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Life at Bommars 1767-1874

The material culture of a decorated farmhouse of Hälsingland

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Abstract

In Hälsingland, Sweden, there are approximately a thousand *Hälsingegårdar*; big farm houses with lavishly decorated rooms typical for the region. These farmhouses have been the subjects of much research, mainly with a focus on their economical background, or restoration aspects. There has been no archaeological research done on these farmhouses, and thus an archaeological perspective is lacking in the previous research. This thesis aims to give a new perspective on the farms and their inhabitants by focusing on the dependencies between the buildings, material objects and the persons living there, inspired by the Theory of Entanglement by Ian Hodder.

The farm in focus is the decorated farmhouse Bommars in Letsbo in the years 1767 - 1874. The investigation was made with help of historical maps, plans of the farm yard as well as of the main dwelling house and estate inventories.

Both the maps and the estate inventories show a notable increase in wealth and resources, much due to the fact that the owner of the farm married a socially important and wealthy jury man. This new social role for the farmers at Letsbo created a need to live up to their social status. No one was registered as tax payer in Letsbo No 2 between 1832 and 1887, and during in the 1840's Bommars burnt down. Thus we cannot know much of the previous buildings on the farm, but it was rebuilt in an impressive fashion after the fire. The choice to build such a big and lavish house even though the farm was not permanently inhabited at the time shows that it still had an important representative function for its owners. The people and their buildings were caught in a mutual dependency, shaped by social obligations and expectations.

Introduction

In Hälsingland, an area in the north-eastern Sweden (fig. 1), there are ca thousand large farmhouses, which were elaborately decorated, and some were built in two or three floors. They are famous for their big rooms dedicated to festivities and celebrations, which were built and decorated with paintings. Many of these buildings were built during the 18th and 19th centuries, but it is possible that some of them have a history dating back to the Middle Ages.

These buildings are known as “decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland” on UNESCO’s world heritage list, and are unique to the region (UNESCO). In 2006 an application for world heritage status was filed, and the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland were inscribed as a world heritage in 2012 (Länsstyrelsen Gävleborg 2006).

Only 7 of the approximately thousand of decorated farmhouses, or *Hälsingegårdar* as they are known in Swedish, are listed as world heritage sites by UNESCO, but in reality these buildings are spread all through the landscape of Hälsingland, and they are considered an important part of Hälsingland's cultural identity and tourism industry.

A short history of farms in Hälsingland

Hälsingland was during the Middle Ages the name used for most part of what today is called *Norrland*. Around the year 1320 the large region Hälsingland had its own law, separate from the law in southern Sweden (Mogren 2000, p 143). The law of Hälsingland stated that a crime was deserving of a higher fine the closer to the home it was committed. The fine was highest in the house, and then less and less severe further away from the home in the following order: yard, barn, cultivated fields, grazing lands and lastly, furthest from the house, the outlands. This paragraph is unique to the law of Hälsingland and gives an idea of the medieval farmers' relationships to their surrounding lands and spaces, as well as cultural ideas and the value of the private space compared to the public space (Mogren 2000, p. 35). The farmers used extra farms in the outlands for summer grazing and farming already during the Middle Ages, and it's possible that the tradition to move with the livestock to the outland during the summers is as old as the Late Iron Age or early Middle Ages (Mogren 2000, p. 34). Many building traditions were kept alive in Hälsingland from the Middle Ages until the 19th century, and some argue that the shape of farms of Hälsingland have even earlier roots. Already during medieval times it was a common practice to let livestock graze in the forest, away from the main farm house, while the cultivated fields were close to the house (Lundell 2007 H18, p. 20f).

It is possible that the farmers of Hälsingland started with crop rotation during the 16th century as they produced about the same amount of crop as during the 18th century when the system was definitely in use (Lundell 2007 H18, p. 20f). A farm layout typical for Northern Sweden was used in Hälsingland during the Middle Ages, but exactly when it took form is not known. This type of farm plan collected the farm's buildings around the farmyard in a square (Lundell 2007 H18, p. 26). There are, however, suggestions that the farms in Hälsingland had more buildings than could be placed around one yard, and that the farms often were divided into

several different yards. One farm yard was surrounded by the dwelling houses, and one yard held all the houses needed to keep livestock, while a third yard was surrounded by buildings needed for agriculture. This way one farm was split between several yards, placed next to each other and grouped together by farming activity (Gustafsson & Lundell 2008, p. 24).

The historical sources about medieval Hälsingland's farms are however scarce, but it seems that it was not uncommon during the 14th century to annex the dwelling house to the barn, or to connect several outbuildings together. Some argue that this is a tradition that was in parts kept from the longhouses during the Iron Age (Lundell 2007 H18, p. 48, 46f). Furthermore, many of the decorated farms of Hälsingland are situated near Iron Age burial mounds, something that has been used to argue that some of the big farms we see today have a tradition and spatial connection reaching back to the Iron Age (Lundell 2007 H 20, p.12).

The farmers in Hälsingland seem to have been relatively wealthy during the 17th century, and the earliest known decorated farm buildings are from this time (Olsson & Thelin 2003, p. 15). The Swedish wars never took place in Hälsingland, with one exception: the Russians raided the coast in Hälsingland in 1721. The fact that the buildings and land was left mostly untouched by war has been seen as one of the reasons behind the preservation of the big wooden farm buildings (Lundell 2007 H 20, p.12) .

A typical dwelling house for a farmer during the 17th century was built in timber and only one floor high. The houses were divided into two areas: half of the house was used by the family for everyday living, and the other half was used for housing guests and festivities. The houses often had several fireplaces (Olsson & Thelin 2003, p. 17). The houses mostly kept this shape in the beginning of the 18th century, but in 1740-1750 the farms of Hälsingland began to grow in size. Several historical accounts of Hälsingland now describe the farms as extravagant, and that the buildings had more rooms than the farmers had use of. Some wealthy farmers added a second floor to their main house, and the building generally became taller and got larger during the end of the 18th century (Olsson & Thelin 2003, p. 19ff).

During the late 19th and early 20th century it was common that the dwelling house was annexed to the farm's barn and other outbuildings, thus creating one large building. Either several older buildings were connected, or a new big building, housing the different utilities in separate areas was built (Nordin 2003, p. 27f). It was not uncommon to annex the barn to the dwelling house during the centuries before, but during this period it was done on a much larger scale. Some researchers think that this is connected to the medieval tradition to annex different buildings in the farm yard (Nordin 2003, p. 29, 34f).

The vast majority of Hälsingland's farmers were freeholders, and the county is described as having been free from aristocracy. This has often been pointed out as one of the main reasons behind the farmers' wealth and success that is often associated with the farmers in Hälsingland during the 18th - 19th century (Olsson 2002, p. 23, Nordin 2003, p. 7). Even if the farmers in Hälsingland were generally better off compared to the peasants in many other parts of Sweden, it didn't mean that the wealth was equally distributed among them. Some farmers accumulated a great wealth, while others lived in poverty (Fiebranz 2003, p. 104).

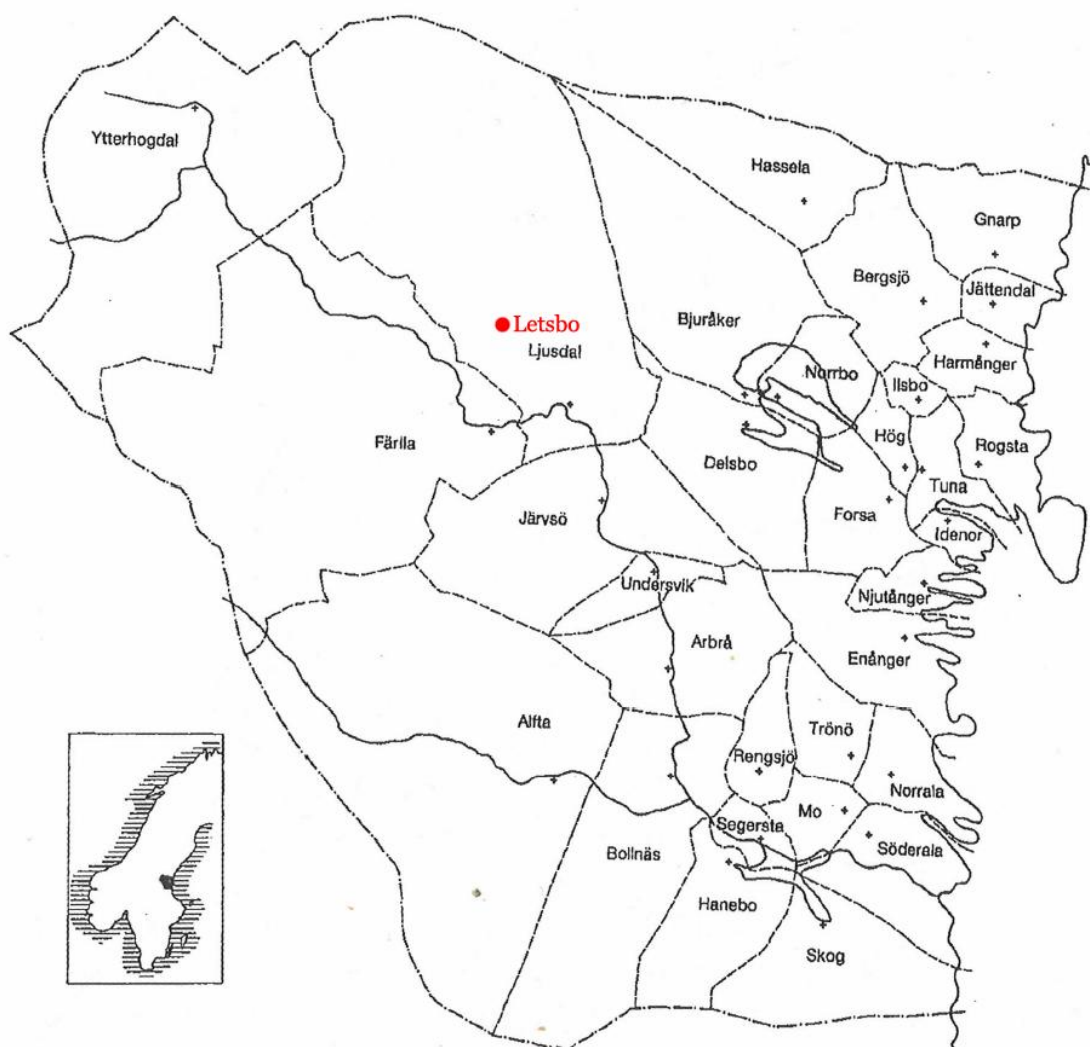


Figure 1: Map over Hälsingland and its mediaeval parishes. Letsbo is marked in red.

Illustrator: Stefan Brink, 1990 (Lagerstedt 2004, p. 27). Minor editing by author.

The landscape in Hälsingland is varied, and not fit for large scale agriculture. The farmers of Hälsingland tackled this problem by working with the conditions the land offered (Nordin 2003, p. 6). The forest was used for grazing the livestock and hunting, both of which were very important for the farmers' economy (Gustafson & Lundell 2003, p. 55, Olson & Thelin 2003, p. 20). The sea and lakes provided fish, and it was common for the farmers to have buildings at the coast or a nearby big lake where they could stay during the summer for fishing (Gustafson & Lundell 2008, p. 23, Gustafson 2003, p. 55). For land cultivation Hälsingland's farmers were often using crop rotation, especially for the fields that they used for flax. These fields were used for flax the first year, then they sowed rye for a few years, and finally used it for hay. After about ten years the farmers started over with flax again (Nordin 2003, p. 6). Hälsingland was famous for its flax production during the 18th and 19th centuries, which during this time period developed into a proto-industry (Fiebranz 2002, p. 104ff).

The life for Hälsingland's farmers was very season dependent. Many owned outlands where they moved with their livestock during the summers for pasture. They often had a "home away from home" on their outland, with a dwelling house, barn and fields which were often used for flax. Those without outland buildings often had a dedicated dwelling house on their home farm, in which they spent the summers (Olsson 2002, p. 28, Nordin 2003, p. 6). The families often housed several generations on their farm, and if they needed, and had the means to, they also hired maids and farmhands who lived with them (Olson & Thelin 2003, p. 20). While a household could consist of many individuals, the villages were relatively small, often not containing more than 2-3 farms, and at most 10. The farmers generally owned small amounts of farmland. In 1750 an average farm contained of between 1,7 and 3,4 hectare (3,4 öresland) of crop and hay land (Nordin 2003, p. 7).

