Destination Management Organisations and Regional Development in Switzerland

Challenges and Success Factors for Cooperation in Destination Development

Master Thesis

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Abstract

In many parts of Europe and in Switzerland tourism is seen as an instrument for regional development in peripheral areas. The allocation of roles and tasks between destination management organisations (DMOs) and regional development organisations are often unclear in destination management and development. Both are key players in destination development and effective cooperation between them is essential. The aim of this study was to explore the challenges and success factors of cooperation between DMOs and regional development within Switzerland by comparing two different destinations and to identify obstacles and key drivers for joint success. Applying a qualitative research design data was collected through semi-structured interviews with stakeholders of the destinations Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair and Leukerbad and additional expert interviews. The 15 interviews were analysed using content analysis to obtain an outline of the role understanding of the various stakeholders of a destination and their cooperation. An overview of factors for successful cooperation between different organisations was derived. The study showed that the destination structure is essential for effective destination development and requires regular review. To overcome the current challenges in tourism, destination development should focus on a living space perspective in the future.

Keywords: destination management organisation (DMO), regional development, cooperation, challenges and success factors, stakeholders, destination management, destination development, living space

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List of abbreviations

AWT	Amt für Wirtschaft und Tourismus (eng. Economic Development and Tourism Agency [Canton of the Grisons])
DMO	Destination Marketing/Management Organisation
DWTI	Dienststelle für Wirtschaft, Tourismus und Innovation (eng. Department for Economy, Tourism and Innovation [Canton of Valais])
ESTAG	Engadin Scuol Tourismus AG
EU	European Union
FHGR	Fachhochschule Graubünden (eng. University of Applied Sciences of the Grisons)
HOGA	Hotel and Gastronomy Association [Leukerbad]
LLB	Busbetriebe Leuk-Leukerbad AG (eng. bus companies)
NRP	New Regional Policy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QCA	Qualitative Data Analysis
RWO AG	Regions- und Wirtschaftszentrum Oberwallis AG (eng. Regional and Economic Centre Upper Valais AG)
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
STRATOS	Strategische Tourismusszenarien (eng. Strategic Tourism Scenarios)
TESSVM	Tourismus Engadin Scuol Samnaun Val Müstair AG
TFS	Tourism Forum Switzerland
USP	Unique selling point

1   Introduction

The author of this master thesis has been working for the destination management organisation (DMO) Tourism Engadin Scuol Samnaun Val Müstair AG (TESSVM) for about six years. First as a trainee in offer development and then as a product manager for nature and sustainability. During this time, she personally experienced the high and especially different expectations that were placed on the DMO. Many service providers and locals expected that, in addition to the classic tasks of a tourism organisation, the DMO would also realise new tourism offers and events, implement tourism projects and maintain infrastructures or even build new ones. However, the performance mandate only took a small part of these tasks into account, or not at all. The author has implemented several smaller and larger projects for the TESSVM and sometimes questioned whether it was really the task of a DMO to push the relevant issues. Conversely, she wondered whether the DMO could not take on even more and thus achieve a greater impact for tourism development. In addition, she saw overlaps with the tasks of regional development. Motivated by personal experiences, this master thesis examined the role of DMOs and their interaction with regional development.

1.1   Research problem

In peripheral regions, tourism is often used as a helpful instrument to promote the location, which can improve economic growth and welfare as well as create jobs (Rogerson, 2015; Timareva et al., 2015). Tourism can be seen as a spatial phenomenon in which many different stakeholders are known to be involved (Laesser & Beritelli, 2013). Where a large number of stakeholders interact with each other, the question arises of comprehensive steering and thus of an organisation that takes on leadership tasks.

Many service providers see the destination marketing/management organisation (DMO) as the responsible entity (Foris et al., 2020). In addition to the usual tasks of a tourism organisation, they are increasingly expected to take on coordination and strategic planning functions. Service providers' expectations towards the DMO are increasing, but the question arises whether it is realistic for a DMO to steer and manage an entire destination (Kämpf, 2023).

It is already difficult to define the borders of a destination, as they differ depending on the perspective for example from the supply or demand side (Laesser, Küng, et al., 2023). There are also different views and models regarding the structure of destination governance (Zhang & Zhu, 2014). More on the definitions of a destination can be read in the chapter 2.1 Destination management organisations (p. 10). But if it is already difficult to determine how a destination should best be structured, then it is even more difficult to define the role of a DMO and what tasks it entails. Also, Swiss tourism has not so long ago addressed this issue. In November 2022, the annual Tourism Forum Switzerland (TFS), organised by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, was held on the topic of "Tourism Destinations: Structures and tasks as well as challenges and perspectives" (SECO, 2022b). In addition, several webinars on the same topic followed (SECO, 2023).

One of these webinars showed that tourism destination development is part of regional development. However, the DMO does not have to manage destination development alone, but together with the various actors of a destination and is therefore seen as a joint responsibility (Laesser, Beritelli, & Küng, 2023). In many parts of Europe, tourism even became synonymous with regional development in peripheral areas (Rogerson, 2015).

Thus, if destination management is seen as part of regional development, it is unclear how the two entities and their tasks can be distinguished from each other. Moreover, importantly, it is important to define what cooperation between a DMO and regional development makes sense and is most successful for the further development of the destination.

As it can be seen in chapter 2 Literature review (p. 10), many studies attempt to identify the roles and functions of a DMO as well as that of regional development. However, literature on concrete cooperation examples between the two actors is very limited and hence there is a clear gap. For this reason, and as it is a current topic in Switzerland, the study is dedicated to the cooperation of DMOs and regional development.

1.2 Research question and objectives

The aim of this master thesis is to investigate the problems described above in more detail and to explore the challenges and success factors of cooperation between DMOs and regional development within Switzerland by comparing two different destinations (see chapter 2.5 Destinations examined, p. 28) and to identify obstacles and key factors for success.

To achieve this, the following research question will be investigated:

What challenges and success factors exist in the cooperation between destination management organisations and regional development concerning destination management and development within Switzerland?

To answer the research question, the following objectives are defined:
   a. To identify the current roles and tasks of Swiss DMOs and regional development;
   b. To determine the necessary knowledge of how the two players and other stakeholders work together;
   c. To explore frequent challenges and success factors for good cooperation between DMOs and regional development;
   d. To discover and assess the feasibility of new approaches for destination management and destination development;
   e. To develop recommendations on how the cooperation between DMOs and regional development and other stakeholders of Swiss tourism destinations can be improved in favour of successful destination development and its management.

1.3 Focus of research

Since the (possible) tasks of a DMO can be very diverse, the master thesis focuses on tasks that have a connection to regional development. This was done to avoid a dispersal and the interviews to focus on questions that concern the destination's further development.

Sustainable development is discussed at certain points but is not explicitly addressed in this thesis. This topic would also go beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to bear in mind that destination management and regional development are always based on the principle of sustainability in the three dimensions as defined in the Swiss Federal Government Tourism Strategy (SECO, 2021).

In order to obtain a broad overview, the international literature is studied; the research itself is concentrated on destinations in Switzerland.

2 Literature review

The literature review provides background information that is central to the research problem presented. First, the setting in which DMOs find themselves and the roles and activities they perform are examined. It then addresses regional development itself and its various forms of organisation. After that, the cooperation between the two actors is studied as well as with other stakeholders. New approaches to destination development are then reviewed. Finally, the two destinations examined as part of this master thesis are presented.

2.1 Destination management organisations

2.1.1 International understanding of DMOs and their role

Before examining what a DMO is, it is necessary to understand what a destination is and what constitutes a destination. Destinations are often defined as geographical areas (Kaurav et al., 2015; Morrison et al., 2018; Tuohino & Konu, 2014). Morrison et al. (2018) have further characterised a destination:

- It is a place where overnight accommodation is offered.
- It provides a wide range of services, infrastructure and experiences – a so-called "destination mix".
- Marketing measures are implemented.
- A coordinating organisational structure (DMO) exists.
- There is an image about the destination, whether it is appropriate or inappropriate.
- State authorities have enacted laws and regulations concerning tourism.
- A wide variety of tourism stakeholders are present.

Pechlaner (2019) sees a tourism destination as a space of movement for a guest who, depending on his or her own demand, moves through a network of bundled points of interests that are offered.

Returning to the geographical classification, a distinction is made between various levels, mostly between countries, federal states/provinces (or similar), regions and cities. However, individual centres can also be considered as destinations (Kaurav et al., 2015; Tuohino & Konu, 2014).

Moving on to the destination management organisations, which can also be assigned according to a geographically defined destination (Kaurav et al., 2015; Varghese & Paul, 2014):

- National Tourism Authorities/Administrations Organisations
- Regional, Provincial or State DMOs
- Local, City, or Town Administration/Association/Organisation/DMOs

In addition, the following terms can be found in the literature (Varghese & Paul, 2014):

- National Tourism Office
- Government Tourism Administration
- Bureau of Tourism Research
- Public Sector Management
- Public Tourism Office

Despite these definitions it is still difficult to determine exactly what a DMO is, as there are many different definitions, as the contexts and perspectives are very diverse (Kaurav et al., 2015). The UN Tourism (n. d.) has described a destination management/marketing organisation in its glossary as follows:

> *"A destination management/marketing organization (DMO) is the leading organizational entity which may encompass the various authorities, stakeholders and professionals and facilitates tourism sector partnerships towards a collective destination vision. The governance structures of DMOs vary from a single public authority to a public/ private partnership model with the key role of initiating, coordinating and managing certain activities such as implementation of tourism policies, strategic planning, product development, promotion and marketing and convention bureau activities.*
> *The functions of the DMOs may vary from national to regional and local levels depending on the current and potential needs as well as on the decentralization level of public administration. Not every tourism destination has a DMO."*

A bit more than 20 years ago, the majority of DMOs were operating as destination marketing organisations and their main role was to promote the destination (Čorak & Živoder, 2017). Over the years, it has become more and more intertwined with destination management, and most recently destination marketing is often seen as a part of comprehensive destination management (Čorak & Živoder, 2017; Morrison et al., 2018; Sheehan et al., 2016). For this reason, the abbreviation DMO is increasingly used for a destination management organisation rather than a destination marketing organisation (Kaurav et al., 2015; Martins et al., 2021; Sheehan et al., 2016). Nevertheless, it is recommended to divide the roles and tasks of a DMO into two main functions, one as external destination marketing and the other as internal destination management (Foris et al., 2020). A similar view is taken by Sheehan et al. (2016). In their opinion, DMOs are in a unique position, namely they act as an interface between the internal environment of the destination and the external market environment. They speak of a so-called smart destination and of the DMO as an intelligent agent that gathers knowledge and data about the market and external stakeholders in an external environment to ensure a strong competitiveness. The internal environment is responsible for the dissemination of information, the effective management of cooperation between local actors and the pursuit of objectives of common interest (Sheehan et al., 2016).

In the literature, further roles and tasks are distinguished under the aforementioned functions, sometimes supplemented with additional ones. These vary in terms of terminology and content depending on the perspective and context. The most commonly mentioned roles are summarised below from an excerpt from the literature, as well as interesting additions (Adeyinka-Ojo et al., 2014; Čorak & Živoder, 2017; Kaurav et al., 2015; Morrison et al., 2018; Timareva et al., 2015; Tuohino & Konu, 2014; Varghese & Paul, 2014; World Tourism Organization, 2007).
Frequently mentioned roles of a DMO:
– Leadership, coordination, organisation and management
– Research, strategy and planning
– Product development (events, attractions etc.)
– Marketing and promotion
– Partnerships and team-building
– Stakeholder management
– Community relationships and involvement
– Community brand builder
– Information provider, visitor service and facilitation of bookings

- − Human resources development
- − Politics and policy
- − Finance, budgeting, funding agent
- − Crisis management
- − Quality and performance control
- − Advocate, convener, facilitator and catalyst
- − Infrastructure development
- − Enabling sustainable destination development

Uniquely named roles:
- − Industry coordinator
- − Quasi-public representatives
- − Improvement of the well-being of the local population
- − Economic driver, business advice
- − Resource stewardship
- − Technology and systems development
- − Training and education

As evident, the possible responsibilities of a DMO are very diverse and hardly conclusive. Accordingly, the importance of a DMO is also assessed differently. In some destinations they take on a very prominent role, in others a very small one, for instance if the tasks are confined to marketing (Tuohino & Konu, 2014). In destinations without a DMO, and particularly when public administration is reluctant or absent, the efforts of local private enterprises are often key to the development of (rural) tourism. Leadership in such cases is commonly attributed to private enterprises (Lun et al., 2016).

Some researchers believe that the role of DMOs is overstated, as their influence is strongly limited (Tuohino & Konu, 2014). Kaurav et al. (2015) on the other hand believe that DMOs are capable of influencing the development of the destination in close collaboration with local communities and governments. However, due to the increased competition in tourism and the growing importance of tourism for the economy in many countries and regions over the last two decades, the relevance of DMOs is generally considered to be enhancing (Čorak & Živoder, 2017; Tuohino & Konu, 2014). In addition to the importance of tourism itself, the need for someone to take care of the sustainable development of the destination, making the best use of resources and ensuring the well-being of the population, has become more and more of an issue. This led to a change in the roles and assigned responsibilities of a DMO (Čorak & Živoder, 2017). D. Fischer & Bergamin (2023) point out that the role of a DMO has constantly evolved over the last 30 years due to higher market requirements and further developments in the environment, whereby the pace has increased in recent years. However, a holistic development of the system, often referred to as "develop the system", is rarely undertaken. Instead, DMOs are busy maintaining the existing system: "run the system". According to the authors, new approaches that are "radically different" are needed to deal with the growing challenges.

In summary, the management of a destination by a DMO has gained increasing significance in recent years. While marketing is still considered a crucial aspect, it is now viewed as just one part of the overall task portfolio. However, destinations are structured so differently that there is no generally valid definition of the roles of a DMO, as these always depend on the context and

other tourism stakeholders. Nevertheless, DMOs should question whether their current roles and tasks meet today's requirements and whether they are prepared for the future.

2.1.2 Swiss understanding of DMOs and their role

After the international understanding of what a DMO is, it will now also be briefly examined for the study how the responsibilities of a DMO are seen in Switzerland, as the destinations to be compared are located within Switzerland.

The Swiss literature also describes the current transformation of DMOs from a destination marketing organisation to a destination management organisation (Wagenseil et al., 2022). Anderegg et al. (2008) as well as Laesser & Beritelli (2013) see similar roles in destination management to those listed in the previous chapter, although not quite as comprehensive:

- Attracting visitors
- Planning and strategy
- Marketing
- Product and quality development
- Coordination and advocacy

D. Fischer & Bergamin (2023) divide the roles of a DMO into three areas:

- Management and development of the destination
  - Tourism management of the destination ("system leader")
  - Network management
  - Location marketing
  - Conception and development of "strategic projects"
- "Retaining guests" and services
  - Information and guest advisory services
  - Administration services / Shared services for service providers
  - Operation and financing of infrastructures
  - Event support
- "Attracting guests"
  - Marketing and communication
  - Product and offer development

However, there is no "one fits it all" solution in Switzerland either, as tourism destinations are structured and managed very differently (Laesser, Beritelli, & Küng, 2023).
An important difference to other countries can be seen in the political structure of Switzerland. The possibility for the local population to participate in local, cantonal and national votes, which can also affect tourism, means that the interests of the various stakeholders must be taken into account accordingly (2008). In addition, compared to foreign countries, it can be seen that Swiss tourism organisations are through their private-law basis and private-public legitimisation closer to the action than tourism organisations in other countries, which are often run by state authorities. Furthermore, unlike many other countries, Swiss tourism organisations are much more interconnected at all levels. However, this also means greater interdependence between the various organisations within the destination as well as at other levels (Laesser, Küng, et al., 2023).

In the recently published basic report "Tourism Destinations: Structures and Tasks as well as Challenges and Perspectives" from Laesser, Küng et al. (2023), commissioned by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, it is put into perspective that DMOs can only partially fulfil their own expectations and those of their stakeholders, or not at all. The reasons for this are limited competence to act, which means that a DMO can only exert a certain influence by coordinating, motivating, stimulating and supporting its service providers. Furthermore, DMOs lack powerful financial resources, which means that they often have to act in the interest of the funding institutions. In addition, DMOs are, so to speak, obliged to act in a consensus-oriented manner, as they see themselves as representatives of all or a majority of the stakeholders (Laesser, Küng, et al., 2023). Laesser, Küng, et al. (2023) see the possibility of a so-called project logic as a new solution approach to get away from the alleged illusion of the steerability of the destination by the DMO. In this approach, DMOs should concentrate on individual measures that belong to their core processes. By implementing individual projects, roles and tasks and their objectives can be better clarified, thus complexity can be reduced.

D. Fischer & Bergamin (2023) consider a different approach. They see development pressure from an increasingly complex and uncertain environment (crises and wars, climate change, digital transformation, etc.), which makes it necessary for DMOs to critically examine their roles and try out "radically" new approaches. For the future perspective of DMOs, they have defined five "game changers". One of these five game changers pursues the focus from tourism space to living space. Especially for alpine regions that are dependent on tourism, they see a comprehensive view of living space as a solution approach in contrast to a merely sectoral perspective. This can expand the strategic scope of a DMO. When focusing on living space, they recommend to bundle the resources of tourism, economic and regional development (D. Fischer & Bergamin, 2023).
Both approaches are looked at in more detail in the chapter 2.4 New approaches for destination development (p. 23).

Basically, Swiss DMOs encounter similar conditions and challenges as in other countries. However, the applied policy of Switzerland and thus also the tourism policy certainly differ in some essential points compared to most countries, which nevertheless leads to some differences. Along with this, the structure of Swiss tourism also needs to be looked at individually, which will be done in the next chapter.
The statements from the latest report by Laesser, Küng, et al. (2023) is examined more closely within the selected methods (see chapter 3 Methodology, p. 32), especially whether the proposed project logic as a new approach can be a potentially accepted solution.

2.1.3 Structure of Swiss tourism

At the federal level, various federal offices have an influence on the tourism sector, whereby the tourism industry is affiliated to the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO (Schweizer Tourismus-Verband, n.d.). Within the SECO, tourism policy belongs to the area of the so-called promotion activities (SECO, n.d.). The national organisation Switzerland Tourism is also active on behalf of the federal government. It is mainly responsible for the marketing of Switzerland as a tourist destination (SECO, 2021).
One level lower are cantonal tourism laws regulated, which most cantons have. Some cantons that are very active in the field of tourism even have their own tourism departments or offices. In addition to the federal government, the cantons are also responsible for the promotion of

tourism, mostly financially, and work together with the municipalities, regional and cantonal tourism associations for this purpose. On a comparable level, there are 13 tourism regions (see Figure 1) that jointly coordinate and communicate their tourism offers and/or maintain close relations. The tourism regions can consist of one or more cantons (Schweizer Tourismus-Verband, n.d.).

1 Graubünden / Grisons
2 Ostschweiz / Suisse orientale
3 Zürich Region / Région zurichoise
4 Luzern / Vierwaldstättersee / Lucerne / Lac des Quatre-Cantons
5 Basel Region / Région bâloise
6 Bern Region / Région Berne
7 Jura & Drei-Seen-Land / Jura & Trois-Lacs
8 Waadtland / Vaud
9 Genf / Genève
10 Wallis / Valais
11 Tessin / Tessin
12 Fribourg Region / Région Fribourg
13 Aargau und Solothurn Region / Région Argovie et Soleure

Stand 1. Januar 2023
État au 1er janvier 2023

0   25   50 km

Raumgliederung: Tourismusregionen
Niveau géographique: régions touristiques

Figure 1: The 13 tourism regions of Switzerland (Federal Statistical Office, 2023)

Within the cantons or tourism regions, tourism destinations are formed at a lower level, which are marketed and managed by (local) tourism organisations or destination management organisations. These can include a village, one or even several municipalities. The municipalities themselves can install a tourism department or a responsible person who takes care of the tourism development of the destination or merely define the framework conditions and, as the case may be, take responsibility for tourism promotion.

Laesser, Küng, et al. (2023) have compiled an exemplary overview of tourism organisations at the various levels (see Figure 2, p. 16, translated from German). The illustration shows that the basic structure with the different levels is given, but the organisational units can still differ greatly. Thus, it also applies in Switzerland that many things are context-dependent.
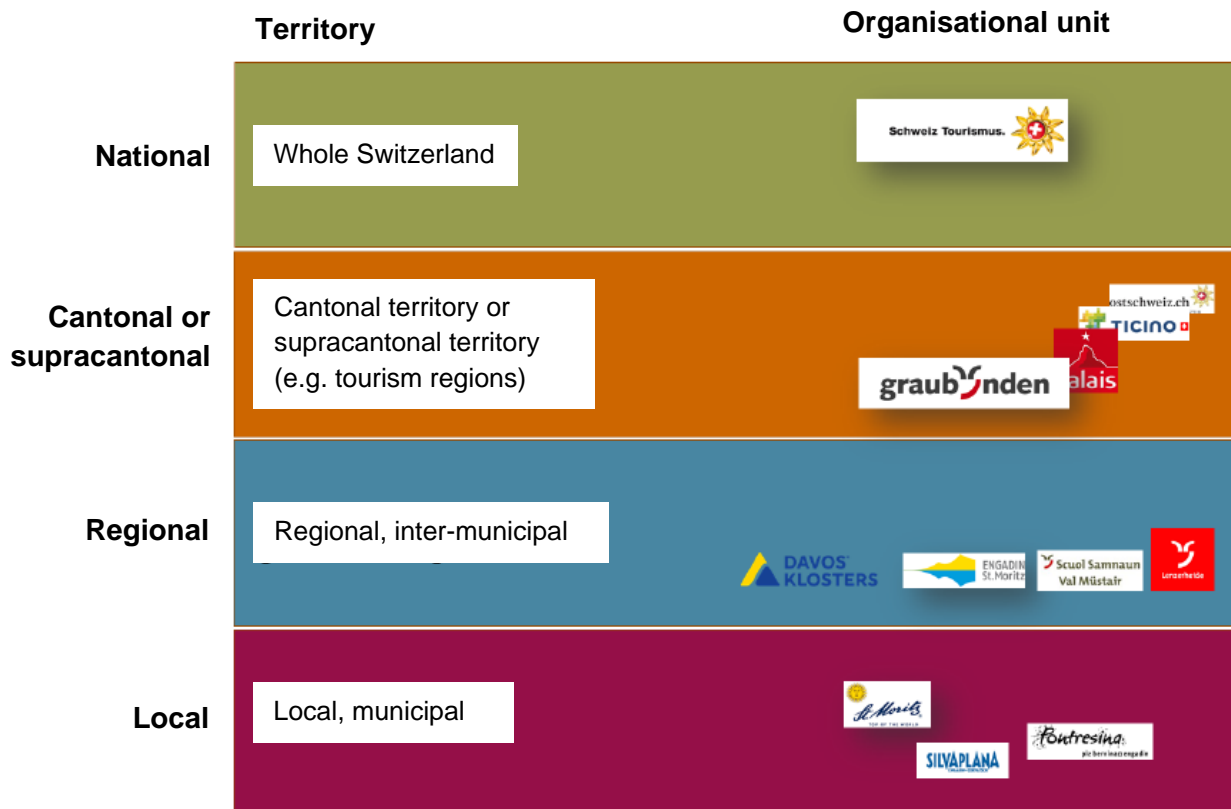
Figure 2: Exemplary illustration of tourism organisations at different levels (Laesser, Küng, et al., 2023)

Basically, destinations in Switzerland are organised in two ways (Laesser, Küng, et al., 2023):

- **Community type Destination:** Destination management is assigned to look after the interests of its "own" service providers. However, a single actor cannot control the entire destination and steer it alone. Tourism appears to be highly fragmented and a heterogeneous, agile system that includes many different market participants and thus a wide variety of interests.
- **Corporate type Destination:** The situation is different for this type. In the case of the "Corporate type Destination", it is primarily a company in the lead that manages the destination, for example like a resort, which serves a complete value chain. The complexity can be greatly reduced with this model, as it is structured more hierarchically.

