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## Being or Becoming In The Know

*A case study of knowledge processes at a Danish tourism destination*

Therkelsen, Anette

*Publication date:*  
2010

*Document Version*  
Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

### *Citation for published version (APA):*

Therkelsen, A. (2010). *Being or Becoming In The Know: A case study of knowledge processes at a Danish tourism destination*. Institut for Historie, Internationale Studier og Samfundsforhold, Aalborg Universitet.

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**Being or Becoming  
In The Know**  
A case study of knowledge  
processes at a Danish tourism  
destination

**Anette Therkelsen**

**TRU PROGRESS**

**WORKING PAPER NO. 7**

**ISSN: 1902-7419**

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**Being or Becoming In The Know – A case study of knowledge processes at a Danish tourism destination**

TRU – Tourism Research Unit

Aalborg University

Denmark

TRU Progress

Working paper no. 7

ISSN: 1902-7419

*Published by*

TRU & Department of History, International and Social Studies  
Aalborg University

*Distribution*

Download as PDF on

<http://www.tru.ihis.aau.dk/publications/tru-progress>

*Editor*

Szilvia Gyimóthy

*Lay-out and word processing*

Cirkeline Kappel

**TRU**

Tourism Research Unit

Aalborg University

Fibigerstraede 2

DK-9220 Aalborg East

**TRU**

Tourism Research Unit

Campus Copenhagen

Lautrupvang 2b

DK-2750 Ballerup

Phone: +45 9940 2354

E-mail: [gyimothy@ihis.aau.dk](mailto:gyimothy@ihis.aau.dk)

Homepage: <http://www.tru.ihis.aau.dk/>

# **Being or Becoming In The Know**

## **A case study of knowledge processes at a Danish tourism destination**

Anette Therkelsen

### **Introduction**

This paper is concerned with a nationally initiated, regionally supported and locally implemented project on all-year tourism, which came about as a consequence of a general stagnation in Danish coastal tourism. The project involved funding to selected destinations as well as a series of seminars held by the national and regional tourism organisations in Denmark. This case study discusses the efforts involved in implementing an all-year tourism project at Destination Mariagerfjord, in North Jutland, Denmark in 2008, with a particular focus on the knowledge flows that characterised it and the motivations and relationships of the actors involved.

The case study is part of the larger EU 6<sup>th</sup> Framework project EUROADITE ([www.eurodite.bham.ac.uk](http://www.eurodite.bham.ac.uk)) which seeks to determine the role of knowledge in innovation and regional development across a number of sectors, including tourism. It is based on the assumption that both micro- and macro-level development is affected by formal and informal knowledge being generated, exchanged and used within and between organisations. The focus of this study is on knowledge processes on the macro-level at a selected tourism destination.

Based on six interviews, strategy papers, minutes and media coverage conducted and collected in November 2008, the purpose of the case study is to identify what types of knowledge were used, how these were acquired and how different interests, motivations and relationships between the actors involved influenced the knowledge event during three particular phases. The interviewees represent a variety of mainly public organisations, such as the regional tourism organisation, VisitNordjylland, the local trade council representing private tourism businesses, the political actor responsible for tourism in the municipality (the chairman of culture and leisure), the newly appointed tourism director for Destination Mariagerfjord, head of one of the local tourism association (Hobro), and the director of one of the main attractions (a museum), who doubles as head of the board of the local tourism association in Hobro. In addition, the opinions of the tourism association and tourism trade in the eastern part of the municipality (Øster Hurup) were extracted from media coverage as they have repeatedly aired their points of view in the local press. It is, furthermore, important to mention that what is studied here is the first part of a more comprehensive project of implementing all-year tourism at Destination Mariagerfjord.

## Theoretical tools in short

Based on the theoretical frameworks developed within the EURODITE project (e.g. Cook 2005; Crevoisier et al., 2007), this case study is concerned with a specific knowledge event, which helps to delimit the potentially diffuse discussion of when and how knowledge comes about and is put to use. To reveal its dynamics, a knowledge event can be split up into different phases, such as start, middle and end, which will help identify changing interests and attitudes among stakeholders and with that different approaches towards the generation, exchange and use of knowledge. Moreover, knowledge events may be perceived by stakeholders to generate different types of development; in the present case some stakeholders are engaged in the all-year project to ensure product and marketing development, whereas others see organisational development as the ideal outcome of the project. Such diverging interests are likely to clash when stakeholders are to work together, particularly if the knowledge event is seen as a significant contributor to business development by the individual stakeholder. Dealing with a project on all-year tourism, which potentially can increase the earnings of the stakeholders involved and thereby ensure a more economically sustainable business, the likelihood of engagement of the stakeholders is high.

