

Culture and Hobbit Village Venture

The purpose of this document is to arouse ground-laying discussion concerning the opportunities Heinävesi and its surroundings can bring in developing into a year-round booster of the tourism industry of the region.

The information covered here have been collected during the past 4 years. Their direct modelling might not function directly, so during discussion one has to weigh all application methods brought out in the course of discussion, determine the initial status, make clear which instances are ready to commit themselves for the project and how, and what are the initial natural resources to be used etc.



This house has been built by photographer Simon Dale. The house has been built in accordance with the EU-directives concerning sustainable development. The construction-material used has been mainly nature's own building materials; stones, scrap wood and straw bales.

The house occupies an area of 70 sqm and the building expenses were about 5.000 €. The share of personal work is quite considerable, meaning everything was been done by hand. The construction project took 18 months to complete.

The basic idea here is presented quite informally, because the point is to generate discussion around the topic.

The goal of the implementation:

- To collect the know-how into one place, thus making it attractive enough, while creating an adequate amount of interest towards the issue.
- Create year-round economic activities with as few new investments as possible.

- The marketing of tourism, the further development and linking together of the tourist-packages.
- Create a unique idea without imitating others.

The common problems of tourism in todays Finland:

- The operations are dispersed, collective marketing is non-existent, blindness towards own locality, i.e. one does not see things/opportunities how a visitor would see them.
- A few months of a peak season, the rest of the time is plain waiting around.
- The hand-crafters and the connoisseurs have difficulties in establishing contact with potential customers.
- Information technology and the free and limitless opportunities it brings are not made use of.
- A number of tourism enterprises price themselves out, "because the season is so short", or respectively rely on 'cheap' student-labour and are forced to close their doors when studies resume.



In addition:

- Where tourism has flourished, has it without exception been centralized. (Linnanmäki, Joulupukinmaa, various 'Landia'-concepts etc.)
 - Many, including the succesfull ventures, have not operated year-round, owing to their special nature. (Linnanmäki, Joulupukinmaa, various 'Landia' -concepts etc.)
- On the other hand, there are those who have succeeded in selling almost every season of the year. (For instance Muumimaa, Särkänniemi planetarium and aquarium and other amusement parks)

- Then there are the activities which do not require that much of marketing or centralization. => fishing in the archipelago - although nobody makes a living out of this. The 'fishing stories' serve as a word of mouth, as a marketing tool - the fisherman, by this time, has everything ready - including that sausage bought from the city.



Notice the little Hobbit running from the bedroom to mom, who is in the kitchen.

How to avoid the stumbling blocks, and do the aforementioned 'right', and with local terms and with small investments.

Create a local association or cooperative, where all issues are taken into account, discussed and made decisions on.

Later on in the text, this is referred to as "the community".

What does a traveller want?

All travellers want to lodge "close" to what they have come to engage in, see and experience.

Urban family:

- A vacation filled with activity.
- A place where children can roam freely, get a lot of stimuli and things to without the parent having to come up with recreational activities. - The children fall asleep before they even reach the place of rest.
- A moment of some timed shared/common activities.
- Value for the money

Company:

- Offer their guests, clients and personnel something different which again doesn't cost too much.

A foreign traveller:

- Direction and knowledge in his/her own language. Most times, the cultural traveller is left out of everything.

Groups:

- Food, programmes and things to see.

Other; youngsters, ones without children, business travellers, even the local cottage folk:

- Parts of the issues mentioned.

What should the community do?:

- Create a special village, a Hobbit village - build the entire village using recycled and renewable materials. [The emphasis is put on the economical building methods where everything is produced locally].



- Collect all local artisans into one village.
- Provide the the artisans the possibility to practice their profession, create commercial courses about the subject/field for ones interested, and provide them with a year-round outlet 'free of charge'.
- Create a touching surface between the farmers and the customers/travelers. [Saturday markets where locally produced food-stuffs are sold.]
- Create affordable packages. (Affordable in this case doesas not necessarily mean cheap.)
- To co-ordinate the marketing of the provincial travel industry.



A covered public space is easily equipped with second-hand windows for the autumn season.

