

Majahult

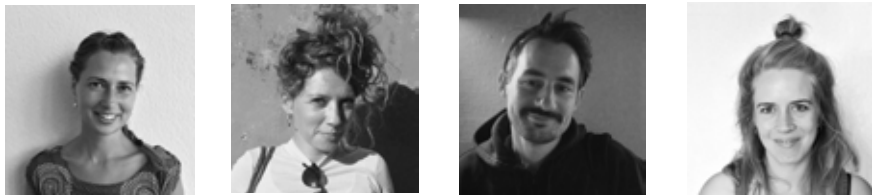
A Vision for a Collective Holiday Farm

Majahult
A Vision for a Collective Holiday Farm
The Royal Danish Academy, School of Architecture
IBBL - Urbanism and Societal Change

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A Vision for a Collective Holiday Farm



The community of Majahult



Majahult

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Summary

Majahult is an idealistic summerhouse collective in Sweden, that has existed since 2010 and currently consists of 17 members who live their everyday lives in Copenhagen, Denmark. Based on two years of ownership in the community, two interconnected challenges arise.

1. The need for more space.
2. Maintaining the old farm.

As the owners are getting more and more children and relatives, the main house is already getting too small for all of us. This is changing the way the owners use the old farm and it is putting pressure on the open-minded individuals. At the same time, we have a lot to maintain with over 500 m² of empty barn spaces.

As Majahult is dependent on the community using it and the community is likewise defined by the spatial use of the old farm, this project aims towards activating the creative potential in the Majahult community through a participation process, which on one side identifies the values, identity, needs and dreams of the community, while on the other side establishes a proposal that reads the site based on the attitude formed through stating the values of the building and combining them in a time-phased vision for a transformation of the barn buildings. The ultimate vision is to create new spaces, that are fit for today's needs and tomorrow's dreams.

A vision for transforming the barn spaces would in that sense also create the frames for a transformation of the community and could create lasting commitment to the transformed spaces.



Picture looking west at the big barn and pumphouse. Start-up organisation 2010.



Picture looking south-west at the small barn. Maintenance work 2010.

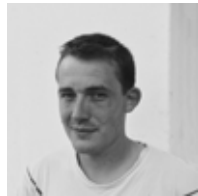
Community



Katrine, 30 years
College Teacher



Sigurd, 29 years
MA in Political
Science



Helge, 25 years
Architecture Student



Klara, 32 years
Social Pedagogue



Monica
Social Worker



Frej, 30 years
Contemporary
Dancer



Mathias H, 31 years
Rhythmic Conserva-
tory. Musician



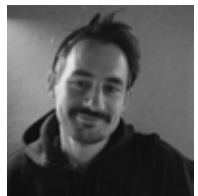
Tobias
Freelance Journalist



Mario, 26 years
Architecture Student



Marie 32 years
Social Worker



Anders 32 years
Forest and Land-
scape Engineer.



Marie H, 33 years
Lecturer at Roskilde
University



Aya
Biology Student



Mathias,
Bank Clerk



Ida, 29 years
MA in Sociology



Andreas, 29 years
Carpenter

Offset

The community functions as a summerhouse collective in the sense of sharing the costs and work for maintaining the old farm. Other household sharing is up to the individual members to decide.

“Majahult is for me a place where you can be yourself, but still feel you are part of a bigger collective” Katrine

It started off in 2010 as a group of 9 friends who wanted to get their own retreat house in the same region where they had spent several summers before. The result was the founding of a cooperative association; ‘Majahult’. The name originates from Maja, the former owner of the farm and the space she had built up on the farm at Härkumåla. There is no clear consensus about what to call the farm that the association owns, but it’s often just called ‘Majahult’, while some like to use the original name Härkumåla and others use the official name Bo.

“After the time we’ve been together, I feel that we know each other and respect each other’s privacy. You can choose to be part of things.” Katrin

Formal Organization

Costs

- 1 Share: 36.000 dkk
- Additionally a monthly payment of 300dkk (50 % of it goes to covering house expenses and 50 % goes in our savings and project fund, covering running maintenance, etc.)
- Project costs under 300dkk are covered individually.

Obligations

- 1 Share = 1 Vote in case of elections
- Meeting at general assembly's. (1 ordinary each year 1 extra if needed)
- Fulfill individually chosen maintenance goals within a year.
- Claim your rights in respect for others.

Rights

- All members can use the vacation property, however much and often they will, as long they don't live there.
- Stay up to 2 months, before asking for permission from the community.
- Orientate the community, when a larger group is coming.

Procedure of Selling a Share.

- Calls for an extra-ordinary general assembly, where it is decided if the share should be bought by the remaining members or if it should be sold to a new candidate.
- 1 Each member can recommend candidates.
 - 2 Each member can veto a candidate.
 - 3 The new member is chosen by lottery.

The Majahult cooperative association consists of 17 members, where four of them sit in a board, that is being elected each year. The association is grounded on a set of regulations that on one side **legally prevent the property from becoming an investment**, as any surplus from dissolving the cooperative association would be given to a NGO of the members' choosing. On the other hand, it regulates the procedures that step in place in case of unsolvable challenges or sever breaks with the committed obligations.

Decision Making Structure

The general assembly is the platform for bigger decisions and orientations about running projects. It is always held in Copenhagen. Usually, decisions are made in consensus, but are not bound to it. As the community know each other well, daily small projects and decisions are preferably taken on the farm.

Consensus is preferred, because it gives a voice to those not satisfied with the planned decisions. Majahult has a structure where all house related expenses are divided equally between the members. In some cases, this puts extra financial pressure on families where both partners are members. This tends to put a pressure on cutting bigger projects in smaller individual pieces over longer time.

Basically all members have equal say in decisions. But as with any decision-making structure in collectives, is it difficult to maintain an actual equality as it's often the case that informal hierarchy structures build up around eloquence, economic insight or as in this case; how much practical one does for maintaining the property.

(Naven, 1987,s45)

From the start up days in 2010 till now, the development has gone from a defined quantity and form of maintenance, like two weekends a year, where the most pressing maintenance is done together, to a self-defined maintenance goal such as i.e. renovating a room in the main house instead of painting windows.