Different types of knowledge may be employed in the course of a knowledge event and these have implications for the development potential both at the organisational and destination level. Firstly, stakeholders may mainly be concerned with using knowledge already existing in the organisation rather than generating new types of knowledge. Even though use of existing knowledge does not mean that the organisation is barred from business development, generating new knowledge, for instance about market developments, product and service innovation and organisational processes, will more often than not make an organisation better equipped for future development. Secondly, knowledge existing within organisations may either be based on tacit knowledge (i.e. personal experiences and practices, gut feelings and die-hard habits) or more formalised or codified knowledge, for instance analytical reports and certified qualifications. Generation and exchange of knowledge across organisations necessitates codified knowledge as tacit knowledge is an individual construct or a construct of the given organisational culture inaccessible to outsiders. Tacit knowledge can, however, be made accessible to others through efforts to make it explicit, thereby turning it into codified knowledge. Thirdly, knowledge may be characterised in terms of its spatial dynamics in that it may be categorised as either local or distant. Local knowledge is generated, exchanged and used within a delimited space, in this case Destination Mariagerfjord, with basically no outside input, whereas distant knowledge is generated outside the given locale and flows into the destination via various types of distant knowledge providers (e.g. consultants, regional or national tourism organisations, or stakeholders from other local tourism

destinations). Fourth and finally, knowledge may be anchored or mobile: anchored in the sense that the knowledge used and/or generated stays within the spatial confines of the destination and mobile in the sense that the knowledge flows beyond the borders of the destination having a potential impact elsewhere.

These theoretical tools concerning different types of knowledge, knowledge flows and interests involved in knowledge events will be used in the subsequent analysis of the all-year tourism project at Destination Mariagerfjord. To understand the context in which these knowledge processes unfold, a description of the destination and the all-year tourism project is, however, necessary at the outset.

### **Background: Destination Mariagerfjord and the all-year tourism project**

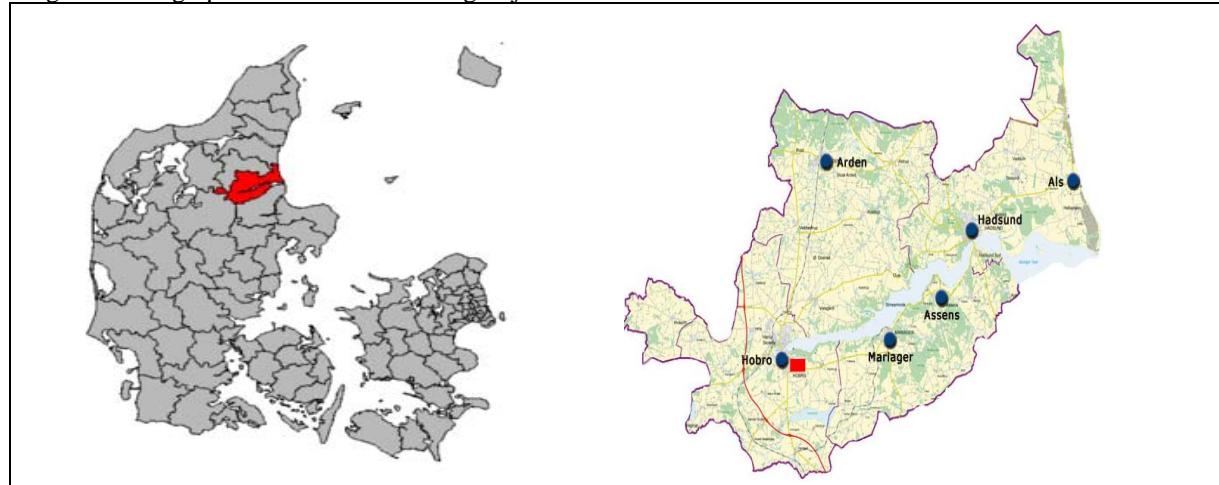
Destination Mariagerfjord is a relatively new construct, being the consequence of a structural reform of the municipalities in Denmark in 2007 which lead to the merger of four municipalities into one, Mariagerfjord. Regardless of the merger, it is still a relatively small municipality with 42.738 inhabitants, a trade structure based on agriculture and forestry, food manufacturing, energy and service, including tourism. Tourism is, ostensibly, one of the pillars on which the municipality was built<sup>1</sup> and hence political dedication to developing tourism would seem to exist. Presently, no formalised knowledge exists on the contribution and significance of tourism in the municipality, however, tourism clearly constitutes a larger part of the total income along the coastline (Øster Hurup) than in the inland parts of the destination<sup>2</sup>. This does not, however, result in any significant regional differences in the engagement in tourism, and more specifically in the implementation of all-year tourism among the stakeholders located in different parts of the municipality.

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<sup>1</sup> Interview w. Chairman for Culture & Leisure, MariagerFjord, 14.11.08.

<sup>2</sup> Interview w. Tourism Director, MariagerFjord, 17.11.08.

Figure 1: Geographical location of MariagerFjord



The tourism product of the destination mainly consists of the coast to the east, the fjord that runs from the east to the west, the forest to the north and some historical attractions and built environments in the three main towns (Hobro, Mariager and Hadsund). In line with the mainly nature-based product, accommodation is primarily focused on camping and holiday cottages<sup>3</sup>. The target group is presently broad, including young people, families with children and empty nesters<sup>4</sup>, but more specified target groups together with product coordination and development are planned to constitute focal points in the future work on all-year tourism in the area<sup>5</sup>.

