A Scandinavian Town and Its Hinterland: The Case of *Nya Lödöse*

Per Cornell¹ · Anna Nilsson² · Lennart Palm³ ·
Christina Rosén⁴

Published online: 17 April 2017

© The Author(s) 2017. This article is an open access publication

Abstract Discussing Nordic towns in medieval and Early Modern eras must always start by noting that this is, at least up to the seventeenth century, a kind of periphery. In this article, we summarize aspects of the sixteenth-century town of Nya Lödöse and its hinterland, drawing on both archaeological and historical knowledge. The hinterland experienced an economic development in the sixteenth century, and increased volumes of exports of wood, iron, and animal products passed the town. Several actor-collectives operated on Nya Lödöse and they played an important part in a military and economic sense. But most of the people of Nya Lödöse lived in poor and sad conditions, not least when compared to the utopia genre of the times. The skeletal material from the churchyard at Nya Lödöse shows the wide distribution of a number of diseases, and a high degree of violence among men. Poverty and misery characterized the location.

Keywords Sixteenth-century town · Periphery · Utopia · Socio-economic context

Historian Lennart Palm produced the basic part of the section on the hinterland, based largely on recent studies in Swedish archives.

✉ Per Cornell
per.comell@archaeology.gu.se

Anna Nilsson
anna.nilsson@globalstudies.gu.se

Lennart Palm
lennart.palm@history.gu.se

Christina Rosén
christina.rosen@arkeologerna.gu.se

¹ Department of Historical Studies, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden

² School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden

³ Department of Historical Studies, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden

⁴ Arkeologerna, Statens Historiska Museum, Stockholm, Sweden

Discussing Nordic towns in medieval and Early Modern eras must always start by noting that this is, at least up to the seventeenth century, a kind of periphery. Still, there were links to wider worlds. Here we will explore a special location, the town of *New Lödöse*, (in Swedish *Nya Lödöse*) in western Sweden, founded in 1473 and abandoned in 1624 (Fig. 1). As will become increasingly evident reading the articles in this IJHA volume, this place was not anything like a continental European metropolis. Still, it is relevant to compare it to the discourses of the time. This was when the concept of utopia was coined and a time in which the urban came to be an ideal, despite the fact that most people lived in non-urban environments. There are certain similarities between the utopian discourse and *Nya Lödöse*, but the differences are rampant.

Utopia

In 1516, at a time when *Nya Lödöse* was a thriving town, the book *Utopia* was published, written by the English lawyer Thomas More. *Utopia* (More 1975) was to become one of the most influential books of the Renaissance. Here, a fictive society is presented as an example of good organization, a society described as a large, well - organised city of Amaurote. *Utopia* was also the beginning of a new utopian genre, appreciated by Early Modern readers. The utopias presented well - organized fictive

Fig. 1 Present-day political map and the location of the Old Town of *Nya Lödöse*

places, worthy of imitation, and these model places were often cities. These stories, often in the form of travel accounts, primarily focused on social organization. A peculiar coincidence is that the growth of the utopian genre was contemporary to the short existence of Nya Lödöse. Consequently, there is a certain relevance to compare a city that was founded, enlarged, and abandoned, simultaneous to the development of the theoretical, urban utopia in *Utopia*.

