Event start-ups as catalysts for place, sport and tourism development: *Moment scapes* and geographical considerations

Kari Jæger

Department of Tourism & Northern Studies, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Norway

**Abstract**

This article focuses on how the Finnmark Race in Norway, identified by a *key moment* and four other *post moments*, shaped by their occurrence, creating new pathways for sport, place and tourism development. The dogsledding race has influenced tourism development and has helped create new tourist products in its rural locale. This research uses data from qualitative interviews with 19 informants, connected to the race through different roles—business people involved in tourism, volunteers, former race managers, journalists and mushers (dogsled drivers). The event start-up has contributed to a new ‘path-creation’, active development of Finnmark as a winter tourism destination, and dogsledding as a new tourism product of the place. A process of path-creation, involving volunteers and lifestyle entrepreneurs, built up a meeting place for the event and for other stakeholders, enabling the sustainable development of attractive, locally-run tourism products.

**Introduction**

It has been argued that sporting events influence tourism in several ways: by attracting tourists, giving places marketing and destination branding, and showing off attractions and places, repeated events can act as catalysts for development, giving improved capacity and attracting tourists through infrastructure gains (Getz and Page 2016; Wise and Harris 2017). The focus of this study is assessing how the establishment of Norway’s Finnmark Race (Finnmarksløpet, an international dogsledding race) has been one of several important factors providing encounters for stakeholders and acting as a catalyst for a specific tourism product, and its significance for the development of winter tourism in Finnmark. Finnmark is the northernmost county in Norway, and probably the most reachable arctic wilderness for European tourists. Already a summer destination, the region has over the last 20 years also developed a substantial winter tourism industry. The Northern Lights and the natural environment with attendant activities attract an increasing number of international tourists (Heimtun and Viken 2016).

Dogsledding, in this context, started as a leisure activity and a sport that implied a certain lifestyle. Mushers for instance who live in a rural area have the space to train dogs, with...
adequate training and natural conditions. This has, in the hands of many of its practitioners, where some becomes lifestyle entrepreneurs, created a business capable of generating a livelihood. There is little research on the economic impacts of dogsledding, but dogsledding as part of the tourism experience is identified as one of the most popular products in Svalbard, North Norway (Karijord 2015). The importance dogsledding might have in Finnmark is also pointed out by Granås (2018) who emphasizes that dogsledding has preceded strategic and commercial initiatives, and continues to be a force in place making processes. She further emphasizes that, ‘as a force in place making, sled dogs and mushers are however found beyond initiatives of actors that aim at making something more out of dogsledding in terms of economic gains, place branding, or destination development’. Even if dogsledding is a rather new activity in the county and Norway in general, it has in a relatively short time begun to be seen as a cultural characteristic of Finnmark. The sporting activity and the event might (by visitors) be understood as perpetuating local traditions of making use of the outdoors and utilizing old routes through the landscape.

The Finnmark Race is an event that is built on a lifestyle—a lifestyle that is increasingly integrated in the local community, but still marks a disruptive innovation within this tradition. It represents a leisure activity becoming a product that is sold, with personal values and commercial values (Bredvold and Skåløn 2016), like a non-commodified commodity (Jæger and Olsen 2016). The event has had a slow growth from bottom-up. To put it another way, the sport has had a slowly extending network build-up (Richards and Colombo 2017), where the first 20 years were based on a network with a volunteer workforce. As a form of tourism development, it has been path-dependent from the start—for instance, it is not the creation of a totally new form of tourism in Finnmark, but more a development of existing winter tourism. Through the years, the race has become involved in local, national and international relations, giving rise to a path-creation (Saarinen 2014), with new actors involved in the race to increase wider social and community impacts locally.

In this article, an evolution model inspired by Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Clavé (2017) is used to identify how a specific event can act as catalyst for place and tourism development. The event in question here is identified on the basis of one key moment—when the Finnmark Race was first held—and four other post moments. Shaped by these moments, the event created new pathways for tourism development in Finnmark: a tourism build-up through lifestyle entrepreneurs, with the mushers (dogsled drivers), initial newcomers from outside Finnmark, and, later also locals establishing their own tourism businesses. The event has produced innovation by building up dogsledding for all purposes, including as a new tourism product, at the same time as it has been anchored in the (outward appearance of) traditional use of local nature and culture. This development is just that, a development, and not a complete break with the existing tourism industry. However, the new directions and foci in Finnmark tourism that the race has produced might, for some locals, be in conflict with existing culture and uses of nature. Some tensions have emerged in relation to accidents between dogsleds and snowmobiles, and accidents involving reindeers grazing on the mountain plateau. Both snowmobiles and reindeer have caused the dogsledding teams stress in the past.