In most regions in Switzerland, the "community model" is predominant, whereby alpine destinations often have a hybrid form, since in many of them a large part of the visitor flows can be traced back to one or just a few service providers, such as a mountain railway or a hotel chain. In cities, the community model comes into play primarily due to the many attractions in a confined space, whereas in rural areas, the lack of individual attractions can be the reason for the community model (Laesser, Küng, et al., 2023). In this model, there is usually a performance mandate for an organisation (tourism organisation or DMO) from the municipalities and possibly also from any other service providers (Anderegg et al., 2008).

In Switzerland, the "corporate model" cannot be identified in its pure form. The Weisse Arena Group in Laax or Andermatt Swiss Alps AG with their significant influence can be mentioned as the closest examples of this type (Laesser, Küng, et al., 2023).

2.1.4 Challenges of DMOs regarding destination management and development

This section will briefly discuss various challenges that DMOs are often confronted with. Spiegel (2022), for example, emphasises the following challenges for DMOs:

- Double function of the DMO: simultaneous management of the own company and the entire destination
- Unclear and difficult measurable goals regarding destination management
- Limited scope for influence
- Major power of interest groups
- DMO as one stakeholder of the destination among many others

According to Laesser, Küng et al. (2023), the majority of Swiss DMOs see themselves in the lead, at least for the strategic development and steering of the destination. However, the authors are convinced that destinations as a complex construct with all their different stakeholders and various interest groups cannot be controlled by a DMO. They justify this with...

- the lack of decision-making competencies and enforcement powers,
- the lack of financial resources at free disposal and without a performance mandate and
- the orientation towards consensus-building in order to satisfy "all" service providers, resulting in the lowest common denominator.

With this overview, the chapter 2.1 Destination management organisations concludes and the focus turns to the further important protagonist of this master thesis.

2.2 Regional development

2.2.1 International understanding of regional development

In order to get closer to the topic of regional development, a definition of what regional development means is also used here. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (n.d.) has described the term as follows:

> *"Regional development is a broad term but can be seen as a general effort to enhance well-being and living standards in all region types, from cities to rural areas, and improve their contribution to national performance and more inclusive, resilient societies."*

But first, a step back is taken to briefly look at what a region is. A region is seen as a delimited area. However, it is not only about the spatial delimitation, but also about the human factor, which defines the spatial organisation (Baidal, 2016). A region is considered supra-local, but so-called "sub-national". However, there is no agreement on how a region comes into being or is formed (Kühne & Weber, 2015).

In the past, regional development was mainly associated with economic interests such as growth, income and employment. However, economic development was also related to the prosperity and well-being of the population. In recent years, other aspects have increasingly been addressed, such as social, ecological, political and cultural issues (Pike et al., 2007).

To understand regional development a little more concretely, it is worth looking at the European Union's (EU) funding programme. The European Regional Development Fund aims to redress the imbalances between regions, thus strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion within the EU. Priorities have been set for the distribution of funding, aiming at a smarter,

greener, better connected and more social Europe (European Commission, n.d.–a). However, regional development itself is then coordinated at the national level (European Commission, n.d.–b).

2.2.2 Regional development in Switzerland

Regional development in Switzerland is defined as improving the quality of life and location and ensuring sustainable development. In this context, however, a region is not seen as a territorially delimited area, but rather as an area of action that experiences common challenges and attempts to overcome them with strategies and projects (regiosuisse, 2014).

In Switzerland, regional development takes place through the funding instrument "New Regional Policy (NRP)". The federal government, together with the cantons, promotes mountain regions, rural areas and border regions. Urban regions are excluded from this (SECO, 2017). With the NRP, the federal government wants to promote entrepreneurship, innovation and value creation in the mentioned areas. Furthermore, the competitiveness of these regions should be improved and new jobs created. These steps are intended to minimise regional disparities (SECO, 2022a).

The NRP pursues three orientations: Promoting innovation, creating synergies and sharing knowledge. Further, there is a division into five funding contents (SECO, 2017):
- Promotion of innovation and the transfer of knowledge
- Implementation of regional training and qualification measures
- Further development of crosscompany networks and partnerships
- Closure and extension of value chains
- Safeguarding of infrastructure / creation of new infrastructure

These five funding contents are divided into three thematic priorities: Industry, tourism and digitalisation (SECO, 2022a). In the third multi-year period (2024-2031), in addition to digitalisation, the cross-cutting topics of "local economy" and "sustainable development" are to be given more importance (The Federal Council, 2023). The cantons can define further funding priorities and ultimately decide which projects will be supported with the NRP funding programme. This is usually done in close exchange with the regions (SECO, 2017). Depending on the challenge, a region can be a valley, a part of a canton or even an area that spans several cantons or countries. The management of the specific region can be taken over by an association of municipalities or a regional conference, a canton or an organisation responsible for a cross-cantonal or cross-border area, a private company or even a research or innovation consortium (regiosuisse, 2014).

To support regional development in Switzerland, the network office regiosuisse was created in 2008 on behalf of the SECO. regiosuisse is responsible for knowledge management of the NRP at national, cantonal and regional level and promotes networking and cooperation between actors in regional development (Schönenberger & Mack, 2019).

For the preparation of the master thesis, cooperation with regiosuisse was sought in order to be able to benefit from the aforementioned network and Switzerland-wide knowledge in regional development. With Sarah Fux from regiosuisse, the co-advisor of the master thesis, the desired cooperation could be found.

regiosuisse (2014) has defined the following possible roles of regional development management:

- Networking partners
- Initiating specific networks and cooperations
- Moderate and manage

For regional management, Ecoplan (2018) has identified some more functions:

- Participation in the preparation of the cantonal implementation programme
- Development of (further) strategies
- Information and communication of the NRP
- Searching for / initiating, proposing, bundling and revising projects
- Evaluating projects
- Accompanying projects
- Project participation or management

The functions mentioned above show that regional development often takes place through the implementation of projects. This brings to mind the project logic proposed by Laesser, Küng, et al. (2023) for DMOs, which is discussed in chapter 2.4.1 Project logic (p. 23).

Briefly, the NRP priority on tourism needs to be looked at in more detail. To strengthen Swiss tourism, SECO (2022c) has defined that the NRP provides support for projects that…

- develop innovative products and services.
- implement regional qualification measures.
- establish inter-company networking and cooperation.
- secure and realise infrastructures.

This is intended to cope with the structural change in tourism and to strengthen the competitiveness of tourism destinations (SECO, 2022c). According to regiosuisse, NRP projects can be implemented by a wide variety of actors (see Figure 3). The network office considers tourism organisations to be particularly qualified for projects in the priority area of "tourism", if they are organised on a supra-municipal level and are professionally managed (regiosuisse, n.d.–e).
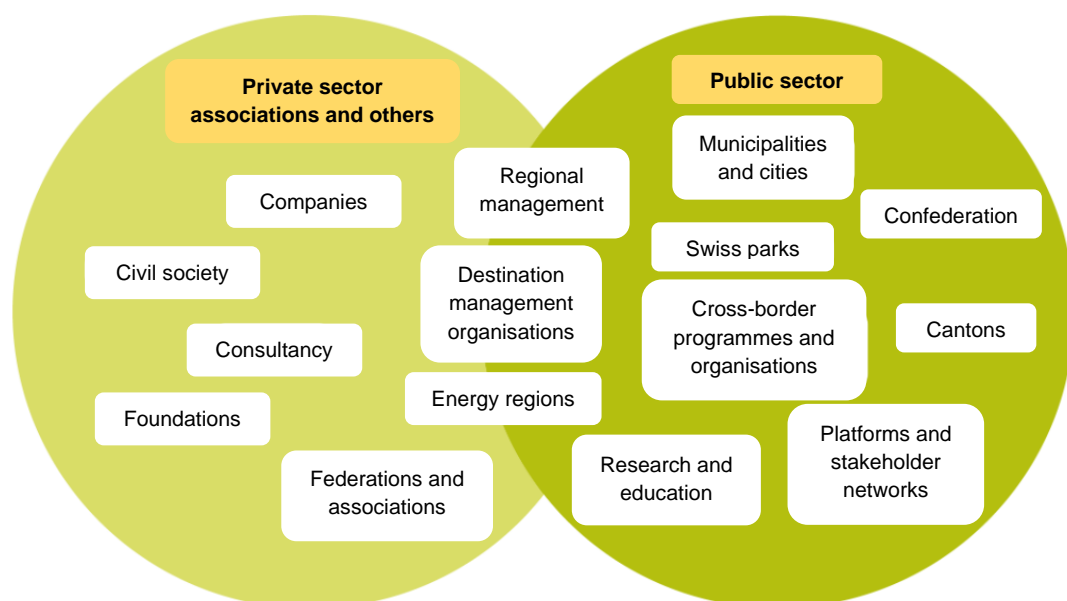

Figure 3: Actors in regional development, translated from regiosuisse (n.d.–a)

Thanks to the NRP funding programme, there are clear guidelines for the structure of regional development in Switzerland in terms of political processes. Nevertheless, there are already different variants of how regional development is approached at the cantonal level. Who finally implements the tasks of regional development is even more diverse, as the figure above (Figure 3, p. 19) shows with the different actors in regional development.

2.2.3 Challenges of regional development regarding region management and development

Regional development also faces various challenges when it comes to regional management or regional development. Lun et al. (2016) have identified various challenges related to the implementation of tourism in rural mountain communities:

- Distribution of responsibilities: competence allocation
- Attitude of the local population: hostility, scepticism, lack of interest, mistrust, convincement, creation of understanding
- Discrepancies of interest: jealousy, interest conflicts
- Administrative support: financing, support on political level
- External communication: Social media, promotion

Willi & Pütz (2018) also recognised challenges for regional development organisations:

- Offices take on project management to ensure that project ideas do not fizzle out, but this leads to a strain on limited capacities
- Unclear performance mandate leads to decreasing motivation of the responsible bodies
- Competences: Limited room for manoeuvre to fulfil the expectations of municipalities, companies and the population
- Generally formulated development approaches are quickly approved, but are then not binding

2.3 Cooperation

Now that the two actors have been analysed in more detail, this chapter looks at the cooperation between DMOs and regional development. In a second step, cooperation with other stakeholders will also be addressed.

2.3.1 Cooperation between DMOs and regional development

As mentioned above, tourism is often seen as an instrument for regional development (Binder et al., 2022; Costa & Lima, 2018; Kauppila et al., 2009; Rogerson, 2015; Timareva et al., 2015). The role of tourism is generally seen as positive, as it provides (new) employment and income for the region. However, regional development with the aims of improving the quality of life and well-being of the people goes much deeper (Rogerson, 2015). Nevertheless, it must be recognised that tourism also performs cross-cutting tasks. This increases with the focus on sustainable development (Mose et al., 2023). From this perspective, the understanding that regional development provides the basis for tourism development also fits (Spiegel, 2022). This raises the question of whether regional development and the DMO cannot meet on an equal footing.

Regardless of this, there is a consensus in the event of successful sustainable development that a coordinated approach is needed between decision-making bodies for regional and tourism development (Binder et al., 2022). Generally speaking, it is not a question of whether

cooperation is needed at all, but in what form and how it can be implemented appropriately (Meili & Schlumpf, 2021).

In pursuit of these questions, almost no generally valid theories on cooperation between DMOs and regional development could be found in the literature. Calero & Turner (2020) also mention in their literature review "Regional development and tourism" that there is a gap in the literature dealing with issues related to tourism and regional development. Apart from that, the literature merely repeatedly points out that the roles and structures – whether in tourism or in regional development – are very situational and must always be assessed in context, which makes it very difficult to draw comparisons (Ecoplan, 2018; Laesser, Küng, et al., 2023).

2.3.2 Cooperation with further tourism stakeholders

Co-operation between regional development and the DMO cannot be considered in isolation, as there are many other tourism players that influence destination management and development. Successful tourism and regional development require an interplay of the common interests and expectations of key stakeholders. This means first identifying the relevant stakeholders and then enabling them to participate in the development of the destination and the region. The establishment of a tourism committee with representatives of key stakeholders is a good way to achieve this (Schuler & Pirchl-Zaugg, 2021).

Who the relevant stakeholders are for a destination respectively a DMO or a regional development organisation is a question of individual evaluation. However, Sautter & Leisen (1999) categorised different stakeholder groups for orientation purposes (see Figure 4).
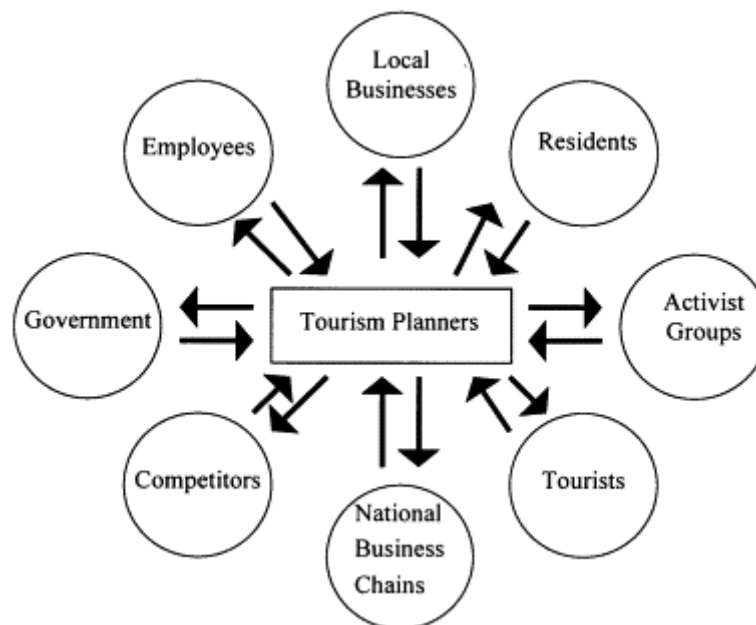
Figure 4: Tourism Stakeholder Map (Sautter & Leisen, 1999)

Due to the large number of interest groups in a tourism destination, these are very complex governance constructs. Distorted power relations between different stakeholders or a lack of leadership can also have a complicating effect, as tourism is a very fragmented sector (Islam et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, cooperation between the various stakeholders can be seen not only as negative and very time-consuming, but also as having many advantages that make well-functioning cooperation possible. Fuchs (2007) has identified the following potential advantages:

- Joint conceptual and strategic tourism development tasks can be realised.
- Jointly found solutions are more viable.
- The transparency and acceptance of decisions made on tourism development is increased by the joint process.
- This transparency also reduces the potential for conflict, as the positions and concerns of individual tourism stakeholders are exchanged at an early stage.
- The resulting personal contacts can build up social capital between the people involved.

The stakeholders in a destination can therefore see themselves as a community of destiny, but one that can develop together into a model for success (Fuchs, 2007).

regiosuisse itself has compiled a comprehensive list of factors for successful cooperation in regional development projects. The following is a selection of these factors, which are also applicable beyond project cooperation (regiosuisse, n.d.–f):

- Giving impetus and creating incentives
- Willingness for cooperation
- Working together and cooperating at an early stage
- Choosing the right partners (similar interests or problems, personal sympathies, need for exchange, etc.)
- Creating a common (project) understanding
- Building on common interests
- Understanding diversity as an opportunity and being willing to compromise (openness to other ideas)
- Demonstrating the benefits of cooperation and offering added value
- Clear rules and structures with sufficient flexibility
- Considering different competences, processes and speeds in decision-making

Bieri et al. (2017) describe the prerequisites for the success of operational cooperation. Below is a compilation of the prerequisites that promote cooperation as well as the basic prerequisites, partly at the personal level and partly at the inter-company and organisational level:

- Clear allocation of roles
- Clear strategy and direction
- Few but clear rules of behaviour
- Common standards
- Clear target agreement
- Target control
- Expertise
- Willingness to be transparent
- Ability to compromise
- Empathy
- Common goals and values of the managers
- Mutual trust
- Willingness to co-operate

– A certain willingness to take risks
– Ability to form personal networks

This large list shows that many different factors can be decisive and therefore many things can contribute to good cooperation, but this is also where the challenges can occur.

2.4 New approaches for destination development

As we have seen in the previous chapters, DMOs, but also regional development, have limited possibilities for action, be it due to the performance mandate, competences received or limited human and financial resources, it is important to examine and try out new approaches.
In the following subchapters, approaches are discussed that are still relatively new or – at least in research – are becoming more and more prevalent.

2.4.1 Project logic

As mentioned in chapter 2.1.2 Swiss understanding of DMOs and their role (p. 13), project logic is seen as a possible approach in destination management, which will be explored in more detail here.

The "Handbuch Projektmanagement" (engl. "Handbook of Project Management"), which is based among other things on the authors' experiences in Switzerland, Germany and Austria, points out that temporary organisations are increasingly being established in order to react more quickly and flexibly. Strongly solution-oriented forms of cooperation are in demand, which requires flexible role models (Kuster et al., 2019). Projects can furthermore reduce complexity and create commitment (Laesser, Küng, et al., 2023).

Before examining the project logic in the context of destination management, we will look at what is defined as a project and what are the characteristics of project management.
Kuster et al. (2019, p. 4) have determined the following definition for the term "project" (translated from German):

> *"A project is a unique, cross-divisional, time-limited, goal-oriented and interdisciplinary undertaking that is so important, critical and urgent that it cannot be handled within the existing line organisation but requires special organisational arrangements."*

The characteristics of a project as identified by the authors of the handbook complement the definition mentioned above (Kuster et al., 2019):
– Simple, flexible and rapidly reactive temporary organisation for optimal handling of the respective project
– Project management to facilitate and promote direct, interdisciplinary cooperation
– Clarified competencies of the leadership within the project organisation
– Easy accessibility of direct communication channels within and outside the project
– Activation of existing performance potential through teamwork and stimulating atmosphere
– Facilitating the recognition and handling of loyalty conflicts through clear affiliation to the project team
– Enabling a learning organisation by involving the people concerned

In order to reduce the complexity of destination management, or parts of it, and to benefit from other positive aspects as mentioned above, Laesser, Küng et al. (2023) recommend project logic as an approach to overcome the illusion of the DMO steering the destination. This approach can be used not only for destination management but also beyond, for example in regional development. As a preliminary step, it is necessary to identify common interests between the different stakeholders and thus define (collaborative) working processes. For this purpose, the authors have developed a process of so-called "intention building and implementation" for destination development, as shown in Figure 5 (translated from German) (Laesser, Küng, et al., 2023). Willi & Pütz (2018) also distinguish regional development processes into two similar phases: first the idea generation and project development phase and then the implementation phase. Going back to the model, with the common interests, the formation of intentions (input) takes place between the stakeholders. At the same time, the tasks and processes as well as the financing, responsibilities and other key elements of an implementation are determined. The intention building can take place within the framework of a workshop or, for example, at an information event at which representatives can pitch their ideas. After the formation of intentions, the implementation of these intentions follows in the form of implementation processes, the actual project implementation (output). The DMO can take on different roles throughout the process (Laesser, Küng, et al., 2023):

- Introduce own intentions
- Proactive leadership or reactive moderation of intention building (own or third party initiative)
- Coordination, responsibility or accountability for all implementation processes: e.g. ensure flow of information or act as mediator in case of conflicting goals
- Lead and take responsibility for individual implementation projects
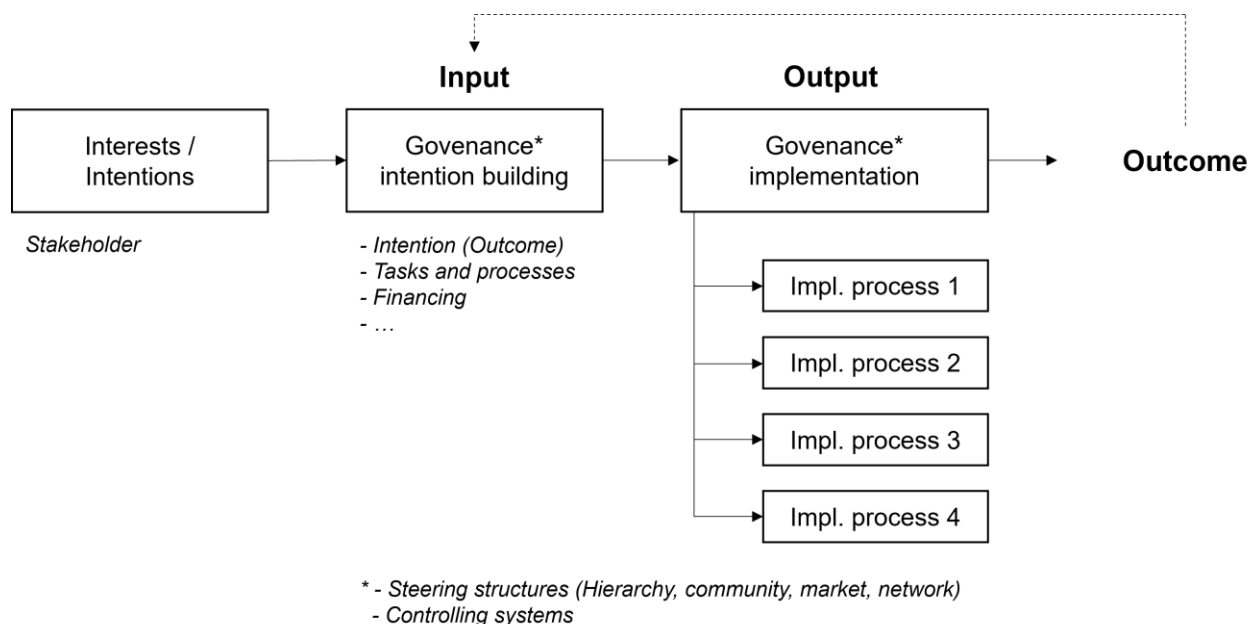
Figure 5: Destination development: Intention building and implementation (Laesser, Küng et al., 2023)

