

AN EXPLORATIVE CASE STUDY APRIL 2026

PERIPHERAL AREAS OF VETLANDA & HÖGSBY

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STUDY SITE





RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) How do border areas **define/experience/identify** themselves and what kind of **relationship** do they have with **territory**?
- 2) How are the **services** in the border areas?
- 3) What **perspective** do the municipalities have on **shrinking periphery areas**?

CONCEPTUAL & TOPICAL FRAMEWORK

- **Sustainability**
- **Depopulation**
- **Shrinking area**
- **Authenticity as an uneven development driver**
- **Rural development and rural power**
- **The Swedish context and planning situation**

METHODS

Semi structured interviews



Survey



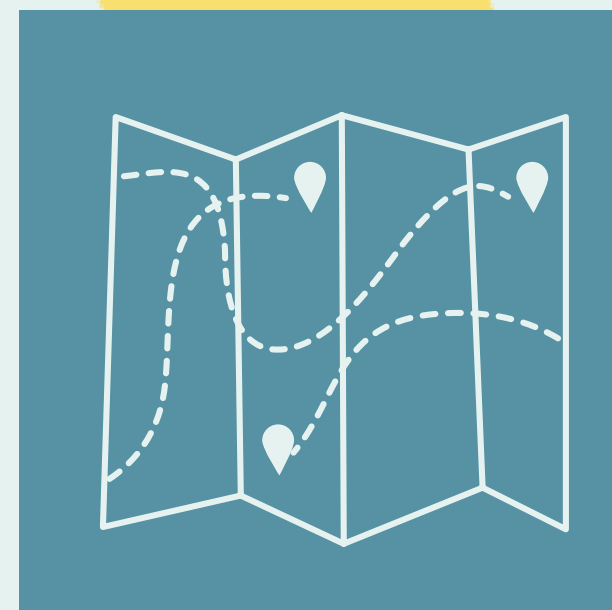
Convenience sampling



Mindmapping



Mapping & spatial



Field mapping



Text analysis



FIELD WORK

Vetlanda



Uppvidinge





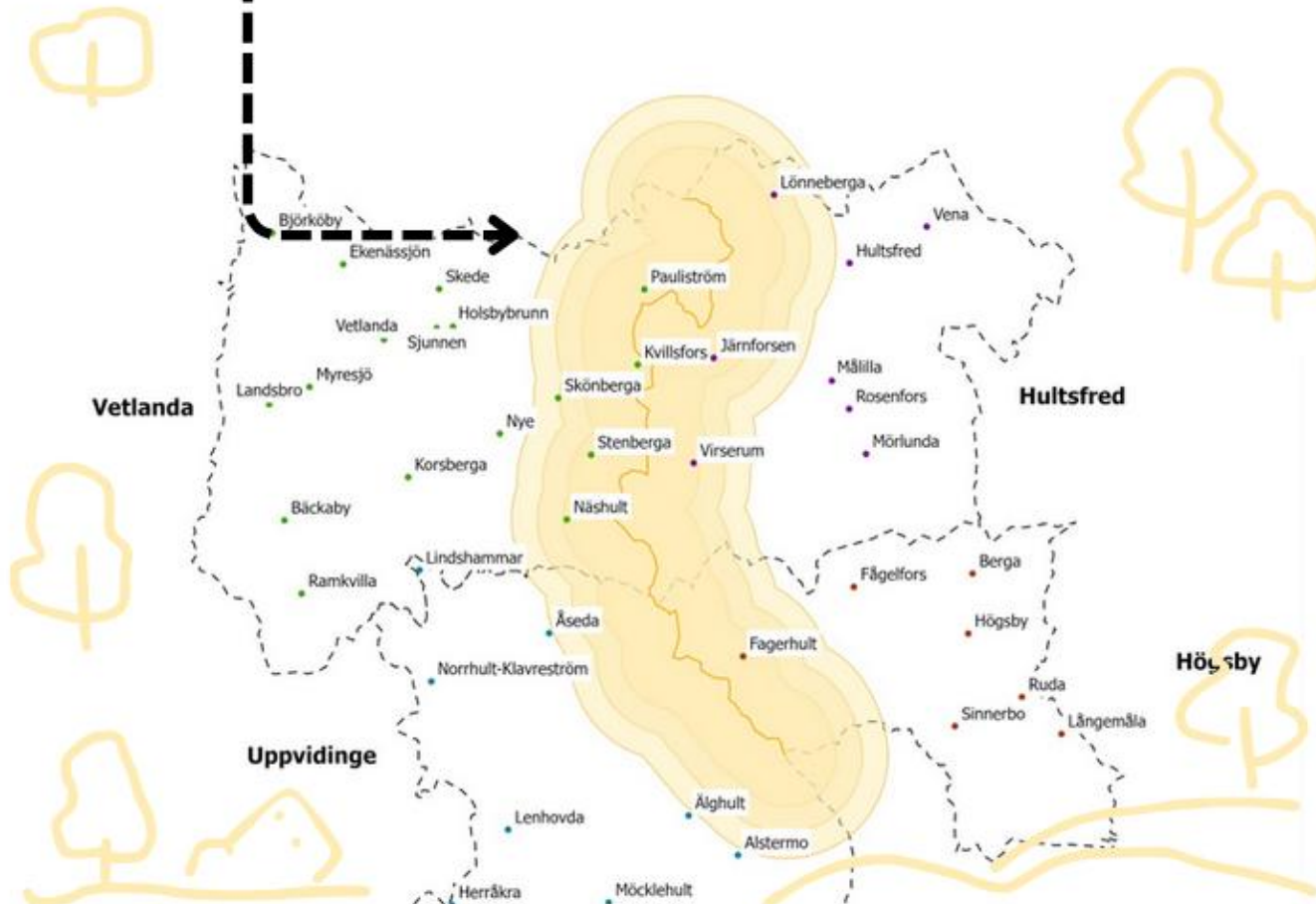
Hej lokalbor!

Hello locals!



Bor du nära det här området?

Do you live in this area?



Om du svarade ja, skulle vi gärna vilja att du svarade på vår enkät! ----->

<http://tiny.cc/Ruralsurvey>



Vi är en grupp studenter i Nord+-programmet som studerar hållbar utveckling i Vetlanda-Högsby-regionen. Som en del av vår forskning är vi intresserade av att lära oss mer om att bo och arbeta på landsbygden inom kommungränserna.