This article begins with theoretical foundations, followed by descriptions of the event and the methods for collecting data. Then the event moments and characteristics are identified and then related to place and tourism development. The findings analyses and discusses the event’s role in lifestyle-based development, ending with a conclusion and suggestions for future research.
Theoretical foundations

Events as catalysts

Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Clavé (2017) emphasize that, in the general literature, the events that have been analysed as catalysts for change have mostly been external and unexpected shocks or events, such as natural disasters or economic crises. This has created a gap in coverage between moments relating to natural disasters and economic crises and those relating to social and cultural events. In tourism-related theory, the role events might have as a catalyst for tourism development is emphasized, with a focus on how events and festivals can become catalysts for the revival of tourism to destinations (Holmes and Ali-Knight 2017). Others point out events functions in policy and strategy agendas, with events as catalysts for placemaking, image-making, creating attraction and as animators (Richards 2015), also closely connected to place marketing (Ziakas and Costa 2011). It is emphasized that mega-events have been supported by host governments because of their role as a catalyst for urban renewal through image enhancement and physical redevelopment (Smith 2012). They attract investment in the hospitality sector (e.g. in hotels and restaurants), and sporting events, for example, often lead to improved facilities that also make the city more attractive for future events (Getz 2013). In line with events acting as catalysts, recent years have also seen an increase in the number of such events worldwide, with the ‘festivalisation’ of cities (Richards and Colombo 2017).

This ‘event effect’ becomes perhaps even more important for events located in rural areas, often overlooked because of their small scale. Here, festivalization often also includes investment in equipment and infrastructure, and the events sometimes become the primary meeting-places for local and visiting people – meeting-places that have to be created and developed (Viken and Jaeger 2012). The enhancement of rural festivalization is often dependent on a particular entrepreneurial role taken by organizers and participants motivated by an interest in recreational pursuits, without an economic focus. This role played by volunteers should be acknowledged as a condition for an event’s success, rather than an obstacle (Hjalager and Kwiatkowski 2018). In their study on rural festivals in Denmark, it is also emphasized that even remotely located festivals are capable of developing their capacity and attractiveness, and in that way contributing to rural development processes (Hjalager and Kwiatkowski 2018).

Events as path-shaping moments in tourism development

Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Clavé (2017) use moments as a conceptual framework in examining how destinations evolve over time, as a viable alternative to traditional life-cycle-based models. They define the understanding of moments as ‘path-shaping evolutionary inflection points that cause a destination’s path (trajectory)’ (Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Clavé 2017: 81-82). The path metaphor in previous research describes catalysts for change, including incidents, events, and decisions, which have an impact on destinations’ evolutionary trajectories (Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Clavé 2017). This understanding is applied here in this article in relation to the occurrence of an event, of which the key moment is identified, unique in its characteristics, with a multitude of measurable factors wherein it might display a catalytic or transformative function (Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Clavé 2017). The discourse of the moment in the path metaphor (with its evolution model) includes three phases:
Pre-moment scape, which is the context with pre-conditioning factors and situations, including economic, social, environmental, political and cultural conditions; Moment characteristics, describing the key moment at which the event was started; and the Post-moment scape after the event began, wherein there might be several new moments (Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Clavé 2017).

Many moments are binary in nature, and the moment framework could be applied to any place and industrial sector. Essentially, moments are flexible and transferable, and might function not only as a theoretical concept but also as a planning tool for understanding how and why places transform (Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Clavé 2017). A moment may occur as the result of a planned initiative or spontaneously, driven by a top-down or bottom-up process—or in cases where the moment is a meeting point of different phenomena. The moment’s intensity may also be important. For example, some moments are path-creating (more radical) and others path-plastic (more incremental) (Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Clavé 2017). The processes in this study might be identified as path-plastic—a slow development from bottom-up, anchored in local traditions of the place, based on leisure time, and conducted by volunteers and lifestyle entrepreneurs.

The role an event might have as a catalyst for development in tourism can be identified according to the way Saarinen (2014) describes tourism development—as part of larger social and ideological processes which produce both the ideas people have, and the physical characteristics of destinations. New paths, according to Saarinen (2014), can induce path-dependency and path-creation in tourism destination development—an insight that helps in understanding and interpreting local responses to internal and external processes, structures and changes. Path-dependence refers to a development in which the actors and their possibilities are relatively limited by existing structures and resources. In path-creation local actors can have an active role influencing and modifying, with certain limits, the course of local and regional development. These new pathways can potentially represent conflicting views about what the destination is; often, where the present identity of a destination is characterized mainly by hegemonic views, in this case a new use of the mountain plateau in Finnmark, with outdoor activities such as dogsledding. It also contains features from the past and signs of future transformations, which may be competing with each other and with the existing hegemonic views (Saarinen 2014). Events may also be regarded as demanding too large a share of local resources, such as public funding and visibility, meaning other upcoming events do not get the same development possibilities (Leenders, Go, and Bhansing 2015), or as communicating a ‘brand’ not all the locals might identify with (Gotham 2011).

