

EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS AND
THREATS TO SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT IN THE BORDER REGION OF;

VÄSTERVIK-ÅTVIDABERG

Alison Stacey, Anete Enikova, Feline Waschneck, Isak Samuelsson, Kirke Kasak, Mari Sohlström, and Martynas Survila



Nordplus



Háskóla
Vestfirðna
University Centre
of the Westfjords

POSITIONALITY OF RESEARCH TEAM

Six universities

Seven nationalities

Six researchers not from Sweden + no to little knowledge of Swedish

One researcher born and raised in one of the municipalities

Alison Stacey, Anete Enikova, Feline Waschneck, Isak Samuelsson, Kirke Kasak, Mari Sohlström, and Martynas Survila



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OVERVIEW

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Background of the Study

02

Research focus

03

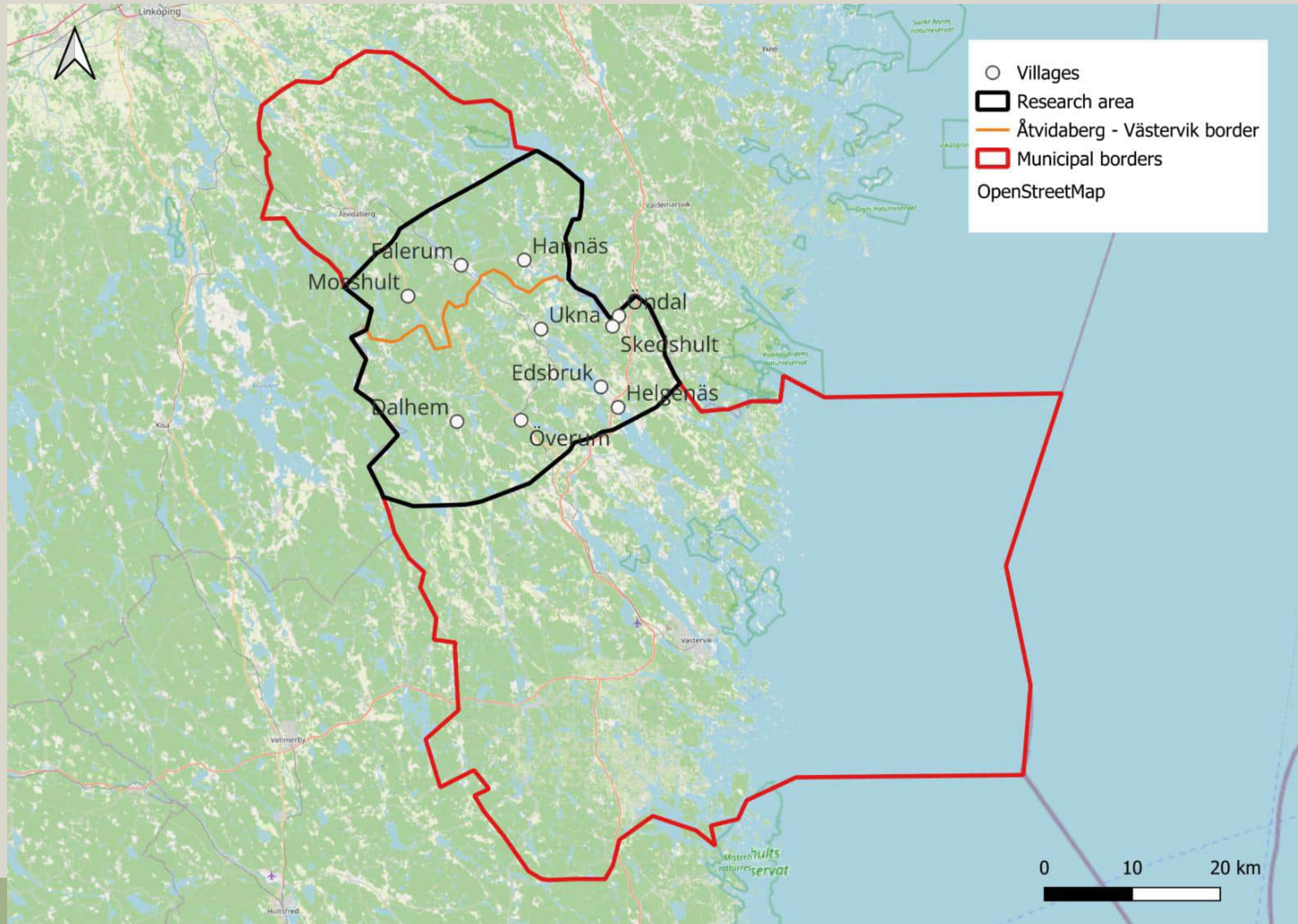
Methodology

04

Results

05

Suggestions



STUDY SITE

Desk research:
April 13-16

Field work:
April 16-21

Analysis:
April 21-23

RESEARCH FOCUS

How do **mobility, youth's access to education, and housing** contribute to sustainable community development in the cross-border area of Västervik-Åtvidaberg?

- Aim to understand the impact on youth populations in the cross-border region as an indicator of community stability.
- Aim to understand what the municipalities and communities deem to be threats to the cross-border area.
- Aim to provide recommendations to address threats to the cross-border area.

METHODOLOGY

SURVEYS

ArcGIS Survey123 for its Public Participation GIS function

Snowball sampling through interview responses, hand delivery, use of social media

59 survey responses from residents in the border area

Microsoft Excel and R Studio for analysis

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews

Municipalities, stakeholder groups, and residents

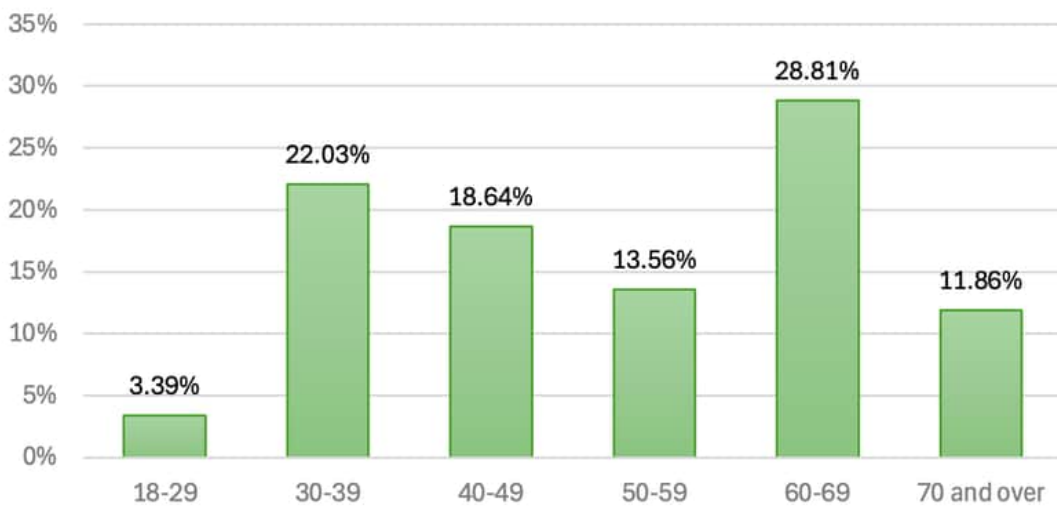
13 interviews and 18 interviewees

Coding was done through MAXQDA Pro

RESPONDENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

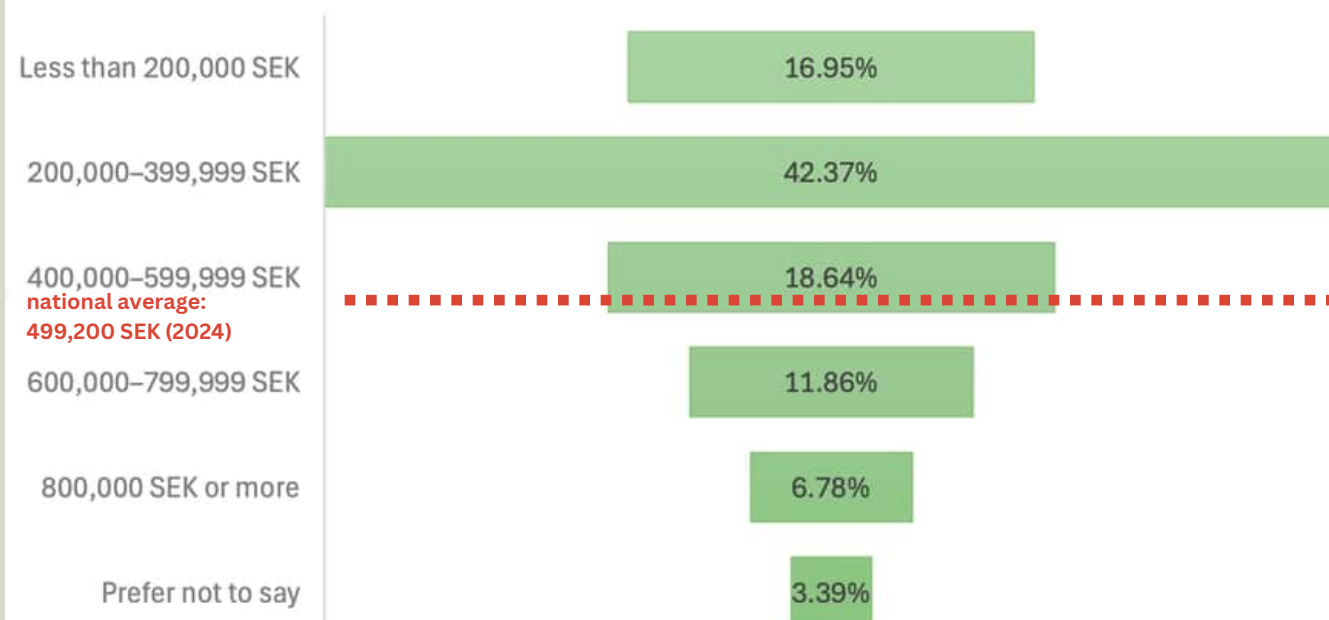
SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Age distribution of the survey respondents (years)



Gender: approx. half and half
Household size: 49 % two-person household

Annual Salary of Respondents



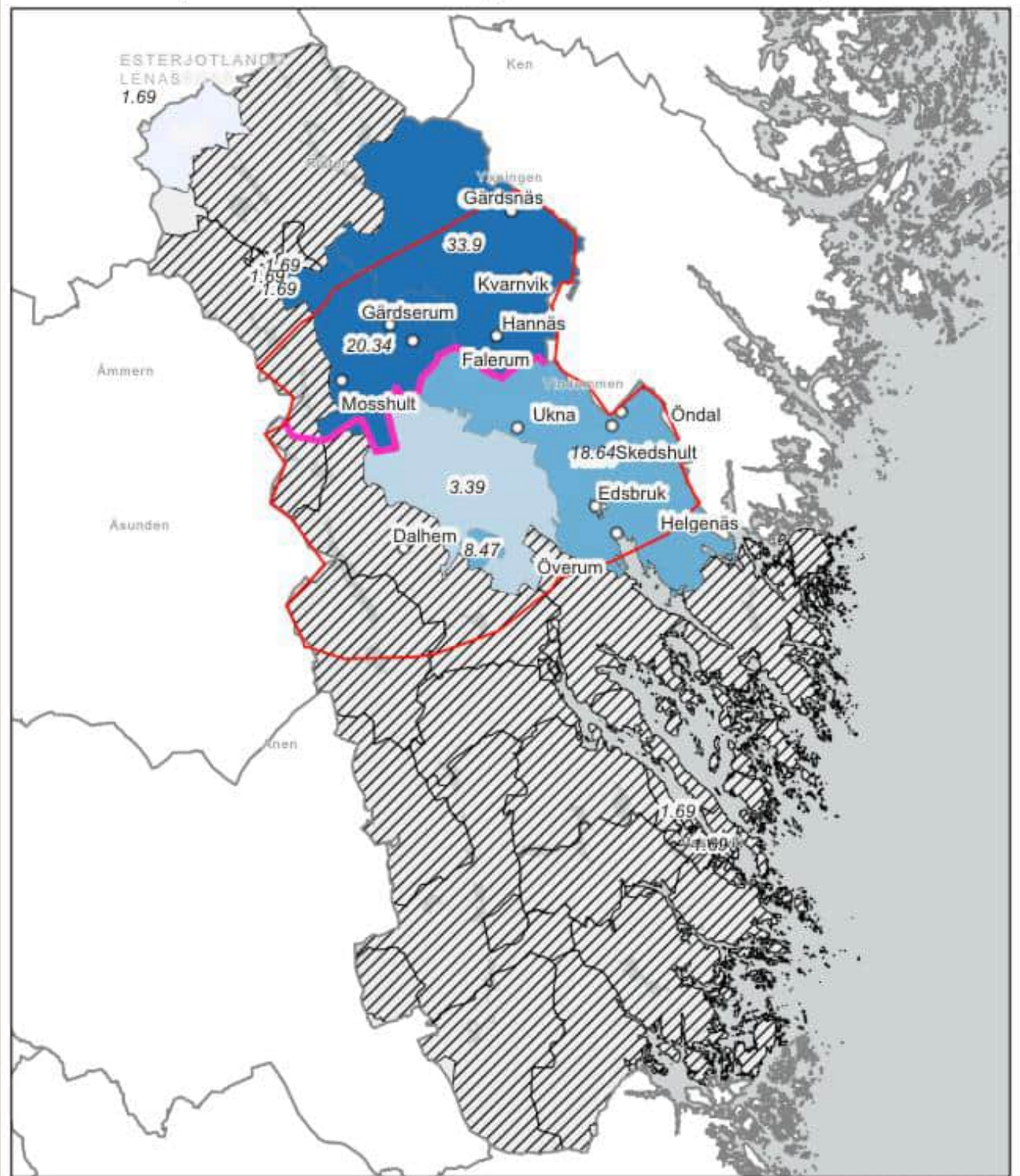
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Municipality workers: 4
Rural development workers:
2
local interest groups: 7
Shop owners: 1
Elderly care workers: 3
School workers: 1

7 residents, 11 worked in the area

9 held in Västervik, 4 in Åtvidaberg

MAP OF SURVEY RESPONSES

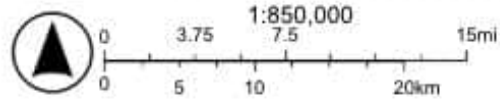


2026-04-22

- Research area
- Borders of Ävidåberg and Västervik municipalities
- Other municipalities
- Main localities of research area
- > 3 - 8
- > 8 - 20
- > 20 - 34
- Postal code areas with no responses

Total responders (%)

1 - 3



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAD, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Esri, Michael Bauer Research GnhH 2024, Statistics Sweden

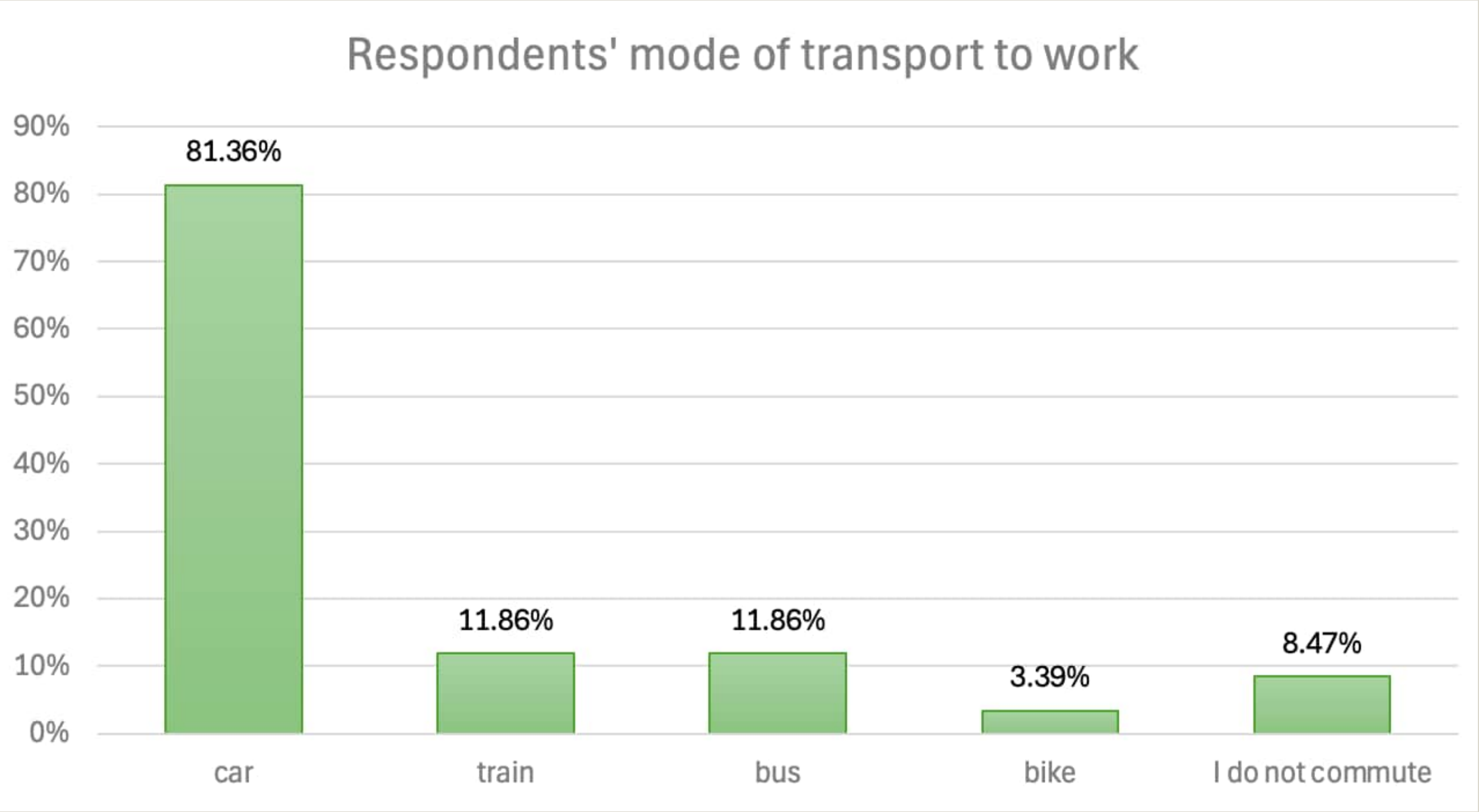
FINDINGS - OVERALL PERCEPTIONS

Future goals	13.8%
Current perception negative	68.5%
Current perception positive	17.7%

Code System	Resident	Organization	Åtvidaberg	Vastervik
Other	2.2%	6.4%	2.5%	4.8%
Community	1.3%	3.0%	4.9%	1.0%
border	14.9%	19.5%	16.6%	17.2%
population decline	3.5%	6.0%	6.7%	3.8%
Youth/ Education	18.7%	13.9%	12.9%	17.9%
Mobility	19.3%	18.4%	17.8%	19.3%
Housing	5.4%	4.9%	4.3%	5.5%

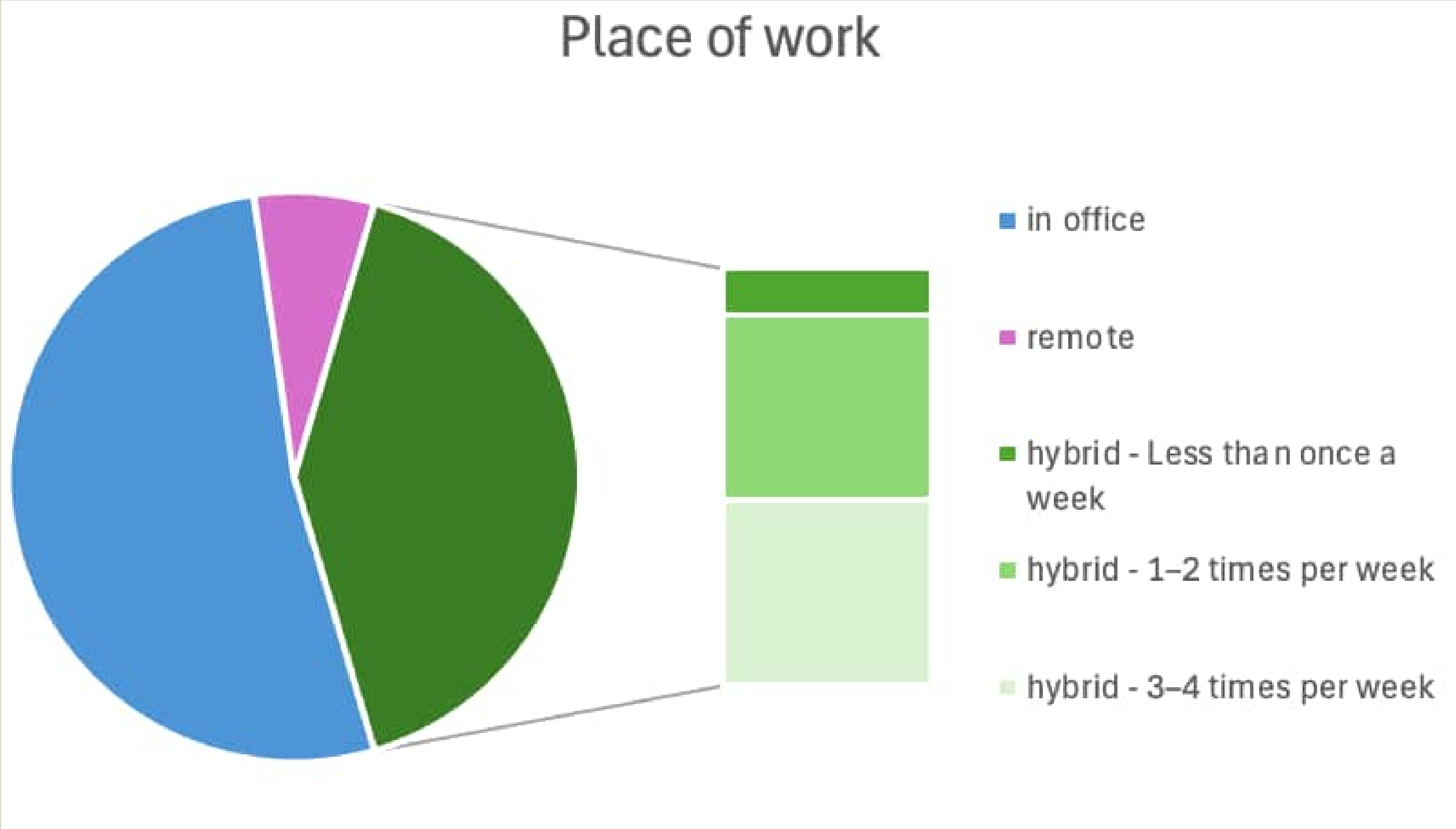
Findings - TRANSPORTATION

SURVEYS WORK-RELATED COMMUTE



Findings - TRANSPORTATION

SURVEYS WORK-RELATED COMMUTE



Findings - TRANSPORTATION

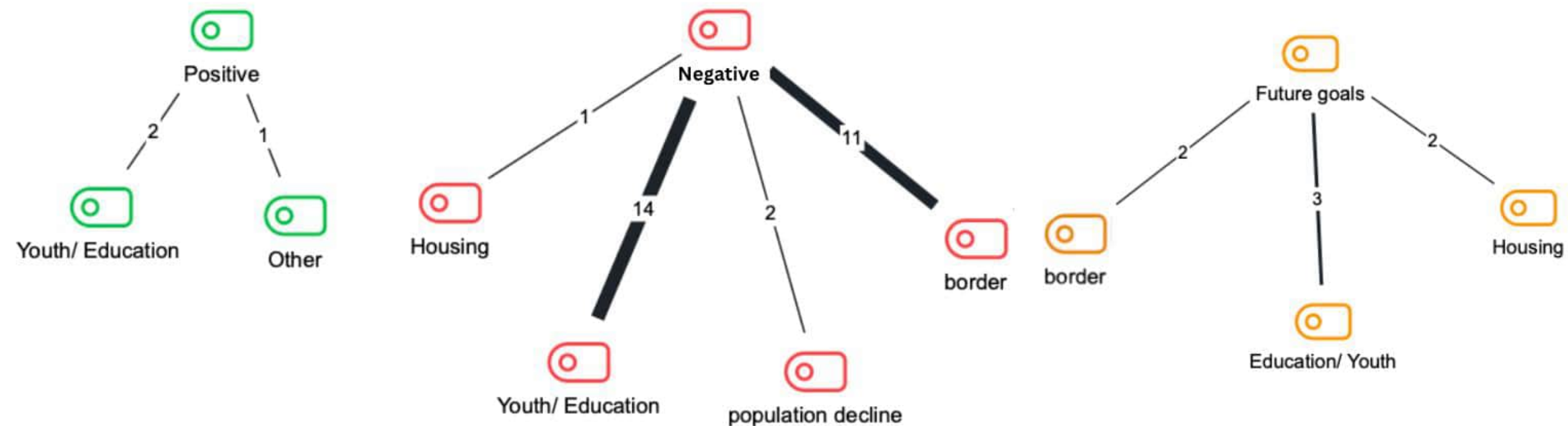
INTERVIEWS

Negative perceptions of transportation were mentioned 119 times across all 13 interviews

“It’s practically impossible to get to and live here. Commuting back and forth.”

