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Conflicting landscapes – integrating sustainable tourism in nature park developments

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyse conflicting landscape associations linked to nature parks. Drawing from an R&D project in one of the largest former wetlands in Denmark, we examine how diversified landscape perceptions and conflicting landscape preferences result from and condition the re-enchantment of nature parks for tourism development. The case study relies on various procedures. First, a combination of local accounts and fieldwork observations of tourism and landscapes. Second, interviews with tourists and local stakeholders on processes of engagement and disengagement with conservation, restoration, and re-wilding processes. Third, collaborative mapping with local stakeholders and citizens and their imaginaries of local nature. By combining literature reviews with findings from the case study, we derive different social imaginaries among tourism entrepreneurs, property owners, farmers, industrial actors, local citizens, and NGOs. Six conflicting landscape imaginaries are identified that, to varying degrees, may apply to other nature parks. Each approach holds different human-nature relations and views on what needs to be sustained locally, and what landscapes need to be developed. We conclude that conflicting positions and preferences over landscapes (geo-positionalities) may hinder interventions for sustainable transition, and that mapping these landscape positionalities may be useful for deliberation in tourism development initiatives.

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Conflictual landscape; sustainable land transition; former wetland; tourism landscapes; social nature

1. Introduction

This paper deals with the rise of new conflicting landscape associations linked to nature-based tourism development. Tourism represents a type of commodification of nature (Büscher and Fletcher 2017; Katz 1998) whose economic importance has increased during recent decades (Margaryan and Fredman 2017; Matilainen and Lähdesmäki 2014; Rytteri and Puhakka 2016). The growth of tourism entails a number of classic negative impacts on biodiversity, local societies, farming, cultural heritage, and environmental degradation, given tourism's structural violence to local people and the land (Buckley 2012; Büscher and Fletcher 2017). Yet, in rural areas such issues and standpoints often coexist with tourism as a strategy through which local development of peripheral

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communities (Bærenholdt and Grindsted 2021) is sought by highlighting the area's rich natural resources and landscapes, among other ways.

Such paradoxes and dilemmas typically involve local conflicts, upholding different meanings and pressures on what to sustain and what to develop. In this paper we argue that while tourism is often acknowledged as a development strategy in peripheral communities, conflicting landscape imaginaries will arise not necessarily due to top-down planning or business-driven goals but be mutually co-dependent on structural as well as local driving forces.

Insofar as nature-based tourism has gradually been recognized as an important rural development strategy (Bærenholdt and Grindsted 2021; Salvatore, Chiodo, and Fantini 2018), a number of underlying pre-conditions and circumstances are fundamentally intertwined with multiscalar dynamics: urban centralization (Olesen and Richardson 2012), transformative urban-rural links including the decline of economic activity in rural areas (Dicken and Thrift 1992), agricultural and industrial dynamics (Van der Ploeg 2018), depopulation and ecological injustice (Rudolph and Kirkegaard 2019), counter-urbanization and relative income (Andersen et al. 2022), rearrangement of public institutional goods (schools, childcare, hospitals), deterioration of local retail functions, jobs, and social activities (Bærenholdt, Fuglsang, and Sundbo 2021), the increasing role of the experience economy (e.g. Sundbo and Sørensen 2013), and the reinvention of the importance of wetlands, nature, and more (Farstad et al. 2022; Krauss, Zhu, and Stagg 2021). However, conflicting landscape associations and their geo-positionalities when place developments are initiated have not been studied in nature parks, where efforts are directed at making tourism an integral part of rural development strategies, not least by enhancing biodiversity, climate, and nature conservation agendas.

Climate change (IPCC 2021), biodiversity, and the function of wetland carbon sinks (European Commision 2021; IPCC 2014) may be coupled with local nature tourism strategies in nature parks. Yet local responses in rural areas influenced by national or international policies may not resonate with such agendas. While EU and national policies (Danish Government 2023) recognize the need for nature restoration, i.e. of wetlands, bogs, marshes, and lowlands to mitigate the worst effects of global environmental change (Blondet et al. 2017), local communities may embrace them, oppose them, or even accelerate conflicts between local stakeholders when confronted with potential land use interventions.

Within this context, the paper follows the trend of nature-based tourism studies in examining local nature-based tourism development together with local actors characterized by family enterprises, often with hidden economic motives, and value-oriented goals (Fletcher et al. 2019; Lundberg, Fredman, and Wall-Reinius 2014; Sørensen and Grindsted 2021). We are also influenced by studies and strategies on greening tourism, and environmental consciousness, and we relate to studies and strategies on sustainable transition potentials (Haisch 2019; Kaae et al. 2019; Lundberg, Fredman, and Wall-Reinius 2014; Meged and Holm 2022; Saarinen and Gill 2019). Furthermore, we draw from political ecology and the social nature approach (Castree 2001; Castree and Braun 2006; Katz 1998; Van der Ploeg 2018) in which natural processes and landscape transformations are social in character.

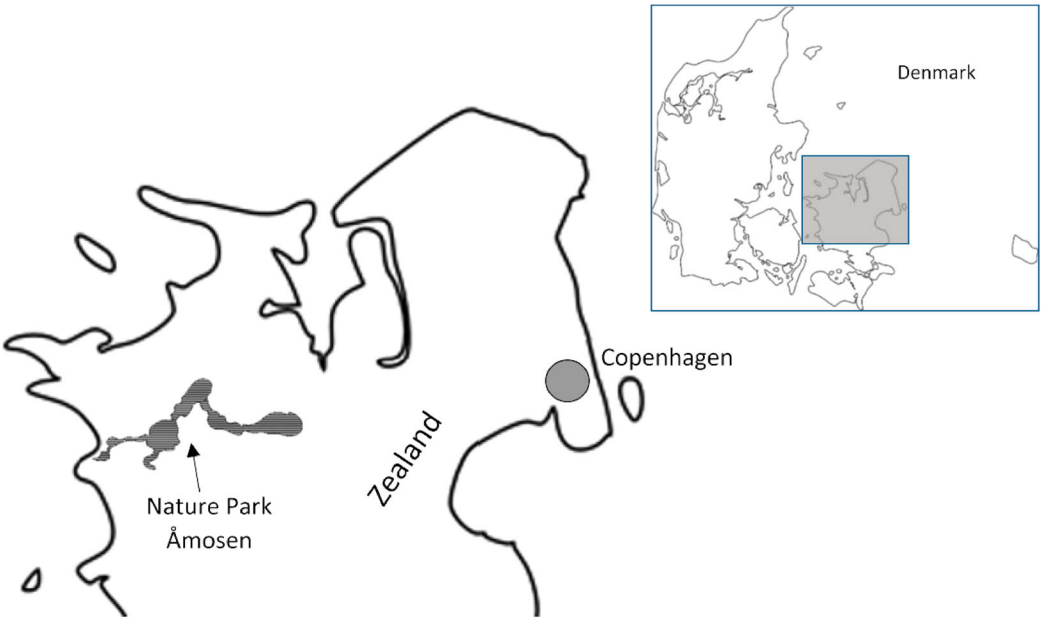
Tourism strategies as perceived solutions to structural dynamics and strategies for local development also coincide with presumed sustainability paths. By way of illustration, Lordkipanidze, Brezet, and Backman (2005), Fletcher et al. (2019), and Holm, Cold-Ravnkilde, and Grindsted (2020) examined the role of tourism actors and how such entrepreneurial actors impact land-use in different destinations and set sustainability targets. Different imaginaries of natural landscapes and how these relate to tourism's role in nature park developments have been less explored (Benediktsson 2016; Hoogendoorn et al. 2019; Koninx 2019), particularly in relation to naturalization, denaturalization and renaturalization processes. Yet, as tourism extends into more nature-rich areas, among other means by commodifying them (Katz 1998; Rytteri and Puhakka 2016), there is an increasing need to understand the characteristics, possibilities, and role of nature-based tourism in natural restoration, conservation, or re-wilding efforts (Kaae et al. 2019). Local conflicting

