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The Process of Commoning in Suderbyn Ecovillage

Rural Lessons for a Multi-scalar Right to the City

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Abstract

Henri Lefebvre's radical call for "the right to the city" as a step in his wider utopian project of societal transformation has attracted much academic interest in the 21st century. A central problematic for advancing this idea, however, is how to take the leap from experimental heterotopies to a new form of urban commons that could provide the foundation for this new society. This thesis draws from Lefebvre's extensive writings as well as from five weeks of ethnographic fieldwork, including a focus group and five semi-structured interviews conducted at Suderbyn ecovillage to deliver a comparative discussion on the process of establishing a common social relation to place (and ultimately space) and how it relates to scale. The main conclusion is that the dominance of use-values in combination with a synthesis of the connection of elements such as work, leisure and learning plays a central role in the process of establishing a common social relation to place in Suderbyn and that this in turn is a crucial aspect of consideration for tackling the scalar problematic.

Key words: the right to the city, Suderbyn, ecovillage, commoning

Preface

I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude towards all those who have made this thesis possible. My supervisor Urban Nordin has given me great support and guidance throughout the semester, as has many others at the Stockholm University Department of Human Geography in one way or another. Most of all, however, I would like to thank Suderbyn collectively as well as everyone individually for their kindness and openness, for giving me such a rich experience, and for making this thesis possible. Thank you.

Henning Svensson

Solna

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"Utopos me General from not island to made island.
Alone I of-lands all without philosophy
State philosophical I-have-formed for-mortals.
Willingly I-impart my-things, not not-willing I-accept better-ones."

   – Thomas More, *Utopia* (2009/1516, p. 129)

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Introduction

In the first two decades of the 21st century much academic interest has been directed towards Henri Lefebvre's revolutionary cry and demand for "the right to the city" (Attoh, 2011; Belda-Miquel et al., 2016; Blokland et al., 2015; Fernandes, 2007; Harvey, 2000; 2003; 2008; 2012; Marcuse, 2009; Purcell, 2002; 2003; 2006; 2013). This idea, which calls for a radical reorientation of the city, is a step in Lefebvre's wider utopian project of societal transformation. A central problematic, however, is how to take the leap from experimental heterotopies to a new form of urban commons. In this thesis I draw from Lefebvre's extensive writing as well as from my own ethnographic fieldwork at Suderbyn ecovillage to deliver a comparative discussion on the process of establishing a common social relation to place (and ultimately space) as a foundation for a larger societal transformation. The main conclusion I am able to draw from this discussion is that the dominance of use-values in combination with a synthesis of the connection of elements such as work, leisure and learning plays a central role in the process of everyday commoning in Suderbyn and that this in turn is a crucial aspect of consideration for tackling the scalar problematic.

Aims and Research Question

The central aim of this thesis is to explore the scalar problematic of "jumping scales" associated with the right to the city. But the aim is also to situate the problem within a wholistic perspective that is sensitive to the spatiotemporal dialectics of society. Since "the seed-beds for revolutionary movements" (Harvey, 2012, p. xvii-xviii), according to Lefebvre, arise out of the ordinary everyday lives of inhabitants, the process of establishing a common social relation to space became a crucial aspect of study for me. It is therefore out of the scope of this thesis to deal with the practical aspects of establishing a right the city in terms of decision-making structures and formal hierarchies that might facilitate a "jumping of scale". Instead, I focus on the social aspect of commoning and the importance of these informal practices in establishing an alternative, putting it in relation to the problem of scale. The research question, therefore, was formulated as follows: *How is a common social relation to place established in Suderbyn?*

To help me probe this question, I devised three sub-questions that I used as a base to formulate further questions for my focus group and interviews:

- How is the ecovillage organised on a daily basis?
- What is everyday life like in the ecovillage?
- What internal and external relations does the community have?

Background

Before getting further into Lefebvre's work, I would like to begin with giving a bit of background. What provoked me into writing this thesis, to begin with, was something that was reviled to me, not in a dream, but during one of Dr. Jonathan Feldman's lectures in Economic History at Stockholm University. He described somewhat of a nexus consisting of an economic crisis, an energy crisis, an environmental crisis, a democratic crisis, and an intellectual crisis. Five interlinked crises. Combined with some utopian thinking, I found this to be a very interesting and wholistic way of looking at the world and how it might be improved. I was already familiar with Lefebvre's work on the right to the city and new I wanted to continue working with this concept. I find it attractive for several reasons, but mostly because of how utopian, wholistic and bottoms-up it is. Lefebvre seeks to remake society and hence touches upon all of these crises in a way that does not require a grand and conscious plan. Instead, experimental heterotopies will provide the seed-beds for revolutionary change that will establish a new form of urban commons.

The fleeting nature of these heterotopies, however, has often made it difficult for them to "jump scale" and, worst still, has seen them become reintegrated and "reclaimed by the dominant praxis". Central to this problematic is, as David Harvey (2012, p. 69) points out, that "the whole nature of the commons problem and the prospects of finding a solution changes dramatically" once we try to jump scale. More knowledge about this process of forming a common social relation to place, and in the extension space, therefore becomes absolutely crucial for understanding the restrains imposed by scale.

In an attempt to enhance the contrasts between heterotopies and the city as the supreme isotopy and to unmask the hidden relations between rurality, urban fabric, and centrality I started thinking about ecovillages as possible heterotopies (at least in a social sense). This perspective has not yet been given room in interpretations of Lefebvre's work since much of the emphasis has (understandably) been placed on heterotopies *in* cities. But the risk of this one-sidedness, I would argue, is that we might lose sight of the totality and instead end up viewing cities as isolated islands, detached from the rural and nature in a way that reduces Lefebvre analysis. To Lefebvre (2006, p. 109-110) urbanisation carries with it the intensifying exploitation of the whole of society. Urban life, he argues,

penetrates the countryside as the city expands and grows in influence (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 119).

Whereas I agree that the city is where we need to go if we are to try to realise Lefebvre's writings on the right to the city and that a rural example cannot provide the kind of knowledge needed for that struggle, I do argue that the probing of a different way of organising socially, in a different context and on a smaller scale, can give us some valuable insights into what it would mean socially to construct a new form of urban commons. In this sense, Suderbyn ecovillage seemed as a suitable case for a number of different reasons. Its experimental approach towards space and participatory governance immediately caught my attention, but their involvement in projects outside of Suderbyn also intrigued me. To me it seemed as a good place to start learning some rural lessons for a global right to the city. But let us now turn to the theory.

Theoretical Framework

This important chapter has mainly been constructed from Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas' selections and outstanding translations of Lefebvre's works in *Writings on Cities* (2006) alongside Donald Nicholson-Smith's wonderful translation of *The Production of Space* (1991). I have also had much use of Kofman and Lebas' own important contributions and interpretations of Lefebvre's writings presented in their extensive introduction to the book, as well those of others (Attoh, 2011; Belda-Miquel et al., 2016; Harvey, 2000; 2012; Marcuse, 2009; Purcell, 2002; 2013). Since this is a quite theory-heavy thesis that is very much concerned with, and seeks to add to, the discussion on Lefebvre's works this is one of the most extensive chapters of the whole thesis. It is divided into two parts of which the first considers the city and society in Lefebvre's works and the other the right to the city and societal transformation. The first part aims to lay out Lefebvre's analysis of the city and society, his dissection of it, his understanding of it, its relationships and its crises, as I see it. The second part (dealing with the right to the city) tries to represent what will have to be done in ways of change and how to set about doing it.

City and Society

> "Though, to tell you the truth, my dear More, I don't see how you can ever get any real justice or prosperity, so long as there's private property, and everything's judged in terms of money – unless you consider it just for the worst sort of people to have the best living conditions, or unless you're prepared to call a country prosperous, in which all the wealth is owned by a tiny minority – who aren't entirely happy even so, while everyone else is simply miserable."
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> – Thomas More, *Utopia* (2009/1516, p. 41)

Let us begin by considering "the city". How can the city possibly be defined, in all its complexities, in a satisfying way? It is, in a way, a reflection of society as a whole, encompassing several dimensions, appearing in a multitude of ways, continuously changing and moving in different directions on different levels. It cannot be reduced to simple evolutionism or described in terms of mere oppositions such as centre and periphery, town and countryside (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 53, 118). "Thinking the city", Lefebvre (cited in Kofman and Lebas, 2006, p. 53) writes, "moves towards thinking the world". But, at the same time, there is also room for action, for the local, for agency. Let us not forget to leave room

for "events, initiatives and decisions", Lefebvre (cited in Kofman and Lebas, 2006, p. 53) writes. David Harvey (2012, p. 67) notes that the city is a site where all kinds of people from different classes and backgrounds come together and mingle. Whether it be reluctantly or not, antagonistically or not, they create a common that appears in any given form for a moment before resuming its continuous and dialectic journey, pulled in different directions by different forces. Indeed, Lefebvre (cited in Kofman and Lebas, 2006, p. 53) argues that what it means to think about the city is to consider its contradictory aspects, to simultaneously maintain and hold them, and to do so without becoming reductionist. "The dialectic of the urban cannot be limited to the opposition of centre-periphery", writes Lefebvre (cited in Kofman and Lebas, 2006, p. 53), "although it implies and contains it". The city contains, at the same time, "constrains and possibilities, peacefulness and violence, meetings and solitude, gathering and separation, the trivial and the poetic, brutal functionalism and surprising improvization" (Lefebvre, cited in Kofman and Lebas, 2006, p. 53). This is the city, "the work of history", but how can we conceptualise it and make sense of it all?

One of the key questions raised in *The Production of Space* (1991) is whether the city should be considered a work of art (an oeuvre) or a mere product. Lefebvre begins in the Hegelian tradition, moving through Marx and Engels, to try to chisel out a satisfying definition of what it means to *produce*, of how we can define "production" as an act. Nature plays an important role, Lefebvre (1991, p. 70) argues, but it does not produce, it creates. Nature is unaware of what it creates, however it cannot be separated from what it creates and is necessary for production to occur (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 69). Humans, the creations of nature, create works and produce products and in both cases labour is needed (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 71). To begin with, the relation between town, country and nature is integral to urban life. "The countryside", Lefebvre (2006, p. 118) argues, "is the place of production and *oeuvres*". He describes the landscape itself as an oeuvre that is later "desecrated by the city and urban life" which "condense it, then dissolve it over through the ages by absorbing it into rationality" (Lefebvre, 2006, p.118). The dialectic relation of the three terms *rurality*, *urban fabric*, and *centrality*, argues Lefebvre (2006, p. 118), is hidden beneath opposite dichotomies such as nature and culture which stem from and deflect the relation of town and countryside.

