

My name is Niels Peter Nielsen and I have previously been chairman of the village guild in Kværstøbøl-Snurom. I have been on the board of the Village Forum and sat for 8 years on the Committee for Sustainability and Rural Areas. Today I represent the Mobility Association - an ad hoc group under the Village Forum. I will give an example of close cooperation (co-production) between the local village associations, the administration, the municipality, ProjectZero, the traffic companies and the state in order to solve mobility challenges in rural areas. My example shows concretely how the Sønderborg model as our organizational opportunity space plays a crucial role in the collaboration across.

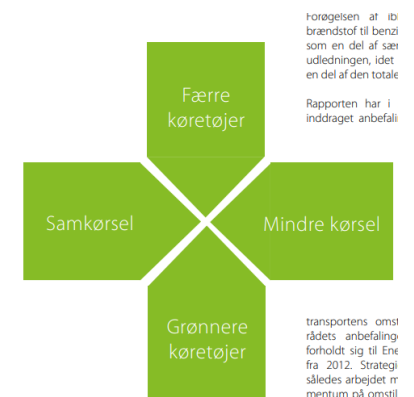
Green mobility in Sønderborg has had a special focus for many years.

Sønderborg will lead the way when it comes to CO2 neutrality and green transition and make Sønderborg Municipality visible as an attractive place to work, establish and run high-tech jobs and companies within the green transition.

We know that it is not possible to maintain the current mobility mix and at the same time achieve the goal of CO2 neutrality in 2029 without various initiatives, where four basic objectives are fundamental: Fewer vehicles, more carpooling, less driving and greener vehicles.

Formally, a Mobility Association has been formed - an ad hoc association under the Village Forum - whose purpose is to create a basis for mobility activities in rural Sønderborg.

Rising fuel prices have made the theme of “Green Mobility” both present and evergreen. But it doesn't stop at mobility - we need to think holistically - we need to think sharing economy both in mobility and in everyday life.



In villages and rural areas, we hear ALL THE TIME: “...*public transportation is getting smaller and smaller. There are very few buses and in the afternoon they stop running. Many people have two cars and would go down to one if they had other options, but they don't*”

(WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?)

The villages work for “more carpooling” to solve the above challenge - and at the same time it is our contribution to “CO2 neutrality in 2029” in Sønderborg Municipality. Our collective “ProjectZero vision”.

We have been piloting Village Buses since 2015 together with the Village Forum (a voluntary association of 37 village associations) and the municipality. It is the villages' contribution to rethinking the possibilities for greener transportation and mobility in rural areas, based on local communities. For several years, we have tried to rethink and test the possibilities for greener transportation and mobility in rural areas.

We have tested carpooling and mobility with, among other things, “Kør-mæ” benches in a number of villages - inspired by “mit-fahr-banke” south of the border, a bicycle ferry across Flensburg Fjord, sharing electric bikes at Kær, car sharing in a few villages, a bike sharing trailer for 10 bikes.

We asked our villagers what motivates them to carpool instead of driving, and most of them said: environmental considerations. Next, it's the opportunity to save money.

In the context of “saving money”, we've been looking at “sharing economy” initiatives. We have worked to create a “sharing bank for the villages” - or a “gear bank” - where villagers, associations and

institutions can borrow equipment rather than buying it all themselves. We are working closely with the nature guides and the health department - we're not there yet, but we're getting there.

As far as the village weeks are concerned, we already have various things that we share. For example, tables and benches on the bike ferry across Flensburg Fjord, which can be borrowed by others outside the summer season. A Christiania bike with room for two passengers in front (looks a bit like a Richshaw) so that people with reduced mobility can also get going, and an overview has been made of all the other elements and things that can be borrowed across the villages.

We just need to reinvent the need to share, because we all know examples from the past where people could share a farm machine or a trailer.

In the project, we tried to tie it together with a smarter and simpler booking portal: the NaboGo app. Our research showed that more people know about a carpooling app - but not as many had used one. We therefore saw a task in trying to change behavior through concrete actions towards a more sustainable future.

But our biggest obstacles to changing habits towards more carpooling are

- o You don't want to give up personal freedom to drive whenever you want
- o Everyday routines don't fit well with having to coordinate with others
- o Transportation time is seen as a free space where you don't want to be disturbed by others

WHAT ARE WE PAYING ATTENTION TO?

- Timing is crucial for us to change our behavior. It could be right after a move, the start of school or after a vacation. The same goes for pilot projects that are pressed for time to plan, test and implement a lasting solution. By the time the project is ready to fly, some people have dropped out and the context has changed.
- Corona was a game-changer and now rising fuel prices are an obvious opportunity to change behavior
- We need to make it easy - get people to take that first small step (e.g. download the app)
- We are herd animals... raise awareness of the opportunities and benefits
- We've found that few people know the cost of having one car in the garage or two cars...
- We need to share more...

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

- Getting 100% economy in the village buses - it is difficult to find a balance between the willingness to pay and what it costs to rent a 9-seater bus per month with full insurance and the possibility for anyone over 18 to get behind the wheel. And that volunteerism can sustain larger tasks over time.
- The transport companies that cover the regions have suggested that they can make agreements with car-sharing operators to promote carpooling. For example, the transport company could co-finance a citizen's journey with a carpooling service or, during a start-up period, provide incentives to establish the service in local communities.

Internationally, there are more and more examples of transport companies having this option, which is used in areas/times where traditional public transport solutions are not economically viable. A condition for subsidization could be that the journey is searched for and paid for via the service from the future joint Travel Card and Travel Plan Company.

We look forward to the results from the appointed expert committee that will map transportation needs and come up with ideas for public transport solutions that can be used in rural and urban areas by the end of 2024.

- We recommend that we get much better at thinking and collaborating across the board - connecting opportunities between transport companies, hauliers, commuters, volunteers, village associations and the municipality or others - and listening to what the people involved want and will act on.

- Our experience is that civil society, in a strong partnership with the public sector, can help solve the socio-economic challenges of CO2 emissions, road congestion and wasted time and money. BUT; as volunteers we can't do it alone. We have several examples of a village guild "giving birth" to a project based on citizen requests that grow bigger than the board can handle due to the complexity and greater operational responsibility. A village guild cannot operate energy supply, public transportation or a ferry connection between two countries with a voluntary and ideal principle (the association structure we know with a general board). This requires a focus on the

economic principle, each with its own logic, and then partnerships with, for example, utility companies, the municipality or regional partners are needed.

- In the project, we see that a high degree of self-determination seems to motivate us when we participate in purposeful activities together with others to whom we have a sense of belonging. And we have learned that what drives us is that it should make sense and create our identity, and that engagement is created in us through the community with others.
- However, we find that “small bumps in the road” take up too much space - such as heavy control and bureaucracy around associations' bank connections, division of responsibilities when sharing elements in the gear bank, including insurance, municipal budgets and administrative changes, etc.

We're not there yet with the complete solution to the sharing economy... but we're on our way and have tested several things along the way to get smarter...