

# Rural housing

Towards diverse living

Master Thesis Spring Term 2022  
Chalmers School of Architecture  
BY, ELISABET ARNS

*Matter Space Structure*  
Examiner and Supervisor, Daniel Norell





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**CHALMERS**

Matter Space Structure: Examiner and Supervisor, Daniel Norell *Master's thesis,*  
*Spring semester, 2022, Architecture and Urban Design*  
Chalmers University of Technology  
Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering



*The valley looking up from Lärjeån, Bergum - Photo by Elisabet Arns*

# Abstract

*More people are choosing to move from the metropolitan regions and it's time to question the urban norm. Gävleborg, Jämtland and Värmland have now more people moving to the regions than from, which is the first time that this has happened in 20 years. This thesis is about rural residential architecture and how development of rural housing can be affected by-, and respond to an increasing interest in moving to the countryside. The work examines how an increased move to the countryside can affect and shape space and life inside the home and in the surrounding outdoor areas. Through studies of current reference projects and in-depth interviews with people who want to move to the countryside, a design proposal is presented for a multi-family housing on a plot located in the municipality of Gothenburg, Sweden. Different focus areas have been addressing issues of land ownership, shared space, flexibility, and access to nature among other things. Together with the architectural proposal the project reflects on the need for new types of typologies in the rural settings as well as how different factors in residential architecture can be lifted for further development and challenge leading norms of rural housing.*

*Keywords : rural, urban norm, housing, residential architecture, ruralization.*

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|------|--|
| AT20 | - Sustainable Development and the Design Professions     |
|      | - Future visions for healthcare 3,                       |
| ST21 | - Nordic Architecture                                    |
|      | - History, theory and method - dealing with inequalities |
|      | - Matter Space Structure 2                               |
| AT21 | - Sustainable Development in a Local Context             |
| ST22 | - Master Thesis  |

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# 01: Introduction

## Background

In this introduction the topic, - rural housing, is presented in a larger perspective and the background of the thesis is described. This chapter will lead into explaining the purpose, aim, research questions and the outcome of the project, as well as methods used.

### Questioning big city life, - the urban norm

*A starting point in this project was that I have seen that some of my friends have a strong desire to live a future life in the countryside. They are attracted to closeness to nature rather than life in the cities, and for some of them all of their choices in life are based on fulfilling this vision. As a soon to be architect, I have seen the city as the center of development and the center of my future career with job opportunities. The countryside is merely an unreachable dream or holiday vacation.*

*But with the pandemic, new lifestyles have been set in motion. With increased opportunities for remote working, more people are now willing to move further away from their workplace.*

*We are not as connected to certain locations as before, and this affects both the urban and rural settlements. In a recent debate article, the architecture theoretic Claes Caldenby questions the densification of the big cities, and points out that more and more people are now choosing to move away from the metropolitan regions and that it is time to question the urban norm. (Caldenby 2021, 25 October) Rural areas are often explained with negative net migration, and in the last decades, population growth has been greater in metropolitan areas. But now we can see that many rural areas have had a positive population growth, which could*

*be noticed already before the pandemic. (Bjerke L. 2013 p.13) The largest increase of inhabitants have been in Gävleborg, Jämtland and Värmland where they now have more people moving to the regions than from, which is the first time that this has happened in 20 years (Eirefelt, M. 2021, 26 okt).*

### Questioning Rural Norm

*The image of the countryside is most often merged with the agricultural community. Open landscapes, farms and sparsely populated areas. But rural areas in Sweden do not all look the same. Some places that are categorized as rural are situated close to densely populated areas, and some far away. This creates different conditions for development. (Bjerke L. 2013). The relationship between city and countryside is often explained from a center-periphery perspective. (Tillväxtverket, 2020) With the city defined as the center of society and rural areas as the outcasts. In the podcast "Landet", it is highlighted that people are bad at communicating what's attractive about rural areas and that the image of the fading countryside is projected in the city. (Whitelock, 2017, 07 September) While cities are often associated as modern and innovative, rural areas are seen as backward-looking and old-fashioned. (Ersson S. 2016)*

### The home as starting point for development

*The countryside carries assets and an attraction that can be supported and strengthened through planning of communities and housing. This could then attract more people to move to rural areas and strengthen conditions for those who already live there. In a conversation with Lena Falkheden, Lecturer within Sustainable Development in architecture, she*

*explains that in rural areas there are opportunities that do not exist in the city, greater freedom and more space to live a sustainable life. In the report, "Futures Beyond GDP Growth" it is suggested that housing should be seen as a starting point for sustainable conversion. That housing can challenge current market logics, and that the home can be seen as an economical experimental workshop and as a hub for a more sustainable life. Further, the report highlights that areas outside of cities are where there is space for flagship projects to emerge, such as households that are looking for alternative lifestyles. The home then becomes a starting point for transition, and not only as an object exploring solutions. (Pernilla Hagbert et al. 2018)*

### **Diversity and typology**

*The typology norm in rural areas could be defined as one-family housing, detached housing residential areas, large farming industries or romanticized old torps. These types of housing may not be ideal for some groups such as first-time buyers, seniors or low-income earners, which often requires major maintenance and financial requirements. Tina Harling, co-founder of "Egnamensfabriken" argues that - you can not only build expensive villas and tenant-owned housing in the countryside, but you also need different forms of housing and rentals as well. (Åkerman, 2020, 2 July) A development of rural housing should suit different types of households, but at the same time offer what are considered the characters or benefits of living in rural areas, such as - proximity to nature, outdoor life, space for workshops and cultivation, neighborhood cooperation and social security among other things.*

## Purpose

*The purpose of this thesis is to show how rural residential architecture can respond to an increased interest in moving to the countryside, and how this can affect the development of rural residency. Through analysis of current innovative projects and interviews with people wanting to move to rural areas - a design proposal will highlight how different factors in residential architecture can be lifted for further development and challenge leading norms in rural housing.*

## Research questions

*01. How can new typologies for rural housing respond to alternative models of land ownership, shared space, flexibility, and access to nature?*

*02. What are some of the factors that underwrite the increased interest in rural living, and how can they be applied into architecture?*

## Outcome

*The project aims to give an architectural proposal on multi-family housing in a given area, based on study areas formed from the understanding of theories, references, personal experience and interviews during the project process. The analysis made will be the basis for design but also processed in parallel with an iterative design process.*

## Delimitations

*Metropolitan norms prevail and there are structural difficulties with the countryside that can be discussed on a political level, but this project aims to focus on opportunities and solutions on a smaller scale that can be answered through development of housing design.*

*The process focuses on a housing situation that is not based on, or intended to be a set in a specific format or concept. Some current concepts that are being tested in rural areas today are ecovillages, Cohousing or Joint building ventures (bygg- och byggemenskaper). But instead, the project aims to build its own set of frameworks for different focus areas that are interesting and relevant to investigate.*

# Method

## Understanding development of housing today

The first part of the research maps a handful of current projects and aims to provide a picture of what housing development looks like in rural areas today. What kind of project there is, how they challenge the typical villa typology and household, what form of housing, materials used, context and other things that are relevant to highlight.

## Adaptation to the chosen context

The context, conditions and opportunities for development are described. The project and design has been adapted according to the opportunities and challenges of the site. Relating to topography, adaptation and relationship to nature and the surroundings.

## Design studies

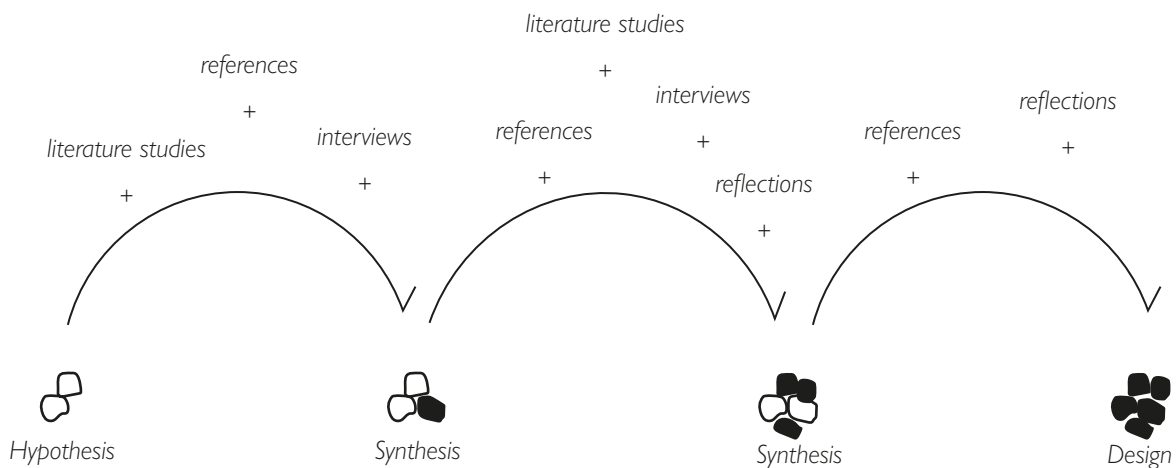
The project is based on a selection of study areas, which have been the basis for the investigation and design process of the project. The various study areas are seen as a hypothesis for future housing and focuses on areas that can be found relevant

and interesting to study. The areas are described on page [ ]. Volume studies, adaptation to the site and sketches in plan and section/elevation have been made through an iterative process, using both physical and digital tools.

## Interviews

As a support and discussion material for design studies, five interviews were conducted with young people who want to move to the countryside or smaller towns. This is to give an idea of how young people reason about their desired accommodation, what they are moving away from and what they are looking for. They work as a target group for the project and represent future needs and basis for development of housing in rural areas. The interviewees are both some of the friends that I know that desire a life in the countryside and people that were available for me to get in contact with.

Abstract illustration of method used for design:





# 02: Rural housing development

## Introduction

### Challenges

*The urban norm has contributed to a weaker development of housing in rural areas than in cities, especially for permanent residents. Despite this, many rural municipalities have experienced strong growth, particularly municipalities where single-family homes are profitable. (Bjerke L. 2013)*

*A major difficulty in building housing in some rural areas is the problem of weak markets, where newly built homes are valued less than the cost of construction. (Hela sverige ska leva) Arguing for building new is therefore hard, but looking for available housing in an attractive area might also be difficult. In Fåglavik Herrljunga Municipality for example, there is a great demand for housing, but all existing homes are inhabited and rarely for sale. Existing houses in the area are worth a fraction of the cost of a conventional new building, and therefore it can be difficult to attract new residents to develop new housing there.*

*In an article, Tina Harling highlights the problem with the housing supply at Tjörn, where ninety percent live in villas. The conditions for younger residents are challenging, with expensive housing and rising prices. Additionally, Tina Harling explains that many older people are moving out to their holiday homes to settle for simpler life, which then creates a demographic imbalance. Harling believes that the situation at Tjörn is not unique. (Åkerman, 2020). In the report Städer och landsbygder, it is explained that there is a higher proportion of older people distributed in rural municipalities, and that differences in the amount of foreign-born and level of education between cities and rural areas is viable, especially looking at very sparse rural municipalities. (Tillväxtverket, Städer och landsbygder. 2020 p.11)*

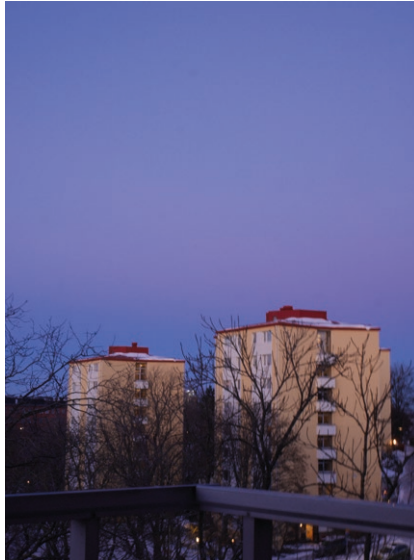
*“At the same time, it is of the utmost importance that many have knowledge... about how our environments, cities and rural areas, public places, housing and surrounding objects are designed, functioning and affecting people. That is an important step in the democratic development.” (Translated by the author)  
- Boverket, (2021)*

### **What is rural?**

*The growth that the city generates spills over to nearby rural areas and when the suburban countryside is included in the cities, a complex geography arises. It becomes more difficult to distinguish clear boundaries between the rural and urban geographies. (Tillväxtverket, Städer och landsbygder. 2020)*

*Authorities in Sweden are using various definitions to describe geographical conditions, such as: urban close rural regions, sparse rural regions and very sparse rural regions. (Tillväxtverket) Other ways to define rural areas can be by looking at proximity by car to urban areas with a certain population size.*

*Another example of defining urban and rural areas are by looking at numbers of inhabitants:  
Big city (more than 300 000 inhabitants),  
Medium sized city (50 000 – 299 999 inhabitants)  
Smaller city (15 000 - 49 999 inhabitants)  
Urban area (up to 14 999 inhabitants)  
Rural area outside of urban area  
(Bostäder i hela sverige, Balansrapport #7. 2020)*



*Comparing some positives and negatives with the City- vs Countryside Housing from a residential perspective (based on personal understanding and asking surrounding people)*

### *City housing*

- + *Simpler housing*
- + *Closeness to social activities and services*
- + *Low maintenance and less responsibility for the individuals*
- + *Lower need for unforeseen expenses associated with housing*
- + *Possibility to rent*
- + *Smaller spaces available, one or two room apartments*
- *Further away from outdoor nature-related activities*
- *Limitations in forming your own space or possibilities for experimental solutions*
- *The dense city can be dark / shady*
- *Greater degree of anonymity as a resident*
- *City living can be experienced as stressful or noisy*
- *Expensive and-, or more difficult to live in large accommodation*

### *Country housing*



- + *Larger housing and more space*
- + *Space for farming and animals*
- + *More freedom to shape your own space and surroundings*
- + *Space for constructing larger physical projects*
- + *Closeness to nature*
- + *Possibility to experiment with alternative solutions*
- *More maintenance, a bigger burden to bear*
- *One-family housing shaped for certain groups or family constellations*
- *Economically uncertain, a need for a larger financial buffer*
- *Often apartments / rentals only in central locations*
- *Rural areas might be located in the periphery of services*
- *Long distances and car-dependent transport*

# Project references

## What does housing development in rural areas look like today?

*A summary of seven reference projects that aims to challenge and develop rural housing.*

In this thesis, I have compared and presented different types of projects that want to challenge or develop housing in rural areas, sparsely populated areas and smaller towns. I chose to study seven references of current projects, both built and planned.

The references are first described briefly, by explaining what kind of project they are, how they work and how they challenge rural housing. The projects are compared and then summarized in a final reflection which specifies how one can interpret and understand the development of housing in rural areas today.

The references have been used as a basis for the design studies, but also as a way to understand, summarize and describe the housing development that takes place in rural Sweden today. Among the references there are also two international projects presented.

### The projects are:

Part of the research project, folkhemet 2.0 - Duved 5

Co-living apartments - Elisabet Sundin

Townhouse with shared spaces for cultivation - Mia Hägg

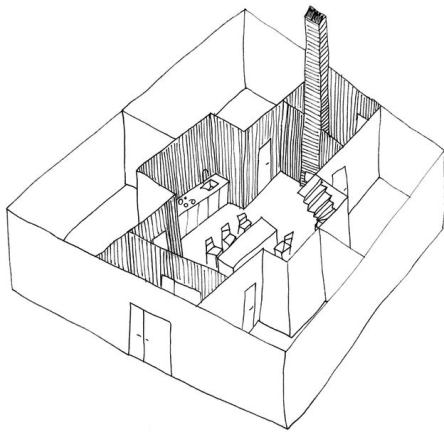
Competition / concept - Dalsland House

Ecovillage - R:ekobyn

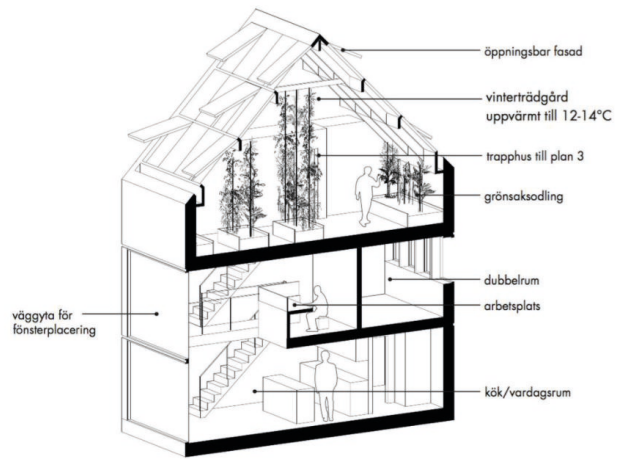
One family house and workshop - Flat House

Co-living - Hogslätts vänboende

Exhibition - Countryside: The Future



*Duved 5, Elisabet Sundin*  
(Elisabet Sundin, u.å.)