A common misunderstanding of the Early Modern utopian genre is that one of its main themes is geometric city plans, that *Utopia* describes a *Città Ideale* or a grid system. This connection is not Early Modern, but rather constructed by architectural historians in the twentieth century, like Helen Rosenau (1983) and Hanno-Walter Kruft (1994). This interpretation of a utopia is thus of little value in the study of Early Modern urbanity. In the utopian genre the main focus is rather on social organization, and Thomas More never presents Amaurote as planned according to an ideal of symmetry. Neither is there any reason to believe that there ever existed any direct connections between *Utopia* and Nya Lödöse. Sweden did not produce any utopian literature and early modern Sweden did not figure as a place in someone else's utopia. *Utopia* was not translated in to Swedish during the Early Modern period and no Early Modern examples of *Utopia* are documented in Sweden. This does not exclude the possibility that some Swedish individuals might have been acquainted to the text or the genre, but it was hardly read and discussed by many burghers, as opposed to Italy, England, or the Netherlands (Cave et al. 2008). The comparison between Nya Lödöse and *Utopia* does consequently not presume that those who built and lived in Nya Lödöse ever did so under a direct influence from *Utopia* or the utopian genre, but it emerges from the fact that the two were contemporary cities – one that is a theoretical model and one that is a real place. Through comparing the theoretical model to the real place we might increase our understanding of both, even though both are worth of study in their own right. This theoretical place can be Thomas More's utopia, and especially the city of Amaurote, through which utopia is described. But it might also be a synthesis of the utopian genre, both as a state of being, where all utopian places are merged into one general place, or as a place in motion, a place that is changed through time and space and where the different versions can be contrasted to each other. This synthesized utopian town, contemporary to Nya Lödöse, often consists of brick buildings, two-three storeys high, in long rows. Wood is avoided in the walls to reduce the risk of fire. It is explicitly stated that the bridge over the river Anyder in Utopia is of stone. The roofs are made by a material similar to copper, but much cheaper, and this is the only time Thomas More mentions a new invention. Utopia is anything but science fiction or a natural paradise and almost every achievement is due to good social organization, not because of any advantages in the utopian science, population, or nature. In Amaurote, these rows of buildings are arranged around public gardens that existed prior to the buildings, and the location of the gardens has defined the rest of the city plan. The streets are relatively broad, but the remarkable thing is rather that there are no backyards, no narrow lanes, or light shafts between the households. Some authors also mention how the uniformity of the facades is relieved through external galleries and stairways, arcades, and colonnades. In Campanella's *City of the Sun* (1602) the walls are covered by mural paintings used in education. The utopian town also has running water along the streets, in fountains, and sometimes even inside buildings, as in Andreae's *Christianopolis* (1624; Andreae

1914). The city is well fortified, with heavy walls, fosses, and towers. The citizens have a common responsibility, not only for the fortifications, but for every building in the town and they have store - houses filled with construction materials that can be used immediately when required (Nilsson, [forthcoming](#)).

In most of these utopias, the hygiene and the preservation of health through common regulations is of highest importance (Eliav-Feldon 1982). Food is prepared in common kitchens. Either the citizens eat together in large dining halls or they collect the food and carry it home to eat. Animals are seldom mentioned in utopian texts and never in a connection to the houses where the citizens sleep. Sick people are housed in large, comfortable hospitals outside the city walls, where the food market is also situated. The west occupied by dead bodies that are supposed to be kept within the city walls, is absent in the utopias, graves not are allowed to pollute the life of the city. Nevertheless, the citizens of Amaurote also throw their garbage in the river of Anyder without hesitation.

Fictive utopian societies struggle to avoid the threatening Early Modern world of war and hunger. They suggest that it might be possible to radically improve the organization of a local society, but reforms beyond this are not even considered. All contacts beyond the local utopia are regulated and the ideal is to be self-supporting and not dependent on what is produced in other places. The means that are used to reach this ideal state is primarily good laws, good organization, and education for all citizens, women included. At the same time, all these early utopias, contemporary to Nya Lödöse, are strictly patriarchal. The utopians are eager to educate the women, but their political influence is clearly restricted and they are always subordinate to their husbands. In *The City of the Sun*, where marriage is forbidden, the women are “held in common” and not the men. The utopian genre is remarkable insofar as there is an obvious difference in the anthropology of utopias written by men and utopias written by women. The former preach the subordination of women and present models for how their work and sexuality should be exploited for the common good. The female utopians present societies where also women take initiatives to their foundation or reformation, still, *The Blazing World* by Margaret Cavendish (1688), presented as the first feminist utopia, was not published until 1666.

The Town of Nya Lödöse and Its Setting

The Middle Ages, which in Swedish terminology start 1000/1100 CE, correspond to new trends in terms of settlements. New kinds of settlements appeared in the Nordic area and several Scandinavian towns were established in this period, mainly in southern Sweden and Denmark. The area corresponding to today’s western Sweden was a disputed area, over which Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish monarchs competed, and particularly over the area around the estuary of the Göta River, where today’s Gothenburg is situated. There were several important urban locations in this latter subregion, including, among others, *Gamla (Old) Lödöse* upstream Göta River, *Marstrand* on an island overlooking the sea, northwest of present-day Gothenburg, and finally *Kungahälla* on a northern arm of the estuary, later moved slightly up the river and named *Kungälv*. The period 1500–1700 also saw many new towns being founded. In Sweden, new towns were mainly founded in the western and northern parts

of the realm, including Finland (part of Sweden up to 1809). The number of towns increased from 69 in the 1570s to 102 in the 1650s. Even more towns were added after 1650, and in several cases, older towns were relocated to new sites. Further, existing towns were restructured according to new grid plans (Ersgård 2013).