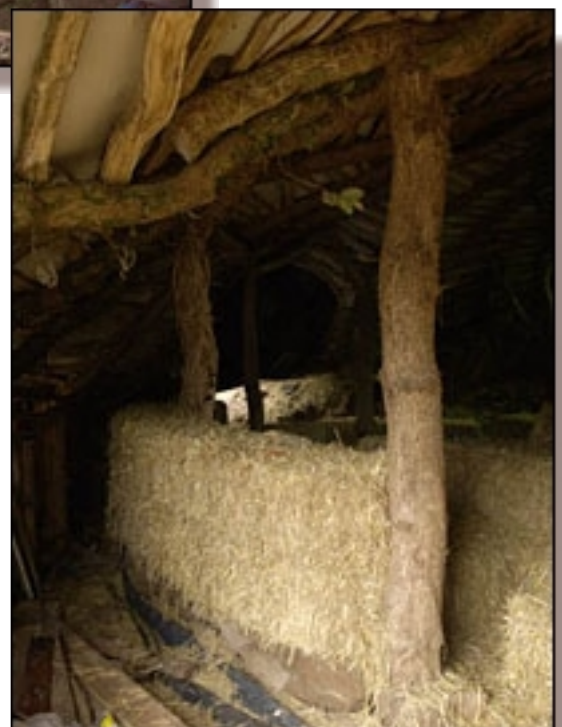
- Also create courses for in-doors, which are for adults, youngsters and children. [A round year "The happening continues even on a rainy day" - guarantee]

- Make a posting in the Internet about every activity using 4 to 5 languages.



- Maintain a bird nest -camera in the Internet, from which one can follow the daily activities, courses, staw-bale construction, and plastering using cow manure etc...
...titled:

"You should be here!"



What do we need?

- Committed local workers.
- Forest (from the municipality, in whose ownership it will stay), slopy, varying terrain, sand and stones, water.
- A durable foundation (on which a parking lot is built)
- A road, electricity and Internet.
- EU-funding
- Cost calculations (when it is known exactly what we want)
- Long-term plans which are approved by the community.
- Around the year lodging capacity for travellers.
- Hand-craft artists and traditional knowledge, wood and metal know-how.



Regardless of the style of the building being built from natural resources, one always needs a lot of stones.



In addition:

- The intention here is not to give the notion that the venture progresses in a style of "Everything and now!", which always results into disappointments, the fading away of the issue and finally the burial.
- One has to proceed and advance more through discussion => commitment => planning => decision => beginning and proceeding according to the plan as a whole.



- There is a certain contradiction in the description of the venture: On one hand one talks about culture, on the other hand one brings forth a hobbit and a troll - an idea aimed for children, which does not necessarily have so much to do with Finnish culture. Here one has to keep in mind the actual realistic objectives: In order to maintain the know-how, and distribute it further and get people to the spot, we have to have something which attracts people to arrive, which makes the place famous. The budgeting and the cost structures are the realism which we are confronted with daily, so that we can make/create what we desire.

One line has to be drawn: We do not sell 'cheap thrills', although one can sink loads of "cotton candy, Coke, and 1 meter-liquorice" into children.

Let the matter be observed from the point of view: "How do the others do it?" This is to say:

- Various products are sold there, regardless if it is locally produced or not.
- A 'Cheap Thrill'-holiday causes, even after one day, a huge dent into the parents' wallet - so this has to be avoided if possible.
- The locals are only left with the money which from the products that are locally produced. All other money, which is to be paid elsewhere, creates the reputation of a n expensive place.
- The equipment and investments are so costly to buy/lease that a huge crowd of people are required to cover the costs. Big masses function only outdoors, because indoor facilities have not been built for such masses. In addition, 'Interesting events' happen only during good weather. This results to fact that one is at the mercy of good weather. Compare: Linnanmäki etc.

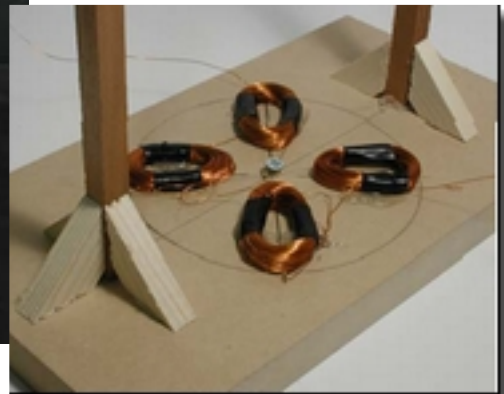
In the culture village, everything is done in a different fashion, this is to say,
- Masses of people are not required when courses can be held for groups of 8 - 14 travellers, and indoors - with the exception of 'the village blacksmith', 'dying with mushrooms' and 'making red clay -paint and other paint' - these happen outdoors, but in covered facilities.