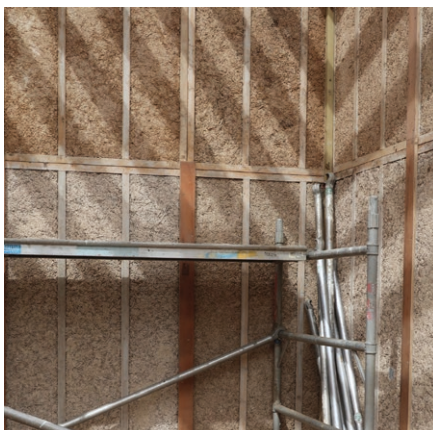
*Duved 5, Mia Hägg*  
(Mia Hägg, 2019)



*Dalsland house, Ieth & Gori*  
(Ieth & Gori, 2015)



*R:ekobyn, Sara Ericsson et al.*  
(Sara Ericsson, u.å.)



*Flat House, Practice Architecture*  
(Practice Architecture, 2019)



*Countryside: The Future, AMO*  
(Laurian Ghinitoiu, 2020)

## Duved 5

*Duved 5 is part of an ongoing research project in Duved, Jämtland. The aim is to develop a prototype village that can act as a model for Sweden in planning and building housing and sustainable urban development.*

*Five Architects were invited to design their proposal of - innovative, sustainable and cost-effective housing construction, within the requirements of the detail plan. They needed to be 200 square meter on ten times ten meter land. I choose to present two of the five projects.*

### Elisabet Sundin

- Within the framework of 200 sqm, the project fills eight small apartments, a Co-living concept, where a large part of the living space is shared. Such as workspace, dining area, kitchen, sauna and pizza oven. The house is inspired by the traditional “parstuga” or “double room cottage” and is constructed of solid wood.

*Site: Kyrklägda, by the Karolinervägen in central Duved, Jämtland*

*Type: Co-living apartments*

*Architect: Elisabet Sundin*

*m2: 200*

*Year: in progress from 2019*

### Mia hägg

- Inspired by atelier apartments in Paris, this project contains a common indoor garden and consists of two townhouses with 100 sqm each. The projekt focuses on self-sufficiency and combination of work and housing. It aims to have generous room solutions, but still be cost-effective. As well as using sustainable methods of building such as recycled timber facade.

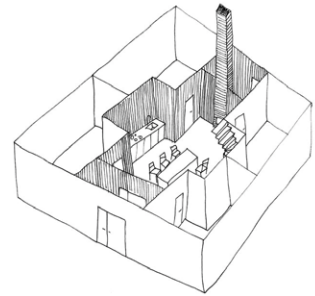
*Site: Kyrklägda, by the Karolinervägen in central Duved, Jämtland*

*Type: two family housing*

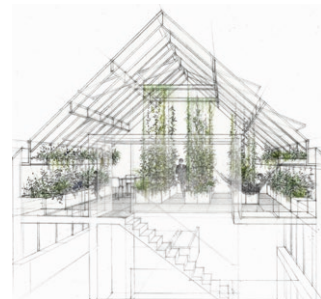
*Architect: Mia Hägg*

*m2: 2x100*

*Year: in progress from 2019*



(Elisabet Sundin, u.å.)



(Mia Hägg, 2019)



## Flat House

- This project located in Cambridgeshire, UK, is a three bedroom low embodied carbon house that was made to explore new types of prefabricated hemp elements. Together with a local farmer, the project is using natural building materials such as locally grown hemp. Through the project they developed a prefabricated system that formed the design of the house. The building is made up of timber I-joists with hempcrete infill that together creates prefabricated panels, made to be quick to assemble on site with the aim of reaching a broader market.

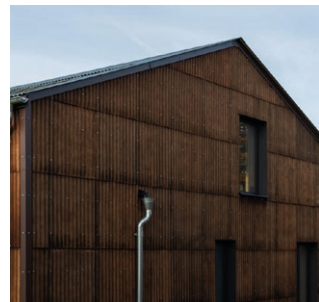
*Site: Cambridgeshire, United Kingdom*

*Type: Three bedroom, One-family home*

*Architect: Paloma Gormley, Practice Architecture*

*m2: 100*

*Year: 2019*



*(Practice Architecture, 2019)*

## Hogslätts vänboende

- The cooperative wooden apartment building is being run by a tenancy association and consists of twelve terraced house-like studio apartments. There are common functions such as a garden and living room and the residence is focused on social community. This project was founded as an answer to the lack of affordable housing for seniors in the local area. There are fifty co-owners in total and the residents together maintain and care for the house and the finances.

*Site: Gerlesborg, Tanum municipality*

*Type: Cooperative housing with twelve rental apartments*

*Architect: Joint building venture together with architect Lena Jarlöv and Hans Sörqvist*

*m2: plot of 5000*

*Year: 2018*



*(Per Pixel Petersson, u.å.)*

# Countryside: The Future

- Was an exhibition that was presented at the Guggenheim Museum discussing new ways of thinking regarding the countryside. The aim of the exhibition was to emphasize on how the countryside is at the forefront of modernization. That it is the place where new ideas and experimentation actually take place. Raising questions about environmental, political and socio economic issues that define and alter the landscape in rural settings around the world. The exhibition is an example of how architects get involved in topics about the development of the countryside and the ongoing discussion and relevancy of the subject.

*Site: Guggenheim Museum, New York*

*Type: Exhibition*

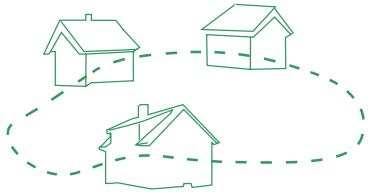
*Architect: AMO Rem Koolhaas and Samin Bantal et al.*

*Year: 2020*

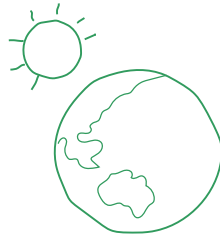


*(Laurian Ghinitoiu, 2020)*

Social  
sustainability



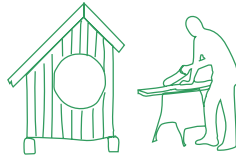
Environmental  
sustainability



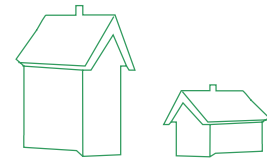
Relate to the  
surroundings



Integrated  
functions



Cost efficient



Different forms  
of housing

# Reflections

## Social sustainability

For several of the reference projects presented in this thesis, it is clear that community and social aspects have been an important part of how the home has been conducted and organized. To live with others, co-living, or to share functions and space to create some form of collaboration between residents.

## Environmental sustainability

The projects show that there are sustainable solutions that are made possible just because of the rural situation. With space for cultivation, alternative technical solutions or experimenting with ideas that cannot be made possible in the same way in a city environment. Leaning towards self-sufficiency, sustainable materials or making adjustments in several different scales where the home is a part of a sustainable conversion.

## Relate to the surroundings

Relating to nature and the surroundings is a central aspect for several of the projects. In Dalsland House the focus is connecting to nature and how the plot boundaries are blurred. Relating to surroundings could also be about how the house is related to society or neighboring areas, how the home contributes to a positive development, as the Duvend research project aims to do.

## Integrated functions

Several of the projects also highlight various functions that act as concepts for the home. Such as Mia Hägg's proposal where the greenhouse acts as the common meeting point between the two homes in the townhouse. Or a shared kitchen and living room as the project by Elisabet Sundin. One analysis is that integrated functions in many new housing projects consciously

support community and shared use, which is not unique to rural housing, but rather an exception that can be an important part of the path to development. The countryside can also enable unique shared functions that are adapted to opportunities and conditions in rural areas, such as remote working, supporting local business, self-sufficiency or simpler housing as some examples.

## Cost efficient

Several of the projects also aim to be cost-efficient. It is expensive to build, but by planning for smaller homes, using simpler materials, planning more space-efficiently and implementing shared functions, costs can be reduced. Another important economic aspect is that it could be difficult to plan and build for housing in rural areas, therefore Cohousing or Joint building ventures (bygg- och byggemenskaper) (Joint building ventures - also known as Baugemeinschaft) have emerged as an alternative to enable and finance alternative housing.

## Different forms of housing

It is also clear that the development of housing in rural areas is about creating several forms of housing for different conditions, characters or needs. This could be done by enabling an increased amount of apartments and rentals, co-ownership through Cohousing or Joint building ventures. Or using shared spaces as a tool in combination with simpler and smaller accommodation. If more and more people choose to move to rural areas, different needs need to be met and planners need to look at the possibilities of extending the housing supply for all kinds of residents.

# 03: Investigation

## Qualitative Interviews

### Introduction

As a part of this thesis five qualitative interviews were conducted with young people that are about to-, or wanting to move to the countryside. In this chapter the qualitative interviews are presented in their full format. The reader is welcome to dive into the specific answers that were given, or read the summary at the end of this chapter.

#### Young rural dwellers, their view on housing and life in rural areas

As mentioned, there is an increasing trend of more people moving from the big cities to rural areas. Studying first-time buyers, young people, as a group for this project became a relevant way to emphasize the importance of developing different typologies in rural areas.

During the project process, the interviews helped in reflecting on future housing and gained an in-depth perspective on how this specific group wants to live in rural areas, what they are looking for in their residency, personal opinions and view of life and dreams. The interviews therefore work well as a complement to the reference studies, which are presented from a planning-, and architectural development point of view.

It is important to underline that the people interviewed were friends of mine, acquaintances or friends of friends. There are social groups in this handful of people that are not represented in

this interview as well as seniors or economically vulnerable groups that could benefit from a more diverse supply of housing options in rural areas.

#### Method

The interviews were conducted in parallel with the design process during the semester, and have not been the basis for design but instead a complementing material. The interviews are also a part of a final reflection together with reference studies and the design proposal at the end of this thesis.

The five interviewees were all given the same fourteen questions, but the discussions and answers did sometimes take different directions and follow-up questions were every so often asked to help the person reflect deeper about the topic. They took about one to two hours each to conduct and the people interviewed were all commenting on how helpful it was to reflect upon these questions in their search for the right context and housing in their rural dream. Hopefully the interviews could not only help the people being interviewed, but also add to the knowledge and understanding in a larger context.

The questions were focused into six different categories: Sustainability, Social aspects, Ancillary rooms/Added functions, Forms of housing, Lifestyle and The house as a building.

The interviews were conducted in Swedish and have afterwards been translated to English by the author.



# Hanna

## Background information:

Age: - 27

Occupation:

- Ceramist

Place of birth and type of accommodation

- Orust Svanesund, small village, Villa

Current residence and type of accommodation:

- Resident in Villa

Desired place of residence, type of house and type of accommodation :

- Orust, House, Ownership

What does the household look like / who are you who will move:

- Hanna, Partner and the dog Styrman

What size accommodation is it that you are looking for:

- 50-100 sqm, at least three rooms and a kitchen

(About the move)

1. Tell us more about why you want to move to the countryside, what are the driving forces?

- I wish to be closer to nature and to have more space for projects such as gardening and workshop. The type of projects that are difficult to cultivate while living in a flat.

2. Do you believe that life will change when you move, and if so, in what way?

- Yes, there will be more car driving and commuting. Everyday life will be filled with more outdoor activities, such as mowing the lawn etc. New types of activities, different from what I'm doing now. The ability to have guests staying and to have space for developing my entrepreneurship. I would have the opportunity to build a workshop where I live. Access to space is key for me in order to reach my goals.

3. Do you see any-, or have you encountered any obstacles in relation to the move or search for housing in the countryside?

- Mainly obstacles! Price is a big issue with galloping biddings and also to acquire knowledge about houses and to estimate the costs of renovations. There are many things which you cannot do yourself and need to contract. We have been doing a lot of research on Radon and on water wells. Many types of unexpected expenses, which you as a beginner haven't a clue about. We wish to live in the south of Bohuslän, but we may be forced to search as far north as Bengtsfors. Many properties have vast forests and big areas which we do not want. It seems like they rarely think about what people are looking for when they split up big properties for the market..

"ON THE TJÖRN AND ORUST ISLANDS, WHICH ARE MAINLY COUNTRYSIDE, THEY BUILD EXPENSIVE APARTMENTS THAT WOULD SUIT BETTER IN GOTHENBURG, PLACED ODDLY ON ROCK AND WITH LACK OF SURROUNDING VEGETATION. IN THAT CASE YOU COULD JUST AS WELL MOVE INTO ERIKSBERG."

(About the new accommodation)

4. Describe your dream home, think freely!

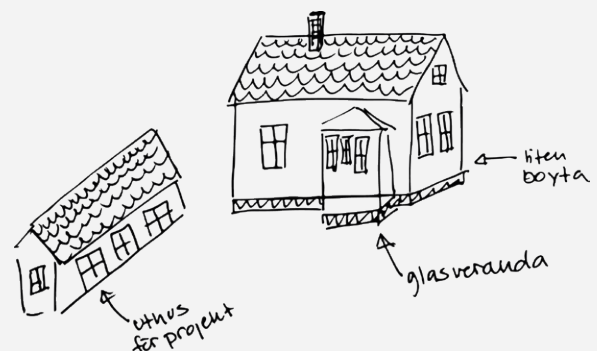
- Oh, it's pretty simple. A red painted old soldier cottage, but a bit bigger. A simple standard building with a chimney and a glass verandah. Maybe bordering a forest but also with open fields for view. We would like neighbors as long as they are not too close by. A guest cottage and an outbuilding for my workshop. Preferably a courtyard providing wind shelter and making a welcoming appearance. It frames the property and makes it a nice place for propagating vegetables and flowers.

5. Tell us what type of accommodation you are looking for and which aspects have a decisive factor in the choice?

- The price is important. We don't want to put ourselves in such a debt that we need to work more than we want. Nature and space enough to build a workshop. Fairly close to family, so that we can go visit them over the day.

6. If you have / had the opportunity to build a house in the countryside, what would the most important things with the house and the construction be for you? Please describe at least three things.

- The architecture must be fairly classical, such as the traditional old country houses. I'd like it to be painted in the traditional red iron color. I like rectangular houses. Close to friends and family with a food store maximum 20 min away. A countryside feeling is important, not a villa-type residential area. To be able to not compromise too much on what you desire. To build a new house feels intimidating and scary, what if we lose control of the costs.



Hanna's Dream Home, sketch by Hanna

**Follow-up question: What factors are important in terms of material and appearance?**

- Using recycled material as much as possible is important to me. Environmental issues are important so the building must be constructed with sustainable alternatives.

**7. In the countryside there is often more space for different things such as outbuildings, workshops, storage and garden. Describe how you think about that, and if that is something that is important to you?**

- This is the main reason why we want to live rural. To be able to create a life such as we want it to be. The outbuilding is in fact more important than the living area. A place where you can create what you want and spend your free time. The residence is a necessity, eat, sleep and watch TV, - the rest is life. If I choose to grow vegetables I can do that.

**8. What type of spaces, rooms or functions are important or significant to you, if you look back on your previous-, and/or present accommodation?**

- The breakfast table is important to me. And if I look back I find that a working area and smart storage solutions are also important. Multifunctional solutions.

*(About life in the countryside)*

**9. Do you think it is easier or more difficult to live environmentally friendly in the countryside compared to the city, and why?**

It depends. It's a difficult question. Time is an important aspect, to have time and possibility to harvest, store and take care of food. The way we have formed our lives today makes it hard to live environmentally friendly. Lack of time often results in decisions made that aren't optimal. Maybe by living in the countryside you don't have the same need to go on holidays abroad. Living self-sufficient in the countryside is an illusion, it takes a lot of investment, time and area.

*We want to live more sustainably and we also want to invest our time in it. Living rural enables you to do that, repairing things, storing things and growing things. Not needing to go shopping as often as you do living in a city.*

**10. How do you feel about renting or buying a home in the countryside? Do you see any difficulties or opportunities with the two?**

- It's hard to find places for rent here. It's mostly private houses that are for rent during the off-season and you have to move again when summer season starts. There are too few opportunities for rent. It is an economical disadvantage to rent, much better to own your property. Owning your own place allows you the chance to develop and build as you want.

**11. What is your perspective on the neighborhood community, is it important for you to be close to neighbors and what's your opinion on sharing things, functions and spaces with others?**

- I would appreciate having neighbors. It's a comfort when things go wrong and you need help, it's also important having social

contacts around you and seeing lit up windows when it's dark. I would very much like to be growing vegetables together with other people. It saves a lot of work doing things together with others and you learn from one another. But it's also important to be able to cooperate. I would however prefer to do it with someone I know, not anybody.

*A workshop, on the other hand, I would not like to share with someone, I want my own. In my previous apartment there were communal localities, but they were seldom used. You need to feel it's your own space. I can see sharing tools etc, but not sharing space. Sharing costs can be smart - why must every villa household own their own leaf blower?*

**12. Do you have any prejudices about life in the countryside?**

- I have prejudice concerning people in my own age who think they could move to a rural place and be self-sufficient. It takes a lot of investment in both time, money and knowledge. You need machines, storage, harvest skills etc. Maybe I am amongst those who are a bit naive? If you need to be high in debt and pay a mortgage you also have to work hard in an office.

*I also have some prejudice from my youth, people from the country are a bit "White-trash" and "bonniga" wearing wellies and a cap printed with a Lantmännen logo. Of Course, very few conform to that description nowadays, at least not where we have been property searching. Where prices are high you only find people with rather high salaries. If you want to live more "bonnigt" you have to move as far as Bengtsfors. But there you won't get many friends visiting, will you?*

**13. Do you feel there are many or few of your friends who also want to move closer to nature?**

Many of my friends want to do that. But my partner's friends from the culture and the music industry prefer to move to Stockholm city, where career prospects are better.

