

## **The Camøno**

A Communitarian Walking Trail in the Sharing Economy

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## ***The Camøno: A communitarian walking trail in the sharing economy***

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To overcome socioeconomic decline, Danish coastal communities attempt to harness the potentials of the collaborative economy with novel forms of communitarian initiatives in tourism. This paper assesses the emergent business model of the *Camøno* walking trail, which was conceived as an alternative, bottom-up initiative to leverage tourism in Southern Denmark. To understand its rapid uptake and success, we draw on theorisations of value creation in alternative and sharing economies as a *reframing* process, with due attention to the transformation of non-market resources into commodities (public land, volunteer labour, sense of place). Based on a two-year-long ethnographic fieldwork chronicling the consolidation of the *Camøno*, we analyse these reframing processes and identify three domains of collaborative governance; the governance of affect, the governance of ownership, and the governance of exchange. The paper concludes with a discussion of the institutionalisation of ad-hoc, alternative business models with due attention to policy recommendations in a European rural context.

### **Keywords:**

**Camøno, coastal tourism, sharing economy, communitarian business model, tourism cooperatives, walking trail, reframing, pilgrimage**

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[removed to maintain anonymity]

## Introduction

Scholars, policymakers and nonprofessionals have been perplexed by the rapid growth of collaborative or sharing economy platforms during the past decade, and their value and impacts for society are still debated today. Advocates (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Sundarajan, 2016) frame the collaborative economy as an efficient and equitable alternative to capitalist models, which marks the advent of a new, sustainable economic regime built on open access and the enhancement of the commons (Rifkin 2014). In contrast to these advocates, a growing body of critical voices have emerged, labelling collaborative phenomena as “pseudo sharing” (Belk, 2014) “platform capitalism” (Slee 2015), and even “neoliberalism on steroids” (Morozov, 2013). To prove their point, critics typically target the sharing economy poster child (Airbnb) as an opportunistic disruptor, which adopts communitarian rhetoric to disguise an entirely neoliberalist, profit-extracting business model (O’Regan & Choe 2017; Meged & Dissing 2017). These enduring conflicts demonstrate that our perceptions of collaborative phenomena are fraught with polemics and knowledge asymmetries (Dredge & Gyimóthy, 2015).

Arguably, the massive overrepresentation of studies on Airbnb and other global platforms obfuscate a more nuanced understanding of the collaborative economy and its potentials (Gyimóthy, 2017b). In particular, three barriers prevail in contemporary research: the lack of empirical diversity, validity and representativeness. First, there is little acknowledgement of the diversity of collaborative business models. Despite the emerging typologies, which identify business models ranging from global corporative platforms to local cooperatives (Slee, 2015; Gyimóthy 2017b), the assessment of their relative impact in specific geographical and sociocultural contexts is not clearly differentiated. Yet, the apparently paradoxical nature of the sharing economy points to the necessity to examine “the emergence of new niches, cultures and forms of agency rather than any capitalist ‘monolith’” (Richardson, 2015:121). Second, as is often the case with new phenomena, both supporters and opponents base their arguments on illustrative anecdotes, isolated case studies, media coverage and opinions rather than solid empirical data collection (Dredge & Gyimóthy, 2015; Dredge & Gyimóthy 2017). This fact questions the validity of most papers presented on the collaborative economy to date. Third, commercial sharing platforms are dependent on a high concentration of idle resources and peer transactions, and hence, usually thrive in densely populated areas only. Consequently, most studies are conducted in urban contexts or resorts with urban characteristics. The lack of research in diverse rural contexts results in knowledge gaps regarding collaborative mechanisms and structures in rural settings. There is ample emphasis on Shareable Cities (Rinne, 2015), however very little is known about the “Shareable Countryside”.

This paper addresses these imbalances, by exploring a successful collaborative economy experiment in a rural Scandinavian context. Adhering to the objective of this special issue, we are interested in alternative, local

business phenomena that are underrepresented in research and international media, in terms of organisational and geographical focus.

### **Scoping and goal of the paper**

Since the 1980s, rural communities in Denmark (and most of Scandinavia at large) have been facing multiple social, demographic and economic challenges (VisitSydsjælland-Møn, 2015). With the decline of primary sectors (fisheries and agriculture) and the stagnation of tourism, employment opportunities have shrunk, leading to out-migration in already sparsely populated areas. Small island communities are especially hard hit (Vordingborg Kommune 2017), to the extent that municipalities are critically constrained in offering their welfare services. To date, neither capitalist market mechanisms, nor regional governments grounded in the Nordic social welfare model have found adequate solutions to these wicked problems. On the other hand, the Danish countryside is blessed with a fairly well developed digital infrastructure as well as a long history of social cohesion at the local level (e.g. cooperative traditions, local associations). Accordingly, rural areas in Denmark may possess both technological and sociocultural conditions for collaborative initiatives, yet, no work has attempted to devise business models to alleviate resource and employment scarcity as well as contribute to long-term improvement of local residents' quality of life.

Collaborative business models started as distinct urban phenomena, but their ethos is now slowly diffusing into new initiatives in rural and coastal Denmark, too. One of these initiatives is the *Camøno* walking trail on the island of Møn; an alternative business model to leverage tourism in Southern Denmark. By alternative, we mean a non-governmental, community activity, which is issue-driven and reconfigures conventional actor roles and constellations. In 2016, the regional museum (Møn Museum) launched a digitally facilitated trail to mobilize and connect local resources across the island and to create value for tourists and citizens. Since its launch in 2016, the *Camøno* brand performed well in economic terms. The first year generated 12 million DKK [160.000 EUR] in economic value (Annual Meeting on Tourism Policies, 2017). On a national level, the *Camøno* is referred to as a best practice project, and has won several innovation and development awards (Visit Sydsjælland & Møn, 2017).