**Lifestyle-based development**

Winter tourism in Finnmark has increased in recent years, especially from individual tourists, as a result of Northern Lights tourism (Heimtun and Viken 2016). A part of this growth involves lifestyle-based tourism businesses founded by mushers who have participated in the Finnmark Race. The initiative of a single entrepreneur can start a major shift in the evolution of a rural tourist destination – the entrepreneur acting as leader, innovator and catalyst for development (Faulkner 2003; Getz and Carlsen 2000). Start-ups centred on new activities in small lifestyle-based tourism enterprises represent values with a strong survival element, in contrast to traditional entrepreneurs, where the focus and desire is often growth and the expansion of their businesses (Ateljevic and Doorne 2000; Marchant and Mottiar
Lifestyle tourism entrepreneurs see the area as a whole in light of a desire to ensure the future sustainability of the destination, primarily motivated by the need to live at a certain quality of life with an income which allows them to survive – describing their start-ups as accidental and attempting to distance themselves from the role of ‘business owner’ (Deakins and Freel 2006; Iversen and Steen Jacobsen 2016; Mottiar 2016).

The Finnmark race event

The Finnmark Race is an annual week-long dogsledding event, which started in 1981 with three dog teams running 230 km. The race has developed through the years to become Europe’s longest dogsledding race, at 1200 km. It starts in the beginning of March every year in Alta Centrum, where the dog teams participating in the longest distance, 1200 km, take around five to seven days to finish the race. Through the years, it has developed from an event involving mostly local participants to become an international sporting occasion, with around 130 mushers participating in three different distances (Finnmarkslopet 2018; Jæger and Viken 2014).

For many of the mushers in Europe, the Finnmark Race creates a meeting place. The event offers the ultimate dream (and challenge) in dogsled racing where some of the best mushers in the world compete to gain new skills and building valuable networks in the arctic setting. Most mushers take holiday time to participate, and foreign mushers use several weeks. In 2018, the 31-year-old musher Dallas Seavey (Alaska), a four time winner of the Iditarod (the world’s longest dogsledding race) was the first musher participating in the Finnmark Race (bringing his own sled dog team from Alaska).

The Finnmark Race is dependent on volunteers. The majority of the volunteers come from Finnmark, across Norway and abroad (Jæger and Mathisen 2017). In 2018, the race had 3 employees, around 600 volunteers and 28 semi-volunteer veterinarians. The race is staged in an event venue (in this case a trail) that goes through a vast and wild natural landscape, interspersed with meetings with local cultures and societies at different checkpoints located in villages and cabins along the trail. All but two checkpoints are located by the road, and parts of the trail are built on old transport routes—perpetuating local culture and heritage with a new transport form.

Methodological approach

This research uses data from a qualitative study in Finnmark, Norway, in which formal interviews were conducted with 19 informants (18 from Norway and one from abroad) connected to the race in different roles, including businesspeople involved in tourism, volunteers, former race managers, journalists and mushers. The evidence also comprises informal conversations with informants in different roles related to the event. Interviews and field conversations were conducted in the time period from 2012–2017. I also draw on my own experience participating as a musher and lifestyle entrepreneur, being a race manager and, in the last few years, being part of the race management team, following the competition out in the field. My personal experiences, being involved with the race by taking on different roles since 1986 has allowed for an approach partly conducted with an ethnographic element. In ethnographic research methodologies are aligned with immersing oneself in contexts for lengthy periods of time so to understand the socio-cultural world.
fully (Sands 1999; Wise 2017). The knowledge collected and then presented are always partial, influenced by who we are, and by who our research subjects are (Hannam and Knox 2010). At the same time, this closeness to a field might give information outsiders would not get (Malterud 1996), as those involved can experience the everyday (Wise 2011).

As this article is concerned with moment scapes, in the following analysis Sections I will apply the theoretical concept of *moments* identifying how a specific event can act as catalyst for place and tourism development, giving an overview in Figure 1. Here, identified by a *key moment* (the event’s start-up) and shaped by a further four other event *post moments*, we see how the event creates new pathways for subsequent developments.

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1.** A model showing the Finnmark Race as a moment for development of tourism in Finnmark, which should be read and understood sequentially from left to right as you would a timeline. It is based on the Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Clavé (2017) model.
Pre-moment scape

The analyses are based on the evolution model devised by Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Clavé (2017), which includes three main phases as described above. First, in the Pre-Moment Scape, we see how tourism and use of the natural landscape was in winter in Finnmark, before the key-moment, when the race was started. Secondly, under Moment Characteristics changes influencing sport and tourism from the key-moment, when the event was started, are described. Finally, the Post-Moment Scape describes how the development of the Finnmark Race, with four post moments, has influenced the development of winter tourism in Finnmark.