Project orientation in Switzerland is already well advanced, thanks to the introduction of Innotour[1] and NRP projects and related financial support from the federal government and the cantons (Hanser Consulting & Universität St. Gallen, 2023). A new approach and an important aspect of the above-mentioned project logic is financing. Laesser, Küng et al. (2023) propose a so-called destination development fund for this purpose. Figure 6 (translated form German) shows possible financing approaches in the project logic. The aforementioned destination development fund is also integrated into this conceivable model.
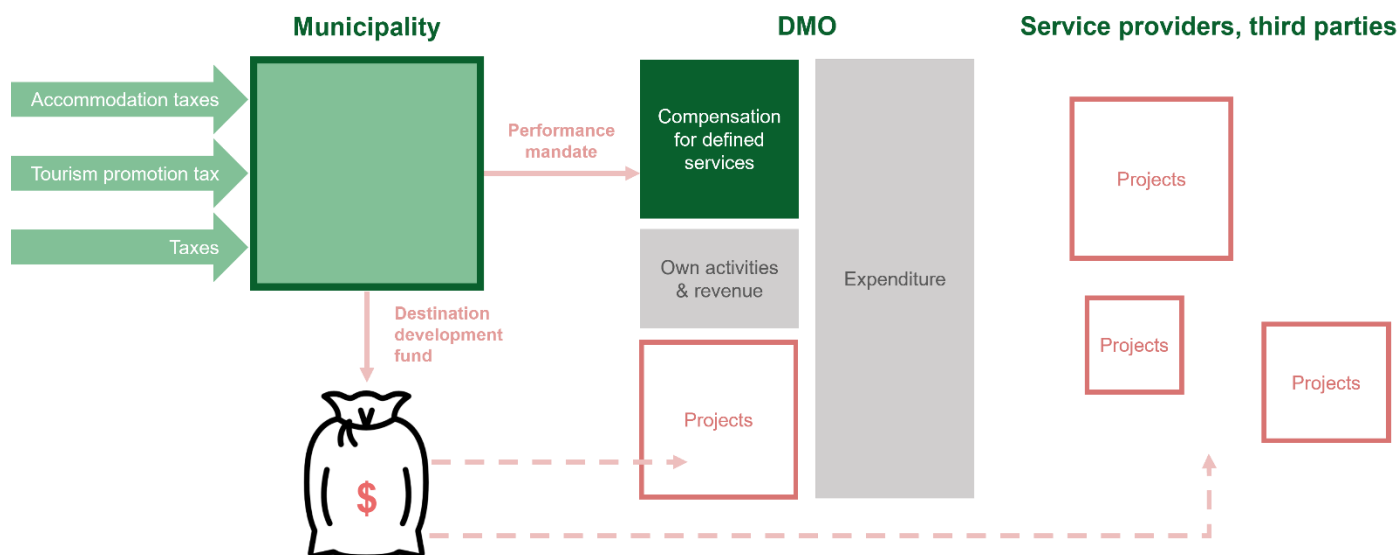
Figure 6: Possible financing approaches within the project logic (Laesser, Küng et al., 2023)

The municipalities can receive money through accommodation taxes, tourism promotion and taxes. As already happens in many destinations today, a part of this can be used to pay for the performance mandate that the DMO has to fulfil. Another part could be allocated to the destination development fund following the new project logic. This is used to finance the various projects within a destination, for which the DMO, the service providers and third parties can apply. This means that the different actors can take on the responsibility or tasks of the projects resulting from the formation of intentions or submit their own projects. The mechanism by which these funds are ultimately distributed can be determined by each destination and its stakeholders. This also applies to how much is still carried out by the DMO via the performance mandate and which tasks are commissioned as a project, for example as a mandate open to all stakeholders, and financed via the destination development fund (Hanser Consulting & Universität St. Gallen, 2023).

2.4.2   Destination governance

The term destination governance is increasingly used and was shaped above all by the realisation that the management model could not fully explain certain developments and specific conditions influence outcomes in practice (Beritelli, 2011; Pechlaner, 2019). With regard to destination development, three aspects have emerged historically and as a logical structure: Destination Planning, Destination Management, Destination Governance. Destination planning is about decisions and actions. Destination management embodies policy and strategy, and

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[1] Innotour is a national funding programme that promotes innovation, cooperation and knowledge development in Swiss tourism (SECO , 2024).

destination governance stands for norms, rules and "culture". Destination governance aims to help by identifying the reasons and proposing concepts and models for destination management and planning (Beritelli, 2011). The concept of governance therefore includes stakeholders from all parts of society. It comprises actors from the public and private sectors, as well as at local and institutional level (Çakar, 2018). Due to the increased political, economic and social challenges, which demand more and more flexibility, Pechlaner (2019) also sees a shift from destination management, representing hierarchical control, to a more flexible approach by means of destination governance. The characteristics described in relation to the governance of Zhang & Zhu (2014) are similar: governance clarifies the control and the rules of the game, whereby it is less about state control and self-evident leadership as well as a predetermined hierarchy. Rather, it is about taking several interest groups into account. Therefore, a destination that has conscious governance with various control elements is more efficient and competitive on the market in the long term. This involves organising collective action, which means building consensus internally and a competitive orientation externally. In addition to formal rules, interactions and processes, informal relationships and interactions must also be taken into account. In order to utilise these informal activities, interfaces to the formal structures and institutions are required, and thus permeable boundaries so that actors can communicate with each other. Whereby those are needed who represent the collective interest and can influence destination development (Raich, 2019).

Governance is therefore a tool with which conflicts and power relations between the actors in a destination can be overcome. Governance is also intended to enable the complexity that exists due to the numerous and diverse internal and external agencies and organisations to be managed. Especially for the sustainable development of a destination, governance is an integrated system that develops and implements management and planning processes in a way that minimises negative impacts and maximises advantages for the local community (Islam et al., 2017).

Beaumont & Dredge (2010, p. 10) identified characteristics of good tourism governance at destination level to create an effective governance structure:

- Positive cultures, constructive communication and engaged communities
- Transparency and accountability
- Vision and leadership
- Acceptance of diversity and the pursuit of equity and inclusiveness
- Developing knowledge, learning and sharing expertise
- Clear roles and responsibilities of participants and clear operational structures and processes of the network

In a similar way, regional governance is also considered. Willi & Pfütz (2018, p. 1) have noted the following in their factsheet about the governance of regional development:

> "Regional governance is often seen as an instrument to foster collaboration between municipalities, improve regional development processes, and make a region more competitive."

Regional governance also deals with the coordination of relationships and interactions in the region and what the steering structures look like (Meili & Schlumpf, 2021). The difference between the two governance approaches is that regional governance refers to the entire region, whereas destination governance focusses on the aspects relevant to tourism in a touristic

region respectively the destination (Spiegel, 2022). For the sake of simplicity, only destination governance is referred to in this master thesis.

2.4.3 Living space perspective

Another relatively new point of view is that destinations should develop along with the living space of the population. As well in this context, tourism is seen as part of regional development (Binder et al., 2022; Payer et al., 2023). The "living space" concept represents a more comprehensive view of the destination. It also takes into account aspects that are not directly related to tourism. These may include, for instance, non-tourism-related infrastructure, the quality of life of the local population or other sectors such as agriculture (Payer et al., 2023).

From a living space perspective, the preservation of competitiveness should be in balance with the quality of life of the local population, or even increase the quality of life. With the fulfilment of both aspects, one speaks of sustainable destination development, whereby it is important to be aware that tourism cannot be considered the only means of overcoming the challenges in rural areas (Binder et al., 2022). Especially in the Alpine regions, which are strongly dependent on tourism, a change from a purely sectoral perspective to a comprehensive living space approach represents a promising solution. Central to this is a sustainable location perspective that takes all three dimensions of sustainability into account (D. Fischer & Bergamin, 2023). Pechlaner (2019) has a similar view, for him the living and destination space represents a field of tension between the interests of travellers and those being visited. If these two spaces can be kept in balance, then he refers to a state of sustainability. For this reason, it is crucial that the quality of life from the perspective of the local population must also be integrated into the tourism development strategy. If the local population can evaluate how tourism affects different areas of life, such as living space or the landscape, then sustainable tourism development can be facilitated (Pechlaner, 2019).

In Austria, the research and development project "GoRegion" was recently implemented, which analysed the federal government's role in shaping and steering regional levels of action in Austria using the example of tourism (M. Fischer et al., 2023). During the project process, a change in orientation from tourism destination to living space became apparent. The term "quality of life" is also becoming increasingly important in Austrian regional development within the framework of regional funding (Payer et al., 2023). As already mentioned above, D. Fischer & Bergamin (2023) also see this as a possible solution for Switzerland, as they stated in their article "The role of DMO under review – ideas in times of transformation" (translated from German). In this article, one of five so-called game changers is named "From tourism to living space focus", which, among other game changers, can help DMOs deal successfully with the increasing uncertainties and complexity of the environment.
Especially in regions with a strong focus on tourism, bringing the region and the destination closer together can help to overcome such challenges. The shortage of skilled labour, regional economic cycles or the social compatibility of tourism can be mentioned here, for example. Both the destination and the region are pursuing a similar goal with "attractive and viable areas". However, this shows that the term living space is more closely associated with the spatial concept of a region than a destination (Payer et al., 2023).

The approach of the living space perspective thus entails a rethink of the DMO's understanding of its role. The strategic scope of a DMO changes and can therefore be expanded. The new

understanding of roles means a reinforcement of a DMO's roles inwards (D. Fischer & Bergamin, 2023). In the context of the change in perspective, D. Fischer & Bergamin (2023) see various new roles or roles with a stronger focus:

- Dialogue and solution platform
- Networking role with a strategic character
- Orchestrator in the living space ecosystem

In addition, new respectively more in-depth competences are required in the following topics (D. Fischer & Bergamin, 2023):

- Sustainability
- Resilience
- Human Resources
- Education
- System development
- Complexity management

Erschbamer et al. (2021) moreover point out that the quantitative and qualitative growth of tourism should be measured by the quality of life of the population in combination with the quality of experience of the guests.

2.5 Destinations examined

This chapter presents the two destinations that provided an insight into the cooperation between the different stakeholders and other topics for the master's thesis. How this selection was made is explained in more detail in the chapter 3.2 Data collection (p. 32).

2.5.1 Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair

The destination is located in the very east of Switzerland and borders Austria and Italy. It was formed from three valleys, which today constitute the so-called "sub-regions": Engadin Scuol Zernez (Lower Engadin), Samnaun and Val Müstair. Since 2001, the Engadin Scuol Tourismus AG (ESTAG) has been responsible for marketing and guest information offices for the former Lower Engadin municipalities (excluding Zernez). As part of the Grisons tourism reform, the DMO Tourismus Engadin Scuol Samnaun Val Müstair AG (TESSVM) was finally created with the three contractual partners ESTAG, Samnaun Tourism and the municipality of Val Müstair. Despite the merger, care was taken to ensure that each sub-region retained its individual positioning (Amt für Wirtschaft und Tourismus Graubünden, 2013a). Figure 7 (translated from German) shows the unique selling points (USPs) of the individual sub-regions (TESSVM, 2021).

Samnaun	Engadin Scuol Zernez	Val Müstair
Silvretta Ski Arena Samnaun / Ischgl	Swiss National Park / UNESCO Biosphere Reserve	
	Engadin villages / lived culture+	
Top Events	Mineral water Bogn Engiadina	Natur Park Biosfera Val Müstair
Duty-free shopping pleasure		UNESCO World Heritage St. Johann Monastery

Figure 7: Unique selling points of the three sub-regions (TESSVM, 2021)

The TESSVM is organised as a public limited company with the following current shareholders (TESSVM, n.d.):
- Sub-region Engadin Scuol Zernez:
  - Municipality Scuol (35%)
  - Municipality Zernez (12%)
  - Municipality Valsot (2%)
- Sub-region Samnaun:
  - Samnaun Tourism (41%)
- Sub-region Val Müstair:
  - Municipality Val Müstair (10%)

In recent years, around one million overnight stays (hotels and holiday accommodation) have been counted in the destination. Whereby overnight stays in the parahotel sector in Val Müstair have not been counted since 2019, which makes a difference of several tens of thousands. The DMO has a total budget of around six million francs and employs about 40 people (TESSVM, 2023).

The entire destination perimeter of the destination consists of the five municipalities of Scuol, Samnaun, Val Müstair, Valsot and Zernez. These in turn form the political region Engiadina Bassa/Val Müstair, a public entity that exclusively fulfils tasks of the canton and the municipalities. The region is managed by the President's Conference, which consists of the mayors of the five municipalities. Operational management is carried out by the head office, where the regional development department is finally affiliated. A regional developer is responsible for the regional development in cooperation with the strategic committees (Regiun Engiadina Bassa/Val Müstair, n.d.–a).
A comprehensive territorial reform was implemented in the canton of Grisons at the beginning of 2016. The 39 counties, 14 regional associations and eleven districts that existed at the time were ultimately transformed into eleven regions, which still exist today – including the Engiadina Bassa/Val Müstair region (Standeskanzlei Graubünden, 2015).

The region pursues the goal of being an attractive living, working, residential and holiday area, which it aims to achieve through regional development together with regional companies, organisations and individual citizens. The contribution of regional development is a combination of (Regiun Engiadina Bassa/Val Müstair, n.d.–b):
- Coordination of the region's strategic direction ("Agenda 2030" process)
- Regional implementation of the federal and cantonal NRP
- Providing advisory support to partners in project development
- Networking of partners and promotion of cooperation
- Initiating regional exchange on current topics

2.5.2 Leukerbad
Four municipalities belong to the destination of Leukerbad: Leukerbad, Albinen, Inden and Varen. The Valais village Leukerbad has been famous for its thermal waters for centuries. The entire destination is also part of the Pfyn-Finges Nature Park (My Leukerbad AG, n.d.–a).

The destination is focussing on its USPs and has defined four business areas for this purpose: Experience, Health Care, (Thermal) Water, Nature. Building on this, they are focussing on the target groups of hiking, biking, snow sports, health and pleasure & culture (see Figure 8) (My Leukerbad AG, 2022).

In order to achieve a rapid turnaround for various financially struggling tourism service providers, the company organisation My Leukerbad AG was created in 2016 (My Leukerbad AG, n.d.– b). In 2017, the operational launch of My Leukerbad AG finally started and by the beginning of 2018, operations, staff and/or executive management had been integrated from the following companies (My Leukerbad AG, 2022):

Figure 8: Strategic business areas and the target groups based on them (My Leukerbad AG, 2022)

- – Torrent-Bahnen (mountain railway)
- – Leukerbad Tourismus
- – Skilift Erli GmbH (snow park)
- – Leukerbad Therme
- – Sportzentrum AG (sport arena)
- – Busbetriebe Leuk-Leukerbad AG (LLB)

My Leukerbad AG thus manages six businesses operationally and represents an operating company. However, the infrastructures are still separate from it as infrastructure companies and will continue to be managed separately in strategic terms (Grämiger, 2022). The public limited company My Leukerbad is owned 50 per cent by the municipality of Leukerbad and 50 per cent by the Burgergemeinde (municipality of the citizens of Leukerbad). Today, the My Leukerbad AG employs a total of 130 staff and 60 seasonal employees (My Leukerbad AG, 2022). My Leukerbad AG including LLB generated a turnover of over 28 million in the 2022/2023 financial year. Around 750,000 overnight stays were recorded in the same year (My Leukerbad AG, 2023).

The regional development company responsible for the destination of Leukerbad is the Regions- und Wirtschaftszentrum Oberwallis AG (RWO AG) (Regional and Economic Centre Upper Valais AG). It was founded in 2008 and is held 33% by the Canton of Valais, 33% by the Verein Wirtschaftsforum Oberwallis (Association Economic Forum Upper Valais) and 34% by the Verein Region Oberwallis (Association Region Upper Valais). These three institutions and the Brig-Visp-Naters agglomeration have performance agreements with the RWO AG, which specify tasks in the areas of regional policy and economic promotion (RW Oberwallis AG, n.d.– b):

- Regional management and marketing for the Upper Valais region
- Operation of a contact point for projects of regional importance by municipalities and third parties
- Collaboration in the strategy development of the Upper Valais region
- Support for economic development
- Support for further education and knowledge transfer
- Business management of the Brig-Visp-Naters agglomeration conference
- Business management of other institutions

The board of directors of RWO AG includes three representatives each from the economy, the canton of Valais and the Verein Region Oberwallis (RW Oberwallis AG, n.d.–b).

The aim of the RWO AG is to "bundle regional interests, exploit potential and increase value creation in the region" as a strategic driving force and developer of the region, promoting an attractive economic and living environment in Upper Valais (RW Oberwallis AG, n.d.–c). For this purpose, they offer the following services (RW Oberwallis AG, n.d.–a):

- Project management: Initiation, support and realisation of projects
- Financial support: Support in securing project financing
- Process consulting: Consultation on the procedure for concretising project ideas
- Business management: Carrying out coordination, communication and administrative tasks under mandate

The STRATOS network (Strategic Tourism Scenarios), which was established in 2014 by the Upper Valais destinations together with PostBus Valais and the Matterhorn Gotthard Railway, should also be mentioned. The cantonal marketing organisation Valais/Wallis Promotion has been part of the network since 2016. The STRATOS network is used to exchange information and knowledge, recognise potential topics and launch independent projects. The RWO AG manages the network and offers support in project and process management as required (RW Oberwallis AG, n.d.–d).

3   Methodology

This chapter defines the methodology of the master thesis. A qualitative approach with an explorative inductive approach was chosen, which will be explained in more detail in the next subchapter. After that, the data collection procedure is described followed by the chosen analysis method. Finally, a description of the quality criteria and the ethical consideration are presented.

3.1   Qualitative research approach

In order to achieve the defined objectives, a qualitative inductive research approach was chosen. By applying this method, complex phenomena and issues can be investigated from a holistic perspective (Fredebeul-Krein, 2012). This is very crucial, as destinations respectively regions are very complex constructs. Each destination is structured differently, so the results depend strongly on the context. Unlike quantitative research, where researchers want to generalise their results as far as possible, qualitative research allows an understanding of the findings in relation to the context (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The explorative inductive approach was chosen because the topic of successful cooperation between DMOs and regional development in Switzerland has hardly been investigated and no theory exists to date. An explorative inductive research approach was used to investigate a relatively unknown topic and to generate new knowledge in order to generate new theories or concepts (Bryman & Bell, 2011). With an inductive approach– the collection of individual, specific statements – general statements can be obtained (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

3.2   Data collection

In the case of complex and possibly contradictory topics, it is recommended to use multiple data collection methods. When more than one method or data source is used, it is called triangulation. This can increase the reliability of the data. Although the use of multiple methods is more common in quantitative research, the application of triangulation also occurs in qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). For qualitative research, open-ended questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions have long been used as data collection methods. They are considered particularly suitable for exploratory research in order to obtain answers that are as "open" as possible (Mason et al., 2010).

Since the work deals with something that has not yet been widely researched, more than one data collection method will be used. One data source is literature review, in addition interviews with stakeholders in different destinations as well as with experts have been chosen. Those methods and the reason for their choice are explained in more detail below.

3.2.1   Literature review

In order to obtain an in-depth knowledge and the current status of the chosen topic, a literature review was compiled.

A literature review can be conducted in two ways, as a systematic review or narrative review (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Dwyer et al., 2012). A systematic review conducted with a replicable and transparent process enables to research in a more objective way. The traditionally conducted narrative reviews, on the other hand, are less focused and allow for more wide-ranging research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The narrative reviews are considered selective and do not follow any formal rules. However, this method makes it possible to identify the most important literature. In

addition, the narrative approach is suitable to point out which further research is still lacking or to provide justification for the conceptualisation of a certain research study (Dwyer et al., 2012). Even though the narrative overview is usually subjective, which can be seen as a point of criticism, the method of the narrative overview has been chosen for the master thesis in order to find the most relevant articles, reports, information on the internet etc. and because the research gap can be shown very well.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

A central component of this study is the primary data collection through in-depth interviews. Interviews enable to find out ideas, thoughts, and experiences from interviewees. Conducting interviews is a flexible method that can provide descriptive, explanatory, and/or exploratory data (Dwyer et al., 2012). The explorative character of the chosen method is especially important for the comparison between different destinations, as it is about the understanding and perception of individual stakeholders and thus their thoughts and experiences on the cooperation between the DMO and regional development.

Qualitative interviews can be divided into two groups: unstructured and semi-structured interviews. An unstructured interview can almost be seen as a conversation. The interviewer may start with only one question and then just respond with follow-up questions to answers that seem relevant (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In the semi-structured interview, the interviewer has several prepared questions structured according to a guideline, but has the freedom to reformulate questions, adapt them or ask new follow-up questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Hopf, 2004). Interviews have been used much more frequently as a research method in tourism research since the noughties than before. Interviews are used especially for research on visitor behaviour, consumer psychology and cultural heritage, but also for destination development and tourism industry management (Dwyer et al., 2012).

The author is convinced that semi-structured interviews was the most suitable research method for the master thesis in order to gain new knowledge about the cooperation between DMOs and regional development within Switzerland.

Selection of the destinations

After discussions with the advisor and the co-advisor, it was decided that two destinations should be compared. It became apparent that one of the two destinations should be the Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair holiday region because the researcher had previously worked there. The familiarity with the destination and the well-established network aloud the author to find enough people who were available for an interview. In addition, there was the possibility that the interviewees had fewer barriers to get in touch with potential interview partners due to knowing each other personally. The familiarity was thought to be an additional benefit in order to provide more insights than they would perhaps do to a stranger. As Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair tends to be a medium-sized mountain destination, the second destination was supposed to be a larger, urban destination. For this reason, Lucerne was chosen as the second destination. But the Lucerne regional developer was unavailable for an interview due to time constraints, which would have meant that a key stakeholder would have been missing. The search therefore continued and the selection criteria were adjusted. In the end, the author decided in favour of the destination Leukerbad, as it had only recently developed a new, interesting model and the regional development in the canton of Valais is set up very differently from that in the Grisons, although both being mountain and tourism cantons.

