THE REPRESENTATIVE ROLE OF AN ISSUE-BASED NET WITHIN A REGIONAL TOURISM NETWORK

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1. THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

In the 1990s, the practical measures aimed at developing tourism industry and the objectives set by the sponsors of various development projects emphasised the importance of networks, both at a regional and business level. Regional development projects and the criteria for the EU subsidies also made networking and cooperation their key words; consequently, these also became fashionable terms in the development of tourism at the end of the 1990s.

The starting point for this study has been a practical research question, which arises from the problems related to regional tourism marketing and, in particular, marketing cooperation. The tourism industry is dominated by small and micro-scale enterprises; other typical attributes include the great number of secondary actors and the powerful investment of the public sector in the development of this industry, both as an actor and as a sponsor. *Networks in this study primarily refer to business networks, where the actors are mainly business organisations,* but as the enterprises in this study are mainly small family businesses, the point of view of the entrepreneur is particularly emphasised. In addition to the concepts used in the industrial network approach, this study also applies the ideas of the school of entrepreneurial network research tradition and, in particular, those of Johannisson (1988, 1993, 1995, 98; Johannisson – Nilsson 1989) regarding the networks of small enterprises, which are based on the personal networks of entrepreneurs, which, for their part, are amongst the most important assets of an enterprise.

Networks in tourism industry in Finland are created, in practise, as a result of different development projects, or, the already existing networks of businesses finance their collective actions with the funding available for different development projects. Networks start for some specific purpose and they may be cooperation projects lasting for only a few years. *The objective of this study is to increase our understanding on why and how a business commits itself to one network* but not to another. A network in this study refers to an overall network which consists of nets of companies. A net, according to my definition, is a form of cooperation between several actors, in which all the parties involved know who belong to this net and in which the parties interact with each other. A net in this study, hence, is not examined as a focal firm's network, but in a holistic sense. The relationships of the enterprises are examined within the net and the network from the point of view of both the interaction between the enterprises and the interaction between the enterprise and the network.

The practical starting point of this study was to discover how and to what extent enterprises are committed to the regional tourism network. It was assumed, within the business, that the commitment of actors to a joint strategy of a regional tourism network would enhance the development of the tourism industry in the province. The question which I was aiming to answer with this study was how the commitment to a network as a form of cooperation comes about in reality, or if commitment is a concept related to a relationship between two parties, or if commitment can, overall, be spoken of in the context of relationships between enterprises. The coordinators of the regional tourism network and those involved in the development of tourism industry talked about "making" enterprises committed to projects, which is indicative of a way of thinking where enterprises can, in certain conditions, be attracted to become committed to the network. What these conditions would be and whether it would be possible for one actor to make another actor committed to the overall network was the central research question. This study concentrates only on company actors; for this reason I also use the term company to refer to an actor.

As is typical of the abductive research approach, the research question focused, as the study proceeded, on a study of issue-based tourism nets and the regional tourism networks, as well as on the commitment of the enterprise to the net and the network in general. The central research questions were:

- what factors influence the desire or the ability of a company to be committed to a net or a network
- what the company commits itself to in a net or a network
- how the company understands the concept of commitment to a net or a network.

The object of the empirical study was the regional tourism network of North Karelia in Finland and the local, issue-based nets within this network. The primary data of this study consisted of interviews, which were complemented by documented material and data obtained through questionnaires distributed during the course of this study.

2. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND THE METHODOLOGY

The network ideology used in this study is based on terminology regarding the industrial network approach developed amongst the IMP research tradition and, particularly, the Uppsala School (f.ex. Matsson 1985, Håkansson 1982, Easton 1992, Håkansson-Snehota 1995).

The definition and description of a net/network in this study combines two views put forward within the industrial network approach, that is, the concept of an issue-based net/network (Brito 1997) and the concept of embeddedness (Törnroos 1997). Furthermore, it has been noted that the actors within the tourism industry include, on the one hand, small owner-based or larger manager-based enterprises, and, on the other hand, different non-entrepreneurial communities.

