



# Maker's Island initiative 2019-2022

Short summary of evaluation report

## Colophon

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Maker's Island initiative 2019-2022. Short summary of evaluation report.

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Photos are kindly shared by Destination Bornholm, Maker's Island Bornholm secretariate, or from Arts & Crafts Association Bornholm website.

Any possible errors are the responsibility of the main author.

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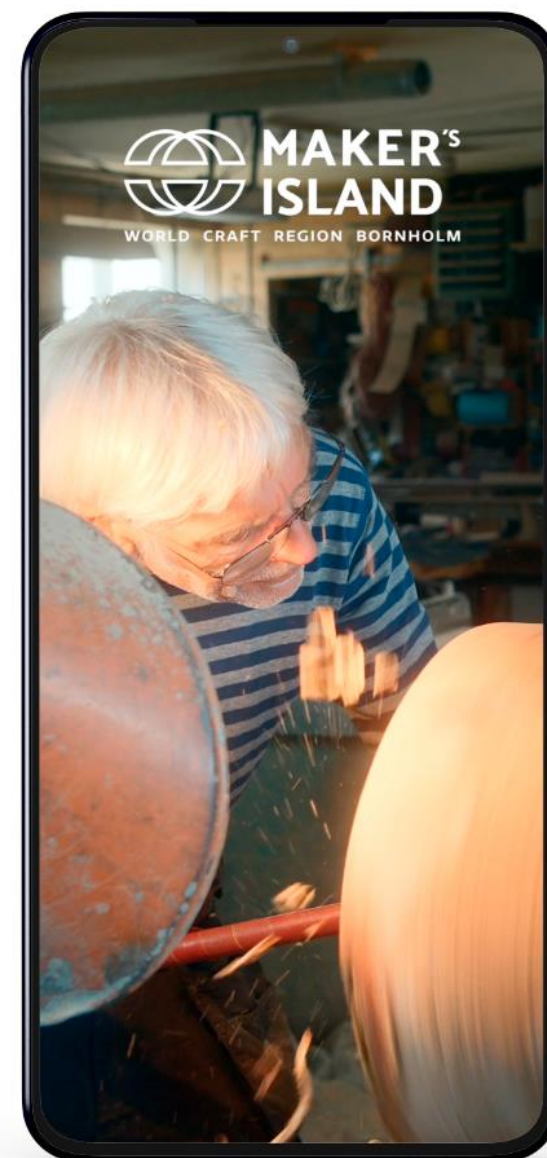
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## Bornholm as World Craft Region

In 2017, the island of Bornholm was granted the privileged title as World Craft Region by the World Craft Council (WCC), as the first place in Europe and as the first island in the world. The application to the WCC came from the Bornholm Regional Municipality. It was enabled by preparations made by the local association for professional makers, Arts & Crafts Association Bornholm (ACAB), including its membership as regional representative in WCC. ACAB has for decades worked to organize and qualify the island's craftspeople, as well as to represent them in national and international contexts.

The application process and the international recognition of the quality, authenticity, and diversity of the crafts-



people and cultural and educational institutions of Bornholm resulted in a deeper understanding of the role that crafts play in many parts of Bornholm's place development.

The recognition also provided an impetus for the local community of makers and related actors to reach out to each other, to ensure the preservation and further development of the craft sector of Bornholm. Their collaboration traverses maker's associations, cultural institutions, educational institutions, business support structures, tourism destination management organizations and the local government.

After a stock-taking period (Broegaard & Andersen, 2018), the Bornholm Regional Municipality established a steering committee for the World Craft Region initiative in 2019, as well as a "Maker's Island" Secretariate. Their





goal was to achieve the potential for local development and growth, both within and beyond the craft sector that the assignation of the World Craft Region title had revealed. The local government's recognition of the importance of the craft sector and its willingness to invest both time and money in it was an important 'game changer', as no other individual actor had the economic capacity to draw together the many and very different relevant actors. Craft businesses, the association for professional craftspeople and the cultural institutions on the island each balance small economies, raising their own core activities despite the odds and often heavily dependent on volunteer work, and as such do not have the capacity, nor the formal position, to lead the process.

The establishment of the Maker's Island Steering Committee and the Secretariat embodied the called-for coordination between the broad spectrum of actors within the 'craft ecosystem' as well as actors of potential importance to its further development. The Maker's Island initiative was granted an initial budget of 2.2 million DKK for a three-year period (2019-2022), which is the focus of this evaluation report. By late 2022 Bornholm's Regional Municipality granted this initiative an additional 3 years of core funding (2023-2025) of 1.8 million DKK by in recognition of the success and importance of the initiative.