Information on the two destinations and the responsible DMOs and regional development organisations can be found in the chapter 2.5 on page 28.

Selection of the Interviewees

In order to obtain the desired amount and, above all, meaningful data, the responsible regional development organisations and the DMOs of the two destinations were contacted first. If the author already knew people from the organisations, she asked them directly, otherwise the organisations were contacted in general. During the initial interviews, the author asked which other stakeholders might be of interest for the master thesis and could be interviewed. To facilitate comparison, it was ultimately ensured that the same actor categories were represented at both destinations. In the end, one mayor, one hotelier respectively hotelier association president, one mountain railway director and the respective regional nature park director were interviewed for each destination.

The following table shows the various interviewees and provides further information.

Table 1: Interviewees from the destinations Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair and Leukerbad

Actor	Organisation	Person	Function	Date	Duration
Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair					
Destination management organisation	Tourismus Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair AG (TESSVM)	Sven Berchtold	Product Manager Mountaineering Villages & Sustainability	10.11.23	45 min
Regional development	Regiun Engiadina Bassa/Val Müstair	Martina Schlapbach	Regional Developer	03.11.23	1 h 5 min
Municipality	Municipality of Samnaun	Daniel Högger	Mayor	14.12.23	47 min
Nature park	Biosfera Val Müstair	David Spinnler	Managing Director	17.11.23	1 h 12 min
Hotel	Hotelier Association Lower Engadin / Belvedere Hotel Familie	René Stoye	President / Manager Belvedere Hotel Familie Scuol	11.12.23	54 min
Mountain railway	Bergbahnen Scuol AG	Andri Poo	Director	18.12.23	57 min
Leukerbad					
Destination management organisation	My Leukerbad AG	Urs Zurbriggen	CEO	20.11.23	47 min
Regional development	RW Oberwallis AG	Esther Schlumpf	Deputy Managing Director	20.11.23	1 h 11 min
Municipality	Municipality of Leukerbad	Christian Grichting	Mayor	22.12.23	53 min
Nature park	Pfyn-Finges Nature Park	Peter Oggier	Director	18.12.23	53 min

Hotel	Hotel and Gastronomy Association (HOGA) / Hotel Alpina	Carine Brendel	President / Co-owner	01.12.23	47 min
Mountain railway	Gemmibahnen	Wolfgang Loretan	Director	18.12.23	56 min

Interview guide

An interview guide was prepared in advance. The guide included sociodemographic information such as name, function and number of years in the respective function. The interview guide defined the topics to be discussed and contained some specific questions that the author wanted to have answered or in order to deepen a topic if necessary. Slightly different interview guides were created, which were tailored to the respective group of actors. Specifically, these were the experts, the DMOs, the regional development organisations and the other stakeholders. Altogether, five subject areas were defined, which were sent to the interviewees in advance as a rough overview. Briefly summarised, these were the five main topics:

- Roles and tasks of the DMO
- Roles and tasks of regional development
- Understanding of roles of other stakeholders and leading a destination
- Cooperation between regional development and the DMO as well as other stakeholders
- Further approaches (project logic, destination governance, living space perspective)

An example of such an interview guide can be found in Appendix I on page 91.

Execution

Finally, for time and logistical reasons, the interviews (including the expert interviews) were mostly conducted online via video conference using the Teams programme. Exceptions were one interview in person on site and one by telephone. The interviews were captured using a recording app and, if they were conducted online to be on the safe side, they were additionally recorded using the Teams programme. The interviews were then transcribed using the Notta programme. In order to give the interviewees the opportunity to express themselves without constraint and as freely as possible, the interviews were conducted in Swiss German. The Notta programme then transcribed the content into German. As the ability to recognise and understand Swiss German through such programmes is still very limited, the transcriptions were carefully reviewed and corrected in detail. Finally, the interviews were coded using the MaxQDA programme, which is described in more detail in chapter 3.3 Data analysis (p. 37).

3.2.3 Expert interviews

In addition to the interviews with the stakeholders in the destinations, so-called expert interviews were conducted. The aim was to mirror the findings from the literature and to obtain a view from outside the destinations.

Nowadays, expert interviews are considered a standard method of qualitative research and are used in the fields of political science as well as social research (Bogner et al., 2018). Kaiser (2021) distinguishes between three types of expert interviews:

- The explorative research interview
- The guideline-based expert interview
- The plausibility interview

The exploratory research interview is about seeking out and exploring facts. The expert knowledge is mainly used to gather information about areas that have been little researched so far. Structured interviews are used to gain specific information that can not be obtained from other sources. The third type of expert interview allows to check the plausibility of scientific research results. In this way, recommendations derived from one's own research can be tested for their practical applicability (Kaiser, 2021).

Experts are defined as persons who have special knowledge or skills in the relevant subject area and are considered professionals in their field (Bogner et al., 2018). Various questions need to be asked before selecting the experts (Kaiser, 2021):

1. Which expert is in possession of the relevant information?
2. Which of these experts is the most capable of providing accurate information?
3. Which of these experts is most likely to be accessible as well as willing to share this information?

Finally, a distinction can be made between three dimensions of the experts' knowledge: Operational knowledge, contextual knowledge and interpretative knowledge (Kaiser, 2021).

Since the author herself already knows a lot about destination management through her professional experience, but less about regional development, an interview was held with an expert from the field of regional development for this master thesis. This interview was conducted as a mixture of the three interview types. On the one hand, it was explorative, as there is little research available on the chosen topic of the master thesis. On the other hand, the interview was semi-structured, as a certain selection of questions needed to be clarified. And finally, the findings from the literature needed to be mirrored and thus checked for their plausibility. Two interviews were also held in a similar form with experts from the canton of the respective destinations. The aim was to do a general assessment as well as to obtain specific perceptions of the destination concerned from an external perspective.

Selection of the interviewees

Regarding the selection of the expert, the search was limited to the organisation regiosuisse, which, as already mentioned, is the platform for regional development in Switzerland. With Sarah Fux, the co-advisor of this master thesis, it was possible to find the expert who was most available and willing to provide the author with information.

In both cantons, the responsible authority was identified and, as with the interviews in the destinations, either the person was asked directly or the office was left to decide who would make themselves available. Table 2 lists the three experts who were interviewed.

Table 2: Interviewed experts

Actor	Organisation	Person	Function	Date	Duration
Network unit for regional development	regiosuisse (Planaval AG)	Sarah Fux	Project Leader (Senior Project Leader)	02.11.23	45 min
Canton	Economic Development and Tourism Agency (AWT), Canton of the Grisons	Michael Caflisch	Head of Tourism Development	11.12.23	58 min

Canton	Department for Economy, Tourism and Innovation (DWTI), Canton of Valais	Werner Zenhäusern	Research associate	19.12.23	52 min

Interview guide and execution

As already mentioned in the previous subchapter, the guides for the expert interviews and their conducting were carried out in a similar way to the other interviews (see 3.2.2, p. 35). Likewise, the analysis was carried out together with the interviews of the destinations, which is described in more detail in the following subchapter.

3.3   Data analysis

Qualitative content analysis was chosen to analyse the data, as this method of analysis can be applied well to interviews (Morgan & Hoffman, 2018; Schreier, 2012). Qualitative data analysis, also called QCA for short, is used when a lot of text has to be dealt with and has to be reduced for the interpretation of the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Schreier, 2012). QCA is about analysing the data material systematically but flexibly at the same time (Schreier, 2012). Elo & Kyngäs (2008) explain the coding process as applying open coding and then creating categories from it. They refer to this procedure for inductive content analysis, meaning when there are no previous studies on the research area, or these are only fragmented (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In the aforementioned QCA process, the coding frame is also flexible and can be adapted at any time if necessary (Schreier, 2012).

Since the inductive approach was chosen for the master thesis, open coding was used. However, as the first codes were already created in the mind during transcription, even without intention, a rough coding frame, or also called codebook, was defined before coding in order to have an initial framework that could be used to start with.

To carry out the analysis, the programme MaxQDA version 24.1.0 was used. QDA stands for Qualitative Data Analysis. The programme is not an analysis tool in itself, but it facilitates coding, helps to structure them and provides a good overview (Woolf & Silver, 2018).

In addition to the categories already created in the codebook, the codes were continuously compared with each other during coding and (new) categories were created from them. Table 3 (p. 38) shows the codebook with the main categories and their subcategories. Additional subcategories were applied for more detailed data analysis, but these were used for process only and are not shown here for better clarity. After that, connections and differences between the categories were sought (Bryman & Bell, 2011) in order to be able to answer open questions, identify relevant findings and thus achieve the defined objectives. Finally, the outcomes were mirrored with the literature (see chapter 5 Discussion, p. 74).

Table 3: Codebook used for analysing the interviews

Codebook
Destination Management Organisation
Development / History
Structure
Performance mandate
Expectations
Roles
Tasks
Influence on destination management & development
Challenges
Regional development
Development / History
Structure
Performance mandate
Roles
Tasks
Influence on destination management & development
Other stakeholders' roles and tasks
Own role as a stakeholder
Other active stakeholders
Heterogeneous / Individual
Influence on destination management & development
Leading a destination
One leading organisation
One leading organisation by areas
Joint leadership
Strategy
Structure
Strength of individual persons/organisations
Cooperation
Structure of destination/region
Overlapping tasks and roles
Regularity and form of exchange
Desired/Planned changes
Destination-specific / Person-dependent
Challenges
Success factors
New approaches for destination development
Project logic
Destination governance
Living space perspective
More

3.4 Quality criteria

To ensure the trustworthiness and high-quality research of the work, the following quality criteria, as defined by Bryman & Bell (2011), have been established and adhered to.

- **Credibility:** Care was taken to ensure that the interviews were well prepared and carefully conducted. If something was not clear, questions were immediately asked in the interview.
- **Dependability:** The interviews were conducted in accordance with the interview guide. Data collection is explained in detail in chapter 3.2 (p. 32) and is therefore transparent. The collected data was processed and is stored in a responsible and well-structured manner.
- **Confirmability:** In order to avoid personal interests and possible biases, the author made herself aware of her previous experience in the field of the master thesis topic and tried to be critical and aware of possible biases, especially during the interviews and when analysing the data.
- **Transferability:** The master thesis will be available on request via the author and the University of Applied Sciences of the Grisons and, if relevant, in consultation with the interview participants. Thus, interested parties from tourism, regional development or other universities in Switzerland can benefit from the findings.

3.5 Ethical consideration

In addition to the quality criteria, ethical considerations were taken into account. Care was taken to ensure that no participants were put at risk, that they were informed about the research and the interview before giving their consent, that their privacy was not violated and that there was no deception (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Along with the request for an interview, the potential participants were informed about the study in writing by email. At the beginning of the interview, the master thesis and the aim of the interview were briefly presented again. Verbal consent was obtained before the first questions were asked to ensure that the interviewees' names and functions could be mentioned. At the end of the interview, it was asked whether all statements made could be used. On request, quotes used were sent to the persons concerned for verification.

With regard to data protection, secure storage by the author is guaranteed so that only she has access to the complete data. The transcripts can be made available on request and with the consent of the interviewees.

4 Results

This chapter presents the results of the interviews. These are summarised based on the five subject areas of the interviews. The interviews with the destinations and its stakeholders as well as the expert interviews were analysed in combination and are presented here together.

It should be mentioned that the direct quotes from the interview transcripts were translated verbatim into English.

4.1 Destination management organisations

The first topic of the interviews focussed on DMOs and their roles and tasks as well as their influence on destination management and destination development. At the beginning, developments of the destinations and their structure were examined.

Destination structure

The interviewees often first analysed how the DMO or the destination is structured. It was repeatedly mentioned that the two destinations have special characteristics in their structure, which should always be taken into account in the following topics. The two destinations analysed therefore have a very different structure (see chapter 2.5, p. 28), which also leads to different advantages but also challenges.

The special characteristic of the destination Leukerbad is obviously the still relatively new model of My Leukerbad AG, which manages six tourism businesses, including the former Leukerbad Tourism Association. Clear demarcation of tasks is particularly important here, as the CEO of My Leukerbad AG, Urs Zurbriggen, explains:

> "*Of course, there are certain blurrinesses, you have to be aware of that, because on the one hand we have a role as a DMO, which is basically for everyone, external communication, marketing and so on, for the whole destination, so also for businesses that don't belong to My Leukerbad. And on the other hand, we are a tourism service provider, we have a mountain railway, we have a thermal spa, we have a sports centre, so we are actually one of many, I always say, and as a DMO we are actually one for everyone. And there are also some demarcations or topics that need to be clearly separated, internally.*"

The holiday region Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair, in contrast, is characterised by the fact that it combines three valleys – so-called sub-regions – into one destination. It therefore has a lot to offer, for example, a regional nature park, the only Swiss national park and the only duty-free area in Switzerland, but the DMO has to ensure how it fulfils the different needs of the various service providers. Sven Berchtold, product manager Mountaineering Villages & Sustainability at the TESSVM, explains it as follows:

> "*There is also certainly the issue of the three sub-regions that we have, Val Müstair, Engadin Scuol Zernez and Samnaun, which "tick" completely differently, almost everyone, and have different partners in them. And we try to match everything, so that each sub-region does not miss out.*"

With regard to destination structures, it was often pointed out that the canton of Valais still has a large number of small-scale tourism organisations, but also other tourism businesses, which usually leads to unprofessionally managed destinations or organisations. According to Michael

Caflisch, Head of Tourism Development at the Economic Development and Tourism Agency of the canton of the Grisons, in the past there were also over 100 tourist and spa associations in Graubünden. In the mid-noughties, however, the canton had declared that it is necessary to think and act in larger areas, which eventually led to many destination mergers. This is also how the TESSVM came into being at that time.

These changes brought with them new tasks and roles for the DMOs. This also applies to the new model of My Leukerbad AG, as mentioned by the mayor of Leukerbad, Christian Grichting:

> *"Or the expectation that My Leukerbad has to do everything now, which is obviously not the case. [...] But simply the expectation of other service providers or those involved in tourism went to infinity partially here, of course."*

More on the destination structures in Valais in general will be discussed later in this chapter.

Roles and tasks

Looking at the roles and tasks of DMOs mentioned, it is noticeable that marketing and communication is still the main task or certainly one of the main tasks of a DMO. This was stated and discussed by far the most.

> *"First and foremost, of course, I see the destination management organisation as a destination marketing organisation. In other words, to sell what we are, for what we stand for, to present it to the outside world and to market it accordingly."* [René Stoye, president of the Hotelier Association Lower Engadin]

> *"But the M as management and marketing is still very much marketing."* [Peter Oggier, director of the Pfyn-Finges Nature Park]

> *"The task of Leukerbad Tourism is simply to market the resort to the outside and to the inside. That is already the main task."* [Wolfgang Loretan, director of the mountain railway Gemmibahnen]

The development of offers was also a frequent subject in the interviews. The TESSVM, for example, has a quite special history with regard to the development of offers and who is responsible for that. The author herself did her internship in the field of offer development at the TESSVM, although the department was in the process of disbanding at the time. After that, the TESSVM has only carried out offer development on a mandate basis. The task was eventually taken over by the municipalities, some of which employed new so-called tourism coordinators or, in Val Müstair, the regional nature park took on this task and created a position for it, as David Spinnler, Managing Director of Biosfera Val Müstair, explains. During the interviews, it was mentioned, particularly for the Lower Engadin, that there is a consideration or desire for the TESSVM to take on more of this task again.

> *"In our region, it must be, or should be from my point of view, more the task [...] of the TESSVM to dedicate themselves to the offer development."* [Andri Poo, director of the mountain railway Bergbahnen Scuol AG]

However, the situation is very different for My Leukerbad AG. Urs Zurbriggen stated that the DMO has a major influence on product development due to the operational merger of various

service providers and can create a new product in-house with relatively little effort. In his opinion, this is very efficient.

In addition to marketing and offer development, many other tasks and roles of a DMO were also addressed. The following is a list of roles as well as tasks that were mentioned several times that a DMO has or should fulfil according to the interviewees.

Roles:
  – Driving force
  – Supporter & consultant
  – Connector & coordinator
  – Intermediary
  – Guest expert
  – Networker

Tasks:
  – Marketing & communication
  – Offer/Product development
  – Sustainability
  – Management
  – Destination/Regional development
  – Project development
  – Strategy development
  – Sales
  – Guest information

However, there are also tasks and roles of DMOs that have been questioned by the participants, such as by Werner Zenhäusern, Research associate of the canton of Valais. In his opinion, sales or analogue guest information, for example, should be critically examined:

> "If you look at the whole thing now, just from the reservation system, that actually works almost better on a private market than if a DMO really does it. I think there will certainly be a change here. I can't imagine that the DMO will invest time and money in the reservation system in the future. [...] for example, all the information for guests, I think even older people […] is already getting information on his mobile phone or on his tablet or on the internet. [...] we have the feeling that the host will probably take over in the future, perhaps even a hotelier or a mountain railway."

Performance mandate

Finally, the experts and regional developers also mentioned that the entire allocation of tasks is very individual and depends strongly on the performance mandate, which mostly come from the municipalities. Esther Schlumpf, deputy managing director of the Regional and Economic Centre Upper Valais (RWO AG), made the following statement on the performance mandates:

> "[...] that you create continuity through a performance mandate. What is still the task of a municipality? What is the responsibility that is delegated to the tourism organisation? The performance mandates are central and I have the feeling that they are not good in many places because they are not clear. Or the DMO does much

more than they should, or much less, because they are not monitored. So, the basic framework has to be good and well regulated and structured and really with the necessary commitments."

Michael Caflisch commented on the variously comprehensive or less comprehensive performance mandates as follows:

"So, there is no right or wrong, it just has to fit together somewhere."

Influence on destination management and development
The interview partners had different views on the extent of the DMO's influence on destination management and in particular on destination development. Looking at the Swiss destinations, Sarah Fux, project leader from regiosuisse, reported the following:

"Yes, I have the feeling that they [the DMO] can even exert influence to some extent, because the governance has been clarified and they can give the service providers a certain direction, but it's like no compulsion for the service provider [...] but the destination has no possibility to intervene. Its scope for action is kind of limited due to this and I think they are not in a position to intervene with their role in the development at the moment. I think to do this, it needs some sort of governance clarification at the various points, so that it is clear what their role is in the whole process."

Michael Caflisch saw it as more of an interplay, as in tourism it is not just one person who says what is right or wrong. It is an interplay since setting up a strategy also depends on the relevant partners speaking the same language and sharing the same understanding. René Stoye takes a similar view. In his opinion, it depends on which protagonists are involved. After all, the possibility of exerting influence depends very much on the individual and their personality. Andri Poo believed that the TESSVM has the potential to exert more influence, but that this potential is not yet being sufficiently utilised:

"I think they could do a lot. It seems to me that they do a lot. If I now take the issue of sustainability, then I believe that TESSVM is the driving force in many areas. [...] they are part of the development or the strategy. I do believe that more could be done."

At the destination Leukerbad, the perception of influence was clearly different. The new structure gave the DMO much more power and therefore more influence, which Wolfgang Loretan explained:

"The influence has definitely increased because My Leukerbad now has a certain position of power. It has a turnover of 22 to 25 million."

Urs Zurbriggen confirmed that they have quite a lot of influence with the new structure. However, they set up a tourism board as a strategic advisory board, which also includes service providers outside My Leukerbad AG and can therefore have an impact in the destination's development.

Challenges
In connection with the DMO, challenges were also frequently mentioned as to why a DMO cannot take on certain tasks or why it is difficult to fulfil specific expectations. A lack of

resources, whether financial or personnel-related, was often mentioned. The political framework conditions also represent a frequent challenge, as do the various stakeholders and their different needs.

> *"[…] it's not just regional development that's needed, but several players at the table. Above all, this is the politics of today, which makes the regulations that nowadays intervene so deeply in entrepreneurship."* [René Stoye]

> *"That many people from outside are telling them [the DMO] to do this or do that and they don't have the financial means at all to realise certain things and that this is actually a difficult vicious circle."* [Sarah Fux]

Some of these are challenges that the DMO itself has to overcome. However, some of them also have an impact on cooperation with other partners.

4.2 Regional development

The second topic relating to regional development was asked in a similar way to the DMOs.

Structure of regional development

As can be seen in the literature research (chapter 2.2.2, p. 18), regional developments in Switzerland are structured very heterogeneously. The two examples analysed show that the cantons of the Grisons and Valais have formed their regional developments very differently. Michael Caflisch, for example, describes regional development in the Grisons as follows:

> *"There are eleven regions in the canton. These are eleven political regions. Some of them are larger areas or are now congruent with the tourism organisation, but in other places they are not. [...] We pay a little via the regional management, but otherwise the regions themselves are financed by the municipalities. [...] The regional and municipal level is somewhere involved. If you have a lot of small municipalities, it's different than if you have one large, strong municipality. [...] That's why the development of the tourism organisations and the development of the regions and municipalities always belong together somewhere, and ultimately the municipality actually orders what they want."*

In the case of the holiday region Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair, the regional development organisation has exactly the same perimeter, which Martina Schlapbach, regional developer from the region Engiadina Bassa/Val Müstair, and Sven Berchtold from the TESSVM see as a great advantage.

For the canton of Valais, Werner Zenhäusern summarises the history of regional development in recent years by stating the following:

> *"We fundamentally reorganised regional development 10 or 15 years ago. We used to have six secretariats, in six socio-economic regions of regional development. [...] And when the new regional policy was introduced, this was drastically reduced. They were actually all brought together. At that time there were still three regions, three socio-economic regions, Upper Valais, Central Valais and Lower Valais [...] Of these two regional development centres, one is Upper Valais, it is called RW Oberwallis AG and is responsible for the whole Upper Valais. And then we also have the Antenne de*

Région Valais romand, which is actually the counterpart to RW Oberwallis in Martigny. And they look after the other two regions, namely Central Valais and Lower Valais."

Consequently, the regional development organisations surveyed differ widely in terms of their size, legal form and the number of tourism destinations for which they are responsible. How this affects their roles and tasks is discussed in the next section.

Roles and tasks

As regional development issues are very wide-ranging, the question obviously arises as to how much the respective regional development organisation is or should be active in the field of tourism. Martina Schlapbach commented:

"[...] if you look at the economy as a whole, in our region and probably in the whole canton, tourism is such an important economic sector. [...] it is so important and also so dependent that, of course, many projects always have a direct or indirect tourism component. [...] that regional development is often involved in projects which also have a touristic content or orientation."