The structural reform has also had consequences for the organisation of tourism in Mariagerfjord, which is not unique to this particular place, but, indeed, the case for many Danish tourism destinations. The four original tourism associations sponsored by each of the previous municipalities continue to exist but after the merger of the municipalities they have entered into cooperation under the auspices of a common Tourism Council which consists of two representatives from each of the four local tourism associations and a representative from the municipality. As will be evident below, the organisational set-up plays a crucial role in the knowledge event on all-year tourism. Shortly after the formation of the Tourism Council in the spring 2007, the opportunity of applying for national funds for developing all-year tourism was seized as a means of a more coordinated destination development<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Niras Konsulenterne, 2006 p.91.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Interview w. Tourism Director, MariagerFjord, 17.11.08

<sup>6</sup> Interview w. Chairman for Culture & Leisure, MariagerFjord, 14.11.08, interview w. Tourism Director, MariagerFjord, 17.11.08

As a consequence of a general stagnation in Danish coastal tourism, the development project “All-year tourism” was initiated by the national tourism organisation, VisitDenmark in 2006. Expanding the tourism season is not an isolated Danish aspiration but something which is also high on the international agenda for obvious reasons: a longer season will result in better exploitation of existing capacity in accommodation facilities, restaurants and attractions and with that a more economically sustainable business for the individual tourism companies and more attractive all-year job possibilities for well-educated staff<sup>7</sup>. On the basis of the application round, seven future all-year destinations were selected which subsequently received funding and educational offers for further development, and 12 learning destinations were identified which were offered educational seminars but no financial support. The regional tourism organisation, VisitNordjylland, followed up on the national initiative and created a learning effort, not just for the three nationally identified learning destinations in the region but for all tourism destinations in the region to ensure that all of Northern Jutland could move in the direction of all-year tourism through a coordinated effort<sup>8</sup>. Three concrete initiatives have been implemented to support the process: distribution of regional development funds to initiate the process locally; a learning programme consisting of local workshops and regional seminars; and a manual for how to develop all-year tourism, freely available online<sup>9</sup>. In addition, all-year tourism has been included in the new strategy plan for VisitNordjylland, which underlines the region’s dedication to this initiative<sup>10</sup>, and plans exist for establishing cooperation contracts with the individual destinations to support the process, also financially, in future.

Destination Mariagerfjord was one of the 12 destinations that were granted status as a learning destination by VisitDenmark after having applied for all-year destination status in 2007. This was, on the one hand, an acknowledgement of the potential present at the destination, but, on the other hand, also a criticism mainly of the lack of coordinated organisation of the tourism sector<sup>11</sup>. Subsequently, Mariagerfjord was granted economic means by VisitNordjylland for an 8-month learning programme which they attended in addition to a number of national seminars until medio 2008. The project has so far resulted in a plan for a tourism organisation for Destination Mariagerfjord and hiring a director for the organisation in October 2008. Beyond this point plans are that analyses of the market and product resources are to be conducted in spring 2009 and a strategy plan for tourism on Destination MariagerFjord is to be decided upon in

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<sup>7</sup> Hall 2000, Getz & Nilsson 2004.

<sup>8</sup> VisitNordjylland.dk, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Interview w. Director of VisitNordjylland, 13.11.08.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Interview w. Chairman for Culture & Leisure, MariagerFjord, 14.11.08, interview w. Tourism Director, MariagerFjord, 17.11.08.

autumn 2009, and in January 2010 the implementation of the strategy plan is to commence<sup>12</sup>. Towards the end of the learning programme (summer/autumn 2008) a controversy among the actors at the destinations started to appear which centred on the type of organisation envisaged for the area and the process that lead to this organisational plan, and consequently one of the local tourism organisations, Hobro, opted out of the cooperation. The disagreement seems, however, to be settled in November 2008 as the mayor joined the Tourism Council to ensure more openness in the process.

As it appear, the knowledge event of all-year tourism at Destination Mariagerfjord is a consequence firstly of a national knowledge dynamic on all-year tourism and secondly a supportive regional knowledge dynamic, in other words financial and knowledge resources being channelled through from the national and regional level to the local level. As mentioned above, seasonality is clearly not an isolated Danish problem and VisitDenmark seems also to have gained inspiration from global knowledge dynamics which appears from a case study of national and international all-year destinations commissioned by VisitDenmark<sup>13</sup>.

## Analysis

The analysis is divided up into three parts with particular emphasis on the sequence of events taking place during the knowledge event as this provides detailed insight into the types of knowledge flowing within the organisations and across the destination, revealing the development potential of these.

