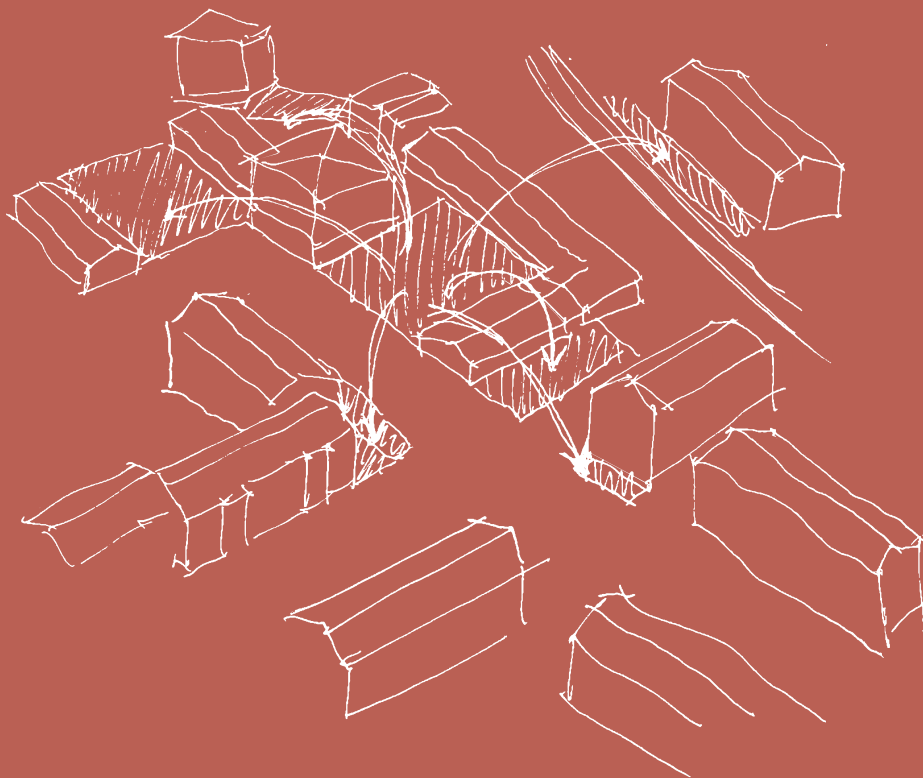


# REIMAGINING CITYTORGET

- A SPATIAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE POTENTIAL OF A SUBURBAN LOCAL SQUARE



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Master's Thesis in Architecture

Chalmers School of Architecture

Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering

Examiner: Marco Adelfio

Supervisor: Nils Björling

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Rurban Transformation

## ABSTRACT

The starting point of this thesis is a personal experience of living in the area which is the subject of this project - seeing both things lacking in the local context as well as great values and potentials. The thing most noticeably lacking is meaningful public space, where we as inhabitants actually want to spend our time providing the possibility for social encounters.

Suburban areas are however often underestimated and preconceptions about their potential for city life risk dictate the planning of new additions in these locations - leaving public space as a negative, what simply becomes left over when new building additions are made.

With several challenges in society today, public space is too valuable to be left to chance, but rather needs careful planning to fulfil its potential.

This thesis aims to discuss the importance of meaningful public spaces in the local context which can work as a catalyst for city life and social encounters. This is made through the redesign of Citytorget and its surroundings in Kortedala, Gothenburg. The aim in the design proposal is improving the quality of the physical environment to a degree which can promote voluntary activities in public space as well as prolonging the necessary activities - making the sense of city life greater and increasing the likelihood for social encounters. The design proposal investigates how a development of city life in the area of Citytorget can be promoted while questioning that everything would need to look like or have the density of the central city to achieve this.

Local preconditions, municipal strategies for the intermediate city and literature are studied and used as a starting point for the design and following discussion.

The outcome of the thesis is a design proposal from which ten principles for design are derived. These principles are formulated as follows; strengthen the design and atmosphere of the physical environment, turn functions towards movement, switching up the venues, a coherent built environment, there are different ways to define space, a coordinated planning, readable space and clear sightlines, strengthen and extend connections in the larger scale, real public places and leaving parts of the design for others.

Keywords : Public space, City life, Social encounters, The intermediate city, Kortedala

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## P R E F A C E

The driving force behind the choice of subject for this master's thesis is my own experience of currently living in the north of Kortedala and having the feeling that the square in question does not quite live up to its potential.

The most apparent flaw of the square is the physical state of it - lack of maintenance and care of both the building and the square space, which drags down the general appearance of an otherwise very beautiful and pleasant neighbourhood.

The next flaw is the lack of people - even though the area around the square is relatively densely populated, and attraction points such as the tram stop and the grocery store on the square renders many people moving in the area for large portions of the day, few people spend more time than absolutely necessary on and around the square.

This made me start thinking about both what could be changed to improve the attraction of the existing buildings as well as what could be done about the surrounding urban spaces to provide attractive public space where you can do very ordinary things which are taken for granted in many other places in the city. The possibility to sit on a bench in the sun watching people walk by, to go for a spontaneous glass of wine with a friend on the evening of a weekday or to have a cup of coffee while your child plays on the playground - just to name a few.

Many would argue that a suburban square like Citytorget can never compete with the city centre when it comes to city life and urban services - but for me, and I'm convinced for many others, the choice is not generally between going to the local square or the city centre, it is between going somewhere local or not having the energy to go somewhere at all. And every time somebody stays at home instead of using public space, and does not take part in and contributes to public life, the preconditions for creating a stronger community where you can know both your neighbours and your local context gets a little worse.

This conviction is a guiding perspective throughout the work, and I hope that my design proposal can be a starting point also for others to start dreaming about what this place could be beyond its current limitations and shortcomings.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION



## PROBLEM SETTING AND BACKGROUND

When Kortedala was planned, it was in many ways a revolution. It was planned as a solution to a severe housing shortage with overcrowding and poor housing qualities as well as an embodiment of the vision of the people's home (folkhemmet). Delegations from all over the world came to visit Kortedala to see how it was possible to build a one bedroom apartment with a bath and parquet floors which an ordinary working class family could afford.

It was planned with care to fit the topography and to provide a foundation for a strong local community and when it was finished Kortedala realised the dream of a modern yet affordable apartment for many families.

Times have changed and the population, movement patterns and use of spaces are not the same as in the 50's and 60's but Kortedala has structurally changed very little. In many aspects the physical environment in large parts of Kortedala is now lacking the capacity to provide the spaces around which a sense of community can be built.

As the city grows and housing shortage increases it becomes more and more in question to explore the possibilities for development and densification in more peripheral locations in the city. In municipal strategies the intermediate city, where Kortedala is included, is set out to be developed. This part of the city often harbours areas of already claimed land which at a first glance seem to have played out their purpose, like parking lots or closed industries (this can be, but is not always true - informal usage of these areas is often overlooked). Together with already existing connections to public transport and other forms of communications two attributes which are seen as desirable when new housing projects are planned are already fulfilled.

Even though municipal strategies state that local preconditions need to be considered in such development there is a risk that prejudice about

these areas - often referred to as the suburbs - dictate the planning, and within new additions in these landscapes the design of public spaces can be overlooked - simply because the common picture of these landscapes is that they are a failure from an urban point of view. The prospects for city life in these environments are often downgraded, or only seen as possible if the existing structure is replaced by something closer resembling traditional European cities to better fit current urban norms. Disregarding the potential of these areas and planning accordingly risks making a lack of city life become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

As a society we should aim to create meaningful public spaces for the inhabitants, spaces which are not only coherent, understandable and related to each other but also relateable to other aspects of life (Lynch et al., 1995). Spaces which you want to spend time in, create memories in and which provide good preconditions for the activities we want to take part in, as well as all those activities which are necessary to make daily life work.

If we want to create these spaces in the city which provide the foundation for city life we have to start with a vision which tells us it is possible, and not reduce the value of public urban space to being the negative which remains when the buildings we needed are built (C. Alexander et al, 1987).

In a time when society is divided by segregation and the increasing polarisation of opinions and values we can not afford to waste the potential of public space as a basis for feeling a connection to those around you and to society as a whole.

That is where this thesis is situated - around a local square in Gothenburg which today appears more as a backside to the tram stop than as a lively public space, but which holds the potential for so much more.



## AIM

The aim of this thesis is to study how a redesign and spatial interventions on and around Citytorget in the north of Kortedala, Gothenburg, can showcase the potential of the local urban square as a catalyst for city life and social encounters.

## METHOD

This work is done primarily with research through design as a method, where a design proposal is the main tool to investigate and discuss how the aim can be fulfilled.

Literature and theory studies are used to help define issues, potentials and values being incorporated in the design, and extensive site analysis is carried out to deepen the understanding of the local context and how local preconditions affect how more general theories can be used in this specific case.

Design choices are through the process tested in an iterative way in drawings, sketches and illustrations, exploring how issues can be resolved and values strengthened. Design and theory goes hand in hand in the process of developing the design proposal.

Different scales of the project are studied in parallel to enable a project which deals with issues all the way from the connections in the larger scale to details at eye

## DELIMITATIONS

level, and how these can affect the perception of the place. This is primarily a spatial investigation, and focus lies on the design and aspects which affect space more or less directly. The project is rather about the visions regarding the potential of space and how an improvement can attract more visitors and not about aspects of economy or marketing regarding the businesses in the area.

Changes in the localities are done from a spatial perspective, and not based on evaluations of the businesses which rent venues on the square today. Some localities will be removed or altered and some will be added, but the proposal regarding businesses will be kept to general statements about what types of businesses could fit where, and not include a detailed proposal for all localities and businesses.

## 2. DISCOURSE

## INTRODUCTION

"There seems to be consensus on the fact that the most important function of public space is meetings" (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001). This section of the thesis aims to expand on that notion, collecting theories regarding public space, why it is important and how we design public space to get to the desired result.

The research from urban design researcher Ann Legeby provides a general problem formulation and perspectives on why the physical environment is crucial in dealing with segregation on a more structural level whereas the perspectives and strategies from Jan Gehl's *Life Between Buildings* goes into more detail describing different levels of social interactions and activities and different measures needed to promote these. Gehl is an architect and urban design researcher who together with his wife Ingrid Gehl, a psychologist, has performed extensive studies on the use of public space in the borderland between sociology, psychology and architecture. This section also aims to bring in other perspectives needed to understand the aims for the design work in this thesis.

## PATTERNS OF CO-PRESENCE

One of the biggest challenges for the city of Gothenburg is an increasing socio-spatial segregation (Valencia et al., 2019). The rates of long-term unemployment, income levels, health and even life expectancy differ vastly between different parts of the city and not only between different groups in the city, rendering issues of segregation not only a social issue but also very much a spatial issue.

Research from Ann Legeby (2013) concludes that urban form and the built environment is highly linked to segregation - we are more or less likely to encounter people from other social groups depending on the shape of public space and urban form. While the question of segregation mostly is discussed as a social issue, when it is discussed as a spatial issue it is mostly in discussions regarding housing segregation - that different groups tend to live in different parts of cities and that those different parts render citizens with very different living conditions and life opportunities. However, Legeby points out that the patterns of residential segregation are not always mirrored by how people use the city in their everyday lives. Public space can either have a reinforcing or counteracting effect on the negative consequences of segregation. Therefore the design of public space needs to be addressed alongside the issues of housing segregation.

Legeby (2013) describes public space as "a site or an arena where one may see and encounter other people, be seen by others and become aware of similarities and differences based on, for example, demographic, socioeconomic or ethnic aspects. By being co-present in public streets, squares, in parks or in public institutions such as libraries or schools, we have the possibility of gaining insight into other people's living conditions." Further she brings up how sharing public space with others is essential to be able to feel included in society and how a limited exchange between different parts of and different groups in the city equals an increased risk for polarisation and exclusion - very much the opposite of a cohesive society.

The understanding of spatial segregation as something which extends beyond housing segregation and includes when and how public space is used and by whom is adapted in this thesis. For even if housing segregation is eradicated, or an individual neighbourhood has a mix of social groups, the positive social implications will to a large extent still be absent without the possibility for meetings, to be able to be co-present in space both with people from the same neighbourhood as yourself and with people from other neighbourhoods.

## THE SCALES OF SEGREGATION

The approach to how to solve the segregation issues has varied over time, from local projects very much connected to the physical environment to pure social initiatives. The ambitions of these projects have often been too high - aiming to solve the city wide structural problems regarding segregation on a local scale have resulted in many projects deemed as failures, even if the projects themselves led to positive results and more equal living conditions both on an individual and local scale. (Legeby, 2013)

"... there is an ambivalence regarding the scale on which segregation should be approached. ... it seems that it is possible on the one hand to discuss social relations or urban social networks within an area and on the other hand, what appears to be of the utmost importance in the issue of urban segregation is to discuss social relations or urban social networks that work between different areas, i.e. relations and networks that overcome space and reach beyond the local neighbourhood or district and connect people, groups etc. across the city and furthermore, study what spatial conditions are needed for these types of urban social networks to emerge." (Legeby, 2013)

Segregation can both exist within and between neighbourhoods, and within this thesis the value of combating segregation also on a local scale is recognised.

## THE PATTERNS OF SEGREGATION

Legeby's studies are primarily based on the architectural theory of space syntax, theories which are used to analyse how spaces connect to each other and how that connection or lack thereof in turn affect how people move or act in the built environment. Those studies show that some urban layouts favour an exchange between different neighbourhoods more than others. Issues with a neighbourhood unit planning from the 40's and 50's are studied, concluding that the conflict between the local community and community at a city level seen in those days in fact does not exist and that diffuse boundaries between neighbourhoods could lead to an increased interplay between them without weakening the local identities. (Legeby, 2013)

Ann Legeby's research regarding the connection between physical space, spatial integration, and social segregation focuses mostly on a perspective regarding larger scales than what is considered in this thesis. If we considering that a street could be the most spatially integrated street in the street system, but if it isn't nice to sit by, and isn't nice for pedestrians - the flow of people and thus the preconditions for social encounters will still be limited, we realise that the large scale is not the only thing which needs to be considered to combat segregation. To get a deeper understanding regarding how design of spaces on a smaller scale influences the use of them, a selection of theories from Jan Gehl is studied in the next section of this text.

