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Tourism activity as an expression of place attachment–place perceptions among tourism actors in the Jukkasjärvi area of northern Sweden

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ABSTRACT

Thus far, the relation between place attachment and lifestyle entrepreneurship has received limited attention in tourism studies. Our study addresses tourism actors' relationship to the place of their engagement, here the Jukkasjärvi area of northern Sweden. Using a qualitative approach, we analyse their place attachment with particular attention to their perceptions of nature. Thereby, we contribute to a deeper understanding of the theoretical linkage between place attachment and lifestyle entrepreneurship in rural nature-based tourism. We find that all actors have strong bonds to the places of their engagement, which we suggest is a key motivator for their professional engagement with tourism. Furthermore, our findings highlight that not only the functional dimension of the environment, but particularly emotional attachment to the environment allows people to perceive places as "ideal" for their activities. All actors speak of their strong appreciation of the natural environment, in particular the climate and seasons, and they embody their attachment through diverse outdoor activities. They claim they wish to "share their lifestyle" with tourists and pursue work-related activities in the same ways and in the same places as their private activities. Hence, we propose that positive perceptions of the natural environment and particularly enthusiasm for different outdoor activities foster as well as promote tourism activity more than other factors do. Hence, our findings illustrate that place attachment may stimulate and promote tourism activity in different ways as well as that tourism activity itself can be seen as an expression of place attachment. This has significant implications both for successful tourism entrepreneurship and industry, or possibly entrepreneurship in rural areas more broadly, as well as for rural development and the promotion of active decisions to "stay".

KEYWORDS

Place attachment; lifestyle entrepreneurship; nature-based tourism; northern Sweden

Introduction

Tourism in Europe's northern areas has developed constantly since the beginning of the twentieth century (Hall & Johnston, 1995). Under the trademark "Lapland" and the notion

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of “Europe’s last wilderness”, these areas appeal through both summer and winter activities in what is described as the “great outdoors”. The main draws for tourists include the possibility to view the midnight sun or northern lights, cross the Arctic Circle or experience Sami Culture – “Europe’s only indigenous people” (Keskitalo & Schilar, 2016; Saarinen, 1997; Viken, 1997a). The touristic services-cape is often nature-based and largely consists of small-scale businesses situated in rural settings (Lundberg & Fredman, 2012). It has been argued that many of these local actors are “lifestyle entrepreneurs” who engage in tourism not primarily for economic reasons, but in order to support certain lifestyle choices (Bredvold & Skålen, 2016; de la Barre, 2013; Lundberg & Fredman, 2012; Müller & Jansson, 2006; Shaw & Williams, 2004; Siemens, 2014). While it might seem intuitive to relate specific lifestyles to specific places, research exploring the salience of place attachment for lifestyle entrepreneurship, and for tourism entrepreneurship in particular, is relatively scarce (Hallak, Brown, & Lindsay, 2012). Previous work has suggested that place attachment may foster more committed and successful entrepreneurship (Hallak et al., 2012; Lundberg & Fredman, 2012; Soini, Vaaralab, & Poutaa, 2012). Furthermore, place attachment has been argued to be crucial to retaining tourism workers in rural settings (Brehm, 2007; Siemens, 2014; Tuulentie & Heimtun, 2014). However, the link between place attachment and lifestyle entrepreneurship in tourism deserves further attention.

In the present article, we draw upon interviews with tourism actors in the Jukkasjärvi area of northernmost Sweden. We study (1) how tourism actors talk about their place attachment, (2) how they perceive the places of their engagement and (3) how they engage with the place and embody their attachment privately as well as professionally. Answering the call of other scholars, we pay particular attention to the tourism actors’ engagement with nature, the specific (outdoor) activities they engage in and the places they frequent (Ioannides & Peterson, 2003; Lundberg & Fredman, 2012; Tuulentie & Heimtun, 2014; Wylie, 2007). In contrast to earlier studies on lifestyle entrepreneurship in tourism, we do not focus on “in-movers”, but rather on local “stayers” (Brehm, 2007; Siemens, 2014; Tuulentie & Heimtun, 2014). Our work adds to a deeper understanding of the link between tourism actors’ place attachment and tourism occupation. We follow Ateljevic and Doorne (2000), who suggest that tourism activity could be seen as a form of lived place attachment, or as we wish to put it: Engaging in tourism professionally in the first place could be interpreted as an expression of place attachment.

People and places

The relationship between people and place is a matter widely contested within human geography and environmental psychology (Kaltenborn, 1997; Sharpley & Jepson, 2011). Many terms are used in this context, e.g. sense of place, place attachment, place identity, place dependence, etc.; yet their singular meaning is often controversial (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Kyle & Chick, 2007). Discussions are typically based on the understanding that people imbue space with meaning (Tuan, 1977, 1980) and that people have experiential, expressive relationships with space (Feld & Basso, 1996), or as Gieryn (2000, p. 465) puts it: “Place would revert to space if we vacuumed out the distinct collection of values, meanings and objects that created it.” Accordingly, it has been recognized that places can hold tremendous meaning for individuals and serve as the centres of their existence (Relph,

1976, p. 43), providing a sense of self, pride and stability (Hallak et al., 2012; Hay, 1998; Hayward, 1975; Knez, 2005; Lewicka, 2008; Rowles, 1990; Shamsuddina & Ujangb, 2008).