forces and views between stakeholders and their perception and preference on landscapes here unpack the structural impact on the environment (Bryan 2015; Büscher and Fletcher 2017; Jasanoff and Kim 2015). We therefore have an interest in understanding where existing local landscape positions may be opened for biodiversity and climate mitigation alongside the development of tourism in Danish nature parks. Consequently, we ask what characterizes different local actors' various landscape positions for rewilding, preserving, restoring, or remanufacturing natural landscapes. We thus aim to produce knowledge for pertinent approaches in local nature park developments with combined tourism and biodiversity/climate mitigation agendas. The empirical basis consists of a case study on a four-year R&D project with diverse experience-related development efforts in the Danish Åmosen Nature Park (NPÅ), a rural, partly farming based nature area, the third largest peatland and the largest drained peatland in Denmark. NPÅ can be considered a case in point of conflicting viewpoints over what should be developed and what should be sustained in future land use transformations.

The paper proceeds in five sections. The following Section 1.1 sets out the concept and context of nature park. Section 2 explains the theoretical approach combining nature tourism studies with the production of nature theory. Section 3 explains the methods. The results section (Section 4) presents six conflicting landscape configurations and explains their characteristics in a nature park context. Finally, we discuss how nature tourism developments intertwine with a complex of conflicting landscape positions that, among other things, impact sustainable landscape transformations.

1.1. Research area – the case of Åmosen Nature Park

Denmark is a highly intensified agricultural country and multiple stressors intensify the need for land, not only due to demands from tourism and recreation (Salvatore, Chiodo, and Fantini 2018), industry and agriculture, urbanization, and more, but increasingly from mitigating climate change and biodiversity collapse, and the promotion of bioenergy, wind, and solar energy farms (Concito 2023; Rudolph and Kirkegaard 2019). In short, environmental sustainability and biodiversity agendas (e.g. EU Common Agricultural Policy) require policy-driven land use in transition (Arler et al. 2017; Gustafsson, Hermelin, and Smas 2019; Hermoso et al. 2022; IPCC 2014). Denmark is different from many other countries, as nature-rich areas and parks are often owned by private landowners, and planning restrictions are no different from areas outside nature parks, such as those concerning farming, building, nature protection, etc. (Ministry of the Environment 2022). Consequently, none of the Danish nature parks are solely natural landscapes but intertwined spaces of nature, infrastructure, housing, farming, cities, and services. By way of example, a nature park may be located within a Ramsar or NATURA 2000 site, but the same regulation applies outside the areas. Nature on public property is restricted by commercial tourism activities, and the same law applies within the parks. In contrast to a national park, nature parks are not benefited by either legislative power or finance by the Government. Thus a nature park operates as a volunteer organization with little authority or public funding (Sørensen and Grindsted 2020). Furthermore, nature parks are highly intensified landscapes in comparison to other European parks, and no nature park in Denmark subscribes to one of the 51 ecolabels of protective measures for parks (Ecolabel Index 2023; Holm 2017). NPÅ has around 1900 landowners. Approximately 97% of the total area of the nature park is privately owned. Some 2500 other citizens also live in the nearest surrounding area. The park and surroundings are characterized by a few exceptionally large property owners (of the total of about 1900), with farming and forestry as predominant activities. The case area has little tourism and limited accommodation, tourism entrepreneurs and commercialized attractions (Cold-Ravnkilde, Holm, and Grindsted 2021; Sørensen and Grindsted 2020). NPÅ estimates it receives around 10,000 visitors a year, of whom the majority are from the upland areas. Moreover, the area is subject to rural trends of industrial decline, job losses, high unemployment, and fewer highly educated people (Andersen et al. 2022). The area is gradually being depopulated,



Map 1. Åmosen Nature Park is located an hour's drive from Copenhagen, between Holbæk, Kalundborg, and Sorø Municipalities.

with regional urbanization taking place primarily in the larger cities in the vicinity of the area (see Appendix 1).

NPÅ is the third largest peatland and the largest drained peatland in Denmark with a 524 km^2 watershed, lowlands, and carbon-rich soils and more than 8000 ha of land (see Appendix 2). With gradual drainage from the 1800s onwards, and most extensively between the 1930s and the 1960s, the biodiversity profile as well as the climate impact due to land drainage has changed dramatically in the case area.[1] Nationally, such low-lying areas and wetlands contribute to half of the agricultural sector's land-use-based greenhouse gas emissions in Denmark (Greve et al. 2020; Gyldenkærne and Greve 2015). Map 1 illustrates the case area of the nature park.

2. Theory

Three bodies of literature frame the theoretical approach. One is positioned within the stream of nature-based tourism studies (e.g. Benediktsson 2016; Hoogendoorn et al. 2019; Sørensen and Grindsted 2021), particularly focusing on studies linking sustainability agendas and rural community development (e.g. Bærenholdt, Fuglsang, and Sundbo 2021; Haisch 2019; Huijbens 2012; Kaae et al. 2019). Second, we draw from the social nature approach (Castree 2013; Katz 1998; Kirsch and Mitchell 2004) related to the production of nature and the political ecologies of naturalization, re-naturalization, and denaturalization (Castree and Braun 2006; Van der Ploeg 2018) and what Katz (1998) has labelled 'restoration' versus 'preservation' strategies in her studies of nature park transformations. Finally, we draw upon Jasanoff's concept of sociotechnical imaginaries from 2009 and re-articulated later by Jasanoff and Kim (2013; 2015): the role of imagining the technological future (cultivated landscape, in this case) as a crucial constructive element in social life. It relates to collective beliefs about how society functions – these sociotechnical imaginaries as phenomena could be articulated and propagated by local, regional, and global actors (Jasanoff and Kim 2015).

We will argue that these three bodies of literature will help to explore the role and dynamics of conflicting images of landscapes within the same geographic area. We thus develop geo-positionalities inspired in Sheila Janasoff and Kim's (2009) work on imaginaries. Imaginaries are the blurred

or intertwined way we see, understand, hope for and desire things around us, such as landscapes, typically conflicting with other utilization, economic, aesthetic, or symbolic agendas. Thus geo-positionalities refer to a positionality relating to imaginaries, hopes, visions, and desires over a landscape and a positionality relating to the geopolitics, motivation, or belief of transforming such landscapes. Hence, geo-positionalities hold collective imaginaries, sometimes conflicting over the same place.

