Politics of Repair

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Politics materialises in buildings lacking maintenance, disrepair infrastructures, and potholes on the road. But what kind of politics, precisely? The volumes in this series put an emphasis on repair and maintenance as an analytical means for studying how we think about and imagine social relations.

Volume 1
Repair, Brokenness, Breakthrough: Ethnographic Responses
Edited by Francisco Martínez and Patrick Laviolette

Repair, Brokenness, Breakthrough

Ethnographic Responses

Edited by

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CONTENTS

List of Illustrations viii

Introduction. Insiders' Manual to Breakdown 1
Francisco Martínez

Snapshot 1. Head, Heart, Hand: On Contradiction, Contingency and Repair 17
Caitlin DeSilvey

Chapter 1. Underwater, Still Life: Multi-species Engagements with the Art Abject of a Wasted American Warship 24
Joshua O. Reno

Snapshot 2. Beyond the Sparkle Zones 41
Kathleen Stewart

Chapter 2. 'Till Death Do Us Part': The Making of Home through Holding on to Objects 45
Tomás Errázuriz

Snapshot 3. 'The Lady Is Not Here': Repairing Tita Meme as a Telecare User 67
Tomás Sánchez Criado

Chapter 3. In the House of Un-things: Decay and Deferral in a Vacated Bulgarian Home 73
Martin Demant Frederiksen

CHAPTER 7

Village Vintage in Southern Norway

Revitalisation and Vernacular Entrepreneurship in Culture Heritage Tourism

SARAH HOLST KJÆR

This chapter provides an analysis of how policy-based criteria on place revitalisation work in a rural setting. Moving away from cultural activities as instruments for social cohesion and identity, I discuss the case of a regional revitalisation project that I worked on as research manager from 2016 to 2018.[1] In this project, and according to the funding criteria, 'local culture heritage' was supposed to work as 'an engine' for the destination's success and prosperity. I analyse how culture heritage was transformed into culture heritage tourism by the local entrepreneurs, volunteers and residents. I argue that the community performed a 'vernacular entrepreneurship strategy' focusing on self-made and self-defined goals. Hence, they moved away from the expectations of standardised 'corporate', industry and business practices. Policy-induced revitalisation can be defined as a repair strategy aimed at reframing the place in order to produce attractiveness to money-strong consumer groups. Still, my results show that this repair strategy is contested by a local and vernacular way of making entrepreneurship which, instead, focuses on executing and engaging the community through cultural activities, ultimately making 'Us' instead of 'the consuming Other' happen.

As a researcher, I worked with a commercial top-down perspective, informed by a market and led by standardised corporate-like business training. For instance, I noted that culture activities in a rural setting more often

are based on local volunteering, residential participation and the quest for social cohesion than on a professional producer–consumer exchange (see also Andersen et al. 2010; Frisvoll and Rye 2016). Yet what kind of implications does this social and geographical condition have for undertaking culture-led revitalisation and repair of a place? What happens when a community works with transforming culture heritage into tourism and how do local entrepreneurial practices negotiate and adapt to consumer criteria in a market-oriented project?

The results show that a vernacular form of entrepreneurship is focused on social cohesion, local routines and the mere execution of cultural activities more than on an external market guiding the entrepreneurial decision-making processes. The consequence of not meeting the market-oriented criteria is that the village community and its residents did not obtain the influx of capital that was necessary to professionalise and prepare for further investments and resources. These investments were important to secure the quality of the tourism experience, the repair of the village and the improvement of the infrastructure. In a larger perspective, the consequences are that the area would stay as it is simply because the requested 'corporate management principle' in the culture-led regeneration project could not translate into rural destination development practices. Hence the village would lose out on support from the official society.

The upcoming section examines how local tourism and business entrepreneurs implicitly and explicitly negotiated policy-based, 'corporate' or even 'elitist' definitions of the market-oriented revitalisation of rural destinations. It gives insight into how corporate entrepreneurship was replaced by a vernacular form of entrepreneurship. Specifically, I discuss the case of a coastal village named Vanse, located on the peninsular of Lista in southern Norway. Here I spent around one month over a two-year period aiming to map and understand how the entrepreneurs could establish a profit-oriented destination based on local culture heritage activities.

Norwegian-American Culture Heritage

The village of Vanse and the entire peninsular of Lista was by the time of my fieldwork characterised by the historical period (1910–70) during which Norwegians migrated back and forth several times over the Atlantic Ocean in order to do service work in America, especially in New York City (Ringdal 2002). The place was affected by this migration period and was home to large quantities of American mass-produced consumer items such as 119 fully functioning, well-maintained American vintage cars, several bathroom interiors in pastels set aside in basements and storage units, kitchen appliances in chrome and plastic and hundreds of polyester and nylon party dresses with matching shoes and purses from the 1950s. Hence, clothing, kitchen appliances, interior decor, furniture, cars and buildings, dating mainly from the 1930–60s, could be found everywhere.

