is for different reasons. Højerup is the best place for putting representations of Stevns, but the argumentation as to *why* changes, depending on who is asked. This is a very clear example of

*individual appropriation*, of embedding different meanings into the cliff. The example of the Visitor Centre is therefore theoretically interesting, because normally appropriations are individual, thus "innumerable" as de Certeau says. But this is an appropriation of space that is actually agreed upon and shared by many, and even made clear by the politicians and DMOs in the UNESCO application. So, even though these respondents all agree the Visitor Centre should be Højerup, they have different reason as to *why*.

It does not stop there: Another dimension of the same phenomenon is that there are different ideas as to *what kind* of Visitor Centre would best represent Stevns. Claus believes that the spectacle of the cliff should be represented in the building, and the DMOs should not be afraid of thinking Louisiana (a museum of arts north of Copenhagen with spectacular architecture). Peer also wants a place of "*amazing architecture*" but does not mind if it is smaller, and fit into the petite village and the simple way of life there. In this way, the actual manifestation of the appropriations is discussed: How do we create something that reflects Højerup best? (And as we just said before, Højerup represents Stevns Klint, so it is rather about what reflects Stevns Klint best). Claus thinks the best representation is grandeur, Peer with simplicity. So even though the respondents agree that the Visitor Centre should be in Højerup, they also have different ideas as to *how*.

This shows that both the way the Visitor Centre is built, as well as where it is being build, says something about the place and the people. And this is where conflicts happen. The Visitor Centre is in fact a building made solely for the sake of being a consumable representation of the cliff (Paterson, 2006). It is where tourists will go and "experience" the cliff (which is paradoxically just outside the door, but that is a whole different discussion). However, being a representation, the Visitor Centre also becomes a symbol, or figure head of Stevns Klint. Meaning that the way the area is understood becomes manifested in the physical object that is being consumed. It becomes a manifestation of Stevnsness, making it one grand appropriation. And conflict rises when the representation of Stevns is put in a place that most people do not see as the best representation of Stevnsness.

In such way, the conflict is based on certain places having certain meanings, and people do not agree on these. This idea is linked to Ekström's theory about individuals embedding identity into objects of consumption. In this case, embedding in Højerup the identity of being the most legitimate

representation of Stevns. Kirsten, and others, who believe Højerup to be the classical centre of tourism, have embedded exactly that identity into the space. So, when higher powers manifest a new identity that contradict the old one, it is bound to create conflict.

This touches upon the politics of representation, which Sassatelli (2010) talks about. Representations are selectively taken up, thus only representing certain symbolic meanings. This gives them power, or rather those who choose the representations, power. Summed up into one (very long) sentence, it becomes clear that there are many appropriations, but only one opportunity to manifest them, giving those operational powers over the Visitor Centre the delicate task of creating something that accounts for as many appropriations as possible, or the most generally accepted understanding.

In such way, the Visitor Centre has become the object around which the idea of what a space is and how it should be used (Högdahl, 2003) is being negotiated. In this negotiation, the local's normative ideas of how things should be, are challenged by those in power to manifest new identities, which may change the original purpose of the space (ibid.) (We will talk more about the power structures of destination development later in the analysis). The Visitor Centre is therefore a textbook example of a spatial conflict, and relates to the theories of cultural geography.

A similar example of how a space possess certain identities, that are being challenged, is the staircase at the lighthouse. It will be placed on top of a memorial from the Cold War that was operating until 2002, which means that the space's use-value is still very fresh in mind for many locals. The particular space has an already strongly manifested identity. And like the Visitor Centre, higher powers are trying to manifest a new identity to the site as yet another place to consume the cliff, and arguably the World Heritage. So, the mixture of identities, of what the space is and how it should be used, creates conflict. Peer and Helle for example feel that especially the cliff around the light house would be experienced best from the seaside, and a staircase would ruin the currently beautiful view as well as the authentic moment. Anni, who works at the lighthouse, feels personally attached to the place and has embedded her "truth" (Högdahl, 2003) in the place. In such a way, Lai & Ooi (2015)'s statement about how "local residents may have developed emotional ties and have personal stories about a site that branding authorities, foreign tourists and businesses may not appreciate" (Lai & Ooi, 2015, p. 279) becomes more relevant than ever, as it describes what the

locals are experiencing in Stevns: Their appropriations are not being considered. As discussed in the theory chapter, the researchers argue that what is being promoted will be criticised, and arguably it is now clear that appropriations of the locals have not been (and possibly cannot be) realised.

