



**MALMÖ UNIVERSITY**  
FACULTY OF CULTURE  
AND SOCIETY

# WRONG SIDE OF THE RIDGE

## CHARTING THE URBAN FABRIC OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

OSCAR DAMERHAM



MSC URBAN STUDIES  
TWO-YEAR MASTERS  
30 CREDITS, THESIS  
SPRING SEMESTER 2017  
SUPERVISOR: GUY BAETEN



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### SUMMARY:

Echoing through the lecture theatres, conference halls and pages of the contemporary Urban Studies discourse is the oft-repeated refrain that today over half the world's population live in urban areas, and that by 2050 this proportion is expected to be upwards of 70%. The place of the leftover 50% of people inhabiting a vast and seemingly forgotten 98% of the planet's rural territory is externalised, apparently lying outside the purview of marching urbanisation. Yet the theory of 'Planetary Urbanisation' has emerged in recent years positing a contentious epistemological questioning of Urban Studies' focus sites, objects and processes. In this it argues for a reorientation of the field towards the ignored rural hinterlands of 'extended urbanity' falling under the influence of the fluid process of urbanisation which is transforming the countryside through processes of rationalisation, functionalisation and disintegration. Critiqued as overly abstract, empirically shallow and puritanically ignoring form, this paper investigates and experiments with the theory of planetary urbanisation in a grounded study of a corridor of the Swedish countryside and the village of Röstånga. It does so by a concrete, detailed and dualistic approach to sites of extended urbanisation, integrating both form and process in its analysis. This research exercises this analysis through extricating the city-bound *flâneur* out into the non-city through a phenomenological 60km, 2 day walk from the city of Malmö to Röstånga. Arriving in Röstånga, this paper then turns its attention to multiple, triangulated methodologies of mapping, observations and interviewing in order to bind our *flâneur* reflections to the built environment of rurality. In doing so, this research details a changing spatial and social landscape of the Skåne countryside and the village of Röstånga with results exposing an urbanised rurality of hybridity, control and decay and a village of operationalised suburbia, of an externally orientated centre and of disparate social innovations. A discussion of these results then exposes a rural realm simultaneously surrendering to its new reality of extended urbanity and desperately searching for meaning and purpose within it; a landscape wilting under what this paper terms as the shadow of post-political urbanisation. This research then calls for 'politics of the possible' in a re-politicisation of the rural and concludes by challenging planners, architects and governments to re-imagine alternatives for this vital if forgotten space.

**KEYWORDS:** Planetary urbanisation, extended urbanisation, methodological cityism, *flâneur*, phenomenology, rural-futurism, villages, countryside

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This exploration of the countryside this paper has sought to make was greatly enriched by the welcoming and open people of the village of Röstånga who invited me into their homes and offices without hesitation.

This thesis would also have been much poorer were it not for the comments and support of my parents Rosemary and Andrew Damerham, and the advice of my brother Thomas Damerham.

Pavel Grabalov also provided cheerful respite with his cartographic advice and occasional Russian language lessons.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The balance between the urban and the rural has dramatically shifted over past centuries leading to an emptying of the countryside in much of the developed world. Cities have come to be fetishised, presented as centres of economic growth, technological innovation and even environmental sustainability. The theory of planetary urbanisation has emerged in opposition to this, building upon Henri Lefebvre's thesis of complete urbanisation, and arguing for an expanded orientation of urban studies out from the city and into the rural hinterlands and wildernesses of extended urbanisation. The place of the rural and the village within this transforming landscape holds personal narratives and spatial indicators which, as yet, have been under-researched from the much debated planetary urbanisation theoretical viewpoint. Through the employment of experimental methodologies, this research seeks to test the utility of planetary urbanisation on a grounded basis in the countryside of Skåne, Sweden and its constituent village of Röstånga. In doing so, it is hoped that a better understanding as to how urbanisation is transforming its externalised peripheries will be achieved. This will then be followed by a further analysis of the issues emerging from this changing countryside with a discussion made on how they can inform the urban.

### 1.1 AIM

To collect, analyse and discuss the spatial and social changes taking place in Swedish rurality from a planetary urbanisation perspective, in order to reveal the influence of the urban realm on its surrounding rural geographies. In doing so, this thesis hopes to better understand both the contemporary and latent role of the rural as well as aid us in reflecting upon the current discourse emerging from urban studies towards this rurality.

### 1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How is 'extended-urbanisation' changing the spatial and social landscape of the Skåne countryside and of the village of Röstånga?

What potential do the resulting emergent conditions, issues and new ideas have in informing the urban?

### 1.3 LAYOUT

This research will begin with brief insight into the inspiration for this thesis, the 2014 Japanese film ‘Little Forest’. This will then be followed by a broad descriptive exploration of the history and current landscape of a rurality under transformation. To aid us in understanding this countryside in flux the theoretical section of this paper will then follow and introduce the theory of Planetary Urbanisation. The theory will then be followed by a study of previous research within planetary urbanisation which will act a stimulus for the experimental methodologies of phenomenological *flânerie* and triangulated techniques which shall be employed in our fieldwork. We will then reach our analysis, executed as a performative walk through the Skåne countryside and a study of the village of Röstånga, which will be formed around three major conclusions. A reflection will then be made on the evidence of extended urbanisation at these sites and a discussion will be engaged with around the post-politics of urbanity and the possible futures rurality offers.

## 2. INSPIRATION

Having lived in cities throughout my life and only experienced a form of country living during brief holidays at my family’s summerhouse, my lived connection to the countryside is rather tenuous. This distance has but grown throughout my time involved in the field of urban studies, with the rural at times seeming distant, irrelevant and even outmoded. Yet after watching a Japanese film last year, the village and the rural became somewhat of a romanticised obsession of mine. ‘Little Forest’, or by its original Japanese title ‘リトル・フォレスト’ tells the story of a young woman named Ichiko who returns to her isolated mountain village after failing to find her place in the city. Structured as a quartet of shorter films released in two batches, ‘Summer and Autumn’ followed by ‘Winter and Spring’, the story quietly follows Ichiko as she farms rice, forages in the woods and cooks her gathered produce in accordance with the rhythm of the seasons<sup>1</sup>. The slow pace of the film, along with the patience and calm expressed through the daily life of Ichiko, draws one into a world in which connection with the soil, the patterns of nature and the accompanying importance of *terroir* form the very pillars of being.

Whilst romantic and almost tender in both its narrative and cinematography, ‘Little Forest’ also explores contemporary developments affecting the Japanese countryside. Throughout the film the noticeable absence of younger villagers and the presence of closed down schools and shops speaks to a phenomenon which the Japanese call the ‘Marginal Village,’ a term which describes the over 8,000 Japanese villages where over half the population is 65 or older<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, the character of Ichiko directly acknowledges this crisis herself, discussing the need for the few younger villagers left to take more responsibility in community management and even vowing that both

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<sup>1</sup> *Little Forest*, directed by Jun’ichi Mori, performed by Ai Hashimoto, Mayu Matsuoka, Yôichi Nukumizu, (Japan: Studio Shochiku, 2014.), DVD.

<sup>2</sup> Lisa Kanai, “Towards a Sustainable Rural Japan: A Case Study on Urban-Rural Migration Motives” (Masters Thesis, DePauw University, Indiana, 2016), 6.



she, and her best friend Kikko, will bear enough children so as to be able to reopen the village school again.

The themes explored in 'Little Forest', of rural depopulation, of youth returning to the countryside, and of seeking a vague form of a 'genuine' life, led me to begin questioning the basics of the process of urbanisation and its relationship to the rural. These queries developed as I further explored more Japanese film and literature, coming across movies such as 'Only Yesterday' from 1991, as well as the magazine 'Turns', a sleek publication aimed at encouraging Japan's urbanites to make the move to the countryside. In short, I started to query my own city based lifestyle with the influence of 'Little Forest' even prompting a few friends and I to go on foraging trips into the countryside and whimsically discuss our own dream rural lives. Whilst perhaps naïve, the story of Ichiko resonated, as her isolated rural life seemed to hold something abstractly "authentic" which seems to be lacking in my own consumption based existence in the city. This led me to question why villages like Ichiko's fictional Komori were dying and what the role urbanity was playing in their demise. It is from this standpoint that I set off on this research.



**Figure 1** // Channelling Ichiko, a few friends and I went out picking wild-garlic in a forest outside of Malmö one spring day in 2017

### 3. BACKGROUND

Ichiko's village of Komori is one defined by decay and decline. It is not alone, throughout the world villages and their surrounding ruralities are in a state of flux with economic, environmental and social pressures all forming a triangulation of seemingly inexorable decline. In the developed world particularly, agricultural industrialisation, the 'desertification' of local services, and population loss are but a few of these pressures. In identifying and understanding these various trends we shall make a sweeping journey through a selection of historical moments, artistic interpretations and ongoing statistical trends which demonstrate the intertwined relationship between the urban and rural and why it relationship today is a vital subject to explore.

Economically, it is asserted that the wealth of the city emerged out of the countryside<sup>3</sup> with agriculture based out of rural village economies being at the core of this wealth generation. Indeed, from the very origins of urbanity in the Fertile Crescent agricultural production from a cultivated countryside was essential to the emergence of these first urban economies. However, this symbiotic relationship was not one of interdependent equals, but one which for centuries favoured the rural. In the relationship between city and country "the emphasis was still on the countryside: real property wealth, the products of the soil, attachment to the land (owners of fiefs or noble titles)"<sup>4</sup> lying in rurality. Skipping across millennia, the landscape of the rural marked a major shift with the coming of the land enclosures in the United Kingdom in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>5</sup> and 'The Great Partition' or *Storskiftet* in Sweden in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The arrival of the industrial revolution accelerated this transformation through the construction of a highly developed agrarian capitalism which caused the gradual disappearance of traditional peasantry and their economies<sup>6</sup>. This agricultural rationalisation, rural and urban industrialisation and emergence of capitalist economies overturned the economic dominance of the rural. These developments have led to a contemporary state in which the economic weight of rural areas has shrunk to a point where only 2.8% of overall global income originates from agriculture despite it engaging an estimated 1.3 billion people<sup>7</sup>, this number drops to only 1.7%<sup>8</sup> when looking at the Swedish economy's agriculture sector.

Environmentally, the rural has long been depicted as a space of natural purity, a place of wild flowers, of babbling brooks and of man's toil with nature. Perhaps best depicted by artists such as Casper David Friedrich, Friedrich painted pieces such as 'Meadows near Greifswald' which portrays prancing horses, waddling geese and a pond reflecting the sky framed by the German city of Greifswald in the backdrop. It

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<sup>3</sup> David Graham Shane, "Notes on the Village as a Global Condition," *Designing the Rural: A Global Countryside in Flux*, Architectural Design Series, (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 50.

<sup>4</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Álvaro Sevilla-Buitrago, "Urbs in Rure: Historical Enclosure and the Extended urbanization of the Countryside," in *Implosions/Explosions*, edited by Neil Brenner (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), 237.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Vintage, 2016), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Julian M. Alston and Philip G. Pardey, "Agriculture in the Global Economy," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 28, no. 1 (2014), 122.

<sup>8</sup> "The World Fact Book, Sweden," The CIA, accessed March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sw.html>

is landscape of rurality completely in tune with the urbanity in the distance. However, the arrival of modern transportation methods, industrialised agriculture and the later 'Green Revolution' in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century dislocated this established relationship. The arrival of the train and employment of pesticides led to agricultural yields rising exponentially and spaces such as Friedrich's harmonious meadows transitioned into sites of agricultural industry. These developments came at the expense of rural ecology as wildlife, waterways and even human health began to suffer. This environmental destruction of the countryside was perhaps best illustrated in Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' in which Carson describes the haunting quiet of spring without birds as a result of the spraying the DDT pesticides on America's vast farmlands. Indeed, the bird populations which once punctuated our rural landscape continue to plummet in numbers. In the UK for example birds such as grey partridge, turtledove and the starling are down more than 85% in number since the 1970s<sup>9</sup>. Added to this, an innumerable number of other environmental issues remain, one being soil degradation, with leaders such as the FAO's deputy director Maria-Helena Semedo warning that at current rates of soil erosion and depletion "all of the world's top soil could be gone within 60 years"<sup>10</sup>. Environmentally, the countryside is therefore being increasingly contaminated, over-exploited and drained of its life.

Demographically, up until very recently, the rural has been home to the vast majority of humanity. In 1800 only 3% of the world's population lived in urban areas with the remaining 97% living in the countryside<sup>11</sup>. In Sweden, as recently as 200 years ago 90% of the population lived in the countryside. Villages inhabited by a vast rural peasantry embedded in an agrarian countryside have been the dominant form of human settlement for thousands of years. The Russian photographer Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii's work in documenting life in the Russian Empire at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century captured a slice of this rural peasant condition. Gorskii's well-known photo entitled "Young Russian Peasant Woman" illustrates both the poverty of this rural population, but also the highly codified, traditional, ritualistic nature of it. The images of these women can, however, be firmly placed in the past. Rural populations around the world have plummeted with the developed world witnessing the largest shifts. In Sweden for example, only 15% of the population remain in rural areas<sup>12</sup> and only 2% are engaged in farming<sup>13</sup>. The countryside continues to empty as urbanisation continues apace, leaving ageing and emptied villages where schools are closing, shops are shutting down and where government services lie further and further away from small villages.

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<sup>9</sup> Claire Marshall, "Farmland birds show rapid decline," *BBC*, accessed 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-29728558>

<sup>10</sup> Chris Arsenault, "Only 60 Years of Farming Left If Soil Degradation Continues," *The Scientific American*, accessed March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/only-60-years-of-farming-left-if-soil-degradation-continues>

<sup>11</sup> "Human Population: Urbanization," *Population Reference Bureau*, accessed 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2017. <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Lesson-Plans/HumanPopulation/Urbanization.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> Stefan Svanström, "Urbanisering – från land till stad," *Statistiska Centralbyrån*, accessed 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2017. [http://www.scb.se/sv\\_/Hitta-statistik/Artiklar/Urbanisering--fran-land-till-stad/](http://www.scb.se/sv_/Hitta-statistik/Artiklar/Urbanisering--fran-land-till-stad/)

<sup>13</sup> "The World Fact Book, Sweden," The CIA, accessed March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sw.html>

Illustrated here is a rural realm that is increasingly economically marginalised, environmentally degraded and demographically shrinking. It is, like Ichiko's village, a landscape of decline. As a result, the divide between urban and rural has grown as rural areas fall further and further away from the centre of economic gravity and societal relevancy which has increasingly found its home in the urban. The image of idyllic independent shops framing a cobbled square with chiming church bells and farmers meandering to and fro between their fields and homes is, therefore, but that, an image. Indeed, writers such as Raymond Williams famously debunked this notion of rural life as simple, natural and unadulterated in his seminal work *'The Country and the City'*<sup>14</sup>. Perhaps a more accurate picture is therefore of farms transformed into rarely inhabited holiday homes, of closed down shops and schools, of vast tractors tilling the mega-farms controlled by a single person more akin to an office worker than a traditional steward of the land. It can be argued that the rural has become a form of periphery that has been mutated to become a de-populated, desertified, service realm to the dominating urban.

Yet to claim this would perhaps be an over simplification. Indeed new questions, hybrid contexts and fresh perspectives are starting to emerge out of this rurality of decline. These developments challenge the paradigm of decline from as simple a phenomena as migrants from the other side of the world working to maintain century regional food traditions such as the Sikhs making parmesan cheese in the Po Valley of Reggio Emil, Italy<sup>15</sup>. Or similarly the refugees making their new homes in the semi-abandoned medieval hilltop town of Riace on Italy's south coast,<sup>16</sup> prompting us to question who the rural is for and what possibilities lie in their repopulation. These ripostes to decay are emerging from more radical places too, such as in the case of *"l'Insurrection qui Vient"* (The Coming Insurrection), which sprouted out of the village of Tarnac in France. In this, a group of students proposed the establishment of insurrection villages in the form of "an anarchist architectural project that rejected the city and sought to resettle the country"<sup>17</sup>. Within these various counter movements seeking to revive or even re-orientate the countryside, we are witnessing a rurality expressing new futures, new possibilities and new functions.

