Craftopia
Exploring building cultures

The era of Anthropocene has set a drastic change in our environment. Lack of global perspective and stratification of modern society has led us to a realm of expertise where every labour, knowledge and actors are separate entities communicating through protocols and polarised comfort zones. By researching tools of space making and material curation we hope to move closer to understanding the social, economic and ecologic implications of our design decisions. Building cultures is our main focus through which we unravel larger systems at work and potentially create awareness and inclusion.

Craftopia explores building as a dialogue, as a social act, as a universal language that derives from the sense of each place. We will dive into the specificities of a given place to understand larger systems at stake. Acting on the micro scale – site-material-detail-builder goes hand in hand with looking at the macro scale – the resource, the politics, the planet. We will learn from the rural and the urban conditions of Norrland in order to develop accessible tools and methods of architecture that can support and nurture stronger communities around common assets.

Site of Investigation

Our testbed will be two poles of human settlements in Norrland. In fall we will set out into The Baltic Sea to temporary join the remote community of Holmön island. Being remote, constrained by the sea and counting well under 100 people it presents an opportunity to understand the fundamentals of human co-existence and interrelation with natural world as well as the importance of sustainable resource management. In Spring we will focus on central part of Umeå (the grided city) where we will investigate urbanity and the contemporary trends of building industry.

One of our entry points will be guided through the lens of J.Rydén’s book Allborgarätten. A way to tackle rural commons, Allemansrätten that states the right to access the landscape and harvest its resources. This right was first labelled in 1940. Thus within 70 years society has shifted from rural to an urban condition whereas Allemansrätten remains the same. How can one define an updated version of Allemansrätten that reflects the state of contemporary urbanized society? What can urbanized societies learn from communities like Holmön and how countryside has to adapt to withstand today’s depopulation trends?

Studio Agenda and Methodology

Understanding how resources are made, distributed and consumed will act as our conceptual design tool to shape more resilient and sustainable communities. Our entry point to chosen sites and topics will be exploring the art of building in the given context. We will investigate and apply tools of architecture that can support and initiate alternative ways of doing society in the context of Umeå and Norrland.

In Fall semester we will study the vernacular, the human scale tectonics, the self-built and the self-sufficient aspects of Holmön to interpret, renovate, redesign and critically re-imagine the built and social environment. In Spring we will push the limits of our imagination and expand our field of investigation towards wider network of potential spaces, communities and agencies that can explore new models of future living. Industrialization, digitalisation, prefabrication, adaptability and up-scalability will be our tools and challenges towards stronger communities.

Studio introduction: Wednesday 01 SEP at 14:00 hrs on Zoom