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Local Food for International Tourists

Explorative Studies of Perceptions of Networking and Interactions in two Holiday Home Destinations in North Jutland, Denmark

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Fremtidens feriehus

**Local Food for International
Tourists
Explorative Studies of
Perceptions of Networking and
Interactions in two Holiday Home
Destinations in North Jutland,
Denmark**

Henrik Halkier

DELRAPPORT 3

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feriehusområde**

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Local Food for International Tourists

Explorative Studies of Perceptions of Networking and Interactions in two Holiday Home Destinations in North Jutland, Denmark¹

1. Introduction

Combining food and tourism is having a powerful appeal to public policy-makers in recent years, and according to the promotional websites of tourist destinations across Europe appealing to potential food tourists becoming increasingly widespread. Offering local products and culinary traditions to international visitors adds a new component to the image of the tourist destination and creates additional economic activity in and around the destination. Such a winning combination is of course particularly attractive in peripheral regions where the need to maximise the income generated by tourism is pressing.

Despite this obvious appeal, many, if not most, destinations find it difficult to translate local food into a resource in tourism development. Bringing local food to international tourists requires local food experiences – specific products or culinary practices – that is being made accessible (organised, produced, packaged, communicated) for visitor consumption – and, of course, such local food experiences must be in demand by tourists in order to be economically viable from a long-term perspective.

In practice these issues are closely intertwined, and while the growing literature on food and tourism has devoted much attention to packaging, communication and demand aspects of local food tourism, this paper concentrates on the less explored issue of making local food experiences accessible to international visitors, i.e. the organisation of the local food experience ‘production chain’ in relation to incoming tourists.

¹ The research reported in this working paper was undertaken as part of a project entitled Future Holiday Homes (Fremtidens Feriehus og Feriehusområde) sponsored by the European Regional Development Fund and the North Jutland Region. Interviews and data collection was undertaken by Luigi D’Ambrosio in spring/summer 2011. Comments on earlier versions of the text from Anette Therkelsen, Pennie F. Henriksen and Luigi D’Ambrosio are gratefully acknowledged.

The concept of network has become central in the literatures on both development of local food and tourist destinations (Renting, Marsden et al. 2003; Sage 2003; Holloway, Cox et al. 2006; Henriksen 2012), and the current text will focus on one important precondition for effective networking, namely the perception of key actors of current and future prospects with regards to food tourism within the destination and the problems needed to be addressed in order to increase the extent to which local food can underpin further development of tourism activities.

The paper combines theoretical reflection on approaches to producer-oriented studies of food tourism with two empirical case studies from Holiday Home destinations in the Region of North Jutland, Denmark. North Jutland is a relevant region to focus on because it is characterised by being a major producer of food through extensive involvement in agriculture and fishery as well as a prime summer holiday destination in Denmark with many visitors from neighbouring countries most of which stay in self-catering accommodation such as rented holiday homes (Larsen, Laursen et al. 2012).

The aim of the current research project is to identify features that facilitate and/or impede the integration of local food in the tourism product at two holiday home destinations in North Jutland, Denmark, and the contribution of this paper is to focus specifically on perceptions of demand patterns and network relations among private and public actors within food and tourism. The text is divided into three parts. First a brief review is undertaken of relevant literatures pertaining to food tourism, local food strategies, and destination development networks. Secondly, a conceptual framework for the case studies is outlined, drawing primarily on an institutionalist approach to the study of economic development discourses. Thirdly, the research design and empirical methods are outlined, leading to a presentation of some key findings from the two case studies, and finally a brief conclusion about further research ventures in this field.

2. Literature review

Two strands of research are of particular interest to the current paper: works on the relationship food and tourism form a natural starting point, and this is followed by studies of networks to promote locally-based food in particular. Both literatures will be briefly reviewed in the following.

