In my thesis project Magnifying the Rural, I have worked with strategies at regional level, as well as with alterations to an existing building, to strengthen and celebrate rural systems in a place called Naum, in Vara municipality in Västergötland. This I have done in order to challenge the dichotomy of urban and rural. I find that urbanity is very often celebrated in the architectural discipline, and in the public debate in general. There is a strong hierarchy of spaces in the national discourse of Sweden. By focusing on a rural space that I perceive have low status and connect it to networks that reach out to other spaces, cities, and regions, I treat the urban and rural as a continuous variation rather than a fixed binary.

The binary is also challenged already by people constantly moving across this scale. Most of the residents of Naum, mapped out in the Site Map of Inhabitants, Relationships and Local Knowledge, commute to Vara Town, or other adjacent towns or cities to work, to go school, to go the doctor, take part in cultural events etc. This project focus on the power of rural networks, on movement, and on rural systems of cooperation. I make a number of alterations at a zoomed-in scale, to offer the inhabitants a more intimate relationship to this agricultural landscape.
THE PRESENTATION: A FULL SCALE ROOM INSTALLATION

My project operates both at the intimate scale of an existing bygdegård, which is a specifically rural community space, in Naum as well as on the larger scale of Vara municipality. To the bygdegård I propose three small scale alterations, a sauna called the ‘Storytelling Sauna’ an overnight stay shelter called the ‘Please Stay’, and an imaginative element of a ‘Wishing-Well-Ditch’. In the larger scale I propose a strategic alteration, the ‘Thriving Passages’, to the treatment of roadsides, in order to increase biodiversity and human movement.

The project presentation was made as a full scale room-installation, that aim to represent the different scales of the project and allow me to move across them. It consists of mappings of bygdegård in Vara municipality and in Sweden and how they are connected by human movement, as well as mappings of historical and agricultural layers of this landscape. In the room-installation one can stand on the flat farmlands of Västergötland looking out on the horizon, which is the 1:500 section-cut that run along the walls. At the same time one can sit on a chair on what I call the ‘Parquet Field of Lost Parties’ inside the decaying bygdegård in Naum. The section runs from Naum, where the bygdegård is located to Vara town, the regional center in Vara municipality. The horizon-section is set at eye-level as it would be in reality.

Working and experimenting with different scales and modes of representing architecture, landscape, and space, has been an important tool. The landscape of this part of Västergötlands is very flat, therefore sky and horizon were important to represent. To be able to work across scales in the room-installation I have mixed the larger scale of maps and drawings with 1:1 parts, such as chairs from the bygdegård and a full-scale section of the ‘Wishing-Well-Ditch’.

The installation enables me to connect the urban and the rural, two categories we take for granted in the city have created and for a long time disconnected. I do this with reference to the architect Ania Zdunek and her “regions rum”, regional spaces.
I wish to emphasize the importance of the everyday spaces in this agricultural landscape for the people who live here. I myself now live in Stockholm but I grew up in Naum with my parents running a biodynamic farm, and I know that these spaces are as important everyday spaces as the urban ones I live in today. I have used my personal experience as a feminist critique of the architectural discipline questioning the “all knowing” role of the architect as well as opening up to include multiple voices, experiences and histories. I wish to value and celebrate the rural systems, the agricultural landscape, the existing, the seemingly un-spectacular, by inviting users, inhabitants and visitors to (re-)build a new, more intimate relationship to the space and landscape.

Photo of Naums bygdegård seen from west in October.
The alterations I propose can all be made by the people in the community with the mapped local knowledge. Because of a lack of money to renovate the building I propose to use minimum means, re-use material on site, when constructing these alterations in community workshops.

As the bygdegård is starting to decay and is very little used today, the existing program of the bygdegård is dysfunctional. Its activities is offered in better ways in other places, so one of my strategies for transforming it, is to imagine new, more intimate, ways of usage, trying to integrate and re-invent layers of histories, that collapses timelines and connect the inhabitants again, more closely, to the landscape.

The naming of spaces has been an important tool in order to imagine new uses of the decaying bygdegård, and new futures for this landscape.
Magnus’s parents used to run the dairy farm. Friends and childhood friends. Parents of Inger. 3rd generation. Family houses.

The community here in the early 19th century was economically dependent on agriculture. The way of life was a part-time job on the farm. The farms in Naum, like all rural farms in Sweden, are surrounded by agricultural fields common in the 19th century.

In the 1990’s, a new and cultural industry was introduced to the area. The community has a high degree of participation in the local heritage association. This was a carpet with a magnified herring bone pattern. The community was very different in the 1980s, when it was given to the local heritage association. The transformation of the bygdegård was historical, when the community was at its peak.
The ‘Storytelling Sauna’ is placed in a former storage space, seen in the mirrored ghost section showing historical layers. The sauna is an intimate space where the inhabitants of Naum can have conversations and share stories. The sauna is also a space where you can sit and look out to the field south of the bygdegård. The booking schedule help organizing the usage.

### THE BYGDEGÅRD MOVEMENT AND CHANGED USES

The bygdegård in Naum, was built in 1937 by the local community here, as a part of an emergent bygdegård movement all over Sweden in the early 20th century. Naums bygdegård is located on a ‘common’, dating back several centuries. The use and program of the bygdegård site has shifted over the centuries along with the landscape of Naum due to large Land Use Reformations, such as the Laga Skifte reformation in the 19th century. The shift in use is also due to an ongoing rationalization of agriculture and because people are increasingly moving towards cities. These changes over time has led to an increasingly biologically monocultural landscape, and a decreased and shifted movement of humans and animals, and Naums bygdegård is today very little used. At the same time, the increasing possibilities for people to move along the spectrum of spaces, of urban and rural, connect Naum and its inhabitants to various other spaces and collapse the binary between city and countryside.
The imaginative intervention of the “Wishing-Well-Ditch” is made to resemble the kind of open ditches, common in the agricultural fields in the 19th Century. The 1:1 section of the ‘Wishing-Well-Ditch’ is collaged directly onto the wall. A precedent for the ditch is a field with such open ditches restored as a nature reserve close to Vara town. The “Wishing-Well-Ditch” make a connection between the inhabitants and the history, aiming to evoke dreams and hopes of the future of the bygdegård space by connecting it to the past. At the same time it works to add to biodiversity by introducing more wetland to the bygdegård site.