An issue-based net is created through relationships amongst actors who are interested in a particular issue or problem through either common or conflicting interests. Their actions are often short-lived and spontaneous. The actors aim to increase their control over actions, resources and other actors with the help of the net by instigating their collective actions. Issue-based nets network further to form different types of nets and those based on different issues. (Brito 1997, 1998; cf. also Araujo – Brito 1998).

Acting in an issue-based net is based on recognition of dependence and conscious networking. It is, however, common that a great number of those who belong to the net do not actively participate in the collective actions of the net, but that the implementation of the actions to reach the common goal are left for a small number of active participants. (Brito 1997, Araujo – Brito 1998). Issue-based networks and different networks acting as a project organisation may be set up for a specific period of time and for some specific goal (Brito 1997, 1998). In principle, all the companies which act in some area of the tourism industry, and all the other actors, belong to different local and product-based nets, which, for their part, form the regional tourism network.

The regional tourism network in this study refers to a network of issue-based nets, which are based on regional administration or the division of marketing regions, and the common goal of which is to make the region in question better known as a tourist destination, as well as to increase the revenue from tourism. An issue-based net refers to, for instance, the net of local tourism enterprises or a product-based net the aim of which is joint product development, production and/or marketing of joint service packages. The actors in the net are mainly tourism enterprises, but representatives of public administration, different organisations, associations, events and local population may also be involved in it.

According to Törnroos (1997) embeddedness in the networks is apparent in the following way: The *inner circle* of the network, at some specific point in time, is constituted by the core actors who collectively make decisions in order to start, maintain, increase or possibly end certain relationships. These core actors vary in the network, to some extent, depending, for instance, on the actions that take place within the network.

The *core* of the network describes other key actors. The *network context* in this study is the industry or the market where the actors operate. (Törnroos 1997, 627-628) The number of actors in the core of the issue-based net is small, but all those actors who are in principle supporting the fulfilment of the common aims can be described as actors in the network (Brito 1997).

The *outer limits* of the network reach such actors who are outside the core activities of a business but who in some cases have the opportunity to directly or indirectly influence the actions of the core of the network. These actors include, for example, sponsors, political decision makers, nature conservationists, or sporting clubs. *The outer environment* refers to the remaining environment of actions, which is outside the interrelated business relations within this defined network (demand market). This model of an embedded network is used in different stages of this study to describe the regional tourism network and the issue-based nets. (Törnroos 1997, 627-628)

The *actions* of an issue-based net and network refers to the events in which the actors combine, develop, exchange or create resources by taking advantage of the joint assets of the network and the actors in it (cf. Håkansson – Johanson 1992). The so-called collective actions, which need *common resources* for their implementation are typical for issue-based nets and networks (Brito 1998, Araujo – Brito 1998). These resource connections in a tourism network help to, for example, create joint service packages by exploiting and combining the production capacity of several actors or by exercising joint marketing. The nets and networks also have, in practise, the possibility to obtain outside funding or know-how resources.

The commitment of a company in a network can be seen as a process, where there is first a need for cooperation between companies, which creates favourable conditions for the development of this commitment. The motive for cooperation may arise from different needs. If a company is able to recognise the possible benefits of cooperation, the company is willing to invest in cooperation. Investment into cooperation also requires resources. The input may be either material (f.ex. money, machinery, equipment, goods) or non-material resources (know-how, time). As a consequence of this input, the companies implement their collective actions; as a result of these actions new experiences are gained, which, for their part may yield concrete benefits. These experiences may lead to satisfaction with cooperation, which increases trust towards cooperation. As a result, cooperation continues by new inputs and, through this, closer cooperation and further commitment. Experiences of cooperation may also be negative, in which case dissatisfaction causes mistrust that may lead to possible termination of cooperation.