Some locals feel that the emotional ties have not been considered by the DMOs. Peer and Helle's ruined view from the sea, and how Peer is concerned that the rust from the staircase will cover the white cliff, shows how one type of consumption might ruin another. The case demonstrates people's understandings of how the place should look like, how it should be used and what they feel would be legit or inappropriate to do there. It seems that the people of Stevns have different ideas on what is the "right" way to experience the cliff. Peer and Helle for example feel that especially in Højerup the cliff would be experienced best from the seaside and a staircase would ruin the currently beautiful view as well as the authentic moment.

It is therefore important to understand that these representations may have impact on identity, that commodification reconfigures the area through manifestation of discourses, as Crouch (2006) argues for. In simpler words, Stevns' identity is in danger if the representations are not sufficiently representing Stevns. How it is made consumable may make it inauthentic (Crouch, 2006; George et al, 2009; Hannam & Knox, 2010; Ryan & Silvanto, 2010) and unrelatable to the locals, which is the great paradox in destination development. There can thus be an incongruence between the story that is being told by the DMO and the story of the locals.

### ***5.1.1 Landscape of social construction***

Above, we have accounted for how several respondents have given us the impression that certain places mean certain things: About how the lighthouse, Højerup and Boesdal all have different meanings, depending on who you ask (and how the development initiatives in these places did not "fit" in with the already established understandings). We also saw how some areas are widely agreed upon, some have very differentiating appropriations. So, from the analysis above, it becomes evident that the embedded identity in the physical landscape argues Stevns Klint being constructed and negotiated socially. And we have actually encountered many statements that relate to this result. First of all, several respondents frame the landscape of social construction by referring to Stevns as an "island":



Peer In old days, it was very difficult to come to Stevns, there were only three bridges, so it was like an island and it still is like an island. And I like it – I like to be on an island.

---

Helle It is it is a peninsula but in a way, it's like an island because we have the is streams separating us from the rest of Sjælland. It was its own little kingdom. So, and you know I just think that the stories so nice and it's authentic.

---

Bjarne Because Stevns peninsula is almost an island because of that stream. And you know a lot about some small islands has special things. And Stevns is almost something of an island in that.

As illustrated on the map of Stevns Klint on the map presented in the method chapter, Stevns is a peninsula on the island of Zealand. But Peers historical explanation offers a reason as to why it is very deep within the people of Stevns that they were their own little kingdom as Helle calls it - there were only three bridges across Tryggevælde stream. It tells about how there are physical and mental boundaries of Stevns, which would argue for a frame for a landscape of social construction. And Helle even refers to how this framing has somehow captured an authentic culture within a particular area.

As it is several locations that seem to have been embedded with meaning, these appropriations have arguably manifested themselves in a map of appropriations. When putting them together, they make up a map of how each individual makes sense of the space in which they interact, concluding in what Phillips calls a *cultural landscape*.

The cultural landscape consists of spiritual connection and cultural importance (Phillips, 1998). The aforementioned examples show how this affects the way people understand the legitimacy in how the space is used; how Kirsten believes that Højerup is the right place for the Visitor Centre. How the staircase ruins the way Helle and Peer wants the cliff to be used and how they want to consume it. Another good example is that Helle wants to build little restaurants in the barns along the cliff site, to preserve authenticity. She then continues to say that it is not like Stevns could not have a big hotel with tennis courts and swimming pools. But it just has to be in St. Heddinge, because "*along the cliff, it would not be a possibility*". This is very interesting, because it tells something, yet again,

about where it is okay to build tourism commodifications. But why can the hotel not be on the cliff site? It seems that there is a difference in the level to which exploitation is legitimate, depending on where you are. In other words, it seems that she thinks that it is more okay to consume commodifications in the tiny town than at the cliff. The following quote from Claus might help to solve this:

Claus:               The previous mayor has lived here for 40 years, and he told me once that he would feel he was still not a proper Stevns resident, because he did not live by the cliff site.