At the same time, this image was not a 'pure' destination image. The rural and coastal landscape also consisted of traditional Norwegian white wooden houses, supermarkets and factories built in square-sized cement units, and 'ordinary' mass-produced family homes from the 1950–80s. A brutalistic architectural style from the 1960s had inspired the town centre, officially named Brooklyn Square, indicating the town's Norwegian-American heritage. Here, the shut-down bus station now contained an American diner and a department store with imported American specialities such as root beer, cupcake toppings and Halloween napkins. The store even specialised in Christmas decorations; most of its annual sales came from the large numbers of regional customers drawn to the village during the Christmas period. In the old bus station, a private museum containing a collection of American mass-produced items occupied the second floor.

Most of the town's total collection of vintage materiality could be considered useless and outdated. It could be perceived as waste, broken and unfit for late-modern living. But the local residents cherished their bright-coloured vintage cars, their art deco furniture ornamented with chrome and their slim-waisted polyester dresses with zippers often in need of repair. It was not unusual for a work-migrating family who returned to Vanse after months, years and decades in New York City to bring home ten to twenty tons of American mass-produced consumer goods. Local ethnologists had already estimated that Vanse might be the Norwegian town that had been most influenced by modern American consumer culture, artefacts and architecture. Statistics suggest that there were around sixty-three thousand Norwegians living and working in New York City, mostly in Brooklyn, between the years 1930 and 1970. Several Norwegian institutions, churches, businesses and organisations had been established by countrymen and women abroad. This migration process resulted in exceptionally close connections which, still at the time of undertaking this culture-led innovation project in 2016–18, were said to exist between Norway and America (Ringdal 2002).

Being influenced by the dream of the hard-working American, and at the same time experiencing a migrant life in small apartments in heavily populated areas in New York City, some of the returning Norwegians had saved up for a single family home. They wanted it to look exactly like those built in the new developments of American suburbia. Between 1940 and the 1960s, they had sent home, or even copied, prefabricated suburban American-style houses. Coming from rural and poor conditions, the Norwegians had also enjoyed the American kitchen appliances – blenders, toasters, mixers – so much that when they built their American-style houses on the peninsular, they installed two electricity standards, both the American 110 voltage and the Norwegian 230 voltage (Ringdal 2002).

The local tourism industry was strongly influenced by the theme of this Norwegian-American migration period. Some private initiatives of collecting and semi-organising the material culture heritage had already been undertaken. They were supported by the local municipality mainly as identity projects such as local school projects, ethnographic research projects, museological and documentary projects. Different intercultural connections, such as a friendship between the town of Vanse and a neighbourhood in Brooklyn, New York, had also been established (Ringdal 2002, 2014). Many local cultural institutions had hence been involved in the migration theme, but did not perceive themselves as business actors able to contribute to regional development, heritage tourism and entrepreneurship (Aas, Hjemdahl and Kjær 2016).

The rural Norwegian scenery had stone hedges, white sandy beaches and green fields. At the same time, the frequently seen American vintage car was cruising the landscape. There were old neon bowling alley signs. A 'half skyscraper' in the town's centre – an ambitious art deco building project from the 1930s – still stood half-finished, with a staircase pointing upwards on the rooftop. The story went that the local municipality had discovered what a skyscraper actually was and had put a stop to the project. The half skyscraper symbolised a conflict between the inhabitants coming home from 'Junaiten' (Norwegian lingo for the United States [Ringdal 2002]) and the locals who stayed behind, not really comprehending what the migrants had experienced in the big city. From others I heard that the building project had gone bankrupt and that this explained why the skyscraper was only half-built.

The existing cultural activities were, to a certain degree, commercialised for experience production, but without the establishment of a professional apparatus around them, such as a website with payment systems and systematic, quality-assessed experience-product deliverances with a supporting service infrastructure.

Methodology

Culture researchers and ethnologists, including myself, accustomed to working in the field of heritage tourism and with hands-on fieldwork methods, set out to pioneer the outskirts of the region, assisting local communities in defining and strengthening their self-identity and well-being, and assisting them in getting their voices heard. I also set out to observe 'cultural traditions in action' at the American Festival (2017) in Vanse. In contrast to other ethnographic researchers, I carried out a 'business ethnography' (Kjær 2012) aiming at commercialising and productifying local culture identity. I analysed local entrepreneurship practices and culture event executions from an external consumer perspective. Due to the funding criteria, I was obliged to make the residents evaluate their performances from an outside corporate- and market-oriented perspective. Therefore, I did not focus solely on the society's self-identity or social cohesion, but instead on whether or not the destination would be found attractive as a consumption product.

Since the project was market-oriented, my goal was to understand a possible future market of homecoming Americans who wanted to explore their Norwegian roots in this particular setting. In order to analyse this relationship-based market of Americans of Norwegian descent, I followed some local entrepreneurs, including the owner of the American department store, Bettina, aged thirty-six, who ran the shop as her day job with a small group of staff assisting her. Bettina visited her partners, relatives and mentors in New York once every year and often around fifteen entrepreneurs from the small town went on the trip with her.

