A VILLAGE WITHIN
IN A WORLD ON THE EDGE

An investigation of a new housing typology on rural land

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Abstract

This thesis will present the background and thoughts behind the architectural project “Village within” which aims to be a rural, holistic, earth-centered settlement, as an alternative to increasing urbanization. I have been working together with two villages in Västerbotten - Sikeå and Rökå - and this project is the result from meetings and discussions with them, as well as experiences from a citizen-perspective. The thesis will elaborate on the subjects of food, the countryside’s position in a globalized, industrial and city-centered civilization, on the ongoing environmental collapse and the concept of resilience. Utopian ideas and their most classical impasses have been important to understand how this project is just one in a long history of human urge to think of, or create a better world. Examples of historical and contemporary initiatives of local self-sufficiency, attempts to “escape the system”, movements for ruralization, together with discussions on how a future village could look like have all created a rich baseline of inspiration to this project.
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Preface – A hole in the wall

As a grownup who have lived all my life in cities, I find myself looking at cheese, only having a vague sense of what process, effort and climate impact is behind it. Even more abstract it becomes when looking at tofu, trying to interpret its stages of refinery followed by transportations across the world to end up at Coop Ålidhem. I can read, maybe look at a video tutorial. Still I feel I have no real knowledge. Modern cars is another example of a highly complex item, often built in China, that I have a very superficial sense of how it actually functions and would have no idea of how to fix if needed. I am totally dependent on food and cars and they surround me every day, yet, they are highly abstract phenomena’s to me and to most of the people around me, with one exception - people who has grown up on the countryside.

This lack of know how has given me a deep sense of dissatisfaction. I would be rather helpless if there would come a day when practical skills like how to grow and store food over winter, or fix a broken electrical aggregate will be necessary to survive. But also on a daily basis I feel I have no chance to make truly responsible choices when buying stuff. I have no time, nor energy, nor possibility to track down the ecological footprint for every single item I buy. My freedom of choice is reduced to walking around in a supermarket, choosing to believe the text on the package saying that this or that has been climate compensated with planted trees in whatever country, guessing that this just as well might be a truth with very much modification. In my world, being a grown up implies to take responsibility for ones actions and to be able to defend ones choices, at least passably. But I cannot defend the action of flushing the toilet with perfect drinking water, sending its content to a place where it is mixed with medicine, hormones and detergents, so that it cannot return to the places where it is most needed - the fields - with more than I have no choice. In a city I have no choice.

Mattias Sandberg, doctor at the Department of Economy and Society in Gothenburg describes a state called physical detachment, that occurs when humans in an industrialized and urbanized world, loses direct contact with the natural resources that they are dependent upon. With physical detachment means both the material, and the psychological condition that derives from the opacifying and automatization of water, energy, food, sewage and waste. This “hole in the wall-society”, he argues, can be problematic since it makes it harder to understand the energy and time
invested to produce the products and services we consume. In the end this can affect our ability to understand the environmental consequences of our actions.¹

For me, it is likely that this hole in the wall society – and mentality – plays a big role in the fact that the average Swede lives as if we had the resources of 4.2 earths,² at the same time as we are considered one of the most sustainable countries in the world.³ This bias seems to be widely accepted among politicians with the instrumental power to make radical changes, Isabelle Stengers concludes in her book In Catastrophic Times from 2015. Contradictory messages such as “think about your carbon footprint” followed by urges to consume more since our whole economic system depends on it, sends signals that the situation is still under control ⁴ - despite the fact that we can see and hear alarming reports about the environmental state of the world on a daily basis. My experience is that this duality makes individuals both cynical and less susceptible to change since most of us in the end wait for a real political sign, not a scientific or organizational sign, that the situation is actually acute. Politicians in their turn see the transformation to a more sustainable society as educated choices that companies and individuals will do voluntarily, and are giving away more and more of their instrumental power to the market via deregulations and trade agreements⁵. The only thing that big political gestures such as the Paris climate summit in 2015 and Agenda 2030, or the Swedish governments 16 environmental goals has created so far, is great political optimism and pride.⁶ No real change has happened.⁷,⁸

I want to live in a world where I do not need to accept this bias. For me, this means to turn my back at the city, and instead open my eyes to the vast areas surrounding them - the countryside. Why this is, will hopefully come clear in this thesis.

Introduction

“Some countryside somewhere will always feed our cities - why not our own?“

Arne Lindström

Since the 1850’s, humanity finds itself living in an industrial civilization – a very short and peculiar exception in human history that have made us healthier, wealthier and live longer than ever before. At the same time we moved in to cities. For this we can thank oil and coal – modern society’s main, and almost divine shortcuts of energy. The city can give us culture and advanced health care, but city life also leads to a physical detachment from nature, undermining our ability to understand our complete dependence upon it, and bombards us with impressions in such a high frequency it can lead to stress, sensory overload and depression.

In “the other place” - the countryside, nature and food production is taking place, and when farmers approaching retirement age or is forced to quit their business for economic reasons, consequently fewer and fewer in Sweden produces, or knows how to produce food. This fact leads to an increasing degree of dependence on surrounding countries, and strongly contributes to our vulnerability in case of ruptures on the global market of food and fossil fuel. Cities are completely dependent on resources from the countryside – but the case is not necessarily the reverse.

My hypothesis is that the countryside has far greater potential in succeeding with the necessary transition towards a resilient and sustainable future society, than any city has today. Recent surveys in Sweden also shows that many more than who actually does, dreams of a life on the countryside - at the same time as the government are actively planning for even more of us to live in cities. Here, there seems to be a gap between desire and reality.

I want to investigate the possibility of developing a concept for the countryside, which can help bridging this gap and provide a new type of living, enabling groups in society that for various reasons haven’t taken the step yet to move. For this I am proposing a multi-family/individual dwelling for 15 – 25 people, placed on abandoned farmland within an already existing village - in this case the village Sikeå in Robertsfors municipality. Its surrounding areas will as far as possible

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9 LRF:s chairman in Västerbotten, Arne Lindström, In a speech at the square in Umeå, 2013-11-17.
provide the amount of food and energy needed for the inhabitants during the whole year, regardless if society at large is facing a severe crisis. It would be a place that lets you be a part of a tangible system and the seasonal cycle of ecosystems - that can enhance social interaction, learning and shared responsibility - at the same time as it will bring new social and practical functions that Sikeå are missing today.