Pre-conditions

Winter tourism in Finnmark was from the 1950s mostly connected to leisure tourists visiting the Sámi Easter celebration in Kautokeino (Hætt)—a celebration arranged for and by the local Sámi people. Organized winter tourism for groups started from the mid-1980s, with snowmobile safaris as the most important activity (Heimtun and Viken 2016). Reindeer and skis originally solved the problem of winter transport on the mountain plateau, later supplanted by Snowcat, until the roads came and brought transport by car in 1964. Today, in the winter, some of the old trails are used for snowmobiles, skiing, biking and dogsledding. Dogsledding in Finnmark started as a leisure activity from the 1970s (Resp. 2), and was then a relatively new winter activity that had to find its place, using the natural landscape together with both reindeer herders and other local people who had snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and ice fishing as their main outdoor leisure activities.

Trigger discourses

Mushers and people related to the Finnmark Race in Norway have been inspired by other dogsledding races, such as the Iditarod, in Alaska, USA, and the Nordic Marathon in Sweden (Resp. 1). The inspiration also came from Norwegian explorer traditions with expeditions in North America, Greenland, Antarctica and the Arctic, with explorers such as Nansen and Amundsen (Granås 2015). Dogsledding played a prominent part in some of these expeditions. The few mushers who lived in Finnmark in 1981 also knew the stories about Seppala and Kaasen, mushers that lived in Alaska, originating from North Norway, and their participation in the well-known Serum run to Nome during the gold rush in Alaska in the beginning of the twentieth century (Granås 2015). Some mushers and volunteers also mentioned that they were inspired by reading Jack London’s The Call of the Wild, forming their dreams when they were young.

Key moment—start-up of the Finnmark race

The start-up of the Finnmark Race was in 1981, initiated by a lifestyle entrepreneur, Sven Engholm, a Swedish musher who had recently settled in Finnmark (Jaeger and Viken 2014). Three dog teams participated, in one class, with unlimited number of dogs.
**Impact discourses—event**

Engholm worked in cooperation with the members of the Alta Dogsled Association, which arranged the first race, and also became the organization that owned and arranged the race in the future. Engholm won the first race and is the most successful musher in the history of the race, with 11 victories in the time period from 1981 to 1994 (Altaposten.no, 2017). As a lifestyle entrepreneur, he was the first in Finnmark starting a business offering dogsledding experiences for tourists and devised a model for how lifestyle entrepreneurs to establish their businesses. This entrepreneurial initiative may have started a shift in the evolution of Finnmark as a tourist destination (Faulkner 2003). Engholm established his kennel in Karasjok, where there was space for the dogs and good training conditions close to nature and trails. He developed the tourism business on local premises, cooperating with reindeer herders, and bringing the tourists to their camp and reindeer herds on the mountain plateau. He has expanded his business, offering overnight stays in wooden cabins which he designed and built himself. Today, he still keeps his business small, with a focus on being able to join the guests in their dogsledding experiences in nature. This has given his activity a focus on values related to a certain quality of life, which is good, as long as it provides enough money to survive (Deakins and Freel 2006).

**Post-conditions—sports tourism**

When the race started, dogsledding was a new sports tourism product, that later became an attractive winter activity for soft-adventure-seeking people (Jæger and Viken 2014). It is a tourism experience product unique and specific to the place, using old trails and mountain cabins, a journey made possible by dog-power, and apparently wild nature. At the same time, it is a small scale tourism product that is locally anchored, and attractive for critical consumer tourists (Ateljevic and Doorne 2000). Through the years, many of the mushers participating in the race have been special interest tourists, attracted by the same values as other tourists visiting Finnmark—the natural landscape, but here with a special focus on the dogs, and the competition and friendship among mushers, handlers, and the race organization (Jæger and Mathisen 2017). It is a tourism development based on the use of old cabins for a new activity, in new networks, with both national and international guests. Where the owners of the mountain cabins welcome new business, they are concerned about the importance of continuing old practices, and maintaining and sustaining tourism (Mottiar 2016). Granås (2018) notes that Finnmark’s wilderness and periphery frames it as a place for fun and adventure—as dogsledding is *destinizing* Finnmark. Such sports tourism development, through lifestyle entrepreneurs, in Finnmark positions traditional ways of living with seasonal occupations: combining dogsledding trips for tourists with farming. This also helps others create opportunities to develop the tourism product and the destination (place). This also points to similarity with other tourism entrepreneurship processes in Finnmark, producing other adventure-profiled products in the same landscapes, such as fat biking, cross country skiing, snowshoe walks, and snow mobile excursions (Granås 2018).