The present paper refers to place attachment most simply as a positive or negative emotional bond that people experience in relation to places (Giuliani, 2003; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Hummon, 1992; Knez, 2005; Moore & Graefe, 1994; Soini et al., 2012). Place attachment entails a place being perceived as significant by the individual (Shamsuddina & Ujangb, 2008; Williams, Anderson, Mc Donald, & Patterson, 1995). Accordingly, Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) suggest that people develop a desire to maintain closeness to particular places. It is further asserted that people describe themselves in terms of belonging to certain places (Stedman, 2002); thus, they may form their identity in relation to specific environments (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983; Shamsuddina & Ujangb, 2008). These attachments can exist at different scales such as a neighbourhood, a certain landscape, a village or larger area (Altman & Low, 1992; Hay, 1998; Tuan, 1974). In terms of tourism actors, one might wonder whether people are attached to the constructed touristic “destination” or make sense of place along other geographical scales.

Place attachment is said to develop through different sources. Length of residence has been identified as a main predictor of place attachment (Hay, 1998; Riger & Lavrakas, 1981; Taylor, Gottfredson, & Brower, 1984). Equally, home or land ownership, life history and feelings of social belonging play a central role for individuals (Brown, Perkins, & Brown, 2003; Giuliani, 1991; Hernandez, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, & Hess, 2007; Soini et al., 2012). Importantly, the role of nature has been described as central to place attachment (Brehm, 2007; Kaltenborn & Bjerke, 2002; Pitkänen, Puhakka, & Sawatzky, 2011). The natural environment is said to give a specific context for experiences (Relph, 1985; Wylie, 2007) and to establish certain conditions, e.g. climate, seasons and landscapes (Knez, 2005; Shamsuddina & Ujangb, 2008; Sharpley & Jepson, 2011). Accordingly, people perceive specific settings as more convenient for achieving their private and professional goals (Soini et al., 2012). Whereas considerable attention has been paid to perceptions of nature in relation to place attachment, we argue that equal attention should be paid to people’s embodiment of the natural environment (Altman & Low, 1992; Kaltenborn, 1997), such as in outdoor activities exercised professionally or privately. In the following, we contextualize place attachment within research on lifestyle entrepreneurship.

Lifestyle entrepreneurship and place attachment

Tourism entrepreneurs, the focus of the present study, are often seen as lifestyle entrepreneurs. The idea of “lifestyle entrepreneurship” implies the centrality of realizing a certain lifestyle, a personal vision, while other goals, particularly economic drivers, are rather secondary (Bredvold & Skåln, 2016; de la Barre, 2013; Lundberg & Fredman, 2012; Müller & Jansson, 2006; Shaw & Williams, 2004; Siemens, 2014). Simpson, Tuck, and Bellamy (2004) describe lifestyle entrepreneurs as “happiness seekers”, mainly trying to feel positive at work, have fun, include their families and make their customers happy. While such a focus may entail different management priorities, and while entrepreneurs may sometimes lack a formal education, it should not be assumed that lifestyle entrepreneurship and successful entrepreneurship are mutually exclusive (Lundberg & Fredman, 2012).

Although scholars acknowledge the importance of place attachment for lifestyle entrepreneurship, studies exploring that link in more detail are relatively scarce (Hallak et al.,

2012). One accepted assertion is that lifestyle entrepreneurs settle in certain places to support their lifestyle choices and engage in particular activities (Andersson, Carlsen, & Getz, 2002; Getz & Carlsen, 2000; Getz, Carlsen, & Morrison, 2004; Ioannides & Peterson, 2003; Morrison, Rimmington, & Williams, 1999; Tuulentie & Heimtun, 2014). However, that link is often instead presented as place dependence, where the place is assumed to meet the specific needs of the intended activities (Kaján, 2014; Soini et al., 2012). However, the ways in which we can conceive of place attachment as being related to a particular lifestyle and entrepreneurial activity have received less research attention.

One aspect that has been addressed is the possible effect of place attachment on more committed and successful entrepreneurship (Brouder & Eriksson, 2013; Hallak et al., 2012; Lundberg & Fredman, 2012; Soini et al., 2012). In their study on small-scale, nature-based tourism enterprises in Sweden, Lundberg and Fredman (2012) find that entrepreneurs combine their business with their interest in outdoor activities and “rural life”. They conclude that choosing both place and lifestyle actively, and engaging with the environment similarly for both personal and professional reasons, seems to represent a success factor for tourism entrepreneurship. Likewise, Hallak et al. (2012) discuss the link between the tourism actor, place and business performance. They establish that place attachment enhances self-efficacy in tourism entrepreneurs and that self-efficacy, in turn, enhances entrepreneurial performance. They further assert that moving to or staying in a preferred location is a main motivation for tourism entrepreneurship in the first place. Furthermore, Brouder and Eriksson (2013) also identified local attachments and experiences as entrepreneurial success factors.

