

Food as a medium to strengthen local communities



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Master Thesis
Integrated Food Studies
June 2015



Title page

Title: Food as a medium to strengthen local communities

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Submission date: June 4th 2015

The present Master Thesis is developed as a part of the interdisciplinary Master of Science Program Integrated Food Studies (IFS) at Aalborg University in Copenhagen. The educational program embraces three research areas within food studies: “Design and Gastronomy”, “Food Policy, Innovation and Networks” and “Public Health Nutrition”. We have an interdisciplinary approach to food studies, combining various research fields, such as social sciences, design thinking, and natural sciences. This interdisciplinary approach provides us with a unique perspective on the complex issues regarding food and society. With this project we are specifically exploring the meanings of food and meals, and how these meanings potentially can be used as a medium to strengthen communities. Our aim is therefore to investigate how the case of MadMarked possibly uses food as a medium to strengthen communities and create a sense of commonship in a local community.

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Style of reference: Harvard

Number of pages: 80

Report size: 45 ECTS points

Number of printed reports submitted: 2

Number of appendixes: 10

Abstract

An increased urbanisation has led to dramatic changes in demography in the outer areas of Denmark, and currently there is a growing focus on how to create positive changes and revitalize these areas. Studies suggest that commonship and human engagement is essential in order to strengthen an area, however, we find that food and meals' potential to create social bonding and a sense of commonship has not been sufficiently explored. Therefore, this Master Thesis uses an explorative and qualitative approach, to investigate if food can possibly be used as a medium to strengthen a local community and create a sense of commonship. In order to investigate this, MadMarked – which is a chain of locally based food markets – was chosen as a case. MadMarked has introduced a new way of trading food in small outskirt communities, and has an ambition to build a unique commonship that can help to keep the local community alive.

The data collection consists of field observations and interviews, which was conducted on the basis of three different MadMarked settings: Svendborg MadMarked, Præstø MadMarked and Skovsgaard MadMarked. Observations and interviews were made with managers and employees at Skovsgaard and Svendborg MadMarked, along with interviews with the founder of MadMarked and costumers at Præstø MadMarked. The theoretical framework includes perspectives on experience economy and food sociology together with an understanding of places and localized potentials.

With this project, we have found that the case of MadMarked consists of elements, which have a potential to be inclusive for the members in the local communities, and that the stores can become stages for facilitating commonship. Firstly, the universal nature of food – in this case particularly local food – has a potential to create a sense of identity and sympathy in the local community. Further, MadMarked's common eating occasion, the Thursday Dinner, invites for commensal meals and functions as a gathering place for the local community. Moreover, each MadMarked has a host, who is important in relation to establishing a personal connection to the costumers and to facilitate a sense of commonship at the common eating occasion. Thereby, we find that the case of MadMarked indicates that food can be said to have a great potential as a medium to create a sense of commonship in a local community.

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Introduction

There is a tendency worldwide for people to move from rural to urban areas, and Denmark is no exception. For several years Denmark has been - and still is - going through a transition with a growing urbanisation, resulting in substantial parts of the population moving to larger cities from rural areas (Local Government Denmark 2014; 7). In fact, it seems like Denmark is one of the countries in Europe, which during recent years has experienced the biggest relative movement from the rural areas to the cities, and according to Eurostat 70,8% of the Danish population currently lives in large or medium sized cities (ibid.; 7-8). Such increasing urbanisation leads to complex demographic changes and changing population composition (Smas et al. 2013; 13). For instance, because the majority of jobs are centred in larger cities the working force tends to move there (Local Government Denmark 2014; 7). Consequently, there is a tendency for the population in the rural or so called “outskirt areas” to be predominated by people financially supported by the municipality, such as elderly and other people outside the working force (ibid.; 8). Furthermore, depopulation of the rural areas changes the townscape, resulting in for instance empty houses, and closed shops and schools (ibid.; 7). This development of depopulation has led to a growing attention from amongst others the media, which has raised awareness on the problems the “outskirts” are facing. Simultaneously it has led to the construction of terms like “Outskirt Denmark” and “The Rotten Banana” as epithets for the outer areas of Denmark (Hendriksen 2012; 15-18).

As a counterpart to these rather negative development patterns there are also positive stories coming from and characterizing the Danish outskirts areas. For instance, a report from RealDania (2012; 74) concludes that the outskirts areas can be considered “land of opportunity”, because there is a strong and persistent spirit of enterprise, which allows for creating new venues and different kinds of projects being realized. Additionally, Svendsen (2012; 76) finds that local engagement is an important resource in the rural areas, and that there compared to larger cities is a greater sense of commonship, meaning a sense of community. Furthermore, there has, according to Lorentzen (2012; 460), arisen a wave in the development of strategies in small outskirts municipalities in Denmark, where food and localized potentials, meaning specific place-bound resources, are used to create experiences. In relation to this, research performed by amongst other Bell and Binnie (2005; 79) has shown that there could be a great potential in using

food with the objective of making places more appealing and to create social communities. For instance, there has been an increase of food experiences and local speciality products in many Danish outskirts such as Lolland, Bornholm and Odsherred (Fødevareplatform 2014, Gourmet Bornholm 2014, Mouritzen 2014). In these locations, food and localized potentials are used as part of a strategy to make the area more appealing. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999; 1-2) businesses, or in this case specific areas that are able to establish an extraordinary experience, can increase their value significantly.

Continuing from the above, one might wonder why food is being emphasized as having a major potential in making rural areas more appealing when many other elements could probably also be of great relevance. Based on our background in the education of Integrated Food Studies, we find that a possible answer to this question could be, as the German sociologist and philosopher Georg Simmel (1997 [1910]; 130) explains, that of the myriad of things people can have in common, the most common of all is that they must *eat* and *drink*. Eating is a biological function, an inevitable physiological condition, which is fundamental for our survival (Fischler 2011; 530). Eating is therefore often described as the primary biological function, but eating could simultaneously be characterized as the primary *social function* (ibid.). According to Fuglsang and Stamer (2015; 11-12) there has come an increased interest in the sociological significance of food, and the subject has not only reached the political agenda, but today food is also perceived by many as being able to “*solve social challenges, create bonding and inclusion*”. Moreover, common meals and the act of eating together with others is an essential dimension with great sociological significance (Fischler 2011; 531). Food and the act of sharing a meal can possibly cultivate a community because the significance of eating together can transcend the time of the actual meal, and additionally the meal has the potential to build relationships within groups of people (Katz 2012; ii). In addition to this, social cohesion is an important factor in a community and can be said to be the glue that binds societies together (United Nations 2012). Additionally, throughout the ages food has played a highly visible role in public life and people have gathered in public spaces to buy food and to eat together. Finally, researchers like Karen Franck (2005; 6-7) have argued that city life additionally can gain increased vitality and conviviality through the public culture of food. Therefore we cannot help but wonder if food could be used as a medium to strengthen an outskirt area by establishing a sense of commonship.

In relation to the above, “MadMarked” is a food related, rural growth and regeneration initiative, launched in Denmark in 2013 (MadMarked 2015). The initiative is a new way to trade goods and buy food in small, local communities, and MadMarked differs from other more traditional grocery stores by functioning as being a combination of a community house, a supermarket and a take-away place (ibid.). Some of the core values of MadMarked are those of *local community* and *commonship*, and once a week they arrange a common eating occasion for the local community (ibid.) MadMarked as an organisation and food related concept caught our attention since it seems as it uses food as a medium to create a positive development in parts of the outskirts areas of Denmark. With this project, we are interested in looking into what impacts the presence of a MadMarked could have in a local community.

As Masters in Integrated Food Studies, we further wonder how we with our food related background potentially could help create positive changes in the outskirts areas of Denmark. We have an interdisciplinary approach to food studies, combining various research fields, such as social sciences, design thinking, and natural sciences. This interdisciplinary approach gives us a unique perspective on the complex issues regarding food and society. With this project we are specifically interested in exploring the meanings of food and meals, and how these meanings potentially can be used as a medium to strengthen societies in a micro and macro perspective. Our aim is therefore to investigate how MadMarked possibly uses food as a medium to establish commonship in a local community. This leads to the following problem statement:

Problem statement

How does Madmarked potentially use food as a medium to strengthen local communities and create a sense of commonship?

Case description

“I have not seen any initiatives similar to this one” (Appendix 9; 62) – Boris Andersen, PhD and food sociologist, Aalborg University.

As the quote above illustrates, MadMarked is not an ordinary supermarket. MadMarked is a chain of locally based food markets that is introducing a new way of trading and buying food in small communities in outskirt areas. MadMarked is a private organisation that is not subsidised by any grants or government funding (Appendix 9; 57). The groceries and products sold in the stores are mainly local and organic (MadMarked 2015). MadMarked is however more than a supermarket selling quality produce to the local population, since it has an ambition to build a unique commonship that can help to keep the local community alive (ibid.). Besides from being a supermarket with fresh produce and in-house production of delicacies and takeaway dishes MadMarked also functions as a restaurant and even a community house (ibid.). There are currently four MadMarkeds in Denmark (see figure 1).



Figure 1. MadMarkeds in Denmark, green = open, red = closed down (own figure).

MadMarked is driven by a number of core values, which constitute what MadMarked defines as its “constitution”. There are six principles, which can be seen in figure 2.

MadMarked's Core Values
1. Local produce
2. Pure food
3. Local commonship
4. Sustainability
5. Transparency
6. Sublime taste

Figure 2. MadMarked's six core values (own figure).

As mentioned above, and as seen from the core values, MadMarked has a strong focus on the local aspect. By cooperating with local farmers and selling local produce, MadMarked ensures a sustainable local product range, together with potentially building positive economic growth within the local community (MadMarked 2015). The local aspect also includes local commonship and local community. According to its webpage, MadMarked sees small communities as having unexplored potential and wishes to create growth through commonship and human relations in local communities (ibid.). An example of an initiative launched by MadMarked in order to try to establish commonship in the community is the weekly eating occasion, “Thursday Dinner”, where the local community is invited to a shared buffet meal for the price of 98 Danish Kr. (ibid.). The Thursday Dinner is held at each of the MadMarked's own facilities. However, Svendborg MadMarked does not have the capacity to hold the event at its store, and therefore it is held at a nearby community house (Appendix 4; 15). Another initiative MadMarked has established is the creation of its Academy, which is an open and free course for everyone wanting to participate, through which MadMarked seeks to provide knowledge of the organic food supply (ibid.).

All the above-mentioned aspects suggest that MadMarked has a new perspective to how a local food market could work. In relation this, during an interview Andersen describes the concept of

MadMarked as unique and as being more than an ordinary grocery store, namely: “(...) focal point for the local community” (Appendix 9; 57, 68). In our opinion MadMarked is not simply a store, but has a unique approach towards creating a combination of being a local supermarket and a gathering place for the local community, and this factor has been an important parameter for selecting MadMarked as a case in this study.

The development of MadMarked

In 2013 the first MadMarked opened in Præstø, and within roughly a year and a half, five more followed in the smaller Danish cities of Store Heddinge, Skovsgaard, Lynæs, Svendborg and Korsør. However, during our project phase, in the period from December 2014 to January 2015, the MadMarkeds in Lynæs, Præstø and Store Heddinge were closed down, and the mother company MadMarkedet A/S was declared bankrupt (Krigslund 2015). The remaining stores in Skovsgaard, Svendborg and Korsør are independently owned, which meant that they were not financially affected by the bankruptcy, and therefore they could continue as normal. On the 26th of March, Præstø MadMarked reopened with new owners and a slightly different concept, and now called “Præstø New MadMarked”. The table below illustrates an overview of the development and the respectively opened or closed periods of the individual MadMarkeds (see table 1).

Opening periods of the different MadMarked locations																									
	2013								2014								2015								
	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M
Præstø	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
St. Heddinge									█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Skovsgaard													█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Lynæs													█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Svendborg																		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	
Korsør																					█	█	█	█	█

Table 1. Overview of open periods at the different MadMarkeds, white = not open yet, green = open, red = closed (own table).

Because of the bankruptcy of MadMarked A/S, the “old” Præstø MadMarked no longer exists, and therefore it would not be possible to continue collecting data from this location. It should be noted that the bankruptcy, according to the information we have been given, is due to an extraordinary situation and therefore there are no specific indications for it to have anything to do with the concept’s durability. Since the bankruptcy is not a focus of this Master Thesis we have chosen to avoid going into these issues.

Delimitation

As mentioned above, the bankruptcy of MadMarked A/S left only Skovsgaard, Svendborg and Korsør MadMarked open. Given that we wanted to be able to make observations and interviews in the current locations we decided to disregard the closed MadMarkeds. Furthermore, the very short opening period of Korsør MadMarked caused us to deselect this location as well. We ultimately decided to focus on Skovsgaard and Svendborg MadMarked. At the time of our study Svendborg MadMarked had been open for less than six months, however we included it because Svendborg and Skovsgaard have an internal cooperation and joint economy. Additionally, despite its closure, we decided to include interviews with customers from Præstø MadMarked. This was due to this location being the first to open and thus we find that it had a better basis for having created a rooted culture, which perhaps to a greater extent would be noticed and recognised by its customers. Consequently, in spite of the atypical situation and that maybe not all examined locations had the time to become an embedded part of the community, we believe that looking at these three locations together has a potential to provide a nuanced picture of how MadMarked potentially could affect local communities. As mentioned above, MadMarked states that it wishes establish commonship and strengthen human relations in local communities. We therefore want to investigate how MadMarked, in practice might do this and if its concept could be used as an example to strengthen other local communities.

It should be stressed that the focus of this Master Thesis will be on the concept of “the old MadMarked” created by the original founders. Any changes in the concept, due to new owners reopening the closed down MadMarkeds, will not be examined.

Definition of concepts

In the following section some of the terms used in this thesis will be defined in order to explain their meaning within the context they are used.

Community

In this Master Thesis we explore the significance of “the community” or “the local community”. “Community” as a term can have multiple meanings. For instance it can refer to a group of people sharing common characteristics or interests (Dictionary 2015 – I). It can also be a social group at any size characterized by having a common locality, government, culture or historical heritage (ibid.). Although the term “community” has multiple meanings, we will seek to use it broadly, and as being defined through common locality. In the context of this study, that would mean the local area surrounding a MadMarked.

Commonship

The Danish concept of “fællesskab” has an important role in this study. There is no existing corresponding term for “fællesskab” in English, but having what could be described as “a sense of community” could be the closest translation (Riis 1991; 1). However, the Danish concept of “fællesskab” covers more than the English term “community”, because “fællesskab” possesses an essential base of common values, including solidarity and cultural fellowship (ibid.). In 1991 the Danish Professor of Medicine Povl Riis suggested the term “commonship” as a neologism to “fællesskab” (ibid.). We have chosen to use Riis’ term “commonship” in this study since we do find any other term to cover the meaning of “fællesskab”.

Customers/guests

The people coming to MadMarked are in this study referred to as both customers and guests. The term “customer” is used in general contexts and in relation to people purchasing groceries in the store. The term “guest” is used specifically in connection with the people eating meals at MadMarked. We are aware that the terms have dissimilar meanings and values added to them; however the term “guest” has been chosen due to the empirical data showing that the meals, including the experience and atmosphere, are able to turn the customer into more than “just a customer”.

Outskirt/rural area/outer area

In this study we are looking into the outer areas – or so called outskirts areas – of Denmark. An outskirts area is by the dictionary defined as an area peripherally located from city areas (Dictionary 2015 - II). However, we are aware that there can be a somewhat negative discourse surrounding the term “outskirt areas”, and it should therefore be stressed that in this Master Thesis the usage of terms like “outskirt”, “rural” and “outer area” have no negative connotations connected to it, and will be used as synonyms.