### *Different stakeholders - different types of development*

The project on all-year tourism is seen to represent different types of developments by the national tourism actor on the one hand, and the regional and local tourism actors on the other hand. The initiator of the all-year tourism project, VisitDenmark, defines product development and marketing as the two central elements of the strategy which also involves further development of certain target groups, particularly adult couples in Germany and the Netherlands<sup>14</sup>. Product development is envisaged in relation to primarily three theme-based experiences: gastronomy, cycling and hiking holidays and is to take place within the framework of a selected number of destinations that possess market and product potential as well as a professional organisation<sup>15</sup>. Maintenance of existing markets in the high season is seen as essential to future

<sup>12</sup> Interview w. Tourism Director, MariagerFjord, 17.11.08

<sup>13</sup> VisitDenmark 2006.

<sup>14</sup> VisitDenmark 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

marketing efforts, but in addition to this the shoulder season and later the low season has to be marketed to adult couples in particular when development at the selected all-year destinations is well in progress.

As described above, the regional actor, VisitNordjylland, has been supportive of the national all-year tourism initiative, both in terms of supporting the general idea of expanding the season through product development to new target groups and intensified marketing, and in terms of financially supporting the destinations in North Jutland that were not granted all-year destinations status by VisitDenmark. However, during the initial project period (summer 2007 to spring 2008), the focus of the learning programme initiated by VisitNordjylland narrowed down to organisational development and resulted in a manual for how to develop a destination management organisation. Organisational development was clearly seen as a necessary prerequisite for all-year tourism product and marketing development to take place and can to some extent be seen as a reaction to the feedback given on applications turned down by VisitDenmark, which had lack of a professional organisation as one of its prominent reasons for not allocating all-year destination status. On the other hand, it seems also to be a consequence of the structural changes that has taken place locally in the region since 2007 which have put cooperation and reorganisation high on the agenda within the tourism sector. So even though there are similarities in relation to what all-year tourism represents on the national and the regional level, there are also differences in terms of what type of development are given main priority: product development and marketing on the national level and organisational development on the regional level.

On the local level, Destination Mariagerfjord, the actors agree that till autumn 2008 the all-year tourism project has first and foremost been concerned with organisational issues, which seems to be a consequence of them attending mainly workshops and seminars initiated by VisitNordjylland as opposed to seminars held by VisitDenmark. All but two actors seem to agree that this has been the right priority, however, one of the four tourism associations<sup>16</sup> and one of the attractions<sup>17</sup> see concrete product development as that which the project ought to have focused on. The importance of this disagreement is documented in the subsequent discussions.

### *Significance to stakeholder businesses*

The tourists that are presently attracted to Destination Mariagerfjord almost exclusively arrive during the high season (June, July and August). Being able to expand the season beyond these months would be important to both individual

<sup>16</sup> Interview w. director of local tourism association in Hobro 14.11.08.

<sup>17</sup> Interview w. director of the Gas Museum, Hobro 17.11.08.

tourism businesses (accommodation facilities, restaurants and attractions) and the tourism offices in terms of economic sustainability, attracting and maintaining qualified labour and developing their businesses. Whereas most actors doubt that all-year tourism will become a general characteristic of the destination, though some attractions and facilities may be able to stay open all-year around, expanding the season into the shoulder seasons as well as during off-season holidays is seen as highly feasible. And if, indeed, tourism is one of the pillars that the municipality is build on, as suggested by the chairman of culture and leisure, then significant expansion of the season would be a necessity.

The focus on organisational development within the all-year project is not seen as equally significant by all the actors involved. As mentioned, one of the tourism associations and one of the attractions lament the turn the project has taken, but also the chairman of the local trade council calls for action in relation to product development. Though he acknowledges the importance of a common tourism organisation to create a better tourism offer and a more sustainable trade, he sees it as a structural means that should be settled, if need be by the intervention of the municipality, so the project can progress to the end goal of product development<sup>18</sup>. Likewise press releases, interviews and letters to the editors conducted by tourism actors in the coastal part of the destination (Øster Hurup) express similar points of view: the organisation is a necessary means but they are impatient to see concrete actions<sup>19</sup>.

### *Sequence of events*

Three phases have been identified in relation to the knowledge event of all-year tourism at Destination Mariagerfjord: A pre-phase, 2002-2006, during which a number of events occur which seem to have influenced the nature of cooperation in the area, and hence this phase will help illustrate whether knowledge flows and interactions processes have changed in connection with the knowledge event; An application phase, spring 2007, during which a bid for the national all-year tourism destination status was made and which necessitated intensive cooperation on a specific task – the first major task undertaken by the newly constituted Tourism Council; And an initial project phase, summer 2007-autumn 2008, which is the first part of a more comprehensive all-year tourism project extending into 2010 and possibly beyond.

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<sup>18</sup> Interview w. Director of local trade council, 14.11.08.

<sup>19</sup> Nordjyske (2008a) Nordjyske (2008b).

### Pre-phase (2002-2006)

Before looking into the actual knowledge processes characterising the pre-phase, it is instructive to consider a couple of events that seems to have influenced the relationship between the actors at the destination. In the late 1990ies, a destination cooperation among neighbouring municipalities was established with a focus on common marketing activities. The collaboration involved three of the four municipalities of the present Mariagerfjord municipality (Hobro, Arden, Hadsund) together with some additional municipalities. In 2002 Hobro, however, withdrew from the cooperation and it was eventually terminated to the dismay of the tourism trade particularly in the eastern part of the area (Hadsund and Øster Hurup). A subsequent attempt at revitalising this cooperation at a smaller scale made by the private tourism trade in Øster Hurup did not last for long either due to differences of interests among the actors involved. In short, the area has a recent history of failed co-operations and inter-organisational conflict which arguably has influenced the generation of knowledge<sup>20</sup>.