However, what explains the rapid market success of an upcoming walking trail in a disadvantaged corner of rural Denmark? This paper aims at exploring the organisational setup of the *Camøno* in order to conceptualise key drivers of its alternative business model. In particular, we focus on the interplay between collaborative discourses and collaborative agency along the notion of performativity or reframing (Richardson, 2015). Our focus is directed to the following questions: How is the walking trail concept produced discursively to attract both markets and suppliers? How are host-guest encounters and transactions enabled in digital and material realms? How are local resources (labour, private property, skills and knowledge) valued and traded?

The paper is structured as follows. First, a detailed presentation of the case and background is provided, followed by a theoretical framing. In our literature review, we draw upon theorisations of alternative economies (Gibson-Graham, 2008; Healy, 2009), the collaborative economy (Dregde & Gyimóthy, 2015), as well as collaborative business models. After a deliberation of the research approach and design, the findings are presented. The analysis gives special attention to the *Camøno*'s fuzzy communitarian ideology and its embeddedness with the equally nebulous imaginaries of spiritual and reflexive walking. In particular, we explore the stimulation of grass root agency; and that is, the mechanisms along which diverse actors and networks capacities are mobilised along the trail. Through a synthesis of the literature and our findings, we identify three domains of collaborative governance; the governance of affect, the governance of ownership and the governance of exchange. The paper concludes with a discussion of the institutionalisation of ad-hoc, alternative business models with due attention to policy recommendations in a European rural context.

### **Background story: The birth of the *Camøno***

The island of Møn is located in South Eastern Denmark, governed by the municipality of Vordingborg, South Zealand (Figure 1). Møn is known for its natural beauty, highlighted by the geological site of Møns Klint (chalk cliffs) on the east coast as well as its well-preserved medieval heritage and townscapes. It stretches over an area of 218 km<sup>2</sup> and inhabited by 9.300 inhabitants. In the past decade, the island's population has stagnated, but is forecasted to decline 25% by 2030 (Vordingborg Kommune, 2017). Møn is in commuting proximity (about 120 km) to the Danish capital, and can be reached from Copenhagen in an hours' motorway drive or by public transport.

[Figure 1 around here]

The peculiar sociodemographic profile of Møn deserves some attention for our analysis. During the 1960s and 1970s, young hippies moved from the Danish capital and larger urban centers to the countryside and settled in abandoned barns and large farmhouses in search of a communitarian lifestyle (Lee, 2016). These green communes emerged on the islands of Langeland, Møn Bornholm, Thy and Southern Fyn (Davis & Warring 2011), and were the key drivers in reintroducing organic agricultural and artisanal production (Risgaard, Frederiksen & Kaltorn, 2007). Likewise, these hippie communes were also the grassroot pioneers who initiated the first wind power plants across the country (Karnøe, Buchhorn, Lafferty & Ruud, 2008). Although the green commune movement declined by the 1980s, the hippie population stayed put in the western part of Møn and is still active in the local community today. Many of them became lifestyle entrepreneurs offering yoga retreats, meditation or eco-camping and their significance is reflected in the name of one of the legs on the *Camøno*; namely the Hippie-leg (Syska, Coordinator, interview). In the past decade, the neo-bohemian flair of the island

also attracted new, affluent migrants (e.g. hobby farmers, empty nesters and urban retirees), who now contribute to a more diverse demographic composition than other rural areas (Lorentzen et al. 2015).

In fact, it was within this resourceful migrant community where two female leisure entrepreneurs conceived the idea for a coastal walking trail. The *Camøno* was eventually seized by Møn Museum, which provided the institutional framework to upscale the idea. The *Camøno* is a 175 km-long, digitally facilitated coastal walking trail stretching along the islands of Møn, Bogø and Nyord (Figure 2). On its digital platform, wanderers may directly connect with local citizens and book experiences ranging from private dinners to birdwatching and berry picking. The *Camøno* opened officially in June 2016 because of an extensive mobilisation of public and private, commercial and non-commercial actors from the region. In its first three months of operation, the project attracted over 9000 wanderers, connecting them with the touristic offerings of 200+ small local operators (*Camøno*, 2016). The project is popular on social as well as broadcasted media, boasting 51.000 unique webpage visits, 75.000 followers on Facebook, and prime time television coverage (Evaluation meeting 2016).

[Figure 2 around here]

When Møn Museum decided to facilitate the project, they redefined the traditional mission of a regional museum, extending it to the curation of heritage interpretation in the open landscape on a grand scale, as well as to the performance of entrepreneurial activities in the island. In collaboration with the municipality of Vordingborg, they managed to raise money from Realdania Credit Fund programme, *Places Matter*, for a community-based walking trail. The primary goal was to sustain and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors, while potential economic gains were framed as secondary, spinoff effects in the wake of the trail's entrepreneurial activities (Syska, 2016). The social entrepreneurial profile was clear from the start; the *Camøno* was initiated and driven by co-opting public partners, framed in a philanthropist private funding scheme, and with the prospect of creating a tourism market potential for the *Camøno* trail. By undertaking a visionary leadership role, Møn Museum transgressed the boundaries between the public and private governance of local entrepreneurship and community development.

