Rethinking governance in planning under shrinkage

A case study of strategic rural planning in Vesthimmerlands Municipality

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Abstract

Rural areas are challenged by continuous urbanisation as people move towards the bigger cities. This puts many rural areas in a state of shrinkage, characterised by a self-reinforcing loop of out-migration. Planning is not adequately suited to address these issues as it has become increasingly growth-centric over the past decades. Because of this planners of rural areas are confronted with the ever relevant question of what to plan for if not growth.

Bottom-up reliant approaches are presented as the main solution, which in planning theory relates to ideas of communicative and collaborative planning. These are supplemented by theories of political-administrative systems, interactive governance, and metagovernance are utilised in an effort to understand the inherent possibilities and limitations of different approaches to governance. This leads to the research question *How can a municipality transform their governance approach related to the strategic planning of rural communities, in order to better cope with, or even utilise a state of shrinkage?*, which is researched in the context of Vesthimmerlands Municipality.

Critical realism is applied as the meta-theoretical approach as it shapes the understanding of what can be researched and how. Institutional theory is applied in order to investigate how planning under shrinkage is different from the established contemporary practices. This is supplemented by the use of metagovernance as a tool for reflecting on how and for what reasons practices such as citizen collaboration are carried out.

The conclusion is that the first step in transforming the governance approach is to acknowledge shrinkage, and the next is to establish a system of urban governance that encourages bottom-up initiatives and empowers citizens in order to create a sense of ownership that can guide future development.

Preface

This report is devised by a group from Aalborg University, 4. semester on the masters programme Urban Planning and Management as the final dissertation in the period February 2020 to June 2020.

All of the interviewees have contributed with useful knowledge about their views on the current planning situation in Vesthimmerlands Municipality. All interviews have been conducted in Danish and relevant quotations have been translated by the authors.

An overview of the interviews can be found in the appendix along with the different interviewguides used throughout the process. The interviews have also been attached as external soundfiles.

References are listed according to the Harvard method, which means they appear as [Surname, Year] in the text, and alphabetically in the bibliography. If two different references share both author and year they are differentiated by the addition of a letter at the end of the year (e.g. $2020a$). If no date is apparent in the source the year is replaced by 'n.d.' [no date].

Tables and figures are referenced with numbers depending on the chapter they are included in and the number of preceding tables or figures in the chapter.

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Introduction

Urbanisation and political initiated structural reforms are often highlighted as the main drivers for the demographic changes Denmark has experienced in recent decades. Both public and private services, workplaces and cultural institutions have increasingly been centralised in and around the larger cities. This development has left many rural areas in a state of decline where population decline, dwindling services and deteriorating housing stocks at worst are threatening their continued existence. This skewed development where the larger cities experience rapid growth and rural areas are facing decline has been posing challenge for a planning system where enhancing and handling growth largely has been the main focus. Symbolised in the national Danish planning legislation where it is stated that planning *should enhance industrial development and growth (Planloven §1 stk 3)*. The growth-oriented focus of planning stems from neoliberal ideals that has dominated planning in recent years, which in many ways accommodates the current situation of the larger cities but to a lesser extent relates to the state of decline experienced by the smaller villages.

The concept of *Shrinkage* has been paid significant attention in the planning literature and it is highlighted that a shift of focus in planning approaches is needed in such areas. Instead of seeking to enhance growth, planning should focus on a qualitative development driven by bottom-up initiatives. In order to achieve this it entails a political-administrative system that are able to facilitate planning processes based on a bottom-up initiatives and collaboration between planning authorities and citizens. Furthermore, this necessitates a shift from a market based New Public Management system towards a New Public Governance system where empowered participation is the foundation. With an offset in this the following research question has been developed:

How can a municipality transform their governance approach related to the strategic planning of rural communities, in order to better cope with, or even utilise a state of shrinkage?

The context of the research is a case study of the current planning in the shrinking rural Vesthimmerlands Municipality. The focus is to investigate the current planning paradigm in the Municipality and secondly to investigate if implementing new modes of governance based on collaboration and bottom-up initiatives can be part of developing planning paradigm that is able to benefit from the local resources in 'shrinking' areas. Much of the planning literature evolves around planning for larger cities. This is also the case for much of planning literature where the concept of 'shrinkage' is discussed and developed primary in a European context. In that light this research is contributing to develop a better understanding of how planning can be transformed to cope with shrinkage in a Danish rural context. Furthermore, the aim of this research is to develop an alternative framework for strategic rural planning that is based on collaboration and utilising local resources as the foundation for development rather than depending on a growth-first mindset where private investments seems to be the primary driver for development.

Towards a new understanding of strategic rural planning

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Globalisation and urbanisation are mega trends which have been drivers for demographic changes and territorial restructuring in Europe for decades. The European research program EPSON has investigated how this development has influenced the process of rural shrinkage in Europe (Raugze et al. 2017). Through EPSON's studies it is revealed that globalisation and urbanisation has resulted in a peripheralisation and an increased urban-rural divide (Raugze et al. 2017). Economic and employment growth has mainly been centralised in and around the larger cities and at the same time agriculture has been less labor intensive (Raugze et al. 2017). This has resulted in a depopulation and an ongoing out-migration of especially well-educated young workers from the rural areas towards the cities (Raugze et al. 2017) - a condition which has been labeled as "brain drain" (Hospers 2014).

The depopulation of an area is the starting point, if unattended, of an downwards spiral where the attractiveness of the area is diminished. An increased depopulation puts both public and private services under pressure and can in the end lead to a withdrawal of services (Raugze et al. 2017). This is again argued to result in a deterioration in quality of life and living conditions (Raugze et al. 2017). Decline in quality of life and living conditions makes it more difficult to attract new residents to the area and thus leading to a surplus in the housing stock (Raugze et al. 2017), (Hospers & Reverda 2015). Demographic decline in shrinking areas is further enhanced by ageing and dwindling fertility rates (Raugze et al. 2017).

	1901	1921	1940	1960	1970	1981	1990	2000	2010	2018
Greater Copenhagen	20.1	21.4	26.6	28.1	28.0	27.0	26.0	26.0	27.8	29.0
City >100,000	0.0	0.0	3.3	6.7	9.3	8.4	8.8	9.0	9.3	9.7
City 10-99,999	10.2	16.7	18.0	19.9	20.2	20.0	20.8	19.6	20.3	20.5
City 1-9,999	11.2	11.4	10.1	11.2	13.9	19.9	21.1	22.4	21.9	21.5
City under 1,000	1.8	5.6	5.9	8.1	8.5	8.5	8.0	8.0	7.5	7.1
Rural districts	56.7	44.8	36.1	26.0	20.1	16.1	15.2	14.9	13.2	12.1
Denmark	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 1.1: Population distribution based on city size, own translation (Andersen & Nørgaard 2018).

The tendencies described in the EPSON research can easily be recognised in a Danish

context. Since the beginning of the 20th century Denmark has experienced dramatic demographic changes. In 1900 approximately 58.5 percent of the population were living in a city under 1,000 inhabitants or in rural districts compared to approximately 19.2 percent in 2018; in the same span of time cities experienced rapid growth (see table 1.1) (Andersen & Nørgaard 2018).

The overall population in Denmark has been growing for decades, but as seen in figure 1.1 the distribution of the growth has not been equal; the larger cities have become even larger while the rural areas have shrunken considerably. The same trend can be seen when considering each municipality on its own as shown on figure 1.1.
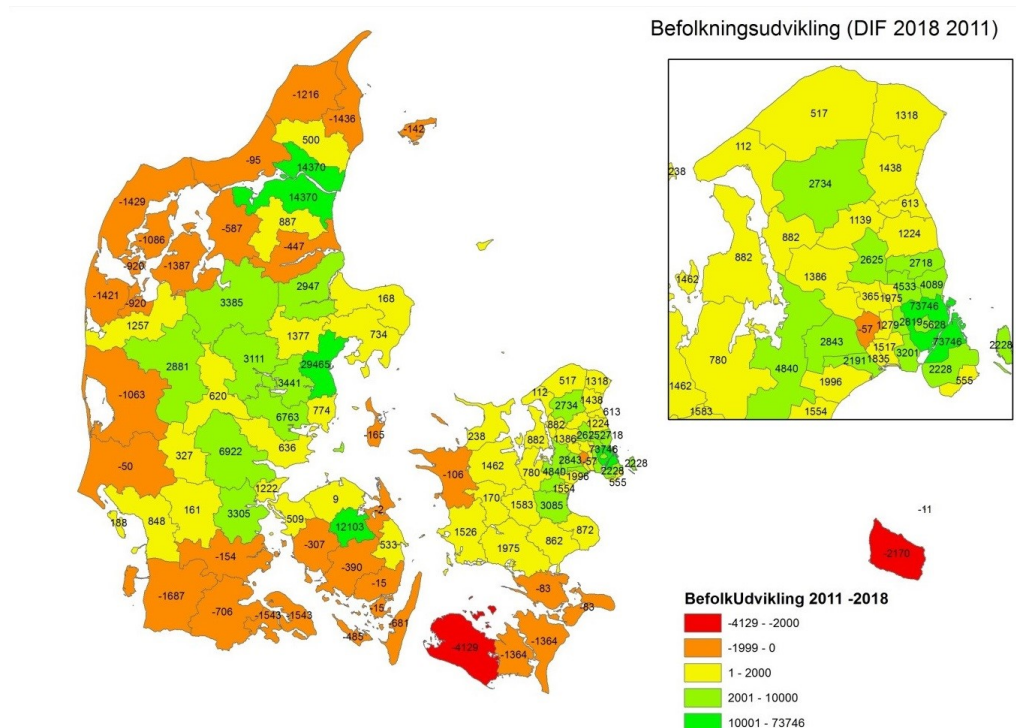
Figure 1.1: Population growth on a municipal level (Jensen et al. 2018).

Looking at figure 1.1 it is apparent that the four areas with the highest population growth (the bright green colour) over the period 2011 to 2018 are also home to the largest cities in Denmark, Aalborg, Aarhus, Odense, and Copenhagen, and as such it is mostly the outer areas that are experiencing a population decline (marked by orange/red). This combined with the fact that over the period of 2017 to 2019, 36 of the 98 Danish municipalities experienced a decline in population strongly indicates that urbanisation is still an ongoing trend.

While the industrialisation is usually seen as the starting point of urbanisation, changes in the labour market can no longer be singled out as the sole reason for the skewed development. In recent times several political decisions have contributed to this unequal development of rural versus city: the structural reform of the Danish municipalities in 2007, the healthcare reform, and the structural reform of the Danish police force are examples of how political decisions have enhanced the negative development in many areas (Udvalget For Levedygtige Landsbyer 2018) - common to all these examples is the centralisation of

public services to nearby cities (Udvalget For Levedygtige Landsbyer 2018)).

The shutting down of schools in small villages and rural areas has been on the political agenda in many municipalities and it is an example of how structural reforms can enhance an already negative development. Center for Landdistriktsforskning (The Danish Centre for Rural Research) has investigated the effect of shutting down elementary schools in several small villages in Tønder Municipality (Svendsen & Sørensen 2016). While the research showed that shutting down schools is not the sole cause of a declining population it does with no doubt contribute to and speed up the process. Declining populations do not only create problems for public institutions, however, as the private service sector is also negatively affected; many villages are experiencing a radical diminishing of formerly flourishing retail shops (Udvalget For Levedygtige Landsbyer 2018).

Population decline and decline in both public and private services combined with a labour market under pressure leaves the areas in a downwards spiral where the overall attractiveness of areas is slowly decreasing (Hospers & Reverda 2015). This makes it difficult to attract new people to the areas which again leads to significantly lower housing prices and a surplus in the housing stock (Udvalget For Levedygtige Landsbyer 2018).

On top of this, many current planning efforts, in rural municipalities, are centred on countering out-migration by employing strategies focused on family housing in order to draw in younger people. This can work to some extent, but comes at the price of neighbouring municipalities. Most municipalities employ the same strategies in order to try and attract the most people, but as it turns out rural areas mostly attract people from other rural areas: *"[...] competition on increase in population in rural areas [can be called] a zero-sum game as long as it is taking place between municipalities in the rural areas."* (Boligøkonomisk Videncenter 2017, :16)

As shown above there is a need to consider rural areas and cities differently: the former is mostly defined by population decline, fading public and private services, surplus in housing stock and a declining labour market, while the latter on the other hand experiences a growing population and a large centralisation of the labour market, public and private services and many large cultural institutions.

This provides two very different contexts to consider in planning: cities are naturally growing and attracting more people, while rural areas are steadily declining and experiencing the aforementioned brain drain. The next step is therefore to investigate how planning is trying to address these issues and what some of the guiding principles of current efforts are.

1.1 The role of planning in rural development

As mentioned the context of planning differs between rural areas and cities and with many of the negative effects of rural decline being self-reinforcing it places a specific focus on rural development in these years, and on how planning addresses the solutions to the problems - what is needed to promote a positive development? If we take a closer look at the Planning Legislation, and what applies in the strategic rural development, growth in

general seems to be the overall focal point of planning. The first section of the Danish Planning Legislation states:

§ 1. The law is intended to ensure coherent planning that combines social interests in land use, contributes to safeguarding the country's nature and environment, and creates good conditions for growth and development throughout the country, so that community development can take place on a sustainable basis with respect for human living conditions, conservation of animal and plant life and increased economic prosperity (Erhvervsministeriet 2018a).

From this it can be understand that the main goal of planning is to secure growth and to an extent equal development. In the previous chapter however it was made clear that many rural areas are not growing but are instead under heavy pressure of depopulation, so what is the role of planning in these areas if planning for growth is not as viable an option as it is in larger cities? On 1 June 2017, a majority of the parliament, consisting of the former government, Dansk Folkeparti and Socialdemokratiet, adopted a modernisation of the Planning Legislation. These are a number of significant changes aimed at giving municipalities, citizens and businesses better opportunities for growth and development, while preserving nature and the environment (Erhvervsstyrelsen 2018*a*). The former Minister of Business, Brian Mikkelsen, from Konservative paid great attention to how it increased the opportunities for rural growth:

"I am very pleased that the Parliament has today adopted the modernisation of the Planning Legislation. The modernisation removes growth barriers in spatial planning and is an important step in promoting growth and development throughout Denmark. The new development opportunities in, among other things, rural areas and retail are now a reality that will work across the country for the benefit of both businesses and citizens, while protecting the environment and a diverse nature." (Erhvervsministeriet 2017)

Another change in the legislation was made in 2019 implementing a general requirement that the municipal planning must decide on the opportunities for development of villages between 200 and 1000 inhabitants; the purpose of the new rules is to make the municipalities take an active position on how villages or challenged rural areas can become viable. Additionally the municipalities must consider what actions to take for these villages and their future roles in the municipality (Erhvervsministeriet 2018*b*). Essentially, they have to:

"[...] support the development of viable communities in villages, promote a differentiated and targeted development of villages, and state the overall objectives and tools for the development of villages" (Erhvervsstyrelsen 2020, :15)

Looking at this it seems apparent that the topic of rural development is being actively regarded on the political agenda, but also that to some extent that planning for more growth is presented as the cure for the ailments that are currently afflicting rural areas. Many of the new planning tools provided to municipalities as a result of the changes in 2017 are focused on making legislation less strict especially regarding land zone permits in an effort to encourage development (Erhvervsstyrelsen 2020).

In other words, national planning calls for expanding and maintaining strategies of growth with the goal of retaining the population within the city limits or even expanding it rather

than planning for the expected decline (Stryjakiewich & Jaroszewska 2016) and in this sense the planning legislation sets out a general framework of planning for growth and development that the municipalities have to navigate within. This leads to the question of how this fascination with growth can be explained, which the following section will attempt to answer by looking into neoliberalism and its effects on Danish planning efforts.

Neoliberalism in strategic spatial planning

Since the 1980s, strategic spatial planning in Denmark has been dominated by neoliberal values and agendas (Galland 2012, Olesen 2014, Sager 2013). Before we consider how it has a connection to rural planning in recent years, it is necessary to define what neoliberalism means in terms of planning. Olesen (2014) defines it as follows:

"Here, I understand neoliberalism as a political economic ideology, which assumes that 'society functions better under a market logic than any other logic, especially a state-directed one' (Purcell, 2009: 141)" (Olesen 2014, :290)

It can then be expected that political systems and planning cultures permeated by neoliberal value will tend towards enhancing market mechanisms and ensure growth. In this sense it highlights how the market, understood as the belief in competitiveness and innovation, has become more prominent in strategic spatial planning (Galland 2012). The neoliberal political ideology is expressed by the concept of 'New Public Management' (NPM) where former public affairs and services are outsourced to the private market with the conviction that the market regulates itself and thus finds the most effective and best solutions (Olesen 2014) - in other words, all economic and social problems have a market solution (Sager 2013). Furthermore, the institutional framework of a neoliberal world must encourage such practices which means that the state has a fundamental role in ensuring that markets function, by safeguarding private property rights through the maintenance of legal structures, police and military functions. Where there are no markets, the state should aim to create the framework for new markets, but government intervention in markets should preferably be avoided (Harvey 1973/2008). This falls in line with the prior point of the state opening up development opportunities in rural areas; if they cannot ensure growth on their own the state intervenes to stabilise the market and encourage development.

Continuing on with strategic spatial planning in rural areas, Galland (2012) states that there has been a shift from 'managing' spatial development to 'facilitating' economic growth in Denmark. He points out how the traditional structure of the planning system actually enabled regional planning to ensure spatial coherence through coordination across municipalities and sectoral plans. To this end, regional planning of the day was based on a need to harmonise social and economic development goals based on the values of the welfare state. But the structural reform in 2007 meant a decentralisation of power where the regions no longer had a governing role in protecting inter-municipal coordination on spatial development issues (Galland 2012). By contrast, the government at the time created a market that increased competition between municipalities, which is not immediately based on ensuring equal development across the state territory.

According to Galland (2012), the state's role in regional planning has gone from being a 'provider' of public services and ensuring equitable spatial development to being a 'facilitator' of growth and competition between municipalities, a notion that is support by Olesen (2014) who likewise points out how strategic spatial planning practices are to some extent based on neoliberal political ideals, where the primary goal is to achieve economic growth and increase competitiveness. There is broad consensus however, that in the Nordic countries, strategic spatial planning is a mix of the welfare state's values and growth-oriented neoliberal strategies (Galland 2012, Olesen 2014, Sager 2013). A counterargument to this is presented by Hansen et al. (2018) where *"[Caroline] Creamer argues that economic rationality, that in a neoliberal context often is not locally specific, can achieve a far too leading role in development."* (Hansen et al. 2018, :7, own translation).

As mentioned earlier, the overall purpose of the Planning Legislation is that planning should create the framework for growth and development throughout the country as a basis for sustainable community development. The purpose suggests how planning works based on the principle of growth first as a prerequisite for general development. Basically, it can be understood that economic growth must ensure the values of the welfare state such as equality, solidarity and justice to mention a few.

Sager (2013) argues that the main goal of cities is is to attract economic capital and thus ensure continuous development. Larger cities are competing for a highly mobile investment capital on a global scale, while smaller cities are looking to find interested developers nationally. If tax revenue proves insufficient for a city the need to secure private investment increases - this holds true for both larger cities but also smaller villages and municipalities (Sager 2013). During a period of growth securing private capital arguably becomes easier as they can help satisfy a demand, for example for housing. This is a lot harder for areas that are depopulating as the development opportunities are not as many - why build houses if people are moving away? This leaves especially the smaller village in quite the tough spot as they need financial help more than ever, but find it harder and harder to attract the necessary investments.

This neoliberal logic is perhaps the reason why the goals of rural development are gradually adjusting to the pursuit of economic growth. Even in areas experiencing population decline, neoliberal thinking seems to dominate planning - as growth has become a synonym for development (Sousa & Pinho 2015). But what is the alternative to neoliberal planning? - a return to the welfare planning of the pre-1980s or something entirely different? Researchers and planning practitioners have recently started using the term 'Shrinkage' as a centre-point of this debate and are using it to reconsider what to plan for if not for growth.

1.2   Conceptualising shrinkage

At its most simple, the term 'Shrinkage' is used to describe a path of urban development, characterised by a steadily declining population - in opposition to urban growth. It is however a bit more complex than that, and Sousa & Pinho (2015) describe it as a confusing paradigm in itself, as *"[...] population growth naturally leads to urban growth, population decrease does not immediately lead to urban shrinkage."* (Sousa & Pinho 2015, :12) - a

point which was also addressed in the previous chapters. This has presented planning with a considerable problem as it seems unsuited to face these challenges of shrinking rather than growing - or as Reis et al. (2016) puts it *"Urban growth has always been one of the most prominent topics of planning."* (Reis et al. 2016, :248). This is further supported by Rumpel et al. (2013), Sousa & Pinho (2015), Stryjakiewicz & Jaroszewska (2016), Wiechmann & Pallagst (2012) who argue that the primary goal of planning has been to secure urban growth, rendering it inadequate when dealing with matters not directly related to growth - Hollander et al. (2009), Liebmann & Kuder (2012) argue that part of the blame also lies with the cities themselves as they stigmatise the concept of shrinkage and find it hard to confront the problems it presents and reorient their planning to address these new challenges - the consequences of shrinkage are shown in Figure 1.2.
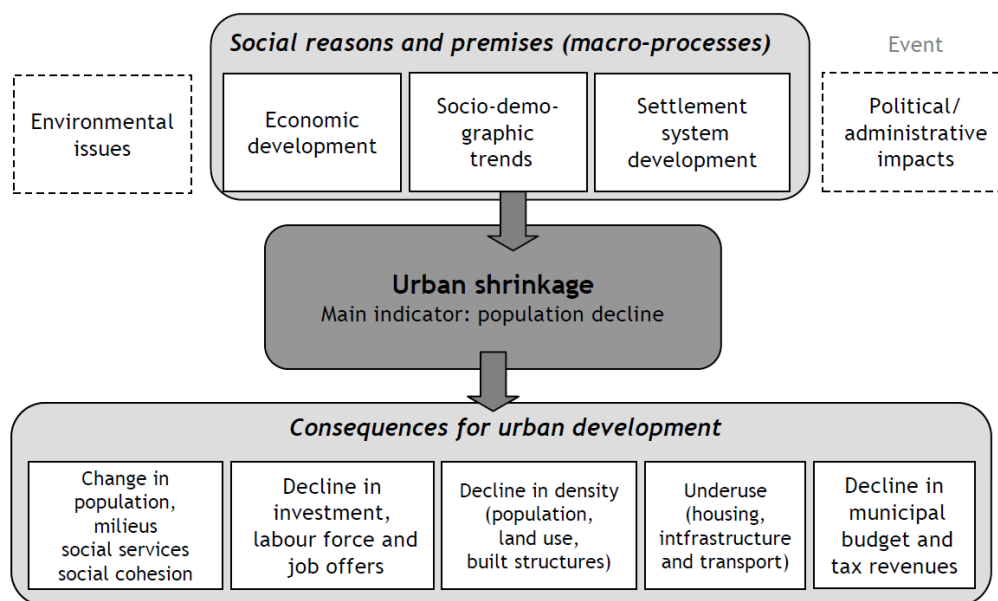
Figure 1.2: The different drivers and effects of shrinkage (Rink et al. 2010)

Before exploring the consequences of this further it is perhaps necessary to conceptualise shrinkage a bit more: the primary cause of shrinkage is a declining population, itself perhaps a cause of economic decline or political actions. In this sense several authors (Liebmann & Kuder 2012, Rink et al. 2014, Stryjakiewicz & Jaroszewska 2016) describe shrinkage as a vicious cycle - or a positive feedback loop - in which the drivers of shrinkage further reinforce the process itself; fewer citizens leads to economic decline which causes services to shut down which leads to people moving away and so on. While several different factors play a part in shrinkage the main result of this state is a declining population:

"Despite its multi-causality, there is one clear and unambiguous indicator for urban shrinkage, which we also take as a starting point: population decline in a structural sense." (Hospers 2014, :1508)

According to Schlappa (2016) there is a tendency that policy makers fail to address this adequately and instead 'recycle' strategies focused on growth in an attempt to reverse the decline. Something that Rink et al. (2014) attribute - in an Eastern European context - to a neoliberal mindset, where *"[...] growth strategies will be applied with the expectation that the trickle-down effects will resolve the problem of shrinkage."* (Rink et al. 2014, :264).

Considering this in light of the previous section 1.1 it raises the question of whether or not this approach is also the one that Danish policy makers take when planning for areas experiencing urban decline. The main problem with this approach is that private investors seem to be largely disinterested in developing shrinking cities, or put differently: *"[...] it will be difficult to attract private investments to shrinking cities for obvious reasons of the likely difficulties of securing safe payback mechanisms."* (Sousa & Pinho 2015, :20). On top of this, Liebmann & Kuder (2012) argue that cities are liable to be complacent in path dependency where *"[...] dominant paths of development are never questioned or abandoned, even when economic or political circumstances might demand it. [...] Thus, just as theories of path dependency suggest, many cities use all their strength to avoid setting out on new paths for as long as possible."* (Liebmann & Kuder 2012, :1160). A sentiment that is shared by Hajer & Versteeg (2019), who essentially argue that people find it hard to imagine a future that is not an extension of the current present - in other words, a future that is radically different from the current path of development. But this is arguably where planning excels: in envisioning a future that is not only radically different, but also achievable through various initiatives. Put differently:

"It is essential to liberate urban policy from the obsession of the steady growth paradigm, to work out suitable forms of planning ('planning for shrinkage'), and to look at urban shrinkage in terms of chances and possibilities of change that it offers in the development path followed so far." (Stryjakiewicz & Jaroszewska 2016, :33)

We argue that shrinkage should stand shoulder-to-shoulder with growth as a pattern of urban development. One of the first principles taught to urban and regional planning students is that growth is not, on its own, a synonym for development. Urban growth can merely mean horizontal or vertical expansion, while urban development means progress, evolution, qualitative leap, transition from one state to another, so that the following is always more advanced than the previous one. (Sousa & Pinho 2015, :13)

In order to do this it is important to move from shrinkage as a taboo and start actively addressing the effects it causes, the most prominent being the aforementioned population decline. But what is the best approach to take when faced with a state of shrinkage? Hospers (2014) define four different strategies: trivialising, countering, accepting, and utilising shrinkage - with the first two being the most common; cities are more inclined to either consider shrinkage as a temporary state, something that will come to pass as they will soon return to a state of growth, or as something that needs to be countered by establishing regrowth policies in order to revitalise the declining state of the city Hospers (2014), Rink et al. (2014), Sousa & Pinho (2015), Stryjakiewicz & Jaroszewska (2016). It is less common for cities to accept shrinkage and work on strategies for mitigating and managing the negative effects while trying to stabilise the population, or utilise shrinkage by attempting to capitalise on the changing demographic by restructuring the city to suit the new needs of the citizens Hospers (2014), Sousa & Pinho (2015). From a planning theory approach shrinkage can also be utilised as a driver to transform planning:

"One of the main purposes of this symposium is to investigate possible paradigm shifts in planning, in particular a departure from growth centered planning. In view of the reality of shrinking cities, this theoretical section seeks indications that this one-sided focus on growth in planning is over." (Wiechmann & Pallagst 2012, :4)

"Instead of focusing so much on growth as a solution to social problems in cities, a new generation of researchers are asking about how to promote social equity in shrinking cities sans *growth."* (Hollander et al. 2009, :20)

The exact path to take in order to carry out this transformation is still unclear, but Guimarães et al. (2016), Hansen et al. (2018), Hospers (2014), James et al. (2016), Rink et al. (2014), Stryjakiewicz & Jaroszewska (2016) suggest that a larger emphasis on governance and citizens participation could be the way to do it. More specifically *"Can a city consistently lose population and yet maintain a high quality of life for both rich and poor? [...] Can local political decisions about how a city shrinks be made in a way that gives voice to the most disenfranchised?"* (Hollander et al. 2009, :20) and *"[...] for shrinking cities, who does planning serve and for what purpose?* (Hollander et al. 2009, :21). Considering the implications of shrinkage and the problems that rural municipalities in Denmark are already faced with (see 1) it seems prudent to ask these questions of Danish planning practices as well; how can a rural community best adapt to a future of shrinkage? - will it even exist in the future? - and if so, then what is its basis for existence, or put in another way, what role does it serve in society? Hospers (2014) further expands on this by presenting three challenges that urban governance will face in dealing with shrinkage:

"The first governance challenge is this: how to move from growth thinking to accepting shrinkage? After all, shrinkage does not fit well in societies addicted to growth." (Hospers 2014, :1515)

"The second challenge for urban governance is how to move from local to regional strategies. Addressing urban shrinkage requires a regional perspective, because shrinking cities are in competition with nearby cities, towns and villages." (Hospers 2014, :1515)

"The third urban governance challenge in shrinking cities is how to move from power to empowerment. Traditionally, the development of societal structures is based upon three pillars: the government (the public sector), the market (the private sector) and civil society (the third sector)." (Hospers 2014, :1515-1516)

The first challenge mimics the issues presented by path dependency, but instead of focusing entirely on decision-makers it is about changing the perception and understanding of the general public: if the public is as 'addicted to growth' as the policy makers then they will likely keep electing people who promise a return to a growth paradigm, essentially ignoring/underestimating the challenges presented by shrinkage - as exemplified in the research of Guimarães et al. (2016) where citizens of four different Portuguese cities preferred 'economic revival' defined by 're-industrialisation' and investment in 'business incubators'. To combat this Hospers (2014) calls for a *"[...] mental transformation from growth to shrinkage [...]"* (Hospers 2014, :1507), a notion that is supported by Guimarães et al. (2016), Sousa & Pinho (2015) who argue that shrinkage is to be seen as distinct from growth and *"[...] requires the development of targeted actions and a bottom-up approach."* (Guimarães et al. 2016, :257)

The second challenge is related to the problems presented initially in chapter 1 on page 1, where competition between municipals and even cities resulted in a zero-sum game. Therefore cities need to expand their horizons and start collaborating in order to address the challenges they face, instead of preying on each other and hoping to come out

on top. Which directly relates to the third challenge as it asks the question of how to best empower civil society such that they can replace a disinterested private sector when developing these areas.

To sum up, Hollander et al. (2009), Rink et al. (2014), Rumpel et al. (2013), Sousa & Pinho (2015), Stryjakiewicz & Jaroszewska (2016) all state that there is a general lack of studies of policy responses to shrinkage, especially as shrinkage manifests itself differently depending on the local context - both in terms of the effects of shrinkage, but also the approach that planners and policy makers take to address it - but more importantly they all base their findings on cities of a considerable size, usually more than 100,000 inhabitants - with Hollander et al. (2009) even going so far as to define a shrinking city as having a minimum of 10,000 inhabitants. As such an argument can be that *"[...] future studies should not only investigate the "usual suspects" of urban shrinkage, like Leipzig and Liverpool. The time has come to study shrinkage in "ordinary" cities and towns in Europe beyond the well-known cases. Does it matter if shrinking cities are large (e.g. more than 200,000 residents) or small?"* (Hospers 2014, :1519).

On top of this the main consensus seems to be that urban governance and an increased focus on public participation is the best way of dealing with shrinkage and as such *"Further work should analyse the use of participatory approaches and the active involvement of citizens [...]"* (Guimarães et al. 2016, :269). An important addition to this is made by Diarmaid Lawlor who argues that collaboration with citizens *"[...] should not be solely about creating the good process, but most of all be about creating places where collaboration process can succeed and maybe even emerge on their own."* (Hansen et al. 2018, :9). As such it becomes necessary to look further into how knowledge is created between different actors and what defines the the interplay between the three aforementioned sectors (public, private, citizen).

1.3   Mechanisms and actors

Within social innovation, efforts are made to understand which mechanisms and actors develop solutions that meet societal needs. To understand the planning of our rural areas, it is necessary to gain an insight into what governing forces are shaping the development of our villages. Social innovation research explores the concept of 'The Quintuple Helix', which seeks a multidisciplinary understanding of what it is that promotes development in our society; the model ranges from natural sciences (due to the natural environment) to social sciences and the humanities (due to society, democracy and economics).

