



# **THE OUTDOOR CAPITAL OF DENMARK? A CASE STUDY OF NATURE-BASED PLACE MAKING IN SILKEBORG**

**MA thesis by Camilla Filtenborg Boll, Mengrong Dai &  
Christian Thomsen**

**Supervisor: Carlos Pastor Chan Santana**

Number of characters: 361.487  
Date: 31 May 2022

Aalborg University Copenhagen



## Abstract

This thesis explored how the place of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark is made, developing, and operating as a tourist destination through place making, place branding, and policy implementations. It is compiled through a four-month research period that included two fieldwork trips collecting data that is examined through a hermeneutical approach along with the lens of social constructivism. Through the data collection, this study identified place making along with nature-based placemaking as the main theories for the development of making Silkeborg into the outdoor capital of Denmark. Along with investigating a mix of top-down- and bottom-up approaches within policy implementation and the position of Silkeborg's new nature-based place brand identity and image, the findings indicated that Silkeborg is on the right path to be recognized as the outdoor capital of Denmark but with room for improvement. This thesis is supplemented with relevant literature in an attempt to add to the academic literature on how nature-based tourist destinations are made, developed, and operated based on a change in place brand identity. Thus, providing a new model of a place making process that aims to inspire them how to benefit the local community in the development process rather than only making a place brand directed towards tourists.

**Keywords:** *Place making; outdoor; policy implementation; place branding; maintenance; Silkeborg; outdoor capital of Denmark; tourism destination; local community; nature-based place making.*

## Acknowledgements

The journey of this thesis has been truly a self-growing and deep learning process. Our passion for nature and outdoor tourism brought the three of us together and motivated us throughout the exploration of this research. Together, we have accompanied each other through some bumpy stages of our life in the past four months, and thanks to the master program at Aalborg University, we managed to finish this study with findings that hopefully could help both future academics and practitioners in tourism as well as inspire other destinations going through a change in brand identity how to manage it, and most importantly, we become reliable friends with each other.

We would like to express our deepest appreciation and gratitude to our supervisor, Carlos Pastor Chan Santana, who has been incredibly generous to share his knowledge and insights with us. His patience, engagement and humor have been a huge encouragement for us to aim higher in the research.

This endeavor would not have been possible without the support of some special individuals in each of our co-authors' lives. Hereby, each of us would like to express our gratitudes:

*“Finishing my Master degree is a huge milestone and accomplishment for me, as I wanted to prove to myself that I was capable of doing it, since I’m not from an academic family. This would not have been possible without the support of all my family members and friends being understanding, and especially my two co-group members’ ability to always bring happiness to tense times of writing the thesis. I want to thank especially my mom and his husband too, for letting me stay at their place during this time, as I suddenly had to move early in the thesis process. Therefore, I want to thank my mom for cooking dinner for me every day, washing my clothes and making sure I had everything needed while I put all my energy into this thesis.”* — Camilla Filtenborg Boll

*“Accomplishing this master program was both the happiest and toughest period I have gone through, without the forever support of my parents who are 8000km away, this would not have been possible. Especially, I am deeply indebted to Jacob Ringgaard and the love from Karin & Carsten Ringgaard, for their mural support and belief in me.”* — Mengrong Dai

*“I would like to thank my amazing study group, family, and friends for the support through tough times, as well as my job at Destination Fyn, for their patience while finishing my Master’s degree. Without this, I would not have been able to grow professionally and personally”* — Christian Thomsen

Lastly, we would like to thank each other again, thank you for creating the most precious friendship while having each other's backs in the thesis writing. Good job to us!

Camilla Filtenborg Boll, Mengrong Dai, and Christian Thomsen

# Table of Content

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Context of Silkeborg	3
2. Theoretical framework	4
2.1 Place making	5
2.1.1 Place making, nature-based place making and their interrelation	5
2.1.2 Policy implementation within place making	9
2.1.3 Place branding within nature-based place making	13
2.1.4 Nature-based placemaking and maintenance of its natural assets	18
3. Methodological and philosophical approach	19
3.1 Philosophy of science	20
3.2 Research design	22
3.2.1 Inductive and deductive research methods	23
3.3 Ethnographic fieldwork	25
3.3.1 Group dynamics and researcher position	25
3.4 Data collection	26
3.4.1 Survey	29
3.4.2 Interviews	30
3.4.3 Sampling	31
3.4.4 Selection of informants	32
3.4.5 Fieldwork observation	35
3.4.6 Participant observation	35
3.4.7 Visual data	36
3.5 Triangulation of knowledge	36
3.6 Analytical strategy	37
3.7 Ethics	37
3.8 Reflexivity	38
3.9 Limitations	38
4. Findings and analysis of the outdoor capital of Denmark	40
4.1 Discovering and designing a new brand	41
4.1.1 Creation of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark	41
4.1.2 Perception of the outdoor capital of Denmark	47
4.1.3 Perception of outdoors	56
4.1.4 Sub-conclusion	60

4.2 Process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark through implementation of outdoor initiatives	61
4.2.1 Local community	64
4.2.1.1 Summary	71
4.2.2 Facility	72
4.2.2.1 Facility maintenance	82
4.2.2.2 Summary	84
4.2.3 Collaboration in Silkeborg	85
4.2.3.1 External collaboration	90
4.2.3.2 Externally collaboration with DMO	93
4.2.3.3 Summary	96
4.2.4 Branding and communication	97
4.2.4.1 External branding	109
4.2.4.2 Summary	114
4.2.5 Sub-conclusion for whole implementation	116
4.3 Impact on Silkeborg place and users	118
4.3.1 Use of natural assets and maintenance	120
4.3.2 Monitoring	127
4.3.3 Sub-conclusion	135
4.4 Conclusion of analysis	136
5. Discussion	140
5.1 Has COVID-19 really influenced the outcome of our findings?	140
5.2 Top-down approach versus bottom-up approach: interaction and inspiration	141
5.3 The interrelation between place making and place branding in a tourism destination development process	142
5.4 What is the next step of place making in Silkeborg?	145
5.5 Is place making the new way to develop sustainable tourism destinations?	147
6. Market implications	148
7. Conclusion	150
7.1. Further research	151
8. Reference list	153

## **List of figures:**

Figure 1. Location of Silkeborg

Figure 2. The essence of the outdoor capital of Denmark

Figure 3. Four types of placemaking

Figure 4. Illustration of nature-based placemaking

Figure 5. Methodological research design

Figure 6. Research journey map

Figure 7. Data collection

Figure 8. Informant overview

Figure 9. Main themes identified from findings central to the analysis

Figure 10. Timeline of the design process.

Figure 11. Do you consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark? (Survey 1)

Figure 12. Do you consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark? (Survey 2)

Figure 13. Comparison of “Do you consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital?”

Figure 14. Stakeholder Roles in Silkeborg

Figure 15. Focus areas and instruments of developing the outdoor capital of Denmark

Figure 16. Local businesses who incorporated outdoor into their business name (1)

Figure 17. Local businesses who incorporated outdoor into their business name (2)

Figure 18. 12km Silk Route pole showing direction

Figure 19. Guiding pole

Figure 20. Educating user

Figure 21. Walking bridge over Almind lake

Figure 22. Woodies - a moveable cafe by Almind lake.

Figure 23. Sunset over the new bathing facilities at Almind lake

Figure 24. Insect hotel in the city

Figure 25. Library incorporating outdoor

Figure 26 and 27. Trees, nature beds, tree trunks and benches on the main street in the city center.

Figure 28. Sustainable development goals in forest

Figure 29. Art exhibition on the Silk route

Figure 30. Birdhouses in the forest

Figure 31. Development structure of the outdoor capital of Denmark

Figure 32. What is your biggest motivation for using nature and outdoor activities?

Figure 33. For what reason have you used nature within the Silkeborg municipality as a tourist?

Figure 34. Newly launched website for Silkeborg Lake District - outdoor capital of Denmark

Figure 35. Motivation for using nature, Survey 1

Figure 36. Motivation for using nature, Survey 2

Figure 37. Local ratings of nature areas' condition

Figure 38. Tourists' rating of nature areas condition

Figure 39. Trial separation

Figure 40. User information

Figure 41. Counters

Figure 42. Counter data 2020. Outdoor secretary

Figure 43. Counter data 2021. Outdoor secretary

Figure 44. Counter data 2021. Danish Nature Agency

Figure 45. Counter data 2022. Danish Nature Agency

Figure 46. Preferred time to visit natural areas in Silkeborg

Figure 47. Illustration of Danish Nature Agency data from counters

Figure 48. COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the use of nature by local residents

Figure 49. COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the use of nature by tourists

Figure 50. Local experience with the number of users in the nature areas

Figure 51. Tourist experience with the number of users in the nature areas

Figure 52. Place making roadmap

This page is left blank

# 1. Introduction

*“Any destination image or tourism promotion projected by the local tourism industry should be anchored to some extent on a true destination identity”*

(Govers, Go & Kumar, 2007; Van Rekom & Go, 2003; Van Riel 1996, 34).

Throughout the world, places become more difficult to differentiate from one another and are increasingly substituting each other within tourism (Pike, 2005). Since destinations are more multidimensional and complex than other services or consumer goods, they are usually meant to find a brand with a succinct message focusing on mainly one or a few brand associations that at the same time encapsulates a destination's diverse and wide range of natural resources, culture, amenities and built attractions among others, which are crucial to its existence (ibid). Hence, making a place into an attractive destination that people both want to live in and visit (Sofield et al., 2017), is essential to develop the community's vibrancy and authenticity, to improve the quality of place and life regarding what it can offer (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017; Wyckoff, 2015; Klijn et al., 2012). According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2016), tourist destinations around the world are promoting new niche markets related to global tourism trends which have moved towards a higher demand for nature experiences, well-being, and health tourism (OECD, 2016), in finding their unique characteristics and values to discover an identity or DNA that differentiates from other destinations, to create a more thorough authentic destination (Kaefer, 2021). Traditionally this is something that destinations usually do through a tourism strategy to create an image to brand the destination externally to attract visitors (Lew, 2017; Sofield et al., 2017). However, studies show that a true destination identity is made from the strength of the internal alignment of values among local stakeholders, with the aim of living these values to support, behave and think about the destination in this manner (Urde, 2003; Wheeler et al., 2017). Otherwise, the branding of a destination will end up promising tourists an authentic experience they cannot guarantee (Kaefer, 2021). The Scandinavian countries have to some extent always fascinated and attracted outdoor tourists with their magnificent natural areas (Fredman & Margaryan, 2021), and in Denmark, the importance of forests and other natural areas for outdoor recreation has increasingly been highlighted in policy and administration (Jensen & Koch, 2004). Therefore, bringing these perspectives down to a more place-specific context, the destination of Silkeborg has gone from being 'the city of cars' to claiming itself as 'the outdoor capital of Denmark'. Here, it has become evident that the nature-based assets and surrounding environment is playing a large role in the development of the destination in this new direction.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate Silkeborg's process of changing its identity based on its local environment and resources that also comes with a new set of values, leading this thesis to ask the following research question:

*“Silkeborg - the outdoor capital of Denmark! How is the place made, developed, and operating as a tourist destination through place making, policy implementations and place branding?”*

To answer this research question, the following sub-questions are addressed to lead the research analysis for this thesis:

1. *How did Silkeborg discover and design the process for making the brand of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark?*
2. *How, who and what, has been done to implement in- and develop the place?*
3. *How has the making of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark impacted the users?*

This thesis contains 7 sections, where the first one introduces the thesis. The second section outlines the theoretical framework and literature on place making along with nature-based placemaking, policy implementation, and place branding and maintenance and examines local residents, local businesses, tourists, the destination management organization (DMO) and the municipality's experience with the process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. The third section elaborates on the applied methods of a primary and secondary mixed-method approach in conducting qualitative and quantitative data throughout the fieldwork analyzed through analytical strategies. The fourth section presents and examines the analysis of the findings discovered from the main themes identified and guided by the three sub-question of this thesis. The fifth section discusses the findings and theories hereof both to provide an answer to the research question and how future destinations can benefit from the use of theories, followed by our implications for how Silkeborg should navigate in the market to succeed with being the outdoor capital of Denmark. The final two sections summarize and conclude on the findings and discussions identified in this thesis and suggest areas for further research.

## 1.1 Context of Silkeborg

Silkeborg municipality is located in central Jutland in Denmark, and is the 9th largest municipality with a population of over 97.000 inhabitants by 1st of January 2022 (Silkeborg Kommune, 2019). Silkeborg is one of the municipalities in Denmark with the largest industrial growth rate, and they are considering itself a highly attractive location, with the expectation of exceeding 100.000 inhabitants by 2025 (ibid). The governmental structure of Silkeborg is consistent with a leading municipality, and further a city council consisting of 31 members who represent the local municipality, different political parties as well as stakeholders



Figure 1. Location of Silkeborg

from the local business communities (ibid.). The city council is the founder of the Silkeborg growth and development strategy report that states that *“Growth and welfare are the overriding goals for the work of the City Council. We go bone-hard after that the municipality in 2030 is home to 105,000 citizens and a level of service in the welfare areas, which matches our ambitions”* (Vindum, 2018 in Silkeborg Kommune 2019, 1). Additionally, according to the development strategy, their ambitions are linked to three main visions: Firstly, attractiveness and growth - secondly, community and welfare - and lastly, outdoor and activeness within the Silkeborg municipality (Silkeborg Kommune, 2019).

The municipality borders an area of 864,9 km<sup>2</sup>, where Silkeborg is located within the geographic area called ‘Søhøjlandet’, which is well-known for being rich in nature, and is further branded as some of the most beautiful nature in Denmark (VisitÅrhus, n.d.). Moreover, Silkeborg is hosting multiple natural assets, mostly dominated by forests and lakes (Danmarks Naturfredningsforening, n.d.), which includes the largest combined forest area in Denmark. The natural surroundings of Silkeborg has a long history of attracting outdoor enthusiasts, both local residents of the area as well as tourists, as the Silkeborg area offers endless opportunities to

participate in outdoor activities such as hiking, mountain biking, and water activities among many others (Outdoor Silkeborg, n.d.), due to the many facilities that have been implemented in the area during the years to benefit both the local residents and tourists (Petersen, 2019). Despite being rich in natural assets, the area was previously known as ‘the city of cars’ (Midtjyllands avis, 2020), but has recently changed its place brand to be ‘the outdoor capital of Denmark’ in 2017.



Figure 2. The essence of the outdoor capital of Denmark

## 2. Theoretical framework

This section aims to examine the following theories of place making and nature-based placemaking as the overall theory framework. This is combined with policy implementation, place branding and maintenance selected because of their relevance to the case study of this thesis along with current relevant literature to make a coherent conceptual framework. Applying the concept of place making to a tourist destination based on its nature-based assets, it is a theory that will help understand the elements of what makes the place of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. Moreover, the concept of placemaking will be used as a tool to understand how outdoors, types of

policies, and branding plays a role in this case study. Therefore, the nature of this thesis aims to emphasize on the complexity of the tourist destination using nature-based assets at the core of its development.

## **2.1 Place making**

This section applies the theory of place making in the case of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. The main focus of this section is first to understand what place making is, to understand how it can be practiced through the place's nature-based assets and what roles the outdoors, policies, and branding plays within this tourist destination.

Therefore, since the case of this study concerns Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, it first describes the concept of place making through the perspective of designing a place based on its nature-based assets.

Second, place making is described through two main approaches, which are an organic bottom-up place-making development and a planned top-down placemaking process respectively. These approaches help outline how place making overall can be implemented and used to develop nature-based places within tourism, through a concurrent process of local community development, collaboration and governance policy making.

Third, place making is usually used within tourism to shape the image and identity of a place and therefore focuses on the construction of a nature-based destination and its development through place branding.

### **2.1.1 Place making, nature-based place making and their interrelation**

As Silkeborg has recently changed their brand from being 'the city of cars' to 'the outdoor capital of Denmark', a new process of making the destination has been started. Therefore, the theory on place making is relevant to understanding the elements of making a place. Place making was first introduced in the 1970s in the USA and the use of it has since the 2000 increased within different literature fields of anthropology, history, and tourism studies among others (Serin, 2018). It is considered a multi-faceted approach towards how public quality places are designed, planned and managed, with the aim of improving residents' quality of life and their surrounding environment (Sofield et al, 2017; PPS, 2015). As the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) (2018) explains, place making is about how we create and shape our surrounding environment ranging from individual lives to larger community levels, which reflects how we live and engage with it considering

ecological, economic, and social aspects of what makes the place into a community (PPS, 2018; Greedy et al., 2022). Hence, the initiatives taken towards including the relevant resources in making the place of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark should have an impact on the local community and its environment. A significant perspective on PPS's basic concept of place making is the branch of nature-based placemaking that is adapted from it, as it is designed not to replace but add-on, connect and cultivate this connection with already existing place making efforts (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). As stated by Greedy et al., (2022), Nature-based placemaking "[...] *is an emerging community development framework that builds on a community's natural assets to bolster community vibrancy*" (Greedy et al. 2022, 51). Thus, it is argued that natural assets such as nature, green spaces, and outdoor environments are linked to the benefits of a community and the residents within it (Greedy et al., 2022; Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017), and are therefore highly associated with making the place of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark based on its natural assets.

According to Fitzpatrick & Fontana (2017), nature-based placemaking occurs when the components of a community's natural assets, the associated economic activities, and the community's attitude and culture towards these economic activities and assets are aligned. In line with Greedy et al.'s (2022) definition of nature-based placemaking previously mentioned, Fitzpatrick & Fontana (2017) defines it to be "[...] *an evolving, integrated theory that utilizes a community's natural, outdoor recreational resources (ASSETS), the recreational activities associated with those resources, and the potential economic impact of those activities on the communities involved*" (Fitzpatrick & Fontana 2017, 4). This means that it is possible to unlock a community's potential for development by using the local natural assets of the outdoor settings surrounding the destination (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). As Silkeborg aims to incorporate the natural assets and outdoor surroundings in the project of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, the natural assets, economic activities, and the community's attitude towards it, becomes central to the place's potential for developing the community and its environment.

In this regard, the outdoors plays an essential role in making the nature-based destination, and is therefore necessary for this study to elaborate on, to obtain a more holistic understanding of its use in making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. Looking at 'outdoors' alone, the literature is limited, as it is often mentioned in relation to outdoor recreation presented in multiple studies regarding visitors (Jenkins & Pigram, 2004; Margaryan & Fredman 2017; Aasetre & Gundersen, 2012). It is associated with activities taking place in a spectacular natural scenery setting of lakes, rivers, forests and mountains among others (Bell et al., 2007) and includes those activities of

hiking, biking, driving for pleasure, fishing and attending outdoor sport events among others (Cordell, 2008). According to Jenkins & Pigram (2004), outdoor recreation is simply defined as all leisure and recreational activities happening outdoors in urban and rural environments (Jenkins & Pigram, 2004 in Margaryan & Fredman, 2017; Aasetre & Gundersen, 2012). Hence, the outdoor activities and facilities that are practiced and offered in Silkeborg are part of making the nature-based destination the outdoor capital of Denmark.

In the literature, it is discovered how the perception of outdoors can be two-sided, as some studies distinguish between the nordic 'Friluftsliv' and 'outdoor recreation' (ibid.; Andkjær, 2004), whereas some interpret outdoor recreation as a direct English translation of the nordic 'Friluftsliv' (Wolf-Watz 2015, 12). As Søren Andkjær (2004) highlights in his studies, the modern Danish 'Friluftsliv' is highly affected by the English-American 'outdoors', and says that trends within 'outdoors' are increasingly accepted and associated with the traditional 'Friluftsliv'. According to himself though, 'Friluftsliv' is about the simple life of being in, and enjoying the calmness of nature as well as creating awareness of its environment whereas outdoors is about activities, competition and technique (Andkjær, 2004). Nonetheless, the definition of outdoor recreation draws multiple comparisons to the nordic "Friluftsliv", as they almost share the same description. Here, the nordic 'Friluftsliv' is characterized by "*its simplicity and popularity focusing on being outside in the landscape for general well-being and encounters with nature that is removed from a context of formal competition*" (Aasetre & Gundersen 2012, 193) meaning that nature is not only used for activities, but also for the well-being of those using it. Hence, nature is something that many places and people are trying to incorporate more into their everyday lives, as an increasing number of studies have shown that exposure to natural environments and nature, everything from gardens to wilderness, is generally found to have a positive effect on both mental and physical health (Sustainable development commission (SDC), 2008; Wilson, 1984; Kellert & Wilson, 1993). Taking the example of Denmark, the benefits of being outdoors have gained increased attention over the last decades. Cases are found within the literature, where all aspects of life are represented. Hence, kids in primary schools, aged 7-16, are currently experiencing that they get to go outside for their curriculum-based lessons, as 'outdoor learning' has received increased attention and the conclusions are overall positive (Bentsen & Jensen, 2012). Moreover, in nursing homes, nature and the outdoors are also being implemented, where design, architecture, and performance are linked together for the benefit of the elderly. Here "[Building] *Projects seek to integrate nature and landscape into the building's function – not as decorative or passive elements, but as key programmatic aspects for healing and health*" (Peters & Verderber 2021, 49). These

are similar to initiatives identified to be incorporated in the place making of Silkeborg, where the natural resources and outdoor recreation activities become a more central element of the urban place as the outdoor capital of Denmark. During the last two centuries, parks and nature reserves have also been supported by the belief that exposure to nature fosters psychological well-being, reduces stress, and promotes physical well-being through activities (Ulrich, 1993; Kellert & Wilson, 1993). Therefore, the use of natural resources and outdoor recreation in making the nature-based place of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark is not only necessary to ensure that activities and facilities can be used by visitors, but is equally important to improve the community's well-being and healthy lifestyle of the residents living in the place.

Since place making and nature-based placemaking are interrelated, it is essential to also consider the elements of place making to gain a more holistic understanding of the concept. Wyckoff et al. (2015) define place making as “*the process of creating quality places where people want to live, work, play, shop, learn and visit*” (Wyckoff et al. 2015, 6), and argues this process of top-down planned placemaking is a tool used to improve quality places through small activities and projects as well as large-scale projects aiming to transform places into attractive magnets for both residents and visitors. Moreover, Wyckoff (2014) describes that quality places should contain several characteristics to be present for both residents' and visitors' experiences, which are those of *accessible, safe, welcoming and allow authentic experiences* among others (Wyckoff 2014, 2-3). In the case of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark, the residents' quality of life is weighed against the distance and accessibility to use nature, which for visitors is related to the authentic, welcoming, and safe experience, which will be elaborated in the analysis.

However, as place making is used by various researchers within different fields, it has been approached from different perspectives. Other authors, such as Coates & Seamon (1984), Othman, Nishimura, & Kubota (2013) and Wortham-Galvin (2008) have described place-making from a more bottom-up organic perspective linked to the ‘sense of place’ as “*how a culture group imprints its values, perceptions, memories, and traditions on a landscape and gives meaning to geographic space*” (cited in Lew 2017, 449). Hence, the transformation of place-making is happening through daily social activities. This perspective is essential to understand the initiatives taken towards the community of Silkeborg's sense of place.

Lew (2017) clarified the confusion of spelling between place making, place-making, and placemaking, as he recognizes place making from two polarized perceptions when place making decisions are made, which are from one end, the bottom-up organic place-making; and from

another end, top-down planned placemaking (Lew, 2017). These two different approaches of place making are especially vital to tourism destination development, however, they are not always recognized in place making (Lew, 2012 & 2017).

As the study is built upon a nature-based placemaking case, one of the most vital factors to guide the place with the right strategy is with political support. Political support connects the common will of the residents and the local government in the place, it helps the place to incorporate various indicators such as economic, sustainability, and satisfaction in their strategy (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). Therefore, the policy making process and implemented policies within place making stands in the center of our study.

### **2.1.2 Policy implementation within place making**

As explained before, natural assets are the fundamental actors in the process of Silkeborg's place making, and place making is a tool to improve the quality of the place in concern of the local community and its visitors. However, good place making decisions are depending on the strategies implemented in the place, and the strategies are often made by placemakers. Placemakers serve in destination planning, policy implementation, and stakeholder collaboration in the process of place making (Wyckoff et al., 2015). In this case, place making decisions are shown as forms of policies implemented regarding making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. Therefore, policy making perspective is understood under the knowledge of place making.

Place making approaches and its concepts, principles, and practices are frequently used by placemakers in forms of policy implementation (Koontz et al., 2014). Therefore, the policy making process plays an important role especially in shaping the place in the development stage. Traditionally, there are two approaches of policy making being broadly used including top-down and bottom-up approaches. They are distinguished by the character of actors, connections and relations between different actors and the kinds of policies to which they can be applied (Cerna, 2013). In the top-down approach, policy implementations are decided by hierarchical execution that the policy targets are set with the purpose of successfully planning and developing the destination (Kubickova & Campbell, 2020). An obvious strength of top-down approach is that policy decisions are made by experts and institutional bodies in different areas and develop integrated identifiable policies that can potentially become a pattern for other areas (Cerna 2013, 18). However, critics argue that top-down approach only represents the perspective of the central level, which lacks the concern for local communities and is ineffective in implementation by actors from the local level (Kubickova & Campbell, 2020; Cerna, 2013; Rodríguez et al, 2014).

On the other hand, the bottom-up approach appears as an opposite character related to the key actors and the policies they focus on. The bottom-up approach values the users of policy; therefore, policies are made on the local level where actors are bound together as they share similar targets and are willing to address similar issues (Cerna, 2013). Furthermore, the bottom-up policies are also more adjustable for the local users to adapt to issues of their interests. This approach starts with a goal and looks for the right implementation that understands and affects the issue the best (Koontz et al., 2014).

However, it is rare in practice that any decisions are made from only one of the perspectives. Therefore, collaborative work in place making is usually interacting with stakeholders of all aspects, making stakeholder collaboration an important factor in policy implementation (Koontz et al., 2014). As Lew (2017) argues, places rarely operate in one end or the other of the place making continuum, but somewhere in the middle where both bottom-up organic place-making and top-down planned placemaking are taking place (Lew, 2017). This aligns with Bosman & Dredge's (2011) statement that tourism places demonstrating their ability to include a concurrently strong place-making and placemaking approach are the most successful. The phenomenon of intensive stakeholder collaboration we have noticed in Silkeborg is an example of this inter-organizational collaborative governance (Bosman & Dredge, 2011).

Collaborative governance happens in an organizational environment where actors are willing to coordinate and collaborate based on their commonly agreed logic and the expected value to be generated (Bosman & Dredge, 2011). Ansell & Gash (2007) defined collaborative governance as *"A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets."* (Ansell & Gash 2007, 544). Under this context, one or more institutions within the policymaking process must work together formally, or as Vignieri (2020, 50) stated *"set up a deliberative forum"* (Vignieri 2020, 50) to make policies.

Moreover, in the case of placemaking, as Wyckoff et al., (2015) stated, *"All forms of successful placemaking depend on broad engagement of stakeholders in the design of projects and activities"* (Wyckoff et al., 2015, 25). Being a top-down placemaking approach, the cooperation between different stakeholders is one of the most essential factors to achieving a quality placemaking where community values are increased throughout the whole process. Stakeholder collaborations in placemaking are staring at the comfort of services and attractiveness of the destination (ibid.).

Therefore, this collaborative placemaking utilizes the local resources to maximize the quality of services in all possible areas which lead to results that can not be realized solely (ibid.). This stakeholder collaboration is a wholesome engagement that takes the local residents' perspectives, rather than developers' opinions, as the core and foundation of development. In other words, the tradition of the community nourishes the decisions made by collaborative stakeholder engagement, while the firm collaboration offers the place a strong image with more meaningful and diversified characters (ibid.). Bosman & Dredge (2011) associated the value of local collaborative placemaking with economical, social, and environmental sustainability, they pointed out that *"place values are emerged from everyday activities, and at the same time impacted by global and societal influences"* (Bosman & Dredge 2011, 3). Thus, this research will investigate the destination's value from a historical and local perspective, including stakeholders' standpoint to understand the place making process in Silkeborg.

Wyckoff (2014) developed the theory into four types of placemaking. The most commonly used placemaking is 'Standard placemaking'. Standard placemaking could happen over a long period of time with incremental changes in a place, these changes can be brought by multiple small projects or activities, or it could be used over a short amount of time by a comprehensive project that creates massive changes to the place. Both ways of standard placemaking convert the place to a quality place with a strong image which draws the attention of people and potential development opportunities. Moreover, it requires engagement of people to participant in the placemaking to maximize the effect and length of the projects (Wyckoff, 2014). There are three specialized placemaking that were designed to realize more specific purposes in placemaking, which are: 1) Strategic placemaking, 2) Creative placemaking, and 3) Tactical placemaking as shown in the following figure:

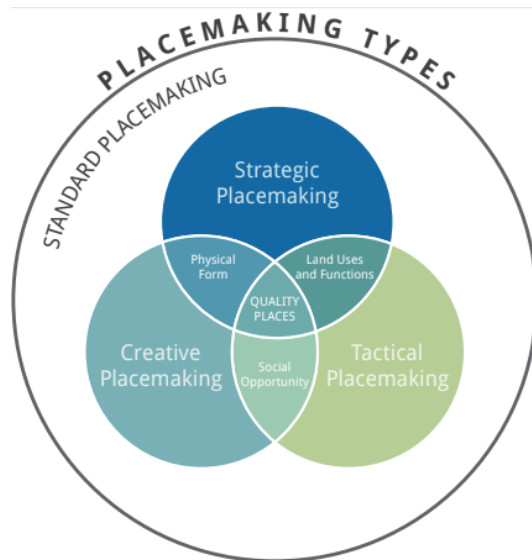


Figure 3: Four types of placemaking (Source: Wyckoff, 2014)

Activities within each of the three placemaking do not necessarily include the activities in standard placemaking, however, all four types of placemaking speak for the complete and integrated placemaking process.

First, strategic placemaking implements large scale projects in a place to attract talented workers and investments to join a quality place with amenities and recreational facilities (Wyckoff, 2014; Wyckoff et al., 2015; Shaw & Montana, 2016). Examples of projects and activities can be rapid transit lines, green public places, and cyclical events (Wyckoff, 2014).

Second, creative placemaking was created and defined by Markusen & Gadwa (2010) as, *“In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired”* (Markusen & Gadwa 2010, 3). This type of placemaking inspires and supports the new and old activities in less-utilized public places. Typical projects and activities are for instance museum exhibitions, outdoor concerts, movies in the park and such (Wyckoff, 2014).

Third, tactical placemaking is a low-cost experimental placemaking that involves multiple small projects over a short period of time, but with the aim to achieve a steady and great transition in the place in the long run (Wyckoff et al. 2015). Though tactical placemaking is a deliberately planned placemaking, it sustains the bottom-up organic process as acts start with what local communities are used to and improves the quality of place steadily (Lew, 2017). An example of this placemaking can be closing a street that normally is runned by vehicles, and then offering the streets to bikes

and pedestrians for a day (Wyckoff, 2014). Furthermore, the focus of these three specialized types of placemaking consists of:

- *Certain types of quality-of-life improvements,*
- *Ways to try some things out before committing significant money and other resources, or*
- *Ways to achieve larger or smaller outcomes/benefits or to achieve them sooner.*

(Wyckoff et al., 2015, 24)

As previously indicated, placemaking relies on wide-ranging stakeholder engagement, which also applies to all four types of placemaking (Wyckoff, 2014). In the case of Silkeborg, the wide range of stakeholder engagement in developing the place into the outdoor capital of Denmark is discovered from all levels. To succeed with a strong stakeholder collaboration, it is essential for the destination to have a shared vision in a project (Olsen, 2016); a vision that reflects a place's identity (Wheeler et al., 2011).

### **2.1.3 Place branding within nature-based place making**

To make policies that should be implemented and accepted both by the local residents and visitors, it is essential for the nature-based place of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark to have a strong identity and image that they can identify themselves with respectively. The outcomes of place making, such as a place's experiences, image and identity, are used within tourism as place branding to construct an attractive destination to visit and live in (Sofield et al., 2017). Therefore, it is essential to brand itself both internally and externally, which makes the theory of place branding relevant to this study regarding making a successful nature-based place brand (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017) of the outdoor capital of Denmark. External branding is usually practiced through various information sources of media advertisement, and word-of-mouth and recommendations to create symbolic and social stimuli respectively (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Um & Crompton, 1990). These are key practices for destination managers to create and maintain a destinations' distinctive personality in the mind of the consumer to differentiate it from other places (Hosany et al., 2007; Rainisto, 2003), through feelings and attitudes towards the destination formed by their motivations for visiting it (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). However, the destination should not only brand itself externally through its image to attract visitors, which is otherwise the traditional way to do branding within tourism (Lew, 2017; Sofield et al., 2017). It is equally important for the destination to brand itself internally to engage local residents and operating businesses, and ensure they represent the brand's values and vision to make it authentic (Kaefer,

2021). As Styliadis et al. (2014, 261) argues, “*if tourism development is to benefit the local community, attention should also be given to the residents’ image of the place rather than that of tourists’ only*”. Therefore, Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark should focus on branding its nature-based place identity both to the segment of visitors coming to the area and the local residents and operating businesses living in the place.

A ‘place brand’ is according to Kaefer (2021) a term that ultimately refers to a place’s defined DNA, meaning its identity, personality and distinctive character; its uniqueness (Kaefer, 2021). Therefore, a place brand is characterized by its shared idea and promise to residents, tourists, and businesses operating in the place to unite and discuss the elements of what exactly makes this place unique (ibid.). This both includes its reputation and perception of the place (Braun et al., 2013), its standard and quality of living it offers (Klijn et al., 2012), and its inimitable place identity based on its history, topography, and culture (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2015; Kalandides, 2011). This aspect is important to understand that Silkeborg’s brand of being the outdoor capital of Denmark should reflect the place’s DNA and uniqueness, which in this case is bound to the residents’ relationship with the place.

Due to the term’s complexity and broad spectrum, scholars have approached the term of place branding differently. The definition of place branding, or the lack of it, is found to be two-sided among scholars. On one hand, Pedersen (2005) claims that place branding is lacking any clear definition as he believes it deals with influencing the future of what will happen rather than the reality (Pedersen, 2005). On the other hand, other scholars such as Zenker & Braun (2010) happen to define the concept as “*a network of associations in the place consumers’ mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communications, values and the general culture of the place’s stakeholders and the overall place design*” (Zenker & Braun 2010 in Zenker et al., 2017, 17). The latter is adopted to this paper, as it emphasizes the collaboration between relevant stakeholders through the shared values, vision and DNA of the Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. Bringing in Urde’s (2003) perspective on corporate branding, the central concept is that of ‘core values’ that signals the soul of the brand that is lived by the organization rather than only focusing on external activities. Applying this to place branding, if the local residents and stakeholders understand and commit themselves to the core values of a place, it affects the way they behave, think, and work. Therefore, it is essential to practice internal branding among the local stakeholders who are part of delivering the brand as they are the basis of the destination’s internal brand identity (Urde, 2003; Wheeler et al., 2011). Essentially, “*everything that the branded identity does should be an affirmation of its identity*”

(Wheeler et al. 2011, 16; Olins, 2000), to increase a stronger reputation followed by the destination's authenticity and the community's identity (Kaefer, 2021).

Regarding the perspective of internal and external branding to the case of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark, this research has identified that there are two main different actors practicing the two respectively. First, the DMO is the actor primarily doing the external branding based on Silkeborg's new identity, to create an image that attracts more tourists. Second, internal branding of the place's identity is identified to be done by local actors, such as the outdoor secretary within the municipality, who aims to engage local residents and operating businesses by making it able for them to associate their own values with the values of the new identity. Braun et al., (2013) argues that policy makers are required to provide opportunities for the local residents in the place branding decision-making process.

Despite the different approaches to defining or not defining place branding, it is also a complex process to navigate in. To shed light on this, Kaefer (2021) has exemplified a set of necessary characteristics for successful place branding to happen, which are those of 1) Educate and communicate, 2) Leadership: involve the right partners, 3) Ensure adequate funding, 4) Ensure brand authenticity through involving the community, and 5) Define, measure, and monitor success. Here, the first emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the key stakeholders of residents, politicians and businesses among others understand the meaning, function and promise of a place brand from the inside, which is to ensure and support the community development in a sustainable manner. It is therefore argued by Aparna (former CEO of IBEF) that *"branding needs to be run by professionals who understand branding"* (cited in Kaefer 2021, 20) to clearly communicate a place's 'how' and 'why' internally, within the community (Kaefer, 2021). The second states that involving the right stakeholders and partners in the place branding process will increase its ability to succeed through dedicated responsible change leaders who support, drive and protect the brand and its value from being diminished by fraud attacks. The third characteristic focuses on how the place branding project is funded, which depends on things such as whether it is a short-term process or long-term sustained place development partnership, but also the type of governing, the size of the place and level of economic development among others. Among the four types of funding that Kaefer (2021) outlines, which are public sector funded, private sector funded, Public-private sector partnership, and civic sector-driven. In this case, Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark is a public-private sector partnership, where the place brand is funded by a combination of public financing and contributions from private sector organizations and companies. The fourth underlines the key aspect of matching the verbal and visual brand identity with the place and

community's reality, and continuously adjusting small changes to ensure they correspond with one another. Lastly, as stated by Kaefer, "*you cannot improve what you cannot measure*" (Kaefer 2021, 25). Hence, measurements of for example new residents and investments, export growth and economic impact regarding how much visitors spend during their visit to the place are some aspects to the improvement and success of a place. They contribute to the causality of place branding activities and the actual changes to the place as they play a role in place branding's view upon a place's overall attractiveness and how and what influences it. Referring to the case of Silkeborg, outdoor activity is developed based on the rich nature assets which has inspired the stakeholders to brand the place as the outdoor capital. During this development, an extensive range of partnership can be observed to ensure the success of branding with the support from the local community, sufficient fundings, and professional methods to sustain the place brand.

However, based on the characteristics of place branding success, Kaefer (2021) also identified risks of failing place branding if challenges of 1) Misconceptions about what place branding is, 2) Political or institutional instability and lack of leadership, 3) Insufficient funding, 4) Insufficient stakeholder engagement and collaboration, and 5) Non-representativeness of place brand, are met and not properly overcome (ibid.). The first concerns how misconception of what place branding is and is not, is the most common failure. It is possible to find place branding projects that range between in-depth and complete place management strategies to very simple visual design exercises dependent on how the different actors in a place perceive and understand place branding. In this regard, Kaefer argues that "*A robust governance model is required for sustaining a place branding program over time: one with clear responsibilities, ownership and investment in ongoing development*" (Kaefer 2021, 17). Second, elections of new politicians are usually a risk to a place brand due to a restructuring. These politicians might not equally prioritize its importance but are more tempted to put their own mark on the place branding agenda by changing it or making new solutions. It will thereby lose support and most likely be turned into a tool that benefits their own political and economic agendas. Third, insufficient funding almost guarantees failure, as if there is no money to fund the place branding, there is no-one to drive it forward. Fourth, the less stakeholders, and especially citizens, that are engaged in the project, the bigger the risk of failing. As Caio Esteves argues, "*a place brand must be shared by all*" (cited in Kaefer 2021, 18), meaning that a brand fails if it is just governmental and is used externally without reflecting the place as a whole, such as the local community, economy and lacks understanding of the overall process. This leads down to the last risk of failure that emphasizes, if the brand is not representative of the local needs and perceptions of the place, and does not speak about the place, its core people and its core

values, it will fail. As Natasha Grand stresses, “*The challenge is to tune the local users (contractors, souvenir producers, event organizers) into the brand values, help them apply and integrate them into their work*” (cited in Kaefer 2021, 18), emphasizing that internal branding to some extent is more important than external branding and make sure the local residents are on board (Kaefer, 2021). This means that if any of these risks are identified and not overcome or limited by Silkeborg, the place brand of being the outdoor capital of Denmark will most likely fail.

As Fitzpatrick & Fontana (2017, 8) argues, “*you only have one chance to make a good first impression*”. Therefore, to succeed with nature-based placemaking in benefitting the local community in the development of a place based on its natural assets, it is necessary to understand the challenges associated with it too. Therefore, if the destination’s identity is not accepted by different stakeholders in the place, the nature-based placemaking will not live up to the visitors’ expectations and thereby damage its potential to develop. As mentioned in the introduction, the nature area around Silkeborg has been used as outdoor settings by the local residents and visitors for many years, and a shift in its identity from being ‘The City of Cars’ to ‘The Outdoor Capital of Denmark’ does not lie far from the local residents’ perception of and identification with the place.

Secondly, despite the importance of connecting economic development with the natural asset, it often solely focuses on this aspect and neglects the focus on benefitting the local stakeholders’ quality of life as well as considering the importance of consistency to be key in obtaining a strong identity for a place based on its natural assets (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017).

These challenges enlighten how places like Silkeborg can prevent themselves from their full potential to benefit economically from linking the place with its natural assets. This is used in the analysis as a critical perspective or suggestions to the initiatives taken in the process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark.

Successful place making involves a series of complex elements. To investigate the developing process of Silkeborg, we focus on the aspects of policy implementation and branding of places under the context of the outdoors and nature that is central to the case of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. Moreover, place making is an asset-based process, with focus on the well-being of the community (Greedy et al., 2022; Hes et al., 2019; Project for Public Spaces, 2018). This is bound to the case of Silkeborg, where place making is based on its abundant natural assets located within the geographical area called ‘søhøjlandet’. The destination hosts a large amount of natural assets such as lakes, hills, and forests. It is therefore essential to elaborate on the aspect of nature-based destinations within place making.

