

## V.10. LEBESBY IN NORWAY: A natural hub for fishing and aquaculture and with roots in coastal Sami traditions

*By Mari Wøien & Karen Refsgaard, 2018/2019.*

### Abstract

Why are some municipalities better than others at deploying their resources, attracting people and creating jobs? This was the key question studied in this analysis of the attractiveness of 14 rural municipalities in the Nordic Region.

The 14 areas selected<sup>41</sup> are all defined as attractive in the sense that their populations and the number of people in work have increased in recent years. The nature of the boost to employment in some sectors has been identified by means of shift-share analyses to determine how much of the change is attributable to specifically local factors.

Interviews then probed key stakeholders about motivation, working conditions, job creation and living conditions. These interviews were with public sector representatives (e.g. mayors and heads of planning and development), business representatives and entrepreneurs, high school students and people from the education sector, as well as families. Combined with analyses of other data and information, the interviews helped us to understand why some places do better than others.

At first another municipality in Northern Norway with a stable population over the decade 2008–2018, and with positive local employment patterns was selected as case study. Due to difficulties in getting this municipality engaged in our study Lebesby was instead selected as case in Northern Norway being recommended by KMD-officials (KMD is the Ministry for Local Development and Modernisation) in Norway as a successful local case.

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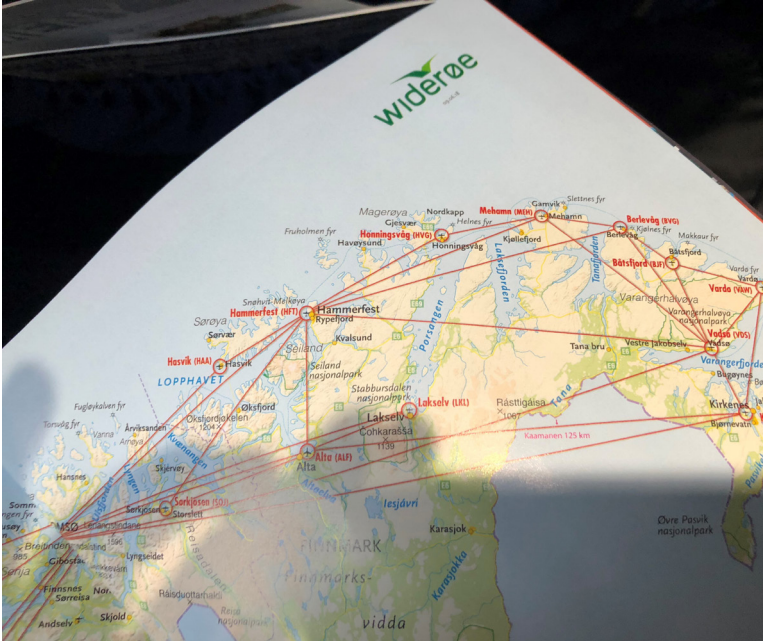
### Description and overview of the municipality

Lebesby is around Laksefjord in north east Norway. Stretching from the northernmost continental point in Europe at Kinnarodden (71°8'1") to the mountain Rasttigai'sa (1067 m.a.s.l), Lebesby is home to a varied natural environment, tough weather conditions and beautiful scenery. Lebesby is one of the geographically largest municipalities in Norway, covering 3,462 km<sup>2</sup> (Lebesby Municipality, 2013). The population is 1,312, spread across villages such as Ifjord, Lebesby, Veidnes, Kjøllefjord, Dyfjord/Kifjord, Bekkarfjord and Kunes (Statistics Norway, 2019). The largest villages are Kjøllefjord and Lebesby (Lebesby Municipality, 2018).

With precarious weather conditions in winter, unreliable infrastructure for people and communications (air, sea and road), and a small population, it should come as no surprise that some people pack up and leave the area. But some people also stay, and some people move in. What makes living in a municipality so far to the north viable and attractive? The freedom to roam, high levels of trust and the connection to nature – these were some of the answers given during the interviews for this case study (Interview 2, 7, 8). This case study delves further into the mechanics of Lebesby municipality's desire to create a happy, healthy and strong community and attract people to the area from all over the world.

### Demographic development

Despite the negative trends in recent years (Vareide & Nyborg Storm, 2010), the population of Lebesby has remained stable and even risen slightly since 2016 (Figure V.10.1). The municipality is struggling with a low birth rate, an ageing population and the majority of the inhabitants in the area being men – see Figure V.10.2 (Lebesby Municipality, 2018). According to the municipal plans, there is some uncertainty related to conjecture about the demographic composition of the area. Changes to settlement patterns may greatly influence the availability of municipal services and may also af-



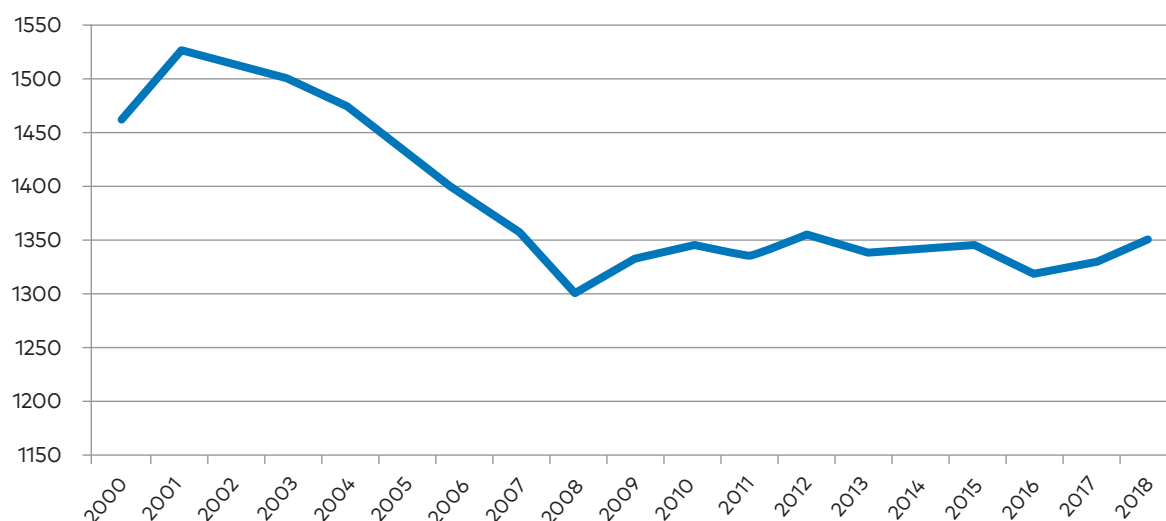
*Infrastructure – communication with Widerøe in Northern Norway; the view to Kjøllefjord. Photos: Karen Refsgaard.*

fect education structures. They may also impact on the structure of the labour market and, by extension, the possibility of attracting people to the municipality (Lebesby Municipality, 2018). Creating an attractive rural municipality is therefore of the utmost importance.