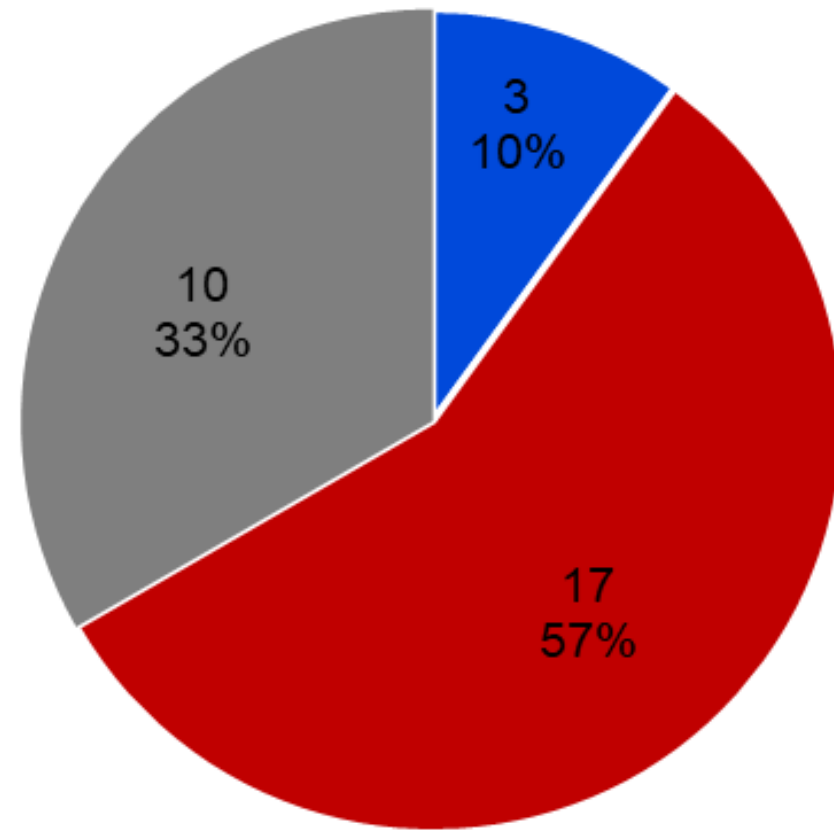
Facebook groups

- Högsbygruppen
- Vi som är från Åseda
- Kvillsfors i mitt hjärta
- Du vet att du är från Hultsfred
- Vetlanda, en levande stad på höglandet
- Hultanäs Sofk
- Vetlanda
- Ruda, Högsby, Berga, Blomstermåla, Långmåla Nytt
- 🏠 Nytt i Fagerhult 🌐 InfoSida för Allt o Alla
- Fagerhults Anslagstavla

Municipality name	Interviewees	Convenience sampling	Survey respondents	Mind maps creators
Vetlanda	3	11	14	4
Högsby	2	4	3	0
Hultsfred	0	3	10	0
Uppvidinge	0	1	3	0

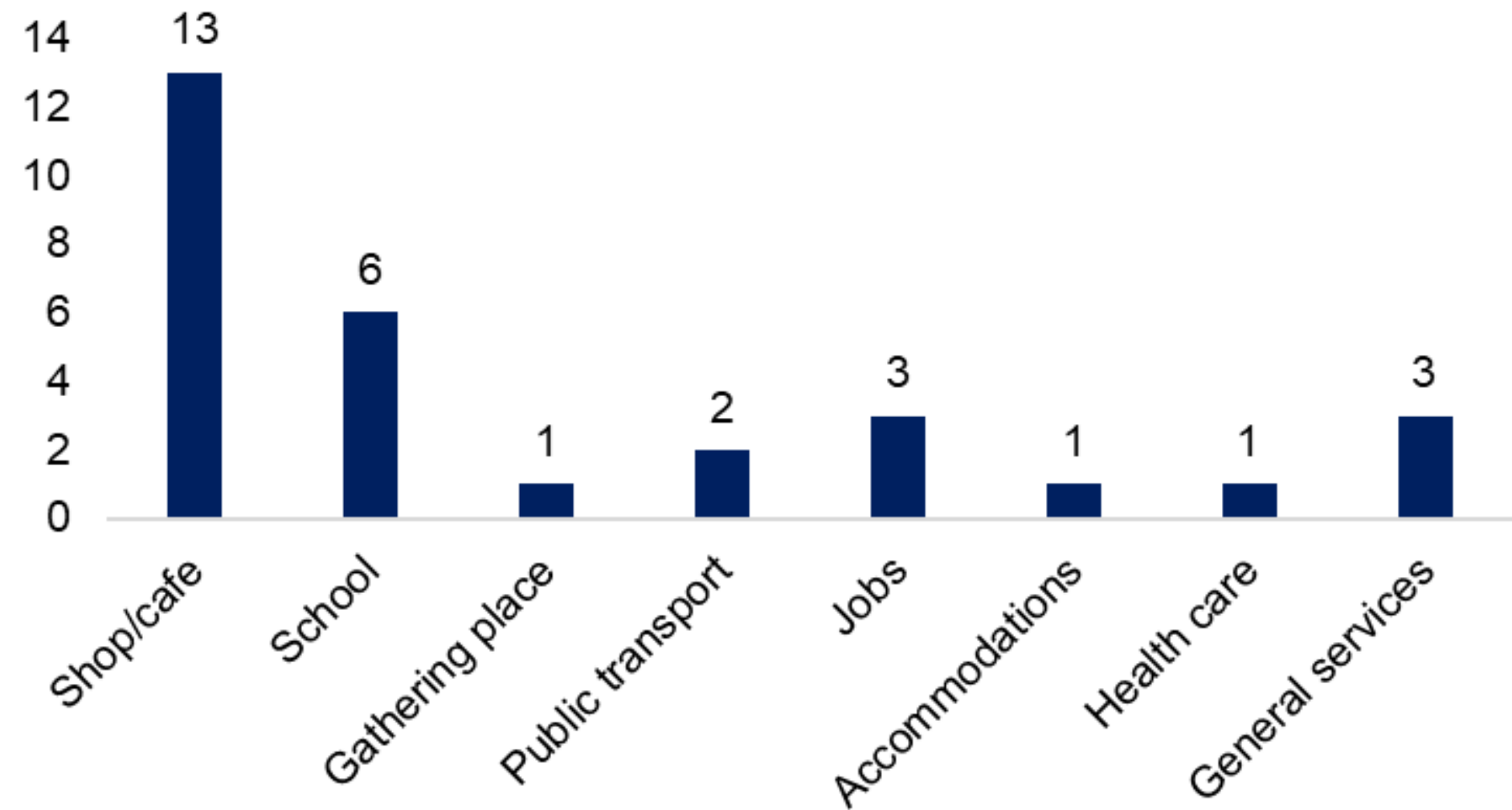
SURVEY ANSWERS

During your time in the community, has your community lost or gained access to amenities



