

# Converge Uddevalle!

## **Designing for a Resilient Growth of a City Centre in Co-existence With an External Mall**

Master Thesis at Chalmers School of Architecture | Stina Gjertsen 2017

Examiner: Emílio da Cruz Brandão | Tutor: Joaquim Tarrasó



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Master Thesis at Chalmers School of  
Architecture within the Master Program Design  
for Sustainable Development (MPDSD)

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My tutor and examiner Joaquim Tarrasó and Emílio da Cruz Brandão, for your guidance and time. For pushing and inspiring me during this process, without you, this project had not reach what it is today.

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ABSTRACT

The situation where external malls have taken over the role as the natural social arena in the city is recognised from all over Sweden, leaving the city centres drained from commerce and urban life. In Uddevalla, a mid-sized city on the Swedish west-coast, the city centre is struggling to survive due to the external mall Torp. The municipality of Uddevalla have now decided to expand the city centre with a wish for it to regain the urban life and again become the main social arena. But how can a vibrant city centre co-exist with a prosperous external mall?

In this thesis I am introducing key design elements to create a strong identity and make Uddevalla city centre attractive to visit, spend time, work and live in. Research about general conflicts between external malls and city centres is used to get an understanding of the complex situation in Uddevalla where the external mall Torp is vital for the city but yet devastating for the city centre. Further, the needs of a potential target group together with existing qualities in Uddevalla founds my design strategies that converge commuting, nature and the social life at one central square. The idea is that the strategies and design could inspire other cities that are struggling with the same urban challenge.

STUDENT BACKGROUND

Bachelor studies

BSc Architectural Engineering Chalmers University of Technology

Master studies

Master Program Design for Sustainable Development (MPDSD)

Selection of courses & internships within the master studies:

Architectural Drawing (Universitat Politècnica de València)

Process Simulation in the Building Process (Universitat Politècnica de València)

Building Services (Universitat Politècnica de València)

Design Systems (Chalmers University of Technology)

Sustainable Building (Chalmers University of Technology)

Internship at Plankontoret, Stadsbyggnadsförvaltningen, Trollhättan Stad, Trollhättan

Spatial Morphology Studio (Chalmers University of Technology)

Internship at Spacescape, Stockholm

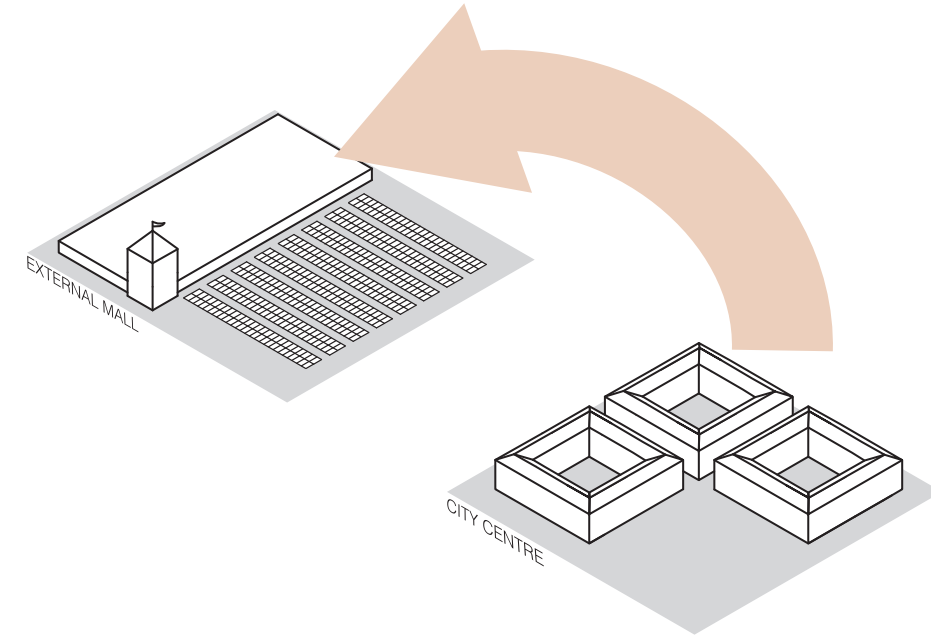
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**Introduction**

The number of malls in Sweden has been more than doubled in the past 15 years, a development that has devastated the commerce in the city centres (HUI Research & Storesupport, 2016). The opening of an external mall causes an out crowd effect, meaning that the mall and the city centre competes with the same customers, a battle usually won by the more convenient external mall (Bergström, 2000).

In Uddevalla, a mid-sized city on the Swedish west-coast, the city centre is struggling to survive due to the external mall Torp. Since the opening of Torp, the shops have gradually moved their business to the external mall and left the city centre empty of commerce and urban life (Andersson, 2016). The municipality now has a wish to expand the city centre in order to regain the urban life. A large area, connecting the city centre with the water, is intended for the expansion. The land has through history been used for industrial work and a development here would double the size of the city centre (Uddevalla kommun, 2017). To make the expansion possible, a resilient growth of the city centre is required and a way must be found for the external mall and the city centre to co-exist.



The shops have gradually moved their businesses from the city centre to the external mall and left the city centre empty of commerce and urban life.

IS THIS THE NEW CITY CENTRE?



The external mall Torp.  
Photo: Thon Property AB



# AIM & SCOPE

The aim of this master thesis is to create an understanding of the complex relationship between external malls and city centres, and how to approach this when developing the city centres. The aim is not to question the existence of external malls, but rather focus on how the city centre and the external mall could co-exist. The result is intended to be a design for how the city centre in Uddevalla could grow in a resilient way that creates conditions for urban life and co-existence with the external mall Torp. The idea is that the strategies and design could inspire other cities that are struggling with the same urban challenge.

## Focus question

How to design for a resilient growth of a city centre in co-existence with an external mall?

# DELIMITATIONS

The design proposal is limited to consider the strategies that enabling Uddevalla city centre to grow in a resilient co-existence with the external mall Torp. Hence, technical issues, such as decontaminated land, flooding and demolition, is not investigated further. Regarding these issues, solutions developed through different investigations done by the municipality, have been adopted. These are further described in the theory chapter.

The design proposal is limited to an urban scale where the most important places and buildings are investigated on a higher detail level. The volumes and the perceptions of the buildings are considered for the exterior whilst the more detailed design and interior is left out.

# METHOD

Research *for* design has been used to create an understanding of the conflict between external malls and city centres and to map the historical and physical context of Uddevalla. This method has also been implemented for the site analysis and the understanding of the potential target group. The knowledge gained from the theory part has been translated into development strategies for Uddevalla and a design concept more specific for the area.

In the design phase, research *by* design has also been implemented, and problems have been tested through physical and digital model studies and sketching. The design proposal is further a result of the theory part together with findings in the design phase. The proposal should be seen as an example of how to implement the development strategies in Uddevalla.

# THEORY

To map the conflict between external malls and city centres literature about the subject from an economical aspect (Bergström, 2000) is combined with more general literature about what triggers urban life (Gehl, 2010). Also, articles from daily newspapers describing the situation in Uddevalla (Gistedt, 2013; Andersson, 2016) and statistics have been analysed (SCB, 2016; SCB, 2010; HUI Research & Storesupport, 2016). To map the historical context of Uddevalla literature describing the history (Bohusläns museum, 2017) is combined with municipal documents by Uddevalla kommun (2016, 2017) and an investigation about immigration to Uddevalla (Länström, 2010).

In the design phase, two municipal documents have been guiding regarding the preconditions. The first one is a pre-study of the new development in the city centre, *Områdesplan för Båveån 2016* (Uddevalla kommun, 2016), and points out a new possible location for a train station in the city centre. It also suggests demolishing and a new location for the swim hall and the bus station, this because of the bad building conditions. The second document is regarding how to handle flooding of the area, *Översvämningskydd förstudie 2016* (WSP, 2016), and the solutions proposed here have been ensured to be applicable in the proposal.

# VOCABULARY

Some recurring words and what they mean in this master thesis:

## CITY CENTRE

The area of the city where commerce, shopping, restaurants, entertaining and other public functions are concentrated.

## COEXIST

Exist in harmony at the same time and in the same area.

## CONVERGE

A concept in mathematics where a set of lines tend to meet at one point (focal point).

## EXTERNAL MALL

A shopping mall in which one or several buildings form a complex of shops. The external malls are located outside of the city centre and the malls are usually owned by one private actor.

## FOCAL POINT

The mathematical term where a set of lines converge. Also the point of interest.

## OUTCROWD EFFECT

When an external mall and a city centre competes with the same customers and one is out-crowded by the other.

## OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Leisure pursuit engaged in the outdoors. Translation of the Swedish word ”friluftsliv”.

## PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

For example squares, parks and nature areas. Public open spaces are owned by the municipality and should be inclusive for everyone.

## RESILIENT GROWTH

A growth that is sustainable over time and able to withstand sudden changes in conditions.

## SPILL-OVER EFFECT

When the external mall and the city centre gain from each other, and together attract visitors to go to both.

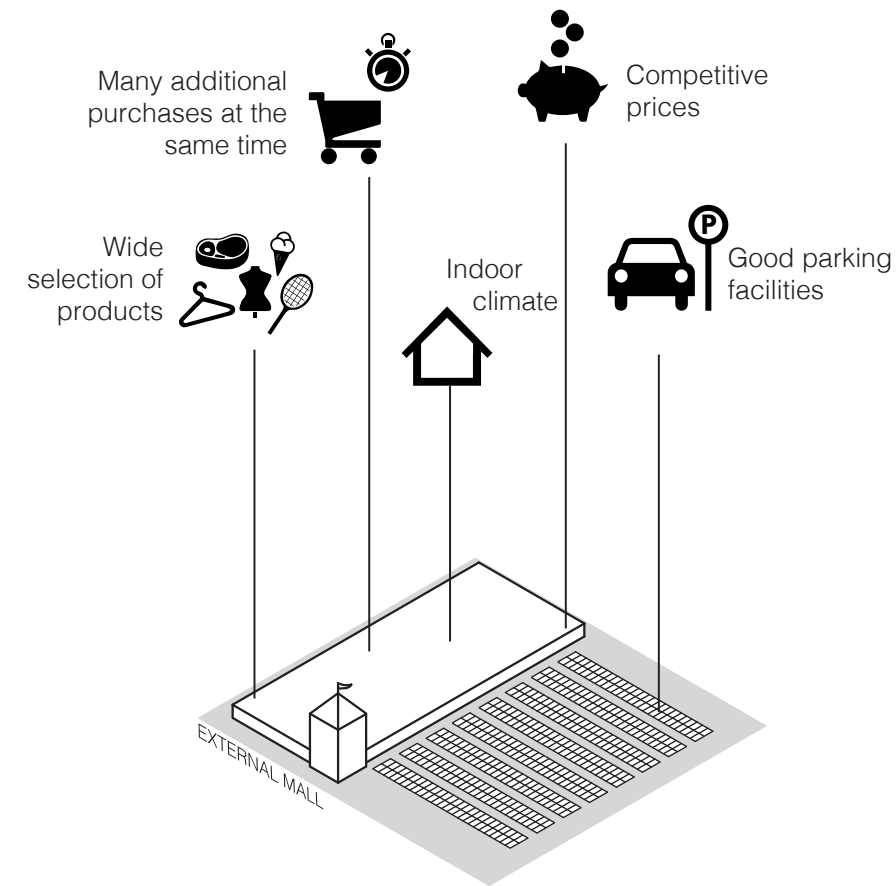
## URBAN LIFE

The activity and movement of people in the city space.

**Research**

## THE SUCCESS OF EXTERNAL MALLS

The number of malls in Sweden has been more than doubled in the past 15 years and 2015 the malls generated sales for 278 million SEK, which represents 38% of the total retail sales (HUI research & Storesupport, 2016). The major reasons why external malls are appreciated by consumers are, according to Bergström (2000), good parking facilities, wide selection of products, competitive prices and that many additional purchases can be made at the same time. The large car parks are convenient and allows the customers to drive right up to the entrance, and then the covered shopping area protects from bad weather experiences. The malls are located outside of the city centres, creating cheap rents and therefor low prices for the costumers. The success of the malls is of course affecting the commerce in the city centre, and between 2005 and 2015 the malls together with the e-commerce conquered 10% of the total sales in Sweden (HUI Research & Storesupport, 2016).

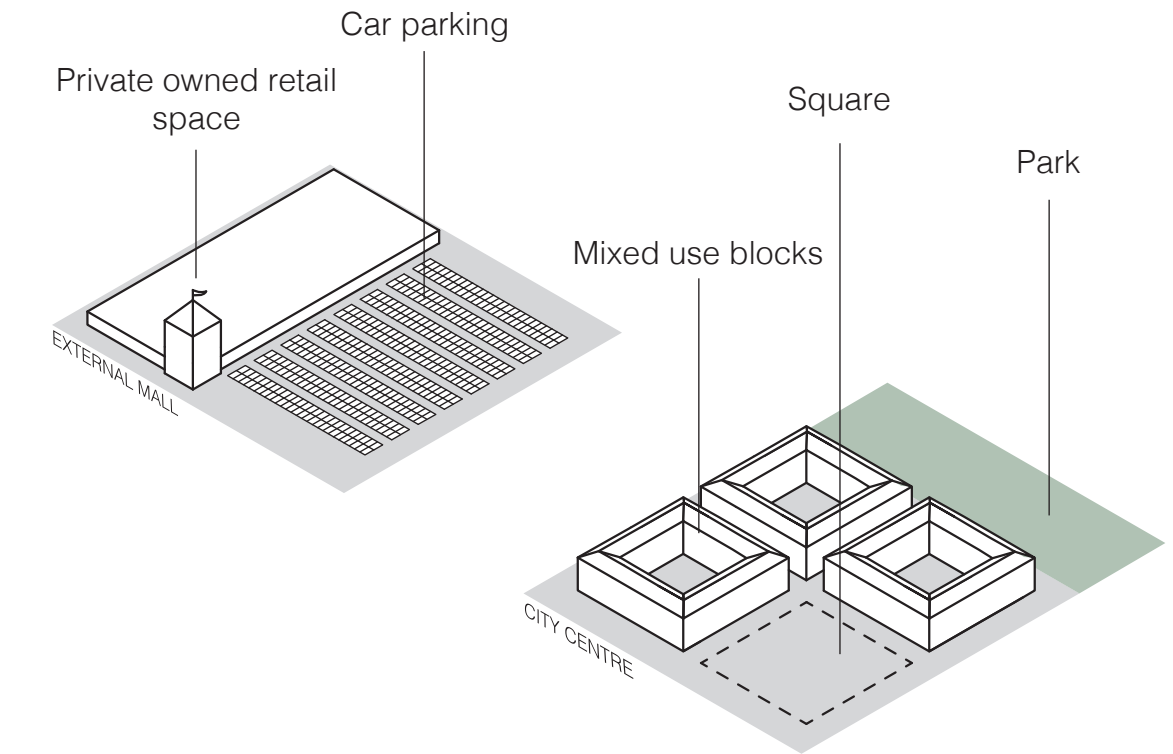


Major reasons why external shopping malls are appreciated by consumers (Bergström, 2000).

## WHY WE NEED CITY CENTRES

### If the external malls are so appreciated, why do we need successful city centres?

Gehl (2010), highlights the importance of the city as a democratic arena providing space for people to meet, regardless of age, income, status, religion or background. Gehl also emphasises the city as an arena for democracy with space for political meetings, demonstrations or the possibility to hand out flyers. According to Gehl, this is possible in public open spaces in the city centre, like parks and squares. The external malls, however, are according to Bergström (2010) adapted to be convenient for car-using customers and the activities are limited to focus on consumption.



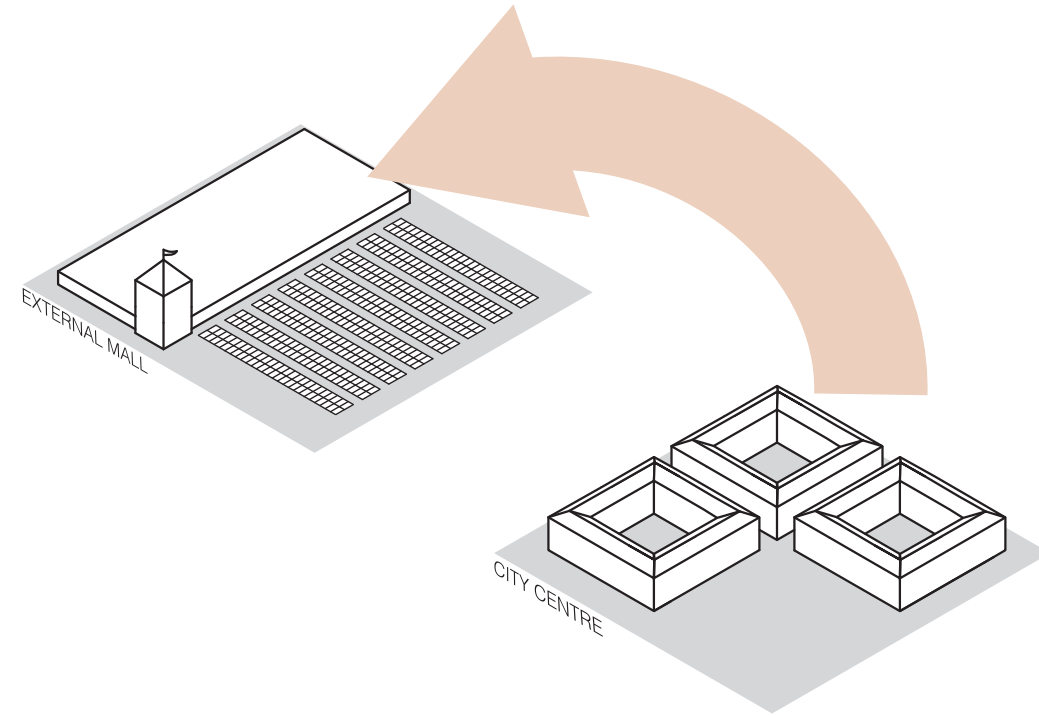
Comparison of land distribution and use at external malls and city centres.

