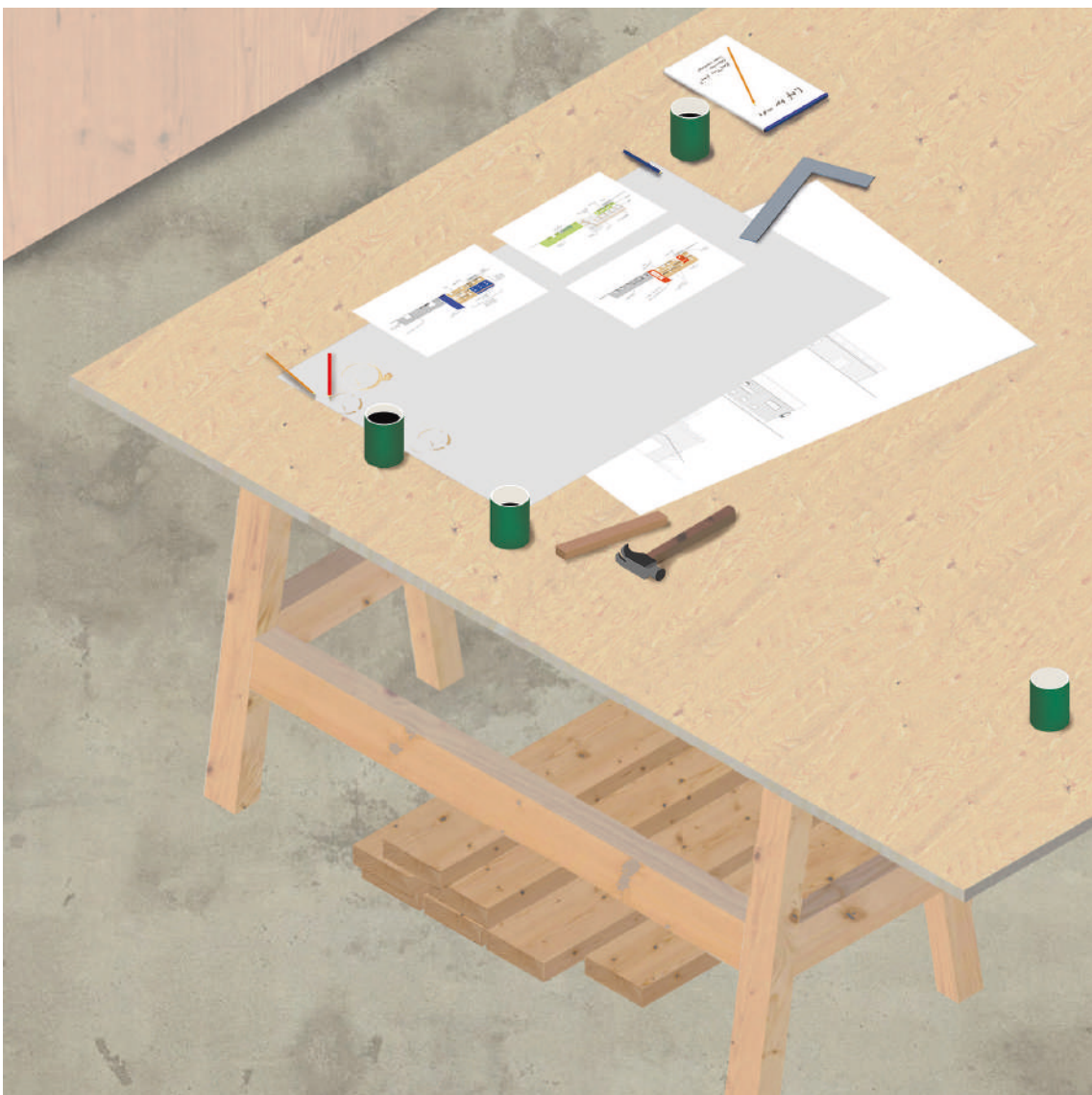


# UNLOCKING TIBRO

RETHINKING COLLABORATION AND VALUE MAKING IN RURBAN AREAS



LINNÉA GABRIELSSON & SOFIA PETERSON

Master's Thesis 2023



**CHALMERS**  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Unlocking Tibro: reimagining collaboration and  
transformation in urban areas

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Master's Thesis 2023

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## Abstract

The purpose of this master's thesis is to challenge the status quo of rural development since there is frequently a lack of visions for how rural areas can develop in novel ways. The project takes place in Tibro, Sweden, and focuses on the former train track area and its old stock building known as Centralföreningen. The thesis presents a method for how one can approach renovation projects in rural areas by using speculative scenarios. Therefore, three alternative futures are suggested and set within the building based on information obtained from the municipality's comprehensive plan and interviews with officials as well as associations. The visions highlight citizen collaboration and association life, as well as current challenges existing in Tibro today, including unemployment, a lack of engagement from youths and a distance between the municipality and the citizens. The futures are visualised as spatial proposals within Centralföreningen and investigate its potential as a social platform to strengthen the community.

As a result, the design process serves as a tool for research and further discussion of the overall goal: How can a method based on new values and forms of collaborations help transform Centralföreningen and strengthen Tibro? The concepts based on the scenarios are summarised and visualised into one final proposal that demonstrates the potential of Centralföreningen. A large focus of the thesis is social value-making, the creation of new meeting spaces as well as responsibility and collaboration within a community. The thesis ends with a discussion about how the alternative futures could facilitate cross-level interaction and mobilisation of community members, and concludes in strategies for how rural municipalities could develop into the future.

*Keywords:*

*Rurban, Collaboration,*

*Valuemaking, Transformation*

# Student background



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## Preface

This master's thesis is based on our project *Community is Unity*\* (2021) developed in the master studio *Local Context* here at Chalmers School of Architecture. The outcome of that project was a step-by-step process on how the population in Hällekis could create a community building by themselves, a starting point for them to develop their own local planning. During a presentation of the project, we came in contact with the city architect of Tibro, Leif Ahnland, who introduced us to Tibro as a potential site to work with for our thesis project. We found Tibro to be an interesting place, partly due to the many speculative projects already done there that we could build upon, but also because of the scale of the municipality. This master's thesis aims to develop in line with the *Community is Unity* project but further investigate how local development does not only need to be driven by a few but can be a collaboration between various actors on different levels.

*\*The project was carried  
through together with  
Christina Dimitriadou*



*View over Tibro's former train track area*

# Index

Introduction	8	Introducing Centralföreningen	40
<i>Aim &amp; Purpose</i>	9	Design studies	47
<i>Research question</i>	9	<i>Scenario making</i>	47
<i>Delimitations</i>	9	1: <i>Youth space</i>	48
Method & Process	10	2: <i>Learning Tibro</i>	50
The local context	13	3: <i>The civic house</i>	52
<i>Tibro today</i>	16	<i>Contextualising and combining the scenarios</i>	54
<i>Integration difficulties</i>	16	<i>Unlocking Centralföreningen</i>	57
<i>Challenges in association life</i>	17	<i>The train track area</i>	58
<i>The lack of youth engagement</i>	19	<i>Nya Centralföreningen</i>	60
Theoretical framework	23	<i>Centralföreningen as a process</i>	62
<i>New perspectives on value</i>	23	<i>Technical solutions</i>	72
<i>People as a resource</i>	25	Discussion	75
<i>Who plans the countryside?</i>	27	<i>Method</i>	75
<i>Who is the initiator?</i>	28	<i>Working together</i>	75
<i>The tricky road to cooperation</i>	29	<i>In terms of responsibility</i>	77
<i>The common goal</i>	29	<i>Going beyond economic values</i>	78
<i>Cross-sector collaboration</i>	30	Conclusion	82
<i>Public accountability for cooperation</i>	32	Bibliography	84
<i>Ownership</i>	33	<i>Interview list</i>	85
<i>Economical strategies</i>	35		
<i>Financial support issues</i>	35		
<i>Financing in rural areas</i>	36		
<i>Lessons learned from the theory</i>	38		



# Introduction

Rural communities are eager to develop; unfortunately, their efforts are sometimes hampered by a lack of resources. Several municipalities in Sweden are dealing with this problem, whether as a result of significant migration to other municipalities, a big number of unemployed individuals, or an ageing population. It all has an impact on the municipalities' resource base. The countryside areas lack the urban advantage of external investments since projects within these areas are often seen as being too risky and expensive by investors (Hellström, 2022). According to Josefina Syssner (2018) in her book *Mindre Många*, these are challenges that are too large or complicated for the small municipality to manage on their own. Syssner instead suggests that they should focus on transforming their visions. She shows that the perpetual need for progress is often what prevents the rural from developing. The dream of growth and the desire to be like another more prosperous area may impede alternate possibilities. New visions that are intertwined and based on the local context and its conditions are suggested as a positive way of moving forward.

This thesis will explore new ways of developing in a context that holds both urban and rural qualities. The in-between state that does not fulfil the vision of the hectic city nor the idyllic countryside is described here as the rurban void. Rurban areas are often hampered by misconceptions that cast the place in the shadow of an ideal vision of urban norms. According to Nils Björling (2023), placemaking in both cities and in rural areas are often striving for attracting economic investments. Without applicable visions from official planning, these voids are often seen as open for exploitation. That can be problematic since these rurban voids are often very dependent on the closest urban node. Instead, there is a potentiality to look into new ways of developing to highlight the voids' own local context. To develop strategies that invite more actors to participate in the process of design, and to look beyond stereotyped visions and include a broader diversity of meeting places. Activities that are situated in these rurban voids are stated as opportunities for novel development.

Although the urban norm has had a leading role for a long period of time, projects within the rurban context have started to emerge. R-Urban (Akbil et al., 2021), Duvedsmodellen (Hellström, 2022), and Röstånga Utvecklings AB (Åkerman, 2020) are examples of research initiatives and civic commitments that have all formed in recent years. All of these projects seek to challenge the status quo in rural development and a common theme presented is a novelization of values that question economic growth. Although, to meet the new demands needed to develop in a sustainable sense, new forms of value need to be defined and questioned.

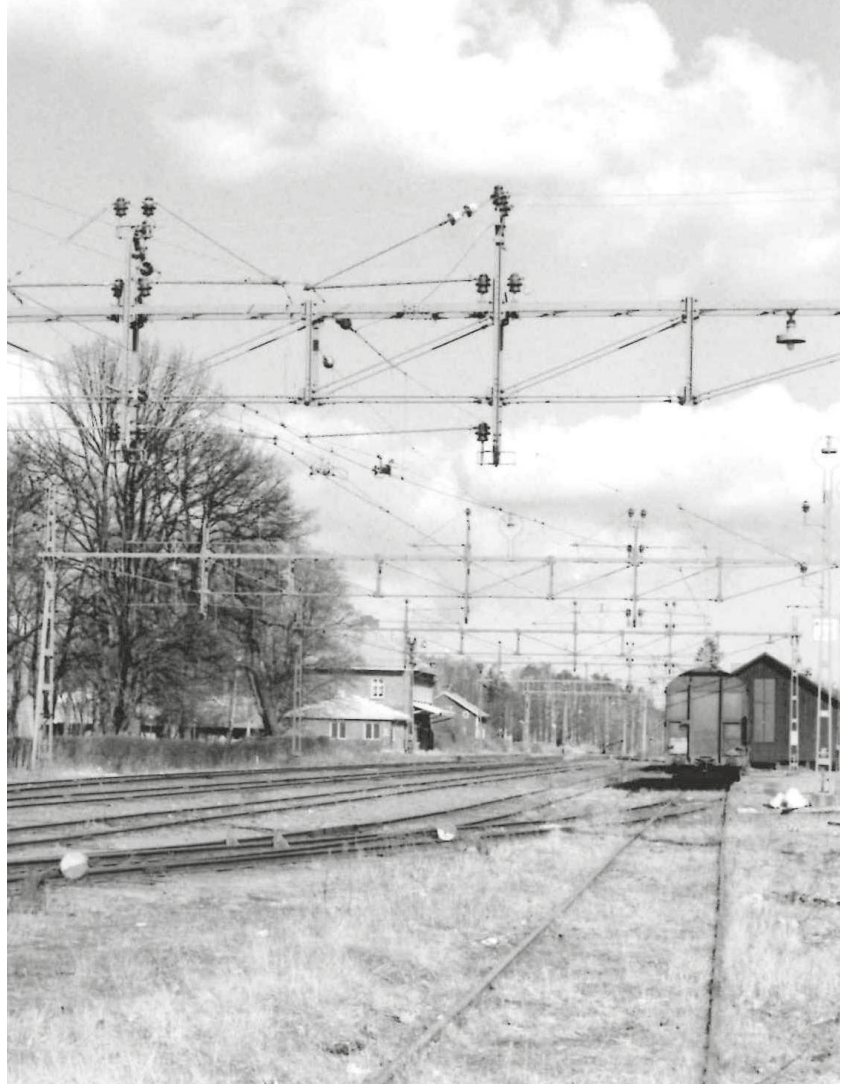
## Delimitations

Is about:

- + *Tibro*
- + *Context analysis*
- + *Collaboration between actors and levels*
- + *Participatory processes*
- + *Social sustainability*
- + *Value Making*
- + *Social assets*
- + *Responsibility*
- + *Ownership*
- + *Speculative futures*
- + *Transformation*
- + *Method making*
- + *Equality*

Will touch upon:

- + *Rurban development in a larger perspective*
- + *Economical strategies*
- + *Local resource mapping*



*Past view over the train track area  
Photo belongs to Tibro Museum*

The thesis will investigate social value-making within the framework of meeting places and the ideas of ownership, collaboration, and responsibility within an rurban context, Tibro. The area is used as a testbed to explore and develop new concepts and strategies.

## Aim & Purpose

This project investigates how a former stock building, Centralföreningen, Tibro, can be used as a social platform for the creation of a new meeting place. Alternative future scenarios will result in a spatial proposal that explores the potential of the building with the purpose of challenging the status quo of rurban development. The overall aim is to present a method based on new values and forms of collaborations to transform Centralföreningen and strengthen Tibro.

## Research Questions

- + What socio economic values can the transformation of Centralföreningen provide to Tibro?
- + How might Tibro's alternative futures facilitate cross-level interaction between community members and actors to develop rurban communities?

## Method & Process

This thesis utilised a number of approaches. Interviews and site visits (walks, mapping, and analysis) are part of it, as is speculative thinking in the form of scenario making. The idea was founded in literature and case studies that investigated topics like value-making, social capital as well as ownership, cooperation, and responsibility. This chapter describes the method in further depth.

The thesis stresses the importance of understanding the local context, therefore several interviews were conducted. Since the discourse circles the topic of collaboration it was in our interest to investigate cooperation that exists in Tibro today. The interviews mainly focused on the municipality, so consequently, they were conducted together with different unit managers (see reference list for interviewed people). Another part of the thesis explored the association life of Tibro and thereby conversations with chairpersons within Föreningspoolen and Tibro Film & Teater were held. The interviews were executed both in Tibro and through video calls. One took notes while the other led the conversation and asked the questions. The conversations focused on topics such as their role within the municipality or the association, what type of premises they use or need, collaboration among one another and their view on Tibro's future with a focus on social values. The interviews helped locate other people of value to converse with. Through these actions we were able to map local resources, which were helpful in the understanding of existing collaborations.

Besides interviews, we visited Tibro on multiple occasions. During these stays, we went to several of the meeting places in Tibro and also accessed Centralföreningen twice. The first time together with Leif Ahnland, the local antiquarian Martin Toresson and a member of the Twinballs club (the association that uses the building today). Ahnland and Toresson took us on a sightseeing tour, where they showed us around the town. The second time we visited Tibro, we went to the building and focused on taking photos and measurements. The site visits together with the interviews helped us understand the local context, the present conditions as well as the needs. With a basis in these investigations, three scenarios were designed.

The scenarios were a way of exploring different futures within Tibro and Centralföreningen. Speculative design and scenario-making were used to create guidelines for our design work. During our master's studies, we were introduced to the terms as a way to help us reshape and imagine new storylines that deviate from today's norms. New stories reveal alternatives that can lead to more sustainable paths (Wangel & Fauvré, 2021), and the exploration of different scenarios can help one envision a desired future to get a better understanding of the present (Dunne

*Interviews with the municipality's unit managers and chairpersons of some associations.*

*New stories illustrate alternate futures that can lead to more sustainable results while also providing greater knowledge of the present.*

& Raby, 2013). It is important to note that stories cannot change anything on their own, but they can help to provide arguments for desirable forthcomings, which can help society to redirect. Speculative projects can additionally be part of a larger discourse by asking, "For whom is the future?" which can address not only people but cultures, ideologies, and ecosystems (Wangel & Fauvré, 2021).

The future can be open and uncertain, but it can also be full of predictions and determined by likeliness (Wangel & Fauvré, 2021). Imagining and creating scenarios can be classified as predictive, exploratory, and normative (Börjeson et al., 2006) or as possible, probable, and preferable (Wangel & Fauvré, 2021). The different routes assist the comprehension of the work's starting point to investigate what could or should happen. The scenario can be realistic or dystopian, set in the future or a different present or past. Regardless of how extreme the scenario may be, when we step away from the predicted forthcomings we start discussing alternative routes, and all of the good and bad features it holds (ibid.). In our work, we decided to create scenarios within a realistic framework, since we thought it would be more helpful for the community to be presented with scenarios that they could achieve.

Speculating on the future by proposing a what-if gives the narrator a platform to explore an idea. During the process, the what-if turns into an as-if (Wangel & Fauvré, 2021) and an architectural design can be made to correspond to the future with a certain type of building or required space (Dunne & Raby, 2013). Therefore, we made sure to map Tibro while developing the scenarios, as a result, they are based on problems and possibilities discovered during site visits and interviews, in addition to those stated in Tibro's comprehensive plan. In this part of the project, research by design was the primary tool used to develop and explore the potential of each scenario, including its spatialities and functions within the building. It was accomplished by sketching.

*The theoretical framework focuses on the concepts of value-making and social assets, as well as ownership, collaboration, and responsibility.*

Besides the already mentioned methods, literature and case studies were central in creating a theoretical framework that the design is based on. The literature mainly focused on the concept of value-making and social assets as well as ownership, collaboration and responsibility. The final design is a result of these readings as well as the scenarios. A loose timeline for the building was developed in order to address the potentiality of all the futures taking place as a stepwise process, leading to the final proposal of what Centralföreningen could become. The design process included sketching and model making to explore the renovation. In addition to the drawings, technical details of the outer wall and roof were presented as a way to estimate some costs of the project, as the economy to some extent had to be considered to showcase the project's buildability.