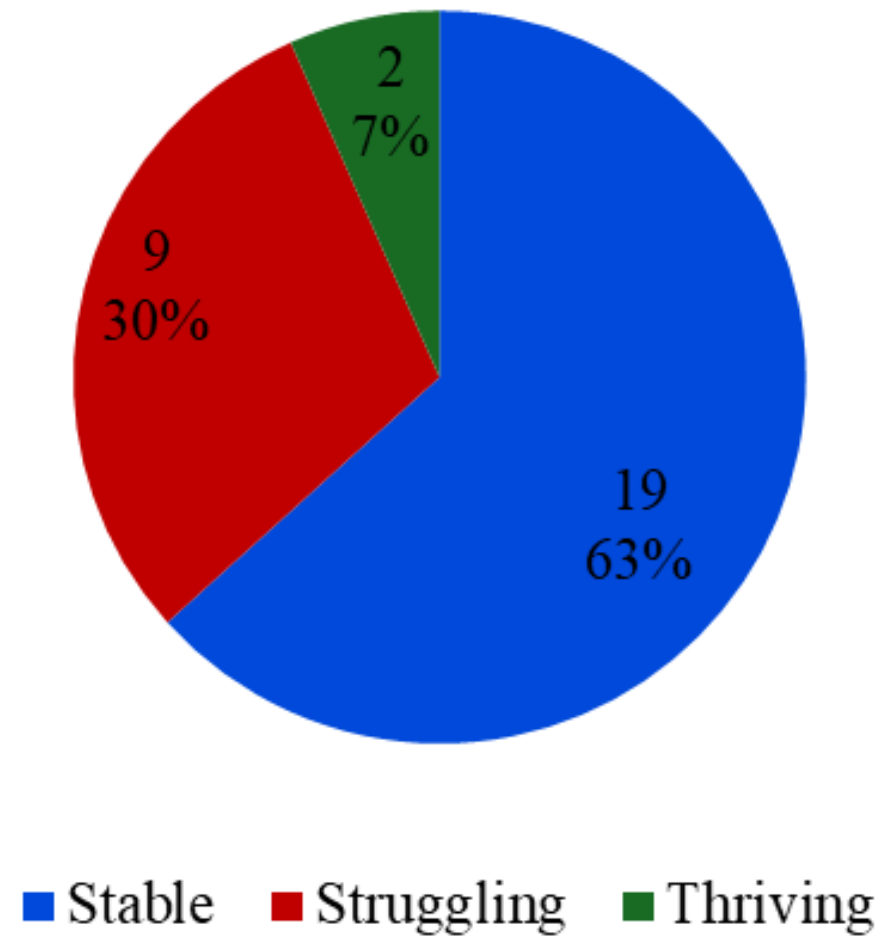
■ Gained ■ Lost ■ Don't know

what amenities have disappeared?