The first two stages of this process (the recognition of the need for cooperation and the desire to invest in cooperation) represent the attitudinal dimension of commitment. The ability of a company to recognise the need for cooperation is affected, in addition to the general attitudes in the company towards cooperation, by the position of the company in the market, the actions of other companies and by the specific properties of the company (size, age, stage of the life cycle, and financial situation). The attitudes towards cooperation, for their part, are affected by the previous experiences of its actors of cooperation, their expectations about cooperation, the available knowledge, and the values and personal attitudes of the individuals acting in companies.

In addition to recognising the need for cooperation, the desire of a company to invest in it is also affected by the resources available for the company to do so. This, for its part, is affected by the specific features and market position of the company. However, if the resources available to invest in cooperation are abundant, commitment can, in some cases, start with a mere financial investment, because the company does not want to run the risk of being left outside the cooperation network, even if it did not hold much faith in the success of the cooperation in the beginning.

The third stage of this process includes material and the nonmaterial investments, which are descriptive of the behavioural commitment of a company in the network. Results are expected to be obtained through actions. Based on these results, the actor evaluates the ability of the network to fulfil the expectations that the actor has set for the network. Table 1 illustrates the factors affecting commitment to the network in the different stages of an empirical study according to concepts used in an industrial network approach.

The empirical part of this study consisted of three stages. The objective of the first stage was to determine how and to what extent North Karelian companies were committed to the tourism strategy of the regional tourism network. I first studied the course of the strategy process with documented material, after which I interviewed 17 actors in the tourism network Finally I conducted a questionnaire study aimed at 236 actors in the North Karelian tourism network.

In the second stage of the empirical study I aimed to find out what type of nets within the regional tourism network the companies were prepared to be committed to and what issues affected the fact that companies were committed more to some nets than to others. In addition, the object of commitment within the net or network was examined. The research

data was collected during spring 1998 by interviewing companies (6 companies) belonging to the network core. I also used data acquired from an interview study conducted amongst companies of a development project as secondary data.

In *the final stage* of the study I selected three issue-based nets within the regional tourism network for closer scrutiny. The aim was to provide a deeper understanding (than that which had evolved on the basis of the results obtained in the first two stages of the study) of the factors that affected the commitment of an enterprise to the network. I was particularly interested in factors related to the formulation of the goals of the net and their evolution, as well as the goals of the company in the network. I interviewed the coordinator of the net and some core actors in each net.

Table 1. The connectedness of the actors, resources, actions, structure, network positions and processes with the commitment process of a company in an issue-based tourism network.

NETWORK CONCEPT	AFFECTING FACTORS	COMMITMENT PROCESS
ACTORS	Properties of the company Properties of the individuals Values and attitudes Earlier experiences	Attitudinal commitment, Desire to become committed
RESOURCES	Properties of the company Properties of the individuals Available resources	Ability to become committed
ACTIONS	Goals	Input into cooperation, behavioural commitment
STRUCTURE AND NETWORK POSITION	Strategies of the actors Competition setting Market positions	Credibility and proportionality of behavioural commitment, social norms, rules
PROCESSES	Results of cooperation, satisfaction	Specific trust Longitudinal commitment

3. THE THEORETICAL CONCLUSIONS

Within the industrial network approach, there has been no previous extensive research into commitment to the network. Instead, commitment has only been dealt with as commitment to the relationship between two actors. The most central theoretical conclusions of this study can be summarised as follows:

1. We can distinguish between an *embedded and representational structure* in an issue-based network operating in the regional tourism industry. Actors in the network are, on the one hand, local and issue-based nets formed by small enterprises and, on the other hand, leading enterprises; those enterprises, which when seen in the regional context, have significant resources. The core of the network is formed by the most significant issue-based and local nets and the leaders, whose representatives form the inner core of the network together with the organisation that is possibly coordinating the cooperation.

Defining the common goals and building up the steering system in this type of a network should take place in such a way that *the representatives* of the actors in the inner cores of the nets form the inner core of the network; the most significant and influential nets and the leading companies form the core of the network and the remaining regional and local nets and their actors form the network context. Actors that have behavioural influence over the network are situated at the outer limits. These include, for example, the most important sponsors, owners of cultural or natural destinations, different citizen organisations, associations of local inhabitants etc. A corresponding structure would also seem to function at a local level and in product-based nets, where the significance of the outer limits and the network context seems, in general, to be of less importance (cf. Oinas – Packalen 1998).

