

Reflections Project Booklet



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Introduction

Intro

This project has been done within the course “Planning and design for sustainable development in a local context” at Chalmers School of Architecture. The course is given on a master level, and the main teachers has been Nils Björling and Ida Röstlund. The theme for the course is focus on rural questions and rural opportunities. Every year the course focuses on a different municipality of Västra Götaland.

The municipality chosen this year was Bengtsfors, and our site of focus within Bengtsfors municipality has been the small mill village of Gustavsfors, close to Lake Lelången and right at the border to Värmland.

It’s been a long and fulfilling process working on the project, though lacking two important things – proper site visits, and the common room. Most of us in the project group has done a quick visit to Gustavsfors, and we have been able to do a proposal that we are indeed happy with.



Our Project

During different processes to understand Bengtsfors municipality as a society, community, its past and its different future needs, we early on identified nature, calmness and peace as some of Bengtsfors most important qualities.

We therefore wanted to do a project somehow investigating and taking in those perspectives. Our project is a new type of stay – something we call a lodge.

The lodge is thought to work as a bridge between different visitor groups over the year, and between visitors and locals. It is a place to stay in the wilderness for a better connection to nature, others and oneself. It’s a long- and shortterm lodge, enabling opportunities for both worklife and tourism throughout the year.

This project creates a new, all year round destination for digital nomads, wilderness tourists and staycationists in Gustavsfors, Dalsland.

Digitalisation provides new opportunities for remote worklife anywhere in the world, a development that has been hastened by the covid pandemic. We regard this as a new possibility for architecture. As a result of this, remote workers/ digital nomads from different parts of Scandinavia and the world, can come to the lodge for work.

The project allows locals to interact with visitors and remote workers, and for all of them to enjoy the calmness of the lake landscapes. By enabling visits on even more months through the year, many new possibilities for visits are created. By doing this, we create an all-year-round open place to stay and interact, in Gustavsfors.



Aim & questions

The aim of this project is to research and answer these questions:

- How is it possible to accentuate the qualities of the landscape through site-specific architecture?
- How does one shape such a place based on creating encounters between recreation and work?
- How can you create a project that allows different forms of tourism, and what are those forms? How do you take advantage of the changings of the seasons in this?

By creating opportunities for establishing a new form of destination and generate work for the people living in the municipality, it can make the municipality of Bengtsfors more resilient to unemployment to some degree. Making a destination meaningful all year round also makes tourism more resilient, and less dependent on minor changes like bad weather.

The project is part of the sustainable transformation by strengthening the economy based on the natural resources, without the need of consuming them. In establishing a longer season for tourism and integrating more with the local community, it creates resilience.

The nature, and especially the water, is greatly valued and can be given a different value than just as a raw material, aimed for industrial production and material processes. By adding other kinds of value to the landscape through architecture, like highlighting recreational value, and making it more accessible, a more sustainable bioeconomic situation is achieved.

Strategies

Early in the project we decided to keep to some main principles. Those where:

- Put focus on calmness, recreation and balance
- Make the visitor season longer, if possible year-round-long
- Treat the untouched nature as an important resource
- Involve the local community in some way.

SWOT Analysis

Strength:

One strong quality in the municipality is the rich and nearby nature. The landscapes with forests and lakes creates a beautiful scenery all around the municipality.

Gustavsfors is already a great location for tourism during summers, and has good connections by car, bus and boat. The town also has the essential services for a further developed visiting destination. Gustavsfors does not host any major disturbing industry, making it different from most other larger nearby settlements.

Opportunities:

Tourism is a way for the municipality to strengthen its local economy and attract new people. The rise of digitalisation, and the reality of being able to work and study from a distance creates new possibilities of living arrangements. Digital nomads and remote workers are concepts that are getting more popular, pushed by the covid situation in 2020.

Weaknesses:

Bengtsfors municipality, and Gustavsfors in particular, has a short tourist season during summers, which is not very resilient for economic life, and somehow affecting social life as well. For example, bad weather can cause a poor tourist season.

There are few workplaces in Gustavsfors now, making it a village for commuters, retired people, or summer house visitors. The shores are not very accessible throughout the village, and the bay Sunden has not been taken care of, as a resource within the village.

Threats:

Loss of population is a threat to many villages in the countryside, resulting in difficulties to sustain schools, pre-schools, and basic service like food stores and pharmacies. When basic services are lacking, it's hard to attract new people to move to the area. Another threat might be climate change continuing to worsen, resulting in more intense flooding in the area.



Sustainability

At the heart of the project are the three pillars of sustainability:

Economical sustainability:

By creating a continuous tourist season throughout the year, more opportunities for living and working in the municipality are created. Seasonal work may also turn into full time, creating new possibilities to settle in the town. The field of tourism generates just as much to Swedish GDP as the steel industry.

We envision a partly cooperative ownership of the project. More about this under the Stakeholders chapter.

Ecological sustainability:

By using the lakes and the wilderness for visitor purposes, value is created without eradicating the ecosystems. This works as an incentive to protect the nature in the area. By utilizing floating units, nature will be spared, with less impact on the site.

Social sustainability:

By creating a common and shared space for locals and visitors, new connections are created, and old ones are strengthened. The geographical spot of the project bridges the old parts of the village and the new parts planned across the water in Årjäng Municipality.

Nature's regenerative effect on health has been well proven (explored deeper in the research chapter), so by bringing people closer to nature, a positive health effect is achieved.

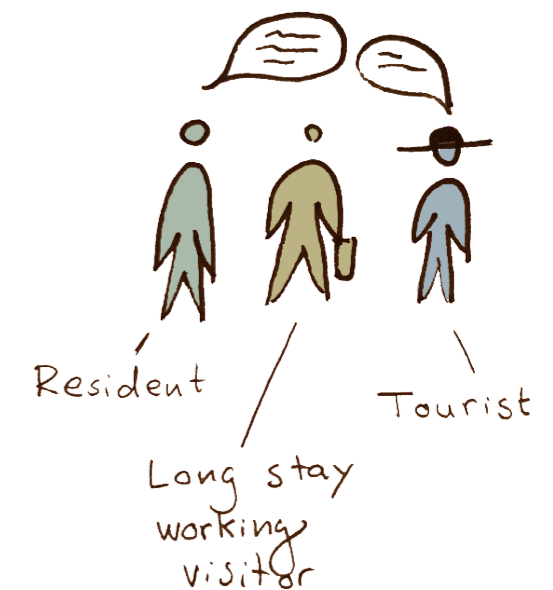
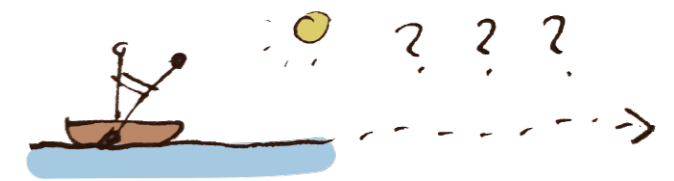
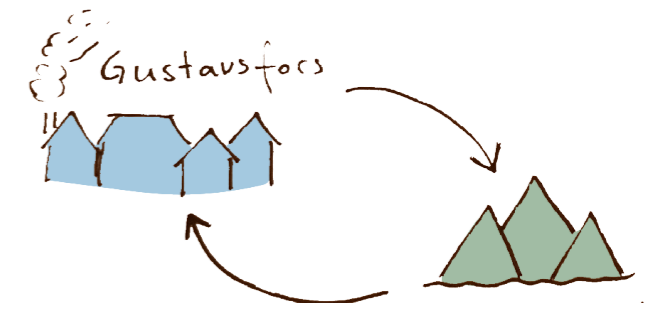


Project Vision

The intention is to design a project that has explored and found new ways of tourism and visits. A new place that brings together different kinds of tourists, visitors and locals, a retreat for every passer-by.

Some of our goals with this project are:

- Adding value to the community.
- Investigating new forms of tourism - combining workspaces with tourism. Forming a new concept of staying.
- Create distinct features, making Bengtsfors stand out from neighbouring municipalities.
- A tourist vision that works all year round and contributes to the municipality's economy/work opportunities, which also increases the municipality's resilience.
- Framing what's already there, nature-wise, through careful architectural additions.
- Creating a space both for tourists and residents, strengthening new social settings and connections.
- To use architecture as a development for local sustainability and showcase for local materials.
- Enhancing the feelings and calm atmosphere of the surroundings into the created spaces.



Delimitations

During the project we have made certain choices that have shaped the project's focus on certain aspects or scales.

- Focus on one site, rather than the whole municipality.
- Letting the project evolve around the water, shore or waterside.
- Being respectful towards the context of the site.
- Using materials and designs reflecting the wilderness, and strengthening the site by adding to nature instead of taking away from it.
- Creating spaces for the locals, as well as for visitors.
- Limiting the scale of the project, to create a balance between economy and nature.

Process Concept

Our intention with this project was to create a new all year round destination for digital nomads, wilderness tourists, staycationists. etc. We also wanted to create possibilities for the locals to interact with visitors and remote workers, and for them to enjoy the calmness of the lake landscapes. By enabling the utilization of many different tourist seasons through the year, many new possibilities could be created.



Stakeholders

Present stakeholders in Gustavsfors today are:

Folkets Hus association, ICA Optimisten food store, Alcatraz hotel and adventure, Svens Kopparkittel café, Gustavsfors museum, Gustavsfors shipyard, Gustavsfors IF sports association and Torrskogs församling.