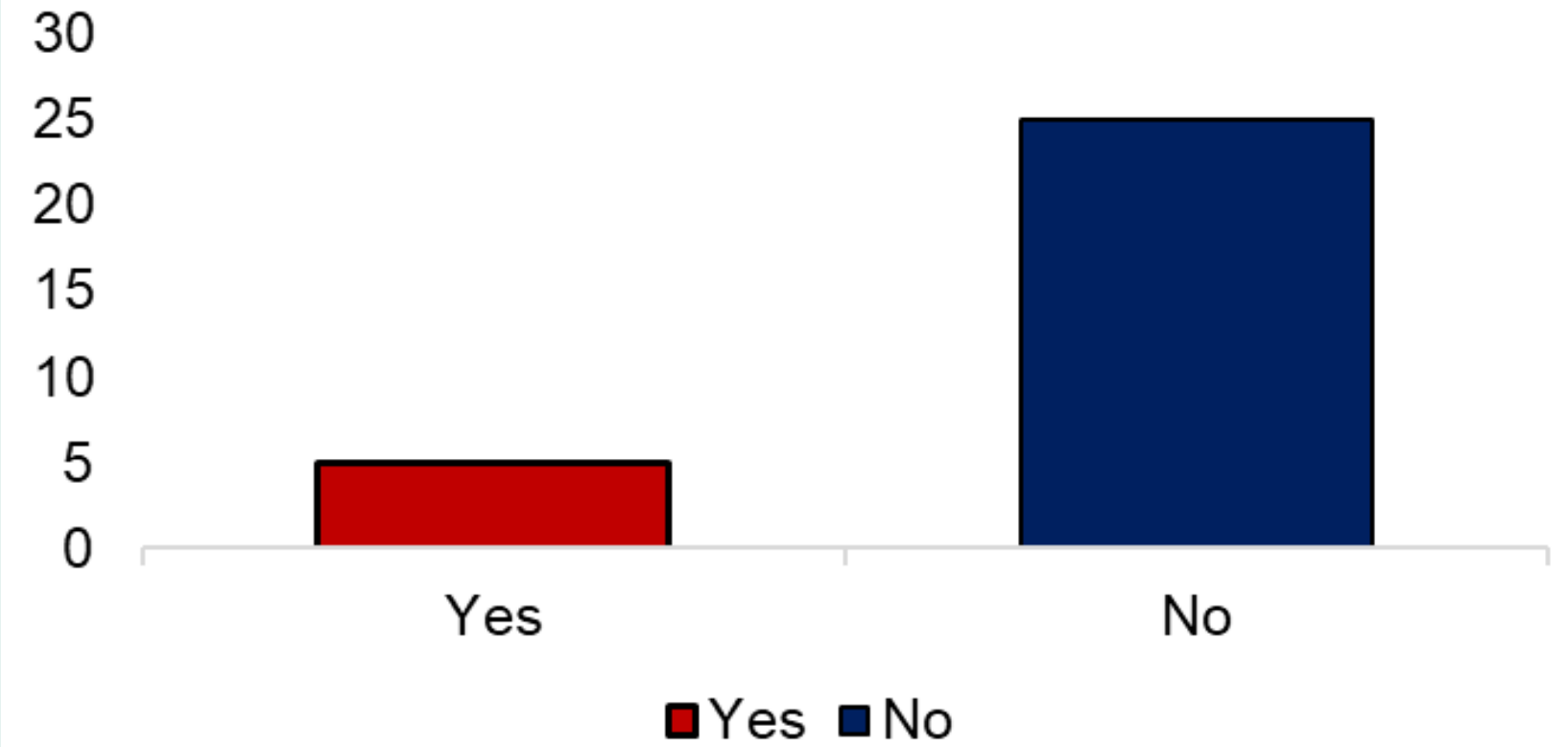


SURVEY ANSWERS

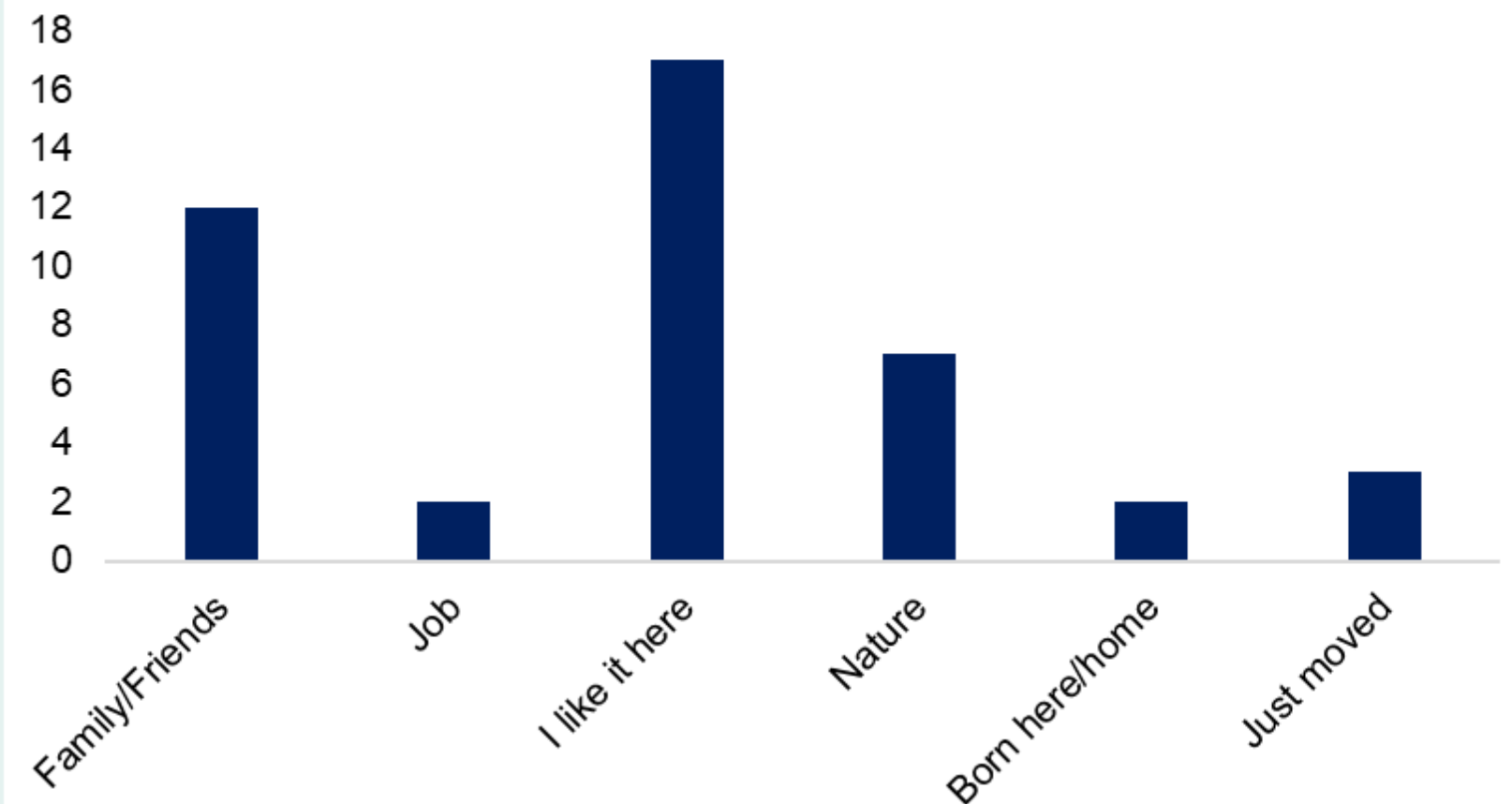
How do you feel your local area where you live is doing over-all?



Have you thought about moving from your municipality/community?

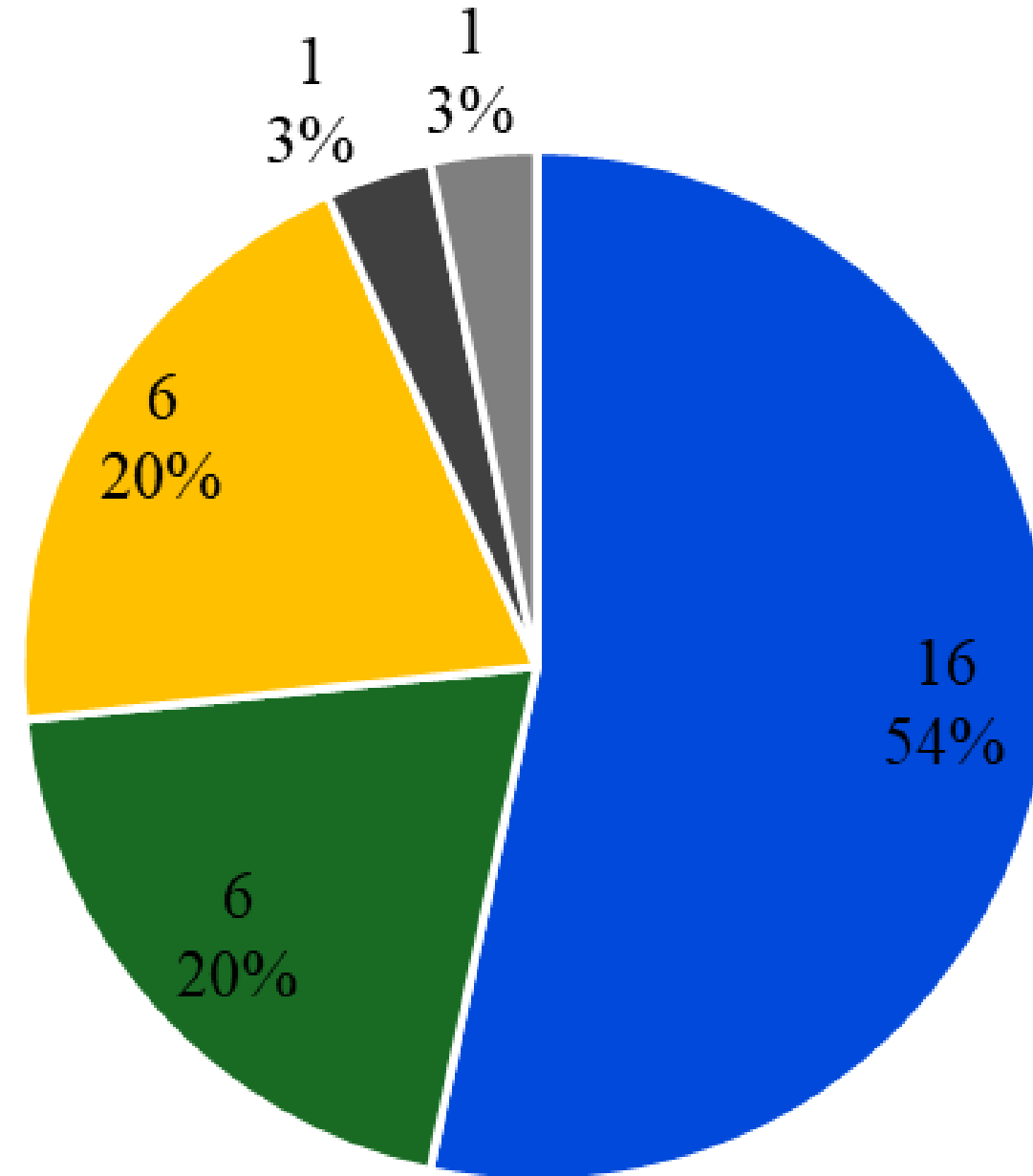


Reasons to stay



SURVEY ANSWERS

What do you think your municipality should prioritize?



■ Public Services ■ Sustainability ■ Economic growth ■ Resilience ■ Other

SURVEY ANSWERS

“GIVE US A LITTLE ATTENTION”

**“THAT ALL RESIDENTS OF THE
MUNICIPALITY ARE PEOPLE WITH
SIMILAR NEEDS WHO DESERVE THE
SAME SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES”**

**“WE LIKE IT HERE. BUT WE’LL
PROBABLY MOVE WHEN WE
GET TOO OLD TO MANAGE ON
OUR OWN.”**

ANSWERS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: HOW DO PEOPLE IN THE RURAL/PERIPHERY AREAS DEFINE THEMSELVES AND WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP DO THEY HAVE WITH TERRITORY?

Citation from survey:
"An idyllic and peaceful countryside with unspoiled natural and cultural landscapes."

