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Summary of Evaluation workshop with the THING Project

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Samandrag

This memorandum sums up the Evaluation work shop for the THING Project – THing sites International Networking Group on June 14th 2012 in Balestrand. 20 people representing the different partners attended the work shop. The work shop covered four topics: if the project objective had been met; the transnational impact, the project organisation and communication and future collaboration.

This memorandum sums up the group discussions and the plenary presentation.

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1. Introduction

1.1 About the THING Project

The THING Project – THing sites International Networking Group - was developed following a pre-project carried out in 2008. The application was based on discussions and information collected at a workshop and in dialogue with potential partners. Sogn og Fjordane County Council took a responsibility to act as lead partner and for coordinating the work developing the application. The application was submitted to the 4th Call of the Northern Periphery Programme 2007-2013. The planned project duration was from 01.07.2009 until 30.06.2012. The project addressed the priority; *Sustainable development of natural and community resources*.

The project was selected for funding and has been run with seven partners and one associated partner representing Norway, Iceland, Scotland, Faroe Islands and United Kingdom. A synopsis from the project plan:

The THING project is based on the Thing Sites, the assembly sites spread across North West Europe as a result of the Viking diaspora and Norse settlements. The objective is to exchange knowledge, specify, develop and test new and improved services for sustainable management and business development at the Northern European Thing Sites. The project results should also contribute to a future nomination process of a serial inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List of the North Atlantic Thing Sites.

The overall objective for the THING project was:

to exchange knowledge, specify, develop and test new and improved services for sustainable management and business development at the Northern European Thing Sites. The project results should also contribute to a future nomination process of a serial inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List of the North Atlantic Thing Sites.

The overall objectives should be achieved by a strong and complementary inter-regional partnership implementing the following sub-objectives:

1. Run a series of surveys and documentation activities and international workshops and seminars held in each of the involved regions to develop shared knowledge and understanding of the history of Thing Sites to support the new regional service development activities
2. Implement and test interpretation methods for local, regional and inter-regional content development and branding, and mainstream this into recommendations for improved services for sustainable tourism and site management
3. Combine the results and new knowledge into an ICT web2.0 based service to promote and support the protection, management and interpretation of the Thing

Sites and to stimulate mobilisation and networking between the interested end-users, regional and international knowledge providers including the regional authorities and universities.

4. Deliver a well-managed and successfully communicated project

The work was divided into 4 Work packages (WP):

- WP1. Management and coordination
- WP2. Communication and dissemination
- WP3. Analysis of good practices and specifications of new service models
- WP4. Pilot test web2.0 inter-regional co-production and co-profiling of services

All work packages ran during all the phases of the THING Project. Wp1 and 2 had the goal to monitor, evaluate and make strategic decisions, provide feedback to all partners at regular intervals and provide dissemination of approaches, interim results and final results both at regional, national and international level.

In WP3 the project should carry out a number of interregional seminars and surveys addressing three broad topics:

1. Develop shared knowledge and understanding of the history of Thing Sites
2. Interpretation methods for local and regional content development and branding
3. Develop knowledge and strategies for sustainable tourism and site management

In WP 4 the project should identify and test a set of Web 2.0 tools that can facilitate the operation of the project, and in marketing of the sites. The project should not develop new tools but utilize available technologies in an appropriate mix.

1.2 About the evaluation task

The project coordinator contacted Western Norway Research Institute (WNRI) in the spring 2012 to discuss an evaluation workshop. WNRI suggested a process; the suggestion was discussed at a meeting and a modified version was implemented.

Evaluation task description:

The task is to carry out an evaluation of the THING project where the main part is an evaluation workshop among the project partners at the consortium meeting in Balestrand 14. June 2012. The aim is to evaluate if the goals set in the project plan have been met. How the process has been carried out, and identify if there are grounds for continued collaboration between Thing Sites.

The work has been divided in three main tasks.