Contrasted with the mainstream representations of Southern Denmark as an underprivileged region, *Camøno* is a living manifest of a diverse economy (Gibson-Graham 2011). Despite being an “alternative” to mainstream industrial models of tourism, it is not disconnected but entangled with commercial production and distribution systems. In order to understand the success of the *Camøno*, it is relevant to address its embeddedness with industrial and capital systems, the public sector as well as non-market aspects of the local society. Our initial familiarisation with the *Camøno* drew our attention to a few distinctive aspects, which facilitated its ability to connect with resources within multiple domains. These entailed a *strong narrative* to mobilise resources (e.g. labour, private property, skills and knowledge), a new approach to *value resources*, and a *digital platform*

*enabling transactions* of these resources. These features may seem similar to those of global sharing economy business models, except that the *Camøno* is not driven by corporate strategy or managed as a venture capital start-up. Hence, we envisage that a more systematic and theoretically framed exploration of these features will shed light on the specific details of this socioeconomic coastal experiment.

## Literature Review

A decade of research on collaborative phenomena has not been sufficient to provide simple definitions as to pin down what the sharing economy is, nor what value it generates (Richardson, 2015). Owing to the diversity of emergent business forms and types, there are diverse labels and definitions around (Dredge & Gyimóthy 2015, 2017b). The definitional confusion is unlikely to be resolved in the future, and we believe that such essentialist approaches (i.e. determining what the sharing economy is), are futile. Instead, it is more relevant to capture the transformational role of emergent business models (i.e. what they do), and ask how they disrupt, transform and contribute to tourism economies: How do collaborative phenomena reconfigure the scope, scale and intensity of economic interactions? How are alternative businesses in the becoming (in our case, the *Camøno*) affect market exchange and the valuation of diverse resources? By following this reframing process, it is possible to identify the character and preconditions of successful communitarian alternatives. Below, we will review how post-capitalist economic transition is conceptualised in the literature.

## Diverse economies

Collaborative economic phenomena are socially embedded. Despite the tendency to conceptually separate market phenomena (enterprises, transactions, waged labour) from social exchange, economic sociologists (Polányi, 1968; Granovetter, 1985) were early to point out that all economic activities, including exchange are embedded in a non-economic context, such as cultural values, social relationships and moral concerns. To identify and analyze the entanglements of markets and societies, Gibson-Graham (2006) put forward a diverse economy framework. This framework is nothing less than an ontological reframing of the economy (ibid., p. 616) which acknowledges the heterogeneity of exchanges and compensations within social space, blurring the distinctions between market and non-market phenomena. The model (reproduced in Figure 3) entails a grid organised along three key parameters, such as; *transactions*, that may take place either on the ordinary free market, on the alternative market or on the nonmarket; *labor*, that may be given in exchange for an ordinary wage, for an alternative payment or be unpaid; and finally, the *enterprise* or business mode, ranging from exploitative capitalist forms to non-capitalist communal constellations. The model has been later amended by

Healy (2009), who suggested capturing other aspects of the economy, including *property ownership* (private vs. common), or forms of finance.

The diverse economy model provides an analytical framework to identify and assess complex economic activities across diverse cultural and geographical contexts. For instance, Gibson-Graham & Roelwink (2011:5) developed an inventorying technique, which is built on a series of specific questions to capture the full spectrum and diversity of goods and services exchanged beyond markets, e.g. grassroots activism, fair trading systems, and social entrepreneurship. This structured approach not only highlights economic differences and multiple roles in a community, but also identifies latent assets and potential needs to be addressed. By mapping both market and non-market transactions, labour and business forms simultaneously, the diverse economy mapping technique may identify opportunities for new social enterprises together with members of the local community (ibid.).

[Figure 3 around here]

Consequently, the contingency approach (which focuses on entanglements of market at non-market spheres and mechanisms) provides a valuable analytical entrance to the complexity and paradoxes of collaborative endeavours in the sharing economy. As Healy (2009) notes, the economy is “an intrinsically heterogeneous space” (p. 338), in which mainstream capitalist and alternative models co-exist in a mutually constitutive way. The diverse economy approach may support the analysis of socially embedded economic phenomena (e.g. social entrepreneurship), emerging along the imperfections of capitalist markets and flawed governance. Yet, despite a logical structure and inventorying approach, the framework presented in Figure 3 does not lend itself readily for a systematic analysis of the simultaneous embeddedness of socio-economic relations. The rudimentary, fixed grid and its key components (transactions, labour, enterprise, ownership, finance) countervails the very ambition of capturing of economic transformations as a result of coalescing market-nonmarket, paid-unpaid, capitalist-cooperativist exchanges. It does not allow for the exploration of fluid and contingent processes of *reframing* as they unfold along negotiated and contested boundaries. Neither agency, nor governance forms are identified to inform the management of collaborative commodities, labour or platforms. We will therefore turn our attention to the notion of performativity, conceptualised by scholars of the sharing economy.

### **Sharing and performativity**

The emergence of the sharing economy has demonstrated that the term “sharing” is fraught with ambiguity and complexity. A recent essay (John, 2013) demonstrates how sharing may refer to acts of distribution (e.g. sharing resources), acts of communication (sharing experiences) and acts of participation. As such, sharing



may simultaneously denote an economy driven by social capital (i.e. the sharing economy/collaborative economy), a mode of online resource distribution (i.e. sharing platforms), and a site of social intensification (symbolic exchanges and bonding among community members) (Kennedy, 2013). With such a diversity of meanings and associations, sharing as a label has a powerful performative potential. As Richardson (2015, p. 122) argues:

At issue is what the label of ‘sharing’ does. On the one hand, such labelling operates as an opportunity in the promise of the sharing economy as an antidote. It performs a narrative of collaboration [...] On the other hand, the label opens a space for critique as the sharing economy fails to act out its role. Whilst articulated through the rhetoric of sharing, this vocabulary might be framed as masking new forms of inequality and polarisations of ownership.