Agriculture, forestry, and industrial demands often conflict with nature conservation (Van der Ploeg 2018) and tourism (Bostedt and Mattsson 1995; 2006). According to the production of nature theory (Castree and Braun 2006), such nature conflicts reside in economic utilization of natural entities, for instance where landowners seek profit from agricultural activities, as does the gradual tourist commodification of nature scenery (Kaltenborn, Haaland, and Sandell 2001).

Structurally, tourism entrepreneurs are often dependent on other local interest groups. Access to nature is a prerequisite for nature-based tourism companies but is often controlled by landowners. By way of illustration, Puhakka (2008) identifies different discourses related to tourism in national parks in Finland, including integration of nature-based tourism and conservation versus practices that stress greater economic utilization of nature. Other local interest groups include local people and voluntary organizations, local planners, and politicians who may perceive nature tourism as an economic development potential, whereas other citizens find it a threat to their lifestyle and local aspirations (Matilainen and Lähdesmäki 2014).

However, in some areas the relation between tourism and nature conservation works well (Mace 2014; Margaryan 2012) and not all stakeholders in rural communities within tourism, farming and beyond seek high profits or follow the logic of mainstream management literature (Fletcher et al. 2019). Many nature-based tourism entrepreneurs, for instance, are driven by values such as being close to nature, authenticity, sustainability, and environmental responsibility (Genovese et al. 2017) and/or they seek alternative lifestyles or pursue personal interests (Haisch 2019; Sørensen and Grindsted 2021). Similar values thrive among stakeholders in recreational and nature sport activities, tourist guides, NGOs and even small farmers; they are manifest by actors often opposed to profit and growth (Lundberg, Fredman, and Wall-Reinius 2014; Saarinen and Gill 2019). In some cases, the aim of building a nature tourism enterprise is to maintain a life in the countryside, for example by turning a family farm into a nature holiday farm (Genovese et al. 2017).

The development of nature tourism also attracts external actors' interests. In addition, university-based researchers may, as in the case of this article, be involved in nature tourism development initiatives in their own way for the benefit of plural jobs, ecological and social interests, often through funded research and development projects. Both researchers and their funders may have their own sets of interests and objectives (Grindsted 2018).

Thus, nature tourism development attracts and relies on a complex of actors who all have direct or indirect interests in nature tourism and in the nature and landscapes that are the core resources of nature tourism (Fredman and Tyrväinen 2010). Although different actors demand quite different landscapes and manipulated natures, tourism can be a practice of nature usage which supports preservation interests (Margaryan 2012), but also different tourism actors' business approaches may coexist with industrial, forestry and agricultural production (Genovese 2017; Mace 2014).

Different degrees of locally based positions and observations of development potentials will thus be expected to be found among the nature tourism actors, even though they may all subscribe to a sustainability discourse (Lundberg, Fredman, and Wall-Reinius 2014; Sørensen and Grindsted 2021). As illustrated below, this can be the case in nature parks where different stakeholders all advocate for sustainability by targeting different landscape formations and their associated natures within the same park.

Drawing from Castree and Braun (2006), we build our analysis on the understanding that different local actors have varying ways of utilizing rural landscapes as operand or operant values for different purposes, ranging from extensive land use to the transformation of landscape and the environment into added value. But emotional, experiential, aesthetic and intrinsic nature

aspirations are also at stake (Benediktsson 2016). The resulting constructions of rural landscape positions and their associated nature(s) are also intimately related to the development of new and conflicting landscape uses. While conflicting landscape imaginaries often emerge when large investment efforts are to transform rural areas, in contrast to Iannucci, Martellozzo, and Randelli (2022) we argue that the soft commoditization of nature as a leisure and tourism resource also results in the rise of new landscape imaginaries in an increasingly complex 'landscape' of conflicting local positions and preferences. We argue that mapping these geo-positionalities is important to identify options for new tourism-related ecologies and to avoid conflicting nature tourism development initiatives. Research and development efforts, such as our own, should also be aware of hidden or conscious landscape positions and preferences.

3. Methodology

The empirical material is based on a case study. The case is spatially delimited to the nature park's area (see Map 1) but also integrates (more arbitrarily) actors operating in the immediate vicinity of the park. Furthermore, the case study took place over four years in an R&D project with diverse experience-related development efforts in the Danish Åmosen Nature Park. The R&D project aimed to study nature park and tourism development in the area, and how different actors position socio-natures in relation to the nature park.

Actors that have a direct relation to tourism development in NPÅ and an impact on it, including property owners, local citizens and visitors, private tourism and non-tourism entrepreneurs, relevant public, semi-public and voluntary organizations, are all part of the study. To include various conflicting landscape images and stakeholder interests in utilizing the landscape and nature in the park, we draw from the cultural-politics-of-nature approach to studying local citizens living with the landscapes (Castree 2014; Castree and Braun 2006). This approach is taken in order to become deliberately involved in getting a grounded understanding of how local practices and living with nature evolve among a diverse number of inhabitants in and around the park (Bryan 2015). The study follows three procedures. First, a combination of local accounts and fieldwork observations of the case area. Second, interviews with tourists and local stakeholders on processes of engagement and disengagement with conservation, restoration, and rewilding processes. Third, collaborative mapping with local stakeholders and citizens and their imaginaries of local nature – identity, preferences, and practise. We understand the methods to be partly supportive when each one reveals similar or controversial knowledge (Blondet et al. 2017; Bryan 2015; Chambers et al. 2022; Salvatore, Chiodo, and Fantini 2018).

3.1. Case area

The case area can be considered an extreme case in Flyvbjerg's terminology (Flyvbjerg 2010) with an extraordinarily high number of conflicts over changes in nature use. In the late 1990s, the NPÅ area gained growing political attention to nature and culture restoration projects (Ministry of the Environment 2001). Reports by consultancies (e.g. COWI 2006) and national nature conservation agencies (Ministry of the Environment 2006) pinpointed the need for restoring the area, not least to preserve some of the best archaeological artefacts from the Mesolithic Stone Age in northern Europe (Aaby and Noe-Nygaard 2020; Lundhede, Hasler, and Bille 2013). Also, the Danish Forest and Nature Agency formed initiatives from 1999 to 2006 on wetland restoration simultaneously with initiatives transforming the area into a national park (Ministry of the Environment 2006). However, expert- and authority-driven nature preservation and rewilding for more wetlands conflicted with the parallel local process of becoming a national park. Many landowners found themselves marginalized and under-represented in the planning process (Ministry of the Environment 2006). As these landowners had major concerns with the nature restoration project and the nature park initiative, they formed a lobbying group, 'the Association for the Conservation

