CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE FORCE MAJEURE

DEAR HOLLY AND STELLA,

We have a philosophical disagreement with the kinds of requests you are making of us. You are asking us to improve particular places, what we would call patches. Each place that you ask us to deal with has many difficulties already in it. For instance, all the urban planning is green washing, and put more generously this adds green to urban environments which in turn helps the air, helps the earth a little bit, is aesthetically pleasing and helps other species like birds and insects live within urban ecosystems.
The reason that we refuse to do this is because this is what everybody else is doing. Even if we do it better than anybody else, it is our view that this kind of work is too little, too late, in face of, for example the IPCC report which gives us only ten to twelwe years, before various forms of collapse are upon us.

The reason that we refuse the patch is because there are countless patches existing globally. And doing a patch here and a patch there, is in denial of the larger problem at hand. Our work is designed to deal with the larger issues, with the view that this is where the changes have to be made, systemically.

Here is what we are willing to do and for which we have some capacity. If we cannot blend with what your capabilities are, there is no blame, we will simply although reluctantly move elsewhere. The work that we can do must take up the following issues, in some measure:

"DOING A PATCH HERE AND A PATCH THERE, IS IN DENIAL OF THE LARGER PROBLEM AT HAND."

• Rebalancing the atmospheric commons, so that carbon reduces and oxygen which is now depleting is regenerated. No patch can address this, it's a whole systems problem.

• The acidity in the world ocean and its warming, aside from pollution and overfishing has reduced the ocean's capacity by somewhere between 60-70%. We are presently working on a design that we think will shed new light on how to deal with that acidity ocean wide.

• The so called green revolution in farming as the increase in the productivity in food, is far less than the decrease in productivity in global topsoil. That is, topsoil globally is losing its ability to hold carbon, losing its friability and thus our ability to produce food is reducing as our population increases. We don't see how modestly improving the green properties of a city addresses these problems in a transformative way. 12 million square miles of topsoil must be tended to.

• 70% of the world forest has been cut. Both our farming methodologies and forestry practices have reduced dramatically many species ability to continue. In fact, all on our own we are in the process of creating a vast contribution to what is now known as the sixth mass extinction.

Patch thinking only makes this problem worse by diverting energy from the big picture to local problems and helping people. Fixing patches here or there takes away our ability to look at, then deal with these larger issues.
Since fitting into your system of helping localized issues does not fit into our paradigm of fixing the crisis we're in, what can we usefully do together?

HERE IS WHAT WE ARE WILLING TO DO:

1
Look at your whole forest and farming situation from the perspective of what might be done to increase biodiversity and decrease monoculture, increase oxygen production and increase carbon holding. Something all agree is a global necessity.

2
You have many thousands of islands that surround you. We argue that the most valuable thing we can do in regards to your relation with the ocean has to do with stopping pollution and stopping fishing. As waters begin to rise, new species will be moving in, but you can not to predict how this is going to take place. As this occurs, biodiversity and food production can increase as long as proper design can be put into place. Who is doing this? No one, because this is something that will take place in 50 years. We call this pre-emptive planning. We are willing and able to do this.