Several stakeholders mentioned that the regional development of Upper Valais is very economy-orientated. The organisation asked itself what role it could play in tourism and addressed this question. Esther Schlumpf explains this process:

"[...] we said that tourism is actually an important economic factor. So, it may not be important in terms of GDP in Valais, but depending on the side valley, it does employ a good number of people and is an important economic sector. And we have said that, as a regional development organisation, we have to ask ourselves precisely what our role in tourism is. A relatively systematic analysis was carried out in five stages. [...] The programme was called STRATOS, i.e. strategic tourism scenarios. And the result in relation to our role was that nothing is actually needed for the guest. [...] Everything to do with the guest is done by the DMO and the service providers. But in the background, someone who supports the DMOs when needed or perhaps provides strategic impulses or sometimes even questions all the structures that are in place – that is what is needed."

Esther Schlumpf thus directly addresses the roles and tasks that they have in the field of tourism and that are usually also recognised and expected by the other stakeholders. The need for support and advice was mentioned quite frequently, as was the role as a networker or driving force.

"I think we have two main tasks. One is project consulting or simply supporting regional partners when it comes to implementing their projects. [...] The second part, where we have a mandate, is really also when it comes to initiating larger regional development projects. This means that we take up topics or issues that we recognise as being of real regional importance." [Martina Schlapbach]

For René Stoye, a major task of regional development is to have a network to reach the important contacts so that ideas and the resulting projects can actually be realised in the region.

Project management was also often discussed. Martina Schlapbach explained that the idea is for the regional development of Engiadina Bassa/Val Müstair to be active mainly in the initial phase and then transfer the project to existing structures or establish new ones for this purpose. This was confirmed by David Spinnler:

> *"I believe that regional development is very much defined as "pushing". I think it's very similar with the nature park. [...] We can help to push. And I believe that regional development has the same role."*

The Nature Park Biosfera Val Müstair has a similar role to regional development and initiates projects, whereby the nature park supports the projects over a longer period if necessary. The RWO AG sees themself as a driving force and is also perceived as such. They can also initiate projects or is commissioned with pre-clarifications. Unlike the Engiadina Bassa/Val Müstair region, however, it manages more projects in the mandate, accompanies the process or even takes over entire business managements for organisations from the regional network.

> *"We actually offer project management and also business management. These are the two pillars that run a little more on a mandate basis. [...] When we see topics, we take them up, also mirror them with the networks and actively initiate regional projects. But then we also work on projects where a mandate request simply comes in. [...] We actually say to ourselves that we are a strategic driving force in tourism. In the meantime, we already do a lot of work on a mandate basis."* [Esther Schlumpf]

In addition to the defined performance mandate, the RWO AG also actively initiates some projects. Nevertheless, a large part of their activities is carried out on demand.

Across all 15 interviews, other roles and tasks of the regional development organisations were mentioned that were performed or described as desirable. The following summarises the entire overview of roles and tasks that were mentioned several times.

Roles:
- Supporter & consultant
- Networker
- Driving force
- Intermediary & moderator
- Project manager & organiser
- Coordinator

Tasks:
- Implementation of (tourism) policy (NRP)
- Strategy
- Assistance
- Support for financing
- Knowledge transfer
- Project development & implementation
- Offer/Product development

The areas in which regional development should be or is already active were also discussed. In addition to economic development and tourism, further areas were mentioned.

Topics:
– Promotion of the economy
– Tourism
– Sustainability
– Society
– Improving quality of life
– Environment

Sarah Fux confirmed this diversity of responsibilities, with interfaces that will be extended by regional policy from 2024 onwards:

> *"But I would say that the main task is certainly to cover the topics of regional policy, like the tourism industry is a main topic, then there are many interface topics that can also include sustainability or digitalisation from 2024, for example. And basically it's also about improving living conditions for the population within the perimeter, improving the economy, ecology and social aspects, as well as the three objectives of sustainability also for the population. And I believe that regional policy, although the main focus is always economic, used to be on the export-based approach, which will be less in 2024, where the regional economy can also be promoted, will then become more important again."*

Influence on destination management and development
When asked about the influence of regional development on destination management or destination development, this was generally considered to be quite small. Werner Zenhäusern, for example, explains this as follows for the RWO AG:

> *"But they don't actually have any influence where they can say, why don't you do this, for example, make an offer like this. They don't see themselves as that either. It's more about process consulting or support. There are a lot of DMOs that have projects where they [...] engage RW Oberwallis as project support. [...] But they have very little influence on tourism themselves, nor do they want to. And it really is a bit more of a network idea. Bringing them together around a table. If it is desired, to accompany them in certain processes."*

In particular, regional development was recognised as having a greater influence on topics that go beyond tourism.

> *"Overall, not much [...] It goes in the direction of the topic, now again the topic of sustainability, living space." [Andri Poo.]*

It was often also seen as an interplay, as Michael Caflisch, for example, stated:

> *"Well, influence... It should primarily be an interplay. [...] It would be completely strange if the municipalities go in one direction with tourism and in another direction with the region."*

Martina Schlapbach took a similar view and spoke less of influence and more of cooperation on an equal footing.

4.3 Further stakeholders and leading a destination

During the interviews, the respondents were asked how they perceive their own role in the organisation for which they work. In particular, however, they were also asked about which other stakeholders they perceive as active in the overall destination structure. The answers to these questions varied greatly. Nevertheless, across all interviews, there were some stakeholders that were mentioned quite frequently and obviously play a central role. First and foremost, these are the municipalities, which usually act as principals for the DMOs and in some cases also for regional development. They are also in charge of a functioning infrastructure and have the competences and responsibility for investments.

> *"By law, tourism in the canton of Valais is the responsibility of the municipalities. Whether that is a good thing or not is another question. [...] It's all about spatial planning and everything else. How do you try to organise all the spatial planning so that you can also make certain developments? [...] And from my point of view, the most important thing is that politicians create good framework conditions. That tourism has a good basis to be able to operate positively. That is one of the main tasks."* [Christian Grichting]

> *"We pay a little through the regional management, but otherwise the regions are financed by the municipalities themselves. They don't get the big money from the canton. In the case of tourism, it's actually a completely communal matter via the municipal tourism funding."* [Michael Caflisch]

As relatively independent organisations, mountain railways can also play an important role, as Werner Zenhäusern confirmed for the canton of Valais:

> *"We have a lot of destinations where the mountain railways play a very important role."*

In the case of the Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair holiday region, Daniel Högger, mayor of Samnaun, saw the mountain railways of Samnaun for their sub-region as well as the mountain railways Scuol for the Lower Engadin as major players. David Spinnler from the nature park shared the same perception. The director of the mountain railways Scuol, Andri Poo, affirmed this view:

> *"I think it is undisputed that the mountain railways are an important player in this region, and that there is also a certain degree of dependence on us."*

At the destination Leukerbad, the director of the DMO, Urs Zurbriggen, explains that the newly created My Leukerbad AG covers almost all the important service providers, however, the Gemmibahnen, which is still privately owned, also plays an important role.

Both of these destinations have a long tradition of spa tourism, which is why the thermal baths in Leukerbad and the mineral water bath in Scuol were often cited as important service providers. The respondents from Valais, though, pointed out that the thermal spa, the Walliser

Alpentherme, does play an important role, but unfortunately mostly a negative one, from which the entire destination suffers.

The hotels were also named again and again. However, some would like the hotels to become more active or unite to form a powerful hotelier association in order to have a strong partner. René Stoye, President of the Lower Engadin Hoteliers Association, explains this himself:

> *"I think the hotel industry is fundamentally an important service provider in the valley, in a region like the Lower Engadin, which is very much characterised by tourism. [...] When our meetings take place, to which I invite twice a year, the same five hoteliers always show up, out of 30 members. I simply have the feeling that most of them don't even realise what opportunities they actually have to exert influence. "*

Carine Brendel, president of the Hoteliers Association of Leukerbad, explains the difficulty of acting united:

> *"We are an association on the one hand and yet competitors on the other."*

Sven Berchtold also mentioned the importance of a functioning association using the example of second home owners, which he also counts as important stakeholders:

> *"I think it needs official legitimisation, like the representatives at the table. The owners of second homes who have also organised themselves here. In other words, for me it needs official representatives of the respective organisations."*

A difference in the naming of other active stakeholders within the two destinations could be seen with regard to the nature parks. Although both have a regional nature park within their destination perimeter, the relevance does not appear to be the same. For example, the nature park Pfyn-Finges was not mentioned by any other interviewee from the Valais, with the exception of the director of the nature park, of course. In contrast, most interviewees from the Grisons mentioned the Swiss National Park and the Biosfera Val Müstair as key players, and occasionally also the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Engiadina Val Müstair.

> *"[...] on the part of Münstertal, that there with the Biosfera, that they are very active, I perceive that […]"* [Andri Poo]

> *"And of the stakeholders, these are a bit of the classic ones that we know in tourism, which are also important to us: the mountain railways, hoteliers. The national park is important to us, the Biosfera, [...]."* [Sven Berchtold]

The following is an overview of all the stakeholders mentioned several times who are perceived as active in tourism or should be from the perspective of the interviewees.

Other active stakeholders:
– Canton
– Municipalities
– Mountain railways
– Baths
– Hotels & holiday accommodations

- Restaurants
- Swiss National Park (exists only in Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair)
- UNESCO Biosphere (exists only in Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair)
- Regional Nature Park (only mentioned for Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair)
- Cultural service providers
- Transport operators
- Trade and business associations
- Private players
- Second home owners

Leading a destination

There was disagreement on the question of whether an organisation in the destination has or should take the lead and, if so, whether this is the DMO, regional development or another organisation. Depending on the point of view, the DMOs were seen as the leading organisation when tourism was viewed separately. Some were of the opinion that the municipalities hold the lead, as they ultimately make the decisions. A few, on the other hand, saw regional development in the role as a leader, as they address more issues than just tourism. As the Biosfera Val Müstair has a similar role to regional development in the Val Müstair sub-region, David Spinnler saw the nature park itself as partly taking the lead:

> *"So, in Val Müstair, I would say that we as a nature park are in the lead when it comes to sustainability. Otherwise, if I look at the Lower Engadin, I have the feeling that the DMO itself is in the lead."*

When it comes to tourism itself, the director of the mountain railway Scuol, Andri Poo, and the regional developer, Martina Schlapbach, are also of the opinion that the DMO TESSVM is the leading organisation. In Andri Poo's case, he would like the TESSVM to be a little stronger and more influential.

In Leukerbad, the distribution of roles seems to be a bit more obvious with the new model and the lead is clearly seen by the DMO, as the mayor Christian Grichting pointed out:

> *"[...] in terms of operational matters and on the part of the guest, we clearly want My Leukerbad to take the lead and also be in charge of the presentation."*

With regard to the leadership of a destination, some emphasised that the extent to which an organisation can exert influence or even take the lead depends very much on the individual. Martina Schlapbach outlined this person-dependent leadership as follows:

> *"I think it depends on the people who are ultimately in leading positions as to how they want to further develop the regions or the institutions, and then also in connection with the region or the destination [...] But yes, I have the feeling that a lot comes from these people who are somehow at the top and where a broad circle of people realise that they have a vision, that they want to shape and help to create and develop it in this way. Not alone, of course, but simply with everything that belongs to this system. And I have the feeling that this can have a huge impact on everything, such as how a destination or region develops."*

René Stoye also describes the qualities and skills that a strong leader should have:

"If I'm going to develop something, I basically have to be a forward-looking personality who has the ability to put small or big ideas out of nowhere, maybe on paper. Someone who is able to walk through the world with open ears and eyes and gather people around them. Who help to develop ideas and then put them into practice."

With regard to leadership, it was also often noted that it is much easier if someone takes the lead. It was seen as helpful and more efficient multiple times.

"That is clear leadership. Clear leadership, clear structures, very well organised. There is a CEO who sets the direction, which is simply set by the Board of Directors. And that makes it much easier to work." [Wolfang Loretan]

"[...] someone once told me [...] the best form of organisation in tourism would be a monarchy, where one person decides where it goes. That might not be very modern. But I think it's always better for projects to be implemented if someone has the lead. [...] And if you actually look at the strong destinations in Switzerland, there is often a strong player somewhere who actually leads the way." [Werner Zenhäusern]

4.4 Cooperation

This section now focuses on the cooperation between the DMO and regional development, but also between the various stakeholders.
In both destinations, the DMOs and the regional development organisations consider their joint cooperation as good to very good. For instance, Sven Berchtold from the DMO describes the cooperation with regional development as follows:

"A very important partner [regional development] for us. I think the work is going very well at the moment. We also have a good personal exchange with Martina Schlapbach in particular, various projects, which works really well. And we have the same goals, we pursue them together and that works very well." [Sven Berchtold]

It is usually difficult for other stakeholders to assess the cooperation between these two players. Either they cannot judge it at all or only marginally. However, no one would have recognised poor cooperation. For example, the mayor of Samnaun, Daniel Högger, was unable to assess the cooperation, as he only took office in August 2023 and had not yet experienced enough of it. However, he had previously been a municipal councillor for several years and hadn't really noticed anything at that time either.
The assessment was particularly difficult for the other stakeholders, as they often have fewer points of contact with regional development or sometimes almost none at all. Consequently, they are also less likely to maintain any cooperation of their own with regional development. René Stoye described this circumstance with the following words:

"With regional development, the flight altitude is perhaps different. If you look at the whole thing purely as a company of the Belvedere family, I would say that we wouldn't actually get any wind of what regional development is doing. That's a different body that we have no insight into. It takes place at a much higher level. That's where the political prominence of the destination sits. And as an entrepreneur, if I'm not on the board of directors or a member of this regional development organisation or the board of directors of the DMO, then I simply get the results presented and that's it."

In contrast, they were able to describe their cooperation with the DMO in much more detail and in some cases also have regular and institutionalised opportunities for exchange. For instance, the cooperation between the DMO and the Leukerbad hoteliers association was not very effective, but the two organisations have recently decided to change this, as Carine Brendel, president of the hoteliers association, said during the interview:

> "We have now decided that we will meet at least four to six times a year. But it has already become clear that it's more than that. It's now almost once a month. And it's very good. Really very productive too."

Returning to the cooperation between regional development and the DMO, it was also asked whether there are overlapping tasks and roles. Sarah Fux from regiosuisse saw a lot of overlap here, especially when it comes to making a place and therefore the living conditions more attractive:

> "Yes, I think there is a lot of overlap between the tasks of the DMO and regional development. I have the feeling that it's getting closer and closer, because a lot of projects or goals that are about the living conditions of the population are also directly related to tourism."

Martina Schlapbach also recognised certain overlaps, especially when a DMO opens up thematically and increasingly incorporates living space issues. But even so, she noticed some interfaces, particularly at the operational level, that require coordination or clarification:

> "And I believe that there are always different solutions and no matter how clearly you define the tasks and roles, there are simply overlaps, I think. Especially when it comes to operational work. [...] I think coordination is always necessary. And that's why I think it's important to have a close exchange and to know what's happening where. And where necessary, to sit together and see who is doing what and who is also not doing something. [...] I find the division of tasks between us is actually relatively well organised [...]."

No overlaps were identified between the Upper Valais regional development organisation and the DMO My Leukerbad, as the roles for both sides are very clear and regional development only becomes active when required. Esther Schlumpf stated:

> "I think the role and function that we have in the region, but also in tourism, is very clear. There are people who understand this and make good use of it. Leukerbad is one of them. I can't think of a situation where you somehow... you don't get in each other's way anyway."

Even though the cooperation between the two DMOs and the respective regional development organisation is considered to be positive, there are still ideas on how this could be improved. Sven Berchtold, for example, could imagine that TESSVM could work much more closely with the regional development organisation with a merged structure:

> "I think the cooperation could always be closer. I can really see that regional development is part of us. So, Martina [Schlapbach] is actually a department with us, along with innovation and a bit of development. Here I can actually see even closer cooperation."

Michael Caflisch confirmed that such models already exist:

> *"There can also be models where this is integrated. For example, the regional development office could also be part of the tourism organisation. In the central Grisons, in Surses, Savognin, there have also been partially shared positions. Someone has worked half for the nature park and half for the region, or nature park and tourism organisation. So, there is no right or wrong. There is only efficient and less efficient or synergetic and less synergy-using."*

More details on the cooperation between individual stakeholders are provided in the next two subchapters 4.4.1 Challenges and 4.4.2 Success factors (p. 59).

4.4.1 Challenges

As the challenges mentioned in the interviews mostly relate to cooperation in general and not just specifically to cooperation between regional development and the DMO, the statements made on this topic are summarised and not considered separately.
First, an overview of the challenges mentioned is presented, followed by a more detailed analysis of the individual hurdles.

Challenges:
- No/little exchange
- No clear strategy
- No up-to-date structure
- Unclear role allocation
- (Too) many stakeholders/organisations
- No common direction and different needs
- Not enough participation
- Lack of knowledge about the partners' activities and current issues
- Lack of willingness to cooperate
- Lack of resources
- Lack of competences
- Low contribution
- Personnel changes

No/little exchange
Cooperation was often considered difficult when there is little or no exchange. This does not necessarily have to be regular, but should take place from time to time, especially if they are not currently working together on one large or several small projects. Andri Poo mentioned the challenge of the lack of an exchange:

> *"I see Martina [Schlapbach] twice a year when I attend a meeting like this. Otherwise, I don't have a phone call with her. Of course, it could also be our tasks. [...] so it's almost exclusively in the context of committees or meetings that we have with other partners. [...] I usually knock on the door when it comes to getting money from the canton or somewhere else from regional development pots. [...] Yes, it would probably be worth getting together at all and doing a bit of an overview. Who does what, or what does regional development do, and who can or should be supported where."*

No clear strategy

A lack of strategy can make cooperation more difficult, or the potential is not fully exploited. Esther Schlumpf referred to the lack of a tourism strategy at cantonal level:

> *"There is no tourism strategy, which means that the DWTI [Dienststelle für Wirtschaft, Tourismus und Innovation (engl. Service for Economy, Tourism and Innovation)] does a bit, Valais/Wallis Promotion develops a strategy for itself and the DMOs have their own strategies, which doesn't always work equally well together."*

She also mentioned the problem at destination level if there is no strategy and municipalities, the central stakeholders and the DMO do not know in which direction they want to go together, it cannot work.

No up-to-date structure

The small structures in Valais were also repeatedly mentioned as an obstacle. These make it difficult to work professionally and achieve faster progress.

> *"The canton of Valais gives all competences to the municipalities by law. We have such small communal structures. [...] It's clear that all the small organisations, with the small municipalities, are overwhelmed. But you really have to focus on the large, dynamic organisations to a certain extent. The smaller ones can benefit from the network and realise what's going on. They can also gain experience from the larger organisations. However, not everyone can be treated equally. It's not a matter of preserving the small structures. I believe that at some point the pressure of suffering will be high enough for a step to be taken." [Esther Schlumpf]*

> *"Upper Valais is extremely small-structured. That is a big problem. […] I have actually been holding merger negotiations with the municipality of Albinen or the municipality of Inden for a few years now. […] They don't want to work together with Leukerbad. They're afraid Leukerbad is too big and they'll lose their jobs. […] There is always somehow […] a jealousy here towards Leukerbad because we are too big and because they say they will have nothing more to say afterwards. […] And that's incredibly tedious because we're burning up so many resources. […] So, we would move forward much faster. A good example of this was My Leukerbad, where we did everything together. And we should actually do exactly the same in the district [Leuk]." [Wolfgang Loretan]*

The new model of My Leukerbad AG is therefore a counter-movement with its structure, as is the merger negotiations between Leuk and Leukerbad mentioned from different interviewees.

Unclear role allocation

If the roles and tasks between two organisations are not clear, this can make cooperation more difficult. Sven Berchtold explained this with reference to responsibilities in projects:

> *"Sometimes I notice it in various projects, sometimes we play a bit of ping-pong. We say the municipality is responsible. The municipality says regional development is responsible. Regional development says we are responsible. [...] As I said, the cooperation works well, but we don't always find ourselves in these projects."*

However, unclear roles can also lead to misunderstandings with the outside world, which in turn can be challenging with other partners and stakeholders. Martina Schlapbach had an example of what happens to her from time to time:

> "[...] even if we know within the DMO and the region and regional development what the areas of responsibility and accountability are, this does not always mean that this is also perceived as such from the outside. [...] And it happens to me sometimes, for example, that I am somewhere out of the region, perhaps at an event where I represent our region, and then I am automatically portrayed as a tourism representative. I then also say that I am not in that sense. So, of course, tourism is an important topic for my work, but the tourism representatives of the region are effectively others. And so, it is of course sometimes difficult to realise from the outside who exactly does what. [...] I think it's important that we know this within both institutions and then we can communicate it clearly to the outside world if necessary."

Andri Poo confirmed that he does not know exactly what mandates are prescribed for these two positions by the canton. He assumed that a conscious demarcation had already been made. However, this does not seem entirely clear to him. He was also honest and said that he had not looked into it.

Like Martina Schlapbach, Esther Schlumpf was aware that not all tourism stakeholders know what the tasks of the regional development organisation are:

> "But some individual service providers won't understand what we're doing. That is clear. But for us, the DMOs are somewhat the important local influencing elements. For example, we have very little to do with the hotel industry. With the mountain railways too. These are elements in tourism that also work very strongly through the sector associations."

(Too) many stakeholders/organisations

Dealing with a large number of organisations and businesses was also mentioned as a challenge. This could be structural, such as in the holiday region Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair, where there are partly several similar organisations, or within a hoteliers association, for example, where the different opinions of the hoteliers need to be bundled. It was also discussed that although a new committee sometimes makes sense, there is a danger that there will be too many of them.

> "Because there are already quite a lot of organisations. There's a national park, there's a Biosfera [Val Müstair], there's the other biosphere [UNESCO Biosfera Engiadina Val Müstair], there's the region, there's the tourism organisation, there are the sub-regions in addition to the TESSVM in purely structural terms. So, the question is, don't you have a bit too many organisations and things? Sure, merging everything into one pot, it's not the job of the national park to run tourism. So perhaps there are also things that need to be consciously kept apart. Keeping them apart doesn't mean being against each other." [Michael Caflisch]

> "We don't always agree within the association either. For example, when something comes from My Leukerbad, be it packages that they sell [...] Then we tell our members. After that, I get the members' opinions. The opinions differ widely. And

that's the difficult thing. One person tells me it's a load of rubbish. And the other says, I'm totally on board. It's difficult to get everyone round the table and find an opinion or a consensus and then go to My Leukerbad." [Carine Brendel]

No common direction and different needs
In the destination Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair, it was mentioned several times how difficult it is to reconcile the three sub-regions and their different orientations.