(Interview 10, Personal communication; April 19, 2026)

Perception of transportation

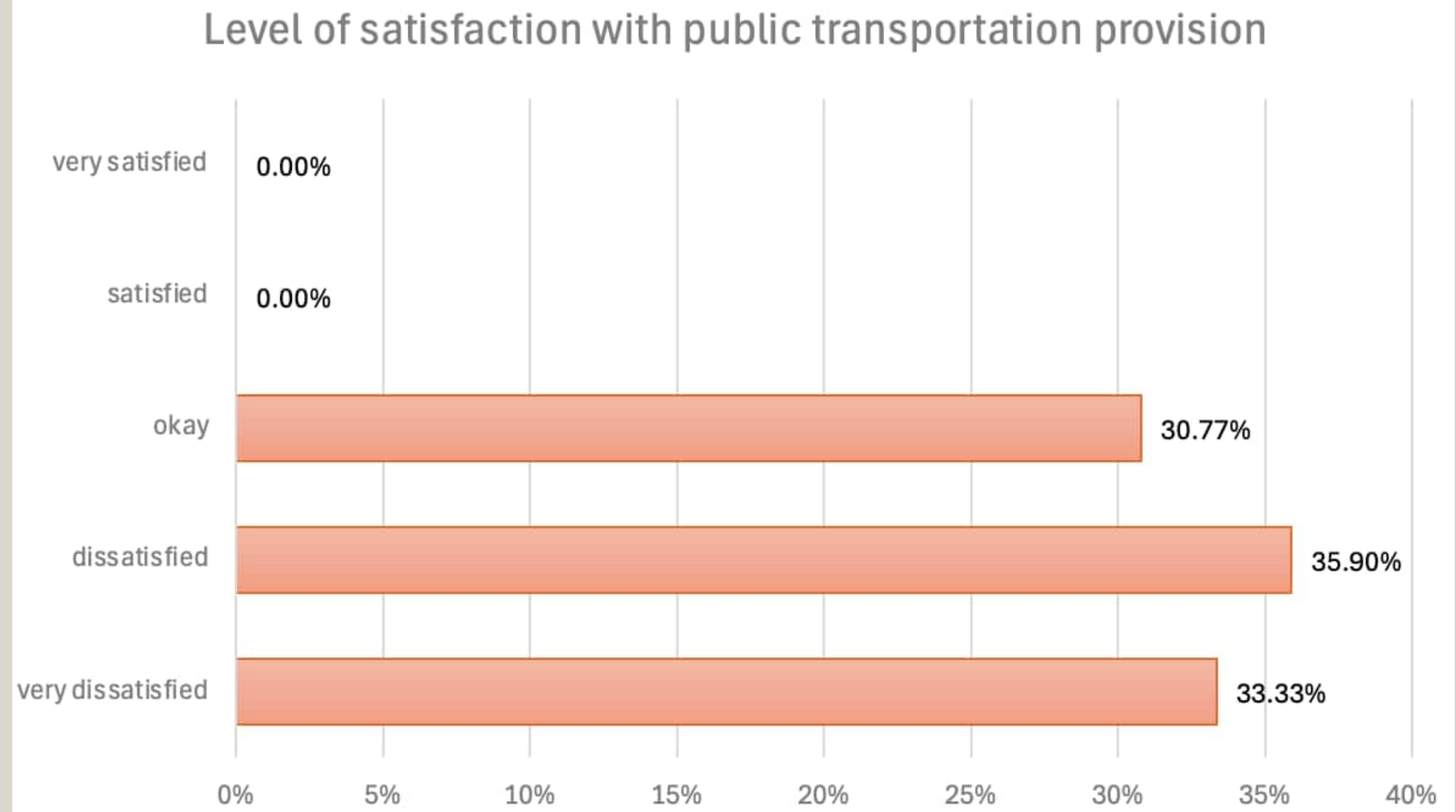


FINDINGS - YOUTH'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION

SURVEYS

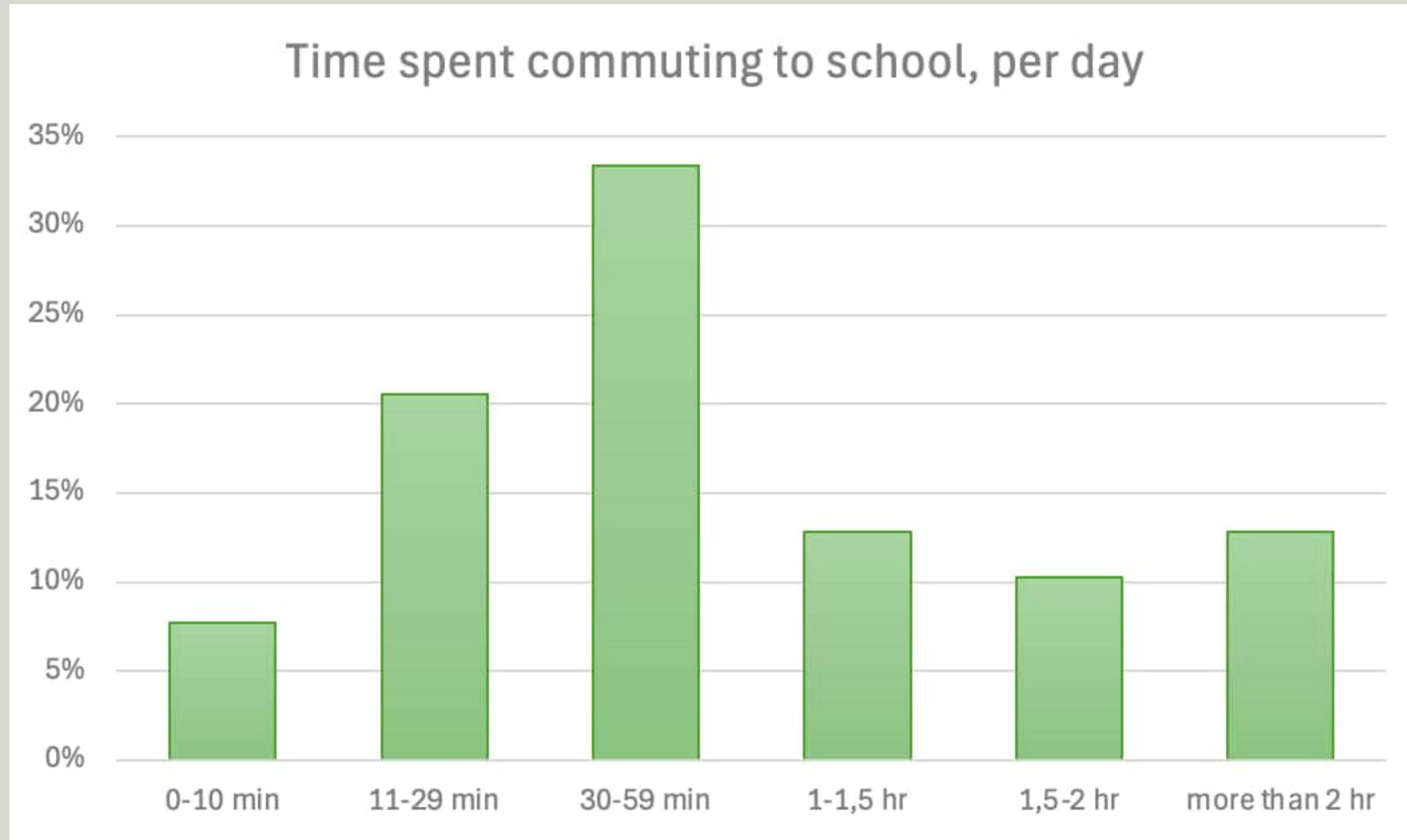
72.88 % rated **access to educational opportunities** (e. g., schools, university,...) as *very poor, poor, or moderate*; regardless of own level of education (χ^2)

69.23 % were *very dissatisfied* or *dissatisfied* with **public transportation to educational facilities**,
0 % were *satisfied* or *very satisfied*



FINDINGS - YOUTH'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION

SURVEYS



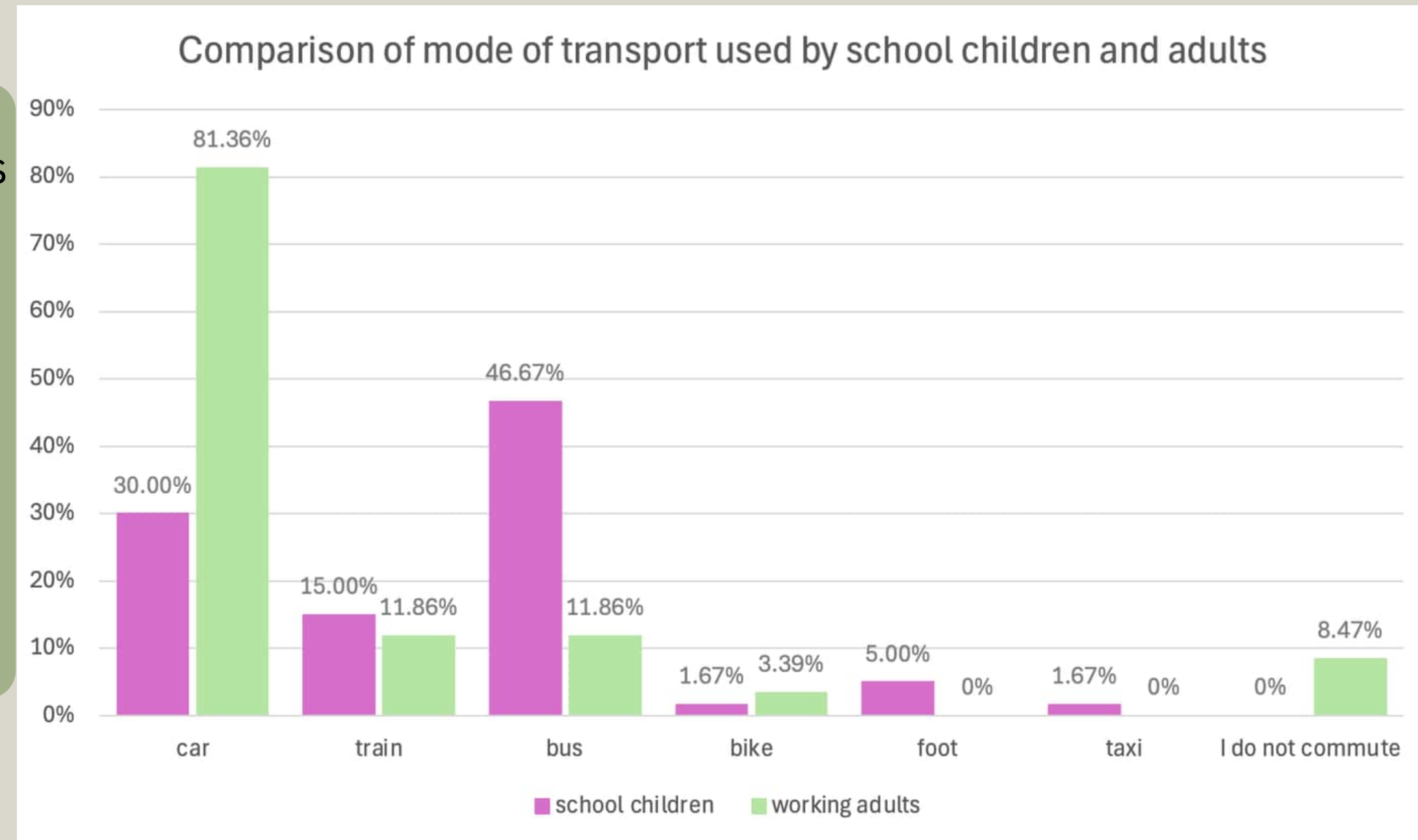
FINDINGS - YOUTH'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION

SURVEYS

significant relation between child's mode of transport and level of satisfaction (χ^2), residuals suggest:

- parents of children who walk more likely to choose *okay*
- parents of children who (partially or fully) need a car to go to school were more likely to be *dissatisfied*

→ small sample size but levels of satisfaction seem rather telling



FINDINGS - YOUTH'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION

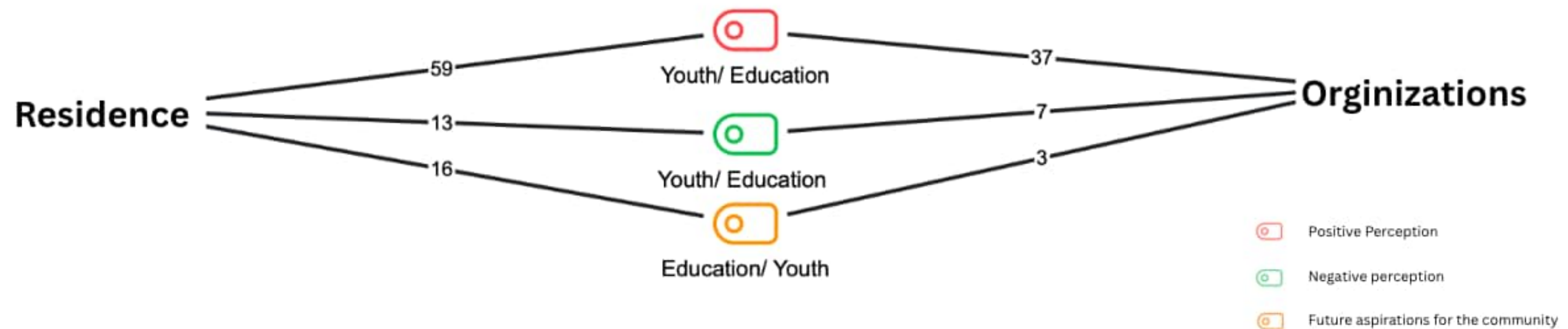
INTERVIEWS

Primary concerns:

- Unable to find trained personnel
- decreasing number of kids
- varied responses on the quality of education
- large age gap in classes
- long commutes
- no long-term stability

Fear associated with school closing

- Increase disparities between kids in remote areas and urban centers
- Force families in the area to move
- Increasing commute times for children
- Increased pressure on parents to get kids to school
- Young families are scared to move to the area



FINDINGS - HOUSING

SURVEYS

Housing does not seem to be a major problem for residents of the area!

Most (81.4 %) respondents owned the house they live in.

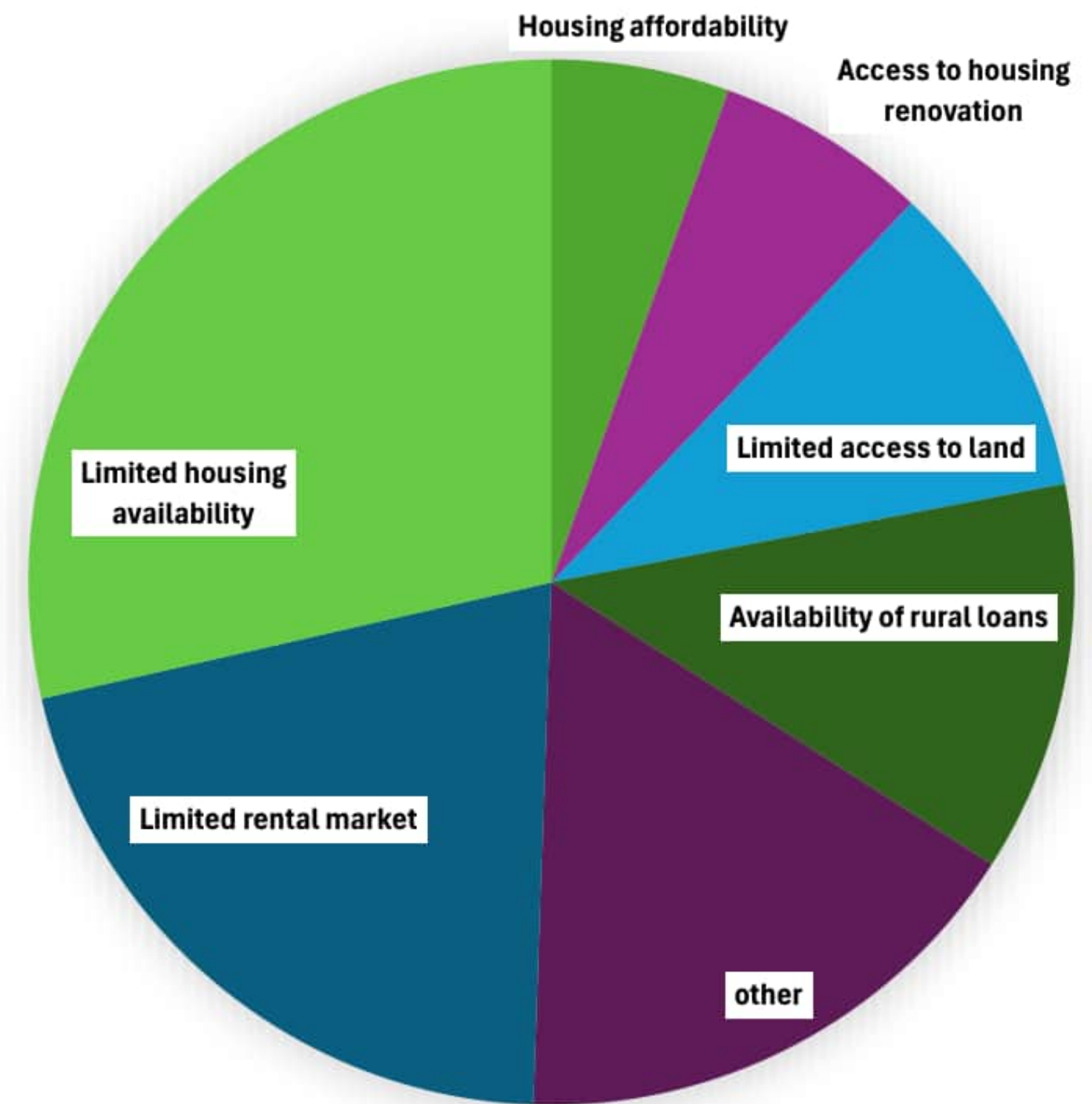
72.9 % unaffected by housing prices.
→ significant relation (χ^2)

No significant association (χ^2) between home ownership/renting and

- perceived housing-related challenges
- rating of affordability
- rating of accessibility for locals

Survey naturally did not cover potential future residents and their opinions.

Main housing-related challenges



FINDINGS - HOUSING

INTERVIEWS


Overall, low concern for all stakeholders interviewed, accounting for only 8% of coded segments

Benifits

- Great views!
- Now have access to internet/ fiber network

Primary concerns

- limited rental availability
- Increase in summer homes
- Housing valuation is the same as in the city
- Hard to get bank loans
- Hard to get building permits

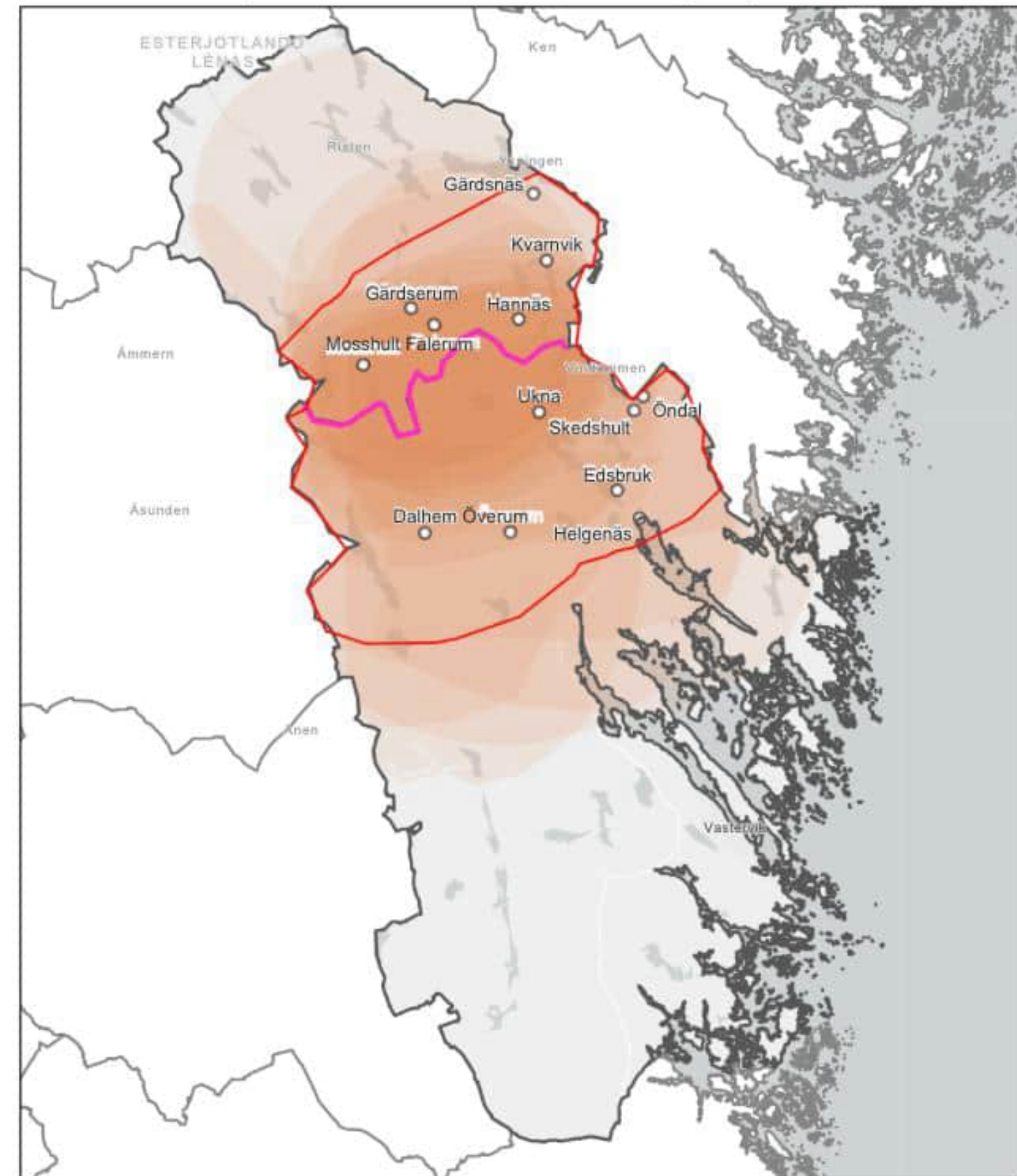
Code System	All	Resident	Orginization	Åtvidaberg	Vastervik
 Future Goals	1.5%	2.3%	0.7%	1.2%	1.7%
 Negetive perception of housing	4.8%	4.9%	4.6%	4.0%	5.0%
 Positive perception of housing	1.7%	0.9%	2.8%	4.0%	0.9%

FINDINGS - BORDER AREA

PARTICIPATORY GIS

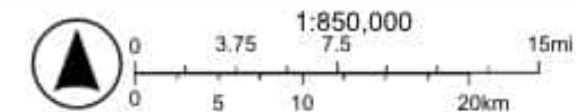
- The perceived border area is concentrated in a central, cross-boundary belt rather than spanning the entire municipal boundary.
- The most significant overlap is found near inland localities close to the Åtvidaberg-Västervik border. In contrast, peripheral areas of both municipalities are only weakly represented in this shared zone.
- As a result, respondents tend to imagine the border area as a selective, shared space rather than as a fixed line or as encompassing the municipal borders.

