

# For good or glory?

an investigation on what one can learn from a current  
Swedish architecture debate about aesthetics and perception  
of architecture

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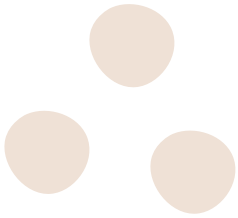
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Chalmers University of Technology  
Architecture and Civil Engineering  
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Sustainability (MPDSD)

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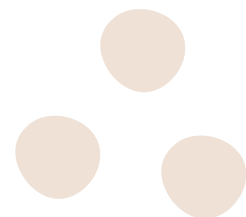
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## **Abstract**

In the beginning of my architecture education I remember my grandmother once said to me "you're not going to draw such boring boxes, aren't you Maria?". It was a result of her telling me about a new-built residential house in the area where she lives. Ever since that I have, now and then, encountered comments about architecture from people I know. It is probably because they know that I am studying architecture and it therefore feels natural to talk to me about it. At the same time, during the last decade civic movements discussing architecture have grown large and formed a new architecture debate in Sweden. People do seem to actually have opinions about their built environment. They do not necessarily analyse architecture on a daily basis, but when presenting a proposal for a new building people react, when travelling people form a perception about the local architecture and when looking for a new home certain architectural values matter. In the current Swedish architecture debate the views fall apart regarding the aesthetics, style and quality of what is built today. Certain non-architects are criticizing it, while certain architects are defending it. Architecture is the only art form we cannot escape from. Whether we think about it or not, we are constantly surrounded and influenced by it. What good architecture is depends on whom you ask. This thesis investigates how architecture is perceived among non-architects and architects and what we can learn from today's architecture debate about aesthetics and style. Through research and design the goal is to get an increased awareness and better understanding on what kind of architecture is appreciated among people today and, by giving the debate another dimension, raise the question of whom we are building for - for others good or for our own glory?

Keywords: perception, aesthetics, non-architect vs architect, dialogue, design tool



# Introduction

## Purpose, exploration & background

This thesis takes off in the public debate on architecture, aesthetics and style which is currently taking place in Sweden. The debate which began a couple of years ago is driven by civic movements who are concerned about today's building and that it does not hold good quality. What started as a criticism of the architecture produced in Sweden today, quickly developed into a rather hot debate where some non-architects puts the blame on architects and the architects, on their part, defend their work and the architecture by stating that good architecture is not only about aesthetics.

What could have been a fruitful dialogue between architects and the public about how we want to further develop our cities has become a non-constructive and polarized debate. It is obvious that architects view architecture in a different way than ordinary men. After all, they have been trained in reading architecture. A person who lacks knowledge about a certain topic is more inclined to interpret emotions and aesthetics. For example a stone is for the common man simply a stone with a certain color and shape. But for a geologist the same stone carries much more information and is valued in a different way.

But how can we learn from each other? The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how a public debate on architecture and aesthetics can be lifted from just being a non-constructive and polarized debate and become a meaningful exchange of views.

Through literature studies, interviews and design I am searching for the answer to what we as architects can learn from today's debate and, moreover, how architecture is perceived among non-architects.

## Main questions and objectives

How is architecture perceived today among architects and non-architects in a Swedish urban context? What can we as architects, in that context, learn from today's architecture debate about aesthetics and perception of architecture?

## Method

My method has been Research by Design (Hanington, 2019) and I have worked with two tracks - one theoretical and one practical - in parallel, which during the process has come together more and more. The theoretical part consists of literature studies within the fields of perception of space, aesthetics, beauty and vernacularity. The fields are relevant because they all connect to the current debate and intend to broaden the perspective. How do we perceive space? How do you define beauty? And what can one learn from vernacular architecture and history in terms of how

it has been a space for giving a voice to those who do not have one within building construction?

The theory is supplemented by interviews that I have conducted with chosen actors, both architects and non-architects engaged in the question. The design part consists of a card game. It is a design tool intended to be used by practitioners and other people who are interested in turning the debate into a meaningful dialogue. It gives the user tools to express and share their opinions on the subject. The content of the game is based on the research and so one could say that the method is design by research.

## Delimitations

In the delimitation diagram on the next page (fig. 1) one can see which delimitations have been made and what possible alternatives that have been excluded (the faded bubbles). As the current debate in Sweden was the starting point it felt natural to focus on the perception of aesthetics and architecture in a Swedish urban context. Urban context because that is where changes are most noticeable and because building tradition in Sweden differs greatly between urban and rural areas. The debate is also the reason why focus has been put more on private constructions and on the exterior of buildings. The current debate has been the starting point for all interviews. Historical and societal background has been delimited so that it suits the context and strengthens the understanding of why it looks like it does.

The timescale has been limited to the last 150 years. It was in the mid 1800's that the industrialisation began in Sweden and what has happened since then is most crucial to what our Swedish cities look like today. The choice of actors has been carefully considered and actors who, based on research, do not seem to be able to contribute to a constructive dialogue have been eliminated, in order to avoid dead ends and non-constructive talks.

## Reading instructions

This master thesis does not follow the more common thesis structure, from theory to analysis, but rather mixes them in order to seek new angles to the main questions. The interviews have been conducted so that they touch upon different sub-topics which are linked to theory. They are another additional explanation to the topic. To better understand the structure of the thesis see the diagram (fig. 2) on page 8. Thereafter comes the design implementation as a product of the research. The report ends with a reflection and manifesto which sums up the process and learning outcomes of this master thesis.



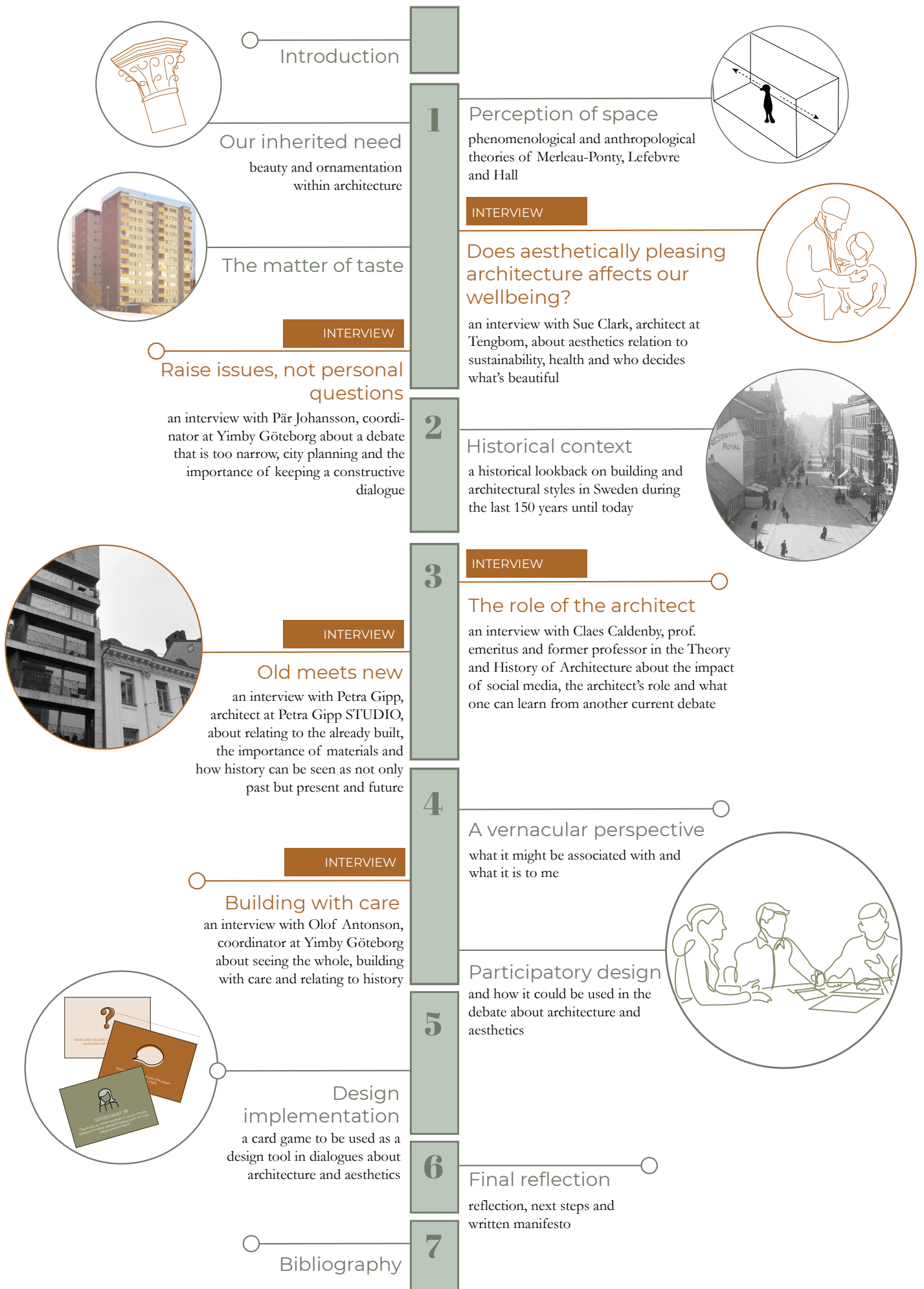


Fig 2. Structure of thesis booklet

# Glossary

## Terms and their use

*This thesis contains a number of recurrent terms, some of which may be vague or broad concepts. To avoid misunderstanding the key terms are explained here. Other terms might occur as well, but those listed here are of main importance and/or recurring several times.*

**Urban context** - a broad term relating to, or constituting a city or town (Reverso Dictionary, 2020). Here referred to as the big cities of Sweden; Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö.

**Newly built** - refers in this context to what has been built in the Swedish urban context during the last ten years (2010-2020 AD).

**Non-architect** - the term used for people - in daily speech generally referred to as most citizens in a society - a large group of people who have in common that they are not governing and thus do not have power to affect what the city looks like (in this case Swedish citizens). Among architects it can also be referred to as user, which refers to the one who uses a building. To avoid repetition, *laymen* is sometimes used instead of people (Sternudd, 2007).

**Architect** - the term refers to architects as a professional, and includes in this thesis architects, urban planners, architecture critics, designers, architectural theorists and other professional groups within design and artistic activities or with a theoretical focus on architecture field of activity. A broad group of professionals who, according to studies, seem to generally share the same aesthetic opinions and view on what good architecture is. Values that clearly differs from the public's (Sternudd, 2007).

**Civic movements** - layman's initiatives, e.g. *Yimby* and *Arkitekturupproret*, which through different forums discuss urban planning and architecture issues from a non-architect's perspective.

**Classicism** - the following of ancient Greek and Roman principles and style in art and literature, generally associated with order, harmony and the seek of consisting values. In architecture it is expressed through architectural elements such as columns and draping as well as through the whole form system and proportionality. Classicism appears at different stages of art history in, for the time, updated versions.

Romanticism in the late 19th century and modernism in the early 20th century both reacted against classicism. The followers of the ideology are called classicists (Nationalencyklopedin, 2020).

**Modernism** - a style or movement in the arts of Western culture that aims to depart significantly from classical and traditional forms and advocates rationalism. The followers of the ideology are called modernists. Influenced architecture through taking distance from traditional, aesthetics common for the classical and vernacular building tradition, the lack of ornamentation and simplified form language (Nationalencyklopedin, 2020).

**Aesthetics** - or *esthetics*, is a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of beauty and taste, as well as the philosophy of art (its own area of philosophy that comes out of aesthetics). It examines subjective and sensori-emotional values, or sometimes called judgments of sentiment and taste (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2020).

**Perception** - perception can be explained as «a belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem» (Wikipedia, 2020). Refers here to people's experience of beauty and visual impressions of architecture, and could also be called *aesthetic experience*. Aesthetically pleasing or beautiful is called an object which, because of its way of looking, gives the viewer a feeling of satisfaction - a beauty experience.

**Vernacularity** - architecture characterized by the use of local materials and knowledge, usually without the supervision of professional architects. Vernacular architecture represents the majority of buildings and settlements created in pre-industrial societies and includes a very wide range of buildings, building traditions and methods of construction. Vernacular buildings are typically simple and practical, whether residential houses or built for other purposes (Wikipedia, 2020).

## Expressions in interviews

*Since the interviewees refer to their own aesthetic experiences, the definitions of concepts might vary among the respondents.*

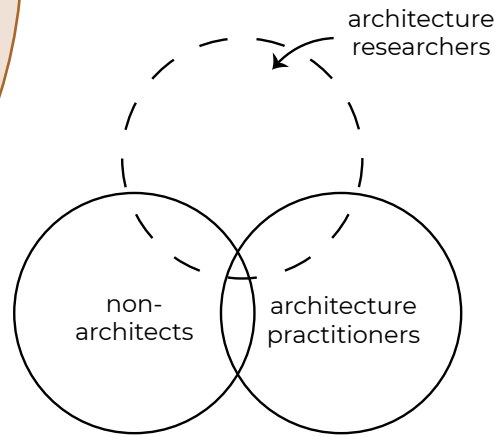


Fig 3. Venn diagram showing the groups of the case study

## Methodology

Since the first day of this thesis the aim has been to maintain and contribute to a constructive discussion. Architecture can be seen as both science and art. As science there are of course physical laws and social sciences which affects building construction. However, in terms of the values I aim to explore - aesthetics and perception - one have to look at architecture as an art form and within art there is no right or wrong. That is the reason for why this thesis is not about raising any particular opinion or to prove who's right or wrong. That might be the result of the public debate and how it has been presented in media, but I believe that is not really the core of the question. As architects we have an important role in the design of our shaped habitat. The question is how to include and create a voice for those who are not involved. Or as in this specific question - how to create a voice for those who are not a part of the discussion.

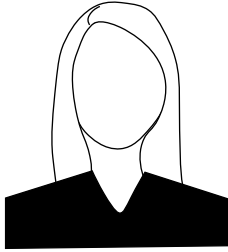
In order to answer the thesis question and investigate how the current architecture debate can take one step further from just being about liking and taste, I have conducted a series of interviews. The interviews have been made with chosen representatives from three groups (fig. 3); architects (namely architecture practitioners), non-architects and architecture researchers. The interviews published in the report have been rewritten to better suit the thesis. You can find a fuller summary and complete list of questions in the appendix at the end of the report.\* The reason for choosing architects and non-architects is simple - it is basically just following the structure of the already ongoing debate. Why I added a third group - architecture researchers - is because I believe that they can complement and nuance the perspective and add another input with their theoretical background and knowledge. While presenting the actors I also want to emphasise that these groups do not include all people in each group. As in all public debates there is of course a large group of architects as well as laymen and researchers, not to say majority, who are not involved in the matter at all and may not even have an opinion about it. The following actors have been chosen because of their involvement in the public debate.

I have not interviewed any members from *Arkitekturuppröret*, although they played a key role in the beginning of this thesis. There are two reasons for that. Firstly they have already been giving a lot of space in media and I was curious about to see what other opinions their might be among engaged non-architects. Secondly, and more important, since this thesis is not about any given group and their opinions, it is not of great interest to focus on them or on any other group in particular. The focus is rather on the communication and discussion between architects and non-architects than on certain groups.

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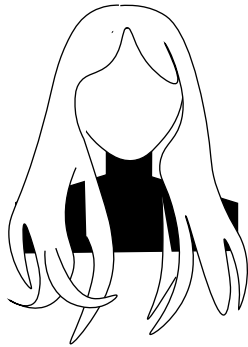
\* All material has been published according to the interviewees' permission

## Interviewees



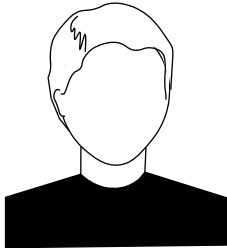
### Petra Gipp

Educated as an architect at Konstakademien in Copenhagen, Denmark, Petra is nowadays active in Stockholm where she, together with two other partners, runs her office Petra Gipp STUDIO. She has worked with both building projects and more experimental architecture and is used to deal with the relation between old and new because of several projects situated in «sensitive surroundings». She has expressed her opinion in the debate throughout a number of articles.



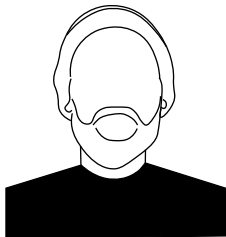
### Sue Clark

Educated as an architect in Canada but works since many years with sustainability project management. She is employed at Tengbom in Stockholm. Tengbom is one Sweden's largest architecture offices with nearly 600 employees (Tengbom, 2020).



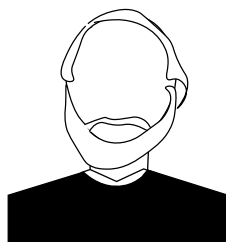
### Pär Johansson

Civil engineer employed at Chalmers University of Technology, where he is researching and teaching within the field of building physics. Coordinator of Yimby Göteborg since 2016. Has a big layman's interest for architecture and within Yimby, he focuses on issues connected to urban planning and densification.



### Olof Antonson

Pre-school teacher specialised in arts pedagogy. Coordinator of Yimby Göteborg since the start of the group in 2008. Has a far-reaching interest in urban construction and architecture, and is passionate about questions regarding history and the significance of the site.



### Claes Caldenby

Professor Emeritus and former professor in the Theory and History of Architecture at Chalmers University of Technology. He is also an active author, working as an editor in the Swedish architecture magazine Arkitektur and regularly writing posts in Göteborgs-Posten, Gothenburg's biggest daily newspaper (Göteborgs-Posten, n.d.). Through his work as a writer and through different talks he has expressed his opinion about questions that has to do with the current debate.

