

DESIRE FOR DEMOCRACY

/ OR AN EXPLORATION OF THE CITY HALL, ACTING AS A
CATALYST FOR DEMOCRACY AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Cities are central in the current world, a chain of systems for functions in modern life, and the principal platform for the creation and reformation of politics, as well as the main public informer of it. This indicates that it is also a major influence on human life—health, views, behaviour, identity, economy, etc. The architectural facade and public space acting as one in a system of representation, constructing a stage and backdrop for life, is a translation of political and social power into a physical environment, affecting interpretation and response in the urban landscape.

Architecture as a social object, interpreted through a chain of symbolisation, can easily become a mechanism of political adaptation. The current uniform legal ownership and totalitarian appropriation of urban space is an instrument for neoliberal localisation, treating the city as a product and thereby stripping the public space of democratic functions—which are dependant on the diverse applications of space. These systematic transformations have replaced social places of culture and politics for places of consumption, turning citizens into consumers.

To use a city hall as a tool for democracy, as a symbolic platform and object of democratic desire and aspiration, would be to claim the space of commerce for a place of conversation. For a change in the image and effect of the urban landscape, I want to work with the presence of the city hall to materialise democratic power, creating a place for inclusion and political participation.

Civic buildings and its architecture represent a societal tradition. Conveying their customary function, content and subject through symbolisation, means that they need to supply public life with representation of a current society. Representation in this case would be a way of including groups which are and were previously excluded from the political arena, to ensure inclusion and justice in equal participation for the moulding of future societies.

KEYWORDS

urban architecture, city hall, Gothenburg, social influence, democracy, symbolic language

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CHAPTER 1

FRAMEWORK

PURPOSE

Imagine ourselves as architects, all armed with a wide range of capacities and powers, embedded in a physical and social world full of manifest constraints and limitations. Imagine also that we are striving to change that world. As crafty architects bent on insurgency we have to think strategically and tactically about what to change and where, about how to change what and with what tools. But we also have somehow to continue to live in this world. This is the fundamental dilemma that faces everyone interested in progressive change.

(Harvey, 2000, p. 233)

The fundamental purpose of the project is to contribute to a discussion for a more socially just and democratic society. Personally and specifically, however, my main aim is to educate myself on how to create a representational structure for housing democratic power, and an urban space that is accessible and inclusive—to create a city hall that welcomes political participation and foster democratic actions.

The project is both a critical comment to the current neoliberal process as well as a hopeful interjection into the discussion. I want to explore the ways in which practices of manifesting power in architectural design affect the perception of *the power*, and even power itself, to create an architectural expression that includes more people into the rooms of power and encourages political actions. Along these lines, the city hall is an interesting typology to study, in reference to the stretch of its influence on urban space and local identity.

Setting the project in Gothenburg, my home town, I wanted to escape the sense of emptiness caused by the consumer spaces that the city has turned into, the design proposal of a new city hall was a way of communicating the yearning for meaning and purpose in the urban environment.

MAIN QUESTIONS

- i. How can you stimulate democracy through urban architecture?
- ii. What influence do the architectural facade and public space have over urban life?
- iii. How can the city hall encourage active citizenship?

METHOD

The approach for the project has mainly consisted of theoretical studies, including reference studies and context analysis that were all applied in the final design work. I had a preliminary hypothesis about local power and neoliberal localisation, which were confirmed by personal observations as well as information from theoretical sources. A previous paper on the totalitarian local authority was also a source of inspiration, and a subject that I came to study more thoroughly in the project.

Having found my subject, I went further into written material and discovered several interesting theories on political processes, urban architecture and social justice that were later applied in the contextual studies, also creating a problem setting. Going deeper into my questions, I ended up with a few concepts examined in text and theory. These concepts were later applied in both contextual analysis and, after some processing, as design tools for the practical project.

Throughout the thesis I have been going on small study trips (both in person, through the internet, or by opening up a book) to observe Nordic city halls; to find inspiration and method in the architectural expression of the typology. The compilation of findings from these studies were also part of the groundwork for the design tools and proposal.

The gathering of information has been constant throughout the project, and become the exercise that has been the hardest to stop or finish, also minding that there is a certain dynamic to the subject that makes it hard to restrict. Nevertheless, the relation between perspectives has become one of the most interesting qualities of the project, and something that inspired me to study it further.

In my aspiration to find an expression of democracy, the design itself was a response to the problems and theoretical concepts of the project. This combined approaches of the democratic space and the subject of active citizenship, alongside the characteristics of the city hall typology.

Throughout the project, I have worked with theory and design as a dialogue. This has enabled all elements of the work to inform and implement each other, allowing findings and theories to be put to the test and be evaluated in relation to each other. Connecting the design strongly to theory was a way of properly showcasing purpose and result, as well as creating an informed design where theoretical concepts and analysis are implemented.

DELIMITATIONS

Since this project is limited in both time and resources, I have needed to restrict the work and research. This means that there are a lot of concepts and theories not completely followed through in this particular collection of work, but which are needed for the illustration of the complexity of the subjects, and as a lead and inspiration for future work and studies.

The choice to work with Gothenburg for the design proposal was made both for the city's lack of democratic and symbolic spaces and in the city centre as well as its currently unfocused places of governmental power, but mostly because of its convenience in availability and location.

For a clean research result I have also chosen to limit the design, focusing on extractions of the building and concentrating on components and spaces that are relevant to the theoretical studies and research questions. These parts will be the more public and representational spaces, and highlighting meaningful architectural implementations. All other parts of the proposal will be conceptual and general. I also made the choice not to focus on building costs or financing, neither will I take building regulations or management into account. As a more speculative project, I want to consider more radical possibilities, focusing entirely on my subject rather than rationality.

READING INSTRUCTIONS

The project proposed has resulted in a body of work that is part written text, part design project—one supporting the other. Working with both components is essential in creating a comprehensive and meaningful result; the text being a way of understanding the discussion while the design is an approach to test and showcase conclusions and ideas.

The booklet is organised in six main chapters. First: *the framework*, giving a foundation and introduction to the project, followed by *background and theory*, *context and analysis*, *design strategies*, *design proposal*, and lastly *reflection*. The chapters and their succession are meant to clarify the work and its purpose, guiding the reader through the problems, ideas, concepts and results of the project.

CHAPTER 2

**BACKGROUND
&
THEORY**

The connection between urban architecture and social justice was a starting point for the project. Continuing with the theoretical research, I fully realised the vastness of the subject; the multifaceted complexity of it. The different theories and arguments discovered created new directions and possibilities for the idea, and provided me with the tools and inspiration to focus the project—resulting in four main concepts to be addressed.

THE URBAN NARRATIVE

Cities are today the principal form of human habitat, they are also the main public informer of politics (Minkenberg, 2014). As the city is full of civic institutions and organisations as such, it is predicted to be the main political representation as well as the main center for political creation and reformation.

Observing the city as a emergent and social, produced and reproduced in ever-changing processes and relationships of social and spatial context (Jonas, McCann & Thomas, 2015), implies that they, and the buildings within, are indicate manifests of society—a fixed time and place in history, and a perfect reflection of that particular society and its forces. Architecture and the urban milieus which holds our lives will affect us in turn—the idea of society serving as a stage, defining citizens as actors and the cityscape as the backdrop, explains the influence of architecture on everyday life as well as milestone occurrences.

The laws of order which gave form to cities also determine those of the states that have been governed by cities.

(Braunfels, 1988, p. 2)

By constructing buildings, any building, we are automatically manifesting and materialising a purpose or intention, and throughout the life of those structures, they will also respond to context, use and practice—becoming a narrative of social events.

The city in turn will have influence over our own identities through the forced formation and reformation of character which in itself is managed by the physical manifestation of power in space. The city, as a part of communities' shared stories of belonging, becomes a connective anchor in an otherwise uncertain and privatised world (Matthews, 2016). As the setting for shared experiences, the built environment creates content and value through a web of meaning, which in turn can be used for the construction of new settings. An awareness of this influence on urban life and society creates a possibility to use it to reinforce democracy and active citizenship.

REPRESENTATION AND JUSTICE

Architecture as a system of representation is saturated with meanings and values which contribute to our sense of self and our culturally constructed identity.

(Lico, 2001, p. 31)

Neither the city nor the people living in it are ever free of their own set of identities, full of prejudice and assumption. We can never avoid a frame, referring to tradition, personal views or concerns, which in turn will colour our analysis and rendering of the city. Buildings will narrate their own identity as well as their view and interpretation of their context in a similar way: through conception and arrangement, communicating with the public space through its exterior—the facade. In some ways, the facade acts as a monument of the building itself, voicing the concerns of its creation.

The architectural facade is full of symbols, attributes and compositions which are loaded with associations and understandings. This system of representation defines the urban space, which in turn influence our culturally constructed identity. This implies a duality in the importance of facade design, which is not just of a technical and visual matter, but also as part of the building or as part of the urban space (Wulz, 1991). This is why I consider the facade and public space as one, the facade acting as one of the conductors of the urban room.

