“Nya gröna vågen”
- the new back-to-the-landers:
Growing new pathways
to the future

Mattias Nitschke
“Nya gröna vågen” - the new back-to-the-landers: Growing new pathways to the future

Mattias Nitschke

Supervisor: Martin Gren
Subject Reviewer: Per-Olof Hallin
## Contents

1 **Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 1  
1.1 Problem Statement and Aim ......................................................................................... 1  

2 **Background** .................................................................................................................. 2  
2.1 Locating “Nya Gröna Vägen”: NGV as a phenomenon and in research .................... 2  
2.2 Origins: Gröna vägen and its history .......................................................................... 3  
2.3 Society, “Nya Gröna Vägen” and Analytical Perspectives ........................................ 4  
  2.3.1 “Nya gröna vägen”, modernity and progress ...................................................... 4  
  2.3.2 “Nya gröna vägen” as a new alternative movement? ......................................... 6  
2.4 “Nya gröna vägen”: A Trend to Count on? ................................................................. 6  

3 **Ontological Positioning and Conceptual Framework** .................................................. 7  
3.1 Ontological positioning ............................................................................................... 7  
3.2 Conceptual framework ............................................................................................... 8  
  3.2.1 Material Practices .................................................................................................. 8  
  3.2.2 Human and non-human relations in material practices ....................................... 9  
  3.2.3 Ideas linked to material practices ........................................................................ 10  
3.3 Summary of Conceptual framework .......................................................................... 11  

4 **Methods** ...................................................................................................................... 13  
4.1 Practice theory research: A qualitative approach ....................................................... 13  
  4.1.1 Ethnography ....................................................................................................... 13  
  4.1.2 Collection of material: semi-structured Interviews ................................................ 14  
  4.1.3 Collection of material: Observations .................................................................... 15  
  4.1.4 Collection of material: visual documentation ....................................................... 16  
  4.1.5 Constructing the field of practice and description of informants .......................... 17  
4.2 Processing of material and Operationalisation ........................................................... 18  
  4.2.1 Transcription and interview material coding process .......................................... 18  
  4.2.2 Operationalisation of the Conceptual Framework ............................................... 18  
4.3 Reflexivity ..................................................................................................................... 20  
4.4 Ethics ............................................................................................................................ 20  

5 **Results** ........................................................................................................................ 20  
5.1 Person 1 ...................................................................................................................... 20  
5.2 Person 2 ...................................................................................................................... 22  
5.3 Person 3 ...................................................................................................................... 25  
5.4 Person 4 ...................................................................................................................... 27  
5.5 Person 5 ...................................................................................................................... 29  

6 **Analysis** ....................................................................................................................... 32  
6.1 Cultivating knowledge embodied in alternative lives ............................................... 32
“Nya gröna vågen”: Growing new ways for the future

MATTIAS NITSCHKE

Nitschke, M., 2019: “Nya gröna vågen”– the new back-to-the-landers; growing new pathways to the future. 
*Master thesis in Sustainable Development at Uppsala University. No. 2019/60, 45 pp, 30 ECTS/hp*

**Abstract:**

In the face of climate change, political instability, ecological destruction, extinction of species and other global issues humanity is facing, various studies are showing that a radical societal transformation is needed to avoid an ecological collapse. This thesis explores the contemporary social-environmental phenomenon “nya gröna vågen” (new-back-to-the-landers) in Sweden as a response to an urgent need for societal transformation as well as a resistance to the conventional modern society. The aim of the study is to examine the material practices in which people within “nya gröna vågen” are involved, how their ideas relate to those practices, and what could be learned from the practitioners in terms of future pathways. To meet this aim, a variant of practice theory is used, which acknowledges non-human actors as well as ideas. Material practice is conceptualized as a network of associations of human and non-humans in specific time-spaces. The study uses semi-structured interviews with practitioners within “nya gröna vågen” and observations. The results show that practices within “nya gröna vågen” are connected to the physical surrounding where they are performed. The material practices of, for example, food provisioning, are understood as embodied understandings of the world made up by a network of human and non-human actors. Further, the material practices within “nya gröna vågen” are based on the idea of a co-creation of human and non-human actors shaping the world. The results also indicate how the actors’ material world-making practices responds to the current planetary situation. In response to what they perceive to be an ecological crisis, they have become involved in practices like regenerative agriculture, adapting to the evolving landscape and water projects. The results also present how the material practices bounded to a specific place as a platform for life are giving a sense of stability and belonging. A relational way of life where people are shaping new imaginations on how to navigate and make life in the future through practices in human/non-human networks.

**Keywords:** Sustainable development, gröna vågen, nya gröna vågen, non-human, material practices, modernity, ontological turn, alternative food provisioning practices, physical surroundings, back-to-the-land, practice theory

*Mattias Nitschke, Department of Earth Sciences, Uppsala University, Villavägen 16, SE- 752 36 Uppsala, Sweden*
“Nya gröna vågen”: Growing new pathways to the future

MATTIAS NITSCHKE


Summary:
In the face of climate change, political instability, ecological destruction, extinction of species and other global issues humanity is facing, various studies are showing that a radical societal transformation is needed to avoid an ecological collapse. This thesis explores the contemporary social-environmental phenomenon “nya gröna vågen”, (new-back-to-the-landers) in Sweden as a response to an urgent need for societal transformation as well as a resistance to the conventional modern society. The aim of the study is to examine the material practices in which people within “nya gröna vågen” are involved, how their ideas relate to those practices, and what could be learned from the practitioners in terms of future pathways. The study uses semi-structured interviews with practitioners within “nya gröna vågen” and observations. The results show that practices within “nya gröna vågen” are connected to the physical surrounding where they are performed. The material practices of, for example, food provisioning, are understood as embodied understandings of the world made up by a network of human and non-human actors. The results also indicate how the actors’ material world-making practices respond to the current planetary situation. In response to what they perceive to be an ecological crisis, they have become involved in practices like regenerative agriculture, adapting to the evolving landscape and water projects. The results also present how the material practices bounded to a specific place as a platform for life are giving a sense of stability and belonging. A relational way of life where people are shaping new imaginations on how to navigate and make life in the future through practices in human/non-human networks.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, gröna vågen, nya gröna vågen, non-human, material practices, modernity, ontological turn, alternative food provisioning practices, physical surroundings, back-to-the-land, practice theory

Mattias Nitschke, Department of Earth Sciences, Uppsala University, Villavägen 16, SE- 752 36 Uppsala, Sweden
List of figures

**Figure 1**: One of the informant’s partly homebuilt house, a homebuilt greenhouse, solar panels on the roof, firewood for heating and surrounding fields and forest (Person 5).

**Figure 2**: A field with vegetables and fence around, the field is connected and grow together with the forest. (Agnes Rembe 2018)

**Figure 3**: Cabbage and kale planted by one of the informants in raised beds (Person 2 2018).

**Figure 4**: A plot prepared for potatoes (Mattias Nitschke 2019).

**Figure 5**: A homebuilt greenhouse, gardens, forest and a constructed pond for watering the vegetables (Agnes Rembe 2018).
**Abbreviations**

GV  Gröna vågen (back-to-the-landers)
NGV Nya gröna vågen (new-back-to-the-landers)
CSA Community Supported Agriculture
1 Introduction

In the face of climate change, political instability, ecological destruction, extinction of species and other global issues facing humanity, there are urgent discussions on how to transform society in more sustainable and just ways. Various studies have shown that a radical societal transformation is needed in order to avoid an ecological collapse (Leggewie & Welzer 2010). In Sweden the government is responding to this alarm call by verbally promising a rapid shift to a sustainable future, but arguably still upholding status quo (Naturvårdsverket 2018; Naturvårdsverket 2019; UNFCCC, 2019). In parallel, a grassroots trend in Sweden, commonly named “nya gröna vågen” (in English; “the new green wave”), is practically responding to this present situation in multiple ways. This phenomenon most commonly refers to a movement of people that are critical to the current economic, political system and move from cities to the countryside with the idea of being a part of a societal transformation (Wilbur 2013).

“Nya gröna vågen” (NGV) has its origins in the 1960-70s when mostly young people wanted to change the society, often with motivations linked to environmental, social and economic issues, and with a focus on communal living and self-sufficiency. This trend was simply known as “gröna vågen” (GV), it received considerable attention and influenced some changes in Swedish society at the time but was eventually to fade away (Belasco 1989). However, during the last decade, in Sweden and elsewhere in global north, there has been a growing trend of people building local communities with a focus on self-sufficiency (Halfacree 2007a).

In Sweden, more people chose to move out from the cities and the interest in growing food and learn about small-scale farming is increasing (Moberg & Zetterdahl 2018). This trend is present in various ways, for example, as a rapid popularity and number of courses in permaculture and self-sufficiency, as well as being frequently portrayed and discussed in media (Moberg & Zetterdahl 2018). Magazines and newspapers are constantly writing this new phenomenon and because of its similarities to GV, it is often referred to as “nya gröna vågen” i.e. the new back-to-the-landers.

It has been argued that this new interest in going back-to-the-land is not merely a reproduction of the previous back-to-the-land movement in 1960-70s. Even though the pattern of migration to rural areas, some of the critique of society and the emphasis on communal living are similar, there are many characteristics that differ (Halfacree 2007a). The present trend seems to be more focused on relationships, both to land and physical surroundings, as well as to other humans, communities and networks. There is also a tendency to engage with local issues and land together with wider issues and the society as a whole in order to develop and shape alternative lives (Wilbur 2013).

Even though there are multiple reasons why people move from urban to rural areas, those of this possibly new emerging distinct movement are doing so with the idea of leaving mainstream society as a practical response to ecological, climate, social and economic issues (Johansson & Honkanen 2018; Halfacree 2007a; Wilbur 2013). Furthermore, this change of how to live life also often corresponds to a practical orientation towards alternative ideas of a societal transformation. Consequently, NVG is presented as a resistance to what is believed to be an unjust exploitation of humans and non-humans, and where people want to learn in practice how to change their ecological footprint and do things on their own, instead of waiting for changes to be done in a top-down structure (Göransson & Burén 2014, Johansson & Honkanen 2018). Whilst most of the attention on the NGV, in media and research, has been focused on the motivations behind the change in ways of living, this thesis instead investigates what is happening in NGV-places and how the practices express alternative ways of living in a world of crisis.

1.1 Problem Statement and Aim

This thesis looks at “nya gröna vågen” (NGV) as an expression of a wider critique of modern society that is facing major social and ecological issues. It focuses on the alternative lives shaped at NGV-
places with everyday practices as a central part. The aim is to examine what material practices people are involved in, how people’s ideas relates to those practices, and what could be learned from those for the future. Thus, the thesis will answer three research questions:

1. What kind of material practices are people of “nya gröna vågen” involved in?
2. What ideas and understandings do the practitioners themselves assign to those practices?
3. What can be learned from those material practices, and the ideas connected to them, when making life in the future?

The first question will set the stage for identifying the practices that are a part of the alternative lives within NGV. The second question reorients the exploration towards ideas and understandings that practitioners themselves assign to their own practices. Lastly, the third question places the NGV in a broader context of modern society and the current and future planetary situation in order to evaluate what could be learned from NGV towards the future that is coming.

2 Background

Through previous research, this section will give a background to the concept GV, its origins, and how it has been studied within the academic field. Moreover, it will navigate some conceptual confusions around the phenomena NGV, its different names and the shortcomings in previous studies. Thereafter, NGV will be related to modernity and criticism of progress and the capitalist system.

2.1 Locating “Nya Gröna Vågen”: NGV as a phenomenon and in research

Since around twenty years back, a trend similar to the GV of the 1960-70s began to form (Wilbur 2013). This contemporary phenomenon consists of a growing number of people moving from urban to rural areas with the interest in self-sufficiency, autonomy, ecological concern, getting closer to nature and exploring ways of transforming the society. This NGV has, so far, received a limited interest within academia and research, especially outside USA (Wilbur 2013). Internationally, it is often referred to as “new-back-to-the-landers”, and in Sweden, it is frequently portrayed and discussed in media and popular science under the name of “gröna vågen 2.0” or “nya gröna vågen” which is used in this study.

The rise of the NGV, as well as the attention it has received is evident in various forms. For example, commercial tv-shows are portraying people living on farms trying to be self-sufficient, numerous new books on the subject are published every year, and transition towns and networks are rapidly growing in numbers (see Omställning.net n.d; Arbman 2019a). Furthermore, Community Supported Agricultures (CSA) are growing in numbers, “REKO-ringar” are gaining in popularity, as well as the fact that more people are moving to rural areas than the amount of people leaving rural areas (see Hushållningssällskapet.se n.d; Göransson & Burén 2014). In addition, the number of courses in self-sufficiency have multiplied during the last years and the self-sufficiency website “alternative.nu” have hundreds of thousands visits every month (see Arbman 2019a, Arbman 2019b). However, despite this massive interest in public media, almost no research has been done on the subject. Although, some universities, such as Umeå University and Swedish University of Agricultural Science are currently starting up some research projects on NGV or on aspects connected to this phenomenon. Even though the phenomenon of NGV is spreading in contemporary society, the academic research is still limited, which motivates further exploration.

In previous research, the NGV has been referred to with many different labels. For example, “neo-farming”, “neo”- or “radical ruralism” or “new-pioneers” (Wilbur 2013). Other more distinctive movement, such as transition towns or permaculture, could also be counted as parts of the broader phenomena of NGV (Halfacree 2007a). There has been a somewhat confusing way of trying to map
out and categorising this phenomenon because the common denominator of a radical ruralism could be expressed in many ways, and the motivations behind are also often diverse.

Most of the research in this field has been focused on the migration itself to understand migration patterns and why people are moving (Wilbur 2013). The research aiming to map out the typology have shown that some people appear to live in less densely populated areas close to cities while keeping contact with urban areas through work while others are driven by the availability, low costs of living and romantic ideas of the life on the countryside (Halfacree & Rivera 2012; Wilbur 2013). Some people rather consider the “anti-urbanism” and “pro-ruralism” where either escaping the city or moving to the countryside with the ambition to strengthen rural areas, are motives behind moving. There are also examples of people resisting the urban norm by seeking progressive ideas and opportunities for an alternative life on the countryside (Trainer 2006; Halfacree 2007b; Kingsnorth, 2010; Wilbur 2014).

The difficulty to categorise and spatialise NGV is not only connected to the variety of motivations to migrate, but also how they are connected to the actions by those actors. It seems like the current attempts to spatialise is only based on a spatial distinction between urban and rural. In contrast, it could arguably be widened to a spatiality including practices in specific time-spaces, not only conceived in the framework of rural and urban. Rather, a more complex spatiality where places, physical surroundings and relations within those networks are acknowledged (Reckwitz 2002; Wilbur 2013; Tsing 2015). Although, people are spread out on the countryside with different ideas, the lives they are living and their individual political actions are still part of a larger political formation that challenge status quo (Halfacree 2007a, Halfacree 2007b). While this larger formation is mostly portrayed as a more left-wing oriented movement with progressive ideas, it could also be expressed with alt- or far-right, racist or nationalist ideologies that in various ways are attached to values of “the local” (Halfacree 2007b).