"On the one hand you have a nature park, then you have the Lower Engadin, which is also moving in a sustainable direction and that doesn't conflict at all with the nature park, but then you have Samnaun, which has a completely different orientation. And now the nature park and Samnaun [...] There you have a difficulty when you want to define the strategy. Then you actually have to say, as it happens, well, in Samnaun we have a different focus. In this sub-region we have a different emphasis than in the Val Müstair sub-region. That's just a bit of a difficulty that the TESSVM has, that this merging has led to areas with different orientations." [David Spinnler]

Urs Zurbriggen reported that there have been various initiatives to further develop tourism in the Upper Valais. But many of the projects failed in finding a common denominator in the heterogeneous tourism landscape in Upper Valais.

Not enough participation
For successful long-term cooperation, the question often arises as to how well the various stakeholders feel they are being listened to and how well they can contribute their opinions. There were also a number of comments on this from various sides that opportunities for participation are sometimes lacking.

"If the TESSVM has a workshop, then the mountain railway director is invited [...] And never really from the small [organisations]. And they might suddenly come up with a completely different idea, a completely different point of view. And then you also have greater acceptance if you want to realise something in the village, in the region [...]." [Daniel Högger]

"They [DMO] just did it, they just showed us ready-made things and presented us with a fait accompli. Now we're trying again to get to the point where we can see together what the guest needs." [Carine Brendel]

"One small danger with My Leukerbad is that not all the key players are involved. Well, myself now as Gemmibahn, I'm a private individual. I'm not in My Leukerbad and there are of course hotels and the Alpentherme that aren't in there either. [...] And sometimes I have to intervene and say, colleagues, the Gemmibahn is still there too. [...] that everyone gets into the boat." [Wolfgang Loretan]

Lack of knowledge about the partners' activities and current issues
It has already been mentioned that stakeholders sometimes know too little about the activities of others, which can lead to misunderstandings or lack of understanding towards others and create a bad atmosphere. This is what Carine Brendel experienced. She was also annoyed with the municipality until she looked more closely at its tasks and realised that certain things were

not solely the responsibility of the municipality, which enabled her to understand certain things better.

Andri Poo also expressed difficulties, saying that he could hardly tell which projects regional development was involved in, which further reduced the chances of potential points of contact.

René Stoye described the lacking knowledge about partners' current issues more generally:

"Politicians are often unaware of the small problems that the little ones have and, conversely, the little ones are often unaware of the big problems that those at the top are actually dealing with and making decisions about."

Lack of willingness to cooperate

The effects of a lack of willingness to cooperate can be seen in Leukerbad. Here, the spa with three hotels, the Walliser Alpentherme, has been resisting for years. Various attempts by different stakeholders from Leukerbad to approach the owner were apparently unsuccessful. The interviewees showed a certain resignation, as further measures hardly seem to be worthwhile. The non-existent cooperation nevertheless has negative effects, be it with the neglected offer described by the interview partners or the owner's lack of interest in managing the business in such a way that Leukerbad's image does not suffer as a result.

Another challenge in this area, however, is the small structures in Valais and the lack of willingness to join forces at communal and touristic level, as Wolfgang Loretan noted:

"Of course, we are extremely structurally weak. And we just can't convince people to merge all together. Simply under one hat or under one roof. Because when I go to a meeting in Turtmann and say, don't you want to merge with the municipality of Leukerbad, or at least merge the tourism organisation, then they say, are you completely crazy? What do I want in Leukerbad? You know, that's absolutely no understanding of tourism."

René Stoye also gave the example of using synergies between hotels. He doesn't understand it when hoteliers have hardly any money to invest, but they are also not willing to tackle certain processes together. For example, if one suggests using a joint reservation system, then issues such as envy and resentment arise very quickly. The hoteliers are afraid that their business will not be given enough consideration when it comes to reservations.

Lack of resources

The lack of resources is a common challenge for a wide range of tourism businesses. This was ultimately discussed more in general terms than specifically in terms of cooperation. Nevertheless, a lack of human resources or a lack of volunteers for certain tasks can make cooperation more difficult. Urs Zurbriggen mentioned the example of the Bike World Championships with electric mountain bikes, which are to be held in Leukerbad in 2025. This raises the question of who should take over the presidency of the organising committee, whose task this is:

"And we are now in the process of setting up the organisation committee. And it's brutally difficult just to find people who are willing to be part of an organising committee. Which is a shame, because it's a huge opportunity for Leukerbad. We really have the discussion at board level. Does My Leukerbad really have to or should

it take on the role of the main contractor, so to speak, as the head of the organising committee with as much manpower as possible? And isn't this actually a task for the destination, for the individual service providers and My Leukerbad is simply involved, but not necessarily in the lead role? And that's a difficult discussion, because at the end of the day, if nobody does it, it falls back on the DMO. And then the DMO will basically only have to decide, yes, we will do it, however possible, or we will reject it altogether, which is actually not the right thing to do if you want to strategically develop a project further."

There would also be potential in the associations themselves if volunteers were more actively involved, as Christian Grichting pointed out:

"But important tourism institutions such as the HOGA, the hotel and gastronomy association, or the trade association, the second home association, would of course be more conducive to the whole if they were more active. [...] But they are all boards or positions that are simply for God's reward, and nobody has much interest in them."

Lack of competences

The lack of competences was considered in two ways. On the one hand, if the required competences for a desired support are not available. For example, the municipality of Leukerbad has a need for development in the areas of climate change or second homes. They also have a corresponding project in which the RWO AG is involved. According to Christian Grichting, however, they have realised that the RWO AG does not have enough expertise to bring additional value.

On the other hand, the lack of competences in the form of expertise within politics came up:

"Municipal councils are often politically composed bodies made up of people who don't have an economic background, or tourism, spatial planning, which are all relevant but don't cover them, but make the decisions in them. That's a bit of a problem with the militia system. I mean, in such small-structured regions, the lack of professionalism in the municipalities really is a major barrier to tourism." [Esther Schlumpf]

"There's absolutely no understanding of tourism. And you have to look at the local councils that are in there. The local councils are office workers, one works at Lonza, one is an electrician, one does something else. They have absolutely no feeling. […] It's incredibly hard to get that across." [Wolfgang Loretan]

Low contribution

DMOs, in particular, have made the experience that sometimes no one feels responsible for certain things and the DMO ends up taking on these tasks – whether with or without a performance mandate.

"But when it comes to developing topics further, it always takes someone to take responsibility. And I don't think Leukerbad is any different to other destinations in this respect. Many times, a lot falls back on the DMO. For whatever reason, it is difficult to find people who really say we want to develop this further." [Urs Zurbriggen]

Personnel changes

Personnel changes occur everywhere, but they always mean that it takes time for the people concerned to acquire the necessary level of knowledge so that the cooperation can continue smoothly again.

Esther Schlumpf pointed out this problem within politics:

> *"And that's a bit of a problem, now with the municipality you have a change of legislature every four years. This means that, in theory, a completely new wind can blow in, including completely different approaches. This is a hurdle – tools are therefore needed to ensure continuity."*

Peter Oggier also sees the same problem. He mentioned the example of sustainability. It usually takes a 4-year period for a municipal council to understand the topic. If individual councillors or even the entire council changes, then the nature park's work of explaining sustainability and its facets starts all over again. However, as the mayor is usually there for longer, they try to work directly with him.

Martina Schlapbach addressed personnel changes when they occur at partner organisations:

> *"Of course, personnel changes, which can also occur in both institutions, are always a challenge. But I think that's also a general topic when it comes to cooperation issues, where one has to find a way to go, depending on the situation. But I also have the feeling that a lot of things are so established that you can actually get back into a routine with new people relatively quickly."*

4.4.2 Success factors

The statements of the various actor groups were not analysed separately for the success factors either. As with the challenges, an overview of the identified success factors is presented first, followed by a closer look at the individual factors.

Success factors:
- Clear strategy
- Congruent perimeter
- Agile structure
- Leading organisation/person
- Clear role allocation
- Common direction/understanding
- Regular & frequent exchange
- Close cooperation
- Participation
- Open & trustful exchange
- Using synergies
- Joint projects
- Focus on guests over competition
- Legitimisation of the organisation

Clear strategy

A clear strategy was seen by many as an important basis for successful cooperation. Michael Caflisch described this in general terms:

> "So, a strategy is actually like a fixed star where you orientate yourself. And this strategic ability, meaning being able to focus on something or say, now we're going to do this and this. That's actually like the starting point, after that it's basically an organisational thing."

Martina Schlapbach explained that regional development has its own strategy, whereby the strategy process was conducted in very close cooperation with TESSVM, among others, and thus the area of tourism in particular is actually congruent with the strategy of the tourism destination.

Urs Zurbriggen pointed out the advantages of a clear strategy, which was additionally developed in an extensive joint process with service providers:

> "What helped us is that in 2019, we said we need a strategic reorganisation. We drew up a master plan and involved the service providers very, very closely at the beginning. For the first six months or maybe even ten months, we really did set up various working groups and we had representatives from the hoteliers, holiday apartment owners, sports shops, etc., etc. We really took them on board and said, now is the time to say in which direction the ship should go and not come back afterwards and say we would have preferred it that way. And that helps us now to keep saying, look, you were also at the table back then. You played a very, very significant role in shaping the strategy that we now have until 2026. And I think we have little discussions at a strategic level today."

This quote also makes it immediately clear that a key element in the development of the strategy is the participation of service providers. This key driver is addressed in more detail below.

Congruent perimeter

One success factor for easier cooperation that the holiday region Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair has identified for themselves is the congruent perimeter of the region and the destination.

> "And in our case, the big advantage is that regional development is congruent with the destination in terms of perimeter." [Sven Berchtold]

> "Of course, this makes it much easier than when I compare it to other regions, where there are somehow two or three DMOs that are active in the regional perimeter, so it's also somehow more complex. And yes, ultimately, we also have the same, how should I put it, superior institutions that stand behind us. So simply the municipalities of the region, they are also very central to the TESSVM, and the region is the common institution of the five regional municipalities. [...] And I think this is an incredibly favourable starting point for really good cooperation. Not that it's not possible otherwise, I don't think so, but yes, it does seem a little simpler to me." [Martina Schlapbach]

Agile structure

Another success factor was seen in agile structures. Michael Caflisch explained that tasks and roles are constantly changing and that "it is important to not just stubbornly say we do this, and we don't do that." There could also be phases in which, for example, events are integrated into the DMO for a while and later, for certain reasons, into the mountain railways. You should think about what makes the most sense at the relevant time. Of course, he did not mean that the distribution of tasks changes every week. However, if something changes, if something new comes along, the allocation of tasks can be reviewed periodically.

Esther Schlumpf also pointed out that it is no longer possible to establish structures for several decades in today's world:

> "I think you are a learning organisation and that is the most important thing. Nowadays, you can't create a structure for 20 years, it just doesn't exist anymore. And if you are flexible enough to work via performance contracts [...] The municipalities are grouped together in a steering body where municipalities can submit their concerns to the marketing organisation, i.e. My Leukerbad AG. And if a municipality joins, this is possible. It is also scalable. And therefore, extremely well positioned."

Leading organisation/person

Some mentioned the fact that clear leadership often simplifies cooperation. For Urs Zurbriggen, it is clear that in the case of Leukerbad, it helps that the new organisation is in the lead. He also perceived the expectation that someone had to pull the cart out of the mud after the past negative years.

Peter Oggier is convinced as well that a large, leading organisation can be helpful:

> "If we do something with Leukerbad, if we do something with a big player, then the little ones will follow. That makes everything easier. If we somehow had five equally positioned destinations and we wanted to work with all of them. Three want to and two don't, then it's a mess. [...] Now we have to see what happens with Leuk – Leukerbad. [...] If they merge, then the small ones will come afterwards. [...] So, it's easier that way, yes."

Wolfgang Loretan also supported the Leukerbad model and the fact that the DMO is now in the lead:

> "That is clear leadership. Clear leadership, clear structures, very well organised. [...] And today everything is actually under one roof. And one person decides. And it's actually decided in one week. And then it's really just a matter of convincing two key players. The Gemmibahn, which always takes part immediately anyway. And the Alpentherme. And if the Alpentherme doesn't join in, then that's all right. [...] From that point of view, with these structures, it has of course become much better. That's what we also wanted."

A similar opinion was also shared in Samnaun:

> "That's why I believe that leadership is also crucial. That you have people who just stand up and announce a goal and then work to achieve it."

In addition, strong leaders were also seen as helpful in achieving common goals.

Clear role allocation

Even if the agile structures mentioned above mean that tasks and roles can be reassigned if necessary, some interviewees mentioned that clarity in the allocation of roles can be conducive to collaboration. Among others, Esther Schlumpf elaborated on this:

> *"I think it's important to systematically clarify roles, to have the same understanding of what regional development does, what tourism does, what the municipality does, what the cantonal tourism organisation does. Understanding the system is extremely important and that takes time. Once the roles and functions are given and clear, then the interplay is extremely potent."*

Martina Schlapbach also saw the clear division of tasks and roles as a reference to responsibility, which is more recognised as a result.

Common direction/understanding

Whether with or without a strategy, the fact that it is simply important to work in the same direction and talk about the same issues was repeatedly mentioned as a success factor. David Spinnler, for example, is very pleased that the DMO has a very similar focus to the nature park:

> *"Some nature parks are jealous of this. Because that really isn't the case everywhere. Here we are lucky that the TESSVM suits this sustainable approach. And that we can really pull together in the Münstertal. That brings a lot. I think that's very, very important. And in other destinations [...] half of the energy simply fizzles out."*

Urs Zurbriggen also attributes the good cooperation within My Leukerbad AG to the fact that they not only have a common strategy, but that this is also supported by everyone.

> *"It is working very well for us at the moment because the owners of the six companies are willing to work with the same strategy. [...] I cannot emphasise this enough. You have to have a common strategy that is really supported by everyone. And otherwise, our model won't work as well as it does at the moment."*

Regular and frequent exchange

Interviewees were asked directly about the frequency and form of exchange with the respective DMO and regional development organisation. These can vary greatly. Some mentioned a regular exchange every few weeks or months, which is institutionalised. Others explained how they frequently meet even without fixed dates, usually through ongoing projects. Even though some people noted that care must be taken not to have too many unnecessary meetings, the existing exchanges were rated as positive.

> *"And there, I think it's also very important, so we've actually institutionalised it in such a way that we simply have a regular exchange and, let's say, come together every six months without necessarily talking about specific projects, but simply giving each other a little insight into where we are at the moment. And then sometimes you come to certain points where you realise ahead of time, ah, it's worth coordinating this early on and seeing who's doing what. [...] it has proved successful for us to institutionalise this exchange a little."* [Martina Schlapbach]

"[…] we are trying to cultivate the exchange a little so that we meet every two months. That means the director of the tourism organisation, the mountain railway director, in other words the major service providers and the hotel industry. It has less to do with the Belvedere family, but rather I happen to be the president of the hoteliers association. But we did this precisely because we want to actively influence this exchange. Otherwise, if I hadn't been the president of the hotelier association, I would have tried to organise a jour fix with the tourism director so that we could stay in contact." [René Stoye]

"We are now also very proactively approaching the association [Second home association] and have integrated them into the tourism council, have given them a seat, because we simply had the feeling that we need to strengthen the dialogue again. That was very well received, so we have a much, much better relationship today than we did three or four years ago." [Urs Zurbriggen]

Close cooperation

Frequent mention was made of close cooperation, which was assessed as something positive. David Spinnler referred to such close cooperation with the DMO as well as with regional development:

"[…] I have the feeling that it works well because we work very closely together. The destination and the nature park work really well together. It also has something to do with a culture. […] In this respect, I have the feeling that the contact between regional development and the destination, and now also in our case with the nature park, is very important. And in our case, I think it is very close, very constructive and very good."

Daniel Högger sees potential for greater success in closer co-operation in general among as many service providers as possible:

"I think we need to work together much, much more in the region anyway. [...] Samnaun is a bit special, Schuls with its spa, the Münstertal. [...] much more of a competitive mentality. [...] And that when a guest in Samnaun is sent from here to the Münstertal to see the monastery, and vice versa perhaps. Or that someone says, yes, bad weather, I could go to Samnaun. There are nice shops there [...] And I believe we can only be successful if we act together, then everyone has more."

Participation

Under the success factor "clear strategy" (p. 60), Urs Zurbriggen explained how they developed their strategic masterplan together with the service providers. By involving the service providers, it is a joint effort and the DMO can always refer to the fact that the chosen direction has been approved by everyone. Ultimately, this leads to fewer discussions and consequently to easier cooperation. In addition, My Leukerbad AG installed a tourism council a few years ago, which Urs Zurbriggen described as follows:

"[...] afterwards we deliberately set up a tourism council. This is a strategic advisory board that is actually intended to reflect the diversity of service providers. [...] This [tourism council] was also founded so that we actually have a body where we can foster informal dialogue."

For example, the nature park Pfyn-Finges was also invited here, as Peter Oggier explained, as well as Carine Brendel from the hoteliers association, who sees it as a positive development in recent times:

> *"My Leukerbad AG has also set up a new [...] tourism council. Well, that's already two or three, four years ago. And I was just asked last time to take part in it. There is already someone on the board, but more of a restaurateur. And now I've been asked to join as a hotelier representative. And you can already see that they're trying... It's going in a good direction."*

The destination Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair does not have a tourism council in this sense, but they do have a sustainability council in the tourism sector. David Spinnler also rates such a council very favourably:

> *"But if we look, now there is the sustainability council, which I think is a very good story, which the TESSVM has set up, where all the players are actually involved again, including us as a nature park, of course."*

Open & trustful exchange
When talking about cooperation, the type of cooperation was also emphasised. Some respondents mentioned the importance of open and trusting exchanges.

> *"After all, it's also the interpersonal relationships that have to work. I think it's also very important to be open and honest with each other. I think that's one of the reasons for having trust. For me, these are rather soft factors."* [Sven Berchtold]

> *"We can talk to each other as equals. We have no secrets from each other. We can also scrutinise each other and give each other advice."* [René Stoye]

> *"But at the same time, I have to add that we work together with all kinds of organisations, with forestry, with energy, with tourism. The tourism experts are the ones who have so far best understood what a regional nature park is. They are actually the ones with whom we work best. That's why I can criticise them so openly and say that I would do even more. We have a very good relationship. I can also tell them what I think, they also tell me what they think. [...] These are very good exchanges, as I said, where you can really talk openly."* [Peter Oggier]

Using synergies
How the cooperation between the various infrastructure companies in Leukerbad has been simplified by the new model came up again and again and has already been addressed in several success factors. Another particularly great advantage is the utilisation of synergies, as Esther Schlumpf mentioned:

> *"But operationally, of course, the synergies in communication, in operations management, in human resources you can... You have maximum synergies in all the background processes. And that is of course the best thing you can do."*

Christian Grichting also points out that this operational bundling is a huge advantage in terms of decision paths and synergies, because it makes everything much easier.

But not only such a model enables the utilisation of synergies. The nature park Val Müstair and the TESSVM have also found ways to avoid duplication and utilise synergies for the Val Müstair sub-region:

> "As you can see, we have one appearance. We used to have two homepages. Now we appear together, we communicate together, including all social media communication, for example, we have now merged our channels. To the outside world, there is actually only Biosfera Val Müstair. Of course, this is also practical because we are both in the same position in the Grisons brand system, meaning the destination and the nature park, we are both brand partners." [David Spinnler]

Joint projects

Joint projects are seen as another way of strengthening cooperation. Martina Schlapbach said the following:

> "So, I think what works well is always... or is not always, but often when it really comes to concrete projects. I have the feeling that there is also a great willingness in our region and destination to work together. To implement projects really in cooperation. When you recognise a common goal somewhere."

Werner Zenhäusern also saw joint projects as a promising success factor:

> "Probably to improve cooperation, joint projects are probably the best thing you can do."

Peter Oggier also saw the joint projects as an alternative to an institutionalised exchange, which is no longer absolutely necessary when the ongoing smaller and larger projects mean that there is a constant exchange anyway.

Focus on guests over competition

This success factor was not mentioned so directly, but it seems to be a means of focusing on the guest, working more towards mutual success and thus reducing competitive thinking. Carine Brendel mentioned this approach in connection with the intensified cooperation between the DMO and the hoteliers association in Leukerbad in recent times. They try to look together at what the guest's needs are and put them centre stage.

David Spinnler emphasised the importance of making things as simple as possible for guests and not confusing them unnecessarily. For example, by having two organisations appear with just one logo, as the guest is not really interested in who is involved in the background.

> "[...] you first have to get to the point where you say, hey, what's important for the guest? And let's do it together, because it makes sense, it makes sense for both of us. And it doesn't matter if my logo is a little higher up than yours. In the best case, just one. Hey, it makes sense this way, come on, let's do it this way. That this attitude, this culture, that this is there, that's brutally important." [David Spinnler]

Legitimisation of the organisation

For the cooperation of other stakeholders, especially those that are very large in number but act individually or even privately, it is important that they are organised in an official body and have representatives who can then make contact with the other stakeholders. This success factor

was mentioned by the interviewees, particularly in relation to second home owners. In addition, the desire for a stronger hotelier, restaurant or trade and commerce association was also expressed in some cases.

> "I believe that we need the representatives at the table, the official legitimacy. I am talking about the second-home owners who have organised themselves here. In other words, for me, we need the official representatives of the respective organisations."
> [Sven Berchtold]

Esther Schlumpf also said that certain DMOs are able to maintain a good dynamic with second home owners thanks to the creation of interest groups for them.

The challenges and success factors in connection with cooperation listed above partly correspond to those identified in the literature review. Whether looking at the literature review or the results themselves, it is important to realise that many factors can be viewed negatively or positively. This means, for example, that if something is missing, this factor can be a challenge for the cooperation. Conversely, if the certain element is not missing, but is present, the cooperation benefits and can therefore be a success factor. In order to prevent duplications, the mentioned in the results factors were summarised and at the same time categorised into those that are necessary, those that can be supportive, those that can be challenging or inhibiting and those that should be avoided as far as possible (see Figure 9).