**Moment scape 1**

In 1990, the race start was moved to centre of Alta, and the race became visible to a bigger audience. The race had until then started from various campsites in the Alta periphery.
**Impact discourses—event**

The race, starting in Alta town centre, created possibilities for new activities in cooperation with other events, such as Borealis (a winter festival initiated by Alta Municipality), and the student week at Finnmark University College in Alta. In 1998 the race start was moved to Bossekop, a borough of Alta. Together with BUL, a local sports club’s association, the race had guests sitting in the sleds in a show start, before the real race started, for the first time. The aim of putting guests in the sleds was to give people with little knowledge about the sport an experience of what dogsledding is, and to connect the mushers with sponsors and other visiting people who formed part of an important network for the race. In early years, it was difficult to communicate what dogsledding was really about, and as one of the journalists mentioned: following ‘the Finnmark Race is as boring as seeing paint drying on the wall’ (Resp. 19). So by involving both media and sponsors, this gave rise to possibilities of positioning the dogsledding product in a segmented marketplace, through creative and innovative entrepreneurs, mushers, and volunteers (Ateljevic and Doorne 2000), and for cooperation with other local volunteer organizations.

**Post-conditions—tourism**

From the mid-1980s, winter tourism began to grow in Finnmark, and several small businesses were started, some in dogsledding, others related to snowmobiling and Sámi culture. Today there are ten tourism businesses offering dogsledding experiences in Finnmark, all of them started by lifestyle entrepreneurs (to promote and gain from sport and leisure activity). Five of the dogsledding companies are located in Alta, where the race began and still has its start and finish. Norway’s first international winter cruise arrived in Alta, 26th of March 2009. The voyage was run by the shipping company Saga, starting from England and named ‘The search for Nordic Light’ (Altahavn. no, 2016 Havn, A. 2009). Ahead of this, the dogsledding companies in Alta had increased their numbers of dogs and invested in new equipment to be able to serve many guests at the same time. The equipment was customized for guests mostly above 65 years old. The new paths created by the race have developed a tourism product providing an important new capacity in a rural destination, with several adventure tourism businesses (Saarinen 2014).

**Moment scape 2**

In 2001, the County Mayor in Finnmark asked the race organizers to produce a one-day program for the Norwegian Princess Märtha Louise. The Princess participated in the show start, sitting in the first sled at the start, and also drove the sled on the Alta river with a many-time winner of the race, Roger Dahl (who also won the race that year). Later that year, a limited company was established which provided a new start for the race, with one manager employed—namely, the author of this article. Since then, there have been four different managers for the race. Today the company has a total of three employees. Owners on the board come from tourism businesses, consultant companies and Alta Dogsled Association. Establishing the limited company has helped increase local skills and enhance crucial business networks, necessary for the economically development of the race. At the same time as the investors have recognized synergies beyond economic of the race, as
marketing Finnmark for sports tourism, and building new knowledge (Prebensen 2008). Even though the Finnmark Race now is managed by a limited company, the Alta Dogsled Association is still the owner of the race and sets/determines rules related to the sport activities.

**Impact discourses—event**

Princess Louise’s visit became an important milestone in the race’s publicity, with 48 accredited national and local journalists in attendance. This was the first time there had been accreditation in the race (Resp. 19). It was also an eye-opener for the journalists – they asked, ‘What is this?’ They did not believe events that big could be arranged in Finnmark. Until the end of 2001, all race work was done by volunteers. Both locals and special-interest tourists were using their holidays to work voluntarily for the race (Jæger and Mathisen 2017). It was people who through their ordinary jobs had a broad set of skills and networks who contributed their resources to manage and develop the race. It was a non-commodified tourism development, at the same time as the event was becoming commercialized (Jæger and Olsen 2016). The event became a meeting place, once a year, first of all for those directly involved in the race: mushers, handlers, volunteers, the race management, and important stakeholders.