Löjtantholms nature reserve, north of Vara town was used as a precedent for the ‘Wishing-Well-Ditch’.
The typology of vindskydds are places all over Sweden along hiking trails in forests and nature reserves. They are always open to one side, free to use, and need not be booked in advance. Many vindskydds are run by Friluftsfrämjandet, a non-profit organisation working to make nature accessible to people.

REFERENCE: VINDSKYDD

The alteration ‘Please Stay’ work at the level of Vara municipality, as well as at the site of Bygdé-gården. It is placed in the basement space under the ‘Silenced Stage’. It is a robust shelter that is open to the outside on one side, where you can stay over night. This offers an opportunity for visitors to create a closer relationship to the landscape, as they can experience it during the night. The ‘Please Stay’ works in a similar way to “vindskydd” which is a kind of open huts, that exist along hiking trails in forests in Sweden. The ‘Please Stay’ suggest that the agricultural fields is a landscape to move through, to experience and value.
The ‘Thriving passages’, marked out as green lines on the Map of Local Movement, operate at a strategic level. It is a proposal to how the roadsides of the existing finely knit network of roads can be treated differently. Instead of just cutting the grass and weeds here, I propose to let it grow. The monocultural landscape of today needs corridors for animals and insects, pollinating insects, to move along, between existing green structures. The passages also make it more attractive for humans to move in this network of roads, by bike or by foot. They can help to slow down the pace of movement, and add to the experience. I propose to make this new treatment of roadsides a “tillägg” to the new Översiktsplan, the regional masterplan, of Vara municipality as a strategy to increase biodiversity and local movement. A “tillägg” is a bureaucratic document that regulate management of overall spatial interests for the whole municipality.
Thriving passages along some of the gravel roads of Vara municipality encourage people, animals and insects to move along the tightly knit network of roads in the area.

Huttl Kvarn is an old mill, build in the early 19th century. Today there is a local heritage center and the mill is turned into a museum. An old steam-boat “Huttlandia” goes for tours along the stream Afsån.

Biking between Naums bygdegård and Önums bygdegård takes about 30 minutes. On the way one can stop by the old sawmill, have a see how timber was made in the 19th century, and perhaps go for a ride with the old steam-boat Huttlandia.

c = car
b = bike
w = walking

PROPOSAL: ZOOM-IN, 'THRIVING PASSAGES' AND 'PLEASE STAY'

ZOOM-IN MOVEMENT BETWEEN TWO BYGDEGÅRDS
1:10 000
In the Map of Local Movement the ‘Please Stay’ at Naums bygdøgård is marked out, as well as all of the bygdøgård, and the map suggest that the typology of ‘Please Stay’ can spread to other bygdøgård in the region. It shows how all the bygdøgård in Vara municipality are connected, and the time it takes to move between them by foot, by bike, and by car. The folded version of this map can be handed out to people, and suggests that residents of Naum, of Vara municipality, can take excursions in the landscape. Staying over night in the ‘Please Stay’s is adding to experience of the landscape. The map aim to increase the local movement in Vara municipality, and suggest that there are things to see and experience along the roads. For instance nature reserves to do with agricultural history, such as the one with the open ditches are marked out on the map, as well as landmarks of contemporary agriculture such as the large grain elevator “Lagerhuset” in Vara town. The map can also be used by local tourists interested in the history of Västergötland, or by a group of school children out to learn about agriculture.

The alterations of this thesis project are the beginning of a transformation at the bygdøgård and at the regional level. The spaces in the bygdøgård left as they are lie fallow for the future. The alterations also exemplify the networks at work in Naum. The project is performed in the full scale room-installation, moving across scales, hopefully engaging you in the landscape.

I want to emphasise the importance of rural systems, and the agricultural landscape. I have done this through mappings and alterations, that aim to strengthen the network and the local inhabitants relationship to their everyday spaces.
BACKGROUND: CONTEXT
MAPS OF VÄSTRA GÖTALAND REGION

MAP OF INHABITANTS

MAP OF YEARLY CROP

MAP OF CONNECTIONS

MAP OF DAILY TRAVEL

BACKGROUND: RELATED MATERIAL

| Vara municipalities new Över- siktsplan, general masterplan for the municipality. |
| I propose to make a “tillägg” to this OP in how to treat the roadsides in the finely knit network of roads. |

Information from Länsstyreken about the nature reserve Löttanhölm, located just north of Vara town. The reserve is a field where the 19th Century type open ditches has been restored. This is one of very few such fields in Sweden.

These ditches has been a precedent for my proposal ‘Wishing-Well-Ditch’.

A system of maps made and distributed by the national Norwegian tourist organisation. It maps out hiking trails, where to stay over night in hyttas, small cabins, etc.

These maps have been precedent for the Map of Local Movement and the possible system of ‘Please Stays’. Using these maps as precedents is also a way to connect the local systems of my thesis project to other such local systems.

An organisation that coordinate different agents of local tourism and cultural events in Vara Municipality.

Investigation by Vägverket about the specific characteristics of the landscape on Västgötlsättens, the plains in Vara municipality.