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Towards development beyond GDP

Case studies of Egnahemsfabriken and Uddebo

Master's thesis in Industrial Ecology

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Abstract

Alternative approaches to sustainability, such as initiatives resonating with the degrowth paradigm have the potential of showing how societies can develop with a focus beyond GDP. Considering the current demographic pattern in Sweden, many people will live in rural and rural areas in the future. How to live and operate sustainably in these areas is explored in this thesis. More precisely, the aim is to explore two rural locations in Sweden, Egnahemsfabriken on Tjörn, and the village Uddebo, where civil society has organised to solve local issues - initiatives that resonate to a great extent with the degrowth paradigm, and initiatives that has brought a lot of positive outcomes locally. Through semi-structured interviews, these places are explored by delving into how these initiatives started, how it has developed, what challenges there have been and what is important to consider for the future. The results show that diversity among people, a lot of drive and energy, as well as unpaid time spent, and empty premises for a low rent/price, has been important in both areas. While Egnahemsfabriken seems to focus on reaching out locally, regionally and even nationally, and to influence other places and institutional levels, Uddebo seems to be more of a place where people move to do their own thing, to work less, do things together, but with great diversity where not everyone is engaged in local initiatives. Some of Egnahemsfabriken's focuses for the future could be to reach out more to the local society and the municipality through e.g. meetings and low-threshold events, increase the long-term financial stability and make projects last longer, as well as continuing facilitating administration and collaboration with their partners. For Uddebo, preventing gentrification, doing bigger projects, and exploring local solutions for sharing/gift economy as well as other local platforms (e.g. local radio and local social media platform) were suggested.

Keywords: degrowth, alternative development, bottom-up, rurality, civil society

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1. Introduction

After over three decades since the emergence of the sustainable development paradigm, achieving the envisioned alignment between economic growth, social well-being and environmental protection is still challenging (Asara et al., 2015). Economic growth is often assumed as a prerequisite for a safe and sustainable societal development. However, assuming it will remain can be threatening if the growth does not continue as expected. Growth forecasts from OECD, even the most optimistic ones, indicate that a lower growth than during the second half of the 20th century is probable in the future (Hagbert et. al, 2018). Factors such as demographics, resource availability and climate change have been emphasised by ecological as well as conventional economists as potentially leading to lower, negative growth or even a collapse of the economy. It could therefore be important to identify how such a society could look like in this scenario.

A paradigm addressing this is the degrowth paradigm, that questions the desirability of economic growth (Kallis et. al, 2015). It is often defined as a downscaling of production and consumption; however, it goes beyond decreased material flows and is not only about doing less of the same. It is about reorganising society, e.g. towards new living and production forms such as eco-communities and cooperatives, emphasising concepts such as self-sufficiency and collaborative economy.

Degrowth and industrial ecology share the principle of subordinating economic growth to other factors (Sahakian, 2016). Profit generation is not explicitly incorporated into the industrial ecology concept, and its roots in bioeconomics imply an acknowledgment of biophysical limitations constraining economic growth. Similarly, the concept of degrowth also recognises these constraints but might place a greater emphasis on the social dimension compared to industrial ecology.

The degrowth paradigm presents many valuable principles that could be implemented by contemporary societies, particularly in rural and rural areas (i.e, in areas with low population density or in areas with low population density and some more densely populated parts). While urban areas are developed based on a scarcity of buildings, services and infrastructure, creating pressure for further development, investment and import, rural/rural areas often have a smaller or larger surplus of buildings and space (Xue, 2014). Societal development in these areas has to be organised in another way than in urban areas. Initiatives associated with degrowth can develop societies by bridging the social distance between people through common activities and collaboration (Hospers & Reverda, 2015), foster local community resilience and other sustainable solutions.

In Sweden, relocations from rural to urban areas are no longer dominating the population change - instead the urban areas grow mainly through immigration and more births (Statistics Sweden, 2015). This shift in population dynamics presents opportunities for redefining the role of rural and rural areas in fostering sustainable communities. And when such local initiatives become interwoven across political levels and geographical scales, they have the potential of bringing about a systemic change (Parés et al., 2017).

Two rural/rural hubs for local alternative development that resonate with the degrowth paradigm are Egnahemsfabriken on the island Tjörn and the village Uddebo in Tranemo municipality. These places exemplify the potential of rural/rural areas in fostering an alternative development associated with degrowth. By embracing degrowth principles such as localisation and collaborative economy, they serve as incubators for alternative approaches to social, environmental and economical sustainability.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this thesis is to explore how bottom-up initiatives on Tjörn and Uddebo can contribute to an alternative development (i.e. a development associated with degrowth) and to a living countryside as well as seeking to identify how to facilitate this development.

The research questions are, for Egnahemsfabriken and Uddebo respectively:

- What aspirations and visions are there for an alternative development towards degrowth?
- What existing initiatives, means and challenges are there for an alternative development towards degrowth?
- What leverage points are there, i.e. crucial aspects, for an alternative development towards degrowth?

1.2 Cases

In the following, the two cases are briefly introduced. First Egnahemsfabriken and their local collaboration partners on Tjörn, and thereafter Uddebo.



Figure 1.1. The location of each case: Egnahemsfabriken, on Tjörn, and Uddebo, in Tranemo municipality.

1.2.1 Tjörn: Egnahemsfabriken and their local collaboration partners

Egnahemsfabriken emerged in 2018 from the local network *Möjligheternas ö*, working with integration of immigrants, during a time period when many immigrants came to Sweden. One of Egnahemsfabriken's aims is to give people with a limited budget the possibility of building their own home. It is a way of transforming the affordable housing shortage to a collective problem rather than an individual problem. This is done through participatory and self-building projects where residents, professionals and volunteers build together and by other building related projects.



Figure 1.2. Participatory building course at Egnahemsfabriken. Photo: Anna Berglund



Figure 1.3. People building together at Egnahemsfabriken. Photo: Anna Berglund

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Figure 1.5. The animals at Egnahemsfabriken are important both for the ecosystem and for social wellbeing. Photo: Anna Berglund



Figure 1.6. Cooperative cultivation. Photo: Anna Berglund

Egnahemsfabriken are working together with Omställning Tjörn, a non-profit association that was founded in 2019, currently in a project financed by Leader and the local bank on Orust & Tjörn, *Water in our landscapes (Vatten i våra landskap)*, with influencing local farming practices and the role of biological diversity for water's temperature-regulating processes for a stable climate. The aim is to promote locally sustainably produced food and local climate action. An aquaponics farmer, engaged in aquaponics & biochar projects, and driving a cooperative mussel farm, is also active in this project *Water in our landscapes*.

Other than that, Omställning Tjörn are currently involved in two other projects, *Collaboration Hoga saluhall (Samverkan hoga saluhall)* together with Hoga market hall, a market hall for locally produced food, Study association adult school and the aquaponics farmer, also for increasing local sustainably produced food, and the project *Bike safely on Tjörn (Cykla säkert på Tjörn)* where they strive for improving local biking possibilities and to promote biking as a healthy and sustainable means of transport.

Another non-profit association, working for social equity, is the café and second hand St Mary, founded in 2020 with financial support from the Swedish church. It is organised democratically and offers working opportunities for people far from the ordinary labour market. It was founded by a social entrepreneur who also was engaged in the immigrant network and the startup of Egnahemsfabriken.

1.2.2 Uddebo

Uddebo is a village in Tranemo municipality with around 450 inhabitants. After years of population decline, people organised for reversing this trend and for revitalising the village, sparking a positive and exciting alternative development. Since around 2008, there has been a growing community and waves of new initiatives here.

One of the first projects was to renovate *Gula huset* (the yellow house), a former textile factory office and warehouse. There were many innovative and creative efforts and events held to gather people that could help with the renovation. Now, community activities and a free shop, crafts shop and flea market are held here.



Figure 1.7. *Gula huset*. Photo: Caroline Bergmann

Furthermore, *Världshuset*, located in Uddebo's former schoolhouse, has become a vibrant community space, hosting cultural events, courses, and even a preschool.



Figure 1.8. *Världshuset*. Photo: Caroline Bergmann

Väveriet, the former weaving mill, is now providing premises for programming/makerspace, cider mill, clay workshop, choir, study promotion association, yoga, bakery and housing.



Figure 1.9. Väveriet. Photo: Per Pixel

Småhusbyn (the small house village) is a village of self-built houses, where some are under construction and some are finished.



Figure 1.10. Småhusbyn. Photo: Frida Rehnberg

2. Methodology

The following chapter outlines the methodology used in this study, which includes a literature study of the degrowth paradigm, semi-structured interviews with interviewees from each case, and data analysis through thematic content analysis and giga mapping.

Given the focus on alternative development for degrowth, a qualitative approach was used as the aspects covered were aimed to be examined and reflected upon rather than quantified (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

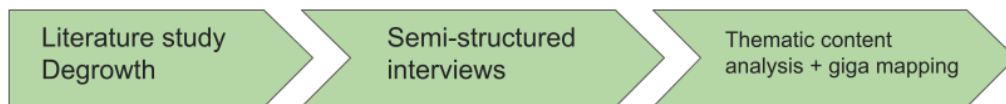


Figure 2.1. A literature study, semi-structured interviews, thematic content analysis and giga mapping were used as methods within the study,

2.1 Literature study

The first step of the thesis was to gain more understanding of the degrowth paradigm and of its applicability in rural/rurban areas and to identify its relation to industrial ecology. Therefore, the previously undertaken research in the field was investigated in a literature study. A search on *google scholar* was carried out using terms such as ‘degrowth’, ‘degrowth + rural’, ‘degrowth + industrial ecology’. Then the reference list of the research papers found was used as a new starting point for finding more relevant papers (snowballing approach) (Wohlin, 2014).

2.2 Co-creation of the research process

As Egnahemsfabriken and Uddebo are different places in different contexts, the practicalities regarding the interviews for each of them was co-created (Adler, 2015) together with the thesis project’s contact persons for the respective places, turning the project into a form of participatory research and action research. Participatory and action research involves the people being the focus of the study, in order for them to influence and be part of the research in a genuine and democratic manner (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). The participatory and action research methodologies provide research that more easily can be translated to real-world communities and non-academic contexts, and that is a combination of researchers theoretical and methodological expertise and participants’ real-world knowledge and experiences.

2.3 Interviews

2.3.1 Data collection

Interviews were held in order to collect qualitative data regarding topics such as dreams/visions, resources, obstacles, cooperation partners, projects, communication media/paths, and strategies/plans for the future in the context of their work for degrowth.

2.3.2 Method & material

The interviews were semi-structured (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014), which enabled an examination of the topics while also enabling delving into certain aspects and creating an interesting discussion. Additionally, a large piece of paper (around A0-format) and markers were used for the participants to write down what came to their mind during the interview. Some interviews were held in groups, and some with one person at a time, see table 1. The interviews held with several participants at once started with asking them to reflect individually about the first topic asked for (visions/dreams), and write down what came to their mind. This was done to get the conversation started. Then, the participants took turns in presenting their reflection. The remaining topics were asked about in turn and were open for everyone to reflect on and write down thoughts/keywords on the paper. At the interviews held with only one person, all topics were asked in turn for the person to reflect on and write down thoughts/keywords on the paper.

Interview questions (held in Swedish, here translated in English):

- What dreams/visions do you have for the future?
- What resources do you have to make your dreams happen?
- What obstacles do you see for making your dreams happen?
- What current partners and projects do you have that help you achieve your dreams?
- What communication channels do you have? Does it work well?
- What strategies (concrete actions/activities/plans) for the future do you have to achieve your dreams?

2.3.3 Participants and practicalities

The number of participants differed between the interviews, some were held in groups and some with one person at a time. Five interviews were held with the staff at Egnahemsfabriken representing their broad competence field. Four interviews were held with their closest collaborators located on Tjörn: Sustainability transition Tjörn (Omställning Tjörn), Study association adult school (Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan), Billströmska folk high school (Billströmska folkhögskolan), a social entrepreneur, an aquaponics farmer and Hoga market hall.

Five interviews were held with Uddebo, and the participants on these were co-selected with two Uddebo contact persons to capture the broad field of people in the village. However, although the aim was for a broad field of Uddebo residents to be represented, the selection was of course influenced by these persons and who they know in the village.

All of the interviews were held in Swedish, in March, April and May 2024. The length of each interview was approximately one hour. The audio was recorded and the paper on which the participants wrote/drew was filmed in order to follow the interviews more easily afterwards.

Table 2.1. Participants at each interview, and number of participants on each interview

	Interviewees from	No of interviewees
Interview 1	Egnahemsfabriken	5
Interview 2	Egnahemsfabriken	4
Interview 3	Egnahemsfabriken	1
Interview 4	Egnahemsfabriken	1
Interview 5	Egnahemsfabriken	1
Interview 6	Hoga saluhall & Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan	2
Interview 7	St Mary, social non-profit enterprise	1
Interview 8	Aquaponics farmer	1
Interview 9	Omställning Tjörn/Billströmska folkhögskolan	1
Summary, Tjörn		17
Interview 10	Uddebo inhabitants	8
Interview 11	Uddebo inhabitant	1
Interview 12	Uddebo inhabitants	4
Interview 13	Uddebo inhabitants	3
Interview 14	Uddebo inhabitants	4
Summary, Uddebo		18

2.4 Data analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an account of the methodologies and processes used to analyse the qualitative data, namely thematic content analysis and giga mapping.