CITY LIFE

LIFE BETWEEN BUILDINGS

City life or life between buildings as Gehl names it is basically the interaction between people, businesses and other activities (Spacescape et al., 2018). An obvious foundation for this is the presence of people in the streets and in public space for without people there cannot be life or interaction. In contrast to many other theories and strategies regarding city life as being totally and only linked/depending to/on the density of population, Gehl brings in how the built environment in different ways can promote or hinder different types of activities and social encounters based on the state and the design of it.

Apart from offering concrete tools to promote it, Gehl offers insights into why life between buildings is so important to maintain a sustainable society, and similarly to the reasoning from Legeby (2013) he argues for the power public space has to create a foundation for a feeling of community and to form an idea about your social surroundings. Gehl (2003) describes social activities and the presence of others as one of the most important qualities of public space.

To understand how the studies from Gehl (2003) are relevant to this thesis two key concepts from the theories from Life between buildings need to be understood - the concept of outdoor activities as being divided in to categories of necessary, voluntary and social activities which require different things of the built environment and the concept of different levels of intensity of these social activities.

NECESSARY ACTIVITIES

The necessary activities are the day to day activities that are hard to avoid, for example going to the grocery store or waiting for public transport. These activities make up the largest part of pedestrian traffic and occur more or less all year round no matter the weather or the state of the physical environment. (Gehl, 2003)

VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

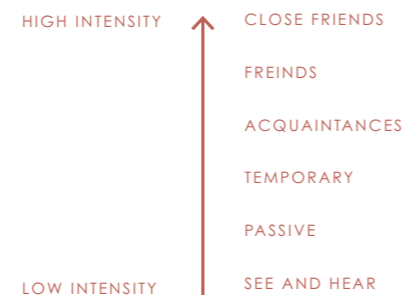
The voluntary activities are the activities and actions you don't need to do but do because you feel like it. In this category various leisure activities are included, but also very basic activities like going for a walk or sitting on a bench enjoying the sunshine. This category of activities are highly dependent on a high quality of the physical environment - "What happens when the outdoor spaces are of poor quality is that only the strictly necessary activities occur" (Gehl, 2003, own translation).

SOCIAL / FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

The category of social and follow-up activities include all forms of social contact which occur in public space, where the most fundamental type is passive contact - to see and to hear others. These activities are also mentioned as follow-up activities since they are very related to and often a product of the two previously mentioned activity types. When these activities occur their quality is not directly affected by the state of the physical environment - but the likelihood of social activities occurring is directly linked to how many necessary and voluntary activities take place as well as how long these activities last. (Gehl, 2003)

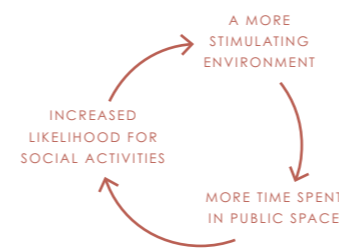
DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CONTACT

The passive contacts are a quality in themselves - without them "the nuanced middle ground between being alone and being together is gone. . . . Either you are alone, or you are together with others on a relatively demanding level." (Gehl, 2003, own translation) They are also an important source of information about your surroundings and as a starting point for more intense forms of contact, for instance to create and maintain new acquaintances.

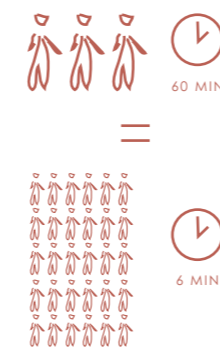


[ADAPTED FROM GEHL, 2003.]

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE QUALITY OF SPACE AND CITY LIFE



ONE + ONE = THREE



The same amount of people can influence the possibility of meetings and a sense of city life very differently depending how long they stay in one place. That in turn is dependent on the quality of the space. Even if the necessary activities occur no matter the state of the physical environment the time spent doing the necessary activities is affected. If the conditions are poor people hurry home, decreasing the amount of people populating public space at the same time. (Gehl, 2003)

	QUALITY OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
	POOR QUALITY	GOOD QUALITY
NECESSARY ACTIVITIES	●	●
VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES	.	●
FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES (SOCIAL ACTIVITIES)	●	●

[ADAPTED FROM GEHL, 2003.]

Since the necessary activities make up the largest part of pedestrian movement, how long the conductors of these activities stay, and thereby how likely it is that the necessary activities lead to a following voluntary or social activity have a very large impact on the experience of a place as lively or not. By extension this influences how attractive it is to spend time in the public space, for the quality of being around other people is a quality that seems irreplaceable (Gehl, 2003). As the urban anthropologist William Whyte famously expressed it: "What attracts other people most, it would appear, is other people". (Whyte, 1980).

Even if someone is only passing by - seeing other people interact, move or do things, contribute with variation and gives a richness in the experience of the space and in turn make it more attractive both to reside in a space or walk by, if there are others around both moving and residing. "Life between buildings is not only pedestrian traffic, the recreational or the social activities. Life between buildings entails the entire spectrum, the diversity and interweaving which actually occur and which together make common spaces in cities and housing areas meaningful and attractive." (Gehl, 2003, own translation)

Gehl (2003) describes life between buildings as a self reinforcing effect and highlights the findings of dutch architect F. van Klingeren who summarised his findings as "One plus one equals three - minimum" Gehl describes the opposite as also being true - "nothing happens because nothing happens etc., etc." (Own translation) Gehl also makes the link between the lack of population of a place and big distances as something which creates the feeling of a no-man's land nobody feels connected to or ownership over. This in turn can be linked to increased vandalism and crime, which lessens the motivation to populate public space and therefore creates a vicious circle.

The number of people matter for this self-reinforcing effect, but the duration of activity is even more important. A vastly different amount of people can contribute to the same average level of activity depending on the average time spent in public space. (Gehl, 2003)

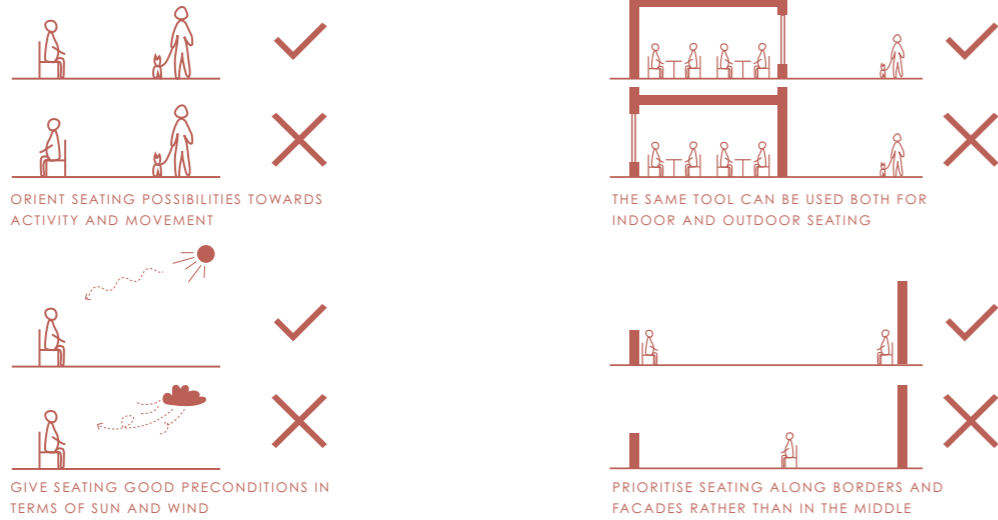
This phenomena of self-reinforcing, this base of all the time working to promote the quality of people being out and about and that activities are to be given proper preconditions to last longer is the foundation for many of Gehl's more concrete tools regarding how to enhance this quality in public space.

In the next section of this text some examples of these tools used for inspiration in this thesis are presented.

## TOOLS FOR CREATING AN ATTRACTIVE AND STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT

Examples of concrete design tools from Gehl (2003) which aim to strengthen the qualities of space, to make people willing to stay longer and thereby contributing to the self-reinforcing effect of life between buildings described on page 18-19.

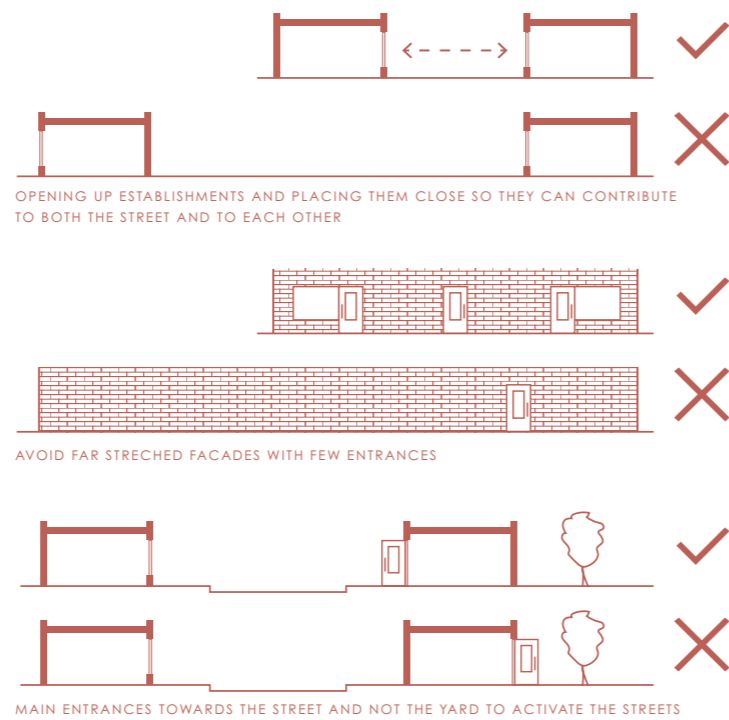
### SEATING



### WALKING



### FACADES AND OPENINGS



## CITY LIFE AND MODERNIST PLANNING

In the discussion around city life and cities planned for people modernist planning ideals are often portrayed as a perpetrator, and many theories have in many regards developed as a counter reaction to those ideals dominating city planning especially in North America and Europe for a large part of the 20th century. Many well-known theorists such as Kevin Lynch, Jane Jacobs and Christian Norberg-Shulz all seem to agree on the shortcomings of modernist planning, and in many ways have contributed to the ideal being transformed to the rather unquestioned current ideal of the traditional city. The theories and work from Jan Gehl are no exception - "Life between buildings first came out in 1971 and was in its original form primarily a way of dealing with the functionalist cities and housing areas" (Gehl, 2003, own translation).

Gehl (2003) describes a spectrum of the possibilities of planning to either create lively or lifeless cities through two extremes where one is a description of typical modernist cities and suburbs "with high rise buildings, subterranean parking spaces, substantial car traffic and large distances between buildings and functions ... Here you see buildings and cars, but only a few or no people since pedestrian traffic has been more or less made impossible". The other end of the spectrum is described as the city with low close-knit buildings where both pedestrian traffic and places to reside has been given proper preconditions in the streets and in connection to housing, workplaces and institutions.

Hajer and Reijndorp (2001) on the other hand questions the dichotomy describing the inner city as the ideal and the periphery as simply being the 'non-city'. In their theory they discuss an increased pull of the periphery as public domain which allows exchange between different groups while trying to use authenticity to strengthen the appeal of the inner city makes it less and less attractive for a wider variety of people and rather it becomes a museum-like attraction for tourists.

While this thesis does not aim to evaluate the modernist planning ideals nor the current urban norms, it recognises the importance of having a nuanced view on the environments in question neither as a failure nor as a complete success - but as an environment with both strengths and weaknesses.

## PUBLIC SPACE AS PUBLIC DOMAIN

Public space, which is mentioned throughout this thesis, is in general defined as spaces freely accessible to everyone. However, the considered ideal for public space can be expressed through the concept of public domain. Hajer and Reijndorp (2001) defines public domain as "those places where an exchange between different social groups is possible and also actually occurs". They point out that public domain can be public space although the opposite is not always true, and that places which are not strictly speaking public also can be public domain. The concept is more about which spaces are "positively valued as places of shared experience by people with different backgrounds or with dissimilar interests" than a question of the legal ownership of a space.



## 3. SITE

# KORTEDALA

Kortedala has a complex history. Starting as a celebrated grand vision of building an urban village based on the idea of folkhemmet (the people's home) where good housing was available to "ordinary people" as well as providing for all types of services and functions needed in the daily life (Gunnemark, 1998). However the critique towards the project started not many years after it was finished, social problems and violence started to dominate the local news and gradually replaced news about grand openings and international study visits. Sovstad (dormitory town) became a label used to describe the district in the press despite the initial intentions and efforts to create a lively local neighbourhood.

The phenomenon of dormitory towns is widespread (Adelfio, 2014) and the effect in Kortedala has been intensified by the decrease in population from 26.000 inhabitants when it was newly built (Andersson et al., 1993) to around 13500 inhabitants at the lowest in the start of the 1990's as well as by changes in behaviour, decrease of pedestrian movement in favour of increased car traffic and external malls outcompeting local commerce. Much of the decrease in population was due to families moving to bigger apartments and villas in surrounding suburbs and municipalities around Gothenburg and the many smaller apartments in Kortedala became primarily occupied by one to two person households. (Gunnemark, 1998).

Since the end of the 1990's there has been a slow but steady increase of population in Kortedala and in the year 2020 the population had grown to 17600 people (Göteborgs stad, n.d.). This is despite the fact that only five new multi family houses have been added to the building stock since the 60's. Three new areas with one family homes and row houses have been built in the same period, constituting around 250 new single family homes.