of Nature in Eastern Åmose', that mobilized protests among national and local politicians (Holm, Cold-Ravnkilde, and Grindsted 2020). Both the wetland restoration and national park project fell apart. The 180 million DKK (€24.1 million) Finance Act (2006) was withdrawn a few days before enactment as the Government could not obtain a majority in Parliament. Irrespectively, processes of restoring peatland and wetlands in the bog failed, leaving local actors with a generalized asymmetry, mistrust, anxiety and division regarding both the conservation project and the national park initiative (Holm, Cold-Ravnkilde, and Grindsted 2020). The steering group of the initiative for creating a national park then chose to abandon their efforts in exchange for establishing a nature park on less conflictual ground as a voluntary private NGO initiative, receiving less attention from the public and national authorities. In 2014 they succeeded; the Åmose area became the first nature park in Denmark. These errors caused wetland restoration projects in and around NPÅ to be a taboo subject for many years to come, drawing an inflamed and divided line locally (Byrnak-Storm, Holm, and Grindsted 2022), including the aims of mixing nature park development with accessibility to land, trails, tourism, and nature restoration interests. Many landowners still back off in despair and mistrust when external units want to develop change processes, due to their experience with lack of influence, poor information, and little transparency during initial nature preservation and pilot park periods (Byrnak-Storm, Holm, and Grindsted 2022).

3.2. Fieldwork observations

Fieldwork can be considered a plethora of specific methods, each contributing to understanding an area (Grindsted, Møller, and Nielsen 2013). Fieldwork observations consisted of several visits, historical maps and desk research to obtain a detailed overview and history of the area. Such observations further consisted of field notes from a landowner trip in June 2022 with 35 landowners from the area. The landowners were exposed to different sites and topics, including tourism development, nature protection, accessibility and restrictions. Researchers undertook both participant observation and small interviews on each site on the landowners' attitudes towards the area. Participant observation includes discussions among landowners and their stated opinions on the different sites. Field notes consist of reflective notes, for example, when a landowner talks about 'wetland transformation' with a fellow landowner for the first time.

3.3. Interview

The material consist of 15 in-depth qualitative interviews with local stakeholders, 6 focus group interviews (2019–2022), as well as short interviews with 79 tourists. Focus group interviews were held with specific interest groups such as horse riders. The semi-structured interviews were audio recorded. All respondents have given their consent and allowed us to publish quotations taken from the interviews.

The 15 respondents and 6 focus group interviews included actors with a direct relation to the nature park (Table 1). Based on a primary mapping of public, semi-public, and voluntary organizations, interviewees were selected on the basis of inputs from the nature park organization, business directories, and internet searches. The initial mapping was followed by a snowball selection of additional actors. However, because of the interviewee selection method, participants may be skewed towards the more 'visible' and progressive tourism and potentially tourism-interested actors. The interviews offered insights into how processes both materialize in the area and are constituted by the narratives through which the stakeholders engage in developing the nature park. Interview themes included the perceptions of NPÅ, its nature and landscapes, the development potential, respondents' development focus and hopes for their area, attractions visited, their experiences, and the potential for and barriers to reaching their goals, including those imposed by the strategies of other actors (Cold-Ravnkilde, Holm, and Grindsted 2021; Holm, Cold-Ravnkilde, and Grindsted 2020). The questions opened up a discussion on what things the interviewees

Table 1. Interviewees in the case study (Recording number and reference I1–I15).

Interviewee profession
1. Municipal project leader in tourism development
2. Public/private partnership project leader in nature-based tourism
3. Landlord and manager of small-scale private accommodation
4. Representative from Danish Nature Association
5. Manager of a group of volunteers at the nature park
6. Board member of Åmosen and of the Danish Outdoor Council
7. Manager of a local visit organisation
8. Landlord and manager of a one-person nature activities tourism business
9. Landlord and manager of a small family-run farm accommodation and activities centre
10. Landlord and manager of a one-person B&B business
11. Landlord, private farmer (agriculture and forestry)
12. Manager of a sports NGO
13. Municipal project leader in tourism development
14. Museum manager
15. Foreman of a local business association

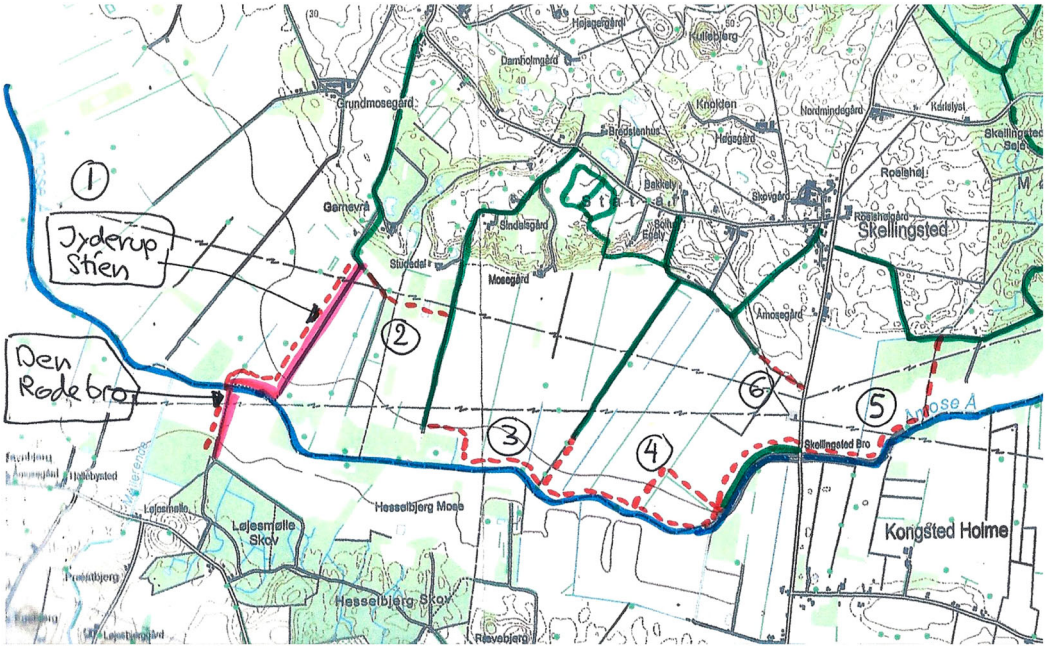
regarded as needing to be sustained (e.g. nature or socio-cultural conditions), what needed to be developed (e.g. re-naturalization, denaturalization), and whether and how the actors saw their own interests being realized in this context. The analytical approach was hermeneutical and abductive, involving a recursive process between data collection, data analysis, and the literature. Interviews, the landowner trip, and collaborative mapping were subject to thematic analysis (Silverman 2006). Using this process, we applied implicit and explicit meaning condensation and meaning categorization to the data, thereby identifying geo-positionalities of the nature park development materialized in six conflicting landscape imaginaries.