Previous research

The decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland have long been a source of pride to the region, and since the process of filing the application UNESCO's world heritage list started a lot of research has been done on these buildings. On the UNESCO website for the "decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland" we can read that "They reflect the prosperity of independent farmers who in the 19th century used their wealth to build substantial new homes with elaborately decorated ancillary houses or suites of rooms reserved for festivities" (UNESCO). This sentence well represents the two main focuses of the research that has been done on the farmhouses: the economic and cultural factors that supported the local farmers to build on such a large scale, and the decorations of the buildings. The subject of the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland has a long research history, which is summarized in a comprehensive manner in "*Litteratur om Gästrikland och Hälsingland*" (Hillblom, 2002).

Hillblom's bibliography lists literature concerning the region of Hälsingland, including previous historical archaeological research. One example of historical archaeological research concerning the region is "*Faxeholm i maktens landskap*", a dissertation by Mats Mogren (2000) concerning power structures in Hälsingland during the Middle Ages. Anna Lagerstedt's dissertation from 2004 investigates the social structures and spatiality of farming communities in northern Sweden during the Middle Ages, including Hälsingland (Lagerstedt 2004). This is part of *Ängersjöprojektet*, an interdisciplinary project that ran between 1998 and 2003 that focused on the culture of communities in the forest dominated landscapes of northern Sweden. "*Skogsfinnsk arkeologi*" edited by Stig Welinder, discusses the material culture and lifestyles of the Finnish people who moved to northern Sweden for forestry work during the 17th - 19th century (Welinder 2014). Other research relevant to the subject at hand is Elisabeth Wennersten's investigation of family relationships and inheritance in the Hälsingland and the neighboring region Dalarna in her dissertation "*Släktens territorier*" from 2002, and about forest farmers in Hälsingland in "*Gårdar och folk i skogsbygd*" (2002).

In the early 1900's Nordiska Museet and the ethnologist Sigurd Erixon lead a comprehensive research about Swedish rural estate development, in which the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland were included. In 1923 Sigurd Erixon published the article *Hälsingarnas hem* in Svenska turistföreningen's annals, where he described the decorated farms of Hälsingland as

"wooden castles", a phrase that is still often used today. Here it is argued that the farmers housed several generations of the family in their home, and this made it necessary to build on a large scale. The article also describes the different buildings normally found on the farms, as well as their decorative elements (Erixon 1923).

A number of studies have argued that the flax production in the 18th -19th century Hälsingland was a significant reason behind the Hälsingland farmers' wealth, which led them to build grand buildings (Fiebranz 2002, p. 109, Lundell 2003, p. 71). Inger Jonsson's dissertation from 1994 investigates this aspect of the economy in Hälsingland, and she concludes that flax was an important source of income in Hälsingland during the 19th century, and that women had an important role in the production thereof, while the commerce was mainly a manly area (Jonsson 1994). The idea that flax has provided the wealth to build the grand farms in Hälsingland has however been questioned by Jan Lundell (2003) who by reviewing historical taxation documents argues that the profit from flax production alone could have not covered the building costs. Lundell instead argues that the reason behind the large dwelling houses can be found in Hälsingland's family traditions. The buildings had to be able to house many guests since family visits were an important part of the culture. Many researchers also stress the fact that the farmers in Hälsingland have a history of utilizing several different resources, such as forestry, farming of flax and rye, as well as livestock husbandry, and that this versatility has led to their prosperity (Nordin 2003, p. 6, Gustafson & Lundell 2008, p. 9f, Lundell, halsingegardar.se). Another reason that is often suggested for the large farmhouses in Hälsingland is that the farmers were freehold peasants, and therefore could build without restrictions from the aristocracy (Nordin 2002, p. 152).

Between 1997 and 2003 a project called "Projektet Hälsingegårdar", was led by the County administrative board of Gävleborg (Länsstyrelsen i Gävleborg), and its results were presented in the publication "*Projekt Hälsingegårdar, Insatser och resultat 1997-2003 - tankar om framtiden*" (Olsson 2003:7). It also resulted in several publications on architecture, preservation, and culture-historical environments of the farms, including "*Hälsingegårdar - Värna, vårda, visa vår byggnadskultur*" that describes the farms and their environments (Nordin 1997). Another book that was published is "*Bild på bondevägg, hälsingegårdarnas måleri*" dedicated to the paintings and art in the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland (Sinha 2002). The project also runs the publication series "*Hälsingegårdar*", which contains books about the individual farms.

Another project, also called "Projekt Hälsingegårdar" was run by Region Gävleborg in 2008-2010. The project focused on the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland as tourist attractions, and was responsible for summarizing the nomination for UNESCO's list of world heritage sites (Hälsingegårdar, *Fakta om projektet*). The project's website lists some literature recommendations concerning the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland (Hälsingegårdar, *lästips*).

These projects inspired more research, for example "*Allmogemålaren Anders Ädel*" (Andersson 2000), and "*Små hål med stor effekt*" (Folkesdotter 2003). They both focus on the decoration and art in the farmhouses. The Royal Institute of Art's department of

Architecture together with Svensk Byggtjänst AB released a book in 2003 with detailed documentation of the architecture and state of preservation of five of the decorated farms in Hälsingland: "*Hälsingegårdar i fem socknar*". One of the chapters covers Bommars (Letsbo No 2 on the map from 1853) and features part of the material I use for my investigation (2002). In 2002 Rosemarie Fiebranz published her dissertation about gender and behavioral patterns within a pre-industrial households in Bjuråker, Hälsingland (Fiebranz 2002).

"*Bebyggelsehistorisk tidsskrift*" dedicated issue 45 published in 2003 to the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland. It was edited by Erik Nordin, previously head of the department of cultural environment in Gävleborg's County. It contains several articles covering various aspects of the farms (Nordin 2003). One article concerns the dwelling houses in Hälsingland during the 17th and 18th century, written by Daniel Olsson and Bertil Thelin. Olsson and Thelin have also written a thesis together about the dwelling houses in Hälsingland during the 17th century (Olsson & Thelin 2000), and Olsson wrote a thesis on the dwelling houses in Hälsingland during the 18th century (Olsson 2002). The series "*Medeltid in Hälsingland*" released an issue concerning the medieval culture of Hälsingland in relation to the later decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland (Lundell 2007). Another book released in 2003 that aims to widen the knowledge about the decorated farmhouses' outbuildings is "*Lador, logar och längor*" by Gunvor Gustafson and Jan Lundell (Gustafson & Lundell 2003).

Several books on Hälsingland's farmhouses have been published since they received their world heritage status. One example is "*7 världsarvsgårdar I Hälsingland*" that focuses on the buildings' connection to the culture in Hälsingland, not only historically, but also how they are parts of living cultural environments today. The book also describes the decorations of the farmhouses and the history behind them, as well as the preservation work that is made (Göllas, Lööv & Kristofers 2012).

The research regarding the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland has mainly been focused on architecture, the decorative elements, and to some degree economy. During the 21st century there has been an emphasis on the preservation of the farms and their cultural environments. No archaeological work has been done on the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland so far, maybe mainly because of their late dates and the fact that many are still in use. An archeological excavation has however been done on a farm in Järvsö, Hälsingland, which layout represents a typical solution found in medieval northern Sweden. The excavation did not lead to an exact dating of the farm, but the historical material suggests that it was still used during the 18th century (Blennå & Eriksson 2010:02).

Aim of the investigation

The decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland have mostly gotten attention for their rich decorations, and research has often focused on the economic factors behind the architecture's extravagance. The development of farmers' houses in Hälsingland has also been explored.

What is missing in the current research about the farmhouses of Hälsingland is the perspective on the inhabitants' relationship to their buildings and furnishings. How did the material world affect their daily lives and shape their thoughts and social relationships? Another aspect that is

missing in the research is an archaeological perspective. I believe that an archaeological theory could contribute with a new, or wider view of these buildings and the people who lived in, and around them.

While the time-frame for a master thesis makes it impossible to make a thorough research on all the farms in Hälsingland, my hope is that this thesis will serve as a start to a new way of surveying the relationships between the farmhouses of Hälsingland and the people who built, and lived in them.

Research questions

To better understand the farm Bommars, called Letsbo No 2 on the map from 1853 (fig. 3), and its owners I have focused my research around these following three questions:

- How did the buildings shape the everyday life of their inhabitants?
- Is it possible to trace a change of the farmers' social roles from the changes in buildings between the 18th century and the 19th century?
- Why was Letsbo No 2 built on such a large scale?

Theory

For this thesis I have been inspired by Ian Hodder's Theory of Entanglement, which is thoroughly described in "Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things" (2012). Hodder bases his theory in a post-processual discussion with the focus on the material objects' agency and symmetrical relationships between humans and material objects, and finds inspirations in authors like Arjun Appadurai (1986), Bruno Latour (1992) and Christopher Tilley (1999) and more. He discusses and tests several previous theories from different fields of research against his theory of entanglement continuously throughout his book.

Hodder is not alone with the argument that 'things' deserve a stronger focus in archaeology, and that they should be seen as symmetrical agents to humans. Several other archaeologists have theorized about the material objects' significance, and emphasized the need to see their value as agents or actants. Things are not only an expression of human society, but have value in themselves, and they have great impact on human life, something that symmetrical archaeology often argues that modern archaeological research has forgotten. "In Defense of Things" by Bjørnar Olsen (2010), "Archaeology: The Discipline of Things" by Bjørnar Olsen, Michael Shanks, Timothy Webmoor, and Christopher Witmore (2012), and the article "What about 'one more turn after the social' in archaeological reasoning? Taking things seriously" by Timothy Webmoor (2007) are examples of texts that share the similar point of view to that of Ian Hodder, where things are considered as important in constitution of social relations as humans, and argue that a symmetrical perspective needs to be applied in archaeological research.

Hodder argues that things, such as objects, animals, and nature have an impact on humans. This relation starts already when we choose which things to engage with, and which things to avoid. While things, unlike humans don't have an intention, they do have an agency because of their influence on humans' decisions and behavior. In its essence the theory of entanglement argues that humans and things are entangled in an equal dependency on each other (Hodder 2012, p. 38, 68).

Humans need things in their lives, and our whole society is based around things and the distribution of them. We depend on things for food, shelter, transportation, communication, and other day-to-day tasks. We can form different types of dependencies on things, such as physical, (e.g. hunger or addiction), or psychological, where a thing can help us ease grief or makes us happy by association or memory. Of course there are also economic or social reasons behind human dependencies on things (Hodder 2012, p. 3, 18).

It is not only humans that depend on things, but things also need humans to exist in the form we wish them to. For example, a house needs building and mending, which makes it dependent on humans for its existence. Flour needs humans to sow, harvest and grind the grains to exist in the first place: then it will need storing and protection from rodents to be of use to us. This constant process of keeping the things in order often requires humans to engage with more things, and to engage other humans to help. To repair a house tools and a helping hand can be needed. All things change over time, even if it is not obvious to a human eye at first. Even a solid stone building will eventually collapse if humans do not take care of it, and landscapes change, even if this process takes more than a human lifetime. When things break down humans need to put extra labor to repair and restore them. This means that things both need a steady relationship with humans, and can unexpectedly 'require' humans to intervene (Hodder 2012, p. 5, 13, 72)

Things are not only dependent on humans to exist in the form we want them to; they are also dependent on other things. To boil water, for example, one could use a kettle, but the kettle would be useless for this purpose without a fire or another heat source. For reparation work one needs a certain set of tools, which could not be made without use of materials and other tools, which in their turn create new networks of entanglement. In this way things depend on other things their whole lifespan, for production, exchange, use and discard. The kettle can be linked in a long chain of dependencies all the way from the mine where the iron for it was mined, to the fireplace where it will be used (Hodder 2012, p. 42f, 47).

Humans are dependent on things, but the things also depend on humans, and this will cause the humans to engage more things in the process, starting new relationships with things and creating more dependencies. This double bound of dependency between things and humans is what Hodder calls "entanglement". The entanglement between humans and things guides and rules human life. We set our daily routines depending on the things we must keep in order, and society is built within, and upon these entanglements. Owning things often leads to rights and obligations, and humans might have to organize themselves to be able to manage their entanglements with things (Hodder 2012, p. 88, 97, 104).

Hodder's ideas attribute humans and material things, such as animals, artifacts and buildings with the same importance and see their coexistence in a symmetrical way. Neither can exist without the other and both structure and order the actions of the other.