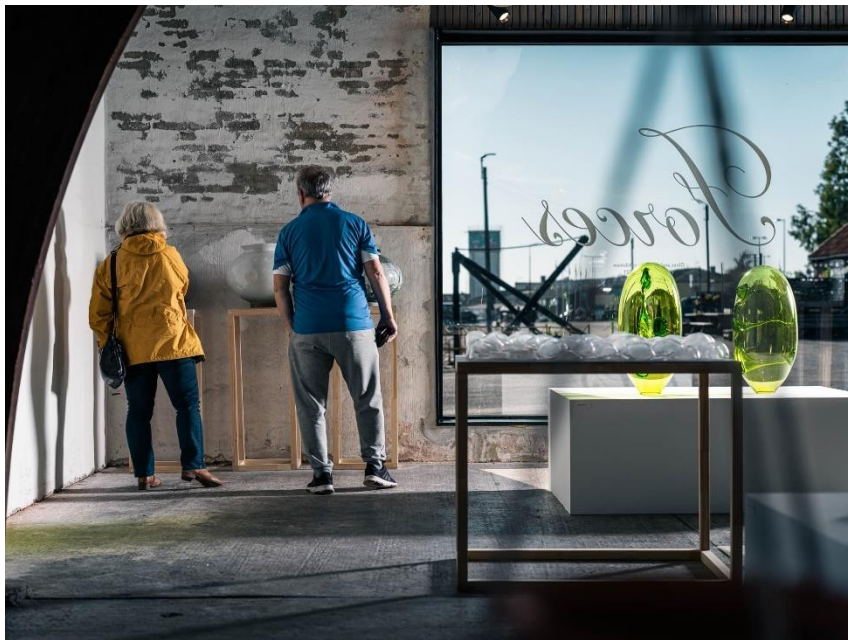
The evaluation draws upon a broad spectrum of information that included business registries and employment data from Statistics Denmark (the national authority on Danish statistics), locally administered questionnaires, phone surveys and individual and group interviews, and e-mail-based questions to international key informants. It also reviewed written information (steering group meeting summaries, mission statements, concept notes, etc.), as well as tourism-oriented analyses provided by the local Destination Management Organization, Destination Bornholm. While the craft businesses were supposed to contribute key data which are otherwise difficult to quantify accurately (for example visitor numbers, economic turnover in certain time-periods), this engagement was unfortunately not achieved. Consequently, the evaluators had to spend considerable and unforeseen time collecting ex-post data. Looking forward, it is strongly recommended that the makers themselves engage in this type of (simple), real-time monitoring to enable better data for the mapping of the development.

There are five key conclusions of the evaluation, each of which is presented with a few selected examples and results. Please refer to the Danish language conclusions for the full presentation.



## **#1. The Maker's Island initiative and the World Craft Region have increased the possibilities for making a living as a maker on Bornholm.**

This is revealed by the positive development of the gross income of makers, the growth in the number of jobs/employed people within the craft sector on the island, and the influx of makers to the island during the evaluated timespan.



For example, the income of people employed (or self-employed) within craft on Bornholm has grown by 26% between 2019 and 2022, which is much higher than for the same sector elsewhere in Denmark. This is also considerably higher than the general growth in income on Bornholm (across the remaining sectors). However, the makers still have a low economic income relative to other sectors.

The number of employed (and self-employed) people within craft on Bornholm has grown by 31% (from 90 to 118) between 2017 and 2022 at a time when employed people across all other sectors on Bornholm declined simultaneously. See the Danish report for details.

## **#2. The collaboration within the “craft ecosystem” of Bornholm has been considerably strengthened.**

This has led to blossoming collaborations between many different actors on the island within diverse issues such as competence development, education/training, business leadership, events, dissemination, marketing, and more, benefitting all actors. The most fundamental condition for the development of these collaborations has been the establishment of a Secretariat with a highly competent leadership.

Furthermore, collaboration in all parts of the ‘craft ecosystem’ has increased. Between individual makers, between makers and cultural institutions, and between makers’ representatives, the local government, higher





education institutions, destination management organisation and the local business development support system. It is remarkable that the collaboration has developed in a mutually respectful and 'peer-to-peer' way, considering that the types of actors are highly diverse and represent very different economic and political situations. Clearly, there is a high degree of trust and of engagement in collaboration between the actors, especially (but not exclusively) between the members of the steering committee. The ecosystem is described as a "more finely knitted net", where information and knowledge is shared, thereby enabling and encouraging that actors approach others for collaboration or feedback.

