

PAGOISM



AN ARCHITECTURAL RESPONSE
TO A DECLINING VILLAGE
IN SOUTH LAPLAND



Pontus Wirf
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Louise Lövenstjerne
Supervisor

Lars-Henrik Ståhl
Examiner

Jury
Peter Siöström

Jury
Jenny B Osuldsen

Master thesis project
Sustainable Urban Design
School of Architecture
Faculty of Engineering
Lund University



LUND UNIVERSITY

PAGO Latin — eng. Village

A group of houses or associated buildings, larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town, situated in a rural area.

1 Abstract

Pagoism – An architectural response to a declining village in South Lapland is a master thesis project conducted at the school of architecture, Lund university. The project seeks to investigate how economical, cultural and local circumstances can shape urban design in a situation where people are leaving the village and where the municipality face severe financial difficulties. The site for this thesis project is Vilhelmina in north Sweden, a village who has a declining population since the 1960's. On the other hand, the village offers great qualities in terms of access to nature and outdoor activities, a dramatic landscape and quaint living environments. The thesis is an exploration of how to build upon and highlight these existing qualities and create new qualities that could attract new people.

With new global trends like globalization and digitalization, and with emerging problems like global heating, the ongoing decline in population could potentially be changed and the thesis aims to investigate a scenario where small interventions and a long-term strategy could generate new economies, activities or connections with the means of incremental urban design. Sensitive design is key why the project pays extra attention in mapping the local culture, landscape, climate, heritage of the Sámi and the life and living that goes on in Vilhelmina today.

The project and design part of this thesis suggests objectives, a strategy and nine separate interventions that can be implemented separately with different time horizons depending on the development of ongoing global trends and how early interventions affect the population and economy. The interventions are explored through drawings and visualisations to further examine how they spatially affect the existing spatial character of the village. Later interventions are more futuristic presuming a situation where a new housing need has emerged in the village of Vilhelmina while early interventions are more abstract and suggest more of a political will but still concerning the architecture of Vilhelmina.

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3 Background

Urbanization continues as a general trend but is more prominent in larger cities compared to small cities. Villages are not growing to the same extent and the regional infrastructure contributes to growth in well-connected small towns around the big cities with people living in the small-town and working in the big town. There has been a complete shift in the urban to rural ratio, from 10 % living in densely built up areas in (*tätort* in Swedish) in 1850 to 90 % around year 2000 (SCB 2021a). Even so, in 2019, 114 out of 290 Swedish municipalities had declining populations. Disconnected and spread-out regions, like in the north of Sweden, have more declining municipalities. Some municipalities in these regions face difficulties in public services, economy and urban qualities. The project seeks to investigate the problems, the spatial effect of these problems and to investigate some urban design-related solutions for the problems.

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research aims to investigate, through design, following questions:

What is happening to the urban structure in remote small-towns facing a declining population?

What global and regional tendencies are relevant for a remote and declining small-town?

What qualities can be enhanced and what sort of life does the small-town offer?

How can we as urban designers attack problems and regenerate in the urban form in this setting?

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

With the research questions, the project aims to find and collect research on ongoing global tendencies that affect the conditions for small towns. Mapping the local traditions, qualities and economy will help to understand the place specific problems and solutions related to the urban form. Knowing the conditions, the next step is to find one or more sites for further developing the urban qualities in response to the identified problems. Key question is to find and design new generators that will help the given conditions. The overall strategy with the design is to tackle local problems with local solutions and resources, not necessarily change the decline in population but to enhance the quality of life for people living here and potentially attract a few new households, competences or activities and enhance opportunities for sustainable living. The design need to be attentive to time, to investigate what interventions are possible in the near future or in 50 or 100 years time.

4 Prestudy

The prestudy will give a general understanding and point of departure for the casestudy and the investigating design. The prestudy touches upon some theoretical cornerstones of urban economy and the literature overview gives some examples of similar studies conducted in in recent time.

4.1 THEORETICAL SUMMARY

One of the urban theorists that gained significant attention in the early 21th century was Richard Florida (2002) and his writings on the creative class. In theory, Florida argues, there are four different classes of people based on your profession, two of them being the super creative core and the creative professionals. The super creative core consists of designers, artists, architects, actors, scientists, authors etc, while creative professionals are the entrepreneurs and professionals within the academic fields like medicine, law and tech. The other two classes are working class and service class that maintain the public and private services of the society.

Florida quantifies his theory, looking at three different factors of a creative city – tech, talent and tolerance. Tech is for example the number of high-tech businesses or patents, talent is level of education and tolerance concerns the diversity of people in the society. Furthermore, he speaks of the notion of amenities, a physical urban quality that attracts the creative class. This, often authentic environments, could be for example housing, restaurants, nature or infrastructure. So to attract the creative class one must first offer these amenities which will, in the end, lead to a new creative economy that can live by itself (Short 2014).

4.2 LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Åkerman (2020) highlights several initiatives to tackle a declining economy and diminishing societal functions in rural or small-town settings. Åkerman is concerned with the conditions for ongoing life in small villages in the south of Sweden with a focus on different initiatives in a bottom up-approach. What can be seen as a common denominator is the cultural theme for these initiatives together with a great amount of work pro bono. A series of interviews make up extensive material to understand that the people behind these initiatives are moving from big cities to search for greater peace, more affordable housing and a lifestyle associated with sustainability. The rural setting allows for all these things together with a DIY-mentality regarding societal services.

Björling & Fredriksson (2018) have a different approach investigating the relationship between urban and rural development in a regional perspective instead of looking at rural development specifically. They highlight the importance of such relationship which tend to be forgotten in modern planning and discussion. They conclude that a wholistic network perspective is needed for sustainable development of both urban and rural settings. Cities

alone or countryside alone can not handle the increasing pressure of resources, natural services and biodiversity but with smart and integrated regional planning we can utilize landuse towards a more sustainable future.

4.3 GLOBAL TRENDS

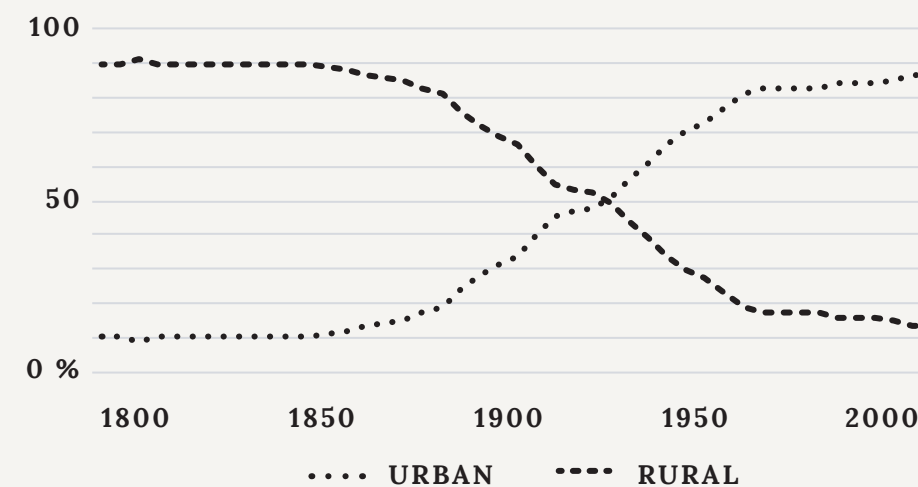
Global trends, by definition, will affect even the most remote societies, including small villages in South Lapland. For this project, a few global tendencies are relevant to highlight as they may affect the design phase:

A shift in economic motors

The main economic motors in society have been through a series of changes throughout the history of modern society: from agriculture to industrialism and now with post-industrialism being a knowledge-based economy. Starting off with the agricultural economy as, naturally, being very dependent on soil quality, the north of Sweden have been less successful in carrying out efficient farming. Instead, hunting, fishing, reindeer herding and living off the forest have been the main resource for food. With industrialism, forestry has been and still is a great part of the economy together with mining that have been carried out for some parts of Lapland. Now with post-industrialism, industries are competing on a global scale which makes it harder to justify the exploitation of the landscape. The economy becomes more based around knowledge and information technology which locates the economy in urban areas where higher education is offered.

Urbanization, globalization and digitalization

Since the industrial revolution, urbanization has been the general trend of where people are choosing to live. It has come to a point where there has been a complete shift in people living inside and outside a densely built up area – tätort (SCB 2021a).



People in Sweden living inside or outside a densely built up area, tätort (SCB 2021a).

This complete shift raises the question if this trend has reached a tipping point, that a new trend could be arising. With digitalization as a parallel trend, the place specificness of a working place becomes less relevant.

Digital nomadism has become a trend and the community Svenska nomader (2021), which are specializing in the area, are steadily growing. The community states that the new modern worklife is everywhere digitally and anywhere physically. With the corona pandemic, the urban living room is closing, boosting the ongoing trend. More and more reports on a new lifestyle arising where people leave the big city to combine work with a nature based lifestyle (DN 2020a, 2020b & 2021). Since 2018, there is a phenomenon called flykten från Stockholm (the Stockholm escape) sprung from the fact that more people are leaving Stockholm than moving in (SVT 2020). This could be seen as several examples that may speak of a new ruralisation instead of an ongoing urbanisation.

Regional development and planning.

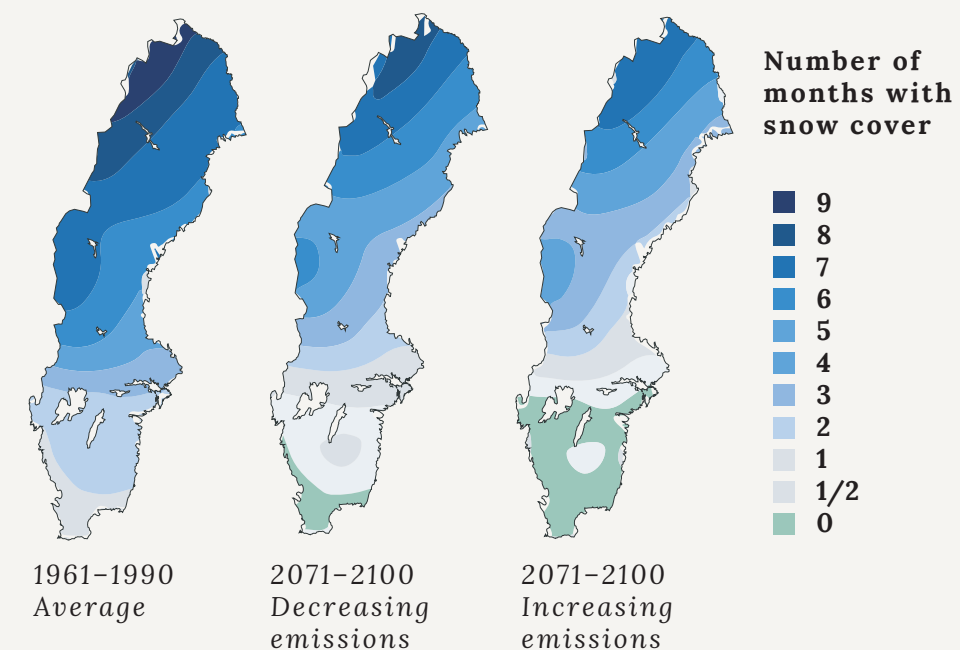
The regionalisation is an ongoing trend both nationally and on a european level (Björling & Fredriksson 2018). Regions have both a political power and are strongly connected to the labor market region. The labor market region only works when commuting is possible and spread out regions with little or weak regional infrastructure are less prone to work both as a geographical region and a labor market region. The relationship between urban and rural discussed by Björling & Fredriksson is not as applicable in the north of Sweden where commuting distances are more than what is viable with daily commuting. On the other hand, daily commuting might not be as necessary in the future combining this trend with digitalization and opportunity to work more on distance, discussed in the earlier bullets.

Global heating and climate changes

With climate changes, more pressure will be put on colder climates with both a short and long time perspective. In a short time perspective, people who desires to experience snowy winters and live with all related activities, like skiing, are forced to live more north than before. In the long term perspective people who do not wish to leave the hot climate might have no choice but to leave for the colder climate if the hot climate becomes too hot with ongoing global heating, so called climate refugees. With these changing parameters in mind one is safe to say that more pressure will be put on northern cities and villages, especially those located at higher altitudes in the longer time perspective.

Resources

Global heating and the political will towards a more sustainable housing industry also affects the landscape of South Lapland. More and more constructions are made with renewable resources like wood and timber which has been a significant industry for especially Vilhelmina, for a long period of time. The demand for such construction materials are increasing which will have beneficial impact on local economy in Vilhelmina since wood industry is the largest economy here. The shift, going back to renewable construction materials is seen on a both local and national level and could be beneficial for economy in the South Lapland area.



Prognosis for number of months with snow coverage (SMHI 2021).