2.4.1 Thematic content analysis

The thematic content analysis method was chosen due to its suitability for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data (Dixon-Woods et al, 2005), allowing for a nuanced examination of the data. The interview responses, which were recorded as audio files, were transcribed using an AI transcription service. From these transcriptions, codes summarising the major themes of the text content were derived through an iterative process. Initially, codes were assigned and then refined for consistency and deeper understanding as the process progressed. Whenever a previously used code was considered, the text was systematically compared with earlier text pieces assigned the same code. This approach ensured a deeper understanding of the nuances and meanings associated with each thematic code.

Subsequently, the content with related thematic codes was deductively grouped into the following subchapters: the need for an alternative development, visions, and means and challenges to achieve the visions (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Finally, a coherent and informative text was written in English, describing and summarising the analysed content in each subchapter. This step involved transforming the coded and thematically organised qualitative data into a narrative presentation that captures the nuances and meanings of the material.

2.4.2 Giga-mapping

The mapping method *giga mapping* was used in order to provide a holistic view of the system, by integrating multiple layers and scales of information. It was performed digitally on the platform *Miro* after the interviews.

The method was originally developed within design thinking and practice by Birger Sevaldson and others at Oslo School of Architecture and Design (Sevaldson, 2011). The goal is to find and create relations and interactions between the parts of the system, and to create a system map with a lot of different information and several layers and scales. The method is based on handling and communicating the complexity in projects by designerly ways and skills of visual thinking and visualisation, while also referring to systems thinking. The method has been used for many complex projects, see e.g. Davidová (2017), da Costa Junior (2020) and Aguirre Ulloa (2020).

Leverage points

Leverage points (Meadows, 1999) were identified based on the interview results and the development and analysis of the system maps. Leverage points are points in a system where an intervention can have large effects; points, i.e. components or aspects that are present in the system, that either is crucial for the system to function in its present state and needs to be preserved, or components that, if changed into something else than their present state, have large (either desired or not desired) effects in the system. Here, the focus is desired effects.

The high leverage points are more difficult to affect, while the lower points are on a more superficial level and are therefore easier to change. The idea is that more significant change occurs when we target the deeper aspects of a system, such as its underlying rules or paradigms, rather than focusing on surface-level elements like material flows or reward structures (Leventon et al, 2021).

2.5 Demarcations

The thesis is carried through within the research project *Facilitating a new rurality*, aiming to facilitate an alternative development by suggesting digital media/tools that can help organisation and communication in these two areas. The project is a collaboration between Chalmers, Gothenburg University, HDK-Valand, Egnahemsfabriken and Uddebo, and is financed by Formas.

Geographically, the thesis is in general limited to Tjörn and Uddebo, respectively. These areas were chosen due to their ongoing activity towards degrowth. Some results may be generally applicable to other places, but not necessarily all of them. The concepts rural and rurban is frequently used in this thesis, and the definition of these two concepts (rural/rurban) may vary in different regions and nations (Wineman, 2020).

2.6 Ethical statement

Since the study involves interviews with individuals in the field associated with the cases, there is a potential ethical consideration regarding their integrity. To address this, anonymity has been ensured for all interviewees in the paper. The data collection was managed so that no sensitive or personal information was collected, only the necessary data. The participants were informed about the purpose of both the research project and the thesis project and were asked to freely give their informed consent for being recorded.

3. Analysis and findings from Literature study

In this section, the degrowth paradigm is explored, examining its origins, definitions (including how it relates to industrial ecology), and key concepts.

3.1 From critique of growth to degrowth

The principles of degrowth originate from diverse areas around the world, but emerged as a slogan within social movements in France during the early 2000s, and was rapidly spread to other places (Gerber, 2020). By the end of that decade, it became a focus for scientific research. Rather than a concept, the term was originally more a ‘missile word’ that triggered discussions on resource limits and re-politicised the consensus around sustainable development and green growth. The degrowth paradigm has its roots from works such as *Limits to Growth* by Donella Meadows et al. in 1972 and *Silent spring* by Rachel Carson in 1962, works of Erich Fromm and Cornelius Castoriadis, Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, and the critique of ‘development’ with the works of Arturo Escobar and Ivan Illich (Demaria et al., 2013).

During the first international conference on economic degrowth for ecological sustainability and social equity in Paris 2008, the first definition of the concept degrowth was agreed on by the participants, as a “voluntary transition towards a just, participatory, and ecologically sustainable society” and was perceived as a process the wealthiest nations should go through for stabilising the national and the global economy and the balancing the increasing environmental impact from human production and consumption (Flipo & Schneider, 2008).

3.2 Definitions of degrowth

There is still a divergence in the definitions of degrowth and what it encompasses, in part because some advocates emphasising its multiple dimensions with a variety of interpretations, open for debate and proposals of practical solutions, rather than a precise definition (Cosme et al., 2017). In the following paragraphs, the whole field is not covered, but some concepts are highlighted that have appeared in several studies.

Degrowth is a field of study and action that acknowledges the uneven distribution and flow of materials and energy globally. Degrowthers argue the size of these flows and stocks often exceeds what's necessary, and that it is possible to reach a fairer society where fewer resources are used (Gerber, 2020). Achieving this requires a significant overhaul and downsizing of economies.

Degrowth isn't just about criticising economic growth; it's also a broader exploration of how humans relate to nature, coexist meaningfully, and organise societies. The degrowth concept aims to be an alternative to the current society centred around growth (Xue, 2014), calling for a change of the social, economical and political systems in order to promote wellbeing, quality of life, democracy and environmental sustainability (Asara et al., 2015). It considers growth unjust also as it is built on an unequal exchange of resources between a core and a periphery, between and within nations (Kallis et al., 2015). The periphery, i.e. rural, indigenous, lower class, different ethnicity, or less developed

areas, are exploited for e.g. extracting a resource or building a factory, then they receive the waste and suffers from the pollution while the core area benefits from this resource extraction and produces and consumes even more, reinforcing this pattern. Furthermore, the effort required for generating growth often comes with a negative impact on human health due to long working hours, not only for paid work but also including the invisible household work mostly done by women.

The degrowth movement strives for a deeper democracy through autonomy and self-determination, and criticises contemporary economics for colonising and depoliticizing collective social choice (Xue, 2014). It visualises a pathway towards smaller and localised economies where wealth is redistributed, with support from the state and international policies. The goal of degrowth is to increase social justice and ecological sustainability, not to reduce GDP or decrease resource metabolism, i.e., the concept of degrowth should not be understood literally (Asara et al., 2015).

Demaria et al. (2013) identifies five streams of degrowth thought - the first being that ecology is considered having intrinsic rather than instrumental values for human resource use. By reducing energy and material throughput, we can preserve ecosystems and keep human activities within their capacity. The second stream of thought is the critique of capitalism which focuses on utility maximisation, i.e. maximising the benefit/satisfaction for the least amount of money, profit maximisation, commodification of goods and services and dissolution of relations between people. Thirdly, degrowth is about redefining well-being and life quality, reevaluating what's important in life, focusing on voluntary simplicity instead of working and consuming more. The fourth source of degrowth is bioeconomics, addressing the regenerative capacity of the environment and the insufficiency and implausibility of technological fix to decrease the environmental impact enough for enabling the environment to recover. The fifth degrowth thought is the arguing for social, environmental and economic justice through fair wealth, resource, economic and environmental burdens distribution, between and within nations and generations.

Degrowth and industrial ecology share the principle of subordinating economic growth to other factors (Sahakian, 2016). As the concept industrial ecology is derived from bio-economics (Georgescu-Roegen 1971, 2006), it recognises the biophysical limit on economic growth and it prioritises the planet and biophysical dimension over the economical (Sahakian, 2016), which degrowth also does, but degrowth perhaps addresses the social dimension to a greater extent than industrial ecology does. Moreover, there are different views within industrial ecology whether transforming society for sustainability is an incremental or radical process (Lifset & Graedel, 2002), while degrowth stresses the need for a radical reorganisation of society (Kallis et al., 2015). There are also ideological differences within industrial ecology about the role of the market economy and current political institutions, and whether these can and will do enough to keep society within our planetary boundaries (Lifset & Graedel, 2002).

3.3 Key concepts for degrowth

Transforming society for degrowth can be described by some key concepts. Among these, 'localisation' is often stressed as one of the most important by degrowthers, due to the negative social and environmental consequences of globalisation and capitalism (Fournier, 2008; Frankova & Johanisova, 2011; Kallis, 2011). However, several other concepts are also important within the paradigm.

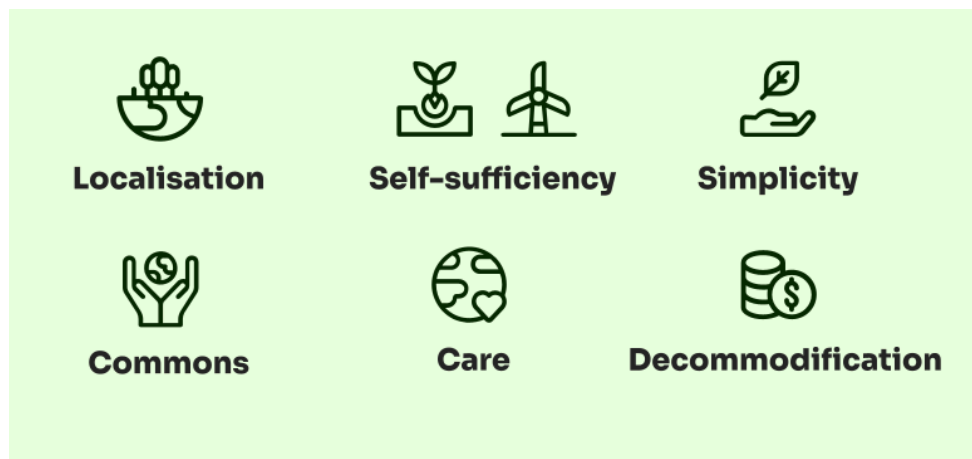


Figure 3.1 Key concepts within the degrowth paradigm

Localisation of power and decision making to smaller organisation units, e.g. towns, villages and neighbourhoods is advocated in order to allow for increased participation and direct control of decisions (Bonaiuti, 2012; Johanisova and Wolf, 2012). Some degrowth proponents argue the current economic and liberal democracy system is shaped more and more by economic capital, that the democracy is undermined and power is increasingly put in the hands of political and economic elites (Brenner, 1999; Peck, 1998; Fotopoulos, 2007). It should instead be spread out among all citizens through other types of democracy systems such as deliberative democracy, direct democracy, participatory democracy or improved representative democracy (Asara et al., 2013). Direct participation in local decisions may increase the awareness and care of the local area, increase the concern for the public good and of other people in the neighbourhood. The local scale is where the everyday life happens, and is the scale that may be less complex and easier to understand.

Simplicity is about reducing waste and resource intensive goods, and reevaluating what is important in life by spending more time on non-materialistic activities that give meaning and satisfaction. Simplicity can mean a minimally sufficient material living standard, and more time and freedom to explore other activities that does not require much money, e.g. more time to spend engaging in the community, more time for family and friends, more time for leisure activities, etc. It rests on the belief that people can live meaningful, free, diverse and happy lives without exceeding a fair share of nature's resources. Related to simplicity is the act of sharing goods and spaces with others, as a means to reduce resource use and to connect with others.

Care involves the daily actions undertaken by individuals to promote their own well-being or the well-being of the people in their community, people nearby, colleagues, family, friends or neighbourhood. Care is fundamental in supporting the mental and physical health of humans and an enormous amount of care work is given to sustaining and contenting relations, but has long been

undervalued in society. Recentering society around care is a path to degrowth. The degrowthers advocate for sharing care work, between genders, members of the community as well as members of society.

Commoning is the social process of managing and sharing responsibility in a community about something owned and managed in common outside the market and the state. The common thing can be anything from knowledge, cultural techniques, a physical space, agricultural land, and many more things. Commoning is typically centred on addressing concrete problems and fulfilling human needs. For a common to be managed in a good way, all members of the community should share the same vision about what is managed and how. The tragedy of the commons can be avoided when the community members establish boundaries, rules, monitoring systems, social norms and punishment of free-riding.

Self-sufficiency refers to the ability of an entity, e.g. a community, to fulfil its own physical needs of e.g. food and energy (Vergunst, 2002). It provides opportunities for human-scale, local development processes, making the local system less dependent on global supply chains. Factors such as localisation, community resilience and the residents' ability to make decisions influence a community's degree of self-sufficiency. In turn, these factors can also be strengthened by increased self-sufficiency.

Decommodification is the process through which products, services or more broadly, social relations cease being commodities, i.e. goods and services with a monetary value (Baranowski et. al, 2022). Decommodification is crucial in the degrowth movement as it helps strengthen relationships among people and between people and the environment, which otherwise tend to dissolve under market mechanisms (Kallis et. al, 2015). The movement argues that people exchanging money and goods on the market tend to perceive each other by means of the money and goods that they exchange - a dynamic that hinders genuine human connections.

