'Just ask Eric': On the Importance of Governance Efficacy, Territorial Ties and Heterogenous Networks for Rural Development

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Abstract

Territorial capital is more than economy, business and socioeconomic status of residents. It is also the way residents of localities form social networks and how these are intertwined with the local political, institutional and administrative configurations. Sampson (2011) argues that while social networks foster the conditions under which collective efficacy may flourish, they are not sufficient for the exercise of social cohesion and social control. Networks have to be activated to be meaningful. Interaction is embedded in local traditions and social order is produced locally. Analysing interviews from a rural location in Denmark, we examine how referential features of group life (spatial areas, relations, shared pasts) generate action. We develop the concept of 'governance efficacy' to denote the capacity to mobilise collective efficacy in relation to territorial development. We argue that such a concept is an important element in explaining why and how a peripheral location is able to manage social challenges despite population decline.

Introduction

In this article, the point of departure is a case-study of Lemvig, Denmark; based on which we discuss the role of interlocking networks in neo-endogenous rural development (Ray 2006). We show how remote locations are able to develop and mobilise local resources for social innovation and development, and how local communities

understood in its broadest sense are central actors in this development. The question guiding the empirical analysis and discussion in the article is *How should we characterise the relations between local government, community and business actors in Lemvig, what role does culture and place attachment play for these interlocking relations, and how do they generate collective action in and for rural development?* We base this on the understanding that it is important to examine how referential features of group life (spatial areas, relations and shared pasts) generate action within a rural location. We argue that local practices provide the basis for cultural extension, influencing societal expectations through the linkages among groups. A central element in these linkages in rural locations is that they cut across organisations, actor types and differences in power, providing opportunities for crosscutting interaction and coordination. However, it is important to empirically investigate the way these partnerships and interlocking networks form locally, how they link to other scales of regional and national governance, and if so, how they function in delivering innovative responses and mobilise resources in tackling structural issues relating to depopulation and the need for local economic growth. In Lemvig Municipality, the case-study for this article, the interlocking relations is best signified by the interview statements 'when you need a problem solved you "just ask Eric"', the mayor of Lemvig Municipality.

We begin by framing our case-study in the debate about changing territorial governance and the role of social capital in and for rural development. Then we move on to present the area of Lemvig, Denmark and outline the methodological considerations behind the study. In the first empirical section, we investigate the characteristics of the networks of Lemvig and the role culture plays in bringing diverse actors together in collective action for development. We touch here on the question of whether collective action and heterogeneous networks are a response to necessity or a shared sense of social order. In the second empirical section, we focus on the role of intermediaries and particularly how different forms of local problems are solved by interlocking relations of territorial governance. On the basis of the case-study, we tentatively develop the concept of 'governance efficacy' to denote the local particular ways that territorial govenance has the capacity to mobilise 'collective efficacy' (Sampson 2011, 2012). In the last section, we pull the analysis together and outline some lessons on how the concept of governance efficacy can be relevant to all areas in need of development.

Territorial governance of rural development – a diminishing role for local communities?

The emphasis on networks and the mobilisation of local rural communities as active parts in territorial development is not particular to rural areas but part of a wider turn in strategic spatial governance. In Denmark, the variant of strategic spatial planning consists of the combination of collaborative planning (Healey 2003) and neoliberal planning (Olesen 2012; Allmendinger 2016). While the former emphasises the importance of capacity building and the formation of shared interest and partnerships, the latter perspective emphasises how the management of territorial development increasingly involves soft spaces of governance, which legitimises bringing market and economic growth concerns to the core and puts pressure on the role of the facilitating state. In our study, we

identify elements of both. Particularly important for rural development in Denmark have been the movements between centralising facilities and capacities for strategic planning, and tendencies of de-centralisation (Richner and Olesen 2019). Critical voices argue that the increased importance of interlocking networks in territorial development might augment a post-political state where political decisions on the direction of local development have moved outside democratic control, and that this form of neoliberal planning favours an economic growth agenda (Olesen 2014). We agree with this concern and the key role of strategic spatial planning in securing development in more remote rural areas.

We argue that collaborative planning in the Danish case cannot be reduced to a question of legitimisation of marketisation or growth strategies but has to be understood as a way to mobilise local communities to have 'power to' (Shucksmith 2010) initiate local innovation that enables the coupling of growth and liveability. In the following, this capacity for local innovation is identified as being closely related to collective interaction and patterns of participation embedded in local traditions and local social order. Bærenholdt and Aarsæther (2002) argue in their study of coping strategies in the Northern periphery that it is the intricate dynamics between local identity, local capacity for reflexivity and mobilisation of networks that decides local paths of territorial development. Moreover, they argue, building on the insights of Woolcock (1998), the degree and form of embeddedness that develop in different localities are crucial to understand the differences in coping with structural changes.