This demographic trend linking a low birth rate, lack of women, and the overrepresentation of men is a generic one in many rural communities. This was also the headline of a news article by the national broadcasting service, NRK, in which men were urged to 'hold on to their women' – espe-

cially in Hasvik, Gamvik and Lebesby (NRK, 2017) where the number of men aged 20–24 is nearly double that of women (Statistics Norway, 2019). The women who follow their partners to Lebesby, due to the seasonal work in the fishing industry, are not staying, either (Interview 1). The demographic structure and the job opportunities at the moment are therefore closely interlinked. This was confirmed by one of our interviewees: *"There are no women left of my generation (...). It's a small community, you know who is here"* (Interview 1).

### Folketallsutvikling i Lebesby kommune 2000–2018



Kilde: Folkemengde og befolkningsendringar. Tabell 06913 i Statistikkbanken (SSB 2018).

*Figure V.10.1. Population of Lebesby municipality, 2000–2018 (Statistics Norway, 2019).*

## Aldersfordeling

(per 1. januar)

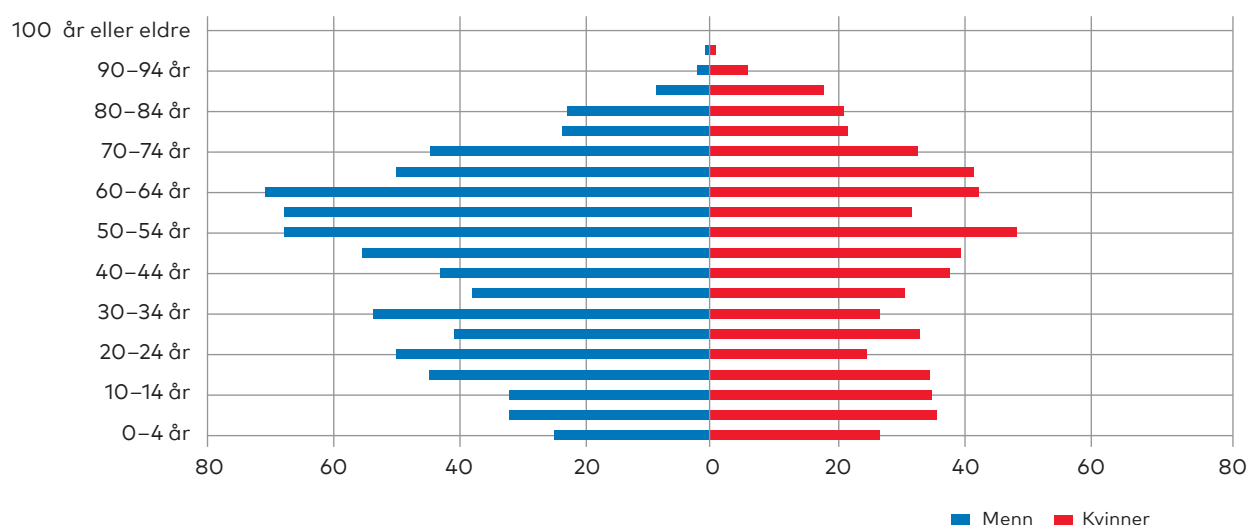


Figure V.10.2. Age structure in Lebesby (Statistics Norway, 2019).

On a grid level (See Figure 1), it is possible to see that the areas around Kjøllefjord and Veidnes and Ifjord have experienced the most positive trend in migration flows, with between three and 24 new residents in the area in the period 2008–2017 (Stjernberg & Penje, 2019). By contrast, Lebesby and Kunes experienced an outward migration of between three and 24 people in the same time-frame. However, whether this is inter-municipal migration, or migrants to or from the municipality, cannot be determined from this map.

### Immigration – part-time or full-time residents

The stable population figures in recent years are primarily linked to the increase in foreign workers and refugees. With the increasing popularity of aquaculture and fishing, due to the sector's formidable profitability, foreign workers are becoming part of the Lebesby community for the greater part of the year. According to the Directorate for Integration and Diversity, immigrants made up 15.7% of the total population in Lebesby in 2019 (Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet, 2019). This number has steadily increased since 2015, and the total number is now 209, with a slight majority of the immigrant's female (Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet, 2019). According to the the Directorate the majority of immigrants are from Lithuania, but since 2016 there has been an increase in refugees, especially Syrians during the



Figure 3. Lebesby municipality migration flows on a grid level\* (Stjernberg & Penje, 2019).

\*Population change explained (Stjernberg & Penje, 2019): **Outward migration:** Light orange = 3 – 24; Orange = 25 – 100; Red = >100

**Inward migration:** Light blue = 3 – 24; Blue = 25 – 100; Dark blue = >100

**Grey** = Change frequency less than 3.

years 2017 and 2018 (Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet, 2019). It is clear that in a municipality experiencing a high influx of refugees, such as Lebesby, there might be a drastic demographic shift again if refugees with larger families decide to leave. As one respondent said: *"If there is a school class with [few] children, and [some] of these are children of refugee parents who decide to move south...it affects the dynamics. [...] You are very vulnerable"* (Interview 8).

It is clear that integrating immigrants into society in Lebesby is a critical factor in upholding the settlement structure in the years to come. However, due to national and international policy developments, it is unlikely that Lebesby will see this scale of influx in the coming years.

### **Labour market and employment**

The municipality of Lebesby is a natural hub for fishing and aquaculture, and it has deep roots in the coastal Sami traditions (interviewees). The shape of the labour market is defined by the fishing industry and by the recent positive surge in the sector drawing people and capital to the area. Despite the success of fishing and aquaculture, the municipality still reports a labour market gap in areas such as education and healthcare (Interviews 6 & 4 & 8). This is in line with the interviews from a large number of small municipalities in Northern Norway. These indicate that there are several successful businesses around, but not a stable supply of labour (Vinsand, 2018). At the same time, the majority of our interviewees reported on the potentially negative dynamics a bigger population could cause, referring to the benefits of existing low unemployment rates and the burden that could otherwise be inflicted upon the municipal economy. *"We don't need more people than what we have jobs for"*, was one response (Interview 6). Finding a balance between attracting enough people to ensure a viable and sustainable society, while at the same time ensuring low levels of unemployment, is a general challenge in otherwise sparsely populated areas.

At the same time, with an industry that is heavily dependent and exposed to the global economy, being able to offer steady employment in the fishing industry has proved difficult (Interview 1). The overall dependency on a male workforce is typical of areas heavily reliant on natural resources. Dependency on older people, often men, also brings with it a need for an eventual generational change,

which is the position facing industries in Lebesby. However, they still remain optimistic about their future: *"I usually say that the graveyard is full of irreplaceable people, but the world goes on nonetheless"* (Interview 1).