Again, very interesting. Claus tells something about how the people, who can call themselves proper Stevns-natives, are those who live closest to the cliff. That means that he argues that there is a higher concentration of authentic Stevnsness at the cliff site, rather than inland. So maybe this also tells something about Helle's statement about how a hotel build on the cliff *would not be a possibility*. If there is a concentration of Stevnsness on the edge of the cliff, maybe this means that it must not be exploited. It is more sacred, more authentic, and it would not be possible to exploit it.

The commodification reconfigures the area through the manifestations of discourses, as Crouch (2006) argues. Meaning that when an area becomes a destination, its original, cultural value is changed. Because Stevns is an up-and-coming destination, which is experiencing conflict about what Stevns is and how it should be used, it is important to stress the destination as the platform for challenging individuals' ideas of how things should be, as Högdahl mentions. Because the identity is currently under negotiation, Högdahls words become more relevant than ever: spaces are used to create truth, and negotiate individual differentiations of our world (Högdahl, 2003). The legitimacy of building big hotels on the edge of the cliff will most likely be up for negotiation as well. These meaning constructions might also change over time. Meanings, and thus the socially constructed landscapes of culture, are provisional, as Sassatelli predicted (Sassatelli, 2013).

### ***5.1.2 Discussion: Why conflicts arise due to appropriations of space***

To sum up this first part of the analysis, it shows how the people of Stevns embed understandings into the cliff, just as one would embed meaning into products, arguing for an appropriation of space. We have seen how there are certain ways in which certain areas are understood, which results in more or less legitimate ways to use the space as representations of Stevnsness. These

understandings differ depending on who you ask, and what space is talked about, so the result that different meanings are embedded in the landscape is the essence of this paragraph. The conflict thus arises from the development of representations that are not properly representing Stevns because of their location. For example, in the Visitor Centre case, the more authentic location is being ignored, thus also ignoring the fact that the destination consists of a sociocultural landscape of meanings. In the case of the Staircase, the location of the development initiatives possesses a strong meaning already embedded within it, which contradicts with the suggested development initiative. In both cases, there is arguably a need to realise the appropriations of space in order to understand why conflicts arise in a natural World Heritage destination.

It thereby becomes clear that there are deep sociocultural roots in the conflicts risen in this newly inscribed World Heritage destination. The analysis has given a greater understanding as to how locals, independent of their stakeholder role, engage in meaning- and identity-embedding into the physical space in which they interact. And how these different embeddings may result in different understandings of the space. The theories of both CCT and Cultural Geography are therefore highly relevant for a destination development discussion - especially the concept of appropriation of space, which connects the two sociocultural literature streams. CCT and Cultural Geography offer new insights to destination development, which are based on the aspects of consumption, rather than production. By looking at the consumption aspect, this paper highlights the reasons for conflict between stakeholders, which was previously lost with the more productionist, managerial perspective.

## **5.2 Power, representations and exclusion**

*This analysis part will offer an understanding of the power relation what follows these negotiations of meaning of the space. First, we will account of how misunderstandings might happen when DMOs try to grasp all the different meanings. Then discuss how communication can become the reason why locals feel left out of the conversation about which meanings should be represented. Lastly, we will discuss the power that DMOs have in relation to choosing the proper representation, and relate to the case about the Trampestien and Conservation Act.*

### **5.2.1 Grasping these many understandings is complex**

The paragraph title could not describe it better: grasping these different understandings is hard. Our realisation of the many appropriations of Stevns and specific areas within it, is also the very reason

the tourism initiatives cannot possibly represent appropriations and understandings of all stakeholders. Even Crouch mentions this. A Visitor Centre could for example not possibly represent all appropriations (the politics of representation, as we talked about before), but the DMOs of Stevns (especially Thor, Naja & Ditte) seemed very willing to try. They try to engage in conversation with locals, in order to understand their feelings. The DMOs and politicians of Stevns all mentioned several times how it was an important part of their job to include the locals in the conversation.

