

# Önningeby and Skagen

## Investigating Two Artists' Colonies with Social Network Analysis

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The first impression of the southern beach at Skagen in Denmark was enchanting: a simple landscape of sea and sand in the summer breeze with two friends walking on the beach in their white dresses. It was not so much about the grandeur, the multi-dimensional landscape but a rather simple one that some would even call a meaningless landscape – seemingly nothing special in its simplicity. But this landscape was in fact a special one; those who went there remembered the lazy, hazy days of the past – the time before industrialisation. This scenery attracted artists who had studied at arts centres and travelled across Europe. Suddenly, for them, the cafés, restaurants and the city

**Fig. 1. Peder Severin Krøyer, *Summer evening on Skagen's Southern Beach; with Anna Ancher and Marie Krøyer*, 1893, oil on canvas, 126.4cm x 178.8cm. Art Museums of Skagen**

Photo: Skagens kunstmuseer



life were no longer appealing. It did not offer the same kind of excitement. Instead, the cities felt large, dirty and the life there rather impersonal and expensive. Artists wanted a change of environment, they wanted to enjoy the simple way of life, they searched for the authentic. On the eve of industrialisation artists felt it their duty to paint the beautiful landscapes that would soon disappear. They wanted to immortalise these immersive landscapes (Fig. 1).

In this article I ask what could be the additional benefits of focusing on social networks and using the social network analysis (later the SNA) to research artist colonies. What kind of new insights would this provide? What kind of social network theory or a combination of several theories would be the most suitable and how could a social network analysis be carried out in this context? I will discuss the possibility that the SNA could provide a new kind of analytical approach for studying the phenomenon of artists' colonies, as the examples in this article will show. The potential of the SNA suggests the possibility of a new insight into the geography of the artists' colonies, their framework, the social leadership within them and maybe even the impact of popular motifs for paintings. I will use two Nordic artists' colonies, Skagen in Denmark and Önningeby in Åland, as examples, and an open-source social network analysis tool, Gephi.org<sup>1</sup>, for studying them. As the basis of this article I use my doctoral thesis.<sup>2</sup>

Landscape was the focus when the artists' colonies started to emerge around the 1820s. First, there were the French landscape painters who discovered the forest of Fontainebleau near the village of Barbizon. The unspoiled nature with its lush trees, dark woods, and rock faces, as well as the simple life of the local peasantry appealed to these artists. In some villages, the local people still wore the traditional costumes, which added to the general atmosphere of authenticity. Another decisive factor was the shift away from the arts centres of Paris, Antwerp and Düsseldorf and young artists' revolt against the historical and mythological painting of academic art education. Instead of working indoors under artificial light, the young artists wanted to paint naturalistic subjects in the open air in order to capture real life, in real light. Added to this was the more practical consideration that living and painting in the rural settings was far cheaper than in the big cities.

1 <http://www.gephi.org> (accessed 18 January 2019).

2 Anna-Maria Wiljanen, *'Nej, i sanning, ett bättre ställe hade den unga målaren ej kunnat hamna på.'* Önningeby konstnärskoloni och de mångfacetterade sociala nätverkens interaktion. Finlands Nationalgalleris publikationer 1. (Finnish National Gallery: Helsingfors, 2014).

The artists' colonies were often established in small, rural villages. They were most often based on the initiative of one artist who was not a permanent resident of the village. The colonies consisted of a group of artists (the majority of whom were visual artists) who lived and worked at the same place or in the same village for a certain period, usually during the summertime. The colonies usually functioned for at least three consecutive months per year, every year. Most of the artists joining them were young, 20–30 years of age, and they represented different nationalities. The colony could be composed of different groups, a key group consisting of the most loyal artists, whose paintings and actions influenced the colony or even helped to create the colony's own significant style further. An implicit social hierarchy can be found in some of these colonies.<sup>3</sup>

The phenomenon spread from France to Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, and to the Nordic countries (Fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> Michael Jacobs' book, *The Good and Simple Life: Artist Colonies in Europe and America* (1985), was a pioneering publication about the formation of 11 different artists' colonies in Europe, Russia and America. A decade after Jacobs' publication, The National Museum of Germany (Germanisches Nationalmuseum) launched a large international research project on this theme. The result was an exhibition '*Künstlerkolonien in Europa. Im Zeichen der Ebene und des Himmels*' that was held at the Nationalmuseum of Germany in Nuremberg in 2001–02. An extensive exhibition catalogue was published in connection with the exhibition.<sup>5</sup>