*The new stage in Stadsparken*

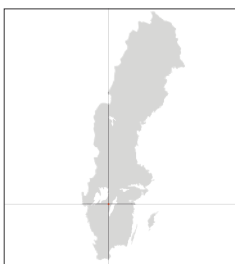
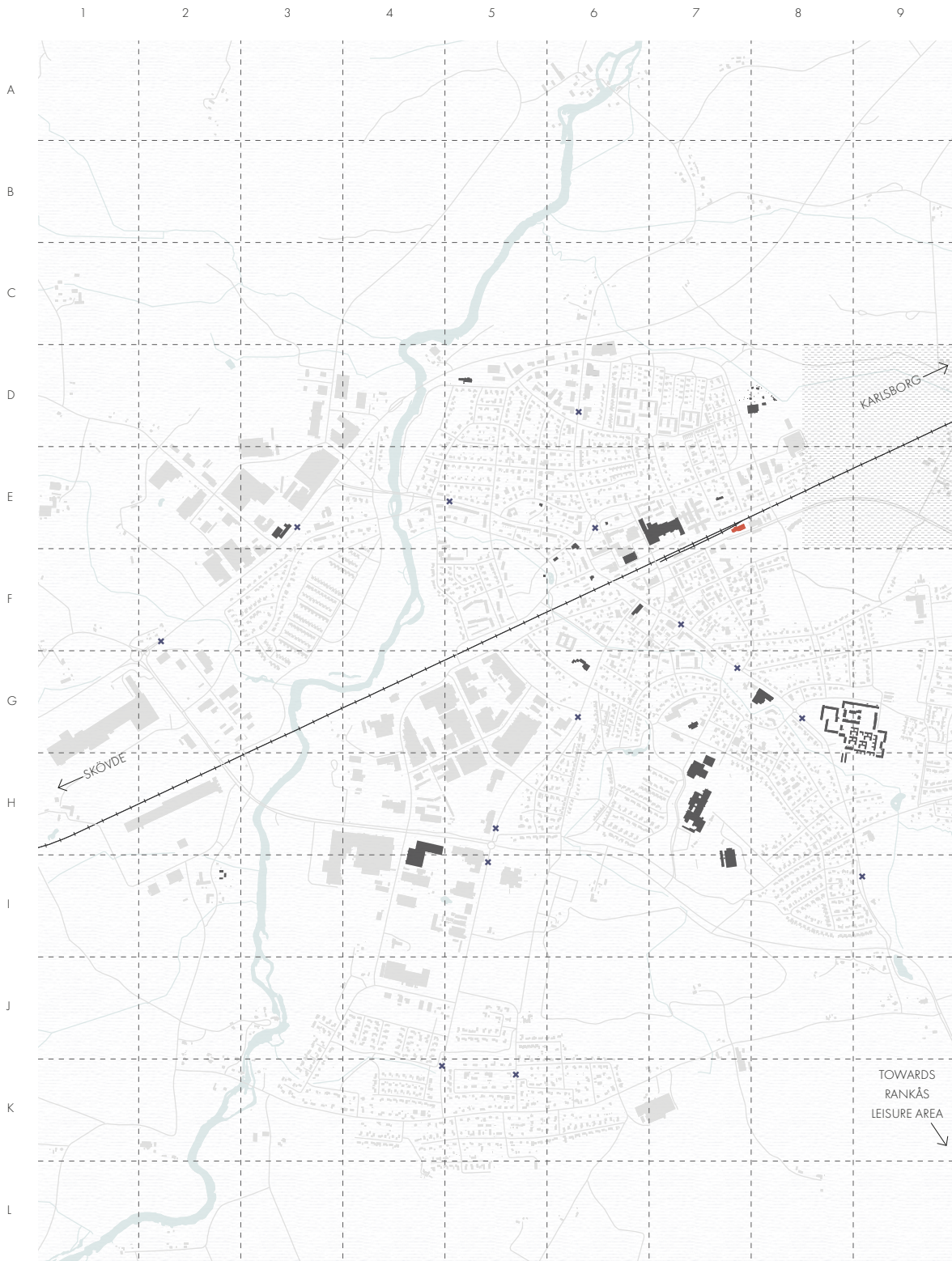
## The local context

Tibro is a town located in Västra Götaland near lake Vättern. It is a town with a garden city structure and a distinct centre that is home to a market, a number of cafés, grocery stores, and restaurants. Tibro is known for its furniture industry which emerged in the 1850s, and grew as a result of the construction of the Tibro railway station and the lack of good agricultural land (Tibro Kommun, 2021). In the 1920s and the 1930s, specialised craftsmen lived here, which made the furniture business bloom, and Tibro faced a large population increase. The town changed in the years that followed, with a redesign of the town square and new large housing projects, like Brittgården\* by British architect Ralph Erskine (Thörn, 2012). Brittgården was a significant project for Tibro, since the architecture of the area strived for social inclusivity. The large influx of workers created a demand for leisure activities, says Martin Toresson antiquarian in Tibro, (personal communication, 23.01.26), and it can be seen as the starting point for Tibros' rich association life. In the 1990s, the railway station shut down, and no trains pass through Tibro anymore but the traces of the rich history in craftsmanship is still a prominent part of the town today. The craft academy of Tibro is one of the leading furniture and craft schools in Sweden (Tibro Hantverksakademi, 2022). They specialise in teaching a wide variety of craftsmanship including woodwork, restoration, gilding, and decorative painting (ibid.). The school and the furniture companies strengthen Tibro as a centre of furniture making in the country.

*\*Brittgården was a significant project for Tibro, since the architecture of the area strived for social inclusivity.*

It is stated in Tibro's comprehensive plan (Tibro Kommun, 2021) that the municipality has had a relatively stable population of about 11000 residents over the last few years. The main demographic shift is an ageing population, and more people are choosing to live in Tibro's central area. At the same time the work market is becoming more and more regional. About 2000 people that live in Tibro work in a different municipality, where the most popular one is the nearby city Skövde (Lans, 2022). This enhances Tibro's vulnerability to regional, national, and international changes and challenges while strengthening their ability to deal with local issues.

When describing Tibro, one can use the term centralities to explain the town's structure. Centralities does not imply a power centre, but rather the regrouping of differences in relation to each other (Lefebvre, 1996). In this context there is a clear centrality by the mall, with a number of cafés, grocery stores, and restaurants as well as a bus station. Within the context of Tibro, it then becomes clear that the library and the school area are located in a different part of the town. Even though the distance is not far geographically, there is a clear separation between the areas. The train track area is located outside of the main city centre, although, Tibro's comprehensive plan (Tibro Kommun, 2021) states that there is a possibility



- |           |                             |         |                      |     |                       |
|-----------|-----------------------------|---------|----------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| E/F - 6/7 | Town center                 | E - 3   | Hantverksskolan      | ■   | Mapped meeting places |
| F - 6     | Gallerian, the mall         | H/I - 4 | Arbetsmarknadsnheten | ■   | Centralföreningen     |
| E - 6/7   | Municipal building          | I - 2   | Hembygdsgård         | ■   | Tidan                 |
| E - 7     | Humlan                      | D - 8   | Tibro Mini-Zoo       | ✕   | Bus stops             |
| E - 7     | Centralföreningen           | E - 6   | Pingskyrkan          | —+— | Train tracks          |
| G/H - 7   | School & leisure area       | G - 6   | Equmeniakyrkan Tibro |     |                       |
| D/E-8/9   | Potential development areas | G - 8   | Vintergatan biograf  |     |                       |
| F - 5     | Stadsparken                 | G - 8   | Kruset Bar & Bowling |     |                       |
| F - 5     | The new stage               | F - 6   | Bagare Brage         |     |                       |
| F - 6     | The museum                  | E - 6   | Villans Café         |     |                       |
| G/H-8/9   | Brittgården                 | D - 5   | Inredia              |     |                       |

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for further development east of the train track area. Which could strengthen the position of the Centralförningen as a part of the main city centre in the future.

The comprehensive plan (Tibro Kommun, 2021) also describes Tibro as a place that should strive for a circular economy, self-sufficiency by increased local production and creativity to face the future environmental challenges. It also contains future visions that present new ways of collaboration; however, there are no concrete suggestions of how these forms could look like. The municipality has already entered into collaboration with Anders Berensson Architects, ArcDes Think Tank and FolkLab that together carry through a practical research project presented in the project journal *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (Anders Berensson Architects et. al. 2019). The project journal presents a deep investigation about the area; what it holds as well as its potential. It circles the old train track and features a citizen dialogue made in 2018 by Leif Ahnland together with Anders Berensson Architects. The question asked was “What do you want to do here?” which worked as the starting point and resulted in the mentioned project journal as well as an alternative comprehensive plan – Tibro train tracks, and some already implemented small scale design additions. An outcome of the project is a stage in the city-park, designed and made by Berensson architects together with the decor painters at Hantverksakademin. The stage design highlights the artistry in Tibro as well as an answer to the citizen dialogue (lecture by Berensson, 22.10.31).

*The new stage was recently published in an issue of the Swedish architecture magazin Arkitektur*

Besides the Tibro train tracks project, the municipality worked together with architectural schools and artists in the development of alternative directions. Tibro has been used as a site in master’s studios at both KTH School of Architecture and Chalmers School of Architecture. The latter in their studio Planning and design for a sustainable development in a local context – where the students examine the site from both a local and global perspective, creating speculative futures and in-depth projects. Another collaboration was made together with Skogen, an artist runned collective for performing arts. This initiative resulted in *Tibrosamlingen*, by Anders Paulin and Johan Forsman, a collection of stories, artefacts, sounds and pictures gathered through the perspective of Tibro presented in a fictional culture house – the silo in a parallel universe (personal communication, 23.01.24). The project is part of a larger and longer project called *The promise*, in which the artists are building a semi-fictional art collection following different places over the span of thirty years. This means that the changes of the Tibro track area will be followed and documented by the artist duo until 2050 (ibid.). Forsman is also working on a digital platform for cultural events all over Sweden, called Samarbetet (ibid.). The app is described as a digital ecosystem, a common database, that will help others with everything from ticket-sales to increasing the visibility of resources. Tibro was supposed to be a try-and-error site for the app but was let go due to the difficulty to find a formal collaboration with the municipality.



*The small installation of a bench and some locally made lamps is one outcome of the collaboration with Anders Berenson Architects*

Leif Ahnland, the municipal architect, is one among those who have initiated these external collaborations and advocates for alternative forms of development. However, he states that he struggles to make politicians and colleagues see that there is value in these new forms of development (personal communication, 23.02.08). He adds that the politicians are playing a safe game with what he believes are anxious decisions, and the majority of the municipal department managers do not live in Tibro. He also adds that there is a general mistrust directed towards the municipality. Ahnland feels like there is a need for new definitions of what the municipality can execute and plan, which opens up more possibilities for him to do things rather than just talk and try to persuade politicians. Ahnland often feels alone with his belief in the future, but he also states that the citizens can not only rely on the municipality. They also need to take responsibility and not only come with wishlists.

## Tibro today

The conducted interviews and site visits helped pinpoint three main themes and challenges. Tibro has a relatively large number of unemployed, many struggle with mental health, there is a rich association life but a low rate of youth involvement. The following text will further describe these findings further.

### Integration difficulties

In the 2010's, immigration to Sweden was high, and Tibro was no exception. Today the amount of immigrants arriving to Tibro is a lot fewer, states Time Berisha,

*Tibro has several challenges: a relatively small percentage of people with a higher education, a high level of economic vulnerability due to unemployment, and a high level of mental ill-health.*

employee at the department of integration (personal communication, 23.02.01). As a result of this, SFI moved to Skövde and the opening hours for the integration department have lessened. For Time, this has resulted in a lack of casual and informal meeting places where competence, integration and the working sector can meet and help people. Berisha's colleague Elin Zell, municipal strategist, agrees that there is a lack of open meeting places (personal communication, 23.02.31). Zell adds that Tibro has a lot of different challenges to face, there is a relatively low degree of people with a higher education, a lot of people live in economic vulnerability due to unemployment and a high degree of mental ill-health. The lack of meeting places is additionally highlighted by the principal of Tibro's crafts academy, Maria Lantz. She states that the students that live in Tibro feel like there is little to do in their spare time because there are few meeting places (personal communication, 23.02.10).

In the past, the labour market unit (AME), a small service organisation that helps unemployed and work trainees, was one of the municipalities' primary platforms for the mentioned issues. Some years ago the department lost a big amount of their budget and the unit had to be restricted to meet its new conditions. The restriction was due to a national state change which also led to the withdrawal of the employment agency (arbetsmarknadsenheten) in Tibro. Mattias Gustafsson, department manager of AME, states that a lot of people in Tibro have a long way to go before they can work or study, this is often due to a language barrier, or an old or non-existent education which makes it hard to be attractive on the labour market. Today, AME is located outside of Tibro's centre, they receive some financial support from the municipality, and they also have a cooperation with the labour department in Skövde. Although, the financial contribution is small and some politicians are starting to question if the money should go to other things instead (personal communication, 23.02.08). But there is hope for the future, Gustavsson is looking into creating a new communal workshop (the old one was shut down), focused on reuse of furniture and gardening.

### **Challenges in association life**

Through the visits in Tibro, it becomes clear that they have a lively association life and many of the residents see Tibro as a mecca for association life. The association culture has remained strong throughout the years, but it has been facing challenges in today's society.

*The municipality cannot afford to maintain buildings that are empty for the most of the day, and subsidised rentals are not something the municipality want to promote.*

As mentioned, it is the economic restrictions that often limit projects in rural areas. In an interview with Peter Doverholt (personal communication, 23.02.02), head of Tibro's culture and leisure department, it becomes clear that the same issues have arisen in Tibro. Doverholt states that the municipality can not afford to have buildings that remain empty for the majority of the day. He





*Former association building, Humlan*

continues to explain that the municipality wants to help the associations of Tibro to find premises, although the problem is often that the rents are too high for the associations. When asked about subventioned rents, Doverhold stated that subventioned rents could prove to be unequal, since every association should have the same prerequisite. Andreas Ernestam, the municipal property unit manager, shares the same opinions regarding subventioned rents for associations (personal communication, 22.02.03). As a solution to the lack of meeting places, both Doverholt and Ernestam suggest that the municipality should focus more on creating flexible spaces that can be used for a plentiful of activities. They additionally add that it could be beneficial to co-use certain properties, and both propose to use classrooms outside of school hours.

The municipality had subventioned rents before, in the former association house Humlan. The subventioned rents were possible due to the fact that the rooms were in quite rough shape, the low standard of the building was ultimately the reason that the municipality shut it down. Ernestam highlights that these types of properties are not safe and the municipality can not take responsibility for them. The building was not something that the municipality could stand by as



they can only rent out buildings that are up to a certain standard, they also did not see a need for more association facilities in Tibro. Another point of view is presented in a conversation with Martin Toresson, who is involved within the association Destiny Dice, that has been active for many years in Tibro (personal communication, 23.01.26). Destiny Dice started by a group of youths with a push from parents who encouraged them to create an association. The municipality at the time saw great value in what they did for groups of people that might have been on the outburst of society and helped them gain a premise in Humlan. Martin greatly appreciated that the building of Humlan was rented out in a rough shape. It allowed each association to make the space their own, without having to be too gentle or careful. Additionally, it kept the rent down, which is greatly appreciated in associations that have very few opportunities to receive grants.

There is also a non-municipality driven platform that works for the association life in Tibro – Föreningspoolen. Today their work mostly focuses on sport associations but they have had the aim to involve other associations as well. Markus Olsson is the founder and works full time to help the associations of Tibro. In an interview, Olsson states that Föreningspoolen is an economic association that works independently and only has some collaborative projects together with the municipality (personal communication, 23.02.02). There is a will from Föreningspoolen to extend its operation to include more cultural associations, although Olsson adds that it has been hard to kickstart the engagement in associations again after the pandemic. Contrary to the municipality, Föreningspoolen and the associations see a clear lack of association facilities in Tibro today. Olsson adds that he views Tibro as a “sleepy municipality”, since there is often a long timespan between idea and action. He sees that enthusiastic and driving people (eldsjälar) exist, but that their initiatives and collaborations with the municipality are often stopped way too soon. The population of Tibro present a mistrust towards the municipality – a dissatisfaction that nothing happens. Mattias Peterson at the business life department, sees these discussions on internet forums and feels like the population lack an understanding of how the municipality works (personal communication, 23.01.25).

### **The lack of youth engagement**

Margareta Larsson has lived in Tibro her entire life. She is the owner of Nya Hotellet in central Tibro but also involved in several associations and heavily engaged in a variety of activities in Tibro. Larsson (personal communication, 23.01.25) believes that Tibro has lost visions for the future, and continues to explain that it is a completely different community from when she grew up. Larsson suspects that the Covid pandemic and the economical crisis have made it hard for the association life to start again. She sees a trend in the last decade, where it has become increasingly difficult to involve youth and young adults in

*The pandemic and the economic crisis have made it difficult to restart the association's life.*

the association's life outside of sports. Martin Toresson (personal communication, 23.02.02), sees the same issues when it comes to politics within Tibro. It has been hard for them to engage a younger clientele.

The goal of engaging youth is something that the municipality's department of Kultur & Fritid works with on a daily basis. Helene Axelsson and Linnea Gardberg, both leisure leaders (fritidsledare) in Tibro, explain that their job is to interact with, coach, teach, and engage youth. They do this by, among other things, arranging a lot of events that target the local youth of Tibro. They strive to kickstart engagement by trying to help youth organise themselves (personal communication, Axelsson 23.02.08 and Gardberg 23.02.16). One success story is the haunted house that now high schoolers Tim Algotsson and Linn Klasson launched while they were still studying in Tibro. They, along with other teenagers, organised a haunted house that targeted younger children last Halloween. The event was a great success, as there were many visitors, and an overwhelmingly positive response from the public. Linnéa Gardberg states that one of the things that made this a success story was the fact that the youths themselves organised everything. The adults simply guided them if they needed help. This goes very much in line with Gardberg's belief that youths should direct their own leisure time. Both Algotsson and Gardberg (personal communication, 23.02.16) believe that there are plenty of youths that want to be more engaged and organise events and projects, but it is hard to reach out to them. One problem that Gardberg sees is that some do not know that Kultur & fritid exist, she and Axelsson believe that the lack of resources is the main reason behind that. When asked about the response from the politicians regarding the haunted house, Gardberg adds that the value of projects like this was not quite highlighted among them. Kultur & fritid is the smallest department of the municipality, and their operation is not statutory, thereby they sometimes feel left behind (Axelsson, personal communication 23.02.08 & Gardeberg, personal communication 23.03.16). The youth centre is closed today, but is soon to re-open in new premises connected to the library. The leisure leaders think that their chances of influencing the youth will become easier while being located closer to its users (ibid.).

Another part of the municipality that collaborates with the youth is the municipality's business department. When asked about how to engage more youths, Peterson states that the youth centre is one way, but he also mentions the project *Young drive*. This is an initiative that collaborates with the municipality, where they offer summer jobs to young people to get a chance to run their own business ideas. Peterson thinks there are a lot of young enthusiastic people but their drive needs to be canalised (personal communication, 23.01.25).

*Some individuals are unaware of Kultur and Fritid's existence. It is the smallest department in the municipality, and their operations are not statutory, making resources tight and leaving them feeling behind at times.*





*Martin Toresson, member of Destiny Dice*





*View over the train track area, taken from the town centre*

*New values can be created  
when people work together  
towards a common goal*

## Theoretical framework

This thesis' theoretical chapter is mostly focused on principles that are thought to help comprehend and contextualise Tibro as well as the project's evolution. The framework revolves around value making, cooperation, and civic participation with added theory regarding social assets, collaborative methods, a sense of ownership and accountability.

### New perspectives on value

The term value-making may have many different meanings, although this master thesis will focus on the social values that can be generated through design. Even though social values in architecture are being discussed on a broader basis today than ten years ago, there are still a lot of different ways of measuring it and no clear definition. The magazine *Social value in architecture* (Samuel & Hatleskog, 2020) presents economical values to generally be the easiest form to measure. However, they fail to consider the invisible values that architecture may bring, this includes social values such as commonness and belonging within a community. According to Samuel and Halteskog (2020) there are five pillars that generate social value; these include 1) jobs and apprenticeships, 2) wellbeing generated through design, 3) learning developed through construction, 4) designing with the community and 5) building with local materials. It is important to note that all of the pillars should be overlapping, and they can be seen in several projects around the world.

The five themes highlight the value that is created when people work together towards a common goal and the responsibility and pride that it may bring. This can appear very different depending on the project and its location. In Atelier d'Architecture Autogérées' R-Urban project in Colombes, a participatory strategy was used to form workshops and collective hubs to strengthen the resilience of communities (Akbil et al., 2021). The project considered and highlighted both the volunteer work done by the community and the work of the professionals that did the construction work. Additionally, it encouraged the value of the new capacities and skills that the participants gained by involvement. An interesting mapping of the invisible values generated by the Colombes project is the iceberg diagram of resilience by Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée, based on *The economy as an iceberg* (Diagram 1, pp.24) by J.K. Gibson-Graham (2013). It demonstrates that the visible part of an iceberg can represent direct financial revenues, whereas the part beneath the surface embodies the volunteer work, skill improvements and ecological savings generated by the construction process, the utilisation of the building and through the activities that the building hosted (Petrescu & Petcou, 2020).