Dagsprogram tirsdag - fredag		Tjansse oversigt - skriv dig på	
9-10	Morgenmad	Tjansse:	Ca. 20 min
10-1030	MorgenMØDE	Arbejde:	2
	Arbejde - male, male, male	Arbejde:	13
11:00	Frokost	Arbejde:	13
	Arbejde - male, male, male	Arbejde:	13
18:30	Kori oprydning på pladsen	Arbejde:	5
19:00	Aftensmad	Arbejde:	6
	Hygge og halle og fl og vin og gyl og munk	Arbejde:	8
	Godnat	Arbejde:	5

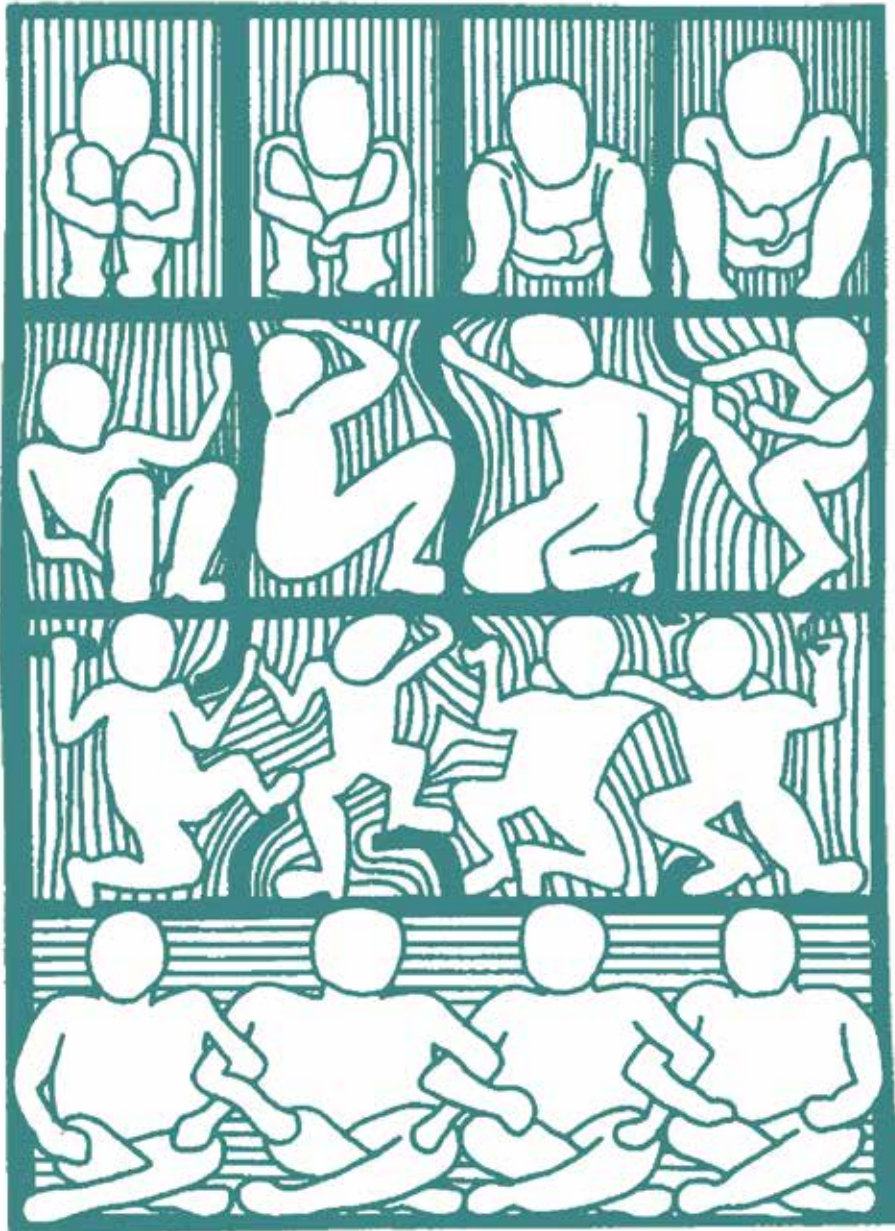


Illustration from the front cover of the magazine "Kollektiver" published from Tusen blomster/kokoo 1980

Challenges in the Community

"I think the sum of energy is bigger if people are not bound to do something specific. But on the other hand, there are a lot of things that are boring and have to be done and some are feeling that they have to do it because if not, they feel no one else is doing it, but that is the danger of no rule constellations." Andreas

The paradigm shift from trying to maintain the buildings so they don't get worse, to doing what each individual wants to do is under a test period now.

"It is a big difference between what people see as important and what is done to maintain all the houses. You really need to be large and walk in with big shoes to contain this anarchy." Andreas

"You really start to value when someone starts doing things. Often I think I would not have done it in the same way, but on the other hand, when it is done it inspires one." Katrine

"It has suited me well that the progress has gone down to a more loose structure and less demanding, but for the collective and for the dreams, it is in some way a loss. Then in the other way, I think energy and creativity will grow, from the fact that people are not tired down of feeling obliged to do so and so the entire time" Marie B

The current state in the community is that maintaining for the sake of preserving is not working at the same level as before, but it also exemplifies a potential for renewed interest as one could imagine maintaining for using as a more appealing motivation.

"As I see the way we are going now, because from that I guess, hope, time, energy and creativity will expand, because I don't think you can force it. Also I think it is making room for i.e. you taking a step with the roof (...) I think in the long run, the outcome will be that people get inspired, we can actually get something done here."

Marie B

Context

99 %

Increase of foreign owned vacation homes since 2000.

Definition

Vacation houses are defined as taxation units with no registered population.

Foreign ownership implies that the taxed owner does not have a Swedish address and Swedish personal identity number. The country reported is where the owners have their addresses and only natural persons are included in the survey.