Whilst a highly generalized and simplified summary of the history and current condition of the rural, what is clear is that it is a context which on the one hand is economically, environmentally and demographically in decline. Yet on the other hand we find points at which it is offering sanctuary to the most vulnerable and even new imaginaries as to how society should be organized. All of this comes in the shadow of the incessantly repeated fact that, today, over half the world's population live in urban areas and that by 2050, this proportion is expected to be upwards of 70%. The trend towards an urbanised world is often presented as inevitable, a pre-determined

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<sup>14</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, (London: Vintage, 2016), 10-

<sup>15</sup> Dany Mitzman, "The Sikhs who saved Parmesan," *BBC*, accessed 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-33149580>

<sup>16</sup> Francesco Pistilli, "Riace: The Italian village abandoned by locals, adopted by migrants," *BBC*, accessed 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-37289713>

<sup>17</sup> Niklas Maak, "Rural Futurism," *Ssense Magazine*, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017. <https://www.ssense.com/en-us/feature/rural-futurism>

future which is often lauded over as a sign of the inevitable march of progress. Fundamental questions as to the inevitability of this trend towards an urbanised world, and as to whether this mass urbanisation is indeed positive, are taken for granted. Yet more importantly, the state of the leftover 50% of the global population occupying 98% of the planet's territory, of Ichiko and her village of Komori, is frequently overlooked and the effects of large-scale urbanisation on the 'left-over' rural areas is placed outside the field of urban studies whose focus is on the magnetising city drawing humanity away from the hamlets and villages of yesterday. The questions therefore arise, how can we understand this changing rurality? And what role does the urban play in its transformation?

In answering these questions this research will engage urban studies with this changing rurality and chart this landscape of flux. In doing so the hope is to more fully understand the relationship between the city and non-city through collecting and analysing the societal and spatial changes occurring in rurality today. Therein, we will attempt to extract an often bounded urbanity and situate its affects in the rural. At this point however, we are confronted by the vastness of this subject area. A wide array of academic schools have sought to understand urbanity's role in a transforming countryside through research into phenomena such as counter-urbanisation, rural gentrification, and village planning. However, it is contended this research borrows theory from an assorted array of academic traditions from human geography in the case of counter-urbanisation to architecture in the case of village planning and so do not even consider the effects of urbanisation on the countryside. Therefore, so as to not get lost in the innumerable range of issues at play above, we shall now turn to exploring a theoretical approach from the field urban studies to be employed in this thesis. It is hoped that by doing so we can form a framework of understanding towards the above questions and, more importantly, target strategies and sites with which we can explore in this research.

## 4. THEORY

A rurality in flux increasingly over shadowed by a dominant urbanity as presented in our background points to a well-established debate as to how best to understand the complex linkages between these two spaces. In the past, several thinkers have sought to remedy the tensions between rural and urban through a form of spatial reconciliation resulting in a variety of theoretical schools and architectural agendas, from the Garden Cities Movement to Soviet Disurbanism. These perspectives were however confronted by Henri Lefebvre's bold thesis which claimed the whole planet as urban through a variegated mixture of urbanisation through social processes as well as spatial spread. More recently, urban studies scholars such as Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid have built upon Lefebvre's ideas, asserting the need for an essential reframing of the urban question itself, advocating a need to look beyond a spatially bound city and claiming the existence of an urbanised hinterland. A brief exploration of these original spatial attempts at reconciliation will be followed by an analysis and critique of contemporary thinking around 'planetary urbanisation'. This theoretical discussion will thereby help this research analyse and interpret the rurality in flux and give us the lens needed to narrow down our questioning and thereby concretely approach our empirical material.

As the established rural dominance of the human lived condition was upended due to the effects of mass industrialisation, several important industrial age thinkers such as Ebenezer Howard attempted to reconcile the rural and urban through ambitious spatial revisions. According to Howard "human society, as represented by the urban, and the beauty of nature (the rural) are meant to be enjoyed together"<sup>18</sup>. He therefore proposed the Garden Cities project. Howard's ideal Garden City was proposed to house 32,000 people, formed in a concentric pattern with open spaces, public parks and six radial boulevards<sup>19</sup>. His vision saw both pure rurality and urbanity as spaces in need of resolution through the architectural and engineered reconceptualisation of the human habitat. Further east, in the 1920's, a collection of Marxist Soviet architects and planners sought to resolve this tension between the rural and urban through an all-out attack on what they saw as the predatory and exploitative nature of cities. Through their plans, in what came to be known as the 'Soviet Disurbanist School', the centred city was to be wholly disassembled and reconstituted as a "ribbon development along roads through the countryside"<sup>20</sup>. One of the leaders of this school of thought was Mikhail Okhitovich whose plan for the industrial town of Magnitogorsk in 1930 "called for eight ribbons; each 25km long, converging on the metallurgical plant"<sup>21</sup>. Within this, the rural-urban diametric was again perceived as a primarily spatial problematique to disentangle in order to achieve a 'perfected society'.

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<sup>18</sup> Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow*, (New York: Books for business, 2001), 12.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Antony French, *Plans, Pragmatism and People: The legacy of Soviet planning for today's cities*, (London: University College Press, 1995), 35.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 2 & 3** // The flag of Magnitogorsk, the Soviet city whose Disurbanist masterplan was never fully implemented. This flag's striking design came to be a symbol of this research, acting as a tribute to the rich past of ambitious agendas to reconcile the rural and the urban realms. On the right, a hand embroidered flag made by the researcher is shown.

Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities, Soviet Disurbanism and even the concept of 'city-country fingers' found in "A Pattern Language", illustrate the established 20<sup>th</sup> century lens which saw the rural and urban as two fundamentally separate spaces in need of varying iterations of spatial balance. At their core, all saw spatiality and form as the central theoretical and design challenge which urbanity had brought to rurality. Yet as shown by our background, rurality is transforming drastically both spatially and socially due the effects of urbanisation. In this vein we turn to French philosopher Henri Lefebvre who declared in 1970 that society had completely urbanised<sup>22</sup>. Continuing, Lefebvre claimed that this complete urbanisation was now a virtual object and an emergent social-spatial condition<sup>23</sup> touching upon all corners of the world in a variegated fashion. In his prominent thesis on the ideological era we are living in today, Lefebvre effectively erased Ebenezer Howard's distinctions between the country and the city in both a spatial and social sense. Spatially, Lefebvre contended that "agricultural production had lost all its autonomy in the major industrialised nations"<sup>24</sup> and that whilst it is still possible to find regions dominated by the agrarian economy, this agriculture is industrial in its form and adheres to the demands of the urban, and as a result "the traditional units typical to peasant life, namely the village, have been transformed"<sup>25</sup>. Socially, in relation to the tendencies, orientations and virtualities of our modern world, Lefebvre rejected the terms of 'Post Industrial' or 'Technological' society and stated the social practice of urban society dominates the ideology of our modern era. Lefebvre therefore threw out former attempts at spatial reconciliation as exemplified by the Garden Cities, arguing for a focus of urbanising social processes which transcend space.

<sup>22</sup> Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Neil Brenner, "Introduction: Urban Theory Without and Outside," in *Implosions/Explosions*, edited by Neil Brenner (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), 17.

<sup>24</sup> Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

## 4.1 PLANETARY URBANISATION

Lefebvre's thesis marked a theoretical milestone in the field of urban studies. It proclaimed a primary shift away from the Garden Cities Movement and Soviet Disurbanism's contention that "the city was a thing that could be engineered successfully in such a way as to control modify or enhance social processes."<sup>26</sup> In essence, from a Lefebvrian perspective, these movements had essentially sought to find the right spatial form as a means to reduce the problems embedded in intricate social processes produced by urbanisation. Instead, Lefebvre argued that a much greater focus ought to be put on the social process of urbanisation itself. Contemporary scholars such as Neil Brenner, David Harvey and Christian Schmid have all sought to build upon Lefebvre's work and chart this emerging totalising urban state through a critique of classical urban studies as a blind field, working through a metanarrative which has produced a 'methodological cityism'. In turn they call for an exploration of an urbanised hinterland wherein they have formed the theory of 'Planetary Urbanisation' which proposes a fundamental questioning of the very epistemological underpinnings of the field of urban studies completed through a disintegration of the field through an interrogation of the objects, sites and final processes classical urban studies seeks to understand. Through an analysis of their theoretical disintegrations and additions, this research shall investigate and critique how these perspectives can aid in understanding the rurality in flux as laid out so far in this thesis.

Planetary Urbanists such as Neil Brenner first claim that established urban studies is an under-theorised and overly descriptive field. A field which treats urbanisation as a natural ultra-complex phenomenon that can merely be, tracked, compared and catalogued<sup>27</sup>. Indeed, according to Brenner, "within this framework, much like the weather, urbanisation has come to be something that exists 'out there' "<sup>28</sup>. Urbanisation at its foundation is therefore uncontested, neutralised and naturalised. At the same time, an uncontested urbanity has become an increasingly popular metanarrative through which almost everything is interpreted resulting in the narrative of an urbanising world becoming "a ubiquitous imperative frame"<sup>29</sup> through which urban thinkers, architects and planners work in problematizing phenomena and solving spatial challenges. In challenging this imperative frame, planetary urbanists go on to query the sites and objects of urbanisation.

Planetary urbanism challenges the site of urbanisation in stating that every square inch of the planet has become, to some extent, urbanised, from central London to the Alps. In this, the proponents of planetary urbanism concede the urbanity of London is indeed more obvious. However, it is claimed that wildernesses such as the Alps are becoming integrated into urbanity through both its physical effects and societal urban extensions. In terms of spatial form, examples can be found in the increasingly environmental mutations in the Alps, from site-specific road tunnels to

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<sup>26</sup> David Harvey, "Cities or Urbanization," in *Implosions/Explosions*, edited by Neil Brenner (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), 53.

<sup>27</sup> Neil Brenner, "The Hinterland Urbanised," *Designing the Rural: A Global Countryside in Flux*, Architectural Design Series, (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 120.

<sup>28</sup> Neil Brenner, "Theses on Urbanization," in *Implosions/Explosions*, edited by Neil Brenner (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), 189.

<sup>29</sup> Brenner, "The Hinterland Urbanised," 121.



broader climatic instability as a result of global warming. In terms of urbanisation processes, it can be argued that the tourism trails and increasingly mobility of its previously isolated residents are effecting both the functional orientation of these spaces as well as their traditionally rural cultural legibility. Geographer David Harvey builds upon this interrogation of site by dissolving the classical spaces of urbanity into a world defined by “a complex checkerboard of segregated and protected wealth in a coup of equally segregated impoverishment and decay”<sup>30</sup> as a result of the fact “we are all embroiled in a global process of capitalist urbanisation”<sup>31</sup>. It is therefore argued that from central London to the tourism trails of the Alps integration into the geographical, economic and cultural rhythms of urbanity, both in physical form and societal effects, extends beyond that of the classically bound city.

As a result of questioning the sites of urbanity Brenner calls for an interrogation of the very methods we use to measure urbanisation rates and questions how these influence the sites we perceive as urban. For example, Brenner points to the fact that in some jurisdictions, urban areas are considered as starting when a settlement reaches just 200 residents, whereas in others it starts at 50,000 people<sup>32</sup>. This therefore leads one to question how these differing urban localities can be considered as belonging to the same field of study, as one urban settlement in one location, might differ radically from that of another jurisdiction. The lines between urban and non-urban are therefore wholly arbitrary and do not halt the effects and processes of urbanisation per say. As a result planetary urbanism contests both site and the object of urban studies<sup>33</sup>.

Planetary urbanisation further challenges the object of urbanisation through a questioning of the scalar typologies around which urban studies is structured. From agglomerations to cities to villages to the countryside, Brenner argues that from as far back as the Chicago School, to debates of world and global cities of the 1990's, the sites under examination have been based on “uninterrogated geographical assumptions based in the late 19th early 20th century geohistorical conditions” not adapted to an emerging Lefebvrian world under the process of complete urbanisation. Within these divisions Brenner asserts that the field of urban studies has come to place too much focus on the city. Indeed, Brenner challenges us to delineate what a city is at a fundamental level, stating because of this ‘methodological cityism’ we are ignoring the fundamental process of urbanisation whose effects and drivers can be found way outside arbitrary city borders. Brenner therefore calls for a reinvention of settlement typologies to be superseded by the analysis of socio-spatial processes.

Finally, as a result of this questioning of site and object, planetary urbanisation seeks to reform the definition of urbanisation itself. Brenner and Christian Schmid state that urbanisation is routinely held as simply the growth of cities. Instead, Schmid and Brenner go back to the origins of the notion of urbanisation formed by the

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<sup>30</sup> Harvey, “Cities or Urbanisation,” 57.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>32</sup> Brenner, “The Hinterland Urbanised,” 121.

<sup>33</sup> Brenner, “Theses on Urbanisation,” 189.

Barcelona master planner Ildefons Cerdà. Cerdà was the first to coin the term in Spanish as *urbanización* which he interpreted not as the growth of the bounded city but as the extension of the urban fabric. Extricating this original definition out of history planetary urbanisation proposes a multidimensional definition of urbanisation which is as much about city growth as it is about a transforming rurality. To help us encapsulate these multidimensional forms of urbanisation, planetary urbanists proposes two base concepts of ‘concentrated’ and ‘extended’ urbanisation. Concentrated urbanisation is employed to describe what we might classically see as urbanity, namely the city or metropole. Extended urbanisation is used to describe the increasingly controlled wilderness and rurality in flux, a realm which has become increasingly industrialised and infrastructuralised<sup>34</sup> by the extension of the urban fabric. Brenner and Schmid have pinpointed four major worldwide socio-spatial transformations which define this notion of extended urbanisation, namely:

**The creation of new scales of urbanisation** define by urbanised interdependencies “consolidated within extremely large, rapidly expanding, polynucleated metropolitan regions around the world”<sup>35</sup>. What could be called ‘urban galaxies’, these are porous new regions traversing national boundaries *for example blue banana of Western Europe*.

**The blurring and rearticulation of urban territories:** Urbanisation processes are being regionalized and deterritorialised<sup>36</sup> leading to the traditional central functions of cities like company headquarters, cultural institutions and infrastructural arrangements being dispersed out into suburbs and countryside, along motorways and railways, *for example Google’s suburban HQ in Palo Alto California*.

**The disintegration of the hinterland:** The hinterland, the non-city, the rural, a territory once thought to be beyond the purview of urban studies, is increasingly being functionalised and controlled, utilized as warehouses, recreational zones, fuel depots, waste disposal, agro-industrial land use systems, *for example the new Tesla Giga factory in Reno, USA*.

**The end of the “wilderness”:** The world has entered the Anthropocene, the planet untouched territories such as its deserts, ice caps, and mountains are being degraded through cumulative socio-ecological consequences of worldwide urbanisation. They are now interconnected with the rhythms of this extended urbanisation<sup>37</sup>, *for example the melting glaciers of the European Alps*.

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<sup>34</sup> Frederic Bonnet, “The Countryside I: Ruralism,” (Lecture, Harvard Graduate School of Design, 21st September 2015.)

<sup>35</sup> Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid, “Planetary Urbanisation” in *Implosions/Explosions*, edited by Neil Brenner (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), 161.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 162.

In recognising these transformations Brenner states that one is able fully appreciate the expansive realms of extended urbanisation around us, thereby allowing an unbinding of oneself from traditional scales and settlement types such as cities. By this redefining of the sites of urban exploration, it is asserted that we will be better able to apprehend the true focus of urban studies, that being the **process of urbanisation**. Planetary urbanists argue that these transformations must force the field of urban studies to confront the fact that the rural cannot not remain the “constitutive outside for urban studies’ epistemological and empirical operations”<sup>38</sup>. In doing so, he does not wish to wholly reject the city, but merely demonstrate that the process of urbanisation affects the social and spatial world of the non-city too. The theory of planetary urbanisation therefore liberates us to explore the rural with its constituent notion of extended urbanisation presenting itself as a highly useful notional tool for this thesis, clearly framing the rurality in flux presented in our background.