**14. Do you have any final thoughts or comments for Architects and planners who want to build better homes in the countryside?**

- YES! Please build homes in a price range that suit young people! It's a big obstacle. Try also to build using more recycled materials. A more personal and original look can be achieved as a result of using recycled components. If you build in the countryside it's also important to know what people really want. On the Tjörn and Orust islands, which are mainly countryside, they build expensive apartments that would suit better in Gothenburg, placed oddly on rock and with lack of surrounding vegetation. In that case you could just as well move into Eriksberg. Find out how people want to live and realize that there is a big difference between living in the country and living in a city. Don't be afraid to reuse older traditional building styles and details from our rural past!

# Oscar

## Background information:

Age: - 30

Occupation:

- Project Manager and Engineer

Place of birth and type of accommodation:

- Karlstad, suburb, Villa

Current residence and type of accommodation:

- Gothenburg, apartment, condominium

Desired place of residence, type of house and type of accommodation :

- Bohuslän, Villa, Bostadsrätt

What does the household look like / who are you who will move:

- Oscar, partner Lovisa and daughter Viola

What size accommodation is it that you are looking for:

- About 100 sqm, 3-4 rooms.

(About the move)

1. Tell us more about why you want to move to the countryside, what are the driving forces?

- Living in a city has a bit of a claustrophobic sense, you don't have enough space to do what you want. It also takes up a lot of time just to get out of the city to where I want to spend my free time, as well as having to always use a car to get there. The ideal would be to live near to a place where I prefer to spend my life. For me it's all about spending time in nature, hunting, hiking, growing things, wildlife and to pick mushrooms not far from my house. Another dream would also be to harvest and eat my own produce, living more sustainably.

2. Do you believe that life will change when you move, and if so, in what way?

- The distance to career possibilities will probably increase, but it would also mean you can leave the treadmill behind. To swap money for time, in other words to produce life instead of consuming it. For me it's important to contribute to society. I don't want to isolate myself in the countryside, I want to be an active part in a context. I want to have space to run a business, start interesting projects and to engage in local activities.

3. Do you see any-, or have you encountered any obstacles in relation to the move or search for housing in the countryside?

- Within the family there are a lot of different hopes and wishes, so it's important to find a way to satisfy everyone, best possible. Finding the right type of site is key. We have family scattered around different parts of Sweden, so finding a good geographical compromise is important. The question is, does one dare to start a business and run the projects one dreams about? Or will convenience make me go for regular employment somewhere.

"THERE MAY BE DIFFERENT WAYS TO LIVE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, BUT IT MUST BE IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER THE EXISTING CULTURE OF RURAL LIVING. DON'T MAKE THE OLD MISTAKES OF BUILDING BLOCKS OF HOUSES THAT PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO LIVE IN. "

(About the new accommodation)

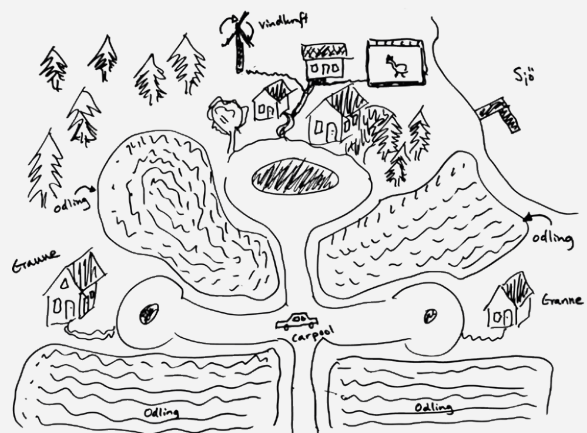
4. Describe your dream home, think freely!

- Recently I have been thinking about the idea of living where we can accommodate multiple generations, a so called "generationsboende". Perhaps building areas for rent to family, or other tenants who want to live more rurally. For me it's all about being able to live and earn a living by working in my local area. There are buildings, once belonging to farming, that need new purposes. Unused buildings could be transformed into family houses.

Keeping animals is an important thing for me in order to produce a major part of my own food, aside from growing my own produce. This will of course demand a fairly big property in terms of hectares. For me it's more about managing land than managing a house. Really managing a life and a way of living. I'm not looking for the perfect kitchen or fancy things. There are other values that make a good life.

5. Tell us what type of accommodation you are looking for and which aspects have a decisive factor in the choice?

- The site and context is crucial. A property with multiple buildings would be ideal. If there is only a small house on the property we can build a new outbuilding with multiple functions.



Oscars Dream Home, sketch by Oscar

6. If you have / had the opportunity to build a house in the countryside, what would the most important things with the house and the construction be for you? Please describe at least three things.

- A building compact and smartly built, since it's rather expensive to build new. If building new it must be built sustainably. It cannot however be expensive, I don't want to be high in debt and be forced into spending more time earning money. But if by building new I still could earn my living the way I want, it may work. As a consequence of climate crisis it's important to also build socially sustainable. A smart and modular house that can lower cost by shared spaces. It's also important to consider the possibility of selling the house when the time comes. That it's also a financially sound investment.

Follow-up question: What factors are important in terms of material and appearance?

- I like recycled material, massive materials with life and character. It must be a sensible and smart house that can breathe and not risk moist damages. I used to dream about a traditional "Skånelänga" or a picturesque wooden house. I am not a big fan of modern architecture, but I'm not against having a house using new experimental design solutions. I am very fond of houses that interact with nature and the environment around them.

7. In the countryside there is often more space for different things such as outbuildings, workshops, storage and garden. Describe how you think about that, and if that is something that is important to you?

- Yes, it's important for me and that they are efficiently used, not just for storing junk. Growing produce could be fun doing together with other growers. My experience is however sadly that things easily get neglected and unorganized if many people are involved.

8. What type of spaces, rooms or functions are important or significant to you, if you look back on your previous-, and/ or present accommodation?

- When asked the question I instantly think about what is outdoors. A patio of some kind has always been an appreciated spot. Storage is an underestimated factor where I have lived. Lack of storage makes life complicated. As a hunter and a cultivator it's essential to have enough storage. A social area is of course also important.

(About life in the countryside)

9. Do you think it is easier or more difficult to live environmentally friendly in the countryside compared to the city, and why?

More difficult. I believe that you will be more dependent on going by car as you live further away from service and shops. To live in an apartment in a big house (multi-family housing) is probably more environmentally friendly. I think country life is more challenging if you want to be environmentally friendly.

10. How do you feel about renting or buying a home in the countryside? Do you see any difficulties or opportunities with the two?

- In the short term it might be better to rent and see if the lifestyle suits you. It is a big change to move to the countryside from the city. But in the long run, I see that it's better to buy something, and that's what I want to do.

11. What is your perspective on the neighborhood community, is it important for you to be close to neighbors and what's your opinion on sharing things, functions and spaces with others?

- I strongly believe in sharing, not only material things but also life. I can live where I don't see any immediate neighbors from my house, but I very much like social connections with neighbors. Sharing social everyday life. You don't choose your neighbors but I like the idea of sharing and helping each other. A bit like "Barnen i Bullerbyn" perhaps.

12. Do you have any prejudices about life in the countryside?

- Yes, I suppose I have. I think my generation will have more demands, such as having good mobile phone coverage. Living rurally you need to accept not having the same service and opportunities as when living in a city. People living rurally need to rely on enthusiasts who drive matters forward and make things happen. Helping each other is definitely more important when living in the countryside. Another prejudice I have is that you are more prone to receive allowances, such as keeping the landscape open or to grow certain crops.

13. Do you feel there are many or few of your friends who also want to move closer to nature?

- No, the majority of them probably won't want that. I only see people wanting to move to villa-type suburbs. I don't think my friends want to move further out than that.

14. Do you have any final thoughts or comments for Architects and planners who want to build better homes in the countryside?

- If you intend to start collective housing projects you need to also integrate the culture of a country lifestyle. There may be different ways to live in the countryside, but it must be important to consider the existing culture of rural living. Don't make the old mistakes of building blocks of houses that people don't want to live in. Norge has succeeded in creating countryside housing where nature and life is taken in great consideration.

# Jonatan

## Background information:

Age: - 30

Occupation:

- Accountant

Place of birth and type of accommodation:

- Gothenburg, apartment, city. And Herrljunga, Farm, countryside

Current residence and type of accommodation:

- Trollhättan, Apartment, Rental

Desired place of residence, type of house and type of accommodation :

- Around trollhättan radius of 2 miles, house, Ownership

What does the household look like / who are you who will move:

- Jonatan, wife and dog

What size accommodation is it that you are looking for:

- 35-80 sqm

(About the move)

1. Tell us more about why you want to move to the countryside, what are the driving forces?

- To live peacefully and close to nature and to get away from loud neighbors. To be able to go outside and have a coffee whilst listening to the birds. My wife and I spend a lot of our time in nature. In Trollhättan we have easy access to shops and restaurants which we don't necessarily consider as an advantage. To get out into nature is however not so easy for us, we would rather have the situation the other way around. Prior to this we used to live in a cottage in Sandsjöbacka, surrounded by a nature reserve, forest paths and a lake and this is the way we ideally would like to live. My impression is that when living in the countryside you have closer relations to the surrounding community.

2. Do you believe that life will change when you move, and if so, in what way?

- Hopefully one can be more relaxed and calm. That's the way I felt when living in Sandsjöbacka. But then of course life gets in the way and things become a bit more complicated. We don't have a car and it's nice to be out biking and to feel the raindrops in your face. It has been a challenge to endure the noise coming through the walls into our flat. Living in the countryside would be much calmer and out of the way from disturbing neighbors. A risk might be that whilst working more managing house and garden you would miss out enjoying the birdsong.

3. Do you see any-, or have you encountered any obstacles in relation to the move or search for housing in the countryside?

- It's obvious that buying a house costs a lot of money, either you have to live smaller or further away. So far we haven't been able

to find anything that we can afford and that is an obstacle. We haven't been on the search for very long, just half a year or so. But I'm convinced that one day we will find the house for us. We could have found a house cheaper but further away and in need of big renovations, but we are not interested in that and we can't invest that amount of time and money. If country houses existed for rent we would probably prefer that instead of buying. There aren't many houses for rent and they are mostly short term rentals. Being educated in finance I know that there are interesting theories arguing that renting is more advantageous than buying a house. By renting there is also less work involved and that's something I like. When we lived in Billdal we sat on the balcony and watched our landlord repainting the house. We don't know how long we really want to live in the house, maybe three years or so.

(About the new accommodation)

4. Describe your dream home, think freely!

- I'm thinking 40 square meters, like the smart looking Atterfalls houses you can see on Instagram. Big windows and glass doors leading out to a patio, a mezzanine bedroom area and a compact bathroom. It shall be situated in the forest surrounded with only nature and with a gravel road leading to the house. Something in the distance of 7-10 km from Trollhättan would have been nice. It would of course be nice to have neighbors living somewhere fairly near, but I don't see it as necessary. Egnahems Fabriken on Tjörn manufactures a nice Attefallshus. Also Sommarnöjen and Manta North make Attefallshus that they deliver by a lorry. It can be mounted to the ground on pillars and be quite simple, just that would be enough work for me. If it's possible to choose, I would prefer it if it's made out of material free from glue, such as cardboard joists and cellulose.

5. Tell us what type of accommodation you are looking for and which aspects have a decisive factor in the choice?

- Low maintenance, effective use of space, low operating costs and a house that can be left alone for a couple of weeks whilst being away on holiday. A house that is easy and cheap to renovate, maintain and to rebuild. Old houses are beautiful but difficult to run, this is why I prefer a new house. If we had found a site that agrees with all our wishes it seems more sensible in theory to build new or place a prefabricated house there.

A deal-breaker would be to have the ability to commute by bike. Our perspective on reasonable biking distance is not like the average person's, I'm used to bike 21 km to my work and my wife is also a keen biker. To have 5 -7 km to the nearest food shop is no big deal for us. We will probably have to buy a car to be able to buy tools and stuff, but we will gladly use our bikes for everyday matters. Furthermore we don't consider it a problem if the house isn't stylish, such as ugly wallpapers or surfaces, the main thing is



Jonatan's Dream Home, sketch by Jonatan

that it's well kept. We don't want an object in need of renovation.

**6. If you have / had the opportunity to build a house in the countryside, what would the most important things with the house and the construction be for you? Please describe at least three things.**

- I want it to be easy to build and easy to maintain. It shall be low priced and environmentally friendly, with a healthy and good indoor environment. Made with non toxic and mold resistant materials. I don't want the house to be too overwhelming to build or to live in. I have seen friends taking on big house projects and the amount of time and energy they have had to put into it.

**Follow-up question: What factors are important in terms of material and appearance?**

- Old wooden houses are beautiful. I like houses from the 50s and 60s with much light and natural materials. .

**7. In the countryside there is often more space for different things such as outbuildings, workshops, storage and garden. Describe how you think about that, and if that is something that is important to you?**

- Of course it would be nice having a workshop since I fix a lot with bikes. In Gothenburg there were bicycle workshops which I enjoyed a lot. I haven't found anything like that where I live now. It's fun and inspiring to do things together with others.

My wife would find joy in having a garden, but I worked as a gardener for a year and learned that it is very time consuming. There are other things in life that I want to do than managing a big area and a garden. We have been dreaming of having the forest near our house and wouldn't mind owning a couple of hectares.

There are two sides of having too much storage space, you tend to gather a lot of unneeded stuff, which I don't like, but on the other hand it's nice to have enough storage. Damp outbuildings are not particularly suitable for storing either. I can fantasize about having a barn for parties.

**8. What type of spaces, rooms or functions are important or significant to you, if you look back on your previous-, and/ or present accommodation?**

- In our previous home in Billdal, a 60m<sup>2</sup> house that we rented, there was a studio that we used as a living room. The room had an adjacent verandah with a beautiful view over a paddock. In our current apartment we don't use the living room very often. We mostly spend the time in the kitchen where we have a view towards trees and squirrels. It's more about the atmosphere of the room than the function.

It's getting more important to have an office-type of space, to be a bit secluded when working from home. During the pandemic I had to work a lot from home and if we move to the countryside it's even more important to have space for this. Having more than an hour to drive to work I would want to work 2-3 days weekly from home. I want to have the freedom of working when it suits my own schedule, leaving time to spend outside.

(About life in the countryside)

**9. Do you think it is easier or more difficult to live environmentally friendly in the countryside compared to the city, and why?**

- Basically it's more environmentally friendly to live a country life. If you look back on history you find that those who lived in balance with nature didn't live in cities. But the way our world is constructed today I believe it's more complicated. You may have a 150m<sup>2</sup> house heated with direct electricity and you may have a Diesel driven car and long distances to work, shops and schools. I suppose it's more environmentally friendly to live in a city flat,

commuting by tram or bus. On the other hand it should be possible to create a country living structure that is environmentally friendly; living in a smaller house, using a bike, cultivating vegetables etc, buying local produce and harnessing your own electricity. But these structures are seldom found today.

Pure vegan lifestyle isn't compatible with modern farming. Consuming locally produced meat and dairy isn't necessarily more friendly towards the environment. It's all very complicated as country life is built upon farming.

**10. How do you feel about renting or buying a home in the countryside? Do you see any difficulties or opportunities with the two?**

- I'm interested in economics and find questions on renting very interesting. How will you be able to profit from selling a house that has increased in value after many years? Do you intend to buy something in a lower price range? The answer is often that you won't. There are also a lot of invisible costs involved in owning a house, such as maintenance and renovations that are not needed when renting. The calculation is not so straightforward, but if you live somewhere for a shorter term, renting is definitely cheaper. Money will not be tied up and if you need to move again you can be more flexible. A problem with rentals can be if you have a bad landlord. If the landlord is a private person you are both vulnerable. What do you do if you can't get along?

**11. What is your perspective on the neighborhood community, is it important for you to be close to neighbors and what's your opinion on sharing things, functions and spaces with others?**

- As I said earlier, I don't prefer living close to neighbors, but I think it's nice to have good connections to neighbors. In the countryside there are stronger connections to people living around you and you can exchange skills and deeds between each other. In cities you can also find these types of networks, but only within certain groups. For instance within the bike community where I belong. It's a big advantage to be able to share tools and resources with others, not needing to buy everything yourself.

**12. Do you have any prejudices about life in the countryside?**

- I'm sure I have, but they are not visible to me now. One prejudice I'm thinking of is that it might be difficult to get to know people. But having lived in Trollhättan I find it easy to make new friends and acquaintances. If you share a common interest such as running, dogs or biking it's much easier to start a conversation and make friends. In the city you are not unique in your hobbies and it can be a bit unnatural to start a conversation with someone who also happens to like biking. But in a smaller city the different communities are more obvious and it can be easier to have an overview of the different opportunities offered.

**13. Do you feel there are many or few of your friends who also want to move closer to nature?**

- I believe most people would want to live in the countryside but close to Gothenburg. Nearly all my friends see themselves living nearer to nature. Many of them will probably end up living in a villa in Lerum. Moving all the way to Dalsland is too far. It can be a big disadvantage to move away from work and friends.