Data is from the Register of Real Estate 2012 (FTR 2012) as Statistics Sweden receives from the Swedish Tax Agency. (Free-translated Bilstöm, rein 2013)



Map Showing Danish Vacation House Owners

Source: Bilstöm, Rein, Scb. 2013(22)

Movement Towards the Countryside

The farm is situated in Högsby and obtained as a vacation house in 2010. Development since 2000 shows we were not the only ones. Swedish vacation houses have become popular outside of Sweden. In 2012 the foreign owned vacation house market was dominated by owners from Denmark (11696) closely followed by Germany (10029) and Norway (9969). Although the foreign owned vacation houses only take about 6 % of the total market, it has been a 99% increase since 2000. Billström explains some of the development with the year 2000 opening of the new bridges, like the Öresunds and Svinesunds bridges, together with relatively low housing prices in the inland of Sweden.

One could question if the interest in Swedish vacation property is only driven from cheap prices and increased accessibility or if it is a bigger interest towards the countryside in general? Price and accessibility is important, when we are talking about an investment but, as a property devalues if it's not kept tidy, one could argue that an increased interest is at the core of the development.



Diagram. Foreign ownership of vacation houses from 2000-2012

Source: Bilstöm, Rein, Scb. 2013 (21)

5 hours travel time



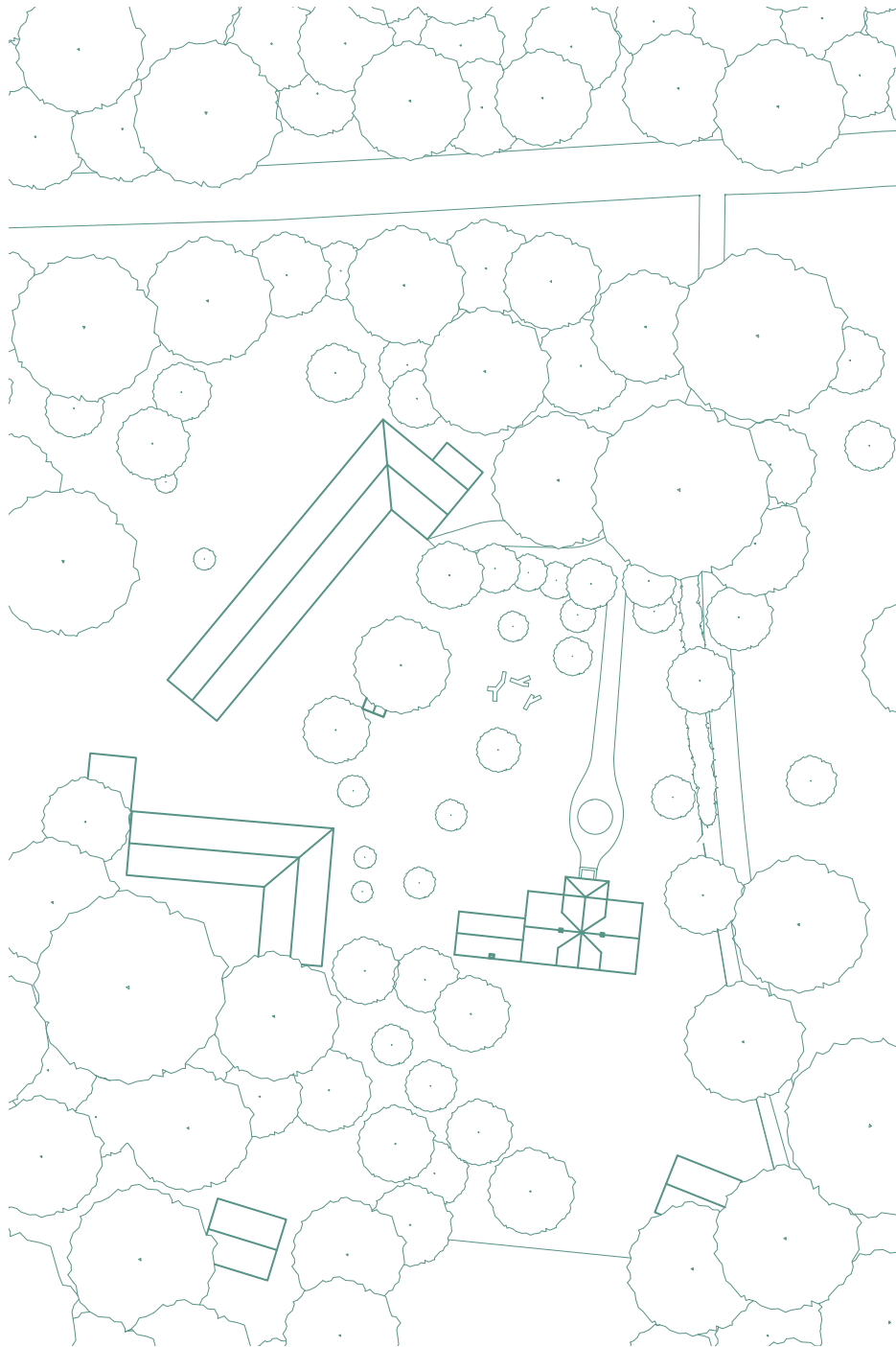
Högsby Municipality

The 17 owners came together from a mix of different backgrounds and relations. What's common for them, is that on one hand all live their daily lives in Denmark and have their individual networks in Copenhagen. On the other hand, they all own an old farm in Högsby.

Högsby is a locality in the Småland region and the smallest municipality in Kalmar County with 5782 inhabitants per 2014. (scb.se (1)). The principal town of the municipality consists today a center of an agricultural community with extensive plantations along Emåen vally and a large forest industry. These conditions have dominated the town back to its roots in the early Iron age.

The municipality got the train in the late 1800s and today has rail connections to Kalmar in the south and Linköping in the north.