# Interview topics

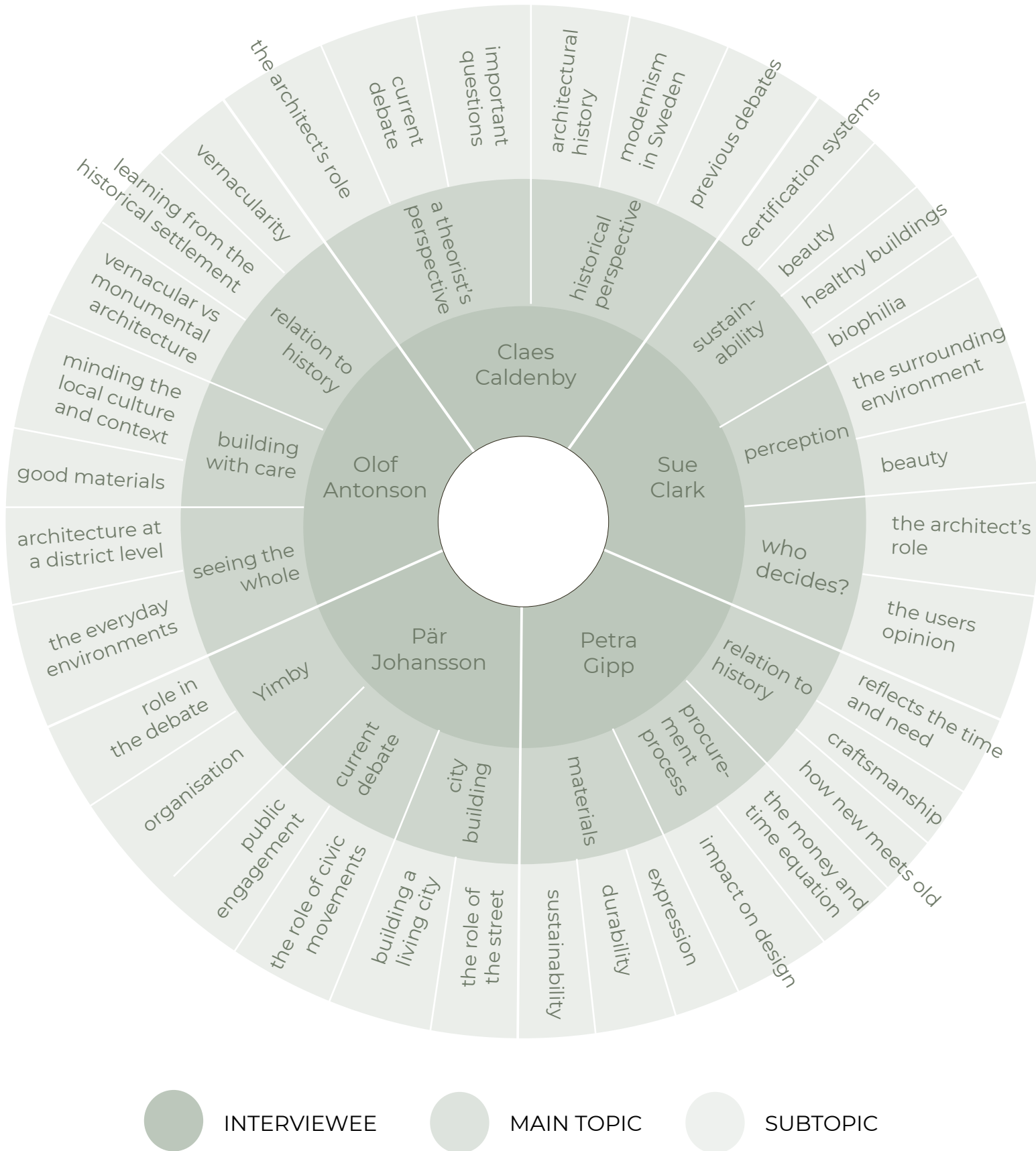
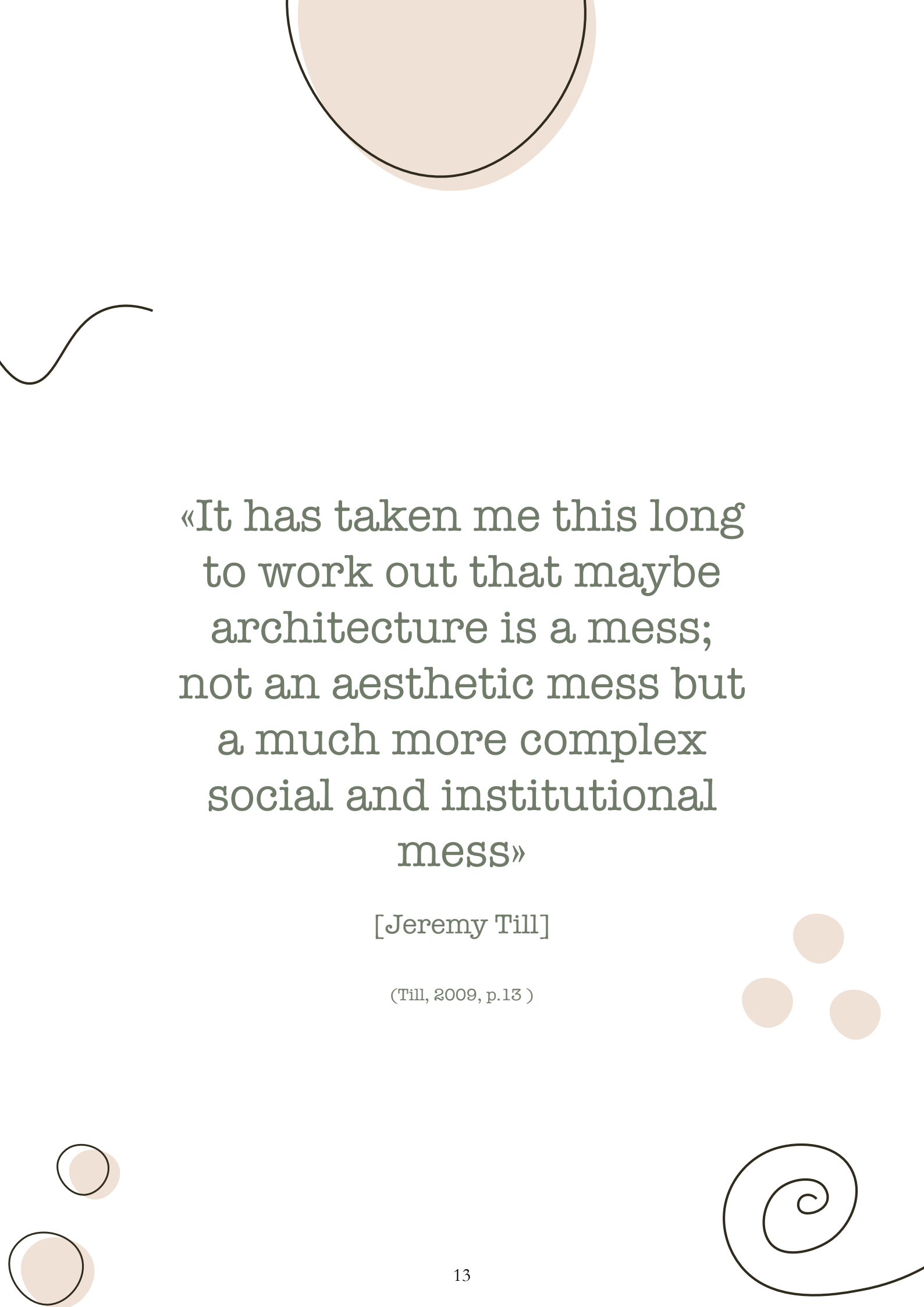


Fig 4. Wheel diagram presenting the topics extracted from the interviews



«It has taken me this long  
to work out that maybe  
architecture is a mess;  
not an aesthetic mess but  
a much more complex  
social and institutional  
mess»

[Jeremy Till]

(Till, 2009, p.13 )

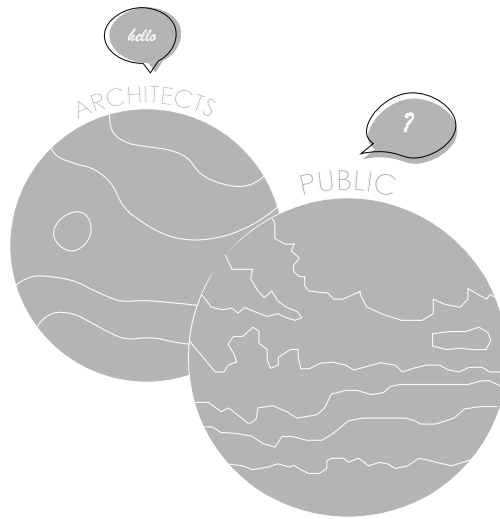


Fig 5. *The architect is from Mars and the non-architect from Venus, or?*

## Background

The quote on the previous page (p. 13) is a quote by Jeremy Till from his book *Architecture Depends* (Till, 2009) and it describes the current debate on architecture and aesthetics very well.

Search for «arkitekturdebatt» (Swedish for architecture debate) on the web and you will get a plentitude of articles and posts debating the Swedish architecture of today. As mentioned in the introduction the Swedish debate on architecture's appearance is driven by civic movements, concerned about today's building construction and the quality of it. *Arkitekturupproret* (roughly translated «the architecture uprising»), was one of the initiators of this debate. The group, established in 2014, is a people's movement «against modernism/neo-modernism and the continued uglification of our cities». They are active on social media, where they discuss and show examples of new built architecture in Sweden and lift what, according to them, is considered to be good architecture (Arkitekturupproret, 2020). It is an open group whereas every person interested in taking part in the discussion is free to join.

Some architects have responded to the critique and *Sveriges Arkitekter*, the architects' union has said that «the architect's job is to interpret the contemporary. Good architecture is not just about beautiful houses but rather has a role in society» (Sveriges Arkitekter, n.d). It has not directly improved the tone - the two sides continue to argue for their cause. There seem to be a lack of understanding and willingness to listen to each other. As if the architect was from Mars and the non-architect from Venus, with different world views and different languages.

Criticism against architecture has probably always existed. According to Moreau (2017) there is no other context where we are exposed to the taste of other people such as in an urban environment. We can choose what to wear, what to eat, how to decorate our homes

but there are only a few that can decide what the buildings surrounding us should look like. Therefore it is not surprising that not everyone appreciates what is being built in our cities. Historically there has been groups before opposing the prevailing building ideals, e.g. The City Beautiful Movement in the U.S. in the late 1800's (Britannica, n.d.). In Sweden one of the 19th centuries most famous architects, Helgo Zettervall, was deeply criticized for his redevelopments of some of Sweden's biggest cathedrals, e.g. Uppsala Cathedral (Carlsson-Lénart, 2019). Similar reactionary movements do exist in other countries as well, e.g. New Urbanism in the US (CNU, 2020) and Urban Villages in U.K (Franklin & Tait, 2003).

Neither is it new to look back at old styles in architecture. Historicism was a big thing in the 19th century. But what actually is new and makes this situation unique is the context in which it takes place. Thanks to social media laymen can today express their opinion about contemporary architecture and easily get in touch with like-minded people (Moreau, 2017). And according to Claes Caldenby it is worth remembering that the architects were very silent even during the big power shift in the construction industry that took place during the 1950s in Sweden (C. Caldenby, personal communication, March 31, 2020).

**«It is worth remembering that the architects were very silent even during the big power shift in the construction industry that took place during the 1950s in Sweden»** Claes Caldenby, 2020

# A

”Byggprojekt eldar på arkitekturdebatt: frustration kring strömlinjeformat byggande”

”Att diskutera ismer leder inte framåt”

”Arkitekturdebatten har fastnat på ytan”

Vad folk vill ha

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Fig 6. Graphical manifesto illustrating the current debate



# 1

chapter

perception of space

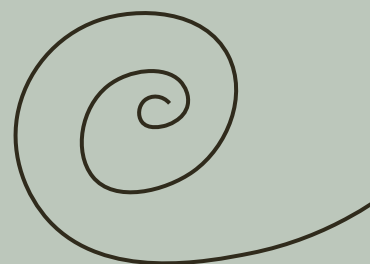




Fig 7. Excursion to Albastra Monastery ruin circa 1890 (Kungl. Konsthögskolan)



## Perception of space

Fig. 7 shows a group of people visiting the ruins of the Alvastra Monastery, a Medieval Convent in southeastern Sweden (Riksantikvarieämbetet, 2009). What did these men and women think about the place? What did they see? Hear? Feel? How did they perceive the space? We can only guess what went through their heads as they looked up over the remainder of the sacred building. But their view was most likely shaped by their view of life and life experiences.

According to the French philosopher *Maurice Merleau-Ponty* (1908-1961), we do not only experience our surrounding buildings and space through sight, but with all of our senses - with body and spirit (Wikipedia, 2020). Merleau-Ponty was a follower of phenomenology - the philosophical study of the structures of experience and consciousness (ibid). Phenomenology says that since we interpret our environment based on the basis of our own body and every body is different, it means that there are probably as many different interpretations of architecture as bodies, i.e. human beings.

What I experience at a certain place does not necessarily have to be the same experience my neighbour has - even if we experience the same place at the very same time! Thus, there is no interpretation that is more correct than another. We interpret architecture based on our bodies, intellect and previous experience. However, usually we do this unconsciously. As we get used to a building it becomes «part of us» and we no longer pay much attention to the surrounding environment. We have probably all experienced that at some point in our lives with a certain building which at first sight gave us a kind of «aha!-experience» but later melted into everyday life (Leander, 2006).

Fig 8. Henri Lefebvre (to the left) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty

*Henri Lefebvre* (1901-1991), another French phenomenological philosopher, had similar ideas about that we perceive space through our body and senses. He argued that we become a product of our created space since it is created by predetermined ideas and functions (Lefebvre, 1992). And this might not always be the most beneficial for our physiological or psychological needs. In his theory of perception of space, Lefebvre states that social space is dependent on three parameters; conceived-, perceived- and lived space. They all influence each other, but the conceived space - created by planners and decision makers - does not always match either the perceived space of people's everyday life nor the lived space shaped by people's experiences (ibid). But if architecture has an impact on our bodies and minds, what is the significance of aesthetics for our well-being? Later, in the text, we will have a talk with Sue Clark, architect with an expertise within social sustainability and architecture's influence on human health, but first some concepts have to be introduced.

**«What I experience at a certain place does not necessarily have to be the same experience my neighbour has - even if we experience the same place at the very same time!»**

author's own words

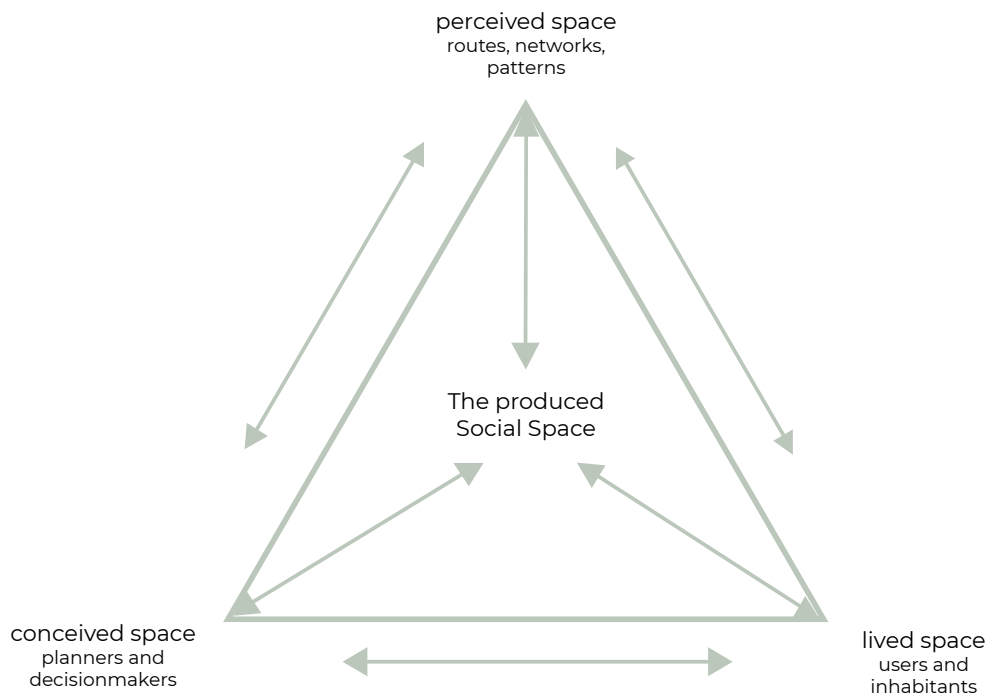
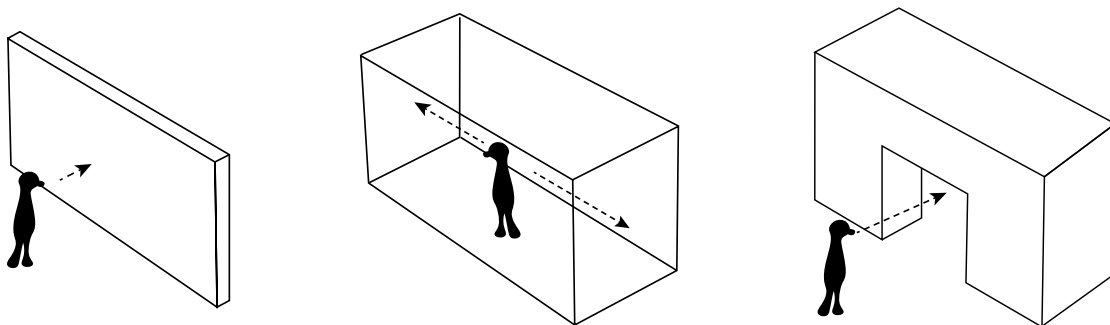


Fig 9. Model of Lefebvre's theory of perceived space

Our perception of space is also deeply rooted in biology and physiology. According to the American anthropologist *Edward Hall* (1914-2009), our relation to space and personal distance can be compared to animal's instincts and the reaction to the environment at different distances, that is; flight distance, critical distance and personal distance. In the same way as animals react differently to their surroundings depending on distance, so does man and therefore we do experience our environment differently depending on distance. When it comes to architecture one has to be aware of that a building is perceived differently at 50 metres, 10 metres and 2 metres. It is also perceived differently from the outside and from the inside.

Measurements matter as well. A room that can be traversed in one or two steps gives an entirely different experience from a room requiring fifteen or twenty steps. A room with a ceiling you can touch is quite different from one with a ceiling five metres high. No one thinks he has to learn how to see. According to Hall the concept that no two people see exactly the same thing when actively using their eyes in a natural situation is shocking to some people because it implies that not all men relate to the world around them in the same way (Hall, 1966).

Fig 10. Figures illustrating how, according to E. Hall, space is perceived differently depending on distance



## Does aesthetically pleasing architecture affects our well-being?

*an interview with Sue Clark, architect at Tengbom, about aesthetics' relation to sustainability, health and whom decides what's beautiful*

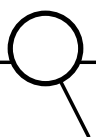
Sue Clark is educated as an architect but works with sustainability project management at Tengbom in Stockholm. She says that «aesthetics is perhaps not commonly considered in the context of sustainability's three pillars of economy, environment and society, but it is by definition sustainable if you create something that by its own course fosters its own connection not only to the people who live and work in it but even the people that pass by» (S. Clark, personal communication, April 8, 2020). She draws a parallel to the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm, an iconic building used by a limited demographic group but seen and experienced by thousands more. Clark means that even if you never went into that opera house you would still have a connection to the building, and if one day it was gone from the urban landscape its absence would be considerable: that fact makes an important argument for it as a sustainable building regardless of how it performs from an energy perspective.

According to Clark, architects are educated with a philosophy that we want to create beautiful places where people want to be and provoke an emotional response. That emotional response also has a whole chain effect of positive mental and physical health effects. But the tricky thing with aesthetics is that, unlike e.g. acoustics and daylight, it can be hard to quantify. For while there are studies showing that background and traffic noise might increase the blood pressure and a view out towards nature can reduce levels of stress hormone, there are no scientific studies showing that a certain architecture style would have a similar impact on our physical and mental health. The argument for a big bright atrium could, for example, emphasize the benefits of daylight to the body's circadian rhythm and the subsequent benefits of improved sleep at night, but it would be harder to say that one architectural style over another specifically improves health outcomes.



However there are today certain certification systems dealing with aesthetics beside sustainability. Clark mentions one called *Living Building Challenge* (fig. 11) which was the first one to develop criteria for beauty. She describes how her office is working with aesthetics and says that at Tengbom *gestaltning* (Swedish for conformation) is a fundamental part of designing sustainably and at Tengbom they want to make sure that everything they design creates that kind of attachment and connection. For if a building is aesthetically appealing, and creates a bond with the people who use it and interact with it – even just passing by on a daily commute – the chances are greater that it will remain longer. «That for us is about sustainability as much as anything else. The resources we take from the ground or the trees we cut down can find an extended life because of the fact that we built in the aesthetically response that people are attached to» (ibid).

Another example of attachment can be found in Järva, an area in Northern Stockholm built as part of *Miljonprogrammet*. A couple of years ago multi-residential buildings in Järva were to be renovated. The buildings were renovated both interiorly and exteriorly and the facades were changed into something which those in charge of the project thought would lift the the buildings and the impression of the area. However, the reaction from the residents in the area became the reverse - they didn't like it since they felt that it wasn't representing their neighbourhood anymore. «Some people have lived there for twenty years and these people have been looking at that facade since they were children. If they have a connection to that specific building in that neighbourhood, who is it to argue what is aesthetically better and what isn't? Yes, as architects we do have the education to decide what's beautiful and what's not but shouldn't the people who are there and are living with it every single day be the ones that have some input as well?» (ibid). ■



## Living Building Challenge

Living building challenge is an international sustainable building certification program. It was established in 2006 by the non-profit International Living Future Institute. The program goal is to encourage the creation of a regenerative built environment. It touches upon seven parameters, or petals as the creators prefer to call it, referring to the flower model as seen to the right (Living Future, 2020).

The certification is unique in that sense that it includes beauty as a parameter for sustainable design. As mentioned in the official description of LBC «The Beauty petal focuses on encouraging project teams to put in genuine and thoughtful efforts into beautifying the project. Although beauty is not subjectively defined in the framework, it is stressed that beauty should be a goal in order to inspire and elevate the lives of the occupants, visitors, and neighbors» (International Living Building Institute, 2016).

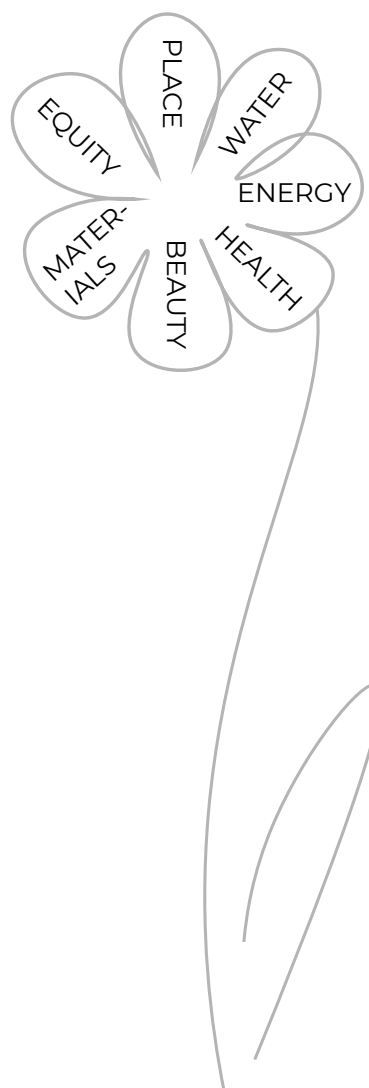


Fig 11. Explanation of the sustainability certification system Living Building Challenge. The flower, with its petals, illustrates the criteria which has to be met for a building to be certified according to the system (International Living Building Institute, 2016)



## The matter of taste

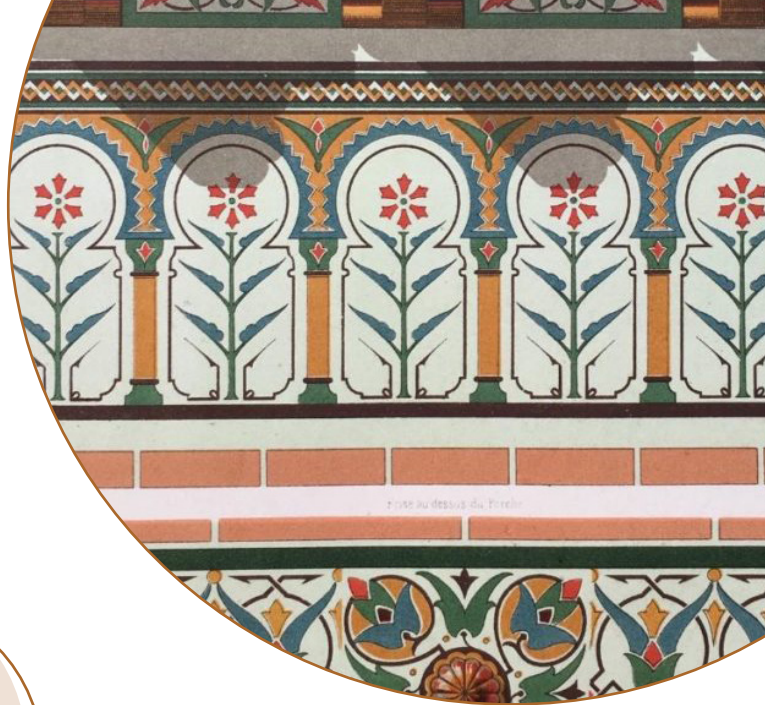
If people perceive reality differently why do some groups, like architects, seem to strikingly agree? It is often due to unspoken agreements that become norm. Among architects this taste-norm seem to be more similar across national borders, than others who's taste generally is more connected to the local culture. This might be due to the architecture education. A study, which compared design students with students from other disciplines showed that the differences in taste preference were small among design students and students from other disciplines' who read the first year, while those who had studied design for a longer period largely acquired the values of the profession (Whitfield & Wiltshire, 1995). Architecture education complements the perception of space.