#### 2.1.4 Nature-based placemaking and maintenance of its natural assets

There are other researchers who indicate that nature-based places can make contributions to sustainability (Winter et al. 2020). Sustainable development is defined by the United Nations to be the “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” (United Nations General Assembly 1987, 43). There are three pillars of sustainability which are the environment, society, and economy that support the process of sustainability. The total quality experience (TQE in figure 4) in nature-based placemaking (NBP in figure 4) developed by Fitzpatrick & Fontana (2017) aligns with the three sustainability pillars as shown in the figure:

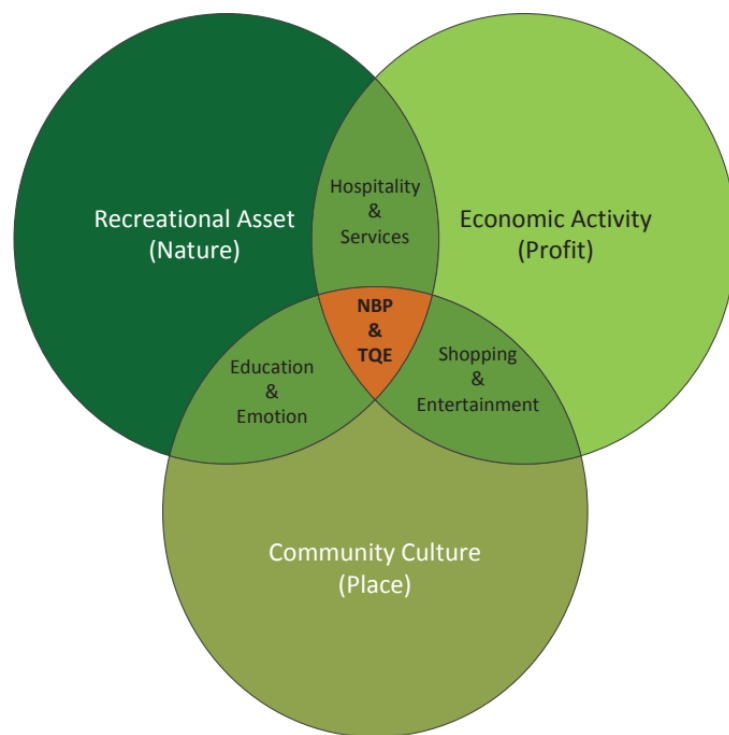


Figure 4. Illustration of nature-based placemaking (NBP)

To create a nature-based place, the prioritized value of the place ought to be the environment and the culture in the community. Therefore, the maintenance of the landscape is put to an important place; and the community needs to have a common will of accepting the place image, including the visitors in their community (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). Furthermore, the economic benefits are also part of the integrated plan in nature-based placemaking as it needs to generate job opportunities and create attractiveness for business stakeholders. A placemaking strategy that considers supply and demand in local business could help us better understand the nature-based placemaking strategies in the place and lead to economic sustainability (ibid.).

Studies have shown that to adapt to the increased user needs, nature-based places often require the public agencies of the place to preserve and maintain the natural environment, facilities and infrastructure, as well as to collaborate with stakeholders to increase their adaptive capacity in performing the policies (Winter et al., 2020). The focus of maintenance in nature-based placemaking differs on various occasions, in this case study we have encountered multiple implications of environmental education. Environmental education is understood by Wolf et al. as it includes “*a greater appreciation of wildlife by the public, both intellectually and emotionally, and enhanced understanding of their ecological needs*” (Wolf et al. 2019, 14). The values of environmental education are not only acknowledging the visitors about their impact on the site, but also informing the stakeholders about their behavior’s influence, any alternative low-impact choices, compatibility of low-impact behavior, and reducing uncalled for high expectations by visitors. In large nature areas like Silkeborg, it is difficult to keep track of or monitor visitors’ obedience. Therefore, establishing an effective visitor education strategy to activate self-restriction of visitors’ behavior is especially important (ibid.). Moreover, Fitzpatrick and Fontana (2017) stressed the importance of creating a “safe, clean, and green place” for visitors and locals, and that the safety and cleanliness initiatives should be accomplished before branding and marketing the nature-based place to the external audiences (Fitzpatrick & Fontana 2017, 39).

Overall, to be able to sustain the natural assets in regard of economic, social, and environmental aspects, local place making stakeholders need to consider the nature-based placemaking planning to ensure that business opportunities are open to local stakeholders, tourism activities are authentic to the community culture, and finally, stimulate nature users’ self-restriction on environmental impacts in the place. All constituents in maintaining the nature-based place should be integrated into the nature-based placemaking process by the place makers to develop a sustainable place. The following analytical section shows the findings of nature-based place making in Silkeborg with empirical data collected using various methods and investigates the interconnections and cooperation as a whole unit.

### **3. Methodological and philosophical approach**

This section elaborates on the methodological approaches in the research that are used to investigate the research problem of “*Silkeborg - the outdoor capital of Denmark! How is the place made, developed, and operating as a tourist destination through place making, policy implementations and place branding?*”. The section started with explaining the philosophy of

science where the paradigmatic position of us, as researchers, stands at during the research. Further, this section presents the methodological design throughout the research process by using a mix of inductive and deductive approaches. Moreover, this section aims to explain the reasons for choosing ethnographic fieldwork and the data collection methods with a mix of both qualitative and quantitative methods used triangularly to gain knowledge. Hence, gathering data through the appliance of methods of conducting semi-structured interviews, two surveys, fieldwork observations, and visual data for the analysis of this research. Moreover, the data collected from the two surveys targeting local residents and tourists are extracted as well as the semi-structured interviews are transcribed and coded for the use of discovering any possible patterns emerging about Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. Quantitative data that is both collected from the surveys and provided by local stakeholders are also applied in the analysis. This mixed-method approach for conducting data has assisted and validated the finding of this research.

### **3.1 Philosophy of science**

This research is conducted through the social constructivism paradigm and represents the essential belief that we see the world as there is no right or wrong, there is no universal truth and that it all depends on the perspective (Guba, 1990; Egholm, 2014). This means that we have found it necessary to make an exploratory study focusing on understanding how local stakeholders and tourists interact with and reflect upon Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. Hence, to understand how that of turning Silkeborg into the outdoor capital of Denmark is socially constructed through a place making- and branding process concerning how it was made, what initiatives have been implemented, and how it has impacted the place. According to Egholm (2014), it is paradigms that identify the conceptual framework, the commonly shared ideas, and understanding of the real world, which guide our actions within this study of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. These actions are necessary for the reader to comprehend based on our belief, understanding and choices made throughout the research, which are highlighted through our paradigmatic perspective.

As relativist researchers following the constructivism paradigm within ontology, we have conducted research about Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark based on our own understanding of the place regarding what we know about its existence, what the reality of Silkeborg is to us, and how we interpret it. We understand the case of Silkeborg individually, like all individuals in the world do, as we believe there exists multiple and intangible coexisting realities in the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Bryman, 2012). Therefore, we are aware that how

we see Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark is different from one another's mind as well as from our informants' reality of it, as the social constructivist approach suggests that "*we can only study our own understanding of objects, relations and characteristics*" (Egholm 2014, 25-26). Hence, reality is interpreted differently since the world we know is independent and can exist differently in different people's minds (Marsh and Furlong, 2002), considering all stakeholders in making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. As ontology is the study of existence and displays the nature of reality in the knowledge one has about the world (Scotland, 2012; Egholm, 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Guba, 1990), it is associated with our own view of interpreting our informants' reality and perception of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark, and their interaction with the place (Kuada, 2012). Hence, we find this an important element to be able to understand the purpose of different initiatives, as we believe there is no ultimate truth or falsity to how our informants define or perceive Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark, and does therefore not believe in generalizing any perception, experience or measurements (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Egholm 2014, 139).

Therefore, we work with subjectivist epistemology within the constructivism paradigm, which means that we have interacted subjectively with our informants' knowledge about how they know about Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. In this regard, we have gotten access to and discovered the underlying meanings of how their knowledge about this is produced through interpretation. Through subjectivist epistemology, we believe that realities only exist in people's minds, which can only be accessed through subjectivist interaction that aims to co-create this knowledge of individuals' reality through interpretation (Egholm, 2014; Guba, 1990). Since epistemology is the study of what constitutes knowledge (Marsh & Furlong 2002; Scotland 2012; Egholm, 2014) that aims to answer the question of "*how we know something, and how knowledge can and must be produced*" (Egholm 2014, 28), we have interpreted how our informants' makes sense of their everyday interpretations and meanings constructing their reality to understand the construction of the phenomenon of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. Therefore, the analytical findings and realities discovered from the interviews in this research are influenced both by the subjectivist interaction between us, the researchers, and our informants from Silkeborg, along with our own knowledge and interpretation of each reality, which has affected our understanding of the phenomenon of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark.

Thereby, we, as researchers have gained knowledge about how the social phenomenon of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark is socially constructed through the hermeneutic methodology, where our interpretations of this research' findings are central for us to obtain a holistic perspective of understanding the whole from its individual parts as well as the individual

parts from its whole (Egholm, 2014). Hence, as characterized by Denzin & Lincoln, hermeneutics is “*an approach to the analysis of texts that stresses how prior understandings and prejudices shape the interpretive process*” (Denzin & Lincoln 2011, 16). This means that our pre-understanding of how Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark is made and developed is applied in this research to understand the collected data and its prejudices hereof, to shape our new understanding of the phenomena through interpretation.

### **3.2 Research design**

The methodological research design of this paper is conducted through an exploratory research approach. To start with, the hermeneutic pre-understanding of the topic inspired us, as researchers, to explore deeper into the theme. Therefore, the survey targeting local residents provided us with knowledge on their perspective, which made the data received from this survey considered to guide the main theme of the research which focuses on discovering the place making development process of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark. Thus, to obtain more insights from different perspectives of the phenomenon, we also conducted data from a survey targeting tourists to gain a better understanding of the destination from an external perspective. Meanwhile, we started making interview guides for the different groups of informants, which we found both through online research and through key informants leading us to other informants to participate in our research about making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. Furthermore, we planned to go into the field in Silkeborg to increase our opportunity to understand the value of the locals through fieldwork observation and interviewing local stakeholders. Due to the time limit from the first fieldwork trip, we decided on doing a second ethnographic fieldwork trip to gain knowledge of the tourists to measure different aspects of the development of Silkeborg as a tourist destination. Thus, with the data from surveys and interviews, we started on color coding and categorizing data into three different topics that concerns the development of the outdoor capital of Denmark. The methodologically research design is illustrated in the following figure 5:

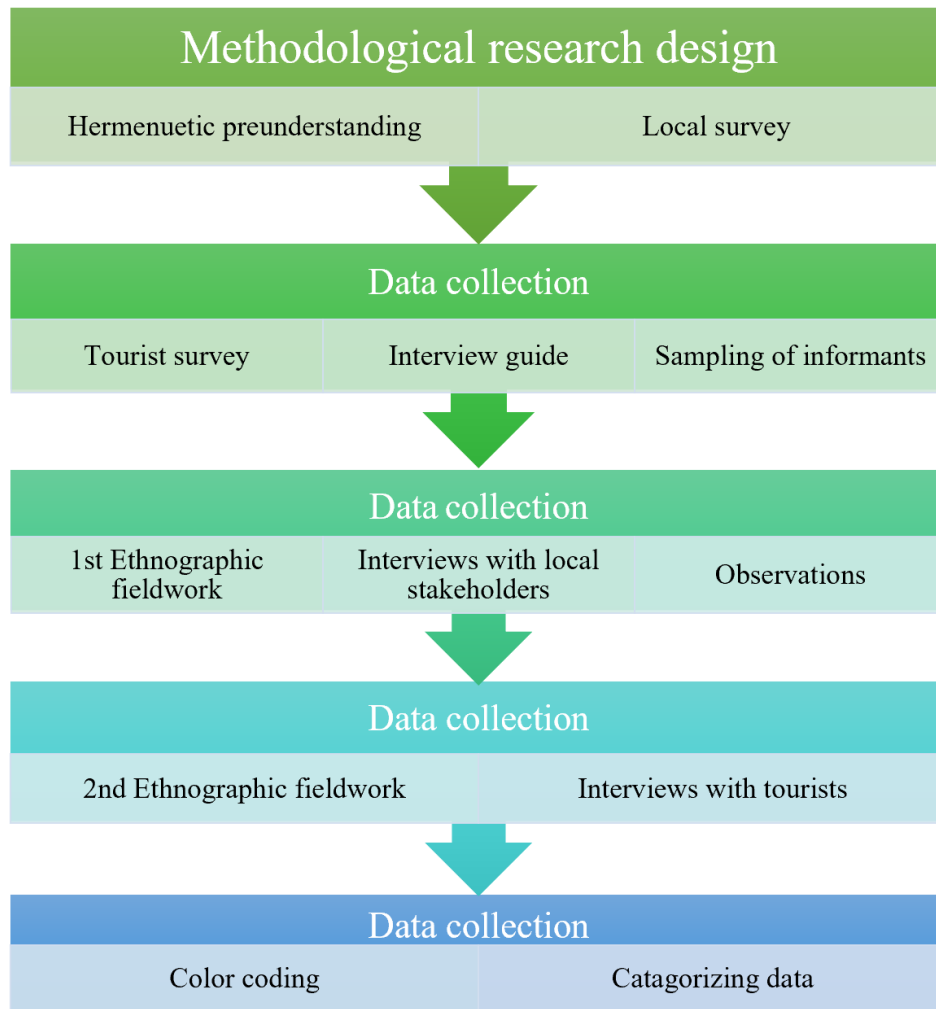


Figure 5. Methodological research design

The choices of methodological design played a significant role later in identifying and developing the theoretical framework and findings. It is conducted through a mix of inductive and deductive research logics, as explained in the next section:

### 3.2.1 Inductive and deductive research methods

The deductive research logic is usually referred to as a top-down approach where existing theory guides the research process of gathering specific data and findings (Bryman, 2012), whereas the inductive research logic is different as it follows a more bottom-up approach with the specific case and findings from the empirical material that guide and allow for patterns and theories to emerge and influence the choice hereof (Bryman, 2012; O'Reilly, 2009). The latter approach usually guides qualitative research (O'Reilly, 2009), and is significant to research guided by social constructivism, where the construction of meaning is based on human interaction identified from the empirical material and findings (Creswell, 2003). However, despite their different approaches,

O'Reilly (2003) argues they are usually intertwined because it is believed to be impossible to begin a research on objectivity solely, since projects usually begin with a pre-understanding or idea about a specific problem based on previous research or theoretical relations to it. As Ezzy (2002) argues, *“all data are theory driven. The point is not to pretend they are not, or to force the data into theory. Rather, the researcher should enter into an ongoing simultaneous process of deduction and induction, of theory building, testing and rebuilding”* (Ezzy, 2002 cited in O'Reilly 2009, 106).

Therefore, using a mix of both deductive and inductive approaches has also been applied to this research, as doing online research on Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark helped identify a theoretical relevance to place branding and implemented policies (Lew, 2017; Wyckoff 2014; Kaefer, 2021), and lastly identify a temporary research question along with sub-questions. However, while collecting empirical material through observations and interviews with key stakeholders about their current knowledge of and experience with making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, we realized the important connection to theories on place making and nature-based placemaking (Lew, 2017; PPS, 2018; Greedy et al., 2022; Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017) due to the destination's reliance on nature-based assets. Thereby, throughout the research process, we adjusted the research question and adapted the theoretical framework to the empirical findings. Hence, using the hermeneutic method of having a pre-understanding of the phenomena to obtain a new understanding through interpretation based on our knowledge and fieldwork experiences. The mix of deductive and inductive approaches implies that the process of this research is a long journey where we from time to time have needed to follow back to the beginning and reflect on the decisions we made. To complement the methodological research design the following journey map has been made to provide an overview of the process, and is illustrated in figure 6 below:

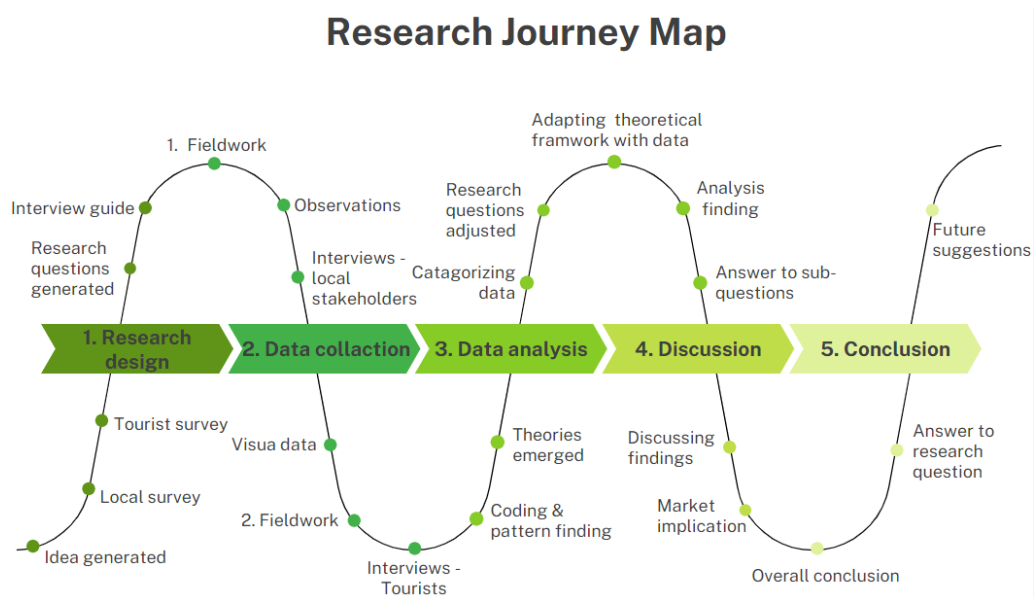


Figure 6. Research journey map

### **3.3 Ethnographic fieldwork**

Throughout this research we, as researchers, decide to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in Silkeborg two times to immerse ourselves into this specific setting to collect data through observations, interviews, and conversations to obtain a better understanding of what makes Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. The first time will be in March from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> and the second time will be in April from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> to both make interviews with our informants within the municipality, tourism businesses, and locals, find tourists to get their perspective on the use of nature areas around Silkeborg and explore nature areas and outdoor facilities offered. As argued by Dwyer et al. (2012) this is essential to analyze or describe all possible behaviors, cultural practices, and beliefs (Dwyer et al., 2012; Schensul & LeCompte, 2013). Therefore, while conducting ethnographic fieldwork, we observed how local residents and visitors were using nature and the outdoor facilities already existing by going hiking on the Silk Route, using the bathing facilities in the Almind lake when going for a swim and using the sauna, walk down the newly inaugurated green main street, and canoeing on Gudenåen (See appendix 9.4.2). Thus, to obtain a better understanding of the users' behaviors and cultural practices of using nature and the outdoor facilities in Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, we established relationships with the people in the field being researched and immersed ourselves into their daily life to understand the socially valid accounts of situations and problems (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013) authentically and more accurately.

Before going to do ethnographic fieldwork, we had an open mind to what we would experience while being there. Of course, we had the expectation to observe a destination rich in its natural resources, which lived up to our expectations. Throughout the fieldwork, we conducted interviews and observations from which the results of our findings have emerged based on our interview guide structured from our pre-understanding of how Silkeborg is turned into the outdoor capital of Denmark to obtain a new understanding of this phenomena.

#### **3.3.1 Group dynamics and researcher position**

Before conducting fieldwork for this thesis, all three of us went into the process knowing that we complement each other with our strengths and weaknesses in a good way since we have previously conducted research together. Therefore, the dynamics in the group is similar to what we have previously experienced, as we still take different positions as researchers due to our different backgrounds and our different strengths in the group used to complement each other. To outline this, two of us are Danish native speakers and one is Chinese native speakers, which makes it the

easiest for us to primarily communicate in English, despite the latter student can speak Danish at a moderate level providing us with the ability to communicate in Danish sometimes too. While beginning on the first steps of conducting interviews and surveys, we started with making all the questions in English to make sure we all agreed on the formulations. Then afterwards we translated them into Danish as the target groups answering the surveys were Danish native speakers. It made the process a little longer than otherwise, but not something that would be considered time consuming in any way, as we did it together and assured everyone agreed on the questions along the way. While conducting semi-structured interviews, our shared ability to speak Danish was beneficial for us as we conducted them with our informants in Danish to make it as comfortable for them as possible. Thus, since we all speak Danish but on different levels, it also provided all of us with the ability to observe, participate, and ask questions during the interviews, while also being open to additional questions evolving throughout the interviews to assure that the answers provided by our informants to the questions are open-ended (Schensul & LeCompte 2013, 174-175). Though, it was not possible for us to do so regarding transcribing the interviews, as it is a time-consuming step in processing the data that would take up more of our time combined. Therefore, we divided the tasks in the way that the two Danish native speaking group members were transcribing the interviews, and when finishing one at a time, the Chinese native speaking group member used a translation tool to read them through in English to still go through this step of processing the data, which further made it possible for all of us to be part of coding the data. Thereby, we complemented each other beneficially within the group through the different tasks of observing and making interviews, when sharing and discussing data after the interviews. Moreover, during the process of writing this thesis, we also each contribute with different strengths and complement each other's weaknesses that we are able to openly emphasize and discuss within the group such that we make the most of the process and eliminate any possible stumbling blocks in our writing process.

### **3.4 Data collection**

The foundation for this exploratory research is our primary and secondary data that we have collected through both qualitative and quantitative methods used together in a mixed-method approach (Byrne & Humble, 2007; Schensul & LeCompte, 2013). In this regard, qualitative methods are used to obtain a more in-depth understanding of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark rather than making generalizations of our findings. Nonetheless, quantitative data is conducted through surveys and statistics from the counters used in nature to understand the amount

of users in the destination's attractions. This means that the different data collection methods we are using overlap and complement each other to improve the triangulation of our data. The different methods chosen to collect our data are illustrated in the following figure 7:

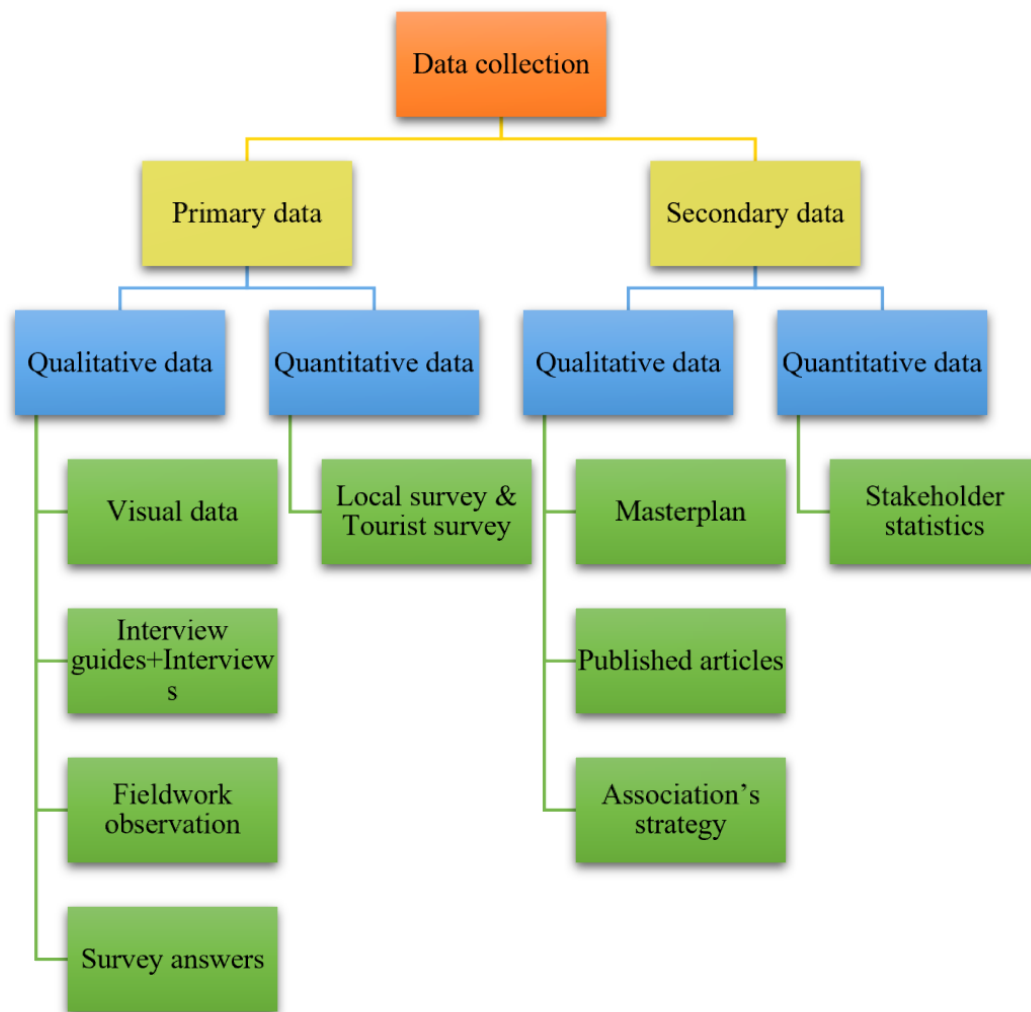


Figure 7. Data collection

Since this thesis takes an interpretive stance at epistemology within social constructivism, we aim to understand the deeper meaning and interpretation of how people make sense of their everyday life. To do so, this research mainly consists of **primary data**, which is empirical data collected by researchers themselves, to investigate a specific research question. The advantage of this collection of data is that it is possible to be tailored to provide an answer to the research question (Hox & Boeije, 2005). This data is conducted through interviews, surveys, and observations, which is elaborated further in the following sections, and contains knowledge that can be used in contributing to the existing knowledge about Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. Additionally, it can be used by other destinations to learn about what elements are central to the

plan of making a place based on its natural assets and the inclusion of local stakeholders in such a process. Since this research in Silkeborg is conducted through a mixed-method approach, the collection of the primary data can be distinguished between qualitative and quantitative data.

The **qualitative data** collection method is a tool we used to obtain insights of the phenomenon of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark from the informants' point of view (Orb et al., 2000), as it has proven its effectiveness by providing valuable results (Mack et al., 2005). This is done to gain cultural-specific information about their values, opinions, behaviors and the social contexts of this specific group and population (ibid.) through personal interaction with the relevant stakeholders (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, we have collected qualitative data through 1) interview guides, 2) visual data, 3) field observations, 4) semi-structured interviews, and 5) individual responses from surveys. Central to qualitative methods is that it is not the number of participants that is important, but the interpretation of their point of view on the phenomenon, valuing an in-depth understanding and attitudes higher (Rienecker & Jørgensen, 2017), which is qualitative researchers' primary role to understand how people make sense of their everyday life (Hox & Boeiji, 2005). Nonetheless, it is essential that the researcher is able to navigate in a both flexible and reflexive manner while still maintaining a distance between them respectively (McCracken, 1988).

**Quantitative data** is the research method used to conduct numerical data that in this research is obtained through two surveys and is analyzed along with other collected data with the aim of contributing to conclude on the research problem (Albers, 2017). These two surveys are made to obtain data on the local community's perspective and experience with Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark as well as tourists' perspective and experience with it.

Moving on to **secondary data**, which in contrast to primary data, is public data that has been collected from secondary sources for a different purpose (Johnston, 2014; Hox & Boeije, 2005), and can provide viable options that we would otherwise not be able to access due to limited time, available tools and resources (Johnston, 2014). Therefore, secondary data, which is also divided into qualitative and quantitative data, is used to supplement the primary data, and includes the qualitative data of 1) the masterplan made by the municipality that shares the strategy of implementing outdoors within place making development in Silkeborg, 2) published articles of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark in a tourism context and the merger between Visit Silkeborg and Visit Aarhus, and 3) Silkeborg outdoor business association's strategy of the local business perspective. These are all important to understand the place regarding its history, its context and plan for future development goals. Additionally, quantitative secondary data is

received from the DMO and the Danish Nature Agency based on counters installed in different parts of the destination to measure and monitor the amount of visitors coming by.

### 3.4.1 Survey

With our obtained pre-understanding of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark, we were intrigued to know about the topic from the perspective of local residents. To develop research with richer data collection and include insights from large amounts of relevant stakeholders in our research analysis, it was necessary to conduct surveys to further understand the development of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital. Survey is “*a research method which aims to generate descriptions of phenomena in the form of numbers, quantities, tables or summaries for a large number of people*” (Sunesen 2020, 70), where data collected through surveys has the advantage of reaching a large number of audiences, creating a large and wide amount of data. It is essential for researchers to realize that both qualitative and quantitative data are necessary as they can be used intertwined for the benefits of the research (Miles & Huberman, 1994a).

By conducting surveys to different groups, we have the opportunity to create a large amount of data from which can be further analyzed and provide valuable topics for the interviews we plan to conduct later on (Sunesen, 2020). We have conducted two surveys for this research study targeting the two different groups of; 1) local residents and 2) tourists, from which we collected 297 effective answers from the survey targeting local residents and 112 answers from the survey targeting tourists.

Firstly, the first survey was designed to target the local residents of Silkeborg to gain knowledge from the local perspective. This data was conducted on a digital survey service platform, and the responses were collected by using social media groups that are designated for local residents living within Silkeborg municipality. We shared our survey questions on several of Silkeborg’s local Facebook groups such as: ‘Silkeborg hjælper hinanden’ (Silkeborg helps each other) and ‘Alle os i Silkeborg’ (All of us in Silkeborg). In this survey we asked them to share their perspectives on Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark to know 1) their awareness of the brand, 2) their motivations for using outdoor facilities and activities, and 3) the inclusiveness of decision making on the local level. Further, we expected the local residents to identify any possible changes within the natural surroundings of Silkeborg.

Secondly, the survey targeting tourists was designed to extend the aspects of this research, by including tourists' perception of experiencing Silkeborg as a tourist destination. Since the survey was made to target those who have visited Silkeborg as tourists, we tried to reach out to them through Facebook groups and sites that were under the themes of traveling in Denmark, outdoor,

and 10 other local groups of the most populated cities and areas in Denmark including Copenhagen, Aarhus, Odense, Middelfart, and more. The requirement for participants was that they had to have visited Silkeborg as a tourist previously. Since conducting two surveys targeting different groups, we are able to compare the data from tourists with the data from local residents, which was analyzed to discover any complications, agreements or disagreements. The questions asked in the survey targeting tourists mainly focused on their motivation for visiting Silkeborg's nature and outdoor facilities, their perceptions of Silkeborg as a travel destination, and their awareness of the nature-based place brand.

The quantitative data is automatically managed by the survey conduction software and transformed into graphic data. Later in the data analysis process, we color coded the survey data along with interview results, where we found patterns from the coding outcomes that contributed to generate themes for the theoretical framework.

Since we are able to use different data collection strategies to provide an answer to the research question (Hox & Boeije, 2005), we have used the **mixed-method** approach, using both primary- and secondary qualitative and quantitative data. However, linking this to social constructivism, the qualitative research methods aim to rely on participants' points of view, which means that the more the questions asked to informants are open-ended about the subject, the better, such that participants are able to construct meaning of the situation, and share their views (Creswell, 2009). Hence, to understand how our informants make sense of, and subjectively interpret, the phenomenon of Silkeborg turning into the outdoor capital of Denmark, the most common qualitative research method (Taylor, 2005 in Kallio et al., 2016) of interviews has been the primary way of conducting data. Hence, the following section elaborates on this form of collecting data.

### 3.4.2 Interviews

Interviews provide us with the opportunity to gain knowledge through a hermeneutic approach by listening to informants' own descriptions of situations or potential problems (Kuada, 2012), as it is based on a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee about a specific topic, entailing their interchanged views hereof (Kvale, 1996), generating knowledge that is socially constructed. Hence, to "*understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold meaning of people's experiences*" (ibid., 2), which helps us define their role in the matter of this thesis' research question through the patterns and underlying structure discovered from the interviews. Therefore, we first scheduled 8 in-depth interviews with local stakeholder informants beforehand that emerged into 15 interviews, as we found additional relevant informants we were unaware of while conducting fieldwork. During the second field trip, we conducted 6 spontaneous interviews

with tourists that we met while exploring the destination, which were kept shorter. According to Bryman (2012), there are three different types of interviews, which are structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Linked to social constructivism, semi-structured open-ended interviews are the main type of interview used to collect data, as it provides our informants with the ability to construct meaning within the specific topic concerning the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). This means that, to get a good reflexive outcome from our informants, we have applied the interview technique of structuring the interviews with an interview guide containing open-ended questions related to the subject of matter. Hence, to allow any additional information or new domains to be explored further (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013) within the interactive conversation between the interviewers and the interviewees. In this regard, it is vital to make well-prepared interview guides, as the quality of them fundamentally influences the result of the whole study (Kallio et al., 2016). This way, the same interview guide questions used in semi-structured open-ended interviews with our informants are expected to reveal different answers, as each informant's personal experience and understanding of the same subject is different from one another (ibid.).

When conducting interviews, it is important to make the informants feel comfortable to increase the level of trust and willingness to share their thoughts (Legard et al., 2003). Therefore, we preferred to carry out the semi-structured interviews in person, and preferable in the informants' environment, such as a workplace, office, or the outdoors for local residents and tourists to make them as comfortable as possible. However, some of the interviews had to be carried out digitally through telephone or the online platforms of Teams or Zoom due to limitations of resources, availability, and time. Nonetheless, all the informants participating in this research constitute the sample of the population concerning the phenomenon of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark.

### **3.4.3 Sampling**

A sample can be categorized as a subset of the population, who are representing the larger population (Acharya et al., 2013). Since it is not possible for us, as researchers, to study the entire population due to limitations, we need to take samples. Samples in this study have been conducted based on availability and relevance and are further categorized into sampling of interview informants, and sampling of survey informants. Furthermore, Acharya et al. (2013) states that sampling techniques are broadly classified into 'probability' and 'non-probability' samples (Acharya et al., 2013; Manfreda & Vehovar, 2008). Both are represented in this study, as probability sampling is that of conducting random samples, which we practice through our surveys, as we do not have any direct limitations to who can, and who cannot participate in the surveys.

However, the two surveys conducted are directly targeting local residents of Silkeborg and tourists respectively and were found through Facebook groups. Moreover, ‘non-probability’ sampling is represented in this thesis in the way we target specific informants who have the most relevance and knowledge regarding the phenomenon of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. Moreover, this sampling technique includes purposive sampling, which is snowball sampling (ibid), meaning that key informants have led us to other informants they know would have relevant information for this research. The relevant informants selected are those representing the groups of local residents, local business stakeholders, the DMOs, private actors, local organizations and the outdoor secretary within the local municipality.

#### 3.4.4 Selection of informants

As Kvale (1996) argues, the right number of informants used in a research is case specific, and has the simple goal that it should provide enough information to be able to answer the research question. The informants collected for the semi-structured interviews are presented as following:

Name	Position	Type of Interview
<b>Local 1</b>	Local	Semi-structured on site
<b>Local 2</b>	Local	Semi-structured on site
<b>Local 3</b>	Local	Semi-structured on phone
<b>Actor 1</b>	Local & business owner	Semi-structured on site
<b>Actor 2</b>	Local & business owner	Semi-structured on site
<b>Actor 3</b>	Local & business operator	Semi-structured on site
<b>Actor 4</b>	Non-profit organization	Semi-structured on site

<b>Actor 5</b>	Local & business operator	Semi-structured online/ on site
<b>Danish Nature Agency</b>	Danish nature agency / Landlord	Semi-structured online
<b>DMO 1</b>	Former Visit Silkeborg - former DMO	Semi-structured on site
<b>DMO 2</b>	Visit Aarhus - DMO	Semi-structured online
<b>Outdoor Secretary/Private organization</b>	Project associate, Municipality	Semi-structured on site
<b>Outdoor Secretary 1</b>	Municipality	Semi-structured on site
<b>Outdoor Secretary 2</b>	Municipality	Semi-structured on site
<b>Outdoor Secretary 3</b>	Municipality	Semi-structured on site
<b>Tourist 1</b>	On Mountain Bikes	Semi-structured on site
<b>Tourist 2</b>	In an Autocamper	Semi-structured on site
<b>Tourist 3</b>	In a Camper Wagon	Semi-structured on site
<b>Tourist 4</b>	Group of friends at cabin	Semi-structured on site
<b>Tourist 5</b>	In an Autocamper	Semi-structured on site
<b>Tourist 6</b>	Hikers on Silkeruten	Semi-structured on site

Figure 8. Informant overview

As identified in the table, we have a total of 15 informants as local stakeholders and 6 informants that are tourists. However, the different stakeholders included different groups of informants to be able to develop a more reflexive analysis representing the different actors' voices and values regarding the process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. Therefore, the following will describe the selected relevant stakeholder groups:

#### *The outdoor secretary*

The outdoor secretary is the key policy-maker in developing Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. They are part of the local municipality and take charge of outdoor related projects in Silkeborg (Outdoor Silkeborg, n.d.).

#### *The DMO*

The Destination Management Organization (DMO) in Silkeborg is currently Visit Aarhus. However, at the beginning of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, Silkeborg had its own tourism office, Visit Silkeborg, who is the former official DMO that initiated the outdoor brand (Axelholm, 2019).

#### *Actors of local businesses and organizations*

Local businesses are tourism business owners or organizations in Silkeborg. Their businesses are outdoor activity based and are located both in the city center of Silkeborg and out in the natural areas. Moreover, the local organizations, such as outdoor institute, which is a non-profit organization aiming to be the leading national and international development- and knowledge sharing actor (Outdoor Institute, n.d.), and Silkeborg outdoor business aiming for developing and unfolding Silkeborg's commercial potential as the outdoor capital of Denmark (Silkeborg outdoor business community, n.d.)

#### *The Danish Nature Agency*

The Danish Nature Agency is a public agency that manages tasks in forests, natural areas and along the shores of Denmark, both regarding its maintenance, nature guidance, operation and care and outdoor life (Danish Nature Agency, n.d.). Their tasks are to create the greatest possible value for society in terms of good conditions for outdoor recreation, nature protection and efficient operation of the Agency's forests and other natural areas. The informant from the Danish Nature Agency works in Silkeborg and is familiar with the natural areas in Silkeborg.

### Local residents

Local residents are informants living in the Silkeborg area, who participate in outdoor related activities in Silkeborg's nature surroundings. They are identified as frequent outdoor users in Silkeborg.

### Tourists

Tourists are informants who appeared in the Silkeborg area while doing hiking, biking and other outdoor activities. They were chosen randomly as we passed by them on the streets in different areas of the destination during the second ethnographic fieldwork.

### **3.4.5 Fieldwork observation**

An integrated part of our research, while conducting ethnographic fieldwork, was to make fieldwork observations while visiting Silkeborg two times. One was in March from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> 2022 and the second time was in April from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> 2022. As an important action within tourism research studies, Hall (2011) argues it is vital for researchers to get into '*the real world*' to be able to connect theoretical knowledge with practical phenomena (Hall 2011, 7). Therefore, considering authenticity, the convenience of field observation data and principles of problem-based studies (Kolmos et al. 2004, 12), we immersed ourselves into the place by experiencing the outdoor activities that are offered for both local residents and tourists in the destination and conducted interviews with our informants. In this regard, we visited nature areas in Silkeborg such as the Gudenå river, the main street of Silkeborg, we hiked different trails such as the Silk Route and used outdoor facilities by the lakes for bathing and sauna. Furthermore, we rented a canoe and went sailing on the Gudenåen river (See Appendix 9.4). With an agile course of action, we were open to recommendations of possible outdoor activities in the area. Recommendations are mostly received from participants in our semi-structured interviews. Hence, to keep records of our fieldwork observations, all three of us were taking field notes during the participation, from which we were creating a timeline and notes afterward. Moreover, visual data in the form of photography were collected during the fieldwork observations, which later will be used for photo elicitation and analysis (see section 3.4.7 Visual data). Another important method used in this thesis regarding fieldwork observations, is that of participant observation.

### **3.4.6 Participant observation**

*"Participant observation is perhaps the easiest method in the world to use since it is ubiquitous, and we can all already do it. From the moment we are born we are, in various ways, observing*

*the world around us and trying to participate in it*” (Eric Laurier in Laurier 2010, 116). This means that participant observation involves spending time at the destination made research on, with the participants or culture being there (Laurier, 2010). As the name states, participant observation is a method from which we, as researchers, are spending time participating in the activities done by our informants. However, despite knowing that our informants were using nature and the outdoor facilities, we were not able to participate with them specifically. Nonetheless, we went using the outdoor facilities along with many other local residents we could see were using them too, to get the full experience. For instance, as we participated in both bathing in the Almind lake from the bathing bridge facility and joined the sauna established at the place, where we were sitting together with the local outdoor users, observing their reactions of jumping into the lake and back in the sauna repeatedly.

### **3.4.7 Visual data**

As outdoor activities are often associated with activities performed in ‘spectacular scenic nature settings’ (Bell et al., 2007), some of the observations during our fieldwork would be described better with a photograph than using words. Besides collecting data from our observations and interviews, there are other supplementary ways of revealing information about how local outdoor users think and feel about the topic. Visual data can be considered as a method for conducting fieldnotes (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013), which can further be observed in Appendix 9.4.2. The visual data collection for this paper can furthermore be analyzed and compared with other collected data, both qualitatively, quantitatively, and through mixed methods (ibid.).

## **3.5 Triangulation of knowledge**

Triangulation of knowledge means using multiple theories, methods, and data sets within the study that combined enhance the criteria of quality. Triangulation within social science is research that *“refers to a process by which a researcher wants to verify a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with or, at least, do not contradict it.”* (Miles and Huberman, 1994 in Meijer et al 2002, 145). We have been using a mixed-method approach and using a mixture of theories in the veins of place making, place branding, and policy implementation. To obtain a better understanding of the research question, the validity of the collected data can be enhanced through the cross-verification that occurs when conducting triangulation. Since this research is consistent with multiple methods, theories, and data sets, validate triangulation is used as an efficient tool for analyzing our collected data and comparing our findings with relevant theories available.

Triangulation can be further categorized in two veins which are internal triangulation and external triangulation. Internal triangulation occurs when we through a mixed-method approach compare our qualitative findings from our semi-structured interviews with the quantitative data of our surveys. On the other hand, external triangulation occurs when we are comparing our findings with external sources, such as previously made studies on the same topics and problems and compare these with our primary findings.

### **3.6 Analytical strategy**

As the research follows the hermeneutic approach, our pre-understanding of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark is applied to comprehend the data and further, enrich our new knowledge that is reshaped by analytical findings (Egholm, 2014). The analytical strategy guiding this master thesis is first to collect all our data from surveys, fieldwork observations and transcriptions of interviews. The analytical strategy is used as a tool to interpret our data to find patterns of themes for analysis through color coding and categorizing. Thus, one of the strategies we have approached was to start with our quantitative data collection. The two surveys targeting local residents and tourists generated data with different perspectives, which were analyzed in comparison to one another, where important responses were highlighted for further analytical use. The two surveys have been closed to the public after a suitable amount of time. Another strategy of our data analysis was that our semi-structured interviews have been transcribed and color coded to categorize and identify the different patterns of themes and problems that were repeatedly represented across the interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994b). The color-coding process gives us, as researchers, a good overview of the data, to obtain a holistic perspective of the data. The main themes of 1) place making, 2) policy implementation, and 3) place branding that were generated from coding helped us turn data into findings, discussions, and market implications in the research.