The concept of the representational role used by Halinen and Törnroos (1998, and Törnroos 1997) plays an important part in the above mentioned issue-based network model. The common activities are guided by common goals in an issue-based net, which means that consensus as to the forms of the collective actions has to be reached. When several nets of small enterprises and a group of leading companies all act inside the regional tourism network, those individual actors who act inside the inner core of the network are clearly representatives of their own net. The representational role is particularly emphasised when there are dozens or even hundreds of actors situated throughout the various nets in the issue-based network.

2. An issue-based network may be seen as a network of long-term relationships of single company actors, even though the structure of an issue-based network as a network of nets varies. Company actors stay in the network during the time that they are actors in the industry, but the network position of the companies varies according to their position in the net at a specific point of time.

3. Commitment to the net is an element which evolves along with the cooperation process, which starts with the actor's need to cooperate. For it to be reinforced, it requires that the cooperation can show results.

It was apparent in this study that even though the attitudinal commitment of a company to the aims of the net was low in the initial stages of the cooperation, the actor was able to develop her/his attitudes through *learning and positive experiences* in such a way that behavioural commitment to cooperation during the process also raised the actor's attitudinal commitment to the goal of the net.

4. A company is committed to the regional network through those issue-based and local nets that are close to it. The object of commitment to the net is, on the one hand, multi-lateral cooperation and, on the other hand, the goals of the net. Commitment requires, on the one hand, a desire to invest, that is, a favourable attitude both towards cooperation and the goal, and, on the other hand, the necessary resources to invest both in cooperation, as such, and in reaching the goal, also through the company's own actions.

In the beginning of this study I present factors based on literature, which affect the readiness of an enterprise to be willing to commit to a net. However, one conclusion of this study states that in addition to the commitment of an actor towards cooperation, another target of commitment can be distinguished, that is, commitment to the "issue" of the net. By this, I mean its values and goals.

In both types of commitment, a further division between attitudinal and behavioural commitment can be detected. Attitudinal commitment refers to the actor's desire to invest in actions aiming at reaching the network's goals in his/her own actions. If the attitude of the actor towards cooperation is positive, it can be assumed that the actor's desire to invest in the collective actions of the net is strong. Behavioural commitment mostly refers to the ability of the actor to invest in either the issue or the collective actions of his own activities and/or through the collective actions.

A company's wish to provide input is primarily affected by the company's own aims, which, for their part, are influenced by *the properties of the enterprise and the entrepreneur* (or the manager). Available *information* on the goals and actions of the net before and during the actions is another factor which affects the desire to invest; the third factor includes the features of *other actors*.

In the study at hand, *dependency* on the industry represented by the net, its *size* and factors related to *know-how* stood out as the *company features* which influenced the company's own goals. The desire of companies dependent on tourism industry to invest in actions in the nets seemed to be higher, in general, than that of those enterprises where the significance of the turnover from tourism was minor. *The personal features of the entrepreneur* were emphasised in small companies, in which case there was a clear connection between the features of the company and those of the entrepreneur (cf. Johannisson 1995). The ability to recognise the complementary nature of the goals of the network and one's own company was, no doubt, also influenced by the know-how related to the entrepreneur's profession and her/his line of business. Know-how, for its part, was influenced by both education and experience in the industry. If the company had several actors, it usually meant that the know-how was also more versatile. In all the nets studied it was possible to perceive that *the age* and the *state of health of the entrepreneur* affected the desire to develop the enterprise and, on the other hand, the desire to become committed to the joint actions of the nets in a behavioural sense: if the entrepreneur did not have someone to continue her/his actions, there was usually no desire to develop the actions and the resources.