1. Review of the project deliverable to get an overview of the content, operation and deliverables as a basis for carrying out the workshop.
2. Workshop - 2-3 discussion groups. Main themes; The Objective of the project, The organisation of the project, processes, communication and results, and further cooperation in the network
3. Prepare memo summarising the discussions and with some reflection from WNRI.

2. Evaluation workshop

2.1 Organisation of the evaluation workshop

The partners were divided into two groups. The project coordinators did not take part in the group discussions, but had a separate group discussing the questions. This was not reported in the plenary session and is not reflected in the present document.

The groups were placed in two separate rooms each with a flip-over notepad for recording discussions. They were given about 30 minutes to discuss each of the three assignments. A copy of the assignment sheets can be found in the attachments. Topics for group discussions were:

- Assignment 1 Objective
- Assignment 2 Transnational Impacts
- Assignment 3 Project Organisation, Operation and Communication

After completing the three group assignments the participants gathered in the plenary room and presented a synopsis of the discussions for each other.

Following the plenary presentation two short presentations were given on how two other networks have are operating and funding the operation. The two examples were;

- The International organisation of Book Towns <http://www.booktown.net>
- The Destination Viking Association <http://www.destinationviking.com/>

These presentations were also followed by a short plenary discussion.

Below are the summary of the plenary presentation from the group workshops, and the plenary discussion on further cooperation in the network.

2.2 Objective

Assignment:

The overall objective of the THING project was ...

«to exchange knowledge, specify, develop and test new and improved services for sustainable management and business development at the Northern European Thing Sites. The project results should also contribute to a future nomination process of a serial inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List of the North Atlantic Thing Sites».

Discuss to what degree and how this objective have been met. Illustrate with examples.

1. How have knowledge been exchanged?
2. How did the projects prepare for future UNESCO World Heritage List nominations?
 - a. Was this a useful exercise?
 - b. Are the group of Thing Sites or any new sites nominated to the UNESCO

World Heritage List during the project?

3. To what degree has the project contributed to the development of the tourism industry surrounding the Thing sites at a local and regional level?
 - a. Are the Thing sites an attractive partner for the SME's
 - b. Have new SME's started in the Thing surroundings to fill a gap in services
4. To what degree has the project contributed to sustainable management of the sites?
5. Overall to what degree and how the objective has been met?

2.2.1 Knowledge exchange

The partners have used a variety of tools to exchange information and knowledge about Thing Sites. Still the value of face-to-face meetings and communication must NOT be underestimated. In particular with projects such as the THING project, the sites and development of the sites as geographic locations require excursions and study-trips to be fully communicated and comprehended.

As part of the project they have learned new techniques for knowledge sharing, by "osmosis". Knowledge was exchanged using a variety of different tools, some found viable for some purpose others for other purpose, and it has enabled a new richness in the collaboration and knowledge exchange. An additional not foreseen effect is that these techniques have been diffused into the communities surrounding the Sites.

2.2.2 Sustainable management

The project has also contributed to develop tools for improved sustainable management of the Sites. Developing the tools together enabled sharing of expenses and risks but also experience. The structured audits performed as part of the UNESCO process have created documentation that is considered useful for the participating sites in their local work but also for other Thing Sites not part of the project. The process has increased the awareness and understanding of the sites, their values (tangible and intangible), weaknesses and strengths. The site management guidelines coming out of this exercise is a good tool to communicate the values to the owners and others operating in the vicinity of the Sites.

2.2.3 UNESCO process

The process for planning and enabling a future UNESCO nomination was fruitful. The project used the templates provided for auditing the sites; assessing the tangible and intangible assets. Carrying out the process gave an improved understanding of legal frameworks, the universal values and authenticity of the sites, and provided a framework for improving the management and conservation of the sites. The process was good, thorough and professional involving both internal and external experts. The process also resulted in documentation of high value both for the local advocacy and toward other transnational organisations. The process also proved that nomination for the UNESCO World Heritage status is not appropriate for the sites as a group. But other transnational organisations might be more appropriate.