CASESTUDY



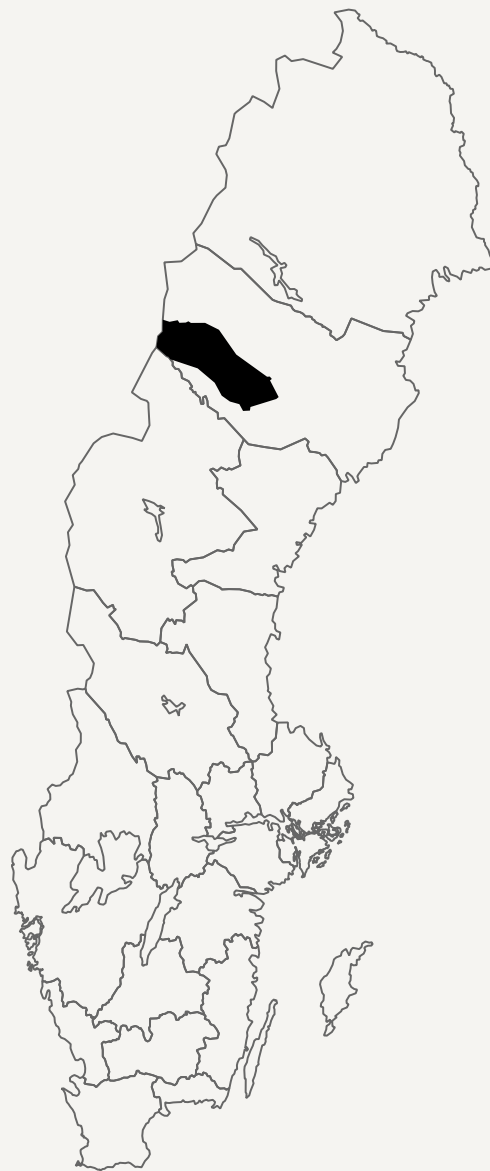
Picture of Storgatan looking north



5 Casestudy

5.1 SITE

The village of Vilhelmina is the central village in Vilhelmina municipality, located in the county of Lapland, region of Västerbotten, in the north of Sweden. About 3.500 people live in the village and about 6.700 live within the municipality. Vilhelmina is Sweden's 9th largest municipality by area and the 6th lowest in density of population (SCB 2021b)



Vilhelmina municipality
in Sweden. 1:10.000.000
(GET 2021)

	<u>VILHELMINA</u>	<u>UMEÅ</u>
POPULATION (MUNICIPALITY, 2019)	6.668	128.901
AVERAGE AGE (2019)	45,0	38,9
EMPLOYMENT % (2018)	80,6	78,4
MUNICIPAL TAX % (2021)	34,75	34,15
AVERAGE INCOME (2019, SEK/MO)	24.126	26.383
LIVING IN URBAN AREAS % (2018)	52,0	89,8
HOUSING PRICES (2019, 1k SEK)	634	3.502

Vilhelmina municipality in numbers, compared with regional capital Umeå. (SCB 2021b).

5.2 A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

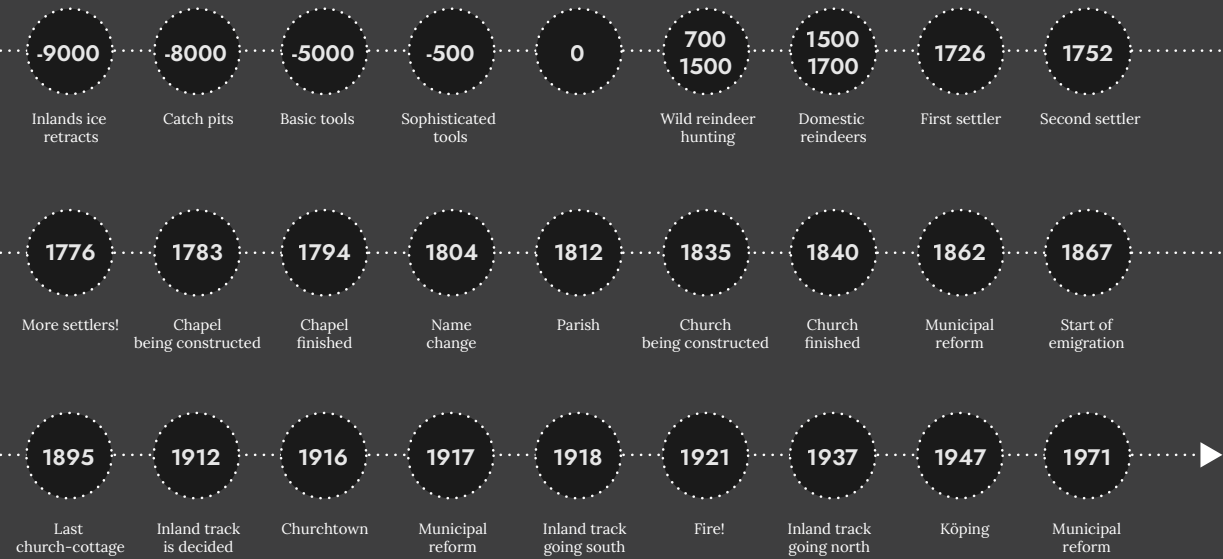
The region of Västerbotten is both a coastal region, a mountain region and everything inbetween stretching from Bottniska viken to Norway at the scandinavian mountainridge. It is a spread out region with very low density of population, especially in the uplands. Being very spread out affects the regional connections and commuting and travelling times from Vilhelmina to nearby villages and cities. The regional connections are not as strong compared with the south of Sweden. Going to Vilhelmina with public transport, i. e., is 1:03 from Åselse, 1:48 from Lycksele and 4:01 from Umeå. With private car it is 0:57, 1:54 and 3:01 from the same cities. South Lapland Airport has daily flights from Stockholm taking two hours and ten minutes but there is little to none regional traffic by train.

The Airport of course connects the region around Vilhelmina with Arlanda but what is missing is a more sustainable way of efficient regional transportation. Public transport with bus is established in the area but commuting times are still very long.

The spatial regional connections are also related to the regional economy. As shown in the table, what differs most between regional capital Umeå and Vilhelmina is the housing prices. In 2019 average single family house was sold for 634.000 SEK in Vilhelmina and 3.502.000 in Umeå. In a more built out regional context people looking for cheaper housing could work here and live there.



TIMELINE



5.3 A BRIEF HISTORY

The history of Vilhelmina begins as the inland ice retracts from Scandinavia almost 10.000 years ago. Ancient remains have been dated back to both stone, bronze and iron ages and speaks of people living off this land as hunters from 8000–500 b.c.e. Traces of wild and domestic reindeer herding dates back to 700–1500 c.e. with the Sámi people roaming the land around Volgsjö. The first settlers inhabited Volgsjö in the beginning of the 18th century (Vilhelmina museum 2021).

As the village grows, the need for a chapel is increasing. 1794, the chapel is established and soon after the name Volgsjö is changed to Vilhelmina after Queen Fredrika Vilhelmina Dorotea av Baden. During the 19th century, the church was constructed together with Kyrkstaden, a village within the village for long distance visitors of the church. In 1918 Vilhelmina was connected to the railway network, the inland track, that stretches from Östersund–Vilhelmina and in 1937 Vilhelmina–Gällivare was added that further helped the industrialization of Vilhelmina. Since 1971 the municipality of Vilhelmina is the same shape as we know it today (ibid).



Kyrkstaden, early 19th century (Vilhelmina museum 2021).
Photo: Vilhelmina museum

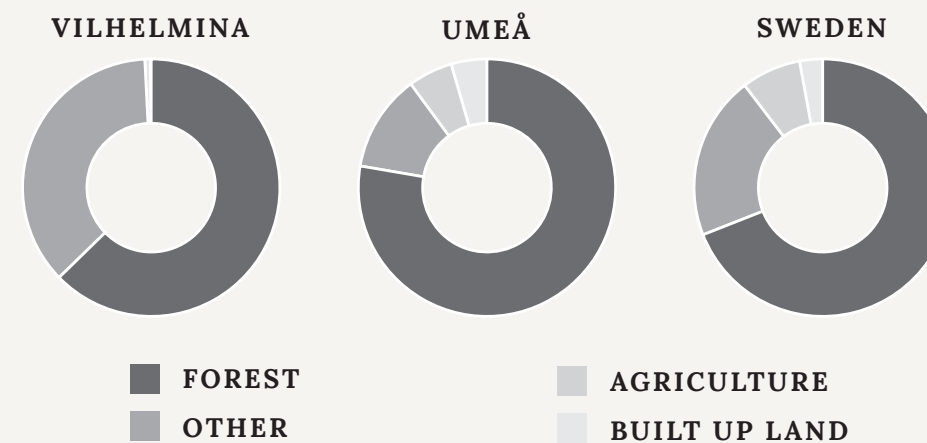


5.4 LANDSCAPE AND CLIMATE

The landscape within Vilhelmina municipality is mostly constituted of great lakes, majestic mountains and deep forest. The landscape have supported the Sámi population with resources for a long period of time and is still very important for the reindeer industry and the Sámi reindeer companies who move with the reindeer herds throughout the municipality around the year depending on season.

Ångermanälven, Ångerman river, is one of Swedens wildest watercourses with average flow of 500 m³/s and has is catchmentarea in greater parts of the South Lapland mountains. It is a national interest with many hydroelectric facilities along its course.

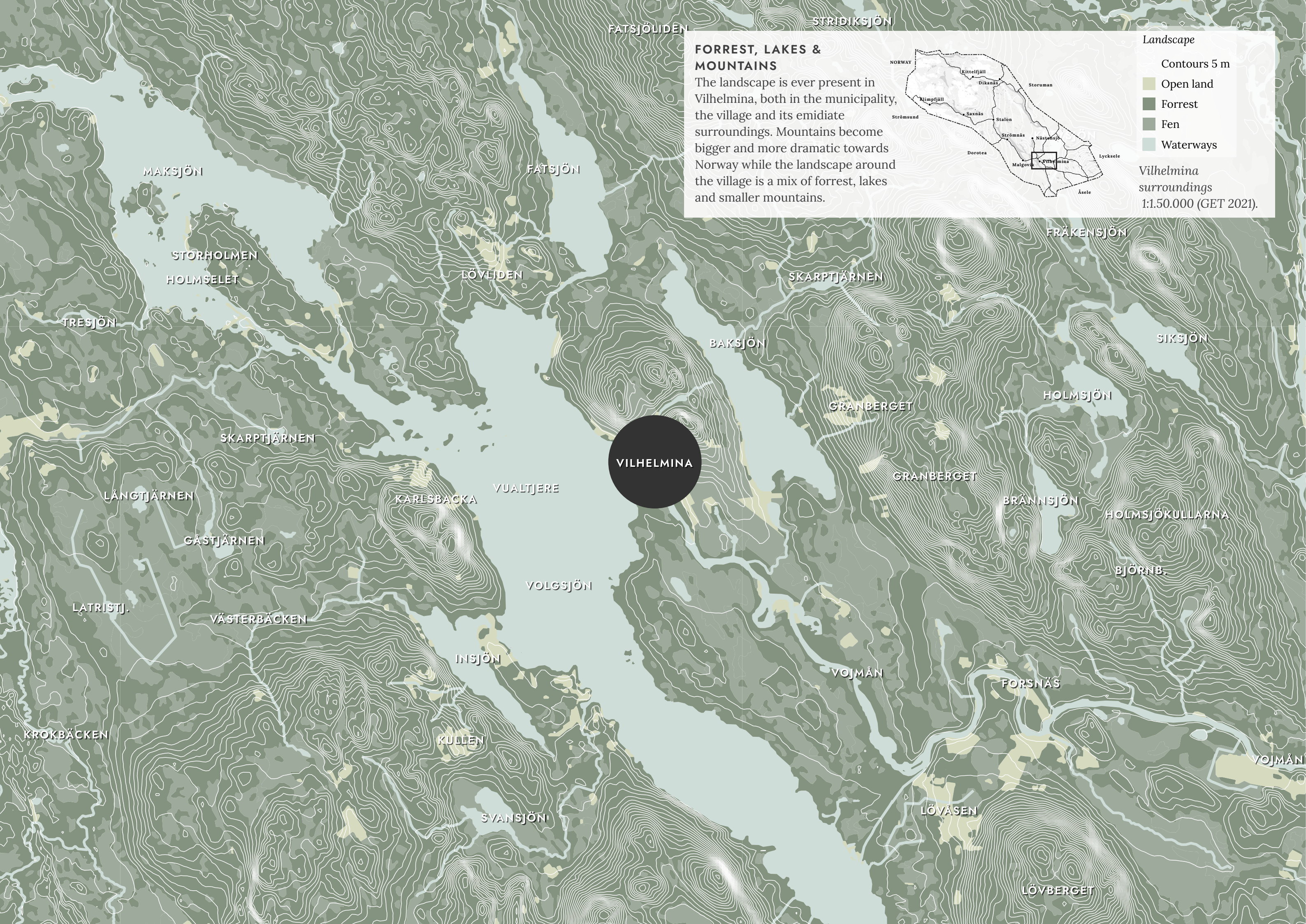
The climate in South Lapland is subarctic with tempered summers and the national gardening association classifies the cultivation possibilities as zone 7–8 out of 9 where zone 1 has the best opportunities for a rich variety of plants.



