



Depopulation and local development?

A comparative study of small rural oriented municipalities on the west coast of Sweden

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate municipal development activities of rural oriented areas of the west coast of Sweden. The chosen municipalities for this study are Tanum, Munkedal, Sotenäs and Orust where the aim is to give an understanding to the different municipalities work towards achieving local development and opposing depopulation. The nature of this study is primarily qualitative with a lightly deductive orientation since the presented concept of *push and pulls factors* of migration and the concept of *governance* with top down and bottom up approaches is used to understand and analyze the empirics. The empirics of this study give answer to the population situation of the municipalities, the prioritized factors for local development and methods adopted to oppose depopulation. The primary conclusion is that the problem of depopulation is handled by promoting local development through economical means in most municipalities.

Key words: Governance, Push and pull factors, Local development, Depopulation, Municipal visionary documents.

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1. Introduction and General Aim

We are living in a modernized world that has been going through tremendous changes. Technological development along with economical and social developments has made our world more globalized and new features have come to grow into our societies today. Along with development a need and desire for changes in living standards has also grown. People have the ability to choose their living environment and conditions, with that new trends have taken place on local scale as well global scale (Martinez-Brawley 1987).

The topic rural depopulation is currently among the most debated subjects of Swedish media. Debates and newsfeeds are various and continuingly discussed, on January 18 2012 in the Swedish newspaper “*Dagens Nyheter*” the gap between municipalities fading away and municipalities growing in terms of population and local development was shown. The article stated that during the past 30 years, Sweden has grown by more than one million inhabitants (Örstadius 2012). Yet countless rural municipalities have decreased in population during the period. According to the Swedish Central Statics Bureau, 142 municipalities have grown in numbers of inhabitants while 148 municipalities have decreased in numbers of inhabitants (Örstadius 2012).

Since the topic rural depopulation is a central term in this study a definition of *rural area* is crucial in order to understand the trend of rural to urban migration. Rural areas in terms of population can be small villages of couple of hundred people up to small towns of 50 000 people that are close to metropolitan centers (Martines-Brawley 1987). The Swedish ministry of agriculture has defined rural area as “*outside an urban area with a population of at least 3000 inhabitants*” (The Swedish ministry of agriculture 2008 pp: 9). Existing literature define rural areas as a collection of wide variety of environments and activities taking place within them (Formas 2006). Rural areas are seen upon as a thin and fragmented genre, continuingly discussed for research and development (Formas 2008).

During the last years a great movement of people migrating from rural areas to urban areas has occurred globally. Statistics show that by year 2050 approximately 70 % of humanity will live in urban areas, which creates discussions of whether rural areas are about to decline and slowly die out. (United Nation 2008).

The trend of population movement in Sweden today differs from the past. In Sweden migration flows from rural areas to urban areas are a trend where metropolitan centers are attractive economic, social and cultural polls. The ongoing debates and existing statistics predict an increase of this trend in coming decades (Niedomysl, Amcoff 2010). Historical research shows that in Sweden during the 19th century occurring migration was mostly in cases where families moved within a rural community. 80 – 90% of all moves where within a 15 km radius and merely 3-4% were from rural to urban (Dribe 2003). Young people moved over short distance working as servants and did not stay at the same place for more than 1-2 years. The major pull factor at that time for local migration over short distance was the desire of landownership and wealth, this viewed upon as the career motive for moving. The push factor was the cause behind movements from one farm to another as servants, or due to poor housing and poor living conditions (Dribe 2003).

Today on the other hand there are different patterns of push and pull factors for young people leaving the rural areas. Current push factors are due to limited activities within rural areas, the pull factors are education and the variety of new lifestyles. This indeed leads to depopulation of rural areas. Migration in this case is affected by young people's desire to control and decide on personal living environment. There is a desire for an active voice in society where individuals independently choose their way of living and the location for that (Martines-Brawley 1987). Families with children often tend to move to municipalities located nearby urban cities, which in turn generates into a growing population of urban areas (Lexen, Gårdlund 2011, Lexen, Torege 2002). The majority of migrants to urban areas are migrating based on personal preferences; their act of movement is not forced as it can be in other parts of the world. (Lundholm, Garvill, Malmberg, Westin 2004).

Studies discuss socioeconomic factors such as personal preferences, better life standards, higher wages and better business climates as important pull factors towards urban areas (Niedomysl, Amcoff 2010). The most important motives for movements among Swedish citizens are 36% social related movements, 33% environmental movements, 19% education related movements, 16% employment related movements and 14% related to other factors (Lundholm, Garvill, Malmberg, Westin 2004).

With movements of people across space and time new demographic patterns are produced leading to population development of certain areas and depopulation in other areas. The rural areas will be affected due to a lack of sufficient tax revenues. The number of education centers will decline and health care services will be more expensive (Coffey, Polése 1985). Having identified education as a pull factor for young people migrating to urban centers, the rural areas are left with a growing aging population and a lack of human resources. From this the challenge of small municipalities is then to manage and keep the rural alive (Coffey, Polése 1985).

In the Swedish case the government has frequently supported the development within rural areas through capital investments and product development but today it is becoming more evident that local inhabitants have an important role in the process of local development (Glesbygdverket 1997). Based on the presented facts, interesting to investigate is then the problem from a socio-political perspective with focus on local governments response to the problem of depopulation. Hence the general aim of this study is to investigate the municipal development activities of rural areas and the work of opposing depopulation from a socio-political perspective. Depopulation is not a phenomenon that occurs without cause; rather depopulation can be seen as a phenomenon that is created based on social, political, economical and environmental factors. Political actors on local level (and national level) thereby have the ability to combat the problem of depopulation, not the least in smaller rural oriented societies. Politicians are the actors with power to control and influence the legal, administrative, financial and social factors which can solve the problem of depopulation. The local political actors are responsible for the existing legislations, strategies, actions and measurements that need to be taken to enhance local development and solve the problem of depopulation. This means that through the rules, strategies and policies, they have the ability to influence the social, political, economical and environmental factors influencing the problem of depopulation.

Existing literature and research primarily discuss the above mentioned factors of population movement as causes for depopulation from a socio-economic perspective. Commonly, one

finds that the problem of depopulation is discussed in terms of sustainable development, local development, with a focus on technological and economic solutions.

In regards to the discussion concerning the role of political actors and governments the existing literature tends to prioritize and focus on investigating the relationship between the state and the society, the structure and the power of governments. However what seems to be missing within the socio-political field is a debate about the strategies and policies regarding the problem of depopulation and local development, which reaches beyond the conventional economic-technical approach. Existing research where strategies, policies and actions towards opposing depopulation is not significant which in turn strengthens the chosen aim of this research paper. Following chapter will discuss the existing literature more in depth and will clarify the gap within the literature more narrowly.

Through a comparative research strategy a study of four different municipalities along west coast of Sweden will be made to study how Swedish municipalities respond to the work towards opposing depopulation, this by investigating municipal local development activities. The basic concepts of migration flows is used a platform to discuss in what way the local political organization prioritize local development with a focus on the problem of depopulation. Official documents and interview materials will be conducted to give an understanding to the problem and how it is handled on local level. Furthermore theories are used to clarify the underlying causes for depopulation and what approaches local actors adopt.

2. Literature Review

The scope of scientific research around the topic of local development are numerous and wide. There is much research on the field that can be divided into two key categories. On one hand there is a socioeconomic category focusing on communal local development and on the other hand a wide political category focusing on Swedish municipal politics.