### **3.7 Ethics**

Throughout this research, several ethical considerations have been crucial. As the destination is a nature-based area, we were aware of our impact on nature and that the place remained in the same order as before our visits. We uncovered the topics and research questions in a neutral manner and used the obtained knowledge responsibly. Ethics is in its simplicity about what is right and wrong, and we, as researchers, seek to investigate the place without causing any complications between different stakeholders (Bernard, 2017). It can potentially make an influence on future collaboration opportunities both internally between local stakeholders and externally between destinations.

Thus, it is necessary for us, as researchers, to keep informants anonymous as they requested. This can prevent complications between different actors who are associated with the topic, by not stating or publishing our informants' political attitudes and values.

Another ethical consideration is regarding the respect of informants being key stakeholders such as local governmental actors or DMOs representing their field of work and political attitudes in making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. Therefore, prior to all the interviews, our informants were asked to sign research consent forms which stated that they were participating in the interview voluntarily and gave us their permission to record the interview for transcriptions and coding. Such a form was not presented to the tourist-informants, as they were not planned and happened spontaneously. However, we did ask for permission to record the conversation before conducting the interview. This leaves the place unaffected so that future researchers can continue their study in Silkeborg without any obstacles by previous researchers.

### **3.8 Reflexivity**

Foucault (1990) suggested that “*critical thinking is more than just an academic tool, it is a way of life that helps the subject to develop an ethical framework*” (Foucault 1990, 57). Here, the approach to investigate the research will acknowledge how this research has managed to be subjective, reflexive, and critical (Mortari, 2015). Reflecting on the research process, we have been reminded to remain critical when analyzing theories and data. This reflexivity enabled us, as researchers, to be aware of the problematic issues even when actors of Silkeborg were not aware of them existing. Despite applying reflexivity throughout this research, we reflected on our position as researchers as well. For the informants, we made sure that they felt comfortable and created a trustworthy environment during the interviews. Considering the sensitivity of some of the informants' occupations, the interviews remain completely anonymous. However, we did not manage to be aware of the neutrality in some of the follow-up questions as they were not planned in the interview guides. For instance, when conducting the interview with one of the local actors, the following question “Now you mentioned the collaboration with DMO, do you think they are doing enough work in providing services for tourists?”, which is a leading question with indications that could possibly affect the answer of the informant.

### **3.9 Limitations**

Limitations within a study could represent weaknesses within a research design that has the ability to influence the outcomes and conclusions of the research (Ross & Bibler-Zaidi, 2019). The

researchers of a study have an obligation to the academic community to present complete and honest limitations of a presented study (ibid.). In this regard, this section states the three limitations for this research study which are: 1) time, 2) seasonality, and 3) economics.

This research has been conducted for a period of four months from February to May 2022. In this regard, the time-period has been limited for collecting primary data due to the schedule of the master program. Collecting primary data over a longer period of time would give a more precise indication of the reality. Another limitation of this tourism research is seasonality, as a part of this study was to investigate the place making process of a destination regarding tourism. The ethnographic fieldwork took place in low season without many tourists present at the destination. Therefore, tourists and visitors were difficult to find and collect data from, which might affect reaching out to larger amounts of tourist informants and broaden the tourist perspectives on the destination. Performing this research during the high season could strengthen the data collection and finding's credibility. Lastly, this study was limited by economic factors. We, as researchers, have received no funding for this thesis, and neither has it been made in collaboration with other actors. Due to this, the expenses associated with the conduction of this thesis have been funded by ourselves. Moreover, the amount of resources available for data collection has been limited, as well as the duration and amount of times we have been able to visit the destination for conducting ethnographic fieldwork.

## 4. Findings and analysis of the outdoor capital of Denmark

This section analyzes the process of making the place of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark based on the overall key theme of place making discovered from color coding the interviews findings and collected data. This is discovered along with the three additionally discovered themes of 1) nature-based placemaking and outdoors, 2) Nature-based place making and policy implementation and 3) Branding within nature-based place making, as illustrated in the following figure. These themes aim to examine why the place of Silkeborg is made into the outdoor capital of Denmark as well as how the elements of nature-based resources, policy implementation and branding are essential in the development of the place. This figure will be used throughout the analysis to structure its direction along with the sub-questions of this thesis.

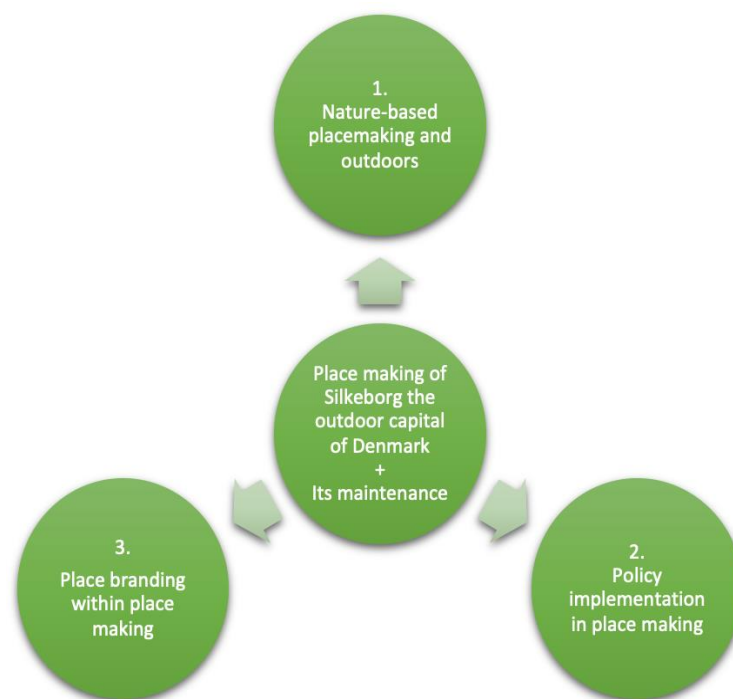


Figure 9. Main themes identified from findings central to the analysis

This section starts with the history of the development processes that occurred regarding Silkeborg becoming the outdoor capital of Denmark, and then goes in depth with how the different informants and survey participants perceive and have experienced Silkeborg having this label. Moreover, it is identified how the place is developing regarding the inclusion of local community, outdoor facilities, collaboration, and branding practices with the aim of improving its welfare, knowledge, growth and educational level on nature. Lastly, this section analyzes how the nature-

based placemaking process has impacted the destination in different ways identified through monitoring and measurements.



## 4.1 Discovering and designing a new brand

The beginning of changing the destination brand of Silkeborg, who claimed themselves to be the outdoor capital of Denmark back in 2017, is the first step in the process of changing and thereby making Silkeborg a new place. It is not the situation that Silkeborg is a completely new place to be made, but since they are radically changing the destination brand from ‘the city of cars’ to ‘the outdoor capital of Denmark’, it is essential to investigate the elements shaping this nature-based destination in a new way and the reason why they did it.

By color coding the collected data, the findings discovered that the first main theme of place making and nature-based placemaking is related to the designing and process of creating the brand of Silkeborg to be the outdoor capital of Denmark, and is guided by the sub-question of: *How did Silkeborg discover and design the process for making the brand of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark?* Therefore, the theory on place making and nature-based placemaking and their interrelation are relevant to analyze why Silkeborg is made the outdoor capital of Denmark and how they managed to do it.

However, as a first step in scratching the surface, we, as researchers, read about Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark online and found it necessary to make a survey for the local community asking about how they perceive the place of Silkeborg to get a better understanding of how we could dig deeper into the case of how it became the outdoor capital of Denmark. Therefore, this analysis is structured by a mix of methodological approach along with a thematic approach developing along the way.

### 4.1.1 Creation of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark

Just as Rome was not built in one day, this thesis is diving into the process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. Through our findings, it was discovered that the design process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark started in 2013, when the tourist management office hired a new manager to work with making a change for Silkeborg due to experiencing a large decrease in overnight visiting number in the area and identify the reasons for it. Therefore, this emphasizes the theme of how the brand of the outdoor capital of Denmark was created and is mainly influenced by the former tourist manager in VisitSilkeborg, who discovered several key issues when looking deeper into VisitSilkeborg’s operations. According to the findings, the first

issue discovered was that Visit Silkeborg were not cooperating with the local tourism businesses, as they were divided into ‘us’ and ‘them’, with the tourist office workers being ‘us’ and the tourism businesses being ‘them’. Therefore, she decided to challenge this self-understanding and shifted their focus onto the most important customer. Additionally, the second issue concerns how several tourism businesses in Silkeborg could have sort of a spoiled attitude towards the need for attracting new tourists, by not putting any effort into it, as they saw themselves as an attractive destination that people would be appealed to find anyway (DMO 2, Appendix 9.1.11). Related to this, the outdoor secretary, who represents the municipal level in this thesis, also describes how they experienced Silkeborg in a similar way when saying:

*“Silkeborg has also for a long time been a bit of a ‘sleeping’ town.”*

[Outdoor Secretary 1]

Hence, this issue indicates that Silkeborg must have been stagnating in their tourism development process without knowing which direction to go. Following these perspectives, the new tourism manager at the time noticed a lack of a shared identity and motivation for developing tourism in the area among all stakeholders involved and started looking into Silkeborg’s tourism potential. As Fitzpatrick & Fontana (2017) states, a strong and shared identity is not shaped by single entities, but through a commonly recognized understanding of it, which the tourist manager of Visit Silkeborg is trying to figure out what could be. Thus, after being inspired on a tourism study trip to Edinburgh in 2014, by listening to a presentation made by a colleague coming from the outdoor capital of the UK, she started to consider the possibility of leading Silkeborg in this direction. Hence, indicating the beginning of designing the place of Silkeborg in a new way from a tourism perspective.

In 2015, along with this consideration of what Silkeborg should become, the tourist manager participated in creating a strategy for 12 municipalities within a Business Region Aarhus network and started to believe it could benefit Silkeborg as a tourist destination to work with other destinations to reveal its full tourism potential. This network has also been the springboard towards Visit Silkeborg’s merge with Visit Aarhus in 2019 (Axelholm, 2019), which will be elaborated later in the analysis.

The first steps of moving into the direction of becoming the outdoor capital of Denmark was to change the customer types from tourists to the local tourism businesses in the area (DMO 2, Appendix: 9.1.14). Therefore, Visit Silkeborg started working together with the tourism businesses to create a stronger partnership leading to a more united tourism destination with common values,

as shared values are a key characteristic in making successful collaboration (Kaefer, 2021). Through these common values, Visit Silkeborg aimed to uncover elements of a new and strong brand identity that could represent the destination as a brand, which aligns with Kaefer's (2021) argument that a place brand should be characterized by a shared idea and be a promise to both residents, tourists and businesses that ultimately refers to a place's uniqueness of its identity, personality, distinctive character and DNA. Therefore, along with making the place of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, the process also includes elements of internal branding from the beginning, where internal branding among local stakeholders is at focus as it is key to internally shape the place's identity (Wheeler et al., 2011). Nonetheless, adding this to the place of Silkeborg from a tourism perspective, Sofield et al. (2017) argues that the identity is typically used within tourism in the branding of a place to construct an attractive destination to visit and live in. To do so, they made a branding process inviting the new customers to be part of it, as the following quote emphasizes:

*“We involved our new customers, who are actors in the tourism industry, so we were about 35-40 people part of making a branding process, where we all wrote everything we knew people talked about and believed belong to Silkeborg down onto boards, (...) and then we asked them to rate, like, if you look from the sky down and should notice Silkeborg, what would be the first thing their eyes would notice, (...) and it turned out that everything that had to do with nature and to be active in nature was rated much higher than anything else combined.”*

[DMO 2, Visit Aarhus]

Based on this finding, this group of customers that Visit Silkeborg invited to this branding process of making a possible identity, helped describe how Silkeborg is perceived. As noticed, they ended up rating everything that had to do with nature the highest, leading to the result of having the shared idea it should be the most relevant element of the identity. As she emphasizes:

*“This thing with ‘out in nature’ is so present that it cannot be ignored, and it turned into something we called ‘outdoor’.”*

[DMO 2, Visit Aarhus]

This finding made it possible for the DMO at the time to start shaping a tourism brand identity in the direction of using the outdoor nature-based assets, as it clearly cannot be ignored. As argued by Kaefer (2021), a place brand should ultimately refer to a place's uniqueness and distinctive

character, which in this case is definitely related to the nature-based assets. Following the characteristics of creating a place based on its available resources (PPS, 2018; Greedy et al., 2022), this is the first time Visit Silkeborg realizes how the natural resources located around Silkeborg could be used in the process of forming the identity of Silkeborg potentially as the outdoor capital of Denmark. As Fitzpatrick & Fontana (2017) argues, the nature-based resources available in a place are useful in connecting and adding on to the place making process. Therefore, this branding process initiated by Visit Silkeborg is essential for the design of the place and its identity, starting with aligning the internal values by including local tourism actors to change the brand of Silkeborg into something they can associate with. This way, they started to make the place of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark through a bottom-up approach with the aim of creating a stronger sense of place based on its natural assets (Lew, 2017; Coates & Seamon, 1984; Othman et al., 2013; Wortham-Galvin, 2008).

However, it was not necessarily an easy task to move forward with, as the tourism manager at the time explained, she was conflicting with the board of directors about who should be the decision-maker in this process. Nonetheless, she chose to move forward with it herself in 2017 when saying:

*“At the annual general meeting, I chose to introduce the fact that now we were going the outdoor way, without informing the board of directors first. (...) I had to take a chance on it and say now we go outdoors, like it or not.”*

[DMO 2, Visit Aarhus]

Here, she launched Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark, and took this chance despite disagreeing with the vice president. However, she ensured they moved in this new direction, otherwise they could have continued to abound around the opinions of how Silkeborg could be so many other things such as having its culture and its city life, not leading the destination in a specific direction. At this annual general meeting, Silkeborg had just gotten a new city council, who luckily immediately started tapping into this, as she explains:

*“We just got a new city council (...) that wrote it into the vision of the coming four years of their work. (...) It was actually there that we started to realize that ‘the outdoor capital of Denmark’ is a good identity for a tourist area, but maybe it could be much more than that.”*

[DMO 2, Visit Aarhus]

Related to this, the outdoor secretary also emphasizes their experience in the following quote:

*“Visit Silkeborg had a vision strategy work where they came to the conclusion that we should try and find a new profile for Silkeborg and the highlands about how we can attract tourists. There they came up with what was called ‘Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark’ and it was to build on everything we know about the resources available and the values that lie in it.”*

[Outdoor secretary 2]

*“It really starts back in 2017 as a tourist vision as the outdoor capital of Denmark, and then it is that after this meeting, that everyone can look into it and that it makes sense.”*

[Outdoor secretary 1]

As DMO 2 states, the launch of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark was synchronized with the time of the new city council establishment, who believed in it and made it part of their vision from the beginning, as they could see its potential for the destination, both as a tourist area and beyond. The support from the new city council was therefore the beginning of a collaboration that is not only strengthening the brand in the eyes of tourism, but these values and vision are incorporated into a higher political level to also strengthen the internal identity of the destination (Kaefer, 2021). Followed by the finding from the outdoor secretary, they also agreed that this new profile of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark was meant to be built on the natural assets available in the surrounding area as well as the values in it. In this case, as Greedy et al. (2022) and Fitzpatrick & Fontana (2017) argues, nature-based placemaking is part of connecting and cultivating the nature-based resources into a place making process by building on top of it in utilizing the community of Silkeborg’s natural assets to develop and bolster the community vibrancy. As the last quote emphasizes, the launch of the identity in 2017 opened up the ability for everyone in the local community to tap into it as it made sense to do so. Hence, meaning that the nature-based resources are essential in developing the community in the direction where their values align with the values of the place (Wheeler et al., 2011) as the outdoor capital of Denmark.

On top of this, they got permission to make it an open option for everyone sharing the values and motivation for being part of the path of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark together with the tourist office, as she explains:

*“Actually, we got a license to make it like, no matter who like the project, those were the people we would go with, like a broad ‘who in town wants to tap into it, we will do it together’”*

[DMO 2, Visit Aarhus]

Thereby, the process of designing and making the place of Silkeborg into the outdoor capital of Denmark slowly took shape with both the motivated local tourism businesses and the city council tapping into this new vision, which indicates that this brand is something more actors in Silkeborg can identify themselves with as well as the destination. These early steps also influence the destination’s authenticity (Kaefer, 2021).

However, in the following process of forming the direction for Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark, a group who originally makes adventure races reached out to the new tourist manager, made her part of their steering group, and encouraged her to develop this outdoor strategy to include all local stakeholders. She spent around a year to make this outdoor attraction strategy, using her inspiration from the trip to England back in 2014, identified several characteristics of who were they going to earn money on, and defined the special interests within outdoor that tourists could make use of (DMO 2, Visit Aarhus). As *“you only have one chance to make a good first impression”* argued by Fitzpatrick & Fontana (2017, 8), it becomes essential to align what the destination has to offer with the identified target group of a destination, which she defined to be *‘the high-consumer exerciser with a penchant to the good life’*. This should make it easier to understand that based on Silkeborg nature-based resources close to the town, they are overall targeting the everyday busy-life people who can expect to combine their vacation or smaller trips in the outdoor surroundings of Silkeborg with living the good life in the city center, to balance the desire for exercising and pleasure. Therefore, since the brand started as a tourism- and branding strategy, which according to the master plan from 2017-2022 was to attract more outdoor enthusiasts and give outdoor tourism a boost (Masterplan, 2020), the new identity is up until this point identified to be clear and well-shaped, as the following quote emphasizes:

*“We have a very clear identity to play into the larger pool with, so the idea was actually that we should play Denmark’s outdoor capital into the merge.”*

[DMO 2, Visit Aarhus]

This indicates that the purpose of making this new identity by Visit Silkeborg was to ensure that Silkeborg would be recognized as a place and remain on the map for tourists to find, and thereby

benefit the place of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark after the merger between Visit Silkeborg and Visit Aarhus in 2019 (Axelholm, 2019).

However, alongside with the tourist office working on the outdoor strategy, the outdoor secretary started doing the same in 2017 with making their first outdoor strategy for the municipality. They did it in a more traditional way of including how they could ensure the facilities of having shelters, mountain bike trails and hiking trails, indicating that the brand not only taps into tourism but into different parts of the community of Silkeborg.

Based on the findings regarding making the design and brand of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark, the following figure 10 provides a timeline of this process to understand how it was made as well as how long it can take, and for other destinations to be inspired from it:

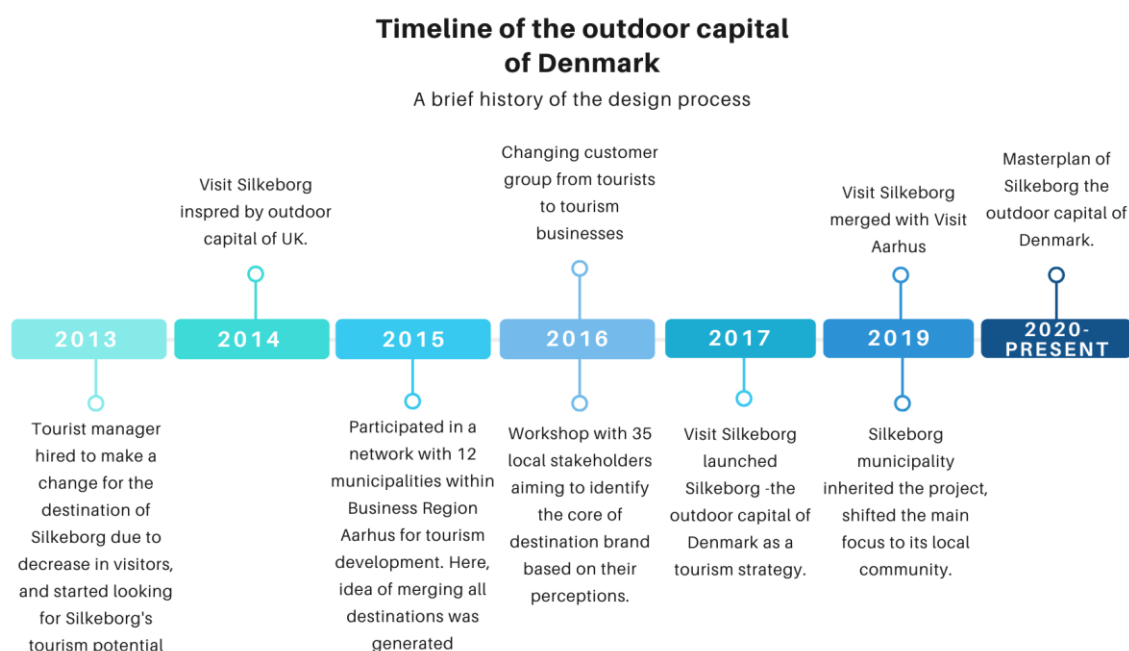


Figure 10. Timeline of the design process

On behalf of this timeline and that of having the local tourist manager's and the outdoor secretary's perspective on how they see Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark, this research also aimed to discover the local residents' and tourists' perspective of this new brand today in 2022, which the following section emphasizes on.

#### 4.1.2 Perception of the outdoor capital of Denmark

Despite the aim of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark is still in the beginning of the process, this thesis dives into how the local residents and tourists perceive this new brand up

until this point, to get a more holistic understanding of how this new brand is performing. Therefore, we asked the local residents in Silkeborg the questions of “*Do you consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark?*” through survey 1, where we got a total of 297 responses, and discovered how their perceptions are split in two, as shown in the following figure:

### Do you consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark?

Local survey 1 (%)



Figure 11. Do you consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark? Survey 1

The finding shows that 49.5% of the local residents of Silkeborg consider Silkeborg to be the outdoor capital of Denmark, which indicates the work done by the outdoor secretary to create awareness of the brand internally within the local community to some extent has succeeded. However, it is an interesting finding that 44.4% do not consider Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. Hence, according to Greedy et al. (2022), nature-based placemaking is an emerging community development framework, in which the fairly divided opinion among local residents regarding whether Silkeborg is considered the outdoor capital of Denmark can be further investigated to understand. In this survey question it was possible for the locals to reply with a comment to share their opinion with us, which we got a total of 22 comments containing a mix of opinions both for and against whether they consider Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. Some of the local residents who do not see Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark commented that:

*“If it supplies tourism, and therefore gives ‘money in the bank’, then the municipality calls it whatever they want.”*

*“For me, it is just the branding of the municipality - but the nature and the opportunities in the area are great.”*

*“It is a branding thing, us who live here every day don’t feel it as much.”*

*“It is a horrible brand that does not live up to what the PR- people are trying to sell.”*

*“Was it not just a neat branding idea? For me, Silkeborg is still ‘The city of cars’  
- so the old branding is well stuck in me.”*

[Local residents, survey 1]

According to the first statement, the local resident assumes that the municipality is willing to call the destination whatever it wants, as long as it generates money. Hence, showing a low level of trust to the municipality and their role in making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. It further indicates that the local resident does not fully believe in the brand either, as it is seen as a brand just made for tourism. The following two local residents share this perspective by stating that to them it is just a brand in itself, and not something they associate themselves with or adopt, as it has not changed how they feel about the place. Though, some participants agree that the natural surroundings are great, which indicates they share some values connecting with the brand of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark. However, one participant strongly disagrees with the brand, stating that the brand is ‘horrible’ and that the brand cannot live up to what is promised by the ‘PR-people’, who in this case is the municipality being in charge of the internal branding to the local community. Nonetheless, the last informant emphasizes how strong the previous brand of Silkeborg as ‘the city of cars’ has been, since the participant still identifies the place with being so. This is an important finding in understanding why it can be difficult for Silkeborg to make the local community identify themselves with the new brand if the previous brand has been equally strong despite its different values. These comments emphasize how and why not all residents support and believe in the new place brand, which is a perspective that should be considered in the place making process to prove for the local residents that it is not just a place branding strategy and vision externally directed towards tourists, but also a true desire to improve the surrounding environment and thereby the residents’ quality of life, as emphasized by Sofield et al. (2017) and Project for Public Spaces (2018). Hence, indicating that the previous brand of being ‘the city of cars’ is not benefiting the local community in the same way the new brand has the potential to do. However, some of our informants from the semi-structured interviews also share the perspective of not seeing Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark, which was revealed when they answered the question: *“Do you see Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark?”*, as the following quotes emphasize:

*“No I do not. I do not think it makes a big difference. There is a lot of outdoor life  
in Silkeborg. It has always been there and it was also there before.”*

[Local 3]

*“We are not the outdoor capital, it is just something we have made up. It is just somebody who made it up, and then we are called it. We have been given a lot from nature, but we are not better than anyone else. (...) if you count the number of shelters, fireplaces and outdoor support points, then we are far behind.”*

[Local 1]

In these quotes, local 3 clearly does not associate Silkeborg with being the outdoor capital of Denmark. However, he admits that there is a lot of outdoor life in Silkeborg, but not something that has been a result of Silkeborg becoming the outdoor capital of Denmark. Furthermore, local 1 disagrees with the idea of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital, instead it is a made-up title and does not consider Silkeborg to be corresponding to the quantity of its outdoor facilities compared to other destinations. This means that despite Silkeborg claiming themselves to be the outdoor capital of Denmark, this informant strongly disagrees due to the lack of facilities offered, which could indicate that the place making process of providing quality places and environment based on its nature-based assets has not been sufficient. According to Fitzpatrick and Fontana (2017) the natural environment is essential to connect and cultivate the place making process in creating the quality places within the destination to bolster the community vibrancy. Therefore, it reveals the new finding and understanding of the process that there could be room for making smaller projects focusing on improving and expanding the facilities offered in the destination to enhance its promise to tourists and increase its attractiveness for people to live in and visit (Wyckoff et al., 2015; Sofield et al., 2017). Nonetheless, these quotes indicate that there is not an overall agreement that Silkeborg is considered the outdoor capital of Denmark by the local residents, despite a small majority among those considering it to be indicating it is progressing. Taking into consideration that the brand has only existed for 5 years, it could seem like a good indication that they with time could succeed with a greater number of residents to associate themselves with the place brand. However, just as the ‘yes’ and ‘no’ options show signs of disagreements, there are also residents commenting that they do consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. This can be observed from the following survey quote, which says:

*“Can it be anything else, with the nature we have?”*

[Local resident, survey 1]

This respondent simply cannot imagine Silkeborg to be anything else, due to the nature surrounding the area, and therefore accept and agree with Silkeborg being the Outdoor capital of Denmark. Although quantitative data collection is great for covering a larger group of participants

with a numeric approach (Albers, 2017), some of the data conducted from semi-structured interviews with our informants also has a shared perspective of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark. When asking our informants whether they think Silkeborg can live up to the status of being the outdoor capital of Denmark, they state the following:

*“Absolutely, I can not imagine anywhere else in Denmark that could bear that name.”*

[Local 2]

*“I see Silkeborg as a place with potential to become it, because there are so large and rich forest- and lake areas around the city making it possible. Both to navigate in the forests but also between them on gravel roads, country roads and on the lakes. So yes I do”*

[Danish Nature Agency]

The first informant clearly identifies Silkeborg as being the outdoor capital, as she believes there is no other place in Denmark that could live up to this status. The second informant from the Danish Nature Agency also agrees that Silkeborg has the potential to bear the status of being the outdoor capital of Denmark. Thus, indicating there is potential to improve the destination and its brand of being the outdoor capital of Denmark.

In this regard, it becomes evident that there is a disagreement between the local residents of Silkeborg, whether they associate Silkeborg with being the outdoor capital of Denmark or not, as both for and against are represented, and both quantitative and qualitative data show overall disagreements from a local perspective.

On the other hand, our findings from investigating the acceptance of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark from a local perspective, this can be further analyzed by looking into the thoughts from a governmental lence. Here, we asked the outdoor secretary about their thoughts regarding how they think local residents of Silkeborg are accepting the fact that Silkeborg is the outdoor capital of Denmark, and how they think the local residents have adopted the status. The answer was:

*“(...) So no, we are not finished with this part at all. We are on our way, but it would be a mistake to neglect that we have reached the finish line. This doesn't happen overnight.”*

[Outdoor secretary 2]

In this statement, the outdoor secretary emphasizes that they have not reached the finish line yet, regarding a full acceptance of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark. Additionally, they state that this is a slow process that does not happen overnight. In this regard, it indicates that the municipality is aware they might not have reached the goal of making the overall community associate the destination with being the outdoor capital of Denmark, but they are not worried about it as they are aware that such a process takes time.

While conducting our ethnographic fieldwork, we asked the same question to the tourists we could find. Once again, we could conclude that the answers varied. This can be observed by the following answers:

*“No, we figured out later, we have just been confirmed that it was an outdoor place.”*

[Tourist 1]

*“No, well, I think it suits well, because I think that Silkeborg is a nice place, a fine city and it is just amazing here.”*

[Tourist 2]

*“No. I really don't know much about it. I have come here for work.”*

[Tourist 5]

According to these responses, it is clear that our informants did not know about Silkeborg being the Outdoor capital of Denmark. However, we got the feeling during our semi-structured interviews that it did not come as chok. On the other hand, we also met tourists who were familiar with Silkeborg being the Outdoor capital of Denmark:

*“Yes, we are aware of that.”*

[Tourist 3]

*“Yes, we knew that. (...) I have been working here, so that is where I knew about it. Back then, they were talking a lot about it, it was something they were very proud of.”*

[Tourist 4]

*“I knew. (Us: how did you hear about that?). I was Googling a bit about Silkeborg, and then it just came up in a Headline”*

The semi structured interviews were conducted with a total of 6 interviews from where couples, individuals and groups were represented. Out of the six interviews, three out of six knew about Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark. After figuring out whether the tourists knew about Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark or not, it can be interesting to analyze through our quantitative data, whether they actually think that Silkeborg is the outdoor capital of Denmark. On this occasion, we asked the question: “*Do you consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark?*”, and got the following data responses:

### Do you consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark?

Tourist survey 2 (%)



Figure 12. Do you consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark? Survey 2

What is interesting with this finding is that only 19.2% of the tourists consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark, compared to the 70.7% not doing so. In other words, only 1 out of 5 tourists agree that Silkeborg is the outdoor capital of Denmark from a national perspective, which could indicate that there is good potential for the place to improve its external branding to stakeholders outside the destination. However, since Silkeborg has only been the outdoor capital of Denmark since 2017, this finding does not come as a surprise as it takes time to develop and manifest a true and authentic brand into a community to actually make them live by its values (Wheeler et al. 2011). Nonetheless, comparing this finding of local residents' perspective of Silkeborg from survey 1 with the tourists' perspective from survey 2, it is evident there is a significant difference in the division of whether they consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital, as illustrated below:

## Comparison of "Do you consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital"?

Local survey 1 vs. Tourist survey 2(%)

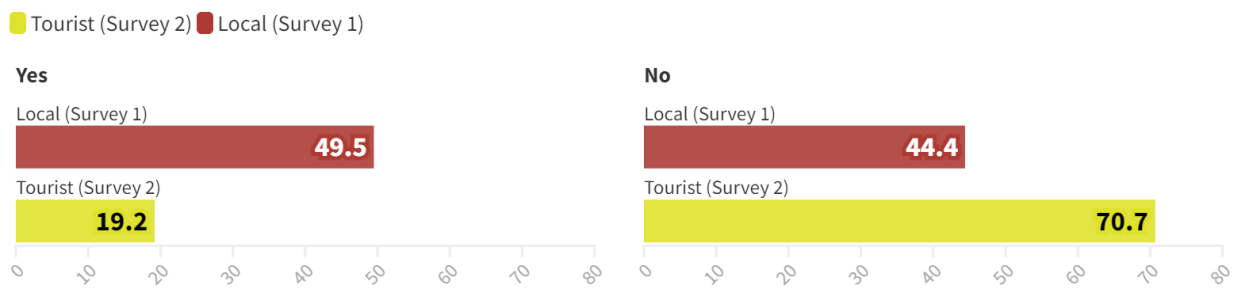


Figure 13. Comparison of 'Do you consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital?'

Hence, this finding indicates they have until now had greater success with creating awareness of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark within the destination than outside of it. Despite this large difference in whether it is perceived to be the outdoor capital or not, varying from the perspective of local residents to tourists, and taking into consideration that the new brand has only existed for about five years, this finding can be interpreted in two ways. One way to interpret it, is that it could indicate that the true brand authenticity is simply not strong enough to be implemented and accepted both by local residents and tourists since there is no overall agreement that Silkeborg is the outdoor capital of Denmark. However, it could also indicate that due to the small majority of local residents leaning towards perceiving the destination as the outdoor capital of Denmark, it is in the process of developing the nature-based place in the right direction which simply needs time to find a foothold in branding it internally among local stakeholders, which is crucial to the brand's success and survival in the long run (Kaefer, 2021).

It is important to note that the answers to the surveys are based on a present point of view from the participants. This study has not been able to measure and conduct historical primary quantitative data that eventually could measure whether non-local residents considered Silkeborg to be the outdoor capital of Denmark in times where there was a higher focus on branding Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark through a tourism aspect. Hence, this result indicates that at this point in the development process there is a higher focus on prioritizing and satisfying local residents than national and international tourists, which could be a strategy that should aim to benefit the overall success of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. Therefore, it is crucial to the destination to measure and follow the change over time, as an important tool for monitoring and achieving its purpose.

Moreover, just as in survey 1, the participants from survey 2 who are tourists had the opportunity to reply with a comment, from which they could share their thoughts with us regarding

*Do you consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark?* Here, it is also observed that there is disagreement regarding this topic, where responses both for and against the consideration of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark are represented. Firstly, positive responses are presented as follows:

*“Yes, because both I and my boys have been exercised in nature (Orienteering and trail-run).”*

*“Because of the easy access to nature.”*

[Tourists, survey 2]

However, out of a total of 27 comments regarding the consideration of Silkeborg being the outdoor Capital of Denmark, comments from tourists ‘against’ are highly represented. A selection can be observed as:

*“I do not think that there is more outdoor in Silkeborg than other places.”*

*“You can do outdoors everywhere in Denmark. I consider Thy more as an eventual Capital.”*

*“Crazy attempt to put a strange half-international designation on something. It changes nothing - and probably neither does the number of tourists. For me, it seems like a silly attempt.”*

*“Silkeborg municipality has nice nature areas that are good for outdoor activities, but I do not consider them as national unique on this front.”*

[Tourists, survey 2]

Hence, according to these statements, some of the tourists from survey 2 do not consider Silkeborg to be anything special or unique compared to other places they know, such as for example Thy. This indicates that they clearly do not believe in the brand’s potential to develop the community, which one informant also emphasizes when saying it is a silly attempt and will not change anything including the visitor number. Hence, this can prevent the nature-based placemaking process from living up to both visitor’s expectations and result in damaging the local community’s ability to develop (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). However, one informant still admits that Silkeborg has a good environment for outdoor recreation and activities opportunities, and thereby does not neglect that the place is rich in nature-based assets, just not in the league of being something unique.

Looking at local residents' and tourists' perception of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark, it becomes evident there is not an overall agreement that Silkeborg is considered in this regard, since the division among local residents is fairly fifty-fifty with a small majority leaning towards perceiving it to be and about 4 out of 5 tourists does not consider it to be either. This indicates that the community is still emerging to become the outdoor capital of Denmark, which the nature-based development framework is part of cultivating (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). Therefore, to get a better understanding of why the participants do not fully consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark, this thesis is further investigating how they understand the term 'outdoor' and what they associate with it.

#### **4.1.3 Perception of outdoors**

To get a better understanding of what is meant with nature and outdoors and how it is perceived regarding Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark, the methodological approach of conducting interviews is used to add the findings of asking our informants to express their understanding of what 'outdoor' is to them. Here, we discovered that the meaning and perception of 'outdoor' differs among our informants, as the following three quotes emphasize three different understandings:

*“It's what I do and it's exercise, so it's swimming, cycling, running, hiking, walking with my dog, all those kinds of things going on out in nature where I have to get rain on my nose and wind in my hair.”*

[Local 2]

*“You can also stand inside by the window and look out, this can also be outdoor. As soon as you connect with the outdoor space, then you are really, in my perspective, outdoors.”*

[Actor 4]

*“In Silkeborg, the outdoors has been related to the English concept, whereas 'friluftsliv' has been related to the Nordic concept. The Nordic 'friluftsliv' is nature that is simple and easy, and something about taking your time, and about making an effort, and gaining some skills. In the English concept it has something more to do with overcoming nature. (...) We often look at whether you use nature as a goal for something, like a leadership course or such as a survival trip, like you can use it as a setting for something.”*

The first informant explains how she relates the outdoors with many different kinds of exercising or doing activities that take place outside in nature, such as hiking, biking, swimming, running or walking with the dog, as long as it takes place in nature where she is being exposed to the wind and rain to feel the outdoors on the skin and in the hair. This aligns with Bell et al. (2007) statement that outdoors is usually associated with activities taking place in a natural scenery, along with Cordell's (2008) argument that it includes those activities of hiking, biking, fishing, and attending outdoor sport events among others. However, despite this is one way to understand the term 'outdoor', and according to the theory is the most common way of understanding it, another informant mentioned a different perspective by simply relating 'outdoor' with the act of looking outside the window at nature, which is a finding that does not relate to the theory. Nonetheless, the informant argues by saying that it is an additional way of connecting with nature, which is a finding that adds a new perspective to what 'outdoors' means in this thesis, contradicting with Bell et al.'s (2007) and Cordell's (2008) arguments for what outdoor is associated with. The third finding illustrates that local actors also linked that of being outdoors with the term 'friluftsliv' and emphasizes how they believe there is a difference between 'friluftsliv' and 'outdoor'. Here, Local 1 relates that of 'friluftsliv' to be the traditional nordic term that demands more effort to practice and accomplish skills within nature. This aligns with Andkjær's (2004) statement that 'friluftsliv' is about how participants learn about nature and position nature as their central value with their fellow community, they become conscious of the environment and at the same time use nature to practice their ability to be in nature. The concept of friluftsliv is standing on an educational perspective where the philosophy is not only about what you do in nature, but also how you coexist with nature. This relates to Aasetre & Gundersen (2012) statement that it is characterized by its simplicity, encounters with nature and the aim of being outside for the sake of one's well-being rather than in a context of the English version of outdoors in the form of competition, which aligns with how this informant perceives 'outdoors' to be a setting for something else, such as activities or events, which further aligns with Andkjær's (2004) description that outdoors is about activities, competition and technique. However, despite analyzing these two opposite perspectives of a continuum regarding what is associated with 'outdoor', the quote from the first informant can be understood as a combination of the two. It contains elements of being outdoors focusing on encounters with nature and one's well-being, but by doing activities and exercises making nature and the outdoors a setting for these. Therefore, the understanding of 'outdoors' can be fuzzy as they might overlap, which is something Andkjær (2004) also emphasizes in his studies by saying

that the modern Danish ‘friluftsliv’ is highly affected by the English-American ‘outdoors’. He says that trends within ‘outdoors’ are increasingly accepted and associated with the traditional ‘friluftsliv’, which can confuse whether outdoor is exactly the same concept as the Nordic term ‘friluftsliv’ or not. This is to some extent perceived by some of our informants, the local business actor 5 and the Danish Nature Agency, who found it hard to distinguish between the differences:

*“Well friluftsliv is the Danish translation of outdoor, or outdoor is the English translation of friluftsliv on one level or another. I find that difficult to disassemble.”*

[Actor 5]

*“(...) 'outdoor' is just because everything needs to be said in English. So it is just a fancy word, and here in Silkeborg, everyone has adopted it. (...) But I better like to use the word 'friluftsliv' because that is damn what this is about.”*

[Danish Nature Agency]

These two informants emphasize the difficulty of distinguishing the meaning behind the two terms, making it difficult to understand when is what. They both explain how they believe the words are just a translation of one another, such that outdoor is just a fancy translated word of the Danish word ‘friluftsliv’ and vice versa. The latter informant prefers the Danish version though. Overall it seems like the understanding of ‘outdoor’ differs among our informants, but in some way they still agree that it has to do with being outside in nature or to some extent being connected with nature. The way they connect is just not a shared agreement, whether you can do it from inside a building looking out or having to be out in the outdoors. Moreover, the understanding of the word also draws in the perspective of ‘friluftsliv’, and whether it means the same or not. The importance of these findings is to see whether our informants perceive outdoors in a similar way since having a shared recognized understanding is part of creating a stronger nature-based place brand identity (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017).

Overall, the qualitative data has provided us with a good in-depth understanding of how ‘outdoor’ is perceived and practiced among local residents, stakeholders and governmental points of views. However, while conducting ethnographic fieldwork, we turned towards the tourists and asked the same question of “*What is outdoor to you?*”, to get a more holistic understanding of how it is perceived, and got following responses:

*“Well, I think it includes some accommodation in shelters and the ‘friluftsliv’ itself, I think that is outdoors. Well just the fact that there are a lot of different options out in nature. There’s something for every exerciser down here too. Both elite and all other levels. There is nothing to complain about here.”*

[Tourist 1]

*“(…) for me, it is just to sit outside.”*

[Tourist 2]

*“Outdoors is something you can do outside, right? Is it not? Of any kind. We have talked about that we have cycled a bit and we hike a lot. And we are also old runners and we have run a lot.”*

[Tourist 3]

*“Social interaction under open air. (...) A fancy term for getting out and enjoying nature. (...) Scout meetings and exercise. So, some skills you have, to be out in nature, and then also the part where it is pure exercise. I think it’s such a combination that is outdoors to me. It’s not only being a scout, but it’s also the trail runners and climbers and such.”*

[Tourist 4]

*“Relaxation. That is mainly it. If you ride a bike, or walk or chill, if it is nice and clean, and nature is not always clean, but no garbage from people. That is the difference.”*

[Tourist 5]

According to our informants who are tourists, it becomes evident that ‘outdoor’ is something they link to being outside in nature one way or another. However, they interact with the outdoors differently, as some relate it to the facilities of shelters and ability to exercise in any possible way, whereas for others it is about just being outside and using it to relax. Noticeable though is that tourist 4 also connects it with social interactions and has a similar opinion to our local informants that outdoors is a fancy word for just being outside whether it is to exercise or have scout meetings. Therefore, these findings indicate that the tourists are having similar understandings of the meaning of outdoors to most of our local informants’ understandings, which bridges the

perspective of a shared understanding of what values that resonate with the values of what an outdoor capital of Denmark should have and what it should offer. Hence, contributing to creating a strong nature-based place brand identity (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017) with values that both locals and tourists can identify themselves with that is essential to the nature-based placemaking process of including the natural assets in making the place of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark.