For this thesis I have also worked with the theoretical perspectives that stress mutual relations between humans and architecture and argue that buildings influence their inhabitants as much as the inhabitants first shaped the building. Rapoport (1990) argues that architecture must be understood from the sequences of human activity that takes place in and around the buildings. Humans order their lives, and they need room for their chains of activities, where one action comes before the next. The whole system of activity links must be considered in order to interpret the architecture. Furthermore, he emphasizes that buildings, or human-made spaces, influence how people act and behave, and that the built environments can be used to encourage a wanted behavior (Rapoport 1990, p. 11f). Rapoport's study quoted here was published in the anthology "Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An Interdisciplinary Cross-cultural Study" (Kent, ed. 1990), which reviewed the ideas about buildings and spatiality within different fields of research, such as archaeology, ethnography and architecture studies. Many archaeologists have investigated the relationships between humans and their usage and ordering of space, in and around buildings. "Architecture & Order: Approaches to Social Space" (Parker Pearson & Colins, eds. 1996), aims to raise an awareness of the building's social and cultural implications as archaeological material. The editors point out that buildings are often documented in great detail in archaeological work, but that they are commonly used as a backdrop to historical activity. Human ordering of space shapes and influence a society (Parker Pearson & Colins 1996, p. 4). A building's walls and openings, for example, provide space and restrictions, which shape the life of its owners or visitors. They argue that through investigating architecture and space and applying a reflexive perspective, archaeology will reach a better understanding of social space (Parker Pearson & Colins 1996). A Swedish example of studies concerning buildings and spatiality is Annika Andersson's research of Hammershus Castle in Sweden (1997). She analyzes the chain of access ways to and through the castle's rooms in an analysis method created by Hillier & Hansson (1984) as described in "The Social Logic of Space", where it's argued that the more private parts of a building demand visitors to pass through more rooms to get there (Andersson 1997, p. 655).

The decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland are rightly seen as monuments of culture historical importance. As objects of study they are commonly put into large contexts of economy, history of building technique, building conservation and art history. They are portrayed as a result of a one way communication from humans to buildings, without acknowledging the building's agency or reflecting over material and other engagements between buildings and their builders and users. Employment of archaeological perspectives that stress importance of material culture and application of the theory of entanglement offer a new way to conceptualize these relationships and their dialectal nature. They allow for better investigations of the relationships between the owners and the buildings and thus the understanding of the buildings' and farmers' roles in each other's everyday lives and the local society. The farms and their inhabitants have more stories to tell if we investigate how the

buildings restricted and enabled the persons living there, and what kind of behavior they might have forced upon their owners. It is also important to see the everyday objects on the farm as active things and not only as curiosities from the past. They shaped the lives of the people that used them, and they still affect people today. The fact that people schedule vacation trips and travel from all over the world to see the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland is a proof that they have an influence on human behavior still today, albeit different from the time they were built in.

Materials

For this investigation I have chosen to focus on one of the seven farms that were granted UNESCO's world heritage site status. Looking at only one farm allows for a deeper investigation, and provides an insight into a single family's life in one of the most famous decorated farmhouses in Hälsingland. It also gives the possibility to trace the development of the estate over the generations. Important to note is however that a single farm may not be representative for the development of all the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland, but a closer analysis may give a deeper understanding for what circumstances gave this farm its special status.

The farmhouse I have chosen as my case study for this investigation is Bommars (farm number 2 on the 1853 map) in the village, or hamlet Letsbo in Northwestern Hälsingland. The choice was based on the fact that Bommars is one of the farms declared as world heritage sites, and is considered to be a typical and well preserved example of the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland. The history of Bommars is also covered by a varied and comprehensive historical material. I have also chosen to limit my investigation to the period between 1767 and 1874. This is because the farm becomes the property of Hans Jonsson's family in 1767, which I follow for three generations until the death of his granddaughter Gölin Jonsdotter in 1874. It was mainly during Gölin's and her husband's ownership that the farm was formed into the decorated farmhouse of Hälsingland that we can see today.

For my investigation I have used a cadastral map of the hamlet Letsbo from 1640 (Fig. 2. Lantmäteriet, V32 - 35: v2: 35 43 47). The map illustrates that Letsbo consisted of two farms, and also covers the both farms' outland buildings with their surrounding land. Even though this map is of an earlier date than the time period I investigate in this thesis, it was a good source for understanding how the surrounding land has changed over time, and what resources the farmers depended on to make Bommars a successful estate. I have also used a map over the hamlet Letsbo from 1853 (Fig. 3. Lantmäteriet 21-ljj-95). It would have been preferable to also have a map from the 18th century over Letsbo, but unfortunately there is none to be found in the digital archive of Lantmäteriet, The National Land Survey of Sweden.

The maps provide a good overview of the lands owned by the farmers situated at Bommars, but they do not give many hints about the buildings' shape or size. I have turned to the book "*Hälsingegårdar i fem socknar*" (2002) published by Svensk Byggtjänst and Konsthögskolans Arkitekturskola (The Royal Institute of Art's department of Architecture). The chapter "*Ljusdalssocken, Letsbo, Bommars*" describes the buildings standing at Bommars today, as well as their building dates (Berg et al 2002, p. 48-61). The dating has in this case been based

on historical sources and dendrochronology. This book is focused on the architecture and art of the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland, but the building's plan and mapping of buildings on the farm have been of good use in my analysis of the patterns of movement on the farm between the houses. Yet again the material does not provide much insight into the 18th century farm as the majority of buildings standing today are from the 19th century, but it's possible that the layout was kept from the 18th century.

To get an idea of the life at Bommars during the 18th and 19th centuries I turned to estate inventories. The first estate inventory I have used is written after Hans Jonsson's death in 1810 (Ljusdals tingslags häradsrätt. FII:5, p. 296). Hans was the owner of Letsbo from at least year 1767 (Berg et al 2002, p. 51). The next owner was his son, Jon Hansson. I have analyzed the estate inventory after both Jon, who died in 1848, and his wife Kerstin Andersdotter, who died in 1843 (Ljusdal tingslags häradsrätt FII:9, p. 145, 414). Their daughter Gölin Jonsdotter and her husband Sven Johansson were the next owners of Bommars. Gölin passed away in 1874, and her estate inventory shows the value of Bommars in comparison to the other lands and farms she owned (Ljusdals tingslags häradsrätt FII:15a, p. 215). Gölin's and Sven's children inherited the farm after their mother, but I chose not to follow the family and farm longer than to Gölin's death, due to the time restrictions for this thesis. These four estate inventories cover three generations of owners of Bommars and their material possession, and paint a picture about the decorated farmhouse's owners' everyday life at the estate.

Method

For my thesis I used an inductive research method, with an analysis based on a cross examination of different types of historical source materials, including maps, estate inventories and plans of the farm. This is in line with what Janken Myrdal's argument that a use of multiple sources in research can give a better chance of answering the research question at hand, by comparing the different materials (Myrdal 2007, p. 499). He also points out that the use of multiple sources also demands from the researcher to have knowledge of many different areas (Myrdal 2007, p. 499f). This is why I have leaned on previous research in my investigation, as well as some materials that have been published by other experts within their fields. The plan of Letsbo No 2's main dwelling house, and the dendrochronological dating of the buildings are examples of this. By comparing multiple sources I hope to paint a broader picture of the life at Letsbo No 2 than what could have been achieved by looking at the separate sources alone. My investigation of Letsbo No 2 is thus based on historical sources and literature, and not on field studies.

I used the maps of Letsbo to understand what kind of land the farmers depended on, and to detect any clues about the farm and farmers' relationship with to the surrounding hamlet. This was done by looking at the roads and other possible connection points with Letsbo and other villages, as well as the farm's situation in the hamlet. The maps could also give a better understanding of how the farmers travelled in the landscape and what kind of surroundings they lived in and depended on.

I turned to the plan of the farm yard to better understand movement patterns and how the houses restricted human movement on the farm. I wanted to see if tasks were divided between

several buildings or if the entire farm's work was done in a smaller area. This could indicate how often and where people met in their daily tasks, what environments they moved in, and which areas were more restricted. Buildings' power over human behavior has often been explored and discussed within archaeology. Susan Kent, for example, argues that the separately addressed purposes of rooms and space are culturally dependent (Kent 1990, p. 6). Space is a human construction (Andersson 1997, p. 648) and buildings consist of material and abstract boundaries to create and divide space which influence human behavior (Lawrence 1990, p. 76). In a similar vein, Rapoport argues that buildings are not only built to enhance certain behaviors, but also to communicate status, power and social roles (Rapoport 1990, p. 11). "Structures are both the medium and the outcome of social practices" postulate Parker Pearson & Richards (1997, p. 2), emphasizing the double bond between humans and their buildings.

This means that the placement of the buildings, and their internal order, will force certain behaviors on their owners and visitors, as well as hint about the intent of the builders. This could indicate if the farm was built as an open environment, or if it was more private, closed off from the outside world. I applied this perspective to the plan of the farm yard, as well as to the main dwelling house's plan, where the walls and doors of the rooms are restricting or enabling movement. I have tried to deduce which areas are private and which are open for visitors. For this analysis I have been inspired by the analysis that Annika Andersson has done in Hammershus Castle. She applied 'access analysis' and 'planning analysis' to the plan of the building to better understand the relationships between private and public rooms (Andersson 1997, p. 655f). Access analysis, a method created by Hillier & Hansson in "The Social Logic of Space" (1984) investigates the access to different rooms, where the researcher creates a diagram over the building's internal ordering and access ways. This can tell which rooms are more accessible to visitors and which are placed further into the building, thus being less open (Andersson 1997, p. 655f). This method for analyzing buildings has however received some critique. Lawrence, for example, counters that to understand space one has to consider the social contexts, not only the structural properties of the buildings. Symbolism and abstract boundaries also need to be considered to better understand space (Lawrence 1990, p. 75f). Rapoport also argues that furnishings and decorations of rooms can change the message the room sends, and that human behavior is not only guided by the more permanent structures, but also the objects within it (Rapoport 1990, p. 13). Andersson herself writes that a pure access analysis gave a diagram that was "too sterile to capture the spatial complexity of the castle" (Andersson 1997, p. 656). Therefore she added the method of planning analysis created by Patrick A. Faulkner. While the planning analysis resembles the access analysis, it also considers the functions of the rooms (Andersson 1997, p. 656). While I have not used the access, or planning analysis in my thesis, I have been inspired by it. By putting the placement of the buildings and rooms in relationship to the decorations used in the different areas, I aimed to get a better understanding of what impression the building was meant to give and how it was planned to be used.

The four estate inventories are good indications of the welfare of the families and their material practices. Christina Rosén has in her investigation of the village Hörås in Sweden

used estate inventories as source material (Rosén 2001). She problematizes the estate inventories as historical material emphasizing their incompleteness in reflecting of the households possessions. Pottery is often not noted at all, as it was generally of very low economic values, for example (Rosén 2001, p. 110). She also points out the difficulty of comparing the value of the objects listed over time, as the currency needs to be re-calculated. Inflation is another factor that needs to be taken in regard. She has instead compared the number of different objects listed in the estate inventories' different categories, such as clothes, livestock, crop, and metals, to see if there are any differences in the estate inventories between individuals, farms and genders (Rosén 2001, p. 108f).

I too have looked at the number of objects listed in the estate inventories, but also compared the objects' values between estate inventories closely related in time. But apart from telling us how much each person owned at the time of his or her death the estate inventories can also give a picture of the life at the farm. They inform about the kind of tools or objects that were used on the farm, how the houses were furnished and how the family members presented and 'fashioned' themselves. This can tell what environments, things and possible abstract ideas the farmers were entangled in. I also compared the estate inventories of Letsbo No 2 to the other two farms in Letsbo to detect any differences in material possessions within the hamlet. I wanted to see if there is anything unique about the entanglements in Letsbo No 2, and if the economic and material patterns and networks have been a continuous part of the farm's history from the 18th century, or were established and negotiated after the farm was rebuilt in a grand style in the 1840's.

Results and analysis

Cadastral map from 1640

The farm Bommars was owned by Anders Björsson in 1640. I have not found any evidence of relations between him and Jon Hansson who lived at the same farm in 1767, and whether it has been kept in the family or sold. What is clear however is that the farm has kept its *bodland* by the lake Opplisjön from 1640 when it is noted in the tax register, until the 19th century (Fig. 2. Lantmäteriet, V32 - 35: v2: 35 43).

It was common for the farms in northern Sweden up until the early 20th century to have pasture lands placed a few kilometers from the main farm, in the forest. Because of the difficulty of correctly translating these terminologies I will instead describe them here, and forward on use the Swedish words *bodland* and *fäbod*.

Bodland and *fäbod* are pieces of land, detached from the main farm, where the livestock was moved during the summer. The difference between the two types of land is that a *fäbod*, or shieling, was only used for keeping the livestock, while the *bodland* was also used for sowing crops. The animals were let loose in the forest for grazing, but a barn as well as a small dwelling house were also built on the *fäbod*. The barn was used for milking the cows when they returned from their grazing at nights, and for making cheese and other dairy products. A *bodland* could have a bigger farm complex with the utility buildings needed for both livestock and crops (Gustafson & Lundell 2008, p. 21f).

