



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

MASTER THESIS

Developing Food Tourism through Partnership and Collaboration

A CASE STUDY OF MADENS FOLKEMØDE - A FOOD EVENT ON LOLLAND-FALSTER,
DENMARK



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Abstract

The emerging literature on food events in rural areas highlights the growing interest among academic scholars, event organisers and development agencies in identifying the potential or actual outcomes of partnership and collaboration from food events. The purpose of this thesis aims to explore the collaborative relationships among stakeholders using the food event as a driver of tourism development in the region. In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the case study research approach and qualitative research method were chosen and applied. The case study method under a constructivist paradigm has been adopted in the thesis to investigate the perspectives of the participating stakeholders at Madens Folkemøde on the significance of collaboration in tourism development. The thesis begins to present the case of Madens Folkemøde in three aspects: tracing back to its historical and conceptual background; introducing the main categories of the event program; and looking at the distribution of authority. Also, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 stakeholders from the public and private sectors. In order to gain an understanding of the collaborative process, this thesis then explores the participatory involvement of stakeholders with a focus on stakeholders' expectations; private-public collaboration; factors facilitating collaboration; collaboration challenges; and collaboration outcomes. The findings reveal several challenges for Madens Folkemøde in achieving future sustainable collaborative relationships in food events as a driver for tourism. The challenges arise associated with the collaboration processes such as communication, competition, misconception, trust and low commitment. Based on the perspective of stakeholders, this thesis adds to the literature on stakeholder's collaboration and sustainable tourism development, by exploring how collaboration is linked to tourism using food events and providing evidence and examples of how stakeholders' collaboration contributes to regional development. The findings of this thesis will be useful for researchers, practitioners and policymakers who interested in developing rural areas with food events through partnership and collaboration. By identifying the role of stakeholder in the collaboration, it is vital in all aspects of the thriving tourism industry and determining how food events are connected to enhancing tourism. This thesis has illustrated that collaboration, and tourism development initiatives are interrelated and interdependent.

Key words: food tourism; food event; collaboration; stakeholders; regional development

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and the challenge

Modern agriculture is producing a higher increase in food per capita than ever before (Global Agriculture, 2019). In 2019, the International Assessment of Agriculture Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development released a report on the state of global agriculture and the need to profoundly change the unsustainable practices in agriculture. Climate change, hunger, health and dietary problems, are just a few of the problems cited in the report. The United Nations Environment Programme (2018) also advocates that their role in highlighting the best practices, advocating action and bringing together governments, civil society and business is critical.

As one of the fastest-growing industries and as one of the most organised actions of mankind as far as creation and consumption go, tourism is a truly global business. Tourism activity has a real impact on economic and social development as it greatly contributes to the GDP. According to UNWTO, about 10% of Global GDP is from tourism, and Europe is the most popular destination worldwide, whereas one out of ten jobs is within its industry. Tourism provides essential fuel for economic growth, employment, general well-being and welfare (UNWTO, 2018) and food and tourism have always been closely integrated. In recent years, the experiential potential brought by food has stimulated the interest of tourism service producers and destination management organisations in food tourism. In terms of academic research, food tourism is also an expanding field, although critical research is still required on the concept and practice of food tourism (Andersson, Mossberg, & Therkelsen, 2017).

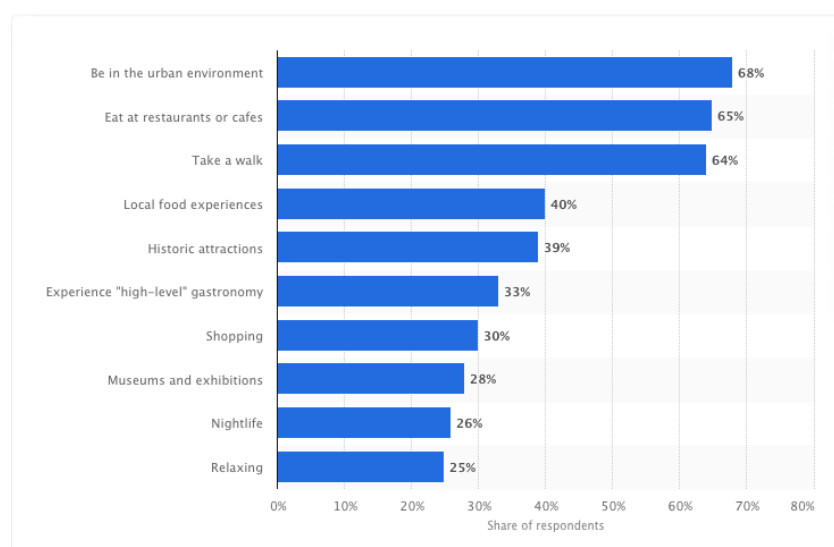


Figure 1: Which activities do you do often on trips in Copenhagen, Aarhus, Odense or Aalborg? (Source: Statista, 2018).

A variety of producers can meet the experience needs of food tourists, including retailers, food producers, restaurants, hotels, markets, attractions, and food festivals (Hall & Sharples, 2003). The online portal for statistics, Statista has demonstrated that when visiting Denmark in 2017 (see Figure 1), 65% of foreign tourists choose to eat at restaurants and cafés. 40% of them would like to have local food experience, and 33% of them were willing to experience "high-level" gastronomy (Statista, 2018). Although caution is required when conducting such consumer surveys, there is no doubt that food tourism has become a trend in the Nordic countries. Food and meals are seldom the act of one producer alone, and therefore cooperation is necessary, often across sectors. Such cooperation sometimes suffers from different interests and modes of operation that may not smoothly go hand in hand.

Moreover, destination development centred on food tourism depends on cooperation across interests and between public and private parties (Henriksen & Halkier, 2015). Cooperation has to be mutually beneficial as well as tuned in to market demands. Due to its close connection to the natural conditions and cultural traditions of a place, local food and meals are frequently used to symbolise the authenticity of a place. It gives food and meal experiences with a substantial destination branding potential that reaches beyond a food tourism context.

Tourism is being used as a means of sustaining the rural economy. However, rural tourism destinations are operating in a highly competitive tourism marketing environment with few differentiating characteristics. Therefore, having a different core product that is locally and culturally rooted in a destination can help the destination's tourism activities. It can reposition a local place to become more distinctive and develop its unique selling proposition (Haven-Tang & Jones, 2005) compared with other rural destinations. Rural tourism activities require local communities to work together through carefully planned activities and tourism products to attract the attention of potential tourists (Adeyinka-Ojo & Khoo-Lattimore, 2013). The municipality of Lolland is a countryside municipality mostly dependent on its agricultural industry featuring an open and intensively farmed landscape. Lolland is an island that is renowned for its vast sugar beet production (Lolland Municipality, 2020). Compared with Bornholm region, a popular destination for diverse gastronomic hotspot that has drawn local food pioneers to transform the island into a culinary destination while, on the other hand, Lolland is far less developed. Rural tourism operators in Lolland have therefore faced significant challenges in marketing their products and services to potential tourists.

To overcome these challenges, the local community and a local estate, Engestofte Gods, organised a local food event called Madens Folkemøde in 2019. It has become an annual event, gaining momentum each year

in terms of the number of attendees. However, little or no empirical research has been conducted about how such an event can move a destination up the value chain. Neither has any investigation been carried out on how events can help transform a rural destination from low to high yield. This study focuses on Madens Folkemøde as a community engagement event for rural tourism. It has adapted food (gastronomy) and culture, two of the nine dimensions of perceived destination image developed by Beerli and Martin (2004) of what needs to be done to differentiate a destination from others competing for destination loyalty, repeat visits and sustainable high yield.

1.2 Significance of the project

Although as one of the largest industries in the world, tourism also has a substantial negative impact on the planet with the increasing rise of travel, unsustainable business operations, health and diet, social living conditions and environmental degradation as the primary concerns. There is an ongoing discussion within the process of stakeholder's collaboration emphasising the importance of collaborative relationships between stakeholders using food events in creating tourism activities.

Using Madens Folkemøde as a case, this thesis focuses on the significance of food events in the stakeholder's collaboration. It is expected that the findings of this study will help to contribute a deeper understanding of the significant role of food events in developing tourism activities in rural areas through partnership and collaboration. The intention is to improve and sustain the collaborative relationships using food events as a driver for tourism and development in the region of Lolland-Falster.

Madens Folkemøde at Engestofte Gods is the epicentre where initiatives in hospitality, food, agriculture businesses meet together with the common goal of unifying its stakeholder's engagement and how well these activities are communicated to the different stakeholders including the local community. The participation of farmers, producers, universities of health and sciences, as well as the government politicians, embody the significance of this event to the entire society.

With this case, this research extends previous works on food events in developing tourism by determining the role of collaboration in the processes. Furthermore, identifying factors that facilitate or hinder the process of collaboration and those that obstruct or assist the achievement of food events for tourism growth in the region of Lolland-Falster. By establishing these factors, the research will determine the areas and the ways that food events associated with partnership and collaboration in the tourism development overlap.

Moreover, the study will explore and analyse how the food event is an essential foundation to practice collaboration between stakeholders. In this way, the area of the study will identify and utilise a full comprehension of why Madens Folkemøde is essential to Lolland-Falster as a developing tourism activity in the region. Food and agriculture sector generate the highest increase in positive behaviour towards sustainability in tourism, therefore, by using Madens Folkemøde food event concept can lead to a broader strategic network, and also in the value chain. Furthermore, the study will help other future academics to uncover critical areas. These issues have to be acknowledged with regards to the creation of food events as a tourism driver in developing rural areas.

1.3 Research question

This paper aims to critically analyse the process of collaboration among stakeholders at Madens Folkemøde - a food event held in Lolland-Falster, Denmark. More specifically, it aims to discover whether (and if so, how) food events could work towards developing food tourism in the regional areas through partnership and collaboration. With this perspective, the main research question we aim to address in this paper is as follows:

Using Madens Folkemøde as a case study, how can food events be used in developing food tourism on Lolland-Falster through Partnership and Collaboration?

In order to be able to answer the research question, we aim to address the following three sub-questions:

- 1. In what way we can use Madens Folkemøde food events as an empirical case of driving tourism in rural areas?**
- 2. To what extent do stakeholders of Madens Folkemøde involve themselves in collaboration?**
- 3. what are the collaboration outcomes of Madens Folkemøde?**

In the first objective, the case study critically analyses the approach of Madens Folkemøde towards collaboration as a driver for tourism in Lolland-Falster. Exploring stakeholders' perspectives provides an understanding of where collaborations and partnership stand in terms of its importance to the tourism industry. This information is central to discovering how significant collaboration is, to the success of food tourism activities on Lolland-Falster. The importance of cooperation in the tourism industry can help us understand the reasons for the cooperative activities among various stakeholders behind the Madens Folkemøde.

The second objective will identify and analyse stakeholders' collaboration. Identifying the issues and obstacles in working collaborative activities towards regional development is essential to be determined. In the case of Madens Folkemøde, the research question also seeks to understand better the processes "the ease, or difficulty" in engaging the diverse actors to collaborate in the initiatives before its implementation. Besides, it is crucial to learn what inhibits or enables collaborative activities in tourism destinations and development. Also, the region of Lolland-Falster has recently been represented by different NGOs initiatives and projects towards local branding and tourism development.

Furthermore, determining different factors to facilitate and challenges in collaborative practices is of abundant value in enhancing how to associate collaborative works and processes to progress each stakeholder's engagement.

The last objective will provide a meaningful viewpoint on the outcomes of collaboration in Madens Folkemøde. Stakeholders' perspectives through collaboration will provide outcomes, tourism competitiveness of the region using food events and if any, that the government involvement could foster positive outcomes on collaborative processes.

Overall this thesis aims not only to enrich and extend current understanding on the status of stakeholders' collaboration at Madens Folkemøde but also to look at the factors that affect the relationship between collaboration and Madens Folkemøde initiative of regional development.

1.4 Structure of the study

This section will highlight the structure of the thesis, which supports the answering of the main research question of this case study. The study is structured into 5 different chapters: 1) Introductory; 2) Literature review; 3) Methodology; 4) Analysis; and 5) Conclusion. These chapters are interrelating connections to each section, providing a step by step approach to answering the identified problem, thus giving the reader a flow of reading.

Chapter 1: Represents the choice of topic and choosing the food event- Madens Folkemøde at Engestofte Gods as a case to study. Additionally, the formulation of the research question and sub-questions supported by the broad review of literature related to the topic.

Chapter 2: Provides a background of the concept by presenting key theoretical backgrounds. The conceptual framework is formed through the literature review, as an approach to provide the dynamics of the topic and discussion. This section, however, conceptualises through the use of borrowing information to narrow down the idea and focus on the issue and fortify the parameters in using collaborative efforts and initiatives towards sustainable tourism.

Chapter 3: Outlines the research methodology of applied science, discusses the research process, including research methods and limitations of the study. This chapter links to the researcher qualitative data and document analysis that were developed and examined. It also elaborates the whole process of creating interviews, and reflection of the data collected (i.e. transcribing, information sharing). Lastly, provide the research's trustworthiness and its limitations.

Chapter 4: Present the key findings of the whole research. It consists of the responses to the four sub-questions, which were interrelated, and allows the reader to absorb the forthcoming conclusion. Furthermore, it analyses and interprets the significance of the findings from the analysis section of the study.

Chapter 5: Concludes the thesis. Draws together the central themes from this research to highlight the summary of the findings, and justify its particular intent.

2 Literature review

This literature review covers conceptual and contextual perspectives on tourism development and stakeholder collaboration. The review is constructed on the basis of enhancing an understanding of the research question by demonstrating that it is grounded in past competitiveness research. We begin to introduce the concept of regional branding, and discuss why it is an essential topic for destination organisers and suppliers. We also look into theories regarding food tourism. We first discuss the different definitions of food tourism followed by addressing the two main actors there, namely tourists and local organisers and suppliers. Then we discuss why this paper is only focusing on the latter. Next, we move onto stakeholder theory. We examine the role that different stakeholders could play within the process of partnership and collaboration, following by illustrating the concept of community-based tourism (CBT). Thus, the literature is reviewed for theoretical and practical insights that are relevant to the case of Madens Folkemøde, and covers related concepts, definitions, attributes and models. Different perspectives on food-event tourism are discussed in relation to the (1) regional development and destination branding, (2) stakeholders' theory, (3) role of collaboration and partnership in value creation, including the concept of sustainability.

2.1 Regional branding

The concept of regional branding will be employed in this paper in the context of being a supportive framework. According to Lee, Wall, & Kovacs (2015), the creative regions can offer visitors an array of food tourism opportunities, such as food-related activities (e.g., the food event Madens Folkemøde on Lolland-Falster). The development of these regions will involve the process of regional branding, aiming to promote the unique local identity and marketable place image to the outside world. Unlike traditional marketing strategies conducted through media channels, according to Morrison and Anderson (2002), regional branding is defined as the process of developing the unique identity of a place by distinguishing it from all competitive destinations. This paper uses Lolland-Falster as a case study to investigate the research problem area. Successfully building a self-sustainable regional brand on Lolland-Falster can accelerate business and tourism development with food production as the focal point. Hence, the following paper proposes that throughout the analysis of Madens Folkemøde, the regional promotion framework derived from regional branding theory should be used as a guiding theoretical benchmark.

Consistent with Morrison and Anderson's definition of regional branding, Qu et al. (2011) believe that regional branding has two critical functions, namely identification and differentiation. Identification refers to

"explaining the source of the product to consumers" (Ibid). For instance, using Lolland-Falster as a regional example, its authentic food comes from the interaction between quality raw materials and unique natural and cultural environment. The high-quality of authentic food identifies the unique conditions for agricultural produce on Lolland-Falster. When it comes to differentiation, it means the region differentiates itself from its competitors based on the distinctive characteristics of its history, culture, and activities (Qu et al., 2011). For example, the authentic food on Lolland-Falster, such as beer in malt barley, cherry cider, and organic cheese, provides the opportunity to attract more tourists than the other destinations, as there is a trend that many tourists are demanding authentic food experiences (Lolland Municipality, 2019). In short, the above two main functions illustrate the significant advantages of regional branding.

