

What if... the future is rural?

Strategic and Spatial Scenarios for Rural Development

00 Prologue

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Reading guidance

This report contains our thesis for the Master's in Urban Design with a specialization in Urban Architecture. It is structured in two books. In the first, you will find: an initial 00 Prologue, followed by the 01 Unfold phase and the 02 Understand phase. In the second book, you will find the phases: 03 Condense, 04 Form, and finally, we conclude with the 05 Epilogue phase. The appendix and design process will follow afterward. We will continuously present the various field studies we have conducted.

All illustrations not specifically listed in the illustration list are our own. Throughout the report, all quotes and interviews appear in their original language; hence, Danish appears in several sections. References are made to the appendix, which is located at the end of the report. The Harvard referencing method has been used for source citations. All maps not provided with a north arrow are true north. Page 26 and 27 contain blank placeholders in the timeline due to copyrighted photographs. The timeline is attached as a confidential appendix and will not be made public.

Helene Holm Dalsgaard

Lærke Kramer Christiansen

Abstract

This Master's thesis project by Helene Holm Dalsgaard and Lærke Kramer Christiansen from Aalborg University, 2024, titled "What If The Future Is Rural," delves into the complexity of rural development in Denmark. Focusing on both national and regional scales, as well as medium and local scales, particularly the village of Vestervig in Thy, the project seeks to address the question: "How can an innovative approach to rural development create new social, spatial, and economic drivers in rural areas to attract new resources and foster sustainable development while facing challenges including land use and dual urbanization?"

The project unfolds through five phases: Prologue, Unfold, Understand, Condense, Form, and Epilogue. Motivated by a desire to challenge conventional strategies and tools while respectfully acknowledging the complexity of rural development, the project aims to provoke new discussions and add fresh perspectives to the subject.

At its core, the vision of the project is to revitalize the role of farms and the natural landscape surrounding small villages, positioning them as central to rural life once again. By considering various agendas influencing rural development, including spatial, political, environmental, and social factors, the project proposes six strategic "What - if Scenarios" as a proposal for the sustainable development of rural villages in Denmark.

Acknowledging uncertainties, such as the impact of political decisions like the proposed CO2 tax on agriculture, the project underscores the critical importance of rural development for current inhabitants, prospective residents, food security, tourism, biodiversity, and cultural heritage. While the future political landscape remains uncertain, the imperative of nurturing rural communities and landscapes remains clear.

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01 Unfold

In the first section, "01 Unfold," we will begin by presenting our motivation and problem statement that will frame this thesis. The method and process will then be detailed in both text and diagrams, which we will revisit and summarize in the conclusion. Thy will be explored in a national, regional, and historical context, followed by an in-depth look at the future of rural districts and landscapes. All of this will culminate in a vision for the project.



Motivation

When reflecting on our own upbringing, which for both of us took place in rural and peripheral municipalities, we can clearly sense the changes that have been unfolding in the small communities outside the major cities in Denmark in recent years. We come from Aabybro with 6,100 inhabitants (Jammerbugt Kommune, n.d.), just north of Aalborg, and Lihme on Salling with 360 inhabitants (Lihmelandsby, n.d.), two villages that are very different and have experienced opposite sides of the development over the last 20 years. Throughout our respective upbringings, we have witnessed both sides: being relocated to different schools due to closures, and on the other hand, receiving new students for the same reason. We have experienced both ends of rural development in Denmark: in a village that has been prioritized, Aabybro, and in a small village, Lihme, which has been deprioritized with school closures and other related consequences. This development paints a clear picture of the changes over the past 20 years, where there has been a migration from very small communities to larger ones and further to Aalborg, Aarhus, Odense, and Copenhagen – a double urbanization. This raises the question – if this development continues: Should we increasingly concentrate development around the larger cities? And what does this really mean for our rural districts? And is it even relevant to prioritize rural districts if more and more people are moving away?

Life in rural areas is certainly not for everyone, but the same applies to life in larger cities, which is not suited to everyone. This means that as a country, we must continue to have offerings that embrace pluriversality and diversity by being able to offer a wide range of living structures both in the city and in the countryside. Furthermore, according to Henrik Lauridsen Lolle, who has researched 'the rural happiness paradox,' studies show higher average levels of quality of life in rural areas (Lolle, 2023).

But where does this major challenge with rural areas originate? This is not a question with a straightforward answer, as we will later explore in this project. Egon Noe, head of

the Center of Rural Research, offers his perspective on where one of the challenges lies: “

Der er sket både en fysisk og mental afkobling mellem byerne, landdistriktsbefolkningen, landbruget, landbrugslandet, nationalparker, turistområder, miljø, klima og biodiversitet. Selvom 1/5 af Danmarks befolkning bor i landdistrikterne, har vi ikke en fortælling om, hvilken rolle de spiller for byerne og vores samfund.” (Noe, 2022, p. 25).

Historically, there has been a mutual dependency and interconnectedness between the countryside and the village, as agriculture has provided food for people living in the villages. Villages have also been essential for the countryside, serving as trading places for agricultural products. With the structural development of agriculture, it has shifted from traditional locally-rooted family farming to becoming export businesses delivering food beyond Danish borders. This has resulted in fewer people having a connection to agriculture today, and as Noe describes it, we no longer have a narrative for the role rural areas play in cities and our society. In other words, a new narrative is needed.

The narrative about agriculture and rural areas has been thoroughly debated in recent years, including the latest election campaign, where CO2 taxes and the use of open land for handling climate and biodiversity issues were discussed. This involves recognizing that areas in the outskirts hold potential when it comes to establishing facilities for renewable energy and areas dedicated to tourism. This should be seen in the light of Denmark historically being an agricultural country, with agriculture today managing 60% of Denmark's land area (Noe, 2022). Another parallel issue has been that especially young people in rural areas have migrated to cities in large numbers to pursue education, subsequently rarely returning. At the same time, there has been an exchange in the opposite direction to rural areas, where socially vulnerable individuals have moved to the outskirts (Noe, 2022).



The complexity of the challenges in rural areas is significant, which may also explain why the model for creating viable local communities is extremely difficult to crack. Some initiatives are effective in one place, while others work well elsewhere. It is therefore difficult to find a 'one-size-fits-all' solution to the problems of rural areas. Perhaps it requires entirely new radical solutions that 'turn the tables' and add new tools to the toolbox.

We must also remember that agriculture is a significant part of our cultural heritage. The development in rural areas has occurred gradually and slowly, making it difficult for many to understand what we are losing in terms of culture and shared history if life in rural areas completely dies out and everything centralizes in the major cities. On April 16, 2024, the historical building Børsen from the 1620s, built by Christian IV, burned down. An event that deeply touched Danes because they could see cultural history disappearing before their eyes. Similarly, we should react when life in rural areas slowly disappears, which is also part of our common cultural history.

It is easy to lose track of all the different interests and agendas at play right now in our rural areas, villages, outskirts... a beloved child has many names. Generally, we can observe that the overall development picture is this: many outskirts struggle with depopulation, dissolution, social imbalance, inequality, and major questions about the future of agriculture and land use in open areas.

All of this has been the motivation for us to engage in this project. With humility and respect for the complexity, combined with the courage to think innovatively and differently from the usual strategies and tools used today, we feel the need to discuss and visualize new perspectives. Therefore, the project may be perceived as one that provokes and pushes boundaries, but it all stems from a heartfelt desire to bring

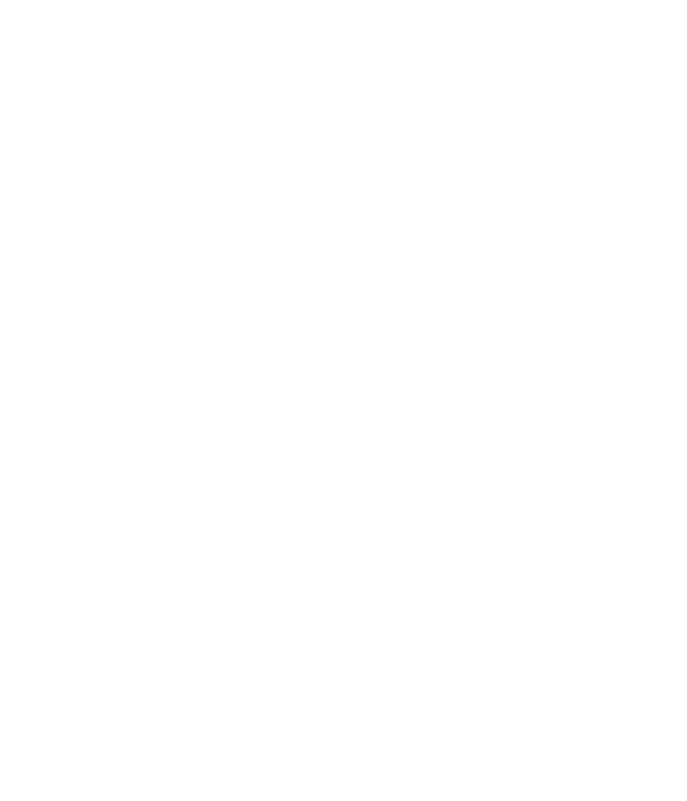
forth new and relevant strategies and design solutions. Because we believe it is important to work on creating quality of life and viable local communities throughout Denmark. Throughout the process, we have asked ourselves (and our supervisor) hundreds of questions, which together have formed the basis for our proposal for a development strategy... because what if...

- **What if the decline of villages and empty buildings could be reversed by activating the empty structures in new innovative ways?**
- **What if village life could be drawn out of the dead village centers and instead placed in contact with nature and landscapes?**
- **What if food production again became integrated as part of the local value chains, so both locals and tourists could eat food produced around them?**
- **What if sustainable and alternative housing forms could offer the qualities that young families seek in cities?**
- **What if family, leisure, and work life could merge into new types of locally-rooted economies and businesses in the countryside, which, for example, deal with locally anchored tourism?**

It is from these wonderings and questions that our project begins. We invite you to put on your visionary glasses and set aside the ideas and perspectives we currently hold about rural areas. Enjoy the read.

How can an innovative approach to rural development create new social and economic drivers in rural areas to attract new resources and create sustainable development while facing challenges including land use and dual urbanization?

Methodology and process



In this master's thesis project, we have gradually progressed through various phases, which have led us from a broad and general problem to a proposal with both theoretical and practical aspects. This progression can also be described in terms of scale, as we have transitioned from a national and regional scale to a medium, and ultimately to a smaller local scale. However, this progression has occurred as an interplay, depicted on the process diagram as a funnel that alternately narrows and opens up.

The process has been divided into four phases, inspired by the integrated design process, in which aesthetic, functional, and technical issues are interconnected to form a design proposal. The problem addressed in this project consists of various elements and a high degree of complexity, which is why an integrated approach has been essential to comprehensively address it. The process has been iterative, as we have continuously moved back and forth between phases and scales, aiming for each phase to inform and contribute to the others (Knudstrup, 2004). The phases of the process are as follows: 00 Prologue, 01 Unfold, 02 Understand, 03 Condense, 04 Form, and 05 Epilogue.

00 Prologue:

In the prologue, the report begins with an abstract, an overview of the content, and guidance on how best to navigate through the report.

01 Unfold:

In the Unfold phase, we have particularly focused on collecting empirical data through literature review and desk

research. Additionally, we conducted an initial field study in Thy to gain insight into the place's problems, potential, and rural development as a general theme.

02 Understand:

In the Understand phase, the analysis is conducted. Phenomenological work has been carried out through on-site field studies, involving interviews, mappings, and general observations. Additionally, quantitative desk research has been conducted, including the analysis of maps, statistics, etc.

A relational understanding of place

The analysis relies on a relational understanding of place, where the place is considered as a fleeting entity, constantly changing, (Marshall 2009) defined by the eyes that see.

To define a place, there must be an understanding that places should be understood as interconnected and complex relationships. As urban designers, we attempt to encompass this entire complexity. As Harvey (Harvey, 1993.) puts it, one of the most multi-layered and multipurpose words in the language.

In other words, a place is more than a set of coordinates (Cresswell 2004). Places are constantly evolving and can be understood as a product of when people, history, cultures, and much more come together. It also emphasizes the point that we, as urban designers, are trying to bring together many different professional fields.

The understanding of place can be seen from different perspectives – etc. a purely economic perspective, a sociological, anthropological, or perhaps a natural/en-

vironmental perspective. Where all the understandings perceive places differently with variation, it is diversity, and complexity in the nuances that make up that specific place. (Laursen, 2021)

This depiction of a place, seen from a more one-dimensional perspective, makes sense in an analytical context with a view to, for example, a comparative analysis, or simply a deeper understanding of the place in question. But the reality is that we humans experience precisely the place as the complex composition it is. A resident who has lived in the same village for 70 years experiences the place very differently and with a different understanding of history and the impact of memories than a tourist does: As Urry and Larsen (Urry, Larsen, 2011, p. 119) describe: *Places are not fixed or given or simply bounded. They are 'in play' in relationship to multiple tourist gazes stretching in, through, and over apparently distinct places*".

This is an understanding that places must be understood both as something locally site-specific, but also as something that is part of something larger. (Laursen, 2009.). This way of understanding a place can in many ways be traced back to Urry's way of thinking, where he argues for an understanding of contemporary society that is performed and organized through time and place (Urry, Sheller 2004). Where a tourist site must be understood as a fluid entity created by a series of performances between the different places. (Coleman, Crang, 2002).

This way of understanding a place frames the importance not only of seeing a place as something static but as

something that is part of a larger whole that moves and shifts throughout time and space. Geographer Doreen Massey highlights that what gives a place its specificity is that it is constructed by economic, political, cultural, and social relationships with other places – and perhaps an online dimension can also be added to this depiction. In other words, this approach blurs the boundaries of a place, as they can constantly shift and vary depending on the perspective from which one views them.

A general and site-specific perspective

Working with rural development and villages can be approached in many ways. Firstly, in the 01 Unfold phase, we aim to uncover a theoretical and context-independent understanding of the development we generally observe in rural areas in Denmark – indeed, worldwide. This involves acquiring knowledge through research, analysis, historical texts, and statistics. Concurrently with this general understanding of the subject, we work with a case study in the 02 Understand phase – namely, Vestervig. This serves as both an example of the current general trend we see and of course, a uniquely specific example of a village.

We work with this case study partly due to its output in a physical-spatial format and partly because it adds a nuanced view of reality to the task, as described by Flyvbjerg:

"For researchers, the closeness of the case study to real-life situations and its multiple wealth of details are important in two respects. First, it is important for the development of a nuanced view of reality, including the

view that human behavior cannot be meaningfully understood as simply the rule-governed acts found at the lowest levels of the learning process and in much theory.” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 223)

Vestervig represents the theoretical portrayal of an ordinary village struggling to attract younger forces. Besides, a village will always represent something unique and site-specific, which is what we are working to understand and highlight. In this example, it encounters a village with a very remote location to the rest of Denmark and Thisted Municipality as a whole – and a village with a strong cultural history.

We work on a national, regional, and local scale to gain an understanding of the subject, with the aim of the different scales reinforcing each other mutually. This is an approach focusing both on the general and the site-specific perspective, which will be unfolded in the report.

Analytical categorization

With an understanding of encapsulating a place being very complex, subjective, and relational, we work with a modification of a three-part understanding inspired by Drejer and Laursen to understand a place. We combine this with a categorization into the three themes: People, Places, and Amenities, as a framework and headlines for the themes that will be addressed in the analysis. (Drejer, Laursen, 2023) (Hele Landet, 2024)

People:

First and foremost, we look at the cultural and social layer – what we humans have created and recreated over time – and still create today. An understanding and a depiction of a place are both a physical manifestation, but it is also the people who live there and their actions.

Places:

Secondly, we focus on the physical aspect of the place. In other words, which physical structures does the place consist of? Fields, buildings, roads, etc. In this category, we also dive into different kinds of mapping, that deal with the phenomenological experience of a place, which relies on subjective narratives, memories, and concepts that together constitute a perception of place.

Amenities:

Finally, we highlight the amenities that the area has to offer, both in terms of job and business opportunities, as well as experiences and activities for both locals and tourists.

We use this tripartite division as a basic understanding of both Vestervig and Thy. It results in some more specific narratives based on the potentials that we try to clarify and bring forward.

Mapping:

This knowledge and understanding, as described and understood, are complex. Our primary task as urban designers is to communicate it in a way so that the rest of the world can understand it. Mapping is a tool for this – it becomes a kind of mediator between us as designers and the world. (Hald, Laursen, Jensen, 2023). In other words, it is a way to produce spatial knowledge – a way to think visually. (Nijhuis et al., 2017)

Mapping can be divided into two parts: In the first part of collecting spatial data, different methods can be used, such as empirical field studies or desktop research, and different tools can be applied, including technologies. In

the second part, the process of map-making combines and relates selected data and findings in new ways, visualizing spatial conditions. (Hald, Laursen, Jensen, 2023) We work with both approaches to mapping. An approach to Thy and Vestervig that starts from the desktop by mapping, functions, infrastructure, squares, landscape features, etc. That falls under a material understanding of a place. It gives us a basic understanding of what kind of place we are working with and a pointer to what we should visit and perhaps also who we should talk to when we visit Thy and Vestervig. This desktop analysis gives us a good ballast for understanding where we are. Knowledge that, together with a perceived understanding of the place combines data and findings in new creative ways. We continuously summarize the findings we obtain through the analysis, both through graphics and text.

03 Condense:

In the condense phase we summarize the analysis into a synthesis that can serve as a foundation for the strategic development presented by the project as a solution to some of the issues addressed in the task. Phase 3 is the narrowest convergence of the funnel seen in the process diagram, where the analysis is gathered and interpreted into a series of what-if scenarios that have defined the 'Form' phase. The what-if scenarios should both address the current situation pragmatically, but also push the standard for a visionary future.

04 Form:

In the form phase, we investigate specific physical and spatial solutions for the more general issues presented in the previous. In this phase, we shift from a scale that deals with describing general issues to focusing on a spe-

cific village, Vestervig

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The design output of this project is not a classic sketch project with a lot of drawings and renders. This is a reflective and strategic thesis. The project is exploratory, pushing the boundaries of traditional rural development concepts. The output reflects the great amount of time we've dedicated to the analytical and theoretical part in phases 01 and 02, given the high degree of complexity of rural development. It didn't make sense to jump straight into design and sketching without first establishing the theoretical groundwork to work with this subject. In this project, we strive to embrace rural development as the complex entity it is, by addressing both its historical evolution and the agendas at play today. Our design output thus encompasses both:

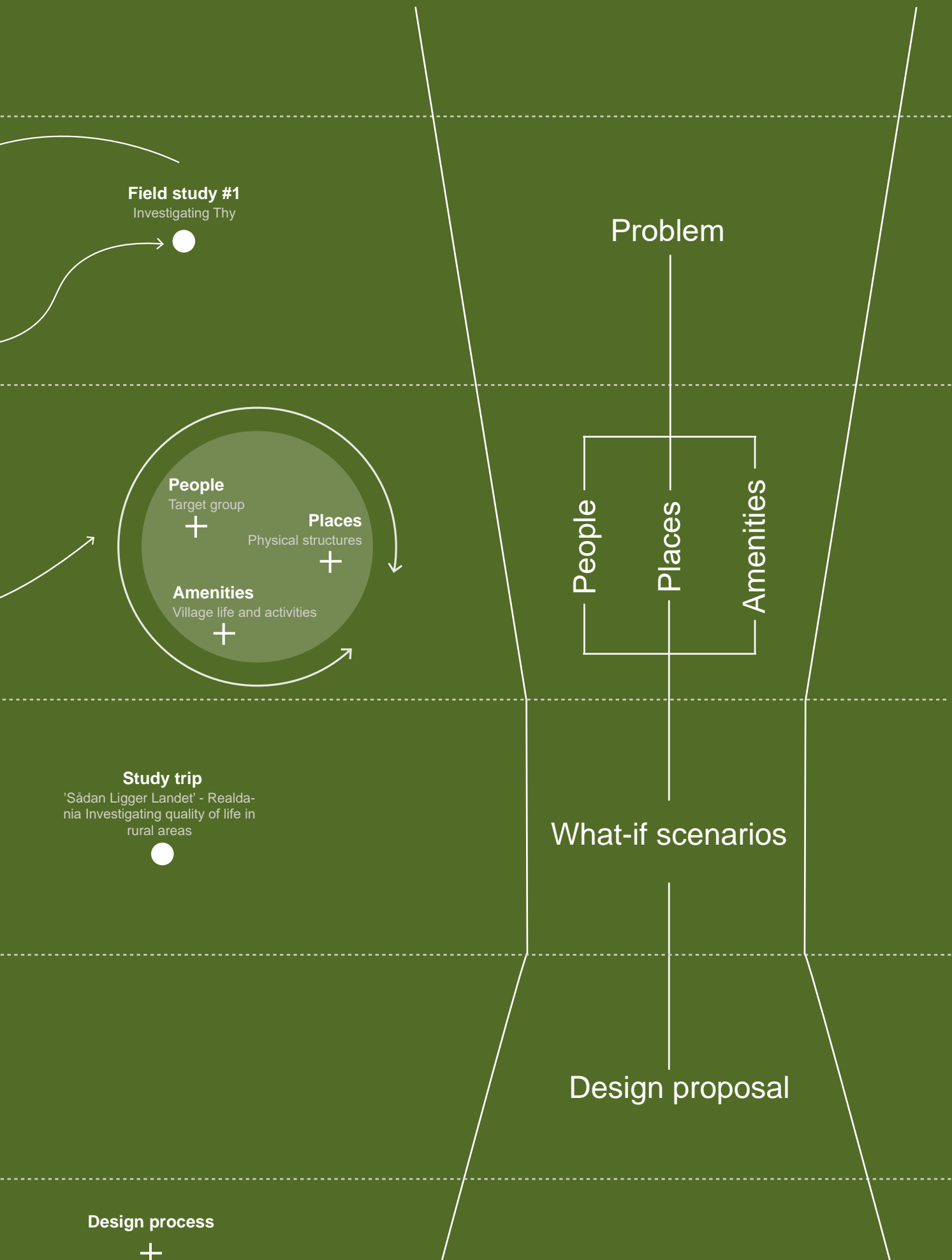
1. A strategic and non-physical proposal of a new innovative way to develop rural areas on a theoretical level (phase 03)
2. Subtle physical examples of how to work with the theoretical strategy (phase 04)

05 Epilogue:

During the epilogue phase, our objective is to summarize the key themes of the project. We will achieve this by reflecting on and discussing the report's content from a reflective and critical perspective. Ultimately, our goal is to offer a conclusion to the task, thereby providing an answer to the project's central problem statement.

Graphical illustration of the process

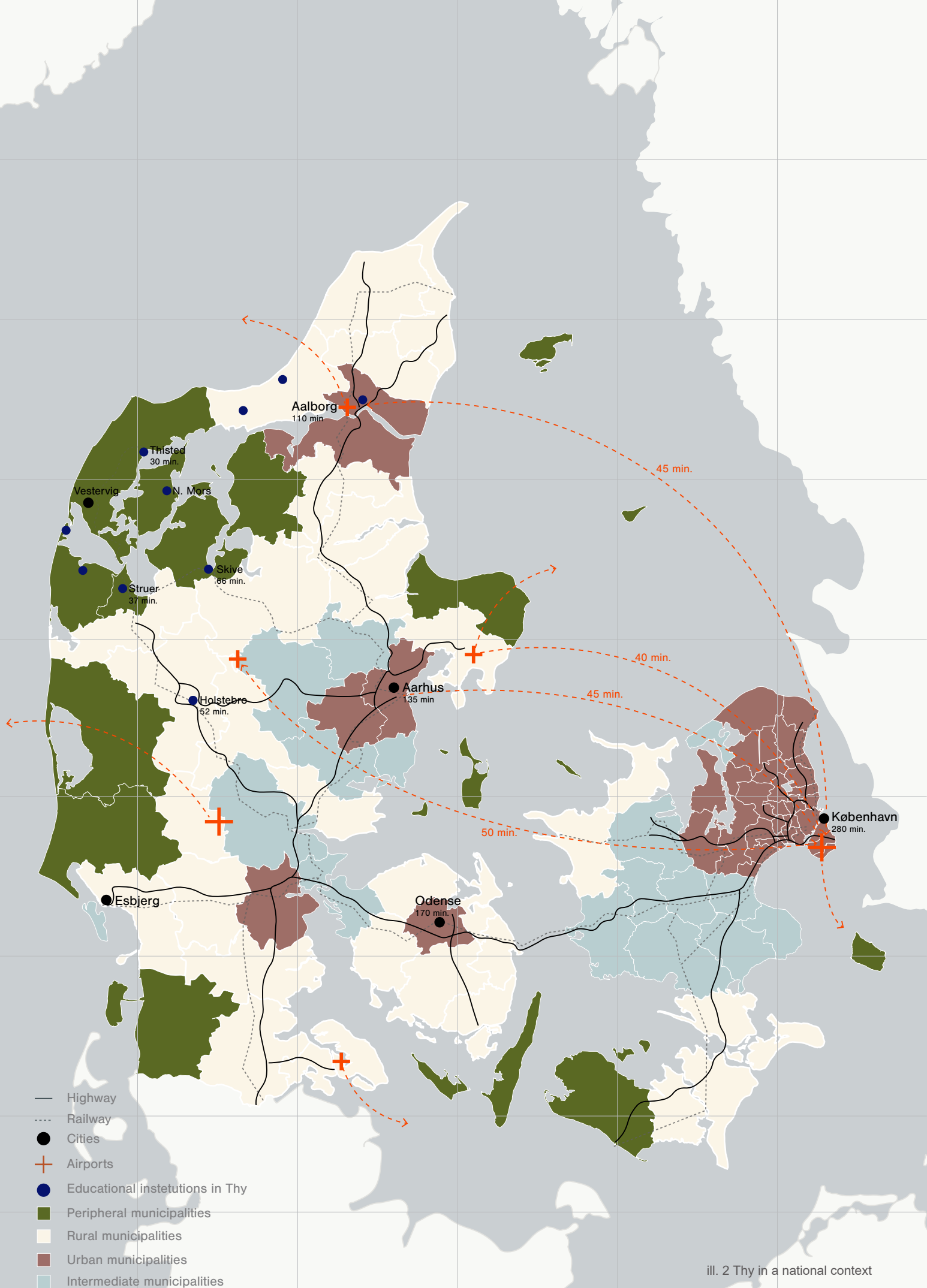




Thy in a national context

In this project, we focus on Thisted Municipality (Thy), which is a peripheral municipality that greatly experiences and continues to face many of the societal agendas at play concerning rural development in Denmark. However, Thy stands out from many other municipalities when looking at the map. Situated in a corner of the Danish country, the infrastructural connections to the municipality emphasize that it's not a municipality one just passes by. Thus, Thyboerne (residents of Thy) have always been accustomed to "taking care of themselves" and creating their path due to its remote location.

If we look at the infrastructure, Thy is located away from the major national road connections, and in the periphery of the so-called H-network. There is a local train connection that connects the southeastern part of Thy with the national railway network, which makes it possible to use the train to reach this part of the municipality. However, the rest of the municipality is relatively disconnected from public train connections. When it comes to airports, Thy is either oriented towards Aalborg Airport or Billund Airport. Due to Thy's location to the major infrastructure arteries, there are not good connections to these, which emphasizes the municipality's isolated position.





ill. 3 Protected landscapes



ill. 4 Valuable agricultural land



ill. 5 Nationalpark Thy

Thy in a regional context

Thy is renowned for its stunning natural landscapes. Looking at the mapping on the opposite page, an illustration of Thisted Municipality's unique landscape features is presented.

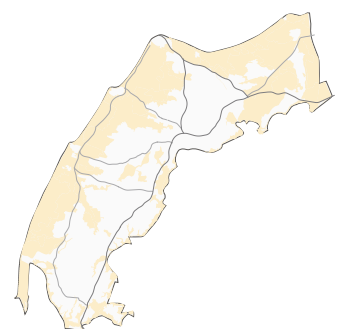
Illustration 5 shows how the western part of Thy was designated as Denmark's first and largest national park, spanning 255 km², formed by centuries of sand drift. The area is rugged and dominated by the North Sea, which significantly influences the climate. It is home to a rich diversity of flora and fauna. The municipality has some very special landscapes that are difficult to find elsewhere in Denmark, and large parts of the municipality's area are protected and conservation-worthy landscapes. This is particularly evident along the coasts, as illustrated in illustrations 3 and 7.

It is the municipality in Denmark with the longest coastline, with both the North Sea to the west and the Limfjord to the east, as illustrated in illustration 6. (Visit Nordvestkysten, n.d.)

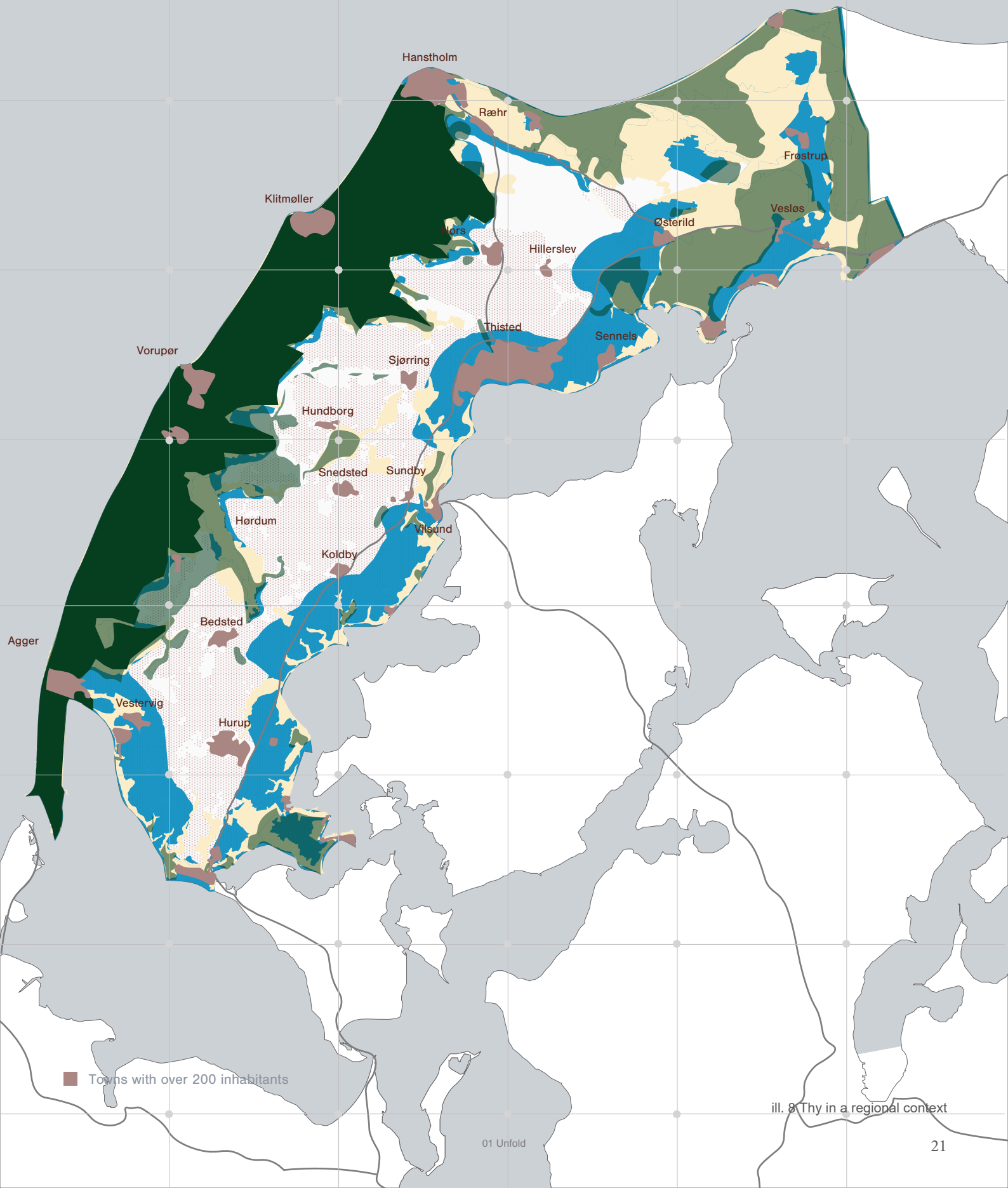
Agriculture thrives in the central part of Thy as illustrated in illustration 4, situated between the North Sea and the Limfjord, where the soil is more clayey and fertile. Over half of Thy's land is used for farming, and the municipality has a high percentage of organic farms, particularly organic cattle farms. (Regional Madkultur, n.d.)



ill. 6 Coastal zone



ill. 7 Preservation-worthy landscapes





ill. 11 West Coast



ill. 10 Nationalpark Thy



ill. 12 Thyborøn - Agger ferry



ill. 9 Østerild Testcenter

Field study #1

Thy

Our first trip to Thy, where we visited various farm owners, Restaurant Tri, Hanstholm Harbor, Thy Whiskey Distillery, Østerild Test Center, and more. A visit that gave us an understanding of a municipality with incredibly diverse agendas, spread out across the beautiful landscape. Talking with the locals put us on track to delve deeper into a specific issue and provided us with a deeper understanding of what Thy is all about. In our studies, the farms stood out particularly as beautiful cultural and historical structures.



ill. 13 Hanstholm Harbor



ill. 14 Hanstholm mink farm



ill. 16 Farm near Vestervig



ill. 15 Farm near Krik

Thy in a historic perspective

Thisted municipality was established through the Structural Reform in 2007, merging Thisted, Hanstholm, and Sydthy into a single administrative entity situated in the Thy region with Thisted as the main city. (Christiansen, n.d.) Covering an area of 1,074 square kilometers, Thy has a population of 43,160. (Thisted Kommune, 2023).

Over time, Thisted Municipality has attracted various individuals who have shaped both the place and its culture. Originally, it was the fishermen whose lives and fishing culture shaped Thisted Municipality. With changes in the economic structure, fishing activities were centralized in Hanstholm, resulting in fewer people now making a living from traditional fishing methods, and Hanstholm harbor and fish auction have become central to Thisted Municipality. (Port of Hanstholm, n.d.) Additionally, farmers and agriculture also play a central role in Thisted Municipality's history, being an important profession for the region. (Realdania, 2012) It is also worth mentioning that over the years, Thisted Municipality has experienced a strong religious presence, with the Inner Mission movement significantly shaping the region throughout the 20th century. While its influence has faded over the years, a notable portion of Thisted Municipality's residents remain religious. (Buus, Nielsen, 2017)

In the 1970s, Thylejren emerged as a significant contrast to the inner missionary movement, as part of the hippie movement, drawing a community of creative and free-spirited individuals to Thy. Later in the 1980s, surfers discovered favorable wind and weather conditions, attracting another group of people with their lifestyle and culture. Not least, there has been a boom of female immigrants from Thailand who have married men from Thy and thus become part of the local community.