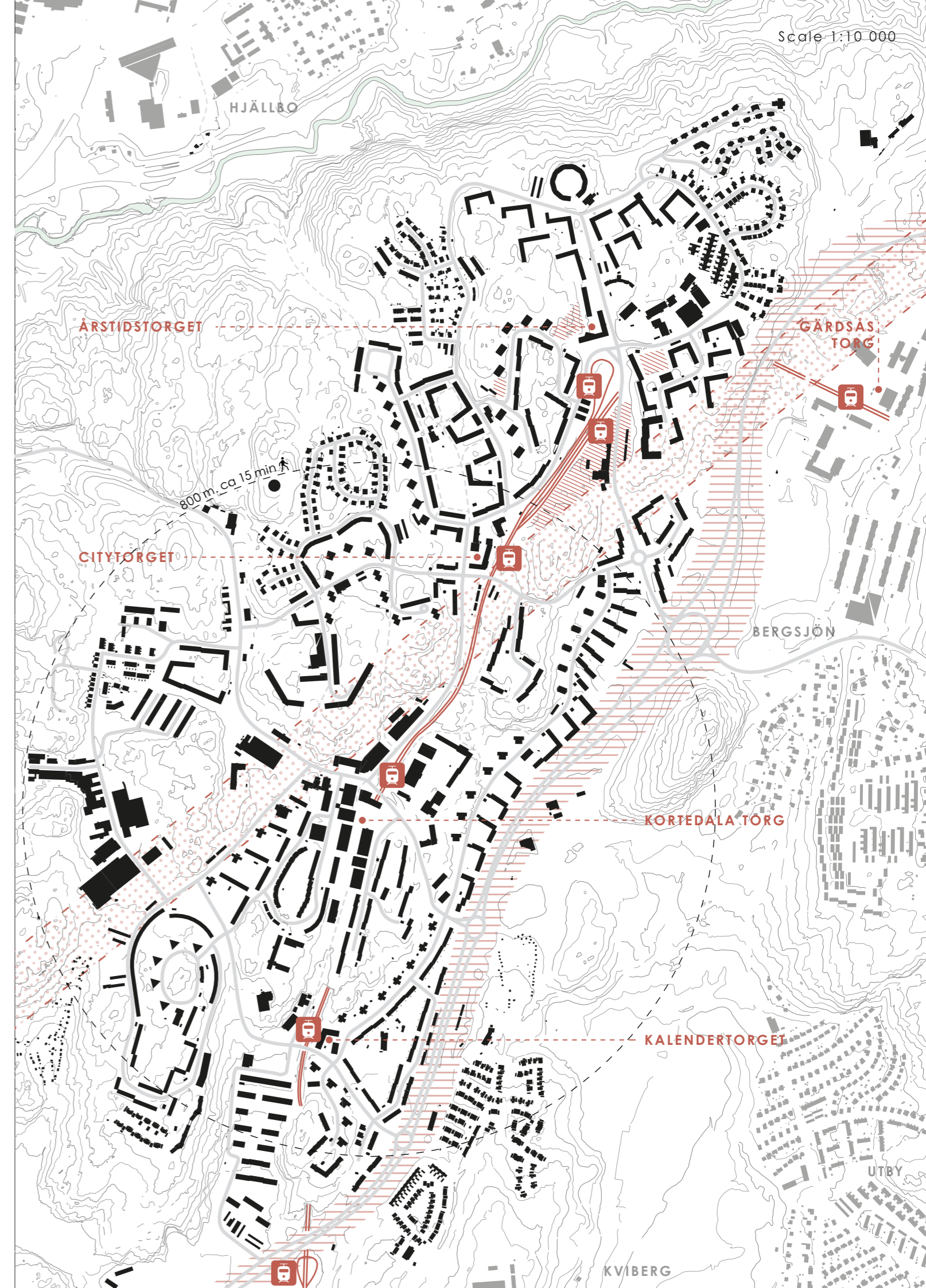
When Kortedala was built the majority of people moving in where a homogenous group of families with children, but the area was also very attractive to, among others, the diverse group of workers in the factories of SKF in Gamlestaden and there has been a great mix of nationalities in the population for many years, and still is today (Gunnemark, 1998).

## DEVELOPMENT PLANS

New development in Kortedala is hindered both by the power lines going through the area and the safety distance of 50 metres to each side specified in the Comprehensive plan for Gothenburg and a lack of capacity in the public transport system. The power lines are very noticeable as they have resulted in large gaps in the built environment in central locations which sometimes constitute even greater barriers than the pronounced topography.

There is currently work ongoing to develop new detail plans in the north of Kortedala where a number of different actors will build primarily new apartment buildings. A larger area just to the north east of Citytorget where the developer aims to build 400 new apartments (Tapajos - Nya Kortedala, n.d.), and a little further to the north where two different actors aim to build 4 new apartment buildings and a preschool. In total it could mean as much as 600 new apartments.

Over the course of the last decade there have been many discussions and decisions regarding turning Kortedalavägen and Almanacksvägen into a boulevard with city character. In January 2022 a proposal in the municipal council was approved not only stating that the roads should be turned in to a city boulevard, but which also pointed out that this boulevard should be surrounded by closed quarters and "classical architecture" (Yousuf, 2022).



## THE SQUARES

### ÅRSTIDSTORGET

It is a bit unclear what is actually planned to be the square, but Årstidstorget consists of a building with a small number of services and is situated quite close to the end stop of tram line 6, Aprilgatan. A bit further south there is another tram stop one level down, Januarigatan, where trams 7 and 11 continue further towards Bergsjön.

### CITYTORGET

Citytorget is situated by the tram stop Allhelgonakyrkan. It has a relatively large number of localities in the ground floor and important services such as a grocery store and post- and package delivery services.

The space of the square is today very sparsely used and none of the businesses utilise it.

### KORTEDALA TORG

Kortedala Torg is a large square strategically placed along Tideråkningsgatan, the only road which connects the two larger motorways which pass Kortedala.

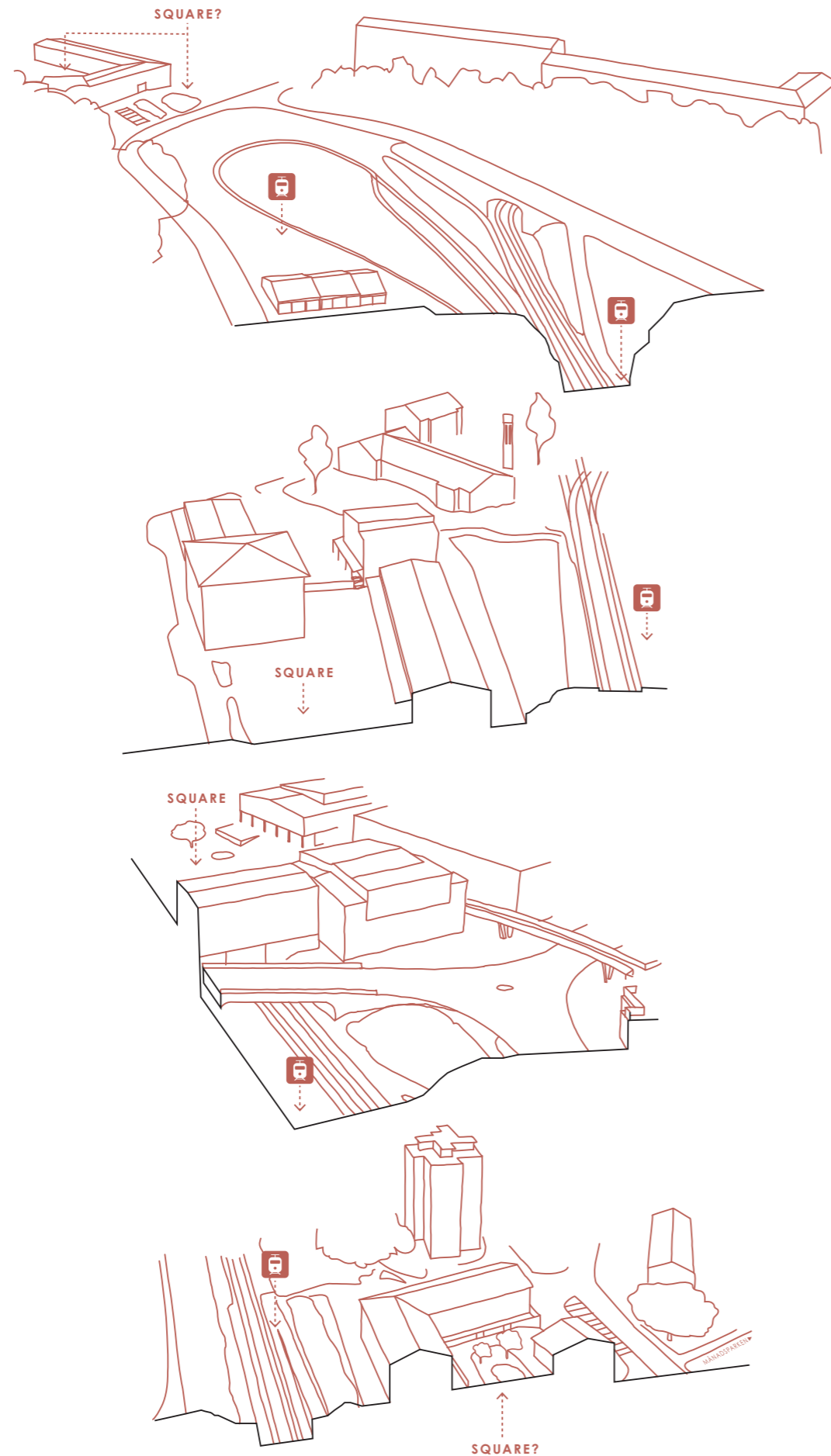
It is a rather well-functioning, lively square with many visitors and hosts public functions such as a library and localities for local associations.

### KALENDERTORGET

Kalendertorget is a small square between Kalendervägen and the tram stop Runstavsgatan.

Originally shops surrounded a square space but the largest building has been turned into row houses with private patios which gives the square the character of a private courtyard.

Månadsparken close by has probably replaced the square as the main public space in the area.



## DISTANCE TO A SQUARE

## PUBLIC PLACES

In general the amount of public places, and the supply of services and culture was underdimensioned when Kortedala was planned due to the assumption that many of the citizens still would prefer to spend their leisure time in the city centre (Alm et al., 2001). The diversity of available services in Kortedala is not very big and the majority of the services and businesses which exist are concentrated to Kortedala Torg which was planned as the main square and centre formation in the area. To Kortedala Torg there are three secondary squares - Årstidstorget, Citytorget and Kalendertorget.

Kortedala Torg is located in the south of Kortedala and due to both physical and mental barriers between the north and the south this is for many too far to walk for both practical errands and maybe especially for the spontaneous leisure activities. 800 metres is used as an example here for a recommended longest walking distance to a square (Spacescape et al., 2018). The recommendation used regards 800 metres actual walking distance, the circle with an 800 metre radius is used to give a vague idea how far this can be. The distance in question is usually defined as a 10 minute walk, but due to topography the walking time for 800 metres is usually closer to 13-15 minutes even if the path is relatively straight. This calls to question if a comfortable distance in this setting is in fact quite a lot shorter.

The experience of walking a path is however defined by much more than only the distance. It is also determined by how spaces relate to each other and how pedestrians themselves relate to them (Qviström et al., 2019). In this specific case there is also the matter of who feels a connection to Kortedala Torg, who feel it is 'their' square and who merely feels like a visitor, something which can also affect the tendency to visit and use the space, and how far away it feels rather than how far away it actually is.

Public places need to be strengthened especially in the north of Kortedala and new connections between different parts need to be made to bridge both actual and mental distances between different areas, tying them closer together.

## COMMUNICATION AND PLANNING PRINCIPLES



According to planning ideals from the time Kortedala was planned, functions should be separated from other types of functions. Different types of traffic should not be mixed and services should be gathered but separated from traffic. Four squares may sound much in many other settings, but considering the lack of the more classical street space where services and businesses, housing and both pedestrian and motorised traffic are combined, it is not so strange this is how the main public spaces in Kortedala were organised.

Well worth noting however is that much of pedestrian traffic is organised along streets, and buildings generally are placed along streets and not in parks in difference to later modernist planning during the 60's.

## A BROADER UNDERSTANDING OF THE SQUARES

The squares in this setting must be understood in broader terms than only looking to the square space itself. Due to the structure the squares and their immediate surroundings constitute the most pronounced centralities in the area and must therefore be dealt with as such, and not be divided into squares as one thing and surrounding streets and buildings as another. In many other locations the square is just one of many typologies of public space which can harbour city life, but here the physical barriers of topography and large infrastructure will keep movement in the area quite limited to in and out from the squares rather than going through different areas - rendering the preconditions for other centralities with services in most other locations rather poor. Working with instead of against the current structure while developing the physical environment to fit current needs, could unlock the full potential of public space in the area.

