

# 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






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- 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 -4 persons
  - Ydre
  - County Administrative Board Kalmar
  - Co-owner Cykla Filmlandskapet Småland
  - Owner of Stigs Konditori & Servicebutik
- 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



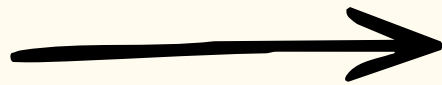
# Method - Photovoice

- 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”*

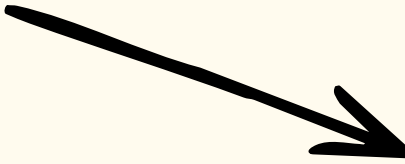
# Results - SSI

## 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

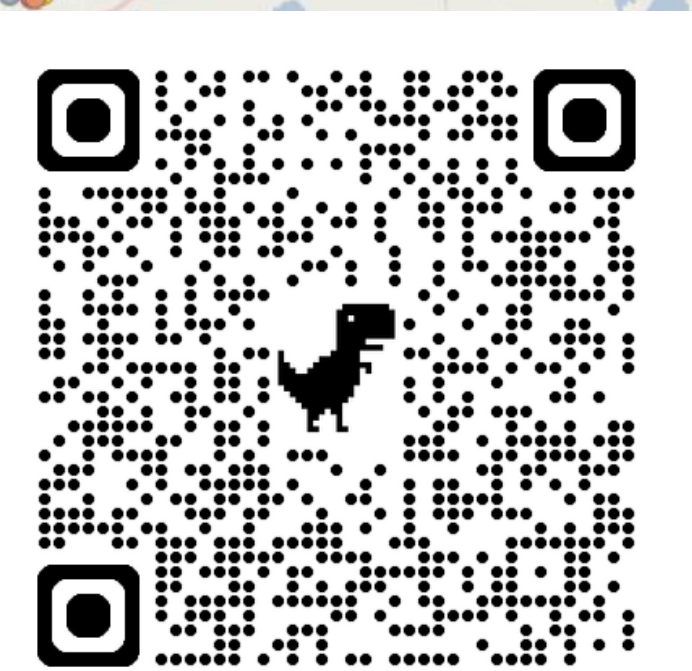
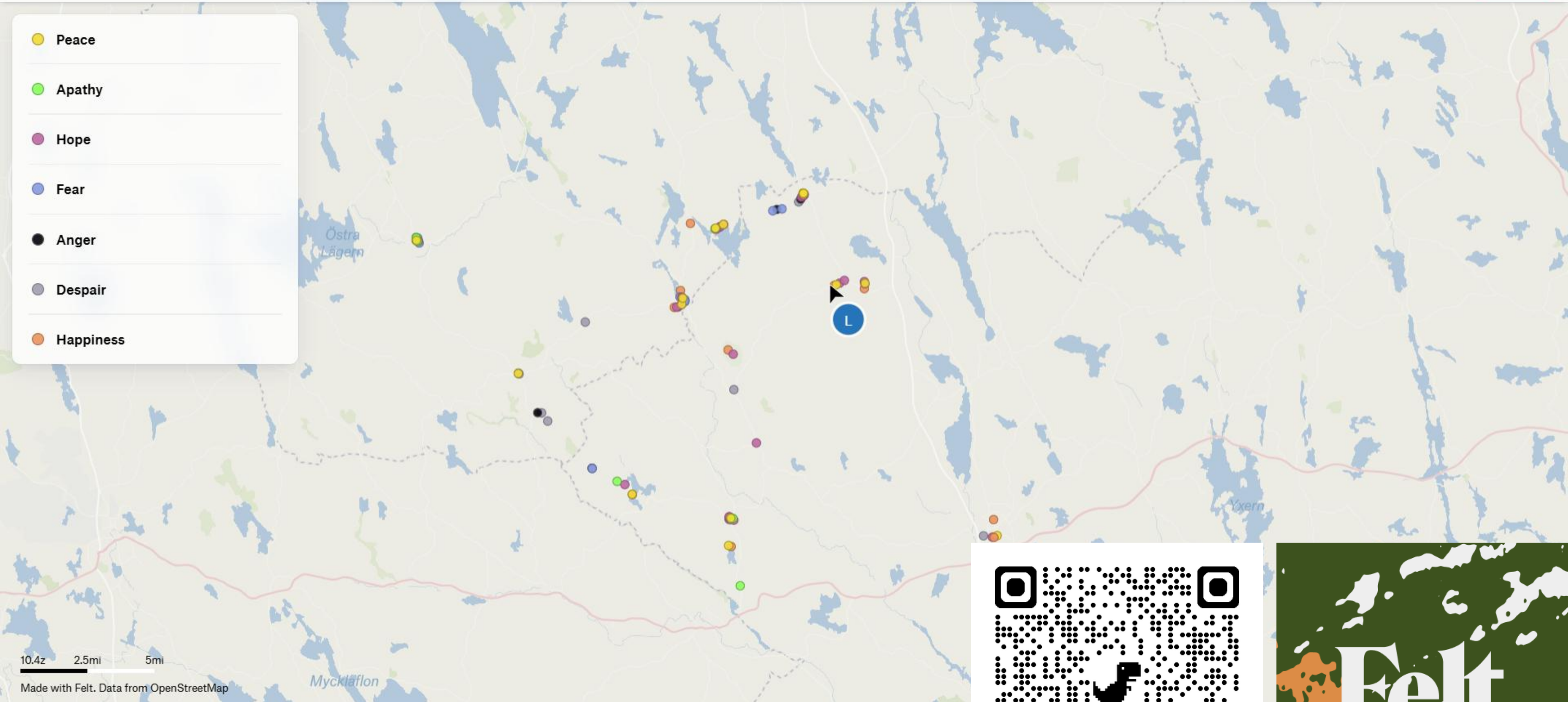
## *Vimmerby municipality:*