In the pre-phase, knowledge processes seem to have taken place mainly within the individual companies, tourism offices and the local private-public tourism associations. Occasional visitor surveys conducted at attractions and accommodation facilities as well as tourism offices seem to be the favoured way of generating codified knowledge. To a limited extent, codified knowledge on markets generated by the national and regional tourism organisations has been used, though this knowledge is criticised for having limited applicability locally<sup>21</sup>. An influx of strategic knowledge of regional tourism development is ensured by board membership of the regional tourism organisation, although the degree to which this knowledge is exchanged and used locally in this phase is not clear from the case study.

Tacit knowledge gained through joined working efforts at the individual tourism offices and in the individual tourism organisations seems to be the main type of knowledge used in this phase and it is mainly based on personal experiences with product development, marketing and daily administrative tasks. Generation, exchange and use of knowledge across organisational divides and prior municipality borders seem to be limited to ad hoc cooperation mainly on common marketing initiatives in this phase, as more committed types of cooperation extents further back in time.

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<sup>20</sup> Interview w. Tourism Director, MariagerFjord, 17.11.08.

<sup>21</sup> Interview w. Tourism Director, MariagerFjord, 17.11.08, interview w. director of local tourism association in Hobro 14.11.08.

As it appears, mainly tacit knowledge exchanged and used within the individual tourism offices, individual companies and private-public tourism associations is at stake at this point of time, and so the spatial dynamics of knowledge centres around proximity in the period preceding the all-year tourism initiative, and distant knowledge interaction is undertaken at a limited ad hoc basis. In other words, knowledge is mainly locally anchored within the individual tourism offices and private companies and to some extent within the private-public tourism associations of each of the four municipalities and so mobility of knowledge beyond municipality borders is at a minimum. With the formation of the common Tourism Council for Destination Mariagerfjord, the foundation is laid for a higher degree of exchange of knowledge among the tourism actors of the destination, which becomes more significant in the project application phase.

### Application phase (spring 2007)

Applying for funds for developing all-year tourism at Destination Mariagerfjord became the first major task of the Tourism Council and hence in many way a test of the viability of the newly formed cooperation. Selected members of the Tourism Council representing both the tourism associations, the attractions and the municipality together with the director of the local trade council and a private local investor constituted the application task force and external expertise in the form of a local consultancy firm was hired to orchestrate the process<sup>22</sup>. Hence both public and private interests were represented and the addition of the trade council director and the investor appear to be a way of safeguarding private interests, in particular. There seems to be agreement among the stakeholders that applying for all-year destination status, and subsequent project funding, was a wise strategy - a way of moving forward towards a common goal and for some a way of leaving behind old disagreements.

Tacit knowledge on products and markets, organisation and level of competence formed the backbone of the knowledge resources used in the application process as no formalised analyses existed of these areas. In other words, the personal experiences, gut feelings and visions for the future of the members of the task force played a central role. The only piece of codified knowledge used in this phase was a national benchmarking analysis including a short section on Destination Mariagerfjord<sup>23</sup> and some general statistics on markets, employment and earnings from the national tourism organisation. The consultancy firm provided knowledge of project management in relation to the application process and hence contributed with knowledge that was not present among the tourism actors. In addition, being external to the tourism sector, the consultancy firm had not been part of previous disagreements, which may have further

<sup>22</sup> MariagerFjord Turistråd & MariagerFjord Kommune (2007).

<sup>23</sup> Niras Konsulenterne, 2006.

stabilised the process. Little new knowledge seems to have been generated by the tourism actors in this phase - apart from new ideas that emerge from discussing and combining already existing knowledge in new ways, and making use of the knowledge of an external knowledge provider, the consultancy firm, on project management and application technicalities.

In terms of spatial dynamics, the application phase is mainly characterised by local knowledge interaction, although the task force, of course, had to relate to the criteria of the application that were determined by a distant knowledge provider (the national tourism organisation). Being locally based and conducting many of their consultancy tasks locally, the consultancy firm also contributed to the local knowledge interaction, though with their experience also from projects outside the local community, elements of distant knowledge interaction may have entered the process through this source.

In terms of mobility and anchorage, knowledge is anchored within the newly established tourism destination of Mariagerfjord in the application phase. It is a short-term phase aimed at bettering the competitive standard of the destination and during this the destination is potentially in competition with all destinations in the region and the country for the same project funding. Though the phase builds on already existing knowledge within the destination, a certain degree of transformation of that knowledge is likely to have occurred due to an intense working process with the application among central stakeholders of the destination.