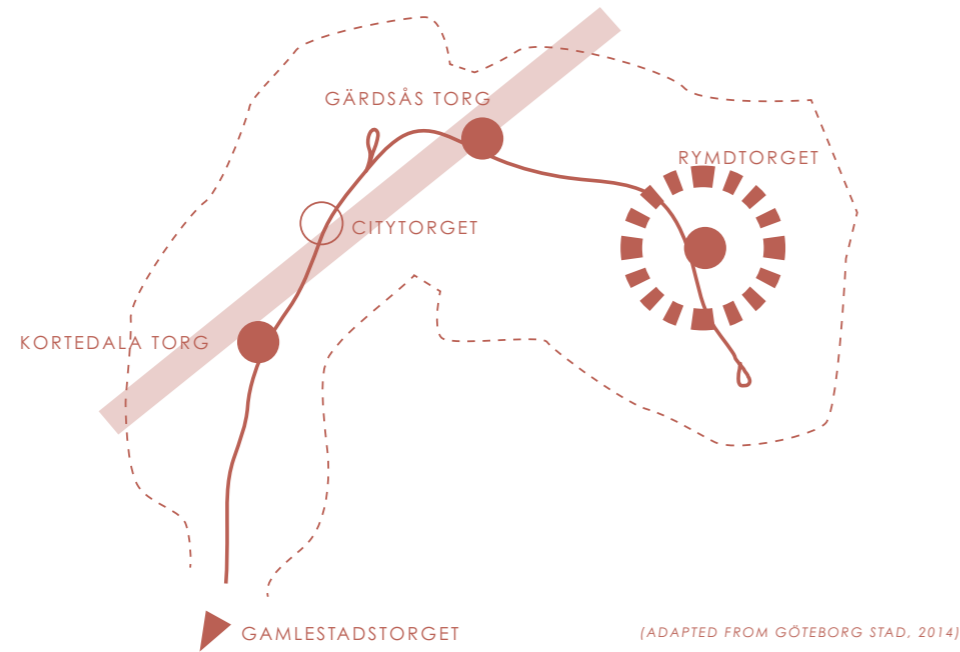


**THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN / DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2035**

**A SIMPLER DAY TO DAY LIFE**

**DENSITY AND URBAN SERVICES**

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERMEDIATE CITY**



(ADAPTED FROM GÖTEBORG STAD, 2014)

In the comprehensive plan for Gothenburg (2009) the city is divided into different categories of areas and for those different categories different needs, goals, challenges and potentials are stated. These categories are: Central Gothenburg, Central renewal areas, The intermediate city, The harbor, big industry and logistics, Coastal areas and the archipelago, Future development areas and lastly Nature areas. The comprehensive plan states that development of Gothenburg primarily shall take place in the already built-up city, of which a large part can be found in the intermediate city. The intermediate city is where Kortedala is included.

The development strategy for Gothenburg (Göteborgs stad, 2014) is based on the comprehensive plan but goes even deeper in setting up goals of development for the intermediate city, in order to secure a more sustainable city development for Gothenburg as well as securing the city's supply of housing.

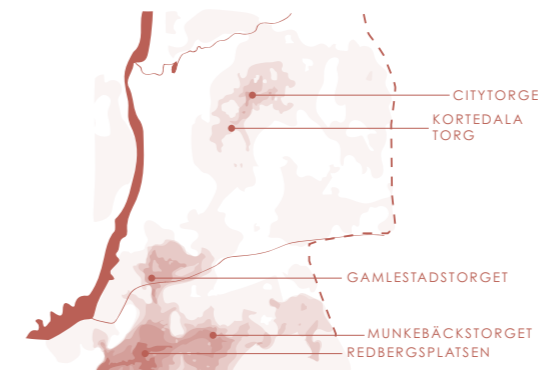
The overarching goal of development is stated as a simpler everyday life for a larger number of people "in a green and vibrant city" (Göteborgs stad, 2014). Density and compactness are highlighted as crucial factors to attain this. "A closely-connected residential building structure is an important step towards a simpler day-to-day life for the inhabitants of the city. Proximity and access to the different functions of the city are self-evident in this type of structure. Having service and social meeting-places close by makes day-to-day life easier and reduces the need for transport. To attain this, it is necessary to have greater density. A more compact city provides a number of opportunities for social interaction, better access to services and efficient use of public transport and infrastructure."

The connection between density and access to services and urban businesses (consumer durables retail, restaurants and cultural businesses) is highlighted in the strategy. The highest supply of urban businesses is said to be found in areas with more than 15 000 residents within one kilometre, which now is almost only in the inner city. The map to the left on the next page shows density of population and workers within one kilometre actual walking distance, and it is clear from this map that Citytorget has the highest density in the entire north eastern parts of Gothenburg apart from Gamlestaden. Even though the area with that high density is not big, it corresponds well with the square and reaches the same density as Gamlestaden which is approximately 12 000 residents and workers within one kilometre (Spacescape & Göteborgs stad, 2013). The next map shows where there is a shortage of everyday commodities in relation to what could be expected based on the density of population.

**CENTRAL POINTS**

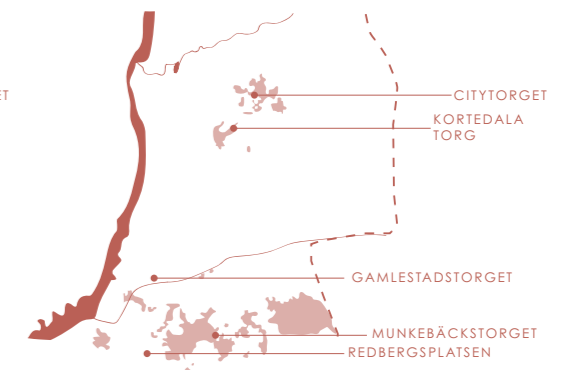
**DEVELOPMENT OF KORTEDALA**

DENSITY OF POPULATION AND WORKERS WITHIN 1 KM WALKING DISTANCE



(ADAPTED FROM GÖTEBORG STAD, 2014)

LACK OF EVERYDAY COMMODITIES IN RELATION TO DENSITY



A great emphasis is placed on the possibility to manage one's everyday life on foot or bicycle to attain a more local city life. The largest potential for this is seen in the parts of the intermediate city which are directly linked to the inner city and around local squares which already have a relatively high density of population and workers. Some of these places, mostly local squares with around 10 000-12 000 inhabitants and workers within 1 km or local squares along the tram system, have been pointed out as central points which are supposed to be densified with both more housing and businesses and attain more of a city character.

Mustering strength areas are pointed out as places where a broad cooperation between the municipality and other stakeholders are of great strategic importance. The goal is to see these areas from an overall view to reach a variety and a broader level of functions through a higher level of exploitation.

The development in the city is supposed to occur within the already built up area and the prioritised development areas are based on this and the current system and supply of public transport. The entire already built area in Kortedala is included in the strategy as a prioritised development area. It is stated in the strategy that development in these areas which make use of already existing infrastructure is needed and that a high density is to be aimed for. It is also stated that the development should contribute to reinforcing the areas' central points.

The named central point in Kortedala is Kortedala Torg. Apart from the goals generally stated for all central points it is here mentioned especially that more jobs are needed and that they are to be placed so that they strengthen the square.

None of the other squares in Kortedala are mentioned, but it is mentioned throughout the strategy the importance of densifying in close connection to public transport and existing services. It is also mentioned that the prioritised development areas differ from each other, and that each shall be developed according to its own preconditions.

Gärdås torg is today mostly a parking space with an external supermarket, but is mentioned as a place with potential to develop into a central point which could constitute a stronger connection between Kortedala and Bergsjön. Gamlestadstorget is pointed out in the strategy as a potential extension of the inner city.

The power lines and the safety distance specified in the comprehensive plan are not mentioned in the development plan (Göteborgs stad, 2014), but they are mentioned as an obstacle in the report about the expansion potential of the intermediate city (Spacescape & Göteborgs stad, 2013). Neither report deals with the contradiction between their placement, the hefty safety margins and the goals for the development of the area laid out in the comprehensive plan or proposes a solution for it.

**Finette**  
*FRUKT*  **Ovrells**  
*Fisk*  **GULD**  
*TOBAK*  
**FÄRG** **SLÖJD**  
*Herr* *FRISÖR* *Dam*  
*Konditori* *Kem-TVÄTT*  
*ami* **FOTO** **KappAhl**  
**SMYRNA**  
*konsum* *Blommor*  
**CYKEL** **TV** **SPORT**

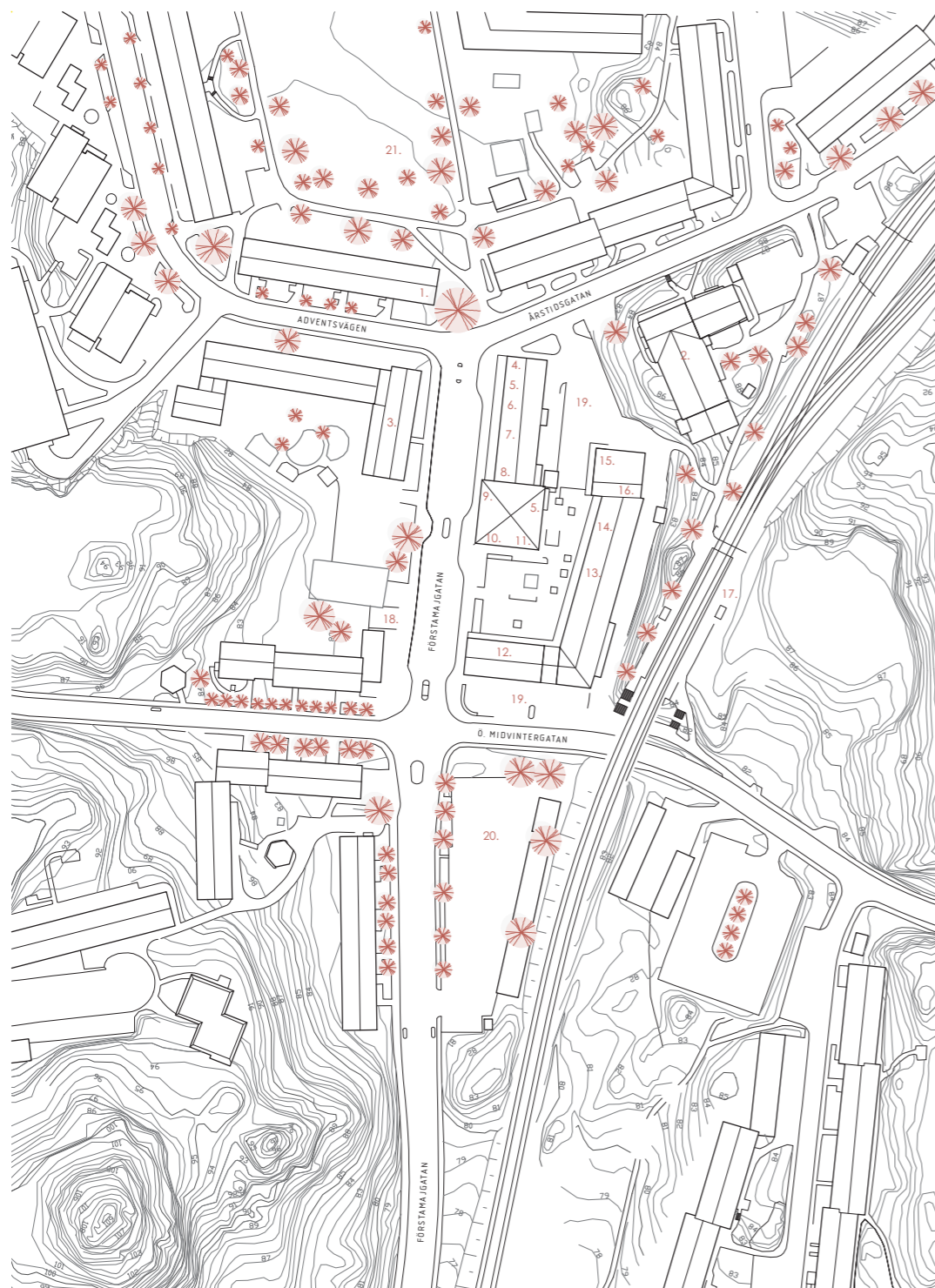
CITYTORGET

CITYTORGET

ADAPTATIONS OF ORIGINAL NEON SIGNS

1957 - 1960

Scale 1:2000



- |                     |                         |                          |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Kortedala Museum | 8. Clothing store       | 15. Cake shop            |
| 2. Church           | 9. Hamburger grill      | 16. Dentist (3rd floor)  |
| 3. Preschool        | 10. Meat/vegetables     | 17. Tram stop            |
| 4. Kebab restaurant | 11. Pedicure salon      | 18. Recycling station    |
| 5. Hairdresser      | 12. Direkten - Post/ATG | 19. Parking lot          |
| 6. Nail salon       | 13. ICA Ovrells         | 20. Private parking lot  |
| 7. Pub/Restaurant   | 14. Pizzeria            | 21. Adventsparken (Park) |

### CITYTORGET

Citytorget (*The City Square*) is one of three secondary centers to the main square in the area, Kortedala Torg. It was finished in 1957 and is situated between a preschool, a church, a parking lot and the tramway with a connecting tram stop.

The square and its surrounding buildings were originally built by the municipal housing company Göteborgshem but in the 1980's it changed ownership to the private real estate company which today goes by the name *Julvihu*. What was built as and appears like a public square is today consequently private property, although the site is still technically owned by the municipality and the private company is a site leaseholder.

From the start the number of localities on ground level was 20, several smaller localities have been combined into larger ones over the years. Today there are 13 localities on the ground floor whereof the oldest one is ICA Ovrells which has been situated on the square since the very beginning. Together with Direkten, which provides postal services among other things, the ICA grocery store constitutes a very important base of everyday services in the area which attract a lot of visitors.

The environment around the square as well as the square itself and its buildings are included in the preservation program of Gothenburg as an interesting example of a secondary center typical of its time. Apart from the square the preschool (now Förstamajgatans förskola, previously Lövässkolan) designed by N E Eriksson, the church and the south western part of Adventsparken housing area are mentioned. (Göteborgs stad, 1999)

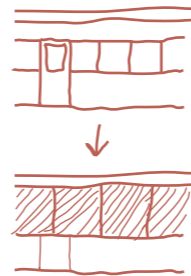
### CITY LIFE AT CITYTORGET

City Torget is a square which started out in the 50s as a modern square with so many and diverse services provided it could sustain a city life of its own, but has over the years been left to decay. With its run down character together with a design of the spaces relying on the power of attraction to draw visitors rather than a natural flow of pedestrians, the square is left feeling a little deserted, and out of touch with its context. Primarily, flows of pedestrians occur along backsides with a very closed character, preventing a feeling of connection to the square as you move by. Hardly anyone resides on the square, both because of the state of it and the fact that public seating is non-existent and none of the localities facing the square utilise the space for outdoor seating.

Residents have previously organised a plea for restoration and improvement of the square directed towards the real estate owner. One of the members of the group which organised the plea described the square as a forgotten place, and the plea wished for a beautiful square the residents can be proud of. The property owner did not give any response to the plea (Isaksson, 2020).