The number of research made within the field of socioeconomics are many and contribute to the understanding of what prior features municipalities stress to gain activity and growth within their societies. Most of the socioeconomic studies within the field discuss primarily underlying factors for people's movement. Scholars enhance socioeconomic factors for this action based on better life standards, better environmental conditions, higher wages and better business climates. These being important pull factors deriving people from certain areas to others (Niedomysl, Amcoff 2010, Dribe 2003, Martines-Brawley 1987).

Moreover most of the socioeconomic research are around general aims of municipalities on how to reach local development and stated goals for growth. Research on this field tends to focus on how ecological environments are created and how sustainable development is reached through investments on: technical development, enterprise and capital investment. For instance how local policies set standards and limits on the way socio-technical systems must evolve and be managed in a community and what effects it has on local development (Glesbygdverket 1997, Coffey, Polése 1985, Formas 2008, Palm, Wihlborg 2004). Additionally the creation of ecological sustainable development and creating jobs through capital investments are in focus in which a discussion of the relationship between economy, ecology and society is taking place. The result of them composed together is actively deliberated (Palm, Whilborg 2007, Baker, Eckerberg 2007, Skill 2008).

The second significant category of research is the Swedish municipal politics. The overall field of municipal politics is wide and well-known scholars such as Robert Putnam, Stig Montin, Jon Pierre have made research on the subject from different perspectives which in turn can be divided into two main classifications.

The first discussion is about structure; power of local government and the role of local actors are addressed among various political scientists (Rothstein 2010, Lidström 2010, Szucs 1995, Lundqvist, Pierre 1995, Montin 2004, Pierre, Peters 2000). Often the discussion tends to focus on whether the structure within local government affects the work and outcomes of the organization. However the role of the local actors carrying out the existing policies and regulations has also been the focus of study among many scholars. Some of the arguments put forward are that local governments due to existing legislation have the ability to control usage of the existing resources in the municipalities. This ability and the way of handling resources do influence the changes that municipalities experience (Sellers, Lidström 2007, Persson 1999, Petersson 2006).

The second discussion about municipal politics concerns the relationship between the state and civil society (Lidström 2010, Magnusson 1998, Ohlin 1998). Here existing studies concerns challenges that local governments and local policies face when the society changes.

The state and the local government in modern world are challenged by concepts such as decentralization and privatization. These concepts put pressure on the traditional government systems of centralization dominating in the past. (Szucs 1995, Lidström 2010, Petersson 2006).

Alongside these changes the local government known as a political institution has come to act as an economical and administrative body. This means that the shift in the role of the local government has gone from being an entirely political body to a partly political and partly economical body. This has made a shift in the role of the citizens as well. Today citizens are no longer mere political citizens they are also consumers of a society (Montin, Elander 1995, Lidström 2010). The changes in the society, creates a demand for municipalities or the local government to build a relationship with citizens in order to keep up with the changes and act accordingly. The relationship with citizens are to a great extend affected by the structure and priorities of the local government (Pettersson 2006).

As shown above, the existing literature integrates and discusses the importance of different factors in order to achieve local development. Socioeconomic factors and socio-technical factors have great input in enhancing the development of an area while the organizational structure of the local government also becomes debated to play a significant role in achieving local development. The political scientific field seems to be missing a discussion related to strategies and policies to combat depopulation and thereby local development. This study intends to fill out the gap and investigate the political strategies used at local level in order to handle depopulation and attract new residents. Hence studying local development of small municipalities on the west coast of Sweden (eg. the former county of Bohuslän) from a political perspective will add additional clarification and contribute to existing literature on the topic.

3. Theoretical Approach

3.1 Causal Assumptions

This research is a descriptive and lightly deductive study; as such it does not rely very heavily on predefined theoretical concepts. The study is based on some causal assumptions about why depopulation occurs and the context within which it occurs. In parallel with urbanization, changes in regulations have correspondingly occurred. (Denters, Lawrence 2005). What previously has been defined as Government has come to shift into what is called Governance. Government is the traditional way of governing with a top down approach, and Governance is the way of regulating and including other actors into the work. The theoretical concept about Push and pull factors of migration and a theoretical concept about Governance with Top down and Bottom up approaches will be used in order to develop an analytical framework. The analytical framework classifies municipal policies to confer depopulation.

The following section will thus introduce and discuss the concept of Push and pull factors of migration and the concept of Governance with Top down and Bottom up approaches. These two major shifts are of interest where firstly: Push and pull factors are presented as theoretical platform explaining the patterns of urbanization, hence reasons to depopulation in rural areas and secondly Governance presented as a theoretical discussion giving explanation to the work of municipalities towards local development and opposing depopulation. Based on presented information about the current trend of migration in Sweden and the focus of existing literature as well as earlier research on local development, the following presented concepts are considered as relevant.

3.2 Push and pull

The nature of push and pull factors are explained as: push factor being causes making people leave their current place and move to a new destination whereas pull factors are causes attracting people to new places. Often a migrant's decision to migration is a result of both. (Fellman, Bjelland, Getis, Getis, 2010). The factors of the concept can be categorized into four categories:

- Political factors
- Social factors
- Environmental factors
- Economic factors

The political factors are for example concerned with freedom of speech, war, religion, freedom. The social factors are primarily concerned with education opportunities, professional opportunities, family, and social life. The environmental factors are primarily of physical character concerned with climate, access to natural resources, healthy environments. Whereas the economic factors are concerned with income level, taxes, unemployment, job opportunities, housing (National geography society 2005, Fellman, Bjelland, Getis, Getis 2010, Singh Kainth 2009).

A further explanation about the concept of push and pull factors of migration should be given in order to understand the complexity of this concept. As understood from the existing literature, discussing the concept of push and pull factors of migration, it is evident that the concept is of a general character, and therefore viewed and perceived differently. What this means is that depending on within which field the factors are being discussed, the four mentioned categories are influenced and give a more highlighted foci. For example some scholar define infrastructure as a social factor while other scholars with an economical philosophy define the same factor to be an economical factor. Even so, one find that the overall concept of push and pull factors are generally used to explain and analyze migration flow, as well as issues of depopulation.

Furthermore based on the short presented classification above, in Sweden the most common motives for migration are based on social factors followed by environmental factors (Lundholm, Garvill, Malmberg, Westin 2004). In this study, the push and pull concept is used as an overall analytical tool to understand the issue of depopulation. The different factors are in this case primarily seen as;

- Political factors: in terms of local political structure and organization of development strategies, which is closely connected to the concept of development approaches discussed below.
- Social factors: primarily focus on factors related to the family such as access to friends, school, health care, elderly care, kindergarten, security etc.
- Environmental factors : primarily focusing on the ecological environment.
- Economic factors: mainly focusing on issues related to income opportunities, and access to physical infrastructure in form of for example public transport etc.

An analytical tool is set up in order to conduct a classification of coding (Bryman 2008). Within official documents Push and Pull factors of migration will be coded according to priority. By coding from 1 – 4 the most prioritized factor will be coded as 1 and thereafter in numerical order. The question in consideration when coding will be: What factors are prioritized to oppose depopulation based on push and pull factors of migration?

Table 1. Push and Pull factors

	Tanum	Sotenäs	Munkedal	Orust
Social				
Environmental				
Economic				
Political				

The classification of push and pull factors of migration will be further discussed in depth when presenting the analytical framework and through the methodology chapter. Regardless of which factors falls into which category, when constructing strategies for local development and opposing depopulation it is significant to have the concept of push and pull factors of migration in mind since the factors within this concept have an important role in access to human resources (Botes, Van Rensburg 2000).