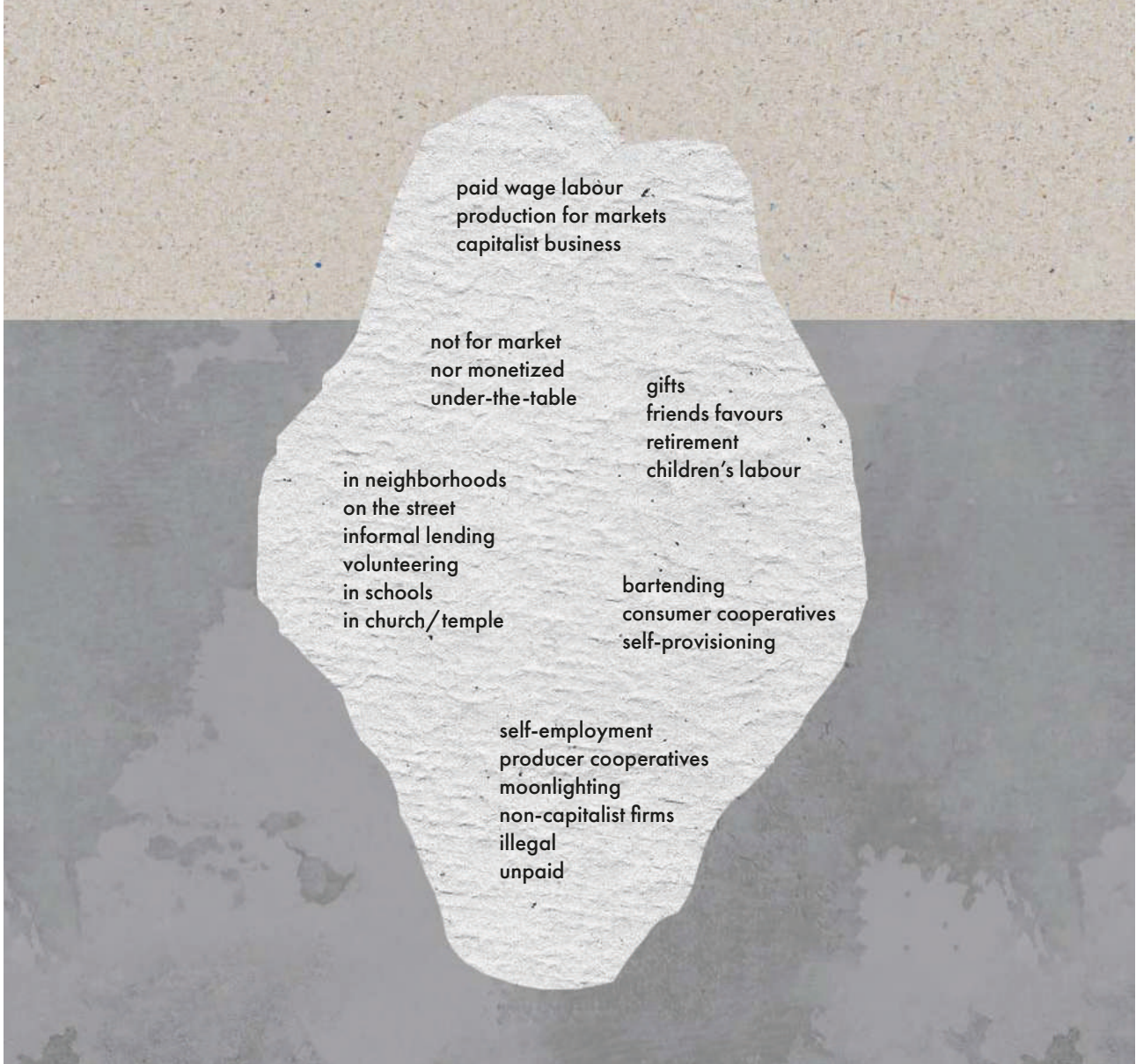


Diagram 1: The economy as an iceberg

A different strategy of social valuemaking was applied in rural China, in the post-earthquake reconstruction of Guangming village, an initiative started by Edward Ng, Wan Li and Xinan Chi (2020, pp. 74-81). In this rural area, the architects had to rethink their work process to adapt to the local materials, technologies and labour existing in the village. The result were houses that were robust, cheap and could withstand earthquakes, but more importantly, the project was an exchange in knowledge. The buildings were innovative and held creative solutions to face the challenges of the earthquakes the area suffered from, but they were built with traditional techniques and the traditional material of rammed earth (Wan & Ng, 2020). The building was a mutual agreement between local craftsmen, villagers, architects and constructors. The villagers could then take the new knowledge and build houses all over the area using the same techniques. It strengthens the community, gives people new homes and creates new jobs.

The two examples are set in two completely different sites, one in Paris and one in Guangming, but they show a lot of similar results in terms of social values. Both projects worked with locals in the design and construction processes and they were strengthened by people's willingness to learn – and to teach. Furthermore,



*Many agree that social values are important to consider in projects, although, it can be hard for municipalities to translate these concepts into a planning process*

*Being allowed to appropriate on a space can help increase civic commitment*

they generated architecture that meant something for the local communities, and connected the people within these communities. Although many probably agree that the social values are needed in projects, it could be hard for municipalities to translate these concepts into a planning process. Magnus Schön at Kod Arkitekter writes in the article *Tre vägar till en socialt hållbar stadsplanering* (2023) that social sustainability can be integrated in municipal planning with the help of three main strategies. These include 1) that the municipality should set demands on how the buildings in the municipality are used, 2) that the detailed plans should highlight the importance of shared and flexible space, and 3) collaborations between the municipality and the locals should be more common. As an example, Schön discusses land maintained by locals but owned by the municipality, stating that this would lead to increased engagement and strengthen the people as they are allowed to appropriate a space. He additionally describes that some municipalities work with selling the land for a set price rather than to the highest bidder. A strategy which helps create a motivation and a will to execute projects that can greatly enhance social, economic and ecological sustainability within a local community.

## People as a resource

Each municipality in Sweden is required by law to provide services to its citizens, such as healthcare and education. This means that certain services that are not bound by law, such as cultural ones, are due to be neglected when there is a limited budget which entails other important values being pushed to the side. When public resources are scarce and the economic struggle leads to the prioritisation of certain services, people tend to either give up or take the responsibility into their own hands. Low resources are often referred to as the starting point for civic engagement, in which the locals take the main responsibility for their own community by creating lively environments through new initiatives and partnerships.

There are several examples in Sweden where the civic society have come together to form local initiatives aiming to transform the built environment. One example that is frequently mentioned is *Röstånga tillsammans*, an association that was founded to explore new forms of cooperation to benefit the development of Röstånga (Åkerman, 2020). The organisation was formed by a few key persons, as they saw a great potential to challenge the view of how it is to live in the countryside. The founders gathered and engaged locals, associations, companies, as well as the municipality. They realised that the engagement and commitment already existed within the community, but they needed help to structure and organise it, in order to simplify participation. Today the project involves over 300 people, who collaborate and have the freedom to come up with and execute their own ideas (Åkerman, 2020). One of the founders of *Röstånga tillsammans*, Nils



Philips, stated that one of the keys to realise a project like *Röstånga tillsammans* is to build trust within the community (personal communication, 21.11.19). This could be done in a very practical manner, for example, *Röstånga tillsammans* made sure that the first smaller project was very visible. Philips explains that they focused on smaller key projects in the beginning, so that the locals could see that things were happening, which resulted in local engagement and sparked a sense of ownership as well as responsibility.

*Local engagement and a sense of ownership can be sparked by starting with small key projects.*

Another successful project that benefited from social assets is *Not Quite* in Fengersfors. The culture centre is an arena for artists and creators where they are equipped with workshops, ateliers, exhibition space as well as stores and cafés. People are welcome to attend events or participate in courses and the artists in the collective can get assistance in finding funding for projects or with financial concerns (Not Quite, 2023). *Not Quite* is divided into two associations, one is an economic association with 70 part time owners, the other is a non-profit who acts as an art collective. Everyone in the associations help out with the maintenance, to host courses, as well as running the shop and café. They also collaborate with the local art school in Steneby. The students can become members and thereby be allowed to use the workshop spaces, and sell their art in the store. During the summertime, when there are not as many full time artists in the area, the collective invites students from different art schools to a residence. The students work in the area during the season, which means that the area still is active and welcoming for tourists. *Not Quite* additionally hold student targeted events during the whole of the year, to attract younger people to participate in the associations even after they graduate (Not quite, 2023).

Alongside the two projects above, the example of Uddebo is also frequently mentioned when talking about the types of initiatives that value people. One thing that makes Uddebo stand out is the large inflow of people that has moved here during the last couple of years, which is often credited to the culture and the association life that has occurred in the last decade (Åkerman, 2020). Two projects highlighted in Uddebo are Väveriet and Småhusbyn. The first mentioned is an old weaving mill that now acts as a facility for associations and small companies, common facilities and workshops free for everyone to use. The second project, Småhusbyn (directly translated to small house village) is an initiative where several families come together and build their own house on a common property (Flisbäck & Carlén, 2022). Småhusbyn can be seen as a result of the previous reformations in Uddebo which raised a questioning of the norm of rural development. Thereby, Småhusbyn challenges the notion of ownership and creates hybrid solutions within the community. When väveriet closed down in 2011, the village looked alot different as to how it looks today, many of the houses stood empty, but through civic engagement and low housing prices, Uddebo has had a large upswing in both people and cultural activities. The people moving in

had a spirit of change and positivity, and the people that lived in Uddebo felt that things finally started to happen, when seeing how old decaying buildings were being renovated and used (ibid.).

*Specialised expertise is common in cities, but is not as common in rural settings.*

The renewal of Uddebo highlights both potential and challenges for development in the countryside. Liv Sonntag and her partner Kalle Magnusson bought Väveriet in Uddebo, they accessed it in 2016 and have since worked to engage companies and projects to rent and use the spaces (Åkerman, 2020). The couple have through their time in Uddebo become aware of the problem of rural development, and Sonntag comments in an interview (ibid.) that she sees a need for more diverse tools and competence in rural processes. Specialised expertise that is common in cities is lacking within the rural setting and the result is a large portion of the responsibility for an endeavour is placed on the locals. Sonntag sees no one-type-solution to the problem. Ideal initiatives and self-organisation can solve some issues but not all. Instead, she desires that larger actors would take on more responsibility for these areas, which could include structural changes within the collaboration between regions and municipalities (ibid.).

### Who plans the countryside?

*A conflict may arise when urban planning processes are applied to the countryside.*

The three projects listed above demonstrate the importance of civic participation; however, civic initiatives can also be troublesome. In the chapter *Planning for quality of life as the right to spatial production in the rural void* (2023), Nils Björling raises the issue, pointing out that many of these initiatives are often developed by individuals and groups with extensive knowledge of how to use funding and establish projects that speak to the urban middle class. He means that a conflict may arise when combining the countryside with urban planning processes (Björling, 2023).

The countryside and its self-organised projects are often seen manufactured as an idyll. However, there is also another way of looking at the transfer of responsibility. Angelica Åkerman (2020) lifts the discussion at the end of her book *En annan landsbygd*, where she introduces a collection of civic initiatives within Sweden. She states the potential of all the initiatives, including Uddebo, as a novel way of developing the rural, but she also lifts a finger and problematizes the root of these actions, which she says come from the injustice of services across the country. Åkerman is not the only one to point out this issue, as Syssner (2018, pp.105) also calls attention to the critique by stressing the matter of fairness in the discussion. Municipal politicians that she has come in contact with means that self-organised work can be problematic since people who pay high taxes need to manufacture their own services, whereas their urban counterparts do not. Additionally, Malin Rönnblom's (2014) discourse analysis for Jordbruksverket on various national policies concerning the Swedish countryside also draws attention

to the problem of equity in rural development. She enforces that responsibility for rural development is prominently placed on the countryside itself, and the problems faced are frequently compared to those in urban areas, which are the norm for societal development.

Civic initiatives can also be problematic with democratic transparency in mind. Ida Nilsson, researcher at Blekinge Institute of Technology, raises the topic in an interview conducted by RURARK (Hagelberg et al., 2022) and claims that when the local society gains a hold of the development, there is a risk that democracy takes a turn. One must consider who is making the choice and how they are doing so. Nilsson raises the probability that people within a local setting may have bigger platforms than others, which could lead to certain issues being brought to the agenda while others might not. She sees it as a risk for a rural elite to seize control of the development programme. For that reason, she stresses that local initiatives do not mean equal justice.

*In local development processes, the society must consider who is making the choice and how they are doing so. Otherwise, there may be a conflict regarding democratic transparency.*

### Who is the initiator?

One needs to find a balance between municipal and civic engagement as the non-profit commitment today is such a crucial resource in the rural areas. The authors in the study *Arkitektens roll på landsbygden* point out the growing interest for locally established development in rural areas as a starting point for societal change (Hagelsson et al., 2022). But the trend of growth still makes the competitiveness between municipalities to be the prior goal and no one seems to be willing to go against the stream.

Sweden's tendency of centralization throughout the years has meant that government positions are being moved to Stockholm, and the regions have in their turn shifted to the region's centre. With increased centralization, the need for administration has become greater, putting additional stress on the already overburdened municipality (Hela Sverige ska leva, 2020a). So, one can question if the already weaker municipalities are to be held responsible for not annotating novel planning initiatives. Municipalities that already lack a solid resource base cannot be held accountable for not producing new strategies and according to Syssner (2016) a majority of the burden should instead be put on the government. Meaning that it's their job to establish new planning initiatives in rural as well as in urban areas. On the other hand, the national organisation Hela Sverige ska leva (2020a) thinks that one should have more faith and respect for the municipality's ability to govern itself. They propose an alternative: one should offer them more responsibility by assigning them more duties in exchange for the associated funding.

*Municipalities that already lack a solid resource base cannot be held accountable for not producing new strategies*

Moreover, the government has taken it upon themselves to take more responsibility for the Swedish countryside. In 2017, the rural committee of Riksdagen submitted

*Local development groups with both civic and public members could be necessary to develop future sustainable societies.*

*The smaller municipalities have good circumstances for collaboration as their size and scale often simplify the path to a decision.*

a unified policy for rural regions, which included 75 notions aimed at creating the same development circumstances as the rest of the country (SOU 2017:1, 2017). Although, it is clear that the plan is not prioritised inside the government. The national organisation Hela Sverige ska leva (2020b) concluded that only three of the policy ideas were completely adopted after three years of implementation. The organisation analysed the plans' outcomes, and none of the five recommendations under *Community planning and housing construction* can be considered completely realised.

A new level of community development could be the way moving forward. This is suggested by Hans Arén, architect and Ulla Herlitz (2019), cultural geographer, where they introduce a novel community level. They believe that a local development group with both civic and public members is a necessity to develop sustainable societies. The new strategy is to bring together civil society activities for the development of the local area with a form of representative democracy through a jointly elected local committee. They argue that civic duty becomes clearer, more direct, and inspires commitment as a result. However, for them to succeed there is a need for politicians to meet them halfway. Their job needs to be about enabling development in the right direction by being supportive with both decisions and laws that work in the good of the work of the civic. Suggesting that future development needs to be more collaborative (ibid.).

## The tricky road to cooperation

Collaboration is seen as a critical step towards achieving long-term sustainable success. One of the UN's priorities for sustainable development is cross-sector collaboration and partnership. In a rural context where the economic driving forces are often perceived as weak, collaboration can be a way of bypassing those factors. The smaller municipalities have good circumstances for collaboration as their size and scale often simplify the path to a decision.

### The common goal

Many factors can lead to a successful cooperation, but the necessity for a shared aim is frequently listed as what decides the outcome of a collaborative effort. In an interview with RURARK (Hagelberg et al., 2022), Erik Berg, architect and creator of Egnahemsfabriken, explains that groups of individuals generally do not get together due to an already-solved problem, but rather for a common challenge or objective. In accordance with Berg's comment, the article *Collective Impact* (Kania & Kramer, 2011) emphasises the requirement for an overall comprehension and approach to an issue in order to build successful collaborations. The article highlights the prospect of cross-sector initiatives that strive for collective impact. Leaving behind its inverse of isolated impact (one-actor initiatives), as a method

to create social shift. Additionally, the common goal is highlighted as a crucial step within Actor-Network theory (ANT) as a way to cope with structural change. The goal should identify factors needed for overall transition within an area, by being long term and based in social negotiation and participatory processes (Kühn, 2010).

A common goal can however be hard to implement in cross sector collaborations. This is because various sectors have their own distinct driving forces. Tillmar et al. (2018) propose within their report *Sektorsöverskridande samverkan* that private, public, and civic actors have all different motivations. The division presented is based on typical ideal assumptions and needs to be considered as they might affect partnerships. The private sector is primarily concerned with output, whereas the public sector has legal security, democratic reasons, and routines as its most prominent motivation. The civic sector on the other hand is more driven by its norms and values. Their different motivations declare why the common vision is elevated as a cornerstone in bringing about change. One way of achieving the common goal, also suggested within ANT, is by implementing strategic projects. The projects can be seen as stepping stones whose purpose is to generate results of the vision, functioning as positive symbols of change. Strategic visions or common goals can in other words generate positive images which can help oppose the current trend within a community. However, change demands the right conditions as well as key persons (Kühn, 2010).

*The common goal can be hard to achieve since various sectors have their own driving forces.*

### **Cross-sector collaboration**

Key individuals, also known as *boundary spanners* or *eldsjälar* in Swedish, are seen as essential for cross-sector collaboration. According to Tillmar et al. (2018), the boundary spanner should have roots in a variety of sectors and has wide expertise, a vast network of other boundary spanners as well as contacts with politicians, bureaucrats, and the target audience. They are seen by Tillmar et al. (2018) as two essential components of a successful partnership as they 1) bring expertise in the form of intersectoral knowledge, excitement for the people being targeted, and the capacity to persuade others to care, while 2) having an extensive set of connections make them have a personal expertise, generally being visible within the society making them forming partnerships more easily. This is also highlighted within the *Collective impact* (Kania & Kramer, 2011) as motivated employees are lifted as a crucial factor in cooperative processes. Tillmar et al. (2018) identify three other elements as essential for a successful cooperation being: 3) Capital - In the scenario of public welfare, public-financed capital is viewed as a requirement, since private capital and non-profits can contribute, but long-term public capital is deemed necessary. 4) Continuity - as the partnership benefits from being ongoing throughout time. Changes among participating organisations or external variables have a detrimental impact on collaboration, causing it to slow down.

*Boundary spanners or eldsjälar, can be vital as they often have roots and knowledge in a variety of sectors.*

Cooperation should grow naturally and originate in a group of people with common ideas and needs

Lastly pointed out, 5) context - the conditions, both local and on a broader scale, influence the outcome of a joint effort. The example of *Röstånga tillsammans*, shows an exemplary case of successful collaboration within Sweden. In an interview by Angelica Åkerman with Anna Haraldsson Jensen, Jensen credits a large part of the success to the competence and process leading skills of Nils Philips (Åkerman, 2020). She states that through the management, people quickly became involved and felt more comfortable in the role of being community active. This resulted in a domino effect, where people became more and more active and willing to execute different ideas by themselves.

On the other hand, structures and administration may not always be the ideal strategy depending on the types of collaborations one wants to achieve. This may be true in the case of youth associations, as Kenth Ottermark (1986) describes in *Kooperativ utveckling och lokal strategi i Emilien*. Ottermark notes that another form of bottom-up perspective needs to be applied, where the youths have to form the organisations themselves. The cooperation should grow naturally and originate in a group of people with common ideas and needs. A way of pushing that forward could be by informing the youths about cooperative structures and ideas. In Italy this is done in the school curriculum and the author also suggests that youth themselves could be the one giving the information (Ottermark, 1986). Ottermark additionally notes the importance of social natural meetingplaces to form these engagements, and how this might enhance corporations among youths. Another aspect of youth cooperation is the value of talking to already existing initiatives and knowledge, as these have collected knowledge that is useful for newer generations. There is otherwise a risk for the new organisation to take over and suffocate the previous. By incorporating both new and present organisations, a more democratic result can be reached (ibid.), which also enhances collaboration between generations.