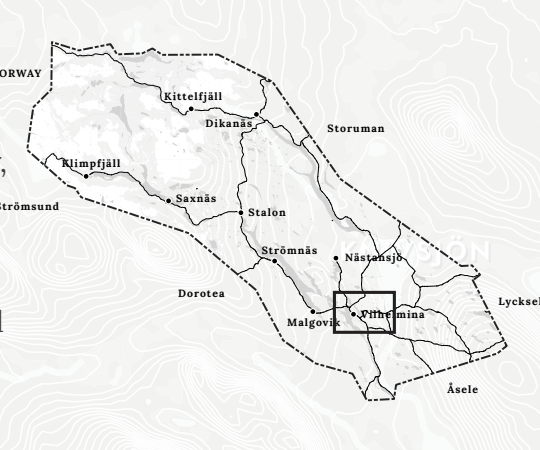
Landuse in the municipality, big blocks (SCB 2021b).

1999–2019	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Average temp (C°)	-9	-8	-5	1	7	12	15	13	8	2	-3	-7
Precipitation (mm)	52	40	40	43	62	84	109	94	66	60	54	53
Rainy/snowy days	9	7	8	7	9	9	11	10	8	8	9	9

Climate (SMHI 2021b)



FORREST, LAKES & MOUNTAINS
The landscape is ever present in Vilhelmina, both in the municipality, the village and its emidiate surroundings. Mountains become bigger and more dramatic towards Norway while the landscape around the village is a mix of forrest, lakes and smaller mountains.



Landscape

- Contours 5 m
- Open land
- Forrest
- Fen
- Waterways

Vilhelmina surroundings
1:150.000 (GET 2021).



KYRKBERGET

+ 440 m

BAKSJÖN

+ 340 m

VOLGSJÖ

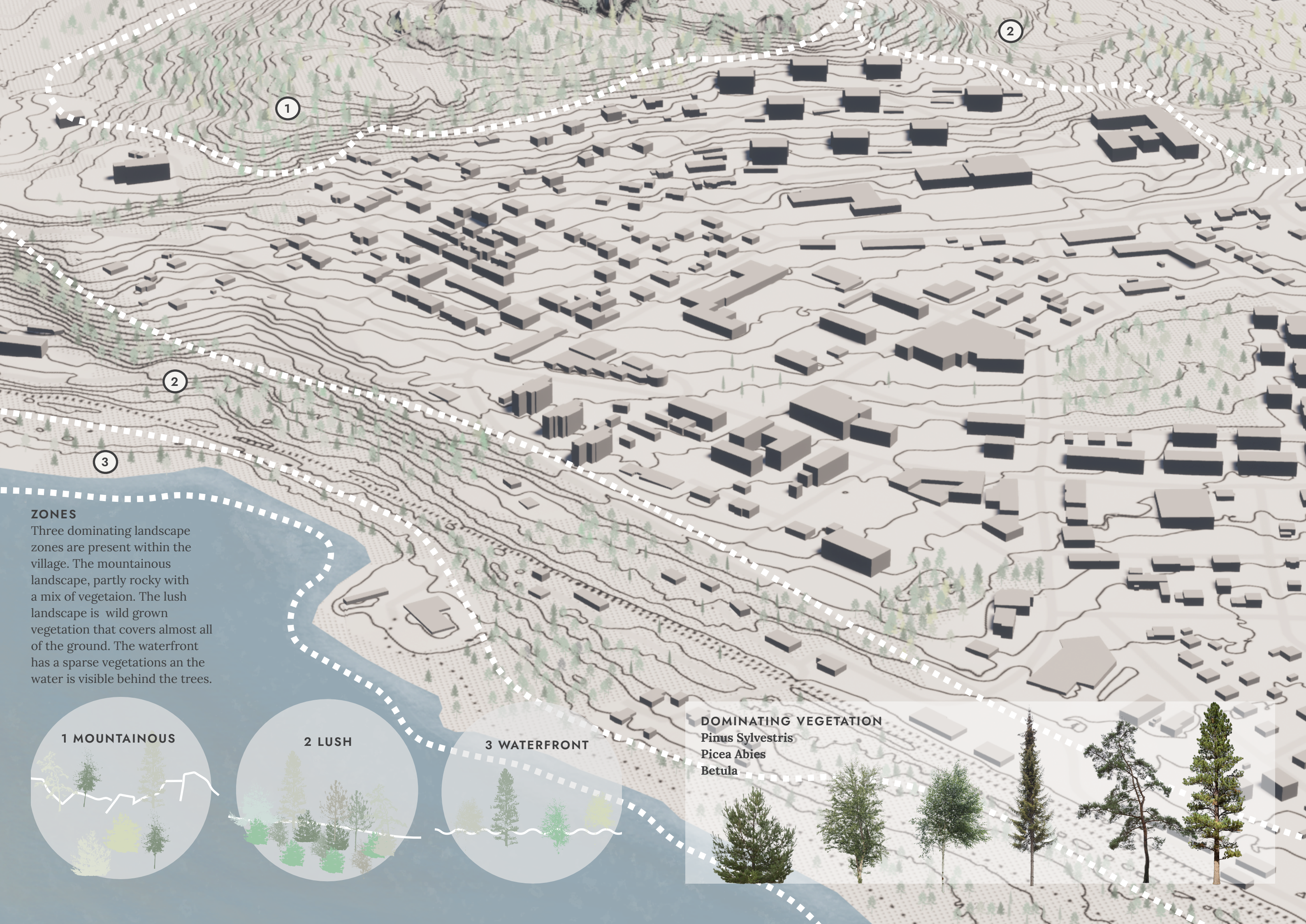
+ 334 m
(MSL)

VOJMAN

Landscape +
Buildings
1:7.500

- 1. Bergbacka. Single family housing 1961–1968.
- 2. Baksjöstrand. Single family housing, 1974–1976.
- 3. Vilhelmina Church. 1935–1940.
- 4. Strandvägen, multi-family housing, 1969–1970.
- 5. Church-town & Storgatan. Mixed buildings, 1840–1895.
- 5. Schools and other institutions.
- 7. Ringvägen, row-houses, 1974–1975
- 8. Down town. Mixed age, typologies and functions.
- 9. Carecenter
- 10. Tallåsvägen, 1971
- 11. Volgsjövägen, 1930's.
- 12. Tallbacka, 1974
- 13. Videvägen, 1955
- 14. Industry. Mixed age
- 15. Sawmill. Mixed age
- 16. Trainstation

ÅNGERMANÄLVEN



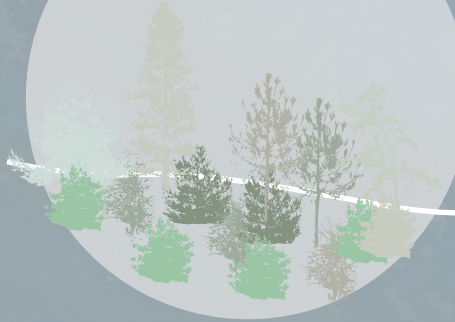
ZONES

Three dominating landscape zones are present within the village. The mountainous landscape, partly rocky with a mix of vegetation. The lush landscape is wild grown vegetation that covers almost all of the ground. The waterfront has a sparse vegetation and the water is visible behind the trees.

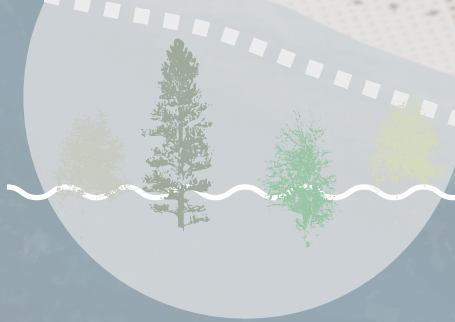
1 MOUNTAINOUS



2 LUSH

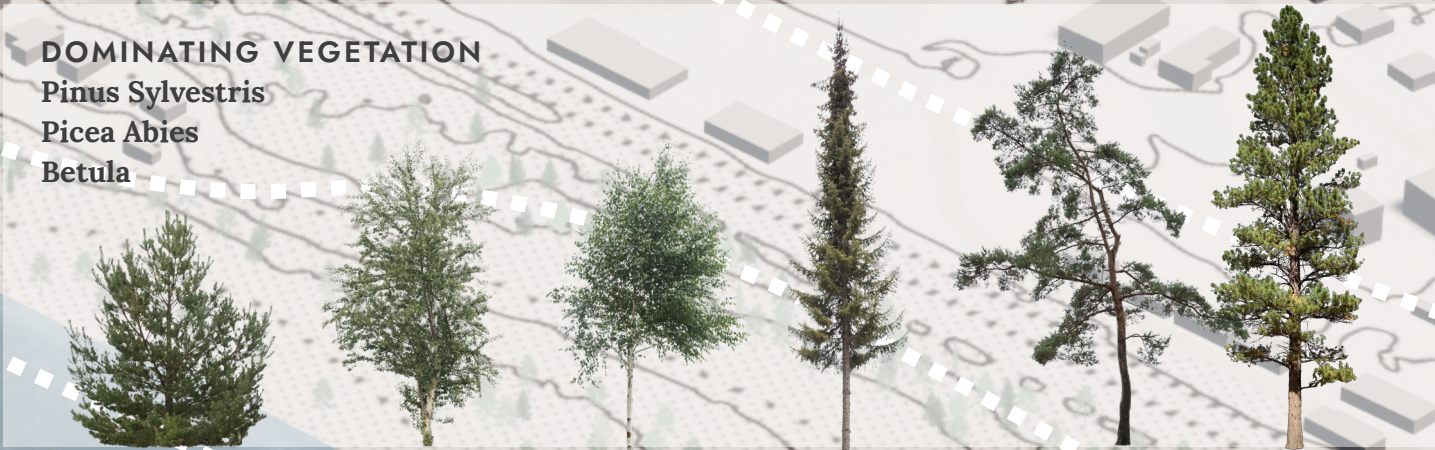


3 WATERFRONT



DOMINATING VEGETATION

- Pinus Sylvestris
- Picea Abies
- Betula



5.5 BUILDINGS AND ARCHITECTURE

Vilhelmina has many layers of time within the built environment. Some of the oldest buildings still standing are the church (3), the courthouse and the buildings on Storgatan (5). Parts of Kyrkstan is still standing even though much of Kyrkstan south of Storgatan was lost in a major fire in 1921. In modern time, most of the development is from the 1960s and -70s (1, 2, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12 and 13). with extensively built out villa areas and some public functions built in to these areas. Since the 1970s, only a few new buildings have been constructed, for example, Folkets hus that holds functions like the library, swimmingpool, theater and cinema.

The local public housing company Vilhelmina Bostäder (VIBO) have recently decided to demolish parts of the housing stock in response to the deminishing housing needs (VK 2020). At the same time, villas are much more difficult to sell and the housing prices are often far lower than costs for construction which lead to some uncertainty in the housing market.



Kyrkstaden remains from the 19th century when people traveled from far away to visit the church and attend church-weekends.



Vilhelmina church.



The Courthouse was constructed 1919–1920, drawn by Nils Nordén. Today it holds Tourist information.



Vilhelmina hotel spotted on the hillside. View from Volgsjön.