Many architects today advocate that we should continue building as we do because to build in classical style would be to build pastiches and the architect's job is to interpret the contemporary (Arkitektur-skolan, 2020). Several sources indicate that there seem to be a clash in taste, which raises the question whom are we building for? For good or for our own glory? And who is it to argue what is aesthetically better and what isn't? (S. Clark, personal communication, April 8, 2020).

Fig 12. Miljonprogrammet housing, Stockholm

**«Some people have lived there for twenty years and these people have been looking at that facade since they were children. If they have a connection to that specific building in that neighbourhood, who is it to argue what is aesthetically better and what isn't?»**

Sue Clark, 2020



## Our inherited need

Even if beauty is considered a highly subjective thing it has, nevertheless, in all times of human history existed beauty ideals and societal norms for what is perceived to be beautiful, also in architecture and structural engineering. Objectively, beauty is described as «the ascription of a property or characteristic to an animal, idea, object, person or place that provides a perceptual experience of pleasure or satisfaction» and the experience of «beauty» often involves an interpretation of some entity as being in balance and harmony with nature, which may lead to feelings of attraction and emotional well-being. Because this can be a subjective experience, it is often said that «beauty is in the eye of the beholder» (Wikipedia, 2020).

Ornaments (from the latin word *ornare*) are «decorative elements that lack constructive function and are intended to adorn other objects» (Wikipedia, 2020). Ornaments could also be seen as «an integrated part of the whole», unlike decorations that is something one put on already finished objects (Axelsson, 2016). To decorate our surroundings seems to be something that humans have indulged in all times. There are e.g. cave paintings that are more than 10 000 years old (UNESCO, n.d.).

According to several researchers (McNicholas, 2006) the urge to create ornament is inherent in us as human beings. We seem to have an inner need or pursuit of beauty. From the Stone Age onwards man has, in all cultures and without any practical reason, chosen to decorate himself and his goods with symbols, patterns and colours. Each epoch and society has shaped and designed their ornaments in accordance with their philosophy and beliefs.

In Western architecture ornaments has historically for the most part only served decorative purposes. But it has also happened that the ornamentation has been part of the structure (as during the Gothic) or even been completely excluded (as during the early Modernism) (Axelsson, 2016). Seen from this perspective it might not be that strange that people expect and demand their surrounding space to be aesthetically appealing to the eye.

## Raise issues, not personal questions

*an interview with Pär Johansson, coordinator at Yimby Göteborg about a debate that is too narrow, city planning and the importance of keeping a constructive dialogue*

According to Pär Johansson, civil engineer working at Chalmers and coordinator at Yimby Göteborg, the current debate is problematic since it is neither factual nor constructive. He stresses the importance of raising issues and not personal questions, which has happened in the ongoing debate. «When it comes to architecture, it often happens that you accuse the architect or the big name or the company... We (the coordinators of Yimby Göteborg, *e.d.*) moderate it quite hard. If anyone writes something against someone it usually disappears rather quickly because we do not think it is constructive. You should point at issues and not at people» (P. Johansson, personal communication, February 18, 2020).

The network which started as a blog in 2008, later evolved into a Facebook-group free to join for anyone interested in taking part of urban planning in Gothenburg. Yimby works as an open platform where people can discuss topics related to construction and urban planning. The group does not have any political nor opinion-based agenda and as long as you do keep a good tone and a constructive discussion, the members are basically free to write about any issue related to architecture and urban planning.. The coordinators, a group of seven people, make sure that the discussions are kept tidy and do not float away. «We always intend to avoid conflicts, but without banning anything» (ibid).

### About Yimby

Yimby Göteborg is a politically independent network, active on social media and open for anybody interested in discussing architecture and urban planning in Gothenburg. Emphasis is on issues like densification, mixing city functions and build what is wanted by people. They describe themselves as a positive and constructive voice in the debate, not only analysing the problems but also discussing the possibilities. YIMBY is an acronym for «Yes In My BackYard!» (Yimby, 2020).

**«The current debate destroys a lot and is very non-constructive. It steals a lot of energy from what you should really talk about, i.e. the conditions for creating good architecture»** Pär Johansson, 2020

They are also running the blog where they write about current issues they find interesting and sometimes arrange city walks or other similar events. Currently the group has 6000 members, with various social and academic background. The group has sister organisations all around Sweden. While talking about people's engagement in Yimby I quickly realise how big the interest for architecture and urban planning among the public really is. Yimby is just one proof of that.

Johansson mentions how the coordinators, depending on personal interest, have focused on different heart issues. He himself has a special interest for city planning and tells about why Yimby favours densification of the city and the concept of *kvartersstad* (closed blocks). City structures such as those in *Vasastan* or *Långatorna* in Gothenburg works well because they create a living mixed-use city. There are many advantages with building like this; it promotes the local community, creates an attractive flow of people for shops in entrance floor and reduces the car dependence according to Pär (ibid).

On the question of whether he feels that Yimby is being heard he responds «it feels like we have managed to gain some support in that sense that they are now starting to build more closed blocks and are talking more about city plans again. But there are still things to improve». And on the current debate, he comments «the current debate destroys a lot and is very non-constructive. It steals a lot of energy from what you should really talk about, i.e. the conditions for creating good architecture... I think that no matter what the house looks like, it has to give something back to the urban environment» (ibid). ■



# 2

chapter

historical context

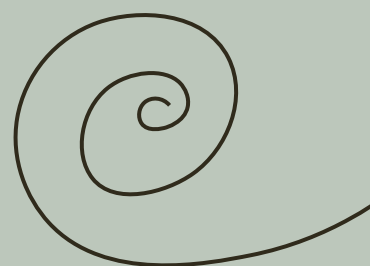




Fig 13. Timeline showing some important happenings in the Swedish architectural history during the last 200 years

## Historical lookback

Building in Sweden has been going on ever since man first immigrated (about 10 000 years ago). But it is not until the 11th century, when Sweden is Christianised, that architecture as we know it today begins to shape. Christianity brings several societal changes that affects building in terms of more permanent settlements, stone building and the idea of «building for eternity». It will incuse the Swedish building for centuries. But it is not until the 19th century when Sweden becomes industrialised that we see societal changes that are directly relevant for our cities today (Bedoire, 2015).

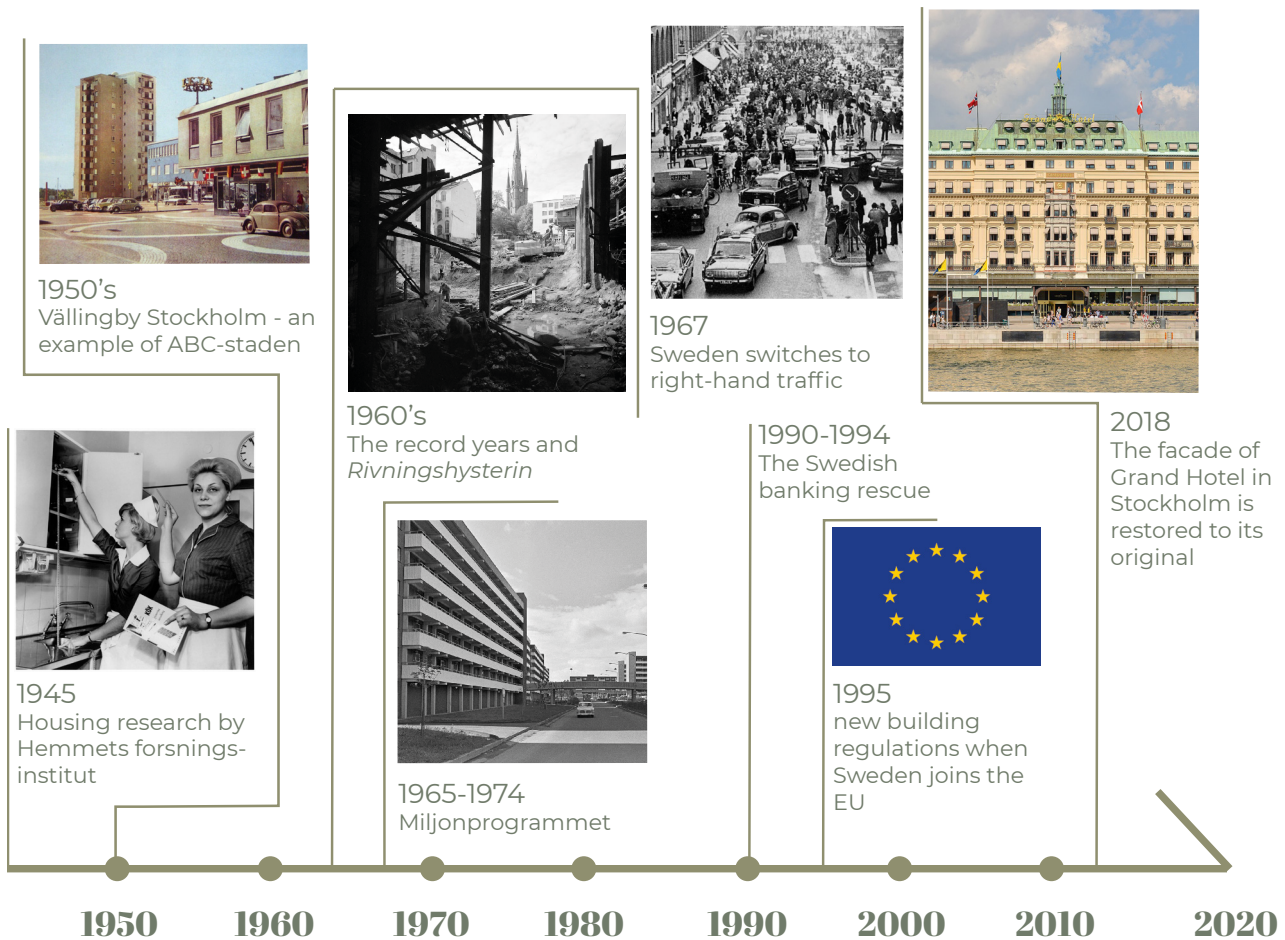
### 1800s and early 1900s

When industrial revolution reaches Sweden, the cities grow rapidly. The proportion of people living in an urbanized context increases from 10 to 20 percent during 1850-1900 (Nylander, 2013). The varied building standards bear witnesses to the large class differences for the time. The sanitary standards in the working class housing were substandard and living space minimal. 70% of the population lived on an area smaller than the minimum for that time - six square metres (ibid).

Due to bad conditions these blocks were later demolished. The architecture that still stands from this time is the one that was built for the bourgeois. What characterises *Kvarterstaden* (Eng. enclosed city blocks) like *Vasastan* in Gothenburg or the inner city of Stockholm

(*Stockholms malmar*) is closed stone- and brick-built blocks and richly ornate facades. The facade testifies to the strict social division. The ground floor was usually for commerce and business. Thanks to the invention of casting sufficiently large steel beams in the late 1800's it was possible to build large windows and goods in storefronts (Bergman, 2003). The first floor, *piano nobile*, was the most spectacular and well-decorated floor where the family who owned the house lived. Thereafter the amount of ornamentation and nobility decreased for each floor. Social hierarchies were also visible in the interior, in the division of public and private rooms and space for family and servants. The houses face the street directly without any front yard and the level of detail is very high (Nylander, 2013).

Kvarterstaden is built between 1880-1930, when Swedish architecture undergoes a number of style epochs; *jugend* (art nouveau), *nationalromantik* (Eng. national romanticism) and *1920-klasicism* (Eng. Nordic classicism, also known as Swedish Grace). At this point there is a remarkable difference in building style throughout the country. Whereas the big cities build in stone, small towns build in wood with facades in wood panel or plaster (Björk, 2016). From the 1940's houses show greater similarities and from the 1960's and onwards it is hard to read from the house which part of the country it is in.



Regional differences merge into a national unit.

### Modernism or the Swedish «funkis»

In the early 1930's the housing standard is among the poorest in Europe and the Swedish state takes on more responsibility in order to solve it. At the same time modernism comes to Sweden, although here it is called *funktionalism* (functionalism) or «funkis» in popular speech.

Modernism, characterized by a simple and geometrical architecture and free from ornaments since «form follows function» (Sullivan, 1886), is a response to many artists' experienced need of turning away from war and build a new world after World War I. Adolf Loos states, «lack of ornament is a sign of intellectual strength» (Axelsson, 2016) and Mis van der Rohe formulates «less is more» (ibid). Modernism is introduced in Sweden with *Stockholmsutställningen*, a national design and architecture fair in 1930 (Rudberg, 1999). In conjunction with the fair a group of eminent architects with Gunnar Asplund in the lead, published *Acceptera*, a manifesto for the functionalism (Wikipedia, 2020). At this time it also happened that ornamentation of older building facades were removed and replaced by plaster. A famous example is Grand Hôtel in Stockholm, which lately was restored to its former appearance.

### 1950-1960s

Due to the fact that Sweden as a country declared itself neutral during World War II, Sweden was spared from the bombs and the finances were good. But the housing standard was still poor in 1945. The politicians decided to sanitize the cities and what later became known as *Rivningshysterin* (Eng. the demolition hysteria) began. Harrison (2014) tells that it was under all criticism since Sweden had escaped both world wars and could no longer be described as poor. The finances were good and the politicians decided to demolish the old and build new. The most well known example is perhaps *Klarakvarteren* in Stockholm. In Gothenburg old buildings in e.g. Landala disappeared. Few opposed «the remediation of the city centres»; the cultural heritage was not highly valued at that time. Only in Stockholm voices were raised for restoration but in vain. Afterwards the decisions have been severely criticized (Harrison, 2014).

At the same time the cities expanded outwards through new suburbs and the majority of them were built in modernistic style. Many of them, built between 1965-1974, were part of *Miljonprogrammet* (Eng. the Million programme), a public housing programme implemented by the Swedish government in order to advise on the housing shortage. The intention was to build one million new homes in ten years. They succeeded in building

off the housing crisis so to the extent that apartment blocks remained empty and later were demolished (Nylander, 2013).

### **Postmodernism 1970-2000**

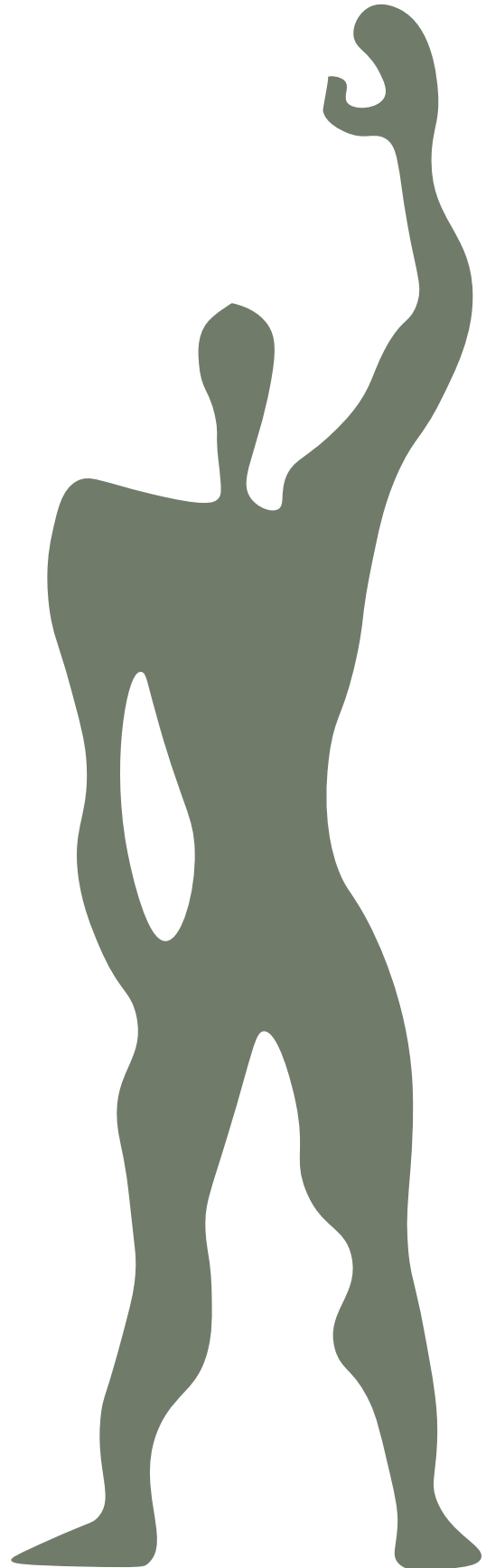
In the early 1970's the opinion turned around. From plans on demolishing entire blocks a new idea about preserving the older architecture as cultural heritage was born. Old quarters still standing from the 1800's, which were planned to be demolished, were now instead renovated (Nylander, 2013).

The holes after the demolished houses were replaced by so called infill houses designed in a way that flirted with the inner city's grid system. Bay windows and concrete beams above the windows reminded about the late 19th century visible facade details. On residential blocks built in the 1980's there are generally speaking two style approaches; houses inspired by the old stenstaden and symmetrical, postmodern buildings with new interpretations of the classicist elements. The 1990's started with the big economic crisis, an effect due to that housing subsidy was abolished which led to that the building sector totally stopped and many architects became unemployed. Once the market recovered architecture looked back at older styles, like the 1930's functionalist style (Nylander, 2013).

**«The classic ideals lived on in the first generation of modernists but were then lost in a historyless teaching during the first postwar period»**

Claes Caldenby, 2020

*Fig. 17. Illustration of Modulor - the measurement and proportion system the modernist architect Le Corbusier developed, inspired by ancient and renaissance theoretical writings (Wikipedia, 2020) »*



## Architectural styles in Sweden 1880-2000

To get a better understanding of how architecture has evolved in Sweden, I will now present the architectural styles in Sweden, following the same time span as the historical lookback (fig. 16). This is how they are generally presented in Swedish history of architecture. Having that said, there might be local examples that differs from how the styles are presented here. This selection is inspired by the way they are presented in *Så byggdes staden* (Björk, Kallstenius, & Reppen, 2018). The information is based on the same source.



Fig. 18.1

### 1880 - Klassicism

*Classicism*. After a long period of style revivals, the classical renaissance style becomes standard for the inner city. The architecture is symmetrical and decorated. The street houses, *gathus*, creates closed quarters, richly decorated with antique elements like pilasters and columns, while the rear houses, *gårdshus*, are simpler, plain and undecorated.

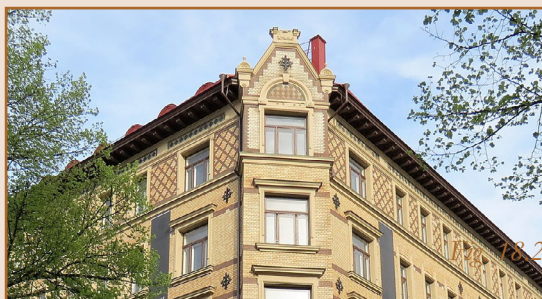


Fig. 18.2

### 1890 - Nystilar

*New styles*. As a reaction against 1880's classicism the 1890's gives more asymmetrical facades and freer forms. Corner houses are decorated with towers and spires. Interest for authentic materials like bricks and natural stone increases.



