

Reporting from the Rural Mobility Seminar 21 February, Vejle, Denmark

GRASSROOTS – Rural mobility top-down and bottom-up

Background

The thematic focus of this seminar was set on grassroots initiatives, the challenges they face and the opportunities they bring. Particular emphasis was set on practical insights from successful projects and initiatives, and by organising this seminar, MAMBA provided ample space to network and mingle with other mobility stakeholders from the Baltic Sea Region and beyond.

Block 1: Introduction

The lead partner of the MAMBA project, Doris Scheer (representing the Diaconie of Schleswig-Holstein), welcomed the audience and gave a short introduction on MAMBA's main aims and activities.

She reiterated the importance of seminars as an excellent opportunity to share knowledge and learn new things about mobility from each other and furthermore, she reminded the audience to also attend the third Rural Mobility Seminar, planned for 5 June 2019 in Seinäjoki, Finland.

Doris Scheer also invited all participants to check the MAMBA project website regularly in order to stay updated and see how the project is developing. Finally, she wished everyone a productive time, shaped by inspiring lectures and fruitful mingling.

Block 2: Inspiration

1. The Danish model for demand-controlled driving

This seminar on the organisation of public transport in Denmark, was presented by Anja Reilev, and Claus Rosenkrantz, Sydtrafik's Coordinating project manager and Project leader respectively.

In Denmark, public transportation is led by a national public service company (DSB), which operates and provides rail services, while five regional public transport organisations operate and provide primarily bus and demand-responsive transport. Sydtrafik is one of the regional public transport organisations and covers the southern part of Jutland. ToD systems have been in place in Denmark for 25 years, extending onto Jutland in 2010. Furthermore, all entities are regulated under the Public Transport Act.

Sydtrafik is owned by the Regions of Southern Denmark and its 11 municipalities, providing routed bus transport and Flextrafik. The vehicles (buses and cars) are outsourced to private operators.

Based upon the 1,2 million local inhabitants, more than 150 contracts have been signed with independent companies differing in size. However, companies are requested only when vehicles are needed.

Management is led by a Board of appointed members from the city and regional councils, where all five regional transport organisations collaborate on the development of joint projects and procurements.

Sydtrafik is also a co-owner of the online travel planner *rejseplanen.dk* – a Danish website helping with the planning of trips via trains, buses, small vehicles etc. to plan trips within all Denmark. Consequently, Sydtrafik operates both routed bus traffic as well as Flextrafik.

However, representatives of Sydtrafik admit that reliance on cars due to the prevailing extensive rural geography, is one of the organisation's main challenges, since it often appears more viable to drive a car than to rely on public transport.

Flextrafik – is a Danish label to describe transport on demand and shared forms of transportation via cars or mini buses. This service is offered as a collaboration between municipalities, regions, and public transport organisations.

Flextrafik works with two models:

- Official transport – always available due to its high demand (e.g. doctors, hospitals)
- Personal more flexible service – offered to the general public (including young people, students and other members of society)

Flextrafik has been offering its services since 2012 within all 11 regional municipalities, generating half a million transport trips a year only by providing the transportation of patients to regional hospitals. In case service is ordered by persons to visit doctors or drive to a hospital, the ride is free of charge.

A joint procurement is used as a method to buy the service. This is how the municipalities and the region save up to 15 % by jointly buying services with border region transport organisations.. Furthermore, a joint tender is larger and therefore also more interesting for bidders, providing higher levels of efficiency while achieving high levels of customer satisfaction.

The system involves IT-based planning and coordination of transport services across the municipalities and driving schemes which allows to take different people in the same vehicle.

Plustur. Trip search and booking via Rejseplanen.dk

This latest product completes the first and last miles of public transportation trips, offering a good solution for areas with low population.

Pilot testing of this method has started in 2018 in Sondenborg under the title PLUSTUR - “the complete journey”. Here, people are taken from their home address to the nearest bus station or vice versa, in case public transport is not available, especially the case in rural areas where bus traffic is rare.

Trip search and booking is done via the webpage minrejseplan.dk, where it is possible to search and book trips as well as handle their payment. . Also, Danish travel card holders can use their passes for this option. Both models, Flextrafik and Plustur, operate the same cars. Due to its success, these models will soon be introduced in other places as well. One mayor weakness of ToD is its unpredictability making especially budgeting very difficult. Whereas public transport rates are set at 22 DDK, the price for the outsourced vehicle varies from day to day. At the end of the month, each municipality therefore gets a detailed list of all trips and costs for it to cover the rest expenses. Marketing is also done by the respective municipalities and needs to be included within the costs.