**Post-conditions—sports tourism**

During the same period, the race office was collocated with Finnmark Reiseliv, a tourism marketing company for Finnmark, when the race became a part of a winter tourism development project. A promotional film for the race was produced through the project, and Finnmark Reiseliv arranged marketing trips for international tour operators, in which one of the trips followed the race through Finnmark County, participating in cultural activities along the trail. The race then became part of a larger process in the construction (Saarinen 2014) of Finnmark as a winter tourism destination. Through the years, the race has created encounters where many different actors want to be present. Many tourists—both those with a special interest and business tourists—want to be in Alta when the race starts. The race may also have been a role model for other local events and tourism build-ups. Two examples are the biking event ‘Offroad Finnmark’, arranged in summer using part of the same trails and the same checkpoints—it is lifestyle entrepreneurs who are offering biking trips on the same trails. Another event started in Finnmark is Varanger Arctic Kite Enduro, arranging the World Championship in kiting on snow. This is rural festivalization, carried out through organizers’ and participants’ interest in recreational pursuits, and without an economic focus (Hjalager and Kwiatkowski, 2018). Both events have seen the growth and attention the Finnmark Race has received through the years, and the new way of using nature in Finnmark (Granås 2015). It is tourists participating in biking and kiting events, and in the Finnmark Race. Tourism is connected to the race directly, through many of the mushers using their holiday to participate, and the volunteer tourists working for the race every year (Jæger and Mathisen 2017). But it is also connected indirectly through lifestyle entrepreneurs and mushers starting tourism businesses, and still being part of the race in different ways.
**Moment scape 3**

In 2003, the trail route was changed, and the trail led from Alta to Kirkenes and back again for the first time.

**Impact discourses—event**

The motivation was that the race should live up to its name, the Finnmark Race, by including nearly the whole county, along with subsequent activities presenting local culture (concerts and markets) along the trail and at the different checkpoints. It might at the same time become more attractive in a tourism context, within reach of both the Russian and the Finnish border, and get access to important infrastructure, such as a big airport and the Coastal Steamer (Hurtigruten) in Kirkenes (Resp. 10). In the same period, media became even more important for the race, and Finnmark, when a Press bus began following the race for the first time in 2003. The Press bus has been important in producing new knowledge about the race in a safe way, and as one of the journalists pointed out (Resp. 12), it also has created the introductory sale for future media coverage by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), the national broadcaster.

**Post-conditions—sports tourism**

The significance moving the trail to Kirkenes has had for the development of tourism lies most of all in the same kind of ripple effects as were seen in the original area. It has also provided new lifestyle entrepreneurs in the area with knowledge about the arrangement of dogsledding events. Some local people say that they want to support or be a part of the race, because it is an event for Finnmark County. The media coverage of the race has, first of all, communicated the race internally in Finnmark and Norway. At the same time, there has been an increase in international winter tourism in the north, with tourists searching for the Northern Lights, and images of winter products have enabled a new communication both of the Northern Lights and of dogsledding tourism products. These newly-developed tourism experiences, involving both local and visiting people, form a tourism development wherein dogsledding and the Northern Lights are highly interconnected, dependent on nature, and including social and cultural meanings, to create the tourist destination (Saarinen 2014). The sport event and the tourism industry are complimentary, and become inextricably linked in this case with relationships anchored in Finnmark’s local society and in some extents Norway in general.

**Moment scape 4**

In 2009, the NRK covered the race for the first time, with daily programmes from the race.

**Impact discourses—event**

The Finnmark County Council gave financial support to make this possible. The TV programmes became important, both for the race and Finnmark in general, by communicating the race and Finnmark to the whole of Norway, showing mushers, nature based activities, and
local societies along the trail, and making visible important stakeholders in the race. In 2017 NRK was still covering the race for six days, with 400 000 viewers on average every day. The editorial director for NRK, points out that one of the reasons they cover the race is the growing interest in sports in which the competition is combined with experiences (Jordal, 2015). In 1996 the first web page was made for the race, and in 1997, for the first time, results were posted on the web page. In 2009, the race put a GPS tracker on each sled. A digital self-tracker (Lupton 2016; McGillivray 2014; 2017), that every musher must have. This made it possible for the race organizers to know the mushers’ speed in the race and their position in the trail, and identifying if their position was off the track, and maybe needed rescue. The GPS also made it possible for people who wanted to follow the race through social media, day and night. This gave an 80% increase in visitors to the race web page from 2008 to 2009 (Resp. 13). In 2016, the number of visitors reached one million during the ten-day race period (Resp. 13). The digital technology presence to help communicate the event through different medias may in the future create blurred boundaries between new and established medias—especially as each extends its reach into another territory (see McGillivray 2014; 2017).

Post-conditions—sports tourism

The media’s role in communication of the race and Finnmark has been important, most of all for those involved in the race, but also in putting Finnmark on the map. One example is a documentary made by NRK, 2015 shown at Christmas. The documentary presented the culture of dogsledding, the mushers involved in the race, and the destination, Finnmark. The resources dedicated to making the film, and its being displayed in an important timeframe on TV, also underlines the acceptance the event has received. The program was named (author’s translation) ‘Where men are men and women often win,’ and the introductory text was: ‘Why does anyone seek after something so extreme? The cold, the tough competition—not just against the competitors, but against ice-cold wind, darkness and hard work. This is the program about the Finnmark Race, Europe’s longest and toughest dogsledding race.’