The first chapter of the analysis (4.1 *The case of Madens Folkemøde*), will present the case of a food event called 'Makens Folkemøde', with a focus on tracing back to its historical and conceptual background of becoming a local branding initiative on Lolland-Falster. Besides, the second chapter of the analysis in the following paper (4.2.2 *Stakeholders' expectations - Local branding*) will display that many stakeholders participate in Madens Folkemøde in order to brand the local community.

2.2 Food tourism

Rural areas like Lolland-Falster are facing problems of marginalisation. According to Blichfeldt and (2014), it has become widespread to use food as a medium to brand rural areas, with efforts revolving around local cultural resources and food-related activities (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014). With increasing interest in locally-produced food, and in particular interest in links with the tourism industry, Lolland Municipality has developed a strategic plan for food production and food tourism in Lolland-Falster. In order to study a food event - Madens Folkemøde, food tourism theory is applied in this paper.

There are many definitions of food tourism. To begin with, many scholars-based food tourisms on food experiences. For example, according to Stille (2001), food tourism has become part of the travel experience of a destination; Horng et al. (2012) defined food tourism as participation in the unique food experiences related to a travel destination; Karim and Chi (2010) interpreted food tourism as a journey to experience different kinds of food in specific destinations; Long (2004) defined food tourism in three aspects: "*it is about individuals to explore new foods and cultures*"; "*it is about groups using food to sell histories and to construct marketable identities*"; and "*it is about the experiencing of food in a mode that is out of ordinary*".

Besides, Hall and Sharples' definition of food tourism represents the views of many people. According to them, food tourism is *"visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production regions are the primary factor for travel"* (Hall & Sharples, 2003). However, this definition focuses only on the consumer side, indicating that within food tourism, tourists' interest in food may differ, and food is not their primary motivation to travel. Moreover, Smith and Xiao (2008) proposed a broader definition of food tourism than the above. They defined food tourism as *"any tourism experience in which one learns about, appreciates, or consumes branded local food resources"*. Their definition reflects on the supplier side, implying that DMOs use their local food as a resource to develop their destination.

Based on the above definitions, there are two main actors in food tourism. On the one hand, some tourists actively participate in food-related activities to consume food or to experience specific food cultures. On the other hand, there are DMOs and food suppliers who provide the local food products and any other food-related activities to attract tourists and to brand the destination. This paper focuses on the latter - the organiser and supplier side, taking into consideration how to make a new food-related activity to become a central part of local development initiatives for Lolland-Falster. The second chapter of the analysis (4.2.4 *Stakeholders' collaboration - Collaboration at the local level*), will present a strategy for food production and food tourism at Lolland-Falster. Scheduling for implementation between 2018 and 2020, the local development strategy for Lolland-Falster was designed to focus on the opportunities that food production presents for attracting tourists from both Denmark and abroad, increasing investment, turnover and employment in the region (Lolland Municipality, 2020)

2.3 Stakeholder theory

Stakeholder theory will be applied in this paper. The usage of the term stakeholders has emerged, which means *"a person entrusted with the stake of bettors"* (Bryson, 2003; Lelea et al., 2016). As by definition, stakeholders are groups of individuals who can affect or are affected by an issue or phenomenon (Schiller et al., 2013). However, Freeman (1984) popularised the term by opposing businesses to consider all stakeholders, rather than just mere shareholders. He defines the term of stakeholders as *"any group or individual who can affect or be affected by the achievement of the organisations' objectives"* (Freeman, 1994). Although the root of this concept is actually in the business literature, this concept has developed because people use it frequently in administration and resource management.

Today, the use of the term emphasised the "stake" or interest in the process widely (Lelea et al., 2016). Grimble and Wellard (1997) defined stakeholders as any group of people organised, who share a common interest in a particular issue or system (Lelea et al., 2016; Grimble & Wellard, 1997). The UNWTO (2005) identified stakeholders in tourism destinations consisting of professionals, public authorities, as well as the press and any other media. Macbeth et al. stress out the need of proper recognition to other stakeholders emphasizing their rights to be acknowledged of the particular residents, indigenous groups and other interest groups that should be acknowledged (Dabphet, 2012). These authors believe that several stakeholders may directly or indirectly influence tourism planning and development. They play a variety of roles, and sometimes have competing aims and objectives on specific issues.

This paper uses Madens Folkemøde as a case study for this research, mapping the relevant stakeholders will provide a clear perspective on partnership and collaboration. Additionally, providing a structure, how the communication flows and organised, the decision processes from top to bottom network in the public and private sector. Based on this, identifying and categorising them as a concept to unveil how active the engagement would be, or on the other hand, potentially problematic between the organisers, organisations (public or private), tourists and the local community.

Stakeholders' identification in sustainable development

The evolution of the term "actors" and "stakeholders" carried out research studies to find out solutions to complex real-world problems (i.e. in food, tourism and farming system of sustainable practices). By considering many factors, the findings stated that the problem definition has to bear on who is considered relevant to that problem (Lelea et al., 2016). The heterogeneity within stakeholder's identification and categorisation requires a decision based upon the representation of an identified stakeholders in visual chart and correspondence with expert informants to obtain practice base insights. According to Robson and Robson (1996), they claimed that the existence of the stakeholders in the tourism development and its involvement has the potential to provide a framework within sustainable tourism development can be delivered.

Additionally, stakeholder theory has been widely used in tourism stakeholders' interdependency and their ability to influence the development processes of the tourism destination (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Integrating stakeholders is a means of accommodating conflict points and claims. Nevertheless, when inclusivity is a goal, then a willingness to take an expansive view of stakeholders is required. As definitions of stakeholders

specifically differ in how inclusive they are, Bryson (2004) asserts that in public management, the term must be used in a more inclusive way to enact more democratic principles (Lelea et al., 2016). Bryson further stated that in a community development practice, stakeholders are often described as 'victims' and 'gainers' in which concerns a particular issue, either, benefits them or be at risk. Moreover, the involvement of stakeholders in sustainable tourism development often depends upon a changing role which the usage of the term varies accordingly on the specific problem and course of planning.

2.4 Role of partnership and collaboration

Over the years, people have widely recognised the need to improve sustainability in the tourism industry. As cited by Graci (2013) many destinations have attempted to move towards sustainability, but unfortunately, have been hindered by lack of initiatives to collaborate among stakeholders in an attempt to address the current issue in practice (Graci, 2013). Collaboration is considered to be an essential aspect of development in integration in the tourism industry towards sustainability.

Collaboration through the partnership as described by Gray (1989) as a process through which parties who see different aspects of the problem, explore constructively and triangulate perspectives to come up with envision solutions. Tapping into and creating broad networks is integral to connecting communities and destinations to more extensive flows of tourists and ensuring local benefits from tourism development. However, little research has probed how communities build these connections. Stoddart (2020) examines how tourism stakeholders perceive and practice the work of network building and assess the challenges they face in pursuing this work in regional tourism development.

Collaboration, the term itself, is an evolving process of alliances working together in a problem domain with complexity and diverse involvement (Gray 1989; Medeiros de Araujo & Bramwell 2002; Jamal & Stronza 2009; Graci 2013; Charleen et al. 2014). This process allows the organisation to build up the resources in expanding the collective commitment, knowledge sharing and expertise by developing a foundation internally. Medeiros de Araujo and Bramwell (2002) also argued that practice of collaboration is part of moral obligations to involve throughout the project, as well as any decision-making processes with regards to rules and regulation, policies, enforcement, planning and the implementation.

Apart from the academic contribution, this study will make, findings from the research will be of particular benefit to Lolland-Falster regions, where there is a greater need for collaborative engagement and local

initiatives. Madens Folkemøde represents a unique concept of co-creation relevant to the current issue of sustaining tourism stakeholders in collaborative projects. Several organisations such as NGOs represent regional development in collaboration with local communities and businesses that have brought attention to the local and central government to joint action, including independent municipalities in the areas of Lolland-Falster. Using Madens Folkemøde as a case study, the research extends previous work on existing initiatives of stakeholder's cooperation by determining its role to the region. The study identifies the factors that facilitate or hinder the processes of collaboration and those that assist or obstruct the achievement of collaborative initiatives.

Though 'partnership' or 'collaboration' is commonly used as a general descriptor for joint efforts; however, stakeholders can have different motivations which somehow overlap. Collaboration, primarily through multi-stakeholder cooperation, is considered an effective way to support tourism development initiatives (Graci, 2013). Additionally, the concept of collaboration provides for a flexible and dynamic process that evolves, enabling multiple stakeholders to address problems or issues (Gray, 1989) jointly. Recognising the need for citizen participation and grassroots participation in the management of natural and cultural resources, making "community participation" an increasingly important principle of sustainability (Hibbard & Lurie, 2000; Mitchell & Reid 2001).

Throughout the literature, aiming for sustainable outcomes requires cross-sector partnerships to support strategic influence in taking control and manage the complexities in planning the development with high regards to resource management, community participation and governance (Graci et al., 2016). To embody the role of stakeholders in the sustainable destination, diverse organisations and actors should establish a common goal and create a framework for joint action (Berresford, 2004). Banach and Gregory (2001) note that collaboration and stakeholder support is also vital at all levels due to its potential to illuminate issues and needs during project implementation (Charleen et al., 2014). Albeit, according to Gray (1989), he suggested that certain specific measures need to be undertaken if the goal is to achieve collaboration successfully.

Madens Folkemøde as an alternative Community- based tourism (CBT)

Correspondingly, a growing body of research is emerging on tourism and partnerships in protected areas, but conceptual development remains fragmented. Sustainability discourses have permeated both development and tourism rhetoric and practice to such an extent that they are inextricably linked (Huxford,

2010). Under the umbrella of this alternative development/sustainable development paradigm, the concept of alternative tourism emerged - Community-based tourism (CBT). The concept of community-based tourism (CBT) has a rigorous definition used very flexibly in rhetoric and practice. However, the definition from Simpson (2008) encapsulates researchers and practitioners believe that community ownership, responsibility, and actual participation in tourism are the keys to tourism sustainability, and are crucial for planners, managers, and operators (Simpson, 2008).

Community-based tourism is normally a platform for the local community to generate economic benefits through offering their products to tourists that range from the local communities, lifestyles, natural resources and cultures (Donny & Nor, 2012). Murphy (1984) was one of the pioneers of studies in CBT concerning aspects of tourism development and its relationship to the local communities (Murphy & Murphy, 2004). This concept of CBT paves the way to further expansion of several works toward analyzing the relationship between tourism and local communities (López-Guzaman et al., 2011).

Researches such as community tourism (CBT) improves the rural economy (Donny & Nor, 2012), emphasizes the local participation (Donny & Nor, 2012), empowers the local community (Armstrong, 2012; and Harwood, 2010), owns and manages by the local community (Armstrong, 2012; Dunn, 2007; Goodwin & Santilli, 2009) sustainability (Donny & Nor, 2012), and reduces poverty (Zapata, Hall, Lindo & Vanderschaeghe, 2011) are the examples of study on CBT that have been conducted though the intentions of prior research work of literature were to address the aspects of Community-based tourism (CBT).

In relation to this research, the case study of Madens Folkemøde would help to identify the perceptions coming from the local communities towards the impacts of collaboration to socio-economic and cultural impacts. The tourism development impacts could lead to either positive or negative impacts on the stakeholder's collaborative relationships, local communities and its government. Timothy (2002) and Smith (1984) described that public participation in decision making is one of the pillars of community empowerment by reflecting legal rights and opportunities. With the various participation of local actors in the food sector, it is possible to create business opportunities and partnerships as a developing activity that has never been exploited for a sustainable tourism initiative. Additionally, the participation of the local communities or stakeholders' initiatives will determine the benefits and costs resulted from the tourism activities. Hsu (2006) depicted that studies on tourism development and impacts among the local communities have become important to the tourism researchers; and to cope with the fast growth of the tourism industry, lifestyles changes, and emergence of new characteristics in tourism development" (Zhang,

2008). In this sense, providing analysis on this case (Madens Folkemøde) would provide extensive knowledge and understanding on how this new form of alternative tourism could generate vast activities for creating employment, an economic boost in resources and improve social and cultural dynamics in Lolland-Falster.

Similarly, development of cooperation's agencies, NGOs, the involvement of locally diverse stakeholders, including the municipalities, governments and local communities is a conditioning factor in the community development tourism. The UNWTO argues that the public-private partnership is the key principle for the successful destination management which requires participants learn from each other, trust and integrate to cooperate in its collective process (Foggin & Münster, 2003; Charleen et al., 2014). Jamal and Stronza (2009) tackle this challenge by focusing on three aspects important for sustainability: complexity, scale (including community involvement and control), structure and scope of collaborations, and challenges of implementation and long-term structuring (for sustainability and success). A share in the benefits of tourism for all community members as the second pillar of empowerment (Timothy, 2002). CBT is based on the development of tourist products and is characterised by community participation in its development. In many cases, it may not be sufficient or practical for the significant tourism stakeholders to consider only specific segments of society (e.g. the poor): tourism can benefit the broader community in all environments and should be considered in a broader perspective as appropriate (Simpson, 2008).

As an alternative way of using community participation to boost up economic status in regional areas; Madens Folkemøde was used as a strategy to develop an idea of integration where food event as a "product" to support sustainable development. Besides that, Madens Folkemøde is a form of NGO initiative which consist of different miscellaneous organizations that are grounded upon funding and management of business development for tourism and development. NGOs can play many active roles in bringing benefits to the community through tourism initiatives; these roles range from investment and equity holdings in projects to capacity building, advocacy, campaigns and consulting (Simpson, 2008). Community is built when, on the basis of different goals, interests, and groups, and interlinking mesh emerges that binds individuals in spite of their differences. The notion of the community should be re-focused as an emerging social interaction generated by the capacity of individuals to pursue common goals and interests that fosters collective strategies and tactics leading to collective action. Obviously, such processes are not without conflict, inequality, conflicting individual interests, disputes that have the tendency of emerging obstacles and challenges in tourism development.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has introduced the literature review of this study, the conceptual and contextual perspectives of collaboration to tourism development were discussed. Different research on tourism development and stakeholders' collaborative relationships has been developed for analyzing destination competitiveness. The significance of collaboration in tourism development and the need to practice collaborative engagement to the local initiatives of regional areas were explained. Also, developing collaborative strategies has been stressed as a crucial step in gaining sustainable competitive advantage. Furthermore, stakeholder's public and private sector and the local communities' role in the development and implementation of sustainable tourism were examined and validated. Apart from that, the importance of collaboration associated with the case of Madens Folkemøde was discussed by different themes: a) Regional branding. The underlying functions of branding appear to be a collaboration because of branding is also, building relationships between stakeholders or consumers and businesses. The small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have been described as a fundamental part of the tourism industry and play a significant role in developing local areas in sustaining tourism. b) Stakeholder theory has been proven to be a particularly used tool to identify different obstacles that may hinder effective collaboration and communication among various stakeholders. c) Moreover, collaboration is frequently seen in the context of community-based tourism (CBT), in which community and participation are crucial to sustainable tourism and development. Lastly, the role and relationships of stakeholder to collaborative tourism development are emphasized as a strategic engagement to create value creation.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will explain and discuss the scientific methods we have chosen to study the research question. First, we will introduce our overall methodological approach. We have adopted qualitative methods (e.g. interviews) to address the practical research problem, as we want to evaluate stakeholders' views and understanding of collaborative activities at Madens Folkemøde.

Then, we will explain our research design. Choosing a case study research approach as a suitable conceptual framework to shed light on the relationship between complexities of the tourism development and the association of various actors- interaction in the practice of collaboration shall be analysed.

Hereafter, research methods and data collection will follow. The method of data collection using in-depth semi-structured interviews, and the methods and procedures utilised for data analysis will be discussed in detail. Next, the research will address ethical considerations correlated with the conducting study. Then the chapter will conclude with an overview of the limitations for this research.

3.2 Research paradigms

Social constructivism

The area of theory of science can be identified as relevant for this thesis was guided by the constructivist research paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1998). However, the chosen research paradigm was focused on social constructivism which is based on the principles of constructivism. The constructivist paradigm requires qualitative methods (rather than positivist - quantitative methods) to seek answers to the research questions (Bryman, 2012) about a socially constructed phenomenon.