As such, the most important disruptive effect of the sharing economy is a semantic confusion. It produces creative misunderstandings, which can be considered to be the very condition of reframing established economic practices as well as notions of joint ownership. Aligned with post-capitalist scholars (Gibson-Graham, 2008; Gibson-Graham and Roelvink, 2010), the proponents of the sharing economy (Botsman & Rogers, 2010) consider sharing and the “commons” as the cornerstone of the emergent alternative economic logic. The notion of the commons invokes an imaginary, utopian “community”, with connotations of egalitarian and symbiotic relationships. Sharing economy platforms use these utopian imaginaries to construct a seductive narrative of a morally superior, “collaborative” business model (Sparks, 2015). Sharing economy startups that went global (e.g. Airbnb) use the narratives of collaboration to gloss over a fundamentally profit extractive enterprise (Slee, 2015), built on peer transactions and authentic encounters among strangers. In this fuzzy context, the term “sharing” is a red herring (a misnomer) that has been twisted to address contemporary consumers’ need for caring, connection and communitarian values (Gyimóthy, 2017b). Yet, this is precisely the semantic confusion that provides fertile ground to imagine and pursue hybrid forms of collaboration across market and non-market domains. In order to illustrate the constructive and boundary-crossing potential of the sharing economy, Richardson presents three performances which underpin its disruptive effects, namely: the enactment of community, the enabling of open/free access, and the co-creation of value through collaboration (Richardson, 2015).

*Sharing to build community.* Departing from the analysis of a sharing economy festival in Paris (*OuiShare*), Richardson (ibid.) demonstrates that digital sharing platforms enable people to build communities in new ways. For instance, crowdfunding and couchsurfing allow connecting, participating and contributing to a good cause on a large geographical scale. The emergence of co-founding and co-hosting networks challenge traditional notions of community that are spatially bound, and proves that virtual forms of belonging are often cemented

by ideological dispositions. In order to mobilise a large volume of users, Airbnb is cultivating an ideological community by framing the hosting of strangers as a virtue or prestige, thereby capitalizing on affect (Thrift, as in Richardson 2015), with the brand promise of ‘belonging anywhere’ around the world. In contrast to the grand narrative, such communitarian relationships depend on trust between hosts and guests, which is commoditised and contested in different ways (for instance through a peer rating system) (Gyimóthy, 2017b).

*Sharing to grant access.* Apart from ideological belonging and identification, sharing can also be performed through free access to common resources. Aligned with post-capitalist scholars (Gibson-Graham, 2008; Gibson-Graham and Roelvink, 2010), access to the “commons” and joint ownership is the central to sharing economy logic. However, the performance of open access may play out radically differently depending whether those commons are articulated in a virtual context (e.g. open source software) or in a material context (communal property or land). These will be embedded in negotiations about ownership and the rights of skimming the benefits from jointly produced wealth, and subsequently lead to tensions between public and private interests.

*Sharing to co-work.* Finally, Richardson (2015) notes that sharing can also be performed through collaboration or co-working where people co-produce value in a cooperative manner. Before the digital age, kind of collaborative value creation required physical proximity and the co-location of labor. Today, thanks to digital technologies, people can also work on the same project despite spatial and temporal distance. For instance, crowdsourcing activities thrive on virtual platforms, which allows for collaborative projects independent of time zones. Global sharing economy enterprises (e.g. Gomore, Airbnb) allow peer transactions to share idle property on a large scale, which blurs the boundaries between work and leisure, production and consumption. These ambivalences create tensions. In some sense, collaborative labour and consumption becomes casual and decentralised, however, the platforms which facilitate value co-creation also operate along standardised procedures and practices.

### **Collaborative economy business models**

These characteristic performances require new ways of managing interactions in the sharing economy. Building a community on ideology requires the enchantment of potential members to join. It requires the governance of affect, the performance of open access, and it requires new ways of managing the common resources; i.e. the governance of ownership. Finally, large-scale collaborative performances require the governance of coordinated transactions. Accordingly, the new business models of the sharing economy are designed with keen attention to these performative parameters (affect, ownership and transactions).

Sharing economy business models may differ greatly in terms of their spatial uptake, social dynamics and intermediating or value creation logic. By comparing their geographical scope and value redistribution procedures, Gyimóthy (2017) identifies three types of business models of collaborative endeavors. Global peer-to-peer (P2P) platforms (e.g. Airbnb, Uber) enable the large scale trading of idle assets among strangers. These exchanges are often monetised and a fee is charged for each transaction. The business model of P2P platforms is profit-extractive: the benefits are collected by the global platform, while the local society is left with the costs of externalities (e.g. labour protection, tax collection). In contrast, place-based sharing cooperatives (e.g. tool or garment swapping networks) are more local in scope and operate along communitarian logic. Cooperative platforms focus on connecting small local providers with local demand, where exchange is not necessarily monetised, and the benefits are reinvested or redistributed locally. A third type of business model is that of virtual communities (e.g. Couchsurfing). These are online meeting places for interest communities, which are created to strengthen communal ties, but may also allow transactions among members.

The literature on sharing performances and the typology of sharing business models provides us with a comprehensive set of concepts to study the *Camøno* as a communitarian endeavor in the making. The concepts of performing community, performing access, and performing transactions will help identify the affective and institutional logic of value creation along the walking trail.

## **Methods and data collection**

This project was commissioned by the Innovation Fund, and it is driven by the task to identify successful collaborative structures in coastal tourism businesses, and assess their potential for being applied in other geographical contexts (Innovation i Dansk Kystturisme, 2017). Our research ambition was not merely a descriptive endeavour (i.e. to chronicle an alternative economic business model), but also to engage in reflexive dialogue with the *Camøno* community during several project workshops and presentations. We acknowledge our active role in the consolidation of the *Camøno* business model itself, and our impact on raising the level of reflexivity of own performances and understandings of building the *Camøno*. This is in line with a performative and action-research based approach, where the researchers and the researched influence each other with the goal to further alternative economies (Gibson-Graham & Roelwink, 2011; Healy, 2009).