This created images inspiring many of the tourist mushers and volunteers who spend several weeks of their holiday to participate in the race. The core actors in the race are the dogs, and as one volunteer veterinarian said, ‘most important for me is the dogs and the passion they show for running. They give everything, this is their life. A happy life.’ The media in general, but especially social media, have become important for the race, and also for many lifestyle tourism businesses where the owner still is a musher participating in the race—their guests follow them through social media after they have bought a dogsledding product, not only in the winter but also potentially in the summer. This goes for mushers with tourism businesses from Finnmark, but also from other places in Norway and other countries. In that way, participants in the race market and sell the winter to former summer tourists, too. The tourism development identified here might be understood, with reference to Saarinen (2014), as part of larger social and ideological process, where media enhance the production of both the ideas and the physical character of the destination Finnmark.

Discussion

The role that the Finnmark Race has had as a catalyst for place and tourism development was demonstrated by identifying key moment and moments in the race’s lifetime so far. In the wake of the event’s start-up, dogsledding as a tourism product has been offered by
lifestyle entrepreneurs since 1981, with Engholm as a role model establishing the first tourism business in Finnmark offering dogsled safaris. Over time, the numbers increased, with a total of ten tourism businesses offering dogsled safaris in Finnmark today, each one's kennels having between 40 and 180 dogs. Many of the lifestyle businesses related to dogsledding depend on getting almost free employees—tourists working through Workaways as volunteer handlers (Workaway 2017). These are people who want to live abroad for free, have time to offer basic skills, and want to experience travel through local eyes on a budget. They are paid in kind by the tourism business, receiving their meals and accommodation for free, and also gaining new knowledge.

The lifestyle entrepreneurs have contributed to a new path-creation by actively developing Finnmark as a destination, with dogsledding as a new tourism product and point of place promotion. At the same time, the product builds on traditional use of nature, and integrates local culture. These lifestyle entrepreneurs are mushers, some of whom still participate in the Finnmark Race and in other dogsledding competitions, in Norway and abroad, who have first-hand knowledge about the dogs and the environmental conditions they bring their guests into.

It has been a tourism development that started out with a path-dependence—not the creation of a totally new form of tourism in Finnmark, but more a development of existing winter tourism, with dogsledding products using the natural environment and existing mountain cabins. Through the years, the race has become more prominent in local, national and international relations. This has given rise to a path-creation, with new actors involved in the race, but also a regional development with other new events starting up in Finnmark, following their path with different core activities. Over the years, the changes in the start location of the race have enabled the building-up of a new, important meeting-place once a year—first of all for those directly involved in the race—mushers, handlers, volunteers, the race management, and important stakeholders—but also for other events arranged in the same time period. The race has had a role in creating encounters between the event and the tourism industry, encounters which have led to an increased product capacity for winter tourism, and especially for the winter cruise product, in a rural destination.

When the County Mayor of Finnmark asked the race organizers to host the Norwegian Princess for a day in 2001, this indicated an acceptance of the race, and made its importance for Finnmark visible. This acceptance was given to an event that was then arranged exclusively by volunteers. With national and local journalists covering the race start that year, it also gave the event and Finnmark a new public face, both locally and nationally. This fresh face has contributed to the further build-up of the race, and a growing professionalization, with the start-up of a limited company, but the event is still built on lifestyle choices, creating new encounters between locals and tourists. The media coverage of the event, especially through social media, has had an important role in making the race visible, and through that also Finnmark County.

**Conclusion**

This study’s focus has been on how the moment when the Finnmark Race was established has influenced tourism development in Finnmark. The event’s start-up has through lifestyle entrepreneurs contributed to a new path-creation, actively developing Finnmark as a tourism destination, and dogsledding as a new tourism product; a path-creation with new actors, national and international, involved in the event, building up an important meeting-place
once a year for those directly involved and for other stakeholders. The study has identified tourism roles in relation to the event: mushers, handlers, volunteers, audience, and lifestyle-entrepreneurs with their workaways. At the same time tourism actors as hotels, camping sites, mountain cabins, car and bus rental companies have been important for the event.

The race is a journey through a county where it also has been a role model, influencing the build-up of other events in Finnmark, with many tourists participating. It represents a rural festivalization based on recreational activities, dependent on volunteers, and arctic weather conditions, not primarily invented for a commodified purpose (which is not necessarily a goal in itself, but often the reality for small businesses in rural areas). Some of the associations and experiences the race forges with Finnmark for its audience and participants can be denoted as follows:

The race is about standing in the snow with temperatures of minus 30 degrees Celsius, waiting for a dogsledding team, when the first light in the morning comes above the mountains.