Space is a powerful tool of intention, and how it is distributed can either sustain or change social configurations. Referring to the facade as part of public space, the under-representation of certain groups within these spaces creates a subordination of certain bodies and experiences in the urban space. This spatial (and therefore architectural) framing of power will in turn affect identity, culture, and sense of belonging.

Combining this reasoning with that of Nancy Fraser's hypothesis of political parity and a three dimensional view of social justice, is a way of observing architecture as a possibility of creating inclusion and thereby social justice in the urban community. This would be attained through *representation*: the political component of Fraser's theory. She discusses representation as the "defining issue of the political" (2008, p.18), which means that the features of political *injustice* would otherwise be that of

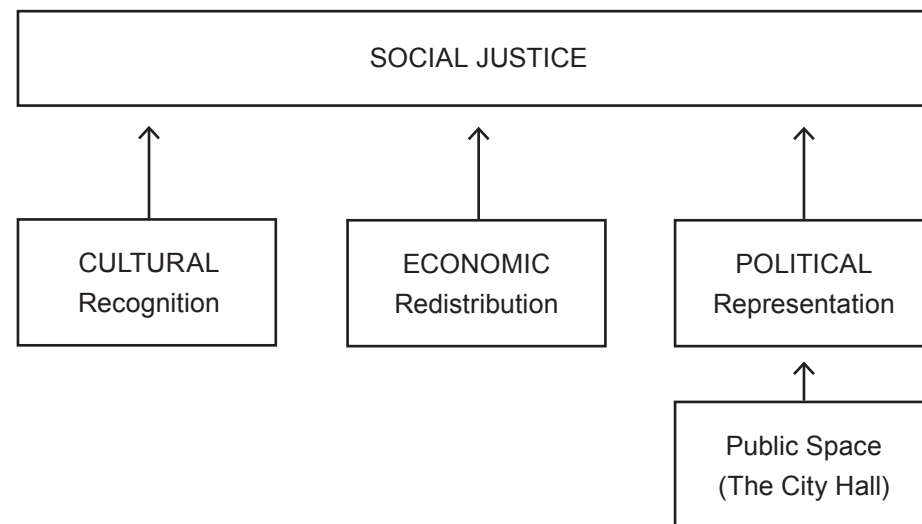


Figure 1. Adaption of Fraser's theory of political parity

misrepresentation, which occurs when people or groups are denied the opportunity of equal participation in social interaction. Together with *recognition* (the cultural component, concerning institutionalised hierarchies of cultural value and statue inequality) and *redistribution* (the economic component, regarding class structure and the economic dimensions of society), representation is needed for a social arrangement which could make possible for all to participate on an equal footing in social life (Bozalek, 2014). This way, architectural representation could be a method for supporting social equity and welcome all groups into the public and political arena.

THE NEOLIBERAL EFFECT

The effect of the appropriation of urban space can become an issue when the legal ownership of the city becomes uniform or totalitarian, serving a systematic purpose. Helen Runting explores this effect and examines architecture as a "key technology in the neoliberal project", resulting in the function of container technologies that "enclose, move, shape, support and produce us" (2018, p. 92). Citizens and their elected representatives are being stripped of power, while corporations take control over the production of urban space and landscape (Hoskyns, 2014).

The transformation of cities into mechanisms of neoliberal localisation (Brenner & Theodore, 2002) has stimulated a transition of public space into consumer space, indicating that the city is for sale. The city, now treated as a commodity, is seen as a

resource to increase real estate market values (Landzelius, 2016). In turn, rents are affected by inflation, which excludes a lot of merchants and tenants (2016), and are consequently making way for a less versatile city.

While the city becomes a trademark, being marketed in a global competition against other cities, its attractiveness becomes mainly a subject for prospective investors rather than its actual inhabitants (Franzén, Hertting & Thörn, 2016). The deprivation of communal influence over the city converts it from a place of communication to one of commerce. Henri Lefebvre compares the capitalist city to "an object of consumption" (2009, p. 188), discussing how space is seen as a product, like raw material or labour power, to be consumed for production. This exploitation of cities risks the dismantling of democratic value of public space.

The democratic functions of public space is a product of an intricate balance between the many and diverse applications of the space, which makes it accessible and relevant to all groups of society. This way, public space becomes relevant and attractive for demonstrations and political appeals, but also a place where society becomes visible—putting social differences and conflicts on display. The entrepreneurial urbanist agenda in urban politics threatens this balance, and with it the public space as a democratic mechanism. (Franzén, Hertting & Thörn, 2016, p. 9)

Neoliberal localisation produces a city dependent on capitalist processes, turning citizens into consumers, but a capitalist society can never be democratic in the true sense (Arruzza, Bhattacharya & Fraser, 2019), making the enforcement of the city's role as civic authority and political entity vital to foster active and democratic citizenship.

THE CITY HALL SYMBOL

The decision of making the city hall the typology of choice for this project enabled further exploration of the effect of architecture on societal understandings. Civic buildings represent public tradition and perception; having been places of decision making and the exercise of power since the dawn of urbanisation, these buildings—especially the ones of a classical style—send a clear message through their visual presence about function, content and subject. This historic representation can be a problem when present civic power reside in those very same buildings, all the while the rest of society has evolved past the circumstances of their construction. Once a manifestation of societal take-over of symbols and architecture characteristics which previously belonged to a different hierarchy and ruling elite (Arvastson, 1995), these built structures have become obsolete in their message, not supplying public life with the representation of current society that is needed. Representation in this case would be a way of including groups which are and were previously excluded from the political arena. Knowing when representational civic buildings have gone passed

their "best before"-date would perhaps be a way to ensure inclusion and justice in equal participation for the moulding of future societies.

Architecture and its spaces do not change society, but through architecture and the understanding of its effect, we can accelerate processes of change under way. (Similarly, architecture can always slow down these processes of change by implementing passéist forms of building and of use.)
(Tschumi, 1994, p. 15)

Historically, in the construction of cities, their city halls have represented a political forum and ceremonial body for its citizens, but also (and perhaps more importantly) to provide the civil society with a symbolic centre (Kolbe, 2008). Studying these buildings will undoubtedly give insight to local political objective and organisation. Webster's Dictionary defines the city hall as the chief administrative building of a city, but also as the municipal government itself, the city officialdom or bureaucracy. Perceived as the materialisation of government, the way in which this is manifested becomes of significant importance. Considering the core purpose of the city hall to act as that symbol of society, the main goal should be to create a picture of democracy.

Claude Lefort describes the source of democracy as "the image of an empty place" (2000, p. 279), asserting that democracy is sustained by the tension between that image and the source of power, which is the people themselves (2000). This theory explains the impossibility of any sovereignty actually occupying the place of power, while also proclaiming the mythical aspect of the power. Using the city hall as a tool to create a vision of power and a symbolic source we could construct, if not a place of democracy, then at least a place of democratic desire: a place for inspiration and imagination. The city hall would act as an exclamation mark in the city, and a change in the image of the urban landscape.

CHAPTER 3

**CONTEXT
&
ANALYSIS**

To create a foundation for the design proposal, the work needed to be focused further on context and circumstance. This was also a way of going back to the very source of the project idea, which was the absence of democratic purpose in Gothenburg's city centre. In combination with studies of the architectural language of public spaces, the contextual analysis created a deeper understanding of the case, related problems and possibilities, to inform different strategies used for the design.

NEOLIBERAL MECHANISMS IN GOTHENBURG

The creation of consumer space in Gothenburg is just one of several mechanisms of the neoliberal localisation of the city, it does however influence more than the specific spaces of consumption—it affects all of public space and life.

Exchanging public spaces for spaces of consumption replaces the city's role as a political force for one of a capitalist growth machine. This shift is motivated by a economic elite (Hoskyns, 2014), with interests in the economic value of the city on a global market. In his text about real estate ownership concentration and urban governance in Gothenburg, Landzelius mentions a dramatic decrease in number of property owners in the city centre (2012). This in turn have affected the contents of the city, creating an autocracy which makes for a less versatile, and therefore less inclusive and democratic, urban society.

In his study, Landzelius also discusses the merging of properties in the city centre. Within the central district of Gothenburg, properties that were once divided into 97 different plots decreased to only 72 in 2012. The number of owners of these 72 properties has also drastically changed, from 91 in 1970, down to only seven different owners in 2010. This change in ownership have greatly affected the use of property as well, where residential properties are decreasing and being replaced by commercial ones, an effect which is probably the result of a few and major property owners having similar interests in the market. On the inner-city real estate market, there are

basically eight different major players today, four of which are public joint-stock companies traded on *Nasdaq QMX Stockholm* (Landzelius, 2012), making their purpose and goal similar to each other—revolving around a rising stock market.