The Quintuple Helix model builds on what we know as 'The Triple Helix Model' by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff and 'The Quadruple Helix Model' by Carayannis and Campbell (Carayannis et al. 2012). The social (societal) system of cooperation is based on 'The Triple Helix' which consists of a combination of university (i.e. education system), industry (i.e. economic system) government (i.e. political system). In 'The Quadruple Helix model', civil society is added as the fourth pillar that takes into account the public as an actor in community development. 'The Quintuple Helix model' adds another pillar - the natural environment as a prerequisite for understanding and producing new knowledge. The five

pillars are more or less prevalent in rural development and are as follows:

1) *The education system: The education system, as the first subsystem, defines itself in reference to 'academia', 'universities', 'higher education systems', and schools. In this helix, the necessary 'human capital' (for example: students, teachers, scientists/researchers, academic entrepreneurs, etc.) of a state (nation-state) is being formed by diffusion and research of knowledge.* (Carayannis et al. 2012, :5).

2) *The economic system: The economic system, as the second subsystem, consists of 'industry/industries', 'firms', services and banks. This helix concentrates and focuses the 'economic capital' (for example: entrepreneurship, machines, products, technology, money, etc.) of a state (nation-state).* (Carayannis et al. 2012, :5).

3) *The natural environment: The natural environment as third subsystem is decisive for a sustainable development and provides people with a 'natural capital' (for example: resources, plants, variety of animals, etc.).* (Carayannis et al. 2012, p. 5).

4) *The media-based and culture-based public: The fourth subsystem, media-based and culture-based public, integrates and combines two forms of 'capital'. On the one hand, this helix has, through the culture-based public (for example: tradition, values, etc.), a 'social capital'. On the other hand, the helix of media-based public (for example: television, internet, newspapers, etc.) contains also 'capital of information' (for example: news, communication, social networks).* (Carayannis et al. 2012, p. 6).

5) *The political system: The political system, as a fifth subsystem, is also of crucial importance, because it formulates the 'will', where to the state (nation-state) is heading toward in the present and future, thereby also defining, organizing as well as administering the general conditions of the state (nation-state). Therefore, this helix has a 'political and legal capital' (for example: ideas, laws, plans, politicians, etc.).* (Carayannis et al. 2012, :6).

What sets the quintuple helix apart from its predecessors is mainly its inclusion of natural resources: in the source article by Carayannis et al. (2012) the model is applied in an attempt to foster a socio-ecological transition. While this is to some extent a considerably different topic from rural development it still merits looking into, as the local context has been argued to hold significant importance when planning and especially so when planning in rural areas. As such the natural environment can also be understood as the local resources where it deals with the physical and geographical characteristics associated with an area and any natural qualities such as forests and access to the sea, including other factors such as infrastructural access to major cities that act as economic hubs.

Looking at the interplay between these subsystems from a planning approach provides some new insights: in chapter 1.1 on page 5 it was found that market mechanisms and competitiveness are at the forefront of the political agenda and at the centre of contemporary planning efforts. In principle it is then the role of the state (the public sector) to create the framework for the optimal market conditions by which rural development is largely ensured through private investment - this also adds the perspective of development being subordinate to growth as the values and goals of the welfare state must be achieved under the condition of economic growth. Strategic planning is then mostly concerned with securing the best possible conditions for the private sector, thereby diminishing or completely omitting influence from the other subsystems.

In 1.2, that approach is criticised for being unrealistic in many rural areas. Here it is emphasised that even though you believe that the private market must ensure the development of the areas that are experiencing decline, we just have to acknowledge that it has not succeeded so far and there are no immediate prospects for it in the future. This creates a paradox - the private sector is largely disinterested in developing in rural areas that are experiencing decline, but the neoliberal planning approach works on the understanding that the private market must solve the problems and drive the planning. In section 1.2, it is clear that these rural areas must recognise their position, and instead focus on some of the other subsystems/pillars that promote development, in particular, civil society should be a significantly greater partner in planning - not only because of the untapped potentials inherent in civil society, but also because of the absence of major private sector investments. As such the public sector is forced to rely more on the civil sector and share the load between them.

In this way, 'The Quintuple Helix model' helps to increase the understanding of planning and shrinkage as a concept. Basically, it is interesting to investigate how we are changing rural planning from being focused on attracting private investment (the economic system) to creating and supporting a framework that supports and relies on the participation of citizens (civil society) in a way that empowers them to address the challenges of shrinkage. The next step is therefore to investigate how planning can engage with governance and public participation and what can be learned from past experiences in these fields.

1.4   Planning theories and practices

In 1.1 it was clarified that planning has been considerably influenced by neoliberal values and has become a tool of neoliberalism seeking to enhance growth first principles as main driver for development (Allmendinger 2016, Sager 2011). In 1.2 it was argued that a neoliberal based planning seems unfit to encounter the challenges shrinking areas experience. Instead of seeking to promote growth the focus in planning should be on development (Sousa & Pinho 2015) through increased public participation and collaboration 1.2. In that light it will be necessary to develop new norms and standards for planning practices that can incorporate public participation and collaboration as the main foundation.

The idea of planning practices driven by civic empowerment and participation is by no means new. New planning ideals were fostered in the 1980s and 1990s and later put under the overarching definition *communicative Planning Theory*. They arose as a response to traditionally expert dominated top-down planning (Fainstein 2000) and were inspired by Habermas' writings on discourse ethics and the development of the concept of communicative rationality (Healy 2003). Communicative Planning Theory is a result of several planning theorists research and it consists of different branches: among others, Forester (1999) with deliberative planning, Innes (1996) with planning through consensus building, and Healey (1996), Healy (1992, 2003) studies of collaborative planning are some of the most notable contributors to Communicative Planning Theory. Even though the scope of their research vary it is easily justifiable to fit them into a communicative planning paradigm. Common is that planning is viewed upon as an interactive process where all interested stakeholders should have the possibility to participate and influence the process

on equal terms (Healy 1992). Furthermore, they all comply that the normative principle for good planning in Communicative Planning is defined by Communicative Rationality (Healy 1992):

"A decision is "communicatively rational" to the degree that it is reached consensually through deliberations involving all stakeholder, where all are equally empowered and fully informed, and where the conditions of ideal speech are met [...] Communicatively rational decisions, then, are those that come about because there are good reasons for them rather than because of the political or economic power of particular stakeholders" (Innes 1996, 461)

As the quote states "good planning" or Communicative Rationality is dependent on if it is possible to reach mutual understanding through deliberation and discourses under conditions of ideal speech (Healy 1992). There is an inherent trust in that power struggles and conflicting stakeholder interests can be overcome if the participants are willing to discuss it open-mindedly (Healy 1992).

"Interaction is thus not simply a form of exchange, of bargaining around pre-defined interests. It involves mutually reconstructing what constitute the interests of various participants – a process of mutual learning through mutually searching to understand" (Healy 1992, 155)

It is assumed that after the involved participants through discussion has identified different interests they can agree on what is relevant in terms of producing a communicative rational decision (Innes 1996). During the processes the participants develop a strengthened reflective capacity that enable them to reevaluate the process and at the same time critical reflect on new discourses emerging in and around the communicative process (Healy 1992). The aim of involving the public in the planning process is to develop community based ownership and responsibility towards the strategies as-well (Healey 1996). Ownership is a key element in collaborative planning. If people have been an integral part in the process of developing a strategy they will have a sense of responsibility and more incitement to work for an implementation of the formulated goals (Agger & Hoffmann 2008). In order to enhance ownership in community development Lachapelle (2008) has established three vital characteristics for implementing a 'sense of ownership' in community development (Lachapelle 2008).

a) *A sense of ownership in process (who has a voice and whose voice is heard?)* (Lachapelle 2008).
b) *A sense of ownership in outcome (who has influence over decisions and what results from the effort?)* (Lachapelle 2008).
c) *A sense of ownership distribution (who is affected by the process and outcome?)* (Lachapelle 2008).

If a 'sense of ownership' should be enhanced in community development it first of all crucial to have an understanding of *who has a voice and whose voice is heard* (Lachapelle 2008). It is those whose voice is heard that have the ability to define problems and solutions (Lachapelle 2008). If definitions are imposed without people having had the opportunity to legitimately have their 'voice' heard it can lead to resistance and diminish the 'sense of ownership' (Lachapelle 2008).

The second characteristic Lachapelle highlights is ownership towards 'outcome'. Ownership to the outcome in community development can be enhanced through empowerment of citizens (Lachapelle 2008). If direct decision-making authority is not a possibility the 'sense of ownership' should be developed through close cooperation between public and private actors (Lachapelle 2008).

The third characteristic Lachapelle highlights is that it is important to identify who will be affected by the outcome of a decision or development (Lachapelle 2008). It should identified who will reap the benefits and costs and decisions should be evaluated in a regional/ national context (Lachapelle 2008).

While Lachapelle provides a normative understanding of three characteristics of how a 'sense of ownership' is developed, Munthe-Kaas (2015) has studied how 'co-design' as a public participatory process has the potential to create new modes of inclusion of actors and possibly develop a sense of ownership among the participants (Munthe-Kaas 2015). Munthe-Kaas is pledging that if people are left as detached observers in the process of developing cities' future it should be regarded as a problem (Munthe-Kaas 2015).

"This disconnection of people from the institutions of urban governance has left citizens feeling that the future is something that has already been decided, rather than something that is owned and co-created by everyone." (Munthe-Kaas 2015, :221)

Munthe-Kaas defines co-design as a tool of designing processes where people are invited as designers of their own city or urban space (Munthe-Kaas 2015). The key idea is that the process of designing a designated future development is a collaboration between citizens and governance institutions (Munthe-Kaas 2015).

Based on this it is essential to have an in-dept knowledge about how to create arenas for participation that has the possibility enhance ownership among the participants. A pitfall in communicative planning processes that they end up being a symbolic gesture of tokenism with the purpose of legitimating already imposed decisions (Arnstein 2019). Arnstein (2019) argues that 'true' public participation is dependent of 'degrees of citizen power' 1.3 and the possibility for 'have-nots' to be a an integrated part of decisions-making processes (Arnstein 2019)
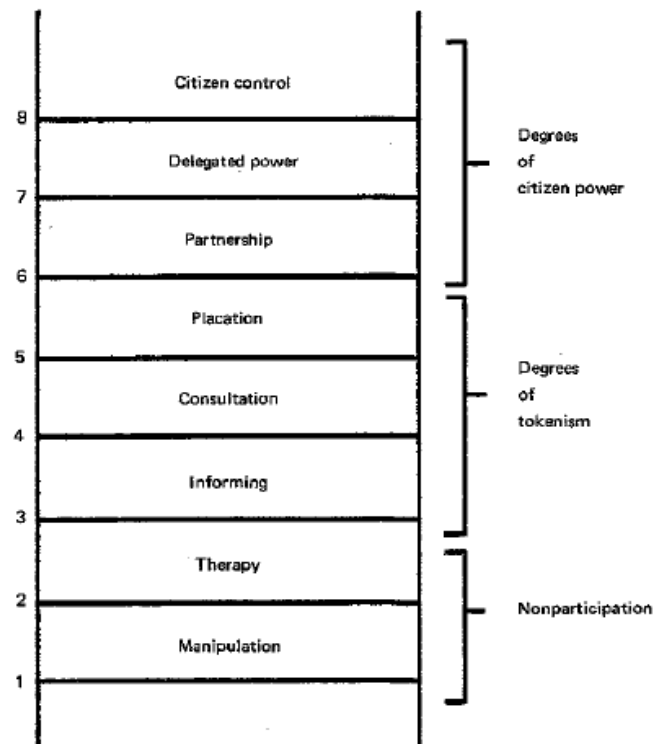
Figure 1.3: Sherry Arnsteins ladder of participation (Arnstein 2019).

Finally it is worth noting that the aim of communicative planning processes is not only defining a desired end state but also modes of achieving it (Healey 1996).

Communicative planning is constructed on stringent normative values and Habermas' ideas of communicative rationality has been the target of fellow planning theorists attacks during the past decade. Flyvbjerg & Richardson (2002) argues that the weakness in Habermas' work is *[...] its lack of agreement between ideal and reality [...] (Flyvbjerg & Richardson 2002, :4)* and they further elaborate that communicative rationality is an Utopia with no clear path on how to get there. Such harsh critique of the normative foundation of communicative planning is rooted in the neglection of power as it seems impossible to completely dissect power from communication (Flyvbjerg & Richardson 2002). Furthermore, it is debated whether a narrow focus on communicative elements result in that power is not the only important non-communicative process that is being neglected (Flyvbjerg & Richardson 2002). Another critique has been that communicative planning has failed to take in consideration how context influence communicative planning processes (Healy 2003) (Calderon & Westin 2019). Healy defines context as locally specific forms of *[...] distinctive power relations of division, domination, and exclusion [...] (Healey 1996, :231)* and describes it as a threat which should be encountered by developing communicative practices (Healey 1996). (Calderon & Westin 2019) agree that power relations is an important factor when trying to grasp the context of communicative planning practices but they also argue that viewing context as just power relations is too superficial (Calderon & Westin 2019). To obtain a deeper understanding of context it is necessary to focus on the interplay between *institutions* and *agency* (Calderon & Westin 2019). Where institutions are *[...] 'socialised structures' comprising a relatively enduring and interconnected set of*

formal regulations and procedures, and informal norms and routines [...] (Calderon & Westin 2019, :2) and agency is the actors' *[...] ability to pursue and achieve their intentions, in ways that reproduce or differ from their institutions [...] (Calderon & Westin 2019, :3).*

When looking into developing a suitable planning approach for shrinking areas there seems to definitely be some value in communicative planning theories. The idea of bringing actors together with the purpose of both identifying different stakeholders interests and also utilising local knowledge with the aim to reach mutual understanding of both challenges seems to correspond with the ideals for planning and shrinkage presented in 1.2. At the same time focusing exclusively on creating good communicative planning practices as the solution would not be desirable. As the critique of communicative planning clearly shows that non-communicative processes and context can influence planning as well. In that light, if communicative planning should be a part of the answer to the shrinkage challenges it would be a necessity with a political-administrative system that could embrace the planning ideals in communicative planning, but also incorporate the non-communicative aspects of planning.

1.5   The political-administrative system

In public administration theory there are three different paths of administration that have been dominant in the western world – Classic Public Administration, New Public Management and New Public Governance (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013). Inspired by David Easton's (Easton 1965) model of the political-administrative system Torfing & Triantafillou (2013) have conceptualised the core values in the three different administrative approaches.
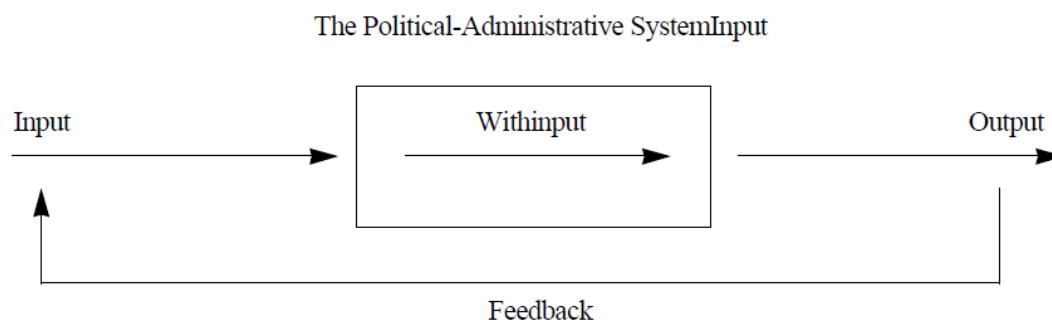
Figure 1.4: Model of the political-administrative system (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013).

The political-administrative system is a loop of input/output and feedback and contains four defining functions which can be regarded as generic as the functions always will be represented in the system but the process' embedded in the functions will change depending on the system approach (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013):

1. *"The provision and processing of* input *in terms of demands, support, and mobilization of resources."*

2. *"The organization and generation of* withinput *in terms of an institutional shaping of the decision-making processes emanating from the roles, values, norms, and routines that are found in public decision-making processes."*
3. *"The design and implementation of* output *in terms of policy, regulations, and public services."*
4. *"The provision of* feedback *in terms of evaluation of outcomes on the basis of normative standards."* (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013, :13)

In Table 1.2 it is shown how the functions are conducted in the different political-administrative systems.

	Input	Withinput	Output	Feedback
Classical Public Administration	Voting plus pressure groups	Bureaucracy: public, based on professional standards	Authoritative rulebased regulation and supply-driven services aiming to ensure equity	Periodic elections and constitutional accountability
New Public Management	Voting plus user satisfaction and choice	Strategic performance management and quasi-markets: public vs. private	Deregulation and demand-driven services aiming to ensure efficiency and user satisfaction	Performance measurement and sanctions through competitiion
New Public Governance	Voting plus arenas for *empowered participation* bringing together public and private actors in continued dialogue	*Collaboration* between different levles, sectors, and actors: public plus private	*New tools* empowering and engaging stakeholders in public problemsolving and service production	*Multiple forms of accountability*based on a variety of standards attuned to organizational learning

Table 1.2: The different political-administrative systems (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013).

Classic Public Administration can best be described as a technocratic and bureaucratic system where the public administration is facilitating political decisions. The input to the administrative system is primarily based on elections and pressure groups forwarding own agendas. Planning in Classic Public Administration is predominantly based on rational values and planning can be described as scientific discipline based on the planners expertise (Banfield 1959).

In 1.1 it was presented that neoliberalism has become the hegemonic political discourse in the past decades. The changes in the political environment entitled immense changes in the public administration as well. Inspired by corporate management ideals from the private sector New Public Management was introduced as a response the Classic Public Administration (Torfing et al. 2012). New Public Management is built upon core

values such as outsourcing public services to the private sector, and competition through quasi-markets (Torfing et al. 2012).

In recent years New Public Management has been heavily criticised. Studies has shown that the in many cases expected benefits from outsourcing of public services and streamlining of the public sector in contrary has led to increased bureaucracy (Torfing et al. 2012). Another critique has been that the citizens are reduced to customers in a service market. As a response to the market driven New Public Management ideals in the public administration there has been an increased focus on governance in recent years and New Public Governance is often presented as an alternative to New Public Management (Torfing et al. 2012). In order to understand the concept New Public Governance it would be necessary to have an understanding of the term Governance. In traditional political terms governance can be understood as the legal and formal steering conducted by governmental institutions at different levels (Torfing et al. 2012). In the context of New Public Governance the term governance has another definition. (Torfing et al. 2012) define governance as:

"In private markets, the economic actors aim to produce value for themselves, whereas in governance the social and political actors aim to define and achieve common objectives and to produce public value, despite the fact that they may have different and often conflicting interests, wants, and beliefs" (Torfing et al. 2012, :15).

As the quote states governance is focused on process' and creating public value through collective action. The core idea is that the society should have a much more central role in the process in terms of definition of goals and in the process of realising the goals (Torfing et al. 2012).

Governance ideals heavily influence the functions in a New Public Governance based political-administrative system 1.2. Voting and surveying are still important *inputs* in a New Public Governance driven system, but the key idea is that the system through *"[...] an expansion of empowered arenas for participation."* (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013, :15) should be systematical supported by forms of direct civic engagement (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013). By facilitating public-private partnerships and mobilising private resources through citizens participation the aim is to develop new forms of public governance and at the same time secure the legitimacy of the system (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013). Compared to the Classical Administrative System where the possibility to influence the system input where limited to influence via elections and a few pressure groups trying to promote own agendas New Public Governance in theory offers the possibility for much broader civic engagement. A political administrative system relying so heavily on civic engagement will naturally face some challenges. First of all the system is dependent on an actual interest in the society to actively participate in public private partnerships. Furthermore, it is important to have the knowledge of how to construct arenas for participation that makes it possible for every individual in the society to participate no matter social class and position (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013). It requires an in dept knowledge of how to activate social groups such as young people, families with children and less resourceful social groups whom all are known to be notoriously difficult to reach in public participation process' (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013). Another threat to the New Public Governance system is that local power elites overtake the participatory process'. Finally it is essential for public private partnerships that the civil servants are willing to partly give up their legal-bureaucratic

roles in order to realise an empowerment of citizens and private stakeholders (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013).

Focus in the administrative process' (*withinput*) has shifted from competition through quasi-markets to collaboration between public and private actors with an aim to foster new and innovative solutions which can be facilitated through partnerships and joint ownership (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013). Furthermore, the administrative process' are reliant on interaction and collaboration between different sectors and levels within the public sector (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013). The administrative process' in a New Public Governance system are facing some notable challenges. Similar to the challenges faced in public participation seeking cross sectoral collaboration in the public sector it is a risk that the most resourceful public bodies are overtaking and defining the process' in the system (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013). Additionally is the administrative system on lower levels (e.g. municipalities) to a large degree guided by among others legislation, guidelines and performance standards developed on the national level (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013). If the framework for the political-administrative system on the lower levels are guided by New Public Management ideals on higher levels it is difficult to develop new forms and standards for collaborative interaction (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013).

The *output* is to an extend still policies, provision of services and other structural frameworks but where a New Public Governance system output differs from the other systems is the focus on development of new tools of governance and improvement of the system process' by strengthening private stakeholders problem solving capacity (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013). The main challenges connected to the output in the New Public Government system are that it can be difficult to determine who should define problems and desired behavior (solutions)(Torfing & Triantafillou 2013). On one hand the public authorities may have one idea of what the key societal problems and coherent solutions are and on the other hand the citizens and other private actors have another notion of problems and solutions (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013).

"The challenge then is to develop institutions and procedures of collaboration whereby the often quite general and vague problem identifications and goals formulated by policymakers are exchanged and debated along with those problems and goals held by diverse private groups" (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013, :19).

By developing institutions and procedures of collaboration it is possible to develop a mutual understanding of the problem and the desired solutions. Another major challenge is how to enhance private actors problem-solving capacity.

Constitutional and political accountability are still important feedback mechanisms but the system is supplemented by multiple forms of mutually agreed accountability for organisational learning and innovation (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013). In that light the challenge is how to develop account-giving standards and procedures for organisational learning and innovation. Organisational learning and innovation can be somewhat abstract and not easy quantifiable concepts thus making it difficult to formulate concrete standards and procedures. On one hand the standards and procedures should specific enough to frame the goals and outcomes but on the other hand they should not be to rigid as it possible can limit the process (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013). Developing multiple new forms of

accountability in the *feedback* loop that goes beyond rigid performance measurement can lead to government overload in the meaning of formulating endless accounts (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013).

Finally it is worth noting that even though the three political-administrative system approaches are described as different system with an offset in notable different ideologies the reality is that the political-administrative systems typically best is defined as a hybrid between the three different approaches (Torfing & Triantafillou 2013). Some even argue the functionality of the political-administrative system is dependent on incorporating aspects from all of the different systems (Torfing et al. 2012). In that light would be nearly impossible to come to the conclusion that a political-administrative system is exclusively Steered by New Public Management or New Public Governance. Instead it would be relevant to determine which ideology is dominant in a given Political-administrative system. Here it is interesting to consider how section 1.1 argues that strategic rural planning is dominated by a New Public Management approach. It is also worth noting that the citizens role and their possibility to come with input to the political-administrative system varies quite a lot. In a Classical Political Administrative system the citizens main possibility to influence the system is through regular voting and elections 1.2. In a New Public Management System the citizens mainly function as customers in quasi-markets 1.2. In a New Public Governance System the role of the citizens is significantly different. The core idea is that the civic society should be included and having an active role in all of the processes in the political-administrative system 1.2. Based on this New Public Governance seems to be the political-administrative system that has the greatest potential of incorporating collaboration and communicative planning ideals presented in 1.2 and 1.4 as means to encountering shrinkage - as presented in the following figure.
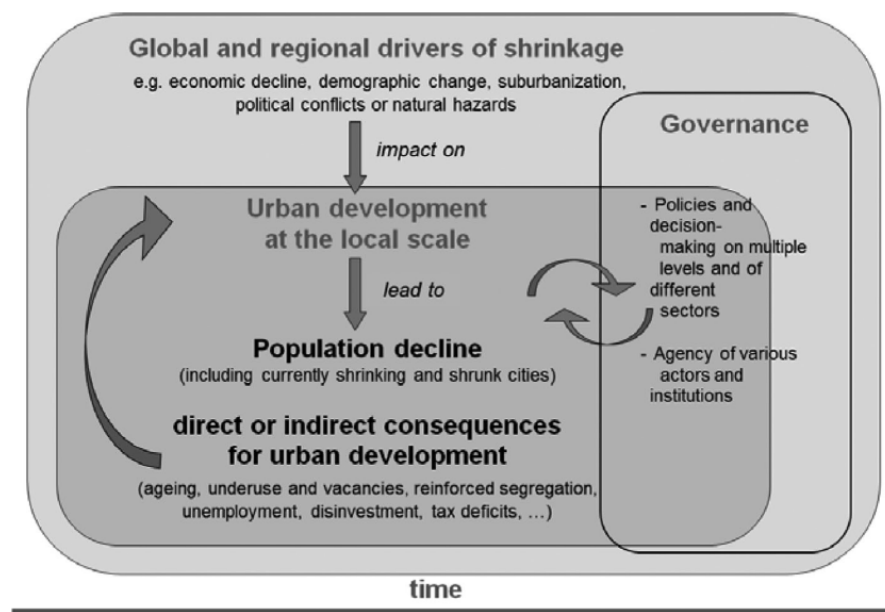

Figure 1.5: The relationship between shrinkage and governance (Haase et al. 2014).

Figure 1.5 shows the relationships between the different aspects of shrinkage in relation to governance. It closely resembles the structure of the report so far: the first step was to identify and address the challenges rural districts are faced with, which led to looking

into the legal framework for planning and then a deeper review of problems inherent with shrinkage - the results of which are largely illustrated in the dark grey box. The smaller governance box seems to indicate that there should be an exchange between urban development processes and governance processes when considering decision making in a context affected by shrinkage. The arrows going back and forth indicated that there should be an exchange between governance and urban development, so that they are both adjusted accordingly.

While this provides a theoretical understanding of how and why governance should be implemented and utilised when planning for shrinkage, it does little to provide practical context. As such the next section will look into what can be learned from a few successful examples of increased governance, and how a change in the political-administrative system can help drive these changes.

1.6   Practical examples of citizen-driven planning

In the following section, we will briefly review a number of practical experiences of citizen-driven innovation and how some of the ideas of 'New Public Governance' has been used in rural planning. The different cases showcase different approaches to how citizen-driven innovation can influence spatial planning and development and at the same time be a concrete answer to how the aforementioned theory of collaborative planning can be put into practice. It is important to point out that each case is context-dependent and therefore these cannot necessarily be directly transferred to practice elsewhere.

Maltfabrikken in Ebeltoft

For a number of years, the iconic factory plant 'Maltfabrikken' has been shut down after the malt chills were extinguished in 1998, but a group of local visionary and passionate citizens saved the buildings from demolition with the vision of creating a dynamic centre for creative business and culture. Today, 'Maltfabrikken' contains citizen service, library, office communities, youth club, workshops, public kitchen, venue and artist in residence, and it has become a public house for all citizens of Ebeltoft to use (Kristian Krog 2020). But if we look at the progress of 'Maltfabrikken', it is interesting to consider the realisation in planning practice.

It all starts back in 2007 when the structural reform meant that 271 municipalities became 98. The municipality of Ebeltoft became part of the new large Syddjurs Municipality, and thus the future planning had to be defined together with a number of citizens. Therefore Syddjurs Municipality, invited selected citizens to contribute to the planning with ideas and visions. In this process, a group of passionate citizens came together and developed the idea of renovating and transforming the old 'Maltfabrikken' (industrial building) into a cultural meeting place for Ebeltoft citizens. Their proposal was presented to the City Council without much success (Altinget 2018). In 2009, a majority in the Planning, Development and Culture Committee decided that the buildings should be demolished and the developer who owned the building could make a large urban centre - with underground parking,

shops in the middle and luxury apartments at the top. But the citizen group was given a deadline of one year to raise money to buy the buildings - otherwise the demolition work would begin (Aarhus Stiftidende 2009). They succeeded and in a year, the promoters and volunteers raised 21 million via public shares, local businesses and fundraising (Kristian Krog 2020).

The plans were pushed back in 2013, as it was decided from a political point of view that the library should be moved to 'Maltfabrikken', and thus the project would be given a new weight, and the collaboration with the Municipality would become a definite partnership. From there it went strong. With financial support from Syddjurs Municipality, a number of philanthropic foundations and through the sale of public shares, a total of DKK 150 million have been raised for the project (Kristian Krog 2020). In 2016 an international architectural competition was held and construction had been started. In 2019, Ebeltoft opened its doors to the Maltfabrikken - 4,400 m2 of renovated cultural factory and 17,000 m2 of outdoor space (Altinget 2018).

There is no doubt that the project is unique and it certainly is not possible in all places. The local business community played a major role in the project and in the fundraising of the initial DKK 21 million, and it is important to point out that not all rural areas have such resourceful citizens and a participating business community in urban development. In addition, it should be emphasised that Ebeltoft is geographically (natural environment see section 1.3) close to Denmark's second largest city and growth centre Aarhus, and we must not underestimate how it provides better conditions for fundraising - since many companies and citizens are linked to Aarhus in one way or another. This means that conditions are different from many rural areas experiencing skrinkage. But if we look at the approach, it is interesting how the collaboration between the Municipality and the citizen group helped to ensure the development of the spatial planning in Ebeltoft. The case shows a New Public Governance' approach, where a public institution and citizens complement each other. The citizens are more free to pursue the planning they want than the public administrators are, while the public administrators take on a supporting role. It is also an example of how the civil society can overcome the challenge of planning without the help of private interests (see section 1.3).

The Sønderborg model

In connection with the Municipal Reform back in 2007, the new Sønderborg Municipality with more than 74,000 inhabitants became a reality. The merging of municipalities really started the debate of the future of rural planning and the some of the city council politicians in the new municipality quickly agreed that it was necessary to secure the voice of the villagers in the new large municipality. The purpose was to create an organisation and structure that would ensure rural development and at the same time counterbalance the centralisation and the municipal political centre of power in Sønderborg city. This has resulted in citizen-driven development called the "Sønderborg Model", bringing together villagers, city council politicians and officials in a trinity to *"create vibrant villages with high quality of life and strong cohesion"* (Landdistrikternes Fællesråd n.d.).

Since 2007, the villages in the municipality of Sønderborg have been organised in village

guilds, which act as the village's external voice, as well as drawing up development plans for each village if they want or can. Today there are 36 village guilds in Sønderborg Municipality and four times a year, representatives from all village guilds meet in the voluntary 'Village Forum'. This organ consist of seven representatives from the municipality's Village Committee, four city council politicians, one person from the administration and a secretary. In the committee, the citizens can vote down politicians. Based on 12 focus areas, the Village Committee thus distributes money for development projects in dialogue with the village representatives and the municipal government. Parallel to assisting the village guilds' work in the 'Village Forum', the Municipality has established the Rural Secretariat, where four planners advise the village guilds on projects from their own development plans, provide funding for fundraising, cross-community collaboration, knowledge sharing, project management and help implementing the Municipality's 12 focus areas (Erhvervsstyrelsen 2018*b*) (Connie Mark Skovbjerg 2020).

This means that the Municipality of Sønderborg has set up a municipal secretariat (four employees) for rural areas that can support the voluntary civic groups. It has actually created a trust between the Municipality and the citizens and furthermore given the villagers the opportunity to develop their own local area. Based on that structure, they have succeeded in creating continuing projects that do not stop when persons with true commitment move or stop their engagement (Landdistrikternes Fællesråd n.d.) (Connie Mark Skovbjerg 2020).

At the same time, the development plans of the villages have created a common basis for the desires for development in the individual villages, which has meant that several projects are implemented because the villages now have one common voice in terms of the development of their place. The experience is that the plans have helped to create local ownership of rural development, strengthened the community and the cohesion of the villages. Through the collaboration with politicians and administration, the larger projects have been qualified and the success rate for projects that can be put into a larger strategic context has become a reality (Erhvervsstyrelsen 2018*b*) (Connie Mark Skovbjerg 2020).

The Sønderborg model has resulted in projects such as three village buses for hire as part of sustainable transport concepts, sharing bikes, renovation of a historic pump house, energy renovation and creation of green jobs, recurring village, nature and beach cleanup, support projects, food initiatives as part of a new food strategy, participation in a Danish/German rural development project and more. In the period 2016 - 2019, the City Council allocated DKK 500,000 to citizen initiatives from the village guilds (Erhvervsstyrelsen 2018*b*) (Connie Mark Skovbjerg 2020).