3.3 From Government to Governance at Local Level

As globalization and urbanization have developed, the role of the local political power has also changed. Government in its traditional form is a way of governing where formal institutions established by the state have legitimate power to uphold public order and enable communal action (Stoker 1998). It is regulation in a form where the top has the power and sets the outlines. Governance on the other hand is a conceptual framework explained as a change from Government, referring to a new way of governing; a new approach of ruling (Rhodes 1996). Governance as a concept classifies the power and involvement of communal action in relationships with other institutions organizations etc. it stresses action which does not rest on direct power from government for authority. (Stoker 1998)

Simply put the concept of Governance is about challenging the formal conventional system of regulated top-down governing, to shift the focus from regulations and protocols towards behavior and reality. The hierarchical style of governing, imposing regulations and decisions has been challenged by the concept of Governance (Evans, Joas, Sundback, Theobald 2007). With increasing political power at the local level (not least in Sweden), the ideas governance can be traced on local level. It is preferable to investigate this to understand how local politics functions and prioritize local development in reality. The function of the concept is important, since it picture the relationship between the political actors and other institutions and organizations. How the relationship between different political and other organizations look, and how communal activities are carried out on local level can give an understanding of how the problem of depopulation in relation to local development is targeted.

Local governments as the closest political system in relation to citizens have experienced changes in their external and internal environment. In the case of Sweden the local government is the municipality, which is a self-governing body with directives and guidelines from the parliament. At macro level trends such as urbanization globalization has challenged the local governments to adopt a new system of governing. At the micro level the individual citizens; by having demands on more participation in decision making processes, projects carried out by different actors and a demand on effectiveness of local governments work has come to challenge local authorities and their system of governing (Bas Denters, Lawrence 2005). The process of meeting challenges has led to changes in the intergovernmental relations, which in turn have led to a shift from local government towards local governance. Governance is the platform for partnership, dialogue and interaction between local citizens, local organizations and local governing body. In other words local governance is the process of relationship between local actors and local government (Evans, Joas, Sundback, Theobald 2007). The implementation of governance perspectives is important for the understanding of economic social and political change in rural areas. With this said there are also implications within the concept and how various part of the concept is discussed. There are approaches within the governance referring to different ways for local actors to carry out or to implement strategies or projects. These are referred to as top-down or bottom- up approaches as it is named by some scholars. Another definition or name for the same approaches are imposed or fully integrated. There is no difference in the tenor or the meaning of the approaches rather they differ in what they are called based on the preferences of different scholars. The next part will give a further narrowly explanation on these two approaches and their correlation with local development.

3.4 Top down and Bottom up approaches in relation to Local Development

In order to make local development achievable human resources, physical resources and economical resources are needed (Cascante, Brennan 2011). These elements are crucial and the lack of one or the other imposes a threat to the process of development. With this notion the challenge of smaller municipalities is to apply strategies that attract migrants to the areas, to boost the process of development (Denters, Lawrence 2005). Often strategies used have been influenced by the decisions of the traditional 'government' however since a new era of governance has grown new strategies are needed. The two approaches explained and used in this study are bottom up and top down approaches.

The top down view of institution is seen through determined laws written by politicians. The top down strategy is about institutions and organizations with power that can directly influence policies (Turner 2007). Top down approach is based on one global institution through which local development is best settled. The imposed approach is the indication for low level of residence-participation in local projects etc. In this approach the governing body considers a traditional governmental role where the objective is to provide public service in form of infrastructure, technology and material. In this approach the focus is primary on outcome and community involvement is not required (Matarrita- Cascante, Brennan 2011). This makes the top down approach same as the imposed approach. The similar characteristics are a traditional governing body that means direct influence on policies and low influence possibilities from outside.

On the other hand the bottom up approach is more open to the idea of involving different institutions of society in the long run (Easterly 2008, Turner 2007). By promoting local involvement, organizations in favor of local development can generate a movement of commitment and empowerment among the local communities. For instance local citizens in small rural areas can participate as partners and use public services to work for a change in the local community. Through a fully integrated strategy local organizations are integrated into the structure and the work of local government. The objective of this approach leans on the fact of improving citizen's contribution and participation in local decision-making (Goss 2001). Simply put the bottom-up approach and the fully integrated approach are indeed pointing toward the same objectives, namely participation of local actors such as municipal residence or nongovernmental actors in the work of local development.

The approaches of top down and bottom up as mentioned are relevant in this thesis, however the problem lies in how actions taken by a local governing body is classified, since top down and bottom up are not defined specifically in existing literature discussing these approaches. For example the literature does not discuss if integrating local residents in writing development strategies or in implementing the written strategies is classified as top down or bottom up.

In this study, a rather 'simplified' view is applied related to top down and bottom up approaches. The interest of the study is to analyze and discuss how local political efforts can enhance local development by solving the problem of depopulation. The reason for this interest is as mentioned previously, due to the fact that human resource is the most important factor and component to achieve any form of local development. Therefore, the way local politicians organize local development activities to combat depopulation is of great interest. Being so, this study therefore has an interest to see if local political decisions and actions are

being conducted in the conventional form where the politicians take a top down technical approach, or if the local political structure enhances the involvement and responsibility of the local population.

An analytical tool is developed to code and analyze municipal vision document where stated goals are ranked according to prioritization. After coding what push and pull factors are prioritized by municipal politicians, the next step will be to analyze if the municipalities work are influenced by the imposed top down approach or the fully integrated bottom up approach of governance. Through conducting interviews a classification of bottom up and top down strategies will be possible. The question in consideration when coding will be: what approach is applied within municipalities to carry out their work?

Table 2. Bottom up and top down models

	Tanum	Sotenäs	Munkedal	Orust
Fully integrated/bottom-up				
Imposed/ Top-down				

3.5 Concluding Comments

Through the given concepts of push and pull, and there to related discussions concerning top down or bottom up approaches for local development, this research strive to see how local municipalities handle the issue of depopulation to enhance local development. The concept of governance with Top down and Bottom up approaches will be used to outline and investigate the work of local actors.

While the concept of push and pull factors of migration will be used to observe which factors are taken into account when developing municipal visionary documents. The method chapter will present a platform with analytical tools that will be used to analyze conducted empirics gathered from small rural oriented municipalities in Sweden.

4. Specified Aim and Research Questions

The main aim of this research is to study the municipal development responses to depopulation in four smaller rural municipalities on the west coast of Sweden. The thesis begins by establishing the present population situation in these municipalities. With this as a foundation, the following research questions will then be addressed:

1. Which push and pull factors do the municipalities prioritize in their work against depopulation?
2. Do the municipalities rely primarily on a top down or a bottom up approach in their work against depopulation?

5. Methodology and Research Design

The nature of this study is primarily qualitative with a lightly deductive orientation (Marsh, Stoker 2010). A qualitative research strategy is best suitable when intentions are put on explaining phenomena in depth rather than just modifying a certain issue without giving explanation to contributing factors (Bryman 2008). The study is classified as deductive since the presented concept of push and pulls factors of migration and the concept of governance with top down and bottom up approaches will be used to understand and analyze empirics. By studying the municipal vision documents that are future development documents written by municipal politicians, the content will be put against the chosen concepts. From this an analysis of whether politicians base their decisions of future developments on factors that attract or dislodge people will be made.