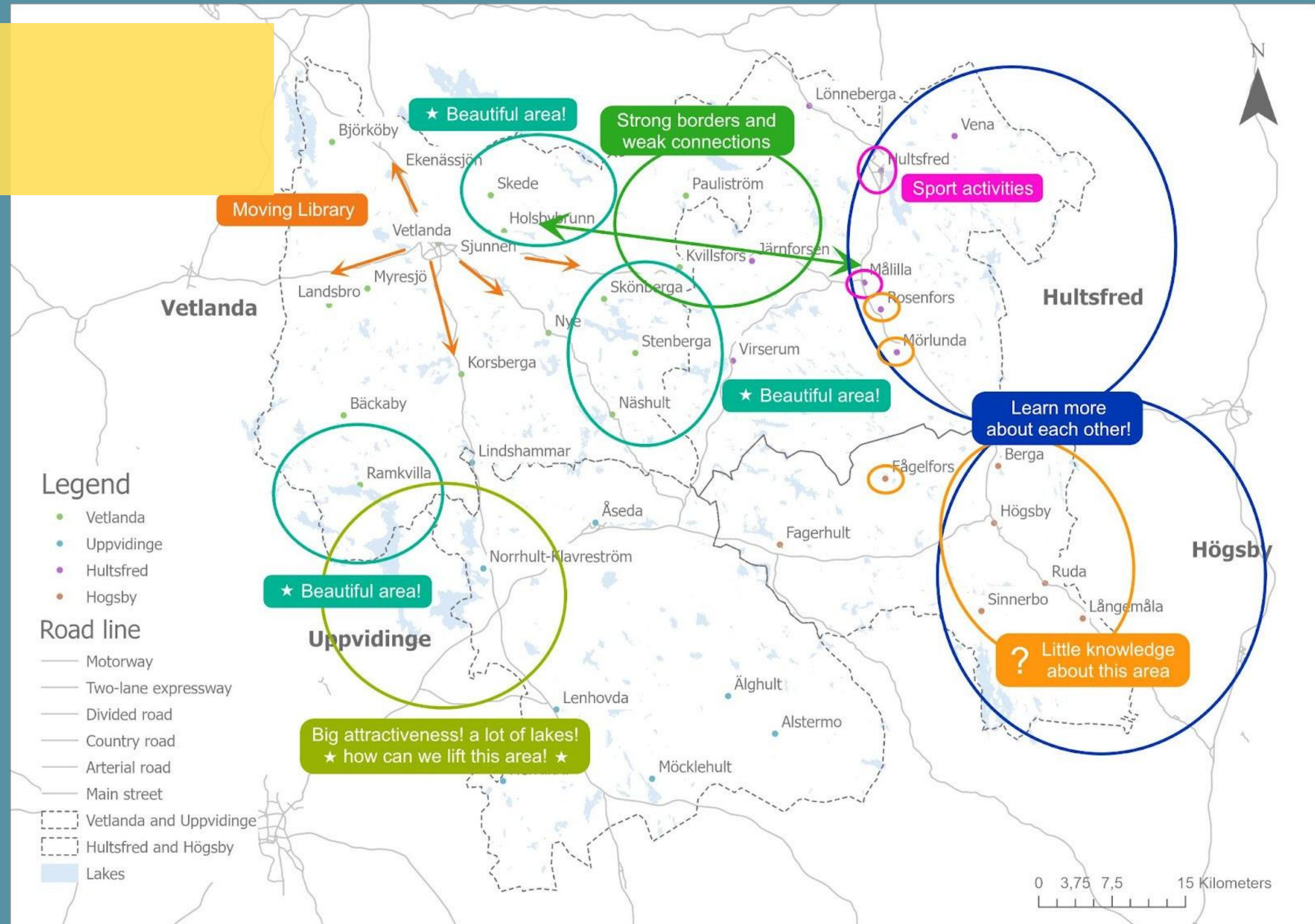
- **Happy place and beautiful nature**
- **Rural and countryside**
- **Self-sufficiency and independence**
- **Boring and abandoned**
- **Foreigners and newcomers**

RQ1: HOW DO PEOPLE IN THE RURAL/PERIPHERY AREAS DEFINE THEMSELVES AND WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP DO THEY HAVE WITH TERRITORY?

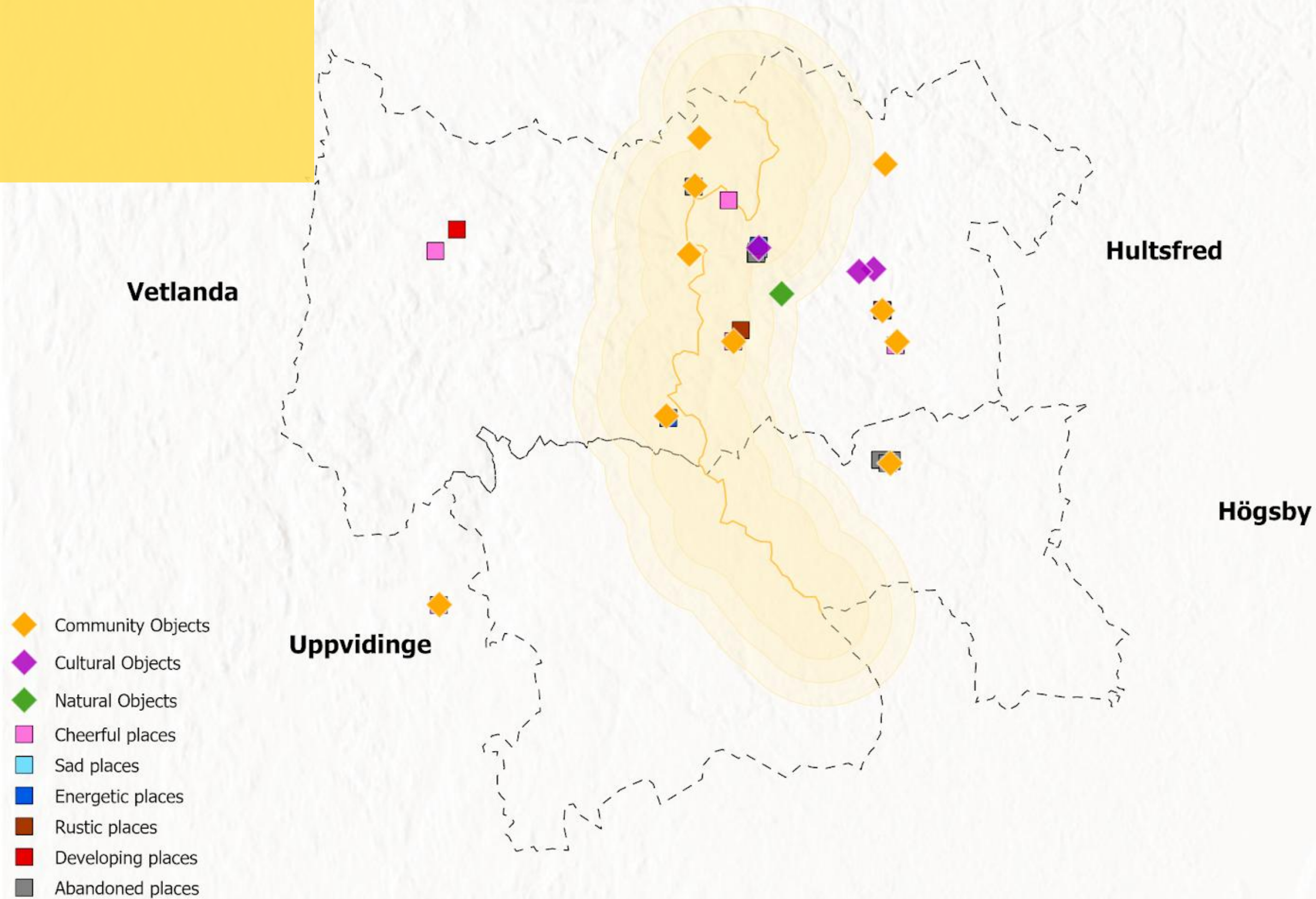
Citation from survey:
“An idyllic and peaceful countryside with unspoiled natural and cultural landscapes.”