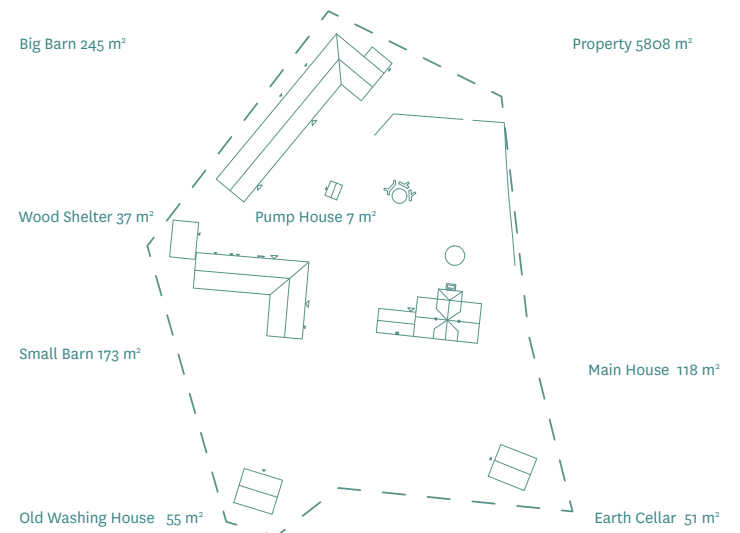




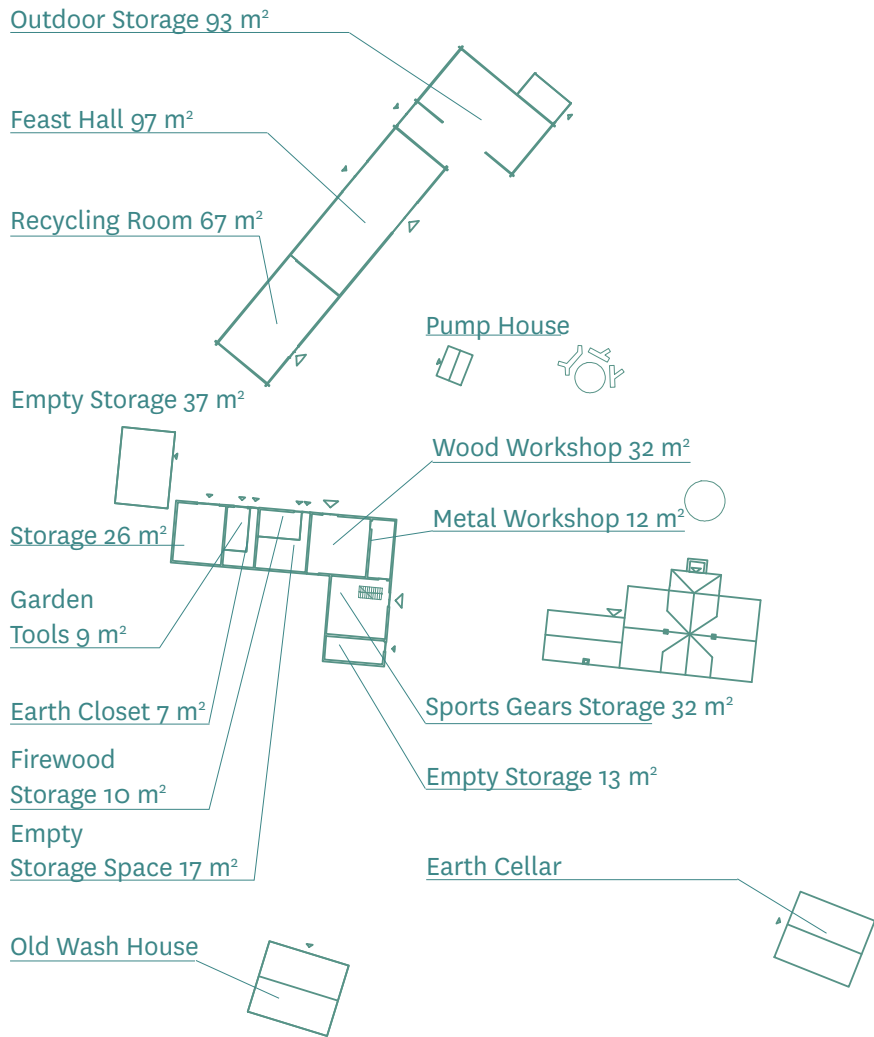
Site

The old farm was bought in 2010 as a vacation property for 410.000 sek and contains 6 buildings and a small road down to the main road, Sinnerbovägen, the outdoor space and usage centers around the fireplace in the middle of the courtyard with the small outdoor kitchen on the back of the pump house. Most trees on the site are old fruit trees, with plum trees at the main entrance, apple and cherry trees around the fireplace and mostly pear and apple trees on the backside of the farm.

The main house is 2 storied with a wood construction, suitable for all year living with its 198 m² of indoor space. The house got renovated around 1930, where the wood facade got plastered as the smaller extension was added to the main body, containing an oil heating system, cellar and a modern toilet. As the main sources of information come from interviews with the former owners and neighbors, some information is unclear about the age of the other buildings. But the big barn is estimated to have been built partly back to the late 18th century, while the rest came around 1900 as the farm's historical peak of expatriation.







Use of the Farm

“Some of the people you don’t see that much, but when you do, we have a great time. And it’s actually nice to see them. Maybe you would not see them if we did not have this place together, so it’s nice to see how this place brings people together.” Frej

An investigation from the Danish interest organization “Danske Torpare” (with 10500 members), shows that the average Danish vacation house owner visits his house about 15 times during a year and spends on average 43 nights in their property.

(Bilstöm, Rein, Scb. 2013(22))

”One of the parts I really like, is that you can have a part of [the farm] and not feel guilty for not using it too little. If I would have a summer house or a vacation home for my own I would feel guilty 90% of the time for not using it.” Marie H