Versions of this theme have been tried and failed many times before, mainly due to social conflicts, economic problems or conflicts with authorities. I do not claim to have a detailed solution for how people within such a place would collaborate, allocate responsibility, or solve conflicts. What I aim for is to design the physical basis for a collaborative life on the countryside to be as easy as possible, and along the way raise a debate of how we actually want to, and need to live - not only in the future but just as much today. My questions is -

*Can a new typology of rural housing address the potential future food and energy scarcity in the rest of society, and at the same time be a solution to contemporary need for housing?*  
*How can it be affordable, and how can it give value back to existing communities?*
Process

The starting point for this thesis has been my last year project The Hive, a building for around 80 people that basically followed two physical laws – a circular plan for highest space and energy efficiency in relation to surface, and arch-shaped in the vertical direction to handle highest possible weight and wind load. The circle has also been a natural shape of human gatherings since we learned how manage fire, and is commonly seen in vernacular architecture. Besides physical laws, its foremost aim was to create a physical environment that would simplify spontaneous and planned interactions among neighbors in the building as well as enhancing a life closer to the land. It has a number of low and high-technical solutions in order to be self-sufficient in energy, and contained a number of shared facilities and social functions. The idea was to place The Hive anywhere with enough abandoned farmland to re-cultivate and feed the people in the building. The name “Hive” was chosen due to its many synonyms, such as gather, engage, assemble and collect, which I felt depicted my intentions with the project very well.

What I wanted to investigate with this thesis was how close to reality a project like The Hive could get, and try to understand what the biggest thresholds would be to succeed. Several obstacles piled up in front of me – political decisions, EU-regulations, small municipalities lack of money, banks unwilling to give loans for “high risk projects”, etc. But I also got the question of how the inhabitants in such a building would cooperate around farming, solving problems, dealing with economy, inviting new inhabitants while perhaps excluding others in case of unsolvable conflicts. To start draw detailed lines for human organization and socialization is, however, one of the most common and dangerous Utopian traps - therefore I have chosen only to suggest loose frameworks for this, which likely would change over time.

In order to lift the project outside of school I have been in contact with municipalities and different interest organizations to see where The Hive evoke most interest for collaboration. In late 2017, I used The Hive as a motif in graphical artwork, exhibited in Östersund during Christmas. It was a positive experience to discuss the project via art as an “excuse”, and it was also attracting an audience that otherwise would not have seen it.

This gave me the idea to call the libraries in six different municipalities in Västerbotten to ask if they also were interested in an art exhibition. All of them were, but in Robertsfor they had no room, instead I got in contact with the building strategist in Robertsfor, Ann Lindberg. She knew of a man named Sture Bergström that had ideas for a site in the middle of the village Sikeå, 50 km
from the town Robertsfors. We later arranged a meeting in Sture’s kitchen where we discussed the site, the needs in the village and society, and what kind of proposal could meet those needs.

When attending the Climate forum in Skellefteå in November 2017, I met Cecilia Wahlberg Roslund from Malå, consultant within biofuel, forestry and agriculture. She was enthusiastic about The Hive and invited me to a meeting with both members of the municipality and members of Rökåbygdens Interest Organization (Rökåbygdens Intresseförening). From that meeting I came back with new input and my second site, a small forest parcel in direct connection to the village Rökå. Due to proximity I chose Sikeå to work with this semester, and the goal is to show the project at the Robertsfors Build and Live fair the 13th of May. Unfortunately I had to cancel the art-tour due to lack of time, but are planning to do it this fall instead.

My role as an architecture student along this process has basically been to talk to rural municipalities struggling with decreasing population and say “Hi, I strongly believe that you are the future and I would like to collaborate with you”, hence offering my services as an architect if they want them. In that case I can also contribute with a firsthand contemporary citizen-dreaming-of-the-countryside-perspective that may be helpful in doing this. For me it feels important for the process and the potential end result to be responsive to the needs and knowledge of those already living on the countryside, and to not romanticize and project my ideas of how things are or should be upon reality.

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Section and ground floor plan from The Hive.
City

‘Stad’, the Swedish word for ‘city’, means ‘plats’ or ‘ställe’ – in English ‘place’ or ‘locality’. ‘Stad’ can for example be seen as a part of words such as ‘bostad’ (dwelling place), verkstad (workshop) or ‘eldstad’ (fireplace).12

Cities in Sweden was originally nodes given special “city privileges” by the government, which made them the only places where it was allowed to trade goods. This was a way to regulate the market and to collect taxes from the people, hence, this reform was not always popular and the population was in many places rather recalcitrant to gather in cities. But today, after more than 100 years of increasing urbanization in Sweden, around 85 % of the population live in cities and even more of us are expected to do so in the nearest 20 years.13 This is a result of a highly industrialized agriculture and forestry that made human labor in these fields unnecessary, but also created a surplus of food that made it possible for people to live in cities.

Along with leaving a labor intense lifestyle of farming in favor of labor intense lifestyle of industry in cities, the story of modernity and the feeling of leaving something old behind grew. Since the 50’s when the heaviest mechanization of agriculture started, city life has been a politically and culturally reproduced story of status and modernity, according to author and journalist Po Tidholm. This story, or myth, determines to a large extent where the government chose to allocate governmental institutions, where private corporations places their businesses and invests money, and thus to what kind of businesses banks will approve loans. 14 For example, it is nearly impossible to get a bank loan to start an agricultural business today since it is not considered profitable enough. 15

Another example of this is how the government wants to tackle the housing needs in Sweden by suggesting nine new cities and districts to be built within a 25 year period. All of them in the already big city regions, Stockholm, Göteborg and Uppsala. The idea is to take advantage of already existing infrastructure, and the government’s role is to remedy eventual obstacles to exploitation by helping with new infrastructure and financing innovations.16

12 “Stad”, https://svenska.se/
14 Tidholm, Po. Lokalsamtal I Umeå, Ersboda folkets hus. Attended 2018-04-12
15 A man in the audience at Klimatforum Västerbotten – Mat och klimat. Länsstyrelsen, Skellefteå, 2017-11-22
By this, those who already have will have even more. Not only houses, but also taxes from those inhabiting them. As put by Tidholm, governmental politics today is not used as a tool to compensate for market growth by investing where the market is not already investing, but to strengthen market growth.\textsuperscript{17}

Personally I have no interest in contributing to this ongoing phenomena. But I have also seen and heard of enough initiatives of collaborative, emancipatory and anticapitalistic character, taken place in cities and that exists under constant threat of, or have been demolished or evicted - sometimes by police force. Projects by Atelier d’architecture autogérée in Paris\textsuperscript{18}, Lokstallarna Kulturhus in Umeå\textsuperscript{19} or Public Works are just a few examples of how power, in the end, are in the hands of politics and capitalism.\textsuperscript{20} This is of course a fact concerning all types of land, but land prices, speculation and exploitation is so far mostly concentrated to and escalating in cities, especially in a time when “densification” is considered as both sustainable and necessary for city development.