State-of-the-art

In continuation of the introduction and case description, we will, in this section, present the reader with a brief overview of how food, communities and commonship are linked, and how food consciously can be used as a medium to strengthen local communities. As mentioned in the introduction, there has come an increased focus in society on food and meals on multiple levels. There has also been an acknowledgement in society of food as more than nutrition and in connection with this, new areas of research and education has emerged (Fuglsang and Stamer 2015; 11-12). Our Masters programme, Integrated Food Studies, is an example of the growing demand for a more interdisciplinary approach towards food research. Hence we acknowledge that the field we are investigating is currently being explored more widely in various research fields, and therefore we emphasize to primarily provide present practice examples, which mainly are in a Danish context. Our literature research on how food can be used as a medium to strengthen local communities has brought us to an interdisciplinary field spanning from gastronomy tourism and experience economy to city development and architecture together with the sociology of food and meals. With point of departure in these research fields, we will explore how food and localized potentials currently are used to strengthen outskirts areas. Additionally, we will explore the ways in which different municipalities have started to brand themselves through food and localized potentials.

In the following section, we will look broadly at what initiatives are in place to strengthen outskirts areas, with focus on the community and creating the sense of commonship. However, these initiatives do not necessarily include the aspect of food, and therefore subsequent food as a potential to strengthen communities, including specific and local initiatives, will be explored in the last section.

Regeneration, community and commonship

As mentioned in the introduction, Denmark is currently experiencing demographic changes caused by people moving from rural to urban areas, and consequently leaving certain outskirts areas rather depopulated (Local Government Denmark 2014; 7). As a consequence different strategies to make outskirts areas more appealing have recently been given a great deal of attention. There

are a variety of different strategies that can be used when trying to make an area more appealing and thus avoiding depopulation. For instance, experience-based development strategies used in an area with, for example, museums, cultural markets and entertainment can amongst other create an identity for the city and attract visitors (Lorentzen 2012; 462).

In continuation of the above an example of a broad strategy to avoid depopulation is the national 3-year campaign called “Yderområder på forkant”, which can be translated into “Remote Areas at the Forefront” (Ministry of Housing Urban and Rural Affairs et al. 2015). The campaign was launched in the fall of 2014 by the Ministry of Housing, Urban and Rural Affairs, the Danish Ministry of Environment, Local Government Denmark and Realdania, and was initiated in order to create positive development in the outskirts areas of Denmark (ibid.). The aim is to benefit the entire country by strengthening adaptation, adjustment and development in areas outside the major cities, and in this connection 18 peripheral municipalities have been selected and have been promised financial support and external advice for development (ibid.). The campaign will consist of developing individual long-term municipal strategic plans together with having network, experience and knowledge exchanges between the selected municipalities (ibid.). Eventually knowledge and experiences will be shared with all municipalities outside the large urban areas (ibid.). In our opinion this campaign illustrates that there has come a focus on making the outer areas more appealing. Some of these municipalities additionally include food as part of their strategy, however the social aspect is not included.

As a response to the increased awareness on regenerating outskirts areas in Denmark, since 2011 an annual and mobile conference on urban development called ThinkSpace has been held (Byens Netværk 2014). The conference has contributed to develop and create awareness on urban areas and empty buildings in Denmark and abroad (ibid.). In October 2014 a ThinkSpace conference, called "Potentials on the Edge", was held in Nykøbing Falster. The focus was on the positive potentials of the remote areas of Denmark, and on the innovative local development, which seeks to put an end to the on-going depressing tale of a segmented Denmark (ibid.). It was a goal of the conference to increase recognition of the huge potential of communities and that societal changes can occur as a result of established communities (Giv Rum 2015). User involvement and the many opportunities that arise when citizens become engaged with joint projects are highlighted as being

particularly important (ibid.). We attended the conference, and found that it included aspects of how food can be used as a social gathering point. However, the social aspects of food were limited to for example being gathered around growing vegetables in community gardens.

A project that focuses more directly on food and nutrition is the SoL-Bornholm project, which in English stands for “Health and Local Community – Bornholm”. The project is a four-year research and developing initiative aiming at improving the health of families in three selected communities at the Island of Bornholm (Aalborg Universitet 2014). SoL-Bornholm is a community-based project with partners from the public administration, Aalborg University, local media, supermarkets, institutions and the civil society. The project’s aim is to *“strengthen the families’ actions and competencies towards practicing a ‘healthy lifestyle’ and increase social community involvement”* (ibid.). The intention is for health to become a recurring theme in the local society through continuous community involvement (ibid.). Hence in spite of this project being very focused on public health and nutrition, we see this initiative as a relevant example of a food related project that aims to bring a community together around a shared goal, and also has the possibility of bringing out the positive potentials in an established local community.

From another perspective, a Danish study was conducted in 2008 on the positive potentials of villages in remote areas of Demark, in relation to creating positive development and population growth (Johansen and Eskildsen 2008; 4). In the study 205 villages in the outskirts of Denmark were examined if they had experienced population growth from 1997 to 2007, and 68 of these villages did experience growth (ibid.). The study concluded that there is no single factor or simple answer on how to retain and attract new citizens in these peripheral areas (ibid.). The research did, however, indicate that when adapted to the individual villages, the positive growth can be explained by a combination of various factors, which can be summarized into two interdependent groups: the first explanatory group includes factors linked to local resources, which incorporates aspects of rurality, infrastructure and the natural and cultural heritage (ibid.; 52); the second group is linked to making use of the local resources, such as local associations, business life, partnerships, and public investment (ibid.). The study further indicated that human resources, such as competences to create networks between the business community and the citizens, are of great importance (ibid.; 51). In relation to this, Stig Andersson (2015), Landscape Architect and

professor at Copenhagen University, argues that commonship and community building are essential when creating positive development in outskirts areas. In connection with this, we suggest that food could be the medium with potential to cultivate community building and commonship. We will explore this aspect in the following section.

Food as a potential

As a response to the challenges of globalization and reorganization within the industrial sector, a new wave has emerged in the development of strategies in small outskirts municipalities in Denmark, and this wave is amongst others based on the concept of experience economy (Lorentzen 2012; 460). In connection with this, according to Fisker and Olsen (2008; 64), food and meals are additionally to a greater extent becoming performative experiences by being *“(...) social events drifting from the space of the dinner table into the domains of the city”*. From an architectural-food based perspective, public food spaces can be created in order to provide an opportunity to build communities and create bonding in a city (Franck 2002; 11-12). From another perspective, there is a renewed interest in local food and localized potentials, and consequently the field of tourism research has also begun to explore the links between food and the visitors' experience. According Sims (2009; 322) food and drink experiences are recognized as being a positive influence to the economy and culture of an area, together with local food being able to provide “a boost” to rural locations. In relation to this, a strategy focused on the localized potentials will also benefit local societies as *“(...) developing a thriving “local” food industry can generate the kind of all-round benefits for hosts and guests”* (ibid.). Based on this we find that food as a medium can attract tourists, and hereby potentially benefit the area on several levels, including the area's economy.

Due to their benefit to the local economy, food experiences and local speciality products are becoming more valuable in many outskirts areas, and some of these areas are even known for their food networks, experiences and strategies. Bornholm is an example of a municipality experiencing a growing demand for their own local food. On Bornholm, an association of food producers of varying sizes has been created. The association, called Gourmet Bornholm, is working nationwide to promote quality food from Bornholm (Gourmet Bornholm 2014). Another area where food is of

importance is the municipality of Odsherred. Food has for a long time contributed to placing Odsherred on the culinary map of Denmark, and consequently the area is known as the North West Zealand's pantry (Mouritzen 2014). Another area of Denmark that has been recognized for its gastronomic potentials is Lolland-Falster. Lolland-Falster is part of the GRO-project, or "Green Regional Food Experiences" project, which seeks to create growth and development through localized potentials, which includes an increased availability of good local produce and development of meal experiences for the citizens and various institutions (Fødevareplatform 2014). Bornholm, Odsherred and Lolland-Falster are all examples of municipalities actively using food as a medium to rebrand and regenerate an area. However, we find that these initiatives often are related to producing and selling food and not so much to the experiences and social aspects connected with eating the food.

In continuation of the above, an example of an initiative that actually includes the social potentials of meals, is a think tank, set up by the Ministry of Food, which recently has come up with ideas on how food and meal culture in Denmark can be strengthened (Måltidstænk tanken 2015; 5). The Meal Think Tank was established in 2014 with the objective to propose a number of meal guidelines and suggesting ideas to strengthen the Danish food and meal culture, and by April 2015 the think tank had formulated three meal guidelines: "Learn to cook – and teach others", "Use raw materials – and shop with responsibility for other people, animals and the planet" and "Eat together with others – and enjoy the commonship and the meal" (ibid; 2, 6). The meal guidelines are intended as inspiration for all Danes, including in private homes, professional kitchens, local communities, the industry, and for political usage (ibid.; 5). Taste, sensuality and communities are in focus, and there is an ambition for people to prioritize the conviviality of the meal, because when people eat together they provide care for each other, and the commonship around the meal creates an opportunity for people to meet (ibid.; 2, 8). Further, it is stated: "*Meals bring people together, develop relationships and strengthen our communities. Good meals are quality of life*" (ibid.; 7). The meal guidelines are in our opinion an example of how food and meals are beginning to be acknowledged on a more sociological level. As mentioned in the introduction, food has a potential to cultivate a community because the implications of eating together can transcend the time of the actual meal and has potential to build relationships within groups of people (Katz 2012; ii). We find that these new meal guidelines illustrates that a broader perception of the

importance of food and meals is emerging, however as these guidelines are new, their potentials have probably not been unfolded yet.

Summary

To summarize, there is currently an increasing awareness on regenerating the outskirts areas of Denmark, and it is recognised as an important matter on governmental level. The mentioned initiatives are merely a brief selection that illustrates the diversity in the field. Furthermore, our intention is to illustrate how the various research fields such as experience design, tourism research and architecture address how food and localized potentials can be used as a strategy to strengthen communities and make areas more appealing. Based on the initiatives mentioned in connection with regenerating outskirts areas, we find it noteworthy that the potential of food as a medium to strengthen an area through a sense of commonship is rather unexplored by research. Even though there are currently many initiatives using food to strengthen communities, none of them seem to explore the concept of building a community with food as a medium. Consequently, we find that there is a lack of research relating food and meals to the possible opportunities to establish social relations in outskirts areas. In this Master Thesis we will take an interdisciplinary approach and amongst others combine sociology and experience based economy, because we see a need for further research on how social relations can be established with food as a medium.

Methodology

In order to gain an understanding of how Madmarked potentially use food as a medium to strengthen local communities, different methodologies will be applied. In the following section the qualitative methodological approach in this Master Thesis will be presented and accounted for. This will be followed by a clarification of the collected empirical data consisting of observations and semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, we will participate in four Academy days at Præstø and Lynæs MadMarked prior to gathering the empirical data, in order to gain an understanding of the organisation.

We will use the qualitative method of research in order to gain insight into how MadMarked may be affecting the local community and how the local citizens experience MadMarked. According to Bryman (2012; 380) qualitative studies enables a greater understanding of the involved people's life-worlds than what is possible by the use of quantitative studies. The individual experience of MadMarked and the social world surrounding it will therefore be essential in order to gain an understanding of how MadMarked might impact the community.

As mentioned in the state-of-the-art section, the focus on depopulation as a consequence of urbanisation has lead to various initiatives in Denmark aiming at strengthening outskirt areas and local communities. Furthermore, food as an important sociological factor, with the potential to bind people together, is also widely recognized (Fischler 2011; 528). However, according to our literature research, these two aspects combined do not commonly constitute the main area of investigation. This study will therefore have an exploratory approach, in which we explore and obtain a greater comprehension of food as a factor influencing local communities. According to Bryman (2012; 41) it can be useful to use an exploratory approach combined with qualitative research in order to generate hypotheses rather than testing them. Furthermore, the goal of an exploratory study is, according to Yin (2003; 6), to *"(...) develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry"*. Based on this, our goal will thus be to explore a somewhat new area, which could then constitute as a basis for further research. Moreover, the research design will have an inductive approach where we will seek to let the empirical world decide what we are looking for. An inductive approach is according to Brinkmann & Kvale (2015; 224) characterized by *"(...) observing a number of instances in order to say something general about the given class of*

instances". This inductive approach towards the empirical data will be chosen due to the exploratory nature of this study.

Preconceptions and approach towards going into the field

To build on to the above, this section's aim is to provide the reader with some of our considerations regarding our preconceptions and approach towards going into the field and how we will seek to gain knowledge.

Since we want to work qualitative and to use ourselves as researchers in the data collection, we find it necessary to become aware of our own preconceptions from the beginning. Preconceptions are all the prejudices and expectations the researcher uses as a horizon to understand the world (Birkler 2007; 96). According to Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004; 269-270) the researcher has to actively use the preconceptions as a tool in order to be able to understand what is being investigated. Prior to beginning the data collection, we will individually write down our preconceptions in order to clarify, document and discuss our individual thoughts and opinions and thereby reduce the degree to which our preconceptions will dominate our results. We instead aim at using our preconceptions actively in the production of knowledge.

In continuation of this, the knowledge obtained in this study will be build through a hermeneutic inspired process, were we will go back and forth from research desk to the field collecting empirical data. Within the hermeneutics, knowledge and understandings are produced through a process called the "hermeneutic circle" (Dahlager and Fredslund 2011; 159). The basis of the hermeneutic circle is that the totality can only be understood by looking at the individual parts, and that the individual parts can only be understood by looking at the totality (ibid.). We find this approach important due to the exploratory nature of the data collection. Hence it will be necessary to go back and forth from "our theoretical presumptions" and "the real world", which we will be investigating – and in this continuous process our knowledge will be build.

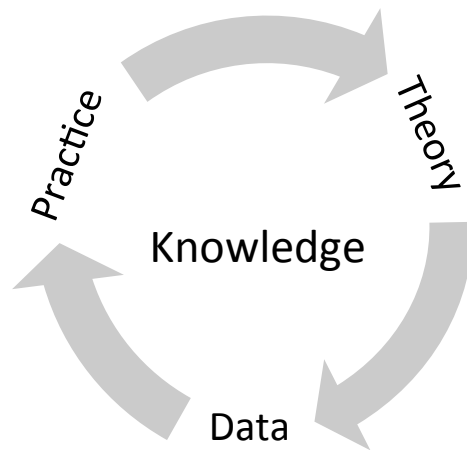


Figure 3. Creating knowledge through a continuous process of practice, data collection and theory (own figure, adapted with inspiration from Dahlager and Fredslund 2011; 160).

Figure 3 illustrates how knowledge is created by the continuous interaction of the practical experience of being in the field with applied theory and gathered data. Every time we will conduct observations or interviews, it will constitute as single parts that can contribute to an understanding of the totality of our study.

Observations

As mentioned earlier in this section, observations will be used as data collection. The observations are made in order to gain an understanding the daily lives at Madmarked. One observation will be conducted during daytime in Svendborg, and two observations will be carried out at Skovsgaard: one at the Thursday Dinner and one during daytime. See table 3 for an overview of the observations.

Observations
Svendborg (daily life and activities)
Skovsgaard (the Thursday Dinner)
Skovsgaard (daily life and activities)

Table 3. Overview of conducted observations (own table).

Within the social sciences, participant observation is one of the most well known research methods, however the degree to which interaction and participation applies in the social setting can vary considerably (Bryman 2012; 273). Participant observation will be chosen for the data collection of this study in order to obtain an understanding of, if MadMarked has potential to influence a local community. The observations will be performed with the role of observer-as-participant, given that the observations will be conducted for a brief period of time where the researchers identity will be known and recognized (Angrosino 2007; 54). All the employees in MadMarked will be aware of our presence and purpose during the observations, and we will not deliberately hide our identity and purpose of our study. On the contrary, we intend to emphasize having informal conversations with costumers where it is possible in order to gain an understanding of the local costumers' perception of MadMarked.

Structured observations will be carried out as a method to systematically observe the behaviour of individuals in contact with MadMarked. Structured observations allow for direct observations of behaviour on the basis of various scheduled categories and formulated guidelines established by the researcher (Bryman 2012; 270). Prior to conducting the observations at MadMarked, an observation guide will be created in order to ensure a nuanced focus on different themes.

Additionally, photos will be taken during the observations. These photos will be used for two main reasons: to more easily recall what was observed at the different locations, and to use them as illustrations in the analysis.

Interviews

As mentioned above, semi-structured interviews will be used to gain an understanding of how MadMarked with food as a medium may affect its local community. The interviews will be qualitative research interviews, through which it is attempted to perceive the world from the interviewee's point of view prior to scientific explanations (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015; 3). It will thus be a way to unfold and understand the interviewee's world in order to produce knowledge about it.