## THE CONFLICT BETWEEN EXTERNAL MALLS & CITY CENTRES

**The opening of an external mall can, according to Bergström (2000), affect the city centre in two different ways; the out crowd effect or the spillover effect.**

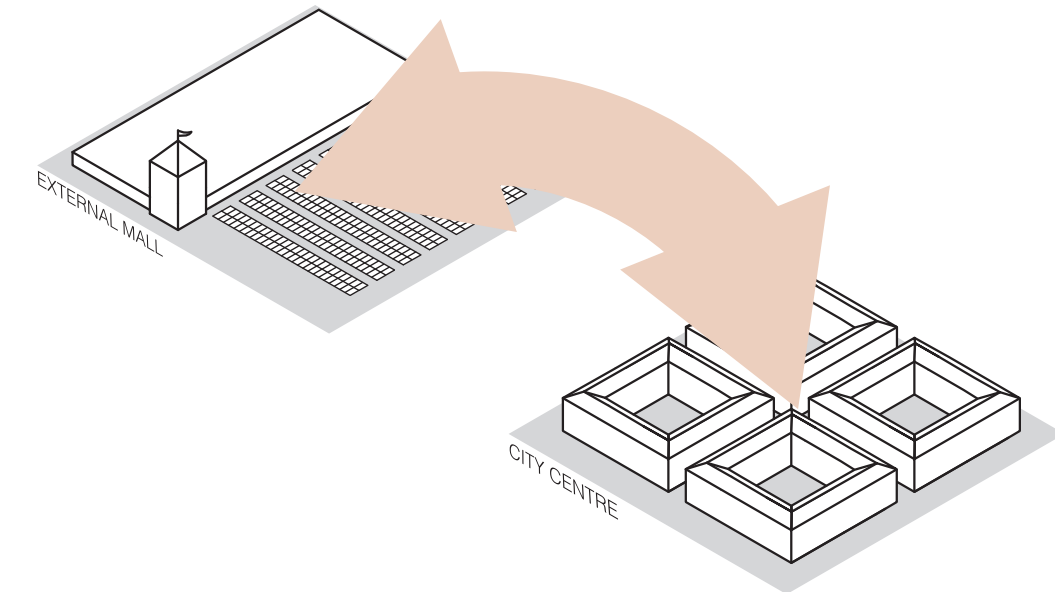
### THE OUTCROWD EFFECT

An opening of an external shopping mall next to the city centre means that more actors have to share an unchanged amount of consumption. Thus, the city centre will face a reduced demand and with a weak identity the out crowd effect occurs. This means less people working and visiting the city centre and therefore decreased urban life (Bergström, 2000).



### THE SPILLOVER EFFECT

External malls may also attract customers from a longer distance. A city centre with a strong identity may attract these customers to not only choose to shop at the external mall but also to visit the city centre. This is called the spillover-effect and increases the urban life in the city centre (Bergström, 2000).





# REFERENCE CITIES

Two reference cities where the external mall and the city centre are coexisting are Örebro and Borås. Similar strategies are used in the two cities to achieve a spillover effect, and the main pursuit is to create a strong identity for the city centres by strengthen qualities absent at the external malls. Bellow, five strategies, common for both Örebro and Borås, are described. (City Örebro, 2015; Örebro kommun, 2008; Borås city, 2016)

## CITY CENTRE STRATEGIES IN BORÅS AND ÖREBRO

### Green & blue environment

Create a green city centre full of nature experiences along the river, a contrast to the hard surface- and indoor environment at the external malls. Parks, recreational walks and sit-landscapes along the water are found in both Örebro and Borås.

### Restaurants & cafés

Turn the restaurants and cafés into an experience that is more than just eating and drinking. In the summer the restaurants and cafés unfold into the squares, streets and parks.

### History and story-telling

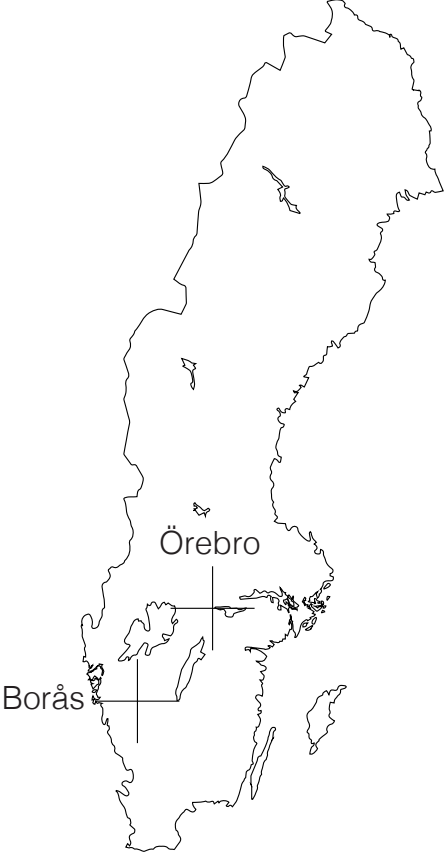
Highlight the history of the built environment. In Borås a unique environment is created connected to the historical textile industry and in Örebro the castle is always in the sightline.

### The city divided into clusters

Create a strong identity for the city centre through dividing the city into clusters with different character. In Borås, examples of these clusters are the cultural quarter, the restaurant square and the design cluster. In Örebro these are the delicacy district, the recreational area and the cultural quarter.

### Pedestrian networks

A pedestrian network where all the important urban functions in the city centre is connected. Both Örebro and Borås are aiming for a car-free city centre with good parking facilities along the edges.