4. Results - Tjörn

In this chapter, the interview results from Egnahemsfabriken and their local collaboration partners on Tjörn are presented. The chapter is divided into sections describing the need for an alternative development based on the present situation, the visions/aspirations for the future, followed by the means, challenges and strategies to achieve the visions. See appendix X for the maps created by interviewees.

4.1 Reasons for alternative development

Regarding the reasons why an alternative development is needed, several interviewees described that there is a too long distance between decision makers and people “on the ground”. For example between politicians and civil society. This leads to e.g. that housing is becoming expensive in many places, making it difficult for people with low/normal finances to find reasonable housing. This was also described as applying specifically to Tjörn as a coastal municipality. There is also a distance between different professions - people nowadays are specialists in one field whereas before the industrialisation we needed to know a little bit of everything. Additionally, there is currently a financial focus in society, limiting the possibilities of accomplishing something considered truly valuable from a social and environmental perspective. Another aspect mentioned was the general feeling of working with something only for others, and with something that lacks a deeper meaning.

The connection between rural areas, rural development and associations was also mentioned - that associations, which are often focused around other values than economic profit, are important in contributing to a living and active rurality. Also, it was mentioned that associations have a significant role in a local democratic context - that there is small scale and locally anchored forums for decision making.

“There is a connection between the countryside, rural development and the existence of associations in the countryside as important forces in bottom-up contributions to a living countryside, or an active countryside, a committed countryside. [...] That one feels involved in the local context and recognises the opportunity for individual development when living in the countryside - there is room to develop your interests, to gather together with others, that it feels natural and that there are forums and places for that. That you can both maybe work, act, but also shop locally based food, is important, I think.”

To see and care for everyone was also one motivation mentioned for the need of an alternative development:

“[...] In all meetings, you should have the view that all people are equal. And you should meet all people at eye level. [...] And it's about small simple things [...]. But that sets the tone a bit. And my dream is that we will have it that way in even more places.”

4.2 Visions and aspirations

Many interviewees described dreams or visions of social character, e.g. exploring how to organise work more equally and democratically, as a goal in itself but also as a means to represent the society that they want to aim for: an open and diverse society where even those with a normal/small wallet can build themselves a decent home, where you work less, live more sustainably and do things together. Other descriptions mentioned was building a local human-friendly society and giving something positive and hopeful to future generations. Being a meetingplace for different people, e.g. decision makers and civil society, and setting up a community centre for everyone with e.g. scene, café, meeting rooms and cinema were also mentioned. The present specialisation of work disciplines in society in general was described as creating a gap that they envision to counteract, due to a belief that doing different things, both theoretical/strategic and practical, is positive for human health and a key for making people engaged in sustainability. Therefore, making architecture and landscape architecture available to more people, by enabling customers to be more actively involved, was mentioned as a way to bridge the gap between strategy and practice.

“Because people are not a single thing, we are made up of a lot of different things we are interested in. And historically, we have done a lot of different things, and been able to. And you can see that not least in places where you have to manage a lot by yourself, that people are good at so many things. Whereas today we are becoming more and more a specialist in something.”

Some interviewees also mentioned visions about environmental aspects. Some responses were rather broad, such as making the consciousness of (climate/sustainability) action increase in local residents, emphasising local action as a way of simplifying a complex issue, to reshape a society for climate mitigation, to work in harmony with the surrounding landscape, take an active climate responsibility in aquaponics and to be a generator for applied and practised sustainability. Other responses were more concrete, e.g. improving safe biking possibilities locally on Tjörn, achieving high self-sufficiency of sustainably produced food on Tjörn, and to have more animals for the ecosystem, reduce the farming scale and merge different fields such as agriculture, fishing and horticulture.

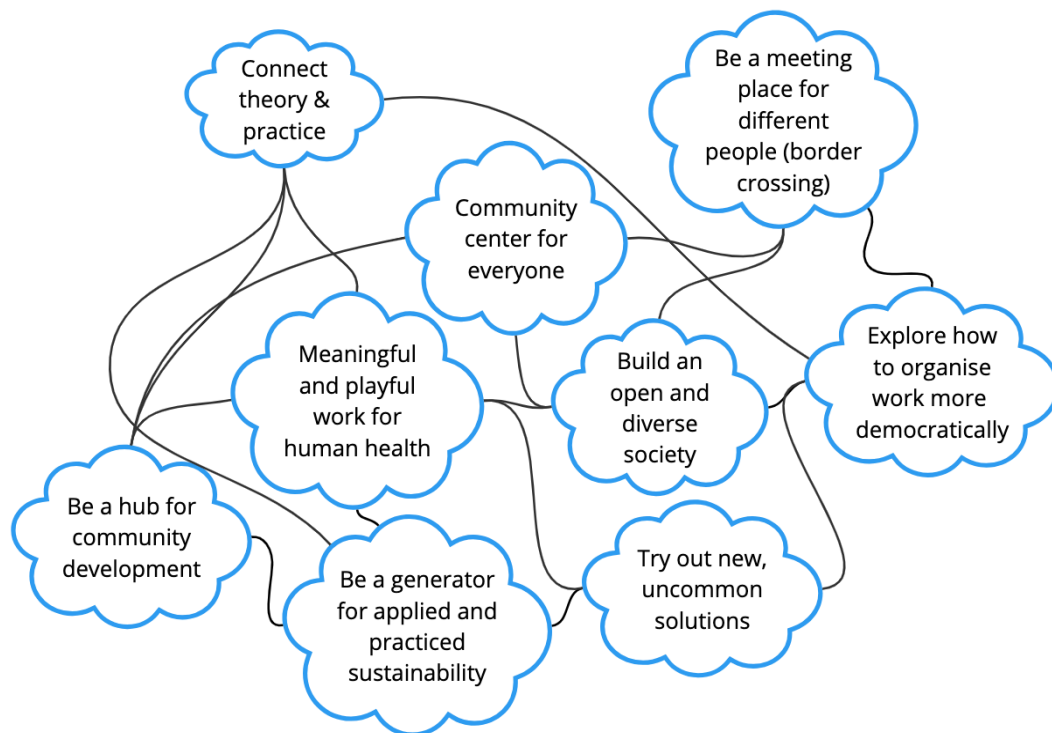


Figure 4.1. Main visions of the employees of Egnahemsfabriken.

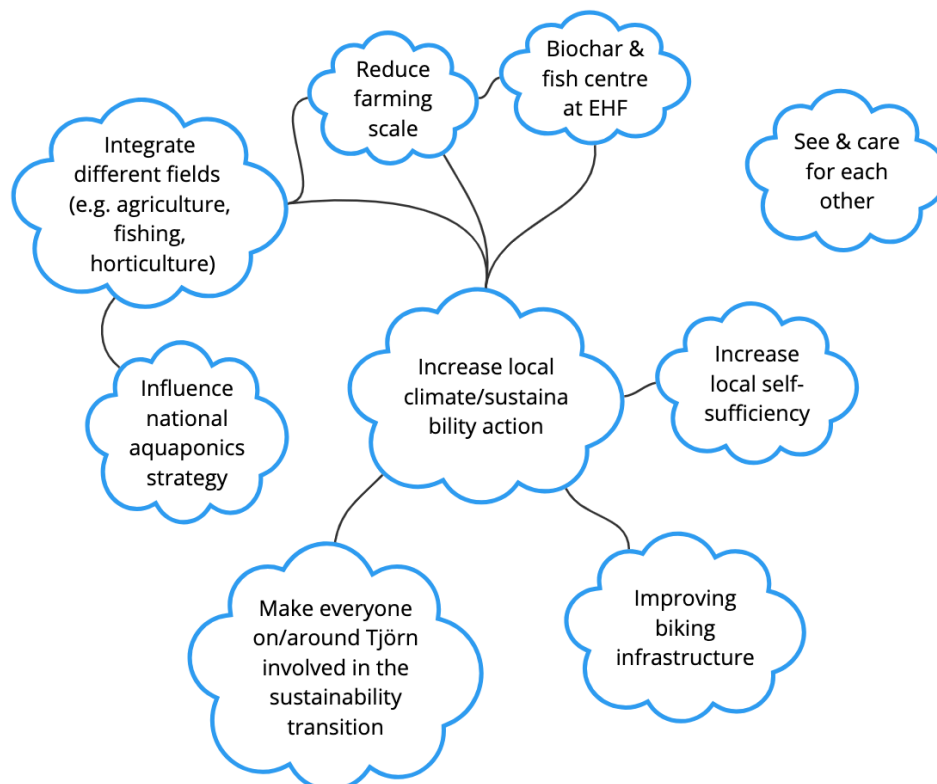


Figure 4.2 Main visions of Egnahemsfabriken's local collaboration partners.

4.3 Means and challenges to achieve the visions

In order to achieve their visions, there needs to be driven people or associations that can facilitate collaboration, which there currently are on Tjörn. Collaboration was described by many interviewees as a prerequisite for startup, receiving legitimacy and spreading ideas. The local society needs to be on board with their work, and it is important that legitimacy is received from the majority.

“There is trust here. It's about building it up. And I actually think that if we, a number of architects from the city, had come from above, it would not have helped. Because we wouldn't have received that legitimacy. But we've done a lot of things for quite a few years before we started this. And these collaborations were with the Church of Sweden and Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan, we had an immigrant project, we had “Mat och Prat”, we had a number of platforms that we built up first.”

When it comes to collaboration, the relation to the municipality of Tjörn was described as important. Some interviewees described a lacking interest and curiosity from the municipality, a financial focus which hinders them from seeing the value that the interviewees creates for the local society, hinders a sustainable management of the environment, as well as the possibility of a more successful cooperation. However, this relationship is a work in progress. One interviewee also described the relation to the local municipality as positive and supportive, possibly due to their projects docking very well into local municipal goals.

“[...] So we have noticed a reason why we have received so much interest from various departments of the municipality for what we do now - it is also that it is not so easy for the municipal officials either to find ways forward, and when we come, with this, [...] and put their work into action, which becomes an action towards the objectives that they actually have, in the direction that they want to go, then it is very thankful for them too. So to get that cooperation so that it becomes a win-win, I think that is an absolute prerequisite. Because if you would leave them out, it would never get that forceful”

Another challenge, described by many interviewees, was reaching out to the local society and involving them in sustainability initiatives. One interviewee described this as a general problem for sustainability organisations, which was stressed as important to address. Other interviewees suggested addressing this by arranging familiar activities (e.g. markets, pizza restaurant, quizzes, EPA tractor meetings, building a children's playground), as well as framing the projects/initiatives from other perspectives than sustainability. For example, Omställning Tjörn has a bike lane project which was brought up as an example of this, and that it could be framed based on bike safety and physical activity instead of sustainability.

“[...] it's almost as if you want to make it a bit more mainstream, in order for people to understand that this is not dangerous. In this compote, or candy bag, there are so many good and positive things, which, in principle, anyone could absorb. Only they gave themselves the chance to look at it.”

During the majority of the interviews with Egnahemsfabriken, the diversity of people (e.g. competences, ages, genders, nationalities, theory based or experienced based knowledge) and a freedom of thought/openness, but with common core values, were described as important for working towards and achieving their visions. Many interviewees also mentioned a lot of energy and drive in themselves, that work and commitment coincide, belief in the future and the capability of concretizing words into action. However, balancing the different discipline fields (building, social, cultivation, etc)

to not create a division or disconnection between these was also mentioned as a challenge by one interviewee. The financial instability and the fact that there is no predetermined structure for their work was described by some interviewees as giving stress but also enabling creativity. The flat organisation was described as challenging as people are used to a hierarchical power structure, and one interviewee described it as challenging due to lack of self confidence (e.g. regarding taking own decisions) and lack of communication. Their premises were described both as a resource and a challenge; renting an already built house enabled starting without high financial investment but was also described as limiting by one interviewee as not owning the premises limits what they can do with it. Their location was mentioned as a resource due to the fact that it is close to a larger city, in a region where many people live and where experts can be found, but at the same time in an area with less strict regulations/plans and less competition of land etc.

“But open spaces are... Just like this, as a contrast to the urban condition, which is more repetitive and more planned, and arranged - someone else has made a plan that you have to follow. And someone else who has been sitting at a desk somewhere. Here we mostly make plans that we forget about. We make plans for what to do and then people do something completely different. And that's how all valuable places grow.”

Administration was mentioned by some interviewees as taking a lot of energy from the other things they want to do. Also due to the fact that many administration systems are made for profit making enterprises, not economic associations. Furthermore, a lot of administration is connected to being a workplace, which Egnahemsfabriken is. Having a safe workplace with strong bonds and common values in the staff with the perfect amount of employees was mentioned as a challenge. Additionally, the challenge of making projects last longer, not only during the project time, was also mentioned.