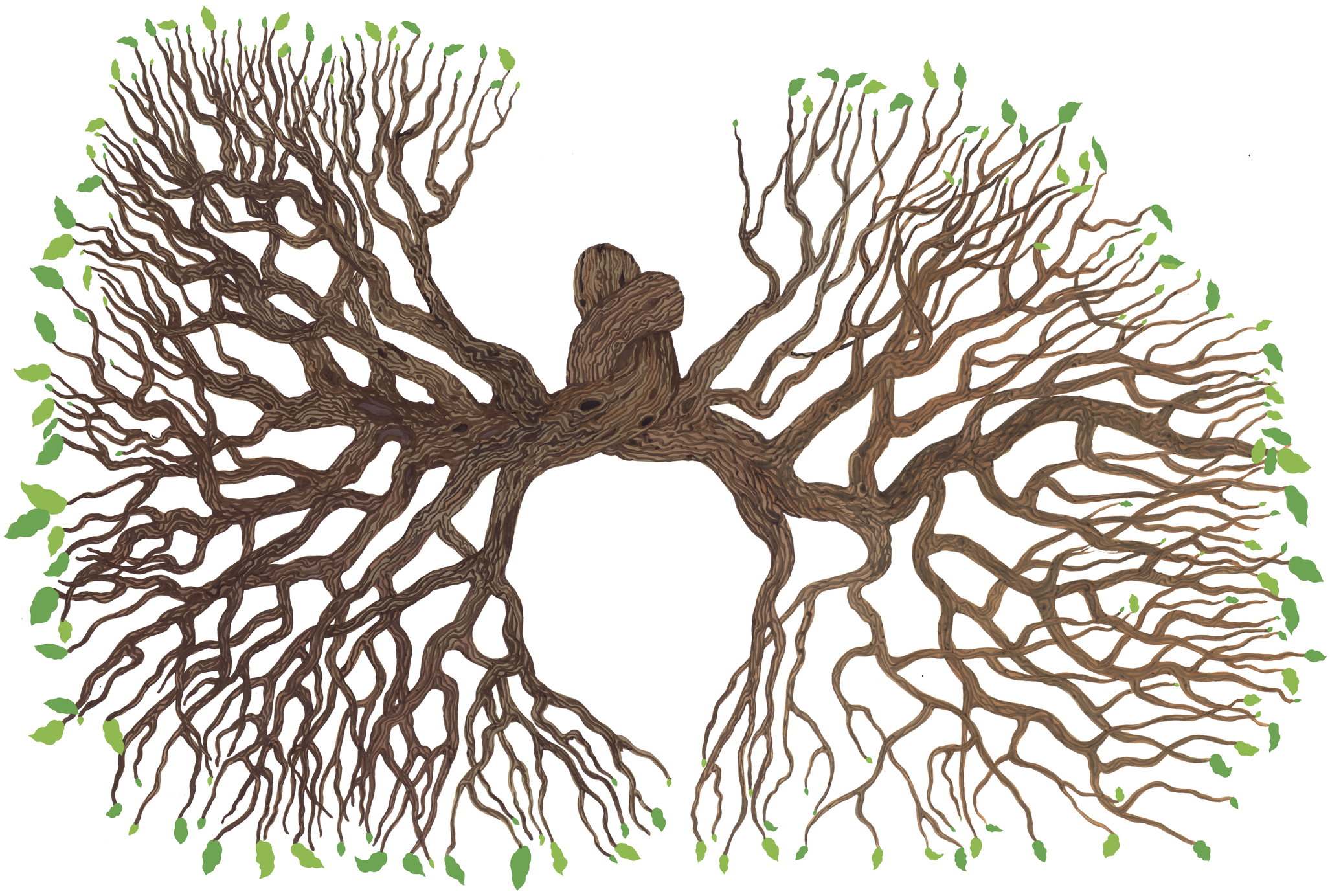
3
If we were to take on something local, it might be the creation of a truly green city, a city that literally takes in more carbon than it produces. An oxygen producer and a carbon sink. A city that by virtue of the way it is built, through the way biodiversity is woven into it, would be the first city in the history of cities that would become a novel urban eco system that would become a niche in the web of life that we often speak about.

Such a new green city would begin in an empty place that is not already particularly damaged, not a toxic dump in need of transformation.

At any rate, what we're talking about here elaborates somewhat on our original proposal. I hope this clarifies why we don't think it's in our interest, nor in the larger interest of the life web, which is where our principle work exists, to do what you ask, which is involving ourselves with greening, in some form or other, areas in the Stockholm region.

Your country, which is so sophisticated, so wealthy, so knowledgeable that it can readily produce a group like the Resilience Center, can surely find the resources to get behind what we are talking about. Perhaps we can speak on the phone soon to consider how we can move forward and work together

ALL THE VERY BEST AND THANKS FOR YOUR WORK
ON OUR BEHALF,
NEWTON



A TOWN CALLED HELEN:

A Green City designed to Harmonize the Swedish Countryside with the Web of Life

Initially we refused to assist in the design of the Stockholm Royal Seaport as from an ecosystems perspective, we perceived it as mainly green-washing. Our work deals with large systemic changes, to address the issues facing the life web and the rebalancing of the commons.

We therefore propose a form of urban settlement, ecologically provident, where the overall wealth is generated by the careful harvesting of naturally occurring redundancies in the life web, in a larger forest farm pastureland ensemble.

