

A photograph of a sunlit path in a park. Sunbeams (crepuscular rays) stream through the dense green trees on the left, creating a dramatic, hazy atmosphere. In the foreground, a black street lamp stands on a grassy verge. Below the lamp is a small white sign with the text 'Zum See' and a right-pointing arrow. To the right of the lamp, a concrete curb borders a paved path that curves into the distance. Further right, a metal railing is visible. The overall scene is peaceful and evokes a sense of a quiet, rural or suburban setting.

# Rural Futures

published by ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius

**30 different views on city-countryside relations**





# Rural Commons

What drives social and economic change? Who contributes to and who benefits from developmental processes? When it comes to questions like these, rural areas and local populations all over the globe have repeatedly found themselves excluded from or belittled in public and political debates. Considering some of the clichéd ways in which rural areas are perceived, this should come as no surprise: What is naturally harmonic and authentic, needs not or cannot change. On the other hand: What and who appears to be reluctant to progress does not need to be considered. But as the contributions to this magazine show, these stereotypical views are on the way to being overcome. Amid a global climate crisis and a multitude of debates on ecological, economic, and social sustainability, rural areas across the globe prove their transformative relevance. This is significantly due to local people initiating and leading communal projects, taking matters of designing rural futures into their own hands. Their commitment draws attention, demonstrating what cooperation on a local level makes possible and restoring as well as creating new images of ruralities. Rural Commons also show that, however specific the local context of people's initiative may be, they can serve as role model for participatory action anywhere. ■

# Self-Empowerment

## Sæd Ubjerg – a small village with many good forces

**Karin Lorenzen Kjærgaard grew up in a small village in southern Jutland. After studying culture and economics and completing many development projects as a volunteer, she is now working as a rural development consultant in Tønder Municipality.**

The village of Sæd is located in southern Jutland, only a few kilometers from the Danish-German border. It is small, counting just over 180 inhabitants, with no grocery store, no school and no kindergarten. Yet, it is a village full of life and optimism. This is mainly thanks to a group of local people that have set up an association dedicated to the village's development. They joined forces and arranged a large play area, a small playground, and a shared garage full of gardening tools and machines for everyone to use. Recently, they added three unique shelters that look like birdhouses, which are rented out to tourists. The association also raised funds to build a small but well-attended learning hut where students and adults alike can learn about renewable energy and climate change.

The story of Sæd is unique, and so is its backstory. In the debate around the construction of six new wind turbines, locals and officials were divided – but ultimately, the turbines were erected, with the village receiving around 1.9 million Danish kroner as compensation. The money has since been used for development projects throughout the village. Along this journey, the people of Sæd developed strong social cohesion as well as a sense of agency and pride in living in a flourishing rural village. As another result of these developments, there are no longer any empty houses. Additionally, the citizens set up a company that bought and renovated a house where people can settle for up to 12 months and test whether or not living in the countryside might suit them. The innovative approach to attract new citizens seems to work: All of the three families that lived in the house have settled nearby.

Research shows that rural development requires the presence of human, social, and economic capital. You need the right people with a positive mindset, a sense of cohesion and agency, and, finally, the financial resources. It seems that it is precisely this cocktail that is being mixed perfectly in Sæd. ■

# Join Hands

## Protecting local amenities is a common task

What comes to mind when you hear that somebody has a village shop? Tranquility, rest, rural idyll? In many cases the reality can turn out to be very different: few customers, minimal order volume, too little purchasing power, and the continuous question of profitability. It's a tough task running a village shop, which is probably one of the key reasons as to why there are fewer shops in rural areas in general. But a village shop is more than a store: it serves as a meeting point, a center of information and communication, as a means of self-organization and direct marketing for regional goods, and very often it serves as a place of multiple supply. A village shop can be a "social meeting hub" (Kersten/Neu/Vogel 2022) and help create social interaction.

**Miriam Alexandra Markowski grew up in a village north of Hamburg, where she now lives again. The daughter of a hairdresser's-shop owner, she does research on local amenities in rural areas.**

With such diverse roles attributed to it, many locals and municipalities are faced with the challenge not only of establishing and running a village shop, but also of supporting its important multiple functions. For owners or even volunteers, it's often too difficult to manage on one's own. This calls for solutions involving a team of people. The government could support financially, for example. It also helps when big companies, organizations, or networks lay the foundations for



The MarktTreff-Team at the MarktTreff Barkauer Land in Kirchbarkau (district of Plön) with manager Dr. Dagmar Thiele-Gliesche (sign in hand)

successful business strategies by sharing their knowledge and contacts. Furthermore, volunteers can contribute local knowledge, innovation, and motivation. And then, of course, there are the owners. Their commercial knowledge, commitment and personality lay the groundwork to a shop. In short: The longevity of a village shop can be increased when the responsibility of running it is shared. Concepts of Community Development (cf. Elsen) can help in this way.

