Governance innovation cases in coastal tourism
Building heritage regulations in support of tourism development

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Heritage is a key resource for rural and coastal tourism. Analyses in the Danish coastal regions demonstrate that tourists appreciate the authentic small towns, the atmosphere of the narrow streets and cozy town squares, and the picturesque harbors. The surroundings frame shopping, strolling, dining, and sightseeing opportunities. However, the surveys also conclude that, according to the tourists, Danish coastal towns and other built environments miss some of the aesthetic and historical qualities that they could have had with more attention and care. The tourists remark on the frequent neglect of the buildings; furthermore, the lack of facilities that could attract the tourists decreases their inclination to prolong their stay.

These observations of tourists are supported by the negative impact of the outmigration from Danish rural and coastal areas. There are many empty buildings, and it is difficult to raise funds for the necessary renovations. Furthermore, there is a lack of knowledge about building heritage and limited entrepreneurial capacity to put old buildings into new use.

Ballum is a village located on the fringe of the Wadden Sea on the Danish West Coast, in the Wadden Sea National Park and the vicinity of the UNESCO World Heritage site. The village consists of three small agglomerations of houses and farm buildings. The majority of the houses were built...
between 1800 and 1930. The oldest farm buildings are of a type commonly known in the Danish and German Wadden region, and are made of red brick with thatched roofs. Over the past decades, the development in Ballum has been extremely modest, and the population has declined. The lack of expansion has benefited the place in the sense that most of the buildings remain and have maintained their historic features. However, the negative impacts have been hurdles for necessary repairs and historically sensitive improvements.

In 2009, Tønder Municipality, convinced of the significant heritage values in the village, introduced a comprehensive planning process. Prior to the establishment of this process, the local museums and building experts documented the heritage values of the village and contributed to the historical and cultural knowledge of importance for a correct restoration. They were supported by many locals who found historical photographs and added narratives from their ancestors’ time. A pride emerged around the building culture in the area, and this pride increased as a consequence of the systematic examinations and external attention.

“Lokalplan” as a means of regulation

The planning format, a “lokalplan,” is a well-known and much used instrument in Danish planning regulation. The plan was negotiated through a number of meetings with locals in order to ensure their commitment for the content of the plan. A preservation lokalplan contains several sections. A mapping of the building types, features, and histories is a foundation for the planning, and so is included in the plan and guidelines.

The plan does not demand that owners change their buildings immediately. However, at the time of any changes, re-buildings, or renovations, the owners are obliged to comply with the guidelines in the plan. Overall, the compulsory measures and orders include the following:

- The architecture of the façades must be maintained and restored with the building materials and elements that belong to the historical traditions and the type of that particular building. No widening of the windows or doors is allowed. If former stables and barns are to be used for other purposes than farming, larger windows can be added, but they must comply with the forms and details historically found in the building and the village.

- All walls should consist of red bricks of the type originally used in the local area, and the techniques and materials used to form the joints are specified according to historical traditions.

- Painting and whitewashing types and colors are made precise as well, adapting also to the traditional styles and the homogeneity of the village.

- Roofs are to be thatched, unless in zones with risk of fire, where specific other roof covers can be allowed following application to the municipality.

- All details of the doors and windows are outlined in order to comply with the traditions in the area.
The lokalplan provides further details and advice on each of these points, and the plan provides illustrative pictures and architectural designs to be used by the craftspeople who produce new building elements and renovate the old.

Photos from the Lokalplan’s advisory section about the design of historic building details

The lokalplan also addresses the terrain and landscapes around the buildings. The traditional vegetation species to be used in gardens are mentioned. As fencing and paving noticeably determine the overall image of the Wadden Sea village, the plan prescribes the materials to be used for and the designs and locations of fencing, hedges, pavements, etc. The outdoor orders also include rules for signboards and flags.

A lokalplan is legally binding for property owners, and the municipality keenly oversees all prospective changes initiated by the owners. If regulations are rigid, as they are in Ballum, it may create opposition toward the preservation endeavor, particularly because not all owners are likely to have appreciated the initiative in the first place, and active farmers least of all. However, an external driver came along in the form of the Maersk Foundation. The foundation recognized the preservation values of the village and promised support for renovations, provided that the lokalplan included fairly restrictive preservation clauses. The Maersk Foundation’s commitment and the lokalplan have been radical game changers in the village. First of all, building renovations could take place at a far more rapid pace and with more competent historical expertise on board than before. Second, the involvement of a major foundation made Ballum and its heritage widely known, as the media started to become interested in the project.

The prices of houses sold in Ballum are now higher than in other villages in the vicinity. This is a supplementary incentive for the property owners to comply with the planning.

The future of tourism
Ballum is not a big place, and touristic resources are very scarce. One of the farming families decided to move along the tourism track. They own one of the best preserved and biggest farm houses, which is called Klægager. Over the years, they have renovated the building with great care, and the renovations works have become a touristic attraction in their own respect. The owners discovered that visitors like to know about historical details, and they love to watch the craftspeople at work. Klægager provides space for conferences and parties, and it provides a limited number of rooms for bed and breakfast. Very much consistent with strategy of the village, the interior of the original farmhouse is not much altered, and visitors feel like they are paying a visit to a dear old aunt in the countryside.

Among the inhabitants the pride of the total area has increased, and there is a genuine acknowledgment of the importance of taking care of the building heritage. More of the locals are now offering accommodation services and guided tours in the Wadden Sea area. Markets are organized every year, and kayak enthusiasts have worked intensively with a kayak mekka concept that is yet to be implemented.

The Wadden Sea National Park was one of Denmark’s first national parks. The main attractions are its unique landscape, the geological processes, the flora, and the bird migrations. Ballum is located exactly where, in the spring and the autumn seasons, the impressive dances of millions of migrating birds can be observed. Ballum is one of the small-scale hubs for touristic developments, and the population and municipality are keen to ensure that the area’s architectural and historical image is not ruined by any massive touristic building installations. The lokalplan helps to control development in the area. The plan can be considered an investment guarantee for the locals and for the Mearsk and Realdania Foundations.

Successful achievement in heritage preservation depends on collaboration with external historical and architectural experts, and that has become clear in Ballum. The population in the village is somewhat stabilizing, which is a very reassuring feature to the inhabitants.

Further reading and viewing


[www.klaegager.dk](http://www.klaegager.dk)