

# Regional impact for North-European regions from the TENTacle project, with a focus on Central Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea Region

Report from the Innovation Circle Network, Vidzeme Planning Region and the Värmland-Østfold Border Council

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## Executive Summary

The Innovation Circle Network was one of the initiators of the TENTacle project, which sought to raise awareness of the potential regional development benefits that could follow the Trans-National European Networks for Transport and their Core Network Corridors. TENTacle sought to involve a wide range of stakeholders at different scales, in particular at local scale amongst politicians, professionals and businesses. The report looks at what was achieved by the Innovation Circle Network and in two of TENTacle's case study regions, Vidzeme Planning Region and the Estonian town of Valga, and the Central Scandinavian Borderland, where ICN members were partners.

As well as drawing on web-based publications of the ICN and the TENTacle project, the research for the report undertook a short email questionnaire sent to some of the key players and stakeholders involved in the project in these two regions. The ICN was found to have been active in developing and disseminating ideas and actions within and also reaching a wider audience.

In Vidzeme, Valga and the Central Scandinavian Borderland a range of methods were used to engage with stakeholders. Overall the project's aims were achieved. Face-to-face meetings with local politicians and with transport and urban planning professionals in a range of agencies were felt to be particularly successful, though not all local politicians engaged with this work.

Any direct regional development benefits were always going to be in the future, following the advocacy through the project. However, in Valga there has been a positive response through a project to implement aspects of the Mobility Study undertaken through the project. The Vidzeme Planning Region was conceived within TENTacle as being within the potential "catchment" of the Core Network Corridor that runs through the Baltic States. However, within this largely rural region there are significant differences in accessibility to that corridor. The Mobility Strategy prepared through the project was seen as a valuable input to policy making.

The Central Scandinavian Borderland was categorised as a Corridor Void area, and the partners worked on making the case for new rail investment through a high speed Oslo-Stockholm link. This idea achieved substantial publicity and won some political backing, though also met some political opposition.

In both regions and in the municipality of Valga, the project made the case for seeing transport investment as a part of regional development, but also as a means to foster more environmentally sustainable forms of mobility. Participation in TENTacle has strengthened the interest of the ICN in issues of green mobility, locally and internationally.

## Aims of the report

This report provides an overview of the TENTacle project from the perspective of three of the 23 partners in the project. Vidzeme Planning Region, Valga Municipality and the Innovation Circle Network (ICN). Vidzeme and Valga are linked by being members of the ICN, while some members of the Värmland-Østfold Border Council are also ICN members. The report explores the aims of these partners, who were directly involved in two of the seven TENTacle case study areas. It summarises the key actions that they undertook within TENTacle, and provides feedback from them at the end of the project on what were the main achievements and lessons. It also summarises work the ICN did throughout the project.

## Background

The Trans-European Networks – Transport (TEN-T) Core Network Corridors (CNCs) in the Baltic Sea Region can be seen as the origin of the TENTacle project. The aim of the CNCs is to coordinate investment in transport infrastructure so as to stimulate regional growth. TENTacle pinpointed two important issues. First, there was a need to look beyond the CNCs themselves and to the gaps in the networks. Second, that to capitalise fully on the potential of the transport investment, and achieve the regional development impacts sought, a wide range of stakeholders at different scales would need to be involved. In particular there had to be awareness raising and capacity building at local level. Concerns about climate change and reducing carbon emissions from transport were less explicit and central to the project initially, but came to the fore in the ICN and its members in Vidzeme, Valga and Värmland-Østfold.

The ICN is “a network that supports small and medium sized places in Europe to make them sustainable and attractive to live at.” It was established in 2007 to bring together rural regions and municipalities of the Baltic Sea Region and to cooperate for a better future for rural Europe. It was one of the drivers behind the creation of the TENTacle project, together with Region Blekinge and Hamburg Hafen Marketing in 2014-2015, capitalising on the IC network and its previous EU projects. The ICN brought to TENTacle its network and experience in working with partners in EU regional development projects, and reaching out to stakeholders.

From the outset, the TENTacle project recognised that stakeholder involvement posed significant challenges. Newsletter 1 stated “Considering that the CNCs include road, rail, air and water transports as well as both passenger and goods transports, it is easy to realize that the number of stakeholders is high, stretching across several countries and border crossings.” Öberg (2018) found that awareness of the CNC development process was very varied, with a particular need for more information to be directed at business representatives. There were calls for conferences and workshops and direct and customised information. In addition, she found that expectations were also varied, both in terms of economic, ecological and “social sustainable development” benefits, but also concerns that CNCs might actually widen the development gap between places on a corridor and neighbouring regions.