- Every traveller gets a locker for free which can be locked, and the children can roam free-of-cost in the Hobbit forest and the safe treehouses, observe the lamb and pigs in the pen etc.

As long as the children are having a good time, the parents also come across every artisan in the village, and sooner or later the family gets hungry. Ideas and information about courses can be given to the customers without haste.



When the parents are attending a course, or in case of bad weather, the children are experimenting with a 'vertical windmill under the guidance of the Hobbit druid. (The course in question is aimed for the ones young at heart and children). The pictured windmill lights up a LED-light even with the slightest gust of wind. Similarly safe courses can additionally be developed in abundance. The leaders work as entrepreneurs and pay the community a share of their income.



The Hobbit-workshop gives the children a chance to do various things: oil, varnish, hammer, pale etc.

Only the old druid (the coordinator) will be using the more dangerous apparatus such the drills etc.

However, the Hobbit druid has done all such things in advance, before the children have arrived.

And when it is not raining, children know how to pass their time using their own initiative.



- The money comes to the local operators, the community and the municipality (...and one has to pay state too.) - although one needs not pay the "Danish ferris-wheel supplier".

- The place keeps its reputation as being inexpensive, down-to-earth and bustling.

Children (our best marketing staff), will be wanting to come back, and the the parents will have nothing against it. [And from a bird-house - camera connected to the interner, they can observe which new things have come up/what new things are being created/built]

Because the cultural people, to whom I am writing here, already understand what draws other tourist-segments, I will not mention the things which can be taken for granted, and stress some issues possibly too much.

I will also cover quite a lot about 'hobbitism', hoping to give some new ideas.

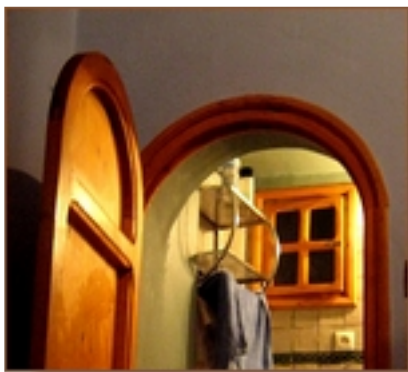


Adapting from natural resources is an newly acquired old art-form, isn't it?

Firstly, all necessary utensil and apparatus can be built in a way a Hobbit would build them. The first rule is that everything in nature is round an crooked.



90-degree angles in the construction are consciously avoided.



At least the corners are rounded off.



Shingles give more appearance.





The generous eave overhangs keep the patio free from snow and give an inviting appearance.



Arcs are relatively easy to make - even out of birch.

A willow fence

The walls of a cob-house are thick, easily crafted and modified.





The beams of the structure can either be left visible or be covered.





The village blacksmith makes all hinges for the heavy doors, the ornamental fasteners for the logs in the house, the lighting appliances etc.





The building material for construction is hessian for wall decorations, unsquared planks, scrap wood (not visible when finished), stones, straw-bales, clay-sand-straw-manure-plaster, shingles and thick beams.

The houses will in fact be made of beams and planks. The unsquared planks etc. are mainly ornamental, giving a 'rustic'-feel to the entity. In Finland the requirements are that a building must withstand a 1-meter layer of ice and snow.





The village could have various style represented, although few basic principles which have been found to be good (and inexpensive) could be the same. The houses could be of sizes of 50 - 70 sqm. However, the main building, where the sauna and cafe is located, has to be bigger.

And the use of colors is allowed...

...even if painting the wall full of white birds...



... and the stairs can also be fitted with a banister.



The interior decoration can also be done this way. Nobody would object to this, or...? It's just about going into the forest to collect some suitable branches... The roots also give material for making something beautiful.



SOFA'S DECORE - walnut, wood-carving, varnished

These masterpieces have been made in Riga. We would also be able to do these here, wouldn't we?
Or we could learn.

On Saturdays during summer, one can organize a fair/market where all the vendors are basically local villagers, who mainly sell vegetables, berries etc. - preferably in old style, traditional clothing. [No liquorice or cotton candy vendors]. At the same time, lectures/courses can be held about "additive-free" food.

It is possible to have, for example, "oriental cuisine"-courses. And a must have is: "Other Cultures Present Themselves", so that the locals are also offered something new. During the evenings, (alcohol free) barbecue-evenings can be held.

Why doesn't the artisan have to pay rent?

- The important thing concerning marketing is that all operations are centralized into one place and therefore all elements support and strengthen each other. This is to say, people do not want to go and buy their bread from one shop, milk from another, and in between look for a shop selling meat.