Perception of the border area among respondents



2026-04-22

- Research area
- Åtvidaberg-Västervik border
- Åtvidaberg and Västervik Districts
- Localities
- Other communes

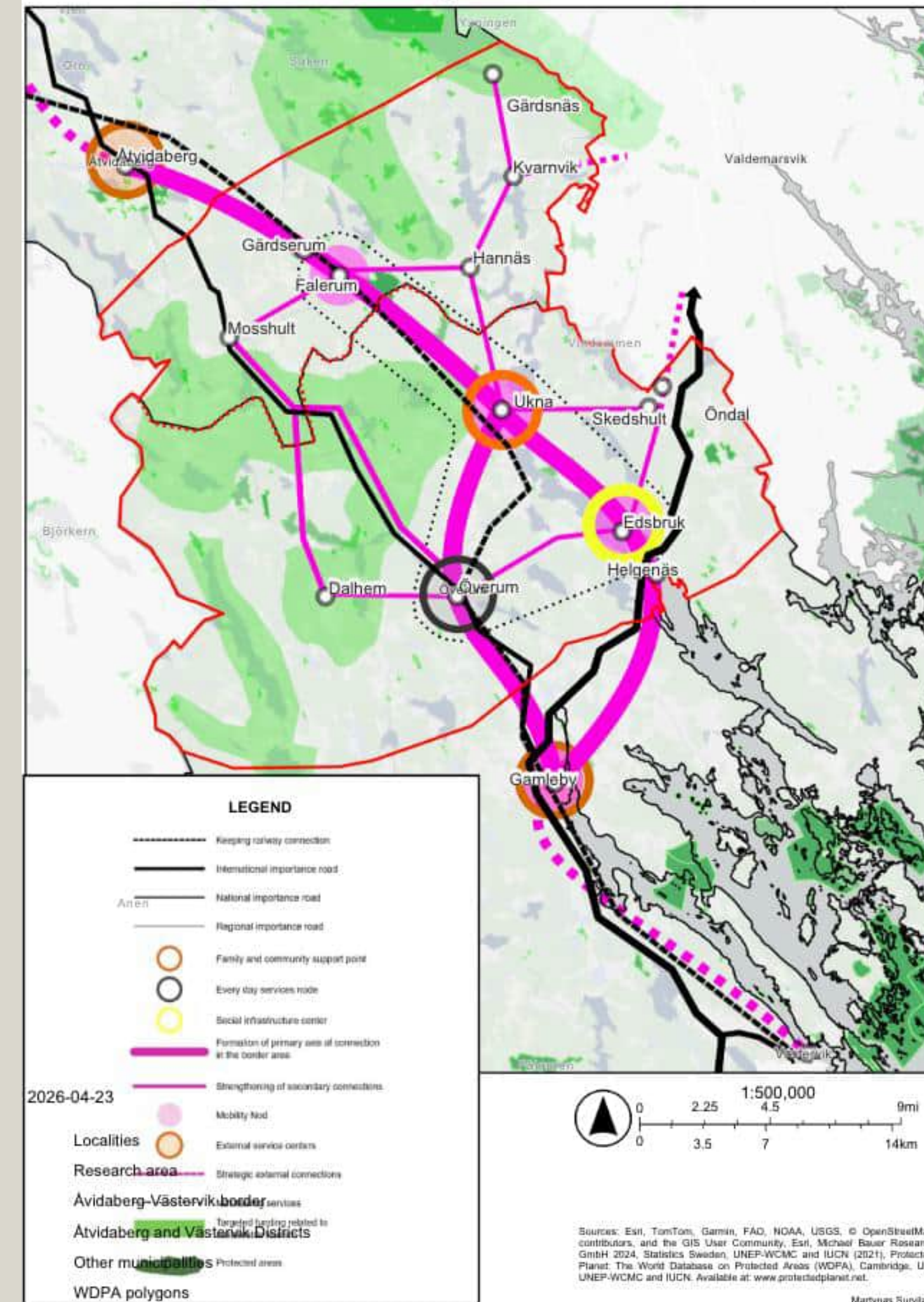


Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAD, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Esri, Michael Bauer Research GmbH 2024, Statistics Sweden

CONCEPT OF THE BORDER AREA

- The conceptual framework regards the Åtvidaberg-Västervik border region not as a zone for expansion, but rather as an area prioritizing retention, service concentration, and functional stabilization.
- The perspective is grounded in empirical evidence from interviews and survey data, indicating that local residents prioritize the preservation of essential services, accessibility, and mobility over territorial growth.
- Accordingly, the concept advocates reinforcing connectivity between principal settlements, more explicit consolidation of basic functions, and reducing administrative fragmentation throughout the border region.
- This approach conceptualizes the border area as a functionally integrated and sustainable everyday living environment to be maintained through more coordinated and contextually responsive planning.

Conception of Åtvidaberg and Västervik municipalities



RECOMENDATIONS

YOUTH EDUCATION

Priority locations

- Hännas - preschool
- Ukna - preschool
- Överum - grade school
- Edsbruk - grade school

Overall priority

Improve school stability for the next five years. Allowing young families to decide where to move, without fear of the schools closing in a year.

Areas for support

- Focus on finding stable, trained staff
 - Hire one director for each grade school
 - Attention and support needed for each child, reducing grade disparities
- Financial agreement on school buses crossing municipal boundaries
 - reduce commute times where possible
 - support children going to the nearest school
 - reduce burden on parents

RECOMENDATIONS

TRANSPORTATION

Road infrastructure

- focus on Riksväg 35 and main border-connecting roads
- increase winter maintenance
- implement strategic wildlife mitigation barriers

Cross-border co-operation

- joint finance for public transportation
- create a permanent mobility working group

Other suggestions

- Optimizing railway investment
- Ensure community stability for transportation
 - increase bus reliability
 - increase cross-border connections
- transition the Surum carpooling pilot project to a permanent regional solution

RECOMENDATIONS

HOUSING

- Increase availability of owner-occupied apartments (not rentals)
- Increase housing available to young families
- Monitor change and impact to increased summer homes in border region

ELDERLY CARE

- monitor duration of home visits from nurses to the elderly
 - ensure continued attention is paid to elderly living in rural settings
 - ensure social dimension of care is not lost
- Västervik can implement a municipal-funded grocery delivery service

SUGGESTIONS MOVING FORWARD

MUNICIPALITIES

Funding

- Increase communication about available funding options in rural regions
- Decrease added bureaucracy on cross-border LEADER applications
 - (currently require 2x the number of applications and reporting)

Communication

- Increase communication between municipalities
- Increase communication with residents in remote areas to prioritize funding
 - ensure funding is accessible
 - ask communities where to prioritize funds
- work to fulfill municipal responsibilities without entrepreneurial funding, displacing the burden onto residents in remote localities
- Create transportation working groups
 - focus on rail and road infrastructure
- co-finance a cross-border school bus to increase education access

LIMITATIONS & SUGGESTIONS

This study was not without limitations

- Time
- limited survey responses
 - hand out survey pamphlets on a mail day
- predominant voice of workers in the region
 - make a stakeholder map to ensure equal voice to people with and without power
 - approach companies in person, less likely to respond to emails
- Software-related limitations

KIITOS - AČIŪ - THANK YOU - AITÄH- TACK -
TAKK FYRIR- PALDIES



QUESTIONS?

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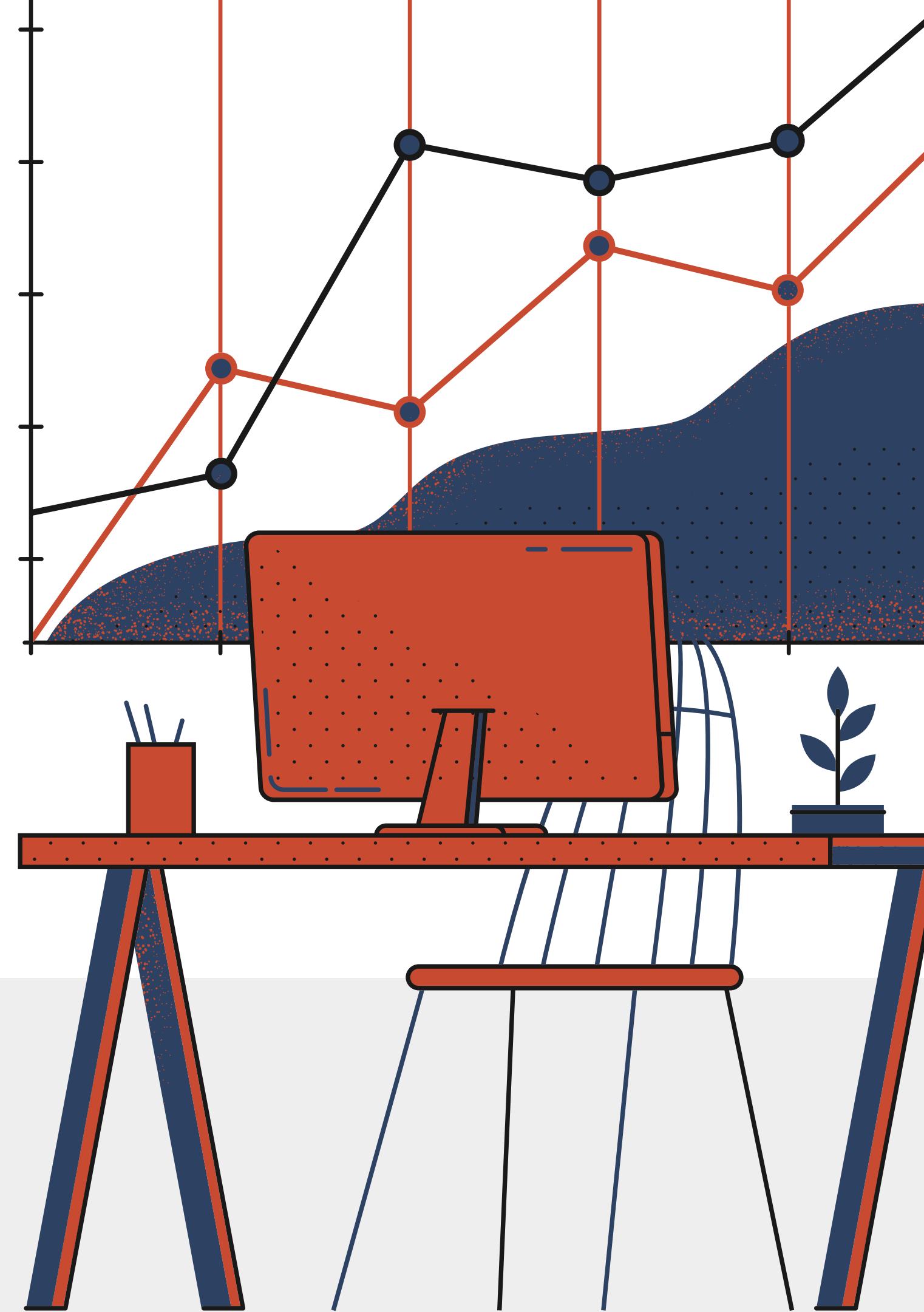
Háskóla­setur Vestfjarða
University Centre of the Westfjords

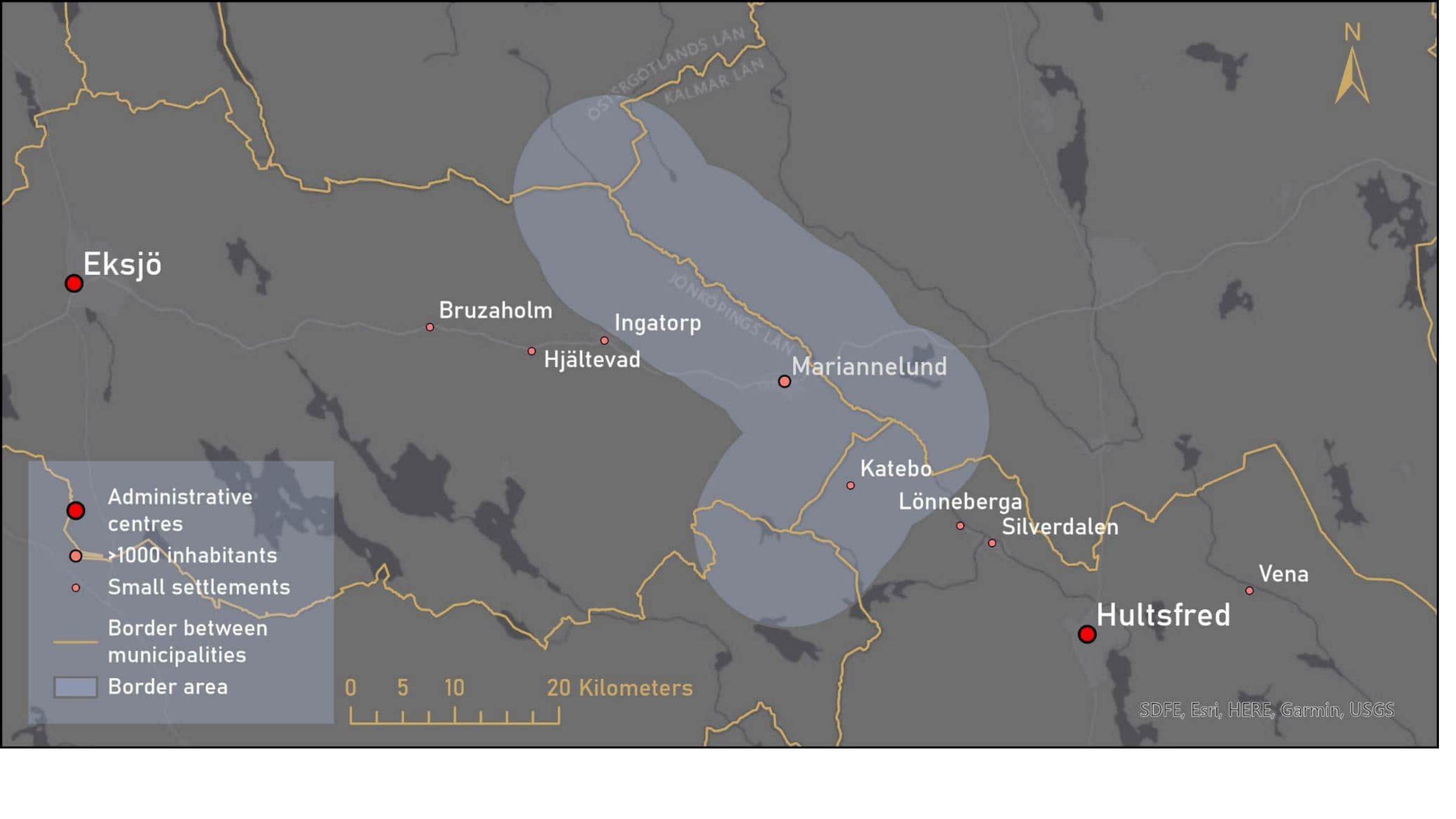


Nordplus

Final seminar Presentation

Group 2 : Ash, Cloe, Eva, Irma, Janis, Nikhil & Oskar







EKSJÖ

Total area 1250 km²

Population 17749

Towns:

Eksjö (administrative center)

Hult

Bruzaholm

Ingatorp

Mariannelund



HULTSFRED

Total area 1190 km²

Population 13609

Towns and villages:

Hultsfred (administrative center)

Katebo

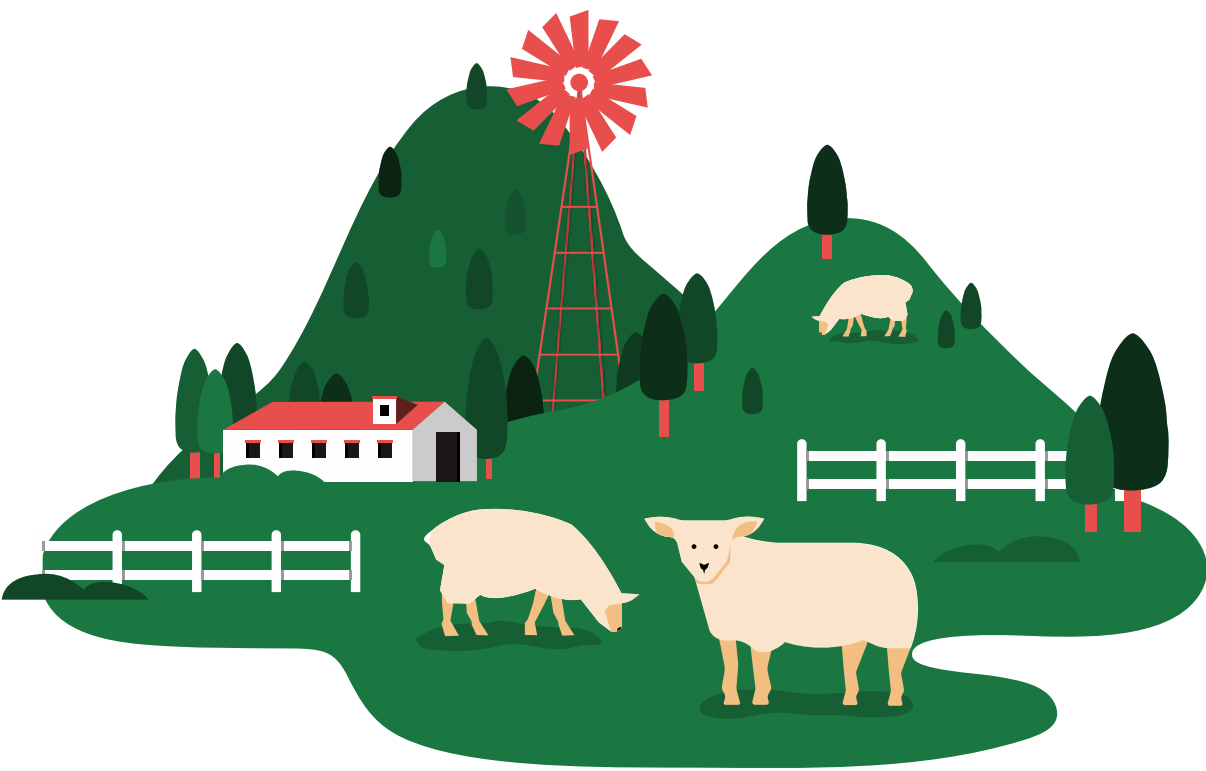
Lonneberga

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

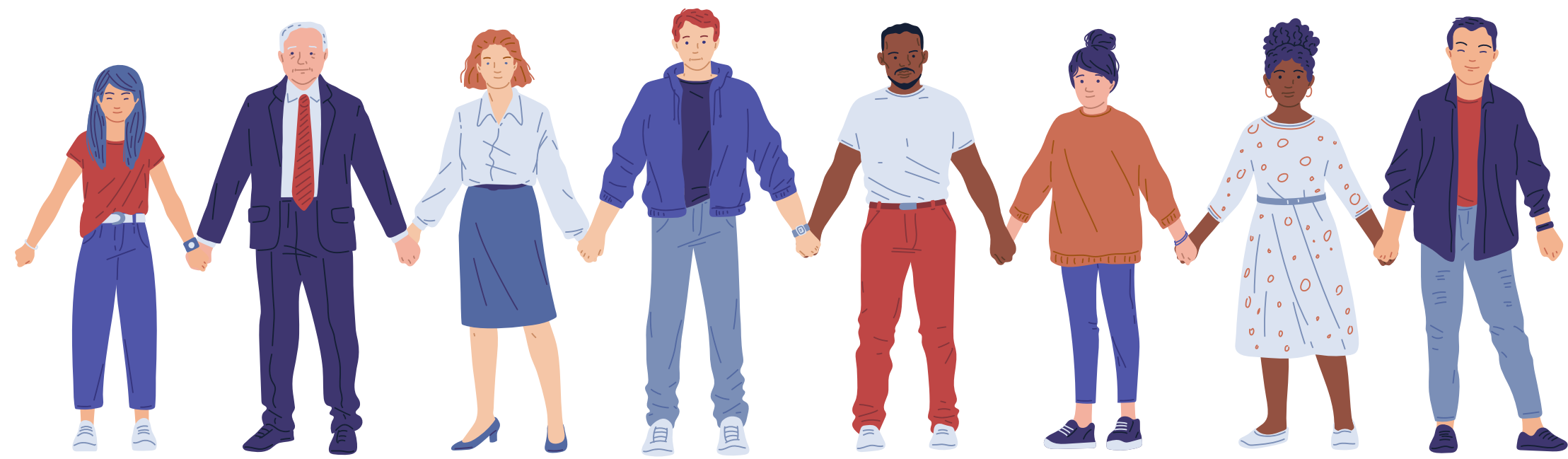
Procedure:

- 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

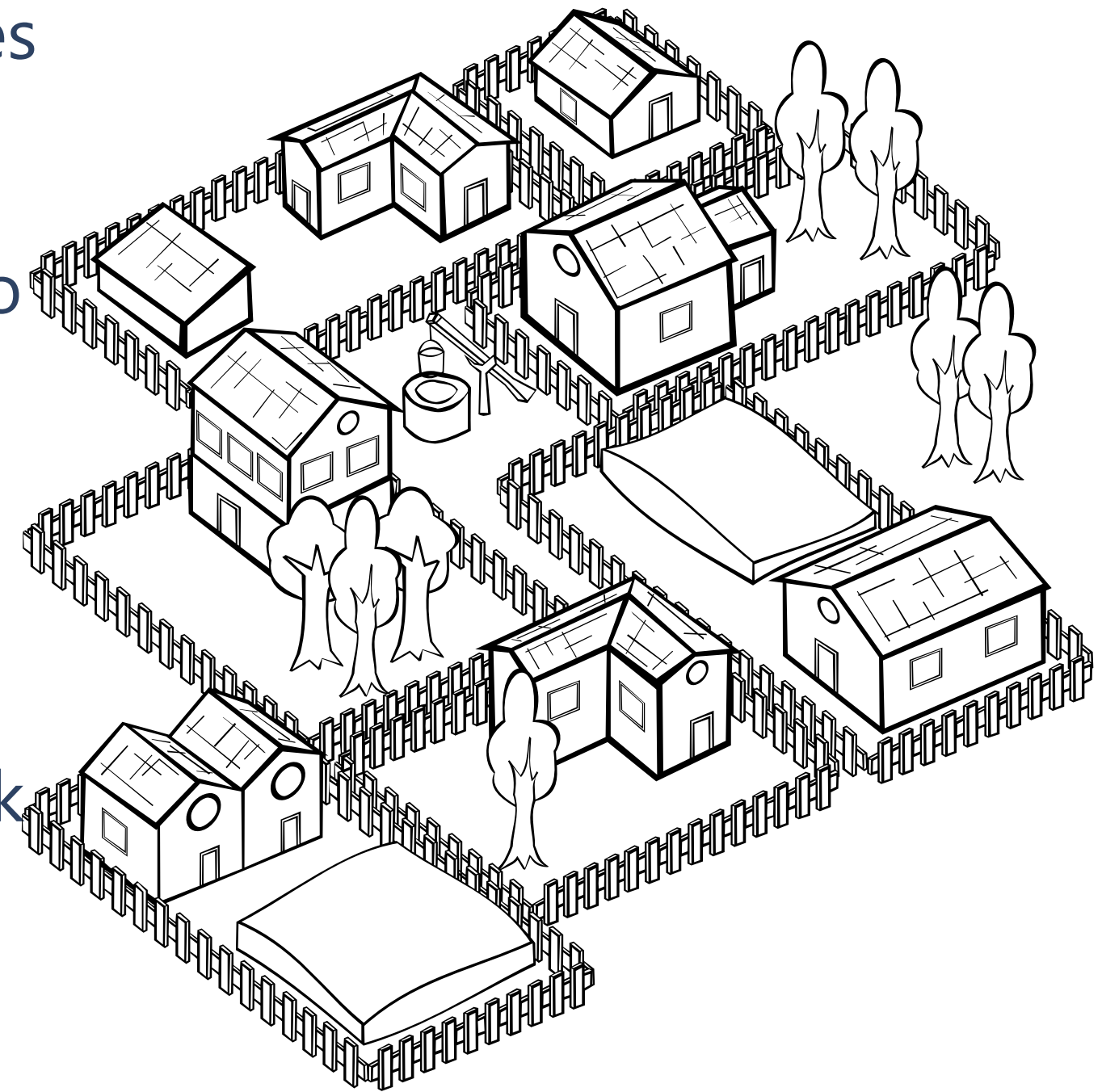


DISCUSSION



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

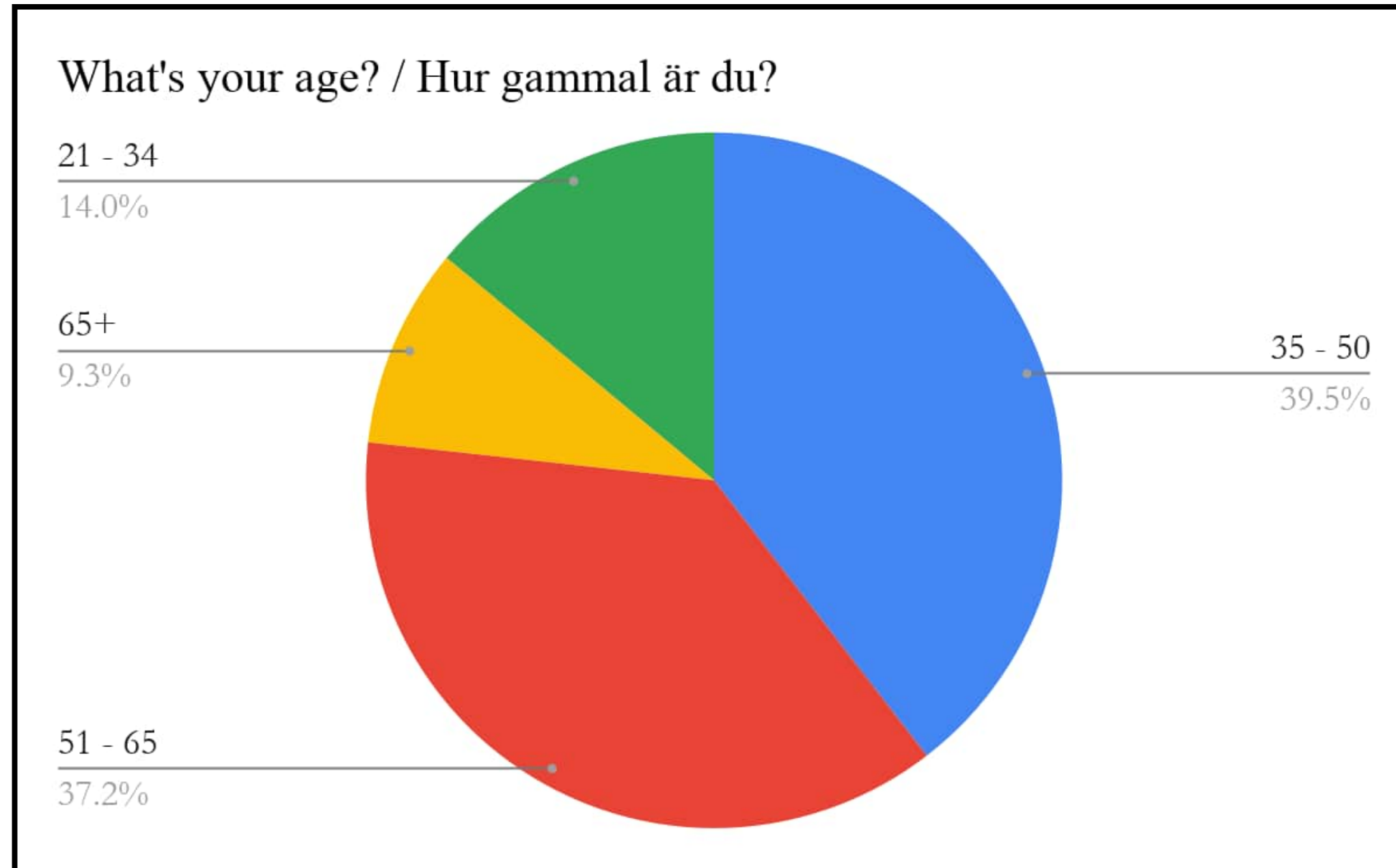
- Abandoned buildings observed in several municipalities
- Creates visual, social, and development challenges

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

Healthcare

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.



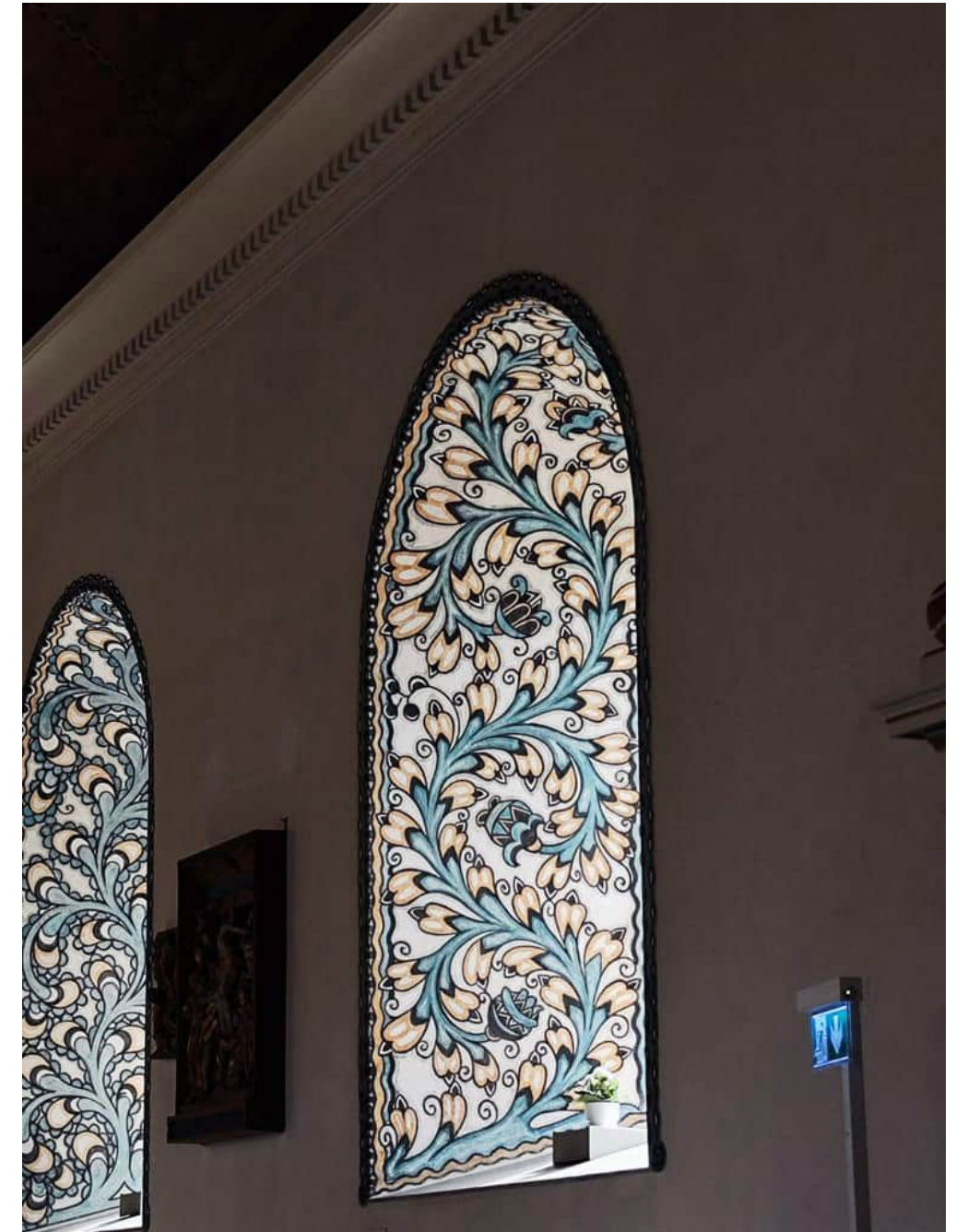
Cultural offer

- 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.



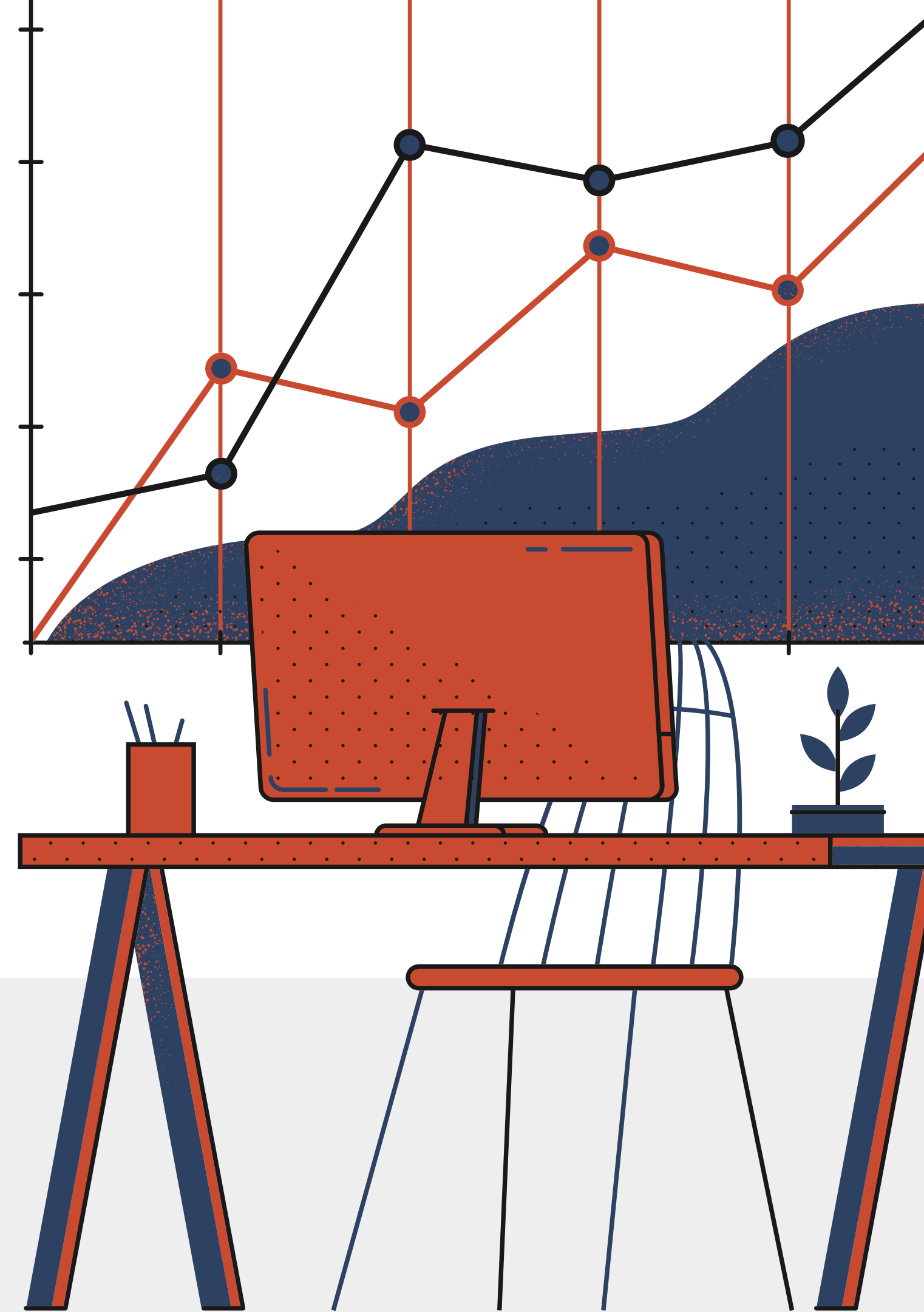
The overall response from the community was positive and valuable.



Nordplus

Tack så mycket

Interviewees, survey
participants, residents ♥





20 min Coffee
break





Nordplus



Háskóla
Vestfirðna

University Centre
of the Westfjords

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES AND DEVELOPMENT

FOR DEPOPULATING AND PERIPHERAL LOCALITIES
IN THE EUROPEAN NORTH

A Study of Cross-Border Areas: Ödeshög–Tranås

Authors: Edijs Kristaps · Selma Larsson · Justas Pamparas Allison Randall · Linda Liis Tanni · Mirian Valk

Supervisors: Moritz Albrecht · Matthias Kokorsch · Ida Grundel · Garri Raagmaa · Donatas Burneika · Zaiga Krisjane

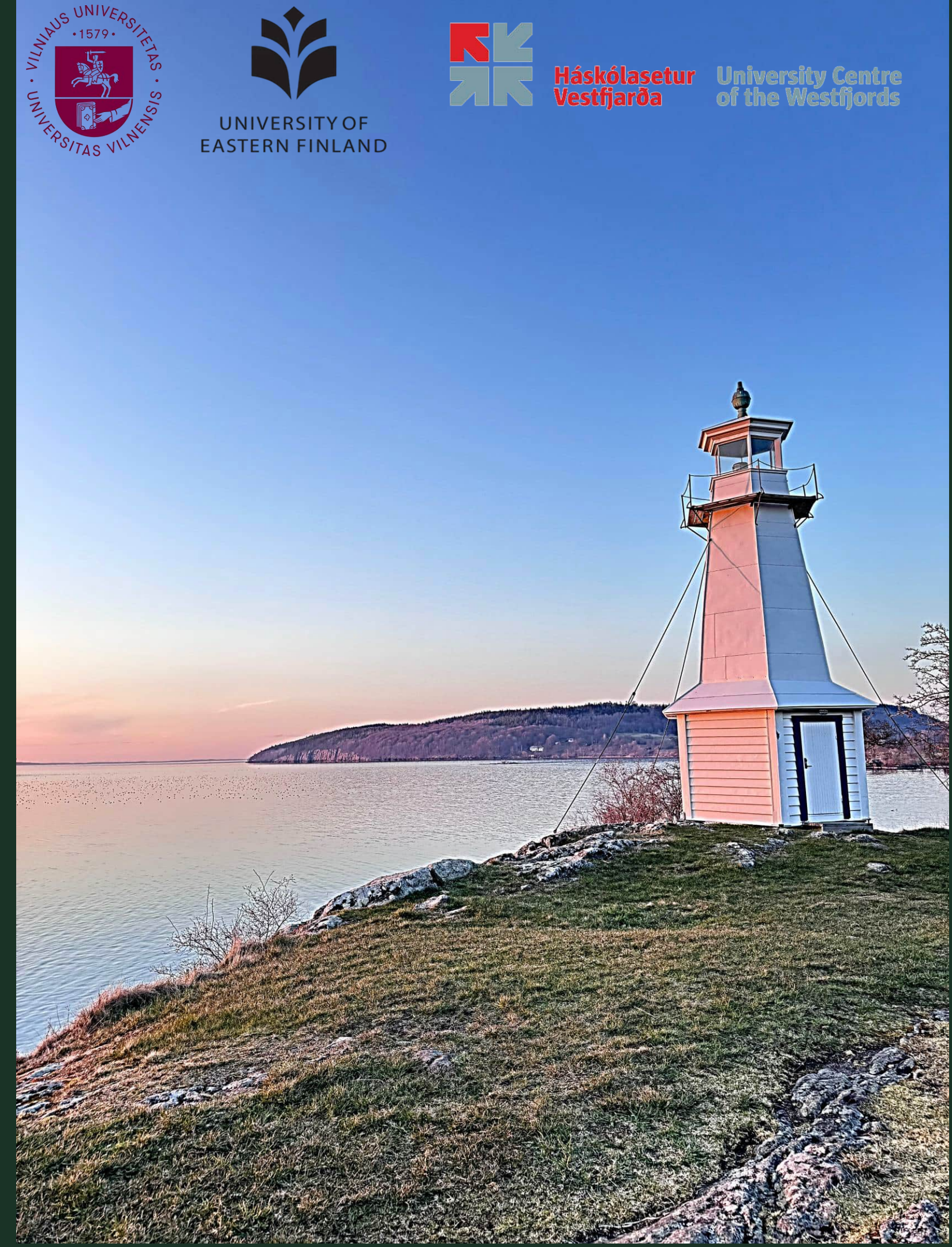


Table of Contents

1 Overview of Area

2 Research Questions

3 Methods

4 Document Analysis

5 Interview Results

6 Survey Results

7 Observation Results

8 Discussion

9 Suggestions



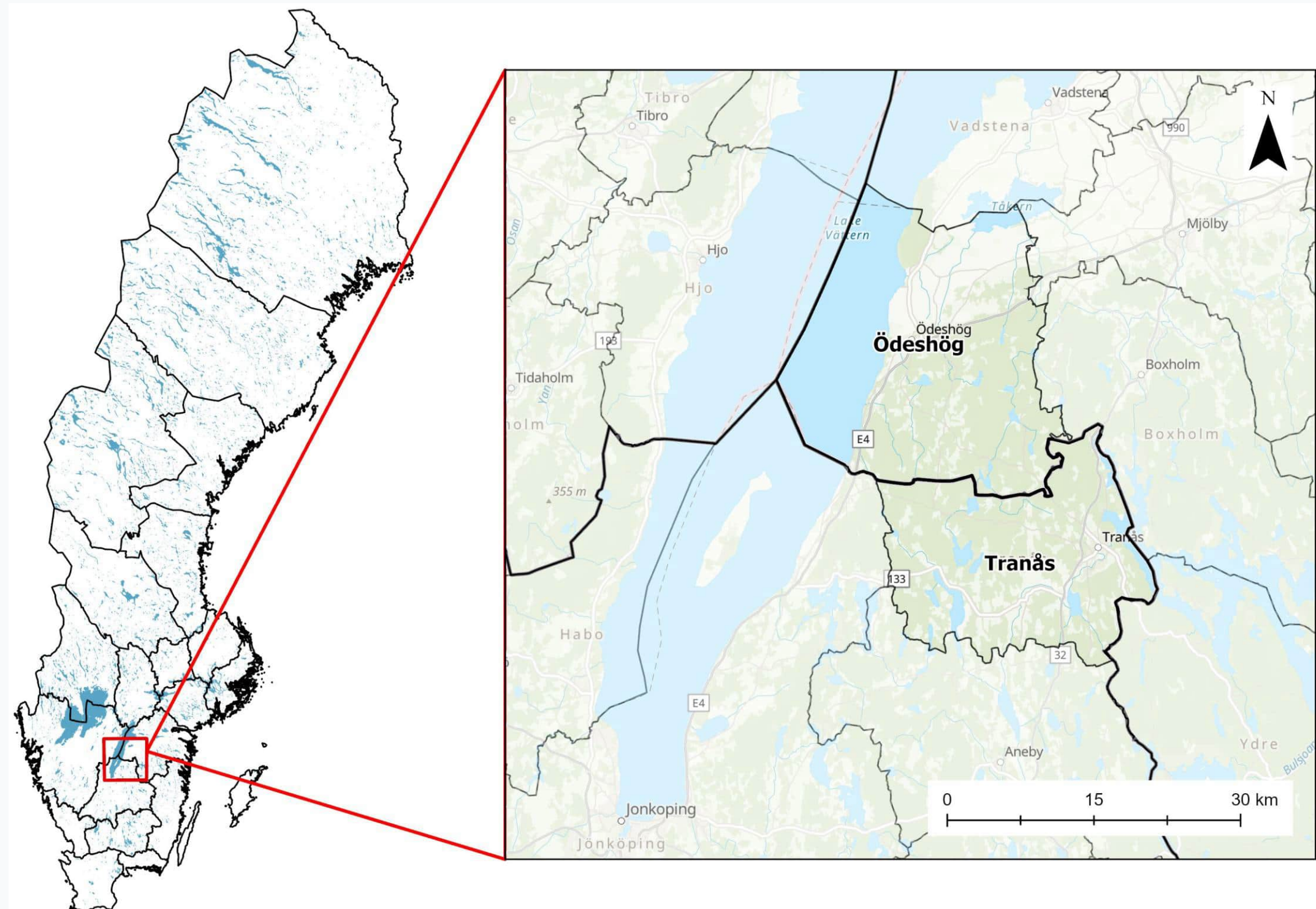
Overview of Study Area

Ödeshög and Tranås

Characteristic	Ödeshög	Tranås
Population size	~5,300	~19,000
People in rural areas	~2,600 (49%)	~5,000 (27%)
Work in home municipality	53.22%	76.75%

Key Findings

- Large proportion of elderly
- Proportion of youth and working-age adults is bigger in Tranås than in Ödeshög
- Outmigration outweighs immigration in both areas
- Young people leaving · Elderly moving to urban centers



Border Area

Scarcely Populated

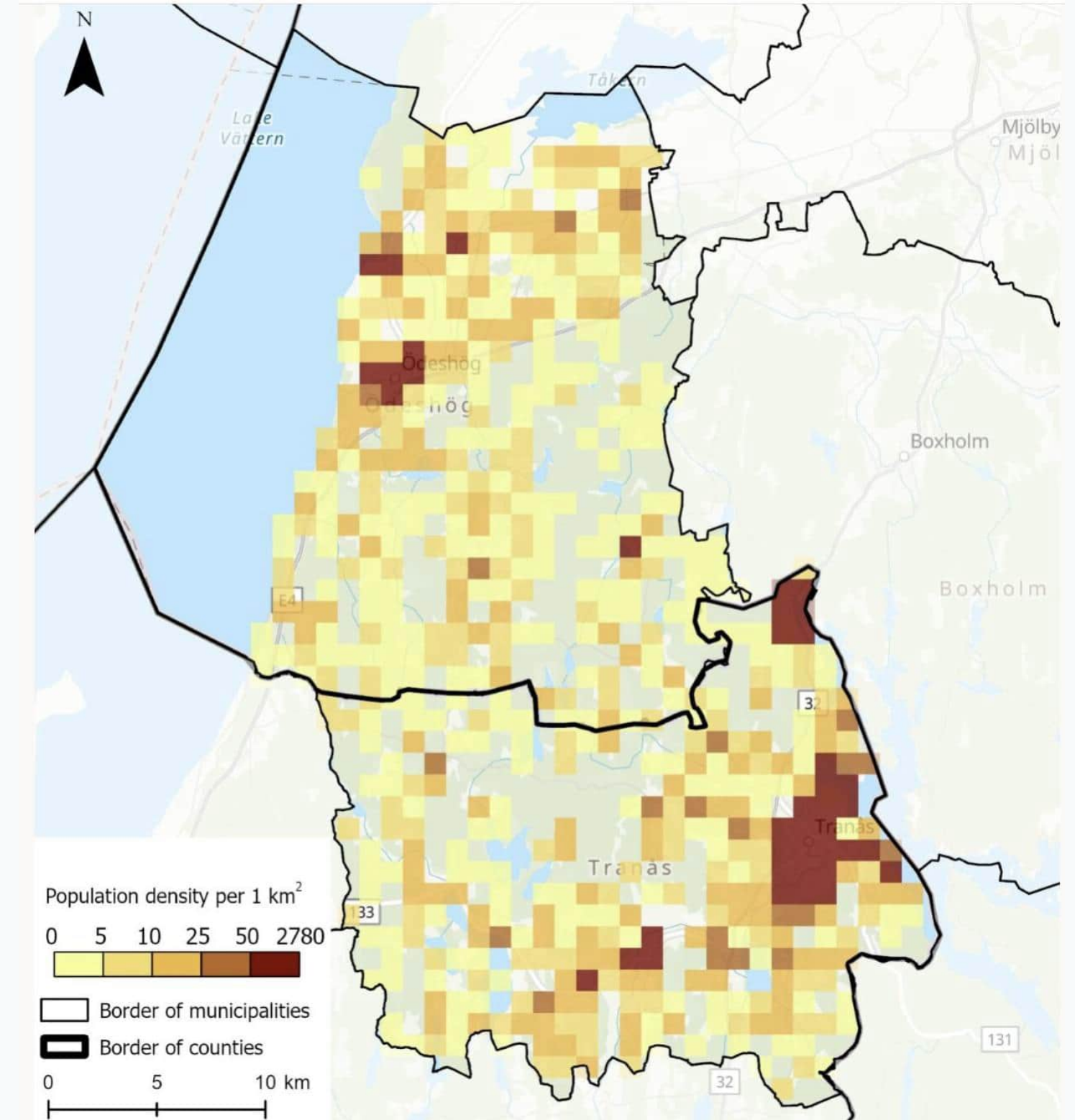
Very low population density across the cross-border zone

Far from Urban Centers

Limited proximity to larger cities and regional services

Poor Transportation

Bad transportation options and no main roads connecting the area



Population Density Map of Research Area

Research Questions

1

How does quality of life and contentment with one's way of life relate to local development, collaboration, and reliance on neighboring municipalities?