According to Lefebvre (2006, p. 101), there are clearly defined people, or groups, that "accomplish" the oeuvre. But the possibilities of this process, notes Lefebvre (2006, p. 101), is both enabled and restrained by the historical conditions. However, they (the historical conditions) do not in

themselves explain "what was born of them, in them, by them". It was, according to Lefebvre (2006, p. 101), in this way that the western medieval city came to be dominated by merchants and bankers. It was *they* who were exercising *their* right to the city by establishing *their* oeuvre. During some periods the dominance of towns lead to conflicts with the surrounding countryside (like on Gotland in 1288) whereas other periods were more peaceful (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 119). But it was still a constant struggle. To Lefebvre (2006, p. 105), the "sculpting of space" is a process of appropriation, of enabling groups to take charge of rhythms and spaces. "The city was at one and the same time the place and the milieu, the theatre and the stake of these complex interactions", Lefebvre (2006, p. 105) writes.

Inscribed, already, in this western medieval city was also the contradiction between use-value and exchange-value. Although these bankers and merchants promoted and generalised exchange, thereby extending the reaches of exchange-value, the city still remained a "work of art", comparable to the creation of culture and civilization (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 101-102). Lefebvre (2006, p. 102) paints a paradoxical picture of this urban reality in which wealth and power is accumulated through commerce, yet the use-value aspect (present in the "pleasure, beauty, ornamentation of meeting places") still prevails. "And thus," Lefebvre (2006, p. 101) writes, "the city is an *oeuvre*, closer to a work of art than to a simple material product". As we see here (and as Mark Purcell (2013, p. 148-149) also argues) Lefebvre does not view the city as a mere "spatial product of [capitalist] industrialization," instead he recognises urbanisation as a force in itself that predates capitalism even though it has been "massively intensified" by industrialisation.

The industrialisation of society (perhaps specifically though this double process of industrialisation-urbanisation) brought further changes to this relation between town and countryside, between the city and its surroundings. In this modern world, Lefebvre (2006, p. 119) argues, the domination and exploitation of the countryside (by the city) takes on a subtler role. The city becomes the centre of decision making and as it expands it "attacks the countryside, corrodes and dissolves it". Urban life seeps into and penetrates the countryside.

Now, Lefebvre makes an important distinction between on the one hand "the city" and on the other "the urban". If the city is an oeuvre, argues Lefebvre (2006, p. 103), then it requires both a steady stream of acts and actions carried out by "certain historical and social 'agents'" as well as a practico-material reality to shape. "There is cause and reason to

distinguish between material and social morphologies", Lefebvre (2006, p. 103) writes, "[w]e should perhaps here introduce a distinction between the city, a present and immediate reality, a practico-material and architectural fact, and the urban, a social reality made up of relations which are to be conceived of, constructed and reconstructed by thought". I argue that this double-morphology goes well beyond what is usually thought of as the "city" and instead cuts across the urban-rural dichotomy to describe the whole of society. I will later use some of the concepts introduced here to explain life in Suderbyn. Furthermore, whereas I agree with Purcell on how Lefebvre sees capitalist industrialisation as imposing itself upon city, generalising exchange-value to the extent that space itself become a consumable commodity, I do not make the same interpretation as Purcell (2013, p. 148-149) when he argues that "the city" merely serves as a "impoverished manifestation" of the urban. Even though I think Purcell is right in emphasising that the urban is inherently based on use-value and the city inherently so on exchange-value, I want to leave some room for images and signs who also play an important part in distorting the picture by reinforcing errors and illusions or even ideologies (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 94). I think I take a more wholistic and integrated view of this double-morphology of the practico-material and the social where "planning as ideology", as Lefebvre (2006, p. 99) calls it, imposes itself upon both realities simultaneously. In doing so, I would argue, it hides the real nature of the problem. As Lefebvre writes:

> "Planning as ideology formulates all the problems of society into questions of space and transposes all that comes from history and consciousness into spatial terms. It is an ideology which immediately divides up. Since society does not work in a satisfactory manner, could there not be a pathology of space? Within this perspective, the virtually official recognition of the priority of space over time is not conceived of as indication of social pathology, as symptom among others of a reality which engenders social disease. On the contrary, what are represented are healthy and diseased spaces". (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 99)

Going deeper into this analysis of "the physical and social morphology of [...] the city, the urban and their connexion", Lefebvre (2006, p. 111) enters into a discussion concerning specific levels of social reality, continuities and discontinuities. Lefebvre (2006, p. 104) begins by criticising what he sees as "simplifying evolutionism" and "naïve continuism" in which the specific is lost due to "simplifying schematas". Lefebvre (1991, p. 105) recognises that reductionism is a necessary method designed to help scientific endeavours in making sense of a chaotic world, however, it must not be abused. To me, Lefebvre seeks a

more satisfying theory on the creation of the oeuvre that is not as reductive as the organicist model (evolutionism and continuism) (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 104). "The correct approach", Lefebvre (2006, p. 105) writes, "consists in going from the most general knowledge to that which concerns historical processes and discontinuities, their projection or refraction onto the city and conversely, particular and specific knowledge of urban reality to its global context". Lefebvre (2006, p. 104-105) believes that if global processes, whether they be economic, social, political or cultural, have affected urban rhythms and spaces, "formed urban space and shaped the city", it was done by helping groups appropriate them.

As we can see, ideology plays a crucial role here. Lefebvre (2006, p. 106) argues that neither the city nor the urban can be understood without institutions. Institutions that I like to think of as "manifestations of ideology"; political, religious or otherwise. Located at the *highest level*, they are to be found in uninhabited or uninhabitable spaces. In my reading of Lefebvre, it strikes me as tremendously important to recognise the city as appearing in both time and space, coming from something and going somewhere. "The past, the present, the possible cannot be separated," he writes (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 148). When an urban formation declines, says Lefebvre (2006, p. 107), fragments of that very formation is reused in new formations. "Yes, the city can be read," says Lefebvre (2006, p. 108), "because it writes, because it was writing." But this is not enough without context. Changes in the city are always visible on the ground, "written in the urban text", Lefebvre (2006, p. 107) argues, but it is not where they originated from.

According to Lefebvre (2006, p. 112), the highest level is simultaneously *above* and *in* the city. "At this level, the city manifests itself as a group of groups, with its double-morphology (practico-sensible or material, on the one hand, social on the other)" (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 112). *Below* the city in the urban writing, is the *context*. Mentioned before and existing in inhabited spaces, they are needed if we are to answer questions such as what? how? why? and for whom? This is everyday life in the city, "immediate relations, the *unconscious* of the urban, what is little said and of which even less is written" (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 108).

Social structures uphold order in the urban, but they also present themselves as material structures in the city. Using Lefebvre's (2006, p. 112) own examples, social order is, at the highest level, represented by the National Police Authority (a government agency). Whereas social order at the same time, at *the specific level*, is represented by neighbourhood police stations. In a similar manner the social institution of religion is at

the highest level represented in the guise of a cathedral and, at the same time, as neighbourhood churches on the specific (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 112)[1]. Now, it is the conscious intention that separates "a work of nature" from "a work of art", meaning ideology also plays a part. "What exactly were the great cathedrals?" Lefebvre (1991, p. 74) askes. "[T]hey were political acts", he responds.

In this way, as I understand it, "the far order is projected into the near order" (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 114). However, according to Lefebvre (2006, p. 114), it is seldom unitary; different types of orders rely on different ideologies and hence the result is a syncretism, something that might be called "unity" yet is not. Western society, Lefebvre (2006, p. 144-145) argues, is obsessed with integration and coherence. "[It] wants itself and sees itself as coherent", Lefebvre (2006, p.144-145) writes, "[and] would coherence not be the obsession of an incoherent society, which searches the way towards coherence by wishing to stop in a conflictual situation denied as such?" In the city as a whole, all the elements needed for creating an urban society is right there in front of us, Lefebvre (2006, p. 143) argues, but they are dissociated from one another. "Under existing conditions", Lefebvre (2006, p. 144) writes, "it dies before being born". Everyday life in the city exists as isolated fragments such as work, transportation and leisure. Many of which I would argue are the same in both rural and urban settings, bearing witness of the connections between them in terms of everyday life, though the specifics of them and they way they are put together can vary. Privet life can be put together in various combinations, but this is not the same as synthesis. "[T]he urban", Lefebvre (2006, p. 143) writes, "cannot be recomposed from the signs of the city […] although the city is a signifying whole". According to Lefebvre (2006, p. 127), the present urban has lost the features that once made it an oeuvre. "[T]he people (the 'inhabitants') move about in a space which tends towards a geometric isotopy, full of instructions and signals, where qualitative differences of places and moments no longer matter" (Lefebvre, 2006, 128).

There is a conflict that is unavoidable, Lefebvre (2006, p. 86, 131-132) argues, between the urban (which is inherently based on use-value) and the unlimited generalisation of exchange-value ("spaces bought and sold, the consumption of products, goods, places and signs") resulting in the suppression of the oeuvre. In the modern city, Lefebvre (2006, p. 109-110) argues, the exploitation of society as a whole is intensified. It

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[1] Not to forget, however, are institutions working on the global level or in, as Lefebvre (2006, p. 112) puts it, "the subterranean shadow". I imagen that this category includes such agencies or institutions as the Vatican or various national security services.

passively aligns with "the ideology of consumption". Objects as well as goods split "into a reality and an image" thus leading us to consume both. The city and the urban are then handed over to consumption (exchange-value in pure form) and everything gets mediated through exchange (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 115).

But Lefebvre (2006, p. 115) also argues that the analysis must (at the same time) be made with regards to, not just the different levels, but different dimensions. There is a symbolic dimension that has to do with squares and avenues, monuments and voids that symbolise the society, the state, the world etc. Secondly, there is also the paradigmatical dimension describing the oppositions of the city such as centre and periphery, integrated and non-integrated. Most relevant for us here is the opposition between town and country. Lefebvre (2006, p. 120) argues that whereas this opposition has lessened, the opposition of urbanity and rurality has accentuated. Therefore, he argues, we cannot assume that "the fusion of urban society with the countryside" has resulted in a dissipation of centrality. Lastly, the city also includes a syntagmatic dimension made up of "the connection of elements", isotopies and heterotopies (being defined at each level and in relation to one another) (Lefebvre, 2006, p. 113, 116). Now, as David Harvey (2012, p. xvii) notes, Lefebvres definition of heterotopia is very much different from that of someone like Foucault. According to Harvey, Lefebvre sees heterotopies as social spaces, arising out of the ordinary lives of people and their quest for meaning in what they do, feel, sense and articulate, in which "something different" is not only possible but indeed necessary for revolutionary trajectories. It is not, therefore, out of some grand or conscious plan that "something different" emerges, Harvey (2012, p. xvii) argues, but out of the everyday lives of people. As a result, heterotopies appear all over the place to provide "the seed-bed for revolutionary movement", as Harvey (2012, p. xvii-xviii) puts it. But they are fleeting by nature and will swiftly come to pass, "reclaimed by the dominant praxis", if not seized (Lefebvre, cited in Harvey, 2012, p. xviii).