Collaboration between sectors can also be challenging as projects that rely on various departments, or who are trying to achieve a collective impact, are more vulnerable when it comes to adjustments within politics and policies that might affect them negatively (Tillmar et al., 2018). This was the case with the project Kooperativet. The economical association aimed to increase work opportunities for disabled people and did so by collaborating with Arbetsförmedlingen within the framework of FAS 3 (an employment and development guarantee for people far away from the labour market, introduced by the government in 2007 and wound up in 2018). Kooperativet had a solid foundation of preconditions, a common goal, a large personal engagement and drive, and good local cooperation between the employees and Arbetsförmedlingen. Although, changes in directives resulted in economic consequences, and changes of rules in Arbetsförmedlingen generated an unstable system. Another factor was the value of peoples connections and network, these were very valuable to initiate different forms of collaborations,

although, in a long term perspective this enhances a fragile system. What happens when a person quits and their network disappears? Another point that was highlighted was the difficulty of different interpretations of the common goal (ibid.).

### Public accountability for cooperation

Municipalities play an important role in community development and collaborative ventures. Partnerships, cooperation and networks are vital for municipalities, partly to handle problems, and partly due to the financial struggles that many of them face (Khakee through Mukthar-Landgren, 2019). However, they might play diverse roles in a cooperation. Mukthar-Landgren (2019) distinguishes three, introducing the municipality as a partner, advocate, or enabler. The author suggest that the municipality, as a partner, is one of many players who contribute to the success of a project. As an advocate, the municipality may promote a project by initiating, sponsoring, or implementing it. Subsequently the municipality, as an enabler, does not play a prominent role in the project and is not one of the numerous actors; however, they actively support the initiative. As facilitators, they have the authority to act on behalf of others. It has the ability to play a major role in the achievement of government goals (ibid.).

*The municipality can take on different roles in different projects, as a partner, advocate or enabler.*

A new point of view on how the state can act is presented in the article *Public Value Governance* by John Bryson et al. (2014). Bryson describes a new role of the state, where it both works in a traditional manner, but also as an initiator and coordinator of networks and partnerships. The approach focuses on public values and service to and for the public.

*“Government acts as convener, catalyst, collaborator; sometimes steering, sometimes, rowing, sometimes partnering, sometimes staying out of the way”  
(Bryson et al., 2014, pp.446).*

A similar approach can be seen when looking at Denmark. The value of rural locations have influenced Danish rural policies, with the most notable being in 2007, where the amount of municipalities went from 275 to 98. With this change came new regulations, and the new municipalities were told to formulate a plan for rural development. This is described by Tjetjien and Jørgensen (2016) in the research paper *Translating a wicked problem: A strategic planning approach to rural shrinkage in Denmark*. The case of the shrinking rural periphery is defined by the two authors as a *wicked problem* They exemplify it such as out-mitigation, ageing population, lower employment rates and lower education levels in rural areas. To handle these struggles, the municipality of Thisted used a new planning approach to address the shrinkage called *Land of opportunities*. The results were six different projects that were based on principles of collaboration and a place-based strategy. To do the projects, Thisted had a planning group consisting of three members of



the planning department and one external consultant. In addition to this they had a cross-departmental group that included local stakeholders. The analysis by Tjetjien and Jørgensen showed that collaborations could help handle wicked problems.

Faaborg-Midtfyns, where the architect Ida B. G. Pedersen works, is another Danish municipality that has actively dealt with rural development. In an interview conducted by RURARK (Hagelberg et al., 2022), Pedersen explains that work with the municipality was based on initiatives from the state and cooperations between the municipality and the locals. There was an organised bottom-up workflow and guidelines for how to cooperate between actors. The politicians in Denmark have worked a lot with development in the countryside, to search for funding and programs aimed at rural areas have been made easier from the state initiatives. A contributor to make this possible is Realdania, a financial holding company, that works with both small and large building projects all over Denmark, aimed at improving the quality of the built environment. A key aspect of Realdania is the collaborations that they have, as they cooperate with the government, the municipalities, companies, as well as associations, local groups and enthusiasts (Realdania, 2023). The initiatives done by the state have had a large impact on the development of the municipalities. According to RURARK, the strategic aspect is just as essential since it demonstrates how to collaborate across multiple levels with these concerns (Hagelberg et al., 2022).

## Ownership

Commons is the ownership by many. It is a term that can describe a variety of different scenarios, but in the handbook by the Urban commons research collective the term is seen as

*“[...] to generate social processes that can maintain, reproduce and reinvent our lives in times of uncertainty” (Akbil et al., 2021, pp. 21).*

Commons could thereby be a way to reflect on political processes, climate change, relationships, care and ownership. The subject of commons and specifically common making is further discussed in the book *The social (Re)production of architecture*. There it is highlighted that more people within a variety of professions are starting projects with a higher focus on common making. It includes fostering cultural and social networks, good public spaces and the implementation of frameworks and strategies that allow for more equitable access to resources. A net of commons is presented by Lars Jadelius (2017) in his book *Ägandet av himmel, hav, skog och bygd as a sociability*. A sociability is the collective term for acts of common ownership and management that aims to question the status quo of the common.

Buildings and spaces are shaped by use and users, meaning that they are shaped according to their preferences and needs. In order to create a sense of belonging, people must be able to utilise and personalise a building. Jadelius (2020) writes about this and continues to disassemble the terms dedication, ownership, and appropriation. He implies that a sense of ownership is intertwined with both access and possession and can be summed up in the term appropriation. Going on he means that appropriation can be seen as a process over time that can be strengthened or weakened depending on how power is distributed and used. He implies that public spaces cannot have a profound impact on us until they respond to our needs. Every change in a space causes disturbances in people's attachment to that space, which can be positive or negative.

*A sense of ownership is intertwined with both access and possession and can be summed up in the term appropriation.*

A good example of this is the Centre of Contemporary Arts (CCA) in Glasgow. The centre was founded in the 1960s under the name Third Eye Center and was widely popular until the beginning of the nineties, when it reformed into CCA. The centre received money to renovate and double the size of its premises but never obtained any money to maintain or operate. As CCA opened up its doors, the previously loved atmosphere was gone and replaced with something too nice, this according to Francis McKee (2017), former director of the CCA (even though he says he is not), stated in a lecture about the centre. He describes that the renovation caused people to not like the place, or rather, people were too scared to enter, which led the place to be put in bankruptcy in the middle of the 2000's and he was hired to close down the centre. McKee thought it was a shame that the premises would stand empty during that time and started instead to hand out keys to artists, organisations as well as individuals, who could make use of the place in the meantime. It led to the reactivation of the centre in which the founders saw prosperity and the temporary concept became permanent and CCA ones again came to life.

McKee (2017) mentions two aspects throughout his lecture on why CCA started to function better after it was shut down which goes in line with what Jadelius (2020) states. The first being a wider sense of ownership (the belonging), as users need to feel a claim over the site. The handing out of keys was one factor in letting people use the building, but it was also the fact that the founders realised that they needed to take a step back in order to retain an open atmosphere. It has led to a power structure within the building that is today hard to see as it is, according to McKee (2017), spread among all of CCA's users. The other aspect pointed out is the need for an interior that the user can appropriate on (the personalization). The place needed to appeal to more people, and to do so, they thought of making the nice art centre look a bit more rough. McKee means that a too nice site scares away people, and by making it crappy, the space feels more relaxed and the site can include more.

*The founders of CCA took a step back in order to retain an open atmosphere. They handed out keys and let the people appropriate freely.*

*It can be a struggle to transfer  
the feeling of ownership*

Nonetheless, including everyone risks creating a situation in which no one feels accountability. The lack of mine and ours devolves into none which often gives a lack of responsibility, as it does not belong to anyone. Jadelius (2017) argues that one needs to go beyond the I and understand the we and all its definitions, to see the complexity of ours in order to achieve the new and modern sociability. As more people get involved and the ownership grows among several the responsibility factor gets a turn. In Tillmars' et al. (2018) description of the case study of *Projektet*, the initiator of the project states that it was hard to transfer the feeling of ownership from the ones managing and coordinating to the participating organisations. The idea was that a project management group would start the project, and then slowly transfer the ownership and responsibility to the participants. This was easier said than done, as the coordinators felt that the project became way too dependent on their active work. There was a will to participate and help, but actively taking on a role scared people away (ibid.).

## Economical strategies

Financing is, as previously stated, an obstacle to rural development. Rural as well as rural municipalities do not have the luxury that cities have, where there is a multitude of investors interested in developing the land. This gives rural areas the potential to think about economy and financing in creative ways, rather than sticking to the urban development norms of growth. As a result, new methods have started to emerge.

*Rural communities have  
the potential to think about  
economy in creative ways*

### Financial support issues

A lot of projects in rural areas are heavily dependent on grants and funds from external actors. In many cases, funding is searched for in a variety of different organisations, states the pilot study by RURARK (Hagelberg et al., 2022). The problem is that these processes are not always so easy nor accessible for everyone. The study goes on to say that many of these funds are targeting very specific groups of people and are often geared toward the business sector. A community house for youths and kids could, for an example, have potential to seek funds at Arvsfonden. The fund specialises in funding projects aimed at youths, kids or elders and highlights that the target groups of a project should be highly involved in the development process (Arvsfonden, 2022). Although, this may exclude projects like a community house, with no specific target group.

The administrative work behind searching for funds may also be directed towards certain people, since these processes often require people to be good at academic writing and knowledgeable about complex financial administration. Requirements like these drastically limit the amount of people able to apply for these types of funds. This could be due to poor Swedish language skills or

for simply not targeting the right groups of people (RURARK, 2022). Many of the funds also require a certain amount of economic self-sufficiency that is not achievable by one association on its own. Associations targeting people that are not youths nor seniors are often heavily restricted in the amounts of grants that are available. The same is true for target activities that do not include sports. The playing field for associations' ability to search for grants is simply not equal to begin with, which makes it clear that there is a need for new forms of collaboration between the associations and the municipality (ibid.).

*There is an injustice in who  
has the possibilities to search  
for funding*

### Financing in rural areas

One way of going around the issues with funding in rural regions is to find and utilise local resources and strengths. This is exemplified in Duvedsmodellen, a research and innovation project that uses the village of Duved in Åre municipality as a platform to investigate how the countryside can develop into the future. The strategies that are researched are aimed to achieve local cooperation, good and affordable housing, circular food production, an attractive living environment as well as digitalisation (Duvedsmodellen, 2023). One of the people working with Duvedsmodellen is Björn Hellström, he is also the author of the report *Nio punkter om lokalsamhällets konkreta behov* in which he describes the difficulty of building cheap housing in the countryside. Hellström claims that the main reason for this is the banks who prioritise larger construction companies and investors that focus on city areas. The building costs in projects set in rural areas can get quite expensive and therefore are investments in rural areas seen by many as too risky (Hellström, 2022). Hellströms summary of Duvedsmodellen continues to describe that the primary strategy to consider when working with rural building development is to think locally and to enhance the cooperation between the municipality, the region, the local companies and the national networks.

Local funding is also brought up in *Den första samhällsnivån*, a report by Herlitz and Arén. They see that people tend to contribute economically if it benefits their daily life, for example saving a local school or store. The authors go on to explain that initiatives like these are relatively easy to understand since people quickly realise the benefits, thereby, they have the power to engage a lot of people. It is more complex to find ways of funding larger amounts of projects or the development of an entire locality. This could additionally include projects that have long term positive effects, yet may not be as necessary in a short term perspective (Herlitz & Arén 2017). An example of reimagining rural development and working around financial limitations is the strategy of Röstånga tillsammans, where they formed RUAB, Röstånga utvecklings aktiebolag, a local development stock company. Nils Philips states that the idea behind the initiative in Röstånga was to improve the social values, to make it feel inclusive, therefore they do not work for economic gain (personal communication, 21.11.19). They have made

*Making poor investments in projects that meant alot for the locals, was a strategy that Röstånga used to build trust and create an inclusive environment.*

a lot of investments that can be seen as ‘poor investments’ from an economic point of view, but the initiatives have meant alot for the locals and for the local development. This was one of their strategies to build trust and an inclusive environment that made it easier for people to contribute to the projects. Philip’s states that they do not talk about money, but resources. One local may be able to contribute with work, and another might contribute with 500 kr, both are equally valued and can contribute in their own ways.

The key concept of RUAB is to buy properties within the community of Röstånga and sell stocks. For this to work, it was stated that the majority stockholder should always be Röstånga tillsammans, the local development association. Anna Haraldsson Jensen (Åkerman, 2020) describes in an interview that the rest of the stockowners are owned privately or by companies; often local. RUAB is non-profit, and all of the revenue goes directly to development projects within the community. According to Jensen, in an ideal world, local organisations would be responsible for seeing what is required on a local scale, while the municipality would have a general perspective of the municipality on a geographical scale. In terms of local site development, she believes that a more integrated cooperation between the associations and the municipality would be beneficial (Åkerman, 2020).

Another example from Röstånga that introduces a novel economical strategy within a rural context is R:ekobyn. Sara Eriksson is an architect and one of the key persons in the development of the project. In an interview conducted by Jenny Lindberg (Lindberg, 2020) the two discuss the problems with getting financial support in projects outside of the big cities. When Eriksson is asked about how to get around the struggles with the economy, she states that the municipalities need to realise their power. The initiation of different depreciation rules for the city, the rural areas as well as the different parts of a city could be necessary to benefit the public. Eriksson believes in a new reform that could stimulate the public benefits and allow smaller municipalities to use it as a tool that generates more area of action. This would require structural changes on how the municipalities and regions act (Lindberg, 2020).

## Lessons learned from the theory

Hereby follows a summary of what we bring with us from the theory.

- + Social values are critical to consider while developing urban areas.
- + Learning-by-doing processes can generate new values.
- + Individuals who act as *boundary spanners*, or *eldsjälar*, are critical to cross-sector collaboration and local development. It can be good to have a coordinator group to initiate and help guide projects, although a danger could be that the project may become too dependent on a few people.
- + A local development group composed of both civic and public members may be viewed as a requirement for developing sustainable communities, since it clarifies civic duty and encourages dedication as a result. However, politicians must meet them halfway by supporting their projects.
- + When residents believe that things are happening in their community, they are more willing to engage and contribute.
- + People can become interested and feel more comfortable being active in the community with new management.
- + The smaller municipalities have good circumstances for collaboration, as their size and scale often simplify the path to a decision.
- + Cooperation is required for the discovery of new development approaches.
- + Strategic visions or common goals can generate positive images which can help oppose current trends within a community and generate structural change.
- + When working with youths, a bottom-up perspective needs to be applied.
- + In projects, the municipality can take on different roles: a partner, an advocate, or an enabler.
- + There may be a need for new state initiatives that place greater trust in municipalities.
- + In order to create a sense of belonging, people must be able to utilise and personalise a building.
- + The preconditions for applying for funds are not equal.





*Exterior view, Centraföreningen*



## Introducing Centralföreningen

The history and context of Centralföreningen, together with the rest of the train track area, are presented within this chapter. The building was chosen as the object of design after discussions with both Leif Ahnland, and architect Anders Berensson. It serves as a foundation for the upcoming design studies, given in the following chapter.

Centralföreningen is one of the largest buildings along the central part of the train tracks area in Tibro. It is located on the outskirts of the current city centre, but can be seen from a great distance due to its size. In the past, the building has been used as a granary run by a collective of farmers that used it as a platform to sell their produce (personal communication, 23.03.06). Over the years both the function and the expression of the building have changed, the addition of the silo and the hall was not added until after the 1960s. It is seen as a well kept building and was repainted red 10 years ago, previous to that the building was white (Hellman et al., 2019). Centralföreningen, as well as the rest of the train tracks area is today owned by the municipality. The building is considered to be one of the key buildings from the old railway and antiquarian Martin Toresson states (personal communication, 23.03.06) that the exterior of the building should be protected and not to be drastically changed in a transformation. However there are different opinions to the area's historic value as another municipal employee sees potential to tear the area down, sell it, and hope that it could be turned into housing in the future (personal communication, 23.02.03).

About half of the ground floor of Centralföreningen has been insulated and heated, and it is rented by the local motorbike club Twin Balls and utilised as a workshop and club house. The basement has been transformed into a private bar, while the ground floor is lined with motorbikes. The second floor has been converted into a studio space for the band Grävlingarna, while the top floor and the silo remains unheated and unoccupied. The hall connected to the silo in the east was previously owned by Glenns Bygg i Tibro AB, who sold it to the municipality and now rents the place instead. The space is divided in two and used for storage.

Centralföreningen is one of several older buildings within the train tracks area. To the west lies the old station building, today used as a glass workshop with an associated store. Opposite the station house one finds the old grain depot, which stands empty and further west next to the square lies the old station cabin; the building was until recently used as a café. Right next to Centralföreningen, to the east, lies Asplunds, which has previously been owned and run by a collective of carpenters. Other close functions to the building are an elderly home, senior living as well as a leisure area (whose existence is questioned by the municipality).