Newsletter 1 also noted that there are different challenges “if you are geographically located on the corridor, as compared to being located in the corridors’ catchment area or more peripheral areas.” Thus, Vidzeme and Valga were placed in a different geographical category than and the Central Scandinavian Borderland. TENTacle put Vidzeme and Valga into a “Corridor catchment area”, meaning that they might seek to realise spill-over benefits from the North Sea-Baltic CNC, whereas the Central Scandinavian Borderland was an example of a “Corridor void area”, the missing cross-border link between Oslo and Örebro.

This report therefore looks at four main matters:

- What actions did the ICN undertake?
- What can be learned from the engagement of stakeholders?
- What can be learned about regional development?
- What can be learned about policy making on climate change?

Research for this report is based on the materials produced by the ICN and by TENTacle and available on their websites [www.innovationcircle.net](http://www.innovationcircle.net) and [www.tentacle.eu](http://www.tentacle.eu) and, in particular, on the reports and events in relation to the case studies in Vidzeme, Valga and in the Central Scandinavian Borderland. In addition, short email questionnaires were sent to some of the key actors in these partners.

## Innovation Circle Network

From the start of the TENTacle project, the ICN used its conferences to raise awareness of the project and share ideas and approaches. The project was first presented to the 2015 ICN annual conference in Berlin. Then the ninth annual conference, held in Riga in 2016, took as its theme “Europeans on the move – Between urban hubs and rural towns”. Speakers explored the linkage between transit corridors and regional growth, town development and new transport routes. The Helsinki-Tallinn-Tunnel and Fehmarn-Belt case were featured. Speakers included Andris Maldups, Director of the transit policy department of the Ministry of Transport in Latvia, who introduced the audience to the new rail connection linking Yiwu City in China and Riga. There was also a presentation on the Rail Baltica project by Ms. Baiba Rubesa, the Chairperson of the Board of Rail Baltica. Jörg Westermann, CEO from Norsk Bane also spoke. Thus from the start ICN opened an international dialogue and connected local stakeholders from amongst its partners to national level policy makers.

In March 2017 ICN helped to organise and deliver a one-day conference in Oslo concerning the Central Scandinavian Borderland. This was attended by 30 experts mainly from Norway and Sweden, and again brought together local and national level stakeholders. A full report was produced of this event. In June 2017 the meeting of the TENTacle partners in Berlin was reported on the ICN website. Then at the tenth ICN conference in Suwalki in November 2017, attended by 70 people from 10 different countries, including China, Alf Johansen presented a progress report on TENTacle, and there were presentations and discussion of the Belt and Road project and the opportunities it might create for the Baltic Sea Region. This was followed

up with a blog on the ICN website. Two further reports on the TENTacle project were posted on the ICN website in January 2018. The ICN annual conference in Tallinn that year focused on the TENTacle theme “Green Mobility = Green Growth” and included presentations and discussions of the TENTacle work in Vidzeme and the Central Scandinavian Borderland. ICN members also took part in the final TENTacle event in Brussels in March 2019.

In summary, throughout the project ICN used its international and local networks to reach a wider audience of local governments, regions, national authorities, NGO’s, transnational organisations and experts within BSR. As well as raising awareness and building capacity in this way, the idea of green mobility has “spilled over” from the TENTacle project to become a central theme of the ICN as a whole for the future.

## Vidzeme

The Vidzeme Planning Region illustrates the opportunities and challenges of CNC development for regions that, while not on a CNC, are nevertheless close enough to connect to it. Located in the north-east of Latvia, it covers 24% of the national territory yet has a population of less than 250,000, the least of all Latvian regions. It suffers net out-migration, both to Riga and internationally, which is expected to continue at least until 2030 (Ardenis Ltd, et.al. No date). It shares borders with Estonia and with Russia. Riga, Latvia’s capital, is much the largest city in Latvia and the key Latvian hub on the North Sea-Baltic CNC. So the regional development question for Vidzeme is whether improved connectivity to the CNC can help reverse the steep demographic decline – or will the CNC further the dominance of Riga?