Throughout the conducted research for this study, we have applied the constructivist research framework. With this, the perspective is to see the social world in a pragmatic approach. The understanding of ontology within the social constructivist paradigm allows the social world to be seen and perceived as one that is subjectively constructed through individuals' perceptions and experiences as well as an evolving social context. In social constructivism, human interests are essential for research purposes, and knowledge is constructed through social interaction.

3.3 Research design

3.3.1 Case study of Madens Folkemøde

According to Simons (2009), *“a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context”*. This paper investigates a single empirical food event called Madens Folkemøde. It is a two-day food event that takes place on the islands of Lolland-Falster in Denmark. This event aims to bring together the entire food scene of Denmark from politicians, industry professionals to the public who have an interest in food, providing a space to meet and have productive conversations about the future of food (Maden Folkemøde, 2020). The purpose of this study is to explore the process of collaborative activities at Madens Folkemøde and to discover whether (and if so, how) food events could work towards developing food tourism on Lolland-Falster through partnership and collaboration. In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the case study research method was chosen and applied because it enables a more profound understanding of Madens Folkemøde and emphasizes the role of collaborative work for local tourism development.

3.3.2 The case study approach

The underlying principle for a case design approach is that it makes the process of “theory building” through qualitative analysis possible (Yin, 2009). According to Stake (1994), the case study approach provides the researcher with an opportunity to use mixed methods to observe a phenomenon from multiple perspectives. In order to produce a defined and acceptable case study approach as a methodological framework of the research, the following steps were conducted:

- Determine and define the research topic by formulating the Research question;
- Selection of Madens Folkemøde as the main subject to be investigated, shaping & planning the data collection and critical analysis technique;
- Collect qualitative data and accomplish document analysis

Case studies are driven by the desire to study a phenomenon up close and in-depth in its real-world setting (Yin, 2012). Case studies can be used for descriptive, exploratory or explanatory research, and are suitable when (1) ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are being explored, (2) the researcher has minimal control over events, and (3) a current incident within a real-life setting is being researched (Yin, 2009). Since case studies seek to extract findings inherent to a situation (Simons, 2009), they allow the researcher to understand the perspectives and behaviours of participants beyond the statistical results of quantitative research (Yin, 2012).

The case study consists of empirical data with the support of ‘document analysis’ as secondary to support the findings. It means a qualitative approach has been applied. The case is being investigated throughout the period from February to May 2020. It includes in-depth research from previous events related to the case, as well as an inquiry into all the information currently available on the Madens Folkemøde initiatives in the community as to which intended for future tourism and development of Lolland Municipality. Figure 2 below is designed based on the “main steps in qualitative research” of Bryman (2008), showing the different steps of this study.

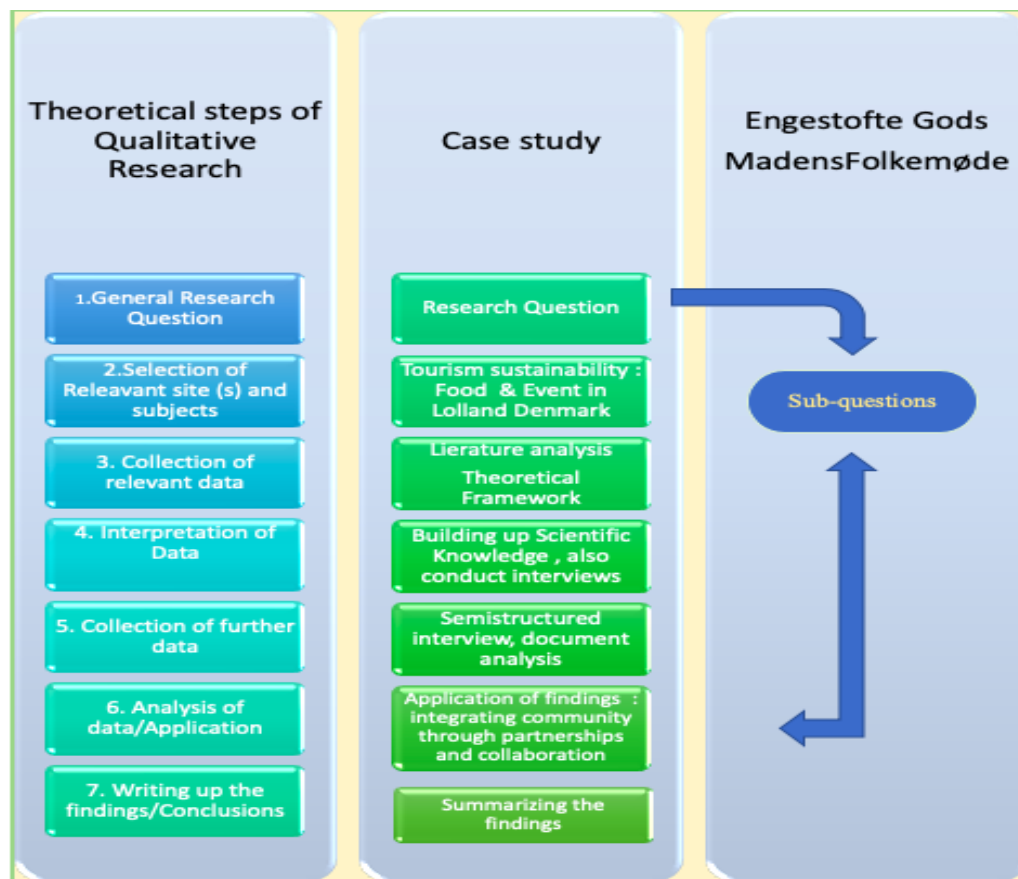


Figure 2: Diagram of research design, inspired by Bryman (2008).

In the case of this research, the researchers had an overall understanding of the issues related to the study. However, the nature of the research questions did not allow presumptions to be made about the answers. For instance, the stakeholders' perspectives on collaboration could not have been affected by any previous knowledge about the case itself. However, to explore more on the topic, the researcher often uses the judgements of the stakeholders to let them express their opinions freely without attempting to constrict their responses by any previous knowledge or research studies. Using a neutral approach during the process of research analysis enabled the researcher to identify similarities and differences between existing research

and the findings of this study. According to Yin (2012), if the quest for contrary findings can produce documentable rebuttals, the likelihood of bias will have been reduced (Fathimath, 2015).

3.4 Research methods

The essence of this research is to provide a better understanding of how the processes of collaboration in the event initiated and exploring how different actors react to these initiatives, its significance to development in tourism as a sustainable solution. For this research, a limited collection of qualitative data was conducted, with the use of two complementary data collections methods. In line with the case study research method, obtaining qualitative data exclusively from stakeholders with an in-depth understanding of the actors, their roles to the processes of collaboration and impacts to tourism development was deemed more appropriate than obtaining findings in generalized statistics of a larger population. The two qualitative data collection used were: individual depth interviews to collect primary data, and the documentary analysis to collect secondary data.

3.4.1 Qualitative in-depth interviews

Qualitative research is the holistic approach for collecting raw data in exploratory research, wherein the researchers are trying to identify specific issues/problems, or opportunity by simply collecting relevant data to obtain an initial understanding about the topic in its context. As noted by Kuper et al. (2008), interviewing is one of the most common sources of data in case study research. Interviews can be structures, semi-structured or unstructured (Remler & Ryzin, 2011). Also, the basis of in-depth interviewing is the desire to understand the lived experiences of the others, and their perspectives of those experiences (Petty et al., 2012).

In-depth interviewing relies on participants' verbal accounts to gain insights into their social lives, experiences and opinions - incidents that cannot be directly witnessed (Seidman, 2013. Tyler and Bogdan (???) argued that the role of the interviewees is important as a role informant for the researcher, revealing undertakings and actions related to past events and how the others received these. In-depth, face-to-face interviews with diverse stakeholders were used for data collection at the beginning process. However, alternative approaches were used, such as Skype calls, phone interviews and email questionnaires on online media sent were conducted due to the current crisis of the pandemic coronavirus (COVID-19).

In order to initiate the process, three semi-structured interviews were conducted. Two of the interviews were associated with the board of the Madens Folkemøde, and the third one was the expert on food-event management and strategies with cultural tourism. The first two participants had been the significant interviewee from the board of Madens Folkemøde associated with the initiatives of rural development projects. They had extensive knowledge of the background and context, its tourism industry, the local food sector, political structure attached to it and extensive knowledge of the case in Lolland-Falster. The third interviewee has had extensive knowledge in project management, organizing significant events in both urban and rural cities such as Copenhagen Cooking, Arla festival etc., similarly from the board, has vast knowledge about the development with extensive capabilities to manage the planning and implementation on such food-event in Lolland-Falster.

Besides, the first phase of the interviews helped to fine-tune the interview protocol for further interviews more directed and detailed. Also, the appropriateness of the questions that were formulated during the initial interviews provided a crucial assessment that confirmed tourism destination issues and practices within the collaborative relationships. Semi-structured interviews are guided by predetermined topics and prompt to structure the conversation or dialogue (Robson, 2011). One of the critical elements of semi-structured interviews is the flexibility to change the course or the direction to tackle in the investigation. However, with its predetermined use of similar questions aimed at structured interviewing cannot guarantee comparable findings to be possible (Fathimath, 2015), because when the data collection has begun the quantitative methods maintain an inherent momentum to the study being investigated on (Bryman, 2012).

3.4.2 Documentary analysis

Apart from the primary data collected through in-depth interviews, we have supplemented by a selection of secondary data. We obtained the secondary data from various official documents, such as the strategy for food production and food tourism on Lolland-Falster (Lolland Municipality, 2020); the 2018-2019 annual report (Lolland Municipality, 2019); the Muld initiatives (Lolland, 2019); actor catalogue (Maden Folkemøde, 2019); 2019 event program (Maden Folkemøde, 2019); and Maden Folkemøde report from Food Organisation of Denmark (FOOD, 2019). The purpose of conducting the documentary analysis was to satisfy the information needed regarding data which may not be readily available to a researcher to be obtained as primary data, data concerning reports and past activities, which or, would take time to collect beyond the time frame allotted for this paper. Besides, since most of the materials are in Danish, researchers have to

translate these materials to understand the general idea first, and then choose to extract some parts according to their judgment, so that relevant information can be expressed in English.

3.5 Data collection

3.5.1 Researchers' reflection

Narrowing down research topics

The researchers were from the beginning inspired by real-life experiences before coming up with the general topic area of investigation. The problem-based learning (PBL) process was later used to select and narrow down our focuses (see Figure 3). We first identified the problem of rural marginalisation and brainstormed ideas based on prior knowledge. Then we engaged in the independent study by collecting data separately. Later on, we shared our information and worked toward a solution, i.e. we found the strategy of developing food tourism can help to build a regional brand for Lolland-Falster. Next, we focused on the collaborative activities among different stakeholders at the food event - Madens Folkemøde with the help of our supervisor.

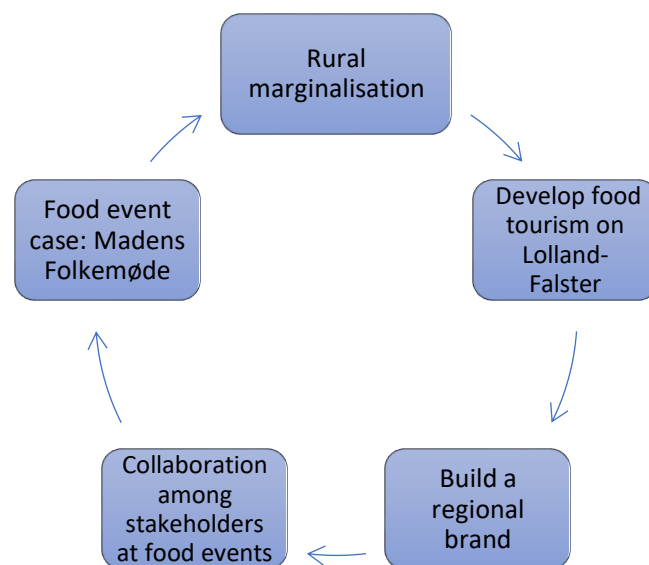


Figure 3: The process of narrowing down research topics based on problem-based learning (Source: author).

File sharing

During the process of working together, researchers used Google Docs to organise knowledge. This online program highlights any edit made to the document and provides opportunities for researchers with immediate feedback. However, editing does not have to happen at the same time. One can easily make comments, and the other can revisit the document and track the comment. Researchers can also respond to

comments, allowing them to have a conversation about edits in Google Docs. Besides, this platform provides support for real-time collaboration, so researchers can conduct virtual meetings from any location to discuss the paper in front of them.

3.5.2 Purposive sampling

According to Creswell (2013), sampling techniques can help qualitative researchers to select informative samples, which can provide a thorough and in-depth understanding of one case. This paper utilizes a purposive sampling strategy (Patton, 2002). The key motive for selecting this approach was to seek a distinctive answer to the research question from as many relevant information-rich cases as possible (Creswell, 2013).

In order to gain a better insight into the process of collaboration, seven semi-structured interviews or online questionnaires were conducted with 11 main stakeholders of Madens Folkemøde. They represent different types of stakeholders, such as the board of Madens Folkemøde, Engestofte Gods, Food Organisation of Denmark (FOOD), Food Nation, and local producers. A total of 2 interviews with three stakeholders were conducted face-to-face, which lasted approximately 40 min each; 3 email interviews were conducted online by sending email questionnaires, and 2 shared their general ideas by email without answering questionnaires. Table 1 below shows the profile of the interviewees.

Interviews & Questionnaires	Interviewee	Position
Interview 1	Mette Egeskov	-Director of Engestofte Gods -Vice-chairman of the board of Madens Folkemøde
	Johan Borup Jensen	Event manager of Engestofte Gods
Interview 2	Pelle Øby Andersen	Director of FOOD organisation
Questionnaire 3	Maria Dyrby Nielsen	Project manager of Food Nation
Questionnaire 4	Uffe Skaaning Lind	Local producer: Isle of Møn Spirits
Questionnaire 5	Niki Bi Frost	Local producer: Frøsamlerne
Email respond 6	Henrik Holm	Local producer: Biotrino
Email respond 7	Jens and Ole	Local producer: Ro'Um

Table 1: Profile of the interviewees (Source: author).

3.6 Ethical considerations

Before interviews, researchers have informed participants about their participation in the research and explained the matter of confidentiality. The interviewee must do so as this builds the truthfulness and openness between the researcher and the respondent. Thus, we, as researchers, will respect the wish of some of our respondents not to present their names. Besides, informed consent was given in exchange for participation in the research, which is standard protocol in case studies. We recorded interviews through a mobile phone voice recorder after receiving the participants' permission. The recording played a vital role in our data analysis phase for us to facilitate the interpretation of the gathered data.

3.7 Research trustworthiness

3.7.1 Credibility

In the qualitative research, the main principle of credibility is based on the results from the research, which are credible and in the same time believable according to the participant's perception (EAIE, 2018). The primary purpose of this specific research is to get an understanding and overview of the phenomena of interest, based on the participant's perspective, as mentioned before. It must be evident that the participants are the only ones who can have the right to criticize the overall credibility of the results.

Triangulation (Statistics Solutions, 2017) as the most important and found technique in qualitative research, was used to gain a more in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, which is being analysed throughout the research, a variety of research methods and theories are also part of this research paper. These aspects helped us to have a clear view about the research study's findings with the practice, but also in order to establish the reality of the research study's findings, which might also help the reader to get a deeper understanding of the topic.

A questionnaire targeted towards the local producers has been conducted. We have sent out 68 questionnaires but only got five responses back. Nevertheless, the data collected supported our findings.

3.7.2 Transferability

By definition, the transferability is related to the research, which is qualitative and can be actually transferred or even generalized to other settings or contexts (Statistics Solutions, 2017). In our case, in terms of transferability, we wanted to make sure that the materials we used as well as the information which was actually 'transfer', were taken responsibly and later used in the new contexts. More specifically, our group used secondary data such as books, online articles, and websites. Based on this fact, we used other relevant research to support our project. However, we kept a critical approach when transferring information and knowledge. In the case of any other researchers who would like to use our project in the future, they will have to make sure that they are responsible for transferring our findings as well as to use their approach towards their contexts.