To further investigate the situation in Gothenburg, I looked into the different kinds of owners of property within the city centre, focusing on the original extent of the city from when it was fortified: the *Inom Vallgraven* and *Nordstaden* districts. The results showed a correlation between the size of the properties and the size of the owner companies, proving how large properties are often owned by large companies. We can also see how properties owned by larger private companies with revenues over 500MSEK and/or listed on the stock exchange market, are located in and around the shopping and consumer centres of the city, and properties owned by smaller actors are situated in the periphery of those areas.

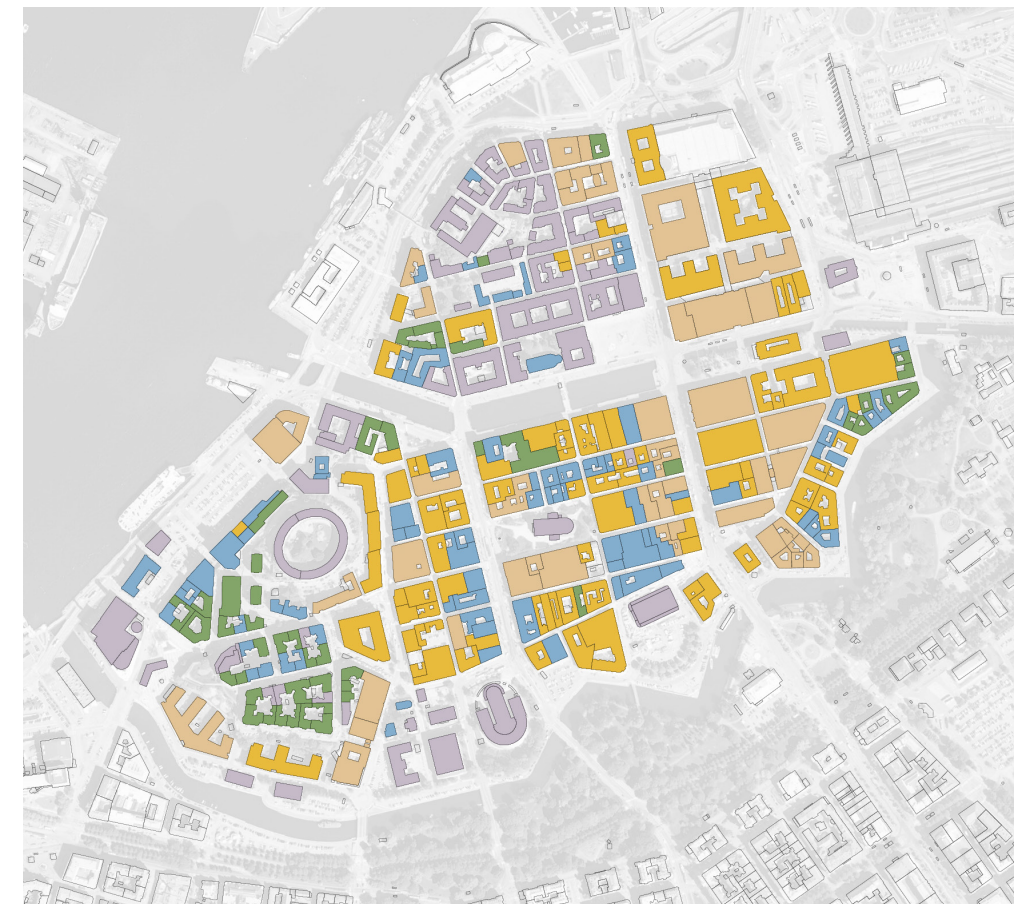
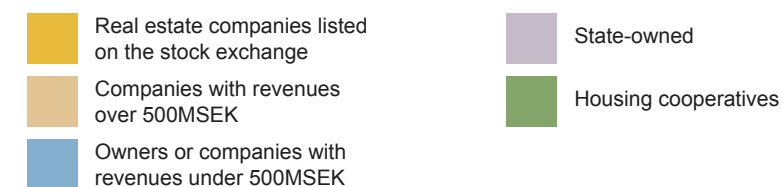


Figure 2. Property owners in the centre of Gothenburg



This distribution of property owners, and the city which they produce, endangers the versatility needed for a democratic society—risking to create a single homogenising culture. Exploiting the city for economic values, all of the city and everything in it is considered a commodity. When increasing market values and creating wealth for investors, rents are raised through inflation and tenants who cannot keep up will be pushed out (Landzelius, 2012).

From different examples of advertisement for blocks and building projects in the city, we can observe how the capitalist transformation of urban space programmes the citizens within to act as consumers, as well as the connection between the hierarchy of urban space with that of social classes in the city. The planning strategy for this type of urban development aims for the promotion of an atmosphere and cosy ambience, appealing to the desired demographic. The re-branding of the city and the rhetoric used, linking happiness to consumerism, is a major indicator of the neoliberal process (Daher, 2013), continuously transforming the definition of the city.



Figure 3. Advertisement for *Fredstan*, a district in the city centre (Milk, n.d.)

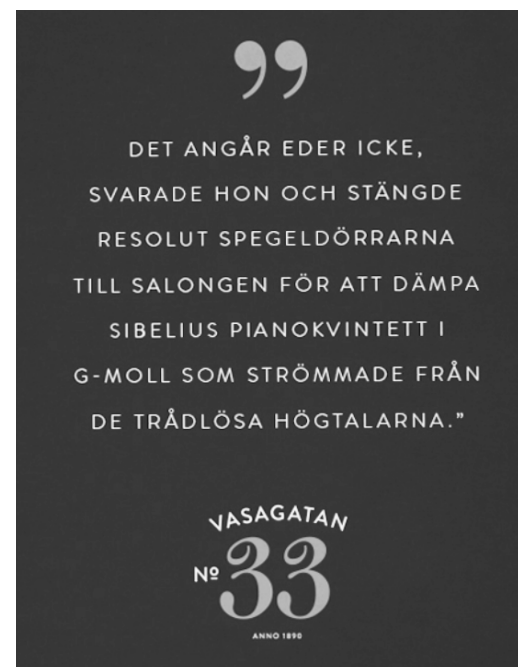


Figure 4. Advertisement for *Vasagatan 33*, a luxury residential project (Milk, n.d.)



Figure 5. Advertisement for *Kvarteret Victoria*, a block in the city centre (Author, 2020)

The re-branding of city is also something that Ruppert (2016) mentions in his book *The Moral Economy of Cities*, where the good and the safe city is regarded as a consumer city. He presents the idea of the good city being much intertwined with that of the capitalistic and neoliberal city, where "the vision of safety came to mean securing the space for particular consumer groups" (2012, p. 89). This way, consumption came to be linked to security, further attaching the notion of capitalism to that of the modern society.

Approaching the public space as a consumer "living room": a capitalistic utopia where spaces for inhabitants to participate in society as citizens (rather than consumers) have been removed, compromises the governmental authority and political role of the city, and turns it into a growth machine for capitalistic purpose. This also means that the matter of the city has become one of the owners and stakeholder instead of one of the people inhabiting it, and weakens the capacity of city as a democratic polity (Kuttner, 2018).

Through the elimination of democratic space and systematic additions and subtractions to the city, public places are arranged to discourage the presence or behaviour of citizens that are not socially accepted in a the neoliberal context—physically manifesting the idea that urban space is only for active and efficient consumers. The consequence of this structured capitalist exploitation of the city is the undermining of the democratic value of public space. Consumer space is no space for democracy.



Figure 6. Rådhuset and Kvarteret Högvakten

GOTHENBURG CITY HALL

Having establishing the crucial function of the city hall: to provide a symbolic centre for democratic power, I ask myself how the situation is arranged in Gothenburg—being the site and context of this project.

Looking to the city halls of the larger cities in the Nordic countries, they are often popular tourist attractions and typical symbols of the city, well-known by their shape. This is not really the case in Gothenburg. While the square at which the city hall is situated, *Gustaf Adolf's square*, is a popular destination among tourist exploring the city, the city hall itself is not even close in status as city icon. Furthermore, the definition of which building is the actual city hall is subtle, to say the least. The original city hall, or *Stadshuset*, which was constructed for the purpose, is now used for communal worker's offices, but still bears the sign "City Hall". Meanwhile, the building that is actually used as the city hall (since 2014) is *Rådhuset* ("the courthouse")—made redundant of its original purpose by the new legal centre, situated on the other side of the moat. However, the main representative building of Gothenburg is *Börsen* ("the bourse"), the old commercial exchange building with great halls for festivities and gatherings, as well as the council assembly hall. The municipality also uses another adjacent building, just in between Rådhuset and Stadshuset, called *Wenngrenska Huset*, which was originally built for residential purposes but have also housed a post office, a bank office and a mortgage association. Altogether, you can see how one would get a bit confused about the situation.