Fig. 18.3

### 1900 - Jugend

*Art nouveau*. In the beginning of the 20th century a new style -art nouveau - influences the European architecture and design. In Sweden as in Germany the style is named *jugend*. It is a completely new idiom, where the nature's organic softness is the starting point. Houses are decorated with plant motifs, freer forms and plaster. Granit and sandstone are common materials on monumental buildings.



Fig. 18.4

### 1910 - Nationalromantik

*Romantic nationalism*. Tensions ahead of what would become World War I leads to national gathering, which is also reflected in architecture, which is inspired by older national building tradition. Heavy closed facades in brick or plaster are common. Machine-made hard-burnt bricks intended to mimic old hand-made bricks are common and an effect of the idea referring to tradition of making it look older than it is.



Fig. 18.5

## 1920 - Klassicism

*20's classicism.* Also known as *Swedish grace*, for its elegance. In the beginning of the 1920's the classical ideal gets a revival, although now it is a simplified interpretation of classicism. The buildings are sparsely decorated. Plastered facades in musty colours are common.



Fig. 18.6

## 1930 - Funktionalism or Funkis

*Functionalism.* Swedish term for modernism, reaches Sweden with the national design fair Stockholmsutställningen in 1930. Radically new ideals regarding both urban planning and building architecture. Influences come from France and Germany. The outer form follows the inner function. No decorative ornamentation. Plastered facades, broken blocks and lamellar houses is often seen from this period.



Fig. 18.7

## 1940 - Folkhemmet

*The people's home.* Modernistic ideas continue, although it is built less during World War II. Simple facades in plaster or brick are common. Socialist politics increases financial and functional requirements and eventually the radical international style with cubic volumes and thin lamellars are replaced by thicker lamellar houses and point blocks.



Fig. 18.8

## 1950 - Grannskapet

*The neighbourhood city.* During the 50's a new idea about the good neighbourhood, with democracy, equality and community as a basis evolve with the concept of ABC-staden (the ABC-city is a shortening for arbete, bostad, centrum which means work, residence, city centre). Housing is centred around a smaller neighbourhood square and it breaks to some extent against functionalism. The low scale enables site specific design and variation in detail design. Ornaments starts to appear again. Rough plaster and musty colours is common.

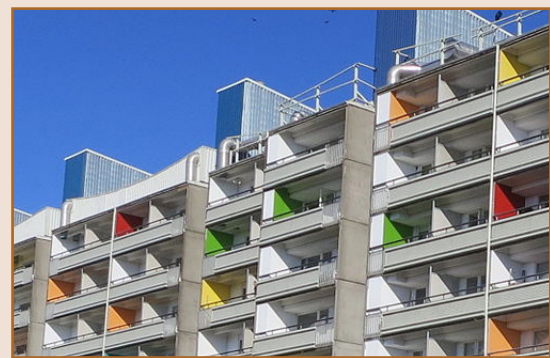


Fig. 18.9

## 1960 - Rekordåren

*The record years.* Increased industrial production requires labor immigration and gives expanded public services and increased urbanisation but also a housing shortage. In 1964 the Swedish parliament decides to build one million homes between 1965-74. It is known as *Miljonprogrammet*. The construction is standardised and industrialised which leads to higher blocks, with mass-produced elements, placed in the outskirts of the city.



Fig. 18.10

### 1970 - Storskalighet

*Large-scale.* Miljonprogrammet continues. The economic upturn devolves in downturn, unemployment and new built empty apartments in the new built blocks. To maximise construction it is built higher - 7-12 floor buildings are now common. Concrete is seen as beautiful and clothes a lot of blocks. Brick, plaster and sheet metal are other common facade materials. Infill-houses are built on demolished sites in the inner city. But not everyone appreciates the new style. Protests against the large-scale results in increased building of small houses.



Fig. 18.11

### 1980 - Postmodernism

*Postmodernism.* In the mid 80's the housing shortage is solved thanks to Miljonprogrammet. Postmodernism comes as a reaction against the modernistic large-scale building. The traditional *kvartierstaden* is back, as well as facades with bay windows and plaster inspired by older architecture. New energy requirements steers the form and gives smaller windows and more isolation.



Fig. 18.12

### 1990 - Stilblandning

*Style mix.* The early 90's are in Sweden known for its financial crash and stop in the building sector. The interest for environment, ecology and older building traditions increases. 20's-classicism, 30's functionalism and 50's architecture are for this time the references and gives a new mixed style.

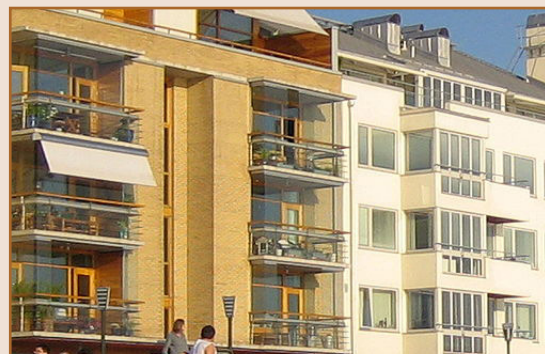


Fig. 18.13

### 2000 - Nymodernism

*Neo modernism.* After some time of mixed style and ornamentation the Swedish architecture takes a clean cut again. Functionalism is back. The big housing fair in Malmö, Bo01, sets the mood for the beginning of the new millennia. Plastered facades, wooden parties, flat roofs and big glassed surfaces represent this period of time.

## How does it look like what we build in Sweden today?

From history we learn that construction follows the development of society, its needs and interests. The man shapes the city in which he wants to live. So how are we building today? What societal norms affect the contemporary construction? In general one can say that we live in an era of individualism. During the last century the Swedes have become less religious and replaced religion with new beliefs and ideals. Lindström (2019) says that Swedes are those who statistically believe least in God in the whole world, but that they for that matter are not non-religious. We have simply replaced the conventional god with something else – individualism and belief in one's own self. Our life goal is to fill our lives with as much happiness as possible and we seek this happiness throughout love, health, self-affirmation, things and experiences (ibid). Our lifestyle is reflected in how and what we build today. New «temples», like shopping malls and public spaces where you can experience things, have replaced churches.

Global warming and the increased refugee flows were two big global issues during the 2010's, which also affected Sweden. It led to increased immigration and has, along with a raised lifespan, resulted in an acute housing shortage.

During the last decade we have seen a building boom, a result due to several reasons. Good finances, the need of housing, further urbanisation and upcoming milestones like Gothenburg's 400th anniversary in 2021.

The global warming has led to an increased environmental awareness, even among architects. Talking about environment is today common practice. We have started to build more multi-dwelling houses with frame and facades in timber. It might be a consequence of climate requirements but is also due to changed regulations for timber building from 1994 when Sweden joined the EU.

Laila Reppen states, «during the 2010's modernism is drawn towards a more expressive direction with new materials and eye-catching colour schemes». We see a lot of all-black buildings, glass facades and facades in strong colours with irregular window panning (Veidekke, n.d.).

### 2010's - Nymodernism

- Big windows and glass facades
- Pastel plastered facades
- Flat sheet roofs
- Large balconies and terraces
- Wooden facades or combination of wood and plaster
- Metal facades (corten steel)
- Green roofs
- Freely placed windows
- Expressive architecture and landmark architecture
- Prefabricated elements

*(Veidekke, n.d.)*



Fig. 19.1



Fig. 19.2



Fig. 19.3



Fig. 19.4



Fig. 19.5



Fig. 19.6



Fig. 19.7

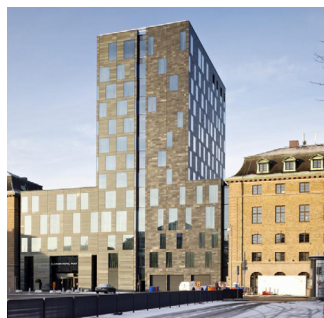


Fig. 19.8

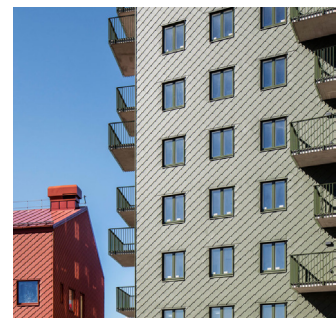


Fig. 19.9

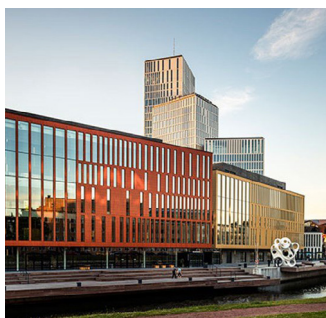


Fig. 19.10



Fig. 19.11

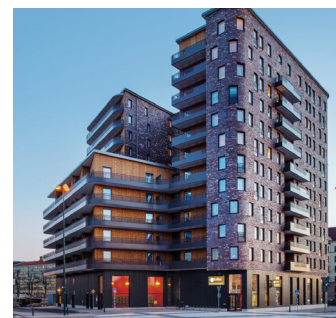
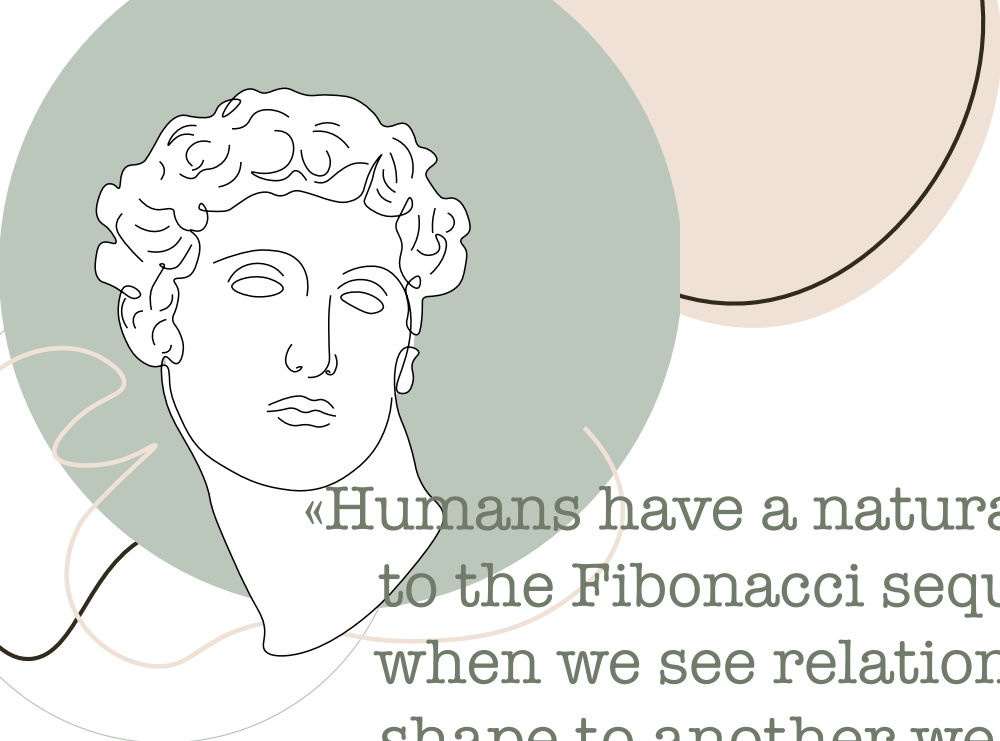


Fig. 19.12

## Built during the 2010's - examples

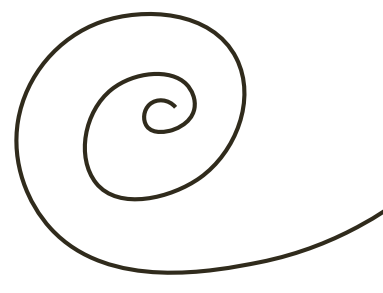
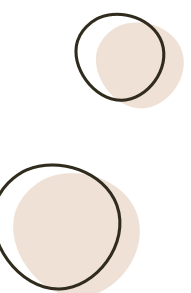
19.1. Widerströmska Huset - Kod Arkitekter, Stockholm (2012) • 19.2. Berghus 3, Ripellino Arkitekter, Stockholm (2017) • 19.3. KTH School of Architecture - Tham&Videgård, Stockholm (2015) • 19.4. Tule Towers - Vera Arkitekter, Sundbyberg Stockholm (2014) • 19.5. Malmö Saluhall - Wingårdhs, Malmö (2016) • 19.6. Gamlestaden resecentrum - Sweco Architects, Göteborg (2018) • 19.7. Ture No8 - Vera Arkitekter, Stockholm (2014) • 19.8. Clarion Hotel Post - Semrén&Månsson, Göteborg (2012) • 19.9. Kvarteret Dockan - White Arkitekter, Göteborg (2018) • 19.10. Malmö Live - Schmidt Hammer Lassen/ Tengbom, Malmö (2015) • 19.11. Kville Saluhall - Gustav Apell Arkitektkontor, Göteborg (2013) • 19.12. Slussplan -White Arkitekter, Malmö (2014)



«Humans have a natural affinity to the Fibonacci sequence – when we see relation of one shape to another we have a natural response. One can even take a classical beautiful face and break it up to golden sections. I think you could break it down like that and say that classical styles do have an inherent appeal. But at the same time architecture is a formal media and the responsibility of a formal media is to communicate something about the reality of time and place for future generations.»

[Sue Clark]

(from interview, April 8, 2020)

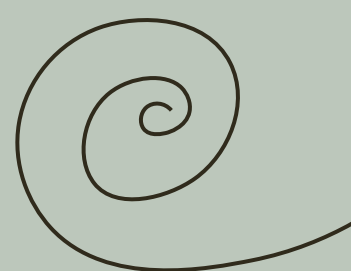




# 3

## chapter

the role of the architect



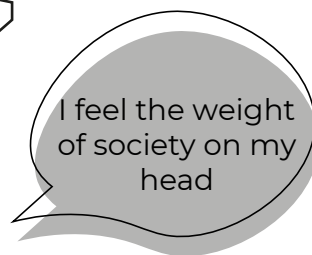
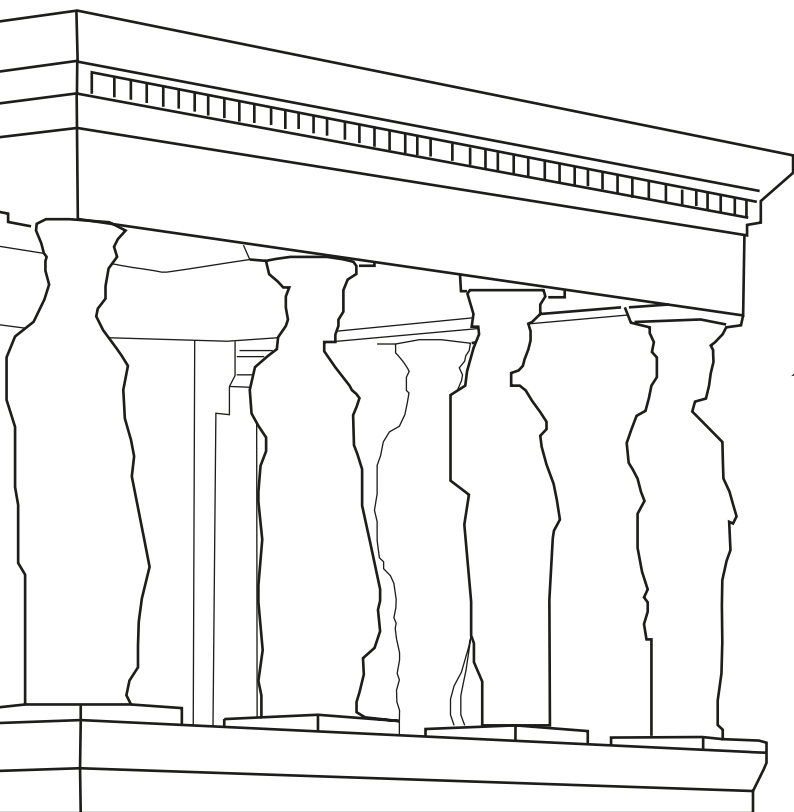


Fig. 20. Illustration of Erechtheion in Athens, Greece

## What if it is neither the inside nor the outside that counts? What if it is both?

Sternudd writes in her doctoral thesis that today time perspective is a widely accepted yardstick for assessment. That construction should reflect its present, or future time, is rarely questioned – the debate is instead about how (Sternudd, 2007).

Europe has many different local building traditions but unite in the common heritage of ancient Greece and Rome (a heritage that with European colonization later even spread over the globe). Unlike other disciplines like philosophy and science, architecture does not have many ancient writings to rely on. The roman architect and engineer Vitruvius' (c. 80–70 BC – c. 15 BC) work *De Architectura* is in fact the only one preserved. Since the Renaissance architects of the 15th century rediscovered Vitruvius' writings and three pillars of good architecture – *firmitas, venustas, utilitas* (latin for firmness, attractiveness and utility) has since then been the foundation of Western construction. Or at least was until the 1920's when Modernism came. Why? By identifying architecture as an act of imposing order

and taking the unruly and making it coherent. Vitruvius did not only apply it to the aesthetics but connected it to the imperial program of expansion and authority. «It was not architecture as such that initially attached Vitruvius to Julius Caesar's might. It was rather the connection of architecture to imperium» (McEwen, 2003). It was probably not controversial at his time but became so to the modernistic thinkers, for whom the relationship between aesthetical order and power collided with their ideology (Till, 2009).

Since architecture is still much influenced by modernism, this *might* be the reason why beauty is still a problematic expression among architects. During long time the word «beauty» has been avoided, and even if it is now slightly shifting and beauty begins to appear in architecture texts again it is still used as a negation. Aesthetical ambitions are viewed with skepticism (Sternudd, 2007).

Saw off one leg on the table and immediately it becomes unstable and begins to sway. It is not whole. And so is not architecture today I believe. For even if Vitruvius made the connection between attractiveness and power it does not necessarily have to be so. Or put it like this; *What if it is neither the inside nor the outside that counts? What if it is both?*

## The role of the architect

*an interview with Claes Caldenby, prof. emeritus and former professor in the Theory and History of Architecture, about the impact of social media, the architect's role and what one can learn from another current debate*

Claes Caldenby is professor emeritus and former professor in the Theory and History of Architecture at Chalmers University of Technology as well as an author who writes for both Gothenburg's biggest daily newspaper *Göteborgs-Posten* (Göteborgs-Posten, n.d.) and for the architecture magazine *Arkitektur*, the later he is also an editor of. Through many articles he has actively expressed his opinion on the matter. And he says himself that to call for a better and more extensive architectural discussion has characterized his entire professional activity since the 1970s (C. Caldenby, personal communication, March 31, 2020).