MINDMAPPING

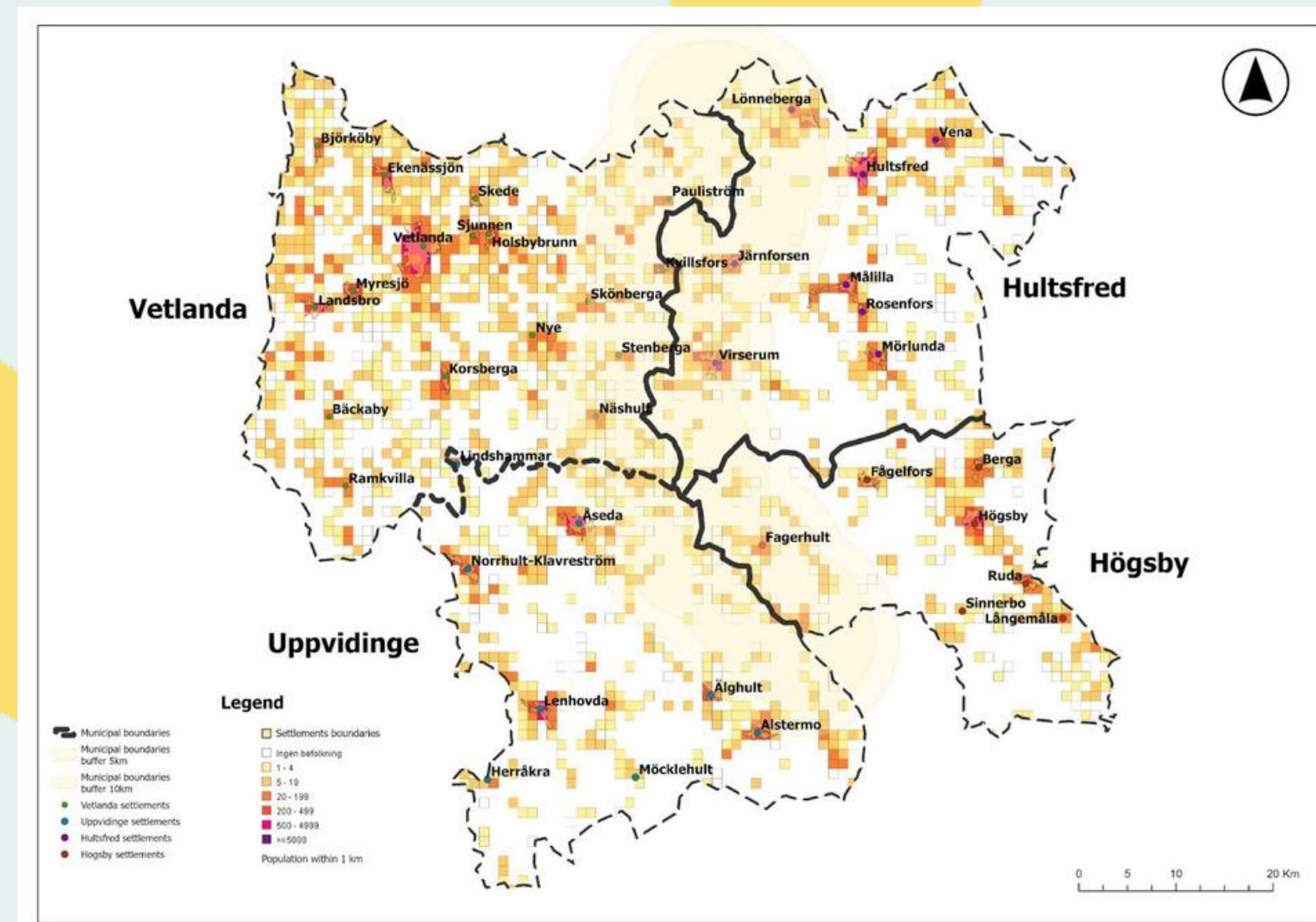
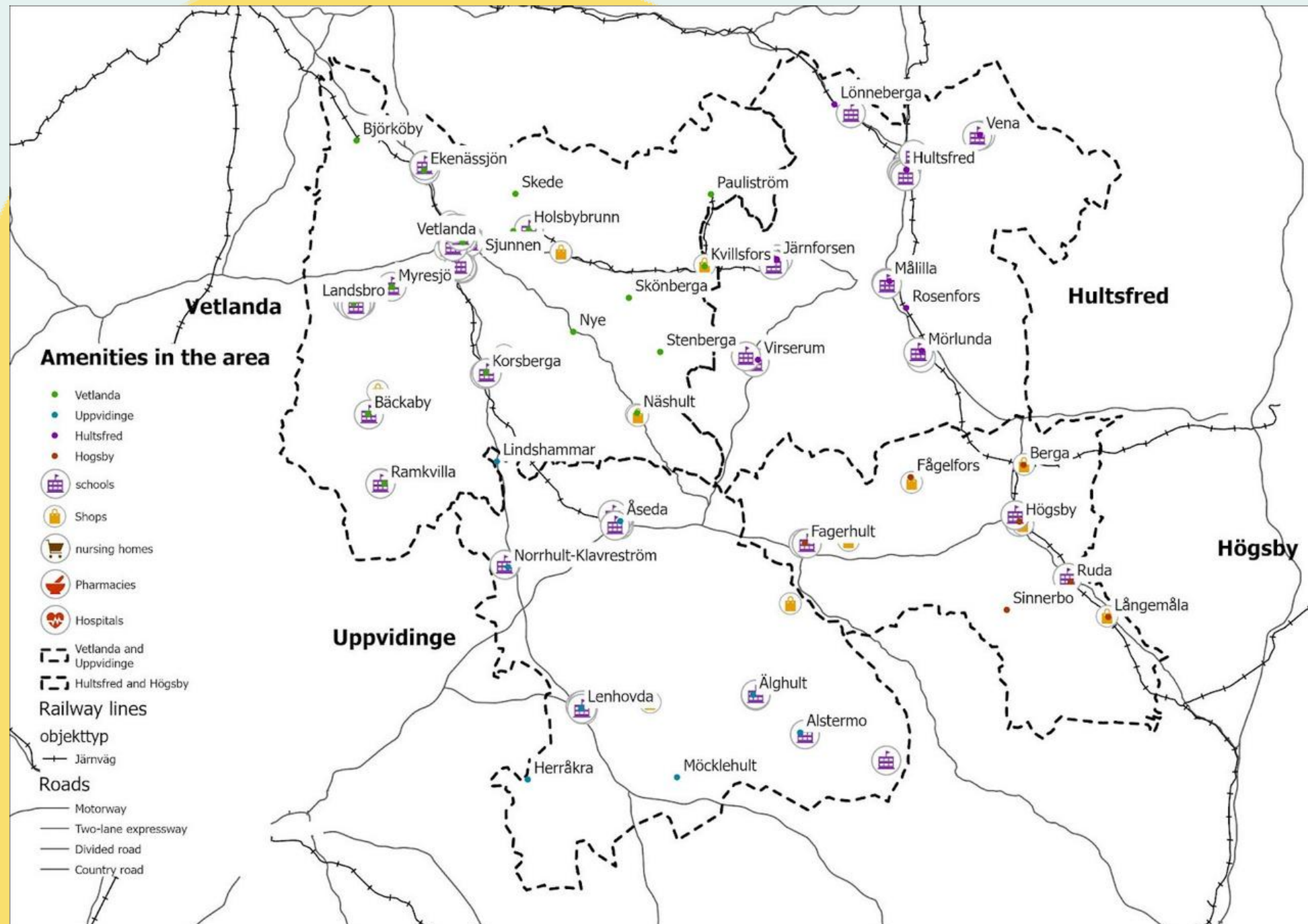