Food is obviously important in tourism as tourist will have to eat anyway and food is a cultural practice particular to the locality visited (Hall and Sharples 2003; Therkelsen and Blichfeldt 2011), and the real challenge is to allow for differences between different types of tourists and different types of destinations. A growing literature has focused on the ways in which cultural heritage in food is being constructed, packaged and communicated to visitors: often focusing on the issue of authenticity (Bessi re 1998; Sims 2009), including the role of schemes certifying origin and/or quality (Parrott, Wilson et al. 2002; Ilbery, Morris et al. 2005; Ittersum, Meulenberg et al. 2007; Tregear, Arfini et al. 2007), or the impact on local areas and residents in terms of strengthening their brand, self-esteem or identity (Boniface 2003; Blichfeldt 2010). It is, however, clearly still important to distinguish between different types of tourists who might seek, as demonstrated by the succinct parody of Blichfeldt and Therkelsen (2010), ‘Michelin, Moussaka or McDonalds’ depending on whether the key food quality sought is refined haute cuisine, rustic and authentic local fare, or something cheap with a well-known capacity to appeal also to e.g. younger members of the travel group. This diversity implies that it cannot be taken for granted that the products and cuisine of the region will appeal to present or future tourists: like it is the case with tourism in general, information about patterns and trends in demand is clearly crucial for providers, but nonetheless mostly gathered in rather unsystematic ways (Halkier 2010). Local food tourism in other words requires strategic decisions about supplying products and services that are relevant to particular types of tourist demand, and thus the organisational micro-dynamics of the interaction between private and public actors within food and tourism within and around the destination become a particular focus point, because it is through these interactions that particular food experiences for tourism consumption are selected, communicated, and made available for consumption.

On the background of this it is hardly surprising that attention has been given to issues relating to the organisation of the ways in which local food can be brought to the attention and table of tourists. Some studies have focused on the importance of joint promotional efforts through e.g. quality certifications or region-of-origin schemes (Parrott, Wilson et al. 2002; Ilbery, Morris et al. 2005; Ittersum, Meulenberg et al. 2007; Tregear, Arfini et al. 2007), events or initiatives to stimulate ongoing attachment between tourists and particular forms of food through (Holloway, Cox et al. 2006; Gyim thy and Mykletun 2009), and research into the commodity chain and the role public policy creating and sustaining network relations between key actors (Everett and Aitchison 2008; Montanari and Staniscia 2009; Sims 2010). In the latter group of studies the role of network relations is generally recognised as being important because of the need to bring many small independent economic actors together around the task of creating new market opportunities, something that can also be found in the literatures on both rural development (Blundel 2002;

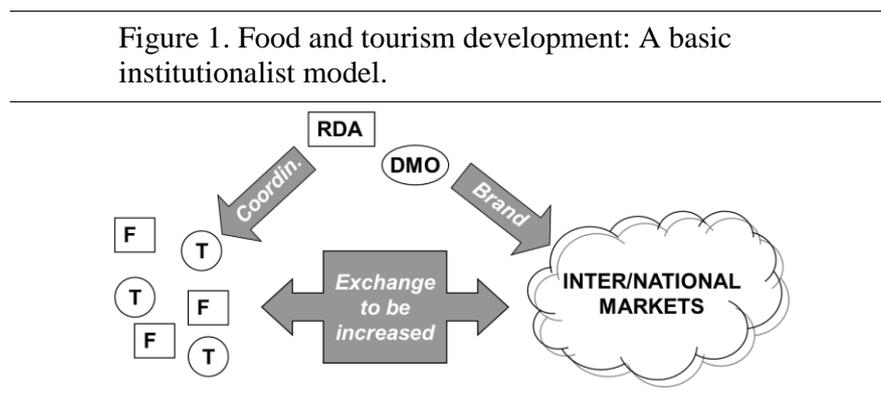
Renting, Marsden et al. 2003; Sage 2003; Holloway, Cox et al. 2006; Cawley, Marsat et al. 2007; Virkkala 2007; Ilbery and Saxena 2009; Henriksen 2012) and, indeed, the general literature on tourist destination development (Jamal and Getz 1995; Hall 1999; Saxena 2005; Dredge 2006; Scott, Baggio et al. 2008; Henriksen and Halkier 2009).