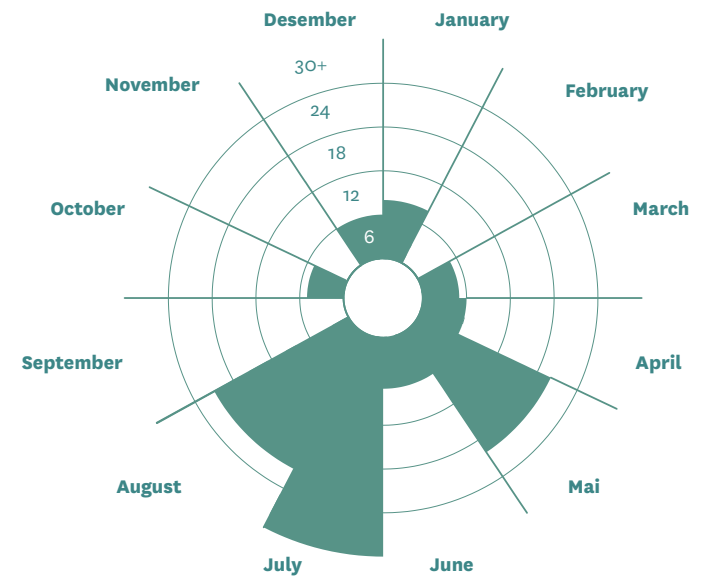


Diagram showing nights spent on the farm in 2014

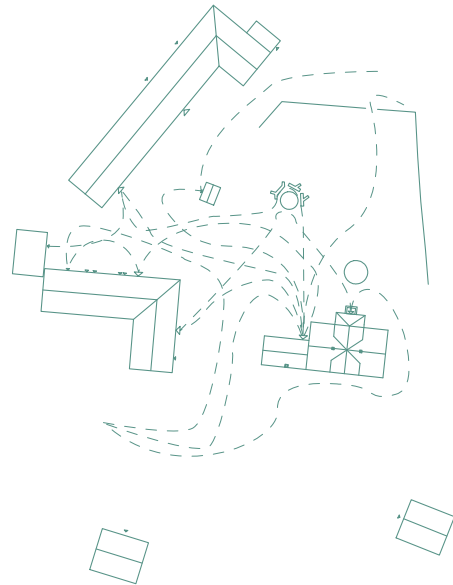


Diagram of use during low season

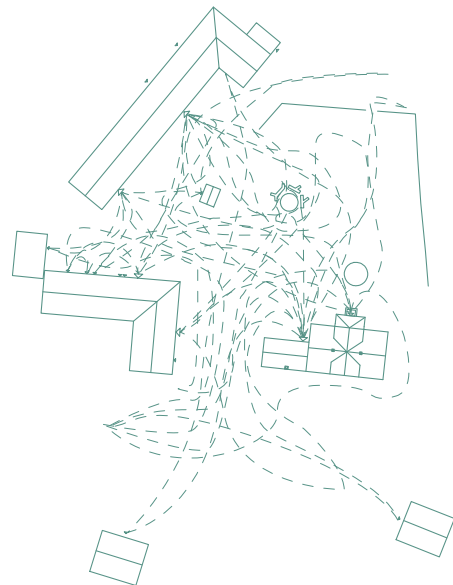


Diagram of use during high season

Challenges in Use

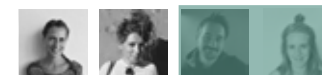
Although the need for more space and privacy currently only appear during high season in the summer time, or when larger groups have workshops at the farm, that need has to be seen in a longer perspective.

“We need something to happen because the issue is that we are a lot of people and we are making families. So the reality is that we are going to be more people there over time.” Andreas.

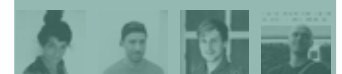
During high season, the core of the challenge can be seen as a purely architectural challenge, as the existing facilities get tested by their qualities, like the wish for noise reduction, parallel living spaces or just simple spaces for contemplation.

“Creating a space where all the loud, noisy people could hang out or that you could redraw from them, just so you have the possibility to pick and choose and not be obliged to be a part of it. So maybe a place for families ?” Marie B