Thinking about the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries in what today is western Sweden must incorporate the notion of borderland, competing kingdoms and the expanding Swedish state, and must be aware of the complexity of the socioeconomic frame. Feudal forms, semi-autonomous peasants and artisans, as well as attempts at manufacture co-existed, and the articulation between such socioeconomic forms was of major importance. Marx's notion of mode of production, and the articulation between modes, could be productively reconsidered. There is not only one mode in operation, but rather a complex and partially dynamic relation between different modes and actors operating in them. For future studies, considering this complexity would be a good point of departure.

There were many different kinds of actors. Among them we can mention the Hanseatic League, and at a later stage, English merchants and Dutch interests. State intervention also played an important part, and the original intention behind Early Modern towns was often state interest in economic and/or military control. But development followed different lines at different places, and individual cases all have their particularities. Among the locations given the status of "town" by the Swedish crown the variability was considerable, in terms of population numbers, in settlement size, in density of the settlements, and in the general layout of the locations. What unites all towns in this period is that they had certain official rights as to trade, regulated by taxation. However, at least by 1500, there was a considerable amount of trade going on at other locations. Some towns were small, almost like a larger peasant village, while others were larger and held important official functions. The population of Swedish towns in the period was low, and Nya Lödöse with a population of 1,000 would have been considered a large town in the Swedish context.

Much can be said about the way a new town or town plan was received and how the people affected by the change acted and reacted, such as, when the wealthy burghers in the then - Danish *Halmstad* protested loudly when the town was rearranged in 1619 after a fire because they would lose their plots near the square. Other inhabitants did not have the means to protest but we can see that they rebuilt their houses on their old plots shortly after the fire despite explicitly being told to wait for the King's engineer to mark out the new grid plan (Rosén 1999). In other places, the building of a new town meant rearranging an existing agricultural landscape to make place for the town and ensure that the townspeople received enough farmland to provide for their needs.

The remains of *Nya Lödöse* (Fig. 1) are situated in the so-called *Gamlestaden* (Old Town) district of Gothenburg (Cornell et al. 2014). It was established in 1473, in a time when the Kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden constituted the Nordic Union (often called the Kalmar Union), which was the formal political framework of fifteenth - century Scandinavia. Sweden, however, had its own agenda, and in the rivalry with Denmark *Nya Lödöse* was an important asset for Sweden. The areas belonging to Denmark, Norway and Sweden respectively in 1500 are marked in Fig. 2. The narrowness of Sweden's western corridor is evident.

Fig. 2 Towns in southwest Scandinavia mentioned in this text

Sweden had another possibility for exchange westwards – from the Baltic rounding the Scandinavian Peninsula, and through the strait Öresund, that is the small passage between present-day Sweden and Denmark to the North Sea. Sweden was for most of the time exempt from the heavy Danish custom fees levied on merchants from other countries passing the strait. However, developments in Sweden’s economy, and the increase of western contacts made the corridor with Nya Lödöse increasingly important over time.

The Swedish “Governor,” the *riksråd* Sten Sture the elder in 1473 commissioned a group of Swedish noblemen, including the Bishop of *Skara*, to go to the site selected for the new town to oversee the marking out of plots and to make sure the new town was fortified with a ditch, embankments, and a palisade. The area had previously been used

by nearby farmers as pasture and meadow. Several of these tenant farms close to the town were given to Nya Lödöse to form its agricultural base. What happened to the tenants is not known. Did they become burghers in the new town, did they continue to farm, only having their rents given to the town, or were they forced away from the area? The farms are difficult to trace in cadastral and other registers from the mid-sixteenth century. These sources might indicate that they became incorporated in the town.

We know from the foundation letter that the town should be staked out with plots marked. But most information about the layout of Nya Lödöse, how it was planned and constructed during the earliest phase of the town's history, must be derived from archaeological sources because there are virtually no other written sources from the first period. The archaeological results show that the town area was covered with a mixture of twigs, branches, and wood chips, probably to drain and level the site. On top of this layer plots were staked out. This is evidently a conscious systematic foundation, which required planning and certain specialized knowledge of measurement.

