

# RURAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE NORDICS

A Pan Nordic analysis of  
Regional Tourism Strategies for rural areas

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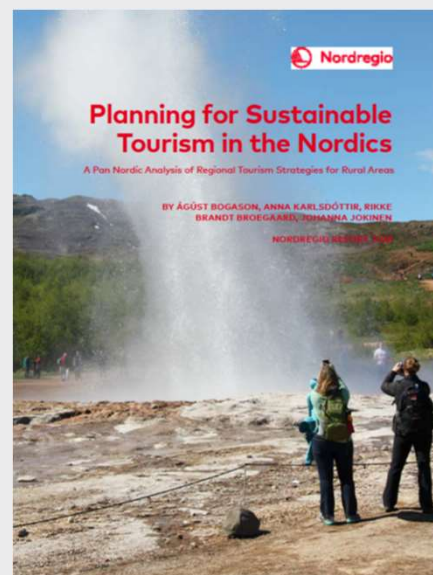


Webinar, March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020

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## MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

- Analyses on regional destination management plans
  - Including a comparative study on Nordic value of the freedom to roam – and sustainable development of rural tourism
  - Country focus chapters



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## RELEVANCE OF PAN-NORDIC RURAL TOURISM STUDY

- Tourism development seen as increasingly important source of employment and economic growth in rural areas.
- Tourism as source of place development, innovation and transformation?
- Environmental and landscape qualities, including cultural landscapes and social experiences, often form main selling-points for rural tourism.



## PLAN FOR NORDIC TOURISM CO-OPERATION 2019-2023



 Nordic Council of Ministers

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## Common problems expressed in tourism

- Speaking to relevant actors in rural tourism in the Nordics provides accounts of different conflicts in relation to increased tourism:
  - Social tolerance
  - Land use / The right to roam – almannsrätten
  - Carrying capacity
  - Cruise ships
  - Taxation or fees for entry / access payments
  - Monitoring...
  - ...Others say they are being left out of the tourism boom



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4. March 2020

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## WHY DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLANS?

- DMP are supposed to be “bottom up” visions of the locals for the development of tourism in their region
- How do the regions define themselves? What is their focus point?
- How do the regions want to develop tourism in a sustainable way?
- Presented as a tool to tackle problems and conflicts caused by tourism
  - Looking into how (if) they are addressed in these documents?
  - e.g. cruise tourism and the right to roam

When the “marketing lingo” has been trimmed away, what remains?

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## THEORETICAL DISCUSSIONS

- Sustainable tourism – an oxymoron?
  - Greenwashing? Staycation?
  - Circular economy in tourism?
  - Sustainability concerns in tourism planning?
- How to ensure local benefits from rural tourism?
  - Local synergies and inter-sectorial dynamics
  - Strategic use of tourism and hospitality-based networks for local and regional development

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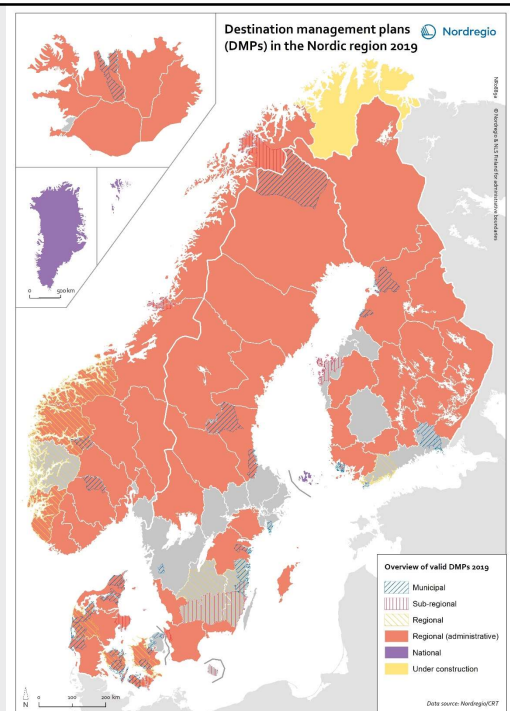
## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- In which ways do regional and municipal Destination Management Plans (DMPs) from rural areas take sustainability into account?
  - To what extent do local & regional actors use DMPs as a tool to balance economic development and environmental or social strain from tourism?
  - How, where and by whom is tourism development used to strengthen synergies with natural and social environments?