**14. Do you have any final thoughts or comments for Architects and planners who want to build better homes in the countryside?**

- Difficult question, but it would be impossible if everybody had the same wishes as we do. Communities would then be very scattered. I find it strange when people build big houses for themselves. Houses are usually built with an intention of comfort, with a parking lot right beside it. But building with consideration to having surrounding access to recreation and nature would be desirable.

# Sara

## Background information:

Age: - 26

Occupation:

- Customer service

Place of birth and type of accommodation:

- Lerum, detached housing residential areas, Villa

Current residence and type of accommodation:

- Lerum, House, Rental

Desired place of residence, type of house and type of accommodation :

- Västra Götaland Region, newly build villa, Ownership

What does the household look like / who are you who will move:

- Sara, partner and two dogs

What size accommodation is it that you are looking for:

- 5-6 rooms and kitchen

(About the move)

1. Tell us more about why you want to move to the countryside, what are the driving forces?

- Above all it's the calm I seek. Fresh air and closeness to the forest. Also in the future, when we hopefully have children, I want to have access to nature from home and from school. I'm very fond of keeping animals so I need to have the right conditions for this. I would very much like to have a horse in the future. My partner has a hunting license and also prefers to live in the countryside. We own a dog and we want to be able to train it for tracking in the forest. In the city there is stress and crowds of people which I don't like. Living in the countryside it's easier to get space for the things I like to do.

2. Do you believe that life will change when you move, and if so, in what way?

- Yes, I believe so, we have recently moved to a rented house on a fairly big property and we have noticed that our friends don't come and visit us as much as we had wanted. They think it's complicated to get to us and we find it a bit of a nuisance getting to Gothenburg.

Managing the house and the property takes a lot of time which we also like. It's rewarding to have things to do and to improve. It's more work but it's also giving back pleasure. I am more busy when I live here, helping out at the farm and taking care of the horses. We help a lot with the sheep that the owners keep in a stable here. There is also more work involved keeping the house clean and tidy since it's much bigger than the apartment we used to live in.

3. Do you see any-, or have you encountered any obstacles in relation to the move or search for housing in the countryside?

- In Lerum, where we live, the houses are very expensive. The prices have increased very much and it's hard for young people like us to buy a house. This is why people have to find something further away where there are cheaper houses in need of renovations. We suspect we'll have to buy a renovation object, an older house, or save up to build our own. Many people buy very old houses that are derelict, leaving them a lot of work and investment into renovations. We want to buy something we can live in.

(About the new accommodation)

4. Describe your dream home, think freely!

- My dream would be to have an architect designed house, preferably surrounded by open landscape with beautiful views from big windows. A house resembling a barn in a way, with open plan interior and overlooking the meadows. I would very much like it to be near a forest and to be situated in the countryside. But also to have the vicinity to bigger cities, such as Gothenburg, Trollhättan or Vänersborg and with good connections to train or bus. Also that it needs to be in reach of schools etc.

5. Tell us what type of accommodation you are looking for and which aspects have a decisive factor in the choice?

- It's important that it's situated in a place where friends can easily come and visit and where it's convenient for us to go places. We don't want a house too near a busy road. We want to have a grocery shop near enough.

The living conditions are very important to us and we can accept commuting to work, which we already do. We want to feel comfortable where we live, without stress. We used to live out on an island where we also had our work. We have experienced people asking us about work related stuff when going shopping. This was most annoying and stressful. Work is work and free time is free time.



Saras Dream Home, sketch by Sara

6. If you have / had the opportunity to build a house in the countryside, what would the most important things with the house and the construction be for you? Please describe at least three things.

- I want it to be environmentally friendly and low consuming and I wouldn't mind having sun panels on the roof. Something that could produce power for us in a sustainable way. I want to be near animals and locally produced food. Using sound and natural materials in the build. To have access to a lake and to go bathing.

Follow-up question: What factors are important in terms of material and appearance?

- A house made of wood, resembling a barn with a facade clad in untreated wood. I like clay tiled roofs and the use of granite stones for the foundation and in the garden. I like rectangular shaped single-storey houses with an open plan interior. It would have been nice to contract a local builder and craftsmen, I believe there are a lot of skills to be found where you live. When using a smaller firm I imagine you can be more involved in the planning. Getting something unique and personal.

7. In the countryside there is often more space for different things such as outbuildings, workshops, storage and garden. Describe how you think about that, and if that is something that is important to you?

- Yes, you always need somewhere to store lawn mowers, bikes, tools and stuff. I don't need a workshop. It's important to have a garden, to plant flowers, grow vegetables and to have a big lawn.

8. What type of spaces, rooms or functions are important or significant to you, if you look back on your previous-, and/ or present accommodation?

- The bedroom is important to me. This is where you relax and spend a lot of time. I want to have space in the bedroom and a calming atmosphere. The kitchen is also important and I want it to feel homely. I have been working a lot in restaurants and I don't want my kitchen to resemble an industrial installation. I want it to be cozy and inviting, but also with a good workspace and layout for cooking. The living area must have big sofas for entertaining friends and to relax in.

(About life in the countryside)

9. Do you think it is easier or more difficult to live environmentally friendly in the countryside compared to the city, and why?

- Yes I believe so, since it's further away from work and you'll probably need a car, which not everybody can afford. Living in a city offers more opportunities for biking or going by tram or bus. The cheaper types of tools and lawn mowers are petrol driven, which is not so good. Older and simpler houses in the countryside are not as well insulated and equipped for low power consumption as newer houses. Some of them have oil burners that are costly and polluting to run.

10. How do you feel about renting or buying a home in the countryside? Do you see any difficulties or opportunities with the two?

- Now that we live in a rented house in the countryside we are able to get what we want. But by renting you are restricted and cannot do whatever you want. The big responsibility lies with the landlord. But since we know the owner we have good relations and it's seldom a problem if we want to change and improve the house.

I'm satisfied living like this for a longer period. It's incredibly difficult to buy a house. We are now able to take our time to learn what it's like living in a house and we can during this time save money and gather experience for our future house. We are lucky to have this ability, it's hard to come by.

11. What is your perspective on the neighborhood community, is it important for you to be close to neighbors and what's your opinion on sharing things, functions and spaces with others?

- I have nothing against sharing areas with others, but I don't wish to have neighbors too close by. I like the secluded feeling of not being watched. Having close neighbors you have to consider them and avoid being loud when entertaining friends in the garden late in the evening. Sometimes you need to cut the grass early in the morning or late at night. We are planning a big party this summer and we have to warn our neighbors in advance that there will be a lot of cars parked in the driveway and probably a lot of noise.

Our landlord keeps sheep here in the barn and we like to help care for them. It's a win-win situation for both parties since being with animals is important for me and it keeps me in good health. I wouldn't want to share a barn with other people if I had my own animals. I want to be in charge of my own decisions. I have a need for control but find it difficult to invite other people to discussions.

12. Do you have any prejudices about life in the countryside?

- (An answer here is missing.)

13. Do you feel there are many or few of your friends who also want to move closer to nature?

- I would say they are few. Many of my friends prefer city life and have no wish to live like I do. They work in Gothenburg where everything is within reach. I like commuting and have no need for city life.

14. Do you have any final thoughts or comments for Architects and planners who want to build better homes in the countryside?

- I'm mostly thinking of the environmental aspect of a house. To make country-style houses but with modern smart solutions for saving power and to use sustainable material in the build. Not to build big areas of prefabricated houses that all look the same. I'd rather see that they built quality houses with a long life ahead of them.



# Summary

## Categories:

Background/Facts

Sustainability (9)

Social aspects (11)

Ancillary rooms/Added functions (7)

Forms of housing (10)

Lifestyle (2,12,13)

The house as a building (4,6,8,14)

(About the move)

**1. Tell us more about how it comes about that you want / wanted to move to the countryside, what are the driving forces?**

**H:** Be closer to nature and have space for different projects connected to gardening and ceramic workshop.

**O:** More space and closer to nature related activities. Being able to harvest and eat your own produce.

**J:** Come closer to nature and nature related activities as well as the surrounding community.

**S:** The calm, closeness to the forest and spaces for nature related activities. In closeness to, or space to keep animals. Less stress and crowds of people

**2. Do you believe that life will change when you move, and if so, in what way?**

**H:** More time spent on commuting, new everyday chores connected to the outdoors and more space to develop the ceramic business.

**O:** Further away from career opportunities, but increased possibilities for an alternative lifestyle. Want to contribute to society and engage in local activities.

**J:** More relaxed and calm and less noise from neighbors. A risk that there will be more work and maintenance of the house and garden, and less time for recreational activities.

**S:** Further away from friends which make it harder for them to come and visit. More time in managing the house, the property and helping the local farmer, wish is rewarding.

**3. Do you see any-, or have you encountered any obstacles in relation to the move or search for housing in the countryside?**

**H:** A Lot of obstacles regarding rising prices, unforeseen expenses, too large plots of land and knowledge of renovation and maintenance that is required which makes it difficult for first-time buyers. Have considered living further away than desired.

**O:** Finding the right type of site that suits the different wishes within the family.

**J:** Have not found any object yet that meets budget and requirements. Would have liked to rent, but due to a weak rental market, short-term leases and private landlords, it is not seen as an option.

**S:** The houses are very expensive. It is hard for young people to buy a house and forces people to move further away and buy old run down houses to renovate.

(About the new accommodation)

**4. Describe your dream home, think freely!**

**H:** A red cottage, chimney and a glass verandah on the edge of the forest and open fields. A guesthouse and workshop forming a courtyard and space for gardening.

**O:** Multi-generational housing that could be rented out to family, or other tenants who want to live more rurally. Make use of the existing buildings on site.

**J:** A small prefabricated house with efficient use of space. 40 sqm, big windows and situated in the forest surrounded with nature.

**S:** To have an architect designed house, preferably surrounded by open landscape with beautiful views. A house resembling a barn with open plan interior, good public transport connections and closeness services.

**5. Tell us what type of accommodation you are looking for and which aspects have a decisive factor in the choice?**

**H:** Buying a house that falls into the budget that does not require a large dept. Not too far away for family and friends, and space to build a workshop.

**O:** A plot with multiple buildings or space to build a new outbuilding with multiple functions.

**J:** A house that is easy and cheap to renovate and

maintain as well as good possibilities to commute by bike.

S: Situated so that friends can easily come visit. Closeness to services. It does not have to be close to work. Enjoy and are used to commuting. Need space to separate work and life.

**6. If you have / had the opportunity to build a house in the countryside, what would the most important things with the house and the construction be for you? Please describe at least three things.**

H: Traditional elements such as red facade and classic style of country house. Close to friends and family. To stay within budget.

O: Space efficient and using sustainable solutions. Not be situated with high debt, forced into spending more time earning money. Socially sustainable with shared spaces and investing in a financially sound object.

J: Easy to build and to maintain. Cost efficient and using environmentally friendly and healthy materials.

S: An environmentally friendly house that is self-sufficient in energy using solar panels. Closeness to water for bathing, animals and locally produced foods.

**Follow-up question: What factors are important in terms of material and appearance?**

H: Using recycled material and sustainable materials and methods.

O: Using recycled material, massive materials with life and character. The aesthetics of "skånelänga" or new experimental design solutions. A house that interacts with nature.

J: Natural materials. The aesthetics of the 50s and 60s with a lot of light or old wooden houses.

S: Using locally produced material and local carpenters. Barn-like structure using wood, clay tiled roof and granite stones for the foundation.

**7. In the countryside there is often more space for different things such as outbuildings, workshops, storage and garden. Describe how you think about that, and if that is something that is important to you?**

H: The outbuildings are more important than the living area, room and freedom to create things in

your spare time. Things supporting living is only a necessity.

O: That the outbuildings are efficiently used, not just for storing junk. Growing produce together with others would be fun but might be difficult to keep it organized and working.

J: A community or a workshop for fixing the bike. Has no general requirements for outbuildings or a garden. Duplex approach to storage space, do not want to accumulate too many things.

S: Garden and space to store tools and lawnmower is important. But there is no need for a workshop.

**8. What type of spaces, rooms or functions are important or significant to you, if you look back on your previous-, and/or present accommodation?**

H: Space for a breakfast table in the kitchen, desktop workspace, generous storage and multifunctional solutions.

O: The outdoor areas, a patio and places to be outdoors. Storage of things and storing of gear for nature related activities such as hunting or cultivation.

J: Values rooms with views and good atmosphere rather than the specific intended function. Have created needs for desktop space during the pandemic, and want to be able to work from remote if moving to the countryside.

S: A large bedroom with a calming atmosphere and a homely kitschen.

*(About life in the countryside)*

**9. Do you think it is easier or more difficult to live environmentally friendly in the countryside compared to the city, and why?**

H: You need to invest time and have space to be able to make sustainable decisions and self-sufficient solutions. Rural living gives space for storing, repairing things as well as cultivating the garden but it takes a lot of time.

O: More difficult because of car dependency and longer distances to service. It might be more challenging to live sustainably, but if you live in a multi-family home / apartment it might be easier.

J: Complex because of modern ways of living. Modern life often requires comfort, car dependency and large spaces and interests in simpler living are seldom found today or not supported.

S: More difficult because of car dependency. The

cheaper types of tools petrol driven and older and simpler houses in the countryside are not as well insulated and equipped for low energy consumption.

**10. How do you feel about renting or buying a home in the countryside? Do you see any difficulties or opportunities with the two?**

**H:** It is difficult to rent in rural areas due to few rentals, private landlords and short-term leases only for the winter season. Ownership gives freedom to do as you want with the space.

**O:** In the short term it is better to rent, then you have more freedom to try out the lifestyle. But in the long run it is better to buy something.

**J:** Sees a great amount of arguments that supports renting over ownership regarding flexibility, time and money. But renting from private landlords could make you vulnerable if you do not get along.

**S:** Now while living in a rented house it fills our requirements. But by renting you are restricted and cannot do whatever you want. Knowing the landlord gives us lots of freedom. Rentals are hard to come by in rural areas.

**11. What is your perspective on the neighborhood community, is it important for you to be close to neighbors and what's your opinion on sharing things, functions and spaces with others?**

**H:** Neighbors support social exchange, knowledge and possibility for shared functions such as a common garden. Not willing to share workshop space but could share certain tools for economical reasons.

**O:** Strongly believe in sharing, not only material things but also life. Enjoy privacy but want social connections with neighbors.

**J:** Have a need for privacy and do not want to live too close to others, but would like to have connections to neighbors. See benefits of sharing tools and exchanging knowledge with others.

**S:** It is a win-win situation to help the local farmer with the animals. It can be difficult to cooperate and consider with neighbors, living alone is much more comfortable.

**12. Do you have any prejudices about life in the countryside?**

**H:** True rural living requires moving far away where prices are lower. The trending self-sufficient lifestyle among young people is a bit naive and requires unexpected time, tools and investments.

**O:** Yes, that the younger generation will have more demands, such as good mobile services and opportunities as when living in the city. That rural areas are driven by enthusiasts who drive matters forward. Also, rural areas are more prone to receive allowances, such as keeping landscapes open.

**J:** That it could be difficult to meet new people, but have found from experience that it is not true especially if you share interests with others.

**S:** (An answer here is missing.)

**13. Do you feel that there are many or few of your friends who also want to move closer to nature?**

**H:** Yes, but my partner's friends from the culture- and the music industry prefer to move to Stockholm city, where career prospects are better.

**O:** No. Friends want to move to villa-type suburbs, not further away.

**J:** Most of them, but not too far away from Gothenburg.

**S:** Only a few. Most of them prefer city life.

**14. Do you have any final thoughts or comments for Architects and planners who want to build better homes in the countryside?**

**H:** Build homes in a price range that suit young people, build using more recycled materials and dare to use local traditional styles. Understanding what people really want and adapting to the requirements and wishes of rural living.

**O:** To integrate the culture of the rural lifestyle. People don't want to live in detached housing residential areas but rather housing where nature and life is taken in greater consideration.

**J:** Build to make people move more, be out in nature and guide people to live healthier lives. Also, it is strange that people build very large houses instead of being more efficient with space.

**S:** To make long lasting country-style houses but with modern smart solutions for saving energy and to use sustainable material. Not build prefabricated housing areas where everything looks the same.