Nina Lübbren states in her book *Rural artists' colonies in Europe 1870–1910*, that more than 3,000 artists worked in artists' colonies at some point of their careers.<sup>6</sup> However, the heyday of these communities was over by the time of the First World War, with a corresponding shift from nostalgic rural idylls to utopian urban ideals.<sup>7</sup> Nina Lübbren's study was the first to undertake more analytical research into this phenomenon. Her new approach focused on the creative sociability among the artists, the relationship between the local people and the artists, the artists and nature, landscapes and tourism.<sup>8</sup>

Some research has been published during the past ten years, such as Alice Gudera *et al.*, *Und sie malten doch! Geschichte der Malerinnen – Worpswede, Fischerhude, Bremen* (2007), Jennifer

3 Wiljanen, '*Nej, i sanning...*', 26.

4 Wiljanen, '*Nej, i sanning...*', 10.

5 *Künstlerkolonien in Europa – Im Zeichen der Ebene und des Himmels*. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg 15. November bis 17. Februar 2002 (Nürnberg: Verlag des Germanischen Nationalmuseums, 2001).

6 Nina Lübbren, *Rural artists' colonies in Europe 1870–1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 2.

7 Lübbren, *Rural artists' colonies...*, 162.

8 Lübbren, *Rural artists' colonies...*, ivii.

L. Aldrich's *Artist Colonies in Europe, the United States and Florida* (2008) and Thomas Andratschke's *Mythos Heimat: Worpswede und die europäischen Künstlerkolonien* (2014). However, art-historical research has not paid attention to social networks in this context until the doctoral thesis produced by Alexandra Herlitz, *Grez-sur-Loing. The International artists' colony in a different light* (2013)<sup>9</sup>, as well as my doctoral dissertation '*No truly, a better place could the young painter not have ended up in.*' *The Önningeby artists' colony and the interaction of the multifaceted social networks* (2014)<sup>10</sup>. There have also been articles focusing on the networks, such as Stefanie Porras's 'Keeping Our Eyes Open: Visualizing Networks and Art History' (2017).<sup>11</sup>

## Social networks as a research toolbox

Social networks are referred to in practically all sectors of today's society. We are looking at the world through 'network glasses' in order better to understand the connections between states, people, politics and economics. We are not merely concentrating on the networks themselves, but also on their structures and how connections between institutions and people are created and what connections there are to those fields where the same kinds of structures emerge.<sup>12</sup>

However, research and the concept of the network is not a new phenomenon. In English-speaking countries it can be traced back to the 16th century, although the more scientific definition was developed in the 19th century.<sup>13</sup> According to Gabriel Tarde (1843–1904), sociology was about studying the psychological interactions between people. The focus was on a small-scale interaction and imitation rather than on social facts. George Simmel (1858–1918) argued that everything is interacting with everything. Different matters are developed in a network that consists of ever-changing relations. According to Simmel, nothing that relates to society or culture can be understood apart from the relations from which they have been shaped.<sup>14</sup>

A network can be defined as a technique that describes the relations between different actors, for example between organisations or people, as a regular structure that can change. It can also be interpreted as a metaphor that can be extended to the entire society. This has shaped the perception about the

9 Alexandra Herlitz, *Grez-sur-Loing revisited. The international artists' colony in a different light* (Göteborg: Makadam förlag & bokproduktion AB, 2013).

10 The original title in Swedish is '*Nej, i sanning, ett bättre ställe hade den unga målaren ej kunnat hamna på.*' *Önningeby konstnärskoloni och de mångfacetterade social nätverkens interaction* (2014).

11 Stefanie Porras, 'Keeping Our Eyes Open: Visualizing Networks and Art History', *Artl@s Bulletin* 6, no 3 (2017), Article 3.

12 Kai Eriksson, *Yhteiskuntatieteellinen verkostoajattelu. Verkostot yhteiskuntatutkimuksessa*. Kai Eriksson (ed.). (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, Helsinki University Press, 2015), 7.