#### 4.1.1 CRITIQUE

The theory of planetary urbanisation is not without its critics however. In challenging the very epistemological foundations of urban studies, its object and its site, and calling for a focus on process over space, planetary urbanisation could be seen as subverting much of the mainstream discourse in the field. Some critics, such as Bob Catterall, critique planetary urbanisation from a feminist and cultured perspective, stating that it acts in dehumanising the planet, “seeing the world as nonsentient (mainly male if gendered) actors and actants”<sup>39</sup>. Scholars such as Kate Shaw and Richard Walker question the reframing of urbanisation theoretically, with Michael Storper and Allen Scott pointing out the theoretical loss as a result of this reframing. A brief exploration of these critiques will now follow.

In ignoring spatial boundaries, we see how planetary urbanism reiterates Lefebvre’s thesis, stating that everything is now in the process of urbanisation, raising the question of urban process over that of space. Yet critics such as human geographer Richard Walker retort that “if nothing is outside the urban, then the urban is everything; and if it is everything, it is nothing in particular and therefore not an interesting problem”<sup>40</sup>. Walker therefore attempt to pull extended urbanisation back from a totalizing brink. In addition, Kate Shaw contends that in emphasizing urbanisation processes over space, the planetary urbanism school are perhaps falling in the same trap at Howard and the Soviet Disurbanists. In this vein, Shaw questions why form and process must be seen as mutually exclusive?<sup>41</sup> Ebenezer Howard saw urbanity purely as form, Brenner as process, but perhaps a middle ground between the two is possible. Walker seconds this, stating that “to declare everything as process

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>39</sup> Bob Catterall, “Towards the Great Transformation: Where/what is culture in ‘Planetary Urbanisation’? Towards a new paradigm,” *City* 18, no. 3 (2014): 370.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Walker, “Building a better theory of the urban: A response to “Towards a new epistemology of the urban?”,” *City* 19, no. 2 (2015): 184.

<sup>41</sup> Kate Shaw, “Planetary urbanisation: what does it matter for politics or practice?”, *Planning Theory and Practice* 16, no. 4 (2015): 592.

and all form as forever shape-shifting is thoroughly one-sided”<sup>42</sup> going on to employ the metaphor of a river which is “a fluid object if there ever was one, which has, at any time, boundaries and flows that can be modelled, even as they are swirling and shifting”<sup>43</sup>. We should therefore see the process of urbanisation as still a roughly spatial if fluid process. In essence, it is claimed that process and form, urbanisation and cities, can and should be intertwined.

In building upon this, planetary urbanisation’s explosion of a bordered urbanity finds support from Storper and Scott who concur that “there is no rigid line that separates the urban land nexus definitively from the rest of geographic space”<sup>44</sup> but rather they advocate for a series of spatial gradations in which we move from the one to the other. In explaining this, they use the metaphor of seasons which fade gradually and unevenly into one another which in turn “does not mean that they do not exist as identifiable phenomena in their own right”<sup>45</sup>. The task when exploring the rural is therefore, not to abolish the concept, but “pull back from the brink of totalizing urbanization to look more carefully at how cities penetrate, exploit and subsume rural areas”<sup>46</sup>, to identify these spatial gradations and look for the points of urbanity, both in its physical form and social processes, which are at work in transforming the non-city. The critiques of planetary urbanisation therefore seek to make the theory more concrete and tangible, a view which is indeed attractive in the face of a perspective which often seems to speak in lofty generalized abstracts. This research will therefore harvest these moderating critiques of planetary urbanisation thereby focusing on both form and process, which seeks to identify spatial gradations, and which attempts to make the theory palpable.

Perhaps this is a central point where both the planetary urbanists and their detractors agree fully upon, that being on the empirical shallowness of planetary urbanism thus far. Indeed Brenner himself declares that new methods must be tested and a new vocabulary created in order to “visualize and thereby politicise the encompassing but generally invisible webs of connections that link our urban way of life to the silent violence of accumulation by dispossession and environmental destruction in the world’s hinterlands and operational landscapes”<sup>47</sup>. Through a brief analysis of previous research within the planetary urbanism school we shall seek to extract concepts and methodologies to utilise in order to visualize these invisible webs of connection in our attempt to ground planetary urbanisation and explore our target rurality.

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<sup>42</sup> Walker, “Building a better theory of the urban,” 185.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Micheal Storper & Allen Scott, “Current debates in urban theory: A critical assessment,” *Urban Studies* 53, no. 6 (2016): 1130.

<sup>45</sup> Storper & Scott, “Current debates in urban theory,” 1130.

<sup>46</sup> Walker, “Building a better theory of the urban,” 186.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

## 5. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

When approaching previous research on a transforming rurality and an extended urbanity, it becomes increasingly clear that this is a field that suffers from a dearth of empirical research. In saying this, much of the previous research that has been conducted has materialised out of Switzerland. This section shall therefore take a cascading scalar trip of previous research around Switzerland, moving from Koolhaas' abstract yet provoking investigative thrusts, down to Meili's study of the extended urbanisation of the Matterhorn Mountain. In doing so, conceptual tools, methodological techniques and gaps to pursue will be identified.

Recently, the architectural theorist Rem Koolhaas has been somewhat of a pioneer in seeking to redress the lack of attention on a rurality in flux through his own comprehensive manifesto on the countryside. In developing this new avenue of inquisition Koolhaas has formed his own architectural notion of 'Ruralism' which has an ambition to document the character, nature and repertoire of the emerging countryside exploring villages as a potential future model of cohabitation and fuelling experimental architecture<sup>48</sup>. Several transformations Koolhaas documents include the countryside's new inhabitants; from the aforementioned Sikh cheese makers of rural Italy to the economic elites inhabiting emptied Swiss villages. In this, he makes an analysis of a Swiss village near his summerhouse through a series of simple maps and photographic essays thereby exposing a village which is simultaneously growing physically but 'thinning' socially. Koolhaas has also made cartographic explorations in the Netherlands with his map 'A Slice of the Dutch Countryside' wherein Koolhaas unpicks an ostensibly agrarian countryside, revealing it to be anything but. As of yet, Koolhaas' research is more a provocation than grounded academic research, yet his base questioning and straightforward methodology shows one initial route into grounding planetary urbanisation.

Christian Schmid has completed perhaps the most comprehensive research within planetary urbanisation with his project "Switzerland: An Urban Portrait". In this Schmid and his team at ETH Zurich explored the countryside of Switzerland through a reconceptualisation of space utilising the concepts of concentrated and extended urbanisation from a national perspective. Schmid aims to visualise a Swiss rurality which he claims has been completely urbanised, through this he divides the country up into five distinct regions distinguished by their spatial practices, conceived urbanity and lived space. One of the regions he proposes is called the 'Quiet Zones' which are areas "isotopic in terms of their internal structure"<sup>49</sup> where life is "slower steadier, more connected to place and more homogeneous"<sup>50</sup>. Yet they are also zones "where agriculture may still define the appearance of the landscape but where it is no longer the economic base of these areas"<sup>51</sup>. These 'Quiet Zones' are contrasted against other categorisations such as 'Metropolitan Regions'. In this restructuring of

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<sup>48</sup> "Countryside: Rotterdam Study Abroad Option Studio," *Harvard University Graduate School of Design*, accessed 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2017. <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/course/countryside-rotterdam-study-abroad-option-studio-spring-2017/>

<sup>49</sup> Christian Schmid, "A Typology of Urban Switzerland" in *Implosions/Explosions*, edited by Neil Brenner (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), 417.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 418.

space, Schmid provides useful, if generalistic, criteria to employ when attempting a reinvention of settlement typologies as called for in planetary urbanism. Yet whilst impressive in its breadth and exciting in its attempt to visualise extended urbanisation, Schmid's work remains on the broad national scale. The villages of the 'Quiet Zones' are therefore subsumed into generalised categorizations and an indepth insight into how this rurality functions within these categories is missing.

In searching for more grounded research on a smaller scale from the field of planetary urbanisation we find Marcel Meili's study on the ski mountain of the Matterhorn in the Swiss canton of Valais. In this Meili asks whether the Matterhorn is an urban mountain.<sup>52</sup> He points to physical evidence of the mountain's urbanisation in the form of it "roads, handrails, signs, garbage cans, climbing hooks and memorial plaques"<sup>53</sup>. Following on from this, Meili then emphasises the role of tourism in the social-spatial urbanisation of the Matterhorn, which has made the mountain and its surrounds "just another piece of large athletic equipment"<sup>54</sup>. The networks created are also important to the mountains transformation with the creation of cultural, social and economic networks "that meet the standards of urban regions"<sup>55</sup> which in turn lead to the Matterhorn becoming taken over by urban functions and conversely scarcely used or experienced "as anything other than an urban monument, an athletic playground or a nature museum"<sup>56</sup>. The strength of Meili's research is that it allows an insight into a detailed geography of extended urbanisation as he attempts to integrate both the process of urbanisation and the form it takes. In doing so, the author goes against Brenner's purist conception of planetary urbanisation which "critiques thick descriptions and place based narratives as black boxed"<sup>57</sup>, yet in doing so Meili makes disintegrated hinterland Brenner talks about tangible, detailing ways of seeing extended urbanisation on the ground. However, a weakness of this research lies in that fact that he is examining an exceptional site of wilderness which might not accurately reflect the experience of the 'ordinary' countryside we are seeking to explore.

Descending the spatial scales further, and in seeking clearer methodological inspiration for our explorations of rurality, we leave Switzerland and turn to the work of Marta Guerra in Spain. Guerra's work lies in documenting and analysing the shrinking villages of the Valverde Valley region in Zamora. Structured as a travelogue, her project lies outside of planetary urbanism but analyses rural shrinkage as a "potential field for investigation"<sup>58</sup> with many of the themes mirroring those found within extended urbanity. The project "is formulated in the larger context of contemporary's lack of clear frameworks to deal with any pattern that may not be related to the modern idea of growth"<sup>59</sup>. In understanding this Guerra employs a broad range of triangulated investigational methodologies from mapping to

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<sup>52</sup> Marcel Meili, "Is the Matterhorn City?" in *Implosions/Explosions*, edited by Neil Brenner (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), 103.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>57</sup> Neil Brenner, "Theses on Urbanisation" in *Implosions/Explosions*, edited by Neil Brenner (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), 188.

<sup>58</sup> Marta Guerra, "Shrinking Villages" (Research Travelogue- Advanced Architectural Studies, Columbia University, New York, 2009), 4.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

photography to interviews, allowing her to explore ways to disintegrate the spatial and communal structure of the wider region and how villages interact within themselves and with each other. Guerra's regional perspective, combined with a focus on specific villages, and her varied methodological approaches provide useful tools and inspiration in forming this research's methodological focus.

Through our analysis of previous research several distinct approaches have been identified as well as significant gaps to investigate. In terms of these approaches, the research of extended urbanity shows a skewed emphasis on the regional and national scales making the empirical results rather intangible and abstract. If the field does descend to earth it often does so in places outside the everyday, for instance at Matterhorn Mountain, leading to questions as to whether this theory is indeed applicable to everyday rurality. These explorations also appear to lack consistent methodological frameworks. The differing spatial scales at which they are approached also exposes the difficulty of knowing at which scalar level to confront the non-city. This inconsistency and confused scalar methods reveal a long established viewpoint of the rural being simply spatial condition set against an urban discourse which is defined by being a spatial practice<sup>60</sup>. Indeed as the British sociologist Howard Newby has argued, "while the city continues to dominate our anxious and collective architectural imagination, the rural remains a frustratingly obfuscatory category to define in any discipline"<sup>61</sup>. Taking base inspiration from Koolhaas, structural definitions of rurality from Schmid, a bounded approach to extended urbanisation from Meili and a varied methodological approach from Guerra, this thesis will attempt to test the utility of our theory on a practical basis through an exploration of the extended urbanity of the Skåne countryside and the village of Röstånga. In doing so it is hoped we will identify how extended urbanisation is changing the spatial and social landscape of our chosen sites.

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<sup>60</sup> Bolchover et. al, "Where is the Rural in the Urban World," p. 15.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

## 6. METHODOLOGY

There is a clear awareness of the confused and often shallow empirical explorations into planetary urbanisation from within the theoretical school itself with Brenner and Schmid calling for methodological experimentation within planetary urbanisation. In this they state that it “requires adventurous, experimental and boundary exploding methodological strategies to facilitate the empirical investigation of planetary urbanisation”<sup>62</sup>. Brenner expands upon this arguing for the need of an explanatory approach that provides pathways and reveals horizons<sup>63</sup>. Planetary urbanism critic Kate Shaw follows on asserting that ideas of process and space in the planetary urbanism context need to “cascade down like a waterfall. From the earth’s atmosphere to continents, nations, states, regions, cities and neighbourhoods”<sup>64</sup>, and in our case ruralities and villages, and thereby put the theory into practice. As a result of the limited practical methodology found within the planetary urbanism and the call to experiment and open up new horizons, the methodology of this research will attempt to do just that.

In undertaking this grounded research of planetary urbanisation we remind ourselves of the aim of this research, that being to chart the spatial and communal transformations taking place in the Skåne country of Röstånga. To achieve this, this thesis’ research design will be based on a phenomenological approach. The methods of data collection will be divided into two chapters, the first chapter shall be based around a *flâneur* walk from the Swedish city of Malmö, through the Skåne countryside, to another chosen object of study, the village of Röstånga. Arriving at the chosen village, a second chapter of data collection defined by a second wave of methodologies will be enacted, including phenomenological observations, mapping and semi-structured interviews. Within this second stage, retroactive research methods will be employed, with visits to and from Röstånga taking place. Our research’s data analysis will work through a phenomenological interpretation of our walk in the first chapter, with a first-hand chronological account being written with a focus on the vividness, accuracy, richness, and elegance of the writing. Our second chapter of analysis will be built around triangulated verification of the multiple methodologies used in the village with a series of maps being produced.

### 6.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design this thesis shall employ emerges out of phenomenology. Put into its simplest terms, phenomenology is the interpretive study of human experience<sup>65</sup> through a deep introspective experiential engagement with research and which seeks to offer “innovative ways at looking at the person-environment relationship and for identifying and understanding its complex, multi-dimensional structures”<sup>66</sup>. Phenomenology can be further defined as “the exploration and description of

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<sup>62</sup> Brenner and Schmid, “Planetary Urbanisation,” 163.

<sup>63</sup> Brenner, “Theses on Urbanisation,” 189.

<sup>64</sup> Shaw, “Planetary urbanisation,” 593.

<sup>65</sup> David Seamon, “Phenomenology, Place, Environment, and Architecture: A Review of the Literature” Kansas State University p 1

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 2.



phenomena”<sup>67</sup> and how humans experience them which can therefore include “any object, event, situation or experience that a person can see, hear, touch, smell, taste, feel, intuit, know, understand, or live through”<sup>68</sup>. Evidently, the phenomenon this research will seek to describe is how extended urbanisation is changing the spatial and social landscape of the Skåne countryside and Röstånga.

Highly qualitative, phenomenology is demarcated by the American environmental-behaviour researcher David Seamon through its two central attributes, namely: a recognition that people and environment compose an indivisible whole and by its character of radical empiricism<sup>69</sup>. In regards to this first attribute, phenomenology provides a fitting focus on the central spatial and communal changes to the landscape we are seeking to study in this thesis. In this, phenomenology sees these two aspects as inextricably linked as it argues, “it is impossible to ask whether person makes world or world makes person because both always exist together”<sup>70</sup>. This aspect of phenomenology therefore thoroughly suits the dual spatial and communal focuses of this thesis. Furthermore, phenomenology as a research design is fitting given its description as being a “science of beginnings”<sup>71</sup>. It has come to merit this characterisation due to its core radical empiricism wherein the studied phenomenon is often an ‘uncharted territory’ which the researcher endeavours to penetrate. In doing so the researcher must “seek to be open to the phenomenon and to allow it to show itself in its fullness and complexity through their own direct involvement and understanding”<sup>72</sup>. This approach reminds us too that in approaching this ‘uncharted territory’, that of extended urbanisation’s footprint on Skåne and Röstånga, the phenomenologist must maintain a sense of flexibility given the researcher has “no clear sense of what will be found or how discoveries will proceed. The skill, perceptiveness, and dedication of the researcher is the engine for phenomenological research and presupposes any specific methodological procedures”<sup>73</sup>. Wholistic, empirical, flexible. Phenomenology as a research design most certainly meets planetary urbanisations demands for methodological strategies which provide pathways and reveal horizons.