Owners with Children 2014

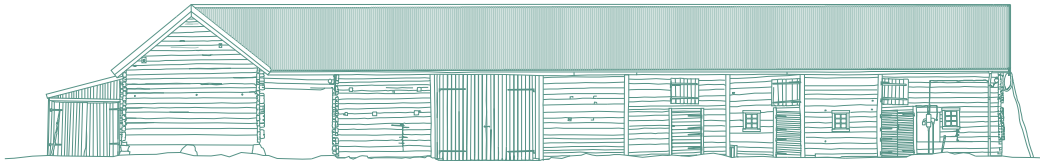


Owners with Children 2020

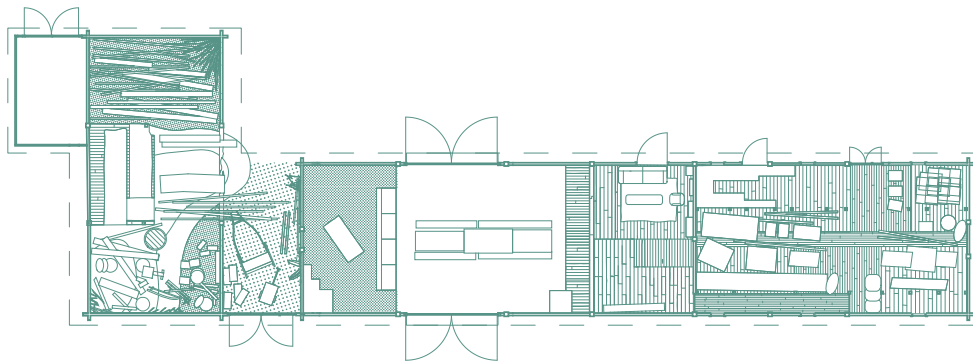


Thesis

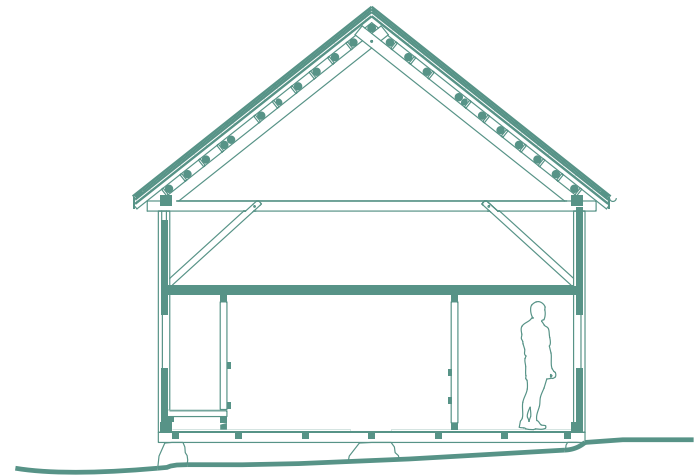