# 04: Design studies

## Site and context





## Sibbajordslyckan, Bergum

"Wet winding feilds"

Sibba - sob; weep, cry

Jord - soil; ground

Lycka - loop; a loop-like part of a river, but also - field

(Svenska Akademiens Ordbok)

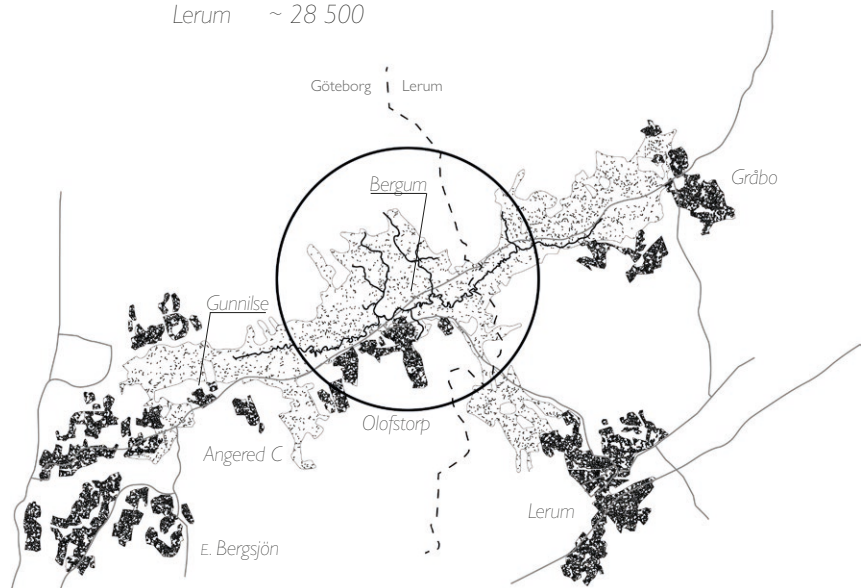
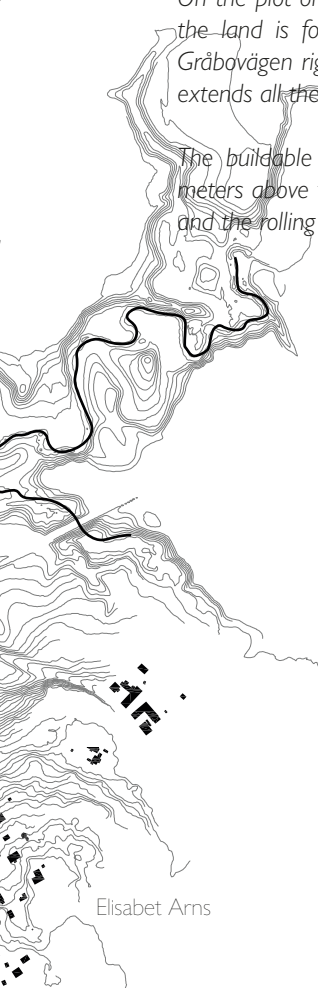
On the plot once stood a house that burned down, and now the land is for sale. The overgrown landscape starts from Gråbovägen right next to the bus station Bergum Kyrka, and extends all the way to Lärjeån.

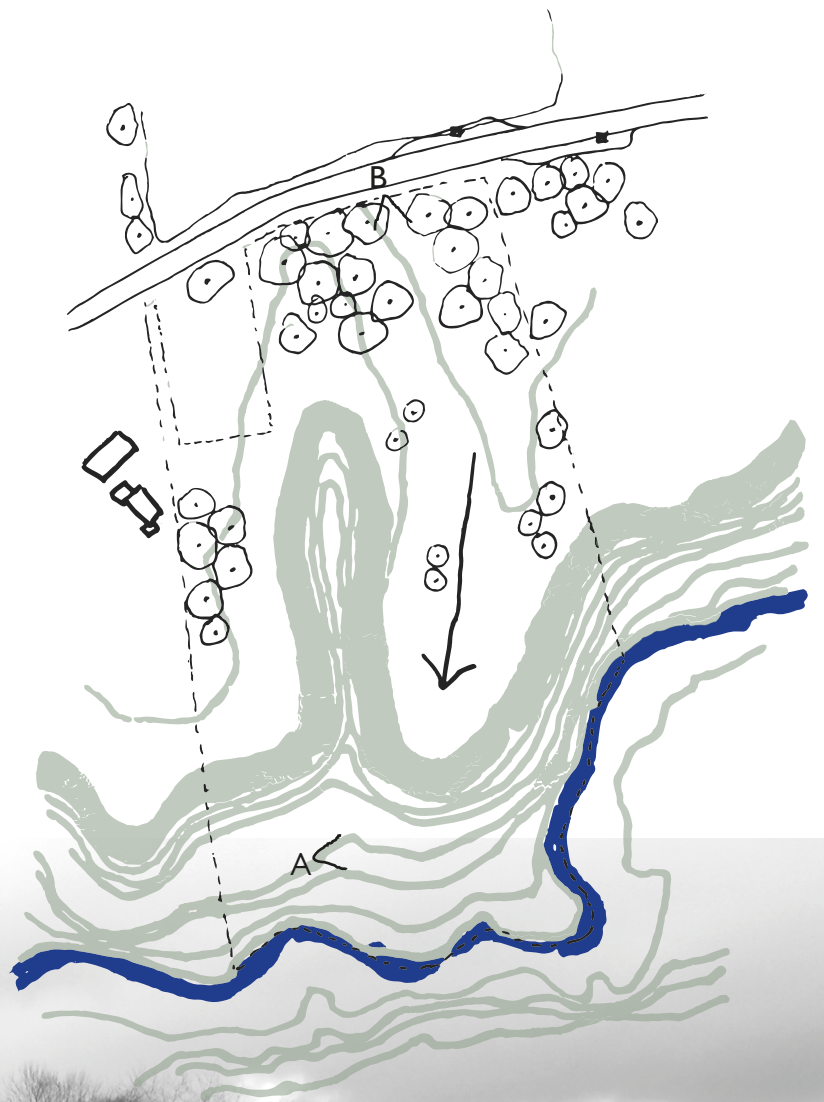
The buildable area forms like a headland located thirteen meters above the river and points out towards the landscape and the rolling meadows.

	Inhabitants	Detached houses	Rentals
Bergum	~ 5 200	90,3 %	9,5%
Gunnilse	~ 4000	97,4 %	5,1%
Angered C	~ 4300	18,6 %	40,1%
E.Bergsjön	~ 10 000	5,3 %	91,1 %

(Statistik och Analys, Göteborgs stadsledningskontor. 2022)

Gråbo	~ 6 700	(no figures from Lerum)
Lerum	~ 28 500	





A



# Facts

## The landscape

*This is a large plot with 1,7 hectares of land. The valleys of Lärjeån surround the plot and high reeds and grass grow along the hills. The plot is overgrown with many trees, shoots and shrubs.*

## Outlooks

*Views in all directions. Views of neighboring farms, the valley and the small mountain on the other side of the road where the local church is located.*

## Service

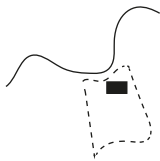
*The bus stop "Bergum Kyrka" is right next to the site and the bus runs every half hour. Bergum School is close to Olofstorp and Mataffärer is a 5-minute drive away, so there is a good connection to service.*

B



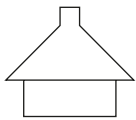
# Study areas

*The study area is a response to a hypothesis about the needs and opportunities that can be seen and developed with rural development. They also relate to the parallel work and understanding performed by the analyzes made of references and interviews.*



## **The site / come close to nature**

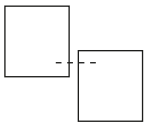
- *Understanding the site, the opportunities and the obstacles affecting the design.*
- *Adapting to surrounding nature and bringing nature close.*



## **Facade and materials / Technical solutions**

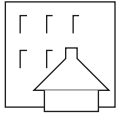
- *Looking for low maintenance solutions in the building structure and facade.*
- *Alternative solutions that respond to the required lifestyle of modern rural living.*
- *Architecture that respects the surroundings, but at the same time wants to be something different.*

*“housing should be seen as a starting point for sustainable conversion that challenges current market logic, and that the home can be seen as an economical experimental workshop and as a hub for a more sustainable life.” (P. Hagbert et al. 2018)*



## **Flexibility**

- *The house must be adaptable to changing conditions - shrinking and growing households, by being able to expand or add new components to your home as needs grow. Or rent out part of your home if the space is too big for the current needs.*



### **Different forms of housing**

- Adding rentals, another type of housing, which will contribute to an increased diversity of forms of housing in the area.

- Adding a type of housing that is not another single-family detached housing, but instead a different type of accommodation.

*"You can not only build expensive villas and tenant-owned housing in the countryside, but you also need different forms of housing and rentals"*

- Tina Harling (Åkerman, 2020, 2 July)



### **Outbuildings / sheds / added functions**

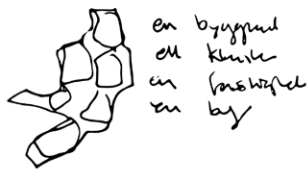
- Place for outdoor life, storage of things and workshop space.

- Space for creating your own things, freedom to shape your own space .

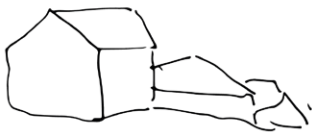
*"In rural areas, there are opportunities that do not exist in the city, greater freedom and more space to live a sustainable life" - Lena Falkheden*

# Housing units and different compositions

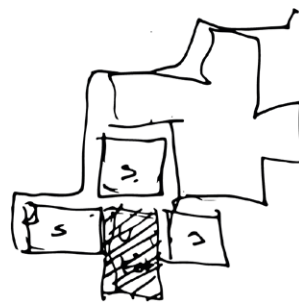
I have worked with finding systems for different compositions of house units, to find flexible housing solutions in different ways. Through iteration in volume, plan and concept studies, the project has developed within the framework of the delimitation that have constituted the studies.



en byggnad  
en kluster  
en bostadsområde  
en by

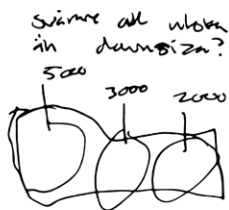


Kanske hyr du  
delar av inte är  
anslutna till vatten



Pusselbitar

Alla har ett  
centralt kök +  
Sällskapsrum +  
bad/hall.

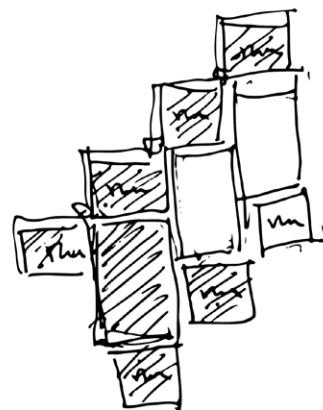


Självre eller utöver  
in denna? 5000

3000 2000

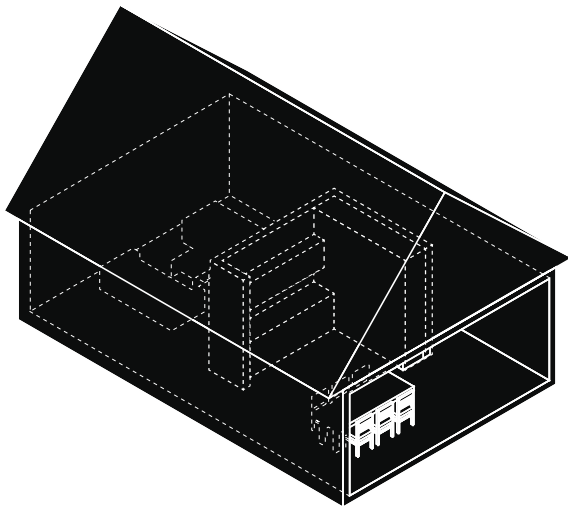
utvecklade  
lägenheter.

du har till till  
tre anläggn. Och  
hyr själv ut de  
ann. På så sätt  
kan du utveckla  
om du har behov.  
Du vill ge dina grannar



*I started volume studies by shaping different units that I worked with. They represented different functions that were studied through different compositions and connections...*

- Warm & Cold Spaces
- Exchangeable units / Add on volumes (Flexible structure)
- Private spaces / "the living core"



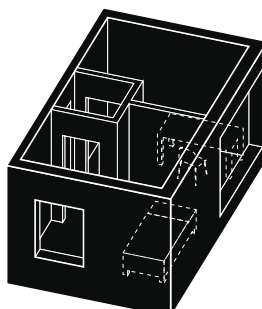
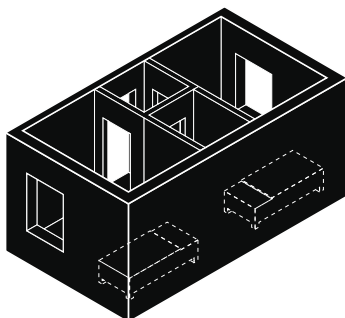
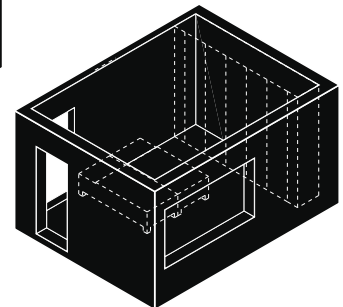
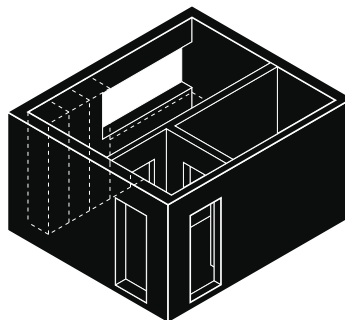
*"The living core" /  
kitchen and living room*

*(57 square meters are shown in the  
example)*

*Exchangeable units /  
add on volumes*

*Units for bath, laundry room,  
bedrooms, study, living room etc.  
About 20 square meters.*