An upsurge in the number of younger people seeking employment in the fishing industry, coupled with the influx of migrant workers (albeit seasonally) means that the industries are not overly concerned about the future. An interviewee at the municipality even pointed to a steady decrease in the average age among fishermen in the municipality: *"[...]at one point it was declining by one year every year"* (Interview 6).

Creating a sustainable labour market and employment structure is important for the municipality, as this is evident both from the recent municipal reports on social strategies and throughout the interviews conducted for this report. Being able to provide a varied (multi-faceted) labour market in order to attract workers is one of the main challenges recognised by the municipality (Lebesby Municipality, 2018, s. 12). Moreover, being situated in one of the peripheral areas of Norway, the municipality has also been challenged by the increased centralisation of public sector jobs (Interview 4). In particular, jobs in the Tax Office and in the Food Safety Authority are among the issues of concern mentioned by the interviewees (Interview 4). The increasing number of public sector jobs relocating away from the immediate surroundings of Lebesby has, according to our municipal interviewees, had wider implications for the sustainability of the demographics of the area. The majority of the women in Lebesby are working in either the public or the private sectors, the latter primarily meaning retail, services and trade (Interview 6). Strides are also being made to recruit future staff for the healthcare sector more systematically, by offering summer or holiday jobs to students in order to generate a sense of belonging and loyalty to the area, and hopefully to entice them to apply for jobs after graduation (Interview 4).

### **Municipal and public policies supporting attractiveness**

The municipal strategy on societal development, Lebesby towards 2035, pointed not only to the centrality of ensuring a varied labour market, but also to the importance of ensuring excellent social services – such as childcare and good educational institutions (Lebesby Municipality, 2018, s. 12). The



municipal strategy also takes on board the importance of creating meaningful meeting spaces across a variety of social and cultural activities in order to lay the foundation for a safe community and (ibid) states that: *"If we want to see people moving to Lebesby, we need to focus on our reputation and makes sure that we are communicating the good stories"* (Lebesby Municipality, 2018, s. 12).

This was also identified in the part of the planning process that involved citizens in what was called a 'workshop of ideas', back in January 2018. Speaking positively about Lebesby is recognised as a prerequisite for incentivising others to settle in the municipality (Lebesby Municipality, 2018).

According to the municipal strategy, Lebesby has acted tactically in setting up a buffer fund which will contribute towards unforeseen developments in the municipality – the so-called 'disposisjonsfond'. It is planned that the fund will eventually equate to at least 15% of the overall gross municipal turnover and is a clever buffer against potentially negative developments. Lebesby municipality has generally posted positive annual financial results in the last few years. This is attributed to property tax income and also income from concessionary powers in the municipal plans (Lebesby Municipality, 2018). Nevertheless, in the light of wider governmental austerity measures

there is uncertainty in relation to municipal frameworks from a central government perspective, for example in terms of changes in property taxation policies – a major income source for the municipality. As a result, the future can feel somewhat uncertain (Lebesby Municipality, 2018, s. 4).

However, when drawing up municipal strategies associated with the overall attractiveness of Lebesby, the municipality has hosted public meetings in order to encourage dialogue with a range of stakeholders. (Lebesby Municipality, 2018, s. 5). Taking onboard the views of local people via participatory consultations sends an important message about trust and influence on the community at large. It creates a stronger foundation for making the cause of generating interest in Lebesby as an attractive place a community-wide effort. It puts the ball back at the feet of the local people and generates a sense of shared responsibility.

### **Citizen participation**

Citizen involvement and citizen engagement were both mentioned by most interviewees in Lebesby. They were mentioned in relation to both top-down and bottom-up initiatives, and to the entrepreneurial spirit of the place (Interview 8 & 5). The 'dugnadsånd', which translates roughly as community spirit, and informal volunteering struc-



*Lebesby Town Hall and library. Head of Planning, Hege Johansen, and Business Development, Toril Svendsen, in Lebesby municipality. Photos: Karen Refsgaard*

tures, were also mentioned as a principal foundation for the community, bringing people together to help with continuous improvements to the community; improvements aimed at those currently living there, and also at future generations. One example of top-down actions driving community improvement are the public meetings hosted by the municipality. The issue of local engagement and local initiatives has also been highlighted as a key ingredient for success by our interviewees. Funding exists for town and village attractiveness projects, but the initiative has to come from the grassroots in order to be eligible for funding (Lebesby Municipality, 2018).

From the families interviewed for this case study it was evident that both interviewees and their partners and friends were heavily involved in creating cultural meeting spaces and festivals. Working in a cross-disciplinary way to find new cultural expressions that suit the community in Lebesby is an important way of creating a deeper sense of belonging. *"Trying to recreate an urban culture is not relevant in this context,"* said one of the interviewees. *"We need to engage people in different ways"* (Interview 5 & 8). This interviewee went on to say that someone living in Lebesby needs to be in charge of their own happiness. Encouraging entrepreneurialism and being prepared

to spot new opportunities is an important way to survive and thrive in the area.

Of the various initiatives in the area, the Skábma-festival, an annual cultural event focusing on contemporary Sami-culture and arctic questions, promises a 'nomadic, interdisciplinary festival at the top of Norway'. The festival is hosted by the locally-based Arctic Cultural Lab, and it has been running since 2016 (Arctic Culture Lab, 2018). There is also the voluntary organisation in charge of the Nordkyn Winter Festival, with its focus on winter activities for the family, and also village days in Veidnes (Veidnesdagan) and Kunes (Kunesdagan), as well as an annual music festival, the Chrisfestival (for more, see Lebesby Municipality, 2017).

Lebesby can be characterised as a municipality built on local 'champions' and enthusiasts, called 'ildsjeler' in Norwegian. It is home to. All sorts of voluntary organisations, associations and sports teams (Interview 6). In view of the report from the municipality's public 'workshop of ideas', it is evident that the public is fully engaged in creating a safe and attractive municipality in which to live. One of the interviewees even said that there is a strong sense of public will and drive to make positive changes in the municipality as people move in (Interview 5). However, another of the interviewees commented: *"We are a bit vulnerable though. There*

*Young swimmers having breakfast at the local hotel in Kjøllefjord. Photo: Karen Refsgaard*





are only so many 'mavericks' in this area. If no-one follows in our footsteps...[we will find that] quite a lot of people are used to being given things, rather than giving themselves. I hope the younger generation learn from us" (Interview 8).

Although there are many volunteers in the area, interviewees said that it tends to be the same people volunteering for most of the social and community initiatives in Lebesby. Voluntary groups in the arts and culture sector, and in sports, are also involved in municipal measures to get children active from an early age, as well as preventing isolation and loneliness among at-risk people by providing plenty of meeting spaces and activities to prevent any decline in the general health of the local population (Lebesby Municipality, 2018).