Caldenby believes the reason why the debate looks the way it does, and which he calls superficial, is due to social media which he thinks does not promote a critical and reflective thinking, and which has been caught up too easily by politicians and the media. He tells that the architects have «a big, difficult and educational task, both in the individual projects vis-à-vis clients and other and in the public discussion» and draws a parallel to the ongoing *corona crisis* that we are facing at the time of writing;

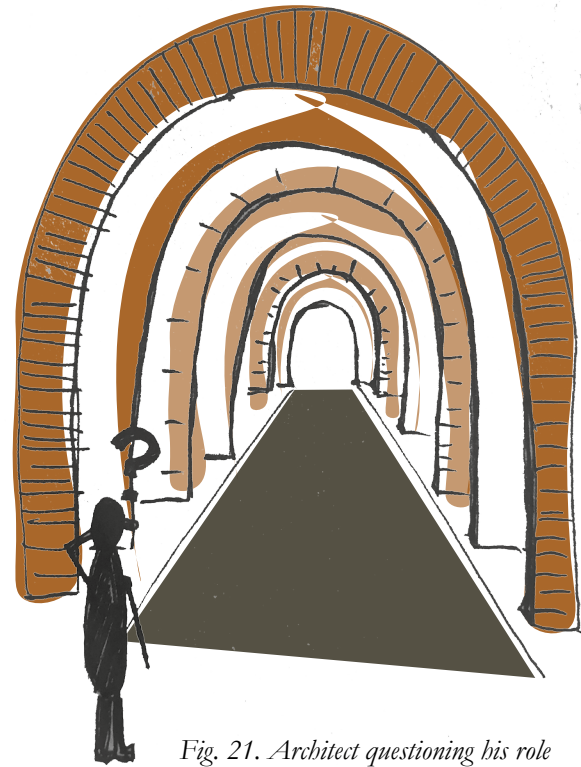
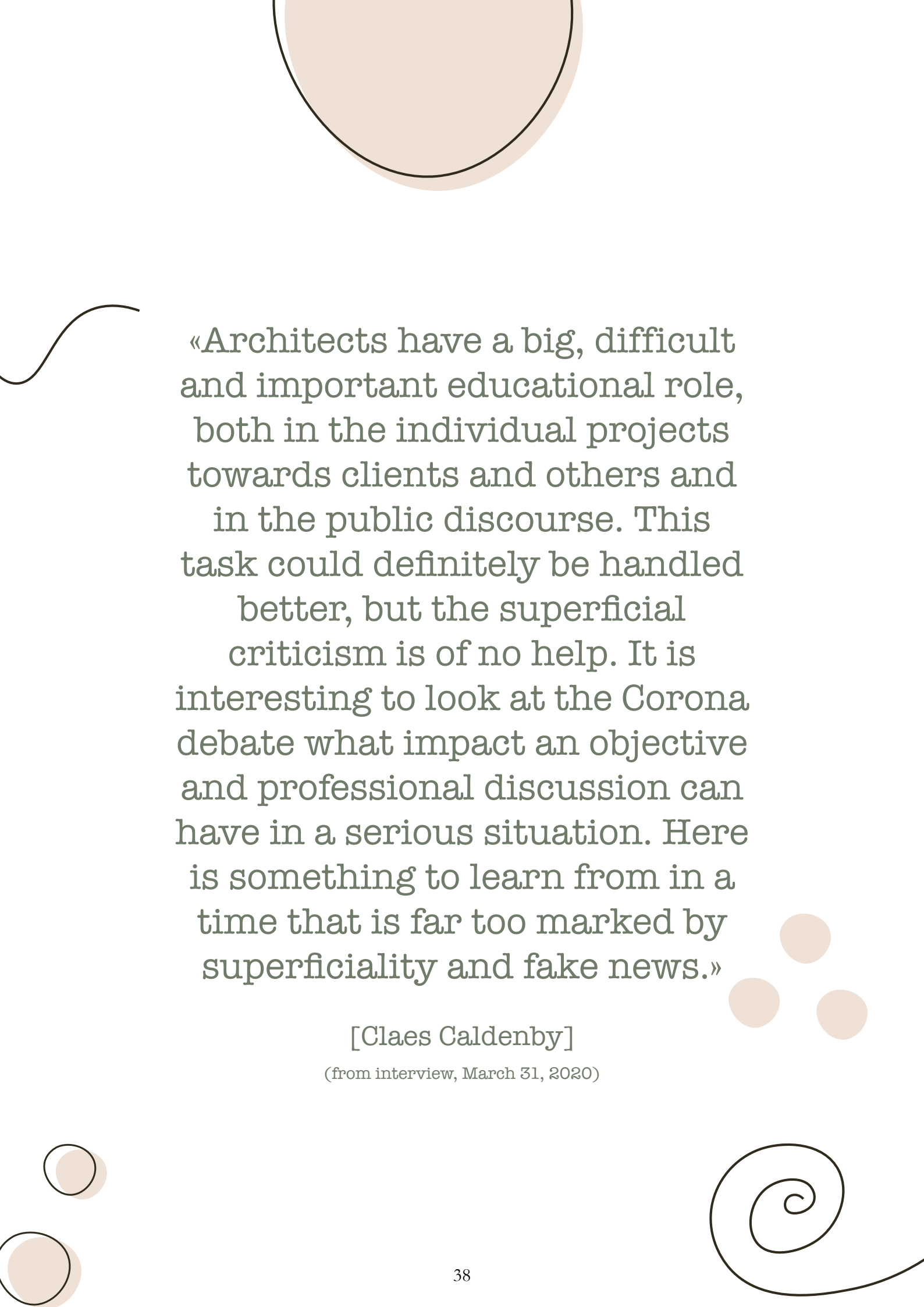


Fig. 21. Architect questioning his role

«...It is interesting to look at the Corona debate what impact an objective and professional discussion can have in a serious situation. Here is something to learn from in a time that is far too marked by superficiality and fake news.» (ibid).

However, this is not the first time the architects in Sweden remain quite silent. So it was also under the the great power shift in the construction industry in the 1950's (Caldenby, 2018).

During the interview we also get into the topic of building enclosed city blocks, i.e. *kvartersstad*. «There's not necessarily anything wrong with *kvartersstad*, in the right place and in the right shape it can be excellent» he says and adds that for him, as raised and educated in the early 1970's postmodernism, it is obvious that the site and history play an important role in architecture. Everything has its own place you could say. So is also the case within architecture. And architects should stand up and dare to take the discussion, at least if you ask Claes Caldenby. ■



«Architects have a big, difficult and important educational role, both in the individual projects towards clients and others and in the public discourse. This task could definitely be handled better, but the superficial criticism is of no help. It is interesting to look at the Corona debate what impact an objective and professional discussion can have in a serious situation. Here is something to learn from in a time that is far too marked by superficiality and fake news.»

[Claes Caldenby]

(from interview, March 31, 2020)

## Old meets new

*an interview with Petra Gipp, architect at Petra Gipp STUDIO, about relating to the already built, the importance of materials and how history can be seen not only as past but as present and future as well*

Petra Gipp, architect educated at Konstakademien in Copenhagen, nowadays active in Stockholm where she, together with two other partners, runs her office Petra Gipp STUDIO, says that the current debate is polarized and it is sad that one cannot discuss architecture, building and urban planning on a deeper level.

That there is a public discussion on architecture is not bad in itself and she believes that this type of discussion has always existed. «People has always discussed whether, perhaps in particular newly built houses are beautiful or ugly, good or bad. In that sense the discussion is not new. I am absolutely convinced that it has always existed. In itself it is great, but as it is happening now, I do not think it favors the debate but rather polarizes it» (P. Gipp, personal communication, April 17, 2020).

She explains her view on how to relate to the already built environment by comparing it with people. «With buildings it's like when two people of different age meet - they should talk to each other and enter into a conversation that is interesting» and goes on by telling what she thinks about the relation between history and architecture which, in connection with the current debate, has undergone a renaissance now.

«When I design a project somewhere in Sweden today it is 2020 and not 1886, and that is our time and it reflects a variety of views of our time which must also be expressed in architecture. I mean, how come the 70's had the architecture it had? Small windows were a result of the oil crisis we were in then. Today we might think that the buildings from that time are horrible but they reflect that particular time. They are also a time document... for history is also our present time. History was not just then, it is now and it is the future as well. That's what history is!» (ibid).

According to Gipp you cannot use history within architecture but rather should relate to history. «You have to use your present time but the present includes to relate to what is around you and within that is history as well. You can't ignore it, but you have to relate to the history» (ibid).

In the article «Vad folk vill ha» (Arkitekten, 2019) Petra Gipp expressed what she thinks people generally appreciate when it comes to architecture and buildings; the ability to age well. She develops her reasoning by giving me an example «Take a brick building for instance. It can stand, it might become a little mossy, some stone can break on some corner and the copper plate can become bubbly, green or brown and it can start to drain copper water on the plastered facade... It is just like you and me. As we get older we also allow to age and that is just beauty. It is quality. That is what I interpret people like when I talk to others about it...» (P. Gipp, personal communication, April 17, 2020).

How do we achieve that then? By working with materials that are actually allowed to be what they are. Gipp refers to the 1980's and 90's stocks and explains why they do not stand the test of time as good as buildings from the turn of the last century do. «Many of the pastiches, at least those made in the 80's and 90's, were many times covered with painted sheet that would look like copper sheet. What happens to it after five years? It starts to flake. There are scratches in it and it gets bubbly and breaks. There is no quality in it at all but it is just surface... Many times I also think that they had greater knowledge in the past, they spent more time and money on building and used materials that held better. You simply had a greater overall perspective than you have today. This means that many older buildings can withstand the test of time, while the buildings that have been built, let us say, in the last forty years, do not feel well over time» (ibid). ■



**«With buildings it's like when two people of different age meet - they should talk to each other and enter into a conversation that is interesting.»**

Welcome to the block, kid!

*Fig. 22. Old building meets new in Vasastan, Stockholm (private photo)*



# 4

## chapter

a vernacular perspective

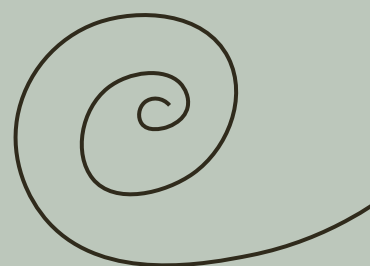




Fig. 23. What vernacularity might be associated with in terms of building

## Vernacularity - what it might be associated with

*Vernacular architecture* might to some people equal traditionally built cottages. With that association it can within the Swedish context be translated to everything from Skåne's timber farms in the South and the Westcoast's fishing communities to Sami architecture in the North. The folk architecture is as wide as the country is oblong.

Vernacular architecture is described as «architecture characterized by the use of local materials and knowledge, usually without the supervision of professional architects. Vernacular architecture represents the majority of buildings and settlements created in pre-industrial societies and includes a very wide range of buildings, building traditions, and methods of construction. Vernacular buildings are typically simple and practical, whether residential houses or built for other purposes».

Vernacular architecture has therefore been widely understood as «the architectural language of the people' and as the opposition of the architecture

architects create (Brown & Maudlin 2011).

Architectural writers has, since the beginning of modernism a hundred years ago, tended to admire traditional building for the instant relationship between form and function – practical solutions to practical circumstances. In the 1950's and 60's vernacular architecture was characterized as a functional shelter for people, «built to meet needs», developments and unpretentious industrial complexes (ibid).

The spectra is in other words broad but one thing that this multitude of buildings has in common is that they all are viewed by architects as outside of what is considered to be 'architecture'. They are «other» (ibid). It is a viewpoint that does everything but bridge the gap in the case of this thesis' topic.

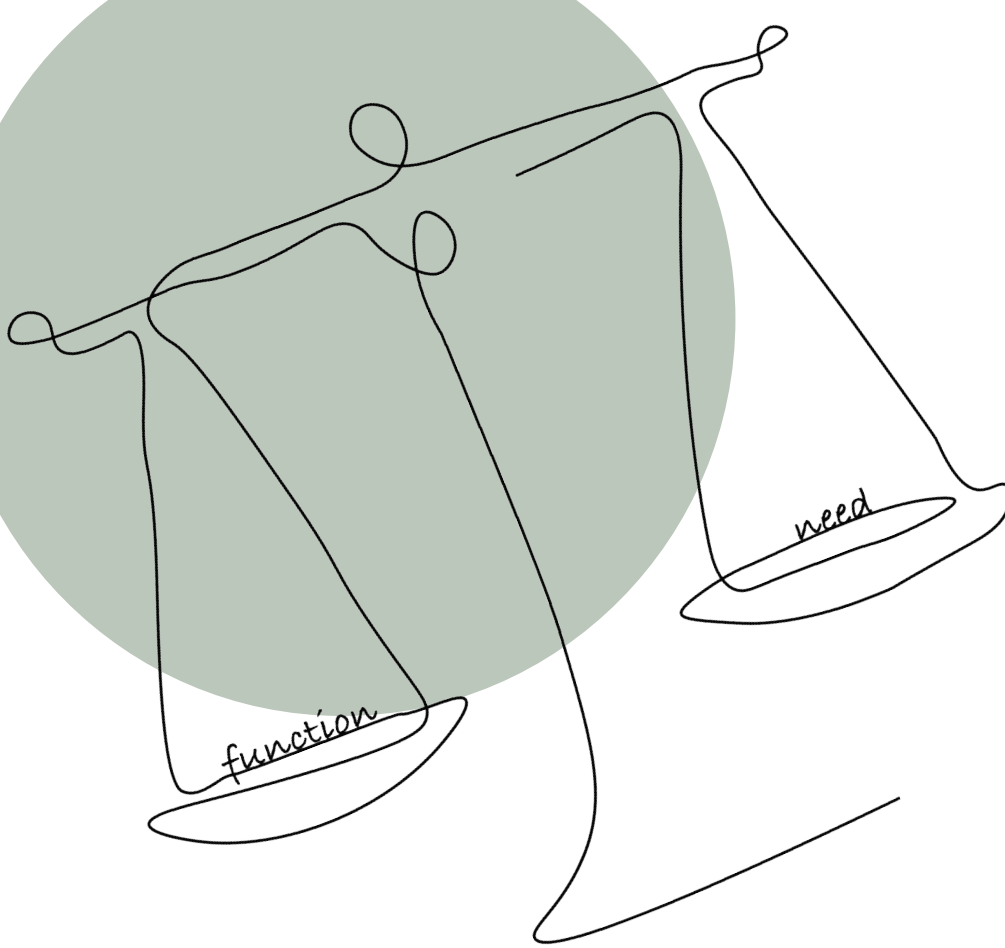


Fig. 24. *Function does not equal need*

## Vernacularity within this thesis

In his book *Architecture Depends*, Jeremy Till describes the evolution of Le Corbusier's project La Cité Frugès in Pessac, southwest of France. It was built in 1924; thirty years later it looked completely different to Le Corbusier's original design. The tenants had filled in the open terraces, replaced steel strip windows with divided ones in timber with traditional shutters and applied different forms of folk ornamentation. What was the reason for that? «In Pessac Le Corbusier produced a kind of architecture that lent itself to conversion and sculptural ornamentation... And what did the occupants add? Their needs.» (Till, 2009).

Till argues that functions, set up by architects while designing, are very different from people's needs and in the end it is the needs, and not the scientifically functions, that claim the architecture. That is what happened in Pessac in the 60's and that is probably also influencing the debate today. Architecture can never fully control the actions of users.

Standardisation was a way to solve the poor housing standard in Sweden in the 1930's and 40's and later, in the 60's a way to tackle the housing shortage and make the building production more effective. The construction was built on political ideas and ideals.

To be able to build on such a large scale, it is obvious that one must follow some kind of rules in order to succeed. But what if we by functionalizing everything forgot about people's needs, «full as they are of desires, differences and demands»? (ibid).

The architect John F.C. Turner once said, «housing is most successful when produced through the autonomy of its residents». So what does that mean? Should we replace architects by joint building ventures and let the people plan and build their own facilities they need? Not necessarily. Turner clarifies that «the critical issue is decision-making, not labouring» (Turner 1972, chapt. 7). Looking back at history most communities have built their societies without the consultation of an architect. This is what we today call vernacular architecture. It might not be an option in the society we live in today. Many reasons make the demands too high. But that does not prevent us from adapting the way of thinking.

Who knows your needs best - an architect or you yourself? Most people would probably answer themselves. Some would perhaps say that an architect could help them visualise their ideas and propose good solutions. But what can we, related to the topic of this thesis, learn from vernacular architecture?

## Building with care

*an interview with Olof Antonson, coordinator at Yimby Göteborg about seeing the whole, building with care and relating to history*

Olof Antonson works as a preschool teacher with focus on drawing and arts, but has for many years now been interested in urban construction and architecture. When we meet he tells me about how that interest evolved from another interest - skateboarding - and how it made him see the potential in places that many people would probably not even notice. He was one of those who started Yimby Göteborg in 2008 and has been part of the coordination group since the beginning (P. Johansson, personal communication, February 18, 2020).

We quickly get into his involvement in Yimby. He confirms what Pär Johansson earlier mentioned about the network's structure and organisation, but also mentions how Yimby Göteborg differs from its sister organisation in Stockholm. While the focus in Stockholm has long been on how to build higher, the heart issue in Gothenburg has rather been about «how can we heal a fragmented city which has gone through quite a lot the last 50-60 years?» (O. Antonson, personal communication, March 4, 2020).

According to Olof it is more about the street rather than individual buildings. «Of course the individual projects are important, but it has to connect to the rest. It is not enough to think about it as a beautiful building or somekind of sculptural object. There has been an over-reliance on that way of thinking. As if the city would become amazing if we just made some kind of cool Zaha Hadid-creation, when in fact, it is the everyday environments that need to be connected and work in union». Therefore, according to Olof, the question of aesthetics and style should not be so much at the planning level of building as at the level of district. He explains through linguistic parallels. «What I like about for instance *Vasastan* (neighbourhood in central Gothenburg, *ed.*) is how it is all connected but at the same time has a variation. I like to draw linguistic parallels. That there is a style level or dialect. That it is connected in some way, that it follows» (ibid).

He mentions a fascination for what he himself calls the «organic grown society» - which the inhabitants built themselves based on their needs. «In the past, it was more like people themselves talked to each other and said, for example; «the barn, where do we put that...? What can we learn from that way of thinking? It makes me think about historical settlements and how they have evolved over time» (ibid). He dismisses the idea that everything has to say something about our time and says that what he believes people really appreciate is small-scale construction and genuine craftsmanship or «that there is some kind of care», as Olof puts it. «In the past, you wanted to do something great to be able to live there yourself and you put an honor and pride in what you had built ...» (ibid). That's not the case today, much due to present procurement processes.

We also talk about connecting to the local - history as well as culture. «It doesn't have to look like something in the new era with lots of volutes and stuff, but it can be like the houses from the 20s and 30s. Here in Gothenburg there is a lot of brick. In Stockholm it may be more plaster, but here it is a lot of brick. And a brick façade and a decent window setting is usually more than enough». Olof mentions Kville Saluhall (the market hall in Kvillebäcken, *ed.*) as an example of a new building in Gothenburg that he appreciates. «First of all it is because of the materials. But it is also because it is classical in its shape. It is striped off but structurally it reminds a lot of a Greek temple, with pillars and so on. There is some kind of order in it. I think that is how people read that building, even if you might be someone who otherwise hates so-called «boxes». Although you may have a difficulty articulating what it is you like in that particular building. I think it's common among people in general that they know when something is wrong and doesn't feel right» (ibid).

«It doesn't have to be life-affirming in any way, but people who live there should be able to feel some kind of pride, like «this is where I live». Now it becomes more like «if I just have a home...» ■



«You have the vernacular building tradition and then you have the more lavish one representing something. This is true in all cultures»

[Olof Antonson]

(from interview, March 4, 2020)

«You have to be there to really be able to take in the whole project ... but I do think that this project could actually lead the the discussion about the importance of materiality and place. Because it looks like this project takes good care of the adaptation to the place, it has very nice room sequences and they have worked very consciously with materiality and space. It could contribute to a discussion about architecture and what it really is, if only those who are critical could listen and if we as architects could use our tools for making a nuanced architecture. Then that discussion could be superb!»

[Petra Gipp]

(from interview, April 17, 2020)

*on the topic that Brf Viva which won 2019's Kasper Salin prize, the Swedish architect union's annual prize for a building of high architectural quality (Sveriges Arkitekter, 2020)*

Fig. 25. Brf Viva, Gothenburg

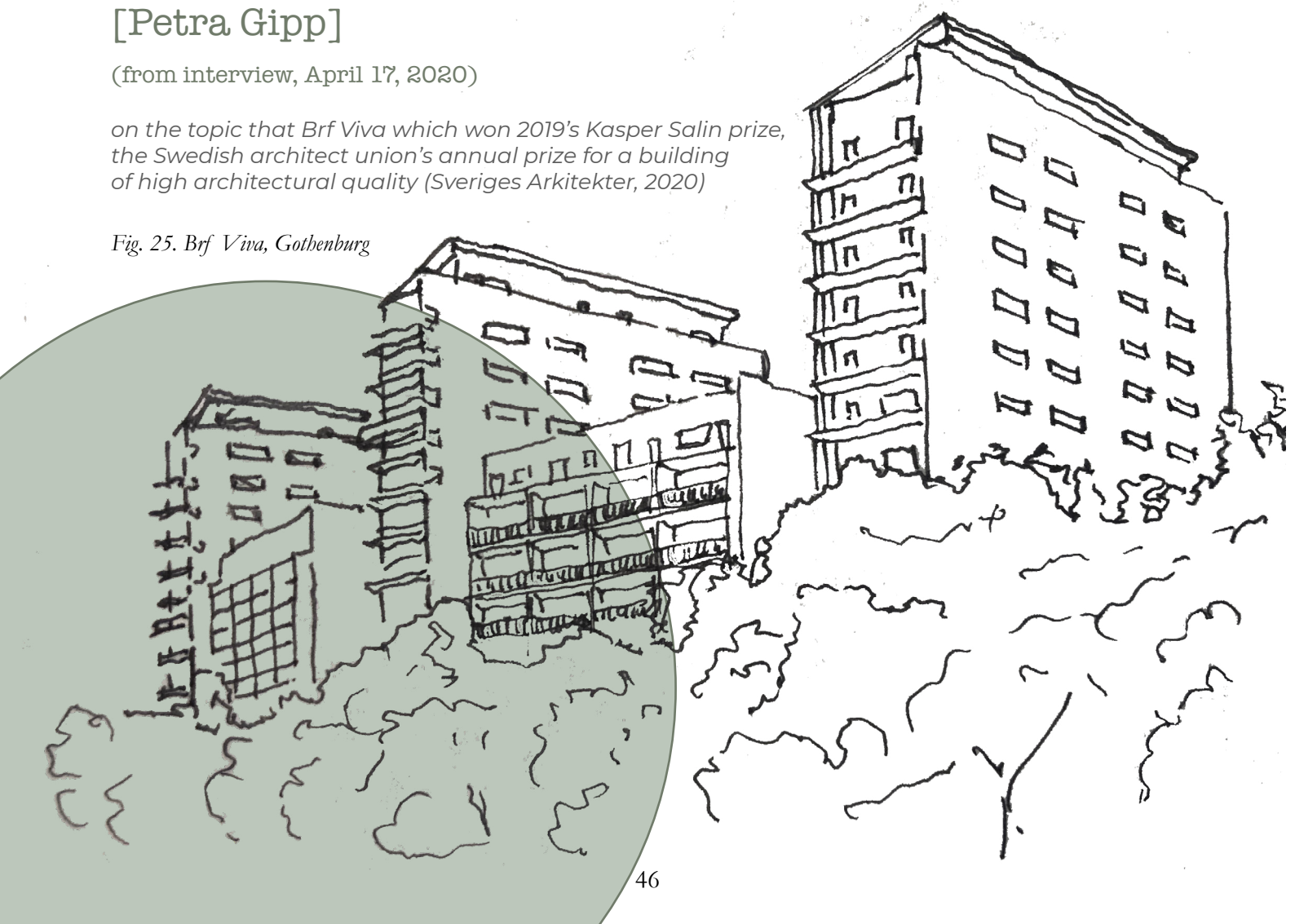




Fig. 26. Public debate

## Participatory design

In 2040, 80% of the earth's population is estimated to live in cities (compared to today's figure of about 40%). The rapid pace of urbanisation places high demands on society's ability to handle complex societal issues and meet the interests of residents (Abrahamsson, 2015).