Other studies have evaluated the salience of place attachment in relation to in-moving tourism workers or entrepreneurs (Brehm, 2007; Siemens, 2014; Tuulentie & Heimtun, 2014). Tuulentie and Heimtun (2014) study the matter from a rural development perspective in northern Norway and Finland. They depict place attachment as an important factor for retaining tourism workers in rural settings. On the one hand, they find that people who depreciate the environment and climate are less likely to stay, whereas engagement in preferred (outdoor) activities could be a powerful reason for staying. Brehm (2007), likewise, highlights the importance of nature as a strong pull-factor and supporter of particular lifestyles. Hence, whereas rural settings are often interpreted as entrepreneurially hostile, one can contrariwise not overlook the strong attraction rural settings, landscapes and lifestyles might have on people (Bredvold & Skålén, 2016; Peters, Frehse, & Buhalis, 2009; Siemens, 2014).

Hence, in the present article, we explore further the link between place attachment and lifestyle entrepreneurship in tourism. We are particularly interested in the link as described by Ateljevic and Doorne (2000), who state that people’s entrepreneurship gives them the opportunity to live their place attachment, or as we wish to put it: Tourism activity could be seen as an expression of place attachment. Thus, in contrast to earlier studies, we do not focus on place as a move-factor, but rather as a stay factor; and instead of deflating the role of place for lifestyle entrepreneurship as mere utility, we look at the nature of place attachments in relation to the activities of tourism actors. In our case study, we have paid attention to three main aspects, which we elaborate in our findings: (1) how the tourism actors talk about their place attachment, (2) how they perceive the places of their engagement and (3) how they engage with the place and embody their attachment privately as well as professionally. Thus, following Wylie (2007), we pay particular attention to the tourism

actors' perceptions of and engagement with the natural environment. Given that ambition, we can however not cover the relational or network aspects discussed in other recent studies in northern Scandinavia, which equally play a role for successful entrepreneurship as well as destination development (Åberg & Svells, 2017; Jóhannesson & Lund, 2017; Viken & Aarsaether, 2013).

Case study and methodological approach

The case study area Jukkasjärvi in Kiruna Municipality, Sweden, is located in northernmost Sweden, with one of the lowest population densities in Europe (about one inhabitant per km²). The area's climate can be both a challenge and attraction in relation to tourism activity (Müller & Jansson, 2006). The summers are short and cool (around 12°C on average from June to August), whereas the winters are long and cold (temperatures from around -15°C to -25°C are not exceptional); snow cover has historically been present from about mid-October to May (although periods of snow cover have been decreasing in recent years).

Repeatedly, the specific natural and cultural features of the area have been highlighted for tourism. The area has been described as "Europe's last wilderness" (Kaltenborn, 1997), focusing on forest lands, the closeness to the mountain range, the Sami as "Europe's only indigenous people", large mammals such as moose or reindeer, as well as unique natural phenomena such as the midnight sun and northern lights. Located above the Arctic Circle, the area has furthermore been described using the notions of "North" (de la Barre & Brouder, 2013), periphery (Müller & Jansson, 2006), "Arctic" (Keskitalo & Schilar, 2016) and wilderness (Wall-Reinius, 2012).

At the same time, the area is strongly marked by industrial and high technological signifiers. Founded around 1900, Kiruna town was built around the rapidly growing iron ore mine, today the largest in northern Europe. According to Granås (2012), today about 1 in 10 of the town's inhabitants work in the industry (population about 18,000 in the town and about 25,000 in the municipality). Kiruna is the largest city in the area and an infrastructural hub (railways, highways, airport, hospital and education). The municipality also includes a large space centre with space research, a satellite imaging centre and higher education opportunities. The average income is higher than in the northernmost counties in general, largely related to the industrial, technological and science profile of the city. Tourism is an important source of income, in particular outdoor activities taking place in the surroundings of Kiruna, but also mining tourism to view northern Europe's largest underground iron ore mine.