Semi-structured interviews

Seven semi-structured interviews will be conducted, and an overview of them can be seen in the table below.

Interviews
Birgitte Escherich, founder of MadMarked
Boris Andersen, researcher from AAU,
Manager at Svendborg MadMarked
Manager at Skovsgaard MadMarked
Employee at Skovsgaard MadMarked
Local customer in Præstø
Local customer in Præstø

Table 2. Overview of conducted interviews (own table).

In qualitative research, the semi-structured interview is one of the most used methods (Bryman 2012; 469; Brinkmann & Kvale 2015; 14). The semi-structured interview will be chosen in this study due to the desire to establish a deeper understanding of the interviewees' own perspective on MadMarked and its possible impacts on the local community. It is desired to illuminate the problem field from different angles, which will be possible with this method.

A semi-structured interview as a technique comes close to an everyday conversation, but has a clear purpose and goal for the researcher (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015; 33). The interviewer usually has a range of questions with the tendency to be of a general character, and the questions are in the form of an interview guide, which allows for variation in the sequence of the questions (Bryman 2012; 716). Additionally, it allows for the interviewer to ask further questions as response to replies from the interviewee, thus being able to touch upon subjects not included in the interview guide (ibid.). In order to be able to go more into depth with the interviewed person's

point of view on MadMarked an interview guide with overall topics and questions will be formulated. The interview guide will allow for the interview to be influenced by the person being interviewed, simultaneously ensuring that important subjects will not be forgotten.

Transcribing the interviews

According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015; 213) a transcription of an interview will always be socially constructed by the researcher, and it is crucial to be aware of what happens in the change from oral to written language. The change is a transformation where some of the important factors such as body language, pauses and intonation is left out and thereby the transcription can become rather decontextualized (ibid.; 204).

Our transcription procedure will be to write verbatim, however small pauses and frequent repetitions such as “øh” and “mmh” will be left out, since we are more concerned with the content than a detailed linguistic analysis. An exception from this will be when the pause or repetition will appear relevant for the meaning, for example because the interviewee is explaining one thing and then jump to another. Moreover, in order to avoid errors as much as possible we will double-check each other’s transcriptions. Hence when the first person makes a transcription, the other will listen to the interview after in order to make necessary corrections.

In continuation of the above, it should also be mentioned that the interviews will be conducted in Danish, and the transcriptions will also be made in Danish. The quotations, which will be used in the analysis, will afterwards be translated into English. Translating from one language to another can however have implications, since some aspects of the meaning in the interview can be difficult to fully capture through the translation.

How we will use the interviews

It should be noted that the interviews will be conducted with various purposes in mind, and they will correspondingly be used different in the analysis. The interview with Birgitte Escherich, cand.scient.pol. and founder of MadMarked and Kostkompagniet, will be conducted to obtain knowledge about MadMarked as a concept and to understand some of the underlying thoughts of the initiative. Therefore this interview will in the analysis serve as background information about

MadMarked. Moreover, the interview with Boris Andersen is considered an expert interview. Boris Andersen is a PhD and food sociologist at University, and he has additionally, as a researcher, been following MadMarked from the beginning. Hence this interview will be used to support the analysis' theoretical framework. Finally the interviews with employees and local costumers will be used specifically when exploring how MadMarked might influence the local community, and they will be weighed equally in the analysis. However the employees' interviews will additionally be used to understand some of the underlying thoughts of MadMarked, whereas the customers' interviews to a greater extend will be used to explore how MadMarked is perceived from the customers' point of view. The two customers have been living in Præstø for respectively 8 and 32 years, and they have both been regular customers in Præstø MadMarked.

Ethical considerations

When doing research we have an obligation to take any potential ethical issue into consideration, and this includes weighing the scientific concerns against the ethical concerns. It is important for the interviewees to be able to give informed consent based on the information provided by the researchers (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015; 93). The informed consent should include information about the purpose and procedures of the interview, a briefing and debriefing, together with informing the interviewees of their right to withdraw from the study at any time (ibid.). Therefore we will contact the interviewees beforehand in order to prepare them by explaining the topics and purpose of the interview. Furthermore, the interviewees will be informed of confidentiality, anonymity and the possibility to withdraw any given statements. All interviewees will be made anonymous with the exception of Birgitte Escherich and Boris Andersen, who both have given us permission to use their names so that we can use them as "experts" within their own field. Moreover, permission to digitally record the interviews will be asked prior to recording the interviews.

Theoretical framework

The following section will provide an introduction of the theoretical framework that will be used in the analysis, where we aim to investigate whether food and meals have a potential to be used as a medium to influence the sense of commonship amongst local citizens in an outer area. As mentioned in the methodology section, we have an explorative approach and therefore we will include various kinds of theory in order to explore our problem statement broadly and to understand the complexity of the research area. However, we find some of the theories to be particularly relevant and therefore they are recurring throughout the analysis, whereas other theories are only relevant in parts of the analysis. We have divided the theoretical framework into three main categories, entitled:

- The setting: Strengthening outskirts areas through commonship and localized resources
- Food sociology: Food as a medium to create social relations
- Experiences: Food as experiences

The first category, the setting, will be used as a basis for understanding differences and local potentials at each MadMarked. Food sociology will be used to explore general and universal aspects of food, and how commensal meals potentially can impact a community. Finally, experiences will be used to understand how MadMarked stage experiences, and what this could entail. As illustrated in figure 4, “Experiences” and “Food sociology” will be the overall and recurring theories, whereas “The setting” is a broader category covering different theories, and the individual theories will not be recurring to the same extent as the other two categories.

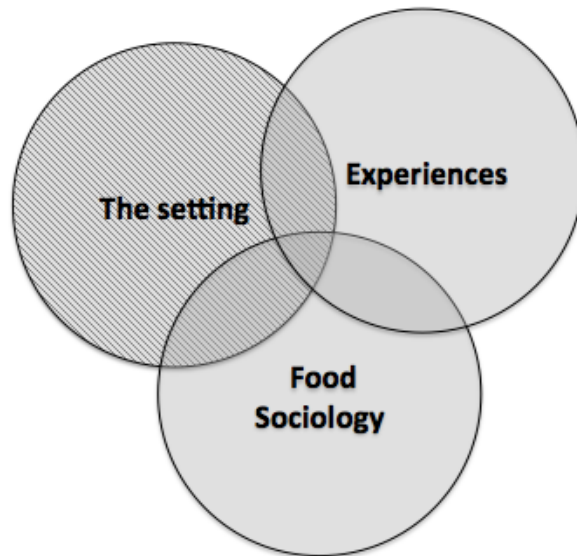


Figure 4. Illustration of the interaction between the different areas in the theoretical framework. The shaded area illustrates that it serves as a basis for understanding the underlying aspects of MadMarked, whereas the non-shaded areas are the overall and recurring themes (own figure).

The setting: Strengthening outskirts through commonship and localized resources

In this section the concept of regeneration of outskirt areas will be explored, with focus on strengthening the community through commonship. In relation to this, we find that local resources and potentials are strongly connected to commonship and engagement in a local community. First, the focus will be on the concept of place and on localized resources as an advantage for the community. Moreover, the importance of engagement, communities and commonship in local areas will be explored.

Localized resources – understanding places

In order to fully benefit from the localized potentials of a local area, it is vital to understand the area's resources and quality potentials (Hansen et al. 2014; 2). MadMarked's concept is not fixed because it adapts to each location, and as a consequence it is important to understand the potentials of the individual localized resources at each MadMarked.

The ability to make use of localized potentials is an important factor in relation to strengthening local communities (Hansen et al. 2014; 6). Localized potentials can be defined as: "(...) that which physically, socially, culturally or economically is bound to the place to such an extent that it will no

longer give (the same) meaning, or will lose value if it is moved” (Christensen 2013; 76). Localized potentials are about more than physical factors, which often appear permanent such as buildings, urban spaces, landscapes and natural resources. Additionally, the more intangible human dimension of localized potentials is of great importance, and: *“The localized potential is ultimately linked to a human engagement (...)”* (Hansen et al. 2014; 6). Based on this, we find that human engagement is a localized resource with potential to positively affect an area.

In continuation of the above, Førde et al. (2012) discuss what the concept of “place” is and how “places” can be studied. Førde et al. (2012; 12) emphasize that a place is an experienced phenomenon, and that it is only something when a person attaches value to it, thus giving the place significance and meaning. Places are not static, they are however constantly being created and recreated by human activity (ibid.). At the same time places affect people, because individuals relate to places and become attached to them, thereby giving people identity (ibid.). In connection with this, Forrest & Kearns (2001; 2137) express how the community affects the individual because places influence public and societal disposition. Places and people continuously influence each other, and therefore places have a central dimension of human existence (Førde et al. 2012; 12). Based on this research, we find that humans and places are interconnected, and that the human factor is important to include when studying what can strengthen a community. The theory suggests that each *place* is different and has different potentials, and therefore an understanding of localized places and resources surrounding each individual MadMarked can be of great importance.

Local engagement, communities and commonship

The value of understanding localized resources is, in our opinion, connected to commonship and engagement in the local community. However, according to Per Schultz Jørgensen (2009; 7), Sc.D. in Psychology at Copenhagen University, the link between the individual and the community has changed dramatically during the past generations, and communities are no longer traditionally determined and embedded in conventional norms, roles, rules and power structures. In modern society, communities and social networks have a new and vital significance, and as a consequence commonship is to a much greater extent something that is chosen by the individual based on self-interest and utility assessment (ibid.; 7-12). Thus there has come a personal dimension to the

assessment, and therefore communities and social relations must provide a personal significance. Consequently the commonship, security and solidarity created by being in a community is actively selected, and the choice or “membership” will only be maintained for as long as the community lives up to the individual’s expectations (ibid.; 14). However, an engagement with the community requires the willingness to contribute to the community irrespective of whether there is a prospect of getting something in return (ibid.). In relation to this, as mentioned in the state-of-the-art section, a Danish study from 2008 concluded that local engagement is an essential factor in connection with retaining and attracting new citizens in peripheral areas (Johansen and Eskildsen 2008; 50). Based on this, we find that communities have a potential to create social relations and commonship, which could become valuable assets to make a local area appealing.

From this section we have found that there is a potential in understanding localized resources in connection with local engagement and commonship. In relation to our study of MadMarked it will be relevant to gain an understanding of how the place might influence the different MadMarked locations.

Food sociology: Food as a medium to create social relations

The sociological significance of food and meals will be presented in the following section. First meals as the primitive form of social interaction will be explored, followed by the significance of eating with other people, including the concept of commensality.

Meals: The primitive form of social interaction

Eating is a daily necessity for retaining biological function of the human body, but eating must be understood as a much broader phenomenon than solely being a circumstance of the everyday life (Holm 2013; 326). In classic sociology, food consumption was not in itself considered noteworthy, and it was not until the final decades of the 20th century that the matter to a larger extent was addressed (ibid.; 324). However, the German sociologist Georg Simmel (1858) was one of the first to draw attention to the sociological significance of food and meals. In 1910 Simmel published an essay named “*Sociology of the Meal*” in which he described the meal as being the primitive form of social interaction and that it represents a forum for the creation of social communities (Simmel

1997 [1910]; 130). In his work, he addresses a paradox within his discussion of eating and drinking, namely that the meal is described as having two opposing forces: on the one hand the acts of eating and drinking are primitive physiological functions, which are common to all human beings, and as a result everybody can participate in a meal, and no one are excluded in advance (ibid.). On the other hand, eating and drinking are described as being the most selfish and individual activities of human beings (ibid.). Simmel (1997 [1910]; 130) explains that what one individual eats or drinks will under no circumstances be possible for others to consume: “*What I think, I can communicate to others; what I see, I can let them see, what I say can be heard by hundreds of others – but what a single individual eats can under no circumstances be eaten by another*”. Within this antinomy – meaning the contradiction between the individual and exclusionary nature of eating, and eating as frequent common occasion, where people are together – the *sociological significance* of the meal arises (ibid.). Based on this, we think that he establishes an understanding of how norms and cultures in society are shaped from the patterns and behaviour around the dinner table. The patterns created during meals have the ability to ensure that meals and mealtimes become permanent social events, which define a normal and decent life (Holm 2013; 329). For example we find that how people set the table, when they eat and what is being eaten is not only structured after a biological need, but rather social norms and culture.

Similarly, Claude Fischler (1947), Professor of Sociology, builds certain parts of his theoretical work on some of Simmel’s thoughts regarding meal sociology. Fischler (2011; 529) has a strong focus on eating as being much more than solely the lowliest and most basic, biological function of human beings, and argues that eating has an embedded social function. Through what he defines as a *bio-anthropological* approach, he examines eating as a way to socialize, and explains that humans historically tend to eat with others (Fischler 1988; 277). Furthermore, Fischler (2011; 529) defines the act of sharing food with others as “commensality”. This term will be examined more closely in the following section.

Commensality – eating with other people

Fischler (2011; 529) addresses the concept of commensality, and in its literal sense commensality derives from the Latin word “*commensal*” meaning, “*eating at the same table*”. Described with a more wide and simple definition: “*Commensality is eating with other people*” (Sobal & Nelson

2003; 183). However, Fischler (2011; 529) takes the definition one step further, defining commensality as eating the *same food* together. He further explains that commensality represents one of the most evident manifestations of human sociality, and the act of sharing food has a major social importance, since it involves some of the basic structures in the society (ibid.). Sharing food has been shown to signify or create intimacy, and eating together produces *bonding* amongst the participants (Fischler 2011; 533). Eating the same food is additionally equated with making the meal participants more alike and bringing them closer to each other (ibid.). As a consequence eating with others becomes a matter of course, and according to Fischler (ibid.; 539) eating alone is in countless cultures generally perceived negatively and is frowned upon. Moreover, eating alone is often not considered as being “real eating”. When the social aspect is not applicable during a meal, and the solitary eater is excluding him- or herself from the commensal meal, it appears as suspicious behaviour (ibid.; 539-540). Hence we find that there potentially are some social structures surrounding the meal that might be relevant to explore, in relation to the case of MadMarked.

In relation to this, Simmel (1997 [1910]; 131) explains that communal eating and drinking “(...) releases an immense socializing power that allows us to overlook that one is not eating and drinking the same thing”. By “the same thing” Simmel, contrary to Fischler, refers to *the same* in a literal sense, meaning that only one person can consume what is being eaten. In our opinion Simmel puts the shared meal in a universal context that potentially can unite all humans with the above quote. Simmel (1997 [1910]; 135) argues that the elemental nature of eating makes it possible to elevate it into what he calls a “*sacrificial*” meal – an event governed by social structures and rituals. In continuation, Fischler (2011; 529) also states that food cannot be considered simply as a form of consumption, because eating includes a collision between the private and the public (ibid.; 532). Thus commensality can in our opinion be said to meld the public and private spheres together.

Sharing food involves the very structure of social organization, and as a consequence commensality bonds the meal participants, but simultaneously it also excludes outsiders (Fischler 2011; 529). Commensality is hereby both an including and excluding factor with potential to manifest equality as well as hierarchy for the meal participants (ibid.; 533). Furthermore, eating

behaviour can form an identity and also distinguish a certain group from another: “*The way any given human group eats helps it assert its diversity, hierarchy and organization, and at the same time, both its oneness and otherness of whoever eats differently*” (Fischler 1988; 275). This illustrates that food and meals have a potential to both include and exclude people.

In this section we have found that eating and drinking has a potential to bring people together because of its universal nature. In relation to the case of MadMarked, the concept of commensality can be used to understand the basic sociological structures of a meal, and help us to explore if joining for a commensal meal could have an influence on a local community. In our opinion Fischler is going one step further than Simmel with the term *commensality* because Simmel addresses the sociological significance of the *common meal* whereas Fischler emphasizes the meaning of eating the *same food* together. Given that we wish to investigate how food can be used as a medium to establish a sense of commonship in local communities, we will use Simmel to understand the underlying aspects of meal sociology in the analysis, whereas Fischler will be used particularly in connection with shared meal experiences.