Thisted Municipality has also been a magnet for tourists fascinated by nature, which was only strengthened with the establishment of Thy National Park in 2007. Thisted Municipality has been and still is, filled with contrasts both in terms of population and landscapes, which in many ways have become a characteristic of the place and part of its identity. (Christiansen, n.d.)

The municipality is particularly characterized by its unique nature, with its rugged coastal landscape to the west and the hilly and fertile fjord landscape to the east. **Wind has always been a central element in the area, and over time, it has been a challenge for locals to contend with. However, today, the wind has been transformed into a resource, both for the National Test Center for Large Wind Turbines in Østerild and for surfers along the North Sea coast and along the Limfjord.** (Christiansen, n.d.) In 2007, a master plan was developed for the so-called Cold Hawaii, aimed at making the West Coast from Hanstholm to Agger even more accessible to surfers and water sports enthusiasts. (Nordjyske, n.d.) (Thy360, n.d.) In 2019, a plan was created for Cold Hawaii Inland, to also activate the fjord side for windsurfing and water sports. (Thisted Kommune, n.d.)

Thisted Municipality has managed to harness the locality's inherent potential in its work on the development of Thy. Particularly, Klitmøller stands out as a prime example of a town that has succeeded in positive development by activating the area's unique wind and weather conditions through surfing. This new staging of the place has created significant value for both locals and tourists and has brought a development that continues to evolve. (Laursen, 2020)

Rural development from a historic perspective

Community as a Commercial Survival Strategy

To understand the structures of villages today, we must look back at some of the factors that have shaped them over time. Andelsbevægelsen, spanning from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century, played a significant role in this development.

Andelsbevægelsen was a time when new ways of structuring interactions emerged as a solution to the uncertainty and economic uncertainty prevalent in society during that period. It was discovered that there were economic and organizational advantages in individuals and businesses coming together in a democratic community, where production itself was collectively owned. This contrasted sharply with previous organizational methods, where individuals or businesses operated independently and competed against each other. (Andel, n.d.) During Andelsbevægelsen, institutions such as cooperative dairies, consumer cooperatives, feed mills, and cooperative slaughterhouses emerged, significantly streamlining agricultural practices. This restructuring affected much of the production on family farms, which increasingly focused on mass-producing goods that could compete in international markets. (Andel, n.d.) Andelsbevægelsen represents an understanding of growth that addresses both creating economic profit and sustaining individual and community well-being. During this time, a strong connection was established between community, local engagement, and democratic business principles, shaping life in villages at that time. (Fenger, 2019)

It was a period when village life thrived, and the village was the central hub of rural life. Therefore, it is interesting to explore what precisely contributed to the success of rural development at that time and whether there are elements we can learn from to better understand what we need to improve in the future. (Fenger, 2019)

The Impact of the Cooperative Movement on Villages

Today, one can trace the influence of Andelsbevægelsen in the built structures of villages in Denmark, where buildings such as consumer cooperatives, community centers, cold stores, and cooperative dairies were built during that time. These institutions were considered the heart of the social life in villages. (Andel, n.a.) The community house played a central role in social dynamics, serving as a gathering point for the entire community. During the 1920s, there were more than 1600 community houses in Denmark, where a rich social life unfolded with everything from meetings and lectures to celebrations such as baptisms, confirmations, and weddings, as well as cultural events like theater performances and communal singing. (Landliv, n.d.)

Challenges Faced by Rural Communities

After the peak of Andelsbevægelsen, the cohesion and communities of villages have come under pressure. People moved from rural areas to cities, attracted by better wages and more opportunities. (Landliv, n.d.)

The technological advancements in the late 1960s and onwards led to a restructuring of agriculture, with large, industrialized farms dominating the market, and many smaller family farms being shut down. The traditional agricultural farm lost its central role as the focal point of village life and community. (Realdania) The restructuring of agriculture and other societal trends brought a range of consequences that made it difficult to maintain community and village life. (Landliv, n.d.)

Today, for many, the village is not a place they are connected to through their work, but rather a place they live, commuting to larger cities where their jobs are based. Consequently, the village is no longer characterized by the strong production communities of the cooperative movement, as it has increasingly taken on a residential function. (Laursen, Frølund, Johansen, 2015) Community houses felt these changes as festivities and social events gradually moved to other meeting places such as inns and hotels. Cultural habits also changed significantly during this time, impacting the role of community houses in society. (Landliv, n.a.)

Learning from the Structures of the Cooperative Movement

As social structures continue to evolve, we must continue to rethink how villages can be structured to provide attractive meeting places and communities to gather. As Tietjen and Jørgensen write:

“Når befolkningstallet svinder ind i et bestemt område, er der færre mennesker til at deltage i lokalsamfundet, til at tage initiativ til og opretholde aktiviteter og til at bidrage generelt til det sociale liv. Det gør også, at mennesker og aktiviteter nødvendigvis koncentrerer sig i de lidt større landsbyer og byer med et højere serviceniveau.” (Tietjen, Jørgensen, 2023)

Tietjen and Jørgensen argue that in the future, we may not need to revert to 'traditional' and locally based communities, but rather, we should focus more on regional communities where shared facilities serve a larger area, and instead gather around shared interests. (Tietjen, Jørgensen, 2023) They suggest that we need to realistically address the challenges facing rural areas today and not develop in a quest to return to a bygone era. Regarding the cooperative idea, it represents some core values that were very effective in fostering communities and local life at the time. Collective ownership was at the time fundamental to an economically sustainable form of business, but it also largely defined a way of organizing that was socially sustainable. (Fenger, 2019)

Today, we are facing a different reality than when the cooperative idea was founded, and this mindset must therefore be adapted to a new reality to be relevant for contemporary rural development. However, the principles of lifting a community collectively by owning a part of what needs to be developed could be interesting to incorporate into a new reality. (Fenger, Paya Hauch, 2019)

A historical overview of Thy and rural development in Denmark

Thy
Rural
development

1500-1800
Sand drifts in Thy from the coast inland (Thy National Park, n.d.)

1866
The beginning of Andelsbevægelsen in Denmark (with the establishment of Thisted Brugsforening) (Bjørn, 2023)

1891
plantations with forest to mitigate sand drift (Thy National Park, n.d.)

1947
From 1947 to 1960, 100,000 tractors were sold in Denmark. The tractor played a crucial role in mechanization, with the Ferguson TE-20, known as "the little grey". (Søndergaard, 2023)

1900

1900

1967
Opening of Hanstholm Havn (Port of Hanstholm, n.d.)

1948
The Marshall Plan kickstarted national financial development in DK after World War II. The funds were primarily used for agricultural machinery, resulting in the industrialization of agriculture. People started working in the industrial enterprises in the cities, and many moved from rural areas into the cities. (DR, 2012)

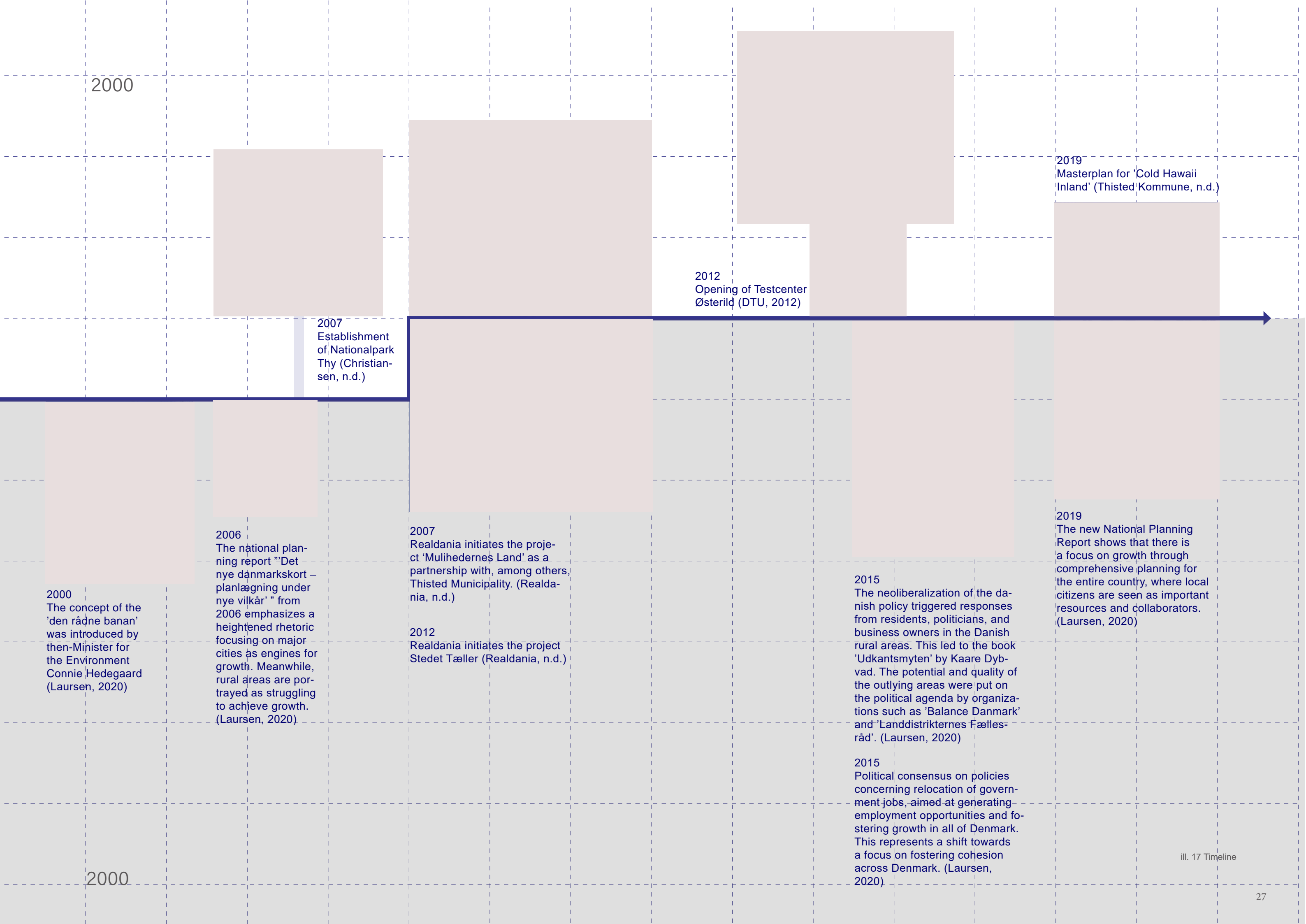
1970
John Lennon and Yoko Ono visited Thy to discuss the peace cause at Nordenfjords World University. (Dall, n.d.)

1970
Establishment of Thy Lejren (Christiansen, n.d.)

1970
Introduction of 'Egnsplaner' to create economic growth through more jobs in peripheral areas. There was a desire for balanced development throughout the country. (Laursen, 2020)

1980
The surfers discover Thy (Christiansen, n.d.)

1990
Increased focus on cities as growth engines, aimed at ensuring national growth. Neoliberalization was a general global trend that also affected Denmark. Politically, this meant a shift from focusing on equal development throughout the country to a greater emphasis on developing the major cities in Denmark. (Laursen, 2020)



How does the future of rural areas look like?

As described earlier, rural areas are facing several challenges that need to be addressed if it is still to remain attractive to settle outside the larger cities.

Looking at projections, it does not appear to be a trend that will reverse in the coming years, as the picture clearly shows population growth in the cities and a decline in rural areas. (Laursen, Frølund, Johansen, 2015) Looking at regional differences, it is clear that net migration in Denmark largely occurs from West Jutland towards the eastern part of the country, which is why migration will particularly affect West Jutland. (Nabolags Atlas, n.d.)

According to Realdania's research project 'Livskvalitet på Landet', despite the many challenges, there is a trend that the people who settle in the provinces are happier than the Danes on average

"Spørgeskemaundersøgelsen 'Danskerne i det byggede miljø' viser år efter år, at vi i Danmark generelt har en meget høj livskvalitet, uanset hvor vi bor. Men den viser også år efter år – og fortsat til manges overraskelse – at vi finder den højeste tilfredshed med tilværelsen hos folk på landet." (Realdania, 2023)

Although it is difficult to see the big picture, several rural municipalities and smaller villages are experiencing positive net migration. For example, Faaborg-Midtfyn, Gulborgsund, and Syddjurs are on the rise. (Gregersen, 2021)

More and more people dream of life in the countryside, and it has become a trend to cultivate a close and peaceful life in harmony with nature, which is also reflected in the fact that every third city dweller aged 18-29 dreams of leaving the city and moving to the countryside. This trend may also be due to the significant increase in property prices in and around the larger cities, forcing many to reconsider their priorities, particularly in terms of the economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has also influenced our thoughts about where we want to live, as many rediscovered nature and its positive impact on everyday life. Particularly in the year 2020, we saw the lowest population growth in the major cities in Denmark since 2008. (Gregersen, 2021)

According to Jesper Nygård, CEO of Realdania, we need to do better at not setting up an opposition between the city and the countryside. He believes that the city and countryside are conditions for each other and that they should complement each other. Stine Lea Jacobi and Simon Harboe from Realdania describe it as follows:

"Vi taler ofte om by og land som isolerede områder og skarpt afgrænsede kategorier. Men i Danmark er by og land ikke to poler på en akse. Geografisk er vores byer og landdistrikter vævet sammen i et tæt netværk af infrastruktur, åbent land og bebyggelser. (..) At være bosat i et landdistrikt betyder ikke, at man nødvendigvis lever et traditionelt landboliv. Rigtigt mange bor på landet, men arbejder i byen, og det er i det hele taget de færreste, der arbejder samme sted, som de bor." (Realdania, 2023)

We need to better understand the factors that create quality of life in rural communities, rather than provoking 'urban ideals' in the countryside. According to Nygård, this involves an understanding that life in the countryside often does not take place in city centers, but also in the sports center, cultural center, and the nature surrounding them. (Rydz, 2024)

The development in rural areas is complex to grasp because there is both decline and development at play, and what is common is that rural environments and communities are often driven by local enthusiasts and therefore also fragile. When municipalities and local communities experience declining populations, it makes it difficult to balance budgets, fewer children to sustain institutions and recreational activities, and surplus housing and agricultural businesses that are left without function. This calls for new solutions and strategies to maintain the quality of life, economy, and labor supply in rural areas.

Today, approximately 20 percent of the Danish population lives in rural areas and villages with up to 1000 inhabitants, and it is therefore a challenge we need to address. (Laursen, Frølund, Johansen, 2015)

There are many agendas at play and we ask ourselves - what do the rural areas of the future look like?





ill. 19 Vorupør

Village clusters as a development Strategy

According to Laursen, Frølund, and Johansen, a proposed solution model for a new way of thinking about villages could involve villages working together across municipal boundaries, so they do not stand alone. It can be difficult for individual villages to cope with the challenges going on, and there is thus potential for villages to focus on complementing each other and thereby strengthening each other, rather than competing against each other. This is described in the report 'Landsbyklynger som mulig udviklingsstrategi - Muligheder og Barrierer', where the 'landsbyklynge' is presented as a strategy for rural development. (Laursen, Frølund, Johansen, 2015) A village cluster is defined as follows:

"En Landsbyklynge kan defineres som et antal landsbyer, i relativ nærhed til hinanden, der samarbejder i en netværksstruktur, benytter hinandens styrker, samt borgernes evner, viden og erfaring, til at udvikle den individuelle landsby udover dens egne potentialer, og hele klyngen" (Laursen, Frølund, Johansen, 2015, p. 8)

A fundamental premise when actively engaging with 'landsbyklynger' should also be acknowledged: the necessity to prioritize strategic development areas, which may naturally lead to the gradual phasing out of other locations. (Laursen, Frølund, Johansen, 2015) This prioritization is difficult and not very popular politically, but it is necessary if 'landsbyklynger' are to be viable and not compete against each other.

This also applies to social life and where it should take place, which is a particularly important parameter for making it attractive to move to a village, where newcomers often seek people to identify with. Social meeting places help create a local attachment to a village, and it is therefore also a fragile quantity to begin to organize in new ways. (Laursen, Frølund, Johansen, 2015)

Meeting places have different characteristics and can be defined as formal meeting places, informal meeting places, and 'third' meeting places, among other things, depending on whether they are created 'from below' or 'from above'. If one begins to work with the dissolution, merging, or development of meeting places, it is important to understand the complexity and the way the 3 types of meeting places are also connected. The key to succeeding with such a type of strategy and process is thus through the city's citizens and the local community, which possess local site-specific knowledge that can help map out the structures. (Laursen, Frølund, Johansen, 2015)

Physical place development projects and Local Anchoring

An important factor in people choosing to settle in rural areas is, as mentioned earlier, quality of life. But how do we ensure that we preserve and promote good quality of life in rural areas in the future? This is a question that Anne Tietjen & Gertrud Jørgensen have addressed in their research. They are particularly interested in the relationship between people and their physical surroundings. They thereby emphasize the importance of the relationship between our physical surroundings and social cohesion. (Tietjen and Jørgensen, 2023)

Through their research, they have worked on exactly this by identifying 734 physical projects around the country's rural areas, where new or transformed buildings, urban spaces, or landscapes have been worked on. A common feature of all of them is that they are user-driven projects. In their comprehensive study of concrete projects, they come up with four strategies that are particularly important for creating quality of life in rural areas. (Tietjen and Jørgensen, 2023)

There is a need for new meeting places and communities in light of the extensive changes in rural areas. According to Tietjen and Jørgensen's research, local citizens have already begun to take advantage of the changed traditio-

nal meeting places to their advantage. There is an increasing tendency to think in regional interest communities, where different groups can benefit from the same facilities. Especially activity centers are experiencing growth as they offer valuable opportunities across local communities, neighboring towns, regions, and tourism. They see great benefit in concentrating activities in the same place because it can create frameworks for formal and informal meetings to arise. (Tietjen & Jørgensen, 2023).

Focus is placed on the empty buildings that once housed industries that are no longer characteristic of rural areas. It is argued that these old industrial structures such as shipyards and cooperative dairies can become mediators of our cultural heritage and give it new life. By reinterpreting local traditions in modern ways, these buildings can be brought into the present and future (Tietjen & Jørgensen, 2023).

Emphasis is placed on the importance of people settling in rural areas having access to the nature and landscape around them, as this is often the reason why many seek there. However, it is pointed out that this is not a given everywhere, as intensive agriculture in many places makes it difficult for villagers to interact with nature. There is a great effect in facilitating the meeting between people and nature and perhaps marked through architectural features.

There is a need to adapt the structures of villages to the needs of today by reconsidering the placement of streets, paths, and nodes. This enables the creation of new spatial structures and connections that better accommodate modern village life (Tietjen & Jørgensen, 2023).

Through their analysis of projects, they find that the entire process and organization around the projects themselves are also beneficial for local development. They see to a large extent that the solution for future life in rural areas

must be found through place development projects, and that this is more effective than desktop politics. This helps create new networks and cohesion across local communities - both internally in the villages and in the connection between the local villages.

Tourism as a Lever for Rural Development

Another development strategy for rural areas may be to increase focus on tourism. With the increasing warmth in Southern Europe due to climate change, the European Travel Commission predicts that more tourists will head north, and thus also to Denmark, in the future. (Schuldt, 2023) Additionally, it's worth noting the environmental advantages that come with choosing the North as a travel destination for residents who already live here, as many now see the benefits of it as well

"Det er måske overraskende at tænke på det danske vejr som en sællert, men det er et af de scenarier, vi kigger ind i, når det klassiske ferieparadis i Sydeuropa bliver utrolig varmt" - Carina Ren (Schuldt, 2023)

Both due to climate considerations and in connection with COVID-19, the demand for tourism in rural areas has increased, and the trend has great potential to create development in rural areas, as it can bring economy, jobs, and new opportunities with it. The so-called 'Rural Tourism' can according to Taiwanese tourism researchers Liu, Chian, and Ko be defined as:

"A type of tourism in which a visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activity, agriculture, rural lifestyle/culture, angling, and sightseeing. (...) This developmental strategy aims to enable a rural community to grow while preserving its traditional culture (Kaptan et al., 2020)." (Liu, Chiang, and Ko, 2023)

In their research, they have specifically examined how

tourism can promote the development of rural areas. Their observations show that tourism has had positive effects, including increased income for locals, more direct sales to consumers, improved earnings, and more opportunities for food sales. They emphasize the importance of the local communities preserving their traditional cultures and using them to promote the site for visitors. This creates entrepreneurial opportunities in the local area and can help restore the connection between people, nature, and culture. (Liu, Chiang, and Ko, 2023)

The target audience attracted to 'Rural Tourism' will often be 'Outdoor tourists', as they are drawn to authenticity and particularly to nature. However, according to a target audience analysis conducted by Behave Green in collaboration with Dansk Kyst og Natur Tursime and Denmark's Business Promotion Board, significant potentials lie within 'Outdoor tourists' because they are divided into 4 sub-categories and seek various types of experiences.

By highlighting a specific target group, it indirectly suggests other target groups that may not be desirable. This is because rural areas are sensitive to changes, and therefore, tourists interacting with them require something in return. Outdoor tourists are known for placing a high value on sustainability, which is favorable for a fragile local area. Thus, tourists can also become a driving force for successfully implementing various sustainability agendas locally. (Behave Green, 2023)

The classic 'Outdoor tourist':

This group views nature as a challenge and seeks the primitive experience as closely connected to nature as possible. Here, efforts can be made to establish tent and shelter facilities for accommodation. (Behave Green, 2023)

'Outdoor tourists' with comfort needs:

This group sees nature as a playground and values being active outdoors. There's potential to facilitate physical

activities in nature, as well as provide overnight options such as camp spots for campervans. They also appreciate authenticity and locality, such as the opportunity to purchase local produce. (Behave Green, 2023)

'Nature enthusiasts':

This group sees nature as a cozy and social space, fulfilling their social needs in comfortable natural settings. Cultural offerings like cafes, events, and children's activities can be developed for this group. They are attracted to cabin accommodations where basic needs are met. (Behave Green, 2023)

'Nature aesthetics': This group views nature as a place for relaxation and appreciates facilitated and beautiful nature experiences, even preferring a touch of luxury. They are willing to invest extra in their experiences and may seek out options for various forms of "glamping". (Behave Green, 2023)

These are archetype descriptions of different tourism target groups, and in reality, they often overlap. This provides concrete spatial responses on how to attract the desired target audience. (Behave Green, 2023)



ill. 20 Vestervig Center



ill. 21 Bikepath in the fields

How does the future of rural landscapes look like?

In the preceding, a range of strategies is presented regarding the development of structures that can enhance cohesion across villages, utilizing physical frameworks as catalysts for development, and employing tourism as a lever for rural development. In the following, we'll explore the so-called 'open land' and landscapes to investigate their role in sustainable rural development.

Following the historical overview of rural development in the previous section "Rural development in a historic perspective", it is clear how our rural areas have been influenced by varying political interests through time. However, rural areas have primarily been developed in terms of zoning regulations and agricultural-structural-evolution and industrialization. This has led to a certain distribution of the open land we see today, which is primarily in use for agricultural purposes and preserved from construction by legislation. Today, we witness the outcome: our larger cities have emerged as economic growth engines for the whole nation, while rural areas have declined in value concerning habitation, business, and nature. (Grønnegaard, 2024)

This has led to a range of challenges for peripheral areas, which have also been explored earlier in this project. Despite these challenges, the peripheral areas have great potential to re-emerge as a central and important player for national goals, as they might be part of the solution to the climate and biodiversity crisis we are currently facing. This is discussed, among other things, in the article 'Fra udkant til guldkant: Behov for langsigtet national strategi og penge til landdistrikterne' written by Helga Grønnegaard, M.Sc., project manager for strategic development at the consulting firm Urland. New light is being shed on the rural areas in Denmark, as they also can be considered a potential source for solving, among other things,

nature, climate, and food problems, and according to Grønnegaard there is great pressure on their shoulders:

"Arealerne i landdistrikterne er afgørende for, at vi lykkes med at; skabe sammenhængende naturarealer, afbøde og håndtere oversvømmelsestrusler, rejse skov, producere bæredygtige og sunde fødevarer, sikre rent drikkevand og etablere anlæg og infrastruktur til fossilfri energi." (Grønnegaard, 2024)

According to Grønnegaard, it's all about the way we manage our areas, and she points out that there is a great expectation pressure on our rural areas in the future. When we expand the use of an area for one purpose, it often comes at the expense of another purpose, and then the equation does not add up. (Grønnegaard, 2024) According to the report 'Prioritering af Danmarks areal i fremtiden' (Teknologirådet), we are facing a challenge where the total expectations for the use of the open land from politicians, NGOs, and global trends exceed 130% to 140% of Denmark's area. There is a need for extra areas equivalent to the size of Skåne and Blekinge if we are to meet all these expectations. The time requires us to begin to think creatively and innovatively about the way we manage our rural areas in Denmark. (Kragesteen, 2022)

According to Grønnegaard, the economy and role of rural areas in society can be completely reversed if we manage to create the necessary changes in the way we handle our landscapes and distribute the country's areas. She refers to a series of recommendations prepared by experts, including a sustainable agricultural sector playing a major role in creating more well-functioning rural areas. She emphasizes the importance of thinking across ag-

riculture, nature, green economy, and new economy. This includes, among other things, vulnerable cultivation areas being withdrawn to fulfil natural purposes, and modern agriculture being strategically placed in the landscape while transitioning to new technology and regenerative cultivation methods. She also suggests establishing new business models that are attractive to farmers, which can also accelerate the transition. (Grønnegaard, 2024)

Grønnegaard's strategy suggests that some of the agricultural land in use today will need to be taken out of production and converted into natural areas. She also advocates for strategically positioning agriculture within the landscape in the future, depending on which new and modern sustainable production methods may emerge in the future. (Grønnegaard, 2024)

When transforming the so-called 'open land' from cultivated land to natural areas, the challenge is - how to approach this. It can be done by using different methods, for example loosening control by allowing natural growth, stopping drainage, and using grazing animals to maintain open landscapes. (Seges, 2023) It's important to mention that the type of natural environment that can be created depends on the landscape's specific geology and soil conditions. Generally speaking, areas that have previously been used for agriculture are often very nutrient-rich, which can be a challenge in creating a diverse natural habitat. Therefore, converting areas from agriculture to nature requires specialized knowledge and a high level of expertise. According to the agricultural organization SEGES, they for example recommend transitioning to the following types of natural environments (Seges, 2023):

Natural growth: Allowing areas to grow into shrubs and

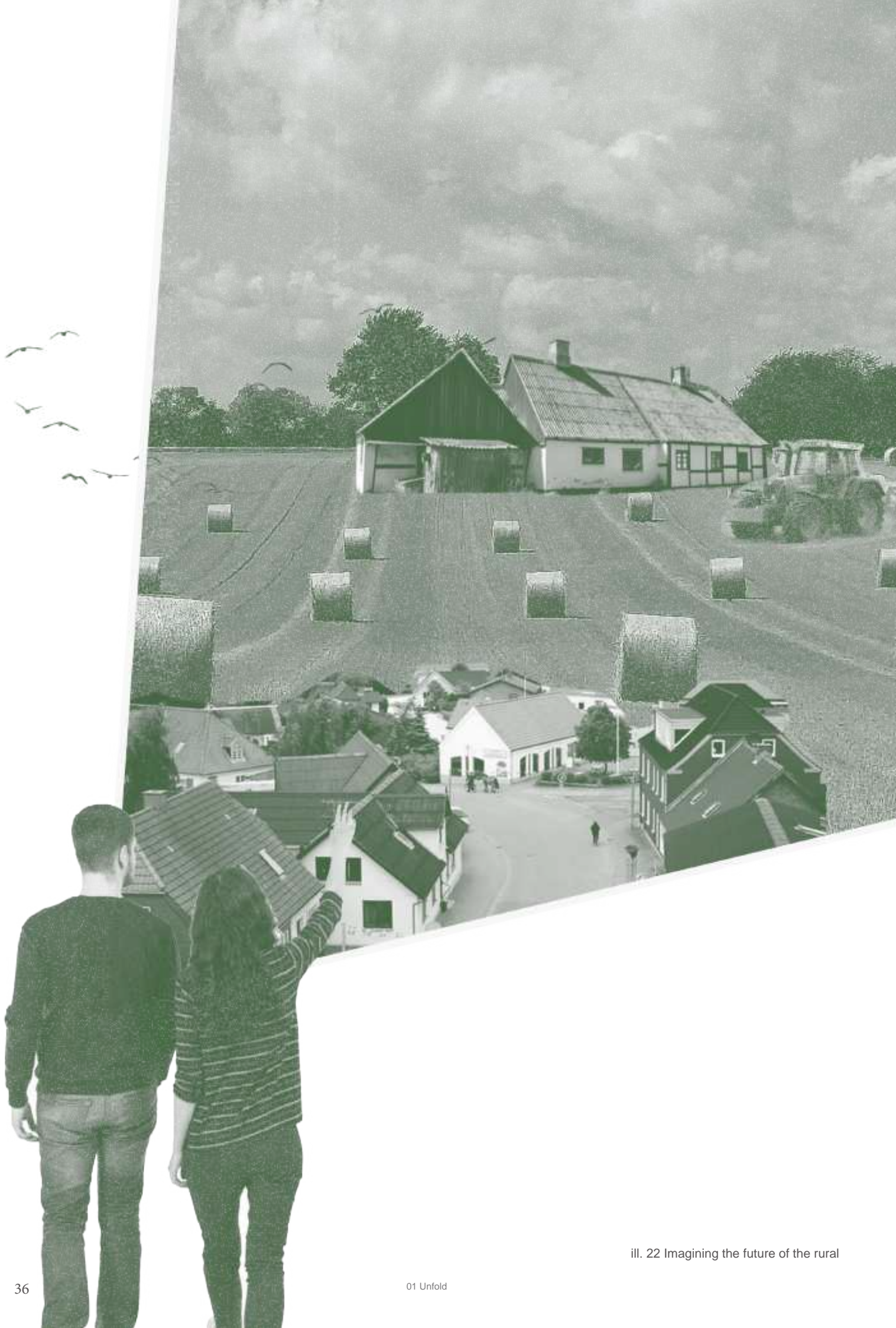
thickets naturally. This helps native species establish themselves in the area. This can be supplemented by planting flowering trees and bushes to benefit insects and birds. (Seges, 2023)

Grazing animals: Introducing large grazing animals to certain areas can add more variation to the landscape. (Seges, 2023)

Flower Stripes: To increase species diversity and provide more food for insects, it can be beneficial to establish flower strips along large monoculture fields. (Seges, 2023)

Natural Hydrology: It can be advantageous to allow wet areas within the landscape to remain wet and stop draining them. This can lead to greater plant diversity and create good habitats for animals and insects. (Seges, 2023)

To conclude there is a significant potential for rural areas to play a key role in achieving national climate and environmental goals in the future. This could benefit rural areas by bringing economic growth, which could have a positive impact on their overall development. Innovative land management and strategic distribution of the rural areas could enable sustainable rural development. This includes strategically placing agriculture within the landscape and transitioning certain areas from production to natural environments.



ill. 22 Imagining the future of the rural

Summing up... What does the future of the rural look like?

There are incredibly many agendas at play when trying to answer the question of what the future rural areas look like. The question is: what is the goal and how do you measure it? Is it, as mentioned, in quality of life, economy, or population growth? It is probably a combination of these, focusing on how we spatially can improve quality and rethink village life. In this way, the smaller communities in the periphery are ensured to be good places to visit and live. (Laursen, L, 2020) In the above, several challenges, potentials, and interests in rural areas were reviewed, as well as three strategic approaches to how to work with rural areas in the future. Additionally, suggestions on how we can also innovate our approach to "open land" and landscapes were unfolded, which we will take further in this project:

Tietjen and Jørgensen refer to the importance of integrating **physical frameworks and spatial structures** into rural development, as this can help solve many of the challenges the areas face. They call this "Site Development Projects," to be led by local enthusiasts and forces in collaboration with relevant authorities. (Tietjen & Jørgensen, 2023).

Laursen, Frølund, and Johansen are more strategic, emphasizing that rural areas and smaller villages should increase their **cooperation and network across city limits** to succeed in development. (Laursen, Frølund, Johansen, 2015).

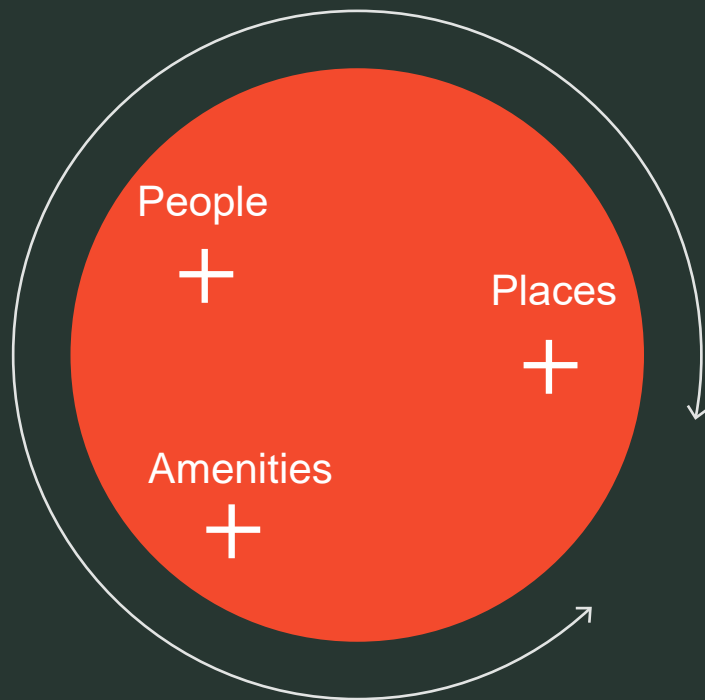
Another key to development in the periphery is '**rural tourism**'. This can bring a new **locally anchored economy**, a larger supply of jobs, a strengthened culture, and entrepreneurial opportunities. It is a strategy that focuses on making the local community grow while bringing out the inherent qualities in new ways and bringing them into the future.

In the final section, Helga Grønnegård's thoughts are presented on **a new strategic approach on how to handle our rural landscapes**. She highlights the potential of rural areas to tackle significant societal challenges related to climate and biodiversity. Grønnegård promotes a more deliberate and strategic land management approach, advocating for site-specific allocation of agriculture and nature within a comprehensive strategy. She suggests that this approach could position rural areas at the forefront in an entirely new way.

The vision is to develop a strategy that utilizes the potential of farms located on the outskirts of small villages and the accessibility to nature in rural areas to reclaim their role as the heart of country life, as they once were.