3.4. Collaborative mapping

A total of 186 citizens participated in 11 workshops (2019–2022) at the location of the nature park secretariat, and at public nature park events. At such workshops, citizens mapped their own or others' local stories from places in the nature park. The workshops were semi-structured and themes were developed collaboratively. Collaborative mapping methods covered different angles of events and experiences, ecological change, including struggles over resources, (in)justice, local meaning, and narratives. The respondents were asked to place figures on one or more of the six detailed maps of the nature park developed for the purpose, and write their experiences with specific places. Advocators of collaborative mapping suggest that such methods empower local communities and support bottom-up processes (Bryan 2015; Salvatore, Chiodo, and Fantini 2018). This way, the fieldwork interviews and collaborative mapping were not framed beforehand by established scientific concepts and approaches but sought to explore stakeholders' and citizens' perspectives and approaches that could be translated into conflicting landscape associations (Map 2).

4. Results

This section presents the landscape configurations of the nature park. It suggests how rurality, accessibility, usability, utilization, commodification, aesthetics, and different nature types are configured in the same physical landscape of NPÅ. We suggest that there are at least six conflicting nature park landscape configurations that can be identified by the ways in which they produce different types of nature. Each differs in terms of which landscape characteristics need to be developed and which need to be sustained, all of them claiming to care about nature, biodiversity, and nature protection. Thus, nature-based tourism initiatives may often hold certain landscape configurations and represent specific geo-positionalities that may mobilize or block incentives for rewilding, preserving, restoring, or remanufacturing natural landscapes in a nature park context.



Map 2. Collaborative mapping and collection of landscape representations. The map shows stories identified by locals including proposals for landscape modifications, such as new trails. Point 1 marks an existing public trail, point 2 a possible trail with stories of peat digging, and point 6 marks the former electricity masts installed by workers in the 1950s that became visible signs of progress locally.

4.1. Renaturing pristine natures – remoteness and wilderness as an attraction

The nature park as a remote destination holds connotations of re-naturalization to environmental qualities and aesthetics in which the remoteness becomes a particular quality. The nature park landscape celebrates what is remote, untouched, and unspoiled, whereby a rurality recentres around the landscape's distinctive qualities. Citizens devoted to geo-positionalities celebrating the remoteness of the nature park point to quietness, dark sky, and slow living as an active anchor point, thus the landscape becomes associated with lifestyles that are contrasted with busy city life. Similarly, property owners, hunters and special segments of tourism actors celebrate and preserve environmental remoteness and inaccessibility as a distinctive local quality.

> The quietness we have, a walk with the dog while listening to the birds in the spring, the beauty of riding in the sunset, watching the rabbits playing, seeing the owls and cranes … (pause) … living here for some time you become one with nature, you blend in. We bought our house in Åmosen [NPÅ, ed.], we first moved here because of the wild nature – the fact that you can ride in the wilderness we have. (Focus group interview)

The remote landscape, however, also has connotations with slow holidays. Some express Nordic silence and remoteness as an attraction in which the tourist-associated landscape relates to outdoor living with different comfort qualities. According to tourism entrepreneurs, the remoteness and silence of the landscape are attractions that a growing number of tourists demand. Such nature cultivations and experiences, however, are best facilitated in pristine 'wildlife' landscapes, whose accessibility becomes an issue. As an interviewee notes:

> If you are in the middle of the Store Åmose [the largest bog – ed.], you are far away from everything … It is one of the most remote areas that you can reach, and I almost get the feeling of being in a tundra [Scandinavian pristine bog landscape – ed.] … And this I believe is something we can also sell … Once we have made a little out of the tourism infrastructure and made it visible, I believe local tourist actors will see the business potential, and then more people would say we can create unique accommodation and nature experiences here.

> There are some areas we should have the courage to develop and some areas we should have the courage to fully protect. Because that is also a selling point that makes us unique. (Interview 4)

These remote landscapes and pristine nature configurations arise out of certain urban-rural relations. Here, rurality is often associated with remote landscapes, beyond the urban footprint of everyday life, with certain aesthetics fostering the feeling. From an urban lens, what lies beyond may be narrated as remote and sometimes even disadvantaged, its inhabitants seen as negligible. Such landscapes are well described and produced by labour market boundary markings upheld by daily commuting. In the nature park, however, for this group the remoteness holds qualities of uniqueness, whereby it re-naturalizes urban-rural geometries, in which the rural becomes central for certain tourism qualities.

The pristine nature and remoteness, however, are not only celebrated by citizens living in the nature park, but also by tourists and those who advocate nature-based tourism development. For those actors, the remote landscape shapes various kinds of associated natures, including the 'tundra', the 'bog' and 'marshland' (Interview 27). The latter two, which exist in the nature park, hold aspirations to Nordic silence and lead to a certain agenda on what needs to be preserved and what restored. Thus, the bogs' remoteness and unspoiled character (although heavily drained) should be further developed, such that the area becomes both re-naturalized and naturalized, e.g. with 'wildlife' and with as little visible remains of modern society as possible. It thereby establishes city-nature relations in which wild nature should be further developed, and human cultivations removed, to recover a feeling of untouched landscapes and celebration of wildlife (Interview 19).

Nevertheless, these aspirations seem to be constructions bounded in sustainability as 'wilderness and pristine nature imaginaries' that should be developed to restore nature by commodifying it as a tourism resource, and they are reinforced by actors with interests in developing tourism. For example, in line with the above, the nature park advertises itself as 'the last wilderness on Zealand' on the nature park's website. Objectively, however, the nature park is exclusively composed of cultural/production landscapes (agriculture and forestry) crisscrossed by old and modern built environments, and visible as well as subterranean infrastructures. The main bog, for example (described as being in the tundra in the quote above), was drained and turned into farmland in the 1930s–1960s.

4.2. Recreational landscapes and naturalized consumerism

Those who advocate recreational landscape configurations associate rurality with landscape sceneries, and see the landscape as a site for nature-based activities, farm-based experiences, holidays, recreation, and sport. These actors find the development of recreational attractions and infrastructure a catalyst for nature-based consumerism of various sorts. The recreational landscape should further develop access to nature in the park, attractions, holiday activities, trails, and infrastructures that better facilitate nature-based tourism activities.

Advocates of this view include micro-tourism actors who draw up certain agendas that re-naturalize land resources towards political ecologies of accessibility by the ways in which they instrumentalize nature for tourism demands. As natural resources are inaccessible for many tourism operators, one farm holiday centre planted a small forest to provide better access to nature experiences for its visitors:

> I had to plant a forest … My farm holiday centre is on intensive agricultural land with many large farms, but many property owners do not like tourists. One nearby property owner in particular found it inappropriate that my visitors occasionally entered his woods. Eventually I planted my own forest on six hectares. We made a horse trail, we have a horse drawn carriage to make little tours into the wood, and occasionally I pull the carriage with my tractor. I built a bird tower so that tourists can climb and see the landscape, the lake, the birds. That is popular, although many visitors do not know the name of the birds they watch. Sometimes we do have experts, but generally … We planted 25 different trees, most tourists are unable to distinguish between them, which is why we strive to have an expert from the nature park to guide visitors. (Interview 11)

Such geo-positionalities suggest nature needs to be transformed as a resource that accommodates tourists' landscape demands. A few small private entrepreneurs and voluntary organizations accept some modifications of nature to better suit consumers' and visitors' nature-based expectations. Thus, the nature park needs to serve tourists' landscape demands, including unique sites, trails, and accessibility. Yet the commodification of nature for some local tourism entrepreneurs may not be oriented towards tourism or residential growth alone. Being in a monocultural landscape dominated by agriculture, a farmer with 900 ha (Kattrup) and another holiday farm in the making (Tyrsgård) has converted their farmland to a biodiverse resort for aspirational and recreational reasons, which is why these actors claim to take part in restoring nature.