#### **4.1.4 Sub-conclusion**

To summarize this section, it was discovered that the new brand of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark has been created by a new tourist manager to make a change in tourism development for Silkeborg, due to a stagnation in motivation from the tourism actors identified as a main reason for Silkeborg's situation not to develop despite a declining number of visitors. After being inspired by another place called 'The outdoor capital of UK' on a study trip to England, the tourist manager decided to include the tourist actors in a brand development process of mapping out the main things they associate with Silkeborg. Here, nature and the outdoors were discovered to be central elements that should be part of designing the new core brand values in developing the destination, because of the nature-based assets and environment surrounding the place. In this regard, the place making process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark is developed on behalf of the rich nature-based resources as an important element in cultivating and increasing the quality of life for the local community (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). Therefore, this paved the way for Silkeborg to be the outdoor capital of Denmark, which was launched in 2017 and welcomed by the new city council that politically supported it by deciding to immediately incorporate it into their vision.

Hence, providing an answer to the first sub-question guiding this analysis asking *How did Silkeborg discover and design the process for making the brand of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark?* However, to understand how this new nature-based brand is performing, after finding out that Silkeborg claimed themselves to be the outdoor capital of Denmark recently, this thesis investigated how the local residents and tourists perceive it, as well as how they perceive 'outdoor', since it is central to the brand. First, these findings revealed that there is a clear division between those agreeing and disagreeing with Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark. Thereby, there is not an overall agreement that Silkeborg is considered in this regard, since the division among local residents is fairly fifty-fifty with a small majority leaning towards perceiving it to be and about 4 out of 5 tourists does not consider it to be either. This indicates that the community is still emerging to become the outdoor capital of Denmark, which the nature-based development

framework is part of cultivating (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). However, due to this division in perceptions, it could relate to their perception of ‘outdoor’ that revealed three different understandings alternating between connecting outdoor with first, physical activities, second, an English term adopted by Danes to either distinguish or compare with the Danish work ‘friluftsliv’, and lastly, looking out of the window at nature. Nonetheless, despite the latter perception, the findings overall indicated that both local residents and tourists are having similar understandings of the meaning of outdoors. Thus, bridging the perspective of a shared understanding of what values that resonate with the values of what an outdoor capital of Denmark should have and what it should offer. This contributes in creating a strong nature-based place brand identity (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017) with values that both local residents and tourists associate with. These are essential to the nature-based placemaking process of including the natural assets in making the place of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, which the following section dives into regarding the implementation of this strategy within Silkeborg.

## **4.2 Process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark through implementation of outdoor initiatives**



The following years after the tourist manager of Visit Silkeborg claimed the destination to be the outdoor capital of Denmark back in 2017, a lot of effort has been put into developing and implementing initiatives within this spirit. Therefore, this section is guided by the sub-question of: “*How, who, and what has been done to implement in- and develop the place?*”, to get a more holistic understanding of who are the actors working with it and how have they worked towards making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. To start with, some of the initiatives made from the beginning was related to that of funding, organizational management, and development of different facilities, as explained in Klein (2021a):

*“22 million DKK has been posted into outdoor facilities, an Outdoor Institute has been set up to create and disseminate knowledge about outdoors, and an outdoor line will soon be available at the local business academy.”*

[Klein, 2021a]

This finding emphasizes that Silkeborg is being serious about making it the outdoor capital of Denmark, since it both improves the destination with a large financial amount of 22 million DKK, creates the Outdoor Institute to communicate and disseminate knowledge about the outdoors and establishing an education line at the local business academy, all with the aim of informing and

educating the local community and visitors about the outdoors. Hence, not only focusing on the tourism perspective of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, but also the local perspective. This was followed by the merger between Visit Silkeborg with Visit Aarhus, where the brand of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark sincerely broadened its perspective when the municipality inherited it. This was done by not only focusing on the tourism perspective but modifying it to a place making plan that aims to include the welfare of the local community regarding its economic, social, and environmental benefits and attract investments (Masterplan, 2020). However, as the destination had announced itself to be the outdoor capital of Denmark, the DMO 2 Visit Aarhus argues that the different stakeholders of the local municipality and Outdoor Institute have had much work to do to make the destination earn up to this new identity, to increase the local community's belief in it too. In this regard, the outdoor secretary within the municipality published a first version of a master plan in June 2020 to be visible for everyone to read about and see the initiatives taken towards developing the outdoor capital of Denmark (Masterplan, 2020).

On behalf of what we have discovered in the process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, our findings revealed 9 different related stakeholders that either existed before Silkeborg became the outdoor capital of Denmark or have been created based on the new place making strategy for the destination. Therefore, the following figure 14 has been made to get a full overview of the different stakeholders identified in the findings with a small description of their role in making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark:



Figure 14. Stakeholder Roles in Silkeborg

As discovered in the masterplan, the ambition of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark is to offer “*joy and benefit of all*” (Masterplan 2020). Hereby, since Silkeborg is the outdoor capital of Denmark, the local municipality aims to provide quality outdoor experiences to all stakeholders such as local residents, companies, organizations, and tourists. By taking all stakeholders into consideration of its place planning strategy, Silkeborg started the place making process with an inclusive mindset of using a bottom-up approach (Lew, 2017). However, the outdoor masterplan also works from a central top-down level, in which it describes how Silkeborg municipality will work to strengthen the place’s position as the outdoor capital of Denmark within three focus areas of 1) welfare, 2) Knowledge & Growth, and 3) Leisure & Nature. Nonetheless, it is further discovered that these three main focus areas are based on four instruments which function as one systematic way the outdoor secretary has decided to develop outdoor projects, to ensure their visibility and high-quality ownership (Masterplan, 2020). These four instruments are the following: 1) Local community; 2) facilities; 3) external collaboration; and 4) branding and communication, which go across the three focus areas, but vary from area to area in how the

instruments are used and weighted in relation to each other. Therefore, they are part of guiding the following implementation process of the outdoor capital of Denmark, starting with the instrument of the local community.

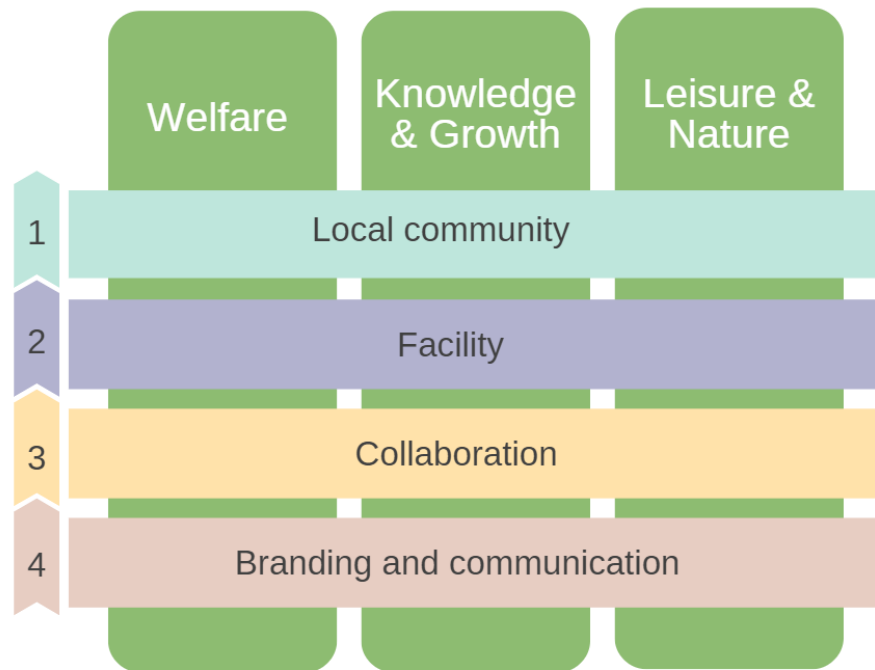


Figure 15. Focus areas and instruments of developing the outdoor capital of Denmark

#### 4.2.1 Local community

The first instrument ‘Local community’ originated from the commitment with local residents and outdoor businesses within the destination, where they planned to strengthen this commitment through co-creation of shaping the place along with accomplishing the initiatives within the outdoor masterplan. In this vein, place making is about how the surrounding environment is created and shaped to reflect the way the local community engages with and lives in it to form the community based on its ecological, economic, and social aspects (PPS, 2018; Greedy et al., 2022). The goal of doing so is identified in our findings, as several of our informants working within the outdoor secretary states that:

*“We hope to make something that benefits the local residents, tourists and businesses.”*

[Outdoor secretary 3]

*“We are working on making a cultural change for the city, the municipality and the residents in our area. So that you, through them, sell the brand we want to be, the outdoor capital of Denmark, meaning that when you come to Silkeborg, it reflects that you are part of that brand. You also do that as a citizen, so you are helping to sell what we want to be.”*

[Outdoor secretary 2]

These findings emphasize that the change in the brand identity is not only focused on benefitting tourism in the destination, but also that the initiatives in becoming the outdoor capital of Denmark lies within a cultural change that should benefit the local residents and businesses as well. Nonetheless, they aim to make it become so incorporated into the community that the local residents and businesses will see themselves as part of the brand reflected through their actions. Hence, the outdoor secretary is using a top-down approach of being the central actor incorporating the values into the vision at an institutional level, which is usually criticized for lacking the perspective of local actors (Kubickova & Campbell, 2020; Cerna, 2013; Rodríguez et al, 2014). However, by looking at the outdoor secretary's focus on the role of locals, it indicates that they are aware of the importance of local residents' commitment in the process of developing and promoting Silkeborg into becoming the outdoor capital of Denmark. As emphasized by the outdoor secretary in the following quote:

*“What we work with a lot is to say that if it is good locally, then it is also good for the tourist. That is what you experience when you come to Silkeborg, an experience of something authentic is what we would like to support, also on the event part.”*

[Outdoor secretary 2]

Here, the outdoor secretary explains how they believe that local residents' experience of the destination will reflect how tourists will most likely experience the destination too. They state that one reason for this is that when the local residents like it, it makes the place more authentic through their everyday actions, which then increases tourists' authentic experience by doing what the local residents choose to do (Kaefer, 2021) among the outdoor experiences and events offered in Silkeborg. This indicates that they aim for a strong sense of place obtained through bottom-up processes too, where local interests and initiatives are part forming the place of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. This aligns with the fact that places rarely operate solely in a top-down planned placemaking or bottom-up organic place making approach, but usually in a mix

between the two (Lew, 2017). Since an effective placemaking process utilizes the tools of a *local community's assets, inspiration, and potential*, in contributing to the creation of a quality place (Fitzpatrick & Fontana 2017, 8), the tools here also ought to be authentic to build on a truthful place identity. This aligns with in place branding where authenticity is the key to a quality culture and nature-based place (Wyckoff 2014; Kaefer, 2021).

On the other hand, considering the benefits to the local community, the city council's vision of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark was revealed by the outdoor secretary:

*“(...) and I quote; ‘1. Solve the welfare task so that everyone can live a good life’ - who will not do that? ‘2. Ensure citizens and businesses have the best framework and lead an ambitious growth policy’ - who will not do that? And then it comes to the last one, which I think is really interesting to adopt into the city council ‘3. Use the outdoor capital of Denmark as a springboard for increased movement, health and quality of life for everyone’ - then all of a sudden it becomes place-specific.”*

[Outdoor secretary 1]

According to this finding, the city council as a public service provider first prioritized the welfare of the local residents, making implementations to provide easy access and quality experience for everyone. This vision has been the priority of the outdoor secretary's masterplan since the beginning of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, and still is what the municipality strives to work on. As nature-based placemaking speaks for the community's culture, social, and economic benefits (Fitzpatrick & Fontana 2017), the policy-makers of Silkeborg offer both quality outdoor activities and competent outdoor partnerships between local residents and business stakeholders. This becomes evident when the local business stakeholders choose to incorporate outdoor into their business strategy and name. An example of this is identified through the fieldwork when visiting several local businesses to see how they have incorporated outdoor into their business name, as the following photos illustrate:



Figure 16 & 17. Two local businesses who incorporated outdoor into their business name

As seen in the photos above, the word ‘outdoor’ has been incorporated into the name of some of the local businesses, which sends a signal that they identify themselves with the new brand of being the outdoor capital of Denmark and want to attract a new group of visitors that taps more into doing outdoor activities and see themselves as outdoor users. Moreover, it is also identified through the interview with one of our informants who took over a business and changed its operating procedures to be more outdoor related as emphasized in the following quote:

*“We decided quite quickly to bite into this outdoor strategy, (...) it was from the municipality at the time we got hold of the outdoor strategy for the area here, and it played right into where we wanted to go. Attracting new customer groups, turning camping and outdoor into something else that is part of it, getting some new customer groups to get out into nature, new forms of accommodation, and new ways of doing things. It spoke to us, so we jumped on it.”*

[Actor 5]

This finding highlights how the first steps of the municipality to use outdoor in their new vision and strategy in the place making process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark has affected other stakeholders within the destination to identify themselves with the values that comes along with it. As emphasized by actor 5, they discovered the overall outdoor strategy from the municipality which spoke to them in a way where they could see the potential of this transformation both regarding new customer groups, new forms of accommodation and doing things in a new and more outdoor related nature-based way. This brings in the perspective how a top-down approach of incorporating the outdoor values can influence through internal communication among the local stakeholders within the destination (Kaefer, 2021), to take part in shaping and strengthening the identity of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. Moreover,

along with the new brand identity of the destination and the fact that local stakeholders can identify themselves with it, the direction for the identity is also slowly being shaped from a bottom-up perspective, as the local stakeholders become part of deciding what nature-based experiences are offered in the destination, ensuring a stronger sense of place for the destination (Lew, 2017). Following this, the city council also has seen the opportunity of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital as a lifestyle change maker for its citizens and tourists. We have discovered that many of the initiatives and events Silkeborg municipality arranged in both short and long term, is to improve the health conditions of the local residents. As our informant from the outdoor secretary suggests:

*“You want to use outdoor as a springboard for education health and well-being, and it is quite unique for this that you have politically made that decision at that level, because it is really awesome as they give an incentive for all welfare areas to stamp into the overall agenda, and that also makes the work cool for us because if they agree to it, then you can say that they work for the city council's overall vision and we should all do together, that is, in each our way. (...) It is a lever for increased health and movement for the citizens of Silkeborg municipality, because we believe that there is a huge and often untapped potential in looking at and tapping into different welfare areas”*

[Outdoor secretary 3]

Here, this finding emphasizes that the municipality's strategy on improving the health condition and education on being healthy is an overall vision of the welfare area. They are convinced that there is always potential in enhancing welfare of the local community and including it in the function of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital could help discover that potential. Thereby, we have discovered that from the municipal level, health and well-being of the local community is one of the major factors in decision-making.

Furthermore, the implementation for the local community is found to use the top-down approach where the municipality decides on the focused area, sets up an agenda, and organizes events and partnerships of the local community. As Lew (2017) explains, a planned placemaking approach is made to leave an impact on people's behavior and form their perceptions of the place (Lew, 2017; Lew, 2012). The outdoor secretary implements the masterplan for the local community not only to encourage local residents to be out in nature and improve their general health, but also to use the change of local people's action to reshape the place identity. A positive

resident attitude on their welfare and a proactive policy-making approach to reconstruction are important factors that are crucial to the success of the planned placemaking strategy.

Moreover, regarding the partnership among the local stakeholders, the outdoor secretary works in collaboration with local business stakeholders to improve the service quality (Vignieri, 2020). It is notable that the existing tourism businesses are stressed as an important prerequisite for being able to attract new businesses through the title of being the outdoor capital of Denmark. In this regard, we have discovered that the business association Silkeborg Business has created a sub-community network named ‘Silkeborg outdoor business community’ which is connected to the making of the outdoor capital for the convenience of potential investment and related outdoor business opportunities. As Silkeborg outdoor business community describes on their website:

*“This network is striving to identify, develop and expand the business potential that awaits - literally outside the door, so Silkeborg outdoor capital also becomes a business capital within the outdoor related products and services.”*

[Silkeborg outdoor business community, n.d.]

The interaction with stakeholders influences the outcome of public policy (Bovaird & Löffler, 2009; Vignieri, 2020), therefore, the tight network established between the outdoor secretary and business community in Silkeborg is a powerful tool to shape the place’s identity and influence the development path in the place. In addition, to identify and attract more business opportunities for the outdoor capital, Silkeborg business and its outdoor community have bigger ambitions to make Silkeborg become the outdoor business capital. This vision relies on the branding and implementation result of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, it also depends on the collaborative governance which takes place in an institutional environment where multiple actors could find a collective logic. Silkeborg outdoor business community understands that every industry segment and business within the supply chain has its unique demand for providers, as they emphasize:

*“We also believe in the idea that more businesses will provide a plus-sum game, where you just attract more customers by being more providers, who are gathered within a broadly defined outdoor business area, namely all kinds of businesses that are based on outdoor-related activities.”*

[Silkeborg outdoor business community, n.d.]

For the nature-based placemaking supply chain, the business usually concerns visitation services, accommodations, restaurants, activities, and supplies supporting the asset (Fitzpatrick & Fontana 2017). As an outdoor business association, their targeted customer group includes all types of suppliers as mentioned above and beyond. Further, this indicates that the association itself is also a supplier. To contribute to the local community and develop an economically sustainable business, the business suppliers need to consider both the local and tourist supply and demand in the nature-based placemaking strategy (ibid.). In this case, as Silkeborg outdoor business community works on adding more outdoor related businesses by offering more to potential businesses, for instance that Silkeborg hosts the largest outdoor shop in Denmark, they also provide more opportunity and demand for the local economy which is becoming increasingly vital to nature-based placemaking. Standing from the policymaker's point of view, the outdoor secretary explains their positive vision of attracting business and tourists:

*“As a municipality, I also think it has been very welcome that you have been able to lift a municipal vision which can actually also help in a settlement perspective and in a perspective that can attract companies, which also attracts tourists who in turn can generate revenue.”*

[Outdoor secretary 1]

Since tourists generate an economy for local business in the destination, tourism is according to Hall (2010) seen in some destinations as the primary method to develop the local economy, grow employment rate, brand, and shape destination identity, and enhance the quality of life for the local community (Hall, 2010). In tourism-oriented destinations, tourists inevitably become the target group the outdoor secretary planned to attract. However, for destinations that are not heavily dependent on the tourism industry, policymakers might not consider the demands of tourists unless tourists revenue becomes important to them (Bosman & Dredge, 2011). The top-down planned approach in placemaking indicates that most of the development in placemaking is intervened by the government to a large extent. The interventions happen even when most of the businesses are operated by private actors. This validates Bosman and Dredge's (2011) statement that the most successful tourism destinations are those using both bottom-up and top-down approaches that are performed in the place making strategies. Therefore, Silkeborg is developing its local businesses and tourism with an appropriate manner by implementing both a bottom-up approach, where the business association is looking for suitable investments, and a top-down approach, where the

municipality makes an economically beneficial plan, overall to contribute to the development of and uncover the local community's potential.

#### 4.2.1.1 Summary

In the place making process, Silkeborg has shifted its focus from tourists to the benefits of the local community which includes residents and businesses. This finding covers the lack of consideration for local actors in policy implementation when a top-down approach is used in the place making process. The outdoor secretary, who represents Silkeborg municipality in outdoor issues, is aware of, and values the importance of local residents' commitment. Utilizing the great value of the local community, the outdoor secretary implemented relevant events and outdoor activities in Silkeborg, to ensure the authenticity of the place (Kaefer, 2021). By absorbing the authentic local traditions of outdoor events and activities, an organic bottom-up approach was used in placemaking. This interaction of top-down and bottom-up approaches made sure of an effective place making process, and the creation of a quality nature-based place is assured by keeping the place's authenticity (Lew, 2017).

Moreover, it has been discovered that local businesses are incorporating the identity's central element of 'outdoor' into their business strategies after discovering the municipality's outdoor strategy and planning. Local outdoor businesses recognized the potential of transforming the city into a nature-based outdoor area. This influence from a top-down policy is reshaping the brand identity of the destination, while the direction of the identity strategy is also guided by the local community's perspective (Fitzpatrick & Fontana 2017). Being part of the welfare benefits, the improvement of health conditions is also taken into consideration by the Masterplan of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. The effort of making local residents go into nature more to improve their health condition also enhances the local residents' supportive attitudes towards the welfare service the municipality is providing.

Furthermore, local businesses are included in the stakeholder engagement by the municipality to attract more business investments and further develop the economic growth for the local community. This collaboration of different stakeholders evolved based on the common value of creating a quality place for the local community (Vignieri, 2020). Additionally, to contribute to an economically sustainable community, the business suppliers are considering both local residents' and tourists' demands in their business strategy, which provides more opportunities for improving the local economy including employment and investment.

The analysis also found out that even if the local community is placed as the prioritized target serving group, tourism development is still expected to generate revenue for the local economy. Overall, in the contribution to the local community, Silkeborg is interconnecting the strength of both bottom-up and top-down approaches, looking for enhancement of welfare, economic growth, and tourism development in the local community.

#### **4.2.2 Facility**

The second instrument Silkeborg's outdoor secretary has tried to improve and invest in recent years are new plants and facilities. The nature-based facilities are an essential element in the process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark that are designed and managed to improve both the environment and residents' quality of life (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). Making quality places with good facilities should affect how the local community lives and engage with it considering ecological, economic, and social aspects in a beneficial way of what makes the place into a community, as the following description from the Masterplan states:

*“Facilities in themselves are, however, no guarantee of success. To get the full benefit of new facilities is absolutely crucial to the organization of the place.”*

[Masterplan, 2020]

According to this finding, it is discovered that the outdoor secretary is aware that only by providing the facilities but without utilizing their positive influence on the users and the place is not the way to success. Hence, the function of facilities in the outdoor capital creates a setting where human and other living creatures can be more lively around them in nature areas, and at the same time, the daily operations for outdoor activities are being taken care of by the place-makers. In the realization of the outdoor masterplan, it has been important to ensure that the organization, quality, supply and location of facilities could live up to the outdoor capital's ambition. The reason for this is that outdoor facilities are essential to any nature-based placemaking, as these facilities are the first things users experience and notice when visiting the place. It affects the general impression and expectation of the visitors (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017), as qualified facilities support other instruments to be implemented in all three focus areas. However, as identified in the instrument of the local community, the local residents play an essential role in indicating whether the facilities are a success or failure, as the visitors are supposed to use them just as the locals do (Kaefer, 2021). Therefore, this section taps into the locals' views upon the facilities to understand how they are aware of them, how they experience them and how they like them or not.

When interviewing our informants, some of the facilities mentioned are a new climbing park that would be inaugurated just before April 2022, a new bike park with a trail center with facilities where visitors can change clothes, and a skate park, which all has been made because of the new brand of being the outdoor capital of Denmark. This indicates that there have been established many different facilities that tap into the use of the outdoors and the destination's nature-based assets regarding biking, climbing, and changing facilities. Moreover, several of our informants also mentioned other facilities such as the lake baths, hiking routes and infrastructure, as the following quotes emphasize:

*“They have made facilities, we have got new baths by the lake, by the west and by the eastside of Almind lake, really cool lake baths, there is a small local business, Woodies, who has made a small coffee cart out there where you can buy delicious ice cream and good coffee, because you can see that this makes good sense, many mountain bikers come at all times of the year, he also stands out there in the winter and sells coffee, and it is this brand that has helped to lift the area.”*

[DMO 1, Visit Silkeborg]

*“We have our bathing facilities and sauna, where there is winter bathing at Almind lake, and it has exploded completely, and there was at one time someone who drove a small coffee cart down there, so now there are both bathing facilities, sauna, coffee cart, then the whole swimming season, we swim in the lake, like outdoor swimming. (...) Silkeborg municipality has also made good hiking routes, it seems like they have gotten better.”*

[Local 2]

*“We have also made a route called the Silk Route and then we have the troll Storm.”*

[Local 1]

*“It's like after it has become Silkeborg outdoor that it has become more formalized and signs have come up and when you come down to the lake you will be able to see that they do a lot to separate pedestrians and cyclists, so you create a good environment.”*

[Local 2]

These findings from four of our informants prove that new facilities built around the natural areas are well-recognized by the local residents and the type of facilities range from bathing facilities by lake areas to mountain biking, hiking trails and better infrastructure to navigate around the areas, all functioning in various ways. Hence, the first informant shows the excitement of having gotten the lake baths not only for the reason of being able to bathe in the lake all year round, but because it has also led to a local starting a business by making a coffee cart selling coffee and ice cream both winter and summer that visitors can enjoy, contributing to improve the quality of the place for people to use. All due to the new brand of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. The second informant agrees with this and explains that this place has become popular in a very short time due to the bathing facilities, sauna and the coffee cart being there throughout the swimming season, indicating that these facilities have a high quality that improve resident's quality of life as it provides more opportunities to be in nature resulting in a more healthy lifestyle (Ulrich, 1993; Kellert & Wilson, 1993). The last informant has experienced that along with Silkeborg becoming the outdoor capital of Denmark, the place has been improved with signs directing visitors where to go as well as separating pedestrians and bikers on the paths making space for everyone. Hence, improving the place through better and maintained infrastructure to make the nature-based placemaking process adapt to the increased user needs (Winter et al. 2020). Moreover, while local 1 states that another good facility is the Silk Route and a troll, in the interview he also agrees that there are many good quality mountain bike trails with different types of tracks and different difficulty levels for people to use in different areas of the town. Especially the new bike park being established with a high robe lane near one of the mountain bike tracks is a new initiative they have not seen before. However, it is not all facilities local 1 is excited about, as he also criticizes some of the other facilities along the tracks by saying:

*“There are not really proper toilet facilities, and the campsites get angry if you establish something that gets too good, because then they say you take the customers away from the campsite. It is a bit silly because if you make proper facilities, then more people will come here and there will be more people coming to the campsites.”*

[Local 1]

According to this finding, not all facilities are properly made which is a shame because he believes it keeps people away from being in those areas where the facilities are lacking. This finding also emphasizes a conflict of developing the destination between the tourism business and the place-

maker., as quality facilities in its entirety improves the common interests among all stakeholders involved. Therefore, campsites should embrace the good intention of building more proper facilities in the area, since both small and large-scale projects of creating more nature-based quality places are part of transforming places like Silkeborg into attractive magnets for both local residents and visitors (Wyckoff et al. 2015). By this means, the destination as a whole will become more attractive with overall high-quality facilities.

However, despite the criticism from local 1, it has been observed that there are many quality facilities made throughout the destination. Through ethnographic fieldwork, we, the three researchers, observed this when we went on the 12km Silk Route hiking trail (see figure 18), bathed by the new facilities in the eastside of Almind lake and experienced the sauna with the lake view (see figure 21). This is illustrated in the following photos:



Figure 18. 12km Silk Route pole showing direction



Figure 19. Guiding pole



Figure 20. Educating users



Figure 21. Walking bridge over Almind lake



Figure 22. Woodies - a moveable cafe by Almind lake



Figure 23. Sunset over the new bathing facilities at Almind lake

The new facilities are built as an integrated part of the masterplan to offer both local residents and tourists a quality outdoor activity experience, as the facilities in nature-based placemaking are one of the fundamental elements to provide in the nature areas. As experienced on the Silk Route, Silkeborg included sustainable goals along the way aiming to educate the hikers about the nature surrounding them and how it is used. This aligns with policies on how sustainable goals and art status in the forest make the visiting experience more interactive and inspiring, and at the same time, it has an educational purpose on teaching visitors' knowledge about sustainability, environmental impacts, and stimulated the self-restriction of visitors' behavior during their trips (Wolf et al. 2019). Therefore, facilities have more purposes than its function in itself, which also aligns with local 2's statement in the following quote:

*“(at the lake baths) so there is all that life and there is this thing with ‘should we just stay and eat a pizza or something’, so it’s absolutely amazing, and it has exploded the last two years (...).”*

[Local 2]

This informant shows her excitement with the facilities when talking about how it is not only being used for its original function, but as a place for people to gather and hang out and combine the convenience of city life and being close to nature. This means that the utilization of facilities becomes a success when it has different purposes, including that it can be used for both educational and social areas which just creates more buzzing life in the areas making positive experiences for both the local residents and visitors. Central to the facilities being made in nature and is accessible

for local residents and tourists to use is due to its close distance to the urban life as explained by the following informant:

*“There is nowhere in Silkeborg no matter where you are, you are no more than 500 meters from nature. It’s a rule of thumb”*

[DMO 1, Visit Silkeborg]

As our informant from DMO 1 Visit Silkeborg states here, the destination of Silkeborg apparently has a rule of thumb saying that as a citizen living in Silkeborg, you should be no more than 500 meters from nature. Hence, nature is a central part of the destination itself as there is not far from urban city life to nature, which also increases the ability for Silkeborg to improve the residents’ quality of life by connecting the urban and nature areas more to improving their well-being (Ulrich, 1993; Kellert & Wilson, 1993).

Tapping into this, to enhance the identity of outdoor capital and offer more outdoor activity opportunities for visitors and local residents, the place of Silkeborg did not only implement its outdoor facilities in nature, but also infused the outdoor element with public spaces like the main shopping street, library, and city corners (see figure 24; 25), which was discovered during our fieldwork trip walking around the city center, as the following photos illustrates:



Figure 24. Insect hotel in the city

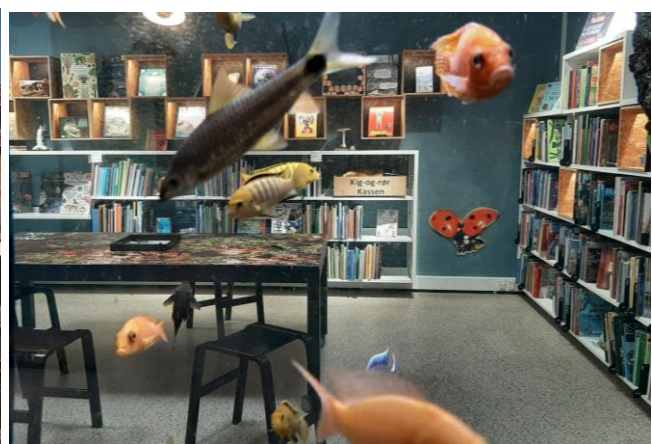


Figure 25. Library incorporating outdoor



Figure 26 and 27. Trees, nature beds, tree trunks and benches on the main street in the city center

Physically being on the site, the place makers' intention of having visitors immerse themselves in nature and outdoor elements can be observed immediately. The atmosphere of being outdoors, and close to nature is hard not to notice, which repeatedly reminded us that we are in the outdoor capital of Denmark. This can be seen as a strategy that place makers are using to advertise for the place as well as benefiting the local residents of improving their well-being which align with Peter & Verderber argument that *"Projects seek to integrate nature and landscape into the building's function – not as decorative or passive elements, but as key programmatic aspects for healing and health"* (Peters & Verderber 2021, 49). Indicating that despite observing how Silkeborg has incorporated nature into the urban life of Silkeborg that looks like passive and decorative elements, they have a deeper purpose of connecting local residents and visitors to nature wherever they are in the destination to improve their health and well-being. Moreover, these findings are identified in the quote from one of our informants:

*"The entire main street was inaugurated with the last things, which are nature playgrounds with insect nests, water and green beds, so they had to finish the main street project and bring nature into Silkeborg."*

[DMO 1, Visit Silkeborg]

Hence, nature has recently been planned and brought into the city center on the main street by planting trees, nature beds, tree trunks, and benches to signal that the destination of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark is living up to its promise of benefitting both local residents and tourists with being surrounded by nature both within the city center and in nature itself. Moreover, as the same informant informs, the public library also tapped into this outdoor vision by providing

the service of renting outdoor bags with different purposes, dependent on what you want to explore:

*“They have something like an outdoor library, and (...) they have different bags where you can rent for example a campfire bag or nature bag that you can take out into nature, and then there are tools for bonfires, or there are books and magnifying glasses if you are going out looking for insects.”*

[DMO 1, Visit Silkeborg]

This means that if visitors are interested in exploring nature but might be unaware of what tools one should use or do not have the tools themselves, then they can go to the library and rent these outdoor bags that have all the equipment needed for visitors to explore, and be educated about nature. Hence, improving the local residents’ and visitors’ knowledge in the connection between the library and the outdoors, which taps into the interrelation of the materplan’s focus areas of knowledge and growth, and nature and leisure. What becomes significant to Silkeborg as a destination being the outdoor capital of Denmark is to combine and connect nature with the different experiences and operating businesses in Silkeborg. Therefore, they made the hiking route ‘the Silk Route’ that goes around the destination into specific areas, as DMO 1 Visit Silkeborg emphasizes:

*“The Silk Route connects city and nature, and passes some cultural institutions.”*

[DMO 1, Visit Silkeborg]

This means that the infrastructure of making the place of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark has been designed and planned thoroughly with the aim of making it easy for both locals and visitors to find their way through the destination’s attractions. Hence, passing by cultural institutions such as museums and parks, connecting the whole destination’s culture and nature assets while doing an outdoor related activity such as hiking.

An additional finding to what facilities Silkeborg and the local stakeholders have made that taps into the place of being the outdoor capital of Denmark is also present at the different accommodation options offered in town, as identified in the following quote:

*“Vejlesøhus, (...) also have a lot outdoors. As an outdoor hotel, they have products with accommodation and cycling, and they arrange packages where you can bring*

*your bike up to the room (...) they offer facilities for that, and they also do that down at the hostel, so they have tapped into the brand.”*

[DMO 1, Visit Silkeborg]

According to this finding, several accommodation businesses also try to tap into the outdoor segment by understanding the new target group coming to the place and provide new and practical facilities they need. This is done so that the visitors who are coming to practice mountain biking in the area, are able to bring their expensive bikes to their room, which signals that they can go there without being nervous about where to put their bike when they are not on the trails.

All these identified different facilities are made with the purpose of putting Silkeborg in the forefront and take the position of being a role model for other outdoor destinations who can learn from them, as our informant from the outdoor secretary 3 emphasizes in the following quote:

*“The facilities are something to offer and we have an obligation to be at the forefront in some areas, or to be at the top. And there we want to be a role model for other municipalities. But the whole foundation is nature as it is. It is the one that has value in itself.”*

[Outdoor secretary 3]

Here, along with seeing themselves as a role model for other outdoor destinations they do highlight the most important factor, which is the nature-based resources itself to succeed with making an outdoor related destination that can live up to being the outdoor capital of Denmark. Overall, nature-based quality facilities are part of making creative installations in a placemaking process where physical forms are made by public or private stakeholders in public spaces to shape the physical and social identity of the place (Wolf et al., 2019), such as the sustainability education sites in the forest as an example (See in figure 28; 29 and 30).



Figure 28. Sustainable development goals in forest



Figure 29. Art exhibition on the Silk route



Figure 30. Birdhouses in the forest

These figures are examples of creative settings in Silkeborg that are an outcome of the collaboration between different local stakeholders such as municipality, Danish Nature Agency, private investors, and artists. This aligns with that creative placemaking builds partnerships across sectors (Markusen & Gadwa 2010, 5). The goal of creative placemaking is to “*institutionalize art, culture, and creative thinking in all aspects of the built environment*” (Wyckoff 2014, 7), which in the nature-based placemaking process, are elements of outdoor integrated into different environments. This is happening both from top-down planned approaches, which an example of this is that Silkeborg museum holds the exhibition ‘From survival to experience’ about outdoor

history in Silkeborg (Museumsilkeborg, n.d.), and organic bottom-up approaches such as individual groups organizing outdoor yoga with music in the forest (Silkeborgbad, 2022). Creative placemaking demonstrates the area's heritage and cultural identity by showcasing the art installations across the place, in which Silkeborg creates a vibrant dynamic to serve local residents and attract tourists (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010) when they are experiencing the outdoor activities.

#### 4.2.2.1 Facility maintenance

Maintenance of the facilities include keeping the hiking and biking trails safe and clean, river accesses, nature conservation, and many more. Any of the placemaking strategies are useless if maintenance is bypassed and facilities are degraded to a certain condition where they are not suitable for users to use anymore (Mispagel et al., 2001). In the destination of Silkeborg, which depends on its natural assets, it can be observed that the responsibility of keeping the place maintained is taken by the DMO and local residents in small areas. However, for a big nature-based placemaking project like Silkeborg, the maintenance of the quality place requires stakeholders in the community to collaborate and create their own way of maintenance (Wyckoff, 2015). The creation of maintenance aims to be conducted in “*an efficient and non-adversarial way*” where the predicted results are mutually supported by both public and private stakeholders (Wyckoff 2015, 8-9). Maintaining the development on the outskirts of a city is usually considered to be expensive and economically unsustainable, as it is partly due to payment imbalance between the infrastructure costs and the long-term maintenance in low-density areas (ibid.). However, it is common for destinations like Silkeborg being rich in nature-based assets that these assets are located in the outskirts of the city. Thus, the nature-based areas surrounding Silkeborg are vital to maintain to ensure the quality of the place in the long run. Hence, nature-based placemaking carries the responsibility of guiding the place towards vitality and sustainability (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017).

Regardless of the implications on maintenance approaches, one of the methods in nature-based placemaking is environmental education (Wolf et al. 2019). Placemakers in Silkeborg stand on the point of view of ‘Use and Protect’ to make decisions and initiatives on the maintenance of natural assets. The goal of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital is to encourage local residents to go out in nature and attend more outdoor activities in the closeby areas. Thus, when asking about how the place makers make sure that nature areas are properly preserved, one of our informants elaborated on the “Use and Protect” approach:

*“Overall, together with the Danish Nature Agency we drive what is called ‘Use & Protect’, it is no longer than that. It’s not like we slam things into nature with facilities, we are not allowed to, it gives itself completely.”*

[Outdoor secretary 1]

Here, the outdoor secretary makes it clear that in a collaboration with the Danish Nature Agency they are protecting and maintaining the destination of Silkeborg by not slamming all sorts of initiatives and facilities into nature without any consideration, they are simply not interested in which the Danish Nature Agency also has a role in managing. Moreover, another informant emphasizes on this too by saying that:

*“We know that the more people who come out, the more prepared they become to reflect on sustainability and change, and to act accordingly. My argument will always be that when you get them out in nature, it means that you have more prepared citizens in relation to accepting a green transition. So things are connected.”*

[Actor 4]

As our informant states, the ‘Use & Protect’ concept is about encouraging local residents to go into nature areas, to increase their considerations of the sustainable benefits of being so connected to nature in life. Hence, they expect the local residents to learn about their behaviors’ impact on the site, reflect on their ecological demands to nature, and appreciate the biodiversity (Wolf et al. 2019) during their outdoor experiences. Furthermore, local nature users are expected to be prepared for accepting the potential green transition for the nature areas and facilities in the place. Additionally, to keep Silkeborg’s nature environments and outdoor facilities to remain at a high standard, it is necessary to work together with professionals in the maintenance area. In the case of Silkeborg, the Danish Nature Agency is the driver of most of the governmentally owned land surrounding the destination. Therefore, getting supervision and permission from the Danish Nature Agency in a collaborative manner became a natural decision for the outdoor secretary:

*“It’s that close collaboration we have with the Danish Nature Agency, to make sure to say ‘which areas are best suited for what’ and then get it ... that you use the lake bath there, that’s what it’s all about.”*

[Outdoor secretary 2]

This means that the outdoor secretary, as the placemaking organization, needs to know exactly where the best locations to set up the outdoor projects and facilities in Silkeborg municipality are, so that the ecological systems will not be harmed. Here, the Danish Nature Agency comes in and provides professional suggestions of how to use the nature areas. This collaboration ensured that the development and maintenance of the nature areas were conducted with the supervision and assessment of the Danish Nature Agency. Collaborations in developing Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark are observed to happen frequently between the local community, tourism businesses, private organizations and the DMO in the area.

#### 4.2.2.2 Summary

The value of facility in creating a quality nature-based place is a necessary implementation for making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, as facilities are made to establish a setting where outdoor users and other living creatures can be comfortable in the nature areas. The types of facilities are built according to outdoor users' demands, which consist of hiking and biking trails, lake bathing facilities, outdoor accommodations, and much more. Moreover, the facilities in the nature area are incorporated with an educational purpose of improving sustainability through creative placemaking approaches using art installations. This educational consideration encourages the outdoor users to reflect on the impact of their behavior, and further understand the purpose of maintaining and preserving nature.

To enhance the identity of the outdoor capital of Denmark, not only facilities in nature were implemented, but also the public service space such as the library, shopping streets, and playgrounds are incorporating elements of the outdoors. The place makers have made initiatives that should make it possible for all users to connect with nature and outdoor experiences such as building better infrastructure and facilities to make the visiting experience easier for both locals and visitors. This is done by offering outdoor equipment and visiting routes that connect Silkeborg's nature and cultural attractions. Hence, indicating multiple stakeholder collaboration to take place during the facility implementation process to ensure the success of facilities.

Moreover, it has been discovered that not all facilities are properly made, which could make the destination unattractive to potential visitors. However, the improvement of these facilities have created an ongoing conflict between tourism businesses and place-makers due to a misunderstanding of the purpose of quality facilities, worrying that quality facilities elsewhere will cause a decrease in business owners' own customers. Nonetheless, improved facilities in nature-based placemaking only enhance the place's identity and therefore, attract more visitors

(Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). Therefore, it should be understood among local stakeholders that having wholesome quality facilities in the destination should not bring competition, but rather mutual benefits to all stakeholders involved.

Additionally, the facilities and the nature surroundings in Silkeborg are being maintained while visitors have been using it. The responsibility of maintaining the facilities and nature is attributed to several different public and private stakeholders, where local residents' plays a role in maintenance by becoming more aware of how they navigate in nature the more they use it. The outdoor secretary expects the local residents to establish the consciousness of preserving nature and prepare themselves for future green transitions.

The design and installation of the outdoor and public space facilities are implemented to provide outdoor users a quality place and enhance the brand of outdoor capital with the supervision and support from the professional institution, the Danish Nature Agency. Thus, qualified and accessible outdoor facilities contribute to the welfare of the local community by providing better activity infrastructure, bringing growth, and improving visitor's experience of the outdoors. With the aim of enhancing this, the next section focuses on investigating the collaboration network within Silkeborg.

#### **4.2.3 Collaboration in Silkeborg**

Third instrument of collaboration aims to gather the stakeholders in Silkeborg who have been positively working in pre-capital times, and furthermore utilize the strengthening of resource integration. Activities and initiatives of the outdoor nature-based place making are supported by the collaborative work among the outdoor secretary, local residents and other main stakeholders such as local businesses, Outdoor Institute, Silkeborg Business and the DMO Visit Aarhus. Active support from different levels acts as the backbone for the vision and endeavor in nature-based place making (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). Furthermore, governance, which exists as a form of interaction and intervention in place development, consists of not only the local municipality but also public-private partnerships (Pearce 1998; Vernon et al., 2005; Deng et al., 2019; Dredge, 2006). This collaborative governance happens in Silkeborg in two different forms of internal- and external collaboration.