Successful Cooperation			
What it takes	**What can be helpful**	**What can be challenging**	**What should be avoided**
– Clear strategy*	– Congruent perimeter*	– (Too) many stakeholders/ organisations*	– No up-to-date structure
– Clear role allocation*	– Agile structure*	– Lack of resources	– Unclear role allocation
– Common direction/ understanding	– Leading organisation*	– Lack of competences	– Lack of knowledge about the partners' activities and current issues
– Open & trustful exchange	– Regular & frequent exchange	– Low contribution	– Lack of willingness to cooperate
– Focus on guests over competition	– Close cooperation	– Personnel changes	
– Legitimisation of the organisation	– Participation*		
	– Using synergies		
	– Joint projects		

* Factors that are likely to affect cooperation between the DMO and regional development more than with other stakeholders.

Figure 9: Factors to be considered for successful cooperation (own illustration)

4.5 New approaches

The final topic of the interviews was the newer approaches in destination management and destination development. The interviewees were briefly introduced to each approach and were then able to give their spontaneous assessment of what came to mind.

4.5.1 Project logic

First, the project logic was presented (see chapter 2.4.1 Project logic, p. 23). Many interviewees immediately found the approach or aspects of it very interesting. Nevertheless, there were also several concerns regarding practicable implementation.

Esther Schlumpf takes a fundamentally positive view of project-based work, as the RWO AG often works in this way itself:

> *"As RWO [...] we practically only work on a project basis, except for the performance mandate. And that's the be-all and end-all. The agility it gives you is massive. Because you really have a specific question. And with this question, you look at who is interested or who is affected. In other words, who should be involved in the decision-making process? In other words, who should co-finance it?"*

Carine Brendel also spontaneously reacted favourably to the project logic approach:

> *"But I think that's definitely a very good thing. Working with projects. I find that very interesting. From my point of view, that's actually the only way how it should work."*

Werner Zenhäusern pointed out that the project logic could result in the elimination of tasks at the DMO, which could lead to job losses at the DMO.

> *"These are also jobs that are behind it. And it's clear that the DMO is of course also trying to keep its people together and not hand over any tasks. [...] That you say, a certain amount of basic funding from the DMO for the people that are still needed. Sure, that's always hard, maybe certain people are no longer needed. [...] But they could then perhaps be active in the management of this fund and help to implement it."*

René Stoye and Sven Berchtold also assumed that there could be a risk that there would not be enough will to implement the projects if they come to realisation. René Stoye comments on this:

> *"So far so good, of course it stands or falls with the working group that takes over the project [...] afterwards and the speed at which they are able to proceed and implement it. [...] In the end, it depends on which actors ultimately play the executive role in these projects."*

And in the words of Sven Berchtold:

> *"I have the feeling that if you leave it solely to the stakeholders to drive projects, then, as we have experienced now, not much would come of them. I think we need a bit of an input provider, a kind of top-down approach. [...] Because if we just wait until something happens, then we're simply moving too slowly."*

Destination development fund

When asked about the destination development fund, it was mentioned several times that something like this could be helpful for projects that would otherwise not have any funding. Another argument was that such a fund could increase flexibility. Michael Caflisch referred to the municipal budgets:

> *"That's certainly also an element of having room for manoeuvre, including the unpredictable. If you always have to go to the community meeting a year in advance... also to increase speed [...] but you need a few rules. How does the money come in and how does the money go out? But that is certainly also an element to enable dynamism, to simplify cooperation. It just requires that everyone accepts the basic rules and maybe five pay in and the benefit is primarily only in one municipality, but if you think a bit bigger and don't have your blinkers on too tightly, then you can also say, yes, if things are going well in Samnaun, then others will benefit too."*

Daniel Högger also expressed precisely this fear that the various municipalities in the region do not agree with the fact that they perhaps almost only pay money into the fund for other municipalities.

Similar considerations were made regarding the need for funding criteria in order to decide which projects can and cannot be realised and also whether such a destination development fund could be combined with existing funding programmes. For example, so that the residual financing required from the regions in order to receive NRP and Innotour funding could be provided by such a fund.

Sven Berchtold was rather critical of the project logic mechanism, but he sees opportunities when it comes to the destination development fund. Because they have already had good experiences with the "Cause We Care" destination fund, with which they can realise projects in the area of ecological sustainability.

> *"We are still happy that we have this because it gives us a certain degree of independence. In other words, we can realise projects and finance projects. It keeps filling up and it's a great tool for us, for example, to really implement things where we can also use money for infrastructural issues."*

He is also of the opinion that a kind of innovation pot is needed for tourism topics in general. Similar to the NRP and Innotour funding programmes, but at municipal or regional level, in order to co-finance innovations or provide initial funding.

Urs Zurbriggen also saw opportunities for financing projects for which no one feels responsible:

> *"But who does the projects on site, in the village and so on? And that often falls back on a DMO, which usually doesn't have the infrastructure funds available. So, creating a kind of fund is very, very exciting. And for us, it's not far-fetched to develop something in this direction."*

Open for other stakeholders and acceptance

In addition to the financial aspect, some also emphasised the advantage of involving other stakeholders through the project logic process, allowing them to contribute and co-decide, which finally increases acceptance.

"In the end, however, I find it exciting that it is still open to many project organisers to submit projects and ideas, which of course always have to be in line with the strategy. [...] And if this fits into the strategy, so that it can also be implemented with many different participants in the project and that the DMO doesn't always have to be the implementer." [Sarah Fux]

"I believe that such a fund is also a way to create acceptance, of course, that you can stand behind joint projects. [...] It is also important for those who have to accumulate the funds [...] that you actually think together about where to invest it properly. And yes, I think that's certainly a good approach." [Werner Zenhäusern]

David Spinnler also emphasised the greater motivation of the players if they can identify with the projects by having a say in them.

Nothing new
After a rough presentation of the project logic, numerous respondents said that it was nothing new and that they already had something similar.

For Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair, as already mentioned above, reference was made to the "Cause We Care" destination fund. The sustainability council was also brought up, where they have formed project groups with interested organisations, for example. Daniel Högger also mentioned that a meeting with the municipalities, the TESSVM and service providers will take place shortly. The aim is to gather the needs and project ideas and see whether something can be implemented together and how it can be coordinated.

Leukerbad also has similar forms of project logic. Wolfgang Loretan described the opportunity for interested parties to submit their ideas:

"We organise a workshop once or twice a year. With everyone who wants to come. A lot of ideas are brought together. For the future of the destination, we always invite not only service providers, but also other people who can take part and contribute their ideas. We collect them and at the end we should evaluate them and take out the best and go in that direction."

Urs Zurbriggen explained that they had unconsciously worked according to the project model:

"Without realising it, we actually managed the master plan according to such a model. […] We defined seven different modules. There were then project teams within the modules. Some of them were strongly internal, but some also involved external partners. Each module had a project manager and then there was an overall project. So, it was actually a very fluid process, from an outline to a strategy definition to implementation at certain points."

4.5.2 Destination governance
During the interviews, it became clear that the destination governance approach is difficult to grasp. Nevertheless, there were some considerations worth mentioning, which are summarised under a few different topics.

Hierarchy

A frequent point of discussion was the hierarchy and therefore whether hierarchical management is an advantage or a flat hierarchy. This was then mostly considered at company level.

David Spinnler mentioned that they work with participative approaches in the nature park and therefore with flat hierarchies. Sven Berchtold is rather critical of this and is of the opinion that certain structures are necessary in a company.

> *"And I have the feeling that sometimes people hide a bit between these terms: agile, flat hierarchies. That you don't actually have to make a decision. That you can always push it back and forth. That's why I'm personally a bit critical of talking about too many flat and agile hierarchies. Every company needs a certain structure to make it work."*

Christian Grichting was also convinced that it doesn't work with flat hierarchies. Someone has to take the lead in projects in order for them to be realised.

Werner Zenhäusern gave the example of large companies such as Apple, Google and Microsoft. These very successful companies are still managed very hierarchically. However, he differentiated whether this could be considered similarly in tourism:

> *"These are completely different challenges, completely different companies. And, of course, the DMO always has the difficulty that it is simply financed by the guests, by the owners of two apartments, by the hoteliers and mountain railways through taxes and so on. There is also a certain... They are, so to speak, in debt to these players who finance them. If they were an independent organisation that financed itself, they would probably be more on an equal footing."*

Rules

The need for rules also came up in connection with the hierarchy. Tourism can be compared to football, said Peter Oggier, as everyone has a different opinion. For this reason, clear structures are needed that clarify what is being tackled together.

Michael Caflisch also noted that destination governance is not possible without certain rules:

> *"[...] and therefore with your reference to a slightly more flexible, new approach, that is absolutely an option. But there is no way around a few rules of the game and a strategy and a common objective. So, you can't say, ah, we don't actually agree, but that's why we're doing something together. You still have to find a way. In the end, it always comes back to money, investments and responsibilities."*

Formal vs. informal

A few examples of formal and informal relationships were mentioned. For instance, the intention to organise a weekly coffee break between the nature park and the TESSVM in Val Müstair, which have their offices in the same building. According to David Spinnler, this informal exchange should further strengthen the close collaboration.

The Leukerbad tourism council was mentioned as another example:

> *"The tourism council that we have now is a formal body. I would say so, but without any major competences in this sense. It was actually set up so that we have a body where we can foster informal exchange."* [Urs Zurbriggen]

Looking at the destination as a whole, Michael Caflisch had the following thoughts:

"Do you sit on each other's boards? So, do you represent each other on these committees? Or is there an informal... a round table where you say, once a month, once a year, whenever, the mayor and the tourism director and the mountain railway director and the five people sit together, although they... it's not a new organisation, but it's more or less like the informal governance of such a system."

Person-dependent

As already discussed in relation to the leadership of a destination (see chapter 4.4.2 Success factors, p. 61), some respondents also pointed out that destination governance can be very person-dependent.

Sarah Fux noted this in the context of personnel changes. For people who have been working in a position for many years, certain things have become established when working with other long-standing representatives of a partner organisation or they get along almost blink. When someone new arrives, this informal approach can be quite difficult at the beginning and things have to settle down again. When it comes to the formal side, it's easier for newcomers to understand what needs to be done and how.

For his part, René Stoye emphasised that it also depends on the personality of the people involved:

"It stands and falls with the people who are involved and the empathy and feeling for other people in the destination. And I think it's very important how the chemistry between the players works. It is simply tempi passati to have the feeling that I am at the top of the pyramid, in the hierarchy, and that you can lead a destination purely on the basis of this delegative management style."

Michael Caflisch mentioned that strong leadership personalities can lead more than just their own organisation, be it a municipality, a tourism organisation, etc., also through informal means. He sits on various boards of directors, has a certain standing and has been able to earn his influence to some extent.

4.5.3 Living space perspective

There were different positions on the living space perspective. Some immediately saw this as a municipal issue or as a regional development task and expressed the opinion that DMOs should concentrate on the tourism sector. Others confirmed that this is the direction that needs to be taken. Frequent reference was made to topics that are not currently within the responsibilities of a DMO, but are nevertheless closely linked to tourism.

"So that's exactly where you get into this logic, because they say, look, we have a problem with accommodation, with the beds in the hotel industry, successor regulation, but also housing, i.e. the attractiveness of housing for employees. Perhaps also community services, which in these small structures are increasingly coming to their limits. Come on, let's do it together as six municipalities... Let's draw up a target vision and define measures together. I think that's what's needed." [Esther Schlumpf]

Alongside the regional developer, Urs Zurbriggen also saw the living space perspective as necessary in order to be able to tackle challenges that go beyond tourism but still have a major impact on it.

"[...] that we are already moving into a task that is actually primarily the responsibility of the municipalities. But it will become more and more important. We can see today that other destinations already have the problem of housing shortages, staff who live far away [...] and so on. That's just one aspect of the whole story. The approach is certainly interesting. The real question here is how many resources can a DMO put into a project like this? Do you have the manpower to do it? [...] But it's an exciting topic that will probably be very much with us over the next few years, together with the municipalities. I think we have to tackle it together."

Tourism is very important in the Samnaun sub-region, therefore the mayor of Samnaun, Daniel Högger, noted the following:

"Basically, I always say that everything we do is for tourism. [...] I believe that at the end of the day, everything is connected. If a DMO works well and we have a lot of people in our region, then we also have jobs in the region, then the region is doing well, then you also have other finances."

The next section will go into more detail on this connection and how both sides can benefit from each other.

Mutual benefits for tourism and locals

When asked about the living space perspective, many recognised the dependencies between the locals and tourism, or rather that they can benefit from each other. Sarah Fux described the situation from the locals' perspective like this:

"If you want to make a place more attractive, then this is also good for tourism, because new skilled workers can be attracted. Or if infrastructure is created for the local population so that it is perhaps also used for tourism, but mainly for the local population, for example."

The opposite view, from the perspective of tourism, was explained by Sven Berchtold:

"Absolutely, because infrastructural projects that we do for tourism also benefit the locals. So, if you renovate and enlarge the Bogn Engiadina, without tourism there would be no Bogn Engiadina. Without tourism, there would be no mountain railways in Scuol. That's why we always have to show the added value for the locals."

Michael Caflisch summarised the mutual dependencies and the interaction between guests and tourists:

"The living space perspective is becoming more important from my point of view, because tourism cannot function without the locals. [...] In the Grisons and also in the Lower Engadin, we are far away from overtourism and yet without acceptance, tourism awareness, without interaction... And that's why I think that the word "living space" for locals, second locals and guests should actually be a symbiosis and not a few guests coming here and leaving again [...] I mean, every local benefits from the tourist offer. So, there has always been this interplay, but perhaps we need to emphasise this interplay even more and put it under the title of living space [...]"

Living space responsibilities

Who should take responsibility for the living space perspective or be in the lead was very controversial across all interview partners. For Andri Poo, for example, it was clear that this should not be done by the DMO, but by regional development, because it very quickly becomes a political issue. For Martina Schlapbach, it depends on the extent to which a regional development organisation is active on site:

> *"And so, the living space approach, where I also see many interfaces with regional development. I can just imagine that there are certainly also destinations where there is perhaps no regional development at all or where regional development is very weak. In that case, I think there is huge potential there. And if there are somehow established regional developments and a DMO would like to go in this direction, I think it is certainly very important to coordinate well with each other and define who is doing what."*

Sarah Fux, however, saw a collaboration between the two organisations. Both organisations, regional development and the DMO have their strengths and expertise, which can be used to achieve the best possible results when they work together.

Meanwhile, David Spinnler could imagine that his organisation, the regional nature park, could play a central role in the living space perspective.

Carine Brendel and Wolfgang Loretan, for example, were of a completely different opinion. According to them, the municipality is responsible for the quality of life and living spaces. The DMO should concentrate on its tasks.

Esther Schlumpf explained that she is convinced that My Leukerbad AG must be able to exert more and more influence on location development issues. The idea is to steer where investments are made and what infrastructure is needed. The issue of available housing for locals and guest workers is of great importance. The municipality should create decision-making channels and processes that are dovetailed so that the needs of the tourism sector are also taken into account.

Looking at all the approaches presented, Michael Caflisch said that they are not mutually exclusive:

> *"But for me, it's not... you know, when you have project logic and living space perspective, it's not either or. It's like, these are all correct terms, but they belong together. So, they're not alternative approaches, but again, if you say on site that we're now going for a living space way of thinking, you can still do projects and vice versa."*

It is therefore not a question of choosing one new approach. It is possible to extract certain aspects or to combine different approaches.

5   Discussion

The discussion also addresses various key topics individually. This is followed by the implications for practice and research, and the chapter concludes with a brief consideration of the limitations.

5.1   Destination management organisations

Both of the destinations analysed have special characteristics in their structure that have resulted from deliberate changes in the past. Out of necessity, the operating company My Leukerbad AG was created (see chapter 2.5.2, p. 29), which today acts as a destination management organisation. This new model now tends towards the so-called "corporate model", which according to Anderegg et al. (2008) prevails when marketing is carried out by a company-controlled entity or when a company has a clear dominance within a destination. However, some aspects of the "community model" can also be recognised. This can be seen, for example, in a performance mandate with the municipality or financing through accommodation taxes or tourism promotion tax (Anderegg et al., 2008; My Leukerbad AG, 2022). The impetus for the new model came from inside.

A different process of structural change took place in Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair. Although the desire came from tourism in the Grisons, the canton in the form of the Economic Development and Tourism Agency (AWT), was in charge of the project "Wettbewerbsfähige Strukturen und Aufgabenteilung im Bündner Tourismus [Competitive structures and division of tasks in tourism in the Grisons]". The tourism reform took place from 2006 to 2013 and reduced the number of mostly local tourism organisations from 90 to four DMOs, eleven regional tourism organisations and three local tourism organisations (Amt für Wirtschaft und Tourismus Graubünden, 2013b). The TESSVM was one of the four new DMOs and clearly features the "community model". The tourism reform in the Grisons was also born out of necessity. In the 1990s, tourism in the Grisons suffered a loss of around CHF 450 million in added value. Among other things, the canton wanted to tackle this with professional structures (Amt für Wirtschaft und Tourismus Graubünden, 2013a).

As destinations and their structures usually grow historically (Beritelli et al., 2007), they must be considered very individually according to their context (Faur & Ban, 2022; Laesser, Küng, et al., 2023). There is no "one fits all" solution for the many different challenges that a DMO has to deal with. Accordingly, customised solutions are required. Nevertheless, the example of the Grisons has shown that a top-down approach can also help destinations and municipalities to overcome the challenge of leaving their old structures behind and adapting them to current circumstances. This did not happen to the same extent in Valais, which is probably an explanation for the mostly still very small-scale tourism destinations and municipalities.

Depending on the structure and principal of the DMO, the performance mandates can therefore look very different, as can their roles and tasks. The interviews showed that marketing is still the main task. It was surprising that certain tasks, which according to the literature would be assigned to the DMO, were not mentioned to any great extent, such as guest information or sales (D. Fischer & Bergamin, 2023; Kaurav et al., 2015; Morrison et al., 2018). It is questionable whether these tasks were not widely discussed, as they tend to be self-evident tasks of a DMO, but are less important than marketing, or whether these two tasks were not associated with destination management, as this was the focus of the interview.

As mentioned, the extent to which management plays a role in addition to marketing is firstly related to the performance mandate. Through the interviews, the researcher came to the

conclusion that another large part is also very dependent on the individual. Be it internally, when strong leaders (operational or strategic) force certain topics or developments more or less. Or if expectations are placed on the DMO by stakeholders, the pressure is increased either quantitatively, if many players express the same demands, or by strong leaders to take on or drop certain tasks and roles.

The author herself experienced how certain people and organisations pushed for the TESSVM to stop developing offers. After almost ten years, however, according to some interview partners from the destination Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair, the discussion seems to be back on whether the DMO should take on this task again on a larger and official scale.

When considering how much of a DMO's tasks and roles should be dedicated to marketing and what belongs to it, it is also important to decide how active the DMO should be within a destination and thus in destination management. As already mentioned in the literature review, two main functions of the DMOs can be recognised. On the one hand, external destination marketing and, on the other, internal destination management (Foris et al., 2020). Especially when the tasks were described more as roles in the interviews, they were primarily roles within the destination in cooperation with the other stakeholders – meaning internal destination management. These were, for example, networker, intermediary, supporter or coordinator. Again, it depends on how many competences the DMO receives through a performance mandate and thus how much it can go beyond support functions and actively shape destination development.

5.2   Regional development

The two regional development organisations studied differed primarily in terms of their size and the number of DMOs for which they are the contact point. Interestingly, the canton of Valais has the much larger and thus smaller number of regional development organisations. However, even in the Grisons it is not appropriate to speak of a small-scale structure in the formation of regional development organisations. Furthermore, according to Ecoplan (2018), both cantons have the same type of cantonal regionalisation model. This type is concerned if there is no external coordination centre and the subdivision is regional (sub-cantonal). Nevertheless, there are considerable differences between the regional development organisations of the two cantons, but the chosen structures do not appear to be better or worse per se. A review of the regional development organisations in the new regional policy also showed that there is no generally applicable regionalisation model for the cantons (Ecoplan, 2018).

The cooperation between the TESSVM and the regional development Engiadina Bassa/Val Müstair seems very close due to the same perimeter of the regional development and the DMO and the similar institutions that act as principals and similar stakeholders with whom the strategies are developed. However, there is a greater risk of overlapping tasks and roles.

This risk hardly exists with the RWO AG and the DMOs in their perimeter. The tasks and roles are clearly defined. In addition, support on demand is very pronounced, which seems to work well for both sides.

What was not specifically analysed, but should nevertheless be taken into account, is the fact that the nature parks are another actor in the areas of regional development and tourism. regiosuisse (n.d.–a) sees the Swiss parks as actors that promote, among other things, the sustainable regional economy and education for sustainable development. Nature parks can be seen as a regional economic instrument for regional development (Hammer et al., 2022). The

overlapping of tasks was mentioned in the interview with the nature park Biosfera Val Müstair. The development of offers was also mentioned, which is anchored in the Biosfera with a position that also develops tourist offers. In general, there are other tourism-related tasks that could just as well be carried out by the TESSVM. Even if it appears that the division of tasks between the Biosfera and TESSVM has been resolved well so far, it is clear that nature parks (could) also act to a certain extent as a destination management organisation. In principle, however, it can be said that the regional nature parks usually cover more topics than tourism and strive for a more sustainable orientation than regional development.

In contrast to the DMO, the wide range of regional development issues was raised during the interviews. The topics to be addressed are determined by the NRP (regiosuisse, n.d.–b) and the respective performance mandates. It is mentioned that the federal government also invests in the creation of attractive living spaces through the NRP. This is probably intended to be achieved indirectly, as it is not specifically mentioned in the objectives and thematic priorities (SECO, 2022a). On the question of the living space perspective in the interviews, regional development was seen as a potential organisation to become more active and play a central role in this. This subject is explored further in the subchapter 5.5 New approaches (p. 78).

5.3 Leading and influencing destination development

In order to better define the roles of the DMO and regional development, it is necessary to understand how a destination works and which other players are active in destination management and development. This can appear differently in each destination. During the interviews, however, it became clear that the municipalities in particular have many competences in terms of financing, decision-making, infrastructure, etc. and can therefore have a major influence on destination development. Other active and influential players are usually strong service providers that are responsible for the main or one of the main offers of a destination, as there are certain dependencies on them. These could be, for example, a mountain railway, a thermal spa, major hotels or a nature park.

The local population was hardly mentioned as another stakeholder. However, this is probably due to the way the question was phrased, as the locals hardly appears as an united group and was therefore not seen as an active stakeholder. However, this interest group is by no means negligible in tourism (Mose et al., 2023), as the respondents showed with other answers that this was not the case.