### Education

According to the municipal plans, the overall educational attainment level appears lower than for the region and country at large, although the number of people finishing high school and higher education (long and short) has been on the rise since the 2000. It is currently at 57.6% (SSB, 2019) (Lebesby Municipality, 2018). There is a causal link between educational attainment and the likelihood

of finishing upper secondary school, and the educational level of parents. This makes it increasingly important to focus on improving education in the area (Lebesby Municipality, 2018, s. 16). It should be noted that there has been a small influx of immigrants into the municipality, and that the extent and nature of their education have not been considered in this equation, as figures for these are not available at present (SSB, 2019). There has recently been an effort by the municipality to integrate immigrants via Norwegian language courses, as well as courses about Norwegian society. This is seen as something that would positively impact the community as a whole (Interview 4).

The focus on education is at the core of municipal strategies, both in terms of attracting settlers and in encouraging people to move back to Lebesby. But it is also about ensuring a viable and strong labour force that corresponds to current labour market needs. There is a difference here between different kinds of public sector jobs. It is difficult to find doctors and nurses, while jobs with lower requirements for skills are proving easier to fill. Due to the thin population base, combined with the vast distances in Finnmark, the municipalities and the regional authority have developed an alterna-

### Høyeste fullførte utdanningsnivå for personer 16 år og over

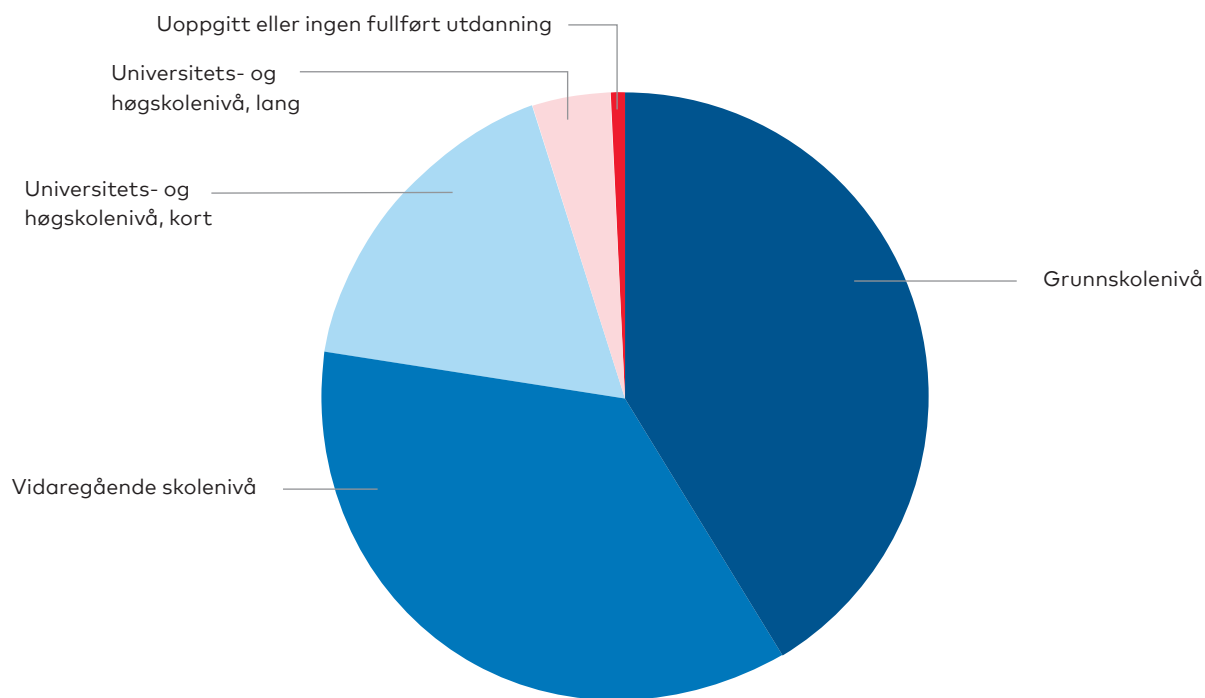


Figure V.10.4. Educational attainment of people aged 16+ (Statistics Norway, 2019)



*Students in the LOSA educational scheme. Photo: Karen Refsgaard*

tive structure – the so-called LOSA model<sup>42</sup>. This is a cooperation agreement between local businesses and the county (which is responsible for upper secondary education in Norway). The LOSA model allows pupils to remain in their home municipality for their first year of high school. The LOSA school is run by the maritime technical college in Nordkapp and the high school in Honningsvåg, in close collaboration with the host municipalities (Lebesby Municipality, 2015). According to municipality websites, teaching happens via teleconferences and all schoolwork is submitted and communicated via the *Fronter* platform (*ibid*).

According to one interviewee, this model offers students a more flexible educational training, especially within the vocational studies. They are able to mix traditional training with practical work in local companies and industries (Interview 7). They also have the opportunity to spend approximately 17 out of 38 school weeks in a local company. The idea is to give them a better starting point for choosing their future vocational stream within the upper secondary school system (Lebesby Municipality, 2015). It also creates stronger ties to the area where students live, and demonstrates that there will be opportunities in Lebesby after they

graduate. However, as the LOSA model is financed by the county, the model's existence is constantly subject to downscaling or closure due to aggregated costs connected with the system (Interview 7). Another interviewee points out that quite a few students find motivation to continue their education through the LOSA system, and that the municipality is fighting alongside the business sector to retain it (Interview 4). LOSA is an important measure, and uses follow up procedures to provide a buffer against increasingly higher drop-out rates among young people in vocational training, (Interview 4).

### **Housing**

Housing is a major issue in Lebesby, and although the population is relatively low, guaranteeing homes is an important way of preventing high numbers of inward commuters who live elsewhere and are not taxable within the municipality. It was referenced by interviewees from the municipality that this was a concern brought up in public meetings by people living in Indre Laksefjord. The municipality is aware of these periodic challenges due, among other things, to short-term contracts in the fishing industry. It is providing local inhabitants with initial loans to build new houses (Lebesby Municipality, 2018, s. 11). However, the location of Lebesby makes it quite expensive to build homes. Shipping materials there is more expensive than to Alta and Hammerfest, two of the bigger towns in

<sup>42</sup> LOSA – Lokal opplæring i samarbeid med arbeidslivet (Local training in collaboration with industry). This structure is available in six municipalities in Finnmark: Berlevåg, Båtsfjord, Gamvik, Hasvik, Lebesby, Loppa, Måsøy and Tana (Lebesby Municipality, 2015).



Finnmark, for example. That said, the housing plot prices are somewhat lower (Interview 1).