This constant tension between isotopies and heterotopies, use-value and exchange-value, the city and the urban etc. is crucial to my understanding of all this. From what I understand, Lefebvre (2006, p. 145-146) sees powerful social and political forces at work that threaten to destroy the city, kill it through planning projects. Essentially ideological, they ravage the urban. The city crumbles under the pressure from "the State, private enterprises and culture". They do this, I would say, armed with what Lefebvre (1991, p. 106-107) calls "reduced models" acquired with a "*reductive practice* in mind". The uniqueness that once made the city a

work of art has been replaced by repetitiveness. Space has become both the result of repetitive actions and reproducible in itself. "It is obvious, sad to say, that repetition has everywhere defeated uniqueness, that the artificial and contrived have driven all spontaneity and naturalness from the field, and, in short, that products have vanquished works" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 75). Spaces are reduced to purely quantifiable terms such as volumes and distances, says Lefebvre (1991, p. 75), to be bought and sold as exchange-value reigns supreme. The generalisation of exchange-value, Purcell (2013, p. 149) argues, alienates the inhabitants from their city in the same way as the workers are alienated from their products. At the same time, "the Olympians of the new bourgeois aristocracy" have transcended everyday life so that they no longer inhabit, Lefebvre (2006, p. 159) argues, but instead are everywhere and nowhere at once, "possessing and commandeering" while going from "grand hotel to grand hotel, or from castle to castle". "Space", Lefebvre (1991, p. 75) concludes, "is undoubtedly produced".

The Right to the City and Societal Transformation

> "Elsewhere, people are always talking about the public interest, but all they really care about is private property. In Utopia, where there's no private property, people take their duty to the public seriously."
> – Thomas More, *Utopia* (2009/1516, p. 129)

Now that we are somewhat informed about the nature of the problem, it is perhaps time to turn to what can be done, to "the right to the city" as an idea. To begin with, the right to the city has to be recognised within Lefebvre's "wider utopian project of societal transformation", as Sergio Belda-Miquel et al. (2016, p. 323) puts it. As Kofman and Lebas (2006, p. 21) argues, the right to the city really grew out of Lefebvres consideration of "the possible impossible". "To think about alternative possibilities", they write, "we need utopias. U-topie, as the search for a place that does not yet exist". But as we delve into utopian thinking we have to be clear about what type of utopianism it is Lefebvre is talking about. After all, "Lefebvre was resolutely antagonistic to the traditional utopianisms of spatial form", as Harvey (2000, p. 182-183) points out. Harvey (2000, p. 159-160, 182-183) argues that Lefebvre thought "the production of space must always remain as an endless open possibility" and that his utopianism therefore should have to be "spatiotemporal" or "dialectic". Hence, a more useful definition might be that of Russell Jacoby (1999, p. 105) who writes that "Utopia here refers not only to a vision of a future society, but a vision pure and simple, an ability, perhaps willingness, to use expansive concepts to see reality and its possibilities". As Purcell (2013, p. 151)

argues, "we need to imagine utopia the way Lefebvre does" and to me that means to push the envelope, to use the ideal in order to achieve something real. To "demand the impossible", as Lefebvre (cited in Kofman and Lebas, 2006, p. 35) writes, "in order to get all that is possible".

The right to the city can, in itself, very much be described as a "cry and demand". Born out of necessity and guided by a vision. Even though I think this overarching message is rather clear, there are some different ways in which it has been described. Harvey (2012, p. x) argues that the cry comes first, as "a response to the existential pain of a withering crisis of everyday life in the city" whereas "[t]he demand was really a command to look that crisis clearly in the eye and to create an alternative urban life". Marcuse (2009, p. 190), on the other hand, argues that "the demand" comes from those directly and materially deprived, the poor, the homeless etc., whereas "the cry" comes from those alienated, those who are creatively oppressed in their lives. In either case it is a (continuous) struggle. The avoidance of closure, however, causes other problems. There is a problem of realisation, as Harvey (2000, p. 185) notes. We could try as hard as we like to create a process-oriented utopia that will remain endlessly open to new possibilities, he argues, but at the end of the day the fact of the matter is that things are either made or they are not. Furthermore, if they are made they have to be made right, because once realised, once invested, material structures will have been put in place that are then hard to change in retrospect and perhaps even increasingly so as time goes by. I do not know if we have a solution to this problem at the moment other than improvisation and experimentation, both of which are problematic in themselves.

As Marcuse (2009, p. 185) points out, the demand for a right to the city is still in need of a (satisfying) definition. There are questions, Marcuse continues, as to what right, whose right, and to what city still left to answer. Kafui Attoh (2011, p. 674) goes even further and argues that "[Lefebvre] spends little time elucidating what a right to the city might look like practically," and that "Lefebvre's notion of rights was sketchy at best, and, worse, the growing scholarship on the 'right to the city' offers little clarification." Attoh's (2011, p. 674-676) argument is basically that the "openness of the right to the city as an idea" is sure to result in the emergence of several inconsistencies out of the collective body of different scholarly interpretations and that this might be more confusing than beneficial. I partly agree with Attoh's assessment, however, as I mentioned before, I think the overarching message is rather clear. I think there is a general consensus surrounding what the right to the city is about, be it a bit vague.

But I think it is vague because it is a radical claim to something that does not yet exist, and it has to be. "It is", as Lefebvre (2006, p. 148) writes, "impossible to envisage the reconstruction of the old city, only the construction of a new one on new foundations, on another scale and in other conditions, in another society. The prescription is: there cannot be a going back". Thus, the direction is set out for us. Looking back at some kind of conservative utopia will not help us. We cannot know what will come next, only that we have to press forwards into something different from both the past and the present. "To claim the right to the city in the sense I mean it here", Harvey (2012, p. 5) writes, "is to claim some kind of shaping power over the process of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and remade, and to do so in a fundamental and radical way". Marcuse (2009, p 194) similarly argues that the right to the city "is a claim to a totality, to something whole and something wholly different from the existing city, the existing society" whereas Purcell (2002, p. 102) breaks it down further into two principal rights: the right to *participation* and the right to *appropriation*. Both of which I would argue can be seen in Suderbyn.

The right to the city is about challenging "the foundation of capitalist class relations", Purcell (2002, p. 103) goes on to argue. To Purcell (2002, p. 102-103), it is about claiming physical access to space, occupying and appropriating it, making decisions about it in a way that directly engages people. Essentially, though, I would say that Purcell is fairly close to Harvey and Marcuse in his reasoning. "*The right to the city* cannot be conceived of as a simple visiting right or as a return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed right to urban life", Lefebvre (2006, p. 158) writes, and I think this is basically at the heart of what these three writers are getting at. As Harvey (2012, p. 22-23) argues, the right to the city is basically about greater democratic control. To "reorient" the city, as Purcell (2013, p. 149) puts it. I do not think anyone knows where this pursuit would lead us at this point, but I do not think we should be afraid to push things in the way that Harvey, Marcuse and Purcell do. To me, the right to the city is about Utopia, about experimenting with alternatives, about trying "something different" and we cannot not know where it will lead to until after it has already been achieved, if ever.

Another question that need to be addressed, though, as Marcuse (2009, p. 189) points out, is that of "whose right", which remains a complex one. I think an essential part of the answer to this question lies in the act of inhabiting. As Harvey (2012, p. xv) argues, claiming the right to the (future) city lies open to anyone. But, as Purcell (2003, p. 101-102) points

out, the right to the city also stresses the need to shift power and control from capital and the state to the inhabitants. Going from ownership to inhabitancy, Purcell (2013, p. 149) argues, includes the act of appropriation. Furthermore, the right to the city is also a collective rather than an individual right which needs to be collectively claimed. Purcell (2013, p. 146) argues that Lefebvre is seeking to establish a "new contract of citizenship". As Lefebvre (2006, 147) observes, only the individual needs of people have been considered and mediated through manipulation and consumption without much consideration given to their social needs. There is a struggle involved, Purcell (2013, p. 146) says, and as Marx (cited in Harvey, 2012, p. xv) states "between equal rights force decides".

Method and Methodology

As Alan Bryman (2016, p. 17) notes, social research methods are not simply "neutral tools" for us to use. Rather, they are tied up with preconceived notions of social reality and how we should go about studying it. In writing this chapter I have therefore drawn from the experiences and guidelines of many researchers and writers mentioned in Bryman (2016), DeLyser et al. (2010), Flyvbjerg (2006), Richie et al. (2014), and Tedlock (1991) as well as their own insights and contributions. There are many important ontological, epistemological, ethical etc. questions that I have had to considered throughout my work on this thesis and that I discuss in this chapter. I do not want to make any absolute ideological commitments, though I would classify the overarching ontological positioning of this thesis as constructionist. I would argue that what is presented here, in this thesis, is *one* way in which "reality" can be understood, but not the *only* way. After all, I do not (and I cannot) know everything. "No matter how broad our analytical scope", as Steve Herbert (p. 72) writes, "each of us is limited – by our histories, our failures to understand others fully, our lack of imagination. These realities force upon us a necessary modesty, an acceptance of the incompleteness of our analysis". Reality or "the field", as Felix Driver (cited in Cope, 2010, p. 34) argues, "is not just 'there'" for us to discover. It is constantly being constructed, locally or elsewhere, physically or through texts and images. Despite these limitations, I have tried my best to understand and represent a part of this constantly negotiated, renewed, reworked, reordered reality in an ethical, fair and as true sense as I possibly can.

Epistemologically speaking, I would classify my position as interpretivist. I think this is a natural continuation from my ontological perspective, but it does not mean that I completely want to reject anything that might be conceived as positivist. I am a pragmatist, and as such I recognise that these different epistemological positions are at odds with each other, perhaps even contradictory, but not absolutely and not necessarily incompatible as a result. They produce different types of knowledge and answer different types of questions. What this statement does entail, however, is that I believe there are limits to positivism and its ability to answer the type of questions I am interested in studying in this thesis. I do essentially believe that the subject matter of the social sciences is radically different to that of the natural sciences, and therefore poses additional or even different challenges from those of the natural sciences. There is a duality in social science of *explaining* and *understanding* human

behaviour (Bryman, 2016, p. 26). The latter requires a more qualitative approach than what is offered by positivism. There is a need to re-examine a range of different scientific criteria, such as objectivity, to get to this understanding. "[H]uman intersubjectivity", as Barbara Tedlock (1991, p. 71) argues, belongs to "this realm that distinguishes the human sciences from the natural sciences as a field of investigation". What are people's intentions? How do they make sense of the world? What is my positioning and my influence? etc.