We ask you instead to risk a proposal that privileges four of the great commons that underlie the wealth of Sweden. The forests, the topsoil, the atmosphere and as an ensemble, the workers in the field, and finally privileges a new form of eco-urban entity as a surround to the city we argue for. To privilege them in such a way that they can become and then do the work of community.

We believe this is to bring back complexity to an unnecessarily simplified system, and to do so we begin by proposing the creation of a small city of approximately 20,000 people. This city and it's surround would be designed to literally be a niche in the life web itself, bringing back agriculture, forestry and herding as meaningful occupations. This work is too complex for big machines to do, much will have to be done by hand or small machines, prioritizing human labor, interest and enchantment. Likewise forestry is rethought, from the perspective of complexity adding resilience in now-stressed systems and regenerating an ancient forest industry. This is also true of both herding and farming.

"THIS CITY AND IT'S SURROUND WOULD BE DESIGNED TO LITERALLY BE A NICHE IN THE LIFE WEB ITSELF"

This green city accomplishes many things; in particular the prioritization of the life web as fundamental to establishing a novel ecosystem as the city's core.
We look at this city as a new generative form in the Swedish landscape. It is definitely not a model.

Scale and scope

The city might take up a space as large as 3 km by 5 km, and be made almost exclusively of wood, functioning as a carbon sink, including enough solar cells and turbines to power itself completely, including electric transport. Walls are covered with harvestable vines, balconies become mini orchards and gardens are forageable, as are the streetscapes and an interlocking park design system, so that the walker can literally traverse the city with little awareness of infrastructure

The borders of the city intersect with forest, farm and meadow which are all designed to be productive, polycultural and biodiverse in nature as part of the life web of this low entropy mini commons we envision. The concepts in this new urban form are repeatable, but differ place by place, in response to differences in climate, topology and biota.

The City that Reorganizes the Countryside

The green city teaches other green cities in formation how to become novel ecosystems, developing new niches in the life web and thereby enriching the countryside. The city will be a form of commons itself, that would be a shape in the countryside.
An ensemble of 5000 hectare of forest, 300 hectare of farming, 2000 hectare of herding collectively designed to establish a deep biodiversity reserve.

We propose the land to be owned by the city and a co-operative. The farming, herding, forestry and maintenance of the city itself, and the small university over time become self sustaining and inherently self-organizing.

This green city cannot be retrofitted into existing cities except in small ways, as from a biodynamic perspective, existing cities have been built on archaic models.

We instead propose the knitting of our small city into the ecosystem; it would then not be an alien form to the life web, like virtually allother cities, rather it will be literally digestible by the life web itself, like all other living systems. It will be a place that teaches people how to be small farmers, herders, foresters again. A multitude of small enterprises can now be understood as fundamentally more efficient ecologically than the endless so destructive swaths of monoculture industrial farming we currently produce.

The last part of this experiment is a question –can a small city do all this work and transform a section of the country much bigger than itself? In so doing, this envisioning can become a new organizing principle in the land of Sweden. Again, biodynamically speaking, we are looking at bringing forth a high-resilience, low-entropy system capable of continuing and continuing. This is a counter-extinction work, at large but still local scale. Given what mono-culture has done to the planet, we see a multitude of small revisions at this scale as a requirement for its continuing.

”THE LAST PART OF THIS EXPERIMENT IS A QUESTION –CAN A SMALL CITY DO ALL THIS WORK AND TRANSFORM A SECTION OF THE COUNTRY MUCH BIGGER THAN ITSELF?”

In this community which we see as a poetry of the whole, half of the terrain is given over to a kind of productive open canopy forest wilding leaning to favoring biodiversity and the sustenance of the life web, while the other half is the collective working together for mutual benefit, as people acting as useful members, literally creating a new niche in the great life web community.

If repeated across the countryside with variations accommodating topographical and ecological variation, site by site, with experimentation conducted as well for crop, trees and understory plants that will grow in 3 to 5 degree warmer temperatures, we have a system that would bring the country of Sweden through planetary temperature rise of 3 to 5 degrees C with its biodiversity intact, its ability to trade surplus intact and its food production intact; a process that costs far less than not doing it. Above all, its civility remains intact.