2.2.4 Tourism industry

Except for Thingvellir and Gulatinget there was not much collaboration with the tourism industry at the outset. Having a focus on this gave the sites an opportunity to become aware of this opportunity and to start producing material that can be used in communication with the industry and with the tourists themselves. The project has created a platform for collaboration with the tourism industry and other SME's in the region. Materials produced in that aid collaboration with the tourism industry are the book «Things in the Viking World», leaflets, memory sticks, website etc.

Each site has slightly different situations as the local politics and influence are different and the local backing varies. The project has initiated important regional processes that will take longer than the project period to complete. Potential impact can be expected in 2-3 years. A key word here is raising awareness; Awareness of the tourism value of the sites, Awareness of the importance of telling the story to tourists and locally to new generations; Awareness of the value of the Things in the "Viking world". In general the experience is that the Thing Sites are attractive partners for the tourism industry.

2.3 Transnational Impacts

Assignment:

A number of different outputs have been or are in the process of being delivered, to mention some: workshops, leaflets, presentation materials, bibliography, project website, the Thing sites web site, interpretation guidelines and so on. Discuss;

1. Discuss what is the most valuable output of the project? Mention 5 outputs and why
2. Discuss what is the least valuable output of the project? Mention 2 outputs and why
3. Are there any results that would NOT have been possible in a regional/local project?
 - a. What is the added value in participating in the transnational project? Please give examples
4. Discuss what is the main result achieved as part of the project?
5. Is there a transnational value in continuing the collaboration between Thing Sites?

In the group work the participants were asked to point out the five most valuable outputs and the two least valuable outputs. This might bring the same output up as both a most valuable and a least valuable. There is no contradiction in this. A least valuable output is the one that was contributing least to the development in the project, but does not mean that it was not necessary or valuable in different respects.

2.3.1 Most valuable outcome

The project has produced a number of significant outcomes. Outcomes have contributed to the development of the individual sites and to the Thing Sites as a group. The following list is the combined list of named valuable outcomes.

- The network – the individuals and skills brought together; academics, managers, tourist developers. A family of like-minded people. Seen as a triple helix success.
- Workshops, presentations, lectures during face to face meetings
- Research agenda presents future actions, it identified themes and topics for future research and guidelines for how to address these

- Thing site website (<http://www.thingsites.com/>) – for raising awareness and marketing. Web 2.0 – with the new opportunities for visiting and sharing knowledge between sites.
- The book “Things in the Viking World” – There exists very little information on Thing Sites. Making this book links the transnational sites into the wider context of things in the Viking World.
- An important but intangible output of the project is the higher awareness of the Thing Sites in all regions involved, including the awareness of opportunities coming from exploiting the Thing Sites in a sustainable way.
- Exchange of best practice - international perspective. The project widened the scope, experience and diversity of information being exchanged. Earlier the exchange was more at a national level; for instance UK sites shared information but not with the other sites. The transnational perspective gave significant increase in the production of higher quality information and practice and was a valuable input to local development
- Belonging to an International community raises status.

2.3.2 Least valuable outcome

The following list is the combined list of least valuable outcomes.

1. The project website (<http://thingproject.eu/>) – The Common project website was a repository of project material needed for the EU. It took a lot of effort. The material could have been made available in other ways without much development.
2. The Common project leaflet – was made available too early - the only real target group was the NPP. If made at a later time when more information about the sites had been identified it could have been targeted to a wider reader group.
3. The focus of several other outputs was the NPP as well. This is a very small audience and a lot of effort was spent to serve this audience, time that could have been used to serve a wider audience.

2.3.3 Results not possible if the project was only at local level

One of the groups sums up this discussion like this. “None of this could have happened without the transnational project”. Working together in a transnational project brought a wider perspective to the development of the local Thing Sites. Belonging to an international community have brought new ideas to the local development through the exchange of

knowledge. The network provided access to a wide range of experts, and the larger more developed sites supported the development of the newer and less developed sites.