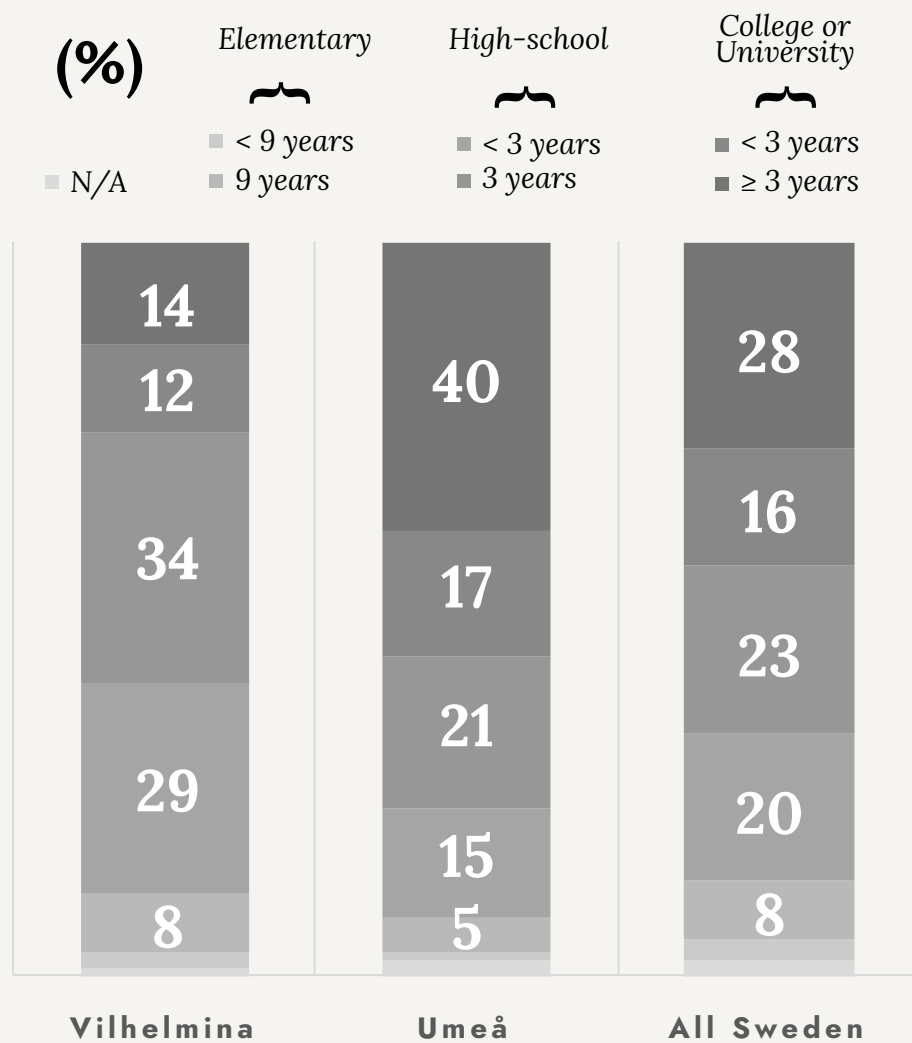
5.6 LIFE AND LIFESTYLE

The life and lifestyle of people living in Vilhelmina is of course varied and rich and not easily described in text. Some common activities still needs to mentioned.

With five to six months of snow, skiing is naturally a part of the lifestyle. The skiing stadium has a handful of different tracks with different lengths and are located just north of Kyrkberget on a five minute walk from central Vilhelmina. For the coldest months, there is also prepared tracks on the lakes Volgsjö and Baksjön.

Another noticeable lifestyle is the motor interest which is shown in many different ways, i. e. theres a variety of car repair shops, snowmobile shops and similar. Young people between 15–18 are part of the EPA-culture, a sort of loophole in the drivers licensing where cars are converted into mopeds. They have their own meeting places and a big part of the lifestyle is built around your vehicle.

Education level is somewhat low compared with the national average. In Vilhelmina, 14 % have a college degree with more than three years of studies compared with 28 % in all of Sweden or 40 % in the regional capital Umeå. Mostly, people settle with a high-school degree with three years of high school studies (SCB 2021a).



Level of education. The darker color, the higher level of education (SCB 2021a).



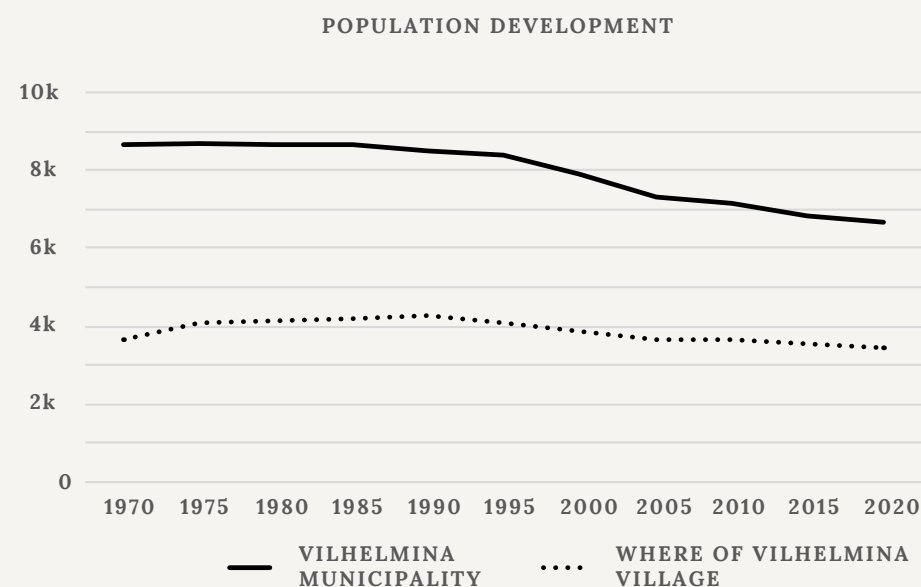
Skidstadion, The Skiingstadium is located north of Kyrkberget and is the startingpoint of four different routes – 1, 2, 5 and 9 km.



A local meetingplace for motor enthusiasts.



Empty shops at Volgsjövägen.



Population development 1965–2020 (SCB 2021a).

5.7 LOCAL TRENDS

Population

The population of Vilhelmina village has been slowly and steadily declining since the 1990s. Peak population for the municipality was around 1975 (SCB 2021a). Latest reports show that Vilhelmina is declining the second fastest in the Västerbotten region with -2 % in 2020 (VK 2021). In 2019, 30 more people died than was born and 58 more people moved out than moved into the municipality. Most people moving in came from the same region while most people leaving left for the rest of Sweden unspecified.

Economy

The state and condition of the municipal economy is alarming. In the municipal equalizing system for welfare, kommunala utjämningsystemet, Vilhelmina municipality ranked 9th in being given money in order to maintain public services getting 28.077 kr per inhabitant (Ekonomifakta 2021a). In 2019, Vilhelmina was ranked number one both in municipal costs per inhabitant and state welfare given to rural municipalities. On the other hand, the unemployment rate is decent and the municipality scored 244 out of 290 when looking at the business climate (Ekonomifakta 2021b).

Buildings and development

In the last 20 years only a few new development-projects have been completed within the village. In 2001 the new culture house was finished and in 2018 there was a transformation of the Police station into a nursing home. Other than that, some construction for holiday cottages are planned within the municipality higher up in the mountains.

Policy documents from the municipality (Vilhelmina kommun 2018) states all building initiatives are welcome to mitigate the declining populations. Still, housing prices are low and development could risk what has been invested when constructing a house. Recently, the housing stock have been going off in a whole different direction. The local public housing company Vihelminabostäder (Vibo) have been

	VILHELMINA	SWEDEN
PPL W/ HIGHER EDUCATION (%)	14,2	28,2
ENTREPRENEURS (%)	9,2	6,1
EARLY PENSIONERS (%)	5,3	4,2
PPL. LIVING OF ALLOWANCE (%)	16,5	12,7
MUNICIPAL TAX INCOME (SEK/PERSON, 2019)	43.869	46.730
STATE MUNICIPAL ALLOW. (SEK/PERSON, 2019)	35.196 (#1)	9.772
MUNICIPAL COSTS (SEK/PERSON, 2019)	84.743 (#1)	55.843 (Ekonomifakta 2021b).

carrying out new dismantling of their housing stock and decided to bring down one building with 24 apartments at Strandvägen. This is the second time people living in rentals have been ordered to leave their home on one specific address to move to another of Vibos houses (VK 2021).

The development of the housing stock is problematic. Vibo on their hand talks about high costs for maintenance as a reason for the dismantling of buildings, that it is more energy efficient to concentrate where people are living rather than to have every other apartment left empty. They state that there is potentially some differences in what sort of living people want and what sort of housing stock they offer at the moment.

SPECIAL CARE
PRE-SCHOOL

DELI

PRE-SCHOOL

CHURCH

BAKERY
MUSEUM

SCHOOL

SCHOOL

HOTEL

THRIFT SHOP
PAINT SHOP

HIGHER EDUCATION
PRE-SCHOOL

DECORATING

HUNTING STORE
HUNTING STOR

TOURIST INFO

PRE-SCHOOL

CAFÉ
RELIGIOUS SOCIETY

BANK

COMMUNITY CENTER

VETERINARY

ELDERLY CARE

PUBLIC EDUCATION

BANK

COMMUNITY CENTER

VETERINARY

ELDERLY CARE

PHARMACY

PIZZERIA

CHOCLATIER

CAR PARTS

RESTAURANT

PRE-SCHOOL

MUNICIPAL OFFICE
RELIGIOUS SOCIETY

HOTEL
LIQUOR STORE

ELDERLY CARE

GARDENING

RECYCLING STATION

MOTEL

CAMPING SITE

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY

OFFICE

CAR SHOP

CAR SHOP

IRON WORKSHOP
DECORATING

HEATING AND PLUMBING

TIRES

MACHINE RENTAL

SNOW MOBILE STORE

LANGUAGE CENTER

ELEKTRICIAN

BUTCHER

RECOND

CAR WORKSHOP

CAR REPAIR

THRIFT SHOP

GAS STATION

CAR REPAIR

POLICE STATION

WHOLESALE

ARCHIVE MANAGEMENT

RECYCLING STATION

TIRES

CONSTRUCTIONWARES

GAS STATION

CAR TESTING

SPEDITION

Local forces
1:10.000

SPEDITION

5.8 LOCAL FORCES

Despite the situation with local economy discussed in 5.7 *Local trends*, a lot of economical activity in different sectors can be seen in the village, especially around the central spine Volgsjövägen and Storgatan. Here is an attempt to map the ongoing economical activity. As shown in the mapping, activities span through many different sectors, i. e. construction, car repair and retail, industry, commerce, leisure and food aswell as many public services like schools for different levels of education, kindergardens, nursing homes and public administration. Most specialized of the working places are within the forestry industry and some bank offices. The largest private employer is SCA Skog with 75 employees, while the largest public employer is

the municipality itself with 875 employees.

One key issue for the future of Vilhelmina would be to strategically develop around the existing economical activities. Proposed development should strengthen what is already there today and identify what is beneficial for the existing activities at same time as new sectors could be explored and to attract new economy.

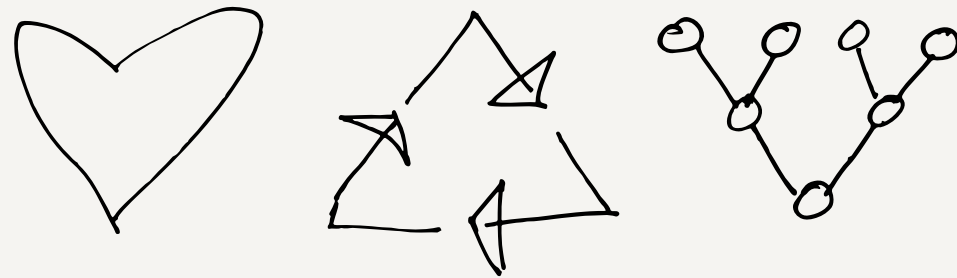


5.9 PROJECT AND DESIGN

Going into the project of this thesis, there's a fairly simple way of understanding the design. The what, why and how of the project is translated into a design hierarchy with objectives, strategy and interventions, whereof the objectives being the most abstract describes the values of the project or what needs to be accomplished. The strategy on the other hand is both a spatially and strategically direction of where to develop while the interventions proposed are only spatial, concrete actions towards a sustainable development of Vilhelmina. The strategy and interventions are part of the design but the objectives are equally important for the project as a whole.

OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives for the project is encapsulated in three strong bullets that will guide the design: respect, reuse and regenerate.