For this case study, we have chosen the Jukkasjärvi area. Jukkasjärvi itself is a village with roughly 600 permanent inhabitants, located about 18 km from the town of Kiruna (see Figure 1). The area represents an interesting case in tourism: the touristic service-scape is made up by the Ice Hotel as the central touristic hub and many smaller, mainly nature-based companies. The Ice Hotel is said to have played a significant role in tourism development in the area and become a trademark for the whole of Sweden (Andersson, 2012; Keskitalo & Schilar, 2016). It is the "world's first Ice Hotel", which has been rebuilt and added to every winter for 25 years, attracting about 50,000–60,000 people each year (day-visitors and overnight guests). Other smaller tourism actors in the area offer mainly outdoor activities such as sledding with dogs or reindeer, skiing,



Figure 1. Case study site: Jukkasjärvi, northern Sweden.

hiking, snowshoe walking, snow scootering, experiences related to Sami culture, local foods and diverse possibilities for accommodation (see Viken & Müller, 2006). An interesting aspect of the destination is the relatively easy and high connectedness (via Stockholm a one-hour flight to Kiruna), combining the notion of northern remoteness and wilderness, with a highly accessible infrastructure for far-away affluent tourists. Tourism imagery can, thus, be seen as partly juxtaposed to other characteristics of the area – images of remoteness and wilderness versus modern high-tech industry and infrastructure. Regarding the place attachment of those working within tourism, one might suspect that their place attachment revolves rather around the features highlighted for tourism.

Whereas in other studies place attachment has been approached using quantitative methods (e.g. Kaltenborn, 1997), evaluating for example weaker or stronger place attachments, the present study takes a qualitative stance, arguing that qualitative studies are crucial to grasping subjective and collective place meanings (Saar & Palang, 2009). Accordingly, the present study aimed for a rather small, strategic sample that allows more in-depth exploration of place attachments with the participants, yet does not enable statistical generalization or make any claims of representativeness (as suggested by Trost, 2005).

Other scholars scrutinizing place attachment have applied similar approaches, likewise using various interviewing methods and smaller samples (e.g. Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2015; Gustafson, 2001; Lemelin, Koster, Bradford, Strickert, & Molinsky, 2015; Tuulentie & Heimtun, 2014; Ujang & Zakariya, 2015; Windsong, 2014). The present study similarly draws upon semi-structured interviews, here addressing tourism actors in the Jukkasjärvi (Kiruna) area. Tourism actors in the area were identified through the registry for enterprises in Sweden as those with businesses located in the postcode area of Jukkasjärvi (98,191) and registered under industry codes related to tourism and adventure guiding, e.g. SNI 2007 codes 79.000s and 93.291. Twelve relevant companies were identified in this way and contacted. Additionally, both regional destination marketing organizations (DMOs) Kiruna Lapland and Swedish Lapland were included. The DMO Swedish Lapland covers a large area reaching south to Skellefteå and west to the Norwegian border, while Kiruna Lapland promotes the area of Kiruna Municipality including Jukkasjärvi. In total, seven in-depth interviews were carried out in April 2015 with representatives of both DMOs, a representative of the Ice Hotel and four tourism entrepreneurs in the area offering typical outdoor activities; others contacted were unable to participate in the study. There was only one female respondent, therefore the personal pronoun “he” is used throughout the text to refer to all respondents’ answers. The interviews were conducted in Swedish, lasted approximately one hour and were transcribed and thematically coded; quotes used in the paper were translated to English. In order to identify any variations between the DMO and tourism company perspective, interviewee quotes are referred to as following: “1DMO” and “2DMO” for the representatives of Swedish Lapland and Kiruna Lapland, “3TC”, “4TC”, “5TC”, “6TC”, “7TC” for the five tourism companies including the Ice Hotel. Because not all interviewees were tourism entrepreneurs *per se*, but also DMO representatives, we subsume all under the term “tourism actors” throughout the article.

Place attachment of tourism actors in the Jukkasjärvi area

Constructing a story with the place

First, we can observe that the interviewees seek to describe their rootedness with the place. They want to be seen as “insider’s” – genuinely bound to the area through family and life history. “We are deeply intertwined with the environment here. (...) It is the same environment where my relatives have lived for many many generations” (5TC). Speaking of “at least nine generations” and using “we”, this interviewee’s storytelling emphasizes his identification through family bonds. The word “intertwined” could be seen to convey the profound relationship that has not only been built through his life, but also by his ancestors. Similarly, other interviewees also describe a link to the environment, in some cases to the Torne River in particular: “Both my parents are from the Torne Valley. So, I have a natural connection to the Torne River” (3TC). One DMO representative describes his attachment throughout his life to different places within the wider area. He says about himself: “a little of Kirunabo, a little of Jokkmokkbo, a little of Lulebo” (“bo” meaning in Swedish one’s belonging to a place as an inhabitant). He uses the word “divided” (Swedish: “splittrad”) to capture his attachment to these different places. Yet this divide does not seem to cause a negative emotion. Rather, all these places fall

under his wider attachment to Norrland as a physical place and a social place captured in “Norrlandsk” (Swedish: from Norrland) culture: “So, maybe I think of myself as Swedish and that we are in Norrland and have a ‘Norrlandsk’ culture; we are more silent, we are hard-working people and many entrepreneurs.” Additionally, he also speaks about his childhood home and a specific village, positioning this village as central to him and highlighting a strong attachment. He thus differentiates between the different geographical scales as multiple layers of attachment.