13 Eriksson, *Yhteiskuntatieteellinen verkostoajattelu...*, 15.

14 Eriksson, *Yhteiskuntatieteellinen verkostoajattelu...*, 16–18.

networked social reality. Many philosophers, among them Gilles Deleuze (1925–95), Michel Foucault (1926–84) and Michel Serres (1930–2019), have referred to networks as open, productive and multidisciplinary structures that shape the changing conditions of social existence. A network is considered complicated because it has been defined in numerous ways. It can be seen as a methodology, as a heuristic model or as an ontology, or it can be viewed as a language, a technique or an organisation or something else.<sup>15</sup>

For analysing social networks the most suitable way seems to be, after carefully examining the options, Linton Freeman’s (1927–2018) network analysis that covers the entire development cycle. According to Freeman, the network analysis consists of 1) a structural way of thinking, 2) the systematic gathering of material, 3) visualisation and 4) mathematical and computer-assisted modelling.<sup>16</sup> Visualisation can be carried out by using sociometrical research initially launched in the 1930s by Jacob L. Moreno (1889–1974). He created a map of social relations where an individual’s position in the group, as well as the group itself, could be analysed. Moreno focused especially on the distinction between social positions and emotions between individuals. One result of his research is that there tends to be one central figure within a network who all the other members want to be in contact with. Moreno developed the sociometrical test that shows how a person has gained their position in a group.<sup>17</sup>

Using the SNA means mapping and measuring relationships and flows between people, groups, organisations and other connected information/knowledge entities. The nodes in the network are the people and groups, whereas the links show relationships or flows between the nodes. The SNA provides both a visual and a mathematical analysis of human relationships. The location and grouping of the actors in the network are evaluated in order to understand the networks and their participants. These measures give insights into the various roles and groupings in a network – who are the connectors, leaders, bridges, isolates, who is in the core of the network, and who is on the periphery.<sup>18</sup>

How can the social network analysis be used as a tool in the research context? Some researchers, such as Alexandra Herlitz, have found Bruno Latour’s (b. 1947) idea of the black box useful. Latour defines blackboxing as ‘the way scientific and technical

15 Eriksson, *Yhteiskuntatieteellinen verkostoajattelu...*, 11–14.

16 Jan-Erik Johanson and Antti Smedlund, *Verkostoanalyysi. Verkostot yhteiskuntatutkimuksessa*. Kai Eriksson (ed.) (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, Helsinki University Press, 2015), 236.

17 Jacob L. Moreno, *Who shall survive? Foundations of Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy and Sociodrama* (Beacon, N.Y.: Beacon House Inc., 1953), 504.

18 <http://www.orgnet.com/sna.html> (accessed 19 January 2019).