Aims:

Determine rural lifestyle

Determine locals' perception of quality of life in respective municipalities

2

How are the municipalities of Tranås and Ödeshög working with developing the border areas and is that in compliance with the reality of the situation?

Aims:

Assess how the current reality works in compliance with their planning

Identify challenges, opportunities, and what is currently working

Construct solutions and suggestions

Methods

01

Document
Analysis

02

Interviews

Semi-structured

Unstructured

03

Survey

04

Observations

**Undersökning
om
landsbygden
och framtida
utveckling**

**Gränsområdet
mellan Tranås-
Ödeshög**



Enkäten är aktiv från: 16 - 20 april 2026



SKANNA HÄR FÖR ATT DELTA I
10-MINUTERSUNDERSÖKNINGEN

Denna undersökning är en del av ett internationellt studentforskningsprojekt om landsbygdsutveckling i gränsområdet Tranås-Ödeshög. Vi vill förstå livskvaliteten, tjänsterna och framtida behov.



För mer information, kontakta: justas.pamparas@chgf.studvu.it

Document Analysis

Planeringsstrategi för översiktlig planering – mandatperioden 2022–2026

Planning Strategy for Comprehensive Planning – Electoral Term 2022–2026

Prepare for a community of 6,000 inhabitants

55% of residents live in the urban areas of Ödeshög and Hästholmen; 45% in rural areas

Strengthen the main town, neighboring village Hästholmen and local nodes to improve public transport and services

Function and development of rural nodes: service points, commuter parking, local transport etc.

Dialogue with residents must be an integral part of this work

Document Analysis

Översiktsplan för Tranås kommun – Comprehensive Plan for Tranås Municipality

"A sustainable development is one that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

25,000 inhabitants by 2040

80% of the population in the Tranås urban area; 20% in rural areas and smaller settlements (Sommen & Gripenberg)

2030 - fossil-free municipality with sustainable transport solutions, blurring boundaries between town, countryside, and region

Sustainable urban and rural development that grows in balance with natural resources, creating places where people want to live, work, and thrive

Adelöv, Linderås, Gripenberg, and Sommen designated as local centres

Interview Results

Main Theme	Main Findings
Transportation	Strong dependence on cars due to weak public transport
Housing & Quality of Life	Affordable housing but limited services
Community	Strong local belonging, but aging engagement
Education & Youth	School pressure and fewer youth opportunities
Nature	Major positive factor for identity and tourism



Survey Results

The survey aimed to understand how residents perceive quality of life, accessibility, services, and belonging in the cross-border area.

10

responses collected

Car Dependency

Strong reliance on private vehicles across the study area

Nature & Community

Generally positive view of natural environment and local community

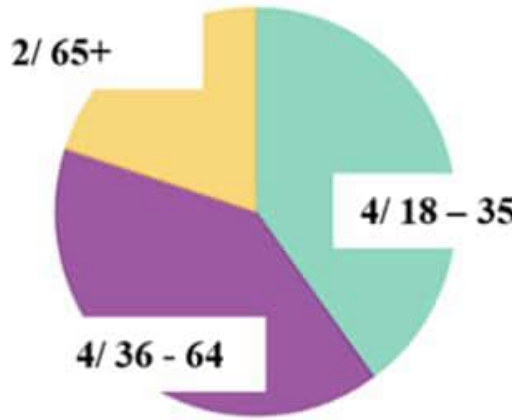
Cross-border Interaction

Limited interaction between residents of the two municipalities

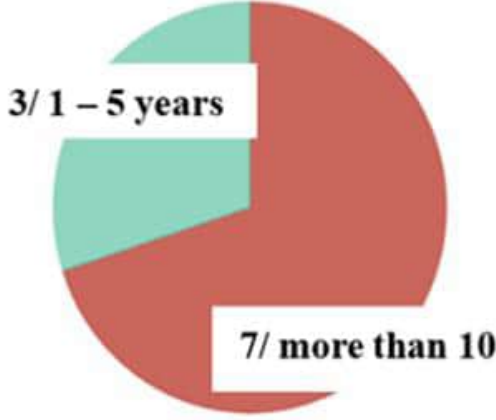
Social Ties

Social ties appeared stronger than attachment to place

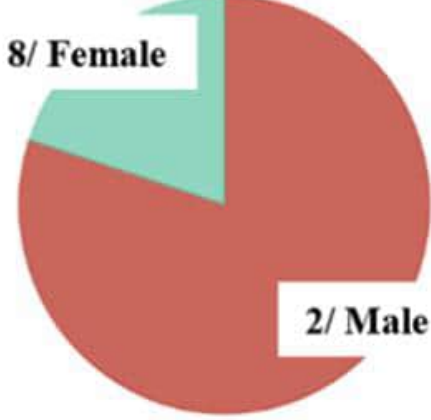
What is your age group?



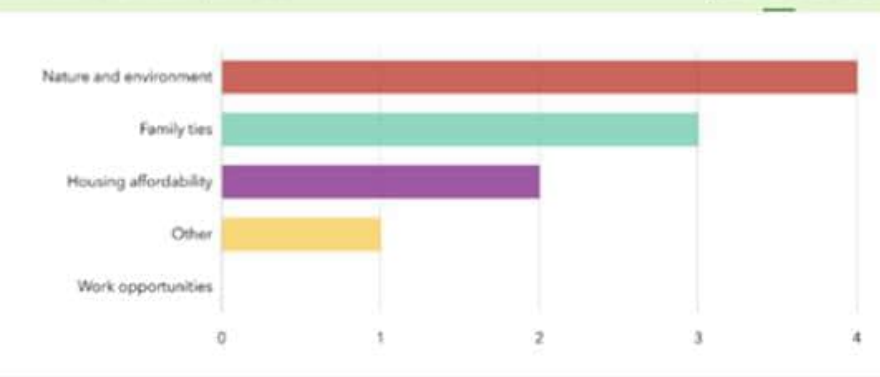
How long have you lived in this area



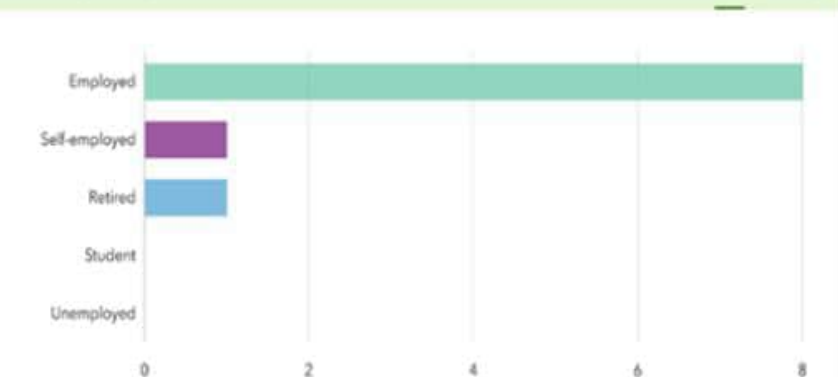
What is your gender?



What is the main reason you live here?



What is your occupation?



Spatial Structure

Structured around two main centers:
Tranås and Ödeshög

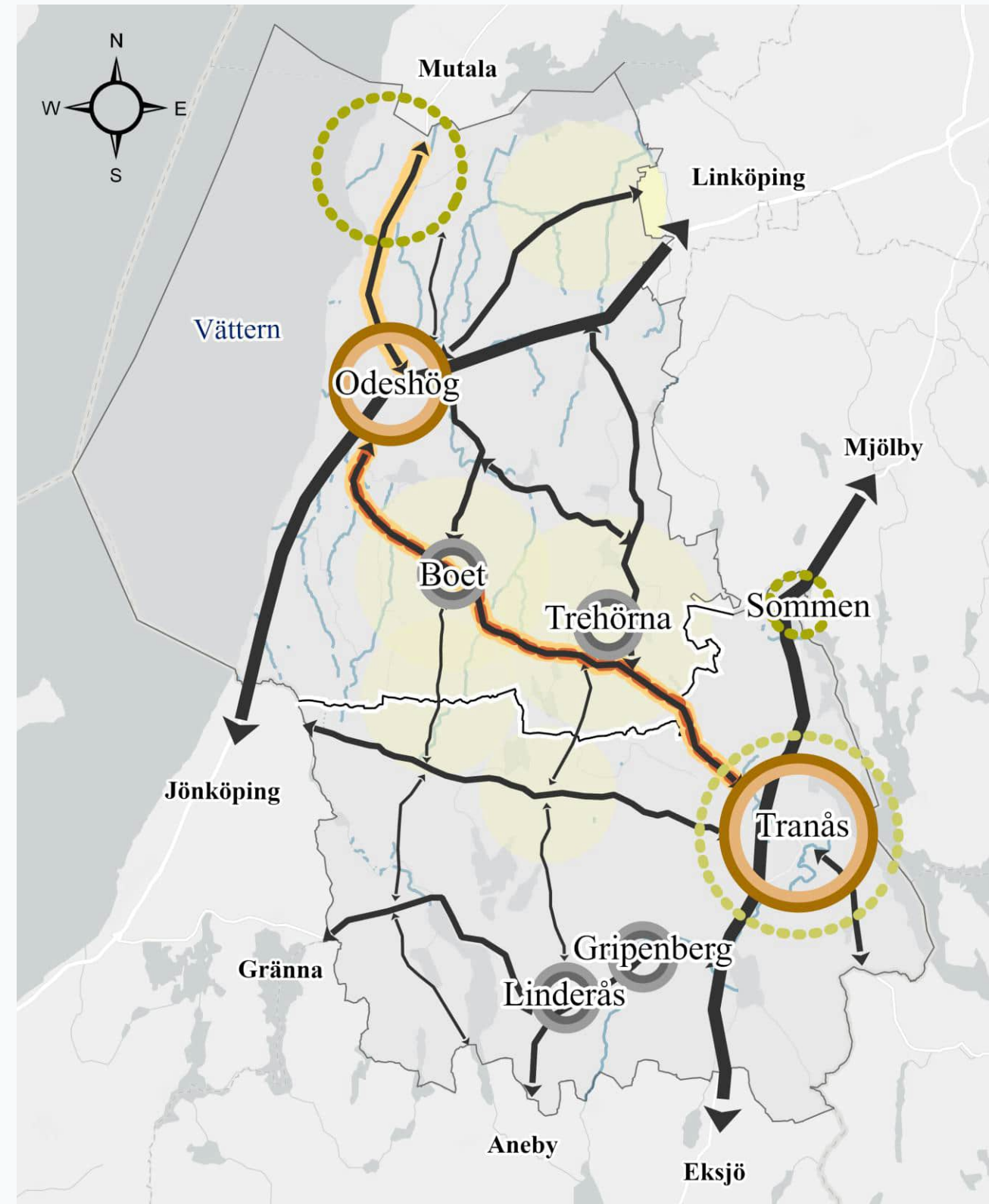
Smaller settlements depend on these
centers for services and connections

Clear center–periphery pattern visible
across the territory

Main challenges: road safety issues,
limited public transport, and service
accessibility gaps

Peripheral areas are more difficult to
access without a car

Development potential is uneven across
the territory



SPATIAL STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY AREA

SPATIAL STRUCTURE

- Regional centers
- Local centers
- Local connection
- Regional connection
- National connection

INTERVIEW - BASED CHALLENGES

- Road safety constraints
- Public transport constraints
- Service accessibility gaps

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

- Regional potential
- Local potential

HYDROGRAPHY AND BOUNDARIES

- Municipalities
- Border area
- stream

0 5 10 Km

The map highlights spatial challenges identified in interviews, including unsafe road connections, limited service access, and dependence on external centers.

Analytical layers: author's interpretation based on semi-structured interviews.

Author: Justas Pamparas

Observation Results

Map of Observation Points in Research Area

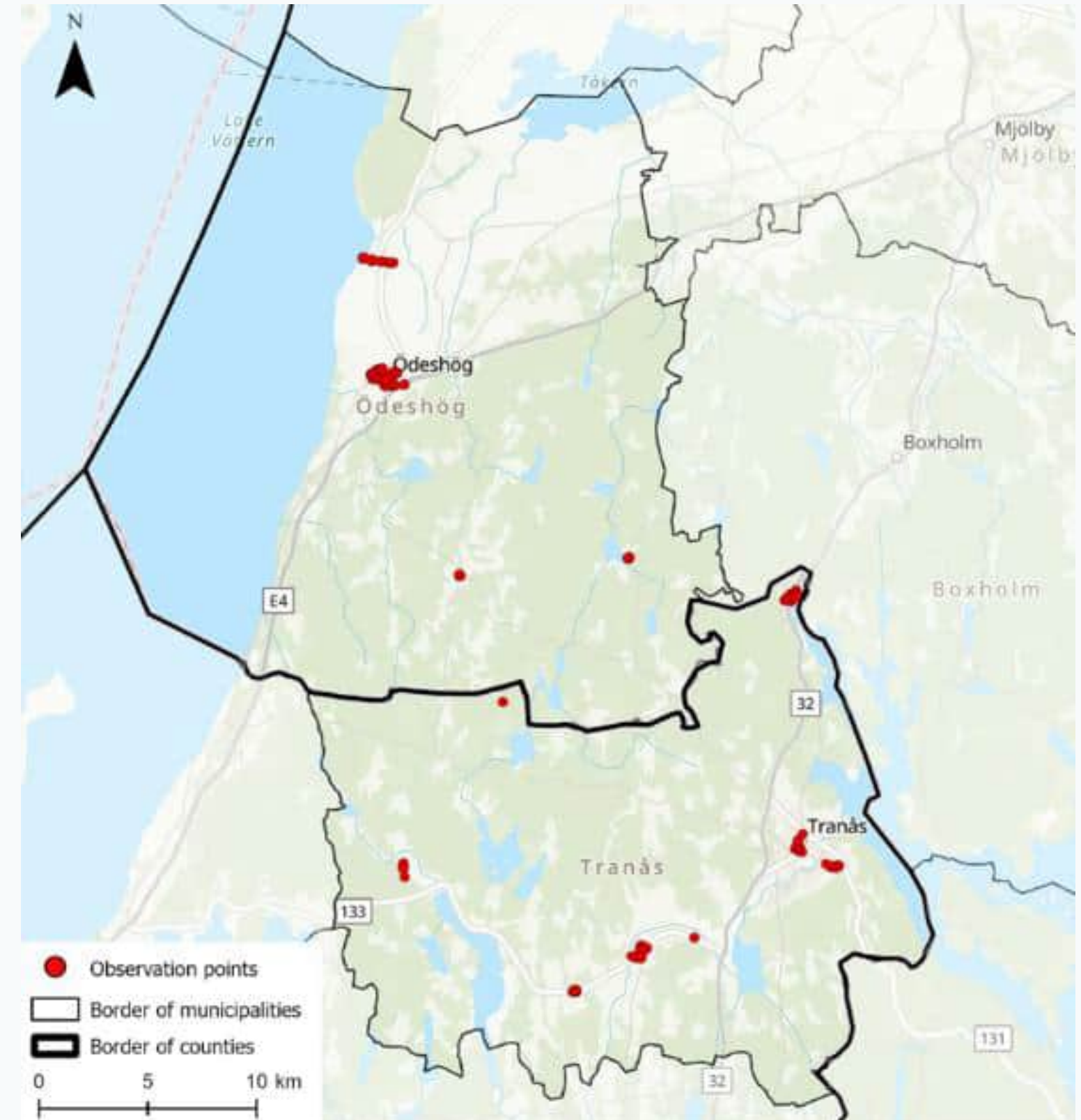
Participant Observation

Structured tabular recording of observed phenomena and activities in the field across multiple locations and time periods.

**130+ observation points
collected across the research
area**

ArcGIS Field Maps

Digital mapping tool used to collect and geo-reference over 130 observation points across the study area.



Field Observations 1



Ödeshög industrial area on Monday morning.



Linderås village on Friday evening.

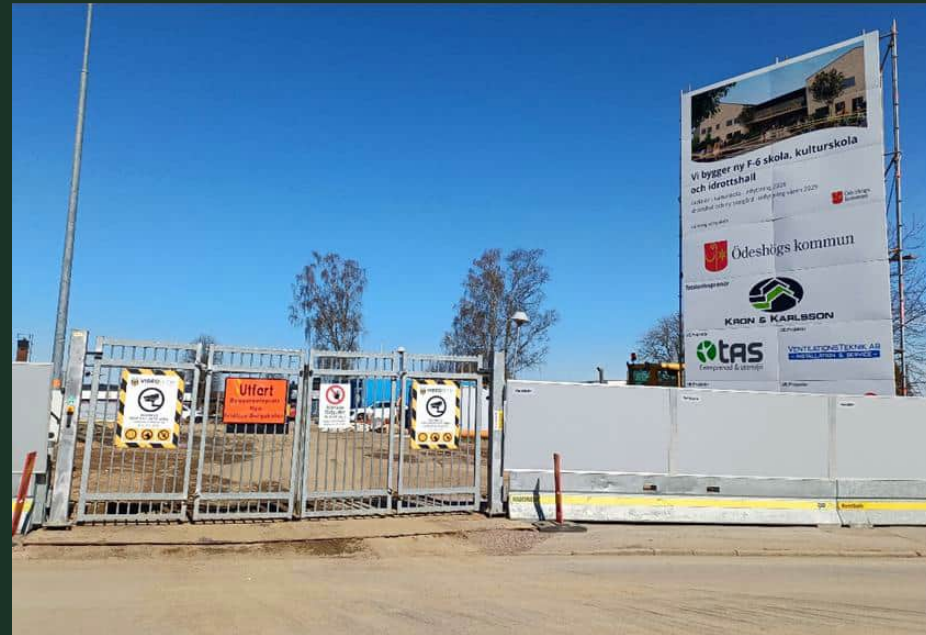
Field Observations 2



Boats in backyards or being towed by trailer.

Signs in Sommen, showing language usage.

Field Observations 3



Construction sites in Ödeshög and Tranås.



Observations in public transport hubs.

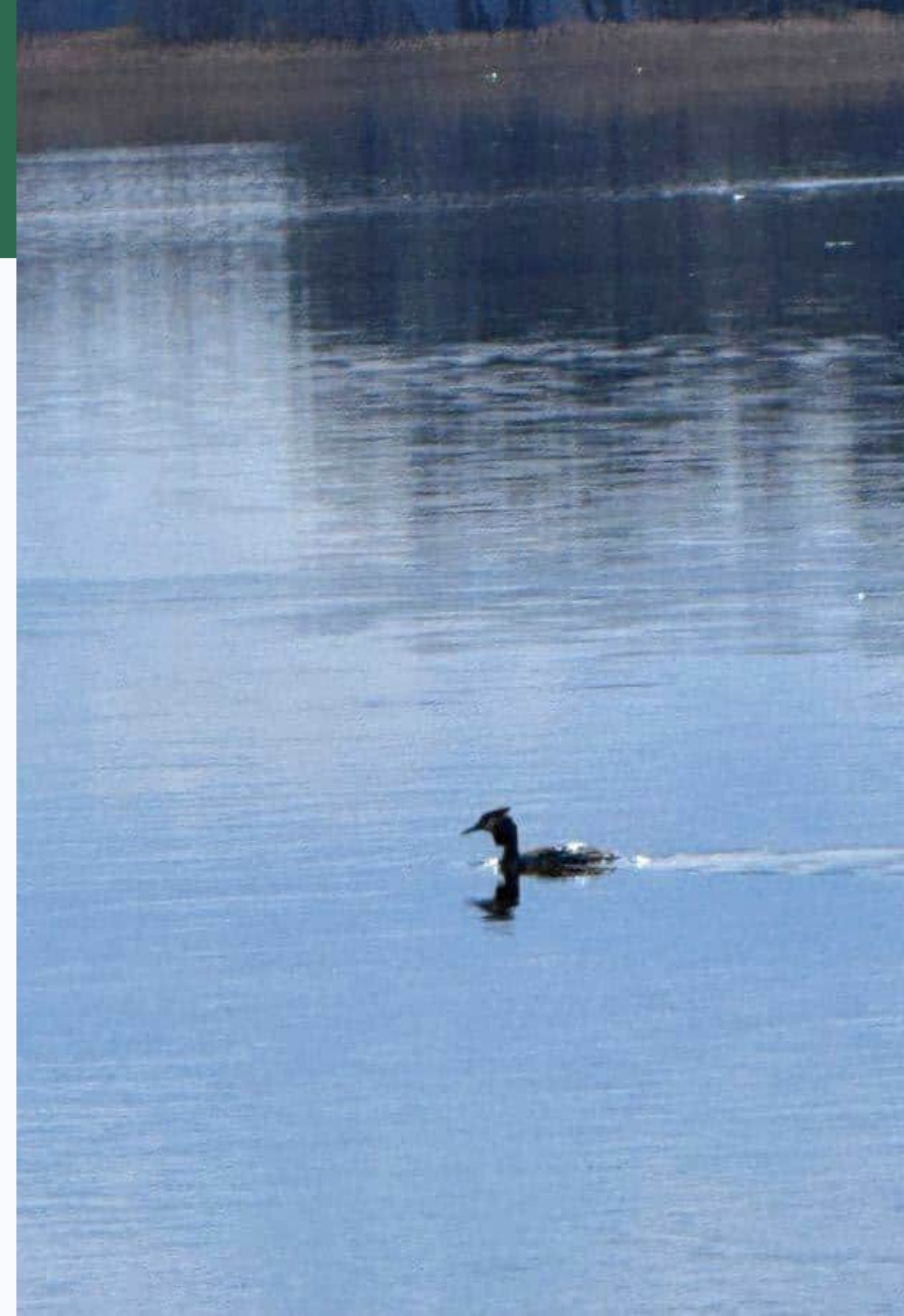
Discussion

Major themes were education, transport, ecological sustainability and contentment

Findings reflected previous research in comparable peripheral areas

People who stay are happy — but what about the people who move?