In the United States, I followed a group of female entrepreneurs for two weeks in order to observe their meetings at, for example, the Norwegian Seaman's Church. On this trip, I also conducted fieldwork among professionals at Cornell University's School of Hospitality Management. Here, a Norwegian-American researcher, whose parents also came from Vanse, was eager to see the village thrive. She gave me important insight into what can be generalised as 'the American taste' in heritage tourism consumption, American experiencing strategies at destinations and sentiments about Scandinavian culture heritage belongings. This made my global-local 'market results' plentiful and concrete in regard to product and service development aimed at this outbound travel market. Many of the Norwegian-Americans we met had connections to southern Norway. Many had been to Vanse and had strong opinions about how the place should develop.

The American Festival was located in the town centre of Vanse, and the old bus station with its American-style shops was an obvious focal point. From my desk research, mainly based on media clippings and the festival's homepage, I had the preconception that the planning, organisation and sustainability of the event were strong: managerial routines for venue organisation, collaboration with the city regarding safety and infrastructure, the recruitment and training of volunteer staff, culture-content curation, contracts with artists, food and beverage offerings, shopping and pop-up shops, restaurants, bars, camping sites, hotels and other services around the town festival could be expected. Also, I had seen annual visitor figures of fifteen to twenty thousand participants for the three-day event.

The last e-mail I had received from the local destination management office, which was very interested in the commercialisation of the culture heritage, contained the encouraging words that the entrepreneurs were eager to show me how culture events were produced in the village. In the local community I had scheduled 'promenade interviews' with the busy entrepreneurs, keen to obtain information on how they executed their practices. I also focused on how 'close' these practices were to the policy criteria and national tourism strategies that governed, or 'should' govern, the tourism industry that had obtained public funding. Additionally, I interviewed guests and visitors in order to find out how the venue, products and services were experienced from a consumer perspective.

How did the festival manager and local shopkeepers plan the destination events in order to receive its guests? How was the event organised and scheduled; how was work organised and divided; how were volunteers trained and managed; how was the stage area set up and decorated; and how was the camping site, for example, supplied with maps, signs, water and electricity? These were just a few of the questions I had in my interview guide, which aimed at exemplifying how culture-led place innovation happens in practice. This can be characterised as a business ethnography framework for destination design, management and entrepreneurship (Kjær 2011). I will later discuss how regional tourism entrepreneurship was practised not as instructed by corporate standards, but rather was informed by a kind of vernacular, social-consensus seeking, focus on entrepreneurship. For this discussion, I include extracts from interviews I conducted with the festival manager, Rebecca. She was a trained nurse at the local hospital and was around thirty years old. She had been part of the festival committee for three years and was now the manager because no one else wanted the (voluntary) job.

I also interviewed and followed others, such as the estate owner of the old bus station, a woman named Karen who was around sixty years old, as well as her daughter Maria, aged thirty. Maria was, outside of her day job, working as the developer of the bus station, aiming to transform the building into a museum and a motel. In a storage space, Karen and Maria had a large collection of bathroom and bedroom décor in pastel colours. Following the Americanised theme of the village, they had a dream of creating a 'Heartbreak Motel' on the third floor, which was now empty. The rest of the building was rented out to the American diner, a smoothie bar and some small clinics and offices. Karen and Maria were both trained physiotherapists and had participated in the American Festival since it started in 2007. This family was thoroughly engaged in the festival's venue-making on Brooklyn Square, which was just outside the bus station. The family business had worked on several culture development projects over the years and was highly dedicated to revitalising the village according to the Norwegian-American migration theme.

Revitalisation

Culture-led revitalisation of places has almost become a mantra in culture policy (McGuigan 2009). 'Revitalisation' often points to a place that needs to be rejuvenated and refreshed (Florida 2005). Revitalising local culture heritage has been defined as the refinement of a society's 'raw products'. Cultural things, customs and traditions of a common social past are perceived as a raw material that can be upcycled into more customised, productified, themed and performed experience products (Olsen 1999; Sjöholm 2011; Sletvold 2001; Strömberg 2011). Revitalisation is thus a kind of repair strategy which, when it is 'culture-led', implies tools and metaphors such as place-making, makeover, culturalisation, theming and framing. Art historian Per Strömberg (2015) defines 'theming' as a way of restoring a place by 'pure-washing' a story or a theme out of the existing conditions. Theming can also work as an 'add on' to or a makeover of a place. Here theming means camouflaging elements that do not seem relevant to the entrepreneurs. In other words, theming involves the use of an overarching theme that can work as an added value in order for a destination to stand out and create a total experience. Strömberg (2015: 546) explains that 'pirates, the Wild West, Egypt, or a self-referential brand such as Nike, create a holistic and cohesive spatial, cultural, and social organization of a consumer venue'.