A town plan with plots about 15×15 m was established from the beginning. During the first decade or so, many of the plots were used mainly for keeping animals (possibly for export but maybe also as a food resource for the first inhabitants) and simple sheds were constructed. In the next phase, beginning around 1480, these early structures were removed and the plots were built according to a pattern with buildings for farm animals and/or workshops on one side of the plot and residential buildings on the other side with a cobbled courtyard in the middle. Many plots also seem to have had a shop which opened toward the street. This pattern seems to be fairly consistent over time, although with several variations on a smaller scale. These are discussed in more detail elsewhere (Nilsen et al., this volume).

The churchyard was probably marked out from the beginning, but left unused during the first decade. Dendrochronological dating shows that the construction of the church started in 1480. It is not known when the first burials took place, but probably in the very late fifteenth century. Parts of the cemetery have been excavated and the remains of about 1,000 individuals collected. These are now undergoing osteological analysis and some preliminary results are presented below (see Andreasson and Svensson, and Heimdahl and Vretemark, this volume). Considering the relatively small population and the short total duration of use of the town, the human remains represent a high percentage in archaeological terms of the original population. It is thus unique demographic material.

It has been estimated that Nya Lödöse had ca. 1100–1300 inhabitants in the years around 1600, from which period we have some systematic historical records like tax registers. To this number we must add visiting merchants, poor and landless people staying in town despite not being fully accepted, and in certain periods several hundred soldiers to be housed and fed (Hjertman et al., this volume). The social and economic conditions in the town varied considerably with the wealthiest burghers paying about a hundred times as much tax as the poorest. There were also a number of people not paying taxes at all due to their extreme poverty. It should be noted at the same time that the archaeological record may be interpreted as reflecting a rather homogenous settlement with large similarities as to how the plots were built and organized.

The choice of giving the new town the same name as the older existing town (Old) *Lödöse* has been interpreted as a desire to maintain established trade contacts, not least with the merchants of the Hanseatic League. However that may be, the reasons why

Nya Lödöse was founded in this exact location in the late fifteenth century are not fully understood. We must consider factors such as conflict and a wish for power and domination in an area that shifted between Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish rule, and where kingdoms competed until the late seventeenth century. The town was strategically located in a border zone between the kingdoms and the town was chosen at least once for negotiations concerning the Union. Nya Lödöse was affected by battles between the kingdoms in the early sixteenth century and was allegedly entirely burned down. There are, however, no traces in the archaeological record of fires that affected the whole built area and we shall, as always, be cautious when it comes to such sweeping statements.

Sketching the history of the town, it was repeatedly subject to armed attacks, and the population during long and short periods periodically moved or were moved to other locations.

After the dissolution of the Nordic Union in 1523, the Swedish Kingdom ruled by Gustavus I (Vasa) invested some resources in Nya Lödöse. The ditch and embankment was fortified – dendrochronological dating show that some of the works took place around 1530. However, the fortifications at Nya Lödöse were never impressive, rather quite simple (cf. Cornell and Larsson 2016). Further down the river, the Swedish crown had a fortress close to the Göta estuary, *Älvsborg*, which may have been understood as a fortress for the town. However, the distance was substantial, and it cannot be understood as a town fortification in a strict sense. Returning to Nya Lödöse, another important construction work was related to some kind of harbor or waterfront. Along the shore of the Göta River, wooden box revetments/caissons were built as foundations both for houses and cobbled outside areas. These constructions were built in instalments until at least the 1570s. The driving force behind these works is unclear. We do not know whether they were public areas or if they were related to individual plots.

In 1547, the population and possibly several of the houses were moved to a new location near the Älvsborg fortress in order to facilitate the defense of the burghers and, above all, the trade activities. How many people that actually moved is unclear and it is possible that some people simply stayed behind on the old location. However, the archaeological record indicates that several plots were deserted and vegetation started to grow on them. The Älvsborg town site was then burned down by the inhabitants themselves in 1563, in connection with the Nordic Seven Years' War, when the Älvsborg fortress was seized by Danish troops. After a peace treaty in 1570 the town was moved back to its original location (Öbrink and Rosén, *in press*; Scander 1975) (Figs. 3 and 4).