The view of the border area differs between residents and between municipalities



Suggestions

Collaboration between different governmental bodies

- Public transportation
- Municipality–Region and Region–Region cooperation

Transport & Infrastructure

- Public transportation improvements
- Road maintenance
- Electric vehicle support

Sustainability & Energy

- Reducing carbon emissions in car-based communities
- Fair distribution of revenue from renewable energy
- Addressing fuel poverty
- Sustainable energy solutions

Tourism & Local Economy

- Promote tourism opportunities
- Support local cafes and small businesses



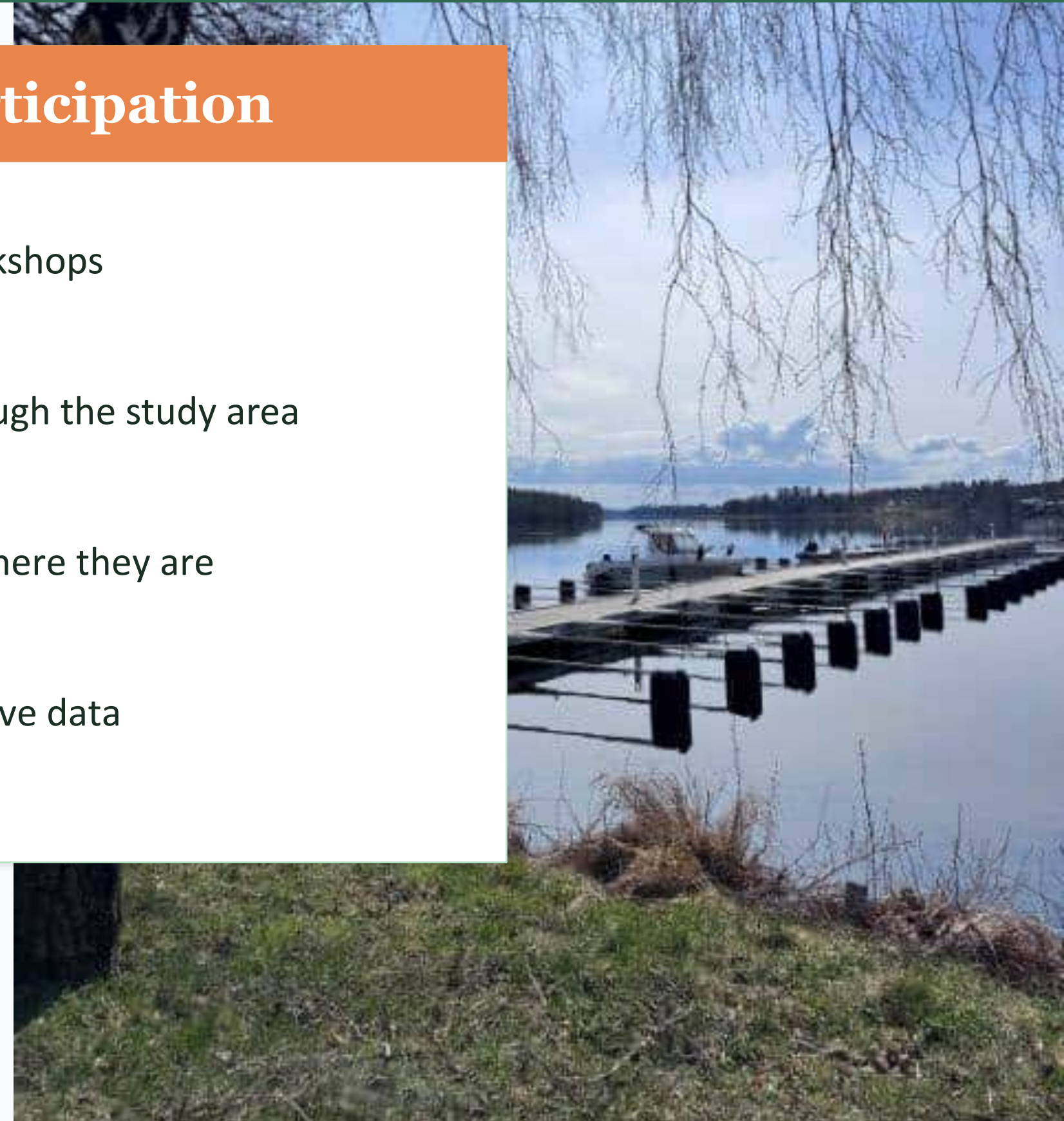
Methodology Suggestions

Survey

- 1 More focused and targeted questions
- 2 Different ways of reaching participants
- 3 Address limited response rates

In-Person Participation

- 1 Meetings and workshops
- 2 Guided walks through the study area
- 3 Meeting people where they are
- 4 Collecting qualitative data



References

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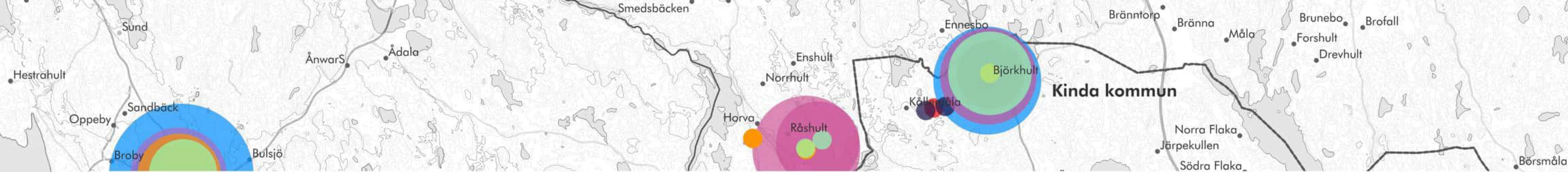
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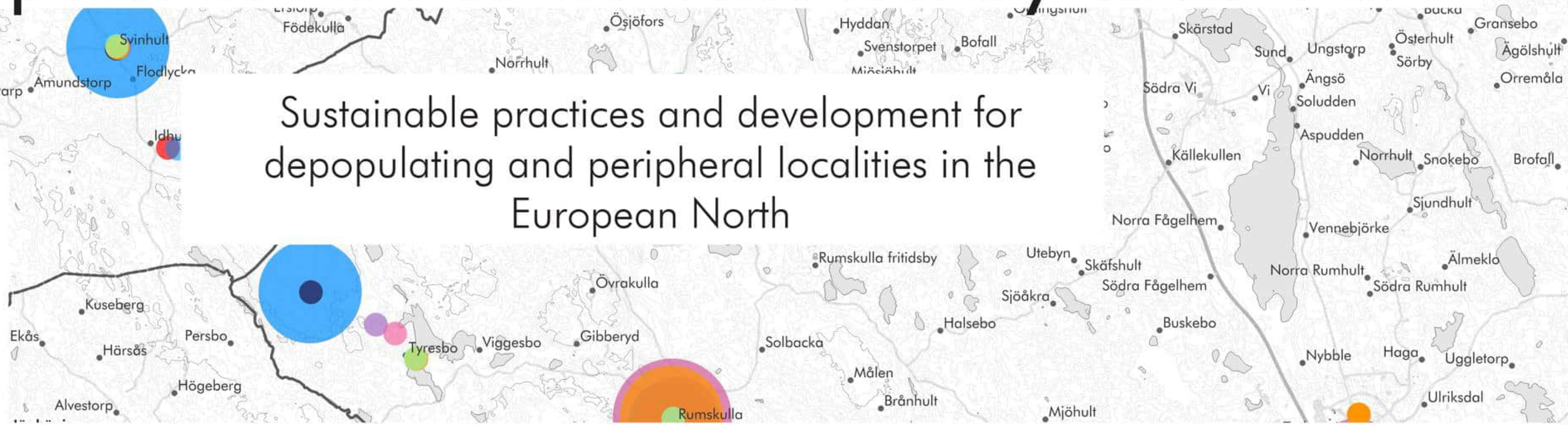
Ödeshögs kommun



Thank You



Bridging the Gap: Cross-border Dynamics of Depopulation and Sustainability in Peripheral Areas of Vimmerby and Ydre

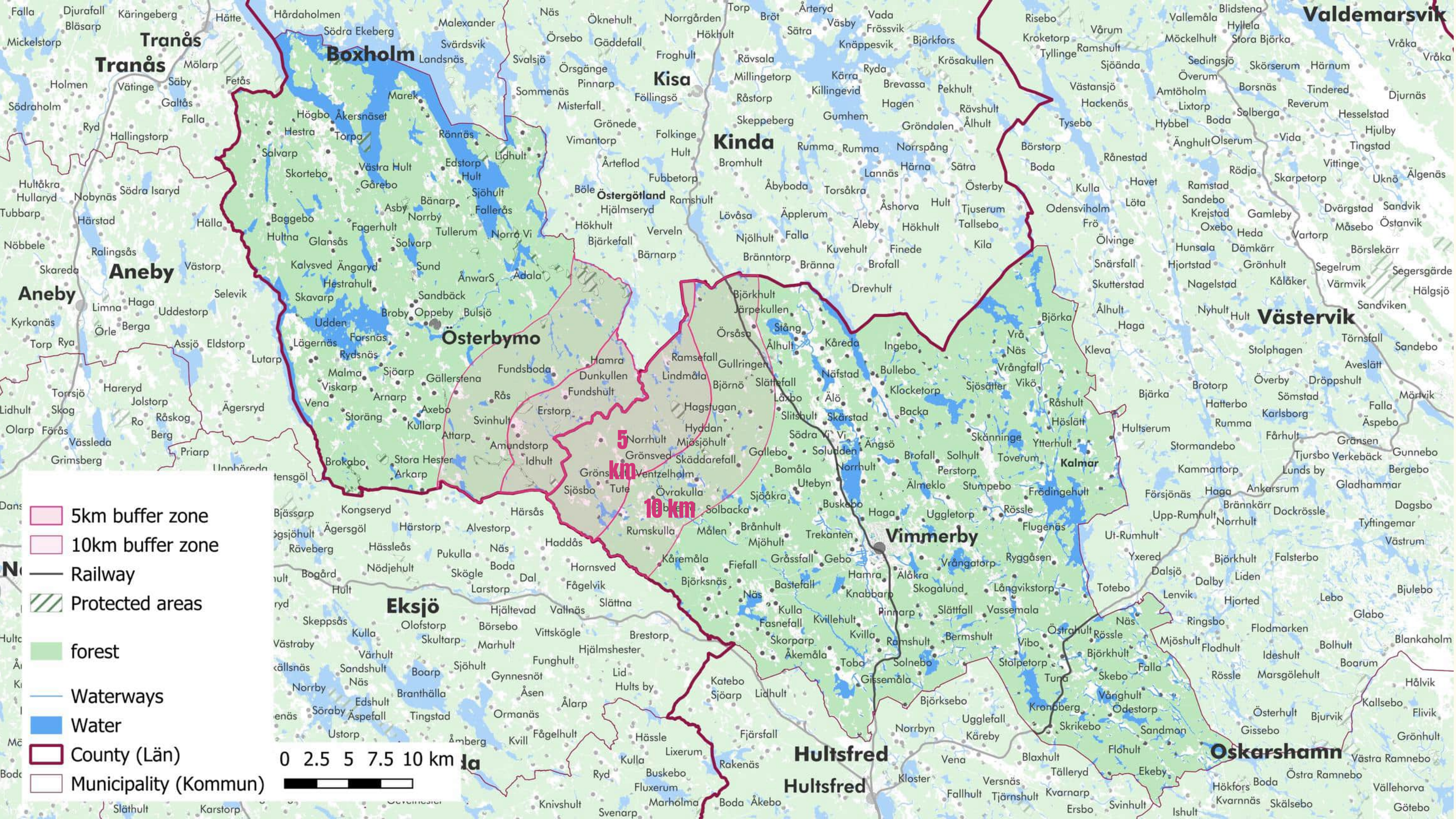


Sustainable practices and development for depopulating and peripheral localities in the European North

 Nordplus



Presentation by: Dovydas Žilinskis, Laia Sala, Landyn Gestic, Makss Soboļevs, Markus Karl Vallaste, Miranda Gulbani, Nic van 't Schip



- 5km buffer zone
- 10km buffer zone
- Railway
- Protected areas
- forest
- Waterways
- Water
- County (Län)
- Municipality (Kommun)

0 2.5 5 7.5 10 km

Aim + Research Questions

- **Aim:** Investigate the challenges and possibilities in the border area between Vimmerby and Ydre municipality.
- **RQ1:** How do different actors (local residents, stakeholders, government institutions and outsiders (us)) perceive and respond to depopulation in the border region of Vimmerby and Ydre?
- **RQ2:** How do these (different) perspectives influence local identity, governance and development in the area?
- **RQ3:** Are current cross border cooperation initiatives effectively implemented?

Overview of Methods

01: Semi-structured Interview

02: Survey



03: Document Analysis

04: Mapping of Emotions

Method - Semi-structured Interview

- 5 interviews
 - Vimmerby - Linda Szanto, Frida Karlsson, Piroska Kallay, Patric Engqvist
 - Ydre - Sofia Faxell
 - County Administrative Board Kalmar - Jerry Svensson
 - Co-owner Cykla Filmlandskapet Småland - Carina Engqvist
 - Owner of Stigs Konditori & Servicebutik - Markus Andersson
- Used pre-made set of questions
- Recorded and Transcribed
- Limitations:
 - Time-consuming
 - Communication hindered by language barrier

Method - Survey

- Internet survey hosted on Google Forms from 16 April - 22 April, offered in both English and Swedish
- Distributed via local Facebook groups, posters, and word of mouth
- Set of questions aimed to measure perception on:
 - Depopulation
 - Border cooperation
 - Local improvements
- Quantitative analysis using Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis (EFA)
- Limitations:
 - Small sample size
 - Limited time to engage with public
 - Quantitative analysis limited

Method - Mapping of Emotions

- Pinpoints of specific locations and the feeling they gave us
- 7 different emotions
 - Anger
 - Despair
 - Fear
 - Apathy
 - Hope
 - Happiness
 - Peace



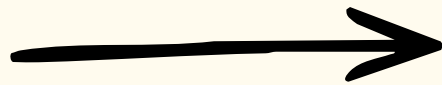
Method - Photovoice

- Last questions of survey
- Participants could upload up to 10 pictures
 - “Points of pride”
 - “Challenges”
- Textual, spatial, and visual data.

Results - SSI

Vimmerby Municipality

- Depopulation
 - Two different approaches
- Collaboration
 - Strong borders
 - “We do not really have anything to do there”
- Transportation
 - Not really mentioned → not a problem?
- Nature-based Tourism
 - Tourism as an opportunity for regional development
 - Supports new initiatives
 - Astrid Lindgren



“I think that they are a little bit more accepting, we don't really want to accept the fact that we are a small place and that we might be decreasing. And if we don't accept it, we can't work with it, but they have sort of accepted it and they're like, okay, so how do we work with this?”

Results - SSI


Ydre Municipality

- Depopulation
 - Approved the two different approaches
 - Tax payers problem
 - Stabilize instead of growth
 - Collaboration
 - Strong borders
 - Transportation
 - Big problem! Especially between counties 
 - No hospital in Ydre → transportation is needed
 - Nature-Based Tourism
 - Tourism as an opportunity for regional development
 - Mostly in summer
- “if you have a doctor's appointment, you have to spend usually 6 hours there”*

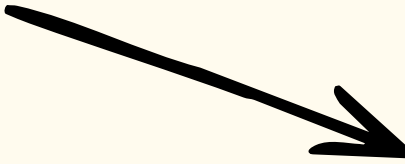
Results - SSI

Other interviews + local quote

- Depopulation
 - Problem is known and acknowledged
- Collaboration
 - Lack of collaboration felt by people in border region
- Transportation
 - Mainly in Ydre
- Nature-Based Tourism
 - Tourism as an opportunity for regional development
 - Mostly in summer
 - New initiatives are supported, but sparsely introduced



“My own kids left the area to study, in Linköping and Jönköping. There are empty windows and houses. It’s very important that people do initiatives like us, to keep community. It’s a very big problem. Tourism is the main solution for it. We need more people in the area.”



“It was interesting when there was snow, the shovelers turned around on this intersection because that is where the county ends, another one had to clean the other side of the intersection because that is another county, the borders are really strict here”

Results - Survey

Demographic Information

- Females responded more to the survey than males
- Young adults and older adults responded more frequently than middle aged ones or elderly
- Österbymo had the most responses from towns

Likert-Scale and Open Ended Questions

- Community growth was the most popular option
- Smaller tight-knit community wanted
- Perceived municipality efforts are low
- Respondents have observed and predict population shrinkage

Quantitative Analysis

- Grouped 5 questions together for assessment
- Assessed reliability of measuring shared theme
- EFA revealed potential follow up themes
- Chi-squared test used to assess factor sufficiency

Results - Document analysis

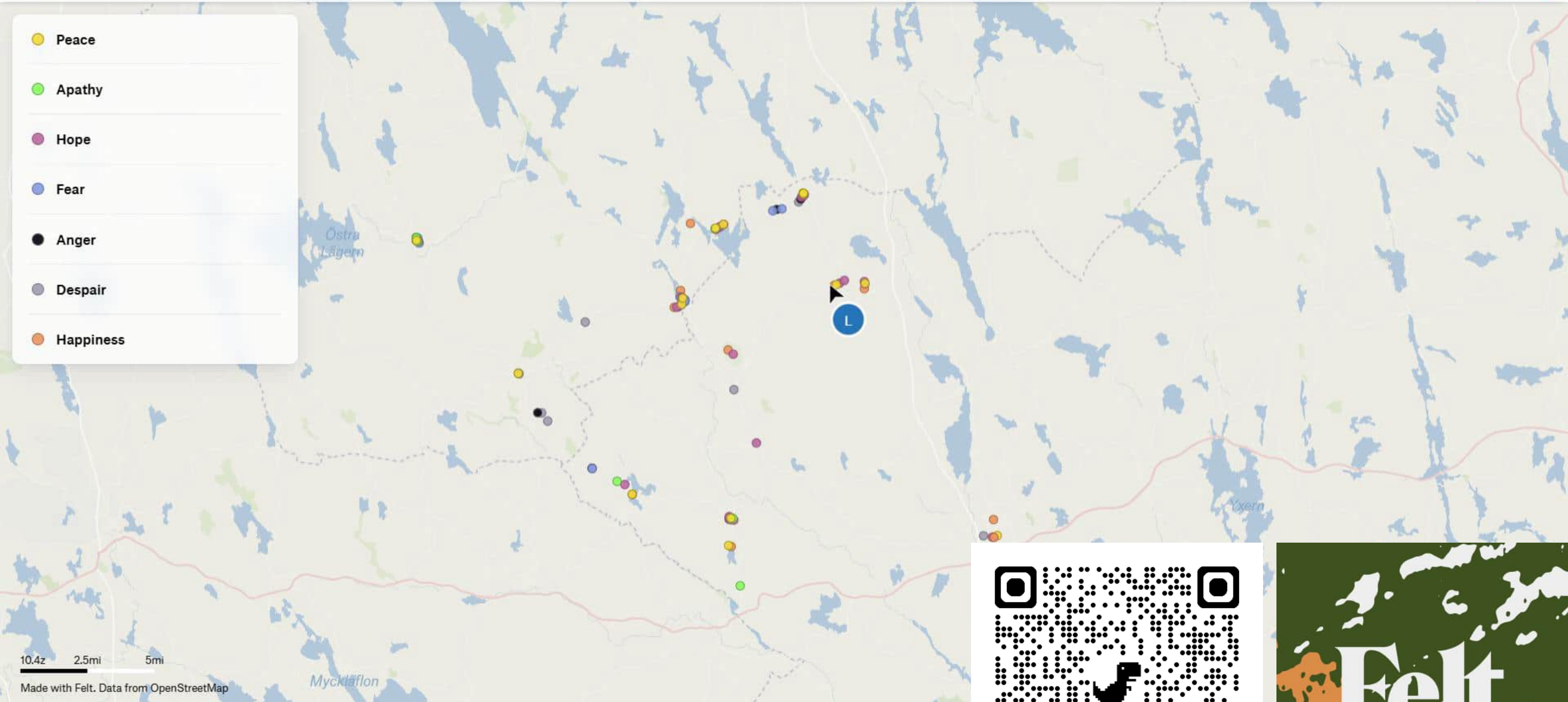
Vimmerby municipality:

- *Mentions all of the areas;*
- *Infrastructure and housing developments focusing on municipal centre - Vimmerby;*
- *Talking about developing rural areas, no concrete mention of how.*

Ydre municipality:

- *Old, non-updated plan (2013);*
- *Main focus on development in rural coastal areas, prioritising housing, tourism development and mandatory free access to water areas in the municip*While the document acknowledges depopulation and decline as a primary challenge and weakness of the municipality, it still promotes growth strategies, especially by triggering active migration processes.
- *While the document acknowledges depopulation and decline as a primary challenge and weakness of the municipality, it still promotes growth strategies, especially by triggering active migration processes.*