NGV has no direct connection to institutionalised political organisations or social movements. It is rather expressed through informal practices that people are involved in, such as alternative food provisioning practices, social organisation and economic support structures. Issues of climate change, the industrial food system or ecological destruction are all directly or indirectly present in their lives and their practices, as well as their migration ‘back-to-the-land’. People of NGV, despite their differences of ideas and motives for migration, are a part of the same radical movement where they embody alternative models of life, standing in contrast to the urban norm. This way of living in itself becomes the political action and influence for change (Wilbur 2013), while it is embodying the seeking for an alternative outside the conventional system. It comes to expression in many ways: from anti-capitalist and anti-modernity, to self-sufficiency and human- non-human relations (Neal 2013). Thus, spatialising the phenomenon only in an urban-rural context seems to the too simplistic in a movement based on practices in specific time-spaces.

2.2 Origins: Gröna vågen and its history

There is a long history when it comes to ideas such as rejecting consumption and working less. The idea to live a simpler life goes back hundreds of years. Taking form in various movements, from the ancient Greeks arguing for a happier life without money, to indigenous cultures not working more than what is needed to survive, and not measuring happiness in material goods (Krznaric 2013). Alternative movements and rejection of luxury or income has been done throughout the history of humankind. It is expressed in different ways and is based on various philosophical foundations depending on the time and space where they are lived. Some are more of a reproduction of the current system in an alternative way, while others, like indigenous cultures are fundamentally different from modern societies (Krznaric 2013). Thus, ideas that seek wellbeing in alternative social or economic organisation are not new. Moreover, other than the historical examples, there are also numerous contemporary movements representing similar ideas, from degrowth to deep ecology (see Dryzek 2013; Calvário & Otero 2014). However, it has been argued that a more distinctive movement with a particularly “green” identity, including people moving from urban to rural areas, began to form in the
1960s (Jacob 1997; Wilbur 2013). This will serve as the foundation for the focus on the contemporary Swedish “nya gröna vågen” in this thesis.

The phenomenon “gröna vågen” is often used to refer to this counter cultural movement in the late 1960s and early 1970. People’s motivations were often linked to environmental issues, and with a focus on communal living, self-sufficiency and an autonomous life outside the market system. It was a part of a wider critique of urban consumer-society, a materialist lifestyle and the industrial food system. Moreover, the people of the GV often had the re-connection with land, “nature” and an ecological sustainable life as a central theme. In other words, a life that in many ways questioned the values and norms in the mainstream society (Halfacree 2007a; Wilbur 2013; Calvário & Otero 2014).

In USA this trend, consisting mainly of young people who were tired of war, industrial life and the lack of a social community feeling in the growing cities, is called back-to-the-land, referring to people’s urge to go back to the land to create a different life in resistance to mainstream culture (Jacob & Brinkerhoff 1986; Wilbur 2013). Similarly, in Sweden people living in cities moved to the countryside, resisting the high tempo, production, and consumption, in exchange for a simpler life close to nature coupled with small-scale agriculture and collective living (Holmberg 1998). This occurred at the same time as the environmental movement brought forward a critic of consumer culture, politics, economic and social organisation that also influenced a “green” migration to the countryside. (Belasco 1989). The GV thus embodied a resistance to conventional urban progress, as well as living a more simplistic life with lower consumption and reduced individual ecological destruction (Coffin & Lipsey 1981). Edginton (2008) states that the foundation of the GV was built around an ideology of counter urbanisation centred around practices and protection of the environment.

Even though GV was fading out in the late 1970s, the strong ideology and especially the practices of connection to nature, environment and collectiveness were a solid basis for building and sustaining future environmental activists (Jacob & Brinkerhoff 1986; Edginton 2008). Furthermore, GV and the relations built during this period served as a foundation for alternative infrastructure. This is argued to be a basis for continued alternative food ways, cooperatives, communities and gardens, and in the long run also inspiring models of alternative economy, social organisation and power distribution (Belasco 1989).

2.3 Society, “Nya Gröna Vågen” and Analytical Perspectives

GV has always been considered as a countercultural movement that challenges existing structures and norms of mainstream society (Halfacree 2007a). Even though ideas of NGV are not always explicitly expressed in political engagement, the actions are argued to embody criticism to modernity. As Wilbur (2013: 151) writes: “Moving to the countryside involves distancing oneself from centres of capitalist accumulation and entering a peripheral zone wherein natural productive features (e.g. soil, vegetation and topography) can be employed to fashion an alternative, sustainable mode of living”. The following sections will present the idea of modern thought and relate it to NGV as an alternative movement for the future.

2.3.1 “Nya gröna vågen”, modernity and progress

Today, modernity is influencing almost every human and society in the world (Latour 1993). Modernity, as a set of ideas of how to understand and conduct life, originates from the so-called “west”, and has widely spread with the rise of globalisation. It is often argued that the modern idea of what it means to be human have its foundation in human rationalism and progress (Dryzek 2013). This is an understanding of humans based on the idea that they are the only living beings that are able to understand the truth and how the world works. Therefore, it is up to humans to use their rationality to make sense of the world (Evernden 1993). Moreover, human progress is the most important thing, and through this we develop the world by moving from the past to a utopian future that is supposed to be better, which is our way to make sense of and value both humanity and our individual lives. Related to this is the idea that humans are conceived of as the only active agents in relation to what is thought to
be a passive material environment outside of society (Lenton & Latour 2018). “Nature” therefore becomes subordinated the will of humans, as it is perceived to be a “dead” object for them to dominate and control in order to use it as a resource for their own progress. This kind of thinking around the concept of progress is something that is often expressed and legitimised under, or in relation to, other categorizations such as development, capitalism or modernity (Büscher et al. 2012).

According to Kingsnorth (2010), there is and has been an undoubted trust in the promises and plans of modernity, and not least, when tied to the concept of progress. “This is received wisdom, passed down over generations; a curiously Pavlovian reaction. The assumptions behind it are clear: city good, country bad; city modern, country backward; consumption modern, production antiquated; ‘progress’ good, always and forever” (Kingsnorth 2010:1). This system of modern dualisms, where it on one side represents “going forward and improving” and the other “going backwards” forms a basis for our modern civilization. Accordingly, this modern way of understanding the world implies that things are separated and will only be understood as individual parts, instead of being part of a complex system interdependent on each other. For example, human separated from “nature”, rural/urban or soul/body (Haïla 2000, Hedlund- de Witt 2014).

Modernity is reproduced by a linear development, from past, via the present, towards future, that characterises economic growth, efficiency, production and usage of more and better technology to improve the world (Giddings et al 2002). To transform “empty” rural spaces to industries, use “nature” as an instrument for human wealth and growth, upgrade technology to make things more efficient are considered as inseparable of the emancipatory potentials of human modern culture. The improvements that is promised by the emancipatory processes of modernisation are with us all the time and almost everywhere (Giddings et al 2002). All societal and personal dreams are built around it: democracy, growth, science and technology. People are living with the hope that economies will grow, and science will improve. Humans perceive themselves as a part of and dependent of this development, on which the understanding of the world is founded. Hence, everything in the world is dependent on us, humans (Tsing 2015). In this process of capitalism, people, eco-systems, relations and most other things have been turned into commodities for a global market, used as instruments for profit and growth. Complex systems have been simplified into resources to fit into the idea of progress, with destructive consequences (Giddings et al 2002; Dryzek 2013; Raworth 2017).

This idea of progress, which is such an essential feature of modernity, is thus getting more and more questioned. It cannot provide what was promises, and progress is often also causing serious environmental and social problems (Hopwood et al 2005). Progress like capitalism, is also very effective in contributing to the destruction of natural landscapes. It is creating ecological disasters, killing species, emitting carbon dioxide and producing social inequity. This development in the name of progress is evidently resulting in more frequent climate change, mass-extinction of species, extreme weather events, poverty, unemployment, loss of biodiversity, plastic pollution and much more (Hopwood et al 2005; Steffen et al 2015). Consequently, many environmentalists argue that there is an ecological crisis going on that is driven by capitalist modernity, which are about to ruin the whole biosphere (Escobar 2008). According to Leggewie and Welzer (2010), the world is starting to ‘shake’ around us and the consequences of this crisis is far beyond only a theoretical matter: it is also experienced by people, creating imaginations and practices of the devastation if it continues. Many argue that what we are experiencing now is not just a single event, it is only the beginning (Leggewie & Welzer 2010). Tsing (2015) argues that most of the time this is just portrayed to be irregularities outside the stable machinery of modernity, an exception of how the world works. Yet, people are experiencing this precarity as a condition for our time, this is now the reality of a contemporary world (Tsing 2015).

To sum up, the story of modernity, especially in relation to ‘progress’, and which is so embedded in society and human perceptions of the world, is not making sense anymore (Hedlund- de Witt 2014; Evermden 1993). Contrary to modernity’s ideal of human mastery and emancipation, humans are not in control of everything, in fact not even of themselves. The stable system around us is unable to give what it promises, and we can no longer rely on status quo (Tsing 2015). This very modern system of thought, from which we are understanding reality and base our ‘world-making projects’ upon are paradoxically also the cause of destruction. In effect, it also fails in making sense of what it means to
be human in ways that are relevant for our present situation. When the system through which we understand the world is starting to fall apart, a critical precarity of the world becomes apparent (Tsing 2015). Progress, and all the effort we, the moderns, have put into it, notably an endless linear development, is no longer convincing. We need to question ourselves and decide upon what world we are really fighting for (Evernden 1993). The modern system cannot deliver what it promises. We are inhabiting land that cannot subsist us, and our physical surroundings and the climate are now agencies that actively influence also our very own world-making projects. Some argue that the planet and the world we know and are building our lives with cannot not subsist us anymore (Steffen et al 2015).

2.3.2 “Nya gröna vågen” as a new alternative movement?

It has been argued that the contemporary phenomenon of the NGV movement embodies a resistance to the very foundations of contemporary modern society and by its way of organising lives outside the conventional it also explores alternatives for the future. (Halfacree 2007a; Gross 2009; Wilbur 2014). The life created at those places and “the radicalism implied in these projects comes from the proposed reconfiguration of dominant ethical norms and market relations, utilising the unique potential of rural spaces, in their capacity as regions of food production, as platforms from which these challenges are launched” (Wilbur 2013:3). Moreover, Calvário and Otero (2014) argue that the migration to the countryside by NGV is an act of resistance to progress in itself; “Since the advent of capitalism, the ‘countryside’ has played a role of critique to rationalist abstraction, commodification of land and labour, modern state and politics, individual alienation, and the dissolution of social bonds.” (Calvário & Otero 2014:173)

One central part of NGV is self-sufficiency or at least some kind of alternative food production. In the industrial food system, food is not seen as a human right, instead it turned into a commodity grown for a marked to make profit (Magdoff 2012). According to Gross (2009), alternative food provisioning practices and non-capitalist-food-ways is only by its practice a rebellion to an industrial food system that have transformed society’s relation to food and food production (Gross 2009). It is argued that alienation from the food that we are eating and the land around us triggers alternative ways of making sense of the world. One of them being growing food for own use instead of selling time to earn money and buy food and other material things. This is arguably a way of both rebelling against the capitalist system of selling time and the industrial food system where food is a commodity (Gross 2009).

Moreover, this not only mean a rebellion or a resistance to the industrial agriculture. Since the understanding of the world is starting to change, and the previous frameworks does not satisfy people anymore, alternative ways are explored. One of them being to recognise the physical surrounding and place. “Detachment from place characterizes the global industrial food system, which is ready to do battle over labels of origin. For people who produce or forage for their own food, the particular place where their food comes from holds a lot of meaning” (Gross 2009:4). It is also argued that a small-scale autonomous agriculture based on ethical, economic and ecological values that clash with the industrial food system can open new networks for knowledge gathering and creating. A kind of knowledge that is embedded in the relations to the land and how agricultural practices are both developed in the interplay with other organisms and shared between practitioners (Wilbur 2014).

“Accordingly, the material form of a back-to-the-land farm is an indicator of both intent and practice, an evolving landscape design that actively contests ‘conventional’ or modernist understandings of how rural space should be used, and a site at which alternative understandings can be given material embodiment” (Wilbur 2013:7). NGV and the ongoing relations and practices at those places are both an embodied resistance to a system that is seen to be failing as well as an exploration of new ways of navigation and understanding a world beyond modernity.

2.4 “Nya gröna vågen”: A Trend to Count on?

GV has in Sweden been an influential countercultural phenomenon, and the contemporary event of NGV is widely discussed in the society. However, almost no research has been done in this subject and only a few have attempted to provide a deeper analysis of the lives of people being a part of it.
Therefore, a focus on the lives that are created at those places of NGV and how it is related to contemporary political concerns, and what we can learn from this, could contribute to new perspectives and a further understanding of this phenomena and its relation to the society we live in.

If we choose to see this as an ongoing process where the continuous entanglement of different materiality’s is the core to this phenomenon, we can explore what kind of new life that is created at those places. To acknowledge this migration as unfinished and a process of exploring, “this subsequent life becomes a messy, complicated, always unfinished co-production involving the people themselves, their entire everyday milieu and beyond” (Halfacree & Rivera 2012). This thesis will follow this line of focus and investigate how back-to-the-landers are politicising social organisation, economic structures, material relations, food production and ecological issues by their way of living (Halfacree & Rivera 2012).

By researching communities, one has a potential gain a deeper understanding of spiritual convictions, interaction to physical surroundings and political expressions (Wilbur 2013). NGV is not considered as revolution or a solution to all problems, rather as a way of performing alternative ways for orientation and making sense of life in times of ecological crisis, climate change and social injustice. “What the phenomenon instead reveals is the gradual opening of imagined and realised possibilities, of preconceived and spontaneous action that chips away (however incrementally) at structures that support coercive and hierarchical relationships” (Wilbur 2013:9).

Thus, people that are part of NGV are opening an alternative way of living in the world, which is opposing the idea of modernisation. The rural areas are not only a passive producer of goods, but a place where human and non-human interactions and sharing are making way for a different way of navigating the future. With this said, there are arguably reasons to investigate NGV and what can be learned from it.

3 Ontological Positioning and Conceptual Framework

The chapter will first clarify the ontological departure of this thesis. After that, the conceptual framework will be outlined by presenting and theorizing the approach to practices and the central concepts within. Finally, a summary of the conceptual framework and the central concept applicable for this study will be provided.

3.1 Ontological positioning

Throughout the history of science there has been a discussion on the nature of reality and the foundation for understanding the world. These ontological questions have often been related to the ability of humans to grasp the essence and functioning of their material surroundings. With the origins in the relation between the biophysical surrounding and human societies, the debate concern whether of those two imagined sides is the foundation of knowledge about our world. Furthermore, such debates relate to the restrictions of human consciousness and in what way we perceive and construct our understanding of the social and natural environment (Tetreault 2017).