The analytical section is built on longitudinal empirical data, following the conception and consolidation of the *Camøno* across during a two-year-long study. We adopted an inductive approach, during which we conducted recurrent ethnographic field visits (Table 1). During these we have developed an in-depth

understanding of how wanderers, local entrepreneurs and volunteers, public organisations and private firms constructed the *Camøno* as a collaborative business model. Specific focus will be given to the mobilisation of the so-called “fiery spirits”[in Danish, ildsjæle], a term used by Møn Museum during the launch of the project idea.

Table 1 provides an overview of the primary data, encompassing participant observations on the test walk, (March 2016), the official opening (June 2016), and an inaugural walk on the Bogø and Møn Cliff legs (September 2016). Furthermore, participant observations were conducted on selected activities offered by fiery spirits on the *Camøno* platform (a sauna experience, a vegan dinner for eight guests, and a B&B overnight stay). Finally, we also participated and recorded the official evaluation events of the first two seasons (November 2016, 17 fiery spirits and December 2017, 18 fiery spirits).

[Table 1: Data sources of the *Camøno* fieldwork, specifying date, type of data and identifier]

In conjunction to the participant observations, five semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected fiery spirits, representing the volunteers (1 & 2), the private entrepreneurs (3) and the public actors (4 & 5). Furthermore, we interviewed 16 wanderers along various parts of the *Camøno* trail by approaching them either when walking or in the B&Bs right before they set out on the walk. Interviews lasted from 15 to 30 minutes, and they reflect a diversity of respondents across age, group composition and walking experience. Finally, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with the first *Camøno* Coordinator (Annette-Marie Syska, March & April 2016) lasting half an hour and two hours, and the second Coordinator (Jeanette Lopez, over the phone for half an hour).

The observations and interviews were contrasted with secondary data retrieved from the webpage and social media (Tripadvisor and Facebook-site of the *Camøno*) as well as strategies for regional development “Udkantspakken” (Danish Government) and Structural Fund projects (EU), Realdania’s and Nordea’s philanthropic funding strategies, as well as reports from the public driven Growth Forum.

## Analysis

Our inductive exploration identified some central themes across these diverse data sources, such as community- and identity building, mixing private and public ownership, access and transactions. In order to map the innovative processes and embeddedness of the *Camøno* with existing tourism systems, we opted for refining the diverse economy inventory with the notion of performativity (Richardson 2015). The analysis is thus structured along the lines of performing community, performing access, and performing transactions.

### ***Building a community: The governance of affect***

Resource scarcity is one of the central issues in Danish rural communities, which is often expressed in terms of economic-structural challenges; lack of jobs, lack of qualified labour or lack of purchase power. Economic and statistical analyses (Udkantspakken, 2014) frequently refer to the islands of Lolland, Falster and Møn as one of the most disadvantaged regions of Denmark, with little or no economic potential. The marginalising discourse of “UdkantsDanmark” [Periphery Denmark] has a tendency to imprint the identity of the local rural community as being unattractive and worthless (Hansen, 2010). Within this context, one of the key focal themes of *Camøno*’s affective governance was to contest the impoverished image, by reframing existing, local resources as something valuable and unique, which are inherent to all members of the community:

“From the beginning the idea was to identify the uniqueness of the area. And the distinct uniqueness is William and Preben and Gerda and Regina and Lene and Hans and all the other passionate locals, who makes it a fine experience” (*Camønoen*, 2017 our translation)

The revalorisation of dormant resources at hand started with a mobilisation action. Beyond its physical infrastructure and design (e.g. signposting and the nine circular *Camøno* benches), the essence of this walking trail lies in the affective engagement of locals through the rhetoric of passionate commitment. The first project manager (a former local journalist), devised a communication campaign inviting volunteers through announcements in the local newspaper. These recruitment ads called for the “fiery spirits of Møn” to co-create the *Camøno* as “the friendliest walking trail in the kingdom” (Syska, March 2016). The project manager also organized public meetings under the heading “Know your Island”, with the aim of informing about the project, and inviting interested individuals/fiery spirits to contribute.

Resource mobilising was the very first and fundamental step towards implementing the *Camøno*, and it was orchestrated along a distinct bottom-up process (Syska, March 2016). The project manager followed up each and every expression of interest in person to demonstrate that “everyone can contribute to the *Camøno* and become a local “fiery spirit” (Syska, March 2016). Such inclusive approach has resulted in a great diversity of ambassadors, including not only local businesses, but also civil volunteer associations, parish councils, pastors, harbour masters, and even private people – actors that are typically excluded from professional business networks and tourism development fora. Non-market assets and latent resources, e.g. idle properties, local skills and competences, are explicitly welcome in the business model of the *Camøno*. Residents were encouraged to contribute even in the most modest ways, e.g. by offering wanderers a free shower, a guided tour or a lunch pack for a minor fee. Local civil associations were asked to perform cleaning and maintenance

activities – banal chores that normally remain invisible (Fiery spirit 1&2). A part of the internal branding campaign was to acknowledge all individual performances of welcome:

We would not have managed without you fiery spirits. You have helped each other and collaborated by giving the *Camøno* wanderers a flag, they could wave it to bypassing cars, if they had sore feet and wanted a lift. [...] Stickers were produced, to indicate the services offered, like putting your restroom or shower at disposal, or preparing a lunch package. And it is entirely up to the fiery spirit whether she wants to charge money. (Project manager 2, Evaluation meeting 2016)

This quote illustrates the ambiguity between altruistic and utilitarian aspects of the *Camøno* hospitality. While the call for volunteers invoked the ideals of genuine private welcome, the implementation has not ruled out the opportunity for micro-entrepreneurship and commercial activities.