ÖREBRO BORÅS



Photo: Borås city



Photo: Borås stad



Photo: Borås city



Photo: Borås.com



Photo: Borås stad



Photo: Simonsland.se



Photo: City Örebro



Photo: Örebro kommun



Photo: City Örebro



Photo: Örebroguiden



Photo: Örebroguiden



Photo: Örebro universitet

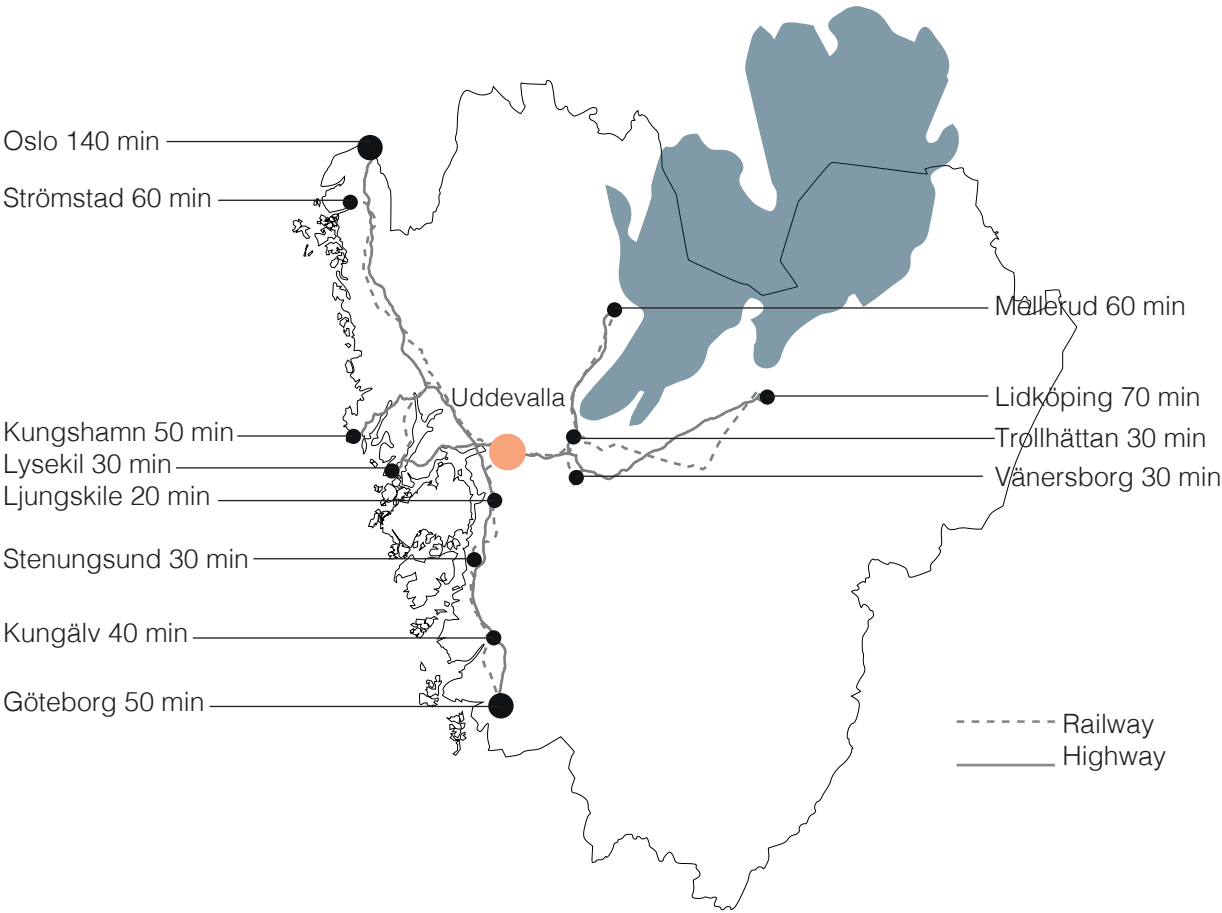
**The Context**

# UDDEVALLA

Uddevalla is a mid-sized city located on the Swedish west coast and is a central node in Västra Götaland. The city is connected to Göteborg and Oslo, both through the highway E6 and the railway. The city centre is located along the fjord Byfjorden and surrounded by green nature areas (Uddevalla kommun, 2017).

7 km outside the city centre the external shopping mall Torp is located. The mall has caused an outcrowd effect in Uddevalla where all the shops have moved to Torp and left the city centre drained from commerce and urban life (Andersson, 2016).

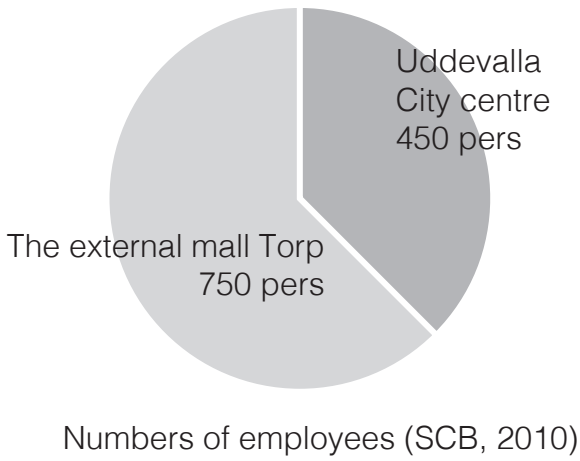
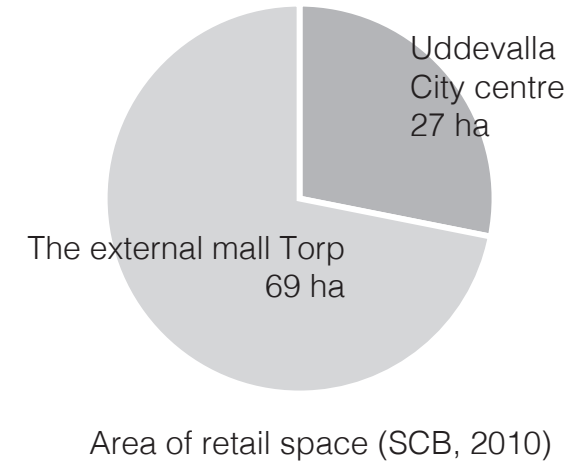
Commuting distance from Uddevalla to cities within Västra Götaland:





# THE MALL IS THE NEW CITY CENTRE

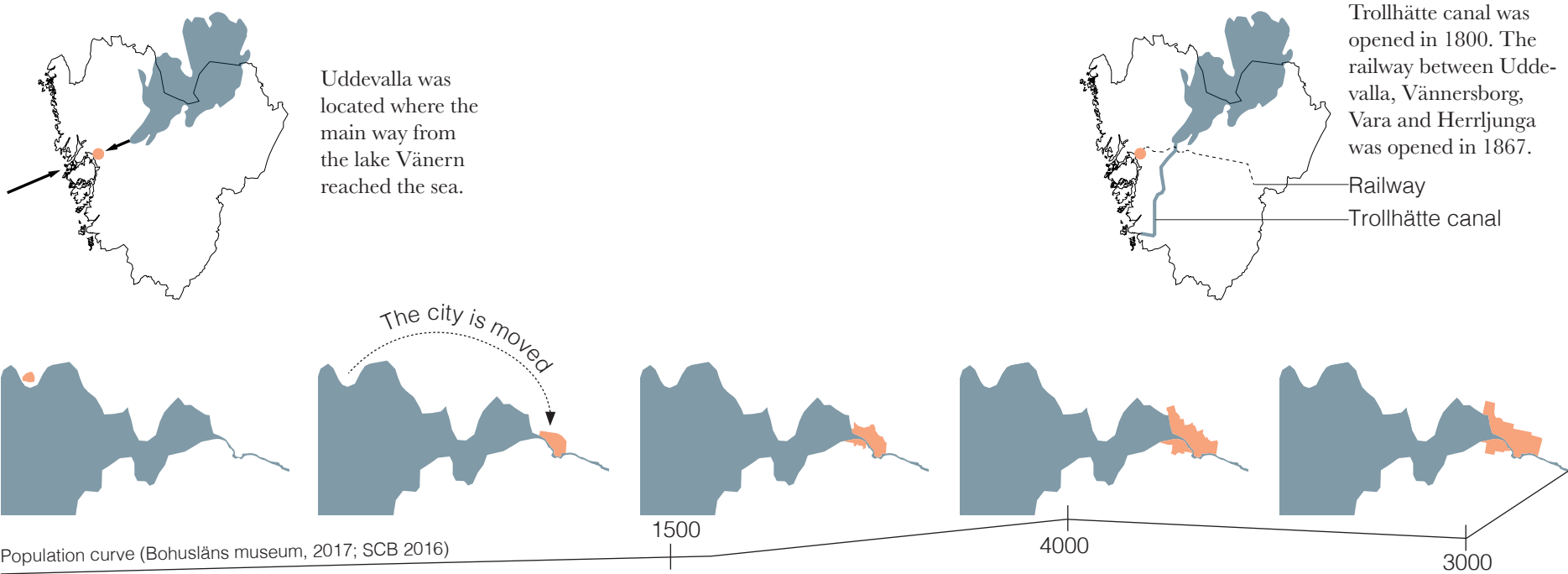
The outcrowd effect in Uddevalla city centre, caused by the external mall Torp, has happened gradually since the opening of the mall in 1991. The situation is now severe and media is reporting of citizens upset about the development of the centre, and store-owners are devastated about the situation (Gistedt, 2013). The outcrowd effect is shown through statistic numbers (SCB, 2016) but also felt when walking the empty streets of Uddevalla city centre.





TIMELINE

The timeline is describing the development of Uddevalla in order to understand the underlying forces that had led to the current situation.



**1400**  
**Uddevalla emerges**

Uddevalla emerges on the main way between the sea and the lake Vänern. Ships are arriving here with fish and salt, that are traded to grains and skins that horse loads brings from the plains around Vänern. The inhabitants are traders and craftsmen and Bohuslän belongs to Norway in the Nordic union (Bohusläns museum, 2017).

**1500**  
**War & fire**

The 16th century is filled with war between Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Bohuslän is very harassed and Uddevalla is burnt on three occasions. After the first one, in 1502, Uddevalla is moved inland to the river Bäveån (Bohusläns museum, 2017).

**1600**  
**War & fire continues**

The wars continue and Uddevalla is burnt another three times. The Treaty of Roskilde in 1658 states that Bohuslän is Swedish territory (Bohusläns museum, 2017).

**1700**  
**Herring period**

The herring population has an enormous increase and the west coast is facing a herring period, the greatest to this date. The citizens of Uddevalla cure herring, construct barrels and handles export (Bohusläns museum, 2017). This is a golden era for the city!

**1800**  
**The three misfortunes**

The "three misfortunes" happens. Trollhätte canal is opened in 1800, meaning that the timber is now shipped to Gothenburg instead of being taken by road to Uddevalla. The city is burnt to the ground in 1806 and the herring disappears in 1808. Uddevalla is now facing a crisis (Bohusläns museum, 2017).