It is common to identify two ontological and epistemological points of departure. First, ontological realism (or materialism) claims that the world is everything there is, and that everything that exist is dependent on the natural environment. It also declares the material world as prior to and independent of human concepts, thought or ideas or. In contrast, ontological idealism departs from the premise that human understanding of the world consists of ideas, and that ideas also can determine reality (Tetreault 2017). In social science, idealism has typically taken the form of social constructivism. The social world as it appears to humans is at the same time the product of their own human/social constructions and discourses. Our physical surrounding, the material world, is often defined as “nature” and is also constructed by the meaning humans give to it, which means that human’s understanding of the material world is determined by social constructions (Escobar 1996; Latour 2003).
In contrast, this thesis does not attempt to follow any of these two ontological positions. Instead it tries to make a middle way, or a third way beyond the positions of idealism and materialism. This has been done by many scholars in different ways (see Latour 2003; Kohn 2013 Tsing 2015), and more recently it appears under “ontological turn” (Vigh & Sausdal 2014). This thesis, however, does not follow any specific “ism”, but has found inspiration in Latour (1993) who has argued that an alternative outlook means not treating the material world or the social world as ontological points of departure. Furthermore, Latour argues that we should focus on actor-networks where both human and non-human actors in their relations and practices are forming the world, for example into “natures/cultures”. According to Reckwitz (2003): “Instead of following anthropology or culturalist sociology in distinguishing different “cultures” and their forms of interpretation, one should distinguish between different “natures/cultures”: Social networks or practices in their historical variability consist not only of human beings and their “intersubjective” relationships, but also simultaneously of non-human “actants”, things that are necessary and are so-to-speak “equal” components of a social practice”. Similarly, Orlikowski (2007) means that the sociomateriality of practices is the foundation for understanding the possibilities of everyday life organization.

For ontology this means that the complexity of a phenomenon is not reduced to one thing, to one single ontological essence, or to a single reality, but is instead made by a network of human and non-human agents making different realities through their practices (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010). Instead of following status quo, where events are observed within specific scientific paradigms, the complexity of the phenomenon is not reduced to the frame of one dominating idea but as co-constructed by multiply processes.

The ontological position of this thesis acknowledges and treat both human and non-human actors, their relationship and the networks they are involved in as part of understanding the being and living in the world. This point of departure will provide the basis for understanding NGV, the lives at those places and how it can be understood in a contemporary world. In order to further understand this phenomenon this will be elaborated in relations to concepts of practices, human and non-human relation, ideas and the future.

3.2 Conceptual framework

This thesis implements a practice theory approach in under understanding NVG, and this section outlines the conceptual framework of practice theory adopted in this thesis.

3.2.1 Material Practices

Practice theory has been developed by various theorists during the last decades, including Bourdieu (1977), Giddens (1984) and Schatzki (1996), they have in common that they put practice in focus in order to understand how people are making and shaping the world that they live in. By focusing on practice, it is possible to get a more holistic perspective of social phenomena by reconciling collective structure (the “system”) and individual human agency (Rouse 2007). Instead of only looking at individual behaviours or social structures as explanations for a social phenomenon, practice theory means that practices in themselves serve as the foundation for analysing and understanding an event. Importantly, in practice theory, it is the individual’s engagement through practices that come to understand and shape the world around them. However, this does not mean that practice theory reduces people to passive objects only influenced by practices, rather they are conceived as active agents that engage in a variety of practices in their everyday lives (Hargreaves 2011).

Practice theory has been interpreted in different ways in the last decades, but in the social sciences it has come to have a focus on social practices. However, as presented in the previous ontological positioning of this thesis, practice theory could also recognize non-human agency as fundamental in world-making practices. It follows that practices must also be seen in the context of where they take place and consider human/non-human relations simultaneously, not separately (Reckwitz 2002). Meaning that the sociomaterial aspect of the human and material must be understood as entangled when practices are studied (Orlikowski 2007). By regarding practices as part of the focus, everyday
performances and the “doing” is a part of examine how people understand the world. It is a network of practices where the actions are becoming in the relations between the physical and social, in a material practice (Latour 2005).

Hence, this thesis builds on social practice theory, how humans through social practices shape the world, but also includes non-humans and physical surrounding as active agents in practices. Humans are not only socialising with other humans, they also engage in practices with constant encounters with non-humans, which is something that is a considerable when understanding how the practices of NVG-people are shaping their world(s). Actions done by individuals are embedded within networks and embodied performances within practices (Hargreaves 2011). Practices are embodied, “materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organized around shared practical understanding” (Schatzki 2001:11). Thus, practices are bodily activities that cannot only be understood by what is expressed or said, it cannot be reduced to a discourse. Rather, a practice is an understanding of the world where the knowledge is expressed within the practice. The mind is expressed through the body and becomes material (Schatzki 1996). Accordingly, when recognizing how both human and non-human actors are a part of the practice, the practice goes beyond being solely social and includes bodily and material as the essence of a practices.

To change practices and generate more sustainable practices, unsustainable practices must be challenged, broken and replaced or remade by other practices. Hence, practices can be changed from the inside when practitioners challenge or resist conventions and create new ways of doing as well as if other alternative practices are practiced and come in contact with each other (Hargreaves 2011). Thus, when exploring how people understand and shape the world, the focus is not on attitudes or choices, but instead on practices and how they are becoming, and are being maintained and reproduced (Hargreaves 2011). Thus, in practice theory, to change behaviours, perceptions, action or ideas- other practices needs to be acted, which means that transformations in future lives and societies must be understood through practices.

To sum up, if one wants to understand how people shape the world through what they do, it is too narrow to look only at people’s choices, attitudes, norms or other social aspects. Actions and bodies are entangled with the practices, which means that this is where the body and mind meet the physical surrounding and ultimately shapes the world. Therefore, human and non-human entities are both a part of practices which are constituting how individual engagements through material practices, influence their understanding of the world. Hence, if we want to understand a phenomenon and how it relates to the society and social orders, material practices can work as an important foundation of knowledge.

3.2.2 Human and non-human relations in material practices

Human practice is not something that exists or occur in isolation, nor is it independent from everything else. For example, practices are performed somewhere, at a specific place with a physical surrounding that may enable or constrain the possibilities for practice. In addition, other than humans, non-human actors are participating in co-creating the reality (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010). Thus, place, landscape, physical surrounding and non-human actors that are part of a larger network must also be included when one wants to understand how the world is made through practices (Tsing 2015).

Human practices are both bodily activities and skills dependent and, enabled by materiality (Reckwitz 2002). Thus, both human bodies and mind, as well as non-humans and the physical surrounding are necessary components for a practice. In practice, human and non-human entities are entangled because activities always take place in a physical surrounding, and therefore practices must be understood in relation to the material (Schatzki 2001). In the network of practices, the relationship between human and non-human agents is a relationship of practical understanding where the “know how” in a practice is becoming a materialised understanding within the practice. Thus, bodies are sites of embodied understanding and non-human artefacts are sites of materialised understanding, and those relationships are understood within practices (Reckwitz 2002).

Therefore, the way life materially takes shape is highly important. The focus falls on how make life is made and knowledge is becoming in time-spaces with shared experiences, practical skills, everyday routines, movements, senses, encounters, planning and interactions (Lorimer 2005). This becomes a
way of exploring those networks of relations within a practice, and, as Lorimer (2005:84) argues, it “offers an escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings and values that apparently await our discovery, interpretation, judgement and ultimate representation”.

Furthermore, since practices here are not conceived of as outside their physical surrounding, it follows that the active shaping of landscapes also come into focus. It is, however, not only humans that shape and reshape landscapes, similarly non-human agencies are necessarily involved (Tsing 2015). For example, beavers are shaping rivers, and some mushrooms only grow together with pine after human disturbance in certain landscapes. These word-making projects are made possible by a network of disturbance, leading to mushrooms growing and later humans picking mushrooms, which makes a common reshaping of the landscape (Tsing 2015). Accordingly, this make both human and non-humans central in the network that enables practices to happen at a place in a constant co-relation with the physical surrounding. Therefore, the sociomaterial aspect of a practice is central because within a practice, the material and the social cannot be understood separately (Orlikowski 2007).

A practice, as theorized here, consists of embodied actions enabling practices to be practiced. This embodiment is both in terms of human bodies and the material, which through history has been part of shaping and understanding a place, as well as being the foundation for networks or practices (Latour 1993). Therefore, embodied understandings of those human and non-human relations are important in understanding practices, and how they shape the world (Reckwitz 2002). Hence, practices are always related to- and connected to, the place where they are performed. Human activities are directly relation to the soil, trees, microorganisms, seeds, birds and other non-human actors, which proves that practices cannot happen without incorporating multispecies (Lorimer 2013). Practices are not only included in a network directly connected to the surrounding landscape, but also works in relation to ecosystems, climate and other organisms that are actively forming the living conditions (Lenton & Latour 2018). Accordingly, life making practices must be understood in the networks consisting of humans and their material environment that together are co-creators of the world.

3.2.3 Ideas linked to material practices

As discussed above, the practice theory approach in this thesis means that reality is not seen to be only socially constructed, which would mean that social and natural environments can be explained by culture or discourses. On the other hand, neither can we only regard our physical surrounding as something solely natural that exist separated from humans. Nevertheless, the way humans make their lives, and the social practices they are involved in, are also dependent on ideas and perceptions of the world. In this study, these are not considered to be separate from practice, but mutually dependent. To understand that practices are always sociomaterial, the social and material must be seen as entangled in practices that are shaping the world (Orlikowski 2007). Thus, to understand practices that people of NGV are involved in, it becomes important to recognize ideas and perceptions of those very practices as part of the practices themselves (Shove & Walker 2010).

As part of practices, people are continuously interpreting themselves, their actions, their physical surrounding, and the context of whatever society their practices take place. This means that it becomes important to study how people think and express their ideas of the world also when studying practices. Moreover, because people have thoughts and ideas that is motivating their practices, which also relates to the context in which their own practices take place. Consequently, the ideas and reflections of the world that are motivating how we make life, which implies a more traditional social practice theory approach also needs to be considered when incorporating a more material approach to practice theory.

People may handle and interpret things in practices in different ways, and those underlying ideas are embedded in the process of co-producing the world (Latour 2005). The thoughts people have of their lives, including what life can or should be, can tell something about which ideas and which interpretations of our social or physical environment that are central, and by this, how lives are shaped in various way. Accordingly, the ideas are not treated as only social, rather they are a part of a larger network of human and non-human assemblages (Latour 2005). Therefore, practices and ideas are connected, and people’s ideas are important components in the practices they are involved in and the networks where they make life. In other words, what people do, is connected to what they think. This ultimately impacts the practices they are involved in (Czarniawska 2005). Moreover, some argue that
the ideas of a practice and how that influences one’s understanding of the world, also is a part of enacting it (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010).

As mentioned earlier, one of the main modern ideas about the world, particularly in the global north, is based on the ontological separation between the human and non-human world (Hopwood et al 2005). This is an anthropocentric idea that has its foundation in humans seeing themselves as the only conscious agent in a passive physical environment (Lenton & Latour 2018). It also means that humans imagine the world from a distance, for example as a globe where they can interpret the material environment as a quantitative resource, converted to a commodity that is a part of practices within a capitalist system as an instrument for growth and human progress (Evernden 1993; Ingold 2000).

However, those ideas, images and the actions they encourage have now proved to be very ecological and socially destructive, leading towards an ecological crisis (Evernden 1993; Escobar 2008). Many are critical to this idea and argue that the world is much more complex and cannot fit in the images of individualistic, capitalist, consumerist and exploitative practices for development, that are a part of how most humans make lives today. These practices are in fact destroying the biosphere and ecosystems (Escobar 2008). With this said, it is argued that this ecological crisis also is a crisis of modern system of thought (Escobar 2008).

In the new planetary regime, often referred to as the Anthropocene, many argue that it is now obvious that we need different ideas and thoughts of our lives and the world we live in. Although the Anthropocene literally means ‘the age of humans’, humans are certainly not the only ones shaping the world. One must also consider all other living organisms that are reacting to everything that happens, shaping and reshaping the world, and making life for their survival at the same time (Lenton & Latour 2018).

Practices are also intimately related to ideas about the future, one often engages, for example, in a practice for some future purpose. It terms of the Anthropocene, it arguably force us to think about the future in a different way, because as some argue, we are in an ecological crisis that might cause a collapse that is threatening many of the major life-support systems on earth (Scranton 2015). When the world is shaking, and the ideas that many people inherent are not making sense in the current state of the world, alternative ideas and understandings of the world must be created in order to shape the world in ways that make it possible for living good lives in the future (Latour 2018 ). Some argue that humans need to rethink its place on earth and the role they have in ecosystem, others argue that how we ought to perceive the world differently, and other stresses the importance of cultivating knowledge on ground that is embedded in concrete networks of lives, and that the understanding of the world ought to be built from there (Evernden 1993, Ingold 2000, Latour 2018 ).

Finally, those ideas are not only a part of how people practice their lives now but also how those practices shape the world for the future. Consequently, ideas are very important when thinking about the future, because those ideas are a part of the practices and how we shape the world now, but the ideas also relates to the future and how we imagine our lives in that time.

3.3 Summary of Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of practice theory has now been motivated and outlined in general ways. The thesis will adopt and narrow down some of the aspects of this conceptual framework, which will be applicable for this study, as presented in this summary. Hence, with reference to the aim of this thesis, the conceptual framework draws on practice theory, constituted by various central concepts. In this thesis those will be adopted to facilitate an analyses of material practices in NGV. The theory is condensed and concluded to below, in order to answer to the aim and research questions of this study, in a holistic and relevant manner:

The ontological positioning of this thesis is founded on the idea that the world is not made up of solely social constructions, nor only of the natural environment (Reckwitz 2003). Instead, the thesis aims for a middle, or third, way, which means that the nature of reality is understood as more than a
combination of these two ontological realms. Taking a practice theory approach, the world is conceived of as made up by practices that consist of networks of humans and non-humans, and it is by observing those world-making practices one can get an understanding of how the world is constituted (Tsing 2015). It means that practices are not only social, they are also material, that both human and non-human encounters are shaping the world in various material practices.

To gain knowledge about the material practices of NGV, and how they can constitute NGV, this thesis focuses on examining the material practices which the participating informants are involved in at locations where they live (Schatzki 2001; Reckwitz 2003; Tsing 2015). When exploring how people of the NGV understand and shape their worlds, the focus is not on their attitudes or choices, but instead on their practices and how they are becoming, being maintained and reproduced (Hargreaves 2011). This also includes an interest in how practitioners interact and challenge other existing practices, hence how dominating practices can change (Hargreaves 2011).

The NGV practices are here conceptualized as networks consisting of associations of human and non-humans in specific times and spaces, which is why they are not considered to be practices only in a social context (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010). Actions by individuals that participate in NGV are thus embedded within networks, where their embodied performances are part of the practices they make (Latour 2005; Hargreaves 2011). Thus, a practice within NGV generates understandings of the world for those who participate, and where their knowledges are expressed within their own practices.