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

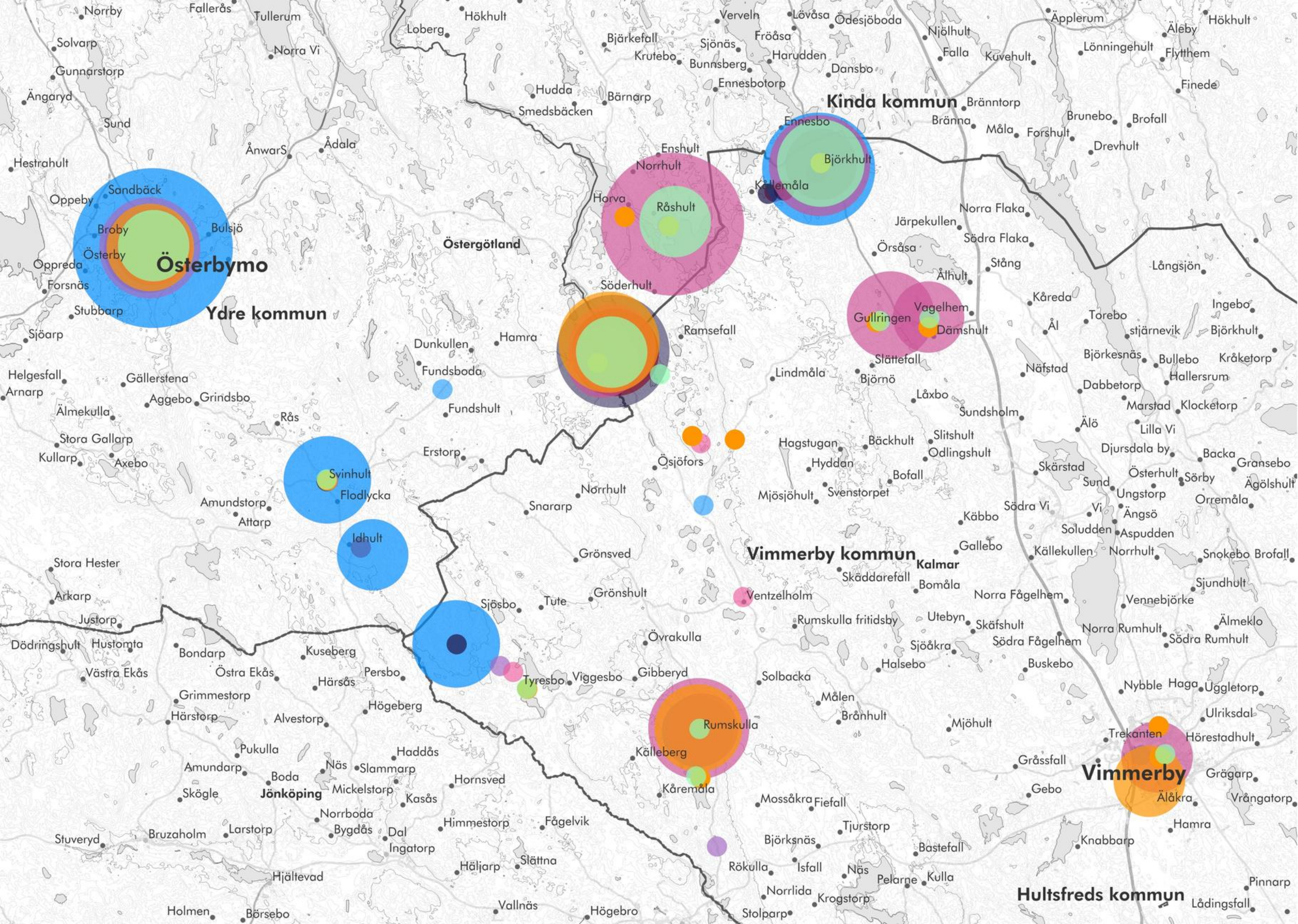
## *Ydre municipality:*

- *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



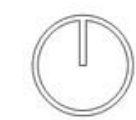
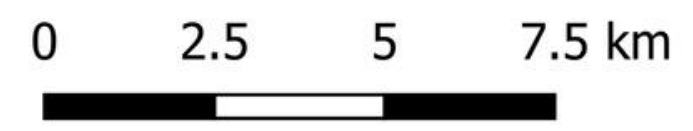
# Results - mapping of emotions

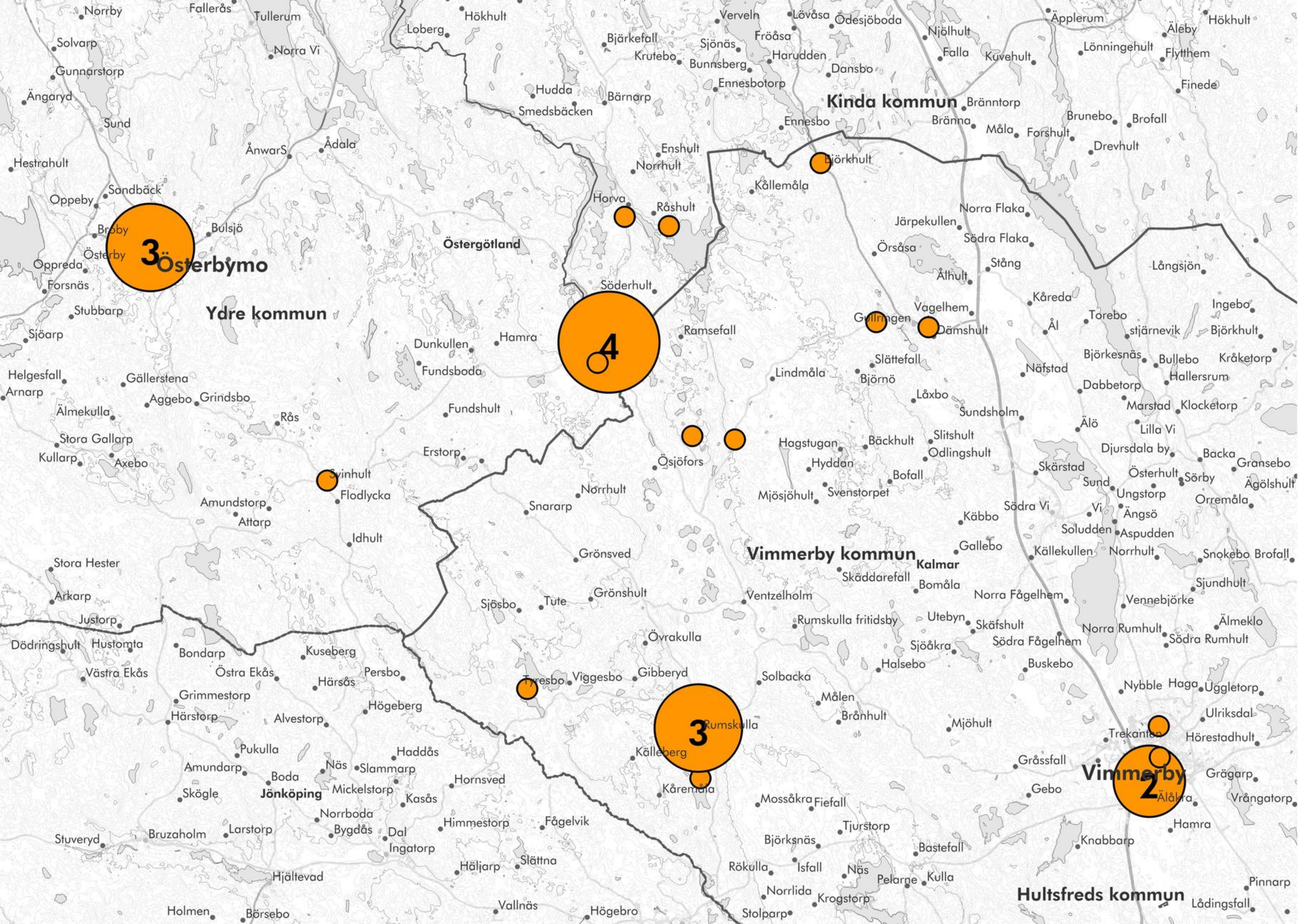


# General distribution of the points

136 points  
161 pictures

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



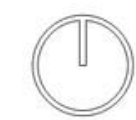
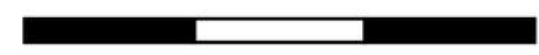