The farmers, or part of their household, moved to the *bodland* in the spring, then to the *fäbod* later during the summer, bringing with them supplies from the *bodland* to live on, and then moved back to the home farm for the winter (Gustafson & Lundell 2008, P. 21f). The two farms in Letsbo both have *bodland* located by the lake Opplisjön in 1640, but no *fäbod*. On the map the fields at the pasture land by Opplisjön are marked, so the families raised crops both on their main farm and their *bodland*.

It is safe to assume that Opplisjön was a favorable location because of the nearby lake since both the animals and the people taking care of them needed water. Opplisjön is also upstream from Letsbo, which could lend some help transporting items and materials on the stream between the two locations.

According to the land registration the hamlet Letsbo had good outlands for grazing, pine forest, good water for fishing and a watermill. The soil was shallow and clayey, and was therefore often badly damaged by the cold. The stream is located to the Southwest, and to Southeast is the lake Letsbosjön. Most of the meadows in the hamlet, especially nearest by the lake Letsbosjön, are noted as marshy meadows, and only a few smaller fields higher up the hill in the forest are described as dry meadows (Lantmäteriet, V32 - 35: v2: 35 43).

Meadows in wet land have historically been of high value to the farmers because the water fertilizes the land for them. It is likely that sedge grew in these meadows and that the land provided a large quantity of hay (Cserhalmi 1997, p. 101). This is also reflected in the tax of



Figure 3: Map of Letsbo from 1853, where Letsbo No 2 is encircled.

Lantmäteriet. Aktbeteckning 21-ljj-95, image 20. Ljusdal, Letsbo, 1853. Cropped, and minor editing by author.

seeds. His neighbor Oloff Anundsson was only paying a total of 36 gilling of hay and 4,25 barrels of seed. Björsson was also paying a larger sum of money in tax than his neighbor, although by a small margin: 12 skilling and 12 daler. Anundsson paid 8 skilling and 12 daler.

From this map and register we can conclude that the farm Bommars was the richer of the two households in Letsbo at this time, and that it was producing a considerably bigger amount of hay than the neighboring farm. From the description of the land it seems it was best suited for keeping livestock; the land was easily damaged by the cold, but the grazing in the surrounding forest was good. The mentioning of a water mill and the good fishing water shows how dependent the farmers in Letsbo were on the nearby water sources. It is also likely that that the location for the farmers' *bodland* was decided by following the stream that passed through the hamlet upstream. This would have made the location easy to find, a water source would have been guaranteed, and transport between the two locations would have been easier.

Map of Letsbo from 1853

In 1853 Letsbo has grown, and there are now three farms in Letsbo. The villages in Hälsingland were generally small, often containing only two or three farms up until the mid-19th century, so Letsbo is not an exception (Gustafson & Lundell 2008, p. 19). Bommars is marked as number 2 on this map (Fig. 3), and was owned by Sven Johansson, Gölin Jonsdotter's husband. The amount of worked land surrounding Bommars had increased (Lantmäteriet, 21-ljj-95. Appendix II).

The house was located close to the road that crosses the stream and continues southeast. North of the house was forest, and south, between the stream and the house, fields belonging to Bommars stretched out. The Bommars farm had land just south of the house, west, just over the road, and southwest across the stream.

The road that leads through the hamlet from the south to the north passed just by Letsbo No 2, and the farm was placed high up on the slope close to the forest. When people travelled the road through Letsbo from the south Bommars would have been well visible higher up along the road, as well as many of its fields and plots of land. Comparing the 1853 map with modern maps it seems that this road could have led to Ljusdal, the centre of the Parish.

The family and their servants lived at three places to have enough food for the livestock over the year; they had both a *fäbod* and a *bodvall*. This could indicate an increase of animals kept by the farm from 1640, when the farm only had a *bodvall*. When the work with sowing was finished at the home farm of Bommars the family and their farmhands moved to the *bodland* in Opplisjön, already in the farm's possession in 1640. After a couple of weeks the farmhands and livestock were sent to the newer *fäbod* in Akinlandet, while the family stayed at the *bodland*. When winter came they all moved back to the main farm (Berg et al 2002, p. 48). This kind of living arrangements meant that travelling with their animals was an important part of the farmers' life and yearly cycle. Both the *bodland* and the *fäbod* are placed upstream from Letsbo, and the water probably provided a good transport route.

Estate inventory, Hans Jonsson 1810

From at least 1767 Letsbo No 2 was owned by the family of Hans Jonsson. Hans Jonsson left the farm to his son Jon Hansson before he died in 1810, which means that this estate inventory does not show all the items and furnishings at Letsbo No 2 (Ljusdals tingslags häradsrätt FII:5, p. 296). He did however still have 4 cows, 8 "small livestock", seed and flax seed in his possession when he died. Jonsson owned a couple of clothing items made of wadmal: a pair of socks and a pair of pants. It is likely that at least some of the small livestock were sheep, which would have provided the wool for the warm clothing items necessary for outdoor work during the winter. The estate of Hans Jonsson was valued at 222 riksdaler and 25 skilling.

According to the catechetical record from Letsbo No 2 in the years 1801-1807 the family only housed one farm hand, but Hans Jonsson's son with family also lived at the farm at this time. They would have provided extra hands for the labor (Ljusdal AI:4a, p. 159).

When compared to the estate inventories of the owners from Letsbo No 1, Hans Jonsson does not appear exceedingly wealthy. Per Olofsson's estate inventory from 1780 has a total worth of 240 riksdaler, and that is excluding the farm itself (Ljusdals tingslags häradsrätt FII:2b, p. 294). When Erik Eriksson, the next owner of Letsbo No 1, died in 1814, only four years after Hans Jonsson, he left behind possessions worth 1140 riksdaler and 19 skilling. This too is excluding the farm itself (Ljusdals tingslags häradsrätt FII:5, p. 569).

When compared to Letsbo No 3 on the other hand, Jonsson does not seem to have been poor either. The owner of that farm, Per Johansson, died in 1804, and his estate inventory is valued at only 29 riksdaler and 33 skilling (Ljusdals tingslags häradsrätt FII:4, p. 562). A later owner, Hans Olofsson, left an inheritance of 89 riksdaler and 32 skilling in 1855 (Ljusdals tingslags häradsrätt FII:11, page 263). Considering the distance in time and the state of the market this seems a meager amount compared to Jonsson's 222 riksdaler in 1810. Worth noticing is however that Olofsson's low total estate value is due to his debts. He owed 266 riksdaler and 32 skilling.

The striking thing about Hans Jonsson's estate inventory is the many clothing items listed. They were in total worth 19 riksdaler and 44 skilling, making them the highest valued category of items in his inventory. It's also interesting that a leather buff coat was worth the same amount (1 riksdaler 32 skilling) as his church sleigh, and this is not his most expensive clothing item. According to Ulväng dissertation about dress economy and dress culture in Härjedalen, Sweden, clothes often generated a high value in the estate inventories, and both the everyday clothes and the finer clothes were recorded during the 19th century (Ulväng 2012, p. 76). To have a relatively large amount of their wealth tied up in clothes can therefore not be considered outside the norm.

Four years later his neighbor Erik Eriksson has a total of ca 40 riksdaler worth of clothing, and some of the estimated values of Eriksson's individual items are higher. This could either be due to difference in quality, or a human error in the assessment. Both the farmers' most expensive clothing item is a coat, and the fact that Eriksson's is worth six riksdaler, and

Jonsson's three, only half the value, does seem to imply that parts of Hans Jonsson's wardrobe was of lesser quality than his neighbor's.

This comparison of estate inventories shows that Letsbo No 2 definitely was not a poor farm in the beginning of the 19th century, but it seems that it was not the richest in the hamlet either. Erik Eriksson had more economical means, and was an "extra jury man", which means that he was of higher social status than an ordinary farmer. He did not only express this via his clothes, but through the furnishings in his home. He owned silver goods for ca 39 riksdaler, and household copper items for ca 55 riksdaler, while Hans Jonsson only owned gold and silver for a total worth of 11 riksdaler and 30 skilling, and a pot as only copper item, worth 16 skilling.

Estate inventory, Kerstin Andersdotter, 1843

Kerstin Andersdotter was the wife of Jon Hansson, and died three years before him. She moved with her husband to her daughter Gölin and her husband Sven in Sörkämsta in 1832 and lived there until her death. In her inventory too clothing is the category of personal possessions that is of the highest value (Ljusdals tingslags häradsrätt FII:9, p. 145). Her estate inventory lists a blue fur, valued at 5 riksdaler, the same amount as for a blue fur in Jon Hansson's estate inventory. This is the most valuable clothing item in her possession.

Kerstin's inventory list only contains jewelry (4 gold rings and two silver fasteners), clothes (worth ca 50 riksdaler) and a few personal items. The estate inventory does not list any kind of items related to household chores or crafting, but it also states that Kerstin gave the rest of her estate to her heirs prior to the day the inventory was made.

Estate inventory, Jon Hansson 1846

Jon Hansson gave his farm to his daughter Gölin and her husband the jury man Sven Johansson before his death, and lived at their farm in Sörkämsta from 1832 to the time of his death in 1846 (Ljusdal AI:9, p. 436). The catechetical records show that he housed a total of three farmhands in Letsbo No 2 during the years 1813-1818, but as most two at a time (Ljusdal AI:6a, p. 171). During the years 1819-1826 the need of farmhands seems to have increased as he had three to four hired individuals at the same time (Ljusdal AI:7a, p.185a).

His estate inventory shows that the total value of his clothes was higher than the value of his livestock (Ljusdals tingslags häradsrätt FII:9, p. 414). It is likely that he left much of his livestock at the same time as he gave Letsbo No 2 to his daughter and her husband in 1832 (Berg et al 2002, p. 50). Clothes were not considered as part of the household economy, but as personal items, and this explains why they are kept by the farmer until his death (Ulväng 2012, p. 39).

Durable clothes that could stand the work at a farm and in the forest without too much tear were probably needed, but it is also likely that the farmers wanted to show their wealth and social status. Hansson owned a coat of "blue fur" (5 riksdaler), maybe inherited from his wife, a "snow fur" (24 skilling), a dog skin fur (20 riksdaler). The blue fur was the third most highly valued clothing item on his list, after a coat valued at 8 riksdaler, topped only by the dog fur that was of four times higher value than the blue fur. A dog skin fur is the most expensive

clothing item one can own at this time (Ulväng 2012, p. 166). The valuable clothing items indicates that he was had a bigger budget than his father Hans Jonsson, and the fact that Hansson could afford luxurious clothing item suggest that he was wealthy, and used clothes to show this.

The use of fur items could suggest that hunting was an activity at Letsbo. In that case the clothing items that this activity provided were valuable. It is however possible that these fur items were bought, but with such close proximity to the forest it is not a far-fetched suggestion that they were produced at the farm. Göllas et al states that hunting had always been an important activity at Letsbo, and that selling the fur and skins was a good extra income (Göllas et al 2012, p. 128).

Hansson's estate inventory also shows two pair of items in silver, cufflinks and fasteners. Both these are used with clothes, which means that he had the means to dress up at occasions. Together with the valuable dog fur he would probably have made an extravagant impression.

Hans Olofsson from Letsbo No 3 owned clothes for 13 riksdaler and 24 skilling at the time of his death in 1855. Even though Olofsson's total estate value, before his debts were paid off, was close to Jon Hansson's, Hansson still had a considerable smaller amount of clothes than his neighbor at Letsbo No 2 (Ljusdal tingslags häradsrätt 1855. F II:11, p. 263). Since Jon Hansson was living with his daughter and her husband, who had a considerable wealth, he enjoyed a higher living standard than his former neighbor. It is likely that living in a local social elite environment had an influence on his wardrobe because of the social expectations of the family.

Estate inventory, Gölin Jonsdotter 1874

Gölin Jonsdotter was Kerstins Andersdotter's and Jon Hansson's only child and heir. In 1828 she married a juryman and farmer Sven Johansson from Sörkämsta, Ljusdal (Berg et al 2002, p. 50f). Being a juryman Sven had a high social status, and it became even higher when he later in life became the district judge (Ljusdal AI:13, p. 334). Being the only heir to a big and rather wealthy farm surely helped Gölin secure this marriage.

What is obvious from Gölin's estate inventory is that she had accumulated a lot of wealth compared to her parents and her grandfather. A large part of this is due to the estate that her husband left her at his death, the farm in Sörkämsta for example. The estate inventories are not completely comparable due to the fact that Gölin's is the only one that also lists the actual real estates. Her father left her and her husband Letsbo No 2 before his death, and it's likely that this also was the case with Hans Jonsson, who died in 1810, since the farm is not listed on his estate inventory.