One key element to investigate in relation to these forms and degrees of embeddedness locally is, as Bosworth *et al.* (2016, p. 443) argue, the role of key intermediaries between top-down and bottom-up development and how they facilitate common understanding across heterogeneous networks. Thus emphasising intermediaries, it draws lines to what Mark Granovetter pointed out in the iconic article, 'The strength of Weak Ties': whatever is to be diffused in social networks it can reach a larger number of people and traverse greater social distance when passed through weak ties rather than strong (Granovetter (1973). Granovetter was concerned with how different ties had different capacities both in terms of speed and in terms of outreach and thus different ability to bridge between different social networks. These intermediaries are crucial to the development of what Magalhães *et al.* (2002) term a 'common frame of reference'. They argue that such a frame of reference is key to developing synergy in diverse and often cross-sectoral partnerships in local territorial development. Rural development depends on institutional capital consisting of knowledge resources, relational resources and mobilisation capabilities (Magalhães *et al.* 2002; Healey 2004). Partnerships between local businesses, community representatives and local authority officials do not always run smoothly or without problems and power struggles. We investigate in this article, how close interaction between key local authority figures and territorially based networks becomes essential for the development of collective efficacy and therefore local possibilities for development.

Social capital, collective efficacy and territorial development

The case-study builds on Ray (2006, p. 285) who places social capital at the centre of neo-endogenous rural development, but also calls for critical research into *how* and in

what way social capital is a driver of territorial development. Since he wrote this, the concept of social capital has become mainstream in local, national and EU documents and programmes. This makes it even more pertinent to look closely at what types of resources that play a role in local development and the importance of particular forms of networks. Bosworth *et al.* (2016) place networks and their social capital at the heart of neo-endogenous development:

> 'If we embrace this neo-endogenous development model, placing networks at the heart of development, these networks become the dynamic mechanisms through which actors can draw on combinations of local and extra-local knowledge to respond to local need. So long as local partnerships build social and institutional capital, they are ideally placed to communicate local needs within those networks and also to add value to local resources, especially those unique, immobile resources that can convey comparative advantage to their rural regions'. (Bosworth *et al.* 2016, p. 444).

This is also supported by a very recent cross-European study that emphasises the role of local sense of identity and culture for trust and social capital and identify how it makes a particular difference in the Danish case (Rivera *et al.* 2019). Similarly, Winther and Svendsen show how bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam 2000) in Danish peripheral rural areas can challenge dominant discourses of the absence of development (Winther and Svendsen 2012). Moreover, Svendsen has in several studies identified the importance of local communitarian meeting places like libraries and community houses for rural development (Svendsen 2010, 2013).

Research on social capital is most frequently based on Coleman's (1988) or Bourdieu's (1986) theories of capital which are related to different paradigms of social theory. Coleman's approach has its roots in structural functionalism, Bourdieu's approach contains elements of conflict theory.

The concept of social capital has been criticised on several fronts (Portes 1998; Curley 2008; Fallov 2011; Lund *et al.* 2019) due to the tautological tendencies of the way the concept is used in local community development; making social capital both the diagnosis and the cure. In an urban setting, Blokland and Savage (2008) have criticised the widespread use of the concept of social capital for having a seductive effect on policymakers. The welfare state's responsibilities for dealing with social integration and social problems to local, urban and regional levels, while addressing so-called 'untapped integrative' forces of communities and neighbourhoods, raises the question of *which* untapped forces can be mobilised within local communities and how such mobilisation may be initiated (Blokland and Savage 2008, p. 3). They introduce the concept of *networked urbanism* in order to grasp both interpersonal micro-ties and the overall and globalised structures of technology with both types of networks linking locations in complex ways (Blokland and Savage 2008, p. 5). Moreover they critique the discussion of social capital for often *'...abstracting ties from given locations so that their formal properties can be delineated (...) These abstractions then do not necessarily examine the everyday workings of social networks, and do not address how networks operate in practice'* (Blokland and Savage 2008, p. 6). A focus on practice is, in many respects, necessary and productive, as there is an obvious distance between theory and actual practice, although it is not unequivocally obvious how we capture practice

in the most accurate way. Our argument is that network practice is intimately related to the characteristic of the specific territory.

According to Lewica (2011), some studies have found a linear relationship between size of community and level of place attachment, with residents of the most traditional places such as villages and small towns reporting the highest attachment). Similar findings emerged from studies of the connections between sense of community and settlement size, density and ethnic diversity. These studies found a negative relationship between measures of urbanisation and sense of community (Lewica 2005). Other studies, however, have presented opposing results. For instance, Theodori and Luloff (2000) compared residents of four rural areas, which differed in their degree of urban presence and pressure, and found that it was the residents of the most urbanised rural area who claimed the highest attachment to local community. The conclusion is that factors other than community size play a role in relation to place attachment. For example, it is well known that neighbourhood relations and residence length are strong predictors of community attachment (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974; Goudy 1982, 1990; Sampson 1988).