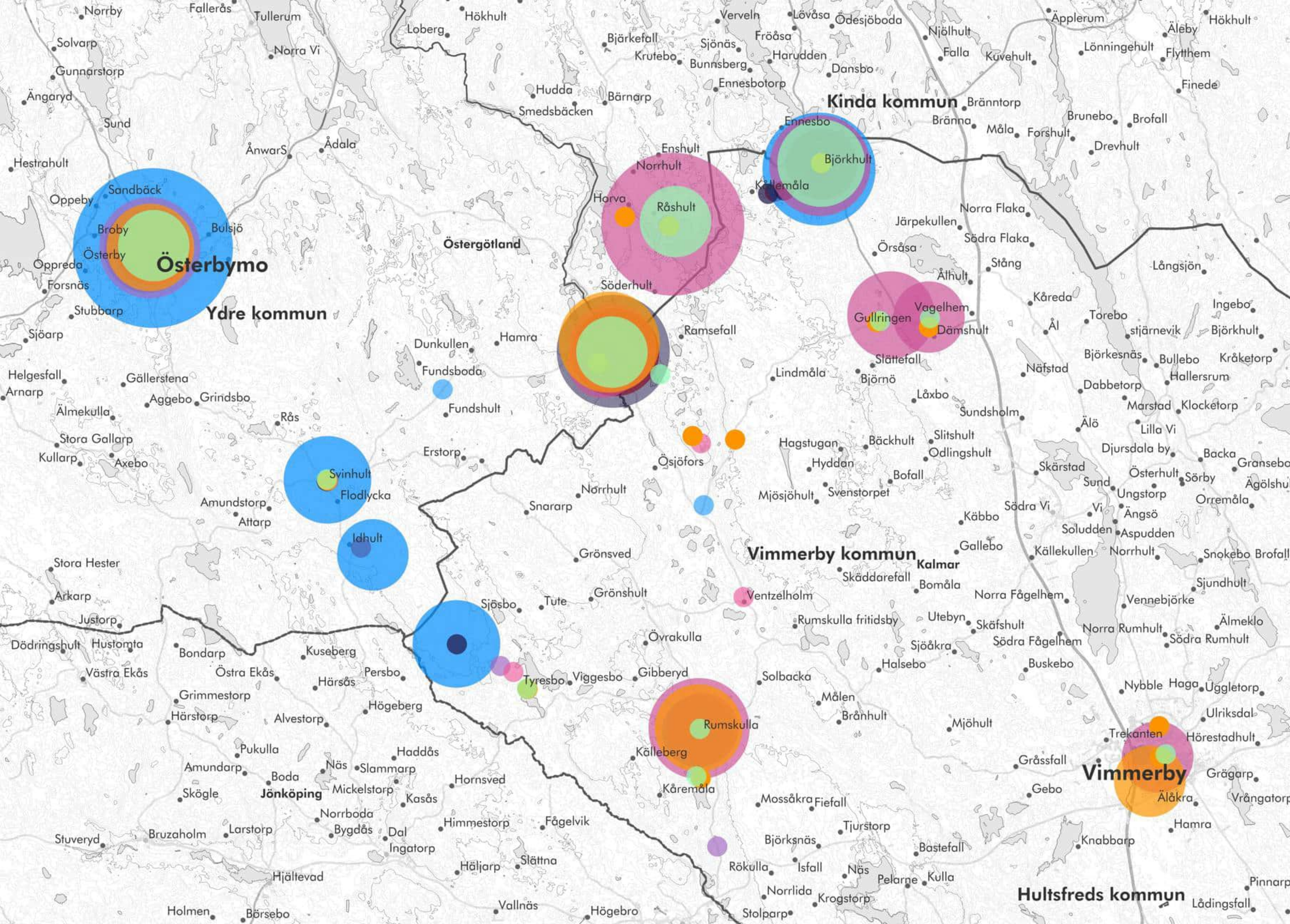
- Peace
- Apathy
- Hope
- Fear
- Anger
- Despair
- Happiness



Results - mapping of emotions

General distribution of the points

136 points
161 pictures

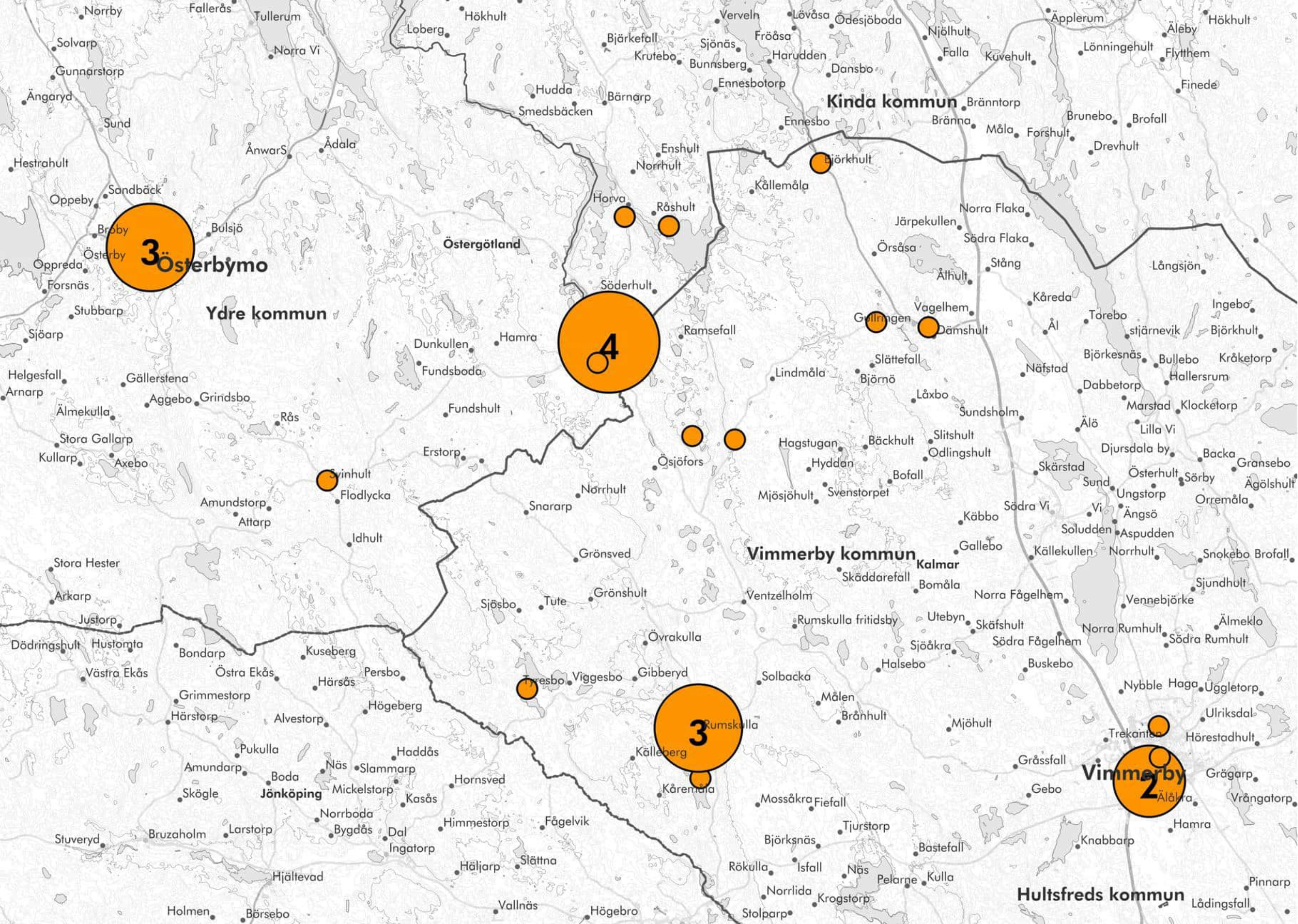


Emotions

- Peace
- Happiness
- Hope
- Fear
- Despair
- Apathy
- Anger

0 2.5 5 7.5 km





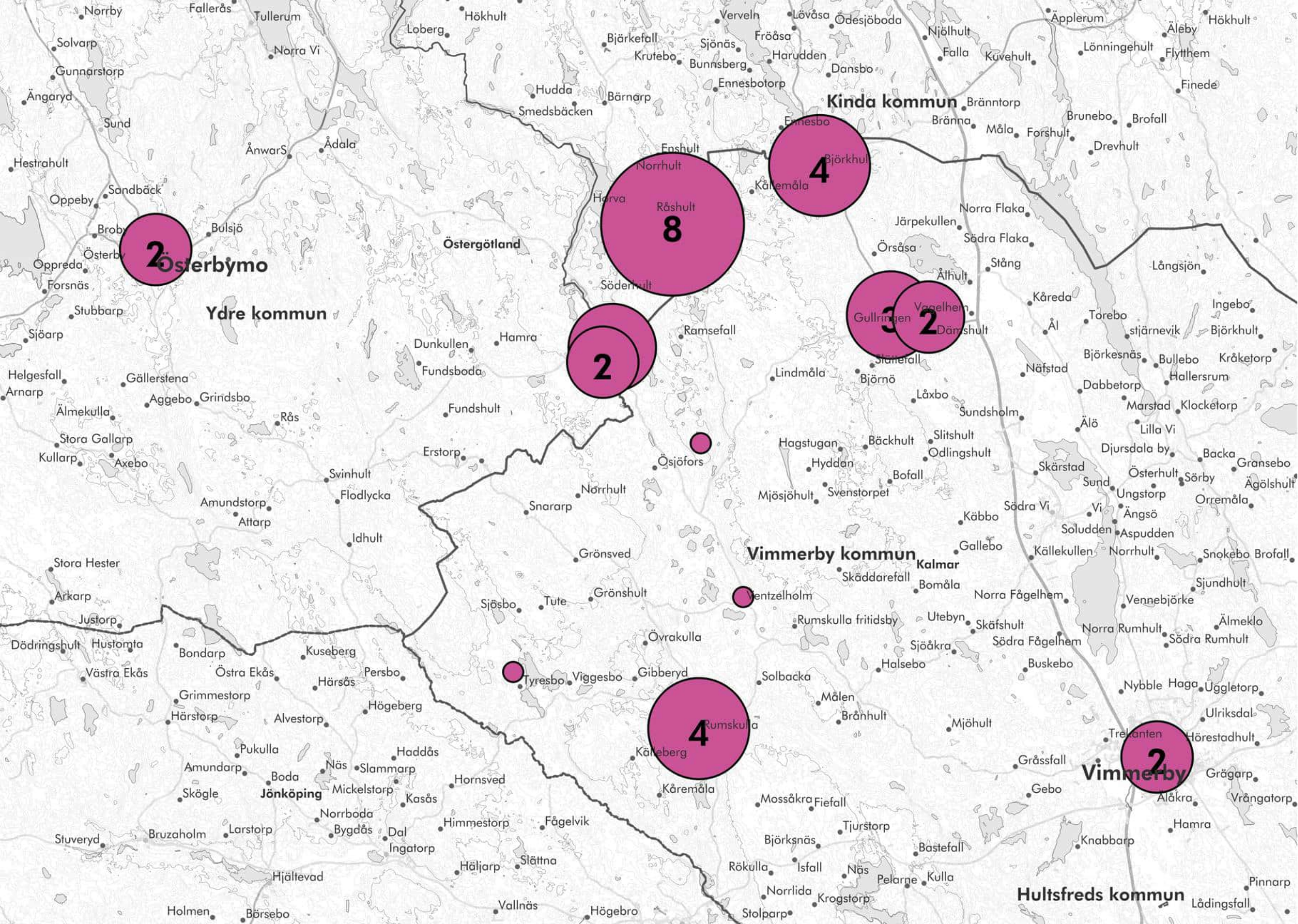
25 points
27 pictures

Emotions

● Happiness

0 2.5 5 7.5 km





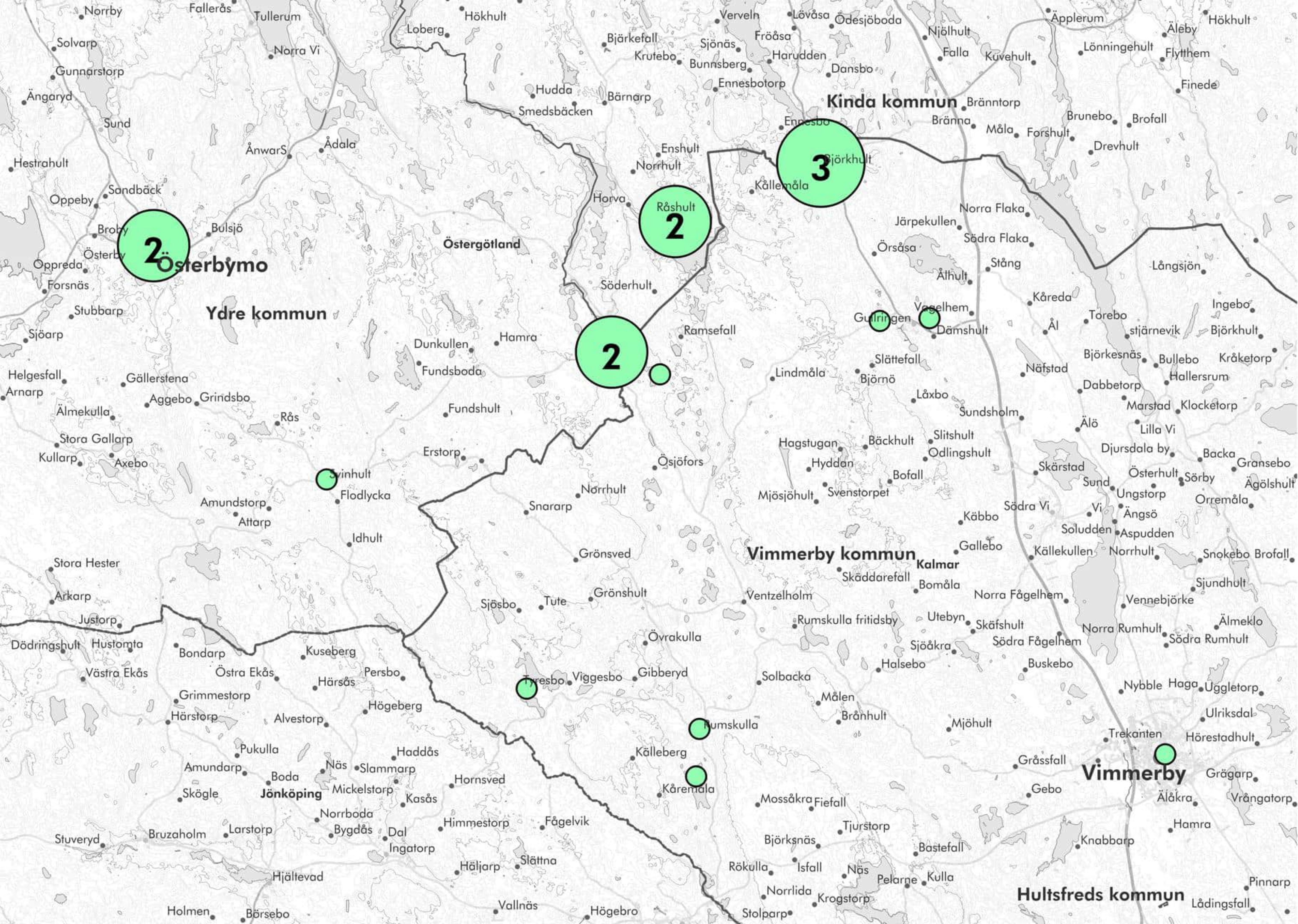
33 points
44 pictures

Emotions

● Hope

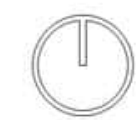
0 2.5 5 7.5 km

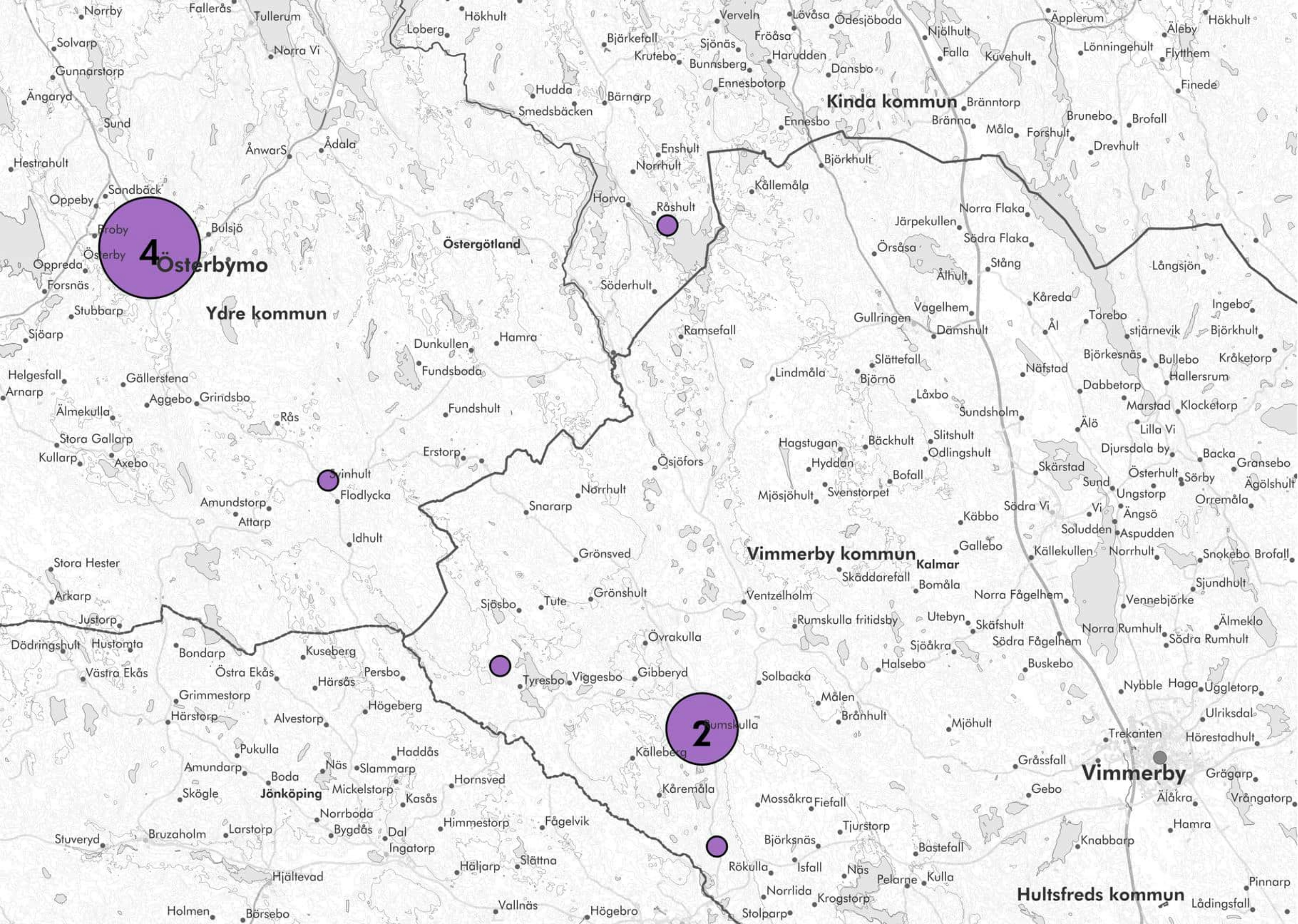




17 points
23 pictures

Emotions
● Peace





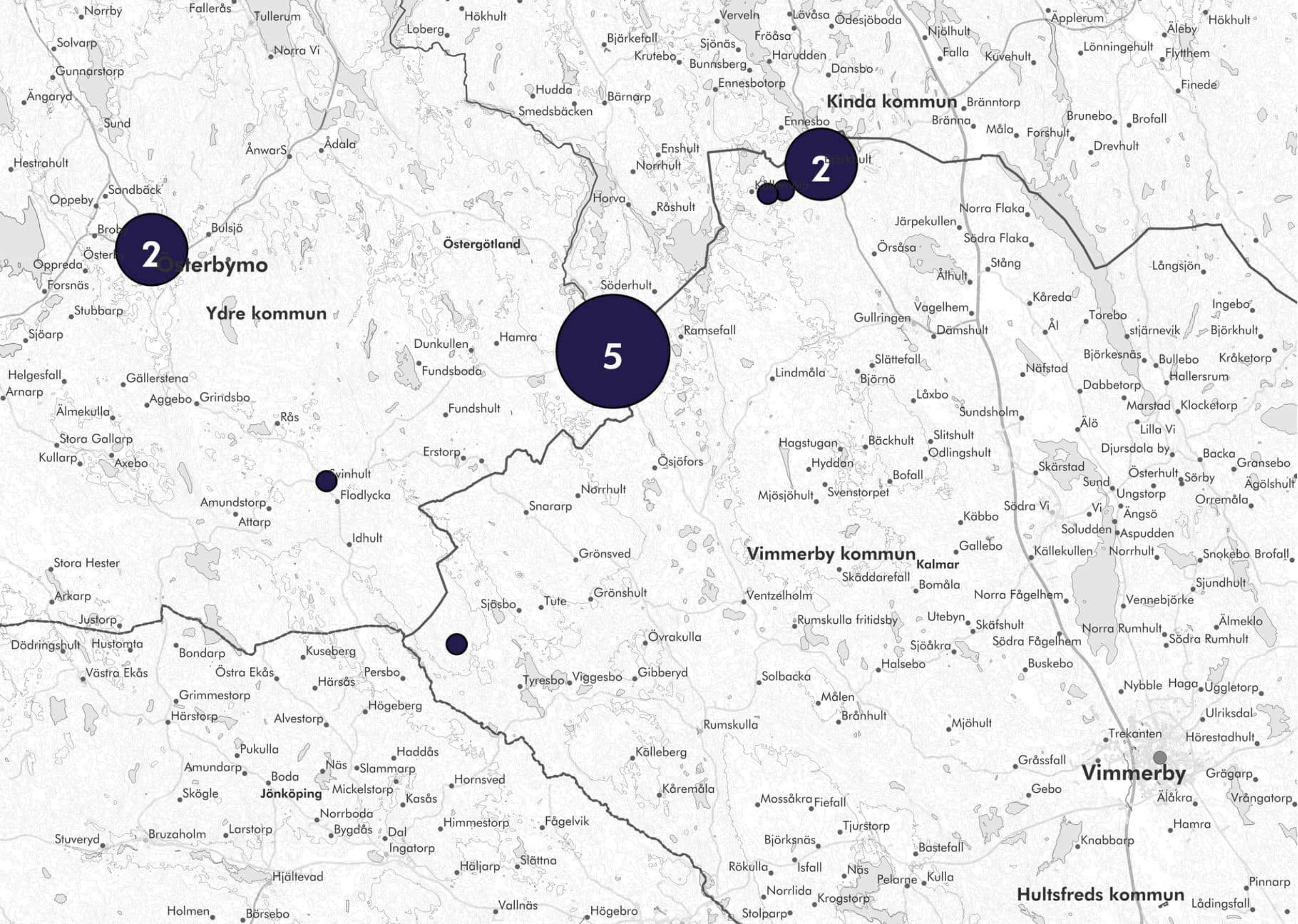
10 points
10 pictures

Emotions

● Apathy

0 2.5 5 7.5 km





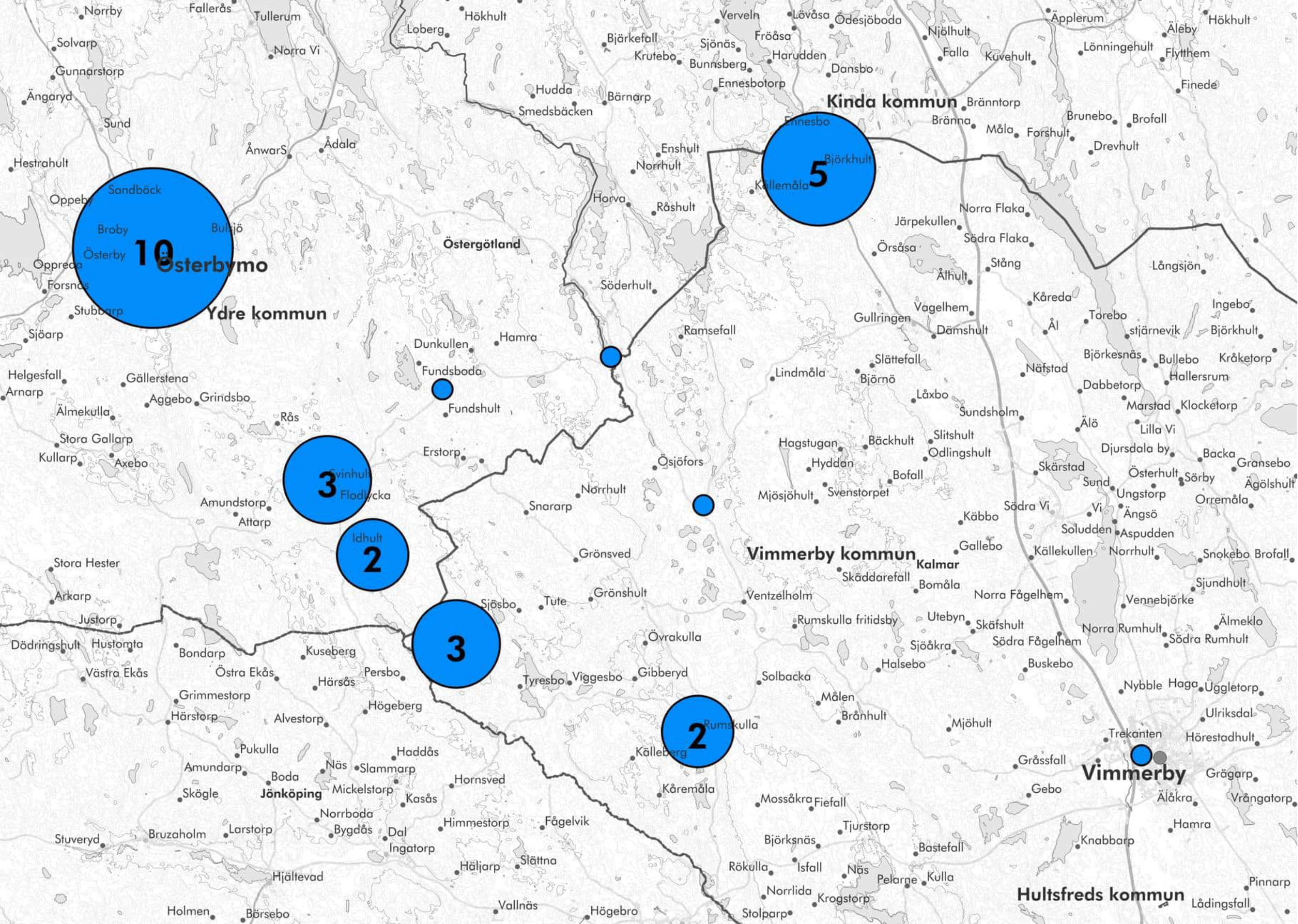
13 points
14 pictures

Emotions

● Fear

0 2.5 5 7.5 km



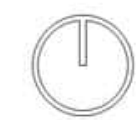


29 points
37 pictures

Emotions

● Despair

0 2.5 5 7.5 km



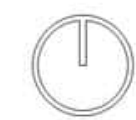


9 points
6 pictures

Emotions

● Anger

0 2.5 5 7.5 km



Vimmerby



- Peace
- Happiness
- Hope
- Fear
- Despair
- Apathy
- Anger

"Nice Mural"

"Vimmerby church, brings people together and felt very peaceful"

Österbymo



"Osterbymo -
Peaceful and calm
town"



"Traffic sign in very bad condition"

"I don't think I'd wanna hang out
here, but not that bad either"

"Not the nicest buildings"



- Peace
- Happiness
- Hope
- Fear
- Despair
- Apathy
- Anger

0 250 500 m



Ydrefors



"People live and work in the area, likely growing for the summer. Signs of life"

"Camping infrastructure seems nice"



"We meet a woman who didn't seem really welcoming, thought we were from monastery. Asked about research and didn't wish to participate."