Transforming the landscape from an agricultural resource into a resource that better accommodates experiences for tourists also implies criticism of the affects, scenery, and effects of industrial or monocultural farmlands. This perspective facilitates the primarily external interests of tourists (from the capital and major cities) and their consumer-based activities, potentially in conflict with local nature (com)modifications.

4.3. Culture-nature romanticism and pre-agroindustrial aesthetics – celebrating the hidden remains

The few actors advocating romanticism of the landscape connote specialized 'objects of knowing' that invite experiences arising from the history of the landscape. This refers both to the visible remains of small villages and dilapidated towns, in which the distinctiveness, materiality, and culture of the locale support the nature-based experience, and to the invisible cultural and historical remains in the landscape. Illustrating the latter, inhabitants of the nature park highlight the uniqueness of the archeological remains beneath the peat.

> Some archeological remains are visible in the landscape, but most are not. The cultural history is not visible. Some of the world's best preservation conditions for Mesolithic Stone Age remains are in the peat, you know. To experience findings from there, you need to visit the National Museum of Denmark. But it is far more interesting to visit the bog. The cultural remains make us unique, but only a handful know about the fantastic cultural remains that we have. Here you can imagine the Mesolithic Stone Age, how it may have looked, but also tell visitors that we stand in the middle of the best archeological remains in northern Europe from that period … This is the site that labels the archeological periods Maglemosetid and Kongemosetid, you know. I love to go out to the former peat industry that Carlsberg, among others, started … They found a whole intact settlement out there. There is so much you cannot see. The peat workers had pubs, schools and brothels out there, a whole industry. (Interview 16)

Several stakeholders describe the cultural heritage as the most interesting part of the nature park landscape (collaborative mapping). For those actors, the archeological remains shape various kinds of associated natures. Bringing alive agricultural remains forms landscape narratives dating back to the Mesolithic Stone Age and also refers to pre-existing landscape aspirations with certain forms of environmental romantics. Guided tours to the unique remains, the bog, and the peat landscape specify narratives and imaginings from the cultural heritage (Interview 26). Being in the bog and seeing the peat catalyse visitors to better imagine the 80,000 archeological remains estimated to be in the peat, dating back to the Mesolithic Stone Age (12,800–3,900 BC), which encapsulates the view of the landscape as a museum. Controversial to many property owners, those who advocate preserving archeological remains find restoring the previous wetlands a necessity. Specific nature(s) and wetland restorations are needed to preserve the archeological remains underneath the peat, as well as to develop tourism experiences of the cultural heritage of national and international interest (focus group interview).

For advocators of preserving cultural remains, geo-positionalities of unsustainability reside in the immense drainage for agricultural production during the past century, and sustainability lies in restoring the previous wetlands for preserving cultural interests, biodiversity restoration (where relevant to this aim), and, to a lesser extent, climate mitigation. Visible remains, the local history, its previous production facilities (peat cutting, mills, etc.) uphold cultural politics of environmental romanticism celebrating pre-agricultural landscapes. This type of

culture-environmental romanticism also relates to the connotations of the patchwork landscape – a mosaic of multilayered and multidimensional use from the many cultural time periods, creating a scenery of never-ending oscillation.

With the growing interest in nature tourism development, the landscape perspective gains momentum for commodification, according to which sustainability resides in preserving the history of the land and its artefacts for generations to come. Nevertheless, while the nature park's visitor centre has an exhibition of (mainly) copies of the most important discovered remains from the Mesolithic Stone Age and the Viking Age, the heritage remains invisible, hidden, and uncommunicated to visitors.

4.4. Productive natures: agricultural and industrial modifications – denaturalizing the landscape

Deeply rooted in agricultural production and the history of the agro-industrial supply and growth regime, the nature park as an agricultural landscape resort finds resonance in local peasants' and farmers' habits. Over two generations or more, they and their families have succeeded in taming the bog, the forest and the wilderness to earn a living – and turn the wilderness into productive land. It is reflected in the sceneries of open crop fields, manor houses, estate landscapes, hunting tracks and farmland production of primary products. It is primarily large-scale property owners and farmers who uphold the preservation of agricultural farmland, but local citizens also describe the beauty of agricultural land and its aesthetics. According to this perspective, the history of taming the land is part of the production of wealth in the area. Such geo-positionalities find nature-based tourism represents a disturbance to farming, hunting and traditional rural landscapes, and other 'productions' challenge not only the 'primary production' but also the beauty and local identities built up for generations. Former industrial uses of the landscape (for peat, beet, brick, gravel, clay) have been replaced by progress and development of more efficient landscape management techniques together with farming. Thus, the use of lakes for processing water, for example, has become a contingent optimization issue. Both industrial and farming interests are rooted in 'water and land use optimization', requiring planning for the equilibrium of water balance, but they uphold conflicting strands and have diverse impacts on landscape qualities.

By way of illustration, as rainfall has increased during winter and is expected to further increase with local experiences of retaining wetland domestication challenges (including more frequent drought events that will occur in the summer), landowners have requested compensation for installing further drainage to avoid increased winter crop loss. Farmers wish to have a low water level during summer in order to drive heavy machinery. By contrast, industry demands process water from lake Tissø and the Åmose water system. With increasing summer drought periods, industrial parties have formulated interests in raising the water level for better security of supply (Interview 2). Thus, industrial needs for process water during summer drought periods further counterpose the interest of farmers, and industry may instrumentalize nature by restoring the wetland in the future. While industry and farmers display different landscape 'efficiency' interests, they both aim at capitalizing by optimizing land management.

While a few of the larger landowners see the potential for developing tourism offers as an additional commodification strategy, most landowners find it unattractive and a potential hindrance to their core business. Thus, their land is closed to tourism development initiatives and to the small-scale nature tourism entrepreneurs and other actors with tourism and leisure interests. In this landscape perception, the role of nature is determined by the possibilities of extracting economic operand value from its resources, and in this game, forestry, farming, and hunting rule while leisure and tourism interests (other than hunting) are not favoured.

> The hunters, they pay, right! Then we talk business. The hunters are the only nature users that really pay. And they pay a lot! And of course, if there is an increased use of the land, people walking or mountain biking, or

> horse riders who do not pay a lot or nothing at all, then it takes from those that pay. Then they tell me: we don't want to pay as much because there are always people walking around. And then I lose business. It is amazingly simple! And that is why I am sometimes against establishing new things. If money is involved, then everything is possible. (Interview 9)

According to this perspective, sustainability resides in modifying the landscape to favour food and water security, to climate adapt (rather than mitigate) the land to accommodate future climate events and risks to agro-industrial feasibility.