Respect

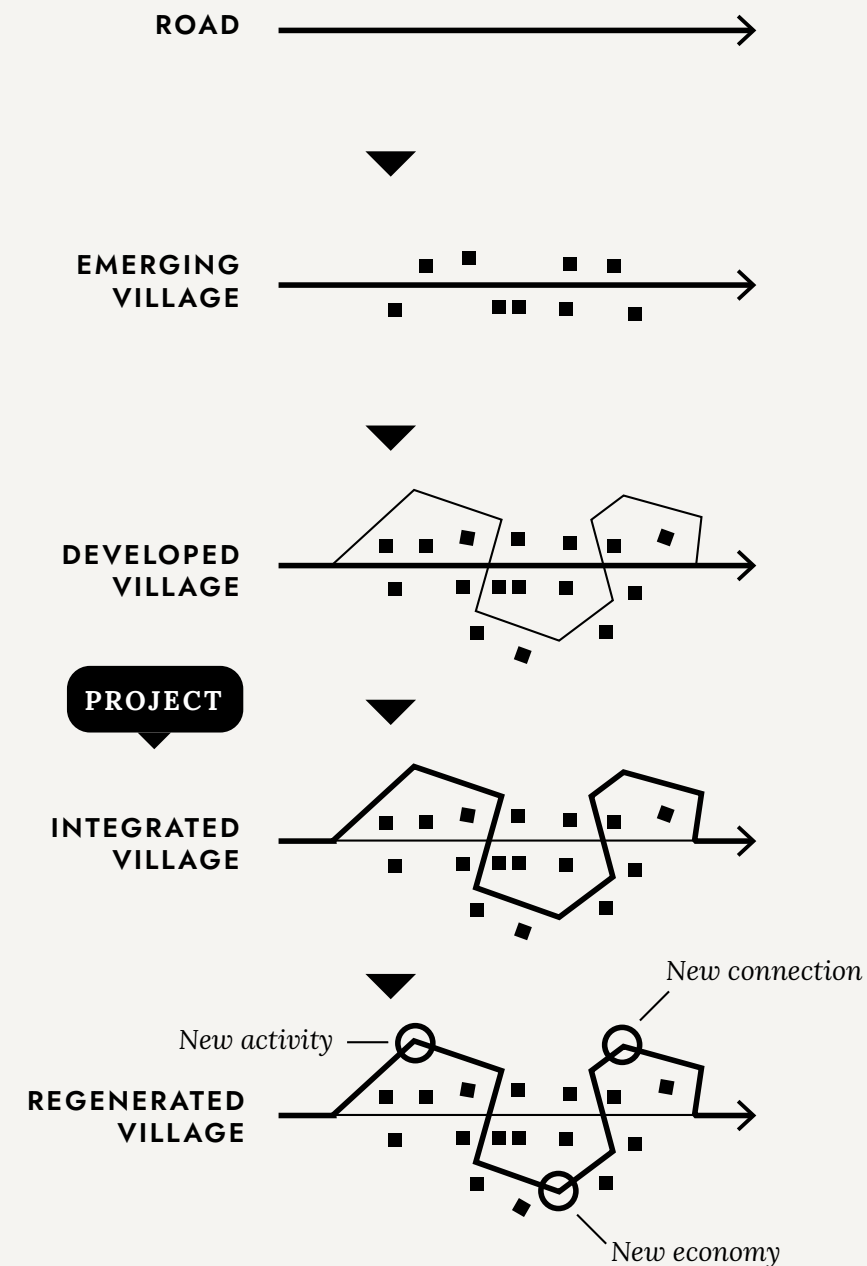
Respect the local circumstances and challenges, history, culture(s) and landscape in order to maintain the qualities that make up the place today. This could be for example suggesting programming that is suitable with the history in mind, suggesting typologies that reflect the heritage of Vilhelmina or building-techniques that do not damage the landscape.

Reuse

The depopulation of the municipality is leaving houses unsold or empty. It is crucial to establish infrastructure for construction materials of abandoned houses where they could be reused in the future when the tide is changing. Reuse also reflects upon the reuse of land in central locations of the village that might have a greater potential than parking or other sorts of wasteland.

Regenerate

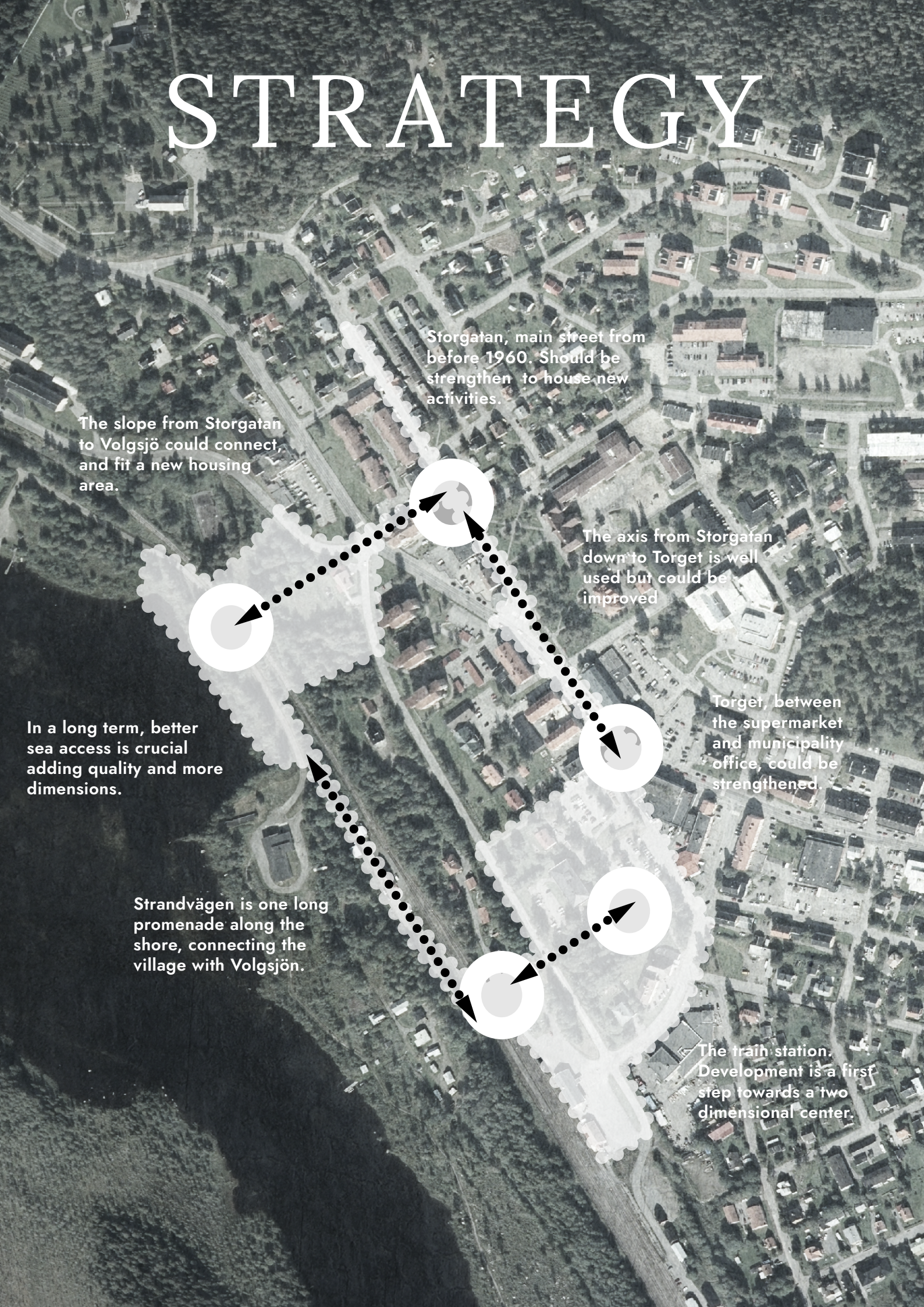
Regenerating is finding new economies within the existing framework of the village and seeing the potential with the discussed global trends and translating them into a spatial configuration. It is about the dreams and vision for the future at specific sites that could improve economy, activities or connections.



VILLAGE PHASES

The diagram above is an attempt to explain the role of this design project and the natural evolution of village structure. Just like many other villages, Vilhelmina is sprung out of the linear element of the main road that had houses popping up around it. The evolution from that is a system of back roads that is changing the linearity of the village into something two dimensional. Introducing the project the village could potentially evolve even more, becoming a integrated village where the first road is not as important anymore. It becomes more than something that you just pass by but an attraction of its own. That is the phase when it is time to introduce new activities, new connections and new economy.

STRATEGY



Storgatan, main street from before 1960. Should be strengthened to house new activities.

The slope from Storgatan to Volgsjö could connect, and fit a new housing area.

The axis from Storgatan down to Torget is well used but could be improved

Torget, between the supermarket and municipality office, could be strengthened.

In a long term, better sea access is crucial adding quality and more dimensions.

Strandvägen is one long promenade along the shore, connecting the village with Volgsjön.

The train station. Development is a first step towards a two dimensional center.



IMPLEMENTATION AND TIME

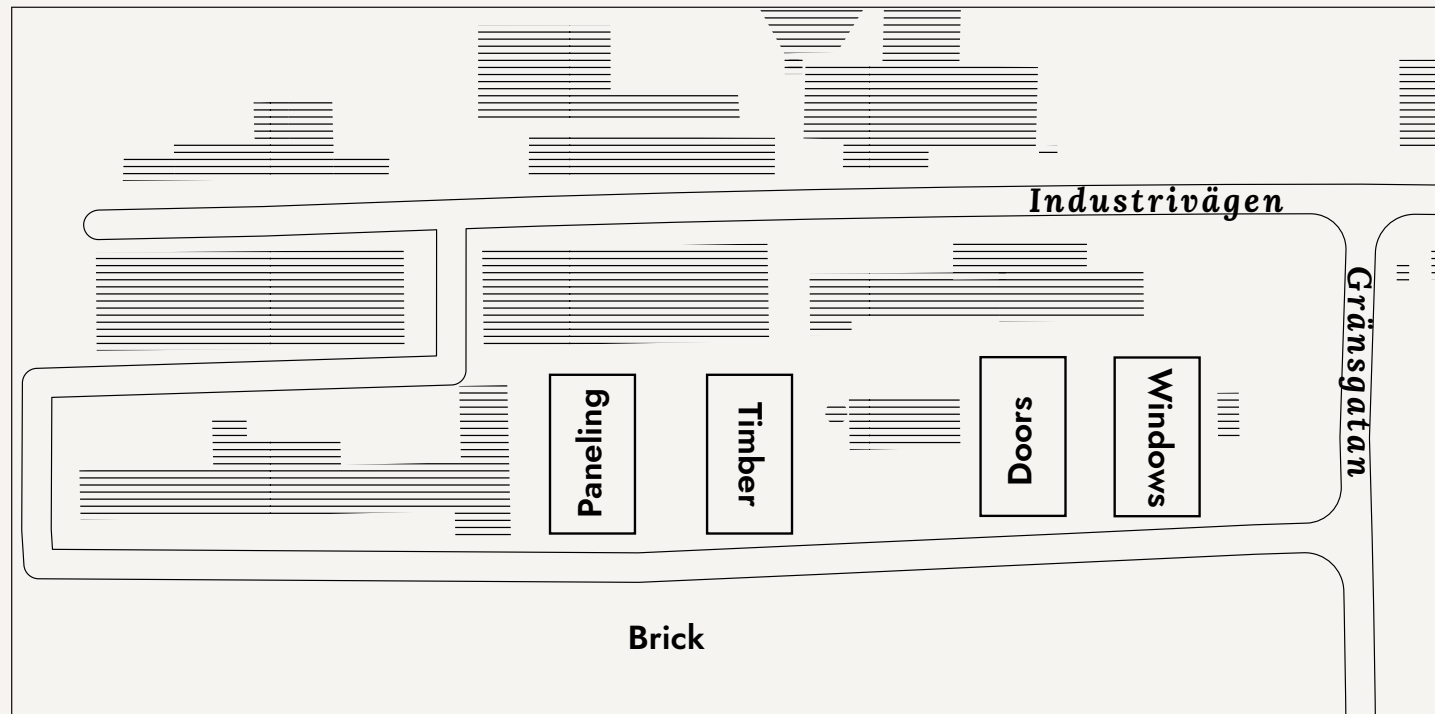
Because of the declining population, design and development must be carried out with great care and only small investments are plausible considering existing problems with providing public services. With the discussed existing conditions, development in Vilhelmina must be carried out with great attention to costs, value and time. The discussed development are sensitive to specific phases of the village Vilhelmina but also to the ongoing global trends and how they evolve. Not all development can come at once, or it could at least be a good idea to see how different initiatives proposed affect population growth and economy before going into the next phase.

First and foremost, the strategy suggest to implement interventions that are more realistic and more cost effective that will have more spinn-off effects on the local economy. After that, more strategic investments can be made to further develop the economy of the Village and raise the attractiveness to others not living there today. The most visinary interventions are more to build upon the already existing good qualities in the village in a situation where the village is growing, with a decreasing populaton and a new need for housing. These interventions are sensitive to all of the global trends discussed in the prestudy so depending on how they develop, interventions could come sooner or later.

INTERVENTIONS

- 1 RECYCLING AND STORING BUILDINGS
- 2 THE SAUNA (PP)
- 3 DIGITAL NOMADISM
- 4 STORGATAN RE-IMAGINED
- 5 CAMPUS LAPLAND
- 6 IMPROVED STRÖGABILITY
- 7 THE EN'TRAIN'CE
- 8 A VIBRANT SQUARE
- 9 VOLGSJÖ TERRACE





1 RECYCLING AND STORING BUILDINGS

A first step is creating an infrastructure for storing or selling building parts from buildings that are left abandoned or not being sold. A suitable site for this would be next to the old sawmill at the end of Industrivägen. Taking care of resources for the future is crucial for a future sustainable development.



The end industrivägen today.



2 THE SAUNA(PP)

The second intervention is to enter the digital world with a public sauna. With the app you can see how many people are in the sauna, show and control the temprature, make bookings and more. This is just a ridiculous way to start a digital mindset that comes with modern economy and of course you get to sauna and be with the nature and other people down by the lake.