In the network of practices that is NGV, the relationship between human agents and non-human agents are considered to be a relationship of practical understanding where the “know how” in a practice becomes materialised understandings within the practice. Thus, people of the NGV are bodies that become sites of embodied understanding, and non-human artefacts are sites of materialised understanding, and those relationships are understood within practices of NGV (Reckwitz 2002). Therefore, the way life takes shape in networks of relations within a practice of NGV is an important matter. The focus falls on a wider spectrum of how people of NGV make their lives and their relations to place, through shared experiences, practical skills, everyday routines, movements, senses, encounters, planning and interactions (Lorimer 2005).

Furthermore, since practices in this study are not conceived to be outside their physical surrounding, the active shaping of place and landscape by practitioners of NGV also comes into focus, particularly through practices of growing food. It is not only the people of NGV that shape and reshape landscapes, they are also dependent upon recruiting non-humans such as land, soil, crops, and animals (Tsing 2015). Hence, practices within NGV are dependent and connected to the places where they are performed. The activities performed by human NGV practitioners are in direct relation to the soil, trees, microorganisms, seeds, birds and other non-human actors, which proves that practices cannot happen without incorporating multispecies (Lorimer 2013). However, the practices of NGV are not only restricted to networks that are directly connected to the surrounding landscape, but also have relations to ecosystems, climate and other organisms that are actively contributing and forming the living conditions (Lenton & Latour 2018).

Nevertheless, the material ways NGV people make their lives through the practices they are involved in, also include their ideas and perceptions of the world. For example, their ideas about NGV are not separate from their NGV-practices, rather they are mutually dependent and reinforcing. Thus, to understand the practices that people of NGV are involved in, the ideas they have of their own practices must be recognized as a part of how NGV is constituted and reproduced (Shove & Walker 2010). Consequently, the ideas and reflections of the world that are motivating how we make life, are also related to the social practices we are involved in. The thoughts people have of their lives can tell us something about which ideas that make up the basis of their interpretations of our social or physical environment and by this, how lives are shaped in various way. Accordingly, the ideas are not treated as only social, rather they are a part of a larger network of human and non-human assembles (Latour 2005).

In the epoch of Anthropocene, some argue that is now obvious we need different ideas and thoughts of our lives and the world we live in. There are not only humans that are shaping the world, one must also consider all other living organisms that are reacting to everything that happens, shaping and
reshaping the world for their survival at the same time (Lenton & Latour 2018). This is also relating to the future; Anthropocene is making us think about the future in a different way. Because, if we are in an ecological crisis that is argued to cause a collapse that is threatening many of the major life support systems on earth (Scranton 2015). When the world is shaking and the ideas that many people base their lives on are not making sense in the light of the current state of the world, alternative ideas and understandings of the world must be created to shape the world in way so it is possible make good lives in the future (Latour 2018). It seems like the current framework of modern though is not corresponding with the reality of a new planetary regime. If the modern guidance of progress cannot tell us where we are going, alternative practices and imaginary guidance beyond where we thought we were going is needed to survive in the future (Tsing 2015).

4 Methods

4.1 Practice theory research: A qualitative approach

When framing this study, the broad phenomenon of NGV in Sweden was used as the focus, with the interest to further explore this continuously growing trend of people moving from urban to rural areas with the idea of using practical means to respond to the failures and issues of the conventional society. With reference to the data and material available, I will use a qualitative approach to gather more qualitative material on the everyday lives of people being a part of NGV. Accordingly, methods for this study were evaluated based upon their ability to capture material practices and the ideas related to the physical expression of the practices. By using qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews and observations it is possible to both see and experience practices and get a deeper understanding of the underlying ideas assigned by the people involved in those practices (Bryman 2011). The empirical material was categorised and themed according to the central concepts in the conceptual framework applied to the material, which makes the collected material a pathway for understanding practices of NVG in accordance with the conceptual framework for material practices.

4.1.1 Ethnography

As a method, this thesis has its point of departure in qualitative inquiry, more specifically the tradition of ethnography. In this study, ethnography is a set of methods where a researcher with an interest of people’s daily lives are participating, observing and conversing in a particular field with the aim of collecting data and material in order to better understand the phenomenon that is studied (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). Since this study focus on people and their practices at the places where they live, an ethnographic approach is considered to be a suitable tool to examine material practices and encounters as well as people’s ideas, perceptions, and understandings of the world through the practices of their everyday lives.

Since I have my research background in cultural anthropology, ethnography is something that comes natural to me when thinking about how to study an issue or phenomenon. However, in the process of finding an applicable method for this thesis, different alternatives were also explored. The starting point was always my three areas of interest corresponding to my research questions; the central practices that people are involved in, how those practices relates to ideas and understandings of the world, and what could be learned from those for the future. One alternative way I considered for this research was to do a text study and use previous ethnographic studies and other research of NGV to investigate those questions. However, reviewing the literature showed that there was not qualitative material enough to examine the details and nuances of people lives and material practices at NGV-places. Furthermore, a second identified possible methodology was to do a case study, but later investigations showed that it did not work very well considering methodology and the time and space limitations of a case study. In addition, an in-depth time-space perspective with mapping and visualisation of various material practices within a network was considered but were chosen not to be done in detail due to lack of time and resources. Thus, since I was already connected to the object of study, both online and personally, ethnography turned out to be a method that corresponded best to
answer my research questions. Equivalent with Bryman (2011) stating that; in Ethnography the researcher is an acknowledged part of the field of study with the possibility to interact and describe the details and complexity of people and environment to better describe a phenomenon and understand the perceptions of the people within (Bryman 2011).

Traditionally, an important part of ethnography is fieldwork, where the field is usually a place where the researcher stays for a longer period to observe and interview people and environment in a study of their everyday life (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). However, as mentioned, NGV is not bounded to any spatial limitations, it is rather considered as an event where individuals or communities together in their ways of living and acting are shaping this phenomenon collectively, but at different locations (Wilbur 2013). Nevertheless, this thesis conceives the connection between practices and the physical surrounding as a main focus when examine the lives of people of NGV, instead of only the demographics of the phenomenon. Accordingly, my initial ambition with this study was to do a longer fieldwork and stay with people for a longer period. However, practical limitations of time and space were restricting me from doing longer fieldworks at different places all over Sweden.

In addition, this study does not consider NGV as something bounded to a specific place where people’s lives are understood through the framework of a culture, which is traditionally done in ethnographic fieldwork (Hannerz 2001). In contrast, this study does not focus on one local area or a single object of study, instead it follows a contemporary ethnography where the field or the area of focus is based on a current phenomenon that is important at the moment (Rabinow & Marcus 2008). When constructing a field that is taking off in a phenomenon in contemporary research, the interest of study is usually not bounded to one geographical area, instead it is connected in a web of networks, connections and relations. In this thesis, this consist of practices within NGV. A multi-sided ethnography focusses on the people being a part of the phenomenon, but also their relations to the localities and the society in large (Hannerz 2001; Falzon 2009). In this case, the field of study is constructed based on NGV in Sweden as a phenomenon, where the people and the practices they are involved in are being a part of it as the main object of study. Nevertheless, their relations to each other, their physical surroundings, the society, publications on the subject and platforms online is also a part of the content that make the field of practice.

4.1.2 Collection of material: semi-structured Interviews

In ethnography, interviews and participant observation are key methods to understanding and describing people’s actions, ideas and understandings of the world (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). Thus, the methods for data collection used in this thesis are; semi-structured interviews and participant observations, including some visual documentation. Interviews provide qualitative data that can give an in-depth understanding of people’s perceptions of their lives and practices. This method, together with observations and documentation of material surrounding and physical interactions, can provide a holistic understanding of a phenomenon and how it relates to other parts of the society (Kaijser & Öhlander 2011; Fägerborg 2011). This combination of methods was selected based on its ability to capture the material practices and the practitioner’s perceptions related to physical expression of such practices. Consequently, interviews and participant observations facilitate the collection of empirical material on people’s practices, ideas connected to those practices and how the informants relate to the future.

In total five interviews were conducted with informants, both male and female, living in different places around Sweden. The semi-structured interviews were based pre-determined questions that were extended and modified according to the dynamics of the interview. Semi-structured interviews are a conversation-like interview in which there is the possibility to explore certain topics in greater depth, clarify issues and develop a mutual understanding (Bryman 2011).

Owing to time, logistical and economical limitations, one interview were conducted by video-call and four face-to-face, which might have influenced the information gathered. The length of the interviews varied from fifty-two minutes to one hour and thirty-two minutes. Since interviews are context specific and shared understandings are created in those situations, some of the spatial complexity
might have been perceived differently in the video-call interviews (Fägerborg 2011). Skype- or telephone interviews can sometimes be a more difficult way of having sustained conversations and sometimes gives other kind of information compared to face-to-face interviews (Bryman 2011). Face-to-face interviews are an effective way of capturing the complexity of a specific context and getting a deeper personal understanding of the informant in a comfortable setting (Bryman 2011). Conducting the interviews in the environment where the practices that the interview focused on were enacted, enabled a deeper understanding of the topic of the interviews. As mentioned, the different interview settings could be something that might have influenced the data collection, but since this study is not interested in comparing different answers, and instead sees them as different perspectives of NGV-practices, this limitation is not a major concern.

Interviews provide insights into the informant’s lives, how the informant perceive their lived reality and understandings of their relation to their surrounding they are in (Fägerborg 2011). Since this study seeks to investigate the lives of the informants in their physical context, questions regarding how they live their lives, what practices they are involved in, why they are doing them and in and what they think about their lives were central.

The general structure of each interview followed three themes:

1) Involvement in practices and activities in the areas where informants live.

2) The ideas and understandings the informants assign to those practices.

3) Ideas about the future in relation to informants’ lives and understandings of the world.

The first area intends to explore the types of practices in which informants are involved and the reasons for their involvement. It is related to the importance of material practices in NVG and the ways they are acted. The second theme intends to investigate the reasoning behind those practices, why they are important to the informants, how they connect to their lives and perceptions of the world. This could reveal what ideas are connected to the material practices, how such ideas and practices relate to the informant’s perception of their relation to the society, other people and their surroundings. Furthermore, this theme explores alternative ways of life and the reasoning, thinking and acting behind such alternatives. The third theme seeks to investigate how theme one and two influence the informant’s perception of the future. It explores in what way they are imagining the future, how to make lives in the future and how this is apparent in their practices and ideas.

4.1.3 Collection of material: Observations

In this study, data collection through participatory observations were conducted at the same time as the visits for the face-to-face interviews, both before, during and after the interviews. The time for observation varied between two to four hours. Observations included both directly participating in activities, visiting the area where people live and observing conversations, activities and the surrounding environment. I looked specifically on the practices that people are involved in, how they worked in their garden, in what way they performed some activities, how they interacted with other people, but also with non-humans and their physical surrounding. I also observed behaviours, the landscape, the place, house and properties and if they seemed to correspond with what people expressed in their interviews. I also participated in some practices, which gave me further understanding of people’s views and perceptions of what they are doing. The observations were documented with notes taken during and after the observation and photographs. Those observations are visually presented as well as described in the thesis.

Participant observation can give insights into that which cannot be mentioned in interviews or literature. It can reveal, for example, that which cannot be explained or topics that are too sensitive to mention in a recorded interview. This method also gives the researcher descriptions of people’s practices and portrayals, what they are doing, how they are dressed, what symbols they present (Kajiser & Öhlander, 2011). It is not enough to only ask questions to understand people’s life, their practices and how those people perceive their practices. One must also observe and learn from how people act, move and undertake activities to understand this non-verbal interaction (O’reilly 2005). Observations complement interview material as they help to identify and compare what people
describe in interviews and how such findings relate to how the informants interact with their surroundings. It also given an understanding of the physical surrounding, the non-human actants and how is a part of the everyday life at those places. Furthermore, observations can clarify and provide a deeper understanding of practices or experiences that are difficult to describe in words, for example, how people move and make sense of a place (O’reilly 2005).

4.1.4 Collection of material: visual documentation

The photographs used in the thesis are from me, a colleague and from the informants. The pictures by the author was taken during the observations and the pictures from the colleague is taken at another occasion but in near time to the study. The photographs from the informants were sent to the me after the fieldwork and all photographs are approved by the originator to be used in this thesis. Furthermore, the photographs are only used in this context as a part of the study.

Since this thesis acknowledge place, physical surrounding, landscape and the non-human environments as important parts of practices, photographs do not only serve as illustrations for the reader to visualise those places. They are also material that is used in understanding and analysing NVG and the relations within human and nonhuman networks in accordance with the conceptual framework for material practices. Accordingly, the photographs are materialised practices that is co-producing alternative imaginations for the future (Latour 2005). As mentioned, this is a way of visualising the various practices with material and social interaction in this study to further emphasise the time-space perspective.

**Figure 1:** One of the informant’s partly homebuilt house, a homebuilt greenhouse, solar panels on the roof, firewood for heating and surrounding fields and forest. (Person 5)
4.1.5 Constructing the field of practice and description of informants

When forming the field, which in this study means the field of practice, I read research, articles, watched tv-shows and listened to radio programs concerning NGV in Sweden to get a general understanding of the expression of the phenomena. Furthermore, I visited forums and groups online to see what topics and discussions that people found relevant. By this I came to understand that the phenomenon of NGV is spread out over Sweden and has many different expressions and forms. However, the core messages identified were; the conventional society as not satisfying and contributing to many global issues, therefore we need alternative ways of living and thinking in which self-sufficiency and connection to the land are an important part of. This led to regarding the whole phenomena as the field, including the whole web of relations within. Hence, the people being a part of the phenomena represents the practices, relations and ideas that influences how NGV make sense of and shape the world. Even though, the people participating in this study and the places they live frames the knowledge that can be presented in relation to this specific context, it is still seen as a part of a wider phenomenon connected to larger systems (Kaijser 2011).

When finding informants for the study, a set of selection criteria was developed in order to narrow the scope and get in contact with suitable informants. Before contacting people, it was decided that they should have moved from an urban area to a rural area in the 2000s, be engaged in some kind of food provision practices, and preferably other practices, as well as they should perceive themselves as part of the phenomena of NGV. Since the focus was not on mapping a specific spatiality or topography, urban or rural were not further defined in population density, rather it was decided by the experience of people living in those places.

Based on these criteria, information about my study were sent to potential informants. Contacting people and finding informants were mostly done online and through personal contacts by using existing networks to get in contact with people involved in practices related to the topic. However, most informants were sourced through different groups on Facebook with interest in the topics of NGV and transition. This also led to people directing me to get in contact with other people outside those groups. In addition, these forums have not only sourced informants, it has also given a lot of informal contacts with people involved in this topic and non-academic or personal texts regarding the topic.