According to Abrahamsson (2015), a developed democracy where residents are given the opportunity to co-create the decisions concerning their own everyday life is crucial for social sustainability. If it is not complied with, there is a risk of dissatisfaction and social exclusion that goes hand in hand with frustration over social injustice and of not being listened to. A frustration that within the context of this thesis now is being expressed among civic groups which experience that their opinions are not taken seriously by holders of power and officials.

In Sweden there is a long tradition of conducting dialogue with the public on various social issues. Since 2006 authorities support municipalities and counties in their work with citizen dialogues (Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner, 2020). However, it is important that it is conducted in the right way, since inadequate dialogue with citizens constitutes a democratic deficit and significant obstacles to sustainable urban development, according to the Sustainable Cities Delegation (2011). Often limited influence to the hierarchy-based explanatory models where decisions are made by those in power either from the top down or the bottom up by citizens (Abrahamsson 2013:15). It is important that the dialogue becomes «democracy and not decoration» (Arkus, 2015).

### Co-creation

The stage of the participation ladder determines the degree of involvement of public. Co-creation can be derived from the concept of participation and refers to the involvement of citizens in creating from the beginning to the end of a decision process. A co-creative dialogue approach is both a dialogue approach and an approach to participation and democracy (Abrahamsson 2013, Montin 2006:147,157).

Good participatory design depends on three components; principles, process and methods & tools (ibid). In the matter of the aesthetical debate I feel that we lack good methods and tools for talking about these issues. That is the reason why I have decided to develop a design tool as part of this master thesis.

### Delimitations

Working with participatory projects in architecture does not mean that the project in itself must be co-designed. It can also be that you design for a co-design project or an interactive-product, which is the case in this thesis.

If used wisely participatory processes can offer a lot of good input in a design work, but it can also be very demanding in terms of time and resources. Due to given circumstances and the limited amount of time and resources it has not been possible for me to run a full developed participatory process. Yet, in creating a design tool that can be used in future participatory processes, this is already a participatory process in that sense.

## Conclusion of research

It is time to untangle the mess that Jeremy Till talked about, as mentioned in the beginning of this thesis. Or at least try to within the scope of this report. After talking to the interviewees the picture of the debate is confirmed. It is an issue that arouses questions and feelings but it is unfortunate how it has been expressed in media, which makes it look like it was either black or white, when in fact it, like so much else, of course is much more complex than that.

The interviewees express their disappointment and mean that the debate could be so much more rewarding if people only listened to each other. If we want to see a change we need to create an accepting and listening dialogue climate. Maybe the problem stems from that aesthetics is a difficult measured field. It easy becomes a matter of personal taste. And the fact that we all perceive space differently does not make things easier.

How do you do if you want to open up for dialogue? First, I think that space needs to be made. Some of my respondents say that you cannot distinguish between architecture and design because «to work with architecture is basically to design a spatiality or a detail» but that it can often be as if the aesthetics and design is a top hat which you put on at the end (P. Gipp, personal communication, April 17, 2020).

This indicates that something is missing, that the questions are not always taken seriously. And, of course, it is easy to design when time and money sets the framework for a project. But that cannot be an excuse. Architects are problem solvers so why don't we solve the problem?

Architecture seems to be perceived in different ways by architects and laymen. Perhaps not so strange - after all, architects have been trained to read architecture in a way that ordinary people do not have. But we can all relate to our built environment, we are all influenced by it and we all have the right to say what we think about it.

How can we form a dialogue about architecture and aesthetics? As in all conversations, mutual trust and an understanding of another's opinions are required. The basis for this is a common language that in this case can be favored by dialogue-creating tools. My suggestion is a dialogue tool in the form of a game. The game is a card game that aims to creatively and playfully approach the question of how we can talk about architecture and aesthetics and exchange thoughts and ideas on the issue without making it into a mess.

### What can we as architects learn for the future?

In order to provide a good dialogue we must all play our part, which made me think about what I could contribute with as an architect. I thought it could be wise to ask someone who's already in the business and therefore at the end of each interview, I took the opportunity to ask my interviewees what they, in relation to the topic, think architects could bring with them in the future. Here are the tips I got. >>

SOME TIPS\*

# For the future architect

1 Understand the needs of people and human encounter with buildings.

2 Listen to other people and do not get caught up in certain ideas too soon, but be flexible. No one has all the answers himself.

3 Learn as much as you ever can and don't fall for simple messages!

4 Never underestimate the importance of talking about architecture and architectural values. It might sound like an obvious thing to do but it is easily forgotten in a world where time and money is key.

5 Believe in what you're doing but, at the same time, be humble and open to others' ideas and suggestions.

6 Think about who decides. As an architect you have the education and knowledge to design but do not forget about the residents (or future ones) - those who are living with the architecture everyday. What input can they give you?

7 Trust your own voice and dare to be personal. For if you are personal and dare to have a discussion about these or other issues, it will be easier to discuss the questions than if you keep them away and just watch and listen to what others say.

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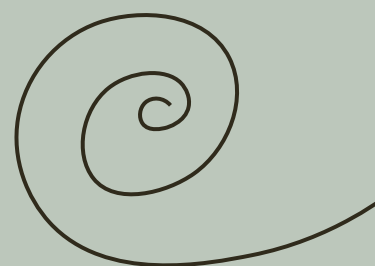
*\* The tips above are all based on the respondents from the interviewees but have in some cases been slightly changed in order to better fit the context*



# 5

chapter

design implementation




# Aestate



What do you think is appreciated architecture among the public in general? Why?



Respond to the argument of the previous speaker (based on your persona card of course)



LOCAL INHABITANT, 19  
I want to be proud of the area I live in. Now it feels more like 'as long as I have a home I should be happy'

Fig 27. Printed card game

# Aestate

## Aim

Aestate is a co-design tool which is supposed to be used to set the rules for the aesthetics of a project and help all parts involved in the project to have aesthetics in mind from the start. It can also be used by architects and planners to evaluate finished projects (with stakeholders, users or other people affected by the project) to see what was appreciated and what could be improved. Like an aesthetical feedback. The name of the game is a play with words and refers to aesthetics and state, in the sense that the participants use it to state their opinions about aesthetics of architecture.

It should be seen as a communication tool which aims to help architects and non-architects to speak the same language and encourage all stakeholders

involved to have a constructive talk and formulate their thoughts and perception of aesthetics and architecture. It might also inspire those who usually tend to put aesthetics aside to pick that part up again and integrate it in the design process.

## Setting

The game is primarily thought to work as a tool during design processes between architect and client, but can advantageously also be used for educational purposes, in architecture schools or other educations dealing with the topic of aesthetics and design or for pleasure, during a coffee break at the office or during a game night with friends. When used in design processes it could eventually be used at different stages. The diagram below is a suggestion of how and when it could be used (Boverket, n.d.).

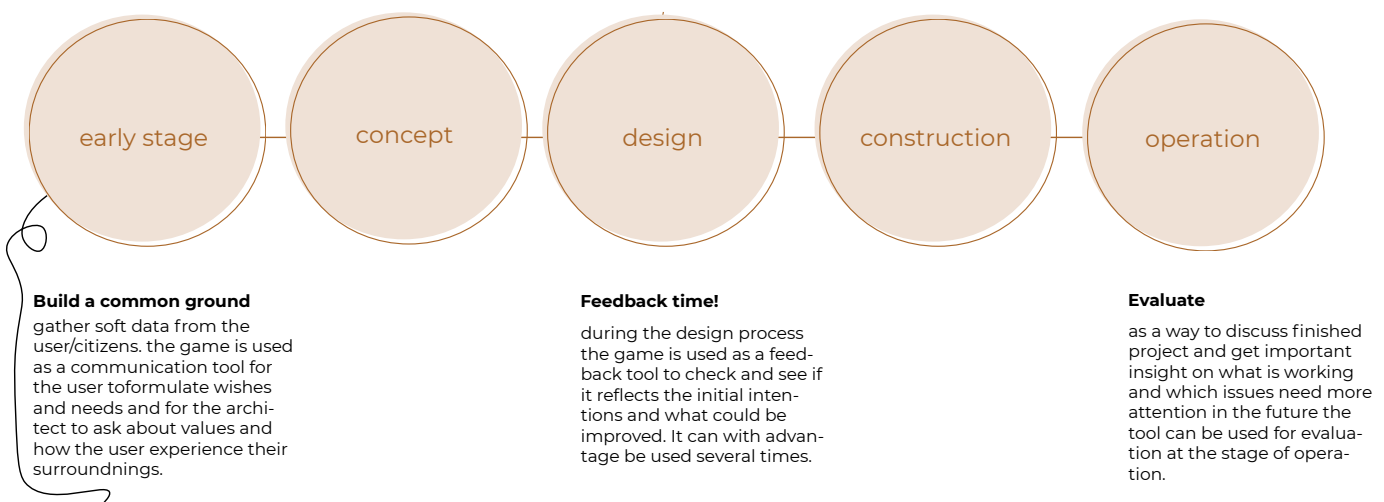
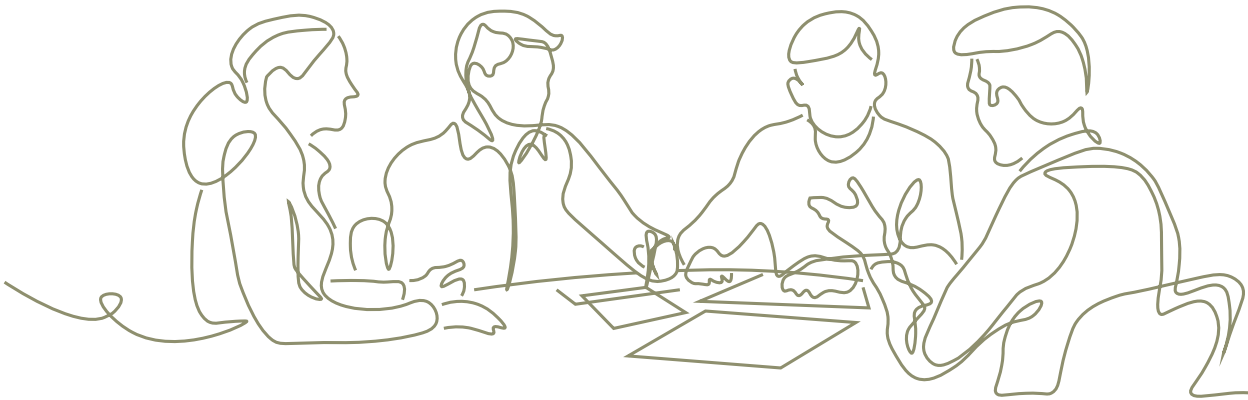
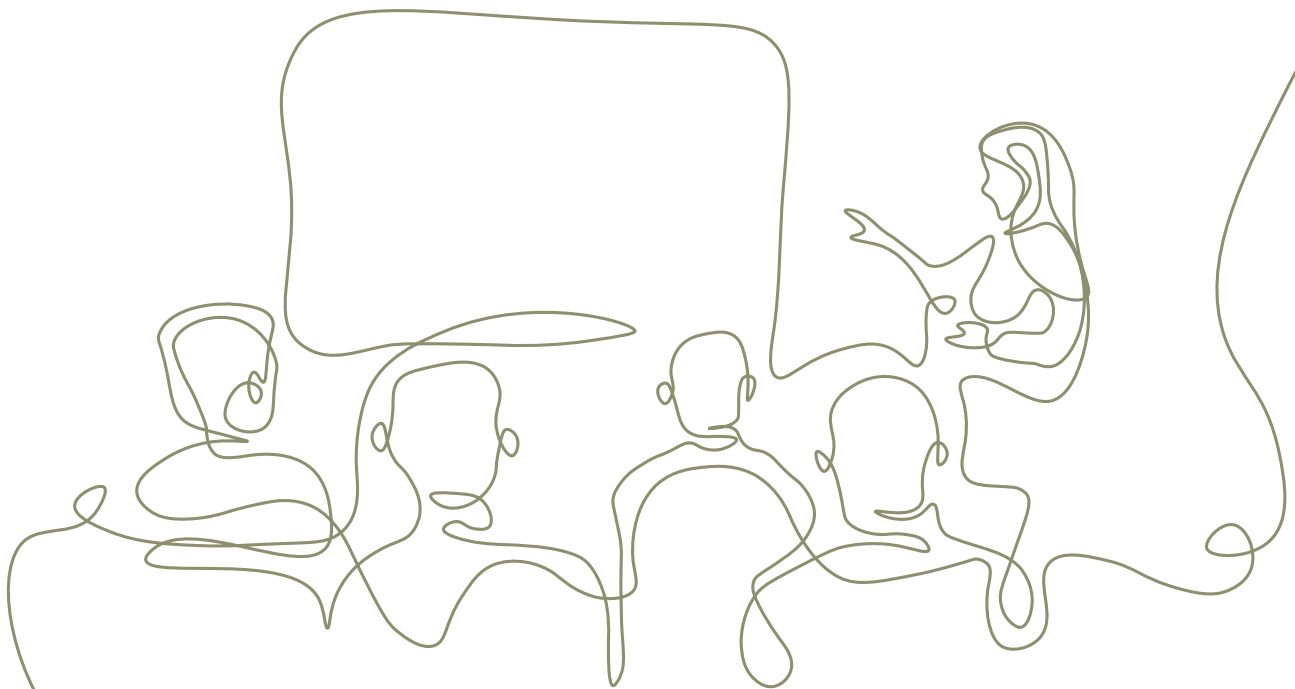


Fig 28. Design process and when to use the design tool (source of steps: Boverket, n.d.)



use it either during design processes and co-workshops...



for educational purposes...



or simply for fun, among colleagues and friends!

*Fig 29. Possible settings for the game*

# instructions

Time approx. 30 min  
3-6 players

## COMPONENTS

The game consists of **112 cards** and three types of cards;

- Question cards (56 pc)** - gives the participants a starting question that sets the theme for the round. The questions may lead to consequential questions, which is just fine. In fact the players are encouraged to do so in order to keep a dialogue and develop their reasoning.
- Persona cards (24 pc)** - offers the participants the chance to take on another role and challenges them in thinking outside of the box. The persona cards consist of a bunch of characters of different age, profession or social background and come with a quote that presents their opinion in the debate. The characters are all fictional, but the quotes are inspired by the thesis' research.
- Action cards (32 pc)** - as the name indicates, these cards give the game action and moves the game forward by giving the participants tasks to perform.

## Other material needed

Timer, pen and paper

## PREPARATION

### 1. Sort the cards into piles according to the card type.

Divide the *persona cards* amongst the participants - each participant receives one card. The other three categories of cards are placed on the table. The participants read their given persona card, that is the role they are given and are expected to play during the round of the game.

### 2. Choose a moderator, secretary and time keeper amongst you.

**The moderator** is responsible for that a good flow is kept throughout the game round and that the word is distributed well between the participants.

**The secretary** writes down the result of the game, comments and thoughts that the participants want to bring with them to the continuing projects process.

**The time keeper** is simply responsible for keeping the time and, if necessary, urges the team to move on to the next stage of the game.

## HOW TO PLAY

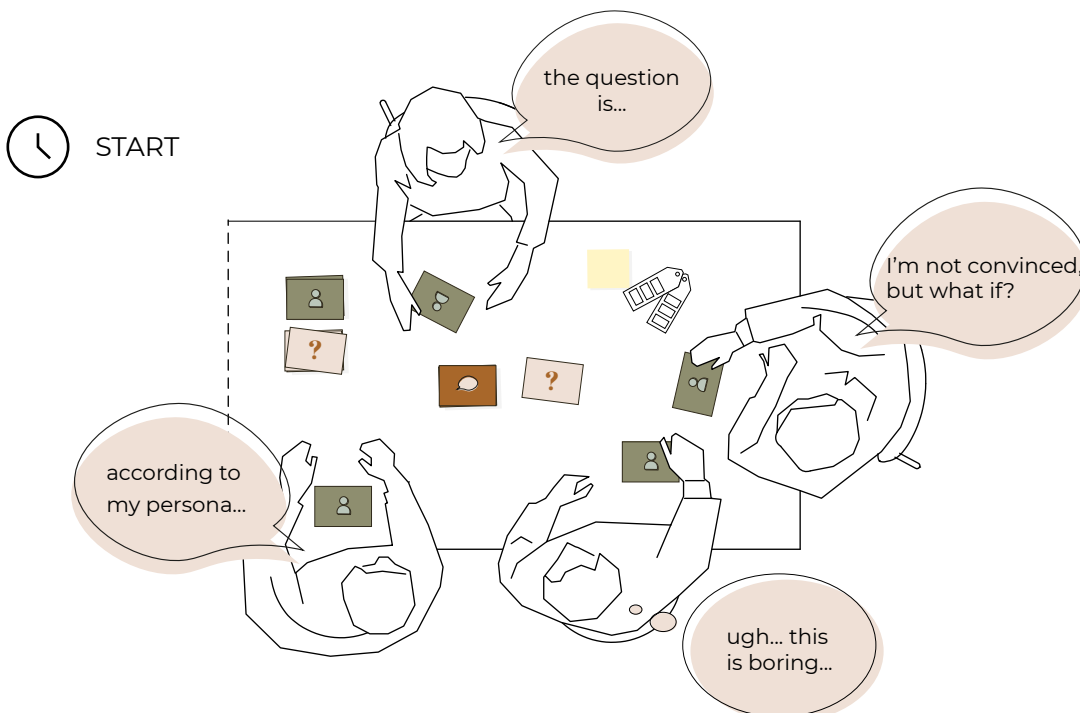
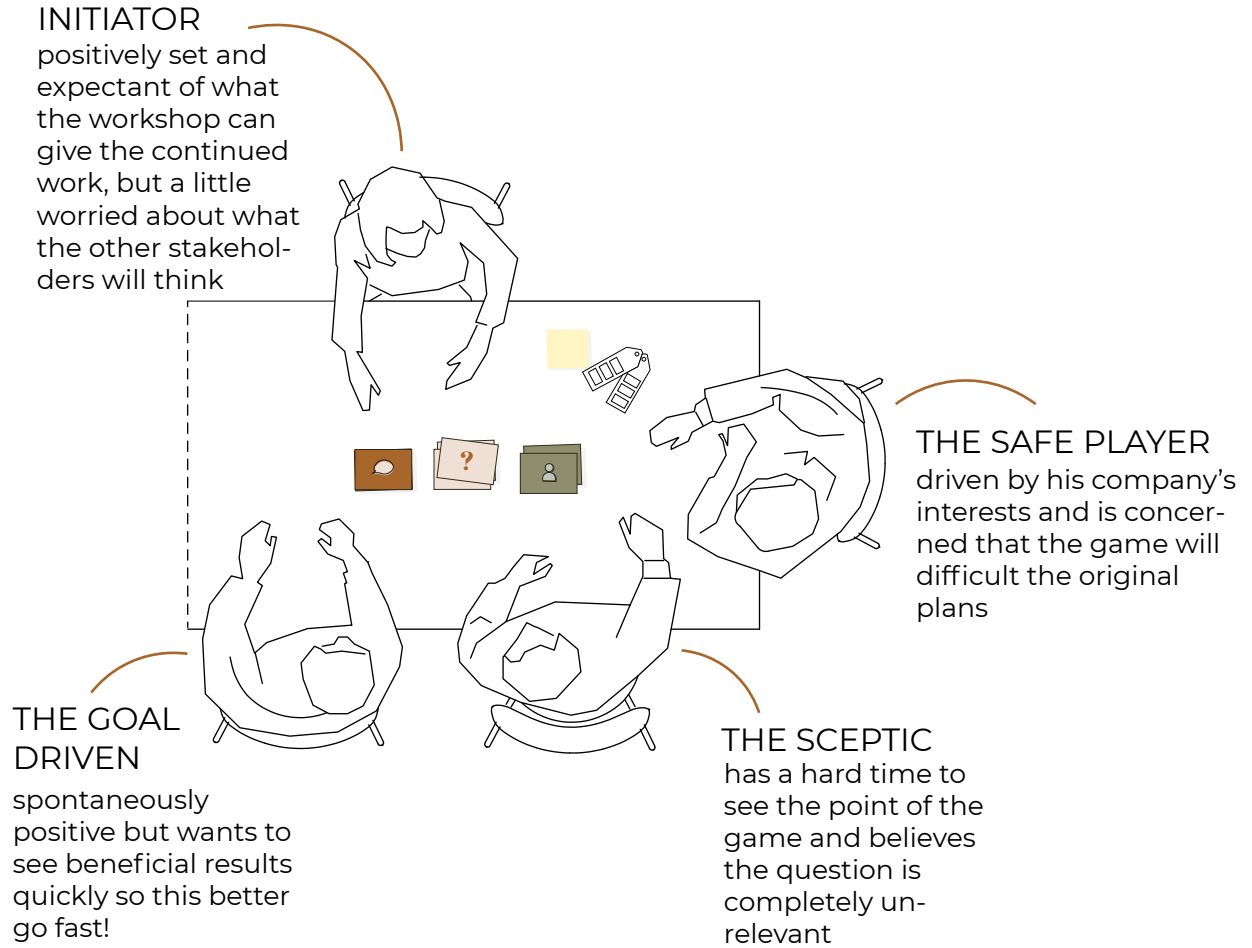
- The time-keeper sets the time and player number 1 picks a question-card, reads it loud and places it on the table so that is visible for everyone involved. The question card sets the theme for the topic to be discussed.
- Each and every participant present themselves and their role in the game. The person to the right of the director starts and the order continues clockwise.
- In accordance with their persona the participants formulate their opinion on the question of the question card on the table.
- Next participant picks an action card, reads and performs the action written on it. It might happen that other participants will get involved in the action as well. Continue the lap around.
- When all participants has picked and performed an action card try to summarize what has been said and what you bring with you from that round. The secretary takes notes.
- Pick a new question card and begin a new round. Continue until the time is up. Summarize.