A market hall is a more favored place.

This is if one does not want to go beyond city limits to buy 'ready-packed microwave products' from a supermarket.

- The first couple of years will have the autumn period as relatively quiet. During the first couple of years the bustle is going to quiet down come autumn. If rent is charged during the autumn period, they will go to work in the area where they have done it earlier. This makes the marketing of a year-round Hobbit-village more challenging. (Although various operations can be marketed further to groups corporate guests).

- Hence it is only rational to charge the acquired customers 20% from their purchases.



A Finnish troll-portrait. Artist unknown.

On the other hand, the artisans are not tied to the location, but these artisans have the advantage, i.e. get to keep their work premises, if they are continuously working in the village. Furthermore, it is also a question of the heating in the houses - this is to say, firewood. This has to be developed further.

Courses (examples):

The courses held would be basically the same courses as in the civic colleges and held partly by the same teachers as in the civic colleges.

We would not do this all at once, but gradually add according to demand and the availability of teachers and facilities:

- Pictorial arts; painting, drawing, chinese calligraphy, glass and porslin painting, Hobbit painting etc. + corresponding activities for children.

- Luis C. Tiffany's glass painting techniques and other related work.
- design; ceramics, clay work, hobbit work + related work with children.
- music; guitar playing to hobbit choir singing.
- handcraft; felting, a puppet work-shop, sewing courses, hobbit dress course for children and persons young at heart, leather workmanship and looming.
- nikkarointia, bookbinding, hobbit portraits, reed-decorations.
- Language studies; adults and children. In groups and/or separated. (We make scripts for the lingvox.com language courses, practice photography etc.)
- woodworking, boat and canoe making, shingle making, constructing of a willow fence.
- traditional building methods and history.
- activities aimed at senior citizens (and other groups)
- Spring outings for schools, activities in a secure hobbit environment - in other words, all kinds of grilling and roaming in the Hobbit forest under safe circumstances. (We have experience regarding this)
- Hobbit-technology work-shop for adults and children, digital photography etc. with which one can make records of the aforementioned activities.

When the parents are occupied, the children can alternatively visit the Hobbit-workshop. It is a kind of a Santa's workshop, but with Hobbit characteristics. The children can be dressed up as little hobbits, and photographed in their activities etc. Various projects are underway constantly and although the children might not be able to witness the conclusion of a project on the spot, they can always follow the progress live via a web camera. (...and beg the parents for a trip back to Hobbit village)



Tero Syvänen and yours truly gluing birch.



Gluing a birch arc - Summer of 2008

A community project, mainly for adults:

A band-saw for sawing logs:

http://www.woodweb.com/knowledge_base/Home_built_bandsaw_mill.html

This is necessary to be built, although most of the lumber would come from the communal saw-mill.

We will organize wood sawing presentations (fenced area, so that this can also be implemented 'even if it rains')

The adults can help with their spirit of 'free labour' by rolling a new log into place, and by helping with the carrying of planks. At the same time the principles of out-door drying of wood is demonstrated.

The childrens play houses need alot of shingles. The same principle applies as with the abovementioned band saw mill.

The shingle-machine is a simple apparatus

A steam engine should be developed for these as a source of power.

Like I mentioned earlier, it is clear that one cannot start doing everything immediately, but it has to be charted and decided what one wants, plan a time-table etc.

Introduction of people

Riikka Söyring, the mother of 3 wonderful sons, a painter, writer, cartoonist, and the matron of a ranch. She acts as the contact person of the venture in Heinävesi.
riikka.soyring@gmail.com

Tero Syvänen, CAD-technician, specialized in Chinese language and culture, having attended university and worked in Beijing, China for a total of 8 years. Other countries where he has lived and gone to school in:

1975 - 1977 Medina, Saudi-Arabia.

1979 - 1982 Dar Es Salaam and Arusha, Tanzania.

1984 - 1986 Tripoli, Libya.

1986 - 1998 Kitwe, Zambia.

tero.syvanen@gmail.com

Henry Björklid, general worker in the grafic field, communications and information technology. The working history mainly entails sales, import and export and marketing with a specialization into the tourist and travel industry.

Lived in Russia during the years 1997 - 2003. My hobbies are carpentry and languages.

Henry.Finland@gmail.com

044-259 1859

Valentina Moskaleva, wife of Henry, born in the eastern corner of Vologdan oblast (approx. 1500 km from Finland), but lived most of her adult life in Riga Latvia, and in Finland for 5 years. Design-seamstress; all the curtains of the village, the Hobbit outfits of the personnel, Hobbiitti-bags and childrens Hobbit-outfits.