The event embraces an impressive arctic landscape, which the mushers control and survive.

‘The most important about the Finnmark Race is that everyone are positive. If they weren’t, they wouldn’t have been here.’

This is images and reflections depicting what some may not think about in their daily life in Finnmark. At the same time, this new public image of Finnmark might open up new possibilities. Increased cooperation with the Sámi people, when bringing Sámi culture in to the race, could be a way to strengthen and make visible both the old culture and modern ways of living in Finnmark—in new ways, in new venues, through and together with a dogsledding event.

Future research is necessary to consider how the media has influenced the development of the event and promote Finnmark for the purpose of stakeholder, place and tourism development. This is important to complement this research because media content to understand what place and whose stakeholder images are communicated through the event, and what particular place features and stakeholders are not? There are important questions concerning geography because they not only relate to tourism development, but wider social impacts for the community and business stakeholders and the development of the place in a broader sense. In this paper, questions concerning sport and geography are influenced by the impact and development of events and tourism.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

**References**

Ateljevic, I., and S. Doorne. 2000. “Staying Within the Fence: lifestyle Entrepreneurship in Tourism.” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 8 (5): 378–392. doi:10.1080/096695800088667374.

Bredvold, R., and P. Skålén. 2016. “Lifestyle Entrepreneurs and Their Identity Construction: A Study of the Tourism Industry.” *Tourism Management* 56: 96–105. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2016.03.023.

Deakins, D., and M. Freel. 2006. “Entrepreneurship and Small Firms”. 4th ed. Basingstoke: McGraw Hill.
McGillivray, D. 2017. “Platform Politics: Sport Events and the Affordances of Digital and Social Media.” *Sport in Society* 20 (12): 1888–1901. doi:10.1080/17430437.2017.1232392.

Mottiar, Z. 2016. “Exploring the Motivations of Tourism Social Entrepreneurs: The Role of a National Tourism Policy as a Motivator for Social Entrepreneurial Activity in Ireland.” *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 28 (6): 1137–1154. doi:10.1108/IJCHM-06-2014-0278.

NRK. 2015. “Der menn er menn og kvinner ofte vinner”. Available at: https://tv.nrk.no/program/mspo31190115/der-menn-er-menn-og-kvinner-ofte-vinner (accessed July 19, 2017).

Prebensen, N. K. 2008. "Investing in an Event: The Case of a Sledge Dog Race in Norway “The Finnmarkslopet.” *Event Management* 11 (3): 99–108. doi:10.3727/152599508784548857.

Richards, G. 2015. “Developing the Eventful City: Time, Space and Urban Identity.” In *Planning for Event Cities*, edited by Mushatat, S., and Al Muhairi, M., 37–46. Ajman: Municipality and Planning Dept. of Ajman.

Richards, G., and A. Colombo. 2017. “Creating Network Value. The Barcelona Sònar Festival as a Global Events Hub.” In *The Value of Events*, edited by Lundberg, E., Armbrecht, J., Andersson, T.D. and Getz, D., 73–86. Abingdon, UK: Taylor and Francis.

Saarinen, J. 2014. “Transforming Destinations: A Discursive Approach to Tourist Destinations and Development.” In *Tourism Destination Development, Turns and Tactics*, edited by Viken, A. and Granås, B., 47–62. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Sands, R. R. 1999. *Sport Ethnography*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Sanz-Ibáñez, C., Wilson, J., and Clavé, S. A. 2017. “Moments as Catalysts for Change in the Evolutionary Paths of Tourism Destinations”, In *Dynamic destinations: Tourism and Evolutionary Economic Geography*, edited by Brouder, P., Anton Clavé, S., Gill, A., and Ioannides, D., 81–102. London: Routledge.

Skoglund, T., and B. O. Kjelsberg. 2015. “Innsikt, fakta om løpet”. Available at: http://www.altoposten.no/innsikt/article10634528.ece (accessed April, 2017).

Viken, A., and K. Jaeger. 2012. “Festivalisering av Bygde-Norge – lokalsamfunnsutvikling Ispedd Turisme.” In *Turisme i Distriktene, Tapir Akademisk Forlag*, edited by Forbord, M., Kvam, G.-T., and Ronningen, 131–150. Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag.

Wise, N. 2011. “Transcending Imaginations through Football Participation and Narratives of the Other: Haitian National Identity in the Dominican Republic.” *Journal of Sport & Tourism* 16 (3): 259–275. doi:10.1080/14775085.2011.635011.

Wise, N. 2017. “Living Abroad and Volunteering at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.” In *International Sports Volunteering*, edited by A. M. Benson and N. Wise, 60–76. London: Routledge.

Workaway. 2017. https://www.workaway.info/hostlist-NO.html (accessed April, 2017).