In total, I got in personal contact with around twenty people to talk about this topic. However, five of those were interviewed and recorded to use as informants for this thesis. They all live in the southern half of Sweden and have their own land and housing in a rural setting. The areal of land varied from a normal sized plot in connection to a house to larger fields. The housing situation also varied from people living alone in ‘tiny houses’ to people living together in bigger houses. The amount of food provisioning practices they are involved also varied from a small garden for the household to community supported agricultures that provides food for around one-hundred other families. Some of them have visible neighbours but the landscape is characterised by non-human landscape in various forms. The informants are in the ages around thirty to fifty and with a variety of backgrounds and educations, from gardener to researcher.
4.2 Processing of material and Operationalisation

4.2.1 Transcription and interview material coding process

All the interviews were conducted, recorded and transcribed in Swedish, later the parts that are presented in the thesis were translated to English. Thus, the quotes and the translation are my own interpretation but is done in a way to represent what was said. Furthermore, transcription did not include every word or sounds, instead summaries of a section in the interview covering one topic were written down with a heading reflecting this topic. Important or significant quotes from this section in the interview were included under the same heading. A summary includes one or more paragraph from one to five minutes in the interview. In the end, many different summaries included similar content or topics discussed at different occasions in the interview, those concerning the same topic were later coloured in the same colour to start forming a pattern. This process was repeated with all the interview material, which helped to determine similar trends, ideas and expressions and differences in from informants. Moreover, the different headings in each interview were coded according to the three different overarching themes of interest for the study to facilitate the analysis of the relations between practices and the ideas and understandings connected to those.

4.2.2 Operationalisation of the Conceptual Framework

With reference to the conceptual framework describing material practices made up by human and non-human relationships as well as ideas, the specific material collected for this thesis is analysed and described in accordance with the conceptual framework for material practices.
Based on the insights gained from the conceptual framework, the conceptual framework is transformed into seven analytical questions, which are applied to the material generated to enable the analysis of the material.

1. What kind of material practices are people of “nya gröna vågen” involved in?
2. What ideas and understandings do the practitioners themselves assign to those practices?
3. What can be learned from those material practices, and the ideas connected to them, when making life in the future?

Material practices

- Are the practices consisting of human and non-human relationships creating realities observable and/or mentioned by the informants?
  - If so, how?
- Are the material practices depicting ‘the world’, wherein knowledge and mind is expressed, observable and/or mentioned by the informants?
  - If so, how?
- Are the actions carried out by informants, which are embedded within human and non-human networks, as well as performances, embodied within the practices observable and/or mentioned by the informants?
  - If so, how?

Human and non-human relations in material practices

- Are human actions and/or practices which are conceived with connectedness to soil, trees, micro-organisms, seeds, birds, other non-human actors, as well as ecosystems, climate and other organisms, observable and/or mentioned by the informants?
  - If so, how?

Ideas linked to material practices

- Are thoughts ‘on life’ or ideas which forms the basis for the actors’ interpretations of the social and physical environment, which is then making up their lives observable and/or mentioned by the informants?
  - If so, how?
- Are material practices assigned or connected to ideas of transformation in the future observable and/or mentioned by the informants?
  - If so, how?

Ideas of the future connected to material practices

- Are material practices and ideas of the future influenced by the planetary regime of Anthropocene observable and/or mentioned by the informants?
  - If so, how?
4.3 Reflexivity

When conducting an ethnographic study with interviews and observations, the researcher will always be a part of the field and the research process (Pripp 2011). As a result, the researcher is an actor that is co-making and affecting the material that is created in a context (Pripp 2011). Therefore, as a researcher, it is important to be aware of that fact that knowledge is created by interpretations of the researcher. It is not possible to stay objective, and the material collected will be co-created in relation to the human and non-human interactions in each context (Vandermause 2008). Therefore, my position as a researcher will affect how I interpret different situations, persons, actions or physical surroundings, both depending on the situation but also my personal background. In relation to this study, my position as a person interested in this subject and being involved with people and projects relating to the topic might have influenced the material. In interviews the informants assumed that we had the same position and ideas of issues relating to sustainability, societal transformation or values. Some things were not explained explicitly because I was assumed to have the basic knowledge of the subject. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to stay interested, curious and as neutral as possible to not influence the informants but to try to capture his or her opinions or perceptions of the world (Bryman 2011).

4.4 Ethics

All people that participated in this study agreed to take part in it, consented to me visiting them where they live and take part in interviews, which fulfils the right of informants to know that they are being studied (Robson & McCartan 2016). All the informants were informed about the topic and the purpose of the study beforehand, both in text and verbally. They were also informed about the general topics of the study, that the interest focused on their lives, ideas, practices and thought. However, the specific details of the study were not revealed in order to avoid steering the conversations in a certain direction or influencing responses.

According to research ethics and confidentiality, all informants were asked if they agreed to be recorded during the interviews and notified that they are all anonymous in the thesis and during the data coding process. Furthermore, before the interviews, all informants were made aware that the recordings would only be used by me personally and would not be published.

5 Results

This chapter presents the empirical findings from the interviews with observations of the five informants in this study. Each interview is reviewed individually in order to represent the informant’s “voices”, stories and perceptions in their environment. Since the length of the interviews varied, the length of the presented results for each person varies accordingly. Following a brief background to the informant, the data from each interview is organised into three sections: firstly, practices are presented, secondly ideas and perceptions in relations to those practices are named and third some thoughts about the future are explored.

5.1 Person 1

Lives outside a town in southern Sweden, where she moved around five years ago to join a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm. There are five people running this CSA and they are producing food for around one hundred families in the surrounding areas. At the place where the CSA is located, they are also organising workshops, lectures, education, working days and other activities related to small scale sustainable food production.
The work she is doing at the CSA is also paying her enough to live the wage, even though it is much less than a normal wage. She does not consider this to be a problem because it gives her time to something that she thinks is meaningful and valuable for her, other people and the planet. The main reason why she moved to the CSA is because she has a strong interest in environmental issues, cares about the environment and believes that a transition is needed in society for human and non-humans to prosper in the future. A big part of this transition is seen to be connected to food and the production of food. Some of her thoughts in relation to her practices at the CSA were expressed as:

“I cannot agree on the way we manage our ecosystem for future generations. What I want to accomplish is that I have done my best, that I have lived a life that I can proudly stand for in relation to future generations, and as a human on this planet in this time”

“Do not use too much energy input, such as electricity and fossil energy. Bind carbon from the atmosphere. Support micro life in the soil, because living soil holds more biomass and humus (topsoil). Everything that creates a good living cycle creates carbon sinks. (...) The industrial way, to only create the conditions for producing food for humans are destroying the conditions for the rest of the living. (...) Don't use machines the way we do now, work more with hands. Because then we can also increase the intensity of the cultivation. Get five times more yield on the same area”.

“What makes this way of making life good is to be able to live close to nature, for real. Not agree to my time being a part of this capitalist system. I want to use the time that I have on this earth in a way that mostly benefits my quality of life and not an invented idea of how the world should work, which by the way is not even good”

One of the most important objects in her life is the physical place and surrounding together with the practices and the practitioners being a part of it; that they are living a practical example of small-scale sustainable food production. “We are pushing the conditions for being small-scale sustainable growers, being a piece in a puzzle of a of a larger movement with the idea that we need new ways to produce food. We are experimenting and testing around it (growing food) together with lots of others. Therefore, we are pushing the development for a new food culture”.

Furthermore, she believes that the practical example of a place where people are living this life gives a lot more credibility in changing something. “People in the world are tired of hearing about a positive systemic change where one cannot see concrete examples of what it is, how it looks, how it feels or works. I can't go around and tell you how one should do something if I haven't done it myself. I find that we get a lot of power and legitimacy in what we are trying to do and say, by people coming here and seeing it.”

She perceives that this CSA is a way of influencing other actors in the society, such as politicians or city planners because they have a running project which is supported by a lot of other members of society, which gives them more influential power. Furthermore, she also wants to raise topics concerning food production for discussion in the society, especially how it can be compatible with a good life together with the difficulties to put the ecological and social factors prior economy and still have a functional production. “I am interested in creating a model for more people to be able to do this (small-scale agriculture). To make it possible for farmers to be able to convert to such a way of farming. Therefore, it must be attractive, so it becomes reasonable to change, a possible way of living a life”. This kind of idea is something that she recognises as different to the first GV: “People moved out in the forest where they could afford to buy something, then they were isolated from the rest of the society with a hard and tiering life. It needs to be more attractive and build new relations to the rest of the society”.

Moreover, she also values the place and the local area where she lives because it challenges the conventional way of living, prompts questions about a meaningful life, and creates an environment where one can do what feels meaningful and by this inspire others.

“The change lies in a consciousness of how one can live one’s life. Create a culture where people are involved and included to express themselves and collaborate.”
“I think it is sacred what we eat, how we take care of our ecosystem that we are part of. It is a key to well-being. To challenge how people are allowed to feel and live their lives. There is such a professionalism in society, where everyone is becoming a project. Something professional. We are not allowed to be humans; we are reduced to something that are only supposed to work for the society.”

“A culture that allows one to be more in line with what one finds meaningful inspires people who come to this in different ways, even if they are not interested in food production. They see that things are possible, that I can dedicate my life to an interest that I have. Something that I want to do, not just have to. People are inspired to not accept the usual arrangement of life; therefore, they leave from here with a feeling that they can do whatever they want.”

“To dive into something, to practice something in a way so it appeals to some deep longing in us to be in relation to what we do. In contrast to the in many ways superficial existence that we seek and live in the society”

The place where she is making her life is seen as a platform for change. She describes how the relations and encounters at this place are changing her ways of perceiving the world together with the people around her.

“One big change (since I moved) is that I understand the value of the networks that one is a part of, the networks around me. We are part of a network that is maintaining all these dreams, thoughts, practices and experiments and actually gets lots of things out of it. We are having an exchange around transformation that is changing our lives at the same time”

“It is also about creating spaces to unlearn things that one does not want. That is how change happens. If I try to squeeze in all the new things I want to do and learn, at the same time as I continue to live this super busy, consumption-oriented life. If I were to try change my life at the same time as I accept the other way (conventional) of doing things, then the change only becomes something temporary. In comparison, if you are trying to create space to unlearn the other way to perceive the world. Instead, just exist, in nature, with the senses, in the practice. I find that a concrete place forms a platform for this. Then, it is only possible to be here; it looks like this, it smells like this, it feels like this, this is what is going on between the people here. It’s just the example that can inspire”.

It was clear that she perceived her life together with other people and the place around her as a foundation to make change for the future. She expressed this as a part of practicing and experimenting alternative ways of living that are good for all living things and, at the same time, producing food. Food provisioning practices in relation to bodily experiences, connections to feelings and a close relationship with nature and the planet is a key component in her life, she finishes.

5.2 Person 2

She lives just outside of a village with around five hundred inhabitants outside a major city in the southern third of Sweden. For the last two and a half years, she has lived in a free-standing house on ten acres of land, both forest and fields with her family. One of the reasons why she moved to this area is because: “It is a varied landscape with forest and is not as open and exploited as other parts of this area”

Another factor is the distance to the city and infrastructure. “One reason why we moved is because of the pricing in this area and the reasonable distance to the city. There are good communications and bus all the way. There is also a railway without a station, which I think will be built in the future. At that point, we will have an excellent way of traveling without using fossil fuels. We looked at lot at the infrastructure and communications before we moved”.

One of the two main reasons why she moved to a rural area is because she likes to live close to nature, lakes, forest and in calm areas. It makes her feel good and happy. She also wanted to start growing and eating her own grown food and now she feels that she has those opportunities. At the moment, she is growing vegetables for their own need, but have plans to expand a lot and make a big forest garden.
“Perennials are better. It is not as work intensive and it is better for the eco system, then we don’t have to dig and disturb the soil too much”.

“In forest gardens, one is trying to imitate the eco system as much as possible, and forests are the by far most dominant eco system in Scandinavia. Also, when we have so much space and doesn’t want to use machinery in a big extent”.

“When designing the forest garden, we will start to use the fields, and on the other side there is a very long forest edge which we are planning to extend. Not to have such sharp edges between forest and field, instead work with zones between those which can be very good for biodiversity”.

She is also expressing the value of the social community with other people who are involved in food provisioning practices in the village. They are sharing the same interest and can together cultivate species that are adapted to the area and sometimes sell their surplus of vegetables.

The other main reason why she wanted to move is because; “I wanted a security for the future, to have some land to give to my children together with some knowledge about self-sufficiency. We see it a bit like an insurance”.

“I am worried about the future. A global anxiety, also climate change. I don’t want to be that vulnerable, instead being a part of a local network where we have natural resources, can grow our own food and produce energy”.

“A part of this is prepping, to learn how to grow my own food and learn processes at this place. I mean, it is also a way of prepping for future crisis”.

Although this is a way of feeling more in control and secure, the life she lives is also reflecting how she think that we need to change and how parts of the solutions for a sustainable society can look like.

“I think a lot of the systems we have today are very fragile, like food, water and such. The global food system is very stupid, we cannot trust the fact that a lot of groceries will always be grown for us and delivered from other parts of the world. Therefore, I want to prevent vulnerability and increase resilience”.

“In the face of climate change, we will have more extreme weather and we need to have a bigger diversity in what we grow in order to increase resilience”.

“We could be able to produce food in a way that is repeating the nature and environment instead of just degrade all the time and just it does more and more and more”.

Moreover, she explains that before she moved, she was more involved in activism focusing directly at global structures, but “it was frustrating because the power seemed to be so far away and it is easy to feel disempowered”. Since she moved, many of her perspectives and understandings of the world have changed in different ways. She says: “I feel better when I am local. It feels like one has most opportunities to influence things and feel good by living in a smaller community and focusing on local work”.

She continues to describe how she have changed since she moved and how her ways of living now makes her see new networks and relations:

“I feel a completely different ownership and empowerment since I moved. It is us, who live here together, it gives more identity and unity. It gives a different relationship to the place. One knows people better and it gives more stability. The whole thing feels more long-term. There is more opportunity to do something long-term”.

“One is a co-creator of a place and it is important to make that place as good as possible. In the city there are so many other actors”.

“The municipality and the state are not so present here. So, there is also a lot up to us at this place to do something if we want it. We do things ourselves. It also gives us a unity and a feeling that one can actually do something, that we can do almost anything. Otherwise nothing will happen”.

23
“It is also a plus that what we do here is not so visible, we can do things a little under the radar and not always ask the municipality for permission. One doesn’t get passive our here, which could be believed otherwise. We do not hide away, we are active. One has to be activated”.

“It is not possible to consume our way to everything. Which is often a nice feeling. It is us who lives here, the inhabitans are owning this place. We are here”.

She also explains that water is a major issue where she lives because the groundwater levels are so low. Therefore, the village cannot use water regularly in the summer. Consequently, she and others have started an appeal to the municipality to start managing this problem and the use of water. She also mentions plans to make home-offices in a common village house and other self-organised activities.

Even though she is worries about the future and the problems she thinks we are heading towards, she states that “It is not possible to force people to change. One can only be a good example and inspire others with this”.

She also emphasises the importance of doing something practical in order to make change for the future: “I think it is really good when we have positive local transitions that are spreading their images and models to others”.

“Our dream is to do something that makes both of us live a good life and that could be a part of something small that is good for the whole”.

“Growing food is good because it connects to feelings. It is the same with the climate issue, some may rationally see the situation and are able reason their way to what needs to be done, but most of us must be touched emotionally”.

