



# THE FUTURE OF ROADSIDE VILLAGES IN DENMARK

- four scenarios for the model village of Shrinksby

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### Colophon

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## Preface

Most Danish municipalities can anticipate a decline in population. This will require adaptation and restructuring. The point of departure for this project is that – in order that others may survive - some villages will have to 'shrink'. In collaboration with seven municipalities, we have focused on villages heading for substantial population decline.

How then, does one actually proceed if one wants to shrink a village? That is the focal issue of the project *New plans for Shrinksby* where our focus has been on the feasibilities available to the municipal planners as well as on the barriers they are facing in connection with shrinking a village. In the course of the project, it became apparent that one village type is particularly conspicuous. They are roadside villages having sprung up at the sides of a road. The houses are in close proximity to each other – and to the road. This village type is facing two major problems: The one problem is that, considering today's substantial supply of properties on the market, houses at the roadside become unattractive, as buyers seek amenity value securely removed from noisy and heavily trafficked roads. Another problem is that the state of decay and disrepair of these roadside villages becomes extremely visible to passersby and tourists. This is why we chose to centre this paper round the future of Roadside Denmark.

The project was performed by way of a series of network meetings held in the autumn of 2013. The participants were planners from the Danish municipalities of Faaborg-Midtfyn, Hjørring, Lemvig, Lolland, Mariagerfjord, Morsø and Vordingborg in collaboration with whom we developed four different scenarios for the model village of Shrinksby for the purposes of creating debate about this significant subject.

On behalf of the Danish Town Planning Institute, we would like to express our gratitude to the seven municipalities for the time and effort they put into the project and for their constructive contributions and sparring from the frontline.

Naturally, any statement and observation made in this paper will be at the Danish Town Planning Institute's own account. Enjoy your reading and debating.

Director Ellen Højgaard Jensen  
The Danish Town Planning Institute, January 2014

# Introduction and primary recommendations

## Introduction

Some villages struggle. Today, they experience declining population figures, and they are up against empty buildings and decay. Nationally, there are several locations where individual households are actually tied to their present homes because they find it impossible to sell. These days, there is a marked awareness with respect to this issue; and, hence, government funds have been earmarked for supporting municipalities in rural and remote areas in their effort to tear down empty buildings.

But a few isolated examples of demolition are inadequate. It is necessary for the municipalities to differentiate and prioritise between the various types of villages in long-term strategic municipal planning. The municipalities must plan where schools and other municipal services should be located in the future; and, likewise, they must decide which villages should be converted from actual urban communities to more scattered buildings comprising such amenity values as may exist

This project investigates how roadside villages with declining population figures may be shrunk or phased out in the best possible way to all the parties involved. In this project, we have focused on four themes, namely: Economy, Legislation, Physical Model; plus Communication and Process. To a very large extent, the project is an academic exercise, and this paper is first and foremost intended as a contribution to the debate, but it also contains a number of relevant factors to be

contemplated by state, municipalities and villages with respect to addressing the challenges represented by the roadside villages.

## The project's primary recommendations:

- The challenge of having a considerable number of superfluous and outdated properties in the remote areas of the country will not disappear of its own accord. Hence, official Denmark needs to acknowledge the challenge and recognise the need for a national effort.
- In both political and popular debates, we shall have to break down psychological barriers to enable the discussion of village shrinking and also to break away from the conventional growth paradigm underlying the legislation on urban renewal as well as planning.
- Though more funding is needed, economic considerations should not be allowed to hinder a discussion about the future of the villages. Quite surprisingly, a rough estimate has shown that, for a municipality, the costs involved will be almost identical, regardless whether it is a matter of servicing a roadside village with a declining population for 20 years, or a matter of phasing out the same roadside village. This estimate does, however, presuppose government funding in connection with all necessary demolition.

## Project participants

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Two village-council chairmen living in villages facing the same challenges as Shrinksby



Examples of Danish roadside villages in 2013

**There is a need for political debate about:**

- The attitude to the cultural heritage of the roadside villages plus a new understanding of the physical and mental cultural heritage. What will happen if, for instance, the main village road is demolished? – Especially since this particular road has constituted the backbone of the village in its entire history? This is a far more radical solution than what we anticipated at the outset. But, maybe, this is what it will take.
- The relationship between exploiting and protecting the landscape. Also in this respect, new mental imagery may be required.

**There is a need to investigate:**

- How new finance models may be developed for the purpose of helping home owners who are tied to villages on the decline.
- The market mechanisms and investments of the supply infrastructures supplying e.g. water, electricity and sewage to all villages today. What is their lifespan? When will they be depreciated? And how can the supply infrastructure be subjected to shrinkage?

**There is a need to test:**

- How a municipality can establish a 1:1 demonstration project, shrinking a village through a positive process.



## The model village as method

The shrinking and phasing out of villages is a very delicate subject - in political as in public debates; and it is probably for this reason that, as yet, no municipality has been willing to identify the name or locality of a village destined for shrinkage.

Anyway, to address this issue in a very tangible manner, we decided to base the project work on a model village: Shrinksby. The village of Shrinksby is, at one and the same time, a physical model and a socio-economic, demographic profile. The village structure has come about as the result of a dialogue with the project participants from the seven municipalities; and, hence, it contains easily recognisable characteristics of villages from all over the country. To begin with, we, at the Danish Town Planning Institute, suggested that Shrinksby should represent a minor village comprising 15-20 properties. In our discussion with the participants, however, it transpired that, probably, such very small villages will not represent any major challenge. This part is rather played by the somewhat larger villages located immediately next to a heavily trafficked public road - the 'roadside villages'.

## About the model village, Shrinksby

Shrinksby is such a roadside village, arisen with a public road as its centre – a road which, today, is heavily trafficked. This road is flanked by rows of small, frequently terraced, town houses of which many are former shops with large windows facing the road. They are built on narrow plots and, compared with today's standards, they are relatively small houses. The traffic load gives rise to considerable noise problems in these houses.

Around the church, which has been built on a hill, a few older houses are scattered. They are all withdrawn from the road, commanding a fine view. The terrain slopes away from the church, and in the opposite end of town, a stream runs past the village. Shrinksby also boasts a minor single-family-house development dating back to the 70s and eight senior homes.

Shrinksby has a population of approximately 150 villagers living in approximately 130 residential properties of which about 20 are empty. The composition of population is a broad mix, although the majority of the villagers generally belong in the relatively



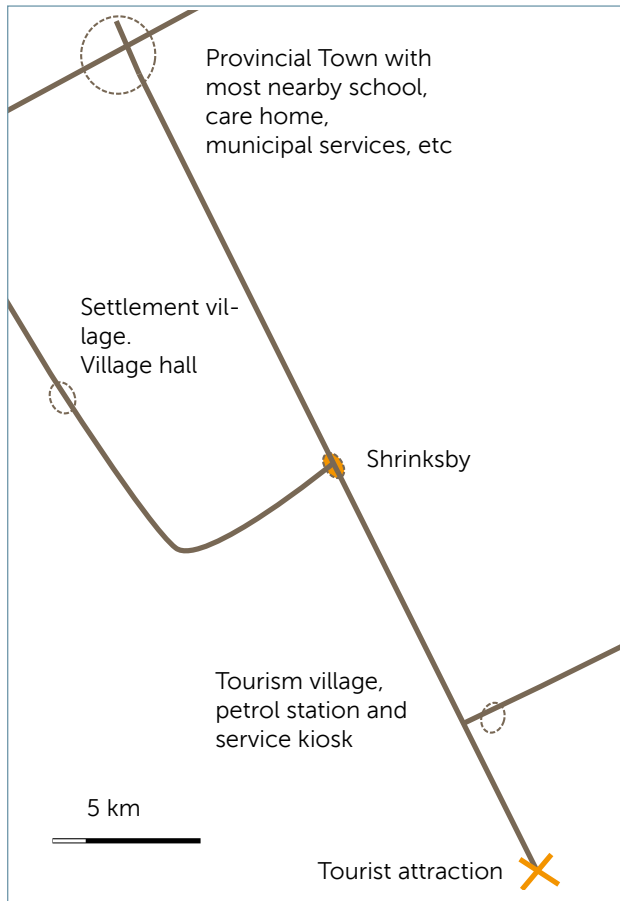
First proposal for Shrinksby, June 2013: The village comprises about 15-20 properties



Next proposal for Shrinksby, August 2013: The village comprises about 50 properties.



Final proposal for Shrinksby, November 2013: The village comprises about 130 properties.



Shrinkby's surroundings and neighbour towns

lower-paid income group: There are some welfare claimants and even more senior citizens, either receiving early retirement benefits or old-age pension.

There is a modest local business community in the village which, in 2014, comprises a builder, a hair-dresser working from home, a so-called backyard mechanic and a home office. In addition, the village boasts a medieval church, a grain silo plus a village hall which is partly subsidised by annual municipal funding.

Shrinkby is located 15 km from a smaller provincial town providing municipal and private services such as nursery, school, healthcare centre for senior citizens, and supermarkets. Further, Shrinkby is neighboured by two smaller villages – each with potential for settlement and tourism.

#### Four scenarios and one calculator

The following pages offer a presentation of four highly caricatured scenarios describing the development of the model village, Shrinkby, over a 20-year period from 2014-34. These scenarios have evolved in the course of the project in collaboration between the project participants. They have emerged from the dialogue about the physical model as ideas on how the municipality may in actual fact handle the shrinkage effort in connection with a village such as Shrinkby. For the purposes of this project, we established a calculator that includes the most essential municipal expenditures involved in both servicing and shrinking Shrinkby over the next 20 years. The point of departure for the calculation is the surplus expenditure involved in the municipality's servicing the Shrinkby population as compared with the expenditure involved if the villagers were living in the smaller provincial town. Calculations were made for each of the four scenarios – being:

### 'Letting things slide'

The key characteristic of this first scenario is that Shrinkby is left to its own devices for the next 20 years. In this scenario, the municipal service expenditure is primarily concerned with the additional time involved for service staffs to reach Shrinkby from the provincial town 15 km away. I.e.: driving hours for e.g. school bus, home care, community nurse and binman. In addition to which, there will be expenditures such as housing benefits, heating aid, idle-running of empty senior homes, and the maintenance of public roads.