Thor tried to sum up how he feels that Stevns people react to development. He calls them two types of love: One type is demonstrated by a very strong relationship to Stevns and an even stronger sense of ownership for the place. With this type of love, people are not willing to share their love, also meaning they do not want to share Stevns with the tourists or even other locals. Claus also refers to these people as:

Claus                    There are people who are not interested in the tourism development, who just want the cliff, and the town, and the land around it... Untouched... /---/ the conservative, who do not want to see other human beings, who are so used to only seeing the horizon, and cannot stand the sight of a red backpack.

Thor equally explained that these protecting locals have connected to Stevns Klint often throughout many family generations. They love the place so much that they want to protect it. They worry that by selling it, the very special connection that they have with the cliff is endangered. By selling it, it disappears (Thor, interview). This is actually the very central dilemma with commodification processes, which Hannam & Knox (2010) points out: Through adding monetary value to a culture or an artefact of socio cultural importance, or even making it consumable through representation, it loses its original value. Its cultural purpose is lost, because it now only exists to be consumed, or devoured, for the entertainment of strangers (Oakes, 1999).

The other type of love, Thor says, is represented by pride of the area that leads people to think the place is so great that they want to share this with others and tell about how great it is (Thor, interview). We have seen this with all of our DMOs, and actually also all of our other respondents, naturists, business owners, and locals alike - they are all very proud, and want to share the cliff with the tourists. Claus, for example, believes that the tourists are good for the "pulse" of Højerup. In

fact, he stated too how most people in Højerup want the Visitor Centre there. Peer has even had tourists staying at his house:

Peer            Here on the road [by his house, red.] here come about 800 German cyclists every year on the Berlin-Copenhagen Route and they come by here like "Ah very nice to see" and sometimes they stop and ask "Where can we stay overnight and where can we see what to see here" and I will give them some material and we even have people sleeping here, because they couldn't find anything anywhere else. It is ok, it is nice for me to meet other people and tell them... We should have a sign saying 'Welcome to Stevns – the UNESCO World Heritage'. [...] I have thought about setting a little sign up here saying 'Welcome to Stevns', but I don't know if I am allowed to do it, it could be a provocation."

Peer feels the same way, that tourism development will be good for Stevns. He would even like to share the love for the place by telling people about Stevns. He feels that Stevns is not yet welcoming the tourists, neither telling them what to see, what to do - there is no one to tell the story. He talked about how he would even do it himself but does not feel that the DMO or municipality would like that. Only we know from talking to the DMO that they *do* want development, but they are having a hard time reaching it because of all these misunderstandings.

In this way, "wanting tourism" is very debated in Stevns. Or at least, many people have very different ideas about who wants development and who do not. But what is upsetting is that they are not necessarily justified, as we see above. So even though it is satisfying to simply divide people into categories of two different kinds of love, or speak dialectically of people who want change and people who do not, we see that it is much more complex than that. It is context dependent, it is about emotional and spiritual attachment, about the embedding understandings in the space. It seems, to us, like there is a great amount of misunderstandings, exaggerations, and blaming between people across different roles. It also shows that many people feel like their point of views are being misunderstood.

### ***5.2.3 Manifestation of appropriations is only for those in power***

When doing appropriations of the space, not all these individuals have the same role. Some have been given the power to create new initiatives and developments, i.e. DMOs and politicians. They have the power to decide what and how to commodify, what the destination is and how the space

should be used (Hannam & Knox, 2010; Högdahl, 2003), meaning that they have the power to *manifest their appropriations*.

This also touches upon the *politics of representation*, mentioned before when talking about the Visitor Centre. The DMO is supposed to represent the entire community, but as we have talked about, the entire community has very differentiating ideas as to how development should go about. Crouch (2006) explained how commodification and representations, created by those in power, are supposed to represent the understandings of the individual, but from what the respondents talked about this is not the case. It represents the way DMOs and politicians would like the destination to be perceived, which does not necessarily reflect the individual consumer (Crouch, 2006). In this sense, Stevns Klint as a destination will be produced according to the meanings that DMOs now use to represent Stevns with, which are manifested through 1) the place they chose to put development initiatives, and 2) the artefacts which they bring forward, the stories they tell, and the physical attributes of the representation. It all will become a manifested representation of Stevns.