A slightly contrasting example is the story of another DMO representative who comes originally from outside of Sweden and is married to a person from Norrbotten, northern Sweden. Noting that “I have lived in Sweden for only eight years”, he compares his own experience to the longer rootedness of others. He emphasizes that his attachment is less bound to municipal borders and not as local as that of others:

So I am a bit different. I don't care so much about municipal borders for example. I don't care if somebody is from Kiruna or Arvidsjaur, that's not important. That's a big difference between me and the people born up here.

This implies that, from his “outside” perspective, people have developed strong local attachments that he does not share and that are not rational to him regarding the physical aspects of the places: “I like all our sixteen destinations (sub-destinations covered by the DMO). They are all beautiful in their way.” Similarly, also 6TC describes himself as coming from the “outside”, in the sense of coming from southern Sweden and making a conscious decision to live there:

I have lived here for soon forty years. (...) I have done my military service up here and then I stayed since I liked the nature and the opportunities for outdoor activities. I stayed because I liked the place, the environment and the landscape.

In that sense, this is the only interviewee who has actively chosen and moved to the place for lifestyle motives.

One of the interviewees (4TC) identified as “Sami” and speaks of “We indigenous people ... ” as his main cultural attachment. He describes his place attachment as follows:

I live in Sweden, I am a Swedish Citizen, but principally I am Sami. And these are two cultures and ways of living. I live in both worlds, like all reindeer herders and Sami today, since we have assimilated to the Sami *and* Swedish community. (...) I live in Jukkasjärvi. I have moved to Jukkasjärvi since my partner comes from there, but I come from a small village 70 kilometres east from Jukkasjärvi; there I have my relatives. (...) But I need to explain that in Sami culture we are not exactly bound to one place, since we have been nomads (...) so I am attached to the environment in general, not Jukkasjärvi as a place. But I have a house in Jukkasjärvi and even in my home village. And it might sound as if there is no big difference in 70 kilometres of distance, but for us there is.

This quote is interesting in many respects. First, the interviewee uses his Sami roots to position his identity and possibly to stress his belonging to the area where Sami lived historically. Connected to this, he also asserts how he (as Sami) can feel attached to a certain type of environment or landscape instead of specific places. Second, we can observe how he uses house ownership to illustrate his attachment. Finally, he makes sure to convey how distinct attachment can be, as he states the distance between the two places to explain the different emotional bonds.

In general, the stories that interviewees tell of place convey their desire to belong there, to be seen as integrated with the place and their perceived need to argue for their rootedness. None of the interviewees describes her-/himself as not belonging to the place, as feeling a more important attachment to another place or as envisioning a life elsewhere. Furthermore, they spoke of attachments at quite different geographical scales: from the wider feeling to belonging to Sweden and describing a Swedish identity, to the perception of being part of “Norrländsk” culture and place, to being attached to different areas such as Jukkasjärvi or neighbouring areas, and to even smaller scales such as the Torne River, a certain village or a childhood home. From a tourism perspective, we can observe that the level of the tourism destination is absent from their narratives; they make sense of their attachments through a more individual perspective based on life history.

Perceiving the place

The interviewees express how they perceive the area first of all as naturally beautiful and attractive. They also provide detailed descriptions of certain emotions that nature provokes within them, such as peacefulness and awe. As one interviewee describes:

We work mainly here in the forests and in the river valley. We have the Torne valley with the forests all around, many lakes and so forth. And the nature here is incredibly beautiful! When you are out in wintertime and you are in the forest and the snow lies heavily on the trees it feels like you are entering a Christmas postcard. Or when you sit at home in the morning and drink a cup of coffee in November or December, when the sky is still quite dark and then the horizon becomes lighter and lighter, nearly gold. That is really fantastic! People just think it's dark up here, but we have sunrise and sunset lasting for six hours (...) and that is so beautiful. (...) And sometimes I am out on the tracks (skiing) in Kurravaara and everything is silent and then there is this heavy snow on the trees and it's all beautiful. And then this time of the year. I find it so great now with the melting snow. You follow ... you see how the river opens at some places and how the water rises and the ice disappears. That is quite impressive. (...) And even the kids say: “Dad, shall we go to the cottage and see how the water has risen?” Yes, it's intense to follow nature (...) very dramatic with the melting ice, so much power. (6TC)

This quote illustrates several aspects of place perception and felt attachment. First, we can observe that the description relates not only to the landscape itself (the forests, the river, etc.), but also to the seasons and the particular climate (darkness, snow, etc.). Second, the narrative conveys considerable intensity and passion in word choice (incredible, fantastic, beautiful, etc.). Furthermore, the interviewee repeatedly uses “we” and “we have”, which shows both his identification with others living in the area who have similar experiences and his attachment to the place – as if he partly “owned” its beauty. Furthermore, there are elements of embodiment (skiing through nature, having coffee while watching the landscape) that will be discussed in more detail below, but are observable here. The interrelatedness of work and private life is also visible when he departs from a description of work life and transitions into elements of private life (home, coffee, kids, etc.).