'The visual' is a strong component in tourism marketing. In place-making, though, all senses need to be blended into a perfect balance, containing the right mix and ideal combinations. Hence, entrepreneurs need to understand how their developmental practices should be carried out in order to stimulate the right type of tourist 'sensing' at a particular place.

In revitalisation projects, theming a place implies curating and packaging the experiential cultural content by engaging all 'the right' or positive sensing. In this sense, the goal is to improve the experience product. The value-creating potential of a place also lies in transforming intercultural and personal relationships, friendships and family ties, city-to-city and business-to-business relations into a new tourism market. Hence, the consumer experience should, according to the project's funding criteria, guide the village of Vanse in how it could become a 'thriving destination'. Ideas about a local 'unique' feeling, not possible to find anywhere else meant that this destination, through its Norwegian-American heritage, could or should 'stand out' and differentiate itself from other heritage destinations, while at the same time be profiting from a larger global market.

Ethnologist Robert Willim (Willim et al. 2006) has discussed how the concept or strategy of 'mixing' different, sometimes seemingly incompatible elements is used in place-making in order to find 'the right' or unique formula that will lead to a magic or extraordinary experience. Especially in heritage destinations, one will find 'weird mixes' or new combinations of local and migrating elements. Related to the context of Vanse, American tourism consumers, in contrast to Europeans, are accustomed to and appreciate the mixing of thematically different cultural elements (Kjær 2016).

'Culture heritage tourism' in a rural setting can be perceived as a form of counter-urbanism demanding the same living conditions as the metropolitans have (Hall, Roberts and Mitchell 2003). In order to obtain this, local identity can be transformed into a corporate-like business opportunity when profit is realised through a business model. In this perspective, a 'business model' is a concept that refers to the field of local culture heritage becoming a new experiential product and service through culture heritage tourism. A business model hence implies that a network of local entrepreneurs have strategised and decided upon how to conduct business together, dividing tasks among them in complementary ways, sharing a market and hence also sharing its potential risks and profits. In policy-induced culture projects, it has, in addition, become more common to expand the network of business collaborators to include non-profit and non-commercial organisations and groups of volunteers in the value creation of a place. These groups are often evident parts of the social community fabric and the obvious culture-content producers of heritage. In a policy-based culture project, an ideal, non-commercial volunteer base cannot 'invest' their work hours in the project and match the funding, since volunteer work is not 'real' (Lysgård 2016). This ultimately makes rural business models of collaborative ideal-commercial work impossible. This project condition makes it difficult for community-based initiatives to enter a 'real market' defined by professional corporations and entrepreneurs attractive to external consumers.

Moral and value-based connotations are also attached to market-based rural revitalisation. What is most often meant by revitalisation is, to start with, perceiving a place as a product (Falkheimer and Thelander 2007). 'Tailoring' experiences, 'branding' the destination and 'packaging' services and experiential products in order to facilitate consumers is a common terminology in culture and tourism business management (Mossberg 2007; Thufvesson 2009). The tourism business in general seeks the money-strong consumer; often Western, upper-middle class, experienced, and aware of high-quality, good designs and satisfactory service performances. In a consumer-oriented perspective, the customers – not the locals, other social groups or classes – make the overall judgement of a destination. In order to meet values of quality, comfort and relevance, the destination entrepreneurs have to view themselves from the outside and take a consumer perspective on their own performance. Success or failure are judged externally.

A Future Market?

The American retro materiality, which now was a rare experience in America, was possible to experience in abundance in Vanse. But the village destination was not well connected to the internet by way of a visible digital profile or connection to international payment systems; the packaging of experiences was not transparent or customer friendly; and the overall impression of the maintenance of the town and the running of cultural events did not live up to what can be expected in a high-cost country. On the positive side, this strange mix of vintage America appearing in the rural Norwegian countryside was something attractive to the homecoming American tourist.

During the market research in America, I, together with Bettina, the shop owner, met up with her mentor, a successful businessman of Norwegian descent, in the Norwegian Seaman's Church. He had been to Vanse several times. He explained to us:

> The town centre looks crappy. Sorry to say. You cannot have empty shops in a town centre. The place looks abandoned. As if no one wants to be there. You can easily get some huge American flags customised and designed to cover up the sad-looking façades. That is fun! It needs to be a little 'Harry'. I can mail you the link to the company who does these façade covers. That would help a lot. (Extract from fieldwork diary, November 2016)

In contrast to what one might think, the American flag in a Norwegian context was not controversial; however, making the place 'Harry' could be. Back in Norway, when I interviewed the children in the town of Vanse, they said, 'Please, don't make the place Harry'. 'Harry' is a man's name referring to a Norwegian 'hill-billy', simple-minded and unsophisticated. What was fun to the homecoming Americans was not fun for the local children and their sense of identity. On the contrary, they could be quite embarrassed when their parents dressed up in funny costumes for the festival. The right type of rural revitalisation was also important for future generations.