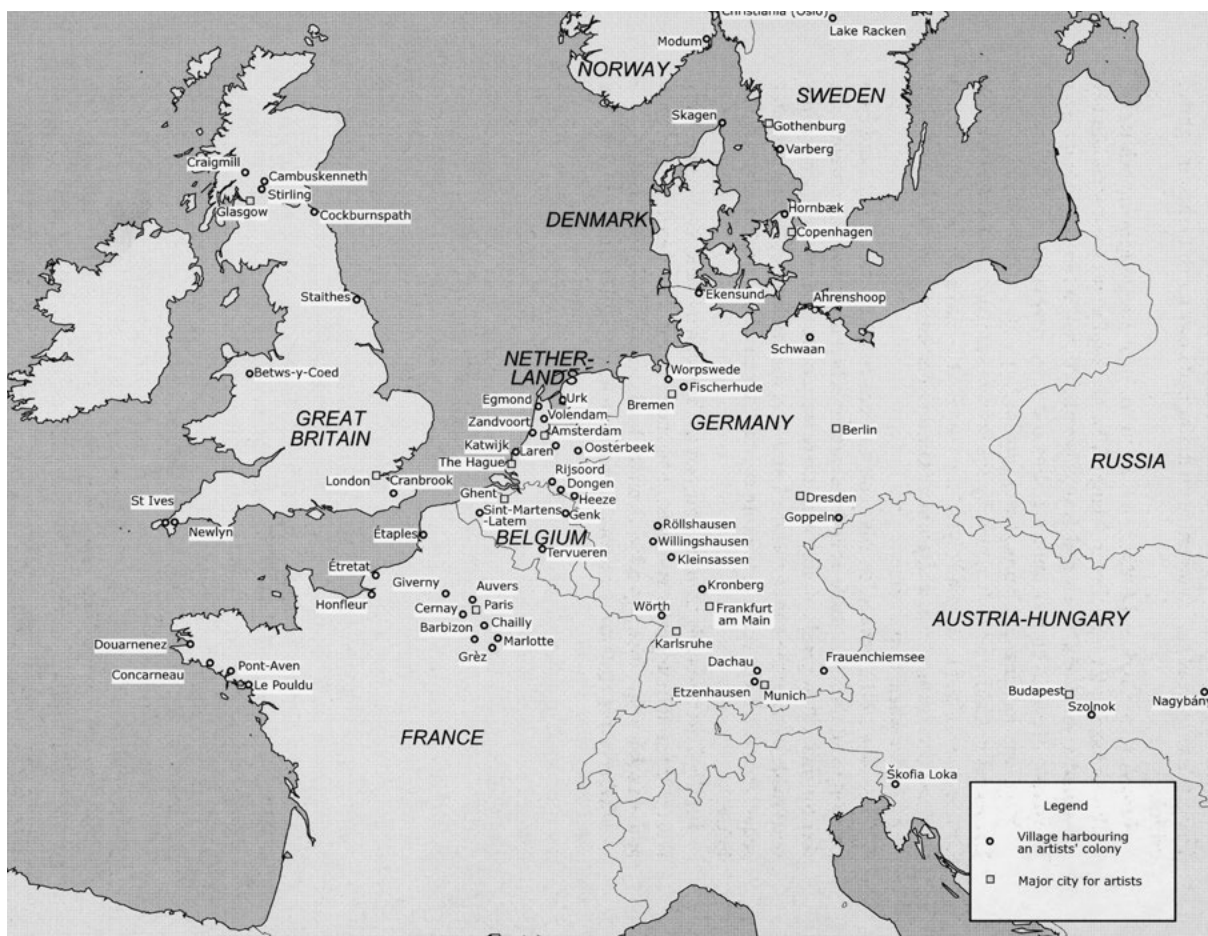


Fig. 2. Principal rural artists' colonies in Europe, c. 1900, in Nina Lübbren, *Rural artists' colonies in Europe 1870–1910*

work is made invisible by its own success. When a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one need focus only on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more science and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become.<sup>19</sup> Latour refers to science as an action where a hypothesis is first presented. In time, it is accepted and turned into an approved result, which according to Latour translates as a black box. Over time, the hypothesis will no longer be questioned but will eventually be accepted by the scientific community.<sup>20</sup> In order to convince the community of the usefulness of the SNA, the best combination of it must be tested.

An artists' colony consisted of a group of artists, with a common denominator that could be a destiny, a certain social structure or a

19 Bruno Latour, *Pandora's hope: essays on the reality of science studies* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 304.

20 Latour, *Pandora's hope*, XXX.

certain status. A group can also consist of individuals who meet on a regular basis, like families or work colleagues. According to Rupert Brown, a group is formed when two or more persons think that they belong to a group and its existence is recognised by at least one person outside the group.<sup>21</sup> Judy Gahagan, on the other hand, does not share Brown's idea. According to her, a collection of people can only be called a group if they share interactive relations that refer to a common goal.<sup>22</sup>

## Undiscovered routes of the artists

How can the SNA be used in studying what made the artists travel to artists' colonies, to the small villages that often were not easily reached? Let's get back to the primary functions of a network that can be divided into exchange, exclusion and inclusion. The most important function is often an exchange that mutually benefits actors within the network.<sup>23</sup> Exchange in a social network can be equated with a gift exchange.<sup>24</sup>

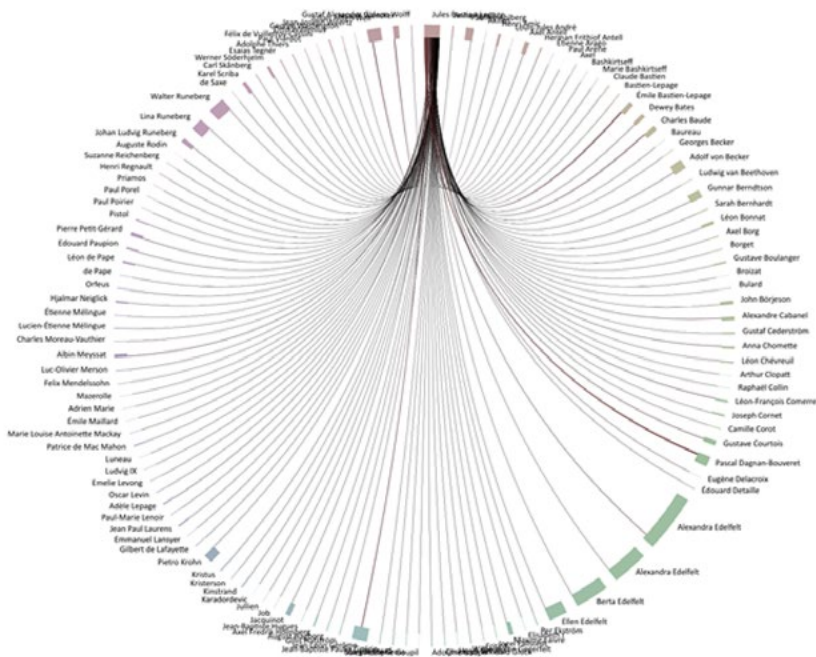
Before the artists' colonies were established, information about the beautiful rural villages and the suitable locations for painting were exchanged between artists. The forms these exchanges took included correspondence, dinner discussions, meetings and mutual travels. For example, the Finnish artist Maria Wiik (1853–1928) wrote to her fellow Finnish artist Alma Engblom (1856–1926):