## 6.2 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

In coming to data collection a decision was made to undertake an investigational walk from the classically bound city into the countryside with a final goal of arriving at the target village. Divided into two chapters of analysis, the first will be based around a phenomenological walk, inspired by *flânerie*, which will involve the researcher entering the rural with a collection of observations being made and images taken. The second chapter will involve an attempt to solidify our reflections from the walk through an application of them to the built environment of the village of Röstångathrough an analysis of communal and spatial changes there.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>70</sup> David Stewart and Algis Mukunas, *Exploring phenomenology: A guide to the field and its literature* second edition (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. 1990), 5

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Seamon, “Phenomenology, Place, Environment, and Architecture,” 9.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

The first chapter's method of data collection will be a performance of phenomenological *flânerie* used as a means through which to structure our research design of phenomenology. Conventionally, to be a *flâneur* is to “stroll aimlessly through the crowds in the big cities in studied contrast to their hurried, purposeful activity, where things reveal themselves in their secret meaning”<sup>74</sup>. The *flâneur* finds its origins in the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, a literary figure of 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris. In his work Baudelaire constructed the character of the *flâneur* as a way of seeing as well as a way of doing. This conception dictates that the *flâneur* is to be the “self-proclaimed and self-believing monarch of the crowd”<sup>75</sup>, to be achieved through a careful positioning of the *flâneur* as being both at “the very centre of the world and yet being unseen to the world”<sup>76</sup>. These somewhat contradictory positionings of the *flâneur* can perhaps best be clarified through an understanding him as a figure who is **of** the crowd as opposed to **in** the crowd. An observer whose key role is in being rather than doing.

One notable thinker who brought the *flâneur* figure into an academic realm of studying the urban was Walter Benjamin. Benjamin firmly placed the character of the *flâneur* in Baudelaire's 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris, a world that he claimed had now been swamped by the unstoppable march of modernity, which brought with it the intoxication of commodification and high capitalism<sup>77</sup>. As a result, Benjamin saw the territory of the *flâneur* as being in retreat through the rationalisation of the city and the circulation of commodities which he saw as now defining the ‘modern’ city. As a result of this diminishing territory of the *flâneur*, Benjamin retreated into the arcades of Paris which he richly depicted as dying and ambiguous spaces of double edged mirrors inhabited by the last women with long hair”<sup>78</sup> untouched by the rationalised and commodified exterior streets of his contemporary Paris. Yet even within these havens the *flâneur* of Benjamin again finds himself on display as one of its wares<sup>79</sup>. Benjamin therefore embraces this surrendering figure and thus, the *flâneur* becomes “part of the fetishized realm of capitalist exchange, an object in the market, a commodity in his own body and activities”<sup>80</sup>. Yet it is in becoming this immersed character that the *flâneur* finds its agency, allowing for critical insight through the immersive intoxication of commercialism and modernity.

The *flânerie* of Benjamin therefore emerges as a means in which “social and cultural commentators can get some grip of the nature and implications of the conditions of modernity and post-modernity”<sup>81</sup> thereby affording a wealth of perspectives to the phenomenological researcher. Indeed it is argued that the *flâneur* “introduces a phenomenology of the urban built around the issues of the fragmentation of

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<sup>74</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p 18

<sup>75</sup> Keith Tester, *The Flâneur* (London: Routledge, 1994), 4.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>78</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Arcades Project” in *Blackwell City Reader 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, edited by Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Chichester, Sussex: 2010), 122.

<sup>79</sup> Cate Sandilands, “A Flâneur in the Forest?: Strolling Point Pelee with Walter Benjamin,” *Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (2000): 37.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Tester, *The Flâneur*, 1.

experience and commodification...which should lead to a critical analysis of the structural feature of urbanity and modernity”<sup>82</sup>. Accordingly, the question arises as to why this research is seeking to place the seemingly urban *flâneur* out into the countryside and villages of Sweden. In this we turn to environment sociologist Cate Sandilands who argues that the countryside “is increasingly being organised by the spectacular commercialism and accompanying rationalisation that inflected the streets of Paris in the 1850’s”<sup>83</sup>. Through her work, ‘A *Flâneur* in the Forest’, Sandilands echoes the discourse of planetary urbanisation, wherein a classically perceived ideal rurality has mutated into a landscape of decline defined by population loss, environmental degradation and economic rationalisation. In crossing Sandilands’s intellectual bridge between the Paris of old and the rurality of today, between *flânerie* and the non-city of extended urbanity, it is hoped this methodology will aid in the cementing and visualisation of our theoretical standpoint while allowing for an open-minded phenomenological approach and act as a gentle contextualisation to our final object of study in Röstånga.

Through this first chapter of data collection this research shall seek out first hand experiences of the lived notion of extended urbanisation through personal written reflections and photography of our *flânerie* walk in the hope to chart the landscape we shall come across on a 60km journey from Malmö to Röstånga. In the interests of *flânerie* a full route will not be charted but rather staged destinations will be established, keeping the focus on the process of walking, and on the experiences and contexts encountered.

Upon arrival at the village of Röstånga a further set of triangulated methodologies will be employed, including further *flânerie* observations, interviews and maps. We have already recognised that examples of previous methodological strategies within planetary urbanisation are thin on the ground. Indeed the formation of new concepts is called for along with new research strategies.<sup>84</sup> Therefore this research will seek to experiment with multiple methodologies. Firstly, arriving in Röstånga an iteration of *flânerie* observation will be continued. This observation will come in the form of several solitary walks which will be taken through the village of Röstånga as a means to create a linkage with our first chapter. Secondly, a series of semi-structured interviews will take place with those interviewees chosen going through a process of purposeful selection enabling as broad a range of perspectives as possible. These interviews will be recorded, are expected to last over one hour each and will be conducted in the homes and offices of the actors, as well as on the streets of Röstånga through walking tours wherein we shall seek to understand the personal geographies of the village’s past, present and future form. These interviews will then be verified through further observations and secondary materials such as history books on Röstånga, current newspaper publications and public documents on the village.

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<sup>82</sup> Chris Jenks and Tiago Neves, “A Walk on the Wild Side: Urban Ethnography Meets the Flâneur”, *Cultural Values*, Vol. 4, No 1 (2000): 13.

<sup>83</sup> Sandilands, *A Flâneur in the Forest*, 37.

<sup>84</sup> Neil Brenner, *Critique of Urbanization: Selected Essays*, (Basel: Birkhauser Publishers, 2016), 189.

**1<sup>st</sup> Respondent** – Björn: male, Swedish, farmer/author, aged 50-60, born in Röstånga, married, three children  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Respondent** – Jonas: male, Swedish, social innovator, age 30-40, born in Malmö, migrated to Röstånga, married, two children  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Respondent** – Anaida: female, Armenian, house wife, 30-40, born outside Sweden, migrated to Röstånga, married, three children

Thirdly, our analysis of Röstånga will be supported by mapping exercises, inspiration for which emerges from the previous work of planetary urbanists such as Christian Schmid, whose research in ‘Switzerland: An Urban Portrait’ focused on creating a cartography out of the borders and networks of the rural regions mapped. In terms of networks Schmid states that there is a need to demonstrate visually how villages are increasingly dependent on networks, such as roads, which he claims are one of the biggest drivers of the extended urbanisation process. He therefore calls for spatial exposure of how these networks function, a call this research shall attempt to answer. In terms of difference Schmid claims that in classical urban thought, city culture is distinguished from village culture in that city cultures are not “built around a ‘distinctive character’ but around a plexus of internal differences”<sup>85</sup>. However, as planetary urbanisation contends, the lines of distinction between those zones of concentrated and extended urbanisation are increasingly blurred. The stratification of the village into different zones, cultures, and contexts of action is therefore a possibility in Röstånga. Some areas might represent zones ‘activated’ by extended urbanisation, whilst other might well have been ‘turned off’. Our cartographic data collection will therefore seek to chart the networks and differences found in Röstånga.

## 6.3 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Our phenomenological research design lends itself to this thesis as it provides guidance to data analysis when interpreting the *flâneur* journey we are to take through the countryside of Skåne as well as the triangulation of methods this research shall undertake in Röstånga. In terms of this analysis, phenomenology pushes the researcher to reflect upon how to adequately express the full lived-quality of the experience of the phenomena entered into<sup>86</sup>. It questions how these experiences can be articulated in a way that offers some degree of equivalence, a coherent set of themes, or a thematic core. In this, phenomenology states that the key criterion for phenomenological data analysis is whether a reader, adopting the same viewpoints as articulated by the researcher, can also see what the researcher saw. Whether or not they agree with the interpretation it is immaterial<sup>87</sup>. Different interpretations of a phenomenon, such as the experience and description of extended urbanisation in Skåne and Röstånga, “do not so much indicate the failure of phenomenology as a method but, rather, demonstrate the existential fact that human interpretation is always only partial”<sup>88</sup>. What is crucial however is that a phenomenological

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

interpretation is delivered with vividness, accuracy, richness, and elegance all of which help the reader to judge the “trustworthiness of the phenomenological interpretation”<sup>89</sup>. In recognising this, the *flâneur* journey to Röstånga will be written as a first-hand account with these criteria in mind in the hope to provide a rich but not exaggerated interpretation. A chronological set of photos taken over the walk will support this written account and illustrate the various stages of this rediscovering of the countryside.

As previously stated, upon arrival in Röstånga a triangulation of methods will be used. Triangulation will be used to analyse and then verify the results from each of the methodologies employed. Triangulation has been chosen as a result of the experimental nature of this research, thereby allowing for a more credible methodological testing of planetary urbanisation. Triangulation in Röstånga will involve collecting information using a variety of sources and methods, “reducing the risk that our conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method”<sup>90</sup>. One example of the triangulation this research will seek to employ is the combination of interviews and observations. At first glance these two methodologies might seem rather unrelated. Indeed, it is argued that “one belief that inhibits triangulation is the widespread assumption that observation is mainly useful for describing behaviour and events while interviewing is mainly useful for obtaining perspectives of actors”<sup>91</sup>. However, it is contended here that “while interviewing is often an efficient and valid way of understanding someone’s perspective, observation can enable you to draw inferences about this perspective that you couldn’t obtain by relying exclusively on interview data”<sup>92</sup>. This is particularly important when one is perhaps confronting tacit understandings as well as “aspects of the participant’s perspective that they are reluctant to directly state in interviews”<sup>93</sup>. Conversely, interviews are important when wanting to gain perspective on events missed in observation, or even the only way of gaining an understanding of events or developments from the past.

Supporting this triangulated analysis will be a series of maps based upon the observations made cross-referenced with the semi-structured interviews taken. These maps will be constructed through ArcGIS with data originating from Sweden’s *Lantmäteriet* and Lund University’s geography department. Together, this data analysis will hope to visualise and ‘bring down to earth’ the spatial and societal changes occurring as a result of the extended urbanisation in Röstånga. Secondary data will also play a role here with local planning documents from Svalöv’s commune supplying background reading to the village of Röstånga. History books on Skåne and Röstånga will also be referred to so as to gain a perspective on the historical development of the subjects under analysis.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Joseph Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, (Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications, 2005), 93.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

## 6.4 LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this study lie in its experimental nature and the fact that little methodological and conceptual tools can be found in the theoretical school this research is seeking to bring down to earth. We are therefore using mixed methods as a means to test various avenues of analysis which can best inform an understanding of a changing countryside and village landscape under planetary urbanisation. Our first method of *flânerie* emerges out of our study of phenomenology. There are those who critique phenomenology as too subjective, soft and anecdotal. It can also be suggested that through embodying the figure of the *flâneur* in this research project, a gendered perspective of planetary urbanisation is also lacking. Indeed, we have previously mentioned that there is also a critique against planetary urbanisation against it being a non-sentient theory describing a landscape of mostly male actants<sup>94</sup>. The *flâneur* is critiqued in a similar fashion with scholars pointing to the singularly male perspective *flâneurs* approach their environments with in the past. It is therefore essential to be aware of these methodological shortcomings.

Over the second chapter of analysis this research has chosen to employ a mixed methods approach, yet even here there is a risk that each of the methods will be employed in limited and way thereby resulting in a lack of depth in the analysis. In turn, we have engaged triangulation to attempt to verify our diverse methodologies however that is not to say triangulation guarantees validity as the individual methods might contain some biases themselves<sup>95</sup>. It is therefore important to be conscious of any individual fallibility in the methods used and look at particular ways to deal with this. For example, with the limited number of interviews undertaken, a conscious effort has been made to engage with a diverse array of actors, from an established village family of farmers to immigrant newcomers, seeking to transcend social, cultural and economic differences. Yet it must be conceded that this research will only result in one, highly personal, interpretation of planetary urbanisation, through one 60km corridor through the Skåne countryside and at one village nestled into this rurality in flux, with the views of a limited number of interviewees, over the period of spring 2017.

## 6.5 DELIMITATIONS

The decision to use a phenomenological approach, of *flânerie* and triangulated mixed methods, is due to the fact that this research involves limited resources, a narrow time frame and a need to make empirical experimentations from the perspective of a theoretical school which remains very much in the abstract. In regards to field work, the village of Röstånga was first chosen purely as a result of a previous visit to the village as part of a hiking trip, Furthermore, the geographical positioning of Röstånga within Skåne meant that the walk to be taken from Malmö to Röstånga would be rather manageable in length and take our *flâneur* journey through a diverse range of

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<sup>94</sup> Catterall, "Towards the Great Transformation," 370.

<sup>95</sup> Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design*, 112.

rural landscapes and villages. In regards to the walk, it was plotted in a relaxed fashion, allowing for a mix of paths, from walking trails through nature reserves to a period walking along a main road, providing a mixture of experiences and rural realities. We also didn't seek to avoid motorways as an experience of these was deemed essential to understand the countryside as it really is.



**Figure 4** // Having assembled this research's theoretical lenses and methodological tools, a journey will now be made into rurality with this leather rucksack as the researcher's only company. The flag of the Russian city of Magnitogorsk was embroidered onto the bag so as to represent a symbolic connection to the historic discourses around urbanity vs rurality as discussed during the introduction to the theory of this thesis.

## 7. RESULTS

### 7.1 OBJECT OF STUDY I

#### 7.1.1 THE WALK

The first object of study for this thesis is a two day, 60km performative walk of *flânerie* to take place from the city of Malmö to the village of Röstånga. The walk will take us through the region of Skåne in Southern Sweden. Skåne is the most densely populated region of Sweden after greater Stockholm, with over 110 residents per square km<sup>96</sup>. The region is defined to some extent by its proximity to Denmark's capital of Copenhagen. Indeed, large swathes of south-western Skåne are considered part of 'Greater Copenhagen'. Furthermore, the presence of multiple large towns and cities mean the region is crisscrossed with commuter corridors and sprawling suburbs, particularly around Malmö and the university city of Lund. Skåne is home to much of Sweden's most fertile lands, and due to its southern position, provides the country's longest growing season. The majority of this fertile land lies to the west and south of the region, whilst the north and east is defined by more wooded, undulating land.

The walk will first take us through the suburbs of Malmö, continuing north we shall then skirt the coast and then plunge into the fertile farming plains around Lund. Halfway, in the village of Södervidinge, a night will be spent at a small farm. The region of Skåne is generally very flat, around two thirds of the walk through the countryside will involve little to no hills. However, as we approach the more wooded, less populated areas of Skåne which Röstånga is situated in, we shall ascend up to one hundred meters as we cross a ridge line which divides the village from the rest of the region.