Experiences: Food as experiences

The following section’s aim is to provide an overview of the theoretical framework in relation to creating experiences with food. MadMarked has a concept where food and experiences in our opinion to some extent are interconnected. Experience economy will consequently be explored in order to uncover the potential meanings of the experiences created by MadMarked in relation to its customers.

Experience economy focuses on developing a relationship between customers and the company, and currently cities and communities are competing for citizens, tourists and businesses, just as it is the case in relation to companies competing for customers and new businesses (Lorentzen 2012; 463). Further, experience economy can also be used as a local development strategy, in order to cultivate the relationship between the local citizens and the town, and potentially also to create a sense of identity of the place itself (ibid.). Lorentzen (2012; 464) argues that an experience-based local development can be threefold. Firstly it may be possible for the local

producers to enhance their competitiveness if they add an aspect of experience to their products and services, and this can additionally lead to creating new jobs (ibid.). Secondly this can consequently also allow for additional job creation within the experience and entertainment industries (ibid.). Finally there is potential for developing the locality as an experience (ibid.). Experience economy can thus in our opinion be used to strengthen outskirts areas in numerous ways creating multi-faceted benefits.

B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, from the field of business and economy, are the founding fathers of the term experience economy, and they provided a whole new understanding of how economic value can be increased by attaching experiences. Pine and Gilmore (1999; 163) state that products and services in themselves are no longer enough for the customers; they want experiences, because the experiences offer more and even have the potential to affect individuals in terms of whom they are, what they can do and where they are going. Experiences constitute as a new source of value for business since it, according to Pine and Gilmore, is the fourth economic offering, following the first three: commodities, goods and services (ibid.; 2). Pine and Gilmore have created a figure in order to illustrate an example of how ranges of value increases as a product go from being a commodity to an experience (see figure 5).

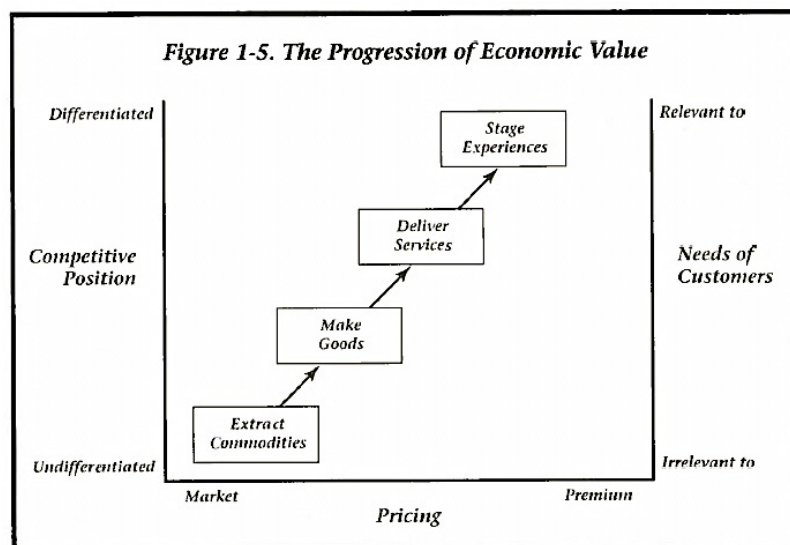


Figure 5. Pine and Gilmore's figure illustrating the progression of economic value (Pine and Gilmore 1999; 22).

As seen on figure 5, a product starts out as a commodity. In the following step, the commodity is manufactured, packed and sold, thus making it goods with a higher price. Subsequently the company, which is selling the product to the customer, can provide a service with the specific product, and that additionally increases the price. Ultimately the business can establish an extraordinary experience, which consequently has the potential to increase the final value significantly (Pine and Gilmore 1999; 1-2). Further Pine and Gilmore (1999; 4) state: *“Companies stage an experience when they engage customers in a memorable way”*. The experience thus needs to be memorable, and that can assert itself in numerous ways, amongst others in the form of entertainment, engagement and personal connections (ibid.; 3). In continuation of this Pine and Gilmore (1999; 30, 59) stress that staging experiences is about engaging costumers: *“The more effectively an experience engages the senses, the more memorable it will be”*. They further explain that there are different dimensions of an experience, one of which is educational experiences. With educational experiences, the customers absorbs the events as they are actively participating in the experience (ibid.; 32). In relation to the case of MadMarked, it is relevant to explore the kinds of experiences they might stage in relation to food, and the potential impacts of staging what could be defined as educational experiences at MadMarked.

In continuation of how food can be used to stage experiences, Karen A. Franck (2002, 2005), Professor of Architecture, is exploring the significance of food in cities from an architectural point of view. According to Franck (2005; 7) food is a tool to regenerate city areas and *“brings vitality and conviviality into urban life”*. New food stores or restaurants can be an important forerunner in regeneration of urban areas and may start gentrification of a whole area (ibid.; 9). Franck (2005; 10) stresses that food in the city opens opportunities for growth and entrepreneurship in different scales. Public spaces of food become a new *“third place”* beyond the private and public to meet and socialize with, for example, neighbours, and the public food space thus becomes an opportunity to create community and bonding in a city (Franck 2002; 11-12). We think that this can be connected to Fischler and Simmel’s thoughts on how a commensal meal can be a medium to create bonding between citizens.

On the basis of this section we have found that experiences are of importance both in terms of creating local development strategies, and also in connection with using experiences to affect the

individual customers. In relation to the case of MadMarked, experience economy can be used to explore if MadMarked stages experiences with food as a medium.

Summary

In order to determine if Madmarked uses food as a medium to strengthen a local community, various theoretical areas are of importance. In the section “The setting: Strengthening outskirts areas through commonship and localized potentials” we find that there is a potential to strengthen outer areas through understanding localized resources together with the possibilities of local engagement and commonship. The section “Food sociology: Food as a medium to create social relations” we find that eating and drinking has a potential to bring people together because of its universal nature. Finally in the section “Experiences: Food as experiences” there is, in our opinion, a potential to use experiences in a local development strategy, and also that it is possible to stage experiences with food as a medium. Theory related to food sociology and experience economy will be used as overall and recurring theories in the analysis, whereas theories related to commonship and localized potentials will be used to gain an understanding of for example specific place-bound potentials.

Analysis

The analysis section is based on the gathered material from interviews, field observations and information from MadMarked – including material from MadMarked’s webpage. From the gathered data we have sought to discover collective and recurring themes for the analysis, and we will use our theoretical framework to gain an understanding of these themes. The following themes have been found:

- MadMarked’s core values and customers
- MadMarked’s potential as a gathering place
- The role of the host
- The potentials of food

We will present the themes and continuously support them with examples from both observations and interviews.

MadMarked’s core values and customers

In the following section we will examine elements of MadMarked’s concept. Initially we will explore what significance the core values of MadMarked could have. Following this section will include an analysis of MadMarked's position of economic value, and finally the customers using MadMarked will be examined in relation to understand inclusive and excluding elements in the concept.

Core values and position of economic value

As mentioned in the case description, MadMarked has six core values, and during an interview Escherich explains that these six core values have been part of the thoughts behind MadMarked since the beginning (Appendix 10; 69). Furthermore, during the conducted observations it was discovered that these cores values do not only constitute as an underlying philosophy for the business, but they are in fact clearly visible in the stores. During our observations in Svendborg MadMarked we noticed that the values was hanging in the window in a visible spot by the

entrance (see picture 1). Additionally, we observed that at Skovsgaard MadMarked, a large poster with the values was hanging under the counter towards the kitchen (see picture 2).



Picture 1 and 2. The six core values visible at the entrance at Svendborg MadMarked and in the dining room at Skovsgaard MadMarked (own pictures).

Svendborg and Skovsgaard MadMarked hereby choose to have their six core values visually apparent at central spots in the stores, and this can have a potential effect on their customers. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, according to Pine and Gilmore (1999; 3) companies stage experiences whenever they engage the customer. When MadMarked chooses to place its core values in a highly visible location, it could be a way to remind the customer of these values being the driving forces of the company. Thereby they are creating an experience and a story that has the potential to add value to the groceries sold in the store. On the basis of this we believe that the store becomes a *stage* for the products that MadMarked sells, and in this way helps to *transform* the groceries into additionally becoming an experience. Therefore, we find that MadMarked places its products at the top of Pine and Gilmore's (1999; 22) model of *the progression of economic value* (see figure 6).

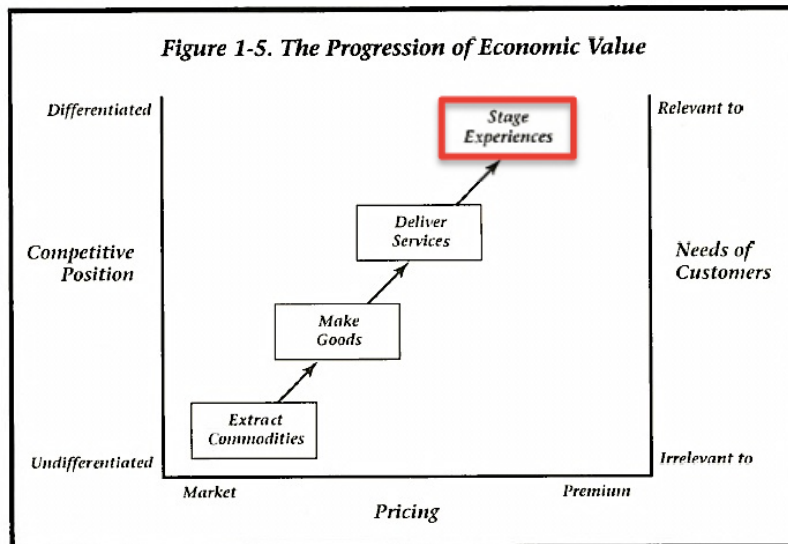


Figure 6. MadMarked's position of economic value (Pine and Gilmore 1999; 22 (with own addition))

In continuation from the above, it quickly became clear through the conducted observations that the customers expressed that the values were directly or indirectly a motivation for using MadMarked. For instance, during a conversation at a Thursday Dinner at Skovsgaard MadMarked, a couple tells that they attend because of the great food (Appendix 2; 8). This comment could be comparable with the core value of *sublime taste*. Moreover, another couple at the dinner express that they are frequently attending because they like the informal commonship and that it is local, which could be equivalent to the core values of *local produce* and *local commonship* (Appendix 2; 8). Furthermore, a woman at Svendborg MadMarked tells during a conversation that the produce is of importance to her, and that she likes the whole story of knowing that the food is organic and local (Appendix 1; 5). This comment could indicate that the woman is expressing interest and concern with several core values, namely *local produce*, *pure food*, *sustainability* and *transparency*. Based on this, the cores values are, in our opinion, not just words created by the founders, but are – consciously or unconsciously – to some extent of importance to the costumers. Andersen support this, as he during an interview describes that the different values are a way for MadMarked to embrace a wider crowd of people, because even if one does not agree with or have interest in one particular value they might do so with another:

“I think the idea of tolerance is important. The fact that it is possible within a concept to disagree, but in a way that does not exclude those who do not necessarily agree” (Appendix 9; 63).

By having six different values, which cover a rather broad area, MadMarked is, as we see it, minimizing the amount of people who cannot identify with the concept.

Continuing from the above interviews with respectively customers, managers of Skovsgaard and Svendborg, and Andersen made it evident that there amongst the interviewed people is a broad consensus of the values being significant to MadMarked’s concept. When we asked directly about the six values, they all unanimously state that all the values are important, and that they are to be looked at as a single entity. For instance a customer from Præstø says:

“I do not think I can select one word and say it is that one. I actually do not think I can do that. Because each one actually fulfill, how many are there – one, two, three, four, five, six – one sixth of the value all of them. (...) because as it actually also illustrates, then it all are bound together. It is a circle for me, meaning it is a totality” (Appendix 8; 53).

Based on the above it could be said that it is the combination of the values that makes the concept strong, and this can additionally indicate that MadMarked could loose some of its broad appeal if not all of the values had been part of the concept.

MadMarked – is it for everyone?

From another perspective, during the conducted interviews and observations at both Svendborg and Skovsgaard MadMarkeds, we have however discovered that it is a certain segment or type of person who comes at MadMarked. For instance, an employee at Svendborg MadMarked explains that many different types of customers are coming to the store, but continues that generally the people who come are:

“(...) those who have a bit of surplus both mentally and financially” (Appendix 1; 4).

Furthermore, costumers from both Svendborg and Præstø also mentioned the prices at MadMarked as being quite expensive and to be higher than in an ordinary supermarket (Appendix 1; 5, Appendix 8; 46-47, Appendix 7; 39). In continuation, in its daily operation, MadMarked amongst other sell, what Pine and Gilmore (1999; 6) defines as *fungible* commodities, meaning that products are what they are, such as vegetables grown in the ground. However as mentioned earlier in this section, MadMarked places itself at the top of Pine and Gilmore's model of the progression of economic value (see figure 6), and therefore the commodities sold in MadMarked are added value from the story told of it, and further added value by being organic. For instance it was observed at Svendborg MadMarked that a celeriac was sold for the price of 20 Danish Kr. and heavy cream from These Dairy was sold for Danish Kr. (Appendix 1; 1). We consider these prices to be above the price range of what you can purchase similar products for in an ordinary supermarket. However, it was also observed that other products are sold within what could be defined as a normal price range (Appendix 1; 1-2). Based on this it could be said, that although some of MadMarked's products might be considered expensive, the staged personalized experience can potentially add value to the products, and thereby make the customers willing to pay extra for the experience. From another perspective, the price level is however noticed by some customers to have a restrictive influence. A customer from Præstø tells:

"(...) the price level is higher than what you can go out and buy in supermarkets. So it is people who are dedicated to thinking about sustainability and food waste and organic [who comes there]" (Appendix 8; 46-47).

From this statement the price level is described as having an inhibitory effect on some people, which leads to only certain types of people using MadMarked. For example, the manager in Svendborg explains that some people generally do not like the concept of organic food and therefore choose to not come to MadMarked (Appendix 4; 14). She further describes:

"Yes, there are some, who think that it [organic food] is something snobbish. Because then you might get your soul cleansed a little, or something holy like that" (Appendix 4; 14).

This quote is in line with what Andersen during an interview tells that he had found in his investigation of food habits amongst young people. He explains that some people, especially in some social groups, have a very negative view on organic food and describe organic in terms of *“it is not for us”* (Appendix 9; 55). In relation to this, a recent study from Aarhus University was made on consumers’ quality perceptions, showing that the Danish population can be said to be divided in two groups when it comes to attitudes towards buying organic: 55% of the population is not interested in the organic, whereas the remaining 45% is (Mørk et al. 2015; 26-30). Based on this, it can be said that large parts of the population will not find the organic aspect to be a particularly positive and desirable foundation for creating commonship in a community. Consequently, the people who are not interested in organic food or who directly consider it being a negative factor will potentially deselect MadMarked on the basis of this.

Continuing from the above, as mentioned in the theoretical framework, commensality can according to Fischler (2011; 533) both be inclusive and exclusive, given that it includes the ones taking part in the commensal meal and excludes the ones who are not. In relation to this he argues: *“The way any given human eats helps assert its diversity, hierarchy and organization, and at the same time both its oneness and otherness of whoever eats differently”* (1988; 275). Thus we find that food becomes a medium at MadMarked not only with the ability to bring people together in a positive way, but consequently also has the potential to alienate people from each other by, for instance, being organic. During an interview, one of the employees explained that some of the negative feedback she has heard in relation to MadMarked is that it is too organic:

“Yes, if they are unhappy with something, that it was not amazing enough, or it was too organic (...)” (Appendix 6; 31)

Relative to this, Andersen, during an interview, illustrated a point he calls *“building bridges and not constructing ditches”* (Appendix 9; 59). We find this metaphor of building bridges and constructing ditches relevant to apply in connection with MadMarked’s potential to bind people rather than to alienate them from each other, and therefore we will use the terminology further on in the analysis. Andersen further explains that since we all must eat, and that the vast majority

of people have one form or another of emotional relation with food, there is the possibility to create connections between people:

“(...) food have the thing in common that it is something we all across gender, nationality, class and such sociological aspects [need to eat]” (Appendix 9; 59).