### 'Complete phase-out'

The second scenario is characterised by the municipality's rehousing of villagers and the purchase and demolition of every property in Shrinkby with the land gradually being sold for agricultural purposes. This scenario is connected with considerable one-time expenses for the rehousing of the villagers plus the purchase and demolition of property. However, the municipality's service expenditure will decrease concurrently with the villagers' move into the provincial town.

### 'Thinning out'

The third scenario is characterised by the municipality's purchase and demolition of main-street properties in the worst condition, whereas the best enclaves will be left untouched. There will be considerable purchase and demolition expenditure in connection with the properties in poorest condition. This scenario will thus mean a gradually declining village population, but there will be continued service requirements.

### 'Relocation'

The fourth scenario is somewhat similar to the third, as the municipality will purchase and demolish a considerable part of the poor properties. In the relocation scenario, however, this will take place at a slower pace than is the case in the thinning-out scenario; and, also, this scenario differs from the third, since here planning permissions will be granted for moving dwellings further away from the road and into the landscape.



The model village, Shrinkby, in the caring hands of the project participants. For the entire duration, this physical model has been a useful tool. It has changed appearance as the project evolved, thus facilitating the concretisation of this complex and delicate matter.

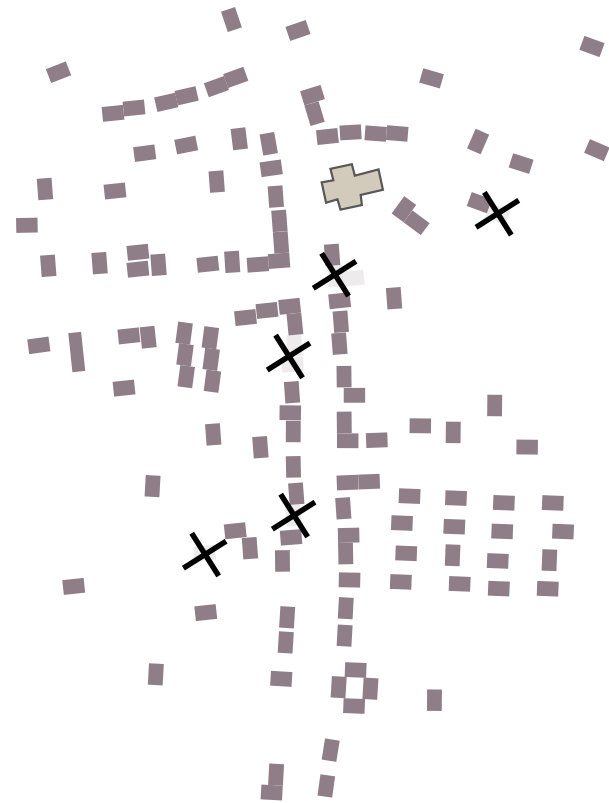
## *Scenario 1 'Letting things slide', by 2034*

*In this scenario, Shrinksby has been left to its own devices. By 2034, 98 of the original 150 villagers are left. The population is spread out on approximately 80 properties, while about 35 properties stand vacant. The municipality has already torn down some of the worst ruins.*









## Scenario 1

### 'Letting things slide'

2034: Annie Jensen, Retired hairdresser and former owner of the salon 'Annie's Haircut', aged 75:

// Shrinksby is not what it once was. It makes me sad to see my village in such a dilapidated state... – I have, after all, been here my entire life. Many of the houses stand vacant. Mostly on The Road, where I live myself, but also in the single-family-house development, Mayor Madsen's Enclosure. It's difficult to tell which are in the worst state – the rental properties, or those houses the heirs can't get rid of, and that are just dilapidating. When the owner has to move into a care home, the house will be put up for sale at a modest price. The sales period may be several years; and, eventually, the estate agent cannot be bothered to advertise for buyers any longer.

#### Fewer shops and more old people

When I opened my salon, there were shops in many of the houses facing The Road. We had a grocer, a baker's, a butcher's shop and an inn; and then,

of course, my own salon. But gradually, the shops closed. In 2014, the last second-hand dealer closed. Only few people moved here – and certainly not anyone wanting to run a business in the village. The few young people coming here mostly moved into the single-family houses in Mayor Madsen's Enclosure. But gradually, even those houses became hard to sell; and, in the last years, only few young have moved to Shrinksby. I have, of course, known most of the villagers before they moved into a care home. In the end, many of my customers were too walking-impaired to come into the salon for their haircut. Then I went to their places. There was a never-ending hustle and bustle of home carers and community nurses. The most poorly received help up to five times a day. But by then, it was not long before they went into a care home.

The houses that are let out are also in real poor condition. Most often, they are located right at The Road; and there has been no drop in traffic over the last 20 years. These houses will often be let by

**Physically:**  
**Gaps in the rows of buildings**  
 Houses are demolished at random - as voluntary agreements are entered. There are gaps in the rows of houses and the village structure is gradually crumbling away.

2014

2019

2024





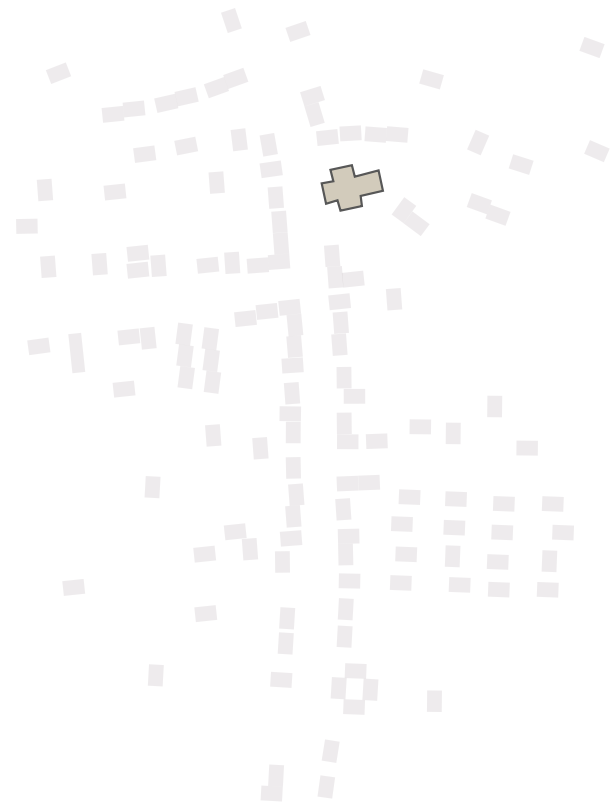
## *Scenario 2 'Complete phase-out', by 2034*

*In this scenario, all Shrinksby's properties are bought and demolished – one by one; and the villagers are rehoused in the most nearby provincial town. Gradually, the properties are sold for agricultural purposes.*









**Physically: Agricultural landscape**

Every house in the village is removed, and the land is converted to serve agricultural purposes. Only the church and areas of natural beauty by the stream are left. During this process, the demolition of the houses is scattered and random.

Scenario 2

**'Complete phase-out'**

2034: Søren Hansen, aged 57, is a farmer operating a production plant, e.g. comprising 1,000 ha of farm land.

// To demolish the village was a bold move, I think – but also a necessary one. You cannot operate a modern agricultural production in a landscape where a village pops up at every turn of the road.

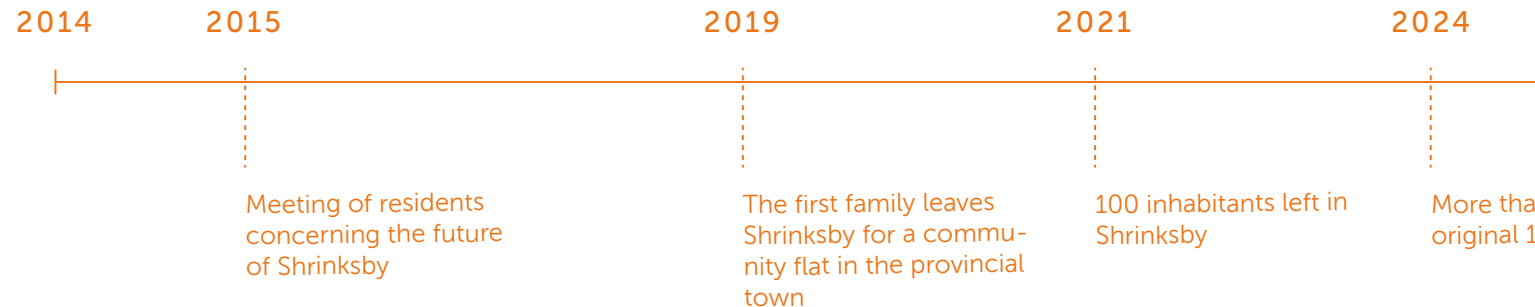
**Much protesting**

It was interesting to follow the process from the sideline. When, back in 2014, the municipality published their plans for shrinking and – in the long term – entirely phase out the village, it brought everyone to the barricades. Public meetings were held, and intense discussions followed. The municipality appeared, represented by the mayor, politicians, and the entire administration. The atmosphere was absolutely irreconcilable. The municipality was adamant, however. Especially the mayor, Henning, was sympathetic towards the villagers, but also realistic. I know – for having grown up myself not far from Shrinksby - I participated in those meetings; and for me there were also mixed

feelings: On the one hand, there were all the memories; but, on the other hand, the houses really were in a bad way and also much affected by the noise from the heavy traffic on The Road. They were years overflowing with angry letters to the editor of the local paper.

**Social effort**

Subsequently, the municipality put in a social effort, contacting every citizen and helping them to move on. Many were highly sceptical. But suddenly, the villagers began to trickle. The government's special pool for the social area, enabled the municipality to facilitate removal aid for the most vulnerable villagers; and this may, of course, have helped to speed matters along. Depending on their income, the citizens would receive a rather large sum – as contribution to the rental deposit on a flat with district heating in the provincial town, 15 km away. In fact, I think many were relieved – in particular the ones living in unsellable houses. Now, they were offered an opportunity to move on; and also, the municipality entered into an agreement with the mortgage bank, establishing an instalment plan.