For example, what would the data, results and conclusions of this thesis have looked like if it had been done by someone else, or still by me but at a different time? What effect has my level of immersion had? How do you represent something that is constantly changing when you yourself is also constantly changing, learning more and adopting new perspectives? This kind of problematic is very visible in Suderbyn since the frequency of people coming and going in this very small community makes the presence or absence of any one person instantly noticeable. The group I left in April was completely different from the one I had first encountered a month earlier. Not only had people left and new ones arrived, but the time of year was also changing. You could feel how the atmosphere of the place was evolving, whether it was due to the changing composition of the group or the change in season. But these five weeks also proved to be a very powerful emotional experience for me personally. I too was changing, both individually and as a part of the group. It is weird when the thing you are trying to study is changing underneath your feet, but even more so when you find yourself becoming part of it. Whereas my ethnographic approach allowed me to produce very in-depth knowledge about this community in collaboration with its people, it also tempered with my objectivity as a student. This is hard to avoid since the approach almost guaranteed that my role as a student would get mixed up with myself as a private person. I was not just there interviewing and observing, but cooking food, playing board games, conversing, and building relations as well as structures. Since I knew this would be an issue from the beginning, I decided to opt for what is usually called "empathetic neutrality" (Ormston et al., 2014, p. 8). Rather than striving for absolute objectivity, I instead tried to recognise and be transparent about my own biases, values etc. while simultaneously striving for an as neutral and non-judgmental approach as possible.

Research Design

Deductive or indictive, that is the question. I think it is difficult to know how one should go about categorising one's approach in these terms.

Norman Blaikie (cited in Ormston et al., 2014, p. 6), for example, argues that there is no "pure" induction or deduction. In "inductive research" the data collected, the questions asked, and the analytical categories constructed will, to some extent, have been influenced by deductive assumptions and knowledge. Likewise, "deductive research" is entangled with induction as it draws from theoretical knowledge derived from induction. Indeed, Herbert (2010, p. 70) even argues that it is neither possible nor desirable to find an absolute clear border for where one ends and the other begins. There is a continuous process of revision as they feed into one another, as Bryman (2016, p. 21-23) argues, which has led me to pick what is usually called an "iterative" approach where I have gone back and forth between theory and the empirical data. After all, "the nature of qualitative research is that the connection between theory and research is somewhat more ambiguous than in quantitative research", as Bryman (2016, p. 378) argues.

The research design for this thesis really grew out of my engagement with Lefebvre's writings and those of modern, contemporary researchers and scholars such as Harvey (2012), Marcuse (2009), and Purcell (2013). As I was trying to wrap my head around this very rich and multi-layered body of work it became ever clearer to me that I would need deep and detailed knowledge about the everyday lives of inhabitants that would be fundamentally context-dependent if I was really to come up with some sort of answer to my research question. The emphasis put on citizens as agents of change through the act of inhabiting along with the experimental nature of Lefebvre's open-ended utopianism were the main reasons as to why I chose a qualitative research design made up of a single case study. It also made sense within the context of a master thesis to limit myself to something that would be manageable given the conditions but still allow for further exploration in a possible future. Hence, I also think it could be said that the thesis includes both idiographic as well as nomothetic elements as a result of this. In the design, I make use of three distinct but intertwined methods: a participant observation (ethnography), a focus group, and five semi-structured interviews. The idea here was to try to use the participant observation as a base and then triangulate using the other two methods. I think this was a fruitful approach. For example, there were a few people that were more comfortable in an interview than in a focus group and by using both of these methods I was able to get more data out of these participants.

The Case Study Approach

The empirical data presented in this thesis is, as mentioned, the result of a five weeks long case study to Suderbyn ecovillage a few miles south of the city of Visby on the Baltic island of Gotland. The study was conducted by myself between the 5th of Mars and the 8th of April, 2018. There are several reasons as to why I picked this approach and this sight as my case. In a more general reasoning for choosing a case study approach I rely on much of Bent Flyvbjerg's (2006) argumentation as to why in-depth case studies are a necessary part of social research if we are to understand complex questions. As Herbert (2010, p. 75) argues, case studies allow you to probe questions of meaning and to uncover central processes through intensive, in-depth examination which gives us a deeper understanding. Still, I will take some time here to discuss the case study approach, as such, seeing as I have not done so yet, and also present my own case study approach as part of my research design.

Early on in his article, Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 221) enters into a discussion on the role of cases in human learning that I find fundamental to the rest of his reasoning. Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 221) makes two points here: firstly, that the type of "context-dependent" knowledge produced by case studies is necessary to develop beyond mere "rule-based beginners" to actual experts and secondly that, in studying human affairs, there is only context-dependent knowledge. As pointed out by Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 222), people become experts in all kinds of things, many of them mundane such as bicycling or conversing, but some also become experts in more specialized activities such as chess. Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 222) argues that people acquire this type of expertise by means of context-dependent knowledge, accumulated from thousands of concrete cases. "To generalise is to be an idiot; to particularise is the alone distinction of merit", as I believe English writer and painter William Blake once put it. I think one of Flyvbjerg's most compelling arguments here is that case studies help us develop a "nuanced view of reality" through exposure and closeness to the details and complexities of real life in the field and that this helps students and researchers alike improve upon their own skills and understandings (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 223).

Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 223) does not disown rule-based knowledge, but he notes that social science has been unable to produce predictive and generalisable theories in the same way the natural sciences has been able to. Therefore, what remains is concrete and context-dependent knowledge of the kind case studies are so good at providing. However, if that seems a bit hard and we still want to have a go at generalising anyhow, what

better method to use, then, than falsification? As Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 228) observes, falsification, generalisation based on a single case, "is one of the most rigorous tests to which a scientific proposition can be subjected".

An important question to ask, though, is what kind of case are we looking at? Bryman (2016, p. 62-63) points out a few different types of cases that can be used in case study research. For me, Suderbyn poses as a so called "critical case" since I picked it after having long considered the theoretical framework. Suderbyn may not be urban or considered part of the city (even though it certainly is connected to it). But I would argue that it is an example of a heterotopy in the theoretical context of this thesis. It is a place where "something different" can and is happening. The experimentation and way of life provides a clear contrast to the city as the "supreme isotopy" and incorporates a lot of aspects such as participation and appropriation, a claim to a totality that is different from general society and that makes it a very useful case to study for my purposes. I do not think we should not get too hung up on where the city begins and ends, but instead think about where places might fit into Lefebvre's wider utopian vision of societal transformation. As I was going into my fourth week in Suderbyn, I really begun to conceptualise what I was seeing and hearing in a way that made sense within the theoretical context. I was able to do this because of the case study approach which, as Herbert (2010, p. 75) notes, made it easier for me to move back and forth between theory and empirical findings and handle this "ambiguous" relationship that exist between data and theory in qualitative research.

Participant Observation or Ethnography

As framework – groundwork – not framework, groundwork to discuss *a* framework of social research methods I used a participant observation which began immediately as I arrived and continued for the entire duration of my five weeks at Suderbyn. This observation continuously provided the groundwork for the fieldwork, constantly giving me data that I could then probe, either directly by asking questions right then and there or later at the focus group or during the semi-structured interviews. I wanted to use this method in order to try to get as close as possible to the daily lives of residents in the ecovillage and getting to know them by participating in their social activities, work, meetings etc. before I brought in other methods. As Annette Watson and Karen E. Till (2010, p. 134) notes, ethnography involves "explicit processes and power relations" in the creation of knowledge. Participating has more to do with "doing" then unearthing facts, co-creating knowledge and reimagining the way we do research, not appropriating but collaborating. (Watson and Till, 2010, p. 132, 134). Furthermore, as already mentioned, Lefebvre does not call for

some kind of grand or conscious plan, instead he argues that "revolutionary trajectories" will arise out of the daily lives of ordinary people (Harvey, 2012, p. xvii). Therefore, I think a participant observation proved especially well-suited for my purposes.

But before going any further I have to briefly address this question of the difference between "participant observation" and "ethnography". As noted by Tedlock (1991, p. 69), ethnography started becoming the preferred term among anthropologists in the late 20th century. However, even if they are almost synonymous, Bryman (2016, p. 423) argues that ethnography is sometimes seen as being a little bit wider and tends to encompass the entire research project. I have decided to use them synonymously since I think they are so similar. That being said, I have tried to stick to the term "participant observation", both for continuity but also to highlight the strain that I experienced between the two aspects of this method. As Benjamin Paul (cited in Tedlock, 1991, p.69) notes, "participance" seems to imply emotional involvement, whereas "observation" seem to signal detachment. I was able to balance these two sides quite well from my position of "empathetic neutrality", however as time went by it got more and more difficult to balance my emotional involvement with objective observations.

Be that as it may, in either case I had to start by deciding whether I should adopt an overt or covert approach to the field. I decided on an overt approach for a couple of reasons. Firstly, I think there is an ethical argument to be had. I am of the belief that social research builds on mutual trust between the researcher (or student) and the participants, those observed or interviewed, and that honesty and transparency are good ways of build that trust. To me it was the easiest and most straight forward way of avoiding *deception*, *harm* to participants, lack of *informed consent*, and *invasion of privacy* to the largest possible degree. These four main areas, defined by Diener and Crandall (cited in Bryman, 2016, p. 125), served as my guidelines in the field. Though, with so many people coming and going it was sometimes difficult to ensure informed consent form everyone all the time. The level of immersion required for this work also makes it difficult to protect participants' privacy. To deal with this I had to make individual decisions once I had begun writing up the results of the thesis as to what to include and what to exclude by weighing the possible harm to participants against the importance of the results to the thesis.

My second reason for going with an overt approach was that it helped open a lot of doors for me in the field. It let me talk more freely with

people and allowed them to assist me more by giving concrete tips or bringing up things that might be of interest to me. Initially, I was a bit worried that this approach might cause people to feel self-conscious around me or modify their behaviour to present a polished surface. Any such worries were soon disintegrated, however, as I was shown the poorly insulated trailer, or "bungalow" which Lars told me is what they call them "because it sounds nicer", that would be my home for the next five weeks. Bear in mind this is in early March. Though, as Antoine (who occupied the bungalow next to mine) explained, you at least do not tend to stay in bed for too long after having waken up. "Always something", I thought at the time. There are more examples I could mention, but the point is that I was honest in my intent and as a result I felt people, as far as I could tell, were honest towards me.