The case illustrates how 'new public governance' can be incorporated into the municipal planning system. The model is based on some clear principles of cooperation between the Municipality and village communities and communicative planning ideals such as deliberative power relations, co-determination and ownership among the citizens (see section 1.4). The Sønderborg model is an example of how it is possible to facilitate a systematised cooperation in which the private actors have the possibility to continuously come with new inputs to the Political Administrative System (see section 1.5). It is clear that the Municipality has prioritised the rural areas, which in addition to having secured the money for projects, has also employed four full-time employees to handle the interests

of the rural areas and help the citizens with their proposals. But those cities that either do not have the resources to make their own plans or projects themselves or cannot agree on what is going to happen to their city are left to themselves (Connie Mark Skovbjerg 2020). This means that Sønderborg Municipality is to some extent disclaiming the responsibility for the planning and development of the cities where the citizens cannot lift the task themselves. It questions the role of the municipality in citizen-driven innovation and in their approach inspired by new public governance.

'Life in town and school' in Jammerbugt Municipality

In Jammerbugt Municipality, the initiative 'life in town and school' has been initiated, which focuses on involving the local communities in rural development. The project started in 2014 and is a collaboration between the Municipality and nine local communities, whose schools were threatened with closure, where the local communities and schools are committing to take responsibility for local development while the municipal council does not initially close the schools (Jammerbugt Kommune n.d.). The political background for "Life in town and school" is the desire to ensure:

a) *Greater local engagement and decentralised school structure* (Jammerbugt Kommune 2017).
b) *Positive development in the local towns* (Jammerbugt Kommune 2017).
c) *Favourable population development* (Jammerbugt Kommune 2017).
d) *Sustainable schools* (Jammerbugt Kommune 2017).

In every community, a citizen group is set up to coordinate the cooperation locally and in relation to the Municipality. In the Municipality, a steering committee has also been set up consisting of the mayor, the municipal director, member of the Finance committee, the chairman of the villaege committee, the chairman of the Cultural committee, the chairman of the children's and School committee, the director of growth in Jammerbrugt and the head of planning (Jammerbugt Kommune n.d.).

The development work takes place locally in the groups set up by villages. During the year, the local groups will meet both individually with the municipal steering committee and in plenary meetings with all communities, where there is an opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas. The regular meetings between the Municipality and the citizen groups must partly give the Municipality a continuous insight into what initiatives and needs there are in the individual communities, and give the local communities advice on local initiatives (Jammerbugt Kommune 2020). This is a binding partnership between the Municipality and the citizens, which is based on a mix between bottom-up and top-down managed planning.

If we take a look at the effects, it turns out that the schools and local communities have succeeded in maintaining a stable number of pupils in relation to the expected forecast. Furthermore, each community has prepared their own development plans where they have succeeded in mobilising a lot of citizens in rural development (Jammerbugt Kommune 2017). In the village of Trekroner, 'life in town and school' has resulted in the nationwide concept of 'village on trial', which is about local communities refurbishing old houses for trial homes

(3 months), and thereby trying to create increased settlement. According to the initiators, they have succeeded in stopping the negative population growth and although there is not exactly population growth, it is still a step in the right direction (Homeprisen 2018). In 2018, DKK 50,000 was allocated to each of the participating communities(Jammerbugt Kommune n.d.).

The case is an example of how they have succeeded in creating "arenas" for empowered participation" and where citizens have been invited into the political system in which decisions are made (see section 1.5). The Municipality supports local initiatives financially, provides professional advice and promises not to close schools, while citizens participate in planning and come up with initiatives that support development with increased settlement. The cooperation is thus in focus, but on the basis of some commitments, which almost compel both partners to work together on urban development. There is thus a clear division of roles between the Municipality and the citizens. However, the focus is still very much on growth, which clashes with shrinkage theory (see section 1.2). In addition, we can ask whether it is a realistic basis to work on, but at the very least the essence of supporting citizen-driven innovation along the way is particularly relevant. In other words, civil society has been enabled to take part in planning (see section 1.3).

Research question 2

By first looking at the general tendencies in rural districts it was established that those areas or villages without a close connection to a major city are experiencing a variety of problems: services such as schools and local shops are closing, there is a lack of urban development, empty houses make the areas unattractive, jobs are migrating away, and the demographic is changing due to a decline in population and ageing. These serious problems threaten certain rural and smaller cities, and therefore the subject has also been given a great political focus. In 2017, the Planning Legislation was modernised, and here it was emphasised that the growth-first principle should ensure rural development and the welfare state's values such as equal development throughout Denmark. The idea that growth must be the starting point for rural development is argued to arise from neoliberalism, which in recent decades has been a dominant political ideology in Danish strategic spatial planning.

The lack of urban development is further problematised by its emphasis in many plans and strategic approaches; when faced with these challenges municipalities seem to focus on creating, or re-creating, growth by taking a business-as-usual approach to designating new areas for urban development regardless of market interest or lack thereof. Exactly that focus in planning can be related to the belief inherent in neoliberalism that the private market is self-regulating and always finds the best and most effective solution. This is done in particular by outsourcing part of the planning to the private market as we know it from New Public Management. But the problem is that the private sector is largely disinterested in developing these rural areas facing general decline - a state for which the term "shrinkage" has been coined as a way of describing the shrinking nature of these cities.

It is argued that shrinkage is a new planning paradigm which many municipalities fail to properly engage with. Four different approaches are presented as ways of dealing with shrinkage: trivialising, countering, accepting, and utilising. Trivialising shrinkage means not acknowledging the reality of it, countering it is trying to go back to a state of growth, accepting it means acknowledging it and trying to mitigate its effects, while utilising it means trying to take advantage of it by looking for opportunities presented by this new situation.

Common for most literature regarding shrinkage and the challenges that cities and municipalities are faced with is that they need to readjust their planning process to be more focused on civil society and what role the citizens can play in the future development. Instead of chasing unattainable growth, municipalities must realise their position with shrinkage and look at other opportunities for development. If we relate it to the actors and mechanisms we have in play in planning, then community development is based on

5 pillars; the education system, the economic system (the private market), the natural environment, the public system and the political system. When the private sector fails and the public sector is under constant economic and logistical stress by the declining population, only the third sector, civil society, continues to carry out the task of creating strategies for new development, while the addition of the natural environment provides an additional perspective of the local context as a knowledge-producing and -sharing actor.

One of the main arguments is the need to give the civil sector more responsibility in the planning - this is not an entirely new concept as it has been covered by both communicative and collaborative planning before. The novel part comes from the fact that the shrinkage literature stresses the inclusion of the civil society as a necessity for the continued existence of rural communities as the challenges they are faced with are not being handled adequately by market mechanisms. It was found that ownership is a crucial part in engaging citizens and encouraging them to take control over the planning process. As such it seems appropriate to consider these suggestions made in the shrinkage literature in the light of experiences made in planning theories and practices. The idea is then that these types of planning have previously failed to become dominant in the current politically administrative system, which is why suggestions are made to shift away from New Public Management and towards New Public Governance; a system that better encompasses and encourages public participation and is structured around the empowerment of citizens.

For practical examples, of communicative planning with citizen collaboration as the main focus, the approaches of Syddjurs, Jammerbugt and Sønderborg municipalities were briefly examined. Common to all three examples is that citizens are at the centre of the planning effort and that the municipalities all approach public participation with a goal of empowering citizens to control the development of their villages. Additionally they are also based on clear frameworks of participation and committing partnerships between the public and civil sector.

Based on these findings the following research question is established:
How can a municipality transform their governance approach related to the strategic planning of rural communities, in order to better cope with, or even utilise a state of shrinkage?

This research questions is then further divided into three sub-questions:

- What defines Vesthimmerlands Municipality's current approach to governance (and institutions) and do they actively consider shrinkage when planning/developing the municipality?
- How are institutions framed and developed in relation to governance and planning for shrinkage?
- What do rural areas stand to benefit from new public governance (based on principles of collaboration, partnerships and ownership) and how can it be implemented?

Vesthimmerlands Municipality 3

In 2007, Vesthimmerlands Municipality was established, after the municipal reform merged the four former municipalities Aars, Løgstør, Farsø and Aalestrup. Vesthimmerlands Municipality is located in northwestern Jutland and part of the Region of Northern Jutland. Today, there are 36,727 citizens living in the municipality, and Aars is the main city with 8,862 inhabitants (Danmarks Statistik FOLK1A 2020). Vesthimmerlands Municipality covers an area of 768.14 square kilometres, see map on Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Own illustration of Vesthimmerlands Municipality

3.1 Recent development

In a survey from Danmarks Statistik - over the development of population growth in municipalities' cities and rural areas with up to 2000 people - it turns out that from 2010 to 2019, there has been a population decline of 5.0 percent to 9.9 percent in Vesthimmerlands Municipality (Danmarks Statistik 2019). If we take a look at the entire municipality, there has been a 4.0 percent population decline in the period 2008 to 2020 (Danmarks Statistik FOLK1A 2020).
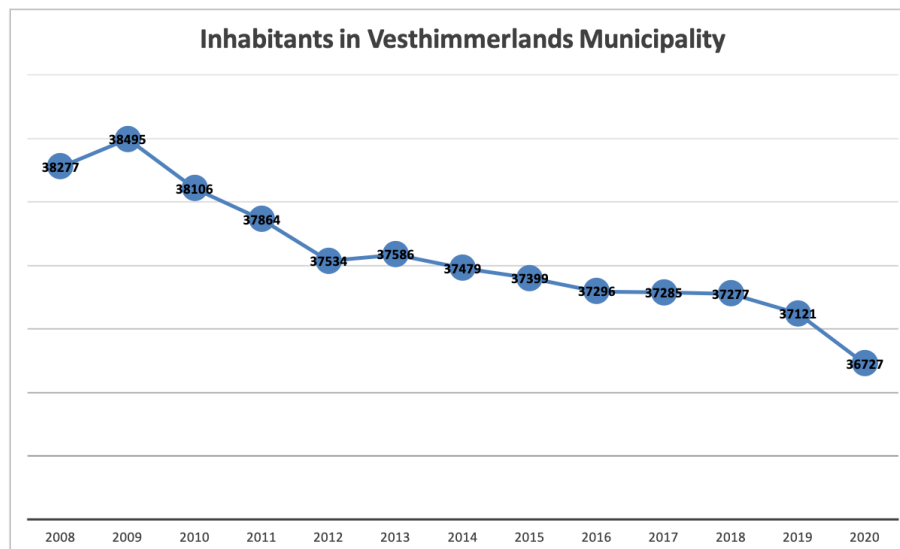
Figure 3.2: Graph of population in Vesthimmerlands Municipality from 2008 to 2020 (Danmarks Statistik FOLK1A 2020).

As shown in Figure 3.2, there were 38,277 citizens in Vesthimmerlands Municipality in 2008 against 36,727 citizens today. This means that since the merging of Danish municipalities back in 2007 there has been a decline in the municipality overall. Looking at the development internally in the municipality, it is interesting to consider how there has been a gradual urbanisation to the larger cities, in particular the municipality's largest city, Aars, has increased its population from 7,979 inhabitants in 2005 to 8,862 inhabitants in 2019, an increase of 11.1 percent (see figure 3.3). In Aalestrup, there is a fairly stable development from 2,796 inhabitants in 2005 to 2,927 inhabitants in 2019, an increase of 4.6 percent. A similar trend is happening for Farsø, where the population has increased from 3,977 inhabitants in 2006 to 4,119 inhabitants in 2019, an increase of 3.6 percent(Danmarks Statistik SOGN10 2020). On the other hand, if we look at Løgstør, the city has seen a decline from 4,067 inhabitants in 2005 to 3,660 inhabitants in 2019, i.e. a decrease of 10.0 percent (Danmarks Statistik SOGN10 2020).

Despite that Vesthimmerlands Municipality is experiencing a decline in population throughout the municipality, 3 of the 4 largest cities in the municipality are actually experiencing an increase in population, and therefore it can be assumed that rural areas and villages in particular are experiencing a negative development with shrinkage (Nordjyske 2018). As mentioned earlier in chapter 1, it was clarified that the population decline leads to a negative development where the attractiveness of the areas is diminished; a declining population of the villages in Vesthimmerlands Municipality means a decline in the supply of public and private services, resulting in a deterioration in quality of life and living conditions (see chapters 1 and 1.2).
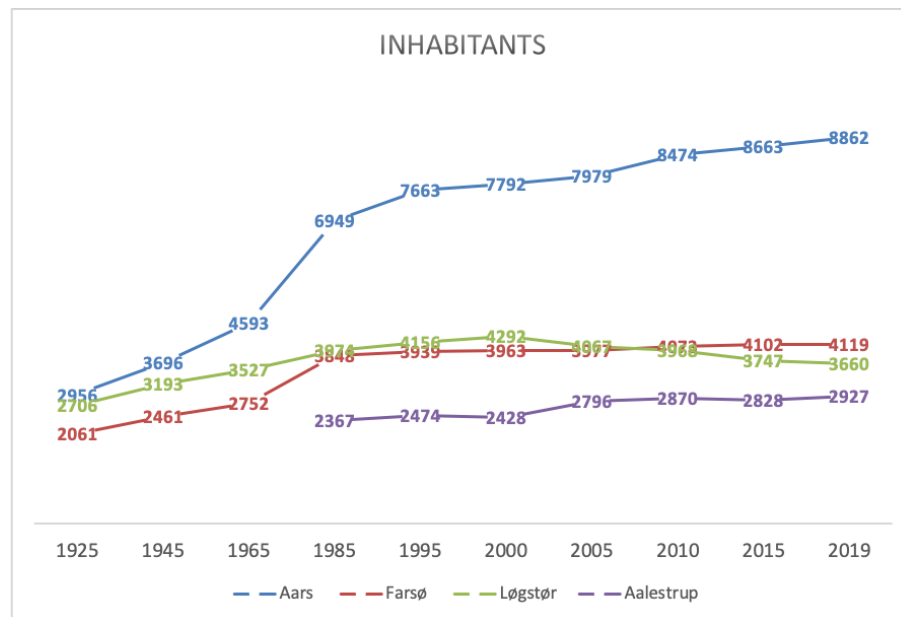
Figure 3.3: Graph of population in the four largest cities in the municipality (Danmarks Statistik SOGN10 2020).

If we then look at the residents who live in the municipality, it is also interesting to look at how there has been a shift in the age distribution and the average age. Figure 3.4 shows how there has been a relatively significant change in the age distribution in the municipality of Vesthimmerlands. There has been a clear shift as there were more people aged 0-49 in 2008 than in 2020, while more aged 50-109 in 2020 than there was back in 2008 (see figure 3.4). If we compare it to the rest of the country there are some relevant considerations. Between the ages of 50-109, there are more in 2020 than in 2008, both in the entire country and in the municipality of Vesthimmerland. In the 20-29 age group there are significantly more nationwide in 2020 compared to 2008, while in the same age group there is a significant decline in Vesthimmerlands Municipality (see figures 3.4 and 3.5). The age groups 10-19 years and 40-49 are largely unchanged at national level from 2008 to 2020, whereas in the same age groups Vesthimmerlands Municipality is experiencing a decline (see figures 3.4 and 3.5). A survey of the population structure 2016-2020 made by VIVE shows that in Vesthimmerlands Municipality, there has been a decrease in the age group 0-64 years of 15.4 percent, while there has been an increase in the age group of 65 years or over of 17.2 percent (VIVE 2020). Last, the average age has increased from 40.6 years in 2005 to 44.5 in 2020 in Vesthimmerlands Municipality, which is higher compared to the rest of the country where the development has gone from 39.7 years in 2005 to 41.8 in 2020 (see figure 3.6).
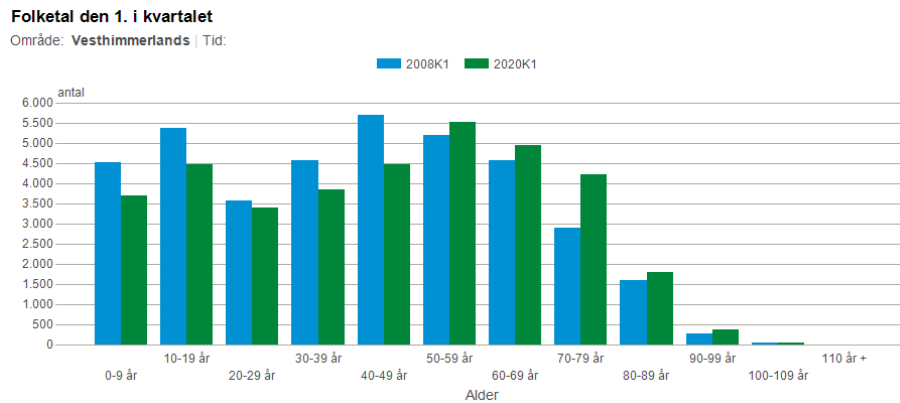
Figure 3.4: Graph of the development in age distribution in Vesthimmerlands Municipality in 2008 and 2020 (Danmarks Statistik FOLK1A 2020).
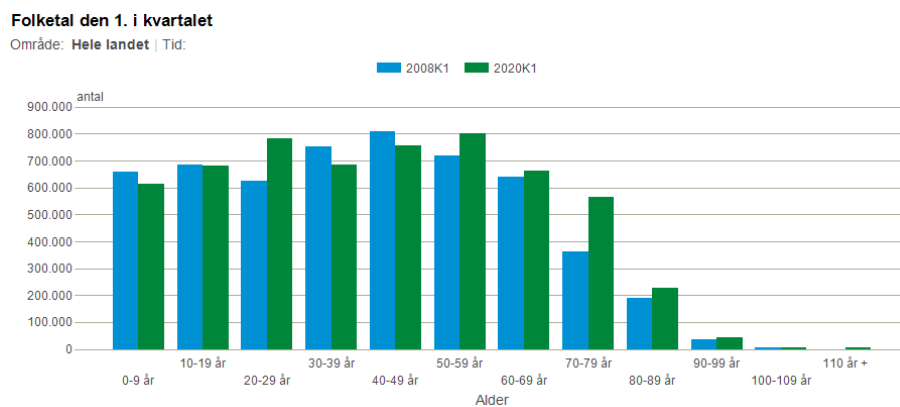
Figure 3.5: Graph of trends in age distribution across the country from 2008 to 2020 (Danmarks Statistik FOLK1A 2020).

There is no doubt that there is a clear trend towards a slightly more ageing population - both nationally and in Vesthimmerlands Municipality. However, there are significantly more elderly and fewer young people in the Vesthimmerlands Municipality in 2020 compared to 2008 - a development that does not correspond to the national average, and this development has some negative consequences. The ageing population means fewer people paying money in taxes to the municipality, and greater expenses for the elderly, which is a major financial challenge for the municipality (Center for landdistriktsforskning 2015).
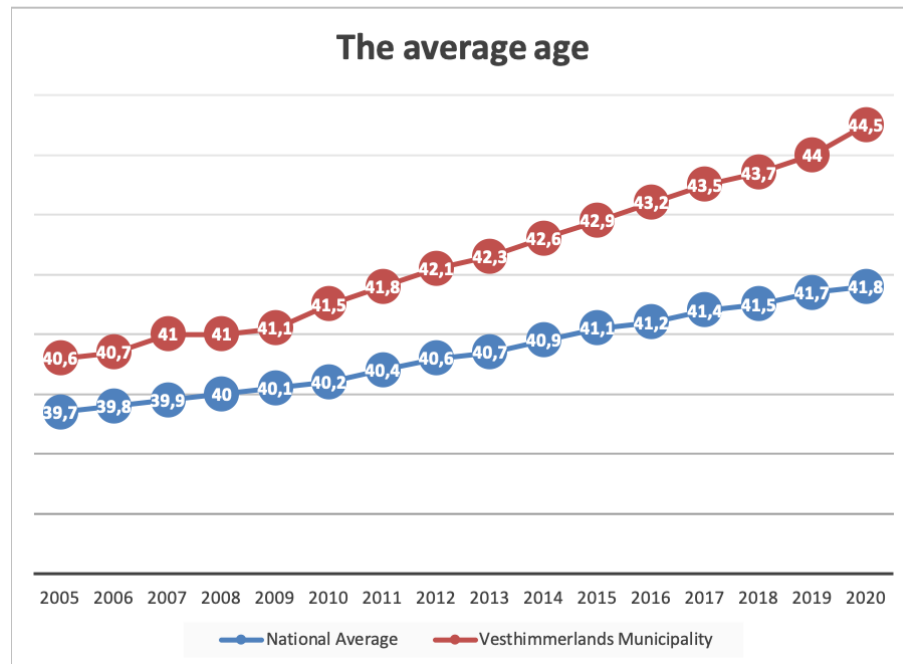
Figure 3.6: Graph of the average age in Vesthimmerlands Municipality and on the national level (Danmarks Statistik GALDER 2020).

The economic challenge and the decline in population may be the reason why Vesthimmerlands Municipality spends less money on urban development, houses and the environment per year per inhabitant in 2020 than they did back in 2007. In the figure 3.8, Vesthimmerlands Municipality spends DKK 343 on urban development, houses and the environment per year per inhabitant in 2020 against the DKK 869 they spent per year per inhabitant back in 2007. This is more than half the budget from 2007, and compared to national average where you spend almost two-thirds as much money - namely DKK 979 per inhabitant. In fact, Vesthimmerlands Municipality is in the top 5 out of 98 municipalities in Denmark that spend the least money on urban development, houses and the environment (Social- og Indenrigsministeriet 2018). It must be assumed that the less money the municipality spends on urban development provides poorer conditions for the physical development of their cities including urban renewal projects and urban beautification that can raise the attractiveness of the municipals citizens. However, it is important to add that it is probably a picture that the municipality is under pressure financially, rather than the municipality not prioritising planning.
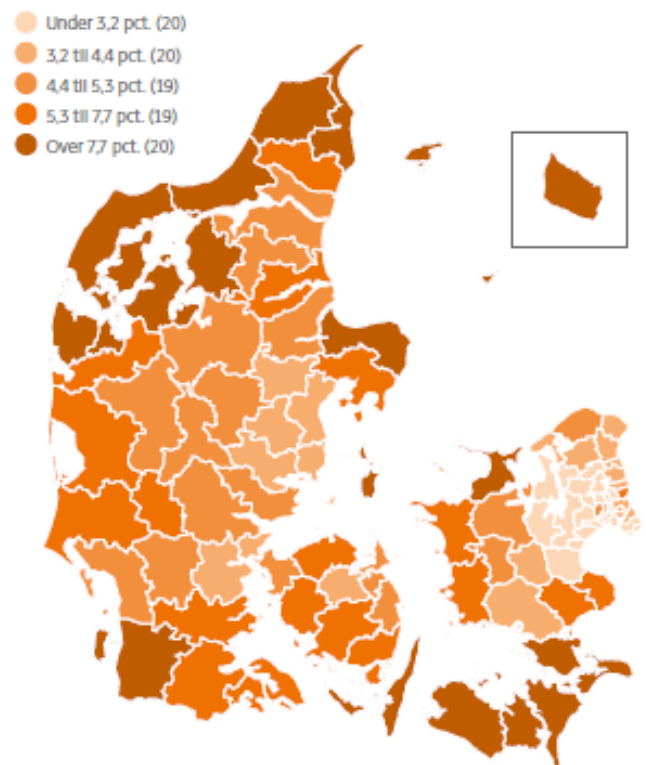
Figure 3.7: Figure of uninhabited residences (Social- og Indenrigsministeriet 2018).

Regarding residences, Vesthimmerlands Municipality is also at the top of the municipalities in Denmark with the most uninhabited residences (see figure 3.7). In 2019, the number of uninhabited residence was 1,780, which represents 9.3 percent of the total housing stock in the municipality (Ejendomswatch 2020). In 2017 a survey by KORA shows that there are between 3,000-5,000 demolition-ready housing in Vesthimmerlands Municipality, which also includes houses where people live and houses that are used for other purposes, for example leisure and cultural purposes in the parish (Ejendomswatch 2020). In Vesthimmerlands Municipality, there is the so-called demolition pool, where financial resources have been allocated for demolition-ready properties. The land that remains after the demolition of property and which the owner is willing to make available can be used to beautify the individual village communities. However, the Municipality has no specific strategy or political direction for the demolition yet (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2020*b*). Besides the fact that the empty houses are obviously a result of people moving away, it also makes the villages appear unattractive. In a study by Bolius, it shows that demolitions of empty houses reduce the risk that property speculators buy the empty houses cheaply and rent them out to vulnerable citizens, which can be an economically costly affair for the already challenged municipalities. It also turns out that local citizens welcome the demolition of the dilapidated housing even though there is no evidence that their house prices are rising (Videncentret Bolius 2019). This means that the uninhabited houses actually influence the local citizens negatively.
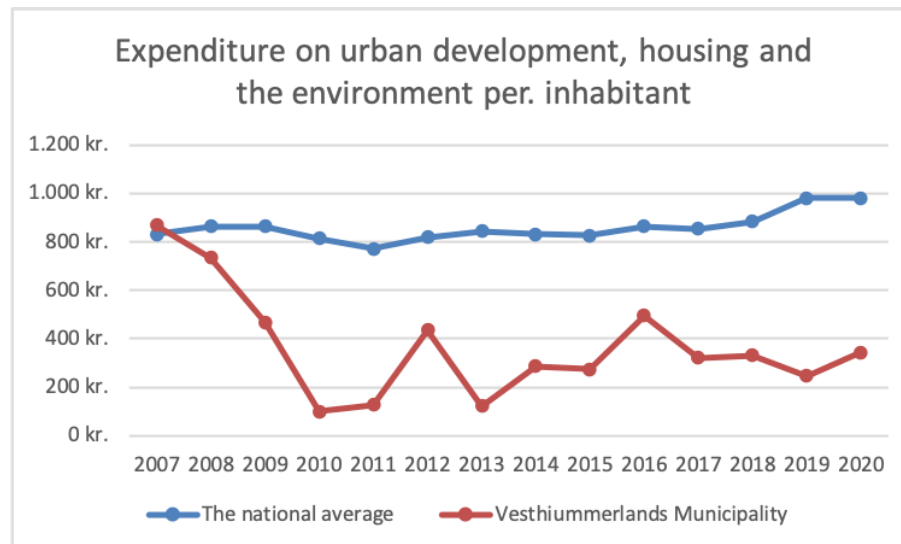
Figure 3.8: Graph of money allocated for urban development, housing and the environment (Social- og Indenrigsministeriet 2018)

If we look at the level of services in Vesthimmerlands Municipality it is declining - both in relation to public and private services. Since the municipal reform back in 2007, the number of schools has dropped from 19 schools in 2007 to 13 schools in 2019 (see figure 3.9). The falling number of schools is a good picture of how schools have had to close in the municipality, as there are fewer and fewer children in the municipality what we also see in the figure 3.4. In 2018/19 had a total student population of 3,233 students. In an estimate compiled by the Children and Family Comittee in Vesthimmerlands Municipality that figure will have fallen to 2,851 students in the school year 2025/26 - a decrease of 382 students. Furthermore, Ranum school, Gedsted school and Ullits school in 2025/26 will each have a student number of less than 80 pupils, which may mean that they might have to close (Lokaltindblik.dk 2019). As mentioned earlier in section 1, the closure of schools can contribute to a negative development in the local area. Center for Landdistriktsforskning points out that the closure of schools is one of the reasons why people move out of the area (Svendsen & Sørensen 2016). In a survey made by Teknologisk Institut it also appears that school in rural areas constitute an important meeting point for the local community which links the area socially in several ways. Closing local schools results in fewer local events, a decline in the association life and that the area's children and parents do not have a common meeting place. Furthermore the same survey states that the school also attaches great importance to the cultural identity of an area, which means a lot to the inhabitants in the city (Teknologisk institut 2008). In other words, school closures contribute to a negative development for the entire local area.

In a survey conducted by the Dansk Erhverv, there has been a decrease in the number of stores in Vesthimmerlands Municipality by 20,6 percent from 2008 to 2016. If we compare it to the national level, an average of 10 percent of physical stores are closed in the period 2008-2016, which means that there are twice as many stores closed in Vesthimmerlands Municipality than nationally, and in fact this means that every fifth store is now empty in the cityscape (TV2 Nord and TV2 Midtvest 2018). When a village's stores close it can make the village seem less attractive to live in. One of the criteria when people looking for

a new house is that a city must have a reasonable selection of stores (Fyens stiftidende 2017). In addition, studies show that retail store closures also mean house prices are falling and people are having a hard time getting their houses sold (TV2 Nord 2014). This means that not only is it harder to attract new residents, but also that the current residents in these areas may experience some negative financial consequences.
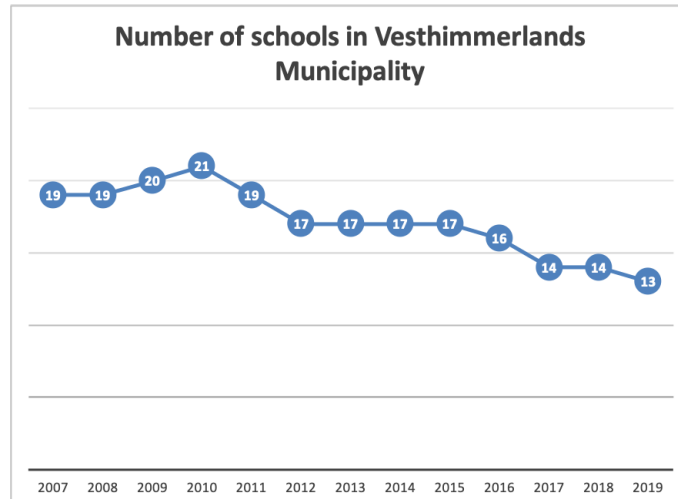
Figure 3.9: Graph of the number of schools in Vesthimmerlands Municipality from 2007 to 2019 (Social- og Indenrigsministeriet 2018).

It has now been clarified how Vesthimmerlands Municipality is experiencing a decline in a number of areas. There has been a population decline since the municipal reform in 2007 throughout the municipality while a growing urbanisation within the municipal boundary occurs - except for Løgstør, the larger cities of Aars, Farsø and Aalestrup are experiencing population growth. The population decline has started a negative spiral for Vesthimmerlands Municipality's development; population decline causes public and private services (such as schools and shops) to close, and when public and private services close it is difficult to attract new citizens because it is difficult to meet people's needs. This means that if the current development continues, these villages risk more or less of dying out. Within the municipality, the population composition has become more ageing, which means that today there are more people over 65 and fewer people under compared to 10-15 years ago. Basically, it means less tax revenues and greater expenses for the elderly, which is a financial challenge to maintain the service levels inside the municipality. In general, Vesthimmerlands Municipality has many empty and demolition-ready houses, school closures and many empty shops, which indicates that in certain areas of the municipality appear very unattractive. The unattractiveness and lack of services leads to lower quality of life and living conditions for the citizens of the municipality. The challenges are an indication that the municipality is dealing with the concept of shrinkage (see section 1.2). Therefore, it is now relevant to take a closer look at some of the towns/rural areas in the municipality that are experiencing some of the aforementioned tendencies.

3.2   Sub-units within the case

As previously described, rural areas and villages in particular are experiencing a state of shrinkage, which is why it is necessary to further investigate these villages. In the selection, emphasis has been put on the villages that experience shrinkage and have recently had some citizen involvement processes through urban renewal projects.

3.2.1   Løgstør

In Løgstør, there are currently 3,660 inhabitants, which means it is the third largest city in Vesthimmerlands Municipality. From 1970 until the municipal reform (2007), Løgstør Municipality existed, but since 2007 Løgstør has belonged to Vesthimmerlands Municipality together with Aars, Farsø and Aalestrup. Løgstør is located in the northern part of Vesthimemrlands Municipality towards the Limfjord (see figure 3.1). Løgstør is a very old town, dating back to the 16th century as a small fishing village near the Limfjord. Over time, the city has evolved into both a settlement and industrial city with several companies (Trap Danmark 2017).