Many of the other properties were sold to the municipalities for a token payment, after the mortgage banks had written off the loans in the properties.

Then there were the families living in the really dilapidated rented housing. Actually, they also stood to gain by the opportunity to move into better dwellings in council flats in Community-Support Town. They got improved housing standards; and, as a consequence, their kids were less sick. In 2018, the entire village was thoroughly photographed, and a book about the history of the village was published – now we have the memories. From 2019 and onwards, the project really gained momentum. People began to move out, and soon afterwards the houses were demolished. Each time you passed through the village, another element had been removed. By 2023 more than half the inhabitants had moved. Over the next 5-10 years, the remaining villagers slowly, but steadily, followed in their wake. Finally, the demolition had reached the part of the village with the single-family houses. Like the rest of the village, they had gradually been worn out. Many had

been built in the seventies, and were thus well over 50 years.

### A new landscape

I purchased the properties by degrees. In a few months, I take over the last land, when the last houses have been demolished. The municipality preferred that I took over the plots as the houses were demolished. However, this would not have been to my advantage. I bought them when there was 0.5 ha collectively. The Road has always been heavily congested – and still is. But after the town sign was removed, there are no longer any speed restrictions. The mayor tells us how the tourists appreciate the fine landscape in this area. Today, this can certainly be observed from the roadside. The same goes for the scenically situated abandoned church: a beautiful church surrounded by its churchyard. I was, in fact, approached by the municipality as to whether I'd put up land for three windmills here. This will be a fine location, as there are no dwellings in close proximity. I'm positive. Anyway, it'll be difficult to turn my new machine in this area

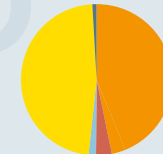


### Communication and Process:

The municipality in the driver's seat  
The process is controlled by the municipality. This requires political unanimity plus extensive collaboration across municipality administrations – in particular the social services and the planning and building administration, as they will coordinate their efforts and allocate many resources to proactive work.



### Allocation of the municipal expenditures



There are two almost identical expenditures. The orange represents the municipal service expenditures on driving hours for homecare help and district nursing plus school bus to Shrinkby. The yellow represents expenditures on rehousing, and on the purchasing and demolition of property.

After 2034, when Shrinkby has been completely phased out, the municipality will have no expenditures.



2029

2034

Half of Shrinkby's 30 properties have disappeared

The last house is demolished

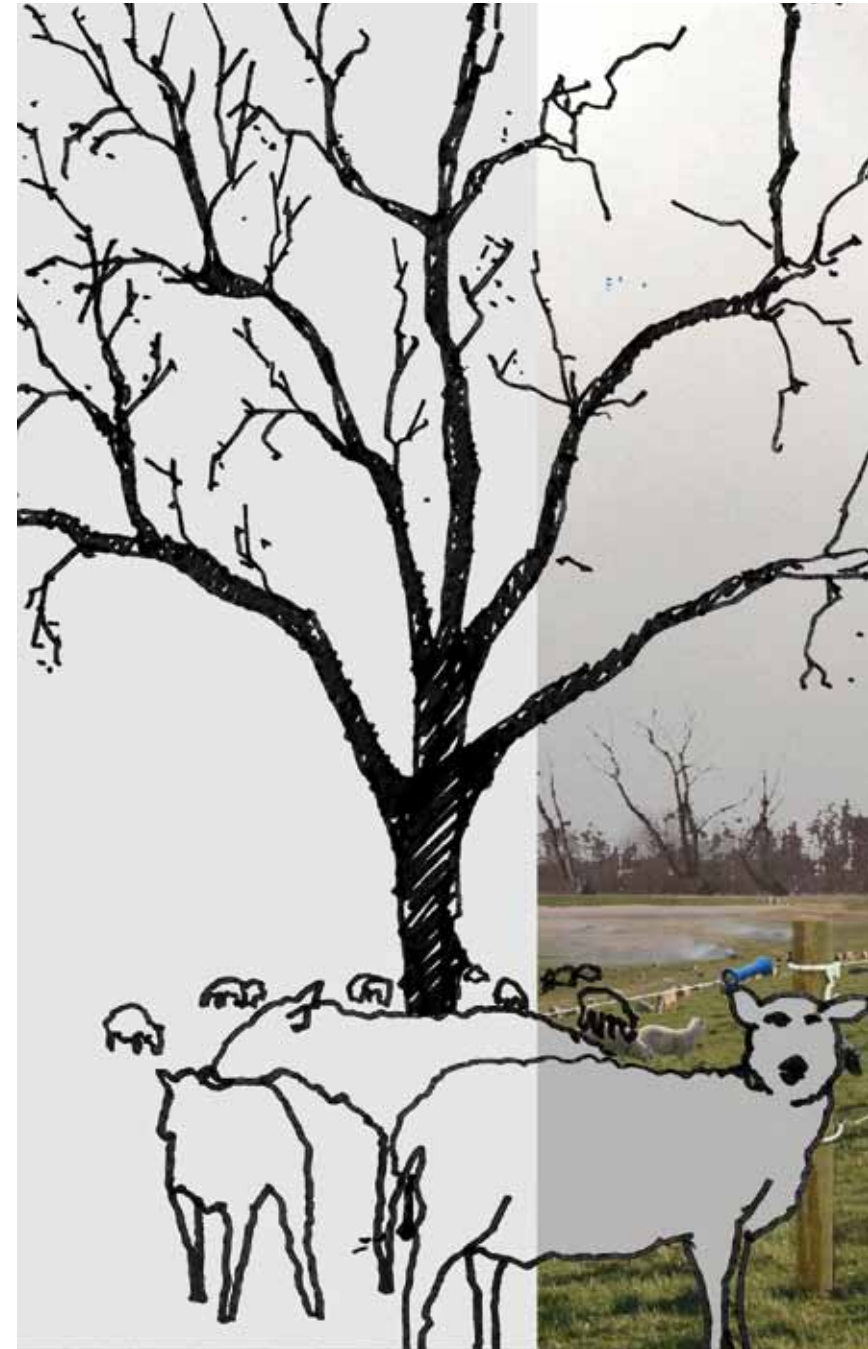
### Legislation:

**The inviolable right of ownership**  
Some villagers are moved against their will; and the municipality is tampering with the inviolable right of ownership. To phase out the village, it becomes necessary to resort to compulsory acquisition – an option not available today.



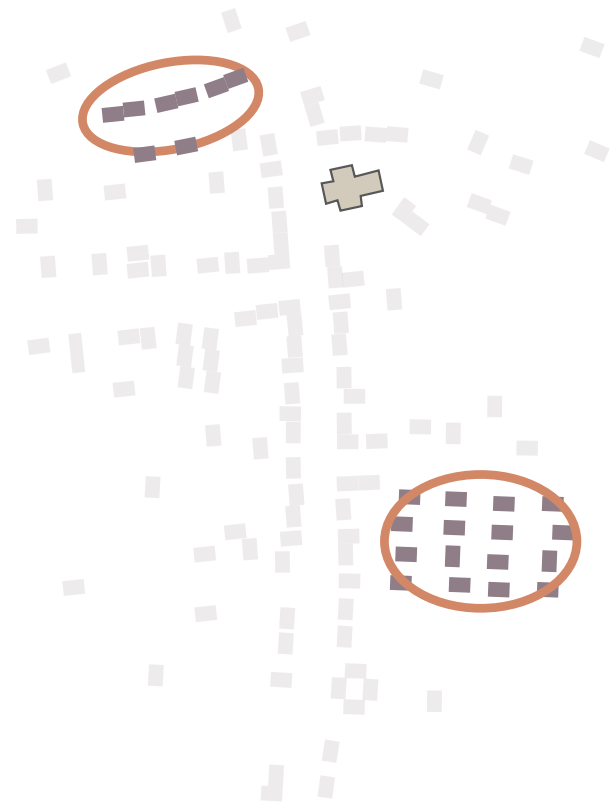
### *Scenario 3 'Thinning out', by 2034*

*This scenario presupposes a substantial thinning out of the properties at the roadside. There are about 50 villagers left; and they live in the 20 houses left of the single-house neighbourhood opposite the church hill. A village green has developed parallel to The Road – here a local sheep guild keeps sheep.*









### Scenario 3

## 'Thinning out'

2034: Mette Sørensen, 10 Mayor Madsen's Enclosure, aged 44.

// I really enjoy living in Shrinksby. Here at Mayor Madsen's Enclosure, located some distance from The Road, I've wonderful neighbours and a nice garden. They may have removed the town sign, but all the same it's still a village. There are lots of activities, and we're a close-knit community. We look after one another and help each other. When the children were younger, we had 'fetch-and-carry' schedules; and now some of the senior citizens have established a shopping scheme. I can hardly count all the clubs and associations we've set up.

My kids were really taken with the sheep. When they were younger, we practically visited them on a daily basis. The green where the sheep are grazing is Shrinksby's gathering point. This is where we celebrate midsummer and Christmas; and, if you go for a walk, you always bump into someone there. Arriving by The Road, you always know you're home as soon as you spot the sheep.

When we moved to Shrinksby, the village was bigger than today. At that time, it was already a somewhat quiet village. But my husband grew up here; and therefore this is where we ended up. At

that time, there was a row of houses at the roadside, but they were small and sad and didn't

in any way fit in with modern family life. And then it was extremely noisy at The Road. When the old people died or went into care homes, no one would be their houses. By then, the houses were so dilapidated that you got the impression that the entire village was empty and ramshackle. But this was not the case at all, you know.