Spaces are special, because they are shared. Which means other people may have different understanding of the same space. Thus, appropriations clash in the interaction with others (Högdahl, 2003; Paterson, 2006). This "clash" of appropriations of space is what Högdahl called "spatial conflicts", meaning a conflict about what the space is and how it should be used (Högdahl, 2003). And the pinch of it all, the thing that hurts is the fact that others can *decide* how the area should be perceived, and they are not doing it right, because they are not doing it like I would have. Sharing something you love is hard, and having someone change or even molest the thing you love is even harder.

The Trampestien (walking path) is one example of this. The conflict arose due to the municipality using their power to *ultimately manifest their appropriation* of the area through the Conservation Act. From a destination development perspective, the case portrays differentiating interests in tourism. The land owners are, according to Frank, genuinely okay with the tourists entering their land, as long as they behave themselves, and leave the land owners alone in private. However, with the Conservation Act, the municipality is applying for public access, to make sure that the tourists can walk along the cliff without further issues about property-rights, until the end of time. Having this right forcefully taken from them, the land owners are very upset. So, according to Frank, the

conflict is not about tourism per se, but about enforcing that one type of love that Thor meant, the "sharing" one, in a way that affects people's privacy and legal ownership of land. In the defence of the municipality, they are doing something good in ensuring that there will continue to be a natural site, a cliff, to embed identities into. However, it was with big consequences for those to whom the cliff plays the biggest role in their everyday life. Because of hierarchical differences, the municipality can manifest (in this case enforce against the wills of others) their appropriations. This example relates to Paterson's statement about power relations in negotiations of space: Meanings of spaces are constructed, and then re-constructed, within the physical context in which we interact. This happens socially, through the production of power relations, subjectivity and identity, which make up the culture within the space (Paterson, 2006). It also relates to how commodification is an important ingredient in the creation of structures of power in that it is selective, exclusionary and regulative (Hannam & Knox, 2010). Through the Conservation Act, the meaning and use of the cliff site is being negotiated, because the municipality is able to manifest certain ways in which they think the area should be used, due to hierarchical power differences. It is thus selective, exclusionary and regulative as Hannam & Knox calls it. The space thus becomes a platform for challenging how things should be, which may change the original purpose of the space (Högdahl, 2003). Trampenien is thus a good example of how there are power structures present in relation to how destination development should go about, which are related to the manifestation of appropriations.

#### ***5.2.4 The rationale of the development initiatives***

Where the argument for the Conservation Act was to ensure access, the argument for the Visitor Centre was equally rational: Thor mentioned that Boesdal poses less infrastructural problems. Thomas said it created more opportunities. Naja & Ditte, Frank and Thor all used the expression "pearls on a string", meaning that they wanted to spread out the tourism initiatives all over the cliff. Naja & Ditte used the argument that spreading out the activities would prevent certain areas from becoming commodified, inauthentic tourism bubbles. We believe that they have a point with this, if they would expect the 40% increase in tourism that Bjarne is hoping for.

It is rather rational arguments about infrastructure and sustainable development that are the basis for choices of development initiatives. Whilst these must also be taken into consideration, there are not many arguments about socially constructed *cultural landscapes* in there. Not much understanding for these individual identity embeddings. And this is interesting. Because *all* of the DMOs that we

talked to brought up the need to develop with consideration to preserve authenticity. We did not even have to direct the topic of conversation to authenticity, they brought it up themselves. So, it is important to mention that authenticity is a matter that is close to the hearts of those who are in charge of destination development in Stevns. Unfortunately, it is also our interpretation, after having talked to many people *without* power to manifest appropriations, that they feel this is not the case. They feel that they have yelled very loud, but the DMOs have not listened. Many people felt that the debate was overshadowed by listening to very few people that did not like any development, but that this was misunderstood. Like the example how the people in Højerup actually would like the Visitor Centre there, but because a few Højerup-locals have been against it, suddenly all Højerup-locals were.