The estate inventory of Gölin Jonsdotter is the first to include and specify the value of the farm Letsbo No 2. Here the farm in Letsbo was valued higher than her husband's farm in Sörkämsta where she lived after they married. It was also under her lifetime that Letsbo No 2

was rebuilt and got the appearance it has today. According to her estate inventory Letsbo No 2 was the larger, or at least the estate with the highest production of the two. Letsbo contained 6 öresland 12 penningland¹, while Sörkämsta only contained 3 öresland and 7 penningland. In the estate inventory Letsbo No 2 is valued at 4300 kronor, and Sörkämsta No1 at 3900 kronor (Ljusdals tingslags häradsrätt FII:15a, p. 215). Apart from that Letsbo No 2 had a higher production, it is also possible that its newer buildings and decorated dwelling house added to its value.

Even though no one is registered as living in Letsbo No 2 from 1832 and on, we can still read from the Gölin's estate inventory that some farming activities must have taken place there (Ljusdal AI:9, p. 218). Gölin's estate inventory from 1874 lists crops from Letsbo No 2: potato, rye, and flax. It also mentions some possessions on the farm that belonged to her and her husband Sven Johansson, such as pipes, baking and forging equipment, 4 dozen sieving trays, a cauldron, and pottery.

The range of different categories of items, and the quantity of items, indicates that Sven and Gölin run an estate of a considerable size, and that their farm work included various tasks. Their livestock included 3 horses, 13 cows, 1 large swine, 23 sheep and 11 goats. The estate inventory lists 44 sheep skin rugs and 9 calf skin rugs, something they could have made from their own animals. There are also several feather bolsters, duvets, feather pillows and other skin rugs, which points to a household with many individuals living in it, or with possibility to house many overnight guests.

If we look at the other household items they also portrait a home that entertained guests. The silverware includes a dozen each of tablespoons, forks, knives and teaspoons, and more various silverware for dining. When it comes to furniture Gölin had 2 long tables with seats, 3 folding tables, and 2 tea tables amongst several other tables, and over 40 chairs. This furniture may have been divided between her different properties, but still speak of a home that was a place that was expecting visitors, and that could afford to entertain them.

Sven Johansson had been an important person in the society, and his home reflected this social status, which also seems to have meant that he had a need to be able to house guests and throw large scale dinners or parties. He was also a wealthy man, and in Gölin's inventory several people who were indebted to them are listed. Gölin's receivables are in total worth 42664 kronor of the total 67029 kronor the estate was worth, and the borrowers were of different economic backgrounds: crofters, farmers, craftsmen, and a district headman.

However wealthy Gölin's family was at the time of her death, the estate inventory also lists items that were used for hard work: All the different tools needed for agricultural work, as well as tools for working wood, metal, food, and textiles. The lands listed include Sörkämsta No 1 and Letsbo No 2, but also shares in a mill and an eel fishery. Gölin also owned 2 boats and a ferry.

¹ *Öresland* and *Penningland* are untis of taxation of land.

For all four of the estate inventories the category of clothes has covered a large part of the person's wealth at the time of their death. This was a common pattern amongst farmers at this time, and indicates that it was culturally important to show belonging, as well as social status via clothes (Ulväng 2012, p. 90).

The people living at Letsbo No 2 cared about how they looked, even outside the festive activities that the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland are known for. In Gölin's estate inventory a dog fur is listed at a considerably higher value than her other clothing items (110 kronor), which could be the same fur that her father Jon Hansson owned at the time of his death. Gölin's estate inventory also lists a blue fur, valued at 8,50 kronor. This as well could be the same fur mentioned in her parents' estate inventories. It seems that clothes were kept in one's possession until death, compared to livestock and lands that seem to have been handed down before the time of death.

Plan of the farm

Admittedly the outside seems brilliant to some extent at first glance, but the large and unnecessarily numerable buildings are often standing totally unused and in most cases completely unfurnished, and in regard to household convenience much seems old fashioned, as it generally was left aside, in favour of brandishing a large facade.

Kongl. Maj:ts Befallningshafvandes femårsberättelser. Åren 1861-1865. Gefleborgs län. 1865, p. 11. Author's translation.

This quote from 1865 seems almost oddly accurate in regard of Letsbo No 2. The farm burnt down in the 1840's, and was rebuilt by Gölin Jonsdotter and her husband Sven Johansson. They built the grand house and farm complex we can see at the site today. According to dendrochronological dating *Vinterstugan* (The Winter House), the main dwelling house, was built in 1848, with the timber felled in 1845-46 (Berg et al 2003, p. 51). According to Riksantikvarieämbetet (The Swedish National Heritage Board) it is likely that many, or most of the buildings on the farm were built around this time (RAÄ, Letsbo 2:10 Bommars, Letsbo 2:10 husnr 1). There is however no documentation of anyone living there at the time since both Gölin and her husband were both living in Sörkämsta, and so did Gölin's father Jon Hansson the last 14 years of his life. The first person registered for tax on the farm since 1832 is Gölin's grandson Sven Persson who lived there from the year 1887 and forward (Berg et al 2002, p. 50). Berg et al argue that this means that the new farm and its impressive main house stood, at least mostly, empty for almost 50 years after it was built. Gölin's estate inventory does however show that the land was used for farming and that the buildings were to some degree furnished.

The main farm, excluding the buildings on the farm's *bodland* and *fäbod* and probable buildings placed on fields for storing hay, consists of eight buildings, three of which are dwelling houses (Fig. 4, No 1, 2 and 3. Fig. 5). I do however not include building No 1 on the plan of the farm yard in my analysis since it is a dwelling house of later date than what this investigation covers.

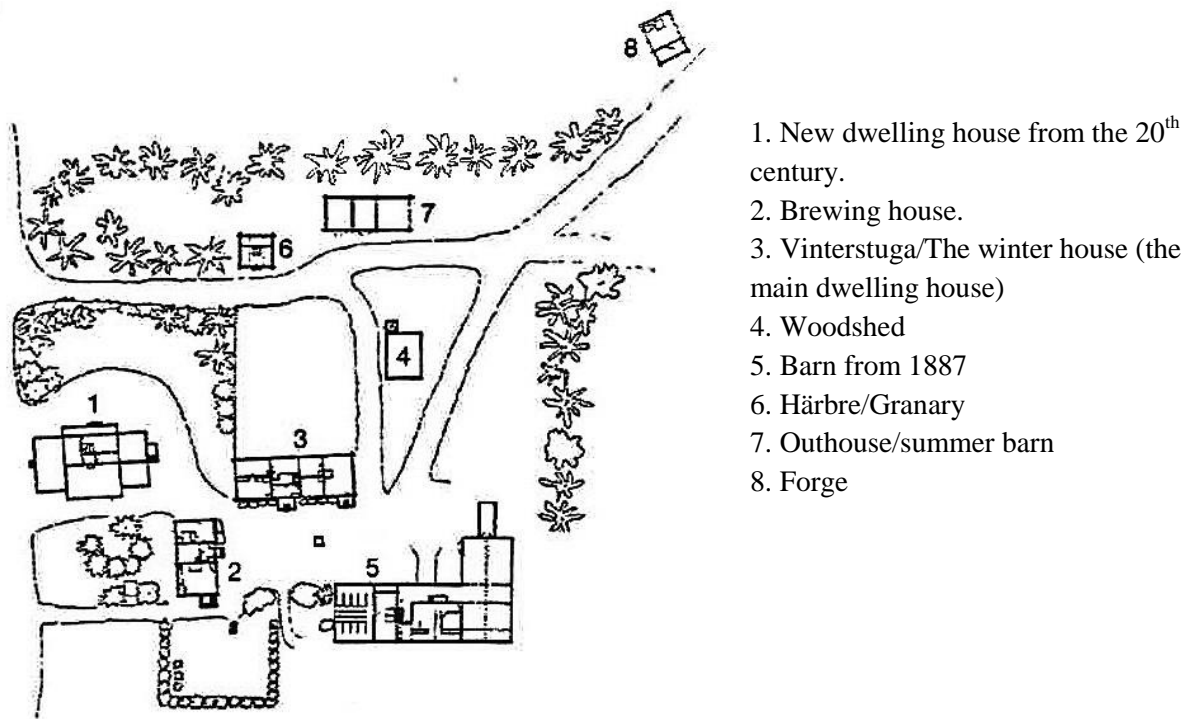


Figure 4: Plan of the farm yard at Letsbo No 2.

Berg et al, 2003, p. 49. Illustrator unknown. Published with permission from Svensk Byggtjänst AB.

A common layout of farms in Hälsingland annexed the main dwelling house with one or more farm buildings or outbuildings in one or more angles. This has been a practice since medieval times in the region, and was especially common in the late 19th - early 20th century (Gustafson & Lundell 2008, p.50, 140). Both the dwelling houses and the barn were considered part of the farm's center in the medieval law of Hälsingland, and it was a greater offense to commit a crime in one of these buildings than in a granary or outbuilding. This suggests that animals and humans had an important relationship, as the barn was considered more "home" than other buildings at the farm (Mogren 2000, p. 35). It was also common for the farmers in Hälsingland during the 19th century to live in the barn with the animals during the summer, which came to the attention of the provincial doctor in Gävleborg County. In his annual report in 1895 he expressed his worries about the bad hygiene that this way of living must result in (Nordin 2003, p. 29). In Letsbo No 2 the buildings are however separate

The fact that they have both a "summer house" and a "winter house" on their main farm yard suggests that the family did not live in the barn during the summer; the barn might have served as the summer dwelling for the servants on the farm. The large barn at Letsbo No 2 (No 5), is also a later addition, built in 1887 by Gölin's and Sven's grandson Sven Persson the same year he moved to the farm. According to Riksantikvarieämbetet the farm also has a smaller 'summer barn', and it is of the approximate same date as the main house (RAÄ, Letsbo 2:10 Bommars, RAÄ, Letsbo 2:10 husnr 8).

The smaller dwelling house, placed southwest on the farm is called *Sommarstugan* (The Summer House) and it was also used for baking bread. On the plan from "*Hälsingegårdar i*

fem socknar” this building is marked number 2, and is called *Bryggstugan* (The Brewing House). Baking and brewing were often done in the same buildings, as well as drinking (Gustafson & Lundell 2008, p. 80). The baking equipment that according to Gölin's estate inventory was at Letsbo was likely to have been stored and used in this house.

Vinterstugan (No 3), the main dwelling house, is facing south. West of it is the summer house, and northeast in front of the main house is the barn built in 1887. North of the main house are the outbuildings, and the forge is placed a bit further away in the forest north of the house. The main house, the summer house and the later barn (No 5) would all have been visible from the village road that runs west of the farm, but the summerhouse has its back turned to the road and lends some privacy. Fields belonging to Bommars stretch out south of the farm, and the road that passes went from south to north. The house is built uphill in the hamlet, viewed from the south, which means that the main house and barn were visible from afar when travelling northwards on the road. All the three houses are facing the yard, which gives the farm privacy and shuts out the world outside their immediate territory, while being conveniently placed nearby the main road. This layout suggests that the placing of the barn built in 1887 south of the house could be to show off the wealth of the farm to anyone approaching on the road. Of course there are also practical reasons to place the barn in front of the house, such as easy access and good view over the barn from the house. The older summer barn (No 7) is placed behind the house, and was less visible from the road. The barn housed the farm's livestock, as well as animal feed and tools (Gustafson & Lundell 2008, p. 50).

House number 4 is a woodshed. The farm is placed close to the edge of the forest north of it, and the farmers would have had easy access to fire wood that was needed for the stoves in both of the dwelling houses.

A common house at farms in Hälsingland is the granary (*härbre*). It was used for storing various items, most commonly grain, but also salted fish and meat, clothes and other belongings. Since it contained valuable food and items it was often placed somewhat off from any fire sources (Gustafson & Lundell 2008, p.24, 55, 66). This seems to be the case at Letsbo No 2, where the granary (No 6) is placed behind the main house, away from the forge and dwelling buildings. It is however well within view from the main dwelling house, which suggests that the owners were careful not to have the goods in this building stolen. It is built in two floors and houses 15 containers for seed, which, according to Riksantikvarieämbetet, indicates that the farm had a good economy (RAÄ Letsbo 2:10 - husnr 13).