Over the years parking space around the square has grown and replaced space intended for pedestrians and windows and staff entrances towards the backsides have been boarded up rendering the sensation of the square being a bit out of touch with its context even stronger - there are buildings having landed on a parking space rather than buildings shaping a street, being accessible for its pedestrians.

Planned and built in a time where many women where home during the days and before the true breakthrough of external shopping malls which drained local squares and city centers of visitors, the preconditions for city life on the square where very different, and the design of the square reflects that fact. Keeping the same organisation of the square based on behavioural patterns from the 50's would not correspond to how people move and use public space today. Instead the square needs to be retrofitted to suit the current time.

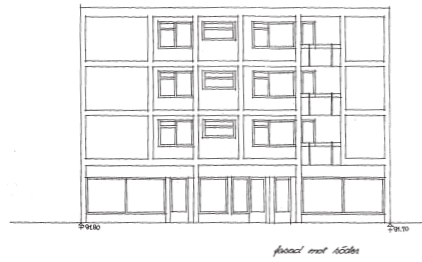


# ORIGINAL APPEARANCE

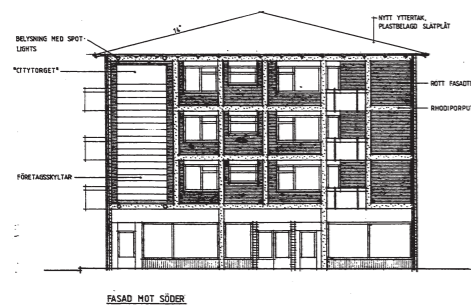
It is very common to blame the modernist planners for extensive parking spaces and primarily planning for cars when it comes to the street space.

In the original plan for the square you can however see that parking spaces when the square was planned were quite limited, and that the space planned to be the square stretched all the way to the north. The large parking spaces to the north and south which exist today were obviously added later on, and replacing both large parts of the square and broader walkways.

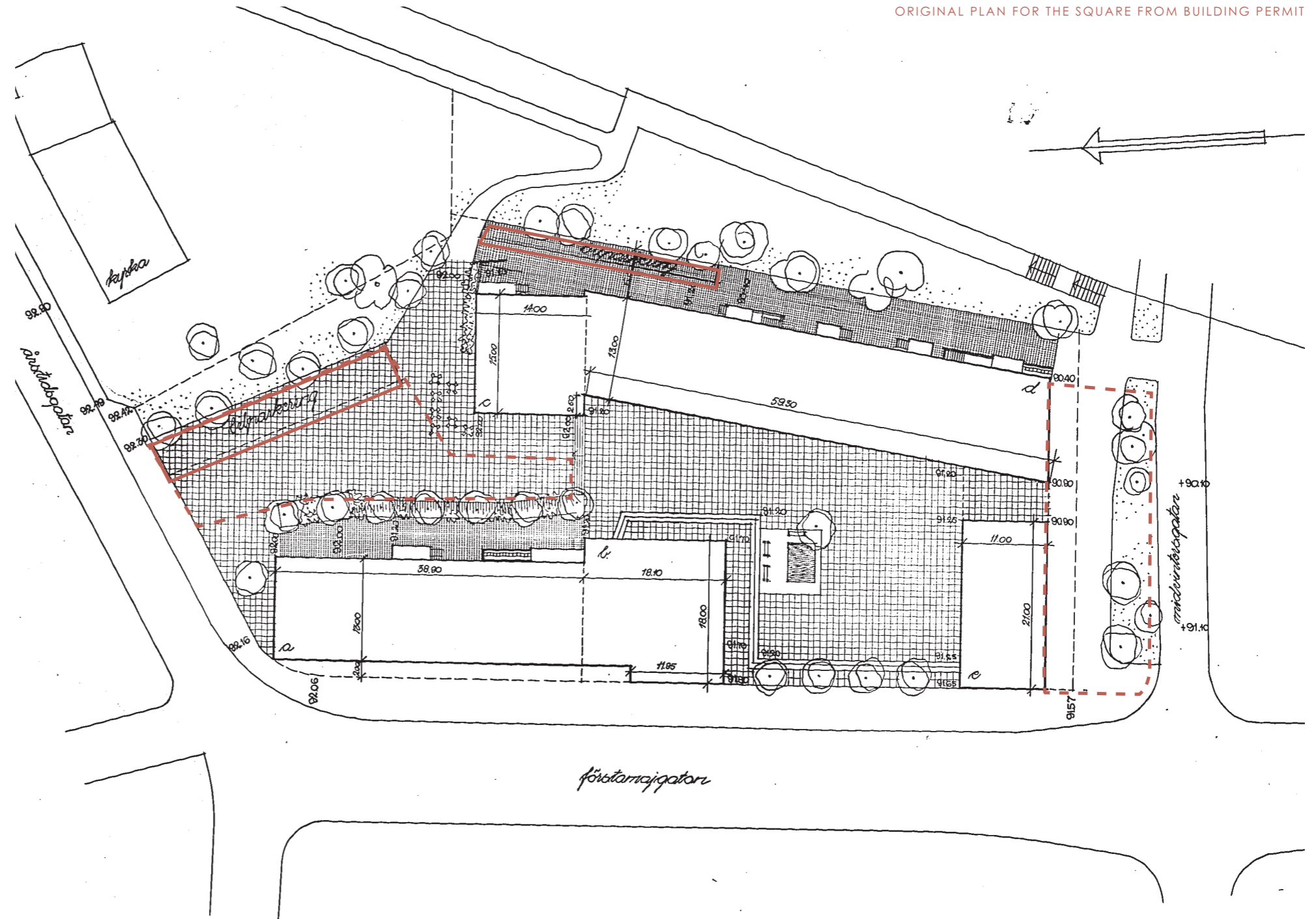
Another significant change on the square is the facade of what in the building permit is referred to as building b. Originally it was a building with a strong modernistic character, with a flat roof and white plastered facades. In the 80's insulation was added to the facade and covered with bricks and a tilted roof was added.



BUILDING PERMIT FOR BUILDING B.  
(DRAWING FROM HSB ARKITEKONTOR, 1956)



BUILDING PERMIT FOR FACADE CHANGES FROM 1982  
(DRAWING FROM GÖTEBORGS FÖRORTERS ARKITEKONTOR, 1982)



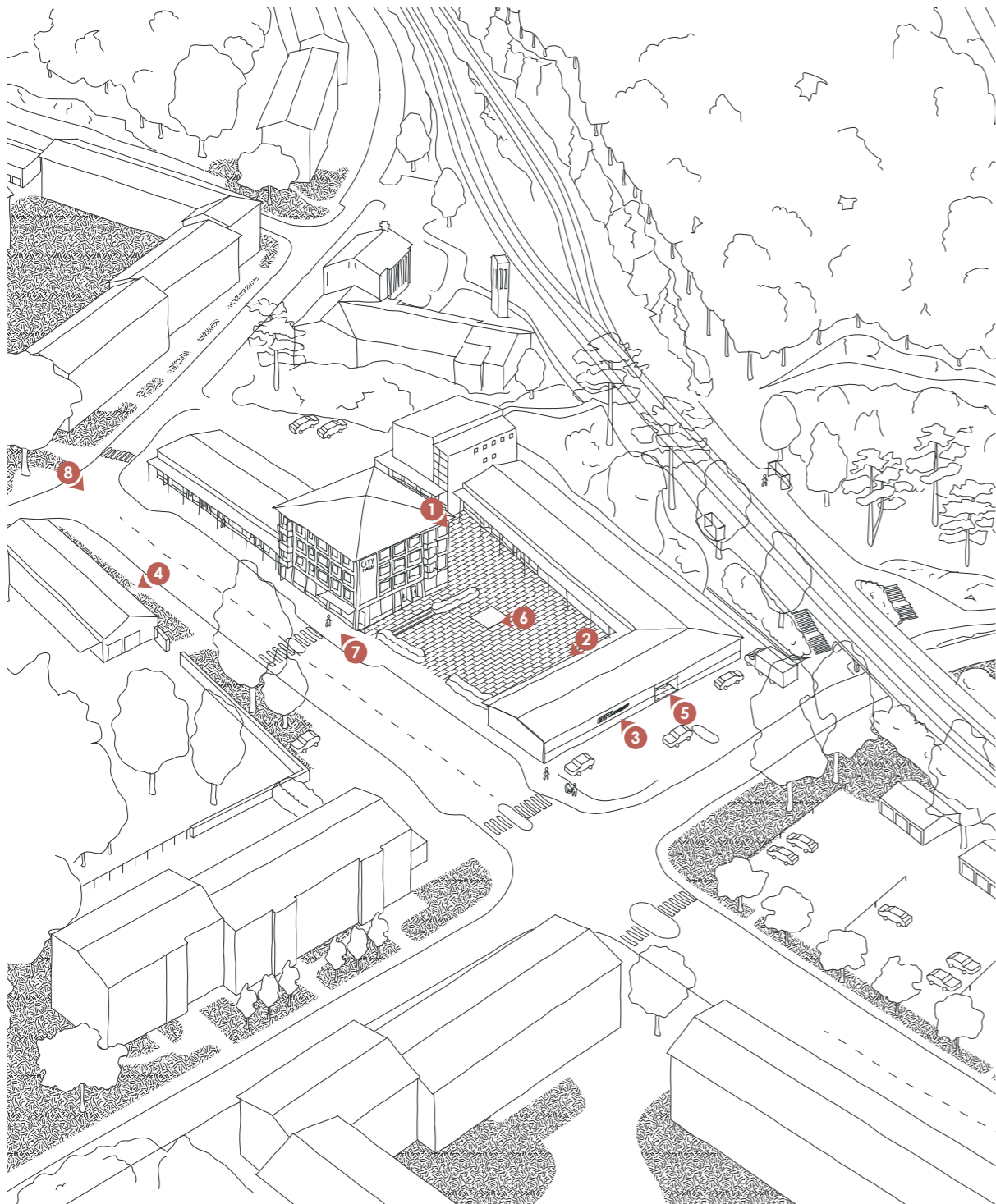
ORIGINAL PLAN FOR THE SQUARE FROM BUILDING PERMIT

(DRAWING FROM HSB ARKITEKONTOR, 1956)

--- CURRENT PARKING SPACES

— ORIGINAL PARKING SPACES

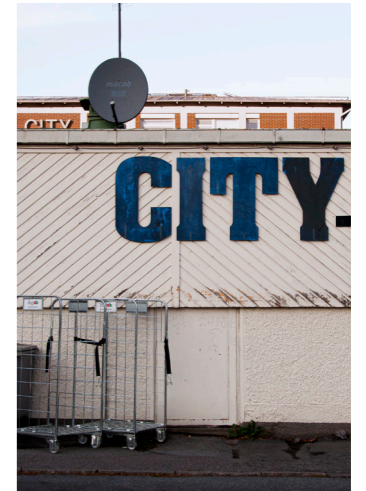
VIEWS



1.



2.



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4.



5.



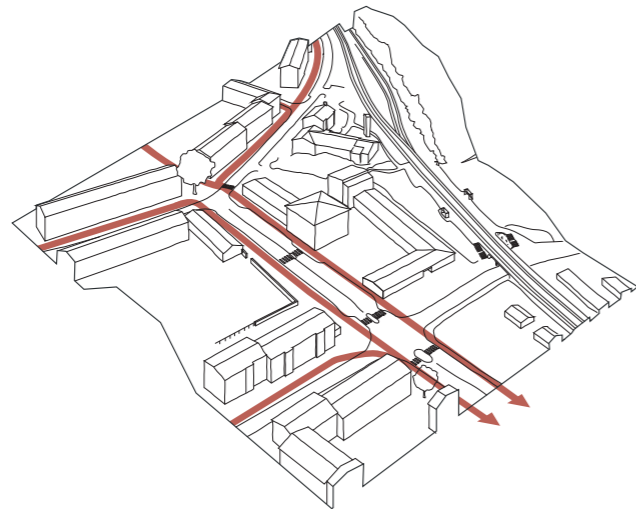
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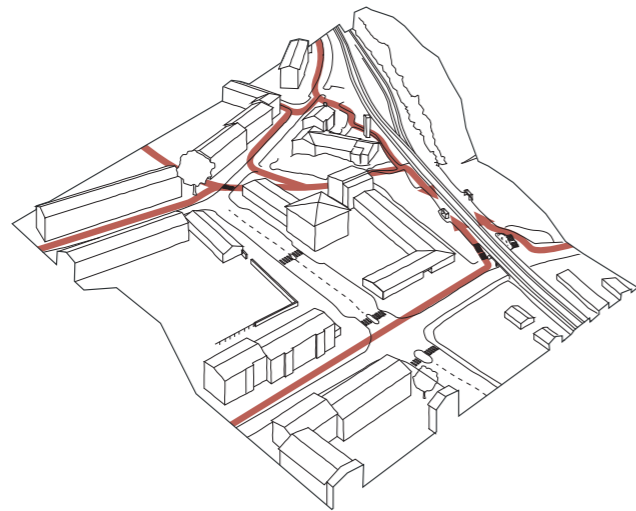
7.



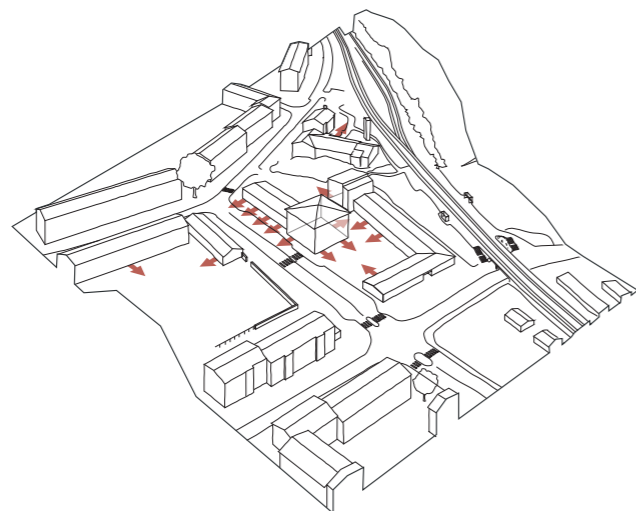
8.