The debate on cities versus countryside is more lively in Sweden today than it has been for several years, Umeå based lecturer and researcher Malin Rönnblom notes in her text \textit{For a policy of the place} (För en platsens politik). She argues that it is time for all of us (debaters, inhabitants, activists, etc) who are ‘creating’ and re-defining the countryside, to challenge the city by actually ignoring it.\textsuperscript{21} In 2017, as a result of the raised discussion, a countryside-committee appointed by the government, presented 75 proposals to “seal the gap” between the city and the countryside. It was later debated by minister of rural areas (landsbygdsminister) Sven-Erik Bucht, Po Tidholm and professor at SLU, Erik Westholm in Swedish radio. Tidholm argued that nothing was done to the real problem - tax regulations that allows companies for hydropower and forestry to pay taxes in Stockholm instead of in the municipalities where they extract their resources, and Westholm meant that we don’t need to “turn the trend” since the countryside has its own future that is not only related to the city, but to climate, global changes and migration, and he believes that the Swedish countryside will have a very important role to play within the coming 30 years, regardless what politics the government are proposing.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{17} Tidholm, Po. \textit{Lokalsamtal I Umeå}, Ersboda folkets hus.
\textsuperscript{18} AAA, r-urban, 2010-2014. http://www.urbantactics.org/projets/r-urban/
\textsuperscript{20} Richard Belfield, Andrew. \textit{Lessons from the community garden} (“Lesson 4”).
Civilization

In the *Eco Modernist Manifesto* from 2015, 15 authors who range all between professors and scientists of environmental sustainability, economics, philosophy and history, celebrate modern civilization and see only one way to save nature and wildlife – with more civilization. What they argue for is *decoupling*, a total separation of human activity and economy from nature.

“Decoupling human well-being from the destruction of nature requires the conscious acceleration of emergent decoupling processes” they say, and continues “Urbanization, agricultural intensification, nuclear power, aquaculture, and desalination are all processes with a demonstrated potential to reduce human demands on the environment, allowing more room for non-human species.” 23 - arguing that we should save the nature for explicit aesthetic and spiritual reasons.

They also strongly believe in cities as an important part of the solution, since they only occupy 1-3% of the earth surface but still are home for almost four billion people. As such, they argue “cities both drive and symbolize the decoupling of humanity from nature, performing far better than rural economies in providing efficiently for material needs while reducing environmental impacts.” 24 One commonly reproduced assertion is also written in the beginning of the manifesto, that (thanks to modern civilization) violence in all forms has declined to the lowest per capita ever experienced by the human species. 25

The Eco modernists have no answers to how mining for uranium or intensified agriculture with all its back sides of monoculture, eroding soil, over nutrition of water, etc, would not take place in, or severely affect wildlife and nature. My guess is that uranium mining and land-grabbing for “intensified agriculture” is not taking place in so many of these professors’ back yards, but instead in other countries, or in rural areas in their own countries, not seldom on land where indigenous people live. 26 27 To me, they seem to be living quite deep in the “hole in the wall-society” described by Mattias Sandberg, 28 and what more is, they want to go deeper.

24 Ibid. Page 12
25 Ibid. Page 8
According to the English Oxford Dictionary, one definition of civilization is “The stage of human social development and organization which is considered most advanced.” However, activist, teacher and author Derrick Jensen draws to mind in his book *Endgame – The problem of civilization*, that all authors, including those writing dictionaries, are propagandists in one way or another. He argues that this definition is hidden propaganda in favor of civilization and the lifestyle that comes with it, since it can be read between the lines that advanced implies “the best”, and that the opposite would have a rather negative connotation as low, undeveloped, unorganized, etc. Instead, he wants to define civilization as:

“(…) a complex of stories, institutions and artifacts – that both leads to and emerges from the growth of cities (civilization, see civil: from *civis*, meaning *citizen*, from Latin *civitatis*, meaning city-state), with cities being defined (…) as people living more or less permanently on one place in densities high enough to require the routine importation of food and other necessities of life”

Further, he presents twenty premises regarding the culture of civilization. Being a long time environmental activist, he possess firsthand experience in seeing and feeling how far civilization is willing to go to take what it needs to prosper. Jensen claims that the culture of civilization has from the beginning been a culture of occupation, and that civilization, in particular industrial civilization, is not and can never be sustainable. Those in power rule by force, because industrial civilization is based on, requires, and would collapse very quickly without persistent and widespread violence.

As the Eco modernists, among others claim, these past two centuries has been the most peaceful in human history, however that description is only true if the statistics is limited to violence executed by humans, towards other humans. The earth, its eco systems and other species are not counted with in the equation. This human centered world view I see as the answer to why we can talk about the most peaceful era in human history, at the same time as we, according to scientists like Ceballos, Ehrlich and Dirzo, now seem to find ourselves in the middle of the sixth mass extinction in history.

30 Ibid. Preface. Page IX-XII
Resilience

The term resilience has been used within environmental science since the 1970 in order to describe ecological systems ability to regrow after disasters. Since the 2000th, the concept of resilience has been more and more common within sociology and cultural geography, mainly in the meaning resilient communities.32 My own observations is that it has also risen in use and popularity among politicians in recent years, perhaps as a consequence of the insight that we are now in a position of fending the impact of climate change and environmental collapse, rather than stopping them from happen in the first place, as the rhetoric was 10-15 years ago.

The English oxford dictionary’s definition of resilience is “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.” It derives from the latin word resilire, which means “bounce back”, composed of re (back) and salire (bounce).33 In the text Resilience – The concepts different meanings and areas of use published by Sweden’s governmental agency for protection and preparedness (MSB - Myndigheten för Samhällsskydd och Beredskap), the authors conclude that biological diversity is essential for the resilience of ecosystems, since it means a dispersion of risks and better possibilities to re-organize after disruption. If one species is extinct, its position can be taken over by another species with a similar function in the system. Too few species within a particular biotope can result in a sudden collapse of that system if only one species disappears, since it can start a domino effect of extinction or overpopulation of other species whose existence relies on a balance within the system. However, humanity have detracted resilience within several natural systems so drastically that their ability to protect us (humans) from disruption has severely declined. Therefore, the authors argue, we promptly need to strengthen resilience within our socio-ecological systems to be able to handle and recover from disasters related to global climate and environmental changes.34

Sweden also participates in the campaign “Making Cities Resilient – My city is getting ready”. It is a platform initiated by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction whith the purpose of building and sharing knowledge about risk reduction, and for development towards sustainable societies. For this, the UN office have formulated a ten point checklist that they believe characterizes resilience on a local level;

33 Ibid Page 8.
34 Ibid. Page 10
1. Disaster risk reduction is a priority
2. There is a budget
3. The municipality uses stable grounds to build on
4. The municipality is aware of the risks and makes risk assessments
5. The municipality increases knowledge about risks by education
6. The municipality protects critical infrastructure
7. The municipality is aware of risks within physical planning and applies building regulations
8. Safe schools and healthcare is available
9. The municipality protects eco systems and applies climate adjustments.
10. The municipality has a preparedness and a system for early warning.\(^{35}\)

While the checklist is very specific about building regulations, schools, healthcare and infrastructure, it is very unspecific when it comes to the importance of having access to food and water – two crucial ingredients in human life.