Attitudinal commitment related to the goals includes elements from the set of values of the company and the entrepreneur. *If the goals of the network are value-based, the significance of the attitudinal commitment of the actors is emphasised.* The personal features of the entrepreneurs (personality, attitudes and know-how) affect the foundation of the value base and, through this, the formulation of the goals of the enterprise.

Attitudinal commitment to the goals of the net is largely dependent on what type of *information* regarding the goals is available in the preliminary stages of the existence of the net, and, on the other hand, on how the information on the actions and the results reach the actors. The *coordinator* of the net, the actor (or actors) in the inner core, has a crucial role; *trust* in the coordinator is a prerequisite for attitudinal commitment. Trust in the actor of the inner core is directed both at the actor organisation and the person. In the latter case, the indicators of trust are the professional skills of the individual actor, human relations skills and determination. The organisation actor of the inner core is expected to have, in addition to credibility related to expertise, independence and financial credibility.

Attitudinal *commitment to cooperation* is related to the observations of the company regarding the other actors and on attitudes towards cooperation in general. The desire to cooperate is primarily affected by the personal properties of the actor, but, as has been stated

in many studies (cf. Cropper 1996, Gray 1996), cooperation in itself, when it is not a more efficient alternative to acting alone, is not meaningful for reaching the company's goals.

The ability to see the possible advantages of cooperation is affected by the actor's *personality* and *previous experiences* of cooperation. The influence of the personal relationships between actors, particularly in the cooperation of small firms is significant. The differences between ways of acting for different personalities have also been tolerated better in situations where the benefits of the actions are evident. Similarity of actors, the complementary nature of products and actions, lack of a competitive setting, equal division of power in the net, and a clear structure of the net as well as identification of legitimate actors seem to enhance attitudinal commitment to cooperation. In a clear net structure the actors identify the positions of the actors and the power and dependency relations related to them. This creates a trusting atmosphere in the communication, which, for its part, improves the actors' attitude towards cooperation.

5. The network position of an actor is defined according to how much resources the actor invests in the actions of the net inside the net and, through this, according to how much the actor invests in the collective actions (behavioural commitment). The net identity of the actor is composed of those roles and positions that the actor her/himself, and other actors, believes the actor to have in her/his most important nets and networks.

Behavioural commitment means that the actor invests resources, at a minimum, towards reaching the goals of the net or cooperation. Behavioural commitment requires that the company is attitudinally committed to at least either the goals of the net or cooperation, as such. Behavioural commitment is therefore affected, on the one hand, by the desire of the company to invest in the actions of the net but particularly also by the ability of the company to invest.

The ability of a company to invest in the net's actions is affected, firstly, by the *resources* of the company. *Lack of financial resources* diminishes the company's chances to invest money into collective actions or into development activities, which correspond to the net's goals in the company itself. Resources related to time were particularly affected by the size of the company and its dependence on the industry. In small, full-time tourism enterprises *the lack of time* seemed to be an even more significant factor affecting behavioural commitment than financial resources (Cf. also Svensk 1998). *The lack of know-how* of the enterprise or the entrepreneur affected in such a way that the possible advantages of cooperation had not been recognised, or the know-how resources of possible partners were not known. The ability to commit was therefore affected, in addition to the properties of the entrepreneur, by the properties of the company.

Behavioural commitment is, however, also possible without the actor being committed to the issue and cooperation at the same time. The actor may be attitudinally committed to the target of the net and invest in collective actions, because in this way she/he is able to obtain such benefits that would not be available to her/him otherwise. In this case, behavioural commitment is, in general, financial investment into the collective actions, but the actor will not give up her/his time for common decision-making nor to maintain social contacts.

In practise, behavioural commitment may also be affected by *external factors* independent of the actors, such as legislation, which may prohibit or enhance the action of a company in some net. In addition, the available *alternatives to act* affect the actor's behavioural

commitment. It became apparent in this study that actors, in general, belong to several issue-based nets and when there are limited resources they have to make choices regarding their inputs of time or money. *The dependency of an actor on other actors in the net,* the net actions and naturally *the industry* affect the amount of inputs. Different nets represent different combinations of substituting resources and alternative ways of acting.