By studying how small municipalities on the west coast of Sweden (eg. former county of Bohuslän) organize and carry out the work of achieving stated goals in vision documents, the generated information will be put against the concept of top down and bottom up approaches. Researchers intend to find explanations about whether municipalities incorporate external actors in their work of achieving stated goals.

5.1 Comparative research strategy

A collection of quantitative data will be made and used to address current population situation of small municipalities on the west coast of Sweden (eg. former county of Bohuslän). By collecting quantitative data on four municipalities Tanum, Sotenäs, Munkedal and Orust at the west coast a descriptive comparative study will be conducted (Marsh, Stoker 2010).

5.1.1 Case Selection

The selection of municipalities is based on a most similar system (Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Wängnerud 2007). Municipalities located at the west coast are homogeneous, based on geographical location, the number of inhabitants, distance to bigger cities etc. The chosen municipalities are part of the former county of Bohuslän.



Figure 1. Map of Bohuslän (fyrlistorg 2012)

The former county of Bohuslän is located on the west coast of Sweden and borders Norway in north. This area consists of 13 municipalities: Strömstad, Tanum, Munkedal, Sotenäs, Lysekil, Uddevalla, Orust, Lilla Edet, Tjörn, Stenungsund, Kungälv, Öckerö and Gothenburg (to some part). The west coast is one of Sweden's most tourist visited areas. Fishing industries, ship building industries, stone cutting, shipping by boat and tourism are the traditional occupations in this part of the country. The area has changed in terms of population numbers, existing industries and urbanization. (Etnologiska institutionen vid Göteborgs Universitet, Bohusläns museum, Landstinget I Göteborgs och Bohus län 1981).

Traditional occupations are no longer as profitable and people have been forced to move to more central and bigger cities such as Uddevalla, Stenungsund and Gothenburg. Where railways and roads have been build and opportunities for commuting is possible, a number of people have chosen to commute to work in more central cities but to keep their residences in original community. (Etnologiska institutionen vid Göteborgs Universitet, Bohusläns museum, Landstinget I Göteborgs och Bohus län 1981).

Residents living in the smaller municipalities of Bohuslän display typical characteristics related to areas of depopulation with for example high percentage of older population, low tax income base, and comparatively costly community services. (Etnologiska institutionen vid Göteborgs Universitet, Bohusläns museum, Landstinget I Göteborgs och Bohus län 1981). The characteristics that can be found in the smaller communities of Bohuslän makes the former county a perfect candidate for this research. The four selected municipalities used in this study, have all similar population distribution and size, they are located in similar ecological environments and share similar culture, tradition, related job opportunities etc. Interesting to investigate then is if they adopt same strategies to oppose depopulation and have the same responses to municipal development. Furthermore, the distance between the University and these municipalities also makes the collection of research material and data more efficient and less time consuming, which is important due to the time restrictions of producing the thesis.

The comparison will be conducted in a cross sectional design in which the content of official documents, in this case municipal vision documents derived from municipalities websites will be compared at one single period of time (Bryman 2008). Through a study of chosen cases a generalization is possible; the results from this work can set guidelines for mapping a trend in the rest of the country. As mentioned the problem of local depopulation in smaller municipalities in Sweden as well as globally is continually debated. The findings of this research can give indications for the problem of depopulation, and how it is handled in other small municipalities facing depopulation as well.

5.2 Methods for gathering data

The primary source of data for this thesis is official documents (Bryman 2008). In this case: vision documents working as future development documents written by municipal politicians. The vision documents are published at each municipality's website easy to access. One feature of these documents is that they are not mainly generated by politicians with the intention of being source of research therefore stated goals within them will reveal non-manipulated information about what factors politicians prioritize. This will give an understanding to what push and pull factors of migration have been taken into consideration by politicians when writing visions for future development.

There are other policy documents available at each municipality's website such as budget plan for the coming years and policy documents about the work of education centers in the municipalities, however the focus of this research will be on visionary documents since the necessary information for push and pull factors of migration and the prioritization can be derived from them. The remaining documents can be relevant for studies concerning the economic aspect of municipal development and work as a source of data for further studies of the topic. The usage of official documents has positive aspects, for example the issue of authenticity and credibility is minimized and the documents have a high level of validity (Bryman 2008, Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Wängnerud 2007).

Quantitative empirics are used as second source of data in this thesis and will provide background information about selected municipalities. The data will be collected through each municipality's official website to present size, number of inhabitants and number of in and out migrants.

The third source of data is in form of interviews (Bryman 2008, Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Wängnerud 2007) with business life development officer (BLDO) at each municipality. The selections of BLDO is based on the fact that he or she is responsible for distribution and follow-up of the municipalities work in order to achieve stated goals in the vision documents. The other underlying feature for the selection of BLDO is based on the fact that he or she is not a politician rather working as an officer; this minimizes the risk for biased interview materials. Since politicians are the ones writing the visionary documents a risk for biased interview material exist due to political ideology that can have affects how the response and defend of the visionary documents. In contrast an officer's duty is to carry out the work as stated in the visionary document. He or She does not have to take any political ideology or party affiliation into account as political actors might do.

The interviews are conducted through a semi-structured method, where the interviewers have a number of interview questions on an optionally interview scheme (Bryman 2008). The questions posed are often open-ended and asked as structured, however if the interviewee continues to give further information on the subject appearing as important follow up questions can be asked (Bryman 2008). Hence the semi-structured interview method is preferable for this study in comparison to other interview methods (Bryman 2008). This due to the fact that specific questions must be asked to receive answers related to the posed research questions. The presented concepts of push and pull factor of migration and the concept of governance with top down or bottom up approaches will be taken into account when designing interview questions in order to conduct relevant and correct data and research material. An un-structured interview method is an alternative option conversely the risk of asking non-related questions about the subject and an overflow of unnecessary information

exist. Worth mentioning is that both methods described above generate primary data (Bryman 2008, Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Wängnerud 2007).

Disadvantageously primary data tend to be costly and time consuming when conducting interviews as source of data. The other issue is the transcription of gathered interview materials. This process is time consuming and the risk for errors do exist (Bryman 2008). Hence interviews with one BLDO's at each municipality will be made. By doing so the intention is to have an efficient process of transcribing the interview material in detail and prudently.

5.3 Methods for analyzing data

A qualitative research design has an interpretative nature, applying such research strategy and method is time consuming, this due to the fact that analysis of qualitative data often goes through different steps (Bryman 2008). In this study the content of the vision documents will be systematically coded and different themes will be created, this process will be conducted by using classification model as an analytical tool. Classification model that is an analytical apparatus is often used in order to classify reality. By classifying findings a descriptive analysis is possible (Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Wängnerud 2007). By using the classification model data will be easier to understand and the comparison of the municipalities will be possible. The previous presented tables of push and pull, and bottom up top down models, table 1 and table 2 will be used when coding and analyzing gathered data of vision documents and interviews. By comparing the results of the two tables one can draw analytical conclusions of most relevant approach for creating local attraction, this is discussed moreover in Result and discussion chapter.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

As discussed above economical and technological developments have made our world more globalized and alongside with globalization a demand for better living standards has grown (Martinez-Brawley 1987). People have the ability to choose their living environment. As it has been presented throughout this research the trends point to an enlargement of urban areas and decrease of rural areas leaving the rural areas facing depopulation. This leads to the aim of this study, to study the municipal development activities of rural oriented areas on the west coast of Sweden. More specifically this research seeks to give an understanding of the municipalities work towards achieving local development and opposing depopulation in former county of Bohuslän.