Starting with the process of internal collaboration in the development of the outdoor capital of Denmark, stakeholders who are involved in matters that concern the benefits of the local community are considered to be participants of internal collaboration. The form of conducting collaboration work is clarified by one of our informants from the outdoor institute:

*“There are some different issues we discuss with them, but we have to put an issue on the table, purely figuratively speaking, and then we have to invite the right people who could have an opinion on this issue and then we are actually facilitators and mediators and structures the discussion and draws knowledge from it.”*

[Actor 4]

According to our informant from the Outdoor Institute, they arrange and facilitate collaborative work between its partners who hold the common interests in outdoor issues and gather them as the mediator to provide opportunities for initiating projects by different stakeholders. Along with this, he further disclosed one of the recent collaborative work processes, as the following quote exemplifies:

*“There were 35 different associations and organizations at the meeting here last week. And one of the themes is ‘how can we together create activities down in a trail center’. And then there are 10 associations and volunteers who start saying that we can also make a user council, etc. We really want to try to involve them, because it is within the culture.”*

[Actor 4]

Here, a group of 35 different associations and volunteers sat together and discussed potential outdoor activities for the outdoor trail center, where the discussion included the opinions from the local municipality, business associations, and local volunteer workers. This makes it evident that place making functions are most optimal, when both the planned top-down approach and the organic bottom-down approach interact with each other (Lew, 2017). Thus, the place making decisions involved the demand of local outdoor projects volunteers as well as the other stakeholders, resulting in a well-considered communication channel for developing Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. From a municipal level, the development mechanism within the local governance of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark is divided by the three areas run by different organizations that Silkeborg municipality plans to develop within the destination along with its natural assets. Hence, the development structure of the outdoor capital of Denmark regarding the three organizations that are working separately and collaboratively on each of the focus areas are illustrated in the following figure:

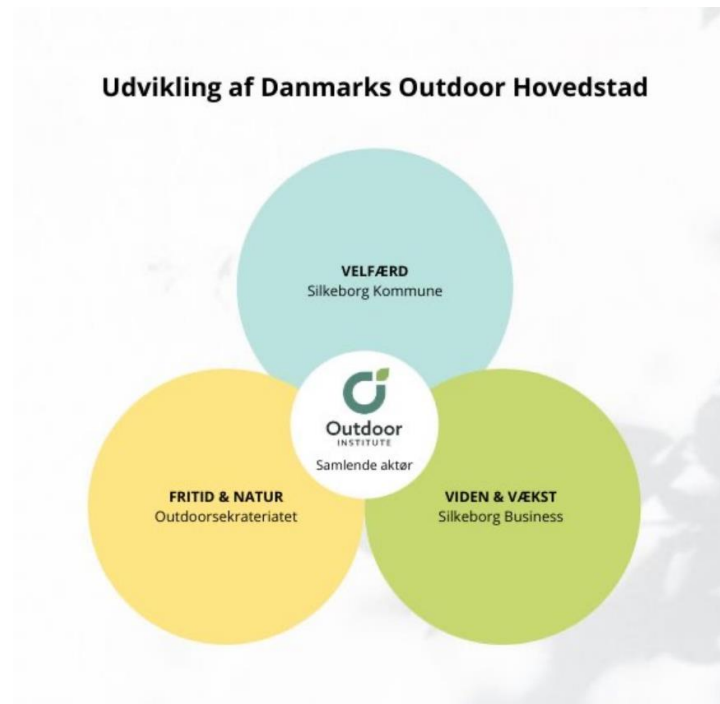


Figure 31. Development structure of the outdoor capital of Denmark

According to this illustration, the development of the outdoor capital of Denmark consists of the three areas Silkeborg plans to involve outdoor element in, which are welfare, knowledge and growth, and leisure and nature, in which these three focus areas are taken charge of by three different organizations as followed: The Silkeborg municipality is overall in charge of the welfare development; the outdoor secretary develops the initiatives of leisure and nature involved issues; Silkeborg Business manages the development of knowledge and growth. On top of this, as a fourth element, the Outdoor Institute acts as the mediator to unify the three departments. The collaboration between these public-private stakeholders shows that the policy-makers in Silkeborg value the advantage of stakeholder engagement, which includes all the positive and negative inputs on building the place as the outdoor capital. Involving the stakeholders enhances the quality and accountability of the policy and provides an opportunity to acknowledge the driven elements that drive stakeholders to make policy decisions (Lemke & Harris-Wai, 2015). This is agreed by one of the local actors:

*“There were some project managers inside the Outdoor secretary where they had invited quite broadly for who they wanted to have with or where it made sense. We had companies that were passionate, various voluntary organizations and the Danish Nature Agency was the host. A nice mix where there was not "our wishes" but a common dialogue whereby we use the trail center in the best possible way and*

*how it can be operated in the best possible way. Around how we can develop this in the best possible collaboration. I think the outdoor network is good and it is getting better and better.”*

[Actor 3]

As a tourism business actor in Silkeborg, our informant recognizes the communication and working process of the outdoor secretary who organizes collaborative meetings for stakeholders. He emphasized here that the decision-making process was not performed through a top-down approach but rather a communicative dialogue for more effective collaboration and better results for the project. Further, he was satisfied with the evaluation of stakeholder collaboration and held positive opinions about the development of this internal collaboration. Moreover, the municipality's collaboration with the Danish Gymnastic Institution (DGI) was commented by our informant who is involved in both organizations:

*“There is a cooperation agreement between DGI Midtjylland and Silkeborg municipality because you believe that when you make this cooperation agreement, then there is a greater chance of getting more active.”*

[Outdoor secretary/private organization]

Here, the collaboration agreement acts as an initiator, which drives the related stakeholders to be more actively involved as the collaborative policy is made to achieve a holistic development by including more stakeholders in the cooperative action. Inclusive collaboration encourages positive insights to come into the decision-making process, therefore, making the outcome of policy implementation more effective. Moreover, when problems occur in collaborative policy making processes, it cannot be addressed solely by a single organization but rather by more organizations who share collective values (Vignieri, 2020). This can also be observed by one of our informants who was part of the collaboration meeting:

*“The other evening we had a network meeting around the new trailer center with 2 colleagues (from other departments), so in that way we collaborate a bit across where it makes sense.”*

[Outdoor Secretary/private organization]

Here, collaborative governance happens when the stakeholders are addressing issues that concern their collective values. The development of cross interaction between different stakeholders helps the collaborative governance approach to establish a network that might develop new forms of collaboration. However, study shows that the network who brings in new forms of collaboration could involve decision-making issues (Vignieri, 2020). For instance, there is a disagreement on how the internal collaborative organizations should learn to be wiser in developing the place, which indicates the challenge within the three main collaboration organizations:

*“When the municipalities do projects, they are interested in the practical part about what they can get out of the projects, but they are not so interested in the knowledge part, as it takes too much of their time. The municipality would rather do development projects with no evaluation than they will do research projects with a thorough evaluation. This is not the way to make us wiser in the outdoor capital.”*

[Actor 4]

Hereby, it is disclosed that within the collaboration bodies, the different working methods affect the policy conducting processes. The municipality prefers to work on practical projects rather than doing thorough evaluation or research on the project in advance, to which the outdoor institute questioned this working method for not facilitating the development of the outdoor capital. In fact, in collaborative governance, the production of public policy is rarely seen as one single organization's responsibility (Vignieri, 2020). The responsibility of the whole decision making process, which indicates the process from planning and design to evaluation, is frequently overlapping and distributed across vertically and horizontally interconnected organizations, as well as service users and communities (ibid.). Therefore, when the responsibility of evaluation and research seems unclear to the co-production organizations, they need to understand that the purpose of the collaboration is to complement each other with different perspectives. The public values are created through the organizations' collaboration and shared responsibilities regarding Silkeborg's outdoor capital identity and its value that will be enhanced through the process of understanding the collaboration method.

Moreover, inside the municipality, the culture, leisure, sports, events, and outdoor areas are broadly rooted and organized across voluntary actors, associations, institutions, and businesses. Therefore, these areas are complex, and it is therefore difficult to get a complete picture of how the different sections operate. The purpose of having all sections integrated working together is to

provide a ‘helicopter perspective’ on the various areas so they have knowledge about organizations, structure, finances, and internal stakeholder experiences. However, the perspective on external collaboration is different, and is emphasized in the following section.

#### 4.2.3.1 External collaboration

Silkeborg municipality has had the experience of collaborating with different local stakeholders regarding making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. However, the place-makers realized that there is a lack in experiences and outdoor facilities offered in making Silkeborg a unique nature-based place, which needs to be improved if the place should carry the title of outdoor capital of Denmark (Masterplan, 2020). External collaboration considers matters that concern the experience of tourists. Therefore, the municipality planned to draw on the experience of other best practices through external collaborations in order to attract tourists and enhance the brand and reputation of the outdoor capital for potential collaboration with stakeholders outside of Silkeborg.

The masterplan stressed the wide range of involvement with local citizens, businesses, municipal departments, and associations. Silkeborg municipality followed the developing structure from the first version of the masterplan, using a collaborative governance approach that engages stakeholders of all levels. Naturally, the responsibilities are spread out between the stakeholders involved in the making of the outdoor capital of Denmark, as the outdoor secretary explains:

*“So far we are actually following the model that we developed to the letter, (...) because some of what we found out, to begin with, is the big driver in this, is the municipality. Then someone starts to take over a bit of it, a bit like an ecosystem we just try to make on it, because then it becomes a relatively smaller municipality, but more business, citizens, etc., to eventually become a really wonderful mix of it.”*

[Outdoor secretary 2]

This quote makes it evident that the responsibility of policy making, and project initiation started with the municipality taking the full leading role, but is slowly moving in the direction where other stakeholders tapping into the vision and strategy of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark are involved in the collaborative governance to take on more responsibility. This means that despite the municipality’s central role of developing the destination in this regard, they aim for decreasing the level of their role in the future, as they believe the brand should be carried more

by all the local stakeholders combined rather than mainly by the municipality. On the contrary, different stakeholders now carry the decisions of place making from their own perspectives. Here, one important local stakeholder group to collaborate with, is the local users of the outdoor activities:

*“We are opening a trail center here in June, which will be one of the 5 examples of projects how to work with it, and that is how to establish a meeting between those who live in Silkeborg, associating people, those who are out cycling or go for a walk, and the tourist, and that’s something we’re extremely excited about, how will it be a meeting, what do we get out of it and what does the tourist get out of it, and how can we get some information flows that way out to the tourist.”*

[Outdoor secretary 2]

Therefore, to conduct the decision-making process that is inclusive to all stakeholders, the outdoor secretary arranged a stakeholder meeting with local residents, outdoor activity users, and tourists. The organization that initiates outdoor projects in Silkeborg is holding an open mind to the opinions of local residents and users, expecting to receive expectations and reviews to enhance their public services and policy implementation. Furthermore, it should improve the tourists’ outdoor experience in Silkeborg when the projects are accomplished. For policy implementation and service delivery, public service organizations relied on the community as much as the community relied on them (Vignieri, 2020; Osborne et al., 2016). On one hand, the project regarding the trail center is going to benefit and make improvements for the local community who uses nature and outdoor assets in Silkeborg. On the other hand, the outdoor secretary, as a policy-maker organization, was founded with the purpose of developing Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark through collaboration with the local community to achieve better outcomes on the policies implemented in Silkeborg by utilizing the community’s resources and assets. Both a top-down approach and a bottom-up approach are happening at the same time, which is beneficial to the policy-making and place making process (Lew, 2017). This interaction with the community can also be observed in the collaboration with local tourism businesses:

*“We work closely with the various actors and our museums, etc., Museum Jorn they should probably also find, because those who are interested in art, they should probably find Museum Jorn or Silkeborg bad, and Jorn is a really good example where they say ‘hey, we have to be on that outdoor wave’, so they have made some bike routes called ‘the culture route’ or something like that.”*

[Outdoor secretary 2]

As the place maker for the outdoor department, the outdoor secretary has been collaborating with the local tourism businesses to expand the outdoor element of tourism development. They have, for instance, used the different characters of different museums to create outdoor related activities and exhibitions that visitors can experience. The collaborations with museums can also be seen as part of the creative placemaking strategy, where the influence of art and leisure can impact the tourists' recognition of a place. The collaboration between the outdoor secretary and the local tourism businesses recalls their vision of benefiting the leisure experience of both local residents and tourists. To develop a nature-based place, it is vital to remain the place as a well-preserved area collaborating with the landlord of the nature area who is the Danish Nature Agency. Silkeborg municipality's co-work with the Danish Nature Agency is described as:

*"It is to be the older brother who says: Here are some really good ideas, but should we not, and could we try, and what if we do this and that and try to place it at these locations, and try to rethink it in different ways, and then furthermore remember all of those other different precautions there is. Because, when we are talking about those segments in the municipality or the institutions that would like to have outdoors. The municipality does also have an important coordinating role. But then we need to tell them that there are some important legalization matters, which can not be ignored. We are just the landlords, so all handling goes through the municipality, or in the end the Danish Environmental Protection Agency. So our job is to be the good, but also critical part of the collaboration."*

[Danish Nature Agency]

Hence, the Danish Nature Agency collaborates with the municipality in forms of giving permission and supervision to projects brought up by the municipality. Since the municipality can only organize projects on national owned areas around Silkeborg, working as the landlord, it will make decisions on the nature use permissions and inform the municipality of the legalization of each project they are planning accordingly. In this regard, the Danish Nature Agency emphasized on the role of the municipality in the collaboration, indicating that the initiatives and implementation are all operated by the Silkeborg municipality. Therefore, the role in the collaboration for the Danish Nature Agency is to support as well as being critical to the municipality's implementation plans. Together, these organizations ensure a legalized, and

professional nature- and use of land procedure in the development of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark.

#### 4.2.3.2 Externally collaboration with DMO

Due to the important destination management role that Visit Aarhus holds, it become necessary that the outdoor secretary works together with Visit Aarhus to brand the outdoor capital identity and attract more tourists:

*“We started just as quietly and working with it, and we had a close collaboration with Visit Silkeborg about how it was that we could help support their story of an outdoor capital, and it was a lot on the facility part to start with.”*

[Outdoor secretary 2]

As previously mentioned in the design process, the brand of Silkeborg as outdoor capital of Denmark was initially a marketing strategy created by the tourism office in Silkeborg, Visit Silkeborg, which merged into the regional tourism office of Aarhus, and is now known as Visit Aarhus. After the municipality inherited the outdoor capital project, the focus of its beneficial effects has shifted towards the local residents. However, the municipality still considers the development of tourism as part of the plan in placemaking, which was elaborated in the previous section of facility implementation. This revealed that the inclusion of tourism in the development plan is partly because of the revenue generated from tourists and partly due to the widespread branding effect tourists are able to contribute with through mouth-to-mouth or recommendations (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Um & Crompton, 1990). Therefore, the outdoor secretary, which is part of the municipality, is supporting the branding and marketing work by the current DMO 2 Visit Aarhus through collaboration concerning facilities, which was essential especially in the beginning of the place making process to improve future implementation of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. This aligns with the analysis finding on the facility, where facilities are the first impression of a place for tourists and have an influence on the image of the destination. Furthermore, to develop tourism in the destination of Silkeborg, including the collaboration network of the local tourism businesses are also essential:

*“Yes, you pay into this pool and then there is joint marketing from there, so that's how you collaborate. We want to come in and see if we can reach Aarhus so we become more visible there. We want to increase the level of our knowledge.”*

[Actor 3]

This finding indicates that it is vital for the local business, Aquarium & Wildlife Park (AQUA), to be more visible for tourists to find, which is done through collaboration with the DMO 2 Visit Aarhus, who are responsible for branding externally to tourists. Therefore, as a unique attraction in Silkeborg, the AQUA park collaborates with Visit Aarhus to utilize their branding and marketing influence for potential tourists. This collaboration appears in the form of a paid partnership, where local tourism businesses can be promoted on Visit Aarhus's branding and marketing platforms. With this collaboration, the local tourism businesses get to be acknowledged by a broader range of tourists which will benefit their profits, as Visit Aarhus is able to expand their partnership network and provide plentiful tourism information to tourists. While conducting fieldwork for this thesis, it has been noticed that several local tourism businesses are involved in this partnership network including multiple outdoor related businesses such as camping sites (See appendix 9.4.1). However, the tourism service that DMO 2 Visit Aarhus has provided to local businesses has received some critics hereof:

*“It's a bit difficult with the services. We have worked with many other places in the old days, I was actually also an advocate for Visit Aarhus, but I have a little regret, and I was actually a large paying member the first year, but I'm not anymore, I'm still a member though. There are some things I fight with them about, and there are some things I think we are missing. (...) That is the map. All that paper and brochures, there is not so much left. I do not have anything like that anymore, but there is some local information that is still important to have. Of course, people use the internet for a lot of things like when they need to find a campsite, but when they go out for a walk in the local area. I do not bother to go out on the Silk Route with a phone in hand. (...) I think tourists want a map.”*

[Actor 2]

*“It would be nice if there was a wooden shelf outside so you do not have to go inside the office that seems closed to find the information. But they will not think outside the box, and that's how it is. We do not bother to think about it, we run our own race and then they have to run theirs. But it's a little annoying.”*

[Actor 1]

Here, our informant Actor 2 explained that he supports the work of DMO 2 Visit Aarhus and that his business is a member of this partnership. However, after having joined the paid membership for a year, he adjusted his membership from an expensive payment to a smaller payment as he found out they were not functioning as he was expecting, yet. According to Actor 2, it is due to the lack of tourist information brochures handed out to tourists that created a sense of unpleasant experience. Additionally, he mentioned that although it could be argued that tourists nowadays are used to searching for travel information online, it is still necessary to offer tourists the physical materials of for example a map for them to bring around the destination. The other Actor 1 expressed a similar complaint about the Visit Aarhus office in Silkeborg due to its inaccessible service. This informant seems quite discouraged with the DMO closing down the local tourist office, when suggesting it would solve the problem if there was a place where tourists could receive information on paper in an open shelf, since it is no longer possible to get from the tourist office where the door seems to be closed all the time. Hence, attributing the problem to the lack of tourism service provided by Visit Aarhus, indicating that it is an important element missing in giving tourists a good overall experience when visiting. Thereby, insights from these two local tourism businesses reflected on the tourism service that the DMO Visit Aarhus is providing. One of the DMO's responsibilities is to address the local community's concern about tourism (UNWTO, 2019), which the empirical data shows that local business owners and local residents in Silkeborg have recognized the problem in relation to inadequate planning in tourist information. Therefore, it indicates that the current DMO Visit Aarhus is lacking consideration of the local community's concern in tourism development, and inefficient work in offering sufficient destination information. Thereby, this lack of attention is causing the stakeholders to hold back their willingness to collaborate with the DMO Visit Aarhus, which might potentially damage the success of destination tourism development.

The collaboration in making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark involves multiple stakeholders and organizations. Hence, when asking our informants from the outdoor secretary about who is the one being in charge of branding the outdoor capital, they expressed their insights:

*“The thing about finding out that there is no one over here who ‘is it’, there are really many who ‘is it’ when you are doing something like this. So it’s a bit of an answer that it’s actually not something that I’m nervous about, that there is no one who ‘is it’, because it’s part of the development phase we are in.”*

[Outdoor secretary 2]

Here, the outdoor secretary clearly emphasizes that no one specifically ‘is it’ regarding that of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, as they answer that it is a collective responsibility from all the stakeholders who taps into the vision and strategy, who participate in ensuring the survival of the brand as well as the development of the destination based on its nature-based assets. This aligns with Fitzpatrick & Fontana’s (2017) statement that not only single entities shape the identity of a place itself, but the strength of the identity is done through a commonly recognized understanding among all the stakeholders.

#### 4.2.3.3 Summary

Collaborative governance in Silkeborg happens in two different forms depending on the stakeholders involved. First, there are internal collaborations between Silkeborg municipality and its internal partners that includes the outdoor secretary, outdoor institute, the local outdoor project volunteers, Silkeborg outdoor business association among others. Policy-makers in Silkeborg value the importance of stakeholder engagement from all levels, and work collaboratively to include stakeholder inputs into building the place as the outdoor capital. This is agreed by the stakeholder engagement theory that involving the stakeholders enhances the quality and accountability of the policy (Lemke & Harris-Wai, 2015).

The stakeholder engagement in outdoor projects is conducted through communicative dialogues to ensure an effective collaboration process with improving outcomes. The agreement on collaborative governance acts as an initiator to encourage more stakeholders to join the network and engage actively. Furthermore, it was discovered that this collaborative governance happens based on the collective issues or common values that stakeholders share.

With new stakeholders joining the network, they also bring in a change in the forms of collaboration. Different working methods could cause co-producing issues when they are working together. In the case study, some stakeholders were questioning the working process of the others, criticizing for not addressing the problem in a holistic manner. However, the responsibility of the decision-making process is distributed across different organizations and stakeholders should complement each other with their strengths from different perspectives.

Secondly, external collaboration can also be recognized in Silkeborg on different levels. Place makers found out that with more stakeholders involved, the responsibilities left for the municipality are becoming smaller. In the external collaboration, local outdoor users make great value to the collaboration as they provide expectations and reviews on policy implementation. Local tourism businesses incorporated outdoor elements to create outdoor related activities and

exhibitions for tourists. Further, the collaboration with the Danish Nature Agency assured that the outdoor projects are implemented with legalized permission and conformed to the national land use procedures.

Lastly, to develop Silkeborg as an outdoor tourism destination for tourists, it becomes necessary to work with DMO Visit Aarhus. Place makers and several local tourism businesses are collaborating with Visit Aarhus to utilize its branding and marketing influence on tourists. However, problematic tourist information service offered by the DMO has caused local tourism businesses' complaints, and a decrease in tourism business collaborations, and potentially harm the reputation and success of the destination place making development. Therefore, the DMO needs to reconsider its approaches to address the local community's concern about tourism and provide destination information with easier accessibility and user-friendly methods.

All in all, the collaborative work in Silkeborg has included stakeholders of multiple levels with mixed policy making approaches. Thus, creating a place that benefits the outdoor users' demand, economic growth, and tourism development. It is pleasing to observe that Silkeborg is considering tourism development as part of their place making development, which is not always the case in other destination management (Lukic, 2021).

#### **4.2.4 Branding and communication**

The fourth instrument of branding and communication is set to anchor the identity of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark. Within a place making process, place branding is essential to increase the awareness of the destination brand, both internally within the community to ensure it reflects the values of local stakeholders (Urde, 2003) and externally to attract a specific group of tourists that identify themselves with these values (Sofield et al., 2017). However, it is not an easy task for places to brand themselves in a successful way that aligns with all stakeholders' values, as it is not a single entity that shapes it, but a commonly recognized understanding of it among the people it involves (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). Therefore, the findings of branding and communication in the process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark are analyzed to identify whether it has been successful or not regarding Kaefer's (2021) characteristics of place branding along with Fitzpatrick & Fontana's (2017) identified possible challenges and the importance to overcome them. Regarding the case of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, two main actors have been identified to brand the destination, which are the local municipality practicing internal branding to the local stakeholders to make them associate with it,

and the DMO taking on the role of branding the destination externally to attract a specific group of tourists.

By looking deeper into the findings, we discovered that branding was performed internally in the design phase of making the brand of Silkeborg to be the outdoor capital of Denmark. Referring back to these findings, the act of performing internal branding among local stakeholders was first discovered when the local tourism manager involved their customers in the branding process of creating the new brand in a workshop. Here, nature and the outdoors were identified and recognized as a central part of what they associated with Silkeborg as a destination. This, forming the brand of Silkeborg to be the outdoor capital of Denmark related to its natural assets along with the tourist manager's inspiration from England, learning that a destination can be an outdoor capital. Moreover, the timeline for developing the brand goes on for 4 years, from 2013 to 2017. This indicates that those working with changing the brand of Silkeborg were aware of what a place brand is and ensured to make it a more in-depth planned place brand and not just a simple design scratching the surface of what values people associate with Silkeborg. Hence, overcoming the challenge of a misconception of what a place brand is, which Kaefer (2021) identifies to be important to overcome in a place branding process. Moreover, the tourist manager's launch of the new brand in 2017 also opened up for the rest of the local stakeholders' ability to associate themselves with it. Here, we discovered that one of the first stakeholders to do so was the new city council, as they immediately incorporated it into their vision and strategy, agreeing this should be the direction for the destination to go. If the city council had not considered the new brand of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark to match with Silkeborg as a destination, the necessary political and institutional support would not be there to move forward with it, and it would most likely lose its internal credibility. This aligns with the successful place branding characteristic of how important it is to involve the right partners and to overcome the element of institutional or political instability to show any signs of lack of leadership (Kaefer, 2021). Therefore, the city council is an important partner in manifesting the values and goal of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, as this increases the possibility that local residents and operating businesses can also identify themselves with it. Since Visit Silkeborg and Visit Aarhus merged in 2019 and the local municipality of Silkeborg inherited the brand for the sake of the destination, it broadened the vision of the brand to not only lean towards tourism but to all local stakeholders in the destination, and stated the following:

*“The outdoor capital of Denmark is primarily a vision or narrative that you can tap into in many different ways.”*

[Outdoor secretary 2]

This finding indicates that the outdoor secretary sees the brand as a vision or narrative for any local stakeholders to identify with, trying not to exclude anyone in the process of developing it. They are opening it up such that local stakeholders can tap into it any way they like, which means that the understanding of the brand will also be formed throughout time as more stakeholders tap into it, leaving it open for interpretation by each stakeholder. As Fitzpatrick & Fontana (2017) states, a shared understanding results in a stronger brand identity, therefore it can be risky not to make visible guidelines or descriptions for what it includes, as both local stakeholders and tourists can perceive outdoor in different ways. This could potentially result in stakeholders exploiting the brand and evaporate the shared understanding and thereby the strong identity, if too many different stakeholders claim that what they are doing is outdoor, without everyone agreeing to it. As Olin's (2000) and Wheeler et al. (2011, 16) argues, *"everything that the branded identity does should be an affirmation of its identity"*, otherwise its identity, reputation and authenticity will diminish (Kaefer, 2021) both internally and externally. Therefore, the following quotes emphasize both from the local business perspective and the municipal level how they have tried to incorporate and communicate it into everything, as the municipality initiated and organized a wide range of activities and events, which are written down in the masterplan's destination strategy and also stated in an article through the following quotes:

*"Now we have been indoctrinated for the last 4 years that this is how it is being branded in the local newspapers. (...) It started inside the municipality at the time, that there was this outdoor branch that started with the tourist information as it was called at the time, but it has then been made into this Visit Aarhus"*

[Actor 5]

*"Outdoors should be incorporated into everything we are doing here in the municipality. And the whole country should look to us regarding the outdoors for inspiration."*

[Simon H. C. in Klein 2021a]

*"We have all sort of exciting initiatives that take place in the outdoor area, so no one is in doubt that we are the outdoor capital of Denmark."*

[Masterplan, 2020]

The initiatives taken towards that of being outdoor capital are implemented as branding strategies to tell the story to local stakeholders and external visitors that the place offers this ample supply of outdoor-related activities. The first informant actor 5 explains that internal communication about Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark started within the municipality saying that the tourist office has made this, indoctrinating everyone to know that this is how it is now being branded. This indicates that the branding and communication of the new identity internally has been consistent and straightforward from the beginning with the fact that this is how it was going to be, which Fitzpatrick & Fontana (2017) argues is important in the establishment of a nature-based place brand. Moreover, in the article by Klein (2021a), Simon who is working at the outdoor secretary as a development consultant emphasizes that Silkeborg should end up being that place in Denmark everyone else is being inspired from when it comes to implementing outdoor within destinations. Hence, the nature-based assets play an essential role in the branding process of identifying the core values that the local community should commit themselves to, and behave, think, and work towards the true identity, for other destinations to be inspired. This aligns with Urde's (2003) argument that the core values are essential for a greater commitment, reputation and authentic experience within place making. Additionally, it is further emphasized in the masterplan that they will work on place branding carefully so that local residents and tourists, regardless of whether they are out in the nature area or in urban spaces, will be repeatedly reminded that they are in the outdoor capital of Denmark. As identified in the Instrument of Facility section, this is done by incorporating nature into the urban spaces of the city as well as making quality facilities in the outdoor areas. This means that the nature-based assets are cultivating the place making process by bringing nature into urban areas and vice versa, with the aim of improving the quality of life regarding the residents' well-being since that of being exposed to nature is believed to reduce stress and foster both psychological and physical well-being (Ulrich, 1993; Kellert & Wilson, 1993). However, since there is a divided understanding of what 'outdoor' is, and how 'outdoor' is perceived among our local informants, it was an interesting finding to discover that the natural assets of the Silkeborg areas are used for recreational activities by our participants but with different motivations. This was discovered from the survey of the local residents, where we asked the question: *"What is your biggest motivation for using nature and outdoor activities?"*. The responses are presented as follows:

### What is your biggest motivation for using nature and outdoor activities?

Local survey 1 (%)

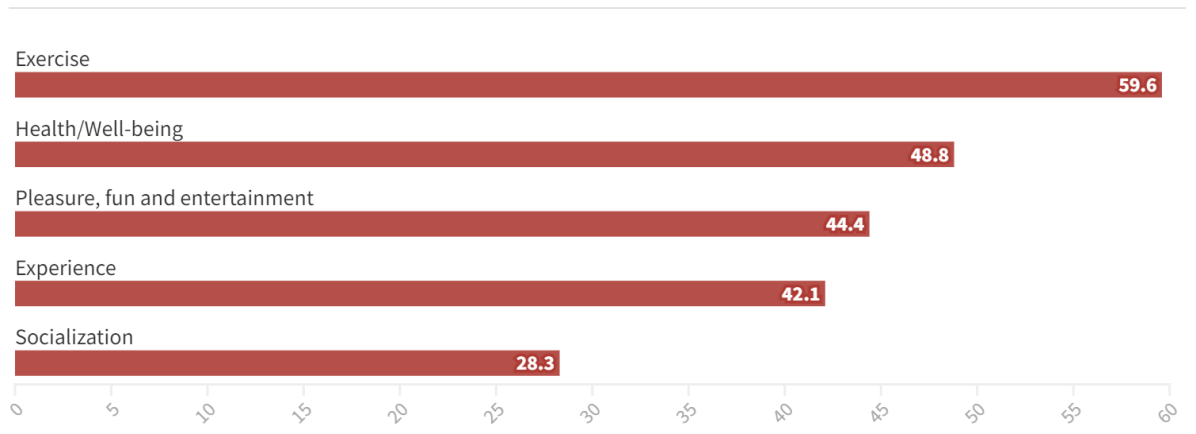


Figure 32. What is your biggest motivation for using nature and outdoor activities?

In this figure (Figure 32), it is observed that the biggest motivation for the local residents to use the outdoors and nature areas are for exercising, which is 59.6%, and is followed by the second most frequent reason, which is to be 'healthy' at 48.8%. This finding indicates that the local residents care a lot about their well-being both physically and psychologically, which aligns with the statement that being close to nature is good for the health of the body in this way. Moreover, as this question in the survey has been set up as a multiple choice making it possible for them to emphasize their answers with comments, the pattern of using nature is also discovered to concern mental health and quietness, as the following comments highlight:

*"The quietness nature provides, as well as I collect food and things for creative projects."*

*"Enjoy nature."*

*"To be out and enjoy nature and get fresh air."*

*"Peace and nature - quietness."*

*"Exercise, find peace."*

[Local residents, survey 1]

Therefore, since the majority of the local residents are motivated to use nature, based on their health and to find quietness, this would be important elements for the destination of Silkeborg to use in their internal place branding among local stakeholders, to make it representative of their

perceptions and needs (Kaefer, 2021), as it can be challenging to tune the local users into the brand values (Grand in Kaefer, 2021). However, it does align with the third point of the city council's vision, making an effort in communicating it to the local stakeholders in a public manner:

*“(...) ‘3. Use the outdoor capital of Denmark as a springboard for increased movement, health and quality of life for everyone’ - then all of a sudden it becomes place-specific.”*

[Outdoor secretary 1]

Hence, branding the aim of the place's core values to the local stakeholders in making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark that should be lived by the local community, who should consider the outdoors and nature areas as a way to improve the quality of life through movement and health. Additionally, the motivation of 'leisure and pleasure' also ranks high at 43.8% along with 'experiences' at 42.1%, indicating that these are also motivating factors that make the locals use the outdoors and nature. Lastly is the motivation for 'socialization' at 28.3% which could possibly be related to the previous two in making good experiences and having fun, but nothing that is solely considered a major importance to them.

Further, we know from our findings that the merge of Visit Silkeborg and Visit Aarhus resulted in the local municipality taking over the local DMO's role of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. Based on this, the city council's vision of increased health and life quality is place-bound to the destination and the local residents living there. However, despite the importance of branding the place's brand internally, the external perspective is equally important when it comes to attracting visitors to the destination. Therefore, to get a more holistic understanding of how it is perceived, we made a survey for visitors coming to Silkeborg asking the question of what their motivations for using the outdoors and natural assets of Silkeborg were, by asking *“For what reason have you used nature within the Silkeborg municipality as a tourist?”*. The answers are presented as follows:

### For what reason have you used nature within the Silkeborg municipality as a tourist? Tourist survey 2 (%)

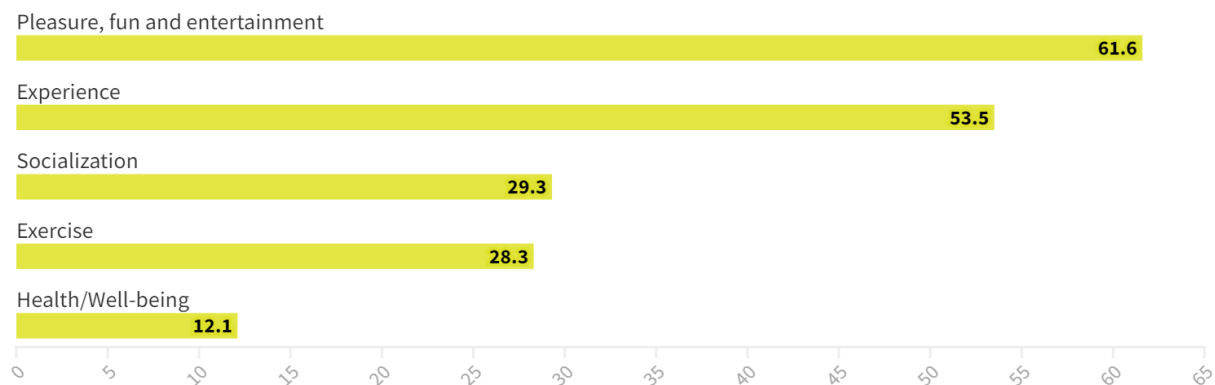


Figure 33. For what reason have you used nature within the Silkeborg municipality as a tourist?

Here (Figure 33), the total percentage also exceeds 100% because the question asked was a multiple answer question making it possible for tourists to make several answers. Though compared to what motivated the local residents, this figure reveals data that indicates tourists are more drawn to Silkeborg to use the nature areas for ‘pleasure, fun and entertainment’ ranking highest with 61.6% as well as ‘experiences’ at 53.5%. Therefore, it becomes evident that the two different target groups of local residents internally and tourists externally are motivated to use nature areas around Silkeborg for different reasons. This means that in the external place branding exercised by the DMO should be more directed towards what kinds of fun and pleasurable experiences tourists can expect to have when visiting the destination. This aligns with Kaefer’s (2021) statement that it is important to brand the true values of the destination and live up to what it promises tourists such that it corresponds with their image and perception of the destination to generate great experiences. Following this, it is also emphasized in the masterplan’s branding strategy when stating that:

*“Excellent stories breed good stories, so it’s just about getting the snowball to roll.”*

[Masterplan, 2020]

Hence, indicating that the following three motivational factors of ‘socializing’ at 29.3%, ‘exercising’ at 28.3% and ‘health’ at 12.1% are not as important to local residents than they are to the tourists. It is interesting to see how the two highest ranked motivations for local residents, which are ‘health’ and ‘exercise’, are the two lowest ranked for tourists motivated to use the outdoors and nature areas around the outdoor capital of Denmark. Therefore, these findings could

be important for future nature-based place-making initiatives of Silkeborg, as it gives an indicator of what purpose the local residents and the tourists are using the natural assets for. An example can be given, where mountain bike trails and running paths might strengthen the place making from a local perspective, whereas shelters, and other nature-based facilities that create outdoor experiences, pleasure, fun, and socializing activities might strengthen the place-making from a touristic perspective. When comparing the local residents' motivations for using the outdoors with the tourists' motivations, these findings indicate that there is a clear difference in their behavior for using it. Therefore, it becomes evident for the destination of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark that they should brand the place differently whether it is internally or externally to the local residents or tourists respectively. This aligns with Styliadis' et al. (2014) argument that a destination should not only be developed on behalf of tourists' image of the place but likewise on behalf of the local residents' image of it to ensure they support the values and identity that is attached to it.

Along with making all local stakeholders commit to the brand identity and make tourists attracted to it, the core values and shared understanding of the identity is also part of what culture they want to breed on, as the outdoor secretary describes in the following quotes:

*“It is a strategy for what culture we want in Silkeborg, both among us citizens, but also how we work. (...) A tourism strategy can of course stand alone, but then it will also stand very alone. Now it is supported by a lot of other different elements which I think are much stronger than if you stand on one leg alone.”*

[Outdoor secretary 2]

Here, the outdoor secretary emphasizes that the tourism strategy is great to influence and strengthen the culture, but not alone as it should also include the local stakeholders, which means that it should contain more 'legs', as they say, meaning that it should be incorporated into all three focus areas of welfare, knowledge and growth, and leisure and nature. This indicates that Silkeborg's brand is created on behalf of its topography, history, and culture, which aligns with Kavaratzis & Ashworth, (2015) and Kalandides, (2011) argument of what makes a place unique, as well as the standard of living it, can offer to the local community (Klijn et al., 2012). Therefore, they argue that it stands much stronger if it is practiced throughout the destination with all initiatives and local stakeholders supporting it (Styliadis et al., 2014). Additionally, they follow up with the perspective that its values should be present both internally and externally, such that not

only locals but also visitors know what to expect when visiting the destination, which they state here:

*“It is very much what expectation you can have as a user about what is made available. This is something we will work on a lot, and it is also into the tourism experience we want to work with. So both with our own citizens but also for those who come from outside. “*

[Outdoor secretary 2]

This finding indicates that the outdoor secretary is aware that the brand’s promise to tourists of what they can expect in this place should also reflect their experiences when they are coming to the destination. This means that to create a good experience for the visitors, it is essential for the internal stakeholders to live and behave in regard to the place brand, to make an attractive and authentic destination (Urde, 2003; Wheeler et al., 2011), and it seems like they have had a good start to this process, which the outdoor secretary emphasizes:

*“What we have noticed here, which has been the strength, is that there is no one who has not wanted to see themselves into it. It's the citizens, companies, the municipality, tourism organizations, accommodation, everything, everyone has been able to say that this is what we need. As little resistance as we have encountered, that is the strength of it, because it is there. It's not something we've figured out, it's there.”*

[Outdoor secretary 1]

According to the outdoor secretary, they have had the experience of not facing very little resistance to the new vision and strategy made for Silkeborg, which clearly indicates that the place’s new brand identity of being the outdoor capital of Denmark and the values belonging to it is something the local community can identify itself with, which means they are probably on the right path to create a true and authentic identity (Kaefer, 2021). However, it is not to say that every person, organization, or business living or operating in the community agrees with it, as the data on whether the local residents see the place as the outdoor capital of Denmark revealed from survey 1 that at least 44.4% of them do not. Nonetheless, to some extent, there is a certain agreement that it contains values that aligns with a weighted part of the local community due to the minimum resistance. This could mean that they might already have existed, but without being strategically used in such a thoroughly nature-based place making process before. Hence, as Greedy et al. (2022) defined nature-based placemaking, it is a framework that develops emerging communities

by building on its natural assets to bolster the community's liveliness, which in the case of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, is an essential aspect of revealing the community's full potential to develop within this nature-based placemaking through the new vision (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). In this case, key stakeholders of residents, politicians and businesses among others should understand the meaning, function, and promise of this new place brand to make sure they support the development of the community in a sustainable manner (Kaefer, 2021). Through our findings, we discovered examples of this both from the operating businesses and local organizations' perspectives. The first is a finding identified in the previous section of the instrument of Facility, where local businesses have started to tap into the vision and strategy for the overall destination of branding itself as the outdoor capital of Denmark. This is done by not only including the word outdoor into their business name, but also changing their strategy such that it aligns with the destination's overall outdoor strategy because it makes more sense to them to run a business in this direction. If several local businesses are changing their strategy to align with the overall vision and strategy of the municipality, then it indicates that this definitely does not just scratch the surface, but are values identified that lie deeper in the destination's existence. This is something one of the local camping sites has done, as they emphasize:

*“We decided quite quickly to bite into this outdoor strategy, (...) it was from the municipality at the time we got hold of the outdoor strategy for the area here, and it played right into where we wanted to go. Attracting new customer groups, turning camping and outdoor into something else that is part of it, getting some new customer groups to get out into nature, new forms of accommodation, new ways of doing things. It spoke to us, so we jumped on it.”*

[Actor 5]

*“There are also some who have found the product called Bike & Burger, out biking and then eat a burger up in the town afterwards (...), and Kongensbro kro has made a product called Krominoen, not Caminoen but Krominoen, so that means you stay with him for two nights, and get delicious gourmet food and he makes sure you get a delicious packed lunch and then you can walk on the trail.”*

[DMO 1, Visit Silkeborg]

According to the first finding, it becomes evident how the local business actor 5 contributes to the internal branding among local stakeholders in making it visible to the visitors and the locals

through their name and strategy that they see Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. The second finding from DMO 1 is emphasizing how other local business stakeholders have tried to make products that tap into the overall strategy of combining experiences with nature and pleasure at the same time, which aligns with the factors tourists are motivated to visit the destination. This makes them all representative of the place brand which is a key characteristic to succeed with place branding according to Kaefer (2021).

The other finding is a local association in the suburb called Virklund, which the outdoor secretary has become aware of it has called itself Virklund outdoor, as exemplified in the following quote:

*“We have a really good example from the small town we have called Virklund. It is a really beautiful area they live in, and then they have made something called Virklund outdoors. (...) They have not been involved in our decision, they have made their own little autonomous environment out there, and now they call themselves Virklund - outdoor suburb capital of Denmark.”*

[Outdoor secretary 1]

This signals that it is not just within the center of Silkeborg that the new identity has been branded, but it has made it to the suburbs as well, with the organization of Virklund outdoor tapping into this brand of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark by calling themselves the outdoor suburb capital of Denmark within in their own autonomous environment. Hence, since the commitment to the brand exceeds the local community to the suburbs it indicates that the representatives of the place brand are visible in different ways and in different areas of the place both from a local business and a local associational perspective, which is essential for a place brand to succeed (Kaefer, 2021).

