

## *Attitudes are key to lifting the rural areas*

**Many people dream about seeing their everyday life with higher quality of life and time over, in close vicinity with nature. In the rural areas, all of this is available; it is high time to confront the concept of the urban areas being the norm. We want to see more attitude projects, with more resources and coordination to strengthen the positive image of the rural areas and convince more people to choose a modern, sustainable lifestyle to ensure the whole country will continue living.**

We've all been led to believe that urban life is the form for a successful lifestyle. If you substitute the word urban with rural and many refer to depopulation, dark forests and solitude; the result of decades of media reporting perhaps best summarized in the beautiful but dystopic documentary series by P-O Tidholm, Resten av Sverige (The Rest of Sweden).

In essence, life in rural areas is not one of solitude, in smaller communities there is more space for everyone, to make a difference and have an impact on the lifestyle. The distance between people may be longer in miles but rarely in hours and minutes. There are jobs, impressive drive and – contrary to the media image – many strong businesses looking for skilled employees. And in these times, full of stress and pressure here is something gaining in importance: Time at hand.

A survey carried out by Kantar Sifo on commission from Landshypotek points out that the items most valued by Swedes when they choose dwellings are quiet surroundings, the possibility to practise their pursuits and the nearness to scenic nature. Other studies show that the young people, also called Generation Order, value close relationships and want to offer their families a safe environment with lots of time for one another.

**This is precisely what the rural dwellings can offer – but hindered by stereotyped images of the rural emptiness people fail to explore.**

A growing number are realizing the importance of challenging the stereotypes; to instead show a realistic image of the opportunities at hand. Here at Leader Höga Kusten we have worked proactively to change attitudes by depicting the drive in existence here and the persons who have designed their reality after their wishes and decisions. Centrally in the campaign are Landsbyggare – Land builders – the entrepreneurs who have taken on the development of our land and the creation of job opportunities in Höga Kusten.

We are doing this since changing the attitudes is essential to the development we wish to see. We do however realize that more is needed, and the efforts need to be coordinated – there is no shortage of initiatives in any part of the country, but we would achieve more power and sustainability if the public sector found a uniform approach towards the rural areas politics.

**We are willing to share the campaign concept Landsbyggare, since we believe that the entire country would benefit from demonstrations of the opportunities in rural districts.**

// Jenny Edvinsson and Eva Jilkén, Leader Höga Kusten