7000 35000 29800 34700

**1900**  
**The industrial revolution**

In the mid 19th century the industry is developing in Uddevalla. One factory after another opens and once again puts the citizens to work. Kampenhof cotton spinning mill and textile factory, Cöster woodwork factory, mechanical factory... (Bohusläns museum, 2017)

**1946**  
**The shipyard**

The shipyard, Uddevallavarvet, is founded in 1946 and during four decades it is putting its mark on Uddevalla and Bohuslän, giving the city a new golden era! But global competition forces the yard to close down in 1984 (Bohusläns museum, 2017).

**1991**  
**Torp Köpcentrum**

Uddevalla is again facing a crisis with high unemployment when the shipyard is closing down. The hope to save Uddevalla is put on the external shopping, Torp, that opens in 1991. Torp is located approximately 7 kilometres west from Uddevalla city centre next to the highway E6 (Bohusläns museum, 2017).

**2017**  
**Outcrowded city centre**

Today the external mall is causing an out crowd effect on the city centre where the streets are drained from commerce and urban life (Andersson, 2016).

The external mall Torp

Uddevalla city centre

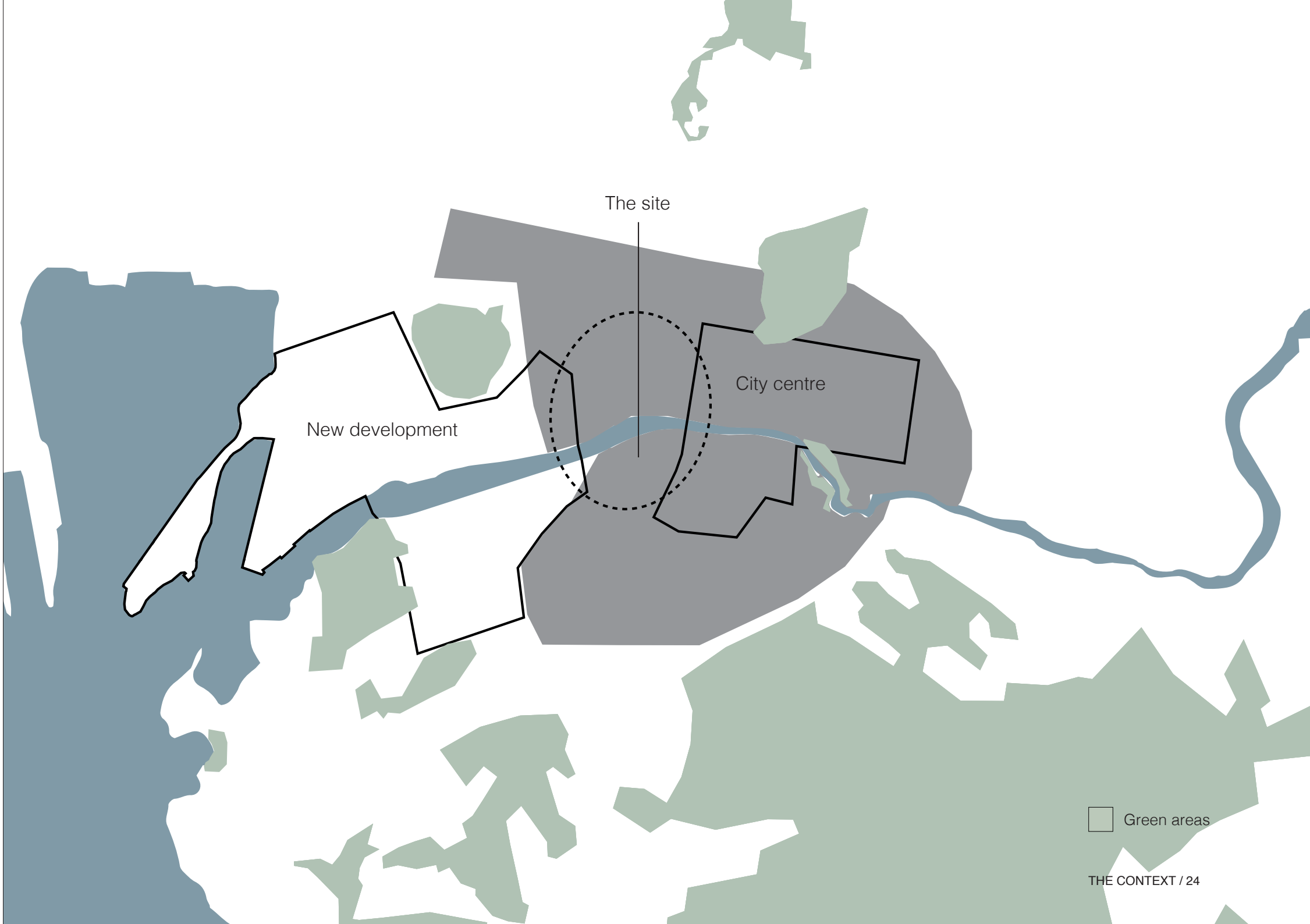
----- Railway  
—— Highway E6

**The external mall is vital for Uddevalla, yet devastating for the city centre.**

# THE MUNICIPALITY’S PLANS FOR UDDEVALLA

The municipality of Uddevalla has decided to expand the city centre with a wish for it to regain the urban life and again become the main social arena in Uddevalla (Uddevalla kommun, 2017).

A large area, connecting the city centre with the water, is intended to be expanded with 3000 new apartments (Uddevalla kommun, 2017). The land has through history been used for industrial work and a development at the proposed area would double the size of the city centre (Uddevalla kommun, 2017). To make the expansion possible, a resilient growth of the city centre is required, connecting the old city centre with the new development. And to regain the urban life, a way must be found for the external mall and the city centre to co-exist.

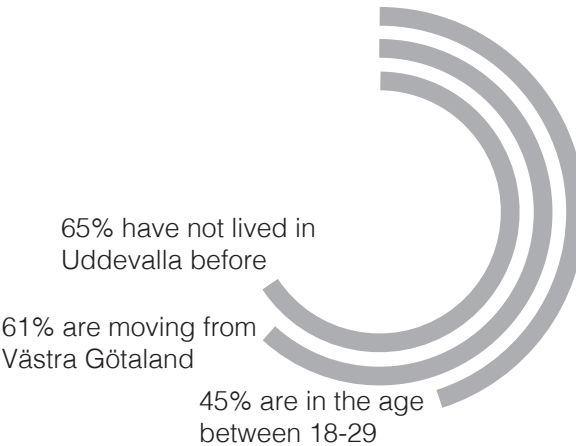


**Analysis**

# THE TARGET GROUP

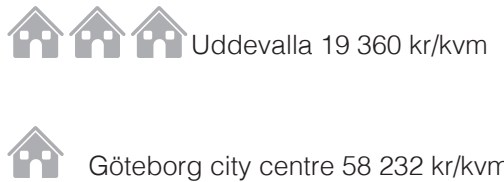
Statistics of people immigrating to Uddevalla today shows that Uddevalla is appealing to young families, not necessarily with a connection to the city from before (Länström, 2010). The commuting distance makes Uddevalla attractive for people moving from Göteborg, looking for cheaper housing or a more calm environment.

## Who chooses to move to Uddevalla today? (Länström, 2010)

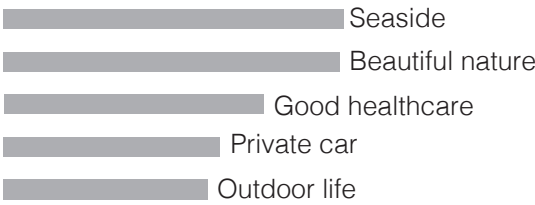


## Why do they choose to move to Uddevalla?

Housing prices in Uddevalla compared to Göteborg (Svensk mäklarstatistik, 2017):



The five most valued reasons why new residents choose Uddevalla (Länström, 2010):



In order for Uddevalla to grow with the proposed extension, people need to move to Uddevalla. By looking at who is moving to Uddevalla today, a potential target group can be defined.

## SMALL SCALE NEIGHBOURHOODS

The potential new residents of Uddevalla are young adults with small children that do not want to live in a busy city, but appreciates the safe environment where children can move around by themselves.



## NATURE & OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

The potential new residents of Uddevalla are appreciating the seaside, the fjord and the green environment. They are active and values a large selection of outdoor activities.



## COMMUTING

The potential new residents of Uddevalla are willing to commute to get the desired living conditions.



## CULTURE & RESTAURANTS

The potential new residents of Uddevalla are choosing Uddevalla instead of somewhere more rural because they are enjoying an urban environment with restaurants and culture around the corner.