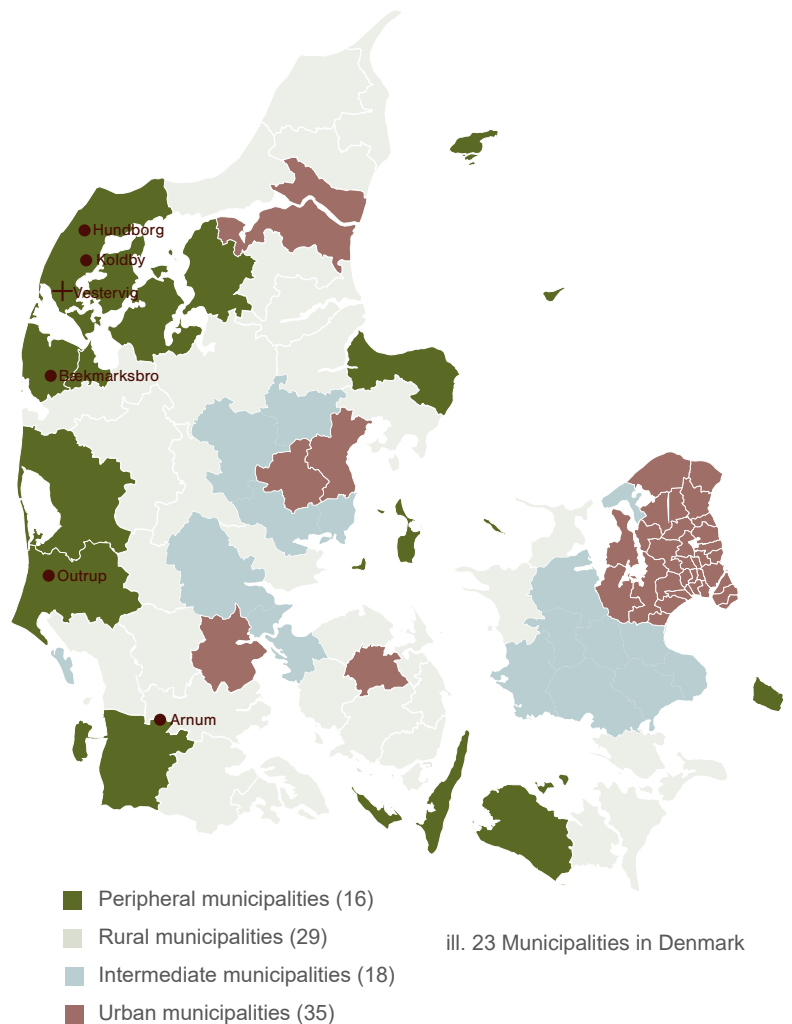
02 Understand

In the 02 Understand phase we will begin our analysis of a specific case, based on the knowledge presented in the 01 Unfold phase. This case centers on the small village of Vestervig in Southern Thy, which forms the foundation of our general understanding of rural development in a small village. The analysis adopts a comprehensive approach to both social and physical structures, divided into three areas of focus: people, places, and amenities.



Vestervig

- a representative case study



In this phase, we are unfolding an analysis of a representative village, namely the small village of Vestervig. We have chosen Vestervig in South Thy as our case study because it exemplifies a village where many of the general societal issues outlined in the preceding section are present. It is a village situated in a sea of fields, unlike Klitmøller, which has the North Sea as a major asset for development. Therefore, it represents many of the villages scattered throughout the Danish rural districts, whose development has traditionally centered around agriculture.

We are using a case study methodological approach, which aims to provide insights into rural development on a broader scale. The significance of case studies in examining both general and specific phenomena is detailed in the methodology section in the prologue of this project, drawing on Flyvbjerg's theoretical understanding of case studies (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

What defines a village is still under discussion. Some believe it refers to an urban community with up to 1,000 inhabitants – anything below this is considered rural. Others argue for a minimum threshold of 200 inhabitants. In this project, we perceive a village as an urban structure, with between 200-1000 inhabitants, where life generally revolves around a grocery store, a community center, and a school, represented to varying degrees.

Vestervig is a village with 595 residents organized according to the 'roadside village' structure, where houses and farms have emerged along the central main street, with

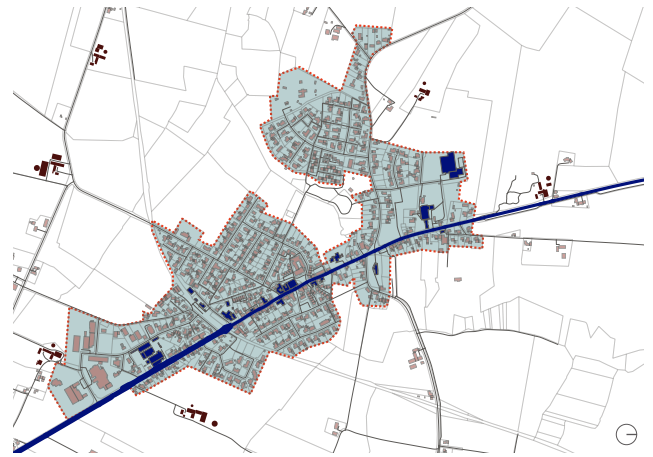
side streets branching off. Historically, the main street as the center of development was popular, but today it reveals its downsides and challenges, as traffic patterns have shifted. Living right next to a busy main street is less appealing today, leaving many towns with abandoned houses and depopulation along the main street (Information, 2014).

Mapping similar villages

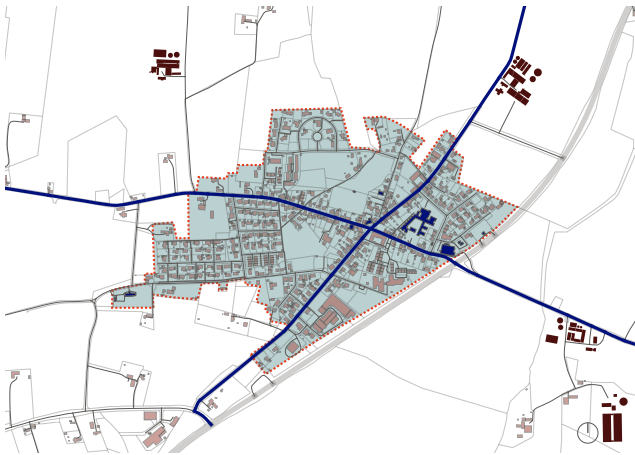
Vestervig is not the only village structured as a 'roadside village,' which is illustrated by a mapping on the next page. The mapping highlights six roadside villages with populations between 450 and 1050 inhabitants, located in remote municipalities similar to Vestervig. These villages underscore the point that this type of village, with this population range, is very consistent in structure. Common to these villages, including Vestervig, is the presence of a busy main street from which public services emerge, which though are limited in most places. The built environment radiates out from the main street and is surrounded by cultivated fields that are not accessible to the public. This gives the village's edge a somewhat harsh, impermeable quality, with limited integration between the village and nature. On the outskirts of these 'roadside villages,' we find farms scattered throughout the surrounding landscape. These farms are easy to identify on the map with their distinctive 4-long structures and manure tanks, surrounded by fields and nature. The purpose of the mapping is to emphasize our aim to understand certain structures and challenges not only occurring in small Vestervig but also prevalent in many villages across Denmark.



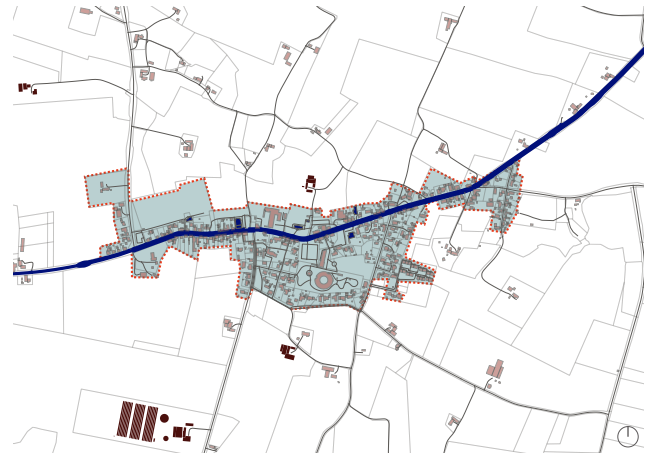
ill. 24 Ørnhøj, 761 residents



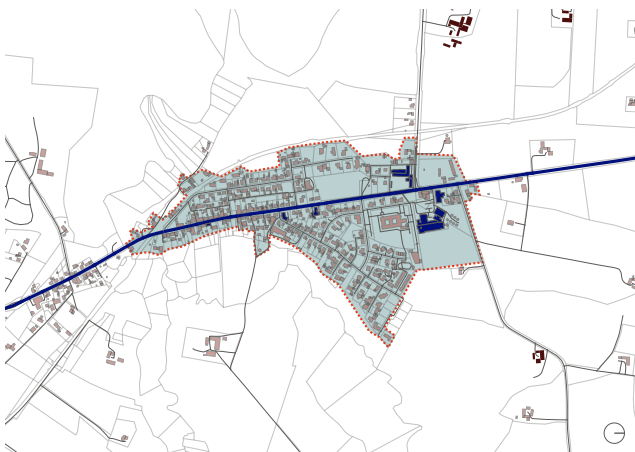
ill. 27 Outrup, 1045 residents



ill. 25 Koldby, 732 residents



ill. 28 Hundborg, 450 residents



ill. 26 Bækmarksbro, 526 residents



ill. 29 Arnum, 1045 residents

— Main street ■ Public amenities ■ City edge ■ Farms ■ Housing

02 Understand - People

In the category "People," we aim to understand and describe the individuals who choose to settle in a rural area like Thy. Here, we utilize the village of Vestervig as a case study, representing a typical village with both challenges and potential. This knowledge is crucial for our efforts to understand which target groups need strategic focus for attraction in such areas. Therefore, we examine aspects such as age distribution, tourism potential, and the significant factors influencing people's decision to settle in a rural area. This culminates in a description of the needs essential for attracting the desired target audience.

Population development and age distribution



ill. 30 More and more elderly...

If we take a closer look at a population forecast for the entire Thisted municipality, it appears that the population is expected to decrease from 43,384 in 2023 to 41,978 inhabitants in 2039 – a decline of -3.2%. This forecast follows the historical population trend that Thisted Municipality has experienced from 2005 to 2023. (App. Diagram 1) This is even though the total population nationwide is expected to increase by 4.4% during the same period. However, it's not possible to predict how the future will unfold, so it's important to bear in mind that a population forecast merely reflects an anticipated trend. (COWI, Thisted Municipality, 2023).

In some areas of the municipality, there's greater attractiveness than others, leading to variations in population trends from one area to another. For instance, population growth is expected in areas such as Hanstholm, Rolighed, Sennels, and Thisted. However, looking closer at Vestervig, the picture is different, indicating a projected decline in population. This trend is influenced by numerous factors, but generally, it suggests that Thisted and the towns surrounding it are experiencing growth, as are the towns along the West Coast and the Limfjord. (App. Diagram 2)

Looking at projections for population development concerning age groups across the entire Thisted Municipality, it appears that there's an expected decrease in the population aged 17-79. Conversely, there is anticipated moderate growth in the age group 0-16 years and significant growth in the age group 80-85+. (App. Diagram 3 + 4) The same trend applies to Vestervig, with local variations, as Vestervig is expected to experience a more pronounced growth in the age group 80-85+ compared to the municipal average. (App. Diagram 5 + 6)

Based on the above, it can be concluded that Thisted Municipality is facing several future challenges, including an expectation of a declining population and an aging population. This is likely to result in economic challenges for the municipality, as there are expected to be fewer tax revenues. Therefore, there is a need for a strategic approach to attract more residents in the age group 17-66 years to increase the number of citizens in the working age range. This could potentially contribute to both labor force, tax revenues, and children to sustain daycare facilities. Additionally, new "fresh" forces could also bring innovative ideas to the area – as seen with the surfing community in Klitmøller and the benefits it has brought.

Why settle in a rural area?

To increase the attraction of more young residents to the villages, it is necessary to identify the factors that can motivate this target group to move from cities to the countryside. As also mentioned in the motivation, the overall quality of life is simply higher in rural areas. According to Pia Heike Johansen, a researcher in sociology and rural development, her studies show that the high quality of life in rural areas, as indicated by Lolle's research, can be linked to the everyday life lived here. She builds on the sociologist Hartmut Rosa's theory of social acceleration, which points out the risk of the increasing speed becoming a premise for all areas of life today, as well as measuring 'quality of life' on economic parameters. His research suggests that this development can result in people feeling alienated from their surroundings because they do not feel that the world is responding to their actions. According to Rosa, this can be addressed by working with the concept of 'Resonance', which is about achieving a sense that you can influence your surroundings, and that the surroundings react to you. Johansen connects this with Henri Lefebvre's theory of rhythms, which he points out exists in all living things. (Johansen, Fisker, 2023)

Pia Heike Johansen's studies indicate that this sense of rhythm and resonance has good conditions for arising in rural areas. This happens, among other things, through the connection to nature and the physical surroundings, which she calls biological rhythms. This particularly involves activities related to food and nature because they can promote the feeling of being part of nature's rhythms: (Johansen, Fisker, 2023)

"Nogle dyrker egne grøntsager. Andre går ud i naturen for at samle bær, frugter, krydderurter eller svampe eller for at fiske eller gå på jagt. Mange bruger også tid på at konservere eller sylte de hjemmedyrkede eller indsamlede råvarer og på at tilberede måltider af dem til venner og familie. (...) Aktiviteterne hænger sammen med endnu langsommere rytmer i naturen og tjener som påmindelser om årstidernes skiften." Pia Heike Johansen (Johansen, Fisker, 2023)

The feeling of having nature integrated as part of everyday life is described by many as a quality of life, and it is precisely a quality that our rural areas can offer. In 2022, Thisted Municipality published a report titled "Rural Life – A Status of the Villages in 2022," where they directly asked citizens about their reasons for settling in one of the 17 villages in the municipality. These villages were selected based on having a population between 200 and 1000 residents. (Thisted Municipality, 2022)

According to the report, proximity to nature is a crucial factor in choosing to settle in a village in Thy. In a survey, citizens from the 17 villages were asked about the reasons for their choice of settlement, where virtually all, except in Hørdum, Sundby, and Hillerslev, cited nature as the primary reason for their choice. In addition to this, citizens also highlight space availability and proximity to family as reasons for settlement. (App. Diagram 7 + 8) (Thisted Municipality, 2022)

Taking a closer look at Vestervig specifically, citizens highlight, besides access to nature, the importance of the possibility to travel on foot and by bicycle, as well as active community life and good sports facilities as significant qualities of the town. Citizens in Vestervig describe their town as 'The town amidst nature', and their vision for the town in the future focuses on developing it into a child-friendly and green town. (App. Diagram 9) (Thisted Municipality, 2022)

Throughout the study, it is evident that nature has a significant influence on the choice of settlement in Thy and smaller villages. Additionally, village residents also value space and authentic relationships and communities as attractive factors. Qualities such as the aesthetics of well-preserved buildings and charming town environments are also highlighted, along with opportunities for childcare and access to schools. (Thisted Municipality, 2022)



ill. 34 Overlooking the church



ill. 33 Barns of Vestervig Overgaard



ill. 32 Barn of Vestervig Overgaard



ill. 31 Green wood constructions

Field study #2

Vestervig Overgaard

Beforehand, we identified Vestervig Overgaard and arranged a meeting with the owner and former owner, Regitze and Niels. The farm was chosen due to its proximity to Vestervig and its beautiful location in the landscape, with a view of the church and Vestervig. It was a very exciting visit, during which the farm was carefully studied and photographed.



ill. 35 Beautiful wooden doors



ill. 37 Looking in from the fields



ill. 36 Mainhouse of the farm

ill. 38 Details from the barn



The following features two interviews with individuals from Vestervig, seeking to gain a more nuanced and phenomenological understanding of what it's like to live in Vestervig, complementing the quantitative data available about the area. First, we speak with the owner and former owner, father, and daughter, of a farm just outside Vestervig. They articulate what it's like to move to Vestervig, life in the village, and how agriculture has changed over time. Next, we speak with a local enthusiast with a background in the municipality to gain a deeper understanding of Vestervig's development. Overall, these interviews add depth and nuance to the data and theory described throughout the report.



ill. 39 Regitze and Niels

A new generation at Vestervig Overgaard

Niels Johnsen Høy and Conny Anette Høy have been owners of Vestervig Overgaard for 35 years until 2019 when their daughter Regitze Johnsen Høy and son-in-law Simon took over the place and its operation. Vestervig Overgaard from 1832 is beautifully situated between Vestervig Church and the town of Vestervig, consisting of a main house as well as several barns and a granary, as they currently raise pigs on the farm. Niels has been running the farm for the 35 years he has lived there, and together with his daughter, he could tell, from each of their perspectives, how farming, living in the countryside, and the villages - especially Vestervig - have evolved. The following are some of Niels and Regitze's key points



ill. 40 Vestervig Overgaard, 1955

Niels, dig og Connie er flyttet fra Vestervig Overgaard og Regitze du har overtaget – hvordan kan det være?

Niels: Det var meget naturligt med den alder vi har, at lade de unge tage over... Og så var det eneste hus min hustru kunne tænke sig at bo i Vestervig til salg: Den gamle distrikt lægebolig, fra 1850, der ligger nede på hovedgaden... Fra da jeg gik ud af døren, har jeg ikke savnet det siden, selvom jeg var enormt glad for at være her i de 35 år. Det er bare et nyt kapitel nu... Ja, så vender man bogen.

Regitze: Vi skulle videre, I skulle videre. Så gav det det bare god mening. Og min kæreste Simon er også herfra og driver landbrug sammen med sin bror, så han kunne overtage driften.

Regitze, Kan du beskrive lidt for os hvordan det er at flytte tilbage til Vestervig?

Regitze: Det har virkelig været godt. Der er så meget fællesskab her og folk på vores alder, med børn som vi tit ses med. Der er utrolig meget initiativ hele tiden – der er virkelig ikke langt fra tanke til handling – folk vil virkelig hinanden og lokalsamfundet. Fx når mit barn er til gymnastik nede i hallen, så laver halinspektørens kone aftensmad til os forældre der venter imens – det er bare så hyggeligt.

Men Regitze, nu har I så, efter 5 år, alligevel besluttet at I skal videre igen, hvordan kan det være?

Regitze: Jamen, det er på grund af landbruget og den retning, det ligesom tager. Det er ikke fordi, vi ikke er glade for at bo her. Vi er vildt glade for at bo her, og det har givet så god mening i de år, vi har været her. Og kunne det egentlig også fremadrettet... Men altså, det er svært at drive et landbrug. Hvis man skal gøre det ordentligt. Hvis man selv skal føle, at man gør det

ordentligt...

Så det er på grund af CO2-afgifter og omlægning, at I vælger at sælge?

Regitze: Ja det er det... Det der med, at det også går op og ned, det skal man på en eller anden måde kunne håndtere. At det går godt, og det går skidt. Og det der med, okay, det her arbejde, det skal du udføre godt. Men du må ikke det, du må ikke det, du må ikke det, du må ikke det... Vi føler os virkelig ikke tilfredsstillet i vores arbejde.

Hvordan er jeres oplevelse af, nu kender I vel folk i branchen her på Sydty og også Thy generelt. Er det noget, som andre sidder med samme overvejelser omkring?

Regitze: Ja. Jamen der er desværre en del yngre, der står i den samme situation som os.

Niels: Ja, jamen jeg tror, det er frustration over, at der ikke er logik i tingene. Hvis man siger, vi vil ikke have landbrug i Danmark, så er det jo fint nok, der bliver bare hele tiden kastet røgslør for argumenterne...

Har I overvejet at sælge driften fra bare?

Regitze: Vi har tænkt tanken. Men ikke sådan seriøst. Jeg tror vi synes, det man skylder det her sted. Det er, at det er som det er nu. At man ikke skiller det fra hinanden. Så for at være tro mod det... Så skal det være alt eller intet. Enten bliver vi her og gør det vi gør. Eller så sælger vi det hele. Og det har jo selvfølgelig også noget at gøre med, det er bare ikke rart at være her, når der sker alt muligt, som man ikke selv er en del af... Og for mit vedkommende er det også et ønske om at komme tættere til byen. Hvis man må kalde det sådan. Det der med, at vores mindste sover en lur. Og vores ældste

gerne vil lege med en ven, det kan jeg ikke lade sig gøre nu, på grund af den store vej der er indtil Vestervig – selvom der kun er få hundrede meter til byen.

Hvis vi nu prøver at lege lidt. Hvis vi tænker 20, 30, 40 år frem. Og tingene går som de går. Der kommer nogle ret massive afgifter. Hvis I realistisk skal forholde jer til gårde og landbrug. Hvordan ser det ud i fremtiden?

Regitze: Altså jeg har virkelig nej hatten på. For jeg tror ikke på det. Nej. Altså dengang vi snakkede om vi skulle det her. Der kunne jeg bare mærke, at jeg skal bare ud af det her NU... Fordi om ikke ret lang tid. Der tror jeg ikke på, at der er noget der hedder landbrug på den her måde længere. Altså så skal der ske et eller andet helt vildt... I forhold til folk også bliver mere vegetarer, så kan man jo bruge jorden på den måde. Man skal tænke helt ud af boksen - det er ikke traditionelt som det er nu. Det bliver noget helt andet. Det tror jeg.

Så hvad kunne et bud være på fremtidens landdistrikter?

Niels: Jamen jeg tror måske nok det kan gå sådan at man vælger at sige at Danmark det skal være natur og der skal være turister. Det skal på en eller anden måde finde en ny form for at få lov at blive.

Regitze: Men landbruget det er jo stadig vigtigt. Altså det er jo vores livsgrundlag. Det er jo også derfor vi synes at det her arbejde giver så meget mening. Det giver så meget mening hver gang vi åbner noget fra købmanden og så er dansk produceret. Og så kan der være forskellige holdninger til om det er godt at slagte en gris eller ej.

Hvordan er nærheden egentlig til de fødevarer der bliver produceret her på Thy? Er der gårdbutikker

eller nogle lokale forretninger?

Regitze: Nej det har vi ikke her på Sydthy. Der er nogen længere oppe mod Thisted. Men ikke her. Nej det har der faktisk ikke. Egentlig ved jeg ikke hvorfor. Der er nogle enkelte der sælger kartofler på vejen. Men det er i Vestervig.

Man ser jo virkelig meget sådan på Samsø og Bornholm, der er enormt stor værdi i sådan det lokalt producerede. Og turisterne, de er jo vilde til at betale. Altså 200 kroner for en rullepølse, hvis det var det.

Hvis det bare var lokalt produceret. Og hvis turisme er svaret, så ville der være en hel ny økonomi omkring det. Så det kunne jo være interessant.

Regitze: Jeg sad lige og kom i tanke om, at der er jo også præsten. Jamen han har jo boet i København altid vel. Altså han er jo født i Holstebro og så er han flyttet hertil. Han har været ansat inde i Kongehuset, arrangeret alt kulturelt for dronningen, når hun skal ud i landet. Og så kommer han her med al sin kultur og rigdom til Vestervig – det er fantastisk.

Men jeg synes bare, at det er ret interessant, også fordi, altså han er homoseksuel, og der er jo noget i forhold til Agger og det indre missionske... Og nu når vi snakker forskel mellem Agger og Vestervig, han har gjort meget ud af, at man får dem bragt tæt sammen. Han er en samlende figur



ill. 41 Otto Lægaard

Otto Lægaard is a local enthusiast in Vestervig. Originally from the Holstebro region, he has been a resident of Thy, Vestervig, for many years. For 13 years, he has worked as a Project Manager, project developer, fundraiser, and business consultant for Thisted Municipality, where he has been deeply involved in development and construction projects. With a strong educational background in economics and experience in fundraising and financing, Otto is passionate about small local communities where relationships and community life play a significant role. In 2006, he was one of the initiators of the community-owned investment company Vestervig Byfornyelse ApS, which works to address vacant buildings in Vestervig through acquisition, sale, and transformation. (Lægaard, n.d.) We had a conversation with Otto about Vestervig, its challenges, and potentials within rural development:

Local ownership in Vestervig

Hvilke udfordringer ser Vestervig ind i ift. Lokal udvikling?

Det der er i den her landdistriktsudvikling, det er jo, at man skal tilpasse, når der ikke er vækst. Nu har vi ikke haft vækst, og det har set frygteligt ud, men så får man tilpasset på et nyt niveau. Og nu begynder der faktisk at komme rigtig mange mennesker - også turister. 'Landet' har fået en anden tiltrækningskraft, og Thy har også fået en anden tiltrækningskraft.

Det der ikke rigtig er lykkedes, det er de alternative boformer. Altså at man kan flytte ind i nogle fællesskaber, som ikke bare er senior-agtige. Vi har tænkt over, at man kunne lave sådan noget bofællesskab i nogle af de eksisterende huse her. Vi får nemlig ikke rigtig solgt nogen af de gamle huse - så kan sådan nogle som jer komme og bo i dem, eller flytte videre. Og så kunne man gøre lidt, hvad man ville. Fx. Hvor der er fælles haver og sådan noget. Det er tiden nok også lidt moden til nu.

Lige pludselig er der begyndt at ske noget inden for de sidste par år. Også med Agger. Jan og Dorte, som har købt det gamle sygehus, de har lavet det til et kulturhotel - Hawkraft. Og de har også flere huse, de har købt fordi de ikke kan lade være. Så der kommer også et godt indhold ind i Vestervig.

Nogle steder, der kører det jo bare fantastisk, og andre steder, der er det lidt... Kommunerne kan godt lukke sig lidt om sig selv. Det er i hvert fald mit hjertebarn, det er den der koordinering ud til byerne. Altså at det bliver gjort. Den er virkelig vigtig. Fordi så kan vi udnytte ressourcerne meget bedre. Men... der mangles jo penge alle steder.

Hvad kan skabe arbejdspladser i fremtiden - i et perspektiv på 5-20-50 år?

Der er jo stadigvæk produktionsvirksomheder i Thy. Der er produktion og arbejdspladser. Og så er der så håndværkere. Mange faguddannede her. Den største

arbejdsplads er jo kommunen. Der er grundlæggende meget her, men de der følgevirkninger af landbruget, de er jo sådan set næsten væk. Der er kun slagteriet inde i Thisted.

Tror du, der er potentiale i vidensarbejde?

Ja, fx sådan nogle arbejdsfællesskaber, hvor man sidder sammen. Det kommer der her nu, i den gamle boghandel. Laurits har lavet sådan et kreativt fællesskab derinde. Måske noget med design... Under Corona fandt man jo ud af, at man godt kan sidde digitalt og holde møder.

Ift. Arbejdspladser, så er der jo også turismen... og det kommer der mere af. Men det har jo ikke rigtigt været et anerkendt erhverv, og med et uddannelsesmiljø fx. kokke mangler man jo helt vildt i turismen. Der kommer generelt en del flere events, og folk vil betale for det.

Hvilke udfordringer står Vestervig overfor i fremtiden?

Der er jo en skole, der lukker. Der var jo et forslag, om at lukke syv, men det blev kun den ene. Og det er meget vigtigt. Skolen er vigtig. Altså det er ikke så vigtigt, med en købmand, fordi unge mennesker, I ville jo ikke tænke, det skulle være et problem at få de varer..

Men en skole er jo vigtig, at have tæt på, og det der fællesskab, der er omkring det. Så kan man så flytte dem til Hurup, hvor der faktisk er pladser. Men der er meget lang transporttid. Der er jo ingen i dagens Danmark der vil have deres små børn til at køre halvanden time, hver vej.

Dem der vender tilbage har ofte en tilknytning til Vestervig. Der bliver et miljø, fordi, der er nogle muligheder for forældrene ift. Bedsteforældre. Hvis vi går 10 - 15 år tilbage, så var tendensen at bedsteforældrene købte sommerhus i nærheden af de store byer, fordi de så kunne være i nærheden.

Target group

Summing up people

Drawing from the previous analytical category "People," we summarize the key points concerning the essential factors in rural settlement and the requirements for attracting new residents. This serves as the foundation for defining two primary 'target groups' for the project:

Resourceful young families and elderly

Based on projections for population development, it can be concluded that Thisted Municipality is facing several future challenges, including an expectation of a declining and aging population. This is described as a general trend, not unique to Thisted Municipality but also applicable to other peripheral municipalities. There's a strategic need to attract more citizens who can contribute to creating a sustainable village life. This involves both resourceful younger people in the working and childbearing age, but also resourceful elderly who have the energy and time to contribute to the community. These two groups of citizens will be able to complement each other well, thus bringing new energy to the area.

Tourists

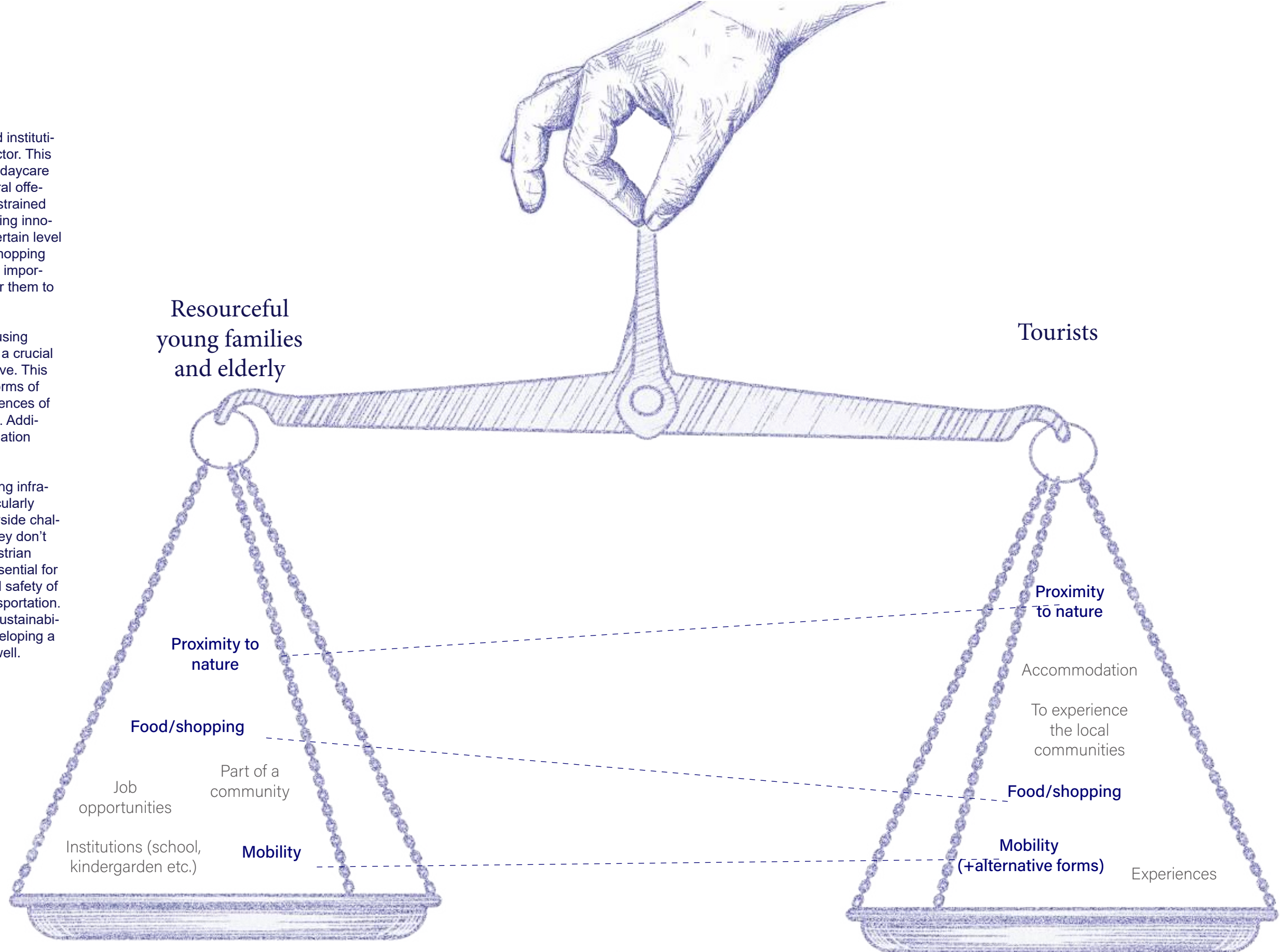
Throughout the section "Tourism as a Lever for Rural Development" earlier in the report, as well as in interviews, tourism is described as a crucial factor in attracting new life and fostering more locally rooted economies in rural areas. This is also linked to the anticipation of an increase in the number of tourists in Denmark in the future due to climate change. Therefore, there is potential for improving facilities for all four archetypes and using tourism as a catalyst for development.

There is a need for new resourceful forces to reverse the current trend of an aging population with fewer young people. Young individuals and newcomers who can see the city's opportunities with fresh eyes, as happened in Klitmøller 20 years ago. A development where entrepreneurial young people, sharing a passion for surfing, built a lifestyle and community around it, which simultaneously became a haven for surfing enthusiasts. The same can happen for Vestervig if the immense potential of nature is managed alongside the opportunities for living in and with the fantastic nature that surrounds it, along with the communities that can arise from it. Nevertheless, we shouldn't underestimate the increasing number of elderly individuals today, who have valuable contributions to make even in their later years due to our generally longer lifespans. This encompasses, for instance, their availability/time to participate in local community activities and their interest in voluntary association work. There's significant potential in the synergies that can develop across generations, bridging resourceful seniors with younger families. (Ministeriet for By, Bolig og Landdistrikter, 2014)

The two target groups are equally weighted because they are each other's prerequisites for success. Residents and tourists must serve as each other's win to achieve a sustainable local community, where the local value chain is strengthened. The two target groups have a range of needs that are individual to each of them, but where some of them also overlap. Based on the previous sections in the report, some of the key needs of the target groups are presented:

- A crucial factor in attracting people to rural areas is the opportunity to get close to and integrate nature into daily life. Tourists also highlight nature as an immensely important factor in destination choice. Thus, in a development strategy, efforts should be made to create better conditions and strengthen the relationship with nature to promote potential increased settlement and tourism.
- Social structures are an important factor in choosing to live in rural areas. This includes factors such as authentic relationships, family, and communities. Thus, an effort should be made to create attractive and more visible meeting places that can facilitate social interactions. It is also attractive for tourists to experience local interactions unfolding.

- The importance of basic services and institutions is also highlighted as a crucial factor. This includes institutions such as schools, daycare centers, shopping facilities, and cultural offerings. These are all services that are strained by declining population figures, requiring innovative approaches to maintaining a certain level of service. Regarding tourists, local shopping options and cultural offerings are also important, which is why there is potential for them to be integrated.
- The importance of developing the housing supply in rural areas is highlighted as a crucial factor in making an area more attractive. This could involve enhancing alternative forms of housing to better align with the preferences of young families and resourceful elders. Additionally, creating authentic accommodation options for tourists is vital.
- Residents emphasize a well-functioning infrastructure for soft traffic users as particularly important. They find life in the countryside challenging in terms of transportation if they don't have access to a car. They lack pedestrian and cyclist connections, which are essential for promoting both the attractiveness and safety of walking and cycling as modes of transportation. Given that outdoor tourists prioritize sustainability, it's also important to focus on developing a greener infrastructure for tourists as well.