Being part the project brought also an awareness of being part of something bigger - an international community. It gave credibility, business opportunities and opened up a new research agenda. Also the more concrete products developed as part of the project like the book, the leaflets, the website and the research agenda, have a quality and draw on a wide range of knowledge that would not have been available at a single site.

To sum it up the project outputs are the building blocks for development of Thing Sites in the future, locally but also as a group, and together with a larger community of Thing Sites who were not part of the project.

2.3.4 Main result

The two groups both points to the network as the main result. The project has contributed to developing a strong network with a promising future. A network that is more than just the project partners. It also included the surrounding communities and the visitors of the Thing Sites. The story told – and the Thing Sites are a legacy product that really needs to be communicated - is done through a set of deliverables such as the book (Things in the Viking World) and the common Thing Site website (<http://www.thingsites.com/>) – a place where we can bring Thing sites together and market ourselves.

Both groups point to the value of continuing the network “... only a few of the Thing Sites that are identified are part of the project, there is a need to expand the reach of the network; among other to England, Normandy, Baltics.”

2.4 Project Organisation

Assignment:

The project organisation have had a number of different committees and levels of operation

- a) Steering group
- b) Management team
- c) Work groups
- d) Regional teams

Each with different tasks and responsibilities, discuss;

1. What are the main strengths of organizing the project this way?
2. What are the main weaknesses of organizing the project this way?
3. Have the project organisation been flexible enough to accommodate changes in operation, tasks and aims?
4. Have the project organisation been effective with regards to ensure involvement and contribution from all partners?
5. If you were consulting another project being developed, what practice would you recommend for project organisation & management from of your experience with the THING project?

2.4.1 The main strengths of the organisation of the project

Steering group (SG)/management team (MT): Having many of the same people in both groups saved effort, and it was successful. The steering group had sufficient knowledge about the issues in the project. When changes were needed, like extra time to complete some work, the SG was active and supported the management team and the work groups. Given the size of the project it was a cost effective management structure.

The work groups: Good approach, created flexibility. Work packages were also broken into smaller work groups to involve the people with the most relevant knowledge or interest in the particular tasks and thus increased efficiency.

Project Coordinator and Work package leaders: The project coordinators and work package leaders have important roles in keeping the work and tasks moving forward on time and according to budget. This is a job for people with certain competence and personal skills. The jobs were delivered with real quality but also with a huge burden on some few persons.

2.4.2 The main weaknesses of the organisation of the project

For some issues the division of work in separate work groups and work packages sometimes split-up work that naturally were linked together. This compartmentalisation was not always beneficiary. More interaction between work packages and work teams could have facilitated the identification of this, and it is also something to look out for in planning future projects.

Initially the management team consisted of only work package leaders and project coordinators; this excluded several partners from management meetings. This was fixed when the project identified this as a problem; the broadening of the management team was important for the effectiveness of the project. As a result the SG and MT ended up being more or less the same.

The approach to describe budget and work distribution is not necessarily effective. It was difficult to get an overview of what resources were available for who and for what tasks. The reasons for this can be several; partly due to things having to do with the programme, partly how lead partners shared information and partly due to how each partner have divided the work and budget. There was a wish for having a budget overview available at all times and not only after 3 months.

2.4.3 Flexibility of the project organisation

It was generally felt that there was sufficient flexibility in the organisation of the project. An important hindering in this respect was the late appointment of the project coordinator. This affected the timing of the project and the flexibility built into the project plan. It was however helped by extending the project operation. The real flexibility in the normal running of the project became clear when the need to extend the project operation arise. The strength in the operation of the management team and the steering group then became clear.