#### Initial project phase (summer 2007 – autumn 2008)

The third phase of the knowledge event starts in the summer 2007 with Mariagerfjord being granted status of national learning destination and embarking upon a learning programme provided by the regional tourism actor, VisitNordjylland. Lack of professional organisation had been one of the main reasons given by the national tourism organisation for not allocating all-year destination status to Mariagerfjord, and hence in cooperation with the regional tourism organisation they decided to focus on organisational knowledge. Two external consultants were hired by VisitNordjylland to undertake the workshops constituting the learning programme, which the four local tourism associations were to participate in and subsequently report back on to their members. The consultants provided codified knowledge on how to develop a destination management organisation in the form of various types of teaching material, but the workshop form also meant that efforts were put into bringing forward the tacit knowledge of the individual tourism association on their everyday work processes resulting in both tacit and codified knowledge being shared through this learning process. A manual for how to develop a destination management

organisation, termed ID360 Destination Management Value System<sup>24</sup>, was a result of the workshops carried out at Destination Mariagerfjord as well as at other destinations in the region, and hence new knowledge was generated during this phase. Moreover, VisitNordjylland arranged a few seminars with focus on knowledge sharing between the learning destinations and the one nationally appointed all-year tourism destination in the region. This constituted the forum of knowledge sharing across destinations as no bilateral links between local destinations seem to have been formed during the period.

In addition to this, codified knowledge was obtained through seminars provided by the national tourism organisation but these are not seen by the local tourism actors as particularly helpful as opposed to the regional initiatives which were generally evaluated positively. Two actors, the director of the local tourism association and the museum director in Hobro are, however, critical towards the sole focus on organisation building and would have liked the learning programme to have taken its point of departure in the purpose of the cooperation, “what it is we are going to do together”<sup>25</sup>, letting the business area determine the organisational design. They also disagree with spending money on external consultants; rather money should have been spent on building up knowledge within the existing associations. It might be that fear of giving up sovereignty to the common tourism organisation is the underlying motive for not applauding the organisational focus of the learning programme, at least it is suggested by several of the respondents that inter-organisational jealousy is a major stumbling block in tourism cooperation in general and also in this particular case.

The local consultancy firm involved in the application phase was also hired in this phase to attend the regional learning programme and register the reactions of the local tourism associations. They were also asked to scrutinise practical organisational matters at each tourism office (e.g. technical equipment, employment contracts, leasing agreements, rent)<sup>26</sup>. The latter turned fragmented knowledge into a more holistic type of codified knowledge useful in the formation of a common tourism organisation. It is also in view of these concrete steps towards organisational integration that the above fear of losing sovereignty should be understood, as a more loosely-knit network seems to be the type of cooperation favoured by the two local actors in Hobro.

The knowledge generated and collected during the workshops and the registration of practical organisational matters was presented and further developed at a 24-hour “camp” in spring 2008. The “camp” was aimed at the

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<sup>24</sup> Visitnordjylland (2007).

<sup>25</sup> Interview w. director of the Gas Museum, Hobro 17.11.08.

<sup>26</sup> Interview w. Tourism Director, MariagerFjord, 17.11.08

tourism associations, tourism offices and the private tourism trade and it was orchestrated by the local consultancy firm. Through group work, mixing actors from different organisations, and a subsequent plenum, a plan for the future organisation of Destination Mariagerfjord was made and presented to the press at the closing of the camp. Hence another loop in the knowledge sharing process was taken to ensure broad inclusion and ownership among public as well as private actors. The local stakeholders generally agree on the value of this process as well as the end result of the camp, however, again the Hobro tourism association and the director of the local museum are critical as they see it as a closed process where the end result had been identified in advance<sup>27</sup>. This controversy escalates during the summer 2008 and culminates with the Hobro tourism association opting out of the cooperation with reference to disagreement on the centralised organisational set-up which ostensibly erodes the economic foundation of the individual tourism offices. The role played by the local consultancy firm in the process, including the money spent on external instead of internal expertise, seems also to have dismayed the Hobro tourism association. The strife is apparently resolved in November 2008, and the tourism association re-enters the tourism cooperation in Mariagerfjord, officially because the mayor of MariagerFjord is now appointed as member of the Tourism Council to ensure more openness in the working and decision-making processes<sup>28</sup>.

Given the significant role played by two sets of consultants, distant knowledge interaction characterises this initial project phase to a higher extent than the previous phases. Also the seminars held by VisitNordjylland and VisitDenmark and the possibility provided for knowledge exchange across destinations at these occasions meant that knowledge from other places has flown into Destination Mariagerfjord. The workshop nature of the regional learning programme has also resulted in local knowledge interaction between the four tourism associations as well as their reporting back to their individual boards and members, just as the 24-hour camp has contributed to a broader knowledge sharing. Knowledge also seems to be more mobile beyond the borders of the destination during this phase as knowledge is exchanged with other destinations in the regions during common regional seminars. Also the fact that Destination Mariagerfjord has contributed to the development of the destination management manual for the region during the workshop sessions means that local knowledge, though transformed through the efforts of the external consultants, potentially will be used outside the destination.