Nya Lödöse was burned down again during the Kalmar War in 1612 and held by the Danish, who seized Älvsborg fortress for a second time, until 1619. A hundred or so townspeople moved with their households to other towns nearby, most of them to the newly founded Alingsås and to Brätte, close to present-day Vänersborg. This is discussed in more detail in Hjertman et al., this volume. After a heavy ransom was paid for the fortress, many people returned to Nya Lödöse. Around 1620, Gothenburg was established and in 1624, Nya Lödöse lost its privileges. The inhabitants were ordered to move to the new town and many did, though perhaps not everyone. The churchyard was repeatedly visited for some decades.

After the town was evicted, the site was converted to arable land owned by the town of Gothenburg, and used as a food resource by its inhabitants, who could rent plots here. Later on, some of these plots were transformed in to a kind of rural estate,

Fig. 3 Map showing the excavated area of Nya Lödöse, north of the Säve River. Translation: *Stadsgård* – plot with houses and opens spaces; *Vret* – narrow passage between plots; *Gata* – street; *Kyrkogård* – cemetery

landerier, rented by the wealthier bourgeoisie. The name Nya Lödöse was replaced with *Gamlestaden* – the Old Town. In the nineteenth century, industrialization took place in the area followed by large infrastructural projects. By the end of the twentieth century, industrial production had for the most part moved elsewhere and the

Fig. 4 The area around Nya Lödöse in 1677, after the town was evicted. The remains of the town, with the ditch and moat, the church, and a few houses can be seen. The town is located east of the Göta River and the smaller Säve River runs through the town. To the right we see the hospital. Note that north is to the right on this map, which is kept in the War Archives in Stockholm (*Krigsarkivet*)

Gamlestaden area was a rather run-down part of Gothenburg with empty industrial buildings, infrastructure that was never finished, and with areas considered unsafe at dark. The municipality of Gothenburg decided to make a radical redevelopment in Gamlestaden, which eventually led to a series of large-scale archaeological rescue excavations, which started in 2013.

The Hinterland

The hinterland of Nya Lödöse included relations with certain areas in Norway and Denmark, but the Swedish provinces of Västergötland, Dalsland, and Värmland played major roles and became increasingly important over time. This hinterland stretches 390 km from north to south. The landscape is characterized by surrounding plains in the inland and south of the big Lake Vänern, in their turn surrounded by rugged highlands, in their western parts sloping toward the North Sea bay of Kattegat. The slopes to the coast are traversed by valleys with rivers running west. These valleys were formerly important as land transport routes. They terminated in coastal towns, which were economically dependent on agrarian produce, each from its own hinterland. The then - Danish province of Halland had several such towns; Kungsbacka, Varberg, Falkenberg Halmstad, and Laholm. The then - Norwegian province of Bohuslän, marking the southern starting point of the Norwegian fjord landscape had an economy based more on fisheries and, in the north, on timber exports.

In the following maps we illustrate some aspects, based on the excellent historical source material from the 1620s in Swedish archives (Palm 2012). The socioeconomic and trade - related outline given below holds more or less for the period 1560 to approximately 1613, when the demise of Nya Lödöse began.

As can be seen, the population density is higher in the southern part of the area, and around Lake Vänern. The northern part, the province Värmland, was the most sparsely populated area. The area east of the lake was a wooded mountain ridge, Tiveden, making passages to eastern and central Sweden difficult.

Sweden was at this time mainly an agrarian society. Although Western Sweden belonged to Sweden's more densely populated south, its agriculture was to a great extent adapted to woodlands and pasture. The ca. 30,000 registered households, overwhelmingly peasants, on average had the following amounts of cattle in 1620 (Table 1).

A household, on average, consisted of about five persons including children. The concept of *cattle unit* is a means used by historians to reduce different kinds of cattle to the relative price of cows. A Swedish cow of the time produced some 600 l of milk a year including calf consumption (Palm 1998). Comparing the provinces from west to east (left to right in the table) underscores that especially Värmland had more of a forest character – more cattle, more goats, and horses instead of oxen.

The following harvests in barrels ca. 1630, have been calculated from tithes records. A barrel can be estimated to 146.6 l (Table 2).