Another interviewee's narrative (3TC) is similar in that he is also “in awe” of the forces of nature: “So I think ‘wow’ – we have colours and we have changes in nature and we have abundance.” This interviewee also uses the form “we”, which can be conceived of as illustrating his identification on a social and place-bound level. At another occasion he also speaks about “our northern lights”, having the same effect. This highlights his pride,

which again makes it seem as if he “owned” the place to a certain extent: “I am very proud to come from this region. I am very proud that I grew up in this magnificent nature.”

In relation to this nature-focused perception, interviewees also depict a contrast between the Jukkasjärvi area with its natural environment and Kiruna as a town. One of the interviewees states: “You need to understand that I live in Jukkasjärvi (...) and that has very very little to do with Kiruna which is 18 kilometres away” (5TC). The interviewees state, for instance, that they perceive Kiruna as a place that is useful as an infrastructural hub, but that city life does not represent an attraction to them and that Kiruna is not a place they feel particularly attached to. One interviewee explains his perspective as follows: “It is good that Kiruna exists since they maintain an airport. But I mean there is no good reason to travel to Kiruna itself. Why should anybody go there other than for the services the town offers?” (6TC). Another interviewee also reflects on the different perspectives one might have on the area, drawing on the views of national versus international tourist:

For one thing it is about the midnight sun, snow, cold, the exotic, Sami experiences and northern lights and the Ice Hotel and so forth. Yet, on a national level one might think more about mines, far away and cold in a negative way. So it is not positive for all, but exotic for all. (7TC)

These quotes illustrate an ambiguity that interviewees seem to relate to the existence of several different features that may be highlighted and valued differently, in tourism or elsewhere, but that exist within relatively short distances in nearby locations. They also illustrate that some aspects such as the cold can be interpreted as both positive and negative. Thus, we can observe that interviewees express their place perceptions as something highly subjective, based primarily on personal preferences, and only secondarily on the diverse physical aspects that are discernible in the specific area.

In a final stance, the interviewees also perceive the place as a resource, precondition or an ideal place for the type of activities they wish to engage in privately or for work. This interpretation has two dimensions. First, it is calculable and purely positive – “what nature has to offer”. Accordingly they state, for instance, that “Nature is an insane resource” (7TC), “Our work is based on the seasons here” (4TC) or “We have the world’s finest ice. Nowhere else in the world is there such pure ice. If you want to build an ice hotel, there is no one else who has ice as beautiful as we do.” Thus, the place is perceived as unique and perhaps ideal with regard to the natural conditions that the interviewees have chosen to highlight. However, the natural conditions are also perceived as a challenge, requiring constant adaptation: “It can be difficult with the mountains. If it is stormy you don’t even make it there ... (...) Following nature is intense!” (7TC). Yet most of the interviewees highlight that their tourism product is “based on the seasons”. They recognize the cold as something special and attractive that cannot be easily experienced in other places, making them feel competitive with other areas and lucky to have “good” preconditions. The constant adaptation to weather conditions in nature-based tourism is an aspect they elucidate mainly with fascination – and without complaint or negativity with regard to how they narrate the physical environment or climate. Aside from nature, culture is also seen as resource. For instance: “We work with tourism that builds on Sami culture and nature experiences. (...) We build our activities on that. This has been our way to work for nearly 20 years.” Yet the natural attributes are much more prevalent in the interviews. This could be related to the tourism products the

actors offer, which are more nature- than culture-based, their own experience of the area as they engage in diverse outdoor activities, or even to an outside interviewer or to perceptions of what values are most important to express in relation to tourists.

Embodying and selling the place

Several of the interviewees describe a link between how they use the place and the experiences they sell. For instance, a company owner and guide (7TC) explains how his own activities inspire his work; he says that when he experiences certain activities and moments, he wants to offer the same to tourists. Thus, he states: "I feel joy when I see others experiencing this" and "I almost get sad when they cannot experience this ...". Thus, he expresses a perception of the place not only through his eyes, but also from the tourists' perspective. Another company owner also speaks about "satisfied clients" as his goal and business strategy (4TC), and one of the DMO representatives states that "Hopefully they (tourists) find what they are looking for (...)" (1DMO). These comments could potentially be the result of a mixture of sentiments: wanting tourists to experience the place the same way they do, wanting tourists to become amazed and attached in similar ways, as well as wanting satisfied clients as an acknowledgement of (and source of funding for) their own lifestyle choices. Simultaneously, these statements can also be a matter of professionalism and making the activities pleasing in the client's eyes.