The interaction between local culture, place attachment and character of local networks is similarly important to Sampson's concept of collective efficacy (Sampson 2011, 2012). According to Sampson, the root of the collective efficacy of a neighbourhood is the intersection of practices and social meanings with a spatial context (Sampson 2011, p. 230). This intersection is predominantly based on face-to-face interaction and is inherently better understood in small units where people recognise others than in large, anonymous units. Networks have to be activated in order to be meaningful and in this sense, collective efficacy can be defined as a link between mutual trust, shared expectations among residents and willingness to intervene and interact (Sampson and Morenoff 1997).

The quantity, quality and diversity of institutions and organisations affect neighbourhoods (Sampson 2011, p. 233). Organisational density and levels of participation in relation to these organisations are crucial, as organisational density is not an equivalent to coordinated action for local interests. Sampson *et al.* have constructed a measure of collective efficacy, combining informant ratings of the capacity for informal social control with social cohesion; defining a neighbourhood *'as a variably interacting population of people and institutions in a common place'* (Sampson and Morenoff 1997, p. 2). This means that network-density, attachment to place, civic participation, disorder, organisational density, identity and capacity for collective action are variable and analytically separable from structural variables. In this way, the concept of collective efficacy is an answer to the most dominating critique of social capital (Woolcock 1998) as it manages to avoid being a matter of good or less good moral or per se as something good and desirable. The composite (and complex) measure is composed of different dimensions and has to be investigated locally and in relation to a problem or a variable before it can be defined as desirable or not.

Therefore, territorial development is not only a matter of whether social capital is generated from the top-down or from the bottom-up. Social capital is most often in planning and policy understood as the aggregate level of individual social capital often measured by 'proxies' that are theoretically linked to social capital as either determinants (how social capital come about) or manifestations (outcomes). Hence, the

central argument in this article is that it is the interaction between a particular local culture and the role of centrally placed governance actors that makes the development of this Danish rural area possible despite strong de-urbanisation forces and high rates of depopulation. It constitutes what might be termed *governance efficacy*, that is, a particular interaction between a locally specific culture for participation, a facilitation of networks and a pragmatic governance attitude which makes it possible for local governance to mobilise collective efficacy in and for development and in the tackling of territorial problems in Lemvig. Governance efficacy might have a slightly different configuration or degree in other areas, and with this article we want to point to the importance of making in depth local studies to understand its dynamics. We will flesh out this argument in the empirical sections, which follow after a presentation of the case area of Lemvig and the methodological considerations.

The case-study of Lemvig

The article is based on material from the Horizon 2020 project COHSMO (grant agreement No 727058). COHSMO is the acronym for a new trans-European research project on *Inequality, urbanization and territorial **Coh** esion: Developing the European **S** ocial **Mo** del of economic growth and democratic capacity* launched on 1 May 2017. The project receives financial support from the EU Commission for a four-year period from 2017 to 2021. The project includes seven partners across Europe: England, Lithuania, Italy, Austria, Poland, Greece and Denmark. The aim of the project is to investigate the territorial dimension in relation to socio-economic forms of inequality. COHSMO aims at investigating the relation between the socio-economic structures of inequality, urbanisation and territorial cohesion, and how territorial cohesion at different European spatial scales affects economic growth, spatial justice and democratic capacities.

   The case-study of Lemvig was based on a mixed method and location-sensitive approach in order to find out the degree and type of collective efficacy and how it interacts with territorial governance in the mobilisation of territorial capital. First and foremost, the study was based on an inductive research strategy focusing on local life-world experiences that were utilised in the formulation of specific concepts. Next, different existing theories were discussed and compared with the results of the inductive process of analysis. This process had elements of abduction in the sense that the process of comparison and condensing finally founded the construction of new concepts. According to Robert Yin, a case-study is an empirical inquiry that 'investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life-context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin 2003, p. 13). The openness of the inductive design combined with the overall research question crystallised the themes and interrelations between local governance, territorial capital and collective efficacy. In this way, the Lemvig case-study illuminates what the variable means when confronted with the local real-life-context and not isolated in an artificial analytical framework. The aim of such a case-study is to make the theoretical concept associated with empirically meaningful variables. The social meaning of the central variables depend on the specific location, and we thus analyse what the variables

mean when they are situated in a real, specific context. This case-study strategy is closely related to the type of research question the present case-study attempts to address on how place matters yielding a large number of potentially relevant variables.

According to Yin, the case-study inquiry *'copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulation fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis'* (Yin 2003, pp. 13–14). In this way, the present case-study has been occupied with the applied model of interrelation between local governance, territorial capital and collective efficacy in order to analyse if it provides a reasonable goodness-of-fit or whether it presents a misleading simplification of the actual case.