The somewhat astoundingly high cereal production suggested for Värmland comes mainly from oats. This oat production is connected with low quality soil and demand for draught animal fodder. When it comes to cereals mainly for human consumption,

Fig. 5 Distribution of the population in the hinterland of Nya Lödöse ca. 1620

the production was on par with that of the households in Västergötland. Later, Värmland was known for its highly productive slash and burn agriculture, not least promoted by Finnish settlers. As corn seeds and *in natura* taxes have to be withdrawn from the cereal production and a grown up laborer needed two to three barrels a year, it is evident that cereals had to be imported, and much of it came via Nya Lödöse. The main products to be used for exchange were animal products, butter, hides, living oxen, forest products, and so forth. This picture was probably typical for the hinterland of Nya Lödöse as it had been for (Old) Lödöse in the Middle Ages. The shortage of cereals must be kept in mind. The importance of fish, as demonstrated by the

Table 1 Households, population, and inventories per household in New Lödöse's hinterland ca. 1620

	Västergötland	Dalsland	Värmland
Households	2589	23,360	3671
Population	124,821	21,082	13,248
Horses	0.3	0.2	0.7
Mares	0.8	0.9	0.7
Young horses	0.2	0.4	0.2
Oxen	1.2	0.6	0.8
Steer	2.1	2.8	4.2
Cows	4.0	5.8	7.3
Heifers	2.0	2.2	3.5
Calves	1.8	2.0	3.2
Adult sheep	4.3	4.5	4.0
Young sheep	2.6	2.4	3.3
Adult goat	2.0	3.6	3.8
Young goat	1.9	3.7	3.9
Old swine	1.2	0.6	1.0
Young swine	1.7	1.2	1.8
Cattle units	10.9	12.6	16.7

archaeological record (Maltin and Jonsson, this volume) adds another important dimension in relation to questions of nutrition and eating habits in Nya Lödöse.

In the sixteenth century, especially the latter half of the century, important new trends emerged in the hinterland, most notably north of Lake Vänern. Although cast iron production had existed in the area for a long time, based on mines northwest of the lake, the Swedish government engaged more and more in bar iron production for export westward. Up to then, metal exports, based in areas further to the east, had mostly gone through Stockholm because of the absence of suitable western transport routes. *Boeijers*, small cargo vessels on Lake Vänern, increasingly connected the mining areas in the eastern part of the hinterland, with the wood rich areas in its northwest, the latter filled with a growing number of forges.

Table 2 Average harvest per household in New Lödöse's hinterland ca. 1630

	Västergötland	Dalsland	Värmland
Wheat	0.0	0.0	0.0
Rye	1.2	0.3	1.2
Barley	1.9	0.3	0.6
Mixed (barley/oats)	0.0	0.8	2.0
Oats harvest	0.7	3.0	6.6
Total harvest recounted according to the price of rye	3.5	2.6	6.5

Factors behind this development were the rise in demand, not least in England. Easy transport routes by Vänern and (less easy) down the Göta River to Nya Lödöse and the North Sea were already there. A factor of growing importance was the abundance of wood in Värmland in contrast to the increasingly exhausted forests near the mines and cast iron melting places. Prince Charles (later king Charles IX), youngest son of Gustavus I (Vasa), played an important part in re-organizing the economy of the area, and was a major actor in introducing manufacture and almost proto-industrial forms of production. From the 1580s he expanded the labor force by inviting Finns to Värmland, promising them tax privileges. He changed the local *in natura* tax system to support the iron industry with coal and founded iron mills and towns: Karlstad in 1584 and Filipstad in 1611. Investments were made to facilitate transports down the Göta River, strengthening the transshipment point Brätte, later Vänersborg, at the mouth of the river in the southwestern part of Vänern, giving it town privileges in the 1580s. Enhanced transports to Nya Lödöse by lock projects in Göta River help iron - laden barges to avoid the rapids along the stream.