02 Understand - Places

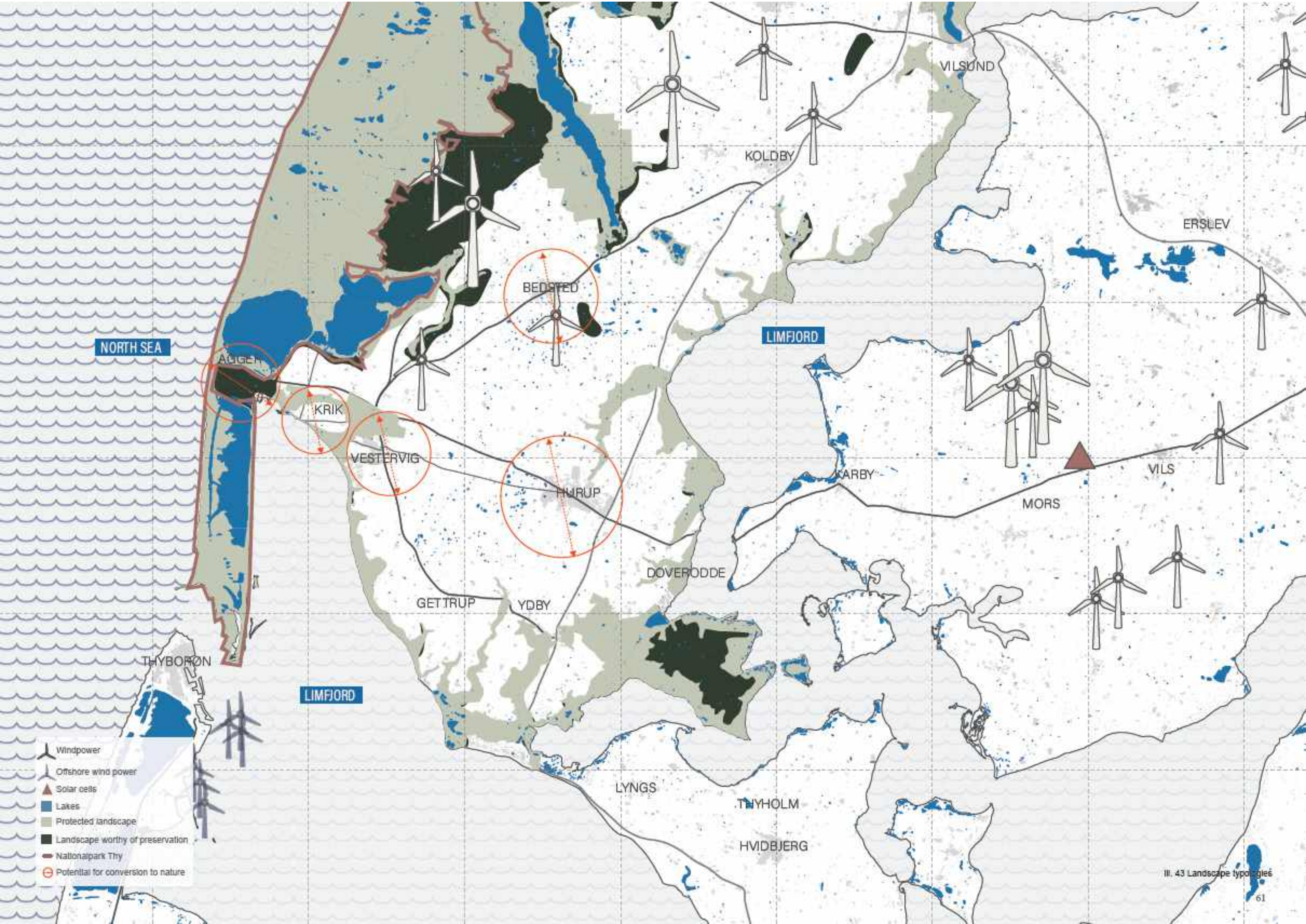
In the category “Places”, we aim to investigate and describe the physical structures, encompassing, nature typologies, infrastructure, and the build structures. We consider both the regional context of Southern Thy and delve into the structures of Vestervig. We map out the problems and potentials regarding the physical framework of the area to identify which strategic parameters are crucial to developing, aiming to attract the right group of people to the area.

Landscape typologies

The southern part of Thisted Municipality is characterized by its stunning and rugged nature, alongside many cultivated and structured landscapes. They primarily consist of young moraine landscapes from the last ice age, predominantly featuring sandy and calcium-poor terrains. (Krüger, 2013) Particularly along the coasts, Thisted Municipality is enveloped by valuable and protected natural areas, highlighted by the dunes and heathlands of the National Park to the west. To the southeast, Limfjorden forms a backdrop, creating an elongated and tranquil coastal stretch, starkly contrasting with the West Coast. Nowhere else in Thy are the West Coast and Limfjorden as close together as in Vestervig – where the sea and the fjord are only 2 km apart. Given that, 100% of the landscape surrounding Vestervig consists of cultivated fields. The holiday home area, Kærgården, borders Limfjorden and represents the closest "natural" environment to Vestervig.

The map also shows how green energy production is distributed in the landscape in terms of wind turbines and solar panels. Near Thyborøn, there are two groups of offshore wind farms towards the Limfjord in the east, centrally on Mors, there is a large solar panel installation, and in the open land centrally in Thy, there are wind turbines. (Energistyrelsen, 2022)

There could be potential to make the landscape adjacent to the villages more accessible and, thus, more attractive for settlement, with nature as an asset. Outside this radius, efforts can be directed toward energy landscapes, cultivation, nature restoration projects, etc.

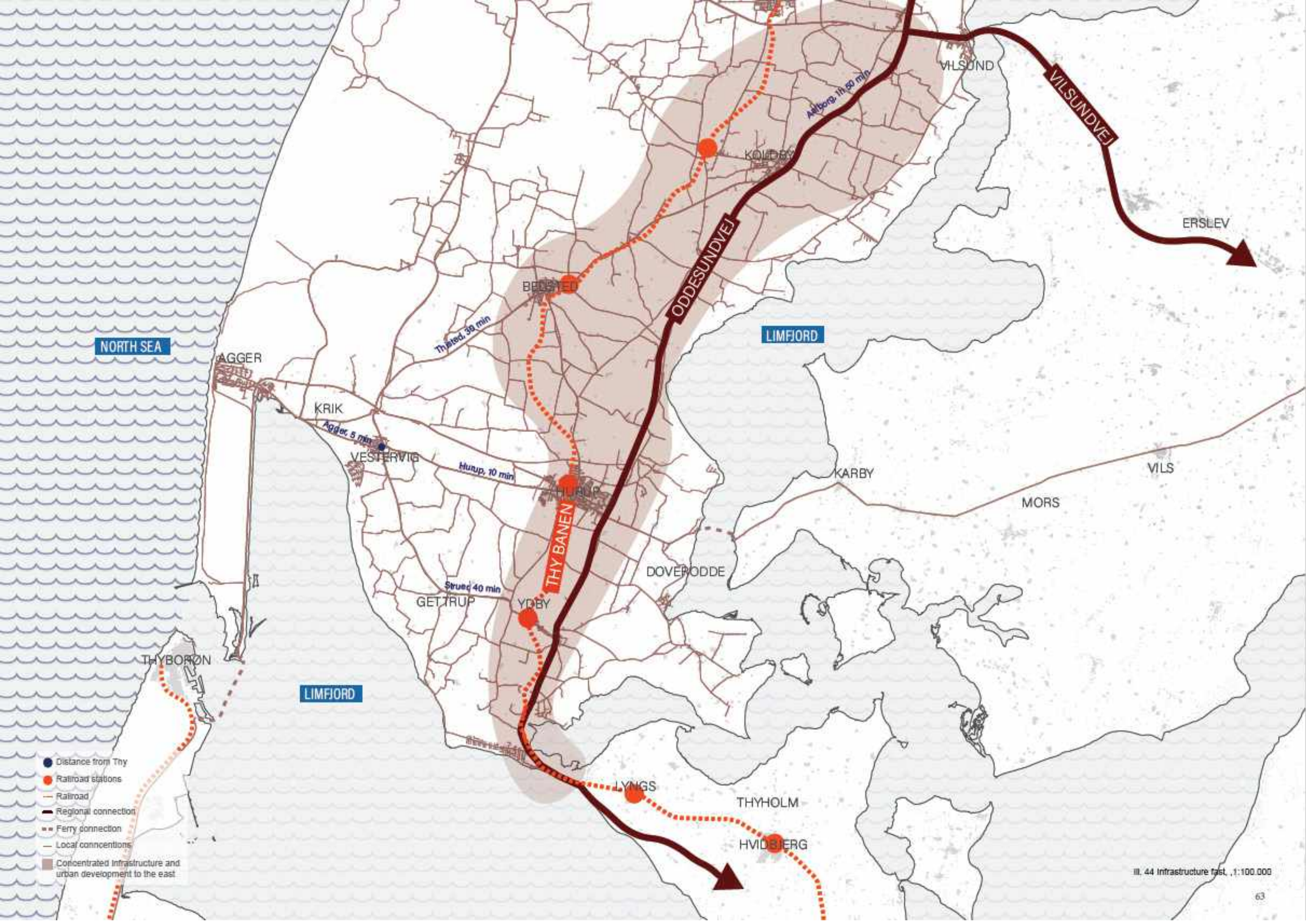


Infrastructure - fast

In a north-south direction, Thisted Municipality is connected by the main road Oddesundvej, which links Thyholm in the south with the larger cities along Thisted Municipality's east coast towards the Limfjord, passing through the main city of Thisted. A railway connection runs through the municipality, primarily serving the eastern part of the municipality. In an east-west direction, the area is connected by a series of local roads that pass through the landscape. Thisted Municipality is also connected to its regional context via ferry and bridge connections passing the Thyborøn Canal, Oddesund, Næssund, and Vilsund.

This highlights an infrastructure that is primarily efficient and advantageous in the eastern part of Thy, which is also reflected in the placement of the larger cities in the area. The western part of Thy suffers from a less efficient infrastructure. Especially when it comes to public transport it is really clear that Vestervig is located on the outskirts of Denmark but also in the outskirts of Thisted Municipality. There is a lot of commuting involved in living in Vestervig, where the nearest college, Thisted Gymnasium fx is located 30 min away by car and 1 hour by bus, including a shift in Hurup.

This paints a picture of heavy reliance on cars when living in Vestervig, which increasingly connects to Hurup, especially since the grocery store has now closed and the bus only runs once an hour. There could be great potential in implementing mobility hubs, where car-sharing could become more prevalent in these areas.



Infrastructure - slow

There are good opportunities for cycling routes along the coast, both towards the North Sea and Limfjorden. Naturstyrelsens cycling routes cover the central part of Thy and create opportunities for trips here. The cycling routes are sometimes equipped with dedicated bike lanes, while others simply follow country roads. Footpaths and hiking trails are primarily found along the west coast. When it comes to Vestervig, dedicated cycling paths and hiking trails are very limited if one wishes to avoid walking along the main road. There are no connections specifically designated for pedestrians and cyclists to the surrounding towns, apart from a small path along the fields to the holiday home area of Kærgården. As mentioned earlier, Vestervig has a unique location close to both the North Sea and Limfjorden, which unfortunately are not being utilized. (ruter.dk, n.d.) (Naturstyrelsen, n.d.)

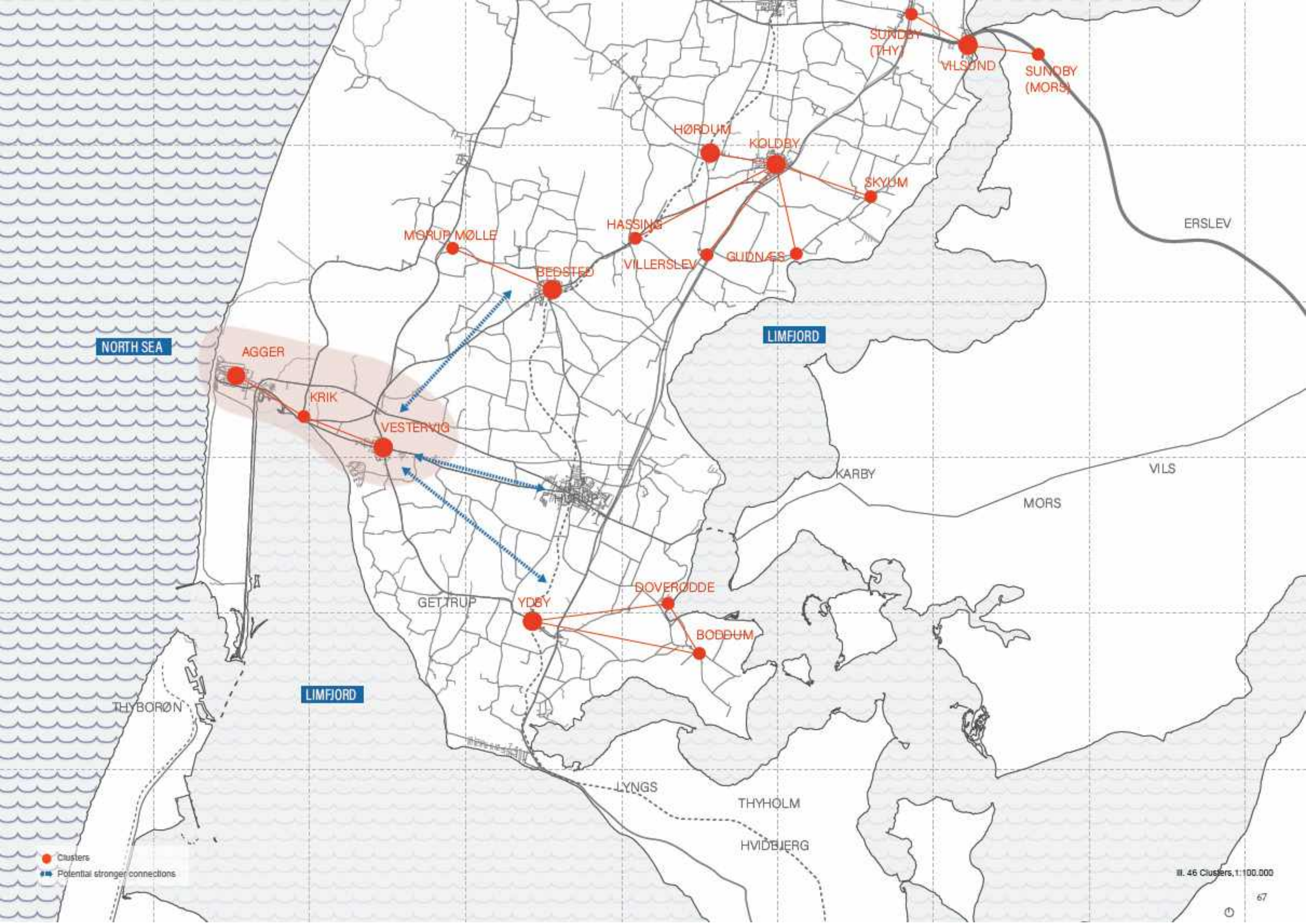
There is a big potential in improving access to nature for pedestrians and cyclists around Vestervig and in general where fields are currently inaccessible. As well as by improving and enhancing Limfjordsruten, which connects Vestervig to the Limfjord and the North Sea.



Clusters and network

In Thy, there is a strong ability to collaborate across the smallest villages in cluster structures. This desire to think holistically rather than standing alone is deeply rooted. On the map, the known clusters are described. Almost all 17 villages in Thy are part of a cluster, with only 5 villages not actively participating in collaboration with other villages (Thisted Kommune, 2022). Vestervig is part of a cluster with Krik and Agger, where the three small towns complement each other in terms of facilities. Here, a specific development strategy has been developed that integrates the synergies of the three villages, thinking not only locally but also across boundaries. (Kappel, 2022). Vestervig is the largest town in this constellation, Agger is the second largest with the North Sea in its backyard as its main attraction, and Krik is the smallest village, situated right next to the Limfjord. The cluster of Agger, Krik, and Vestervig is known for strong citizen engagement, which truly enables collaboration and progress. However, the cluster is fragile in terms of future development, and it is, therefore, necessary to think innovatively to ensure the preservation of amenities such as schools and shopping options in the local area in the long term. (Kappel, 2022)

The sense of belonging to a specific place or village is often an unspoken mental, social, and structural understanding. Some may feel more connected to Vestervig, while others may have stronger ties to Agger. However, to succeed in working with clusters as a new understanding of urban connections, new mental maps, and divisions need to be created, as Tietgen and Jørgensen put it. The conventional understanding of city boundaries needs to be softened, and a sense of belonging across clusters needs to be fostered. (Tietjen, Jørgensen, 2023) This could for example be through new physical connections across the village boundary, new communal spaces that appeal to shared use, or maybe new connections in the landscape.





ill. 43 Historical photo, 1910

Vestervig

We now focus on Vestervig. The village has been central to Sydthy, with an active business community and a wide range of service facilities such as courts and jails, hospitals, pharmacies, medical practices, technical schools, private schools, savings banks, craft associations, grocery stores, brickworks, cooperative dairies, bakeries, post offices, etc. Vestervig is particularly known today for housing the largest 'village church.' (Vestervig, n.d.) in the Nordic region. It is an old historic village whose history can be traced back to 1682 when the town consisted of only 11 farms surrounded by farmland. The town has grown in two directions: the old village around the historic monastery ruins and church, which positioned itself to the north, and towards the south, where service facilities, businesses, and residences were established. Over time, Vestervig has transformed, but growth stagnated around the 20th century. As mentioned earlier in connection with the structures of Andelsbevægelsen, this also applied to Vestervig. The community was essential for survival in the countryside, and Vestervig was a vibrant small town where the village was the center of life in the countryside. (Vestervig, n.d.)



ill. 44 Historical map, 1963 - 1976 , 1:20.000



ill. 48 Overlooking Vestervig



ill. 47 Mainstreet of Vestervig



ill. 46 The local inn



ill. 45 Mainroad houses

Field study #3

Vestervig

We selected Vestervig and visited it to gain an in-depth understanding of what kind of village Vestervig is, as well as its landscape features. We spoke with locals, explored all corners of the village, mapped connections, and took photos. This formed the basis for further work on the village from the desk.



ill. 49 Mainroad of Vestervig



ill. 51 Krik



ill. 50 Vestervig Church

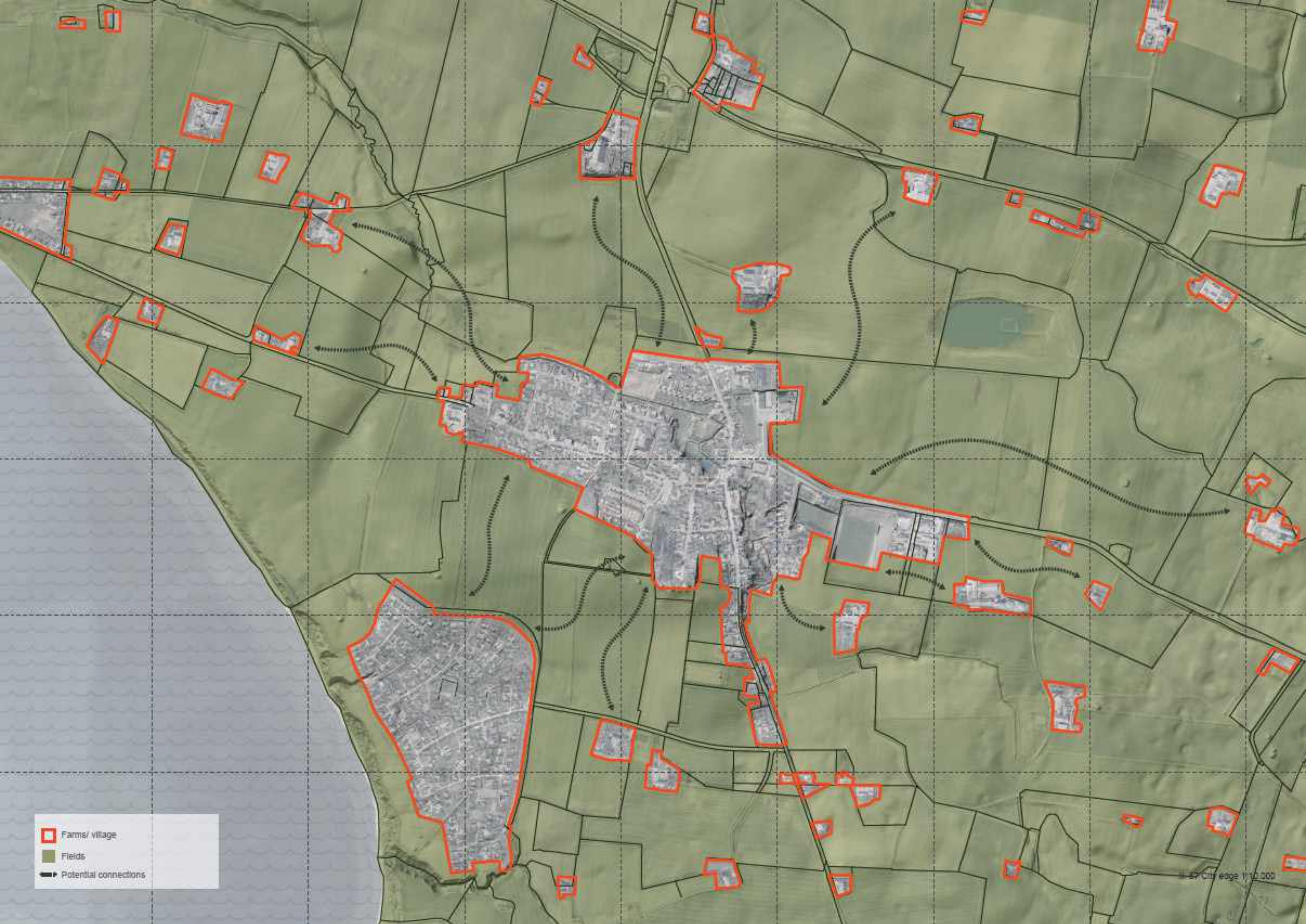
ill. 52 Periphery of Vestervig



City edge - periphery or center?

Vestervig lies like an island in a sea of fields. The cultivated fields create long vistas across the landscape towards the horizon. A landscape that may seem so natural, although it has not always looked that way; but it is our image of what rural life looks like. A consequence of the layout, where the fields border directly onto the edges of the villages (as seen on the next page), means that it is not possible to venture out into the countryside. The same applies to the farms, which also position themselves as smaller islands without any real connection to the surrounding nature.

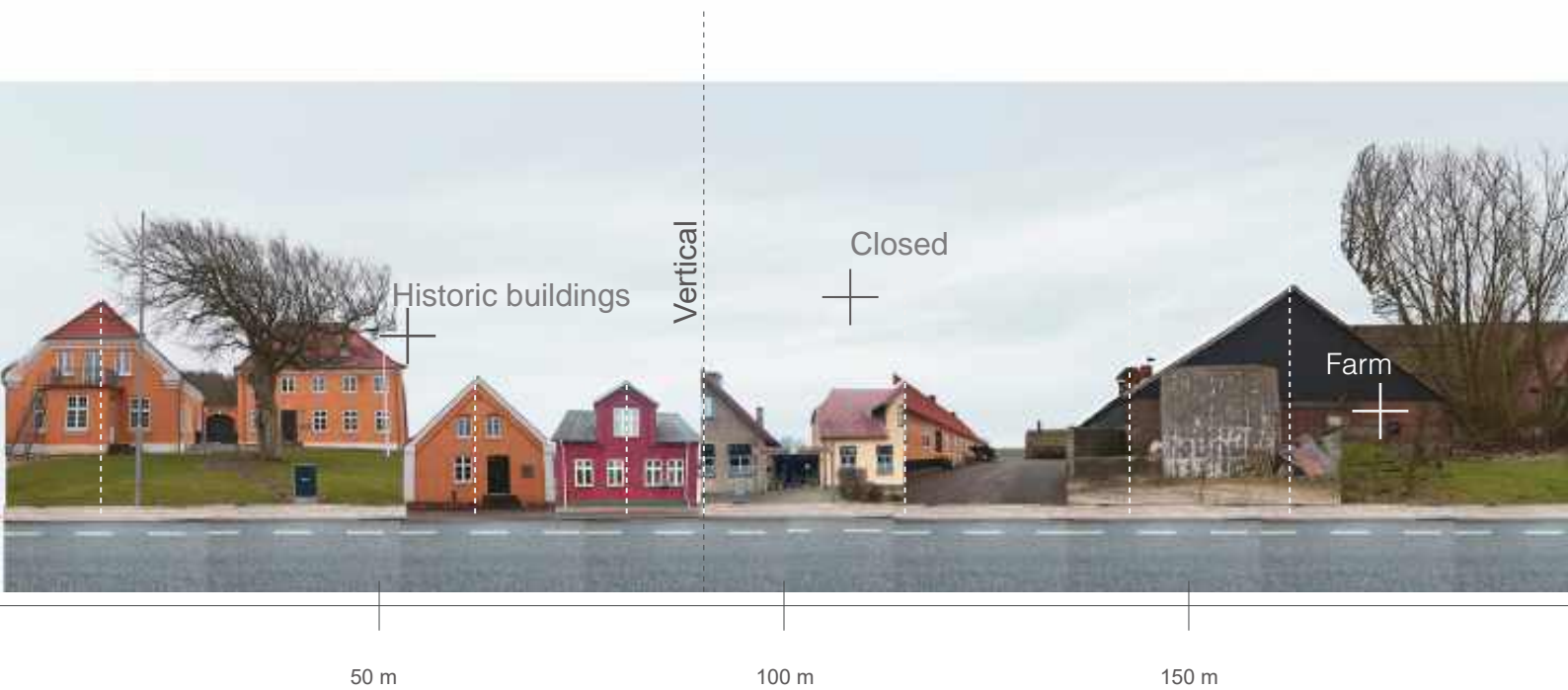
The lack of access to "nature" is clear in two ways: Lack of footpath connections as well as a lack of actual nature to traverse, where agricultural fields are more classified as cultural landscapes.



 Farms/ village

 Fields

 Potential connections



ill. 53 The section reflects how the fields around Vestervig are drawn right up to the edge of the town, thus creating a sudden transition between urban and rural areas.



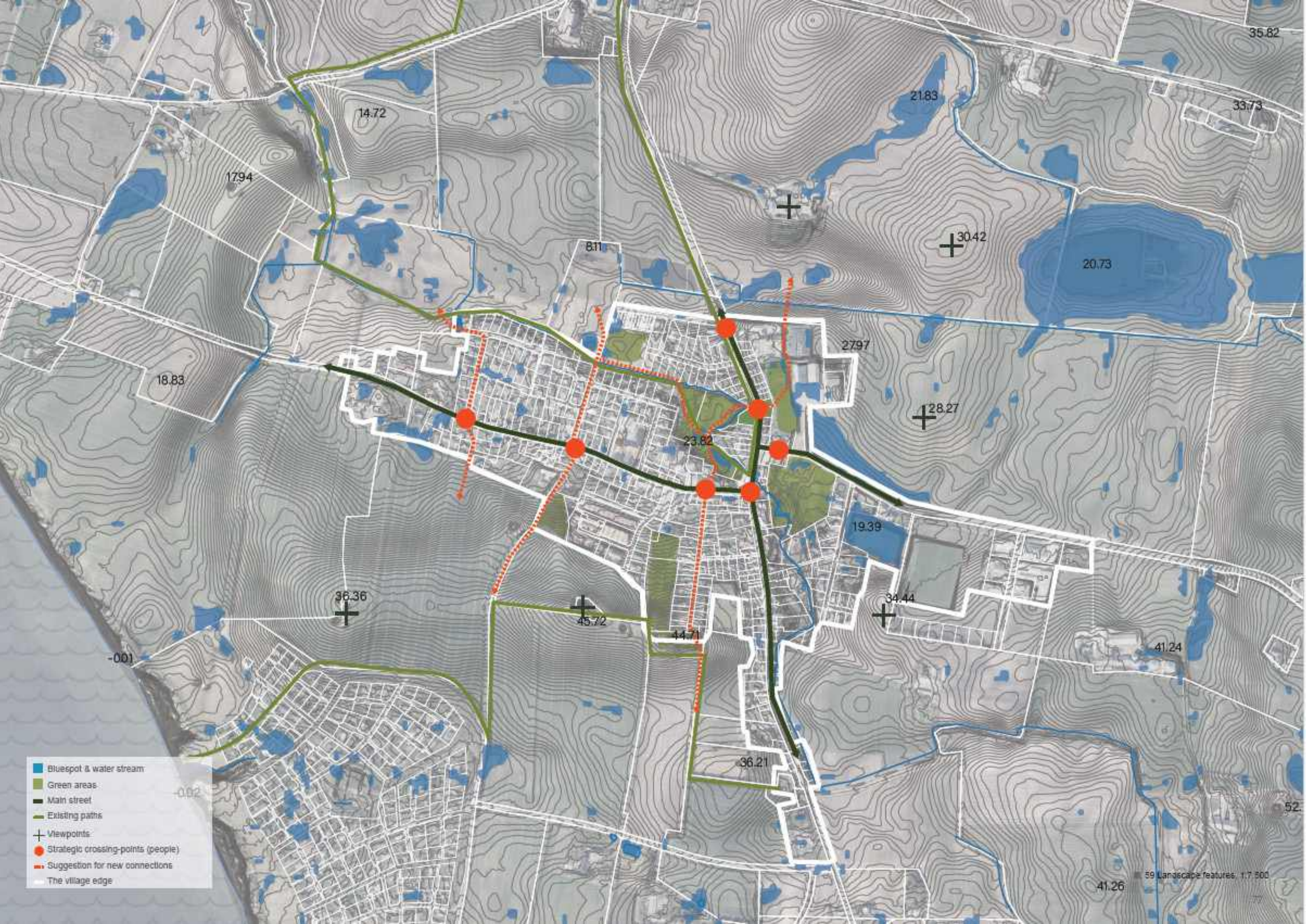


Landscape features and land use

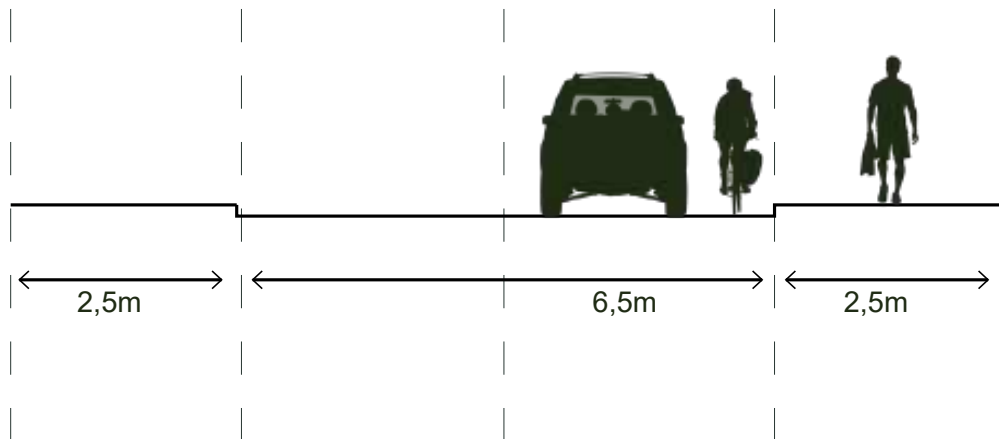
Vestervig is situated on a slope. The landscape rises towards the south and falls towards the north. From the lowest point, the landscape ascends again to its highest point, where Vestervig Church is located. This terrain offers some fantastic views over the village and the church, contributing significantly to Vestervig's landscape value. This is especially noticeable when arriving in the village from the north or south, where the terrain varies the most. The hilly terrain also means that there are some quite large blue spots, which have the potential to be transformed into dedicated wetlands.

The landscape around Vestervig is almost entirely cultivated land, aside from a few shelter belts. This means it's not a landscape suitable for recreational purposes or any kind of traversal. Apart from two footpath connections – one north of the village and one south of the village, leading to the summer house area Kærgården.

At first glance, it's predominantly the buildings that stand out when encountering Vestervig along the two main streets. The green park Klosterparken runs across the village and has become more visible after a house on the corner was removed. However, there is very little greenery evident in the village. Nevertheless, some road connections lead out into the countryside that abruptly stop at the edge of the fields, presenting an opportunity to introduce greenery and incorporate "nature" into the village. Additionally, the stream that runs through the entire village has the potential to become more visible and serve as a unifying feature for the village's residents.



- Bluespot & water stream
- Green areas
- Main street
- Existing paths
- Viewpoints
- Strategic crossing-points (people)
- Suggestion for new connections
- The village edge



ill. 54 Vestervig - Klostergade

Vestervig - a village without a center

Common to many villages is that they center around one or more main streets. This is also true for Vestervig, where the main streets run in a north-south direction and an east-west direction. The main street includes a bus stop, the local inn, and a few shops. Additionally, there are some outlying areas along the long street layout, such as small squares, vacant plots, and the space/parking lot in front of the grocery store. At the intersection of Vestergade and Klostergade, there is an opening to a park pathway northeastward, which continues southwestward, but it is not connected across the road.

There are a total of two pedestrian crossings in Vestervig, one near the school on Klostergade and one at the end of Vestervig-Agger Hallen on Teglgårdsvej. Additionally, there is a speed bump on Vestergade and a chicane at the beginning of Teglgårdsvej to the east. In other words, Vestervig is primarily a town designed for cars, and pedestrians and cyclists must yield. This is evident in the absence of bike lanes along the main streets – cyclists

must ride on the road.

Generally speaking, the town is designed for cars. The fact that people primarily gather along the main street does not encourage longer stays due to the fast-moving and noisy traffic. Furthermore, the individual park pathways are not connected across the roads. With only two connections across the road, along with just one chicane and one speed bump, cars have the opportunity to drive very fast along the main streets. It is contradictory that all "urban spaces" are located along the main streets, where the hierarchy is clearly in favor of motorists.

Could efforts be made to shift the hierarchy more in favor of pedestrians and cyclists? This would provide a greater incentive to utilize the urban spaces along the main streets. Additionally, creating better connections across the main street to link the town's amenities and green spaces more effectively would be beneficial. Especially between the school, the sports center and the city center.



ill. 56 Klosterparken



ill. 57 Busstop



ill. 55 Empty building plot



ill. 58 Empty building plot



ill. 59 Small square

- Main street and empty plots
- Green areas
- Small streets

Housing supply

Vestervig primarily consists of single-family houses. The houses along the main street are a mix of old market town buildings and newer constructions from the early 1900s. The large residential area, located in the northwestern part of the village, was developed in the 1960s. Additionally, farms are scattered around Vestervig, with some even located right up to the main street. The houses along the main street are generally in very poor condition due to inadequate maintenance. Conditions generally improve as you move away from the main street, but the main street is the first impression one gets of a village when driving through.