The extensive nature of Vidzeme Planning Region means some parts of it are much closer to the CNC than others. Ardenis Ltd, et.al. (No date) reported that distances to Riga were between 60 and 240 kms, with travel times by road transport ranging between one and three hours: these are significant differences within the region. They note the EU goal that by 2050 most people and businesses will live no more than 30 minutes travel time from a CNC. This may be achieved for places in the northern and central parts of Vidzeme, but there must be serious doubts about how realistic this is for the south-eastern parts.

The key TENTacle output for Vidzeme is the Vidzeme Regional Mobility Investment Plan 2030 (Ardenis Ltd, et.al. No date). It was produced after a programme of consultation that involved roundtable discussions, 42 interviews with local, regional and national stakeholders, and seminars and workshops. The English summary of the Regional Mobility Investment Plan 2030 notes that per capita the Latvian networks of roads are more extensive than those in Scandinavian countries, while Latvia’s GDP per capita is much lower. However, the report says that it is necessary to preserve Vidzeme’s existing network, and improve the condition of state roads, and municipal roads and streets. The full Latvian version of the Mobility Study has a section on investment and an annex listing numerous road improvements and their costs. The transport infrastructure in this part of Latvia is poor, when compared with other EU countries or even other parts of Latvia. Therefore the planners in Vidzeme found the Mobility

Study to be valuable for several reasons. It provides a long-term focus – to 2030; it gives local and national policy makers a comprehensive overview of the networks, and identifies gaps.

The Vidzeme Regional Mobility Investment Plan 2030 recognises the dominance of private cars, especially in the rural areas, while recommending a bus-on-demand system for the remoter regions where public transport services are already almost non-existent. The poor road quality and connections are also identified as having negative impacts for businesses in Vidzeme. The consultants called for restoration of freight hubs near railway lines and better connections to the new cargo terminal at Salaspils. In addition the Plan called for investment in cycle paths, traffic safety and for pedestrians.

The report argues that “development of international transport corridors is essential for the



*The Study visit to Sweden (Region Blekinge) was very productive. It showed, and what is very important, explained real life examples to our stakeholders which lead to better understanding of how these best practices could be transferred to Latvia.*

*The Design Thinking approach was fruitful during face to face events (conferences and local seminars on mobility). Design Thinking facilitated by experts allowed us to be more open minded and client / end user oriented when designing our vision for further transport system development.*

**VIDZEME PLANNING REGION**

region to integrate into the European transport system, to participate in joint development projects with bordering regions, to strengthen the region’s accessibility and improve mobility”(p.3). To achieve this, the report advocates high speed connections to Riga from Valmiera (a city of 25,000) and the other main towns along two transport corridors, one based on the E264 (Cesis-Valmiera-Valka) and the other on the E77 through Rauna and Ape. Smaller towns would be linked by road to each other and into these corridors.

Another TENTacle study (TENTacle, 2018) looked at the likely impacts of the Rail Baltica component of the North Sea-Baltic CNC. Rail Baltica is to be a double track electrified railway line, carrying passenger trains at 240km/hour and freight, and connecting Tallinn on a north-south line via Riga and Kaunas to the Lithuanian border with Poland. The impact analysis revealed that Riga would be the main economic beneficiary within Latvia. Part of that growth will be through relocation of people and businesses from other parts of Latvia to the capital. In particular the urban areas in the eastern part of the country are expected to suffer these displacement effects, as their accessibility decreases relative to the nodes on the new Rail Baltica line. The result for these more peripheral regions is “less and lower paid jobs, lower income tax base, higher transportation costs and decrease in demand for land and housing

which would cause a drop in price levels” (p.39). Thus increasing regional disparities are identified as a possible outcome.

This view contrasts with the more optimistic aims for Vidzeme as a Corridor Catchment Area, and the transport improvements proposed in the Vidzeme Regional Mobility Investment Plan 2030. In the light of the impact study, more remote parts of Vidzeme might be better categorised as a Corridor Void Area, while towns on the two proposed corridors connecting to the CNC might hope to benefit from better connections to Riga and beyond. Meanwhile, representatives of Vidzeme Planning Region rightly point out that spending money on infrastructure just because money is there, e.g. through EU funding, can sometimes have no positive impact or even worsen the overall mobility situation. This has been a criticism of the use of Cohesion Funds in many countries. The value of the Regional Mobility Investment Plan



*Overall communication with business sector is something to be improved in future. Maybe Vidzeme Planning Region as a brand is not strong enough and that's why we did not get the expected response from businesses which we tried hard to involve. In future they could be approached through ministries or associations which they know and trust more.*

#### VIDZEME PLANNING REGION

as an exercise is that it is helped to change local mindsets and approaches, raising awareness of transport and mobility as very complex systems that deserve more attention.