2.4.4 Efficiency with regard to involvement and contribution from all partners

Generally working well, but an important amendment was done when extending the management team to represent all partners as opposed to only work package leaders. This

involved all partners more in the operation of the project and facilitated the accessibility to resources at work package level.

The 6 months lag in time, due to late appointment of project coordinator was a problem because there was no project coordinator in place that could help, instruct the partners in planning and setting up the project. The lead partner needs to act quickly to appoint coordinator in order to support the partners in initiating and planning the local implementation of the project. Also on this topic the budget and cost regimes were pointed to. This time as a hindering to efficient operation and involvement of the project. It was claimed that a different cost regime could have been even more efficient in distributing the work.

2.4.5 Best practice to other projects

The Thing Sites model is not applicable for all projects, but with the number of partners and different tasks it was appropriate though amendments can be done. The main recommendation is to base more of the development on face to face meetings, not only for management teams but also for work groups. At the meeting points more time should be spent in specific workgroups than in plenary sessions.

Another recommendation is to be more proactive in the development of the project plan to make sure it reflects what you want to deliver, otherwise it will affect ability to deliver – Avoid vague phrase which need to be operationalized as part of the project.

2.5 Project Communication

Assignment:

The project used a number of different communication channels (Skype, internet, email, phone, onsite meetings and so on). Discuss;

1. What are the main strengths of using each of these communication channels?
2. What are the main weaknesses of using each of these communication channels?
3. Where partners able to communicate easily with the management team and with other partners?
4. If you were consulting another project being developed, what practice would you recommend from of your experience with the Thing Site project?

2.5.1 Main strengths of communication channels used

As part of the project the partners tried out a number of different communication channels for different kind of situations and knowledge sharing. Based on this the groups points to the following channels as the best tools

- Face-to-face meetings and conversations – best for making immediate progress on tasks
- Skype and google hangouts – good for work group meetings
- Basecamp – brilliant online project management tool, good for uploading and sharing information and for discussions, with links to email

- Telephone conference meetings – best for Management Team and Steering Committee in addition to face-to-face meetings
- Doodle.com – a useful tool for scheduling meetings
- Email – good for communication throughout project

The main strength in testing and using a range of techniques for different situations is that when at face to face meetings we have been able to work more productively, knowing each other better, than if only email had been used.

2.5.2 Main weaknesses of communication channels used

The main weakness in basing the collaboration on a number of different communication channels are that some organisations have restrictions for internet and web 2.0 usage (among other some organisations have restrictions on Facebook usage); firewalls and other restrictions do not allow all to use all tools. Or they had to use them from home in their spare time. Also some, switching between different tools was a challenge, though at the same time they point to the benefits as well. As one said “I’ve learned things that I never dreamed were possible”.

The tool that was least effective was “snail mail” more than one partner had problems with claims not getting through to Project Co-ordinators – at one point the post office even lost a package of cost claim documentation, there seem to have been a problem with the use of Post Office and PO Box address. It was also mentioned that the ease of communicating sometimes bypassed cultural differences and the fact that different nationalities have different national holidays.

2.5.3 Ease of communication with the management team and with other partners

The groups reported that the communication was very good, but that some had difficulties using different tools due to restrictions in the some offices. Some had to use the tools from home to bypass the restrictions.

2.5.4 Best practice to recommend other projects

A project like this is a good way to test out and be exposed to a number of different technologies. And for small rural communities do not overlook the spill-over effect for the local community as well. Do not stick rigidly to one channel; test others in small setting to find what suites the group and different tasks best. Be proactive from the beginning.

Even with all the tools available do not underestimate the value of face to face interaction. Basecamp is an excellent project management tool.

2.6 Future collaboration

Prior to the workshop, the partners of the Management and steering comitte had started to discus how to continue the fruitful collaboration past the end of the project. An undertaking had been taken to continue collaboration and to explore working with other existing organisations, such as the Destination Viking Association. At the workshop, two examples

were presented. Each example had started up as a project and can provide some inspiration to think of a good way of continuing the Thing network.