Andersen continuously explains that people can have very different approaches to food, but by focusing on what they have in common rather than to point out the differences, there is a potential to “*build bridges*” between people rather than “*constructing ditches*” between them:

“(...) that it is able to unite different groups, different approaches to food. That is what I mean by building bridges. (...) It is a matter of that you take point of departure in what may be in common” (Appendix 9; 59).

As an example, he explains that everything MadMarked sell is entirely organic, but it is not necessarily what they should promote, if they do not want to exclude certain groups (ibid.). During our observations we noted that it was not visibly clear in the MadMarked stores that they are fully organic, and additionally we observed a customer asking an employee if a certain product was organic (Appendix 1; 3). Hereby MadMarked is in our opinion using food to bind people and *build a bridge* between them by, for instance, not promoting that everything in the store is organic. However, an excluding factor could be the aforementioned prices, which might be above the price range in ordinary stores, which could cause some people to deselect MadMarked and therefore potentially *construct a ditch*.

From another aspect, if we return to the theoretical framework, experiences are, according to Pine and Gilmore (1999; 30), about engaging the customers. Furthermore, customers can be engaged on different dimensions, one of which is educational experiences (ibid.). With the educational experience, a customer or guest absorbs the events, which are unfolded before him or her, and the person is additionally actively participating and must engage the mind in order to be truly informed or increase his or her level of knowledge and skills (ibid.; 32). In connection with

this, Escherich explains that MadMarked tries to communicate its knowledge of the sustainability value chain to its customers both in the stores and also for example via social media. She says:

“There we have done it quite differently because we have said, well, it is for us to decide what is on the shelves, because we actually have an insight into this sustainability value chain. But what we are trying to do, is that we try to open your eyes. And then we try to use all these fresh food scenarios we have each day, as paedagogic intervention” (Appendix 10; 86).

Based on this we find that MadMarked, at least on some level, is conscious about possibly creating what could be considered educational experiences for its customers. As mentioned above, the term organic is by both employees and Andersen highlighted as being a factor that can have a negative impact on some people (Appendix 4; 14, Appendix 9; 59). The term organic does not directly appear amongst MadMarked’s aforementioned six core values, however it could be said that they are implicitly mentioned through the two values *pure food* and *sustainability*. However, Pine and Gilmore (1999; 163) additionally state that experiences affect who we are and that: *“(…) we will increasingly ask companies to stage experiences that change us. Human beings have always sought out new and exciting experiences to learn and grow, develop and improve, mend and reform”*. Consequently, we believe that MadMarked has a potential to create educational experiences, which can be desired by some people because they wish to learn and gain knowledge. However, the educational aspect can also potentially *construct ditches* between the people who are in no way interested in sustainability and organic production and the people who are.

Summary

MadMarked have six core values, which based on our analysis, create a stage for the products they sell. This leads to MadMarked being placed on the top of Pine and Gilmore’s model of the progression of economic value. Further, the values make the concept strong, and MadMarked could lose some of its broad appeal if not all of the values had been part of the concept.

MadMarked has the potential to *build bridges* in a local community with food as a medium since food is something universal to unite around. However, our data collection indicates that it is mostly people with “surplus financially and mentally” who frequents MadMarked. In connection

with this we have found that large parts of the population might find the organic aspect to be a particularly positive and desirable foundation for creating commonship in a community. Therefore if MadMarked wishes to have a broader public appeal it is important not to *construct ditches* with, for example, what could be perceived as an expensive price range or emphasizing the organic aspect.

MadMarked's potential as a gathering place

In the following section MadMarked's potential as a gathering place will be analysed. Firstly how MadMarked has the potential to create commonship will be examined. This will be followed by examining how varieties in local commonship are expressed in different settings. Through the conducted interviews we further noticed that the Thursday Dinner was continuously used as a reference when the interviewees were talking about commonship. Based on this, the significance of the Thursday Dinner together with the room's potential to facilitate commonship will lastly be explored.

Possibilities for creating a sense of commonship by being a gathering place

As mentioned in the case description, MadMarked announce on their website that they aim to contribute with building a unique community and creating growth and positive energy through commonship and human relations within the local community (MadMarked 2015). Both customers and employees express to be of the opinion that this also applies in the individual MadMarkeds. For instance, during an interview Escherich explains that MadMarked functions as a local gathering place and that:

"We [the people in Præstø] have gotten something to unite around" (Appendix 10; 84).

A customer from Præstø supports this statement by explaining that Præstø MadMarked is a place where people meet and a commonship arises, and furthermore tells that she feels MadMarked has contributed to gather the community:

“(...) there comes a cohesive force in society. The close community, the close community surrounding you” (Appendix 7; 34-35).

In addition a local couple from Langeland point out, during a conversation at Skovsgaard MadMarked, that the commonship is one of their primary reasons for attending the Thursday Dinner (Appendix 2; 8). The above-mentioned statements could indicate that MadMarked has a potential to be a gathering place, where commonship can be created. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Jørgensen (2009; 14) stresses that in today's individualized society there is a clear need for security, commitment, support, solidarity and commonship. He further states that the communities, in which these factors emerge, are however actively selected by the individual, and will only be maintained for as long as the community lives up to the individual's anticipations (ibid.). On the basis of this, the aforementioned woman and couple will only keep coming to MadMarked as long as they feel a personal benefit of going, and will thus stop coming if it no longer lives up to their expectations. This is in fact possibly what has been the case for the two interviewed costumers from Præstø, given that they currently are not using Præstø MadMarked after it reopened. As one of them explains:

“(...) I am curious, but I do not think that the new Præstø MadMarked can have the same aura or the same atmosphere or the same charisma as the old MadMarked” (Appendix 7; 39).

In this quote the women expresses a reservation towards the recently opened new Præstø MadMarked because she does not feel that it can have the same atmosphere and sense of commonship as the old one. Relative to this we find that even though MadMarked has a potential to create a sense of commonship amongst the customers, there is also a vulnerability to it because the individuality of people can cause for them to deselect it if they do not feel they benefit “enough” from the commonship.

Varieties in location and local commonship

Commonship, as a term, is referred to in all conducted interviews. However, how the commonship asserts itself is dissimilar at the different locations. An employee from Svendborg MadMarked,

who lives on Langeland, is expressing during a conversation that Skovsgaard MadMarked has been of greater importance to the local people on Langeland than Svendborg MadMarked has been to the people in Svendborg:

“On Langeland it means a lot that you can get something decent to eat, it creates jobs – and for the social life, it means a great deal. It is a good place to meet other people. And you do not need not to change your clothes to go there” (Appendix 1; 4).

She explains that this is due to Svendborg MadMarked being located in a city with many other options, whereas on Langeland the possibilities for restaurants and cafés being open outside tourist season are much more limited (ibid.). As mentioned in the state-of-the-art section, a Danish study from 2008 was made on the development and population growth in villages in remote areas of Denmark (Johansen and Eskildsen 2008; 4). The study suggests that an explanatory factor having impact is the combination of local engagement and associations together with local business life, partnerships and public investment (ibid.; 52). Having this as a point of reference, it is possible to gain an understanding as to why a local business like MadMarked might be of greater significance to Langeland than it is to Svendborg. By Danish standards, Svendborg can be said to be a relatively large city with approximately 26.700 inhabitants, whereas Langeland is an island, which does not have any major cities, and with around 12.700 inhabitants, has fewer than half of the inhabitants of Svendborg spread out on the entire island (Statistics Denmark 2014). Thus we think that in Svendborg, the initiative can be said to more easily “disappear into the masses” of all the other initiatives, whereas in Skovsgaard the locals to a larger extent notice it, and thereby potentially can be of greater importance in relation to creating local commonship.

Præstø MadMarked can, in our opinion, location-wise be said to fall in between Skovsgaard and Svendborg. It is located in a city, but with approximately 3.800 inhabitants it is not nearly as big a city as Svendborg (Statistics Denmark 2014). On the pictures below it is also possible to view some of the locational differences between the three MadMarkeds: Svendborg MadMarked is located in between other buildings in a rather large city, Skovsgaard MadMarked is situated at Skovsgaard Estate in a rural area relatively far away from any settlement, and Præstø MadMarked can be said

to be somewhere in between those two with its location in a smaller town by the harbour in Præstø.



Picture 3, 4 and 5. The locations of Skovsgaard MadMarked (own picture), Svendborg MadMarked (own picture) and Præstø MadMarked (Google Earth).

In continuation of the above, the locations of the different MadMarkeds also seem to affect how the locals use it. For instance during an interview with the manager at Skovsgaard MadMarked we are informed that the local customers come from all parts of Langeland, and most of them come to eat there at the Thursday Dinner (Appendix 5, 24). However, in Svendborg, the central location and the relatively small eating area result in many customers quickly stopping by only to purchase groceries (ibid.). The interviewed customers from Præstø explain that they have used MadMarked to a great extent for both grocery shopping and for eating. For instance one of them is telling that she has used the Thursday Dinner as a gathering place (Appendix 8; 42-43). She explains how Præstø MadMarked has affected the local community and has created commonship:

“There has been created many relationships in lots of directions. A very large commonship, that is what there is. And that is actually what I believe such a MadMarked can do in many places” (Appendix 8; 51)

Another customer from Præstø expresses having a similar opinion, as she explains that she believes MadMarked has had an impact on Præstø as a community, and she continues:

“I would go as far as to say that it is a social meeting place (laughs.) Yes, I would definitely say that” (Appendix 7; 40)

From these statements it is clear that the two customers see MadMarked as more than a place to buy groceries and food – it is a gathering place. Based on these findings, together with the possibility, as mentioned above, that Svendborg MadMarked might not be as “important” for the local population as at Skovsgaard, the locations of the individual MadMarkeds can thus be said to influence the degree and form of commonship created around it. In the theoretical framework, having local resources and associations together with local business life were emphasised as being important factors for the positive development of an area (Johansen and Eskildsen 2008; 52). Therefore it could seem that the MadMarked located in the relatively big city of Svendborg might not have as great of an impact to the local community as in Skovsgaard and Præstø. Hence we find that the *location* and *population* could be important factors affecting how the commonship manifests itself.

The importance of the Thursday Dinner

Through the conducted interviews it further became clear that there is not only variation in the customer base from one MadMarked to the other, but also that the guests attending the Thursday Dinner to a certain extent are different from the costumers buying their groceries on a regular basis. For instance, Escherich describes that the Thursday Dinner attracts a more varied type of costumers than what applies in everyday life of the stores:

“And it is really diverse [the people attending the Thursday Dinner], so with that we have really achieved what we wanted with the popular appeal” (Appendix 10; 79).

Moreover, the manager at Skovsgaard additionally explains that the customers buying groceries make conscious choices to buy organic, but the guests attending at the dinner have varying motivation for coming, such as the food tasting good and the relatively low price (Appendix 5; 23). In addition to this, our empirical data show that the Thursday Dinner is frequently highlighted in connection with being able to *facilitate* commonship particularly well. For instance a customer from Præstø, is during an interview stressing that she has been very delighted with coming at the Thursday Dinner, and she states:

“(...) you get to know people, but there was always such a spark, there were always such nice people down there. You always just had a chat” (Appendix 8; 50).

Another customer from Præstø explains that there are no other places in the area that can match MadMarked:

“There are no other places down here that can match it. Uhm, well if you go into... like Frederiksminde or Babette [local restaurants] or something, then the flavours might be there, but not at all the sense of social fellowship” (Appendix 7; 38).

Both costumers describe the Thursday Dinner as particularly special in relation to the atmosphere and the sense of commonship that they feel. As seen in the theoretical framework, Fischler (2011; 529) addresses the concept of commensality, which in its literal sense means *“eating at the same table”*, but he additionally defines it as the act of sharing and eating the *same food* together. According to Fischler (2011; 529, 533) commensality has a major social importance, and it involves some of the basic structures in society. He further notes that sharing food has been shown to signify or create intimacy, and eating together produces bonding amongst the participants together (ibid.; 533). Based on this, we find that the sociological significance of the meal, together with the act of sharing food, is of importance to the positive perception of the weekly dinner. At the Thursday Dinner there is only one dish is served, and it is served as a buffet. This is, in our opinion, what could create a sense of *sharing food* and eating the *same food* together. We believe that the commensal meal is vital for having a potential to create a sense of commonship at MadMarked.

Another aspect of understanding why the Thursday Dinner is particularly special for the attending guests can be seen from an experience perspective. If we return to the theoretical framework, Pine and Gilmore (1999; 1-4) state that experiences offer a new source of value to a company's products and services, and thereby have the potential to increase it further. They additionally state: *“Staging experiences is not about entertaining the customers, it's about engaging them”* (ibid.; 30). Based on this perspective, we find that the Thursday Dinner can be seen as an example of experience based economy, because it offers a unique eating experience centred around a

commensal meal, and thereby MadMarked distinguishes itself from an ordinary restaurant. Relative to this, it is noted by one of the guests attending a Thursday Dinner at Skovsgaard, as she says:

“There is something special about the atmosphere here” (Appendix 2; 7).

Based on this we find that MadMarked at the Thursday Dinner offer an experience that engages its guests in a commensal meal where a sociological significance arises, and consequently there is a potential to create a gathering place with a “special atmosphere”.

Continuing from the above, we believe that the Thursday Dinner has a potential to create a synergy in the encounter between the sociological significance of the meal and the meal as an experience. If we return to the theoretical framework, Simmel (1997 [1910]; 130-132) explains that eating and drinking are individual, primitive and uncivilised activities of human beings. However, the universality of the common meal transforms the individuality and primitiveness of eating into a civilised form of togetherness, which even has the potential to transform an enemy into a friend (ibid.). Based on this, the meal therefore has a potential to be an experience, which in our opinion can *build bridges* between people. It is not possible to force someone to be affected by experiences, hence the experience must be right for the individual in order for it to affect the person (Pine and Gilmore 1999; 165, 177). Based on this we find that transforming the social common eating occasion into an experience can potentially enhance the sense of commonship in a local community.

In relation to this, if we return to the theoretical framework, Fischler (2011; 529, 533) explains that eating the same food is equated with making the meal participants more alike and bringing them closer to each other. As mentioned in the first section of this analysis, a consequence of the commensal meal is that the people not participating are automatically excluded (Ibid.; 529). This perspective raises the question of what happens to those individuals in the community who do not attend the commensal meal at MadMarked – are they excluded from the commonship? There can be several of reasons for not attending the Thursday Dinner, one of which could be the price. Even though 98 Danish Kr. per person can be said to be rather cheap for a good and organic meal,

everyone may not view it that way, and some people might not be able to afford to frequently pay that price for an everyday meal. Thus the commonship facilitated by MadMarked potentially becomes limited to those who have enough money to prioritise to participate.

The room facilitating commonship

Continuing from the above, the interior arrangement of Præstø MadMarked has, according to Escherich, been designed in order to create a specific atmosphere:

“It had to be some long tables, where you appeal to, well, just take a seat and you will see who you sit next to. And that we have actually received much praise for. That people get to sit next to someone, and they started by coming alone, but they ended up with sitting and talking to someone, because they sat there” (Appendix 10; 84).

By this she expresses that the design of eating area with long tables has a function to make people sit next to others and talk, and can thereby a tool to facilitate the creation of commonship. A customer from Præstø expresses an appreciation for this design. She explains that she would sometimes come to the Thursday Dinner alone, and that even though it in the beginning required some overcoming to go alone, the dinner was a unique way of meeting others and getting to talk to strangers (Appendix 7; 35-36). She furthermore states:

“You get to talk to each other in a different way. You are standing at the buffet and are pushing a little to each other, and then something else occurs when you are standing like that instead of being at a restaurant or a cafeteria... It [the long tables] calls for the saying ‘pass me the salt’ or ‘would you like some water?’ or something” (Appendix 7; 36).

Based on this, we find that Præstø MadMarked has tried to facilitate a sense of commonship with the concept of having a buffet and through the decor of the dining room, and it appears that it has had a positive effect on customers. If we return to the theoretical framework, it is according to Fischler (2011; 539) in countless cultures generally perceived negatively and is frowned upon to

eat alone. Moreover, cultural norms are, according to Simmel (1997 [1910]; 130-131), affecting how we eat and meals can in itself represent a forum for creating social communities. Based on this, the above-mentioned statements illustrate that although the woman from Præstø in the beginning is a bit uncomfortable about eating alone at the Thursday Dinner, she has the potential to talk to others during the dinner, and therefore she is not eating alone *per se*. Thus we find that the room and interior arrangement has a potential to constitute a basis for *facilitating* commonship.