Dependability is concerned with what results would we get out of research if we would have done the same research again. However, according to Trochim (2006), we cannot observe the same things twice. Thus, it must be taken into consideration the different conditions which might change, yet, influence the way the researcher approaches the study (Trochim, 2006).

That is why it is essential to state that we are aware that depicting the current state of collaborative practices based on the individual viewpoint of the stakeholders' interviewed might be subjective. Qualitative data collected throughout the thesis have designed and developed the conclusion of this study. We acknowledge that if other researchers repeated the same study, they would end up with a different result. Since different methodological approaches would be different, comprehension and experiences from interviewed respondents would not be the same.

Confirmability takes into consideration that each researcher is unique, and this might reflect on and understand various situations differently. Confirmability is the level to which we can verify the outcomes of our study. There are several ways how the study can be verified or re-checked during the process as detailed, documenting the process of conducting the study.

In order to tackle this issue, we have been recording and transcribing the interviews made. Moreover, we have made a diary noting our progress together with our perceptions and emotions. We have been transparent throughout the development of the study, and we tried to address all the challenges we encountered.

3.8 Limitations

One of the limitations of this thesis is the lack of members from the central government as research participants. Central government agencies, such as the Ministry of Tourism, Visit Lolland-Falster representative, would give a distinctive perspective on how tourism in the regional areas are being conducted and addressed for development and its competitiveness. As the primary concern of the local initiative - Madens Folkemøde, is to attract tourists by increasing the flow of visitors in the region of Lolland-Falster, therefore it would be interesting to note the role of state governance in regional counterpart. As elaborated in the discussion about the intent of Madens Folkemøde food event was to attract politicians, members of parliament and other key staff of central government to participate in the activities. The tenacity of "democracy" through debates was to unify and address the current issues about health, business and sustainable practices are fundamental. In this case, this reflected a lack of central government support to use resources and able to increase tourism in regional areas, specifically those who are based in greater Copenhagen cities. Additionally, participants from the central government could have given valuable insights on collaboration between the local and the central governments and the impacts of Madens Folkemøde food-event in tourism development and collaborative competitiveness in Lolland-Falster.

The thesis has provided information on a set of attributes of stakeholders based on their role and perspectives on the food-event. Additionally, as an alternative form of tourism development in the region and has then assessed their collaborative relationship on the food-event. To complete research, involving a full range of stakeholders would have been necessary to interview or gather data from the public (local tourists, school participants, farmers etc.) who would provide additional insights to the initiative. Including the visitor's perspective would have required expansion of the scope of the thesis proper. These are gaps that could be addressed by a future research approach.

Moreover, the perspectives of the visitors attending the event on what they believe are the critical attributes of Madens Folkemøde. Collected data for future study could provide a comparison between stakeholders and visitors' standpoint of what factors constitute the tourism development to the region. Also, evaluating the role of stakeholders' collaboration in elements of both active (stakeholders) and non-active (visitors) participants perceived as an indicator of continuous tourism development and attractiveness of collaborative relationships.

From the time when this research was conducted, two years after the creation and Madens Folkemøde was established, limited sources of data on the impacts of the collaboration or tourism development were

available. At the time of this research started, most of the stakeholders of the food-event initiatives were beginning to get established, initiation to pursue collaborative relationships to start to create awareness of the benefits of working together - to adapt locally co-creating initiatives and regional branding. Therefore, this research was unable to reflect on the outcomes of collaborative processes and activities specifically on the side of local businesses and SMEs. However, if the research has been done right after the implementation phase, just after its first launch, it will reveal how well the collaborative practice, process and the extent to which the efforts and activities were accomplished.

Furthermore, the opinions that were captured from stakeholders conducted at the same time when the Madens Folkemøde was established will reveal the relevance of findings and disclose sustainability and effectiveness of the collaborative processes that were implemented after the first launch of the Madens Folkemøde initiative.

Consequently, the visitors of the Madens Folkemøde event tended to view the creation of initiative as “clear promotion” and “food festival” which was mistakenly understood. With several distinctive and miscellaneous stakeholders who supported the initiative for the region's development, Madens Folkemøde became visible. This article focuses on the impact of this change, the collaborative process, and the value created. Taking into consideration the stance of Madens Folkemøde supporters and government involvement on the significance of collaboration could create a concept for the future research.

As a Master thesis, data analysis was conducted by the researcher correspondingly. A future study that triangulates stakeholders’ opinions with other data sources, data analysis by a co-existing researcher, a review by an expert panel or input from the research participants could provide comprehensive findings to further develop upon and expand the results of this research. Future research that captures and compares information from two or more politically merged tourism destinations that look into the significance of stakeholder collaboration would assist in overcoming the limitation of a single case.

4 Analysis

4.1 The case of Madens Folkemøde

4.1.1 Background and context

According to Stolarick et al. (2010), many rural areas and small towns are struggling to arrest population decline and economic malaise by reinvigorating their economies in ways that respect their cultural atmosphere. This is to say, in a way that is compatible with existing economic activities and does not undermine the ambience that is one of their significant assets. Rural areas like Lolland-Falster are facing prospects of marginalisation in an age of globalisation where the attention of governments and media focuses increasingly on the (lack of) competitiveness of urban and metropolitan regions (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014). According to Mette Egeskov, the director of Engestofte Gods & the vice-chairman of the board of Madens Folkemøde, even though Lolland-Falster has fertile soil and high-quality products, this area has never benefited from it. It is partly due to the lack of branding of its land resources so that the public does not know the advantages and potentials of this area (Appendix 1 - ME). In 2019, several food organisations and high-profile entrepreneurs in the food industry were invited to Lolland-Falster to attend an event called Madens Folkemøde, which started to uncover the beautiful veil of this area. This section shows the context of the Madens Folkemøde event from both historical and conceptual background.

Historical background

As an agricultural area, Lolland-Falster is rich in resources producing quality products and has a long historical tradition of producing food for all of Denmark, also for the whole world (Business Lolland-Falster, 2019). According to the local DMO, Visit Lolland-Falster, one can taste the Earth's best produce from Lolland-Falster. People are also very proud of their locally grown foods, such as juicy apples, award-winning beer, world-class cherry wine and many other delicacies (Visit Lolland-Falster, 2020).

However, for some reason, Lolland-Falster has had a lousy reputation portrayed by the media as the vicinity far away from the developed cities, namely an area of the peripheral Denmark where there are poor communities with no jobs and future, and people are living an unhealthy life (Appendix 1 - ME & JJ). For example, TV 2, a national television station in Denmark, made a TV program series named 'På røven i Nakskov' in 2015 that follows many socially vulnerable families. Even before the series launched, the resentment of the citizens of Lolland-Falster aroused (Jeppesen, 2015). The locals in Lolland-Falster felt that they could not recognise the image TV 2 drew of them. Much of the criticism was that it was typical for a metropolitan media

to portray the area in a stigmatising and condescending way. It was not only the citizens of Lolland-Falster who felt that their area's image got deteriorated by the program but also the mayor of Lolland Municipality, Holger Schou Rasmussen, has criticised the program because he believed it stigmatised the local population (Larsen, 2016). Nevertheless, TV 2 maintained that the program was necessary to address problems in society.

Why was Lolland-Falster chosen (out of any other parts of Denmark) to be an example to depict the people who are having a hard time financially and socially in Denmark? According to producer Anne Eberhardt, the figures at Statistics Denmark led to Lolland, where most citizens were receiving the transfer payment from the government (Jeppesen, 2015).

Thus, when it comes to Lolland-Falster, people put more attention on the negative side - poor area, spare housing, and the export of social problems. According to Henrik, the deputy mayor of Lolland Municipality, 1 out of 3 young people moving into Lolland comes with a significant social issue (Appendix 2 - PA). One of the significant issues in Denmark comes from rural areas like Lolland-Falster that young people moved to cities to get an education, and they did not want to move back. Then, the social problem occurs when they cannot afford an apartment in the city, or they could not get support from the municipality. They move back to Lolland-Falster because they can get cheap housing there. It can be stressful for some people who are happy to live in Lolland and cannot enjoy themselves any more, for seeing all of the best and smart young people move away and get many social problems back instead (Appendix 2 - PA).

Who is to blame for the poverty in Lolland-Falster? It may be the market conditions that are responsible for poverty in the outskirts, according to Finn Kenneth Hansen, a researcher in poverty, it stems from the fact that some businesses in the food industry have left the area, and therefore employment is lacking. When there is no employment, there is no money in circulation, and then there is no growth (Larsen, 2016). Hence, in order to reinvigorate its economies, there is an urgent need for Lolland-Falster to start branding the community and selling a good story about the area as a place where the good stuff comes from (Appendix 1 - JJ).

Conceptual background

Madens Folkemøde was created with inspiration from a Swedish concept that politics meets citizens, businesses and organisations under informal forms (Appendix 1 - ME). In Denmark, the people's meeting "Folkemødet" in Bornholm shares the same value with the Swedish concept, in which people talk about politics and democracy. After visiting Bornholm Folkemødet once, Mette Egeskov, the director of Engestofte

Gods, began to explore the possibility of creating a similar event in food edition on Lolland-Falster (Appendix 1 - ME). It took five years of development before Madens Folkemøde was conceptualised as a food-event at Engestofte Gods, a manor house located in Lolland Municipality (Appendix 1 - JJ).

A dream of a food embassy

As one of the oldest royal estates from 1457, Engestofte Gods forms an integral part of the Danes' shared history and cultural heritage. However, the old farm buildings can no longer be used for their original purposes, such as for stables, barns, and granaries can no longer meet the demands of modern agricultural operations. Instead, using the manor for trade fairs, banquet, conferences, market place, and associations will be the best preservation strategy.

Based on the interview conducted with the management of Engestofte Gods, in the first place, Mette wanted to create new activities for the manor, even to initiate new projects and to become a central part of local development initiatives for Lolland-Falster. The ambition was to make Engestofte a 'food embassy' for smaller, local food producers and the local business community (Appendix 1 - ME & JJ). With a concept that also embraced ongoing activities, Engestofte traced back to the manor's original function and role in local food production. The vision was that local quality food should be a central element in all activities. The project was to both make the manor the local area change agent and generate income that could strengthen Engestofte's business base in the long run (Appendix 1 - ME & JJ). This idea can not only make good use of the original functions of the manor facilities but also make the manor itself a "food embassy" for the local development of Lolland-Falster.

Food embassy became Madens Folkemøde

In order to elaborate more about the conceptual process of Madens Folkemøde, and how Mette turned her idea into reality, a campaign called 'Fremtidens Herregård' (The manor of the future) must be introduced. This campaign was initiated by an organisation called Realdania, aiming to bring new life into the manor's historic buildings and focusing on the manor as a dynamo for rural life and local development (Realdania, 2020). With the help of Realdania's campaign 'Fremtidens Herregård', Engestofte has been refurbished into a local focal point where players from business and association can hold markets, conferences, private parties and cultural events. Specifically, it is in the large barn of Engestofte that various activities take place today (see Figure 4). This barn provides a platform for networking and marketing activities, which work closely with other regional development projects on Lolland-Falster.



Figure 4: The large barn at Engestofte Gods, as a dinner venue for 2019 Madens Folkemøde (Maden's Folkemøde, 2019).

Gradually, as a local branding initiative, the dream of creating a food embassy for Lolland-Falster became the idea of Madens Folkemøde (Appendix 1 - ME & JJ). An idea that has been underway for several years and was launched for the first time in May 2019. More specifically, Madens Folkemøde is a food event that brings together the entire food scene of Denmark through over 70 debates, cookery school for children, communal dinners, food craft scenes and a wealth of food producers and food trucks (Maden's Folkemøde, 2019).

4.1.2 Event program

As a part of the initiative, an event program (Appendix 10 - 2019 program) has been created by the organisers to assist in achieving the standards and goals of Madens Folkemøde. The 2019 program is a detailed document to provide a convenient guide for the event. It includes the official logo, procedures, the content of the event, the program commences and other relevant information. In order to let readers understand what kind of food event the Madens Folkemøde is, this section aims to introduce the four different categories of the event program.

Debates and talks - for companies and organisations

The central element of Madens Folkemøde is debates and talks, where different people discuss with each other about the future of Denmark as a food country. For instance, politicians, local producers, entrepreneurs, scientists, citizens, and associations will meet at the various stages of the event and discuss everything from sustainable production to the future of the food industry (Appendix 9 - *Actor catalogue*).

Food crafts - for skilled food craftsmen

Denmark stands in the leading position when it comes to the quality of food. Apart from debates and talks, this event also aims to share knowledge, experiences and excellent craftsmanship. In short, at Madens Folkemøde, people can participate in conversations, tastings and workshops with the most skilled Danish food craftsmen. They are from bakers, brewers and fishers to butchers, chefs and farmers (Appendix 10 - *2019 program*).

Sensory experiences for children and young people

According to the 2019 program, as an integral part of the meeting, a range of learning-based activities and workshops are created for children, young people, and the whole family. The initiative includes two parts: Children's area with small tents, tables, essential kitchen equipment; a series of debates and workshops on children and learning. The smallest can greet farm animals, cook over bonfires and be close to nature, while the older children and young people can attend pasta workshops or any other activities about future food and sustainability.

Market life - stands for Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

According to the actor catalogue (Appendix 9), market life brings all attendees together and creates celebration and joy for Madens Folkemøde. Here have the best local food producers, the unforgettable communal dining experiences, the best food party and beautiful excursions in nature around the estate. In order to show Lolland-Falster's food potential, there will be a priority for the local producers to attend the market life initiative, but it also welcomes any exciting manufacturers from the rest of Denmark.

4.1.3 Organisational structure

Many authors have widely explored collaboration theory in tourism management, examining a variety of related questions from different perspectives. As an example, Jamal and Getz (1995) note that the selection of stakeholders is tightly bound up with two other important aspects of collaborative processes: legitimacy and power. These authors interpret legitimacy, concerning Gray (1989), as both the capacity of a given stakeholder to be involved in a collaboration, arguing that in order to participate, a legitimate stakeholder “must even have the resources and skills” (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Due to the diversity of the players involved, it is unlikely that organisational leadership will have direct control over all those participating in the place branding process (Moilanen and Rainisto, 2009). Therefore, Madens Folkemøde requires attention to decision-making dynamics, and also the underlying goal of organisational leadership should be to facilitate collaboration, communication, and the sharing of information (Lee, Wall, & Kovacs, 2015).

In order to analyse Madens Folkemøde as a co-creative initiative, it must first be examined as strategic cooperation between actors situated in the public sector (i.e. the Ministry of Business and Trade of Denmark, the municipalities of Guldborgsund and Lolland) and the private sector (i.e. the local business representatives) on Lolland-Falster. The central management of Madens Folkemøde consists of two parts: The Board and the FOOD (Food organisation of Denmark), both of which have members and partners from the public and private sectors.

The Board

According to the director of the FOOD, the board of Madens Folkemøde is the governing institution, and it owns the legal entity (Appendix 2 - PA). Besides, according to the official website of Madens Folkemøde, the board of Madens Folkemøde (Figure 5: The board of Madens Folkemøde) consists of many of Denmark's most prominent people within the food industry. They represent every link in the food chain - from the organic farmer to the conventional big farmer, from the entrepreneur to the politician and the food artisan to the consumer (Maden Folkemøde, 2020).

According to Mette, the director of Engestofte Gods & vice-chairman of the board of Madens Folkemøde, “it is amazing to have all of those fantastic people into the board, and it is all about having the people and has that network” (Appendix 1 - ME). Claus Meyer, for instance, as a famous culinary entrepreneur in Denmark, he put his name on the board in the first place and helped to draw in other people on the board quickly. Surprisingly, all members of the board were willing to support the event for free. Based on the comment

from Johan, the event manager of Engestofte Gods, "they are all passionate about food for different reasons, and they will do philanthropic stuff and something that they believe to" (Appendix 1 - JJ).