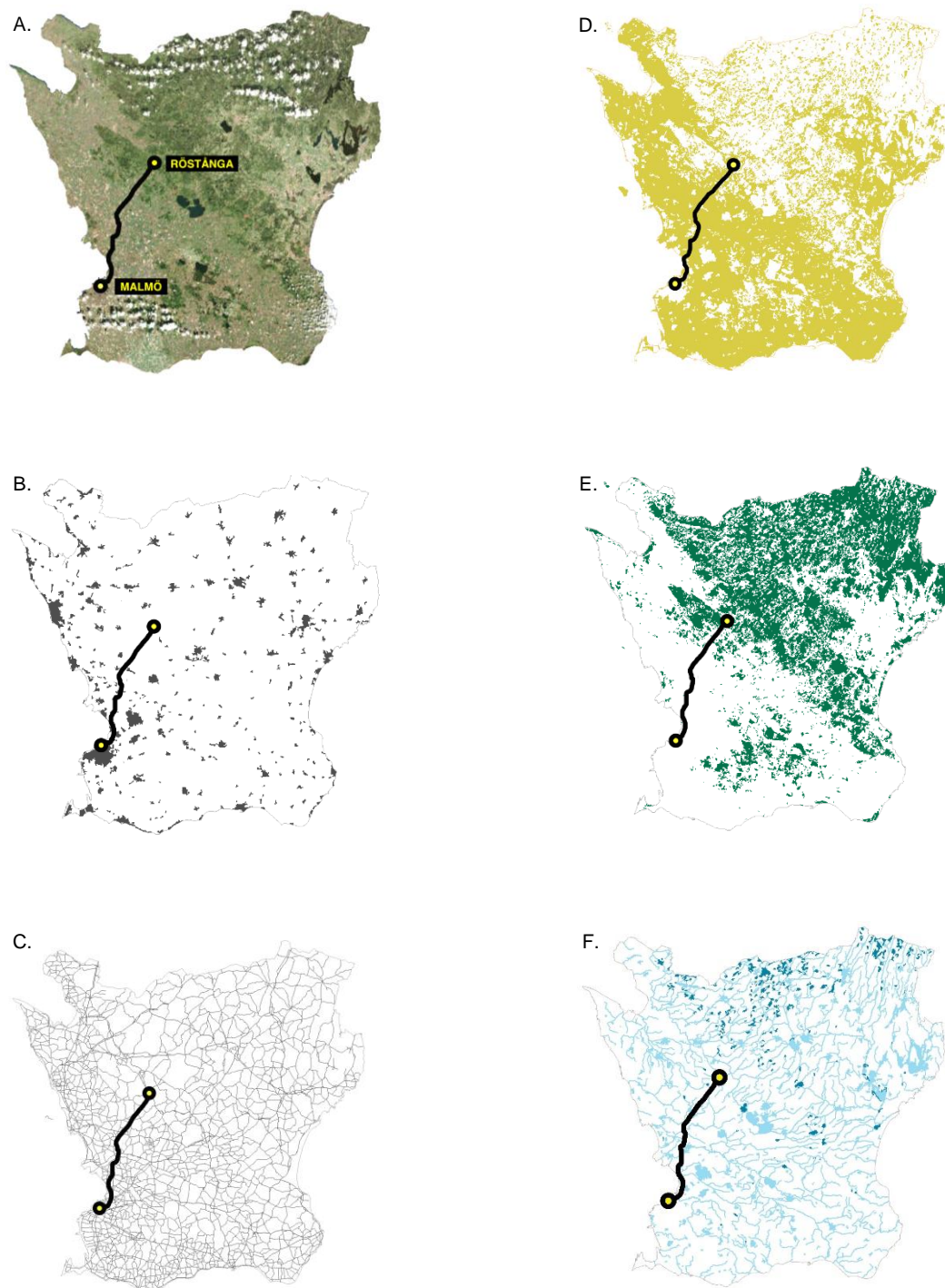
The researcher will carry with him a rucksack with a change of clothes and other bare essentials. So as to embody the elegance and almost reckless abandon of the *flâneur* figure, our planetary urbanist *flâneur* shall wear everyday clothes as if simply going for an evening stroll. The two day walk shall be done in normal shoes, woollen trousers and a handmade jumper. Several cameras will be taken to experiment with, a digital camera, a disposable camera, and a vintage Zenit-E Soviet camera from the 1970s. A yellow woollen hat will also accent the walk, reflecting the spring season and yellow weatherboard houses found throughout Röstånga. The following *flânerie* observations of this first chapter of analysis will be written in the first person in the hope that it will contribute the vividness, accuracy, richness, and elegance our methodology calls for. As the walk progresses the observations will slowly shift from descriptive to analytical, mirroring the slow ascent of the researcher from mere walker to *flâneur*. The narrative style of this first chapter of analysis will be interspersed with photo triptychs illustrating the journey's progression.

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<sup>96</sup> Johanna Roto, "Population Density in 2011," *Nordregio*, accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2017. <http://www.nordregio.se/en/Maps/01-Population-and-demography/Population-density-in-2011/>



## 7.1.2 DISINTEGRATION



**Figure 5** // The black line shows the path taken, heading north from Malmö to Röstänga. Map 'A' shows an aerial view on Skåne. Map 'B' displays the built up towns and cities of the region ■. Map 'C' shows the road network —. Maps 'D' & 'E' represent land usage in Skåne. Map 'D' shows the farmed fields of Skåne ■ and map 'E' the wooded areas of the region ■. Finally, map 'F' shows the marshes ■ plus the lakes and rivers in Skåne ■.

0 100 KM



## 7.2 ANALYSIS I

### 7.2.1 THE WALK - DAY ONE

Channelling my inner *flâneur* with my best sense of *laissez-faire* I left my flat and started wandering through the streets of central Malmö on this meandering journey through the Skåne countryside to the village of Röstånga. It was a windy but sunny spring day as I crossed over the canal which encircles the old town and onto the main coastal road out of the city. Heading north I passed over the railway lines leading into the Central Station which acted as a sort of dividing line between the industrial areas of outer-Malmö I was about to enter and the rather genteel central city behind me.

The whiff of petrol and exhaust fumes perfumed my walk through the industrial estates as I hugged the side of the four-lane road, the wave upon wave of commuter cars delivering the scent as I stuck to a cycle way. I began to feel smaller and more alone in the face of vast postal distribution centres and bus yards. Tarmac, concrete and empty verges of the short cut grass dominated my view. The central city's tender face had abruptly morphed into practical and uncompromising resource flows, storage centres and cheap hotdog kiosks. Signposts that pointed to Stockholm and Gothenburg stood to attention at the side of the E6 motorway as the last traces of built industry faded out. These directions to other cities almost represented a final promise. An assurance of other places beyond the emptiness about to be entered into. The white spaces on the map that constitute the countryside; simply scenery to the passing traveller. As I reached the coastline just north of Malmö, the city of Copenhagen came into view, its hazy profile emerging out of the Öresund strait's calm waters. Overhead, the hum of planes heading in for landing at Copenhagen's Kastrup Airport were a reminder of more links to the outside; the distant global.

These indicators to other abstract geographies soon gave way to the first earthy traces of farmland as the land opened up before me. The first fields, freshly ploughed and waiting patiently for their spring sowing lay to either side of the road. The change in scale hit me. The expansive empty fields were complemented by equally large barns and silos that lay at their corners. I began to feeler smaller still. Each step I took appeared less significant as the fields followed me for longer and longer periods. The landscape seemed to slow down at the same moment that the cars, buses and lorries accompanying me sped up. Breaching the town limits of Lomma I entered back into concentrated urbanity. The town square was impeccably clean; prosperous looking young families ambled across the square as an old couples sipped their cappuccinos at a local cafe. However, the town itself felt cold and provincial. Perhaps though this was simply a hyperbolic impression driven by an accentuated sense of self after my brief isolation in the first fields of rurality.



Leaving Lomma I continued ever north entering the small forest reserve of Habo Ljung between Lomma and next town of Bjärred. Here I took a short break. The walk was a little harder than I had first thought so, seeking to channel Baudelaire and Benjamin as a fount of revival, I tuned into some music on my old I-Pod and settled down to a picnic. An hour later, refreshed and ready to regain a sense idleness, I drifted on, skirting Bjärred's periphery as I left the coastline behind me. The fringes of Bjärred contained perhaps the most suburban of suburbs I had ever encountered. BMW, Mercedes, Volvo, BMW, BMW, Audi. White picket fence, impeccable hedge, black picket fence. It felt so safe and measured I almost felt like breaking something to give some texture to its exacting monotony.

Bjärred doesn't fade out. The border between it and the fields around is remarkably distinct. On the one side brick bungalows, on the other vast fields of earthy emptiness. The roads narrowed at this juncture, taking on the traits typical to Skåne with pruned willow trees and long straight roads dividing the landscape. As I strolled further inland I felt as if I had entered the heartlands of rural Skåne. The fields to either side of me lay bare or displayed newly sown potatoes seedlings. Again I was alone. Time slowed down even though Lund had risen from the horizon to my east and the circling planes, destination Copenhagen, still hummed above me playing to the melody of urbanity.

The curious thing about the first few hours in this rurality lay in its vacancy. Here the *flâneur* is not lost in the crowd but lost in his isolation. The only human movements were those coming from the golf course in the distance. These vistas of willows trees and flat fields inhabit the imaginations of the Skånska people yet it appeared no one inhabits the material spaces themselves. At this point I had resorted to trudging in a grassy ditch in order to avoid the cars and trucks which appeared to navigate these country roads at a practiced high speed. As I reached into my bag to take a sip of water I turned back to take in the panorama behind me. Lund rose up on its gentle incline to the east and the turning torso skyscraper which dominates Malmö's skyline continued to loom large to my south. In-between the whirls of the wind turbines and constant flow of cars were the sole movements that animated the otherwise empty fields. It appeared as a formation of industrially scaled services whose extended urbanity was defined just as much by the steady stream of commuters in their cars as by the lifeless, expansive fields they were speeding past. A composition incredibly distant from that of Friedrich's 'Meadows near Greifwald'. Simultaneously abuzz yet peaceful, beautiful yet banal, I had entered purgatory between urban and rural defined by a harmony of contrasts, an accumulation of dissensus.

Passing through the village of Flädie a semblance of classical rurality was finally met. The church steeple poking out of a scattered assembly of houses and cottages delivered a sense of nostalgia-tinged reassurance. Yet passing by a row of post boxes I spotted something unexpected. Yared Nugusse Estifanes, Yonas Gebreyesus, Nachat Mudalla, Mohamad Manal Ayham. The names on the post-boxes told of the refugee centre which stood behind them. Are these the new residents of the rural, neo-villagers of a neo-village? Nowhere, not even Flädie, is isolated from contemporary global currents and transformations.





Leaving the village I passed the first walker I had come across since leaving Bjärred. He looked about as lost as me, his slight limp and bedraggled hair added to the sense of confusion. To the other side of the road lay yet another newly ploughed field, however this time a large section of it was covered in sheets of thick translucent plastic. Its corners weighed down by lumps of soil dumped at three metre intervals along its edges. Some slivers of plastic had come free of their weights and were flapping noisily in the incessant Skåne wind.

As I wandered northwest I decided to snack on an orange and accidentally dropped a piece of peel. The orange peel lay on the side of the road yet its presence felt to me like an almost violent piece of littering. Its vibrant colour standing out so starkly against the precise division of tarmac-turf-soil. This was an environment of narrow clipped verges, plastic covered fields and linear roads which together gave this rurality an altogether clinical finish. A countryside defined by an absence of colour and thus, also of life. 'Living' it seemed, had fallen prey to urbanisation<sup>97</sup>.

Continuing on I plodded over a bridge traversing the E20/E6 motorway. This stretch of road, I later found out, forms part of two rather ambitious cross-continental European highway systems. The E20 stretches from the city of Shannon in Ireland and to St Petersburg in Russia, the E6 from Malmö to the northern Norwegian border with Russia. Despite these transnational connections, at first glance one could almost describe the motorway as being nestled into its landscape given the earthen sound-barriers cushioning it on either side. Yet after having lingered on the bridge, this sheltering appeared more as the bordered formation of an alternate dimension for the traveller. It passes through this landscape, both dominating it and remaining detached on its journey from country to country, city to city. The rural is reduced to the space between<sup>98</sup>. On the other side of the bridge I noticed an older couple wearing wooden clogs standing on the side of the road, their cocker spaniel sniffing about in the nearby field. They both stood there, seemingly transfixed by the motorway below. At that moment their clogs and the drone of the motorway emanated an intense sense of juxtaposition, appearing as symbols of two worlds colliding.

The countryside remained unceasingly flat I strolled on south of the town of Furulund. The roads in this area were the quietest I had come across all day yet even here the shadow of urbanity loomed in the form of towering electricity pylons. They stretched out into the distance, east to west, their scale married to that of the industrial fields around them but clashing with that of the small white washed cottages that can still be found along these back roads. The farmhouses were set out in the typical Skåne fashion, with barns and the farm house framing a central courtyard, their solid, somewhat gruff square formations making them appear introverted. Yet even in front of some of these built remnants of a past rurality sat Chevrolet 4WDs, dwarfing the houses they serve.

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<sup>97</sup> Christian Schmid, "Travelling Warrior and Complete Urbanisation: Landscape as Lived Space" in *Implosions/Explosions*, edited by Neil Brenner (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), 101.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.



At this point the sun was growing lower and lower in the big Skåne sky. My walk was into its fifth hour and with each step felt like I was entering further and further into myself. Though gentle and seemingly abundant, the land around me was ceaselessly empty and windswept, the expanses slowly forming into a kind of green desert. The barns I passed were clinical, industrial and repetitive, their graphic clean lines the antonym of organic pure rurality. I entered the town of Kävlinge and past a small concentration of supermarkets on the borders of the town and listened to the clanging of the trolley as the shoppers trundled to and from their cars. The last stretch of the day took me off the roads and onto a cycle track by a railway line. To one side was track fencing which stretched into the distances, to the other another vast field, another manmade landscape stripped bare.

## 7.2.2 DAY TWO

After spending the night in a converted barn at a B&B on a small farm in Södervidinge I set off for a second day of *flânerie*. That morning I carried with me a simultaneous sense of introversion and exposure, the previous day of walking had been ruled by description yet with each ensuing kilometre and each subsequent hour of silent meandering I recognised I was entering into the perceptual yet floating cognition of *flânerie*. Leaving the farm I felt suspended between removal and remaining, between travelling and going nowhere, entering a rurality of indeterminate dissensus, ready for the coming landscape to reveal itself in its secret meaning.

The weather had turned and driving rain had been falling all morning. Leaving the village I joined highway 108 which would take me all the way to Röstånga. To my left I saw a typically-Swedish red stained barn with a steeply pitched corrugated roof. In big letters on its side it read “Klädbutiken”. From barn as accommodation to barn as boutique I thought. The countryside I met at this stage was dotted with the occasional beautified *farmette*, and around them lay several fields again covered by the same plastic sheeting I had seen the day before. A few tracts of plastic had come away from their weights revealing the seedlings beneath. A glimpse of nature poking out beneath manmade drapery. An immense greenhouse a little further on was but a further structure of regulation. The plants inside suspended between nature and glass.

This was therefore an uneven landscape which, with each passing step, generated further and further into a scenery of motley mutation and transformational processes<sup>99</sup>. A rurality were “one farmhouse gets nabbed and turned into a restaurant, another into an oversized dwelling with guest quarters in the former barn”<sup>100</sup>, all in the midst of field factories of glass and plastic.

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<sup>99</sup> Bruno De Meulder and Tania Vandenbroucke, “The Lys-Scheldt Interfluvium: Theatre of Do It-Yourself,” *OASE Journal for Architecture* 63, no. 1 (2004): 134.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.





The countryside I entered next differed considerably from that which I had passed through earlier that morning and the day before. The villages were even more lifeless, and this time the ramshackle houses, junked cars, closed down schools and shops that littered them gave the spaces a decidedly morose ambiance. Some of the houses were abandoned, others appeared so but showed some semblance of life. I don't know which were more disheartening. Within one of these villages stood a rather strange business. "An Authentic 1880's Ghost Town for private events" read the sign in English. Behind it lay a mock American 'wild west' street with over twenty artificial facades in various states of faux disrepair. A mock ghost town within a real one it seemed.

Not all the villages were dominated by scenes of decay however, indeed some houses looked rather prosperous with one old school house having seemingly been transformed into a family home and a warm candlelit glow emerged as I spotted a family having their lunch through the window. The slow and regular landscape of this part of central Skåne therefore revealed an interlaced and varying catalogue of spaces, areas of continual recomposition and differentiation whose conflicting forms and processes exposed the fact that this countryside is one which "houses rich and poor, fully fledged farms and inadequacy, the long term and the short game, cleanliness and grime, building for eternity and camping in the here and now."<sup>101</sup> Decay mixed with formation.