4.5. Restoration of nature – the landscape as inherent nature

Proponents of this perspective, which is deeply rooted in associations with getting back to nature, strongly associate the land with their 'home'. Here the rural landscape is perceived and valued as a refuge from the urban, its noise, and alienation from nature-based experiences. The rural environment has the positive connotations of grounding, health and wellbeing, purity, inherited sensory properties and nature-based living and resilience. The landscape as inherent manifest nature breaks away from what can be considered harmful or destructive in society; an imagined reality about the peaceful, idyllic, and unspoiled land where the dwellers re-connect and restore their relationship with nature. Similarly, these geo-positionalities of naturalization as an inherent process consider a physical landscape with special characteristics, traditions, and culture that values a set of qualities and assumptions much negated as irrelevant to urban life. Thus, citizens affiliated to the landscape as inherent nature explain their active dropping out of the increasing hypermodern acceleration in modern society as an active choice to recentre life politics. The land as home thus reconnects with nature, and those living there seek to distance themselves from any land changes and activity that could disturb the quietness of rural life and be associated with degrowth due to the ways in which the residents aim to protect wild animal life and habitats.

> Our area is one of the few on the Island of Zealand where you can walk in a remote environment, where you can view the stars, and enjoy the feeling of being fully alone. At some point, the municipality planned streetlights in our village, but it would destroy the beauty of the place. We did not want it. (Participatory mapping)

The landscape configuration establishes city-nature relations in which the remoteness and silence contrast with and distance from the urban nature of the city, which potentially disturbs simple living. It invites nature-based experiences of relaxation and stillness associated with certain landscapes in which few man-made socio-natures and urban materials are visible. Rather, the emergence of inherent nature maintains a distance from any tourist, visitor, or consumer-based activities and draws on dichotomous relations of the city and its spaces of consumption versus the countryside. Thus, the remote landscape inspires nature-based experiences where you get a sensuous relation with nature, and only tourists who appreciate living and learning with nature are welcome in what ideally are pristine, nurtured, and protected environments. True nature experiences must refrain from commodified value systems, and hospitality leans towards nurturing nature rather than tourists.

The woods, trees, lakes, wildlife, and landscape may offer various life-centred interpretations for locals and visitors that host courses, therapies and events involving meditation, pantheistic celebrations, contemplative therapies, glamping, and other properties for communities of nature-based spiritualized people and the like. The more rewilding and nature restoration, the better. The other types of landscape preferences mentioned, except for the remoteness and wilderness landscape, threaten this refugium type of landscape interpretation. What is unsustainable resides in the city and society, whereas sustainable land transition must reconnect humans with nature.

4.6. Preservation of landscapes – the landscape as a reserve

Finally, the landscape and the nature park as a reserve come into play. This unmasks preservation versus restoration efforts with multiple and conflicting views over tourists´ access to and use of

natural resources. Deeply rooted in cultural and environmental conservativism, existing landscapes need to be preserved and the idea that the landscape and its natural biotopes, culture, and values need to be kept safe from new intervention is prevalent. Respondents who associate themselves with such geo-positionalities are as diverse as property owners, small-scale farmers, NGOs and nature protectionists, biologists, and hunters. The diverse groups find that they preserve nature by hindering people's access to land, from the perspective of biologists by having biotopes with no human intervention and from that of other locals by avoiding disturbance to animal life, etc.

> We have many unique flowers and rare orchids, and birds in Åmosen. Once I had tourists in my garden, and they saw nothing and simply trod on rare plants. We protect the flowers and the unique landscape best by keeping the tourists away. (Interview 13)

However, preservation from humans primarily favours preservation from non-locals, whereas locals should have (limited) access and the right to use their land as they have always done. In different combinations, locals are best at preserving the land, its resources, and space to develop anything, including remote and undisturbed landscapes. Thus, those who advocate for the landscape as a reserve seek to preserve the farmland, the productive agricultural landscapes, and locals protect the landscape and its natural resources better than do the authorities and external partners. It is necessary to know the local nature to preserve it, to farm it, to hunt and perform other local cultural praxises. To preserve nature and its habitats from non-resident humans, nature is better restored by keeping tourists out (tourism degrowth, agricultural regrowth), except for the few exclusive nature-visitors guiding tourists with an underlying expert- or network-based purpose.

By way of example, locals have reported that otters have reappeared in the lower part of the Åmose water system. Otters are rare animals in Denmark. Simultaneously, NPÅ aimed to develop recreational infrastructure and public access to parts of the water system for canoeing and kayaking. However, landowners and nature conservation actors were sceptical over the proposal and found themselves being protectors of the otter (and their land) and at the same time restricting tourist and visitor access to private property along the stream.

The preservation of land is a concept held most dominantly by environmental conservativism, in which the existing manipulated natures should be kept as they are, but restricted from access by others, and should be neither re-naturalized nor naturalized according to the will of external interests or authorities. It is the locals who preserve the landscape and its biodiversity and act best in the interests of nature.

5. Discussion

This study identified six conflicting landscape configurations in NPÅ, each of which is devoted to different geo-positionalities. Geo-positionalities, we argue, appear both as conflicting landscape positionalities over the same area and in relation to nature-based tourism as an incentive for remanufacturing nature.

Landscape configurations are dynamic and interchangeable over time, and we do not claim to cover the full spectrum of landscape views in the case area nor all land use controversies related to nature park developments. Rather, we argue that the conflicting landscape associations identified hold asymmetrical geo-positionalities that create stabilized yet dynamic 'landscape lock-ins'. Inasmuch as local accounts differ from one another, each landscape configuration is promoted to exclude others in their pure form. Mutually defined as conflicting with other landscape accounts, they are dynamic and yet they stabilize, and if dominant may hinder more sustainable land transformations in terms of meeting IPCC and other external agendas (Hermoso et al. 2022; IPCC 2014; Krauss, Zhu, and Stagg 2021). The hegemonic landscape account is not in itself an anticipation of a transition into rewilding or becoming a wetland.

The root causes of different rural and policy-driven development strategies force nature tourism entrepreneurs, farmers, property owners and others to navigate between different conflicting

landscape associations and changing social natures (Castree and Braun 2006; Mace 2014). This suggests how the different actors manoeuver and position themselves within different tourism demands, remanufacturing nature in accordance with consumed and commodified natures (Katz 1998), regardless of possible positive or negative environmental impacts (Büscher and Fletcher 2017).

Yet the multiscalar agendas and dynamics from outside – climate change and drivers for turning the area into a wetland (IPCC 2014; Krauss, Zhu, and Stagg 2021), biodiversity (Hermoso et al. 2022), tourism as a rural development strategy (Bærenholdt and Grindsted 2021), cultural heritage of national or tourism interests (Iannucci, Martellozzo, and Randelli 2022), and industrial and agricultural demands (Castree and Braun 2006; Van der Ploeg 2018) – all represent combinations within which they inevitably instrumentalize and provoke various landscape images. Aligned with the findings of Hoogendoorn et al. (2019), this study shows that new tourism commodifications of nature operate in niches that, even when rewilding nature to better suit visitors' tourism landscape expectations, legitimate the rise of counterpositions among locals. External forces, from tourism organizations, external companies, policy-driven nature restoration (Farstad et al. 2022), and scientists (Grindsted 2018), however profitable they are declared to be to locals, contradict local tourism development and expose the ambivalences of the locals living with tourism (Bærenholdt, Fuglsang, and Sundbo 2021; Büscher and Fletcher 2017; Huijbens 2012).