Figure 3: Cabbage and kale planted by one of the informants in raised beds (Person 2 2018).
5.3 Person 3

He lives around 40 km outside one of the bigger cities in Sweden, a where he moved around one and a half years ago. Even though the distance to the city is not great, the area is still isolated with a small number of neighbours and far to the nearest big road. He works as a researcher in the area of system ecology in the city where he goes every other week. One of the main reasons why he moved was because he wanted to work more practically with his body, especially in the field of sustainability and more specifically food provisioning practices. He wanted to have more space and opportunities, “here, I have unlimited space. Space should not be a limitation, rather time and ideas”.

The main thing he practices is food production and preparations for self-sufficiency. This is because he thinks that the society today is very destructive and that this destruction of the planet will trigger a systemic collapse. One of the major things he practices is developing an understanding of the place and understanding the relations in his surroundings.

"It is important to do things where one learns to use the resources at a place without buying a lot of things. It has an intrinsic value, because the things that I learn now will help me at any time in any situation ”.

"One should always reflect on what works and then build a synthesis that suits one's own place and context."

“One should start from a place and see what is there. Then design the cultivation or the house or whatever it is, and base it on the strengths that exist and strengthen them and the capacity of the place. Not importing lots of non-renewable resources, but if you do so, it should be seen as an investment that then does not require a new addition of non-renewable resources”

Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of trying new things, experimenting and gathering knowledge for the future. This is something that he does at this place, because he believes that we need to transform the society and find new ways of living in the future.

"What I grow here is knowledge, rather than food at the moment".

"To be able to scale it up, I need to have knowledge and experience on how it could be scaled up, which can be shared with others later, when are receptive to that knowledge".

As mentioned earlier, one of the main reasons why he chose to move live this life is because he thinks that we are in the beginning of a collapse that is caused by overexploitation and overconsumption in the society in which we live. He believes that we are using way too many non-renewables resources that are degrading the natural system. The negative impact we are having on the earth systems by this way of organising societies will also make those earth systems unable to sustain this way of life, which is creating the collapse.

"The capitalist system is the major problem and the root of this problem is our lifestyle in global north. Instead of going to Africa or Latin America and try to help people to solve environmental problems and get out of poverty, we must build our societies so that they reduce stress on the earth system. Today we import things that generate environmental damage and poverty elsewhere”.

"Problems have to be solved here at home, the problem is our lifestyle"

"The society today produces so much suffering with competition, individualism and materialism. For example, the professions today that have the highest status are those that are most destructive to the planet and other humanities. Marketing, advertising, stockbrokers are all terribly destructive but have the highest status in society. Those professions must, of course, be removed, but then we have to begin to change the values and look at farmers as heroes, for example. But maintaining the society that we have now with the values we have now, has no intrinsic value. In addition, it is not even possible “.

For this reason, he also believes that his life and the practices he engages in should not only be a way for him to get through the collapse but also be regenerative and have positive effect on the environment: “Reduce external negative impact and maximize places ability to build regenerative
functions. That is practical but is still abstract and theoretical. How we can learn from ecosystems to recreate such things? All investments and use of resources should strive to create regenerative functions. That is the basis of how I do my practices”.

He does not think that current global circumstances will change on their own, because the system that we are in is so powerful. Moreover, he thinks that the situation and the transformations needed in the society are too huge to grasp and is not compatible society’s worldview, and therefore, it is just rejected. If people do understand, they do not want to listen because it questions the whole way of being human and end everything we know. Therefore, he believes that the change needs to come bottom up, people like him need to practically start the transition at places where it is possible to live differently than in the cities. Those places can work as platforms where alternative ways of living can be realised, and new understandings can be built and shared in a society after the collapse of the incumbent system.

“I still think the process is too slow, it will be some kind of collapse anyway. It is a lengthy process that we are already at the beginning of. As the collapse gets worse and worse, more and more people will seek alternatives and at this point is important that some people have already started to build new systems where those people can come and learn”.

“If we start to build the processes, we will become pioneers. If we all work on different things in relation to transition, niches such as permaculture or forest gardens. We will build invaluable knowledge that others can benefit from when they are mature to change”.

“Self-organization is important. This (transition to a new society) must grow from below. People want to try different things, new ways of structuring communities. We cannot change the whole society. There are small parts that must be developed from below, with different social and practical skills. All those islands then have sub-competencies that we can put together later when building a new society. All pieces are available in different places, because at we cannot learn and do everything at the same time”.

He also thinks that those current physical examples can expand our understandings, build new relations and inspire change today. He believes that we must change our worldviews and the values that we have today. However, it needs to be done in relation with other humans and non-humans in a way that is rebuilding and adding to a system including all humans, not the other way around.

“It is difficult to make deep changes in how we perceive our surroundings. It needs be lived and done for a long time, not taught theoretically. Emotionally, I have difficulties to create new values, to the trees around me. I can do it in a system perspective, rationally but not emotionally”.

“It is about going back to different values, with interactions and doing things together. We have it in us but doesn’t have the opportunity to use it today”.

He emphasizes the importance of creating new values in life that is less destructive for the environment and make us feel better at the same time. Again, he believes that this comes from physical places and sociomaterial interactions.

"We should not stop doing things, we should start doing things that we want more. Find parts in our lives that create additional value and doesn't feel like a sacrifice. So that we don’t stop doing something, instead we are doing something else and doesn’t have time for those destructive things. My fireplace here, for example, now I meet friends here instead of sitting at a bar in town”. He further explains how people change mindset when they come visit him and interact with each other and the surrounding.

Furthermore, he also mentions his daughter in relation to the difficulties to change perception of the world. “I try to change it, especially with my daughter so that she will carry it through her whole life. To see humans as a part of nature. Talk about processes, communication. I take her into the woods, talk about ecology and not just see nature as a background. More systems ecology”.

In the future he foresees a world where all living species are living a good life entangles with each other.
“What is on the other side (of the collapse) is better, people are happier and feel better than today. But the transition and the process will be brutal. The society we have today is not worth maintaining because people doesn’t get happier by the consumption we have today”.

“In the future, we have a village structure, a decentralized society. Where every village is almost self-sufficient in food and energy. Surplus and consumer goods, crafts etc. are traded between each other. We need to use locally renewable resources and processes at the places we live, which varies of course, and therefore, a little trade works as well. It is low-tech. Events where people help each other with different things are important. Interactions will happen around common working days where we help each other. It is the renewable resources that govern what we can do. Very decentralized systems”.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 4.** A plot prepared for potatoes (Mattias Nitschke 2019).

### 5.4 Person 4

She lives outside a town in southern Sweden on a small farm with her family. At the farm they have two sheep which they saved from being slaughtered and now have to keep the landscape open. They also have some chickens and are also growing food for themselves. Most parts of the house they live in was renovated or built by them. Furthermore, they have a large greenhouse, which is homebuilt. She states “It is important to know how to do things on your own, we are trying to learn and try things on our own. Which is something that we have much more possibilities to do where we live now”.

She continues to talk about the activities carried out at the place where she lives: “I have planted around 15 kilos of potatoes which will give me 130 kilos. I mostly grow things that I can store for the
winter. Cucumber to pickle, different varieties of beans, onions, different kales and cabbage, root vegetables. Of course, we also grow tomatoes, salads and other things for the summer. I also grow marigold to make my skin products”.

“Since I moved, I have really learnt how to grow vegetables, how to store and refine what I grow. Use the root cellar. And this is something I learn more and more about every year”.

She also discusses gardening and the anthroposophy tradition: “It is important to be in and around your garden a lot, to be there, that’s how you learn. To have time. This is also something that I like with bio dynamic growing, the time that you spend with your plants. (...) Some procedures are almost like a ceremony where you welcome the soil, thank the soil and so on”.

“In large-scale agriculture, everything is supposed to go so fast. They spray their fields with pesticides, they don’t have time, and everything must be produced so fast”

At the farm they also have a small store where she sells various products including her home-made certified skin products. “In the future, I want a start a small “handelsträdgård” (garden shop). Because it’s nice. Then we can really create a place to be and exist. For people to come and visit and buy good things like crafts made by myself and my friends. Also, to create a platform and a space for social communities and interactions”.

In addition to the practices at the farm, she and two other people from the area have started a community centre in the town close to where she lives. Its aim is to create a social platform in the town where people can get together to do what they like and inspire each other to live better lives. They have a café, office spaces for people to be able to work from home but not being alone, organizes cultural events in evenings, communal dinners, workshops, skill sharing and much more. In addition, the space is open for members every afternoon to use as a “living room”.

“We should not have to go to the city, everything cannot be created there. When we make a cabaret here, we compete with Netflix, HBO and those actors. That’s our competitions if we want a culture scene here. After all, it eats people. We would then like to create a space for cooperative creation, build local network at this place. I also think that inspires others”.

She emphasizes the importance of social relations - helping each other and shaping platforms for social interactions. She argues that an inner transformation is needed to make time for things that matters and value things which are connected to social relations.

“To constantly be online is probably a bad thing that forces us to be available all the time. We are never inside ourselves; we are always somewhere else. We must be aware of it and learn to handle it. To think for ourselves”.

“Sustainability starts with yourself. It is not possible to consume your way to become ecological. You have to start with yourself and then help others”.

“Sustainability is to make time for yourself. Then, we can help others. It’s the start to shape social platforms and social communities in the small scale. In the small things, we can make change. No one can do everything, but everyone can do something”.

She believes such thoughts and actions have developed since she moved to this place and that the way she lives now makes room for expansion in these areas.

“Not having enough time is a problem. To give time to things. It is very nice to allow things to take time. These things have changed a lot since I moved out here. The urge for immediate satisfaction was much more present when I lived in the city. Everything was supposed to go so fast. Hire people for everything, not doing or thinking for yourself. I think that it is related both to environmental sustainability, material purchases, food and so on. If you have less money and more time, you can take the time needed. In this sense, food cultivation is absolutely fantastic, you put this seed and you can’t hurry or make it grow faster. Maybe with some nice manure. Then, you see it grow and reap. Then, to give that time and knowledge to our children who will carry this earth after us”.

28
“Approaching the understanding that job and leisure are not different things but that I want to live and make life at the same place. Not stay in one place, go away and work and then come home to live. I want this to be combined. I don't want to be two different persons”.

“I think living in harmony with the seasons is very important. I believe living with nature is very important. For example, in the spring I put seeds in the ground, go out and see how everything grows, the animals have their kids, life comes back. In the summer, see how everything grows, just enjoy life. In the autumn we harvest. In the winter we are inside, making a fire and heat the house. If you live with the seasons and nature you will respect it more too, and that is necessary”.

When talking about the future, she foresees a situation where self-sufficiency and practical knowledge together with a respect for nature is needed.

“We will have to learn to do things differently in the future. Back to basic. We will have to learn how to grow our own food, we will really need that. We have our own well for drinking water, even though it is scary with the drought. Also, we have enough to grow food for a year”.

“We do not know what will happen to the earth in the future. It is important to be able to take care of yourself, be able to fix our own food. Both in practical terms and for self-esteem. To be able to do things that are needed. Know how things work and understand the value of food, water, heating. It is also a knowledge that I want to pass on to my children”.

“We are a part of and live in the reality of climate change. We live in it in another way. For example, water shortage in our well. So, it will be natural to try to do something about it. It is real for us here in the rural areas, it is perhaps also good because we must keep the future in mind with our actions”.

Finally, she believes that one must lead by example, and this is only something that one can do when being happy about life. Small communities can be great examples of transformation to a society that takes care of humans and the environment.

“It is important what we shape at a local level, a good community. I want to be present and support this place. If I got too much global, it will just be an overload”.

“I want to spread ideas and practices as well, be an inspiration and support others. Show that it is possible but also support other people’s visions and dreams. It is difficult to leave your everyday life”.

5.5 Person 5

He lives outside a small village located at the Swedish west coast in a “tiny house” on wheels that he built himself five years ago. He has also built a sauna, a shed and an outdoor toilet on the land where he lives, which he owns together with four other people. However, he underlines: “That’s only the small universe. The important thing is still the bigger context I am in, the environment, nature and people”.

At this place he is involved in various food provisioning practices. He grows food for himself, shares a greenhouse with some friends and is a part of a food cooperative. Moreover, he has started a mini factory where he buys beans from farmers in the areas. The beans are usually grown to feed animals, but instead he makes flour for human consumption. He argues: “It is a systemic error that we are importing legumes to Sweden and then feeding what we grow here to animals”. He further elaborates on his beliefs around food and practices:

“In these processes that are outside humans, there is food. Food is a fundamental and natural part of being part of a larger system. I mean, we must get something from outside into our bodies, then it goes through us and then it goes back. When one engages in food practices and learn about it, one also begins to think about these larger systems. Where does food come from, how does it come here and how does it is it connected? You start to understand that you are a part of a long chain of processes that begin with sunlight and micro life and minerals. That modesty, I think begins with the countryside and interacting with the rural”.

29
In relation to this he elaborates on how important he think different contexts and surroundings are. Arguing that both human and non-human relations are very important when trying to see ourselves in a larger context, which is also necessary when orienting towards a better world. In this search, he finds practical activities and experimenting with new things to be a key component.

“To have a social community is something that I have felt is very important for me, people that get what I am doing and to whom I can share things. Both for practical reasons but also just people that I like to hang out with. To me, a larger context and a social sphere are necessities”.

“However, more things are needed to see this more holistically and to understand larger contexts, but a good start is to interact with non-human contexts or with more than human worlds. For me, that is a reason to live on the countryside and practice farming”.

“One has to do things by oneself here. Nothing is given to you. Either you must make things happen on your own or you have to do it with others. Not a lot exists here, but on the other hand, it also gives a feeling of possibilities. It forces me to be more inventive not to fall into a trap where I have to work to earn money and by that get exhausted and not have any energy to do other things. Then nothing will happen”.

Furthermore, this relates to ideas around the importance of societal transformations. He thinks that one of the main problems we have in the society today is the way we live our lives and the worldview it is based on.

“A part of the problems we are facing as a civilization is about the fact that we don’t understand that we are a part of something larger, a whole. We are a part of a system that is greater than humans and humanity”.

“In order to miss that humans are a part of this system; we must distance ourselves from it, make it to something different and alien. (...) We are not natural systems and we are protecting ourselves from them. In a city you can almost walk a whole day without seeing something wild. Most of the things you see is made by humans or made with the aim to serve humans. It is a human made environment. This makes it easy to think that is everything we need. That this is what the world is, that’s what humans are. There, I think it is a difference to come to the countryside, to understand the processes that we are a part of, which are present here”.

“A lot is connected around taking responsibility for my life where I am and recognising that there are spheres outside my sphere. An understanding and feeling for a whole. With that, there will probably also be a greater well-being and a feeling of meaning of our existence. That we are just a part something bigger”.

“Sustainability as a concept might have served its role and is sometimes misleading. Nothing is really sustainable, it is only flows, rebuilds and decomposition”.

“We have reached a point where we rather have to think about how we can give back to the systems that we are degrading. Regenerative farming for example, to build soil at the same time as you cultivate. Humans need to support and add to the systems, not only exploit them”.