*(18 - 21 square meters are shown in  
the examples)*



# Design Studies in 3D

1

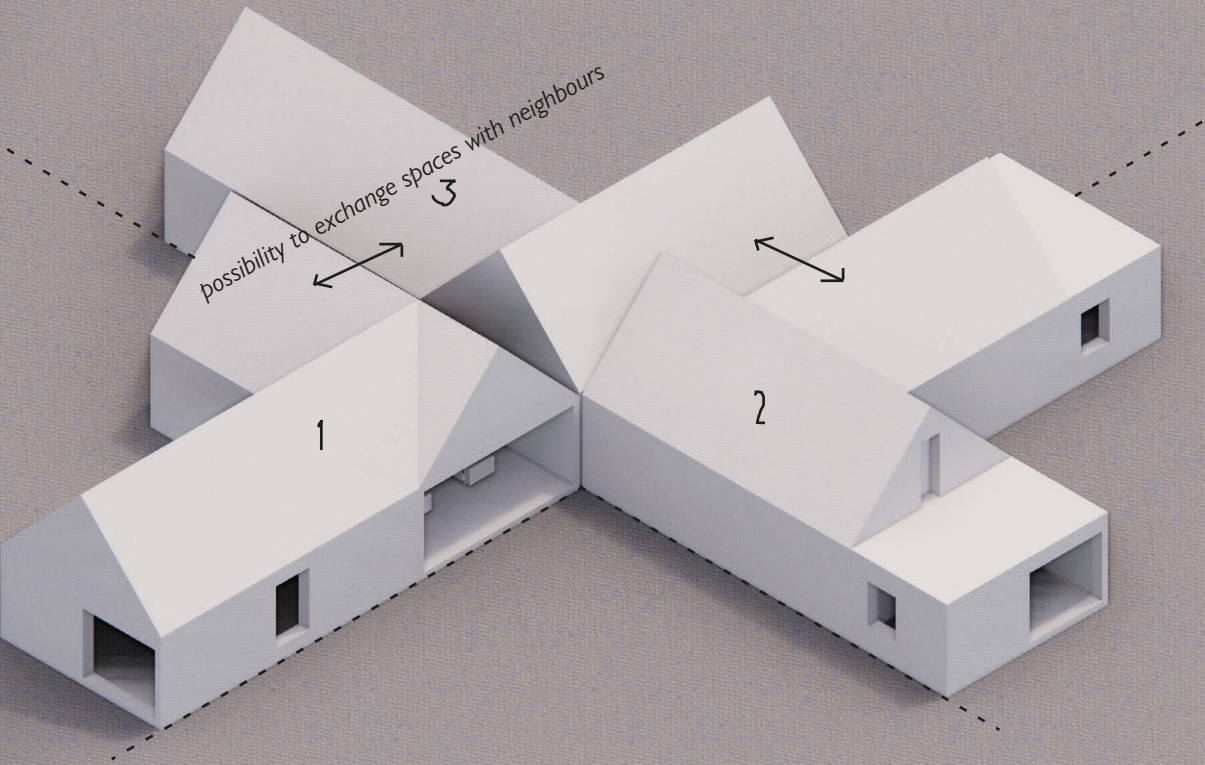
2

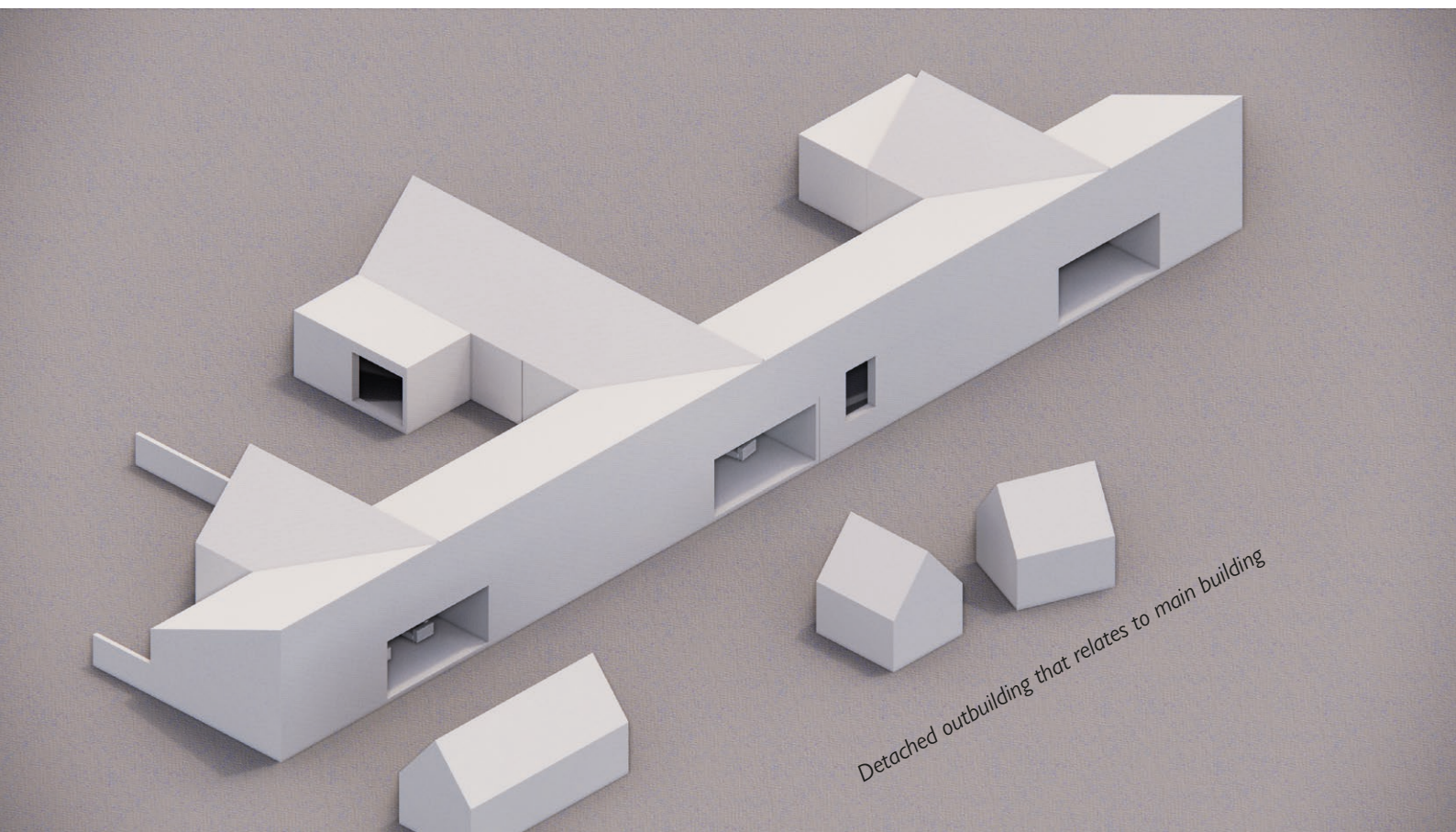
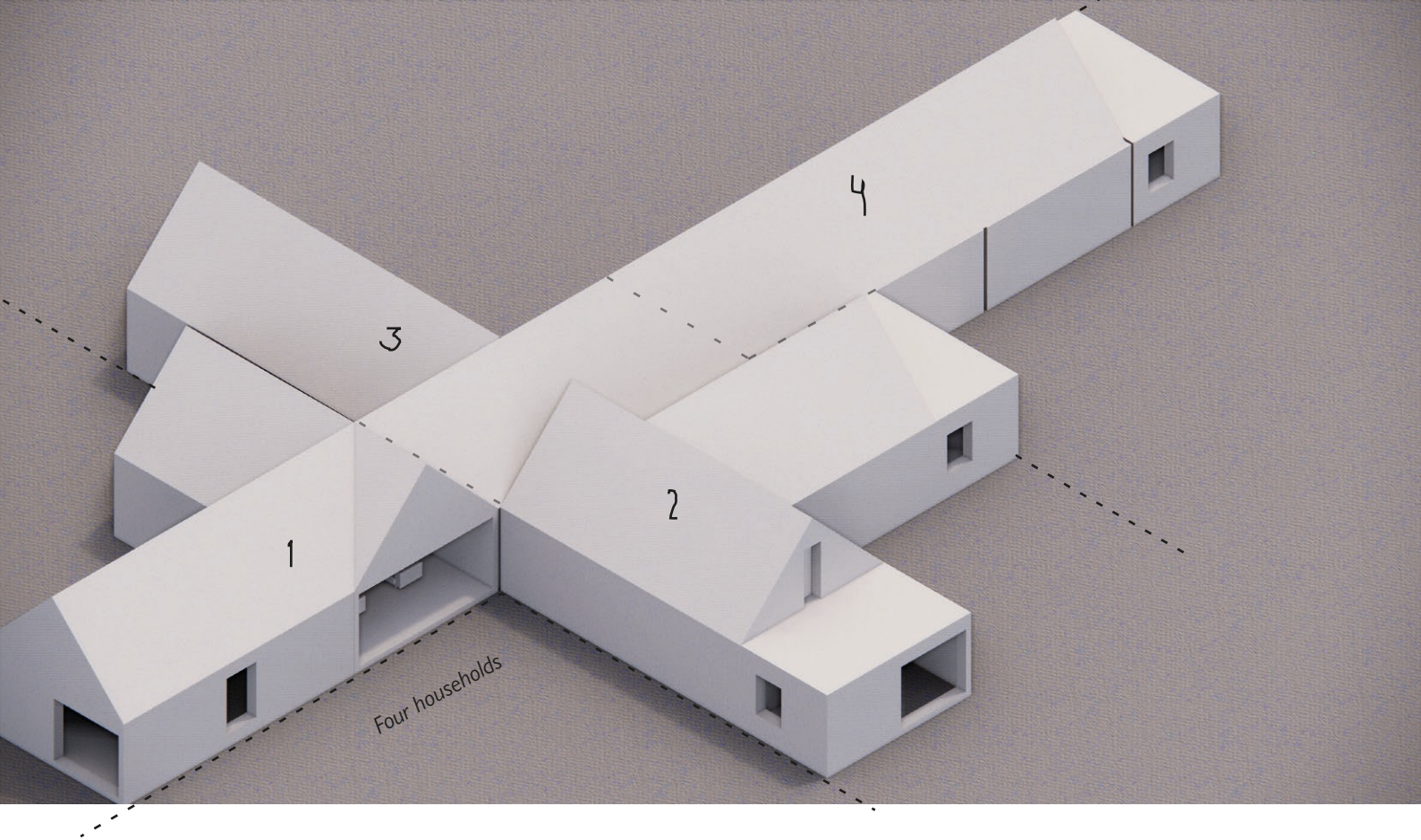
Own outdoor space  
Two households

possibility to exchange spaces with neighbours

1

2





# 05: Architectural proposal

*Perspective over the building, seen from Gräbovägen*





# 05: Architectural proposal

## Project description

### Concept

The design is modest and practical, yet groundbreaking and responding to alternative ways. It facilitates work and life within the home and the surrounding landscape. It supports cultivation of small scale farming, everyday needs as well as desc work and workshop space in multifunctional areas. This house is designed for four households: two two room apartments, one three room apartment and a fourth five room apartment. But could be adjusted by adding new units/rooms or by exchanging rooms with neighbors to downsize the amount of space.

This house is not designed to be a conventional “bedroom + kitchen” unit, but instead an accommodation adapting to the opportunities and need of rural living, which resulted in “room + kitchen + workshop” unit apartments.

### For whom

This House is designed for people moving to rural areas, or people living in rural areas looking for alternative housing options. It is a house for those who want to connect to surrounding nature, but still not live secluded. It is for those who value privacy but want to benefit from community functions and more flexible structures and living. The house is designed for people who do not want to put too much time in maintenance of the building, but instead in recreational activities connected to the surrounding nature. Or by developing different projects in the garden or the workshop.

### Details

*X room + Kitchen + Workshop*

2 rkw 100 sqm (x2)

3 rkw 135 sqm

5 rkw 160 sqm

## Rentals

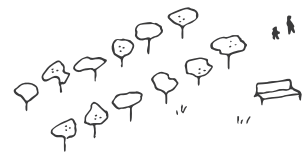
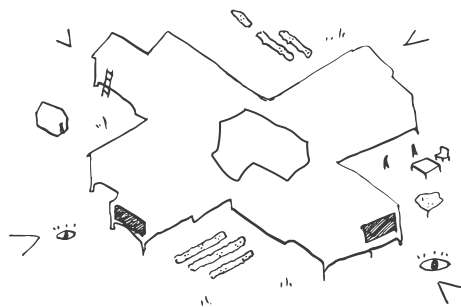
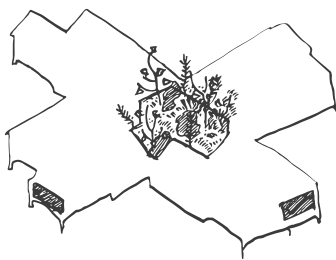
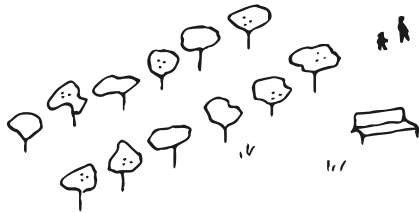
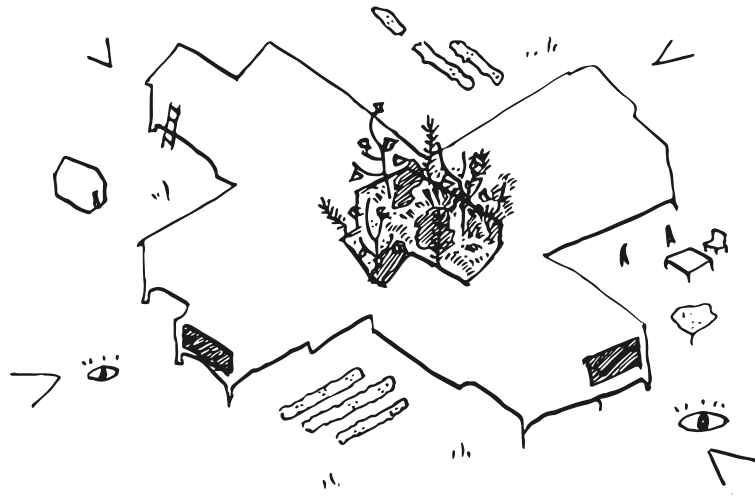
This residential building is based on strengthening the rental market in the area by adding new rental apartments. The project has not been focused on the practical implementation of the house. But the idea is that the house could be created and built through local engagement / actors.

Another possibility would be to implement such a project through collaborative housing based on the principle of Joint building ventures. Then the residents together need to pay for the costs of construction, through private efforts or together with financial contributions and will then together be the owners of the building. However, an increased rental market in rural areas would have been desirable, and it would have been beneficial to look into the possibilities of creating such structures.



Site plan 1:800

# Three gardens



## The Courtyard

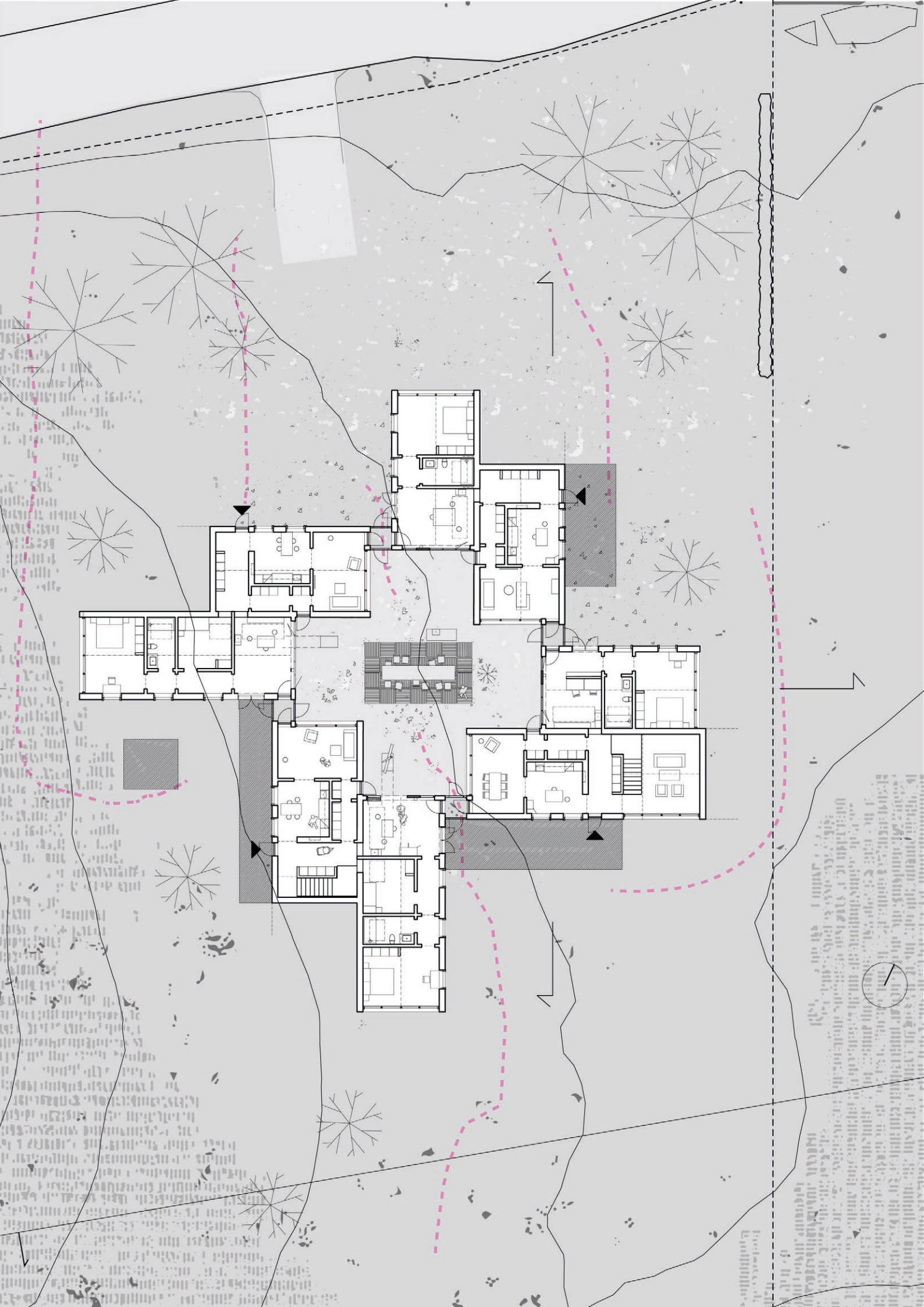
- Closed room
- Shared space
- Social exchange, close contact with neighbors

## The Backyard

- Private garden / cultivation
- Freedom to shape your own space
- Two facades at an angle
- Open to surrounding nature

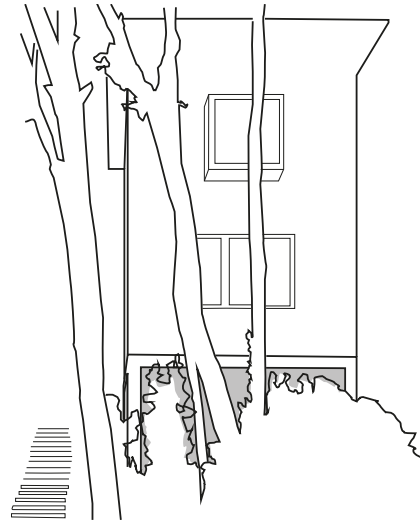
## The Apple Hill headland

- Open "public" room
- More anonymous landscape
- Shared with neighbors
- Greater distance and views