MAIN PATHS TO  
KORTEDALA TORG



MAIN PATHS TO  
THE TRAM STOP



DIRECTION  
OF ENTRANCES

### INVERTED AND CLOSED CHARACTER

The square in the middle is what is perceived as public space, but few move there. You don't happen to walk by and become part of what is happening on the square, you have to actively choose to go there. That is true for all squares in Kortedala, but in difference to the others Citytorget is situated at street level. A transformation of the surrounding roads into pedestrian friendly, well-framed streets inviting to activity could in fact make Citytorget the most easily accessible square and public place in the area.

### AN AMBIGUOUS MAIN STREET

Förstamajgatan is the street mainly connecting the north of Kortedala to the south, and goes parallel to the tramway, which today is what mainly connects Kortedala with other parts of the city for pedestrians. In the local street grid, with all its topography and a quite unclear hierarchy of streets this street is the closest thing to a main street. Today however it has a very road-like character. Recently the sidewalks have been broadened and a bicycle lane has been added which has made it more pleasant to move along by foot or bicycle, but it lacks framing and destinations for most of the stretch.

Along Förstamajgatan the only localities on the plot of the square facing outward are located, contributing with some activity to the street. However, the other side of the street has a very backside-like character with a back-entrance, windows which have been boarded up, empty carriages from deliveries, parking spaces and a recycling station. The short stretch of front-side gets outweighed by the longer stretch of backside on the other side of the street.

### INTERFACE BETWEEN BUILDINGS AND PEDESTRIAN SPACE

In addition to the square space not corresponding with where people move, pedestrians get a disingenuous invitation to the square and its localities when sidewalks disappear in favour of parking lots. Both to the north and the south of the square pedestrians have to cross spaces primarily adapted for cars both to get to the square and to the tram stop.

The canopy stretching around the square shades the storefronts and creates a dark and narrow barrier between the walkways and buildings, hindering insight as people walk by as well as rendering the localities themselves darker and less attractive to spend time in.

### A TRAM STOP WITH A VIEW

In accordance with the principle of separation of traffic, the tramway is separated from the street system in all of Kortedala and Bergsjön. Almost all tram stops are also at a different level than the surrounding streets and buildings, and due to topography many are below street level, making it impossible to see what you pass by from the tram (see figures on p.26). However, the tram stop Allhelgonakyrkan by Citytorget is at a higher level rather than a lower one. Today it is hard to discern and immediately recognize that what you pass is a public place and a square due to its inverted character. A redesign of the spaces could both integrate the tram stop into the built environment as well as provide an instant view of the public life going on as you pass - inviting many more to spontaneous visits at Citytorget.

### GOING IN TO INSTEAD OF FALLING OUT OF

Coming from residential streets which in general are very well-framed, green and coherent, the contrast when reaching the square and Förstamajgatan is very big. Large open spaces where roads and parking spaces dominate the impression can make you feel like you just reached the very edge of the neighbourhood rather than reaching the centre of it. Filling in the gaps in the built environment and strengthening the connection between the square and the surrounding streets could reverse this impression, creating a feeling of going in to the core of the community rather than falling out of it all together.

# PHYSICAL STATE

## THE BUILDINGS

The physical state of the buildings of the square is strikingly poor. In part the appearance could be significantly improved by a simple cleaning of facades, roofs, canopies and signs. However, there are also parts of the plastered facades where pieces of plaster have fallen off revealing the lightweight concrete structure (see figure 1) and on several spots the facade has sustained apparent water damage due to broken gutters and downpipes (see figure 2-6). One window in the north eastern three story building has been broken for several years without being mended (figure 6).

There are signs of alterations and renovations having been made, but rather than improving the impression of the square, these stand out as ad hoc and have been performed with very varying results (see figure 7-8 for example). Several of the basements have had issues with flooding.

With this description the outlook for the buildings on the square may not sound positive, but in difference to a wooden structure the lightweight concrete can endure long term exposure to water and should not have sustained any permanent damage. Facade renovations and drainage around the basements should be possible but are long overdue.

## THE SQUARE

The square space is a patchwork of concrete pavement and asphalt with apparent surface water management issues. The surface is so uneven that it is hard to walk there with for example a walker. On some places on and around the square there have been flower beds with larger bushes, these have however been cut down in recent years and replaced by new ones which do not seem content with their living conditions.

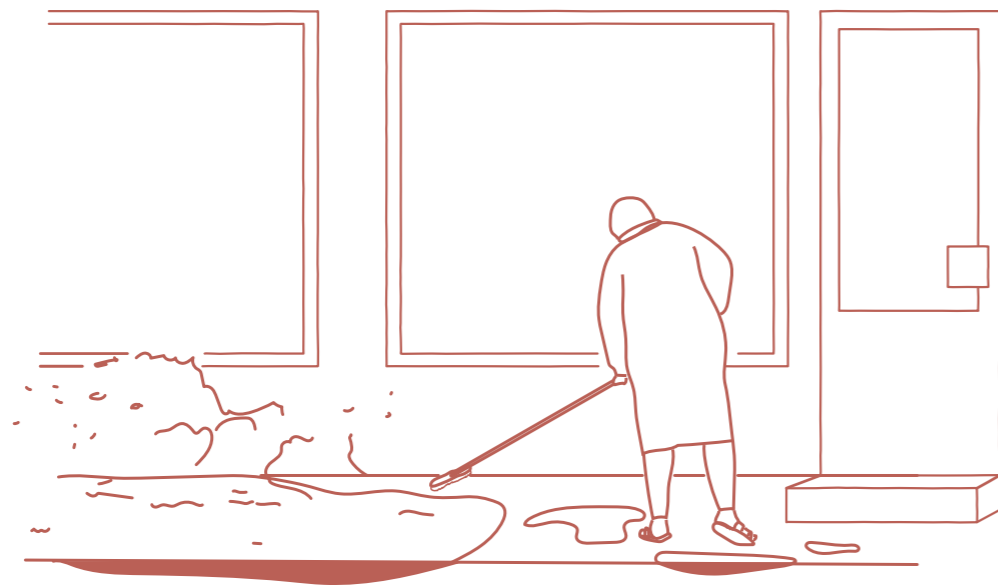


ILLUSTRATION SHOWING HOW A SHOPKEEPER TRIES TO FIGHT THE FLOODING OUTSIDE THE SHOP WITH A BROOM



1.



2.



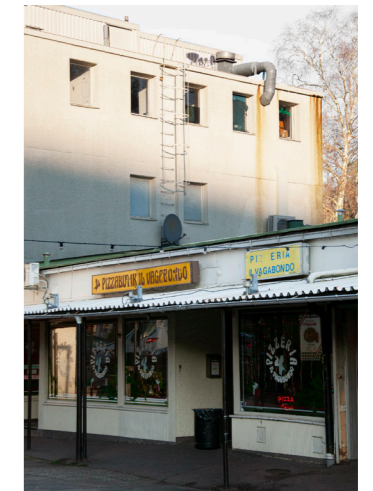
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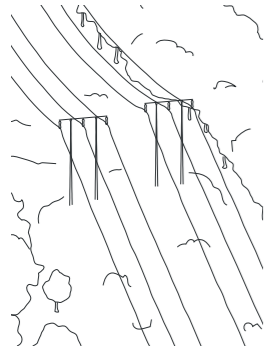
7.



8.



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## POWER LINES

As is evident in the map on page 25, the power lines going through Kortedala and the western parts of Bergsjön divide the area in two. They are a huge obstacle both for development in strategic locations in Kortedala and by Gårdsås Torg where the development strategy (Göteborgs stad, 2014) has pointed out that the gap between Kortedala and Bergsjön could be closed.

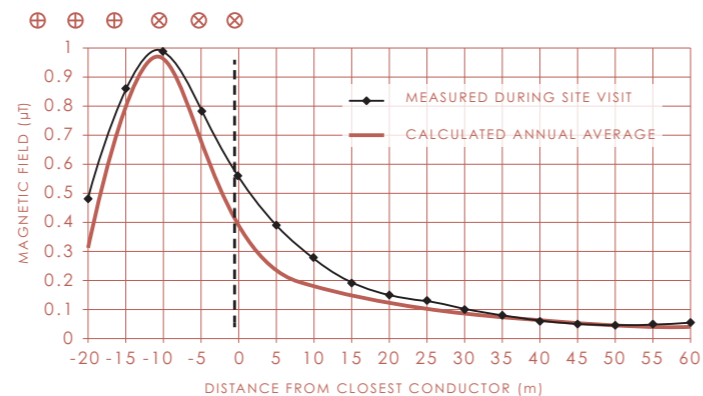
In the long run it is crucial for the development that the power lines are moved or dug down, a suggestion is to look at utilising the plans of a boulevard along Almanacksvägen, and study the potential to put it in the street when extensive ground work will be necessary either way.

In a shorter perspective, working around the obstacle of the power lines and their safety distance is necessary, and therefore it is relevant to study if a 50 metre safety distance is really necessary.

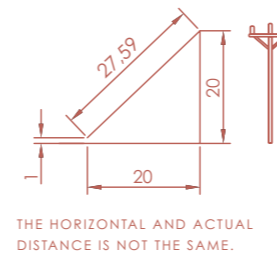
In the comprehensive plan for Gothenburg regulations regarding power lines and their relation to buildings are defined. To ensure the physical safety of people and buildings and to protect the power lines, the comprehensive plan regulates a 15 metre building free zone on each side of 130 kV power lines. For housing and work places a safety distance of 50 metres on each side of power lines is implemented due to the precautionary principle regarding electromagnetic fields. (Göteborgs stad, 2009) Electromagnetic fields have been suspected to have negative health effects, and therefore this principle has been implemented.

The distance of 50 metres seems however rather excessive. Both due to the fact that the evidence for any health effects remain highly controversial (World Health Organization, 2016), new studies in recent years have not been able to verify earlier shown connections between electromagnetic fields and health hazards and due to the fact that it is established that if they constitute a health risk, it is only at radiation levels above  $0,4 \mu\text{T}$  (Molnár, 2018). Radiation levels are connected to distance, but a general distance of 50 metres horizontally to each side says nothing about the actual radiation levels.

Based on readings from the very same power lines as are in question in this thesis, a 50 metre safety distance is exaggerated. The readings were done close to a preschool and show the level of radiation in five metre intervals from the closest conductor. Based on the readings, the calculated annual average is as low as  $0,2 \mu\text{T}$  already before the 10 metre mark is reached (Molnár & Tondel, 2012).



(ADAPTED FROM MOLNÁR & TONDEL, 2012)



These readings were done one metre above ground level, which is relevant since it is the actual distance and not the horizontal distance which determines the radiation levels (Molnár, 2018).

When new power lines are planned the limit for electromagnetic radiation in relation to residential and school buildings is set to  $0,4 \mu\text{T}$ . The authorities regard  $0,2 \mu\text{T}$  as a normal annual average for residential environments (Svenska kraftnät, 2022).

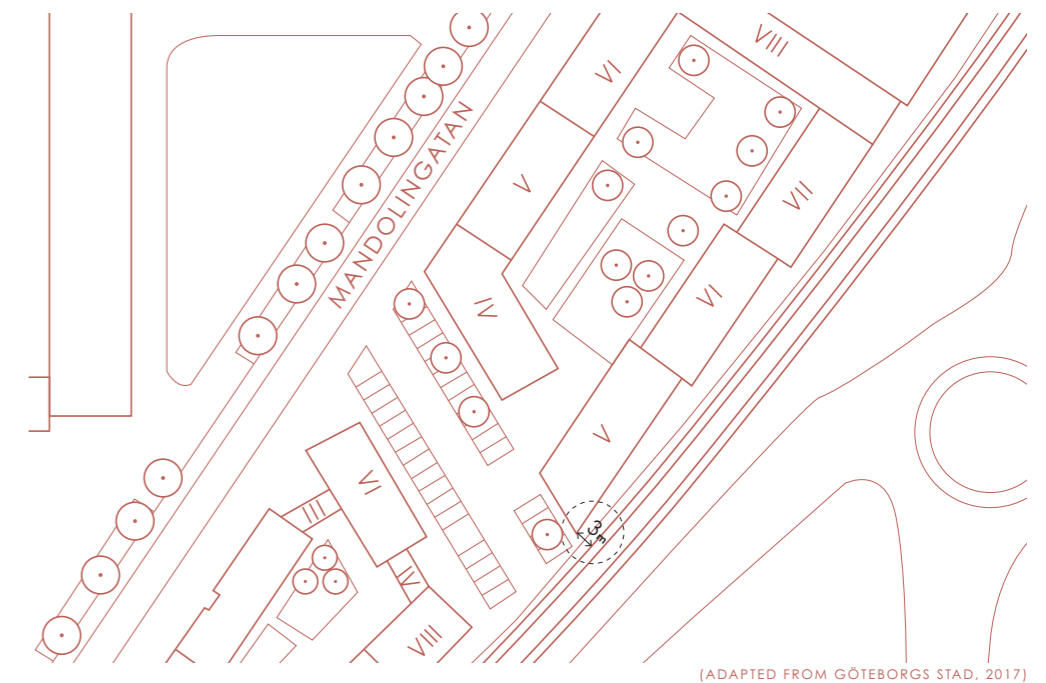
A safety distance of 25-30 metres actual distance around citytorget would still mean radiation levels well below  $0,2 \mu\text{T}$ , presumably very close to  $0,1 \mu\text{T}$ . This altered distance is what is considered in the design proposal of this thesis.

## THE TRAMWAY

In the location in question in this thesis, the tramway goes very close to sites considered for building development. This can of course create issues regarding for example noise pollution and safety. To know how close to the tramway housing can be built, a detail plan and what was later built according to that plan is used as a reference.

The studied project is located along Mandolingatan in Västra Frölunda just before the tram stop Frölunda Torg. The facades of the buildings along Mandolingatan are as close as 3 metres from the tram rail. This is with this background assumed to work also by Citytorget.

