

Unit 3 - Understanding the community

The oldest of the remaining houses in Thorupstrand was built around 1715 when traders settled in the area. Until the middle of the 19th century trade (between Norway and Denmark) over Skagerrak was the center of the community, but slowly the fishery became the livelihood of the villagers. Fishery remains the main source of income in the village. While a few of the fishers of Thorupstrand fish from the port city Hanstholm, 30 km further west, the landing place at the beach continues to be the main workplace in the village. For every fishing vessel roughly 4 people are employed on land: Gutting the fish, transporting the fish, selling the fish, maintaining and operating the landing place, maintaining and building the boats and fishing gears. (Read more about how the wooden boats are built in the neighboring village Slettestrand: <http://www.havbaade.dk/baadebyggeri/>)

In 2014 a new packing, sorting and icing facility was established in connection to the landing place, including a processing hall and a fish shop selling only low-impact caught fish. This modernization was possible due to donations from private and public funding seeing the value in promoting the eco-friendly fishery (<https://thorupstrandfiskehus.dk>).

There is no grocery store in Thorupstrand so the villagers must go to Vester Thorup 4 kilometers further south for shopping. This village is mainly inhabited by farmers and the fishery leaves no trace of itself here except from the smokehouse selling fish. This reinforces the feeling of Thorupstrand being a very local and small community. The children of Thorupstrand go to school in Klim, yet another small village further inland.

The landing place is the center of Thorupstrand. This is not only a workplace but also the place villagers go to meet and talk daily. The main subjects are the fishing and the weather, but unlike a lot of other places it is not just something to talk about, but a very present and determination factor in the everyday life: can the fishers go fishing or not? The locals have a word for it: 'Hawvejr' (meaning 'sea-weather' in the local dialect). This underlines the fact, that the livelihood of the fishers is completely dependent on 'nature'. Nature is not just something to 'protect' or 'consume', but an all times present factor to cooperate with.

When talking to the fishers in Thorupstrand, it is evident that fishing is not just a job, but a way of living as independent and self-employed fishing people. Being a wage-worker is a common joke to them. Fishing is not a *means* to profit, wage and leisure time, or a career. It is a way of living, and becomes an *end* in itself (Andresen, J., Højrup, T. 2008: <http://www.havbaade.dk/thenecessity.pdf>).

The permanent population in Thorupstrand estimates around 200 people. During the summer the population increase dramatically due to around 2.000 people visiting summer cabins in the area. And even more are visiting for only a day - leaving again in the night. This points to the fact that Thorupstrand is not just a fishing village anymore but also a growing tourist destination. People are coming to relax and enjoy the beach and forest, but also to watch the vessels being hauled onto the shore and catch a glimpse of the fishers 'in action'.

Since 2015, four of the fishers in Thorupstrand have been the main characters of the national, weekly documentary called 'Gutterne på Kutterne' ('the guys at the boats'). They have become famous for practicing traditional Danish fishing techniques and advocating better rights for small scale, ecofriendly fishery in Denmark.

In the local community there are conflicting feelings about the increasing tourism. On the one hand, many long to live as they have always done: As a local fishing community without tourism. On the other hand, there is an increasing awareness that they need the political attention and sympathy that tourists contribute to in order to ensure better fishing policies for small scale fishery. Questions have been raised whether it is possible to maintain the of existence of sustainable life-modes in the coastal communities, while tourism is introduced (read more about this: Højrup2011 - <http://www.havbaade.dk/theneccesity.pdf>). Tourism is already creating a lot of jobs in the neighboring villages, and local initiatives such as a ‘Sustainability Festival’ is rising in the region.

Remaining as a small-scale local fishing community in an industrialized, global world is not an easy job. External forces such as privatized fishing rights and politics, EU legislations, and the stock market are both the foundation of existence and the biggest threats to the community. Being better armed to handle external forces the fishers in Thorupstrand to organized themselves as in a fishing rights owning corporative.

- Howdoes it do to people, if they exploit the sea and the natural resources they are dependent on instead of living with it?
- Is sustainable tourism possible? And is the sustainable co-existence of tourism and small-scale fishery a possibility?