The article presents a case-study of the rural Danish municipality Lemvig. It is based on qualitative data from interviews with 25 informants in Lemvig with three different types of informants: active community actors (5), business actors (5) and governance and policy actors (14) covering both local authority employees, higher executive civil servants, and school leaders. The gender division among the informants is somewhat uneven, as 21 men and four women were interviewed. However, informants were identified and chosen primarily on the background of their position, overriding issues of gender. The gender bias towards men also mirrors the types of businesses and the administrative culture prevailing in Lemvig. Furthermore, rather than being a representation of the population of Lemvig the sample is based on local actors who are active in territorial development.

The interviews were conducted in most cases by one and in some case by two researchers. The vast majority of interviews were done face-to-face in Lemvig and were conducted on the basis of interview guides directed at the different types of actors and phrased in accordance with the overall guidelines for the COHSMO-project.

The interviews focused on identifying territorial assets and territorial problems, with particular focus on the structural forces of urbanization and unequal development. We asked the informants how they would describe the character of the local community, how local community and local businesses were engaged in territorial development, and the relations to surrounding localities and role of other scales of government.

All interviews were transcribed and coded in the coding program Nvivo. In the project, the interview data is combined with discourse analysis of policy documents and statistical analysis. However, in the present article the emphasis is on the interview data. All data is anonymised.

The municipality of Lemvig

Lemvig is in a paradoxical situation: on the one hand it is a very well run municipality with a good local economy, sufficient jobs and substantial service deliveries and on the other hand it is experiencing a population decline. Therefore, a great number of immigrant workers come to Lemvig in order to supply the demand for workers, in particular within the fishing industry, farming and the production of energy.

The municipality of Lemvig is located on the west coast of Jutland. The town of Lemvig is located at the entry to the fiord Limfjorden. By water, Lemvig is well-connected to both the North Sea and Limfjorden. By land, Lemvig is peripherally located with approximately 50 km to the nearest motorway, 70 km to the nearest domestic airport and 150 km to an international airport. The municipal council of Lemvig is very engaged in territorial development of the municipality on the basis of increasing tourism and different types of leisure activities. Hence, they are partitioning more land and thereby opening up for an increased number of summerhouses (Municipality of Lemvig 2016–2020). Along the west coast of the municipality, a spectacular nature with wide and white sandy beaches, dramatically steep cliffs and an unobstructed view of The North Sea can be found. Part of this coastline, if partitioned, will be sold to private owners and part of it to larger projects and financially strong developers to develop a holiday resort related to surfing. It is also the wish of the municipal council to develop a geo-park and a nature-park.

Lemvig has a population of 20,100 inhabitants and a population density of 39.9 inhabitants per square kilometre. The population change is unevenly distributed within the municipality. Lemvig is the only town in the municipality with more than 2,500 inhabitants; expected to decrease by 3 per cent every year until 2026. In the rural areas, the decrease is anticipated to reach 7 per cent per year by 2021 and 15 per cent per year in 2026. Overall, it is expected that the population will decrease by 9 per cent in the next ten years (Region Midtjylland 2017; https://www.rm.dk/siteassets/regio nal-udvikling/ru/talog-strategi/midt-i-statistikken/midt-i-statistikken-2017/lemvig. pdf). Depopulation is pointed out as the overall challenge of Lemvig Municipality. This is mentioned by all interviewees, indicating a shared understanding of the main territorial problem. Young people move from Lemvig to larger cities of Denmark to study, and often they do not return to Lemvig. The lack of population is the source of a range of other problems such as labour shortage and stagnation in the housing market, which causes loss of private capital and physical decay of the housing stock. Furthermore, there is a lack of suitable and attractive jobs for women, which limits the incentive of families to move to Lemvig.

In Lemvig Municipality the primary industry dominates, as the area contains a wide range of natural resources that constitute the basis of different kinds of businesses. First, the farmland is of very high quality. Second, fishing is very good in particular on the west coast around the area of Thyborøn and partly also in the fiord that constitutes the northern border of the municipality. Third, the wind atlas of Lemvig contains the highest wind speed in the country. The coastline of the western part of the municipality is called 'the iron coast' because of its very difficult ocean current and the harsh wind. The wind is usually blowing from west and north-west, which, when combined with high speeds, constitutes supreme conditions for wind turbines.

When it comes to productivity, it is noteworthy that Lemvig has a high score measured as value added per person-years. While the average is 531,715 DKR for the region, and 591,170 DKR for the whole country, it is 606,541 DKR for Lemvig. This tendency is mirrored when it comes to start-up companies with employees and export. The number of new companies increased by 28 per cent in 2014, whereas for the rest of the region and Denmark in total it decreased by 5 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. Lemvig has a historical connection to the communities that formed the

basis for the modern Danish wind power industry as is was developed in the 1970s in the town called Ulfborg, close to the municipality of Lemvig. This connection has grown into a local market.