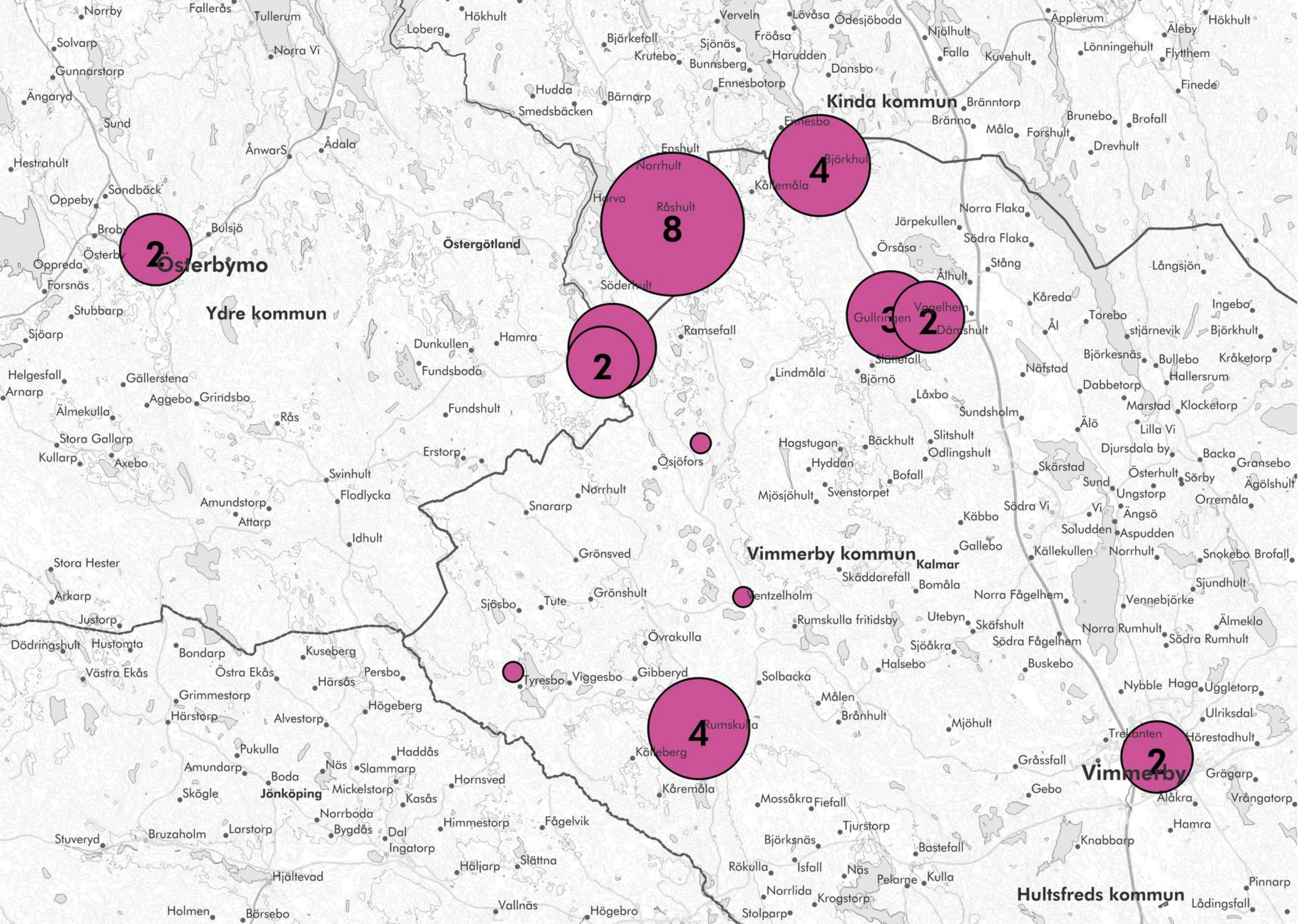
**25 points**  
**27 pictures**

**Emotions**

● Happiness

0 2.5 5 7.5 km



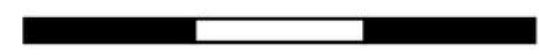


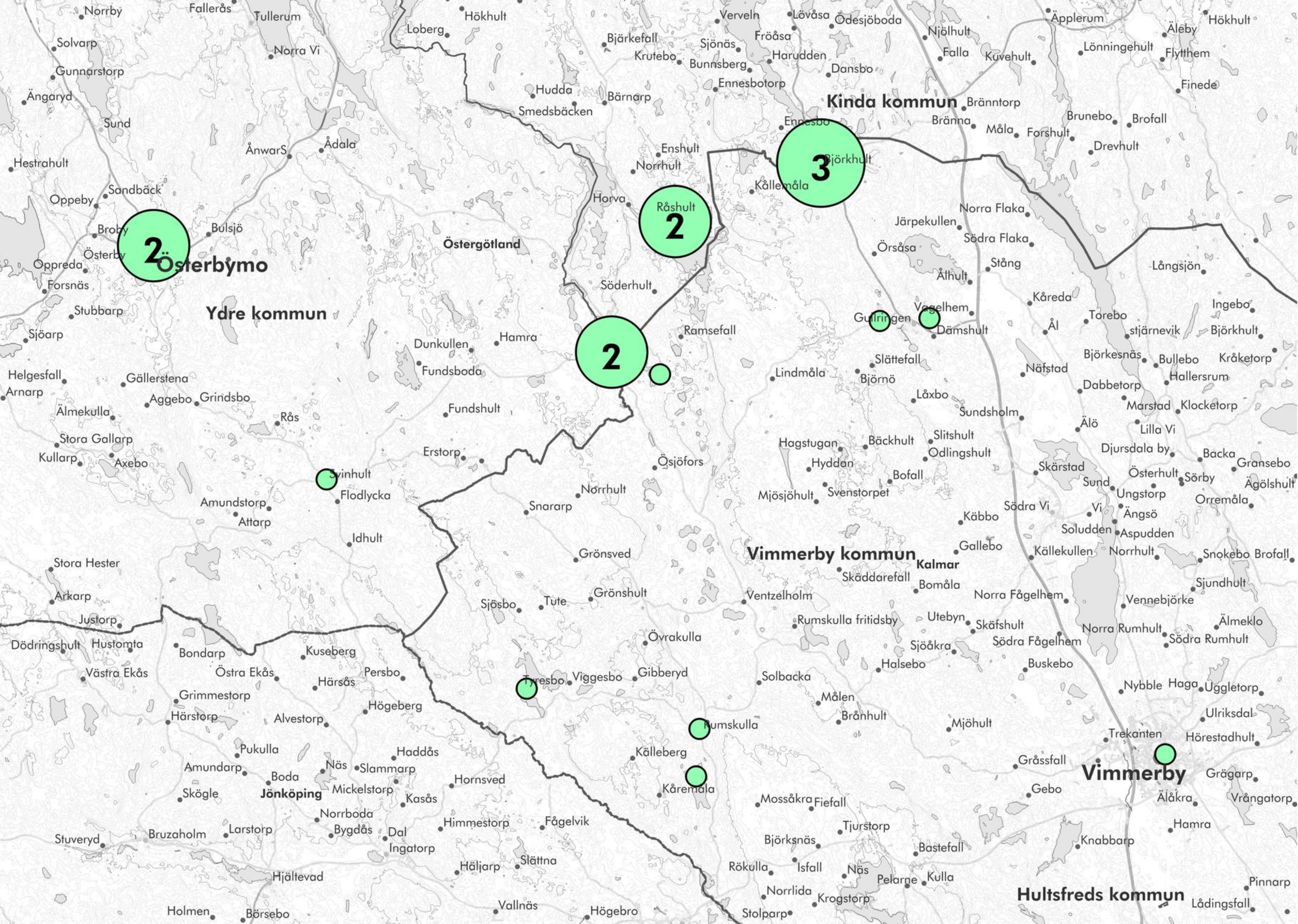
**33 points**  
**44 pictures**

**Emotions**

● Hope

0 2.5 5 7.5 km