Once I had settled on an overt approach, the next thing I had to do was to establish contact with the community. This was not much of a problem since I could easily use Suderbyn's website to apply for a longer visit and sign up as a volunteer which would make it natural for me to slip into the role of a "participant". The next issue I had to address, though, was the key step of gaining access to the community. As Bryman (2016, p. 425) notes, this can sometimes be difficult to achieve, but again this was not the case here. Within half an hour of my arrival I found myself working along others in the kitchen. I could already tell this was a community that was used to having people (including researchers and students) coming and going more or less constantly. As Nils-Erik would jokingly tell me later in the evening: "we are used to being guinea-pigs here". This initial experience further solidified my confidence in picking an overt approach as it would allow me to gain further access to people and the community in a more honest and straight forward way. "No bullshit", as Nicky would have put it.

The last thing I had to consider was the process of writing ethnography. Not only must one reflect on the work carried out in the field, but also on the way that data is framed and presented as a text. As Bryman (p. 459) writes "The ethnographers text must not simply present a set of findings: it must provide an 'authoritative' account of the group or culture in question. In other words, the ethnographer must convince us that he or she has arrived at an account of social reality that has strong claims to truth". This is something I find very difficult to do, but I have tried to the best of my abilities to give an account that describes my experiences as well as my findings.

Focus Group and Interviews

The second method I used was a focus group that took place in Suderbyn's meditation room on the 15th of March. Apart from me, there were six people participating and two others who ended up only observing. I wanted to use a focus group in order to probe some of the topics and pieces of information I had picked up during my observations, working, living and conversing with people in the community. But the general theme was basically "everyday life in Suderbyn". The discussion was recorded and then transcribed by me at a later date. The main reason for this was, as Bryman (2016, p. 503) notes, that it is difficult to moderate and keep track of who is saying what by merely taking notes. By recording the conversation, I was able to focus more on other aspects, such as who was speaking, what they were saying, how they were saying it etc. In my role as moderator I tried to use very wide questions and not get too involved in order to allow for a broad and free discussion where I would not steer the participants too much in any one direction once I had introduced a question to the group. It worked quite well, sometimes the participants would ask me to intervene and I would explain the question a bit more ore give an example of some kind. Overall, I think we had good communications. The size of the group and the choice of participants was more or less determined by itself due to how small the community was. I used the morning meetings to voice my wish of hosting a focus group that anyone who was able to and wanted to participate in could join. This group of eight people was the result of that. The session lasted for about an hour.

Name	Age	Gender	Nationality	Stay at Suderbyn
Ana	33	Female	Spanish	3,5 months
Lars	25	Male	Dutch	5,5 months
Alisa	27	Female	Russian	2,5 years
Eywa	24	Female	Turkish	3 months
Laura	29	Female	Hungarian/Romanian	2 years
Martin	34	?	Earthling	1,5 years
Antoine	25	Male	Suderbyan/French	2 years
Phati	26	Female	Georgian	11 days

Table 1 Focus group participants

As recommended by Bryman (2016, p. 511), I opened the focus group by giving a short introduction, thanking the participants, briefly presenting the goals of my thesis, and giving the reasons for recording. When concluding the focus group, I again thanked the participants and took some time to make sure they knew what would happen to the data and that they felt comfortable with it since I think these focus groups and interviews should also be a positive experience for the participants. From what I could tell, people seemed content or even happy with the session, even though a couple of the participants told me they would prefer one-

on-one interviews because they felt distracted by what other people were saying and found it hard to make up their own minds about what they thought. I later ended up including some of these participants in my interviews in order to make sure I got their perspectives as well.

The last method I employed was semi-structured interviews. Interviewing is perhaps, as Bryman (2016, p. 466) notes, the most widely used method in qualitative research. Qualitative interviews are, as Bryman (2016, p. 466) writes, good at giving an insight into the interviewee's point of view and what it is he or she finds important or relevant. This is also why I chose to quote participants as accurately as I could. "Words, stories, narratives matter. It is how we explain ourselves to others, how we justify our actions (or inactions), how we present ourselves to others", as Linda McDowell (2010, p. 156) writes. As a result, my interviews were more flexible and even though I had an interview guide, the interviews could divert from it (Bryman, 2016, p. 466-477). Again, just like with the focus group, I wanted to use these interviews to probe some of the data I already had.

Name	Age	Gender	Nationality	Stay at Suderbyn
Eywa	24	Female	Turkish	3 months
Lars	25	Male	Dutch	5,5 months
Sarah	x	Female	French	4 months
Laura	29	Female	Hungarian/Romanian	2 years
Ana	33	Female	Spanish	3,5 months

Table 2 Interviewees

The interviews were all conducted during my last weeks in Suderbyn. By this point the interviewees had gotten know me a little bit and the interviews were quite comfortable and natural. I began by thanking the interviewee, briefly introducing my goals, and explaining why I would like to record the session. I then followed an interview guide that was the same for all interviews, but what questions I asked and in what order depended on how the specific interview progressed and how the conversation progressed. I tried to adapt my questioning to the flow of the conversation as to get a natural rhythm flowing as seamlessly as possible from one area to another. The interviews lasted for around 30 minutes each.

Empirical Results

The data from my case study is presented in three parts, respectively dealing with Decision-making, ideology and culture, and lastly the production of space through everyday life. My goal has been to present the data as an authentic account of social reality from the perspective of myself and those involved in a truthful manner. The data, consisting of fieldnotes, pictures, and transcriptions, was coded and organised into these three parts be myself before being written up in order to present it in a comprehensible way. The different parts do of course overlap and to avoid reductionism I have allowed them to do so and also tried to link the data to theory when appropriate. But I begin with a short introduction to Suderbyn.

Introducing Suderbyn

> "Suderbyn Ecovillage is an intentional community of open-minded people from various countries and cultures, located on the island Gotland in the middle of the Baltic Sea. All of us who live here are building the place - not only physically but also socially. Our goal is to live in a way that creates a prosperous living environment while minimizing our environmental footprint. In creating Suderbyn Ecovillage together, we aim to live close to nature and achieve a more sustainable lifestyle, striving for self-sufficiency in food production and renewable energy, prioritizing ecological and local materials. We question patterns of consumption, social structures and cultural stereotypes. We experiment in different areas with innovation and traditional knowledge with the attempt to create a model of healthy and happy society, enjoying the diversity of people. We work with educational projects on the local and international levels. We regenerate the connections between people and between people and nature." (Suderbyn 1, 2018-02-19)

Suderbyn Ecovillage was launched in 2008 and is located just a few miles south of Visby on the Swedish island of Gotland. At present, it consists of two entities: Suderbyn People-Care Cooperative and the NGO RELEARN Suderbyn. There are also plans to register a third entity called Suderbyn Earth-Care foundation that would take over the formal ownership of the property which is now held by the cooperative. The cooperative is also responsible for maintaining and developing the property, including land and buildings, with the goal of "provide a sustainable home for short- and long-term residents, volunteers and visitors" and a long-term goal of creating an ecovillage with the capacity for 30-50 people to live sustainably. (Suderbyn 1, 2018-02-28). At the time of my fieldwork there were a total 12 cooperative members. Not all members reside in

Suderbyn, however, and the number of resident varies throughout the year as non-cooperative members come and go. Initially, as Alisa tells me, cooperative members had to pay a one-off fee of 100.000 SEK to buy into the cooperative. Whereas this allowed the cooperative to make larger investments than they would otherwise have been able to do, it also resulted in them accumulating a sizable debt since cooperative members who cancelled their membership had to be reimbursed. Because of this, the fee was recently reduced to only 5.000 SEK. The cooperative functions a bit like a housing association with an elected board that is responsible for larger investments, finances including taxes, bookkeeping etc. The board is elected on the yearly meeting where only members of the cooperative are allowed to vote.

Figure 1 Cooperative yearly meeting in the meditation room (photo by author, April 2018)

The NGO was founded around the same time as the cooperative, has its own board, and is described as:

> "…a non-profit NGO working locally and internationally with environmental resilience, social justice, respect for human rights and democratic development, transformative education and international cooperation for sustainable development. We have experience in working with and leading various transnational projects: locally, within the Baltic region and internationally." (Suderbyn 2, 2018-05-24)

The NGO is engaged in a number of different projects, with some of them taking place in Suderbyn such as Green Skills projects for the European Voluntary Service (EVS). These projects can be very different in scale and in what they entail, but the overarching goal is to promote and advance a sustainable society.

All of this really began when Robert and Ingrid, based on their own nuclear family, founded Gotland Ecovillage Association some time before

2008. As Robert writes, the association was soon abandoned, however, in favour of a broader networking approach that would allow them to reach other like-minded people whom might also be interested in establishing an ecovillage community on Gotland. With a core group consisting of four families and an additional five to ten interested families and individuals, Gotland Eco-village Network was established in 2007 (later renamed RELEARN Suderbyn). One of the first priorities at this stage was finding a plot of land that would be suitable for establishing an ecovillage. But by the time the small farm that is now Suderbyn was acquired the core of the network had shrunk to just Robert and Ingrid's own family. (Hall, 2009, p. 43)

Figure 2 The main house with outside kitchen, greenhouse, and seed-beds visible in the foreground (photo by author, March 2018)

With the help of network members, however, they were still able to legally register Suderbyn Cooperative Society in 2008 (renamed Suderbyn People-Care Cooperative in 2016). By networking, establishing themselves on platforms online, and reaching out they were able to attracts volunteers as well as others to the ecovillage for projects and courses. (Hall, 2009, p. 44)

Today the property houses around 15-20 residents (I am not sure if they are able to keep track themselves so do not blame me for the lack of precision. Anyhow, I have already made my opinion on positivism clear in these matters.) The main house serves as a sort of social hub but also offers some accommodation, mainly on the second floor. There is also a barn equipped with a workshop, meditation room, free-shop, and office. "The green house", "the white house", and trailers etc. offer additional accommodation. Lastly, there are seven horseshoes-shaped sun traps, four ponds and a permaculture garden, plus some greenhouses including the dome. But, as Ana tells me, "it's ever changing".

Decision-making and Structure

"We believe in the need of deep participatory governance in the society at large and therefore practice it in Suderbyn. All voices must be heard in case of opposition in opinions and win-win resolutions should be found. We encourage community members willing to stay in Suderbyn for long periods to be involved in the governance of Suderbyn. The governance is based on long-term perspective but pays attention to and cares about the current needs and capacities. The decisions are taken on the base of consensus, meaning that all participants are consent with the proposal and do not have strong reasonable objections. There are various open community meetings that take up issues that affects the daily lives of inhabitants. Issues with major legal and financial implications are taken up in the decision-making meetings of the relevant Suderbyn legal entity." (Suderbyn 3, 2018-02-25)

As described above, Suderbyn is governed though a series of different meetings and there is a certain structure to the way things are done in the community. But as Antoine puts it, it is a "very movable skeleton" and there is some flexibility built into the structure. To begin with, there are basically three different meetings in addition to the yearly meeting: Monday morning meetings, regular morning meetings, and community meetings. The board of the cooperative takes decisions on "issues with major legal and financial implications" (similarly to a board in a housing association) but the community members can also have a say.