This would seem to suggest that network theory will clearly be relevant for studies of organisational features that facilitate and/or impede the integration of local food in the experience offer of tourist destinations, and a first approach to the mapping of interaction patterns can be achieved by focusing on the *perceptions* of interactions by key stakeholders, i.e. the mental maps of the actors involved that can tell us about the way they view issues concerning efforts of bringing about productive exchanges between local food providers and international tourists in the two holiday home destinations in North Jutland, Denmark.

3. Conceptual framework

From an institutionalist perspective (Halkier 2006) the obvious starting point for the analysis is the private firms and public organisations (potentially) involved in the process of bringing local food to international tourists. Figure 1 captures the three main categories of actors involved in the process, namely

- private firms in the food and tourism sector, providing products and services for local citizens and incoming visitors,
- the (inter)national markets outside the destination which are seen as the potential and desirable source of additional turn-over in food and tourism, and
- the public bodies promoting tourism (destination management organisation, DMO) and economic development (regional development agency, RDA).



Source: Inspired by Halkier 2006, Figure 3.1.

When analysing perceptions of the interactions between tourism and food firms, public agencies, and the wider socio-economic environment, inspiration can be found in earlier work on institutions and policy discourse (Halkier 2006). Here it was argued that actor perceptions – and indeed the wider discursive environment – can be understood through the conceptual lens of what has been dubbed ‘assumptual orders’. Any organisation embodies explicit or implicit assumptions about the external world that are likely to influence its relations with other organisations, and inspired by the work of Niels Åkerstrøm Andersen (1994; 2003) these assumptions have been grouped into three assumptual orders – topographical, temporal and operational – that contain a series of dichotomies which functions as lines of orientation along which a particular actor ex- or implicitly situates itself vis-à-vis the surrounding world in terms of space, time and agency (Halkier 2006). All three assumptual orders and their dichotomies combine cognitive and normative aspects: while they involve perceptions of social realities within the external world – defines collectivities, distinguishes between now and before,

designates actor roles – they also ascribe values in that they designate good and bad, desirable directions of change, and friends and foes.

For the purpose of the current paper, these assumptional orders have been translated into the context of promotion of local food to international tourists, as summarised in Table 1. By identifying the world views prevailing among the different groups of actors identified in Figure 1, it will be possible to get a first impression of the challenges of developing more extensive exchanges between local food producers and international tourists in the two holiday home destinations, because this will establish how they perceive the current situation, through what mechanisms change may be pursued, and what actors are likely to be playing which roles in the process. This analytical perspective will not only provide an indication of the strategies individual actors are likely to pursue but also – equally important – what limitations and opportunities they see in their environment such as the freedom of chain retailers to stock local produce, the extent to which local government can set its own priorities with regards to economic development, differences in international market profiles (for example when high-end quality food producers operate in the hinterland of a price-oriented mass tourism destination), or the influence of national networks attempting to brand e.g. Danish food by associating with particular values and sensory qualities.

Table 1. An Institutional Approach to Analysing Food Tourism Development Discourses