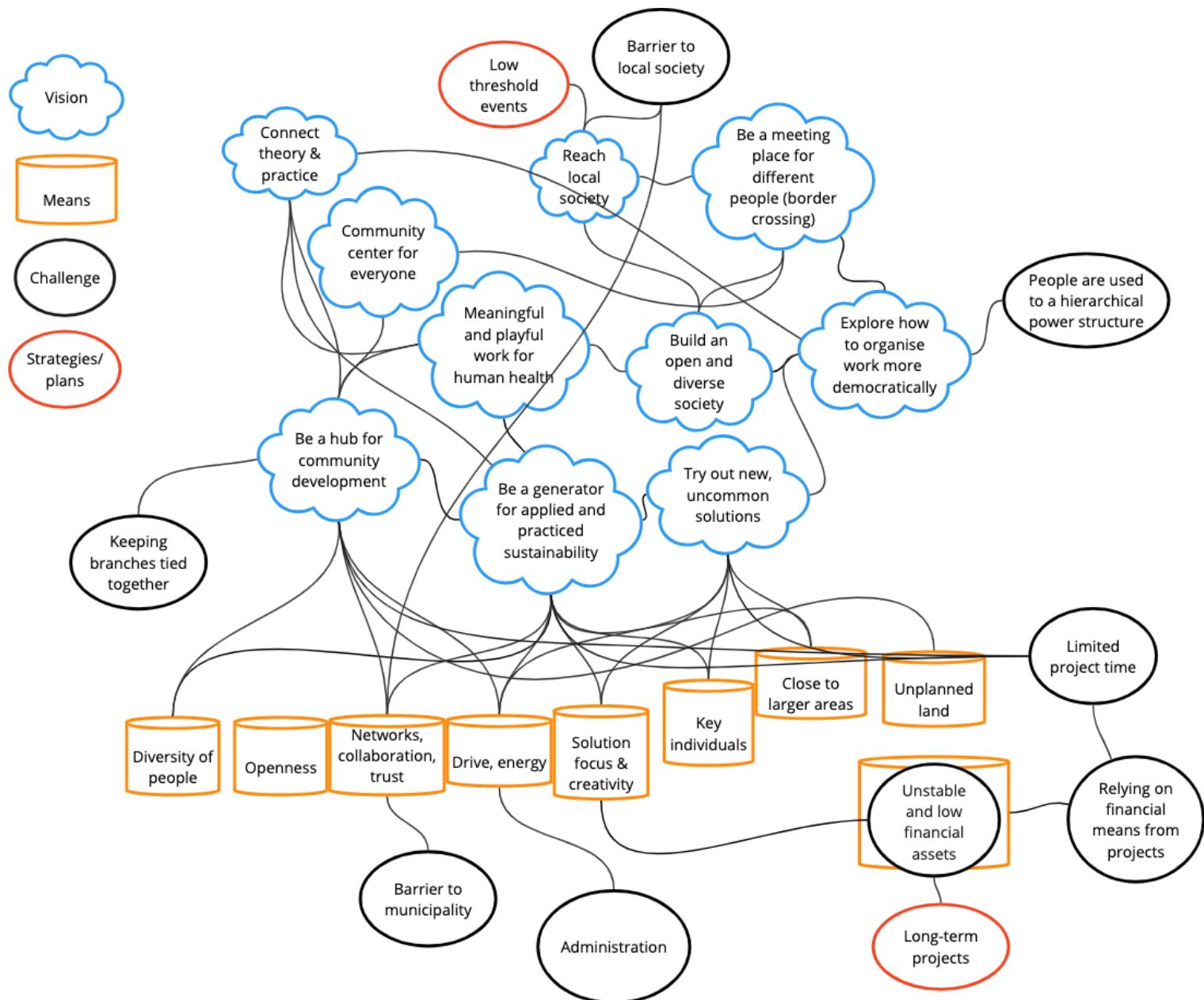


Figure 4.3 The most important means (orange) and challenges (black) for Egnahemsfabriken's visions.

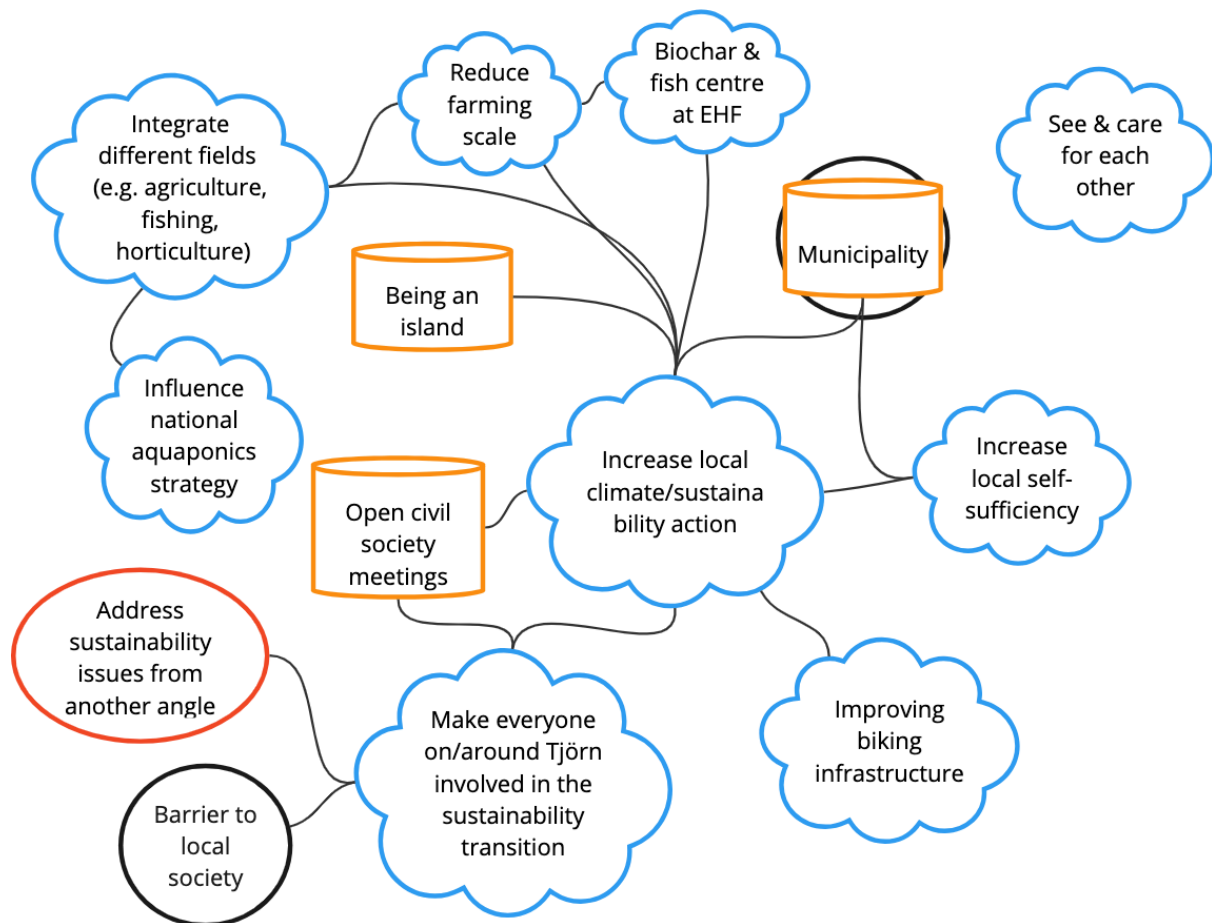


Figure 4.4. The most important means (orange) and challenges (black) for the visions of Egnahemsfabriken's local collaboration partners.

4.4 Summary

Interviewees mentioned the disconnection between decision-makers and the general population as a primary reason for alternative development. This gap, particularly between politicians and civil society, contributes to issues like expensive housing that makes it difficult for people with a limited budget to find affordable housing. This is evident especially on Tjörn as a coastal municipality. Additionally, the specialisation in professions has created a knowledge gap, and limits the realisation of socially and environmentally valuable projects. Some interviewees highlighted the importance of associations in rural development, contributing to local democracy and community involvement.

The visions for Tjörn include a socially equitable and democratic society with affordable housing for everyone, where people live sustainably with more community involvement. Interviewees envisioned a mixed society, a community centre, and a bridge between theoretical and practical work to promote human health and engagement in sustainability. Environmental aspirations included increased local climate consciousness, improved biking infrastructure, and higher self-sufficiency in sustainably produced food.

Achieving these visions requires collaboration between driven individuals and associations, with local legitimacy being crucial. Interviewees stressed the importance of a supportive relationship with the municipality and the local society, despite some existing challenges. Engaging the local society in sustainability initiatives was identified as a challenge, with suggestions to integrate familiar activities and frame projects from different perspectives.

The diversity of people and openness at Egnahemsfabriken were seen as strengths. However, balancing various disciplines, managing stress from a non-hierarchical structure, and dealing with administrative burdens was mentioned as a challenge. The location and flexible premises were both resources and limitations for their work.

5. Results - Uddebo

In this chapter, the interview results from Uddebo are presented. The chapter is divided into sections describing the need for an alternative development based on the present situation, the visions/aspirations for the future, followed by the means, challenges and strategies to achieve the visions.

5.1 Reasons for alternative development

The need for an alternative development was described partly as stemming from the fact, which is an issue for many rural areas, that there had been a negative population trend (before the alternative development), and local shops and markets had closed down due to a centralisation of businesses to other larger areas. The importance of the civil society and the business sector in rural areas, as the public sector is not as large, was also emphasised. This alternative development has been a way of revitalising the village. Low housing prices also have attracted people that want to work less and spend time on other things, such as being involved in the community, growing their own food, arranging cultural events, etc. New ways of living, in whichever way it is, being able to influence one's life, were also some reasons why some people moved here.

“Many have made a choice for something that they perceive as more sustainable. It can be about more space for culture in one's life, or more space for local food production. There are different choices [...] And there is time for that. Many do not work one hundred percent.”

“For me anyway, it is a strong feeling that I am creating it for a better development of the world. And something good that can create more community. And present a different way of life. Bring people together. For me, that is the greatest value.”

5.2 Visions and aspirations

Uddebo was described as a place where people move to do their own thing, being able to live one's life in the way one wants to. With that being said, there are probably many different dreams and visions among the people in the village.

“...Those of us who have moved in are also a rather scattered crowd. It's not like everyone moves here for one reason. It varies. And that probably also means that there won't be someone who has always lived here and someone who comes in and has the same standards, the same values. It varies, I think. But there is some kind of habit and willingness to do a lot together anyway.”

One interviewee mentioned the vision of being an inspiration for other places, also in terms of sustainability. A place people can come to visit, and that you also can be active here. A vision not just for societal development of Uddebo, but for creating meeting places where people of different backgrounds can meet. It was described as a societal development experiment rather than just a local societal development.

Other interviewees mentioned the vision of a circular economy. Connected to this, the vision of joint ownership of meeting places was added, where no one owns and where houses are lent to the next generation, and the focus is not *mine* but *ours*.

“I think what we are talking about is very much giving gifts and seeing resources like the element of water instead of the element of fire. So that it flows, and that it is... what is it called? Regenerative.”

“Imagine what we can accomplish, if we create joint ownership, if we don’t own our own venues. [...] That we borrow, that we do not own houses, that we lend houses to the next generation, is a fine approach, I think - that we don’t have private places that we should invest in and make a profit on and make money on, rather that this places exist for us to contribute to a better world”

Another vision was to have more meeting places in Uddebo, e.g. a library, perhaps a culture house (although others emphasised that what is needed is people that can keep the places alive rather than more spaces for that), and a local newspaper. Another vision mentioned by some interviewees was to have an own social media platform for Uddebo, where they can share different things and services with each other, and other more local digital solutions, e.g. a radio, servers, internet, etc. Also to connect with other communities around the world, perhaps through a digital platform. It could be used to facilitate helping each other, to increase the cooperation and relationships between similar places. One example mentioned was Unnaryd.

One interviewee mentioned the importance of protected forests, in general and specifically the forests around Uddebo. It was mentioned as a dream to protect the forests from deforestation. To be able to go for a walk in the forest was described as valuable/enjoyable, rather than cutting it down to make short-lived products such as newspaper and toilet paper. Another interviewee dreamed of more animals (pigs and hens) as a part of an organic permaculture, and for human health.



Figure 5.1 Main visions in Uddebo.

5.3 Means and challenges to achieve visions

A prerequisite being mentioned was the fact that many inhabitants here don’t work full time, or they work with their passion, which gives them time to invest in the societal development of the village. Another resource was the fact that there is a broad knowledge and experience field among the inhabitants which helps realising ideas, resulting in a low threshold to start projects. Many people have moved here from other places and have actively chosen to live here to be able to engage in community initiatives and projects. However, there is a great diversity of people and not all people are active in the village. One interviewee claimed that the majority is not.

There is also creativity stemming from being a small village, that people are not expecting any larger organisation or business to organise anything, rather, if they want something to happen, they basically have to organise it themselves.

“If an idea comes up about a trailer pool, then there are enough people who know roughly how to do it. So you just fix it. [...] So it's not a big deal. But for many societies, it's a big deal. How to establish a cooperative cultivation area in a villa area is not obvious.”