Naja & Ditte mentioned how important it is to build trust between themselves and the locals. However, the narratives of the locals show that there is little trust in the municipality or the tourism development of Stevns. Maybe because people feel not listened to or not considered in the whole conversation.

It is safe to say that the DMOs and politicians we talked to showed awareness of this issue, and spent a great deal of energy trying to include the locals in the conversation. Everything from World Heritage days, transparency on the website, and keeping open doors to their office. The problem seems to be that many locals did not have that impression. They often felt that it was "us against them", not only with the heavily debated Conservation Act, but even the Visitor Centre, or the staircase. Especially because they did not feel that they partook in the discussion.

All of this has resulted in a conflict very much based on a simplified role-division of us-against-them narrative. When analysing the data, it became clear that the words "them" or "they" were discursively being used by locals to describe the people with "power" in general, or people who are in charge of development. What is interesting is that Naja, who is one of these people in power of development, told us this exact fact on the first day of our field study, before we had come to the conclusion ourselves. She talked about the development of the staircase. The construction was undertaken by a major company from Copenhagen, who chose to show little transparency in the process of coming up with the initial idea to the staircase. This made the locals very frustrated



because they cannot separate that *"we are not 'them' and 'them' is not us"* - what they see is only those with power not including them and not listening to their opinions.

Naja expressed the frustration she feels because her legitimacy is being questioned when being categorised with "development people" are not being transparent. Clearly the local society felt betrayed by "them", believing it is especially DMO, politicians, the municipality - simply everyone with the "power" to implement developments and make decisions. With the different understandings of Stevns and different ideas on how to use the space the local society feels that their appropriations are not being considered by the "decision-makers". Lai and Ooi explain these conflicts as a reason for that the locals' emotional ties and stories are not considered (Lai & Ooi, 2015).

A second part of the frustration is in the exclusion from the conversation. Locals described that things were "just decided" without them having a say in all the debates represents how power relations play an important role. The politicians and DMO in this case are the ones who have the power to make decisions and thus appropriate Stevns according to their understandings.

Claus            I don't think the monster out there (meaning the staircase by the lighthouse) is very well thought through. And I feel that they have not listened, but it feels to me that if you are just big and powerful enough, you can afford to not care.

Claus statement explains one of these appropriations that are related to his understanding of the area, but how frustrating it is that the DMOs are not listening. How much the local society feels not listened too. How much they feel excluded, and how frustrating it is that those who should listen do not seem to care. Claus portrays the feeling of insignificance.

The conflict is obvious, with DMOs who seem interested in listening, and implementing several strategies to engage in conversation with the locals. In this sense, they *are* trying to engage in holistic planning and include different parties to participate in the process, as Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011, advocate. However, the feeling is not mutual. Locals feels excluded from the conversation. When we relate this to CCT, it can be argued that the frustration could come from a lack of consideration of locals' roles as co-creators of meaning (de Certeau, 1984; Sassatelli, 2015). The subjective understanding of an area is lost once it undergoes commodification processes (Crouch,

2006). So, by not feeling heard, the locals are not even given the chance to partake in the production of the destination, thus depriving the locals their roles as co-creators. It is no longer a negotiation of the meaning of space, as Högdahl and Paterson mention, if the conversation is felt to be only one-sided. Claus summed it up by saying:

Claus            People want to be seen and heard. People want recognition for their opinions, their home, their thoughts, even though they might be different than mine. Sometimes, it is about just listening.... But this approach has not been appreciated by them, or prioritised with resources.

What must be considered is Crouch (2006)'s point about how the DMOs could never represent all the meaning embeddings into the representations like the Visitor Centre. Making everyone happy is impossible. So, when decisions are made, it is the manifestation of only one, or a few, of these appropriations. It has to be (Crouch, 2006). But in the process, people will feel excluded, which results in confusion and resentment (Hannam & Knox, 2010), which is very much the case in Stevns. As a local, the feeling of exclusion is especially strengthened when not feeling listened to - being powerless. No matter how much the DMOs say that they work for communication, the feeling of withhold and concealment is unquestionably present amongst the locals at Stevns Klint.