The issue of housing is complex, and it is considered to be a bottleneck across Lebesby municipality. According to the municipal strategy, *Lebesby towards 2035*, there are an increasing number of single households.<sup>43</sup> Seasonal workers, alongside settlements of refugees, are also considered to be a challenge. This is not necessarily due to the lack of houses *per se*, but is rather due to the conditions they are in. The municipal public meetings have also called for a greater variety of housing to be made available, including a greater variety of flat sizes, house sizes and forms of temporary housing (Lebesby Municipality, 2018, s. 11). According to Statistics Norway, there are 538 detached houses in Lebesby and 29 flats. Some 8.7% of the population lives in cramped household conditions.<sup>44</sup> The municipality has been urged by its citizens to help stimulate more housebuilding in the area (Lebesby Municipality, 2018).

## Business development

In figure 5 the level of employment in 2016, the anticipated change between 2008 and 2016, and the actual change brought about by local effects is shown. The major employers in the municipality are the construction industry, the service sector, manufacturing, fishing and the public sector. Considering the shifts in employment at local level that may be attributed to local factors, it is clear that the fishing, agricultural and forestry sectors have been positively impacted by local strategies, alongside other local factors and conditions<sup>45</sup> which affect business employment in the area in general. By contrast, manufacturing and the public sector are predominantly affected by national and sectoral trends. Tourism falls under the category of administrative and support service activities and is also positively affected by local conditions and strategies.

Traditional fishing, the fish processing industry and fish farming are central to life in Lebesby.

Drawing on the natural advantage provided by the fishing industry is still considered to be the principal lifeline for remaining and flourishing in the area. Energy and agriculture are also part of the industrial make-up of Lebesby, and the oil and gas exploration fields in the Barents Sea are considered the possible source of a positive ripple effect for settlements in the area in the foreseeable future (Interview 6). The ability to influence the pathway of different industries is not within the municipal jurisdiction, and depends rather on regional, national and international framework agreements, strategies and price fluctuations (Interview 6; Lebesby Municipality 2018). In order to utilise these conditions, the municipality has invested in harbours so that it can improve the economic conditions for the fisheries locally. Nevertheless, the municipality is considered an active and engaged party by several of the interviewees, both with regards to recruitment and infrastructure projects (Interview 7; Interview 1).

While agriculture, for example depends upon, and is protected by, the national subsidy framework and favourable conditions to incentivise food production, the fishing industry remains highly exposed to global economic fluctuations. These global fluctuations determine and influence the ability to secure feedstock for fish farming, trading schemes and global fish prices. Unsurprisingly, the debate on sustainability of fish farming has also reached Lebesby but is generally understood to be an integral part of the overall labour market in the area (Interview 6), that is, Gamvik municipality. With perfect conditions for fish farming and smolt production, the prospects for the fish farming industry are bright (Interview 6). Two of the largest hatchery plants for fish in the country are located in the bay of Laksefjord. They hold concessions to produce up to 21.5 million smolt per year (Lebesby Municipality, 2018). The hatchery plants play a pertinent role in shaping the employment structure of the municipality, since the seasonal variation involved in fishing signifies a precarious situation for its employees (Lebesby Municipality, 2018) (Interview 1). One of our interviewees from the municipality said that the average age amongst fishermen has steadily been declining over the past few years. At one point the average age was declining by one year every year

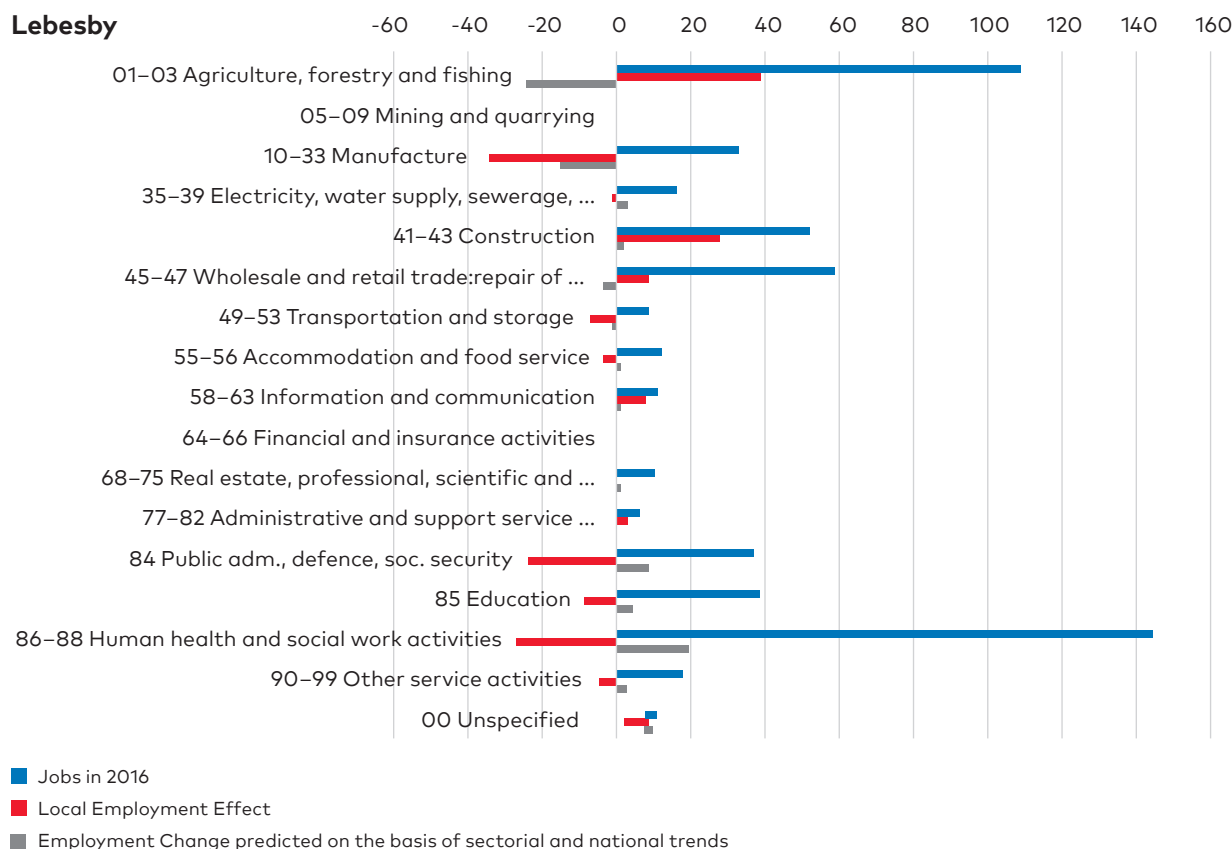
*"You used to tell your sons and daughters that they should never consider becoming fishermen, but*

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43 The average number of persons per household was 1.99 in 2019 (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2019).