In recent years, Løgstør has been very successful in marketing the city as a seaside town and has grown as a tourist town (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2018). In particular, the Limfjord Museum, which opened in 1964, dealing with the Limfjord's maritime cultural history, attracted 92,402 visitors in 2019 (TV2 Nord 2019). In addition to the tourism industries, several major companies are headquartered in the city. These include, among others, Jeld Wen, manufacturer of doors and windows with over 500 employees (TV2 Lorry n.d.*c*), Logstor, which deals with district heating solutions with between 320-330 employees (Metal Supply 2016) and Probeco who develops and manufactures office supplies with 70 employees (Probeco 2020). In Løgstør there is also a school with 381 pupils, and there is an expectation that this figure will fall to 319 pupils in 2025, and thus a decline of 16.3 percent. If we look at the population of figure 3.10, there has been a significant decline in population in recent years since the year 2000. Back in 2000 there were 4,292 compared to today where 3,660 citizens live in Løgstør, which is a decrease of 14.7 percent (Danmarks Statistik SOGN10 2020).
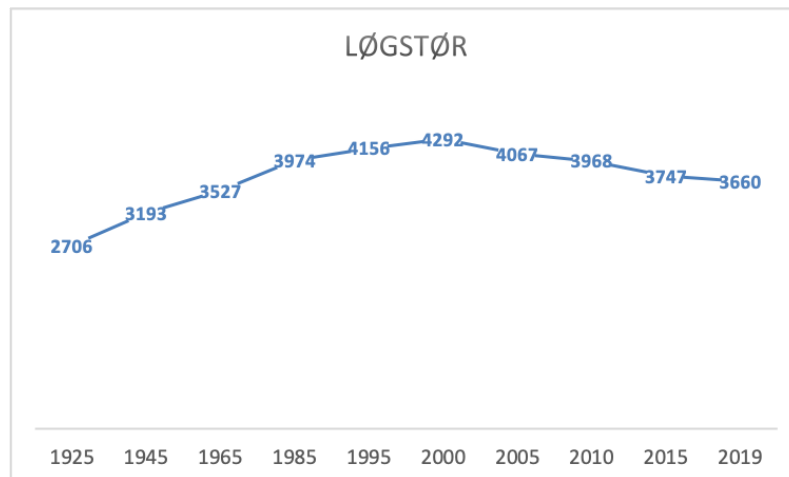
Figure 3.10: Graph of developments in the population of Løgstør (Danmarks Statistik SOGN10 2020)

In 2018, Vesthimmerlands Municipality, in collaboration with the consultancy firm COWI, is preparing a new development plan for Løgstør town. The development plan for Løgstør is a kind of handbook for politicians. It contains 40 proposals for the development of the city, which the politicians can try to realise as economics do (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2018). In connection with the plan, a traditional citizen meeting was held before the plan was made with the opportunity to come up with ideas, and a consultation period after the development plan was made with the opportunity to comment on the content of the plan (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2018*c*). More than 250 citizens attended the civic meetings, which was considerably more than expected (Vesthimmerlands Folkeblad 2018).

3.2.2   Ranum

In Ranum, there are 1,267 inhabitants and is the fifth largest city in Vesthimmerlands Municipality. Ranum is located in the western part of Himmerland 24 km from Aars, 9 km from Løgstør and 19 km from Farsø. Ranum is situated in scenic surroundings, with the Limfjord a few kilometers to the west, and with Vilsted Lake east of the city (see figure 3.1). Ranum has 3 large workplaces; The Salling Plast pipe factory with over 100 employees as well as Ranum Efterskole and an asylum centre. Ranum Efterskole is one of the country's largest high schools with 425 pupils and approximately 75 employees and the asylum centre has 325 residents and approximately 45 employees (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2016).

In addition, as mentioned earlier, there is a local school, Ranum School, with 113 pupils, which has been threatened with closure several times, as the number of pupils is too low (Lokaltindblik.dk 2019). In Ranum there is a single well functioning supermarket, 1 gas station, 2 car repair shops/dealers, 2 pubs, Ranum Inn, recycling shops, a doctor, and a dentist. In the years 1848-1987, Ranum was also home to an educational institution for teachers which had about 400-600 students. For many years, Ranum has experienced a decline in the number of inhabitants: back in 1965 there were 2,020 inhabitants, in 2000 that number was 1,648 inhabitants and in 2019 there were 1,267 inhabitants (see figure

3.11). This means a significant decrease in the population by 37.3 percent between 1965 and 2019 (Danmarks Statistik SOGN10 2020).
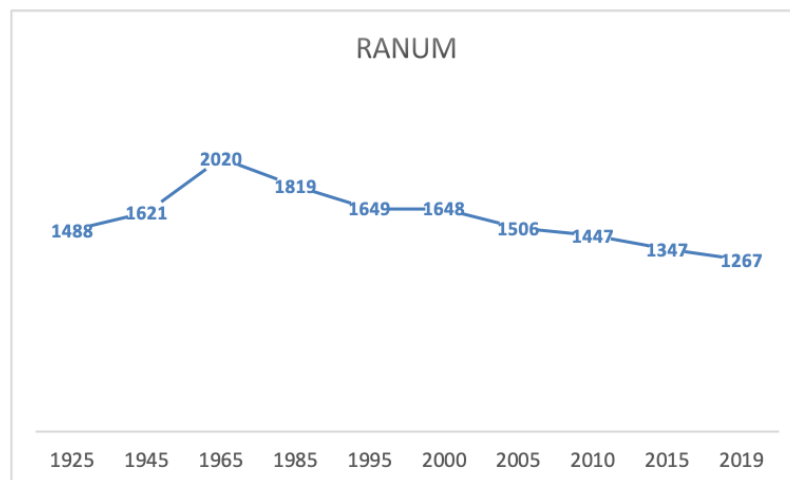
Figure 3.11: Graph of developments in the population of Ranum (Danmarks Statistik SOGN10 2020)

In 2016, a longer process started with an urban renewal project involving the citizens of the city. The project included the establishment of new path systems, beautification of the main street, and the creation of a new community house (Lokaltindblik.dk 2019). Two citizen meetings were held in connection with the project - an idea workshop and a project workshop. About 200 citizens from Ranum attended the two civic meetings. There was discussion about everything from the front gardens, demolition of empty buildings, the establishment of rolling paths and adventure paths, city gates, cleaning of the lake and streams, road bumps, parking conditions and community houses (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2016).

Figure 3.12: Own picture of a square in Ranum Centre

3.2.3 Gedsted

In Gedsted there are currently 1,050 inhabitants which makes it the municipality's seventh largest city. Gedsted is located in the southern part of Vesthimmerlands Municipality and is close to Limfjorden (see figure 3.1). In Gedsted there are about 30 companies (Gedsted Beboer- og erhvervsforening 2020). The largest companies in the city are the worldwide furniture manufacturer Getama, which has between 20-49 employees (TV2 Lorry n.d.*b*), Trend Snedkeri employing 30 employees (TREND n.d.) and Gedsted Mejeriet with between 10-19 employees (TV2 Lorry n.d.*a*). In Gedsted, there is a small retail life that contains a hairdressing salon, a pub, a supermarket, flower shop, a pizzaria, petrol tanks and a cafe and shop selling local produce (Gedsted Beboer- og erhvervsforening 2020). Furthermore, there is the Citizens' House, which contains a number of activities for the citizens, a daycare, a retirement home and a school with 85 pupils (Lokaltindblik.dk 2019). As previously described, there is a prospect of a lower number of pupils in the coming years, and it is therefore being considered whether the school should close. Gedsted has for some years experienced shrinkage, and as shown in the figure 3.13, there has been a population decline. In 2000, 1,198 citizens lived in the city, and in 2019 that number was down to 1,050, which means a decrease by 12.4 percent (Danmarks Statistik SOGN10 2020).
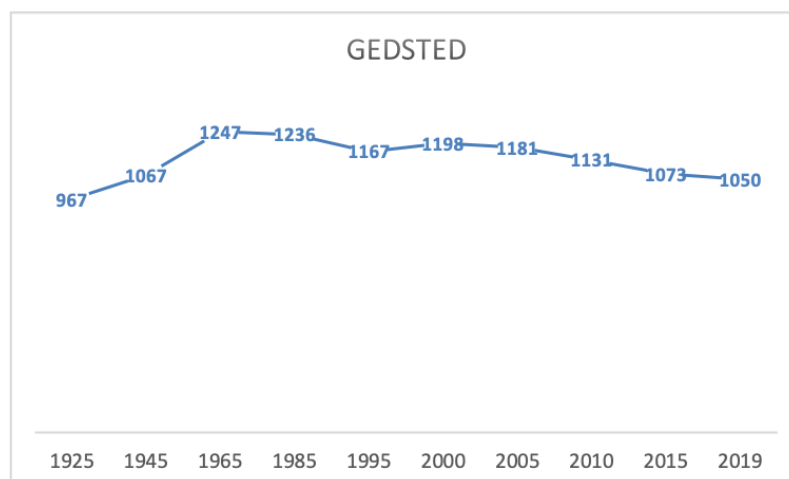
Figure 3.13: Graph of developments in the population of Gedsted (Danmarks Statistik SOGN10 2020)

The citizens of Gedsted have themselves wanted changes and improvements in the city. Back in 2016, a citizen meeting was held at Gedsted school, with about 100 people attending and discussing a future area renewal program in the city. At the citizen meeting there were many suggestions and ideas for improving Gedsted and 16 citizens divided into two working groups signed up to participate in the further work with elaborating on ideas and designing programs (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2017*b*). The process has resulted in the City Council now approving funding for 6 projects in the city most recently completed in 2021 (Farsø Avis 2017).

Methodology 4

4.1 Theoretical framework

The purpose of this chapter is to showcase the theories applied to answer the main research question, but also clarify what assumptions guide the use of certain terms and how theories are understood in this particular context. In this way the framework functions as a tool for both understanding and analysing the collected data. It is based on theories of critical realism, interactive governance, and institutional theory. Their individual uses and how they are connected will be made clear in each section.

4.1.1 Critical realism

In this section the main theoretical biases and assumptions inherent to the report will be highlighted. Critical realism is used as the main scientific theory because of its unique perspective that combines the existence of a real intransitive world with a transitive dimension of knowledge that is subject to interpretation (Danermark et al. 2002).

To clarify, the intransitive world refers to a physical reality understood to be composed of three distinct domains: the empirical, which encompasses immediate and personal experiences; the actual, which is more abstract and details all events, even those that are not observed or experienced by anybody; and the real, dealing with underlying structures and generative mechanisms. The purpose of this abstraction and subdivision of reality is to formulate an ontological foundation for researching *why* something happens. The three domains and their characteristics are shown in Table 4.1:

Domain	Contents
The empirical	Experiences and observations
The actual	Events and phenomena (whether they are experienced or not)
The real	Structures, mechanisms, causal potentials and inclinations

Table 4.1: The three ontological domains of critical realism (Buch-Hansen & Nielsen 2005, :25 (own translation)).

The transitive domain of knowledge is then the understanding that knowledge changes as experiences build up and research proves or disproves theories, and perhaps most importantly that the understanding of the world does not itself change the world (Danermark et al. 2002) - the most commonly provided example is that of the Earth

being flat: even if everybody on the planet were convinced that it was in fact flat, it would not change the reality (hence why it is called intransitive) of the Earth being spherical.

The final defining part of critical realism is that it provides a view of the world as consisting of several hierarchically organised strata. Each strata adds something new by providing its own unique way of perceiving and understanding reality and as such cannot be reduced to the strata below. This is often exemplified by the four strata of physics, chemistry, biology, and sociology - layered in an ascending order the idea is that what happens on for example a sociological strata cannot be reduced to simply biology. Something new emerges when considering social interactions as existing on a strata different from biology, but ultimately relies on biology as an underlying strata. In other words higher strata rely on the ones beneath them, but cannot be reduced to them.
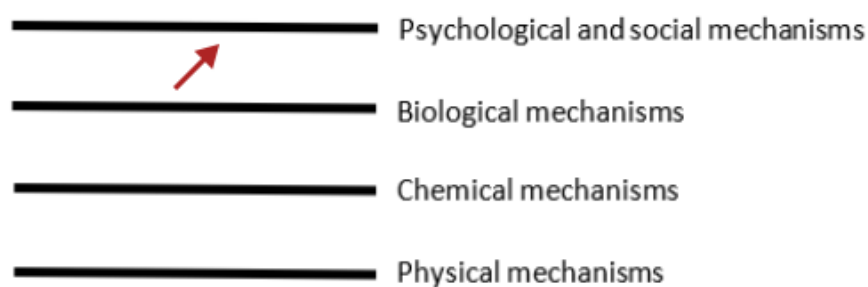
Figure 4.1: Own illustration of the exemplified strata. The red arrow has been added to symbolise the movement from one strata to the next.

While Figure 4.1 shows the four strata from the prior example, there are potentially infinite strata to be examined and it is this that makes it especially interesting in terms of both understanding and answering the research question. One of the main points of the literature review (see chapter 2 on page 27) is that planning under a paradigm of shrinkage is different (and essentially non-reducible) to current planning practices. If they are then construed as different strata then the idea is that 'planning under shrinkage' exists on a higher level than 'current planning practices', which means research can be directed at what causes these differences (generative mechanisms). But also that planning currently fails to sufficiently engage with shrinkage in rural areas because it is not seen as something distinct to plan for - effectively reducing a higher strata to a lower one.

Critical realism then provides the first step in answering the the research question as its main goal is to reach an understanding of how a municipality can transform their governance in order to better address a paradigm of shrinkage. The three different ontological domains as seen in Table 4.1 all make for different approaches to researching this questions: 'the empirical' sets up a need to seek out actors who are in someway engaged with the problem at hand, as their firsthand experiences will form an understanding of what is currently happening and how planning is being approached; 'the actual' implies a need to look into the processes currently taking place in the planning of Vesthimmerlands Municipality and how governance and shrinkage are regarded in strategies and plans; lastly, the process of transformation can be said to be in the domain of 'the real' as it relies on changing structures and understanding generative mechanisms.

The next step is create an understanding of how shrinkage can be analysed, by first briefly assessing the different methods applied in the literature that was reviewed in chapter 1.2 on page 6.

4.1.2   Analysing shrinkage

At its most basic the purpose of this framework is to provide some insight into which of the four different policy approaches mentioned in chapter 1.2 on page 6 is applied in the context of the chosen case. Delving further into the methods we find that both Stryjakiewicz & Jaroszewska (2016) and Rumpel et al. (2013) advice looking into urban governance. The former finds it important as urban governance is a deciding factor in what they refer to as the 'efficiency' of the policies adapted. The latter take a different approach where they define the following three central dimensions for their analysis: actors, structural conditions, and normative frameworks.

To elaborate on this Rumpel et al. (2013) argue that in order to understand how a city plans for shrinkage it is necessary to establish which actors gain influence in the planning process and what their goals for planning are. Likewise it is necessary to establish the structural conditions guiding the planning, meaning the *"[...] funding, know-how, legal powers or professional personnel."* (Rumpel et al. 2013, :114) as well as the norms guiding the involved actors.

Rink et al. (2014) also focuses on governance, but once again from a different perspective; they have conducted their analysis with a focus on *"[...] the following aspects of governance:*

- *The pursued coping strategy,*
- *Implemented policies,*
- *Involved actors,*
- *Achievements (of responses) and*
- *Future challenges.* (Rink et al. 2014, :264)"

The first two points can be related back to understanding the four different approaches, while the remaining three points can be linked to the three aforementioned dimensions (actors, structural conditions, and normative frameworks). Finally both Liebmann & Kuder (2012) and Stryjakiewicz & Jaroszewska (2016) look into path dependency as a way of understanding shrinkage:

"Over time, this collection of inter-related strategies and plans that reflect urban development policy begin to constitute a specific self-reinforcing logic that can be captured by the concept of an institutional or urban development path" (Liebmann & Kuder 2012, :1157)

To sum up it is essential to look into both the actual planning taking place and the processes surrounding it, but also the framework, both structural and normative, in order to fully grasp what is guiding the current planning. In this sense shrinkage sets up the need to further define governance and institutional theory as they are the main methods utilised in the research of shrinkage as a paradigm. For that reason the following sections will be concerned with how to approach this; first by expanding on governance and what

it means in the context of this report, then followed by a theoretical understanding of institutional theory and how to apply it.

4.1.3 Interactive governance

When considering governance it is important to understand that governance is not only concerned with 'how to govern' but also 'how to organise governing' - it is concerned not only with process itself but also with how to set up and carry out said process. Generally speaking however governance is about steering and control; it is about gathering stakeholders, encouraging collective action and achieving common goals.

In this regard steering and control of society is most commonly assumed to be best carried out in formal settings by powerful state actors, which is diametrically opposed to the definition of governance that will be applied in this framework. This more traditional understanding of steering and control can be defined as a 'Government' system, where public officials take on the role of top-down commander and society falls in line. Opposed to this is the more flexible concept of 'Governance' that instead relies on bottom-up initiatives and engagement of citizens. In this sense public administrators take on the role of facilitators instead, hoping to smoothen process and empower engaged citizens.

"While traditional forms of governance rely on top-down imposition of authority, interactive governance assumes that decisions will be made either from the bottom-up or through interactive processes, and empowered participation is orchestrated, and even sometimes initiated, by government agencies." (Torfing et al. 2012, :3)

There are a couple of things to consider in this quote: first of all, Torfing et al. (2012) speaks of interactive governance rather than governance - to briefly define interactive governance it is a complex process in which several social and political actors each with their own set of interests interact in order to achieve common objectives - which has a greater focus on the interactions and the managing of these interactions of different stakeholders; second, emphasis is put on *empowered participation*, which is to be facilitated by government agencies. This seems to fall perfectly in line with the points made earlier in chapter 1.2 on page 6 where one of the main challenges when planning for shrinking cities was made out to be the empowerment of citizens.

As presented above Interactive Governance is defined by three key features. First of all the Interactive Governance is related to the complex interplay between governmental and nongovernmental actors in the process of developing new policies. Second, the aim of the process is to formulate common objectives. This further adds to the complexity of Interactive Governance as the common objectives is formulated through negotiation between actors that may have conflicting interests. Developing common objectives is essential in an Interactive Governance process as it first of all it is crucial that the actors work in the same direction but it will also result in a form of interdependency between the different actors, which further enhance the need for collaboration between public and private actors in the pursue of joint solutions. The final key feature is that the processes are decentered. Governmental institutions often play an important role in facilitating policy interaction but the policy making is a result of the interplay between multiple public

and private actors contributing with knowledge, resources and ideas. (Torfing et al. 2012)

Even though Interactive Governance relies on participation and decentralization of decision-making there is a need of a certain degree of institutionalization of governance to secure stability and predictability (Torfing et al. 2012). As presented Interactive Governance rely on a redistribution of decision-making capability from exclusively being a governmental procedure to a result of multiple actors participation. This entitles the need of developing new forms of institutions at the governmental level. It is necessary to develop institutions that are capable of involving other institutions in the decision-making processes. Furthermore, it is crucial that the institutions are build upon legitimacy and public accept. (Torfing et al. 2012)

In order to facilitate private governance networks it is also essential with a degree of institutionalization. Governance networks loosely formed around common interests are prone to not developing the necessary coherence between the different actors. In that light it is necessary that the governance networks develop common values for internal culture and functioning. By this form of institutionalization the actors in the governance network can develop a sense of unity and belonging which is will be the foundation for the persistence of the network and the capability to develop common objectives. Developing a form of unity and common objectives is crucial as the governance networks have to legitimate their position in the governing processes and the linkage to formal institutions in the governmental sector. This would arguably be easier if the governance network is based on unity instead of fragmentation. (Torfing et al. 2012)

As the above shows Interactive Governance rely on degrees of institutionalization but it comes with a risk of over-institutionalization which can lead to conflict and disinterest from the involved actors. It is also worth noting that institutions are not set in stone but a continuum where structures are either becoming more or less institutionalized. (Torfing et al. 2012) This provides new challenges to the administrative system and how to ensure accountability and direction in interactive policy processes.

"Although a good deal of the actual decision-making associated with interactive governance involves relatively autonomous actions by social actors, these apparently autonomous actions can be framed and influenced by official actors in the public sector." (Torfing et al. 2012, :4)

As the quote state even if the core idea in Interactive Governance is that the decision-making process are based on social actors acting according to own interests and ideas it is still possible for public actors to frame and influence interactive governance arenas (Torfing et al. 2012). Based on this it would be relevant to look into the concept of *metagovernance* as a tool of steering and guiding interactive governance processes. Metagovernance can be regarded as the governance of governance and *[...] it involves deliberate attempts to facilitate, manage, and direct more or less self-regulating processes of interactive governance [...]* (Torfing et al. 2012, :122). Furthermore, the purpose of metagovernance is to develop identities and capabilities of both public and private actors (Torfing et al. 2012). The purpose of developing identities is to create a mutual understanding of coherence between the actors which and a sense of working towards the same goal. Identities can be created through storytelling and development of institutional rules and norms. Developing the capacity of actors to act is another tool of metagovernance. The capabilities can be

developed by defining the different actors rights and role in the system. Furthermore, it is a matter of identifying competences and resources and how to utilize them. (Torfing et al. 2012)

Within the process of the process of metagovernance or metagoverning there are managerial tools that can be used to guide the interactive processes. The scope of interactive governance arrangements can be influenced through *institutional design* where rules, procedures and norms are defined (Torfing et al. 2012). Purpose and direction of interactive governance processes can be guided through *goal and framework steering* (Torfing et al. 2012). This is a matter of defining the overall objectives through creating a framework for the interactive governance arrangements. The framework can be created through discursive storylines, legal parameters and by defining the fiscal basis (Torfing et al. 2012). Both tools are examples how it is possible to create and facilitate frameworks for arenas of interactive governance. They can be seen as a sort distant way of controlling the processes. This can especially be relevant in the start-up processes. There are also more direct managerial tools that can be applied to steering governance processes. *Process Management* and *Direct Participation* are tools to guide ongoing processes (Torfing et al. 2012). Empowering certain actors and providing material and providing inputs are examples of process management can be a way of shaping a process (Torfing et al. 2012). Direct participation makes it possible to obtain a more leading role in guiding the processes and outcome (Torfing et al. 2012).

It is important to notice that Interactive Governance is not a complete substitution but a supplement to the traditional hierarchically governing of society. Figure 4.2 is an illustration of how Interactive Governance coexist with Governments.
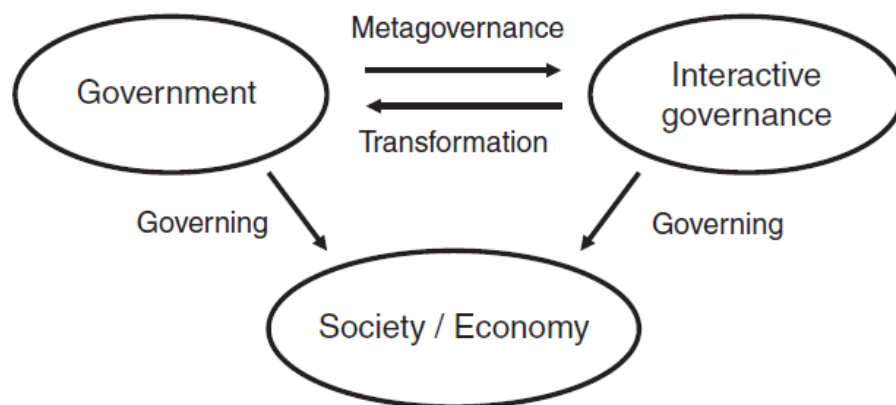
Figure 4.2: Illustration of the linkage between Government and Interactive Governance (Torfing et al. 2012)

Governments has an important role in shaping and directing forms of Interactive Governance through Metagovernance. Interactive Governance is affecting Government by seeking to transform it from governing by traditional unilateral state action towards a foundation based on public participation and arenas of Interactive Governance. (Torfing et al. 2012)

4.1.4 Institutional analysis

Another way of engaging with terms such as 'structural conditions' and 'normative framework' is to situate then within institutional theory. In this understanding an 'institution' is to be understood as a type of common understanding surrounding decision-making and displays of power (Christensen & Jensen 2001, :95). Institutional power then shapes actions through actors' understanding of their positions to each other, but also in relation to the arena on which they are carrying out these actions. An institutional analysis is therefore an analysis of what constitutes this surrounding framework and how it exercises its power on the actors involved.

According to Scott (2001) institutions consist of three pillars, each constituting their own approach to an institutional analysis: regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive. He argues that in order to fully understand any given institution it is not enough to asses it based on the conditions on one pillar, but rather all three of them, as they each have something distinct to add. Institutions can also be assessed from a historical perspective in which the concept of path dependency is a key factor (Torfing et al. 2012).

Going back to the main point made in chapter 1.2 on page 6 of governance (and especially New Public Governance) being important in the future planning for shrinkage, we find that Torfing et al. (2012) argues that for some subsets of governance 'relatively institutionalised frameworks' are a necessity for the ensured cooperation of the involved actors (Torfing et al. 2012, :16).

In the theory of institutional analysis, it is first and foremost necessary to understand what it is that defines an institution. According to Scott (2001), institutions are characterised as:

"In this conception, institutions are multifaceted, durable social structures, made up of symbolic elements, social activities, and material resources. Institutions exhibit distinctive properties: They are relatively resistant to change [...] They tend to be transmitted across generations, to be maintained and reproduced [...] As Giddens (1984) states 'Institutions by definition are the more enduring features of social life... giving 'solidity' [to social systems] across the time and space' [...] Institutions exhibit these properties because of the processes set in motion by regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements." (Scott 2001, :49)

As the quote states, an institution is what we can describe as a social structure consisting of the aforementioned three pillars: the regulatory, the normative and the cultural-cognitive. It considers the processes by which structures, including rules, norms, schemes, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour - both individually, groups and organisations etc. (Scott 2001). In order to find out what it is that shapes the planning and how interactive governace can handle shrinkage in rural areas, it is now relevant to investigate what the three pillars mean and how it can be related to the planning.

If we first take the regulatory pillar, it is about the regulatory aspects of an institution that restricts and regulates behaviour. Regulations are most often seen as being implemented as laws and rules supported by sanctions in an attempt to influence future behaviour. Here

it is important to emphasise that these regulations can work through informal and formal mechanisms; it can be informally understood in the way of folkways such as shaming or shunning activities and more formal regulations are assigned to specialised actors, such as the police and courts, where people can be punished if they do not follow formulated laws and rules. As long as there are any rules that can be broken and those rules meet with a punishment, then there it is the regulatory pillar of an institution, whether it is formal or informal rules. Often, regulations work and influence people's behaviour through fear, power and expedience (Scott 2001). That is, the current rules and laws there in an institution directly affect people and are indicative of how we must behave socially. However, the regulative pillar is closely related to the normative pillar; since the general use of regulations includes a temporary use of authority, where *[...] coercive power is legitimated by a normative framework that both supports and restricts the exercise of power [...]* (Scott 2001, :53). In terms of planning the regulative pillar then both refers to the legal constraints imposed on the planning practice, but also the constraints that planning itself poses on civil society and private businessses.

As described, the regulatory pillar of an institution is closely related to the normative pillar. The normative pillar relates to the impact of values, norms and roles on social life. Values are definite perceptions of what is valuable and desirable and what is not, from which standards are also constructed to which existing structures or people's behaviour can be compared and evaluated. Norms refer to rules or ways of doing things; that is, the normative specifies the desirable or anticipatory behaviour of an institution, both relating to goals (what should we achieve) and identifying appropriate ways to pursue them (how to achieve them). Norms are rules for what is appropriate behaviour or the right way to solve a task, while values are the common notions that underlie these norms. Normative systems can be described as the unwritten rules of behaviour we humans follow without always knowing why, thereby delegating roles between us and expectations accordingly. This means that the normative system can impose social behaviour and at the same time strengthen and enable social action. *"They confer rights as well as responsibilities;privileges as well as duties; licenses as well as mandates."* (Scott 2001, :55). It means that values and norms provide expectations to particular individuals or social positions (roles) (Scott 2001). The normative pillars are therefore about how we ought to behave, which in a planning perspective is related to the understanding of what makes up 'good planning'.
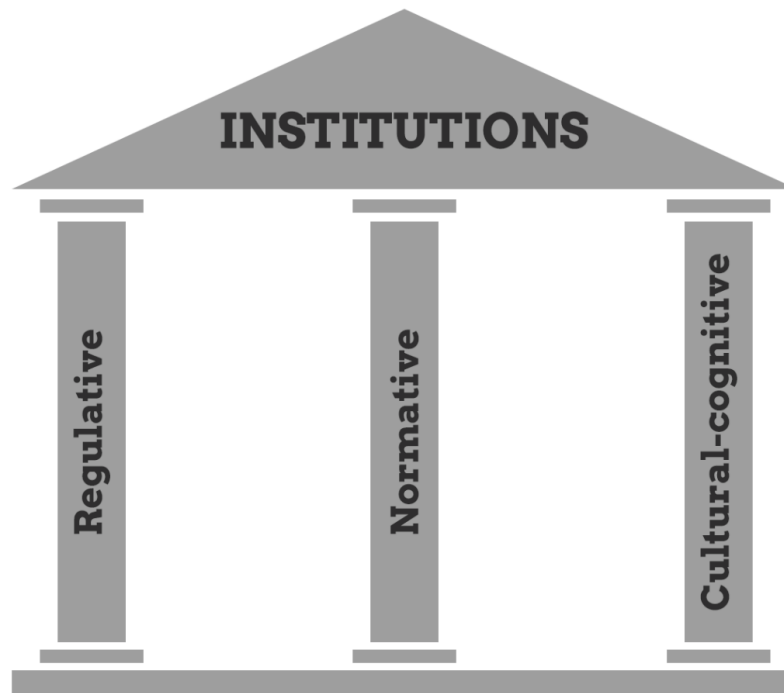
Figure 4.3: Own illustration of an institution consisting of the three pillars

In the cultural-cognitive pillar, the focus is on the frame in which meaning is formed. This pillar focuses on how the external environment, the external world, affects and stimulates in relation to the individual's reaction. Within this line of thinking, the behaviour of an individual will partly reflect the individual's interaction with the outside world. The cultural-cognitive pillar is a common frame of understanding between people which is essential for the creation of meaning. This means that common social constructs are the starting point for the way we understand and act socially. This does not mean that all people necessarily agree on how things are to be done or understood, but in the cultural-cognitive pillar one simply recognises that the symbols, signs and words the individual encounters throughout life help to influence their meaning by which interactions can have an impact on human behaviour. However, cultural-cognitive is about the meaning of objects and phenomena. When there is consistency between individuals, it is pointed out with the cultural focus that it is because other forms of behaviour will be unthinkable. Individuals follow their routines, taking them unconsciously for granted without any further consideration, because these are meaningful, and "the way we do it" - knowledge we agree on, but which we do not question. To sum up the cultural-cognitive pillar is how we usually behave (Scott 2001). In terms of planning it details the business-as-usual practices where tasks are carried out without regards to normative discrepancies, but because that is how it has always been done.

In summary Scott (2001) argues that in order to get a complete picture of a given institution it is necessary to analyse its regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects as they all play an equal part in defining how the institution functions. The regulative pillar can be said to cover the structural conditions, that is the legal framework and capacity of an institution to carry out a specific task; the normative pillar is concerned with the norms of the institution and how actors impose restrictions on or help each other based on

these norms; and the cultural-cognitive pillar deals with everyday actions, the things that actors do without actively thinking about them also described as taken-for-grantedness and business-as-usual.

"The study of rules, norms, values, and cognitive schemes that structure organizations and their interrelations is crucial for understanding how organizations function and how they can contribute to processes of steering and control for societies." (Torfing et al. 2012, :43)

Understanding what currently makes up an institution is a necessary step to take before looking into how it can be changed. In other words, institutional theory is the backbone of the analytical framework as it provides an approach that allows for the research of the aforementioned generative mechanisms that cause a planning department to plan in a certain way, while also laying out the groundwork for understanding how to transform it; in order to change a system it is necessary to first create a picture of how it is currently working.

4.1.5   Summary

Finally combining all of these points leads to the following proposed model:
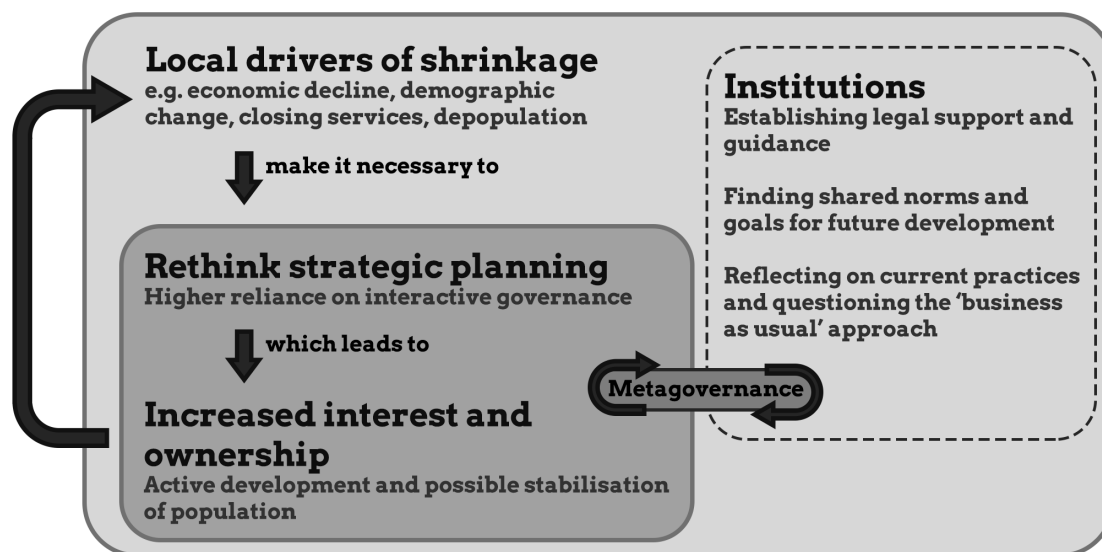
Figure 4.4: Own illustration inspired by figure 1.5 on page 20.