The first meeting I have a chance to participate in is a regular morning meeting. This is the most frequent type of meeting, held every weekday at 08:30 in order to organise the day in terms of work and other activities. Monday morning meetings are longer since they are used to make a general plan for the entire week. These morning meetings are not mandatory, but most people show up since it is a good way to keep oneself informed about what is going on, as Sarah tells me later.

The meeting starts with a round in which everyone is given a chance to share their thoughts and feelings. This might sound trivial, but it plays an important part as Ana explains to me:

"I think it's great because you already know each other. So, you know if somebody is grumpy in the morning or if, I don't know, or if they have pain in the back and they can't do this or that thing or – it's a lot easier living with people like this, and funnier."

Even though, as Laura tells me, people can of course decide themselves how much they want to share and how honest they want to be. Once everyone has had a go, Antoine writes up tasks and activities under categories such as "building", "garden", "office", "social" etc. on a whiteboard. Some things are left from the day before but people also add

new tasks, workshops, events etc. Some projects can have an "engine" in charge of them, usually someone who can help guide people through a particular task they themselves will not have time to work on. Once everything is on the board there is another round where people briefly share what they will be doing during the day. It can basically be anything from going for a walk along the sea to taking on the task of unclogging the sewer. It is very free, as Sarah tells me, and even if nothing is mandatory, the board fills up quite quickly with people volunteering. The problem sometimes, however, is that things are done "super slowly", as Sarah says.

> "I like that fact that you… we can have a two hours lunch break if you want to and some days are superfast and some days are super slow and nobody is judging for that. You just do your own stuff but yeah… some projects are taking way more time that it should be." (Sarah)

Still, as Alisa says during the focus group, there can be a sense of both involvement and responsibility as "your needs become, like, how to say, the collective needs or needs of other people can – very much – get very much integrated into your own needs". Laura describes it as "being of service", saying "you live in this community, so you also give some of your time to this community". There is this constant "floating between this level of *I* and level of *we*", which Alisa describes as "the entrance to the culture".

Figure 3 Morning meeting in the dining room of the main house (photo by author, March 2018)

I myself decided to volunteer for work in the kitchen during my first morning meeting, helping Lars who had already signed up for lunch duty. It was a good way for me to "enter the culture", so to say, since it became a natural way of bonding with someone. In general, it was quite easy for me to slip into the community by volunteering for different types of work with different people. In this sense, the morning meetings also play an

important social role even if their primary function is to organise practical aspects of the day. "I feel involved already in the morning meeting", Ana says when asked about her feelings of involvement in the community and I can see why. The wholistic approach to community building that combines learning, work, and social life gives people the freedom to choose when and how they want to be involved while at the same time providing an incentive to do so as it adds to a feeling of inclusion and belonging. As Ana says:

> "It's totally social! It's not like, yeah, we have like tasks that we have to do, we have to accomplish, but - it's not the - it's nothing ever forced or like, yeah, it's all in good mood, all with a different energy than if you just have to do it because somebody says so, you know."

The meetings can also be experienced as slow and drawn out, however. Eywa tells me she sometimes finds it hard to stay for the entire meeting in the mornings. Once the morning meeting is over, however, there is about 15 minutes of general cleaning of the bottom floor of the main house before people go about their day. As Laura tells me, people are allowed to follow their own rhythms and tend to their own needs. Hence, some go straight to work while others take their time to get ready. Lars and I go to work in the kitchen. I do my best to keep up even though I feel a bit lost not knowing where anything is. Luckily, though, Lars is very patient with me and takes charge, leading our work on preparing a carrot soup as well as a sauerkraut and potato gratin. The common lunch is an important point of the day since it is a time when everyone come together again. It is one of the fixed and reoccurring points in this "movable skeleton" that Antoine was talking about.

> "So, it's a bit like this dance of, like, coming together and going back and, yeah, and going back to our own little things or group projects or these things…" (Antoine)

The evenings are usually more relaxed and less structured. Quite often there might be a workshop or a sharing circle or something else going on but sometimes people just take time for themselves. However, the community meetings are often held on Friday afternoons. Prior to my first one, Antoine explains the structure of the community meeting. He shows me a list pinned to one of the doors in the kitchen. There are two main categories he explains: information points and discussion points. Information points are basically just a way of informing the community if you are planning on going away or if you want to remind people about putting things back where they belong or whatever. If you have something to bring up that requires the community to take a decision of some sort, however, it goes as a discussion point. "It could for example be that someone wants to change something about the way we work", Antoine explains. But it could also be other things. For example, he tells

me that when I applied to come to Suderbyn to do my thesis project my application went through this process before I was accepted by the community.

The meeting begins with choosing a speaker and a secretary. Information points are easiest to go through and dealt with first followed by the discussion points. At my first community meeting there is only a handful of points. Alisa laughs and says she is sorry I happen to be doing my fieldwork at this time since there usually are about two full sheets of points. I assure her it is not a problem since I will have time to participate in more community meetings. It also gives me the opportunity to witness how the transition from winter to summer effects the community, but more on this later. At another community meeting a few weeks later I get to see how the voting works. Thumbs up for approval, sideways if you approve but have concerns, and thumbs down if you oppose. If a person approves with concerns, he or she can choose to either voice his or her concern or keep it to themselves. A concern could for example be that someone wants more information about someone like me when considering an application. I did not witness any real conflicts during the community meetings I attended and as Ana tells me "we usually decide "yes" for the same things and "no" for the same things" since Suderbyn tends to attract people with similar values. This is not always the case, however, and I witnessed a diversity of opinion during my time there, but no major conflicts.

Culture and Ideology

Figure 4 Georgian evening (photo by author, March 2018)

In certain ways Suderbyn is a very culturally diverse place, which I was also expecting going in there. What I did not expect, however, was that pretty much everyone would have a different nationality. Slovenian,

American, Russian, French, Spanish, Georgian, Dutch, Turkish, and so on and so forth. Suderbyn is very much a place made up of people from different backgrounds coming and going. Many of the people I met were or had been enrolled in the EVS-program. However, there are also more permanent residents. Whereas it is divers and continually changing in this sense, there is also a sense of cohesion and of a core since Suderbyn tend to attract people that already hold certain ideas, views and values that are compatible with Suderbyn's. This "core" is perhaps best summed up by the three ethics of permaculture described by Antoine as *people care*, *earth care* and *fair share*. People care, for instance, is included in the cooperatives full name (Suderbyn People-Care Cooperative) because, as Antoine explains, Suderbyn is not just about organising things practically, but about including this aspect of people care in how the cooperative is organised both socially and in terms of work. It could, for example, be about "just holding space to another person", as Alisa describes it, or organising a sharing circle and for some it is a way of "entering the culture" and getting involved. It really is an important aspect of the culture of Suderbyn in addition to the environmental aspect. Sarah even goes so far as to describe Suderbyn as being, first and foremost, a social space.

The community is really made up of people from different places with different backgrounds but who are all looking for something similar. "That's why we ended up here", Ana tells me, "because we're not fit for regular society in that way. At least we crave a little bit more." The environmental aspect is of course there in most cases, but this search for belonging and community life is also very strong among the people I talked with. My impression of community life in Suderbyn was that social activities, work, and learning were all part of a very integrated whole instead of isolated fragments dispersed through the day. Workshops, for example, can be just as much about bonding as learning or working.

However, people do of course have different ideas and can hold very different expectations upon arriving. Sarah, for example, tells me she was expecting it to be more militant whereas Ana was worried it might be too close, to intimate, "too hippie" for her. Because of people's different backgrounds and expectations, the identity of the place (including the individual and the collective) is constantly renegotiated around a common core. As Alisa describes it:

> "It's, for the most, for me it's a social experiment. It's a playground where people are capable to try to live in a very different [way] form society and there may be thousands of different perceptions of how people would like to live, but this brings, most of the time, people

together with certain inclinations. Like, towards low-impact, ehm, environmental low-impact lifestyle, towards more socially connected and socially inclusive life. Towards diversity, but diversity within certain, eh, limits. So, it's both inclusive and exclusive too, like, because we do have certain guidelines and frameworks which we, eh, see as our own culture, in a way."

In this way, this diversity of opinion and different perspectives can also be something that attracts people to come here. Sarah tells me she wanted to get out of a "French vision of life" and have her convictions confronted by other cultures and get that shook of "okay, I'm super French actually and I need to go see further, open my mind". Part of the culture, therefore, Laura tells me is about being open to a difference of opinion or at least accepting "values that, I mean, might not be 100 per cent your values". She continues:

"…if someone comes and wants to eat meat, for example, we don't say it's forbidden, "you cannot eat meat", because, in the end, it's a personal choice this. It's another thing that we don't buy it as common food, but if this person wants to buy meat and cook, it's their choice…"

However, as Alisa says during the focus group, it is probably harder for someone that does not share the common values to integrate into the culture. Still, one of Baiko's standard phrases whenever she would treat us to some Georgian cuisine was "usually, it's with meat". What Sarah was telling me about, however, was not so much about a difference in commitment, but rather a difference in approaches. Describing herself as a "ground person", she tells me about her opposition to the aeroponic pipes in the dome that will grow plants without the use of soil saying:

"I was in complete opposition but then I decided to, okay, I'm joining the team and I need to learn because apparently it's going to be their culture. I want to understand what we are talking about. Still not convinced, but I go for it. It's not easy but it's a way of dealing with this. I prefer that to rather just shut my eyes and, no, I want to contribute understand and, yeah, and take my, draw my own conclusions…"

Returning to this dichotomy of *I* and *we*, she points out that she used to say "they", since she did not see herself as being part of it, but that she has gradually shifted to saying "we" even if she is still not completely convinced. Other residents also tell me it took them time to settle in and find their role in the community. Laura, for example, tells me she felt more included and freer once she had finished her EVS-program and was no longer restricted by that framework. Eywa, on the other hand, tells me

she felt rejected by the community since she felt unable to communicate and that it was difficult for her to adapt to the culture, says that:

> "Maybe I was the wrong one because I was pushing so hard, maybe I should look at myself because there [is] something wrong. The community is rejecting me because I'm the one who's doing that. I'm taking myself apart from the community, they're not the ones who are doing that…"

As Alisa mentioned during the focus group, Suderbyn is "both inclusive and exclusive". I first hear this from Nils-Erik having accompanied him to one of his weekly dance lesson in Visby. After having embarrassed myself on the dancefloor (even though everyone were very encouraging and eager to let me know I had done very well for a beginner) Nils-Erik tells me he has brought several people from Suderbyn there but that it is rare for anyone to tag along more than one time. He lets me know he is glad I wanted to come with him and says that it can be particularly difficult to get the foreign residents to leave Suderbyn. "One time there was a guy who only left once in three months", he tells me during our we drive back from town. This is something people in general seem to acknowledge even if, as Ana says, "I don't want to be this "they, they, us" and all this, like, clash of people". "[E]ven if we don't really want it", Antoine says during the focus group, "there is still, ah, it's still hard to prevent this bubble from happening". Everyday life is "intense", as Alisa describes it and during my first trip into Visby Ana tells me she sometimes just has to get away for a little bit to breath even if she loves the place. How intense it is varies depending on who you ask, but in general I am told the summers are the most intense whereas winters are calmer.

