



Trash2Cash Delrapport nr. 3.1

Reinventing the small scale fishery

Delprojekt 3: Højkvalitetsfisk fra Thorupstrand

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Small group of Danish coastal fishers explores **new sales concept**

Reinventing the small scale fishery

A small group of fishermen on the west coast of Denmark is finding innovative ways to maintain the viability of their fishery and make it attractive for younger generations to join the business.

Some of the most desirable addresses in central Copenhagen are in the area around the square Kongens Nytorv. Surrounded by the old opera house, art galleries, the French embassy, expensive hotels, and up market stores, the square is also where Nyhavn starts, a canal lined with colourful 17th and 18th century buildings housing bars, cafes, restaurants, and apartments. At the other end the canal opens into the harbour so that the boats that are berthed all along the sides of the canal can sail out into the Oresund.

The vessels anchored in the canal are a motley mix of pleasure boats, fishing vessels, and even the odd houseboat. A recent addition to this flotilla is the Jammerbugt, a fishing vessel painted the traditional light blue that appeared in the canal towards the end of last year. What is unusual about the Jammerbugt is that the cabin has been refashioned as a fish shop with a glass-fronted refrigerated counter displaying fish and seafood. Depending on the season one can find freshly made fish burgers, fresh flounder, lumpfish, saithe, turbot, haddock, hake, fresh and smoked salmon, and fresh cod. The fish is very fresh – it has been caught the day before and brought to the Jammerbugt to sell.

Selling fish from a boat is not unusual in itself. Havfriskfisk (sea fresh fish) uses an eponymous

website to inform potential customers, when a fishing vessel will arrive in a harbour and what fish it will have on board. Customers can buy the fish directly from the boat. Jammerbugt is different in more than one respect. It is a converted fishing vessel that was remodelled purely to sell fish rather than catch it. It is anchored in Nyhavn in the very centre of Copenhagen, and it is owned by a unique fishermen's guild based on the north west coast of Jutland in an area called Thorupstrand.

Fishermen form guild to protect their livelihood

The Thorupstrand Kystfiskerlaug (Thorup beach coastal fishers' guild) was established in 2006 by the fishing families of Thorupstrand in response to changes in fisheries legislation in Denmark that brought about a consolidation in the industry as bigger fishermen bought up quotas from smaller ones. According to Thomas Højrup, chairman of the guild, this destroyed much of the smaller inshore fishery, replacing an environmentally friendly form of fishing that used gillnets, traps, Danish seines, and long lines with trawlers and purse seines. The fishers from Thorupstrand realising the threat they were facing got together to form a guild that would buy fishing quotas that would be shared by all the members of the guild. The members agreed that the



The Jammerbugt, a fishing vessel that has been remodelled in to a floating fish shop to sell fish caught by the Thorupstrand guild. The boat is anchored in Nyhavn in the heart of Copenhagen.

quotas would not be traded and that new members could join the guild by paying the same fee of DKK100,000 as the founders of the guild had done. If a member leaves he gets the same amount back as he had paid in ensuring thereby that the market value of the quotas stays in the guild. Each year the quotas are distributed between the members who pay the guild for the right to use them, a sum which goes towards paying off the loans taken from the bank to acquire the quotas.

Ensuring an opportunity for the next generation

The formation of the guild has served multiple purposes. On the one hand it has enabled the fishing families of Thorupstrand to continue their fishery at a time when the Danish small scale fishery has shrunk. This has had wider

implications for the town of Thorupstrand as a vibrant fishing community brings economic benefits to the area where they are based. The guild also provides a way for young people interested in becoming fishers to fulfil their ambitions without becoming highly indebted. In addition, the fishing methods and gear used by the fishers in the guild are sustainable causing little or no damage to the environment compared with other forms of capture fishery; the seabed is protected, there is very little bycatch, and the fishers use less fuel. The investment in the Jammerbugt is seen as a way of selling sustainably-caught fish to a consumer circle that is willing to buy into this concept. The relatively affluent consumers that inhabit the area around Nyhavn and Kongens Nytorv form the target market for the fishers of the Thorupstrand Kystfiskerlaug. Well-educated, health conscious, and older than the

median, this is the typical profile of fish consumers, and Nyhavn and the areas around it host many of them. Sofie Romme, the trained chef who manages the shop, says there are young people too, who come and buy fish, mothers with small children for example, but they typically buy the children-friendly fish burgers. The challenge is to attract younger consumers to the Jammerbugt to ensure the sustainability of the concept.

New filleting facility almost completed

The boat underwent a comprehensive refitting that converted it from a regular vessel fishing in the North Sea to a floating fishmonger's. A thorough overhaul of the wooden hull, extensive woodwork, a renovated engine room, expanded cabin, and new refrigerators were among the changes that the vessel went through before it sailed to its destination in Nyhavn in December 2013. The boat is supplied two to three times a week by refrigerated trucks bringing the fish caught in the North Sea by the guild's vessels.

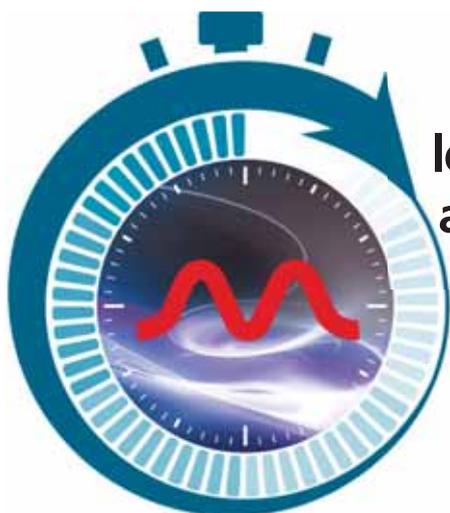
The boats make day trips going out in the morning and returning in the evening so the fish never spends more than a day at sea. Fish from Thorupstrand is augmented with fish bought from the auction at Hanstholm to be able to offer customers a wider range of species and products. According to Iben Wiene Rathje, a fisheries biologist advising the project, although it is too early to come to any conclusions about the success or otherwise of the project, sales have been more or less on track with expectations and, importantly, have been increasing as word of this new fish outlet gets round. People like the fish and appreciate the story that goes with it as well as the fact that they know the fish they buy is from Thorupstrand, says Ms Rathje. The guild in collaboration with two other associations is also building a storage and processing facility, where the fish can be filleted before it is transported to the boat in Copenhagen. Currently this is being done in Hanstholm, a town further north, but since March this year the new facility has been operational.



Sustainably-caught fish from Thorupstrand. A small group of fishers has formed a guild that buys fish quotas and distributes them among its members. Some of the catch is sold from a fishmonger's in Copenhagen that the guild has started.

Since the Jammerbugt is owned and supplied directly by the guild the fishers have effectively eliminated any middlemen. The earnings from the sale of the fish go directly back to the guild. We are aiming at a turnover of DKK10,000 a day, says Ms Romme, to enable the guild to buy more fish quotas. Although it has only been open for a couple of months sales are already approaching half that amount, and the trend is steadily upwards. In late spring and summer when the weather gets warmer the plan is to have a few chairs and tables on the deck, where customers can enjoy a light,

fish-based meal. For a connoisseur fish from the North Sea, particularly the cod, is qualitatively different from the fish caught in the Oresund, the body of water between Sjælland (Zealand), the biggest Danish island, and Sweden, where many of the local vessels fish. Fish from the Danish west coast caught sustainably by a small group of coastal fishermen fighting to retain their traditional livelihood and ensure its existence for coming generations is a story that resonates with customers and should in time even persuade young buyers to purchase more than fish burgers.



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