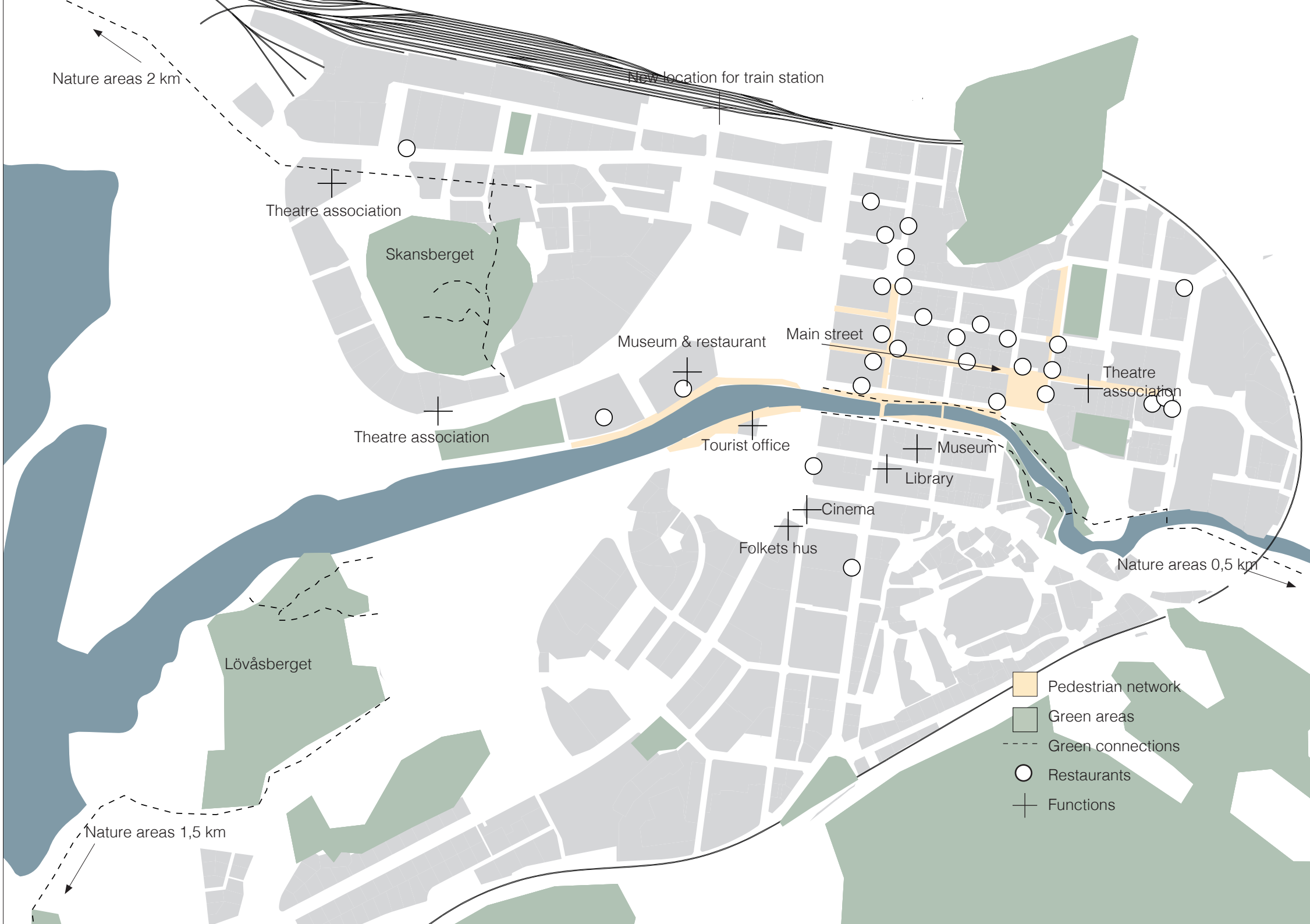
# EXISTING QUALITIES

Based on needs and requirements for the potential target group, existing qualities in Uddevalla city centre are mapped out.

The train and bus station are important nodes and a new location for the train station is proposed by the municipality,. The location for the bus station is flexible since the old building is to be demolished.

The city centre is characterised by the hills that are embedding Uddevalla. Lövåssberget and Skansberget are valuable green areas close to the city centre but yet disconnected from the city network. The large green areas surrounding Uddevalla is connected through a beautiful green walk along the water connected to the city centre alongside Lövåssberget.

In the city centre a cluster of cultural activities can be distinguished south of the fjord, with the cinema, Folkets hus, the library and a museum. In Uddevalla, there is a lot of small theatre associations, but no natural place for them to perform. There is also a lack of an art gallery. The restaurants are clustered around the main street, and does not stretch out to meet the water.



# CONCLUSIONS

*How to design for a resilient growth of a city centre in co-existence with an external mall?*

Essential in order for the city centre to grow is an increased immigration to Uddevalla. To create a resilient growth the design is to be focused to meet the needs and requirements of the potential target group. It is also important for Uddevalla to distinguish as the natural choice of residence for this target group. Uddevalla has to create a strong identity based on the existing qualities that appeals to the target group. Successful strategies in the reference cities Örebro and Borås, in order to create a strong identity, has been to divide the city into clusters with strong character. By letting these clusters offer urban qualities and experiences that the external malls lacks, the spillover effect is achieved. In that way, the external mall can provide the visitors with a nice shopping experience that is followed by a, for example, culture or restaurant experience in the city centre. Further, to unfold the urban life, places have to be provided in the city centre that bring people together.

- Create a strong identity for the city by dividing the city centre into clusters with strong character.
- Focus on strengthen existing qualities in the city centre that are absent at the external mall.
- Meet needs and requirements of a potential target group to ensure a resilient growth.
- Create meeting places that brings people together.

# DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

In order to bring people together and create a strong identity for Uddevalla, based on the existing qualities and the requirements of the target group, three development strategies are created.



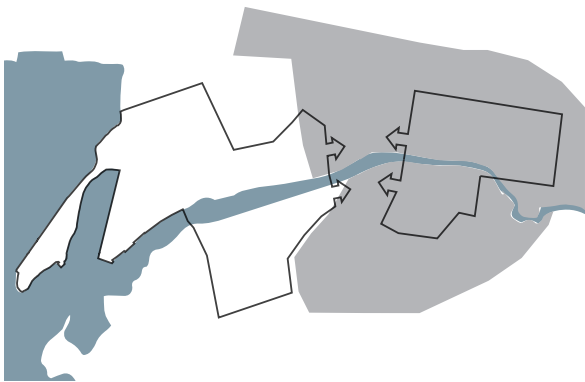
## Converge commuting!

Make Uddevalla city centre the focal point for commuting in Västra Götaland. Increase the access to public transportation and introduce facilities that makes it convenient to be a commuter in the city centre.



## Converge nature!

Make Uddevalla city centre the focal point for the unique nature and outdoor activities in the area. Bring in the green and blue environment into the city centre and make it visible. Increase the access to the surrounding nature.



## Converge people!

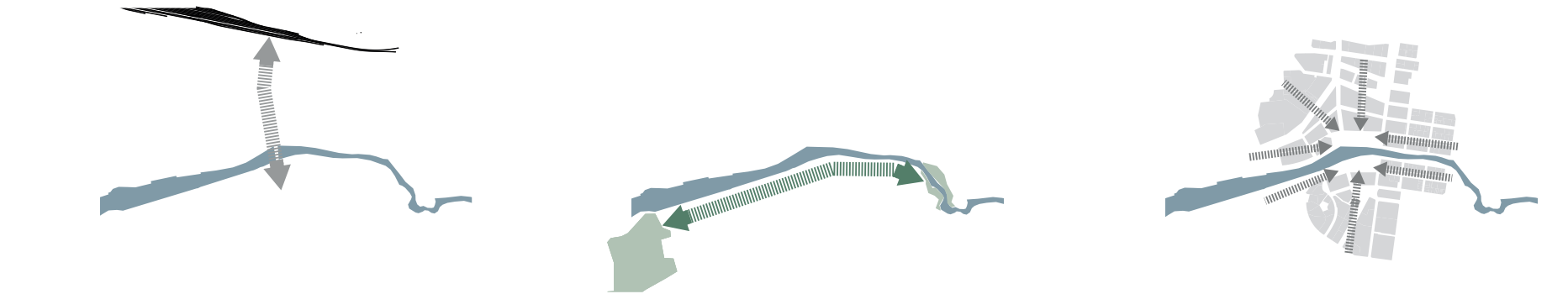
Make the area between the old city centre and the new development a natural focal point for people to meet. Unfold the urban life by direct the city to one central point.