The Production of Space through Everyday Life

As I arrive at the ecovillage by buss in the afternoon of March 5th 2018 I am swiftly shown into what is commonly referred to as "the main house" by a woman named Laura, whom I encounter soon after having set foot on the property. As I enter the house I am immediately greeted by my contact person, Antoine, whom have been assigned some sort of responsibility for me. The look of him, as well as the interior of the building in general, is bohemian to say the least. The kitchen runs as a corridor in the very centre of the bottom floor, connecting all rooms and staircases. I am at once offered a hot cup of Earl Grey as I make my way around the kitchen and what is commonly referred to as "the social room", shaking hands and greeting new faces as I go along.

The open furnace in the corner of the social room immediately catches my attention. Made out of stones and clay, it is decorated with ceramic at the bottom. Itself a work of art, it will later be joined by a collectively painted

tree on the opposite wall. Along with several other buildings and details around the property, this serves as a good example of how space in this place can be collectively created, made and remade, with the human relation in mind. There is a certain uniqueness to it through which the underlying ideology seeps though. The significance of the tree, for instance, was to celebrate Soraja, and her time in the community, before she was to return to Slovenia, which can be traced back to the "people care" aspect mentioned before. There are countless examples like this spread out around the property since it is such a part of what Suderbyn is. As Antoine describes it:

> "We have this, sort of, responsibility and ability to really, like, project what we love and what we care about in this space and, sort of like, add features or modify things, and I think that's also very precious, even though it seems like just a materialistic aspect – but it's really, like, a way of how we live here. And even someone who doesn't stay for very long leaves a trace here and we remember this person for this."

But it is also about how people use the space. Before I know it, we all gather around an American named Curi who is in the process of explaining the benefits of fermentation in the kitchen. I soon find myself chopping, salting and tossing cabbage together with other residents (all under Curi's guidance) which throws me directly into the reality of daily life in Suderbyn. These workshops, events, and happenings can be either planned or spontaneous ways of exchanging knowledge. It is something that Laura tells me adds to the "richness" of the place and enriches the daily experience of life in the community. Returning to the concept of uniqueness, Alisa (during the focus group) points out how these types of experiences and exchanges are made possible by Suderbyn's structure. She describes the community as both a family and a tribe before explaining how these things, like our little fermentation workshop going on here, would feel strange to propose in a typical family context, yet somehow seems like something completely natural to do in Suderbyn. One way in which she describes this structure is in terms of order and chaos where everyday life is a mixture of the two. Antoine also shares this description and elaborates a bit more on it and what it means for the way you go about your day:

> "I would say that it's sort of a balance between some kind of structure, eh, organisation and something, like, and… organic events and, and, and happenings. So, I would say that it shouldn't be too much of one or another because otherwise it hurts the, the efficiency or the magic of the place."

As work with the fermentation of vegetables winds down a bit, Antoine offers to show me around the property while there is still some sunlight.

He explains that the social room and the kitchen are the main areas for hanging around and "being social". Worth mentioning is also that this is the only kitchen on the entire property, which Robert explains to me at a later state is a conscious decision to create "bottle-necks" where people will naturally come together throughout the course of the day, much like in the above-mentioned scenario. Next to the social room is a larger dining room used for all kinds of different activities. There is a large table, an equally if not larger bookshelf filled to the brink with books on ecology, spirituality, anthropology, sociology etc. There are also a couple of smaller tables, a whiteboard and some chairs. Breakfast is usually had here before or during the morning meeting. The common lunch is also served here on weekdays, as is the traditional Sunday pancake brunch. Though, I am told many of these activities take place outside during the summer. Otherwise the room can also be used for hosting workshops and various other kinds of activities in the afternoons or evenings.

Figure 5 The kitchen inside the main house with the social room visible in the background (photo by author, March 2018)

Continuing back through the kitchen to the other end of the building, we make our way to an extension of the main house bluntly referred to as "the extension". Here is where the common dry toilet and shower is located, equipped with ecological hygiene articles including soaps, toothpaste, shampoo etc. It is an example of what Laura calls "simple living spaces and that Martin describes as:

> "positioning our own level of comfort in a material way, [not at] the highest level. We choose to have other stuff, like… eh… eh, other values which has been mentioned before, our value base. Eh… for example, eh… not using water closet toilets eh, which is a big no-no for a lot of people."

The standard is somewhat austere, however as Laura says she still feels that she lives pretty comfortably only that it is simple compared to a general Swedish household. Antoine explains that there are different schedules and systems of rotation for cleaning, emptying the lavatory, preparing the common lunches etc. that governs whose responsibility these tasks are as he shows me the list for whose turn it is to empty what is sometimes referred to as "the shit bin". I study the chart and about a week later I accompany Lars to learn how the content is handled. This may seem trivial, but it serves as a very concrete example of how the culture is expressed through everyday life. I once overheard Lars and Curi discussing the feeling of waste that came over them whenever they went to town and had to resort to using a water closet. As Martin explains during the focus group, they make sure to handle and use it themselves because they want to question patterns, challenge the status quo or the ordinary to learn and find new and better alternatives. "And it's quite interesting to, eh… feel yourself living in an experiment, understanding like, realising that you live in a demonstration site", Alisa says. The bin itself is also an example of the community's mantra of reusing, repairing, and repurpose. As I learn during the morning meeting the current bin has a whole at the bottom that needs to be repaired. Lars and I replace it with another bin, but as Antoine makes clear he does not want to throw away the old one, so it will have to be stored until it can be repaired or repurposed somehow. In this way the place is, as Alisa says, a reflection of the community driven by people.

> "I can imagine this room being different, I the main house being different, I can imagine, hm… values and the community remaining in a different place. There is certain shapeness, of course, both of the community by the place and the place by the community, but actually for me even though I, I so strongly feel myself on these five hectares, like, almost… kind of like slipping in to the houses and buildings and the land, still for me this is all about people."

Space is modified through the labour and based on the wants, needs, and desires of the people inhabiting it. As I am told, this is perhaps not always the safest way of doing things but it does, however, give the people a great deal of influence over how space is shaped and reworked even if it comes with a degree of experimentation. Alisa describes is as a playground, an experiment where people can live in a different way from general society and Laura says it is not about being an expert, but that it can be a "learning journey". Picking up on Alisa's statement, Antoine says:

> "We really live in there, really inhabit the place in the way that we modify it… as we live here and what we want to do. Like, there is a hole in the wall, someone wants to put a recipe board there. There is… the, the blue barrel, hundred litre barrels, are getting full, someone wants to put some bigger tanks there. Someone wants to paint the

entrance of the dome. You just bring, physically, what, what is important for you and what, is, you want to do, even in small things and big things, it doesn't matter. But we really have this influence on this space that you don't have in the city or… a few movements have, like the Incredible Edible. They started, like, install vegetables in the city and they start really re-appropriate the public space, but we don't need to re-appropriate it because it's already ours and we, we can, like, transform it and touch it, move it, eh, clean it. Mostly clean it."

The main house, itself, has been subject to these types of modifications, but I am told there are plans to construct a new main house that will be even more suited for the type of lifestyle you will find in Suderbyn. Antoine tells me the present main house works fine, but that it gets a bit crowded sometimes. A site for the new house has already been picked out, although construction is not likely to begin anytime soon. The way things are now, the top floor is divided into private rooms for some residents, Antoine explains as we prepare ourselves to continue the tour outside.

Not much of the garden is visible at this time of year due to the thick layer of snow that engulfs just about everything. We make our way towards the four bungalows, mentioned before, to drop off my luggage. "We are going to be neighbours", Antoine tells me. The bungalow which has already been described in the method chapter, again serves as a reminder of the not-at-the-highest-level simple living spaces. I do not mind, though, as some of the other resident will tell me it will give me "the real Suderbyan experience". He tells me the people who had initially occupied the two larger bungalows had not ended up integrating into the community as well as hoped and that it almost created two communities. I later talk to Robert about the same thing who tells me this is one of the reasons they try to create these bottle-necks and that there had been a similar situation with "the white house" which lead them to remove the kitchen which it had previously been equipped with so that no one should be able to get up, go directly to their car and leave without meeting anyone else.

Antoine and I walk a short distance towards a frozen and snow-covered pond. He tells me that this is one out of four ponds that were dug on the property in order to conserve water. The earth that was uncovered was later used to build seven large horseshoe-shaped suntraps between one and a half and two meters high. Antoine later tells me they all run east to west before curving south towards the edges, almost forming the shape of a horseshoe. The idea of them is that they will provide shelter from the northern winds while simultaneously capturing as much sunlight as possible on the southern side. He says it is hard to see now because of the snow, but that the south side of the hills are like gardens, with the intention of simulating the edge of a forest with taller trees and bushes at the top and shorter plants in the front forming more of a meadow closer

to the base of the hill. Again, this is about not wasting materials. The dirt from the digging of the ponds is now sitting in the hills and the limestone can be found in certain buildings. A few weeks later, he will explain to me and a visiting Norwegian that they, as part of permaculture, observe the natural landscape and its conditions before making any changes to it. Once they do make changes they start with small changes and they start as close as possible to where they live (that is primarily the main house and the outside kitchen) based on the specific conditions. What will grow best in this semi-shady area? What combination of plants would be best suited for this soil in these conditions?