To sum up, the inward-oriented strategic communication acknowledges the primary condition of organisational branding: “identity precedes image” (Schultz, 2005), i.e. in order to gain critical mass of supporters (or brand ambassadors) for an idea or a movement, one must first narrate a joint identity for the community. These initiatives discursively reframed Møn as a potential asset and the locus of the community, rather than a pathetic periphery. Local pride and identification was further reinforced by the sudden (positive) media coverages, (*Camøno* wanderers 7), bringing a marginal region to the fore of national attention.

#### *An evocative label creating anticipation*

While the internal branding of the *Camøno* can be characterised as affirmative communication, the external branding was dominated by the strategic aim to create anticipation and awareness among potential walkers for a trail without any historical grounding. Arguably, the name itself, paraphrasing the legendary El Camino in Southern Europe played an important role in consolidating the brand equity of the *Camøno*. It immediately triggers associations to spiritual walking, connoting contemplation, community relationships and recreation (Munar, Meged & Bødker, forthcoming). Our discussions with walkers revealed and anticipation of a non-ordinary walking trail:

It was really a scoop to label this trail the *Camøno* and piggy-back on the Camino’s mythical appeal. (*Camøno* wanderers 7)

Several informants claimed to have chosen to walk the *Camøno* instead of other walking trails because of the imaginaries its name represents (*Camøno wanderers 5*). On a broader level, this trail addresses the contemporary needs of the so-called aspirational class (Currid-Halkett, 2017). These entail demand for meditative activities and existential therapy of the self, with a promise of “taking visitors to a zone of peace, well-being, knowledge and magical moments [they] will never forget” (*Camøno*, 2016). The affective governance of the *Camøno* also extends to diverse rituals augmenting the secular act of walking. The Christian community and local pastors played an important role in enchanting the walking trail. One of the first test tours of the *Camøno* in May 2016 opened with a High Mass in Elmelund Church, blessing all wanderers upon departure (*Camøno test walk 2016*).

The confusion between pilgrimage and other practices of leisure walking aims at maximising market impact and appeal to as many different types of walkers as possible (*Camøno wanderers 7*), as well as to embrace passionate locals, who admittedly would stay away if the *Camøno* was a religious project (*Voluntary Fiery Spirit 1*). Nevertheless, as the first project manager assures, the *Camøno* was never conceived to target pilgrims specifically, as the name may suggest, but in reality, all type of wanderers such as families, scout troops, romantic couples and endurance sportsmen. In its pluralistic ethos (“everyone can hike”; “open for everyone”), the religious elements are deliberately kept ambiguous and secondary, least these should put off more secular visitors.

The market upscaling of the *Camøno* is reflected in the design of the nine hiking legs, none of which is explicitly linked to Christian pilgrimage. Rather, they are organised around specific themes to address diverse walker preferences and needs. For instance, The Juniper Berry Hike appeals to forager-gatherer walkers, the Hippy Hike to spiritual walkers and King Asger’s Hike to people interested in prehistoric heritage (Syska, March 2016). As such, the thematic hikes are subscribing to a range of contemporary walking practices present in European leisure cultures. Each of these walking imaginaries highlights walking along scenic trails and being close to nature (romantic gae), performing introspection, and the sociality with other wanderers. In spite of the intentional ambiguity of the trail, the walkers themselves made sense of the *Camøno* through contrasting it with El Camino (*Camøno wanderers 1, 2 & 4*, Vegan dinner, 2016). The wanderers (both believers and atheists) perceived the latter as a much more institutionalised religious and meditative performance, some refraining from talking while walking (*Camøno wanderers 3, 4*, 2016, The Vegan dinner, 2016).

The symbolic embeddedness with the Camino not only grants associative freeriding on a consolidated imaginary, but also shapes expectations, and sometimes creates negative effects. Many wanderers have already walked the Camino, and instinctively use it as a comparison standard to assess the *Camøno* (*Camøno wanderers 2 & 4*, 2016 & Vegan dinner, 2016). In particular, complaints were made about the lack of functionalities (e.g.

lacking signposting, or the availability of inexpensive shelters, especially in low season) (*Camøno* wanderers 6 & 7). There is a clear gap between the successful brand communication and implementation of a fully functioning and serviced trail. As such, the *Camøno*'s ambiguous new imaginaries accentuate fundamental differences in expectations and destabilize notions of private ownership and the commons. This leads us to analysing the governance of access.

#### *Offering access: the governance of joint ownership*

The noble cause (i.e. contributing to the friendliest walking trail in Denmark) gradually convinced private residents to become engaged and turn into lifestyle-entrepreneurs (*Camøno* evaluation 2016). For instance, to solve accommodation capacity shortages along the trail, and provide shelters for the wanderers, residents were asked to open up their backyards for camping or sheds, or to turn idle buildings (e.g. lighthouses, barns, granaries) into short term sleeping facilities:

Dear *Camøno* travelers! Here at my place, you may sleep outside in the garden directly under the stars or in a tent. Contact me upfront and we will find a solution that fits you. I also have room for groups. (*Camøno* webpage, "Sleeping under the Stars")

As the above quote illustrates, the *Camøno* experience is made possible by local hosts, who willingly share their private property with potential guests. In line with the inclusive rhetoric of the *Camøno*, visitors are promised unrestricted access to the physical walking space along its entire 175 kilometres. However, the brand essence of an accessible trail that is "open 365 years a day" depends heavily on the benevolence of private and public landowners, and not everyone is hospitable with the temporary trespassers. In practice, the unlimited spatial capacity of the "friendliest walking trail" is physically restricted through quite a few *no access*-signs along the road (*Camøno* wanderer, 6). Free access and walkability was particularly critical in defining the final setting of the trail, where the original idea of an exclusively coastal route was obstructed by a few central landowners, who were reluctant to grant access to walking paths through their property (Syska, March 2016). This controversy has prevailed even after the official opening as reflected in regretful social media comments from walkers:

We encountered less accommodating landowners, numerous "Private" signs and even *Camøno* partners [...], who certainly did not leave us with the impression of being friendly above average. Keep track on your collaboration with landowners and



establish a set of expectations for partners with whom you collaborate. (Facebook comment from a wanderer 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2017)

The final route was born as a compromise of complex negotiations, and despite some of the hikes lead through scenic detours, 70% of the *Camøno*'s main track stretches along tarmac roads. Most wanderers however, prefer the scenic routes and the hikes alongside the coastline - especially on the eastern coast, running along Møns Klint (a spectacular chalk cliff and public property) (*Camøno* wanderers 3; The *Camøno* Evaluation, 2016). This ambivalence produces images of the rural as a simultaneously welcoming and a hostile sphere, and spurred alternative solutions to bypass and deflect the trail to coherent open areas.

Despite the egalitarian and inclusive ethos of the trail (initially used to mobilise local resources), asymmetries are apparent. Not every supplier benefits equally from their contribution, and there is evidence of opportunistic behavior attempting to seize the sudden economic potential. The growth is not evenly distributed on the island due to diversity in natural resources, and reluctant landowners. For instance, very few come across the camping of Mønbroen, because landowners cut off the route from the coastline. The locals who have benefitted most from the *Camøno* also tend to be the most resourceful in socioeconomic terms. Although there are more than 200 fiery spirits, there is a core group of ca. 50 islanders which are the key figures behind the *Camøno* (Lopez Coordinator, 2017), and perhaps also the ones reaping most of its rewards.

### *Performing transactions: the governance of exchange*

This final analytical section explores the management of transactions among peers in the sharing business model of the *Camøno*. In particular, we focus our attention on the digital platform which was designed to upscale small scale exchanges between private people.

The digital business model of the *Camøno* can be described as a local communitarian platform (Gyimóthy, 2017), mediated by a public on nonprofit body – in this case Møn Museum. The website, [camoenoen.org](http://camoenoen.org) enables direct, peer transactions between wanderers and local citizens, where one can book diverse experiences ranging from private dinners to birdwatching and berry-picking. In the egalitarian spirit of the *Camøno*, anyone with an e-mail account can offer their products or services on the website – there are no restrictions on format, timing and price. There is a small lump sum fee for VAT-registered firms, while private persons and NGOs may list their offers for free. All subsequent web-mediated transactions take place directly between supplier and costumers and the platform does not charge a commission fee for intermediation. The museum does not engage in vetting procedures and deflects all responsibility regarding the accuracy and availability of listed services on the website. Instead, it is expected that the market will gradually take over quality control mechanisms with users posting their reviews on social media like Facebook and Tripadvisor. Ultimately, the

trustworthiness of those reviews will depend on the extent to which users adopt the platform as well as the volume of members contributing.

After the second year of operation, only a fraction of transactions have taken place on the website (Lopez, 2017, *Camøno* evaluation, 2017). The digital platform reflects the decentralised and somewhat unstructured logic of the fiery spirit community as suppliers. The list (without exhaustions) features conventional B&B accommodations, musical Stone Age recitation in dolmens, drop-in yoga and even the tourism marketing agencies of Bogø. Although the platform suggests itineraries augmented with an interactive map interface, wanderers find it difficult to navigate and plan their trips because of lacking up-to date or exact information (*Camøno* wanderers 4; Facebook). After a year of operations, the platform fails to live up to its transactional role, mainly due to the egalitarian (or anarchist) display of suppliers of all size and kind and the chaotic digital infrastructure. This confusion has benefitted new service innovations, of which the most notable is the recently established *Camøno* bureau, a private travel agency offering all-inclusive hiking package tours for *Camøno* wanderers. A curious detail, but perhaps well illustrating our point of hybridity is the fact that this agency is owned and driven by the same person who is employed at Møn Museum as the present and now second project manager of the *Camøno*. Being simultaneously the facilitator and mediator of private businesses, including her own micro-entreprise, the current project manager does not perceive these dual roles as a conflict of interest. In this light, the *Camøno* may best be interpreted as a pro-active marketisation of all possible resources while transgressing and dissolving the boundaries between market and non-market spheres.

The marketisation of diverse idle resources at Møn dissolves the borders between non-markets and markets, and enables exchanges driven by both micro-entrepreneurial logic and communitarian altruism (Gibson-Graham, 2006). This resulted in a new business models, curated and incubated by the support of a public museum. Such an approach warrants moderate growth. Firstly, it is based on existing resources and capacity, as opposed to a boosterish development with foreign direct investment (FDI) capital. Second, the benefits generated from the *Camøno* stay in the area and not extracted by a global platform owner. However, as the *Camøno* depends on both bottom-up private initiative and voluntary participation, there are inevitably also signs of disparities in the distribution of activities and income generation.