*There will be a real artists' colony in the Åland Islands in the summer. Male and female artists from both Sweden and Finland, a real restoration à la Brittany. Maybe you go there too.*<sup>25</sup>

Not only does Wiik mention news about the upcoming artists' colony in Åland but she also refers to another colony in Brittany. The networks between the women artists in Finland were extensive, so news about an upcoming artists' colony, as well as Brittany, spread relatively quickly. News about the artists' colony in Skagen circulated in a local newspaper *Dagsavisen*. The front page read:

*There is a small Scandinavian artists' colony in Skagen this summer. In addition to Michael Ancher and his wife, who*

- 21 Rupert Brown, *Group Processes. Dynamics within and between groups* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1988), 1–3.
- 22 Judy Gahagan, *Vuorovaikutus, ryhmä ja joukko* (originally in English *Interpersonal and Group*). Trans. Manu Jääskeläinen (Espoo: Weilin + Göös, 1975), 98–99.
- 23 Ylva-Müller Hasselberg and Niklas Leos-Stenlås, 'Åter till historiens nätverk. Sociala nätverk och fält', in Håkan Gunneriusson (ed.), *Opuscula Historica Upsaliensia 28* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2002), 19.
- 24 Marcel Mauss, *Gåvan*. Med förord av Bo G. Eriksson (Uppsala: Argos Förlag. Ab. Wikströms Tryckeri, 1972), 57.
- 25 Maria Wiik's letter to Alma Engblom, Spring 1886. Archive Collections. Åbo Akademi University. Originally in Swedish: 'På sommaren kommer det att finnas en riktig konstnärskoloni på Åland. Manliga och kvinnliga konstnärer både från Sverige och Finland, och en allmän restauration à la Bretagne. Kanske du också åker dit.'



**Fig. 3. Network of the French artist Jules Bastien-Lepage, in *Albert Edelfelts brev. Elektronisk brev- och konstutgåva*, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2014, <http://edelfelt.sls.fi/personer/634/bastien-lepage-jules/> (accessed 13 August 2019)**

*have been staying there, there are also the Danes Krøyer and Locher, the Swede Oscar Björck, a relatively young artist, whose painting portrait of the artist's father has attracted attention, and also the young and very talented artist Krouthén. Norway is best represented with four artists: Christian Krogh, Wilhelm Peters, Eilif Peterssen and a quite young artist named Lund.*<sup>26</sup>

26 *Dagsavisen* 24 August 1883. Originally in Danish: 'Oppe paa Skagen er der i Sommer en hel lille skandinavisk Kunstnerkoloni, foruden Michael Ancher og Hustru, som jo har haft ophold deroppe, er af danske Kroyer og Locher, af svenske Oscar Björck, en ganske ung Kunstner, hvis Billeder paa Udstillingen, Portraet af Kunstnerens Faders "Skaal" osv. har tildraget sig Opmaerkksomhed, samt Krouthén, ligaledes ung, meget talentfuld Kunstner. Norge er staerkest repraesenteret, nemlig af 4 Kunstnere: Christian Krogh, Wilhelm Peters, Eilif Peterssen og en ganske ung Kunstner ved Namn Lund.'

The SNA can be used when establishing the ways in which information about the colonies spread. An artist's network should be established in order to find out how the information was disseminated. Fig. 3 shows the links between the French artist Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848–84) and the Finnish painter Albert Edelfelt (1854–1905).