Bettina was more concerned that the town centre looked abandoned in the eyes of her mentor. 'Should we cover the windows with American flags?' she asked me. At this point, I didn't know what to do with the empty shop windows. It could be attractive in the eyes of the American homecoming consumer to experience a vintage America strangely located in a Norwegian traditional rural landscape. Still, this mix needed strengthening, theming and fixing, since the village in reality was run down. It needed mending and was infused with several other architectural trends and building techniques from different periods, creating a cluttered aesthetic.

On the American festival's website, the event was marketed as 'fun and cool'. The residents had worked in their own ways to transform culture heritage into culture heritage tourism. Thus, previous attempts to create experience products had already been made. A logo with the inscription 'American Festival Lista' symbolised both the American Festival and the local identity. A local graphic designer had created the logo for the first festival in 2007. It was used to market experience products such as vintage car taxi driving and a guided tour along 'Route 8', the road in the peninsular landscape that connected the American-style houses. From the American diner, one could pre-order a guided tour and some commercial travel companies arranged for Norwegians to have a package experience visiting the American Lista by bus. This trip included a meal, and the chef at the American diner made sure that the eating experience was authentic, using original recipes collected by the local museum. Most often, the dishes served were 'fun', based largely on industry-processed and tinned food mixed in homemade dishes to colour and spice up more basic food. The menu often included the Norwegians' favourite comfort foods from the migration period.

A destination logo, like the 'American Festival Lista', has influence and non-influence in framing what is already 'there'. The logo showed a happy and a sad theatre mask, some music notes and the American and Norwegian flags intertwined. But was the 'American Festival Lista' a self-referential brand (Strömberg 2015) framing the festival and destination? The intertwining flags could – on a concrete level – symbolise the cultural mix which the destination was made up of, and Bettina liked the logo very much. She also liked the fact that the designer who had created it was a part of the social community. How does one know when a destination logo is still in style? How can one argue that a certain type of symbolism is over-used, outdated or even unsophisticated? What made the intertwining Norwegian-American flags in the abandoned shop windows right or wrong? What about the logo's sad and happy masks? While these were referring to theatrical conventions, the flags were referring to migration conventions (Gradén 2003). Would *The Norwegian Tourism Strategy* (2012), which in a publicly funded innovation project it was mandatory to follow, give any advice on when a destination brand had gone out of style, or would the strategy instead assume that all entrepreneurs had the same perception of destination-design and market trends?

A revitalisation plan for the destination would take the point of departure in what was already there. But perhaps the intertwining flags needed reframing or a new way of mixing the existing components, an experiential mix of culture activities (Willim et al. 2006) containing both the 'traditional Norwegian' (e.g. arts and crafts, local food specialities and the experience of a pure coastal landscape) and the 'vintage American' (the classic cars, the American-style houses, the diner with its Norwegian-style hamburgers). This type of mix could, to American 'home-coming tourists', be a way to revitalise, improve and reframe the destination.

The American Festival

In a rural revitalisation project perspective, the American Festival could be perceived as an 'engine for place-making', referring to the organised event as a way to attract visitors through spectacle. An 'event' can be considered a low-cost, ad-hoc and pop-up experience product that can be changed and adjusted quite easily from year to year. In addition, an event can make use of non-commercial and non-profit value creators, such as volunteers who offer their time to fill the culture content and make the event happen (Kjær 2012).

I arrived in the run-up to the festival weekend. The whole town was busy putting up signs. Boxes of programmes were delivered, tents in the market were raised. A circus had occupied the town centre's parking lot and several pop-up shop owners were arriving from far away, getting their products ready for sale. Everything from stands with specially imported top-quality cowboy hats to home-made hamburgers, Norwegian handicrafts and plastic toys now transformed the town park into a market fair. On Saturday night the town centre's Brooklyn Square would transform into the heart of the festival, hosting a party with line dancing and the local, Las Vegas prize-winning Elvis impersonator 'Kjell-Elvis', who was the festival's top name.

Some local women, friends of Maria, the developer from the bus station, were preparing to get into their vintage dresses and narrow 1950s pumps. They had borrowed the outfits from the museum and were planning to throw a private party in some of the rooms in the museum. It was even possible to have one's hair and make-up done in a beauty parlour, by professionals Maria had recruited from Oslo who specialised in original styles from the 1950s. They were also using salon interiors and apparatuses from the museum.

Studying experience product development while doing a business ethnography, it is common to conduct 'action research', which implies suggesting improvements to the entrepreneurs during fieldwork. Quickly, I suggested to Maria that her idea could be developed from serving her personal friends into a business model, through which she could make a profit. Transforming an idea into a business would have demanded entrepreneurial elements such as pricing, marketing, collaborating with others, sharing sales, creating a stock of outfits and designing a venue. Maria, I suggested, could take this year's festival as an opportunity to observe how the market reacted to her idea. She could refine the idea through a business model perspective and hence launch it as a product at next year's festival. Maria did not think this was a good idea. The dresses were borrowed from the museum; to her they were delicate heritage objects that should be protected. To rent out dresses to strangers would risk damaging important museum artefacts. Ways to avoid this scenario were not further discussed or tested.