The collaboration between the Royal Academy of Art School of Design and the established makers is one of

the achievements that is highlighted in interviews, as well as the central role that the business support system has gained in helping makers strengthen the business part of their work.

An international observer from the British Craft Council identified this approach to collaboration as being at the heart of Bornholm's success:

*"The joined up approach of key stakeholders and partners – where individual craftspeople have the same agency as decision makers" [... and the] "clear sense of pride that unites and bonds stakeholders at all levels, with a real sense of everyone's role in the success and the celebration of this". "This collective, co-created approach has made the role of craft much greater" (Nicky Dewar, British Craft Council, January 30, 2023).*

Furthermore, the long-term commitment to a strategic vision and investment by the local government, and the interconnectivity of place, tourism, local economy and making, were also identified as key elements for the success of the Maker's Island.





Another international actor, advisor to the World Craft Council International, also points to the approach to collaboration and relation-building between the local actors, and the role of leadership, as something decisive for the success:

*"I think the spirit of the makers was key along with their approach to relationship-building with local government. Bornholm is a perfect example of how a region can carve out a unique identity around local talents. They started with a big idea and had the leadership and commitment to stay with that idea building piece by piece to become the 'maker's island". (Louise Allen, advisor to the World Craft Council International, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023).*

### **#3. Arts and crafts' importance for Bornholm have been made clear.**

The Bornholm makers, and Bornholm's status as a craft destination, have been acknowledged locally, nationally, and internationally.

This has led to (strengthened) political and economic engagement locally. It has further strengthened the recognition of the importance of craft for local development and place attractivity and opened doors to new possibilities of exposition, collaboration, and development for the makers, even at the highest international levels.

The event "Bornholm Craft Weeks" is highlighted for having embodied the World Craft Region status of Bornholm to locals as well as national and international visitors, while also becoming an occasion for innovating business models of makers and the way craft is presented.

Destination Bornholm has been a key actor in advancing and disseminating the knowledge of Bornholm





as a craft destination through its media work, thematic journalist tours, and practical collaboration with makers, optimizing websites, shared event calendars, etc., creating vital synergies.



The number of articles portraying Bornholm craft has grown considerably within the studied timeframe, especially in international media, and the estimated audience of such articles has increased 50-fold since 2019. The national and international visibility of Bornholm's craft sector feeds back into a growing local political awareness about the relevance of engaging with and investing in the craft sector, not as 'icing on the cake', but as key building blocks for continued economic, social, and cultural development of the island and its attractiveness as a place to visit and to live.

All interviewed makers mention the importance of being 'part of something bigger', such as the community of Bornholm's makers, and how this collective growth and

the international recognition increases the joy they take in their work. International collaborations, although still under development, are something that many actors greatly look forward to.



#### #4. The craft sector has gained an increased importance for tourism, overall branding and the 'story of Bornholm'.

This has large economic implications for the island of Bornholm through the local added value and employment created by the tourism sector.

Surveys among visiting tourists show that the proportion of tourists that experience the possibility of having good craft-related experiences on Bornholm have increased. In 2019 and 2020, 34% of tourists indicated that possibilities were "very good"; by 2021 and 2022 this had increased to 45%. Furthermore, the share of tourists who indicate that arts and craft constitute an important reason for their visit to Bornholm has grown from 16% in 2019 to 19% in 2021 (the most recent data on record).



Promoting Bornholm as a craft destination:  
<https://bornholm.info/en/makers-island-bornholm/>

Imagining that there were no arts and craft on Bornholm, and with the assumption that just 5% of the current tourists would thus not visit the island, this would represent a loss of value of 40 million DKK per year in the tourism sector, and the loss of approximately 90 jobs on the island.



Gudhjem museum. Destination Bornholm. Photo by Stefan Asp.



**#5. The number of applicants to the Royal Academy of Art's Design school on Bornholm has more than doubled since 2017, and the Royal Academy's Design School on Bornholm is important for attracting new residents to the island even beyond the education period.**

Of the 190 former students from the Royal Academy of Art's Design school on Bornholm still residing in Denmark, just under a third are permanently living on Bornholm. This is not because they are from the island – 84% of them were born elsewhere.