**The Proposal**



DESIGN CONCEPT

The development strategies for Uddevalla are translated into a design concept which is adapted to the site.



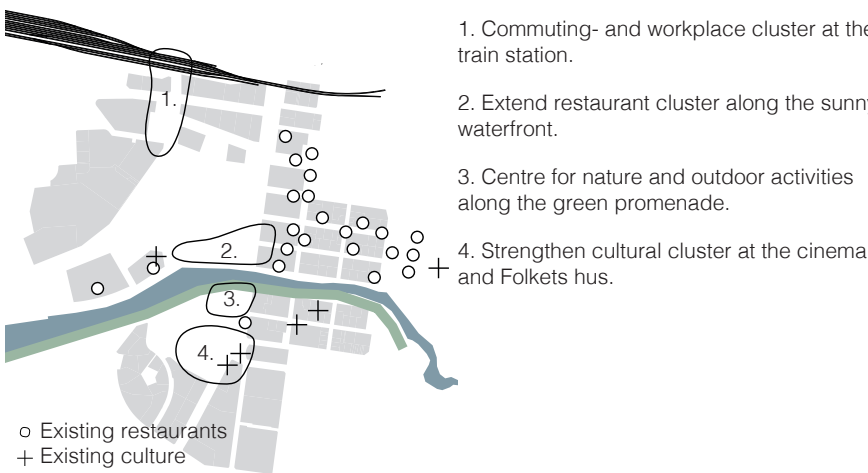
Connect the city centre and the train station with a vertical spine through the city centre.

Connect the nature areas in East and West with a green walk along the water.

Direct the streets towards one central square.

PROGRAM

In addition to the design concept, with the intention to create clusters in the city centre with strong character, a program is introduced.



ELEMENTS

The elements in the new area are intended to create a natural transition between the existing city centre and the new area. The block dimensions are adapted to an "Uddevalla scale".



Continue block structure from the existing city centre.

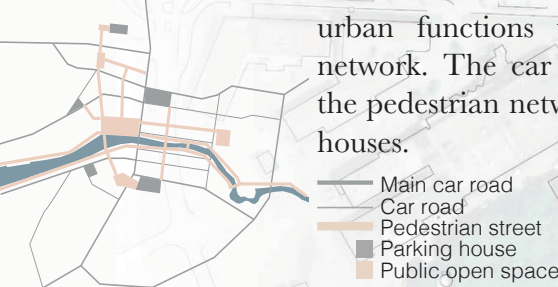
Enclose yards for a private oasis.

Offset buildings to change scale and rhythm through the city centre.

THE PROPOSAL

New street network

The new street network is connecting the urban functions with a pedestrian street network. The car is parked at the edge of the pedestrian network in one of the parking houses.



Building use

The existing main street is extended into the new area with commercial in the ground floor. The offices are located along the spine and along the more busy car streets.



Building height

The buildings are higher along the spine and along the more busy car streets.





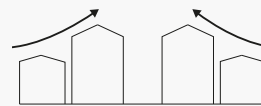


The spine - street section 1:400



The neighbourhood passage - street section 1:400

## THE SPINE



The spine is the new backbone in Uddevalla, connecting the new train station with the city centre. The buildings around the spine are high and marks the importance of the street. The flow of people back and forth to the station fits well on the wide street, and the spacious bike lane makes it convenient to bike along the spine.

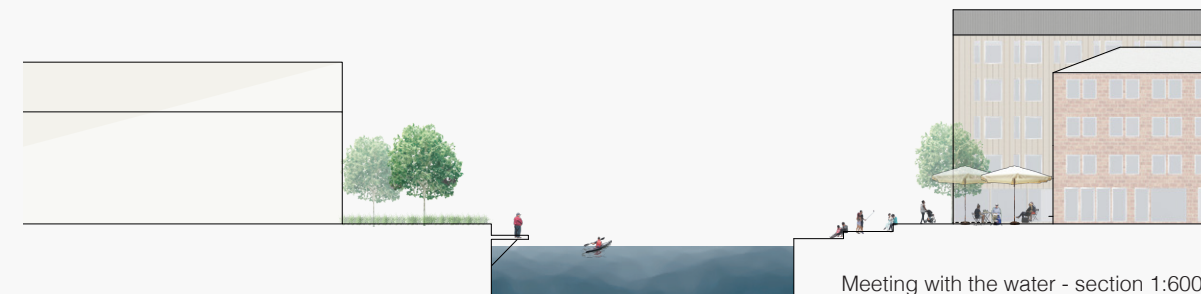
## THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PASSAGE



The neighbourhood passage is intimate and with low rise buildings to create a human scale environment. The volumes are broken to create a slow pace through the neighbourhood and the width of the street varies from narrow passages to wider, recurring meeting places.

## MEETING WITH THE WATER

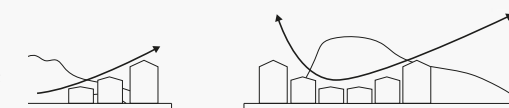
The waterfront is designed to enable closeness to the water. On the South side, a pier holds the canoes in the outdoor activity park, but also works as a walk along the water. On the North side, the social sit landscape steps down to the water in different levels.



Meeting with the water - section 1:600

## THE SILHOUETTE

The nature is integrated in the silhouette of Uddevalla. The buildings varies in height, inverted to the shape of the characteristic mountains, and frames the green hill tops.



Section 1:2000

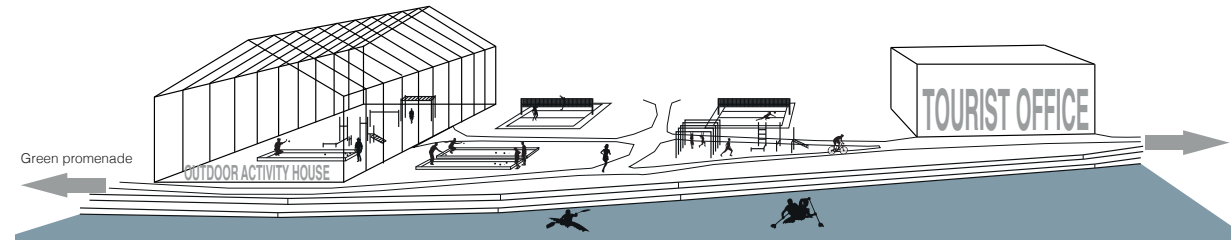
## BIRD VIEW





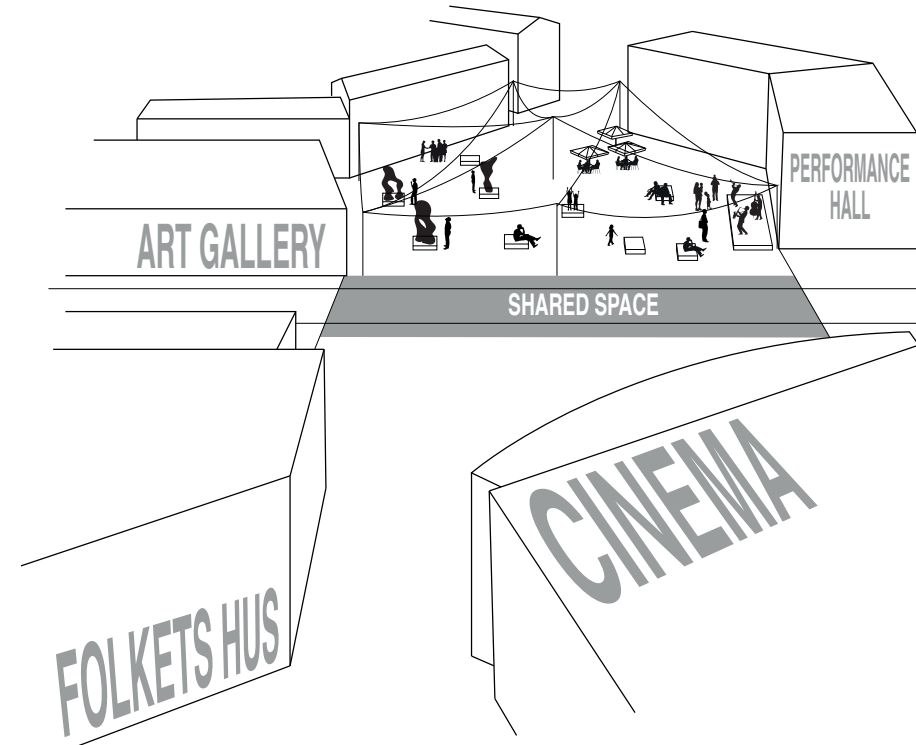
## THE OUTDOOR ACTIVITY PARK

The outdoor activity park is the focal point for the outdoor activities in the area. This is the starting point for run-, hike- and bike tracks into the surrounding nature. It is also where you can rent a kayak and explore the unique fjord environment. The tourist office is located in the park and provides visitors with needed information about the activities. The outdoor activity park is offering urban outdoor activities such as boules, volleyball or gyms, both outdoor and in the weather protected public open glass house.