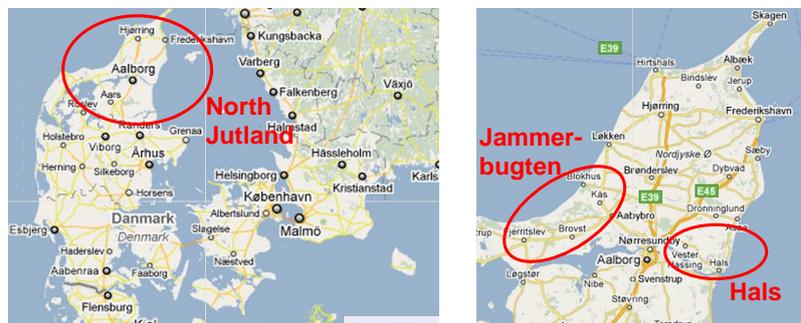
<i>Assumptional orders</i>	<i>Dichotomies</i>	<i>Analytical focus</i>
Topographical	Horizontal	Relationship between tourist destination and food-providing area
	Vertical	Relative status of tourism and food producers/providers
Temporal	Past/future	The extent to which current food-tourism exchanges are seen as satisfactory
	Causal relations	Factors seen as furthering/limiting food-tourism exchanges in the destination
Operational	Subject/object	Defines active agents of changes and passive objects that can be manipulate, e.g. destination management organisations and small private firms
	Assistant/adversary	Defines actors that will assist/obstruct change

Source: Inspired by Halkier 2006 Table 3.3.

4. Case-study presentation and methods

Given the explorative nature of the current research project – only very little has been written on this aspect of food and tourism in North Jutland (Mahler 2009) – adopting a qualitative case-study approach is an obvious choice, because the aim of the work is to understand the perceptions of actors and why they are (not) interacting to pursue food-tourism as a development strategy. In order to be able to achieve a relatively intensive coverage of actors, it has been decided to focus empirical work in limited geographical areas within the region, namely the small coastal towns of Blokhus and Hals (see Figure 2). These two destinations are similar in tourism terms in that they are typical North Jutland coastal destinations with rural hinterlands where most international tourists avail themselves of accommodation in self-catering holiday homes. The introduction of this geographical focus should make it possible to achieve a high degree of coverage of relevant actors within the two destinations and hence provide a fairly comprehensive picture of the current situation with regard to food/tourism synergies, including the factors furthering or discouraging further developments along these lines.

Figure 3. North Jutland and the two case study areas



Source: Google maps 2012

At the point of time when research was undertaken (2011), neither destinations had food tourism as a primary focus or strength, but they still differed with regard to the extent to which local produce or culinary traditions are a visible part of the local tourist experience, with (fresh/local) fish playing a greater role in Blokhus on the North Sea coast than in Hals on the more placid eastern coast, despite the history of the two localities: while Hals was an important fishing community, Blokhus was predominantly a trading post. Taken together this choice of case studies generates expectations of commonalities as well as differences, with the role of food in tourism potentially being more developed in the westerly of the two case study areas. But from the perspective of the current paper, priority is given to exploring diversity within North Jutland rather than conducting a systematic comparative analysis.

In each of the two case study destinations interviews have been conducted with key actors in the potential ‘production chain’ that could bring local food experiences to incoming tourists, namely

- producers of food branded as being local and/or of superior quality,
- distributors of food (retailers and restaurants), and
- local policy-makers within tourism and economic development (DMO and RDA-type semi-public organisations).

Research has in other words focused on the perceptions of actors that play, or could potentially play, a role in bringing local food to incoming tourists, while the end-consumers is only part of the analysis through the perceptions of demand patterns and trends by the three groups of actors interviewed. However, having a particular focus on food branded as being local and/or of particular quality makes sure that the study covers ‘fine cooking’ or ‘culinary heritage’ as travel experiences (Blichfeldt and Therkelsen 2010), two types of food-tourist relations that are often seen as particularly desirable by policy-makers because they are associated with the ability and willingness to pay a premium price for perceived extraordinary culinary qualities (Hall and Sharples 2003; Sims 2010). All in all 19 interviews were conducted, and in addition to this strategy documents, annual reports, and other documentary sources from the selected firms and organisations was collected as part of the research process. Key actors were identified by first consulting networks of producers and trawling through marketing materials – very comprehensive brochures exist in each of the destinations aimed at profiling local providers of goods and services to incoming tourists – and then achieving the snow-ball effects by asking interviewees about important local providers.