All of these buildings housing different city hall capacities are arranged around Gustaf Adolf's square. The consistent use of architectural elements, volume and hues on the adjacent buildings muddles their impression, creating an attractive but vague wall of facades around the open square. This confusion and failure in communicating use and purpose of the structures, implies that the purpose of the city hall as an icon and marker of political intention is not fulfilled through the architecture of the current buildings.

While old buildings such as these are valuable from a historic and heritage perspective, I find that they fail in expressing values and aims of our current society. Closed up and inaccessible from the public space—they exude power over the square and the people in it, but fails in providing a sense of vision, inspiration and inclusion. The square itself, however, is an important and symbolic hub of both new and old Gothenburg. It is representing the birth of the city with its monumental statue of Gustav II Adolf, pointing to the ground as if to mark the place to break ground for the new city, but it is also important in the moulding of a future society, in being an important base for political actions, protests, demonstrations and other social happenings.



Figure 7. Kvarteret Högvakten, from the left: Wenngrenska Huset, Stadshuset & Börsen (Higab, n.d.)



Figure 8. Rådhuset, currently used as city hall (Higab, n.d.)

STUDY OF REFERENCE OBJECTS

To create a frame of reference to inspire and inform the design process, I did an illustrative and comparative study of a variety of Nordic city halls. Focusing on finding comprehensive patterns and common features for structuring an architectural library of attributes, the objects were chosen for their articulation and expressiveness, as well as their iconic position in the city.

Regarding the city hall's function as a symbol in the public space, it comes as no surprise that most of the attributes construed as characteristics of the city hall were part of the exterior of the building. Perceiving the correlation between facade and cityscape, each defining the other, puts further emphasis on the importance of the symbolic use of the facade. As a part of a conversation, the facade broadcasts the intention and possibilities of the structure, using the exterior as an information screen about the building as well as its context.

Cultural cluster	Buildings of power and/or history are often located in the same block or area, creating importance by association. Often located in the original centre of the city.
The square	Often connected to an architectural cluster. Creates both function and intention—classifying adjacent buildings through the importance of itself, but also practical use in form of a platform for political actions and social events. Often emphasized through architecture.
The mayor's balcony	Historically practical way of presenting power, creating a lectern above the people below for everyone to see. Also symbolic implications of the placement of power out of reach.
The campanile	The word translates both as <i>bell tower</i> and <i>meeting place</i> . Historical and practical symbol—the bell tower calls to gatherings, but also functions as a watchtower. Originally a manifestation of the bourgeois' power over the nobles. Italian influence in the early 20th century resulted in the common use of the campanile (among other attributes), becoming a given component in the Nordic typology. (Bloxham, 2000)
The clock	The natural evolution of the bell tower component. Symbolic implications of time as power.
Exclusive materials	Symbolic suggestions of official buildings consisting of lasting and precious materials, to endure centuries of use by the many. The exclusivity also adds to the mythology of the places of power.
Ornament & public art	Communication of meaning through figural arts is generally the most easily translated medium in relation to architecture. A way of proclaiming origin, history or purpose. Traditionally nationalistic pieces, but the style evolved in step with the modernistic and socialist Nordic welfare states.
The courtyard	An inheritance of the castle courtyards, which was a safe and sheltered outdoor space. A monumental space in its openness, often covered with glass ceilings or skylights, making the most of the natural light.

Table 1. City hall attributes and characteristics



Figure 9. Falkenberg City Hall (Ahnlund, n.d.)



Figure 10. Mölndal City Hall (Blomgren, 2013)



Figure 11. Oslo City Hall (Berzinn, 2015)



Figure 12. Lahti City Hall (2013)



Figure 13. Halmstad City Hall (Björtvedt, 2012)



Figure 14. Copenhagen City Hall (Láscar, 2014)



Figure 15. Copenhagen City Hall (Ebbesen, 2008)



Figure 16. Aarhus City Hall (2018)

When examining the architectural elements of the different examples, despite being of different styles and constructed at different periods in time, they all have a lot of similarities between them, forming a common language of symbols and meanings through their architectural expression. It becomes clear how the different attributes and iconographic architecture lives on through such monumental structures, surviving through the adaption of new styles. The efficient way in which these are communicated proves that the symbolic language of the architectural typology have been well established in our common culture, maintaining a well functioning design tool for composing other focused buildings of a parallel purpose.

Starting by the examination of the facade—both separated from and in relation to its context—considering style, material and composition, was a way of getting to know the buildings. However, a complete view of the characteristics of different expressions in the structures was first found after examining synergies of its situations: placement in the cityscape, social context, and patterns of human movement. The composition and scale of the buildings often made them noticeable present, which in turn raised the question of how this constant presence affects the city, its habitants and their identities? The relation to surrounding structures (and people) turned out to be the principal influence concerning all of the different approaches to symbolising or exercising power in the urban context. This highlights the connectivity of symbolic intention and the production meaning—affirming the synergy of urban culture, its people and the cityscape.

When taking inventory of the components found, it became clear that the application of power was a main function of a lot of them. Having housed the very sovereignty of society for centuries, it comes naturally that the city hall has turned into a physical manifestation of that power. Although interrelated and affected by each other, I categorised the ways in which I found the structures to exercise power over the city and/or its citizens. A lot of the references studied showed a display of power with the purpose to restrict and exclude, however, I did not define an authority or target for these expressions of power, but solely studied if and how the built structure exerted influence over its surroundings. This list turned into a catalogue of ways in which to direct attention and movement, with the possibility to be used for both exclusion or inclusion.

Position	
Relation to the street	A free-standing position creates focus, symbolic weight and hierarchy within the cityscape. The separation of other structures also invites a different movement around the building.
Relation to height	Dramatic arrangement that creates an exclusion of adjacent structures.
Relation to movement	Capturing movement creates an end of space and a clear focus. To steer human movement around an object is also a way of creating dominance and power of space.
Axiality	Clear axis and symmetry is an effective way of creating dramatic power. Placing a structure "in" the street is also a way of exercising power, in its obstruction of path.
Association	
Grouping	Power by association is a common way of creating authority. Structures of power, history and societal importance are often positioned in clusters.
Symbols	Everything from ornament, colour, and building components are richly coded with meaning, which will affect the impression and interpretation of the structure.
Distinction	
Scale	An effective way of dominating space and effectively influence an extended area.
Form	Exclusion in form to stand out of a crowd and thereby exercising dominance. Too much variety, however, can indicate unpredictability and uncertainty, rather than focus and power.
Density	The sum of openings in the facade is directly connected to how you read the facade: is it open or closed to the people? Solidity creates dominance and exclusion. The placement of openings are also important for interpretation: is the opening reachable for the public?
Extension	Power by claiming more visual or actual space than what is enclosed by the building itself, for example by a connective stair, an associated square, or paving. Scale (for example a tower) can also be a way of extending the imaginary periphery of a structure.

Table 2. Exercise of power through architecture



Figure 17. Stockholm City Hall (2009)



Figure 18. Oslo City Hall (2018)



Figure 19. Kiruna Old City Hall (Vågen, 2017)



Figure 20. Copenhagen City Hall (Romero, 2016)



Figure 21. Lahti City Hall (2013)



Figure 22. Oslo City Hall (Ottesen, 2009)



Figure 23. Västerås City Hall (Barkskog, 2006)

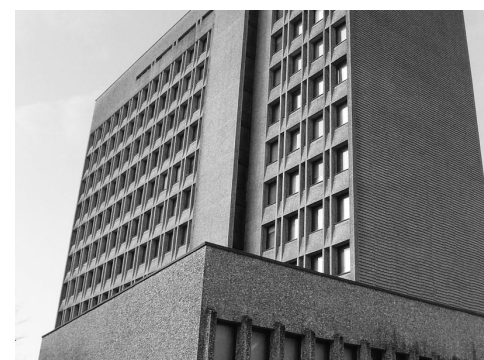


Figure 24. Bergen City Hall (2009)

Relation to the street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detached • Bound • Flush • Offset • In the street • Beside the street
Relation to height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevated • Submerged
Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative or associative • Approachable or dismissal • Hierarchy • Articulation
Extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imaginary rooms • Definite rooms
Density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness • Direction • Plasticity
Axiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direction • Rhytm, drama • Definite or imaginary axis • Focus • Ensemble

Table 3. Architectural expression related to human movement

While studying the different ways in which I found the buildings to be exercising power over the urban environment, I found that the common trait of these features was the way in which they affected human movement in the city. Steering and controlling the movements of others is a natural and primal way of putting power to practice, connected to the most fundamental language of the body. Considering architecture, the control of movement also implies control over how to approach a building—the first impression. While all of the city halls studied have multiple and complex characters, there is always that first impression to colour the forthcoming experience of a building.

Going ahead with the findings of the studies, I want to consider the effects of the different attributes and characteristics—in what manner do they represent the building and the power within? Are they inclusive or dismissive, what is the articulation and focus of the elements? Working with the comprehensive trait of these, which is the importance of the arrangement of public space, context is key to how these symbols are employed as well as their effect. When designing a new space of political power and vision, this is what should be the fundamental concern and inspiration.