Lemvig is characterised by political stability. The Mayor of Lemvig, Erik Flyvholm, represents the Liberal Party, Venstre, which is the largest party in the municipal council with 12 out of 21 mandates. There is a strong right-wing orientation among local voters which means that 15 mandates out of 21 are right-wing and 6 mandates are left-wing.

Local networks as collective actors for development: culture, historic necessity or both?

Culturally and socially, the territorial advantages of Lemvig are related to a very high level of collective efficacy. A strong tradition for participation in local associations and in non-profit organisations persist and many local attractions and cultural institutions are mainly run by volunteers. Lemvig has a high level of social associations and organised civil society compared to the number of inhabitants and at the same time, Lemvig ranges among the municipalities with the highest share of locally active residents in Denmark (Jakobsen *et al.* 2014). The present case-study identifies a high degree of interlocking and interdependent relations between entrepreneurs, business stakeholders, community stakeholders, NGO's and local public authorities. There is a mentality of taking care of problems in these varied and local webs of social relations – this is described as having been built on 'the mentality of being self-employed farmers or fishermen located in a remote part of the country where you are not used to getting help' (Rur_Comm_17). Historically, the inhabitants of Lemvig were free farmers instead of serving the aristocracy and local manors, which was otherwise normal in Denmark until 1800. This historical identity of the area is presented as a reason for the mentality of taking responsibility and for participating in all sorts of local affairs. This explanation is linked to a certain 'culture of necessity' that is related to the geographical remoteness of the municipality: they have to manage things themselves as no one will come and help because the municipality is too small and too remotely located. This apparent challenge has become an advantage in that it has required the local actors to work together in solving local problems.

Many narratives centre on a capability to fend for oneself and the local community, and relate this capability to historical path dependencies conditioned by the material surroundings and dependence on natural conditions:

> I think it is the surroundings and what the West Coast did for the country. In the old days when the men went to sea, you all hoped that they would return, but some did not. When they did not return, you all had to support the widow who was then alone to fend for 5-7 children. This is something ingrained in the local culture that we take care of each other. (Rur_PA_9)

Part of the explanation for the high level of collective efficacy is to be found in the interrelation between the occupational structure, the climate challenges and the dependence on each other to get by in sparsely populated areas. This becomes an

incorporated part of habitus in the areas along the West Coast, and result in an attitude of 'if we want to get something done then we have to do it ourselves'. Another part of the story is the long history of associational culture. The area is the birthplace of the co-op movement in Denmark, which has not only resulted in benefits for the farmers and many educational facilities along the west coast, but has also been a key condition for the Danish wind industry in more recent history. Moreover, when the narratives of engagement become dominant cultural narratives of place, people also align themselves with this narrative:

> What carries these small social systems is the narrative. This is important... This attracts many people, because everyone wants to be part of this narrative. (Rur_PA_10)

Place narratives and place identities become prominent features in explaining the high level of collective efficacy. Thus the ability to mobilise this form of meaning-making and entrepreneurial peasant culture and broadening this into something that is an identity (Kumpulainen and Soini 2019) of the 'Lemvig community' is central to why Lemvig has managed to prosper despite depopulation and difficulties in attracting businesses; something they have in common with other coastal regions with the same natural conditions.

Three different types of networks play a role, in different ways, in mobilising the common narrative of Lemvig:

- Long lasting networks of cross-sectoral membership oriented towards a broad range of local problems and development issues
- Single-issue networks
- Closed 'old boys' networks.

The first type of network is accurately described by a head of a SME in the area:

> I think the area has been capable of gathering public and private actors in different types of groups and networks, of which there is a great number in the area and that have local backing. We are not talking about the exclusive groups that are very typical in other places. You meet once a month or in some instances once a week, eat, talk and sometimes hear a public speech. What is going on is not so important – the important part is that you meet. (Rur_Ba_3)

He is himself a newcomer to the area and he explains that these dense, interlocking relationships are an important resource in the processes of starting a business. When asked about the characteristics of the network's organisational structure, and whether leadership in these networks pull in particular directions, he explains:

> Like in all other areas of society, there are a number of leaders and chieftains. Some of these chieftains make nearly a kind of council, which set some direction. Some of these are politically grounded, understood positively as being engaged, and who can generate a coupling between an area like Lemvig, which earlier was characterised as a peripheral area and then to Christiansborg [The national parliament]. It is no incidence that Lemvig is the city where one of the first state institutions, the Danish Coastal Authority, was decentralised to. That is an important element of the history. It explains something not only about political tendencies, but also about their persistence in that Lemvig is a natural place for it. (Rur_BA_3)

The mentioned leaders are not only head of businesses but hold different types of positions across the locality and across public and private sectors. Another informant (Rur_PA_14) explains how many of the local business are owned by local men, whose spouses are then in key positions in public authorities, or in local school boards etc. This indicates that the webs of interlocking relations extend across sectors in all areas of local influence.