Returning to the walk, the 108 motorway was, at times, a rather busy road. Indeed on occasion I was forced to walk in its muddy ditches which made me feel less a monarchical *flâneur* and more an insane vagrant crawling along the sides of a highway which was itself punishingly straight and monotonous. The village of Marieholm was the last settlement of any significance for the last 15km of my journey. In its centre lay 'Marieholms Restaurang', a pizzeria which occupied a set of grey portable cabins, the restaurant's yellow and red signage standing out against its bland façade. The landscape gradually shifted into rolling hills after leaving Marieholm. The fields remained large, with some disappearing over the distant ridgelines. The few houses that punctuated the rest of the road looked to double as used car lots; old American Cadillacs seemed to be the preferred brand. A number of houses were supplemented by old caravans sitting in their front gardens. Were these places that lived in the past I thought, the age of big cars and big skies?

Slowly the landscape around me was transforming into one of built banal pluralities that tended towards the generic which, in reality, could be situated anywhere. A de-territorialized landscape where hardly anything connected to their surroundings<sup>102</sup>. A temporal decontextualized rurality where the local pizzeria can be put on a truck and moved tomorrow, the local inhabitants following in their caravans and battered cars.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 136.



The rolling hills grew more wooded as I came within two hours walk of Röstånga. This was a landscape with very little space for the wandering *flâneur*. The verges were narrow, the houses fenced advertising security systems or the presence of guard dogs. A securitised and defensive space. The woods on the other hand provided a sense of liberation and humanity. A space of sheltered privacy in the stripped utilitarian fields I had walked through over the past days. The trees appeared to accompany me on this last stretch of my walk, willing me to carry on. At this point my legs and feet were truly drained. My meander out of Malmö had turned into a trudge in those last hours and the landscape around me started to fade away. Its wind, rain and mud seemed all too harsh. The roads were busy too, it was late afternoon and commuters were heading home in great streams.

Over that last hour of dull pain, each step seemed less and less substantial. It was a simultaneous feeling of floating and attachment as the physical landscape around me faded away at the same time its naked visage formed in front of me. I had entered into the *flâneur*'s high; my body stripped away, exposed to reflect upon the pattern and melody of the land I had just passed through. The last two days had been a journey of discovery in a landscape of both expansive beauty and of quotidian banality. In essence it had been a countryside leading a double life defined by unabated decay and stringent control, of transcontinental highways mixed with wooden clogs, of mega-barns and barns as boutiques. Together these created a rurality where a blurring and rearticulation of the land was creating a dissensus of separated realities. A hybrid countryside of stagnation and tradition but also of turbulent trial and error wherein villages are variously turned on and turned off depending on how well they adapt and fit into the mutating, structures of play of rationalisation, high capitalism and urban dominated modernity. Within this transformed countryside a new rurality was forming around me, of floating villages and communities in a “free/fixed relationship with the farms to which they owe their origins, in an anchoring in the land and in freeing oneself of it”<sup>103</sup>. 18<sup>th</sup> century Paris has therefore come to the Skåne countryside assembling a land of extended urbanity found as much in the converted school building of a prosperous family as in the abandoned houses and junked cars, as much in the speeding commuter cars as in the empty expansive fields. An extended urbanity of decay and of life.

Absorbing this, the landscape that speared out before me as I descended the ridge into Röstånga appeared to me not as a postcard picture of rurality which man should not contaminate by his presence, but as the stage itself, the locus, “the place where the musical composition itself is performed”<sup>104</sup>, forever imperfect, unfinished, incomplete, and therefore a suspended motion of process and form. A built environment embedded in a rural space which had been rediscovered through the lenses of planetary urbanisation, the finger prints of urbanity found in every corner. Finally, as the village of Röstånga itself came into view, the clouds began to break up and, as if willing a clichéd ending to the walk, a rainbow formed over the hills to my east.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 136.





## 7.3 OBJECT OF STUDY II

### 7.3.1 THE VILLAGE

Having discovered a countryside of motley hybridity, a set of experimental triangulated methodologies will be employed in Röstånga in this second chapter of analysis thereby allowing us to chart the changes in the village's spatial and social landscape within this context of the results found in our first chapter. A focus on Röstånga will provide the opportunity for greater depth, allowing for an exploration of the history of Röstånga as well as an in-depth interrogation of its contemporary state within this hybrid rurality. After having explored the village's past developments we shall then employ an extension of *flânerie* observations. This will then be followed by semi-structured interviews combined with walking tours around Röstånga, these will be verified against a further set of observations which will go on to inform a set of maps built around three major reflections.

### 7.3.2 HISTORY

As with most villages in the Swedish countryside, Röstånga was formed around a church was first recorded as existing in the area the year 1220<sup>105</sup>. The rest of the original medieval village was formed around ten farms which lay at the bottom of the hill from the church, today's Nedangårdsvägen. These farms made up the centre of medieval Röstånga with each farm's lands scattered in long random strips in the surrounding countryside. In addition, Röstånga held an important historical function as a stop off point between regional towns and on the old Stockholm to Malmö land-road. This led to the emergence of several "*Gästgivaregård*" or inns in the village. The first inn was recorded as existing in the mid 1600's. Around these inns several businesses sprang up with the 1808 map of the village recording two smithies, two breweries, a gatehouse as well as five mills. The traditional structure of the village of Röstånga was greatly affected by 'The Great Partition' or *Storskiftet* in Sweden in the 1800's. During this period, five of the farms were relocated to other areas surrounding the village, effectively destroyed the original structure of Röstånga.<sup>106</sup> This era also brought about the establishment of the first school in 1822, as well as the opening up of a railway line through the village in 1892. This connection to the rail network prompted significant growth in the village and led it to become a tourist destination in the region.<sup>107</sup> It is said that the period from 1892-1961 represented the 'golden age'<sup>108</sup> of Röstånga with the wealth created by a significant timber industry, tourism and local farming spawning a rich village life. Over this period four banks operated in the village, along with a butchers, shoe shop, a milk processor, a barber, three cafes, a carpenter and even a candy shop<sup>109</sup>. Yet the closing of the railway line in 1961 was said to represent the beginning of a decline in village life.

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<sup>105</sup> Martin Simonsson, *Det Gamla Röstånga*, (Klippan: Ljunbergs Boktryckeri AB, 1968), 9.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 8.

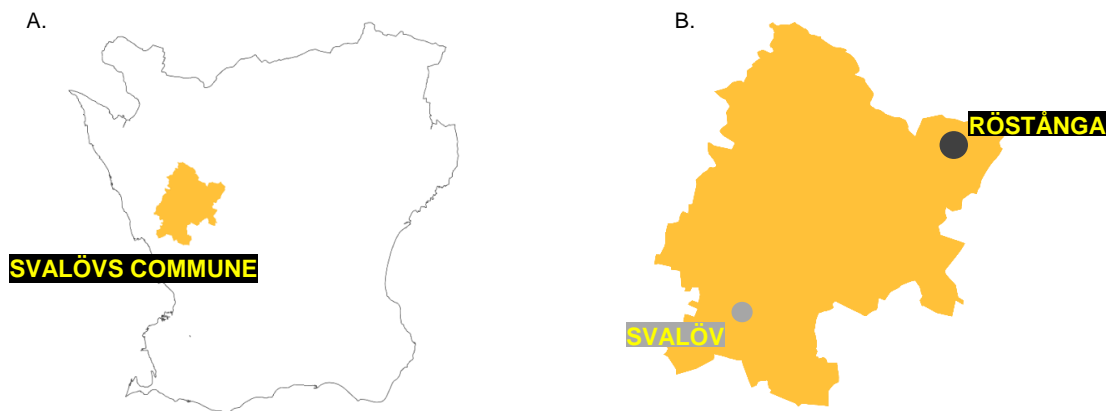
<sup>107</sup> "Röstångas Historia," *Röstånga Nu*, accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2017. <http://rostanga.nu/leva-bo/mitt-rostanga/>

<sup>108</sup> Björn (local farmer and writer), interviewed by author, conducted in Röstånga, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2017.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

### 7.3.3 TODAY

Since the closure of the railway station, Röstånga continued to experience slow growth up until the 1980's. This period was marked by several new housing developments mainly located on the western side of the village. Yet despite this growth in physical and numerical terms, the village lost the majority of its services, for instance, all four banks left the village, and two of the three cafes closed down. Röstånga today is a village of 900 inhabitants<sup>110</sup> located within Svalövs commune in western Skåne. It lies at the crossroads of highways 108 and 13. The village itself contains one café/bakery, one pizzeria, one restaurant, one B&B, one hotel, one undertaker, one hardware shop, one church, one camping site, one small factory, one florist, one vets, one car workshop and a primary school. Röstånga is now defined by its relatively stagnant population serviced by a much-reduced number of shops and public services. The proximity to Söderåsen National Park continues to attract a steady flow of tourists and, importantly, the village continues to support a primary school and church. From demographic decline to shrinking public and social services, Röstånga is a village undergoing many of the same transformations effecting settlements such as Ichiko's village of Komori in 'Little Forest' which inspired this research and therefore presents itself as a suitable archetype of a village based in the rurality in flux navigated through in our first chapter of analysis.

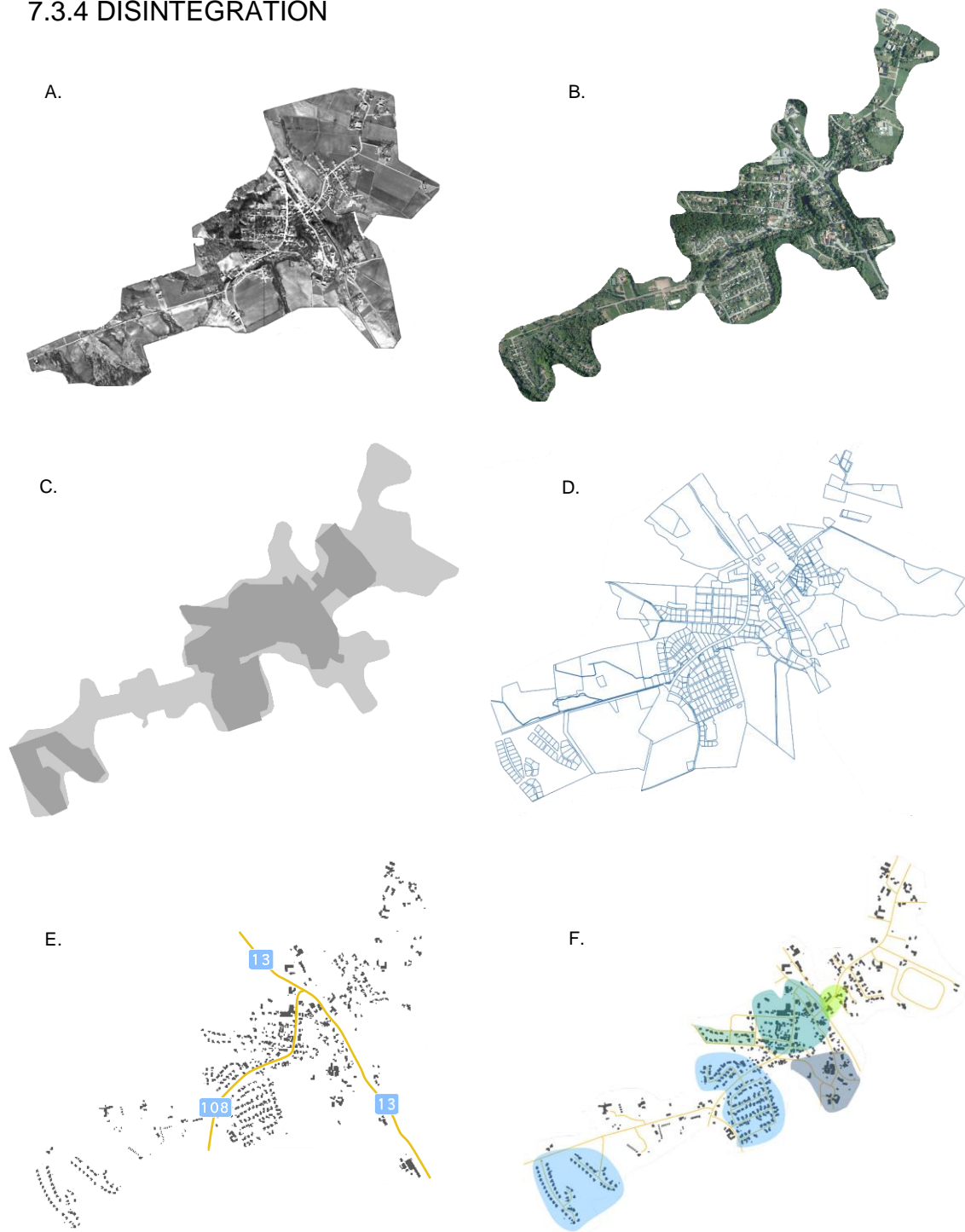


**Figure 6** // Svalövs Commune within the boundaries of Skåne is shown in map 'A'. Map 'B' shows a closer view of Svalövs commune. The capital of the commune is the town of Svalöv shown by the . The village of Röstånga is located in the far north-eastern part of the commune on the other side of a significant ridge line which distinguishes its geography from that of the rest of the commune which is generally flat, dominated by industrial farming. Two of our respondents claimed that Röstånga was ignored by the commune and that it was therefore on the 'wrong side of the ridge'.

<sup>110</sup> Anna Berlina, "Community Driven Development in Röstånga," *Nordregio*, accessed 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2017.  
[http://www.nordregio.se/Global/SIN/TSI%20Nordics%20and%20Scotland\\_R%C3%B6st%C3%A5nga%20Tillsammans.pdf](http://www.nordregio.se/Global/SIN/TSI%20Nordics%20and%20Scotland_R%C3%B6st%C3%A5nga%20Tillsammans.pdf)



### 7.3.4 DISINTEGRATION



**Figure 7** // Above is a cartographic disintegration of Röstånga. Map 'A' shows an aerial view of Röstånga in the 1960's with map 'B' showing the most recent satellite imagery. Demonstrated is an expansion of the village's built area to the south and west. Map 'C' shows the current residential areas of the village ■ set against the overall built area ■. Map 'D' shows the property lines of the village and surrounding fields □. Map 'E' shows Röstånga's building footprint and the main roads — going through the village. Finally, map 'F' shows the initial zones of difference within the village identified before our analysis. Sections ■ represent the new areas of the village, ■ displays the old centre of the village, ■ covers the area with the majority of businesses, ■ appeared to be the area with most degrading housing, and ■ was the zone with the largest and most prosperous looking residences.

0 1 KM





## 7.4 ANALYSIS II

Coming away from our historical exploration and cartographic disintegration of Röstånga, this research shall now employ our triangulated methodologies of observations, interviews and further mapping. In this second chapter of analysis our results will be integrated with photos, as well as cartographic and written reflections. Through them we will identify and analyse three keys spaces and processes in Röstånga: ‘Suburbs’, ‘Centres’ and ‘Degradation/Restoration’. This research argues that these three aspects represent the spatial and social changes underway in the village as a result of extended urbanisation. These conclusions will then be contextualised within the major reflections of hybridity, control and decay extracted during our *flâneur* walk in the countryside from Malmö to Röstånga. A discussion will then follow.