Conclusively, the opportunity to attain door-to-door services is a unique feature, which should be developed further.

2. Ride share and peer-to-peer freight service as a mobility solution for local communities

Presented by Nabogo’s CTO Kasper Dam Mikkelsen and CEO Anders Muusmann, this shared ride platform from Denmark was introduced.

Nabogo translates into *Neighbour On the Go* and derives from the old Nordic word, Nabo, meaning “neighbour”. These services, developed by public administrator Anders and environmental planner Kasper, are focusing on the social component and resource efficiency of transportation. The company was founded in 2017, starting off as a sharing platform from March 2018 onwards. Nabogo aims at developing shared economy solutions, bringing new mobility options to rural areas and reducing congestion in cities. Based upon the notion that rural mobility patterns deeply affect transportation within cities by fostering car dependency, a shift in focus towards rural areas is key.

Denmark is shaped by several current trends such as high degrees of centralisation, economic prosperity as well as individualisation and self-realisation. This has translated into a lack of communication and community as well as an increase in private motorised commutes between centres and the periphery. However, demographics lacking private types mobility options, such as young, elderly or poorer people must not be forgotten.

Within the age of digitalisation, Nabogo therefore developed an app with the following three integrated products, based upon registration and a small fee, covering three years of usage:

- 1) NABOlift – for both rural and urban ridesharing. Based upon the introduction of virtual car stops, similar to actual bus stops, where the system inquires on a daily basis if private individuals would like to offer their cars. The payment is then divided between users, based upon a fixed price of 0,10 EUR per km, where the total sum is calculated based upon all registered users and fed into the online system, where payments are also handled. Solution can be joined to PLUSTUR as well.

- 2) NABOfragt – for peer-to-peer freight service, where e.g. neighbours help each other by moving goods such as garden waste, groceries, boxes etc. around.
- 3) NABOtrailer – for peer-to-peer trailer sharing, including all types of trailers for the movement of larger and heavier objects. This service is based upon a two-sided business plan, where the platform charges a fee in order to cover expenses and insurance costs

The typical Danish village Smidstrup, situated at 14 km from Vejle with a population of 781 people will serve as a suitable example. Here, all service points are located with driving distance, however many inhabitants pursue leisure activities only offered in cities.. On the one hand side this causes parents to spend much time driving their family around, on the other hand it creates a large set of regular commuters into Vejle. The app tackles this problem by giving you the opportunity of using your time and money more efficiently by sharing rides, including trips to the doctor, university or school .

However, strong ambassadors are needed to raise awareness and take responsibility for such ideas. Furthermore, a strong partnership with local municipalities is needed.

3. ABCD - Asset Based Community Development

A third inspiring example was given by Peter Sepstrup, rural development project leader of the Vejle Municipality, who gave a presentation on ways of activating and engaging citizens.

The ABCD model developed by John Mcknight from the Northwestern University, was presented as an engagement strategy, applicable onto a range of contexts, including mobility.

According to Mcknight, there are five key success factors, namely engaging volunteers or citizens, local associations, local institutions and companies, keeping the (spatial) context in mind and looking for top-down connection points.

Some tips by Peter Sepstrup to involve citizens included:

- The utilisation of people's strengths
- The application of solution- instead of problem-oriented approaches as a more positive and fruitful technique
- The creation of case and context specific solutions instead of creating one-fits-all recipes
- The inclusion of people's wishes and aspirations

The classic ABCD process therefore starts off by mapping out resources and skills, creating and strengthening partnerships and mobilising resources for potential solutions. The realisation of shared wishes and aspirations will trigger more involvement, foster stronger leadership and create better results.

Block 3: Implementation

Future Camp Mobility Script – discussed in a World Café

Mobility in Rural areas – How do we create a new “Mobility culture”? (Hauke Klünder, Kreis Plön and Benefit4Regions)

In this last block, the project Benefit4Regions (Interreg V A Germany-Denmark) was introduced to the audience, presenting visions, strategies, tactics and interaction methods set up by Danish and German project partners.

Subsequently they presented several methods for the efficient involvement of local citizens, fostering participation.