**Vulnerability**

During the cold war era and with the rationing during the World War 2 fresh in mind, the Swedish government decided to increase the capacity of the total defense and the domestic management of food supply. As late as in the 80’s Sweden was almost 100% self-sufficient in food, and still in the late 1980s, around 200 food stocks were placed throughout the country. But when the Cold War ended 1990, the feeling spread that there will never be war again and so Sweden began to dismount its stockpile of food.\(^{36}\) Since Sweden joined the trade organization EU in 1995, we have no stockpile at all. Further, we have no governmental agency in Sweden that has an overall responsibility for food supply. Instead, this responsibility is now spread out on private companies that distribute food. According to Sven Lindgren, chairman of Civil Defense Union, all our stocks are basically on wheels, and the few central stocks we have will last for 3 – 8 days. Industry and import docks may have supply for a few days more.\(^{37}\)

\(^{35}\) Ibid. Page 18


\(^{37}\) Skillemar, Fredrik. Sverige saknar livsmedelslager för en kris. SVT. 2017
However, in December 2017 the Swedish Defense Commission released a report concerning the overall preparedness in case of crisis, both in times of peace, in gray zone situations and in times of war. The investigation was done on behalf of the Swedish government, and the commission concludes in its summary that *the global security situation today is characterized by instability and unpredictability, and that the situation can change quickly*. Therefore, the ability to withstand serious interference of functions in society for *three months* without any help from any other country will be the focus when planning for the restoration of our total and civil defense.38

To reach this goal, the commission stresses the needs of increased planning in society in times of peace, to secure the safety of people in times of crisis. Hence, the commission argues, it is crucial that a reasonable supply of food, water, energy and medicine is secured to maintain the function of our total defense, and that Sweden needs to rebuild its capacity of food stocks and food supply.39

Anders Ygeman, Minister for Internal Affairs, states that a total cut of food import is an unlikely scenario. On the contrary, the possibility of a cyber-attack is an obvious threat he says, but he doesn’t see that as a major threat to our food distribution. However, he continues, there are parts of it that can be threatened, for example the water supply that is dependent on IT-systems to work.40

**Digitalization**

Contrary to what Ygeman says, food distribution would be highly affected by a cyber-attack, since Swedish society is one of the most, and aims to be *the* most digitalized society in the world.41 Humans, animals and crops are dependent on large amounts of water. Food distribution also need fossil fuel, which in its turn is highly dependent on digital systems to be accessed. Grocery stores depend on power supply, advanced IT support and the financial system of card payments. Damages on power or fuel supply can lead to severe ruptures in agriculture and food production which in short time will affect the whole society – in the shape of food shortage.42

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39 Ibid. Page 4
40 Skillemar, Fredrik. *Sverige saknar livsmedelslager för en kris*. SVT, 2017
http://www.regeringen.se/regeringens-politik/digitaliseringspolitik/
According to the Swedish Defense Commission, our digital systems are not adjusted to handle the strains of war or danger of war, hence, a cyber-attack may have similar serious impact as a military seizure. 43 In conclusion, a cyber-attack would, (among other important functions as hospitals, sewage plants and mobile communication), also affect food distribution.

**Food strategy**

"In Sweden we believe in the market and that it shall rule basically all sectors in society, including agriculture. In Sweden it is taboo to talk about a secured food supply built on domestic production. In other countries it is self-evident.”(own transl.) This is a quote from “Farmer men’s national organization” (Lantmännens Riksförsbund), who continues, that all eventual efforts to strengthen domestic food production is today inhibited due to fear of protectionism.44 This was written in 2012. In 2017 Sweden’s governmental Department of industry (Näringsdepartementet) launched a new food strategy. Many hoped for it to increase self-sufficiency and give more jobs on the countryside, but reading it, it is designed for Sweden to be a better competitor on the global food market, and aims on a higher and more cost efficient production of food - meaning larger agricultural units and higher level of industrialization to reduce the amount of people working. Focus lays on higher export, not to strengthen small scale local food production. This is a result of EU trade agreements that forces Swedish farmers to compete with other countries that have longer crop seasons, lower payments of workers and lower standards of animal regulations. Due to these conditions, 5 farmers a day quitted their business in Sweden during 2011. If this trend continues we may have no full-time farmers left in the year 2024. 45

The efficiency in agriculture is also a paradox since it inherits two efficiencies, says Anders Wästfelt, researcher in agrarian history at SLU. On a smaller surface with more control, timing and work, you can get higher yields per surface unit - while on a larger surface with big machines you can get higher yields per work-hour. Farmers who strive for larger production units are work-efficient, but from a global perspective he argues, we should strive for smaller units, not bigger.46

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43 Swedish Defense Commission report summary, Motståndskraft.. 2017-12-20. Page 2, 4
**Deregulation**

In Sweden today, a company can run an agricultural business, but a physical person still needs to own the land, which makes it harder for international companies to invest in Swedish farmland and forests. In the beginning of 2018 however, there has been a discussion in the EU of how Sweden could deregulate its market so that also companies can be owners of land.

According to Joel Holmdahl who represents the organization Nordbruk, member of the international farmer organization La Via Campesina (“The farmers way”), this can lead to a situation where multinational companies owns more and more agricultural land and forests in Sweden, not only to build larger production units (hence pay taxes in other countries) but also just for future speculation.47 Fredrik Wangsten and Marina Eriksson from Sweden’s Association of Small Scale Farmers (Förbundet Sveriges Småbrukare), fears that such speculation will be followed by an increase in prices of land, which in turn would result in a situation where the few farmers left (whose business probably is on the edge of economic ruin, (authors comment)) instead sells their property to large corporations, and thereby becomes “slaves for the capital” as tenants on their own farms.48

**A new green wave**

“A new green wave could transform society”(own transl.) is the headline of an article in Dagens Nyheter from March 2018, where lecturer in countryside development at SLU Emil Sandström, describes a ten year old trend in society – the interest for self-sufficiency. Reasons he sees can be everything from “fear of the Russians” to the discussion on climate and peak-oil. The movement can be seen as a cultural counteraction and a protest against modern society at large, and have some parallels to the “green wave” in the 70’s, a movement which resulted in that more people actually migrated to the country than in to the cities during a then year period.49

A survey made by Sweden’s Real Estate Agency (Svensk Fastighetsförmedling) made in 2017, reveals that the type of living estimated to be the most common in the future is self-sufficient