The in- and outflow of people was mostly described positively in the sense that there is a diversity, openness and acceptance for new people. The rotation of people engaged in the village is also positive for keeping the initiatives flatter and more democratic.

“A committed person comes in who drives forward and thinks it's fun. Then it dies out a bit. Then a new person comes along and starts something else. And so it goes on. And then it rises slowly but surely. So there is a development. But not just by the same person or people.”

Some interviewees described the importance of larger areas close to Uddebo, such as Svenljunga, Tranemo and Borås as well as infrastructure, e.g. the bike path between Uddebo and the nearby village Strömsfors.

As Uddebo is a small village, there are only two bigger streets which also were described as important meeting places, and that there is walking distance between everyone in the village. Indoor meeting places, i.e. old business premises were also described as very important, and there are many meeting places in Uddebo: *the weaving mill, the yellow house, Världshuset, Bygdegården*, the old *Konsum* building, for example, and also seven different concert premises. One interviewee also mentioned a folk kitchen, a freeshop and a community centre as three core meeting places for a village, and these are also present in Uddebo. Organising these places and other projects requires some dedicated people as well - people with a broad network, that knows how to drive projects, that makes sure everyone is included and has a foot every here and there. There is a mutual relationship between dedicated people and other people that just want to be there and live their life, or do their thing. There are certain people that are important nodes in this network, who have been especially important in developing Uddebo.

“The prerequisite is that someone has a capacity and a competence to maintain basic processes and drive a project forward. [...] A project pilot. Someone has done that job, but unpaid. But without that person it would never have happened.”

Some inhabitants appreciate the work that some of the driven people do more than others, but at the same time, it was emphasised that the development in recent years has happened in open dialogue with everyone, e.g. the inhabitants that lived in the village before the revitalisation and community projects started. For example by inviting people to events and by spreading information about activities to everyone in the village. It's not the old village-residents against the new, rather, there are several groups and also an overlap between the groups. The different groups were described positively - that you don't have to be a particular type of person to be able to live in Uddebo.

Affordable housing was described as the base for being able to do all other things in life - being creative, connecting with other people, having time for the things one enjoys. A challenge mentioned by many interviewees was that housing prices have increased, which in turn might attract people with less time to spend for community projects etc. Both how many people move to the village, and how

much time and interest of community and projects these people have were mentioned as important regarding this. The fact that the village has grown, and might be growing even more in the future, was described both positively and challenging. Some interviewees meant that Uddebo is not close enough to a large city, reducing the risk of gentrification. It was also emphasised that people with higher financial assets may also help and invest in the village, which can be positive, and they are also a part of a diversity, which is important to preserve. There are also some plots of land that aren't that expensive, which in some way could serve as a "protection" against increased prices. Setting up shared rental housing, and in that way keeping affordable housing available is work in progress. And in general, there is an ongoing dialogue in the village on how to handle this issue, although no decisions have been made yet.

Another challenge is the culture of giving, which can be a difficult prerequisite as an enterprise owner. Although people want to give, it is sometimes necessary to require people to pay for services/products in order to be able to run an enterprise.

Some interviewees described Uddebo as resilient towards crises. Many inhabitants here are used to living at low costs, there are a lot of natural resources in the village - e.g. fresh water and a lot of arable land available for local food production, and there is a sense of community and care for each other. During e.g. a power outage, people help each other out, while in urban areas, the connections to neighbours are often weaker.

For the vision of a circular/gift economy, the free shop was mentioned as a resource for exchanging things with each other. Some interviewees also mentioned the idea of loosening up the financial system by experimenting with a local currency as a way towards a more circular society with less ownership, with the idea of not needing a currency at all in the future. Another interviewee mentioned that the product/service exchange could also be organised through a digital platform. Another suggestion that was brought up was to have a pick-up place for carpooling, like a bus station but for carpooling. Other interviewees described the resource of sharing goods between each other, in solidarity, without the sharing going through a special service or exchange of money.

"If I need a lawnmower I can ask someone. That makes it much easier. You save a lot of money on it because not everyone needs to have it. It is also joint ownership in solidarity."

The municipality was mentioned by a few interviewees as being positive towards the development in Uddebo, in fact as they did not have to step in and actively work for increasing the in-migration as they have done in other villages. And the municipality also tries to look at what Uddebo is doing that can be applied to other similar places.

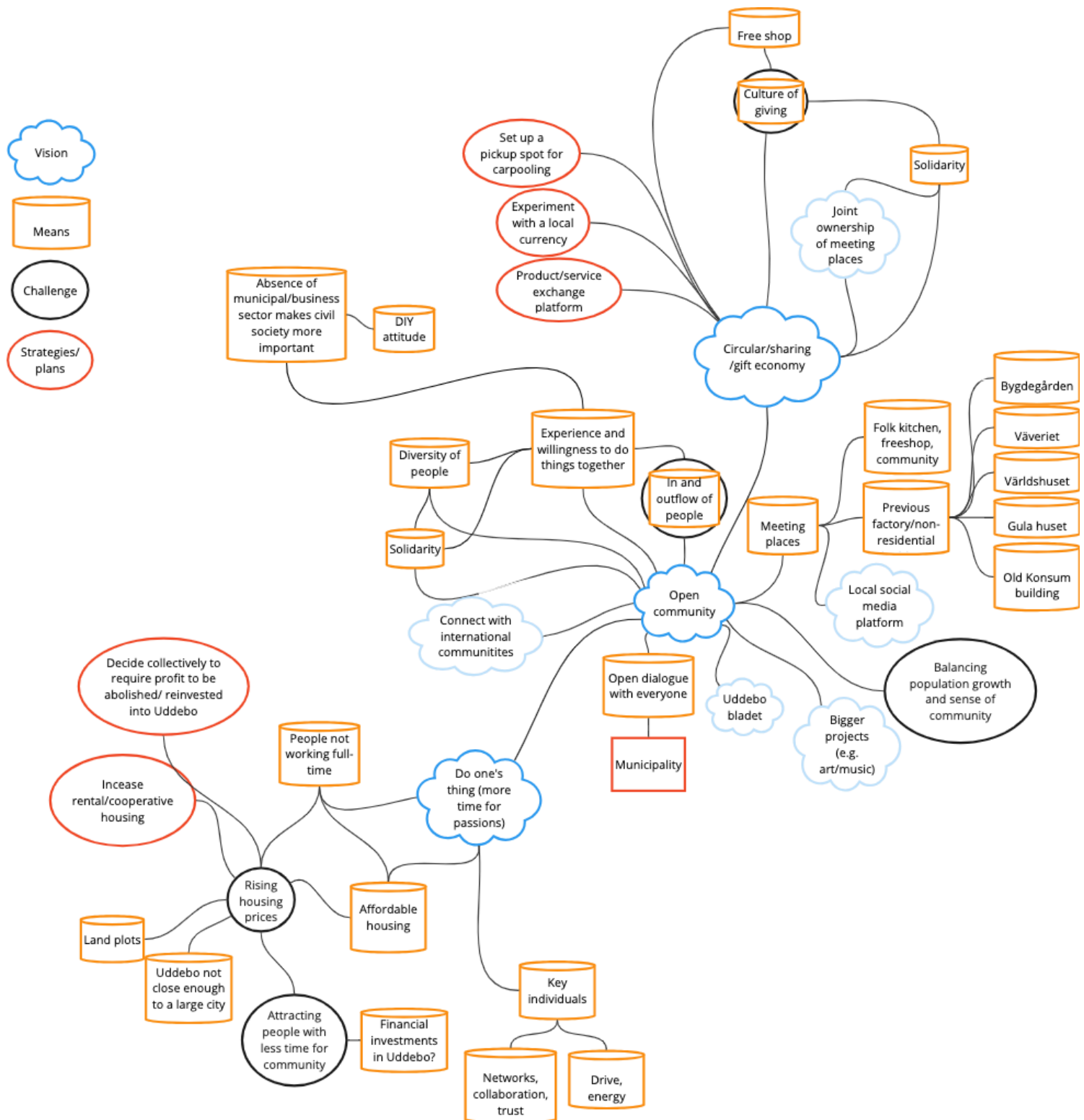


Figure 5.2. The most important means (orange) and challenges (black) for the inhabitants' visions in Uddebo.

5.4 Summary

The interviewees mentioned a negative population trend and the centralisation of businesses to larger areas as reasons for an alternative development. The importance of civil society and the business sector in rural areas was emphasised, given the smaller public sector. Low housing prices attract people working less and engaging in community activities, cultural events, and sustainable living. Many residents moved to Uddebo seeking a more sustainable lifestyle, with more space for culture and local food production.

Uddebo is described as a place where people can live according to their own values and lifestyles, and there are diverse dreams and visions. Some interviewees aspire for Uddebo to serve as an inspiration for other places, promoting sustainability and creating meeting places for diverse groups. Visions include a circular economy, gift economy, joint ownership of communal spaces, protected forests, organic permaculture, and more community meeting places like a library and a cultural house. There are also ideas for local digital solutions, such as a social media platform for Uddebo and connections with other communities globally.

The inhabitants' ability to invest time in community development is a key resource, as well as the diverse skills and experiences. The small size of the village fosters a do-it-yourself attitude, despite not all residents being equally active in initiatives. Infrastructure and indoor meeting places are crucial for community activities.

Dedicated individuals with a broad network play an important role in driving projects and maintaining community cohesion, and an open dialogue with long-time inhabitants has also been important. Affordable housing is essential for enabling creativity and community involvement, though rising housing prices is a challenge. The culture of giving and balancing financial sustainability for enterprises is another challenge.

Uddebo's resilience to crises, strong sense of community, and natural resources contribute to its sustainability. The municipality's positive attitude on Uddebo's development, and its potential to apply Uddebo's strategies to other villages, is also noted.

6. Analysis

In this section, the results are analysed in order to identify what seems to be crucial factors for this development, and what potential leverage points there are (points where an intervention might cause a large change). The first section is about Tjörn and the following is about Uddebo.

6.1 Tjörn

One potential leverage point is collaboration, which is essential to continue in the future. Establishing and maintaining a network of individuals with diverse skills is crucial. Collaboration with other associations can broaden influence, involve more people and help spread ideas. Connections with research and universities have had a significant role regarding legitimacy.

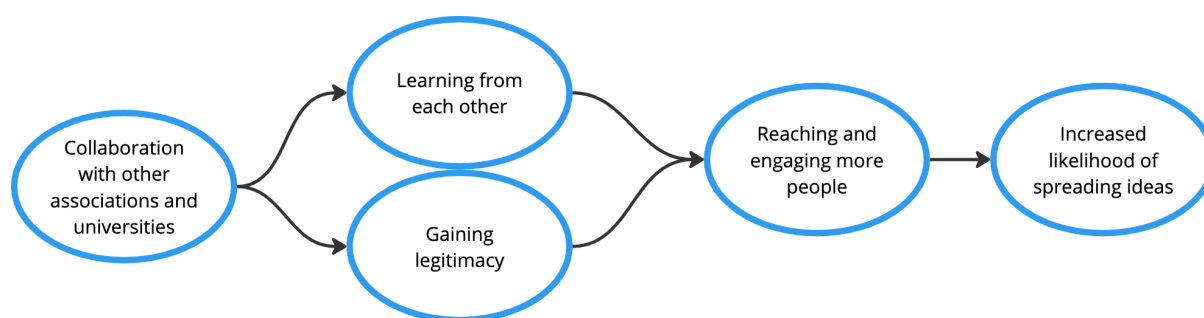


Figure 6.1 Collaboration has been important for working towards their visions, for gaining legitimacy and spreading ideas.

Given that building cooperatives, self-sufficiency of food, other sustainability issues, crafts, culture and arts go hand in hand, aligning and reinforcing goals (goals can also be seen as a leverage point) through a unified vision between all/several stakeholders in this local network could make the various efforts not just successful on their own but are also part of a bigger, interconnected system that drives meaningful, long-term change. And if the municipality is on board with such goals, there is an increased potential.

Additionally, the development of the Svanvik area, where Egnahemsfabriken is located, is another important aspect regarding this. Their plans and visions about developing the area can facilitate stronger networks between the local associations, groups, and individuals working towards sustainability.

Egnahemsfabriken attracts people from various regions, highlighting the widespread interest in their initiatives. Despite this, their reach remains somewhat niched. By establishing stronger connections with the broader society, especially within Tjörn, they could amplify their influence and extend their ideas to a wider audience. This approach could serve as a leverage point for achieving greater impact. There is an ongoing discussion about future collaboration with the municipality - which is a positive step forward, demonstrating the increased potential when Egnahemsfabriken's work aligns with municipal goals. The municipality has recognized the need to attract more year-round residents, particularly younger people, and has acknowledged the role of Egnahemsfabriken in this effort. To foster more frequent interactions with the municipality, it could also be beneficial to regularly update them on ongoing projects and their positive impacts on the local community.

In turn, a potential leverage point for Egnahemsfabriken to gain more visibility and reach politicians and the local society is showcasing evidence from large-scale projects like *Egnahem för alla* (when finished). Such projects can demonstrate their potential and highlight their ability to create impressive outcomes that can help the municipality gain new inhabitants. Moreover, there is potential for a positive feedback loop: completing a larger project can build trust and make it easier to secure support for future large-scale projects. Additionally, to better engage with the local community, Egnahemsfabriken could organise more open, low-threshold events, such as small-scale markets.