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## RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

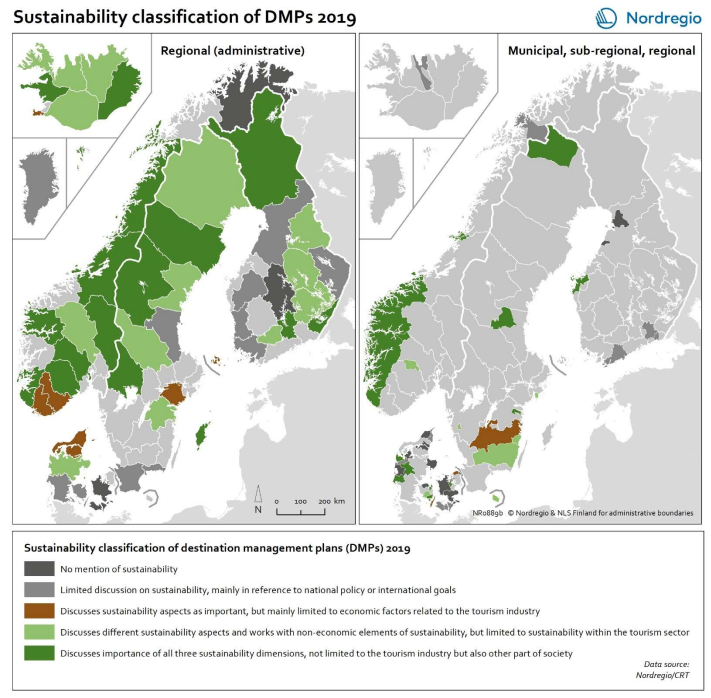
- Municipal or regional Destination Management Plans (DMPs) from the Nordic region (N=119).
  - Criteria for inclusion:
    - Non-urban regions
    - DMP's in current use (dating)
- Coding DMPs (in national languages); pre-defined codes and emergent categories (Nvivo 12).
- Analysis both within nodes and between nodes and classifications (matrix queries), exploring patterns, at national level.
- Comparison within and between countries.



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## SUSTAINABILITY CONCERNS

- DMPs exist that do not mention 'sustainability' (in local language) or contains elements coded as such during the content analysis; as well as DMPs that only mention the concept but lacks any operationalization.
- Simultaneously, DMPs exist that include environmental and social sustainability issues, in addition to the economic ones, and does so in ways that bridge out from the tourism industry.



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## SUSTAINABILITY CONCERNS

Negative experiences of tourism are hardly reflected in the DMPs, despite debate and literature about increasing numbers of tourists pressuring the public right of access.

Does having experienced negative consequences of tourism influence the sustainability concerns in DMPs?

- Tendency (Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands), that having experienced negative consequences of tourism is associated with green and dark-green DMPs.



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## SUSTAINABILITY CONCERNS

### Participatory planning processes

- More inclusive processes tend to result in more holistic DMPs, with more local development issues being included.
  - DK; Sweden; Iceland;
  - Norway, Finland – not as marked
- Related to type of actor leading process; more than business-development-authority; allowing multiple viewpoints and experiences to be voiced
  - Community/destination development
  - Broad-based collaboration (food, outdoor...)

## CONCLUSIONS

- Limited use of DMP as strategic planning tools for intra-sectorial issues – but potentials.
- Main focus on economic growth within sector (overnights; employment).
- Sustainability concerns (Soc, Env) only weakly represented – although with national and local variations.
  - Negative experiences => more holistic sustainability and nature preservation concerns
    - Norway; Faroe Islands; Iceland & Finland to some extent (Cruise tourism & seasonal peaks);
  - Participatory planning processes => more holistic sustainability concerns.