In relation to this, the conducted observations at both Svendborg and Skovsgaard MadMarked showed that the atmosphere is made to be cosy and homelike, but at the same time it is very personal from one location to the other (Appendix 1; 3, Appendix 2; 6). In Svendborg, the shop is located in a cosy old town house with half-timbering and has many small corners around the store (see picture 6 and 7). Given the very limited space for tables there are no long tables, and only four small tables in total. The shop is decorated homelike with cosy tables and tablecloths, ceramic candlesticks, pictures on the walls, mixed flea porcelain and small flowers at the tables (Appendix 1; 3). In our opinion the room and the small tables create an intimate atmosphere that invites private conversation rather than talking to the person at the neighbour table. In our opinion the room is thereby not decorated or capable of facilitating a sense of commonship broadly in the community.



Picture 6 and 7. The eating area at Svendborg MadMarked (own pictures).

As a counterpart Skovsgaard MadMarked has a much larger shop area and a large dining room area for the guests (see picture 8 and 9). The dining room consists of a large room as an extension of the store. The furniture is informal and while there are paintings on the walls, massive wooden cupboards, many green plants and small flowers on the tables, there are not many other decorative objects (Appendix 2; 6). The area has a mixture of small and large tables, thus leaving it up to each customer whether they wish to sit at long tables or not.



Picture 8 and 9. The dining room at Skovsgaard MadMarked (own pictures).

Compared to Svendborg MadMarked we think that the interior design of this eating area, including the use of long tables invites for the guests to sit with others at the same table, and therefore the room has a potential to facilitate a broader a sense of commonship for those who want it. However, at an observation at Skovsgaard, which was conducted during daytime on a weekday outside the high season, it was noticed that the store was very quiet, and the eating area seemed very empty due to the large unoccupied tables (Appendix 3; 9). Based on this, the room is more suitable for being filled with people who sit together, such as is the case at the Thursday Dinner, than it is for the daily operation where the room is not filled with people and their lively conversations. Yet there is still an informal atmosphere in the room and as an example, an employee from Skovsgaard referring to the eating area as a living room, stated:

“So there comes a commonship here in this living room” (Appendix 6; 33).

From this quote it is illustrated that the employee in our opinion perceives the eating area as more than just an eating area – it is a more homelike place. If we return to the theoretical framework, Pine and Gilmore (1999; 163) explain that goods and services are in themselves no longer enough for the customers; they want to be affected by experiences. When MadMarked create a room arrangement facilitating positive emotions and possibly a sense of commonship, then they are not just selling food anymore. Consequently they have the potential to affect the customers and thereby to create a positive experience, which could be inviting for establishing a sense of commonship. However, all people do not find the same interior arrangement to be appealing, so the room arrangement at MadMarked might not have the same potential to facilitate positive emotions and a sense of commonship for everybody.

Summary

We find that MadMarked has a potential to become a *gathering place* where commonship can be established. However the location and population can have a big influence on the degree and form of commonship created around the individual MadMarked. In relation to this we find that the room and interior arrangement have a potential to constitute the basis for *facilitating* commonship. Moreover, the individualized society makes people more reflexive in how and with whom they engage themselves, which means that the commonship can be deselected again. Furthermore, we find that the empirical data particularly points to the Thursday Dinner, and the experience created around it, to be essential in connection with creating sense of commonship in the local community. The act of sharing food has a great potential to bring people closer, and as the dinner attracts a varied type of guest it consequently might be able to *build bridges* between the people attending. However, there is also a potential exclusive factor in the commensal meal, meaning that those not participating can be excluded from the commonship, which is taking place during the meal.

The role of the host

Each MadMarked have a manager, which they call a “host”, and in this section the host’s role will be examined. We will look into the potential impacts of having a host in the daily operation of MadMarked together with the host’s significance during the Thursday Dinner. Managers at each MadMarked carry out the role of the host, however, the employees also seem to have a similar function in the daily operation and therefore their role will also be explored.

The managers’ role of being an enthusiastic host

Our empirical data show that the host of each MadMarked have a function as being more than an ordinary manager. For instance it became clear, during interviews with managers at both Skovsgaard and Svendborg MadMarked, that it is essential to have the right “enthusiastic soul” for the location. An example of this is that both managers explained that they had to contact the founders of MadMarked themselves in order to convince them that they should open a MadMarked (Appendix 4; 12, Appendix 5; 23). Thus having a good location and a person wanting to manage the place is not enough, unless the person is considered suitable for the given MadMarked. In our opinion, a “suitable host” at MadMarked requires personal engagement from the individual, which for example becomes apparent during an interview with the manager at Skovsgaard, as she stresses the importance of her having a close relationship to the locals:

“So we just know each other. That they know who I am, and I know who they are, and they also know the staff” (Appendix 5; 26).

This quotation illustrates that the manager sees her personal interaction and engagement with the local community as being important. Continuing from this, during an interview, Andersen compare the close relations between the host at MadMarked and the costumers to how the relationship used to be further back in history in old grocery stores:

“Well in reality it is perhaps an old romantic image, but it is the merchant. It is the merchant, who is responsible for this, and we believe in you and therefore we also believe in the products you have. It counts as a plus” (Appendix 9; 60).

From this quote, the merchant or host is pointed out to have a potential to become the guarantor of the products together with being someone the costumers can trust. For instance, a customer from Præstø MadMarked also notes the importance of the personal relationship and the engagement from the host. She states:

“But it is a necessity to have some dedicated people standing there, otherwise it will not work. If it is just a person standing there, being kind of grumpy and just hand over [the groceries]. It means a lot that you really are your goods, and want to show them off, right” (Appendix 8; 44).

The customer is here expressing the need to experience an engaged and sincere host. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, experience economy as an approach can, according to Lorentzen (2012; 463), contribute with developing the relationship between the customer and the business. Further, Pine and Gilmore (1999; 3-4) explain that it is crucial to stage an experience when engaging customers in a memorable way, which amongst others can assert itself in the form of engagement and personal connections. In connection with this, MadMarked can hereby develop the relationship to the customer by staging an experience through the personal, positive and sincere relationship with the individual. The host therefore have a potential to stage personal experiences, and the close relationship with the costumers is additionally in our opinion an important aspect of what makes MadMarked differ from ordinary grocery stores.

Continuing from the above, Andersen explains that a prerequisite for starting a business like MadMarked is having an enthusiast who is willing to put all energy into it (Appendix 9; 61). However, there can also be a downside to this way of organizing a business, given that it potentially can make the individual MadMarkeds fragile (ibid.). There will always be a risk of the enthusiast to get ill or in some other way be unable to manage the job, and given the intensive work that is put into finding a suitable manager for each MadMarked, it might be a very challenging assignment to find a proper replacement. In connection with this, it is crucial for the host it to ensure guest satisfaction, limit complaint and make the customers happy so that they hopefully will return and ultimately obtain a profit for the company (Lashley 2000; 12). Based on this we find that having a personally engaged enthusiast to manage a MadMarked is consequently

what helps ensure customer satisfaction, but it also makes the concept fragile because unforeseen occurrences could have serious consequences for customers' willingness to come back. An example of this is the aforementioned example of the costumers in Præstø who are reluctant to visit the new Præstø MadMarked (Appendix 7; 39).

The staffs' role as host in the daily operation

Our data collection shows that it is not only the managers who are devoted to the project, but the entire staff seems to be as well. An example of employee dedication to MadMarked's concept, was heard during an observation at Svendborg MadMarked, when an employee stressed that her motivation for working there is not based on financial reasons:

"The salary is not great, but people want to work here anyway. We [the staff] like to work here because the idea is good" (Appendix 1; 4).

Further it is noted through observations that the staff members often have friendly conversations with the guests, and they are additionally creating a positive welcoming atmosphere in the store (Appendix 1; 2). The employees are additionally wearing their own clothes and an apron as a work-uniform, which we think help to create a more casual and homelike atmosphere (ibid.). If we return to the theoretical framework, businesses can, according to Pine and Gilmore (1999; 3-4), stage an experience by creating a personal connection and thereby increasing the value of their products. In our opinion the employees are performing a host-like role, and given their large extent of interaction with customers it could become an important part of the experience of MadMarked. Further Lashley (2000; 8) states: *"(...) giving and receiving food is a symbolic significance which hints at a bond of trust and closeness between host and guest"*. The symbolic significance of providing food means that the employees also have an important role in staging a personal experience. Furthermore, we find that the above-mentioned fragility of the concept being attached to one specific person, namely the host, can potentially be reduced if the rest of the employees perform a host-like role. However, we also noted that this dedication from the employees towards staging personal experiences might be something that they do rather intuitively and which they do not consider being a part of their job *per se*. For example, when we

asked one of the employees at Skovsgaard MadMarked about what her role was at the Thursday Dinner, she replied:

“I serve the food and make sure to fill it up. (...) You also have to make something for Svendborg on this evening, so that they have it for the following day. So we use our time to cook for Svendborg.” (Appendix 6; 32).

Based on this quote the employee appears to be unaware of having a particular host-like role during the dinner. Additionally, our observation at the Thursday Dinner at Skovsgaard showed that the manager had a host-like role to a greater extent than the other employees, given that she was the one to greet the guests as they showed up, whereas the other employees stayed in the kitchen area (Appendix 2; 7). However, that does not mean that the employees are not performing as hosts at all. For instance when we interviewed the same employee the day after the Thursday Dinner, she told anecdotes of the conversations she had with guest during the dinner the night before (Appendix 6; 32). On this basis, we think that the employees have a role as hosts, but the role is not as visible as it is with the manager. And additionally the employees might not be consciously aware of this role.

The host's role at the Thursday Dinner

In continuation of the above it was discovered that the hosts play a particularly essential role during the Thursday Dinner. We think that this could be due to what we earlier referred to as *sociological significance*, which arises in the commensal meal. In relation to this, Fischler (2011; 529) explains commensality to represent one of the most evident manifestations of human sociality, and the act of sharing food has potential to create bonding amongst the participants. However, we think that commensality might not automatically occur just because people eat together, and here we have found the host to be an important *facilitator*. For instance, Escherich explains during an interview that the role of the host is very important at the dinners because the host has to facilitate a warm and welcoming atmosphere:

“So being a host is to say, well you know, I embrace this place, I have created it, I love being here, I am here where I am the best, I welcome you and I look forward to seeing you again. There are not very many places that does that” (Appendix 10, 88).

Both managers at Svendborg and Skovsgaard are aware of their role, although articulated at various degrees. The manager at Svendborg MadMarked is aware of her and her husband’s role as hosts, and she tells that they are the ones making sure everything is okay and talking to people during the evening (Appendix 4; 14). However, the manager at Skovsgaard makes it clear that she does not specifically picture herself as the host, stating:

“On my business card it says host. (...) So instead of it saying director, which might seem a bit pompous, then we have decided to call it a host. But I would say that the term host, that is as just as much the other staff who were there yesterday [at the Thursday Dinner]” (Appendix 5; 26)

From this quotation it is possible to see that the term “host” by the manager is primarily viewed as a title. However, although she does not specifically perceive herself as the host during the dinners, it becomes clear during our observation at the Thursday Dinner that she performs a host-like role by warmly welcoming all guests (Appendix 2; 7). As a counterpart to this, Escherich explains that she saw her role as host as being very important at the Thursday Dinner:

“I could just feel that it was really important that I was there. It was completely out of discussion. Of course I had to be there. You could just feel that very clearly (...)” (Appendix 10; 89).

Based on this, we believe that the host’s personal engagement in relation to having a potential to facilitate an experience becomes clear. Being a good host implies more than a specific behaviour such as providing food and drinks; it requires attentiveness from the host and a genuine desire to make the guests happy and to accommodate their wishes (Telfer 1996; 85-86). We find that the different managers are not only providing food for the customers, they are sincerely attentive and are treating the customers as valued guests. If we return to our theoretical framework, Pine and

Gilmore (1999; 177) state that a transformation through an experience can only occur within the customer, and the customer can thereby only be guided by a *transformation facilitator*. Thus we find that the host at MadMarked cannot force customers to be affected by the experience, but they have a potential to *facilitate* a foundation for the transformation. Furthermore, Franck (2002; 11-12) explains that public spaces of food become a new *“third place”* beyond the private and public to meet and socialize, and thus it becomes an opportunity to create community and bonding. We believe that the host has an important role in this *“third place”*: he or she can be a link between the private and public, thereby becoming a crucial facilitator of commonship.

During the conducted interviews we became aware that the guests at the Thursday Dinner are conscious of the importance of the host’s role. During interviews, two customers from Præstø MadMarked express very similar opinions to the importance of the host. One of them states how much it means to be greeted warmly when you get there. She says:

“And then it is like “welcome!” when people come in the door, “welcome!” and “nice to see you!”, and there is such a cordiality and social inclusion you could say” (Appendix 7; 36).

If we return to the theoretical framework, Pine and Gilmore (1999; 163) suggest that people are seeking experiences since they offer a potential to affect individuals in terms of who they are, what they can do, and where they are going. Further, they explain that experiences are inherently personal and they constitute as events where the individual reacts and creates a unique memory (ibid.; 172). On the basis of this, welcoming the guests in a warm and familiar way can contribute to creating a unique experience. Additionally, a customer from Præstø, during an interview, expresses that she missed the host when she was not present during the Thursday Dinner:

“And we also like to have that contact, now when someone has opened a MadMarked. So I really think people missed her [the host] a little sometimes. Because she is so lovely, and she can talk so excited about the food” (Appendix 8; 44).

She continues to explain that the other employees were nice as well, but there was something special when the host was there (Appendix 8; 44). Based on this we find that the host therefore has the potential to affect people in different ways, and seeing known faces might add extra value to the experience for the customers. The host at the Thursday Dinner therefore, in our opinion, has an important role in *facilitating* this possible *commonship*. However, there is also a paradox in relation to the host's role at the Thursday Dinner: because the host is of such importance in relation to facilitating a special atmosphere, then the experience of a sense of commonship at the dinner is vulnerable because the experience, to a large extent, is dependent on one person.

Summary

To sum up we think that the host's role is important to *stage personal experiences* through a close relationship to the costumers. Further, it is particularly during the Thursday Dinner that the host is important because he or she has the potential to *facilitate* commonship amongst the guests. However, there is also a paradox arising when the host becomes so crucial because it also makes the concept's ability to create commonship vulnerable when it relies on the presence of one person. In the daily operations of the store, we find that the employees are instinctively performing a host-like role and this, together with the symbolic significance of the act of providing food, means that the employees also have an important role in staging a personal experience.

The potentials of food

The last of the themes, which has been identified through our observations and interviews, is the importance of food, and especially the significance of the food being local. In this section we will explore how food potentially can play a role at various levels in a community, including how local food can have a potential to strengthen a local community. Furthermore, we will examine how MadMarked uses food as a medium to stage a sensuous experience.

Local food – localized potentials

Through the empirical data, we have identified food as an important theme that can potentially influence a community in numerous ways. For instance, as mentioned in the theoretical framework, Franck (2005; 7) describes food as a tool to regenerate areas and as having the

potential to bring “(...) vitality and conviviality into urban life”. Similarly, the manager in Svendborg expresses the importance of selling local produce to create a positive impact on the local area:

“Well I find it a little hard to explain, but it is such a feeling that I have, that it would help if we got this business up, and other businesses up and running with local produce. Then I think it must boost the local areas” (Appendix 4; 13).

From this quote, the manager explains that she believes that food has potential to “boost” a local area. In continuation of this Andersen, during an interview, also describes how food can be used as an approach to make it more appealing for people to settle in outskirts areas:

“(...) encourage the local production [of food], and a nice eatery, and things like that, it could make it more appealing to stay out there” (Appendix 9; 56).