The importance of having an internationally relevant institute of education is highlighted by several actors within the Maker's Island initiative, not just for attracting students and residents, but also for providing a "first point of contact" for a thriving and evolving community of makers. The Design school constitutes a fortunate situation for Bornholm, which not all European World Craft Regions share.

Furthermore, the strengthened collaboration between the school and the professional makers on Bornholm greatly increases the attractiveness of the school, providing a living and inspiring environment for the students.



## Forward-looking, practical advice stemming from the interviews.

**It is important to highlight and draw attention to the fact that coordination and collaboration is not something that can be taken for granted.** Rather, it is the result of dedicated and continuous work by the Secretariat, the Steering Committee of the Maker's Island initiative, and the various participating institutions and businesses. It has also been made possible by the municipal government's assignation of three-year budgets to the core work of the secretariat, and by the additional support from local and national funds.

As it is not a given that this will continue, especially within a pressured municipal economy, the role of the coordination must continuously be appreciated, and its value must be shown.

While this is obvious to those closest to the secretariat and the Maker's Island initiative, it is easily overlooked by actors that are slightly further removed from the coordination, including local citizens, local politicians, and newcomers to the island (even if these are involved in craft businesses), as well as boards of local and national foundations.



**While the Maker's Island initiative has created impressive results and achieved unprecedented developments in the visibility and recognition of the craft sector of Bornholm, there is even more to show and celebrate.** For example, the case with the uniqueness of the closely knitted collaboration around craft within a complete and well-functioning craft ecosystem - from education to businesses, business- and place-development perspectives, cross-sectorial collaborations and dissemination and branding. The





quality, dynamism and closeness of this collaboration is assessed to be unique and innovative, and something that actors from across Europe visit Bornholm to learn more about.

Another result that can be celebrated more explicitly is that the Maker's Island initiative, due to its many cross-sectorial collaborations, has freed time for makers to dedicate themselves more to their workshops. Previously, they would have had to spend more effort on collective, self-organized and self-financed marketing and branding projects, as well as the organization of courses and exhibitions (typically within the Arts & Crafts Association Bornholm).

Now, the branding and marketing has been raised to new heights through the collaboration with Destination Bornholm as well as through the dedicated communication effort led by the Secretariat, and the collaboration with Business Centre Bornholm and the

Royal Academy of Art's Design School, among others, has provided new and unprecedented courses and workshops for the makers.

**There remains much work to be done internally regarding knowledge and understanding of the title as World Craft Region.** While there is generally good understanding and strong appreciation of the WCR title and its importance among the local makers, interviews show more partial understandings thereof among craft and craft businesspeople who have recently moved to the island. Thus, the evaluation identified a continued need to expose the mission and the achievements of the Maker's Island initiative.

Furthermore, there seems to be a need to revisit the English-language key terms (Maker's Island, World Craft Region, Bornholm Craft Weeks) to see whether they can



be better explained, and their connection made clearer for the bystander. There is also a continuous need for local exchange of knowledge and internal communication, making sure that even makers who are not active in steering committees or boards of associations are well informed.

The interviews for the evaluation have indicated a wealth of **possible future development options**, which are related to synergies between craft and local development. These include innovative ideas about exploring and testing the (potential) role of craft and art in municipal social welfare responsibilities, the further development of the involvement of craft in local schooling programs, the ambition to develop a “Maker’s Island Academy” tying together the Royal Academy of Art’s Design school, the Bornholm Business Centre, Campus Bornholm, and a future Residential College, providing a specialized offer for future makers-to-be. This is mentioned as a possible way to ensure future economic sustainability for the Maker’s Island Secretariate. Another idea is the exploration of possibilities to create work grants and travel grants for Bornholm makers to signal the recognition of the importance of the craft community on the island. Further collaboration between the craft, tourism, and local foods sectors is also mentioned as a low-hanging fruit to create synergies for local businesses. Finally, actors point to the international collaboration possibilities created by the World Craft Region title, the collaboration with other European World Craft Regions, and the ACAB

membership within the Michelangelo Foundation. There are great hopes and expectations related to the international collaborations, and many express that “We have only seen the start”.



### **Link to full evaluation report in Danish:**

[https://crt.dk/wp-content/uploads/Makers-Island-slutevaluering-2019\\_2022\\_.pdf](https://crt.dk/wp-content/uploads/Makers-Island-slutevaluering-2019_2022_.pdf)

### **Report from 2018, with English summary:**

<https://crt.dk/project/world-craft-region-titel-som-aktiv-for-bornholms-kunsthandvaerk-og-turisme/>