FIELD MAP

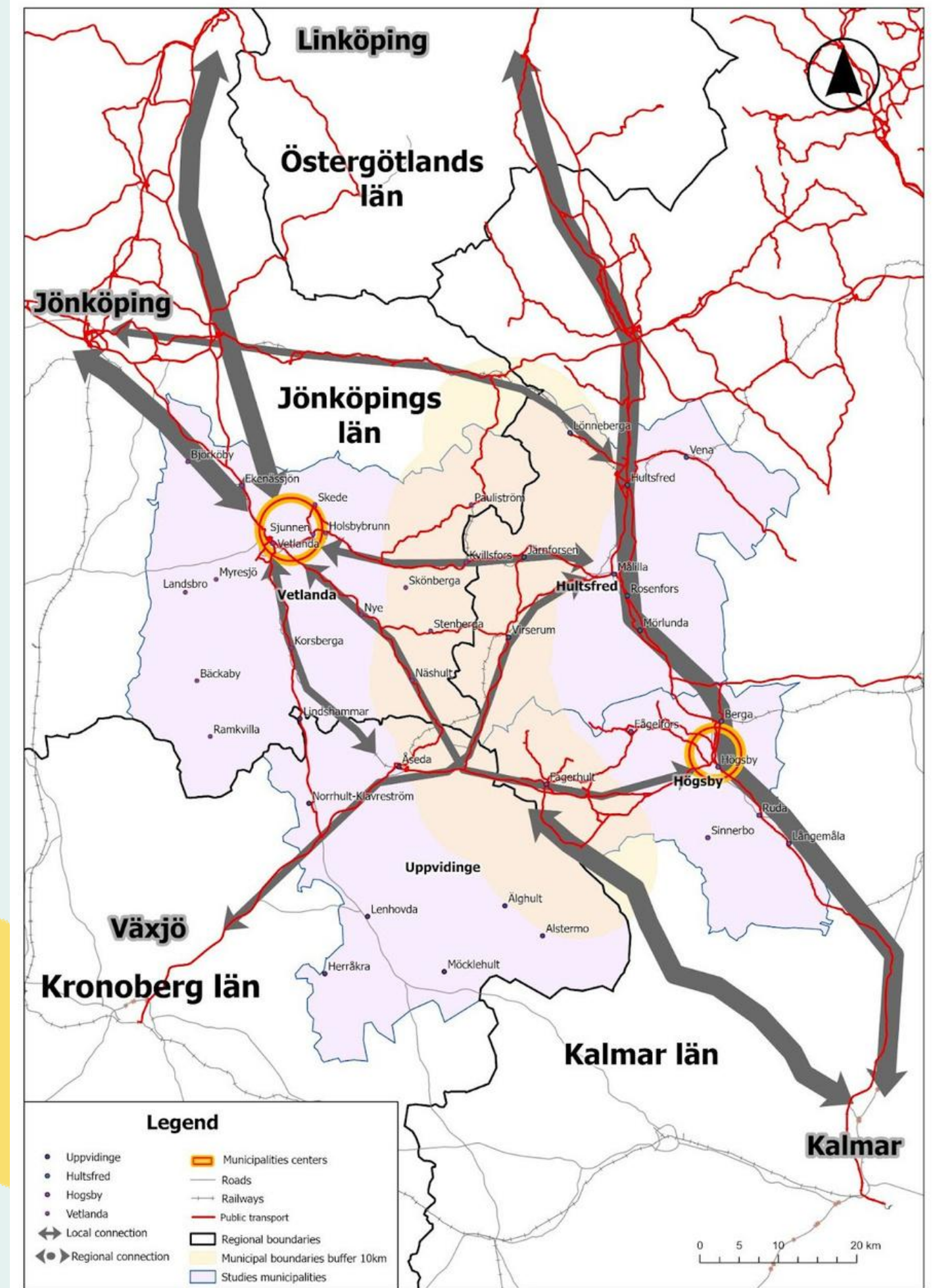


RQ2: HOW ARE THE SERVICES IN THE BORDER AREAS?

Citation from survey:
“Low population density of their region should not be a reason to reduce funding for transportation and health services: every resident must have equal and easy access to them, without distinction.”