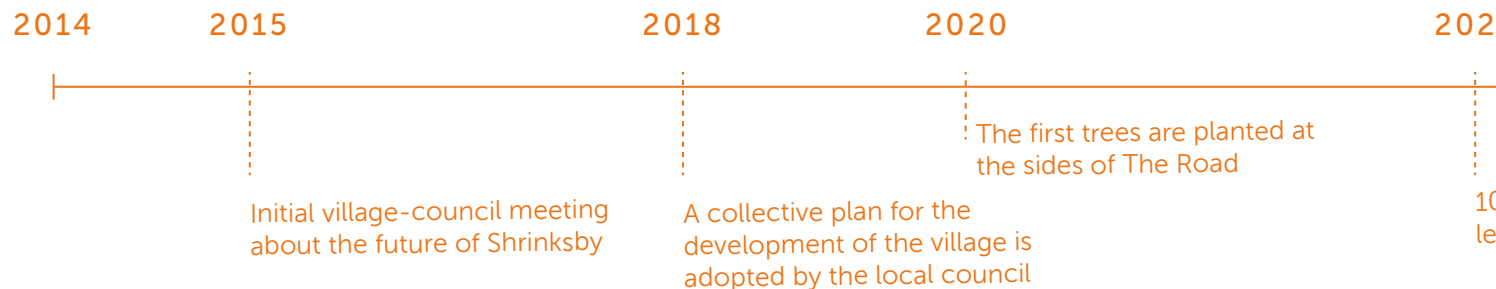
#### A long-term plan

Once, some of us put our heads together and discussed what might be done about it. At that time, a few houses had already been demolished, but that was not enough – not by a long shot. We held village meetings, and I was elected chairman of the village council. Since I'm a familiar face at the town hall, the others probably figured that I'd stand a better chance of finding a sympathetic ear. But, as a matter of fact, this wasn't at all difficult. Swiftly, Susanne from the planning department had organised a workshop meeting where we got the opportunity to present our ideas to the politicians. As a matter of fact, the politicians were quite cautious to begin with. They weren't keen on the idea of demolishing a large number of houses – and maybe even set about it a bit heavy-handedly. But

#### Physically:

#### Goodbye to "Roadside Village"

Shrinksby comprises two house enclaves: A single-house area and, opposite the church standing back from The Road, a small group of older houses. The many isolated trees planted in the empty plots at the roadside lend character to the village



then again, they never care to step on anyone's toes – and, anyway, they only have a 4-year time perspective. The rest of us, who'd be living here for the next 30 years, were well aware that a bit more long-term thinking was required.

The outcome was the making of a plan targeted at the removal of all the houses along The Road. It seemed to be a very radical thing to do, but when we got used to the idea, it made really good sense. The places where there was life were precisely in the Mayor Madsen's Enclosure, where we live, and then up by the church in some of the older town houses a bit removed from the road. The people up there have always been very active types – artists and such.

#### A characteristic village

To begin with, the municipality demolished the senior housing. Half the buildings were empty, anyway; and I happen to know that several of the old people were happy about moving into Community-Support Town, as this brought them closer to both the care-centre facilities and activities not available in Shrinksby.

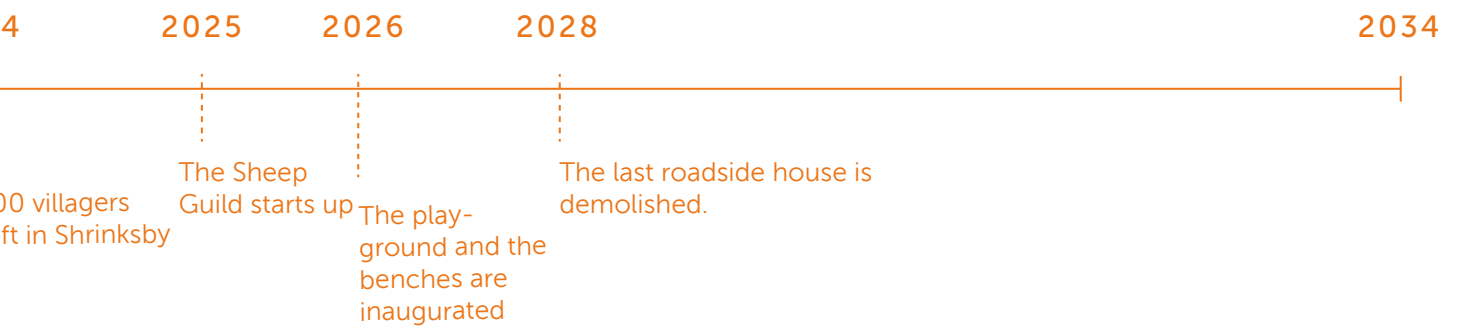
When the first houses by The Road went down, it looked really strange. It looked rather gap-toothed. But then somebody came up with the idea to plant a tree for each demolished house. That way, it became a festive day where we got together and celebrated each time a tree was planted. A really nice municipal landscape architect suggested planting them in a row. In the beginning, we found this a bit strange, but now

you can see that it was a really good idea.

Now all the trees stand in a row – almost as if they symbolise the houses. It looks really great to

people passing through the village – like an avenue, so to speak. You really pay notice to Shrinksby – even though the houses have gone. The Sheep Guild was started up about the time the houses down by the stream were demolished. It was when Hans, who was familiar with organic farming, moved into one of the houses opposite the church. So now, sheep are grazing there, and you have a view of the stream – it all looks so much nicer. The benches and the playground came later; and, actually, it has become the gathering place of Shrinksby. The land on both sides of The Road is still owned by the municipality, but we are in charge of the maintenance.

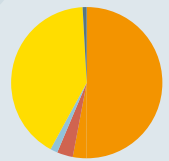
I was sad when the village hall closed. However, without any municipal subsidy, it was simply falling into decay. Instead, many of us use the village hall in the next village. For instance, I participate in a reading group and a knitting circle there. As a matter of fact, I've made friends with a couple of girls from over there. Shrinksby is a wonderful village – close to nature and room for differences; and the provincial town is only 15 km away. My kids went to school here, and there are lots of shopping facilities. The houses are not so pricy here, and therefore we've been able to afford a few renovations of our house. I think we'll continue to live here for many years to come.



#### Communication and Process: How to support the villagers' initiative and energy?

The villagers apply to the municipality which is geared to exploit the villagers' energy and innovative power. The municipality prioritises the village-thinning-out project; and the final outcome of the effort towards a removal of all the roadside houses evolves into an interaction between villagers and municipal professionals.

#### Allocation of the municipal expenditures over a period of 20 years



There are two almost identical expenditures. The orange represents the municipal service expenditure on driving hours to Shrinksby for e.g. home-care help and district nurses. The yellow indicates expenditures on rehousing and the purchasing and demolition of property.

#### Legislation: How to facilitate the villagers' further progress?

There is a desire to remove certain houses, but the compulsory powers to expropriate and help people to move on are not in place. Frequently the residents are elderly people actually wanting to move away but being unable sell their houses on an arm's length basis.

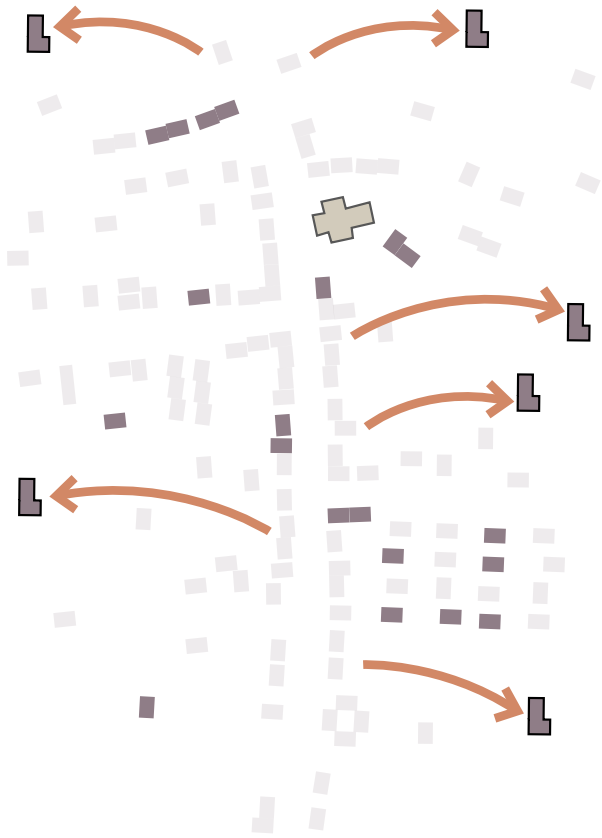
## *Scenario 4 'Relocation', by 2034*

*This scenario has been targeted towards a substantial thinning out among the roadside properties. Some of the villagers, having been granted permission to move their rights to build away from The Road, have built new houses. The remainder of the about 50 villagers now live here and there in the former village houses; and, in total, there are about 20 houses left.*









## Scenario 4

# 'Relocation'

Contractor and recreational wine grower Ole Madsen, aged 60

“From the first floor, I can see the neighbouring house. But on the ground floor, I can walk around just as I please. Every morning, I take my coffee in the sunroom – enjoying the view. I frequently spot a deer or a hare. To me, that’s quality of life. I’m so pleased that I was allowed to build the house of my dreams here on the hill. When I inherited from my mother, I immediately knew how I’d spend the money. I’d move away from the roadside, where cars constantly rushing by gave me stress. It was no mean feat to clear things with the municipality – and I also put in considerable amounts of elbow grease myself – but wow, I’m proud of the resulting 350 wonderful square metres. When I met Sussi and the kids, they were sold on the idea of moving out of town. Of course, it takes some time to drive the kids around. But this is time well spent. I know nothing better than showing my house to family, friends and colleagues from the town. Then I offer my visitors a glass of my home-grown wine and a little of the goat’s cheese that I’m becoming quite adept at making. Of course, they always are a bit envious. Then they ask what it takes to get a house and life like mine.

### What happened?

In 2013, the village was practically in ruins. There were many dilapidated small houses at the roadside. They were extremely hard to sell, and the municipality had begun to buy up the most decayed ones for 1 krone. That left scattered sites along the road. Not exactly good advertising for life in the village. Then some of the often health-hazardous houses began to be inhabited by socially disadvantaged families with dependent children. Now, a kind of bleakness and hopelessness crept in. What could be done? Gradually, the villagers became few and far between. Yet, there were a great many villagers with initiative. People like me who recognised the qualities of the village. After all, the village is excellently located near the provincial town, and in an extremely beautiful landscape. What was so frustrating was that people simply couldn’t see this landscape – but just the road with cars incessantly whizzing by at high speed. Also, the absence of footpaths meant that one could barely walk the dog or go for a walk with one’s girlfriend – and no one were keen on the main road.