### 7.4.1 SUBURBS

As presented in our object of study Röstånga has exhibited a rather contradictory trend of expansion and decline in the past few decades. Public services, along with business and community life, have been on the decline since the 1960’s at the same time the village’s physical size has grown. This growth has been concentrated in housing developments on the western edge of the village where this research has identified as the ‘suburbanised quarters’ of Röstånga. Built in the 1980’s, their physical separation from the village’s core is perceptible. They poke off the side of the main road in the form of large cul-de-sacs their physical form markedly different from that of the main settlement. Wide roads, large houses and big front gardens typify them, typologies more akin to that of an American suburb than to European rurality. Garages dominate the street frontage of these roads, acting almost as the neo-barns and sheds of the territory. The detached houses of mock brick lie behind expanses of tightly trimmed lawns with little credence given to local context or materials. The repetitive property boundary lines in these ‘developments resemble those found in suburbs rather than those typically found in villages. It was argued by one of our respondents, Björn, that these areas of Röstånga represent the post-1961 era of the village, which saw the closure of the railway, the car takeover and the gradual decline of village life. Björn continued, stating that because of these developments “Röstånga had turned into a sleeping village, people living here and working somewhere else because there are no jobs in Röstånga, or very few”<sup>111</sup>. It was argued that this allowed for the creation of these suburbanised subdivisions where “95% of them would say I work in Landskrona, I work in Svalöv, I work in Klippan, I work in Lund, I work in Malmö, they are sleeping here.”<sup>112</sup>

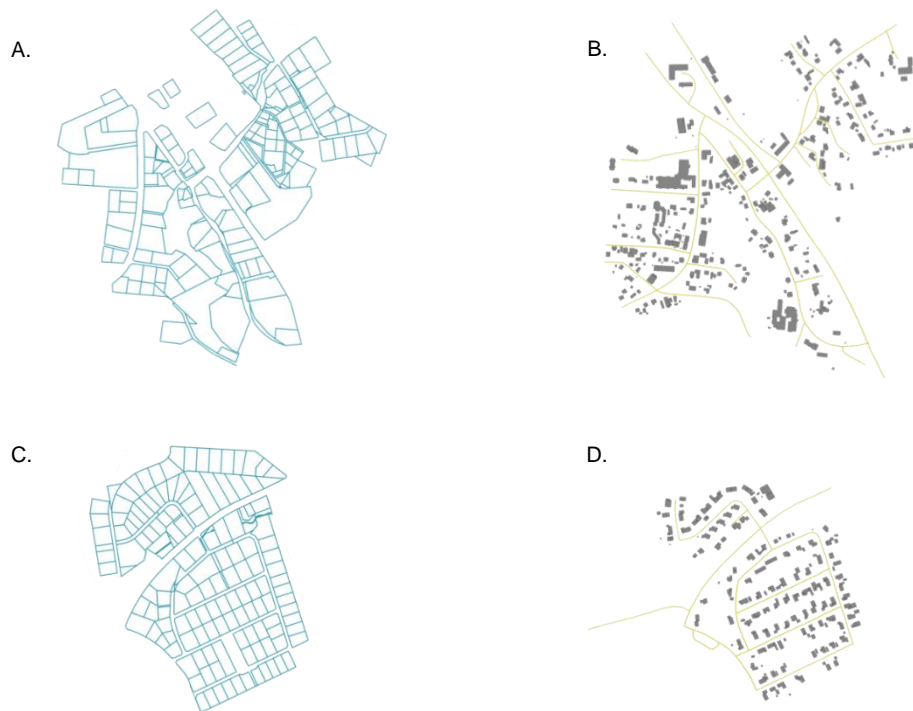
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<sup>111</sup> Björn (local farmer and writer), interviewed by author, conducted in Röstånga, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2017.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.



What emerges before us is therefore a segmented suburban neo-village clinging to the roads which feed them. The repetitive streets of these dead-end developments, seemingly structured around optimisation and rationalisation, mimic that of the huge fields around them and which we met on our walk to Röstånga. The homogeneity they introduce clashes with that found on the older streets of Röstånga. These are subdivisions of dendritic patterns which seem to parasitically cling to the main road, precluding multiple uses and disrupting the cohesion of the village landscape.<sup>113</sup> These areas therefore appear as spaces of neo-rurality, the neo-village on the slippery slope to becoming a suburb with a double and distorted face, both village and suburb, charming and banal. The discovery of this area takes us back to Koolhaas who speaks of the ‘thinning village’. Describing his local Swiss hamlet, Koolhaas explains the thinning village as a simultaneous evacuation and extension of rural settlements<sup>114</sup>. He then pushes the researcher to uncover the form of these transformed areas through the “rules they obey”<sup>115</sup> and the processes they produce. The rules these developments conform to speak of the commuter habits of their residents, confirmed through interviews and observations. The forms of this area speak to processes of operationalisation and control confronted during our walk from Malmö. These houses present a semi-lived rurality geared towards to exterior flows floating above the local context. Our first evidence of extended urbanity in Röstånga.



**Figure 8** // The above maps display the difference in built configuration between the older centre of Röstånga shown in maps ‘A’ and ‘B’, and the ‘suburban quarters’ we have identified shown in maps ‘C’ and ‘D’. The blue lines in maps ‘A’ and ‘C’ represent the property boundaries. Whilst maps ‘B’ and ‘D’ show the building footprint and roads. This set of maps clearly displays the homogenous ‘neo-village’ structure of the suburban set against the more organic, porous village centre above.

<sup>113</sup> De Meulder & Vandenbroucke, *The Lys-Scheldt Interfluvium*, 132.

<sup>114</sup> Rem Koolhaas, “Countryside.”

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

We therefore claim that the “Suburbs” are a concrete representation of both process and form which are producing the blurring and rearticulation of urban territories Brenner and Schmid argue are key processes of extended urbanisation. Bounded urbanity has outsourced its suburbs to the former periphery, the garages the homes of those humming cars we saw crisscrossing the Skåne countryside on our walk emerging from these housing developments of generalised car mobility increasingly caught up in a global territorial apparatus<sup>116</sup>. This was no longer a village of the rural hinterland but an escape valve for suburban housing. Every morning as the cars pull out of their driveways, on their way to work in Landskrona or another nearby city, the village becomes but a bed. Life takes place elsewhere. The hinterland the resident inhabits becomes a space to be seen from the other side of a car window as they join the highway beyond.

## 7.4.2 CENTRES

The second aspect of extended urbanity identified as a result of our interviews, mapping and observations was that of a shifting village centre. In his questioning of scalar typologies, Christian Schmid often approaches a settlement with one question, where is the centre?<sup>117</sup> Normally applied to classically bound cities, Schmid contends that pinpointing the perceived centre of a settlement is a good entry point for analysis and reveals a lot about how that wider territory functions, revealing what processes of urbanisation are at play there, and how these link into a world of planetary urbanisation.

In our investigations of Röstånga, it was revealed that the centre of the village has gone through three major iterations. The centre first emerged around the church and farms of the original medieval village which we discovered through our historical analysis. Evidence of this original centre remains in the form of an abandoned water mill and two remaining original farm houses; a centre defined by small-scale agriculture and the church. As the village grew, its hub moved further towards the railway line, creating a main street of shops and cafes along Billingevägen. Along this street Björn pointed to empty shop frontages and abandoned plots of land saying, “there, by the flowers was a café, it was called the harbour café because I was close to the stream”<sup>118</sup>. He continued that “you could buy anything in the village, there were shoe shops and barbers and we had three cafes and you could buy food, there was a butchers and all of it”<sup>119</sup>. This was a centre which represented a rich village life, the golden days. Today, this research identified the centre of the village as having moved up to the main intersection between highways 108 and 13. At its core lies the village’s ICA supermarket which all three of our respondents pointed to as the being the centre of the village, Anaida even said it was the only part of the village she really knew. The village’s central bus stop and tourism office are all situated around the supermarket and the sole café/bakery sits on the other side of the road.

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<sup>116</sup> De Meulder & Vandenbroucke, *The Lys-Scheldt Interfluvium*, 132.

<sup>117</sup> Christian Schmid, “Towards a New Vocabulary of Urbanisation” (lecture, UCL Urban Laboratory, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2017.)

<sup>118</sup> Björn (local farmer and writer), interviewed by author, conducted in Röstånga, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2017.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.





**Figure 9** // The three iterations of Röstänga's centres and shown in the map above. The original medieval centre ■ and the second pre-1960's centre on Billingevägen ■ both lie among the minor roads — of the village. The current centre ■ of the village straddles the highway intersection —, orientating away from the main village area shown here by their building footprint ■.

The form of this new centre is wholly geared towards the car, it hugs the motorway intersection, with the petrol station being the most visible built element as vehicles speed past. The ICA supermarket at its core is a hangar like white building sitting amidst an expanse of car parks. The structure of the area is dispersed with busy roads running through it and the car parks disrupt any possibility of built cohesion. The spatial qualities of this area therefore demonstrates a centre with an external orientation, turning its back on the village around it and welcoming the passing visitor by clinging to the built infrastructure of urbanity, the road. This is indeed an emblematic connection, echoing Schmid's contention that in realms of extended urbanisation "the highway has become the most important generators of the urbanisation process"<sup>120</sup>.

The centre's shift away from its original agrarian-rooted location to its current position demonstrates a space increasingly intertwined with regional and global resource processes of urbanisation. This new centre begs the attention of passing cars on their journey through the spaces of in-between demonstrating an attempt to plug into the infrastructural networks of the urban fabric. A village adhering to the demands of the urban, as Lefebvre would have put it. These shifting centres represent a village in transformation, having left its agrarian past far behind. The oversized food delivery lorry found at the back of the supermarket, the bounty of the land displayed on its side, therefore becomes a symbol of the Lefebvre's village of agricultural production having it lost all its autonomy to concentrated urbanity. Indeed, the village of production morphs into the village of consumption just as tied up into the networks of industrial food distribution as the city of Malmö I had left on my original walk here.

<sup>120</sup> Christian Schmid, "The Urbanisation of Switzerland," in *Implosions/Explosions*, edited by Neil Brenner (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), p. 399.



The tourist bureau sitting behind this site of consumption and within the current village centre is yet another layer in this village's extended urbanity. The tourist office reminds us of Meili's 'Matterhorn as a City' and suggests that, as with that Swiss mountain, Röstånga is selling its hinterland as just "another piece of athletic equipment"<sup>121</sup>. Linking back to Brenner and Schmid, we are reminded of 'end of the wilderness' they spoke of wherein the untouched areas of our planet are increasingly interconnected with the rhythms of extended urbanisation<sup>122</sup>. Söderasen therefore forms a key part of the contemporary village centre and thereby also shows itself to be as an urbanised wilderness, a natural museum, plugged into cultural, social and economic network emanating out of concentrated urbanity, forming an expression of extended urbanisation in both the form it creates and the processes it facilitates.

### 7.4.3 DEGRADATION / RESTORATION

The final aspect demonstrating a village under social and spatial transformation as a result of extended urbanisation is that of the degradation and restoration found within Röstånga. As discovered during the walk from Malmö to Röstånga, villages with bleak signs of abandonment and neglect litter the countryside of Skåne. The same is true for Röstånga, leaving the suburban quarters and central core behind, one finds a number of houses in older parts of the village with moss growing on their yellow weatherboards, their windows dark, and their front gardens overgrown. This process of decay was pointed out by two of our respondents. As we walked past a few buildings in various states of disrepair Björn lamented that "no new houses have been built in Röstånga in thirty years"<sup>123</sup>. Jonas, added to this, claiming that some of the houses had become fallen into such disrepair that they had become drug dens.

However, in researching this degradation two of our respondents introduced us to a spate of renovations taking place in an attempt to reverse this decay. Jonas took me to see three houses which had been the alleged drug dens and were now being renovated by a newly formed local housing company called '*Röstånga Utveckling AB*'. Jonas, who happened to be a board member of *Röstånga Utveckling AB*, told of how the housing company has been purchasing degraded and abandoned houses and turning them into apartments with both regional and national funding. At the time of this research, our third respondent Anaida was looking at moving into one of the newly renovated cottages with her husband and three children. Her family was being evicted from her current home and during our interview stated that had it not been for the cheap apartments being offered by *Röstånga Utveckling AB*, her family would have left Röstånga.

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<sup>121</sup> Meili, "Is the Matterhorn City?" 107.

<sup>122</sup> Brenner & Schmid, "Planetary Urbanisation," 162.

<sup>123</sup> Björn (local farmer and writer), interviewed by author, conducted in Röstånga, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2017.







This discovering of simultaneous degradation and renovation led to the uncovering of another community organisation called *Röstånga Tillsammans*, an NGO with over who have been undertaking more restoration projects in Röstånga, from a modern art gallery in a converted community fridge, to the renovation of the village's old railway station into a restaurant. Further schemes include teaching Swedish to asylum seekers in the organisations office and a brewery. Our respondent Jonas was very much involved in all of these projects and claimed that “the best social innovations can be found in the countryside”<sup>124</sup>. Showing me around the small village art gallery his face beamed as he compared the dark interior to clubs in Berlin. Indeed, he stated that the village was home to many artists because of the cheap housing that can be found here. He went on to acclaim the arrival of newcomers such as Anaida, along with the many asylum seekers who were placed in Röstånga during the recent migrant crisis. Talking to Anaida however, she stated that her family had simply “ended up in Röstånga”<sup>125</sup> because it was cheap and wasn't too far for her husband to commute.

Whether decay or restoration, the neglect and ensuing transformation of these spaces in Röstånga is a concrete demonstration of a village whose spatial and social landscape is decidedly fluid. Despite the spate of renovations underway, the degraded houses demonstrate a village of polarisation, wherein our previously identified ‘suburban quarters’ are segregated away both physically and psychologically. This polarisation found therefore embodies Harvey's “complex checkerboard of segregated and protected wealth in coup of equally segregated impoverishment and decay”<sup>126</sup> which is now found in a transforming rurality as much as in cities. These degenerating buildings therefore become but physical representations of extended urbanity losing its neutral façade. They demonstrate processes of extended urbanisation which do not simply naturally and neutrally touch upon the spaces they enter, but through operationalization and disintegration, they favour certain typologies, spaces and amenities. These wooden houses in central Röstånga are perhaps then but victims of uneven capitalist development creeping out of the city and entering the rural.

Furthermore, the renovations and revitalisation being pursued by *Röstånga Utveckling AB* and *Röstånga Tillsammans* seem to, at first, represent a construction towards an alternative version of village life, fighting a rurality of decline. Yet the means through which were they exercising their agency exhibited signs that the alternatives being pursued again plug into the processes of planetary urbanisation. The number of the disparate projects, from the art gallery to the restaurant to the brewery can be interpreted as yet further evidence of a countryside looking outwards to tourists and visitors in supporting itself. Modern art is replacing an agrarian past, apartments are replacing old farm houses, Anaida and the asylum seekers learning Swedish are replacing the homogeneous, ritualised, traditional countryside of the past.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Jonas (social entrepreneur), interviewed by author, conducted in Röstånga, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2017.

<sup>125</sup> Anaida (local house wife), interviewed by author, conducted in Röstånga, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2017.

<sup>126</sup> David Harvey, “Cities or Urbanisation,” 53.

<sup>127</sup> Rem Koolhaas, “Countryside.”

## 8. DISCUSSION

Through this analysis we sought to approach the rural stripped of romantic expectations and classical theoretical understandings, instead we have endeavoured to experiment with planetary urbanisation to collect, analyse and discuss the spatial and social changes taking place in the Skåne countryside and in Röstånga. Revealed through our analysis was a countryside of hybridity, control and decay and a village of operationalised suburbia, of an externally orientated centre and of disparate social innovation. In this chorus of dissensus each of these aspects were seen as simultaneously transforming the non-city and producing an operationalised blurred territory wherein the countryside is increasingly living a double life of separated realities. Within this rural context we found villages in free/fixed relationship with the farms and soils to which they owe their origins. Villages turning to the external; disconnected from their agrarian past increasingly defined by subdivisions of dendritic patterns. Yet we also came across social mobilisation which simultaneously seemed to both inculcate extended urbanism into its actions but also fight against it. Whilst some of our observations might appear disconnected, disordered, and perhaps meaningless taken individually, the challenge of this research has been to take our quotidian observations, *flânerie* experiences, and strolling interviews and to juxtapose them in such a way that they start to collectively glow. In doing so, we have endeavoured to expose the linkages between each of these seemingly separate spatial and social changes through an analysis of the processes and forms of extended urbanisation they produce.