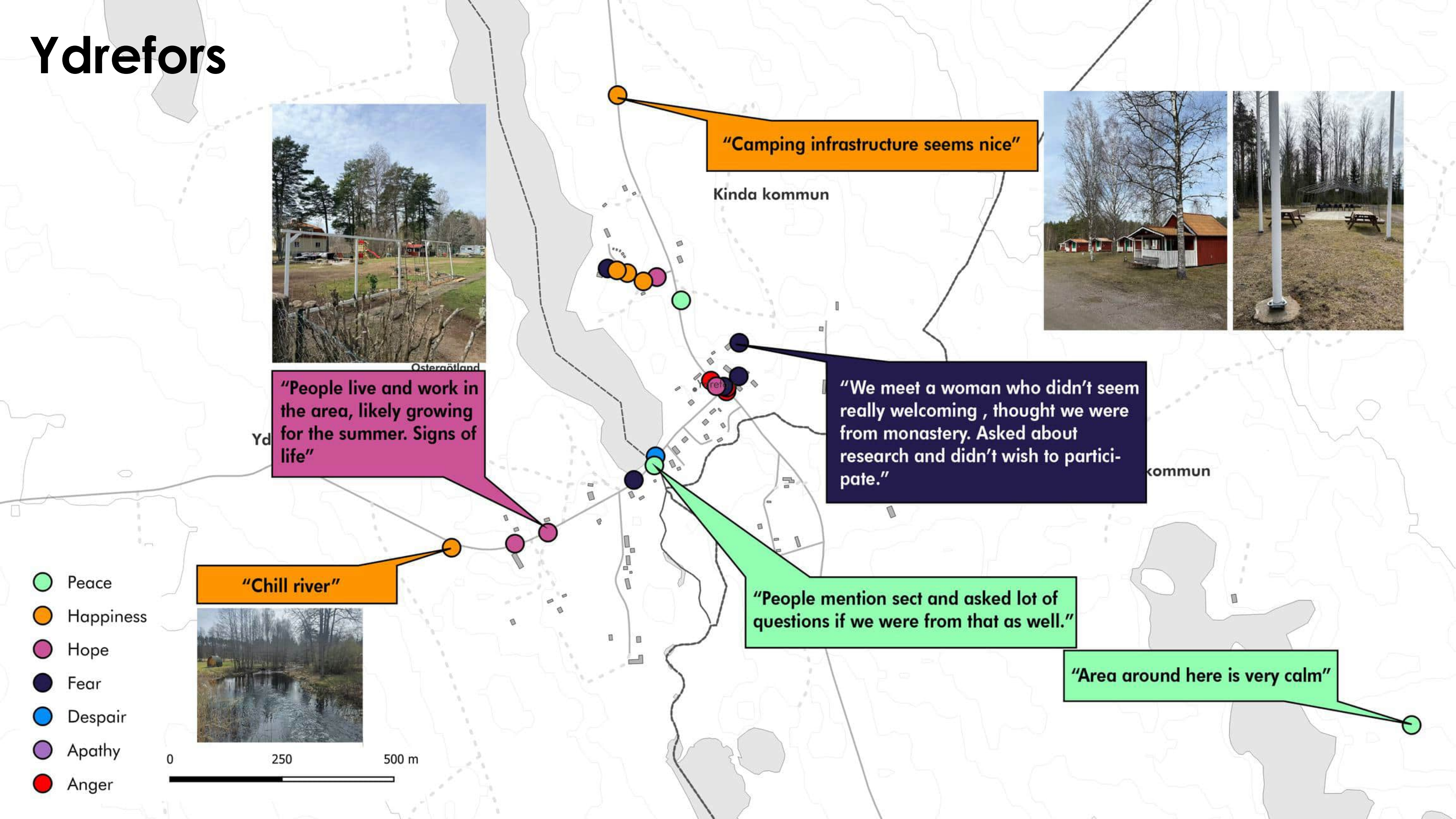
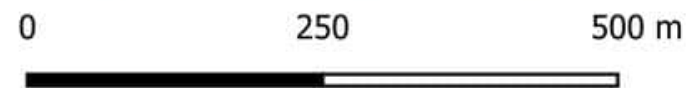
"Chill river"



"People mention sect and asked lot of questions if we were from that as well."

"Area around here is very calm"

- Peace
- Happiness
- Hope
- Fear
- Despair
- Apathy
- Anger



Results - Photovoice

- **Aim:** know locals' perspective through pictures.
- Total: **18** photographs → **12** as “favourite” and **4** as “least favourite” attached in the survey + **2** in person.
- Shared patterns and aspects:

Positive

Nature

Water

Absence of urban
environment

Negative

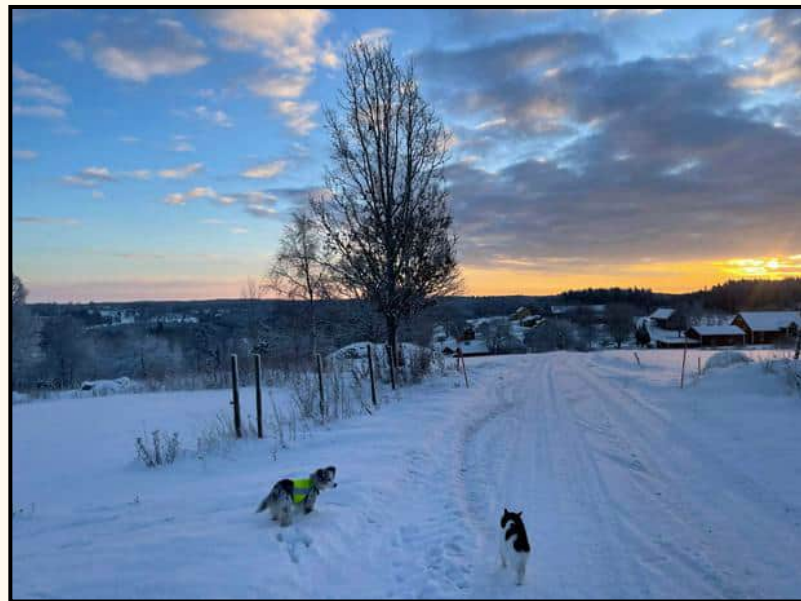
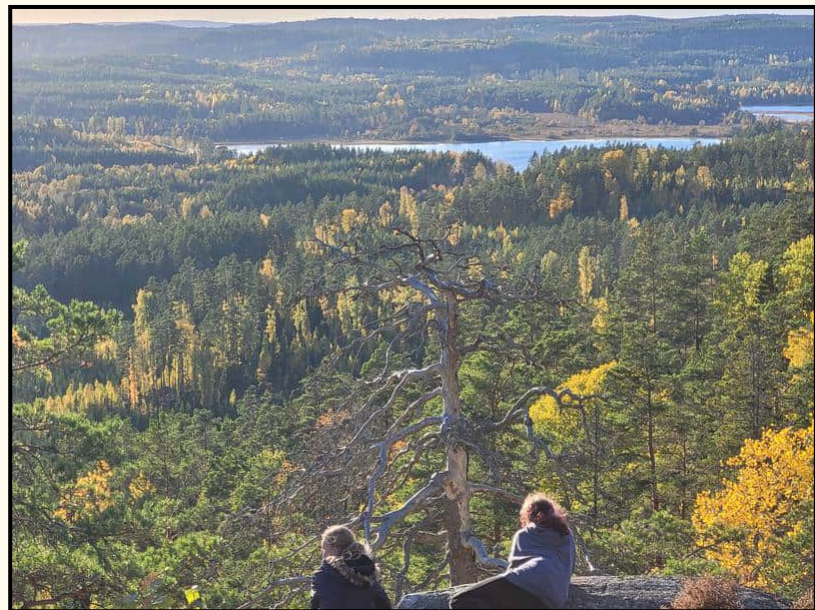
Human intervention

Tension between natural
spaces and economic use of
land

- **Limitations:** time and space, accessibility to technology and number of pictures.

Results - Photovoice

Positive



Negative



Discussion - Bridging the gap

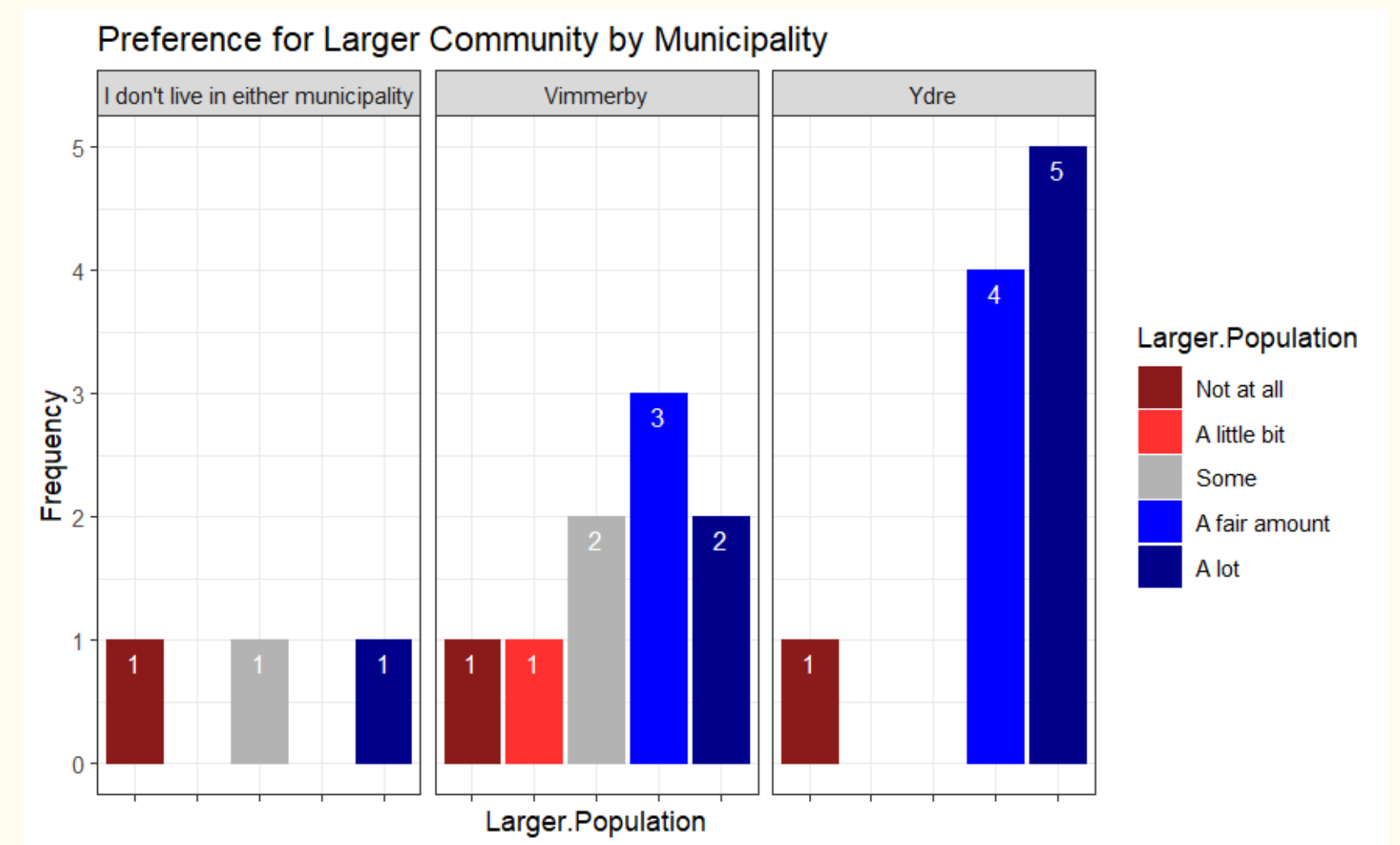
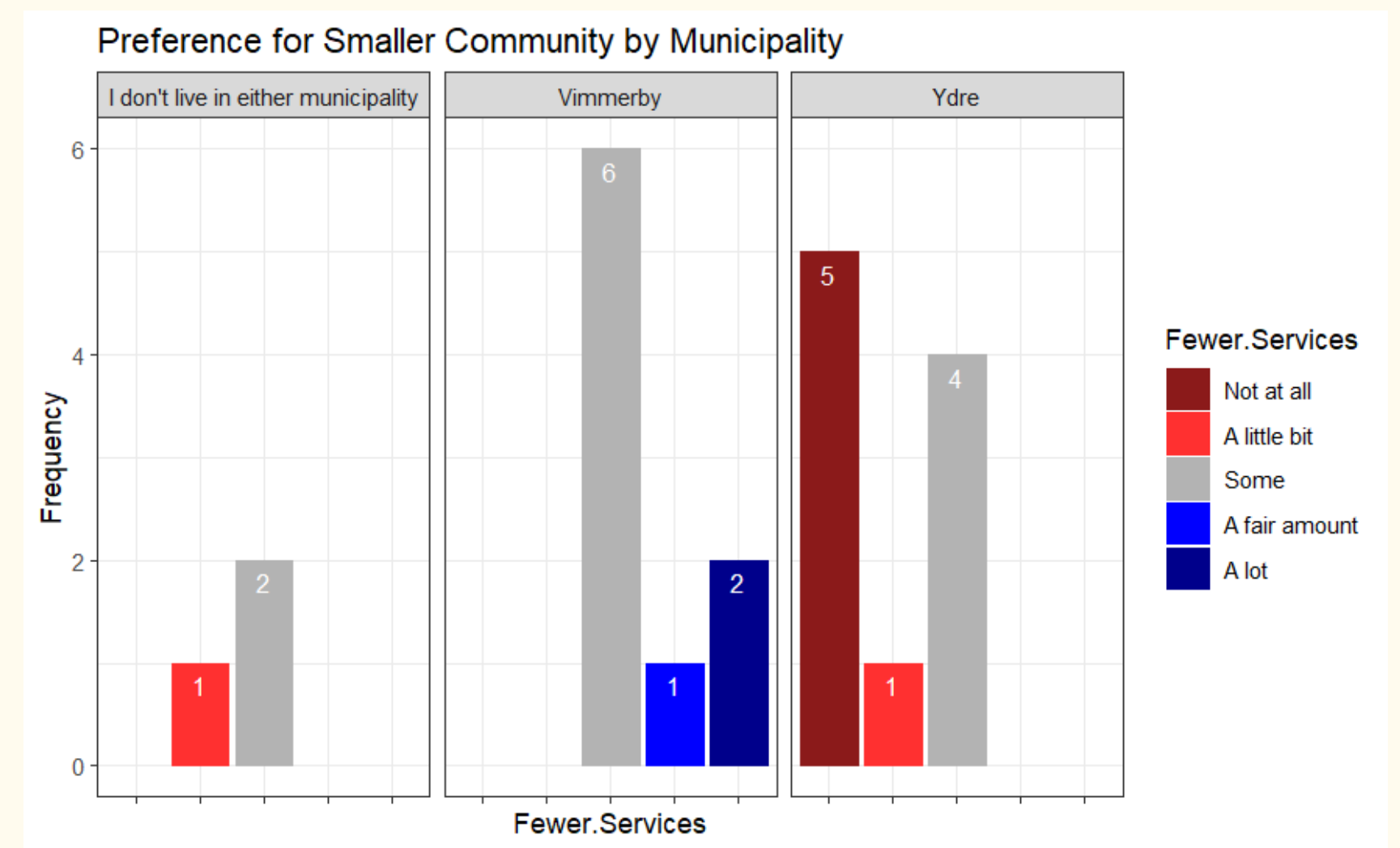
- Both municipalities face similar problems, like depopulation and ageing
- Residents show openness to development and change
- Nature tourism seen as a key opportunity
 - but mostly seasonal, limited long-term impact
- Strong demand for basic services
 - public transportation, healthcare, education

Discussion - Survey

Community Shifts

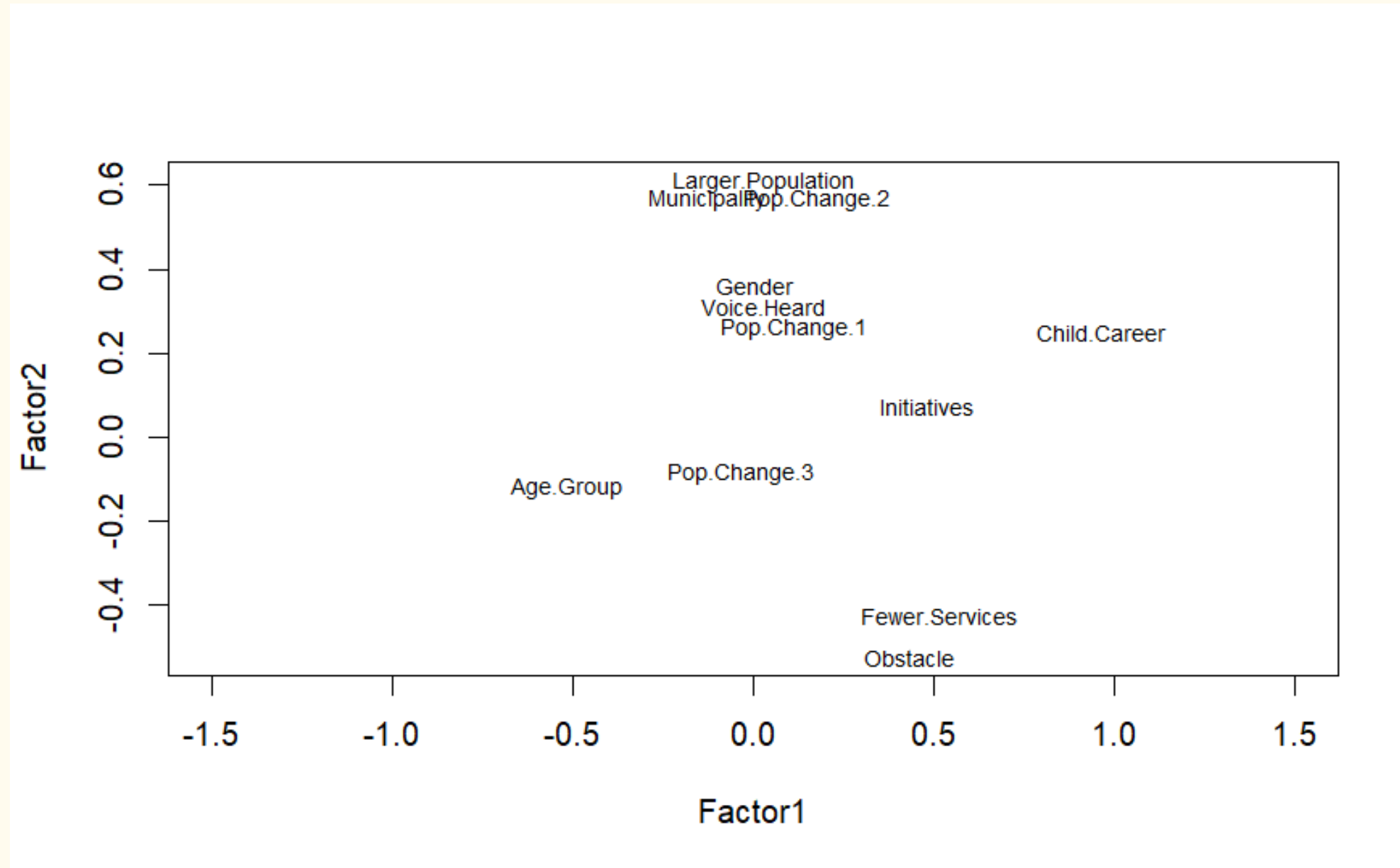
Likert-Scale and Open Ended Questions

- Population growth wanted but magnitude not specified
- Likely want to combat depopulation to retain public services
- Desire for services in region reflect this further
- Respondents know population isn't currently growing



Discussion - Survey

Looking toward the future



Quantitative Analysis

- Grouped 5 questions to assess
- Assessed reliability of measuring shared theme
- EFA revealed potential follow up themes
- Chi-squared test used to assess factor sufficiency

Discussion - Barriers & Differences

Broken Bridges

- Limited collaboration between municipalities
 - administrative borders affect daily life
- Transportation challenges (Ydre)
 - impacts healthcare access and mobility
- Different strategies:
 - Ydre → adaptive (e.g. repurposing schools)
 - Vimmerby → less acknowledgment of decline

Discussion - Experiences (additional)

- Emotion mapping & photovoice
 - Strong connection to nature
- Visible signs of decline (empty buildings, services)
- Tension between:
 - Rural identity (positive)
 - Service loss (negative)

Conclusions

- Suggestions
 - Public transportation links between Vimmerby and Ydre
 - Tourism in nature protection areas
 - Cross-border
- Concluding remarks
 - Vimmerby municipality doesn't accept depopulation, is trying actively to battle it.
 - Ydre municipality acknowledges the depopulation, but tries to develop infrastructure and improve living conditions of people already living there.
 - There's cross-border cooperation only in IT area focused on spatial planning. There no cooperation done with the aim of combatting depopulation or developing industries and infrastructure in the areas.

Tack så mycket!