In an embedded representational issue-based network, the representational net position can be thought to mean the idea of the company itself and that of the other actors in the net on what issue-based nets within the network the company belongs to and whether the company acts as a representative of its net in some other net or on a higher level of the network. The position is defined according to the amount of resources the actor invests into the collective actions of the net and according to the amount and type of resources the company has to offer to benefit the other actors in the net. Linking the concept of the representational role (Halinen – Törnroos 1998) with the concept of an embedded network structure of Törnroos (1997) in the context of an issue-based network results in a more precise understanding of both of these theoretical notions. In Halinen and Törnroos' work (1998), representativeness is dealt with as a phenomenon, which guides the actions of a single actor. In the context of an issue-based network, representativeness may be considered as a consciously perceptible concept related to the steering of the network, which defines the network's structure.

6. The commitment of an actor to the net can be described, for example, at three different levels: a high level of commitment, an advanced level of commitment and a low level of commitment. The degree of commitment defines the position of an actor in the network in such a way that the commitment of an actor at the inner core is at a high level, the actor of the core is at least on an advanced level and an actor in the network context has a low level of commitment.

7. A high level of commitment requires not only attitudinal commitment both to cooperation and to the goal of the network, but also credible and equal input into the collective actions.

In this study, the actors in the nets measured the activeness of an actor by the amount of participation in collective actions and by financial input. The companies consider the financial input as the clearest sign of commitment. The results of this study support the results of Gundlach et. al. (1995), according to which the input in cooperation must be credible and proportional so that the parties are able to trust each other's commitment. Credibility, here, means that the investments are considerable compared to the resources of the actor and that they are significant, proportionality refers to a situation where both parties, or in the network context all parties, invest a proportionally equal amount, compared to their resources (Gundlach et. al. 1995, 81). The actors in the inner core of nets emphasised, in addition to financial investment, the significance of time input and participation of the actors in joint decision-making.

8. The mutual trust of actors is an absolute prerequisite for a high level of commitment.

According to the results of this study, trust, in the commitment to the net, is related specifically to the desire to invest in cooperation. When considering whether to join the net, the actor evaluates the reliability of other actors and, particularly, that of the actors in the inner core on many levels: the reliability of the actor and credibility as a person, the actor's reliability in a financial sense, the professional reliability and the credibility of the actor. As

the actions of the net evolve, maintaining and developing trust is a prerequisite of commitment to both attitudinal and behavioural cooperation. Trust is gained from positive results, which for their part, are always related to the expectations of the actor. The quality of communication in the net affects the foundation and development of trust. Frequent communications, information about current matters and, particularly, the reliability and neutrality of information are factors which increase trust and, through this, strengthen the desire to invest in the actions. (cf. also Baldauf – Cravens 1999, Svensk 1998).

In the light of the results of this study I am able to agree with Brugha's (1999) view, according to which commitment is a process, in which actions are developed through knowledge, feeling and will by creating responses in the parties involved in cooperation. While the knowledge of the properties of the other actors develops into a skill towards implementing actions, behavioural commitment develops onto a higher level. When the actor is adequately satisfied or convinced about the positive feelings of the other parties, the actor is ready for emotional input, that is, trust. Trust represents the affective dimension of attitudinal commitment.

4. THE PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The most central practical conclusion of this study is that regional tourism organisations within the tourism industry should be seen as networks of issue-based nets, which have an embedded and representational structure. The goals and strategies of these networks should be formulated according to already existing cooperation between local and product-based nets. The development model of tourism cooperation presented in this study could be utilised in the management of the activities of these tourism networks. I described the evolution process of network cooperation by dividing the development stages of the network into a six-stage process (situation before cooperation, problem formulation stage, definition of direction, construction stage, implementation stage and the results of cooperation), which I have created from a combination of the models of Gray (1985), Jamal and Getz (1995) and Selin and Chavez (1995). This model of analysis was particularly applicable when examining the process involved in creating a joint strategy for a regional tourism network, but features of different stages in the model were also detected in the evolution of the cooperation of the examined nets. The properties of the actors, division of resources and their mutual exploitation, setting the goals and implementing the actions were clearly discernible in this model as factors affecting the attitudinal and behavioural commitment of the actors in the evolution process of cooperation. With the help of this model, it was also possible to identify those problems that different factors caused at each stage of the cooperation process, from the point of view of commitment of the actors.