Future Stakeholders:

Who will own the project, and make it happen? We think these three types of scenarios might be realistic:

- A local cooperative/economic association, owned by the stakeholders and nearby inhabitants
- Local capital/investment company (lokalt aktiebolag), for example local tourist entrepreneurs
- External capital/investment company (aktiebolag), for example a hotel business with several other units at other places

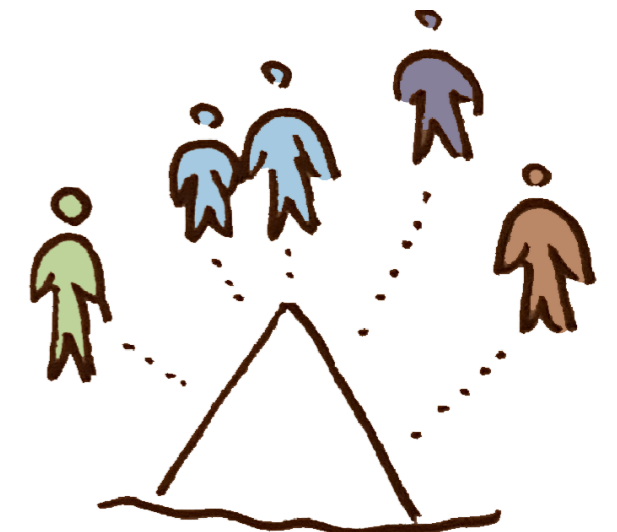
Of the three alternatives, we envision that a partly cooperative ownership together with a business would suit the project best. By owning in this local and reciprocal way, more long-term stability is added into the project. However, a business contract partner would be necessary for the running of the accommodation, while the cooperative side could have more focus on the sauna and trail.

It is a good way to get some of the starting financing as community ownership tends to be more supported by the community, financially and spiritually. This economic form also allows people to sometimes give voluntary work hours, to help the enterprise.

A cooperative ownership also allows villagers to take part in the building process as volunteers, for example villagers could help with building the hideouts, and the circle walk around the lake.

Additionally, a cooperative project within the village, could work as a generator for social interaction and strengthen links between people and enterprises.

In every start-up project, finance is an important issue. We think the project could be financially supported by Tillväxtverket and Almi loans in the beginning (support from the Swedish state). In a second phase, local banks (sparbanker) can support the project with loans. The circle promenade could probably receive financial support from Leader (EU). Free start-up consulting can be achieved from Coompanion.



Nature's impact on stress

The researchers Walter Osika and Cecilia Stenfors at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm has done studies on worklife and stress.

In a minor non-scientific (lacking control group) on-site-study, stretching over three days, five people with particularly stressful jobs – for example an international radio journalist and police officer – were studied while living on the islet of Henriksholm in Västra Götaland. Available activities at the spot where typical outdoor activities like cooking food over a fire, taking a bath, and walking in the woods.

How the results were measured:

- The participants made a self-assessment test where the status of their current well-being and connection to nature were examined.
- One test studied creativity and problem-solving ability.
- The participants had to write a diary every evening, describing wellbeing, thoughts and emotions about the situation.
- The participants blood pressure was measured at arrival, and again after 72 hours.
- The participants heart rate was measured at arrival, and again after 72 hours.

A quote from the study says something about the effects:

“After 72 hours, the five participants showed a significant decrease in systolic blood pressure. Additionally, there was a drop in heart rate, and an increase in well-being and even creativity.”

Walter Osika, stress researcher and associate professor at Karolinska Institutet summaries:

“I am positively surprised by the results and it shows that a ‘close to nature’ lifestyle can improve people’s well-being, at least in a short run. We saw a 70 percent decrease of stress, which is considerable”

Results from the study:

“ - The participant’s stress levels dropped with the results showing a significant decrease of as much as 70 percent in reported stress levels.

- The participant’s blood pressure and heart rate decreased. The results after 72 hours showed a statistically notable decrease in systolic blood pressure from 128 mmHg to 117 mmHg and a non-significant trend for a decrease in heart rate, dropping from 70 bmp to 60 bmp on follow up.
- The participant’s anxiety decreased significantly. There was a substantial increase in well-being, measured on a 1-4 point scale, from an average of 3.2 to 3.8.
- The participants reported an increased connectedness to nature; measured on a 1-7 point scale, from an average of 2.6 to 5.6, which is considerable.
- The participants also showed a sizable increase in creativity (that is, the ability to solve a classical association/creativity test).”

The results is an indication of the positive effects of a ‘close-to-nature’ lifestyle that is so widespread in the nordic countries. (Osika, n.d.)

Designing for Digital nomads

The definition of work and tourism has become more and more obscure throughout the last couple of years. Now when work is getting more digital than before, people have realised that work can be done from anywhere. These people that integrate their work with travelling can be called a lot of different things. Digital nomads, flexi-workers, remote workers or hot-deskers are some common definitions. They resemble the typical tourist based on their selection of location and their segregation from the local community, even though they integrate it with work and leisure. (Reichenberger, 2017)

For many people this is a way to temporarily experience a different city, change the pace and meet new people. They are often keen to live like locals and explore more of local places. The place’s attractiveness is often dependent on the distinctiveness of the local atmosphere and its identity. These people are not one homogenous group, but rather different individuals, with different status, interests, life-stage and economic conditions, that all want to be part of different communities. (Qi et al., 2020)

Since digital nomads cannot depend on organisations to provide them with an office, they instead search for environments equipped with certain utilities. These utilities might include cubicles, conference rooms, local printer setups and ergonomic and flexible workstations. Conference rooms can offer connectiveness, whiteboards, tables, seats and projectors for example. Cubicles provide connectivity and furniture of ergonomic comfort. Both provide some sort of privacy which is important for their daily work life to function, since they have to be free from distraction. (Su & Mark, 2008)

However they often seek informal interactions. When designing for digital nomads a space is needed for these informal interactions. Informal face-to-face interactions helps the digital nomad to seek out encounters with other visitors. The community element when designing for digital nomads is considered to be one of the most important aspects of any digital nomads life. These community based spaces attract people from different places, with different backgrounds and skill sets, which makes an interesting mixture of people where most are all looking for the same type of social interactions. (Su & Mark, 2008)

Japanese research on forest bathing

In urbanised and dense Japan, research on so called “forest bath” has been going on since start of the millennia. “Forest bathing” is a Japanese form of hiking, but with some slight differences from the western way. The most significant difference is a slight focus on mindfulness, and on a non-judging “flow” of what comes to mind, while walking in the forest.

The Japanese researchers have found (Li et al 2008), (Komori et al 1995), that so called phytoncides play an important role in wellbeing after forest bathing/forest walks. Phytoncides are produced in different trees, and are set out into the air. When human beings inhale the phytoncides, they seem to have good effects on health in general.

After three days in the forest, positive effects are seen on stress levels and heart function, and these effects seem to last for up to 30 days (Tsunetsugu et al. 2007). Levels of cortisol decreased up to 12% in the saliva of test persons in Tsunetsugu's study 2007.

Same study showed that the test persons had a higher heartbeat-rate, after returning to the city, and negative effects could be seen already after 15 minutes in the city (or vice versa in the forest).

Site analysis

A broader context

Bengtsfors municipality is situated in the middle of the triangle Oslo, Gothenburg and Värmland/Örebro. This means that the municipality is in a spot between centre and periphery. The nearest larger city is Gothenburg. Bengtsfors is politically and structurally closest connected to Sweden's second largest city.

However, the dynamic and wealthy Oslo region is not far away. Bengtsfors is also culturally closely connected to the Värmland region - as dialect, cultural history and geographic scenery are to a big extent shared with Värmland.

Gothenburg is reached by bus and train quite quickly. Travelling between Bengtsfors and Gothenburg takes around two hours. This is all thanks to the Norway-Vänern-railroad, a semi-high-speed railroad upgraded in the first decade of the century, that passes through Bengtsfors municipality. In a couple of years, the journey might be even easier, if the train will stop in Bäckeфорs.

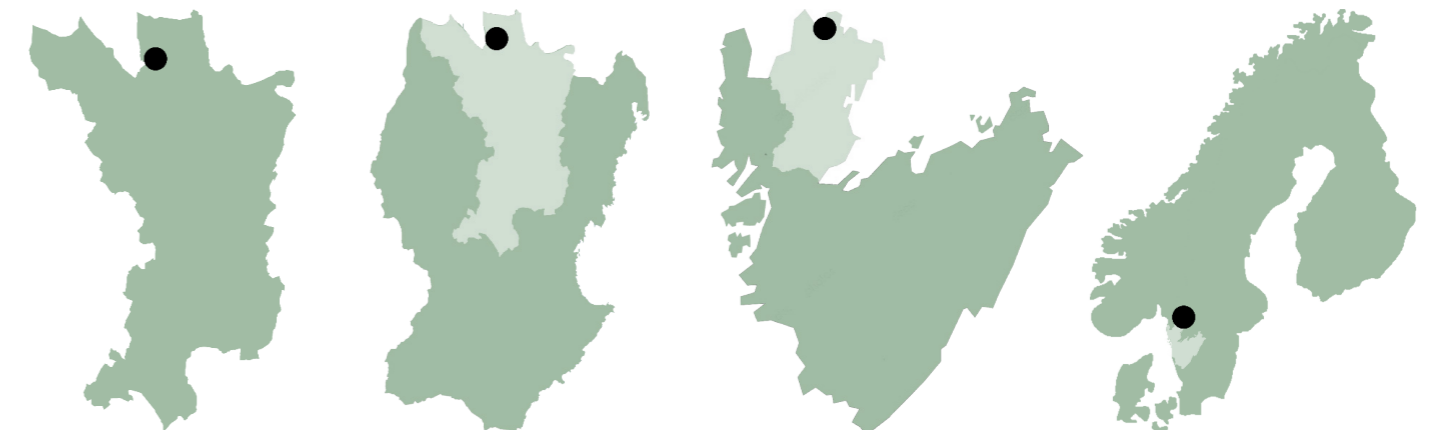
North of the municipality, a high-speed railroad is planned as well. A connection between Stockholm and Oslo is being upgraded, as the line is outstandingly slow today. The new high-speed railroad will make it possible to travel between the cities in under three hours of time, and a station in Arvika is planned.