Identifying long-term funding sources, partnerships and revenue generating activities can facilitate the realisation of larger projects or help shorter projects continue after the project time. The Västra Götaland region gives Egnahemsfabriken funding support regularly, which is an example of such funding that can give more stable finances and help realise long-term projects. Certain projects can also be long-term realised through partnerships with the municipality, so called IOP (idea-borne public partnership/ideburet offentligt partnerskap).

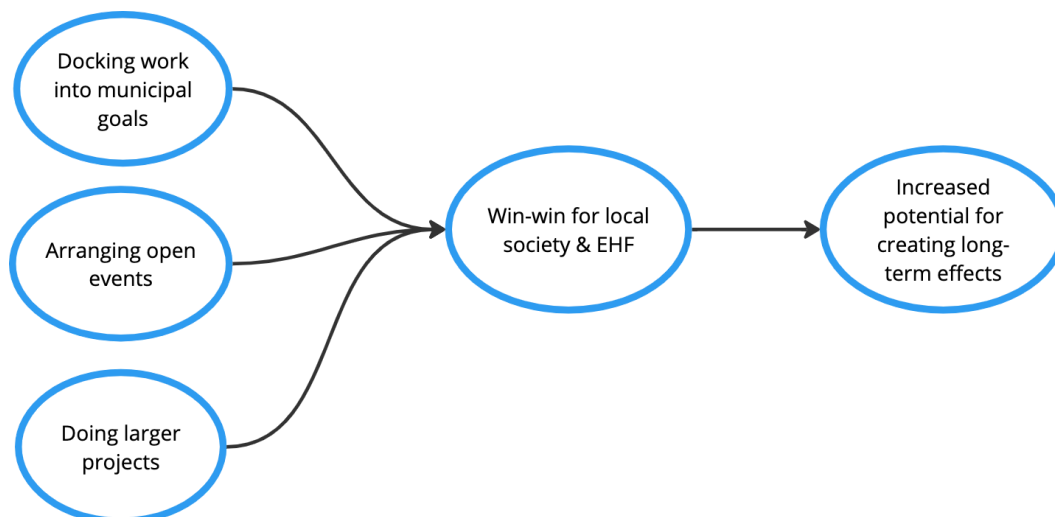


Figure 6.2 By docking in their work into municipal goals, arranging open events, and doing larger projects, there is an increased potential for long term effects.

Administration, a task that can be burdensome and time-taking, is something Egnahemsfabriken nowadays gets help with from a consultant, so that is a step in the right direction, and it might be good enough. Administration is maybe not such a strong leverage point, but investigating if there are more efforts that could facilitate it could be worth it. In general, applying and receiving funding for projects also require a lot of administration, so it is something not only Egnahemsfabriken find time-consuming.

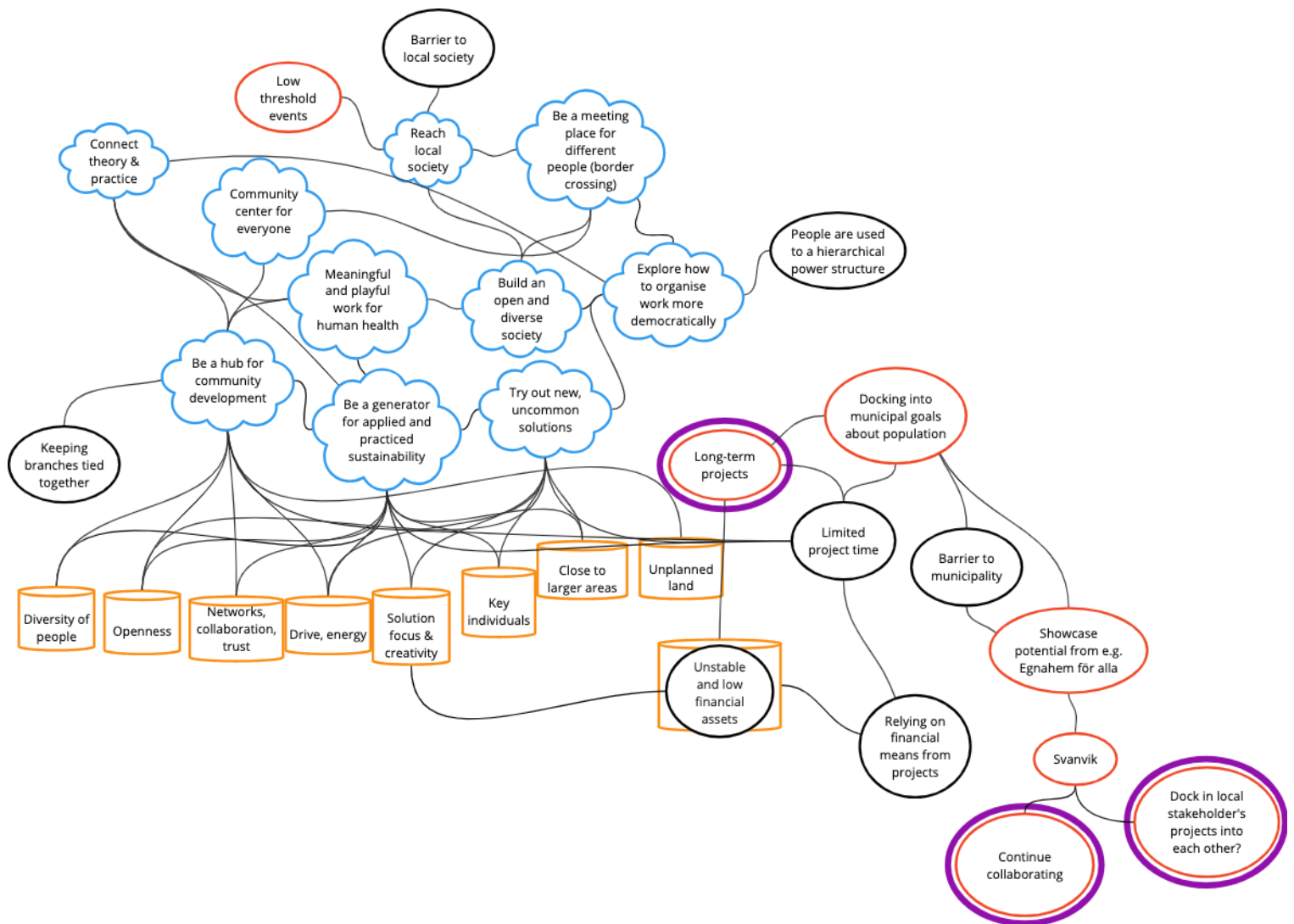


Figure 6.3 Leverage points (purple): Creating long-term projects (or initiatives/effects) is a potential leverage point in this system. Continuing collaborating is another one, as well as docking different projects into each other. The development of the Svanvik area has also potential regarding this.

6.2 Uddebo

People move to Uddebo for different reasons, but affordable housing and its consequences, such as being able to work with one's passion, is an important prerequisite. Affordable housing and working with one's passion (or working less in general) has in turn enabled people to spend time on alternative initiatives.

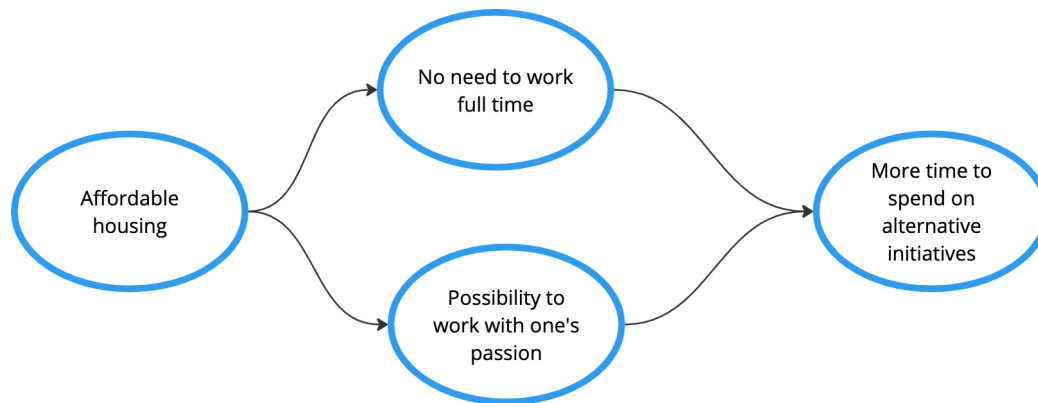


Figure 6.4 Affordable housing has been an important prerequisite that has enabled people to do their thing.

Affordable housing can be seen as a leverage point, so keeping housing affordable and preventing gentrification is crucial. Additionally, the available empty industrial premises have been crucial, serving as meeting places where people can meet and things can be organised. Strategies to keep housing affordable include increasing the availability of rental housing and establishing housing cooperatives. Another innovative approach is to collectively agree within the village not to allow for profit making from the sale of houses. Instead, any profit generated could be reinvested back into community projects, infrastructure, or other communal benefits. Other suggestions could be keeping things a bit dirty and decayed or setting up a wagon village, which would provide an alternative, low-cost housing solution. However, setting up such a village would likely not be accepted by the municipality. Open forums, workshops, or regular meetings could be established to discuss these ideas, ensuring that all voices are heard.

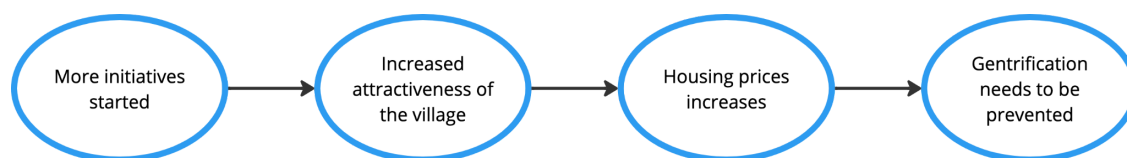


Figure 6.5 Preventing gentrification is important for keeping housing affordable.

However, while affordable housing is an important prerequisite, what has perhaps been more important (or at least equally important) is the driven people, being ready to spend much unpaid time for maintaining and progressing initiatives in the village and making sure the majority is on board with their efforts. And here, a few individuals have been extra dedicated; without these people, Uddebo would not be what it is today. These people could also be seen as a leverage point.

As time has passed, new people have moved in and started initiatives, so another potential leverage point could be the diversity of people, as well as the openness to newcomers and the willingness and

experience of doing things together. So the diversity has been a crucial factor in its thriving community. The openness to newcomers has prevented the village from becoming insular and has encouraged dynamics and inclusion. To ensure that the village continues to thrive, it is essential to maintain this diversity by embracing new people and ideas.

While still keeping the possibility for everyone to do their own thing, the diversity of people and competences also gives the opportunity to do bigger projects together, which could be something to do in the future. There are numerous ideas for future projects in Uddebo that aim to enhance community engagement and connectivity, for example bigger art or music projects. Another promising concept is the creation of digital platforms, free of advertising and algorithms, designed to keep residents in touch with each other and informed about village activities. These platforms could serve multiple purposes, including event announcements, local news sharing, and facilitating discussions among villagers, serving as another leverage point. While face-to-face interactions remain vital for community cohesion, digital tools can complement these by organising and promoting in-person meetings and events more efficiently. Such platforms can also foster connections with other similar villages, allowing for the exchange of ideas, mutual support, and collaborative efforts in village revitalisation. By connecting with like-minded communities, Uddebo can draw inspiration from others' experiences while offering its own stories and strategies as a model. This interconnected network can amplify the impact of local initiatives, creating a broader movement of rural renewal and sustainability.

Another idea is to revive the local newspaper, *UddeboBladet*, which has been on pause for about a year. This publication could play a crucial role in keeping villagers updated on local news, events, and projects. It would also provide a platform for residents to share stories, opinions, and creative works, thereby strengthening the community's sense of identity and belonging. Reestablishing the paper would not only help residents stay informed but also foster a deeper connection among them by highlighting diverse voices and experiences within Uddebo.

As there are ideas and thoughts of gift and collaborative economy among the interviewees, with less focus on personal ownership and more on collective use and access, it seems like facilitating such ideas could be something to look into in the future. The vision of joint ownership of meeting places, where properties are lent to the next generation, reflects a shift towards collective stewardship, an idea that can be applied to other resources as well. Developing a digital service where residents can list items they are willing to share or services they can offer could streamline and encourage participation in the gift economy. Such a platform can also facilitate carpooling, skill-sharing, and other collaborative activities. However, while a gift economy emphasises generosity and sharing without expecting direct compensation, it's also crucial to consider the sustainability of local enterprises and the overall economic health of the community.