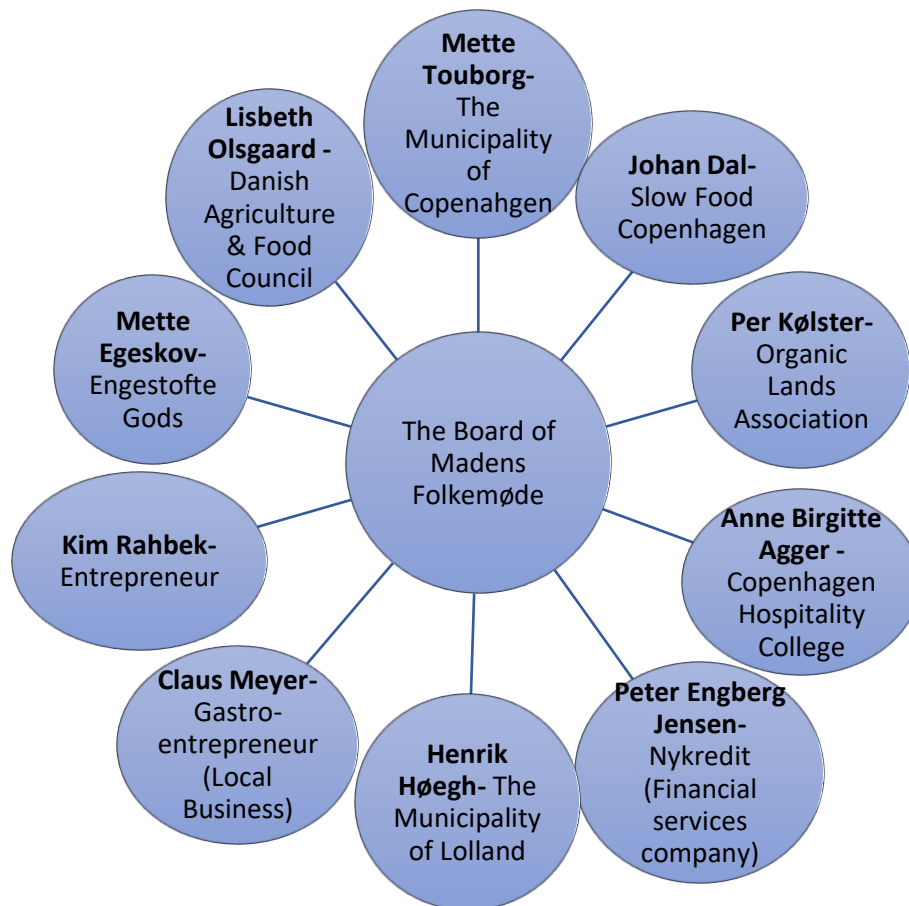


Figure 5: The board of Madens Folkemøde (Source: Madens Folkemøde, 2020).

The FOOD

Under the board, Madens Folkemøde is organised by a non-profit organisation - Food organisation of Denmark (FOOD). The FOOD is assigned to plan, organise, and execute the event. According to Mette, the vice-chairman of the board of Madens Folkemøde, an event like Madens Folkemøde requires excellent experience and expertise, capable of acting upon the directives from the organisations above. Thus, the board "hired the FOOD to do the operational side" of the Madens Folkemøde (Appendix 1 - ME).

As a partnership organisation, FOOD has both public and private partners. Some of them are big food companies, such as Carlsberg, Arla - the dairy, Danish Crown - the meat processing company, and they also work with approximately 600 different Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Appendix 2 - PA). For the

public sector, FOOD has a partnership with the Ministry of Business and Trade (Erhvervsministeriet) and the Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark (Appendix 2 - PA).

FOOD is a professional food event organiser. It organises the two biggest and most influential food events in Denmark (i.e. Food Festival in Aarhus and Copenhagen Cooking & Food Festival) and some smaller-scale food events during the year (FOOD, 2020). According to the official website of FOOD, those events attract more than 80.000 people every year, including approximately 300+ food entrepreneurs, farmers, craftsmen and chefs. Moreover, years of work experience have given FOOD an in-depth understanding of the Danish food industry. FOOD is increasingly used as a business consultant and development partner for different companies (FOOD, 2020).

Therefore, FOOD was able to contact different actors and have them participate in the Madens Folkemøde. Specifically, those actors included private institutions, local government units, universities, local food producers, hospitality providers, businesses in agriculture and food sector experts, restaurants and professional individuals in the local community (see Figure 6: Diagram of the FOOD).

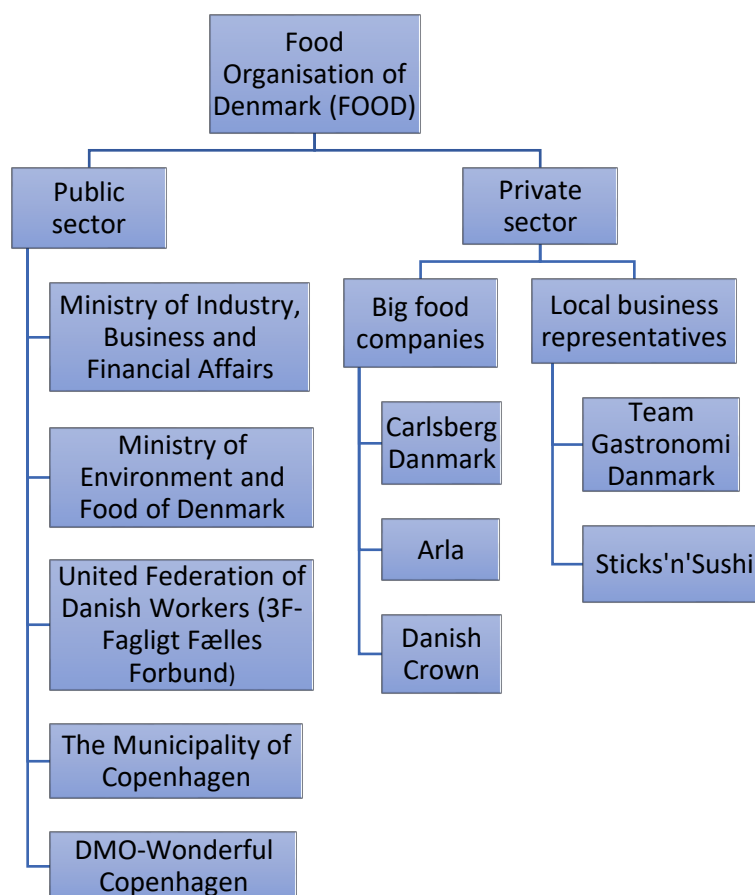


Figure 6: Diagram of the FOOD - FOOD's board and partners (Source: FOOD, 2020).

The relationship between the Board and the FOOD

When it comes to the distribution of authority and the structure of decision-making within the Madens Folkemøde, FOOD is in charge of planning, organizing, and executing the event, while the board picks and decides some of the debate topics, helps to facilitate and invite people and takes charge of approving the budget and the lines of the plans for funding (Appendix 2 - PA). Figure 7 below shows the relationship between the board of Madens Folkemøde and the FOOD.

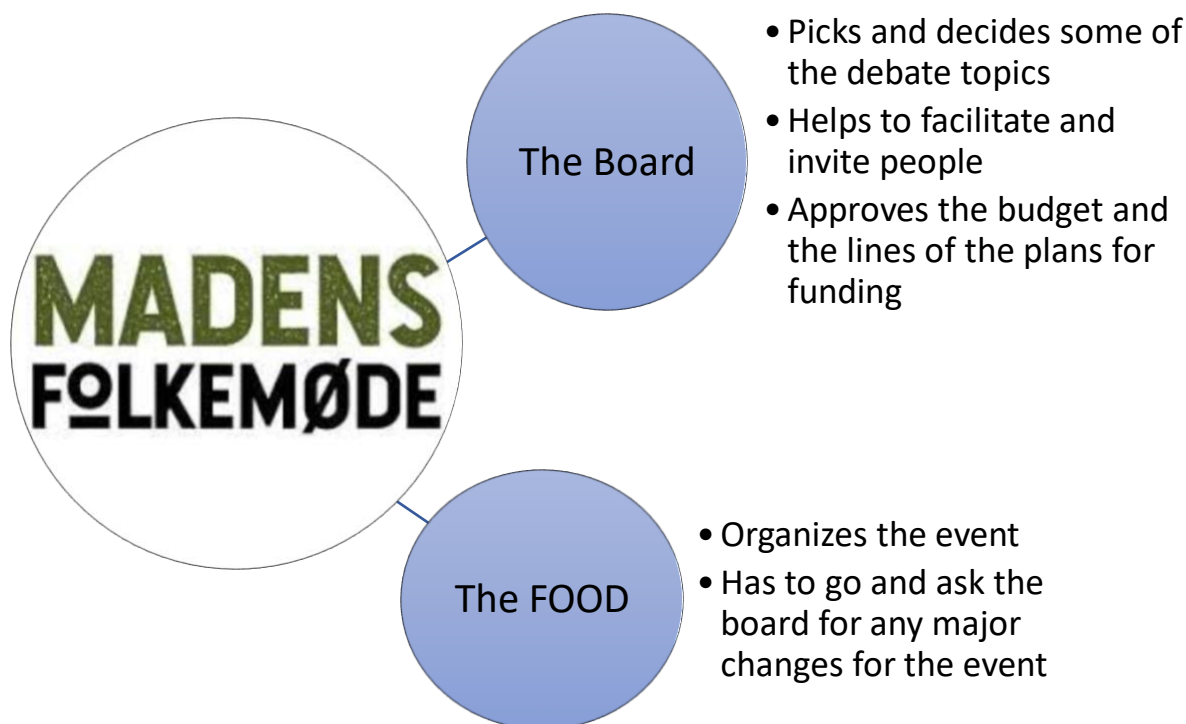


Figure 7: The relationship between the board of Madens Folkemøde and the FOOD (Source: author).

4.1.4 Sub-conclusion

The purpose of the first chapter of the analysis was to present the case of Madens Folkemøde, with a focus on three aspects: tracing back to its historical and conceptual background; introducing the main categories of the event program; looking at the distribution of authority and also the structure of decision-making within the Madens Folkemøde.

The analysis found the idea of Madens Folkemøde turns out to be conceptualised strongly in line with the contradiction between the negative image of Lolland-Falster and its abundant agricultural resources. Besides, the four different categories of the event program help the public understand the theme of Madens

Folkemøde, and everyone can participate in this event in different ways. Furthermore, as the head of the local development practice, the board of the Madens Folkemøde and the FOOD are granted significant autonomy over the strategic direction of the initiative, and the realisation of the particular food event. As a professional food event organiser and a business consultant with excellent experience and expertise, FOOD helped conceptualise the concept of Madens Folkemøde and ensured different stakeholders' involvement in the event. Simultaneously, the presence of public actors in the board provides FOOD with numerous resources, which could not be obtained with similar ease if only representatives of local businesses ran the initiative.

4.2 Participatory involvement of stakeholders

4.2.1 Stakeholders at Madens Folkemøde

Stakeholders, or constituents, are defined as those groups or individuals who can affect, or are affected by, the achievement of the organisation's objectives (Freeman, 1984). Hede (2008) stated that food festivals have many stakeholders. Madens Folkemøde is not an exception. As defined in the previous chapter, Madens Folkemøde is a two-day food event that brings together food industry professionals, researchers, politicians and the public, providing a space for them to meet each other and debate current food issues (Maden Folkemøde, 2020). Obviously, this event is characterized by interconnections between multiple systems (i.e. value chains) and a large number of stakeholders (see Figure 8: Stakeholder map for Madens Folkemøde).



Figure 8: Stakeholder map for Madens Folkemøde (Maden Folkemøde, 2019).

As we can see from the above Figure 8, Madens Folkemøde consists of multiple stakeholders: the government (i.e. two municipalities of Lolland and Guldborgsund); media; local DMO (i.e. Visit Lolland-Falster); food companies (i.e. Arla, Danish Crown); organisations (i.e. Danish Agriculture and Food Council, DSK); schools and universities; restaurants; volunteers; tourist; residents; local businesses. Compared with the generic stakeholder map for food festivals (see Figure 9) created by Hede (2008), Madens Folkemøde has almost all the stakeholders included in Figure 8. Moreover, Madens Folkemøde has a greater range of stakeholders than Figure 9, such as the FOOD, the board of Madens Folkemøde, Engestofte Gods, and Business Lolland-Falster, which are either related to the organisers of the event (i.e. Engestofte Gods, the Board and the FOOD) or a part of local business development services (i.e. Business Lolland-Falster). Thus, the stakeholder map for Madens Folkemøde not only emphasises the diversity in the stakeholder network but also depicts a wide range of stakeholders from Lolland-Falster.

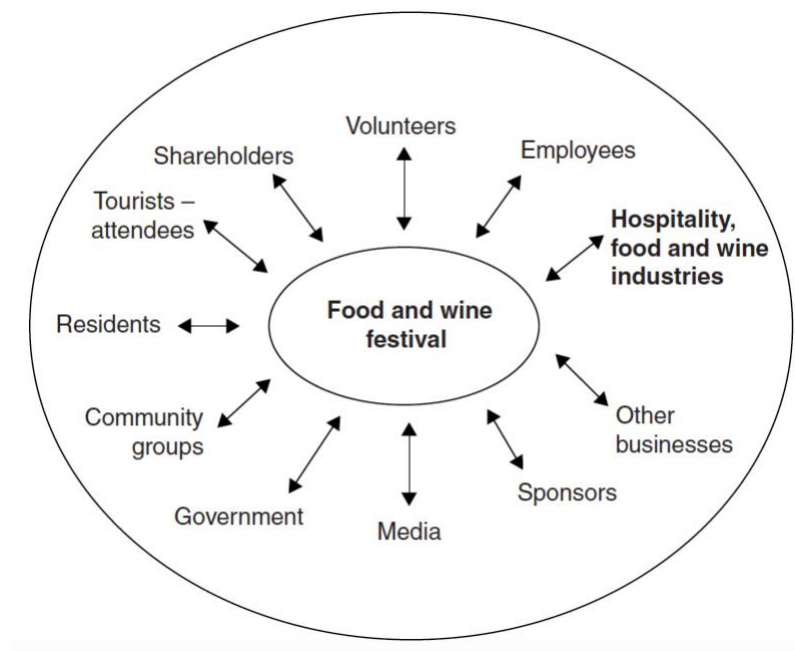


Figure 9: Stakeholder map for food festivals (Source: Hede, 2008).

4.2.2 Stakeholders' expectations

As a local branding initiative and a food tourism development event, Madens Folkemøde brings together the entire food scene of Denmark and everyone that is interested in food. By definition, the various stakeholders of Madens Folkemøde will have an interest in achieving the same objective as the event, which is to brand the local food production to the rest of Denmark and develop the local businesses on Lolland-Falster. In reality, however, stakeholders have their different expectations for being part of Madens Folkemøde. In fact, from the perspective of Hede (2008), stakeholders' expectations for their participation in a food event often

differ, and sometimes even compete with each other. According to the research from Hall and Sharples (2008), understanding the various stakeholders' motivations and expectations for their association with the food event is imperative.

To identify what diverse objectives stakeholders of Madens Folkemøde represent, we have looked at the reasons that motivate stakeholders to join the event with a focus on how they were connected. Specifically speaking, we have looked first into the 2019 actor catalogue of Madens Folkemøde (Appendix 9 - *Actor catalogue*). The actor catalogue introduced the content of Madens Folkemøde and explained the ways for everyone to participate in the event. We also have looked at the 2019 program of Madens Folkemøde (Appendix 10 - *2019 Program*). The program listed more than 75 debates, 33 food crafts, 40 workshops and activities for children and young people, 50 tasting stands, 15 special events for everyone over two days. Equally important, both the actor catalogue and the 2019 event program showed that a large number of stakeholders who attended the event were with different motivations and expectations among each other.