Number 7 is simply mentioned as an outhouse in "*Hälsingegårdar i fem socknar*" (Berg et al 2002, p. 49), but Riksantikvarieämbetet calls this building a summer barn. The building was raised at around the same as the main dwelling house (RAÄ Letsbo 2:10 - husnr 8). One can assume it was used for keeping livestock and storing tools needed for the farm, or tools for other activities such as fishing or forestry. It is placed just on the edge of the forest, not far from the granary and woodshed. This is against the medieval pattern of keeping the barn in connection to the dwelling house. Lagerstedt's analysis of an excavated medieval farm in Björka, Hälsingland shows that the house was annexed to the barn where the livestock was

kept, and she out and she points out the connection to the law of Hälsingland, where the barn was considered a central part of the farm. In Björka outbuildings were located in the edges of the farmyard, which is consistent with the law of Hälsingland's picture that imagines them less central than (Lagerstedt 2004, p. 156). At Letsbo No 2 the barn was placed among the other outbuildings, which suggests that it was not considered part of the most central home sphere. Maybe this is because the farm was not used on a permanent basis, and less animals were kept here and only for shorter periods of time.

Letsbo No 2 also had a farm forge (No 8). This was not unusual for larger farms in Hälsingland, but not a rule. The farm forges were used to make simple tools or repairs that could be useful at the farm, but if something more complicated was needed a professional smith was hired (Gustafson & Lundell 2008, p. 82). The forge is a small wooden building containing one small room directly inside the entryway, and one bigger room where the hearth and bellows were placed. It was common sense to place the forge away from other houses, and this is also the case at Letsbo No 2 where the forge is placed northeast of the farm complex. Gölin's estate inventory lists forging equipment both at Sörkämsta No 1 and Letsbo No 2, which suggest that the forge at Bommars was used during her lifetime.

Judging by this plan of Letsbo No 2 the farm was dependent on the livestock and agriculture. It was also dependent on the forest for both building in large scale in wood, as well as keeping the baking house, forge and dwelling houses' stoves going. It is built as a well-functioning farm, and not only as an impressive social statement.



Figure 5: The farm yard at Letsbo No 2, viewed from the east. From left to right: The brewing house, the 1900's dwelling house, the main dwelling house with its westernmost entrance.

Photo: Hans Lindqvist. 2012. *Bommars 02*. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bommars_02.JPG [2015.05.08]. CC BY-SA 3.0. Minor editing by author.

The many activities that took place on the farm created a need for many different buildings. These buildings are all made in wood, which was accessible from the forest land that the farmers owned. Building in stone or bricks would have been much more costly, in both money and effort. To manage a large estate meant that having a forge was a necessity, or at least a great convenience, but the building material on the farm forced the owners to place the forge in a safe distance, thus creating a movement pattern from the main house to the forge.

The farm's three most impressive buildings are placed well visible from rest of the hamlet down slope, and from the village road, while the necessary storing units were placed within view behind the main dwelling house. The dwelling houses have several fireplaces, and it's probable that the family had to walk to the woodshed often during the winters to get firewood. It is however likely that the family would have lived in only a small part of the main house, as discussed below, and therefore only have used one fireplace during their everyday life. The other fires would have been lit when guests visited or feasts were held.

When taking into account that the new, large barn in front of the house was not built until 1887 it is evident that the dwelling houses were facing part of the farm's land, while the outhouses and buildings connected to labor were all placed behind the front farm yard. The baking stove and equipment was an exception, since they were housed in the brewing house. This layout divided the farm into two areas: the front that was used by the owners as a living area, and the area behind the house that was connected to labor with its barn, forge, granary and woodshed. That being said, it is of course very likely that the dwelling houses were used for different kinds of labors that were connected to running a household, or other tasks that didn't need a stationary facility.

Fiebranz argues in her dissertation about gender systems and household strategies in Bjuråker in northern Hälsingland that historical sources indicate that the men were the official representative for the farmers' households in Hälsingland in the time 1750-1850, while the women were symbolically, and most times in reality tied to the home (Fiebranz 2002, p. 138ff, 152f). The men were responsible for the heavy works, such as building and repairing buildings, roads and ditches, hauling and transporting crops and hay (Fiebranz 2002, p. 139, 142). The woman's role was to tend to the food production, cleaning (including the dwelling house, outbuildings and fields), textile production and caring for the animals (as a part of both food and textile production (Fiebranz 2002, 138, 143ff). This division of labor and space is already mentioned in medieval sources, and Lagerstedt finds that the farm at Björka seems to use different buildings for different activities and labors. She suggests that this system upholds the division between different groups of people (Lagerstedt 2004, p. 100, 158). It seems this system is still in use in Letsbo No 2, where different tasks required different buildings.

The only animal at the farm that was a manly responsibility was the horse. Horses were needed for all the heavy works, such as transporting goods, plowing, etc. The horse was also needed for travelling, which was mainly a manly responsibility since he was the representative of the household. The horses were often prioritized over the other animals when it came to food, because it symbolized its master and his household. A strong and

healthy horse symbolized a strong and well-functioning man and household (Fiebranz 2002, p.139).

According to Fiebranz it was not uncommon that household work crossed the gender boundaries, but in these cases it was always the women who *helped* the men with their responsibilities. Women had a lower standing than men in the household, because the men were ultimately responsible for it. This meant that women could be called upon to help with the heavier work when the men needed an extra hand, but the historical records do not show any indications that the men stepped over the gender boundaries' and helped with the traditionally female work tasks (Fiebranz 2002, p. 135f).

Fiebranz's analysis of the work division in the household gives an indication on how the individuals of different gender moved in Letsbo No 2, even if local traditions, and different solutions for the individual farms could have varied from the ideal. The women would have been tied to the both dwelling houses at Letsbo No 2. There they would have worked with spinning, a never ending task that was done all year around. The brewing house also housed the cooking and brewing facilities, both of which were female jobs. The housewife was also responsible for keeping the fires in the house alive, and fetching firewood from the woodshed, although the man was responsible for keeping the woodshed filled (Fiebranz 2002, p.145f). Her responsibility for the livestock meant that she did much work of the work in the barn, such as feeding, milking and shearing the animals, and cleaning the building. Letsbo No 2 had only one barn at the time of Gölin's and Sven's ownership, and the horses were likely to have been kept here too. This meant that both men and women worked in the barn. The forge on the other hand was a work space for the man, and he would also spend time in the woodshed cutting firewood.

The tasks that both men and women shared were often regarding the harvest. The man was cutting the hay or crop, while the woman picked it up. She could also *help* with cutting the harvest, but Fiebranz finds it unlikely that the man in these cases would do the traditional female task of walking behind and picking up the crop (Fiebranz 2002, p. 137).

This division of labor shows that the woman of Letsbo No 2 would have been tied closer to the home than the man. She would mostly have moved between the barn and the dwelling houses, but also help out with some of his tasks in the fields. She was also responsible for keeping all the spaces of the farm clean. The man on the other hand was less bound to one place. He had the representative role in the household, and was more mobile since he was the person using the farm's horses for work and travelling. He hunted, cut wood, repaired the house, work tools and carriages, and he worked the fields. This shows that the division of labor, and the separation of the genders' work in different buildings is based on older ideas that were already in use during medieval times. Lagerstedt found that the finds tied to female work were found in the main dwelling house and the summer house at the farm in Björka, but also in the farm's 'craft house', where both men and women worked (Lagerstedt 2004, p. 144ff). Letsbo No 2 did not have a designated house for various crafting, but instead the barn seems to have been a work place for both the genders (Lagerstedt 2004, p. 144ff).



Figure 6: The main dwelling house at Letsbo No 2, viewed from southeast.

Photo: Hans Lindqvist. 2012. *Bommars 01*. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bommars_01.JPG [2015.05.08]. CC BY-SA 3.0. Minor editing by author.

Plan of the main house

The main house was built in 1848 (Fig. 6), the same year as Gölin's daughter Karin Svensdotter was married to the farmer Pehr Olofsson (Ljusdal EI:3, Image 21). One theory is that Letsbo No 2 was rebuilt in such grand order because Gölin and Sven intended their daughter to move there with her future family (Berg et al 2003, p. 50, Göllas et al 2012, p. 139). Karin did never move to Letsbo, but to the neighboring village Hedsta with her husband Pehr (Berg et al 2003, p. 50, Göllas et al 2012, p. 130). It is hard to imagine that Karin and Pehr did not share their moving plans with her parents, especially if they were rebuilding the Letsbo farm for them. Therefore it is difficult to accept that this house was built for Karin and Pehr to live in, especially since it stayed in Gölin's and Sven's ownership until Gölin's death in 1874. Gölin and Sven also had a son, Jonas Svensson, but he moved to Letsberg in Ljusdal parish to the family of his wife after they married in 1861 (Ljusdal AI:11, p. 451, Ljusdal AI:17, p. 4), and there is no record of them moving to Letsbo after Gölin's death.

A more likely theory is presented by Göllas et al, who suggests that the farm was meant to house the wedding feast for Karin and her husband. There are however no records of this being the case, and is hard to prove. It would explain that it was built the same year as their

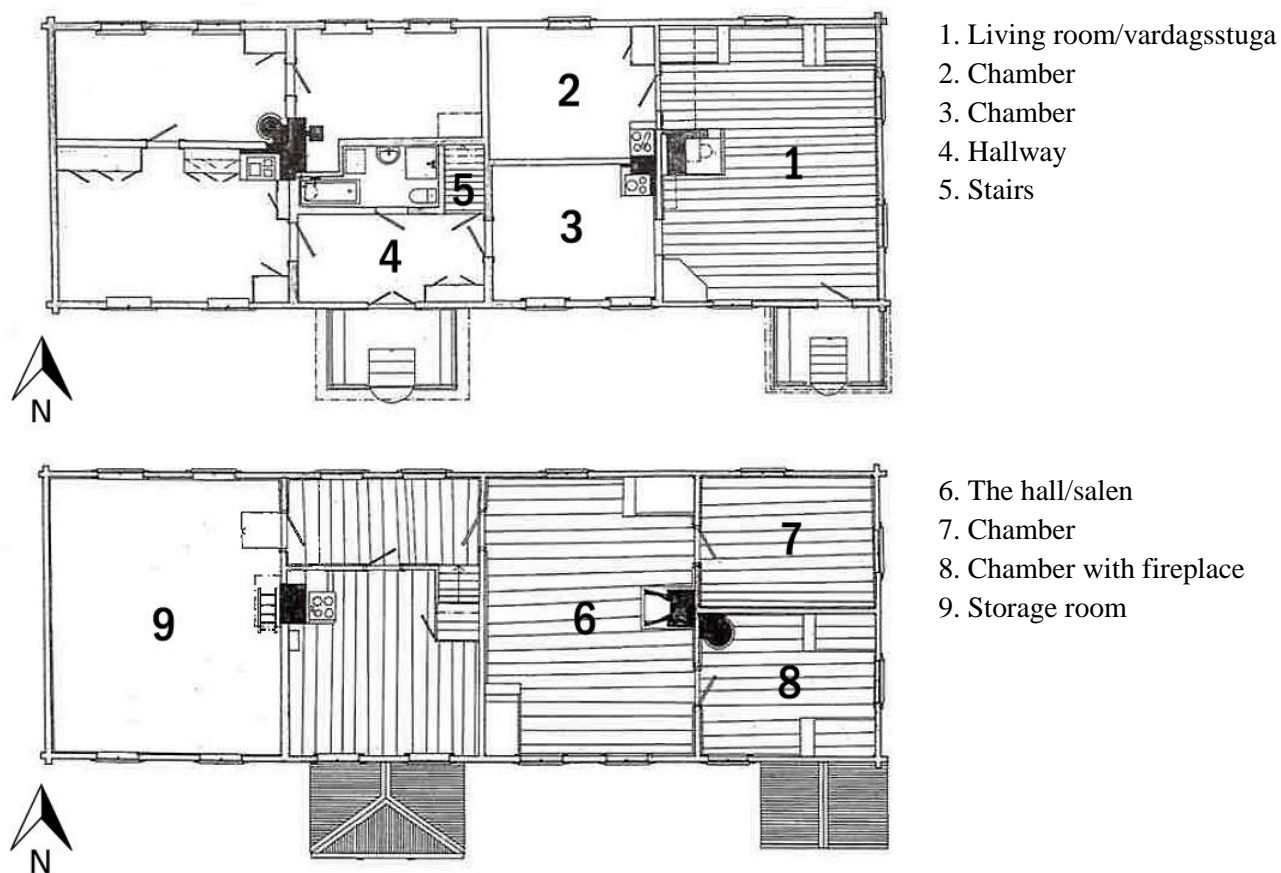


Figure 7: Plans of ground, and second floor of the main house.