The supply of housing in Vestervig and rural villages in general is very limited. One action could therefore be to make it more diverse to attract a larger population. Furthermore, the average Dane has also become wealthier and thus has higher demands on where and how they should live, which the supply must match.

Moreover, there is also a debate about what future buildings will look like. We live in a time when we cannot afford to demolish usable buildings and discard recyclable building materials. In other words, the most sustainable buildings are those we have already built. However, it is difficult to imagine a complete halt to construction, but in the future, we must renovate, transform, and reuse much more than we do today. In this context, there is potential in the materials from houses of such poor quality that they need to be demolished. Additionally, there is great potential in the farms, which constitute large generic building masses, offering many possibilities. These reflections naturally affect aesthetics. In other words, we are entering a new era where new sustainability requirements are in focus and ways of living are being challenged.



Aesthetics of Vestervig

Main street





ill. 60 Main street Vestervig - Klostergade

The first impression of Vestervig is experienced along the main streets, where the village's immediate appearance and character are defined. Vestervig was once an important village with much more activity than it has today. Large townhouses and other significant historical buildings line the main streets. The condition of these houses varies greatly, with some being incredibly well-maintained and others somewhat dilapidated. Additionally, there is very little greenery along the main streets, as most houses are situated right up to the sidewalk or have gravel in their front yards. It is crucial to clear out these dilapidated houses to ensure the town gives a good first impression.

1960's neighborhood



Historic farms





ill. 61 1960's neighborhood

In the 1960s, a new neighborhood emerged in Vestervig. Single-family brick houses with large driveways and lawns characterize this area. It is somewhat self-contained, set back from the main street and facing the fields. The neighborhood lacks a center, hierarchy, or central space for orientation, but it provides space for residents to live their own lives a bit withdrawn from the main thoroughfare.



ill. 62 Historic farms

The farms around Vestervig vary greatly in quality and style. However, it can generally be said that the large generic buildings hold significant potential for new functions. Additionally, they offer new opportunities and potential since they are situated amid fields/nature, thus providing something different from the houses in the village.

Summing up places

'Places' explores the challenges and potentials related to the physical structures in and around Vestervig. This has provided us with an understanding of the specific areas where efforts could be made to promote the area's development and accommodate the needs of the target group, ultimately fostering increased migration and sustainable development in Vestervig. The main points from the analysis 'Places' are summarized under four headlines, which will be included in our further project work.

Lack of connection to nature:

Despite Vestervigs strategic position between the West Coast (Cold Hawaii), Limfjord (Cold Hawaii Inland), and Thy National Park, it remains quite disconnected from its natural surroundings. This represents an untapped potential for both locals and tourists. Moreover, on a smaller scale, Vestervig lacks integration with nature in the close context, mainly due to the cultivated land, which isn't accessible to the citizens. There exists untapped potential in enhancing the natural landscape in the near context of Vestervig and facilitating the village's integration with it through new green spaces and pathways. This also entails establishing improved pedestrian and cycling connections in the landscape, turning it into an asset for everyday life for residents as well as for tourists who wish to experience the site-specific qualities.

A village for cars without a center:

The village's reliance on cars is visual on its main street, which is characterized by asphalt roads and narrow sidewalks. As several amenities have closed over time, parts of the main street now appear deserted, lacking a distinct focal point/center. There is the potential to improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists in Vestervig, encouraging movement and leisure along the main street.

Moreover, there is an opportunity to enhance access to nature for pedestrians and cyclists around Vestervig, especially in areas currently inaccessible due to cultivated agricultural land.

Insufficient housing supply:

It's evident that the housing supply in Vestervig and rural villages is characterized by decay and, in many places, low quality and outdated aesthetics. Addressing this issue is crucial, if increased settlement shall succeed. It includes introducing new housing typologies that are appealing to the target group. This aspect was also explored in the category 'People', where community-oriented housing options were presented as an opportunity. However, when developing new residences, it's vital to prioritize sustainability, both in terms of quantity and environmental impact. This may involve transforming or reusing outdated structures as valuable resources for new housing. In terms of transforming existing structures, we see considerable potential in the nearby farms, which often have a rich architectural aesthetic and cultural heritage that can be integrated into contemporary settings.

Fragile cluster structures requiring sustained focus:

Vestervig is currently part of a cluster with Krik and Agger, known for its active and dedicated community members. This is a huge asset for the village, but it is also a fragility that needs to be nurtured and managed with care. It is important to work on a sustainable strategy for cohesion across the villages, ensuring that cohesion does not disappear with the people who are the driving forces. This involves creating new physical, social, and mental connections across the villages, for example by establishing new physical structures that can link the villages together.

02 Understand - Amenities

Now we have touched upon the people who visit, live, and work in Vestervig and the surrounding areas, as well as the physical structures. But what are the actual attractions they are here for? As mentioned earlier, there have been many different reasons to visit and settle in Thy over time. Today, we are in a time of transition, where agriculture and fishing employ fewer and fewer people, and new sources to the economy are being explored regarding employment and tourism offerings. This section details the range of Amenities in Syd Thy and Vestervig, continuously presenting both problems and potentials.

Amenities in South Thy

When talking about new narratives and economies, National Park Thy, "Cold Hawaii Inland," and the rugged West Coast play an enormously significant role, both in attracting new people and in developing Thy as a tourist destination. Shaped by the strong winds from the west and rough coastal conditions, the landscape in the national park is truly unique. These conditions have led to especially Klitmøller (including the coastline from Agger to Hanstholm) being known today as "Cold Hawaii," transforming former fishing villages into an internationally renowned surfing destination. This transformation has had many downstream effects, such as new jobs and entrepreneurial activities, which together have given the villages a whole new life and identity (Drejer, Laursen, 2023).

Similar trends are also seen further south, especially in Vorupør, and Agger is slowly starting to show signs of activity as well, with increasing house prices and heightened activity currently being experienced... It is here that the fragility but also the susceptibility of small communities to new initiatives is evident, such as with the opening of the Michelin-starred restaurant Tri, which has been a significant contributor to putting Agger on the map. Despite a greater focus on and promotion of National Park Thy and the West Coast, the majority of jobs are not based on that. Thisted is, in fact, a pronounced industrial municipality, with almost 25% of the jobs located here. The significant industrial employment is due to solid positions in a range of sectors, including the food sector and companies centered around wood products, such as Idealcombi A/S in Hurup, one of Denmark's leading window manufacturers, employing around 550 people. It is also worth mentioning agriculture, where 5.9% of the

population is employed in this primary sector (Trap Denmark, 2017), (Danmarks Statistik, 2022). This percentage is significantly higher than the national average and slightly above the average for the North Jutland region. This is because the municipality is strong in fishing (with Hanstholm as the most important harbor), pig and mink production, as well as cattle farming and dairy production (Trap Denmark, 2017).

Although the proportion of employment in the primary sector is relatively large, it must be considered concerning the extensive land area occupied by agriculture and its limited contribution to Thy. Regitze emphasized this point during the interview at Vestervig Overgaard, noting that there are very few places with farm shops in South Thy.

In recent years, there has been an increase in culture and leisure-related employment, as well as a larger increase in employment related to hotels and restaurants (Trap Denmark, 2017). It is also worth mentioning that the number of overnight stays has increased by approximately 22% from 2017 to 2021, where Thy National Park has played a huge role in this context (Drejer, Laursen, 2023). So, it is these new types of place-specific innovations that are particularly gaining ground and making headway in these years – they are situated somewhere between food, tourism, nature, and the experience economy. Here, locals have utilized the brand value and framework provided by the national park and the west coast in a commercial manner (Drejer, Laursen, 2023). Examples of this can be seen in SMK Thy in Doverodde and Thy Whiskey Distillery.



Amenities in Vestervig

Nowhere else in Thy are Cold Hawaii and Cold Hawaii Inland as close together as in Vestervig – where the sea and the fjord lie only 2 km apart. A huge resource for recreational activities, as well as an opportunity to ride the wave of growth that these areas offer. However, Vestervig doesn't seem to tap into this energy immediately, nor does it fully utilize the potential of National Park Thy and the opportunities it presents. It is neighboring villages like Agger and Krik that manage to tap into this energy more effectively.

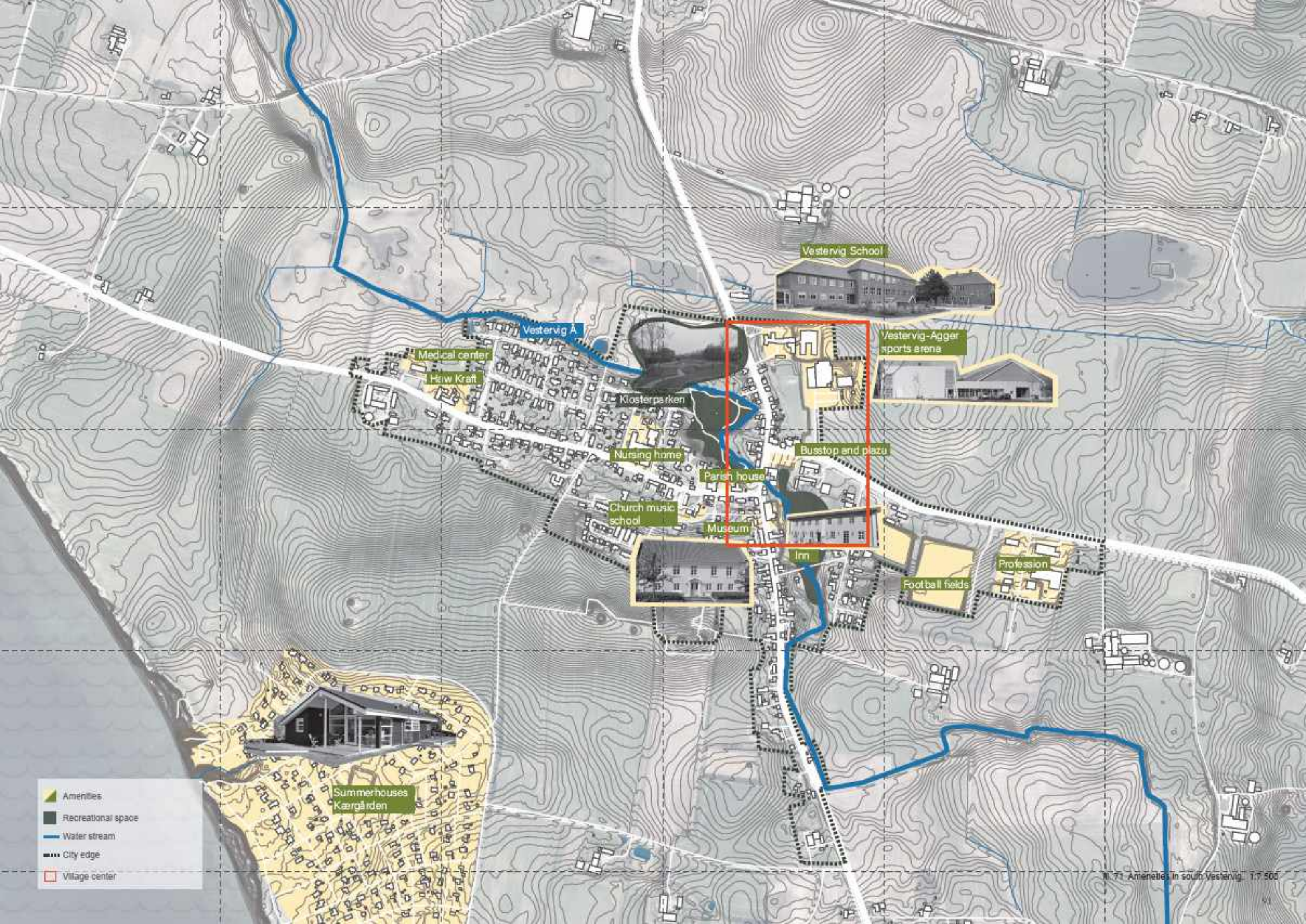
Vestervig has a completely different urban character compared to Agger and Krik – one might even say that Vestervig is a "proper" village. Large townhouses, a big school, a hall, a doctor, a dentist, and a nursing home all contribute to forming the backbone of Vestervig. With that said, the structures in Vestervig are still changing with functions gradually shutting down and relocated to larger villages and the main city of Thisted. Most importantly, the school was decided to be closed in 2023, but instead, a private school has been established (Andersen, 2023) and recently the grocery shop has closed. The decision to close the school was made due to poor student numbers (Andersen, 2023). This indicates that Vestervig is a fragile village where a good quality of life and accessibility to services do not maintain itself if nothing is done about it.

The summer house area of Kærgården is supposed to lean more towards a Vestervig that caters more to tourists. However, the connection between the summer house area and the village is simply too weak for Kærgården to be perceived as integrated into Vestervig. In the Krik, Agger, and Vestervig cluster, it is particular-

ly the sea, the fjord, and the culture that are recurring themes. In Vestervig, it is more the cultural offerings that stand out, with Vestervig's school, children's house, and activity center being active daily, complemented by cultural events in the center and the church, as well as sports events at the center and the stadium. Vestervig Church serves as the area's concert hall with ambitious concert programs of international caliber. Additionally, there is the development of Hawkraft in Vestervig's old hospital, complementing the cultural offerings found in the cluster and Vestervig today.

To some extent, the area's rich community life is not tied to the community center but is generally more subdued and not visible in the urban environments – it tends to keep to itself. This is also reflected in Vestervig's "center" where the Square is the natural focal point for the town, situated between the town's inn, museum, and school. However, there are no activities taking place facing the square/crossroad, apart from the bus stop, which makes it somewhat blunt and dull to linger there.

Overall, one sees new offerings emerge in the village, but not offerings that redefine the framework of how one reimagines a place and perhaps more significantly engages with nature lying just outside the village. Vestervig is situated incredibly beautifully in hilly terrain and has great potential to capitalize more on its scenic surroundings. Today, the experience in Vestervig is that nature is simply something one observes and does not actively live in. There is very little opportunity to venture out into nature – it is limited to a short trail along some fields south of the village, and Klosterparken (Kappel, 2022).



- Amenities
- Recreational space
- Water stream
- City edge
- Village center

Summing up Ameneties

Overall, Vestervig is a very fragile village. Recently, while this thesis has been in progress, the local grocery store closed, and last year the school was shut down, though it was later saved by private efforts. There are some new initiatives, like Hawkraft, which offers a new cultural venue. However, it is challenging to sustain these efforts in Vestervig, as the village is not significantly connected to tourism.

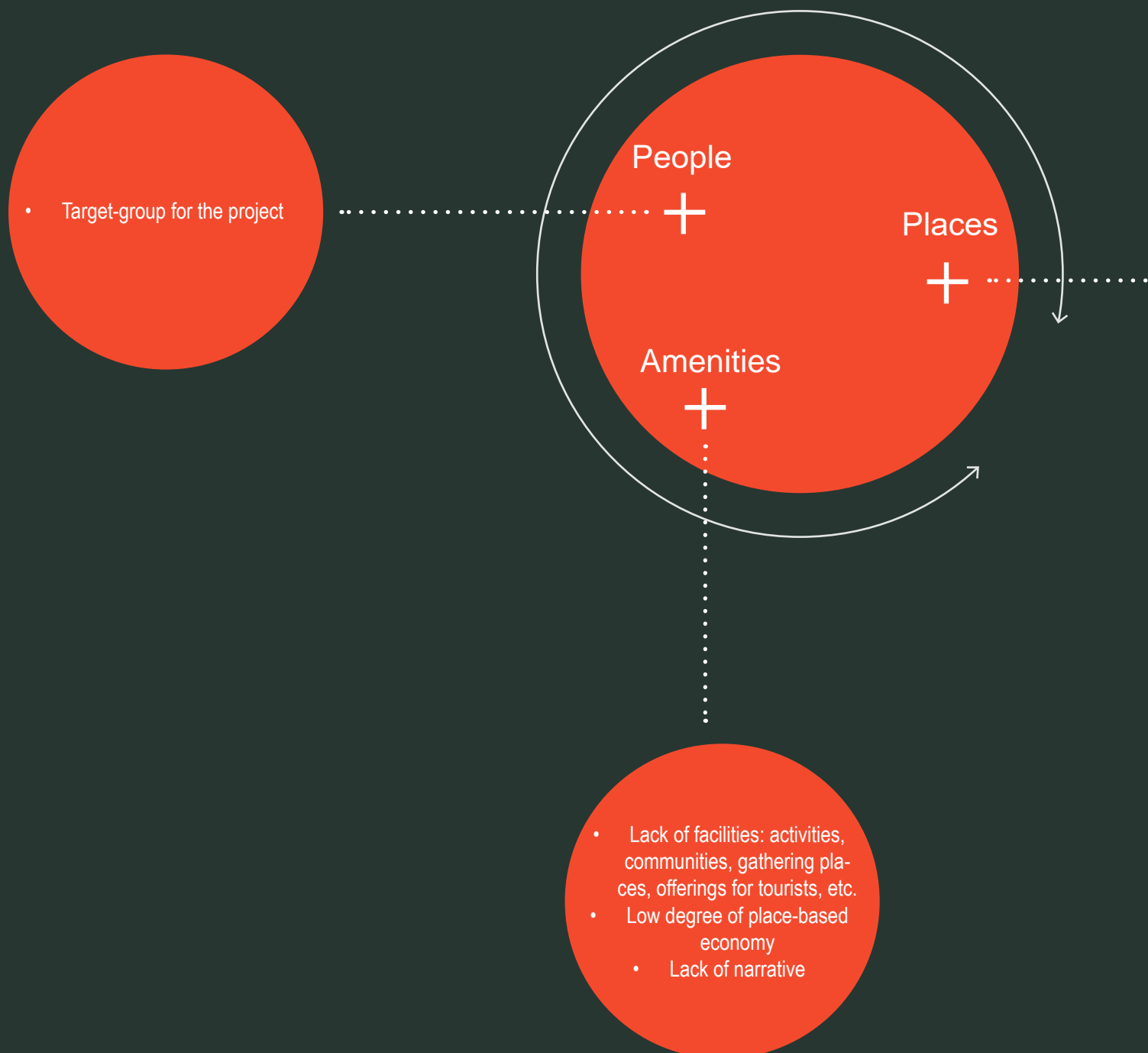
Situated between Cold Hawaii and Cold Hawaii Inland and surrounded by a beautiful landscape, Vestervig has not managed to tap into the energy of these areas. Moreover, the landscape and farms are also largely self-contained. There are no opportunities to buy local produce in and around Vestervig, where the connection from farm to table is very poor.


This could be Vestervig's lifeline, helping to develop a place-based economy that could attract tourists and create more jobs. In other words, there are many inherent and highly developed potentials in and around Vestervig that could drive the village's development.

Vestervig lacks a narrative. Once the main village of the district, bustling with many shops, hairdressers, and vibrant street life, today's reality is very different. Today, Vestervig, to some extent, is increasingly becoming just a place to live as its functions diminish. Moreover, life in Vestervig is very subtle – not easily decipherable or visible, which makes it difficult to tap into what Vestervig has to offer.



... Summing up the primary findings from the analysis



- 
- The potential of the farms
 - Insufficient housing supply
 - Lack of relation to nature
 - A village for cars

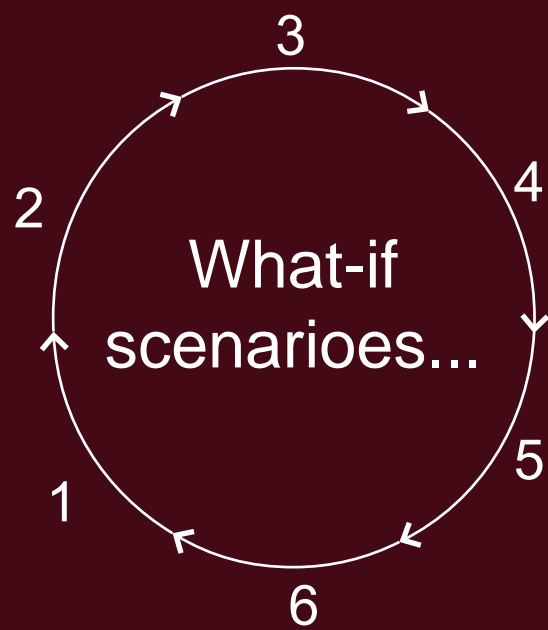
03 Condense

Based on various theoretical understandings and extensive empirical analysis of Vestervig, the following six 'What if Scenarios' have been formed. These scenarios offer an innovative, progressive, and slightly provocative response to the project's core question: 'How can an innovative approach to rural development create new social, spatial, and economic drivers in rural areas to attract new resources and create sustainable development while facing challenges including land use and dual urbanization?'

The 'What if Scenarios' question our current spatial experience of the rural, challenge present organizational methods, reverse traditional approaches to rural development, and envision alternative sustainable futures for these areas. The vision is to: 'Utilize the potential of farms located on the outskirts of small villages and the accessibility to nature in rural areas to reclaim their role as the heart of country life, as they once were.'

These scenarios should be seen as new tools added to the strategic rural development toolbox. They propose perspectives and help us discuss how to create more attractive village communities, closer to nature, that can attract resourceful families and tourists. The 'What if Scenarios' is not a checklist to be implemented sequentially from 1 to 6 to achieve a perfect village. Instead, they are scenarios that can help kickstart a conversation about new perspectives on the development of future rural areas. Since every place is unique, the scenarios should be viewed as a series of tools to be tailored to the specific village in question. Action should be based on the particular needs of each location.

Another aspect we wanted to explore more deeply concerns the strategy's approach to both centralization and decentralization. Our "What if scenarios" present an approach that focuses not only on the development of town centers but also on distributing meeting places throughout the landscape. This might resemble trends like "urban sprawl," which is undesirable from a planning perspective and contradicts the intentions of our planning legislation. However, it is important to emphasize that our strategy does not aim to create an undesirable spread of settlements in our landscapes. Our goal is rather to improve the quality of the village communities by supplementing the existing offerings. Therefore, the strategy is not intended to replace existing town centers but to complement them with high-quality, densified offerings that can attract new forces to the area and tourists.



What if scenarios...

1. What if nature were the framework for a new culture in rural areas, making nature more accessible?
2. What if the concept of a single center were rethought as polycentric, with meeting places anchored in the surrounding farms, creating synergies with existing village life?
3. What if the edges of the village were blurred and stitched together with the surrounding nature?

4. What if new sustainable communities on the farms surrounding the villages could offer an attractive alternative to urban life?
5. What if new place-based economies were established on the farms, where tourism serves as a catalyst?
6. What if the built structures along the main street were 'tidied up,' and green streets for people were created?

1. What if **nature**
were the framework
for a new culture
in rural areas,
making nature more
accessible?



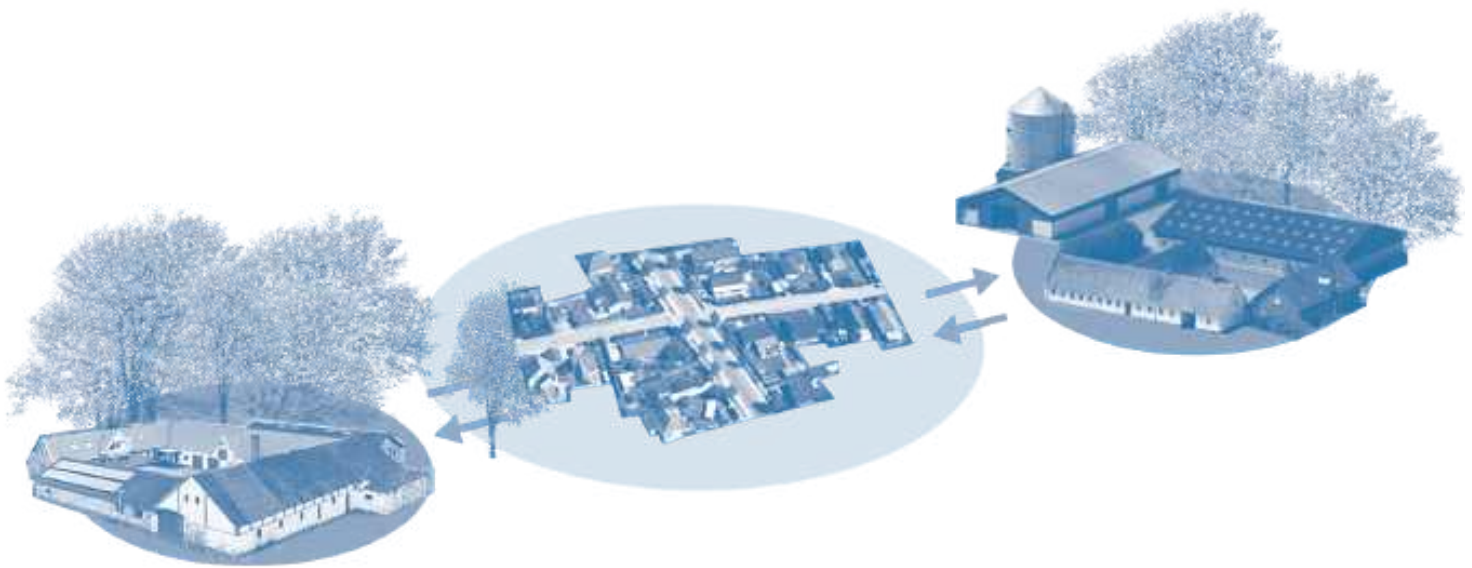
ill. 64 What - if scenario 1

Once, agriculture was the cornerstone of life in the countryside. Today, only a very small percentage are engaged in agriculture, due to the decline the industry is experiencing. There is a need for a new sense of shared values and thus a new "Why" when it comes to settling in rural areas. Accessibility to nature could become the new attraction for rural areas, and the new 'Why'.

There is a huge potential in making nature more accessible for the villages and farms in proximity, thus creating a nature that people can live in and with to a greater extent, rather than simply living alongside.

This also involves creating new connections for soft traffic between farms and villages, allowing for the emergence of new mental maps and understandings in rural areas.

2. What if the
concept of a
single center
were rethought as
polycentric, with
meeting places
anchored in the
surrounding farms,
creating **synergies**
with existing village
life?



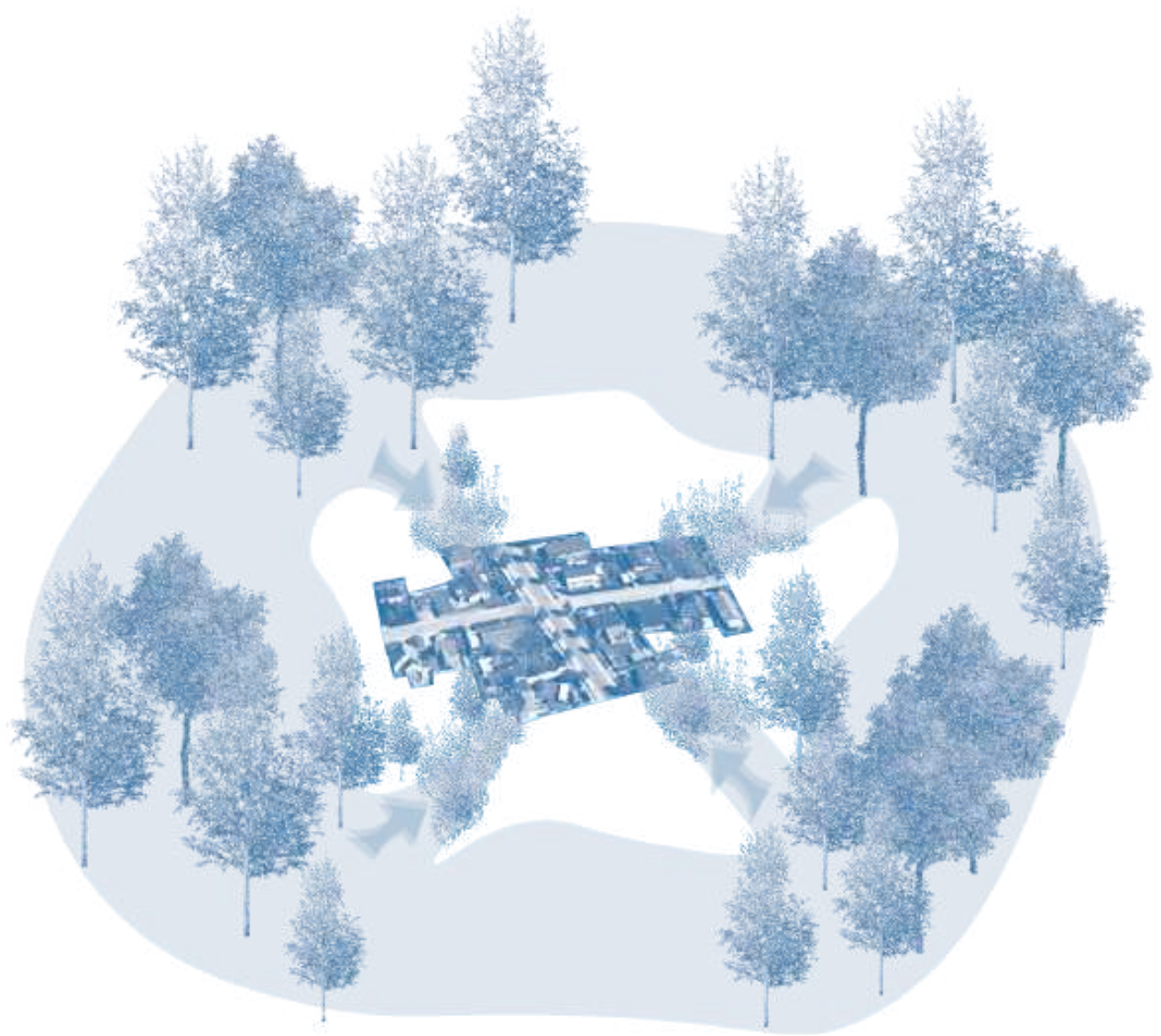
ill. 65 What - if scenario 2

The existing city centers lack significantly in terms of aesthetic qualities, proximity to nature, and appealing places to reside. Therefore, it makes sense to rethink the notion of enhancing a current village center. Rather, emphasis is placed on revitalizing the surrounding farms, integrating them into the natural environment, and densifying functions around them.

Targeting farms near the village enables tapping into the village's inherent energy.

This, along with the farms located on the outskirts of the village, envisions a future where they must consider transitioning their functions and land use. They also have a rich cultural heritage that is valuable to incorporate into a new future, both in terms of architectural and cultural legacy.

3. What if the **edges**
of the village were
blurred and **stitched**
together with the
surrounding nature?



ill. 66 What - if scenario 3

To meet the desire to create more accessible nature around villages and establish connections between farms and the village, the edge of the village is being reimagined. This involves placing accessible natural landscapes near the villages and farms, while production landscapes and energy landscapes are relocated further away from residential areas.

4. What if new
sustainable
communities on the
farms surrounding
the villages could
offer an attractive
alternative to urban
life?



ill. 67 What - if scenario 4

To succeed in revitalizing the farms located in the outskirts requires a new flow of resourceful citizens who seek to engage in a community. It demands a new type of housing that can specifically attract this demographic. With a housing model designed to support community and proximity to nature, the village gains renewed vitality, which can contribute to the development of the local community. New energy, ideas, children, the creation of jobs, and leisure activities are just some of the effects that the project can be expected to bring.

It requires a diverse range of offerings that can attract people from the nearby village or cluster across seasons, weekends/weekdays, and throughout the day. This could be in the form of a remote workstation, cultural events, picking vegetables from the market garden, or whatever offerings each farm may provide.

5. What if new place-based **economies** were established on the **farms**, where **tourism** serves as a catalyst?



ill. 68 What - if scenario 5

To succeed in revitalizing the farms located in the outskirts requires a new flow of resourceful citizens who seek to engage in a community. It demands a new type of housing that can specifically attract this demographic. With a housing model designed to support community and proximity to nature, the village gains renewed vitality, which can contribute to the development of the local community. New energy, ideas, children, the creation of jobs, and leisure activities are just some of the effects that the project can be expected to bring.

6. What if the built structures along the **main street** were 'tidied up,' and green **streets for people** were created?



ill. 69 What - if scenario 6

The main street is the first encounter in a village, as long as arrival primarily happens by car. Often, the main street is solely for cars, and at the same time, they serve as the only semblance of public space due to the lack thereof in smaller villages. To improve the experience for people they need to be greened, beautified, decluttered, and most importantly, the hierarchy should be reversed in favor of pedestrians and cyclists, allowing life between the houses to flourish to a greater extent.

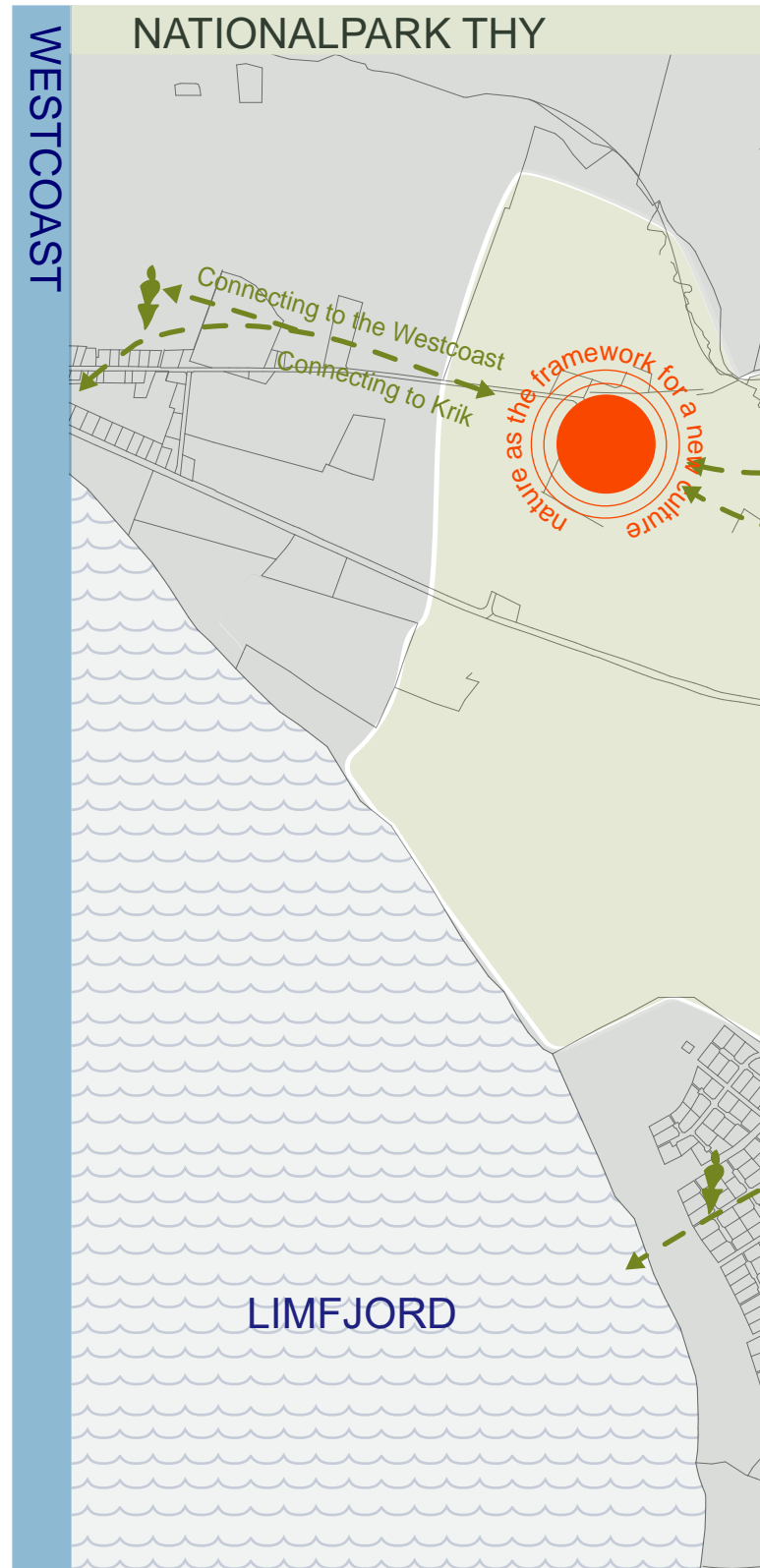
04 Form

In this section, we aim to take the six what-if scenarios described on a general level in the previous section and apply them to Vestervig as a case example. The presentation focuses on Vestervig from a long-term perspective, looking into a future with a lot of uncertainties.