Matti Koskela, ship building engineer [introduction to come later]

Matti.Koskela@gmail.com

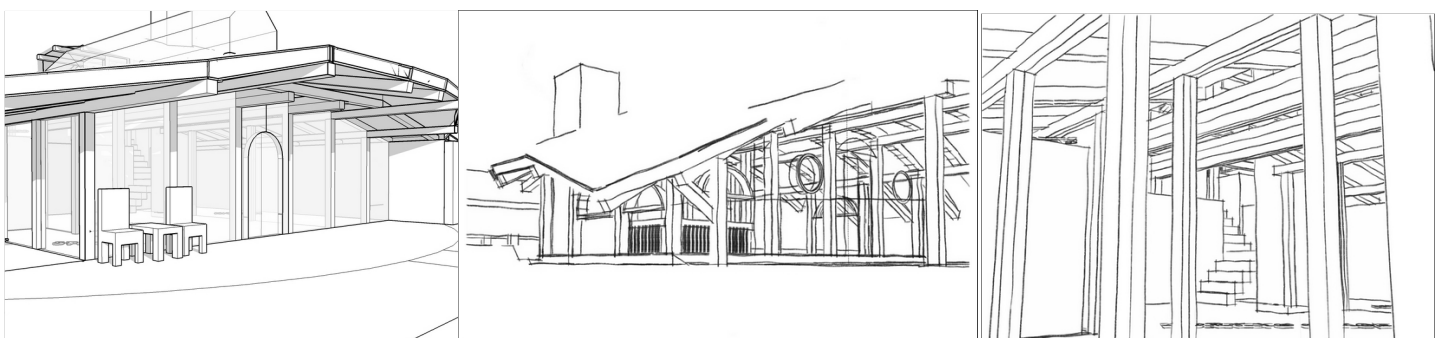
All people presented here are presently living in Parainen, with the exception of Riikka Söyring, who is living in Heinävesi.

The moment a decision is made concerning our project, which convinces us that the project has gained broader interest, i.e. we get word on what region is in question, we will begin to publish a web-journal. [The journal is going to be in 4 languages in the beginning.]

As the issue progresses, we will be moving to Heinävesi to do everything necessary to further the venture.