### **Discussion: A diverse economy reading of the *Camøno*'s communitarian system**

At the outset, this study aimed at understanding how the communitarian model of the *Camøno* is embedded in and disrupting tourism markets and capital systems, the governance of heritage and public space as well as the everyday life of residents. Along the way, we have found performances reshaping the relationships among local community members and consumers of leisure walking. As the analysis demonstrated, these

performances arise along ambivalences and productive misunderstandings, opening up a whole new potential for rural tourism experiences. The evocative label of the Camøno (merging the names of the island Møn and El Camino) and the narratives of walking have transformed a rural agricultural production space into a leisure consumption space – with minimal investment in physical infrastructure. Through the affective governance of residents and potential wanderers, the Camøno project opened a new space for bottom-up experimentation, reframing four contextual features, that was hitherto considered as fixed:

- Reframing the place brand: Møn as a disadvantaged space of poverty is reframed as a space of care, mindfulness and leisure
- Reframing labour: from lack of waged, skilled local labour to a volunteer hospitality taskforce
- Reframing market exchange: from transactional reciprocity (monetary exchange) to mutuality (generalised reciprocity)
- Reframing business models: merging industrial /capitalist models to communitarian cooperatives

[Figure 5 around here]

The four parameters may be summarised in a model highlighting the interconnectedness of an alternative economy. Figure 5 depicts the multiscale disruptive aspects of Camøno as a communitarian business model. The first cogwheel in motion is the positive reframing of the rural place brand of Møn. This affectively invigorates the local community to participate in new ways, reframing labour as a volunteer hospitality taskforce across various strata of the local community. Subsequently, market exchange has been reframed not least because the private locals, the museum of Møn, and volunteers supply services with little or no economic remuneration, but take collective pride and responsibility for the development of the island. This has finally reframed business models merging of industrial /capitalist models with communitarian cooperatives and voluntarism in a bottom up process resulting in a collaborative communitarian micro- entrepreneurial rural economy.

The findings resonate well with the suggestions of post-capitalist scholars. Arguably, doing economy differently implies a discursive approach; that is talking alternative models into being by sharing the knowledge and vision of communitarian practices (Gibson-Graham, 2008). Seen through a diverse economy lens, the *Camøno* assembles heterogeneous, small scale resources into a homogeneous commodity (a walking trail), in which previously non-market resources (private household amenities and knowledge) gain new meaning and value.

The *Camøno*'s hybrid economic rationales (Gibson-Graham 2006; Richardson, 2015) open up creative intersections between the declining industrial production system of local tourism and the governance of

cultural and natural heritage resources. Rural tourism has always been a mixed/diverse market, where most attractions and hospitality infrastructure are publicly governed, while consumer goods and services are mediated on private or alternative markets – yet, those value chains seldom cross each other. In contrast, most of the new enterprises that spun out of the *Camøno* are transgressing traditional market/non-market boundaries – in terms of ownership, transactions and value generation. The suppliers (voluntary or commercial) are equally framed as fiery spirits, flattening out traditional market hierarchies and as the new entrepreneurial class. Despite their economic diversity and connectedness with markets, all actors are embedded in the local sociocultural fabric of Møn, which warrants growth at their own pace.

## **Conclusions and policy implications**

This paper has chronicled the consolidation of the *Camøno*, in order to assess it as a socioeconomic coastal tourism experiment to revitalise a declining region in Northern Europe. Despite twenty years of planning efforts focusing on tourism as a driver of rural transformation, most public initiatives in the Scandinavian countryside tend to turn out as “boondoggles” (Anell & Wilson, 2004). Boondoggles are wasteful interventions, sucking, rather than mobilising resources and in general, failing to connect with markets and local productions systems, and likely to disintegrate after the funded period (Meged, 1999). In the wake of recurring flops of governmental initiatives, a new type of development governance has emerged to resurrect the Danish countryside. Today, an increasingly large proportion of regional development projects are supported by private funds, such as the Realdania Credit Fund programme, *Places Matter* [Stedet Tæller] (2017), which also funded the *Camøno* project. While its rhetoric is entrenched in a catalyst philanthropy (“to strengthen the quality of life in peripheral regions”), the ultimate objective of *Places Matter* is a market-oriented “re-entrepreneurialisation” of the rural, both physically and socially. Opposed to public initiatives in the past, banks and credit fund programs require local embeddedness and encourage experimentation with new business models and organisational constellations.

We would like to draw attention to two policy aspects related to the *Camøno* initiative. The first concerns the somewhat unusual institutional anchoring of the project at a non-profit and non-tourism actor. Instead of the local DMO or municipality, the leadership of the project was assigned to the local museum with a high credibility and specific skills in narrative interpretation and branding. Not only did the museum mobilise credit funds and volunteer labour to create a fully operational walking experience, it also established a communitarian platform for micro-entrepreneurship for the small firms located along the trail. This required the radical rephrasing of the traditional mission of a museum, which now also entails being the brand manager, platform owner and service hub for the walking trail. The second policy implication concerns the contested spatiality of an “open access” trail. Our findings demonstrated that the grand ambition of a commons walking trail

incorporating land in different kinds of ownership is at odds with the realities of Danish property regulations and landowner practices. The spatial projection of ownership emphasises the clash between the rationale of unconditional hospitality and sharing vs. individual rights afforded by private ownership. This reflects the fragility of an ideological concept, which can only be implemented successfully if there is a broad support and material anchoring from local landowners. As the project owner (the museum) is not a legitimate actor to negotiate land use with the owners, a strong collaboration with the local municipality is recommended.

Despite its domestic fame, we are aware of the global anonymity of the Camøno walking trail. However even small stories may provide valuable insights to transform the economy. It is therefore appropriate to conclude with Healy's (2009) remark on the importance of studying inconspicuous local initiatives:

The commonplace view is that economic alternatives are tiny islands awash in a sea of capitalism. [...] The metonymical pairing of global-capitalism and local-alternatives structures our understanding of economic space even when an alternative economic practice becomes global in scope. [...] The goal of [...] scholarship is to examine economic practices that are potentially valuable but discursively subordinated, bringing them into light and engaging with actors to build or strengthen alternative economies. (Healy, 2009, p. 342)

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