ILLUSTRATION OF THE  
DETAIL PLAN USED AS  
REFERENCE



INTRODUCTION

In this section three conversations with three different key figures are summarised. The meetings were all held in february 2022. The conversations were conducted in Swedish and translations have been made by the author.

MATHILDA ANDERSSON, 37 - KORTEDALA



FOUNDER OF THE LOCAL FACEBOOK GROUP.

INITIATOR FOR THE PLEA TO RESTORE AND IMPROVE THE SQUARE.

Mathilda moved to Kortedala 15 years ago to move in to the collective house "Trädet", but now lives in a row house in the north of Kortedala. She sees an ongoing generational shift in the neighbourhood, especially in the villas and row houses.

Around three years ago she and a few others started the local facebook group *Kortedala - Göteborg* which today has more than 3000 members which could constitute up to 20% of the adult population in Kortedala. (Authors own remark)

**"It's really great with the group - Kortedala is so fragmented and there are hardly any physical meeting places. It's great to see all the initiatives and social events now being organised in the group."**

Two years ago Mathilda and a small group of other residents in the north of Kortedala organised a plea for restoration and improvement of the square, and collected signatures from members in the facebook group. 169 people signed the petition but they never got any response from the real estate owner despite several attempts to contact them. Mathilda felt and still feels that the square has great potential - there are a lot of people living in close vicinity to the square who are yearning for more services. Today however she says it's more of a disgrace to the neighbourhood which otherwise is really beautiful with its 50's architecture wedged in between forest-covered hills.

**"Many appreciate places to go in close vicinity to their homes, and not just the elderly. The pendulum has turned away from external shopping malls as the big thing to the local community once again being more in focus."**

The municipality is currently underway to improve and broaden the sidewalks and add a bicycle path along Förstamajgatan going past the square - something Mathilda feels is a really positive addition. However it has made the terrible state of the square even more evident as the surrounding environment has somewhat improved.

**"It becomes so evident - this is where the municipality's responsibilities ended."**

The group behind the plea had plans to investigate further what could be done about the square but a global pandemic got in the way.

Discussing the potential of the square further Mathilda expresses a great scepticism towards the potential of the square if the ownership stays the same. She reasons that what is probably needed is a dedicated property owner who in turn can find and support dedicated entrepreneurs to run the services needed on the square. People are getting tired of businesses opening up only to close a short while later.

**"They have had it since the 80's and it looks like this. That says a lot about their commitment."**



FOUNDER AND OWNER OF JULVIHUS I GÖTEBORG AB

JARL NORDSTRÖM, 78 - HOVÅS

Jarl started out as a pastry chef but turned to real estate as a more long term pension insurance realising one can't do the hours and the hard work in a bakery as you age.

He now owns several real estate companies managing properties mostly in central Gothenburg and Falkenberg.

He explains that they acquired Citytorget by a somewhat coincidence - the municipal company 'Göteborgshem' wanted to get rid of the square so Jarl's company got it for a very low price given that they took over the debt related to the square.

Discussing the potential of the square he says nothing is impossible, but he lists squares and other public places where renovations and improvements have been made which now have empty localities due to higher rents after the renovations.

**"On Kortedala Torg they have three to four times the rent we have but then a whole lot is empty. Half the square is now gone, they (the municipality) tore it down and built housing instead."**

By far the biggest challenge for the square is vandalism according to Jarl. He says this is something they've always had issues with but only recently started reporting the incidents to the police. Last year (2021) he said they reported 41 separate cases of vandalism, almost only consisting of graffiti. Earlier they have also had issues with other types of criminality.

He expresses displeasure towards the lack of measurements from both the police and the municipality.

**"The municipality triples the rent for the grounds but do nothing to help with the vandalism."**

Their own measures to counter criminality and improve the square have been to cut down the trees to remove dark places to hang out, put up more lights and removed the benches to prevent alcoholics from residing on the square. He also mentions parking spots as a crucial aspect for the improvement of the square, something they have tried to get from the municipality.

**"If you look at the malls and squares doing well today, parking spots are crucial."**

Discussing the potential for renovations he's hesitant to whether that would attract more visitors and again points to places where improvements have been made and empty localities have followed.

**"It is positive that you are here, but there are limitations in these vulnerable areas ('utsatta områden')\*. We can't raise the rents, if we do the square will vanish."**

To a certain extent he is surprised the square has survived, when the population in Kortedala declined and the purchasing power disappeared he thought the square would disappear too. The company has considered turning the lower buildings on the square into row houses.

Today however he says they have a lot more hope for the square than ten years ago, but that in the end there has to be money in it to be able to invest. He says that the company would be able to invest if they believe in the project.

\* Authors note: Kortedala is not classified as a "utsatt område" (Polismyndigheten, 2021).



OWNER OF ICA OVRELLS

THIRD GENERATION  
OWNING THE STORE

## MIKAEL OVRELL, 38

It was Mikael's grandfather who founded 'Ovrells livs' in 1952. It started in a small shop at Julafångsgatan with over the counter service but moved to new facilities when the construction of Citytorget was done in 1957. It then became one of the very first self-service stores in the country.

Mikael mentions a lot happened on the square during the first decades, for example a lot of what you could win on 'Bingolotto' was on Citytorget. One of the prizes was the opportunity to win everything you could grab during two minutes with a blindfold - and that happened at Ovrells livs.

The catchment area of the store is primarily the North of Kortedala and the primary draw is the more spontaneous grocery shopping you do when you suddenly realise that dinner is needed today too. Ovrell estimates that the store has around 1000 unique visitors every day, and that the absolute majority of these visitors walk to the square. He says that in general, if you get behind the wheel you drive to a bigger store anyways and that a vast amount of parking spaces is not what is needed to make ends meet for his business.

Discussing the potential of the square, Mikael says he believes there to be a great potential, and he appears committed to the well-being of both the square and the surrounding community.

***"Where I live, when we're out walking the dog, if you get to Mariaplan you can spontaneously pop in for a glass of wine or a beer. Also by the water there is an infinite number of small cosy venues. Why would that not be possible here? The inhabitants here (in Kortedala) also want that possibility."***

He arranged what he called 'Citytorgets dag' for a couple of years but gave up on events after the police turned down a permit to display the world cup on a big screen on

the square due to what he felt was prejudice about the amount of police resources which would be needed to maintain order, even though they did not even intend to serve alcohol.

He does however see challenges both for the square and his own business, over the years the store has had issues with violent visitors who have threatened the staff and theft. He has had much contact with the municipality, working with safety measures and preventive work. He has also seen how the demographic in the north of Kortedala has changed over the years and feels that it is apparent that the number of people getting a lot of support from society has increased since around 2014 and points out the need for a balanced mix of inhabitants for a healthy society.

Ovrell has become quite well known within the ICA-dealer community and often gets asked why he continues running the store when they have faced so many difficulties.

***"If I were to sell... None of the bigger chains are interested in this type of location anymore and I could never leave unless I was absolutely sure somebody who really cared took over. I won't sell the store."***

Discussing the potential of the square and the area further, he says he believes Citytorget to have a different potential than Kortedala torg. "Public services like a library, meeting points for education, language and work probably suit Kortedala Torg excellent."

On Citytorget he envisions a greater supply of services and urban businesses such as a charcuterie, stores for fish or cheese, a pharmacy and a bistro of some kind.

***"For Citytorget to survive and thrive we need strong entrepreneurs, if you own your business you make damn sure it is taken care of."***



## SUMMARY OF SITE ANALYSIS

### KORTEDALA:

- KORTEDALA IS RATHER ISOLATED FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE CITY
- THERE IS A LACK OF CONNECTIONS WITHIN KORTEDALA
- THERE IS A LACK OF QUALITATIVE PUBLIC SPACES WHERE DIFFERENT GROUPS CAN MEET
- THERE ARE POOR PRECONDITIONS FOR OTHER CENTRALITIES THAN THE EXISTING SQUARES
- KORTEDALA TORG IS POINTED OUT AS AN IMPORTANT PLACE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN MUNICIPAL STRATEGIES, BUT KORTEDALA TORG IS NOT ENOUGH TO PROVIDE THE ENTIRE NEIGHBOURHOOD WITH SERVICES AND CITY LIFE

### CITYTORGET:

- CITYTORGET IS PLACED AT A STRATEGIC LOCATION BUT ITS INVERTED CHARACTER MAKES IT SEEM DETACHED FROM ITS SURROUNDINGS
- THE SQUARE AND ITS SURROUNDING BUILDINGS HAS A STRONG CHARACTER TYPICAL OF THE TIME IT WAS BUILT, BUT A LACK OF MAINTENANCE PREVENTS THE ENVIRONMENT FROM BEING SOMETHING THE INHABITANTS CAN FEEL PROUD OF
- MANY MOVE PAST BUT FEW RESIDE ON THE SQUARE, RENDERING THE SPACES FEELING DESERTED AND FAILING TO CREATE A SENSE OF CITY LIFE

## 4. DESIGN

## INTRODUCTION TO THE DESIGN CHAPTER

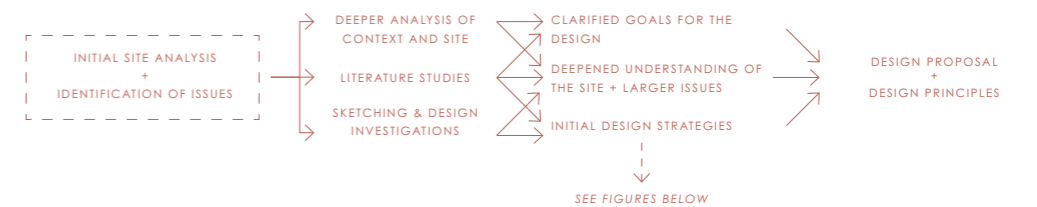
This chapter presents a design proposal for the site which is based on conclusions from both the theory in chapter two and conclusions from the site and context analysis presented in chapter 3.

The goal has been to create a design proposal which can support a development of city life in the area while questioning that everything would need to look like or have the density of the central city to achieve this. In relation to this the theories from Gehl (2003) have been especially important. Theories regarding the connection between the state of the physical environment and our willingness to participate in different types of activities and the concept of city life being a self-reinforcing effect primarily connected to how much time people spend in public space rather than how many move through it.

The design is an attempt to translate theories which largely developed from analysis of much more central and denser settings to the intermediate city and the context of Kortedala and Citytorget. The result is a design which focuses on spatial transformations which create more attractive places to reside in the area and which enables already existing flows of people to contribute to the sense of city life and increase the likelihood of social encounters.

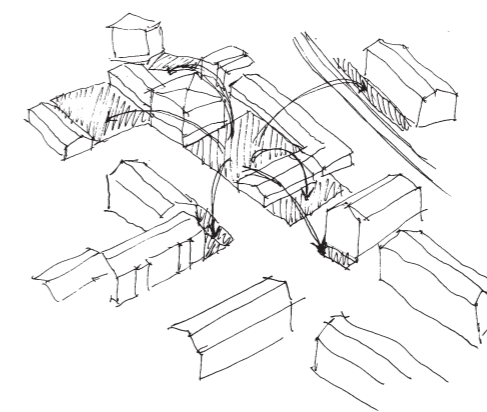
The design proposal developed as a combined result of initial intuitive sketching, deeper analysis of the context and site and literature studies. The process has been an iterative one where all studies and investigations have for the most part been carried out in parallel and the design has been continuously evaluated and updated both due to new insights from other studies and from the design investigations themselves. Very simplified the design process can be visualised as the following diagram.