This last weekend in June, the Norwegian-American relationship was celebrated for the tenth time. Under the website motto 'Unique, Different and Lots of Fun', the festival and the parade this year were visualising the theme of American popular history. In my promenade interviews, the festival manager, Rebecca, explained to me that she herself had organised the content of the parade theme. Some elements had become tradition, for example opening with a woman dressed as the Statue of Liberty and ending with the cruising vintage cars. Somewhere at the front of the parade, the obligatory group of school children had, as their school projects, designed different Disney costumes. This year, in 2017, the snow queen Elsa of Arendal was the prime figure. The local line dancing group appeared, the women in vintage dresses and heavy make-up and 1950s hairstyles, and the local Kjell-Elvis was sitting in the back of a white Cadillac dressed in the iconic white beaded costume, together with bare-shouldered Honolulu girls draped in Hawaiian flower wreaths. The girls were actually the staff from the local Thai restaurant, and several of them were married to Norwegian men. In the parade, two black men, dressed in black and white tuxedos, were demonstrating for black power, symbolising the American civil rights movement from the 1950s to the 1960s. Rebecca had, in between her shifts at the hospital, also been able to involve the nearby refugee camp. She was pleased that some of the Syrian refugees had volunteered to participate as black civil rights fighters. To her, this festival was mainly about the local community's social cohesion, getting to know and becoming friends with the next-door neighbour, although on a larger scale she dreamt of the town becoming a certified heritage village protected by national culture heritage funding. During my fieldwork I realised that Rebecca did everything from guiding traffic to calling the city's renovation department when the public toilets broke down. She even participated in the parade and pointed out when signs to the campsite were pointing in the wrong direction.

Vernacular Entrepreneurs

The town of Vanse can be characterised as a small village. Just like many other coastal and rural communities, local residents live a secluded life far away from national interests and public investments (Lysgård 2016). The fact that this small community had a strong cross-Atlantic orientation to the hyper-urbanism of metropolitan New York (Ringdal 2002) had led to a specific 'community feeling'.

Culture heritage tourism is often perceived as an economic practice that can repair the rural periphery (Hall, Roberts and Mitchell 2003). In Norway, culture-led destination development projects are created through shared funding between regional stakeholders and the local businesses themselves. The criteria for obtaining funding mean that the entrepreneurs should pay for half of the project with their work hours. As I noted during my fieldwork, the local entrepreneurs did not show high regard for the national bureaucracy through which the local culture and tourism practices were assessed. These entrepreneurs considered policy-making and the project funding that came along with it elite, irrelevant and unnecessarily difficult to work with.

Still, the point of departure of this market-oriented project was to collaborate in creating totality in the destination design and the experience products. This would imply a new way of organising the local entrepreneurs, businesses and volunteers at the destination. For example, the entrepreneurs could work with business models on how to develop a system for sharing profits and improve the products in order to attract the needed investors. These place-making processes could hence be viewed as a way for the entrepreneurs to work successfully together, finding a model for shared profit and, through a joint concept such as the American-Norwegian mix, transform the already large collection of things, cars, houses, photos, furniture and clothing into experience- and service-product designs and ultimately American outbound travel products. Creating a novel market, distributing the themed experience products, channelled through personal and cultural Norwegian-American bonds and relations, would in addition transform personal visitors into consuming tourists.

The vernacular entrepreneurship at the American Lista was defined by geographical conditions and the social implications that come along with them. The local, place-bound managerial routines could in a corporate management perspective be considered semi-structured, half-finished and focused on local relationships instead of relating to a market. This volunteer-driven destination was, it seemed, more concerned with the mere execution of culture activities, engaging in and sustaining social cohesion and the sharing of a common past. The non-profit organisation was the entrepreneurial fabric of the American Lista. Most people, including Bettina, Karen, Maria and Rebecca, had volunteered to help. The characteristics of the destination's entrepreneurial work were improvisation or the process of being 'thrown into' developing a new work routine while, at the same time, being able to fit into routines already established or preferred by other volunteers.

The local entrepreneurs staged and organised the town and the experiential culture content of the festival in many different ways. Like in other small communities, based on voluntary work, the community was engaged throughout the year in costume-making, rehearsing music or organising volunteers as entrance, parking and camping assistants, applying for different services and permissions at the city council, such as permission to sell alcohol and food, and getting a working infrastructure in place to facilitate cases of emergency. Hence, the local culture presented a form of vernacular entrepreneurship that could be perceived as a way to repair, restore and make the identity of a local community (Gradén 2003). The power of engaging those already there meant accepting the destination entrepreneurship as vernacular.