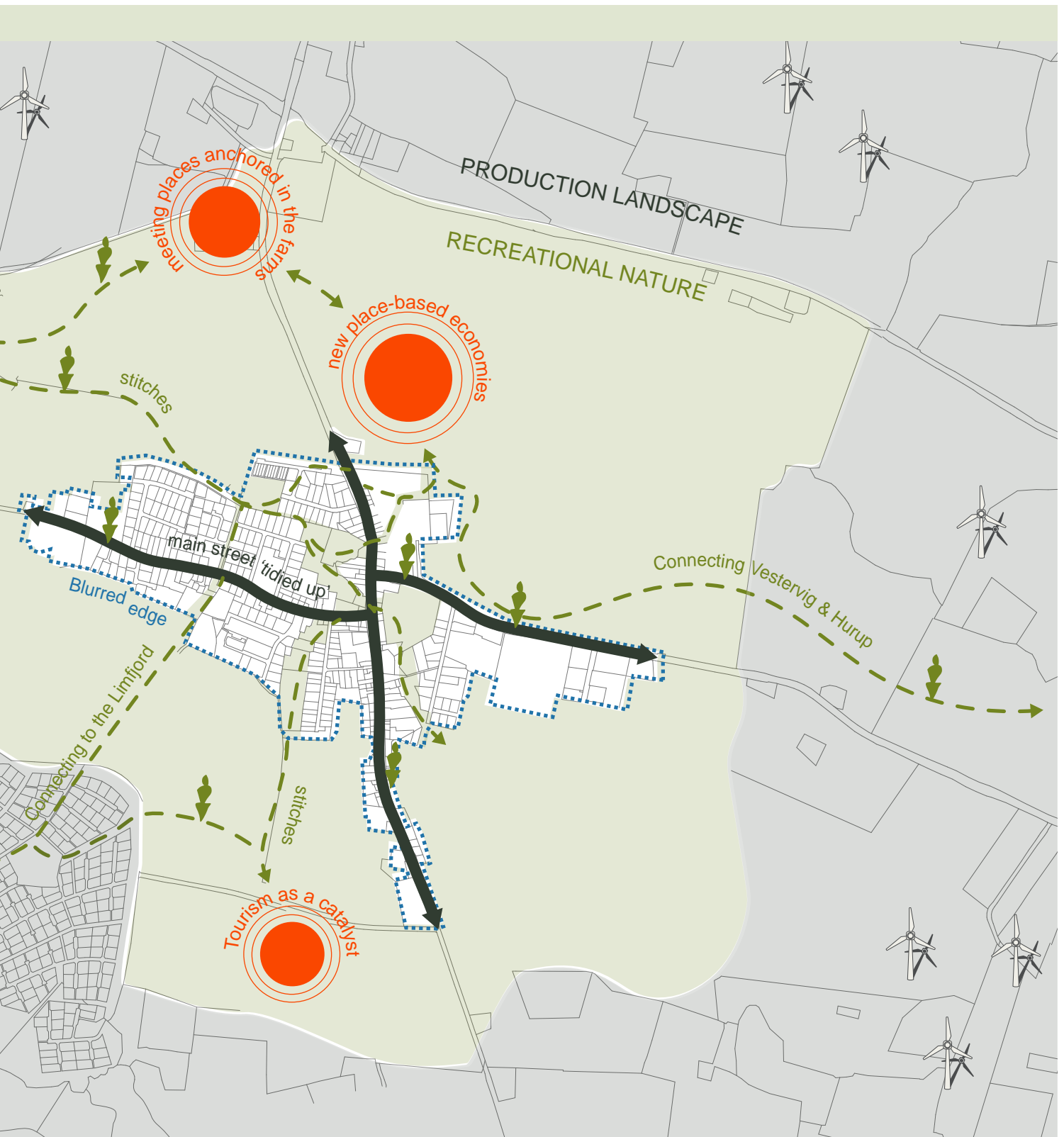


iii. 70 What - if Map

What-if Map



The illustration shows an abstract map of Vestervig, where the six what-if scenarios have been interpreted from a theoretical input to a physical-spatial output. We call this a What-If Map, providing an overall view of the transformation we will present for Vestervig in the following section. The scenarios are unfolded one by one, as examples of how the What-If Scenario can be interpreted. It is important to note that these are merely examples, and the scenarios could look in different ways depending on the village being considered.



ill. 71 What - if Map







A new future for Vestervig?

To explore the six what-if scenarios in detail, we will delve into a specific area of the village centered around Vestervig Overgård, located northeast of Vestervig. This farm is also presented earlier in the project as a part of field study #3 and in the interview with Niels and Regitze Overgaard, owner and former owner of the farm.

The chosen area is highlighted in the above illustration. On the opposite page, you will find a detailed plan of the selected area, showcasing how the various What-if scenarios interact in connection to Vestervig Overgaard. The elements of the plan are described directly on the material. In the following section, we will go through each scenario individually.



production land
(agriculture, energy production)

Vestervig Church

Natural wetland

Natural growth

Flower Strips

Vestervig Overgaard

Mobility hub
shared cars

Natural growth

community
houses

Public cafe

meeting place

Tourism
accommodation

Services

Workstations

Ramparts

Barn

Greenhouse
restaurant

Market garden

Golfing
area

Golfing
parking

Natural wetland

Grazing animals

New connections

Paint shop

Pedestrian
zone

Vestervig school

Vestervig-Agger Hallen

Kindergarten

Natural wetland

Forest

Connecting to Hørup

Klosterparken

New connections

Green Corridor

Natural wetland

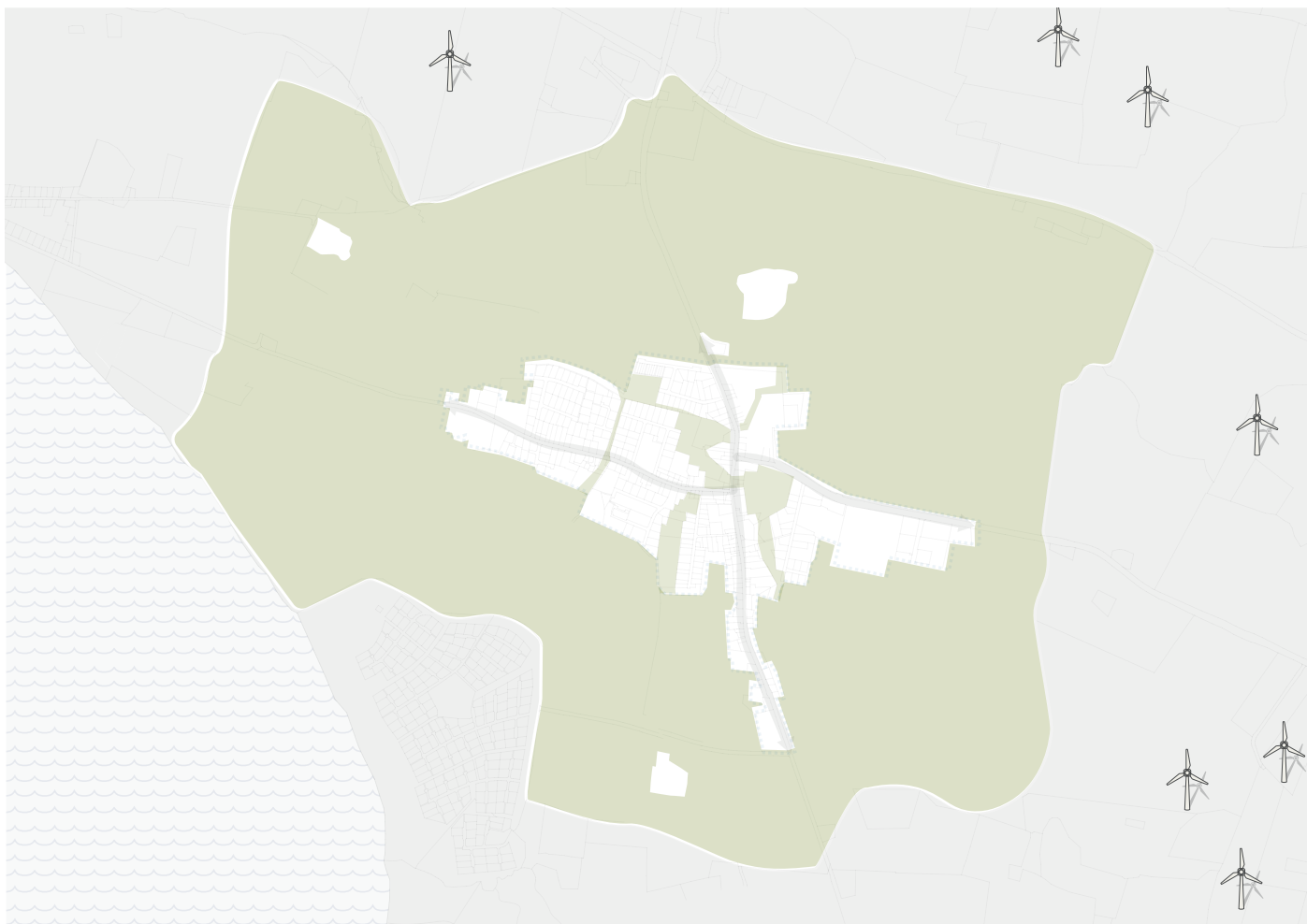
Forest

New connections

Natural wetland

Forest

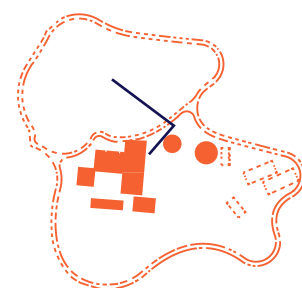
Natural wetland



ill. 74 What-if scenario 1

1. What if nature were the framework for a new culture in rural areas, making nature more accessible?

The illustration on the opposite page shows how the beautiful old barn at Overgaard has been transformed from a grain storehouse into a barn connected to the new market garden established outside the farm's eastern wing. In the background, new sustainable housing is integrated into the scenic landscape, maintaining a close connection to the natural surroundings. These community-oriented homes all have access to a communal house in the adjoining wing. This scenario illustrates a transformation of Overgaard into a multifunctional buildings structure, featuring, etc. a market garden and new housing typologies, designed to enhance residents' connection to nature's rhythms and foster new types of social communities.

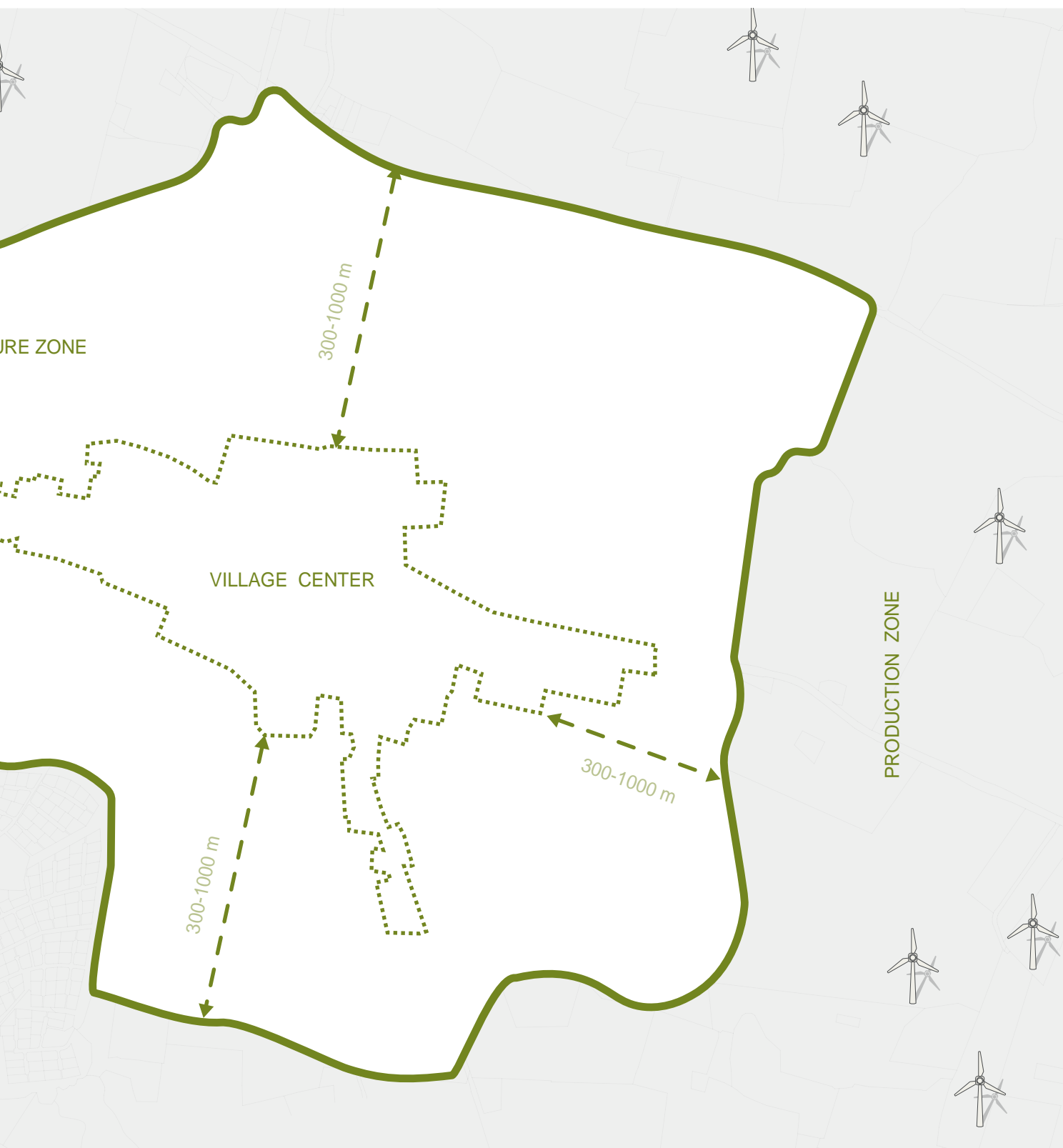




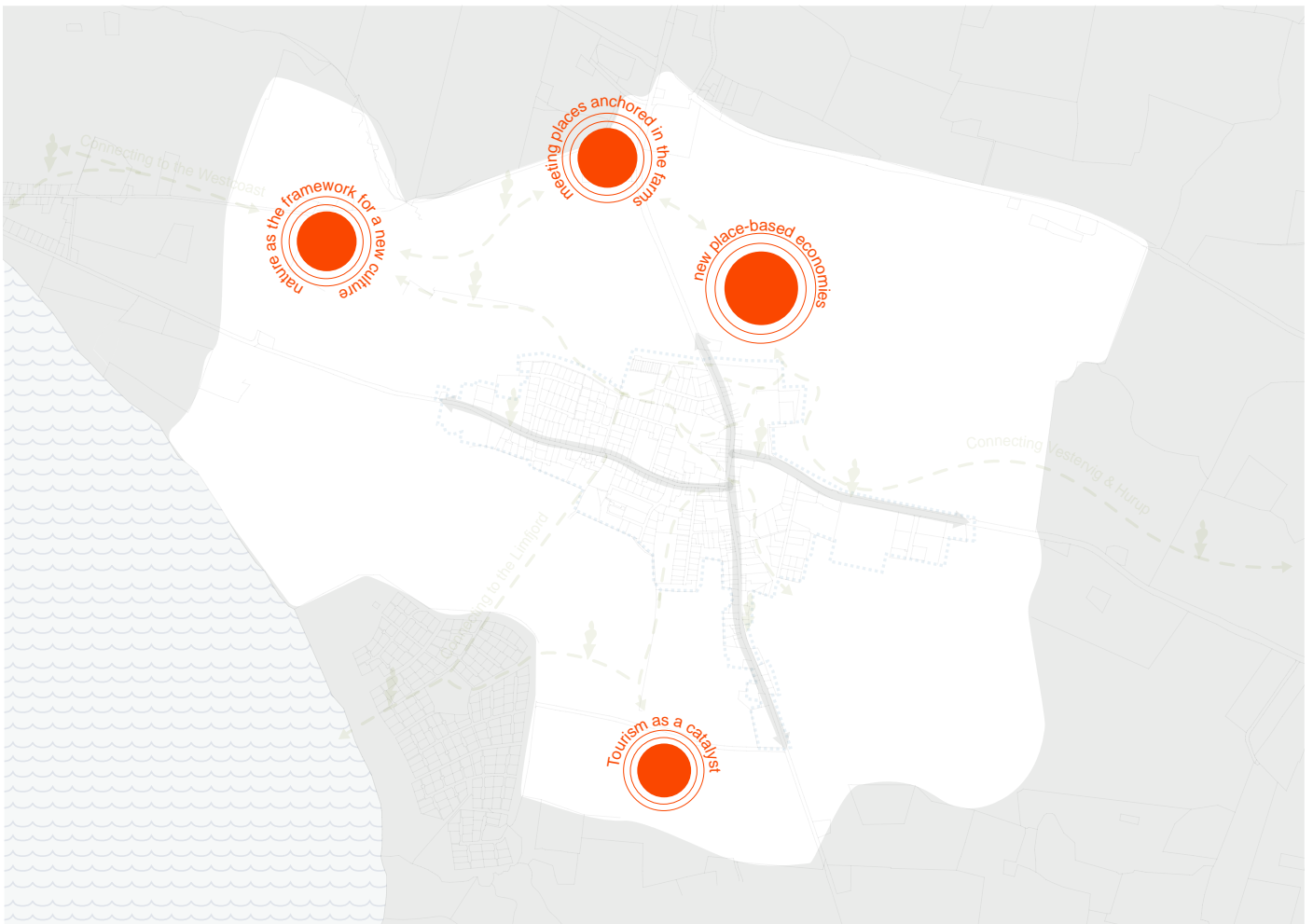
Making nature more accessible

The what-if scenario rethinks the zone between the village and the surrounding farms, which is being transformed into accessible natural landscapes. This is done with the overarching principle of opening up the landscape around the village and the adjacent farms within a radius of 300 – 1000 meters, according to the specific landscape. In this way, both a closer contact with nature for the residents and the many proposals regarding how the landscapes of the future should be utilized are accommodated. This includes energy landscapes, nature restoration, agriculture, etc.





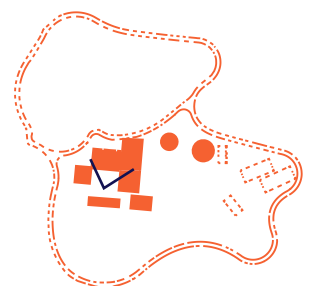
ill. 76 Nature accessible



ill. 77 What - if scenario 2

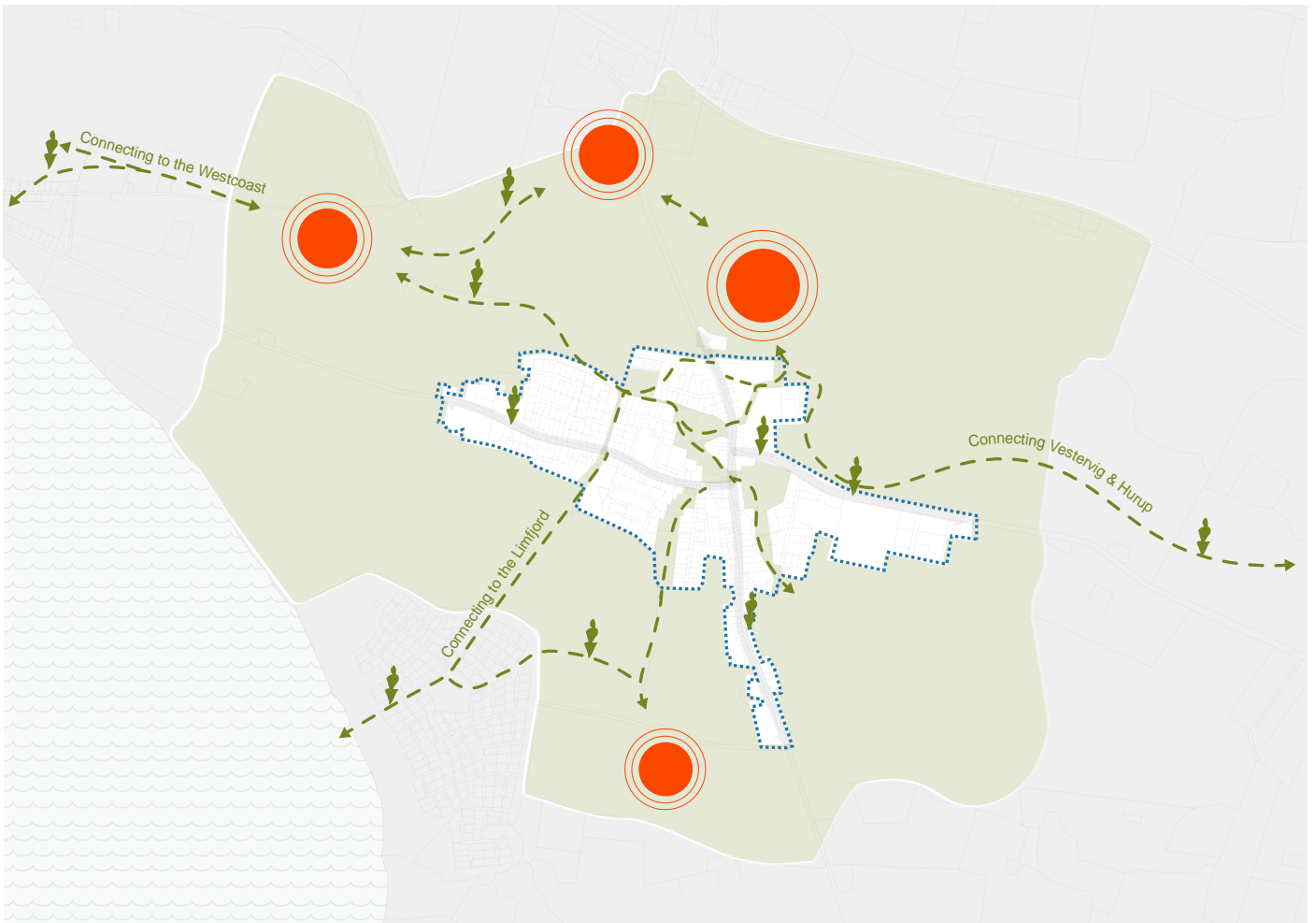
2. What if the concept of a single center were rethought as polycentric, with meeting places anchored in the surrounding farms, creating synergies with existing village life?

Our analysis of Vestervig revealed that the village center has its limitations in several key areas crucial for attracting the target group necessary for Vestervig to become a thriving village. To draw resourceful families and seniors, it is vital to offer proximity to nature, an attractive housing supply with aesthetic and architectural quality, and strong communities. Given the limitations of the village, we identified significant potential in the nearby farms, where it is possible to densify functions around. The farms are relevant, particularly in terms of their closeness and connection to nature, which is a defining characteristic of the farms. The illustration on the opposite page shows the transformation of the old pigsty at Overgaard into a communal house for residents of the newly established housing area north of the farm. This communal house provides spaces for activities such as communal dining, fitness, and childcare.





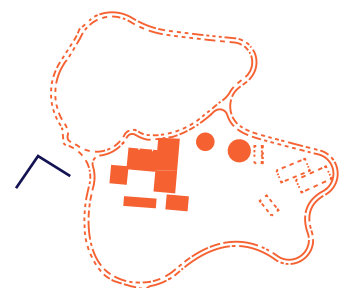
III. 78 Community dinner at Vestervig Overgaard



ill. 79 What - if scenario 3

3. What if the edges of the village were blurred and stitched together with the surrounding nature?

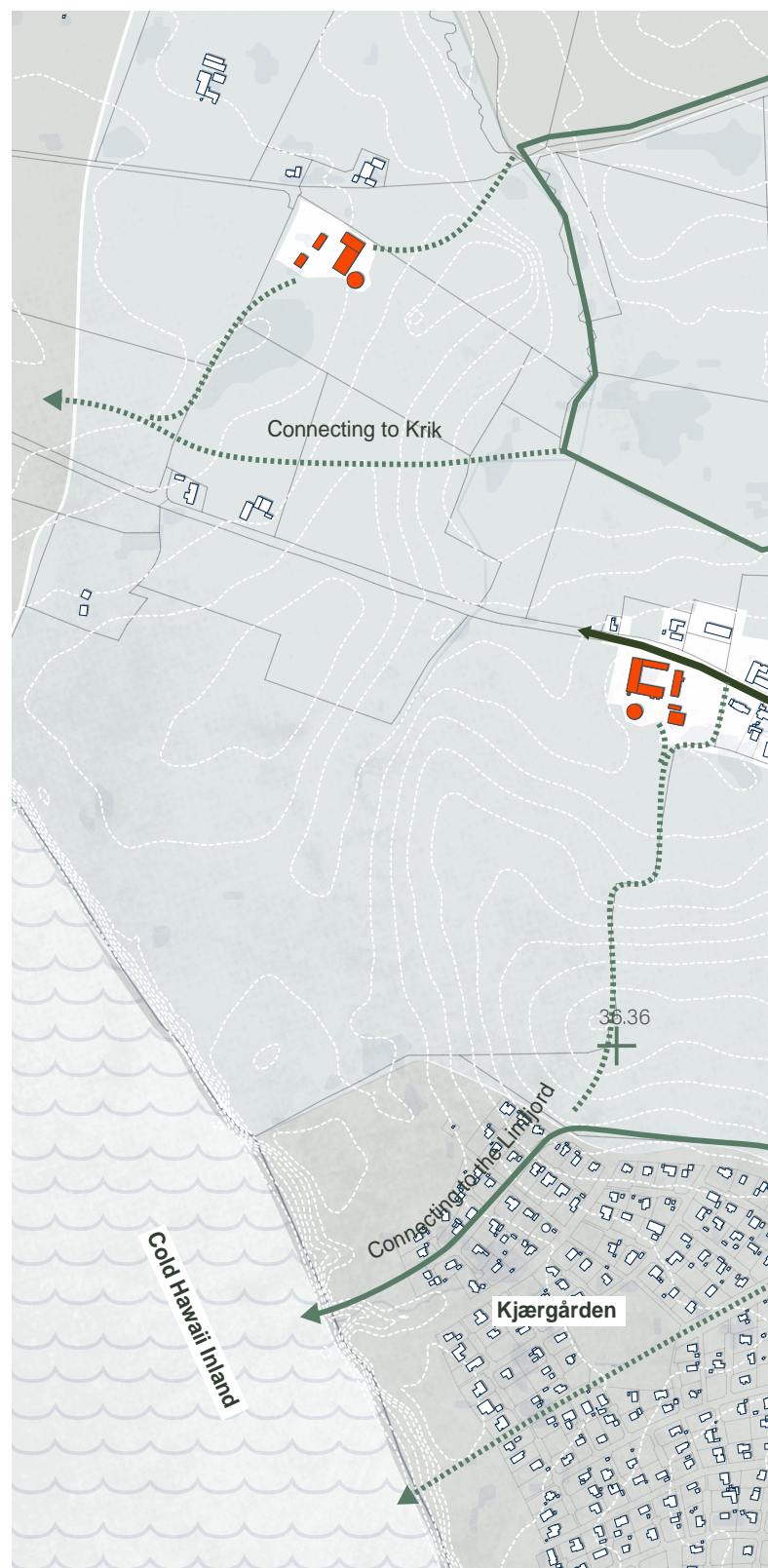
The analysis highlights the importance of proximity to nature as a crucial factor for attracting the desired target group to increase settlement in the area. Currently, access to nature in Vestervig is limited due to a sharp boundary between the village's edge and the cultivated fields, which are inaccessible to residents in Vestervig. To enhance access to nature, this What-if Scenario proposes transforming the areas adjacent to the village's edge from cultivated land to accessible natural landscapes. This transformation is illustrated in the collage on the opposite page, where former fields have been turned into natural landscapes with grazing cattle, allowing residents to easily explore and enjoy the surroundings.

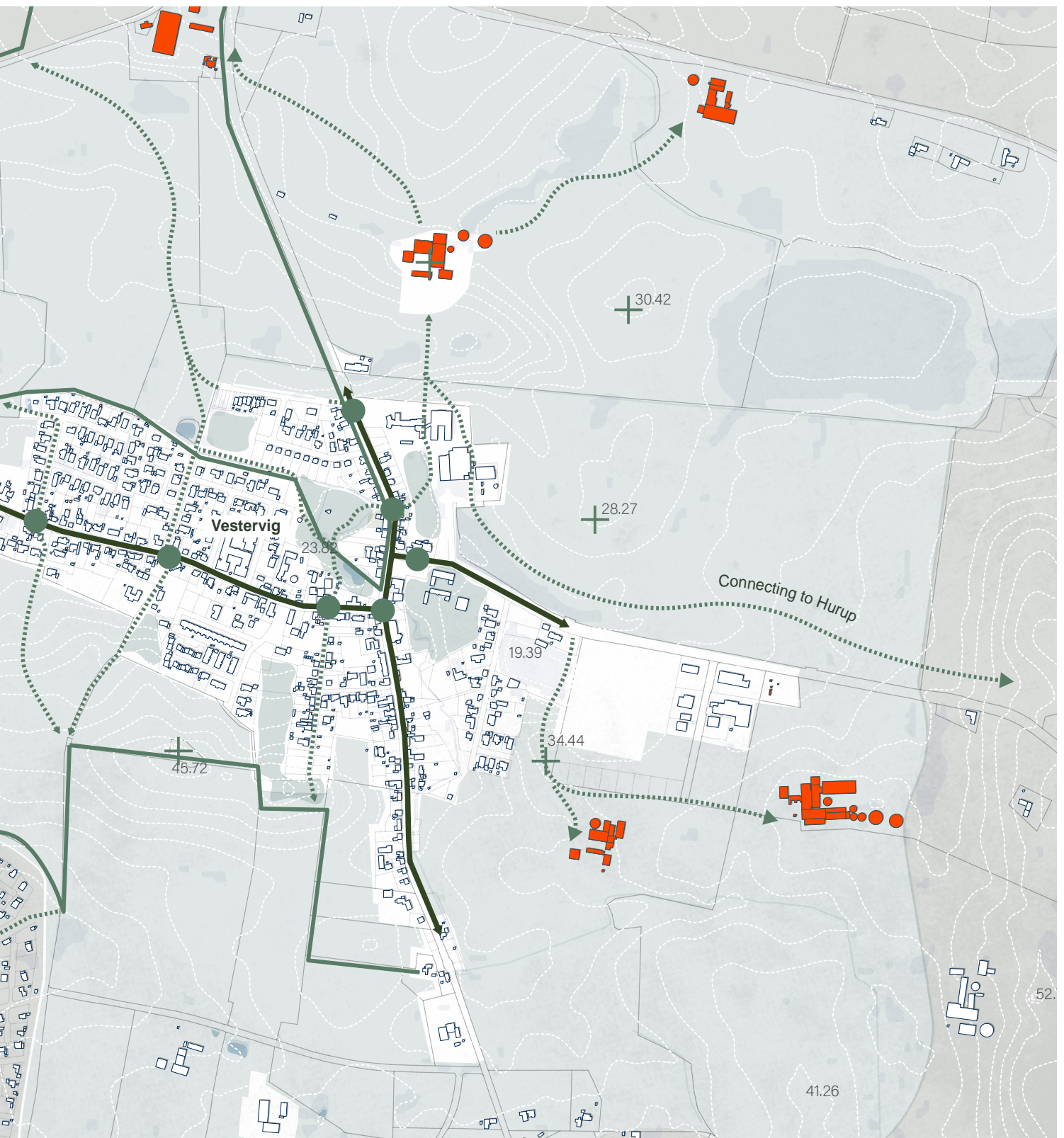




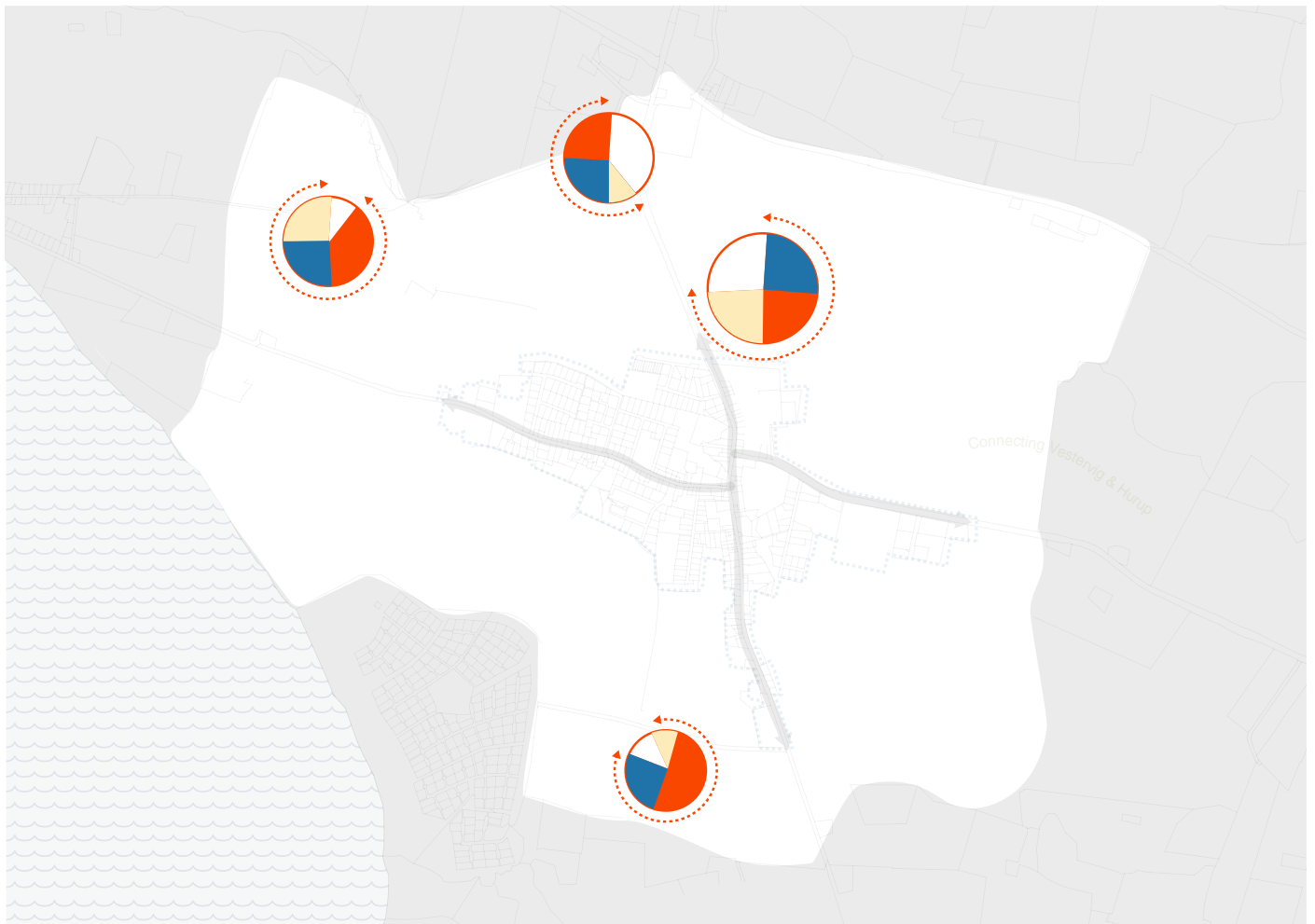
New connections in the landscape

The map illustrates how, in this scenario, we have worked to create new connections for soft traffic in Vestervig. These connections enhance the village's integration with the surrounding landscape through green corridors that cut across the main streets and soften the existing hard edges. It also demonstrates how we have established better connections with the surrounding areas by creating new soft connections to the nearby farms. We strategically activate some of the unused potentials, such as establishing a stronger connection to the Limfjord to the southwest through the area with vacation houses, Kærgården. Additionally, we suggest creating better soft traffic connections towards Hurup in the east and Krik, Agger, and The North Sea in the west. In this way, new mental maps and networks are created across the existing, benefiting both internal and external cohesion within the cluster.





ill. 81 New connections



ill. 82 What - if scenario 4

4. What if new sustainable communities on the farms surrounding the villages could offer an attractive alternative to urban life?

