



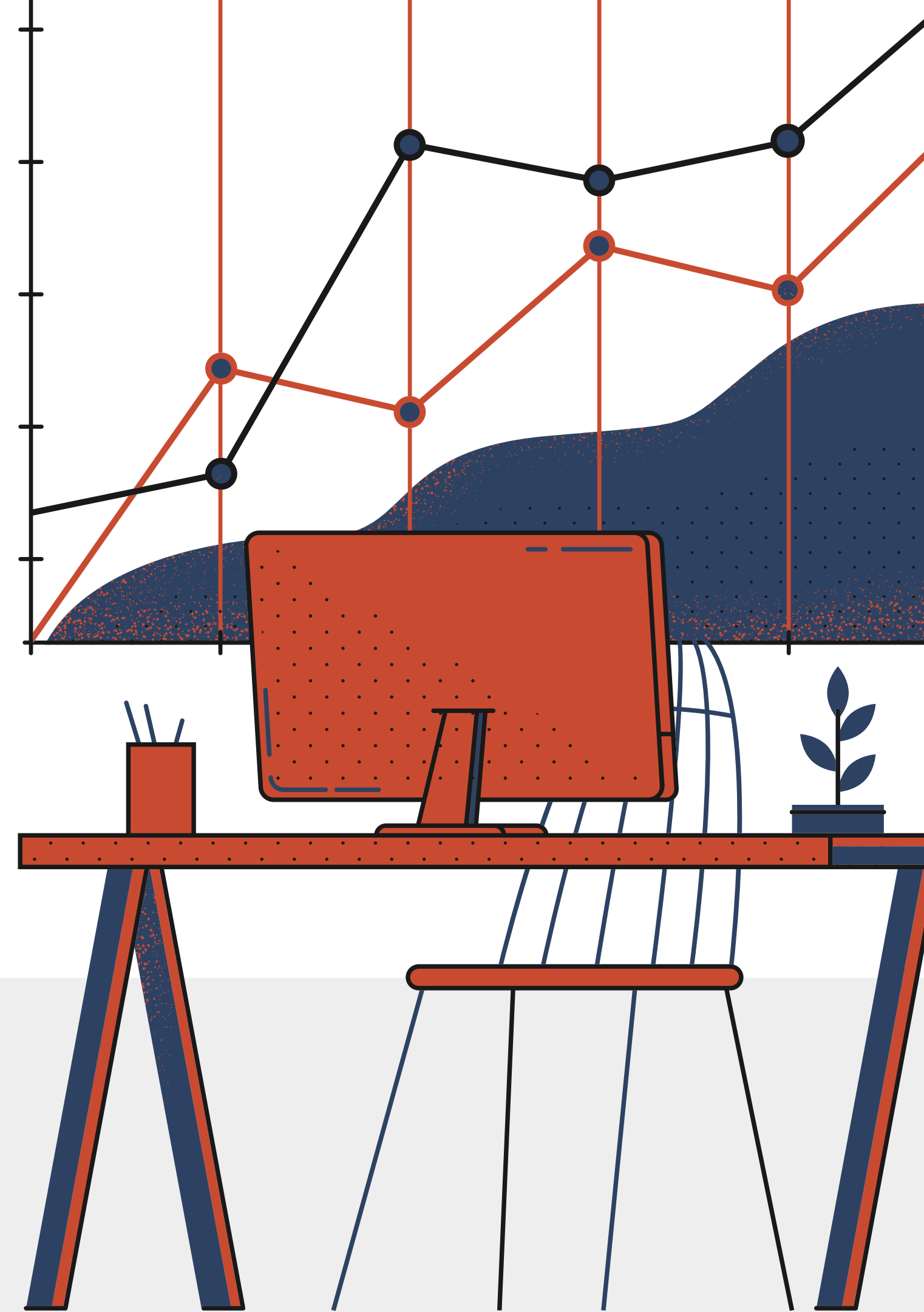
Háskóla­setur Vestfjarða  
University Centre of the Westfjords