According to Rob Shields, people attribute certain characteristics to certain places. He argues that, by a process involving over-simplification, stereotyping, labelling and activating prejudices, these conceptions are divided into symbolic formations that are called place-images. A group of place-images forms a place-



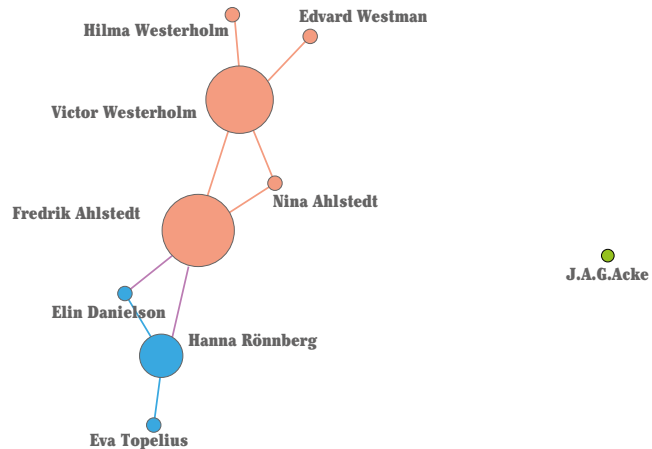


Fig. 4. Relations between key members of the Önningsby artists' colony before they joined the colony, in Anna-Maria Wiljanen, 'Nej, i sanning, ett bättre ställe hade den unga målaren ej kunnat hamna på.', 128

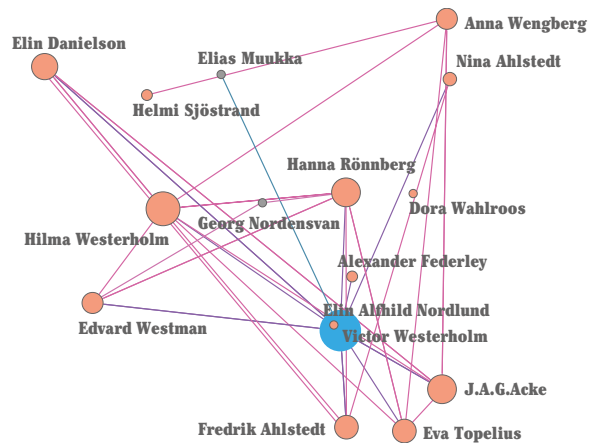


Fig. 5. Relations between key members and members of the subgroups of the Önningsby artists' colony, in Wiljanen, 'Nej, i sanning, ett bättre ställe hade den unga målaren ej kunnat hamna på.', 129

myth.<sup>27</sup> Information about the mythical locations spread mainly in letters from one node to one another (artist); first to the strongest direct links but then also to weaker links in their network.

Social network mapping provides more information about the selection of colony sites, about the artists' routes to the colonies, whether their arrival was intentional or not and whether they were attracted merely by the myth of the place. An analysis of the cultural positioning of the venues of these artists' colonies and how their position was constructed within a broader

27 Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin. Alternative geographies of modernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 47.

framework for the spatialisation of the cultures in their respective countries can be carried out with the social network analysis.<sup>28</sup>

Linton Freeman's four-phase-theory combined with the sociograms developed by Jacob L. Moreno, have proved to be the most useful, as the following examples show. Fig. 4 describes the relations between the artists at the outset of the Önningsby artists' colony. The artist who initiated it was Victor Westerholm (1860–1919). According to artist Hanna Rönnberg's (1860–1946) memoirs, Westerholm was considered the new talent in landscape painting and already had large networks. How can these networks and their impact be measured? By using the Gephi Graph Visualisation and Manipulation software for the social network analysis in which different variables are given to different aspects – such as whether the artists who became key members of the colony knew each other before joining, whether they were friends or had worked together or were married to another artist in the same colony. Gephi then calculates the values for different nodes. The analysis confirms that Westerholm was already part of a large number of networks before the colony, and this helped him expand the number of its members even further.

What we know about these artists' relationships to each other from archive documents verifies this. Both Westerholm and Fredrik Ahlstedt (1839–1901) had naturally strong links to their wives Hilma Westerholm and Nina Ahlstedt (1853–1907) but Westerholm also probably knew Edvard Westman (1865–1917), since they both had studied in Düsseldorf. Ahlstedt also had strong links to his students Elin Danielson (1861–1919) and Hanna Rönnberg, who had become acquainted with Eva Topelius (1855–1929). The Swedish artist J.A.G. Acke (1859–1924) almost falls out of the sociogram because he probably did not know any of the members before joining. Based on the sociogram, the initiator could also have been Fredrik Ahlstedt because of his large networks but he was older than Westerholm and perhaps not willing to live on the Åland Islands every summer.

Degree centrality means measuring the network activity for a node by using the concept of degrees – the number of direct connections a node has. A node with the most direct connections in the network is a connector. Fig. 5 shows that both Westerholm and Ahlstedt – both with equally many links – were connectors, even though Westerholm became the initiator of the artists'

28 Shields, *Places of Margin*, 73–74.

colony. He was considered as the leader both by contemporaries and in the later research.