#### ***5.2.5 Discussion: Why conflicts arise due to power structures and politics of representation***

To sum up, we see that when trying to grasp all meanings, simplified categorisation may occur, which may lead to misunderstandings about what other people think the space is, and especially how it should be used. Those in power to manifest their appropriations through Visitor Centre and other representations in space also have the power to be selective in defining how the space should be used, as in the example of the Trampestien, as well as the Visitor Centre and the staircase. Yet again the managerial perspective of destination development becomes evident. The DMOs are those in power of manifesting their appropriations of space. Not being part of the conversation and feeling misunderstood by the DMOs can be translated to the feeling of not being considered as co-creators of meaning. This argues for the feeling of exclusion, as another reason for conflict. In such way, the conflicts arise due to hierarchical power structures in defining how Stevns Klint should be represented. In order to understand those conflicts and especially to reach a successful co-creation it is important to include the perspective of Consumer Culture Theory.

Only a limited amount of appropriations can be realised and manifested into an actual building, iron structure, or legal commandment. In all three cases, social negotiations of what the space is and how it should be used become evident examples of conflict. Therefore, there is arguably a need to realise how the power to define identity, and politics of representation, are socially negotiated, in order to understand why conflicts arise in a natural World Heritage destination.

The prior section about power of representations and exclusion yet again argues for the need to look at the sociocultural aspects of conflict in a newly inscribed World Heritage destination. Understanding the meaning- and identity embedding, and the social and cultural aspects of a destination will make DMO's more capable of navigating through a possible conflict that may arise due to a destination development initiative. By receiving the World Heritage label, the identity of the space is given new meaning, which needs to be represented through development initiatives. Not realising that all types of stakeholders are undergoing the same negotiation, and thus excluding them in the conversation, may create conflict. The theories CCT and Cultural Geography presented in this paper can thereby be a tool to understand the space, and the meaning embedded in it.

### **5.3 It is about so much more than UNESCO**

We went to Stevns with the idea that we would study how conflicts arose as a result of the new meaning or value that the destination got when becoming a World Heritage destination. We started our paper back in March with the puzzlement about what happens when you "add" a new label to a place, how this automatically changed the meaning of the place. We for example wrote the sentence *"The space in which stakeholders interact has received a new title as a World Heritage destination, giving the space new meaning, that can be interpreted differently, possibly creating conflict."* Only we now realise that the conflicts we encountered had nothing to do with the World Heritage at all.

What became immensely clear to us during our field study, and our conversations with locals as well as politicians, business owners and tourism developers, is that their love for the area goes far beyond what a place-brand of special value tells them it is. It is, instead, very much about what *they* think it is. What should represent Stevns, and where it would be represented it best. It is about people's appropriations of the land being represented wrong, or forcefully changed, or not listened to. So, it does not even have anything to do with adding *new* meaning to Stevns. It is about the

sociocultural landscape that defines legitimacy. The stakeholders are therefore not adding new meaning to Stevns, but rather negotiating *old* meaning, trying to decide what is real Stevnsness.

Throughout every single interview, the respondent would him/herself bring up the struggles that the community have been through, explained through their eyes. But they do not talk about UNESCO. Just like Thomas said:

Thomas            I actually don't think that, you know, in itself becoming a UNESCO world site and that others things that happen with more tourists and that interests have had significant influence on people's perception. I think those two political discussion have had a lot...

He, and several others explain that the conversation is about the conflicts, not UNESCO. They explain the reasons for those struggles and conflicts as a lack of communication and decisions that were made without letting everyone having a say. They explain that the municipality do not realise that in some of the decisions they make, they lose the Stevnsness.

Stevns locals are not negotiating what UNESCO means to them. They are rather negotiating what Stevns means to them. So, it is no longer about UNESCO, but about the conversation around it, as Ekström states. UNESCO does not give Stevns Klint new meaning. UNESCO is the force that drove the residents to engage in negotiations of what Stevns Klint is and how it should be used, and the clash of different understanding is what then created conflict.