CHAPTER 4

DESIGN STRATEGIES

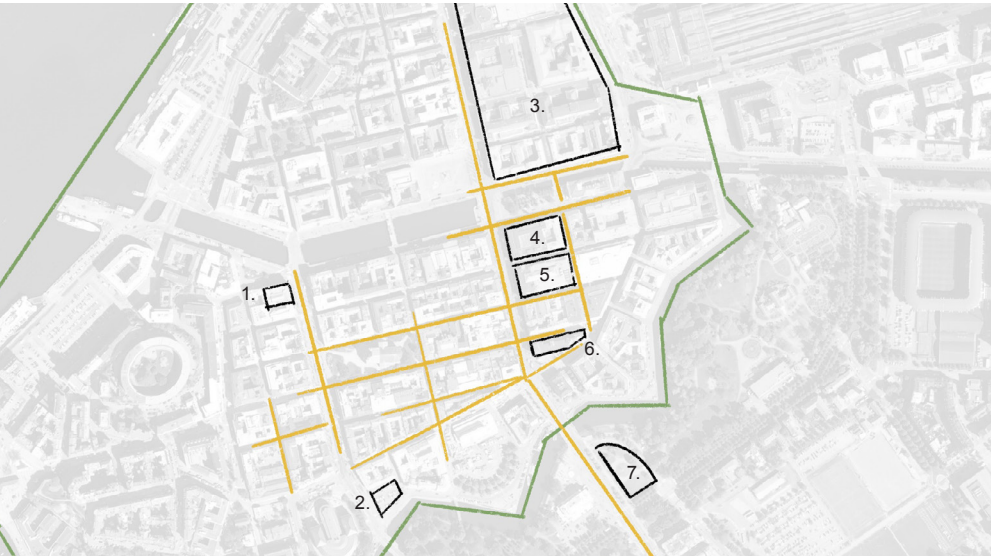
Throughout the project, I have worked with theory and design as a dialogue. This has enabled all elements of the work to inform and implement each other, allowing findings and theories to be put to the test and evaluated in relation to each other. Connecting the design strongly to theory was a way of properly showcasing purpose and result, as well as creating an informed design where theoretical concepts and analysis are implemented. The applied concepts are as following:

SETTING THE STAGE

With this kind of project, the site is as important as the building itself. Establishing the purposes and needs of the project, the site will set the stage for possibilities and aspirations—to create the right conditions for a democratic space, the setting needs to communicate importance as well as affability. Placing the building at a site that is central in both geographical and symbolic terms, will subsequently create consequence as well as highlighting the addressed issues and purposes of the project. Consequently, the decision was made early on in the project to choose a site within the area Inom Vallgraven, the original extent of the fortified city of Gothenburg, both because of the symbolic implication as well as for the practical motive—choosing to build at a central and observed site will direct the attention of the urban society.

There are no suitable plots within the chosen area that are not currently inhabited or developed, creating the opportunity to investigate a more radical possibility than building at a vacant plot—which is to claim a site already built upon. Coming back to the purpose and theory of the project, the decision of what site to claim should be based upon the social effect. Having the intention to prevent the privatisation of public space, and thereby restrain neoliberal localisation, suggested a choice of site that is currently used for capitalistic private purposes, a site that creates exclusion and discourages political activism among citizens. This way, the choice of site becomes an act of both prevention and encouragement—a way of infiltrating the

current centra of neoliberalism in the city, in order to inspire democracy and political actions. Not choosing a more remote and unoccupied site is also a demonstration of not following suit in accepting the neoliberal mechanisms that are manifesting themselves in the current environment. It could also risk the new structure to be denied the public attention and focus it could achieve—out of sight, out of mind.



Possible plots	Owner	Current function	Evaluation
1. Västra Hamngatan 1	Bygg Göta	Bank and offices.	Nice connection to the harbour. Not central enough. Too small.
2. Grönsakstorget	Göteborgs Stad	Parking lot.	Not central enough. Unfocused space. Too small.
3. Nordstan	Vasakronan, Hufvudstaden, F O Peterson Söner Byggnads AB, Gösta Andersson Byggnadsfirma AB, Castellum AB, and Nordstans Samfällighetsförening	Shopping mall.	A space that is currently used by exposed groups in society, it would be counteractive for this project to claim it for another purpose. The size of the plot would also be a challenge.
4. Arkaden	Vasakronan	Shopping mall and offices.	Nice connection to the canal, but too undefined with the adjacent park and spaces.
5. NK	Hufvudstaden	Luxury department store.	Good size and placement along the main consumer street, framed by surrounding structures.
6. Centrumhuset	Vasakronan	Shops and offices.	Could be a good placement, but too small.
7. Bältespännarparken	Göteborgs Stad	Public park.	Good placement, but would be unfulfilling to remove a public park.

Table 4. Possible project plots in the city centre

The candid need for a tangible place for social actions such as demonstrations, speeches, protests and interviews, establishing a backdrop for the political life of the city and materialising the intention of democracy, is part of the actual purposes of locating the city hall within the physical and symbolic centre of the city. But there are also more abstract functions of the arrangement, in the physical structure's purpose as an icon of the city and marker of political intention. Using architecture and physical space in terms of symbolic illustrative language are methods that has proven to be of great importance for the purposes of the project, and will inform all of the applied concepts as such.

THE DEMOCRATIC SPACE

In order to create conditions for a democratic structure, we first have to establish what democratic architecture really is. Adopting Lefort's concept of the empty space—that democracy derives from the image of power being unoccupied, would implicate a space that discourages the human impulse of owning and dominating. This would be a structure which celebrates the void, and does not discriminate or in any way differentiate the people it holds (Runting, 2018). Democratic architecture, then, should be an architecture which has the capacity of creating desire to explore and discover its extent. There is potential to the emptiness and the undefinable in that it creates aim and possibility, a place that allows, includes and involves.

I will focus this concept of the empty space in the shape of a public square. The square has such a rich history in societies and in urban life by itself. It has been the place to assemble, to get information, to voice an opinion, for entertainment and to influence, and has the ability to both embrace, stimulate and attract. The square has been a constant partner of the city hall, and a known attribute of its architectural typology. Dating back to the ancient Greek *agora*, which was a public square and adjacent buildings to accommodate the growing society of the cities—a place for people to meet, discuss, share, and amuse themselves, to create social and political order in the city (Hoskyns, 2014). The multi-use of the classical public space allowed citizenry to segue between different roles, through participation and representation, as an active participant or as a bystander. Defining the public square as the original political and democratic space, will that make the creation of a city hall without it incomplete, or impossible?

One of the results of neoliberal localisation is the transformation of public space. When becoming dependent on capitalist processes, public space becomes equal with the space of consumption (Lefebvre, 2009). To revive democracy through the empowerment of citizens and by the reclaiming of public space as a political platform, indicates a need to discourage private ownership of that very space. Arranging public space in order to affect ownership becomes of great importance, also in

that the ownership of land is basically the original source of wealth and expression of societal power.

Another way of creating a sense of ownership and belonging of the city would be to connect the picture of public space with that of the city. By enhancing local features and promoting local identity, there is a possibility of creating ownership of the city by maintaining its integrity. This can also be a way of directing the meaning and message of the city hall, by illustrating the recipient.



Figure 25. Landshövdingehuset in Gärdä (Saulus, 2012)



Figure 26. Rosenlundsverket (Vågen, 2015)



Figure 27. Cluster of boathouses (Sewón, n.d.)



Figure 28. Gothenburg Museum of Art (2013)

To prevent the marketing of the city as a capitalistic utopia, treated as a consumer "living room" and welcoming only the "right" demographic, the public space and the architecture within needs to be established as a political monument—to maintain an open, communicative and versatile city. This because the democratic functions depends on a balance between a diverse use of space, which in turn creates relevant and accessible spaces for all groups in society. This enables political and social participation on equal terms—but relies on the public space as a democratic mechanism.

The grounds for choosing a city hall for the project was really the notion of a need for a place where urban inhabitants could participate in social life as citizens rather than consumers, as well as being a source for inspiration and motivation for a different shared future. I want to enforce the social role of the city, which has been

reduced to one of consumption and economic value, and minimise the commercial domain in the city. I believe that the very presence of political space can contribute to integration, both political and social.

So how can architecture and urban design both symbolically represent, and physically facilitate democracy? If democracy truly depends on the availability of physical public space, then the question about "how space is used, how it is constructed, and how it is controlled" (Parkinson, 2012, p.9) is crucial to all of society. Still, we are at a point where architecture and cities are viewed more as consumer goods, instead of the human rights and societal functions that they are. This creates a need to reaffirm the image of political and social space in the city, claiming the city for the citizens and discouraging the possession of public space.