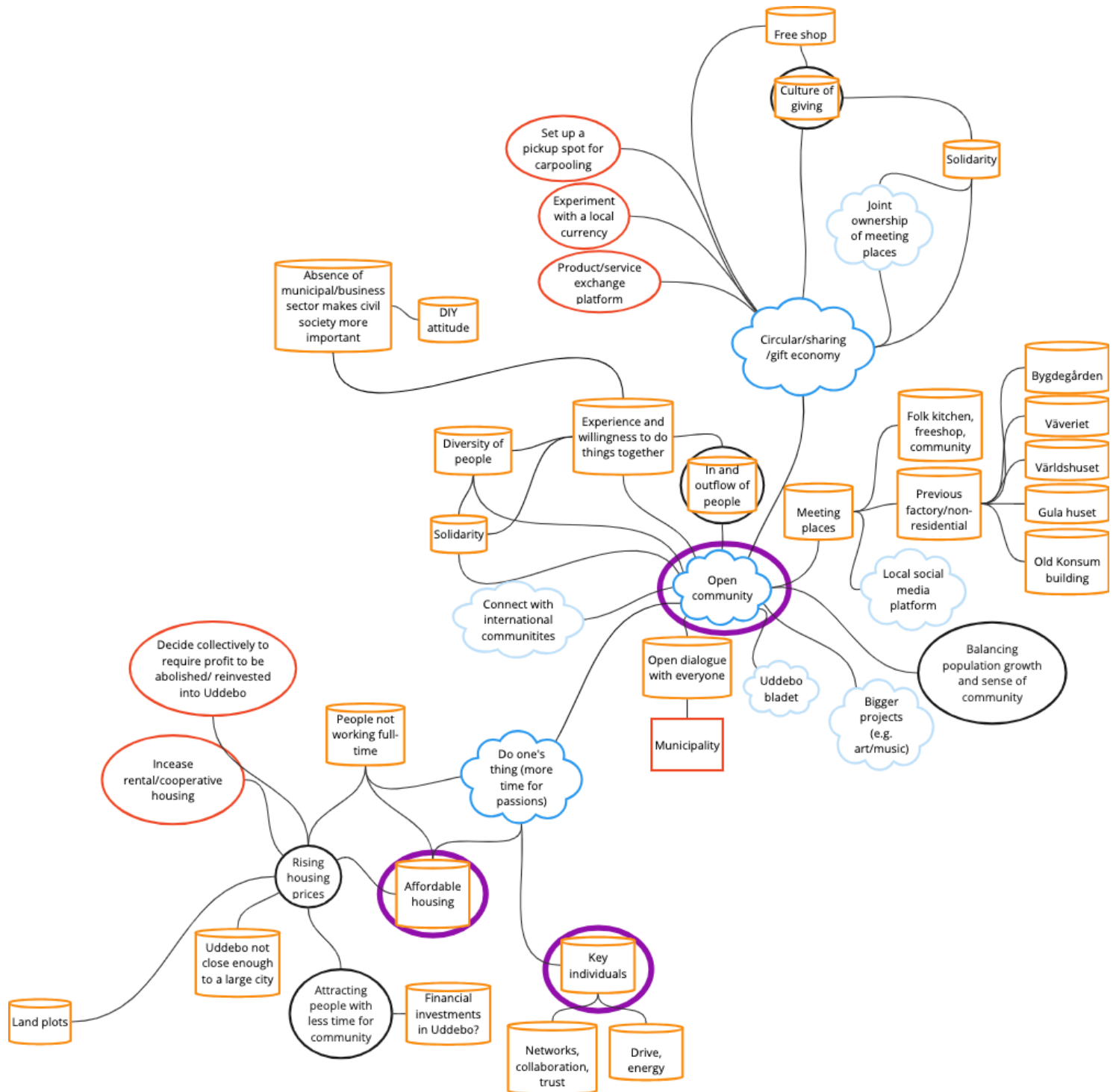


Figure 6.6 The leverage points (purple) in this system are the open community, key individuals and affordable housing.

6.3 Comparison between Tjörn & Uddebo

In both places, although the contexts are different, the initiatives have started from a need for something that the municipality or the market haven't been able to satisfy, something that people themselves instead have decided to address. For Egnahemsfabriken, it was the need for affordable housing for people with normal/low financial assets, in particular immigrants, young and elderly. In Uddebo it was the need for a revitalisation, to change a negative population trend. The mindset of "if we want to achieve something, we might have to do it ourselves" seems to be present in both places, and there is a drive and energy in this.

There is a connection between housing prices/rents and the possibility to engage in alternative projects and initiatives. Affordable housing is a prerequisite for being able to work with one's passion, working less and spending more time on community projects and initiatives. Tjörn does not have affordable housing to the same extent as Uddebo, which is something that Egnahemsfabriken is trying to change. So partially, Egnahemsfabriken is working for this fundamental prerequisite for more alternative initiatives to thrive on Tjörn.

However, it is difficult to weigh the various environmental aspects of affordable housing. Affordability alone does not guarantee that housing is environmentally sustainable or constructed in an eco-friendly manner. But affordable housing may give people time to work less, pursue their passions, engage in meaningful activities, and ultimately consume less. Additionally, the focus on shared resources and spaces in smaller communities like Uddebo, as well as in housing cooperatives developed by Egnahemsfabriken, has the potential to reduce overall resource use.

Furthermore, there were aspects in both locations described both as a challenge and a means, revealing a broader theme: the inherent complexity and interdependence of these systems. The factors that empower and enable the community also introduce risks and challenges. This duality suggests that successful community projects must be dynamic and adaptive, continuously balancing these tensions.

Both Egnahemsfabriken and Uddebo attract a lot of people interested in various forms of alternative initiatives. But when it comes to involving the local society, interviewees from Tjörn describe a general interest, but that there still is some form of barrier, a barrier that seems absent in Uddebo. This difference may partly stem from the context, where Uddebo's smaller size makes it easier for everyone to connect with each other. Additionally, the limited number of other activities and enterprises in Uddebo allows for greater flexibility and creativity in developing local projects.

Low-threshold events, such as organising a pizzeria or café, have been suggested by interviewees from both places playing an important role in reaching out and bringing different people together. Such low-threshold-events can be a way for other people to discover Egnahemsfabriken/Uddebo.

Both locations are less planned than urban areas, which makes it possible to influence the development of the area and what the land and buildings should be used for. This has been important to both Tjörn and Uddebo. An important aspect of the development is the availability of fundamental infrastructure, such as vacant premises available for rent or at a low cost, which can be repurposed as communal meeting places. These spaces are important for starting new initiatives, cultivating a sense of community, and meeting potential collaborators.

Although some individuals in Uddebo are actively involved in spreading their ideas and initiatives to broader areas, something they have in common with some of the people at Egnahemsfabriken, there is also a perspective towards appreciating and maintaining the local way of life. It seems that many value a simple, contented lifestyle within their own village. However, the community's development likely wouldn't have reached its current stage without the dedication and efforts of key individuals who have invested significant time and energy into it. The same is true for the progress seen in Egnahemsfabriken.

Diversity among people seems to be important in both areas when starting and driving projects. When individuals from varied backgrounds, cultures, and experiences come together, they bring a wealth of different perspectives and ideas.

In summary, while the context is different between these two places, there are some things they have in common: the alternative development started from solving an issue in their area, affordable housing is something important in both places, they are both rural/rurban which comes with the advantage of being able to influence the development of the area, there are key individuals that have been crucial, and diversity of people and ideas is something important for both. A difference is the barrier to the local society, which seems greater on Tjörn than in Uddebo, possibly due to size and context differences.

7. Discussion: connection to degrowth concepts

In this section, the interview results are linked to some key concepts within the degrowth paradigm: localisation, autonomy, care, commoning, self-sufficiency, simplicity and decommodification.

Localisation

All interviewees from both places are active on a local level, and want to contribute to positive social development on the island/in the village where they live. Some interviewees from Uddebo and many interviewees from Tjörn described that they want their visions/work to spread, but that the base is at the local level and that is where they have started, that is where you have to build something up before you can spread it further. It is also a way to reduce complexity and powerlessness and do something very concrete, in the area where you live.

Bridging the gap between theory and practice is both a means and a vision for Egnahemsfabriken and their collaboration partners, embodying a commitment to localisation. Localisation of decision making builds community, social cohesion, resilience and a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the collective well-being. Through this commitment to localisation, Egnahemsfabriken and their partners illustrate a practical and visionary pathway for sustainable community development.

Commoning

Many of the interviewees, in both areas, are engaged in the practice of commoning. Especially commoning in a collaborative sense in terms of democracy, shared decision making and a flat group structure. In that sense, commoning is a core concept among interviewees in both areas. It is both a means to their goals, and a goal in itself, as democracy, shared decision making and a flat group structure stands for the society that many of them want to aim for. The vision for community centres and shared spaces, where people of different backgrounds can gather and engage in various activities, also embodies commoning principles.

Autonomy

The autonomy is shown in both locations as they all are focused around other values than economic growth and competition. For many, it's about having and promoting a sustainable and simple lifestyle and having more time for cultural or social activities, rather than a materialistic lifestyle focused around consumption and status. Egnahemsfabriken's diverse activities and flat self-governed organisational structure can also be viewed as means to enhance autonomy, and shaping another future where social cohesion, community, simplicity and sustainability are keywords. The ideas in Uddebo about a local currency, local social media, local radio and other local digital solutions also connect to the autonomy concept, as well as to decommodification.

Care

Expressed in terms of 'building a human-friendly society', 'building a future for people with low/normal financial means', care is permeating everything Egnahemsfabriken does. There are several examples of how care permeates Uddebo as well; there is an acceptance of different lifestyles and different people, there is a culture of giving, there is a folk kitchen and a free shop and several other initiatives. The vision of facilitating interactions among inhabitants through e.g. more meeting places and communication platforms further supports the caring and inclusive environment.

Decommodification

Egnahemsfabriken's critique of the current housing market on Tjörn, which has failed to provide affordable housing, underscores a call for the decommodification of housing. This perspective views housing as a fundamental right that should not be governed by market forces. The concept of decommodification is also evident in Uddebo, exemplified by the free shop, the culture of giving, the notion of joint ownership of buildings, and the idea of passing houses to the next generation instead of selling them for profit. These practices are also related to the concept of commoning.

Self-sufficiency

Both places are striving for increased self-sufficiency, especially when it comes to food production. In many courses that Egnahemsfabriken has arranged during recent years, there has been a focus on local (or at least regional) materials as well. Some examples are courses in willow basket weaving, thatched roof construction and clay plaster. They have also collaborated with local forest owners, not on Tjörn but in Ucklum 20 km away in a timber felling and sawmill course. Self-sufficiency is also a recurring theme in Uddebo, where many inhabitants grow their own food and engage in cooperative cultivation areas. In broader terms it is also promoted by sharing goods and facilities, which in turn is also enabled by the size of the village - not having too many inhabitants means that such initiatives tend to work better and free riding is avoided. This not only reduces reliance on external food production chains but also fosters a deeper connection to the area, the land and local ecosystem.

Simplicity

The focus on local food production, reduced working hours, and community engagement reflects a desire for a simpler lifestyle where quality of life is prioritised over material wealth or consumption, linking to the concept simplicity. This is something resonating both with Egnahemsfabriken and Uddebo. Protecting forests and promoting organic permaculture practices, also mentioned during interviews in Uddebo, further emphasises a commitment to living within local ecological limits.

8. Conclusions

In conclusion, Egnahemsfabriken's and their local collaboration partners' work represents a multifaceted approach to sustainable rural development that, if strategically leveraged and expanded, could lead to significant and lasting change both locally and potentially in other regions. Uddebo's future success will likely depend on maintaining the key aspects that have shaped the village so far, while perhaps also exploring new ways to enhance community engagement and sustainability.

The study contributes to the degrowth literature by providing practical examples of how it can be applied in reality, geographically limited to Tjörn and Uddebo. By discussing the challenges faced by these communities—such as financial sustainability, preventing gentrification, and maintaining long-term engagement—the thesis also contributes to the degrowth literature by identifying potential challenges to the adoption of degrowth principles. It also suggests strategies to overcome these challenges, such as fostering greater local collaboration, exploring alternative economic models like the gift economy, and increasing outreach efforts.

The thesis also adds a nuanced understanding small-scale, community-driven projects and how they are aligned with the broader principles of industrial ecology, such as optimising resource use, and creating resilient, self-sufficient systems. The emphasis on diversity, unpaid time, and local collaboration in these communities highlights the role of social capital in sustaining local economies. This is analogous to how industrial ecology values material and energy flows; the thesis shows how social and human resources can be harnessed to sustain local initiatives, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of resource efficiency and resilience in economic systems.

Furthermore, the thesis contributes to the two cases as an exploration and an external perspective on their efforts and initiatives, and a basis for further discussion on how the development in each location could be facilitated.