### Physically: Houses in the landscape

The physical appearance will become a bit helter-skelter, since it should be assumed that some small properties will remain at the roadside. It will be a landscape of criss-cross drives and houses scattered around the area for the purpose of exploiting the vistas of the landscape. This is no longer a village with a clearly defined structure.

2014

New legislation, a pilot project is initiated

2020

The first relocation takes place. Self-financed

2021

The village hall is closed down

2022

Footpaths are laid out

2020

Removal of the town sign. The municipality “closes” the worst roadside properties – comprising a

2025

The mortgage-backed properties, a

### The houses move out

It turned out that several villagers had approached and applied to the municipality with respect to building new houses away from the road and outside what was the original boundaries of the village. A series of public meetings were held; and the municipality initiated a collective plan for the development of the village. In 2018, after prolonged negotiations with the state, the village was selected as a pilot project for exploitation of place-bound resources and the relocation of planning permissions. Then things began to happen. By 2023 approximately one third of the roadside houses had been demolished and new imaginative large houses with views of the unique landscape had sprung up. Many of us purchased several of the small plots in order to make room for moving the building site backwards. This way, more sites with longer drives – either railed, bordered by stone fencing, or marked with signboards – were established. Around this time, footpaths were laid out – to the benefit of both villagers and town dwellers on their Sunday outings. The first movers were people like me, with money in the bank or having come into a substantial inheritance; for the mortgage banks weren't keen on lending on the new properties. The road was now beginning to take on a somewhat helter-skelter appearance - as a row of teeth with gaps and tooth rot. It was still necessary for the municipality to remove the most dilapidated properties. A few of the roadside houses remained, albeit with considerably larger gardens because the owners had been able to buy up the neighbouring plot. All the while, people in

other houses were frustrated. They couldn't afford to move out. They interpreted the removal of the town sign as an omen of gloom and decay. But, gradually, there was a change of mood, and the mortgage bank was convinced that there would be a future market here.

### The good life in the country

In 2034, passers-by will never notice that they are actually passing through a village. There is an abandoned church plus a few houses at the roadside. And you can make a stop and follow the footpath up to the church or into the landscape and follow the stream. To passers-by it is obvious that they are driving through a landscape where the people who live there really care about the nature. About 20 houses are left – all very different in appearance.

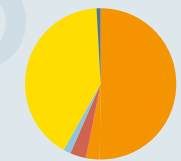
The area does not require much by way of municipal service. I clear away the snow myself and cut the grass at the roadside in the summer. In return, I only wish to be left alone and not to be governed by much too strict rules and regulations. I like a little bit of elbow room; and I don't have much contact with my neighbours – mostly with my family, my friends and my work colleagues.

My mail is delivered by drones; and, on a daily basis I chat with my grandchildren who live in Copenhagen. But when they come to visit, they love to take a stroll and help Sussi with the quince jelly. Both Sussi and I still work in town, but after we got the electric cars, this no longer represents a problem to speak of.

### Communication and Process: The municipality is in control of the situation

Several approaches and applications made independently to the municipality bear witness to substantial enterprise among the villagers. Some end up at Building others at Planning, but – as it turns out that many of the applicants have the same ideas – the municipality gathers all trends and coordinates them into collective planning

### Allocation of the municipal expenditures over a period of 20 years



There are two almost identical expenditures. The orange represents the municipal service expenditure on driving hours to Shrinkby for e.g. home care help and district nurses. The yellow indicates expenditures on rehousing and the purchasing and demolition of property

### Legislation: the family silver

Today, it would be almost impossible to move the building permits up the hills and away from the main thoroughfare of the village. This will be seen as a first step towards urban dispersion/sprawl – and a clear boundary between town and country is one of the fundamental planning issues. We are touching the family silver here.



# Current feasibilities, barriers and proposals – for each of the four project themes

## Introduction

This section comprises the final reporting of the inputs with which the project participants and introductory speakers have contributed to the debates we had in the course of the project under the heading New Plans for Shrinksby.

The section has been structured into four sub-sections each addressing the four themes of the project – namely Economy, Legislation, a Physical Model, plus Communication and Process. The feasibilities and barriers currently available for the purpose of shrinking villages have been described for each theme. Also, each section discusses one or more proposals for overcoming barriers. The proposals are varied – some are at a general level whereas others operate at a concrete level – and all are communicated loyally to the project's participants. The proposals should be seen as a catalogue on which to continue work, politically and administratively at both national and municipal levels. At the same time, it should be stressed that everyone involved in the project have considered the project to be both complex and multifaceted and that no swift or standardised solutions can be found. It is rather an issue requiring differentiated solutions. In some locations there will be a need for demolition whereas in other places, other actions and efforts will be required. Here, e.g. legislation is, at times, perceived to be rich in potential and, at other times, to be rigid and constricting.



## Economy

### Current possibilities

It may be feasible to buy up properties that are ripe for destruction. A number of municipalities operate on the basis of a contingency arrangement enabling them to keep an eye on foreclosure auctions and make bids for such dwellings. This way, a municipality will ensure that the dilapidated dwellings are demolished whilst, at the same time, preventing slum landlords from taking possession of such properties.

**Resourceful villages** will take care of the problems on their own. Villages with economic and social capital may be in charge of the property buy-up, demolition/renovation of properties, including the resale of such properties – similar to the model known from the village of Vestervig, located in Thisted Municipality (see example 1 and proposal 1).

In general, the municipalities value the existence of the **subsidy schemes targeted at demolition** under the Redevelopment Act. Combined with the funds for

#### PROPOSAL 1

### Institutionalisation of the corporate model

What are the advantages of institutionalising the corporate model à la Vestervig? Public-private partnerships can frequently be efficient tools towards the realisation of urban development. It may also be a means towards the purchasing and demolition of properties and perhaps towards an actual shrinkage effort.



#### EXAMPEL 1

##### About the Vestervig urban-redevelopment effort

The old Danish parish of Vestervig has a population of about 700 people. In 2009, the main street in Vestervig was characterised by properties due for demolition. Hence, the civic and trade-guild association (Borger- og Håndværkerforeningen) called a meeting to address this problem. The small private limited company, Vestervig Byfornyelsesselskab Aps (Vestervig Redevelopment Company), was established with an initial capital of DKK 200,000 provided by the villagers – a few had kicked in as much as DKK 10,000; but, in general, the individual contributions were less than that. The redevelopment company started out by purchasing properties in 2009; and, with the help of many active Vestervig villagers, a few properties were renovated and re-sold, whereas other properties were bought for demolition purposes. To this date, 16 properties have been demolished. In the course of 2011-12, 23 new families have moved into the village.

area renewal, it has now become possible to design a cohesive and holistically oriented plan.

There is a need for **improved matching of expectations between municipality and mortgage bank**. The municipality planners know much about regulation and about how the municipality prioritises its investments, but less about the workings of the housing market. The mortgage banks know much about the workings of the housing market, but less about how the municipality prioritises its investments. It is feasible

to establish increased dialogue between municipalities and mortgage banks, and this might lead to improved credit facilities in the areas prioritised by the municipa-

#### EXAMPEL 2

##### The Danish mortgage bank Nykredit's message: There are three types of dwellings in the rural and remote districts

Nykredit operates with three dwelling types in remote areas, namely development dwellings, maintenance dwellings and phasing-out dwellings, respectively. Which category a given dwelling belongs in has much to do with the question whether there is a market for dwellings in this locality. With respect to the two first-mentioned types of dwelling – development dwellings and maintenance dwellings, this is often the case. Hence buyers and owners of these two types of property will be in a position to realise their dwelling dreams by means of mortgage loans. With respect to the phasing-out dwellings, the market for such dwellings is typically non-existent; and, hence, the property will be difficult to sell again. This is why Nykredit considers such properties as consumer goods, which will be worn down; and after a period their value will actually be used up. Just like the contents of a sack of potatoes which will be consumed until the sack is empty. This is something of which buyers purchasing a dwelling in remote areas should be aware. Yet, it will frequently be possible to be granted a mortgage loan – but probably not a non-interest one and only at 15-year terms. Thus the buyer's finances must be able to tolerate that, after 15 years, the value of the property will be nil.

lities (see example 2)

### Current barriers

Our scenarios are based on the state subsidising half the demolitions with the municipalities paying the other half. However, the municipalities have limited economy for the purchase of the abandoned buildings. And the participating municipalities all feel bad about saying “send more money”.

But the fact that this is also a question of economy is unavoidable. Regardless whether the municipalities choose to provide full service for the sparsely populated areas, or whether they choose to demolish, then the reorganisation will always mean added costs – for municipality and state, alike. Historically, it should be considered whether it might be feasible to allocate funds within a scope that would be sufficient to match the costs available for urban renewal in the large Danish cities during the 90s. The problems are equally wide-ranging – if not more so. It might also be deliberated whether it is actually fair to demand municipal co-financing. Thus, one of the participants in the project seminar, Nykredit’s Poul Erik Jørgensen, has criticised the fact that the DKK 2x200m currently set aside for this effort under the Government’s Growth Plan requires municipal co-financing. He brings up the question as to why those municipalities that are already

### PROPOSAL 2

#### Scrappage scheme for houses

A scrappage scheme for houses, similar to the scheme existing for cars, might be a solution. Such a solution would enable people to move on from their house before it begins to fall into decay. Think for instance of the elderly villager who would like to move, but needs a minor amount to pay a deposit. It might also represent an incentive to the heirs to demolish the estate of a deceased person rather than try to sell it.

### PROPOSAL 3

#### Everyone should participate in the demolition

The places of growth should contribute to the demolition payment in places where there is no growth. This could be done by earmarking e.g. a percentage of the VAT on property sales to a national demolition pool.

struggling and most burdened financially, should be required to co-finance the demolition (see proposals 2 and 3).

#### How can a supply infrastructure be shrunk?

The cable and piping infrastructures established over many years by supply companies such as power, sewage, district-heating and water companies will be very difficult to adapt to a shrinking village. These infrastructures constitute extensive networks established and funded by loans obtained by the supply companies in the expectation that they would be providing supplies to a number of properties over a considerable number of years. In one of the participating villages, district heating is supplied by a district heating company. When the municipality buys a property for demolition, this entails a number of expenses. The withdrawal cost alone equals DKK 70,000; and notice of such withdrawal must be given 18 months in advance – the annual connection charge is around DKK 8,000. What would be the consequences if a substantial number of properties were demolished – would the connection charge for the remaining properties then be increased?