44 Cramped households are defined as "people living in households where: 1) The number of rooms in the house/flat is fewer than the number of persons dwelling in the space, or one person living in a single room flat/house; 2) Below 25m<sup>2</sup> per person." (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2019).

45 These factors can be due to, for example, access to markets, the predominant industrial culture, municipal facilitation, etc (Turunen, 2018).



**Figure V.10.5. Relative local employment effect, 2008–2016 (Turunen, 2018)**

that has changed. It's the fishermen who currently earn the most in our society" (Interview 6).

The differentiated payroll tax, otherwise known as employers' national insurance contributions, was also mentioned as an important mechanism for developing and maintaining local industry in Lebesby. Lebesby falls within band V, which means the complete absence (0%) of payroll taxes for the industries in the area (Skatteetaten, 2019). The interviewees therefore stressed the importance of pushing industries and businesses to have their employees registering in the municipality or moving to the municipality in order to benefit from the taxable income they would contribute towards, and in that way contribute towards the development of the municipality (interview). However, payroll taxes, alongside regional development plans and the framework conditions for primary sectors, all fall outside local jurisdiction.

Another national scheme, 'Tiltakssonen i Nord-Troms og Finnmark', which has important implications for industry and settlement, is concerned with the geographical differentiation of personal transfers and tax releases as part of the district

policy set up in 1990. Comment from a KMD official also highlights the exemption from social security payments as one of the most important financial measures, in combination with others. An evaluation by Angell et al (2012) concluded that these personalised measures did indeed have an economic effect.

Safeguarding natural and renewable resources in a sound manner is important for a society such as Lebesby's. As one of the interviewees stated, "the primary sector is the most important one, and it allows our community to thrive" (Interview 6). But the need to move with the times is also significant for industrial survival. The municipal plan, Lebesby towards 2035, explicitly mentions the need to bring new ideas, research and development into the existing industries, focussing on how to maximise existing resources and finding new potential avenues for development (Lebesby Municipality, 2018, s. 22).

Increasing levels of digitalisation were also mentioned in the interviews, both as a trend which has become a lifeline to industries in the area, but also as a threat to jobs as automation gradually

Jobs in Lebesby									
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Jobs in 2016
A. Agriculture, forestry and fishing	95	94	86	106	114	97	103	97	109
B. Mining and quarrying	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C. Manufacture	83	73	28	51	77	68	47	35	33
E. Electricity, water supply, sewerage, waste management	15	15	12	17	15	15	15	17	16
F. Construction	22	25	17	22	13	26	51	51	52
G. Wholesale and retail trade: repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	54	59	61	59	54	60	51	49	59
H. Transportation and storage	17	17	15	14	12	10	11	13	9
I. Accommodation and food service activities	14	14	10	16	12	16	15	7	12
J. Information and communication	3	0	0	10	6	8	7	5	11
K. Financial and insurance activities	0	0	3	3	3	3	0	0	0
L. Real estate, professional, scientific and technical activities	10	8	8	8	8	9	6	11	10
N. Administrative and support service activities	3	0	3	3	6	7	6	6	6
O. Public adm., defence, soc. security	52	50	44	44	157	74	49	43	37
P. Education	44	50	50	54	7	35	41	30	39
Q. Human health and social work activities	151	152	152	159	106	134	142	150	144
S. Other service activities	20	19	15	17	11	13	13	19	18
X. Unspecified	6	0	3	3	0	0	3	5	3
<b>SUM</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>558</b>

secures a foothold in the local community (Interview 4). In a small place where the municipality is the largest employer and industry is prone to robotification, it is clear that digitalisation is a double-edged sword. Ensuring that the municipality has access to a robust and excellent digital network plays an important role in municipal plans (Lebesby Municipality, 2018). For that reason, the municipality contributed financial support to the development of a 4G network (Interview 4). This development was particularly argued for with regard to fish farming plants but was also considered important from a rural development perspective (Interview 4). According to one interviewee, the state has placed a demand on the Norwegian telecoms company, Telenor, to provide a 72-hour back up mechanism for the digital network. This is in order to safeguard coverage throughout the year and the seasons (Interview 4).

### Tourism

Tourism is another interesting sector in Lebesby, and efforts has been made to increase the municipality's visibility by connecting with those involved in fishing tourism, outdoor enthusiasts and the cruise ship Hurtigruten, creating a 'step off-step on' offer between Kjøllefjord and Mehamn, organised by local companies (Lebesby Municipality, 2018, s. 18) Interview 4). Although it is a challenge to create a proper breakthrough in tourism, the efforts to do so largely depend upon volunteers and local 'champions' (Interview 4). The drive and enthusiasm shown by these locals demonstrates the main resource in the area and the source of a thriving community: *"Human resources are our primary strength"* (Interview 4).





*Hurtigruten stops, and the passengers take a tour with Vida Sami Camp on the way to Mehamn.  
Photos: Karen Refsgaard*

The municipality has been a multicultural hub for centuries, incorporating the Sami, the Kvens<sup>46</sup>, and the Norwegians. According to the municipal strategy devised by Lebesby in 2018 there has been an increased interest in the Sami people's culture and language in recent years (Lebesby Municipality, 2018). This is reflected in the upsurge of Sami-related industry, with tourism being one example (Interview 2 & 5). The Sami parliament's subsidy framework for business development in Sami areas acts as a positive incentive here (see more, Sámediggi, 2018). The subsidy is aimed at business development in and around reindeer husbandry, as well as cultural and handicraft (duodji) businesses and tourism initiatives in the Sámediggi's action zones across municipalities, and across the country more widely (Sámediggi, 2018). These action zones do not include all parts of the municipality. For example, Kjøllefjord is not part of this zone, although other areas in Lebesby municipality are.

Tourism in the northernmost region of Europe naturally involves presenting the best of the natural environment in Lebesby municipality. Various tourism activities have been put in place, such as fishing opportunities on the Laksefjord plateau and bird watching tourism in Veidnes. As the tourism industry also includes Sámi culture, food and design. The Arctic Coast was initiated by local

enthusiasts in 2008 (Arctic Coast, n.d.) and offers bookings in conjunction with the Hurtigruten stopover in Kjøllefjord and Mehamn. Supported by Innovation Norway, the municipality and the Sámi parliament, the business is going well, with 300-400 visitors during the summer months (Interview 2). Preserving Sámi culture is important to the area of Lebesby, with its notably strong roots in the Sámi sea culture. Paying increased attention to the Sámi people is a relatively new initiative, and since the inauguration of the Sámi parliament in 1989 it has become somewhat easier to keep the culture alive (interview). The Sámi parliament provides funding towards, for example, business investments promoting Sámi culture or the Sámi lifestyle, as well as the aforementioned fishing trading schemes for Sámi areas (Interview 2).