6.2 Result and Analysis

Research question 1:

Which push and pull factors do the municipalities prioritize in their work against depopulation?

All municipalities in Sweden have a visionary development document. This document indicates how the politicians view the current problems and future development of the local society. As discussed in the theory and method chapter, the municipal visionary development document of each municipality is analyzed with a focus related to the pull and push factors. This text analysis can thereby categorize how push and pull factors are identified and analyzed in order to combat depopulation.

Tanum

Tanum municipality is located in northern parts of the west coast with a population of 12 320 (out of which 3101 people are above the age of 65) and an area of 945 km². Tanum is sparsely populated with 13 people/km²: Tanum display a negative population trend with a decrease in population of 50 inhabitants in 2011. (Tanum 20012) (SCB 2012)^a

The population situation of Tanum municipalities according to the Business Life Development Officer (BLDO):

“We have had some particular in-migration, which is not a very remarkable number. The number of births in the municipality is not high. We have a certain proportion of residents called part time residents living here for some time during the year. The important question is: how to get the part time residents to move to Tanum permanently and live there all year round?...” (Kempe 2012, translated from Swedish)

Tanum municipality is decreasing in number of population due to low birthrates, high aging population and out-migration. As indicated from quote above the municipality is aware of the problem of depopulation and is actively searching for possible solutions. Part-time residents are being taken into accounts as a solution to depopulation. The goal is to attract part-time residents to become all year round- residents; this is seen as an investment in the municipality.

Depopulation is not equivalent to local development, rather is a related issue to the subject. Tanum municipality's intention to make part residents become all year residents might be a way of solving the problem. However the important question to be asked is who is being attracted to the municipality? The answer to this question might be a group of mid-age and elderly people, since they often have more capital to invest. When discussing the underlying reasons for the current population patterns the business life development officer argues that;

“Mainly education is the primary factor for young people leaving the municipality. There is no full High-School program given at Tanum municipality...” (Kempe 2012, translated from Swedish).

In this case there is a clear consistency between theory and push factor. The fact that young people leave the area because of education is based on social factors. In Tanum's Vision documents social factors are prioritized as a second priority. In this case a clear push factor is driving young people away from Tanum municipality. When young people migrate out from the municipality, they often tend to create new network in their place of arrival, which means that they do not return to place of origin until later, some may never return.

In Tanum, the municipal council establishes a number of policies, strategies and business objectives as general municipal operations. Some of the cases are of a more general nature, human resource strategy, financial goals etc. others are designed for regulation. The overarching objectives for local development set by the municipal council are to grow and have an increase of population number. Tanum municipality's objective is to symbolize positive development through successful investments (Tanum 2009).

Munkedal

Munkedal is a municipality with a population of 10 223 and an area of 635 km². Out of the total population, 2374 is above the age of 65. Munkedal display a small positive change in population numbers for 2011. (Munkedal 2012) (SCB 2012)^b

The BLDO of Munkedal municipality discusses the population situation as;

“Munkedal is fortunate since during the last five years we have had a plus minus zero, when it comes to in and out migration ... the reason we have lost residents is that old people die and that the birth rate is low...we had a surplus of moving ... last year we went actually plus with 42 people and that in a small municipality like Munkedal is very much...being close to E6 road and shorter distance to Gothenburg and the fact that we today are a commuter community makes it very attractive to live here in the municipality but work elsewhere” (Larsson 2012, translated from Swedish).

Physical infrastructure as a pull factor tends to attract young people and families that want to live near urban areas with good communications. Furthermore what can be mentioned is that the community by presenting itself as commuting municipality is building an attractive image putting residents comfort above other factors. When it comes to the underlying causes for out-migration, low birth rate and a growing aging population is classified as the main causes. Furthermore the BLDO argues that;

“The main reasons for moving from Munkedal is partly because of separation in the family, which means people chose to move apart ... the second reason why people move is that they want to start study so they move to another

municipality... we have a problem in Munkedal, and it is that, we cannot start new construction of housing in the municipality [Because] You cannot loan money from the bank since the production cost is higher than the resale value is ...” (Larsson 2012, translated from Swedish)

However when presenting the main cause for migrating to the community he argues that;

“We have people who choose a certain lifestyle, you want to live in the countryside and want to be close to nature.” (Larsson 2012, translated from Swedish)

Education once again is being portrayed as a fundamental factor for young people’s decision to leave the rural, secondly housing as an economic factor is the next issue. The combination of the two factors contributes to a decision of migrating out of the municipality. At the moment the municipality is not decreasing in population but there is still a number of out-migrants. The environmental factor, according to BLDO is a pull factor attracting people to Munkedal.

The municipality has an overall vision set out for 2025 with the objectives of remaining as an attractive municipality that develops together with associations, organizations and residents. The community strives to be a sustainable growing municipality and creating an exciting environment where residents are involved, energetic and proud (Munkedal 2009).

Municipal council priorities according to vision documents

- Good municipal hosting
- Residential building
- Enterprise and employment
- Infrastructure, communication and service
- Nature, culture and leisure
- Health and safety
- Education
- Environment (Munkedal 2012)

Sotenäs

Sotenäs is geographically located by the sea, between Oslo and Gothenburg with a population of 9007 and an area of 139,43 km². 2522 people are above the age of 65. Sotenäs display a slight negative change in population. (Sotenas 2011) (SCB 2012)^c

The BLDO in the municipality of Sotenäs discusses the question of population patterns as;

“Today there are nine thousand people here and it's not very much... we have more in migration than out migration but we have many elderly people here who die and that makes us lose people ... Young people, those who want a college education often apply to an university and begin there and then there they will have a new network... which they then do not want to move from, often one comes back a bit later in life...” (Samuelsson 2012, translated from Swedish)

Once again we can see a trend of young people moving out because of education and moving back to the place of origin later in life, this in turn puts the rural oriented municipality in a difficult position, were the lack of young people with relevant education can come to

jeopardizes the services that the municipality have to provide for remaining elderly residents. If the number of people who are employed are not sufficient the income of the municipality will also be affected, since the income generated from taxes is crucial for the work of the municipality.

The vision objective is based on the good costal life opportunities that combine innovation sustainable development and the future marked by respect for the individual and human equality (Sotenäs 2011)

Municipal council priorities according to vision documents

- Case management system
- Creating future industry areas
- Housing
- Fyrbodal Project
- EU project
- Knowledge companies, service companies
- Municipal activities
- Education (Sotenäs 2011)

Orust

Orust is the largest island of the West coast with a population of 15 129 and an area of 389 km². A large part of the population is above the age of 65, and the municipality shows a distinct negative population trend. (Orust 2010) (SCB 2012)^d

The BLDO of Orust discusses the question of population patterns and underlying causes for current population situation as;

“ During the last years there has been a trend of out-migration and a decrease of population. The reason for this is that like many other small municipalities we have a high number of aging populations. The birth-rates are low and death-rates are high...” (Pettersson 2012, translated from Swedish)

Here the ongoing trend is repeated again, young people are moving out because of education and moving back to the place of origin in older ages, which puts the survival of the area in difficulty.

“We have a pretty large in and out-migration, the out-migrations are of course young people between the age of the 18-24 leaving the municipality for studies because we have no university here...”(Pettersson 2012, translated from Swedish)

“But we still think that we have a decent conditions, since we have such a great commuting trend, both into the municipality and out of the municipality. Around 3000 people are commuting out from the municipality and around 1000 people are commuting in. This leaves us with a net of 2000 commuters...” (Pettersson 2012, translated from Swedish)

In Orust municipal vision documents, social factors are prioritized as number two. Even if the municipality clarify themselves as a commuter community, they still end up with a decrease

in population, partly because older people die and partly because there are no opportunities created for younger people to stay in the municipality and be active.