## 6. Discussion & Conclusion

Being inscribed the World Heritage label creates many new opportunities for promotion and economic development (Lai & Ooi, 2015; Ryan & Silvano, 2010; Terlouw et al., 2015). However, developing the destination may also lead to conflicts (Caust & Vecco, 2017; George et al., 2009; Hannam & Knox, 2010; Lai & Ooi, 2015, Oakes, 1999; Ryan & Silvano, 2010). Destination development literature offers theory about how development may cause conflict, or change the local engagement, or how promoting tourism may change the nature of a place drastically and irreversibly. However, the literature does not account for the origin or characteristics of the occurring conflicts. It states that DMOs should try to manage the destination and the stakeholders (Caust & Vecco, 2017; Lai & Ooi, 2015; Ryan & Silvano, 2010), but does not offer a reason as to why the conflicts appeared in the first place.

The thesis addresses this gap by accounting for the conflicts, which previous literature fails to. Through ethnographic investigations of narratives and discourses from different types of stakeholders in Stevns Klint, it became quite clear that the conflicts that they are experiencing have to do with fundamentally differentiating ideas about what Stevns Klint is and how the space should be used for tourism development. Even *if* the space should be used for tourism development at all. This has resulted in conflict. Further, the fact that certain people have power to manifest their appropriation, through for example being able to decide where a Visitor Centre should be, or that a cliff should be safeguarded, has brought on further conflict. Because it has clashed with what other people think the space is, or how it should be used. Feeling excluded from the decision process, and not listened to, has not exactly made those *not* in power more content about the decisions made, either. In such way, we answered our research question, by accounting for the characteristics of the conflicts, which previous literature fails to. In such way, we answer our research question asking *Why does destination development in a newly inscribed WH destination create conflict between stakeholders.*

On a theoretical level, the thesis contributes by accounting for the reasons for conflict. We were able to offer an understanding of how there is a need to address more sociocultural theories such as Consumer Culture Theory and Cultural Geography, in order to fully understand why conflicts happen in destination development. Like Sarameimi & Kylänen (2003), we advocate for awareness

in research for how consumption and production processes are intertwined in the context of tourism development. More than anything, this paper has offered a greater understanding about how spaces play a part in our social interaction. Specifically, how culture is manifested in the spaces we share with others. It is through this understanding that we argue for a need of a sociocultural perspective to destination development. We found it necessary to look at CCT and Cultural Geography theory in order to fully understand the basis of the conflicts that happen on a World Heritage destination. It was therefore necessary to apply these types of literature when writing our theoretical approach, in order to understand our empirical material, and answer our research question. And so, our empirical findings have made it clear that there is a need for a dialogue between the managerial perspective of the previous literature, and the more sociocultural perspective on destination development. Our study differs from other studies through the novel attempt to merge these literature streams.

When we apply this finding to a specific type of destination, namely a Nature World Heritage destination, it becomes clear how natural sites are socially constructed, in negotiations what a space is and how it should be used, and especially in power to define these. It is thus very much along the lines of Cronon (1996)'s words about how even a natural site cannot exist outside a social construction, as well as Stedman (2003)'s idea of cultural landscapes: That even nature-destination possess cultural value. And what is being negotiated is not the natural landscape itself, but rather the cultural, social embeddings in the natural landscape.

## **6.1 Further Research**

The collected data contains many findings with more interesting points to discuss. One of the findings was very much related to the concept of coherent brand identity and storytelling. From the DMO-side of our respondents several respondents mentioned how people should talk about the same thing when talking about Stevns, - meaning they wish for a coherent destination brand identity. As discussed above, we see a need to merge the destination development thoughts with the socio-cultural aspects of spatial production. Both respondents from the managerial, development side as well as locals expressed how they felt a need to tell the story of Stevns. They thought about the harm of not having a coherent brand identity, how it slows down the development and would hinder the storytelling. However, we chose to focus on the CCT perspective of destination development. We want to show that we are aware of this brand management side of things. Further

research could account for the aforementioned managerial side of how to create a coherent destination brand identity as well as the concept of storytelling.

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