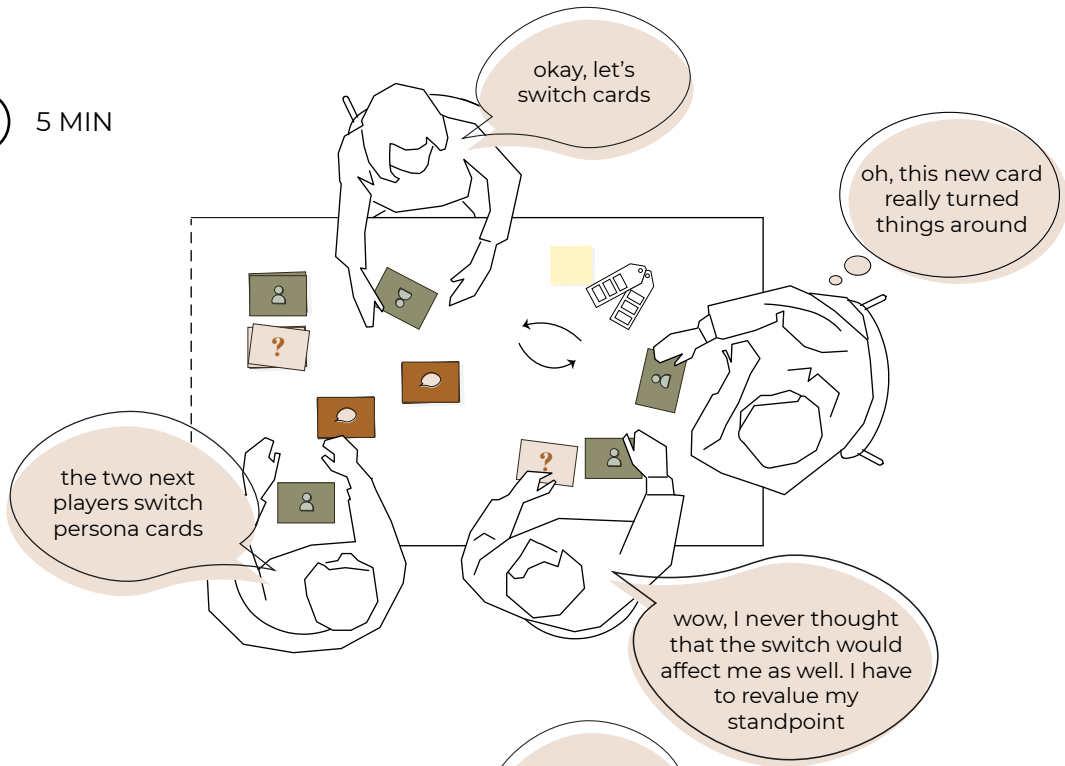
Fig 30. The three types of cards

# game dynamics

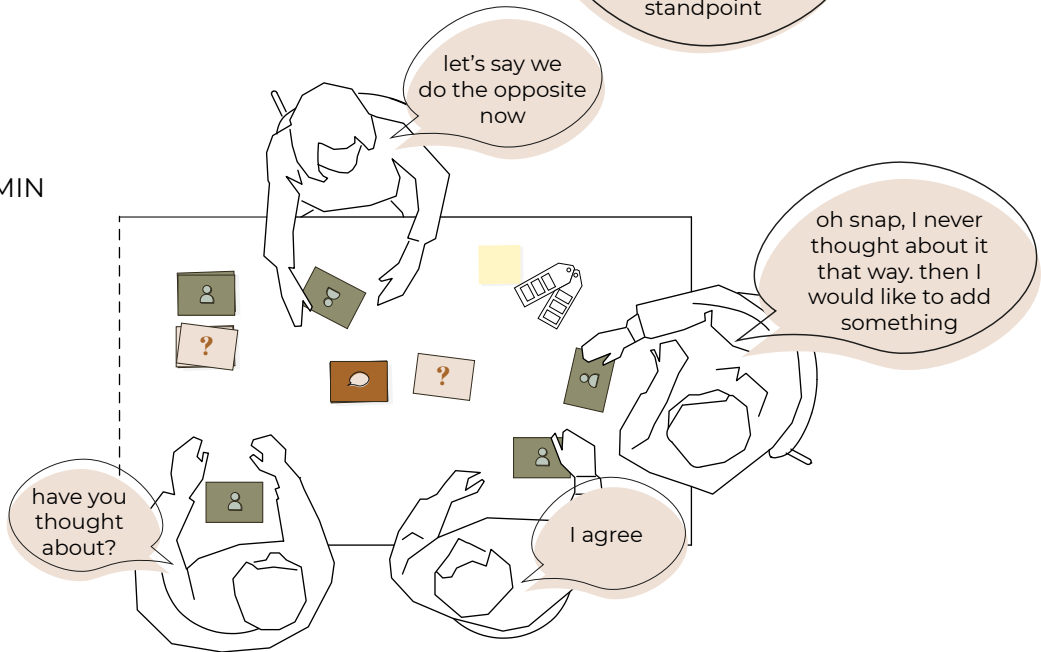
- an example of what a round could look like



5 MIN



15 MIN



30 MIN

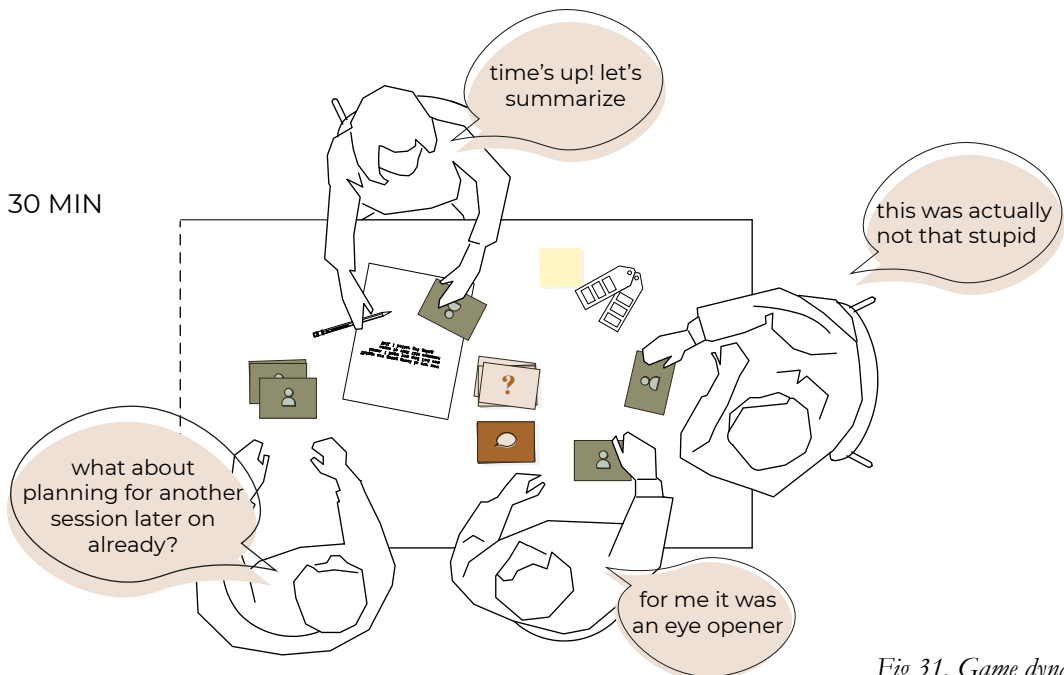


Fig 31. Game dynamics

## alternative games

- the card game can be used in several ways

### POST-IT WORKSHOP

1. Choose a couple of cards that you will work with.
2. Begin to define each card with post-its. For example you can use the persona cards and add thoughts and comments on their positions in relation to the project. The same can be done with the question- or quote cards.
3. Set a time and when time is up go through the post-its and discuss the outcome and what the participants want to bring forth in the project process.



Fig 32. Alternative game with post-its

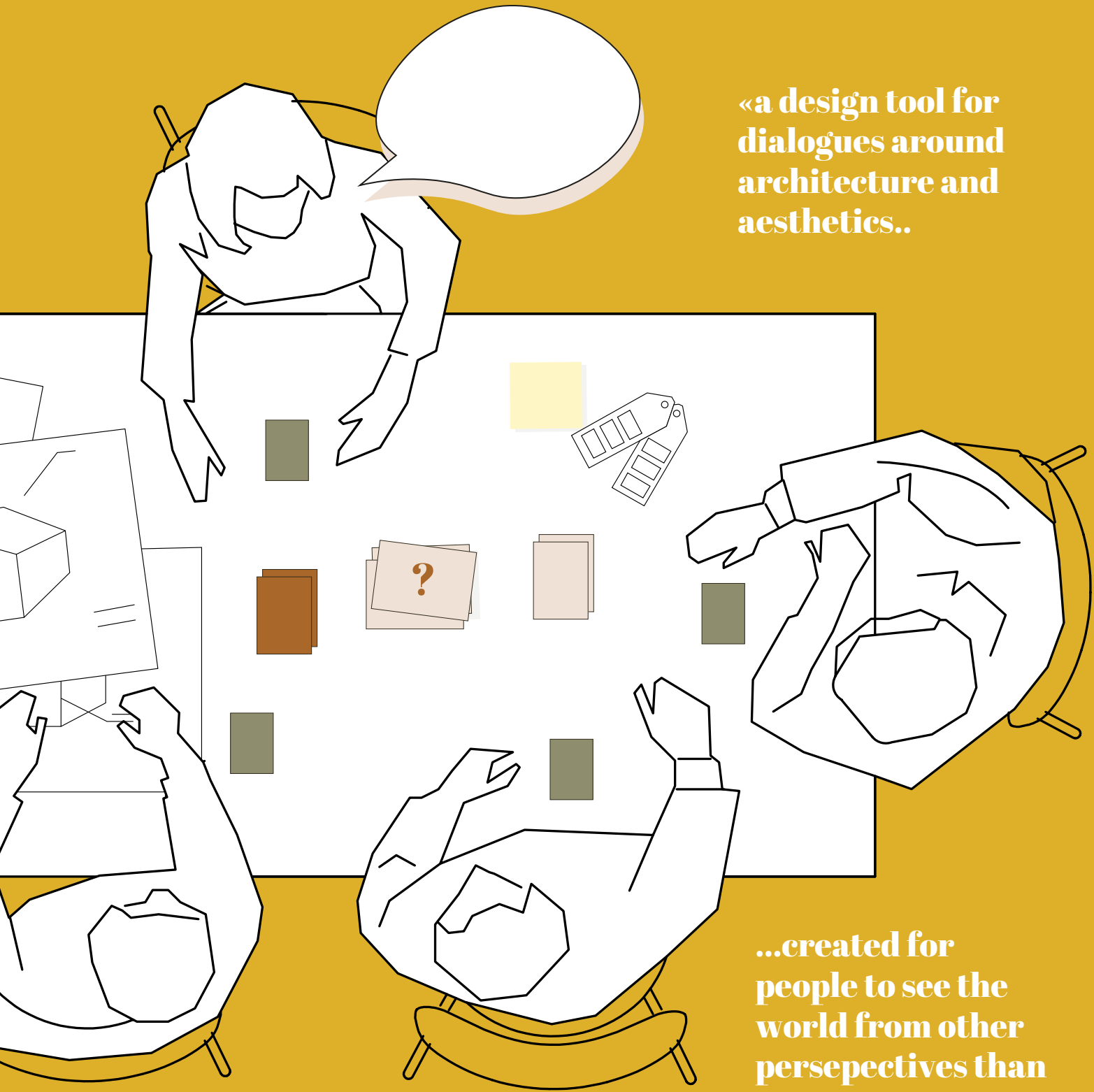
### WHOLE DECK ON THE TABLE

Sometimes the best way to begin is just to lay out the whole deck on the table and start discussing. Let the conversation lead the way! If time is limited one can choose a randomly selected part of the cards - however make sure that there are cards from all categories, it will create a better ground for the discussion!

Set a time and let the first person pick a card and comment it. Continue the lap around and keep picking cards until time is up.



Fig 33. Alternative game - whole deck on the table



**«a design tool for dialogues around architecture and aesthetics..**

**...created for people to see the world from other perspectives than just their own»**



WANNA KNOW MORE?  
Send me an e-mail! You'll find my contacts on page 69

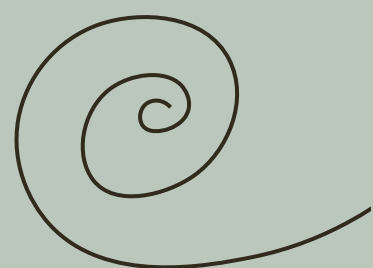
Fig 34. Printed card game



# 6

chapter

final reflections



## Final reflections

In this thesis I have investigated what one can learn from an architecture debate about aesthetics and perception of architecture going on in Sweden. My initial main questions were «How is architecture perceived today among architects and non-architects in a Swedish urban context? What can we as architects, in that context, learn from today's architecture debate about aesthetics and perception of architecture?».

It has been a journey where I have come to realise more and more that it may not be so interesting to know how people want what is being built to look like, but rather how we talk about these questions. It seems like architects view the question differently, probably because of their experience and education. They have been trained at looking beyond the facade and see other values than the physically visible. To talk about what is beautiful or ugly does not lead anywhere, because it is a matter of taste and highly subjective. Public taste changes over time. What is considered ugly today might be appreciated tomorrow.

It is a complex question and nothing that can be solved easily. And I am not even sure that we want to solve it. Do not get me wrong, but from failed debates there is *always* something one can learn. This is an excellent example of what a public debate on architecture should not look like. However, I do believe that the newly awakened interest for architecture and urban planning among the public which this debate might have resulted in is good in itself. In a democratic society there has to be space to talk about it. But as in all dialogues it should of course be conducted in a respectful and good manner. And if there is something that this debate has proven it is that what we build, how it is designed and what it looks like really has an impact on people. We must not forget that.

### New insights

From the news and debate posts in the media it is easy to get the impression that it is a deeply divided discussion. But as in all public debates, there are always certain people or groups that are seen and heard more than others. The word is rarely fairly distributed. And even if it is, there may be opinions that are not heard because there are people who do not want or dare to make their voice heard. Or maybe not even care. The desire to explore how the debate can become more constructive was what led me to the decision of conducting a series of qualitative interviews. In retrospect, I can conclude that it was a much better choice than for example conducting a survey (an alternative early stage idea).

The series of interviews I have conducted has given me a number of new insights; about how there already seems to be an increased awareness on this issue; how aesthetics and design can be seen as part of the work towards global sustainability, how there is a shared desire for a more open dialogue and what the next generation of architects can learn from this.

Nevertheless, to explore the subject as a student of architecture has not been easy I must admit. I have my own personal perceptions as an architect and as a person. But the goal has always been to investigate the issue objectively. Therefore, I do not judge what my respondents have said. The aim of the interviews has been to qualitatively investigate what people from different 'sides' in the question think.

### Transform criticism into creativity

In the beginning of this journey, when I was doing research, I found a quote saying; «transform criticism into creativity». I thought it summarised my aim well and saved it quickly in my mood board-folder. Since

then that quote has been stuck in the back of my head and from times to times made itself felt again. It has also worked as a motivation in the development of *Aestate*, the card game.

How can we in this case lift the critique and make something creative out of it? Criticism is part of the architecture profession. For five years students are trained at the school of architecture to develop concept ideas into finished drawings and project proposals and to be able to explain and defend their choices. Being able to respond to criticism is in a way what architects are trained to do. Besides problem-solving of course. But it is not easy to respond to criticism that is not constructive, that is only looking for faults or that even gets someone into trouble. The problem with today's debate, as I see it, is that it has totally wrong focus. What could have become a constructive dialogue between developers and users, between architects and clients, has instead become a polarised and fragmented discussion. New technology which could serve as an excellent tool for reaching more people has instead become trenches for shooting.

### **Thesis question**

The thesis question could be further developed and approached from other points of view, such as those stemming from social sciences and human geography. Another aspect that was not mentioned, simply because it was not part of the thesis question, but that I personally would find interesting to explore in relation to the topic, is the gender aspect. To talk about aesthetics and gender might be problematic. There is a risk that it is automatically associated with gender roles and becomes stereotyped. The history of aesthetics, as well as of architecture is dominated by men and soft values like beauty has, at least in the Western society, historically been associated with the feminine, while hard values has been associated with the masculine. Katarina Bonnevier (2011), has described how architecture can be divided into two inseparable sides: one practical, constructive and functional side and one aesthetic, harmonic and symbolic side and how these two sides are gender coded. The second one, the feminine side of the coin is often totally dismissed. However, referring back to the previously mentioned phenomenological researchers, you might say that it may have had some impact. For if perception of space is based on our physical body and the male body differs from the female, then there could also be differences between how men and women perceive space? Has architecture aesthetically been influenced by the fact that in most cases it has been designed by men? That is an exciting question to keep in mind.

### **The interviews**

I am aware that the amount of interviewees might be seen as a small sample of people. Choosing a qualitative method for interviewing is much more time consuming than a quantitative method, but on the other hand it gives a deeper understanding and result that would have not been possible to reach in the same way with a quantitative method. Since I wanted to dig deeper into the topic and was curious about what was hidden behind the media curtain I found it relevant to conduct the interviews in this way. With that said, of course it does not exclude the possibility to interview a bigger sample of people. It is not like the number of five has been something that I have been striving for or the ideal number. Not at all. I believe that the more voices heard the better (as long as the tone remains on-topic) and there are other aspects that would have been interesting to touch upon and interview people about as well. But as always, time is limited, and somewhere you have to set your delimitations and this is what I have prioritised in accordance to mine.

### **Design proposal**

The card game was deliberately designed in a generic way so that it would fit several settings and several target groups. The original idea was that it was supposed to work for discussing qualities of space for both business and educational purposes and thanks to its generic composition I believe it does. However, there is a risk that, because of how it is constructed, discussions based upon it might become generic as well. Therefore a possible next step or way of development could be to design several versions of the game, directed towards different target groups and settings. By studying a particular target group the design tool could be customised towards that group's needs and interests. Or it could possibly even be done through a co-design collaboration with them. Thanks to the game's generic and open design I believe the development opportunities are many.

### **Finally**

For me personally architecture has always been about people. How do we design the best possible solution based on the conditions we have for the people who will be able to access and use the building when it is completed one day? I believe most architects share that view. But of course you do not always have the right answer to everything. Dialogue and tools might help and that is why I designed the card game. Because I do think that design tools like that could help transform criticism into creativity. And in the end you can boil it down to one question - who are we building for? Are we building for everyone's good or for some people's glory?