CREATING A MONUMENT

Often of an old or neoclassical style, the image of a representational or governmental building has become a classical one, their presence conveying a well established message about function, content and subject. This habitual style is not an accident, but a deliberate choice for the application of an established symbolic language associated to the typology. However, the implications and meanings of those different attributes have somewhat changed with the changes of society. The appropriation of established symbols for new purposes have historically been for political intent, for societal takeovers of symbols and elements previously used for structures of a ruling elite, once that sovereignty was made redundant. This evolution of styles implies a connection throughout time, allowing symbols to survive the loss of original meaning or purpose through the gain of a new one.

The symbolic language of classical architecture often provokes a strong reaction with the beholder, my understanding is that people generally like classical architecture and old houses better than modern and new ones. There is also a calmness, a steadiness and dependability with classical architecture which probably affects the interpretation of a structure, but perhaps also the weight of its history. My interpretation is that a certain element of pathos gives an appreciable depth and solidity to a structure, and connects the building further to former societies and the people who lived there.

Abstraction in architecture, which has become the normative style influence of modern architecture, has put emphasis on the qualities of form instead of calling upon a more direct form of communication: the language of symbols. Symbols which are interpreted through references, different to every person, but shared through culturally constructed basis of mutual meanings. Using a historical established architectural language is in my opinion not a way of discouraging the devel-

opment of modern architecture, but to remember and use what has already been created, becoming richer in a symbolic linguistic capacity. Not freezing time, but neither reinventing the wheel.

I would like to adopt this classical language for a new structure. Using the identified attributes and characteristics of the city hall to communicate history and purpose, but also rediscover them through composition, material and use as to create a new symbolic purpose, as well as supporting the iconic image of a public and political building. Adopting an established language of architectural symbols will help in creating a structure that communicates resilience and stability, but also an opportunity to reinterpret their character and translation for a current and future society. The mere imitation of symbols would probably create a lifeless structure, but a translation and rediscovery of their use can be full of purpose. Using form as the vehicle of content, should mean that the sculptural language invites to more accessible interpretation and reading than abstract forms—making the iconographic architecture superior in communicating its intent.

The use of symbols and ornament will create a structure that is aesthetically enriched, serving the people in preference to the architects. This type of representational building does not exist only to be pragmatic, but to provide emotional and symbolic content—speaking to the masses. Ornament and symbolism shortens the reading process and allows for communication with a wide target audience. Another way of achieving that agenda is by the application of attributes of power. Using manifestations of power to promote a just and equal society, directing attention and awareness, will be a method for making architecture serve the society instead of private power, providing a platform for democracy and a possibility of authoring identity and aim.



Figure 29. Piazza del Campidoglio (Dupérac, 1568)



Figure 30. Piazza del Campo, Siena (2011)

CHAPTER 5

THE DESIGN



Site plan 1:2500



Putting the theory to the test, the design is a joint effect of the different issues and subjects discussed, creating a unity. The multi-layered concerns of architecture is what makes it interesting and complex, in that it involves all layers of society and relates to the issues within. It is something that affects us all, which is why we should make the most of its possibilities of influence and change. We do not all have the same opportunities to influence or have our opinions heard, suggesting that developers, architects and urban planners are people of both great personal privilege and obligation for enhancing cultural and political narratives. This is what I have chosen to do with this opportunity to encourage a democratic society.

THE SITE

To prevent the privatisation of public space and neoliberal localisation of the city, the choice of site for the design proposal resulted in the claiming and repurposing of a plot already built upon. The symbolic implications of choosing an occupied site is partly dependant on what is occupying it at the moment. In this case the selected site currently contains a department store of luxury goods: *Nordiska Kompaniet* ("The Nordic Company", hereafter referred to as "NK"). Both the trademark and real estate property are owned by *Hufvudstaden AB*, a Swedish real estate company listed on the stock exchange in Stockholm. The building is situated along the main shopping avenue in Gothenburg, and is a well-known symbol of luxury in the consumer city. The building itself is really a merging of a whole block and its originally individual buildings. The exterior have been preserved and renovated, but is only a pretense facade to the completely remodelled and unified structure within.

As a speculative project, I have had the opportunity of creating my own conditions for the work. While implementing a radical idea, such as tearing down an icon in the city,

might be impetuous or unrealistic, I still believe that in doing so I have a possibility of putting real emphasis on the actual issue, without the compromises of regulations and restrictions. In addition, I do consider that the positive effects of the elimination of such a strong influence on capitalistic lifestyle (city icon or not) would more than compensate for the loss of it.

Returning to the site, the distinct location of the plot creates a practical foundation for the project, both in terms of possibilities for symbolic influence and the functions of the future building. Placing the city hall as a contrasting force in the thick of the consumer centre of the city will hopefully emphasise its purpose, creating a distinct democratic presence, as opposed to if the site would be located in at already established site of political intent.



Figure 24. NK, main entrance (Author, 2020)



Figure 24. NK, North facade (Author, 2020)



Figure 24. NK, back entrance (Author, 2020)

THE FACADE

When arranging the facade of the city hall, I have used the new context to apply and adapt the attributes and characteristics of the typology. Attempting to create a local symbol, attached to the city through the common use of cultural meanings and symbols, the facade serves as an announcement board to inform the surroundings of its intentions and aims.

There is a duality to the applied iconographic programme of the design. The building has a traditional shape and character, but is reinterpreted through local tradition and culture. This translation is among other things made with the adoption of attributes through the use of material and composition.

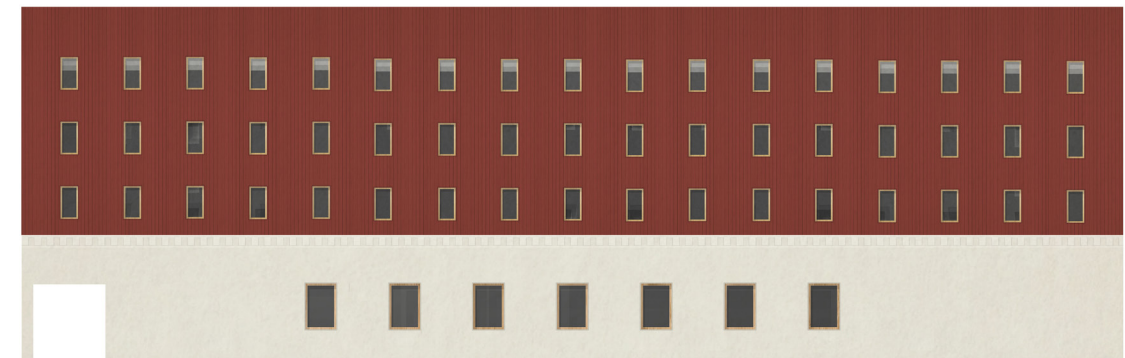
The different facades have different functions, through the use of ornament and openings, a hierarchy was created between them, and a way of directing movement and communicating the purpose of the building and its exterior. Using material, composition and ornament, I have tried to create a building that is strongly anchored in the local identity. The material and colour of the main and upper part of the facade consists of a wood panel, painted with the traditional Swedish *faluröd* paint (“falu red”, a deep red earth paint), traditional to Sweden—reminding us of the classic, Swedish cottage, or the boathouses along the coast and archipelago. The bottom half of the facade has a plastered finish, the duality of the facade drawing a connection to the classic *landshövdingehusen*, specific to Gothenburg. The choice of applying a plastered brick structure to the ground floor also has a symbolic meaning in its stability and durability, creating a foundation that is solid and resilient. The material also creates the possibility of working with ornament in a more liberal approach.

Choosing to implement the use of ornament was grounded in the notion of classical architecture and the attributes of the city hall archetype. Working with an established symbolic language will inform the volume and size of the buildings, and vice versa. To emphasise the intention of the ornament, which is to communicate purpose and aim of the specific structure, but also the historic evolution of the city hall archetype, the placement and character are made with subtlety, to make obvious the symbolic purpose in that they are not structural elements, but exist to stimulate the imagination. The subjects of the ornaments are based on the mythical origins of power, but also, when for example using *corinthian columns* for the main facade, to emphasise a development from the classical teachings. The corinthian column, which is supposed to represent the delicacy of a young girl (Wultz, 1991), or even sometimes considered “the courtesan” of the classical orders, will be an approach to invite a group into the political arena that historically have been kept out. The ornaments are all located on the facade of the bottom level of the structure. This concentration and distribution of the decor is a way of also creating a hierarchy along the vertical of the building.

The main and west facade is adorned with a clock attached to a rectangular surface of blue sheet metal, inspired by the exterior of *Rosenlundsverket* (a power plant in central Gothenburg). This design is supposed to connect to the idea of the campanile, redefined and adapted through composition and use of material to relate to context and purpose—creating the implication of power without the domination of space.