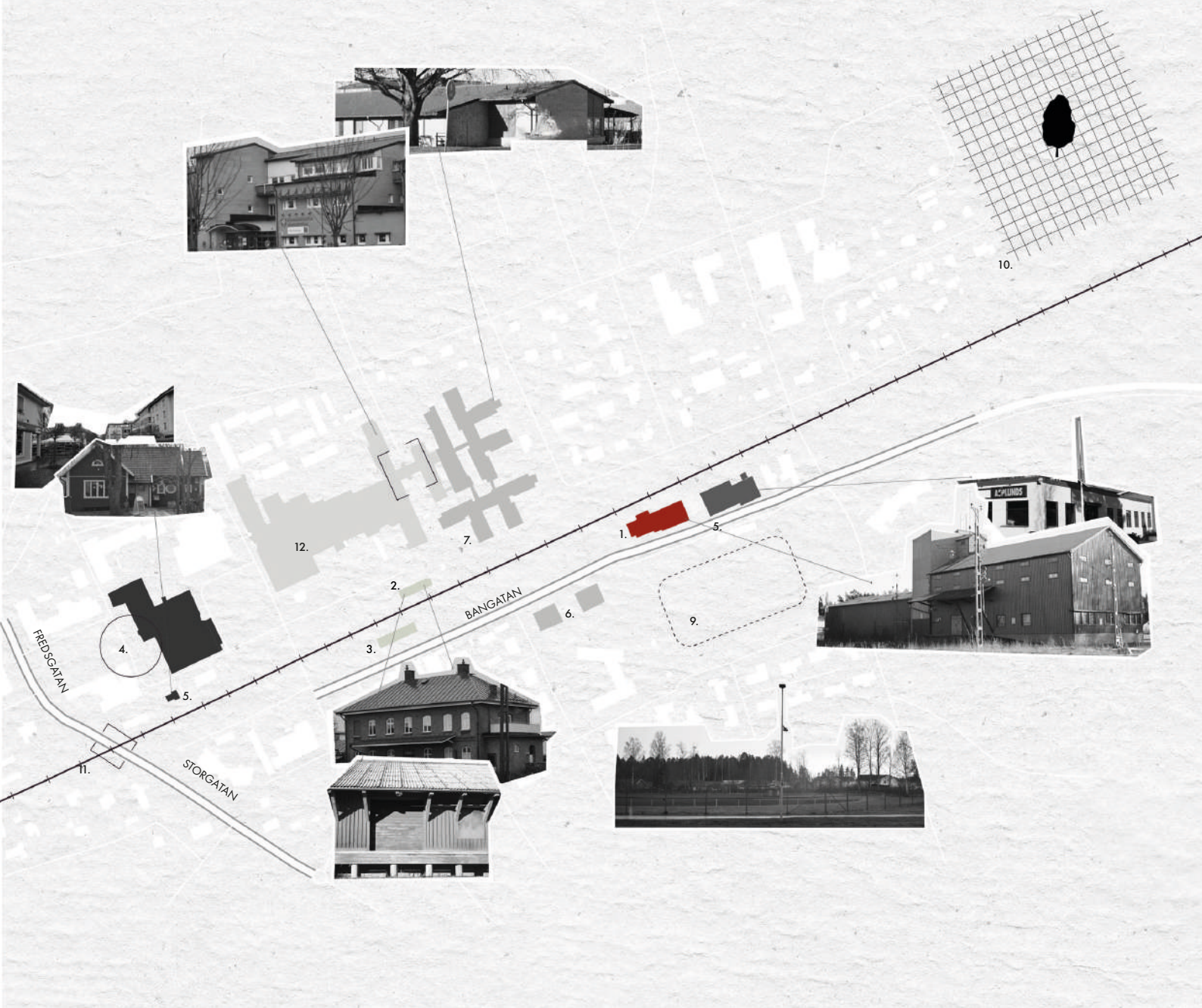
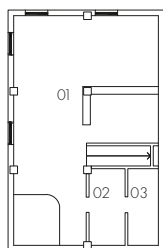
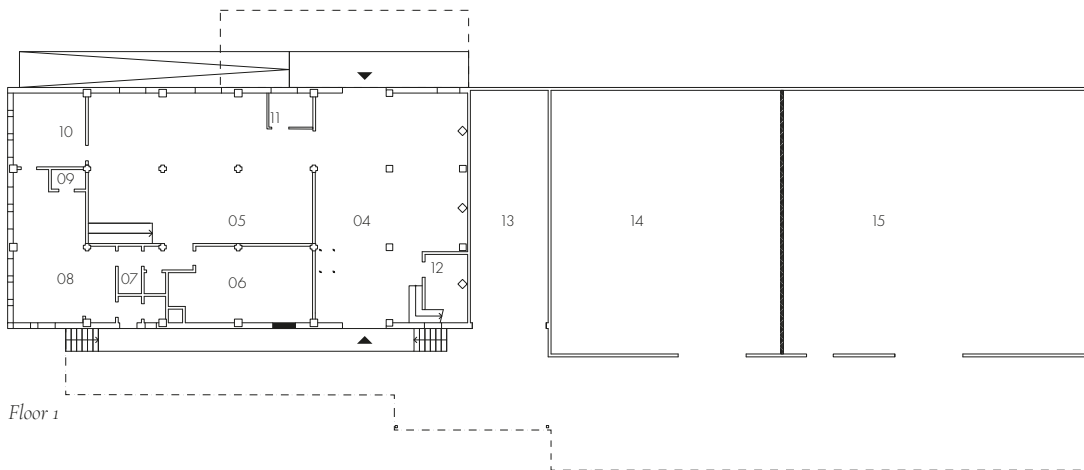
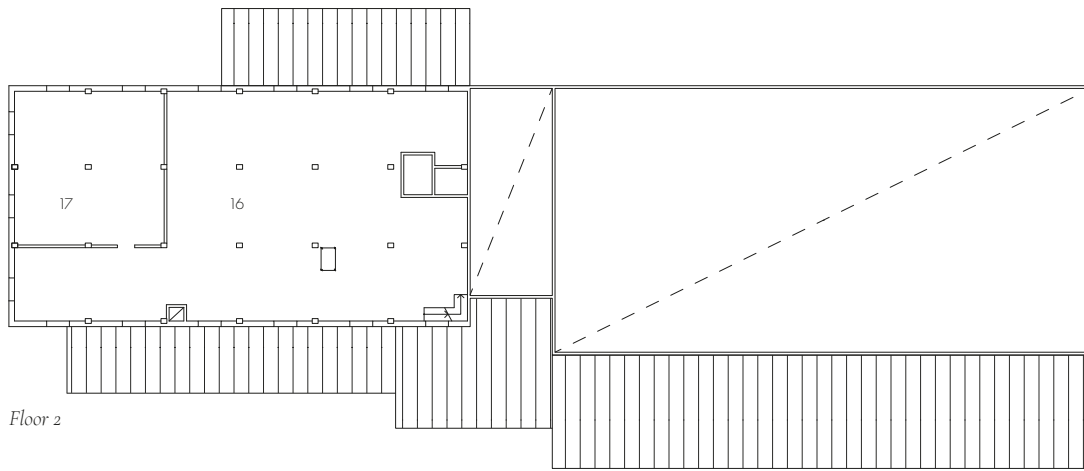
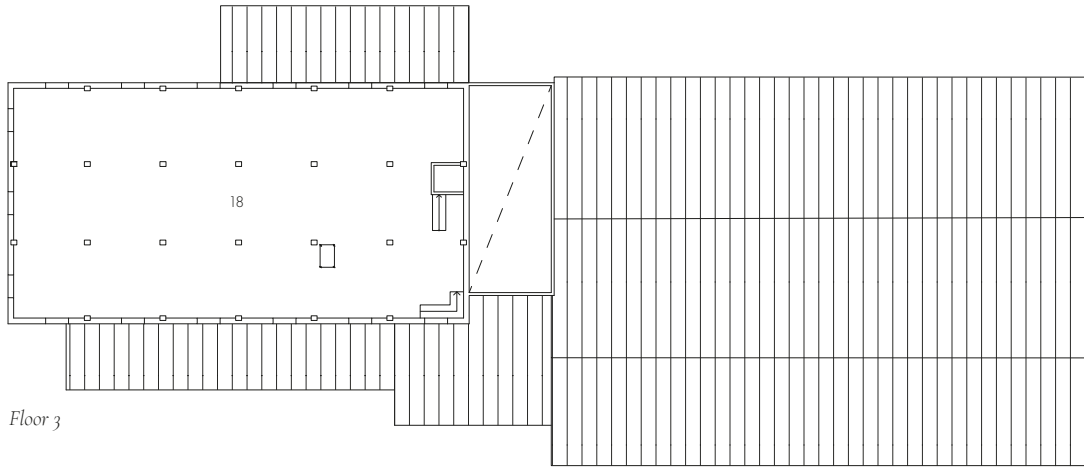


Diagram 2: The train track area

1. Centralföreningen
2. Trainstation
3. Grain depot
4. The square
5. Station Cabin
6. Asplund
7. Senior living
8. Elderly house
9. Leisure area
10. Areas to develop
11. Viaduct
12. Municipal building

The municipality, as previously mentioned, sees possibilities to build on the fields and forest areas to the north-east of the building.

When studying the infrastructure of the area, it is clear that there are some barriers hindering a good flow through the station area. These include a viaduct that connects Fredsgatan and Storgatan, which separates the former train tracks from the rest of the infrastructure. Another barrier is the train area in itself, it is not used much today, and there are not a lot of organised places to cross. In addition to this, directly north of the train track area is the municipal house, a building with a very large floor footprint, thereby it graveley hinders movement though the area.



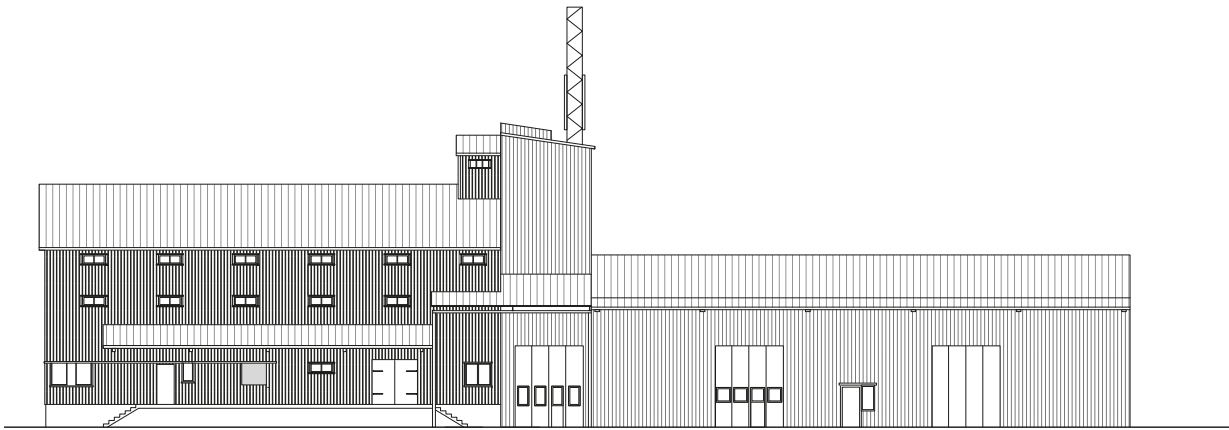
Original floor plans – 1:400

- |    |                    |    |           |    |            |
|----|--------------------|----|-----------|----|------------|
| 01 | Twinballs' Urinal  | 08 | Club Room | 16 | Open room  |
| 02 | Urinal             | 09 | Storage   | 17 | Music Room |
| 03 | Storage            | 10 | Room      | 18 | Open room  |
| 04 | Entrance room      | 11 | Storage   |    |            |
| 05 | Motorcycle storage | 12 | Storage   |    |            |
| 06 | Workshop           | 13 | Silo      |    |            |
| 07 | WC / Storage       | 14 | Storage   |    |            |
|    |                    | 15 | Storage   |    |            |

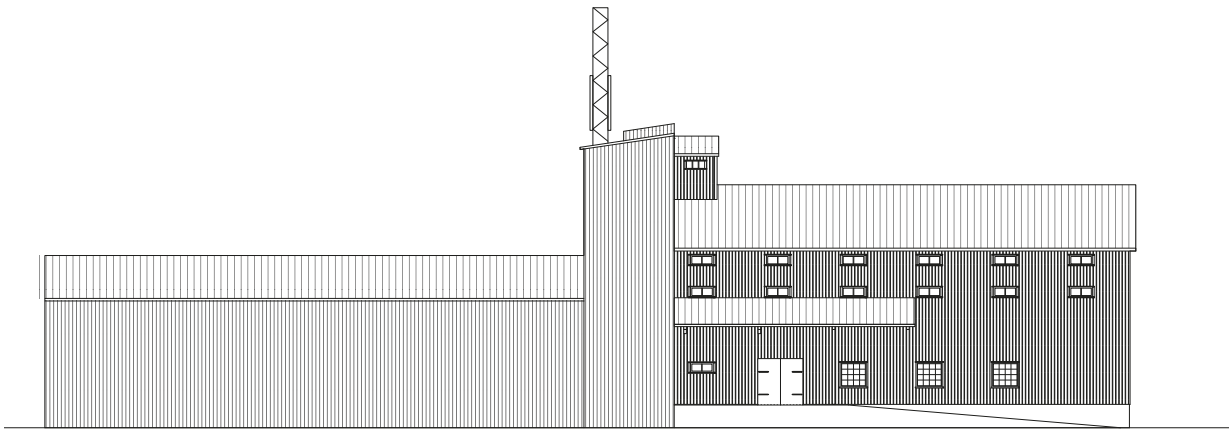




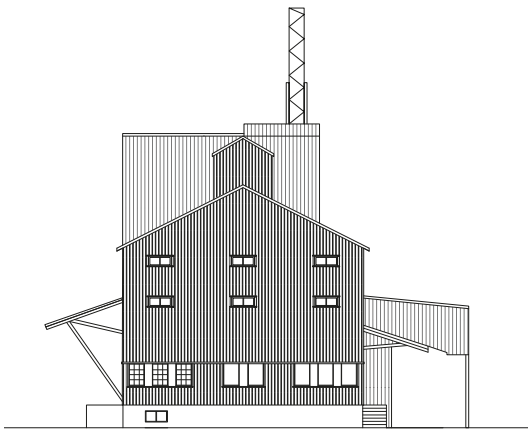
*View of motorcycle storage (room 05)*



*Elevation South-East*

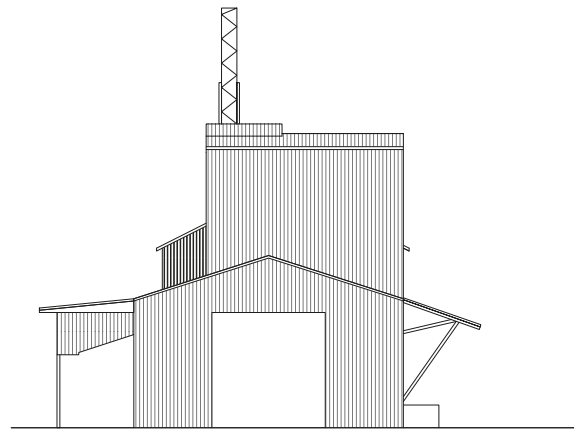


*Elevation North-West*



*Elevation South-West*

*Original elevations – 1:400*



*Elevation North-East*





*Centralföreningen viewed from the train track area*





*The entrance to the silo*

## Design studies

In this chapter the learnings from both the context analysis and the theory is put into action. This is presented in the shape of three different scenarios. They act as stepping stones to reach the final design proposal of Centralföreningen.

## Scenario making

As part of the early phase of the design research, three different speculative scenarios have been established and investigated. The hypothetical future situations are diverse from one another as they originate from the different challenges of youth commitment, integration, and association life previously described in the chapter Tibro today. They all explore the commons' influence in Tibro from the perspective of different user groups, functions, or intended outcomes. The design investigates the building's capabilities and explores how Centralföreningen might be able to accommodate the scenarios' needs. The scenarios are applied to push concepts and ideas to their boundaries and use that information to improve the final design proposal. The main purpose is to illustrate an alternative course of action rather than to establish rigid criteria for how the renovation should be conducted.

## 1. Youth space – Empowering engagement

What if the lack of commitment among Tibro's youth forces the municipality to think outside the box? With the new youth centre by the school, the engagement among the youths starts to blossom, and more resources are thereby aimed towards the leisure leaders in the municipality. The youth centre is the spark that makes more young people realise their potential, and an engagement revolt unlike any other. A youth association is formed and starts to initiate new projects, which results in the school premises quickly becoming insufficient. The municipality sees and encourages the youth engagement and they look back on what they did for Destiny Dice. They conclude that they want to do it all again, but on a much larger scale as they hand over Centralföreningen to the youth association. Being trusted and given a physical space outside of the school and sports facilities encourages young people to participate and cooperate. With the municipality as an advocate, the youths transform Centralföreningen into Sweden's first school of eldsjälär. From childhood, the teens and children in Tibro gain knowledge and enthusiasm for civic engagement, which provides Tibro with more resources than ever before. A shift in values occurs as a wider variety of age groups are introduced to association life and the development of Tibro.

### UNLOCKING SCENARIO 1

**Issue:** Hard to engage the youths within associations and within the society

**Collaboration:** Tibro municipality: Department of Kultur & Fritid and Näringslivsenheten, future youth association

**Target groups:** Youth and young adults

**Goal – Kultur & Fritid:** Strengthen the youth's engagement and role in Tibro

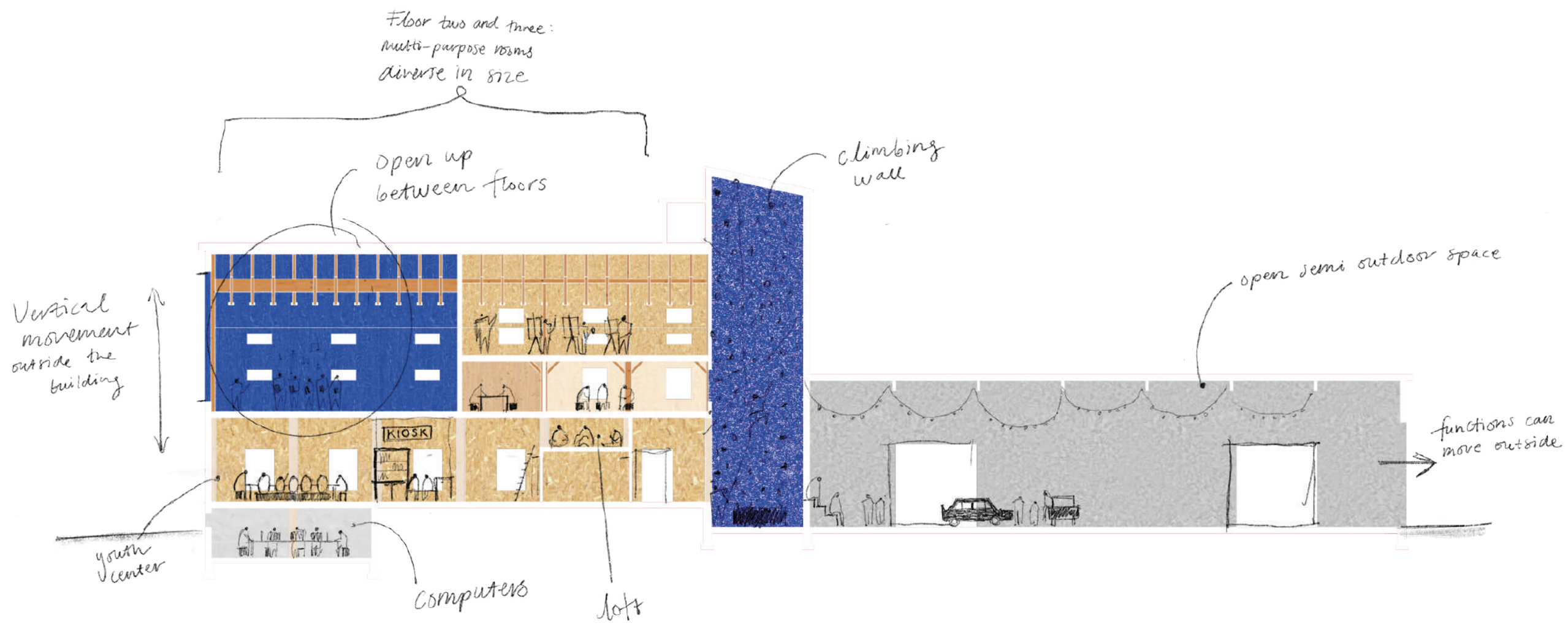
**Goal – Näringslivsenheten:** Strengthen young entrepreneurship

**Goal – Youth:** A platform, be heard and gain trust

**Proposal:** A youth driven house

**Municipal role:** Advocate

**Ownership:** Tibro municipality



Floor two and three:  
multi-purpose rooms  
diverse in size

open up  
between floors

climbing  
wall

Vertical  
movement  
outside the  
building

open semi outdoor space

functions can  
move outside

youth  
center

Computers

lots

## 2. Learning platform – Creating trust and commitment

What if Tibro could learn their problems away? The realisation that too many people living in Tibro do not have a job and live in economic vulnerability forces the municipality to consider a new set of values, beyond the economic ones, and take on the role of a partner. They decide to take a larger social responsibility and the old train track area is suggested as a development project to make people feel more included and part of the community. A communal house is created as a project, used by several organisations within the municipality, among them Arbetsmarknadsenheten (AME) and the department of integration and Näringslivsenheten. The house is developed into a meeting space with a workshop that acts as a learning platform for work trainees, thereby using the learning process as a tool for greater inclusion within the society. Centraföreningen is owned by the municipality and represents an act of prevention, to help the locals and future residents feel part of the society. The house provides a meeting place between the citizens and the municipal organisations, which helps build trust, transparency and collaboration as it connects various people. This is the beginning of a collaboration that in the long run affects all the locals in Tibro, as they are invited to the Communal house as the starting point for transforming the train tracks.

### UNLOCKING SCENARIO 2

**Issue:** A relatively large portion of the citizens are unemployed and live in economic vulnerability, meeting places has been moved to Skövde.