The lifestyle orientation to entrepreneurship is also expressed more generally in some statements. 7TC articulates further that, for him, work and private life spaces are inter-related: "In my free time I am out a lot and prepare things, so, tourists can experience what I experience. I didn't think about it yet, but it's very interrelated." This is an argument made by several interviewees; e.g. 6TC states "We live where we work" and asserts "I use the landscape the same way for myself as when I work in it." Also 4TC expresses: "Nature is naturally one's workplace." Many view their private engagement in similar activities and in the same places as an advantage for their work, because it feels "more authentic and familiar" (2DMO). Yet we can also note that the way they engage in activities is slightly different and not as animated as for tourists:

I am by myself a lot in nature and fish a little or go canoeing. (...) So, I experience similar activities but only that I do not follow a guide. I do it more independently, in my own way so to speak. (2DMO)

This interviewee further states that he naturally experiences more meaningful place attachment than tourists might, because "for me it's quite familiar and it's 'home'" (2DMO).

According to their expressed view that the Jukkasjärvi area is a place dominated by nature and its opportunities, all the interviewed tourism actors, thus, highlight their engagement in different outdoor activities. One company representative states:

Nature, there are my roots. When I am free I go out in nature. (...) I am always outside. The worst for me is being inside. I walk a lot, I ski a lot, I hike, I pick berries, I am on the water, I fish, ... A little of everything. (3TC)

By mentioning these activities, he seems to express a relation to the area and nature that he sees as important. It is also worth noting how he seems to identify with nature as a

concept and a place of comfort rather than with a specific social group. Interviewees, thus, also make clear that their preference is related to the specific place and not detached from it, although in theory these activities could be carried out elsewhere. Only in combination do they become special: "Activities alone are just activities, it does not matter where. Yet we tend to think that it is the place that is unique" (6TC).

Tourism discourses are interesting owing to both their presence and their absence throughout the interviews. They are present in how the tourism actors sometimes talk about "destination" and how they highlight certain features of the place for marketing purposes. From this angle, they describe the area as a comfortable, exclusive destination (3TC, 7TC), which attracts "global travellers" (1DMO), mainly affluent international tourists (2DMO, 5TC, 6TC), seeking features that are seen as exotic (5TC). They describe the pull factors – such as the midnight sun, northern lights, winter, snow, cold, Sami, etc. – as unique to the environment. In addition, they highlight how the area is physically and structurally distinct from northern Norway and Finland: Northern Finland is said to be more strongly developed in terms of tourism, thus conveying a notion of "crowdedness" and "inauthenticity" (1DMO, 7TC); in comparison to both countries, northern Sweden is said to have more diverse nature including mountains, forests and seaside. Some interviewees note: "We have real mountains" (6TC); "There is simply no other place like Jukkasjärvi" (3TC). They also describe the destination as still developing and full of potential (6TC). The Ice Hotel is seen as iconic (2DMO) and as responsible for the positive touristic development of the area. Both the hotel itself and "Lapland" are understood as strong touristic brands and drivers (2DMO, 7TC). As 4TC states: "It is a destination where lots is going on in terms of tourism." Nevertheless, the tourism discourse is also relatively absent in that the descriptions of Jukkasjärvi as a "touristic destination" are far fewer than the descriptions of Jukkasjärvi as a natural, beautiful place, a place to work and live in – a place that they "own", not as one the tourists dominate, thus, not centrally as a touristic place where people *also* work and live. Thus, tourism is not dominant in the way they express their place perception in the interviews. Rather, it seems that they highlight the natural features of the place in a way that expresses both what they feel and what is valued in tourism with regard to these same features – in a way that allows them to share what they express as "these most beautiful days" and to merge work and leisure. "It is not an official product or anything invented. What we provide to tourists comes out of our lives. (...) We want to share our arctic lifestyle" (6TC).

Accordingly, the tourism actors interviewed here did not problematize tourism as an uncontrollable, overwhelming, destructive force, as might be the case for other destinations. They rather expressed their reasoning that "the environment is attractive, thus, tourists come and we offer them activities". Because tourism provides an income for these interviewees, who are active specifically in areas where they can express this type of place attachment, it is possible that others in the area have more critical opinions. Hence, in their understanding of the place, the tourism actors stress how the physical attributes – the landscapes, the seasons, the climate – both enable and limit their activities. Furthermore, they stress how private places and workplaces are intertwined, providing a frame for the tourism activities to be carried out. Yet in their expressions of place perception, the tourism conceptions of the location seem to be less important than their own lived experiences of the natural environment.

Discussion and conclusions: tourism activity as an expression of place attachment

In the present article, we addressed Jukkasjärvi's tourist actors' relationship to the place of their engagement, in particular how they perceive and embody the natural environment. We thereby sought to discuss the link between tourism actors' place attachment and their engagement in tourism.

An initial conclusion must be that all actors expressed positive bonds to the places of their engagement (e.g. Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Hummon, 1992; Knez, 2005). Places evoked a sense of self, belonging and pride (e.g. Hallak et al., 2012; Hay, 1998; Shamsud-dina & Ujangb, 2008). In accordance with most literature on the matter, the sources of their attachment were duration of residence, family history, home ownership, etc. (e.g. Brown et al., 2003; Hay, 1998; Taylor et al., 1984). Their narratives served to construct a meaningful connection to and long-time rootedness in the place, talking themselves into a relationship with the place (Granås, 2012) and wanting to be seen as "insiders". Hence, one initial hypothesis for further research must be that positive place attachment and perceived rootedness may promote professional engagement with tourism.