The leading survey company in Sweden Kantar Sifo also recently conducted an inquiry that shows that double the number wants to live on the countryside than who does today, that around 30% ranks a house on the countryside as most desirable, and that only 20% of the households’ dream of an apartment in the city. What also came through was that the countryside represents the “Swedish dream” and has the qualities that Swedes value the most in their homes - a calm surrounding. Other highly valued aspects was possibility to practice ones interests, proximity to nature and the possibility to work.\footnote{Fries, Elin. \textit{Så vill svenskar egentligen bo}. Jordbruksaktuellt. 2018-01-01 \url{http://www.ja.se/artikel/55963/sa-vill-svenskar-egentligen-bo.html} (accessed 2018-04-19)} According to Po Tidholm among others, the last point - possibility to work - is the bottleneck and crucial point together with the shutting down of schools, grocery stores, gas stations and health care – to why the trend, despite what these surveys shows, still is that people are more prone to move in to cities than out to the countryside. This phenomena also comes clear in \textit{Västerbottens Bostadsanalys 2017}, made by Länsstyrelsen.\footnote{Alatalo, Maria. Backe, Ida. Granslandt, Clara. \textit{Västerbottens Bostadsanalys 2017}, Länsstyrelsen, 2017. \url{https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/download/18.304d30c1612954524550ddf/1526067882800/2017-06-01_Bostadsmarknadsanalys%202017%20v%C3%A4sterbottens%20l%C3%A4n.pdf} (accessed 2018-04-19)}

In the chronicle \textit{Many more wants to live on the countryside – but is there a choice? I have never managed to live in a city} (own transl.), Amanda Labbart describes how she and many with her have a hard time dealing with city life. “We are many who are stuck inside the tollgates and carries the shackles of city-life without being able to get out. We are also accurst at politics, because just as much as it disfavors the countryside, it makes us prisoners in a life we don’t want to live, at a place we don’t want to live in.”(own transl.)\footnote{Labbart, Amanda. \textit{Många fler vill bo på landet – men var är valfriheten?} Allehanda. 2018-01-18 \url{https://www.allehanda.se/kultur/manga-fler-vill-bo-pa-landet-men-var-ar-valfriheten-jag-har-aldrig-klarat-av-att-leva-i-en-stad} (acessed 2018-01-29)}

My observation is also that one threshold for born and raised citizens to move to the countryside, is that you don’t want to do it yourself, you want to do it with your friends. For many today, partner and kids is not enough to bring with you as a social base, and there is also a fear that the kids would lose old friends, have a long way to school or have a hard time finding new friends in their own age. For people with no partner and kids but who still values daily social life with friends, the threshold may be even bigger. As a friend of mine puts it, “no nuclear family = city. My experience is also that city people to a higher extent are used to, and fond of living in apartments, not having to deal with all sorts of problems and economical risk that can come with buying a house – but can still be very interested in gardening, farming and being close to nature.
Utopian making * Auroville

One long lived example of people wanting something else is Auroville in India. Considered the world’s largest existing attempt to a spiritual utopia, the aim was to “realize human unity and establish an ideal society.” Founded in 1968 and originally planned for 50 000 people, Auroville today has about 2 500 recorded residents, even though the actual number is estimated to be around 10 000. The community is sponsored by the Indian government, who donates more than $200 000 to the village every year, and the township is protected by UNESCO since its birth in 1968. Auroville doesn’t have a self-sustaining economy - most inhabitants either come in with savings or leave for a few months to work in their home countries. To become an Aurovilian is a two-year process that requires applicants to prove their self-sustenance and dedication to the cause. Applicants are not allowed to leave Auroville for two years and must work for free as a contribution to the township. After two years they face the Entry Services, a small group that decides who can finally become an Aurovilian. With no money, no government, no religion, no skyscrapers or expressways, no newspapers with headlines of war, poverty, and genocide, it has been described as a place where ‘Marxist-flavored socialism met anarchy.’ However, they still use money, and they certainly have governments – UNESCO protecting them and the Indian government donating money, but also those within the community who decides who are welcome and not, hence, have the power to opt out poor or mentally unstable individuals. It also seems to be a rather individualistic culture, according to one of the interviewees in Cowells report. Neighbors do little to help each other, and she had to call her friend from another village to help her when she broke her arm. This picture may seem a bit contradictory to Aurovilles original vision:

“Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But to live in Auroville, one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness. Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages. Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realizations. Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity”.

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Utopian thinking and writing

Thomas More (1478-1535, executed for free thinking and the ‘divine’ right to remain silent) is most known for writing the novel "A truly golden little book, no less beneficial than entertaining, of a republic's best state and of the new island Utopia”, often referred to only as “Utopia”. It was a humanistic political satire at the time, drawing the outlines of a society based on rationality and sense. It starts well with 6 hours workday, equality among men and women, who works both at the fields and in the city - and where fellowship, integration and sharing of knowledge are the highest of ideals. But in the end, the system is so well-thought in detail that it cannot handle any departures – therefore More sees himself forced to apply rules, such as everyone must wear the same uniform, and restrictions to move outside specific designated areas within the state and the city.55

The word Utopia, and the spelling Utopia has a widespread use today, but originally it was a game of words, where Utopia meant “no place” and Eutopia meant “good place”, hence, they are pronounced the same and therefore Utopia is often described as “the good place that doesn’t exist”. Perhaps More chose the spelling Utopia, not only because the place didn’t actually exist yet, but also to stay under the political radar, not being accused of actually suggesting it.

A great amount of utopian/dystopian literature have been written since then, and human nature’s contradictory needs contra interests of the collective or almighty government is the common red thread.

In the introduction to her book *Utopia as method* from 2013, professor in sociology Ruth Levitas argues that; “We need to think about what kind of social and economic system can deliver secure and sustainable livelihoods and ways of life for all. For those who still think that utopia is about the impossible, what really is impossible is to carry on as we are. (...) Our very survival depends on finding another way of living.”56 However, she continues “utopia is commonly dismissed as an irrelevant fantasy or traduced as a malevolent nightmare leading to totalitarianism. This anti-utopian discourse equates utopia with a blueprint producing violence and terror, and gives rise to a politics of quiescent subordination to the dictates of capitalist markets.”57

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57 Ibid. Page xiii (introduction)
My own experience is also that a common argument in discussions and debates where capitalism or free trade is questioned, is ‘So you want to have it like in Soviet/Cuba/North Corea?’ - three well known examples of societies who started out with high “utopian” ideals. For the neo-liberal parties, the experiences from Soviet and Cuba plays right in their hands when proposing all sorts of deregulations. Other groups whose essential values may ask for more regulations of the market, or something even more radical like unconditional basic income, instead suffers from fear of being associated with communist dictatorships, or accused for being “utopian”, meaning “unrealistic”.

Professor in sociology Erik Olin Wright, makes the same observation as Levitas in his book *Envisioning Real Utopias*, but also acknowledges the generally conservative opinion that the bigger the scale of conscious projects of social change, the harder it is to predict all of the unintended and unwanted ramifications that will follow in the footsteps of social upheaval. However, he argues, these unintended consequences can be dealt with as they arrive and doesn’t necessarily need to be a fatal threat to the projects themselves.58

The Swedish sociologist and author Roland Paulsen is a bit more inclement in his judgement in the essay *The dream about utopia* (Drömmen om utopin) from 2017, writing that; “The idea of a persistent “good society” is both dangerous and unrealistic. The one who honestly wants to argue for an alternative need to persuade that all its costs, problems and conflicts still is more preferable than the existing.” (own transl.)59 Here I believe Paulsen makes an important point. A perfect solution is impossible, since humans have and always will have contradictory needs. Big transformations of society after anticapitalistic revolutions like in Soviet and Cuba, have as history shows resulted in highly totalitarian and paranoid governments, jailing or executing its opponents. Even if Cuba have some positive “utopian” aspects, it is still a nondemocratic government that violates human rights.