> I think there is a good attitude among some of the local people with many resources, economic resources, that they want to be engaged locally. They are not anonymous, but rather want to share some of their wealth locally. (Rur_PA_14)

He and nearly all of the informants explain how these close interlocking relations rests upon a dense web of associations. This is what Sampson terms as civic membership (Sampson 2012). The informants describe a sense of obligation for involvement in the local community; an obligation that extends to local businesses and key public actors. This involvement goes both ways: local community groups have a keen interest in what goes on in the local businesses and in return expect local businesses to be involved and engaged in local community affairs. Sampson argues in his study of Chicago that it is not only the extent of civic membership which develops into friendship ties and dense local relations, but also the density of non-profit and civic organisations that are key to the mobilisation of collective action in relation to solving local problems and external influences (Sampson 2012). In the Danish case, an extended associational culture with a high degree of organisational infrastructure exists. Consequently, there are dense networks, designated chairpersons and spokespeople for nearly all types of problems.

Some of these interlocking relations are, however, less permeable and have more the character of 'old boys' networks'. Sometimes, quite literally expanding around football teams or other local meeting places. As an informant explains here:

> The networks are not closed to those that want to be part of them, but of course, they do have their own culture. Seen from the outside, they appear as difficult to enter, but it is not as if you are turned away, although they are as thick as thieves. This is the character of a social club, but it also means that you can get a phone number 'you can just call', and then someone in the other end saying 'oh yes, I have heard about this'. This is what I love about it. Some might say that it is too much with these old boys networks, but I am born and bred with that this is how things are happening. (Rur_PA_10)

Adjacent to the cross-sectoral and bridging forms of social capital we find networks that facilitate bonding social capital. They have what Bourdieu characterises as a club character where members ensure the reproduction of capital, privileges and opportunities in the closed network and where membership is graded by incorporating particular forms of habitus (Bourdieu 1987, 2005).

Coleman would explain these networks as accounting for not only the actions of individuals, but also the development of social organisations. *Network Closure* is the source of social capital and occur in networks where everyone is connected no one can escape the notice of others. This type of interconnectedness affects access to information and produce trust (Coleman 1990, p. 310; 1988, p. 104). Closure represents

a tight relation but it is also vulnerable in the sense that it can be seriously damaged if one individual leaves the network or the community.

The old-boys' network is not the dominant narrative relayed in Lemvig about networks and local engagement. Most people refer to ad hoc networks and strong activity around specific issues. A prominent example here is the lighthouse Bovbjerg that functions as the symbolic marker for the engaged local community and an important territorial asset for the local area. Volunteers persuaded the municipality to buy the lighthouse from the state and secure it as a public good. It has become one of the biggest tourist attractions of the area, functioning as a cultural institution for art exhibitions, talks, concerts and guided tours as well as a café and a shop with local handicraft products. Many of the volunteers are also part of the voluntary staff of the museum of religious art, which is widely known in Denmark and recognised for its high standard. The museum relies entirely on voluntary work. The lighthouse project was initiated by a few locals, but grew rapidly and now has four employed administrative workers and 150 volunteers. The chairman of the board reports:

> [It is] a classic example of passionate and tireless individuals putting the project in motion. These are relations between individuals with resources of any kind who get together and say, 'this is something we want', and then a constructive relation to the local authorities. There are three factors involved in its success from my perspective. That it was locally engaged residents who saw the potential and put things in motion, that there are social relations running all the way through the municipality and which you can mobilise and activate, and the interplay between political authorities, municipality, state and region. Those three factors: entrepreneurs, the social capital and the interplay with the authorities, were crucial for its success. (Rur_Comm_16)

Being an enthusiastic activist is not enough to put things in motion, although the area has a great many of these. It is the timing, the interplay with resourceful networks, and how they extend to relations to key public authorities that made the difference in the case of Lighthouse Bovbjerg. Similar stories were relayed to us from some of the active villages. One example is the village of Nr. Nissum which through the help of a large number of enthusiastic activists and their networks was chosen as the rural village of the Central Denmark Region 2017.

'What needs to be done and how? – Just Ask Eric!'