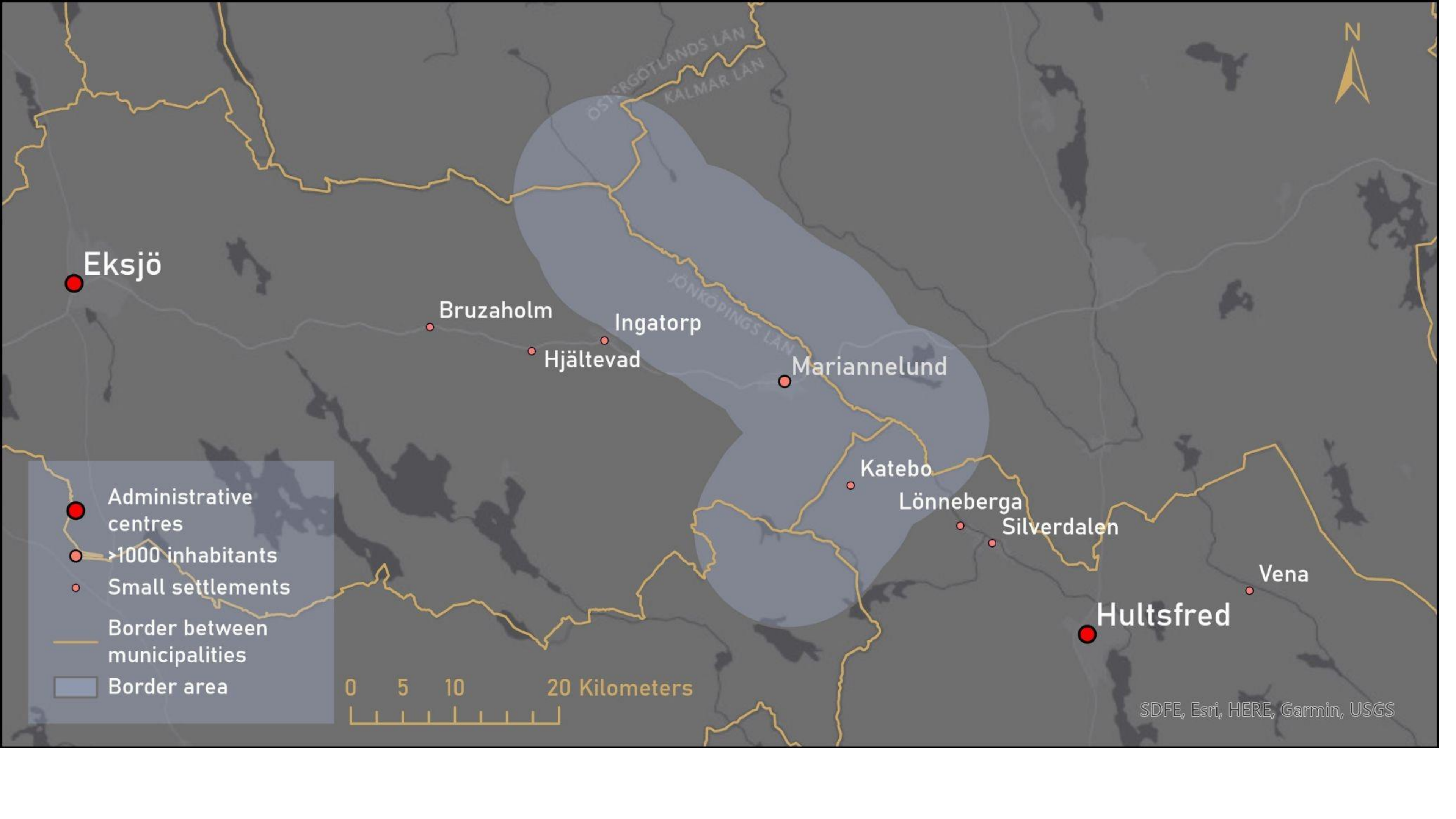


Nordplus

# Final seminar Presentation

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# EKSJÖ

**Total area 1250 km<sup>2</sup>**

**Population 17749**

**Towns:**

**Eksjö (administrative center)**

**Hult**

**Bruzaholm**

**Ingatorp**

**Mariannelund**



# HULTSFRED

**Total area 1190 km<sup>2</sup>**

**Population 13609**

**Towns and villages:**

**Hultsfred (administrative center)**

**Katebo**

**Lonneberga**

**Silverdalen**

**Vena**

# CONCEPTUAL & TOPICAL FRAMING

**Rural shrinkage** is caused by economic decline, population loss, ageing, and reduced access to services in smaller municipalities.



- Deindustrialisation, globalisation, and urbanisation are major drivers of rural decline.
- Outmigration of young people leads to ageing populations and lower birth rates.
- population decline reduces tax income and weakens public services and infrastructure.