The only thing we can argue for is a “good place”, or at least a better place than what is offered today, despite all its eventual struggles. Therefore I would like to highlight the word “Eutopia” as it feels more applicable in an attempt of realization. A good place, not perfect, but that actually exists.

Sites

My main site this semester was Sikeå, a village by the sea in the municipality of Robertsfors, 50 minutes north from Umeå. Once a thriving community of 600 people with six cafés, cinema and a shipyard building large ships in the 20’s, now a village with around 300 people mostly known for its camping and secondhand-store in the summer. In a vision document from 2007 can be read; “Our vision of Legdeå/Sikeå is that these villages in ten years are even more sustainable villages – villages for body and soul, were we as far as possible creates our own living environment”.60 The last ten years they have been organized around a parenting cooperative with around 40 children, The project Må Bra Byn61, and cooperative animal huspandry to keep the fields open and to share the meat in the end of the season.

The other site was Rökå, a village of 59 people of which 49 is over 65 years old, in the south of Malå municipality. They wish to see more people moving in, but the grocery store closed down in the 90’s, the school is now the village-house, and the special apartments for elderly was also torn down in the 90’s, hence, the moving chain within Rökå is nonexistent. First of all they wish to see younger people with energy and ideas who are tired of the city and wants to do something completely different, secondly a senior home for those already living in the village. At the meeting they suggested a site and later I talked to the person who owns it. He was positive to the project and could sell the land for this purpose.

Design process > Proposal

At the meeting with Ann Lindberg, the building strategist in Robertsfors, and Sture Bergström, the villager engaged in the Legdeå/Sikeå interest organization, we discussed the site in the middle of Sikeå that since the 1950’s has been overgrown with trees. They expressed a desire to see the fields open again, and also wish for more people to move to the village and the municipality. The man who owns the land are planning to divide it in to 20 plots and sell them to people to build regular villas. What Sture had in mind was a type of eco-village where the municipality buys the land, divides it in 5 smaller pieces and let people build their own self sufficient units.

60 Legdeå Sikeå interestorganization’s analysis and future vision document. 2007
Main sites, Sikeå 5:79 (58 000 m²) and Sikeå 5:53 (25 000 m²), plus additional sites.

The Rundloge “Töva Lite” at Sikeå Bus station. They were Originally used for threshing grain by letting animals walk on the seed so that the shells loosened. The have also been popular for dancing since the floors was so flat and the shape facilitated the circular moving patterns of folk dance.
But instead of spread out in the landscape as traditional village housing do, my proposal is built on the height. This can be beneficial in several ways, since it would save both the cost and the extensive time of cognizance at Lantmäteriet. Further, it could make the overall building cost lower per person, it would save valuable farmland as well as building material, and the operating costs for energy consumption per m² is in general also lower in apartment buildings than for individual units. Hence, a more energy and cost-efficient building with, for example, a cooperative rental solution, could open up possibilities for many of those who wants to live on the countryside, but don’t want to, or don’t have the economical means to buy or build a house of their own.

Regarding the size of the site and how many people would be likely to move there we estimated a maximum of 20 people to begin with. The size of the main site is 80 000 m², and if counting on a mixed diet, around 3000 m²/person is needed to be self-sufficient all year round. In this case the area can sustain 26 people.\(^\text{62}\)

At the meeting we discussed the appearance and agreed on that the original 24 corner “round” shape of The Hive would be too alien to the existing building typology. The traditional eight corner rundloge on the other hand seemed to be a fair compromise between the original round shape and a traditional four corner building. As a result, my proposal now has the ground shape of a rundloge, but with the first 3 floors extended, giving the outdoor spaces the character of verandas. Ann and Sture commented that the design feels familiar and will not be perceived as deviating - even though it is a multi-family residence and the structure and size is very different from a traditional rundloge.

The project can be developed in three stages. First, enthusiasts who want to be part of the construction process of Logen can move to the site. Living in small compact attefallshus they will learn about the construction and installation of various technical systems. This can make it easier to transfer knowledge and solve technical problems that may occur in the future. The units are easy to move and can be used later for rental, guest houses or if someone prefers more privacy and isolation. In this phase the establishment of slow growing fruit trees and berry bushes also takes place.

Stage two will start with the economy building with wood and metal workshop and a stable for the first animals to start gracing the fields. In the north on this type of not so fertile soil, originally used only to grow hey, animals have traditionally been of high importance due to the relatively short and cold growing season since they refine fibrous plants that humans cannot eat - into milk and meat. In this case the animals will also be important in the work of helping eating the bushes down and fertilize the land to later grow potatoes, beans, kale, etc. In connection to this, the multi family house Logen for about 15 - 20 people is built. The whole ground floor is shared spaces, in this case a common space for gatherings, parties and music events, with a bar where you as a Sikeåbo can go and have a beer and a piece of food. The common ground floor, partly open to the public, may ease social contact both within the building and for the village as a whole, and will possess opportunities for both informal and organized learning in various subjects regarding farming, animals, wool, singing, cutting up meat, conserve vegetables, art, solar collectors, etc.

In 2016 Inobi Analys -> Arkitektur proposed a project with very similar ambitions called Ekobo in Uppsala. They called it “The world’s first resilience-house” and among many other things they stressed the importance of social resilience, as a combination of strong and weak social connections, as well as economic and skill diversity among the inhabitants – aspects that strengthens the collective ability to solve problems in the future. A house for “the hand, the heart and the brain” it also highlights the importance of easy access to workshops, shared meeting spaces and gardening.

A laundry room connected to a room for sewing, weaving and refining wool from sheep was an idea from Inga-Britt Hultmar that I met in Rökå. Both Inga-Britt and Ann stressed the importance of a high capacity industrial kitchen with all the equipment for different kinds of conservation methods, and also a place for cutting up large amount of meat. Floor two and three contains apartments with big kitchen and living room combined, and additional shared living rooms facing the south on each floor, of which some may have more specific functions such as relax area or office, and also can be used for pre cultivating in early spring, in order to extend the short growing season. The fourth floor will have four smaller rooms and a shared kitchen and living room - a cheaper and more flexible type of living, suitable for young people or students, etc. Fifth floor contains one apartment with loft, one shared living room, storage and machine room. The basement is mainly the place for food storage that would cover the need for 250 individuals

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63 One of the ideas in Legdeå Sikeå interest organization’s analysis and visions for the future. 2007
Enthusiasts who want to be part of the construction process can move here first. As a small newbuilder colony, you live in a compact living hut, so that you can be available on site through the process. Being part of the building as well as the installation of the various technical systems makes it easier to transfer knowledge and solve problems that may arise in the future. Around the houses are planted perennial bushes and trees that need time to grow. Relatively easy maintained animals such as hens, snails, and bees contribute to a small-scale self-sufficiency. It's easy to move and can be used later for rental, guest houses or as social valve depending on preferences or upcoming social situations.