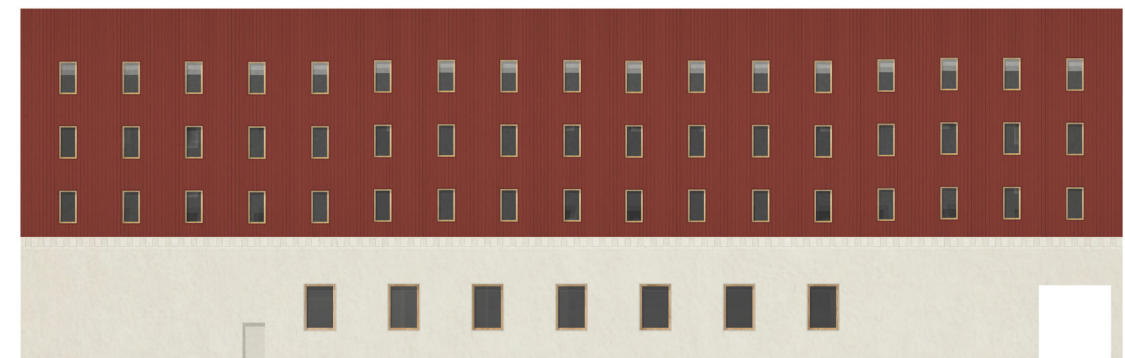
West elevation 1:400



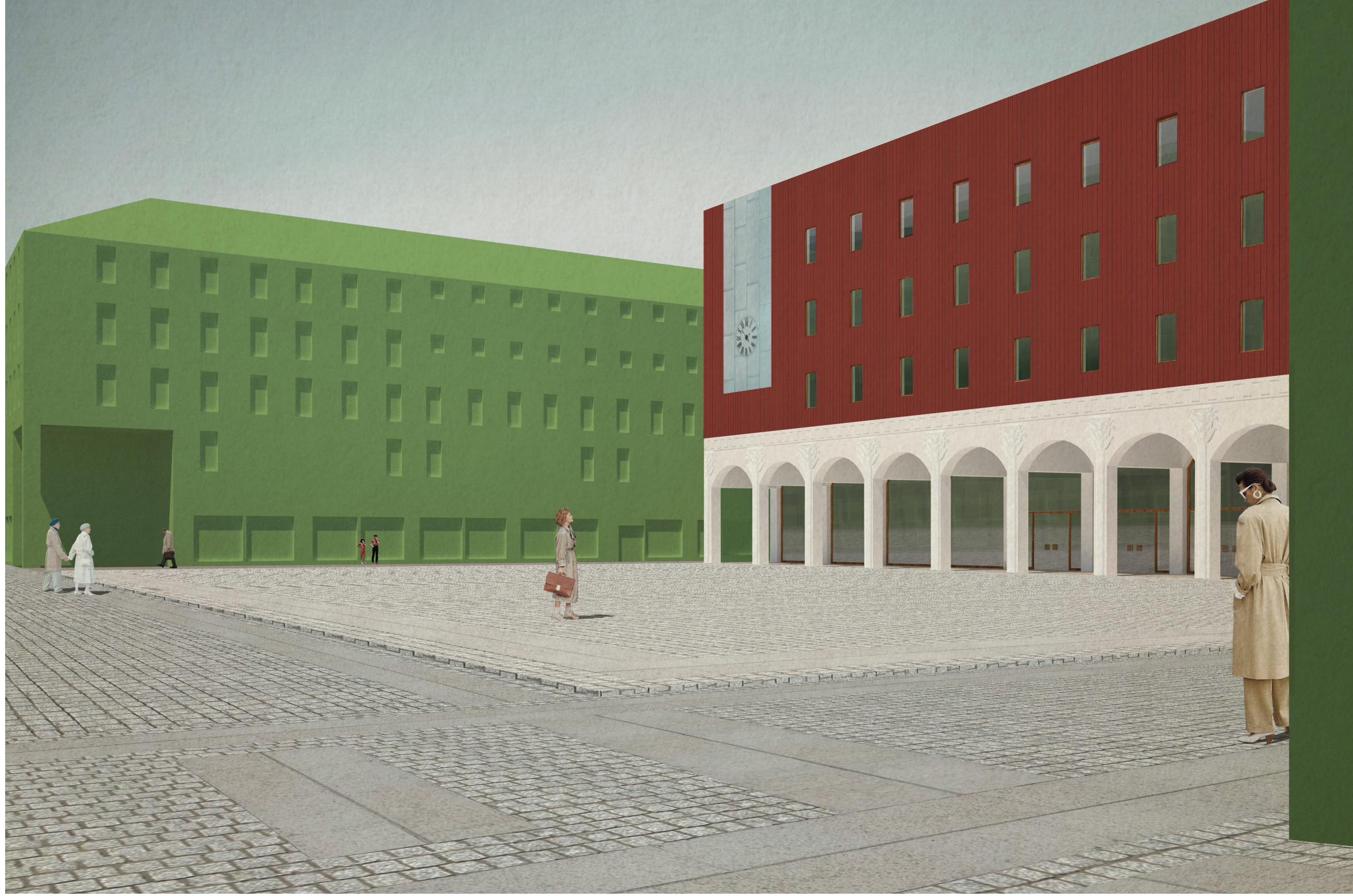
South elevation 1:400

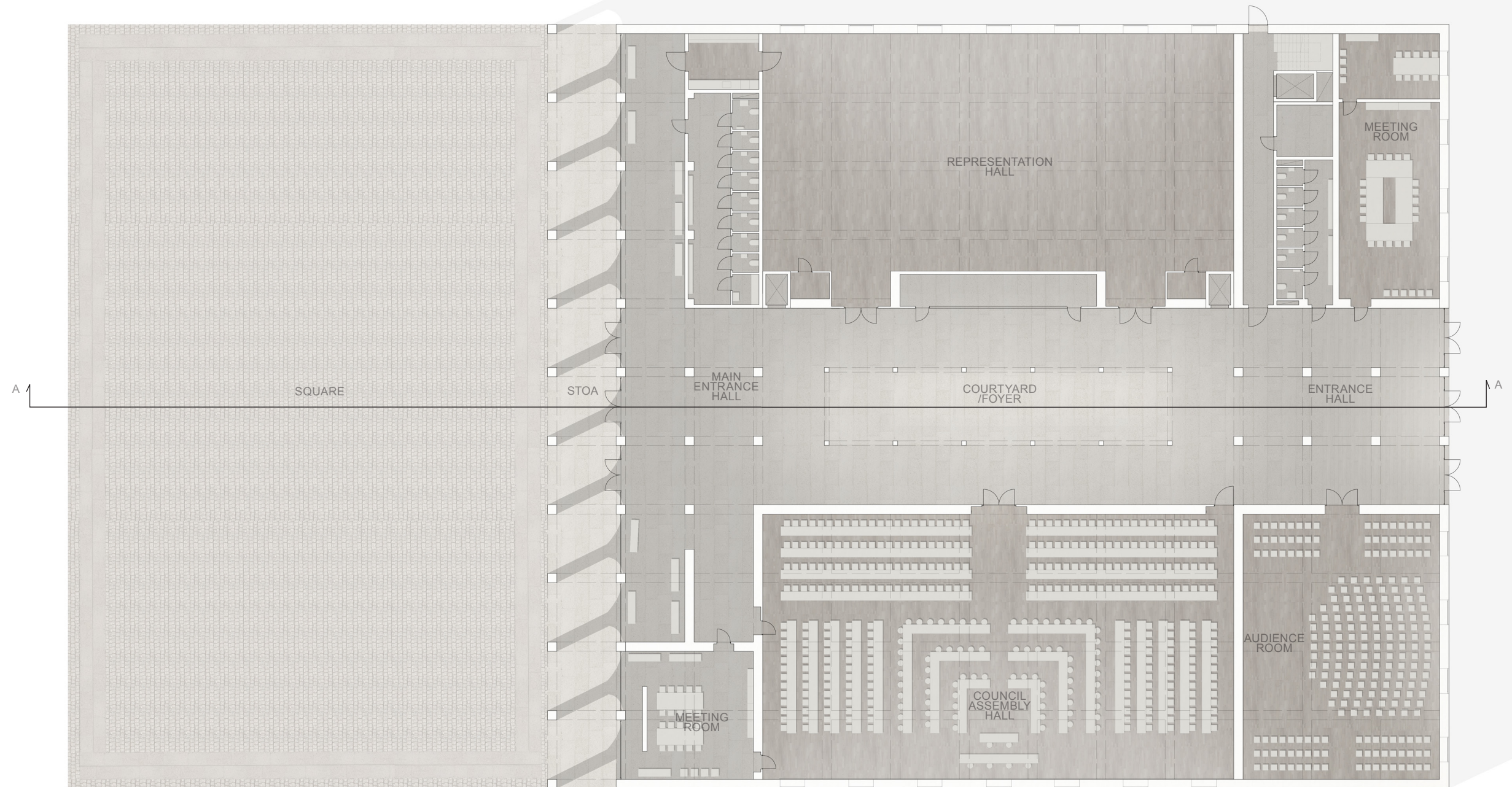


East elevation 1:400



North elevation 1:400





Floor plan 1:150





Section AA 1:500

THE SQUARE

The square was a given part of the programme for the site, and has an essential role in defining both space and building. The size of the plot will not allow for a square big enough for comprehensive actions or protests, but is still needed for symbolic implications, materialising the empty space and giving symbolic weight to the city hall. The square also creates distance from the street, implying a difference to the city hall in relation to the surrounding commercialised public spaces, but also as a power attribute: by pushing the building back from the street and capturing movement instead of sending it further down the avenue. The decision to create an "empty" square on a valuable plot in the centre of the city, could also be the most radical design choice in a neoliberal context, where every last millimetre of urban space should be exploited for profit.