Perspective from Sjögatan down to the new sauna.





Perspective of the digital nomadism.



Digital nomadism Plan

3 DIGITAL NOMADISM

The third intervention is the digital nomadism. At Kyrkberget today, there is an outdoor museum of the nomad lifestyle from 300 years ago with the Sámi people roaming this land. The site is suitable for a new kind of nomadism. The digital nomad that wants to live in close contact with nature and own as little as possible. So intervention number three is proposing these ten small off-grid cabins, gently placed in the landscape for a new digital era.



4 STORGATAN REIMAGINED

Storgatan have some shops left unused, which could potentially be changed. The co-working space is a response to people working more from home. Here you can print, have better wifi or other office-related functions that is just momentarily needed. The pop-up is for new business ideas. One of the shops could be turned into housing as it is a bit easier to rent out. The restaurant school are in need of a new restaurant and this could be a good place for that. One of them could go from shop to office.



"The morning train stops, in both wintertime and summertime, just outside new Campus Lapland and has become the regional central hub, both geographically and knowledge-wise"



5 CAMPUS LAPLAND

As a response to the fairly low educational level one key factor for answering to the declining population is offering more in terms of higher education. The village would be very helped with starting Campus Lapland as a part of Umeå university with faculties that are extra relevant to this specific landscape, culture or heritage.

The site for this initiative is proposed just by the train station, a site that is a bit left over today and has the potential of giving a better sense of arrival with train. In a long term, the village could utilize the full potential of the railroad network and could become more of regional hub in the Lapland region with Campus Lapland as a base. This does not seem to farfetched since Vilhelmina actually is one of the most populated municipalities in the region.



5 IMPROVED STRÖGABILITY

The local culture is all about motor vehicles. There is a word for going out for a ride with your car just for leisure. It is called ströga. With small means you can improve strögability connected the road network. So I propose these small connections for a better integrated street network. New connections are proposed at Torget, Sjögatan and Järnvägsgatan, all in touch with the strategy of connecting the village with Volgsjö.

6 IMPROVED STRÖGABILITY

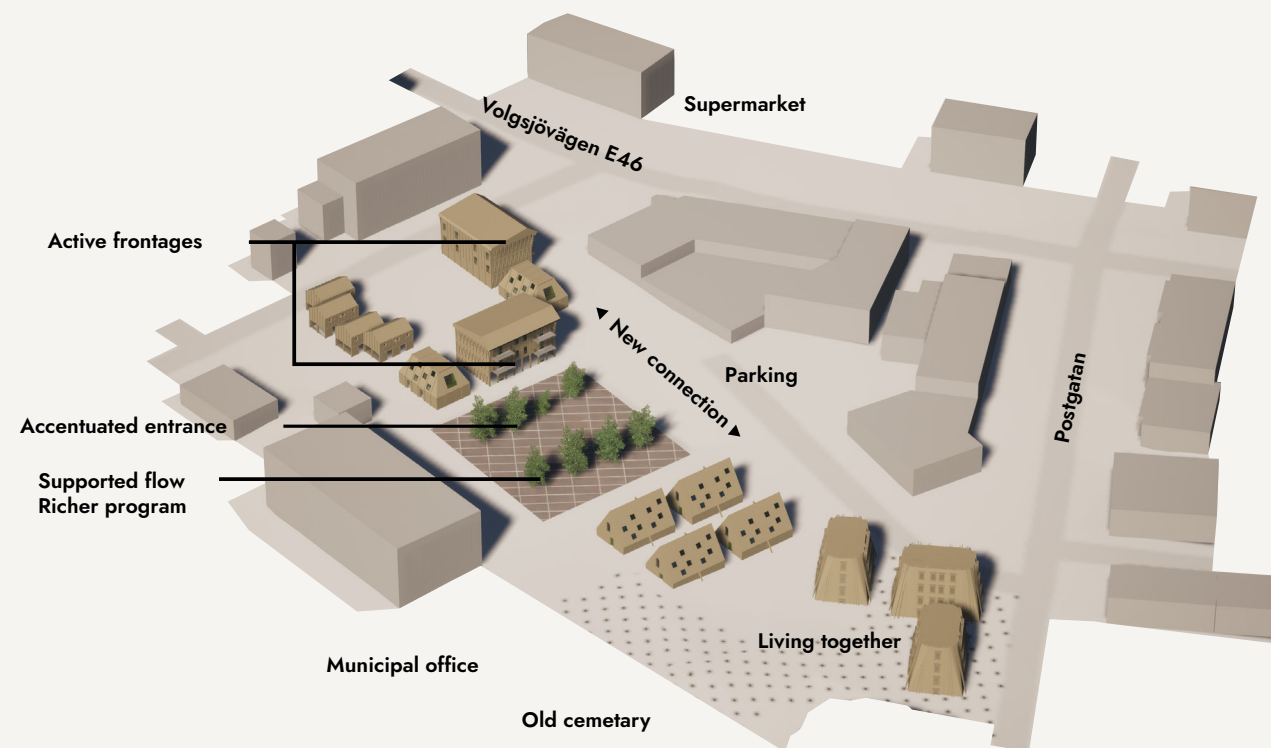


7 THE EN'TRAIN'CE

The entrance project is a small development project for a greater sense of arrival by train. It contains housing and a guided walk and stairs towards the village center. Intervention 7, 8 and 9 stipulates a changing trend for the population of Vilhelmina and suggest a new need for housing of different kinds as a result of both the earlier interventions but also with global trends changing the conditions for Vilhelmina.

8 A VIBRANT SQUARE

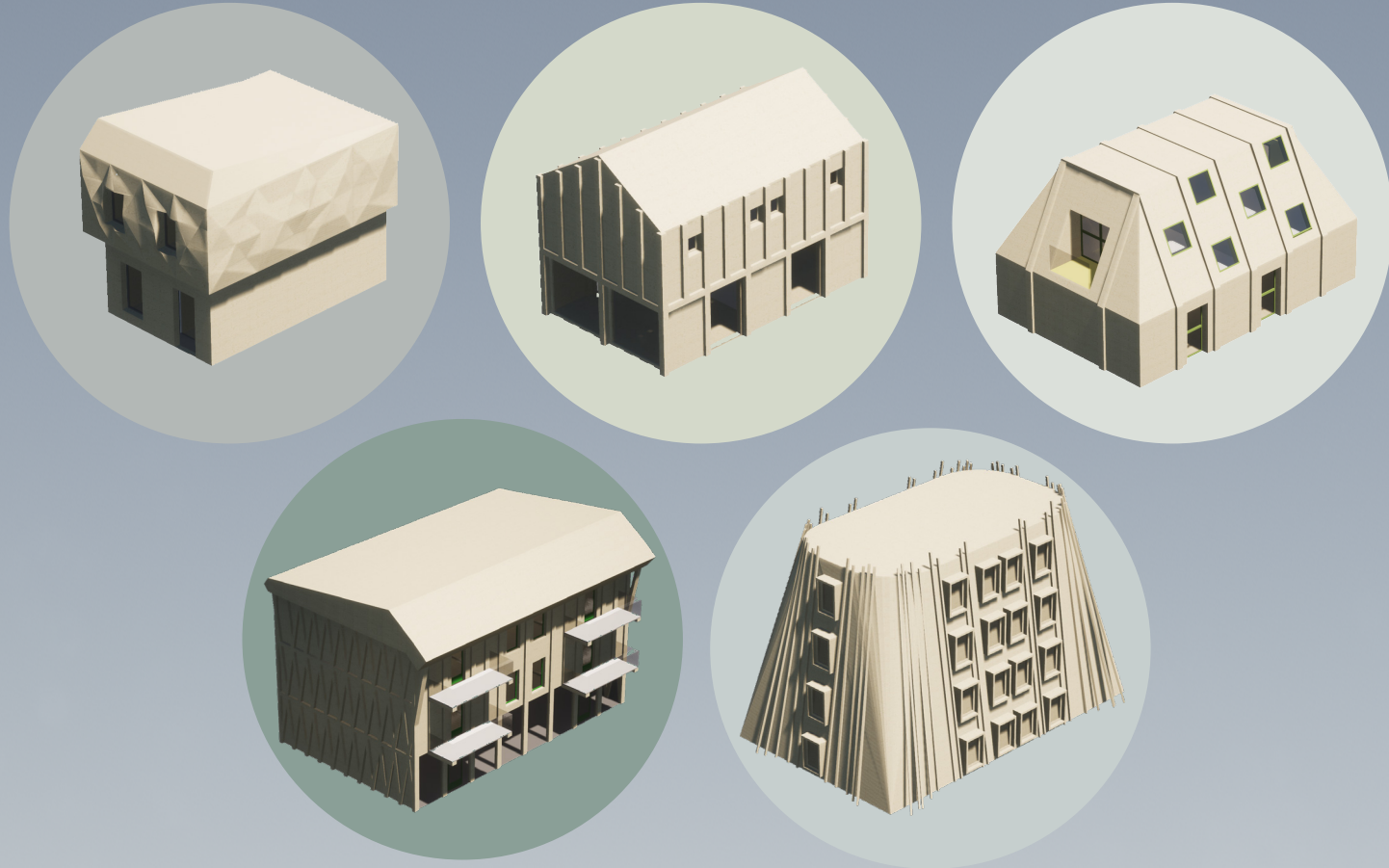
What is called Torget today is basically a parking lot with some recycling bins. The physical environment just outside the municipal office could, in a long term, be developed to better signalize the importance of the common while at the same time offering a clear meeting place at this site where early Volgsjö chapel was erected.