In this context 'Institutions' is to be understood as the planning practices currently in use in a given municipality as this can be said to be both a social structure comprised of the three pillars, but also a common understanding that guides decisions. It is this aspect of the planning process that is proposed to transform through the implementation of interactive governance ideals. The addition of interactive governance is presumed to account for some of the potential shortcomings of institutions as highlighted in the following quote:

"Acknowledging that institutions might be a necessary, but never a sufficient condition for change, as institutions are also objects of change themselves, it is important to be aware that the probability of collapse might also arise." (Montiel 2007, :104)

So while institutions themselves are subject to change the idea presented in the above Figure 4.4 is that this change should be facilitated through the process of metagovernance - that is the governance of governance. So by increasingly institutionalising governance and engaging actively with how to utilise it in planning, it can be fitted to the local context, which in this case is one of shrinkage. The idea is that shrinkage necessitates a rethinking of current practices as they are each dealing with a different strata. Based on principles of participatory values found in planning theory (see chapter 1.4 on page 12) the assumption is made that increased governance will lead to positive developments for challenged rural areas which then leads to a reassessment of the current situation which starts the cycle anew. In order to facilitate this, municipalities need to actively engage with metagovernance so that they can reframe their institutional system as to better handle the new approach.

4.2 Methods

As mentioned in the previous chapter 4.1.1, critical realism is used as the guiding meta-theoretical principle. This shapes both the ontological and epistemological understandings present in the report and in turn holds certain implications for the methods used in conducting the research. Primarily qualitative methods are applied in order to gain an understanding of the transitive world - defined as ever-changing knowledge that continually builds on the past in an effort to understand the surrounding (intransitive) world. This means that a method such as interviews is crucial in understanding how different stakeholders interact with and understand the matter that is being researched. The intransitive world is approached more quantitatively in the sense that primarily statistics are used to develop an understanding of recent developments - however, no quantitative methods have been used in the generation of data used for the empirical analysis.

This also means that different types of logical inference are applied throughout the report as some points are made on a deductive or inductive basis. Generally speaking however an abductive approach is taken as it is a way of reinterpreting knowledge from smaller events to a larger context, which is the main concern of the established research question - to establish how the analytical framework can help understand the current planning context of Vesthimmerlands Municipality and what can be learned from the case in general. In other words the main objective of abductive research is: *"To interpret and recontextualize individual phenomena within a conceptual framework or a set of ideas. To be able to understand something in a new way by observing and interpreting this something in a new conceptual framework."* (Danermark et al. 2002, :80)
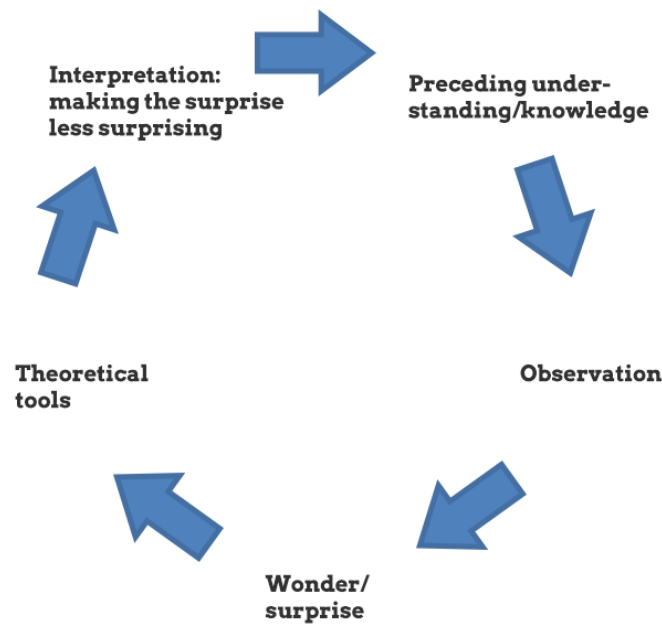
Figure 4.5: Abductive reasoning as a circular approach, adapted from (Shank 2008)

Figure 4.5 shows how abductive research can be structured. In terms of this project the literature review forms the base for the 'Preceding understanding/knowledge', while the case of Vesthimmerlands Municipality serves as the focal point for 'Observations'. The 'Wonder/surprise' is addressed partly in the chapter on critical realism as the difference between *planning for shrinkage* and *current planning practices*: as in, why are they not the same? - what justifies the split of these into two distinct strata? The analytical framework then works as the 'Theoretical tools' by establishing how to analyse the underlying mechanisms, which then leads to the 'Interpretation: making the surprise less surprising' in a discussion of the results of the analysis and an attempt to answer the two previous questions.

Research design

In the process of answering the research question, we have prepared a research design, see Figure 4.6. The research design provides an overview of the issues that form the report and the methods used to answer them. As shown in the figure we have prepared 3 sub-question to answer our research question. Different methods are used for answering each of the sub-questions, however literature study, document analysis and interviews form the main empirical basis.

Some initial assumptions have been made regarding answering the sub-questions

Through the use of methods we expect an certain result in the context of Vesthimmerlands Municipality that is our case. In the end all these expected results enables us to answer our research question.
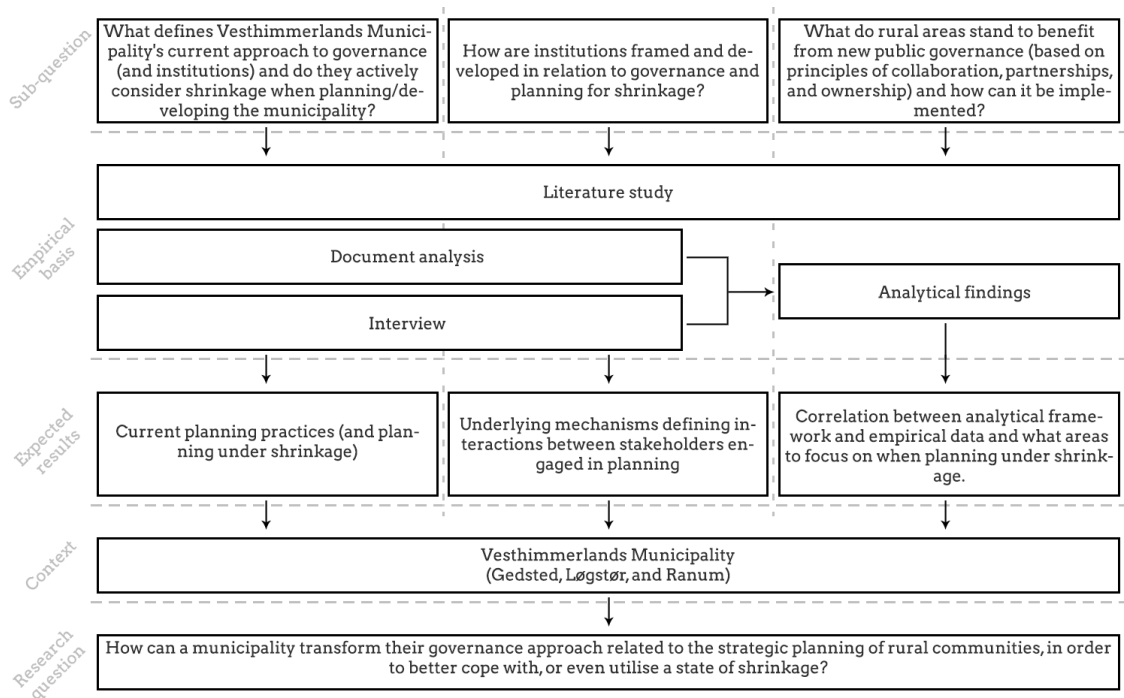
Figure 4.6: Research design of the rapport

As a supplement to the research design an overview of each method and how these have contributed to the research (see table 4.6).

Method	Purpose
Case study	The focus is to acquire knowledge about a determined field.
Observation	The possibility to get our own impression of the villages and the physical effects of shrinkage.
Literature review	To gain a understanding of key concept related to the research question and to create a theoretical framework.
Document analysis	To investigate and understand the context which the planners, the politicians and the citizen works within planning. This provides an insight into how Vesthimmerlands Municipality handles rural planning, including goals and rationales.
Interview	The opportunity to gain local knowledge and include the perspective of involved actors. Main tool of data generation.

Table 4.2: Overview of the methods used in the report, and the content of each.

Case study

The aim of this research is to develop an understanding and new perspectives of how municipalities can use new modes of governance to better cope with shrinkage in rural

areas. In order to obtain a profound understanding of governance and shrinkage in a 'real-life' context the research has been designed as a case study of the current planning for rural development in Vesthimmerlands Municipality.

In chapter 1 it was presented that many of the rural areas in Denmark are facing a state of *shrinkage* and in chapter 3 on page 29 it was made clear that Vesthimmerlands Municipality where facing a range of challenges that could be directly related to what was defined as 'shrinkage' in the conceptual framework. The fact that challenges in Vesthimmerlands Municipality reflect the general challenges rural areas in Denmark are facing makes the findings in the case study relevant in a broader perspective as well. In that light the case can be regarded as what Flyvbjerg (2006) defines as a 'critical case'. Critical cases are defined by *having strategic importance in relation to the general problem (Flyvbjerg 2006, :229)* and Flyvbjerg further elaborate on critical cases that findings can be generalized to other cases facing similar challenges (Flyvbjerg 2006). In that light, the findings can be applied to a broader context as a stepping stone to developing general framework of how rural municipalities can use governance as tool of rural development (Flyvbjerg 2006).

The case design in this research has been designed as an 'embedded single case study' (Yin 2018) where Vesthimmerlands Municipality has been the overall context. Through interviews with planners and politicians and through document analysis of plans and strategies a general understanding of how rural development is framed in the political administrative system. Urban renewal projects in Ranum and Gedsted and planning for development in Løgstør has been subunits of analysis. The purpose of the subunits were to develop an empirical foundation of analyzing modes of governance in Vesthimmerlands Municipality.

Observation - Fieldtrip

During the research process the group members made a fieldtrip in Vesterhimmerlands Municipality with the purpose of visiting Ranum, Gedsted and Løgstør. This was crucial in developing a better understanding of the context of the research. It was especially beneficial to see the challenges and opportunities each city are facing. The fieldtrip revealed several nuances in the different cities development. Especially in the case of Gedsted and Ranum. When investigating the cities through document study the cities seems fairly comparable but after visiting them it was extraordinary clear that the physical setting and general context were by no means comparable. Furthermore, it was very helpful to have obtained this understanding of the different contexts when analysing the interviews. By visiting the cities the group obtained a better foundation to understand and relate to projects and places the interviewees mentioned.

Literature study

Literature studies are used in the selection of existing knowledge within a given topic or problem. Literature can be published both as academic journals and professional publications (such as books and articles). The selection of the literature should be based on the research question, because it is the framework for what is to be investigated (Farthing

2016). By using literature studies, it is possible to analyse a topic or problem in-depth from different perspectives (sources), and through the information gathered identify gaps in existing knowledge. Literature studies must thus ensure that the report is based on a thorough and informed base of knowledge.

During the report literature studies are being used to identify a problem in the field of strategic rural planning and to create a theoretical framework which has form the basis for analysing practice. The research question has been crucial to the topics we examined in the literature, where the concepts; strategic rural planning, shrinkage, governance and collaborative planning have been guiding for the selection of the literature (Farthing 2016). The literature is based on both a Danish and a European context. The concept of shrinkage in particular is only related and referred to a European context as it is not immediately a concept that has been studied in a Danish context. In the selection of literature, we have been critical of the credibility of the sources. We have done this by comparing the sources with other data collected in different methods. Furthermore, we have considered the validity of the sources by looking at how far a publication is based on some original study (Farthing 2016).

Document analysis

Document analysis has been used as a method to gain a deeper understanding of how Vesthimmerlands Municipality manage shrinkage through governance. It means that document analysis are helping generating data of how the social world works (Farthing 2016). Basically, it is about analysing official planning documents such as: Municipal Plan 2017(Kommuneplan 2017), Plan and Sustainability Strategy 2018(Plan- og Bæredygtighedsstrategi 2018), and Together we create Vesthimemrlands Municipality (Sammen skaber vi Vesthimmerlands Kommune) - all of which form the basis and framework for the planning practice that is carried out. In this way, document analysis helps to illustrate how the Vesthimmerlands Municipality, as an institution, wants development, and what solutions they see to the problems caused by shrinkage.

When we review the documents we have used, they all contribute to understanding their practice in relation to our theoretical point of view. The Municipal Plan of 2017(Kommuneplan 2017) is the overall judicial framework for practice. Here we have had special focus on the purpose paragraphs, which in particular draws a picture of what the Municipality is working on. Thus, it is also assumed that The Municipal Plan 2017 largely contributes to shaping the planners' actions and work on rural development. The Planning and Sustainability Strategy of 2018 (Plan- og Bæredygtighedsstrategi 2018) contains the political priorities of which planning tasks to be completed during the period. It thus helps to understand the strategic considerations about why and how development should be ensured in the municipality. It therefore complements the Municipal Plan by arguing the practice they want to be carried out. Last, we analysed "Together we create the Municipality of Vesthimemrlands" (Sammen skaber vi Vesthimmerlands Kommune) which deals with the common foundation that must constitute citizen involvement and cooperation between the Municipality and citizens. The document helps to understand how they understand citizen involvement and want to use it in rural planning.

In general, all the documents help to describe the context in which the planners work and how the theoretical concepts are used and understood in their plans. It has not only given us as researchers the opportunity to understand the framework of practice, it has just as much helped to understand the planners, citizens and politicians when referring to the regulations they work within. The selected plans have been relevant to analyse because, as Farthing (2016) argues, they can provide an understanding of the social world (framework for practice) in Vesthimemrlands Municipality - ie how the Municipality conceptualises and works with the concepts of shrinkage and governance. In this report, the method of document analysis has been used as the starting point for the analysis of how Vesthimmerlands Municipality addresses shrinkage and whether they use governance in their management structures to deal with the problems. In order to gain a more holistic understanding, the document analysis are combined with interviews. Furthermore, the knowledge gained through the document analysis has been essential in the design of the interviewguides (see A.1 on page 113).

Interview

Eleven interviews where conducted during the research process. In preparing interviews we grouped those who participated by position in the planning. Overall, we divided the interviewees into three categories; planners, politicians and citizens. In addition, we initially interviewed three people who had nothing to do with the specific case - Vesthimmerlands Municipality - but were relevant to talk to in order get more insight in the field of strategic rural planning. The interviews had a qualitative approach and were based on Kvale & Brinkmann (2015) ideals for semi-structured interviews.

An interview guide (see appendix A.1 on page 113) was the foundation of all the interviews. Within the interview guide several question and topics were formulated. The guide functioned as a checklist rather than a questionnaire during the interviews. Often it was not necessary to ask direct questions as some of the interviews developed into a rather explorative manner and the interviewees were able to reflect on most of the topics with out the necessity of asking direct questions. The purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews was to make it possible for people to reflect on their own position and role. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview format also allows the interviewees to bring in additional perspectives to the context and the with that in mind the interviews has been an important part in developing the structure of the research.

The interview with Carsten Jahn Hansen was carried out at Aalborg University. The rest of the interviews were carried out as video interviews via various online platforms such as Skype, Cisco Webex Meetings and Facetime. The relative large mix of platforms is a result of different preferences from the people attending the interviews. The interviews were conducted at least two and in some occasions three group members.

Due to the amount of data collected through the interviews, the interviews were not fully transcribed but instead thematised after the principles of 'condensing meaning' (see appendix A.1 on page 113) (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015). When processing the interviews a timestamp and a theme is made when a new topic is discussed during the interview. The themes reflects the questions presented in the interview guide.

All the interviews were conducted in Danish. As a result of this, all citations from the interviews used in the research is a result of the authors own translating. Additionally, the citations are in some circumstances also a conversion from spoken language to text. This can result in some minor deviations compared to a one to one translation. Quotes from the interview have been translated from speech to text, which means that certain reformulations occurs in the translation, however, focusing on the content part still completely match what was said.

The interviews have been an integral part of the analysis in several aspects. First of all they have contributed valuable knowledge about the context of the case. The interviews has also been a valuable contribution to investigating the current governance processes in the municipality. Where it has been possible to obtain an understanding of how both actors from the political administrative system and private actors has experienced planning processes for rural development. Finally the interviews has been the cornerstone in the process of developing an understanding of how both public and private institutions are constructed and their embedded norms and values.

The following is a brief presentation of people who has been interviewed and how they have contributed to the research.

Planners

Merete Bach Hansen is a planner in Vesthimmerlands Municipality. She has worked in the Municipality for 28 years and been responsible for urban renewal projects in Ranum and Gedsted. In this way, she has a lot of experience and knowledge about the municipal practice according to stakeholder involvement and strategic rural planning.

August Skovmand is also a planner in Vesthimmerlands Municipality. He works with strategic rural planning in the Municipality and has been responsible, among other things, for a urban renewal project in Hvalpsund. He contributes with a broader perspective on the planning practices carried out in the Municipality and knowledge of the underlying rationales.

Peter Bach Frederiksen is a rural coordinator in Vesthimemrlands Municipality. He is responsible for the dialogue with the citizens of the villages and thus has a thorough knowledge of how rural development is handled. Furthermore, he is responsible for the LAG-funds, which are financial pools for citizen-driven projects in rural areas, which means he knows what is going on in planning right now in the municipality.

Politicians

Asger Andersen is a member and chairman of the Socialdemokratiet in Vesthimmerlands Municipality, and elected to the City Council. In addition, he is chairman of the Culture and Leisure Committee and member of the Village Committee. He contributes both to his political visions for rural planning and with his extensive knowledge of the planning bodies.

Jens Lauritzen is a member of Venstre and the City Council in Vesthimmerlands Municipality. He has previously been mayor of the former Løgstør Municipality. He is also a member of Planning and Environment Committee, which is why he has in-depth knowledge of planning in the municipality. He also contributes to his political visions for rural planning and his extensive knowledge of the municipal system that controls planning.

Citizens

Doris Lauritzen is both a City Council member for Socialdemokratiet and chairwoman of Gedsted Citizen Association. In this report, Doris states exclusively as citizen. Doris has represented the citizens in the urban renewal projects in Gedsted, and is currently working on several projects in a working group with other citizens. She contributes with knowledge of the citizens' abilities in planning and municipal practice seen from the citizens' perspective.

Britt Dalsgaard is a teacher and member of the Ranum Citizen Association. Britt has also participated in urban renewal projects in Ranum, and in this connection has been a member of a working group set up by Vesthimmerlands Municipality. She therefore also contributes with important knowledge of the citizens' abilities in planning and municipal practice seen from the citizens' perspective.

Anders Bloksgaard is the director of the Limfjordmuseeet and member of the Løgstør Vækstforum. Anders, through his position and commitment, has been part of a number of planning projects with the municipality, and thus has both as a citizen and a director, experience in collaborating across organisations. In the report he contributes with his views on the planning and the practice Løgstør Vækstforum conducts to create development in Løgstør.

Others

Kristian Krog is the director of Maltfabrikken in Ebeltoft. Maltfabrikken is a citizen-driven initiative that was implemented in collaboration with the municipality. Kristian contributes with knowledge of how Syddjurs Municipality has established a collaboration between the Municipality and citizens and how it has driven the development. In this way, he contributed to the design of the rapport in the initial phase.

Connie Mark Skovbjerg is a Rural Coordinator in Sønderborg Municipality. Connie has contributed with relevant knowledge about the planning practices that Sønderborg Municipality conducts to create development in their rural areas. The interview focused especially on the so-called Sønderborg Model, which also helped shape the report in the initial phase.

Carsten Jahn Hansen is an Associate Professor of spatial development and planning Aalborg University. We did an initial interview with Carsten about relevant theoretical and practical issues in strategic rural planning. Carsten has thus contributed to the selection of different cases.

Interviewee	Position	Relevance
Merete Bach Hansen	Planner Vesthimmerlands Municipality	Responsible for the urban renewal projects in Ranum and Gedsted
August Skovmand	Planner Vesthimmerlands Municipality	Planner who knows about plans, strategies and general practice in the Municipality
Peter Bach Frederiksen	Rural Coordinator Vesthimmerlands Municipality	Responsible for the Municipality's cooperation with the citizen of the villages. Furthermore, he is also responsible for the LAG-Funds, which is a pool that citizens can seek for projects
Asger Andersen	Member of City Council Socialdemokratiet	Chairman of the Culture and Leisure Committee and member of the Village Committee
Jens Lauritzen	Member of City Council Venstre	Former Mayor of Løgstør and current member of the Planning and Environment Committee
Doris Lauritzen	Member of City Council and member of Gedsted Citizen Association	Representative of the citizens in the urban renewal projects and actively works for development in Gedsted
Britt Dalsgaard	Teacher and member of Ranum Citizen Association	Representative of the citizens in the urban renewal projects and actively works for development in Ranum
Anders Bloksgaard	Director of Limfjordsmusseet and member of Løgstør Vækstforum	Prominent position in Løgstør Growth Forum and representative of one of the largest cultural institutions in the municipality
Kristian Krog	Director of Maltfabrikken in Ebeltoft Syddjurs Municipality	Initiator for the citizen-driven project Maltfabrikken
Connie Mark Skovbjerg	Rural Coordinator Sønderborg Municipality	Represents Sønderborg Municipality's approach to shrinkage and rural development (explained the Sønderborg model)
Carsten Jahn	Associate Professor in spatial development and planning Aalborg University	Extensive knowledge of theoretic and practice issues in the field of rural development.

Table 4.3: Overview of persons who has been interviewed in relation to this report

Critical reflections

The qualitative approach taken means most of the data is based on subjective perceptions of events and our own interpretations. The same topic could be research more quantitatively by utilising different methods such as questionnaires and structured interviews as a way of gaining a more quantifiable idea of the processes - this approach was for example utilised by (Guimarães et al. 2016). This approach also allows for more breadth in the

research as a questionnaire is comparatively easier to share with more people/cities than the more qualitative, vaguely defined semi-structured interviews that have defined our data generation.

The selection criteria could also have been widened to allow investigating more villages in the municipality, which would provide a potentially more coherent picture of the planning processes and their driving mechanisms. This could be done both with the current research design and with a more quantitative approach: the problem with looking at more cases is the risk that they lose depth in an effort to keep the analysis sharp and simple - having 8 or 10 villages more would potentially more than double the length of the analysis if all interviews were given the same attention. Structuring the interviews in a quantifiable manner would make this approach more accommodating however as it eases the burden of comparing the results of the cities.

Finally the chosen approach to investigate the research question does not yield fully definitive results, but rather serves to provide a picture of contemporary practices and how they are experienced. In the same vein the results might be hard to reproduce because of the qualitative nature that does not rely on connecting structures - as exemplified in the use of highly subjective semi-structured interviews which can be assumed to be fully shaped by the people involved, which stands in contrast to more rigid methods of interviewing that stick to a set structure. Despite these considerations, the qualitative approach remains a deliberate and satisfactory choice as it opens up the possibility of an in-depth analysis of the chosen cases in a nuanced and reflective manner.

Planning context of Vesthimmerlands Municipality 5

The theoretical framework and literature review show how shrinkage is a condition that requires a new approach in planning, where the focus should be more on collaboration with the citizens. Furthermore, in section 4, interactive governance was presented as a way in which collaboration between citizens and planners can be formalised and incorporated as a framework for practice. But before it is possible to investigate whether it is possible, how it can be done and what can contribute to in Vesthimmerlands Municipality, it is necessary to investigate how the current planning approach to shrinkage and citizen involvement is. Therefore, the next chapter will be an analysis of existing plans and conducted interviews with the actors (planners, citizen, politicians). This empirical basis will be investigated by application of several supporting sub-questions based on principles of institutional theory. The chapter ends in a summary of all the findings and examination of how the actors' statements correlate with three institutional pillars.

As shown in figure 5.1, the current planning is examined based on 3 questions. The three questions are constructed from the three pillars we know from the theoretical framework of institutional analysis. This means that there is a question related to the regulative, one to the normative and one to the cultural-cognitive. The questions differ slightly to suit each stakeholder group (planners, citizens and politicians), but the essence of the questions addresses the same. The plans have a separate section, and relate only to issues related to the regulatory and normative pillars, because the plans are purely a document analysis and not an analysis of some active action.
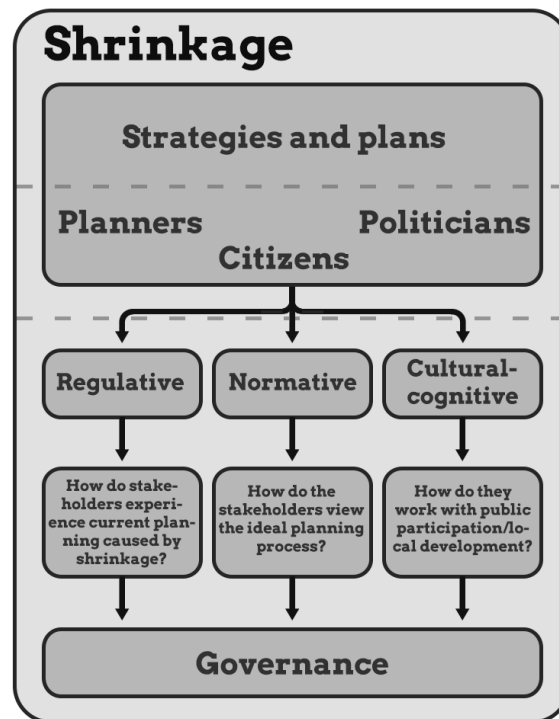
Figure 5.1: Own figure of the structure of the analysis with 'Shrinkage' as the surrounding context.

5.1 Plans and strategies

Before looking into how individual actors perceive the problems caused by shrinkage and how they are addressed in planning it is necessary to first establish how these issues are approached in official planning documents. The main focus of this section will therefore be the municipal plan of 2017 (Kommuneplanen 2017, Vesthimmerlands Kommune (2017*c*)), the planning and sustainability strategy of 2018 (Plan- og Bæredygtighedsstrategi 2018, Vesthimmerlands Kommune (2018*a*)), and 'Together we create Vesthimmerlands Municipality' a report on public participation (Sammen skaber vi Vesthimmerlands Kommune, Vesthimmerlands Kommune (2018*b*)). This examination will be based around two key concepts:

- How are they currently addressing the problems caused by shrinkage?
- How do present view public participation?

How are they currently addressing the problems caused by shrinkage?

In order to investigate this questions some terminology is borrowed from chapter 1.2 on page 6 - here it was presented how there are four different approaches when planning for shrinkage: trivialising, countering, accepting, and utilising. The goal is then to figure out which of the four is the most dominant in the planning of Vesthimmerlands Municipality.

A village Committee has been set up in the work on rural planning and development in Vesthimemrlands Municipality. At the time of writing, there are 45 villages in the

municipality that are members of this Village Committee. The Village Committee is an advisory committee under the Culture and Leisure Committee. The committee consists of two city council politicians and two representatives from the civil unions in the four local areas (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2020*a*). The village Committee deals with all relevant issues for the municipality's villages and rural areas:

a) *Provides consultation responses in connection with new policies published by the Municipality* (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2020*a*).
b) *Provides budgetary wishes to the municipality's economy* (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2020*a*).
c) *Follows projects in villages and is also involved in major projects of importance to the villages such as the project "Rural roads and paths"* (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2020*a*).

In the Municipal Plan all the cities in the municipality are hierarchically classified according to seize.

a) *Regional capital - Aars* (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2017*a*)
b) *Area towns - Farsø, Løgstør og Aalestrup* (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2017*a*)
c) *Villages - Gedsted, Hornum, Ranum og Hvalpsund* (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2017*a*)
d) *Minor villages - Aggersund, Fjelsø, Havbro, Overlade, Simested, Strandby, Ullits, Vegger, Vester Hornum, Vilsted, Vindblæs, Vognsild og Østrup* (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2017*a*).
e) *Smaller communities - rest of the settlements in the land zone* (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2017*a*)

In their municipal plan, the purpose is that;

"The regional capital city and the area towns contribute to a large part of the population development and settlement. It is therefore imperative that sufficient land is laid out for urban development in these cities." (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2017*a*)

"Villages are where local development needs to be created in order to maintain existing service levels and ensure ongoing maintenance of the qualities of the cities. These are cities that depend on jobs and service offerings in the other cities." (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2017*c*, :20)

"In the minor villages, the good life has room to unfold in everyday life. The good life is characterized by the fact that citizens can live a coherent life with work, family, close relationships and developing experiences." (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2017*a*)

The document opens by defining four different tiers of city within the municipality based on size and development opportunities: regional capital, area towns, villages, and minor villages. The most interesting to look at is perhaps the cities that are experiencing decline, and from section 3 on page 29, we know that these are more or less all cities except Aars, Farsø and Aalestrup. In general, the goal is for urban development must be done by redeveloping existing urban areas and/or by distributing new areas for urban development

(Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2017*a*). In other words, there is a fundamental strategic goal in the municipality for cities to grow and attract new citizens.

The villages in the municipality are Gedsted, Hornum, Ranum and Hvalpsund. The specifics of Gedsted and Ranum will be elaborated on later as part of the citizen investigation. What is interesting to note here is that for all four of them there is an emphasis on strengthening their positions as settlement villages in order to attract more newcomers to the municipality. In terms of development the following is stated:

"Urban development takes place both by urban transformation of existing urban areas and by allocating new areas for development on the outskirts of cities. The good urban development ensures continuous expansion and maintenance of the qualities of the cities [...]" (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2017*c*, :21)

Looking at these two points together it seems clear that the main approach taken for this tier is most in line with trivialising and countering shrinkage. It can be argued to be trivialising in the sense that the plan calls for continued focus on increasing settlement possibilities by growing the cities ever outwards, but in the same sense it can also be argued to be an attempt at countering shrinkage by increasing the focus on attracting new citizens by providing more housing opportunities. The approach for villages, the tier below, is a bit different as it emphasises engagement of citizens, which is more in line with the results of the literature review on shrinkage.

"The precondition is that the citizens living in the villages will contribute to creating life and cohesion, and that new citizens will come and engage in development and contribute new impulses." (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2017*c*, :21)

So in this sense they acknowledge that if the villages are to continue to exist then the citizens that live there need to be actively engaged in the development of the village. This is a lot closer to the accepting shrinkage perspective as it more actively considers how to engage with the issues the villages are facing. However it does also fall in line with the countering perspective as it is still at least partly based on the acquisition of new citizens.

How do they present public participation?

When trying to involve citizens however it seems Vesthimmerlands Municipality's approach to public participation falls more in line with New Public Management than New Public Governance, which has been argued to have significant consequences for the results of the process (see chapter 1.5 on page 16). From the report 'Together we create Vesthimmerlands Municipality' (written by an advisory committee of local politicians with the purpose of investigating how the Municipality should approach public participation (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2018*b*)) it can be established that participatory processes are mainly carried out in a top-down manner usually with a select few actors: specific councils, established partnerships with clubs/societies, legally obligated hearings, and dialogue meetings (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2018*b*). While they do establish that public participation, or citizens involvement as they put it, should be tailored to the situation at hand they de-emphasise the importance of actual collaborative processes where citizens are empowered to make decisions on their own behalf, coupled with a concern

about the time and cost of more extensive participatory processes. For the purpose of engaging in public participation they state that:

"[...] the [advisory] Committee recommends that efforts be concentrated on initiatives to make it easier for citizens to follow what is happening in the municipality, as well as more work on early dialogue." (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2018*b*, :17)

As seen in the quote they are recommending an approach to public participation that is closer to the bottom half of the ladder of participation (see figure 1.3 on page 15), that is with the most focus on sharing information with citizens instead of empowering them in the process. This combined with the importance attributed to the need to carefully consider time and resources, when deciding which approach to public participation is appropriate, can be seen to imply that true bottom-up processes are not fully encouraged. They are seen as too time-demanding and costly, and focus should instead be on simply sharing information and engaging in dialogue. Additionally no general framework for how to approach public participation is presented in the report apart from the need to consider the extent of involvement on a case by case basis.