2.6.1 International Organisation of Book Towns (IOB)

This is another similar network that started out with a project in the EU 4th framework programme, the BookTownNet project. It was a 2 year project running from 1998-2000. It involved five countries, five book towns, about 10 small bookselling enterprises with a total of 14 partners.

The project had a focus on sustainable development and livelihood in rural areas. The project developed common service on the internet, A network between the participants and beyond. The network furthering the work was established formally in 2002-3.

The network established an organisation with no permanent staff. It has a board of four members who are elected for 2 years at the time at a general assembly, collocated with the IOB book festival. They are organised as an EEIG: European economic interest grouping. Today there are 24 members from 14 book towns.

The aim of the organisation is to;

- raise public awareness of book towns and stimulate interest by giving information via internet and by organising an International Book Town Festival every second year;
- enhance the quality of book towns by exchanging knowledge, skills and know-how between the book towns and their individual book sellers and other businesses;
- strengthen the rural economy by making propaganda for the existing book towns and by offering a medium (e-commerce) to the book sellers, by which they can offer their books to an universal public, also or specially in the quiet season (“winter economy”);
- undertake other activities which can serve the interests of book towns and strengthen independent businesses in book towns, e.g. stimulating the use of information technology;
- help in these ways maintaining regional and national cultural heritage and to stimulate the international public to get acquainted with it.

They have defined a set of criteria's for becoming members. Members of the organisation can be associations, organisations, local governments, businesses and individuals in book towns.

2.6.2 The Destination Viking Association

The Destination Viking Association was founded in 2007 following on from four EU funded projects:

- Follow the Vikings
- North Sea Viking Legacy
- Destination Viking Sagalands
- Destination Viking Living History

Its primary aim is to promote Borderless Tourism based on a shared Viking legacy.

The Destination Viking Association is a membership association managed by a Board. Its membership includes museums, academic institutions, commercial companies and non-profit organisations, providing the ideal merger of both academic and cultural heritage expertise.

The main objectives of the association are:

- to develop a strong Viking brand for cross border tourism
- to sponsor co-operation between groups throughout Europe and beyond
- to celebrate the best Viking sites and promote the tangible and intangible legacy of the Vikings

Destination Viking is currently pursuing two major initiatives

- The first is the re-accreditation of the Council of Europe Viking Cultural Route and its re-launch under the auspices of the DVA
- The second is a major new networking initiative, the Viking Visions project

2.6.3 Discussion

In earlier group discussions the participants had been asked if there was a transnational value in continuing the collaboration established as part of the project. The learning and knowledge exchange have improved the local development of the sites and both groups points to the value of continuing the network by statements like "... only a few of the Thing Sites that are identified are part of the project, there is a need to expand the reach of the network; among other England, Normandy, Baltics."

Unfortunately there was very little time for discussing this topic at the end of the workshop. But a few suggestions are at the table and *and* were discussed further by project members in the Steering Committee meeting which followed the Evaluation workshop.

- Collaboration/membership with the Destination Viking Association
- Seek collaboration / funding with the parliament structures of today, the modern heritage of the Thing Sites, (Storting, Fylkesting, Allting etc.),
- Own organisation only for Thing Sites vs. collaboration with organisations relating to the Viking heritage

3. Reflection and recommendation

3.1 Objective

Having gone through the online material and examined that in relation to the project plan and listened in on the discussions at the workshop and the presentations, the project seems to have achieved the aims set out in the objective.

The comment from the participants that it would have been beneficial if more of the partners were active in the direct writing of the application is important. To take part in such a writing process the participants get a different ownership to the text and plans. Some of the partners did take part in the process through the pre-project and the project workshop carried out. The local partners representing the lead partner Sogn og Fjordane County Council and Gulen municipality took also part in the final discussions and editing, though the main editing was done by a secretariat that did not take direct part in carrying out the project.