**Collaboration:** The municipality, Arbetsmarknadsenheten, Department of Integration, Näringslivsenheten

**Target groups:** Newly arrived, unemployed

**Goal – AME/Integration:** A space for integration

**Goal – Näringslivsenheten:** Strengthen the local labour market

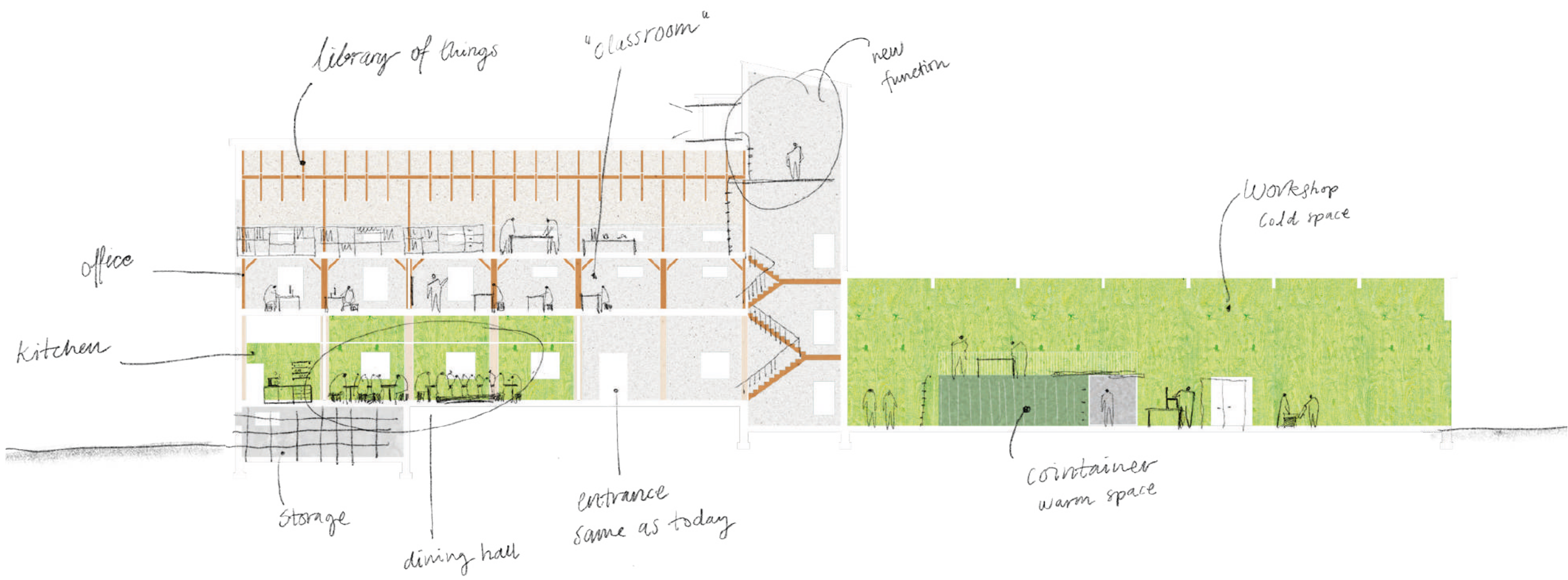
**Goal – Youth:** Feel included and gain a place in society

**Proposal:** A learning platform in Tibro

**Municipal role:** Partner

**Ownership:** Tibro municipality





### 3. The civic house – Strengthening the culture

What if the municipality decides to donate Centralföreningen to Föreningspoolen? This provides a space for the associations and the locals; they are given a centrally located, historically important building that belongs to them. The associations and its eldsjälar engage the people of Tibro to use the building as an exploratory platform and together they turn Centralföreningen into a civic house. The management invites enthusiasts and hands them keys to the building encouraging them to use and invite more people to the new platform, inspired by the process of CCA(Mckee, 2017). Over time, the building gets appropriated by the people that are occupying and transforming it. The design grows in a stepwise process in the spirit of participation, democracy and creativity. The building become a meeting place for associations and a platform for social interactions between Tibro's citizens. Through the creation and usage of the building, new social networks are created of great social values. The donation shows that the municipality can take on the role of an enabler, which sparks trust between the municipality and the citizens, simplifying future collaborations.

#### UNLOCKING SCENARIO 3

**Issue:** A lot of the associations struggle with engagement, a lack of meeting places and financing

**Collaboration:** Associations, eldsjälar, the civic society, the association pool, municipality

**Target groups:** Associations, civic society

**Goal – Association pool:** Strengthen the role of associations in the society

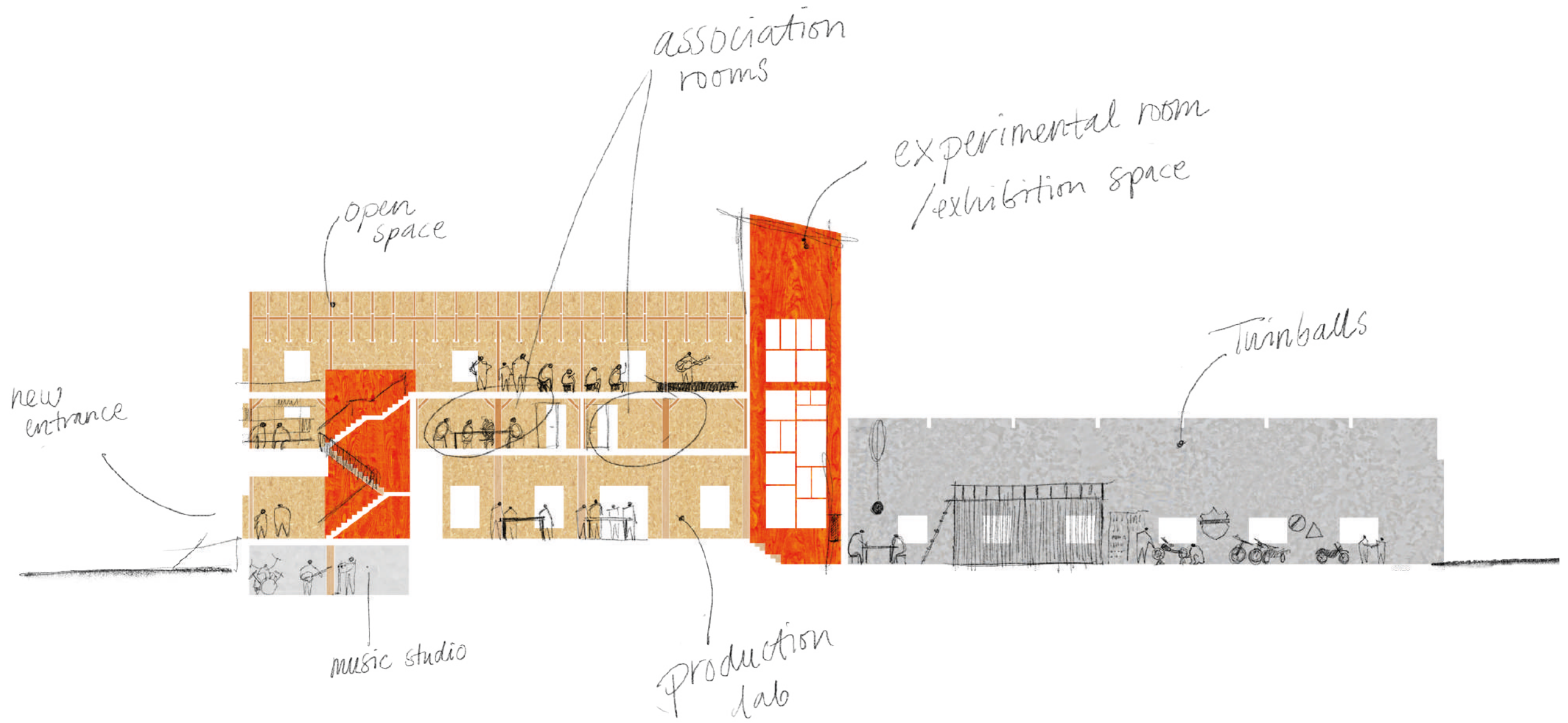
**Goal – Eldsjälar:** Strengthen civic impact, transferring ownership

**Goal – Municipality:** Better relation to the associations

**Proposal:** A community driven association and culture house

**Municipal role:** Enabler

**Ownership:** The association pool in combination with the associations



## Contextualising and combining the scenarios

We see that all of the scenarios can contribute to something unique in Tibro. Although, they could also work together as a stepwise process. The youth and the learning scenario can be viewed as projects that the municipality initiates to kickstart the engagement of Tibro. The initiatives could generate long-term engagement within the groups of the community that are not as engaged within associations today. We see that this could benefit Centralföreningen in the end, as a lot of different people will be given the opportunity to appropriate and create a sense of ownership over the building. The municipality does not want its facilities to remain empty, and needs to prioritise its economic investments, thereby we see that the municipality could have a gradually smaller and smaller responsibility for the building. This could be additionally beneficial since the people will be allowed to appropriate and make the building their own, while making sure that the building is used as a civic house for several years to come. For this to work, we suggest that the municipality could take a larger responsibility in the beginning of a process like this to show what could be possible and help spark the engagement. The influence and ownership of the municipality can also be showcased in a larger perspective overlooking the entire train track areas.



How do we involve more youths?

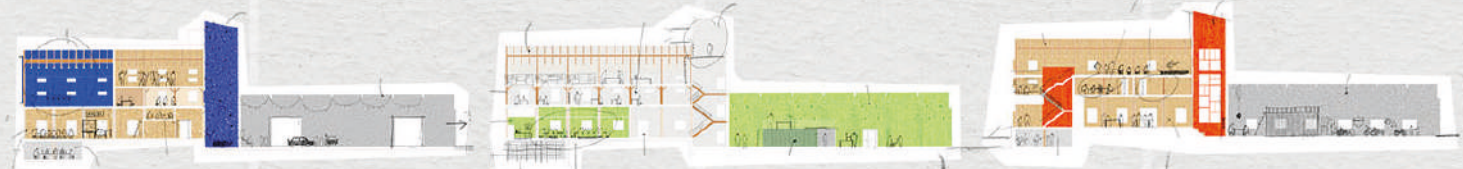
How do we make more people feel included?

How do we strengthen the association culture?

PROJECT 1

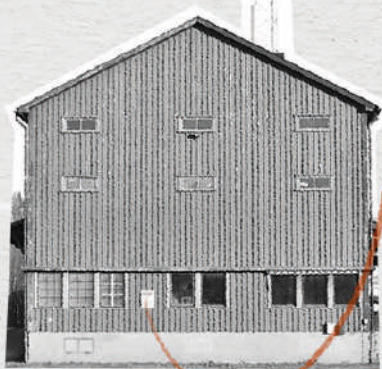
PROJECT 2

FINAL STAGE?



SHORT TERM  
- SUMMER ☀️  
- 4 YEARS?

LONG TERM  
TRANSITION



Building

Site

Train Track Area





## Unlocking Centralföreningen

The design proposal of Centralföreningen is a civic house presented as the result of initiating all of the scenarios. To accomplish this, the process relies on the formation of development groups that can implement each vision. The groups are to form new collaborations between the municipality and the civic society, something Tibro lacks today. The design proposal goes on to emphasise the importance of nurturing the local association's life and proposes that their role should be strengthened within the community through Centralföreningen. In addition to this, collaborations with the local crafts academy and previous collaborative projects are included to highlight the value of local design and traces. The development groups are necessary for all of the suggested collaborations to work, as they are in between the various sectors. Thereby, they are key for the involvement of a more diverse and representative part of Tibros residents in the transformation of Centralföreningen.





## The train track area

The map above shows changes to the train tracks and the nearby area which makes Centralföreningen feel more integrated within the context of Tibro. One of the bigger interventions suggested is to create a passage through the municipal house by opening up a part of it. This will strengthen the connections, as the municipal house today acts as a large barrier for the infrastructural flow. With the train tracks being turned into a bike and pedestrian lane, there are more possibilities in creating crossovers between the north and south parts of the town centre. This would strengthen the area as a whole, and ensure that the new path would not act as a barrier. In addition to this, the viaduct to the west is raised and covered as it today disconnects the infrastructures. The leisure field south of Centralföreningen should be an open area, meaning that the fence is removed

1. Centralföreningen
2. Passage
3. Cross-overs
4. Viaduct
5. Leisure field
6. Levelled ground
7. Playground
8. Square
9. Craftmanship Village
10. The arena

-  Development areas
-  New bike lane





*Suggested transformation of the train track area*

making it more available for the nearby residents and the whole of Tibro. Additionally, by levelling the ground, the leisure area and Centralföreningen are connected, which makes the entire place feel more like a square and also lowers the speed of traffic passing through Bangatan. There is also an addition of a playground north of Centralföreningen and a small park to the east. In this thesis, the transformation of Centralföreningen is seen as one part of multiple interventions that can be made in the train track area. There is large potential in integrating projects from Behrensens Tibro train tracks – presented here is the elongation of the city square, the arena, as well as the suggested craftsmanship village. One could additionally work further with the ideas from student projects from both Chalmers and KTH and continue following and collaborating with the artist duo from Skogen.

## Nya Centralföreningen

The renovation of Centralföreningen aims to act as a spark in the development of the train track area. The building should be viewed as a place where the local engagement of Tibro can be highlighted and strengthened.

One now enters the building through the former silo (1). The accessibility through the silo, with two entrances from both north and south are made to make the building appear as less of a barrier for crossing. The ground floor centres around a large common dining hall (2), which acts as a new meeting place for Tibro's residents. Connected to the dining hall is a common kitchen (3) and an office (4) for association pool, as the hope is for them to be one of the leading actors of the building in its final state, Nya Centralföreningen. Their role should also be to help, connect and encourage both the old and the new associations in Tibro. In the east part of the building one finds the large common workshop (5). This space extends to the outdoors through already existing generous openings and connects functions to the nearby building, which is where we suggest that the motorcycle club existing in Centralföreningen today can have their new base.

The second floor of the building is the main space for the associations. Fairly large premises (6) are here used for the associations that need room to carry out their hobbies. These rooms are meant to be shared by different associations, which demand people to take away their stuff. Therefore, the corridor (7) provides a system of large shelving and lockers. If there is less demand on association rooms, one association can get a room for themselves and if a bigger space is needed walls can be taken down. The majority of the inner walls are therefore purposely designed and placed so that they do not line up with the columns, to simplify the removal and the transformation of the space if needed. It is understood that not all associations will have space in the new building, though many may be included in the overall transformation of the train track area, where other potential buildings could be used by the associations. Humlan, the old association house, could also be renovated and reopened. The second floor additionally hosts a loft (8) overlooking the workshop space connecting the two areas.

The third, top floor of the building is purposefully left empty in order to highlight it as an adaptable space (9) that should be programmed by the people who use it. The floor is equipped with a balcony (10) directed towards the leisure area, softening the border between in and out. The floor is also connected to the two other floors since the new entrance provides a vertical connection between all of them.