Dalsland has a natural landscape dominated by woodlands. This means that a lot of the enterprise and industry at the site is somewhat connected to wood or paper.

Another important infrastructure, shared with other regions and nearby municipalities, is the Dalsland Kanal canal system. It was originally built for transporting iron ore and steel, but is today a large tourist attraction, allowing visitors to paddle or go by motorboat from Lake Vänern to Norway/Oslo fjord.

No highways pass by Bengtsfors, but one main nearby road is Sweden's longest road E45, stretching from the very north of Sweden, to Gothenburg.

Below: Maps showing Gustavsfors in the municipality, Dalsland, the Västra Götaland Region and the Nordic countries.



Gustavsfors

We have chosen to locate our project by the historical mill village of Gustavsfors. Gustavsfors has around 200 inhabitants and is situated in the very north of Bengtsfors municipality, at the border to Värmland.

It was founded in the 1600s, as an iron and ore mill village, with the power from the stream between Silen and Lelången as the main reason for the establishment - besides the large resources of cheap and accessible woods for heating the iron furnaces. In the 1820s, Gustavsfors was the birthplace for modern Swedish ore production. As technologies developed, it was possible for Swedish steel to compete with the industry in England and Germany.

Since the 1950s, there has been almost no industrial activity in the village, a fact that has turned the village into a seasonal tourist site.

Distances to other places:

Bengtsfors 23 km

Gothenburg 185 km

Oslo 135 km

Karlstad 115 km

Train station, Ed 44 km

Library, Bengtsfors 23 km

Shops/centre, Bengtsfors 23 km

Gustavsfors is already a seasonal tourist destination during summertime. With its mix of nature, cultural heritage, and basic services - it would be an ideal site for a further developed visitor's sector in the municipality. Today a part of the households in the village are seasonal living, with retired people from Norway, Germany and the Netherlands living part time of the year at the site.

With the access to beautiful natural scenery, as well as some service and an interesting cultural heritage, we regard Gustavsfors as a village possible to be further developed, without devastating the existing calmness and natural beauty of the site. The beautiful water scenery of Lake Lelången and the Sunden bay is however, hard to access by foot today.

Also, Gustavsfors has no heavy industry, and haven't had for more than sixty years. This might be seen as a disadvantage regarding job opportunities but can also be seen as an advantage regarding visitors, looking for a calm place and space.

Stockholm 415 km

Copenhagen 440 km

Norway border 55 km

Canoes and canoeing equipment, Dietz Bengtsfors 23 km

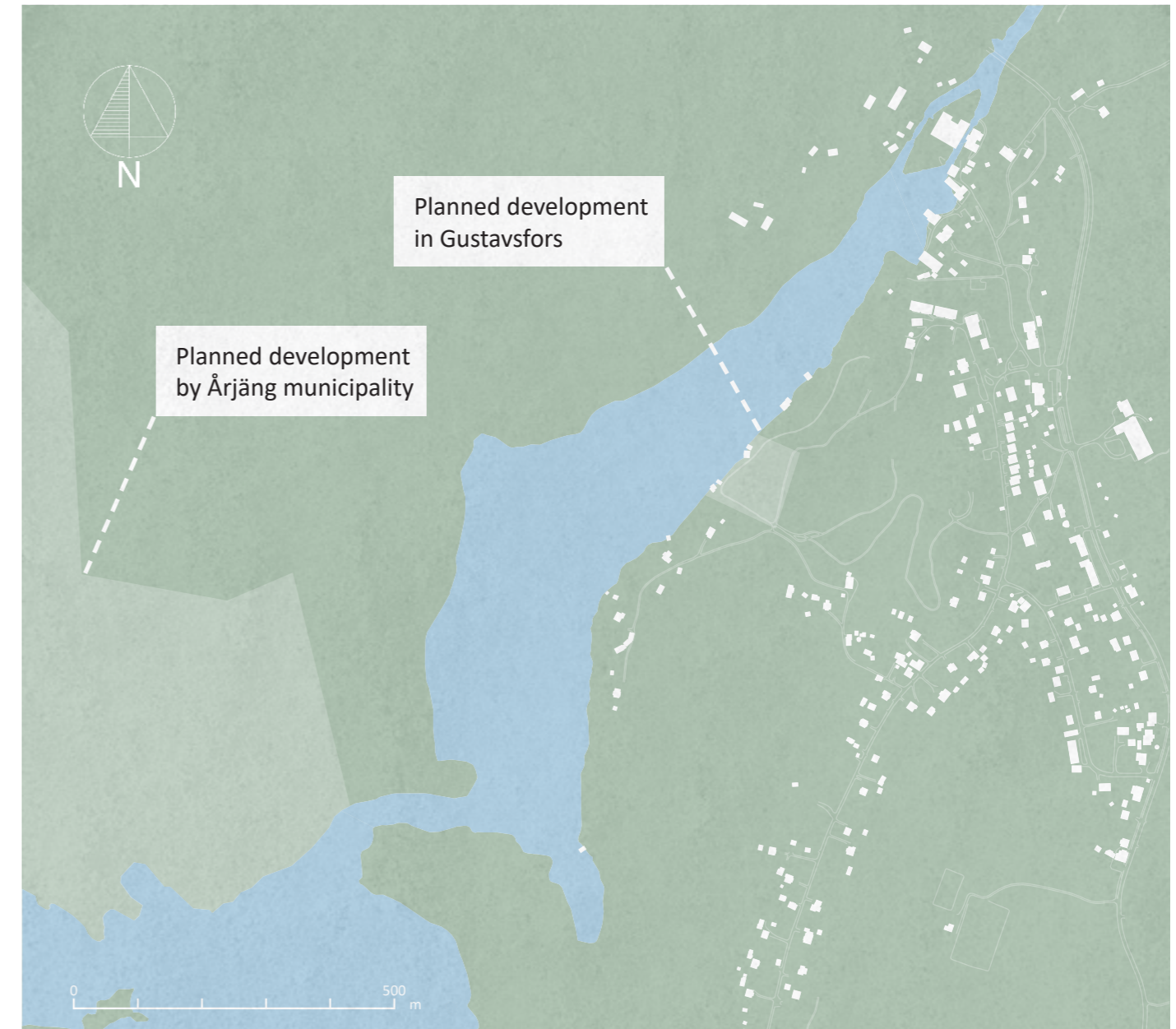
Art school Dals-Långed 38 km

Coworking Space Studio Växt, Dals-Långed 38 km

Built structures - future developments

Årjäng municipality plans to develop a housing project west of the bay and present settlement, adding around 50 houses to the area. Bengtsfors municipality also plans to expand, with around 20 new houses in the southern part of the village.

There is, at the moment, no articulated strategy from the municipalities how to connect those new areas to each other.



Accessibility

Today it's not easy to reach or walk along the lake shores, as a visitor. Along the shores on the Bengtsfors side, bushy areas make access difficult south of the shipyard. South of this bushy area, private property blocks access to the lake shore.

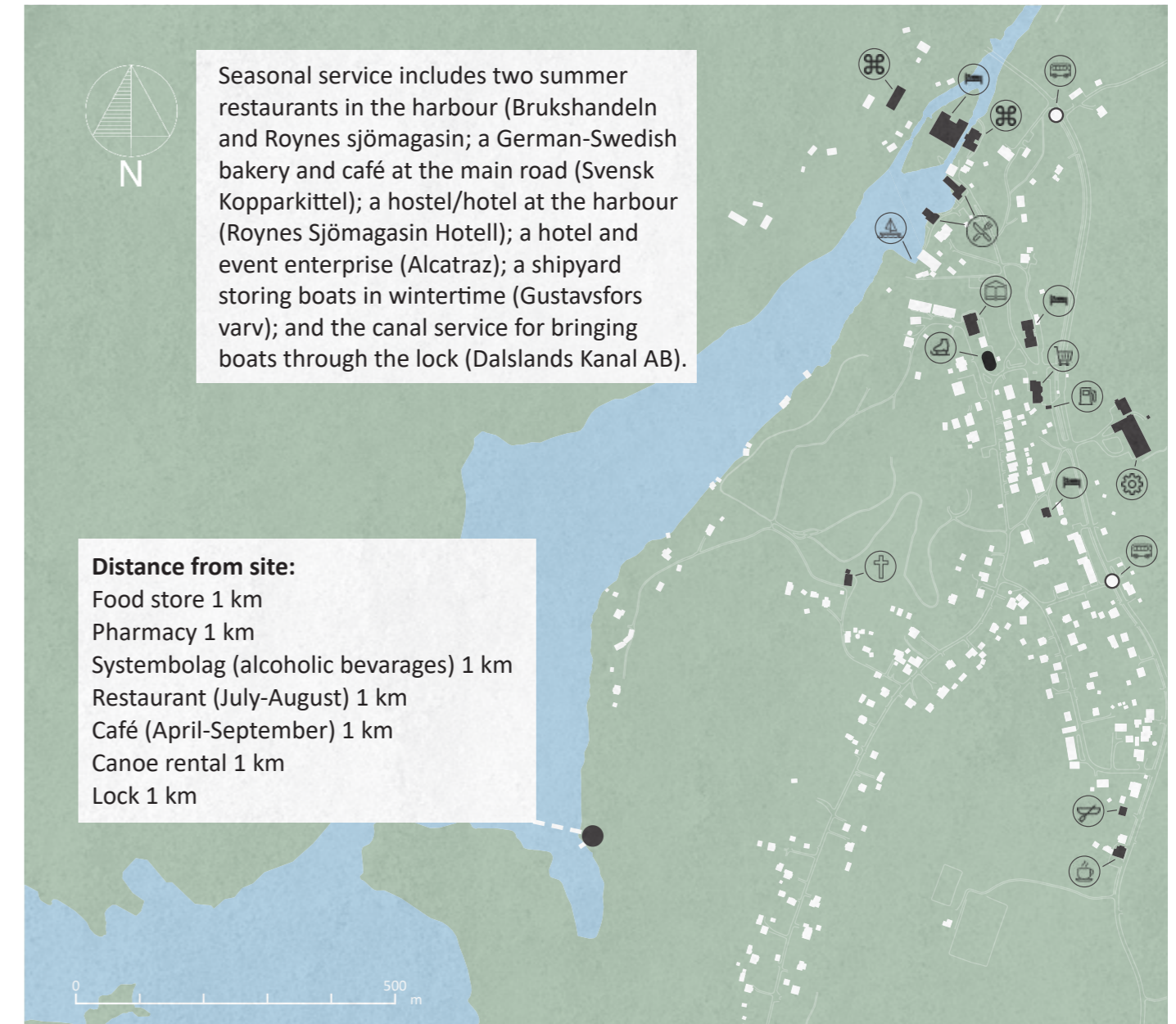
To add more, there are no signs or tracks/colours leading visitors where to go. This makes it hard for visitors not arriving by boat, to understand how to access the scenery of Lake Lelången, since it is hidden from central Gustavsfors by a ridge.