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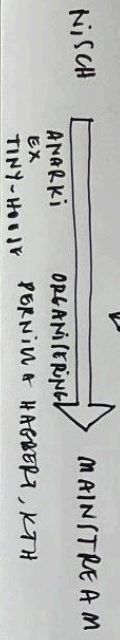
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- GODA DEJIVE
- TÄNNA OCH ERIK NODER:
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- (FAKTUEPINKA-DEGGAAM)

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- KOMPETENSER,
- OIKA BAKGRUND
- OCH ÄVDRAR.
- MÄNKA
- FANTASTISKA
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- TRYCK BAL FÖR ANTIÄVDA MED LUTINER OCH GEMENSAKT VTECKNINGAR.
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- FOKUS PÅ EGNATHEN/FAKTIKEN TÖRN.
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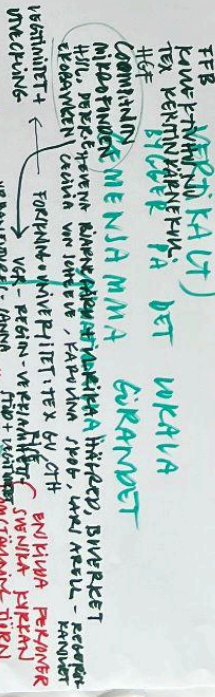
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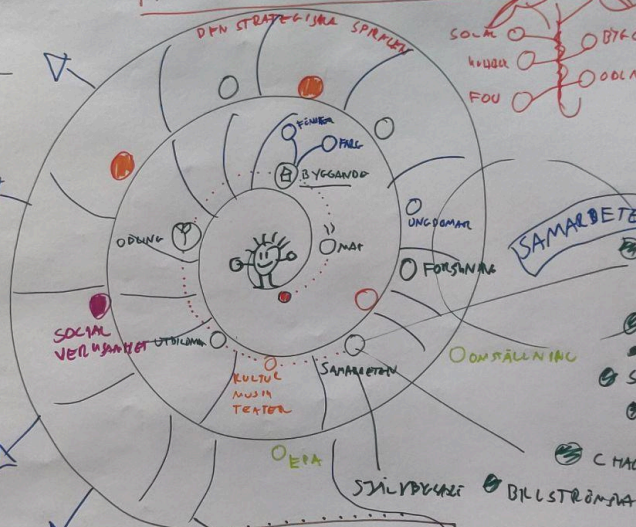
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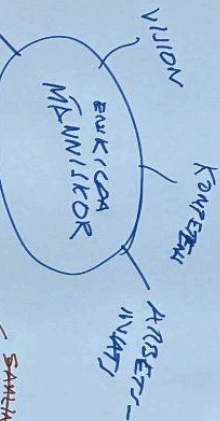
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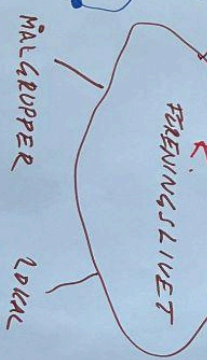
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Agape
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 ETF/omställning

Kommunen säger: allt lön är tillåtet
 i miljöskydd utställningar.
 Jag vill att tillgång
 till lön ska vara
 rättvis.

Hur ska höga
 i landskapskriterier

Auolym ägar

Många ägar
 1000 renhållare

Västeråsarna för
 friskvårdsläsa. Boplott!

Jordbruk
 Fiske
 Skog
 Park
 Hörtkultur

Chalmers, SLU, GU.
 Umeå, Konstfack, SJU, SKU,

Formas
 60 miljoner
 på 4 år

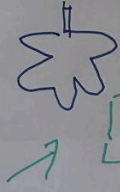
Konceptuellhet?
 Istället för valda
 hållbar produktiv
 Vem för lyssnare?
 Hur blir lön?



Följning testad.
 Många ska läsa sig
 och vara stilt del-
 tagare

Vattenbruk

Snabbare
 växer
 i smedjesskär



+++ FE
 --- SE

Böjhol
 var?
 hur?

Växande
 material för
 ombruk för?

Kommersiell
 Test/bed
 BOVA

Esnarens fabriker
 bas?

AFG ett
 alternativt
 Aug-
 holmen

STABIL VERKSAMHET SOM GRUND
ORGANISATION som fungerar
& JÄTA PROJEKTMED
REDMSNING
GIKA BÄTTR PROJEKTBIDRAGAR

KONFLIK NÄR PLATSEN BLIR MER
ARBETSPLATS ÄN IDEELLT
FA (STÖRRE) UPPDRAG
FÖR ATT PRÖVA VIDAREUTVECKLA
VAR VISION och ARBETSSÄTT

KONTAKTER
FRIA HÄNDER
TILL I T
STÖDJANDE UPPMÄRKSAMHET

PERSONLIGA KONTAKTINÄT
TIDNINGEN
PRISER
LANDSBERGSLÄNDERL
FÖR SKOLANS PROJEKT
HELA JÄRNLINJE
SKA LEA

FB - GRUPP PÅ EFF
DELVE
MAIL
TELEFON

PRAKTIK
STRATEGI

EKONOM
VARDA SPUSSEL - TID
BRIST PÅ REURSER INOM ADMIN
SVÄRT ATT LEA UPP TILL FÖRÄNTNINGAR

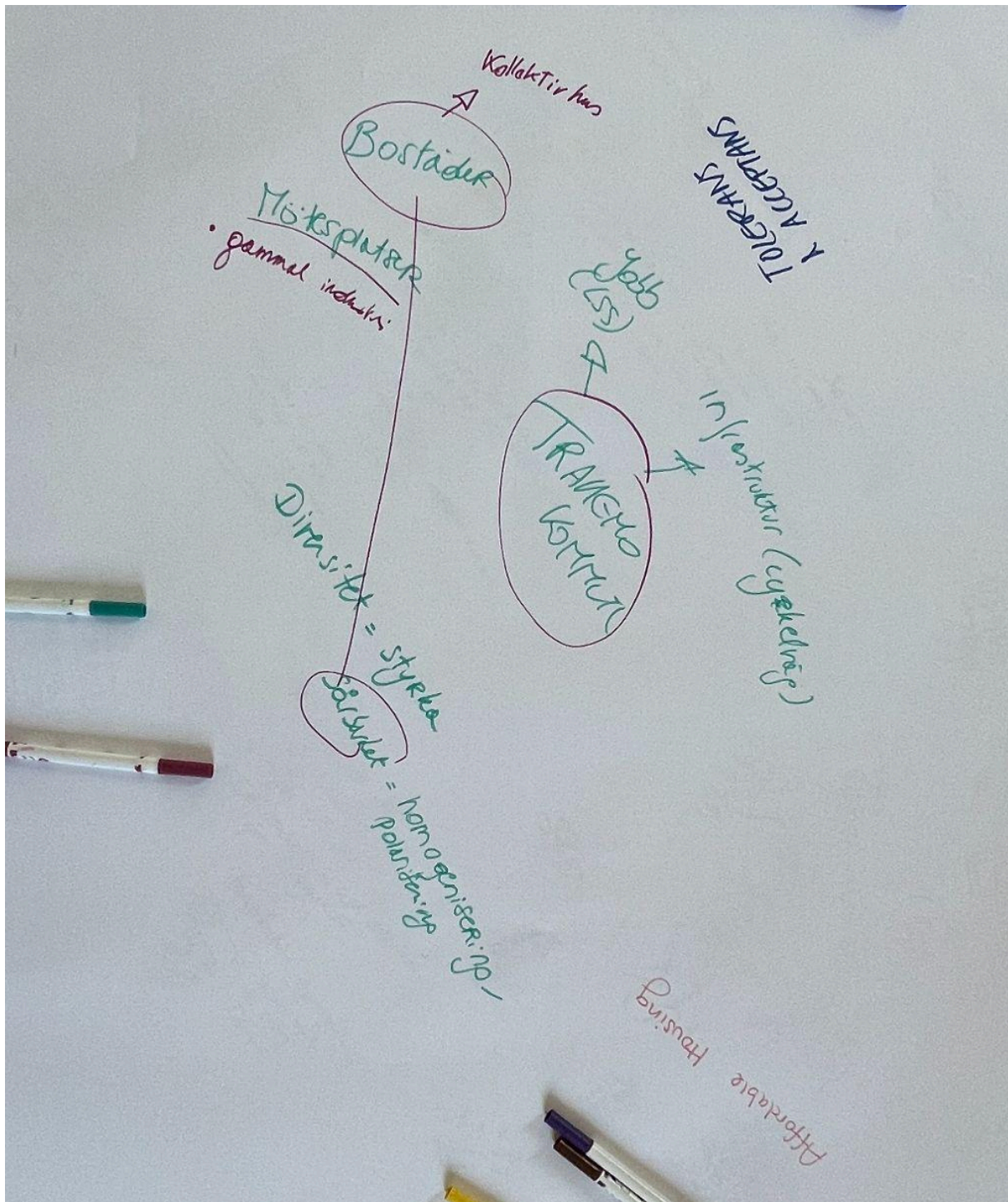
RELATION TILL
DET SOM VÄXER

SKAPA SAMHÄLLET
SOM JÄTA VILL LEA I
TILL GÄNGLIGGARA
ARKITEKTUR

SAMARBETE MED
ANDRA AKTÖRER

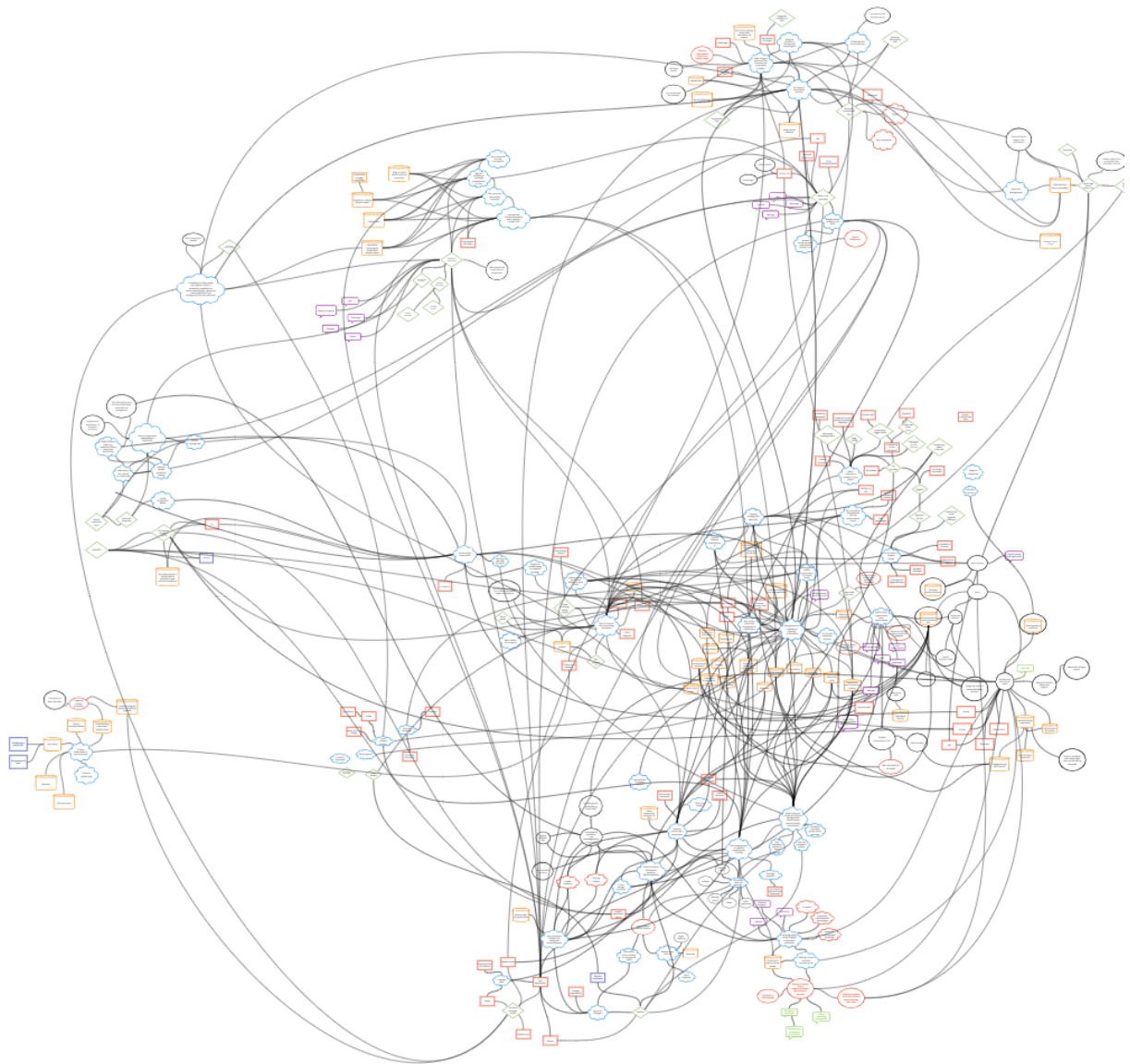
SPRIDA VÄR
IDÉ • VISION
GÅ FÖR
TILLSAMMAN
ARKITEKT KONTR
FOLKSKOLOR
SKOLOR
CIVILSAMHÄLLET PREMIERAR
KUNTERANSEN

LEADERPROJEKT
BRIST PÅ MODER • VÄS ERFARENINGER
LEDER OCHSA TILL INNOVATIVA GÄNNARE
NÄTVERK MÄNKETED
INNOVATIONER
SÖKATA MEDLER
HUR VILL VI STÄM • KUNNANLÄRA
MAIL
FB
DISCORD



Appendix B - giga maps

Tjörn



Uddebo