The different landscape accounts pinpoint that nature-based experiences may mobilize into new 'landscapes' and 'natures' whereby tourism instrumentalizes 'nature' into a set of different conflicts over various land uses and views on environmental sustainability agendas (Sørensen and Grindsted 2021). Commoditization of nature as a leisure and tourism resource also results in mobilization of new landscape imaginaries in an increasingly complex 'landscape' of conflicting local perceptions and preferences, we argue. Yet these accounts neither suppress nor devalue the variegated conflicting landscape configurations. Rather, the different accounts point towards instrumentalizations from tourism that accommodate rewilding, preserving, restoring, conserving, or remanufacturing natural landscapes when it comes to landscape development accounts in a Danish nature park context.

Although wilderness attractions and cultural remains mark restoration and preservation interests and associated natures (wetland and wilderness, respectively) (Katz 1998), the restored nature park agendas invite questions such as: preserving for whom and in whose interest? This marks local conflicts over coexisting landscapes, agricultural farmland versus minor biotopes or visitor sites, as re-nationalization of different productions (and associated co-existing natures). By way of illustration, a few minor tourism actors have an entrepreneurial approach that turns farmland into landscapes that better accommodate tourism demands; for instance, by converting farmland into forest and biotope reserves (Lykkebjerg, Kattrup, Åmosen naturcamp, and Tyrsgaard being examples).

Advocates of the growth of tourism sometimes recognize nature-based tourism as a driver for environmental improvement (Hoogendoorn et al. 2019), thus advocating for themselves as more sustainable land users, as tourists are said to demand landscapes of high recreational and natural value (Bostedt and Mattsson 1995; Genovese et al. 2017). Others, however, contrast such standpoints locally, as tourist demand conflicts with other value systems, practices, local community development strategies, farmland, nature conservation organizations or property owners (Kaltenborn, Haaland, and Sandell 2001; Matilainen and Lähdesmäki 2014).

The six conflicting landscape configurations identified are each counterproductive to the others, and all claim to uphold sustainable land management components that explain what needs to be sustained and what needs to be developed. Yet these are sometimes so indifferent and controversial to one another (or external to locals) as to hinder a common route for sustainable land transformation, if wetland transformations in accordance with the IPCC are to follow.

For future interventions on nature tourism and the like to avoid meeting lock-ins by locals, we suggest that the deliberate adoption of conflicting landscape visions be articulated (mapped, photographed, drawn) among local stakeholders and citizens, as this is where we understand many

conflicting values and interests really do crystallize in a form of common ground with tacit values that will not be mentioned in normal participatory efforts.

We invite studies that critically scrutinize conflicting landscape configurations in other nature/national parks to examine both the extent to which they prove overlapping and identifiable with other contexts and where they lock in local accounts for sustainable landscape transformations, as well as where they mediate new transitional landscape formations. Similarly, for case studies exploring where conflicting landscape associations may blend together over time and mediate transition, we propose local stakeholder analysis that maps hidden conflicting landscape configurations as a way forward. By doing so we may also avoid misinterpreting the use of common value dominator concepts ('wild', 'beauty', 'sustainable') that may confuse us, in order to reach a consensus when meeting local positions.

Note

1. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, bogs, peat, and wetlands occupied 20%–25% of the country. Today such areas cover less than 1%–3% (Ministry of the Environment 2022). Moreover, the area has more than 8,000 ha of lowlands and 2,802 ha of carbon-rich soil (>12% carbon), the third largest in Denmark. While no accurate emission estimates exist, COWI (2006) found that Store Åmose emits 23,147 ton CO2e/year in a 1,413 ha site with carbon-rich soils and 18,702 ton CO2e/year in another 1,181 ha site. Emissions estimates for the entire drained wetland are rather uncertain, but could be 50–150,000 ton CO2e/year, as COWI (2006) estimate that one ha emits 15–16 ton CO2e/year. This would be approx. 1/10 of the emissions from Copenhagen (1.1 Mt/ CO2e/year). Altogether Denmark has 300,000 ha of carbon-rich soils (>6% carbon) that emit 77.5 Mt CO2e/year (Greve et al. 2020; Gyldenkærne and Greve 2015).

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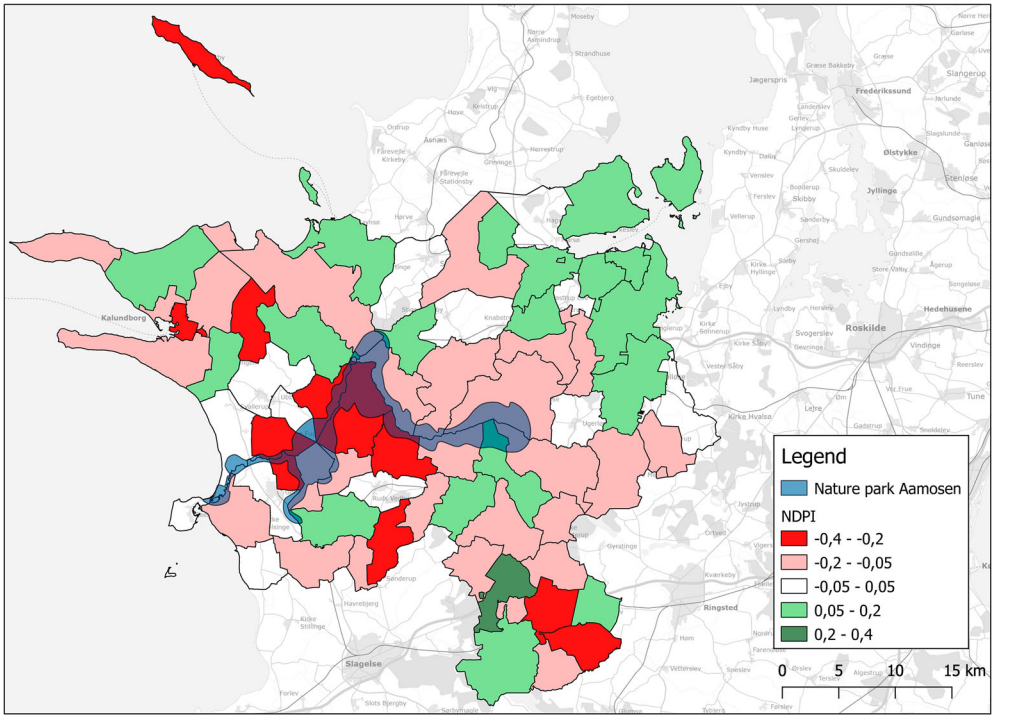
Appendices

Appendix 1



Appendix 2