### ***The fishing industry – seasonal issues***

The fishing industry plays an important role across most of eastern Finnmark, and Lebesby is no exception to this rule. Optimism is felt across the industry, and the number of fishermen has gone up in recent years (Interview 4; Lebesby Municipality, 2018)). The fishing industry is a highly profitable business and draws in seasonal workers, predominantly men, from all over Europe. The industry started importing migrant workers, mainly from Lithuania and Poland, in 2005 (Interview 1). Few of the foreign workers settle permanently, but companies such as Lerøy Norway Seafoods and the municipality are both insisting that efforts, such as organising language courses in Norwegian, need to be introduced in order to improve the integration of foreign workers into Lebesby society. Taking steps to ensure decent wages and good liv-

46 The Kvens ('Kvener' in Norwegian) is a Finnic population group originating from the Bothnian Arc and the area between Lofoten (Norway) and the Kola peninsula (Russia). The Kvens have been living in Norway since the late middle ages, with a greater influx of migration happening in the 1700-1800s (Norske Kveners Forbund, n.d.). According to Lane (2011), the number of people of Kven-origin in Norway is roughly estimated to be around 50,000.

ing conditions, including low rental prices, are also important measures to ensure that foreign labour chooses Lerøy Norway Seafoods over its competitors. Despite the general understanding that a generational shift is potentially detrimental to many companies, businesses and the municipality are highly positive towards the younger generation taking over in time. The main concern is holding on to young people, especially as the stability of work differs greatly throughout the year, with high risk and unpredictability negatively impacting the industry.

One interviewee put it this way: *"If you cannot offer people stable job and work every day, it affects your ability to attract the best. But we've been lucky. We have a few very capable young people who work here. We try to keep them busy and to prioritise them"* (Interview 1).

Dependency on fisheries also influences the availability of so-called 'blue stream specialisations'



*Fishermen preparing their boats in Kjøllefjord.*  
Photo: Karen Refsgaard

### INFOBOX V.10.1. Lerøy Norway Seafoods AS

Lerøy Norway Seafoods AS exemplifies the close connections between the traditional fishing profession, the impact of global trade and the reality of being at the mercy of seasonal changes. All of this impacts on the labour market. The differentiated pay roll tax is therefore an important measure for remaining profitable, or at least making ends meet (Interview 1).

Lerøy Norway Seafoods AS is one of the largest companies on the scene, and holds a concession to fish across all of eastern Finnmark. The trawling concessions adhering to the eastern part of Finnmark oblige the concession holder to offer their catch to landing sites in the area, and ensuring that their department in Kjøllefjord has the necessary capacity. The fishery in Kjøllefjord also has an "activity obligation". One of the interviewees underlined the importance by saying that *"it is crystal clear to me that without the activity obligation at our fishery, the fishery would have been decommissioned"* (Interview 1). Competition from Nergård Polar Kjøllefjord AS, for example, is also warmly welcomed, despite challenging Lerøy Norway Seafoods' activities with a new, modern fishery (interview). The plans and location for the new fishery were carefully devised so as to link up with potential tourism from the cruise ship Hurtigruta AS (NRK, 2016). According to the interviewee at Lerøy Norway

Seafoods AS, this meant that their focus on services has improved, especially with regards to offering longer general opening hours, as well as weekend opening hours (Interview 1).

Product development is also part of creating a stronger profile, and the interviewee at Lerøy Norway Seafoods was highly positive as to the attention the company pays to its staff with regard to potential projects. Although it is a big company, strides have been taken to develop new products. For example, the company has developed king crab products in eastern Finnmark, which is a highly profitable business. With the existing know-how and technology in-house, the potential for a new and innovative take on products is within the company's capacity. *"I usually compare Lerøy with a train. It takes a while before it gets up to speed, but when it does it can do anything. And what is done is done quickly"* (Interview 1).

The quota scheme for king crab fishing is open to all, conditional on the fulfilment of certain criteria (Fiskeridirektoratet, 2019). According to the municipal business consultant, this an excellent stepping stone for getting the younger generation into the fishing sector. It is profitable and it helps to establish smaller businesses on the scene (Lebesby Municipality, 2018).





*Fishery fleet in Kjøllefjord and with three fish factories. Photo: Karen Refsgaard*

in high school and in the technical colleges, focusing on fisheries and aquaculture. Recognising competencies outside mainstream education, such as those developed during the workers' time at either the fisheries or at sea is another important measure. According to one interviewee from the municipality, a number of young people are eligible to take a competence-based diploma from a technical college, usually in smolt and fish farming or ship mechanics. Similar measures have also been introduced at Lerøy Norway Seafoods AS, with the diploma leading to a pay rise. However, the symbolic effect of attaining the certification is arguably more important: *"Those who have worked here over five years are eligible to take a technical college diploma. I did it myself [...] It really means something to you personally. It's a recognition of your skills. It's important for people to have something to show, something that says you have a certain competence and certain capabilities"* (Interview 1).

### **Young people and families – current and future perspectives**

It is not readily evident that people move to wherever there are jobs. The need to live in an area surrounded by the promise of freedom in the nature that surrounds you, being close to your roots, and the yearning to make a difference: these are other aspects that might entice people to move back to their home areas. Some come back to help reduce

their student loans<sup>47</sup> or to seek an area full of the promise of new adventure. *"You often end up going because of the feeling you get. You just do it then"* (Interview 5). The above-mentioned aspects were all part of the families' rationale for settling in Lebesby.

As another interviewee said: *"There was never any doubt about returning [home]. I was away for a while, for eight years, studying. But I missed home and being able to contribute to something bigger than one's own life. I have always been involved in volunteering and 'dugnad'"* (Interview 5).

The municipality is actively engaging with ways of encouraging permanent settlement in Lebesby, something which is clear from the section on society in the municipal plan for Lebesby (Lebesby Municipality, 2018). According to the business consultant in Lebesby, a primary marketing tool for the municipality is demonstrating the positive and comfortable surroundings that exist for raising children (interview). According to the families interviewed, having children in Lebesby is easy. Those families interviewed list ready access to all of the services that they need, along with the closeness and security of the local environment for their children to grow up in. This was echoed by one of the young people from the local upper secondary school. *"I think it is a good place to grow up*

<sup>47</sup> Students loan in 'Tiltakssonen for Northern Norway' are on better conditions than elsewhere.



*in. I think it is, at least. The distances to things aren't 'big.' You're quite free to do whatever you'd like."*

At the centre of the municipality's work in creating an attractive and viable place to live is the conundrum of how to ensure that young people return to Lebesby after their studies. This is one of the most important concerns of the municipality's attractiveness plans. Ensuring enjoyable living conditions for young people is part of the strategy to retain or incentivise young people to return to Lebesby. Indeed, *"It is the most important measure we have"* (Interview 6). According to the interviewees, this reality is exemplified by the municipality's focus on creating a good and varied list of courses in the local School of Arts, as well as youth activities, sports and events. For example, the School of Arts is working in an interdisciplinary way to create a positive environment; one where children are allowed and encouraged to develop their cultural interests. Some of the children's shows have even been held for passengers on Hurtigruten.