Building to be Transformed



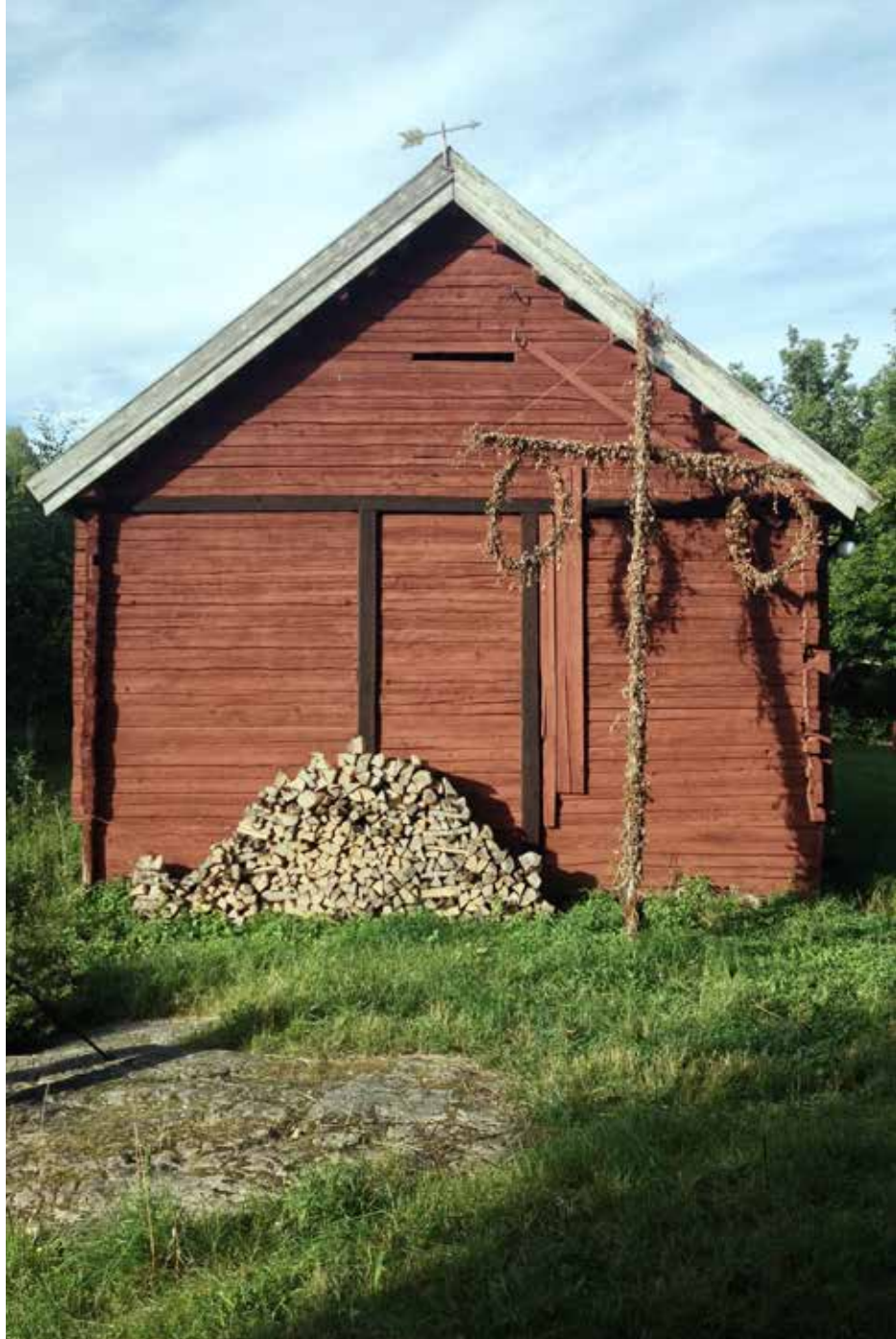
Existing Elevation north west

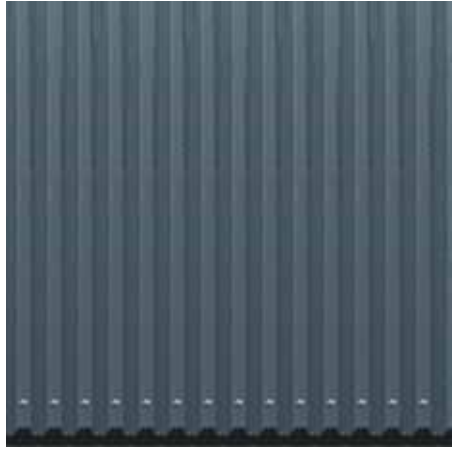
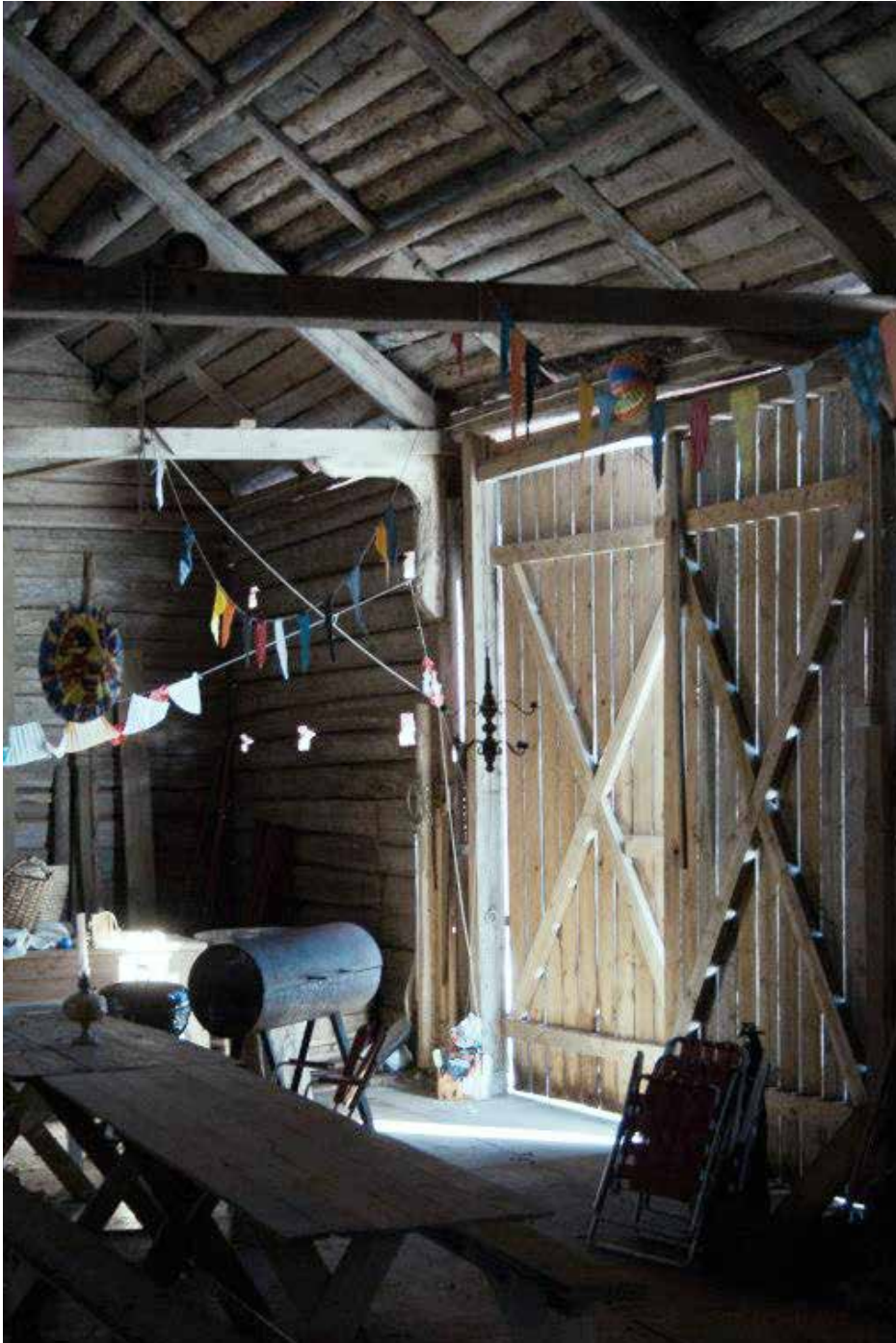