In this quotation, Andersen expresses that there can be a connection between local food and making an area more appealing, and thus food can become a connection between people and the place. If we return to the theoretical framework, Førde et al. (2012; 12) emphasize that people attach themselves to a place, and the people living in or using an area is what creates place. Place is thus an experienced phenomenon that is only “something” when a person or group attaches value to it, thereby giving the place significance and meaning (ibid.). Based on this, we find that what makes an area appealing is defined by people’s own perception of what is of value and significance. In relation to MadMarked, food can thus become a physical link between something place-bound – which in this case can be the individual localized resources, such as local food products – and the people using MadMarked. In addition to this, MadMarked could be a potential positive influential factor for creating value, and thereby making the area more appealing for the individuals living there.

Local food and identity

From another perspective we have, through interviews and observations, found that local food might have the potential to establish a sense of identity in a local community. For instance, a couple at Skovsgaard MadMarked is telling that “*the local*” means a lot to them, and that they

primarily are coming to MadMarked because they want to support the local initiatives (Appendix 2; 8). Further, a local woman in Præstø expresses that local food is of importance to both her and the identity of the local community:

“There is also a good thought behind buying local food where you know, well, that here it is produced just down on Lolland, and this comes from Møn. You create a story; both about the food, but also that there comes a cohesive force in society” (Appendix 7; 34).

In the above-mentioned quote the customer draws a parallel between local food and a sense of cohesion in the local community. As seen in the theoretical framework, Franck (2005; 9) explains that particularly local food can be of significance to the individual: *“When the food we eat, grow or buy is local, we also experience a connection to the region, the seasons and the ground we inhabit”*. In continuation of this, selling local food does, according to Escherich, lead to having:

“(...) gathered local interests in a navel, you might say. And it gives such a local sympathy in the public sphere (...)” (Appendix 10; 83).

Escherich is here explaining how the local community is gathering around the local food. We find that her metaphor of local food as the navel and gathering point of local interests indicates that food has the potential to create a centre of the individual as well as the whole community. Therefore, we find that local food can help establish an *identity* and thereby potentially a sense of commonship in a local community.

Food as an experience

Another aspect of food, which has emerged during our observations and interviews, is food as a sensuous experience in MadMarked. The sensuous experience appears in several ways including through sight, smell, taste and textures and by being able to touch the groceries. For instance, at Skovsgaard MadMarked, we experienced to be met by a wonderful aroma of food as we entered the front door, and then we found ourselves in a large shop area where there were locally produced products from the floor to the ceiling (Appendix 3; 9). Another example is as you enter

the store in Svendborg, you are met by fresh products lying in little braided baskets, together with a small variety of their products being displayed (see picture 10).



Picture 10. Products placed by the door at Svendborg MadMarked (own picture).

In our opinion, this arrangement of the food and food products create a specific atmosphere, as you are visually reminded of the food being local and not mass-produced. The carrots are not just placed in plastic boxes and lined up in bulks as normally seen in ordinary supermarkets, but are lying in a basket still covered with dirt, as if they had just been harvested. Furthermore, Escherich explains how the food and the store's atmosphere can be a sensuous experience:

“People come and see these big kale sticks and cut sprouts sticks and freshly harvested apples lying with a pleasant odour, six different varieties, or sometimes we had twelve different varieties that taste completely different, and we have just made fresh juice. It is damn few people who do not think that is great to experience”
(Appendix 10; 86).

MadMarked's way of displaying its food products, such as described in this quotation, has in our opinion a potential to contribute to creating a sensuous experience. If we return to the theoretical framework, Franck (2005; 5) explains that fresh produce on display can enrich sensory experiences.

By having focus on the products and how to display them, MadMarked can hereby be said to enrich the sensory experiences for its customers.

Another aspect of how MadMarked visually appeals to its customers is its use of displaying food in a showcase. MadMarked uses the showcase to present its food in an appealing way, including that the bowls are in different colours and shapes, which we think creates a more intimate and homelike feeling (see picture 11).



Picture 11. The showcase in Præstø MadMarked (Photographer Kim Escherich).

From another perspective, if we return to the theoretical framework, Fischler (1988; 289) states: *“Modern food is less and less identifiable by its consistency, flavour, smell and texture. It is processed, packaged, “presented”, as it were dematerialized, stripped of its sensory characters, reduced to appearance and signs”*. In our opinion, MadMarked’s approach to food and its aim of creating a sensuous experience for its customers can be seen as a counter-movement to this tendency, which Fischler is describing.

Based on the conducted empirical data, we find that the customers often point out the good taste of the food. As mentioned in the case description, one of MadMarked’s core values is *sublime taste*, and MadMarked stresses on its webpage that taste is more than just taste; it is about emphasizing the raw material’s complexity, working with senses, the flavour principles, textures

and perceptions of what is eaten (MadMarked 2015). Based on this description, MadMarked underlines the taste prominently, and in connection to this, the manager at Skovsgaard explained during an interview that a lot of people are coming because the food tastes so good. She furthermore states that the staff is trained extensively in relation to creating a sensuous experience (Appendix 5; 28). She explains:

“If something [food] is boring, you do something to make it really delicious. There is nothing down there [in the showcase], which is boring or do not taste of anything, or is sagging. Not at all” (Appendix 5; 28).

From this quote it can be understood that the manager takes a lot of pride in making sure that the quality of the food at MadMarked is good. In connection with this our observations also showed that numerous of the customers we talked to stressed that they really appreciate the good food at MadMarked (Appendix 2; 8). If we return to the theoretical framework, an experience can, according to Pine and Gilmore (1999; 163), be a transformation process that affects who we are and potentially change us. They further explain that *“(...) the more effectively an experience engages the senses, the more memorable it will be”* (ibid.; 59). In our opinion, food is hereby used to engage the senses and in addition to this, food can be said to embody the experience more physically, given that the costumers literally eat the food.

In continuation of the above, as mentioned in the theoretical framework, Franck (2005; 2, 7) states that through different ways of producing, displaying and consuming food, it is possible to enhance our everyday experiences of not only taste, but also the senses of sound, sight and smell. Relating to this, Escherich explains in an interview that one of the ideas behind MadMarked is to give people an opportunity to be led into a sensuous universe:

“It is really to lead people into a universe where they are allowed to taste, smell and feel the love” (Appendix 10; 68).

She elaborates by saying that the universe should be loving and sustainable (Appendix 10; 68). Returning to the theoretical framework, Pine and Gilmore (1999; 172) explain experiences to be

personal, and in addition stress that a transformation process goes much further than to create memories – it affects the very *being* of the buyer. In our opinion, the idea of MadMarked being a “loving universe” can be related to the customers being guided towards a transformation, in which they might be able to make reflected and sustainable choices. However, the customers might not be aware of these underlying thoughts of MadMarked being a sensuous experience, and therefore we think that the transformation potentially can happen without the customers being consciously aware of it. As mentioned earlier in this analysis, MadMarked can be said to stage educational experiences for the customers. An example of how MadMarked specifically uses food to create what, in our opinion, is an educational experience, is by using storytelling to provide information of its products. Escherich explains that MadMarked, for instance, uses Facebook to communicate knowledge and information about the products, such as their origin and how they are made (Appendix 10; 86). However, she continues to explain that she is not fond of the way, some of the other MadMarkeds communicate on social media:

“(...) there are some of the shops, which are not very good [at communicating]. For example, “well now we have baked raspberry cake, yummy they taste good”. That I am not a fan of. That is not good enough” (Appendix 10; 86).

Escherich prefers that the customers receive a lot of information – a story – about the different products, and thus she can, in our opinion, be said to use food as a medium to stage educational experiences. However, a critical position towards this could be that MadMarked potentially *excludes* some groups by being so focused on the enlightening aspect. Therefore, we find that if MadMarked chooses to be less focused on “schooling” the customers, then they might reach a broader group of customers, namely the ones not interested in organic food and sustainability. By not focusing on this, MadMarked could therefore potentially use food as a medium to create *bridge* and perhaps a sense of commonship more broadly in the local community.

Summary

Based on this section of the analysis, we find that food has a potential to strengthen outskirts areas and to make them more appealing by establishing a sense of identity, and creating a connection to the local area. Local food can additionally be a localized resource for people to gather around, and

consequently it can function as a *bridge* creating a sense of sympathy and commonship in the local community. Moreover, eating food is a physically embodied experience and thereby has the potential to become more memorable for the customers. Furthermore, we think MadMarked uses food as a medium to establish a sensuous universe where the costumers can experience to use their senses in multiple ways. The experiences additionally have the potential to be educational, however, the educational aspect can also be a factor that possibly excludes some groups in the community.

Results

In the analysis performed above, we have discovered elements in MadMarked's concept where we find that they have a potential to use food as a medium to strengthen local communities, and create a sense of commonship. We especially found the elements *core values*, *the host*, *the Thursday Dinner* and *local food* to be particular significant. As outlined with the analysis above, we find that these elements have a potential to create food-related experiences for the customers. Further, when experiences are combined with eating together at a commensal meal we have found that a synergy can arise; meal experiences can bring people together and possibly create a sense of commonship. Furthermore, we have, within the case and concept of MadMarked found some elements, which we find can be inclusive factors with potential to *build bridges* between people in the local community, namely:

- The Thursday Dinner attracts a wide group of people and functions as a *gathering place* for local communities.
- The universalism of food – local food's ability to create a sense of *identity and sympathy* in local communities.
- The interior arrangement of the eating area *facilitating social interaction* between meal participants by for example having long tables.
- The host can, as a local and personally engaged person, establish *personal connections* in the local community, and *facilitates* a sense of commonship at the Thursday Dinner.
- The variety in the core values and not visually promoting the organic products enables more people to *identify* with MadMarked.

However, during the analysis above some factors with potential to be excluding and to *construct ditches* in the community were additionally discovered. Firstly, MadMarked's concept has a potential to be excluding, since not all people will be able to identify with their core values, the stores being fully organic, and that they stage experiences, which can be said to be educational. In addition to this, the higher price range can potentially result in *constructing a ditch* between the ones who can afford to participate in the commensal meal, and the ones who cannot.

Based on this, we find that even though the case of MadMarked has elements in its concept, which can seem as excluding factors for some people, in our opinion, they seem to have a greater potential to *build bridges* between people. Moreover, we find the elements of *the Thursday Dinner*, *the host* and *local produce* to be the most important factors in connection with strengthening communities and creating a sense of commonship. In the figure below, we have illustrated the importance of these three factors. In the figure below, *the Thursday Dinner* and *the host* are marked with a dark grey colour, because we find that these two factors combined are what makes MadMarked distinguish themselves from other similar initiatives, such as a restaurant or a grocery store. *Local produce* is marked with a lighter grey colour given that it is important, however, in our opinion, there are many other initiatives including this aspect.

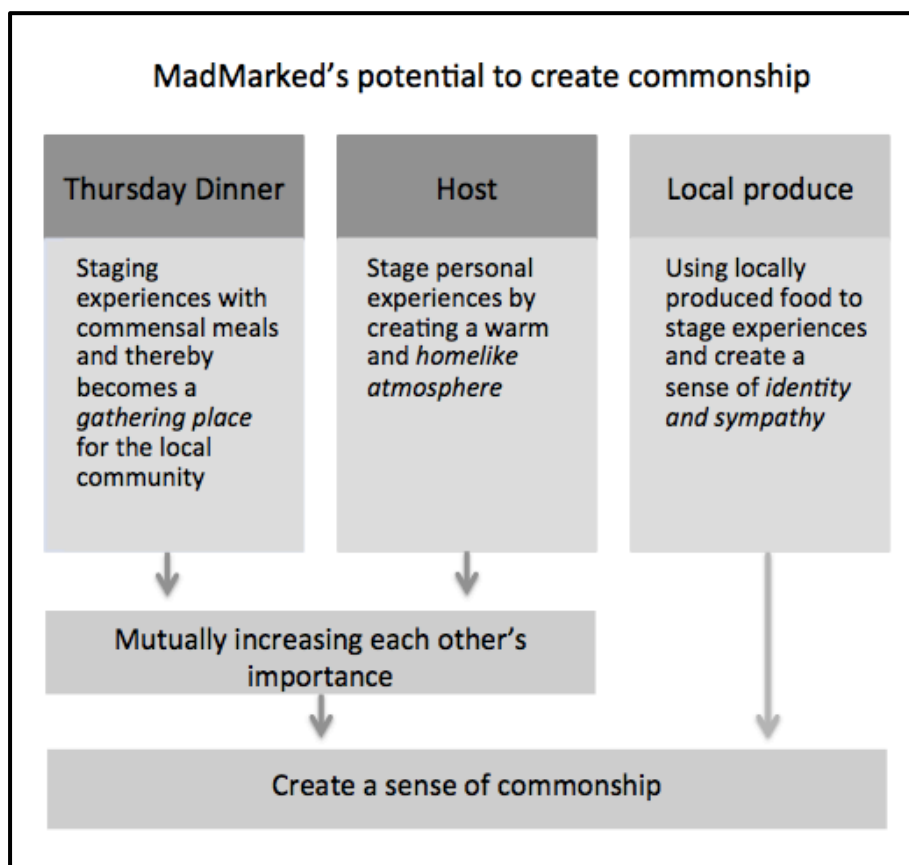


Figure 7. MadMarked's potential to create commonship through the influence of the Thursday dinner, host and local produce (own figure).

On the basis of the findings in the analysis, the case of MadMarked shows that food, in our opinion, have a potential to be used as a medium to create a sense of commonship in local

communities. However, our analysis also showed that the specific location and population of the individual MadMarked are of great importance in connection with how the commonship potentially manifests itself. For example, we have in the analysis found indications of that the MadMarked located in the relatively big city of Svendborg, might not have as great an impact to the local community as in the relatively smaller cities of Skovsgaard and Præstø. Consequently, the localized potentials can cause local possibilities as well as limits, and therefore it is up to the individual location to uncover the distinctive opportunities to strengthen the local community and create a sense of commonship.

Discussion

The motivation for writing this Master Thesis was to explore how we, as Masters in Integrated Food Studies, with our interdisciplinary food related background, could help to create positive changes in the outskirts areas of Denmark. The aim was to use MadMarked as a case study, in order to understand if food possibly can be used as a medium to strengthen local communities and to establish a sense of commonship.

Through our analysis we have in fact found that food does have the potential to be used as a medium to strengthen communities and to create commonship. In connection with this there are certain factors, which in our opinion are of particular importance, namely: *Thursday Dinner, the host and local produce*. In relation to this, our results show that it is particularly during the Thursday Dinner that MadMarked has the potential to create memorable experiences and bonding amongst participants. Thereby the results indicate that when food is transformed from solely being a commodity into a shared meal experience, it has potential to create a sense of commonship and hence strengthen local communities. In the state-of-the-art section we accentuated providing current practice examples in a Danish context, and we found that food as a medium to establish a sense of commonship is rather unexplored. Thus our results differ from the other initiatives mentioned in the state-of-the-art section, given that we emphasized exploring the potentials in the social aspects of food and shared meals.

In the following sections we will present our reflections and considerations in relation to the theoretical framework, followed by our methodological approach, and finally future perspectives. The aim of the discussion is to provide a better comprehension of what choices we have made, as well as perspectives on what could have been done differently or be improved in order to strengthen the outcomes of potential further studies.

Reflections upon theoretical framework

In this section, a reflection upon the applied theory will be presented together with a discussion on how we have used commensality as a term combined with commonship.

Reflections in relation to choice of theory

In the following section we reflect upon our approach towards the theoretical framework. In relation to this, meal sociology and the experiences, created with food as a medium, have shown to be important aspects in the theoretical framework. In particular, the concept of *commensality* combined with creating *food experiences* have shown to elucidate new potentials to engage people in local communities. On the basis of this theory, we found that food, and especially local food, can affect the community by creating a sense of commonship and local sympathy; however it is the act of sharing food that to a high degree has the potential to produce bonding amongst people.

When looking at MadMarked as a case, theories of meal sociology and experience economy have not been sufficient to cover all aspects of the analysis. For example the concept of commensality only applies in relation to meals, and therefore it was not suitable in all sections of the analysis. As a consequence, other theories were applied in order to fully cover the themes identified in the analysis. An example of this is that theories related to understanding places and localized resources were applied in order to gain an understanding of specific localized potentials. Whereas further theories on how modern society affects the individual were included, in order to gain a broader understanding of individual priorities and selections. These theories helped us to understand that there is not only one kind of commonship, as the location and the people living near the individual MadMarked to a large extent determine what kind of commonship that has a potential to be established. For instance, we found that the MadMarked located in the relatively large city Svendborg might not have as great an impact to the local community as in Skovsgaard and Præstø. Therefore, we have used the theory in relation to understand how commonship might assert itself differently on the basis of variation in location and population.