In my opinion, there is one other important point: Protecting local amenities helps to protect democracy, as it decreases feelings of abandonment or of having been "forgotten," which can lead people towards more extreme political routes. Let's join hands so that in the future, when we hear the term "village," we can still think of tranquility and rural idyll. ■



# | Contributors

**Alina Gombert**, Co-Founder //KOMPOST Ensemble, Goethe University Frankfurt/Main

**Dr. Annette Aagaard Thuesen**, Associate Professor, Danish Centre for Rural Research and University of Southern Denmark

**Dr. Anna Hofmann**, Head of Research and Scholarship, ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius

**Dr. Hamza Ayari**, Agrégé in geography, Tunis' Faculty of Human and Social Sciences

**Chloe Helen Bent**, Doctoral Researcher, University of Birmingham (UK)

**David Laubmeier**, Photographer, FRAMELESS Bewegtbildproduktion

**Monica Andersen**, MA in Sustainable Tourism, Aalborg University

**Prof. Dr. Egon Bjørnshave Noe**, Head of the Danish Centre for Rural Research, University of Southern Denmark

**Eleonore Harmel**, Co-Founder, studio amore and Project Manager, Thünen-Institut für Regionalentwicklung

**Geo Sebastian**, Freelance Consultant Rural development

**Dr. Gvantsa Salukvadze**, Affiliated Researcher at Tbilisi State University and the University of Zurich

**Hauke Feddersen**, Research Assistant, University of Hamburg

**Prof. Dr. Ines Lüder**, Professor for Urban Planning, Regional Building and Design, HAWK University of Applied Sciences and Arts Hildesheim

**Dr. Inga Reimers**, Postdoctoral Research Assistant, HafenCity University Hamburg

**Joel Rodriguez Richardson**, Student and Research Assistant, TH Lübeck

**Jonathan Rahn**, PhD Student in Rural Development, Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)

**Karin Lorenzen**, Rural coordinator, municipality of Tønder, Denmark

**Katerina-Shelagh Boucoyannis**, Architect / Researcher

**Dr. Klara Stumpf**, Program Lead, Alfred Toepfer Stiftung F.V.S.

**Lea Loretta Zentgraf**, Doctoral Researcher, Food for Justice: Power, Politics and Food Inequalities in a Bioeconomy, HCIAS, Heidelberg University

**Leon Jank**, Co-Founder, studio amore and Researcher at Technische Universität Dresden

**Luis Rieken**, Project Manager, ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius

**Lukas Dörrie**, Co-Founder //KOMPOST Ensemble, University of Kassel

**PD Dr. Manuel Trummer**, Associate Professor, Comparative European Ethnology, University Regensburg

**Mara Thiry**, Student and Research Assistant, TH Lübeck

**Matthias Koch**, Project Manager, ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius

**Mikheil Kurdadze**, Fundraising Officer, Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus)

**Miriam Alexandra Markowski**, Head of real estate management, BürgerStiftung Hamburg

**Monica Andersen**, MA in Sustainable Tourism, Aalborg University

**Nora Franziska Ebberts**, Student and Research Assistant, TH Lübeck

**Dr. Ralph Richter**, Senior Researcher at the Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS)

**Temur Gugushvili**, Assistant Professor, International Black Sea University

# | Imprint

## Editor

ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius  
Feldbrunnenstraße 56  
20148 Hamburg  
phone +49 40 413 366  
fax +49 40 413 367 00  
email zeit-stiftung@zeit-stiftung.de  
www.zeit-stiftung.de

## Responsible

Prof. Manuel J. Hartung  
CEO and Chairman of the Executive Board

## Project + Editorial Team

Dr. Anna Hofmann  
Luis Rieken  
Matthias Koch  
Robin Micha

## Concept + Graphic Design

THE LINK GbR  
Jan Dimog + Hendrik Bohle

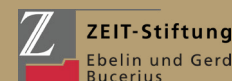
## Proofreading

Molly O'Laughlin Kemper

## Photos

All photos © David Laubmeier. Photos in Sections 1, 2, and 3 courtesy of the authors, unless otherwise indicated.

## A project series by



## Partners



KGL. DÄNISCHE  
BOTSCHAFT



The ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius would like to thank the authors, interview partners, and photographers for their contributions to this publication.

The ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius has made every effort to locate all copyright holders. Should we have overlooked any rights, justified claims will of course be settled within the framework of applicable agreement.

Hamburg, July 2023