To define destination and destination management is rather easy

Definition of Destination
(WTO 1992 or Bieger 1996)

A destination is a geographical area consisting of all the services and infrastructure necessary for the stay of a specific tourist or tourism segment. Destinations are the competitive units of incoming tourism. Destinations are therefore an important part of a tourism product.
However, different types of tourist destinations compete for the same markets, today

- Centrally managed destinations and owned by one or few companies or individuals
  - cruise ships (mobile destinations)
  - amusement parks
  - winter sport resorts in Northern America
  - summer vacation resorts, e.g. in Asia and in the Middle East

- Destinations consisting of a system of fragmented services delivered by many companies and actors (numerous SMEs)
  - traditional tourist regions/destinations with community character (e.g. in Europe)
  - cities

implications for strategy and governance

- entrepreneurial initiative
- private cooperation
- corporate strategies

- process of public choice and decision-making
- discussions and democratic decisions
- administrative decisions
- workshops and forums
- rules and norms set around the environment and the society

Particularly, type B (community type of destination) bears inherent challenges with regard to the current competitive environment

How can we define a common strategy for the whole destination? Which is our identity and how can this identity be translated into common actions?

Which institutions, which products and brands shape our perception in the markets? Do these players act on their own or do they involve other players in their strategic intent?

Who is responsible for the strategy and governance process in our destination? Which mechanisms are relevant?

Which is the most effective way to communicate with each other and to define next steps in marketing and sales?

How can we make sure that private and public entities all share a common vision and support a specific development policy?
In fact, strategies in community type of destinations take place in public space...

...and constrain the involved actors and their institutions in a complex system of particular interests

Cooperative behavior among stakeholders and their institutions is limited by three phenomena (Ostrom, 1991):

1. the tragedy of the commons, where there is no incentive for institutions to avoid the overexploitation of common resources (e.g. natural landscape, cultural assets) (Hardin, 1968),

2. the prisoner's dilemma, which induces the actors, under the conditions of limited information and non-repeated rounds, not to cooperate although they would be better off if they cooperated (Axelrod & Hamilton, 1981)

3. the challenge of collective action, whereby collective failure and the individual's limitation to acknowledge the importance of collective goods increases with (1) the size of the groups, (2) their homogeneity, and (3) the lack of institutional structures that promote collective action (Olson, 1965).
In order, to understand why and how opinions and ideas lead to action or omission, we must understand multiple levels...

...as well as multiple relationships at these different levels
SNA is a methodological approach, which enables us (among others) to capture multiple characteristics and opinions of actors representing institutions and stakeholder groups in an Alpine tourist destination in Austria (asymmetric, valued) (44 nominated actors, 42 interviewed).

Two-mode binary network with regard to actors and the main competitive advantages of the destination.
One-mode network with regard to the main competitors (derived from two-mode network)...

…and another perspective of the competitor's perception, here looking only at the actors
Network visualization looks nice, but the real story develops when we discuss networks with respect to some central SNA theoretical constructs.

Thank you very much for your attention!