- smaller towns increasingly depend on stronger regional centres for services and employment.
- Eksjo supports resilience through heritage tourism, while Hultsfred has faced decline after the end of the Hultsfred Festival.

# CONCEPTUAL & TOPICAL FRAMING

Rural municipalities face growing **challenges** in maintaining services, attracting people, and creating long-term economic stability.



- Smaller municipalities often lose healthcare, schools, banks, and retail services.
- Ageing population and limited job opportunities make it harder to attract and retain workers.
- Weak housing markets and low housing availability create barriers for newcomers.
- Tourism supports local economies, but seasonal jobs limit long-term sustainability.
- Hultsfred and Mariannelund rely on local identity, nature, and culture to strengthen development opportunities.

# METHODS



## Data collection:

- Interview
- Survey
- Field Observation

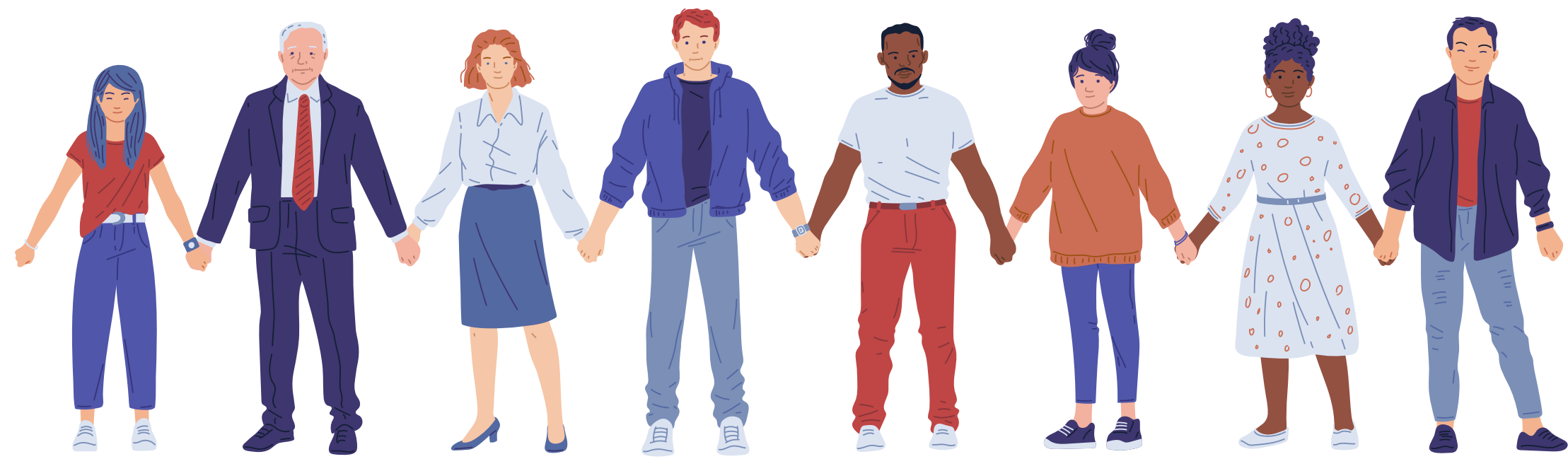
## Procedure:

- Field Observation
- Telling about research project
- Ask for interview/ survey
- Have the interview / share survey

# RESULTS

## Positive aspects

- nature
- sense of community
- cheap housing
- healthcare
- tourism



# RESULTS

## Challenges

- cultural offer
- politicians perception
- abandonend building
- public transport
- education
- job market
- outmigration
- healthcare
- shops
- aging population

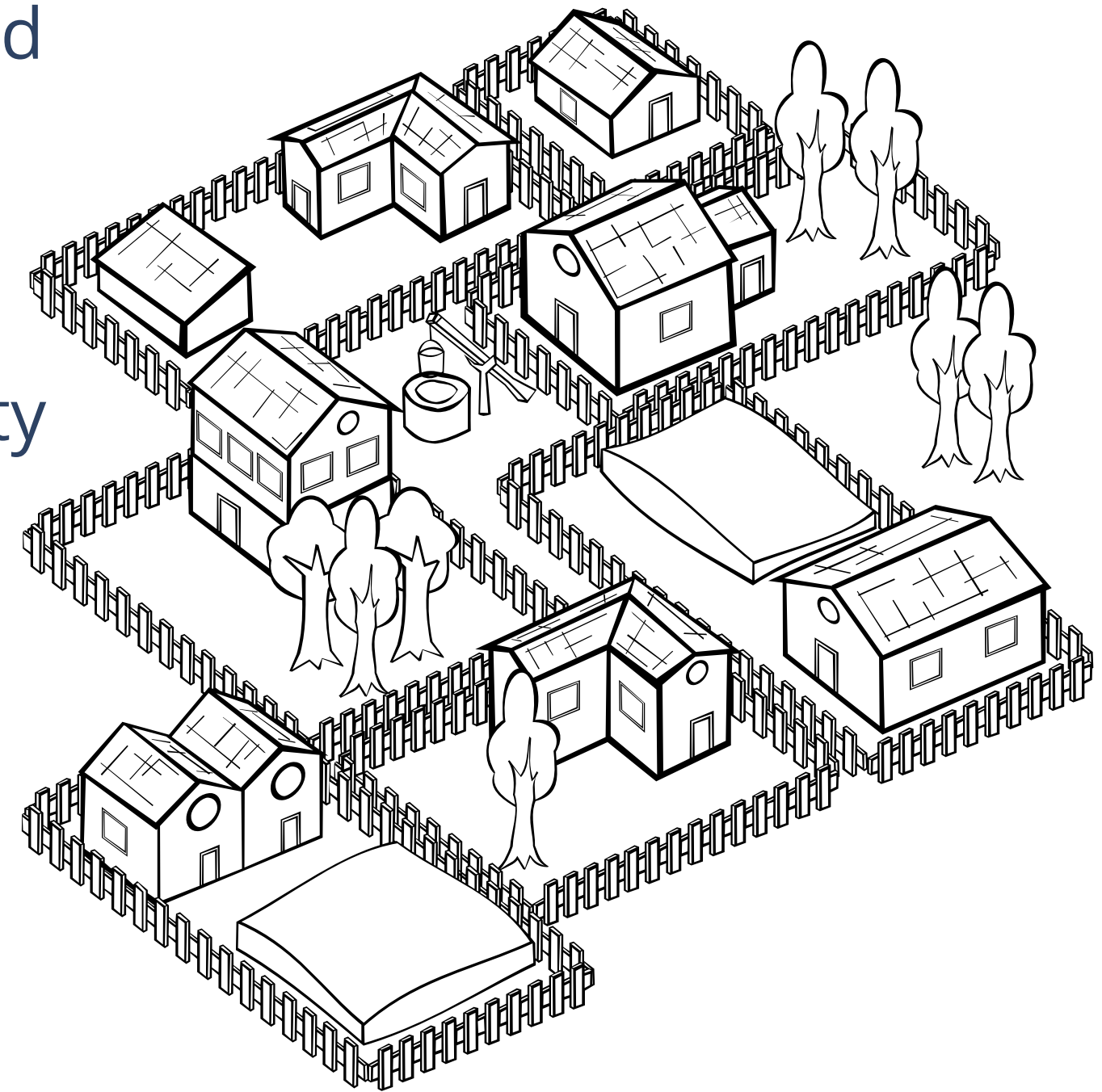


# DISCUSSION



# CHEAP HOUSING

- Ageing and depopulation in rural areas leave many houses vacant, creating both safety risks from neglected properties and opportunities for affordable housing
- Low housing prices can attract new residents, but they also increase second-home ownership, leading to empty seasonal houses and weaker year-round community life.
- Despite cheap housing, limited bank loans and weak demand make rural housing shortages worse, remote work and lifestyle migration may help attract working-age residents.



# HEALTHCARE

- Healthcare is highly valued by residents, with Eksjö receiving a high rating of 4.1/5 for medical services, while Mariannelund scored slightly lower.
- The Eksjö Hospital is seen as a key workplace and an essential service that improves quality of life and encourages people to remain in the area.
- Promoting active lifestyle and health activities for older people is important to reduce healthcare demand, especially as elderly women often face greater mobility challenges.



# NATURE, TOURISM & SENSE OF

## COMMUNITY

- Nature highly valued

→ Concerns about sustainable forestry practices and biodiversity

- Tourism is a central part of local identity and economy

→ Strong influence of Astrid Lindgren heritage

- Strong sense of community and social cohesion across all towns

→ Challenge for newcomers to integrate



# POLITICIANS PERCEPTION

- Low perceived trust and transparency between residents and policymakers
- Many residents feel limited involvement in municipal decision-making