*To the right:*

*Axonometry showing Nya Centralföreningen. The final state of the scenarios.*





CENTRALKÖRBYN

CYKEL VERSTAD

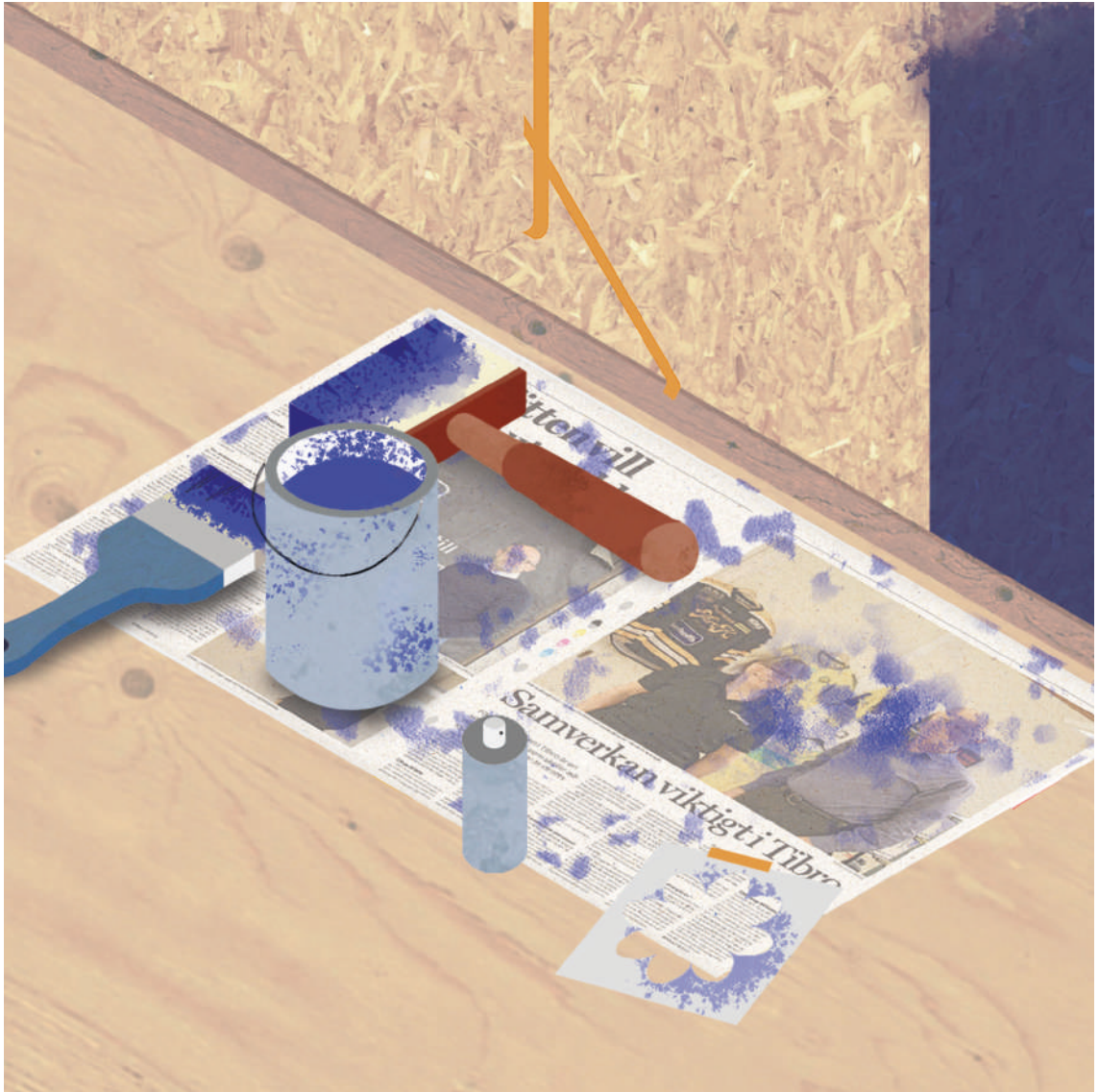
VERSTAD



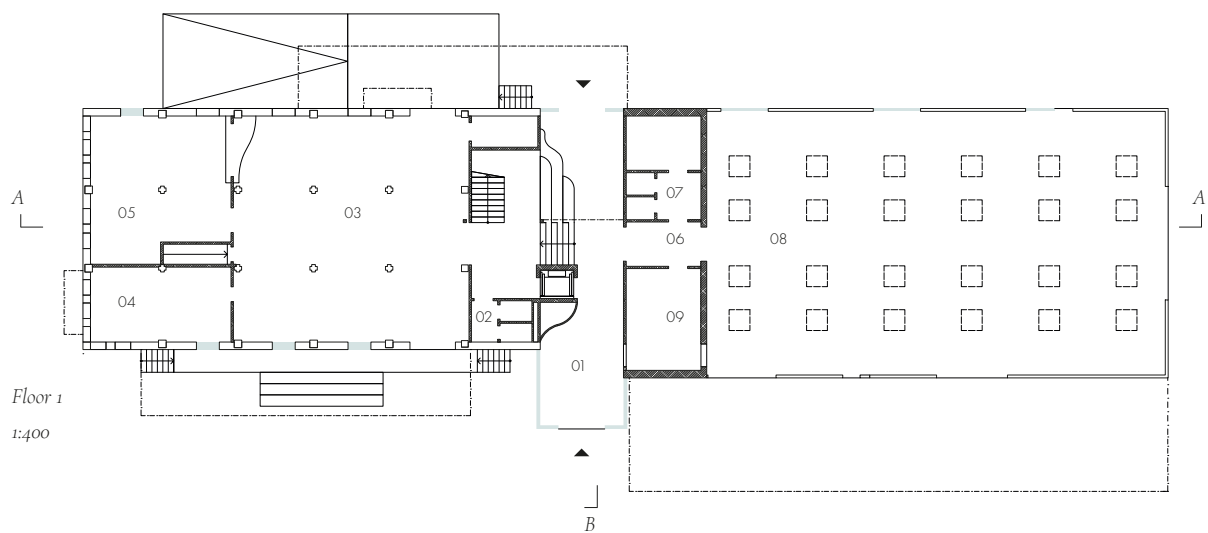
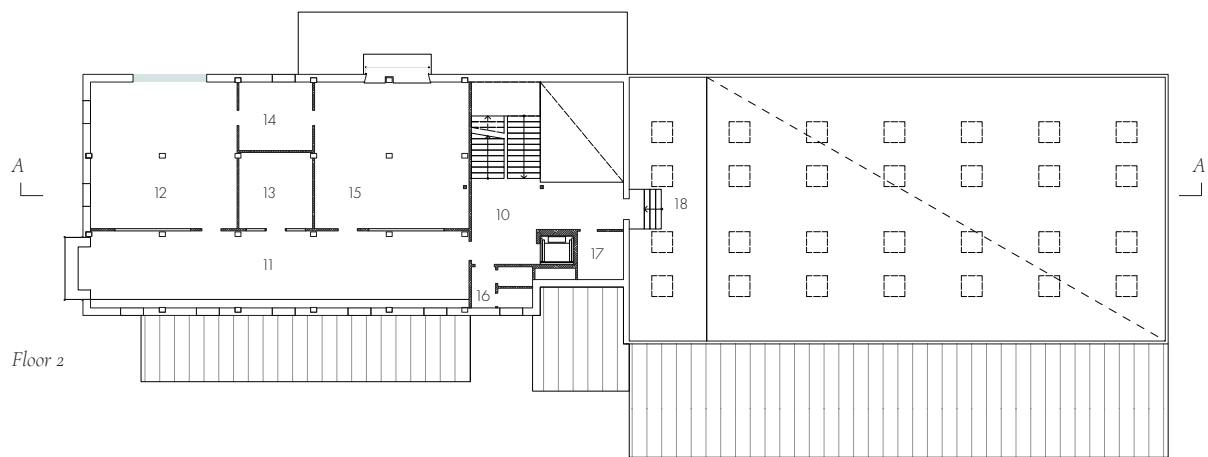
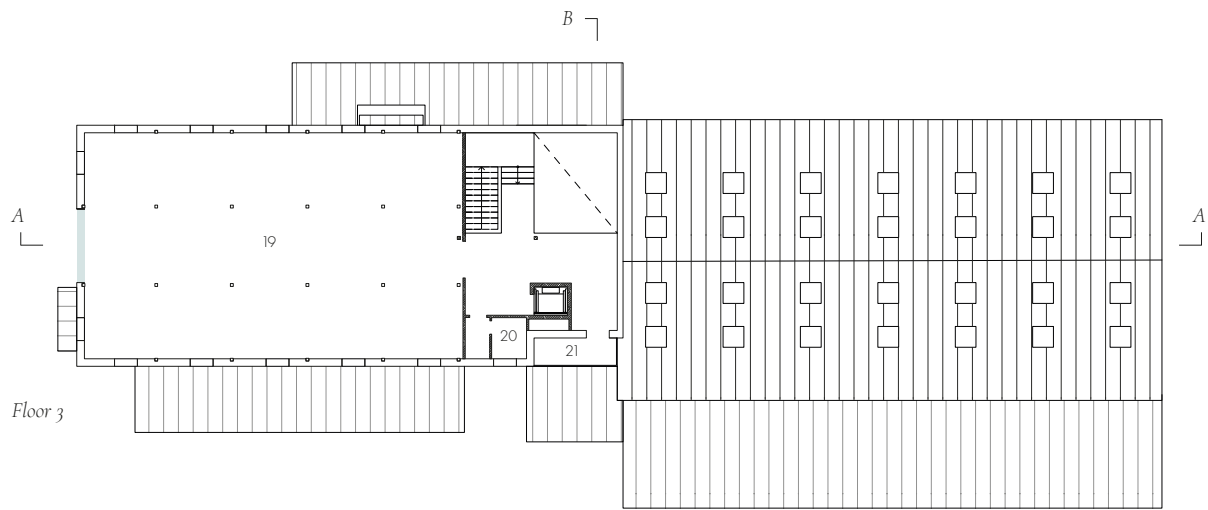
## Centralföreningen as a process

It should be noted that the outcome of the final house may not be the most important part of the process, but rather the method itself and the lessons learned along the way. The process is important for the locals to feel ownership and responsibility over the building, something that would not be achieved if the renovation was conducted by a company. The stepwise process towards the renovation will leave traces throughout the building, which are important to underline that there is never a truly finished house, it will be changed time and time again to suit the needs of the civic society. To highlight the traces there are reminders of the scenarios throughout the building. An example of this is the workshop, which is a reminiscence of the learning scenario. The traces in themselves do not have to be in the shape of physical evidence, they could also be seen in the engagement needed to do the renovation. This engagement is a trace in itself from all of the scenarios and the collaborative processes that have been required.





*By being able to participate in the transformation, people can appropriate the building*



Floor 1

Floor 2

Floor 3

Changes

- 01 Entrance
- 02 WC
- 03 Dining hall
- 04 Office
- 05 Kitchen

- 06 Passage
- 07 WC
- 08 Workshop
- 09 Reception

- 10 Staircase
- 11 Association corridor
- 12 Association rooms
- 13 Meeting room
- 14 Common storage