This stance on public participation is also present throughout the official guidelines for future development of the municipality; public participation is described as mainly being centred around information and dialogue with citizens (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2018*a*). There are some mentions of collaborative processes, mostly in the sense of involving special local councils, but as with the aforementioned report these guidelines do not provide an overarching strategy for public participation either:

"In the overall spatial planning - especially in connection with the preparation of urban development plans and programs for urban renewal in the smaller villages - the Municipality of Vesthimmerland has chosen to set up local councils, where citizens and interest groups have the opportunity to make their mark on the plans. The councils are involved in designing concrete initiatives, and they are also encouraged to take an active part in the realisation." (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2018*a*, :33)

In summation the different documents provide a quite fragmented image of public participation. It is presented as part of the solution, but also as something that should not be invested too heavily in; a set purpose and goal of public participation is established, but without a surrounding framework or general guidelines. At the same time cities should focus on growing despite being faced with essentially all the paradoxes mentioned in chapter 1.2 on page 6 which causes growth to be an almost insurmountable challenge in its own right.

5.2 The planners

In order to analyse how planning in Vesthimmerlands Municipality handles the aforementioned shrinkage problems, it is relevant to first gain an insight into the planners' practices. Therefore, the following will be based on interviews conducted with the two planners in the municipality; Merete Bach Hansen and August Skovmand, and rural coordinator Peter Bach Frederiksen. In the process of interviews, an analytical framework

will be used based on these issues:

- How do the planners experience current planning caused by shrinkage?
- How do the planners view the ideal planning process?
- How do the planners work with public participation?

How do the planners experience current planning caused by shrinkage?

In all the interviews there is a consensus that the majority of the municipality is in decline (with the exceptions of Aars, Farsø and Aalestrup), and it is a fact that needs to be addressed in the planning. Therefore, it is also interesting to find out how they relate to the strategic approach to the problems of shrinkage in the municipality, and here it is clear that planners are currently awaiting an overall strategy for development in their rural areas. This quote shows:

"Strategic planning for the villages is one of the to-do tasks we (the municipality) have... and I have no doubt that this is something that the politicians are interested in... so that is something we still need to work on." (Merete Bach Hansen 2020, 10:01)

That is, Merete Bach Hansen sees a problem in the fact that no decision has yet been made on how to handle the shrinkage problems strategically, and as a planner she says she must wait and refer to the politicians as decision makers in this area. Therefore, we must partly refer to the existing plans and structures of development in rural areas presented in section 5.1. In that section we got an insight into how a Village Committee has been set up consisting of two city council politicians and two representatives from the citizen associations in the four divided local areas to deal with the problems and opportunities for rural development. In addition, rural coordinator Peter Bach Frederiksen is associated with a part-time position, where his primary task is, as he says; *"[...] to support the local communities' own desire in the hope of creating new growth and new development or just avoiding decline."* (Peter Bach Frederiksen 2020, 02:07). But Peter Bach Frederiksen also makes it clear that it is up to the citizens themselves to define the problems in their local way and find the solutions to them:

"The basic principle of that (the Village Committee) is that it is a citizen-driven collaboration. It means I do not go out and tell them what to do, but I make myself available and run some processes with them where they themselves help define the development" (Peter Bach Frederiksen 2020, 05:14)

Although he believes that it is up to the citizens themselves to ensure the development of their area, he still has a pretty clear insight into what the problems are being experienced in the villages. In particular, he points out how an exchange in a local community has a crucial impact on development, and highlights how it is actually newcomers rather than current citizens who drive development in most villages. It is stated here:

"It varies a lot from village to village. In some of the villages there is not a lot of exchange in citizens, in other words not a lot of newcomers arrive, and in those places we experience a lot disregard for the place and a lack of involvement. In other places with more settlement,

it is most often the people that move in who drive development." (Peter Bach Frederiksen 2020, 15:58)

The quote is interesting in light of what we know from the theory of shrinkage (see section 1.2), where the main problem is the decline in population. Thus, it can be assumed that the decline in population also has a significant impact on whether the citizens themselves are able to take responsibility for solving the problems the villagers are experiencing. If a city experiences that people are simply moving away, and very few are moving in, then the chance to recognise the problems and to explore the opportunities is obviously less. However, it is important to emphasise that a city can easily experience a decline in population, yet at the same time experience population change and new migrants. But with the premise that citizens themselves must take responsibility and initiative in planning, then the question is what do those cities do that do not experience great exchange in their population, and at the same time find it difficult to engage their citizens to participate? Here August Skovmand and Merete Bach Hansen relatively agree that it is important to get the Village Committee to frame the problems and the planning. Merete Bach Hansen says the following:

"[Strategic rural planning] can be a huge task because we have 45 villages, and how do we organise all the interests and needs of the cities into one plan? Not all cities may wish the same development, and how do we handle it? We have the Village Committee, which I think is the body we need to use in the strategic rural plan because there are representatives from the different communities and City Council politicians. But that's just something we have talked about, but it's not concrete yet." (Merete Bach Hansen 2020, 10:42)

That is what August Skovmand agrees on, and believes that it must be the Village Committee that have to deal with the problems in the first place, and they must set the framework for the village planning in the future:

"Somehow it will be great to get a proposal from the Village Committee that we can work from." (August Skovmand 2020, 33:03)

In addition to the Village Committee not seeming to be working properly, they are also calling for a framework for how citizen involvement should be handled if it is to be the solution for shrinkage. Here, they both agree that right now there is no plan for what the purpose of involving citizens is and how it should be implemented in practice. August Skovmand says the following:

"I think we need to have a strategy for citizen involvement, but a strategy must not be more defined than can be adapted to the individual project." (August Skovmand 2020, 23:17)

He does not doubt that a strategy for citizen involvement is needed, but also points out that there must be some form of freedom to organise citizen involvement for the individual process/project. It also makes demands on the individual planner's professionalism. The lack of citizen involvement strategy is something Merete Bach Hansen can recognise:

"From a strategic point of view, there is no plan [for handling cooperation with citizens]. It is not set out or written down in this way so that we can say what our strategic goals are with citizen involvement therefore we must just try to help citizens and businesses as well

as we able to." (Merete Bach Hansen 2020, 9:23)

According to what she says, when there is no strategic goal for citizen involvement, they should just try to help citizens and businesses in planning in the areas experiencing shrinkage. It can be argued that there is an understanding of governance, and that citizen involvement is a key element in the management of shrinkage. However, it is also clear that there is a lack of overall coordination and framework to support not only the citizens, but also the planners in their work in developing the local areas. In other words, the planners believe that the plans mentioned in section 5.1 on page 62 are not sufficient enough to solve the problems Vesthimmerlands Municipality are facing. Having this in mind, it is now relevant to look into how they think planning can ensure rural development.

How do the planners view the ideal planning process?

Now that we know what the problems the planners see in handling shrinkage, we therefore need to find out what they see as the solution. As already stated above, the planners would like to establish cooperation with the citizens. The question is just how and what it should contribute to future development. A common point of view from all three planners is that if people move to smaller cities that are in decline then they themselves have a responsibility for development:

"In my opinion, if you live in a village, you have also chosen to do things yourself. The villages where there are some citizens with true commitment something also happens, and the villages where there are no citizens with true commitment to take responsibility the development is stalled" (August Skovmand 2020, 25:56)

As the quote states, it seems that it is not just about getting the citizens involved, but actually getting them to define development. In other words, planning must be outsourced to the citizens, which means that the citizens must be assigned a huge responsibility. It raises many questions as to what the planner's role should be, because it does not seem that it should be a definite collaboration that should manage planning. To that end, Merete Bach Hansen points out one of the reasons for the view is that the Municipality does not immediately have the resources itself:

"We are very dependent on citizen initiatives because we [the Municipality] do not have the resources to promise development otherwise. So, therefore, the locals must take responsibility and we [the Municipality] can support them" (Merete Bach Hansen 2020, 12:26)

Here Merete Bach Hansen describes how the role of planners should be to support local initiatives. However, Peter Bach Frederiksen believes that planners also have a major task in bringing people together through facilitation of workshops, because it helps to increase opportunities for development. He says this:

"It often turns out that if you bring people together something happens because there are many individuals who have ideas for development, but they are strongest together... we have to facilitate workshops where we gather people because it also helps those places that are not experiencing population growth to evolve." (Peter Bach Frederiksen 2020, 17:26)

According to Peter Bach Frederiksen, planners have an active role in engaging citizens to participate in planning. Immediately, it should not be a collaboration between citizens and planners, but the quote is more a recognition that planners also have a responsibility for citizen-driven planning. August Skovmand also supports this, pointing out that it is not only about getting individuals to cooperate, but also getting the villages across each other to collaborate:

"It is about creating a cooperation across the villages, because if they are to be separated into 45 units, development stops and it does not benefit the municipality" (August Skovmand 2020, 30:27)

Therefore, according to August Skovmand, it is also necessary to create a system or structure that can ensure cooperation between the villages in planning. As mentioned earlier, the Village Committee may be the body that will make sure that cooperation happens, but if it does not work, then there is a need to rethink how that structure can bring individuals and citizen associations from different villages together in the future. Thus, there is broad agreement between the planners that the purpose is partly to involve the citizens and partly to create cooperation between the citizens, but the question is; what should it lead to in planning? August Skovmand and Merete Bach Hansen have no doubt that the key words are to spread ownership and engagement among citizens, because it ensures that development takes place:

"First of all, we are very dependent on citizen involvement and it is very important. Citizens must take ownership of these plans and strategies themselves." (Merete Bach Hansen 2020, 32:32)

"What the citizens meeting should create is largely... is to create this ownership, to mobilize the passionate people, and to create a forum where the citizens talk about development of their village, and get it established to a degree where it keeps on running even after we [the Municipality] leave." (August Skovmand 2020, 25:27)

It is quite clear that August Skovmand and Merete Bach Hansen point out that planning is about mobilising local resources and getting people to take responsibility and ownership for the development of their own village. This view is very much in line with the ideals we know from communicative planning presented in section 1.4, where Healy (2003) and Agger & Hoffmann (2008), Lachapelle (2008) and Munthe-Kaas (2015) describe precisely how citizens who are included in the planning process will feel more ownership and incentive to work for the implementation of the formulated goals. However, it is debatable whether the planner should have a more prominent role in communicative planning.

To sum up, planners basically agree that citizens should have the greatest responsibility for planning and development of their cities. According to them, the purpose of planning should be to get citizens and citizen associations to cooperate, because when citizens are allowed to define what the problems are and how to solve them, they gain ownership of the planning and translate plans/strategies into specific projects. In this way the development of areas that cannot grow on their own are highly dependent on the citizens. Finally, it can be assumed that planners do not think it should be a definite collaboration between them and citizens, and therefore it is now interesting to investigate how they practice citizen involvement.

How do the planners work with public participation?

Before we can describe what kind of governance that exists in Vesthimmerlands Municipality, it is necessary to analyse how the planners perceive the citizen involvement practices that are carried out. Although it is already clear that planners see citizens as the key to rural development, and at the same time believe that a clear framework and strategic direction for addressing the shrinkage problems through citizen involvement is lacking, they are actually engaged in a dialogue with citizens. In the three cases of urban renewal projects in Gedsted and Ranum, as well as the development plan for Løgstør, some citizen involvement processes have been run, and here are some interesting perspectives on how it has been practised. August Skovmand states that citizen involvement in Vesthimmerlands Municipality takes place in a classic form without further reflection:

"My view is that in the past [in Vesthimmerlands Municipality] they just held these citizen meetings because that is 'how we do it' - it is pure custom." (August Skovmand 2020, 18:31)

"I do not think citizen involvement [in Vesthimmerlands Municipality] is necessarily collaboration/co-creation but that it is just as much citizen information." (August Skovmand 2020, 49:41)

It seems that the practices that have been carried out do not necessarily have collaboration in focus. Instead, there has been a business-as-usual approach whereby the Municipality has been able to inform the citizens about what is going to happen in their area and in this way the involvement becomes more of a legitimate process. August Skovmand also appeals to them as planners to keep in mind why they really want to involve the citizens as he says *"Why do we hold a citizen meeting? - it is because we want some to contribute to the planning, it is not just because we have to do it."* (August Skovmand 2020, 22:11). The very purpose of citizen involvement also does not seem to be fully considered further according to Merete Bach Hansen so she would like to talk about how they make collaboration processes because she does just as usual - do it because you have to:

"It makes sense that when we start making strategies for the villages, we also talk about what collaboration is and how we do it in practice, so that it is framed for us [the planners] so we know how to do it in practice. Because we do as we usually do." (Merete Bach Hansen 2020, 54:12)

In other words, it can be assumed that the practice of citizen involvement in the Vesthimmerlands Municipality has been conducted at an information level with the aim of getting citizens to contribute to planning rather than regular formalised cooperation between the Municipality and citizens. However, with an understanding that what the planners really want is a more collaborative process. In Gedsted, it actually turned out to be the citizens themselves who took the initiative for a number of urban renewal projects:

"They [the citizens] prioritise and characterise projects themselves. In Gedsted, it's amazing what happened to the urban renewal projects, where the citizens themselves had found money for projects and during the process they [the citizens] have been super good at finding fundraising without help from the Municipality. It is desirable that this happens and our task is to motivate people in the local communities to take responsibility for the development

themselves." (Merete Bach Hansen 2020, 13:59)

Although Merete Bach Hansen says that planners have a task in motivating citizens in planning, it can be questioned whether it is possible if citizen involvement is used for information. Gedsted is a good example of how citizens themselves took the initiative, but the process is just not a result of a citizen involvement process made by the Municipality. In this way, the urban renewal projects are primarily run by citizens. The process shows that the Municipality's starting point in a collaboration is that the citizens themselves come and submit projects they would like help from the Municipality. This means that the Municipality has so far not facilitated processes that can foster citizen-driven innovation. Both August Skovmand and Peter Bach Frederiksen confirms this here:

"We will not come and help them [the citizens] unless they come up with some projects they need help with." (August Skovmand 2020, 26:38)

"I do not go out and tell them what to do, but I make myself available and run some processes with them if they themselves help define the development." (Peter Bach Frederiksen 2020, 05:23)

Basically, this means that Vesthimmerlands Municipality has not made outreach citizen involvement. In addition to imposing greater demands on citizens if they want development, the Municipality also has and is very much dependent on active and enterprising citizens with this practice. Whether all cities experiencing shrinkage have the necessary local resources to plan and secure the development of their city is questionable. For example, a similar project in Ranum has immediately stalled due to a lack of civilian forces, and then the question is who is in charge (Merete Bach Hansen 2020, 43:23). Nevertheless, there is a focus on citizen involvement and it is more or less incorporated into practice. However, it also appears that it is not a definite process of collaboration, it is more about supporting the projects the citizens themselves come up with.

Key findings

To summarise the planners' point of views on how to deal with shrinkage in Vesthimmerlands Municipality, there are a number of points to observe. First of all, there is a very clear consensus that if the negative development needs to change, then it must be done on the citizens' own initiatives and ideas. In other words, there is a fundamental belief that a bottom-up approach to planning can solve the problems. But if we look at the planning and the plans that are worked out, especially August Skovmand and Merete Bach Hansen find it extremely problematic that there is no rural strategy or plan. Here, in particular, they point out that if citizen involvement is to be the solution to the problems caused by shrinkage, then it is crucial to create a framework that can form a common basis for why they do it and how it should be done in practice. For this, according to them, it would be perfectly obvious to use the Village Committee as a body to define the future development, as it is already a forum based on cooperation between politicians, the administration and the citizens. But as it is now, it is not working as intended. If we look at what they think citizen involvement should create, they more or less agree that it is about getting citizens involved in planning, because that is how they take ownership and responsibility

for local development. Therefore, they see their task as the one to bring people together and get activated - both the individual citizens but also the different civic associations in the villages. In this way, they have a strong focus on creating collaboration. However, this is not entirely in line with the practice being carried out and as they say *"we do as we usually do"*, where the primary approach to citizen involvement is based on citizen information, and otherwise it is up to the citizens themselves to contact the Municipality with projects. That is, citizen involvement is in no way outreaching and the authorised participation is not orchestrated or initiated by the Municipality. In doing so, it places extremely high demands on the citizens' ability to plan and become active with planning processes.

5.3   The citizens

In order to analyse the current planning practices and how shrinkage is encountered in Vesthimmerlands Municipality three citizens who has been involved in public participation processes has been interviewed with the purpose of clarifying which values and norms they have in relation of developing their local communities. The interviewed persons where Britt Dalsgaard Ranum Citizen Association. Doris Lauritzen, Gedsted Citizen Association and member of Vesthimmerlands Municipality City Council, and Anders Bloksgaard, director of Limfjordsmuseet and member of Vækstforum Løgstør. The purpose of the interviews was to answer the following questions:

- How have the citizens experienced current planning caused by shrinkage?
- How do the citizen view the ideal planning process?
- How do the citizens work with local development?

5.3.1   Urban renewal project in Ranum

In 2016 Vesthimmerlands Municipality decided to launch a urban renewal project in Ranum. The main scope was to improve the attractiveness of the village and ultimately the goal is to invert the population decline into a positive development (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2016). In the planning process three main success criteria was formulated. The population decline should be evened out, the amount of empty housings should be lowered and on sight there should be a market for building new houses in empty building plots in the village (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2016).

The organisation of the urban renewal project is presented as traditional hierarchically project management. Vesthimmerlands Municipality has the overall responsibility for the project. The overall decision capability and project management was handled by a steering committee consisting of Head of Administration, a project manager from the planning department and COWI as an external consulting firm (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2016). A working group consisting of representatives from various departments in the Municipality and representatives from institutions from the local area such as Ranum Citizens Association, educational and cultural institutions in Ranum and local business. (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2016).
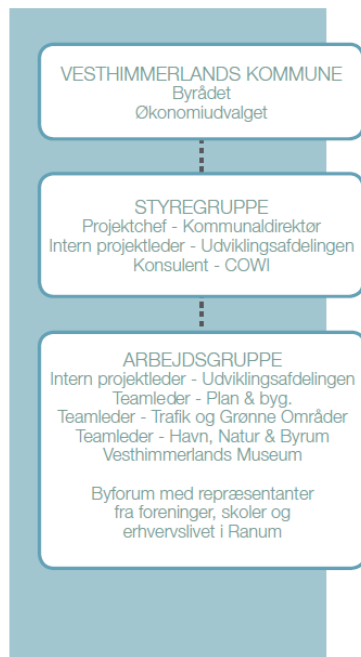
Figure 5.2: Overview of the organisation in the urban renewal project (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2016)

Figure 5.3: Overview of the process of the urban renewal project (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2016)

It is stated in the planning program that public participation should be an important part of the urban renewal process. The aim of the participatory process' was that the urban renewal project should be a reflection of the local actors ideas and wishes for the future development of Ranum. Furthermore, it is stated that public participation should enhance ownership to the renewal project in the local area (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2016).

The process of formulating the urban renewal plan can be seen in figure 5.3. The process started with an internal workshop in the Municipality where problems and opportunities where identified. Furthermore, the internal workshop resulted in some focus points which would be relevant as a foundation of the urban renewal project (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2016). This was followed by a public meeting at the local inn. The meeting was attended by approximately 100 locals and the purpose was to gather ideas and desires from the inhabitants in Ranum (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2016). Based on the knowledge from the public meeting the Municipality formulated concrete proposals to what the aim of the urban renewal project should be. These proposals were presented to the working group committee as a catalogue of ideas they could pick and choose between. The proposals even came with a price tag so it would be easier to prioritise for the public committee (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2016). Finally there was a public meeting at the local inn where approximately 50 locals attended. The purpose of the meeting was presenting the ideas agreed on and the further process in the urban renewal project (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2016).

How has citizens experienced current planning for shrinkage?

As a member of the Citizens Association in Ranum and as a member of the working group facilitated in the urban renewal project Britt Dalsgaard brings some interesting perspectives to the process and how the local actors have experienced it.

First of all Britt Dalsgaard has some interesting perspectives on why she has engaged in the urban renewal project and which challenges she sees in terms on engaging people in the community.

"In a small village it can be difficult to engage enough people in planning processes. I like to know what is going on and have the possibility to influence the development of the village." (Britt Dalsgaard 2020, 2:17)

Personally she would like the possibility to be a part of decision making processes but in general she thinks it can be difficult to engage people in the village. She further elaborates on why it might be difficult to engage people:

"There are also many empty houses, which means that the rent is low and those who come to the village are often resource disadvantaged residents... it affects our school, it affects our associations, that we have many of these types of families... There is a tendency for asking 'what is my need?', and it is difficult to see long-term and asking 'what are the needs of the general population?' and then people can become negative towards the planning." (Britt Dalsgaard 2020, 18:37)

The process of shrinkage has lead to cheap housings which during the years has attracted many less resourceful people whom it can be difficult to activate in public participation. Furthermore, she states there is a tendency of putting own interest higher than the public good.

"There have been some disagreements between the citizens about the project, and it has often been me who has been the target because I have been involved in a working group with the Municipality" (Britt Dalsgaard 2020, 14:20)

Even though the citizens of Ranum fairly early in the process was invited to a workshop where they could come with input to the urban renewal project there still was some disagreements to what should be the goal of the project. This lack of unity among the actors in Ranum has put Britt Dalsgaard in a precarious position several times as people has they have attended her with their different expectations to the project. This leads to her only major criticism of the planning process the Municipality has facilitated.

"The citizens and the village were represented quite well in the beginning where we had the possibility to get some information on what is going on. What lacked is continuous information and the citizens know that I represent them in this project and some information leaks out, but I do not want to inform about what is going on because it is not my duty... There I would like the Municipality to take greater responsibility." (Britt Dalsgaard 2020, 9.02)

It is interesting how Britt Dalsgaard wants to be able to influence the planning process and she have volunteered to be a part of the Citizens Association and the working group

but at the same time she does not see it as her duty to inform the other citizens in Ranum on what is going on and where they are in the process. Instead she argues that should be the Municipality that provides information and handle internal conflicts among the citizens. She therefore calls for the Municipality to have been more active in collaboration with the citizens.

The last meeting we held in the working group (with the Municipality) was back in August (2019) and since then I have heard nothing about the urban renewal project and it is unsatisfactory (Britt Dalsgaard 2020, 12.04)

Britt further elaborates that she sees it as a problem that there is a lack of communication from the Municipality about further progress in the urban renewal project.

I could have contacted the Municipality, but I have not done so since August (2019) because I think they (the Municipality) should take the initiative, but nothing happens. So the project is on stand-by and no one knows what happens and what doesn't happen (Britt Dalsgaard 2020, 13.18)

Again Britt points to the fact that she clearly thinks that it is the Municipality that are responsible for the further progress in the project. This unclear definition of responsibility has resulted in a standstill.

How do the citizen view the ideal planning process?

The purpose of this section is to develop an understanding of how the citizens see the ideal planning process and whom they see as having the main responsibility of developing their local area.

During the interview it was discussed who has the responsibility for the development of the villages in the municipality.

"In my opinion it is the Municipality that has the greatest responsibility. It is those consultants I have been in contact with because it is their job and what they are paid for." (Britt Dalsgaard 2020, 4:56)

Britt Dalsgaard was clear about that it should be the Municipality that is responsible for enhancing development in the smaller villages (such as Ranum, which is defined as a village). First of all she thinks it is 'their' job. Furthermore, she points out that the Citizens Association cannot be responsible for the development of the village as their work is based on voluntary participation. Finally, she does not think the citizens have the necessary capabilities to have the main responsibility for the development of Ranum. (Britt Dalsgaard 2020, 4:46)

Britt Dalsgaards's perspective on responsibility is interesting as on one hand they have formed a Citizens Association and there seems to be an interest in both the future development of Ranum and a desire to be part of the decision making processes in the urban renewal project, on the other hand there seems to be a lack of willingness to share the responsibility with the Municipality. Instead Britt Dalsgaard thinks it would be a dream scenario to hire a part time consultant that could work with development of the

village.

"[...] getting a local consultant here in Ranum in a half-time position who can work on the village's development with public relations and gathering ideas ... We are all volunteers and it's hard to find the time, so just think if there were a consultant hired to handle it and involve people." (Britt Dalsgaard 2020, 29:41)

Again the citation is an expression of how she does not seem to believe that the citizens in Ranum have the capabilities to be their own project managers in the future development of Ranum.

How do they work with local development?

As a final part of the interview it was the aim to clarify if there was any ongoing local development projects outside the Municipal instigated planning processes.

In Ranum, Britt Daalsgaard highlights a collaboration, named Søbyerne, between the Citizens Associations from the three cities Rannum, Overlade and Vilsted as worth mentioning. The purpose of Søbyerne is to create shared events between the three villages and furthermore it maybe have a future potential of being part of creating a new brand for the whole area. (Britt Dalsgaard 2020)

"[...] we are trying across all the Citizens Association to get the project up and running. Because we can see that fewer and fewer people will be involved, and in the future we may have only one single Citizens Association in these three cities. " (Britt Dalsgaard 2020, 35:37)

She also sees new forms of collaboration between the local cities as a way of encountering the fact that it can be difficult to engage people in the local community.

With financial support from the Municipality and help from a private consultant firm a strategy plan was formulated in 2018. The scope the plan is through collaboration between the three cities and by branding the area as a unity the aim is to revert the population decline, focus on developing tourism and new potential business' and how to develop the collaboration between the three villages (Bugge & Hjeds 2018).

Key findings

The interview with Britt Dalsgaard brought some interesting findings. At one hand Britt Dalsgaard wants to be part of the urban renewal project and she thinks that the public participatory process has been fine. On the other hand she is very clear about that it is the Municipality's responsibility to be both project manager and facilitator as she does not think that the local actors has the necessary resources to handle the development of Ranum by them self. One explanation, according to Britt Dalsgaard, could be that the decline Ranum has experienced has lead to an over representation of less resourceful people in the village.

In the urban renewal program it was stated that the purpose with the public participatory

processes was to ensure that project proposals was a reflection of the local actors ideas and furthermore enhance ownership among the local actors. It does not seem like that is what happened in reality. Britt points out that even after the project proposals has been formalised in the plan for urban renewal there still are disputes internally about the projects. The lack of local enhancement is further supported by the facts that the local actors place the responsibility for development at the Municipality. Britt several times underline that she clearly sees it as the Municipality's responsibility to take the initiative in the process. As a result of what Britt describes as lack of communication and initiative from the Municipality the urban renewal project is on stand-by. This is again a sign of that ownership to the urban renewal project in Ranum is not so deeply rooted among the citizens that they want to take responsibility for further action. It seems like the urban renewal project is more Vesthimmerlands Municipality's project of encountering the shrinkage of Ranum rather than the people in Ranum developing their village.

Finally it is worth mentioning that there is a desire in Ranum to try and generate development. The example of 'Søbyerne' where three cities team up and try to promote their local area shows that there is a will. Supported by funding from the Municipality a strategy was developed in cooperation with a consultant firm, but there does not seem to have been much action since the strategy was formulated. This could also be interpreted as there is a will to start up initiatives but a lack of resourceful local actors that have the necessary capabilities to implement local initiatives.

5.3.2 Urban renewal project in Gedsted

In 2016 representatives from Gedsted contacted Vesthimmerlands Municipality with a desire to start an urban renewal project. The wish was granted and in 2016 and the urban renewal project was started. The urban renewal project has three main focus points, enhance a positive development in terms of population in Gedsted, improve the attractiveness of the village by physical improvements and finally there was focus on improving the safety for pedestrians cyclists in the village. (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and sbs rådgivning a/s 2017)

The project was organised with a steering committee consisting of a representative from the planning department, two members from the City Council, both representing Gedsted, a local actor from Gedsted and a representative from SBS Consultants A/S (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and sbs rådgivning a/s 2017). Furthermore, two working group consisting of 16 local actors were facilitated. The relation between the steering group and the working groups is defined as a 'binding partnership' where the local actors are obliged to be active in both the formulation of the planning program for the urban renewal project and in the process of implementing concrete projects (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and sbs rådgivning a/s 2017).

Public participation in the process of developing the urban renewal plan consisted of one public meeting where approximately 100 local residents attended. Two workshops with the working groups where ideas and proposals from the public meeting were developed into concrete projects. Other than that local actors and especially the two working groups has been very active in terms of fundraising and working with the implementation of projects

(Vesthimmerlands Kommune and sbs rådgivning a/s 2017).

How has citizens experienced current planning for shrinkage?

Doris Lauritzen is a very engaged local actor. She represents Socialdemokratiet in the City Council and she has been one of the driving forces in the urban renewal project in Gedsted. Doris Lauritzen has been represented in both the overall steering group and in one of the two working groups. In this context this interview has been focusing on her role as an active citizen in urban renewal project and not as a local politician - a distinction that might be hard to make.

Doris Lauritzen has been very pleased with the collaboration with the Municipality during the urban renewal project. She highlights that the local actors in Gedsted has had rich opportunities to come with inputs and influence during the process and in the final planning program.

"We have a lot of influence. The Municipality basically has to just do the practical work and then pay the bill. We actually decide everything ourselves." (Doris Lauritzen 2020, 8:12)

As the quote states she sees the collaboration with the Municipality as a partnership where the local actors has an important role in developing ideas and projects and the Municipality's role is to help with technical and financial support. Furthermore, she points out that this sort of collaboration is only because there is large interest in civic engagement in Gedsted and many local resources that be activated.

"In this village there are lot who are passionate about making an effort". (Doris Lauritzen 2020, 19.22)

Even though many different local actors have been involved in the process Doris emphasises that despite minor disputes there is a strong sense unity and local agreement to the final proposals in the development plan. (Doris Lauritzen 2020, 4.31)

It is interesting how the urban renewal project has been driven by strong local actors and the Municipality's role to an extend have been reduced to formalising the process and helping with technicalities and funding.

How do the citizen view the ideal planning process? What is the goal of planning to them?

Regarding who has the responsibility for the development in the cities in the municipality Doris states:

"It should be the municipality that is responsible (for the development) but I know about both sides (as a politician and as a citizen) and then I know that nothing will happen if we (the citizens) do not do it ourselves. That is actually a criticism of them (the politicians)." (Doris Lauritzen 2020, 10.37)

Idealistic Doris Lauritzen thinks it should be the Municipality that should have the overall responsibility but she also acknowledge that a large part of the responsibility for development rely on participation and engagement from local actors. On the other hand she does not necessarily see it as a problem that the Municipality is not sole responsible for development.

"Somehow, I think we, as citizens, are also obliged to do some things ourselves, and not just think the public sector should do everything for us" (Doris Lauritzen 2020, 18.23)

Inhabitants in the local areas have a obligation to be active in the development of their communities if they want improvements and in order to have influence on the development it essential that:

"If people want influence then people need to show up where you can get influence." (Doris Lauritzen 2020, 21:18)

In this context that if you want to influence the urban renewal project you as a citizen minimum have to participate in the public meetings where the foundation of the project is created.

The dream scenario for the future development in Gedsted was also discussed during the interview. Doris explains that the long term goal is that population decline would be turned into growth in population.

"The dream scenario is that Gedsted is growing, but that depends on whether or not we are enough people to keep running our school and grocery shop." (Doris Lauritzen 2020, 35:15)

Population growth is the overall goal as it is regarded as essential for the future existence of the local school and shops in Gedsted (Doris Lauritzen 2020).

How do they work with local development?

Finally Doris Lauritzen reflected on the future development of Gedsted and how the actors work with local development outside the Municipal facilitated processes. Doris explains that she see the urban renewal project as just a starting point for a continuous development of Gedsted.

"The idea is also that when we have finished the last of the area renewal project, we (the citizens) continue on." (Doris Lauritzen 2020, 17:56)

She even explained that during the urban renewal project the local actors felt that the progress was to slow and they could not wait for the Municipality to start up the projects. This resulted in some of the projects were implemented without involving the Municipality (Doris Lauritzen 2020, 17.33). Furthermore, Doris Lauritzen explains that even though the urban renewal project was allocated 3 millions the Citizens Association has been very active in terms of applying for further funding to renewal projects.