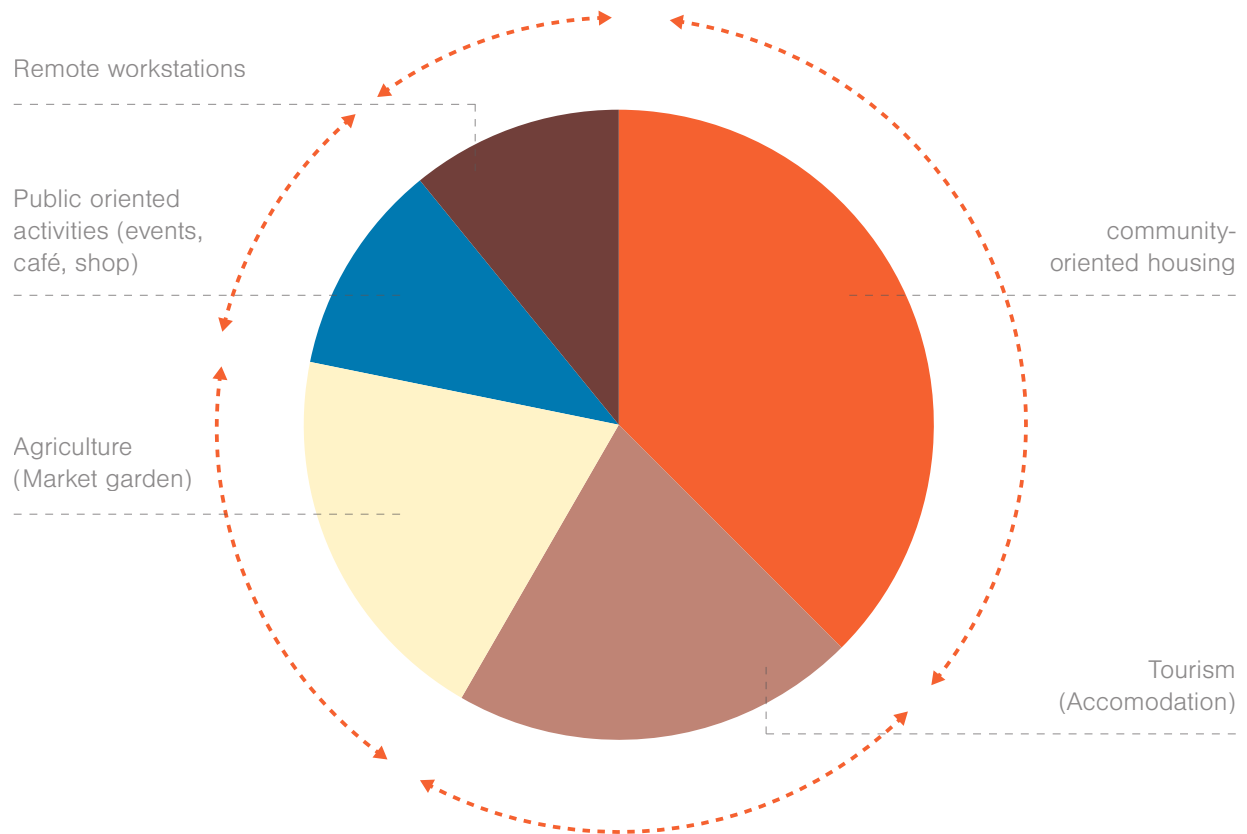
When creating "new sustainable communities on the farms surrounding the villages" that can "offer an attractive alternative to urban life," as the scenario outlines, the goal is to rethink the structure of the traditional village. Instead of focusing solely on developing activities within the limits of the village, this project proposes enhancing the existing structures near Vestervig due to their proximity to nature and the landscape.

Earlier in the report, it is explained how farms historically have served as economic and social drivers in rural areas. This was also evident in 'Andelsbevægelsen', where collective ownership played a key role in the way people organized. These elements are reinterpreted in our strategy and adapted to a contemporary context.

Our proposal involves reactivating the farms around Vestervig as social and economic engines, where each farm

functions as an 'Andelsforening'. These associations would be structured to support various functions and facilities, differing from farm to farm. This model also makes farm ownership more economically accessible by distributing ownership among multiple stakeholders. Moreover, concentrating multiple functions is a strategy to make small farms and communities more resilient. This way, if one function shuts down, other functions will continue to sustain the farms' vitality.

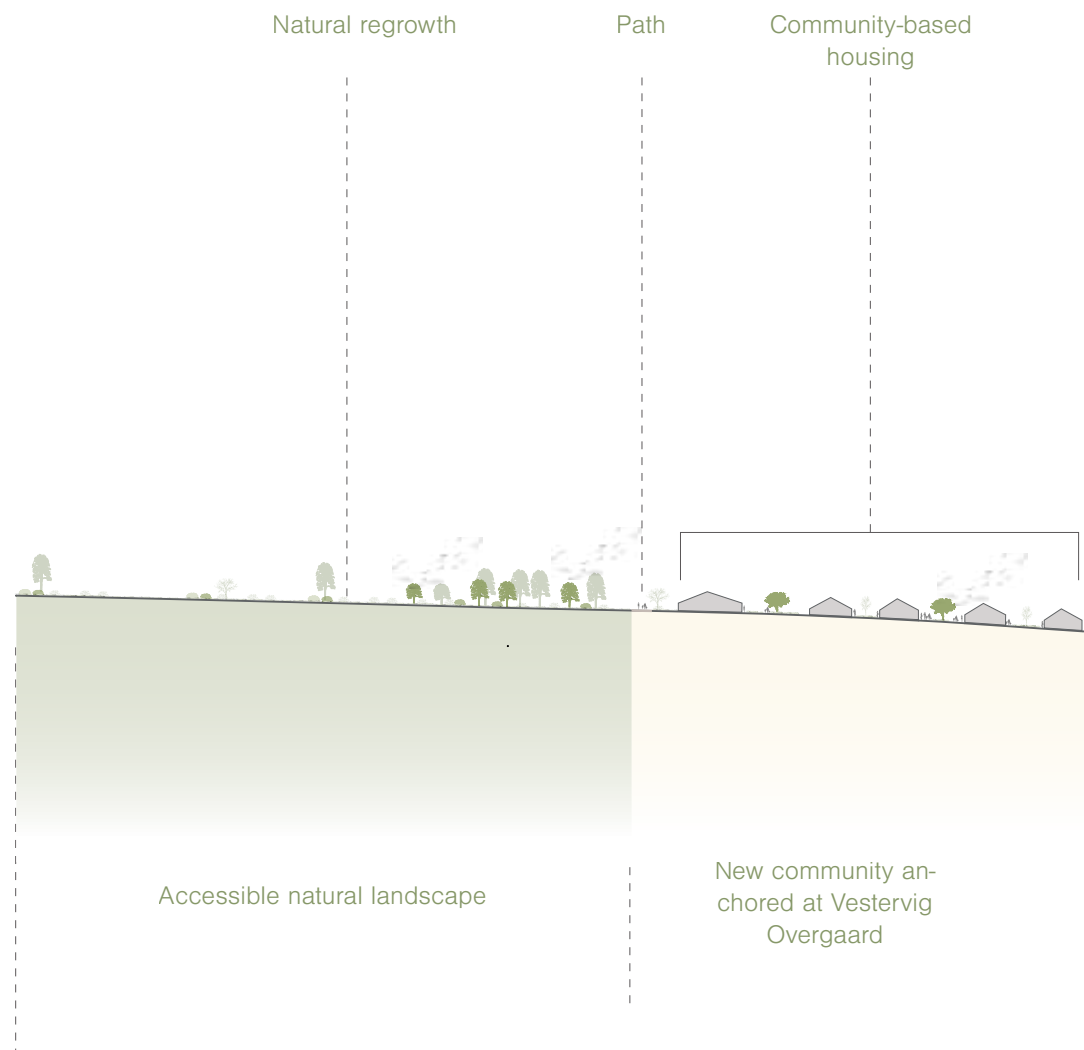
The chart illustrates the distribution of functions at Vestervig Overgård, which includes housing, tourism, public-oriented activities, agriculture (market garden), and remote workstations. The diagram also illustrates how it is possible to adjust the emphasis on different functions, tailoring them to the specific needs of each farm.

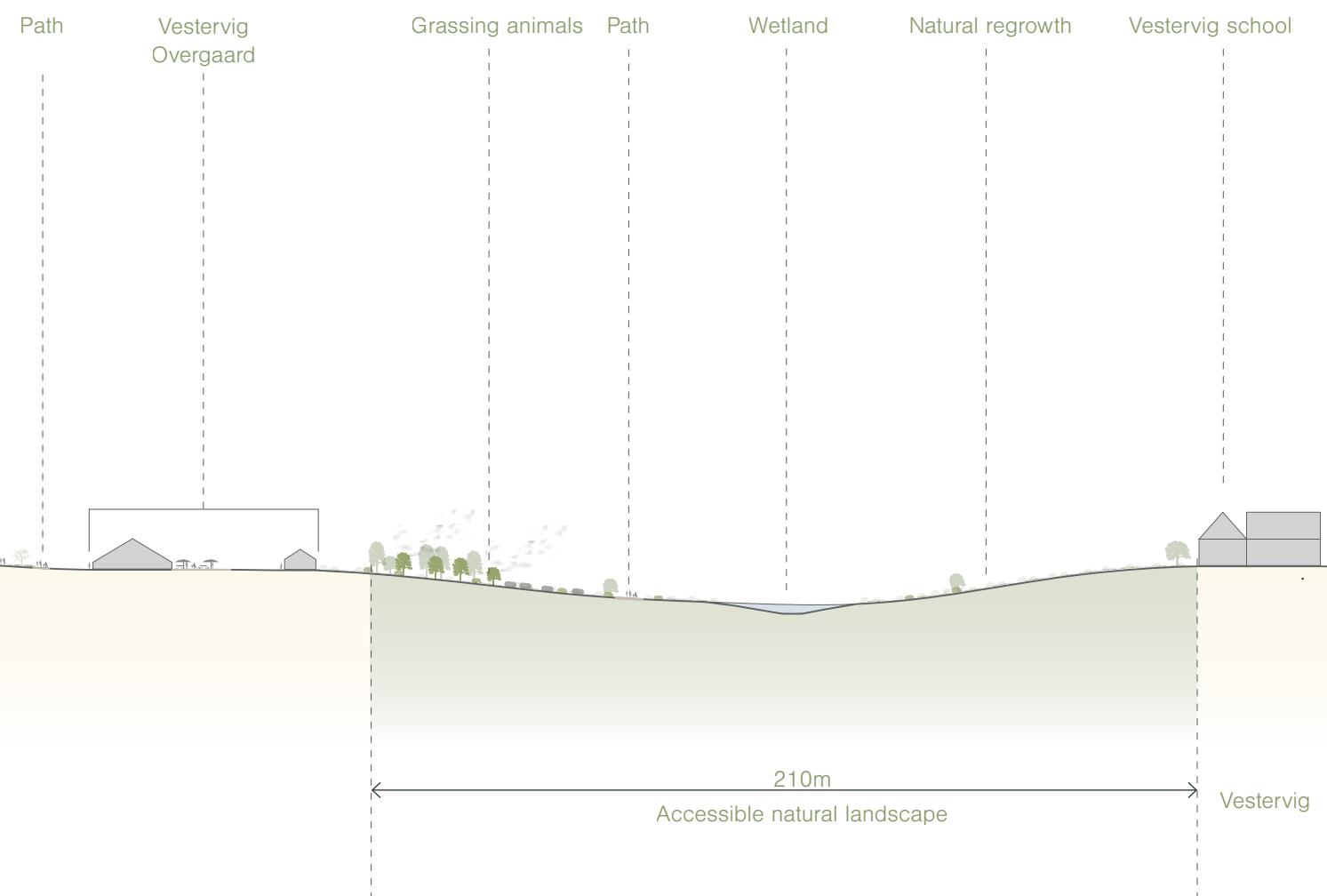


ill. 83 Distribution of functions at Vestervig Overgård

Proximity to nature and new social communities...

The section illustrates the integration of new housing typologies within the landscape, highlighting the accessibility of the surrounding nature. It also emphasizes the farm's proximity to Vestervig. However, previous interviews with the owner of Overgaard indicate that the distance feels longer today due to the necessity of traveling by car along the main road. This issue is accommodated by establishing new connections for soft traffic through the landscape. The closeness to nature and the community-focused living structure is one of several strategies to offer attractive alternatives to urban life. The homes are situated near the original part of the farm Vestervig Overgaard, where various functions are located, creating a new, attractive meeting place for residents and people from nearby villages.





ill. 84 Section, 1:2.000



ill. 85 What-if scenario 5

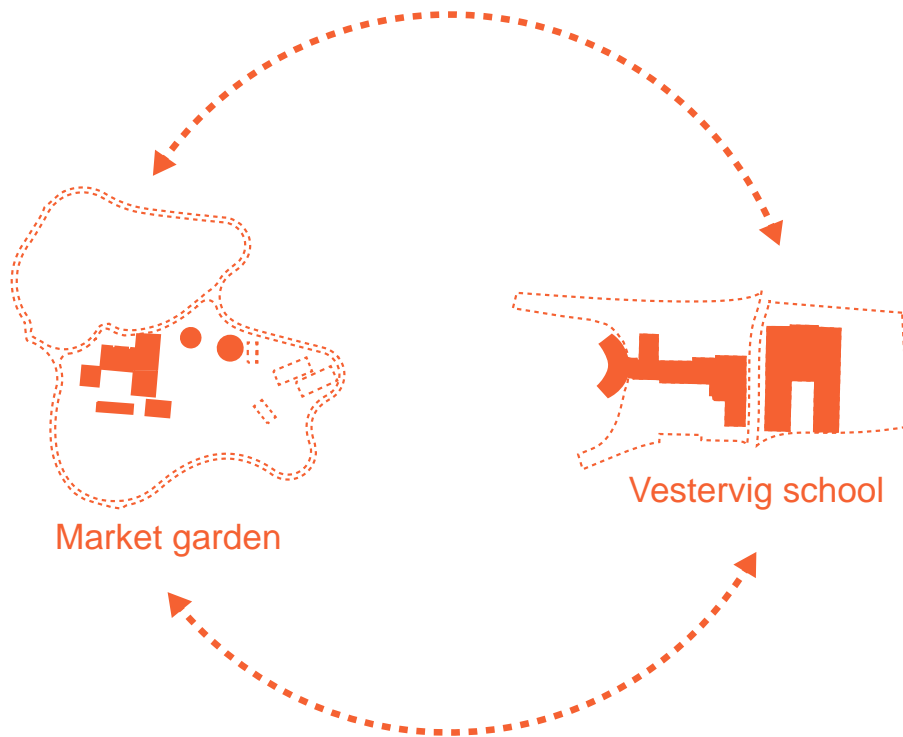
5. What if new place-based economies were established on the farms, where tourism serves as a catalyst?

To establish a new place-based economy on the farms around Vestervig, we propose connecting them with other existing actors both within and outside the cluster. We call this matchmaking, where bridges are built between, for example, Vestervig Overgaard as a new actor and the existing local actors. This can help create new synergies among locals, generate innovation, and new knowledge, and lay the foundation for new markets (Jørgensen & Sandvad, 2017).

The illustration shows an example of matchmaking between the market garden at Vestervig Overgaard (as a new actor) and Vestervig School (as an existing local actor). This collaboration could involve Vestervig School participating in a school garden facilitated by the market garden at Overgaard and the market garden supplying

locally produced food to the school. This approach would create entirely new, locally rooted value chains. The goal of this strategy is to activate inherent local resources in innovative ways and strengthen them through cross-sector collaboration. Additionally, it helps to increase local and social cohesion both within and across cluster structures. This can also generate new innovative and interesting offerings with a strong local identity, particularly concerning tourism.

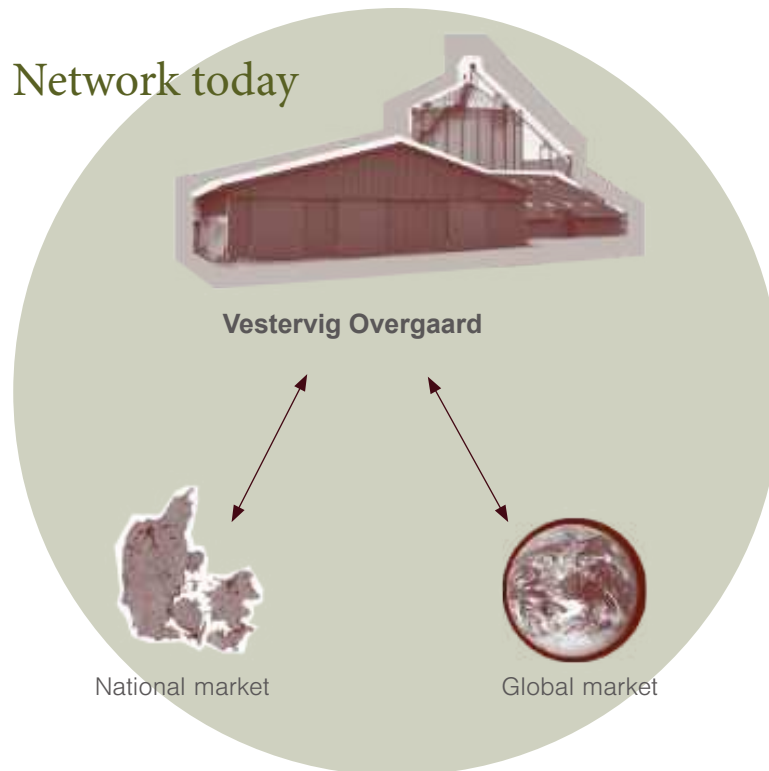
Match making



ill. 86 Match making

New local network structures

Network today



ill. 87 New local structures

The strategy aims to create new place-based economies by developing stronger local value chains rooted in Thy. Currently, the food produced at Vestervig Overgaard is sold exclusively to national and global markets. While this benefits Vestervig Overgaard as a single business, it has minimal impact on the local context. We propose a model that continues to sell to national and global markets but also integrates with the local market. This could involve collaboration between Vestervig Overgaard and the local Michelin restaurant Tri, the local inn, the cultural center in Krik, and the local meal kit service 'Thy Kassen'.

A good example of a local business in Thy that has successfully implemented this structure is the whisky distillery

'Thy Whisky'. Based on the local farm Gyrrup, all processes from growing the grain to malting, mashing, and distilling take place. The whisky is sold to locals and tourists from the farm's shop, which also serves as a visitor center. They also sell their whisky nationally in Denmark and globally. They have created a highly refined product, which commands a high price, and their business is economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable (Thy Whisky, n.d.). Through our empirical studies, including fieldwork at Thy Whisky, we learned about their collaboration with other actors in Thy, such as supplying specially crafted whisky to restaurant Tri, developed in partnership with the restaurant. This demonstrates their existing engagement in matchmaking on a smaller scale.



Vestervig School



Restaurant Tri, Agger

...Future local
network



'Thy Kassen', Thy



Kulhuset, Krik



Thinghuskroen, Vestervig



Vestervig Overgaard



National market



Global market

ill. 88 New local structures



ill. 89 What - if scenario 6

6. What if the built structures along the main street were ‘tidied up,’ and green streets for people were created?

Today, the main street in Vestervig serves as both the village’s main transportation artery and its primary social and public space. Here, residents have the opportunity to encounter each other and greet in informal meetings. Currently, the main street is primarily designed for car traffic, and many houses along the road are vacant or poorly maintained. This creates very challenging conditions for attractive meeting places and pleasant pedestrian experiences. Therefore, in this what-if scenario we propose that the main street should be transformed to accommodate soft traffic, social meeting places, and urban spaces where residents can socialize, rather than being a street dominated by abandoned houses and car traffic. The illustration on the opposite page shows a transformation of Klostergade in Vestervig.

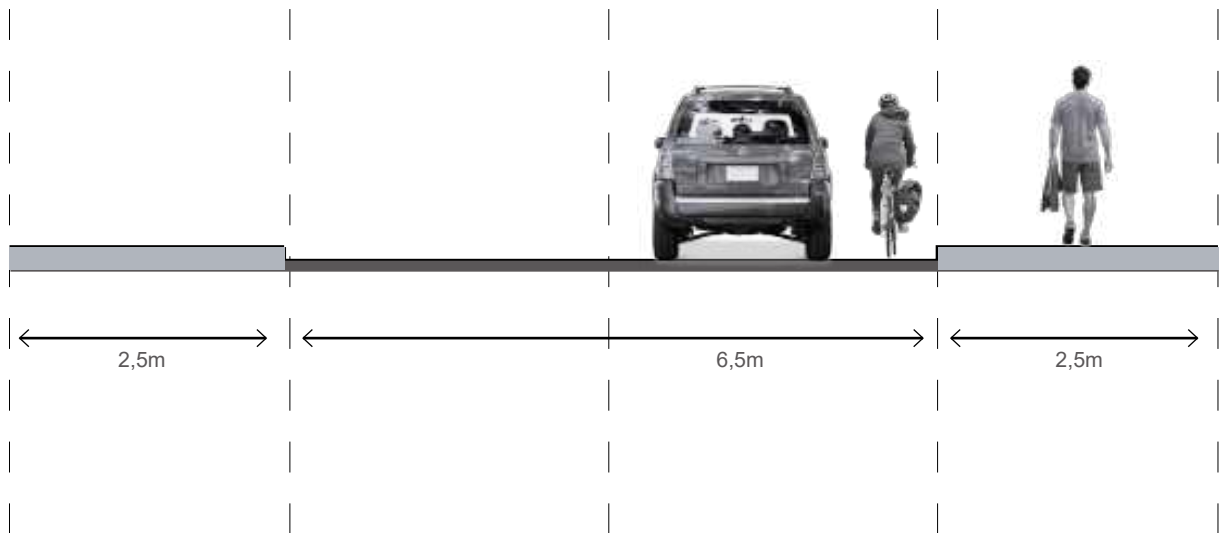
It illustrates how two wide shared pedestrian and cycling paths run along each side of the road, with trees and green beds integrated. In the background, the pavement changes to bricks as a signal to drivers that a square is forming, where pedestrians and cyclists are prioritized. In front of the former grocery store in the white building to the right, a small plaza has been created, with seats inviting to short stays.



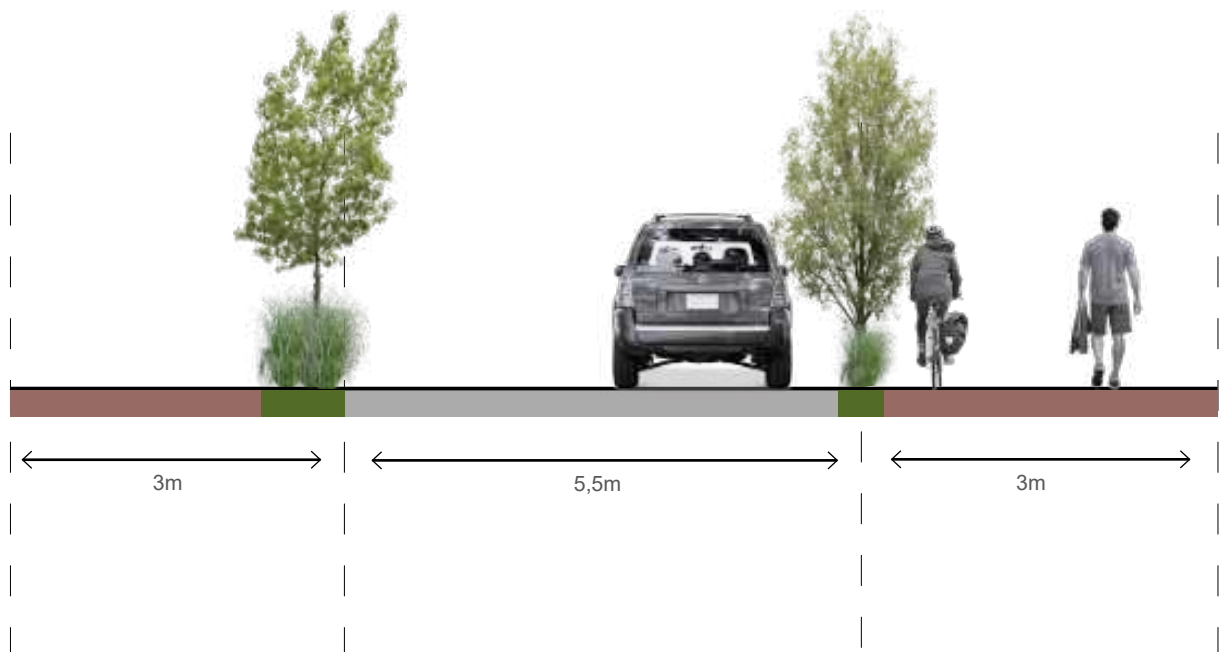


Transforming the mainstreet in Vestervig

The two sections on the opposite page illustrate how the main street has been transformed from a regular two-way street into a so-called 2-1 road, where cars drive more slowly. It is a wide 2-1 solution where cars have the opportunity to pass each other simultaneously unless there is a green bed narrowing the width of the road. In that case, they pass each other by taking turns yielding. The road profile is structured as a shared space, which places extra demands on drivers to be aware of pedestrians. The purpose of this is to reverse the hierarchy between hard and soft traffic, making the drivers feel more 'out of their element' and thus sharpen their attention. Nature is integrated through road trees and green beds, with the beds strategically placed in areas where pedestrians require extra protection, shielding the pedestrian area from the car area.



ill. 91 Before



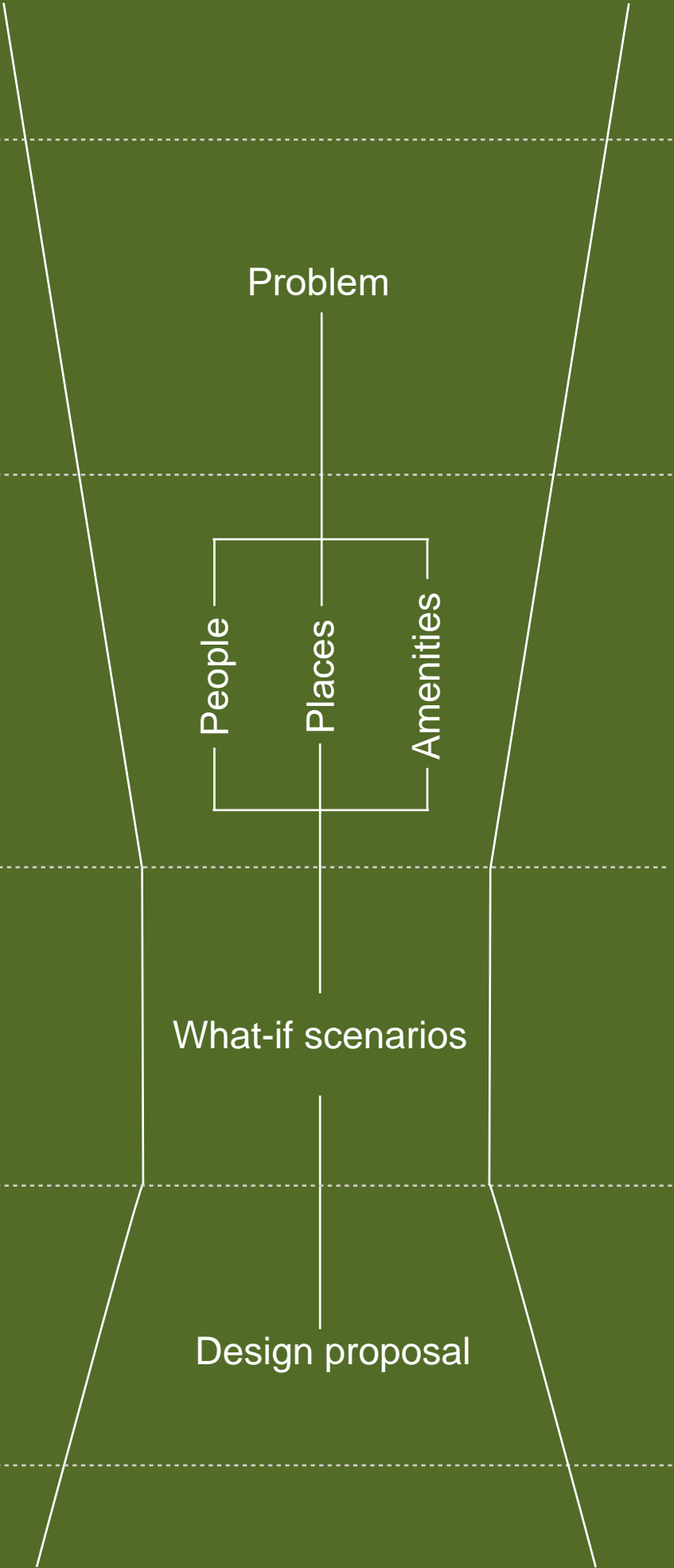
ill. 92 After

05 Epilogue

In the following sections, we will first revisit the process diagram, presenting the various findings derived from it. Then, we will provide a conclusion to the project, followed by a final reflection on the project's role in a societal perspective.

Findings from the process





Conclusion

This project proposes a vision for the strategic development of a rural village by considering the various current agendas in these regions, including political, environmental, and social factors that influence the development of Danish rural districts. It is from this understanding that the project takes its departure. This foundational knowledge is applied in the "01 Unfold" section, specifically relating to Thy, the area we chose to focus on, supported by our initial field study.

In "02 Understand," we chose Vestervig as our "case-village". Vestervig represents many other villages in the Danish countryside facing depopulation. Unlike Klitmøller, which benefits from proximity to the North Sea, Vestervig must reinvent itself to reverse the trend of depopulation. We analyzed Vestervig through the lenses of people, places, and amenities to identify what works in the village and the challenges it faces. A visit to Vestervig Overgaard and meetings with the two generations on the farm were pivotal for the further development of the project. We identified potential in developing the farms located close to the villages, thereby bringing the community closer to nature and away from the main street. This approach envisions new surroundings, with large generic building masses, encouraging a new way of thinking about villages. Instead of concentrating development along the main street, meeting places are spread out across the landscape and clustered around the farms. This represents a polycentric mindset.

In "03 Condense," drawing from various theoretical insights and extensive empirical analysis of Vestervig, we developed six what-if scenarios. These scenarios offer an innovative, progressive, and slightly provocative approach to generate discussions on new perspectives for the future development of rural areas. These scenarios shall be seen as new tools in the strategic rural development toolbox. They present perspectives and help us discuss how to create more attractive village communities, closer to nature, that can attract resourceful families and tourists.

Finally, in "04 Form," we return to Vestervig and implement these six scenarios, presenting a vision of their spatial potential. Since every place is unique, the scenarios should be viewed as adaptable tools tailored to the specific village in question. These scenarios specifically align with the fact that rural development strategies have become mandatory for municipalities, so this strategy targets those who plan 'from above': municipalities and consultants. However, place development projects and new ambitions often arise 'bottom up,' organized by the citizens themselves. Thus, this strategy is also targeted towards individual citizens in various village communities. The project's reflection explores the potential strengths and weaknesses related to the implementation of this strategy.

Reflection

Over the past six months, we have had the opportunity to delve into the field of rural development, which is highly complex. As we explored various perspectives and 'opened new doors,' it became clearer which paths the project also could explore. This project, with its investigative, speculative, slightly provocative, theoretical, and empirical approach, has been significantly different from our previous work. Unlike past projects, the design output here not only presents a concrete proposal but also opens a dialogue on future approaches to strategic rural development. This has confirmed our belief that the complexity of Urban Design—including its physical-spatial, social, societal, and anthropological dimensions—greatly sparks our engagement and drive to transform the physical structures we inhabit. We see our role as urban designers as bringing innovation and new ideas to the table, creating new physical and spatial structures that enhance the quality of life in a world full of complexity and constant change.