In parallel with researching the two holiday-home case-study destinations, interviews and documentary sources will be sought on the regional level, focusing both on the tourism development body *VisitNordjylland*, and on the various networks and cluster-type organisations which have been launched as part of the economic development activities of the North Jutland RDA, *Vækstforum Nordjylland* (for an introduction to the policy set-up, see Berg Schmidt and Halkier 2008; Halkier, Therkelsen et al. 2008). These organisations play important roles in setting public development agendas within the region in relation to tourism and food respectively, and they therefore are important parts of the immediate socio-political context of public and private actors in the two case study destinations.

5. Perceptions of food tourism interactions

In this section the perceptions of food tourism potentials and challenges in the two Danish holiday home destinations will be analysed on the basis of the oral and written evidence collected. First the topography of food tourism is analysed with regard to what localities and what food is relevant for food tourism development in North Jutland in general and the two destinations in particular. The next session focuses on the perceptions of the opportunities and challenges facing food tourism initiatives, and the final section zooms in on perceptions of the distribution of roles in attempts to stimulate the interaction between food and tourism actors in the context of Hals and Blokhus in particular and North Jutland holiday home destinations more generally.

5.1. Perceptions of Local Food Tourism Topographies

Food production and tourism are major economic activities in North Jutland, with food accounting for 8 per cent of gross value added in 2008 (Region Nordjylland Vækstforum 2010 p 16) and tourism-related activities constituting 3.6 per cent of employment within the region (VisitDenmark 2011 p 36). It is therefore hardly surprising that both have been promoted by regional actors in order to further increase activities in areas that for a long time have made major contributions to economic prosperity, although the organisational set-up differ between the two sectors.

In tourism a separate and semi-permanent tourism development body, *VisitNordjylland*, has been established, charged with marketing, innovation and competence development by providing services and coordinating activities of other public and private actors (see www.visitnordjylland.dk, cf. Halkier, Therkelsen et al. 2008). In the most recent strategy (VisitNordjylland.dk 2010) becoming better to use the potential of local quality produce is one of the lines of action prioritised, and this is repeated on its promotional website under the ‘Gourmet’ heading where it is claimed that “From a gastronomic point of view, things have never been better in North Jutland than right now” (<http://www.visitnordjylland.dk/international/en-gb/menu/turist/inspiration/gourmet/gourmet.htm>). With regard to the food sector, initiatives have been rather more ad-hoc in the sense that a separate cluster organisation, *SPIS NORD* (literally: Eat North) has been established, drawing hitherto disparate initiative closer to each other while retaining their separate identities. Nonetheless activities still tend to be more project driven, focusing on temporary efforts in marketing, and innovation (see www.spisnord.dk) that range from rather technical initiatives (e.g. traceability) with story-telling potential to events like food fairs and food theatre aiming to provide both information and sensory experiences (Bente Albeck Madsen, Taste of North Jutland), and, indeed, working closely with VisitNordjylland to increase the sectors input into tourism-related activities through gastronomy and retail outlets through e.g. the *Taste of North Jutland* website (www.smagen.dk). In short, at the regional level the notion of North Jutland consisting of two matching economic activity regions in tourism and food that could be mutually supportive is in other words widespread.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this is also echoed at the local level where many of the key actors interviewed referred to the closeness of food producers to the holiday home destinations and the presence of tourists as a significant extension of the market for food. Like the regional actors whose horizon is clearly defined by the borders institutionalised by territorial governance patterns, local public actors tend to focus on promoting activities within the municipal borders (e.g. *Smag for Jammerbugten*, literally ‘A Taste for Jammerbugten’), and this sets Blokhus on the North Sea coast destination apart from the easterly Hals destination because the latter is now part of Aalborg Municipality rather than a territorial governance entity in its own right. Still, Hals harbour runs a weekly quality food market in the high season (www.visitaalborg.dk). Perhaps unsurprisingly, private actors are rather more pragmatic when delimiting the local/regional products that are relevant from a food tourism perspective: whatever can be reasonably expected to pass as ‘local/regional’ food with incoming tourists can be used to enhance the culinary experience of visitors, ranging from “fresh fish bought at the seaside” (Kim Højen, Lantmännen Schulstad food wholesaler) to “Ryå butter (Maxim Vitaljevich, Saltum Inn), “locally grown potatoes” (Mikael Christensen, Kopp & Ko restaurant), and “Fur beer” (Jakob Tømmerby, Strandingskroen Inn), although the latter stems from an island outside the administrative region of North Jutland. This private sector pragmatism may in other words occasionally clash with more geographically rigid public sector initiatives based on existing administrative borders. At the same time it is, however, noticeable that despite their different relation to tourism and food, none of the interviewees seem to imply a difference in status between the two areas of activity. Exploitation of potential inter-sectoral synergies will in other words take place on a ‘level playing field’ between partners that are seen as being of equal importance. Instead, an oft-repeated challenge is the limited extent to which quality is perceived to be appreciated in Danish food culture:

Danes are hopeless with food and quality. We are a nation of bargain hunters, it is about quantity rather than quality (Mikael Christensen, Kopp & Ko restaurant).

This suggests that despite geographical proximity, parity in status, and flexible notions about what counts as local produce, at least quality-oriented food tourism could be difficult to bring about because of the weakness of domestic demand on the back of which touristic offers can be developed.

5.2. Perceptions of Challenges and Opportunities in Local Food Tourism

Among the key actors interviewed, two perspectives on local food tourism predominate. On the one hand all public and many private actors think that the co-existence of local quality food and sizeable numbers of tourists is something that could be exploited to a much larger extent, to the benefit both of the tourism sector that would get added attractiveness and food producers/purveyors that would gain additional customers. On the other hand some private actors take the view that local quality food is of no relevance for their business or customers, as illustrated by this quote from a restaurant owner:

We don't have any local dishes on our menu; to be honest I don't know how many of our guests would actually be interested in that. Not many of our guests ask for local dishes. However, we do have a Blokhus Steak on our menu and we sell plenty of them because they [our guests] think "well, it's called Blokhus" - and it's just meat like the rest (Christian Hem, Nordstjernen restaurant).

In the absence of perceived demand, there is no problem to address, and the business of catering for guests, including tourist, on the basis of maintaining a sensible balance between food, service, and price can go on as usual, albeit seasoned with a limited attempt to associate a particular standard product with the place in which it is being served. Similar perceptions are undoubtedly wide-spread among caterers who target a price-oriented mass market with standardised food (pizzas, burgers, etc.), and the implication of this is an ambiguous one. The immediate effect is clearly to limit the possibilities of bringing local food to international tourists because these eateries are deeply entrenched in national distribution chains where geographical provenance is irrelevant, but at the same time it also makes those restaurants stand out that actually engage themselves in local quality food and lend them an air of attractive exclusivity which individual visitors can become part of simply by booking a table, even it is just for one night as a complement to eating fast food or self-catering in the holiday home.

Among the public and private actors who think that tourism and local quality food would benefit from being much more closely associated, different views can be found with regard to the origins of the problem and what could be done in order to address it. With small firms making up the vast majority of firms both in tourism and among local quality food producers/purveyors also in North Jutland, it is hardly surprising that many interviewees stress the importance of increased orchestration of activities, because as one restaurant owner states:

We underestimate the potential of co-operation. I think it's a question of mentality; they [business actors] mind their own business and think of others as competitors (Inger Herdis Slott, Pandrup Inn).