"We [the Citizens Association] are looking for all the funds, savings funds and other investment pools at the Municipality." (Doris Lauritzen 2020, 3:59)

This is an example of that the local actors both has the initiative, resources and capabilities to work with continuous development of their local area outside Municipal instigated processes.

"We have to do everything we can with someone else [other than the Municipality] that want us, so that we can make as many initiatives as possible." (Doris Lauritzen 2020, 14:51)

Finally they are aware of that there could be some benefits in developing some partnerships with the other villages in their local area. Especially, Doris Lauritzen pinpoints an example of how six villages joined-up in an attempt to put pressure on the Region in order to get a locally based ambulance (Doris Lauritzen 2020, 24:35).

Key findings

The urban renewal project in Gedsted has several interesting aspects. First of all is the project instigated by local actors from Gedsted and they have been deeply embedded in the process of formulating the urban renewal plan. As Doris Lauritzen point outs, they have had plenty opportunities come with inputs and have a strong voice in the process. The local actors see them selves as project managers and the Municipality has acted as a sounding board and being helpful with funding and technicalities. Idealistic Doris thinks that it should be the Municipality who is responsible for the development of Gedsted but she acknowledged that the local actors has a large responsibility as well. Overall Gedsted is an example of a village where many resourceful people have both the desire but also the capability to take action in order to develop the village. This is emphasised by the fact that they do not see the urban renewal project as a isolated project that can secure the future of Gedsted but a stepping stone for further development with the citizens as their own project managers. Finally Doris underline there is a general consensus among the local actors on the future path for Gedsted.

5.3.3   Løgstør

Løgstør is defined as an area town in the Municipal plan (see 5.1 on page 62) (Vesthimmerlands Kommune 2017*c*). As one of the four major cities in Vesthimmerlands Municipality the planning situation is different than in Ranum and Gedsted. Instead of urban renewal projects planning for development of Løgstør is formalised in a masterplan where initiatives for further development are described (Vesthimmerlands Kommune and COWI 2018).

How has citizens experienced current planning for shrinkage?

As it is another planning situation it has also influenced the scope of the interview with Anders Bloksgaard. The interview was focusing on how citizens and organizations in Løgstør experience the collaboration with Vesthimmerlands Municipality and the possibility to be included in planning and development processes. Anders Bloksgaard is the director of Limfjordsmuseet in Løgstør and qua position he is part of Vækstforum Løgstør which is

an umbrella organisation for the three organisations chamber of commerce, tourism and business in Løgstør.

Anders Bloksgaard is fairly pleased with both the possibility to be included in planning and development processes. About the communication with Vesthimmerlands Municipality he states:

"I experienece that as fairly good." (Anders Bloksgaard 2020, 27:16).

He gives an example of how the Municipality see Vækstforum Løgstør as an important actor and specificly invite them to dialogue when there is planning and development issues. (Anders Bloksgaard 2020, 13.46) Even though he thinks that the collaboration with the Municipality is reasonable he still point to the fact that he sees a range of other municipal challenges as a hinderance for the development of Løgstør.

"Municipal challenges - Relatively poor cohesion, there is no actual main city, as in many other municipalities... There has instead been an attempt at dividing it between four cities (Aars, Løgstør, Farsø and Aalestrup), where each town has a profile as either tourist, education, health or commuter town." (Anders Bloksgaard 2020, 21:45)

The fact that the Vesthimmerlands Municipality is result of merging four independent municipalities has resulted in a fragmented municipality where the task is to find new identities to cities that used be the main city in their own municipality. Furthermore, this result in Anders' opinion in a municipal planning that seeks to plan for even development in the whole municipality. Which again is making it difficult to differentiate and stage local resources (Anders Bloksgaard 2020, 23:28).

Finally Anders points to the fact that several both regional and local political decisions has resulted in that Løgstørians feels that numerous services has been taken from the town. This has lead to a sense of distrust and a feeling of Løgstør against the world in the town (Anders Bloksgaard 2020, 43:10).

How do the citizen view the ideal planning process?

It has now been clarified how Anders Bloksgaard has experienced the Municipality's handling of the problems caused by shrinkage. Although he is overly satisfied with the current collaboration, he also makes some reflections on what it takes to ensure good planning in Løgstør. To this end, he has a relatively clear position on how the division of responsibilities should be, where he says:

"In the end, it is the people who live in the community who are responsible. The expectation of someone coming from outside and creating development should not be there." (Anders Bloksgaard 2020, 19:34)

As the quote shows, Anders Bloksgaard is of the belief that it is primarily the citizens themselves who are responsible for local development. Citizens must thus create development, and not just wait for private actors or the Municipality to do it for them. However, he is a little more nuanced in relation to the Municipality's role, where he actually points out that the bottom-up approach he wants, which has the Municipality also a large

part of the responsibility. As he says:

"There are many of these things that would not be possible if the Municipality does not support, but the initiative for the development, the direction it should take, I often find that it comes from below" (Anders Bloksgaard 2020, 19:53)

It can be assumed that Anders Bloksgaard here points out that the Municipality must create the framework for bottom-up initiatives. It is not enough just to say that the citizens must take care of themselves, it also requires that the municipality helps them to take care of themselves and the development. There is no doubt that he sees the citizens in charge when it comes to planning, and therefore it must also be interpreted that he considers them to have the necessary skills to some extent. To be clearer, it is now relevant to look at what they are doing in practice to ensure local development.

How do they work with local development?

Finally, Anders reflected on how they are working with local development internally in Løgstør. He explained that there is not a citizens association working with development in Løgstør instead he again refers to the three organisations presented in 5.3.3 on page 80:

"You have been looking for a Citizens Association - there is none, but there is a business council, a trade association, and a tourist association and the three organisations cooperate a lot." (Anders Bloksgaard 2020, 10:45)

Those three organisations are seen as the dominant actors in terms of local engagement and development. They especially focus on how increased tourism can secure economic growth and be the foundation of the future development in Løgstør. Having three so strong actors could come at the risk of only very few had the possibility to influence scope of the future development in Løgstør. Anders does not see such a problem, as he states:

"As bad as the cohesion is in Vesthimmerlands Municipality... equally homogeneous is the cohesiveness in Løgstør" (Anders Bloksgaard 2020, 29:37)

Anders Bloksgaard is convinced that the majority of the citizens in Løgstør agree with the path of development Vækstforum Løgstør is representing. He further elaborate that people in Løgstør sort of say feel they have a common enemy in urbanisation and centralisation (Anders Bloksgaard 2020, 30.10). Furthermore, Anders Bloksgaard emphasises that:

"These three organisations are democratically founded with elected boards." (Anders Bloksgaard 2020, 41:02)

With that in mind Anders Bloksgaard argues that everyone that want to be part of the development in Løgstør has the possibility as they can run for election to the board of direction.

"In my experience it is not an excluding collaboration, rather contrary, those who want to make an effort have the opportunity to contribute." (Anders Bloksgaard 2020, 41:49)

nEven though Anders several times pinpoint that he sees it as an open organisation based on common objectives it could be seen as a limitation how the Growth Forum is structured.

As it is structured by three strong organisations (business, trade and cultural) which all have the agenda of developing Løgstør in order to strengthen their own interests in terms of creating better foundations for business, trade and tourists it can be seen an excluding collaboration in terms of representing the common Løgstørians interests. In that light it is interesting that there is not a citizens association in Løgstør at the current time. During recent years there has been attempts to facilitate such organisations. In 2017 the organisation Løgstør Bosætningsforening was established (CVR API n.d.). The overall purpose of Løgstør Bosætningsforening was to unite interested local actors and define a common objective for the development of Løgstør and especially how it could be possible to attract new citizens (lokaltindblik.dk 2017). Løgstør Bosætningsforening was a somewhat short lived experiment and they were closed again in 2018 (CVR API n.d.). The fact that there is not a citizens association in Løgstør could be result of either the citizens not having interest or the needed capabilities and knowledge on how to create the needed cohesion amongst the actors.

Key findings

Løgstør is an interesting case in many circumstances as it seems like a town that never fully have agreed with the fact that it is no longer the main town in it is own municipality. Like Anders Bloksgaard explains there is a strong sense of Løgstør against the world. In terms of how the local development is organised in the town it is interesting how three strong organisations seems to have a firm grip on the power to determine the future development. As Anders made clear during the interview he clearly perceive it as there is a strong feeling of cohesion in the town and the initiatives from Vækstforum Løgstør represent the overall opinion among the citizens in Løgstør.

It is also interesting that even though there has been attempts to unite local actors outside the Growth Forum there is has not been possible to develop an organisation that has been strong enough to survive. In that perspective it seems like there is a lack of forum where other perspectives than those represented by the Growth Forum can be presented and developed.

Key findings in the three cases

The three cases of Ranum, Gedsted and Løgstør represent three very different approaches to local development and how it is organised and driven. The urban renewal projects in Ranum and Gedsted is to a degree comparable as they objective was the same for both processes, enhance development in shrinking cities. At the same time the cases are very different. The urban renewal project in Ranum was instigated by the Municipality and it seems like the citizens in Ranum never really developed a sense unity and ownership to the process and initiatives instead they waited for the Municipality to take action, as Britt Dalsgaard said, it is their responsibility as they are paid for it. In Gedsted the situation was quite different as it was the citizens who instigated the process. Even though Doris Lauritzen idealistic thinks the Municipality should be responsible for developing cities she acknowledge that citizens has a responsibility to be involved in developing their villages.

This is truly reflected in the urban renewal project in Gedsted where local actors has been crucial in both developing and implementing initiatives. Another interesting difference in the two cases is local resources. In Ranum the citizens feel they lack the necessary resources and capabilities where in Gedsted there are many local actors who wants to contribute and take responsibility.

On of the reason to why there is such differences in the two urban renewal projects might be found in the fact they have two different starting points. In Gedsted there seemed to developed a sense of 'we need to do something' and a willingness to contribute from the citizens before the urban renewal project even started. This seems not to be the case in Ranum. Even though it was stated in the planning program that public participatory processes should enhance locally ownership it seems like two public meetings and three work group meetings have not achieved this. This could be interpreted as if it is the Municipality instigating urban renewal projects there is a need of putting in an extra effort in activating and creating common objectives. On the other hand Gedsted is an example of how local actors can function as both project managers and developers if unity and common objectives are the foundation of the process and if there are some resourceful citizens who has the required drive. This also highlights that even the two processes for the urban renewal projects have been more or less the same the outcome is very different. Thus a process that has been successful in one case cannot automatically be applied in another context.

Løgstør is a different case and context but can still provide some interesting perspectives. In Løgstør three strong organisations with both resourceful members and economic resources seems to have gained domination in formulating a future for Løgstør. Having strong local actors is principally not a disadvantage but it comes with the risk of creating elitist arenas of decision making where common citizens are excluded from participation and influence. Anders Bloksgaard explained that different municipal departments often contacted Løgstør Vækstforum in order to get their opinion on the development of Løgstør. With that in mind such strong organisations might seem like the best option for input for the Municipality which again can lead to further exclusion of other interest in the town.

All three cases are examples of different challenges the Municipality needs to take in consideration when working with development of cities.

5.4   The politicians

In order to get an understanding of the political landscape shaping the decisions in Vesthimmerlands Municipality two interviews have been conducted with local politicians Asger Andersen (S) and Jens Lauritzen (V). This examination will be based around three key concepts:

- How do the politicians view current planning caused by shrinkage?
- How do the politicians view the ideal planning process?
- How do the politicians view local development?

How do the politicians view current planning caused by shrinkage?

Like the planners, both the politicians acknowledge that the municipality is facing several challenges especially population decline. They also agree that the focus of development should be to first stop this depopulation by increasing the attractiveness of the villages in general:

"Development in the villages is probably about stopping the depopulation of the villages." (Jens Lauritzen 2020, 12:10)

Here Jens Lauritzen equates development with stopping depopulation, something that seems contrary to the more traditional planning paradigm where development is typically equated to growth (see chapter 1.2 on page 6). Development in this sense is then not growth, but more in line with the ideas of qualitative development as a means to mitigate the effects of shrinkage. Asger Andersen share these sentiments:

"The first criterion for success is that we stop the population decline and that requires that we are continually attractive to live in." (Asger Andersen 2020, 30:40)

But while they agree on what the problem is and what approach should be taken in order to handle it, their opinions differ in terms of what planning can do. To Jens Lauritzen planning does not hold the adequate measures to properly handle these issues and he states that if it were possible to solve it by planning then the perfect plan could be written up and put immediately into effect (Jens Lauritzen 2020, 26:30). For Asger Andersen the issues that the rural villages are facing are a result of a skewed prioritisation in the development of the entire municipality based on the municipal plan:

"The villages must have a higher position in the municipal plan if they are to reverse this development." (Asger Andersen 2020, 47:22)

To him it is adamant that changes are made to the overarching framework as it does not provide the best possible grounds for development of the villages. In chapter 5.1 it was argued that most of the development goals are oriented towards physically growing the cities by expanding the available housing stock - a topic which shows to further highlight the two politicans' opinion on development: Jens Laurtizens is of the opinion that planning for the management of decline should in fact be the most concerned with securing and increasing housing opportunities (and cites Løgstør as a good example of how to attract socioeconomically advantaged citizens) (Jens Lauritzen 2020, 23:50). Additionally he is under the impression that there are more than enough developers that are interested in building new houses and apartments throughout the municipality, but the main issue is lack of interest from the citizens - nobody seems to want to move into the newly developed areas (Jens Lauritzen 2020, 16:40).

Asger Andersen on the other hand is a bit more sceptical of this kind of development; he rationalises the lack of development in the villages from a market economy perspective: *"But where there is no market anyway, why should we plan something there?"* (Asger Andersen 2020, 6:05). This is supported by some of the findings earlier in the report where it was argued that development of rural areas is down-prioritised in a neo-liberal planning paradigm as market interest has become the deciding factor (see chapter 1.1 on

page 5). From his perspective the municipality either needs to accept the current state of depopulation and general decline or take action (Asger Andersen 2020, 03:50).

"But I am also completely certain that if we do not do something different from what we have done so far, then the decline will continue." (Asger Andersen 2020, 37:58)

Concerning mobility their opinions also seem to differ as Jens Lauritzen expresses concern that the increased mobility is one of the driving factors of depopulation and the shrinking state that the municipality is currently faced with (Jens Lauritzen 2020, 07:55). For Asger Andersen this is not as important as increased mobility also potentially means it becomes easier to live a rural life, what is important then, to him, is to focus on life quality within the municipality instead (Asger Andersen 2020, 19:35).

How do the politicians view the ideal planning process?

Further examining what both politicians think the future development should entail reveals that they once again both agree that citizen involvement should be a key factor. Jens Lauritzen is of the belief that it is the politicians role to create the proper framework for supporting and encouraging citizen initiatives so that local development can be driven by the citizens that want to do it (Jens Lauritzen 2020, :12:10). He does not think it is possible for a municipality to be the sole actor driving development in these rural villages, especially so if the village itself is disinterested in engaging with the planning efforts:

"I don't believe we can run it - it has to be run by those who find it exciting which also ensures that it is used." (Jens Lauritzen 2020, 15:09)

Which is something that Asger Andersen largely agrees on, as he believes that, slightly paraphrased, volunteers can be made to do anything if they are listened to and empowered in the processes (Asger Andersen 2020, 42:35). He mentions several positive experiences regarding this and points to Gedsted as an example of the benefits of doing public participation within an established frame of reference so that citizens know what the expect of the process (Asger Andersen 2020, 18:00). To add to this Jens Lauritzen mentions that:

"It is probably one of the most important things; if something is to succeed, it must be something that those who live there think they are lacking." (Jens Lauritzen 2020, 4:00)

But again this is where they diverge slightly because as mentioned earlier Jens Lauritzen mostly seems to want to engage people in order to get them interested in new development in order to grow or regrow the villages - as with the example of building new housing. He also mentions a recent collaboration between the Municipality and citizens regarding fibre-optic broadband as an example of how citizen engagement can help increase interest from private developers (Jens Lauritzen 2020, 08:15). Additionally he adds that a goal for planning in the future should be to add more flexibility to the processes so that it can be more suited to the individual contexts and needs (Jens Lauritzen 2020, 28:25).

Asger Andersen seems more concerned with involving citizens for their benefit in terms of empowering them to develop the villages on their own terms. He mentions that in politics culture has historically been seen as something extra and not necessarily something to

focus planning and development around (Asger Andersen 2020, 23:40), which is something that the municipal plan should help alleviate; to him the purpose of the municipal plan is to showcase the opportunities and highlight the potentials of the are in order to encourage citizen engagement (Asger Andersen 2020, 25:45). On top of this he also expresses concern that the municipal plan might inhibit local initiatives it does not sufficiently address the development of rural villages (Asger Andersen 2020, 46:30). Finally he mentions that especially the challenge of keeping an adequate service level is something that the villages need to collaborate on in the of form partnerships and village clusters (Asger Andersen 2020, 08:55), as declining, or severely threatened, services are a condition of living in a rural area (Asger Andersen 2020, 14:10).

How do the politicians view local development?

This then begs the question of how they are approaching the planning for these problems in more practical terms. Some of their motivations and driving factors have already been clarified, such as Jens Lauritzen being in favour of encouraging market interest through citizen engagement and Asger Andersen wanting the focus to shift away from the major cities in the municipality and more towards the rural villages. In more practical terms he believes that they need to formulate an 'offensive strategy' concerned with new development following demolition of destitute housing (Asger Andersen 2020, 35:35). Jens Lauritzen adds the caveat that redevelopment needs to be done from an educated standpoint as a new feature in the city quickly becomes meaningless if the citizens are disinterested:

"But when you demolish houses and make more urban squares and public areas and such within the city... if there is no one to use them or there can be no social life there, then it does not benefit the content of the city." (Jens Lauritzen 2020, 10:50)

So again in practical terms it appears they agree that there is a need for making a strategy focused on the physical growth of the city, as there is a lack of follow up on current demolition practices. Regarding their approach to growth however Jens Lauritzen appears a bit more optimistic that the municipality can turn their state of shrinkage around and return to a paradigm of growth - if only citizens help create the needed market interest. Asger Andersen is mainly concerned with securing growth in the rural villages:

"Because I do not believe that Vesthimmerlands Municipality creates enough growth if we only grow in the centre. It means in the main cities" (Asger Andersen 2020, 36:45)

The goal, he says, should not be to aim for a return to massive growth, but rather to stop the population decline in short terms and then hope for a minor growth rate over a longer period of time. So that growth becomes an indicator that they are not declining rather than an end goal in itself. Which ties in well with the former point of establishing and sustaining village clusters as a means of further developing rural areas - and these clusters should not be confined by the municipal border, but should aim for including neighbouring village regardless of municipal affiliation (Asger Andersen 2020, 28:50).

Key findings

In summary the opinions of the two interviewed politicians are to some extent fairly similar, but differ in certain areas. They both agree that the villages should mainly be run by the citizens and not the Municipality, that depopulation is the biggest challenge that they are currently faced with, and that something should be done in terms of developing a housing strategy. The main point on which they seem to disagree is the purpose of planning and especially public participation: where it is on one side argued that the primary focus of citizen engagement should be to garner market interest and secure partnerships with private developers, it is on the other side argued that the primary goal of public participation should be empowerment in order to properly equip the rural villages with the proper tools to deal with their own individual needs. At the same time Asger Andersen argues that the focus in the current Municipal Plan is skewed towards the larger cities in the municipality and it does not provide a sufficient foundation for developing the smaller villages. Even though more then half of the municipals population is living in the smaller villages and rural areas he thinks that the role of them are neglected in the current plan. Furthermore, he argues that the Municipal Plan is limiting the smaller villages rather than encouraging development.

This divide in political opinion is to some extent what has been covered in more general terms in the chapter (1.2 on page 6) on shrinkage as one side keeps arguing for keeping relying on the market (in the New Public Management approach) and the other is in favour of rethinking the process to be more citizen-oriented with an increased focus on quality of life changes (potentially in a New Public Governance approach).

5.5   Institutional analysis

	Regulative	Normative	Cultural-cognitive
Strategies and plans	Main focus on settlement and expansion. Public participation mostly as dialogue and information	Biggest focus on time and resources. Growth as a precondition for development	Rely on a return to growth (path dependency). Attracting settlers as a competition with other municipalities
Planners	Lack a framework for strategic planning of rural areas. Lack a formal framework public participation. View village committees as largely dysfunctional.	Positive approach to public participation and collaboration. Want to encourage ownership of planning. Citizens should be a driving factor in the planning of their own village. Want to bring people together. Want to encourage collaboration between villages.	Follow a business-as-usual approach (public participation as dialogue and information). Do not encourage citizen initiatives (and it is their understanding that this is the task of the politicians and the citizens themselves).
Citizens	Lack a framework for participatory processes. Want a more clearly defined distribution of roles.	The Municipality should be in charge of development initiatives. Citizens also hold some responsibility for development. Villages should collaborate in partnerships (except Løgstør).	Citizens' associations work somewhat isolated in that they only ask the Municipality for help when they get stuck (the Municipality as an antagonist and not a partner). Associations facilitate processes instead of the Municipality. Private partnerships are sought without the help of the Municipality. Some have not moved on from the four previous municipalities.
Politicians	Lack a framework for strategic planning of rural areas. Need to reconsider public participation.	Citizens have most of the responsibility for development. Need to do something different from the current approach. Villages should collaborate in partnerships (even across municipal borders). Halt the depopulation and increase settlement.	Still somewhat concerned with planning mainly for growth. Public participation is still mostly information and dialogue.

Table 5.1: Summary of key findings in the collected data in relation to the three institutional pillars.

The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the findings so far through the application of institutional theory - this interpretation will be centred on the three different pillars and how the different actors interact with them. The key findings have been summarised in the above Table 5.1 and have been categorised in terms of each of the three pillars.

The regulative pillar

The examination of the main strategies and plans dealing with the future development of Vesthimmerlands Municipality and how they should approach public participation revealed that few measures are in place that directly address shrinkage. This combined with an impression of an approach to public participation more concerned with providing citizens with information and engaging in dialogue in order to mitigate potential dissatisfaction presents a picture of a strategical framework not geared towards dealing with shrinkage. These initial assumptions were confirmed by both of the planners who both felt that the lack of a framework for them to work within effectually inhibited their work in terms of both planning for the rural areas and public participation. On top of this the village committees, a potential frame for citizen engagement, is seen as largely dysfunctional as citizens either do not interact with it or simply bypass it in the process. From the citizens' perspective there is likewise a lack of a general frame of reference when it comes to public participation as the many different processes have left some citizens confused as to what their role is and should be when the municipal wants to develop their village. Both the politicians likewise agreed that there is a need to establish a strategic framework for the planning of the rural areas as they otherwise do not get the attention they need in order to stop the depopulation that is currently threatening their existence. They also agreed that the Municipality's current approach to public participation might need to be rethought with a larger focus on engaging citizens and empowering them so that they are capable of developing their villages on their own accord.

The normative pillar

On the normative aspect of the strategies and plans there were repeated mentions of growth, expansion, and resource management. Even the strategies concerning public participation were more concerned with the stressing that the Municipality should first and foremost manage their time and resources when considering which approach to take for public participation - rather than viewing the inclusion of citizens as a way of gaining resources and reaching untapped potentials. This is in direct opposition to the norms guiding the planners as they are far more convinced of the positive aspects of not just public participation but collaboration and interdependent partnerships. They both see it as a way of encouraging ownership of planning processes and transferring some of the development load from the Municipality to the citizens, while ensuring that the citizens get the kind of development they feel they need and want - at the same time villages should be encouraged to work together so that they can be stronger together and handle issues collectively that might be too much for the individual village. This type of collaboration is something that most of the citizens were open to, while also holding the belief that they hold some of the responsibility for the development of their village. Some did argue that it

is specifically the task of the Municipality to initiate and run these processes and were less open about collaborating with neighbours as they felt threatened enough on their own and would not want to spread their resources thin by working in a bigger context. Lastly the politicians both agreed that it is mainly the responsibility of the villagers to secure the development of their village, while the politicians themselves should work towards securing they have the proper frame to work within - which ties well together with the point made about how there is an explicit need for them to approach this differently than what they have currently been doing. They also found value in encouraging partnerships between villages, especially as a way of mitigating the negative effects of closing services. Their perspectives on public participation did differ slightly where one was more in favour of engaging citizens as a way of getting the market and private developers interested in investing in the municipality, while the other shared some of the norms of the planners' and saw public participation as a way of empowering the citizens while increasing their sense of ownership. To both politicians the main goal of planning for these areas should be to halt the depopulation and focus on attracting newcomers to the municipality.

The cultural-cognitive pillar

In terms of the cultural-cognitive pillar it seems like the strategies and plans follow the same plan as they have previously; that is the main goal is still planning for growth. This is mostly expressed through the conservative approach to public participation and the recurring focus on the attraction of new citizens. The same can be said to an extent about the planners, as they too seem to follow a business-as-usual approach in regards to both the strategic planning and public participation. The citizens are likewise continuing in the same path as usual as there are several examples of them trying to solve their development issues in local associations, without necessarily involving the Municipality until the very end - instead of engaging in dialogue with the Municipality and drawing on their resources in a collaborative process. The politicians also seem to follow the tried and tested way that they are used to as they too seem mostly interested in growth, with public participation being used for information and dialogue.

Key findings

So in summary there is a clash of several sub-institutions within the broader defined institution of Vesthimmerland Municipality: the four different perspectives that have been examined here all express distinct needs and wants from the system in general. Interestingly they all agree that especially the regulative pillar is lacking critical features, such as general frameworks that supply actors with a common understanding of their roles, the general objective, and the degree of their involvement in the process. This is made especially clear in the normative pillar as most of the norms they express fit perfectly with the established goals and values of interactive governance (see chapter 4 on page 41), but they are left without the proper tools to follow up on this desired state of planning as the supporting system is not in place. Their current actions, as showcased in the cultural-cognitive pillar, can then be said to be a result of this, in that the system supports the approach that they

are used too (instead of the ideal way as dictated by the norms), which leads them to continue in a business-as-usual manner.

To reiterate all the right pieces of the puzzle have been gathered: they all agree on the main issue (lacking framework) and mostly agree on the way it should be (citizen empowerment through collaboration), but come short of connecting them in a full picture because of the way the public administrative system is currently tied together. A more holistic approach to interactive governance is then supposed to help alleviate this and essentially transform the system from one of predominantly NPM to NPG. How this should be done and what the benefits of doing it can be will be detailed in the following chapter.

Discussion 6

We have now become clearer about the underlying mechanisms there is in play in rural planning in Vesthimemrlands Municipality. It has been clarified how the institutional pillars conflict with each other, where the regulations the actors work within in particular do not conform to the norms outlined by the planners, citizens and politicians. In addition, it appears that the practice approach, also understood as the cultural-cognitive pillar, has difficulty coping with their norms, which means that the planning framework does not work as intended. Although there is a clear focus on a bottom-up approach to governing planning, their practice has not worked in all places, where Ranum in particular seems to be left to themselves, and this has resulted in planning and development being stopped. Therefore, in the following we will discuss how their current approach relates to new public governance and interactive governance, and further whether and how Vesthimmerlands Municipality can change their political administrative system to better cope or even utilise the state of shrinkage.

6.1 Dilemmas of governance in strategic rural planning

In chapter 1.2 it was found that a state of shrinkage, which Vesthimmerlands Municipality is currently in, necessitates involving citizens more in planning, which in chapter 1.4 was put into the perspective of communicative and collaborative planning theory. The result of this was that the political administrative system that planning is situated in, not only frames and shapes planning practices, but also the understanding of why planning is being done in a certain way. Put differently, public participation serves a different purpose in a system of New Public Management than it does in New Public Governance.

The practical examples in chapter 1.6 highlighted the potential of NPG as three different municipalities had had varying degrees of success with empowering the general public: Sønderborg-modellen is an example of how an established framework can create smoother, more inclusive planning processes that allow officials to rely on citizens initiatives and local knowledge, Syddjurs Municipality shows how providing the proper tools and encouragement for said initiatives can help a community develop and flourish, while Jammerbugt Municipality is an example of the benefits of interdependent partnerships where public participation becomes a resource in itself rather than an added expense. That is not to say that all these examples are perfect and without fault, but on a surface level they serve to confirm some of the claims made in relation to shrinkage - that an NPG approach can help stop and maybe revert the negative development.

Referring back to the analysis (the interviewed stakeholders) two of the major findings

in regards to governance was that public participation is currently done with already powerful stakeholders or carefully selected actors with vested interests in the project, rather than the general public; and that these processes are most often situated near the lower half of the ladder of participation. This arguably situates the current planning approach in Vesthimmerlands Municipality closer to New Public Management than New Public Governance. What makes this point especially interesting is that a majority of the interviewed actors argued that development should be carried out in mostly bottom-up processes where the Municipality acts as a partner and facilitator instead of constraining initiatives. So on a normative level there was wide agreement to pursue New Public Governance as the dominant strategy, but on a cultural-cognitive level most actors did not manage to embrace a bottom-up approach, but rather relied on tried and tested methods of dialogues and information sharing. In this way the dominant system in the Municipality cannot be said to be either fully NPM or NPG, but rather a combination of both. The problem with this, from an idealistic point of view, is that many of the nuances and positive factors of NPG are overshadowed by a focus on private interests and growth that usually accompanies NPM (see chapter 1.5 on page 16).

In the case of Vesthimmerlands Municipality a majority of the interviewed stakeholders pointed out how there is no framework for how to engage with public participation, which was confirmed by examining the planning documents that outline the strategy of the Municipality. This creates a contrast between Vesthimmerlands Municipality and the aforementioned cases, as what the other municipalities have succeeded in doing is establishing a common ground for citizen engagement. It also serves to highlight the point of public participation being a predominantly top-down process focused on information and dialogue rather than collaboration. This can also be seen to some extent in the strategies and plans as they show a degree of reluctance to empower citizens if it means it comes at the cost of political power (mentioned in 'Together we create Vesthimmerlands Municipality', see chapter 5.1), but is again contrasted by the two interviews with the politicians as they both acknowledged the need for both empowering citizens and increasing engagement.

Who holds the responsibility for public participation in general is also something that appears a bit uncertain in the context of Vesthimmerlands Municipality. Politicians, plans and strategies all state that it is a political decision and responsibility that needs to be reassessed on a case by case basis, while the planners at the Municipality do not explicitly see it as their responsibility to initiate public participatory processes - but rather the responsibility of the citizens themselves. The citizens, however, see it as the planners' responsibility as they are the ones they engage the most directly with during these processes. So these different conceptions of who is responsible for defining and initiating public participation creates confusion and inhibits the establishing of a system that can handle the current challenges faced by Vesthimmerlands Municipality. From the perspective of interactive governance it is the responsibility of both politicians and planners to encourage and engage in public participation by establishing a framework and articulating common objectives; resourceful citizens should be able to develop their villages by engaging with the system in an intuitive manner, while less resourceful citizens in potentially more challenged villages should be engaged by the planning department. Planning in interactive governance is as much about encouraging engagement through

empowering efforts as it is about steering processes - and it is important to note here that on a normative level most of the stakeholders agree that this is how Vesthimmerlands Municipality should proceed, they are just lacking the proper regulative support.

This is where the concept of metagovernance becomes relevant: the idea presented in Figure 4.4 on page 50 is that metagovernance can be a contributing factor in transforming the institutions that are shaping the current planning system into a system that can be better accommodate the needs of the municipality. Metagovernance as a reflection on the 'governance of governance' essentially means that within the politically administrative system there needs to be made considerations about how they are doing what they are currently doing and why they are doing it. Establishing a system of metagovernance could in this context help clarify what the purpose of public participation is and should be, how it is currently being carried out and whether or not this actually serves the stated purpose, and also address what needs to be changed in order to match the two, so that the process fits the purpose.

Considering the current system from a metagovernance perspective can also help explain some of the institutional clashes that were brought to light in the analysis: the result of the cultural-cognitive approach was that many of the stakeholders carry on in the way they are used to - even when their norms clash with current practices. So while their norms favour a New Public Governance approach, most of the interviewed stakeholders carry on in a New Public Management system that does not properly accommodate the type of interactive governance and public participation that is necessary to counter shrinkage. As stated, addressing the whys and hows of current actions is the purpose of metagovernance and bringing these considerations forth could help highlight the difference what the stakeholders think ought to be done and what is currently being done.