Service

Today in Gustavsfors, service exists to a certain amount. However, a large part of it is seasonal service - open during two months of summer, or from May to September.

All-year-round service is provided by the ICA food store, where it is also possible to buy medicines, alcohol, fresh bread and a cup of coffee.



Process

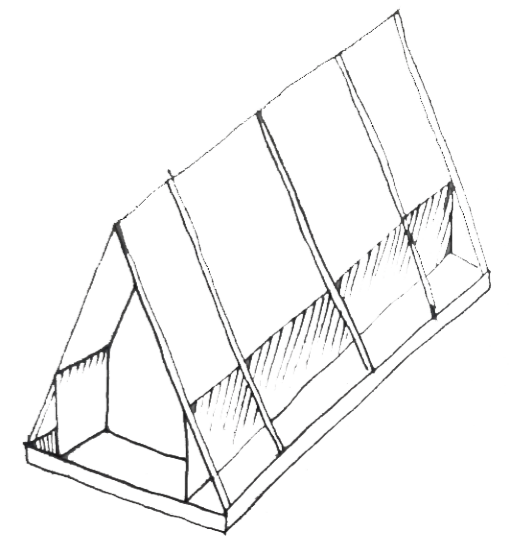
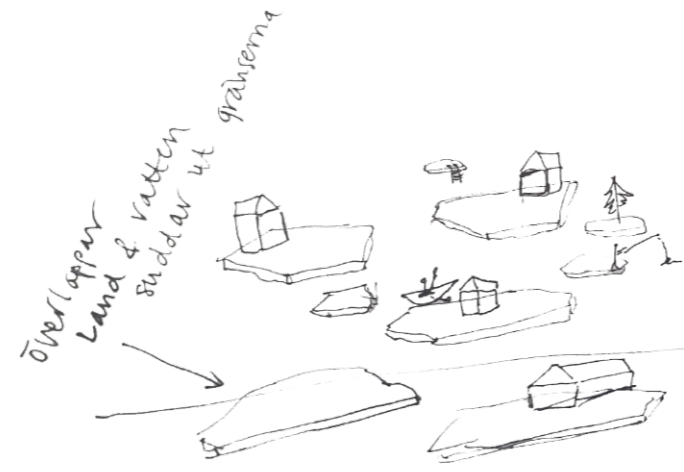
The process, sketches & a coffee/tea

Our process has included a lot of analysis - not only of Gustavsfors but also of Bengtsfors municipality, Dalsland, and western Sweden as a whole. We made a site visit in September, and we've been working with analysis projects and presentations, before doing our proposal.

Sketching, searching for references, learning facts and figures about Dalsland, and tutoring from architects and Bengtsfors municipality, have been four important parts of our process.

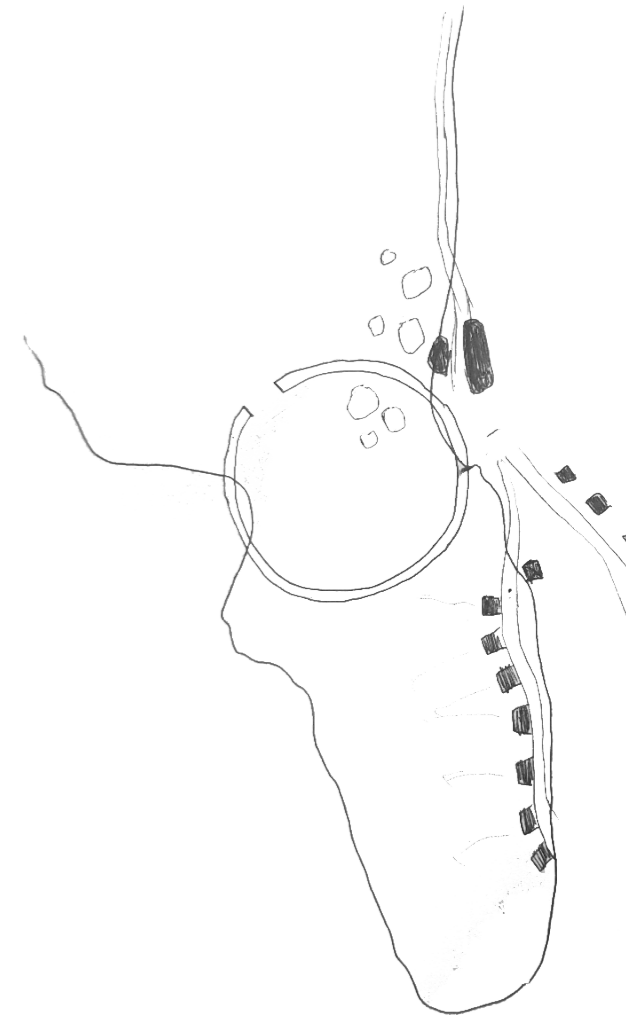
As a group we have of course been talking a lot, mainly on Teams, and working with different proposals in Miro. Quite late, we discovered that it is possible to "draw" (in a very primitive way, in Miro, and this helped us a little bit in the end of the process.

The tricky part was in the end, going from ideas to drawings. It went, regarding the situation, quite well anyhow.



During the process, like in all architectural processes, sketching has been the natural way of moving forward and creating ideas together. However, this very special autumn has been like no other. We have during the whole project been sitting in different places, forcing us to sketch by oneself, but connected via the internet, showing our sketches for each other on the working platform Miro. This has made the sketching process go slower but also taught us new ways of interacting and creating.

The sketches presented here are all done without a surrounding "team" in the physical room. Instead, we have tried to inspire each other in the sketching process and then presenting online - all the time building on each other's ideas to get closer to the final result.



Choice of site

Firstly, we looked at putting our project quite close to the lock, the canal, and the historical centre of the village. This would allow a quick access from the summer restaurants and the harbour, to the new long stay lodge.

It would also allow quick access to the supermarket, and other services at ICA from the lodge. However, we made a choice of picking a site more remotely from the centre. There were several reasons for this.

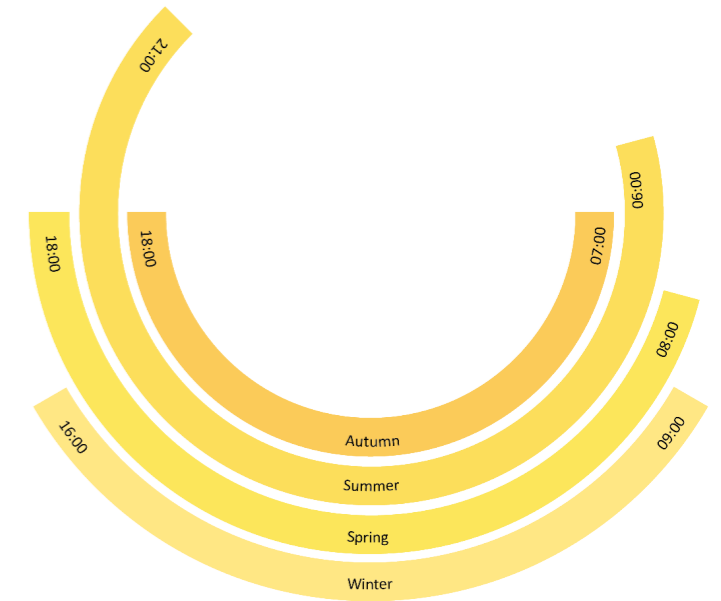


Sun study

We made a sun study to better understand the light of Sunden, Lelången and Gustavsfors. An advantage at Braskviken was the light reflecting into the buildings from one, two, three, and in some cases up to four sides. The result showed that there is a good amount of sunlight at Braskviken all year round.

Since we envision an all-year-round destination with a focus on people working there, sufficient light is an important factor for people's well being. This together with our previous reasons for placing the project at Braskviken confirms it as a suitable spot for the project.

The upper yellow diagram shows the length of the daylight, during different seasons at the spot. The lower black and white diagram displays shadows in Braskviken during different times throughout the year.