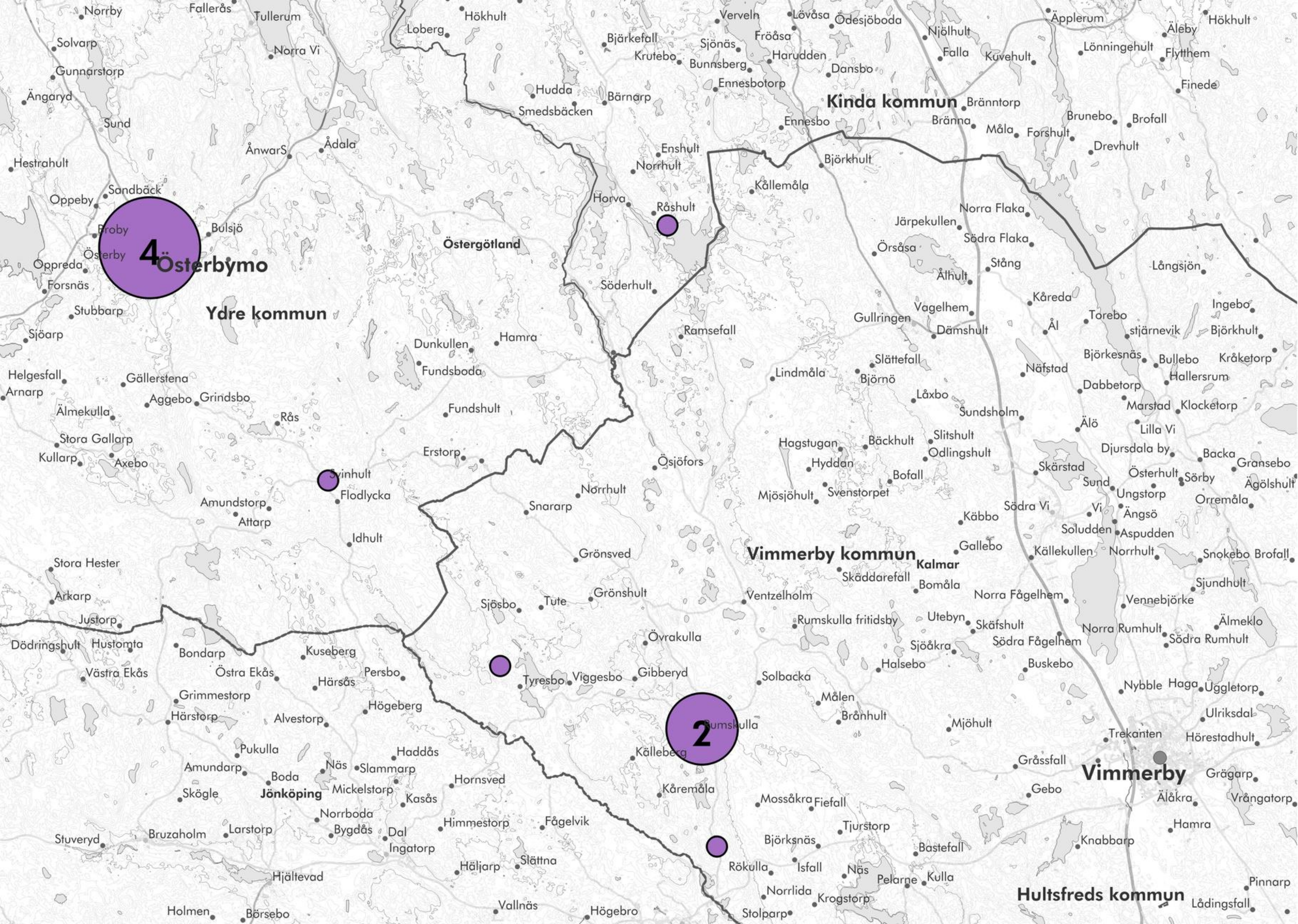
**17 points**  
**23 pictures**

**Emotions**

● Peace

0 2.5 5 7.5 km



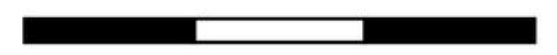


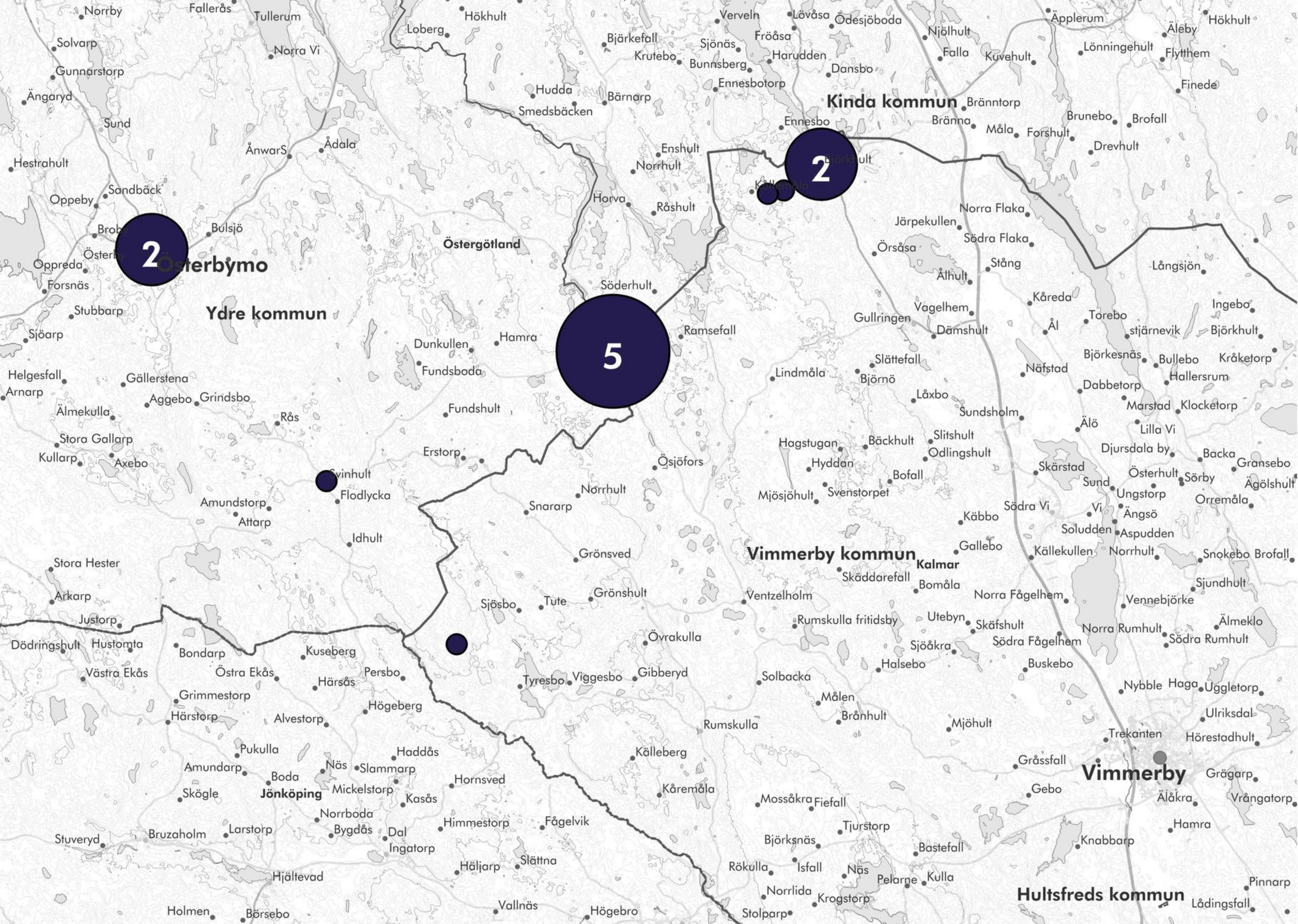
**10 points**  
**10 pictures**

**Emotions**

● Apathy

0 2.5 5 7.5 km





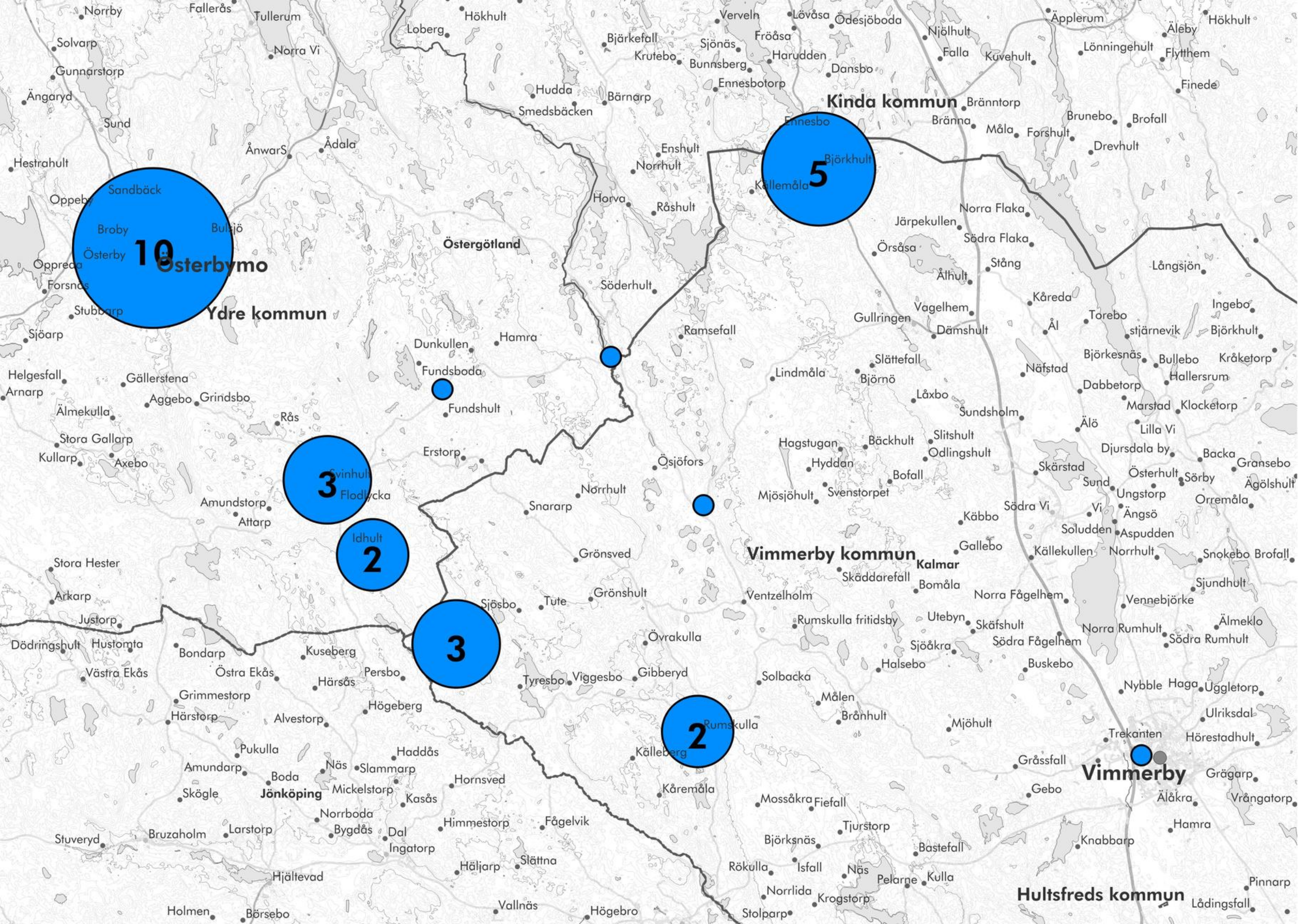
**13 points**  
**14 pictures**

**Emotions**

● Fear

0 2.5 5 7.5 km



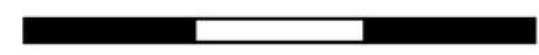


**29 points**  
**37 pictures**

**Emotions**

● Despair

0 2.5 5 7.5 km





3 Östervåra

3

3

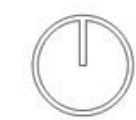
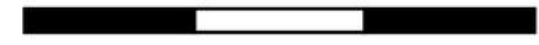
3