As mentioned, the municipalities value the state’s demolition funds. But frequently, problems may arise when a municipality is forced to use the allocated means within a time limit. Then the demolition work becomes more or less random. The **short-term funds**

#### PROPOSAL 4

##### **More long-term time limits**

More long-term time limits for governmental demolition pools will facilitate strategic municipal application of the funds.

**constitute an obstacle to a long-term strategic demolition effort** (see proposal 4).

**Larger commercial properties** are expensive to remove. Further, the tearing down of larger commercial properties which are ripe for destruction will cost several hundred thousand Danish kroner; and, hence, such demolition may deplete an entire municipal action pool.

**The credit crunch** ties owners to unsellable properties. Unsellable houses with unrealistical high mortgage loans tie the owners to their houses which

#### PROPOSAL 5

##### **Agreements between mortgage banks, municipalities and tied-down home-owners**

The three parties can enter into agreements where the homeowner pays instalments on mortgage loans. That owners repay part of their debts rather than going into personal bankruptcy is a better solution for owners, mortgage banks and the national economy.

An alternative would be to establish a national fund to finance the rescheduling of the owners' debts – maybe in cooperation with the mortgage banks. At the same time, help should be provided for the homeowners to facilitate a better life in another place – e.g. via a pool with the funds to pay for the actual relocation plus the deposit on a flat.

makes it difficult to facilitate their move to another locality – and to a better life in another place (see proposal 5).

## **Legislation**

Four different Danish acts were discussed in the course of the project. They were: The Act on Urban Renewal, The Planning Act, The Social Services Act and the tax legislation. The most focus was on The Planning Act and The Act on Urban Renewal – both legislations spring from a time of nationwide expansion. A key issue on the seminars was the need for adjustments of both acts in order to establish a better match between legislation and the new reality. Planning for nationwide growth should be less one-sided. Instead, we should plan towards a differentiated development with good living conditions for all citizens. In some cases, unrealistic goals aimed at growth may hinder a sustainable development. One solution could be the introduction of new measurement methods – for instance inspired by OECD's Better Life Index. With its 11 criteria for growth and welfare measurement, this index is considered more viable than the conventional growth measurements.

### **Current possibilities**

Current legislation renders it possible to demolish isolated properties. This may for instance be combined with area renewal as seen in e.g. Vestervig. To villages with a 'healthy' core, this will be a good strategy. As a point of departure, demolition should take place through voluntary agreements, albeit, with respect to health hazards, the municipalities are entitled to commence demolition. This means that they are entitled to require the demolition of outright insanitary houses. The guidelines to the Act on Urban Renewal – issued by the Ministry of Housing, Urban and Rural Affairs – contain much good advice on the application of the act. The Danish Ministry of the Environment has introduced a relaxation of the rural-zone regulations which means that it is now feasible to take special local considerations in areas with limited pressure on the area resources together with declining employment and/or a drop in the number of households. But this relaxation is mainly targeted at the building of new dwellings or an

expansion of commercial businesses. Legislation is continuously adapted to local requirements, but this is mainly with respect to minor adjustments, all taking their point of departure in desires to make investments.

#### Current barriers

The legislative framework of The Act on Urban Renewal is to strengthen the foundation for private investments and settlement. In order to apply for area renewal, the municipality is required to give an account of the development that can take place in an urban environment. Today, the purpose of area renewal is to initiate development and conversion of malfunctioning towns and render them attractive for settlement and private investment. The urban renewal legislation has thus been targeted towards growth and development. This way, the area-renewal tool does not take into account the existing need to shrink and phase out villages (see proposal 6).

#### PROPOSAL 6

**An amendment of the objective of the area-renewal legislation** in order that area renewal may also be applied for creating qualitative development: I.e. not conventional growth in population, properties and investment, but rather a development/shrinking effort leading to fewer properties with fewer inhabitants, yet with enhanced qualities of life and improved dwelling standards.

There is lack of support of the shrinkage effort, which will require both legislation and other tools. As mentioned, the existing guidelines issued by the Ministry of Housing, Urban and Rural Affairs provide fine approaches about the development of villages. However, the challenges of many of the outer districts as regards demolition-ripe houses is much more than just filling in a few gaps in the village main

street: It is about an actual phasing out of villages. Here, a catalogue of ideas would come in handy.

The use of the DKK 2 x 200m that have been allocated for demolition efforts according to the Danish government's growth plan will require **voluntary agreements** with owners; and, hence, compulsory demolition will be more difficult to realise via action-pool means. Experience from the social efforts with respect to the dwelling situation, carried out by the municipality of Mariagerfjord these years, shows that solutions by voluntary means are definitely not the way to perform the implementation of the rehousing of individual persons and families inhabiting the properties to be demolished (see example 3).

#### EXAMPLE 3

#### **The combined effort against unhealthy dwellings and the social efforts with respect to the dwelling situation performed within the municipality of Mariagerfjord**

During the period 2011-2013 the municipal housing committee in Mariagerfjord, decided to make a targeted effort to combat poor dwelling conditions. Assisted by Søren Garde Rådgivning, the municipality demolished 165 dwellings between December 2011 and June 2013. As a part of this process, a social worker within the area of dwelling, and with a pedagogical background, was put in charge of for instance the rehousing of about 50 individual persons and families. The project budget was DKK 8.7m of which DKK 4m was spent on demolition. It is difficult to make a definite calculation, but the municipality reckons that, on an annual basis, it has saved several million kroner in transfer payments as the property demolition efforts have limited the settlement possibilities for resource-weak inhabitants from other municipalities.



The Planning Act was engendered at a time of area pressure in large parts of the country. In this growth agenda it made good sense to control urban growth – growth in the number of inhabitants as in properties. But this logic does not make much sense in such areas of Denmark where there is no growth. Both legislative and economic barriers are involved in moving building rights into the landscape. First, in pursuance of the Planning Act, this is actually prohibited, as it is considered to be urban expansion; and, secondly, the mortgage banks, basing their assessment on whether there is a market for such properties, are reluctant towards the idea.

If a building in Shrinksby should have a **new temporary function** – such as e.g. community hall – in connection with the shrinkage effort, this will require the establishment of a new local development plan and that, forward-looking, the house lives up to the new building regulations. It will be too difficult to exploit the place-bound potentials. Any discussion about out-phasing should be linked with the development discussion, i.e. opportunities for developing the place-bound potentials. Today, the relocation scenario will not be feasible, since the Planning Act's rural-zone regulations consider the relocation of properties

#### EXAMPEL 4

##### Reutilisation of the farm

The Faaborg-Midtfyn municipality has received an application concerning the use of a biodynamic farm holding for shared living, to comprise 20 owner flats. This cannot be realised as the Planning Act considers it to be urban expansion. This is taking place in spite of the political declarations that the Planning Act must never impede such initiatives in the country

#### PROPOSAL 7

##### The activation of place-bound potentials

Proposal concerning the establishment of national pools aimed at enabling local enthusiasts and municipalities to seek permission for activation of place-bound potentials

#### PROPOSAL 8

##### Set up a rural-zone committee

to consider how the Planning Act's rural-zone regulations can be amended for purposes of qualitative growth in villages – i.e. for fewer villagers who will come to live in fewer but better properties.

#### PROPOSAL 9

##### The sale of holiday cottages to foreigners

A proposal to change the legislation in order to permit foreign nationals to purchase holiday cottages in Denmark. This will still presuppose a demolition effort, since, presumably, no foreigner will buy a house in a derelict village.

#### PROPOSAL 10

##### Tax exemption for Roadside Denmark with respect to the taxation of the proceeds from sale of property

Where a Shrinksby villager has a desire to combine his property with the neighbouring plot, and the resulting area is more than 1400 m<sup>2</sup> in total, this villager will be required to pay tax of the proceeds from the sale. The reason for this is that, fundamentally, the villager will have obtained the right of parcelling out. But in this case the reason for the takeover is the very fact that people neither want to live nor build there. Therefore this taxation is absolutely meaningless

to be urban expansion – just as, today, a larger and well-situated farm cannot be converted into owner-occupied flats (see example 4 and proposal 7). Today, much too expensive rents go undetected. Previously, the municipalities had control tools to check for stiff rents in tenanted properties, when tenants applied for housing benefits. But now, since the state authority, Udbetaling Danmark (Payment Denmark) has taken over this function, the municipalities have lost a valuable tool



## Physical model

### Current possibilities

Landscape-wise as architecturally, the model village of Shrinksby has qualities that may be normative for the shrinkage of the village. The village is located in an upland landscape and particularly from one side of the road – up towards the church – there is an excellent view of the surrounding landscape. Opposite the church, a stream is bordering the village. It is possible to establish visual contact with the stream as well as physical contact by means of footpaths. A number of preservation-worthy buildings surround the church, for instance a row of identical semidetached houses, withdrawn from the

### PROPOSAL 11

#### Make a virtue out of the principles of randomness

through flexible feasibility planning. This may for instance be done by preparing a catalogue of potential physical efforts that are deemed appropriate for the individual location.

main road. They are well located in the landscape and, moreover, there are excellent opportunities for expansion.

Studying the model village, the municipalities may be at the front edge by committing themselves to the physical, spacious and landscape relations to the physical, spacious and landscape relations of the village. Municipalities can map and register current physical relations and make a forward-looking plan. Having a physical plan, the goal for the village-shrinking effort may be laid down. If the plan is to thin out the village, what, then, can be done with the gaps? Will the roadside gaps be planted up with trees and thus retain the close-knit village structure, or should there rather be open stretches along the roadside to draw the landscape in?



A worst-case scenario?

It is feasible to plan both holistically and physically. Structures of land-registration and ownership frequently complicate cohesive planning, e.g. with respect to landscapes. Existing tools will only facilitate sporadic and non-strategic demolition. Here, the planners will have to make a virtue out of the principles of randomness and prepare flexible feasibility planning (see proposal 11).