Based on the actor catalogue and event program of Madens Folkemøde (Maden Folkemøde, 2019), we have categorised 11 types of stakeholders with their particular reasons to join Madens Folkemøde. Differences between the various stakeholders' motivations and expectations are to be expected. To be specific, those different motivations include product development; place branding; network building; image creation; launching a selling concept; finding business partners; promote sustainability; ensuring good animal welfare, etc. Surprisingly, both critical overlapping and conflicting aims can also be found among those stakeholders. According to Arnaboldi and Spiller (2011), stakeholders who represent diverse and sometimes conflicting interests and several issues can potentially threaten this food event. To identify what these conflicting interests and threatening issues are, we have grouped 3 main expectations for collaboration among stakeholders who joined 2019 Madens Folkemøde (see Table 2):

3 main expectations among stakeholders to join Madens Folkemøde			
Type of stakeholders	Local branding	Business growth	Educational workshops & sustainable practices
1. Government administration	Municipalities of Lolland and Guldborgsund		
2. Food production	Coop.dk MAD	Danish Crown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Nation • Danish Crown
3. Local DMOs	Visit Lolland-Falster		
4. Political organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tænketanken Frej • Danish Agriculture and Food Council 	Tænketanken Frej DSK	The Danish Chamber of Commerce

5. International affairs			Nordic Council of Ministers
6. Educational institution	CELf- Centre for Vocational Education Lolland-Falster		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stockholm University • Copenhagen University • CELf • REFA • Marius Pedersen A/S
7. Non-profit/ Organisation	Slow Food Copenhagen	Slow Food Copenhagen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danish Restaurateurs Guarantee Association (REGA) • Stockholm Resilience Centre
8. Business development	Business Lolland-Falster		
9. Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lolland-Falsters Folketidende A/S • Politiken • TV2 East 		
10. Local producers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pabst Bakery • Biotrino • RO'UM • Folkets Madhus 	
11. Others	Local residents	Volunteers	Experts (chefs, food critics)

Table 2: Three main expectations for collaboration among stakeholders at Madens Folkemøde (Source: author).

Based on Table 2, major stakeholders for the event were local hospitality, food organisations, namely Slow Food Copenhagen, Danish Restaurateurs Guarantee Association (REGA). Media partners included Folketidende (the local news site), Politiken (national newspaper) and TV2 East. The event's product partners are 68 local food producers, such as Biotrino (Biotechnology); Pabst Bakery; Nordic Quinoa; Ro'Um liquor. In addition, many educational institutions, including: CELf, Copenhagen University, DTU; and environmental services, including Marius Pedersen and REFA were also part of the event. Overall, the Madens Folkemøde developed a network of stakeholders that were able to facilitate achieving the event's vision.

Business growth

Some stakeholders, such as event supporters and local producers, are primarily focused on the exposure they will gain as a result of their association with Madens Folkemøde. According to Hall and Sharples (2008), those stakeholders have been found to be concerned with the influence that their participation in an event has on their brand equity. This influence includes brand exposure, popularity, and brand's value. Also, those stakeholders may also be interested in achieving maximum consumer reach through the media exposure

they might gain from their endorsement of Madens Folkemøde. For example, Danish Crown participated in the debate and represented "Communication about animals that live to die!". According to them, this debate is to temper the mood for launching a new selling concept (Danish Crown, 2019). According to some of the local producers' representatives, such as Pabst Bakery and RO'UM (Appendix 7 - JO), Madens Folkemøde is the best alternative to market their products and meet potential customers and partners for future collaboration. This is because Madens Folkemøde is both a place where business meets business (B2B) and where the business meets the consumer (B2C) (Business Lolland-Falster, 2020).

Take the market life of Madens Folkemøde as an example, various actors, especially local food producers involved with Slow Food organisation (a food community) and the Muld Lolland-Falster (a regional network of SMEs). It aims to increase awareness of their high-quality products and boost sales (Appendix 6 - HH) (Appendix 4 - UL). For instance, the Slow Food movement Copenhagen, a grassroots organisation with an active network around the world that works for good, clean and fair food for everyone, participated at Madens Folkemøde with many stands on market life and workshops on the Slow Food stage. In order to make sure that producers and consumers meet, and that they have a dialogue about what people eat, the Slow Food presented a number of the producers and their products that strike the quality of Danish food production at Madens Folkemøde. Both Slow Food and the Muld are full of communities and business opportunities. Working with local or non-profit organisations whose values conform to the core values of their products can increase business exposure and have a significant impact on their business growth.

Moreover, every promotional and commercial request was implemented to the extent, and in the ways which the stakeholders deemed interesting and useful to their businesses. For instance, Meyers Madhus, a course centre in Copenhagen, managed to have a mega baking-workshop; the movie called *A Taste of Skye* was shown in the event, which followed by a discussion with Claus Meyer, a world-renowned restaurateur and cookbook author; Food Nation, a public-private partnership organisation, was able to present a live podcast for organic frontrunners, which they believed it is a good opportunity to reach out the target group of Danish food cluster (Maden Folkemøde, 2020).

Regional branding

Governments have become stakeholders of the Madens Folkemøde. Each government's focus and expectations of a food event will vary, but this depends on the focus of the specific government departments that fund the food event. For example, a tourism department will be interested in the economic impacts that

such a food event can produce, whereas an education department will be interested in the educational and training outcomes resulting from it (Hede, 2008).

Based on the previous chapter, Madens Folkemøde was built on the participation of politicians, interest groups, NGOs, associations, educational institutions, opinion makers and professionals. In order to create an annually returning event corresponding to a national theme meeting on food, two municipalities of Lolland and Guldborgsund supported Madens Folkemøde with each 0.25 million DKK; Business Lolland-Falster (BLF) contributed with employee resources to the event (Appendix 8 – *2018 Annual Report*). While the Food organisation of Denmark (FOOD) was responsible for the organisational part of coordinating events and debates as well as the establishment of a physical framework, Lolland Municipality had partly arranged networking meetings and debates about the potential of having municipal food strategies. (Appendix 8 - *2019 Annual Report*).

The mayor of the Guldborgsund Municipality, John Brædder, was thrilled that the Madens Folkemøde was set up, *“when we focus on Lolland-Falster, we can do great things”*. He said on the welcome ceremony of Madens Folkemøde in 2019 that he was looking forward to a meeting where *“both head and stomach are filled”*, and referred to the many debates on food production, sustainability and gastronomy (Olsen & Bøgh, 2019).

What’s more, as a stakeholder, Folketidende, the local news site about Lolland and Falster, was interested in whether the stories of Madens Folkemøde will attract the public and local destination’s attention, which will also increase the readership of its websites. Apart from the local news site, according to Pelle, the director of the FOOD, they also had a partnership with the national newspaper- Politiken, National Radio, National TV and any other ways to promote Madens Folkemøde (Appendix 2 - *PA*).

Furthermore, as a DMO (Destination Management Organisation), Visit Lolland-Falster advertised the Madens Folkemøde event both on its official website as a people’s democratic festival (Visit Lolland-Falster, 2020) and on its social media platform, such as Facebook, in which they tried to attract more people to join the Madens Folkemøde by following the latest updates of the event on a regular basis. For example, Visit Lolland-Falster shared a link called *“Banquet (Party dinner) at Madens Folkemøde”* on 17 April 2019 and received 22 likes, 4 comments and 3 shares (Figure 10).

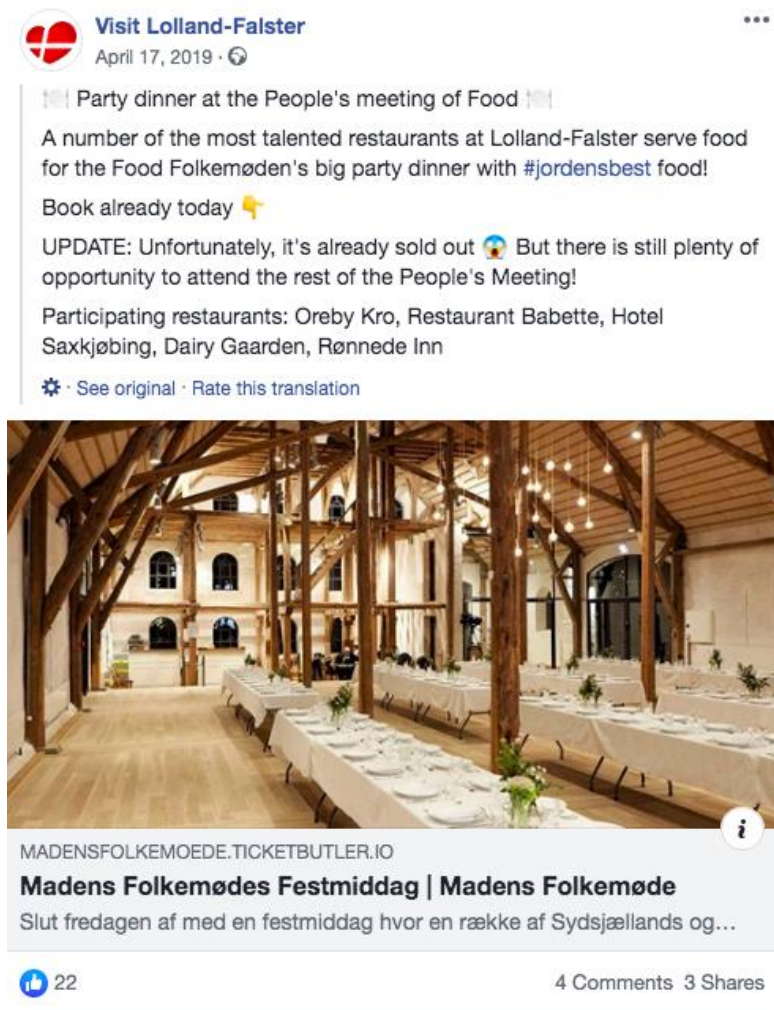


Figure 10: One propaganda post of Visit Lolland-Falster for Madens Folkemøde.

Educational workshops and sustainable practices

At Madens Folkemøde, almost all the educational workshops are discussing sustainable practices. For example, The Danish Chamber of Commerce presented a debate about the role of companies in the climate fight; Food Nation provided a live podcast about 'World champions in ecology' at Madens Folkemøde. People heard the stories behind some of the world's best sustainable food solutions from Danish business leaders, contractors and experts. In that live podcast, Food Nation highlighted some of the people who are passionate about organic farming and what are their motivations. Also, Danish Crown participated in the debate and represented 'Communication about animals that live to die!'. There, Communications Director Astrid Gade Nielsen participated with pig producer and co-owner Michael Nielsen and Mickey Gjerris, a bioethicist from Copenhagen University. The debate was about animal welfare - and who is responsible for its order. The debate panel, despite disagreements along the way, agreed that responsibility lies with all of us and that it is a common task to ensure good animal welfare.

Besides, CELF (Centre for Vocational Education Lolland-Falster), an educational institution, held food production and various workshops at Madens Folkemøde in order to have a good dialogue about the meaning of the food and the meal. Specifically, in the CELF tent, people could take part in inspiring workshops where guests could cook healthy, easy and climate-friendly dishes together with students from the programs cook, waitress, nutrition assistant, gourmet butcher and baker/pastry chef (Madens Folkemøde, 2019). While delicious food was being prepared, guests and students got a chat about, for example, taste, climate, local produce and food culture. Hence, students made local tapas with the potato theme; ingredients came from the local community; everyone talked about their passion and expectations for the future of food (Madens Folkemøde, 2019).

Moreover, an environmental service company, Marius Pedersen A/S, show solutions for collecting and recycling food waste at their stand. GoCook workshop from Coop at Madens Folkemøde Let the kids bake 100% their green pizza in GoCook's kitchen on wheels (Madens Folkemøde, 2019). A renewables & environment organisation, REFA, held an educational workshop about waste sorting for both the adult and young people to teach people to sort appropriately and think sustainably (Madens Folkemøde, 2019). A political organisation, Tænk tanken Frej (Frej) held a quinoa production workshop called "Mad & Mad" during Madens Folkemøde in order to create a dialogue between food manufacturers and consumers (Frej, 2019).

Furthermore, REFA (Resources, Energy Production, Supply, Waste Management), a Renewables & Environment company, provided an educational booth for both adults and children at Madens Folkemøde, including waste collection, recycling and dissemination. People could also get good tips for sorting their household waste as well as knowing why it is important to sort properly and think sustainably (Madens Folkemøde, 2019).

Therefore, from what we have elaborated above, in order to break the negative impression of Lolland-Falster and to develop the rural area by focusing on the locally produced food and its natural scenery, Madens Folkemøde brings together the entire food scene of Denmark for a constructive dialogue about the food culture and food systems across industries and value chains. However, from what we have discussed above, we can see that not all of the stakeholders joined the event due to building the rural destination and sharing the same value of Madens Folkemøde. Some of them even did not think of anything related to regional branding or tourism development. Although it is a priority for the FOOD to ensure that all of the stakeholders'

needs are met, it is more important for the FOOD to make sure that stakeholders' expectations are subject to the requirement of the event. For example, FOOD couldn't accept the request from COOP to "be the only one wholesaler at Madens Folkemøde" because this event is "*not just a propaganda thing in one part of the food system*", it is for the whole food industry of Denmark (Appendix 2 - PA).

4.2.3 Stakeholders' collaboration

The concept of stakeholder collaboration is frequently used in examining the process of networking and partnership activities amongst stakeholders involved in the process of cluster formation (Lee, Wall & Kovacs, 2015). According to Lee, Wall and Kovacs (2015), it is generally understood that tourism is a fragmented set of activities. As such, the concept of stakeholder collaboration is a critical issue in analysing food cluster and culinary tourism development. According to Jamal and Getz (1995), the basic idea of stakeholder collaboration in tourism development is to involve all those affected by the development process. Thus, stakeholders include not only the individuals who are involved in the development process but also those who are impacted by it (Aas et al., 2005). Therefore, a wide range of stakeholders, such as service providers, voluntary actors, local residents, and government officials, should be involved in the collaborative process. However, it is frequently argued that there is insufficient stakeholder collaboration in tourism development. For example, Reid (2003) and Stern and Hall (2010) argued that tourism development in rural settings is usually oriented strictly towards economic growth. Consequently, rural tourism development is focused almost exclusively on assisting the tourism industry to fulfil tourists' desires for experiences rather than empowering local residents by providing them with opportunities to participate in such development.

Unlike other tourism development events, Madens Folkemøde aims to gather the community stakeholders' input about the core values in the region, the quality of life, current and desired image, economic development opportunities and vision for the future. These areas were undisputedly covered by FOOD, as the conceptualisation of the Madens Folkemøde was formulated strictly based on the output series of meetings with representatives of both public and private sectors (Appendix 2 - PA).

Public-private collaboration

A study from Bramwell and Rawding (1996) has found that the participation of representatives of local authorities in public-private partnerships is likely to make business interests more influential in the public policy agenda (Lewandowska, 2019). Indeed, just as Madens Folkemøde can benefit from the participatory engagement of local business representatives, the partnership with two municipalities of Lolland and

Guldborgsund also provides Madens Folkemøde with easy access to the local press, the local newspaper - Folketidende, EU and Danish national sources of funding and expertise, and a variety of other public actors (Appendix 2 - PA).

Thus, with the strategic cooperation between actors situated in the public and private sector, Madens Folkemøde provided a common framework for forming new business relationships into a self-sustainable network. Based on the interviews and online questionnaires conducted with local producers, some claimed Madens Folkemøde provided *“a nice, cosy and affordable place with the right image”* for them to meet potential customers and partners for future cooperation (Appendix 6 - HH); others claimed that Madens Folkemøde was *“a clear promotion event”* for their brand and product (Appendix 7 - JO).

Collaboration between local and central Governments

Collaboration between local and central governments is an area that is given significant emphasis by industry stakeholders (Fathimath, 2015). In the context of tourism, tourism associations and organizations vary in size, scope, level of development, ownership and authority control. They are normally funded and supported by the government at all levels. In this case, however, a tourism-oriented non-governmental organization like Madens Folkemøde are becoming increasingly relevant as an alternative and legitimate source of tourism development.

As it was stated from the previous section of the analysis, Madens Folkemøde has *“its entity and legitimate power”* even though some of the members of the board were related to the government administrations. (see Appendix 2 - PA). The local government bodies, such as the two municipalities of Lolland and Guldborgsund, were a special asset and key actors in implementing the initiative towards the development in the region. With the effect of not only providing a strong network around the community as a public figure and disseminating information, but also providing the quick social interaction within the area.

According to Dabphet et al. (2012), their findings revealed that the local government involvement in the implementation of the regional initiative and projects, similarly to this case, is very important for the success. One of the members of the management of Engestofte, John Borup Jensen, noted that the purpose has to be achieved to gain support. Jensen further explained that if, for example, with the debates: *“The whole point was to bring governments and the politicians close to the people* (Appendix 1 - ME).