The formation of the square is also of great importance. To keep the space open and without a programme was essential in making it responsive to interpretation and the formation and reformation of ownership. This was also a way of avoiding misinterpretation of the square, in that it is not supposed to be a place with atmosphere and cosy ambiance, functioning as an extra outdoor seating for the surrounding cafés. The purpose of the square in providing the public space with a political platform should be apparent, to emphasise the space as political infrastructure, a vehicle for citizenship, I did not want to provide it with a programme of trees and benches, but left it bare.

THE STOA

Continuing the use of classical elements, I wanted to complete the square with a *stoa*—drawing connections to the ancient *agoras* (another word which translates into "meeting place") of Greece. The stoa is a covered walkway or portico, which was historically open to the public—creating a sheltered public space for events and gatherings around an open square. Much like the agora, I want to create a place that is the symbolic centre of political life in the city, and an informal scene for activism.

The use of arches for the stoa are to bare implications of a portal, which have been used throughout history to convey a heightened significance to what lay beyond them. The stoa also acts as a junction between exterior and interior, defusing the boundary between inside and outside, and merging the spaces by the use of glass. To apply transparent surfaces is a simple but effective way of conveying openness and inclusion. While the building itself, as an urban icon, can take advantage by a communicated mystery surrounding it, it was important that the entrance and user experience of the building expressed an openness and frankness—creating a space that welcomes participation and consideration.



THE INTERIOR

Regarding the design as the output or product of the theoretical work of the project, I have chosen to limit the extent of it, only focusing on the public and/or representative spaces of the building to maintain relevance and focus. These spaces would, except for the facade and square, include the entrances, the foyer, representational and event rooms, and the council assembly hall with adjoining meeting and audience rooms.

The colonnade from the stoa outside extends into the entrance hall where you can see straight through the building, creating a flow of movement and direction. Further into the building is a glassed over courtyard, functioning as a foyer and creating a hub for the building. To connect the interior further with the public square outside, the courtyard is designed as a square itself, complete with a surrounding colonnade. It is also a way of

bringing natural light into the building, providing the view of the entrance with a backdrop and leading inwards and onwards towards the light and centre.

The facade influences the interior, continuing the grid of the colonnade through the entrance, but also by the over-dimensioned walls and pillars, communicating stability and importance throughout the building.

There are two main halls located on each side of the courtyard, the council assembly hall and the representational event hall. In contrast to the public spaces, the halls are introvert and concentrated. The windows are placed at a height to prevent the observation of the surroundings, both for practical reasons as well as to focus the space and communicating its weight.

CHAPTER 6

REFLECTION

DISCUSSION

Space is constructed from social relations, informal and formal; public architecture is commissioned or agreed by the state; while this is always contested, architects are often forced to work with relations of power and not resistance.

(Hoskyns, 2014, p. 76)

Starting the discussion with the point of departure for the project, which was my personal yearning for an escape from the emptiness of the consumer spaces of the city, I hope that I have done what I can with the tools that are available to me, and taking the opportunity to do something a bit radical—but full of purpose.

Regarding the project as a critical comment and a contribution to the discussion of the present neoliberal localisation, I think that the speculative aspect of the design amplifies the questions concerned and solutions considered. Making the decision of simply replacing a consumer space with that of a political one can appear to be a crass solution, and is in fact in a sense a simplistic answer, but this is also one of the few options available for me as an architect, in order to achieve the aims of the project. In addition, the unexpectedness of the decision also created a tool for provoking reaction and drawing attention to the subject, which with a theoretical project is as much as you can hope for.

However, I will not play down the unrealistic aspect of the project proposal. The extreme suggestion to tear a building down in the city centre, an icon and consumer nerve centre, to be replaced with a new one without any capitalistic purpose would have never been followed through in our current reality. Be that as it may, I felt that there is only so much one can do in the capacity of an architect, and if by choosing a more speculative direction with my project, I have achieved in planting at least a seed of inspiration and awareness with myself or the reader, I should be happy and hope to keep this realisation, to act upon it in the future.

The design result itself is as of now the weakest part of the project. I ended up with a fairly eclectic facade and uncomplicated interior, which was a direct way for me to apply the findings of the reference studies for a symbolic purpose, also wanting to create a structure that was straightforward and easily communicated. It is rather the presence and influence of the building that is emphasised, and its effect upon the city image. The design as such could have been much improved with additional time, it is still quite humble in its realisation, but I do believe the theory behind it is both useful and relevant for its purpose.

I found the combination of my own findings and ideas with that of the theories of applied sources paired up well and created a richer result, but, as mentioned before, the project has been limited and restricted in time, making it necessary to eliminate a lot of the leads and theories I would have wanted to explore further. One example of this is the application of Fraser's theory on political parity. I could not acknowledge

the full potential of this within the limits of the project, but think it is an approach for creating equity and social justice through architecture and urban planning that is worth to explore more thoroughly.

To discuss the design further, I also believe that it could have been improved if complemented with a thorough study of the ways in which groups and communities are represented in public space, if represented at all, in relation to how they desire to be represented. To do a more thorough mapping and register of this could have given the work further depth and encourage related questions. I did consider to include a similar study and corresponding theory in combination with a co-design solution, but ruled it out for lack in time, but also because co-design in this sense felt as an attempt to make citizens make up for mistakes made by neoliberal actors, and remove the responsibility from policies and forces of the sovereign power. What I do think could have given the work another dimension would have been to implement a range of interviews with citizens, for the inclusion of other points of view of the context and project purpose, to be used as inspiration and for evaluation of the concluded theory and design. I also think that an extended critical analysis of the existing city hall and its connected buildings as well as the current structure at the project plot could have been made, for a more in-depth understanding of the current situation and the influence of the built structures.

Altogether, the project has produced some potential theories and ideas, a few of which were not applied or followed through due to different reasons, but has succeeded in highlighting the main questions and related issues. In illustrating the principal problem of the dismantling of the democratic function of the city, the project has accentuated the importance of a reestablishment of the original purposes of the city, and of using the political tool that is urban architecture for creating a shared city and culture—instead of separation and discrimination.

CONCLUSION

Considering the main question of the project: *how urban architecture can stimulate democracy*, the focus throughout the project has always been the complex relations and interrelations of the subject. Urban architecture and democracy as an incredibly multifaceted subject created the need for bringing in a width of subjects to the project, all initially connected and affect by each other. This complexity in the analysis proved to be a big challenge, but also an inspiration and motivation to go further into the discussion—much like any subject: the more you know, the more you want to learn.

Through the merging of the different subjects and theories, I have found that architecture can stimulate democracy through the presence of political spaces and

buildings, but also through the discouragement of neoliberal mechanisms and the rearrangement of ownership of the city—providing citizens with tools and inspiration to participate in political actions and in the creation of a democratic society. This could be achieved through the reinforcement of the public role and prominence of the public space, which would provide the city hall with focus and social influence. In my quest to find an expression of democracy, the design itself transformed into a direct response to the problems and theoretical concepts of the project: a combination of approaches of the democratic space and the subject of active citizenship, alongside the characteristics of the city hall typology.

Discussing one of the sub-questions: *the influence of the architectural facade and public space on urban life*, will require a further engagement in the subject. I have established that the architectural facade do have a great influence on society, but also that urban life in turn has a lot of influence on the reading of the facade. As a system of representation, all architectural elements have a meaning, which resides in society. This cultural synergy, of both people and cityscape defining and influencing meanings and implications, makes the representation of architecture and its values a major contributor to societies culturally constructed identity.

The other sub-question for the project was: *how can the city hall encourage active citizenship?* The angle with which I addressed this question was mostly through the analysis from the effects of the neoliberal spaces in the city—turning citizens into consumers and producing a city dependent on capitalist processes. This exploitation of the city and public space as a commodity has embedded a neoliberal intention in the spatial fabric. Similarly, the opposite action would create a contrasting effect. My solution to this is to, yet again, stress the city halls potential in fostering a politically active and democratic society. By creating an urban space of political presence and democratic promise, I believe that citizens would find inspiration and representation, and to that end be encouraged for active citizenship and political participation.

STUDENT BACKGROUND

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