The vision of what increased coordination might mean in practice takes a variety of forms. Many think in terms of more joint marketing efforts along the lines of e.g. *Smag for Jammerbugten* or *Smagen af Nordjylland*. Others, especially food producers, argue that other aspects of the organisational infrastructure should also be strengthened, for instance through public support for participation of food producers "at the world's most important trade fairs" (Jimmy Lunde Havgård, Rævhede game products) or, even more radical, the establishment of a public or cooperative wholesaler of food products from North Jutland:

Problems connected with the logistics of transportation increases product prices for small producers. Since we are so many local producers today up here in Northern Jutland, I've told Smagen the last few years 'why don't you buy a warehouse, buy our products and store them there'. This way you could cut extra transportation fees by making a pallet with my products, Jimmy's, Bondegårds Hyben's products, etc., to

send to customers in Copenhagen or elsewhere in the country (Henrik Lindhart, Aabybro Dairy).

Increased coordination and collective facilities are in other words seen as important means to increase exports of quality food products from North Jutland, functioning through the creation of public initiatives that support their visibility in and availability on the market, especially outside the region.

In order to bring more local food to international tourists visiting the region, adjustment of business strategies and practices among private actors are, however, also perceived to be necessary, because perceptions of price levels and reliability of supply varies between producers and buyers of local food products.

Unsurprisingly, some local producers think that the problem of high prices is created by the profit levels sought by food retailers, either resulting in very expensive consumer prices (personal interview, Søren Peter Eriksen, Neisig Økologi organic producers) or a lack of willingness to pay for local quality products:

We have contacted some of the big distributors, but we must say that we don't really fit in, as they want to push the price far down and we cannot get along with that (Susanne Thomsen, Æblegården Baksminde fruit growers).

In contrast to this, many of the restaurateurs interviewed perceive a trade-off between different qualities of the products and suppliers they use, as illustrated by the following quotes:

We'd like to use more local products, but it's not convenient; it's because of price and delivery. It's much easier to go on the Internet and buy them online. However, although it's not always the best solution, we still buy some local products as chocolate and flour from Aurion in Hjørring, because it matters to our customers (Maxim Vitaljevich, Saltum Inn).

"I use local suppliers, ... However, it is important to understand that you don't have to compromise with quality, when using local suppliers (Mikael Christensen, Kopp & Ko restaurant).

We don't have anything against using local suppliers. We are actually trying to find out whether we should cooperate with the local bakery here in town. However, it is not because we have to buy local, but rather because we can get something new and creative; something that you cannot get from the large wholesalers (René Toftelund Madsen, Det Skæve Køkken restaurant).

In short, from the perspective of local restaurateurs, local origin is just one of several 'non-industrial' qualities that goes into the decision about where to source ingredients and other catering supplies, and thus although the potential for synergies between international tourism and local food is recognised, this particular issue will not automatically take priority over other concerns.

5.3. Perceptions of Actors and Agency

Taking a closer look at how various groups of actors perceive each other in relation to the promotion of food tourism in North Jutland completes and in many ways sums up the analysis, because change is likely to be driven by actors and their agency rather than emerge mysteriously out of the blue. Table 2 attempts to sum up the mutual perceptions of actors, and the findings are further elaborated on below

<i>Actor group</i>	<i>As perceived by</i>	<i>Key assumptions</i>
Private firms in the tourism and food trade	Other private firms	Inter-firm wrangling about prices and terms of delivery Fear of free-riding behavior Small firms lack resources needed to take major initiatives
	Policy-making bodies	Small firms lack resources needed to take major initiatives
Policy-making bodies	Private firms	Current initiatives should be supplemented by new ones
	Other policy-making bodies	Readiness to engage in cross-sectoral collaboration
Tourists	Policy-making bodies	Potential demand by esp. 'best ager' visitors
	Private firms	Uncertainty of demand, locality only one among many qualities that make businesses competitive

In terms of actually delivering local quality food experiences to international tourists, cross-sector collaboration between private firms is essential, and while some local actors in both food and tourism subscribe to the idea that food tourism could be expanded in North Jutland, even they have concerns about conditions of trade (price, reliable delivery), and they suspect other actors of free-riding e.g. in relation to networking, as illustrated by the following quote:

One of the disadvantages of co-operation is that not all the parties involved might be equally involved or might contribute as much (Morten Pedersen, Rasmus Klump pancake restaurant).