	06:00	08:00	12:00	16:00	18:00
23 December					
23 Mars					
23 Juni					
23 September					

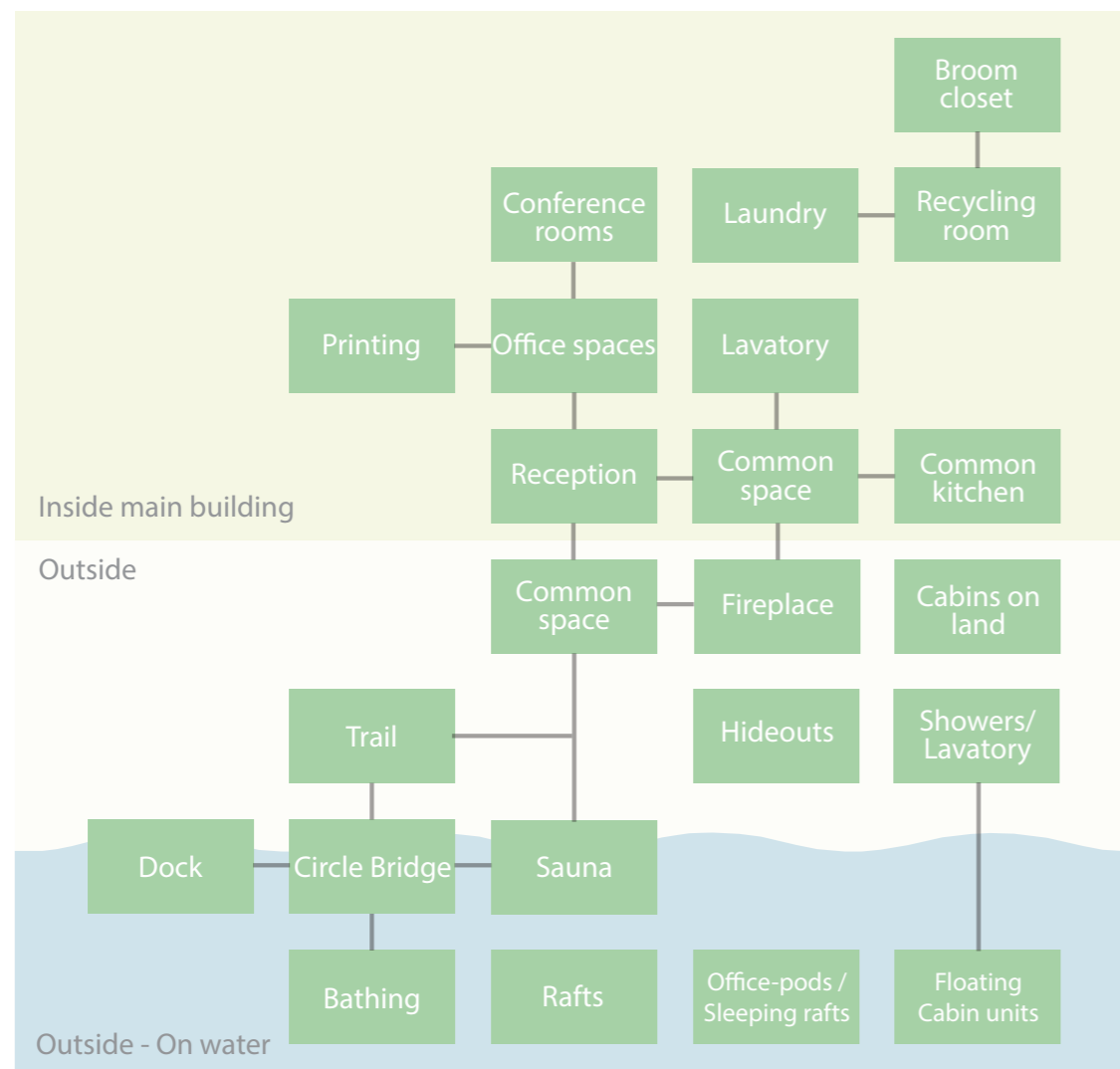
Diagram of functions

The diagram of functions shows the different functions needed in the project - for example kitchen, housing, sauna, office spaces, reception or cleaning.

Some functions demand its own spaces or even own houses, while some functions can be combined with other functions in the same room. Different functions can be put near or far from each other, creating different flows and/or connections at the site.

The diagram helped us state where the different buildings were meant to be put, as well as how the rooms in the larger building were put in relation to each other. It also helped while discussing the needs of every cabin. Is a kitchen necessary? Shower? Toilet?

These discussions led into the choice to let the cabins on land have toilet, showers and a small kitchen, while the floating cabins could do without – as long as they have access to the main building.



Mapping of meeting places

When planning the project, we also analysed where different groups in Gustavsfors could be able to meet and interact.

Different groups use different spaces, creating different patterns of interaction. For example, a housing unit is used by a visitor, but not by a local. A sauna or the circular Sunden walk, could be used by locals, as well as by visitors.

We also wanted to make a distinction between real interaction (talking to a person/exchanging thoughts) from just passing by someone, nodding and saying hi.

In architectural planning “false meetings” (for example just passing by someone at a square without interaction) are sometimes called meetings are and highly overestimated - creating a misconceptual picture of reality and the proposed architecture.

	Locals	Longstayers	Daily visitors	Overnight guests
Restaurant	●	●	●	●
Café	●	●	●	●
Trail	●	●	●	●
Sauna	●	●		●
Fireplace	●	●		●
Entrance space	●	●	●	●
Hideouts	●	●	●	●
Office	●	●		
Common kitchen		●		●
Common room		●		●
Laundry room		●		
Showers				
Parking				
Raft				
Cleaning room				

- Interactions within the same group of people
- Physical meetings
- Strong interactions
- Weak interactions

Proposal

Concept

Pillars of the experience:

Nature frames the project and is the foundation. By utilising it, the other parts of the project get their special values by being combined but also from the location. This is one of the main things setting the project apart from other co-working spaces, long-stay accommodations etc.

Community is the second pillar and important to connect people inside the lodge as well as people from Gustavsfors. Why not just rent a cabin in the middle of nowhere? This gives a choice to either be alone with nature, or meet other remote workers, locals, and visitors with other purposes. The possibility to be “alone together in the wilderness” gives an important duality and possibility to connect both to the locals and visitors.

The lodge also depends on and gives back to the community of Gustavsfors by utilizing and creating more opportunities for the existing services in the town. Also by creating new places and ways for the existing community to meet and interact, for example locals are encouraged to use the sauna, the trail and the common room in the main building.

Recreation takes foot in the calmness of the outdoors and distance from the business of the city. Both to be able to work in the forest, enjoy the sauna in mid-winter or renting a canoe in the warmer months. Simply living and working in a spot closer to nature becomes a sort of “workcation” when one can be more relaxed without being away from work all together. Also, the new trail and the new connections across Sunden, makes the access to nature easier for the inhabitants of Gustavsfors.

At the shore

All the buildings in the project are close to the shore. We regard the shore/beach as a meeting place, and a common space in the project. At the shore people take a swim, go to read a book, paddle canoe, barbecue, watch the stars, have a sauna bath, or just hangout to have a look over the water. Also people walking the trail pass by the shore on a random basis.

Visitors / tourism

We started with visioning a calm long stay place for connection and recreation. This led us into looking more deeply into the patterns of tourism, and we identified a lack of continuity in the season and ability for visitors to go to Gustavsfors.

Tourists are important for the village, but the tourist season is short today - only about six weeks long. Today, tourists tend to come from Midsummer to the first week of August.

Visitors can be something more. A visitor might not necessarily come for a touristic experience – some examples are conference or fairs participants, people taking part in sports or cultural events, or a person going away for a weekend to relax and gain energy. We have identified the visitors as an interesting group, that could expand the season in Gustavsfors into an all-year-round season.



The type of visitor we have identified as interesting in this project are persons working remotely as digital nomads. In a stressful work life, where it is possible for this group to work anywhere in the world, we think the calm nature of Lelången and Gustavsfors could be a way to vitalise the village and create new forms of connection. It would at the same time be a way to lengthen the season of Gustavsfors.

Digital nomads working remotely could be the core of visitors, allowing a lodge to stay open during wintertime. This would also allow other types of visitors, like cyclists, hunters and people picking mushrooms, to find somewhere to stay.

This would then create a good circle of visitors and opportunities to go to Gustavsfors in all parts of the year.

A person working remotely often needs some kind of social interactions. An example of this is coworking spaces where freelancers or lone workers can find a common arena. This is the case in our project as well. We have however added unique parts, that are hard to find anywhere else. The calming nature - with abilities to hike, fish, swim, cook over a fire, take a sauna, pick berries and interact with others, can here be combined with work.



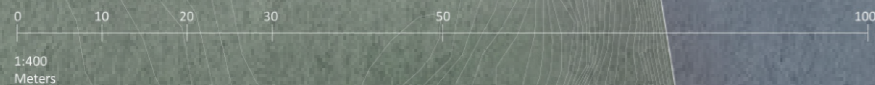
The Site - Around the circle bridge

At the heart of the site, there's a "circle bridge" - a half circular jetty, connecting the two sides of Braskviken. The circular bridge has two important functions. The first one is that it's connecting the two sides of Braskviken, enabling the trail to go over it. It also works as powerful architecture, giving an identity to the project as a whole, lodge and trail combined.

Northeast of the main building there is a parking lot for people arriving by car. It is situated at a distance from the site to not disturb the remoteness. Small paths connect the main building with the housing units.

The circle trail round the lake passes by here, and the main buildings interconnect with the trail. This makes spontaneous meetings possible, but also allows travellers arriving by bus, to use the trail to reach the lodge.

The buildings of the lodge are spread out close to the eastern shore of the small bay at the Lelången-Gustavsfors inlet. All the buildings are to some means oriented towards the water, and some of them are even floating on water. The round bridge and the sauna are constructed in water.



Zoneing

The project, with lodge, circle bridge and trail, can be divided into public, semipublic, semiprivate, and private zones.

The trail around bay Sunden is a public zone, dedicated to create meetings and "pulling people into nature". Where the trail passes by the proposed buildings, it crosses the circle bridge, a point everyone must pass, regardless what path one took to reach the area. The bridge has a bottleneck effect - making it likely to meet someone there.

In front of the main building, there is a fireplace open to everyone. The trail, and other paths, passes by this spot. It is close to the circle bridge as well, and also just in front of the main entrance. All these factors put together, creates a frequented public space, equal to a "square in the woods".

The public can enter the main building if they want to. In there, they can take a rest or warm up in the lobby and assembly room. This creates a semipublic space in the main building, where locals and visitors can mix.