## THE CULTURAL CLUSTER

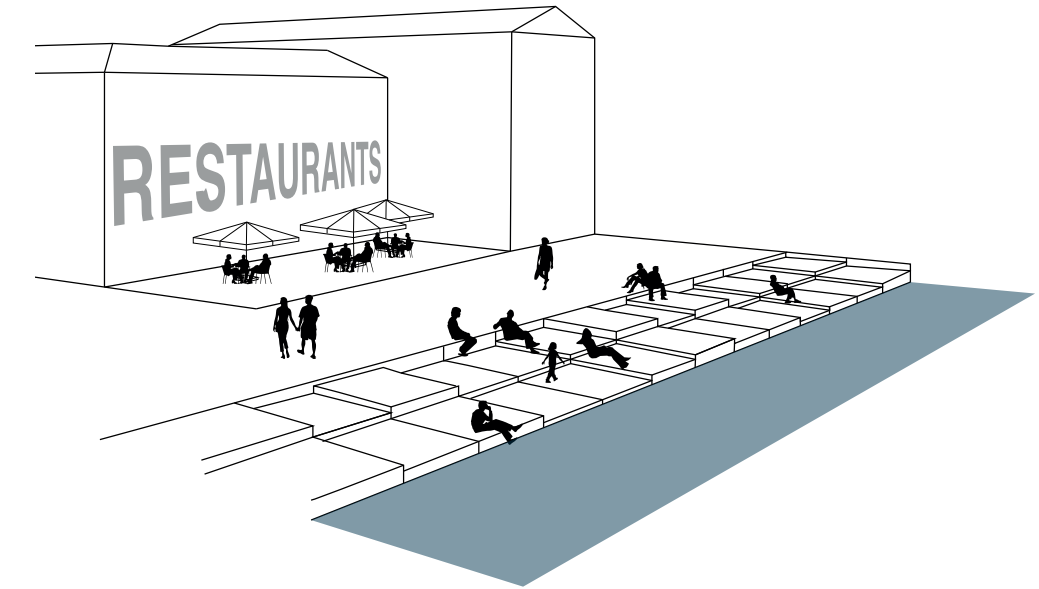
When entering Uddevalla from the South, the cultural cluster is what you first meet. The existing cinema and Folkets hus are complemented with an art gallery, a performance hall and facilities for education with a culture orientation. In-between the buildings a flexible square enables culture activities, such as art exhibitions and performances, to move out into the public space.



## THE WATERFRONT

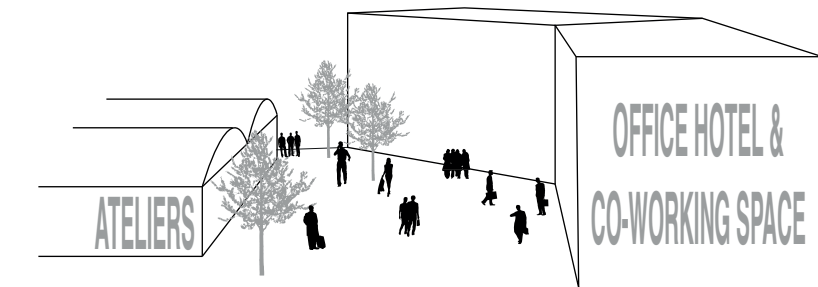
Directed to the South, restaurants with outdoor terraces are stretched out along the waterfront. The stair stepping down to the water is creating a sit landscape for social interaction in close contact with the water. A sunny day this central point of the city is crowded with people and on a rainy day the restaurants are packed with people enjoying the view over the water and the park on the other side.

Green promenade



## THE OFFICE HUB

The office hub is located along the spine, in close connection to the commuting centre. The hub offers the commuters in Uddevalla facilities to work in when not have to travel to work. In the office hotel it is possible to rent a space temporary or more permanent and at the working café the commuters spend an hour with a cup of coffee in a working adapted environment before the train leaves. The old industrial building is transformed to a co-working space and ateliers.

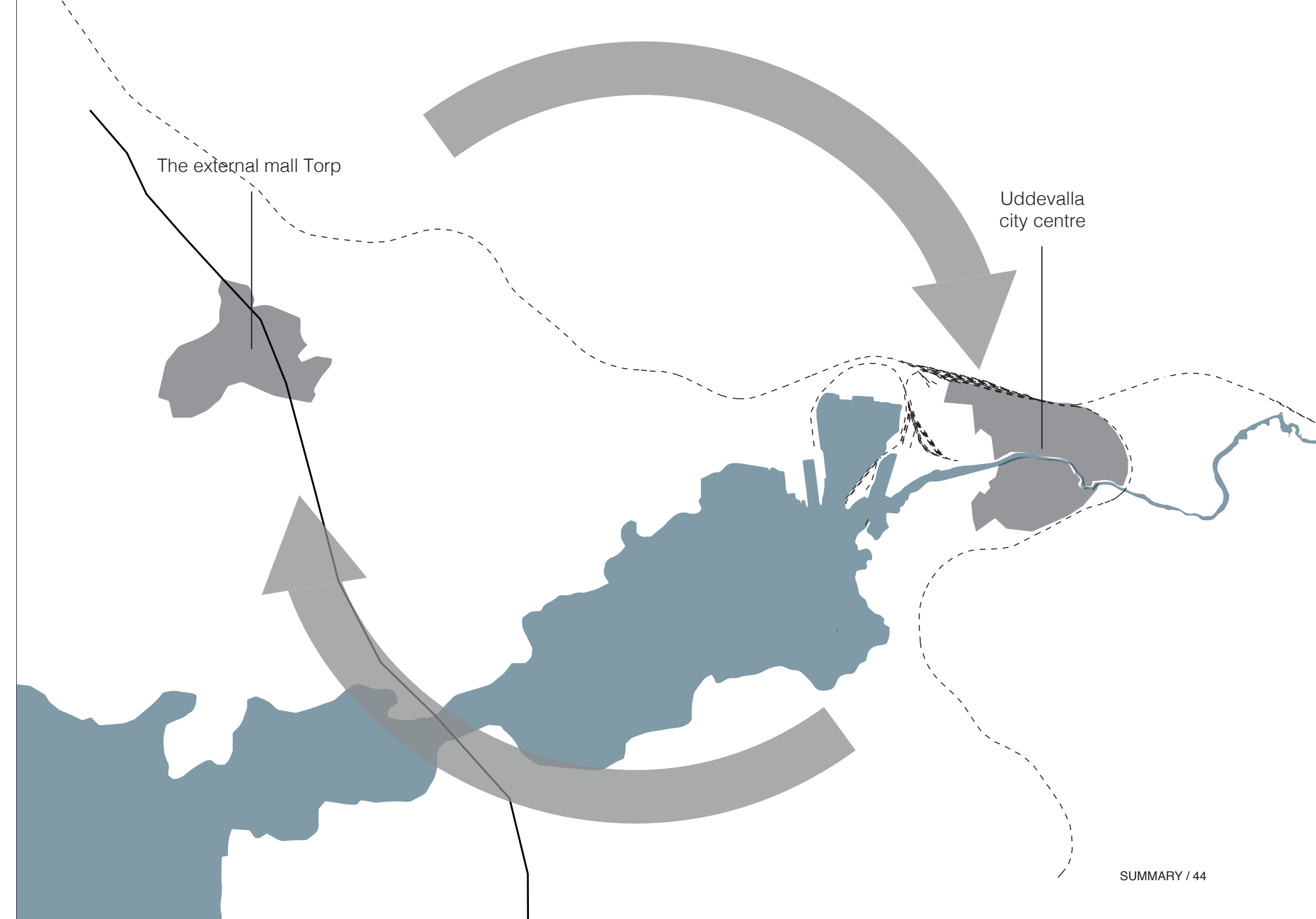


**Summary**

I started out with the research question *how to design for a resilient growth of a city centre in co-existence with an external mall?* My solution for co-existence is to create an identity for Uddevalla city centre through clusters with strong character and strengthen qualities absent at the external mall. By doing this Uddevalla provides the visitors with different experiences, a nice shopping experience at the external mall followed by a nature, culture or restaurant experience in the city centre.

My solution for a resilient growth of the city centre is to create an identity for Uddevalla that meets the needs and requirements of the potential target group.

I believe that my solutions not only creates conditions for the external mall and the city centre to co-exist. What is actually created is a unit where the two complement each other and together become an attractive destination point for the whole region!





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**Appendix**  
posters





