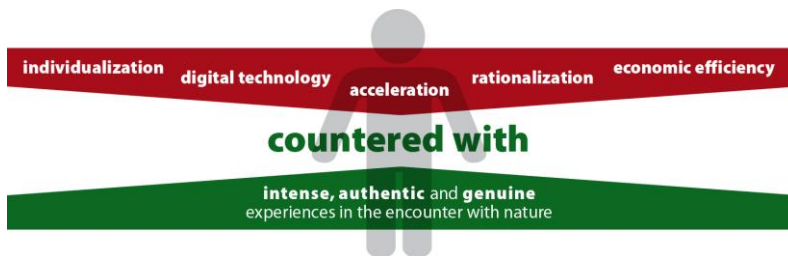




Introduction

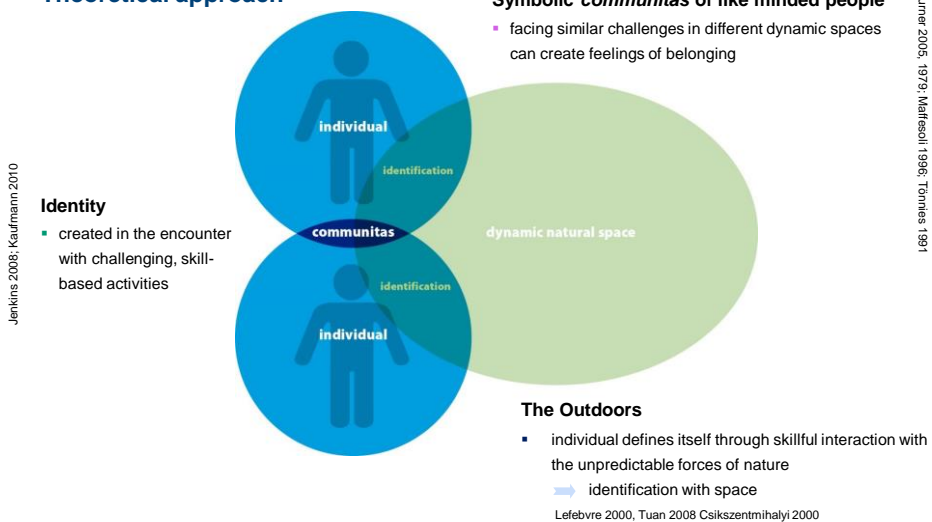


nature friendly, skill-based outdoor activities (or *friluftsliv*-experiences)
and their identity and community building aspects

Research questions

- How are intrinsic outdoor activities used to strengthen identity?
- Do the shared experiences of outdoor actors create a kind of collective identity?
- Does the experience of acting in dynamic outdoor spaces generate a symbolic *communitas* in the sense of Turner?

Theoretical approach



The construction of identity in the context of outdoor activities

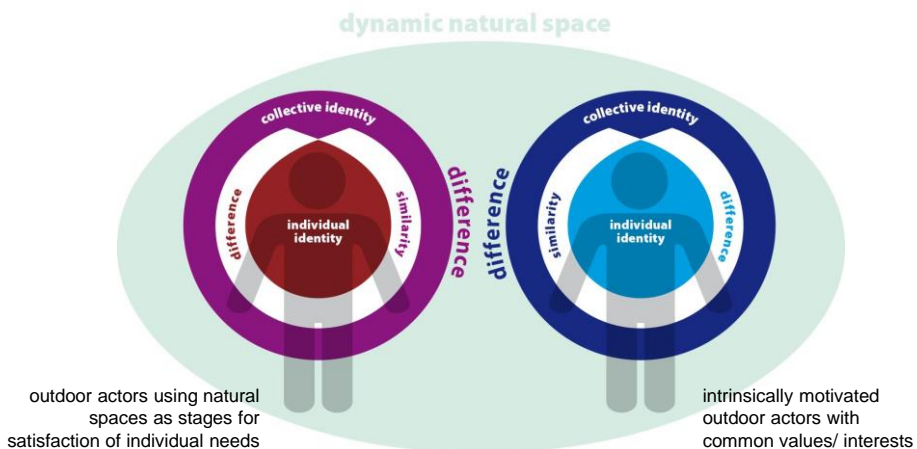
identity

- is constituted in a dialectic process of 'being' and 'becoming'
- is made up of different layers (flexible + negotiable identities)
- is stabilized by being questioned
- means to *associate with* or *attach to* something or somebody else → *identification*
- involves an understanding of who *we* are, who *other people* are



The construction of identity in the context of outdoor activities

Identity: individual ↔ collective



The construction of identity in the frame of outdoor activities

identity

- outdoor experiences contribute to (re-)connect the individual with a collective
- regaining control over situations perceived as beyond human control through collective action
 - ➔ sense of 'we'

outdoor actors share moments of **identification** based on

shared experience of nature	attachment for the spatial contexts of their activities (spatial affinity)	sense of achievement provided by skills-based activities	shared cultural code (seamanship..)
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Towards a symbolic *communitas* of like-minded people

members of an "outdoor team"

- depend on shared knowledge, team spirit, confidence, awareness and intrinsic motivation
- e.g. yacht crew or rope party construct relationships on the basis of personal qualities
- communicate **directly, openly** and **authentic**
- problems solved collectively create an intense **feeling of belonging**



construction of outdoor communities

- **meanings** that outdoor actors attach to "untouched" spaces
- **affinity** for certain natural surroundings
- and the **shared joy** of experiencing them



Towards a symbolic communitas of like-minded people

- within these groups authority is derived from competence and the ability to contribute to the group as a whole, *not* from social status or title
- the *smaller* the group involved in the collective management of a task, the *higher* the need to act empathically
 - ➡ indicators of an **anti-structural communitas** that temporarily supercedes the everyday self-centredness and instrumental rationality of postmodern society

Towards a symbolic communitas of like-minded people

whether it is

- a small group of actors exercising the same outdoor activity (crew, team, rope party)
- several groups sharing the affinity for a particular outdoor activity (sailing, climbing, hiking..)
- or different actors sharing the joy of intrinsic outdoor experiences in dynamic natural spaces

is *not* decisive for creating a symbolic communitas



A symbolic communitas of like-minded people

symbolic communitas

- **is based on a collective identity** constituted by the shared affinity for outdoor activities and spaces
- **temporarily shifts the focus of the constitution of authority** from social status to competence in dealing with the environment
- **creates an alternative to the functionality** of structured contemporary society by implementing a collective based on face-to-face interaction
- **strengthens collective identity** by excluding outdoor actors ignoring the need for protection of fragile natural spaces
- **facilitates the development of critical attitudes** towards the exploitation of natural and cultural spaces

Conclusion

outdoor experiences

- can strengthen individual identities and create a sense of belonging
- create a *symbolic communitas* that temporarily challenges the dominant structures and socio-economic restraints imposed by postmodern society

Can this idea of community be used to communicate, maintain or even strengthen ...

- ... the development of destination brands (marketing)
- ... the mobilization of community members for the protection of endangered natural spaces (politics)
- ... the development of a culture of sustainability geared towards preserving the dynamic natural spaces on which it depends



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