Existing Plan



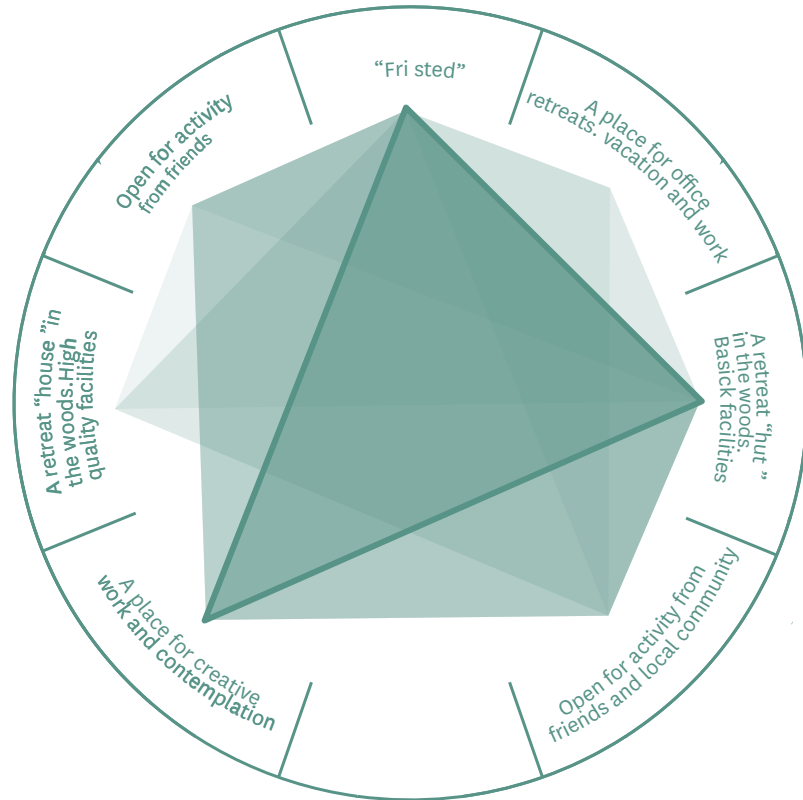
Existing Plan





Values and Identity Diagram

Based on 12 Interviews



Intention

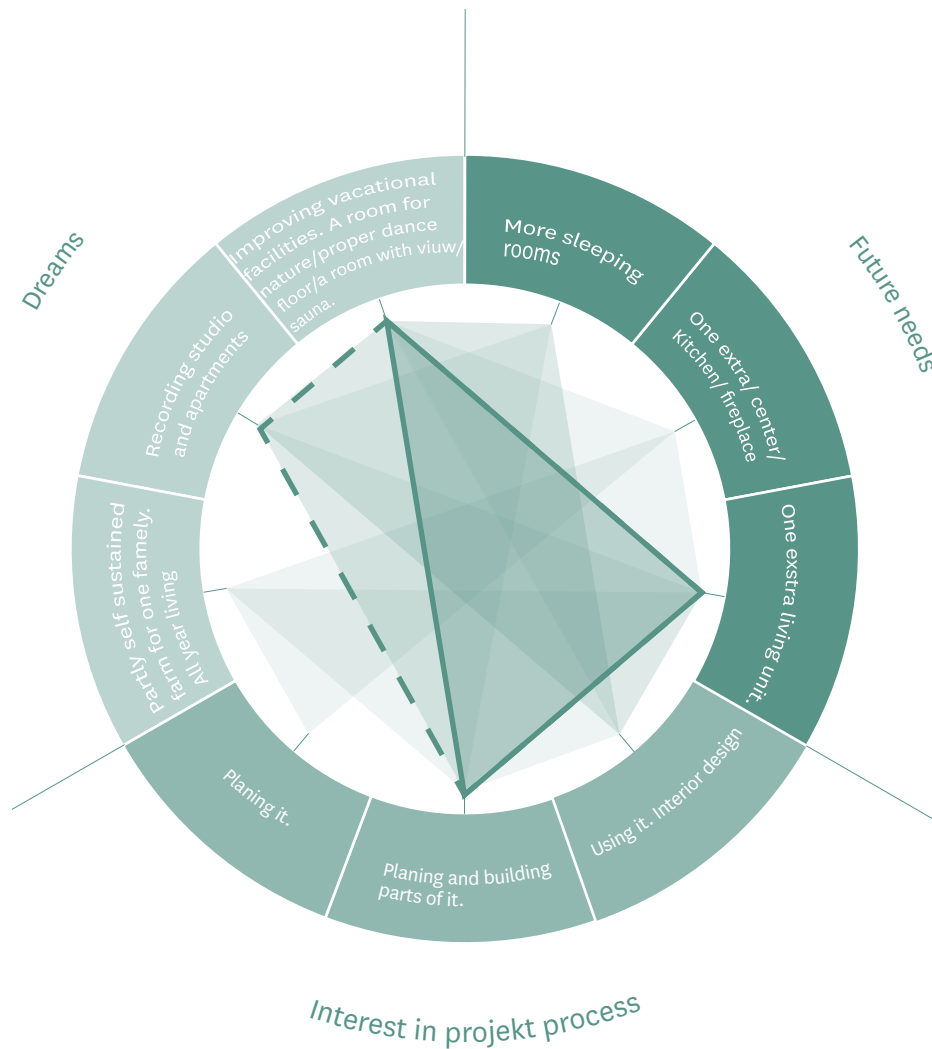
As Majahult is dependent of the community using it and the community so defined by the spatial spaces of the old farm, this project is aiming at activating the creative potential in the Majahult community through a participation process, that on one side identifies values, identity, needs and dreams. On the other side, it establishes a proposal, that reads the site based on an attitude formed through stating the values of the building and combining them in a time-phased vision for a transformation of the barn buildings, creating new spaces that are fitted for today's needs and tomorrow's dreams.

A vision for a transformation of the barn spaces would in that sense also create the frame for a transformation of the community and could create lasting commitment to the transformed spaces.

My starting point is a transformation of the big barn building in the sense of finding a program for using it more and thereby preserving it, but want to hold the possibility of changing to or including the small barn as my investigation proceeds.

Vision Diagram

Based on 12 interviues



Vision and Guiding Program

Vision

Transforming the big barn to become more accessible for creative work, events and be open for temporary use from the local community and friends.

Guiding Program

One housing unit for artist residents/ Recording studio / Living room/ Rentable space

Flexible event space / Rentable space

One guest house unit for basic living/ Fireplace/ Green house

Hand-In Scales and Participation Process

In my final drawings, themes such as landscape, still leben and portrait will be used for displaying the characteristics of each scale

Landscape 1:200/500 Site plan

Still leben 1:50/100 Plans, sections and elevations

Portrait 1:10/20 Details

Spatial illustrations of exterior and interior

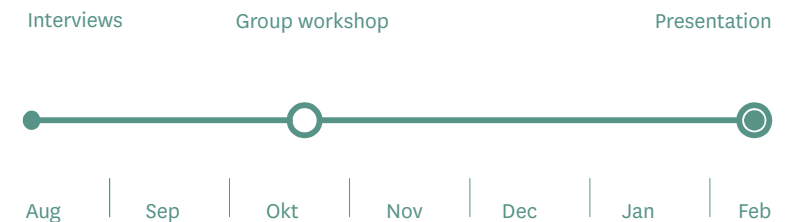
Process material: Interviews and workshop documentation

Presentation models: Landscape 1:200 /500
Still leben 1:50/100 structure

All scales are guiding and may be changed during the project

Participation

As being primarily a participation project, part one of three is already completed and continues in a feedback workshop around atmospheres of selected functions before presenting the final vision to the community in the end of February, at the same time inviting them to join the master thesis presentation.



References

Sources and Articles

Articles

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scb.se (1) http://www.scb.se/en_/Finding-statistics/Statistics-by-subject-area/Population/Population-composition/Population-statistics/Aktuell-Pong/25795/Yearly-statistics--Municipalities-Countries-and-the-whole-country/159277/

Keshavarz, Mahmoud 2010-2011 "Design and Dissensus Framing and staging participation in design research" <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2752/089279313X13968799815994>

Participation Method and Practice

<http://www.baupiloten.com/en/partizipation-english/>

Books

Naven, Anne-Dorte, 1987. "At Bo i Fællesskab" Arkitektenes

forlag, københavn. ISBN 87-7407-079-7.



Dovecote Studio



Glenn mercutte arkitekts Marika house



Vicens sarrablo and Jaume Colom Conversion of horse



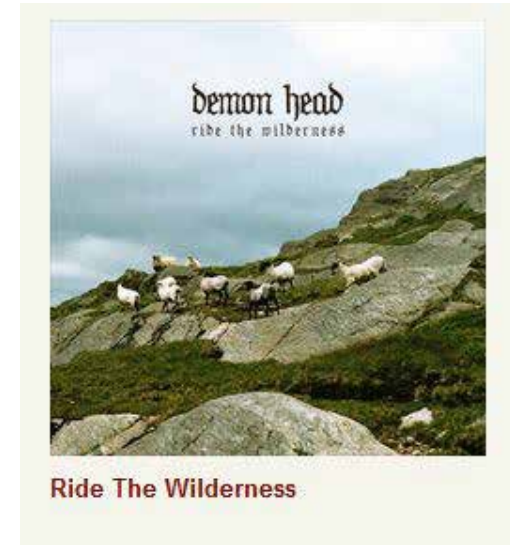
Neumann arkitekten S(ch)austall



Appendix



Øya teatret production workshop



Ride The Wilderness



Demon Head recording and concert on Majahult



Mid-Summer at Majahult



Mid-Summer at Majahult