Commensality vs. commonship

As mentioned earlier in the introduction and state-of-the-art section, several studies suggest that commonship is essential to strengthen communities (Johansen and Eskildsen 2008; 51, Svendsen 2012; 76). In connection with this, we have found that commensality and the act of eating together has shown to be very significant in order to create *bonding* and a sense of *commonship*. However, we have additionally become aware that we could have included a more critical position towards how commonship is created around the acts of preparing, serving and eating food. Firstly, we acknowledge that commonship may not automatically arise if you put a certain amount of people together over a meal. For example, during the Thursday Dinner at Skovsgaard, we observed two couples that sat at the same table eating the same food, but appeared to have no form of social interaction during the dinner (Appendix 2; 6). We acknowledge the fact that we might not know, if they have felt a sense of commonship, however, we see it as an example of how commonship and social interaction may not necessarily arise solely on the basis of people eating the same food at the same table.

From another perspective we have also become aware that we primarily focused on commensality as the medium to create commonship; however, there are more aspects of commonship than this, which could have been explored. For instance, during an interview Escherich informed us that MadMarked has a rather distinctive way of cooperating with local growers. For example, MadMarked never demands a price cut since they would like to establish a fair and equal partnership. We see this as an attempt to establish a close and personal relationship between farmers and MadMarked, and thereby becomes a medium with potential to create a sense of commonship, solidarity and cohesion in local communities.

In relation to this, theory referring to community building could additionally be applicable in order to establish a deeper comprehension of how a community can be organized. Community building are enabling the people in a community to take control over their lived environment through an empowerment approach (Minkler et al. 2008; 288). An example that might be relevant in relation to explore the relationship between farmer and MadMarked, is the study of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). The CSA movement started in USA in the mid-80s and is when a community pledge to support a farm operation so that the farmland becomes, either legally or

spiritually, the community's farm (AFSIC 2015). One of the founders, Robyn Van En, suggests that CSA can be used to strengthen a community: *"CSA also helps bridge socio-economic gaps. Intelligence and knowing you like good, fresh food has nothing to do with money, status, or where you live. (...) Together they guarantee that local farmers survive and ensure that their children and grandchildren can eat from the same farm"* (Van En 1995). We therefore believe that there are many ways in which community and commonship can be created, and food can be used to create commonship in other ways than the ones being studied in this Master Thesis.

Reflections upon the methodological approach

In the following section we will reflect upon the methodological approach of this study. Firstly we provide reflections on our qualitative approach, followed by our data collection. Finally reflections on the selection criteria of respondents and preconceptions are discussed.

Qualitative approach

The qualitative method was chosen as the approach to elucidate the problem field because it, to a greater extent, enables a profound understanding of the life-worlds of those involved than the use of the quantitative method (Bryman 2012; 380). However, qualitative research is occasionally criticized for being too subjective, lacking transparency and being difficult to replicate and generalizing upon (ibid.; 405-406). Consequently, we have not been able to generalize opinions and attitudes of entire communities based upon the gathered empirical data. Had we, however, chosen to use quantitative methods, we would have been able to use numerical data in order to produce more objective and generalizable findings (ibid.; 160). In connection with this, a quantitative approach could in connection with MadMarked have been used to gain an understanding of the perceptions of a wider group of the customers and MadMarked's potential impacts in local communities. However, qualitative research is sometimes criticized for failing to distinguish people from *"the world of nature"*, meaning that people's social lives may differ from the researched phenomenon, but the differences between the social and the natural world are ignored (ibid.; 178). Based on this and due to the explorative nature of this Master Thesis, we find that it would not have been beneficial for us to use a quantitative approach. Our goal was to deeply understand the individual humans who might be affected by MadMarked, and therefore a

quantitative approach seeking for generalizable patterns would not have been appropriate. As a consequence the results are not generalizable: they represent our respondents' life-worlds, and can therefore be used to understand how MadMarked potentially affects the people who use it, which would not have been possible to the same extent with a quantitative approach.

Data collection

In order to gain an understanding of MadMarked's potential to strengthen local communities, we have conducted various interviews and field observations. Further, our research and data collection has been an inductive process in which we continuously have gained more knowledge of the field we were investigating. By doing so we have had the opportunity to "evaluate" our approaches and data collection, and as a result we realised during the process that we might have had too much weight on "second hand sources" in our data collection. We wanted to investigate MadMarked's potential impact on the local community; however, we started out by interviewing the people behind MadMarked and managers and employees at the different MadMarked locations rather than locals. This was done because we were of the opinion that these respondents could provide us with broad knowledge of how MadMarked affects the customers and local community. Subsequent we conducted interviews with two local citizens in Præstø, and have additionally had informal conversations with locals during the observations. Additionally, the employees in MadMarked could also be considered as locals, given that it is our perception that the majority of those we spoke to live in the local area near the MadMarked in which they work.

In retrospective, we could have benefitted from interviewing more locals from the beginning of our process, since they were perhaps a more suitable source to what we wanted to investigate: how *they* perceived MadMarked, and how *they* think it may have influenced *their* local community. Moreover we see a potential in using storytelling as a research strategy given that stories and personas can contribute with providing a more profound understanding of the users (Quesenbery & Brooks 2010; 2). By using storytelling we could probably get a deeper comprehension of how the users, who in this case are the customers, perceive MadMarked, and how MadMarked in their opinion affect the local communities.

Gatekeepers and selection criteria of respondents

We are aware that there are some factors in relation to the selection criteria of our respondents that can have affected the empirical data. According to Angrosino (2007; 57), when one wants to study an unknown area it is important to approach gatekeepers in order to gain access to the field. In connection with this, MadMarked's founder, Birgitte Escherich, was a crucial gatekeeper in order to establish contact to the other MadMarkeds and local citizens from Præstø. It is our understanding that Birgitte is well-reputed in the local community and has a close connection to many local citizens in Præstø, and therefore she was an important gatekeeper for us. However, as we became aware of the interviewees having a rather personal relation to the founder, we acknowledge that this could also have led to the interviewed customers being more positive towards MadMarked than other "ordinary customers", because they might have a stronger connection to Escherich and MadMarked. Nevertheless, in order to investigate MadMarked's potential impacts on the community we needed to interview some locals who had an actual connection to MadMarked and thereby being able to express possible impacts. It should additionally be noted that the customers we talked to during our observations overall seemed to have the same opinions in relation to MadMarked, and therefore we did not find the statements of the interviewees to differ to a large extent.

Preconceptions

As mentioned in the methodology section, we have worked intensively with our preconceptions, and thereby included them in the working process of our study by being aware of them and their influence on the results. Furthermore, we have on three different occasions individually written down our preconceptions of MadMarked. Based on this, we could conclude that our preconceptions have been rather close to each other, and in many cases we found them to be in accordance with what we subsequently were to experience during observations and interviews. In relation to this, Bryman (2012; 405) argues that: *"In qualitative research, the investigator him- or herself is the main instrument of data collecting, so that what is observed and heard and also what the researcher decides to concentrate upon are very much products of his or her preconceptions"*. Thus we acknowledge that although we paid close attention to our preconceptions, they will still, to some extent, have had an influence on our results. Moreover, we have attempted to use our preconceptions actively in order for them to become an advantage instead of a disadvantage. For

instance, we both had a preconception of the location of each MadMarked to be significant for the type of customer coming at the different places. We additionally discovered that we had a somewhat different opinion on what “local” is, and what distances could mean outside the major cities. As a result, our attention was drawn to the potential significance of this aspect. We therefore decided to incorporate it in our data collection, and it became a topic we tried to include during the informal conversations during the observations.

Future perspectives

In this section we provide some perspectives on possible future work. Firstly how hospitality could be applied to explore the host’s role in relation to facilitating commonship, further how potentials in relation to tourism could be investigated, and finally how shared meals could become part of a development strategy.

Hospitality – exploring the host’s role in relation to facilitating commonship

Our theoretical framework has provided us with a variety of perspectives to elucidate the themes identified in the analysis. Nevertheless, we found that the framework did not at all times fully cover these themes. For instance in the host section of the analysis, we especially found it difficult to explain the meaning and importance of the host through our existing theoretical framework. We included the host because we could see indications of the host having a crucial role in relation to facilitating a sense of commonship and establishing close relations in the local community. However, seen in retrospect, we could perhaps have benefitted from using additional theories such as hospitality, including specific considerations on host-guest relationships. According to Lashley (2000; 5, 8), hospitality is often defined as the provision of food and drink away from home, and food additionally has a symbolic role, by creating intimacy between the host and the guests. Furthermore, we think that Telfer (1996; 83) can be said to link hospitality and commensality when she states: “(...) *food is of central importance in hospitality*”. Still, it was beyond this study’s scope to fully go in depth with the links between host-guest relationships, commensality and commonship, and therefore we suggest that theories from the field of hospitality could be of relevance for future studies, in order to explore the potentials of the host’s role in relation to facilitating a sense of commonship.

Exploring potentials in relation to tourism

During our data collection we discovered that the customer base of MadMarked does not only consist of locals, but it is in fact also a tourist attraction for many visitors. Skovsgaard MadMarked is a clear example of having a unique location, which also attracts tourists, and the manager at Skovsgaard MadMarked explained that they gain a lot of income from the tourists (Appendix 5; 25). However, since our problem field was centred on MadMarked's potential to influence local communities, we did not include this aspect in this project. Nevertheless, we see a potential in exploring the concept of tourism in connection with MadMarked, because tourism might also be of importance in connection with creating a sense of commonship. For instance a customer from Præstø is, during an interview, explaining that the many tourists coming to MadMarked have had an impact on Præstø as a city, and that she often heard the tourist complimenting Præstø, such as saying "it is so lovely down here" (Appendix 7; 40). Hence, we find that tourism can contribute to create a positive discourse around the local area, and this could be a factor of importance in connection with creating a sense of commonship and local sympathy. Furthermore, as mentioned in the state-of-the-art section, the field of tourism also explores the links between food and memorable experiences. In relation to this, Sims (2009; 322) argues that a tourism strategy that focuses on localized potentials and developing a local food industry could generate multifaceted benefits for the local society. Based on this, it could be interesting to further explore how MadMarked has the potential to create memorable experiences with food as a medium in a tourism perspective.

Common shared meals as part of a development strategy in rural areas

One of the main findings of this study is that the common shared meal at MadMarked, the Thursday Dinner, has potential to create a sense of commonship amongst the participants. As mentioned in the introduction, there is currently an increased acknowledgement of how food and meals can be used to create social communities and inclusion (Fuglsang & Stamer 2015; 12). An example hereof is, as mentioned in the state-of-the-art section, the new Meal Think Tank, which acknowledges the significance of common meals and in relation to this recently has announced three new meal guidelines (Måltidstænketanken 2015; 6). The Meal Think Tank encourages the food sector to create more food and meal experiences that includes the local community in order

to: *“meet each other across cultures for a shared dinner in the local area – and get to know your neighbour”*. In our opinion, MadMarked is actually already doing this by opening up its stores for public common meal experiences.

On the basis of the above, we wonder if common shared meals could advantageously become a more integrated part of development strategies for outskirts areas. MadMarked or elements of its concept could have a potential to be used as part of a development strategy and to constitute as the basis for further research. However, if MadMarked should be used in a development strategy, it could be very relevant to make further studies examining the groups of people who do not use MadMarked. We found indications that the costumers using MadMarked can be said to be of the same “type”, namely the ones who can afford it and are interested in organic food. However, there can be an abundance of types and segments of people in rural areas and therefore one might wonder if MadMarked attracts a broad enough segment in order to use it specifically as a development strategy; or maybe it simply will not be possible to include and engage all types of people at one place. We therefore suggest further research exploring the reasons people do not use MadMarked, in order to find out, what could motivate them to take part in initiatives like common shared meals.

Evaluation

In this study we have, with an integrated approach, explored food’s potential as medium to strengthen a local community and creating a sense of commonship. When attempting to evaluate the outcome, and as part hereof our theoretical framework, it is necessary to look at how combining the concept of commensality with the perspective of experience economy, worked. Combined these theoretical perspectives entailed to elucidate that especially the common shared meals are of significance. However, the concept of commensality only applies in relation to meals, and therefore it was not applicable in all sections of the analysis as argued for above. The theoretical perspective of experience economy was on the other hand suitable in the vast majority of the sections in the analysis, as we found many aspects of MadMarked to have a potential as being experiences.

When evaluating our data collection we have found that it was especially through the interviews with the local citizens that we gained profound knowledge of MadMarked's potential impact. Our field observations provided us with an understanding of the daily life at MadMarked, however we would, for instance, not have discovered the significance of the Thursday Dinner by our observations alone. Consequently, we recommend that more research could profitably be conducted through interviews with a broader selection of the local citizens, thus getting a deeper insight from a customer point of view. Moreover, we see a potential in using storytelling as a research strategy in order to gain insight into the users of MadMarked.

Overall this study has explored new interdisciplinary connections in relation to reinforcing rural areas of Denmark. The applied theory and methods have, in our opinion, been sufficient to investigate our problem field of MadMarked's potentials to strengthen communities and create a sense of commonship. However, we find that there are many theoretical aspects that could be explored further, including investigating potentials in relation to tourism, the host-guest relations and how common shared meals could be part of a development strategy. We therefore suggest that more integrated research is needed in order to uncover the potentials to strengthen rural areas with food as a medium.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, many local initiatives and development strategies have been launched in the recent past in order to make the Danish outskirts areas more appealing, and MadMarked is an initiative with potential in this respect. The aim of this Extended Master Thesis was to use MadMarked as a case in order to gain an understanding of the potentials in using food as a medium to strengthen local communities and to create a sense of commonship. The case study had an explorative character since we were investigating a somewhat new area. In order to explore how MadMarked affects the local community a qualitative approach was chosen with the aim of gaining insight into the individual's perception of MadMarked. The data collection was made on the basis of three different MadMarked settings: Svendborg MadMarked, Præstø MadMarked and Skovsgaard MadMarked. The data was collected through field observations at Skovsgaard and Svendborg MadMarked and interviews were made with one of the founders of MadMarked, managers, employees and costumers.

In the analysis of the gathered data we found a series of recurring themes, which were elaborated with the theoretical framework including perspectives of experience economy, food sociology and localized potentials. In this project especially the concept of *commensality* combined with creating *food experiences* have shown to elucidate new potentials in relation to engaging people in the local communities. On the basis of the analysis we additionally found that food and especially local food in itself can affect the community in terms of creating a sense of commonship and *local sympathy*. However, it is the act of *sharing food*, which to a high degree has a potential to produce *bonding* amongst people. In relation to this, MadMarked's common eating occasion, the Thursday Dinner, was found to be particularly significant in terms of engaging a wide group of people in the local communities together with having a potential to create commonship and *bonding*. The Thursday Dinner has become a *gathering place* for many local citizens where a *commensal meal* can be enjoyed with people who are well known or not. Moreover, the host was found to be able to *facilitate* the sense of commonship and *stage* memorable experiences at the Thursday Dinner particularly well. Thus we found the *Thursday Dinner*, the *host* and *local produce* to be the most important factors in connection with strengthening communities and creating a sense of commonship.

In addition to the above, it was discovered that these three factors have potential to *build bridges* between people as they provide elements to unite around. However, there were also a few elements in the concept of MadMarked, which were identified as possibly being an excluding factor for some people. For instance, we found MadMarked to have potential to *construct ditches* between people by having a price range above ordinary supermarkets and by being a fully organic store, which not all people might relate to. On the basis of this, the case of MadMarked might not be able to include all citizens in the community, and we therefore suggest that further studies are needed in connection with examining how food could possibly be used as a medium to *build bridges* in an even wider community. We find that the case of MadMarked indicates that food has potential to be used as a medium to strengthen a local community by creating a sense of commonship. Therefore, this study can be used as a basis for understanding how food and meals can be used as a strategy to strengthen outer areas in Denmark.

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