Diving into the perspective of how the initiative of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark is funded, it is described in Klein (2021a) *that there has been invested 22 million Danish crowns into outdoor facilities*. Moreover, when asking the outdoor secretary how the development of Silkeborg to become the outdoor capital of Denmark including the place brand is funded, they explained the following:

*“It is the municipality that invests in new outdoor facilities - lake baths, mountain bike tracks, paths, urban spaces, etc. It is also the municipality that runs the outdoor activities in schools, the health area and the other major welfare areas. But on the other hand, there are also companies, organizations, etc., who invest in*

*the development of new business areas - campsites, tree-climbing paths, guided tours, accommodation, etc.”*

[Outdoor secretary 2]

This informant explains how the economic structure of the project is funded by a public-private sector partnership, where the place brand is funded by a combination of public financing from the municipality and contributions from private sector organizations and companies. According to Kaefer (2021), efficient funding is key to succeed and drive forward with the place brand to communicate to the different stakeholders through different channels. Therefore, insufficient funding of the place brand of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark will almost guarantee failure as it becomes difficult to manifest and create an authentic destination based on its values and identity that is central to make the destination attractive to both visit and live in (Sofield et al., 2017).

However, some stakeholders do question a destination's ability to discover values that represent shared values across all stakeholders within it, which is a rhetorical question asked by Christian Dragin-Jensen in Klein (2021b), who is an expert in destination branding:

*“If you have nature and the outdoors as your DNA, it can seem credible. But there is a risk of not gaining support for the strategy, because ‘can something such as outdoor activities really embrace the interest of all stakeholders within an entire municipality?’”*

[Christian D. J. in Klein, 2021b]

The rhetorical question in this finding reveals how important it is for those in charge of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark to ask themselves, as a destination, whether it is possible to find a brand with values that aligns across the local community stakeholders when starting such a process in changing the place brand and whether they believe in its success or not. This emphasizes the importance of making a planned in-depth place management strategy (Kaefer, 2021) for the process of changing the brand for Silkeborg from being ‘the city of cars’ to ‘the outdoor capital of Denmark’, which clearly is a priority that has been made. However, despite considering this critical rhetorical question, the process of branding Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark seems to be succeeding in a slow and steady process with improving the quality of the place through many different initiatives and internal branding. Nonetheless, this does raise the question of how they are doing with external branding, which the section below elaborates on.

#### 4.2.4.1 External branding

External branding is essential to create awareness of a place that has been constructed to be an attractive destination through its image that people both want to live in but also visit. The external branding can be practiced in different ways and is directed towards external stakeholders such as potential tourists, businesses, and new residents (Kaefer, 2021; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Um & Crompton, 1990). Significant to the branding of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark externally, is that it is managed solely by the DMO. The way we identified external branding practices was first to pretend to be tourists searching for the outdoor capital of Denmark online, to identify what the tourists experience when searching for it. To our surprise, there was a confusing gap of where to find information, as we first entered the website of Visit Silkeborg, which was the original main site, however, after a few clicks, we kept being directed to the Visit Aarhus website. Therefore, from a tourist perspective, who does not know the area, it was confusing where the destination of the outdoor capital of Denmark was located. Therefore, in our interview with the local DMO, Visit Aarhus, whom our informant was the tourist manager in the former DMO, Visit Silkeborg, we asked how she has been managing this. She states as followed in the quote:

*“That is completely true. It is one of the consequences that has been in making a merger, where things just take a little longer than you had actually expected. We inherited Visit Silkeborg’s website, and it has actually been standing still until now, so the hope is that it will be easier for you as a tourist in the outdoor capital of Denmark in a short period of time, we are well aware of that part.”*

[DMO 2, Visit Aarhus]

This extracted quote shows that the current DMO is well aware of the confusion that tourists must have been experiencing when looking for information about Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark in the period of time from the merger in the summer of 2019 till today, spring 2022, since the information available online about what to experience in the outdoor capital of Denmark had not been streamlined yet. Therefore, the consequence emphasized by her regarding the branded promise of what attractions and experiences that tourists could expect to have when visiting the destination during this period of time, is that the online media advertisement and thereby the creation of Silkeborg’s image might not have been strong in creating symbolic and social stimuli for tourists, as argued by Hosany, Ekinici, & Uysal (2007). Hence, diminishing Silkeborg’s ability to form its image based on its distinctive personality (ibid.) and missing out on

the opportunity to give potential tourists a good first impression of their new nature-based place identity (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). Nonetheless, when asking about the current DMO of Visit Aarhus' role in branding the outdoor capital of Denmark, she added that they were planning on improving this with a new website launch in May when saying:

*“When we fused, we took over all sorts of local websites, and now in the beginning of May, we launch and change our whole web-system based on a new branding strategy, where Silkeborg and Skanderborg municipalities disappears and get replaced by ‘Lake-district’ and ‘Søhøjlandet’. In ‘Søhøjlandet’, trademark nr. 1 is ‘The outdoor capital of Denmark’, and trademark nr. 2 is ‘Himmelbjerget’.”*

[DMO 2, Visit Aarhus]

According to this finding, the DMO is planning to launch a new and streamlined online universe of information about the place for tourists to find, which is based on a partly new and extended branding strategy on how to develop the destination of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. This emphasizes that one of the main external branding practices done by the DMO is to use online platforms to inform about- and create awareness of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. Hence, it aligns with Fakeye & Crompton (1991) and Um & Crompton's (1990) identification of external branding practices usually performed through media advertisement. Though, as she explains, there is a desire to include other regions than the Silkeborg municipality into the area of being the outdoor capital of Denmark, transforming it into a larger destination called ‘The Lake District’ with two main trademarks of ‘The outdoor capital of Denmark’ being the first followed by ‘Himmelbjerget’ as second, to attract potential visitors, investors, and talents (Kaefer, 2021). The latter trademark would not otherwise be within the outdoor capital of Denmark if it was restricted to Silkeborg municipality, since this attraction is located in the neighboring municipality, Skanderborg municipality (Hasløv & Kjærsgaard, 2021). In this vein, while writing this thesis, the online universe of branding the outdoor capital of Denmark within the extended branding strategy for the whole new Silkeborg Lake District has been launched and now provides a much better first impression for the tourist, when searching for experiences in the area. The following figure 34 illustrates this:

## Silkeborg Lake District - Outdoor Capital of Denmark

With more than 50 lakes and a forest area, which stretches beyond 224 square kilometers, Silkeborg Søhøjlandet is the largest nature area in the entire country. This combined with the cultural and art heritage found in Silkeborg makes the perfect destination for families, couples and friends looking for new experiences and time to relax.

Figure 34: Newly launched website for Silkeborg Lake District - outdoor capital of Denmark.

(Source: Silkeborg.com)

As illustrated in the figure 34, the website launch of Silkeborg as the Lake District has streamlined the information about the area having the outdoor capital of Denmark as the first trademark that is communicated to the visitors. Thereby, it is clearly communicated that this destination is based on its nature-based assets, as emphasized in the description of the Silkeborg Lake District - the outdoor capital of Denmark, where it says this is where you can visit the largest nature area in the entire country along with its more than 50 lakes, inviting tourists with desire for nature and outdoor experiences to explore. Hence, branding the place externally to tourists with the aim of creating a good first impression of what the nature-based place can offer to strengthen its destination image (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). On top of the fact that external branding is usually practiced through media advertisement (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Um & Crompton, 1990), the website of the streamlined information about the destination is essential to the overall place identity and image communicated by the DMO manager from Visit Aarhus to differentiate their place from others. Hence, the website is part of creating and maintaining the destination's distinctive personality in the mind of the tourists through the feelings it creates, and the attitudes formed towards the destination by their motivations for visiting it (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Therefore, since these motivations are usually associated with the values that tourists can identify themselves with, it is important to communicate and brand the place towards the specific target group of tourists whose values aligns with the values attached to the destination's identity and what experiences it can offer, to motivate them to visit (Stylidis et al., 2014) As previously discovered in this analysis, tourists are motivated to visit and use nature and the outdoors environment surrounding Silkeborg according to what experiences as well as pleasure, fun and entertainment that can redeem their expectations. Therefore, the DMO should brand the nature-based place image through these primary motivational factors related to what the place can offer, to communicate its true and authentic identity (Kaefer, 2021). However, it is crucial that the DMO communicates the identity

of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark in a consistent manner to strengthen and maintain the strong identity that Silkeborg as a nature-based place has created (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). This is also an important aspect when branding the destination to external national business stakeholders working within the tourism industry, such that it is convincing and makes stakeholders believe in it. When researching the internet we discovered findings regarding external branding in different articles, where both former and existing actors working with making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark have commented on the process to make everyone outside of Silkeborg understand why they brand themselves this way. Hence, identifying another media promotion of the place in making it the outdoor capital of Denmark (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Um & Crompton, 1990). One of the former actors, Mads Frandsen, who is the former chairman of the outdoor secretary within Silkeborg municipality, says the following:

*“We brand ourselves so much on the outdoors because we have a nature that is worthy of being a capital.”*

[Mads Frandsen in Klein, 2021a]

Here, Mads is arguing in the article that the natural environment surrounding Silkeborg is worthy of being a capital, which is the reason they have been branding the place so much on the outdoors. Hence, indicating that from the outdoor secretary’s perspective, they really believe in the brand’s authenticity and truthfulness of what it can manage regarding being the outdoor capital of Denmark. Following along with the statement from the DMO 2 Visit Aarhus, whom is Liselotte, the former tourist manager in Visit Silkeborg that actually invented and believed in the place’s new brand’s strength of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, she claims that:

*“Outdoor is included in everything we are communicating. It is narratively strong. We are the outdoor capital of Denmark. Period.”*

[DMO 2 Visit Aarhus, Liselotte in Klein, 2021a]

Here, Liselotte clearly emphasizes that outdoor is included in everything they are communicating externally because it is narratively strong, indicating that it includes all the outdoor related experiences that are both pleasurable, fun, and entertaining appealing to the tourists and external stakeholders’ motivations for visiting the area. This aligns with the importance of branding a true and authentic brand that gives people a good first impression of the place (Kaefer, 2021) and the values it contains that they can reflect on. Hence, creating and maintaining the destination’s

distinctive personality and DNA in the mind of the consumers in a consistent way differentiating it from other places (Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2007; Rainisto, 2003), by putting an end to the doubting that people might have of whether Silkeborg is, or is not, the outdoor capital of Denmark, by simply trumping through stating that it is, period. And then there is nothing more to discuss about that. Here, through external branding and communication, the DMO is taking on the role of spreading the word about the place in a clear way that no-one can be in doubt of, which is a statement that will be imprinted in the stakeholders' minds and make them talk about the place in this way. Thus, to breed a word-of-mouth effect in making people recommend the place in their respective networks through social and symbolic stimuli (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Um & Crompton, 1990). This is also part of constructing a strong image and thereby an attractive destination that people want to live in and visit (Sofield et al., 2017), by taking on the role of communicating the brand to external stakeholders of potential visitors, residents, and businesses in a consistent way regarding its nature-based assets used in the process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). An element that also stands out is that Silkeborg is the only municipality in the country with an outdoor secretary, which emphasizes how much the municipality believes in this outdoor brand's identity and its strength (described in Klein, 2021a). This is also identified in the process of creating the destination and distinguishing it from other places along with the merger between Visit Silkeborg and Visit Aarhus. Therefore, we asked our informant from the DMO Visit Aarhus how it would affect Silkeborg as a destination. Here she mentions that:

*“We’ve got the name protected apropos the story from England that everyone can call themselves ‘the outdoor capital’. We actually paid a lot of money to get name protection”*

[DMO 2, Visit Aarhus]

Hence, referring back to the funding of the project, some of this money funded to develop the place have been used to protect the name of ‘the outdoor capital of Denmark’ from being used in other places in Denmark, making it impossible for the place to experience any competition in this regard, since no-one else can take this mark and put it onto their destination, as it would be illegal. By making such a serious act of protecting the brand name from being used elsewhere indicates that the DMO, the municipality and other local stakeholders believe in its strong DNA and personality so much that they are not afraid of taking it this step further. Thereby, managing the destination with the aim of truly distinguishing the place from other places (Hosany, Ekinci, &

Uysal, 2007; Rainisto, 2003). This will naturally convince both internal and external stakeholders to understand that Silkeborg is the outdoor capital of Denmark, and to an extent be a magnet in itself attracting both local residents and visitors.

Overall, these findings regarding internal and external branding are associated with the definition of place branding this thesis has adopted, which Zenker & Braun (2010) has defined to be “*a network of associations in the place consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communications, values and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design*” (Zenker & Braun 2010 in Zenker et al. 2017, 17). Hence, all communications, values, the verbal, visual and behavioral expressions of the place being the outdoor capital of Denmark made by all the different stakeholders tapping into this vision is central to and aligns with the goal of branding Silkeborg in this direction to create awareness to make local stakeholders identify themselves with the place and make it attractive for future tourists, potential residents, and businesses. In the end, this overall aligns with the core idea that the strength of the identity comes from a shared understanding of the values attached to it among all stakeholders that should be lived by them.

#### 4.2.4.2 Summary

Summing up on this section, the branding and communication instrument has been used to develop and improve Silkeborg's new identity as the outdoor capital of Denmark within the three focus areas. Hence, both internal and external place branding plays an essential role in the place making process of shaping and strengthening it.

First, it is identified that practices of internal branding were already part of the early steps of the place making process, as the change in destination identity from ‘the city of cars’ to ‘the outdoor capital of Denmark’ started from a tourism perspective. Thus, this new identity was made with the goal of distinguishing Silkeborg from other destinations with the local DMO, Visit Silkeborg, merging with the DMO from Visit Aarhus. It played an essential role in getting the right partner onboard, who is the city council, from the beginning, as they incorporated it into their vision and strategy to manifest the new values of the identity to make it easier for local stakeholders of residents and businesses to associate with it. As the place brand shifted to a broader focus on welfare when the municipality inherited it, it became evident that everything the local stakeholders were doing should be an affirmation of the place's identity, which means that it includes incorporating outdoor and nature into the urban spaces of Silkeborg as well as making quality facilities in nature for people to use (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). Thus, having core values that

are lived by everyone to strengthen the identity and improve the residents' quality of life is done by focusing on their well-being by being exposed more to nature, which has a stress reducing effect (Ulrich, 1993; Kellert & Wilson, 1993). Therefore, as everyone should participate in strengthening the identity, then both the municipality and local stakeholders within the public-private sector partnership are responsible for developing and improving the destination regarding its welfare, knowledge, and accessibility to nature, which is possible due to the large portion of funding of 22 million Danish crowns.

Second, nature and the outdoor facilities are used with different purposes whether it is local residents or tourists, as they are motivated to use it by different characteristics. Therefore, internal and external branding practices should be done differently based on who their target group is and what they are motivated by, as a destination should not only be developed on behalf of tourists' image of the place but also the local residents' since the destination likewise depends on their perception of the place (Stylidis et al. 2014). This is also central to the community's culture and is part of making the brand more authentic and stand stronger by being incorporated to the whole destination and not only within a tourism strategy. Therefore, what the destination is promising to both tourists and local residents should be something they can guarantee and live up to with the aim of giving everyone a good experience living up to their expectations of using nature and the outdoor facilities.

Furthermore, there are several indications that the place brand is succeeding based on the findings that the municipality has experienced very little resistance to the brand identity meaning that the local community can identify themselves with the values attached to it. Therefore, it can be understood as these values might already have existed within the community but without being used in a more strategic manner, that is now shaping and developing it based on its nature-based assets. Moreover, another indication is discovered regarding that local businesses and associations have incorporated 'outdoor' into their name as well as adjusting the business strategy to align with the spirit of the municipality's overall outdoor vision and strategy, making local stakeholders and associations representative for the place brand that is essential for the destination to succeed with it (Kaefer, 2021). However, the rhetorical question of how a destination can make a brand with a DNA that really embraces the interest of all stakeholders within an entire municipality is flourishing in the background breeding a tiny skepticism.

Finally, external branding is exercised by the DMO and takes the role of branding the destination externally to attract potential tourists, businesses, and future residents. Hence, to succeed with external branding the DMO should be consistent in its communication forms of branding the places identity and image that external stakeholders are associating themselves with.

This is identified both through the online media website having streamlined all information into one platform as well as articles where they are being clear about their statement that Silkeborg is the outdoor capital of Denmark.

#### **4.2.5 Sub-conclusion for whole implementation**

Summing up, based on these findings, Silkeborg municipality has shifted its focus from tourists to the local community in the process of branding Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. Regarding this, a series of policy implementations has been performed for the nature-based placemaking strategy, to develop the benefits of the local community regarding welfare, knowledge, growth, leisure and nature use. In these processes, Silkeborg are using mainly four instruments to assure a successful and effective place making, which contribute to suggest an answer to the sub-question of: *How, who, and what has been done to implement in- and develop the place?* that has guided this section.

Firstly, the importance of including the local community was emphasized by place-makers in Silkeborg, as the place-makers depend on the local community just as much as the local community depends on them. Here, the local community provides inspiration for outdoor traditions and are part of indicating what is working and not since they are outdoor users that experience and give reviews on the initiatives being implemented. Additionally, the expectations on improving health conditions for local residents has attached great importance to outdoor policies. In the spirit of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, it was identified that more businesses in the local area are incorporating outdoor elements into their strategy and vision and are thereby contributing to a more economically sustainable community (Kaefer, 2021). Nonetheless, tourism development is also valued in the placemaking strategy in the way that the more authentic the destination, it is expected to attract more tourists to the place to bring economic growth to the community (ibid.).

Secondly, to create a quality place in nature areas where outdoor users' demands and comfortability can be satisfied, a set of facilities were built both in nature areas and incorporated into the urban city life. These facilities serve to educate visitors with sustainable knowledge and inspire them to reflect on their behaviors while using nature. Conflicts between tourism businesses and place-makers are found in this study, as tourism businesses are worried that competition with the public facilities could cause them to lose customers. However, the responsibility of maintaining the facilities is attributed to different public and private stakeholders, in which the local

stakeholders are expected to learn about preserving nature and prepare for future green transitions while using it and implementing outdoor initiatives.

Third, the place making process in Silkeborg is found to be a collaborative process, as the collaborations that concern the benefits of the local community and tourists are inclusive to stakeholders of all levels. The wide range of stakeholders are contributing to the decision-making process with their insights to strengthen the outdoor identity. However, they also bring in different working methods, which at some point can cause collaboration issues regarding who is doing what and ensure communication with one another on the different initiatives. The collaboration showcases the effect of mixing top-down and bottom-up policy making approaches, which indicate an effective place making process in making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, as successful places contain both elements and do not only operate from one end or the other of that continuum (Lew, 2017). Furthermore, local tourism businesses revealed their concern about the lack of tourist information service provided by the DMO due to the closed tourist office, which might harm the local residents' willingness to collaborate and thereby affect the success of Silkeborg's place making process of becoming the outdoor capital of Denmark.

Lastly, branding and communication are presented as the last instrument used for developing Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. In the place making process of becoming so, both internal and external place branding is essential. Internally, Silkeborg experienced a place branding change, when they went from being 'the city of cars' to 'the outdoor capital of Denmark'. This was set out as a tourism branding strategy, but as a merge occurred with the local tourism DMO, where the new label of the outdoor capital was inherited by the municipality, the local business stakeholders and the city council had been nursing and well accepting the brand. This created changes in the branding values, as the focus started leaning more towards the well-being of the local community of Silkeborg. Our findings indicate that the place branding has overall succeeded, as it has met little resistance from those who engage with the brand and the destination. On the other hand, the findings also indicate that they have not reached the goal yet as there is still room for improvement of making more local stakeholders associate the destination with being the outdoor capital of Denmark. However, other findings also indicate that the values being promoted through the outdoor capital already had its roots within the community prior to the strategic efforts that have been made. Nonetheless, investments in facilities, collaborations and branding are still highly ongoing, and the result of these are a continuous strengthening of the DNA associated with Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark.

Overall, valuing the importance of local community as well as creating outdoor facilities with educational purposes, improve collaboration among stakeholders of different levels, and brand the

new place identity, Silkeborg is developing its vision on making the outdoor capital beneficial for its local community's welfare as well as the enhancement of economic, social, and cultural growth, and the creation of a quality nature-based place for all stakeholders.

### 4.3 Impact on Silkeborg place and users



Based on the findings from the process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, this thesis has further been researching how it has impacted the place and its different users of local residents and tourists in different ways. Therefore, this section is guided by the last sub-question of: *“How has the making of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark impacted the place and users?”*, following the design and implementation process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, to understand how the different users of Silkeborg and its nature-based assets have been impacted. Based on the findings from survey 1 concerning how often the local residents have been using nature and the outdoors facilities in general, we discovered that 43.8% are using it either weekly or several times a week and is followed by 16.2% using it daily and 15.8% using it monthly, and significantly only 1.3% are never using the nature areas (see Appendix 9.1.2.4). This has given us an understanding of the distribution showing that the majority of the local residents are using nature on a regular basis in general. Therefore, to identify whether the brand of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark has had any impact on their motivation in this regard, we have asked the local residents of Silkeborg to answer the question: *“Silkeborg has recently become the outdoor capital of Denmark. How has this changed your motivation for getting more out in nature?”*, which revealed an intriguing result illustrated in the figure 35 below:

#### **Silkeborg has recently become the outdoor capital of Denmark. How has this changed your motivation for getting more out in nature?**

Local survey 1 (%)

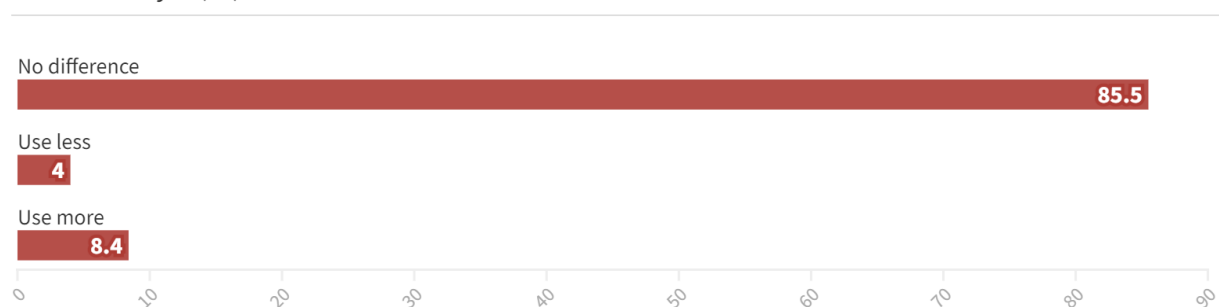


Figure 35. Motivation for using nature, Survey 1

From this finding, it is observed that among 297 responses, a significant amount of 85.5% of the local residents are using nature the same amount of time, as before Silkeborg was announced to be

the outdoor capital of Denmark. Therefore, although the outdoor secretary and its stakeholders collaborated to work on encouraging the local residents through implemented quality facilities and internal branding to attend more outdoor activities and use the natural assets more, it seems like the outcome has not been showing off with notable changes, at least not yet. This could indicate that since the majority of the local residents have already been using the nature and outdoor facilities on a regular basis, there has not been a significant change in how they are using it after it became the outdoor capital of Denmark. Hence, the values that are branded internally are most likely something that has already existed among the local residents, but probably not in a strategic way by putting a mark on the destination.

Similar data is identified from the national tourism perspective, where we asked the question of: *“Has the announcement of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark affected your interest in visiting the area as a tourist?”* in survey 2, to identify whether there has been a change in tourists’ behavior after the announcement of Silkeborg becoming the outdoor capital of Denmark:

### **Has the announcement of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark affected your interest in visiting the area as a tourist?**

Tourist survey 2 (%)

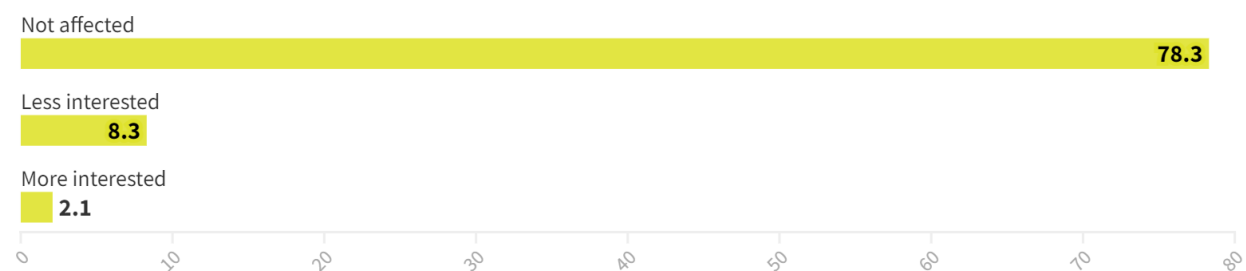


Figure 36. Motivation for using nature, Tourist Survey 2

As this finding reveals, it is very identical to the result of local residents’ behavior, as 78.3% have stated that it has not affected whether they want to visit Silkeborg or not compared to previous times where Silkeborg was not holding the title of the outdoor capital of Denmark. Despite the purpose of branding Silkeborg externally as the outdoor capital of Denmark was to attract more users to nature and outdoors, this could indicate that the outcome of external branding has not been effective in making more of the national tourists wanting to visit the place more. This does not necessarily mean that the strategy has failed, but it might indicate that the natural assets within the Silkeborg area have always been highly attractive and used by both local residents and tourists.

However, this leads to the topic of how the current natural assets are managed and maintained, as this can be directly linked to the user's willingness to use them.

### 4.3.1 Use of natural assets and maintenance

Along with making the place of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, to which the nature-based assets play a central role, this thesis aimed to investigate the level of maintenance of nature while developing quality places and facilities for the local community and tourists to use, to understand whether it has been impacted or not. Therefore, to obtain a more holistic understanding in this regard, we decided to ask the local residents of Silkeborg, in survey 1: *“On a scale from 1-10, how would you rate the nature-areas current condition? Where 1 is destroyed and 10 are well maintained.”*, which revealed the following answers illustrated below:

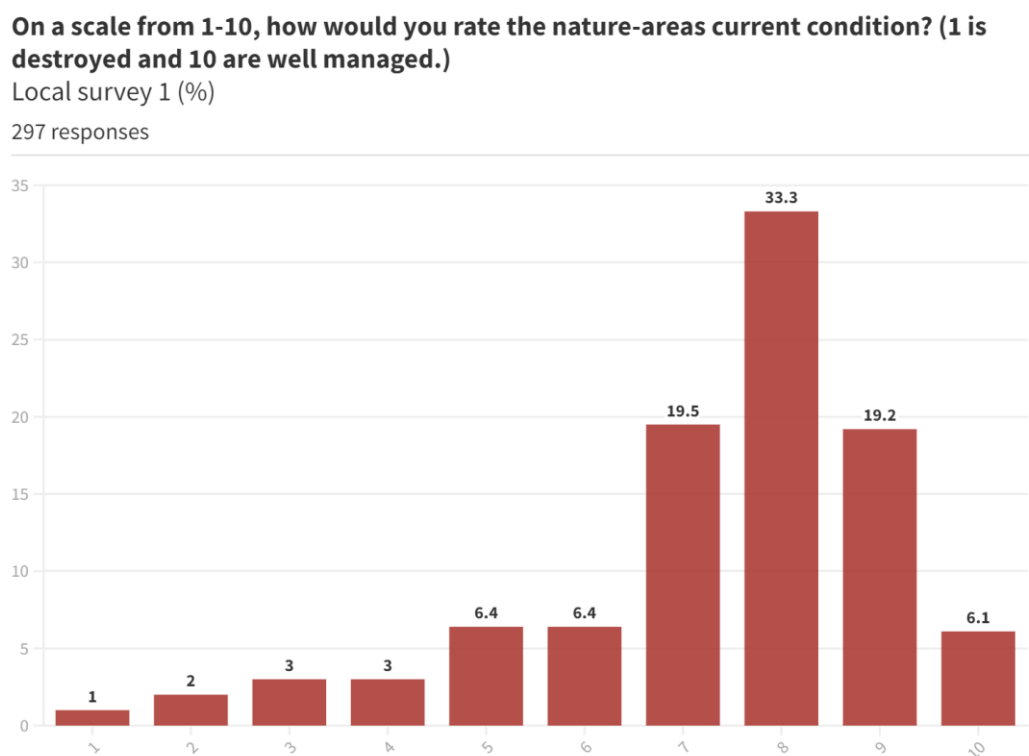


Figure 37. Local ratings of nature areas' condition

Based on this finding, it becomes evident that the local residents' experience of whether nature is maintained or not clearly lean towards the shared impression that it is well maintained. Here, it is discovered that the amount of the local residents rating the level of maintenance to be 8 constitute 33.3%, which is the most selected answer. This indicates that there is a high level of maintenance of nature, but still with room for some improvement. When interpreting the data further and dividing the answers based on the average of how nature is maintained, which this thesis considers to be the middle number 5 on the scale, the majority of the local residents rating 6-10 constitute

84.5% of the total number of answers, believing it is well maintained. Hence, this indicates that nature and the outdoors is well maintained and therefore does not reveal any sign that the nature-based assets overall should have been impacted in any negative ways. Hence, to create a nature-based place it is essential to prioritize the values of maintaining the it and add it to the overall place brand image and identity as well as making sure that what is branded both internally to local residents and externally to tourists is something they live up to, to create a common acceptance that is essential for the brand's authenticity that should reflect the experiences of them having in the destination (Kaefer, 2021; Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017).

Moreover, the reason for asking the local residents about their opinion on the conditions of the nature-based assets within the area of Silkeborg, is because we consider them to be a great source who can bring more trustworthy and weighted answers to these questions rather than we, as researchers, can provide ourselves. This is due to their local knowledge and experience of the place obtained throughout the time they have become familiar with the place of living there, which is information that we are limited in accessing on our own.

In contrast to the locals' perception of the conditions of the natural assets of Silkeborg, we wanted to get an understanding of whether visitors agree with the local residents of Silkeborg on this topic. Therefore, we asked the same question in survey 2 for tourists: *"On a scale from 1-10, how would you rate the nature-areas current condition? Where 1 is destroyed and 10 are well managed."* From this, we got the following results:

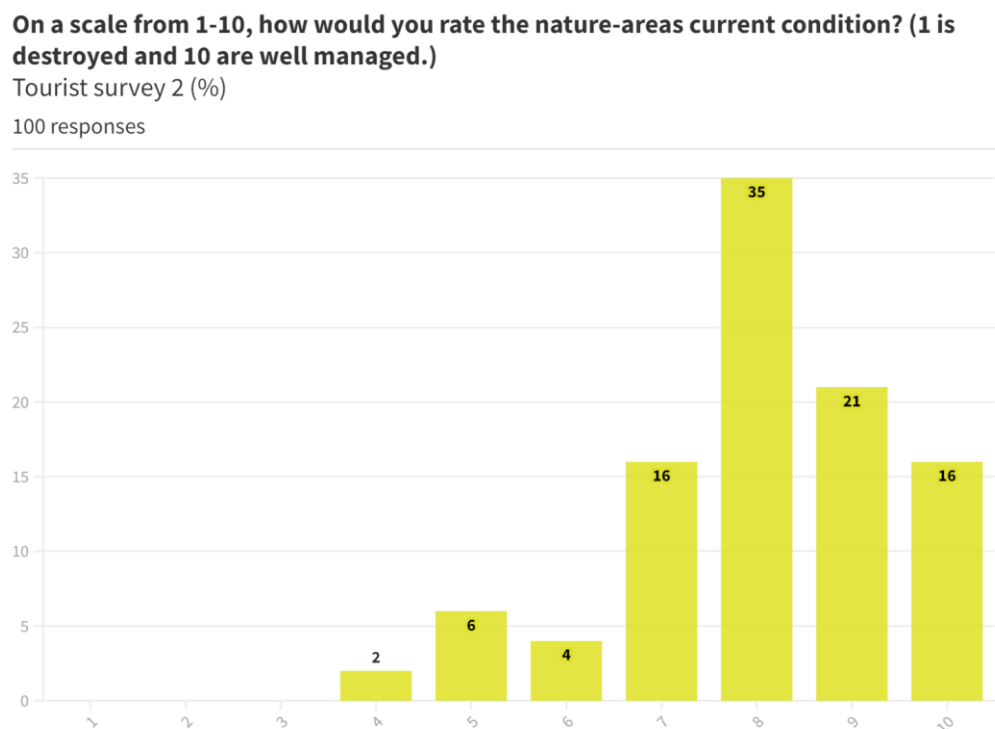


Figure 38. Tourists rating of nature areas condition

Similar to the local residents' perception of the level of maintenance of the nature-based assets, tourists are having the same experience that the nature-based assets surrounding Silkeborg are well maintained, where it is discovered that the amount of the tourists rating the level of maintenance to be 8 constitute 35%, which is the most selected answer. Analyzing the data further through the same division of the data with considering the middle number 5 to be the average, this finding reveals that the majority of tourists rating 6-10 constitute 92% of the total number of answers. Hence, indicating that tourists share the same experience as local residents, that Silkeborg's nature and the outdoors is well maintained. However, as stated by Fitzpatrick and Fontana (2017), creating a safe, clean, and green place for both visitors and locals is important due to its reflection of environmental values, which should be accomplished before branding and marketing the place to external audiences (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). This should be done to ensure that what the destination's place brand is promising to the tourists and local residents regarding its initiatives and values related to the environment is something they can live up to such that it is consistent with what they will experience when visiting (Kaefer, 2021). Hence, contributing to understand that Silkeborg's brand of being the outdoor capital of Denmark is also concerning the values regarding the natural environment within the place's DNA and uniqueness.

Along with the findings from the two surveys presented above, we also interviewed our informants within Silkeborg regarding how they experience the destination of Silkeborg is managing and maintaining its natural assets. In a semi-structured interview with our informant from the Danish Nature Agency, it was explaining that:

*“Our primary role is to work for an increased improvement of nature and 'friluftsliv' activities in Denmark, and secure that the residents on the combined areas have good conditions for nature experiences (...) 'friluftslivet' still needs to have amazing opportunities to unfold (...)”*

[Danish Nature Agency]

Here, the Danish Nature Agency emphasizes their important role in ensuring that there are good conditions for nature-based experiences for local residents and thereby also tourists since that when some facilities are good for the local residents they are also considered to be good for tourists. This aligns with Winter et al. (2020) stating that for nature-based places to adapt to an increased user need, they often require public agencies to preserve and maintain the natural environment, facilities and infrastructure, which the Danish Nature Agency is taking the role of being the public agency regarding this in developing Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. Moreover, these good nature and outdoor facility conditions part of the place making process should benefit both local

residents and thereby the tourists. As Sofield et al. (2017) states, the outcomes place making, such as a place's experiences, image, and identity, are used within tourism as place branding to construct an attractive destination to visit and live in, which is developed on behalf of the local community. Hence providing a good nature setting for activities and experiences to be unfolded within nature is impacting how they will use the nature-based assets in the place. Previously, it was identified that the Danish Nature Agency does not distinguish between 'friluftsliv' and 'outdoor', which means that this statement also includes outdoor activities, just as other researchers do not distinguish between them either (Wolf-Watz 2015; Andkjær, 2004). Additionally, the Danish Nature Agency further explains that they are the main landlord of the natural assets in the Silkeborg area in the following quote:

*"(...) our most important task here around Silkeborg, is that we are the biggest landlord. So everything Silkeborg municipality would like to do, has to be conducted on our land because they don't have any land themselves. (...) Silkeborg is like the yolk in an egg, where Silkeborg is the yolk and everything around it is the governmental forest run by the Danish Nature Agency. And then further out are the private forests."*

[Danish Nature Agency]

According to this finding, the Danish Nature Agency is a major stakeholder in the place making and development processes of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, which means that they have a large impact on what initiatives that can be unfolded and realized in the nature-based areas that often function as a setting for outdoor activities and experiences. This is something also emphasized by one of our local informants stating that:

*"(...) and what you can see is that, if there is to be an organized race or run, then you need a permit from the Danish Nature Agency. And that is something I think one should maintain. And It is for the simple reason that one can somehow control it."*

[Local 3]

Here it can be observed that if there is to be a bigger event as a mountain-bike race or larger trail run, and this is to be held at one of the areas that are maintained by the Danish Nature Agency, then they would need to obtain a permit. Hence, the Danish Forest and Nature Agency needs to accept the specific event before it can be held. This is a notable power for a stakeholder, as they

have a final saying in the realization of the events. Local 3 furthermore states that he is pleased with this structure, as it creates the opportunity to be controlled, as if something is not measured, it cannot be improved (Kaefer, 2021).

However, these largely public governmentally owned nature-based areas surrounding Silkeborg is having a major impact on the place's ability to actually be able to make many outdoor initiatives related to that of being the outdoor capital of Denmark, which actor 3 states as followed:

*“(...) well, it is the Danish Nature Agency who by far owns the largest areas. And that is something that makes it easier for Silkeborg to have a high focus on ‘outdoor’, as there are many public areas.”*

[Actor 3]

Therefore, this finding indicates that if these large governmentally owned nature-based areas were private instead of public, it would not be possible for the place of Silkeborg to develop the destination into this direction of being the outdoor capital of Denmark. Taking this to a broader perspective within Denmark in general, the Danish Nature Agency explains that usually when other municipalities are suggesting improvements or development initiatives within the publicly governmentally owned nature areas surrounding their destination, it can sometimes be challenging to make these decisions, as emphasized in the following quote:

*“(...) we have some challenges regarding these many municipalities who like to move very fast forward. There we have to tell them to ‘slow down, let us have a look from all angles first’,”*

[Danish Nature Agency]

The reason for it can be challenging for the Danish Nature Agency to make these decisions is that many municipalities usually have big visions and initiatives that they want to move fast with, without considering the environmental impacts. This is something the Danish Nature Agency reminds them by saying that it is important to look at the initiatives from all angles before implementing them, as they have the role of being responsible for managing and maintaining the nature-based public land and thereby deal with eventual consequences on the natural assets. This aspect is important regarding understanding how the Danish Nature Agency works in the area of Silkeborg to make sure that all initiatives have been considered from all angles to make sure it will not have any negative impacts on nature further on.

A significant example of how the Danish Forest and Nature Agency is managing and maintaining the natural assets can be observed in the following statement from another local resident of Silkeborg:

*“(...) Thus, the municipality has committed itself to strengthen sustainability and biodiversity. (...) Fortunately, we have many state-owned nature areas, and that means that the Danish Nature Agency is involved. The Danish Nature Agency is someone who keeps an eye out for when the bell-frog is there, then they say that we can not use a specific nature area for nature experiences at that time, so they close it off to the public. There are some experts in the field who can navigate it.”*

[Local 1]

According to this finding, the new strategy and vision for making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark has made the municipality commit itself to strengthen their request for better sustainability and biodiversity in the area. Nonetheless, it is the Danish Nature Agency that decides which policies should be implemented to make sure that the nature-based areas' biodiversity is not overrun or impacted in any way that could destroy it. This is done by closing these areas off from outdoor related activities based on opinions from experts in the field to maintain them. This made us ask the question of when does nature get a voice in the development process of making the nature-based place of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, to which this informant replied:

*“(...) that it is the Danish Nature Agency who deals with it, because they are really good at monitoring nature, so luckily we have them to keep an eye on it.”*

[Local 1]

Hence, it is the Danish Nature Agency that through their role of maintaining and monitoring the surrounding nature in Silkeborg that gives nature a voice in the process of developing the destination to become the outdoor capital of Denmark. This aligns with the fact that the natural assets are a fundamental resource for the development in nature-based placemaking process (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). Moreover, while conducting ethnographic fieldwork at the destination, we observed several initiatives in the regard of maintaining nature, which one of them is the following initiative illustrated in the figures below:



Figure 39. Trial separation



Figure 40. User information

As figure 39 illustrates, the forest trail has been separated into two lanes accommodating the space needed for both hikers and bikers in an organized way while maintaining the trail, as further emphasized in figure 40. Hence, emphasizing that the Danish Nature Agency is the one maintaining the nature-based area, while keeping it open to the public for outdoor use.

Based on these findings, the initiatives of making outdoor activities related to making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark is ruled by the Danish Nature Agency who is the public agency taking the role of maintaining and preserving the nature-based place's environment, infrastructure, and facilities (Winter et al. 2020) in deciding what can be done and not, as the majority of outdoor offers are to be held on land managed by them. However, Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark also needs some data to measure on regarding the impacts of the brand, which the following section aims to investigate further.

### 4.3.2 Monitoring

Monitoring the use of natural assets can be a difficult task, as the areas are large and open 24 hours a day with no registration of when people have visited. However, both the outdoor secretary and the Danish Nature Agency are trying to collect data that can monitor the use of the natural assets by visitors and local residents in their surrounding area. One of these methods to do so is by using specific counters that can monitor by-passers at different trails and mountain-bike routes, which we also discovered while doing ethnographic fieldwork exploring the outdoor attractions that the place offers (see figure 41). The data collected from these specific counters can be used for measuring when, where, and the amount of users in nature passes by over time, which is important to measure any possible increase or decrease in users as well as whether the visitors' behavior changes along with the implementation of new initiatives and facilities such as new hiking paths or mountain bike routes. Thereby, this data can also be used to measure whether there have been any possible effects on the branding of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark as a proof of the initiatives made in the nature-based place making process of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark

have been useful or not. The good thing about these counters is that they are designed to function 24 hours a day and need a low level of maintenance. The counters look like this: (See figure 41).