What makes that link even more explicit is that the actors do not only seem to perceive of the place as functionally ideal for their activities, as a form of place dependence proposed previously (Kaján, 2014; Soini et al., 2012), but rather they stress the emotional dimension of place attachment. In particular, their awe in the natural environment and their expressed connection to it illustrate these emotional bonds. In our study, following the seasons and the northern climate were particularly important. Thus, as expected, nature plays an important role in place attachment in these cases (in line with, e.g. Brehm, 2007; Kaltenborn & Bjerke, 2002; Pitkänen et al., 2011; Wylie, 2007). Therefore, our second conclusion is that positive perceptions of the natural environment may stimulate tourism activity more than other factors do. This may be particularly true in areas where it is possible to connect these two. In contrast, for instance, the industrial and modern aspects of the area were neither central to their perception nor explicit drivers for their choice to work in tourism. However, these findings may be related to our selection of interviewees working for companies located in Jukkasjärvi that mainly engage in nature-based activities or working with broader destination development. We presume that other actors may have expressed different place attachments where positive relations may have been expressed, for instance, between tourism and mining activities.

As presumed, we found that the interviewees make sense of place at very different levels, e.g. a childhood home, a river, a village, etc. (Altman & Low, 1992; Hay, 1998; Tuan, 1974). Notably, from a tourism perspective, they did not identify with the destination as such. Hence, while tourism destinations strive for unity, people living in the destinations may have very diverse attachments and ideas of the destination. This could be a relevant point of departure for future research as well as an important consideration for destination development. One might wish to study whether and how an attachment to "the destination" could be stimulated. Furthermore, one possible research question could be whether the focus on specific features within tourism and the destination might exclude groups of people who are not active in tourism or who simply do not relate to these images and who have different place attachments.

Furthermore, the interviewees express their place attachment through their engagement with nature. In accordance with Kaltenborn (1997), Lundberg and Fredman (2012) and Wylie (2007), outdoor activities were an important part of the interviewees' private and professional life. Most interestingly, the interviewees mentioned using the same places in similar ways in their leisure time as well as in their work time. The interviewees talk about wanting "to share their lifestyle with the tourists", are highly committed and make great efforts to please and satisfy their clients, similar to what has been stated in the literature on lifestyle entrepreneurship (Getz et al., 2004; Lundberg & Fredman, 2012). Taking the tourists to their favourite or "secret" places also expresses the interviewees' attachment to these places. Furthermore, it also illustrates their positive relation to tourism in general, which is not seen as harmful or overwhelming (Kaján, 2014). Thus, future research should explore further the premise that engagement with the natural environment and particularly enthusiasm for different outdoor sports foster as well as promote tourism activity.

Hence, our findings illustrate that place attachment may stimulate and promote tourism activity in different ways and that tourism activity itself can be seen as an expression of place attachment. Our findings show that similar features may be perceived as important to both tourism activity and individual place attachment. We see two major implications of these findings. First, following Hallak et al. (2012), place attachment may not only be a motivator, but also a success factor for tourism activity. Thus, more research attention needs to be paid to place attachment, as it may affect entrepreneurs, communities and the tourism industry at the destination. Interestingly, the representatives of the two DMOs in our study showed an entrepreneurial spirit similar to that of the entrepreneurs. For this reason, we suggest broadening the idea of "lifestyle entrepreneurship" to "lifestyle profession", which might be equally imbued with meaning and commitment as one's own entrepreneurial activity. Accordingly, we call for future studies that address place attachment as a success factor more broadly, both for entrepreneurs and for other professions. Furthermore, interesting links could be made to the paper of Jóhannesson and Lund (2017) in this same issue, who explore the relations between lifestyle entrepreneurship in tourism and its creative, participatory elements. Very likely, our findings regarding place attachment and their notion of creative engagement with place and people by tourism entrepreneurs could very well be linked and explored further.

Finally, and in accordance with Tuulentie and Heimtun (2014), we found place attachment to be an important stay factor in the case of these tourism actors. "Staying" as an active decision in place attachment has been discussed very little thus far, but may be a crucial objective for rural communities striving to retain a workforce. We suggest that "staying" as an active decision deserves further research attention, as it may be just as imbued with meanings as "moving" or "leaving". Drawing from Cohen, Duncan, and Thulemark's (2015) ideas on contemporary western mobility patterns, framed as "lifestyle mobility", one could propose the idea of "lifestyle immobility" as equally imbued with meaning and intention (see also Thellbro, 2006). Hence, and lastly, an important question for both local tourism development and rural development in general will be whether and how place attachment – to multiple features in an area – is developed or could be encouraged. As our findings suggest, for some people engagement in outdoor activities and lifestyles close to nature may signify the motivation for tourism activity and promote entrepreneurship in rural areas.

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