Reflecting on the project, the view from participants in Vidzeme Planning Region is that there were real benefits. These included capacity building through participation in the project partner meetings,

conferences and seminars. Networking with other partners was valued, along with the opportunity to develop the Mobility Investment Plan. The project also stimulated cooperation with the Ministry of Transport of Latvia.

In Vidzeme, the TENTacle goal of raising awareness and building capacity at local level amongst a wide range of stakeholders was achieved. The Mobility Investment Plan and project findings were presented three times to the Development Council of Vidzeme Planning Region, The Ministry of Transport was involved in the project and in developing the Mobility Investment Plan. Stakeholders also participated in the study tour to Sweden and international/local TENTacle conferences and seminars, including of course the ICN conferences where TENTacle figured prominently. As is often the case, involvement of business stakeholders proved most difficult. It also proved hard to get representatives of transport and logistics associations based in Riga to come to Vidzeme for meetings and events, though they did respond to questionnaires and other surveys. During the project Vidzeme used a wide range of methods to raise awareness, notably meetings, round table discussions, study visits, conferences, seminars, surveys, workshops, and cooperation with project partners, particularly the city of Valga.



## Valga

Valga is on the southern border of Estonia, while its twin town Valka is in Latvia and part of Vidzeme Planning Region. Until the declaration of the independence of the Republic of Estonia and the Republic of Latvia in 1920 they were one town. Within TENTacle, Valga is part of the Vidzeme Region Pilot Case.

A Mobility Report for the municipality of Valga (OÜ Hendrikson and Ko, 2017) was prepared within TENTacle. It looks at the town and its adjacent municipality Valka. The preparation of this report was the main focus for awareness building. The Valga Municipality planning and development department worked closely with the company carrying out the survey, so the city planners and city architect were perhaps the most direct beneficiaries of the project. The

*It is very important for a small rural municipality like Valga to be part of such a big international project. It gives hope that life in border areas is not dying out if planning the transportation in the area is well thought out.*

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exercise showed the high value of direct communication and discussions with these professionals, along with those in transport companies and urban transport operators. Details of the TENTacle project were posted on the municipality's website, though, not surprisingly, this provision of information did not trigger the same level of involvement from the public that a more direct approach had amongst the professionals and local politicians.

The Mobility Report on Valga / Valka found some differences in the specification of data between the two towns. The work was locally focused, down to street level, and drew on perception analysis that involved children/young people and elderly residents. Valga was found to be “a compact city, where the distribution and distance of different functions and population promotes sustainable mobility and thus the city streets should be designed to support sustainable modes of mobility... developing Valga into (a) walkable and bicycle-friendly city.”

Involvement in the project has brought practical results in Valga. During the development of a new central square, broader sidewalks and safe road crossings were created to facilitate walking and cycling in its surroundings. Also as a result of the mobility study undertaken within TENTacle, there are discussions about how to restructure the central street of the city to make it a more attractive place for environmentally friendly mobility.

Rail Baltica will not pass through Valga. As noted above in relation to Vidzeme, this raises questions about whether the town can gain benefits from being theoretically within its

catchment. Valga is about 160 kms from Riga or 140 kms from Pärnu, the two nearest currently planned stops on the Rail Baltica line.

## Central Scandinavia Borderland

This case study covers areas close to the Sweden-Norway Border: the south eastern parts of the Oslo-region, parts of the counties Akershus and Hedmark, Västra Götaland, and the whole of Østfold and Värmland. While Østfold benefits from its proximity and relatively good accessibility to the Oslo metropolitan area, across the border in Sweden, Värmland is relatively remote from the Stockholm region, and less prosperous. The Central Scandinavian Borderland was chosen as a case study for a region that is Corridor Void. Faced with this situation, the main expected outcome was “a growth and development strategy for the Central Scandinavian Borderland with good connections to the TEN-T core network” (Johansen, 2019, p. 4). This was not the only ambition. Amongst others, was the preparation of a Prosperity and Growth Strategy for the Karlstad region produced by NGOs and civil society, and, like in Vidzeme, awareness raising and capacity building.