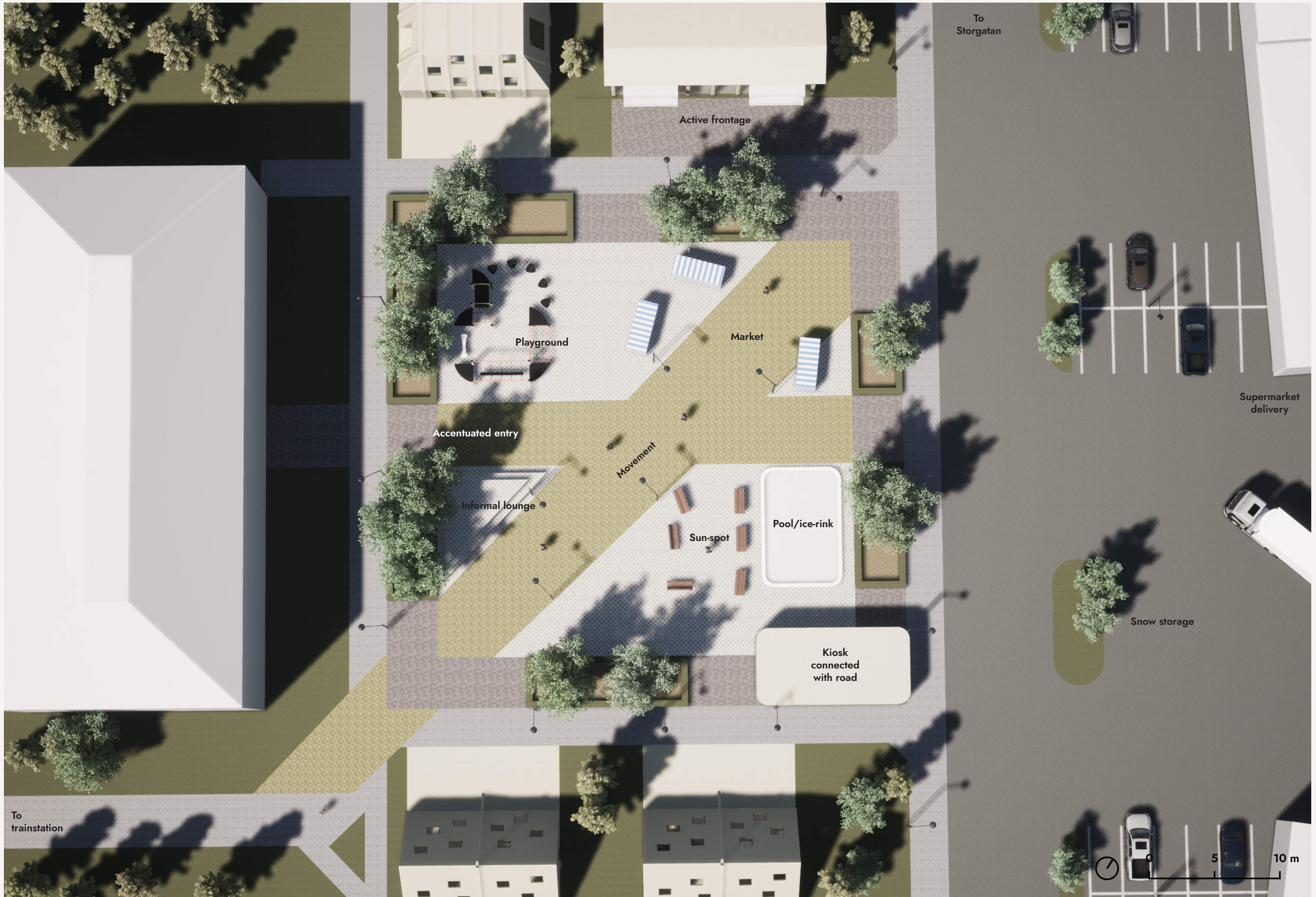


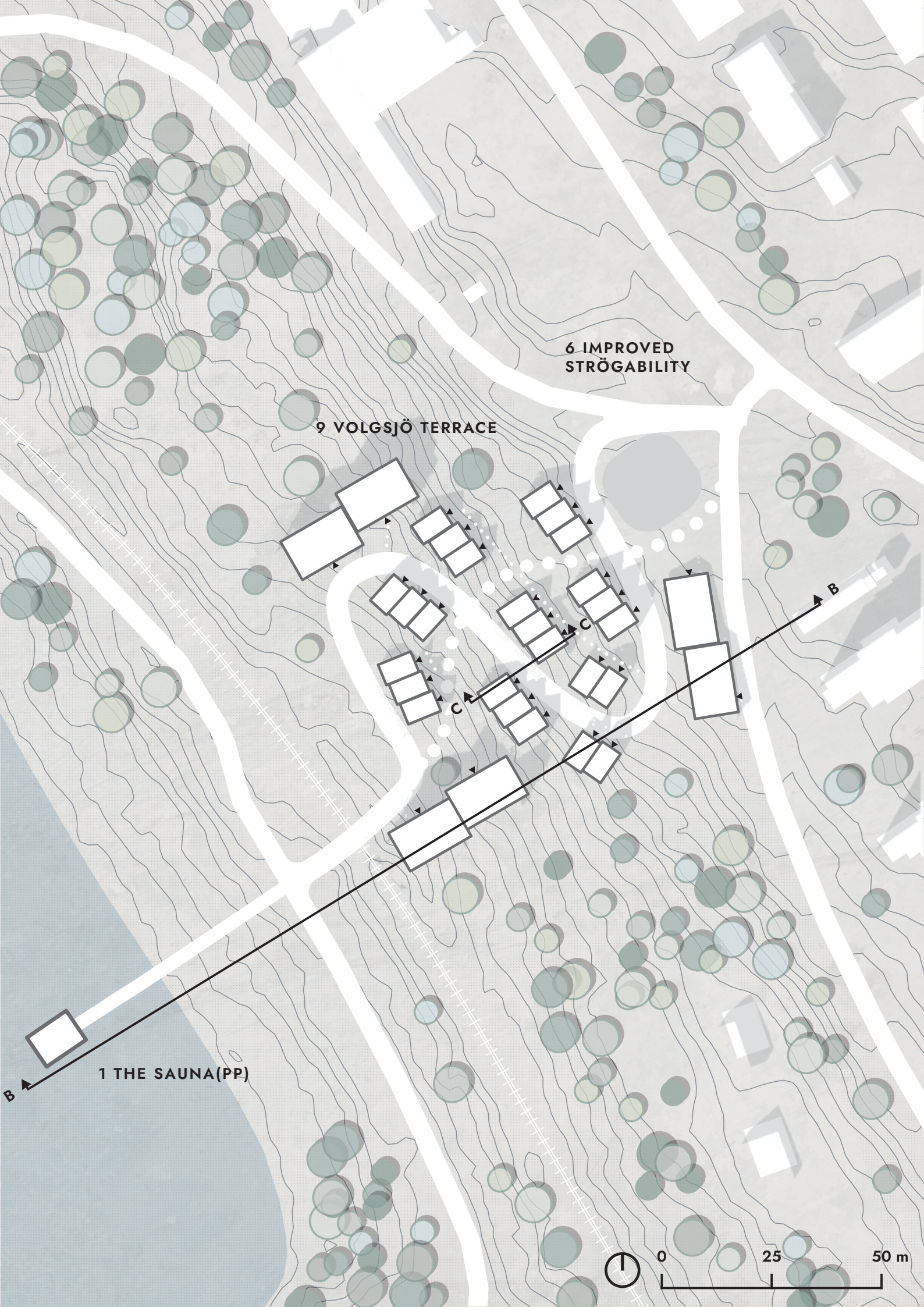
- ♥ Respecting the local culture, improving strögability.
- ♥ Hommaging the Sámi architecture in details.
- ♥ Respecting the common, giving the municipal office a clearer entrance
- ♻ Re-using building materials

- ♻ Re-using valuable land near the trainstation
- ♻ Connecting with existing activities at Storgatan supporting flow from Storgatan to the trainstation.
- ♻ Regenerating commercial activities at a central location with active frontages
- ♻ Richer programming for the square.

TYPOLOGIES

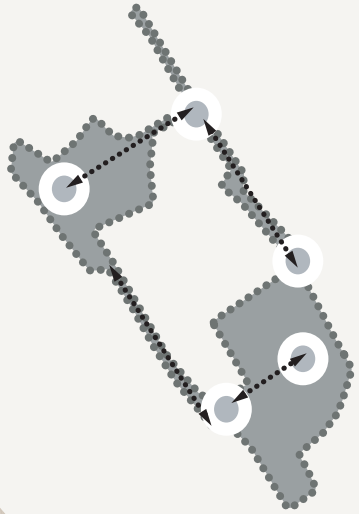
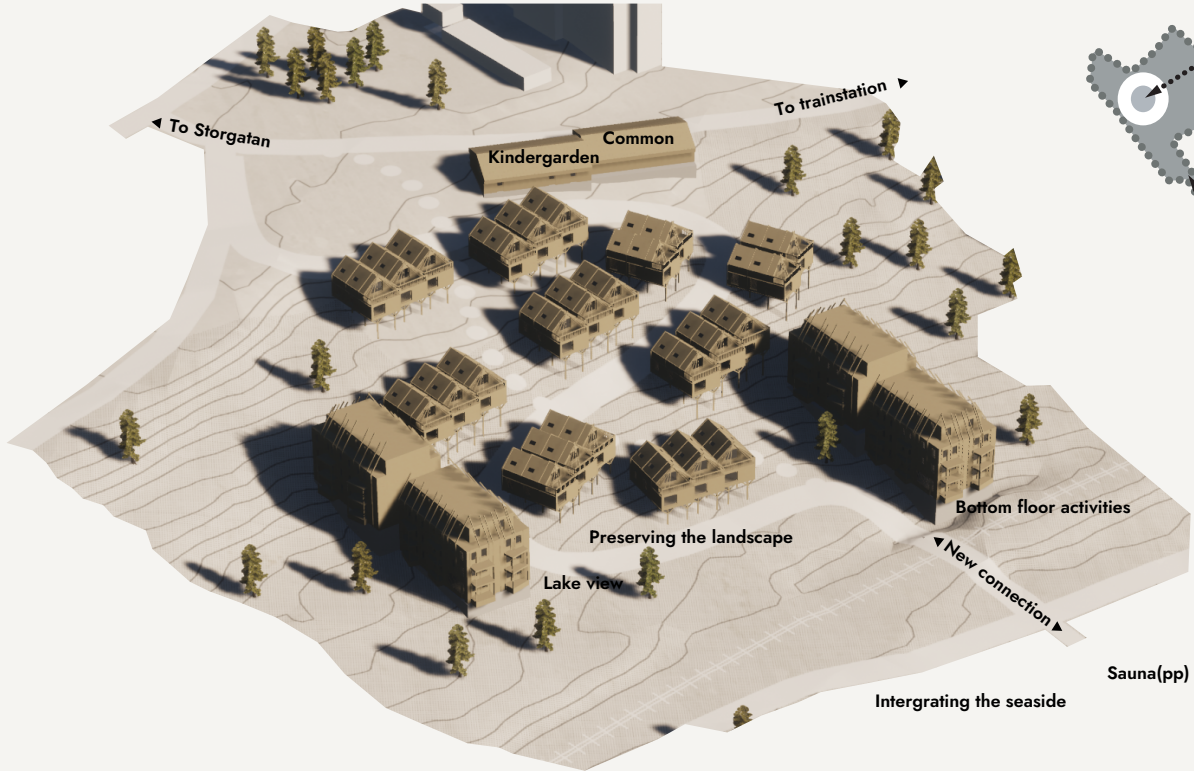






9 VOLGSJÖ TERRACE

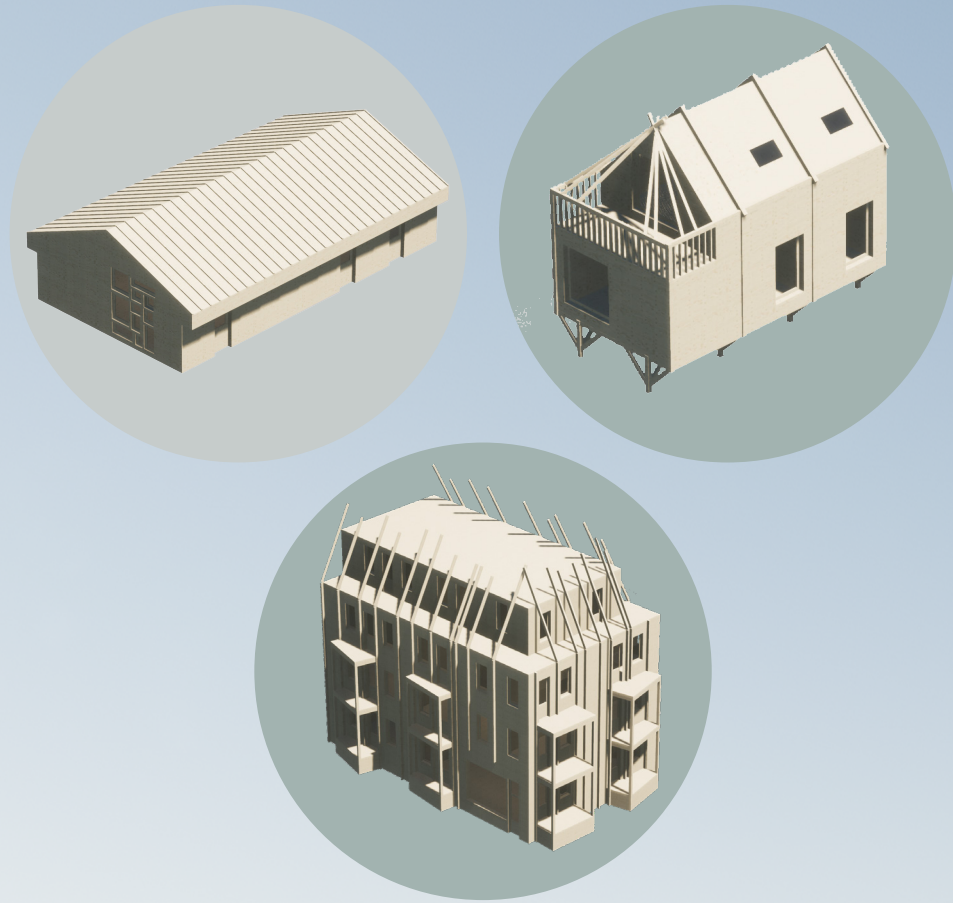
The development of Volgsjö terrace is the final proposed intervention for this project. The time aspect for such project would be in a far away future but is equally important with the proposed strategy to connect all the parts of downtown Vilhelmina. The slope from Volgsjövägen down to Volgsjö is fairly steep why a serpenteroad is suggested. Pillar-supported rowhouses blend in with this landscape and in the lower parts, near Volgsjö, multi-family housing is suggested to allow for a better mix in that great location. The common-house fits kindergarden, domestic kitchen, laundryroom and is a way to aspire for a more shared economy for things that does not fit within the tree-house typology.