In the main building, visitors are able to enter the office rooms with keycards, creating a semiprivate area.

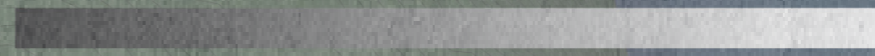
There are no barriers to reach the housing units on land or at the shore, but the paths are not very frequented, because the main trail does not lead there. This creates a semipublic feeling, where it's perfectly fine to pass by.

Visitors find private zones in the housing units. This is created through the architectural choice to close off the short side facing the path/jetty, to create protection from outside viewers. The opposite short sides of the housing units, are instead open, to maximize sight and light.

The hideouts, including the sauna, works as semipublic spaces providing shelter and a getaway for the visitors, from the more busy area around the main building.

Put together, the different levels on the private-public scale, creates a possibility of choice for the level of social interaction, where visitors always can make a choice, depending on mood and/or workload.

Private semiprivate semipublic Public

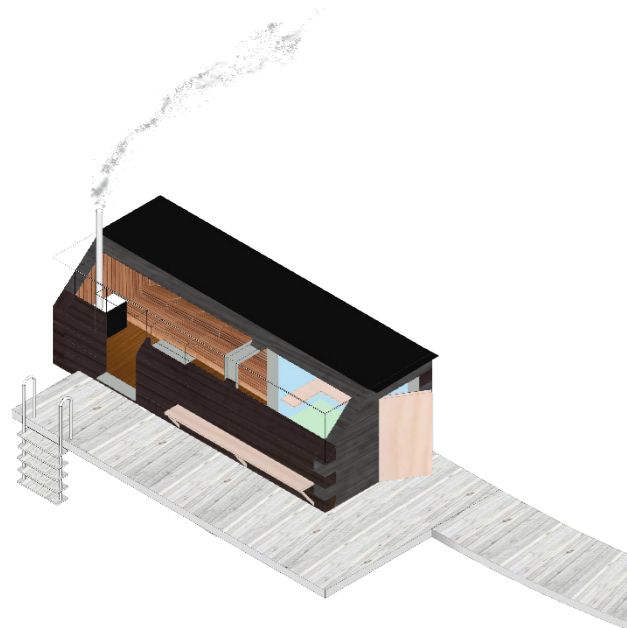


Main building & Sauna

Sauna

The sauna is situated in the lake, at the end of the circle bridge, across the bay Braskviken seen from the main building. The sauna makes it possible to keep clean and recover through taking a sauna bath. A sauna this close to the lake also allows all-year-round-bathing in general. The sauna is heated with electricity or firewood.

It's open for everyone - visitors and locals, and works as a meeting place in Gustavsfors. It also has a function of gathering people to the spot, as more people frequently use the trail to get to the sauna.



Main Building

The main building is situated in the slope close to the water at the small Braskviken bay. It is built in a split-level construction, resulting in a building built in three levels, with open visibility between the levels. Close to the entrance there is a reception and a drying room for wet clothes. The office spaces and meeting rooms for remote workers are located towards the calm light of the north.

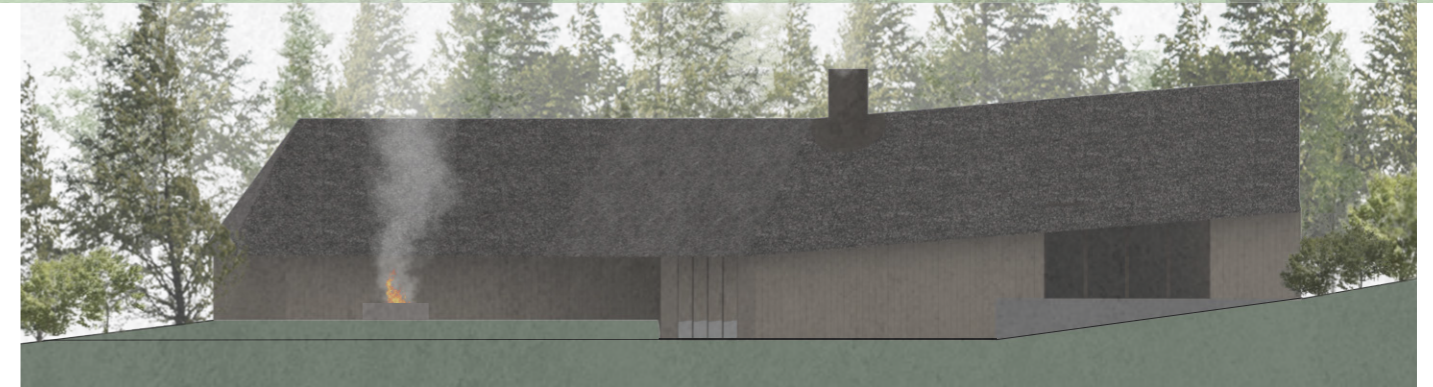
Oriented towards the south, where there's sun and the light from the lake, the assembly room, kitchen and food space are located. We imagine these rooms to encourage social interaction. A place to go when one wants to meet people, maybe after a workday in the common offices, or after a day in the private hut.

In the assembly room there is a fireplace in the middle. Some stairs for sitting are possible to find here. One has a direct contact from the assembly room, with different things happening in and around the building. A friend making dinner in the kitchen, a new guest entering from outside, or a group sitting at the large fireplace in front of the building.

In a smaller building connected to the main building by the extended roof, there is a washing room and a cleaning room, accessible without having to enter the main building.

The elevation illustrates the profile of the main building, and its situation in the landscape. The spot for the building is a little bit steep, and the building is therefore divided in three levels with visibility between the levels.

The main building does not have a restaurant or a proper café. This is partly due to economic reasons, while it is likely not possible to run a all-year-round restaurant at the moment in Gustavsfors. Also such a restaurant would compete with existing restaurants and cafés in the village. A cup of coffee will be possible to buy in the reception. Food is otherwise bought at the food store, and prepared in the common kitchen. The project contributes to the local restaurants and cafe, by creating better conditions for all-year-round visits to Gustavsfors.

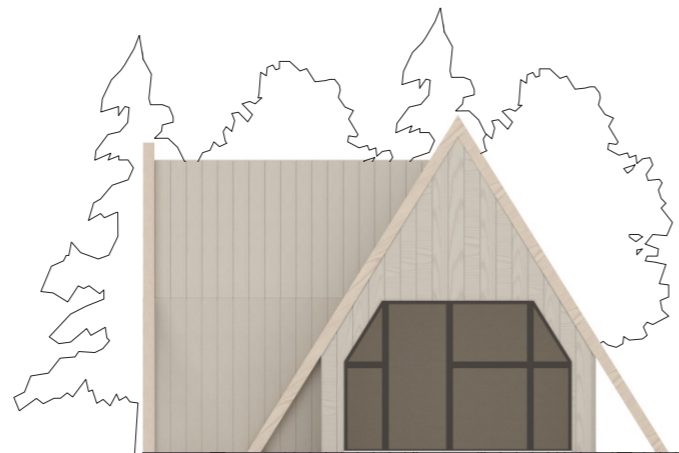
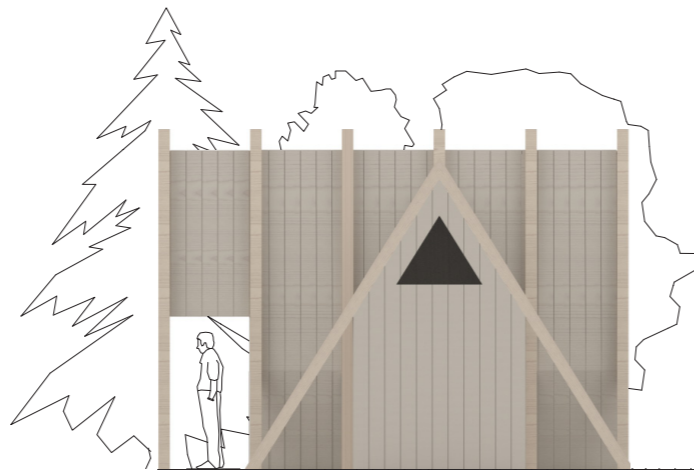
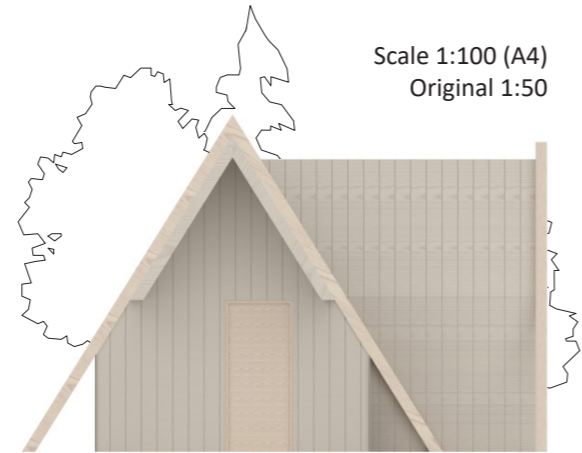
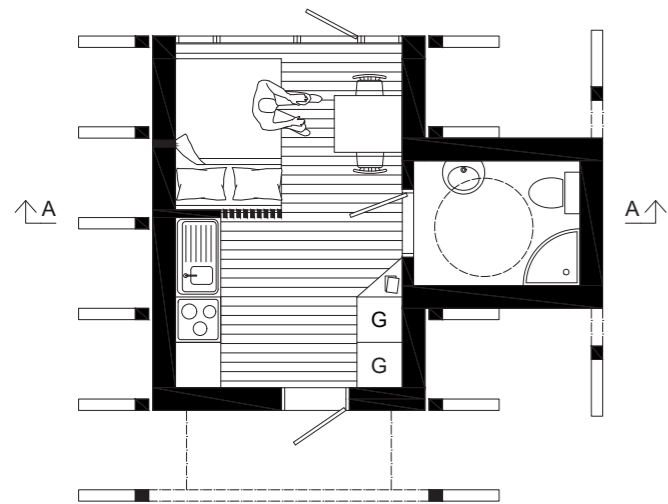
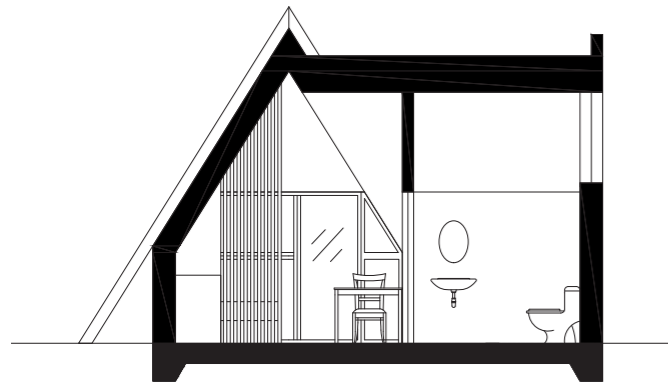


Housing units on land

All the housing units pick up an A-shaped tent design, associating to wildlife, freedom, nomads and temporary living.