9 points  
6 pictures

Emotions

● Anger

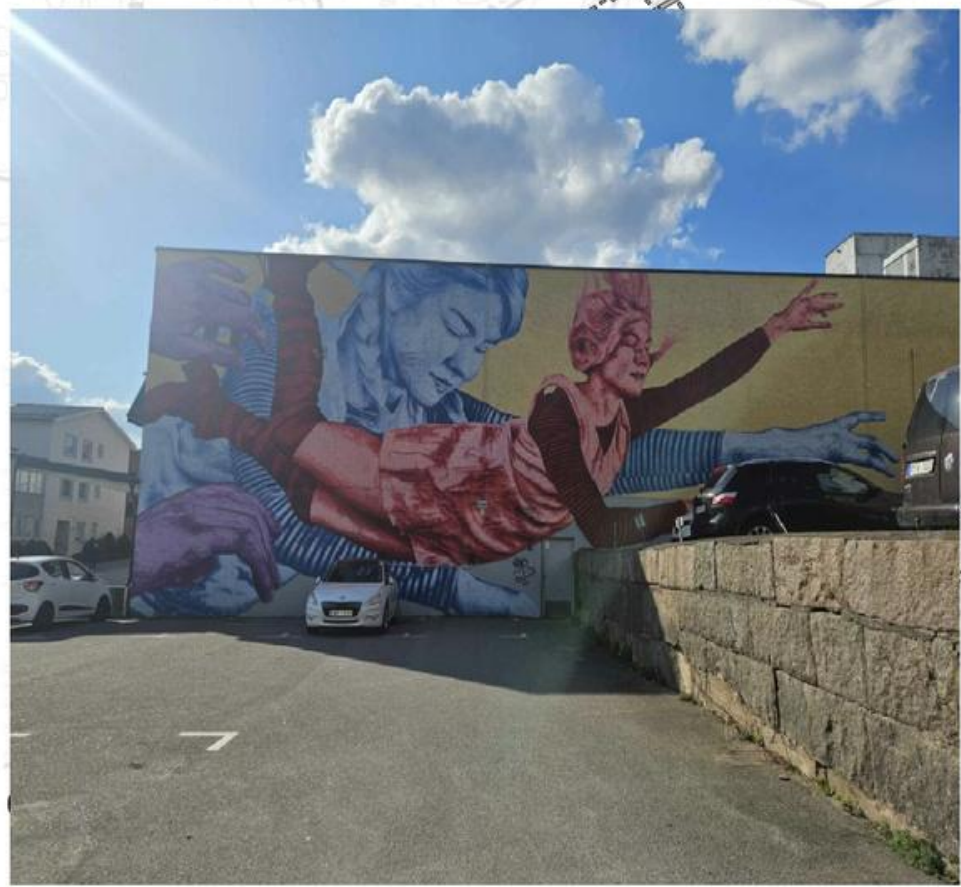
0 2.5 5 7.5 km



# Vimmerby



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



"Nice Mural"

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

# 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

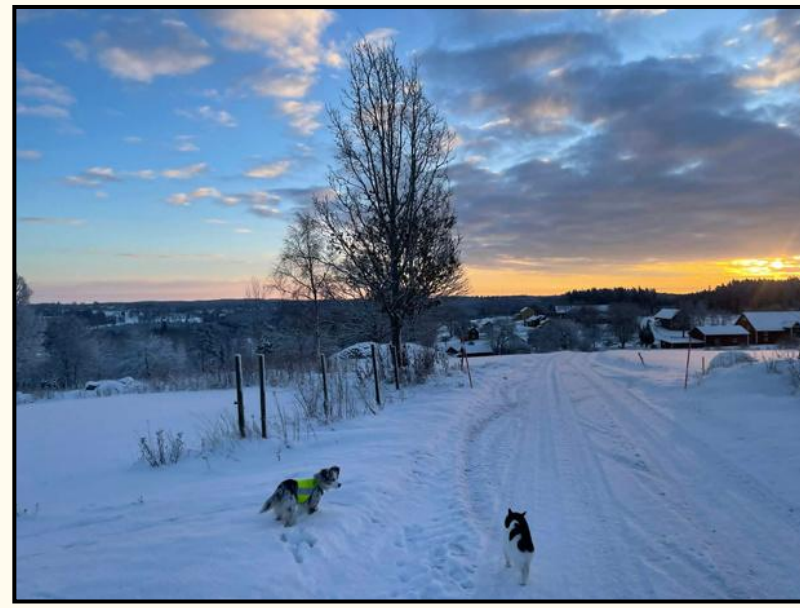
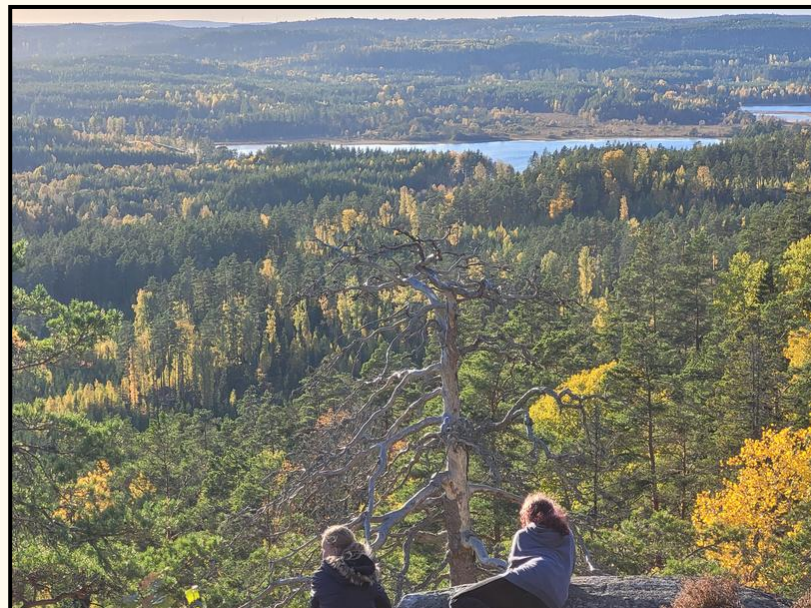
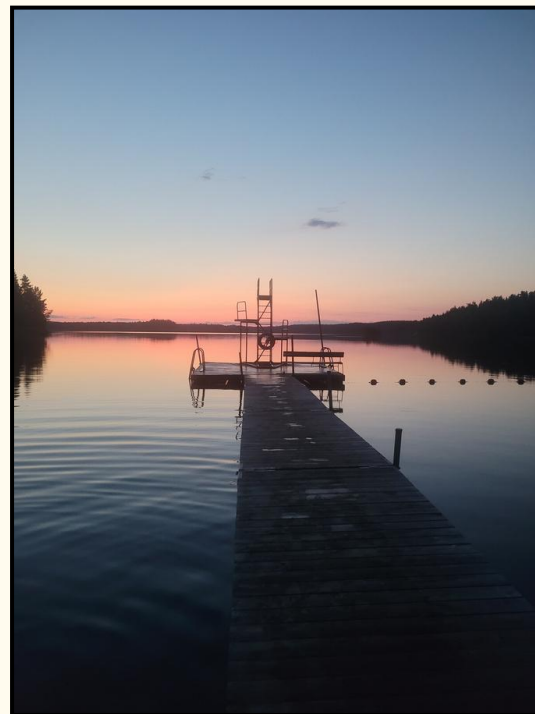
Human intervention