Furthermore, he also wants to live a different kind of life himself and change the way he understands the world. The way he makes life today have changed his way of perceiving the world and he points out the importance of the place and the networks there as fundamental in this change.

“It is a kind of activism to move and create a sustainable life outside the city. Our culture is centred around cities as the place where innovation and culture are created, the place where everything should origin from. There is a value in resisting this and do you own thing. It is only one kind of culture that is created there but only within the frames of a city norm”.

“That has grown to be a deeper though, to take responsibility for a place. If you feel responsible for a place, you won’t destroy it. It becomes a part of you, of us. A lot of crimes against nature happen when nobody feels responsible”.

30
“There is something in a place that affects you. The places’ spirit, the essence. It is not only the minerals and the plants, the humans who lives there are also carrying and co-creating the history and spirit of place. Those things interact with each other”.

“In the body, the animal body of humans is affected by the sun, wind, seasons and everything is much closer here”.

When reflecting on the future, he thinks that we are heading toward some kind of crisis. He recognizes some of the dominating social and economic systems today as main problems and thinks that we must be very adaptive and diverse when making new lives for the future.

“I think we are going through or are at the beginning of a shaky period. In order for us to get through that period without destroying things for a long time ahead, we have to build relationships with each other in fair ways, treat each other well and trust each other. We also must consider that part. I mean, it is hard to trust and be dependent on others”.

“Humans are narrative people. We live in the narrative that we reproduce. By changing this narrative, we have a way of making a deeper transformation. Because we need a fundamentally different understanding of our existence on this planet, and this is something that cannot be achieved with some change in the margins when it comes to agriculture for example”.

“At several levels, it is probably a lot about listening, because we do not know what is coming and we have no clear solutions for what is coming. What I want to be a part of and what I try to think when I build something is: it is flexible, open, adaptable for whatever will come. It must be like something that does not work as a train that drives straight into the future, rather more like water or something that adapts to the surrounding environment is very sensitive and inclusive. Because it is a lot of uncertainty around what we are facing”.

Figure 5: A homebuilt greenhouse, gardens, forest and a constructed pond for watering the vegetables (Agnes Rembe 2018).
6 Analysis

The material produced was analysed based on the interpretation of practice theory outlined in the conceptual framework and the analytical questions in the operationalisation. The following sections categorise the empiric material under several common themes from the interviews, all based on the three overarching focus areas: material practices, ideas and future. However, this chapter mainly focused on the first two, a wider discussion regarding the futures is presented in the discussion. This chapter blend descriptions of the material with analyses connected to the conceptual framework.

6.1 Cultivating knowledge embodied in alternative lives

Most of the informants expressed an urge to have more space and more opportunities to do more practical things with their bodies as a main reason for moving to a rural area. They felt a dissatisfaction with the limitations to engage in physical practices with their surrounding in cities and instead they wanted to move to have more influence over their world-making practices. Accordingly, practices and the expression through practices arguably is a foundation for understanding the phenomenon of NGV (Hargreaves 2011). The practices that people are involved in, is not only a way for them to understand the world, they are also actively seeking to make and shape the world with their minds and bodies (Schatzki 1996).

Many of them express a longing to be in relation to what they do, contrasting the life that they have now with a “superficial” existence in the city where people do not engage in practices that are a part of their world. All of them expressed the necessity to be an active agent in the practices that are a part of shaping their world. Voicing the importance of not only expressing attitudes or thoughts but acknowledging that their actions and bodies are in direct connection to the practices that are shaping their world (Hargreaves 2011). Consequently, to be in relation to what one does, could in this context be expressed as a longing for engaging in practices that involves bodily interactions with the physical surrounding that is together shaping the world they are in. It becomes an expression to further explore the sociomaterial of the practices that are making up the world.

One of the most important things in the interviewed people’s life is to be able to do things on their own. For example, building things the way they want, grow food, run a local business, make electricity and heat their house. In other words, they all want to be able to shape their lives the way they want at the place where they live. Their wish to engage in material practices that give the basic requirements to make a living becomes a way of connecting to networks of human and non-humans in a specific time and place (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010). For example, an individual world-making practice of building a greenhouse is co-created in relation to the physical surrounding at the specific place it is build. This material practice is made up by a network of relations: the reshaping of the landscape to make space for the greenhouse, removal of trees and soil, using the position of the sun in relation to the greenhouse and using material by build the greenhouse. Thus, the practice is both restricting and enabling lives in various ways, influencing movements, encounters and interactions in various world-making practices within this network (Tsing 2015). The sociomaterial relationship in the practice is a natural way for the informants of making sense and navigating in their everyday life (Orlikowski 2007).

Furthermore, the “know how” that is needed to survive within this network is made up by the practical understandings of human and non-human relations (Reckwitz 2002). Getting firewood from the forest or installing solar panels on the roof is a part of shaping the world in a way that influences other actors in the network, where the material and embodied understanding within this practice is the foundation for shaping the world in this time and space. Thus, to be in relations to what they do also opens possibilities to be active in shaping their lives. In relation, the results indicated that self-sufficiency is also perceived as a relation to the physical surrounding, which is understood to be the foundation for how one can live within NGV (Hopwood et al 2005). The material way people of NGV make their life also seems to be connected to ideas of the physical surrounding not only as a resource for heating, food, electricity or firewood, but equally important to humans in making lives on the countryside.
The results illustrate that one reason for practicing self-sufficiency is because the economic, food and political systems that humans depend on today are argued to be fragile and in the process of a collapse. Engaging in self-sufficient practices is an active way of rejecting participation a capitalist idea of a life that is not agreed on, since it is considered to be socially and ecologically destructive. Instead, doing this differently is a way of cultivating knowledge within a practice that becomes a materialised idea of alternative ways of life (Hargreaves 2011). This knowledge is both important in practically living in the future at the same time as understanding in making sense in a life outside the conventional.

Similarly, many of the informants emphasised the importance of being physical examples of a transition to an alternative society. One cannot only conceptualise a different understanding of the world; the practice of a life outside of capitalism or in an imagined future collapse is generating a practical understanding of the world, where the knowledge is expressed within the practice (Schatzki 1996). In other words, to practice an alternative life is a way of embodying an alternative understanding of the world, since one cannot build knowledge on something that does not exist. This could then inspire people and open other people’s minds since the bodily practices become materialised examples that enables alternative world-making projects (Reckwitz 2002).

In addition, a way of changing existing dominating practices is to challenge, break and replace them (Hargreaves 2011). By functioning as physical examples of resisting a capitalist system at the same time as living an alternative life, NGV is also a way of influencing how people in society could make lives differently. Practicing alternative ways of growing and distributing food, generating electricity off-grid or structure work outside the conventional is a way of challenging the dominant practices. Thus, material practices that are evolving at those places can be maintained and spread to other places. It means that not only the practices, but also the embodied ideas are reproduced and materialised at different locations. Similarly, to encourage people to take part or visit those places is a way of getting different practices in contact with each other and ultimately a way of replacing the old practices (Hargreaves 2011).

### 6.2 Food provisioning practices

As the results demonstrate, the main practice that the informants are engaging in is food-provisioning practices. They described all the varieties of vegetables they were growing and what they could use it for. Their food cultivation is also dependent on their predictions of the yield in relation to the amount of land and seed they are using and ultimately how much food they will get.

By engaging in this kind of practice, they are a part of something that is in direct relation to their life. They are growing food for themselves, using their own body and experience by creating embodied knowledge within the practice they are repeating and evolving every year together with the material environment (Reckwitz 2002). Growing food is something that is done in direct relation with the soil, it is an earthly bounded practice that where the practitioners must understand the world in relation to their bio-physical surrounding. When someone is predicting to get almost ten times more potatoes than she put in the soil, it means that there must be an embodied knowledge within this practice of how much potatoes she can get at this place. This knowledge is created within this practice and works as foundation for this practice in how it is understood to shape the world (Schatzki 2001, Hargreaves 2011). Accordingly, the embodied skills within food provisioning practices are also ways of making lives, this evolving process reflects and shapes the understanding of the world where those people live.

However, this is not only something that can be understood as an embodied knowledge of performance, the practice is also becoming in direct relation to the physical surrounding. This is something that all the informants were reflecting upon, how one could work to build and relate to the synthesis within the surrounding in the context they are in. To study the movement of the sun, shading in the garden, with trees that needs a lot of water or how various changes in the nearby area are influencing each other. Hence, the sociomateriality is becoming a fundamental understanding of the world and how it is influencing the possibilities for making everyday life (Orlikowski 2007). The human and non-human is entangled within the practice, where the inclusion and synthesis of the material surrounding is becoming a natural part of understanding life.
Food provisioning practices and the amount of potatoes one can harvest is also dependent on the physical surrounding. Growing food is not only an action done by the farmer, it is entangled in a network of non-human actors that are constituting the foundation for the practices and how it is shaping the world. One part of it is the skills of the farmer that put potatoes is the soil, manure, water, but it is also enabled by microorganism, worms, sun, other animals and much more which are all part of this practice and how it shapes the world. By reflecting on those things, the informants’ ideas within those practices could be argued to shape their understanding of food. In those practices, food becomes something that is co-created at a place, made possible by the movements, interactions, skills, encounters and other word making projects by human and non-human actors in this network (Reckwitz 2002).

Moreover, those practices are also shaping the physical landscape where they are acted. Landscapes are not just passive backgrounds; they are active in themselves. This means that humans are joining other living beings in shaping the world (Tsing 2015). Growing food means creating a place to grow the food, digging in the soil, planting seeds, removing weeds and other plants and interacting with the physical landscape in many other ways. When practicing gardening, all the informants were emphasising the importance of giving back and supporting the systems they are a part of and practice a regenerative farming that builds soil at the same time as they cultivate. Thus, the way they make their practices is built on the assumption that both human and non-human actors are making lives for their survival in a way that is shaping the world (Reckwitz 2002). In this sense, the people of NGV are in direct relation to the practices that are shaping the physical landscape around them, which also influences how they live their lives. With one part being, doing food provisioning practices in a way that is rebuilding the networks that they are a part, providing more life space for both humans and non-humans. Accordingly, they see both the human and non-human agency as unseparated and fundamental in a world-making practice (Tsing 2015). This shows that the practices that they are involved in could also be world-making projects that is embodying practices that facilitates multiply ways of living. In relation, the practices of NGV are results of the practitioners wish to be a part of the processes that feed them and the embodied network which enables food to grow, be eaten, turn in to compost and soil, and then back again.

In relation to this, some of the informants within NGV also articulated that the farming helped them to understand that they are a part of a bigger network both consisting of the direct interactions they have with their physical surrounding, but also on a bigger scale. This means that food practices are forcing them to practically interact and relate to all the processes around them, from sunlight to microorganism and from seed via digestion to become soil again. Therefore, the food practices become the fundament of acting in a larger network, not perceiving local only in the sense of the surrounding landscape but also include seasons, eco systems and the climate (Lenton & Latour 2018). This could be argued to be a way of creating new imaginations of the world which has its foundation in grounded understandings embedded in the earthly processes and perceiving the world from there (Latour 2018). One could see that the ideas and practices are correlating in shaping a more integrated understanding of the human and non-human world, where the imaginations of the world are becoming in the practices (Reckwitz 2002).

As shown, by exploring alternative ways of food provisioning practices, the people within NGV are also embodying ideas and skills that through those practices are evolving understandings of the world that contrast the modern thought of progress, separation and growth (Hopwood et al 2005). In the interviews, all informants expressed dissatisfaction with the industrial food production, which they linked to a capitalist system. They also contrasted their own food production to the conventional model pointing out things they did differently. Accordingly, the way they practice food production seems to be opposite of the industrial agriculture where only human needs are satisfied at the same time as it is destroying the conditions for other non-human world-making projects. It becomes clear that ideas connected to food practices of NGV are embedded in how they interpret the world when they make life (Latour 2005). They are not only rejecting the idea of industrial agriculture; they are also enacting an alternative that in its becoming are shaping the world in an alternative way. One could argue that it is an embodied resistance to the conventional food system at the same time as it is shaping possibilities for other ways of living (Tsing 2015). Moreover, the practices within NGV are not only shaping the world at particular places, it is also an embodied example that shapes alternative
ways of understanding food production as a whole as well as the processes and earthly images that are embedded in it. Thus, this practice is important in shaping the understanding of how food could be produced in an alternative way that is not destroying life on the planet. By focusing on the practice; the skills, ideas, tools, place, movements and encounters on which this practice depends on, it can function as a real-life example of how life can be made differently.

Furthermore, by engaging in this practice, those people do not only grow food for eating, this practice also becomes an enactment of NGV. The way they make life becomes an embodied knowledge of NGV (Schatzki 2001). The food provisioning practice become an embodied expression of what NGV is. As a result, the food provisioning practice is not only something that is shaping the understanding of the world within this practice, in addition, the phenomenon of NGV is also enacted partly through those practices (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010). Thus, food practices are not only a way of understanding this phenomenon, those practices are also at the same time part of the making and remaking of the phenomena and the networks connected to its practices (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010).

6.3 Place & local as platforms for changemaking

When the informants discussed their lives, they all described the place where they lived in detail. They talked about the area, referring to the landscape and the location being a major a reason for why they moved there, and mostly related to their physical surrounding where they lived when explaining what their lives were like. The way NVG live their lives has its foundation in the physical place where they stay and engage in everyday practices that are shaping their world. For example, all of them analysed the social and material environment where they live before engaging in various practices to understand the networks that they are a part of. Meaning that the practices within NGV are very connected to the place where they live, where the human and non-human processes are natural co-creators of the place where they live (Reckwitz 2002). The understanding of their lives through the practices starts at the place where they live and the network there, which shapes an understanding of the world founded in a place of human and non-human relations. Which also shows that they are joining an active landscape with the idea that they are not there to transform it, rather join the processes there to shape it together in a network of material practices (Tsing 2015).

In relation, a key concern for some of the informants was water shortages. As a result, many of the informants are involved in world-making projects to address this problem. Some of them are constructing ponds, others have long-term plans with water reserves and discuss water management with the municipality. In those practices these people are in direct contact to their surrounding and are engaging in a network that makes their world, because this relationship is also the foundations for the possibilities in to shape life. Thus, to understand the sociomateriality of a practice becomes a natural way of navigating in the world. Humans are organising themselves and understand water usage by talking to politicians locally but are also in relation to anthropogenic influence on drought and water issues globally. Moreover, this practice must be understood in its non-human context where the water is something grounded at this place but is also in relation to the shape of the landscape and all other living organisms in this area (Tsing 2015). Accordingly, drought as a consequence of climate change forces the people of NGV to engage in practices in its manner. A practice that makes those people engaging in the network of human and non-humans, embodying the water shortage and the networks embedded in it. Which means that those people, are shaping their understanding of the world in the human and non-human assembles, from local water shortage to climate change through their practice (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010, Latour 2005). This cultivation of knowledge at one place through the networks is, therefore, a correspondence between ideas and practice in relation to the physical surrounding that will shape images of future world-making projects (Latour 2018, Tsing 2015). Human and non-human shaping of the world for survival can be understood through local water shortage and the involvement in this process.