On land, there are ten housing units with a proper standard. Those units are mainly for long-term stay, and they are equipped with shower, a toilet, hot water, wardrobes and a minor kitchen. Apart from a larger bed, there is also a small workplace/worktable. All that is necessary for a comfortable longstay.

On the short side of the housing units, there's a glass wall, enabling a view over the lake from inside of the house. On the opposite shortside is the entrance, leading to the path nearby the unit.



Price diversity

Different categories and standards of housing, enables different price categories for accommodation, opening the lodge for people with a spectrum of income.

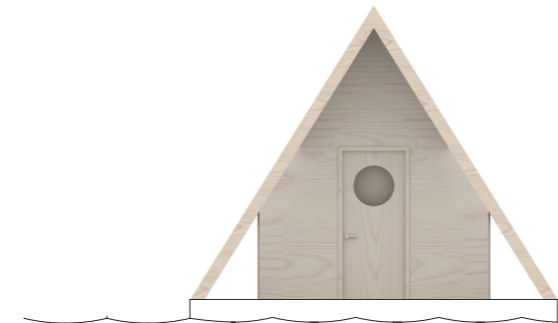
Floating units

Housing

In the water close to the bay shore, there are six floating units for living. The floating units has a lower standard of living, making the floating units ideal for a short term stay, or a longer stay with lower standard closer to nature. It contains a bed, a minor hallway for clothes and bags, a benchtop with a portable watertank for tea or coffee making. All that is necessary for a comfortable wildlife stay.

The short side facing the water is made of glass, providing the lake view and light to shine into the hut. It's possible to sunbathe, swim or work, at the small wooden jetty just outside the glass wall, at the short side of the unit.

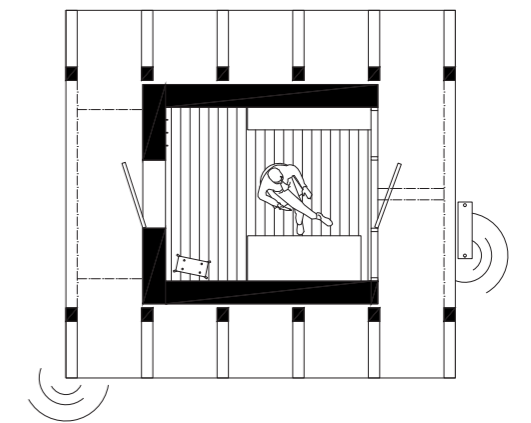
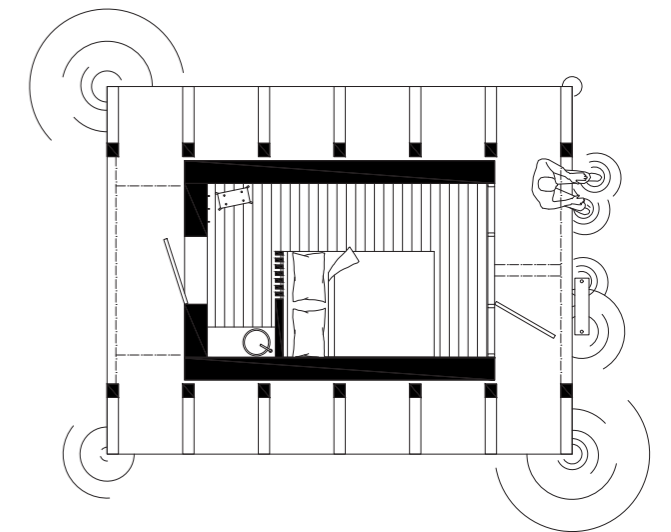
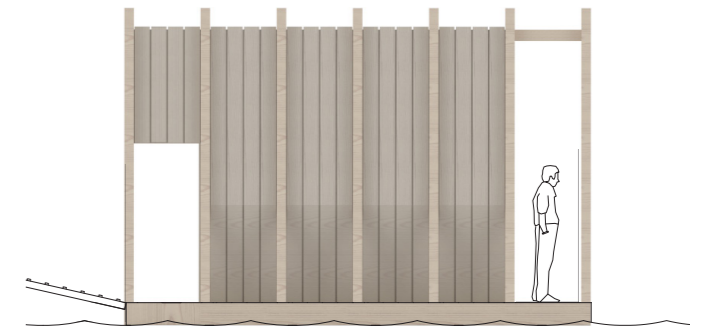
Wintertime the floating units stay in the water, being as stable to ice movement as floating jettys. However, due to the risk of icy paths and leaning floaters because of impact from the ice, the floating units are not available to book if the ice is too thick.



Office-pods

In addition to the office-area of the common building, floating office-pods with a similar design will be added in the third year of the project. This will expand the capacity of the site and they can be converted into sleeping-units with only a bed during the busier summer months.

Scale 1:100 (A4)
Original 1:50



Trail around Sunden bay & Hideouts

Along and around the small bay Sunden stretching from Lake Lelången to Gustavsfors, we propose a new trail. It makes the shores of the bay accessible in a new way, and for new groups. It also connects the eastern and the western side, through crossings situated at the inlet of the bay.

Another advantage with this trail is that it's adapted to disabled people, making it possible to go around it in a wheelchair, or with a rolling walker (rullator).

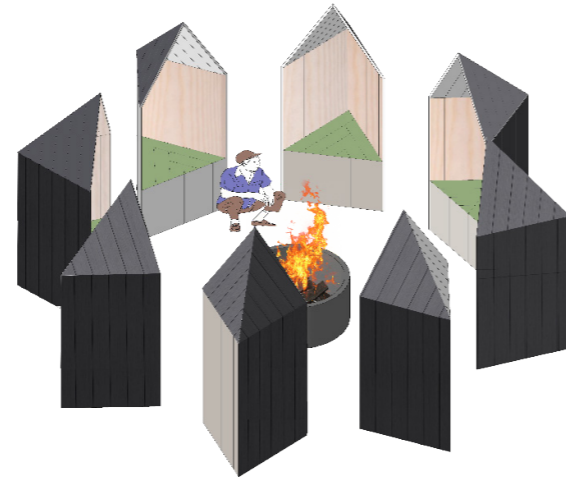
To add more, the trail connects the main building, the sauna, and the housing units to the already existing part of Gustavsfors. It also makes the view of Lake Lelången more accessible for pedestrians. Finally, along the trail we add hideouts, adding something completely new to the area.

When passing the main building of our project, there is a fireplace and benches, inviting temporary visitors to rest and interact.

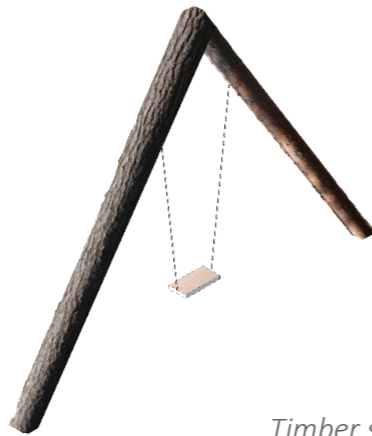
The hideouts along the Sunden trail are designed to create playfulness, surprise, a temporary remote workplace, or the possibility for a getaway. They are put at different unexpected spots - some more nearby to the main building, some more far away. Three of them are pictured to the right:

The hideouts are built with natural materials, connecting them to the nature of the site. We want the hideouts to be used by locals, by day visitors and by long term visitors.

For long term visitors they will function as a possible outdoor office, offering an alternative to a workday in the main building or "at home" in the housing hut. The hideouts are also fun for kids, as they create opportunity for play, for example "hide and seek".



Private huts



Timber swings



Nature boxes

We envision that a new hideout can be built every year, in a voluntary work-cooperation between the villagers of Gustavsfors. This will function as an activity strengthening the community,

as well as a surprise for returning visitors - who will experience something new when they come back. Temporary art installations as hideouts is also a possibility, since they can have varied functionality.