Among local government actors of Lemvig, it is a common assumption that public political processes and local administration need to be simple, transparent and based on a high degree of adaptability as conditions and surroundings are changing. For example, one local government actor said. *'Just because some cities in the country has ten times the population of Lemvig it should not be necessary for them to have political and administrative processes that are ten times as complicated'* (Rur_PA_8, 2). Face-to-face interaction, proximity, small scale and close relations to key intermediaries is some of the core-dimensions of the efficiency of Lemvig but local cultural heritage also plays an important role:

> There are not that many farmers left in the municipality but the old culture of the co-operative movement, non-profit organisations and the whole associational life still plays a

role – it is like a generation or just half a generation closer in the memory than in many other places. It also has to do with the low residential density in the sense that you cannot hide or skive. It is a transparent milieu and it is easy to distinguish between the ones that who are doing the hard work and the ones that are not. (Rur_PA_7)

Underlining the dense networks is a sense of shared obligation to engage in local development, and this shared sense of obligation is passed on to newcomers through network activities. When businesses settle in the area they are expected to play a part in the community, invite community organisations into the business premises and contribute with business resources to local organisations. The feeling of engagement in solving local territorial problems is mutual in the sense that local NGOs also play a proactive role in tackling hard-to-solve local problems. An example of this is the integration of the immigrant workers and their families, on whom Lemvig depend. Many of these families arrive with very limited Danish language skills and this means extra costs for local schools and educational institutions. Here, local organisations have played a pro-active role in approaching immigrant families, offering member-ship to sports facilities and organisations and, through this, opportunities to become integrated in the local community.

The relations between local community, businesses and local government are char-acterised by informal social conventions. It becomes clear when you look at how the locals interact with the mayor or other central actors within the local government.

> We are on a first name basis with our mayor Eric – we just say hallo Eric and how is it going. He is local and it is easy. (Rur_PA_10)

> I can call Eric if I want to at any time – not that I misuse it – but I can and I think everyone here can. Just call and say 'Eric we have a problem. Can you help us?' Here we are never further away from each other than a phone number. (Rur_BA_1)

The easy access to the local political system and high degree of participation and co-operation across the different sectors and actors make it easy for Lemvig to adapt to new challenges. Public-private partnerships are the source of a range of initiatives and prevents many difficulties. These partnerships are not permanent alliances but consist of changing personal compositions: '...For want of a better expression I will call the relation a "multistakeholder, private-public-partnership" and that is the key to this type of co-operation' (Rur_BA_3). The mode of operation is characterised by the basic idea that what has to be done and taken care of has to be done and taken care of:

> I think they are really good at delivering on this interaction between businesses and institu-tions. It relates to creating a contact person that you approach in the municipality, which I think is a good initiative that I have commended them for. You call, and they act fast. There is no long bureaucratic processing time. I have experienced having the need to talk to some-one specific and then within two hours he said: you know what, I am just coming out to you; that is much easier than exchanging over phone and mail. Then you get to see each other in the eyes and you get your problems solved and you come to a common solution. (Rur_BA_3)

In Lemvig, there is an emphasis on developing common interest and to be united within the municipality. This common interest is seen by many as a necessary part of 'being in a remote location together'. It is more natural to unite and act in unity when

you have the feeling of existing outside the attention of the national and to a large degree the regional government. Everyone is united in a common interest of lifting the area through supporting growth and settlement (Rur_PA_6). This understanding of common interest and conditions form a 'common frame of reference' across sectoral actors (Magalhães *et al.* 2002). The tight knit local community is described as a having a kind of resilient rationale that leads residents to act in favour of collective goals and the common good:

> It is about a mentality – no one is whining; they act. Some years ago, we had some severe storms. The emergency preparedness – employees and voluntary – came down here and they calculated where the storm would hit and made some predictions. They made a division of labour between municipal employees, volunteers and employees from the utility company and they worked together in order to avoid the expected flooding. Everything was just implemented and accomplished. The water level was the highest in the whole country but there were only one water damage reported to the insurance companies from Lemvig. There is a great potential here. It is about a very proud way of solving problems through cooperation. It is a resource. (Rur_BA_5)

Overall, Lemvig is characterised by a pragmatic attitude and ease-of-access to central decision-making actors and institutions. It is easy to mobilise both local community actors and business actors, who invest time, effort and money in securing the local development agenda. The relationship between local government, local community and business actors is described by interviewees as a multi-stakeholder public-private partnership or as a quadruple helix. This indicates that multiple interlocking and crosscutting relations are involved in the governance of Lemvig. No sector dominates development, but it is clear that economic cautiousness characterises municipal governance. Local engagement is characterised by several interviewees as securing local cohesiveness and sustaining welfare services in the future. Finally, interviewees point to the importance of the size and location of the municipality. This relates both to the sense of necessity of being proactive in generating development that can turn territorial problems of a peripheral location around, and to the small size being an advantage and even a precondition for the pragmatic and pro-active approach.

In Lemvig, there is a strong preference for an informal, open and dynamic character of local networks, which is one of the reasons why both residents and key-actors within the different sectors of society are able to call the mayor and 'just Ask Eric' if a problem arises. The informal way of networking and the limited size of the population is of vital importance for the development of a wide range of interlocking relations between business, community and public authority actors. The short distances between central actors and different sectors as well as the informal character of collaboration give local networks a sense of familiarity. Everyone knows everyone, and it is a core value to act for the common good of the locality. Shared expectations and mutual trust mark the local mindset even between individuals that are of different political orientations.