No cattle lists exist from Nya Lödöse that could give information comparable to that given above for other parts of the hinterland. When the destroyed town was replaced by Gothenburg in 1621, the latter was exempt from the cattle tax. However, such lists have survived for two other towns heavily involved in the Värmland iron export project, Brätte and Karlstad, probably sharing many traits with Nya Lödöse (Tables 3 and 4). The archaeological evidence shows clearly the presence of animals typical for the farmstead in the latter. But there were certainly differences in number as compared to the countryside. In Brätte and Karlstad towns, the average household held only some 25% of the amount of cattle held by the peasants. Horses were about equal in the two categories, but oxen and steers, like adult sheep, were only

Table 3 Inventories of registered households from two towns in New Lödöse's Hinterland ca. 1620

	Brätte	Karlstad
Households	97	71
Horses	0.5	0.6
Mares	0.2	0.1
Young horses	0.0	0.3
Oxen	0.7	0.7
Steer	1.0	1.4
Cows	0.0	0.1
Heifers	0.1	0.1
Calves	0.1	0.1
Adult sheep	1.2	2.7
Young sheep	0.2	0.7
Adult goat	0.3	0.1
Young goat	0.3	0.5
Old swine	0.0	0.0
Young swine	0.0	0.1
Cattle units	2.5	3.2

Table 4 Harvests of households for two towns in New Lödöse's hinterland ca. 1630

	Brätte	Karlstad
Rye	0.02	0.02
Barley	0.04	0.00
Mixed	0.00	0.89
Oats	0.00	2.84
Total harvest recounted according to the price of rye	0.06	2.03

half as common among the townsfolks compared to the countryside. Cows, heifers, and calves were almost nonexistent in the towns. The city dwellers held very few goats and swine in comparison.

The cereal production in Brätte was almost nil. Karlstad, although a port but more inland, could harvest about one third of its consumption on average in the hinterland.

The development north of Lake Vänern made its export increasingly economically important. In 1610, Stockholm represented 43% of the total export value from Sweden proper (excluding Finland), while Nya Lödöse (formally “Älvsborg”) 15.3%. In imports Stockholm's part was somewhat higher (1590; Heckscher 1935: appendix V). Sporadic customs data give the following exports from Nya Lödöse

- In the 1560s Sweden proper exported 680 tons of butter, around 45% via Stockholm, 32% via Nya Lödöse (Forssell 1884:39).
- 1590 25.8% of total Swedish fur export value went through Nya Lödöse (Heckscher 1935: 142).
- 1590 47.5% of Sweden's timber and tar wood exports were registered at Nya Lödöse (Heckscher 1935: 142).

These export products probably have a long tradition in the area, although volumes further back in time are not known. The new dynamics during the sixteenth century north and northeast of Vänern are more striking where iron is concerned.

The total iron export from the traditional main iron export port of Stockholm ca. 1550 amounted to a little over 22,158 barrels (*fat*), from Älvsborg, 1,816 barrels. In 1613, the proportions had changed, Stockholm exported about the same volumes as 60 years before, 20,827 barrels, Älvsborg 5,629. (Heckscher 1935:157). This shift continued for a long time. In 1730, Stockholm exported 62% of Sweden's iron, Gothenburg 27%, and in 1811, the proportions were 48% and 30% respectively. (Heckscher 1949:100). At the beginning of the eighteenth century, 83% of England's iron imports came from Sweden, amounting to over 40% of England's iron consumption (Heckscher 1969:110). The dynamism is also mirrored in population growth. In the 1570s, Nya Lödöse had some 1,100 inhabitants, Gothenburg in the 1690s had over 5,000 (Lilja 1996:67). Population growth in the hinterland corroborates these strong tendencies (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6 Population growth in the hinterland

Conclusion

The town of Nya Lödöse can hardly be considered to have been a nice place to live. Rather, it was an exposed settlement in a war - ridden border region, and violence was an ever-present occurrence. Living conditions were generally poor, and only a small number of persons of the elite had somewhat better possibilities. Except for the church, there were no monumental buildings, and the wooden town would seem like a large

village. Cultivation and husbandry were important even inside the moat, though not as intensive as in the countryside. On the other hand, cereal was scarce in the region and had to be imported. Atlantic deep-sea fish was another important part of the nutrition. Considerable exports passed the town, notably wood, iron, and animal products.

Contrasting Nya Lödöse to the utopia of the time we see certain similarities; like in Amaurote, the burghers threw their garbage in Anyder, the burghers of Nya Lödöse threw their garbage in the Säve River. But above all there are differences. Just to pick one example, the town was in no sense self-sufficient in terms of food production. Yet our knowledge on Nya Lödöse and other kinds of settlements in the region is limited, and there is still much to learn. Combining in-depth renewed studies of written sources with new archaeological data has proved productive, and this approach should be further developed.

Open Access This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.