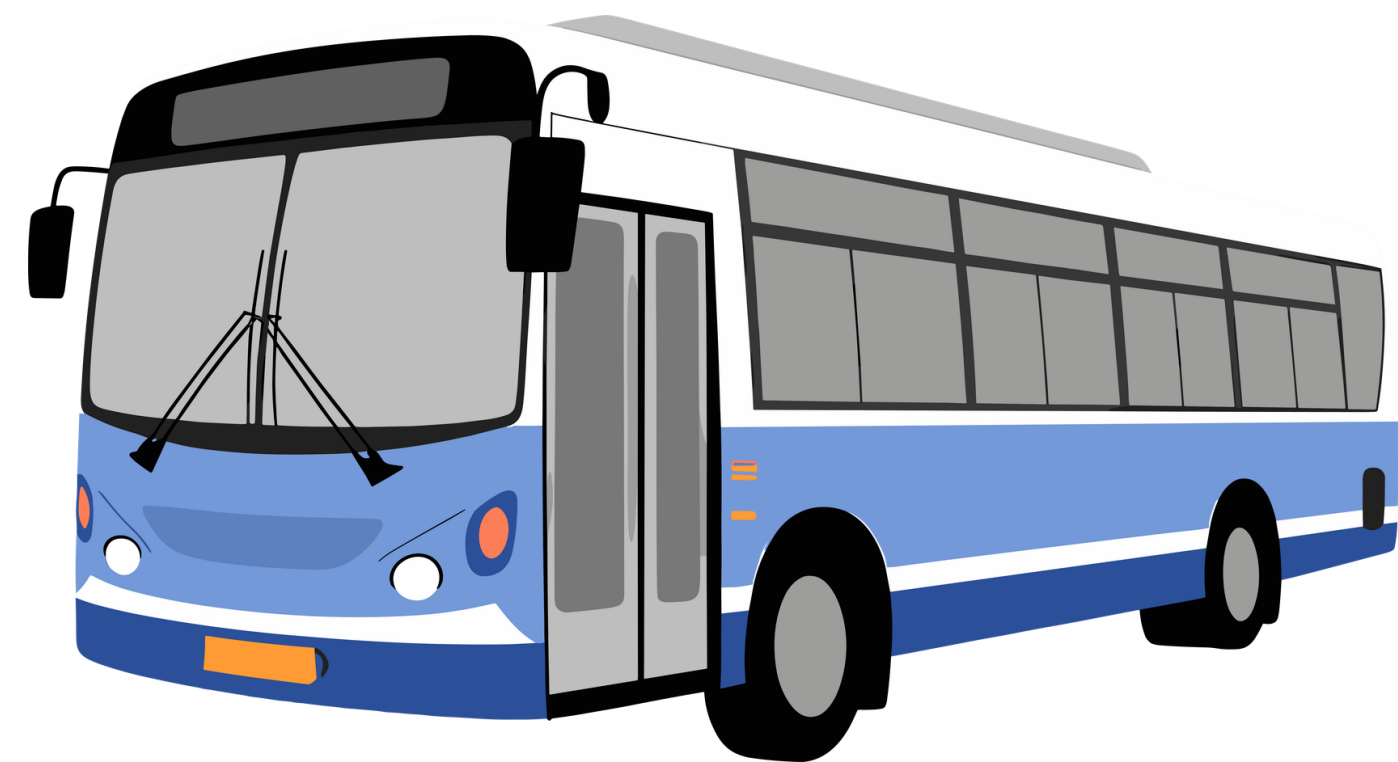


## Proposed solutions:

- Collaborative governance
- Inclusion of successes and failures to build trust
- Engagement of third-party institutions
- Broader participation in local governance processes

# Rural transport & accessibility

- Public transport seen as a major local concern
- Weak and slow connections between municipalities
- Limited bus frequency → barriers