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

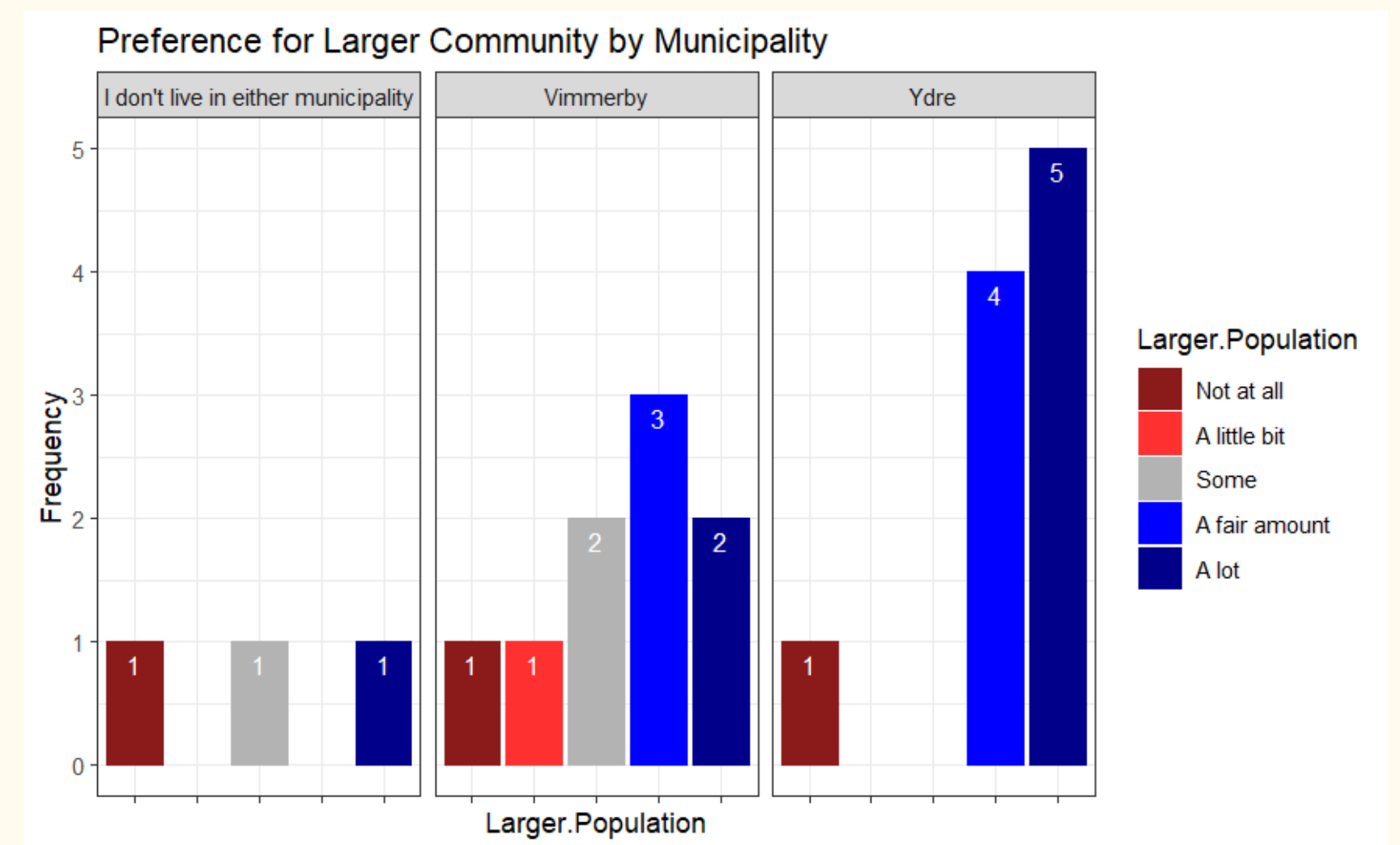
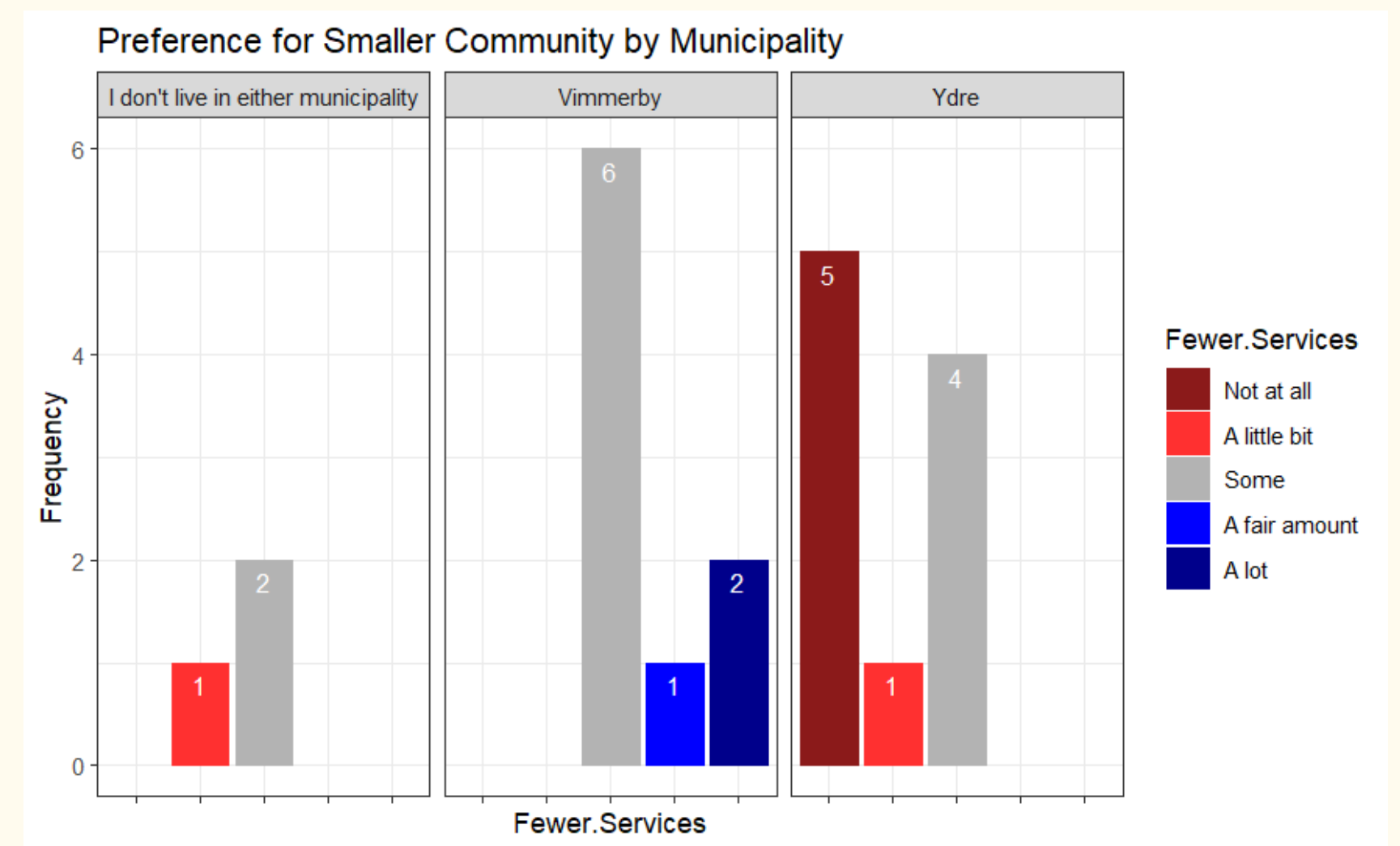
- Both municipalities face similar problems, like depopulation and ageing
- Residents show openness to development and change
- Nature tourism seen as a key opportunity
  - but mostly seasonal, limited long-term impact
- Strong demand for basic services
  - public transportation, healthcare, education