Berg et al, 2003, p. 53. Illustrator unknown. Published with permission from Svensk Byggtjänst AB. Minor editing by author.

wedding, and in such an impressive design. It was not unusual for wedding feasts among the wealthy farmers of Hälsingland to last for several days, and the house would have to entertain many guests (Fiebranz 2003, p.104). As seen in Gölin's estate inventory she and her husband had the capacity to do this in their home in Sörkämsta, but perhaps a wedding feast in a newly built house would have been more impressive, and a good way to celebrate both Karin's wedding and the new house.

There are two entrance ways into the house on the first floor, one in the west and one in the east (Fig. 7). The western part of the first floor has been modernized, and it is hard to say how it was originally intended to be used. The eastern entrance leads in to a large room with two beds fastened to the northern wall, and a big fireplace on the western wall (Fig. 7, room 1. Fig 8). In the eastern wall panel there is a cut for a grandfather clock, which has been removed and disappeared in the 20th century. This room is known as the living room (*vardagsstugan*), and Berg et al believes it might have been meant for the owners to live in. The walls of the room are embellished with stenciled decorations. Two doors lead from the living room. One leads into a chamber in the north part of the house (2), and the other door leads to another chamber (3), which one can move through to the hallway (4). The later door was closed with a wood panel at a later date (Berg et al 2003, p. 58). Under the living room there is a vaulted

stone cellar with an exit towards south (Berg et al 2003, p. 52f). According to Gustafson & Lundell basements of this particular type are of older tradition than the detached underground cellars that became popular in the end of the 18th century (Gustafson & Lundell 2008, p 74). This could indicate that the previous dwelling house that burnt down in the 1840's was positioned at the same place as the 1848 house.

The second floor's rooms of Bommars are the ones that are best preserved from the time they were decorated. The second floor also seems to be the most richly decorated floor of the two in the house (Berg et al 2002, p.54). *Salen* (The Hall) is a big room with wallpapers designed as a copy of a wallpaper found at Ekebyhov Castle in Ekerö, Sweden, but the color scheme is brighter at Letsbo (Fig. 7, room 6. Fig. 9). The walls are also decorated with stencils, and there is a large fireplace on the eastern wall (Berg et al 2002, p. 54). Riksantikvarieämbetet highlights this room as a well preserved example of how wealthy farmers in Hälsingland mixed the peasantry's esthetic culture with that of the aristocracy (RAÄ Letsbo 2:10 - husnr 1). This room was likely meant as the feast hall, and in direct connection to it are two chambers with decorated walls, one of which has its own fireplace (room 7 and 8).

The westernmost room on the second floor is unfurnished, and the walls are covered with newspaper pages and parliament protocols from the years 1840-1851 (9). Berg et al calls this the dressing room (*klädskammare*), but no argument as to why this would have been used as a storing room for clothes specifically is presented. It does seem likely that it was used for storing of some kind since it lacks a fireplace and it is not adorned with the same kind of decorations as the rest of the house, although some stenciling has been done on the papered walls. There is also a ladder leading from this room to the attic, which also could have been used for storing.

It is very likely that the family lived, or was planned to live in the first floor's eastern room, the *vardagsstuga*, with its big fireplace and close proximity to the stone cellar that was used for storing fresh food. This would also have given the family easy access to the farm yard as the front door leads directly outside. At the same time the other doors inside the room would give them access to the rest of the house. The tradition of only inhabiting a small part of the house was a common practice in the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland (Nordin 2002, p. 140ff).

The stairs that lead to the second floor are situated in the building's hallway inside the western front door (5). This would enable guests who entered the house to easily find the way up to the great hall that was likely built for the purpose of holding feasts. This means that the house is divided between a private part, where the owners lived, and a social part, where they entertained their guests. If Karin's and Pehr's wedding feast was held in Letsbo No 2, this is most probably the room that was used, with its adjacent chambers for overnight guests.

On the second floor there is also a lot of storing space in the western chamber, with its ladder to the attic. If the room was indeed used for storing clothing, as suggested by Berg et al, then a considerable amount of space in the house was put aside for this purpose. As seen in the Gölin's estate inventory her estate contained a large amount of clothes, and maybe a large chamber was needed for seasonal wear, but I find it likely that other linen and household

items were stored here as well. It is situated far from the private part of the house, and it is probably not a room that would have had to be visited daily, as it seems more convenient to keep the things you need for the close future in the living room or one of its adjacent chambers.

Since the western part of the lower floor is modernized it is hard to know how exactly it may have been used during Gölin's lifetime. One alternative is that the first floor was divided into two private areas, where the owners' lived in one end, and the older generation of the family in the other. It was common for farmers in Hälsingland to house several generations of the family in their home (Nordin 2002, 140ff).



Figure 8: The living room (vardagsstugan) in the main house at Letsbo No 2, showing the fireplace and the beds.

Photo: Catasa. 2012. *Bommars kök 1*. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bommars_k%C3%B6k_1.JPG [2015.05.08]. CC BY-SA 3.0.



Figure 9: The hall (salen) in the main house at Letsbo No 2.

Photo: Jakob Dahlström.

Discussion

How did the buildings shape the everyday life of their inhabitants?

The everyday life of Letsbo was likely to have been very busy all year round. The household had many different tasks to attend to due to their varied productions and sources of income. The land was not fertile enough for large scale agriculture, which meant that the farmers had to choose more diversified ways of using the land to survive. The 1640's cadastral map states that the forest surrounding the hamlet was well suited for grazing, which enabled the farmers to keep livestock. The animals provided the owners of Letsbo No 2 with food (milk and meat), and also skin and wool for clothes and other items that were necessary at the farm and, surplus of which could be sold. The forest landscape thus created an economic and physical dependence on livestock for the farmers. The animals did however also need food during the winter, which meant that the farmers needed to harvest hay during the summer and store for the winter months, as they also did with grains for their own consumption. This job, as well as the work of plowing, sowing, fertilizing and harvesting the crops that the farm produced demanded a need for horses. It also got the farmers caught up with the changing seasons, binding them to the rhythms of the land around them. Their possessions all needed to be taken care of in a proper order. They must harvest the flax before they clapped it, which in its turn must precede the weaving of the fabric. As observed by Hodder, "Things are organized into sequences and humans get drawn into these chains, waiting for one thing to happen before another step can be taken" (2012, p. 59). The dependency on the land and production did not only decide certain activities for the farmers in Letsbo, it also decided *when* they had to engage in these activities.

One can see in this use and demands of landscape a series of entangled relationship between people, physical surroundings, material objects and animals. Economic and life-style decisions made by the several generations that chose Letsbo as their home created a chain of consequences and dependencies on material and immaterial elements in order for the family to survive. The same can be said about livestock and tools, for example. Their existence, well-being and usability involved dependencies on human and other intervention. Here we can see "that things depend on humans and humans get drawn into greater labor and into a variety of responses in order to keep things as they are wanted" (Hodder 2012, p. 72). These co-dependencies illustrate well the symmetries on complexities between people and other material and immaterial elements of the world.

The animals and the crops created a need for outbuildings, which meant that the farmers had more spaces to take care of. The spaces needed to be kept clean and organized, and the buildings demanded that farmers took care of them and repaired them. Because of the accessibility of wood as building material the farmers built wooden houses, and therefore had to be extra careful of fire hazards. This influenced the placement of the outbuildings, as the valuable granary and barn had to stand on a safe distance from the forge and the dwelling houses with their fireplaces. At the same time their dependency on their stored food and other possessions made it important for them to be able to watch them from thieving animals or humans (Gustafson & Lundell 2003, p. 61f).

The dependency on livestock made it necessary for the farmers to move from their main house to their outland buildings, *bodvallar*, during the summers. The animals were let loose in the forest for grazing, and moving during the summer season allowed for more pasture land, as well as more land for agriculture (Gustafson & Lundell 2008, p. 21f). This meant that the family had buildings at different places to mend and take care of including the many buildings at the main farm. This custom led to travelling between homes, and since women were responsible for the livestock it was they who spent their summers at the *fäbod* with the animals while the men stayed at the main farm or *bodland* to take care of the harvest and tasks needed to keep the farm running.

The farm's different kinds of production required many different buildings. The barn was needed to house the animals, their food and their dung that was valuable for fertilizing the fields. The work in the barn also required many different tools, all which had to be produced from wood, metal, leather, etc. The fields produced hay, crops and flax, which then had to be processed. The flax could be turned into fabric, but it required several different steps, such as clapping and weaving; to be accomplished these processes needed sets of tools and space. All the different tools in their turn needed to be mended, stored and sometimes cleaned, which created even more dependencies. Gustafson et al states that only for brewing beer more than 20 different buildings or designated spaces were needed for the entire production chain from sowing of the grain to the storing of the beer (Gustafson et al, 2008, p. 33). At Letsbo the barn, granary, brewing house and stone cellar would have been part of the brewing chain, as well as the hamlet's mill. This is a good example of how things depend on other things and form a long chain of relationships. Of course this chain also involved the farm's animals for fertilizing the fields and pulling the plow. The use of horses created the need for horseshoes and nails, which made it convenient for the farmers to have their own forge.

These chains of production all required human labor, and engaged more people than the owners themselves. Letsbo had several farmhands hired, although not in any large numbers at the same time. When Hans Jonsson owned the farm both his family and his son's family lived at the farm. The farm needed many hands to keep it running, and living more than one generation in the same household eased the labor, and enabled the farmer to be more productive. Housing more individuals at the same farm did however demand more space, which meant that bigger, or more dwelling houses were needed. There seems to have been an increased need of farmhands between the years 1819 - 1826, which might suggest that the farm had become harder to manage by the family alone. Apart from the family and their farmhands the farmers would have needed to hire expert help with more advanced forging and carpentry for example (Gustafson & Lundell 2008, p. 82). Trading the goods that the farm produced supplied the family with money, which required travelling and contacts outside the village. The farmers thus depended of many persons outside the household to manage their material possessions. The market journeys also meant that the man of the household was absent for periods of time (Fiebranz 2003, p. 111). The work tasks were clearly divided between men and women, which meant that some work could not be done when he was gone. The increased production, and the farmers increased absence from the farm could together create the need for farmhands. Of course the same argument can be made

for women: increased production meant more food to preserve, more flax and wool to make into fabrics, and more job at the fields. When the family had a child it was also the woman's responsibility to take care of it, and thus hindering her from some of her tasks outside the dwelling house. In such a case a maid could be hired to help with the female jobs at the farm.

The farmyard was divided into two parts. The dwelling houses faced the sloping fields towards the hamlet, and were visible from down the road, while the outbuildings were placed in more secluded positions behind the house. This indicates that the farm's dwelling houses had a representative purpose. They were supposed to represent the farm's prosperity, not only to the guests who were entertained in the grand rooms, but to strangers as well. The outbuildings could also have been visible from the road, and thus shown the farm's success and wealth, but they were not put in the front line of sight, suggesting that the dwelling houses had the main role in representing the farmers' economy.

The different tasks were also divided between different buildings, which meant that movement across the farmyard was needed to get from one chore to another, and that the people working on the farm would work in separate areas if they did not share the same task. The different productions on the farm demanded different buildings, as mentioned above, which in its turn forced the inhabitants to move and work in different parts of the farm. The women were often working in the dwelling house, the brewing house and the barn, but also travelled to the *fäbod* during the summer. The *fäbod* and the livestock kept there were most often managed by maids (Fiebranz 2002, p. 138, 143ff, 152f). The men, on the other hand were not tied to the dwelling house, but were responsible for fishing, hunting, cutting wood, trading, working the fields, building and repairing (Fierbranz 2002, p. 139, 142). This divided the inhabitants of the farm into two different work spheres, where the women were responsible for the home, and the men for the work outside.

The farm was also divided into separate areas of different function. The house had a private part and a part dedicated for guests and festivities. This means that a large portion of the main dwelling house would have stood unused during the farmers' everyday life, and the owners would have constricted themselves to a small portion of their grand home (Nordin 2002, p. 140ff) This was probably because they did not need a larger space for their own living, and to heat and use a bigger part of the house would mean more work and expenses. The grander rooms were needed to house and entertain guests, as well as making a social statement (Olsson 2002, p. 29f). It expressed a pride in the wealth that the farmers had gathered through hard work, and was used to separate themselves from the people of lower social status. But there was probably also a social and in a way economic need for these rooms: the farmers in Hälsingland were known for strong family bonds, which could have been important to sustain in order to accomplish big projects at the farm. Building for example would demand many hands, and having a network of relatives would help the farmers to find laborers. To keep the family close festivities were held, often for large parties, and thus created a need for big rooms. These rooms would also need furnishings. In the grand hall upstairs, for example, a bed is fastened to the wall. This would have required linen, and probably of higher quality since it was part of the room that was used as a representative area for the household's social and economic success. But it is also probable that the family used their finest furnishings here

because they took pride in keeping a beautiful home, just as many do today. To use the home's most beautiful rooms for the guests must also have been a way of showing respect and appreciation, not only a way of bragging. This custom created a need for luxury products, and the farmers had to buy or produce finer materials and crafts to parade in the feast hall and its connected chambers.