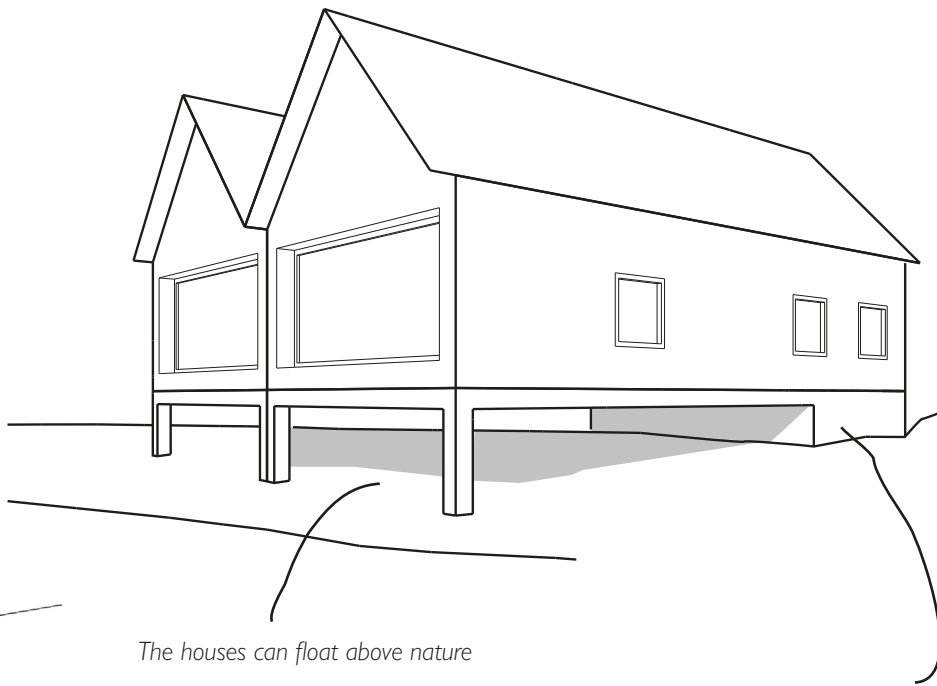


# Meeting the ground

*A house that stands on plinths to make as little damage to nature as possible.*



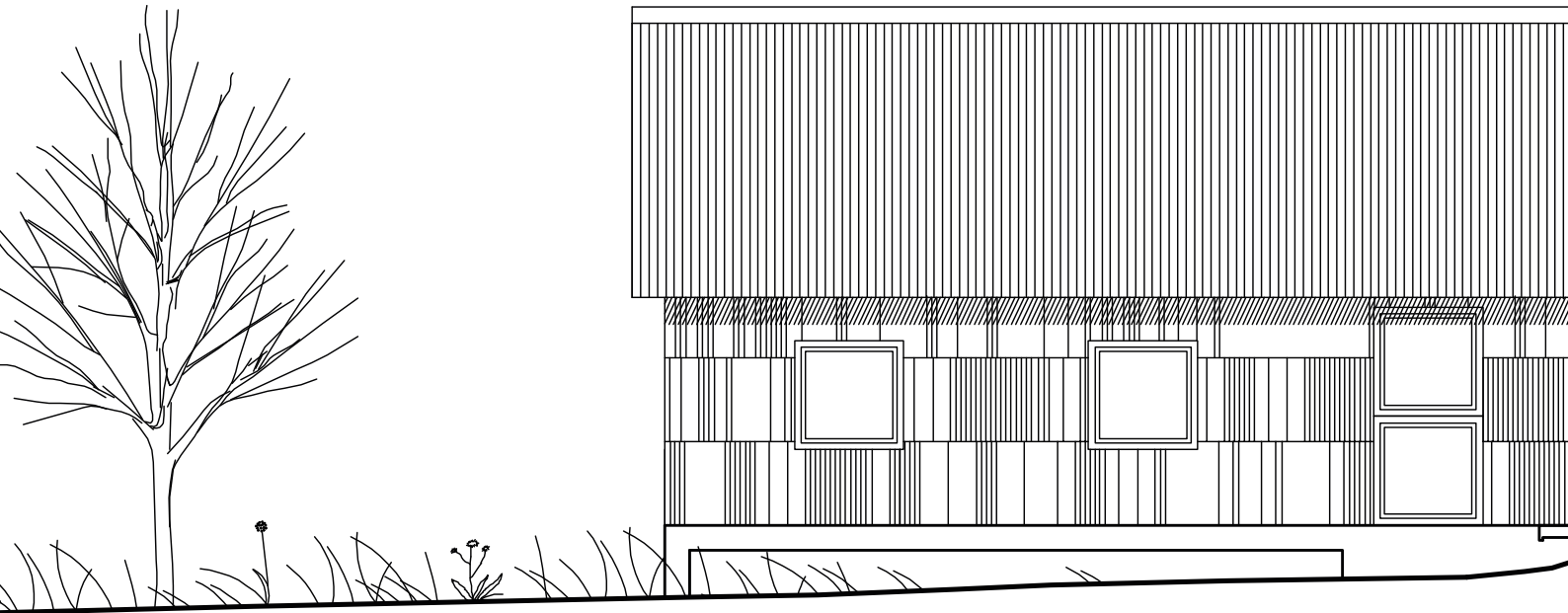
*Reference: Casa corcho girona, Lopez Rivera*



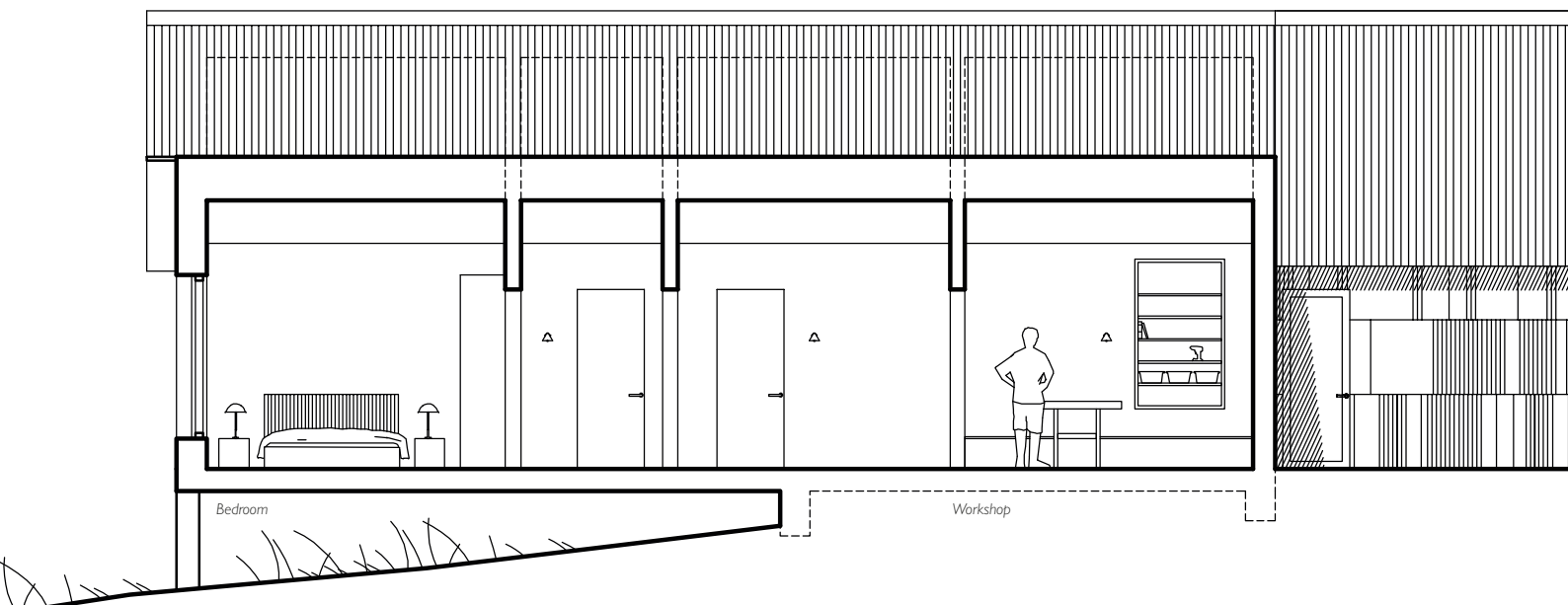
*The houses can float above nature*

*Drain- and water pipes collected in a cast foundation*

# Section and Elevation



Section A-A 1:100



Section B-B 1:100

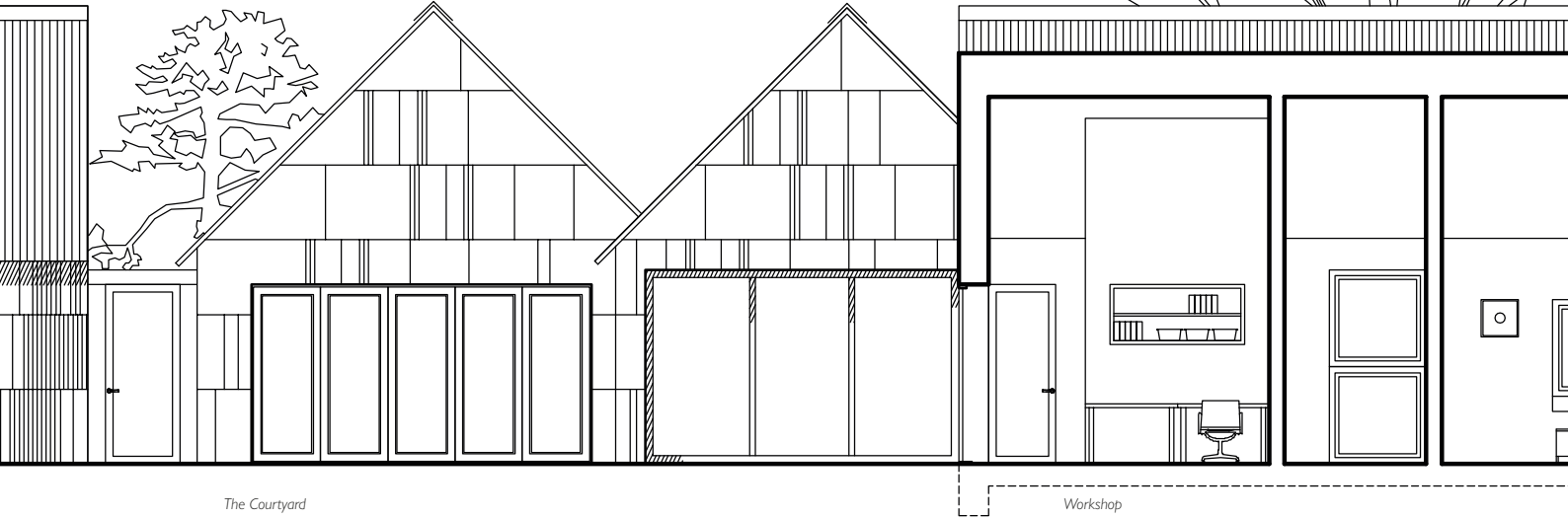


Kitchen

Workshop

Living room

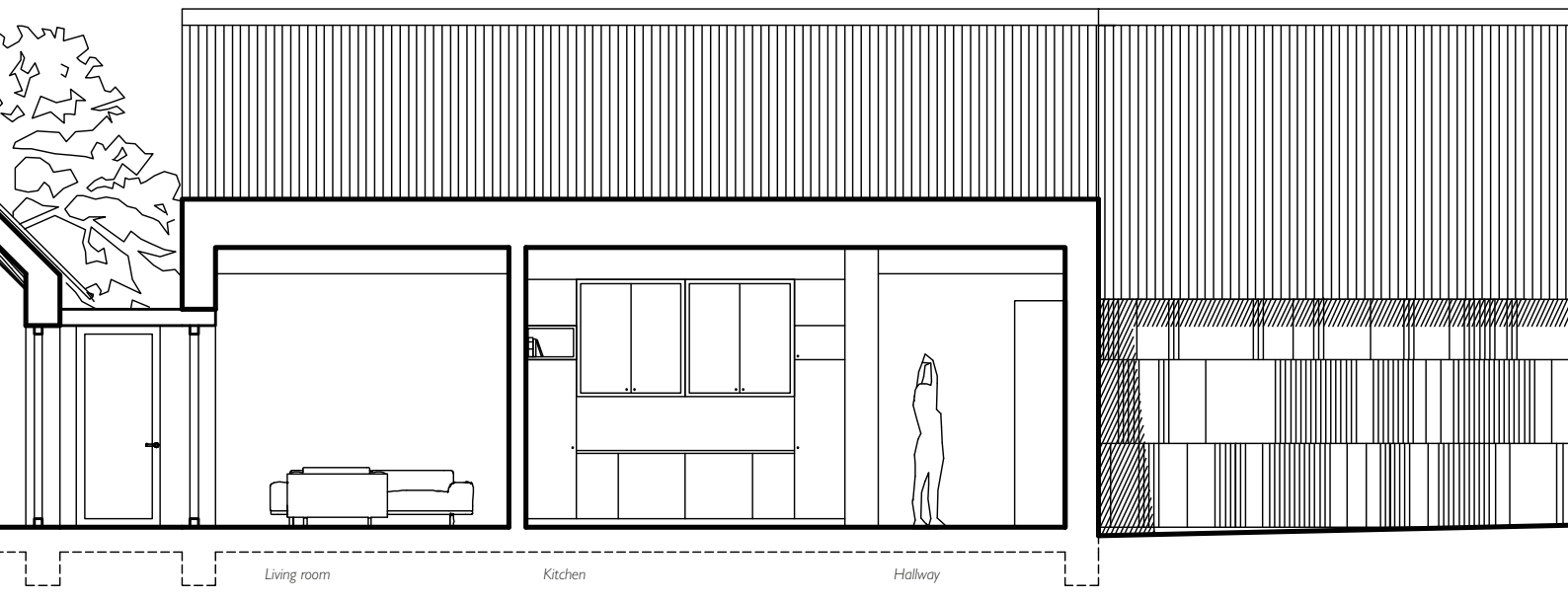
Section A-A 1:100



The Courtyard

Workshop

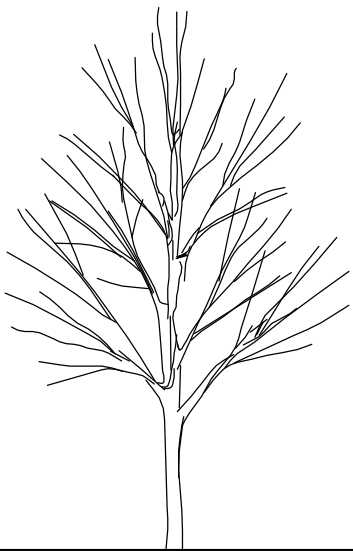
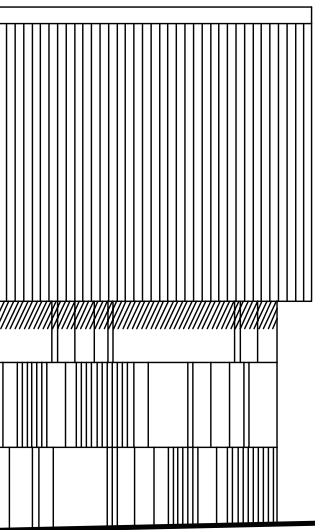
Section B-B 1:100