Based on these comments and experience from other applications and projects, it is a recommendation to identify and involve core project actors in the process as early as possible and to involve them directly in the writing process. It will probably require more costs related to developing the project application as it will take more time and efforts on behalf of more people.

Independent of this, there will always be a need for reinterpretation of what is written in a project application. In a 3 year project the surroundings change and new plans and reinterpretations are needed at several points in the process; often at the time of the first meeting, then at the start of each work package and in relation to important milestones in the project.

3.2 Transnational Impacts

The participants at the evaluation workshop seemed like a group of people who had worked well together. The discussion and dialogues were lively and had a good energy. It was clearly a group that had worked well.

The organisation including workgroups and regional teams has ensured both the local work and the transnational aspects of the carrying out the project.

The workshop participants highlight several times the importance of meeting transnationally and the role this has had in developing the least developed and smaller sites.

3.3 Project Organisation and Communication

The project organisation seems to be appropriate and with the modification of the management team also involving all partners at the different level.

The main objection seems to be the late appointment of the project coordinator. This affected the timing of the project and the flexibility built into the project plan. A recommendation is to have the project coordinator as part of the team putting the application together, then the coordinator knows the project from the idea and will be able to get the process started as soon as the project starts.

Another recommendation is to involve more of the partners, get them to take a more proactive role in the development of project. This could ensure that the plan better reflects what the partners want to deliver. It will leave fewer vague phrases, as the participants have participated in the development of the application and already know the operationalization of the project.

There is also a comment to the way the budget is distributed and handled. In part this is a legacy that comes from the programme level and the way that budgets and resources are handled there. Each partner needs to guarantee for a certain own effort or in kind effort which is in proportion of the total budget allocated to the partner. And each partner is responsible for keeping an overview over resources available, spent and what is remaining. The management of the resources needs to be discussed with work package managers and project coordinators, but in the INTERREG programme it is the responsibility of each partner to plan and keep track of own resources. Other funding schemas exist in other funding programmes. One such is the culture programme; it has a funding schema closer to what the work groups expressed as more desirable namely that the coordinator keeps track of available resources, plan and distribute tasks, and keeps track of what is spent and what is remaining. In the group discussion it was expressed that having an full update only after 3 months was not good enough. Both funding models have its benefits and deficiencies. It is possible to set up managerial procedures to be carried out by the project coordinator and the work package leaders. But it is not in line with the principles of Interreg funding and it will increase the effort needed by the coordinator and work package leader and in case needs to be taken into the planning of the project and the budget. It would be an extra cost a few partners will have on behalf of the other partners without a coordinator role or a work package leader role.

The project have identified and tested a number of different web 2.0 and social media tools. It has had important spill-over effect on the communities and schools in the vicinity of the thing sites.

The participants of the evaluation workshop found the THING project organisation model as appropriate given the size of the project, but also comments that it might not be appropriate for all. The critique voiced is with respect the too little face-to-face time was available for the work group meetings. That is the time spent together could have been better used by putting priority to work group meetings while the plenary meetings could have been shorter.

It is difficult to find the right balance between work groups and plenary meetings, both have their grounds in the project objective and tasks defined. But this might have an implication for future project budgets that independent of the use of new modern technology don't underestimate travel costs as it allows for more face-to-face time for project activities.

3.4 Future collaboration

It is difficult to give clear recommendations for future collaboration between the partners. To summarize the findings from the evaluation workshop:

- The network is the most valuable output of the project
- Nomination for UNESCO for a group of sites are not applicable
- There is an interest in continuing the collaboration
- The partners have agreed to fund and operate the common websites for 3 years

Based on these findings, we will recommend to use some time (1-2 years) to find the most appropriate way of organising the network. It can become a network organisation, an association, only for the Thing sites and the organisations surrounding the sites. Or the partners can join a network like the Destination Viking Association. Some of the Thing sites might find one more appropriate than the other.