Figure 6 Construction of the greenhouse "Pépita" with the dome, polytunnel, and horseshoe nr. 1 visible in the background (photo by author, March 2018)

The horseshoes are, of course, bigger changes to the landscape that I think is a good example of this "responsibility and ability" in terms of modifying space and adding features to it, that Antoine talked about during the focus group. He tells me they might have been too eager to expand in the past and as a result have been unable to maintain everything. Horseshoe nr. 6 and 7, for example, he says are more or less neglected by now since the person most in charge of this project left the community. I guess it is a return to this before mentioned balance between order and chaos, but he also tells me that part of the problem is that even if there is an attempt to pass over the knowledge is sometimes things are not being maintained anyways. This is perhaps most noticeable in the garden since it requires structure or, as Antoine says, "100 per cent pure organisation". These are things that have to be handled in people's daily lives. Antoine says that:

> "[S]ome people… pull a bit more towards organisation and efficiency and getting things done and, eh, using, eh, peoples time and energy well and on another way there's some strength to also say that this is

a different place where we relate differently to work and to, like, borrowing stuff and, and basically let people live their life as they want. Like, if someone says "I'm tired today, I don't want to work", there's not this contract or anything saying "you're [a] volunteer, you have to contribute, bla, bla, bla"."

There is, as Alisa brought up during the focus group, a "constant interplay" between "I" and "we" in terms of people's own needs and the needs of others or the community at large. Laura describes this as being of service, saying "you live in this community, so you also give some of your time to this community". One practice aspect of this interplay is that some people have become more specialised in certain areas. Antoine, Sarah, and Laura, for example, are among those who have been taking some extra responsibility for the garden whereas Alisa works more in the office. Martin, however, describes himself as a generalist and says that part of his feeling of involvement comes from that. "I'm really broad, always been the opposition to monoculture within myself and I get to be that here", he says. This aspect of balancing efficiency with "the magic of the place" becomes very prominent. For Martin, never knowing what piece he might bring into any given day is part of how he sees Suderbyn as a whole, as being in opposition to "monoculture". Alisa too says that she sometimes feels as if she is missing out on a lot of the hands-on work and has had to learn to identify more with the collective to feel included in all aspects of everyday life. Another aspect is what Laura calls "the ever-changing nature" of Suderbyn. Sarah points out that this can be something that can be difficult to deal with and that what is needed is roots which I think means more permanent residents.

> "…the experience here is really super interesting in a social aspect. What is really, really… (exhales) I feel like I'm super alive here, thanks to all these people coming from everywhere and just learning everything, something every day. It's super intense and super rich, but it lacks roots."

From the bungalows Antoine and I walk over to what is referred to as "the dome", a rather large dome shaped greenhouse partly designed to capture runoff rainwater and lead it to two entrances where it can be collected. But before we get there we pass a small stage with the words "NO MORE WAR" written on it. Antoine tells me that it was built this past summer for a no more war musical festival hosted by Suderbyn as a sort of response to calls for military rearmament (particularly of Gotland). As we enter the dome over a small bridge, the first thing that catches my eye are several large concrete-looking vertically raised pipes with smaller holes drilled into them. Antoine explains how these pipes are intended to be used for farming without the use of earth or dirt. The plants will grow out from the holes as their roots hang freely inside the pipe where they will be watered from above. There is also a larger but shorter, round concrete-looking

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structure connected to several pipes. Antoine tells me they intend to produce biogas to fuel their cars. However, as I am informed, there have been some problems with this project. Antoine tells me, as we are about to exit the dome, that they here at Suderbyn learn by making mistakes at the community, that they do everything themselves instead of hiring someone to come and do something for them, that they are experimenting and learning. Alisa describes Suderbyn very much as just that, a playground, and experiment.

Figure 7 Raising aeroponic pipes inside the Dome (photo by author, March 2018)

But this experimentation with different projects and the production of space can also result in some trial and error. Not only is this the case with the biogas-production, but as we return to the main house Antoine offers to show me a small greenhouse next the house that had caught my attention as we were leaving for the bungalows. He tells me it is a combination of an outdoor shower and a greenhouse, the idea being that the two would complement each other. However, he tells me it does not work as well as hoped. The same can be said about the sauna which is seldomly used, if ever, since it takes too long to heat up.

Discussion and Analysis

The monumental complexity of the task at hand is evident for anyone to see. Lefebvre does not just wish to remake the city, but society as a whole. "It is," as Lefebvre (2006, p. 148) writes, "impossible to envisage the reconstruction of the old city, only the construction of a new one on new foundations, on another scale and in other conditions, in another society". This wider open-ended utopian project of societal transformation is no small feat. But, as already noted by Harvey (2012, p. xvii), Lefebvre does not require some grand or conscious plan for change to occur. Instead it begins with the ordinary lives of people, heterotopies arising out of the inhabited spaces, from the context below the city. In this chapter I discuss and analyse Lefebvre's theoretical framework with the use of Suderbyn as a counter point to the city as the supreme isotopy. I will begin by using Lefebvre's expansive concepts to discuss the process of commoning in Suderbyn as an embryonic start for a foundation for this wider societal transformation. I will then move on to discuss the problem of scale and what this thesis might be able to contribute to that problematic.

The Process of Commoning

I do believe that we have to start with considering the building of a new form of urban commons, and that is why my research question for this thesis has been based on how a common social relation to place can be established. The planning ideology, as Lefebvre writes, "is an ideology which immediately divides up", both in the practico-material sense as well as social reality. If I wanted, I could probably go weeks in the city without having to talk to anybody. In Suderbyn that would be very hard to do for reasons I will get into and that I will argue are vital for creating this common social relation to place.

Firstly, there is a totality present in Suderbyn. The synthesis of everyday life here is not just a signifying whole but actual coherence. In contrast to the city, the elements of everyday life do not present themselves as combinations of isolated fragments. Instead, the inhabitants are in charge of their own rhythms and spaces allowing them to establish their own "oeuvre", so to speak. Work, leisure, learning, and other elements are organically crossbreed and intermingled with one another to form a consistent whole. It is, in Marcuse's (2009, p. 194) words, "a claim to a totality, to something whole and something wholly different from the existing city, the existing society". If I want to work out in a city

dominated by generalised exchange-value, for example, I go and I buy a gym membership or hire a personal trainer, an instructor, or whatever. It would be an element negotiated through exchange-value and separated from the rest of my life. If I want to work out in Suderbyn I just join one of Kamu's boxing workshops. This little example also exposes the second point I want to highlight, namely the importance of having a structure based on use-values rather than generalisable exchange if a more playful and meaningful common social relation to place is to be achieved. The base in use-values helps avoid the reductive nature of exchange which otherwise alienates inhabitants from the city by having every element of their private lives measured in quantifiable terms pushed by the planning ideology aligned with consumerism. If my access to use-values is dependent on an exchange-value structure I can still get them, but the social relation will be hidden. My gym instructor is a stranger to me, separated from all other elements of my life, who provides me with a service in exchange for value in monetary form. Hence, the social relation is not there in the same way as in Kamu's workshop. I see this totality of coherently integrating elements of everyday life, in the syntagmatic dimension, as a vital part of starting to construct a new form of urban commons based on use-values. This is very important since exchange-value impersonalises otherwise meaningful, social interactions.

Emerging from inhabited spaces blow the city, from the context, "the urban text" (if we accept the premise that urban life has penetrated the countryside) instead of being implemented from above, this can be read in Suderbyn. "We really live in there, really inhabit the place in the way that we modify it", as Antoine says. Everywhere you look in Suderbyn you will see that uniqueness has defeated repetition. The permaculture garden being a prime example. But I am not just talking about the practico-material. Considering this double-morphology of the physical and the social we can also begin to see a more playful and experimental social reality present here. Since Suderbyn is inherently based on use-values, the social relation to space becomes essential. Whether it be physical structures (such as the main house) or more abstract spaces (such as sharing circles) their creation is first and foremost motivated by the wants, needs, and desires of the inhabitants. By creating and inhabiting this space collectively, a common social relation to the place is established. "It is", in Lefebvre's (2006, p. 101) words, "a production and reproduction of human beings by human beings, rather than a production of objects". The structures facilitating this are in turn adapted to the needs of the inhabitants and not to those of capital. As Purcell notes,

appropriation and participation are important here. Fundamental in fact, for establishing this wholistic form of commons based on use-values.

These structures are noticeable in everyday life. Physically we have these bottle-necks bringing people together and socially we have the different meetings, activities, and work. Symbolic to some extent, but most interesting to me, however, is the paradigmatical dimension concerned with the oppositions of the city. Most fundamental, perhaps, is the opposition of nature and culture which is something that is integrated in Suderbyn through the way waste and the garden are handled, for example, by using their own waste to produce agricultural products for themselves collectively. Hence, the prominence of use-values along with a totality or wholistic integration of elements are fundamental aspects of everyday life in Suderbyn contributing to a common social relation to place.

Addressing Scale

What then can be said about the construction of a new form of urban commons on a larger scale? The problem, as I see it at least, is how all of these things that I have just discussed should be defined and manifested on the different levels described by Lefebvre. The problem of jumping scales has already been laid out quite well by Harvey. What is needed, quite obviously, is a change in ideology into something more wholistic. The problem is only how to do it. Harvey calls for the need of a hierarchy of some sorts. Presuming that this is possible, I would argue that it needs to be able to successfully deal with the connection of elements in a wholistic way that retains the informal and social aspects of everyday life. This is no easy feat, of course, but I think it is a key aspect of the problem. As long as everything is measured in exchange-value and the elements of urban life remains divided it will be very difficult to achieve the change we are looking for. I do, however, think that this this problematic (especially visible in the syntagmatic and paradigmatical dimensions) is what should be at the top of our agenda.

The difficulties of retaining a common social relation through common social relations and activities facilitated by decision-making structures and above all informally through these bottle-necks will most likely only become more difficult as we jump scale. Exchange-value generalisation and dominance may impersonalise otherwise meaningful, social interactions but scale in itself can also contribute to this problem. My guess is that this wholistic combination of elements that intermingles with the decision-making structure and is crucial for the process of commoning is one of the most difficult aspects to transfer to a larger scale.

Conclusions

My conclusion is that, whereas Suderbyn has indeed been able to create something that is both whole and wholly different from existing society, it is still obvious that we are far from finding a solution to the problem posed by scale. I do, however, still argue that the process of commoning plays a crucial part in establishing a new foundation for a future society and that the lack of a totality in the dominant society as well as the dominance of exchange-values are two major challenges to overcome spatially in terms of jumping scale. Harvey has, as mentioned, already laid out the difficulties of constructing a network of hierarchy, but I would add that in terms of everyday life there is a further challenge. An important aspect of establishing a common social relation in Suderbyn was about creating these bottle-necks as well as common social spaces. The round at the beginning of the morning meeting, for example, is an important part of this totality and wholistic culture. These more informal parts I identified as important aspects of establishing a common social relation to pace in Suderbyn (in contrast to its formal structure of decision-making etc.) are perhaps even more difficult to scale up than what could be put into these larger networks and hierarchies. They are, however, crucial. I would argue that more knowledge about these aspects is also needed if we are to understand the complexity of the scalar problematic.

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