One interviewee noted that *"the children were very proud"* (Interview 5). Creating an environment to thrive and to be creative in is important, both for stimulating intellectual curiosity (Interview 5) and arguably also for encouraging job creation at a later stage in life. Due to the difficulty of attracting applicants to jobs in the public sector, these jobs remain stable. and the ability to create something new is always on the horizon. According to one of the interviewees, *"you need to be a bit of an entrepreneur to live here."* Both of the families interviewed were actively engaged in either informal or formal volunteering, creating their own businesses or cultural initiatives.

The interviewees also mentioned an array of different activities which are either free or cheap to use, for both young people and families. With a cinema, concerts, the occasional theatre production and festivals, family life in Lebesby can be pretty active. *"We have always thought that we have what we need for living a good life. We have*

*Baby meeting at the local library. Photo: Karen Refsgaard*



*what we want. We almost have too much, actually. We almost don't have time to do everything we want to do. We have to choose."*

The sports arenas are free, and the municipality has invested in floodlit skiing tracks and hiking paths. *"It is meant not only to be a good place to live, but also an affordable place to live as well,"* said one of the interviewees. *"No sports teams or other associations cost more than NOK 500 a year."* The local swimming club is also popular. It has a contract with the local hotel, where the swimmers eat breakfast after their morning practice (Interview 6). This further emphasises the role of the local community in creating a safe and tight-knit community in the north.

Another important initiative is the youth club, which is open every weekend and supported by a youth leader. The local Lebesby Youth Club is one of the last remaining youth clubs in all of Finnmark. Prior to Facebook, the municipality also organised 'Welcome home' meetings for young people attending schools elsewhere. The municipality is actively using Facebook to stay in touch with both the younger generations and the adult population in Lebesby.

### **The future**

Among the young people interviewed for this case study, there is a shared sense of freedom in living in the north. Although words such as 'boring' cropped up during the interview, the majority of boys were positive towards the idea of returning to Lebesby after completing degrees or professional diplomas – provided there are jobs available. The girls were more reluctant, and listed the lack of variety among people and the possible lack of jobs as some of the reasons. The possibility of creating your own workplace was seen as a positive by both groups. *"Not every profession has job opportunities available...there is work, you just need to do what you're able to do"* (Interview 3).

At the moment, it is easy for upper-secondary school students to find jobs, and quite a few of our

interviewees had part-time ones outside school – or through school and the LOSA model. The LOSA model holds some promise as buffer against out-migration. According to interviewee 4, the current centralisation of politics at national level, due to the merging of potential public sector jobs, makes it more difficult to retain younger people. Another challenge is to entice younger healthcare personnel to come to the area, as the healthcare profession is too small, and the nearest hospital is 400 km away (Interview 4). This interviewee also said, *"those in the village who get a medical degree find it hard to come back, as it is too close for comfort – they know everyone."* However, the intimate environment could be seen as a good starting point for gaining experience. That is the case for doctors, physiotherapists, teachers, police officers, healthcare workers or just those wanting to try something new, according to the municipal business consultant (Interview 6 & 4). The scope and foundation for building something of your own – in terms of work or business – remains plausible and tenable.

Smaller municipalities have to fight for their survival on several fronts, it might be argued. Lebesby has taken action in order to help them continue to thrive. It has done this by focusing on future generations. Efforts to create a sense of belonging by investing time and money in ensuring safe, and strong communities not only having coming generations in focus. The various efforts to include local people in participatory processes, and by allowing for spurs and flares of both formal and informal volunteering aimed at nurturing a strong local identity. When preserving local identity, spatially bounded idiosyncrasies become increasingly apparent, of course. Indeed, a sense of local pride may already be firmly manifested in young people's perceptions of Lebesby: *"You're always proud to be coming from somewhere, or from here. I am proud of it. Why shouldn't you be proud?"* (Interview 3).

## Conclusion

**Table V.10.2. Attractiveness of Alvdal and obstacles/challenges to overcome**

Good practices and main reasons behind attractiveness	Obstacles and challenges
<p><b>Education</b> LOSA-model allowing for mixing training with practical work, while also allowing for staying at home during the first year at upper secondary school, and closer follow-up.</p> <p><b>Employment and jobs</b> Positive local employment trends in fishing and smolt production and construction, including investments in harbours. Sami parliament subsidy for business development.</p> <p><b>Entrepreneurship culture</b> Companies and the municipality are working together to concentrate on young people, with summer jobs, diplomas, etc. in fishing and aquaculture.</p> <p><b>Governance and participation</b> Societal development strategy: LOSA idea workshops/ citizen involvement, distributable reserve</p> <p><b>Infrastructure and transportation</b> Municipal efforts to ensure connections between tourism enterprises and Hurtigruten, including pride in Sami culture. Construction and investments in harbours.</p> <p><b>Immigration</b> Positive initiatives from enterprises with language courses, also providing decent working and living conditions for foreign labour.</p> <p><b>Housing</b> Cheap loans for housing.</p> <p><b>Quality of life and local community</b> Municipality providing good environments for children. As motives for re-migration or inward migration quality of life is cited more often than jobs. In particular, the creating of opportunities for youth, leisure activities and summer jobs. A strong sense of community ownership, with voluntary organisations and "firebrands".</p> <p><b>Taxation</b> Norway's differentiated payroll tax is important for local businesses.</p>	<p><b>Education</b> Low educational attainment. LOSA-model is dependent on annual decisions from the county council.</p> <p><b>Employment and jobs</b> Creating a sustainable (stable and multi-faceted) labour market and employment structure is a challenge for the municipality. This became evident both from recent municipal reports on social strategies and in the interviews conducted for this report. Being able to provide a multi-faceted labour market in order to attract people is one of the main challenges recognised by the municipality – another is the gender balance. Relocation of public sector jobs and decision-making posts (police, public administration, postal offices). Attracting younger healthcare personnel.</p> <p><b>Housing</b> Housing is scarce and expensive for building, due to periodic commuting, increasing number of single households and location issues.</p> <p><b>Infrastructure and transportation</b> Ensuring a robust and stable digital network.</p> <p><b>Immigration</b> Integration of immigrants into local communities is a critical factor in maintaining positive settlements.</p> <p><b>Young people – living, staying/returning</b> Girls more reluctant to move back than boys after education, due to lack of variety in people and jobs. Attracting younger healthcare personnel.</p>

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## Interviewees in lebesby

1. Lerøy Norway Seafoods AS
2. Davvi Siida
3. Young people
4. Business consultant
5. Parents
6. The municipality
7. Comments by Benedikte, KMD