There are also other Thing sites that are not part of the project which can be approached. There was also suggested to seek out collaboration with modern Things like Alltinget, Stortinget etc. to see if there are opportunities that giving direction either toward a separate association for Things or to seek membership in an association based on the heritage of the sites like the Destination Viking Association, or maybe both can be appropriate.

It is noted that insufficient time was allocated for this discussion in the Evaluation Workshop, however in the following meeting Steering Committee members agreed that they wanted to continue collaboration, individual organisations were encouraged to join the Destination Viking Association and partners decided to meet again in July 2013 with a view to broadening the network and exploring future initiatives and broadening the network.

Attachment: Group work assignments

Assignment 1 Objective

Working method:

- Select a reporter and chairman of the group
- Read quickly through the assignment
- Use 5 minutes individually
- Sharing round where all express their thoughts and ideas
- Discuss!
- Note proposals on large sheets and bring to plenary session
- Meet accurate to the plenary discussion

Assignment:

The overall objective of the THING project was ...

to exchange knowledge, specify, develop and test new and improved services for sustainable management and business development at the Northern European Thing Sites. The project results should also contribute to a future nomination process of a serial inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List of the North Atlantic Thing Sites.

Discuss to what degree and how this objective have been met. Please illustrate with examples.

- How has knowledge been exchanged?
- How did the projects prepare for future UNESCO World Heritage List nominations?
 - Was this a useful exercise?
 - Are the group of Thing Sites or any new sites nominated to the UNESCO World Heritage List during the project?
- To what degree has the project contributed to the development of the tourism industry surrounding the Thing Sites at a local and regional level?
 - Are the Thing Sites an attractive partner for the SME's
 - Have new SME's started in the Thing surroundings to fill a gap in services
- To what degree has the project contributed to sustainable management of the sites?
- Overall assessment of how this objective have been met

Assignment 2 Transnational Impacts

Working method:

- Select a reporter and chairman of the group
- Read quickly through the assignment
- Use 5 minutes individually
- Sharing round where all express their thoughts and ideas
- Discuss!
- Note proposals on large sheets and bring to plenary session
- Meet accurate to the plenary discussion

Assignment:

A number of different outputs have been or are in the process of being delivered, to mention some: workshops, leaflets, presentation materials, bibliography, project website, the Thing Sites web site, interpretation guidelines and so on

- Discuss what is the most valuable output of the project? Mention 5 outputs and why
- Discuss what is the least valuable output of the project? Mention 2 outputs and why
- Are there any results that would NOT have been possible in a regional/local project?
 - What is the added value in participating in the transnational project? Please give examples
- Discuss what is the main result achieved as part of the project?
- Is there an transnational value in continuing the collaboration between Thing Sites?

Assignment 3 Project Organisation

Working method:

- Select a reporter and chairman of the group
- Read quickly through the assignment
- Use 5 minutes individually
- Sharing round where all express their thoughts and ideas
- Discuss!
- Note proposals on large sheets and bring to plenary session
- Meet accurate to the plenary discussion

Assignment:

The project organisation have had a number of different committees and levels of operation

- Steering group
- Management team
- Work groups
- Regional teams

Each with different tasks and responsibilities

Discuss:

- What are the main strengths of organizing the project this way?
- What are the main weaknesses of organizing the project this way?
- Have the project organisation been flexible enough to accommodate changes in operation, tasks and aims?
- Have the project organisation been effective with regards to ensure involvement and contribution from all partners
- If you were consulting another project being developed, what practice would you recommend for project organisation & management from of your experience with the THING project?

The project used a number of different communication channels (Skype, internet, email, phone, onsite meetings and so on)

Discuss

- What are the main strengths of using each of these communication channels?
- What are the main weaknesses of using each of these communication channels?
- Where partners able to communicate easily with the management team and with other partners?
- If you were consulting another project being developed, what practice would you recommend from of your experience with the THING project?