- Strong dependence on private cars
- Transport gaps reduce attractiveness for residents and businesses
- Improved mobility linked to regional development & retention
- Need for more flexible and sustainable transport solutions



# Abandoned houses

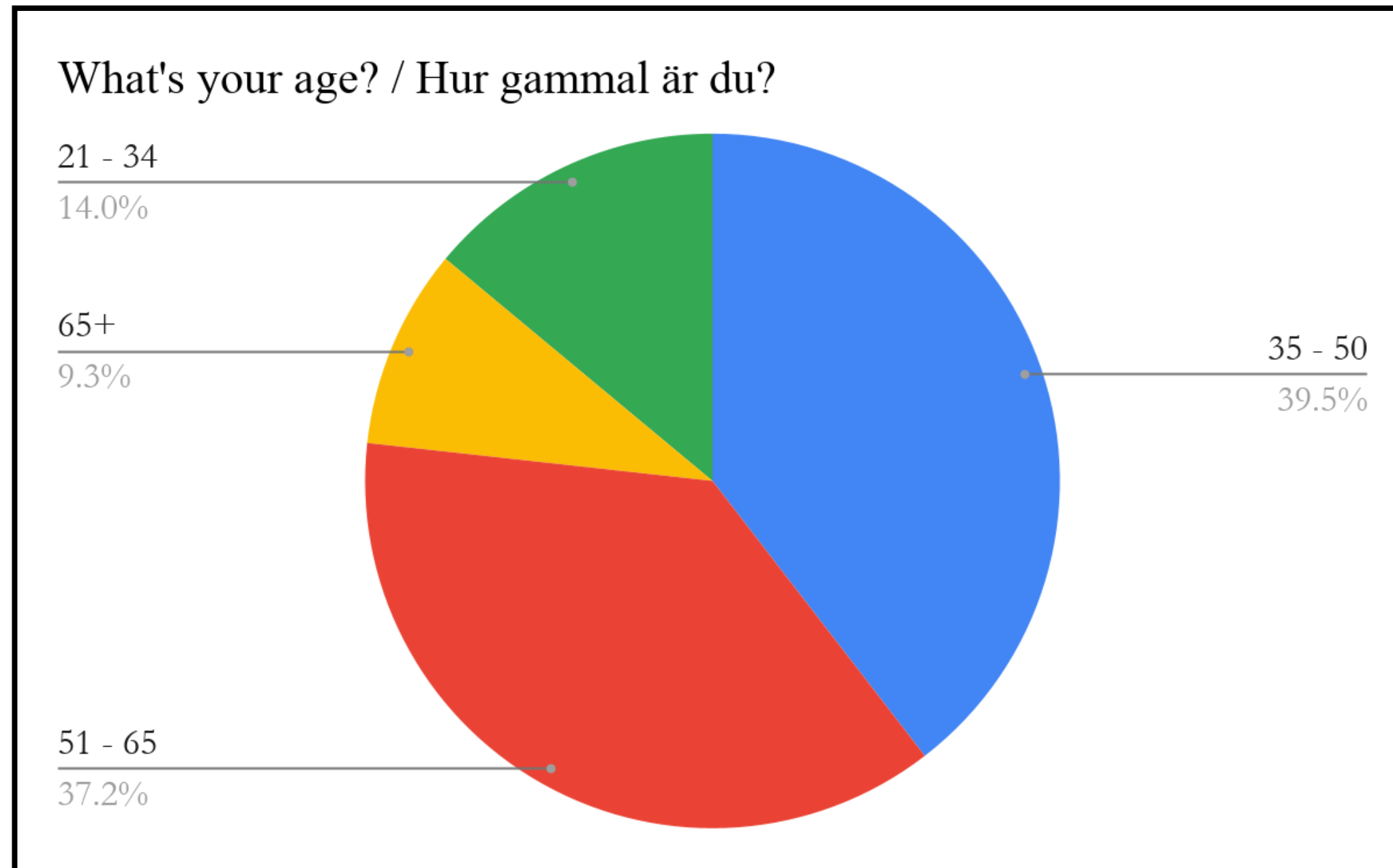
- Abandoned buildings observed in several municipalities
- Creates visual, social, and development challenges

