

Food as a Medium to Strengthen Local Communities

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Extended Master Thesis
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Aim

To investigate MadMarked's potential to use *food as a medium* to strengthen *local communities* and create a *sense of commonship*, meaning a sense of community.

Background

Increased urbanisation leads to demographic changes in the outskirts areas of Denmark, and consequently they become less appealing and depopulated. Studies suggest that commonship and human engagement are essential in order to strengthen an area, and currently there is a focus on how food can be used as a medium to create positive changes in the outer areas. This study contributes with exploring how food and meals can be used to create commonship and social engagement.

Case and methods

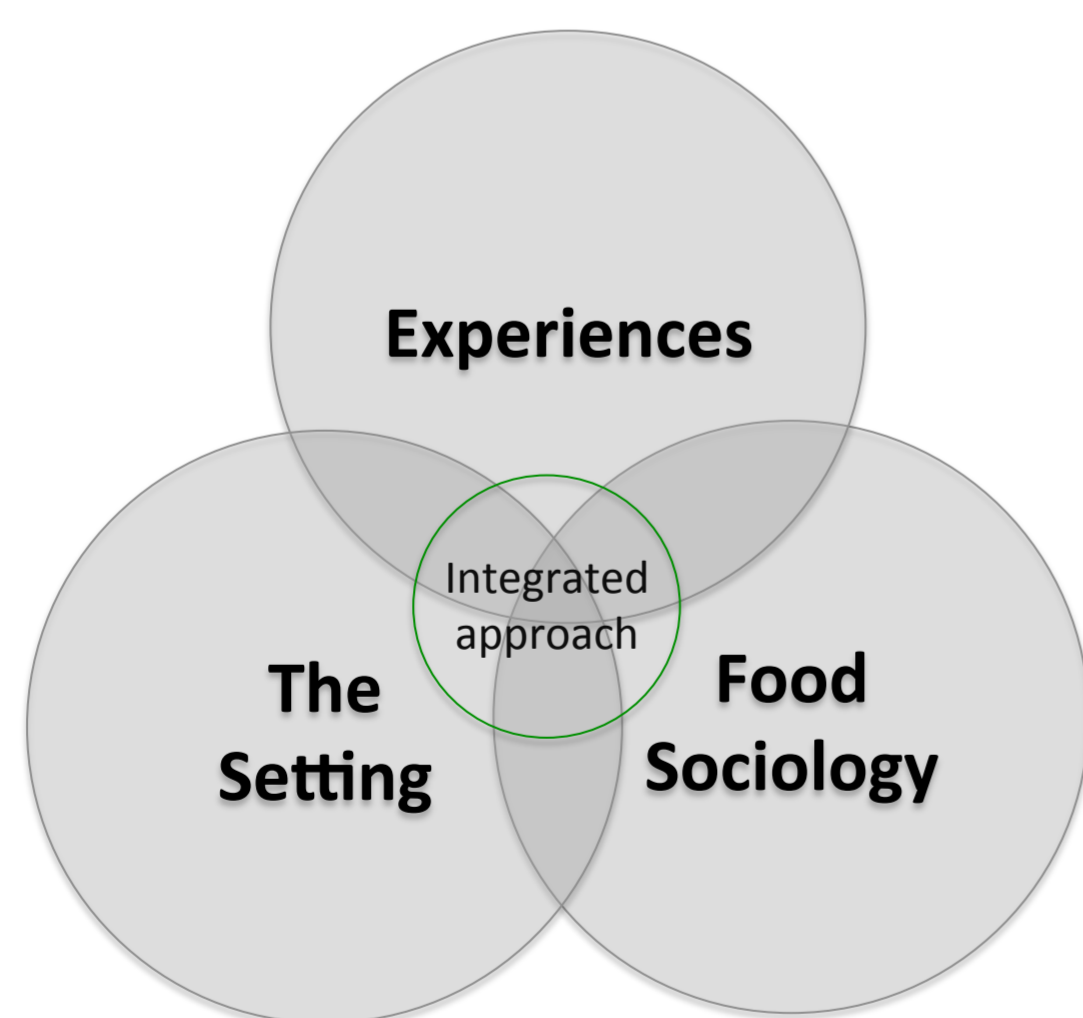
MadMarked is a chain of locally based food markets, which has introduced a new way of trading food in small outskirts communities. MadMarked has an ambition to build a unique commonship that can help to keep the local community alive by for instance hosting a weekly common eating occasion for the community; the Thursday Dinner.

The data collection has been carried out at three MadMarked locations: Svendborg, Skovsgaard and Præstø. Field observations and interviews have been used as the research methods, including interviews with managers, employees, customers and one of the founders.

Theoretical framework

In the theoretical framework various kinds of theory have been applied in order to explore the problem field with an integrated approach. The theory is divided into three main categories:

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



Results and conclusion

The most important findings in relation to MadMarked's potential to create a sense of commonship:

The Thursday Dinner

- Staging experiences with commensal meals and thereby becomes a *gathering place* for the local community

The host

- *Facilitating* personal experiences by creating a warm and *homelike atmosphere*

Local produce

- Using locally produced food to stage experiences and create a sense of *identity and sympathy*

The case of MadMarked indicates that food can be said to have a great potential as a medium to strengthen local communities and create a sense of commonship.