In the interviews, it became clear that the organisations that influence destination development or even assume leadership of the destination are seen very differently. Regional development was recognised as having more influence when it goes beyond tourism. However, the regional development organisations are often limited in their decision-making powers to implement development strategies by themselves (Willi & Pütz, 2018). Although the DMO is considered to have the possibility of exerting a great deal of influence, as many threads relating to tourism come together at the DMO, the organisation is restricted in its actions due to a lack of decision-making powers. The 4-circle model of a DMO's room for manoeuvre (see Figure 10, p. 77) confirms that the DMO has a great deal of room for manoeuvre within its own company, but that this then decreases through cooperation with the service providers, the destination with the other stakeholder groups and finally through to the political framework conditions, thereby also reducing its influence (Weber & Taufer, 2016).
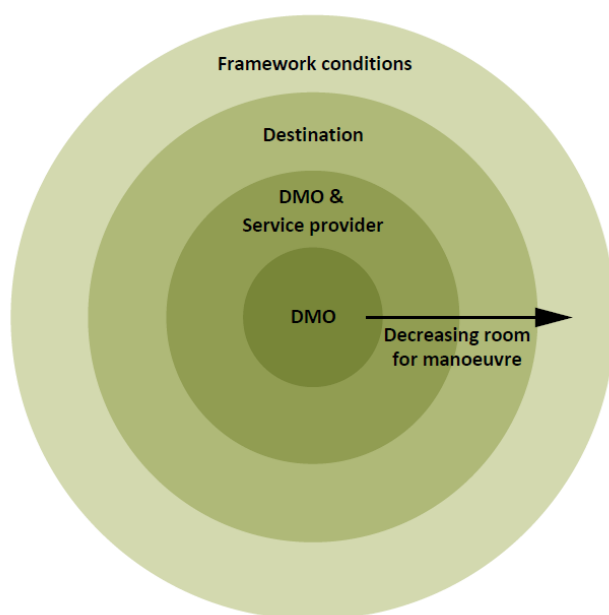
Figure 10: 4-circle model of a DMO's room for manoeuvre (Weber & Taufer)

Accordingly, it can be assumed that the DMO's room for manoeuvre is greater if the destination is managed in a corporate model, which means that more service providers are directly in the innermost circle, as is the case with My Leukerbad AG. Taking the corporate model as a starting point, the management of a destination is more likely to be an interplay between the DMO and the service providers as well as other stakeholders. Here too, a DMO or a service provider can take on a leading role. Although Laesser, Küng et al. (2023) are of the opinion that DMOs need to move away from the idea that they can manage a destination, in the interviews it was seen quite positively that a leading organisation – be it the DMO or another organisation – simplifies processes and makes them more efficient. Still, the participation of the various stakeholder groups must not be neglected, as the decision-making processes in destination management are never controlled by anyone alone (Asero & Billi, 2022) and these decisions and measures are accepted and supported by the majority (regiosuisse, n.d.–d). This can be done by creating a tourism committee with representatives of the interest groups (Schuler & Pirchl-Zaugg, 2021). This has already been implemented in Leukerbad by means of a tourism council and for the destination Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair a sustainability council has been established, which meets for tourism matters in the area of sustainable development.

The influence of regional development on destination development appears to be all the greater the closer it is to the tourism destination and thus shares more of the same partners with the DMO and the strategies overlap in many areas. Of course, it also depends on how much the regional development focusses on tourism. The greater the dependence of the region on tourism, the greater this focus is likely to be.
It is therefore all the more important that the various strategies are harmonised in order to prevent overlaps or potential conflicts (Willi & Pütz, 2018).

5.4   Cooperation

Taking up the previous section, the closer regional development and the DMO are structurally located, the greater the risk of overlaps and thus uncertainties in the separation of roles and tasks. However, in these "close" cases, it is also possible to consider whether even greater convergence could be considered in order to utilise as many synergies as possible. The author remembers how the cooperation between the TESSVM and the Biosfera Val Müstair was the subject of discussion for many years. This was also mentioned in the short report on the Grisons tourism reform 2006-2013 (Amt für Wirtschaft und Tourismus Graubünden, 2013b). In the meantime, though, they have greatly intensified their cooperation, have clearly allocated tasks and no longer present themselves to the outside world as two organisations. Therefore,

they can exploit many synergies. Nevertheless, it should be noted that ultimately the performance mandate is always decisive.

The Figure 9 (p. 66) in chapter 4.4.2 Success factors presented a compilation of the analysed challenges and key drivers for successful cooperation. In relation to this graphic, it is important to note, that almost all factors relate to the general cooperation of various organisations in tourism. It is difficult to make statements on cooperation that only concern the DMO and regional development. This is most likely to be possible for the factors of perimeter, structure, strategy, distribution of roles, many stakeholders, leading organisation and participation, as these are topics that are of greater concern to both organisations and are likely to raise more questions in relation to mutual cooperation.

Since most of the key drivers for successful cooperation are generally valid, this is probably also the reason for the gap in the literature on cooperation between regional development and DMOs that was also identified by Calero & Turner (2020). Even if it is not possible to provide a comprehensive list of success factors for cooperation between regional development and DMOs alone, it is noticeable that many recommendations emphasise a clear distribution of tasks (Ecoplan, 2018; Willi & Pütz, 2018) .

5.5 New approaches

The question of which organisation has which roles and tasks automatically brings the existing system into discussion. For this reason, relatively new approaches were examined in the framework of the literature review and the respondents were asked for their spontaneous assessment after a brief explanation.

Project logic

Project-based cooperation is an effective way of bringing different stakeholders together, sensitising them to certain topics and gaining their commitment to these issues without the need for a joint strategy. Meili & Schlumpf (2021) see similar advantages here. Project-related cooperation helps to connect stakeholders and increase mutual understanding and knowledge of the individual strategies as well as strengths and weaknesses. This in turn promotes trust for further collaboration. Even without the existence of a joint strategy or long-term structures and commitments, a common goal can be pursued with project-based cooperation (Meili & Schlumpf, 2021). However, a project logic cannot be detached from a strategy, otherwise there is a risk that, for example, offers will be created that do not fit the positioning of the tourism destination at all. This means that certain funding criteria must be defined in order to determine which projects are ultimately implemented, as well as certain rules for the formation of intentions so that the intentions are actually turned into implementation and the defined project partners are committed to working on them. Willi & Pütz (2018) also see it as crucial that the question of human and financial resources for implementation must already be clarified during the planning phase.

The destination development fund has the potential to provide financial resources for projects that are considered as necessary by many stakeholders in the destination, but which would otherwise be difficult to raise. Many funding programmes, such as the NRP and Innotour, require equity capital from the project organisation or from the region in order for the funding to be granted at all (regiosuisse, n.d.–c). The destination development fund could help to raise this necessary residual financing in an easier way.

The project logic can also be seen as an opportunity to systematically involve other stakeholders in destination development, which leads to more participation, which in turn can mean improved acceptance among service providers and the population. Spiegel (2022) confirms that the involvement of stakeholders increases the acceptance of the agreed tourism activities. Especially when introducing such a project logic, the distribution of roles and tasks between the DMO, regional development and other stakeholders may be discussed independently of the principals.

The project logic was presented as a new recommendation in the report from Laesser, Küng et al. (2023), but the interviews revealed that similar solutions had already been implemented in the destinations and that it was therefore not something new. Project-based work has been strongly promoted and practised in Switzerland in recent years, particularly with the NRP. However, this study revealed that tourism research had not yet dealt with this to any great extent and that little literature was available on the subject.

Destination governance

Hierarchy was a major topic in the interviews with regard to destination governance. Though they often referred to the hierarchy within a company. Destination governance, however, is about the various stakeholders in a destination. These have a high need for coordination, especially as there is no typical hierarchy between the stakeholders. Despite this, they have varying degrees of influence or power. It would therefore be more about the DMO or another organisation taking on the coordination role of the entire network or parts of it (Spiegel, 2022).

In general, it was difficult to identify a common tendency from the respondents' spontaneous feedback on destination governance. It is probably, like often, a matter of each destination finding out for itself what kind of governance is needed. In addition to the existence of certain formal structures, a balance is required, depending on the leadership personalities of the key stakeholders, with room for informal interaction and certain rules to prevent individuals or organisations from establishing an unrestricted position of power.

A recent example of destination governance is the realignment of the Flims Laax Falera destination, which announced at the end of 2023 that they intended to move away from traditional destination management and the idea of being able to steer a destination, and would therefore strategically realign themselves with the concept of destination governance. They see the activation of existing networks and the increased involvement of local service providers and stakeholders as prerequisites for success. By means of transparency, an open dialogue and a joint development process, they aim to improve the long-term competitiveness and resilience of the destination (htr hotelrevue, 2023).

Living space perspective

The living space perspective has become increasingly important in recent years (Binder et al., 2022). Also the respondents were generally open to the idea of taking a broader view of tourism. This is because most of them were aware that tourism often plays a role in other subject areas or is in turn affected by them. It was also expressed that the mutual interactions between an attractive living space and an attractive holiday region cannot be denied. The locals benefit from the tourism offers and tourism also has the benefit of a high quality of life among the local population. Wittmann & Helleisz (2022, p. 153) confirm this view (translated from German):

"Attractive living spaces are often also attractive holiday destinations."

Of course, the negative effects of tourism must also be taken into account when considering the living space and tourism should act according to responsible behaviour. Locals and visitors share a geographical area and it is therefore important to find a balance between the needs of the various stakeholder groups (Wittmann & Helleisz, 2022).

Many challenges were mentioned by the interviewees, such as climate change, a shortage of skilled labour or a lack of housing, which cannot be tackled alone. M. Fischer et al. (2023) see the need for new and effective cooperation between the state, the economy and civil society, especially at regional level, as social challenges can no longer be addressed alone.

It is therefore clear that one organisation is not solely responsible for living space management, but the question can also be asked here of who takes the lead or bears the most responsibility for this. Wittmann & Helleisz (2022) are convinced that living space management is not necessarily the task of a DMO, especially if a regional development organisation is already active in the destination. Nevertheless, a DMO is suitable for taking on a larger role within the living space perspective, as it has a strong interdisciplinary network and thus brings together the local players who have the necessary knowledge for the various issues.

It seems that the living space perspective and thus the focus on the balance between the competitiveness of a destination and the quality of life of the local population is becoming increasingly important. However, it is not possible to clearly state which organisation is primarily responsible, as the municipalities, for example, also play a very central role here. Once again, therefore, it must be said that each destination must work out for itself which organisations are willing and able to take on which tasks and roles.

5.6 Implications for practice and research

As already mentioned, there is no single solution or model that explains how the structure of a destination should be organised, how the roles and tasks should be distributed among the stakeholders and what the collaboration should ultimately look like. Based on the findings, however, certain recommendations can be made regarding what is considered to be particularly helpful and what is seen as having potential for successful destination management and future-oriented destination development. In addition to the factors to be considered for successful cooperation, which are listed in Figure 9 on page 66, the author has put together some suggestions.

Recommendations:
- Overcoming small-scale structures: Using more synergies, becoming more efficient and more professional
- Clearly outlined and harmonised strategies: between regional development and the DMO as well as the superordinate levels
- Clear allocation of roles and tasks: Increasing fulfilment of responsibility
- Establishment of a tourism council with representatives of the various interest groups for institutionalised participation
- Opportunities for exchange in an institutionalised form and occasionally in an informal setting to promote open dialogue
- Focus on the guest and thus overcoming competitive thinking within the destination
- Examination of new approaches over time, necessity of transformation processes

These recommendations can be taken into account when developing a new strategy or a masterplan, for example. They can also be used by the key players in destination development to review whether certain aspects or areas need to be improved to ensure successful cooperation.

Further research

As part of the master thesis, it was possible to analyse and compare two destinations. However, it would be interesting to have more opportunities for comparison with other tourism destinations and their regional development managers. This would allow the exploration of other destination structures and the comparison of similarly organised destinations. A next step could be a more broader quantitative approach that focuses only on the cooperation between the two actors DMO and regional development organisation.

It became apparent during this work that there is actually a third player that can be active in the field of action between a DMO and regional development, namely the nature parks. The role of this player could be examined in the same way as the other two organisations in order to get a more in-depth understanding of the implication of this actor.

Now that initial assessments of the proposed project logic by Laesser, Küng et al. (2023) have been obtained, the next step would be to apply it in practice. This means that this project logic is implemented in one or more destinations with the formation of intentions and further steps and that this is scientifically monitored.

Finally, the author sees great importance in the living space perspective, which is why this approach should be further investigated, especially with regard to responsibilities and joint realisation.

5.7   Limitations

This study has some limitations. Only two destinations were studied, which means that many other organisational forms of regional development or destination structures could not be taken into account. Within the destinations, a selection of other stakeholders was included, but there are other stakeholder groups that could have also been considered.

Despite the interview guide, it did happen that the explanations of the new approaches were sometimes presented slightly differently in personal interviews, which may have led to respondents not understanding the approaches in exactly the same way as other interviewees. However, each interviewee has different prior knowledge and also brings a different understanding of the subject, so that the questions could also be perceived differently in some cases.

During the interviews with the various stakeholders, it became obvious that not everyone was equally familiar with the structures and tasks of the DMO and regional development. For this reason, it was sometimes difficult for the respondents to answer the questions, but this was also a finding.

When selecting the destinations, it was discussed whether it could have an influence if the destination Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair was selected, where the author worked for the DMO for several years. The decision was made in favour of Engadin Samnaun Val Müstair due to advantages such as easier access to potential interview partners and the chance to gain deeper insights through the familiar system and people already known. Reflexivity through discussions with supervisors has assisted in overcoming this potential bias.

6 Conclusion

Tourism is a central instrument of regional development in rural areas in Switzerland. The DMO and regional development can nevertheless meet on an equal footing. However, the distribution of tasks and roles can vary greatly and is heavily dependent on the destination structure and how regional development is organised. Therefore, there is no solution or model that could work for all or at least the majority of tourism destinations and regions. The historically evolved structures and the existing culture of cooperation must be taken into account. Nevertheless, it is important for destinations and regions to review from time to time whether the chosen structures and strategies are still up to date and provide the necessary framework conditions to meet the current challenges, or whether adjustments are needed or even a complete transformation process is necessary. The DMO can generally consider if the corporate or the community model is more beneficial for them. Accordingly, it is important to consciously choose the appropriate governance and also to take into account the roles of all stakeholders and discuss them if necessary.

The challenges of recent years, which will obviously continue for a while and the increased importance of sustainability in tourism, the living space perspective is inevitably receiving more attention. It is likely that this will also place greater demands on DMOs in the future. It is crucial to ensure effective coordination among municipalities, regional development, and DMOs to strategically allocate responsibilities and delineate specific areas for living space development. If there is hardly any regional development locally or too little initiative from the municipalities, a greater role for a DMO in the living space perspective should be considered.
The project logic is not something fundamentally new, but it is an opportunity to anchor this logic as a fixed process in the cooperation with service providers and other stakeholders. Thereby participation will be strengthened and with that the tourism acceptance will increase. Each destination must find the right implementation solution for itself. It is essential that the project logic and thus the intention building is aligned with the strategies of the destination and region. It is also important that corresponding funding criteria are defined for the destination development fund. In addition, the DMO's performance mandate must be clearly clarified in advance.
In this sense, the approaches presented in this thesis are not mutually exclusive, but are applied at various levels and methodologically in different ways. A combination of all three approaches discussed is therefore absolutely possible.

Depending on the chosen destination structure and the available human and financial resources, the roles of DMOs and regional development vary from destination to destination respectively region. In addition to the performance mandate, the chosen model can also be decisive here. In the community model, tasks such as coordination, networking, support and mediation are given more weight. If, on the other hand, the focus is more on the corporate model, it is easier for a DMO to independently develop offers or organise events.
The responsibilities of regional development can also range from supporting tasks to the realisation of their own projects. Because so many options are possible, it is essential that the roles and tasks for destination management and development are discussed between the DMO and regional development, but also with other players such as the municipality, nature park, etc., and that a clear and binding allocation is made. This prevents misunderstandings and helps to ensure successful cooperation. Other factors for fruitful cooperation include a clear and, ideally, jointly developed strategy. If no strategy exists or is necessary between two organisations, a common understanding and working in the same direction is very important.

Equally crucial is a regular exchange that is open and based on mutual trust. Close cooperation, which can be achieved for example through joint projects, helps to be informed about each other's activities and to discover possible conflicts or potential opportunities early enough. If necessary, the cooperation can also go beyond joint projects by bundling areas of responsibility and thus utilising synergies. In order to achieve goals efficiently, it can be beneficial if one organisation takes the lead as long as the other stakeholders have the opportunity to participate by ensuring that all interest groups have legitimate representatives in discussions and decision-making processes.

Collaboration relies on the individuals involved and can swiftly shift in either direction. Hence, a commitment to fostering positive cooperation from all parties involved is consistently essential. It is also crucial that the institutions involved create the necessary framework conditions to enable employees to focus on the content of their work.

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Appendix
Interview guide

The following is an example of the interview guideline for the interview with regional development.

Interview guide for regional development			
Date of the interview:		**Start time:**	
Location of the interview:		**End time:**	
Interview code:		**Duration:**	
Interview file:			
Name of Interviewee:			
Stakeholder category:			
Company/Organisation:			
Function/Position:			

Before the interview (without recording)
- Purpose of the interview - Reminder of the selection process - Reminder of what is expected of the interviewee - Explanation of how the interview will be conducted: Recording with dictaphone app and/or video recording via Teams, taking notes in between, asking questions if anything is unclear

At the beginning of the interview
- Thank you very much for being willing to participate and share your knowledge - Interview will be used for master thesis - May your name and position be mentioned for the master thesis (list of participants, interview possibly in the appendix, with citation in the text and as a quotation)?   □ Yes   □ No   □ Yes, with the following reservation: _____

Topic: Roles and tasks of the regional development organisation xxx
Invitation to talk: In Switzerland, the tasks of regional development can be carried out at **different levels** and by **different forms of organisation**. How would you describe the regional development of xxx **in general** (organisational form and tasks)? What **roles and tasks** can be identified in relation to tourism destination management?
- How is the regional development xxx **organised**? - Roles and tasks in relation to destination management - Extent of **influence** of regional development on **tourism destination development**?

Topic: Roles and tasks of the DMO xxx

Invitation to talk: Expectations of a DMO have **risen** steadily in recent years and new responsibilities have been added. The **abbreviation DMO** increasingly stands for destination management organisation instead of destination marketing organisation.

How do you see this **development in general** and in **xxx** itself, and what roles and tasks do you see for the DMO in terms of destination management?

- **Development of DMO** from marketing to management
- Roles and tasks of the DMO xxx in relation to destination management
- Increased expectations towards DMOs
- Extent of the **influence** of the DMO xxx on **destination development**

Topic: Understanding of roles of other stakeholders and leading a destination

Invitation to talk: There are **other players active** in a destination with varying degrees of influence.

With regard to destination management and development, **which other stakeholders do you think are often contributing**? Does the destination need to be managed by an organisation? If yes, by whom? If not, why not and what could destination management look like instead?

- Other frequently active stakeholders
- Stakeholders **with a high level of influence** on destination management/development
- Stakeholders who **should become more active** in destination management/development
- Need for **leadership** of destination management / need for **coordination** of destination development
- In your experience, which **organisation(s) is/are in the lead**? (Is there a clear definition?)
- Can such a leading organisation **contribute to (more) successful cooperation** between the other stakeholders?

Topic: Cooperation between regional development and the DMO as well as other stakeholders

Invitation to talk: Whether with or without a leading organisation, destination development **can never be undertaken alone**.

How do you see the **cooperation** between you, the regional development organisation, and the DMO xxx? Where are there overlaps? What needs to be clarified between the two organisations and with other stakeholders?

- **How does the cooperation** between you and the DMO **work**?
- Form and regularity of the **exchange**
- What usually works well and what doesn't?
- Frequent **challenges**
- Need for **clarification**
- **Recipes for success**
- What has been **changed or tried** in the past?
- Cooperation with **other stakeholders and with each other** (perception)
- Where do you still see potential for future cooperation?

Topic: Other approaches (project logic, living space perspective, destination governance)

Invitation to talk: Destination management is constantly evolving and researchers and tourism experts are always in search of new possible approaches.

Project logic: According to the new **report** *"Tourism Destinations: Structures and Tasks as well as Challenges and Perspectives"* from this year, commissioned by SECO, the authors recommend that **DMOs should move away from the idea** that they can manage a destination and suggest a project logic. There should be a joint **formation of intentions**, which then results in projects, whereby cooperation and the **allocation** of tasks and responsibilities are primarily based on projects and are therefore **more binding**. The DMO, but also other stakeholders, could take on a **coordinating** role. A **destination development fund** is proposed to finance the projects.

Destination governance: From **hierarchical** destination management to **flexible** destination governance, interplay of **formal** institutions, processes and relationships as well as **informal** interactions and relationships, **cooperation between state and private stakeholders**.

Living space perspective: Competitiveness of the destination is in **balance** with the quality of life of the locals, comprehensive consideration of living space and **not a purely sectoral perspective → Extended strategic scope** for the DMO, new understanding of roles (**dialogue platform**, process management and system development), politics as a principal of the DMO

In your opinion, are new approaches even necessary? How do you see the different approaches? What seems **practicable** to you and, in your opinion, has **potential** and what has less?

- The **need** for new approaches
- **Opportunities and challenges**, advantages and disadvantages
- What might work, what might not? Reasons?
- **Project logic**: Already in use? Possible implementation? Responsibilities for **overarching** work/processes (management, development of a common vision and strategy)
- Potential **destination development fund**, possible implementation
- **Governance**: Informal interactions & relationships, cooperation between state & private actors
- **Living space perspective**: New role to be **assigned** rather to DMO or regional development? Sensible allocation of roles

Exploratory questions

- Would you tell me how you define it, so I have it in your words?
- That's interesting, can you tell me more about that please?
- You said that... Can you explain what you mean by that?

At the end of the interview

- Is there anything you would like to tell me that I haven't asked you about or that we haven't talked about yet?

- May all answers and information be used for the master thesis?

  ☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ With initials only   ☐ Yes, except _____

- Are you interested in the final result (in English)?

  ☐ Yes   ☐ No

- Thank you again for participating and sharing your knowledge

Declaration

I herewith declare that this is my independent work written by me and using only admissible aides and no other sources than those given. I have marked as such, all passages which have been taken literally or analogously from another source. I am aware that if this is not the case, the executive board of the university of applied sciences is entitled to rescind any qualifications awarded or any title bestowed based on this work.

Yvonne Schuler

Chur, 8 March 2024