As a purpose, the debates are structured to attract and invite politicians in the dialogue among the stakeholders and participants. *“Reinforce democracy”* (Appendix 1 - JJ), by getting the attention from the state and the government to address the current issues about sustainable practices, business undertaking towards these initiatives, he further added. With this perspective, people might expect to, *feel that there is a big distance, and then the government doesn't quite understand the issues and problems that are facing in some regions”* (Appendix 1 - JJ). A fair judgement and acknowledgement of regional initiatives through support can loosen the negative impression over political views, thus promoting sustainable social practices.

Moreover, exercising collaborative practice and involvement of government in the activities is a clear promotion towards adapting the development for Lolland-Falster, and so, not just the big cities such as Copenhagen as a priority.

Having the local and governmental bodies “brought into line” with the initiatives is an essential element for the development and progress of the regional development area according to the board of Madens Folkemøde according to the board of Madens Folkemøde. And when the local and central government are actively participating in the objectives of the food event, more engagement in collaborative initiatives will follow. Whereas, if there is an unbalanced collaboration among stakeholders without any prospective support from the local and central government, conflict arises, therefore, inhibits a destination objective for sustainable tourism. Furthermore, collaborative engagement in such initiatives (Maden Folkemøde) generates a sense of positivity, motivation and encourage within the food-agricultural businesses to work together as one.

[Collaboration Strategy for food production and food tourism at Lolland-Falster](#)

Agriculture and food production are the official strength position in Lolland-Falster, and the area is also depending on turnover and employment in the sector. Lolland and Guldborgsund Municipalities, as well as Business Lolland-Falster (BLF), are experiencing an ever-increasing activity in the area in the form of both companies and events. In 2017, the two municipalities therefore asked BLF to initiate a background study of local potentials, resources and development opportunities in the area (Lewandowska, 2019), to gain a better basis for qualifying and supporting local initiatives that have the best growth potential measured in terms of employment and turnover.

The study was carried out by the consulting company GEMBA in collaboration with BLF (Lolland Municipality, 2020). The material from the study was a preliminary analysis and a strategic plan, which showed that there

was a growth potential for small food producers. Therefore, scheduled for implementation between 2018 and 2020, a local development strategy for Lolland-Falster was designed to focus on the opportunities that food production presents for attracting tourists from both Denmark and abroad, increasing investment, turnover and employment in the region (Lolland Municipality, 2020).

A strategy with three focuses

The strategy indicates that there are growth potentials in terms of increased turnover and employment in the following three aspects:

1. Identify and marketing: the unique story of the area's food, identity and history as well as nature and culture are created (such as logo, image and video database, labels, postcards, posters etc.);
2. Authentic food: a growth program is set up for smaller food producers, where they can receive advice and guidance on, e.g. hygiene, labelling rules, food law and in business development and marketing. The goal is to increase turnover and employment for those companies that have ambitions for growth;
3. Food tourism:
 - The manor-gastro-tourism in gastronomy, food and food experiences, hunting and fishing etc. (such as Madens Folkemøde);
 - Food routes and tours for food tourists;
 - Marketplaces and food, where it is about strengthening the marketplaces as a food destination for tourists, their food environment, e.g. around events with food as a focal point (Maden Folkemøde).

According to Lolland Municipality (2019), the first two focus areas are mainly managed by BLF, in close cooperation with the two municipalities as well as other (private) players in the area. Besides, the focus of the strategy is especially on the last two - authentic food and food tourism - as there is a need to strengthen the framework for food producers and stakeholders to develop.

Collaboration in tourism marketing and promotion

According to Pelle Øby Andersen, the promotional approaches played an essential role in promoting Madens Folkemøde and attracting potential participants (Appendix 2 - PA). Social media communication has a material effect on unfolding events, and for better or worse, this has an impact on the management of, and

response to an event (Mirbabaie et al., 2014). Social media becomes an additional helping tool and source of information. Although the event organiser spent some money on the promotion of Madens Folkemøde, the result is impressive. The low-cost transaction underpins social media usage for the sharing of and disseminating information.

For instance, social media has been adopted to reach out as many people as possible to participate in Madens Folkemøde. The event was promoted on TV, newspapers, online media, radio broadcast and other different methods. The involvement of different stakeholders (i.e. local producers, universities, various channels of communication) have had a substantial benefit to the promotion and disseminating information of the event. Stakeholders are encouraged to promote their products by promoting the event itself. In this sense, the scope of promotion is scattered rather than a linear approach. Therefore, the use of social media as the promotional tool was a significant low-cost resource that has been used to develop an organised social community integration to the development of Lolland-Falster.

4.2.4 Factors facilitating collaboration

Based on what we have discussed above, several interests provided by the diverse actors at Madens Folkemøde indicated to facilitate the concept of collaborative initiative. Specific themes are evident, and the following sections provide with a selection of statements from interviewees.

Creating awareness and opportunities for interaction

The first step in encouraging collaboration is to make people aware of its importance and benefits, which is very important not only for the community and business but also for the entire Lolland-Falster. On the contrary, ignoring the possibility of gaining benefits from the collaboration is an obstacle to collaborative practice. This unawareness leads to several underlying issues of false assumptions when working with other stakeholders, such as worrying about the business being copied or stolen or worrying about the inappropriate management of other stakeholders. According to Mette Egeskov, one of Madens Folkemøde objectives was to get more life out of the area by creating awareness and strengthening the profile of the rural areas. When it comes to the strategic direction of the initiative for local development, according to Mette, apart from tourism, the focuses could be different aspects such as the profile of the area. So, in this case, Madens Folkemøde aims to make awareness of the food products on Lolland-Falster, and by doing that, it will gradually gain the attention from other regions of Denmark (Appendix 1 - ME).

This food event was an effort to increase life balance, social engagement and an attempt to increase employment in the area by providing sources of income, and by adapting the concept of locally sustainable products. Beritelli (2011) stated that although participation was there, realistically, gathering individuals and groups does not guarantee their collaboration (Fathimath, 2015). Getting people to work together on something beneficial and let them understand the bigger picture of collaboration is a crucial step to make the change happen. Apart from this, realising the mutual benefits of collaborating is the key to build trust among stakeholders so that they will not feel threatened about participating and will engage in supporting the initiatives.

The current activities and projects launched in the area of Lolland-Falster are supported by BLF such as the Muld initiatives under Madens Folkemøde, who are getting various stakeholders working together to bring opportunities continuously. For example, debates and talks at Madens Folkemøde attracted many stakeholders from the public and private sectors. According to Rikke Fabienke, the project manager of the Muld initiative, locally produced products were showcased and used in workshops. It was an opportunity to promote the local producers' effort and at the same time, provide an authentic experience in food. Therefore, opportunities to work together are believed to assist in building trust and encouraging engagements, which is essential to dispel existing fears and feelings of being threatened by requests to collaborate (Fathimath, 2015). The literature supports the view that trust built by working together is a factor that facilitates collaboration (Wong, Mistilis, & Dwyer, 2011).

Flat organisation structure

Selecting the appropriate type of organisation structure is central for effectively directing and managing the necessary processes for achieving success in destination development, management and operations (Hassan, 2000). Several interviews confirmed that the board of Madens Folkemøde has a holistic approach for tourism development on Lolland-Falster through a collaborative effort. Madens Folkemøde has a flat organisational structure. This means that there is no superiority; everyone is involved in decision making, allowing information flow smoothly and respect with each other is practice.

Moreover, the presence of, and local government representatives in the board convey potential attributes for joint strategies and campaign towards the region development. According to the vice-chairman of the Madens Folkemøde, the members of the board *“do it for free”*, and they are high upscale professionals that can influence both the strategy and communication (Appendix 1 - ME). Consequently, to protect the organisation itself (Maden Folkemøde), the money or the funds being consumed by the projects and

initiatives was not given under the municipalities. As general policy applies, municipalities are not allowed to spend certain funds that benefit businesses such as NGOs. Therefore, Madens Folkemøde has a wide network in cooperation, "like an umbrella organisation" that is carrying out the event (Lewandowska, 2019).

The top-down approach

As discussed in the background chapter of Madens Folkemøde, the level of authority reveals a straightforward command. It was further elaborated how was the relationship between the board of Madens Folkemøde with the FOOD organisation (see Figure 7), and the linkages between the stakeholders (see Figure 8). Based on the conducted interviews and questionnaires, many stakeholders contacted FOOD directly if they had any concerns about Madens Folkemøde (Appendix 3 - MN). Also, from superior organisations down to other actors is congruent of what the board wants to achieve, the board of Madens Folkemøde does not have to get the contacts of all the actors. So, communication is basically between FOOD and the stakeholders, and not direct with Madens Folkemøde. With the layers of authority being practised, although there is a flat structure, both communication and knowledge information in decision making have been accessible, also, enhancing the communication processes more fluidly. What each one shares, at the core of each, is the exchange of information. Collaboration adds the goal of moving a collaborative product forward, but without communication, collaboration cannot happen.

Inspirational leadership

According to Heath (2003), inspirational leadership is one of the core driving forces behind destination competitiveness (Fathimath, 2015). Strong leadership in the process of tourism development is a crucial prerequisite for having a great deal of outlook towards collaborating. From the conducted interviews, the leadership taken by Madens Folkemøde had positive impacts, particularly in bringing other stakeholders together (Appendix 2 - PA). For example, the event organiser FOOD has built trust with the participating stakeholders at Madens Folkemøde; therefore, those stakeholders initiated their full support by engagement and contribution because "they have seen this is working" (Appendix 2 - PA). Also, having the princess Marie involved in the food event was a massive achievement of the leaders' power and authority. "She is the protector of children and food" (Appendix 1 - ME), school kids were invited to cook with her and learned the importance of food, nutrition and waste in sustainability. It adds up to visibility of promoting the food event itself. In short, people could see the benefit out of it, community participation in the food event works towards a common goal to develop the region through collaboration.

Transparent communication

As a vital aspect of motivation, the effective communication process is an essential part of management since Madens Folkemøde targets a broader scope of stakeholders. For example, through this process of promoting the event, Madens Folkemøde managed to build a relationship with different stakeholders on Lolland-Falster. Similarly, stakeholders were able to interact positively direct to the organisers of Madens Folkemøde. It enlightens how the horizontal and vertical array of communication channels work. Conveying the importance of collaboration through open and transparent communication is necessary. Establishing a good relationship within the area of businesses on Lolland-Falster is one of the purposes of Madens Folkemøde. Keeping them as the foundation and stay to foster the growth of the partnership and collaborative relationship is fundamental. On one hand, it was clear that the actors are comfortable by the way FOOD manages the various channels of communication. On the other hand, the level of the communicative relationship falls when other stakeholders are not very keen in responding due to personal matters, and that is when the collaborative attachment tends to drag down the other actors' motivation.

Clear goals

From the collaboration motivations section above, setting clear goals is critical to ensure the commitment of stakeholder. Madens Folkemøde is not just a food event to have debates and talks, but also an open platform to facilitate collaboration at the regional areas among different stakeholders. It provides opportunities for promoting locally-produced products and increasing the statistics of food tourism through a food event on Lolland-Falster. Teamwork is a starting point of collaboration, from Muld initiatives representatives they argued upon the importance of tools, knowledge and suitable communication styles (i.e. proactive, empathy and sympathy), and nevertheless, the leadership approach. The structure of the organisation helps to establish clear roles and responsibilities that need to be set out for everyone involved in the processes. In this way, stakeholders stand together to achieve their goals. The processes, stakeholder's management, and clear direction of the goal are the element of foundation which increases the performance of collaboration and partnerships.

4.2.5 Collaboration challenges

Establishing of stakeholder collaboration cannot guarantee a positive outcome without an effective management and engagement process. This section will discuss some challenges that hinder the process of collaboration.

Competition

One of the benefits of stakeholder collaboration is resource sharing. However, **competition** may exist in stakeholder collaboration due to limitation of resources (Proulx et al., 2014). It can refer to co-opetition, a scenario in which organisations simultaneously cooperate and at the same time, compete with one another. Hutter et al. (2011) asserted that at the local and regional level, co-opetition is regarded as necessary to create quality tourism products that are capable of developing and sustaining collaborative relationships. Additionally, when there is co-opetition the engagement and motivation to perform collaboration increase, therefore, sharing resources, information and knowledge while they simultaneously compete shapes their abilities to do better. Maintaining and supporting collaborative relationships within the entire collaboration cycle through co-opetition has been found mutually beneficial for tourism and local businesses (ibid).

Consequently, community-based collaboration has been successful in motivating collaboration in areas where individuals or businesses lack enthusiasm in working with one another (Hawkins, 2004). In order to compete against each other's areas of expertise, stakeholders of the community are encouraged to interact and participate in engaging joint discussion related to food-event initiatives. Creating a sense of urgency by allowing interaction and mutual relation to address the issue within the business is another form of finding ways to outperform others by providing viewpoints hence, competing and cooperating simultaneously (Hutter et al., 2011). On that account, co-opetition usually exists among stakeholders with a similar intent to a specific aim of collaborating initiatives which is very applicable in community-based projects (ibid).

Unrealistic expectations

Bramwell and Sharman (1999) claimed that understanding the extent to which stakeholders can accept constraints on feasibility is important to avoid unrealistic expectations of the collaboration process implementation. As explained in the previous chapter, FOOD organises Madens Folkemøde. While a consensus had to be reached regarding Madens Folkemøde, it was a priority for the FOOD to ensure that all of the stakeholders' critical remarks were addressed. Moreover, the stakeholders had an in-depth understanding of why certain choices had been made and that they could be convinced to accept the final version of the agreement as valid. While the board of Madens Folkemøde intervened in the decision-making process if a compromise could not be reached among the stakeholders, virtually all decisions were made between stakeholders and the FOOD. However, some stakeholders have unrealistic expectations to join the event.

For example, when explaining one of the challenges for organising the event, FOOD rejected Coop Danmark A/S (the largest retailer of consumer goods in Denmark) for "*being the only one wholesaler at Madens Folkemøde*" (Appendix 2 - PA). The request from COOP cannot be met in Madens Folkemøde, as it provides a platform for the entire food industry in Denmark, not a food event set up for a single company or organisation. FOOD has to keep a delicate balance among different stakeholders at Madens Folkemøde, making sure that each stakeholder is heard but also talks nicely to each other because "it is *not just a propaganda thing in one part of the food system*". Also, "*if one does not feel that, one cannot be part of the conversation and does not want to contribute*" (Appendix 2 - PA), indicating that if one stakeholder lacks a consensus of a collaboration process, it may impede the success of Madens Folkemøde.

Trust issue

Trust is another issue when it comes to collaboration challenges. This section will reveal factors that are constituent with trust issues.

Low commitment/engagement

In some circumstances, some stakeholders are way too hard to reach and show full commitment, although the support was there. It hinders the processes of collaboration, which disappoints not only the other stakeholders but the initiative itself. According to Lewandowska (2019), the contact person who is in charge of the process sent many emails regarding agendas and meetings and spent much time calling around the participants. Also, according to Rikke Fabienke, project manager of Business Lolland-Falster (BLF), some participants were busy with their business but did not show any engagement towards the event (Lewandowska, 2019). Thus, it is hard work when dealing with stakeholders who barely respond. Some reasons for not being so active in the process may be the lack of time, uncertainty of participation. It was discussed above in the literature section that effective leadership was vital for the promotion of information flow between stakeholder's collaboration. However, there is no direct control among stakeholders due to the diversity of voluntary participating actors involved. Moreover, leadership has to facilitate communication effectively towards the goals by bringing stakeholders together. However, organisers were aware that the stakeholders have a hard time to realise how the initiative will succeed.

Misconception

Another challenge for event organisers is to spot and take advantage of the differences and synergies among stakeholders. Bergh (2013) stated in his study that differing the stakeholders' perspectives regarding

collaboration might bring “ineffective” constrained network building and can pose challenges towards tourism development in a region. For instance, different stakeholders have different expectations of joining Madens Folkemøde. Some conflicting expectations may affect the relationship between them and create a negative outcome on collaboration. Also, many stakeholders at Madens Folkemøde were competitors with each other; it creates specific misconception towards competitors and initiates hesitation to the process of collaboration. Take Muld initiative as an example, as one participating organisation at Madens Folkemøde, it consists of many local businesses on Lolland-Falster. In the beginning, the co-create initiatives they had with the local actors for regional branding were not easy, because the trust was not yet established, actor representatives were still puzzled on how this event will work and succeed.