The local community was interested in presenting a place identity guided by a combination of a past of personal migration and a broad theme of American popular culture. Rebecca, the festival manager, thought that anything American could be in the parade; Karen, the estate owner of the bus station, had also been very active in the festival over the years, would argue that 'everything after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy' should not be accepted. Ultimately, these perspectives on how the event should be performed or developed were guided by principles of contrasts in taste. In Karen's perception, the American Lista should present a migratory past that was 'correct', before the world went wrong. Rebecca, on the other hand, had an 'anything goes as long as it is fun and inclusive' way of managing the parade. These contesting viewpoints were hard to bridge,

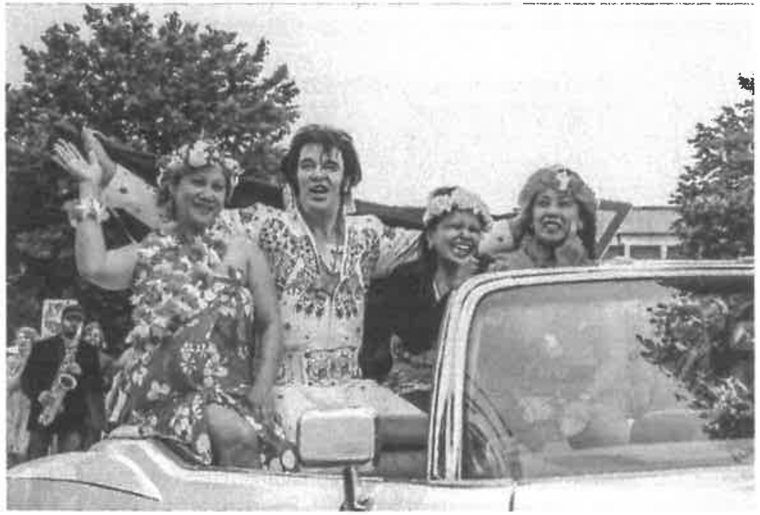

Figure 7.1. Kjell-Elvis, photograph by Thomas Høyrup Christensen, 2017.

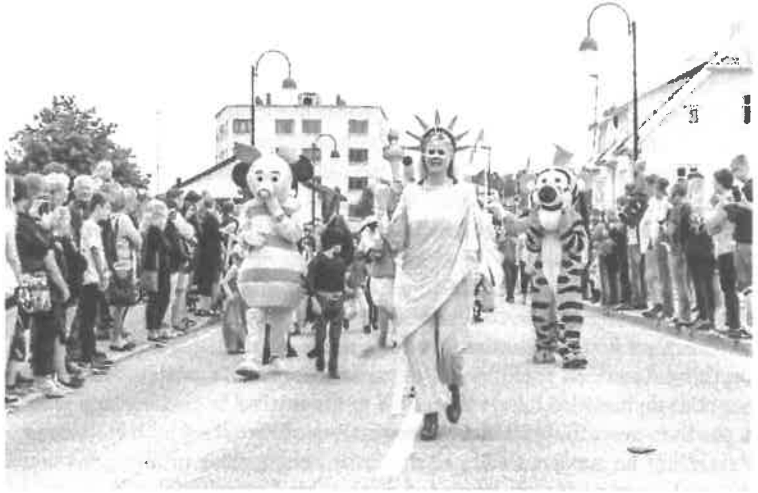

Figure 7.2. American parade, photograph by Thomas Høyrup Christensen, 2017.

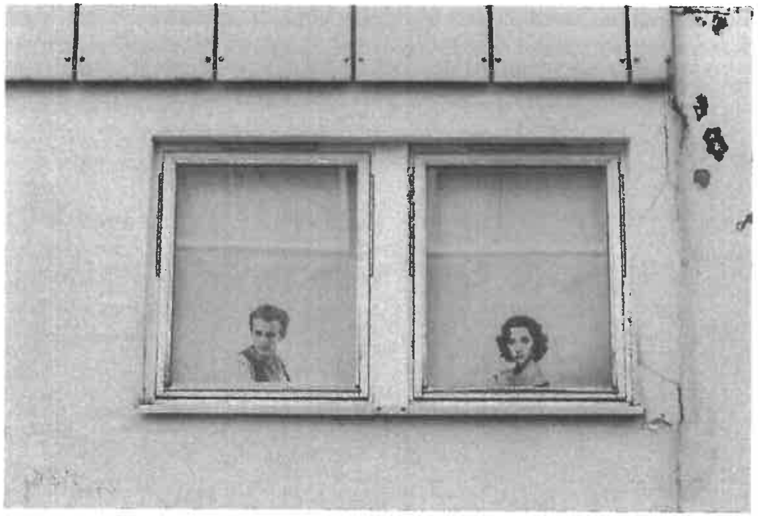

Figure 7.3. Rundown building, photograph by Thomas Høyrup Christensen, 2017.