Our analysis has shown that extended urbanisation is indeed changing the spatial and social landscape of the Skåne countryside and of Röstånga. Whilst highly qualitative, anecdotal and perhaps empirically soft at some points, this research sought to test a highly abstract theoretical discourse on the ground. Upon reflection, the theory of planetary urbanisation did provide a well-rounded, critical perspective in approaching rurality from the city, forcing us to look beyond the ostensibly inert spaces of rurality around us. However, in following the advice of planetary urbanisation's critics such as Kate Shaw and Richard Walker, this research pursued a moderated line of attack, integrating an examination of spatial form with this processual perspective. This allowed us, for instance, to recognise the E20/E6 cross-continental motorway met during our rural *flânerie* through both its physical division of, and removal from, the countryside, and through its processual agency in turning the rural into a cognitive space of 'in-between'. In our study of the "Suburbs" too, this perspective drove this research to assess both the area's spatial configuration wherein we scrutinised both the "garages and tightly trimmed lawns", as well as the processes this form of space produces; specifically a rationalised commuter culture. This dual outlook produced a grounded representation of the forms and processes disintegrating the hinterlands and blurring and rearticulating rural territories which theorists like Neil Brenner express in the abstract.

The results of this thesis did mirror those touched upon in our previous research. Koolhaas' broad exposures of the contradictions found in the contemporary countryside repeatedly inspired our analysis, from the thinning village to the unpacking of traditional, homogenous village life by the arrival of new transcontinental residents. Meili's mountain "as just another piece of athletic equipment" found a friend in Söderåsens and Schmid 'quiet zones,' wherein agriculture is no longer ruralities economic base, also inflected our two chapters of analysis. Yet this research's results also exposed gaps in this previous research and, more broadly and importantly perhaps, within the theory of planetary urbanisation. These gaps were specifically in regards to the community mobilisation found underway in our case study village through the auspices of *Röstånga Tillsammans* and *Röstånga Utveckling AB*.

The community mobilisation found in the form of highly engaged local actors, such as our respondent Jonas, challenged some of the core thrusts of planetary urbanisation. Essentially these actors expressed a continued relevancy of what planetary urbanism considers arbitrary scalar boundaries in need of deconstruction. The perception of Röstånga as an entity mattered to them, this was not simply a settlement riding the waves of change which battered it. To these sentient eyes on the ground, the village was not a disseminated settlement of extended urbanity but a bordered place with its own history, culture and community, a place which could chart its own direction through spatial revisions and community mobilisation. Our results showed *Röstånga Tillsammans* and *Röstånga Utveckling AB* to be significant actors in the village and their agency in trying to build alternatives in the village showed Bob Caterall's critique, which holds planetary urbanisation as a viewpoint which de-humanises the planet through seeing the world as non-sentient actors and actants<sup>128</sup>, to perhaps contain some accuracy.

As a result of this sentient shortcoming, as we attempted to analyse these actors we were left without conceptual tools or theoretical pathways. This research therefore reflects upon this through a brief return to the counter-urbanisation research field briefly mentioned during the background section. In this we discovered a variety of case-studies which one could situate *Röstånga Tillsammans* and *Röstånga Utveckling AB* within. From the 'crisis-counterurbanisers' of 'neo-rurals' in Spain and Greece as explored by Menelaos Gkartzios<sup>129</sup> or, closer to home, Dutch immigrants to rural Bergslagen in central Sweden studied by Marco Eimermann<sup>130</sup>. But yet again these various research routes do not engage with planetary urbanisation or indeed the influence of urbanity as a whole in their explorations. One suggestion of this research is that there is a need for planetary urbanisation to engage with the fact that sentient social movements are present on the ground and a better understanding as to how they are influencing extended urbanisation in the countryside is needed. A sentient planetary urbanisation is therefore called for.

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<sup>128</sup> Bob Catterall, "Towards the Great Transformation," 370.

<sup>129</sup> Menelaos Gkartzios, "Leaving Athens: Narratives of Counterurbanisation in Times of Crisis," *Journal of Rural Studies* 32, no. 1 (2013): 161.

<sup>130</sup> Marco Eimermann, "Lifestyle Migration Beyond Consumption – Production Binaries: Dutch Migrants and Multifunctional Rural Land Use in Sweden," *Dve domovini/Two Homelands Journal* 42, no. 1 (2015): 91.

Whilst perhaps overly descriptive and narrativised at times, what Brenner might have call 'black boxed', this research also sought to combat the 'fluffy' face of a theoretical approach which at times appeared impenetrable and overly abstracted. This was attempted through a use of phenomenological thick description, mapping and semi-structured interviews. It is argued that the 60km phenomological walk from Malmö to Röstånga provided results which more easily fit into the concepts and previous work of planetary urbanisation, perhaps because a great part of it remained in the descriptive abstract. Our work in Röstånga however resulted in a more chaotic set of results, with challenges being met in how to engage with actors on the ground and also how to shift through the surprising number of changes, social groups and narratives just one village can hold. The mapping and extended *flânerie* observations undertaken connected well with the first chapter of analysis. Our interviewing however, clashed with the aforementioned sentient shortcomings of planetary urbanisation, resulting results that could not be fully understood through the lens of planetary urbanisation used. Having said this, within this conflicted field it is hoped that this research found a restrained middle way, a first attempt at a formation of a grounded understanding of the rural in flux. In this we attempted to bring 'sense making meaning' rather than 'problem solving solutions'<sup>131</sup> to our study.

In having reiterated the social and spatial changes occurring in the Skåne countryside and in Röstånga, and deliberated the theoretical gaps encountered, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of our methodology, there is a need to reflect upon our results as a whole, bring them back to the traditional city, and to the insert them into the discourse found within contemporary urban studies. In doing so we will discuss the resulting emergent conditions, issues and new ideas we discovered in the landscapes of extended urbanity, and what potential they have in informing concentrated urbanity and urban studies as a whole.

The clear results of this research demonstrated a rurality socially and spatially urbanised. Yet upon deeper reflection this research shall argue that our result show that urbanisation has entered the realm of the post-political. Despite processes of planetary urbanisation creating a cyborg rurality defined by a countryside of hybridity, control and decay and a village of suburban quarters, shifting centres, degeneration and renovation, our research exposed an overarching sentiment of defeated acceptance in our analysis, of surrender to this new reality. The only glimmers of alternatives realities, however co-opted by extended urbanity, emerged from our brief and imperfect encounters with the social movements emerging in Röstånga. The effects of extended urbanisation were seen as natural and unstoppable and therefore unquestioned. Found was a countryside and village desperately adapting to unquestioned urbanisation, a countryside cut up by international highways, a village building art galleries and suburban quarters and selling its hinterland to the passing visitor. A realm of disparate dissensus, searching for meaning and purpose in its transformation. In exploring this concluding claim of post-political urbanisation and of a surrendered countryside with turn to Erik Swyngedouw's conception of nature.

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<sup>131</sup> Ezio Manzini, "Design: When Everyone Designs," (Lecture, Malmö University, 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2015)

In structuring this discussion of our results we turn to the geographer Erik Swyngedouw's introspection on nature and post-politics as a means through which we can thereby locate our final claim of post-political urbanisation in current debate and future research. Firstly, Swyngedouw echoes our findings in his claim that our planet has become "a 'cyborg world', part natural, part social, part technical, part cultural, with no clear boundaries, centres or margins"<sup>132</sup>. Within this cyborg world, Swyngedouw picks up on the philosopher Slavoj Žižek, who has declared that nature, as commonly conceived, does not exist<sup>133</sup>. Again this mirrors the blurred, rearticulated territories of extended urbanisation we came across in our analysis, the fields of glass and plastic, the natural museum of Söderåsens, the villages floating above their contexts.

Swyngedouw then argues that in order to understand this cyborg world, this world of planetary urbanisation in our case, we need to recognise a multiplicity of natures. In doing so, he calls for the rejection of the prevailing discourse in which nature is seen as balanced, cyclical, benign, and in need of saving which has, in turn, created an environment in "which the politically sensitive but vital questions as to what kind of socio-environmental arrangements we wish to produce"<sup>134</sup> are avoided. Singular nature therefore become post-political. In following this intellectual push, this thesis therefore claims that the same questioning of urbanisation is demonstrably lacking within urban studies. Indeed, through our research it has been exposed that the current mass urbanisation paradigm, whilst not perceived as pure and 'in need of saving' as with Swyngedouw's nature, is similarly perceived as benign, natural and untouchable even though it is radically transforming the rurality 'outside' it. Indeed, a discourse around radical alternatives or a questioning as to how to re-imagine the rural urban paradigm were markedly absent throughout the process of this research, coming only in the form of Jonas and his disparate projects with *Röstånga Tillsammans* and *Röstånga Utveckling AB*. What is therefore left is an ignored rurality of hybridity, control and decay, left to naturally fade into obscurity.

At this stage we again hear the echoes of the incessant chorus of governments, scholars, architects and urban planners repeating that over half the world's population live in urban areas and that by 2050, this proportion is expected to be upwards of 70% of the global population. Just as nature is now post-political, in the sense that a consensus posits it as undebatable, and that its purity and protection are a societal good, so urbanisation is now presented as inevitable and pre-determined, a symbol of modernity and progress under which Röstånga and the countryside represent the past. Expanding urbanity and singular nature therefore join neo-liberalism, democracy, and the cosmopolitan *multi-culti* as post-political unquestionables. Just as for "those who posit themselves outside the (nature) consensus the law is suspended... and are treated as extremists and terrorists"<sup>135</sup>, so it goes for those who question the inevitability of urbanisation, who are treated as

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<sup>132</sup> Erik Swyngedouw, "Impossible Sustainability and the Post-political Condition," in *Making Strategies In Spatial Planning*, edited by Maria Cerreta, Grazia Concilio & Valeria Monno (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 203.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 195.

hippies, dreamers or even terrorists too, as with the aforementioned radical students of *“l’Insurrection qui Vient”*.

Returning to Swyngedouw and his interrogation of nature, he mirrors our reflection with his claims that environmental issues such as climate change are now dominating all visions of the future. Here again we find a reflected discourse within classical urban studies. Cities are seen as the future, from organisations such as the UN to most theoretical schools in our very own urban studies. Where once there were many visions of possible futures in balancing the city and non-city as with the aforementioned Soviet Disurbanists and ‘Garden Cities’, there is now only one. A future of the continued expansion and growth of the urban fabric. Instead Swyngedouw argues for a multiplicity of natures which are being produced out of this cyborg world and that in their production we can open up a “politics of the possible”<sup>136</sup>. Following Swyngedouw, this research also pushes for a similar call for the politics of the possible to inform our approach to the urban and the rural.

Emerging from this landscape of somewhat morose reflections and ignored rurality, the need to discuss possible futures therefore becomes essential for future research and progressing the planetary urbanisation discourse. Following Swyngedouw, this research therefore also calls for a return to conflict. A rural fundamentalism so to speak. A departure must be made from the consensual space urban studies find itself in in regards to the contemporary rural-urban model. The landscape of decline found in the non-city through this research cannot be seen as an externality of the bound urban, but a constituent part in need of examination and alternative imaginings of how it can potentially co-exist, or challenge, or even delicately decay in the face of the urban. The architect Niklas Maak perhaps points one way forward through his notion of ‘Rural Futurism’. In this he states that today’s urban has lost its promise, that urbanity has become defined by city centres designed only with financial flows in mind where a previously held urban promise of sovereignty, confidence, and power is now gone. An evacuation must therefore be performed. In this we delve into a transformed countryside, an act commonly perceived as de-politicising or a retreat into private nostalgia. “This has always been wrong”<sup>137</sup> argues Maak, it is instead “an act of hopeful acceleration and politicisation”<sup>138</sup>. Our mottled, hybrid, decaying rural can therefore act as less a “refuge, but more a basecamp for citizens whose energy is not entirely devoured by iPads and real estate loans.” A space of opportunity, and dare I say, perhaps “a utopian nucleus of a new society that can no longer emerge in museum-like cities”<sup>139</sup>. In this reconceptualisation of a politicised rurality, opportunities arise allowing for a recalibrated view of the bound urban too. We therefore find manifold prospects in rethinking the rural as we have traditionally understood it in urban studies, allowing for an unbound discourse which must engage with how rural decline be transformed into opportunity

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Niklas Maak, “Rural Futurism,” *Ssense Magazine*, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017. <https://www.ssense.com/en-us/feature/rural-futurism>

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

## 9. CONCLUSION

This research has shown that planetary urbanisation is transforming rurality in a tangled process of social and spatial transformations. After an interrogation of the theory of planetary urbanisation, this thesis sought to explore the conceptual space of extended urbanity theorists such as Neil Brenner, David Harvey and Christian Schmid have controversially conceived. In this we took a moderated approach to planetary urbanism, taking on board the critique of planetary urbanism's detractors, through a focus on both the forms and processes of extended urbanity. This research then made a descending scalar journey through previous research, discovering little concrete research in the villages and fields of 'everyday' rurality. In attempting to fill this intellectual gap, a methodology offering a 'science of beginnings' was found within phenomenology, which this thesis structured around the use of *flânerie*. Further methodological experimentations were found in a triangulated application of walking interviews, observations and mapping in Röstånga. Through this experimental *flânerie* in the countryside of Skåne and a triangulated exploration of the village of Röstånga we confronted a rurality of hybridity, control and decay and a village of operationalised suburbia, of an externally orientated centre and of disparate social innovations. In our discussion of these findings we reflected on the sentient shortcomings of planetary urbanisation and claimed that the totality of our results demonstrated a surrendered rurality in the shadow of post-political conceptions of urbanisation. Expounding upon this we mirrored Erik Swyngedouw's questioning of natures by our own interrogation of a contemporary paradigm which places a transforming rurality in a post-political space in favour of the urban. A return to conflict in questioning this established rural-urban paradigm was then argued for through a re-focus and re-politicisation of rurality.

Despite our conclusions, this research is not calling on Ichiko of 'Little Forest' to grab a rifle and march against dominating cities. It does however express a need for urban studies to look again at its base processes. However exciting, interesting and of course essential it is to understand classically conceived city-bound urban life, with all its complex political, economic and spatial contentions, urbanisation does not end at its apparent boundaries. It is hoped that this research has demonstrated the extended urbanity of the countryside in a grounded fashion so that its effects can be better understood, contextualised and ultimately challenged. Through this governments, planners and architects can propose new futures which can regulate, instrumentalise or perhaps fight against the extended urbanisation of the countryside. Indeed our village of Röstånga is continually changing, with for example, the first new housing development in 30 years being planned for development in 2019. Named '*Rekobyn*,' the new housing area presents itself as an 'eco-village' in Röstånga with 30 houses planned<sup>140</sup>. What form this development will take is a highly interesting pathway for further research. Will it mirror the path of our suburbanised quarter and continue Röstånga's descent into being a sleeping village? Or can it offer an alternative to villages of extended urbanity? If so what would this village even look like?

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<sup>140</sup> "Innovativ Ekoby i Röstånga," FOJAB Arkitekter, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2017. <http://www.fojab.se/nyheter/innovativ-ekoby-i-rostanga>

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## 11. FIGURES

**Figure 1** // *Wild Garlic in Alnarp*. 2017. Photograph. (Author's own private collection).

**Figure 2** // *The flag of Magnitogorsk (Chebysinsk oblast)*. 2017. Wiki Commons. Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2017. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnitogorsk>

**Figure 3** // *The Flag of Magnitogorsk Embroidered*. 2017. Photograph. (Author's own private collection).

**Figure 4** // *The Bag Before the Walk*. 2017. Photograph. (Author's own private collection).

**Figure 5** // Damerham, Oscar. *Disintegration of Skåne*. Map data from the Department of Geography, Lund University. Produced in Malmö, 2017. Using ArcGIS. Version 3.1

**Figure 6** // Damerham, Oscar. *Svalöv and Röstånga*. Map data from the Department of Geography, Lund University. Produced in Malmö, 2017. Using ArcGIS. Version 3.1

**Figure 7** // Damerham, Oscar. *Disintegration of Röstånga*. Map data from Sveriges Lantmäteriet, (<http://www.lantmateriet.se/>). Produced in Malmö, 2017. Using ArcGIS. Version 3.1

**Figure 8** // Damerham, Oscar. *Suburbia in Röstånga*. Map data from Sveriges Lantmäteriet, (<http://www.lantmateriet.se/>). Produced in Malmö, 2017. Using ArcGIS. Version 3.1

**Figure 9** // Damerham, Oscar. *Centres of Röstånga*. Map data from Sveriges Lantmäteriet, (<http://www.lantmateriet.se/>). Produced in Malmö, 2017. Using ArcGIS. Version 3.1