# Discussion - Survey

## Community Shifts

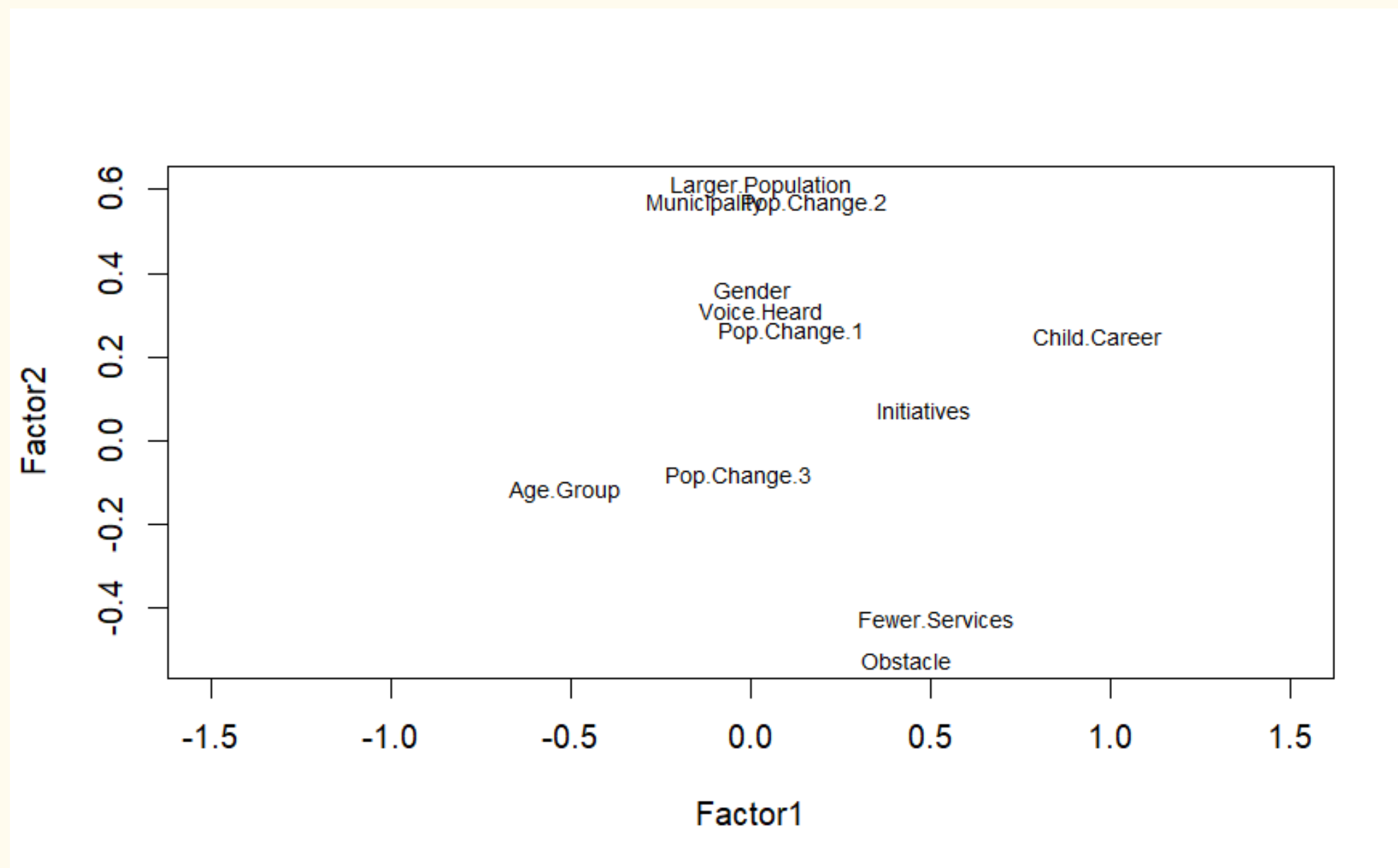
### *Likert-Scale and Open Ended Questions*

- 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!