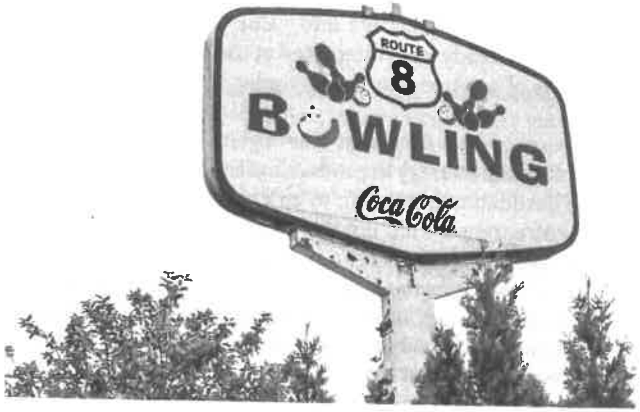

Figure 7.4. Bowling sign, photograph by Thomas Høyrup Christensen, 2017.

and redirected the focus from the external consumer perspective to local perspectives.

The promenade interviews shed light on how a local community in need of investments attempted to prolong the life of things by working in vernacular ways, combining habits, sentiments and self-learned skills in order to preserve the Norwegian-American migration heritage. By throwing the annual American Festival and by volunteering to preserve and fix cars, clothing, things and buildings, and by learning about the local history and taking tourists on a guided tour, 'the past' at first worked as a local identity project. The question was how ready the entrepreneurs were to view themselves from the outside, taking the point of departure in the demands of an American outbound tourism market.

Conclusion

One of my original research interests was to discuss how a local community's entrepreneurs within the tourism and experience industry made use of and comprehended the tons of colourful vintage consumer items as value-creating raw material. Regional destinations are often conditioned by their ability to single out one narrative, brand or main attraction that will be attractive from a consumer perspective. In order for a rural village to reach its ambition of becoming a global destination, making a profit and sustaining its residents, the mobilisation of local resources is vital. Commercially transforming cultural heritage into value-creating tourism and experience services had already been attempted at the destination. But the tastes and preferences of an American homecoming market were difficult to put into practice.

The touristic reuse of the American-Norwegian migration heritage could be an entrepreneurial strategy to professionalise, commoditise, refine and coordinate the destination in relation to an external, targeted market. Nonetheless, local entrepreneurs did not work along the lines of a corporate business-model like practice. As I have shown, these entrepreneurs analysed their performances not from an outside perspective, but rather they were absorbed in social dynamics and next-door neighbour collaborations. In addition, they took a 'volunteer approach' for which 'getting cultural activities executed' was of the most importance.

A great part of designing a heritage destination is created by ideals and norms about place identity, originating in self-perceptions about 'who we are' or who we want to be. In order to reach these ideals, repair, maintenance and fixing activities were organised, from which both frustration and pleasure emerged, depending on the result. These feelings, in turn, defined the vernacular entrepreneurship strategy performed by Karen, Maria, Bettina and Rebecca. In this context, I, as a representative of the public society, was not able to fill the gap between the policy ideals of corporate entrepreneurship and the vernacular business practices of the rural destination. Culture-led revitalisation projects have a policy whereby corporate entrepreneurship works as the formula for success. 'Failure' or 'what should not be done' is not defined, however, and these project conditions are often summed up in a business language far from local vernacular practices.

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Note

1. The title of the project was 'The American Lista: Culture- and Art-Based Place Development and Norwegian-American Travel Routes Products' (2016–19). The project was categorised as an 'industry research project' and was financed by the Regional Research Foundation Agder (RFF), Norway. The project was aborted in 2018 because the funding criteria's 50-50 publicly and privately shared investments was not possible to meet by the local, volunteer-driven entrepreneurs.

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SNAPSHOT 8

A Story of Time Keepers

Jérôme Denis and David Pontille

One day in 1965, at 10.49 a.m., in the heart of Paris, the Wagner clock, which has been standing over the Panthéon's mausoleum for national heroes since the middle of the nineteenth century, stopped. It would seem that it was sabotaged by the very person who was then in charge of winding it every week, and who, probably tired of this task, hit it with an iron bar until it passed away. The clock remained inert for forty years, its mechanism slowly oxidising, until September 2005, when members of a group of clandestine explorers (called *UX*, for 'Urban eXperiment') who had made a habit of wandering the Panthéon for years fell on it and decided to restore it. A confirmed watchmaker who co-founded the group convinced the members of Untergunther, the branch of UX dedicated to the restoration of what they call the 'invisible or abandoned cultural heritage sites' (Murray 2008), to embark on this adventure. This was hardly their first project. Among the few they agreed to make public, we know that they previously rebuilt an abandoned 100-year-old bunker and renovated a twelfth-century crypt (Sage 2000).

One year after they decided to take care of the Panthéon's clock, its mechanism was shining like on the first day, and the clock was working again. To achieve this spectacular result, the group built a secret workshop, hidden in the heights of the Panthéon, into which they brought the clock mechanism and subjected it to a series of delicate operations. They notably soaked it in a bath, polished all its surfaces, replaced a few cables and pulleys, repaired the mechanism's glass cabinet, and completely restored the sabotaged escapement (Lackman 2012). The intervention cost them four thousand euros in all.