4.2.6 Sub-conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present the part of the findings, from which the central theme is participatory involvement of stakeholders at Madens Folkemøde using the food event as a driver of tourism in Lolland-Falster. It started the discussion on stakeholder mapping, different expectations and the role of stakeholders in the collaborative process at Madens Folkemøde. The chapter then moved to reveal the factors that facilitate collaboration. The factors that facilitate collaboration consist of several aspects: awareness-creating, Flat organisation structure, open communication, clear goals, and collaborative practice assessment. These elements, together with a range of different aspects, were discussed in detail. Several challenges in collaboration were also discussed. These challenges were described and outlined following by examples related to the issue of the challenge.

The stakeholder map for Madens Folkemøde not only emphasises the diversity in the stakeholder network but also depicts a wide range of stakeholders from Lolland-Falster. Driving its funding from both the public and private sectors, Madens Folkemøde has generated positive engagement with various stakeholders. Despite having a diverse range of objectives about their association with the food event, those participating stakeholders also had some commonalities, particularly with regards to the commitment to the event, which highlights the type of stakeholders and what they represent.

From the findings discussed in this chapter, although stakeholders shared overlapping or conflicting expectations at Madens Folkemøde, the collaboration among those stakeholders was evident. This collaboration was important because it established basic cooperative relations among different stakeholders in food events, and it will promote local tourism development in the future. While Madens Folkemøde has

brought a number of advantages to develop tourism activities, however, there existed many collaboration challenges, such as competition, misconception, unrealistic expectations, and trust issues, which hindered the process of collaboration.

4.3 Collaboration outcomes

Like many food events, Madens Folkemøde is inseparably linked to the local, and increasingly it seems, to the whole food industry of Denmark. According to Hede (2018), while stakeholder theory suggests that all stakeholders are equally important, the relationship Madens Folkemøde has with the food industry is vital to its success. In an effective relationship, the association between the Madens Folkemøde and its stakeholders is mutual. That is, while the Madens Folkemøde is designed to sustain the local food industry, its sustainability depends on stakeholders' relationship.

Table 3 below presents the collaboration outcomes resulting from Madens Folkemøde. The outcomes have been categorised into four aspects based on different stakeholders' feedback after attending Madens Folkemøde, i.e. develop new business opportunities; promote collaborative debates; brand authentic food; and strengthen democracy.

Collaboration Outcomes
Develop new business opportunities
Promote collaborative debates
Brand authentic food
Strengthen democracy

Table 3: Madens Folkemøde: collaboration outcomes (Source: author).

4.3.1 Develop new business opportunities

According to Hede (2008), there is the expectation that most tourism events will produce a positive impact on business growth. Also, attending food events (e.g., Madens Folkemøde) is one of the most natural ways to meet and network with new customers while helping one's business build tangible connections. Based on the 2019 annual report of Lolland Municipality, the result of the first Madens Folkemøde "*was a very popular meeting*", and there were up to 8000 people in two days visiting the event (Appendix 8 - 2019 annual report).

Also, more than 200 different companies and organisations, chefs, restaurants (Appendix 2 - PA), 68 local producers (Madens Folkemøde, 2020), and several different stakeholders participated in this event. Although not all of the stakeholders shared the same purpose for joining the event, the 2019 Madens Folkemøde has exceeded all expectations of the participating stakeholders. According to Pelle Andersen, organiser of the food event, he has received a lot of positive feedback from participating stakeholders since 2019 Madens Folkemøde opened, and many of them stated that they would like to participate next year (Appendix 2 - PA).

Indeed, from participating stakeholders' point of view, Madens Folkemøde helped them to sell products better. For instance, Guldrummet, a special butcher department of the Danish Crown, participated with its own stand, from which there were sales of products and tastings in stripes (see Figure 11). According to Guldrummet, they have reached total sales of products in its stand at Madens Folkemøde (Danish Crown, 2019). In addition, according to Dorte Kærgaard Ruby, Senior Manager of Danish Crown, Guldrummet was also there to temper the mood for the new concept, which is called "Expensive". This concept will be launching soon on the channel for direct sales to individuals via the online shop Dyrbar.



Figure 11: Guldrummet by Danish Crown at Madens Folkemøde (Source: Danish Crown, 2019).

According to Dorte Kærgaard Ruby, there were many people who got a completely different view of how pork can taste from the stand of Guldrummet at Madens Folkemøde (Danish Crown, 2019). At Madens Folkemøde, Guldrummet talked a lot about meat quality and how top chefs run an agenda where tasteful meat is not necessarily served in large quantities - and therefore may cost more. In front of customers, Guldrummet showed how high-quality meats could present themselves and taste amazing simply with the

help of proper preparation and a little salt, which received much positive feedback from customers and everyone was excited about their products.

4.3.2 Promote collaborative debates

Based on Pelle Andersen, director of the FOOD, the first round of debate at Madens Folkemøde had more than thrice as many as they actually were aiming for (Appendix 2 - PA). In order to have enough room for all stakeholders who want to participate in the debate, some organisations have to group together and find one interesting topic that suits for different stakeholders. According to the 2019 event program (Appendix 10), there are 29 collaborative debates at Madens Folkemøde in total, and almost all debates consist of diverse stakeholders.

For instance, Danmarks Restauranter & Cafeer (DRC)'s industry initiative REGA held a debate on the future of the restaurant industry and the division of responsibilities towards a sustainable restaurant industry (see Figure 12). There are high demands on the Danish restaurant industry that whether it is going to play along with sustainable development or not. The restaurateurs have to take responsibility for their own businesses, but the industry still needs to get the necessary political support for the future. This debate worked towards a sustainable restaurant industry. It collaborated with many stakeholders, such as Madklubben (food club), Hotel Saxkjøbing, Copenhagen Hospitality College, KBH Madhus, Hahnemann Køkken (café) (Maden Folkemøde, 2019).



Figure 12: DRC and REGA at Madens Folkemøde (Source: DRC, 2019).

Also, Nordic Council of Ministers (International affairs), Stockholm Resilience Centre (Non-profit) and Stockholm University (Education) collaborated together to deliver the debate called '*Should the Nordic countries take the lead in the green transition?*' (Appendix 10 – 2019 event program). The Nordic countries have the lead when it comes to reaching the UN's global goals. But they are still facing some challenges, such as unhealthy eating and massive food waste, which have major consequences for both the climate and economy. This collaborative panel discusses whether the Nordic countries can use their strengths of the Nordic food system to show the world that it is actually possible to use food as leverage to reach the UN's World Goals (Madens Folkemøde, 2019).

Moreover, University College Absalon (Trade school), Organic Lands Association (A community for farmers, businesses and consumers), and four municipalities (Lejre, Sønderborg, Lolland, Guldborgsund) collaborated together and discussed '*How to create space for small innovative food producers?*' (Appendix 10 – 2019 event program). When it comes to running a small food business or innovative agriculture, legislation, control and regulations can be major challenges. The recently adopted food conciliation announces a small-scale package offering what can make it easier for small-scale producers. This panel consisted of politicians, producers, food students, the chairman of the Organic Lands Association, and a star chef to discuss the questions related to small-scale producers (Madens Folkemøde, 2019).

4.3.3 Brand authentic food

According to Arcodia and Whitford (2006), there is an increasing acknowledgement that food festivals can contribute to brand locally-produced food. When food events promote local products, they facilitate social and cultural exchanges, which create new forms of social and intellectual capital within their host communities (Hede, 2008). The fact that Madens Folkemøde took place at Lolland-Falster is not a coincidence. Lolland-Falster has hundreds of farms and more than 60 smaller food producers who grow quality raw materials. Unique conditions for agricultural produce on Lolland-Falster is characterised by high soil moisture and favourable climatic conditions for food production (see Figure 13). Thus, the area is, as the press release states, "blessed with excellent agricultural land, a proud agricultural tradition and an entire army of outstanding local producers and restaurants, which will play a key role in the new public meeting" (Christensen, 2018).



Figure 13: The good soil on Lolland-Falster (Source: Folketidende, 2019).

Known from the previous chapters, because of having abundant resources, Lolland-Falster has adopted a strategy for food production and food tourism (Lolland Municipality, 2019). One of the focuses of the strategy is especially on Lolland-Falster's authentic food. As a local branding initiative, Madens Folkemøde is a showcase for locally-produced quality food. It was obvious that one of the intentions of the initiative was to raise the visibility of the region through a food event together with a number of authentic foods.

Indeed, many visitors spoke highly of Madens Folkemøde. From the perspective of attendees, Ida Sørensen from Vordingborg mentioned there was a lot of focus on good produce and sustainability and animal welfare. Thomas Felbo from Copenhagen was not only amazed by the beauty of Lolland-Falster but also satisfied with the variety of food there, especially the locally-produced food. Hanne Couriol from Nykøbing Falster said it was a really good initiative to support the local community by branding the local products. From the perspective of Joan Thorlin, a local producer, she was pleased to join Madens Folkemøde. According to Joan, Madens Folkemøde is a great opportunity to show that Lolland-Falster has world-class food and increase the visibility of the individual actors in the collaborative network.

4.3.4 Strengthen democracy

Just like the People's Meeting "Folkemødet" on Bornholm, Madens Folkemøde provides an interactive environment and framework to ensure that politicians not only interact with other politicians but also with ordinary citizens. It is to make sure this event can narrow the gap between those in power and those without

power. According to Johan Borup Jensen, event manager of Engestofte Gods, the main idea of Madens Folkemøde was to bring governments and the politicians close to the people (Appendix 1 - JJ). Although Denmark is a small country, the government in Copenhagen is still lacking in understanding the issues and problems that are facing in some regions. Everyone can participate in the Madens Folkemøde, and everyone is on the same level. There will be debating, and people can ask questions directly, politicians, members of parliament will walk around (see Figure 14). By doing so, it can create a dialogue between government and citizens, and then strengthen the Danish democracy.



Figure 14: People at Madens Folkemøde (Source: Madens Folkemøde, 2019).

For example, based on the political organisation De Samvirkende Købmænd (DSK)'s point of view, Madens Folkemøde provided a perfect setting for the informal meeting between politicians and the citizens. It was a good opportunity to take the temperature on political issues and ensure the best possible business policy framework for the merchants. Also, take the other political organisation as an example, Tænk tanken Frej (Frej) held an activity at Madens Folkemøde called 'Meet the man behind the food'. During this activity, people can join a communal lunch with Lolland Quinoa and have conversations with Henrik Knudsen, a member of the Quinoa Lolland-Falster Association (Frej, 2019). In this way, it creates a dialogue between food manufacturers and consumers.

4.3.5 Sub-conclusion

The purpose of this chapter of this analysis was to examine the collaboration outcomes of Madens Folkemøde. Those outcomes were categorised as four aspects based on different stakeholders' feedback after attending Madens Folkemøde, i.e. develop new business opportunities; promote collaborative debates; brand authentic food; and strengthen democracy. In an era of increasing competition in the event marketplace, the 2019 Madens Folkemøde had positive outcomes for both participating stakeholders and the host region Lolland-Falster.

When it comes to the direct collaboration outcomes of attending Madens Folkemøde, it first helped to participate stakeholders to display their products, meet new customers, temper selling concepts, and increase sales. Then, it promoted collaboration among different stakeholders when preparing and delivering debates. Also, Madens Folkemøde helps local producers to brand their authentic foods. Moreover, Madens Folkemøde helped to strengthen the Danish democracy by providing an interactive setting to bring people together, especially to bring governments and the politicians close to the citizens.

Thus, it is not a coincidence that Madens Folkemøde took place at Lolland-Falster, as some of the best food in Denmark grows in the South Sea Islands. Hence, it is the right framework for a meeting on Danish food culture. Besides, at Lolland-Falster, local municipalities have worked intensively in recent years to strengthen the link between local food, business development, tourism and local activities (Christensen, 2018). As an important platform for development, we believe that Madens Folkemøde can work towards all of the branding initiatives and local activities on Lolland-Falster, helping drive all of Denmark forward as a food country that can inspire the world.

5 Conclusion

The main aim of this thesis was to explore the role of stakeholder collaboration in food events. It was achieved through a case study focusing on Madens Folkemøde using qualitative semi-structured interviews with eight stakeholders. The experience of stakeholders in collaborating within the various stakeholders was obtained. An inductive, constructivist approach allowed in-depth analysis and interpretation to arise from the data. The relevant theoretical framework and findings of other academic studies, including the areas of rural development associated by local tourism activities as well as stakeholders' partnership and collaboration were employed as a critical guidepost throughout the analysis.

The study also argued that it is crucial to map out the level of the interest of different stakeholders concerning authority and power. The board of the Madens Folkemøde and the FOOD are granted significant autonomy over the strategic direction of the initiative, and the realisation of the particular food event. Also, the flat organisational structure of the board using a top-down approach has a vital role in advocating the process of collaboration among the participating stakeholders of the food event. The members of the board are considered to be a factor that compels the attention of the local municipalities and central government.

The section of literature review tackled regional branding as a conceptual framework in the value creation of Lolland-Falster in identifying and differentiating its competitiveness in the tourism industry. This thesis found out all stakeholders recognised the importance of collaboration at Madens Folkemøde. The activities under the Madens Folkemøde have successfully laid the foundation for Lolland-Falster's competitive advantage as Denmark's emerging culinary hub. Branding is fundamental to enhance food tourism activities in rural areas. Lolland-Falster needs a definitive brand that differentiates and enhances its image. More specifically, Madens Folkemøde is able to create a valuable brand for various stakeholders through initiating new partnership and collaboration between the public and private sectors in the region, which contributes to the socio-cultural aspects of the tourism development on Lolland-Falster.

The different stakeholders may have overlapping or conflicting expectations towards collaborating with others. Stakeholders believe that collaboration does not mean constant agreement. The degree of collaboration may differ, and working towards similar objectives may not always be necessary. Hence, continuous communication among various stakeholders within the industry was recommended. Equal opportunities are provided for all stakeholders to engage and voice their concerns.

A shared goal is a fundamental component of the collaborative relationship at Madens Folkemøde. Throughout the thesis, Freeman (1994) stakeholders' theory was applied to analyse the process of collaboration among different stakeholders, including their roles and engagement to co-create. The key elements of cooperation in food events are the willingness and commitment of the local community and stakeholders to promote tourism activities in the region. Recognising the different perspectives among stakeholders is a prerequisite for maintaining mutual respect. Also, despite the competitions among stakeholders, it may seek to promote cooperation without destroying common interests.

This thesis outlines some collaboration challenges at Madens Folkemøde. Some organisations and local businesses did not believe in the advantages of collaboration, as they perceived the network could generate more competitiveness. Some of the SMEs noted that low-level engagement to collaborate with others due to competition, unrealistic expectations and trust issues. Moreover, the stakeholders who support Madens Folkemøde prioritised their businesses due to limited time and resources.

This thesis concluded by categorising the collaboration outcomes of Madens Folkemøde. Those outcomes include developing new business opportunities; promoting collaborative debates; branding authentic food; and strengthening democracy. As an ongoing driver for tourism activities, Madens Folkemøde can work towards all of the local development initiatives on Lolland-Falster. The findings of this thesis will be useful for researchers, practitioners and policymakers who are interested in developing rural areas with food events through partnership and collaboration.

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7 Appendices

Appendix 1: Transcript of interview with Mette Egeskov (ME) & Johan Borup Jensen (JJ)

Appendix 2: Transcript of interview with Pelle Øby Andersen (PA)

Appendix 3: Questionnaire with Maria Dyrby Nielsen (MN)

Appendix 4: Questionnaire with Uffe Skaaning Lind (UL)

Appendix 5: Questionnaire with Niki Bi Frost (NF)

Appendix 6: Email replies from Henrik Holm (HH)

Appendix 7: Email replies from Jens and Ole (JO)

Appendix 8: 2018 & 2019 Annual report of Lolland Municipality about Madens Folkemøde

Appendix 9: Actor Catalogue of Madens Folkemøde

Appendix 10: 2019 event program of Madens Folkemøde