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<sup>27</sup> Interview w. director of local tourism organisation in Hobro 14.11.08, interview w. director of the Gas Museum, Hobro 17.11.08.

<sup>28</sup> Randers Amtsavis (2008).

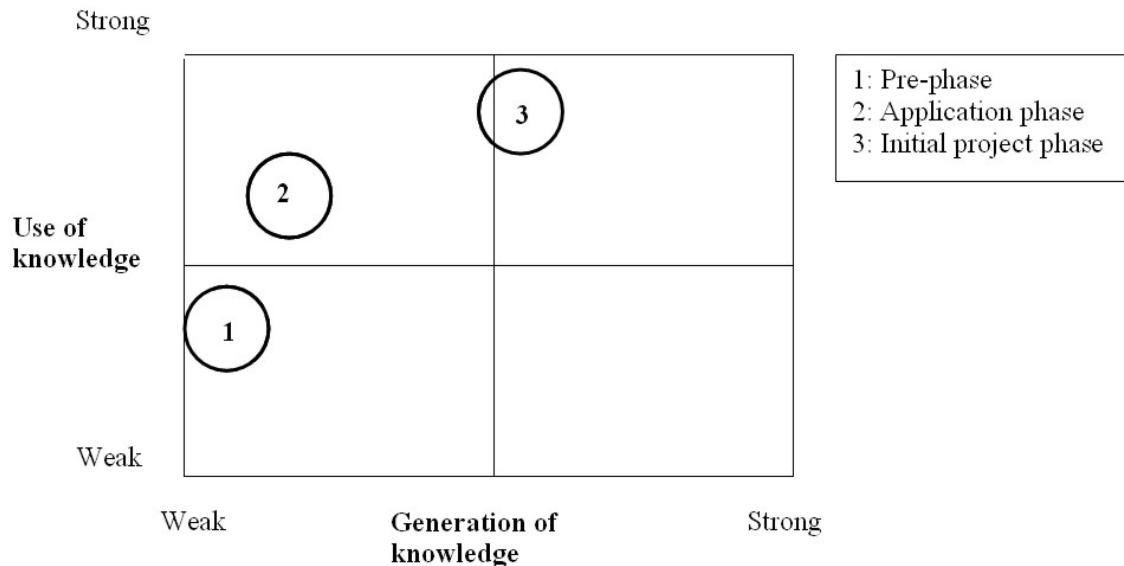
## **Summary**

The knowledge event, all-year tourism, at Destination Mariagerfjord in North Jutland, Denmark has had its main focus on developing organisational knowledge with a view to establishing a destination management organization. This is seen as a prerequisite for future steps towards product and marketing development by central local stakeholders. This is fully in line with the regional tourism organization's understanding of and contribution to the knowledge event but differs to some extent from what the initiator of the project, the national tourism organization, sees as the aim of the all-year tourism project – as they stress product and marketing developments. As the knowledge event at Destination Mariagerfjord is financed by the regional tourism organization, no conflict seems to have materialized between the local and the national stakeholders.

Extending the tourism season into the shoulder seasons and ideally into an all-year business activity is viewed as central by the local stakeholders as this is the prerequisite for an economically sustainable tourism trade. Some local disagreement, however, exists in relation to the focus on organizational development that has characterized the initial project phase and a preference is voiced for an all-year project focused on product and marketing development.

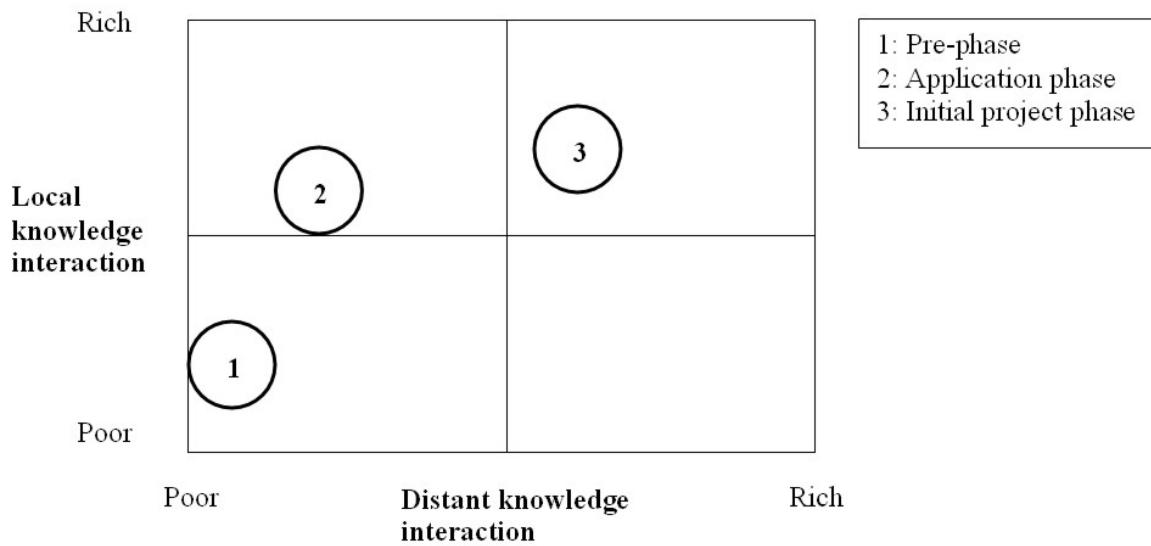
Tacit knowledge holds a central position in the knowledge event, particularly in the first two phases of the event, whereas the third phase is characterized by codified knowledge being transferred and generated through local workshops and regionally and nationally held seminars. This difference between tacit and codified knowledge across the different phases of the knowledge event is parallel to the use and generation of knowledge in the different phases, in that the phases with an emphasis on tacit knowledge involves use but basically no generation of knowledge, whereas the phase with the highest level of codified knowledge, the initial project phase, is characterized by a fairly high degree of generation of knowledge. Furthermore, the use and generation of knowledge clearly intensifies throughout the knowledge event (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Use and generation of knowledge in the all-year tourism project