Section A-A 1:100



Section B-B 1:100

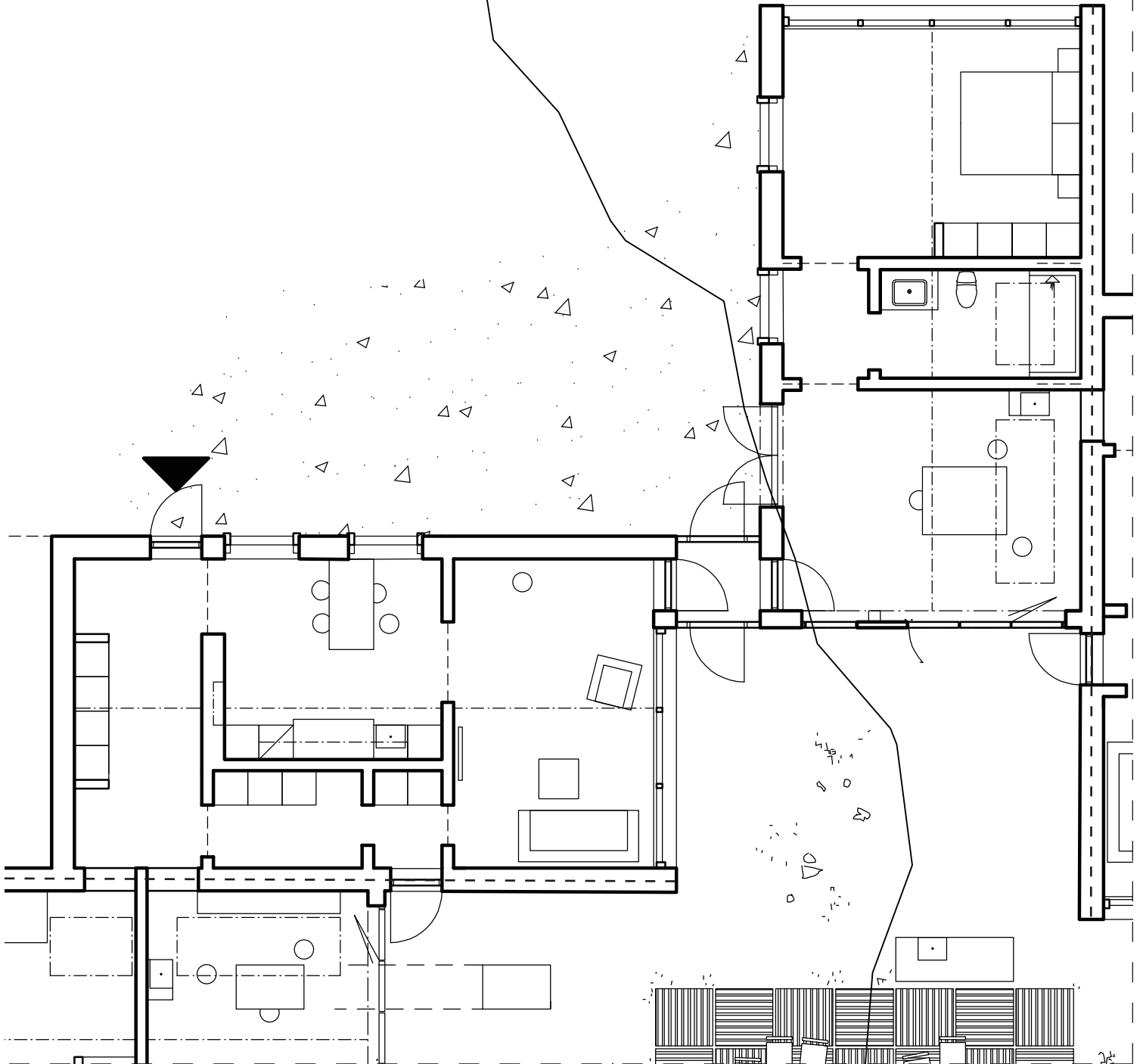




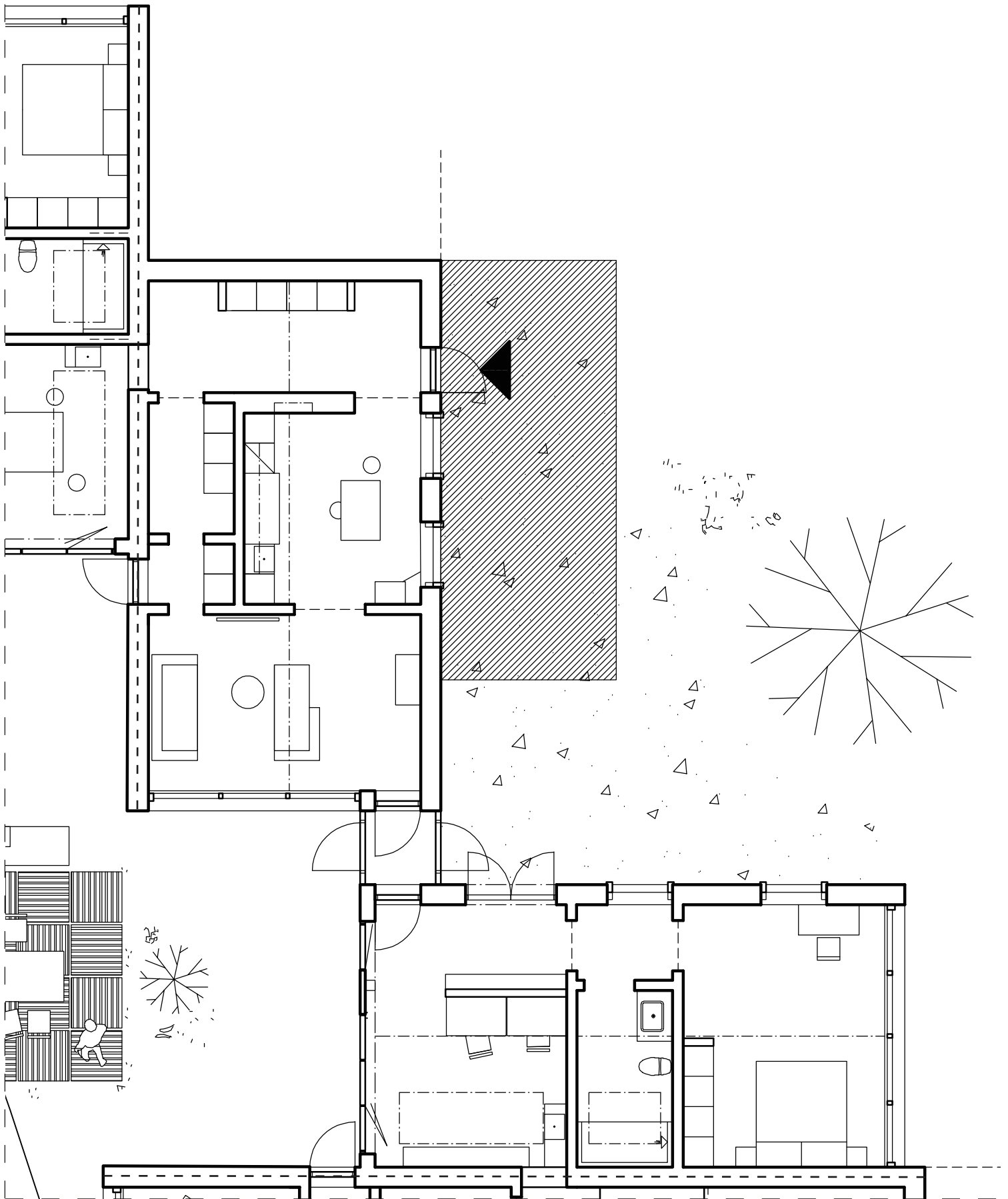
*Perspective over the Courtyard*



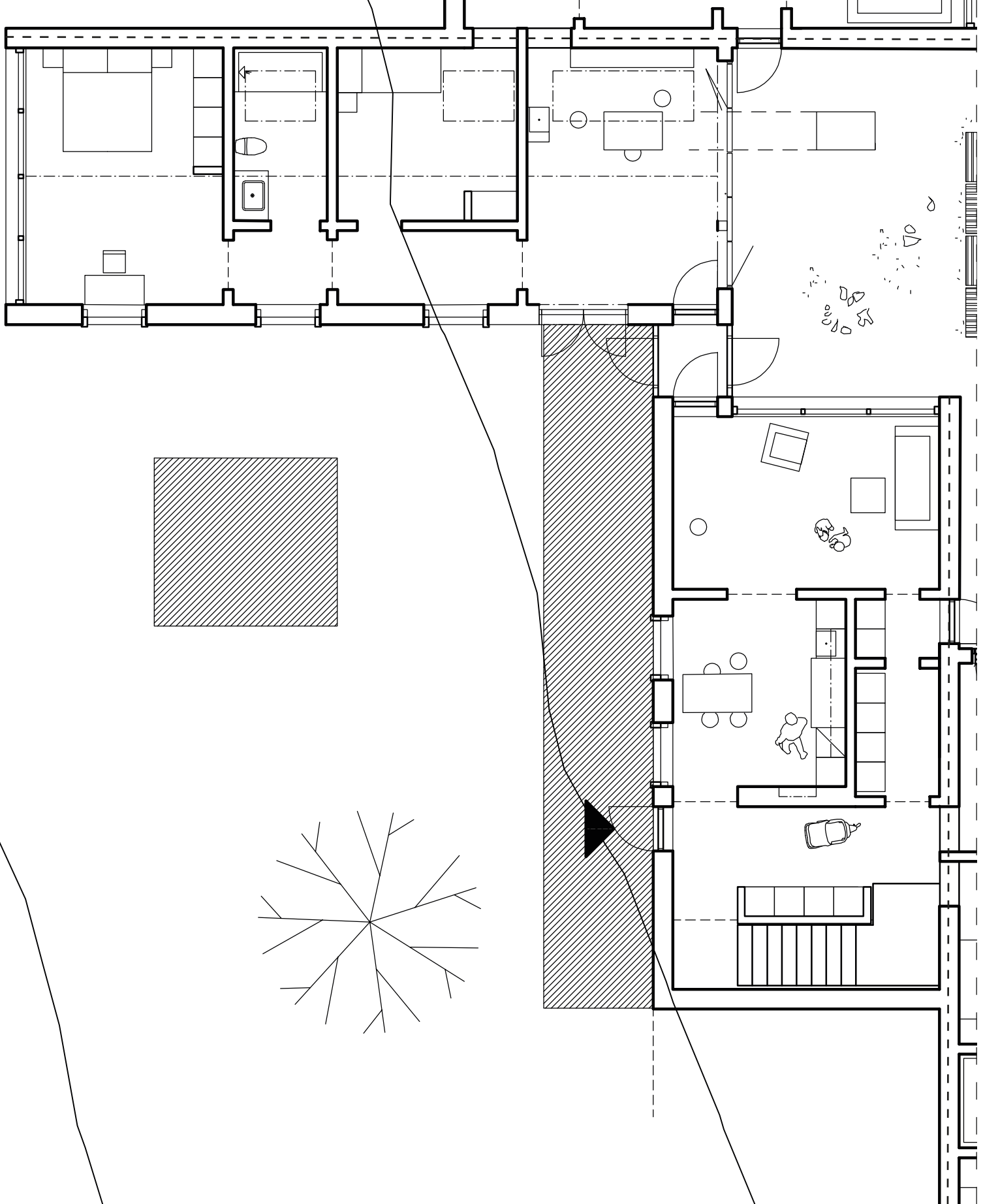
# Plan



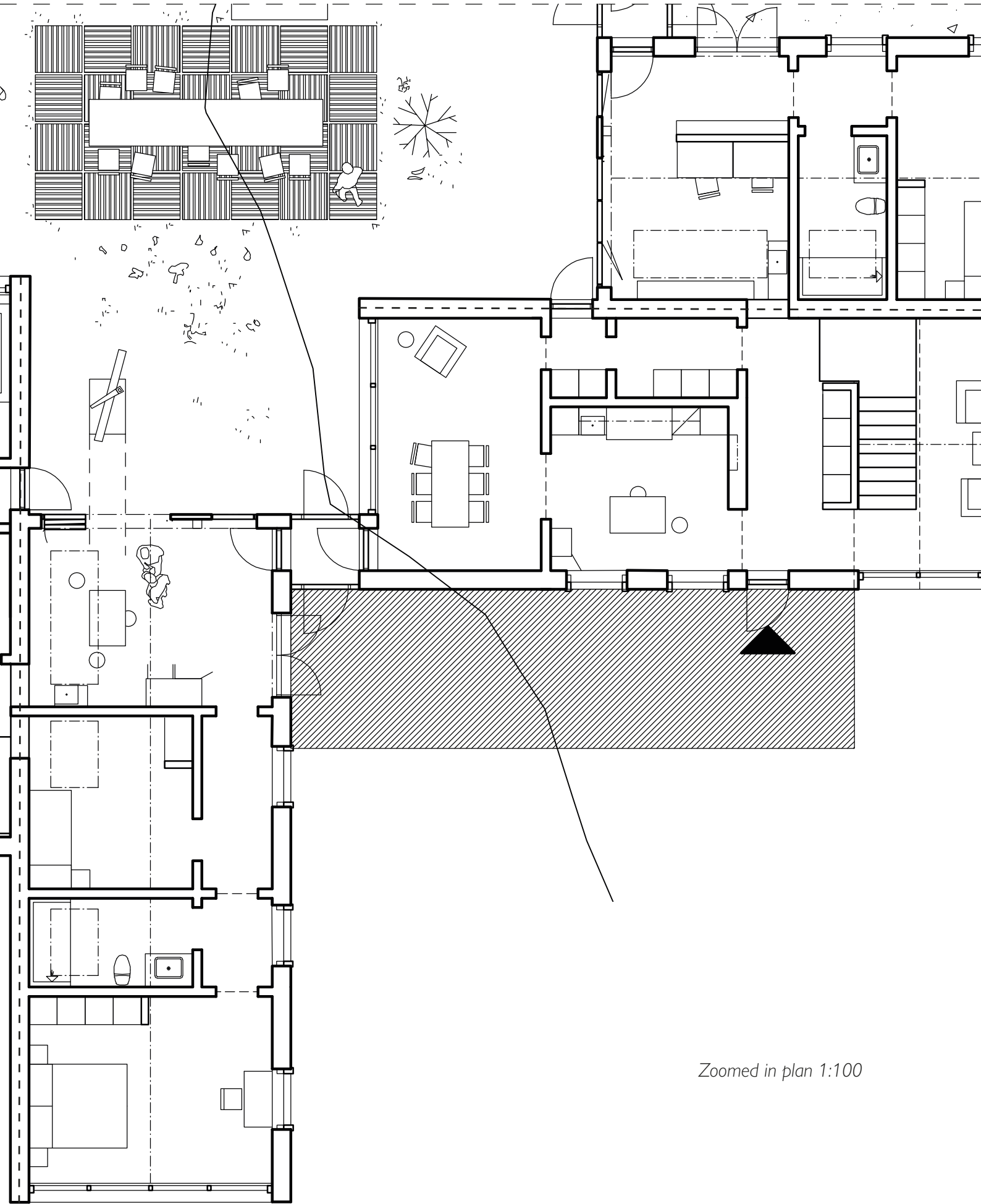
Zoomed in plan 1:100  
2 rkw 100 sqm



Zoomed in plan 1:100  
2 rkw 100 sqm



Zoomed in plan 1:100  
3 rkw 135 sqm



*Zoomed in plan 1:100*



*Perspective over the building, seen from Gråbovägen*



# 06: Reflections

## Relating to the research questions

*01. How can new typologies for rural housing respond to alternative models of land ownership, shared space, flexibility, and access to nature?*

*02. What are some of the factors that underwrite the increased interest in rural living, and how can they be applied into architecture?*

### **Typologies, Shared space, Flexibility and Access to nature**

In this project, I have chosen to work with these different issues in one design proposal. References have guided me to understand how the different challenges of flexibility, shared spaces and access to nature can be addressed in architecture. The proposal points to a new type of typology that challenges rural norms.

Dealing with different solutions of flexibility has been an important factor throughout the project. Increasing flexible solutions not only by adding units to the structure, but also being able to downsize the home. It is easy to argue for expanding and building new when there is space and needs. But not as easy to downsize, especially when living in a detached-housing which is common in rural locations. In rural areas, you could rent out parts of your home or move to a smaller space. In the city where there is limited space, the option to move is not as far away compared to rural residency, where moving becomes a lot more difficult. Smaller accommodations might not be available in the area and the option is to move to a different area or city might not be reasonable.

Through interviews and references, it is clear that connection to nature and calm is an important factor in rural living. Being able to think more freely of how one could combine residential architecture with surrounding nature, as well as allowing for generous storage and space for nature related activities, is therefore important and has been a large part of the design process.

Being able to share functions and spaces in a multi-family housing typology comes with both social and economical benefits. Several of the reference projects that have been highlighted in this thesis show in different ways how one has worked with common functions. The shared functions are positive not only for social interaction, but also for shared responsibility and can contribute with economical benefits.

The references clearly show that there are several areas in residential architecture in rural areas that can be questioned or improved. That it can be expensive to build and live. That there is potential for the development of sustainable materials and methods such as hemp, to create cheaper housing, and so on.

### **Factor behind increased interest in rural living**

Young people who want to move to the countryside dream of calm and nature. It is a different lifestyle you see in front of you that is not possible to achieve in the city. The countryside is seen as unique and affects everyday life in general, how you live and what opportunities there are.

In the interviews, they all have different views on how big the accommodation should be and

how to use the spaces, but what they have in common is that it is about cultivating what is on the plot or in the surroundings. To be able to cultivate the land, expand with new buildings, have animals or live next to forests and nature.

All interviewees highlight the difficulties in buying a home in the countryside, and some of them could have considered renting or creating rental opportunities. Most of the interview participants lift the burden of being responsible for and managing houses in various ways. That it can cost a lot of money, be difficult or require a lot of time. One of the interviewees also mentioned that it is important that no houses on the site are wasted. That you feel that you make use of the spaces and the buildings that you manage and create meaning to them.

It was clear that all of the interviewees wanted their own space, even though some of them could have considered or were open to sharing tools or seldomly used spaces with neighbors. In the design proposal, it was important to maintain a sense of own space, therefore creating both shared and private functions became a part of the design. The outdoor gardens and the workshops as well as maintenance of the building are parts of this common use of space.

Lack of affordable housing, tenancies and simpler housing are some of the challenges that rural housing faces. The design proposal aimed to bring forward the need for different types of typologies that add to the rural areas current forms of housing, but also add a new type of proposal in relation to the referens brought up in this thesis. Not being another type of eco-village or pre-made concept for sustainable housing, but rather responding to the needs that the

interviews address and to the hypothesis made up in the beginning of the project, responding to needs seen in an increased migration to rural areas.

### Conclusion

The view of rural housing and the demands placed on it change with society, our needs trends. Architects and planners try to meet these needs by responding to-, and testing new methods for living in rural areas. There are different ways of understanding and giving proposals for important areas of development and aspects regarding typology and architectural designs in rural areas, which are forward-looking and show alternative ways of living, building and planning. This proposal aims to highlight different needs that are supported in the interviews that have been conducted and the references that are presented.

The proposal questions the rural norm that exists in the leading typologies, but also highlights unique characteristics that the rural context makes possible. For example, there is a need for social exchange and flexible housing in rural areas, but also a need to be able to be more private, closer to nature and calm. The project emphasizes the importance of-, and the possibilities with rental apartments and multi-family housing in rural areas, that can provide more flexible solutions for more different types of residents and what community that it can support. At the same time the proposal shows how to combine this with more private spaces, freedom and room for space to shape one's own housing and surroundings, possibilities that rural areas often bring.

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## *Illustrations and Photos*

Från Elisabet Sundin (u.å.) *Duved 5 - Housing Project* [Illustration] <https://elisabetsundin.com/duved-5-housing-project>

Från Laurian Ghinitoiu (2020) *Countryside: The Future* [Foto] <https://www.dezeen.com/2020/02/21/countryside-the-future-exhibit-rem-koolhaas-guggenheim-new-york/>

Från Leth & Gori (2015). *Sketch* [Illustration]. <https://lethgori.dk/dalsland-house/>

Från Mia Hägg (2019) *En ateljébostad Perspektiv Sektion* [Illustration] <https://www.duvedframtid.se/berattelsen/mia-hgg-ateljhus-med-odling>

Från Per Pixel Petersson (u.å.) *Bottna* [Foto] <https://xn--hogslttsvnbo-kcbe.se/bilder/>

Från Practice Architecture (2019) *Flat House* [Foto] <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/from-farm-to-form-flat-house-by-practice-architecture-2>

Från Sara Ericsson (u.å.) *Röstånga R:ekoby* [Illustration] <https://fojab.se/projekt/rostanga-rekoby/>