Another example of ideas assigned to practices connected to the physical surrounding at a specific place is how one informant chose to build a construction to prevent an enormous birch tree next to her house from falling onto her house instead of cutting it down. The decision was based on all the
invisible ways this tree was shaping the place where she lives; by taking water with the roots, shading spots in the garden, making space for numerous animals to live and much more. Likewise, were all the informants adapting their plans, constructions, how they socialised with friends or mobility according to the physical surrounding. Proving that their ideas of non-human relations are present in the practices, being embodied in movements, senses, plans, skills and interactions (Lorimer 2005). In addition, the embodied relations at a place influences other practices, since many of the informants have started to socialise more with humans in a non-human environment. Instead of having a drink at a pub, they build a fireplace for socialising by a lake, establishing ways to include human and non-human relations how they make life (Tsing 2015).

Furthermore, the way the interviewed people are living their lives is strongly connected to platforms, with a starting point at the place where they live. In their practices, they are shaping those platforms together with others, creating opportunities to engage in practices centred around the networks at the place (Reckwitz 2002). For example, one of the informants has a store where she lives, selling handcrafts, skin products and food produced by her and her friends. She is using the place where she lives as the natural starting point in her world-making projects; what could be made here; a store, then using the networks connected to this place to shape the practice of selling thing. From growing plants and using human skills to make skin lotion or pickled vegetables, to social networks and including their local practices for them to make a living in this local area. Thus, the material place works as the foundation for the practices possible and is interpreted as a natural actor in shaping lives at those places (Tsing 2015). Accordingly, the practice is enacting a shared idea of mutual world-making of humans and non-humans as a foundation for making lives at this place.

Moreover, organising a café, workspaces and musical events is another way of open possibilities for people to make life at the place where they live. Creating the space for co-creating practices is then a part of shaping people’s everyday lives but are also building networks of actors that is part of the process. In this co-creating, the shared understandings of what working, live music or sharing a meal could be is embodied in the practices (Hargreaves 2011). One of the informants described it like their cabaret or live music evening is competing with Netflix or HBO. Thus, those practices are also part of a bigger context of entertainment. However, by having a platform to create entertainment, people within their relations have created a bodily and material foundation to understand entertainment in an alternative way. It could also be argued that those practices are an enactment of an idea of entertainment as something shared and material, not something given to us through screens (Schatzki 1996), which in its enactment will shape the reality of the people being involved in it (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010).

Involvement in such practices could, as many of the informants expressed, shape a sense of responsibility and belonging to a place. The idea of building local platforms for a rural place to flourish serves as a basis for their interpretations of their physical surrounding and the networks they are a part of, consequently, influencing how they live their lives. Understanding the networks, NGV are a part of how they together are maintaining and shaping the world. Before moving, the informants felt alienated from a wholeness and belonging, something that changed when engaging in practices that revealed human and non-human networks that is maintaining and shaping one’s life. People now see themselves as co-creators of a place, acknowledging the exchange of humans and non-humans in the making of a flourishing rurality (Reckwitz 2002; Lorimer 2013). By focusing on those practices bounded to this specific place, it is also possible to see how ideas and practices are shaping new imaginations in how to navigate and make life in the future. Furthermore, leaving modern ideas of human and non-human relations, understanding the locality as a process that is shaping the world at the place but also acknowledging the connections outside this local sphere is also a part of this world-making process within NGV (Evernden 1993; Tsing 2015; Latour 2018).

7 Discussion

This following chapter discusses NGV in relation to GV and previous research as well as what could possibly be learned for the future by studying the material practices of NGV. Thus, more focus is on the third research question regarding what could be learned from the future. This discussion is
arguably required to be done in a wider perspective in order to examine what could possibly be learnt for the future in relation to other aspects in the world.

7.1 “Nya gröna vågen”: beyond modernity into the future

If the current planetary situation puts humans in a situation where the conditions for how to live have changed; humans are no longer the only active agent making the world that the rest depends upon (Tsing 2015). This means that the way most humans understand and find meaning in their life in this world, is built on a modern thought that is not making sense anymore (Evernden 1993; Latour 1993). Therefore, new ways of navigating and understanding the world must be explored.

The ruins of the modern idea of progress is already apparent and this is where one will find NGV. In the rural areas that are only considered as resources to fuel progress, where physical landscapes have been destructed and non-humans exploited to expand growth with extinction of eco-systems and climate change as a result (Evernden 1993). Those rural areas are now abandoned, services and infrastructure are almost non-existing. Thus, the people of NGV are living in the outskirts of the modernity, in the ruins of capitalism and ultimately in “nature”. They are living in the non-human landscape that is excluded from the project of progress, but which is crucial to include in future world-making projects.

As indicated, NGV is a way of exploring lives in this new planetary regime. Within their practices and the ideas connected to them, they live in a reality where world-making is not limited to humans; it happens everywhere, both by humans and non-humans. Acknowledging that all organisms are making living spaces, all affecting each other and with interdependency of overlapping world-making projects (Tsing 2015). In a situation where one no longer can ignore how the physical surrounding is influencing the life space, people within NGV are living in a way that is entangled with non-human networks in an attempt of creating new understandings of how to live in this condition. Thus, it is not only a way to stop the destruction of the biosphere and prevent an ecological collapse, it is also a way of living as part of the biosphere.

If the understanding of the world is not embedded in social structures but in material practices, the future is more about what practices people are involved in, where they happen, how and what is created there. By focusing on practices within NGV and the people physically living in the outskirts of modernity, the research in this case could also produce some knowledge that might be useful when imagining a future beyond the idea of modern development.

The knowledge produced in the practices of NGV is embedded in the networks of human and non-human organisms connected to the ground where they live. They are all part of a network that is the foundations for co-creating the world, all dependent on each other. This is embodied and materialised in those networks, meaning that they live at the place that is influencing their understanding of the world. Consequently, new meanings of life have been created, because they are a part of something and has a function in this network; maintaining, shaping and reshaping the world that they live in.

7.2 Is there something new with “nya gröna vågen”? 

The name NGV and all the other labels such as ‘gröna vägen 2.0’ or ‘new back-to-the-landers’ implies that this is the second version of something, a follow up on the original (Wilbur 2013). However, the results indicated that there is more than just a second version, NGV has some fundamental differences from the “original” version. The first GV was considered to be an alternative, a critique to a consumerist society and a way of doing something different in the margin (Holmberg 1998). An exploration of a life outside the conventional, where individuals and communities lived a more environmentally friendly, social just and simplistic life, more or less isolated from the rest of the society (Coffin & Lipsey 1981). In contrast, in the face of an ecological crisis and climate change, a state of precarity where the world is shaking, NGV appears to be more of necessity than an alternative. When human activities have wiped out a lot of the life supporting systems on earth and many life
supporting systems are heading towards a global collapse, if things are not radically changed, a completely different way of life is needed (Leggewie & Welzer 2010). Therefore, as the result illustrate; NGV cannot merely be regarded as an alternative lifestyle, rather, they cannot afford to be an alternative since the ‘alternative’ must be the new ‘normal’. A total societal transformation with different understanding of the world and how to make life is needed to prevent a future collapse and to make a good life for all living beings in the future.

Another way this is indicated is how the original and the new GV relates to the physical surrounding and the foundation for life. Earlier, this was taken for granted, people wanted to live closer and get a stronger connection to nature (Halfacree 2007a). Contrary, in this new situation of Anthropocene, this foundation of nature can no longer he taken for granted. It is not a passive backdrop one can connect to; it is in the forefront actively dictating the conditions of life (Lenton & Latour 2018). In NGV, including and accepting non-humans in shaping of the world in not an option, it is a necessity. Thus, the “new” GV is not really going back-to-the land, rather the “land” is coming at them, governing the conditions for the future, requiring a new understanding of how to make life in the future.

Moreover, NGV is also leaving the old imagination and dualism of urban/rural. To be local or have a global perspective is not the only way of perceiving the world. Instead, the networks and life supporting systems of human and non-human entanglement in the biosphere becomes the new way of relating to time-spaces and imagining the future.

7.3 “Nya gröna vågen”: opening new possibilities for the future?

As earlier mentioned, previous studies on this phenomenon have mostly been focusing on how new rurality’s are evolving when people are moving from urban to rural areas, trying to map out the reasons behind migration flows (Wilbur 2013). By focusing on the lives after the migration, more specifically on practices and the ideas related to them the findings have illustrated that this phenomenon is much more than just migration flows. It has given an insight and exploration of the lives of people being a part of NGV and how they are shaping and reshaping the world that they live in. Instead of only consider it as a countercultural phenomenon that is resisting and criticising the ‘conventional’ urban society, widening the perspective have shown that is also opening new possibilities of life making and understanding of the world. Accordingly, it can not only be reduced to an anti-movement, since it must be understood within the multi-perspective context it is lived. For example, they do not only resist capitalist foodways; they are creating new values for food and its connections to the physical surrounding, furthermore, they do not only reject the consumerist lifestyle; they are a part of a network where production is co-created by human and non-human actors, and finally, they are not only living a more simplistic life; they are making lives in a place that makes their relation more complex than before. In other words, NGV is creating values and relations to all the things that are considered “empty”, “dead” or “passive” in modern capitalism. The phenomenon reveals an opening to new possibilities and imaginations for future lives in a new planetary regime.

8 Conclusions and Limitations

In the face of climate change, political instability, ecological destruction, extinction of species and other global issues humanity is facing, various studies are showing that a radical societal transformation is needed, in order to avoid an ecological collapse. Arguably, alternative ways of living and understanding the world beyond modernity and the idea of progress, may make up the transformation needed (Hopwood 2005; Escobar 2008). Therefore, this thesis explores the contemporary phenomenon NGV as a response to this urgent need for societal transformation, as well as a resistance to the conventional modern society. The aim of the study is to examine the material practices in which people of NGV are involved, how their ideas relate to those practices, and what could be learned from the practitioners in terms of future pathways.
The results to research question one “What kind of material practices are people of “nya gröna vägen” involved in?” showed that the informants in this study, representing NGV, were involved in various material practices where they live. All of them are practicing alternative food provisioning together with other material practices directly involving the physical surrounding where they live. They expressed the necessity to be an active agent in the practices that are a part of shaping her world. Voicing the importance of not only expressing attitudes or thoughts but acknowledging that our action and bodies are in direct connection to the practices that are shaping our world.

Moreover, the results answering to research question two “What ideas and understandings do the practitioners themselves assign to those practices?” indicated that the self-sufficiency as an important practice is also seen as a relation to the physical surrounding, considered to be a foundation for how one can live. Engaging in self-sufficient practices is an active way of rejecting to be a part of a capitalist system. An idea of life that they do not agree on because it is considered to be destructive. Instead, engaging in material practices is a way of cultivating knowledge within a network that becomes a materialised idea of alternative ways of life. For example, growing food is not only an action done by the farmer, it is entangled in a network of non-human actors that are constituting the foundation for the practices and how it is shaping the world. This could arguably also shape the perceptions of the world from there. One can see that the ideas and practices are correlating in shaping a more integrated understanding of the human and non-human world, where the imaginations of the world are becoming in the practices.

To summarize, people within NGV are involved in material practices that are cultivating knowledge in relational networks within a practice. The knowledge that is created, is embedded in the material living organisms within the space wherein life is made. Thus, a planetary situation were humans are not the only agent shaping the conditions for survival, requires new and alternative ways of understanding the world, in order to make life in the future. The material practices and the ideas expressed within NGV are opening new imaginations and possibilities for how to make life in the precarity of the future. With reference to research question three “What can be learned from those material practices, and the ideas connected to them, when making life in the future?”, it can be argued that practices such as the informants active dissociation from the modern though, and redefinition of ‘a good life’ ought to be learned by a greater mass for the future since the embodied practices are challenging the dominating structures in society. Moreover, the state of Anthropocene requires new ways of living in different conditions and the material practices could state as an attempt to shape a life in this epoch. An understanding where ideas of the world has its foundation in embedded earthly processes and recognise human and non-human as co-creators of the world. Thus, the world-making of NGV could arguably be a way of creating new imaginations, contrasting the modern separation and dichotomies to prove how to make life in the ruins of modern progress.

This thesis has by its unique nature complemented the limited research available on the phenomenon NGV. Lack of time and resources set limitations to conduct in-depth study with more fieldwork, including more informants on a diverse set of spaces. Due to this limitation, one of the interviews was conducted online. At times poor connections and misunderstandings influenced the quality and outcome of the interview. Moreover, it was not possible to participate and interact in the surrounding where the informant practices his life. The limited number of informants due to the time constrains of this study could be considered a limitation regarding the conclusions drawn from a small study. A larger number of informants would have given more perspectives and a greater understanding of this phenomenon, with less risk of missing the diversity in a phenomenon. However, this study has given a qualitative in-depth study of this phenomenon given the time and resources available, which has provided insights and a start for future studies. The findings in this study cannot be understood as a fact for this whole phenomenon but can serve as a real-life example of what is happening an NGV-places and a small-scale picture of this whole movement. Despite the shortcomings, with this thesis the hope is to contribute to further discussions on the phenomenon by taking this first stance and widen the discussion on possible futures and alternative developments. It welcomes future researches to take on where this study ended to gain deeper understanding of the NGV as a part of shaping alternative understandings of a future world. As NGV is a diverse phenomenon including context-specific ways of living, a longer study can complement the research and offer a more multi-
perspective study of the topic that is arguably needed. The discipline of future studies could benefit from further observations and encounters with the lives and practices within NGV.

No direct comparison between informants were done in this study, even though, the informants live very differently, while also having different values and identifying themselves with various ideas of life. A comparative study of the nature of NGV informants, could arguably help identify contrasting types and varieties in NVG-lives. In addition, this study did neither include a comparison of people’s lives in the urban area before they moved to the rural lives they live now, which may also be of interest for future research, in order to understand differences in material practices in relation to place. An extension of the study with this perspective could paint a different picture of the influence of the physical surrounding and in what way people’s understandings of the world might have changed after the migration. As mentioned, a more in-depth focus on time-spaces with maps and other visual tools is something that could benefit a future study. Furthermore, this study was only focusing on “gröna vågen” in Sweden, drawing conclusions on its philosophical and ontological foundations in its context. However, a more extensive study could benefit from doing a more in-depth review on historical and other contemporary alternative movement to compare similarities and differences in their expression. There are a lot of angles, methods and perspectives to apply to the research of NGV, furthermore, there is plenty to examine, and ultimately learn from NGV, in order to create a future where all living organisms can prosper in a new planetary regime.
9 Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Marin Gren for valuable feedback, inspiration and patience. Thank you, Per-Olof Hallin for good inputs.

I would also like to thank all the informants for participating in the research, you are truly inspiring.

Thank you to my study group in the library, and to Andreas for encouragement and positivity, Cam for valuable last-minute feedback, Therese for taking time to assist and Hanna for endless support, time and help.

A big thank you to Myggan and Agnes for everything. I can’t imagine finishing this thesis without you.
10 References