In Stage 2 the economy building Ladan and the house Logen is built. Ladan's bottom floor contains wood and metal workshops, as well as stables for animals. A large staircase leads to the second floor, a mow for the hay to dry. A small third floor to the south contains office/studio. Logen is the multi family house for about 18 people. Here restless citizens, retirees who want to sell the villa, returnees with children or young folks from the neighborhood can move with a common interest in being part of animal husbandry and small-scale farming. Ladan's ground floor has a small stage, bar with beer and lighter food open to the public.

If additional land can be rented or purchased, there is the possibility for more people to move in. Here, the senior residence is built, a smaller house with room for about 15 persons. It is also possible to combine with elderly care so that you don't have to move from friends or partners if your needs start to look different. A small gym in the bottom floor makes it easier to maintain body and mental health.

Annual plants & Root crops
- Vegetables
- Seasonal heat layer
- Sun collection for warm water and seasonal heat layer
- Natural filtration of grey and black water
- Solar panels and wind power for electricity.

When we no longer can or want to import oil from countries who repress humans and the environment, and when electrical farm machines becomes too expensive, we may start to use original horsepower.

Recreation
- Spices & Herbs
- Food for insects
- Leisure

Meat
- Wool & Skin
- Soil cultivation
- Work
- Transport
- Hobby

Enthusiasts who want to be part of the construction process can move here first. As a small newbuilder colony, you live in a compact living hut, so that you can be available on site through the process. Being part of the building as well as the installation of the various technical systems makes it easier to transfer knowledge and solve problems that may arise in the future. Around the houses are planted perennial bushes and trees that need time to grow. Relatively easy maintained animals such as hens, snails, and bees contribute to a small-scale self-sufficiency. It's easy to move and can be used later for rental, guest houses or as social valve depending on preferences or upcoming social situations.

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Recreation
- Spices & Herbs
- Food for insects
- Leisure

Meat
- Wool & Skin
- Soil cultivation
- Work
- Transport
- Hobby
5th floor
> One apartment
    > 50 m²
> Storage
> Ventilation
> Relax / Yoga
    > 25 m²

4th floor - rooms
> 2 x 20 m²
> 1 x 30 m²
> 1 x 36 m²
> Shared kitchen
> Shared living room
    > 25 m²

3rd floor
> One apartment
    > 79 m²
> One apartment
    > 65 m²
> Common living room

2nd floor
> One apartment
    > 87 m²
> One apartment
    > 57 m²
> Common living room
> Office in the south direction

Ground floor
> Bar, dining room, music stage
    > 52 m²
> Big kitchen and butchering area
    > 42 m²
> Laundry room
    > 32 m²
> Spinning room
    > 14 m²
> Spinning room
    > 16 m²
> Machineroom
    > 48 m²

Basement
> Different rooms for storage at different temperatures
    > potatoes, carrots, beetroots, etc
> Cheese
> Apples
> Conserved fruit and berries
> Machineroom

Petra Henriksson
LSAP 5
Umeå Arkitekthögskola
during one year, which will be beneficial for the whole village and surrounding areas in case of a major food or fuel crisis. It has different rooms for different temperature and humidity conditions to best preserve different crops.

In stage three, the senior residence is built. It can be a smaller Loge with room for about 15 persons. It is also possible to combine with elderly care so that you don’t have to move from friends or partners if your needs start to look different. A small gym in the bottom floor makes it easier to maintain body and mental health. Here, gardening of the more relaxed sort can be one of the main occupations. For example, cultivation of flowers and spices as well as care for hens and other animals. An open pre-school may also be combined with the retirement home. The aim for this dwelling is to be both a node where one can live for a while and learn enough to take the step to move into an own house on the countryside – as well as the place where one decides to stay the rest of their life.

Social structures and methods for collaboration can be one of the hardest parts to solve in a village-house like this. According to Thorsten Laxvik, one of the founders of the program The Future Villge, (framtidens by) of which I attended the Teaching village weekend seminar the most important aspect for an organization to work is direct democracy. Everybody needs to attend every meeting, and can never send someone else in their place. It is also important that everyone in the beginning of every meeting is seen and welcomed individually, to avoid unnecessary conflicts to occur.

The indigenous farmer collective Zapatistas in Mexico has a way of practicing direct democracy, where they rotate on the administrative positions every fifteen or thirty days. They mean that it is important that everybody becomes familiar with, and get trained in administration, and that the system effectively prevents any form of accumulation of individual power. Establishing and imposing rules and having one experienced person on the position may be more work-efficient, but this system they argue, is effective in terms of building and sustaining negotiation and mutual respect. A version of this system could be applicable in a house like this where the inhabitants once in a while can rotate on all positions (if there are any), so that everybody gets a basic understanding of how all the technical systems, gardening and animal husbandry works. This will enhance resilience, self-confidence and the feeling of responsibility.

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An elephant in the room

The 28 of March this year was Sweden’s “overshoot day” - the day when we have consumed all the resources for one year, if we are to live within the boundaries of one planet. Different governmental agencies have different agendas contradicting each other, where those protecting the interests of industry, trade and growth in general have the last say. This is also be seen on a global level, following the struggles to live up to Paris Climate Summit 2015 and Agenda 2030, at the same time as the EU are seeking to seal trade agreements such as CETA and TTIP, that will enable multinational corporations to sue nations and municipalities if they vindicate ecological or social values in favor of the corporations interests. Even if no one gets sued, it will still increase trade, which today stands for a third of Sweden’s carbon dioxide emissions.

One peculiar thing I have noticed during this work, both at the Climate fair in Skellefteå, and at the Lokalsamtal with Po Tidholm, two arrangements full of people with vast knowledge on the subject, is that the EU and free trade agreements that to the highest extent demands the rules, were never discussed, almost not even mentioned. EU really was the elephant in the room. Maybe, it all comes down to the fear of association with, not only Soviet and Cuba, but contemporary phenomena’s like Brexit and Trump. In the logic of the debate, decentralization of power equals local governance, equals protectionism, equals nationalism, equals fascism, etc.

However, this is not happening unnoticed. Just to mention a few - the Zapatistas in Mexico and the worldwide organization Via campesina, who both started as a counteraction to free trade agreements undermining the livelihoods of small scale farmers. Transition network (Omställningsnätverket), “A movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world”, along with Greenpeace, native communities and others who occupy our last pieces of wild life from being exploited are other examples. Hela Sverige Ska Leva, and the initiative Framtidsby who works for a raised debate about the countryside as well as the growing prepper movement and forums like alternativ.nu with over 42 000 members are all counteractions to our modern, city-centered society.