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**Be creative. Work hard. Believe in what you are doing. Transform criticism into creativity. But do not forget to be humble. Humble enough to admit that you may not have all the answers. For how architecture is perceived depends on whom you ask. There might be a conceptual definition of beauty. But what is perceived as beautiful is highly personal. There is no right or wrong. Focus on how to create a constructive dialogue instead. And think about whom you are designing for. For good or glory?**

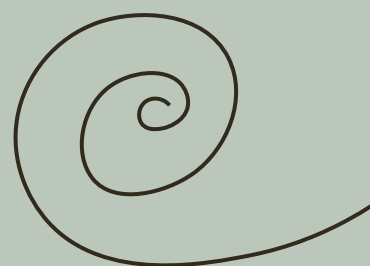
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# 7

chapter

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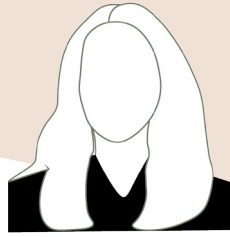
Figure 19.8. Clarion Hotel Post. Retrieved from <http://www.semren-mansson.se/projekt/clarion-hotel-post>

Figure 19.9. Kvarteret Dockan. Retrieved from <https://whitearkitekter.com/se/projekt/kvarteret-dockan/>

Figure 19.10. Malmö Live. Retrieved from <https://www.skanska.se/vart-erbjudande/vara-projekt/57333/Malmo-Live%2C-Malmo>

Figure 19.11. Kville Saluhall. Retrieved from <https://gustavappell.se/projekt/kville-saluhall/>

Figure 19.12. Slussplan. Retrieved from <https://whitearkitekter.com/se/projekt/slussplan/>



## **Acknowledgements**

My biggest thanks to all of you which I have had the the great privilege to interview. Pär Johansson, Olof Antonson, Claes Caldenby, Sue Clark and Petra Gipp - thank you for your time, your involvement, your wise and inspiring response. It's been really fun and educational to talk to you. Thanks to Marco, Emilio and Shea for tutoring and constantly contributing with new input and points of view. Finally, thanks to my family, friends and colleagues for always being so loving and supportive. Without you this journey wouldn't have been the same!

## **About the author**

Born and raised in Stockholm and educated as an architect at Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg. For me personally architecture has always been about people and how we design the best possible solution based on the conditions we have for the people who will use the building when it is completed one day. This interest has grown bigger during my master studies and has led to that I've taken master courses much related to participatory design and social sustainability, for instance Reality Studio and Design and Planning for Social Inclusion. This master thesis is the last step in that chain and the first step in the next one.

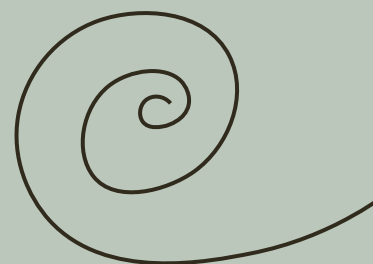
Do you have any questions? Would like to discuss the topic? Or maybe want to know more about the game *Aestate*? Feel free to contact me at:  
[mariatherese.lidenholm@gmail.com](mailto:mariatherese.lidenholm@gmail.com)





# I

appendix  
interview material



# Interview material

*The following appendix contains a brief resume of each and every interview followed by a full list of the questions asked. The questions are listed in the language the interview was conducted (Swedish in all cases except one) and the material is sorted by date, in other words the order the interviews were conducted throughout the process.*

## Pär Johansson

Interview conducted 20.02.18

An interview with one of the coordinators of Yimby Göteborg. Pär Johansson is a civil engineer, employed at Chalmers University of Technology where he is researching and teaching in the field of building physics. He has been active in Yimby since 2016. He said himself that he has a big layman's interest for architecture and that within Yimby he focuses on issues connected to urban planning and densification.

The interview focused on Yimby Göteborg and the interviewee's role within the network as well as the current debate from a non-architect's perspective. It touched upon the topic of aesthetics and reflections about what good architecture could be for a non-architect and the public in general, thoughts about today's urban planning in the Swedish urban context (in this case Gothenburg) and how densification could possibly improve the architecture and perception of the city.

### Questions

- Vill du kort presentera vem du är, vad du jobbar med och hur ditt engagemang i Yimby ser ut?
- Beskriv er organisation. Hur många medlemmar har ni? Hur engagerar sig medlemmarna?
- Hur stort upplever du att engagemanget är från allmänheten? (I sociala medier, på era anordnade evenemang som stadsvandringar etc.)
- Vad skiljer er från andra grupper/nätverk som diskuterar stadsbyggnadsfrågor?
- Yimby står ju för «Yes in my backyard», alltså en i grunden positiv syn på förtätning i närområdet. Kan du beskriva vilken typ av förtätning ni vill se?
- På er hemsida står det att "Yimby Göteborg vill ta fasta på fungerande, levande och roliga stadsmiljöer som redan finns i Göteborg (t.ex. Långgatorna) och bygga mer, mycket mer på det viset". Vad är det som Yimby finner attraktivt i Långgatornas bebyggelse? Vilka kvalitéer har de som ni skulle vilja se mer utav?

- Vad tycker du om hur det byggs i Göteborg idag?
- Apropå att ni vill bygga mer tät blandstad, vad anser du om den nybyggda stadsdelen Kvillebäcken? Vad är bra/dåligt med den?
- Yimby lägger mycket vikt vid förtätning. Vad anser du om estetik? Detaljer? Idén om att nybyggen ska passa in i omgivningen och komplettera befintlig bebyggelse?
- Vad tror du är viktigt för gemene man när det kommer till arkitektur?
- Vad anser ni som grupp om den rådande arkitekturdebatten som handlar om huruvida vi förskönar eller förfular våra städer?
- Upplever du att ni får gehör för era åsikter från politiker och stadsplanerare?
- Vad skulle du önska se mer från arkitektkårens sida?
- Till sist, vilket råd skulle du vilja ge mig och alla andra arkitektstudenter som snart tar steget ut i arbetslivet?

## Olof Antonson

Interview conducted 20.03.04

An interview with one of the coordinators of Yimby Göteborg. Olof Antonson is pre-school teacher specialised in arts pedagogy. He has been a coordinator of Yimby Göteborg since the start in 2008. According to himself he has a far-reaching interest in urban construction and architecture, and is passionate about questions regarding history and the significance of the site.

The interview focused on Yimby Göteborg and Olof's role within the group as well as the current debate from a non-architect's perspective. It touched upon the topics of building with care in the sense of choosing good materials and having the local culture and context in mind, what one could learn from the history of architecture, the impact of everyday environments and the interaction between monumental and vernacular architecture.

## Questions

- Vill du börja med att presentera dig, vem du är, vad du jobbar med och hur ditt engagemang i Yimby ser ut?
- Det känns som att ni har ganska olika bakgrund ni som sitter i Yimbys samordningsgrupp, stämmer det?
- Är det ni samordnare som frågar medlemmar i gruppen, som ni ser visar framfötterna, om de vill ta på sig ansvar eller är det den som är intresserad som får kontakta er och fråga om de får bli en del av samordningsgruppen?
- Har du något särintresse inom gruppen? Några frågor som du brinner mer för?
- När du har pratat med arkitekter och personer som sitter i beslutsfattande position, upplever du att du får samma svar från alla? Tycker alla lika?
- Tror du att det idag är så lätt att titta på referenser från andra delar av världen att vi glömmer bort vår egna lokala tradition? Att globaliseringen kan vara en anledning till att vi jorden runt numera bygger i alltmer likadan stil?
- Vad är din åsikt om den nybyggda stadsdelen Kvillebäcken? Vad är bra/dåligt med den och idén om att skapa en uttrycksdifferentering trots att husen är byggda under samma tidsperiod?
- Somliga har i debatten hävdad att man inte kan rita nytt i stil med förra sekelskiftet eftersom att det blir pastisch. Om man vänder på steken, skulle man kunna säga att det som byggs idag kan ses som pastisch på modernismen?
- Vad tror du är viktigt för gemene man när det kommer till arkitektur? Vad är viktigt för dig?
- Debatten idag fokuserar ju väldigt mycket på estetik, fasader och att det ska se ut på ett visst sätt. Tror du att det handlar mer om relationen till platsen snarare än tidstypiska uttryck?
- Tror du att det även hänger ihop med design-egot och bilden av arkitekten som ett geni? Någon slags mentalitet i stil med ”nu ska jag rita den perfekta lösningen som ingen någonsin har gjort tidigare”?
- Kan det vara lättare att som arkitekt ställa krav om man utvecklar ett nära samarbete med den som bygger?
- Har Yimby några slags riktlinjer eller någon agenda för vilka frågor ni vill skall diskuteras? Hur tillåtande är ni åsiktsmässigt?
- Anser du att det vi bygger idag återspeglar den individualistiska tid vi lever i?
- Till sist, vilket råd skulle du vilja ge mig och alla andra arkitektstudenter som snart tar steget ut i arbetslivet?

## Claes Caldenby

Interview conducted 20.03.31

An interview with Claes Caldenby, professor emeritus and former professor in the Theory and History of

Architecture at Chalmers University of Technology. He is also an active author, working as an editor in the Swedish architecture magazine Arkitektur and regularly writing posts in Göteborgs-Posten, Gothenburg's biggest daily newspaper (Göteborgs-Posten, n.d.). Through his work as a writer and through different talks he has expressed his opinion about questions that has to do with the current debate.

The interview was based on Claes' perspective as an architectural theorist and writer, approaching the topic from his area of expertise - the history of architecture, the role of the architect then and now, thoughts about the current debate, what architects could have done differently and what impact last year's winner of the Kasper Salin prize might have on the debate.

## Questions

- Vad tycker du om arkitekturdebatten som är idag? Varför tror du att det har blivit som det är?
- Historiskt sett, har vi under de senaste 100 åren i Sverige haft debatter som liknar den vi har idag?
- Jag intervjuade tidigare representanter för Yimby Göteborg och de nämnde bland annat att kopplingen till lokal tradition och byggnadskonst i allt högre grad har ersatts av "den internationella stilen", vilket är något som de ser som ett problem. Hur viktigt tycker du att det är att som arkitekt som förhålla sig till platsen och dess lokala tradition? Kan vi lära oss något av folklig arkitektur?
- Yimby förespråkar även kvarterstad och slutna kvarter och har uttryckt missnöje över Kvillebäcken som de inte tycker lever upp till den bilden. Vad är din åsikt om Kvillebäcken och om att bygga kvartersstad?
- Finns det en poäng i den kritik som Yimby och Arkitekturupproret lyfter fram? Tror du att nätverk som dessa ger en rättvis bild av vad folk i Sverige efterfrågar idag när det kommer till arkitektur och stadsbyggande? Om inte, vad tror du allmänheten i Göteborg vill se?
- Med inspiration från arkitekturteorin utvecklade Le Corbusier sitt mått- och proportionssystem Modulor. Kan man se det som att klassiska idéer levde vidare i modernismen, trots att de tidiga modernisterna vände sig bort från tidigare klassiska ideal?
- Det finns kritiker som säger att dagens arkitektutbildning är urholkad och att dagens arkitekter saknar den breda arkitekturhistoriska kunskap som 30-talets modernister hade. Vad svarar du på det?
- Modernismen kom ju rätt sent till Sverige eftersom 1920-talet dominerades av 20-talsklassicismen i Norden. När den lanserades i början av 30-talet hade de modernistiska idéerna i Europa redan florerat i ett

ett decennium. Att de modernistiska idéerna inte fick genomslag tidigare i Sverige, kan det tolkas som att det till en början fanns skepsis mot modernismen?

- Vad skulle du vilja säga till dem som ifrågasätter dagens byggande och anser att det är av dålig kvalitet, tråkigt och fult?

- Skulle den svenska arkitektkåren kunna agera annorlunda i frågan? Vad skulle du önska se mer av från arkitekternas sida?

- Brf Viva fick nyligen 2019 års Kasper Salin-pris. Vilka signaler sänder det? Tror du det finns en risk att debatten blir än mer infekterad nu?

- Till sist, vilket råd skulle du vilja ge mig och alla andra arkitektstudenter som snart tar steget ut i arbetslivet?

## Sue Clark

Interview conducted 20.04.08

An interview with Sue Clark, educated as an architect in Canada but since many years now working with sustainability project management. She is employed at Tengbom in Stockholm. Tengbom is one Sweden's largest architecture offices with nearly 600 employees (Tengbom, 2020).

The interview approached the question from an architect's point of view, with focus on Sue's area of expertise; sustainability. It touched upon the topics of how aesthetics could be seen as sustainable factor within architectural planning and design, healthy buildings, certification systems working with beauty, perception of space, the architect's role and who it is to decide what is beautiful or not.

### Questions

- Do you want to start by briefly presenting yourself and your job as an architect?

- Would you say that the relation between sustainability and aesthetics that you just described is a common view among architects or is it something that you specifically work with at Tengbom? Have you heard similar opinions from other architects?

- Is there any similar discussion regarding architecture and aesthetics in Canada or is it not even touched upon?

- Do you think that the fact that we don't have as much research proving the importance of aesthetics, is a reason why it is harder to argue for it?

- Do you think there is any truth in the statement that ordinary people prefer neo-classical architecture to modernistic one?

- If we go back to your work, how would you say that you in particular work with aesthetics at Tengbom? Is it a part of your work with sustainability?

- Is that something that you work with at all of Tengbom's offices?

## Petra Gipp

Interview conducted 20.04.17

An interview with Petra Gipp, architect educated at Konstakademien in Copenhagen, Denmark, and nowadays active in Stockholm where she, together with two other partners, runs her office Petra Gipp STUDIO. She has worked with both building projects and more experimental architecture and is used to deal with the relation between old and new because of several projects situated in «sensitive surroundings». She has expressed her opinion in the debate through out a number of articles.

The interview approached the question from an architect's point of view and focused on thoughts about the current debate, questions regarding the importance of relation to history, materiality, and what impact the procurement process might have.

### Questions

- Vill du börja med att kort presentera dig och ditt jobb som arkitekt?

- Vad tycker du om arkitekturdebatten kring stil som är idag?

- Varför tror du att det har blivit som det är?

- Finns det en poäng i den kritik som grupper som Yimby och Arkitekturupproret lyfter fram?

- Jag intervjuade tidigare representanter för Yimby Göteborg och de nämnde bland annat att kopplingen till lokal tradition och byggnadskonst i allt högre grad har ersatts av "den internationella stilen", vilket är något som de kan se som ett problem. Hur viktigt tycker du att det är att som arkitekt som förhålla sig till platsen och dess lokala tradition? Kan vi lära oss något av folklig arkitektur?

- Går det att använda sig av historien utan att det blir pastisch? Hur då?

- Så det handlar alltså om att förhålla sig till historien istället för att använda sig av den?

- I artikeln "Vad folk vill ha" (Arkitektur, 2019) sa du att du tror att människor tycker om byggnader som klarar av att åldras bra? Vill du utveckla det resonemanget?

- Hur mycket av problematiken med kvalitén tror du ligger i den upphandlingsprocess som vi har i Sverige idag?

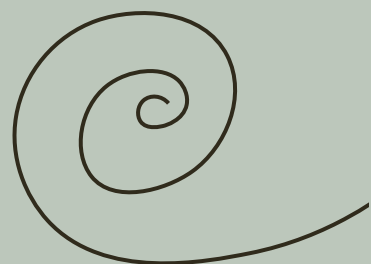
- Du ställde även i samma intervju (Arkitekten, 2019) frågan “hur möter man i dag den vurm som människor uppenbarligen har för den tidens arkitektur?”. Hur skulle du besvara den själv?
- Tror du att de facto att vi arkitekter har skolats i att läsa vår omgivning och gestaltade livsmiljö, bidrar till att vi har en annan syn på arkitektur än gemene man?
- Hur jobbar ni med estetik och gestaltning på ditt kontor?
- Tror du att man skulle kunna föra medborgardialog om estetiska värden? Upplever du att det finns metoder, redskap och utrymme för att prata om de här frågorna?
- Vad skulle du vilja säga till dem som ifrågasätter dagens byggande och anser att det är av dålig kvalitet, tråkigt och fult?
- Tycker du att den svenska arkitektkåren skulle kunna agera annorlunda i frågan?
- Brf Viva fick nyligen 2019 års Kasper Salin-pris. Vilka signaler sänder det? Tror du det finns en risk att debatten blir än mer infekterad nu?
- Till sist, vilket råd skulle du vilja ge mig och alla andra arkitektstudenter som snart tar steget ut i arbetslivet?



# III

appendix

illustrative  
compositions



# transform criticism -

Search for "arkitekturdebatt" (the Swedish word for architecture debate) on the web and you will get a multitude of articles and posts debating the Swedish architecture of today. As mentioned in the introduction the Swedish debate on architecture's appearance is driven by civic movements concerned about today's building, construction and the quality of it. Arkitekturupproret (which in English roughly means "The architecture uprising"), was one of the initiators of this discussion. It was established in 2014 and is a people's movement "against modernism/neo-modernism and the continued uglification of our cities".

For good or glory  
est 2020

## theory

While a specific place in place does not necessarily have to be the same experience my neighbour has - even if we experience the place at the very same time! Thus, there is no interpretation that is more correct than another. We interpret architecture based on our bodies, intellect and previous experience. However, usually we do this unconsciously. As we get used to a building it becomes "part of us" and we no longer pay much attention to the surrounding environment. We have probably all experienced that at some point in our lives we see a certain building which at first sight gave us a kind of "aha" experience but later melted into everyday life (Leander 2006).

### architecture debate on aesthetics

"Byggprojekt eldar på arkitekturdebatt: frustration kring strömlinjeformat byggande"

"Att diskutera ismer leder inte framåt"

"Arkitekturdebatten är fastnat på ytan"

Vad folk vill ha



## interviews

...ion of  
architecture  
researchers  
architecture in their eyes  
whereas every person  
to join.  
...ecessarily have to be the  
...even if we experience the same  
...space at the very same time! Thus, there is no interpretation that is  
...e correct than another. We interpret architecture based on our  
...s intellect and previous experience. However, usually we do this  
...s unconsciously. As we get used to a building it becomes "part of us"  
...o longer pay much attention to the surrounding environment.  
...probably all experienced that at some point in our lives with a  
...ilding which at first sight gave us a kind of "aha" experience  
...melted into everyday life (Leander 2006).

architects  
architecture practitioners

# into creativity!



## AIM

The tool is a co-design tool which is supposed to be used to set the rules for the aesthetics of a project and for the project to have aesthetics in mind from the start. It is intended for use by architects and planners to evaluate factors, users or other people affected by the project and what could be improved.

## game

It should be seen as a communication tool for architects and non-architects to speak the same language and perception of aesthetics and to integrate it in the design process.

## SETTING UP

The tool is thought to work as tool during design processes, but can advantageously be used for educational purposes, in architecture schools or when dealing with the topic of aesthetics and aesthetics in a coffee break at the office or during a meeting. In design processes it could even be used in several stages. The diagram below is a suggestion of how to be used.

## COMPONENTS

The game consists of three types of cards;

Question cards - gives the participants a starting theme for the round. The questions may lead to discussions, which is just fine. In fact the questions are encouraged in order to keep a dialogue and to explore reasons.

Persona cards - gives the participants a role and challenges the participants to think of different paths. The persona cards represent age, profession or presents their opinion on the topic, but the quotes are inspired by real life.

## PREPARATION

1. Sort the cards into piles according to the role they are given and are expected to play during the game.

2. Assign roles to the participants: moderator, secretary and time keeper amongst you. The moderator is responsible for that a good flow is kept throughout the game and the word is distributed well.

3. Start the game, comments and questions are encouraged during with them to the moderator.

4. The time keeper is responsible for keeping the time and, if necessary, to move the game to the next stage in the process.

5. The moderator sets the time and player number 1 picks a card and reads it out loud and places it on the table so that all participants are involved. The question card sets the theme for the round to be discussed.

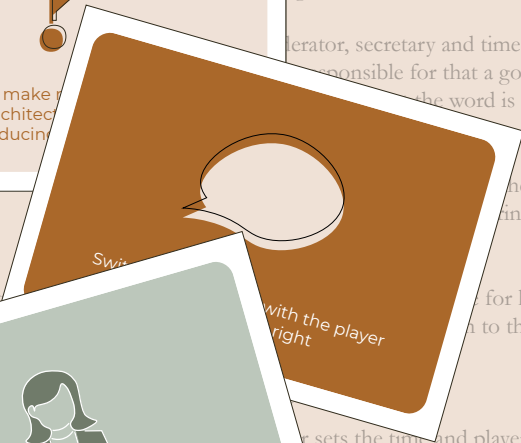
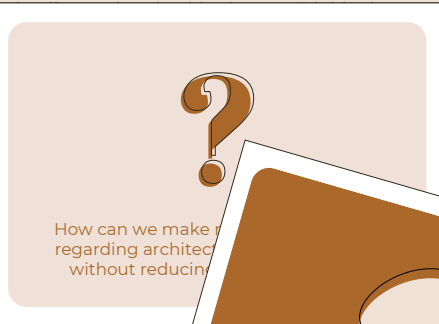
6. Every participant present themselves and their role in the game. The person to the right of the moderator starts and the moderator continues to facilitate the discussion.

7. In accordance with the question card, participants simulate a role and give their opinion on the question of the question card on the table.

8. Next participants pick an action card and perform the action written on it. It might happen that other participants will get involved in the action. The action cards are placed around the table.

9. When all participants has picked and performed an action card and what you bring with you, the moderator makes notes.

10. Start a new round. Continue the process.



**...created for people to see the world from other perspectives than just their own"**