The coordinator of the net, that is, the core actor, seems to have a central role in the cooperation development model, which seems to also be true for nets within the tourism industry. This model is suitable for examination of the initial stages of the net's existence, particularly because the net and the net's actions are seen as a whole, where the evolution of the interrelated relationships of different actors, actions and resources may be described and followed at the different stages of the development. The model of examination is restricted, however, to mainly describe the onset of the net and it does not include elements related to the dynamics of an established net. Application of the model in general, alongside the industrial network approach, may be restricted because differences between actors in most industries are presumably not as great as within the tourism industry.

The important role of local tourism organisations in the development of the industry was noticeable in this study. Municipalities have a central role in the development of tourism through the regional councils, so the tourism organisations owned by them should also have a clear role in the regional tourism network. Tourism has a specific position in the development of peripheral areas, due to which a considerable amount of regional development funds are directed in eastern and northern Finland (Aho 1997). Regional councils are responsible for allocating these funds. Tourism networks, however, do not usually have the authority, as an organisation, to use the regional development funds. It can be assumed that if the structure of regional tourism networks and the positions of the actors in these networks were to be clearer and if the nets starting and operating within the networks gained a more important position in the definition of strategies for the networks, this would improve the possibilities of the fragmented industry to carry out better coordinated development work.

When development projects normally also deal with, in addition to developing the companies themselves, the development of mutual cooperation, project work should pay more attention to what level the goals of the project are set at. If the actors' ideas about the goals of the net are realistic, the results of a purely educational project may also be satisfactory from the point of view of the actors in the net. Training projects precede many production and marketing nets (Komppula 1996), so their significance in the foundation of tourism nets is unquestionable. Clear identification of the goals of a project as well as recognising the succession of the learning and implementation stages could increase the actors' attitudinal commitment to the nets through the fact that when the expectations regarding the actions of the net are realistic, the expectations of cooperation is more likely to be more positive, which, for its part, would increase the behavioural commitment of the actors to cooperation.

The attitudinal commitment to cooperation in the nets that are created through the projects seems, in many cases, to be connected with various financial benefits that the company can gain to develop its own actions by joining the company network of the project. Attitudinal commitment to the goals of the net would seem to be enhanced by the fact that the goals of the net are based on solving the development problems of the companies themselves through the actions of the net. A chance to influence the planning of actions and awareness of the continuation of the actions would seem to increase attitudinal commitment. A clear management and finance structure would also seem to predict a more advanced level of commitment to the net (cf. also Kataja 1998).

Because many issue-based nets within the tourism industry receive outside funding and the activities of the net are based on successive projects, the position of the project leaders often becomes crucial. Johannisson and Nilsson (1989) speak of a type of "community entrepreneurs" who themselves may not necessarily be entrepreneurs but who work in the projects in order to develop cooperation between companies. Project leaders see the development of cooperation as their personal goal. They help entrepreneurs to develop their abilities and their feeling of self-esteem and help the actors to create and exploit their relations with authorities and other outside interest groups. Project leaders combine their different personal networks to benefit the community and search for projects which help to reduce the socio-economic risks of the community. A good project leader believes in what she/he does and at the same time makes the entrepreneurs also believe in and hence be committed to the project. (Johannisson – Nilsson 1989, 4-5)

Actors in the local organisations can be, at best, such community entrepreneurs, but in practise the profit targets of the local organisations often cause competitive situations

between private entrepreneurs and local organisations. According to this study and that of Lassila and Komppula (1999), local organisations would, however, seem to have an important position as a net closest to the entrepreneur. Corresponding results have also been presented by Svensk (1998) on his study regarding Swedish ski centres.

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