- 15 Association rooms
- 16 WC
- 17 Storage
- 18 Loft

- 19 Open space
- 20 WC
- 21 Balcony

- New walls
- New windows



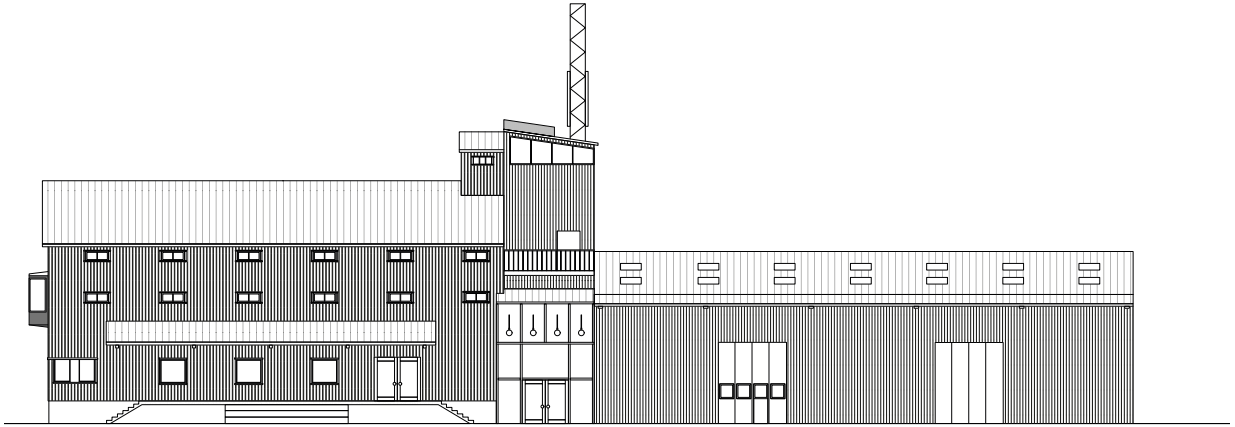
*Interior view, floor 3*



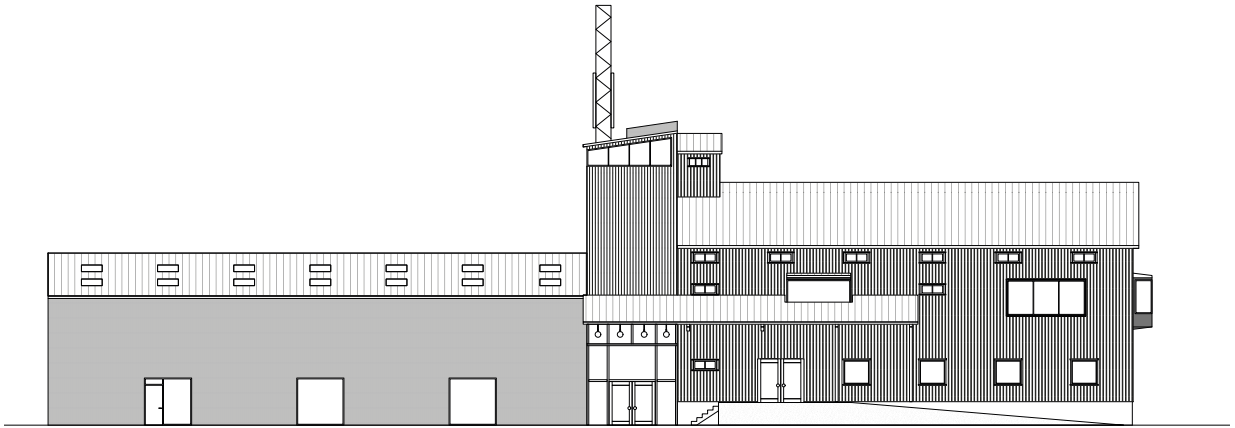


*View over the workshop*

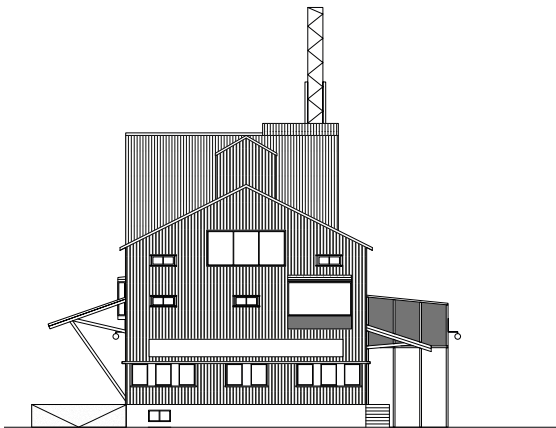




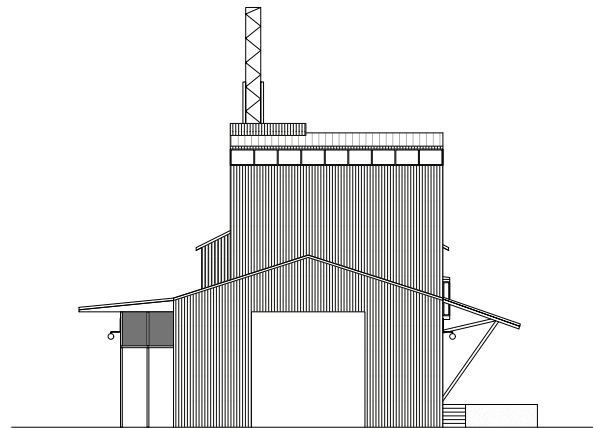
*Elevation South-East*



*Elevation North-West*

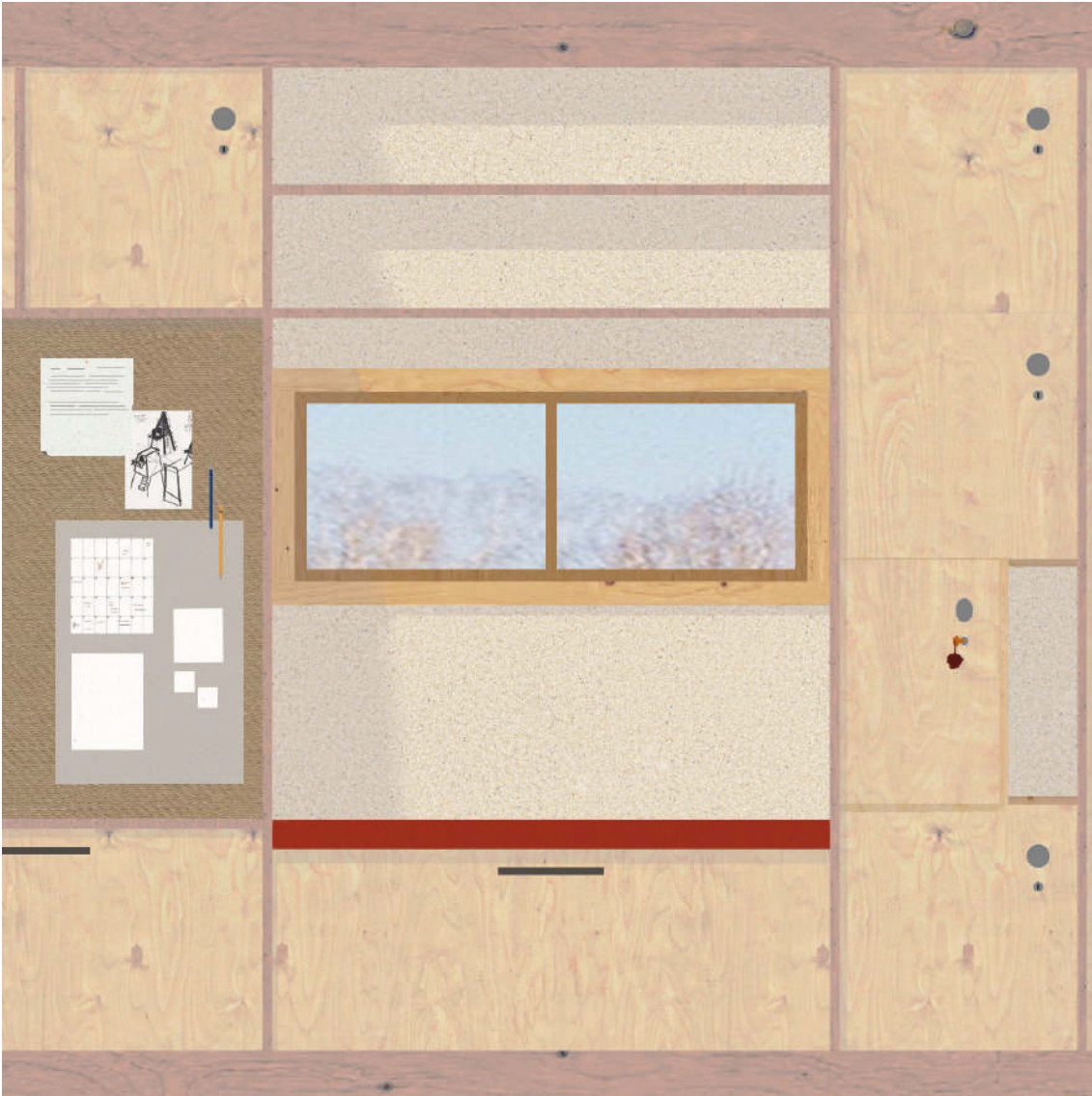


*Elevation South-West*

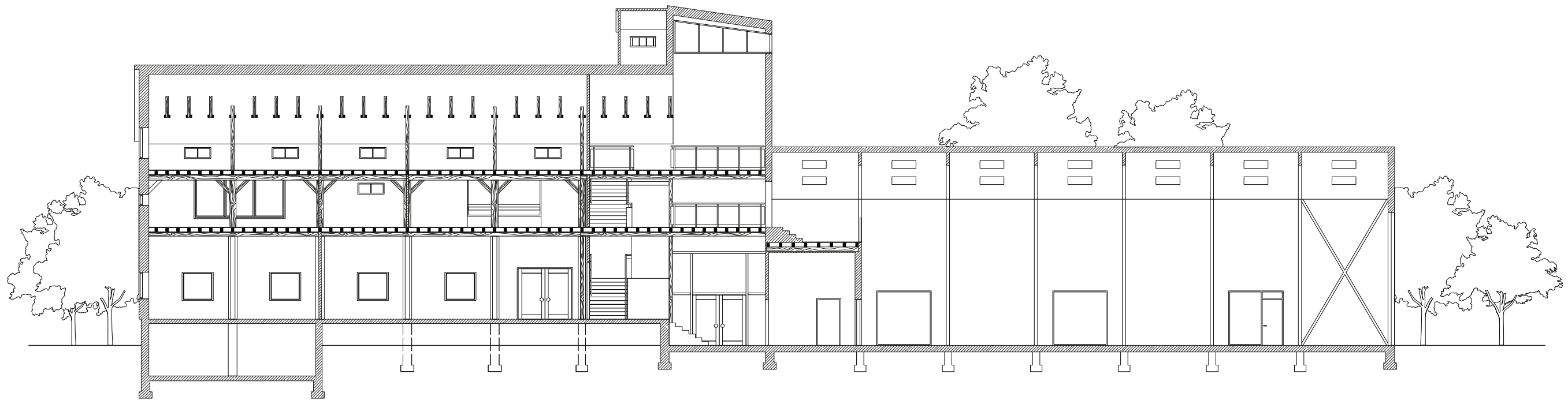


*Elevation North-East*

1:400



*Storage units for the associations are in the corridor on floor 2*

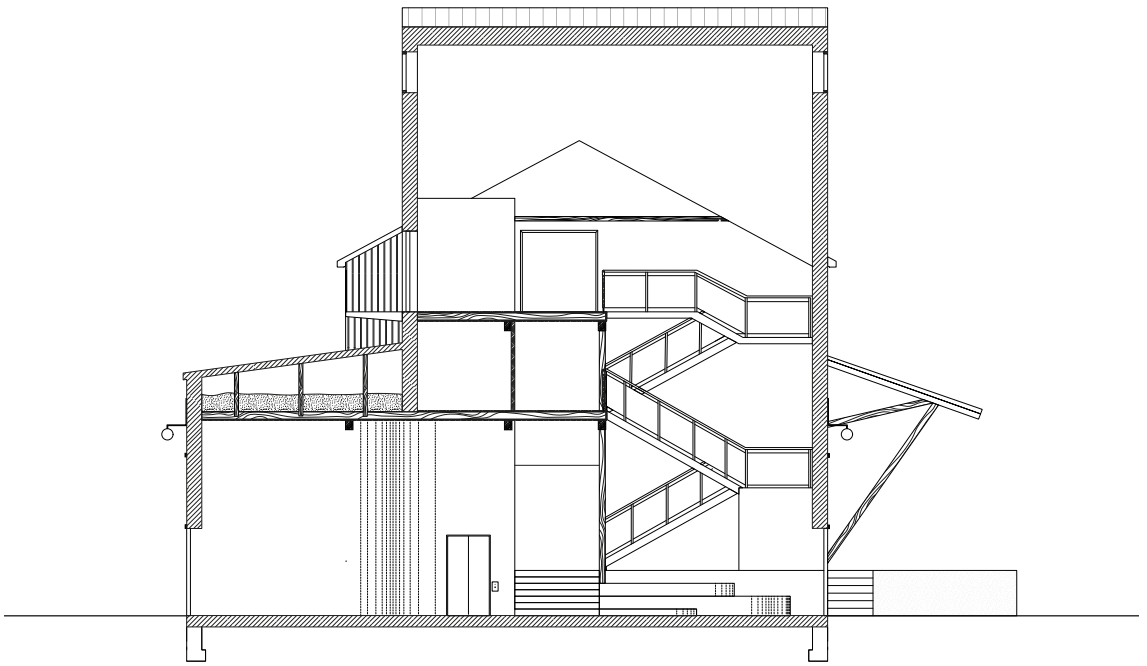


*Drawing: Section A-A*  
1:200



*Drawing: Interior view, floor 2*

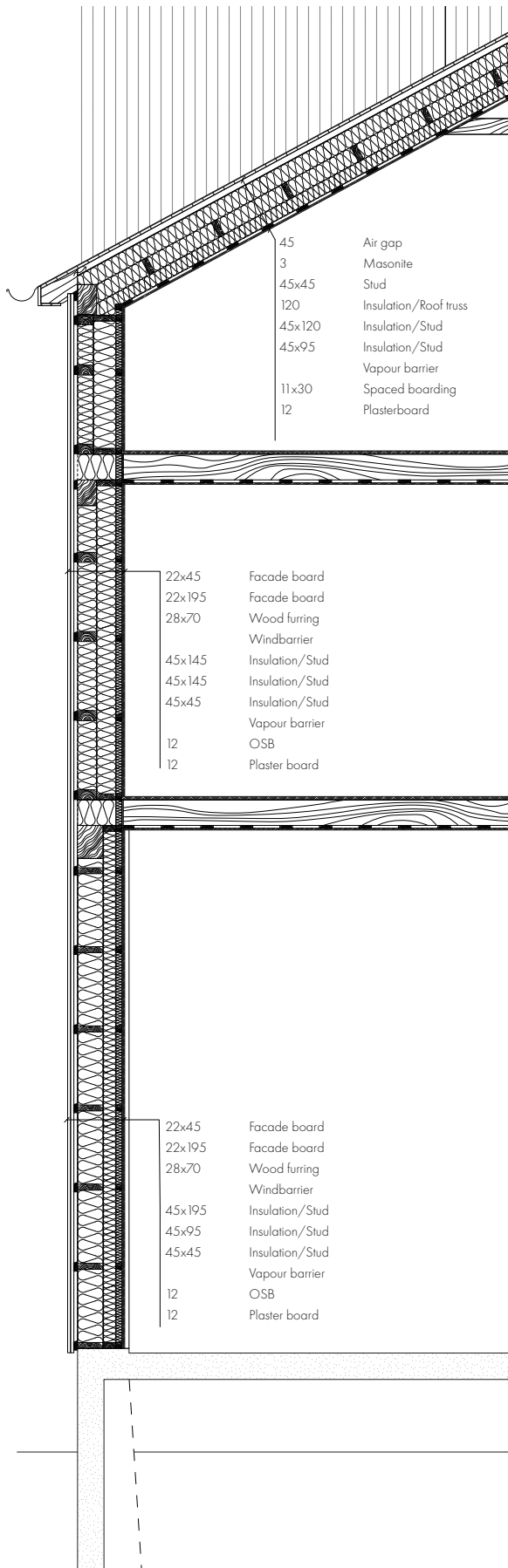




*Drawing: Section B-B*

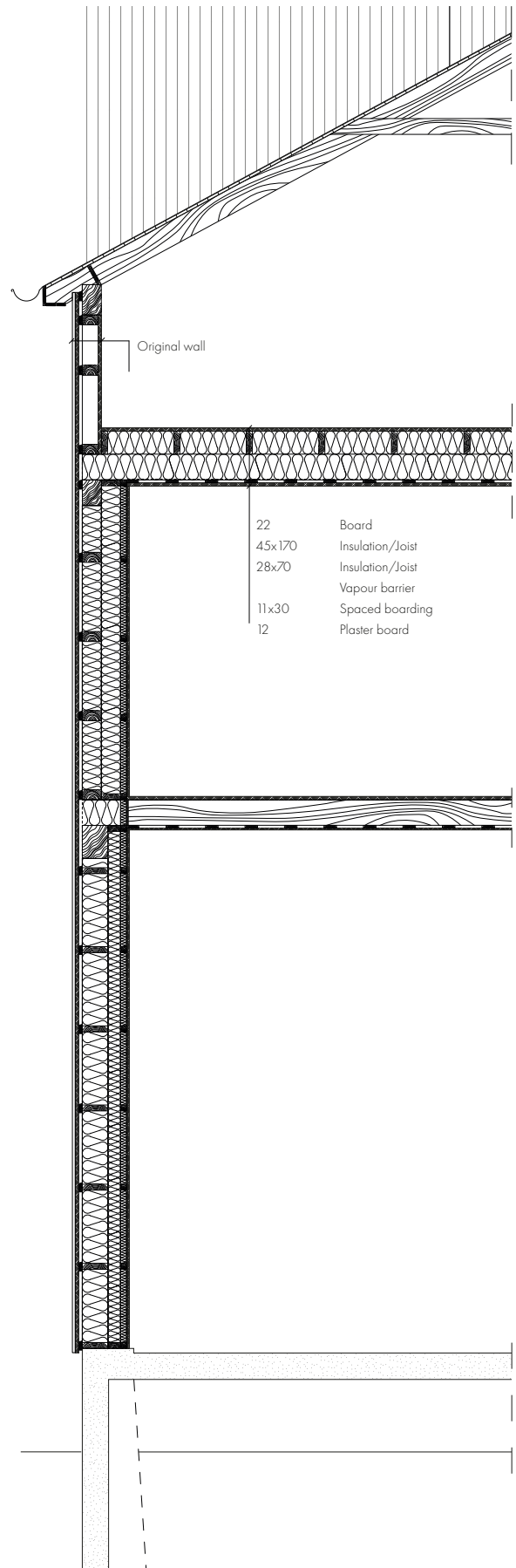
## Technical solutions

During the studies and site visits to the house it became clear that it is necessary for the house to be insulated in certain parts for it to be able to become a fully functioning civic house. Thereby, two examples for how this could look are presented together with a rough cost calculation. In both cases, the insulation is applied to the inside of the structure to maintain the outside as intact as possible. Since the building lacks an air gap in its facade, there is a need to apply such when making the structure heated. It adds some centimetres to its exterior. Example one suggests insulating the main building as well as the silo and a part of the workshop. Example two proposes keeping the silo, the whole workshop as well as the upper floor cold as a suggestion of keeping costs down. Suggestion one gives a material cost of roughly 750000SEK while suggestion two cost around 370000SEK. There is also potential saving in natural ventilation, as the silo can be used to achieve stack effect.



Technical drawing – Suggestion 1  
Material cost – 634SEK/sqm

1:50



Technical drawing – Suggestion 2  
Material cost – 612SEK/sqm





Centralföreningen viewed from Bangatan

## Discussion

This thesis makes it evident that there are numerous pathways to rural development, but one constant aspect is that norms must change. We believe that speculative scenarios can help to break down old structures and pave the way for new forms of local development. In the case of Tibro, we rapidly realised that their association life is one of their most valuable assets. We think that through recognising and utilising that civic engagement, as well as through scenarios involving otherwise difficult-to-reach groups of individuals, Tibro has the potential to unlock new possibilities.

## Method

The scenarios of this thesis have been a method making process that have helped us in the work of developing and presenting what Centralförningen and Tibro could become. We thought it to be helpful in the process of challenging its potential as well as the potential of Tibro. Even though they might in many ways seem distant from reality they point out aspects of what could come to be and what could be needed for future sustainable development. By focusing the scenarios on potential collaborations, ownership and target groups, we have been able to pinpoint paths for how these could be enabled. It is however, important to note that our proposal is one of several possible alternatives. The outcome of our project is an example of what could happen if the method is applied. It should therefore be highlighted that the outcome of the design studies is not a fixed solution. In order to unlock the values that we see the method can generate, Tibro collectively must pinpoint what assets and challenges they see and from that create their own scenarios and timeline.

We believe that the method could be beneficial for Tibro in their future development plans because it shows a different way of approaching rural development. Instead of trying to be someone else, the method allows them to foster their local context. By that they are promoting their rural qualities by highlighting them. We believe that the same principles could be applied in other rural municipalities, since every place has their own set of unique qualities and struggles. It is just suggested that Tibro takes the first step and dares to be different in their way of planning. Paving the way for many others.

## Working together

With the existing situation, we perceive a need to organise and map Tibro's current assets in order to build a civic house in Centralförningen. Because the recurring theme of spare resources is constantly demonstrated, there is a need to go beyond today's development norms. We think that this is possible with

the participation and cooperation of many people, resulting in a collective force for change. As a result, it is in the best interests of both the municipality and the civic, as well as the private sector, to restructure and begin partnering in order to accomplish new values. The interviews and research conducted for this thesis revealed that many difficulties concerning local development may be resolved through collaboration. It is also supported in the research done in the economic chapters, where initiatives in non-urban areas are heavily dependent on engagement, non-profit work, and financial support from funds and the region. However, it is also proven that collaboration is often more easily suggested than carried out, as there are many influencing factors. To get there, we feel it is critical to search for and uncover eldsjälär with the power to jumpstart the interaction. These people already exist in Tibro; the challenge is how to assist them while also recognising their relevance in the pursuit of change.

The case studies of Uddebo and Röstånga presented in the theoretical chapter, are heavily reliant on eldsjälär, particularly in the early stages of development. They are extremely valuable since many of them are excellent process leaders with the ability to connect with people. Although we discovered through the theory that relying on only a few selected people causes instability, what happens if a person moves? Does the commitment disappear? Today's systems demonstrate that there is no way to avoid the dependency on eldsjälär for new sorts of development. But as stated in the theoretical chapter ownership, it is hard to transfer the feeling of ownership and responsibility to others, when the kickstarters want to gradually hand over the project (Tillmars et al., 2018). It is consequently critical to identify and engage numerous boundary spanners who can aid each other while also encouraging others to step up.

We have designed our scenarios in such a way that, ideally, the engagement will endure as a new culture of responsibility is formed in Tibro. The issue of over-reliance on eldsjälär is instead viewed as a potential in which the scenarios attempt to develop more dedicated people in a long term perspective. The approach is therefore to involve a diverse range of individuals and teach them to become elsjälär, thereby increasing the number of people on whom development can rely. However, there is still a need to initiate these processes, so some must, from the start, stand up and lead the process in the right direction. However, if the objective from the start is to foster greater participation and a greater sense of responsibility, there is hope for a successful process.

The shared goal is one component that has proved to be vital yet difficult to apply. It is demonstrated in the theoretical chapter to be a critical component in developing cooperation. The challenge typically arises when attempting to achieve what we propose in the thesis, cross-sector collaboration, because various sectors often have different perspectives on what is important. This was the situation



with Kooperativet, where the same purpose was misunderstood by several participants, causing difficulties in the process. Instead of a single objective, we have tried to reassure that all the different sectors are given an individual aim in line with the overall.

The thesis suggests and relies to a large extent on the collaborations between the associations and the municipality. In many ways, this could be questioned, as there seems to be a gap between the two. The associations do not feel prioritised, and the municipality does not feel that they have the resources to initiate anything other than state-bound duties. We believe that collaboration between the associations and the municipality will be vital for the development of the train track area if one wants to see results that go beyond the status quo. It is therefore believed by us that the municipality can be held responsible for taking the first step. However, they need to realise that they can play diverse roles in the transformation of the train track area. Mukthar-Landgren (2019) introduced the terms partner, advocate, and enabler, meaning that the municipality can be seen as the main driving force or as an actor that just supports and empowers the work of others. To make the timeline of the scenarios work, we see that it is important that the municipality works to encourage engagement, projects and local initiatives to a higher degree. A lot of the initiatives in Tibro are said to not be fulfilled (personal communication, 2023.02.02), we believe that this could be due to the fact that the municipality is not embracing any of the roles.

Even though collaboration has been proven difficult, one also needs to realise that it is a process that, as with other things, needs to be practised. This is why the process towards a final building is as important as, or even more important than, the final state of the building.

## In terms of responsibility

In our scenarios, the municipality is seen as taking on a greater role at the beginning of the development and gradually reducing its responsibility. However, it is questionable, as Syssner (2016) states, how a municipality with already spare resources is to take the first step. Hela Sverige ska leva (2020a) believes that the municipality could do more if they got the resources from the beginning. Although, even with increased financial support, it is not guaranteed that Tibro can reverse the negative trends within the municipality today, and in addition to that, take even more duties upon them. Furthermore, for the municipality to become more engaged and interested in new ways of development, people within the municipality must push for new ways of working and new solutions. One issue today is that a majority of department managers live in nearby municipalities rather than in Tibro. Due to a lack of strong initiators within the municipality, the will to change may be lost when the consequences do not directly connect to oneself.

We feel that the municipality can do more, by introducing the approach that this thesis presents, the municipality stands to earn more than it stands to lose. In the long run, this will improve the relationship between the associations and the civic involvement creating a better resource base for future development. However one can also question, as previously stated, if it is the municipalities that need to be the initiator. Maybe there is a demand for the government to step up and look to Denmark as an example of how state initiatives can benefit rural development.

In the question of equity, we see that a strengthened civic commitment does not have to mean a shift away from the municipality. We would very much like to see that the municipality to some extent is involved throughout the whole process, as we see that it could strengthen the bond between the locals and the municipality. A strategy for this is to have clear and open discussions between the participants, making it clear that democratic and public values should not get lost. However, the municipality should not fear giving a lot of trust to the users as it creates other values and simplifies the appropriation of the space.

One strategy in the project has been to incorporate two groups of individuals that have proven difficult to reach. We would like to believe that by providing a space and integrating youths in the train track area, we can build and teach involvement over time. Both the youth and the learning scenario can be seen as projects, they are thus viewed as learning institutions of commitment, drawing inspiration from Ottermark's (1986) Italian case studies. We see that a house for and run by youths can get the target group more used to project management and strengthen their civic commitment. In addition to that, we see that the second scenario focused on learning can help introduce people who are newly arrived or otherwise hard to reach to civic engagement, either through the association scene or other projects. This encourages a wider range of cultures and ages to step up, leading to a more diverse scene of *eldsjälar* and spreading the engagement through a larger part of Tibro. By doing so, *Centralföreningen* can help strengthen the civic resource base within Tibro, creating more responsibility and belonging.

Another benefit of including these two groups of individuals is that the phrase meeting places takes on a broader meaning. The term is defined by those who make use of the space. As a result, it is impossible to create the perfect meeting place that suits all of Tibro's inhabitants. But our method aims to make sure that a wider variety of people feel included and see the house as a gathering space through the process of collaborative design. This is one reason why we choose to prioritise the youth and the learning scenario first. These two scenarios could also help kickstart long-term engagement and create new *eldsjälar*. In the case of this method being applied to other projects, we see that an analysis of different scenarios is necessary to determine how to prioritise and implement them. Some scenarios will need to take place first to start the appropriation, while others could be combined or take place at the same time.

## Going beyond economic values

It has never been the main strategy to carefully calculate the cost of this project. However, because it has proven to be such an important aspect of development, we cannot leave it out of the process. In our technical solutions, we have proposed two different options for how one could insulate parts of the building. We limited ourselves to focusing on the outer walls and roof, since that enables use throughout the year. With the drawings is a rough cost estimation to showcase the difference in material cost if one chooses to insulate the silo or not. The estimation and the drawings aim to encourage Tibro to think of new ways to save costs, like only using parts of Centralföreningen during the summer and keeping some uninsulated. However, this only applies to the material cost on the outer walls and roof; there are also more aspects to consider, such as floors, inner walls, and labour. Although labour costs could also be heavily reduced by doing things within each scenario and encouraging the people within them to contribute. In that sense, one translates the investment in Centralföreningen into processes that lead to new values of appropriation and responsibility, going beyond economic values.

In terms of economics, one may argue that there is no purpose to build a civic house at all. This is a critique we have heard from the municipality today, since it would be more cost effective for them to allow the association to co-rent the already existing spaces, such as school classrooms. In one sense, this is beneficial since it allows the facilities to be used for a greater number of hours during the day. However, we see value in having a dedicated space for association activities that goes beyond financial concerns. Creating a common space to share and maintain inside Nya Centralföreningen can spark unexpected and spontaneous activities while also allowing for a broader network to form as more individuals come into contact with one another. It also simplifies the possibilities of appropriating the space, and in accordance with the municipality, we propose in our design strategy to co-rent and co-use the larger rooms to keep costs low for users.

We learned from the interviews that the municipality no longer believes in subventioned rentals for associations. Rent subventions, according to administrators at both Kultur och Fritid and Fastighetsbolaget, generate inequality between the organisations. The reason for this is that the municipality cannot rent out any structures deemed unsafe. A structure that meets the regulations but is still a little rough might, in our opinion, be a good compromise and provide more associations with premises. Instead, the municipality advises groups to look for grants and money to help finance their facilities. When we looked at the grants available to fund associations, we quickly realised that the playing field for obtaining funds is not levelled to begin with. Sports groups, as well as those targeting youths or the elderly, have far more opportunities to



apply than cultural organisations, such as the game association Destiny Dice. As a result, if the municipality does not consider subvention rentals, there may be a substantial gap. Furthermore, many of the funds and grants that are available to apply for require a certain level of academic writing and knowledge of the Swedish language, which might exclude a large number of people. It contributes to an unequal society if the municipality does not provide adequate support and assistance to these groups.

As a result, it is once again evident that it is critical for the municipality to take efforts to ensure equity within the municipality. We believe that the youth scenario can help to spark the building's transformation. This is because it opens up additional financial options as many grants are geared at youths. Because funding has repeatedly proven to be critical, it is advantageous to secure a sum early in the process. We have selected to introduce the learning scenario after the youth project. A project that may include collaboration with either the area or the state. Both projects create what we believe is a timeline that can reassure funding and start the renovation. The segmentation of the possibilities results in smaller pieces of investment opportunities rather than a single one. Smaller investments translate into smaller implementations. As previously stated, the relevant initiatives, such as Röstånga Tillsammans, demonstrate that smaller, more attainable undertakings are more likely to evoke a positive reaction from the community. In hindsight one can question the large scale of the building and the project. However the method could easily be transferred and benefit from first being applied to one of the smaller buildings along the track area. Although through a step-by-step process the appropriation and transformation of Centralföreningen can be seen as a project spanning over a longer period of time. Including and engaging a larger portion of Tibro. Making it more feasible for providing societal funding as a solution to the problem, using RUAB as guidance.

The municipality has the option of demolishing the land and selling plots for exploitation. This is the status quo of development, and this is where we see that Tibro has the ability to do things differently. They have the potential to do things in other ways and create new sorts of values. However, one may see that selling some of the plots along the train track area could be a strategy for the municipality to get funding to reinvest in, for example, Centralföreningen.



*Centralföreningen viewed from Bangatan*





### Plant the seed

- + Gather ideas and map resources
- + Who would want to help? To which degree?

### Formulate the scenarios

- + Locate the challenges that exist today, how can they be conquered?
- + What possible futures does the civic society see?



### Find the initiators

- + Which eldsjälär are there to be found within the associations, the municipality and the civic society?
- + Who can be the enabler, the partner, the advocate?



### Form the common goals

- + What can be achieved for each actor?

### Form the collaborations

Create a development group that works as a bridge between the actors



## Conclusion

Following the knowledge gained from the project, we suggest steps to take with the aim of rethinking rural development. We see that socio-economic values can be generated through new management and vision-making, the key to achieving this is to build and highlight the commitment within the community. We see that the process is more important than the result in itself, and we thereby suggest steps to unlock new values in Tibro.





### Learn by doing

The process is to generate new values.

The outcomes are steps on the way.



### Implement the scenarios

- + A summer project where youths get involved in community development?
- + A collaboration with AME?
- + In what order can the scenarios take place to achieve certain values?

### Ask for help

- + Are there any similar projects that have been done
- + What could be learned?
- + Can the state or the region help?

### Involve more!

- + Can the schools paint a fence?
- + Can local companies contribute?



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## Interview list

- + Johan Forsman - Konstnär på Skogen (2023-01-24)
- + Margareta Larsson - Föreningsaktiv Tibro seniorförening (2023-01-25)
- + Towe Lindblom - Kommunanställd, kulturperson (2023-01-25)
- + Martin Toresson - Antikvatie Tibro (2023-01-26)
- + Mattias Peterson - Näringslivschef Tibro kommun (2023-01-31)
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