Timeline

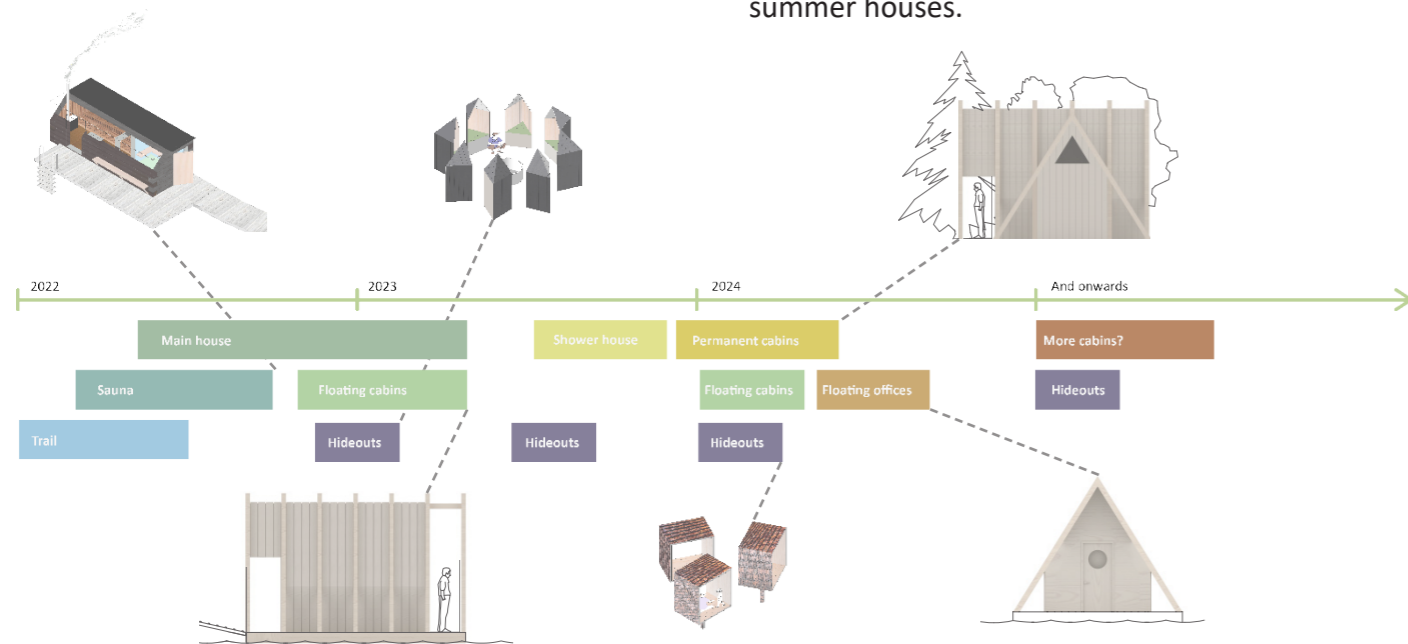
The timeline illustrates in what order we imagine that different things are done in the project. To enable the project to be done economically, we think it is important that things are done “in the right order”.

Firstly, we envision that the Sunden trail, along with the sauna, and the main building, are built.

This is due to the possibility to cooperate with the inhabitants of Gustavsfors in this issue. The feeling of doing something new and inspiring together, is very important for the rest of the project to succeed.

At the end of the season, almost half of the floating housing cabins are built. By doing this, it's possible to offer a living at the lodge quite quickly, without too much invested money. The sauna offers possibilities to keep hygiene.

To finance the more expensive and expensive parts, we think that a slow start, with possibility for summer tourists to visit the lodge, is good.



After the first summer of trying the concept, the expansion continues. In this part, permanent housing on land is constructed, more floating cabins are built, as well as the floating offices.

During the whole time, a new hideout is opened every year. The every-year-hideout builds identity and create support from the local community.

We vision that it can be possible to expand the project a bit, in a more distant future, though we don't believe in heavy expansion at the site. Rather would we like to see that the concept is copied by other local groups and constructed at other spots in Dalsland or Scandinavia.

In case this concept would not work out in Gustavsfors, we have thought of some different possibilities. Either that the office concept doesn't work, and that the office-pods can be converted into all year round huts for sleeping. Then the office spaces in the main building can also become accomodation for visitors.

Another way-out-scenario is that the main building is transformed into a common house for the village, while the housing units are sold as summer houses.

Materials

The exteriors of the buildings of our project will be constructed mainly out of wood, glass, straw and tin. We want the materials to be as natural as possible, to fit in with its surroundings, and have as little climate impact possible.

The housing pods with their A-shaped forms, are constructed mainly in wood. Roofs and outer walls on these units are roughly the same. Short sides are constructed in wood and glass.

The main building has a wooden facade of standing timber, and a straw roof. The wooden facade is variated with windows. The exterior floor at the two entrances is slate stone, a local material from the area.

The sauna is constructed of horizontal logs with bevelled edges, forming a flat log facade. The roof of the sauna is a tin roof, partly because of fire regulations.



Wood as both interior and exterior material



Above: Timber construction

Left: Roofs made of straw and tin

Reference projects

When looking at inspiration for our project we found a vast range of projects since there was no existing one that had done what our project was trying to achieve. Here are a few examples of projects that had an impact on our design process.

Stedans In the Woods, Lendager Group.

A resort of sorts deep in the forests of Halland in southern Sweden where sustainability is in focus and simplicity is key.



Stedans In the Woods (Hörnberg, K.)

The Infinite Bridge, Niels Povlsgaard and Johan Gjødes.

The circular bridge in Aarhus, Denmark was a big inspiration for our central bridge-piece.



Visitors view of bridge (Gjøde & Povlsgaard Arkitekter)

Various Projects, Rintala Eggertsson Architects

Many smaller projects that became an inspiration for our Hideouts and Sauna.



Various projects (Rintala Eggertsson Architects)



Lofthuset (Bergaliv)

Bergaliv - Lofthuset, Hanna Michelson

A simple living in the northern Swedish forests, focusing on nature and stripping away the unnecessary things.



Naturum Tåkern (Länsstyrelsen)

Naturum Tåkern, Wingårdh architects

A modern use of straw roof and inspiration for the main building of the project.



Cottages surrounding pond (ADLER lodge RITTEN)

Adler Lodge Ritten, Hugo Demetz

A resort complex in the Italian Dolomites. Architectural inspiration, materials and the meetings with nature.

Answering the guiding questions

When working with the programme, we formulated some guiding questions for the project. It is interesting to reflect upon if we managed to answer them and if they have been relevant throughout and still describe the project.

How does one shape such a place based on creating encounters between recreation and work?

Through research into the topic of nature's effect on stress and well-being, it became apparent that the closeness to nature while working is a form of recreation in itself. Being able to work in nature means work and recreation can be one and the same. The main focus became enabling remote co-working in a recreational environment. By not only creating a regular accommodation but somewhere that enables a working community, the encounters are created.

So by creating a place focused not only on the stay but also work with a simpleness that directs the focus towards nature, you can shape a place to create these encounters.

How is it possible to accentuate the qualities of the landscape through site-specific architecture?

In the project, the focus was for the architecture to make little impact on the site and be a way to frame and direct the visitor towards nature, to experience it more thanks to the architecture. By simply putting a view inside a frame, you will reflect upon and see it in a new way. The form language used was inspired by other structures people relate to nature and see as a natural addition. Using wood, straw, stone and other materials that blend in creates a unity between the forest and buildings within it.

A different approach used was to have architecture which is very bold and striking while simple at the same time. The triangular shaped huts and the circular bridge are examples of this. By placing a simple shape in a complex and living landscape it becomes even more striking through the strong contrast created.

So, by framing or placing something to relate the nature to, the landscape can become even more striking. With something breaking off the scene, it becomes more than just another beautiful landscape and something visitors will remember. This is one of many ways to influence the experience of the wild, but one answer to the question.

How can you create a project that allows different forms of tourism, and what are those forms? How do you take advantage of the changings of the seasons in this?

To allow different forms of tourism throughout the year, they need to support each other financially. The facility cannot support only fishing or ice-skating on their own for example. But together, the different forms of tourism can enable a facility to be open the whole year. At the same time, a year-round-open facility creates more visits.

With the busier summer months as a basis and working visitors enabling the lodge to stay operational, other types of tourists can have a place to stay as well, for example hunters, berry pickers, artist in residence, woofers (a type of working tourists), and art course participants.

With peak season and work stays becoming the foundation, a wide variety of visitors will come to Gustavsfors throughout the year. With different experiences depending on the season, it will be different with every visit, encouraging people to return. One visit you can ice-skate after work and the next one sit around the campfire after going to the sauna.

How the project will develop the future development of Gustavsfors and the municipality.

By creating a longer season and a more resilient tourist industry, more jobs are created and more incentives to stay and live in the municipality. Also, by creating stronger value from nature not only by extraction but recreation, it shifts the focus to a sustainable use of it. More people visiting the town and being able to try living in the countryside without the need of buying property, might lead to a larger interest in settling in the municipality as more people realise the quality of life one gets from living close to nature.

With people staying longer as visitors at the site, they might explore the municipality even more than tourists today and at other times of the year, creating opportunities for the whole municipality.

Similar projects could also be developed in other sites in the municipality focusing on other aspects such as learning crafts and local work.

General thoughts

What has the project taught us, and what can we bring with us into future projects? Some points we found are...

- To learn from nature and let the process and project partly be “run” by nature. An architectural project can allow people to get closer to nature, but also let the materials and activities be defined by what is possible “on site”.
 - Some understanding for different needs, regarding long term and short term stay.
 - Questions about the possibility to build in a certain “harmony” in a project. What can such a harmony look like, and why are some projects more rooted and balanced than others?
 - Building in different elements. Architects tend to build on land, but in this project, we have also been building on the shore and in the water. One of our references, Bergaliv in Hälsingland, is building in the air.
 - The beach as a meeting place and arena, is somehow a bit forgotten in architecture.
- Digitalisation of the work life opens new opportunities for architecture and planning. How does architecture react to that?
 - The building as its own advertisement. Through social media - pictures, rating and knowledge of interesting lodges are spread.
 - The simple can have a certain beauty. It’s not necessarily the costly, expensive and luxurious that is desirable.
 - Cooperation, between stakeholders, locals, and investors, is very important for rural architecture.
 - Modularity – as in moveability, flexibility and resilience. The houses are possible to “copy” and build somewhere else.
 - Instead of growing and growing, we would apply the concept and build the same somewhere else. We don’t think that expansion is very suitable for this project.

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