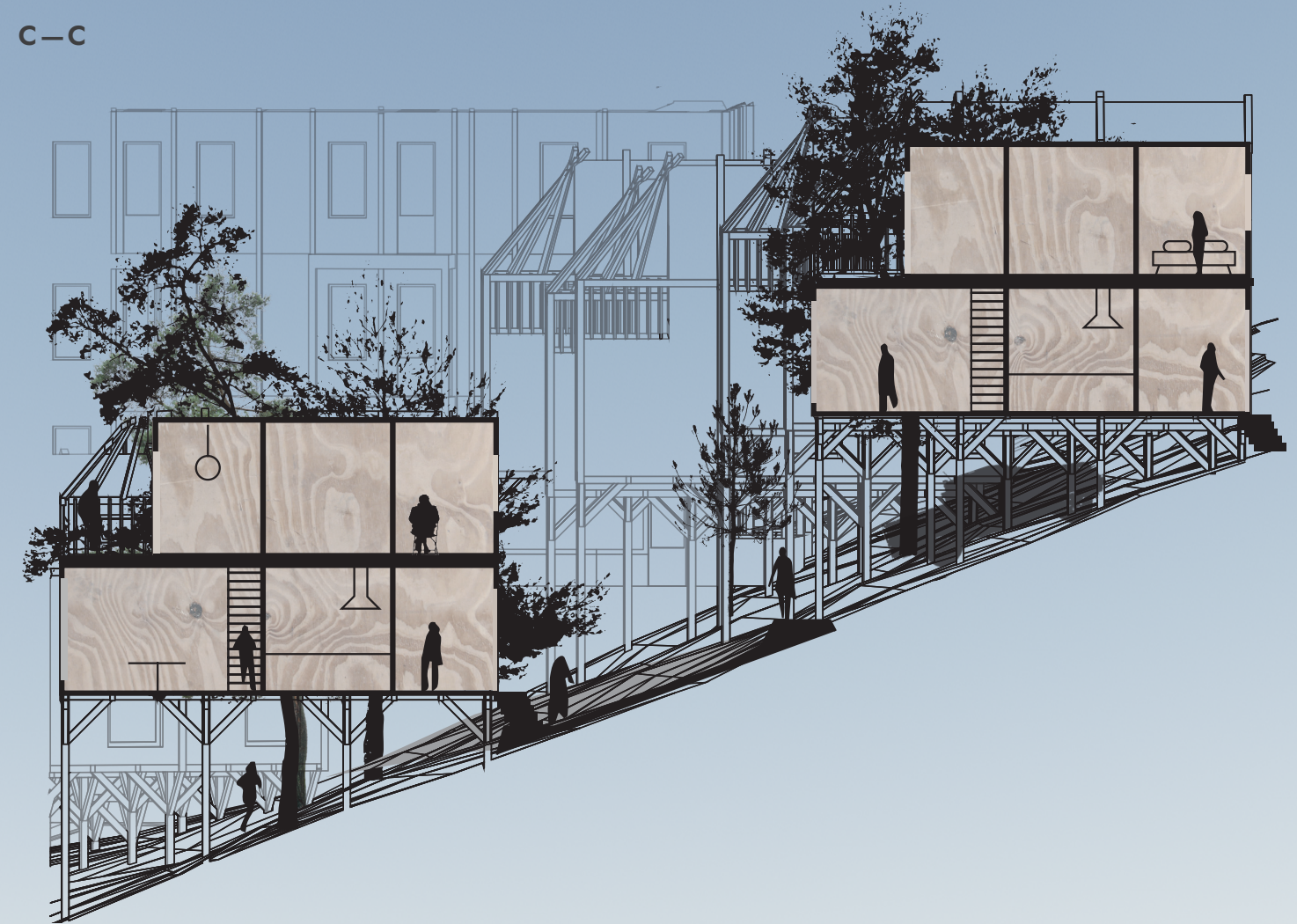
STRATEGY
Missing link

- ♥ Respecting the landscape building mostly on stilts.
- ♥ Hommaging the Sámi architecture in details.
- ♻ Re-using building materials
- ♻ Connecting with existing activities at Storgatan supporting flow from Storgatan to the seaside.
- ♻ Regenerating activities close to the seaside and the sauna.
- ♻ Improving accessibility to existing sea-activities like skiing and snowmobile.

TYOLOGIES



C-C

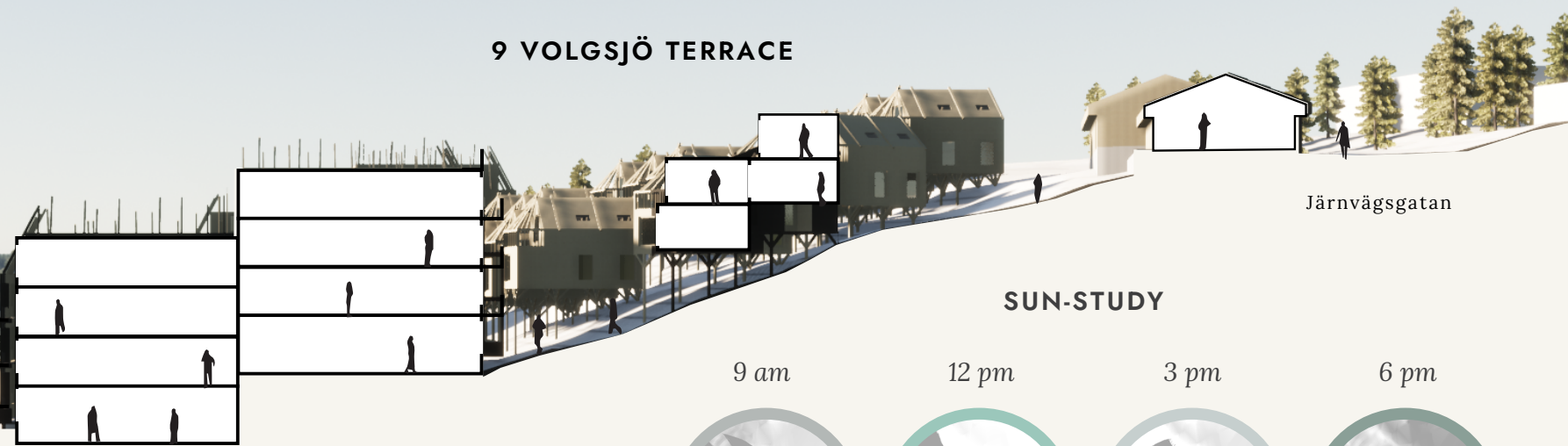


B-B

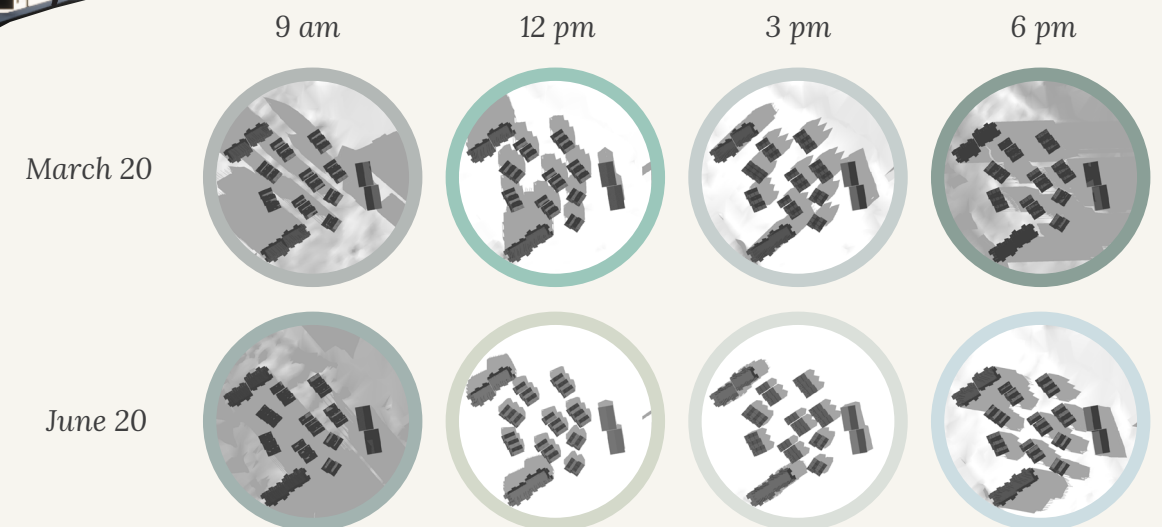


2 THE SAUNA (PP)

9 VOLGSJÖ TERRACE



SUN-STUDY

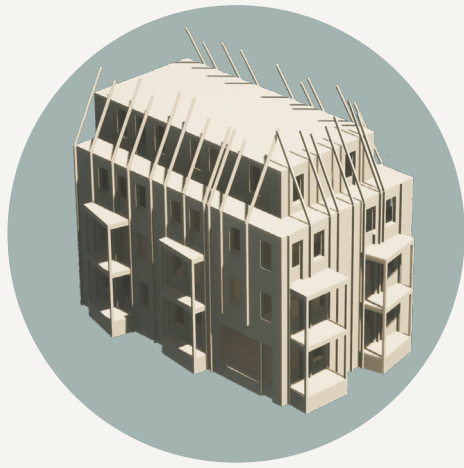
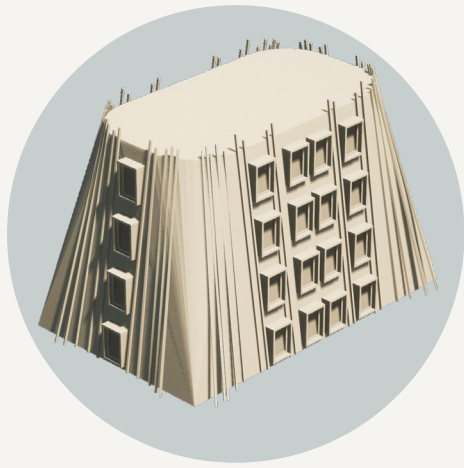
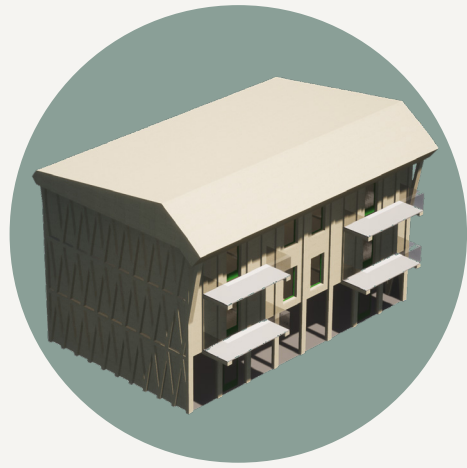
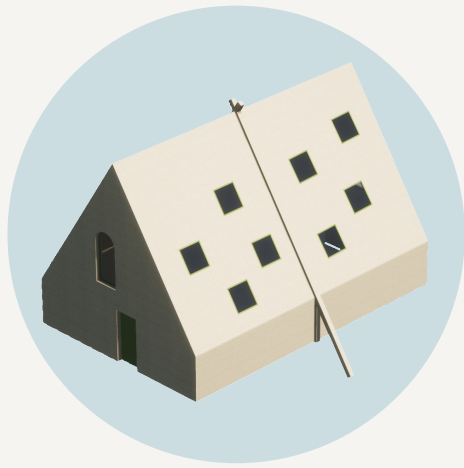


Railroad

Sjövägen

Järnvägsgatan

TYOLOGIES AND THE SÁMI HERITAGE



6 Conclusion

6.1 ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

So, to conclude the thesis project it is appropriate to revisit the research questions and – if possible – try to pair them with some answers. As a reminder, the following questions were formulated in the background of the thesis:

What is happening to the urban structure in remote small-towns facing a declining population?

What global and regional tendencies are relevant for a remote and declining small-town?

What qualities can be enhanced and what sort of life does the small-town offer?

How can we as urban designers attack problems and regenerate in the urban form in this setting?

First question first. The urban structure of, for example Vilhelmina, is not going through any rapid changes. Instead, there is a slow and steady decay of the life and architecture if left in its current state. The public housing company demolish some of their houses every once in a while and housing prices are generally low which might affect personal economy but not quite the urban structure.

The global and regional tendencies might help the situation in Vilhelmina and similar small-towns or villages, especially with a increasing digitalization making the location of cities less important. The discussion on climate changes may also be beneficial for Vilhelmina and similar villages.

Regarding qualities for the life and living in South Lapland there is not one unambiguous answer. With the mappings done within the framework of this thesis one should at least mention that the landscape is ever present in Vilhelmina. It is the elements, the steep

slopes making you catch your breathe, the white treetops and the the viewingpoints, the local food and the silence, all in all: nature and what it gives back to you.

So with that said, how can we as urban designers attack the problems and regenerate in the urban form? One attempt to raise the attractiveness of Vilhelmina have been done in my proposed design for this thesis. It is one of many alternatives of how to do it and every alternative probably have a separate successrate in contributing to a sustainable society. What have been explored with my design is that new connections, activities and economy should pay special attention to the specifics of Vilhelmina in terms of materials, heritage and landscape and that the time aspect for every design in these situations are relevant for a convincing urban design.

There is a time for everything.

Allt har sin tid.

6.2 REFLECTIONS

Looking back at the thesis project, one of the early concerns in the process was that this village had little to do with urban design considering the development in recent years – that the theme of decline where to not design at all. It turns out that is not the case and that urban design is a field of studies that are ever so relevant, even in the most remote locations in the world. When you open your eyes there is often more to see than you first think of. With that said, the design and especially the process of the design have been very valuable as a part of the masters program in sustainable urban design. As I see it, a good architect sees the potential in things – opportunities, or improvements. My quest for this thesis was to see the potential in Vilhelmina, a remote village South Lapland and that is something I truly did!

7 Apendix

7.1 DATA & STATISTICS

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