Having received the data on the existing counters within the Silkeborg area, we have identified that there are a total of 15 counters, of which 5 are operated by the Danish Nature Agency, and the remaining 10 are operated by the outdoor secretary. However, we got informed in a telephone conversation that the data is being shared among both parts, to help each other improve their insight of the data more comprehensively because they are all located in different strategic areas within the destination. Thereby, sharing this data gives them the opportunity to monitor larger areas and therefore create more effective data. From a critical point of view, these counters do not have the ability to distinguish between the type of users, such as a biker or a hiker, or visitor or local resident because they measure any movement that passes the counter. Therefore, it could possibly end up measuring a mob of deer's as if it was a group of mountain bikers on a Wednesday evening in the forest. Furthermore, 1 count from the counter is not necessarily 1 user, as it is likely that the same

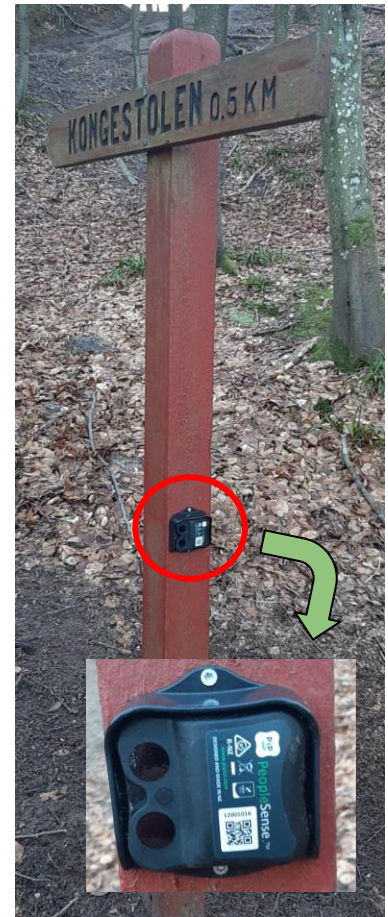


Figure 41. Counters

person has passed by the counter multiple times. However, the data created by these counters is interesting for this research, as it can provide a good insight to when the users are using these natural assets. Thus, to provide an understanding of any increased popularity, the difference between high season and low season users' behavior, and a numeric value of the amount of users in specific areas, which has not been possible to measure during the ethnographic fieldwork. The outdoor secretary was the first to implement these counters at different sites back in 2020, but the Danish Nature Agency has been having counters as well since April 2021. The counter data received from the outdoor secretary and the Danish Nature Agency respectively is presented in the following figures:

2020

Gruppe	Antal (alle dage)	Antal (hverdag)	Antal (weekend)	Gns. antal pr. dag	Gns. antal pr. uge	Gns. antal pr. måned
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Bikepark</b>	<b>99.126</b>	<b>58.967</b>	<b>40.159</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>1.896</b>	<b>8.261</b>
Silkeborg Bikepark Blå linje højre	19.689	11.226	8.463	54	377	1.641
Silkeborg Bikepark Grønt Spor	21.597	12.206	9.391	93	654	3.037
Silkeborg Bikepark Rød linje	12.130	6.163	5.967	33	233	1.014
Silkeborg Bikepark Sort linje	14.855	11.095	3.760	41	290	1.265
Silkeborg Bikepark: Start opkørsel til blå/rød/sort	30.855	18.277	12.578	93	651	2.957
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>MTB Spor</b>	<b>164.216</b>	<b>81.283</b>	<b>82.933</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>3.141</b>	<b>13.685</b>
11 MTB spor Nordskoven	13.531	7.516	6.015	42	297	1.324
12 MTB spor Nordskoven opkørsel fra Sejs	9.252	3.940	5.312	25	177	771
19 Gjern MTB Amerika plantage	8.983	5.136	3.847	25	172	749
Silkeborg - 07 MTB spor Vesterskoven ud	66.459	32.362	34.097	182	1.271	5.538
Silkeborg - 10 MTB spor vesterskoven efter Mindestenen	65.991	32.329	33.662	180	1.262	5.499
<b>Total</b>	<b>263.342</b>	<b>140.250</b>	<b>123.092</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>5.037</b>	<b>21.945</b>

Figure 42. Counter data 2020, Outdoor secretary

2021

Gruppe	Antal (alle dage)	Antal (hverdag)	Antal (weekend)	Gns. antal pr. dag	Gns. antal pr. uge	Gns. antal pr. måned
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Bikepark</b>	<b>93.643</b>	<b>48.644</b>	<b>44.999</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>1.796</b>	<b>7.804</b>
Silkeborg Bikepark Blå linje højre	14.482	7.628	6.854	40	278	1.207
Silkeborg Bikepark Grønt Spor	25.276	12.747	12.529	69	485	2.106
Silkeborg Bikepark Rød linje	9.302	4.865	4.437	25	178	775
Silkeborg Bikepark Sort linje	10.157	4.853	5.304	28	195	849
Silkeborg Bikepark: Start opkørsel til blå/rød/sort	34.426	18.551	15.875	94	660	2.869
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>MTB Spor</b>	<b>149.038</b>	<b>71.393</b>	<b>77.645</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>2.858</b>	<b>12.420</b>
11 MTB spor Nordskoven	4.803	3.344	1.459	15	107	475
12 MTB spor Nordskoven opkørsel fra Sejs	28.985	13.986	14.999	79	556	2.415
19 Gjern MTB Amerika plantage	6.827	3.458	3.369	19	131	569
Silkeborg - 07 MTB spor Vesterskoven ud	54.560	25.419	29.141	149	1.046	4.547
Silkeborg - 10 MTB spor vesterskoven efter Mindestenen	53.863	25.186	28.677	148	1.033	4.489
<b>Total</b>	<b>242.681</b>	<b>120.037</b>	<b>122.644</b>	<b>665</b>	<b>4.654</b>	<b>20.223</b>

Figure 43. Counter data 2021, Outdoor secretary

Ejer	Type	Placering	Etableringsdato	januar	februar	marts	april	maj	juni	juli	august	september	oktober	november	december	I alt
NST	Sti/bro	Odden	18. september 2021									7.489	17.005	11.848	10.417	46.759
NST	Sti	Trækstien	28. april 2021				125	2.720	2.080	1.727	746	732	764	435	745	10.074
NST	Sti	Frederik VII Høj	28. april 2021				177	2.292	1.331	1.549	1.619	1.496	1.922	888	1.559	12.833
NST	Sti	Slåensø	5. maj 2021					1.087	910	1.668	1.403	1.455	1.433	1.272	754	9.982
NST	Sti	Himmelbjerget	5. maj 2021					6.065	4.358	14.791	9.496	4.033	4.450	1.565	1.577	46.335
		<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>12.164</b>	<b>8.679</b>	<b>19.735</b>	<b>13.264</b>	<b>15.205</b>	<b>25.574</b>	<b>16.008</b>	<b>15.052</b>	<b>125.983</b>

Figure 44. Counter data 2021, Danish Nature Agency

Ejer	Type	Placering	januar	februar	marts	april	maj	juni	juli	august	septembe	oktober	november	december	I alt
NST	Sti/bro	Odden	13.220	10.890	17.629										41.739
NST	Sti	Trækstien	775	368	467										1.610
NST	Sti	Frederik VII Høj	1.510	1.077	1.280										3.867
NST	Sti	Slåensø	961	546	455										1.962
NST	Sti	Himmelbjerget	2.096	2.115	2.543										6.754
		<b>Total</b>	<b>18.562</b>	<b>14.996</b>	<b>22.374</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>55.932</b>

Figure 45. Counter data 2022, Danish Nature Agency

When analyzing these data, it is observed that there is a great amount of users using the attractions within the nature-based areas surrounding Silkeborg. However, this thesis has not been able to measure any change in the use of nature from before and after Silkeborg became the outdoor capital of Denmark based on the counters, as they have only used them since 2020. Thereby, it has not been able to analyze whether there could be any indication that the branding of the place would have had any effect on the amount of visitors in this regard. Nonetheless, these data received from the outdoor secretary and the Danish Nature Agency can still contribute to this research by supplying an estimate of what time during the week and which months during the year that the natural areas are most popular within the past years. Therefore, as a public agency, the Danish Nature Agency is taking the role of preserving and maintaining the natural environment, facilities and infrastructure of the nature-based place of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. Moreover, this aligns with Kaefer's (2021, 25) argument that places need to define, measure and monitor success of initiatives to reach the goal of making a successful place brand, and says that *"you cannot improve what you cannot measure"*. This means that if the effects of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark are not defined, measured and monitored regularly according to its impacts on the place both regarding the amount of users, nature and the outdoor facilities, they are not able to improve the quality of the places and facilities to make a destination that is attractive for both local residents, visitors and operating businesses. Moreover, it is also essential for Silkeborg's ability to understand the effects on visitor's behavior and spendings at the place over time to identify whether they need to develop or make any improvements. These aspects contribute to the causality of place branding activities that have been practiced to improve the place's overall attractiveness and what influences it.

Therefore, when analyzing the data from the outdoor secretary, it is observed that in 2020, a total of 140.250 counts were made at the location with counters on the days Monday to Friday, whereas 123.092 were counted on weekends Saturday to Sunday. Hence, this can be further calculated by dividing it by the amount of weekdays, which is five, to investigate the use during weekdays. This number is 28.050 whereas the same can be done for the two weekend days, showing that this number is 61.546. From this, we have been able to calculate that the outdoor

activities offered are used 45.5% more on weekends than weekdays in 2020, which helps to understand what time during the week there is a larger impact on nature. Compared to 2021, this number had decreased to 39.1%. As it is not possible to distinguish the data between local residents and tourists visiting the area, the data from survey 2 helps us get a better understanding of this increase during the weekends, when asking the tourists: *When do you prefer to visit the natural areas within the Silkeborg municipality?* This revealed the following answers presented below:

**When do you prefer to visit the natural areas within the Silkeborg municipality?**

Tourist survey 2 (%)

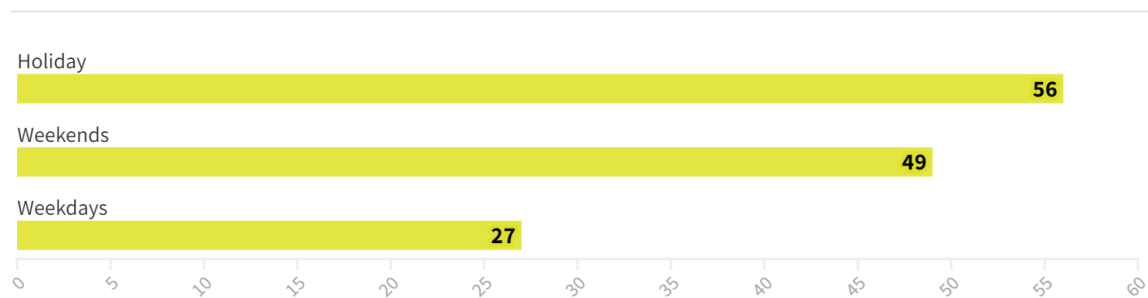


Figure 46. Preferred time to visit natural areas in Silkeborg

This data shows a similar pattern of tourists that prefer to visit and use nature and the outdoors in Silkeborg more on the weekends compared to during the week. Not surprisingly, this data makes sense in the regard that it follows when people in Denmark are usually working during the weekdays providing more free time during weekends and holidays to explore. Naturally, this is reflected in the higher numbers of visitors wanting to explore the outdoors during their free time more than after work.

However, the data received from the Danish Nature Agency is not fulfilled enough for creating similar calculations, since their counters have been implemented over time, and not at once. On the other hand, though, this data can still supply with the understanding of what time of the year these recreational activities are most popular, as it provides information about the amount of users measured monthly presented in the following figure:

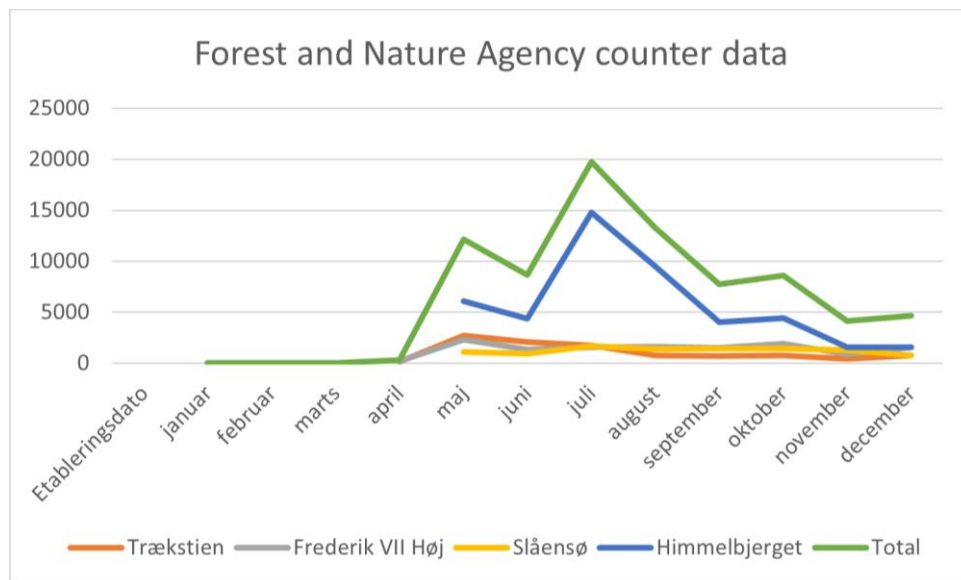


Figure 47: Illustration of Danish Nature Agency data from counters

This graph is conducted based on the valid data measured from May to December 2021. However, despite the large numbers from one counter at ‘Odden’ in the table due to its location very close to the city center, this is left out in the figure as it only provides data from winter months compared to the other counters providing data from summer months, and therefore are not comparable in the same manner. Nonetheless, it is observed in the graph that the busiest time in those areas where the counters are located is peaking in July, which is also considered the high season due to the Danish summer holidays. Hence, indicating that it has been possible to measure that nature and the outdoor facilities are used more during this period of time, which might not have any effect on the place brand’s success at the moment, but is important data for further interpretation of when and how it is being used in the future. This finding is also discovered through our qualitative data from our interviews, where some of our informants stated the following:

*“Purely geographically, they come 80% from Denmark during a season. We are only open from 8. April to 13 September, it is our season and during that time the vast majority of Danes come. It is Dutch and Germans who come, and they usually turn up in mid-late August because of their holiday.”*

[Actor 5]

In the above statements, our informant clearly emphasizes that the summertime is the busiest season, which aligns with the findings from the data on the counters received from the Danish Nature Agency (see figure 44 & 45). As the first informant says, their season is from April to September indicating the high season is during the summer months, where the majority of visitors

are Danes but Dutch and Germans show up later on in August due to their summer holidays. Moreover, our informant from the DMO Visit Aarhus also emphasized the high season is peaking in July, and adds another perspective to the previous years that have been different than usual when saying:

*“In the high-season, within the last couple of years, the outdoors sold itself, as there has been a major boom in outdoor tourism due to COVID-19. So July month and the school’s summer-break are selling themselves, so we need to be ‘always on’ in order to extend the season.”*

[DMO 2, Visit Aarhus]

Here, she says that July has simply been ‘selling itself’ due to the public holidays but that there has also been a boom in outdoor tourism caused by the COVID-19 pandemic where it has basically sold itself without the DMO Visit Aarhus having to do anything extraordinary. Taking this perspective into consideration when analyzing the data, it is important to emphasize that despite this thesis is measuring the impacts regarding the new brand of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark, meanwhile creating and implementing the brand into the destination of Silkeborg, the unforeseen phenomenon of the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged throughout this time. Since early 2020 it has been putting a hold on international tourism with closing the borders down and thereby boosted national tourism (Regeringen, 2020), which indicates that it could possibly have impacted both local residents’ and tourists’ behavior regarding using nature and the outdoors facilities around Silkeborg. In this regard, we asked both the local residents and the tourists the following question within the two surveys, survey 1 and survey 2 respectively: *Has the COVID-19 pandemic had any effect on how much you are using the natural assets?* The answers from the surveys are presented below, with the first one referring to the local residents’ answers and the second one referring to the tourists’ answers:

### Has the COVID-19 pandemic had any effect on how much you are using the natural assets?

Local survey 1 (%)

297 responses

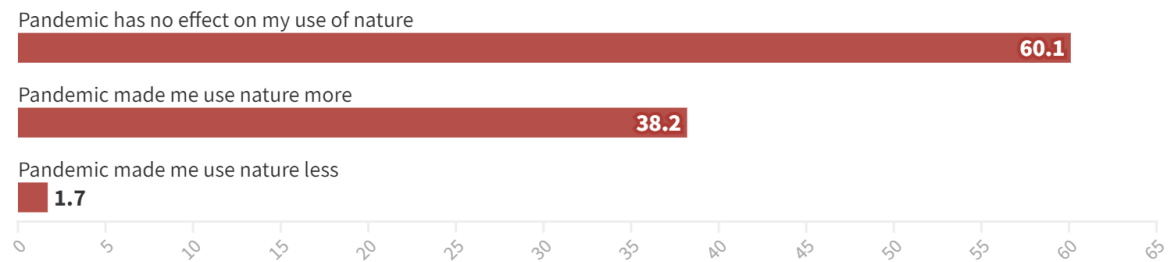


Figure 48. COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the use of nature by local residents

### Has the COVID-19 pandemic had any effect on how much you are using the natural assets?

Tourist survey 2 (%)

100 responses

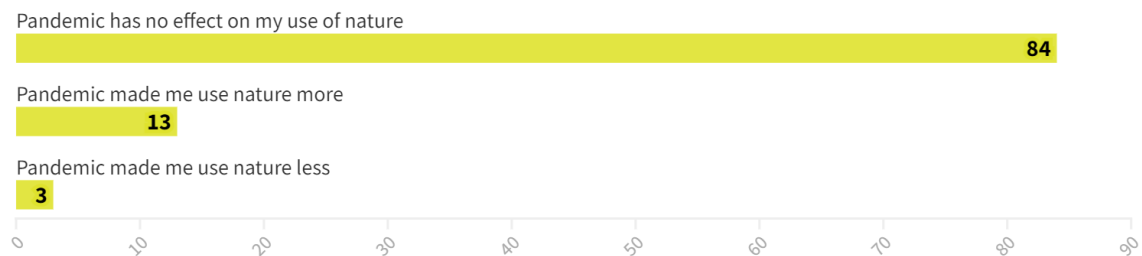


Figure 49. COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the use of nature by tourists

When analyzing these data, it is observed that the majority of local residents at 60.1% have not experienced any change whether they have used nature and the outdoor facilities due to COVID-19. Nonetheless, a good portion of 38.2% states though that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their use of it regarding using it more than they usually have done, which indicates that the numbers received from the Danish Nature Agency (see figure 47) might be higher than they usually were before the COVID-19 pandemic. Though, the amount of local residents impacted to use nature less is significantly small with only 1.7%. When looking at the findings from the tourists' answers, it becomes evident that their behavior of how often they use nature and the outdoor facilities in Silkeborg is similar to the local residents, as the majority of 84% has not been affected by COVID-19 either. These findings contradict the statement from the DMO 2 Visit Aarhus that states there has been a boom in outdoor tourism due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Therefore, it could indicate

that this increase in outdoor tourism is potentially due to an increased use from local residents of Silkeborg, and not visitors. This is no guarantee though, since we have become aware that it can be hard to distinguish between the users of the natural assets.

However, analyzing the impacts on the destination based on making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, this research investigated whether there has been an impact on the destination regarding the amount of people using nature and the outdoor facilities and whether there is enough space in the nature-based surroundings for all the local residents and tourists using it. Therefore, we asked both the local residents and tourists how they have experienced the number of users in nature. The answers are illustrated in the following figures with the first illustrating answers from the local residents and the latter illustrating answers from the tourists:

### How was your experience regarding the number of users in nature areas of Silkeborg municipality?

Local survey 1 (%)

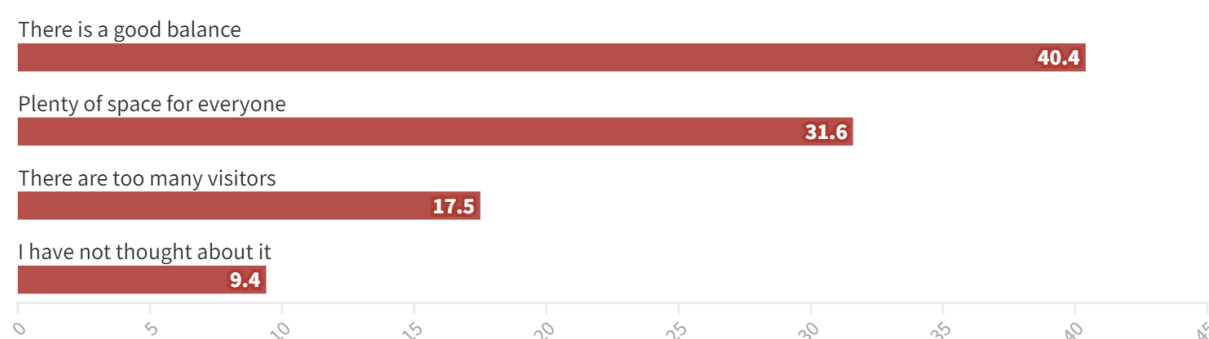


Figure 50. Local experience with the number of users in the nature areas

### How was your experience regarding the number of users in nature areas of Silkeborg municipality?

Tourist survey 2 (%)

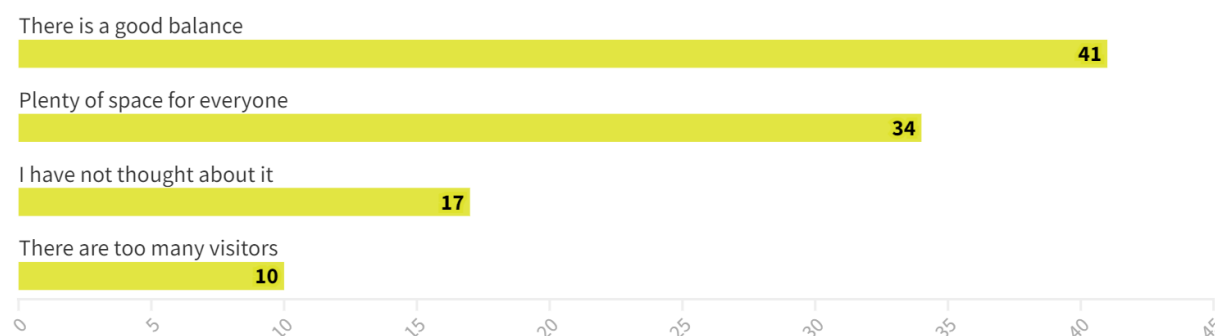


Figure 51. Tourist experience with the number of users in the nature areas

Overall, these two data illustrations show that the majority of both the local residents and the tourists have had the experience that there is a good balance and plenty of space for everyone in nature and the outdoor facilities offered in Silkeborg, and therefore this is not a major concern that Silkeborg should consider right now. However, it is important to keep track of an opinion like this to understand how their destination is perceived as it can affect it negatively making less people use and visit if it is too crowded.

#### **4.3.3 Sub-conclusion**

Summing up, this section aimed to identify the impacts that the brand of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark has had both regarding nature and the outdoor facilities as well as how the local residents and tourists have been using these. Thus, providing an answer to the sub-question of *How has the making of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark impacted the place and users?* that has been guiding this section.

This section first identified that despite having created the new brand of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark with the aim of motivating both local residents and tourists to use it more, it has not had a significant effect on why and how much neither of them are using it. Hence, regarding the local residents, it could indicate that the values being branded internally probably already existed among the local residents, but without having used them in a more strategic way regarding the destination. However, the finding regarding tourists could indicate that either external branding has not been effective enough in motivating national tourists to visit the place more often nor that the natural assets within the Silkeborg area have always been highly attractive and used by both local residents and tourists. Nonetheless, it is always essential to engage the local community and ensure they represent the brand and the values attached to it, whether the values have existed before the brand or not, to improve the authenticity of the place that motivates tourists to visit more (Kaefer, 2021).

Moreover, according to both local residents and tourists, making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark has impacted the maintenance of nature and the outdoor facilities in a positive way, since most of them have rated the level of maintenance 8 on a scale from 1-to 10 with 1 being destroyed and 10 is well maintained. This means that Silkeborg is putting an effort into creating a safe, clean and green place for those using it as argued by Fitzpatrick and Fontana (2017), reflecting its environmental values of the destination that should reflect the local residents' perception of the place to create a truthful brand that lives up to visitors' expectations (Kaefer, 2021).

Furthermore, since the Danish Nature Agency is the largest landlord working with developing and maintaining the nature-based areas surrounding Silkeborg related to outdoor initiatives in the process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, they are a main stakeholder regarding the maintenance and measuring of the impacts, as the nature-based assets are important in the place making process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. This aligns with the fact that the natural assets and the maintenance of these are fundamental to the development in nature-based placemaking processes (Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017). The way the Danish Nature Agency is measuring, and monitoring data is by having set-up data counters to measure the amount of visitors using nature and the outdoor facilities, and is doing so to get insights on what initiatives and policies that are impacting the destination either in a positive sustainable manner or whether it needs to be improved.

Since the destination started branding Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark in 2017 and completed the merger between Visit Silkeborg and Visit Aarhus in 2019, it is evident that it has not been possible to brand the nature-based place of Silkeborg for very long before the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged throughout the world putting a hold on international tourism. However, the findings of whether it has impacted the place and users are mixed, as the DMO believes that it has experienced a boom in outdoor tourism throughout this time, whereas the findings from the local residents and tourists agree it has not affected their behavior in any significant manner, except a group of locals experiencing an increase in their use of nature and the outdoor facilities.

## **4.4 Conclusion of analysis**

Overall, this paper addressed how Silkeborg has turned into the outdoor capital of Denmark, not only by changing the brand name solely to attract tourists, but to root the core values and the identity within the community by making local residents and businesses tap into it. By studying our informants' perceptions and experiences with that of making Silkeborg into a new nature-based place of being the outdoor capital of Denmark, this thesis considers it to be related to three overall areas identified. These areas include the creation of the new brand of being the outdoor capital of Denmark, as well as developing the destination through implementation of outdoor facilities and initiatives along with policies and place branding strategies, together with identifying how it has impacted the place and users in different ways. Thus, these areas combined are central to provide an answer to the research question.

First, the story goes that a newly employed tourism manager was hired to turn the negative curve of a decline in visitors around. After she got inspired by another destination known as the outdoor

capital of the UK and having worked on polishing this brand for some years, she presented the idea of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark to the city council in 2017, where she was basically the reason Silkeborg proclaimed itself to have this new label. On a positive note, it was immediately accepted and incorporated into the overall strategy and vision for the Silkeborg city council for how to develop the destination. Moreover, the findings show that the label of being the outdoor capital has been accepted by multiple local businesses, as well as it has been implemented in institutions such as the local library and public spaces in the main street of Silkeborg. Though, it was also identified that only a slight majority of the local residents are agreeing with Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark, which means that there is still room for improvement on creating more awareness of the brand to increase its authenticity among local residents. In this vein, this new label has been difficult to specify among the local residents, as it showed that ‘outdoor’ was considered to be anything from looking out the window, to something that involved multiple-day activities and overnighting outside. However, according to the majority of our findings, ‘outdoor’ is associated with something taking place outside in natural settings, and often involves physical activities such as hiking or biking.

Second, during the implementation of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark, the focus on their target groups has shifted from the tourists to the local residents, where Silkeborg municipality started using nature-based placemaking as an approach to benefit the welfare of the local community, grow investments, and build a strong identity of being the unique outdoor capital of Denmark. However, due to the complexity of the place making process, it was necessary to identify the key stakeholders and the different roles each part is taking. To generate more value for the local residents, the place making planning therefore focuses on three main areas, which are 1) welfare, 2) knowledge & growth, and 3) leisure & nature, in the development process of the destination. These areas are further realized through the following four instruments of 1) local community, 2) facilities, 3) collaboration, and 4) branding and communication.

Third, the place-makers are having an important role in providing well-being for the local residents and sustainable economic growth for the local businesses, as they are a key stakeholder in the process of implementing the nature-based outdoor projects and interpretation of the benefits thereof. An important goal has been to create quality facilities to provide proper outdoor activity experiences and educate users of nature and the outdoor facilities to appreciate and preserve nature. In this regard, all place making planning initiatives are conducted by collaborative governance where mixed policy making approaches are used to assure the inclusiveness and efficiency of all stakeholders within the nature-based place making process. Hence, collaboration engaged stakeholders from different levels to be involved in outdoor developing issues which are based on

their common values of tapping into the place brand of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark. However, the findings showed single incidents of local stakeholders disagreeing on the effect of the quality facilities, whether they would cause a decrease or increase in visitors. However, collaboration issues with different working methods and lack of tourist service were factors found to be improved in future place making processes.

Fourth, for the new place brand to succeed after it shifted to a broader focus on welfare when the municipality inherited it, it is vital that all local stakeholder act in the favor of the place's identity and the core values, which includes to use nature and the outdoor facilities as well as the municipality having incorporated it into the urban city life to improve the local residents' quality of life and well-being of being exposed more to nature. Hence, making all local stakeholders responsible for the success of the development and improvement of the destination regarding its welfare, knowledge and accessibility to nature. Hence, it became central to the community's culture of making it as authentic as possible, as well as being able to live up to what the destination promises both local residents and tourists to ensure good experiences. In this regard, it was discovered that local residents and tourists are motivated to use nature and the outdoor facilities differently, meaning that internal and external place branding practices should be directed towards the specific target group to succeed. By now, the municipality has experienced little resistance, which indicates that the values attached to the new identity of being the outdoor capital of Denmark might already have been present but has not been incorporated in a strategic nature-based place making process. This is also evident in the local businesses reaction of incorporating outdoor into their names and business strategies turning them into be representative for the place brand. However, despite the rhetorical question of how a destination can make a brand with a DNA that really embraces the interest of all stakeholders within an entire municipality, external branding practices show their consistency in creating awareness that Silkeborg is the outdoor capital of Denmark, without a doubt.

Lastly, this analysis investigates the impacts there have been occurring due to, and as a result of, Silkeborg becoming the outdoor capital of Denmark. The impacts have affected both the place as a destination, but also the different users using it. However, even though the place of Silkeborg actively has been marketed with the aim of attracting more users to the outdoors, our findings indicate that there has not been a significant change in the consumer behavior from either local residents or visitors. Internal branded values towards locals possible already existed at the time the destination started its strategic focus, whereas external branded values towards visitors indicate that either the branded values have not been effective enough, or that the natural assets of Silkeborg always have been highly attractive, also before the destination labeled themselves as the outdoor

capital of Denmark. Furthermore, our findings strongly indicate that the natural assets in the area are well maintained. This is something that both local residents and visitors agree on, and therefore Silkeborg is putting an upright effort to create a green, clean and safe place for its users in all aspects. In this regard, the key stakeholder of the Danish Nature Agency is playing an essential role in maintaining and improving the place's biodiversity and sustainability by monitoring and conducting policies to maintain and manage the natural assets in the most responsible way possible. Additionally, we quantitatively discovered that the COVID-19 pandemic did not have a significant influence on the destination, though our qualitative data stated it had. However, we, as researchers, are fully aware that the pandemic and the restrictions that followed it have the possibility to have affected our data collections. The overall result is that the destination of Silkeborg is currently experiencing impacts in different forms as it is developing. However, these impacts can be considered controlled, as they are measured and planned by different stakeholders of the destination.

Overall, the process of making the place of Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark is on the right path of making a strong place brand identity that local residents associate with the destination as well as the values attached to it based on the nature-based assets. Thereby, the place brand is not only a hollow shell with the aim of attracting tourists, as it simultaneously focuses on improving the community's quality of life through place making initiatives that incorporates nature into the urban city life as well as creating quality facilities for local residents, operating businesses and tourists to use. If the local stakeholders continue their work on improvements of outdoor facilities and incorporating it into the community, there is no doubt that with time both internal and external stakeholders will not be in doubt that this destination in Denmark is the outdoor capital of Denmark.

## 5. Discussion

To answer how Silkeborg is made and developed to become the outdoor capital of Denmark, this section will sum up the concluding thoughts uncovered from the analysis that was guided by three sub-questions, with the aim of providing an answer to them as well as using them to suggest an answer to the research question. First, this section critically reflects upon whether COVID-19 influenced the outcome of our findings due to its large impact on Danish residents' behavior of seeking out into nature. Second, we discuss the interaction between the implementation of top-down and bottom-up approaches, and how they have been inspiring each other in the place making process; Third, we discuss how the theories of place making and place branding are interrelated in a tourism development process that is based on a change in place brand identity, indicating the two theories combined benefit destinations to develop both internally and externally. Hence, this thesis provides a model aimed to inspire other destinations' developing processes based on a change in place brand identity. Fourth, we discuss what are some essential steps to make a successful place in developing Silkeborg into the outdoor capital of Denmark. Lastly, we discuss whether place making is the new way to develop a sustainable tourism destination because place making contributes to connecting the internal and external elements of developing a tourist destination, including the local residents rather than destinations only having a brand identity basically functioning as a hollow shell.

### 5.1 Has COVID-19 really influenced the outcome of our findings?

In light of post-COVID-19 times, it is necessary for this research to discuss which potential impacts a global pandemic could have had on the process of conducting this thesis. We, as tourism researchers, are well aware that the global COVID-19 pandemic has had a big influence on the tourism industry, as initiatives such as strict travel restrictions and shut-downs occurred both internationally and nationally. Hence, travel patterns and consumer behavior shifted accordingly in order for people to adapt to this nonnormality.

Since this paper is investigating the nature-based placemaking processes regarding the transformation of Silkeborg into the outdoor capital of Denmark, it is important for both us, as researchers, as well as future bodies using this thesis for inspiration, that they understand that this thesis is conducted based on both primary and secondary data, that has been collected from the field of Silkeborg, as well as from a national perspective, and that a majority of the data collection is connected to the informants' attitudes, actions and memories of the place. Based on our

analytical findings, despite the disagreement among the DMO and the local residents' responses to whether COVID-19 pandemic has affected their behavior of using nature, it is impossible to ignore that it could have possibly affected them rather than only the change of the brand due to its extent of having influenced the world. Therefore, this could have affected our data collections, as the local residents' perception of the place has been formed during a time when the brand of being the outdoor capital of Denmark had just been decided a few years before COVID-19 hit the world and emerged throughout a time where people sought out in nature a never before. From a critical perspective, as we have investigated the place making development process of the Silkeborg during an abnormal period of time with a global pandemic, then it is hard to trust the results collected blindly, as the collected data are a result of our informants' attitudes, actions, and memories obtained throughout this time. Therefore, our data, and thereby our findings, might not reflect an ordinary situation of the destination. Thus, it can be discussed whether the outcomes of implementations, impacts, and brandings made regarding Silkeborg being the outdoor capital, is a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, or the planned strategic outdoor initiatives made at the destination. However, even if these reflections are the case, the findings conducted in this research are still highly valuable, as our findings can contribute to the fundamental understanding of the current situation of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark. Even so, it is necessary for the destination to conduct future studies that can be aligned with our data and findings to measure any possible changes. Furthermore, future findings could potentially either verify or refute our findings and possibly indicate whether the COVID-19 pandemic has had an influence on this research despite our overall findings indicating that over half of our local survey participants and even less of the tourists have not behaved differently during the pandemic. Overall, our analysis states that the pandemic had not caused any significant change in the consumer behavior of the users in the natural assets of Silkeborg regarding Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark, but we, as researchers, believe that it is necessary to be skeptical about this due to the pandemic's large impact on the whole international tourism industry in the world and its effect on Danish residents to seek more into nature during that period of time.

## **5.2 Top-down approach versus bottom-up approach: interaction and inspiration**

Place making processes are shaped by both a planned top-down approach and an organic bottom-up approach (Lew, 2017), and nature-based place making cannot be achieved without political support to provide guidance and implement policies (Lew, 2017; Fitzpatrick & Fontana, 2017).

Therefore, in this case study, the city council's recognition, and association of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark was the most essential to the place making. The credibility of the brand and recognition of the partners and stakeholders are only valid when the city council of Silkeborg decided to include outdoor as part of their vision and make strategies for the place.

On one hand, the findings of policy implementation indicated that Silkeborg municipality makes efforts to include the local community in their policy making processes. Though it was discovered that mixed approaches from both top-down and bottom-up perspectives are present in the place making process, the final decision maker is still the municipality. Therefore, the process of policy making was initiated with a top-down approach and shifted with the extended engagement of stakeholder collaboration using bottom-up approach to keep authenticity in place branding, and finally, adjusted the outcome of the collaboration process and made decisions to build a quality nature-based place for all. Thus, the top end of place making process by the municipality takes the dominant position in the whole process of making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark.

On the other hand, decisions from the top-down approach which were inspired by the tradition and DNA of the local community are adversely inspiring the local community to create outdoor activities of their own. The municipality depends on the local community just as much as the local community depends on them (Vignieri, 2020). The municipality of Silkeborg can develop the city as the outdoor capital based on nature using traditions in the local community, and they evaluate the effect of implementations on outdoor projects based on the feedback and reviews from nature users including the local community. Whereas from the local level, the local community such as the autonomous community in Virklund, who claim themselves to be the outdoor suburb capital of Denmark and are organizing their own outdoor activities, were also inspired by the new vision from the municipality. It can be understood that the local initiatives in outdoor are nursed from the municipal governance. This mutual inspiration and interaction in developing the place identity can be seen as a new outcome of mixing top-down and bottom-up approaches to achieve an efficient place making.

### **5.3 The interrelation between place making and place branding in a tourism destination development process**

Within this thesis, the relevant theories that emerged and were decided to use on behalf of the patterns identified from coded data, which throughout the process of understanding the development and change of Silkeborg from being ‘the city of cars’ to ‘the outdoor capital of

Denmark', provides this section to discuss how the theories are used, how they are interrelating and complementing each other as well as where do they clash?

With the new hiring of the former tourist manager aiming to make a change for Silkeborg and created the new brand identity to distinguish it from other places, it was evident how this process started from a tourism perspective and thereby also from a branding perspective, since destination branding traditionally is used within tourism to promote a destination externally to tourists. However, as discovered with the merger between the local DMO 1 Visit Silkeborg and the regional DMO 2 Visit Aarhus, the new brand identity created for the place belonged to it and could not be taken away, despite the place being managed by the regional DMO 2 Visit Aarhus on its external branding. Thereby, as the municipality inherited the brand identity, and incorporated it into their vision and strategy for developing the place of Silkeborg into the outdoor capital of Denmark, the multi-faceted approach towards making public quality places showed its first evidence of place making to be designed, planned, and managed, with the aim of improving residents' quality of life and their surrounding environment. This means that place making, despite its decisions being made from a top-down approach, considers the well-being and wealth of the local community, and therefore builds on the perspective of primarily accommodating them, which gives a new perspective to destination development within tourism that is worth to be considered to not only focus on tourists. As identified in the case of Silkeborg, the place making process is taking a stand in the newly identified place brand, showing signs that the two theories are inspiring- and are inspired by one another in a destination development process. Thus, they complement each other with different skills regarding identifying the local community's core values and associations with what makes a destination unique, which place branding can effectively be used to identify through a bottom-up approach, and which show signs of place-making regarding making a stronger sense of place. On behalf of that, the surrounding environment is created and shaped from a more top-down approach through placemaking of deciding on the quality places needed to be made, in which individuals or larger communities strives to live in and engage with, considering the ecological, economic, and social aspects that aligns with the values of the community and more specifically considering what makes the place into a community. This means that already in the beginning of making a place, which in the case of Silkeborg is not happening from scratch but through a change in brand identity for the destination, the procedures of place making and place branding largely interplay in balancing the design, planning and management of this nature-based place to build a solid brand identity that is based on its nature-based resources identified through the bottom-up approach of creating the brand identity. However, it is essential to emphasize that place branding is taking shape regarding internal branding among local stakeholders in the designing and planning

phase of making the place of Silkeborg into the outdoor capital of Denmark. The reason for this is that it is important for places to have quality places before branding it externally such that they ensure the local residents, first of all, are accepting and identifying themselves with the new values branded through the place brand identity that should live up to their expectations of what it is like to live in the place. Hence, to establish and develop a form of authenticity coming from the core values that are lived by them. First then, Silkeborg, and other destinations in general, should brand the place externally by consistently and clearly communicating what the place has to offer both tourists and potential new businesses- and residents, to make sure of having quality places that live up to their expectations of what to experience in the place, to make sure they have a good experience. As identified in the findings, if tourists are having a good experience, it breeds good stories that are shared in their network of friends, which turns into becoming good recommendations that make more tourists visit the place. As usual, a good reputation is key to the success of a destination both from a tourism perspective but also from a local community perspective as it affects the desire to live in the place. In this regard, the key successful and failure characteristics identified for place branding can complement the place making process in navigating what initiatives should be done to make sure the place brand and the quality of the place with facilities and activities offered in the destination are implemented in a sustainable manner. What is crucial to such a place making process is first of all to realize that the place brand should be created from a bottom-up approach of identifying what the local community associates with the place. Secondly, to be aware that it takes time to develop a true and authentic destination based on a new brand identity, which the outdoor secretary also emphasizes through the findings that they have not reached their goal yet despite having had the brand identity for five years now. However, they see clear indications that they are on the right path and therefore do not doubt its potential if it is given the time to develop at the right pace.