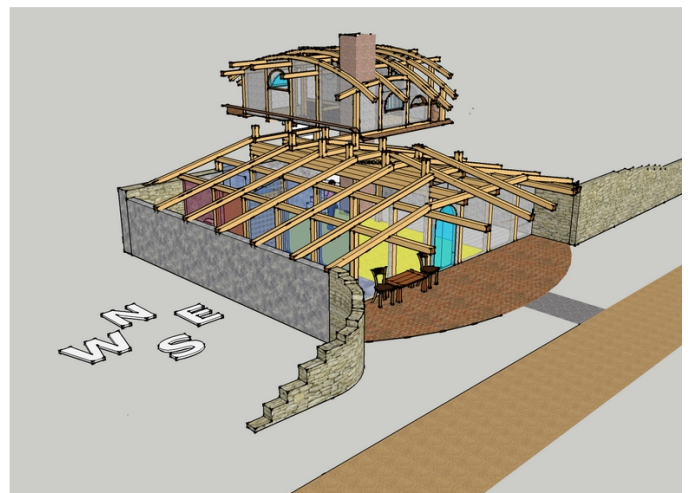
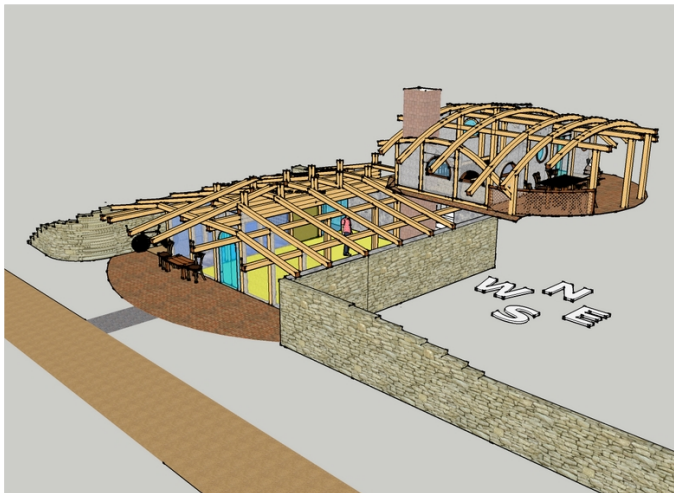
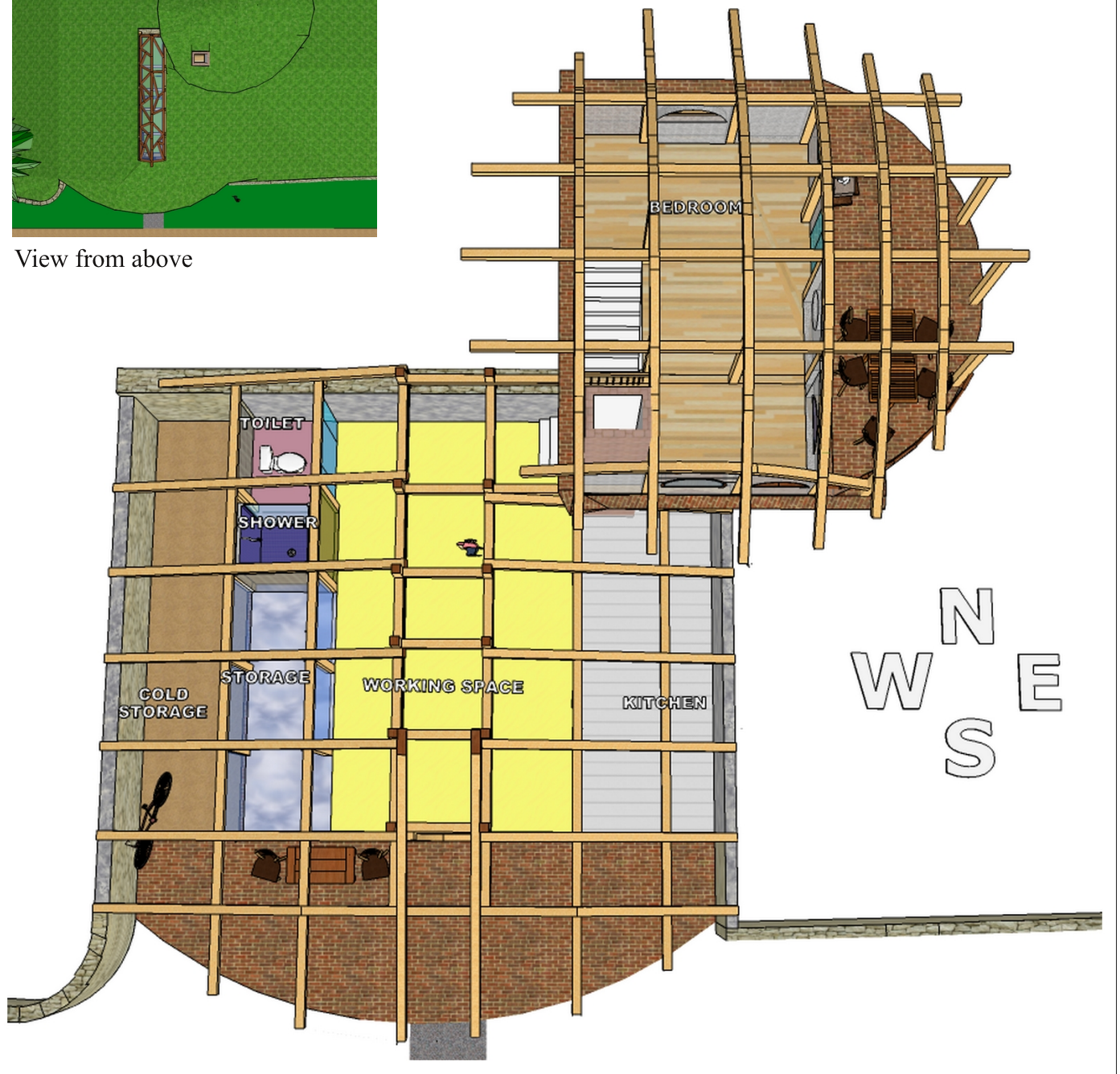


Included are some 3D-illustrations made by Tero Syvänen, depicting what the Finnish adaptation of a Hobbit-house would look like.





View from above





We are looking for people who want to get out of the box and create something new, while learning with other people.

In the Internet, there are links concerning our activities.

A collection of links and text files can be obtained from us by writing to:

provillage@gmail.com

June 6th 2009

Henry Björklid