The general aims are to create conditions for local residents to live and develop as independent people with a good quality of life. The municipality wants to ensure basic service and care in different stages of life. To actively create a rich business sector, rich cultural and leisure activities to create a good physical environment and sustainable development for both individuals and for the municipality in general. The municipality intends to actively seek to utilize and develop ocean, sea, nature and buildings (Orust 2009).

Orust municipal council priorities according to vision documents

- Access to attractive homes in varying price ranges and with different concession opportunities.
- Access to a good labor market with a variety of jobs within a reasonable distance
- Access to various forms of social and commercial services
- Access to nature, a variety of leisure and cultural activities
- Good communications (Orust 2009)

The pull and push concept indicates that people tend to move according to various factors. One conventionally common displayed factor is of economic character related to employment/income opportunities. However, many studies of local development display that factors of more social and/or environmental character is often regarded as more important. Examples of such issues include good housing, good schools, good social network and a clean and beautiful landscape.

Analysis

Within official documents, Push and Pull factors are coded according to priority. By coding from 1 – 4 the most prioritized factor will be coded as 1 and thereafter in numerical order. As shown in the table, Tanum, Sotenäs and Orust prioritize conventional economic factors in their respective vision documents. In Munkedal on the other hand social factors are prioritized here politicians have decided on municipal hosting, putting the residents comfort in focus. Environmental factors are only stated in Munkedal’s vision documents and political factors are not stated in any vision documents.

Table 1. Push and pull factors in accordance to prioritization in Municipal vision documents

	Tanum	Munkedal	Sotenäs	Orust
Social	2	1	2	2
Environmental	-	3	-	-
Economic	1	2	1	1
Political	-	-	-	-

Three out four municipalities have social factors as second priority additionally three out four municipalities have failed to include environmental factors into their visions documents for local development. Social factors are the main reason for especially young people to leave rural areas. Environmental factors are a vibrant pull factor that seems to be overlooked and/or not prioritized at all by these municipalities of Bohuslän.

What is being portrayed here is that politicians have chosen to prioritize conventional economic factors, which means that politicians are not completely aware of the concepts of push and pull factors. They are aware of individual factors within the theory, factors that traditionally has been prioritized. Another explanation or analysis regarding the above mentioned might be that politicians cannot agree and decide on what factors should be prioritized in the municipal visionary documents. With this said it should be mentioned that those municipalities prioritizing economic factors are those who are declining in population number while the municipality that has prioritized social factors before economic one are the one with a positive in-migration number. This can portrait as an evidence and an opportunity for other political scientist to make further research on the relationship between politicians decisions for future development and population situation in Swedish municipalities.

Research Question 2:

Do the municipalities rely primarily on a top down or a bottom up approach in their work against depopulation?

The stated question is to investigate and present municipalities' work of opposing depopulation. The answer to this question is based on citation from interview material where BLDO's of the studied municipalities have discussed the question. The citations presented will give indications about the focus of the municipalities and the approaches adopted. Top down and bottom up approaches of governance are in focus. The citations will be analyzed and discussed in regards to earlier presented concepts in this research.

Tanum

BLDO's officer argues:

"Housing is important if you want younger people to move back to the municipality, given the high prices along the coast. The old business life strategy has been reformulated and will be adopted in may/june 2012. This means that we will be working in a different way from before. Overall objective is: for Tanum to be perceived by business life as one of Sweden's most development-oriented municipalities... Creation and establishment of business in the municipalities are actively discussed..." (Kempe 2012, translated from Swedish)

The new strategy, has eight goals, one of them is the collaboration between industry and schools. This goal is set up to attract new migrants. The foremost way of attracting people back to the municipality is through creating pull factors in order to attract young people and in migration to the municipality. New visions documents are set up in which a connection between industry and young students are created. In this way Tanum municipality is trying to involve young people into the economy and industry sector from a young age and on, so that a network is created leading to young people staying in the municipality and not migrate out of the municipality for jobs or other social factors. There are specific emphasis for example on various projects based on tourism and how to attract tourists, Swedish tourists as well as international tourists. Norwegian tourists and residents are also taken into interest.

"...Since Tanum is located near the border to Norway. We are working around ideas on how to remove barriers between borders; a collaboration between Norwegian municipalities and Swedish municipalities are of interest to make trade easier" (given that Norway is not an EU country). "Border trade is important for the survival of the rural, Norwegians come here and spend money, we have some Norwegians buying houses here in Tanum. If you live in the municipality you pay tax in the municipality, so if we receive more money we can spend more money..." (Kempe 2012, translated from Swedish)

Swedish rural oriented municipalities are trying to integrate people from other parts of the world in their work to achieve local development and oppose depopulation, furthermore the importance of human resources for development stand out, however the specific group that the municipality is focusing on are mid-age and older people who have the financial opportunities and capital to invest in the housing. The municipality organizes a meeting for municipal residents and part-time residents every summer. The BLDO argues;

"This is to create interaction, to get perspectives and to provide information about what is happening in the municipality etc. During the recent years a large number of tourist companies have established and through this the municipality has cooperation with actors and organizations in the community that have the

same aim and goals...” (Kempe 2012, translated from Swedish)

Additionally through a direct contact via a summer school the municipality is adopting a Bottom up approach in which the residents are involved within the municipalities work and can have a say about what is decided in their municipality. Tanum municipality is open to empowerment and engagement of locals. In this case, as it is evident from the BLDO’s citation, they do so by creating interaction between the political actors and residence when it comes to planning and discussing what is necessary to achieve development. The creation and usage of local tourist companies is another indicator of integrating nongovernmental actors into the work of development. In regards to the theory of bottom up approach this empowerment is in favor of local development. The residents are integrated and the meeting during summer time is to give part-time residents the possibility of being integrated as well. To classify the municipality of Tanum and the methods used when handling the problem of depopulation and achieving development the municipality is working in a Bottom up approach where residents are fully integrated in the process.

Munkedal

In Munkedal municipality there is cooperation with other actors in society to achieve local development and combat depopulation. The municipality has collaboration with a unit, which business life development officer explains accordingly;

“We have organized ourselves here in the municipality to work with development issues ... we have done so through something called Growth Unit (Tillväxenheter) that we belong to...We have done survey research among people who have moved in out of Munkedal, from the results we received, we found out what makes people want to move to and away from Munkedal...”
(Larsson 2012, translated from Swedish)

By carrying out the work in cooperation with a specific unit, the municipality is updated with current situation of the municipality. Through contact with residents and follow up of previous residents the municipality is investigating on Push and pulls factors for migration that has caused out migration. This gives the municipality a chance of changing attitude and become aware of what is needed to take into account in order to keep resident and at the same time attract new residents. A bottom up approach is adopted in which research is made to understand underlying factors for the problem of depopulation. This bottom up approach is evident from the survey researchers made, since by doing so the municipal resident have the opportunity to be a part of the discussion around opposing depopulation and achieving development.