It would be feasible to prepare an operational strategy for the properties purchased and demolished by the municipality. Here, the municipality may seek to make deals with local villagers concerning the future maintenance and operation of such properties. Currently, in Nørre Nisum, Lemvig municipality is passing the responsibility of operating an activity park, located on the old school plot, to the local village guild.

It is possible to prepare a collective municipal strategy for road downgrading. The downgrading of roads to private community roads has become feasible due to the introduction of a collective municipal strategy. Though all roads must be handed over in repaired condition, this may entail long-term savings on operations and snow-removal costs.

### Current barriers

One physical barrier and problem constituted by the model village of Shrinksby is the structure of the village – with houses concentrating on and orienting towards a road which, today, is highly trafficked and encumbered by traffic noise. The feature representing the spatial backbone of the village is also the least desired area in which to live. Not only because of the noise, but also because of the narrow plot structure that obstructs both expansion and renovation.

Shrinksby is located in a range of hills, and in some places there is an excellent view of the stream

bordering the outskirts of the village. However, the buildings at the roadside block the view and contact with the landscape.

Another physical barrier is the lack of access to the landscape. The village is surrounded by relatively intensely farmed agricultural land with only few fences, field boundaries and footpaths out into the landscape.

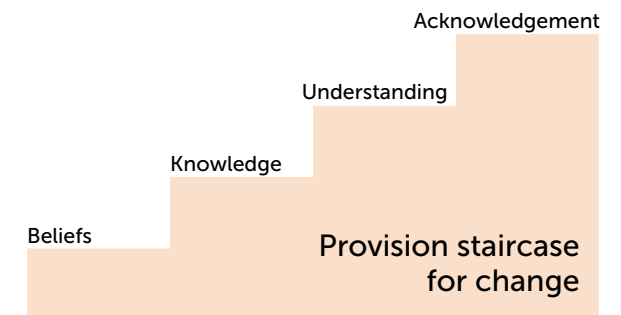
Taking a view of the model village, the question of cultural heritage will often constitute a barrier when shrinking a village. What to do about the preservation-worthy buildings and structures? A discussion as to what is to be preserved, how and why is unavoidable – and also about who shall fund such preservation. To facilitate a discussion about which stories to preserve on a 1:1 basis out in the landscape, this discussion should take place in the individual village as well as at municipal and national levels.

## Communication and Process

### Current possibilities

In principle, clear political statements are perfectly feasible – statements about and prioritisation of how service adaptation should be implemented within the individual municipality. Examples of this are municipalities such as Guldborgsund, Hjørring and Lolland. In practice, no municipality has – as yet – named any concrete physical localities and villages that need downgrading.

At the local level, it is necessary to invent a way and a language in which to discuss the shrinkage effort – be that nationally or locally. Once, it was possible, albeit not unproblematic, to demolish and redevelop entire neighbourhoods of inner-city areas. However, when it comes to similar



Source: Casper Sørensen, Tanskegang A/S

#### PROPOSAL 13

##### **Move out**

The municipality should meet the involved villagers at eye level. One model might be to set up shop in one of the empty village buildings, thus setting up a project office amid the villagers. In connection with such a building, it could also be an idea to appoint one of the villagers as 'village steward'.

#### PROPOSAL 14

##### **Think holistically**

Proposals for requiring general statements with respect to the parliamentarians' intentions for the rural and remote areas plus more holistic planning for these areas – across the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Housing, Urban and Rural Affairs.

efforts in the country, there are mental barriers to overcome.

It is about communicating the need for change. Communication consultant Casper Sørensen's 'provision staircase for change' is a relevant tool in this respect: Change requires acknowledgement, which again requires understanding, which then again requires knowledge, whereas the bottom step represents beliefs/prejudices.

It is important to set out from the right step – otherwise communication may go haywire. Communication should be 'outside in'. Any adversarial relationship between municipality and village is unfortunate. Hence, the municipality must, physically, move its secretariat out into the village. The sender of any communicated messages must be the village itself. Perhaps it will be necessary to appoint a 'village steward', acting as ambassador for the shrinkage effort. Communication can be based on three keywords: Truth, openness and simplicity. It is important to communicate what is going on in a simplified manner. What is the good story? Why are we doing this? How do we do it? What will be the outcome? In this connection it is essential to visualise what the end result will look like (see proposal 13).

##### **Current barriers**

Nationally (In Parliament, ministers and ministries) as locally (town council, municipal administration and citizens), psychological barriers will frequently obstruct discussions about village shrinkage. Politicians and planners will often know where problems exist, but they cannot publicly single out such

villages. However, the problems related to the overload of obsolescent properties in rural and remote areas will not go away by themselves.

Official Denmark's rhetoric about 'Denmark in equilibrium' and 'Growth all over Denmark' is nothing but pompous speech. Consistently sticking to this rhetoric, the parliamentarians give the voters in rural areas the impression that such conditions will come to be realised – also with respect to their situation. And there is no factual reason to believe that this is the case. There is a need for a national debate together with a clarification of what the parliamentarians' intentions for the country's rural and remote areas actually are. Which division of roles will be allocated to cities and rural districts, respectively? (See proposal 14).

We have no empirical evidence of 'the good shrinking process'. Today, we solely have experience with the development of villages plus the municipality of Hjørring's experience with respect to the pooling of villages due to school closure. However, no process experience exists from practical cases where a village has been subjected to shrinkage or been phased out entirely – neither from Denmark nor from abroad. There is, however, useful experience from social efforts with respect to dwelling – e.g. from the municipality of Mariagerfjord (see example 3). Such experience shows that visits to residents are positively received, where the dwelling situation (rather than subjects such as drug taking, criminality, etc.) constitutes the focal point.





## APPENDIX: PROJECT METHOD

## Appendix: Project method

### Project structure

The project was structured over four seminars, held in the autumn of 2013. Here we addressed the project themes of Economy, Legislation, Physical Model plus Communication and Process.

On these seminars, we facilitated discussions for the purpose of sharing experiences and knowledge and, further, to clarify possibilities and barriers for municipal shrinkage efforts.

Our seminars were held round the country; and thus the first and last seminars were held in Copenhagen, whereas the second and third were held in the municipalities of Faaborg-Midtfyn and Hjørring, respectively. The two last-mentioned seminars were held in two villages each facing challenges with respect to depopulation and empty houses – right at the main road. Here, we took a village walk, discussing the specific issues facing these villages. To participate in these two seminars, we had also invited external keynote speakers – e.g. a mortgage bank manager and a couple of village-council chairmen. For the last seminar, we had invited a communication consultant who contributed with proposals for a toolbox to be used in connection with the handling of the shrinkage process.

### A methodical principle

For the project process, we chose a methodical principle: When faced with two alternatives, always select the more difficult of the two. For instance, when the choice was between focusing the project on a very small village with 15–20 properties or a slightly larger village, we chose the slightly larger one, since

this represented a greater challenge – economically, process-wise and politically. Likewise, we also opted for the harder of two alternatives when deciding that the four collages should depict Shrinksby on an over-cast day in November 2034.

The physical model as method

For the purpose of facilitating the concretisation of difficult and complex discussions, we chose to use a method where we worked with a physical model of Shrinksby. The project group worked with the model at two out of four seminars where the shared objective was to develop ideas about the model village whilst ensuring a high quality for this model.

At first, we applied the model to find out what Shrinksby does in fact look like. Quite literally, the project participants collaborated on the shaping of the village: The small standard houses were placed on the model plate, and thus the structure of the village was defined. Our method ensured that the village possesses traits that are recognisable, no matter which part of the country you come from. This way, we settled the matter of which type of village the project should focus on – namely, a roadside village.

We subsequently applied the model in our discussions as to how a shrinking of the village might take place. Quite specifically, the project participants gathered round the model, removing houses as the shrinking proceeded. This way, it was discussed which houses to remove the soonest and which were to follow at a later date – and which, if any, should perhaps be allowed to remain. This exercise was performed repeatedly, based on different premises and objectives. The result of the exercises, performed on the physical model, constituted the point of departure for our scenarios.

Running parallel with the construction of the physical

### Project participants

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Trine Hedegaard, Planner  
Hjørring Municipality:  
Helle Lassen, Head of Plan and Development,  
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Camilla Nissen, Project Manager  
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Mariagerfjord Kommune:  
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Rita Mogensen, Planner  
Morsø Municipality:  
Ann-Sophie Øberg, MSc (engineering)  
Helle T. Bertelsen, Planner  
Vordingborg Kommune:  
Peter Haugan Vergo, Deputy head  
Rosa Philippine Birckner, Architect

### Seminar presentations by

Poul Erik Jørgensen, Deputy Chief Executive, Nykredit  
Casper Sørensen, Consultant, Tankegang A/S  
Two village-council chairmen living in villages facing the same challenges as Shrinksby

model, we also clarified the demographic profile to be applied as an input for the economic calculations.

### Scenarios and characters

The task of shrinking a village will be a highly complex one which will always depend on a substantial number of very local aspects: physical, scenic, historical, psychological, human, etc. For this reason, and in order to visualise and investigate how a shrinking process could be approached in different circumstances – and preferably provide inspiration for various possible solutions, the decision to work with different scenarios for our model village was an obvious one.

As mentioned, the work with the physical model inspired us to – and helped us decide on – the scenarios with which to proceed.

We chose to describe the various scenarios through four characters. This way, we could proceed from the highly general level, dealing with the structure of the village, to the very personal level. This allowed us to continue our work at a highly concrete level, whilst, at the same time, forcing us to see Shrinksby and the shrinkage process at eye level. It was necessary that we tried to imagine how the process and the village would be experienced by the individual inhabitant. Moreover, the work with the characters' descriptions gave rise to a series of concrete questions, decisions and discussions concerning the respective scenarios.

### Method relative to an economic analysis of the shrinkage scenarios

The participating municipalities and other experts within Town Planning Institute's network have contributed with information of all significant expenses related to the servicing and shrinkage of

Shrinksby. Frequently, the following figures were based on educated guessing or estimates of the average revenue or expenditure related to the servicing and shrinking of villages. Further, we made a virtue of making conservative estimates. All figures are based on 2013 conditions.