Intentional communities are another, well tried-succeeded-and-failed way of response to the capitalistic hegemony, but as seen in the example of Auroville, it is hard to escape unflattering elements of human (nature) and society such as the de-selection of poor, and since they are not entirely self-sufficient they are highly dependent on the Indian government’s money. Money that they claim they don’t want. But obviously they are still there, and the interest is growing. Some parts of the original vision may actually work well enough. Other initiatives to escape or isolate themselves from the capitalist world order by actually being totally self-sufficient in food, may still one day be in need of advanced medical care or to buy tools or spare parts for some old machine they use. A common critique to intentional communities is that they can never escape for “real” and are only “saving themselves” instead of doing something about the whole system.

In this project a total escape is not the ultimate goal, but rather to make much less negative impact on the earth together with an urge to live closer to nature. And in the end we are all probably going to save ourselves and our nearest in a case of crisis. How much I may really admire those with enough endurance to grow initiatives in the cracks of capitalistic city environment over and over again, I still argue that staying in the city struggling with the government doesn’t necessarily make you a better person - especially if you become mentally and physically exhausted by the city environment. Building alternatives closer to nature as a viable and normalized option to city life and constant food import, I believe is a more long term sustainable option, that are more needed now than ever.

As Derrik Jensen admits, “The truth is that although I do not believe that designing groovy eco-villages will help bring down civilization, when the crash comes, I’m sure to be first in line knocking on their doors asking for food”\(^\text{71}\)

Nostalgia

It may be considered nostalgic to suggest that we are to return to the countryside and start growing our own food again. On the other hand; can it be nostalgic to grow food since we will always need it? There are many more answers, as well as discussions about negative or positive connotations to words as “nostalgic” and “modern” - but in the end it is a matter of who, where and how it is produced, and what we consider to be most desirable giving the environmental state of the world today. It definitely challenges the story of urban supremacy. But in a 30 year period or so, it may be considered “nostalgic” to buy food that has been cropped in a monoculture and then travelled across the world with airplanes before ending up at ones plate. It might be seen as really odd and backward looking, referred to as “typical early 2000’s behavior”. Aquaponics and laboratory meat is the other, “modern” way to go in the quest for environmentally friendly and locally produced food. However the nutritional content is questionable\(^{72}\), and these techniques are not fulfilling the needs and desire among many to actually work with the land, soil, animals and seasons with their own hands.

As with any other type of living, this is not a standard solution that fits everyone. However, those who really would like to move to the country, maybe with a group of friends to not be alone with all the responsibility, are at the moment having very circumscribed possibilities in the current society and housing market. A bigger problem in society than having to cooperate with neighbors also seems to be the increasing isolation and loneliness, especially among elderly.\(^{73} 74\) Many situations in life can make it hard to break isolation, especially since social activities of today requires energy, money, showing up at a specific time, car or functional public transport - and the luck of not getting sick since they are often only one day a week. These social activities also expects you to perform an activity in front of others. This housing typology I hope will break some of these common thresholds for social interactions, by providing shared spaces with different functions, accessible at all hours of the day. “Nostalgic” or not, this is a proposal to meet the future needs of society at large, but in particular enable for the growing amounts of people who need and dream of the countryside, or maybe just want to try it out to see if it is the right choice for them.


Appendix

13th of May I attended the Build and Live fair held by the municipality in Robertsfors. It was an event open to the public but just as well a place for developers and companies to meet and discuss each other’s projects. Visitors I talked to about my project were in general positive, but a common hesitation was that it would be too expensive for them to live there. This I guess will be one of my bigger challenges when taking this further into reality. When discussing the building situation in Robertsfors municipality with an architecture firm in Bygdeå, their view was that smaller municipalities are afraid to approve multi-family housing anywhere else than in their central towns, since the consultants they hire conducts market surveys that shows that there is no market for anything else.

My conclusion is that I will need to do my own market surveys, and in Malå, the other municipality I have been working with, they are interested in developing a project like this, despite the fact that the village Rökå is relatively small and is situated quite far from the central town. However, in the end it is a question of who are willing to move there and who are willing to take the financial risks that comes with a new establishment of this size.

A strategy for doing this that I am planning to investigate is the library art-tour that was postponed. Graphical art inspired by this new project, together with the architectural proposal can be a discussion-starter in the municipalities I am visiting. Hopefully I will be able to collect some sites from each municipality that could be suitable for the project. When having the sites, I can start approaching the bigger city regions where I would find my main target group – tired citizens that want something else in life, who maybe grew up on the countryside, or are organized around city-gardening but still doesn’t feel satisfied. To them I can present the different sites, and people can sign up on where they are most interested in moving. Creating a homepage that can connect people with each other and with different locations would be a helpful tool in this process. From here, the step is not too far to suggest a Byggemenskap. Early in the process I will have to contact building developers that can make a more precise calculation of what the building would cost so that people will know what they are signing up for, and to minimize unpleasant economical surprises along the way.

75 Föreningen för byggemenskap. http://byggemenskap.se/
My experience from this semester is that smaller municipalities with a modern history of decreasing population are really eager and positive to ideas of this sort, not only because they want to keep a critical number of inhabitants for tax base to maintain schools and healthcare. My reflection is that those living on the countryside in general have a better understanding than the average citizen of the connection between nature, resources, ecosystems and human wellbeing - since they in general are less detached from nature.

In this text I haven’t been able to describe all the examples I have come across during this work, of how people have gathered around an idea of escaping or creating something else than modern civilization. Many initiatives inspired by the French philosopher and socialist Charles Fourier and his ideas of the ideal farm-collective Phanlanstère thrived in the USA around 1840-50 where the most famous example was Brook Farm. Collective houses is cities with shared workshops, kitchens and cooperative childcare was a concept growing in Sweden mostly during the 30’s and the 80’s. A few Swedish examples from the green wave era during the 70’s that is worth looking more into is Moder Jord and the village collectives Skogsnäs and Solbyn. A more contemporary example is the village Marinaleda in Andalusia, Spain. It is too interesting to describe shortly, therefore I restrict myself to end this thesis with a quote from the mayor of the village, Sánchez Gordillo:

"We have learned that it is not enough to define utopia, nor is it enough to fight against the reactionary forces. One must build it here and now, brick by brick, patiently but steadily, until we can make the old dreams a reality: that there will be bread for all, freedom among citizens, and culture; and to be able to read with respect the word 'peace'. We sincerely believe that there is no future that is not built in the present."  

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77 Brook Farm [https://www.britannica.com/topic/Brook-Farm](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Brook-Farm), latest update, 2018
80 Mårdskog, Sarah, Mårdskog, Göran. Skogsnäs [http://www.skogsnasgreens.com/skogsn%C3%A4s](http://www.skogsnasgreens.com/skogsn%C3%A4s)
81 Stenram, Åke. Historik, Solbyn [http://www.solbyn.org/about.html](http://www.solbyn.org/about.html) 2018