Therefore, this thesis contributes with the aspect that in any case of a destination development based on a new place brand identity, it clearly indicates that considering a place making process along with a place branding process will be beneficial for any destinations if the first steps of making sure the local community is tapping into the new identity and values produced is made carefully and thoroughly such that it is lived by the local community and thus creates much more authentic experiences. Thus, providing a new model based on this research to be used for other destinations in their development process to consider a mix of place making and place branding procedures in making sustainable tourism destinations that accommodate not only tourists but also local stakeholders:

# Place making roadmap

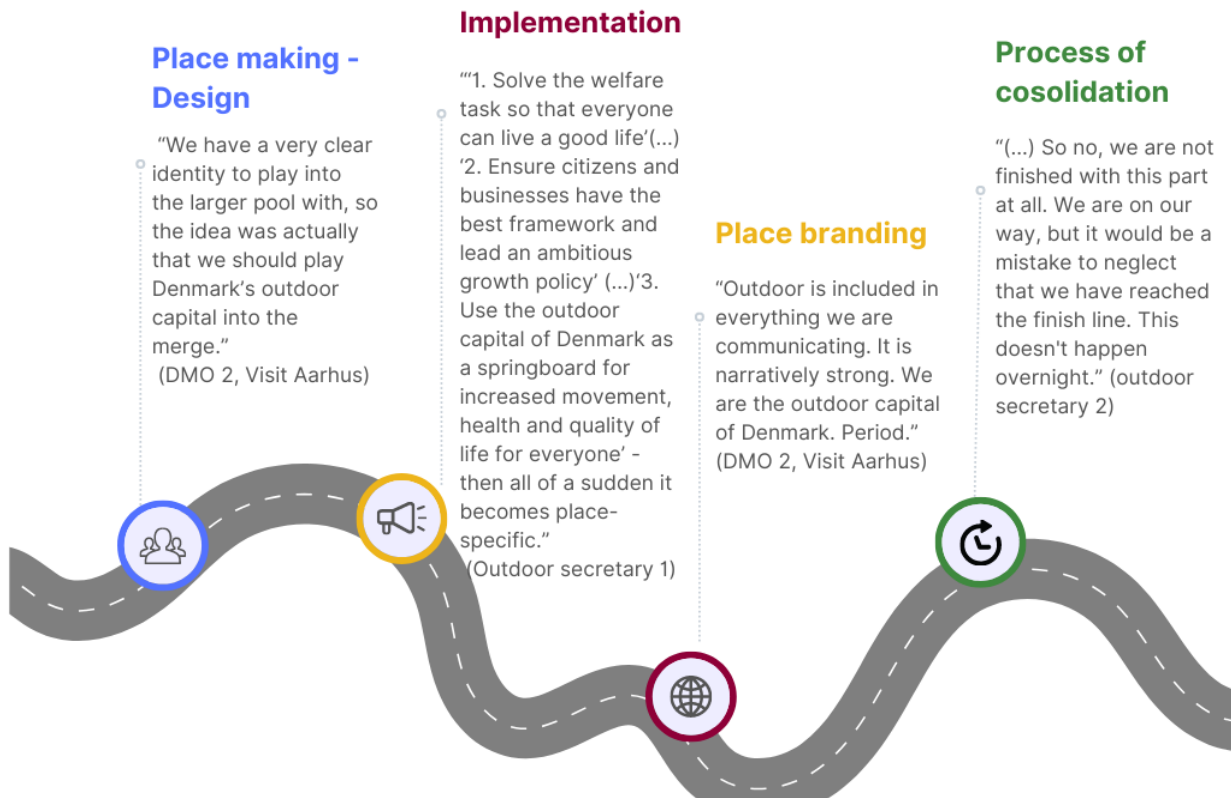


Figure 52. Place making roadmap

## 5.4 What is the next step of place making in Silkeborg?

Another subject that can be discussed is the question of what Silkeborg should do now. This can be a difficult question to answer for us, as researchers. However, according to our theory, now we know that *"All forms of successful placemaking depend on broad engagement of stakeholders in the design of projects and activities"* (Wyckoff et al. 2015, 25.). Hence, our analytical findings indicate that since the municipality adopted the vision of being the outdoor capital of Denmark from the local tourism DMO at the time, there has been large focus involvement of the local stakeholders as well as an increased focus on the well-being of the local residents which furthermore constitute of the local communities who in this regard can be considered as an important stakeholder. Additionally, the theory also states that *"if tourism development is to benefit the local community, attention should also be given to the residents' image of the place rather than that of tourists' only"* (Stylidis et al. 2014, 261). Setting this quote in the perspective of our analytical findings, we discovered that just 49.5% of the local residents considered Silkeborg to be the outdoor capital of Denmark. Hence, there is still a good amount of local residents who could

use some more persuasion. With this being said, the municipality could successfully continue its internal branding, before focusing on external branding. Thus, if the municipality creates a strong brand locally, the destination would possibly create a stronger sense of place, and therefore possibly have an easier process of attracting visitors, from whom our findings indicate that only 19.2% consider Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark.

However, when discussing this topic, and suggesting that the attention towards the local stakeholders is a strategic good approach, how could the destination then know when they have succeeded? And when should they start to increase the focus externally? Our theory clearly states that *“you cannot improve what you cannot measure”* (Kaefer 2021, 25), which means that the destination of Silkeborg, just as well as other destinations, should collect data frequently to measure changes over time which can help them understand the development of the place and get insights to how many users are out in nature using the outdoor facilities. Hence, if there is a positive development in the measurements of the local residents of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark, then the destination knows with true evidence that they are moving in the right direction. If the opposite should occur, then this could be an indicator there is a need for new innovative initiatives and implementations. Most important of all is that these measurements can provide knowledge for the destination managers to act on, if the data shows any significant changes or to identify whether their initiatives are working or not. As this thesis has gotten access to the first data ever measured from the counters installed in different nature areas of Silkeborg both by the outdoor secretary and the Danish Nature Agency, we consider it to contribute to this knowledge that future researchers can be inspired by and continue working on concerning Silkeborg.

Another finding in this thesis is that there is not a clear definition of what ‘outdoor’ is among the different stakeholders, which could potentially weaken the whole concept of being the outdoor capital of Denmark. Therefore, to benefit the destination, this thesis suggests the local destination managers and key stakeholders working with the internal and external branding should create a clear definition of how they perceive ‘outdoor’ and communicate it to the local stakeholders so they become aware of how they should tap into the vision and strategy for the destination. Thus, to prevent any confusion among stakeholders as this could result in the branding of the place weakening due to unclear and different values that will decrease the strength of its identity.

## 5.5 Is place making the new way to develop sustainable tourism destinations?

As place making is "*the process of creating a quality place for people want to live, work, play and learn in.*" (Wyckoff, 2013), Silkeborg has been focusing on the benefits of the local community regarding their welfare, community growth, and leisure activities. However, the implementations of place making in Silkeborg are following the place making planning where local residents are provided with more quality facilities to improve their health conditions and accessibility to nature and the outdoors. Moreover, the broad range of stakeholder engagement and collaboration increased the experience and knowledge of establishing the place to address the needs of different stakeholders, and further enhance the attractiveness of investments. Defined by Silkeborg's abundant natural assets, place making in Silkeborg is meant to consider and surpass visitors' outdoor experience in nature.

With all place making plans assembled for the destination, the fruits of place making are beneficial to a successful sustainable tourism destination as well. Sustainable tourism destinations are when tourism development takes the economic, social, and environmental impacts in the environment and host communities into consideration (UNWTO, n.d.) which is similar to the aspect of place making regarding making quality places for local communities through improvement of facilities. The optimal use of natural assets is constituted as the key to place making in Silkeborg, and preserving the natural areas is valued by place makers. This aligns with sustainable tourism's principle which refers to the maintenance of natural heritage and biodiversity in the use of environmental resources (ibid.). Furthermore, sustainable tourism respects the authenticity of traditions, social-cultural heritages in the host community, while in place making, authenticity is both important to outdoor strategy making and branding process in making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark. Overall, to ensure a consistently efficient place identity, it is vital to create economic benefits, employment opportunities, and potential investments to the local community, which contributes to the long-term economic growth of all local stakeholders for a sustainable destination.

Thus, in the sense that Silkeborg is shaped by the nature-based placemaking process and incorporated it into the local community has strongly emerged the destination into a more sustainable one of its kind. In this regard, place making in general as well as nature-based placemaking regarding destinations that are rich in nature-based assets like Silkeborg, might be a new approach for establishing a sustainable destination in a holistic manner with the values of

place making reflecting upon principles of sustainable destination equally rooted in the local community rather than solely a brand made for attracting tourists.

## **6. Market implications**

The aim of this section is to indicate how this thesis can assist Silkeborg's further strategy in the development and maintenance of being the outdoor capital of Denmark. An important aspect identified throughout this thesis indicates that Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark still has room for improvements when it comes to making larger parts of the local community associate the place with being the outdoor capital of Denmark. Therefore, this section aims to suggest how they can navigate within improving the destination place brand along with the place making process to create a true and authentic place for local residents to live in and for tourists to visit:

First, regarding the internal branding, the outdoor secretary within the local municipality should communicate a more clear understanding of how outdoor is perceived by them such that this will be expressed in the local residents' and local businesses' actions when tapping into the outdoor vision and strategy themselves, to create a shared understanding of it, since it is a core element to the place brand identity of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark. Therefore, to succeed with branding the destination externally and strengthen its reputation in the world, they should collaborate with tourists or travel influencers to help create awareness of the destination. Thus, with a shared understanding of what outdoor is as well as how the brand of being the outdoor capital of Denmark is perceived through the consistent branding and communication from the municipality internally and the DMO externally, it makes it easier for, for instance, local businesses to collaborate with external stakeholders, such as influencers, in the way that if the place brand's core values are lived by local residents and local businesses through this shared understanding creating a more true and authentic place to visit, it will most likely be expressed through the influencers' co-creation of the destination image as well.

Second, after obtaining and agreeing on a clear definition of how outdoor should be perceived, the destination should regularly monitor the activities conducted at the natural assets in the Silkeborg area. Here it is important for the destination to understand that these activities are affected by outdoor trends that emerge and change all the time. Therefore, Silkeborg should be aware of these changes and place their investments in nature and outdoor facilities and activities offered, so they adapt to what motivates the tourists to visit the destination such that it continues with being an attractive place. Hence, continuing with having an eye on new and emerging trends both in types of activities and changes in consumer behavior. An example of this is related to our

analytical findings that indicate how mountain biking is an attractive activity in the nature areas of Silkeborg. Therefore, by making the 'Bikepark' facility for mountain bikers to use, it has made a specific facility to attract a specific target group within outdoor activities. However, since trends are emerging and changing over time, there is a risk that these trends also fade away again, which makes it important for destinations like Silkeborg to make facilities that both serve a specific target group but also can be adapted to, or recycled into, other new outdoor facilities that accommodate new emerging activities. Hence, to be innovative with the resources and facilities that exist to continue with developing the destination in a sustainable manner.

Third, the local stakeholders should continue with navigating between planned top-down and organic bottom-up approaches that balance the improvement in quality places along with a stronger sense of place, as successful tourist destinations contain elements of both approaches existing simultaneously. Thus, make a plan for how local stakeholders can collaborate with each other in a strategic manner, and make sure to measure their initiatives, as it is stated in our theory, that "*you cannot improve what you cannot measure*" (Kaefer, 2021).

## 7. Conclusion

This thesis addressed how the place of Silkeborg is made, developed, and operating as the outdoor capital of Denmark after changing its destination brand from being ‘the city of cars’ to ‘the outdoor capital of Denmark’. By studying our informants’ perceptions, behavior, and experiences related to Silkeborg’s place making process of improving the quality places and facilities implemented through collaboration and policy approaches to enhance the new place brand identity, this paper points to three overall areas that are related to making Silkeborg the outdoor capital of Denmark.

First, the place of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark was made by the former tourist manager to make the place more attractive from a tourism perspective. However, due to the city council incorporating it into their vision and strategy of the overall destination, followed by the merge between the local DMO Visit Silkeborg and the regional DMO Visit Aarhus along with the municipality inheriting the brand, it broadened its perspective to also include the local residents and businesses in the place making development process. In this regard, findings revealed that both some local businesses adapted outdoor into their own vision and strategy as well as a slight majority of local residents from survey 1 associate Silkeborg with being the outdoor capital of Denmark. However, despite there being a lack in the shared understanding of ‘outdoor’, which is central to the brand, it is mainly considered to be associated with being outside in natural settings often including activities.

Second, place-makers are key stakeholders in making and implementing nature-based quality places and outdoor facilities, both through planned top-down and organic bottom-up approaches used to ensure the inclusiveness and efficiency of all stakeholders within the nature-based place making process that balances the improvement in quality places along with a stronger sense of place to benefit the well-being of local residents and their quality of life. Thus, a collaborative engagement among the different stakeholders is based on commonly recognized values, which motivates them to tap into improving the place brand of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark. The indication of a successful place brand is evident when all local stakeholders’ actions are an affirmation of its identity and values, which makes them all responsible for the development and improvement of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark regarding its welfare, knowledge, and accessibility to nature. Hence, the identity should be rooted in the community’s culture and DNA making it as authentic as possible to live up to the destination’s promise to tourists. Through our findings, Silkeborg has partly succeeded with this, despite the need for internal and external place branding practices to be directed differently towards the specific target group of local residents and tourists, as they are motivated to use nature and the outdoor facilities differently.

Nonetheless, despite the rhetorical question of how a destination can make a brand with a DNA that really embraces the interest of all stakeholders within an entire municipality, consistency in external branding practices is essential to creating awareness of Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark.

Third, despite branding Silkeborg as the outdoor capital of Denmark internally and externally, it has not affected local residents' or tourists' behavior in using nature and the outdoor facilities in any significant way. Moreover, based on the identified development of implementation and branding initiatives, the outdoor secretary and the Danish Nature Agency have recently started operating with monitoring and measuring data that indicate the amount of visitors using nature and the outdoor facilities in Silkeborg. In this regard, the Danish Nature Agency plays an essential role in maintaining nature and the outdoor facilities with the aim of creating a green, clean and safe place for the users, whom in this research also rated it to be well maintained.

Overall, it is observed that Silkeborg is on the right path of succeeding with the place making process of making it the outdoor capital of Denmark based on local residents' perception of the brand, as well as on the initiatives of outdoor facilities implemented to create a better quality place for both local residents to live in, and for tourists to visit. This is made from collaboration engagement among local stakeholders through both top-down and bottom-up approaches that ensure inclusiveness and efficiency of all stakeholders within the nature-based placemaking process, to improve these quality places and create a stronger sense of place to benefit the local residents' quality of life and well-being by being exposed more to nature. Moreover, place branding has played an essential role in strengthening the identity and creating a truer and more authentic place, where the local community of residents and businesses are tapping into the vision in different ways. Hence, the consistent branding and communication practices from the municipality and the DMO will in time result in both internal and external stakeholders not to question its credibility of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark.

## **7.1. Further research**

This section suggests that further research on the topic of Silkeborg being the outdoor capital of Denmark is necessary for the place makers to continue a positive destination development. This thesis and its findings offer a good foundation of knowledge. However, for the destination to verify and understand its current development processes, studies like this one need to be conducted repeatedly over time to be able to measure changes and new demands from both internal and external users. Furthermore, this thesis investigates how the place of Silkeborg is made, developed,

and operated based on our findings, whereas we, as researchers, had to make a prioritized selection of what to investigate, to make it specific and precise. In this regard, there are multiple other angles that could be interesting to investigate.

First, our analytical findings are briefly covering the concerns of the COVID-19 pandemics' effect on our data collection. Hence, this topic could be interesting to investigate further, as there is a possibility that the pandemic has had a larger influence on the use of natural assets in the Silkeborg area than what our findings covered.

Second, we investigated the 'users' categorized as local residents and tourists. Therefore, it could be interesting to investigate other segmentations such as genders, different age groups, and lastly from an international perspective, as they might influence the outcome of our findings.

Finally, it could be interesting to investigate the effects of implementing specific outdoor facilities in the area. Hence, creating research bound to a specific facility could help the place makers to get a better understanding of the values each specific facility contributes with, both regarding local residents and tourists. Additionally, this would provide evidence for reasons why new facilities should, or should not, be implemented in the natural assets. Moreover, this knowledge would help to perform a more structured nature-based place making. Suggestions for facilities that could be interesting to study could be the Almind lake bath, the Silk Route, and the trail center.

Overall, if Silkeborg, as the outdoor capital of Denmark, wants to keep practicing a strategic and positive place making development, future research on these topics could be beneficial for the most effective process and best outcomes.

## 8. Reference list

1. Acharya, A. S., Prakash, A., Saxena, P., & Nigam, A. (2013). Sampling: Why and How of It?. *Indian Journal of Medical Specialties*. Vol. 4, 330-333. DOI: 10.7713/ijms.2013.0032.
2. Albers, M. J. (2017). Quantitative Data Analysis—In the Graduate Curriculum. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*. Vol. 47(2), 215–33. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047281617692067>.
3. Andkjær S. (2004). *Dansk friluftsliv i det 21. århundrede*. Institut for Idræt og Biomekanik. Syddansk Universitet.
4. Ansell, C. & Gash, A. (2007). Collaborative governance in theory and practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. Vol. 18(4), 543–571.
5. Axelholm, L. B. (2019). VisitAarhus og VisitSilkeborg slår pjalterne sammen. *Turisme.nu*, June 12, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://turisme.nu/visitaarhus-og-visitsilkeborg-slaar-pjalterne-sammen/> [Accessed May 6th, 2022]
6. Aasetre, J. & Gundersen, V. (2012) Outdoor recreation research: Different approaches, different values?. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography*. Vol. 66(4), 193-203. DOI: 10.1080/00291951.2012.707987
7. Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K.W. (1999). A model of destination image formation. *Annals of Tourism Research*. Vol. 26(4), 868–897.
8. Barrett, F., Powley, E. & Pearce, B. (2011). Hermeneutic philosophy and organizational theory. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*. Vol. 32. 181-213. DOI: 10.1108/S0733-558X(2011)0000032009.
9. Baskin, Y. (1997): The work of nature: How the diversity of life sustains us. *Island Press*, Washington DC.
10. Bell, S., Tyrväinen, L., Sievänen, T., Pröbstl-Haider, U. & Simpson, M. (2007). Outdoor Recreation and Nature Tourism: A European Perspective. *Living Reviews in Landscape Research*. DOI: 1. 10.12942/lrlr-2007-2.
11. Bentsen, P., Jensen, F. S. (2012) The nature of *udeskole*: outdoor learning theory and practice in Danish schools. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*. Vol.

12(3), 199-219.  
DOI: [10.1080/14729679.2012.699806](https://doi.org/10.1080/14729679.2012.699806)

12. Bernard, H. R. (2017). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Rowman & Littlefield.
13. Blichfeldt, B. S. (2005). Unmanageable place brands? *Place branding*. Vol. 1(4), 388-401.
14. Bosman, C. & Dredge, D. (2011). Histories of placemaking in the Gold Coast City: The neoliberal norm, the State story and the community narrative. *Urban Research Program, Research Paper 33* (April). Brisbane: Griffith University.
15. Bovaird, T. & Löffler, E. (2009). *Public management and governance* (2). Routledge. London, UK.
16. Braun, E., Kavaratzis, M. & Zenker, S. (2013). My City – My Brand: The Role of Residents in Place Branding. *Journal of Place Management and Development*. Vol 6(1), 18-28.
17. Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods: 4<sup>th</sup> edition*. Oxford University Press.
18. Byrne, J. & Humble, Á. M. (2007). An introduction to mixed-method research. *Atlantic research centre for family-work issues*. (1), 1-4.
19. Cai, L. A. (2002). Cooperative branding for rural destinations. *Annals of tourism*. Vol. 29(3), 720-742.
20. Calculli, C., D'Uggento, A. M., Labarile, A. & Ribeco, N. (2021). Evaluating people's awareness about climate changes and environmental issues: A case study. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 324.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.129244>.
21. Cerna, L. (2013). The nature of policy change and implementation: A review of different theoretical approaches. *Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development*
22. Coates, G. J. & Seamon, D. (1984). Toward a phenomenology of place and place-making: Interpreting landscape, lifeworld and aesthetics. *Oz*. Vol. 6(1), 6–9.  
DOI:10.4148/2378-5853.1074
23. Cohen, E. & Cohen, S. A. (2012) *Authentication: Hot and cool*. *Annals of Tourism Research* 39(3), 1295–1314.

24. Cordell, H. K. (2008). The latest trends in nature-based outdoor recreation. *Forest History Today*. Spring 2008
25. Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research Design. Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (2). SAGE Publications
26. Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design. Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (3). SAGE Publication.
27. Danish Nature Agency. (n.d.). *Danish Nature Agency Lake District*. Retrieved from: <https://naturstyrelsen.dk/lokale-enheder/soehoejlandet/> [Accessed 29th May, 2022]
28. Deng, H. Y. & Ma, M. (2019). Regional policy and tourism: A quasi-natural experiment. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 74, 1–16.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2018.10.001>
29. Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
30. Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*
31. Dansk Naturfredningsforening (DNF) (2020). Danmarks Naturfredningsforening. *13 vidunderlige skove i Danmark*. Retrieved from: <https://www.dn.dk/nyheder/13-vidunderlige-skove-i-danmark/> [Accessed May 28th, 2022]
32. Dansk Naturfredningsforening (DNF) (n.d.). Danmarks Naturfredningsforening. *Naturen i Silkeborg*. Retrieved from: <https://silkeborg.dn.dk/naturen-i-silkeborg/naturomraader-i-silkeborg/> [Accessed May 28th, 2022]
33. Dredge, D. (2006). Policy networks and the local organization of tourism. *Tourism Management*. Vol. 27(2), 269–280.
34. Dwyer, L., Gill, A. & Seetaram, N. (2012). *Handbook of Research Methods in Tourism: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
35. Egholm, L. (2014). *Philosophy of Science: Perspectives on Organisations and Society*. Hans Reitzels Forlag, KBH.
36. Fakeye, P. C. & Crompton, J. L. (1991). Image differences between prospective, first-time, and repeat visitors to the lower Rio Grande Valley. *Journal of Travel Research*.

Vol. 30(2), 10–16.

37. Fitzpatrick, J. & Fontana, B. (2017). *Nature-based placemaking: A handbook for utilizing a community's natural outdoor recreational resources to create a total quality experience and support local community and economic development*. <http://padowntown.org>
38. Foucault, M. (1990). What is criticism?. *French Society of Philosophy*. Vol. 84(2), 35–63.
39. Fredman, P. & Margaryan, L. (2021). 20 years of Nordic nature-based tourism research: a review and future research agenda. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*. Vol. 21(1), 14-25.  
DOI: [10.1080/15022250.2020.1823247](https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2020.1823247)
40. Goodwin, H. & Santilli, R. (2009). Community-based tourism: A success? *The International Centre for Responsible Tourism (ICRT)*. Occasional Paper 11. ICRT.  
Retrieved from:  
<http://www.haroldgoodwin.info/uploads/CBTaSuccessPubpdf.pdf>  
[Accessed April 30th, 2022]
41. Govers, R., Go, F. M. & Kumar, K. (2007). Promoting tourism destination image. *Journal of travel research*. Vol. 46, 15-23.  
DOI: 10.1177/0047287507302374
42. Govers, R. & Go, F. (2009). *Place Branding*. London, Palgrave Macmillan.
43. Greedy, R. D., Perry, E. E., Goralnik, L. & Fitzpatrick, J. (2022). Nature-based Placemaking: A Natural Asset Focused Community Vibrancy Roadmap. *Journal of outdoor recreation, education and leadership*. Vol. 14(1), 51-61.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18666/JOREL-2022-V14-I1-11134>
44. Guba, E. G. (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Newbury Park: SAGE Publications, Incorporated.
45. Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. 105–117. Sage Publications, Inc.
46. Hall, C.M. (2010). Crisis events in tourism: subjects of crisis in tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism*. Vol. 13, 401–417.
47. Hall, H. R. & Roussel, L. A. (2017): *Evidence-Based Practice: An Integrative Approach to Research, Administration, and Practice*. Elsevier Health Sciences, London, UK.

48. Hamzah, A. & Khalifah, Z. (2009). *Handbook on community based tourism: How to develop and sustain CBT*. Singapore: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Secretariat.
49. Hasløv & Kjærsgaard. (2021). *Himmelbjerget - forundersøgelse*. Retrieved from: [https://www.skanderborg.dk/Files/Files/udvikling-i-kommunen/20210928\\_Forunders%C3%B8gelse\\_Himmelbjerget\\_bilag%20og%20Hvidbog.pdf](https://www.skanderborg.dk/Files/Files/udvikling-i-kommunen/20210928_Forunders%C3%B8gelse_Himmelbjerget_bilag%20og%20Hvidbog.pdf)  
[Accessed May 13th, 2022]
50. Hes, D., Mateo-Babiano, I. & Lee, G. (2019). Fundamentals of placemaking for the built environment: An introduction. In D. Hes & C. Hernandez-Santin (Eds.), *Placemaking fundamentals for the built environment*. 1–13. Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore.  
DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-32-9624-4\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-32-9624-4_1)
51. Hosany, S., Ekinci, Y. & Uysal, M. (2007). Destination image and destination personality. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*. Vol. 1(1), 62–81.
52. Hox, J. J. & Boeij, H. R. (2005). Data collection, Primary vs. Secondary. *Encyclopedia of Social Measurement*, Vol. 1, 593-599. Elsevier  
DOI: 10.1016/B0-12-369398-5/00041-4.
53. Jenkins, M. J. & Pigram, J. J. (2004). *Encyclopedia of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation*. Routledge.
54. Jensen, F. S. & Koch, N. E. (2004). Twenty-five Years of Forest Recreation Research in Denmark and its Influence on Forest Policy. *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*. Vol. 19(4), 93–102.  
DOI:10.1080/14004080410034173.
55. Johnston, M. (2014). Secondary Data Analysis: A Method of Which the Time has Come. *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries*. Vol. 3, 619-626.
56. Kaefer, F. (2021). *An insider's guide to place branding: shaping the identity and reputation of cities, regions and countries*. Springer International Association of Specific Experts in Tourism (AIEST), Marrakech, Morocco.
57. Kalandides, A. (2011). City marketing for Bogotá: A case study in integrated place branding. *Journal of Place Management and Development*. Vol. 4(3), 282–291.
58. Kallio, H., Pietilä, A.-M., Johnson, M. & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured

interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. Vol. 72(12), 2954– 2965.  
DOI: 10.1111/jan.13031

59. Kavaratzis, M. & Ashworth, G. (2015). Hijacking culture: The disconnection between place culture and place brands. *The Town Planning Review*. Vol. 86(2), 155–176.
60. Kellert, S. R. & Wilson, E. O. (Eds.) (1993). *The biophilia hypothesis*. Island Press.
61. Kelly, S. E. (2010). Qualitative interviewing techniques and styles. In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Methods in Health Research*, SAGE, London, Vol. 1, 307–327.
62. Kerr, G. (2006). From destination brand to location brand. *Journal of Brand Management*. Vol. 13(4/5), 276-283.
63. Klein, M. N. (2021a). Ingen jysk beskedenhed: “Vi er Danmarks Outdoor Hovedstad. Punktum”. *Turisme.nu*. December 6th, 2021. Received from: <https://turisme.nu/silkeborg-outdoor-hovedstad/> [Accessed May 6, 2022]
64. Klein, M. N. (2021b). Eksperter: Meget at vinde i kommunernes kamp om outdoor-segmentet – og store faldgruber. *Turisme.nu*. December 10th, 2021. Received from: <https://turisme.nu/eksperter-meget-at-vinde-i-kommunernes-kamp-om-outdoor-segmentet-og-store-faldgruber/> [Accessed May 6th, 2022]
65. Klijn, E., Eshuis, J. & E. Braun. (2012). The influence of stakeholder involvement on the effectiveness of place branding. *Public Management Review*. Vol. 14(4), 499–519.
66. Koontz, T. & Newig, J. (2014). From Planning to Implementation: Top Down and Bottom Up Approaches for Collaborative Watershed Management. *Policy Studies Journal*. Vol. 42(3), 416-442.  
DOI: 416-442. 10.1111/psj.12067.
67. Kuada, J. (2012). *Research Methodology: A Project Guide for University Students*. Samfundslitteratur.
68. Kubickova, J. & Campbell, M. (2020). The role of government in agro-tourism development: a top-down bottom-up approach. *Current Issues in Tourism*. Vol. 23(5), 587–604.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2018.1551338>
69. Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

70. Laurier, E. (2010). Participant Observation. In N. Clifford, S. French, & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Key Methods in Geography* (2). 116-130. SAGE Publications Ltd.
71. Legard, R., Keegan, J. & Ward, K. (2003). In-depth interviews. In Ritchie, J. & Lewis, J. (ed.) *QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PRACTICE. A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, 138-169. SAGE
72. Lemke, A. & Harris-Wai, J. (2015). Stakeholder engagement in policy development: challenges and opportunities for human genomics. *Genet Med*. Vol. 17, 949–957. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1038/gim.2015.8>
73. Lew, A. A. (2012). Geography and the marketing of tourism destinations. In J. Wilson (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of tourism geographies*. 181–186. New York, NY: Routledge.
74. Lew, A. A. (2017). Tourism planning and place making: place-making or placemaking? *Tourism Geographies*. Vol. 19(3), 448-466.  
DOI: 10.1080/14616688.2017.1282007
75. Lukic, I. V. (2021). Placemaking, local community and tourism. *Hrvatski Geografski Glasnik*. Vol. 83(1), 77-104.  
DOI: 10.21861/HGG.2021.83.01.04.
76. Mack, N., Woodsong, C., Km, M., Guest, G. & Namey, E. (2005). *Qualitative research methods: a data collectors field guide*. Family Health International.
77. Margaryan, L. (2017). *Commercialization of nature through tourism*. Doctoral dissertation, Mid Sweden University.
78. Margaryan, L. & Fredman, P. (2017). Bridging outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism in a commercial context: Insights from the Swedish service providers. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*. Vol. 17, 84-92.  
DOI: 10.1016/j.jort.2017.01.003.
79. Markusen A. & Gadwa A. (2010). Creative placemaking, A white paper for The Mayors' Institute on City Design, a leadership initiative on the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the United States Conference of Mayors and American Architectural Foundation. NEA 2010. Vol. 77.  
Retrieved from: <https://www.arts.gov/about/publications/creative-placemaking>  
[Accessed May 10th, 2022]
80. Marsh, D. & Furlong, P. (2002). A skin, not a sweater: ontology and epistemology in political science. *Theory and methods in political science*. Vol. 2(1), 17-41.

81. Masterplan (2020). *Master Plan for udvikling af Danmarks outdoor hovedstad*. Retrieved from: <https://outdoor.silkeborg.dk/-/media/Subsites/Special-og-projektsites/Outdoor/Masterplan-for-Udvikling-af-Danmarks-Outdoor-Hovedstad.pdf> [Accessed May 10th, 2022]
82. McCracken, G. D. (1988). *The Long Interview*. Newbury Park, Calif: Sage Publications.
83. Miles, M. B. & Huberman, M. A. (1994a). Focusing and Bounding the Collection of Data. In *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Vol. (2), 40-49. Sage Publications, Inc.
84. Miles, M. B. & Huberman, M. A. (1994b). Early steps in analysis. In *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. (2). Sage Publications, Inc.
85. Mispagel, K. M., Stein, J. A., Axelson, P. W., Kirschbaum, J. B. & Longmuir, P. E. & Yamada, D. A. (2001). *Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access: Part II of II: Best Practices Design Guide*. Bicycle & Pedestrian Section, Federal Highway Administration, Washington, DC.
- 
86. Midtjyllands Avis. (2020). Silkeborg er stadig kendt som Bilernes By. *Midtjyllandsavis*. Retrieved from: <https://www.midtjyllandsavis.dk/artikel/88617de7-df73-44d6-9e39-18ae346d5eb6/-> [Accessed May 28th, 2022]
87. Moncanu, R. (2014). Destination branding through experience and authenticity. *Journal of tourism challenges and trends*. Vol. 7(1), 89-104.
- 
88. Mortari L. (2015). Reflectivity in Research Practice: An Overview of Different Perspectives. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. Vol. 14(5), 498–501 DOI: 10.1177/1609406915618045
89. Museumsilkeborg. (n.d.). Silkeborg Outdoor – fra overlevelse til oplevelse. *Silkeborg museum*. Retrieved from: <https://www.museumsilkeborg.dk/nyheder-visningsside?Action=1&NewsId=975&M=NewsV2&PID=148> [Accessed May 24th, 2022]
90. OECD. (2016). OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2016. *OECD Publishing*, Paris. Retrieved from: <http://www.oecdilibrary.org/docserver/download/8512031ec004.pdf?expires=1359627337&id=id&accname=ocid54028181&checksum=A5D3A4DA6139C0A3BD78363C1E98>

884A%5Cn[http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/industry-and-services/oecd-tourism-trends-and-policies-2012\\_tour-2012-](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/industry-and-services/oecd-tourism-trends-and-policies-2012_tour-2012-)

[Accessed April 30th, 2022]

91. Olins, W. (2000). How brands are taking over the corporation. In M. Schultz, M. Hatch, & M. Larsen (Eds.), *The expressive organization: Linking identity, reputation, and the corporate brand*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 51–65.
92. Olsen, L. S. (2016). Sami tourism in destination development: conflict and collaboration. *Polar Geography*. Vol. 39(3), 179-195.  
DOI: 10.1080/1088937X.2016.1201870
93. Osborne, S. P., Radnor, Z. & Strokosch, K. (2016). Co-production and the co-creation of value in public services: A suitable case for treatment?. *Public Management Review*. Vol. 18(5), 639–653.
94. Othman, S., Nishimura, Y. & Kubota, A. (2013). Memory association in place making: A review. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Vol. 85(1), 554–563.
95. Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L. & Wynaden, D. (2000). Ethics in Qualitative Research. *Journal of nursing scholarship*. Vol. 33(1), 93-96.
96. Outdoor Institute. (n.d.). *Gennem outdoor styrker vi sundhed, livskvalitet, velfærd og vækst*. Retrieved from: <https://outdoorinstitute.dk/> [Accessed May 30th, 2022]
97. Outdoor Silkeborg. (n.d.). Danmarks outdoor hovedstad. *Outdoor Silkeborg*. Retrieved from: <https://outdoor.silkeborg.dk/Masterplan-for-Danmarks-Outdoor-Hovedstad/Viden-og-vaekst>  
[Accessed May 29th, 2022]
98. O'Reilly, K. (2009). *Key Concepts in Ethnography*. SAGE. Retrieved from: <http://methods.sagepub.com/zorac.aub.aau.dk/base/download/BookChapter/key-concepts-in-ethnography/n19.xml>  
[Accessed May 10th, 2022]
99. Pazit L., Cerin, E., Milner, C. & Hill, K. D. (2022). Older people and nature: the benefits of outdoors, parks and nature in light of COVID-19 and beyond– where to from here?, *International Journal of Environmental Health Research*. Vol. 32(6), 1329-1336.  
DOI: [10.1080/09603123.2021.1879739](https://doi.org/10.1080/09603123.2021.1879739)
100. Pearce, D. G. (1998). Tourism development in Paris: Public intervention. *Annals of Tourism Research*. Vol. 25(2), 457–476.

101. Pedersen, K. B & Nielsen, L. D, (2001). *Kvalitative metoder - Fra metateori til Markarbejde*. (1). Roskilde universitetsforlag.  
ISBN 87-7867-128-0.
102. Pedersen, S. B. (2005). *Making Space: An Outline of Place Branding*. Frederiksberg, Copenhagen Business School.
103. Peters, T. & Verderber, S. (2021). Biophilic Design Strategies in Long-Term Residential Care Environments for Persons with Dementia, *Journal of Aging and Environment*.  
Crossref  
DOI: 10.1080/26892618.2021.1918815.
104. Petersen, B. D (2019). Friluftsliv i Silkeborg Kommune i Trap Danmark. Retrieved from: [https://trap.lex.dk/Friluftsliv i Silkeborg Kommune](https://trap.lex.dk/Friluftsliv_i_Silkeborg_Kommune)  
[Accessed May 27th, 2022]
105. Pike, S. (2005). Beyond products and brand management: Tourism destination brand complexity. *Journal of product & brand management*. Vol. 14(4), 258-259.
106. Project for Public Spaces (PPS) (2015). A thriving future of places: placemaking as the new urban agenda. *PPS.org*. Retrieved from: <https://www.pps.org/article/a-thriving-future-of-places-placemaking-as-the-new-urban-agenda> [Accessed April 24th, 2022]
107. Project for Public Spaces (PPS) (2018). Placemaking: What if we built our cities around places?. *PPS.org*. Retrieved from: <https://www.pps.org/article/greatcitiesinitiative>  
[Accessed April 24th, 2022]
108. Rainisto, S. K. (2003). *Success factors of place marketing: A study of place marketing practices in Northern Europe and the United States (Doctoral dissertation)*. Helsinki University of Technology, Helsinki, Finland.  
ISBN: 9512266849.pdf?sequ
109. Regeringen. (2020). Sommerpakke skal sætte skub i dansk sommerøkonomi. *Regeringen*  
Retrieved from: <https://www.regeringen.dk/nyheder/2020/sommerpakke-skal-saette-skub-i-dansk-sommeroekonomi/?fbclid=IwAR31O4yqZYVG7J98o2KM2ZkDIaS2g5JkDvXhQmgS3NA6JIhpf2cP0cdjD6Y>  
[Accessed April 05th, 2022]
110. Rienecker, L & Jørgensen, P. (2017) *Den gode opgave* (5). Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

111. Rodríguez, I. M. Williams, A. & Hall, C. M. (2014). Tourism innovation policy: Implementation and outcomes. *Annals of Tourism Research*. Vol. 49, 76–93.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2014.08.004>
112. Ross, P.T. & Bibler-Zaidi, N.L. (2019). Limited by our limitations. *Perspect Med Educ* Vol. 8, 261–264.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-00530-x>
113. Schensul, J. J. & LeCompte, M. D. (2013). *Essential Ethnographic Methods: A Mixed Methods Approach* (2). Altamira Press.
114. Scotland, J. (2012). Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research: Relating ontology and epistemology to the methodology and methods of the scientific, interpretive, and critical research paradigms. *English language teaching*, Vol. 5, (9), 9-16.
115. Serin, B. (2018). *Cross Disciplinary Review of Placemaking*. Retrieved from: [https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2018/04/W2018\\_04\\_01\\_Serin\\_Placemaking-Working-Paper.pdf](https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2018/04/W2018_04_01_Serin_Placemaking-Working-Paper.pdf)  
[Accessed May 01st, 2022]
116. Shaw, K. & Montana, G. (2016). Place-making in megaprojects in Melbourne. *Urban Policy and Research*. Vol. 34(2), 166–189.
117. Silkeborg (2022). Outdoor capital of Denmark. *Silkeborg Aarhus Region*. Retrieved from: <https://www.silkeborg.com/>  
[Accessed May 20th, 2022]
118. Silkeborgbad. (2022). Der sker-YOGA I SKULPTURPARKEN. *Kulturcenteret Silkeborg Bad*. Retrieved from: <https://www.silkeborgbad.dk/det-sker.html>  
[Accessed May 14th, 2022]
119. Silkeborg Kommune (2019). UDVIKLINGSSTRATEGI FOR SILKEBORG KOMMUNE 2018-2030. *Silkeborg Kommune*. Retrieved from: [https://silkeborg.dk/~media/Om-kommunen/Politikker-planer-og-strategier/Udviklingsstrategi/2018-2030/Udviklingsstrategi\\_2018\\_2030\\_web.pdf?la=da](https://silkeborg.dk/~media/Om-kommunen/Politikker-planer-og-strategier/Udviklingsstrategi/2018-2030/Udviklingsstrategi_2018_2030_web.pdf?la=da)  
[Accessed May 27th, 2022]
120. Silkeborg outdoor business community. (n.d.). *Silkeborg outdoor business community*. Retrieved from: <https://silkeborgbusiness.dk/netvaerk/silkeborg-outdoor-community/>  
[Accessed May 30th, 2022]
121. Sofield, T. & Guia, J. & Specht, J. (2017). Organic ‘folkloric’ community-driven place-making and tourism. *Tourism Management*. Vol. 61, 1-22.

122. Sunesen, M. S. K. (2020). *Sådan laver du undersøgelser, 2020 - Videnskabsteori, metode og analyse*. Hans Reitzels Forlag
123. Styliadis, D., Biran, A., Sit, J. & Szivas, E. M. (2014). Residents' support for tourism development: The role of residents' place image and perceived tourism impacts. *Tourism management*. Vol. 45, 260-274.
124. Sustainable development Commission (SDC) (2008). *Health, place and nature: how outdoor environments influence health and well-being: a knowledge base*. Sustainable Development Commission.  
URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/10023/2180>
125. Um, S. & Crompton, J. L. (1990). Attitude determinants in tourism destination choice. *Annals of Tourism Research*. Vol. 17(3), 432–448.
126. United Nations General Assembly. (1987). *Report of the world commission on environment and development: Our common future*. Oslo, Norway: United Nations General Assembly, Development and International Co-operation: Environment.
127. UNWTO, (n.d.). Sustainable development. *UNWTO*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>  
[Accessed April 14th, 2022]
128. UNWTO. World Tourism Organization (2019), UNWTO Guidelines for Institutional Strengthening of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) – Preparing DMOs for new challenges, *UNWTO*, Madrid,  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420841>
129. Urde, M. (2003). Core value-based corporate brand building. *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 37, (7–8), 1017–1040.
130. Van Riel, C. B. M. (1996). Identiteit en Imago: Grondslagen van corporate communication. In *Identity and Image: Foundations of corporate communication*, (2). Schoonhoven, The Netherlands: Academic Service.
131. Vernon, J., Essex, S., Pinder, D., & Curry, K. (2005). Collaborative policymaking – Local sustainable projects. *Annals of Tourism Research*. Vol. 32(2), 325–345.
132. Vignieri, V. (2020). Leveraging Collaborative Governance: How Co-production Contributes to Outcomes and Public Value in a Small Town. In *Enabling Collaborative Governance through Systems Modeling Methods*. 47–71. Springer International Publishing.  
DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42970-6\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42970-6_3)

133. VisitÅrhus (n.d). Top naturoplevelser i Søhøjlandet. *VisitÅrhus*. Retrieved from: <https://www.visitaarhusregionen.dk/friluftsregionen/top-naturoplevelser-i-sohojlandet> [Accessed May 28th, 2022]
134. Wilson, O. E. (1984). *Biophilia*. Harvard University Press.
135. Wheeler F., Frost W. & Weiler B. (2011). Destination Brand Identity, Values, and Community: A Case Study From Rural Victoria Australia. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 28(1), 13-26.  
DOI: 10.1080/10548408.2011.535441
136. Winter, P., L., Selin, S., Cervený, L., & Bricker, K. (2020). Outdoor Recreation, Nature-Based Tourism, and Sustainability. *Sustainability*. Vol. 12(1), 81.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12010081>
137. Wolf, I. D., Croft, D. B., & Green, R. J. (2019). Nature Conservation and Nature-Based Tourism: A Paradox? *Environments*. Vol. 6(9), 104.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/environments6090104>
138. Wolf-Watz, D. (2015). *On environmental grounds: outdoor recreation, place relations and environmental sustainability*. Dis. Karlstad: Karlstads universitet.
139. Wortham-Galvin, B. D. (2008). Mythologies of placemaking. *Places*. Vol. 20(1), 32–39.
140. Wyckoff, M. A. (2014). DEFINITION OF PLACEMAKING: Four Different Types. *pxnews.net*. Retrieved from: <http://pznews.net/media/13f25a9fff4cf18ffff8419ffaf2815.pdf> [Accessed May 03rd, 2022]
141. Wyckoff, M. A., Neumann, B., Pape, G., & Schindler, K. (2015). *Placemaking as an economic development tool: A placemaking guide*. East Lansing, MI: Land Policy Institute, Michigan State University.
142. Zenker, S., & Braun, E. (2010). *Branding a City: A Conceptual Approach for Place Branding and Place Brand Management*. Paper presented at The 39th EMAC Annual Conference 2010. Frederiksberg, Denmark.
143. Zenker, S., E. Braun, and S. Petersen. (2017). Branding the Destination versus the Place: The Effects of Brand Complexity and Identification for Residents and Visitors. *Tourism Management*. Vol. 58(1), 15–27.  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.10.008>.