“A survey from a few years ago showed that rural communities normally lose young girls, but Munkedal has not done that, we had an influx of young girls, research showed that in Dingle area, where there is an environmental program given at the high-school where horses are a main subject, the number of girls have increased... after living in Dingle for 3 years one has in fact created a new network, new friends and new interests and they usually have horses as an interest...We came to the conclusion that we need a larger facility for the horses, a Dingle Horse Arena was created...when we market the municipality; we have presented the horse interest as well...” (Larsson 2012, translated from Swedish)

In order to grow and not only keep their own young residents but also to attract new residents to the area the municipality uses Dingle area with its rich nature resource and horse activities frequently. The idea behind the project of Dingle Arena is efficient in the long run since

young people moving there are of an active age, they create a network and are attached to horses and the lifestyle. Since the created network is highly valued for the young people they often choose to stay in the municipality even after graduating from Dingle high school.

“Munkedal has been selected as the year's municipality year 2011, this due to our active rural work together with our local development groups in the municipality...this means that we actively work with the voluntary sector to develop Munkedal municipality...today as I have told before, a fiber construction is going on and ten fiber associations have started up...it's people who live in our community who, because of they being interested in the municipality's development, that they have taken things in their own hands and construct the broadband...” (Larsson 2012, translated from Swedish)

In general the municipality of Munkedal seems to be working in relation with residents. There is local development activities put together by residents themselves as it is evident from the citation above, this is integrating municipal resident and sharing of the governmental power in order to achieve development and oppose depopulation. There is an engagement among residents that can be classified as a fully integrated method. As mentioned in the interview in this case engagement is dynamic, residents themselves create development of the rural municipality and work to build fiber network in the municipality. The approach adopted in this municipality is a bottom up approach where the objective of residents as well as decision makers is to work for local development and cooperate in the process.

Sotenäs

The work of opposing depopulation and local development is discussed by BLDO accordingly:

“Two sectors are growing most in the world, one of them is tourism, here it's very nice ... during the summer months we are about 50,000 people per day here. But then the companies and hotels and restaurants, they're going to operate their businesses the entire year. During the summer there is no problem but the season is so short here, so it becomes difficult, then it is about extending the season...” (Samuelsson 2012, translated from Swedish)

Once again the trend of taking tourism into consideration as a way of promoting local development is evident. By extending the seasons and attract people to the municipality they hope to receive activity in the area for a longer time classified as a solution for local development. Whether this posed solution will be effective even in long terms remains to be discussed.

“We have about 7000 properties in this municipality. Half of those are part-time residents. We go out with questionnaires to our part-time residents and ask them what we can do for them in order to make them live here the year round” “Here we have a quality of life, spring, autumn, summer here is valuable, you do not see any homeless people here, here is a social network that people enjoy...” (Samuelsson 2012, translated from Swedish)

The municipality of Sotenäs is doing research on population situation in order to make part-time residents become full time-residents, the work is done by sending out surveys where a form of contact with residents is established. This contact is mainly in order to enhance information about resident's preferences, living environment, this in turn indicates that the

residents and also part-time residents are integrating the process of generating information for what decisions the municipality need to make in order to achieve development. Politicians are aware of the beautiful nature of the municipality, take pride in the nice atmosphere and social network of the municipality. As it is evident from the concept of push and pull factors of migration, and the presented facts about peoples preferences during earlier parts, today people appreciate nature more and are attracted to live in areas in access to nature. The BLDO continues with explaining the importance of different for development of the municipality, he argues:

“The other sector that is growing in the world is the service sector... Service providers with all IT skills and other things they [should be able] to sit wherever they are and that is what we are doing up here ... What I call this the Corporate arena Sotenäs. It is really about pooling companies, service companies to one place ... This is based on having shared information, common data supplies, common conference room, work places that can be hired, or one can work from home, people do not need to own everything...If we cannot get businesses started [here] that pay taxes then the existing money stock [of the municipality] will end. This is how it works in the world; to develop something you have to have money...people fail to understand the importance of entrepreneurship. It's not just about to have the money, money comes of course from somewhere, which means that you have to have a really good business life to generate money from...” (Samuelsson 2012, translated from Swedish)

The municipality is clearly business oriented trying to create opportunities for companies and businesses in general to establish their businesses in Sotenäs municipality. As it is evident from the interview material presented above the municipality of Sotenäs has concentrated on two sectors in order to achieve local development and oppose depopulation. Tourism sector and Service sector are both according to the theory of push and pull factor of migration classified as economic factors, since they are related to income opportunities. The municipality is trying to find ways of maintaining the tourism sector, being active not only during the summer months but also during the rest of the year. This is important for the survival of the existing companies that are active in the tourism sector such as hotels, restaurants, tourist bureaus etc.

When analyzing the work of the municipality toward local development and opposing depopulation it is evident that the approaches and actions taken by the municipality is mainly business oriented. This can have advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that achieving local development through economical means actually generates money, which is needed if the goal is to spend them on different project and improving the municipality to start potential projects that can solve the problem of depopulation. However at the same time a disadvantage is the risk of straying away from the actual goal and put focus on finding ways of generating money in order to increase municipality's budget. This in turn means that depopulation is not prioritized as much as needed rather the situation of the companies and businesses are prioritized instead. In regards to top down and bottom up strategies based on this interview the methods of the municipalities work are leaning on a bottom up strategy when dealing with depopulation.

Orust

The BLDO of Orust municipality discusses the work of achieving local development and opposing depopulation accordingly:

“Our geographical location is good because we have the ability to commute to the big cities, whilst still living here. The large urban nightlife benefits our residents. But to be able both to live, commute and work here, we will need decent infrastructure. This matter is pretty active right now; we are working on a better road connection and on constructing roads. Also broadband is important and we will jointly with businesses and residents try to get good fiber utilization next year...” (Pettersson 2012, translated from Swedish)

Orust main goal is to increase the population with 100 residents per year. And the plan for this is to focus on attractive housing conditions in connection to larger communities and creating an attractive business climate. Furthermore there are plans on creating opportunities for tourist investments since the tourist industry is growing. As he continues to discuss the question, he claims that there is no direct institution or department dealing with depopulation in Orust, he argues:

“...it is part of, for example my job, the communicator's job or the county manager's job. We take part and participate in several exhibition, the boat show, open houses etc the school is on a recruitment fair, so somewhere we have a wide distribution but not any individual official that has responsibility to work with the issue of depopulation”.“During spring and fall, we have an open forum for residents to meet with politicians and some officials. It's usually held in some location around the community depending on the issues that have come up. It may be just about anything and then we try to summarize what has been resonated to publish it online...” (Pettersson 2012, translated from Swedish)

Is it is evident that the municipality is working to have contact with residents, there are indications pointing to the fact that the municipality actually is aware of push and pull factors of migration, however if the municipality has organized itself and actually is prioritizing opposing depopulation is arguable. What is clear is that the municipality strives to market themselves by attending different types of events around the country for example by attending boat fairs etc. However an active strategy handling the problem does not exist. The BLDO continues to discuss the question accordingly;

“...Our website will be reassembled and developed. There are plans on having a political forum, where residents ask questions directly to politicians. We believe in the development of the web in order to communicate better with residents. Part -time residents have a great interest in what happens here in the municipality because they own properties here. I think it would have been more interesting to strengthen cooperation and contact with part-time residents more effectively. It must always be clear to us whom we are here for, residents and business owners...” (Pettersson 2012, translated from Swedish)

The municipality seems to have a close relationship with local actors and residents, this in regards to the fiber construction work where local enterprises, residents and municipality are working together. Furthermore the reconstruction of the webpage and setting up a platform for residents being able to communicate with politicians directly is a sign of a close collaboration and integration of residents in the work of the municipality.