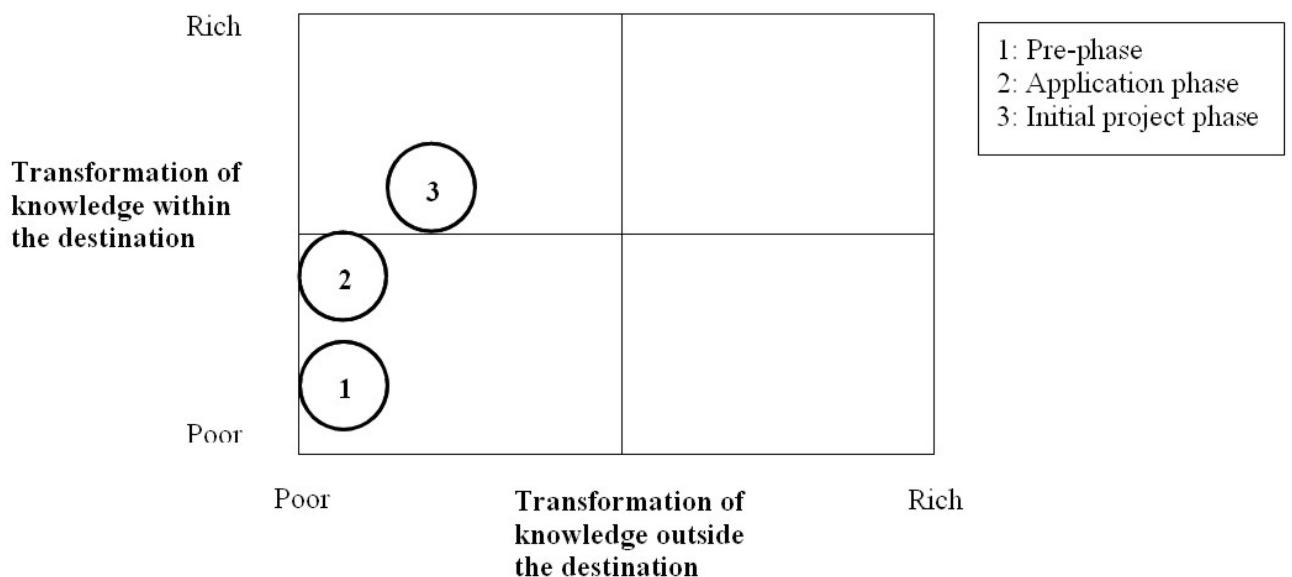
Knowledge interaction has clearly intensified during the phases of the knowledge event, and in terms of spatial dynamics a development has taken place from relying heavily on very locally situated knowledge to incorporating significantly more knowledge from outside the destination through workshops with external consultants and various external seminars (Figure 3). Hence knowledge from external sources has poured into the destination in order to accomplish the task of firstly creating a destination management organisation and secondly achieving a more viable (i.e. seasonally extended) tourism trade.

Figure 3: Local and distant knowledge interaction in the all-year tourism project



Finally, knowledge is solely anchored within the local destination in the first two phases of the knowledge event. In the first phase even mostly within the individual companies and tourism offices as cooperation seems to be fairly low. In the second phase knowledge is anchored within the borders of the newly formed tourism destination as a competitive situation with other destinations for national funding exists. In the third phase, knowledge is more mobile penetrating the borders of the destination due to participation in and contribution to regional seminars as well as to a manual for regional destination management (Figure 4). Still the main part of the knowledge generated is anchored and used locally.

Figure 4: Mobility and anchoring of knowledge in the all-year tourism project



All in all the development across the three phases of the knowledge event suggests that in terms of knowledge resources Destination Mariagerfjord is better equipped for developing their destination at the end of the knowledge event than at the outset. Turning existing, tacit knowledge into codified knowledge and supplementing it with formalized analyses, and generating new knowledge through increased interactions among destination stakeholders and beyond, seem to constitute important elements for future development and innovation at this newly established destination.

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