In conclusion the land use and productions of the farm created a need for many buildings, and the many and large houses created more work for the farmers. They had to be taken care of in form of reparations, cleaning, painting, and in some cases heating. The use of several buildings also created a division between the different work spheres of men and women. The placement of the buildings created a distance between the dwelling houses, where women mostly worked, and its outbuildings which were mainly the man's domain. The barn and fields were exceptions. The barn housed both the livestock and the horses. The men cared for their horses and the items used with or for the horse, while the women were responsible for the livestock. Both men and women would have worked at the fields during the harvest when all hands were needed.

The dependency of seasonal grazing for the livestock meant that the farmers had to move with their livestock during the summer. This created a rhythmic movement pattern in the landscape, and the farmers had to travel between homes to work at several locations. This, in combination with the farmers' trading and family ties that lead to visits and celebrations indicates that they did not live isolated lives at their farms and were used to traveling.

As seen in Letsbo there is a network of dependencies on things and other humans to keep the possessions and daily life on the farm in the order that the owners wanted them to be. This network is not only shaped by the practical necessities of running the farm, but also by social and symbolic meanings and ideas (Hodder 2012, p. 97). The division of work between men and women, and the socio-cultural want and expectation on the family to express their wealth were both abstract ideas that were part of the entanglement between humans in things at Letsbo (cf. Hodder 2012, p. 123). Socio-cultural ideas also played a role in the entanglements at Letsbo No 2, for example in deciding how a functioning farm should be built. The many outbuildings divided the labor in different areas of the farm, thus dictating the movement of the inhabitants, which influenced the social relationships at the farm. There is also the idea that a home needs to be representative of its owner, as well as practical. These abstractions created a series of entangled relationships between people, material objects and natural resources.

The farm was depending on the owners, and the owners depended on the farm, and they were caught in an entrapment. "Entrapment is not produced by things, tools and environments in themselves but by all the forms of dependence" between things and humans (Hodder 2012, p. 98). When the farm burnt down in the 1840's, an unexpected need for rebuilding arose out of humans' need for keeping things ordered. The reconstruction of the farm in the 1840's also mobilized new relations and dependencies, as it needed materials, labors, tools and specialized carpenter skills. This had consequences in the internal ordering of the

relationships between the inhabitants of the farm as the layout divided the farm into different spheres of work and function.

Is it possible to trace a change of the farmers' social roles from the changes in buildings between the 18th century and the 19th century?

There is a clear difference in quality and quantity of material possessions between the first two generations at Letsbo No 2 and Gölin Jonsdotter who owned the farm with her husband the district judge Sven Johansson. Hans Jonsson's and Jon Hansson's estate inventories speak of two generations of farmers with good economy, based on a varied use of land, although they were in no way exceedingly wealthy. Gölin's estate inventory on the other hand speaks of a large estate that engaged in conspicuous consumption and could afford entertaining many guests. Her estate consisted of two farms and investments in other properties. How Gölin and Sven met is unknown, but I find it likely that the facts that Letsbo was a large estate and she was the only heir helped her secure the marriage with Sven, who was of higher social status being a jury man. This means that the material possessions of her family enabled her to acquire a new social role as the wife of a jury man, who later became the district judge.

Hodder observes that "Dominance, power and social difference all depend on things and access to things" (Hodder 2012, p. 26). Sven's material possession would have helped his career. His respectable position as a jury man secured his marriage to Gölin who brought him even more land and wealth, and his position in society brought them more respect, power and capital.

Gölin's marriage gave her a more public role than that of a farmer's wife, and Sven's household would have had to be suited to entertain guests. This may be the reason to why they chose to live in Sörkämsta, which was bigger community than Letsbo. The social requirements that sprung from their position can be seen in the long list of items that were related to entertaining, such as silverware, tea tables and tea equipment, sofas and long tables. Of course these objects created new networks of entanglement. Some of the furniture could possibly have been created within the household, if someone in the family or staff was skilled in carpentry, but the silverware and plates would have been bought. The silverware must also be washed and clean, and stored in a safe space. Protection of valuables would have created a pattern where some people were restricted from an area, while others had to go there to mend the things.

Hodder states that "Various forms of ownership of things may lead to rights and obligations towards each other" (Hodder 2012, p. 104), and this is evident in the long list of receivables in Gölin's estate inventory. This suggests that she and Sven helped many local business men financially, such as tradesmen, painters, carpenters and shoemakers, but also individuals such as peasants and soldiers. Their material wealth and position in the society obligated them to be a pillar of the community, and their roles were not only to look well and entertain, but also to lend economic support. As pointed out by Hodder "As a thing is given away, the giver may gain a sense of self and may gain social esteem by the generosity" (Hodder 2012, p. 22). Of course lending money is not quite the same as giving it away, but the act was no doubt appreciated by the receiver none the less. The borrower may have gained prestige too from

the alliance with the district judge (cf. Hodder 2012, p. 22). There is also the possibility that if Sven had not lent money to the craftsmen and business owners, there was a risk that his own network of trade would have shrunk, which would have given a negative effect on his estate.

The owners of Letsbo No 2 had always had large quantities of clothes, which was common for the farmers in the 19th century (Ulväng 2012, p. 76, 90). This suggests that showing belonging to the society they lived in, and showing their wealth and social status were important ideas. Some of their clothing items listed in the estate inventories of Letsbo was of high value. The most prominent example is the dog skin fur that was inherited by Sven or Gölin from Jon Hansson, and was the most highly valued clothing items on both their estate inventories. The estate inventories indicate that clothes and personal appearance was of important through all their lives, since they were not handed down before the time of the owner's death. Clothes can have two purposes: practical and representational, both of which seem to have been of importance for the owners of Letsbo. The social status was not expressed solely through their buildings, but also through what was worn outside the home in public. Clothes were considered personal belongings, and not part of the household's shared possessions (Ulväng 2012, p. 39). This could of course be because clothes, compared to real estate and livestock, did not demand hard physical labor to stay in working condition. An old man would prefer to live out his days under his daughter's roof while she and her husband tended his old land, while his clothes were not needed to manage the farm and did not demand much work of the owner. But clothes could also have been personal items because they were so closely tied to the person owning them. "Familiar things are absorbed into our sense of identity; they become recognized and owned" (Hodder 2012, p. 38).

The farmers in Letsbo have had a need of showing their social status. Jonsson and Hansson were successful farmers, but not exceedingly wealthy. Their estate inventories still indicate that socio-cultural traditions demanded to show their social status via clothes. Gölin's marriage to a jury man gave her a new social role apart from that of a farmer's wife, and she needed to present herself accordingly. Sven's connections and status also meant that they needed to be able to entertain guests, and this is evident in Gölin's estate inventory. Their wealth and social roles also demanded that they took an active part in the affairs of other individuals, as the lending of money was a contract that granted social esteem on both side. Their relationships shaped new privileges and gave them power, but also forced them into new obligations, both social and towards the things they needed to uphold their roles (cf. Hodder 2012, p. 26).

Why was Letsbo No 2 built on such a large scale?

Gölin and Sven rebuilt Letsbo No 2 after a fire had destroyed the farm in the 1840's. The large land of the estate needed outbuildings to manage the farm, and the farmers needed somewhere to live and conduct household related tasks. The long links of entanglements that were necessary to conduct a functioning farm demanded them to build many different outhouses. Not to rebuild the farm would have meant that the land would have stood useless, and considering how much it was worth compared to their farm in Sörkämsta this would have been a hard blow to their economy. The land could not produce crops and other supplies unless someone took care of it, and Sven and Gölin needed it to uphold their lifestyle and

social obligations. This is an entrapment that forced them to rebuild the farm (cf. Hodder 2012, p. 98). As stated above it was not only the family that depended on their economical means, but also the society around them. The social role and wealth of the family did perhaps not only enable them to build on a large scale in Letsbo; their position in the local community demanded that they follow cultural practices that required building and living in a certain way. This would correspond with Hodder's observation that "The ideas and symbols may be entangled in themselves, and they may themselves influence the way the practical entanglements take shape" (Hodder 2012, p. 119). Thus Sven's and Gölin's entanglements with people and things were shaped with abstract ideas of how they should behave, and how they organized the material world around them.

As seen from the plans of the farm yard and the dwelling house the farm had two clear separate purposes, just like the clothes they owned: representational and practical. Previous researchers have concluded that the farm stood empty between 1832 and 1887, the year when Gölin's grandson moved there, while I find this hypothesis unlikely since the farm obviously produced crops and had a functioning forge according to Gölin's estate inventory. This would not have been possible without investment of labor in the land. Furthermore, if the land stood unused for 55 years it would have had negative consequences on its usability: "Things cannot reproduce and therefore cannot exist without humans. Of course, a house that has fallen down still exists. And domesticated species can revert or go feral if untended. So it is more that things cannot exist for humans, in the ways that humans want, without human intervention" (Hodder 2012, p. 69). This decay is something I don't imagine any farmer would allow for such a large piece of land. It is possible that the farm was used from a distance, meaning that the farmer or the farmhands travelled there over the days to work, but spent their nights at the farm in Sörkämsta. The state inventory does however also list personal items at Letsbo No 2, which suggests that the main house at some points also was used for dwelling. It is more likely that the farm in Letsbo was used as a seasonal home, like the farm's outlands, but maybe in short periods only.

The house was rebuilt in 1848, and it's possible that the wedding of Karin Svensdotter was an event that influenced the decision to restore the house and use it as a stage for the wedding feast. The newly built house with its lavish decorations would have made an impressive place to entertain the guests. The grand hall's wallpapers, inspired by aristocratic homes, mixed with the traditional stencil art of peasants' culture in Hälsingland would have been representative of the both spheres that the family was part of: farmers with a wide network in trade, and the higher social classes. One must also remember that more farmers built large dwelling houses at this time in Hälsingland, which meant it was an idea that was adapted in society they lived in. Letsbo No 2's layout and design can be seen as the result of being "caught up in the attempt to make links across domains, to create intellectual coherence, to seek metaphor and unity of idea" (Hodder 2012, p. 121). The grand house was fitting into their entanglements of ideas, things and other people.

The newly built farm would have shown the wealth and resources that Sven and Gölin possessed, and put their mark on the small village of Letsbo. Their social roles created the need to demonstrate their material resources, probably both to separate themselves from the

peasants and farmers of lower social status, and to send a reassuring message that they had the means to continue to fulfill the obligations as official persons in the local society, and large scale farmers.

Letsbo No 2 was rebuilt because it was a necessary part of the household economy. The many houses were needed for the farm's different productions, and the entanglements they created. Gölin's and Sven's status in society as well as their wealth demanded them to demonstrate their power and position, as it was expected of them. This led them to build a farm that was both functional as well as representative for their social roles, with a grand dwelling house that could be used for entertaining guests as well as housing the family.

Conclusion

Investigating the relationships between the farmers at Letsbo No 2 and their material possessions has shown that it was not only through a grand farm that their wealth and social status were expressed, which has been the focus in previous research. The socio-cultural ideas of the time also demanded that they took care about how they represented themselves with clothes outside the home. The big farms were also needed to run the large estate with many different kinds of land use and production, which also has been suggested in some previous research. The family's social role was dependent on their material possessions, and their material possessions were dependent on their social roles, thus creating a double bond, or an entrapment. This did not only affect the family itself, but the surrounding society that depended on their support and expected them to behave and look in a certain way. The farm represented the family's capacity to live up to their status and obligations, and served to separate themselves from the lower classes. But there was also a social need of a large house, as family bonds and social networks were important, and they needed space for entertaining guests.

Previous research of the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland has regarded the relationships between people and their houses and farms in a largely one-dimensional way. The people has been viewed as the only active agents; they were the ones who ordered the surrounding landscape, made decisions regarding buildings and economic activities depending on their means, skills and cultural norms. By applying Hodder's ideas of entanglement to my research I find that the relationships were far more complex. This perspective problematizes the relationships between humans, material and immaterial things and shows chains of mutual dependencies.

For further research I suggest more investigations of the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland with a focus on material objects' impact on human behavior is made. This would lead to a better understanding of the individual farms and their owners, as well as enable the possibility to make comparative studies between the different decorated farms. It would also be interesting to search for possible differences between the decorated farmhouses of Hälsingland and the less wealthy farms in the county.

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Maps

Lantmäteriet. Aktbeteckning V32 - 35: v2: 35 43 47, image 2. Ljusdal, Letsbo, 1640.

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