## Proposed solutions:

- tax incentives for redevelopment
- demolition + reuse of vacant land
- community-based uses
- financial support for families moving in
- rent subsidies
- funding for job-creating projects



# The aging population and healthcare



Noticable precence of the elderly

## Healthcar

Eksö 4.1

Hultsfred - 2.6

Mariannelund 3.1

- pharmacy return
- receiving prescription medicine straight from the health centre
- strengthen local primary healthcare centers
- digital healthcare services
- bringing the prescribed medication to the people in need

# Job market and education

## Lack of jobs in the area

- more industry
  - forest as a source
  - carpentry
- innovative companies and companies working in the IT sector
- higher education program linked to the professions that are in demand in the Höglands hospital
- community-run repairshop for bicycles and small electronics

## Education

- mixed perception on the education sector
- rare interest in higher education
- further research is needed to assess the best option for the area
- schools as social centres
  - closure affects long-term sustainability and cohesion
- implementing social projects
- digital studies

# Outmigration

- Rural areas lack of workers in farming, forestry, and agriculture - younger generations avoid these sectors.
- Municipalities could promote platforms like **Workaway** and create internship agreements with universities.
- Local job-seekers could also be connected with rural businesses needing workers.



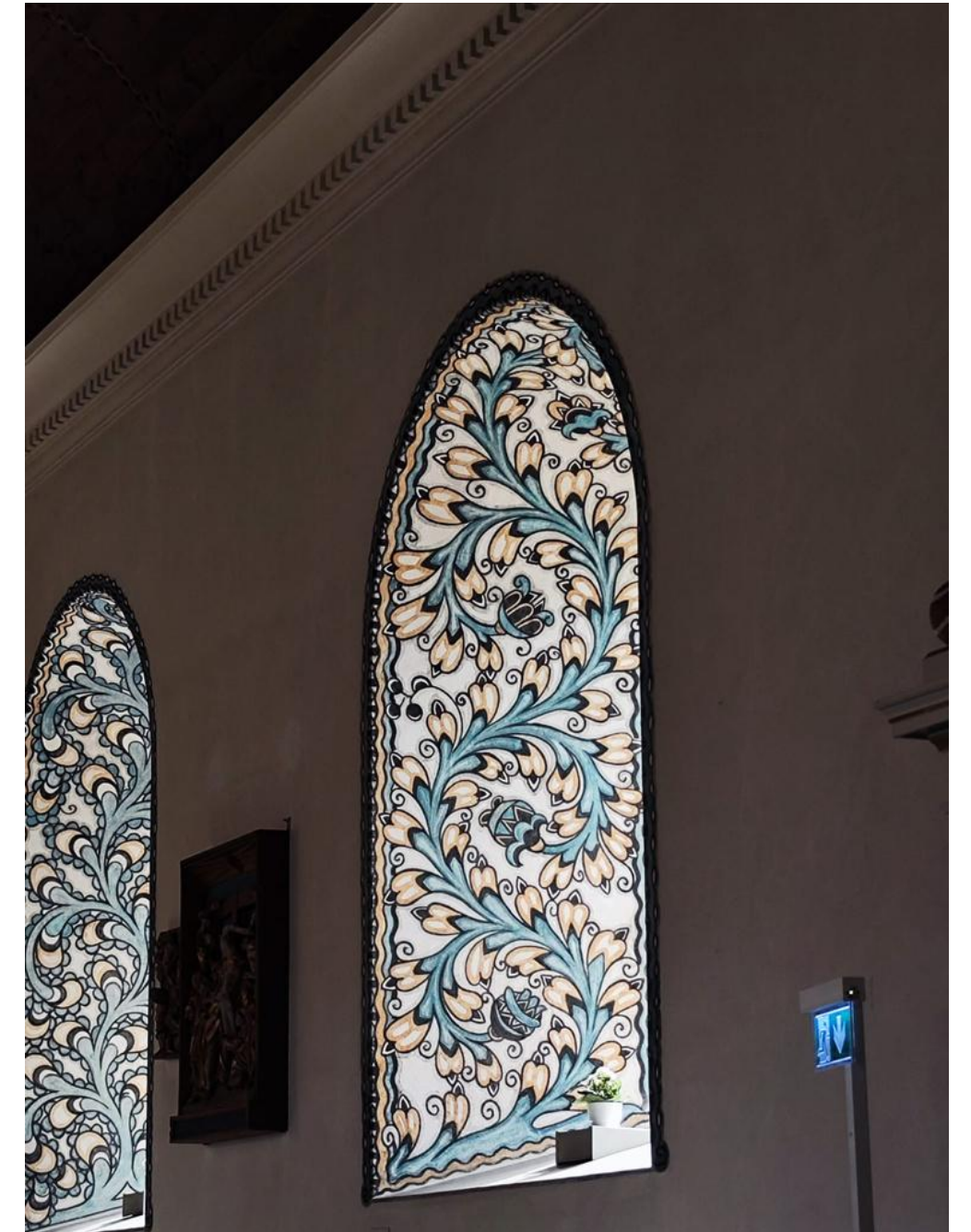
# Cultural offer

- Cultural offerings in rural areas are limited, especially for young people. Activities for elderly are more common.
- Better use existing venues. Need for big venue?
- Involve youth in designing activities (Cahill & Dadvand, 2018)
- Mariannelund's active events
- Libraries were highly valued in all towns - continued support
- Later-opening social pub Eksjö



# Cross-border relationship

- Relationship as weak or non-existent - mental barrier
- High transport costs
- Some residents cannot access the closest hospital or preferred school
- Suggested solutions:
  - Lower transport costs
  - Shared events calendar
  - Increase joint tourism initiatives
  - Improve access to healthcare and schools



# REFLECTION on the Fieldwork

- Almost all residents were open, friendly, and willing to share their experiences and opinions.
- Highest engagement: Eksjö and Mariannelund; significantly lower openness in Silverdalen.
- Challenges: Social media groups and relatively low response to questionnaires, except when privately addressing or involving key people.
- Dozens of emails were sent, but only a few responded.
- Some residents were unable to attend the meeting.



**The overall response from the community was positive and**



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# Tack så mycket

Interviewees, survey  
participants, residents ❤️