Orust municipality does not have a specific unit working actively with the problem of depopulation. Physical infrastructure is prioritized due to the geographical location of the

municipality, based on this commuters are recognized as potential future municipality residents. Orust municipality employs a fully integrated approach, which means that politician and the municipality are aware of the importance of being in contact with municipality residence in order to achieve development and hopefully find solutions for solving the problem of depopulation.

Analysis

The analytical tool associated with the concept of top down and bottom up strategies use coding by analyzing the interview material gathered. Through analysis of interviews, an analysis of the municipalities work display if they are influenced by the imposed top down approach, or the bottom-up approach is made.

Table 2. Bottom up Top down models adopted by municipalities of former Bohuslän County

	Tanum	Sotenäs	Munkedal	Orust
Bottom-up approach	x	x	x	x
Top-down approach				

As presented in the table above, all four municipalities have adopted a bottom up strategy to deal with the problem of depopulation and work for local development. These studied municipalities have done so through survey researchers, setting up local companies etc. Overall there seem to be a frequent trend of fully integrated societies in municipalities along the west coast of Sweden. They work in different ways, putting focus on different factors but in the end they have rather similar strategy of carrying out the work and with this said it can be concluded that the concept of governance is well rooted in these municipalities.

7. Discussion and conclusion

When discussing the population situation in each municipality and comparing them, a clear trend appears. Three out of four municipalities, Tanum, Sotenäs and Orust are decreasing in population while Munkedal are balanced. The population number is not increasing and not decreasing either. The reason for this can be discussed from a political perspective based on theories presented in this study. From a political perspective the municipality has a clear distinctive prioritization in municipal visionary documents this indicates that the politicians think differently from politicians of the other municipalities.

It is obvious that all municipalities are aware of depopulation problems in rural areas. Remarkably in three of the studied municipalities, making part-time residents becoming full-time residents is considered to be a potential solution for opposing depopulation. Through participation in different events municipalities are trying to market themselves and create an attractive image among potential municipal residents. In all studied municipalities, education is being mentioned as a crucial factor for the loss of young people, while aging population and low birth rates are additional reasons contributing to a population decrease in all municipalities.

The causes for the decrease and movement of people from rural areas are consistent with the concept of Push and pull factors of migration. Being aware of how the population situation of each municipality looks like and the causes behind the current population trend, interesting to discuss is how the municipalities work to handle the problem of depopulation.

As a final discussion from presented results some crucial points do stand out. There are cases where politicians and other actors are united on what is important for the development of the municipality and opposing depopulation. From this the important point is that the term Local development must be distinguished from opposing depopulation. Two different solutions are required to assess the two terms. The politicians must prioritize the issue of depopulation in its own right. As it has been discussed the politicians have the ability to influence depopulation through their power and influence over social, economic, environmental and political factors. A good example for this work is the municipality of Munkedal. Munkedal is the only municipality with a full research and follow-up of studies that show the causes of peoples movements, in terms of in and out migration. The community seems to have a specific project putting focus on opposing depopulation while in other studied municipalities the problem of depopulation is tackled from different angles. In general all municipalities are aware of the problem of depopulation. The fact that there are a low proportion of young people, low birth rates and high death rates and a decrease of population number in general is evident.

The problem is clear in every municipality but the method for dealing with the problem is somewhat old fashioned and differs. The promoted solutions are often based on economical thinking as conducted from municipal vision documents. In Sotenäs municipality the main focus is put on creating a business arena to attract companies to the municipality. This can be interpreted as if there are companies in the municipality offering job opportunities, people will automatically move to the municipality. This may to some degree be correct, for example in matters like generating tax incomes. However the problem of high housing costs or a mismatch of existing skills on the market compared to the existing vacant jobs still puts a pressure on the posed solution.

As it has been mentioned before, the local governments today are not solely political bodies. They are to some degree political bodies and to some degree economical bodies. This can be interpreted as a contributing fact for local politicians to prioritize economical factors when setting up municipal vision documents, the generation of income from taxes and municipal companies tend to become more important than their role as politicians dealing with political questions.

As discussed in literature review much of the previous research tend to circle around technical development, enterprise and capital investments all known as economical factors in this study, which is consistent with the work of three out of four municipalities studied in this research. Whilst in current situation based on the concept of Push and pull factors of migration the underlying factors for peoples decision for migration is based on social factors, a very important factor prioritized as number one by only one municipality. For instance a good infrastructure is not necessarily a solution when there are no education centers or activities for young people in the municipality. Further the existence of a Business Arena is not an efficient solution if the potential municipal residents, in this case younger people, do not have enough capital to invest in housing.

Given the location of the municipalities, Tanum Orust and Sotenäs are taking the existing environmental factor for granted and not prioritizing or using them in favor of attracting residents. Rather there seems to be mere assumptions of people automatically wanting to live there because of the sea and the rich nature etc. In contrast Munkedal not as conveniently located is finding diverse solutions through prioritizing environmental factors in their municipal vision documents.

The work of municipalities tends to fall short and be one step behind when it comes to understanding and opposing depopulation. However as it goes for the concept of governance with top down and bottom up approaches, all four municipalities are carrying out the work of local development through a Bottom up approach. These municipalities have established a close relationship with municipality residents which results in an understanding of the needs of their residents thus able to act accordingly. The relationship with residents and other organizations is of great importance to fulfill Local development.

The finding of this research leads back to the presented literature review on the topic of local development. Currently there are two principal fields that are discussed frequently among scholars, on one hand there is a socioeconomic field focusing on communal local development and on the other there is a political field focusing on municipal politics. The existing research within the two fields contributes to the study of local development and thereby solving the problem of depopulation. In contrast this study gives indicators on dealing with depopulation as a primary factor separately and thereby achieving local development gradually, the importance of the push and pulls factors of migration is once again proven. This study has attempted to fill the existing gap within the field by showing and proving that depopulation is a political matter which needs to be handled separately from the term local development. Policies, strategies that are design to assess the issue are needed which means an understanding about the underlying causes of the problem is crucial. The study has also shown that the concept of governance is well oriented and well implemented in the studied municipalities, a fully integrated model is growing more and more into the process. If the residents are pleased with the work of politicians the chances for politicians to become re-elected are high and on the other hand the residents involved with their ideas and views are being into account. This brings a feeling of security leading to residents choosing to live in

the municipality rather than moving from the municipality.

What seems to be an issue is the way politicians and municipal residents on local level can affect municipal policies, national policies, guidelines and protocols provided by the parliament. As it is evident from the results presented in this study the relation between the municipal politicians and local residents are fully integrated however this trend seems to stop at the local level. The guidelines and national policies are provided by the parliament and obviously much harder to affect by local actors. Therefore furthermore research on the relationship between local actors and national actors due to top down, bottom up strategy can have additional importance within the field. Also research on the subject with a clear focus on depopulation as a solid factor distinguished from local development is crucial. Research on rural oriented areas and human resource combined for further studies can contribute to the field and put up a platform for opposing depopulation on local level as well national level.

New questions that can be raised from this study and contribute further to the political scientific field can be questions concerning depopulation in relation to local political actors and national political actors. How is the national politics set up to work against depopulation? Since the problem is not only ongoing at the west coast of Sweden, rather it is a problem of all sparsely areas in Sweden. Do national politicians follow up the work of local politicians in terms of depopulation? Since national politicians are providing the guidelines for local government and the question is then if national politics prioritize depopulation as an important factor as they prioritize other political questions.

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