We tried to marginalise the municipal additional expenditure by servicing the inhabitants of the village in comparison with the identical service received if the same inhabitants lived in the smaller provincial town, located 15 km from Shrinksby – where, obviously, there is no added time linked with providing the same service.

The financial calculations pertaining to the individual scenarios show that, over the 20-year period, the total municipal additional expenditure in connection with the servicing and shrinkage effort for each scenario will constitute:

Scenario 1 'Letting things slide'	DKK 37.4m
Scenario 2 'Total phase-out'	DKK 39.4m
Scenario 3 'Thinning out'	DKK 39.8m
Scenario 4 'Relocation'	DKK 39.6m

### Three premises

#### Shrinksby in figures

In 2014, Shrinksby has 150 inhabitants broken down as follows – and on the basis of a general depopulation percentage of 4-5% over the 20-year period from 2014-34.

In 2014, Shrinksby has 130 properties – broken down according to property type:

Municipal revenue and expenditure in connection with the servicing of Shrinksby  
The calculator includes the main municipal expenditures with respect to both the servicing and

Property types	year 2013
Owner-occupied houses	90
- of which, unoccupied	10
Private renting	28
- of which, unoccupied	4
Senior homes	8
- of which, unoccupied	4
Village hall and church	2
	1
Other: grain silo	129

Age group	in 2013	in 2018	in 2023	in 2033
Children (-19 år)	50	35	27	19
Adults (20-59)	75	71	63	48
Early retirement (60-64)	6	6	6	7
Old-age pensioners (65-)	19	22	22	24
<b>In total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>98</b>

shrinking of Shrinksby during the period between 2014 and 2034.

### Revenue

Tax on real estate is a permanent municipal source of income, in this connection taken as the average of a family dwelling in each of the seven municipalities that participated in the project. The annual municipal revenue for each Shrinksby property has been specified as DKK 5,016. Real-estate tax on farm land equals a fourth of ordinary real-estate tax. Thus, the municipality in scenario 2 'Complete phase-out' selling property as farm land will only secure income in the amount of one fourth of ordinary real-estate tax. In general, however,

revenue from real-estate tax is a somewhat dubious source of income since many properties have been put up for sale and are impossible to sell, whereas others again have been abandoned.

## Expenditures

### Additional hours for home care/community nurse.

We have split up the requirements into three categories: Category A is highly care-requiring (with 10% aged over 65), category B requires less care (with 20% aged over 65), and category C represents those who are, mainly, able to take care of themselves (with 40% aged over 65). Thus, the remaining 30% of the old-age pensioners do not receive home care.

A. Driving to Shrinksby and back 5 times daily to care for the most care-requiring villagers, the home help has five daily 30-minute (DKK 87.5) driving hours to Shrinksby, equal to DKK 437.5 x 365 days, thus totalling an annual expense of **DKK 159,687.5**. The community nurse, receiving an hourly rate of DKK 250, pays two 30-minute visits a day. The annual expenditure totals DKK (2 x 125 x 365) **91,250**.

B. With respect to the less care-requiring villagers, the home help has two daily 30-minute (DKK 87.5) driving hours to Shrinksby, equal to DKK 175 x 365 days, thus totalling an annual expense of **DKK 63,875**.

C. With respect to the most self-reliant, the home help visits twice a week, i.e. two 30-minute (DKK 87.5) driving hours to Shrinksby, equal to DKK 175 x 52 weeks x 2. Thus the annual expense totals **DKK 18,200**.

We specified **additional time for meals on wheels** as a fixed annual cost – regardless of the number of people receiving this service. The additional cost as compared with town conditions: 365x30-minute drives equal DKK 75 x 365, thus totalling **DKK 27,375**.

**Additional driving hours in connection with rehabilitation therapy** is a fixed expenditure, annually totalling **DKK 40,000**, regardless of the number of persons receiving such aid.

**Additional driving hours for the school-bus** mornings and afternoons. The annual additional cost of **DKK 80,000** represents the amount which would be saved if the school-bus was superfluous (this applies to the 'Letting things slide' as well as the 'Thinning-out' scenario).

**Additional driving hours in connection with the transport to special-needs education of children** coming from three socioeconomically disadvantaged families. The annual expenditure equals **DKK 80,000** (solely scenario 1 - 'Letting things slide'). In the two other scenarios, the disadvantaged families move into the provincial town).

**Housing benefits.** Where the monthly rent of the village dwelling is DKK 3,500, the tenant will typically receive around DKK 600 in housing benefits. Should the tenant move into council housing and pay DKK 4,000 in rent, the monthly housing benefits would equal approximately DKK 950. Separately considering this particular family, it would, in reality, receive a benefit increase of DKK 350; and, hence, this would mean an additional municipal expenditure of **DKK 4,200** – always presupposing, of

course, that the old dwelling is demolished, which will prevent new arrivals to the village who will also require housing benefits. Therefore, seen on the basis of a single household, the calculation will be meaningless – any revenue in this respect will presuppose that a substantial number of dwellings be closed down.

**Heating benefits.** Old-age and disability pensioners are entitled to heating benefits – granted on the basis of their income. The point of departure for the purposes of this report was a single disability pensioner, living in a small dwelling and rehoused into another small dwelling. The annual heating expenses equal **DKK 18,000** – in an outdated dwelling, and DKK 9,000 – in a council flat in the provincial town. The annual municipal aid for the outdated dwelling was estimated to be DKK 9,250, whereas, in the council flat, the tenant would only be entitled to benefits in the amount of DKK 3,225. Thus, the municipality would obtain annual savings in the amount of **DKK 6,025** by moving the inhabitant into a council flat in the provincial town.

Having four empty senior homes **running at idle** on an annual basis means the absence of rental income in the amount of **DKK 240,000**.

**The municipal operational grant with respect to the village hall** was fixed at **DKK 50,000**. This amount comprises heating expenses, electricity bill and general maintenance.

**Sewage.** We based the sewage expenses on a key indicator obtained from a larger village with 500-600 inhabitants with a sewerage system requiring repair for DKK 21m over the next few



years. In Shrinksby, we assessed the annual additional expenditure for renovation and maintenance to be **DKK 250,000**.

In principle, power, water and heating supply are just as important supply infrastructures as sewerage systems. However, we decided that Shrinksby has no district heating; and, likewise, we have chosen to omit electricity and water from our calculations. The supply area can hardly be subjected to shrinkage, since this will involve huge infrastructures. The supply companies' income and operation structures have been founded in the expectation that they will continue to supply a number of properties over a considerable number of years to come. What can be done? In a village under one of the participating municipalities, a Greenfield heating system supplies district heating to the village properties. Whenever the municipality buys a property for demolition, this entails a number of expenditures. The withdrawal cost alone is DKK 70,000; and notice of such withdrawal must be given 18 months in advance – also, the annual connection charge is about DKK 6-8,000.

We isolated the **refuse-disposal expenditures** with respect to the additional cost involved in the collection of garbage in the village as compared with conditions in town. On an annual basis this has been specified as a ridiculously small sum, namely DKK 52 per property. For Shrinksby's 130 properties this annual additional cost totals **DKK 6,760**.

The annual expenditures for ordinary operation and maintenance of roads plus snow-clearing service related to the 7.5-10 km of secondary roads and byways around Shrinksby have been estimated to equal **DKK 125,000**.

### **Municipal expenditures in connection with the shrinkage efforts in Shrinksby**

**What are the property prices in Shrinksby?** The crux of the matter in this analysis is how to fix the price of what it will cost to purchase one of the Shrinksby properties. We based our price setting on the hypothesis that the mortgage banks will write off any debt in all properties and sell them to the municipality for token payment. In this connection, we divided Shrinksby's 130 properties into two categories: A and B. To the municipality, the average cost of category-A properties will be DKK 200,000. Two thirds of the Shrinksby properties fall within category A. The remaining third fall within category B, and they are properties in such poor condition that, in principle, they can be bought at a compulsory sale at the price of DKK 1. However, an additional expense in the amount of **DKK 40,000** will be connected with taking over such properties (legal expenses, advertising costs, registration of title, and, in case of any owed property tax, the municipality will be under an obligation to meet such debts).

**The expenditure on the social effort with respect to dwellings**, intended to take place with respect to the rehousing of the individual family, comprising the casework and rent reimbursement received by the family as phase-in support over the next 10 years, has been fixed at **DKK 50,000** per family.

**Demolition expenditure.** A voluntary property demolition will cost **DKK 105,000** per property. Condemnation proceedings, inclusive of municipal casework, will cost **DKK 110,000** per property. Our calculations are based on a 50% reimbursement by

the state for both demolition types. With respect to scenario 2, 'Complete phase-out', the collective state subsidy will be in the amount of **DKK 6.5m**

**Demolition expenditure in connection with the demolition of senior homes.** In principle, the process is identical to the example above, only the homes designed for senior citizens are smaller and located closely to each another. Hence a comprehensive demolition can be carried out, and the expenditure per dwelling has therefore been fixed at **DKK 50,000**.

**Greening initiatives.** Scenario 3, 'Thinning out', proposes physical nature restoration such as e.g. tree or hedge planting or the laying out of foot-paths. This presupposes that the maintenance of these areas will subsequently be the responsibility of the local villagers; and, hence, the municipality involvement will be a one-time expenditure fixed at **DKK 15,000**.

**Income from the sale of property for agricultural purposes.** As proposed in Scenario 2, 'Complete phase-out', the municipality's sale of land to farmers will represent a revenue. Here, we presume that for each time the municipality sells seven properties of about 700 m<sup>2</sup> in size, this equals a half hectare and will represent a revenue of about **DKK 50,000**.

### **The future of Roadside Villages in Denmark Four scenarios for the model village of Shrinksby**

By far the majority of the Danish municipalities can anticipate a future with a decline in population. The point of departure is that some villages will have to shrink in order that others may survive. It is therefore essential that both the state and the municipalities perform long-term and differentiated planning, naming the villages to receive support by way of municipal service – and likewise, the villages to be subjected to shrinkage or out-phasing. This paper proposes four possible scenarios for the future of the roadside villages in Denmark.