At the same time private actors, especially those who see food tourists as having a commercial potential, also stress that the smallness of most private firms in the two sectors makes coordination a key issue, and they generally point towards the public sector to take the lead. Policy-making bodies are very positive with regards to cross-sector collaboration, and they share the self-perception of private actors for the need of the public sector to take the lead in coordinating activities – but the crucial question remains what form this coordination should take. This is generally less clear from the interviews undertaken, but most ideas points towards various forms of intensified promotion of local food in relation to international tourists – apparently closer collaboration between producers and purveyors of food experiences through e.g. network

arrangements is not high on the agenda, presumably because the current (low) level of formalised inter-firm networking is deemed to be sufficient.

Taken together this pattern of mutual perceptions would seem to place the initiative primarily with public policy-makers, except of course from the perspective of those who think that local food is of little relevance to their activities, either because their own business is integrated into national network oriented towards mass-production of standardized food experiences, or because they perceive holiday home visitors as a relatively uninteresting market because of their oft-repeated preference for self-catering. Notwithstanding this, uncertainty about the importance of the geographical provenance of food experiences for potential customers – and hence the business strategies of private actors – is clearly widespread. In a sense this strengthens the case for public initiatives, but perhaps it also suggests that the profile of policy measures will have to be reconsidered when, after years of policy attention and *Taste-of-....* type initiatives, private sector providers of food experiences still have not been convinced that tourists constitute a growth opportunity for them.

6. Local Food to International Tourist in North Jutland: Challenges and Opportunities

In theory, the potential for increasing the extent to which international tourists encounter and, hopefully, enjoy local food experiences in North Jutland should be considerable: extensive food production takes place both in the rural hinterland of the coastal destinations and through fishery in the surrounding seas. In practice, however, increasing the synergies between two of the main areas of economic activity within the region would seem to be rather more difficult to engineer:

- significant parts of the local food industry is primarily integrated into national supplier networks that allows for limited local flexibility
- public actors have chosen to focus primarily on promotion of quality/up-market food experiences, something that chimes well with attempts to attract well-off tourists also outside the main season, but therefore also tends to overlook the potential for breaking in to the mass-market of self-catering visitors populating holiday homes in the main season
- some degree of distrust exists among private actors about the motives and behavior of potential collaborators and, indeed, the size of the market for food tourism in North Jutland

While some progress has undoubtedly been made through the various policy initiatives already taken – and bottom-up collaborative initiatives should by no means be discounted (Henriksen 2012) – perhaps time has come to reconsider the current strategies in terms of aims and means. Four things in particular would seem to be relevant to focus on in such a process:

- increasing the production and dissemination of *knowledge about demand trends* regarding food experiences among current and potential tourists in North Jutland, building on, among other things, work undertaken as part of the *Future Holiday Homes* project (Therkelsen, Larsen et al. 2012)
- widening the *target group* for food experience promotion to focus more strongly on the main mass market of tourists staying in self-catering holiday homes, something which is likely to require the building of new networks and partnerships with local producers and retailers
- making *inter-sectoral network-initiatives* more user-driven in terms of aims and methods than has hitherto been the case, and, indeed, more stable over time and less ad-hoc'ish than current efforts in relation to the North Jutland food sector
- combine *promotional and development-oriented* measures so that potential participants can see not just (uncertain) long-term perspectives but also the likelihood of financial benefits from a short-term perspective

Finally, a rethinking of food-tourism strategies might well benefit from ongoing research into the experience of other destinations with similar visions – something there is little scarcity of across Europe from Ireland to Slovakia and from Lofoten in the north to Paros in the south – and here

public knowledge institutions will, hopefully, be willing and able to contribute to what could be a really exciting, but also genuinely challenging, endeavor.

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