The differences in the planning processes of Gedsted and Ranum provide a practical example of the benefits of clearly defined roles and citizen empowerment. Doris Lauritzen seems to have managed to leverage her position within the political system to smoothen out the process creating positive results for the development of Gedsted, while Ranum, being left more to their own, was somewhat left behind as Britt Dalsgaard was not as interested in being the initiator, but rather thinks that this should be the job of the planners. So put differently, Gedsted is an example of how Vesthimmerlands Municipality carried out a good process that fits within the defined system of interactive governance, while Ranum on the other hand falls short of that. The goal is then to set up these aforementioned metagovernance processes in a way that actually helps institutionalise the way that public participation as carried out in Gedsted, so that villages like Ranum can receive the help it needs, in the way it needs it. The idea is that the reflexive and adaptive approach that interactive governance provides would allow planners to approach the Gedsted case as facilitators and the Ranum case as initiators, so that they in the former let the engaged citizens do all the legwork while they in the latter help encourage and empower citizens by showing them the possibilities.

Another thing to note is that the process in Gedsted was started one the citizens' own initiate, which seems to have resulted in a higher degree of ownership and gratification of the planning. While the process in Ranum on the other hand was started by the Municipality and seems to have failed in gaining considerable traction and motivating the

citizens. This also serves to show the benefit of having a common objective (emphasised in interactive governance) as it helped mobilise and focus the efforts in Gedsted, while the lack of a common objective drove the planning to a halt in Ranum when the citizens could not agree on how to redevelop the village square. In this way the practical examples of Gedsted and Ranum serve to confirm the initial suspicion that a sense of ownership (as defined by Lachapelle (2008) in chapter 1.4 on page 12) is a highly deciding factor in community development - Gedsted as an example of how the citizens feel ownership of the process, outcome, and distribution and thus feel empowered enough to carry out the desired development in the way they want it; Ranum as an example of almost the opposite, where the process was almost involuntarily imposed on them by the Municipality, where the outcome ended up being a sort of compromise that did not satisfy anybody sufficiently (the half-finished town square), and where Britt Dalsgaard felt she was disproportionately affected by the entire process as her fellow citizens held her accountable for the Municipality's decisions. Relating this back to chapter 1.4, Munthe-Kaas (2015) is quoted with stating:

"This disconnection of people from the institutions of urban governance has left citizens feeling that the future is something that has already been decided, rather than something that is owned and co-created by everyone." (Munthe-Kaas 2015, :221)

So in this context the lack of a pre-defined institutional space that can act as an arena for public participation seems to be the cause of the disconnect; Britt Dalsgaard sees this as the major problem in the process in Ranum, as citizens feel they have had little say in the actual development, as the process felt more top-down imposed than bottom-up initiated. The fact that the citizens have been unable to define a common goal for how to develop their village has led to a lack of ownership of the development of the town square, which in turn has caused development in general to come to a standstill. The argument from an interactive governance perspective is that it is the responsibility of Vesthimmerlands Municipality to first and foremost encourage and empower citizens to initiate development - provide the citizens with the resources to take control of development, instead of starting a process that fails because it fails at engaging the citizens and garnering the necessary support.

A key part of metagovernance lies in *"The development of identities involves the shaping of the actors' perceptions of themselves, each other, and their joint missions. This is done through storytelling, the production and circulation of knowledge, and the creation of institutional rules, norms, symbols, and rituals. The development of the capabilities of the network actors is an attempt to empower the actors to act alone and together. Empowerment involves the construction and distribution of rights, resources, competences, and political know-how."* (Torfing et al. 2012, :129). This has been one of the guiding principles of the analysis and serves to underline the importance of understanding the institutions that shape the planning of Vesthimmerlands Municipality and the planning practice as an institution in itself. And as was mentioned earlier it is exactly the lack of *institutional rules, norms, symbols, and rituals* that causes these discrepancies in the planning processes.

Løgstør is also interesting to follow up on as they seem to be without an actual citizens association, at least in the same vein as the other villages, but rather rely on their locally elected growth forum to represent their interests. This creates a slightly elitist and confusing

arena for public participation in Løgstør as it is unclear who is actually represented and what their interests are. Additionally there seems to be a strong identity rooted in the previous municipal system which creates a situation that is reminiscent of what (Hospers 2014) defines as *"church tower politics"*, where local politicians oppose each other instead of working together. So once again the lack of a general framework and clearly defined official channels through which public participation can occur seems to be hindering the development of the municipality. The argument made in interactive governance is that it is also the task of the Municipality to ensure that there are arenas for discussion that are open to all citizens, which does not seem to be fully the case in Løgstør, where the aforementioned growth forum seems to monopolise interaction with the municipality (the locals know who they have to go to in order to get something done). This presence of a powerful local actor is not necessarily bad, as it also serves to strengthen their position when talking to the municipality, while also helping in defining common goals for development. The downside is that there is a potential risk that the individuals involved will pursue their own interests over those of the village, without consulting with the rest of the citizens.

It is also interesting to compare Løgstør to the other two, as Løgstør is considerably larger and a former municipal city. The size alone seems to result in more conflicting interests within the city, while the past identity shapes interaction with the rest of the municipality. So while the approach in Ranum should be one of encouraging development and creating interest and in Gedsted should be one of facilitating citizen initiatives and forming partnerships, the approach in Løgstør is perhaps better described as one of a mediator; this essentially means that Vesthimmerlands Municipality needs to focus their efforts on sorting out who is representing which interests and for what reasons when it comes to developing Løgstør, while at the same time encouraging citizen initiatives. If the growth forum is strictly focused on how to obtain growth, it might discourage other citizens from participating in the planning debate concerning the general development of the town - hence the need for the Municipality to map out the different interests at play in the town and mediate between them. In this way a strong local actor can be both positive and negative for a town like Løgstør; positive in the sense that it serves as a visible actor that has clearly defined goals for the city and negative in the sense that it might not represent all interests and filters out certain opinions.

Another point to make concerning the lack of official channels of communication and participation is about the existence of the Village Committee. While slightly similar to the Sønderborg Model it does not achieve the same results as Vesthimmerlands Municipality does not go to the same lengths of institutionalising the committees as official bodies. The fact that they are barely mentioned by any of the actors and their limited presence in the planning documents highlights the vital difference between the two approaches, as the inclusion is systematised in the Sønderborg Model while it appears to be more arbitrary in Vesthimmerlands Municipality. One of the key critiques of the Sønderborg Model presented in chapter 1.6 on page 21 was that in some regards it is a fairly lax approach to planning, in the sense that it seems like the villages are left more or less to their own without much intervention from the Municipality. Ranum serves as an example of why this might not be the best idea, as they appear somewhat burned out on planning and lack the drive to initiate development. But it might be possible to engage them properly if they are empowered by Vesthimmerlands Municipality through a systematised

version of the Villages Committee. The committee should be somehow structured around interdependency and partnership-formation as exemplified in Jammerbugt Municipality, as this helped increase the sense of ownership dramatically and might be a concrete way of avoiding development standstill.

The idea here is to rethink the purpose of the Village Committee and reform the public participatory process to be structured around their inclusions, in the same vein as Sønderborg Modellen, with a focus on establishing interdependent partnerships, like with Jammerbugt Municipality, in order to ensure the continued co-development of the system. In this way the Municipality learns from the citizens and vice versa and ideally metagovernance allows the Municipality to adjust its efforts where needed - villages such as Ranum. The Village committee transform from a formality to an essential arena that through institutionalisation can serve as a platform for discussion of future development; an arena in which citizens, politicians, and planners can meet to define common goals, while providing a transparent structure for public participation.

The fundamental questions at the heart of interactive governance is whether or not it makes sense to impose the task of planning and developing on the citizens, whether or not they are interested in undertaking this task and claiming responsibility for the future of their villages, and whether or not they have the necessary resources to adequately rise to the challenge that shrinkage presents them with. But all these questions are forced upon villages when faced with shrinkage, as shrinkage threatens their existence. So the citizens need to address how and why planning and development should be carried out in the future, as does the Municipality as it needs to reassess the way it currently plans. The same holds true in terms of interest and responsibility as shrinkage has larger economical implications for the individual and planning becomes a matter of quality of life for every body concerned. While the final question forces responsibility on the Municipality to educate the citizens in planning, but also to train themselves in the art of public participation and metagovernance.

In summation the benefits of New Public Governance in rural areas seem manifold: empowered citizens hold more ownership of the planning and development, the Municipality can focus its efforts on those who need it the most while relying more on the resources of the citizens, private developers might gain more interest as citizen engagement grows, and lastly it provides an opportunity to plan for what matters the most for citizens themselves as planning will be less reliant on return of investment - this is especially important as areas affected by shrinkage can rely less on the private sector as defined in chapter 1.3; it is important that the public and civil sector learn to cooperate and develop without the help of the private sector.

Finally it raises the question of whether or not Vesthimmerlands Municipality is ready to address their business-as-usual approach and rethink how they do planning in the villages by acknowledging the consequences of shrinkage and restructuring the political system accordingly - do they have the courage to stray away from the known way of planning, the type of planning that has been dominant for the last few decades, and are they properly equipped to address the dilemmas this new situation presents them with?

6.2   Contextualising shrinkage

One of the initial questions raised in terms of planning for shrinkage was whether or not smaller rural villages stood to learn from the planning experiences of the more well-defined shrinking cities in for example Germany (see chapter 1.2 on page 6). As most shrinkage literature addresses the issues in the context of cities with far more citizens it was uncertain whether or not the ideas presented could be applied to this different context. Looking at the statements provided by the interviewed stakeholders, they seem to hold a perception of how planning ought to be done that fits neatly within the parameters of shrinkage, as defined in the literature review. That is that planning should focus on development rather than growth, that bottom-up initiatives are imperative for the continued existence of the villages, and that institutions must be fit to encompass and encourage public participation in new ways. So while much shrinkage literature currently focuses on how to rethink spatial planning in the context of cities (establishing parks and squares in place of buildings that have fallen out of use in the inner cities) it also holds merit in terms of planning for rural villages, in the sense that *the paradigm shift*, as Wiechmann & Pallagst (2012) call it, is more concerned with the administrative system that guides and defines planning rather than the planning itself.

Shrinkage as a perspective can also help clarify some of the events in the practical examples that have been investigated. In Ranum, development has failed to an extent as a result of a lacking framework, a disinterested private sector, and disempowered citizens, while the development of Gedsted on the other hand was driven by a few passionate citizens. Løgstør is an example of some of the more unique problems that arise when dealing with rural areas and the dangers of a strong identity; Løgstør's former role as a capital city in its own municipality stunts its interaction with the rest of the municipality and causes the town to lead a sort of isolated existence, where cooperation with others is only done for the benefit of Løgstør.

To follow up on the three challenges of urban governance as presented by Hospers (2014) in chapter 1.2 (moving from growth to accepting shrinkage, moving from local to regional strategies, and moving from power to empowerment) it is found that they are also present in the context of Vesthimmerlands Municipality. Addressing them in turn it can be said that growth thinking still seems to be the dominant approach to planning as securing new settlement remains a key goal for planning initiatives; that some the villages have realised the need for cooperation with immediate neighbours (besides Løgstør, which still sees the rest of the municipality as a direct competitor rather than a partner); and, that the Municipality is still struggling with how to properly empower citizens in public participatory processes (despite favouring and supporting the bottom-up style of governance on a normative level).

This final challenge is also reflected on the cultural-cognitive level where most of the involved stakeholders seem to follow a business-as-usual approach, despite conflicting norms. This is defined as a sort of path dependency and is perhaps best stated in the following quote:

"Over time, this collection of inter-related strategies and plans that reflect urban development

policy begin to constitute a specific self-reinforcing logic that can be captured by the concept of an institutional or urban development path" (Liebmann & Kuder 2012, :1157)

From this perspective the self-reinforcing logic becomes the dominant institutional development path, in the sense that planning institution of Vesthimmerlands Municipality is shaped more by its actions (which on a cultural-cognitive level adhere most to ideals of New Public Management with the inclusion of carefully selected powerful actors in an otherwise top-down system based on dialogue and information sharing) than by its norms (that lie closer to the ideals presented by New Public Governance and collaborative planning). The point is that the municipality needs to address shrinkage and its effects on a political and strategic level, as the current approach fails to fully engage the problems caused by shrinkage.
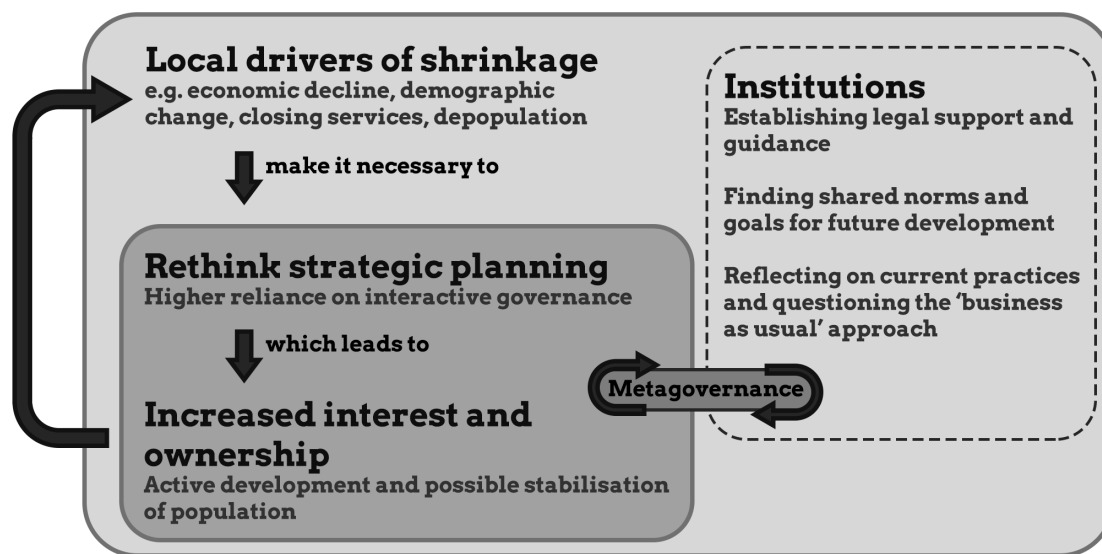

Figure 6.1: The illustration presented in the analytical framework in chapter 4.1.5 on page 50.

Looking back at the proposed model for understanding and addressing shrinkage that was presented as part of the analytical framework (Figure 4.4) most of the assumptions it was based on have to some extent been confirmed: strategic planning needs to be directed at addressing shrinkage in an effort to increase ownership of plans and development. This should be done through a system of metagovernance where the Municipality actively considers how and why it engages its citizens and constantly adjusts the system so that it keeps evolving as new and different challenges emerge. The metagovernance should be aimed at shaping the institutions that guide planning decisions to ensure that they form a coherent picture and mitigate problems of institutional discrepancies (such as the ones that were found as part of the institutional analysis). This will hopefully lead to some sort of new development of the villages and in some cases maybe even growth. A crucial difference in perspective lies in asking who is being planned for: is planning being done for the current citizens and to their benefit? - or is the main target of planning a more vague idea of potential settlers, people that might come at some point?

From a critical realist perspective the assumption that planning under the effects of

shrinkage should be seen as separate from more traditional planning (which in chapter 1.2 is argued to be planning for growth) has also been confirmed and is illustrated on Figure 6.2.
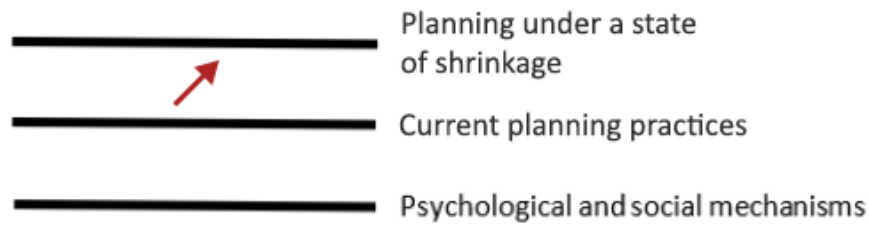

Figure 6.2: Own illustration of the proposed position of the different strata, with the two planning strata being the most important. The sociological strata is only there to provide additional context.

Put differently it means that if planning continues in the same way as usual in an area undergoing shrinkage then it does not properly address the issues at hand, as it exists on a different strata and something new emerges - and as argued in critical realism the strata are hierarchically dependant on but non-reducible to each other.

Conclusion 7

The analysis of Vesthimmerlands Municipality and their planning processes showed several benefits to rethinking their political administrative system to be more in line with New Public Governance. Approaching Vesthimmerlands Municipality from three different institutional perspectives (regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive) showed internal fragmentation, as normatively a majority of actors preferred and encouraged bottom-up processes that rely on empowered citizens, but regulatively and cultural-cognitively this support is lacking. Regulatively, there were little or no mentions of an overarching framework in the plans and strategies, a sentiment that was shared by the interviewed stakeholders as they all called for a more coherent strategy for public participation. Cultural-cognitively, many processes were carried out in the usual manner, meaning norms were not incorporated in daily activities. This is the foundation that is used to answer the research question:

How can a municipality transform their governance approach related to the strategic planning of rural communities, in order to better cope with, or even utilise a state of shrinkage?

It was confirmed through the investigation of this question that acknowledging a state of shrinkage is imperative and a necessary first step to take; shrinkage needs to be addressed on a strategic level, otherwise the Municipality risks carrying on in the usual manner without addressing shrinkage at all. In order to address how to systematise these institutional changes the concept of metagovernance was applied. Metagovernance is seen as the governance of governance or how these processes are carried out and for what purpose, and should be used to ensure that municipal actions fit their designated purpose - in practical terms it should be seen as a tool that helps ensure that participatory processes are done for the benefit of the citizens and not for legitimising purposes, such as dialogue meetings and information sharing.

Additionally municipalities faced with shrinkage should look to encourage and facilitate bottom-up development through partnerships with citizens to avoid the lack of private interest leading to a halt in development. This should be done in a system designed to empower and engage citizens in order to clarify and designate roles between the interacting actors. By doing this, citizens ideally gain a new sense of ownership over the plans and processes, which then becomes the driving factor in development rather than the pursuit of growth. The importance of ownership is perhaps best exemplified in the cases of Gedsted and Ranum where the same process had vastly different outcomes, possibly because of the difference in ownership. In Gedsted resourceful citizens with a strong sense of ownership latched on to the municipal initiative and intend to carry on planning and developing their village, while development in Ranum has entered a deadlock as citizens await municipal

action and the Municipality awaits citizen action. This serves to show the importance of having the Municipality as a central actor in this process, as it retains the task of helping those villages where the citizens cannot be a driving force in planning on their own.

Shrinkage can then be utilised to embrace a 'development first, growth second' mindset that allows for more flexible planning or otherwise disadvantaged rural areas. There is no guarantee that growth will return to the shrinking villages if they start planning for development, but they will be able to address some of the immediate challenges they are currently faced with such as the closing of public services. Likewise there is no guarantee that interactive governance or new public governance will be able to return the villages to a paradigm of growth, but one of the major findings is that main benefit of a new public governance approach is that it provides a formal system in which actors know their role and which can help institutionalise new ways of planning.

As a final remark Vesthimmerlands Municipality is advised to establish a common framework for the strategic planning of rural communities in which they emphasise channels of interaction in order to ease the burden on passionate citizens who are willing to initiate processes - in practical terms this could mean refashioning the village committees to serve as the central body through which Vesthimmerlands Municipality interacts with the different villages. This should be done in combination with an increased effort to empower the villages that lack the interest or resources to start these processes on their own. In a sense the more resources the Municipality pours into establishing a system of self-governance, the more resources the citizens will be able to contribute with in the overall planning of the municipality.

So in conclusion the first step in transforming the governance approach is to acknowledge shrinkage, and the next is to establish a system of urban governance that encourages bottom-up initiatives and empowers citizens in order to create a sense of ownership that can guide future development. The role of the Municipality then becomes that of establishing institutions where they are needed and engaging in interdependent partnerships.

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Appendix A

A.1 Interviewguides

A.1.1 Planners

1. **Introductory presentation**

1.1 What is your background?
1.2. What is / was your motivation for engaging as planner in planning?

2. **Municipal Practices**

2.1 Rural development - who does what today?
2.2 Citizen involvement - who does what today and why?
2.3 What is the framework that you planners are working within to promote development in the municipality?
2.4 The purpose of urban renewal projects?

3. **The role of the municipality in rural development and citizen involvement**

3.1 How do you ensure development in your villages?
3.2 How do you view the distribution of roles between citizens / municipality?
3.3 Cooperation processes - Who is responsible?
3.4 What is the purpose of involving citizens?
3.5 How do you handle citizen initiatives in planning? passionate citizens? Citizens with concrete projects?
3.6 Do you facilitate citizen engagement processes? How would you react if a citizen came up with a completed plan?
3.7 What opportunities and challenges do you experience in Vesthimmerlands Municipality?
3.8 What is the framework for good citizen involvement? What is the purpose of citizen involvement?

4. **Growth, shrinkage and development**

4.1 Do you relate to the settlement/transformation/shrinkage in your planning?
4.2 What do you mean by growth? Why?
4.3 Do you have a clear goal of increased settlement? Why? How should it be implemented?

4.3 How do you handle proposals from private investors?

5. **Opportunities and challenges in Vesthimmerlands Municipality**

5.1 What opportunities and challenges do you experience in Vesthimmerlands Municipality?
Political? Practical?
5.2 How do you get from strategy to plan (reality/realization)?
5.3 What can planning do (to stop the negative development) in Vesthimmerlands Municipality?

6. **Describe your dream scenario for urban development? In 5 years? in 10 years?**

A.1.2   Citizens

1. **Introductory presentation**

1.1 What is your background (why do you live in the city?)
1.2. What is / was your motivation for engaging as a citizen in planning?

2. **Development and planning**

2.1 What do you think is the ideal development for your city? (your visions and dreams for the city)
2.2 What is needed to ensure the development you want?
2.3 Who is responsible for ensuring development in your city? Which actors should be involved and how should the roles be distributed?

3. **Visions for planning and development in your city**

3.1 Is it possible for you to realize your visions?
3.2 What opportunities and barriers do you experience in realizing your vision for the development of the city?

4. **General opportunities and challenges as citizens in Vesthimmerlands Municipality**

4.1 How do you experience the possibility of having a political influence on planning?
4.2 How do you experience the opportunity to be involved in the municipality's planning?

5. **Cooperation with other actors**

5.1 How do you cooperate with the Municipality?
5.2 How do you cooperate together as citizens?

5.3 How do you cooperate with private actors?

6. Do you relate to settlement / transformation / shrinkage - that your city should not grow with new citizens and businesses - or is the ultimate goal of increased settlement and attracting more businesses?

7. **Describe your dream scenario for urban development? In 5 years? in 10 years?**

A.1.3   Politicians

1. **Introductory presentation**

1.1 What is your background (as politician)
1.2. What is your motivation for engaging as politician in planning?

2. **Political visions for rural planning and development**

3. **Opportunities and challenges in planning in Vesthimmerlands Municipality**

3.1 Political?
3.2 Cooperation with actors?
3.3 Practical?

4. **Ensure the development of the villages in the future**

4.1 Strategic?
4.2 Political?
4.3 Practical?

5. **Strategic rural development**

5.1 Who is responsible? Distribution of roles?
5.2 What should happen?
5.3 How should the development be?
5.4 What are the biggest barriers you encounter to realisation?

6. **Do you relate to settlement / transformation / shrinkage - that your city should not grow with new citizens and businesses - or is the ultimate goal of increased settlement and attracting more businesses?**

7. **Describe your dream scenario for urban development? In 5 years? in 10 years?**

A.1.4 Others

1. **Introductory presentation**

1.1 What is your background?
1.2. What is / was your motivation for engaging in planning?

2. **Management of citizen initiatives in planning**

2.1 Planning practices regarding citizen initiatives?
2.2 Distribution of roles and cooperation between citizens, the municipality and the private sector?
2.3 What is the role of the municipality in a bottom-up approach?

3. **Resources in planning**

3.1 Resources among local citizens?
3.2 Mobilisation of local resources?
3.3 Resources in the local business community?

4. **Advantages and disadvantages of citizen involvement**

4.1 Advantages and disadvantages of citizen initiatives?
4.2 How is bottom-up transformed into plan practice?
4.3 Can citizens be responsible for planning?

5. **Other reflections**

5.1 Planning practice?
5.2 Political?
5.3 How to develop rural districts?

A.2 Interview with Merete Bach Hansen - Planner Vesthimmerlands Municipality

00:00 Introduction to Merete, and her work with the strategic planning and municipal planning in Vesthimemrlands Municipality
4:57 General development in the municipality focusing on the planning strategy as the regulatory basis
5:55 Rural development and rural communities
9:20 Framework/strategy for collaboration with citizens in rural development
12:26 Urban renewal projects and citizen involvement
16:32 Framework of urban renewal projects

20:37 Village Committee and the cooperation between the villages

24:54 Shrinkage in Vesthimmerlands Municipality

27:32 Strategic framework of shrinkage

29:38 What can planning solve (opportunities and challenges)

32:02 Realisation of strategies and plans

35:25 The distribution of roles in planning

37:30 Practice for urban renewal projects

40:02 Ressources in the local communities 48:35 The goal of increased settlement and growth

52:00 Collaboration processes and framing

A.3 Interview with Peter Bach Frederiksen - Rural Coordinator Vesthimmerlands Municipality

00:00 Introduction to Peter Bach Frederiksen and the role of Rural Coordinator

2:42 What is the Village Committee in Vesthimmerlands Municipality

5:00 Cooperation with citizens

5:53 Financial pools to projects

7:07 Practice as Rural Coordinator

9:01 Opportunities and challenges for the rural communities

13:10 Vesthimmerlands Municipality's focus on development in rural districts

15:53 Ressources in the villages

17:00 How to engage the citizen

19:00 Collaboration with local private companies

23:51 Growth and shrinkage

27:50 Visions for rural development

31:25 Suggestions for relevant citizen to talk to

A.4 August Skovmand - Planner Vesthimmerlands Municipality

1:25 Introduction to August and his work in Vesthimmerlands Municipality

2:12 Managing national requirements for strategic rural planning in Vesthimmerland Municipality

7:00 The framework for rural planning in Vesthimmerlands Municipality and area renewal in Hvalpsund

15:00 The role of planner

17:40 The framework for citizen involvement in the Vesthimmerland Municipality

24:25 The roles of citizen engagement processes

29:28 Realities between citizens and planners

34:20 Barrier to citizen involvement

37:55 Collaboration across the organization

42:45 Handling of citizen proposals

47:00 Understanding of citizen involvement in Vesthimmerlands Municipality

A.5   Doris Lauritzen - Gedsted Citizens Association

02:34 Introduction to Doris and Gedsted residents association

04:28 Urban renewal projects in Gedsted

07:41 Citizen working group

10:27 Responsibility for planning and development in the villages

11:38 Citizens' Visions for Planning

16:07 Citizens' cooperation with the Municipality of Vesthimmerland

18:41 Citizen resources in planning

20:48 Managing different interests among citizens

24:10 Collaboration with other villages

27:21 Experience in seeking funds for projects

28:27 Challenges in planning processes

31:00 Collaboration with local companies

33:26 Reflections on the role of the villages and the future

35:00 Visions for Gedsted

A.6   Britt Dalsgaard - Ranum Citizens Association

00:00 Introduction to Britt Dalsgaard and Ranum residents association

4:41 Responsibility for planning and development in the villages

5:58 Urban renewal project in Ranum and the distribution of roles in planning

7:18 Working group in the urban renewal project

8:55 Conflicts between the citizens

12:00 Urban renewal projects is stopped

14:07 Handling conflicts between citizens

16:36 Ranum's development over the past years

18:32 Consequences of the negative development

20:20 Barriers and opportunities to development

23:42 Access to citizen initiatives and projects

26:30 Visions for Ranum

33:36 The role of the municipality in citizen involvement processes

35:03 Cooperation with other villages

A.7   Anders Bloksgaard - Løgstør Vækstforum

00.00 Introduction scope of thesis
5.01 Introduction Anders and his background
5.36 Anders talks about how he got involved in community development
7.38 Structural reform and how it has influenced the development of Løgstør
9.04 Responsibility in the development of Løgstør
13.20 The role of Growth Forum Løgstør in the development of the city
15.13 How to attract new citizens to the city
20.03 Opportunities and barriers
23.27 Opportunities for political influence
25.58 How are the opportunities to be included in the municipality's planning?
28.00 Collaboration between citizens in Løgstør?
30.57 Collaboration with surrounding cities?
34.01 Collaboration with private actors?
36.01 Shrinkage - How do you deal with the decline?
39.00 What is being done to ensure that the citizens of the city have the opportunity to be included in the planning and development of Løgstør?
41:25 Are you good enough to accommodate new inputs? Is growth Forum enforcing own agendas, and neglecting other inputs?
43.00 Reflections on how urbanisation and centralisation has lead to a decrease in services in Løgstør
45.00 Collaboration with Vesthimmerlands Municipality
46.23 Framework for public participation
49.28 Growth or development and final reflections on the future of Løgstør

A.8   Jens Lauritzen - Member of Venstre and the City Coucil Vesthimmerlands Municipality

00.00 – Introduction to Jens
00.44 – General reflections on development in Vesthimmerlands Municipality
02.30 – Visions for development and responsibility
04.15 – Challenges and possibilities in Vesthimmerlands Municipality
10.00 – The role of the Village Committee
11:50 – Visions and responsibility for development of the villages in the Municipality
16.27 – Private investments in the development of the villages
19.25 – Reflections on growth vs development
23.32 – Reflections on planning as a strategic tool in development
26.11 – Planning cannot solve problems on its own
28.27 – Planning should be flexible and not a hinderance for development
29.45 – The role of politicians in the future
32.55 – Citizens associations in Løgstør

A.9   Asger Andersen - Member of Socialdemokratiet and the City Coucil Vesthimmerlands Municipality

00.00 - Introduction of scope of thesis

02.18 – Introduction of Asger and his background

06.05 – The villages role in the current municipal plan – and general reflections on the future of the villages

8.50 – Collaboration between villages

9.40 – The role of institutions in rural areas

12.25 – Economy and possibilities to attract people to rural areas

14.10 – Smaller villages should accept lower level of service

15.45 – Rural decline is partly a result of market forces

17.05 – Reelections on urban renewal projects in Gedsted and Ranum

22.08 – Who has the responsibility for enhancing development in the municipality

30.40 – What is the ultimate goal for development – and how can we get there

36.45 – Growth should not only be ensured in the largest cities in the Municipality

38.00 – There is a need for a new approach to development

40.05 – The role of the Village Committee

42.29 – The role of local actors in rural development

46.00 – Final reflections on the future role of the smaller villages in the municipality

A.10   Kristian Krog - Director of Maltfabrikken, Ebeltoft

3:31 The process of Maltfabrikken and subsequent reflections on the project

9:58 Previous visions for the Maltfabrikken

11:55 Cooperation between citizens and the municipality

14:16 Mechanisms in the bottom-up approach to Maltfabrikken

16:58 Influence on municipal practice

26.00 Bottom-up communities

20:20 View on how to create collaboration across actors

26:00 The municipality's framework for civic initiatives

29:38 Organizing cooperation between actors

31:00 Negative rural development

32:12 Citizenship practice

33:31 Citizens with ideas (how do we handle it)

36:00 The role of civil society in planning

39:33 Reflections on the way to realisation

40:55 The political landscape in relation to large projects

A.11   Connie Mark Skovbjerg - Rural Coordinator Sønderborg Municipality

00:00 Introduction to Connie and her role in Sønderborg Municipality

00:52 the facilitator role as planner

2:58-4:29 Bad connection (no sound)

6:44 Managing various interests

7:39 Rural Community Council and village cooperation

11.39 The Sønderborg-model

14:53 Village Committee - How does that body work?

16:30 12 areas for rural development

18:44 Specific example of planning practice

21:00 Reflections on planning practice and concrete examples of how the Sønderborg-model works

26:50 Who should the citizens contact?

27:40 Election of representatives in the Village Committee

30.15 Citizens' opportunity for participation

31:50 How to enable local citizens to participate in planning

40:36 Dialogue with dissatisfied citizens

46:16-47:19 Bad connection (no sound)

47:19 Financial basis for projects

51:20 Cooperation with German municipalities

54:59 Opportunities and challenges for citizen-driven planning

58:58 Cities and citizens must take the initiative to planning and development themselves

1:01:00 Distribution of responsibilities between actors

1:03:30 Networking is important

1:10:09 Rural resources