The cross-border focus and attempts to influence decision-making on a high-speed rail connection linking Oslo to Stockholm were notable features of this part of the TENTacle project. Arguments about carbon reduction were a key part of this advocacy. To a greater extent than in Vidzeme, the activity in this pilot action addressed central governments, their railway operators and even international investors, though local stake holders and politicians were also reached. Johansen (2019, p.9) reports that despite substantial advocacy from TENTacle, including a Ministerial level meeting, a “joint Nordic transport strategy is not going to be established. Only incremental steps are to be taken on certain railway lines. There is no

shared strategy on how to establish an integrated cross-border railway structure in Scandinavia. And absolutely no shared high speed rail strategy. Neither is there any budget decisions for major investments for new railways between the Nordic capitals in the next decades.” Lendrup and Hermansson (2018, p.45) quote from Sweden’s Centerpartiet who argue that “the issue of high-speed railways has been stuck in a deadlock in the political debate. One major issue for high-speed railways is that we need to reduce costs and reduce the uncertainty that exists today in Trafikverket’s construction calculations, which show that Swedish high-speed railways are much more expensive to build per kilometre compared with other comparable countries in Europe.”

Despite these barriers, as Johansen’s report shows, the advocacy led by TENTacle partners in this region has achieved considerable publicity in both countries at both national and local levels. Furthermore, the governments of Sweden and of Norway have responded to the arguments from TENTacle by proposing that Oslo-Stockholm should be added to the priority CNCs at the next revision of TEN-T. The project also managed to achieve direct discussions with the European co-ordinator for the Scan-Med corridor, Mr. Pat Cox. The Norwegian government’s National Transport Plan 2018-2029 has also included a commitment that construction of all new railways should enable them to be connected to a high speed network.

The Norwegian Transport Ministry also confirmed in a letter to the ICN that there are no legal obstacles to private investment in new railways (Johansen, 2019, p.12). An innovative feature of actions taken through TENTacle was the reach out to private investors. In particular, Mrs. Wang from the Committee of the China Association for Promoting International Economic and Technical Cooperation attended the ICN conference in 2018, where there was also discussion of the Chinese-led, transnational Belt and Road project.

The report on the Karlstad region confirmed that poor surface connectivity had contributed to the relative decline within Sweden of the city and of the wider Värmland region. In 2010, the regional GDP per capita of Värmland was 81% of the Swedish national GDP, with the county ranked 22 of the 24 Swedish counties. The Nordregio Regional Potential Index placed Värmland 58th among the 74 Nordic Regions. A key TENTacle finding was that “the strong growth in our region depends on the availability and quality of railway transport services. To reverse the negative development trends in Värmland, first, a high speed railway between Oslo and Stockholm, two of the fastest growing regions in Europe, is needed. Such a railway will create a labor market from Oslo to Stockholm, and will help Karlstad improve its comparative competitiveness in relation to other cities of a similar size in e.g. in eastern and southern Sweden” (Lendrup and Hermansson, 2018, p.2). However, the report as a whole is much broader in scope. It discusses the potential impacts of new technologies, skills, political leadership, and the loss of a regional-based banking system for example. It presents a vision and a broad-based strategy for the growth of Karlstad.

A notable feature of the work done by TENTacle in this Central Borderland pilot study was the emphasis it put on climate change. Reduction of emissions-heavy road and air transport were a strong part of the case for the investing in a high-speed rail connection. The EU achieved an overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 19% in the period 1990 to 2012, with reductions in most sectors: however, in the transport sector, over that period, emissions increased (Jos Delbeke and Peter Vis, 2016, p.15). This indicates not just growth in the

*Our primary goal was to lift “the missing link”, meaning the railway between Örebro and Oslo, to the priority level of TEN-T. The result is that the ministers for infrastructure in Norway and Sweden has put that demand to the EU-department responsible for the next revision a TEN-T in 2021. The working method was continuous contacts with the “right” persons to inform and describe the necessity of this decision for the region.*

#### URBAN HERMANSSON, TRANSNORDEN.

regional infrastructure projects. In particular there needs to be better inter-sectoral collaboration between transport planning, spatial planning, and regional development. The Oslo Region commented that while they were only indirectly involved in the TENTacle project, “The project was of benefit for us in terms of building knowledge and awareness among other stakeholders that can influence the improvement of cross border rail transport in Scandinavia.” This reflected the positive tone from others who responded to the questionnaire.