However, the situation changed when J.A.G. Acke joined the colony. Acke was very outgoing and liked his fellow artists, especially two women artists who he fell in love with. When he arrived, the power positions in the colony changed, as can be seen in Fig. 5 when compared with Fig. 4.

Fig. 5 shows that Westerholm still had the most links but other nodes, such as Elin Danielson, Hilma Westerholm, Hanna Rönnerberg and J.A.G. Acke, were already getting stronger. When combining the SNA with the archive material, it becomes clear that the leadership changed quite soon after the establishment of the colony. Later, Acke's position was strengthened even further, so that he eventually became the strongest node. An individual's network centralities provide insight into their location in the network. The relationship between the centralities of all the nodes of the network can reveal information about the network's structure, the network centralisation. If a network is more or less dominated by one or a few very central nodes, we are talking about a very centralised network. If a network is centralised around one node, a connector with large networks, it can be disabled if this node is removed.<sup>29</sup>

This is precisely what happened in Önningsby. Acke was not considered as a central node when he joined the colony. However, he became the connector since the number of his direct relations grew the most. The situation changed dramatically when Acke was preparing a monumental painting, *Snöljus* (1892), which was to be sent to the Salon de Paris. Suddenly, he no longer had any time to take care of his relations. He focused only on his artwork and the links around him became weaker. The painting was sent to Paris, where it was refused in the Spring of 1892.<sup>30</sup> Acke and his wife associated this misfortune with their time in Önningsby, and they left the colony, never to return. This departure of a dominating node signalled an end to the heyday of the Önningsby artists' colony. Even Elin Danielson, who was another powerful node in the network, decided to leave. Some artists, like Rönnerberg, Westman and another dominating node, Westerholm, went back to Önningsby after 1892 but it was not the same. Finally, Westerholm, the initiator of the colony, was left alone there in 1914.<sup>31</sup>

29 Wiljanen, 'Nej, i sanning...', 129.

30 Wiljanen, 'Nej, i sanning...', 121.

31 Wiljanen, 'Nej, i sanning...', 122.

The situation was quite similar in Skagen. Four dominating nodes in the colony – Michael Ancher (1849–1927), Anna Ancher (1859–1935), Peder Severin Krøyer (1851–1909) and Laurits Tuxen (1851–1923) – stayed and worked in Skagen well into the 1890s. The poet and artist Holger Drachmann (1846–1908) also belonged to this group of powerful nodes. Direct links between these artists had already been forged before the colony’s establishment. Michael Ancher married Anna in 1880 and Tuxen had studied at the same time as Krøyer at the Royal Danish Academy of Arts. The five nodes strengthened their links to fellow artists and local people even further when they eventually bought houses in the village. Despite the strong direct links to other nodes, the network of Skagen artists turned out to be vulnerable. A less centralised or decentralised network, like Skagen’s artists’ colony, had more connected nodes, so the failure of one node had less and less impact but it increased the resilience of the network. It is more resilient against many intentional or random failures – many nodes or links can fail while allowing the remaining nodes still to reach each other over other network paths. However, this was not the case in Skagen. When two powerful nodes in the network died – Drachmann in 1908 and Krøyer in 1909 – it meant the end of the colony’s heyday too.

Can this research follow in the footsteps of the artists with the help of the SNA? Some local hotels or inns near these artists’ colonies kept guestbooks, where each guest wrote their name, occupation, address, name of the last visited location, arrival date and departure date, as well as their next destination.<sup>32</sup> These variables can be put into a social network analysis tool Gephi.org that calculates different centrality values. The results of the analysis explain for example, the gender mix in the colony, especially the proportion of working women artists and those women artists who did not paint during their stay, but who instead took care of the families and their artist husbands. The SNA could also analyse the nature of the links between the women artists. The share of women in the five European artists’ colonies of Barbizon, Pont-Aven, Grez-sur-Loing, Skagen and Önningsby was approximately 17 per cent. The smallest share was in Barbizon and the largest in Önningsby, where the local newspaper wrote about the women artists and their paintings regularly, whereas in Skagen the local newspaper did not even mention Anna Ancher by

32 Hans Nielsen, ‘Das Gästebuch von Bröndums Hotel’, in *Künstlerkolonien in Europa – Im Zeichen der Ebene und des Himmels*. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg 15. November bis 17. Februar 2002. (Nürnberg: Verlag des Germanischen Nationalmuseums, 2001), 154.