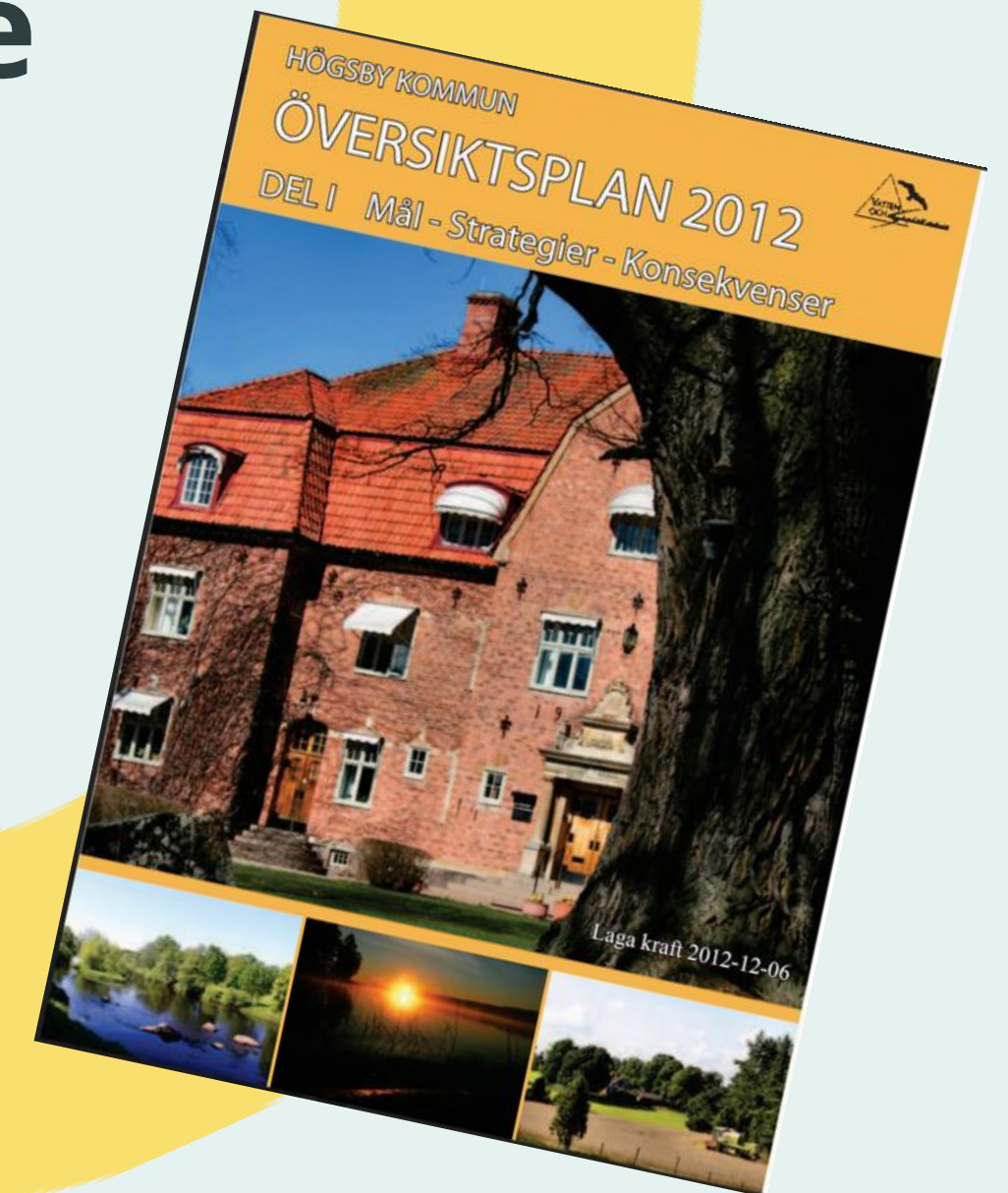
RQ2: HOW ARE THE SERVICES IN THE BORDER AREAS?



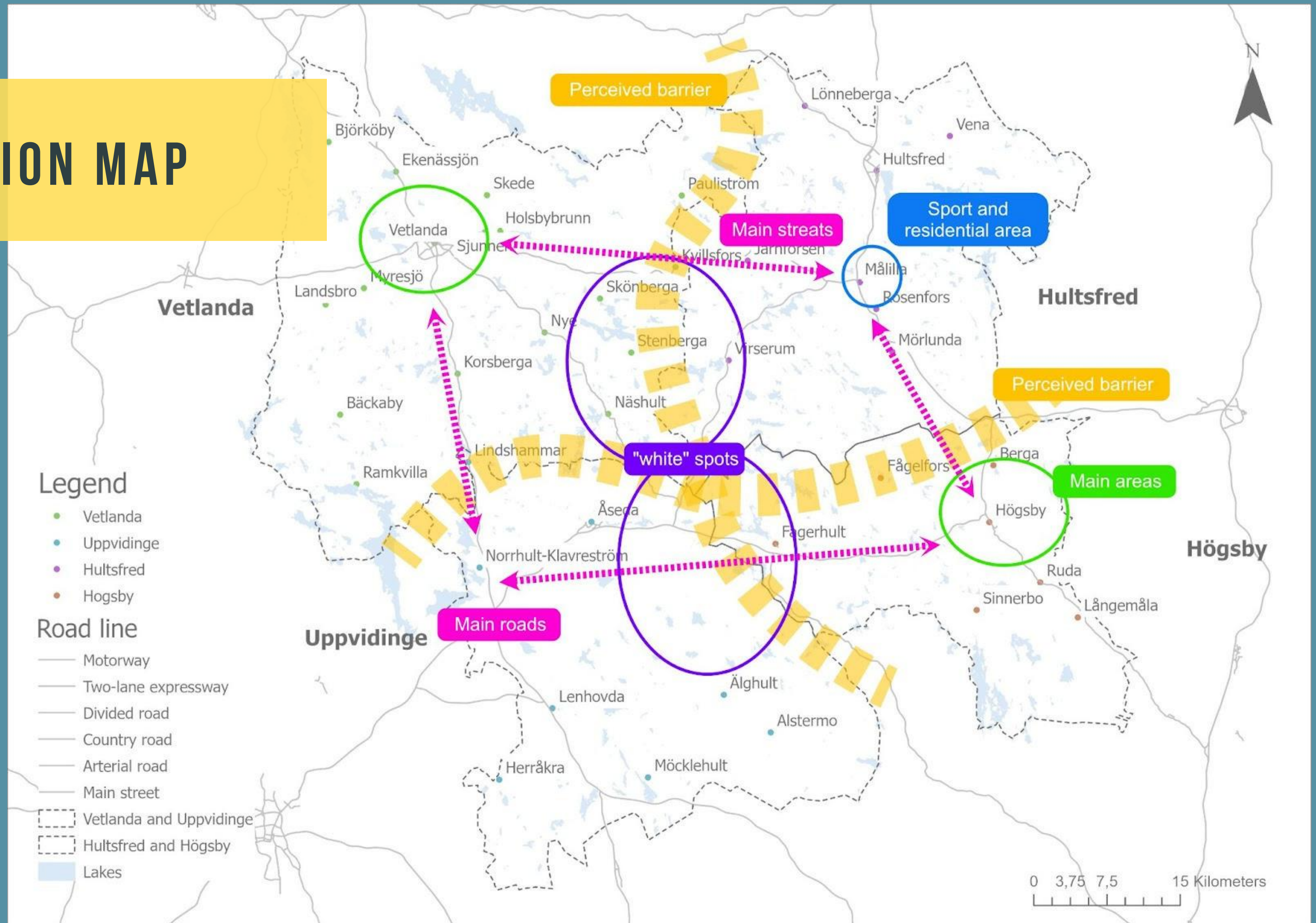
RQ3: WHAT PERSPECTIVE DO THE MUNICIPALITIES HAVE ON SHRINKING PERIPHERY AREAS?

- **Vetlanda: opportunities & future**
- **Högsby: more challenges**
- **Strong borders**
- **Collaborations**
- **Defining areas based on populations numbers, property value, history and culture**

Citation from interview:
*"Fagerhult is well off,
but the population is still dwindling"*



PERCEPTION MAP





CONCLUSION

The border area has a mix of thriving places and struggling, with the population being both newcomers from foreign countries and families that have lived there for generations. There is beautiful nature, thriving smaller businesses, as well as abandoned places. Connection to the outside through transportation and digital solutions is important. Strict administrative borders and limited cooperation between municipalities and regions are a constraint.



SUGGESTIONS

- **Enhance dialogue** among the border populations and municipalities
 - **Strengthen cooperation** between municipalities
 - Support the populations **identity of being self-sufficient** (energy communities)
 - Protect the beautiful nature
 - Focus on **connections** (transportation and digital solutions)
 - Fostering community feelings and **ensure public meeting spaces**
 - Flexible services like the moving library
 - Be mindful of how areas and towns are defined
 - Further research on environmental sustainability
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