Overall it was seen that the project had succeeded in raising awareness and building capacity amongst stakeholders in Värmland-Østfold. There was recognition in Marker that local

*The main benefit was to establish a possibility to include the northern axis of the Scandinavian triangle, e.g. Oslo – Stockholm in the TEN-T map as a first important step to realize a high speed train connection between the two cities.*

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politicians and businesses could have been more involved, and that awareness within the local community could have been greater. From Østfold Fylkeskommune the view was that there had been particular success in involving local mayors and people involved in cross-border railway development. The seminars and participation in political debates were seen as successful, while also noting that pursuit of solutions such as a high-speed train that were not seen as politically viable could be seen as a distraction. Urban Hermansson, in responding to the questionnaire,

conceded that, while one of the major political parties had taken up the cause, “So far our least success is connected to our proposal to build new high-speed railways. Local and regional partners are not convinced that the value motivates the huge investments. Our tries to change this attitude based on scientific studies and transportation forecasts have not been enough.”

## Conclusions

Amongst the ICN and the partners who are ICN members the TENTacle project succeeded in its aim of raising awareness and building capacity in relation to the impact of the TEN-T programme and its CNCs. The project recognised at the start that potentially there were very many stakeholders to reach out to. A wide range of methods were used to connect to them. As well as the successive annual ICN conferences between 2015 and 2018, there were seminars, study visits, publications, workshops, use of websites, and face-to-face meetings. Not only were local and regional stakeholders mobilised, but there were dialogues with actors and agencies at national, transnational and EU levels. This represents a considerable achievement.

Not surprisingly, the “deep” forms of involvement – face-to-face meetings – had a more significant impact than the “shallow” approaches, such as putting information on a website. Similarly, the capacity building and awareness raising was best achieved with respect to professionals and civil servants working in urban planning and transport agencies, and with local politicians. Not only were these the stakeholders with a very direct interest in TENTacle’s concerns, they were also the ones most likely to take part in the most intensive engagement activities, such as face-to-face meetings. Targeting such group was an effective deployment of limited resources within the project.

Not all local politicians were equally engaged, and it also proved difficult to engage actively stakeholders from the business community or the wider public, though media coverage of the case for high-speed trains between Oslo and Stockholm will have reached a very wide audience.

Regional development was always seen as a long-term aim of TENTacle, with the short-term focus on awareness raising as the necessary stage to influence policy and eventual investment. In Vidzeme the Mobility Plan is seen as having provided a valuable starting point to support the case for investment in regional transport infrastructure. The Mobility Study of Valga has resulted in actions to improve mobility for all within the town. In the Central Scandinavian Borderland TENTacle also played a valuable role in focusing attention on regional development options. In both cases the end of the project will not be the end of the discussion and debate. The full impacts of TENTacle extend well into the future.

Nevertheless, in the short term regional development in Vidzeme, Valga and on the Swedish side of the Central Borderland is not going to benefit from the CNCs. Indeed these areas are likely to lose competitiveness, in relative terms, as the CNC hubs benefit from improved inter-connectivity. There are difficult policy choices ahead, particularly in Vidzeme, where some

towns are better placed within the Corridor Catchment Area than others. Sustaining people and places in the Corridor Void Areas will continue to be a challenge.

Finally, what lessons can be learned from the attempts through the project to advocate for more sustainable transport and mobility options? Within Valga there was receptiveness to these messages, supported by some local action. However, across the sparsely populated rural areas of Vidzeme the car remains the main means of transport and public transport has been in long decline. It remains to be seen whether a “dial-a-bus” system could reverse this trend, which will get worse if people and businesses continue to be drained away. At present it is much easier to move to sustainable mobility mode in towns and cities than in sparsely populated regions. In the Central Scandinavian case there are lessons to be learned from the debates triggered by TENTacle about the environmental case for high-speed rail as an alternative to roads and air travel. The issue has divided opinion amongst politicians there, while the challenges of climate change have mobilised young people to start school strikes which have spread internationally, demanding more radical solutions that an older generation and their politicians are unwilling to embrace.

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