**Fig. 6. Peder Severin Krøyer, *Artists' Luncheon at Brøndums Hotel*, 1883, oil on canvas. 82cm x 61cm. Art Museums of Skagen**

Photo: Skagens kunstmuseer

name but referred to her merely as the wife of Michael Ancher. Another interesting area where the SNA could be used, was to find out why local artists seldom mixed with the artists' colonies (with the exception of Michael and Anna Ancher, who lived in Skagen permanently). The share of artists who initially came from the same village where the colony was located was only 1 per cent.<sup>33</sup>

33 Wiljanen, '*Nej, i sanning...*', 48.

## The choice of motifs for painting

The SNA can also be used when mapping the motifs used in the artworks. Analysing the paintings produced in the artists' colonies, we can see that motifs, compositions and even colours in different artists' paintings can reflect one another. One reason for this was that some artists went to the same places to paint. However, in some cases, the reasons behind the choice of motifs might have been more complex. For example Peder Severin Krøyer was fond of painting groups of people in everyday, informal situations in different light conditions, and he experimented with different kinds of compositions. He often painted artists at breakfast or lunch, fishermen by the seashore or a group of friends by the bonfire or walking on the beach. I assume, that the reason for choosing these motifs could be traced from the social networks. Krøyer worked in the French artists' colony of Cernay-la-Ville, in 1879. During his stay, he finished *The Artists' Luncheon in Cernay-la-Ville* (1879). He later painted the same motif in Skagen, as seen in *Artists' Luncheon at Brøndums Hotel* (1883, Fig. 6). He developed this motif further in *Artists at breakfast, Grèz*, in 1884. One more version of the same motif was *A Luncheon. The Artist, his Wife and the Writer Otto Benzon* (1893, Fig. 7).

Krøyer travelled around Europe and met many artists. An SNA could be undertaken by analysing, for example, the following variables: artists using certain motifs, compositions, colours, the direction of the light, and the number of models in the painting. Then the 'betweenness' and 'closeness' centrality would be calculated, after which the final analysis could be made. However, the main reason for these choices of motifs can be traced back to the quest for authenticity. On the eve of industrialisation, people linked modernisation with instability and artificiality. They searched for an authenticity that could be found in a simple lifestyle in the countryside where 'real people' lived. This sense of authenticity was comforting in a situation where the rapid change in society could cause insecurity. Historic sightseeing spots gave a sense of continuity and security.<sup>34</sup> This also affected the artists' choice of motif. The descriptions of the artists' life were a way in which to communicate about their colonies and to recruit new members. These kinds of motifs also depicted the history of the colonies.

34 Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist. A new theory of the leisure class*. With a New Foreword by Lucy R. Lippard and a New Epilogue by the author (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1999), 13.



Fig. 7. Peder Severin Krøyer, *A Luncheon. The Artist, his Wife and the Writer Otto Benzon*, 1893, oil on wood, 39.2cm x 50cm. Den Hirschsprungske Samling

## Conclusion

This article has pointed out some examples of the possibilities of social network analysis in the research into artists' colonies. The results show that defining the networks of the artists helps us to understand the mechanism with which artists were 'recruited' to the colonies. They could be part of the network of an art academy or a private art school in one country or in another. They could be asked to join one artists' colony and from there again via social networks to join another, maybe in another country. They could travel to Paris, where they would be part of an even bigger network, such as that of the Scandinavian artists. The mobility of

the artists, the end of the colonies, the leadership of the colonies and even the motifs in the paintings can be explained with the help of the SNA.

When researching artists' lives and work, the role of the SNA is to take a new and complementary analytical approach to knowledge based on archival material and other historical documentation. Hence, it might be challenging to implement social network analysis in this context because the prerequisite is that there is enough basic information about the nodes, so that they can be included in the sociometrical test. The more complete the research on the artist, based on letters, photographs and journals, the better, as can be seen in Fig. 3. If there is not enough information, then the node cannot be included in the analysis.

Once the social network is built, it should be visualised. Visualisation is a means of organising and translating sometimes disorganised archive material. Another advantage with SNA tools like Gephi.org, is that they can handle large amounts of fragmented data. The more data is at hand, the more manipulation is needed to make the resulting visualisation legible.<sup>35</sup> Building networks of the artists is time-consuming, as can be seen in Figs. 4 and 5, but digital data sets created and shared by cultural heritage organisations, for example by The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, are of vital importance. Social networks and the SNA, together with archival documentation, should be put into the black box of artists' colony research in order to conduct new, analytical research methods. In this way the SNA will most certainly shed new light on the history of artists' colonies.

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35 Porras, 'Keeping Our Eyes Open...', 45.