Local government is weaved together with local business life and local civil society in handling territorial challenges. We suggest labelling this approach *governance efficacy* to denote the interaction between the locally specific culture for participation (collective efficacy), the facilitation of networks and the pragmatic governance

attitude. The term governance efficacy is a concept that focuses on the ability of local government to utilise collective efficacy (Sampson 2012) towards territorial development. This governance efficacy enables the mobilisation of territorial capital in the most effective way through changing local networks of central actors within business, civil society and local government. The combination of very close networks between the different sectors of local government and the changing constellation of actors within the different sectors make for a significant type of territorial ties.

Concluding discussion: Lessons learnt from a local case of 'governance efficacy'

The purpose of this article has been to examine how referential features of group life (spatial areas, relations, shared pasts) can generate action within a rural locality. In the paper, we have developed the concept of governance efficacy to denote the capacity to mobilise collective efficacy in relation to territorial development. Such a concept constitutes an important element in explaining why and how a peripheral location is able to manage social challenges despite population decline. Lemvig is in many ways a struggling municipality, but, at the same time, it is a prospering municipality. Summarising our findings, we can identify three main lessons to be learned from Lemvig.

The first lesson to be learned is that collective efficacy boosts local development; creating the ground for moving on. Mobilising territorial capital through territorial ties illuminates social relations that do not correspond with portraying the rural as stable, backward and unproductive. Thus, the mobilisation of local place narratives function as a counter-narrative to national narratives of the periphery and feelings of powerlessness (Svendsen 2013; Willet and Lang 2018). Through a traditional collective pattern of activity and a high degree of collective norms, Lemvig is gaining social and societal value from their remote position and their small size. Besides the direct impact on local political and social processes, the local networks of Lemvig continuously ensure local learning, passing on of competences and place-specific experiences related to the creation and maintenance of local communities to new residents. In this way, local practices and linkages among groups are sustained and can continue to boost the development of Lemvig despite the social challenges stemming from population decline.

The second lesson we can draw from the Lemvig case-study is that governance efficacy is important for local engagement in solving local (social and territorial) problems in innovative ways: Is this governance efficacy just a question of roll-with-it neoliberalism (Olesen 2014) resulting in agonistic consensus behind the economic growth agenda also present in Lemvig? To some extent the answer is yes, in the sense that the common frame of reference in the narrative of pragmatic acting local networks means that there is little space for alternative agendas or high public spenditure. However, the interplay between government efficacy and collective efficacy rests on the interplay between reflexivity, identity and social capital, and thus on the ease of access of community voices to local government. Moreover, it is particular to the Danish case that this dynamic between sectors results in collective solutions to issues related to redistribution and spatial justice. For example, partnerships between local

government and businesses do not only work to facilitate new enterprises, but also create corporate social responsibility in solving territorial issues related to the integration of immigrants and refugees. Furthermore, there is room for new ideas and bottom up innovation, such as green innovation, and also willingness to back risky ideas with public finances, especially if such new ideas might lead to new jobs and the attraction of businesses. These qualities are not just important in handling the local economy, activities in civil society, formulation and implementation of local policies and the operation of institutions such as schools, kindergartens and museums. It also seems to affect the inhabitants of Lemvig; making them feel responsible for maintaining local society as a unit of collective action and for social learning. Living in Lemvig might limit your opportunities but the way residents relate to one another and the way they weave local social bonds in civil society with local government and local business-life compensate for the constrictions.

The third and final lesson is that governance efficacy facilitates interscalar relations which again underpin collective efficacy. Governance efficacy rests not only on the informal contacts between civil society, business and local governance, but also on the ability of Mayor Eric and other local intermediaries to mobilise their contacts with other scales of governance. Such inter-territorial and vertical relations have proven to be important in processes of counter-centralization that have been the result of previous waves of neoliberal planning. Power has moved away from regional strategic planning, and this change of inter-scalar government relations has coincided with the increasing use of soft spaces such as entrepreneurial growth houses. This counter-centralization has facilitated the securing of national government funds, institutions and attention directed at Lemvig.

Throughout the article, we have addressed the need to develop practical knowledge of how local networks and the social capital they can mobilise are at the heart of neo-endogenous development. Exogenous structural variables have not been addressed explicitly in this article, but they do, of course, play a role as conditions and frames for the particular interplay between culture for participation and pragmatic entrepreneurialism we find in Lemvig. Although the embeddedness of this interplay means that networks of local resources can be easily activated and mobilised, it does not solve the pulls of urbanisation and the dilemmas associated with its consequent unequal development. However, it still serves as an important example providing learning of development from the bottom up and the important role of local government intermediaries in securing quality of life in rural localities.

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