With these considerations in mind, we have reflected upon our project: 'What if the future is rural?' And its position in the debate on rural development. Some questions we would like to have explored further include: How can the project be practically implemented? And who could succeed in realizing the scenarios we propose?

We address the latter by noting that the strategy primarily targets a 'top-down' approach, involving municipalities and planners. These actors are now obliged, due to new legislation, to work with strategic planning for rural areas. That said, the project is equally relevant to residents, whose importance as co-creators and actors cannot be understated, representing a 'bottom-up' approach. This project should be seen as offering new tools that can be approached from many angles and help start a conversation about new solutions that can reverse the decline and create sustainable development.

This also acknowledges that many municipalities are financially strained today, which means working with the strategy would require economic prioritization. In an interview in section 02 Understand - People, Otto Lægaard describes a huge untapped potential in the people living

in rural municipalities and their ability to organize and initiate projects. Therefore, the strategy also has great potential to be initiated from a bottom-up level. Otto's many years of experience from Thisted Municipality and as a rural developer highlight that the municipalities don't always manage to keep in touch with residents, ongoing or potential projects, which he points out is extremely important for mutual benefit and development to take place.

"Kommunerne kan godt lukke sig lidt om sig selv. Det er i hvert fald mit hjertebrun, det er den der koordinering ud til byerne. Altså at det bliver gjort. Den er virkelig vigtig. Fordi så kan vi udnytte ressourcerne meget bedre. Men... der mangles jo penge alle steder." - Otto Lægaard, interview p. 55

To foster collaboration between the municipality and its citizens, bridging the gap between top-down and bottom-up approaches is essential. This will facilitate overarching strategic development from a broader municipal perspective while incorporating local forces capable of initiating projects. By doing so, projects can be rooted in local communities, potentially generating new networks and collaborations. This shift is necessary: our perception of villages and rural areas must be transformed. Rather than viewing them as isolated urban structures, we should see them as dynamic networks that foster closeness to nature, new relationships, and strong synergies based on local inherent potentials and actors. Strategic awareness, as outlined in the six scenarios, is crucial when relocating meeting places into the landscape to avoid phenomena like "urban sprawl."

There are many uncertainties regarding the future of rural areas, particularly with the political agreement on a CO2 tax on agriculture. We cannot predict how this strategy will fit into the new political landscape that will emerge. However, one thing is certain: the development of our rural areas is vital. It is important for current residents, for those who wish to move there, to ensure future food supply, for tourists, for biodiversity, and for our shared cultural heritage.

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Illustration list

- III. 17: Rapeseed fields, Carsten Ingemann, Realdania
- III. 19: Vorupør, Carsten Ingemann, Realdania
- III. 20: Vestervig Center, Carsten Ingemann, Realdania
- III. 21: Bikepath in the fields, Mikkel Østergaard, Cyklistforbundet
- III. 40: Vestervig Overgaard 1955, Danmark Set fra Luften
- III. 41: Otto Lægaard, Leif Tuxen
- III. 47: Historical photo, 1910, Sydthys Egnshistoriske Arkiv

Generally, our mapping contains data from the Agency for Data Supply and Infrastructure, Denmark's Elevation Model, January 2024.

Diagram 1

Actual and expected population in Thisted Municipality as of January 1st (COWI, Thisted Municipality, 2023)

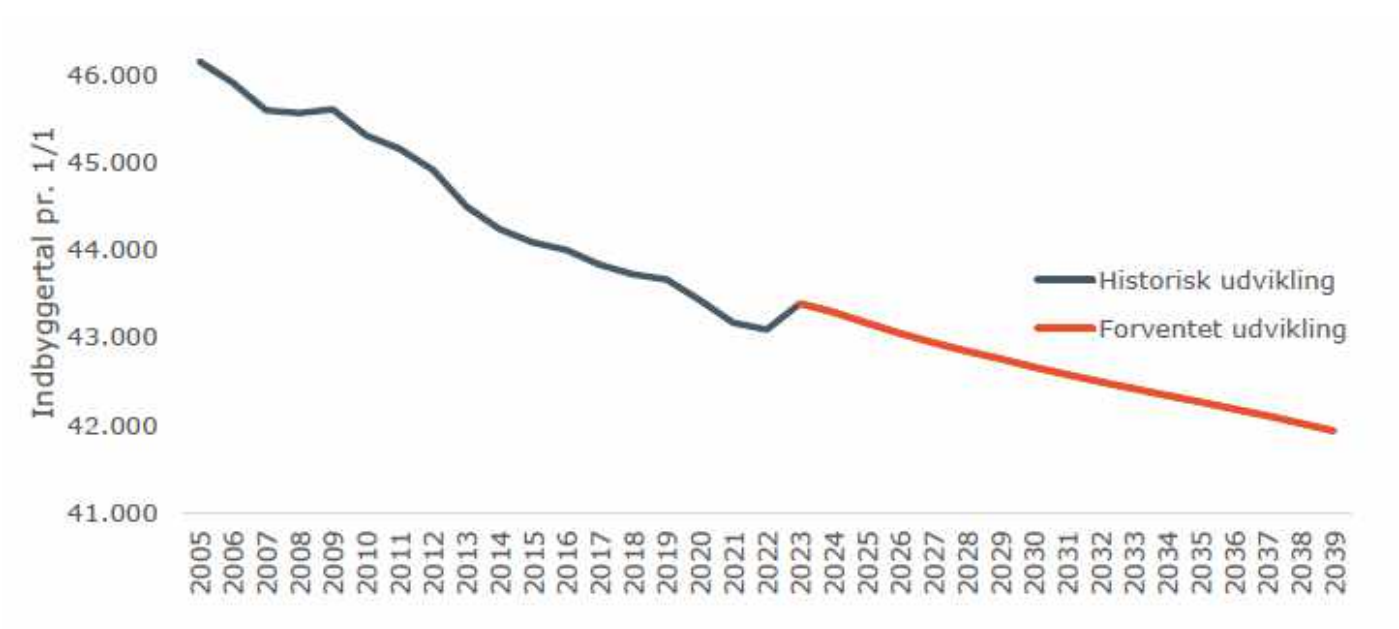


Diagram 2

Indexed population numbers at the beginning of 2023 (actual) and indexed population numbers at the beginning of 2024-2039 (2023 = index 100) (COWI, Thisted Municipality, 2023)

Område	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039
Bedsted	100	100	99	98	98	97	97	96	96	95	95	95	94	94	93	93	93
Fikt. flygt																	
Hannæs	100	99	99	98	97	97	96	96	95	95	94	94	93	93	92	92	91
Hanstholm	100	100	100	100	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101
Hurup	100	99	99	99	98	98	97	97	97	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	95
Koldby	100	100	99	98	98	97	97	96	96	95	95	95	94	94	93	93	93
Nors	100	99	98	96	95	95	95	94	94	93	93	93	93	92	92	92	92
Rolighed	100	100	99	100	103	102	103	103	103	103	104	104	104	104	105	105	105
Sennels	100	100	101	102	102	103	103	103	104	104	103	103	104	104	104	104	104
Sjerring	100	99	99	98	97	97	96	96	95	95	94	94	94	93	93	93	92
Snedsted	100	99	98	98	97	96	96	95	94	94	93	93	92	92	91	91	90
Tilsted	100	100	100	100	100	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101
Tingstrup	100	100	100	99	99	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Vestervig	100	100	100	100	99	99	99	98	98	97	97	96	96	95	95	94	94
Østerild	100	99	99	98	97	97	96	96	96	95	95	95	94	94	93	93	93
Østre	100	100	100	99	99	98	98	98	98	98	97	97	97	96	96	96	95
Ukendte adre-ser	100	98	95	93	92	91	90	90	90	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	88
Total	100	100	99	99	99	99	99	98	98	98	98	98	97	97	97	97	97

Diagram 3

Overall development in Thisted Municipality: Population at the beginning of 2023 (actual) and population 2024-2039 (expected) (COWI, Thisted Municipality, 2023)

Område	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039
Bedsted	1.814	1.806	1.792	1.781	1.769	1.759	1.752	1.744	1.737	1.727	1.721	1.716	1.708	1.703	1.696	1.688	1.679
Fikt. flygt	0	71	82	94	106	118	130	143	156	169	181	195	208	222	235	249	263
Hannæs	2.367	2.353	2.338	2.318	2.304	2.291	2.275	2.266	2.255	2.240	2.228	2.219	2.208	2.195	2.183	2.170	2.161
Hanstholm	4.082	4.079	4.098	4.102	4.107	4.109	4.111	4.117	4.116	4.115	4.127	4.123	4.130	4.125	4.132	4.124	4.125
Hurup	4.188	4.166	4.159	4.136	4.109	4.096	4.080	4.064	4.056	4.041	4.029	4.021	4.015	4.012	4.005	4.000	3.989
Koldby	1.810	1.803	1.789	1.777	1.767	1.756	1.747	1.741	1.732	1.726	1.719	1.711	1.706	1.701	1.692	1.687	1.680
Nors	1.751	1.733	1.708	1.688	1.670	1.657	1.662	1.653	1.641	1.634	1.630	1.626	1.621	1.614	1.610	1.607	1.603
Rolighed	3.310	3.300	3.290	3.324	3.395	3.388	3.396	3.398	3.410	3.412	3.430	3.435	3.446	3.452	3.466	3.478	3.488
Sennels	1.337	1.333	1.344	1.366	1.363	1.374	1.379	1.380	1.386	1.387	1.381	1.383	1.384	1.391	1.390	1.388	1.388
Sjerring	3.763	3.731	3.724	3.691	3.663	3.639	3.619	3.605	3.584	3.569	3.549	3.537	3.520	3.512	3.497	3.489	3.474
Snedsted	4.059	4.030	3.997	3.966	3.932	3.902	3.877	3.853	3.833	3.810	3.789	3.767	3.745	3.730	3.710	3.689	3.663
Tilsted	2.014	2.017	2.006	2.018	2.023	2.026	2.028	2.027	2.032	2.034	2.035	2.036	2.039	2.040	2.041	2.039	2.042
Tingstrup	4.291	4.279	4.272	4.268	4.268	4.283	4.289	4.288	4.290	4.303	4.305	4.295	4.301	4.299	4.297	4.294	4.292
Vestervig	1.786	1.778	1.793	1.785	1.775	1.767	1.761	1.753	1.745	1.735	1.726	1.721	1.712	1.702	1.693	1.684	1.673
Østerild	1.162	1.156	1.148	1.139	1.132	1.126	1.120	1.115	1.110	1.104	1.102	1.098	1.094	1.089	1.085	1.081	1.076
Østre	5.587	5.590	5.562	5.538	5.506	5.502	5.481	5.474	5.456	5.455	5.431	5.425	5.403	5.379	5.358	5.338	5.327
Ukendte adresser	63	62	60	59	58	57	57	57	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
Total	43.384	43.288	43.162	43.050	42.947	42.850	42.765	42.677	42.594	42.516	42.442	42.364	42.294	42.221	42.145	42.061	41.978

Diagram 4

Overall development in Thisted Municipality: Indexed population numbers at the beginning of 2023 (actual) and indexed population numbers at the beginning of 2024-2039 (2023 = index 100) (COWI, Thisted Municipality, 2023)

Område	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039
Bedsted	100	100	99	98	98	97	97	96	96	95	95	95	94	94	93	93	93
Fikt. flygt																	
Hannæs	100	99	99	98	97	97	96	96	95	95	94	94	93	93	92	92	91
Hanstholm	100	100	100	100	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101
Hurup	100	99	99	99	98	98	97	97	97	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	95
Koldby	100	100	99	98	98	97	97	96	96	95	95	95	94	94	93	93	93
Nors	100	99	98	96	95	95	95	94	94	93	93	93	93	92	92	92	92
Rolighed	100	100	99	100	103	102	103	103	103	103	104	104	104	104	105	105	105
Sennels	100	100	101	102	102	103	103	103	104	104	103	103	104	104	104	104	104
Sjerring	100	99	99	98	97	97	96	96	95	95	94	94	94	93	93	93	92
Snedsted	100	99	98	98	97	96	96	95	94	94	93	93	92	92	91	91	90
Tilsted	100	100	100	100	100	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101
Tingstrup	100	100	100	99	99	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Vestervig	100	100	100	100	99	99	99	98	98	97	97	96	96	95	95	94	94
Østerild	100	99	99	98	97	97	96	96	96	95	95	95	94	94	93	93	93
Østre	100	100	100	99	99	98	98	98	98	98	97	97	97	96	96	96	95
Ukendte adresser	100	98	95	93	92	91	90	90	90	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	88
Total	100	100	99	99	99	99	99	98	98	98	98	98	97	97	97	97	97

Diagram 5

Vestervig: Population at the beginning of 2023 (actual) and population 2024-2039 (expected) (COWI, Thisted Municipality, 2023)

Alder	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039
0-2 år	31	40	42	46	48	50	52	52	53	53	52	53	52	52	51	51	50
3-5 år	48	42	44	41	47	48	51	52	53	55	55	56	56	55	55	55	54
6-16 år	148	152	151	156	155	162	166	169	175	181	186	191	194	195	198	203	204
17-24 år	114	114	126	124	121	116	113	111	107	104	102	101	102	104	104	103	104
25-66 år	907	887	882	871	864	858	844	834	826	820	809	807	792	783	777	771	765
67-79 år	423	412	415	398	386	382	374	365	359	345	344	333	336	338	328	321	314
80-84 år	73	84	85	99	103	97	100	104	98	101	101	98	94	89	88	91	90
85+ år	42	47	49	50	51	54	63	65	74	77	76	83	86	87	91	90	91
Total	1.786	1.778	1.793	1.785	1.775	1.767	1.761	1.753	1.745	1.735	1.726	1.721	1.712	1.702	1.693	1.684	1.673

Diagram 6

Vestervig: Indexed population numbers at the beginning of 2023 (actual) and indexed population numbers at the beginning of 2024-2039 (2023 = index 100) (expected) (COWI, Thisted Municipality, 2023)

Alder	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039
0-2 år	100	128	134	149	156	161	166	169	170	170	169	169	168	167	165	164	162
3-5 år	100	88	92	85	99	99	105	108	111	114	115	116	116	115	115	114	113
6-16 år	100	103	102	106	105	109	112	114	118	122	126	129	131	132	134	137	138
17-24 år	100	100	110	109	106	102	99	97	94	91	89	89	89	91	91	90	91
25-66 år	100	98	97	96	95	95	93	92	91	90	89	89	87	86	86	85	84
67-79 år	100	97	98	94	91	90	88	86	85	81	81	79	80	80	78	76	74
80-84 år	100	114	116	135	141	133	137	142	134	139	139	134	128	122	121	124	124
85+ år	100	112	115	118	121	129	150	155	177	184	182	197	204	207	216	214	217
Total	100	100	100	100	99	99	99	98	98	97	97	96	96	95	95	94	94

Diagram 7

Top 1 reason for living in the village (Thisted Municipality, 2022)

Naturen er grund for bosætning

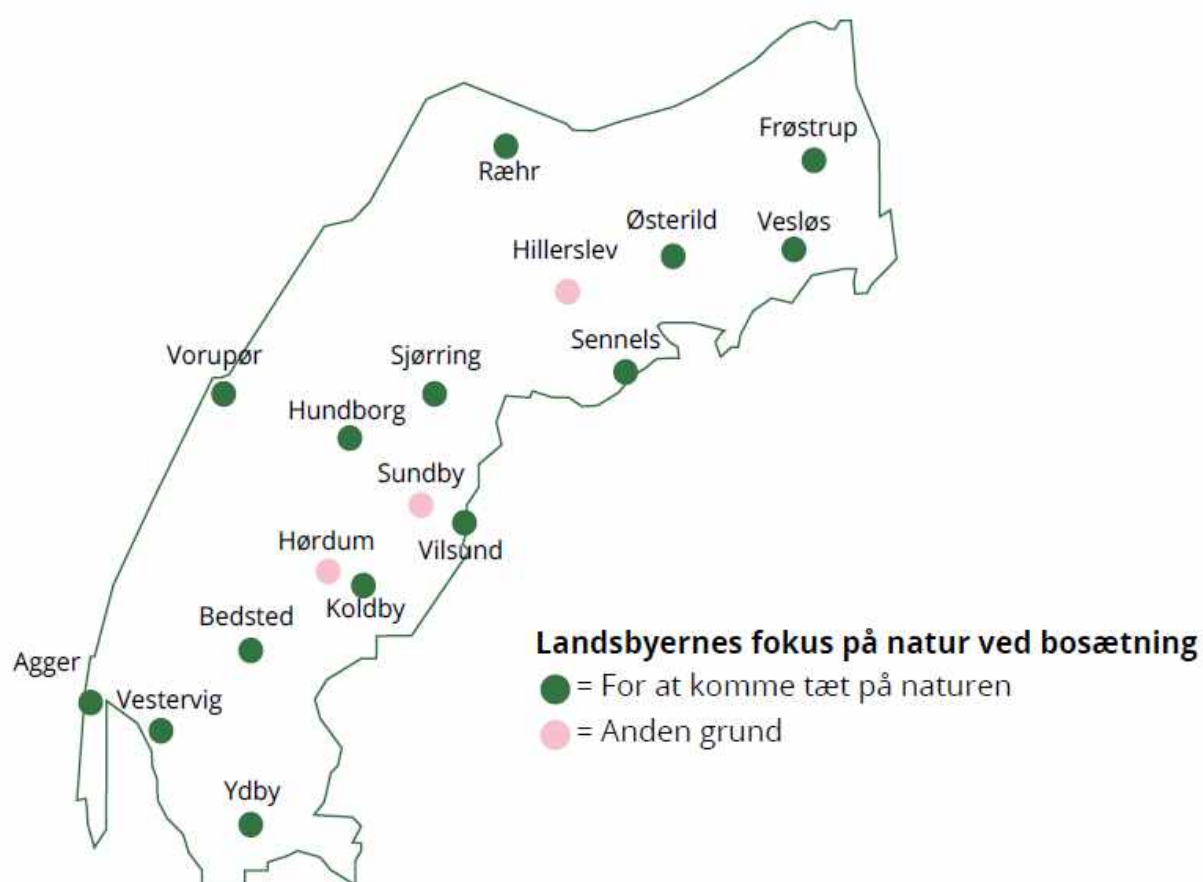


Diagram 8

The figure shows the top 1, 2, and 3 reasons for settling in the village (Thisted Municipality, 2022)

HVORFOR BOR VI HER?

I spørgeskemaet er borgerne i landsbyerne blevet spurgt ind til, hvorfor de har valgt at bosætte sig netop her, hvilket der var 7 forskellige svarmuligheder til: Naturen, pladsmuligheder, nærhed til familien, skole og pasningstilbud, boligpris, boligkvalitet og fritidsinteresse.

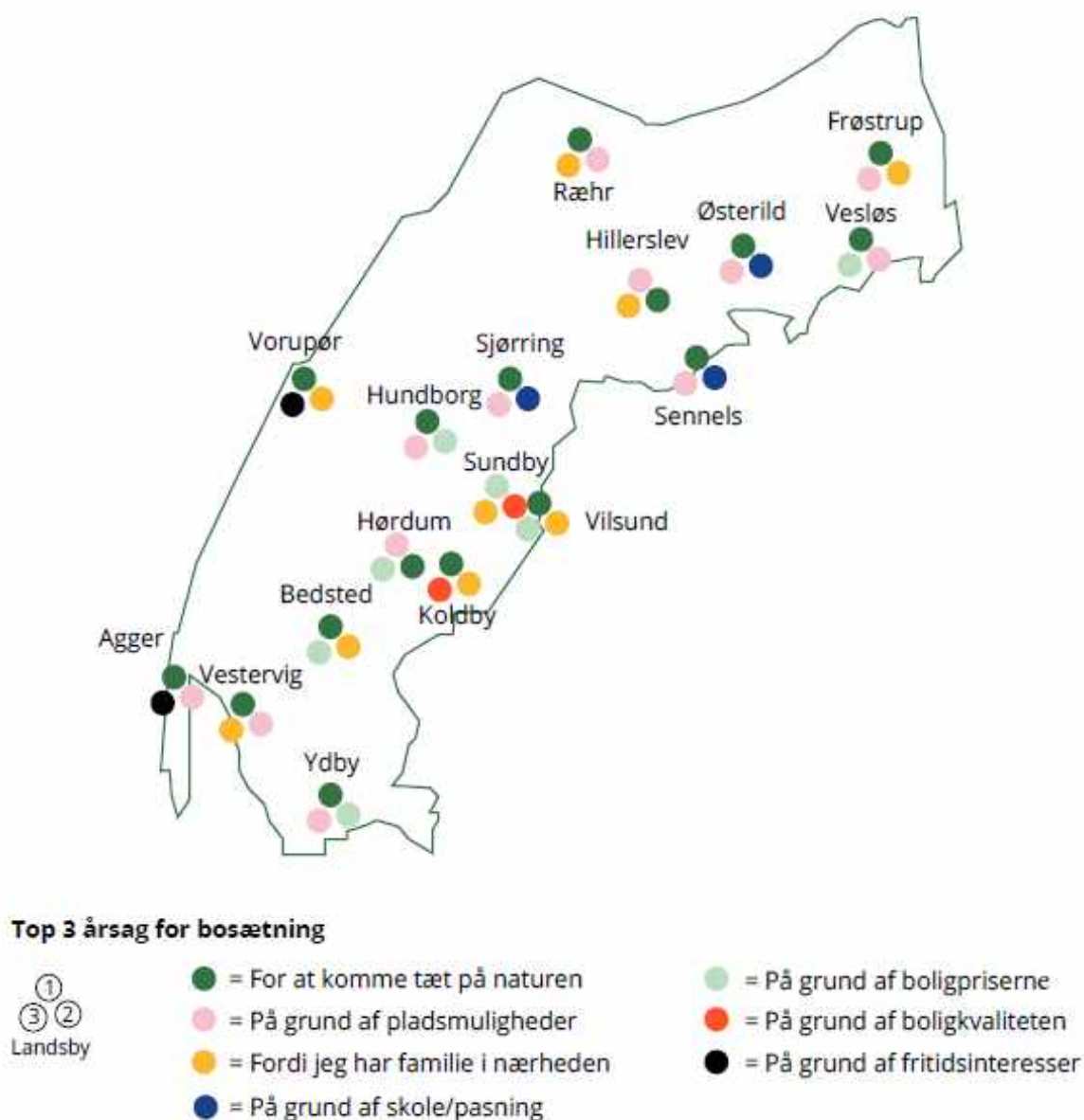


Diagram 9

Vestervig (Thisted Municipality, 2022)

Hvorfor bor vi her?

TOP 3

- 1. For at komme tæt på naturen
- 2. På grund af pladsmuligheder
- 3. Fordi jeg har familie i nærheden

Derfor bor vi her...

"Fandt drømmeboligen her. Dejlige fredelige omgivelser uden bylarm, til gengæld masser af fuglekvadder."

"Der er både skole og institution tæt på og det er bare helt perfekt"

"Aktivt lokalsamfund, foreningsliv, købmand."

"Vestervig er en smuk og smukt beliggende by. Derudover er der i byen et rigt kulturliv, som jeg selv er aktiv deltager i. Den storslåede natur i Thy - og ikke mindst, hvor jeg bor."

"At byde kunne byde på et godt lokal miljø"

"Naturen og kulturen"

"Byen har en fantastisk historie."

Hvad er kvaliteterne?

TOP 3

- 1. Adgang til natur
- 2. Kommer rundt til fods og på cykel
- 3. Foreningsliv og sportstilbud

Byen byder på...

"byen tilbyder alt man brug for det daglige liv, kort vej til Nationalparken og indkøbsmuligheder i Hurup"

"En god lokal købmand"

"Mange aktive mennesker, som er klar til at gøre noget for byen - og ikke bare dem selv. Gode kulturelle tilbud!"

"Aktiv lokalgruppe, som hele tiden arbejder på, at gøre byen endnu bedre"

"Vores arrangementer med musik og hygge. Sankt hans, fastelavn optog, juleoptog osv."

"Nordens største landsbykirke"

"Tæt på vand og skov"

"lave boligpriser, mange aktiviteter"

Vores by kan bedst beskrives som ...

- Byen midt i naturen

Om 10 år kan vores by beskrives som...

- Den børnevenlige by / Den grønne by - gode institutioner og legepladser/ tæt på natur og grønne rekreative områder

Derfor vil vi gerne arbejde med...

- Lokalt sammenhold og nabohjælp/ Velholdt og hyggelig by

Design proces

Findings presented at pinup 1:

At the beginning of our process, we spent considerable time determining how to approach the investigation.

To kickstart the process, we conducted a field study in Thisted Municipality (Thy). We wandered around, allowing ourselves to be surprised and inspired, and gained an understanding of the area. We had several appointments with locals, where we engaged in informal conversations that helped us grasp the agendas at play. We talked with a pig farmer from Høboøre, the restaurant manager of the Michelin-starred Tri in Agger, a berry grower and former mink farmer at Thy Økobær in Snedsted, and visited Thy Whisky for a discussion on local production and community ties in central Thy. We also visited the new museum project at Doverodde and watched windsurfers at Krik. After the field study, we reflected on where to focus our project.



We debated whether to focus on the entire Thisted Municipality, multiple towns within the municipality, or just a single village. To provide a clear framework for our study, we established specific criteria for the towns we wanted to examine closely. It became evident that villages with 200-1000 inhabitants were particularly interesting for our investigation. Additionally, it was clear that these villages needed to have landscape quality and be situated close to nature, as this emerged as a crucial parameter for settlement in the initial studies. We also wanted to work with a village that had some basic existing functions to build upon. Consequently, Sjørring, Hundborg, Bedsted, and Vestervig were selected as potential towns for our investigations.

Criteria:



200-1000 inhabitants



Close to nature



School and grocery

Selected villages



Findings presented at pinup 2:

After receiving feedback from our first Pin-up session, it became evident that we needed to establish our investigative priorities. We deliberated whether to superficially explore numerous towns or to focus more intensely on a single one. Rooted in our case-based methodology, aimed at finding a village that could represent many others, we ultimately chose a deeper engagement with one village. Vestervig was selected as it mirrored the structure of similar-sized villages and encompassed the agendas we aimed to explore.

Subsequently, our next field study led us to Vestervig and South Thy for a deeper exploration. We scheduled additional interviews with locals to gain further insights. Connecting with both current and former owners of Vestervig Overgaard proved invaluable for our studies.

This marked the inception of our process in developing what we now refer to as "what - if scenarios," here presented as "dogmas." These scenarios have undergone continuous refinement and have evolved into a comprehensive conceptual framework. The sketches below shows some of the processes we have gone through.



6 dogmas

1. Let nature be the framework for a new culture!



2. Rethink the concept of a single city center, and spread the meeting places out in the landscape - anchored in the farms around and their cultural heritage!



3. Blur out the city's edge and Stitch it together with the surrounding nature!



4. Create new sustainable communities that offer an attractive alternative to urban life!



5. 'Tidy up' in the build structures along the main street and create green streets for people!

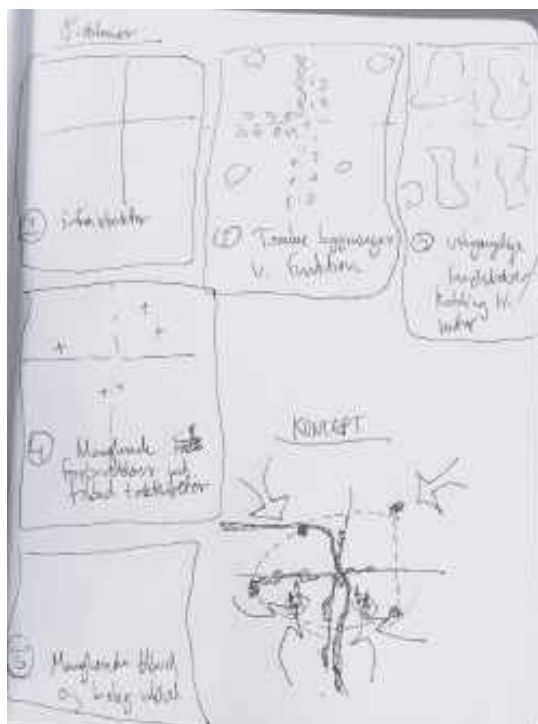


6. Create new place-based economies where tourism serves as a catalyst!

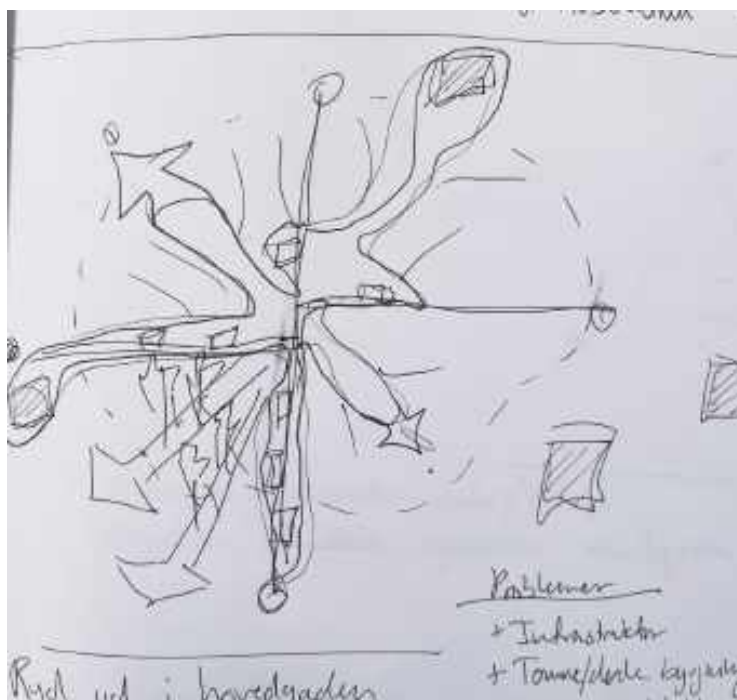
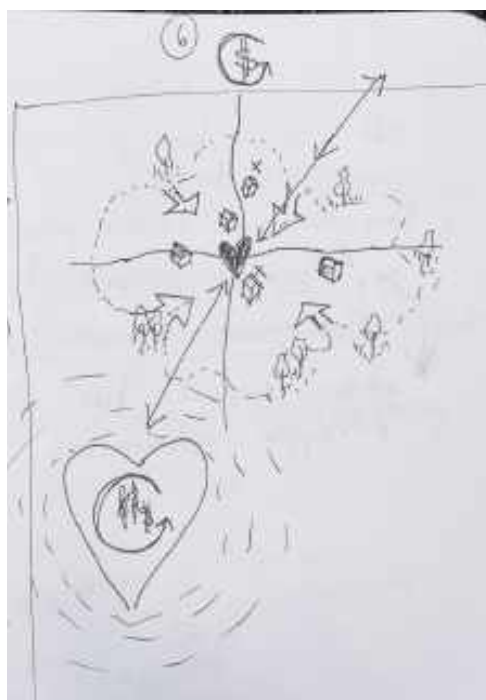


The further work involved connecting analyses, theoretical and empirical studies, and investigations to bring forth the "what-if scenarios" that we aim to convey, describe, and discuss with the project. This process has entailed outlining and working on implementing the scenarios while aligning them with our theoretical and empirical background knowledge.

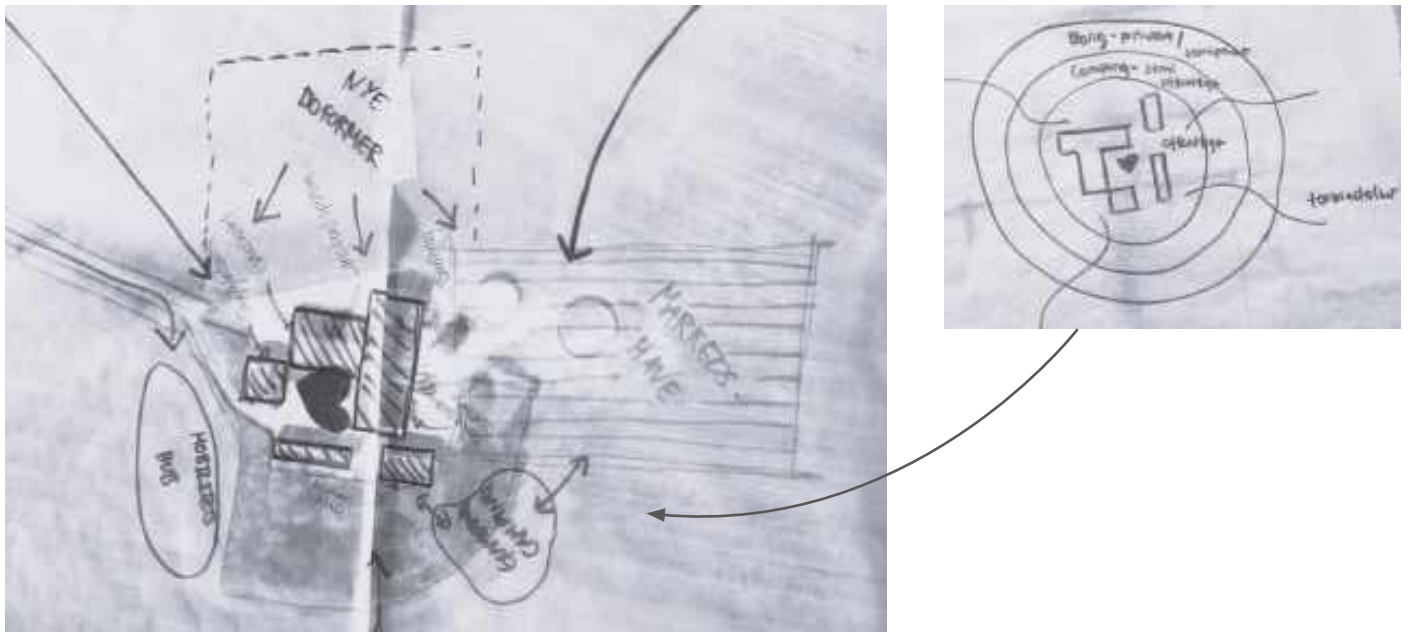
Throughout the process, we have also focused on delving into the existing structures in and around Vestervig, with particular emphasis on Vestervig Overgaard. In our work on the farm and its connection to the "what-if scenarios," we have explored numerous sketches. Through large A0 maps and copious amounts of manifold, we have continuously tested and experimented with how the scenarios could be implemented.



Conceptual sketching



Sketching on development of Vestervig Overgaard - konceptual drawings



Transformation: Andelsbevægelsen -> today -> the future?

Vestervig in a regional scale



Activating the farm by matching them with existing actors