References

- Andreae, J. V. (1914). *Christianopolis: An Ideal State of the Seventeenth Century*. <https://archive.org/details/johannvalentinan00andrrich>, accessed August 2015
- Campanella, T. (1602). *The City of the Sun*. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2816/2816-h/2816-h.html>.
- Cave, T., et al. (2008). *Thomas More's Utopia in Early Modern Europe. Paratexts and Contexts*. Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Cavendish, M. (1688). *The Description of a New World Called the Blazing-World*. <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/newcastle/blazing/blazing.html>, accessed September 2016
- Cornell, P. and Larsson, S. (2016). War and the siege in 16th and 17th century Sweden - looking at the general effects inside and outside the fortifications at Nya Lödöse town and Kalmar Castle. In Verdiani, ed., *Defensive Architecture of the Mediterranean, XV to XVIII Centuries*. Didapress, Firenze, Italy, pp. 477–484.
- Cornell, P., Rosén, C., and Öbrink, M. (2014). Archaeology, architecture and urban planning: reflections and comments from the experience of the Old City (Nya Lödöse) excavations in Gothenburg, Sweden. In Cornell, P. and Verdiani, eds., *AACCP Firenze workshop*, Dipartimento de Architettura, Università degli Studi, Firenze, Firenze: Lulu Editore, pp. 67–86.
- Eliav-Feldon, M. (1982). *Realistic Utopias: The Ideal Imaginary Societies of the Renaissance, 1516–1630*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Ersgård, L. (2013). Tidigmoderna städer i Sverige - en arkeologisk forskningsöversikt. *Visioner och verklighet. Arkeologiska texter om den tidigmoderna staden*. Ersgård, L. ed., GOTARC Serie C, Arkeologiska Skrifter 76. Institutionen för arkeologi, Göteborgs universitet. Göteborg, pp 30–54.
- Forssell, H. (1884). *Anteckningar om Sveriges jordbruksnäring i sextonde seklet*. Stockholm: K. Vitterhets-, Historie- och Antiquitets-akademien.
- Heckscher, E. F. (1935). *Sveriges ekonomiska historia: från Gustav Vasa, I:1*. Bonnier, Stockholm.
- Heckscher, E. F. (1949). *Sveriges ekonomiska historia: från Gustav Vasa, II:1*, Bonnier, Stockholm.
- Heckscher, E. F. (1969). *Svenskt arbete och liv*, Bonnier, Stockholm.
- Kruft, H.-W. (1994). *A History of Architecture Theory From Vitruvius to the Present*. Princeton Architecture Press, New York.
- Lilja, S. (1996). *Städernas folkmängd och tillväxt - Sverige med Finland ca 1570-tal till 1810-tal*, Stads och Kommunhistoriska institutet, Stockholm.
- More, T. (1975). *Utopia: A New Translation, Backgrounds, Criticism*. Adams, R. M., ed., Norton, New York.
- Nilsson, A. (forthcoming). *In What Perspective is the Best Life Founded? Utopias as Early Modern Abstractions of Urban Organisation*.

- Öbrink, M. and Rosén, C. ed. (In press). *Undersökningar i Nya Lödöse. Stadsgård 1-4, gata A och B, Vret 1/2, 1/3, 2/4 och 3/4*. Västergötland, Göteborg, Gamlestaden, Göteborg 2018.
- Palm, L. A. (1998). Till frågan om boskapsskötselns avkastning 1550-1800, in, *Ett föränderligt agrarsamhälle: Västsverige i jämförande belysning*. Palm, L. Andersson, C-J Gadd, L. Nyström eds. Göteborg: Humanistiska fakulteten, Göteborgs universitet.
- Palm, L. A. (2012). *Sverige 1630 - Åkerbruk, boskapsskötsel, befolkning*. Göteborg. (Available on Internet: <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/31820> , corresponding database in Svensk Nationell Datatjänst, <http://snd.gu.se>).
- Rosén, Christina (1999). Föremål och social status i Halmstad c 1550-1750. GOTARC C:26. University of Gothenburg: Göteborg.
- Rosenau, H. (1983). *The Ideal City: Its Architectural Evolution in Europe*, Methuen, London.
- Scander, Ralph (1975). *Karl IX's Göteborg på Hisingen*. Göteborgs Hembygdsförening, Göteborg.