### PROCESS DIAGRAM

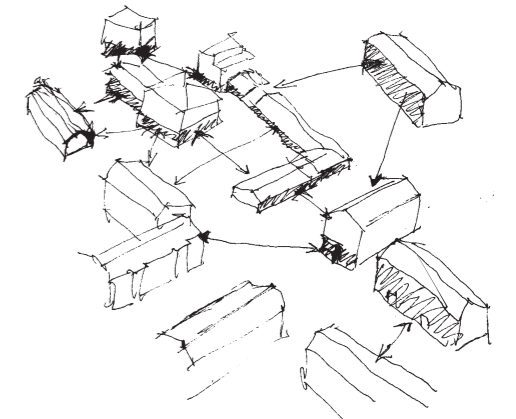


### INITIAL DESIGN STRATEGIES

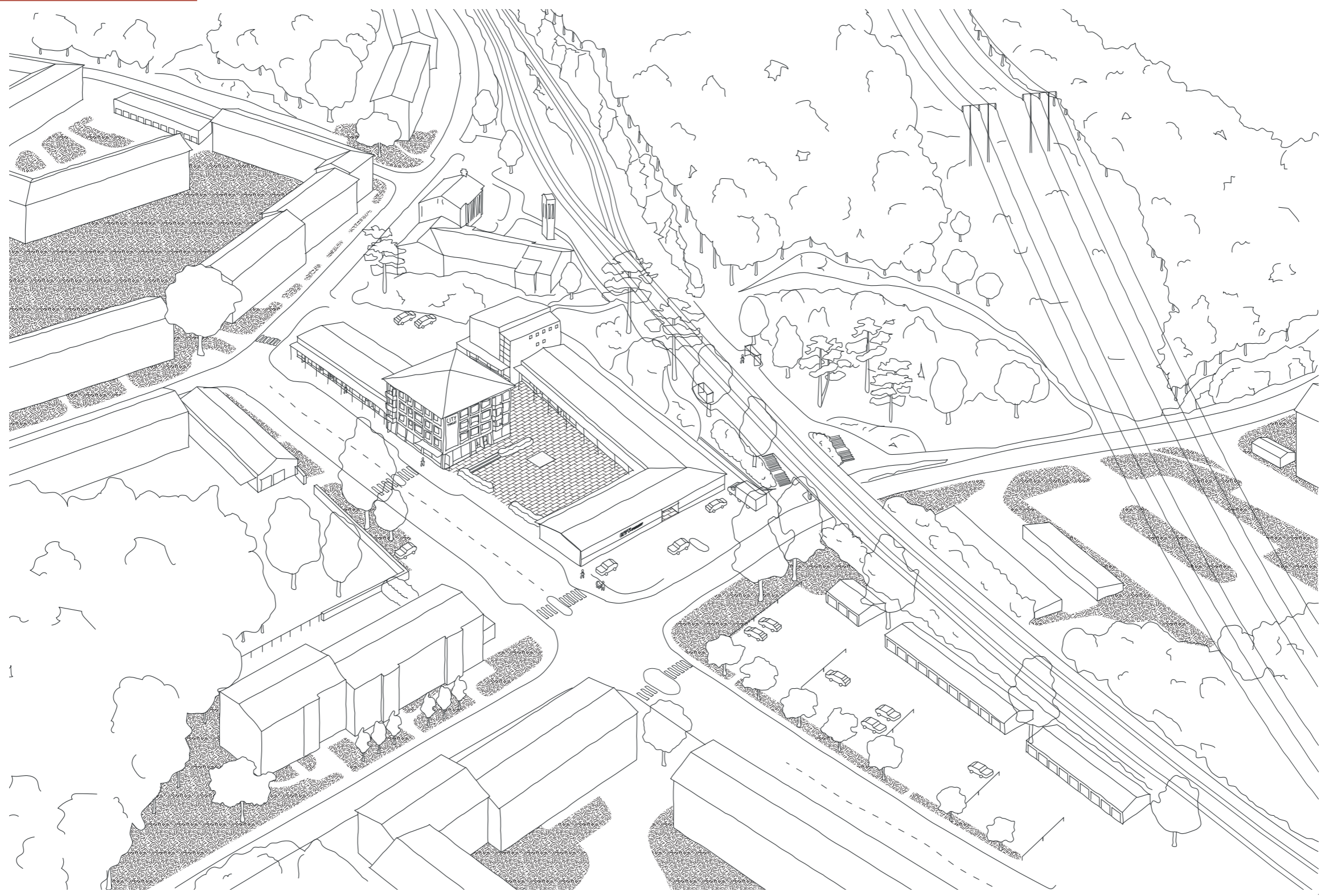
#### I. EXPANDING THE SQUARE



#### II. FRAMING THE STREETS AND TURNING BACKSIDES INTO FRONTS



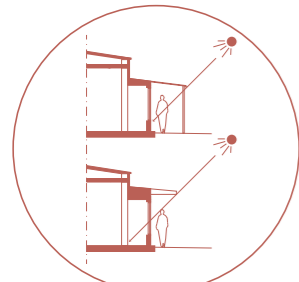
CURRENT APPEARANCE



# DESIGN PROPOSAL

A shortened building to create a stronger visual connection between the street and the north square space, and a direct link to and from the new neighbourhood north of the square.

Preliminary volumes from ongoing plan work.



Removing barriers of all scales



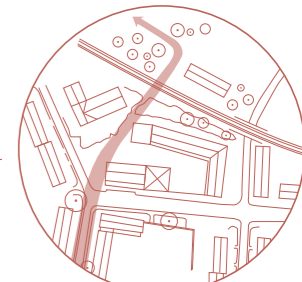
Small changes to turn a back into a front

The previous square space will not host the main volume of day-to-day life, but can still be an important space to be able to arrange public activities.

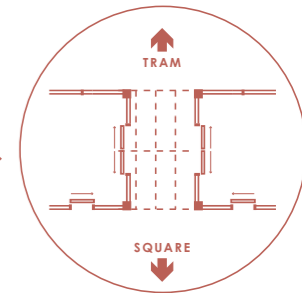
Entrances going through the building provides easy access to the yard while keeping the street-entrance as the main access point.



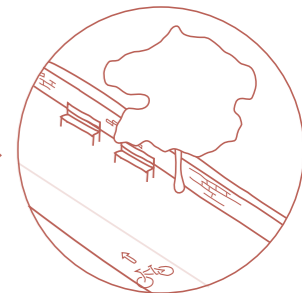
Combining commercial and non-commercial seating



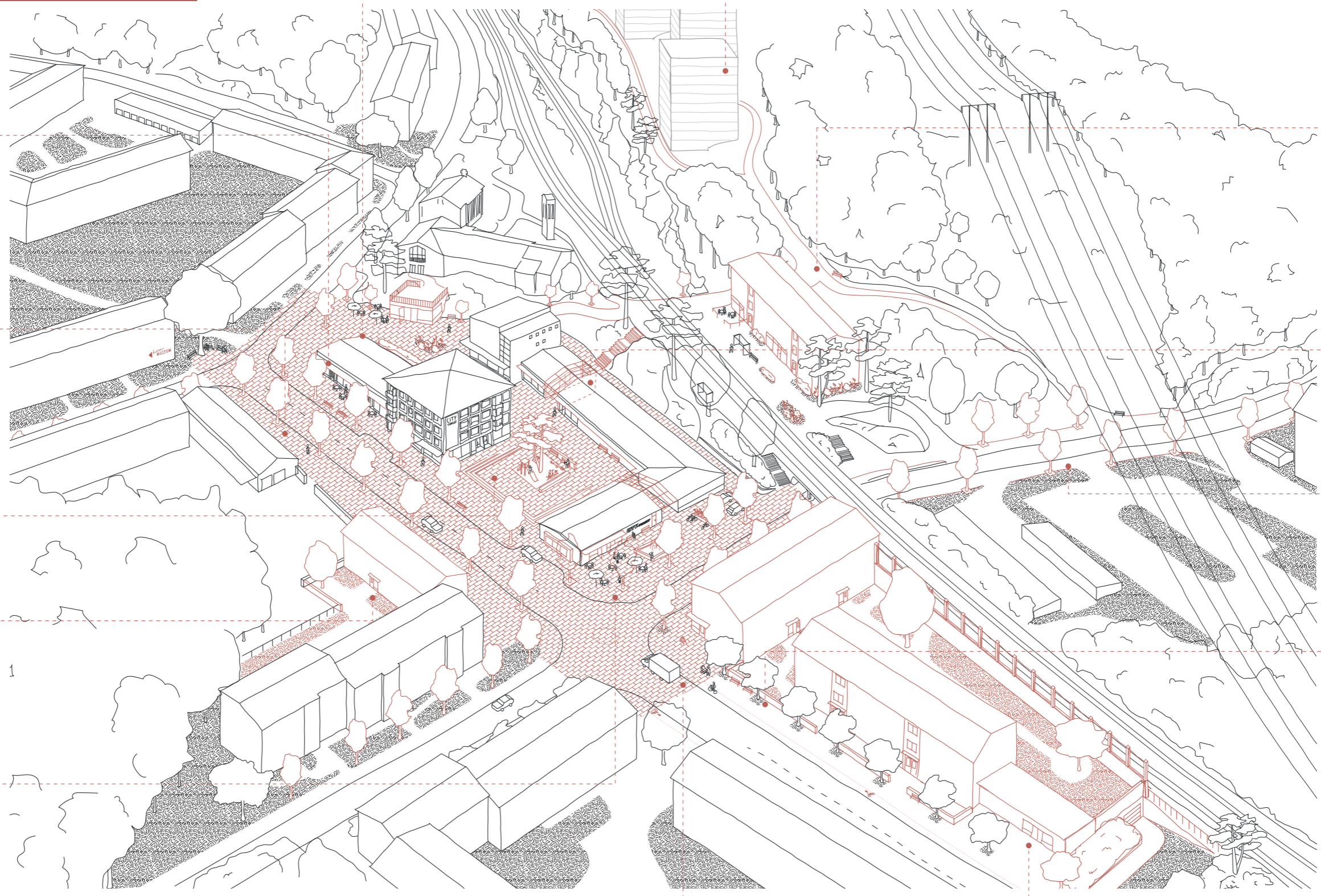
More direct paths for a stronger connection



Broadened sidewalks lined with trees can create a path more attractive for walking and while the powerlines are still here the trees frame the street and give it a clear direction to the square.



Separating private from public through a brick wall



- New additions/alterations
- Preliminary new additions from ongoing plan work
- Current appearance

A difference in material covering the ground shows that movement occur on pedestrian terms and creates a feeling of coherence

To not get too close to the power lines this building can't be too high, but the yard would benefit from a volume closing it. This could be housing in 1-2 stories or a locality open to the public. Perhaps this could be a good location for a bike workshop or studio space for rent?

## A CLOSER LOOK

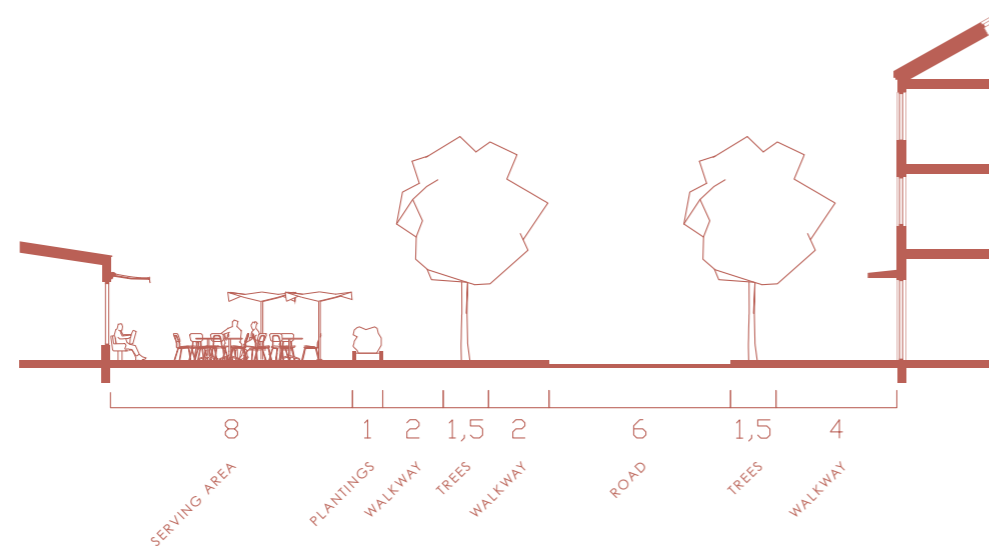
### INTRODUCTION

The illustration on page 56-57 shows the full proposal, while this segment aims to show parts of the design proposal at a more detailed level. All parts of the proposal are not designed in detail, but parts of the proposal regarding the streets, the larger connections, the existing buildings and the new residential buildings are visualised to give a better sense of what qualities and potentials a development could bring. The visualisations are to be seen as investigations of how a redesign could change the atmosphere of the place, and their aim is to incite imagination rather than show a fully finished design.

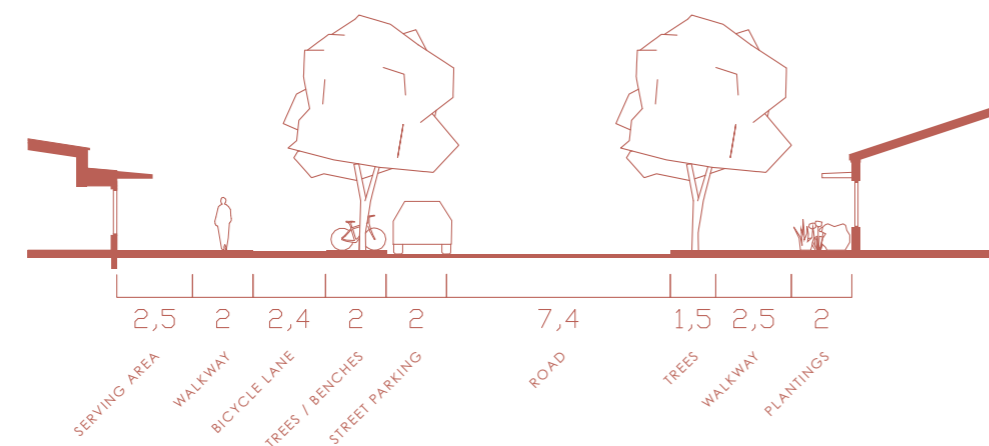
### THE STREETS

The streets are through the design more clearly defined as pedestrian friendly streets instead of roads. Places for pedestrians and visitors to the square to reside are prioritised over parking spaces, and unused patches of grass between walkways and buildings are replaced by either broadening the sidewalks or creating flower borders which contribute to a nicer and greener street space. The streets are lined with trees to divide the street space into a more pleasant scale and to strengthen the continuity along the paths.

STREET SECTION ÖSTRA  
MIDVINTERGATAN



STREET SECTION  
FÖRSTAMAJGATAN



FRAMING THE STREETS WITH GREENERY CAN BOTH DIVIDE THE STREET SPACE INTO A MORE PLEASANT SCALE AND EMPHASISE DIRECTION AND HIERARCHY IN THE STREET SYSTEM



PLEASANT PATHS WITH ACTIVITIES AND CONTINUITY CAN MAKE A DISTANCE APPEAR SHORTER



SHORTENED  
EXPERIENCED AND  
ACTUAL DISTANCES

MAP SHOWING  
TWO EXAMPLES  
OF CONNECTIONS  
WHICH COULD BE  
STRENGTHENED

- ↔ EXISTING PATHS
- ← - - → POTENTIAL NEW PATHS
- AREAS WHICH COULD BE BUILT
- AREA WHICH COULD BE IMPROVED WITH LANDSCAPING

THE LARGER CONNECTIONS

This is an overview proposal showing how a development of Citytorget could be the start of better connections for pedestrians.

Shortening the actual distance between Bergsjön and Kortedala would be possible in this location through adding a straighter walkway. Shortening the experienced distance is however a foundation for this, in this scenario it is assumed that the area of the enormous roundabout will be built in connection to a boulevard development, removing the large barrier the infrastructure constitutes today.

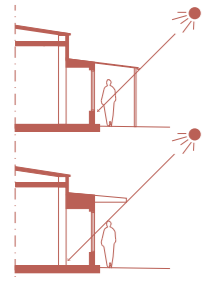
The experienced distance between Citytorget and Kortedala Torg could be significantly shortened. A starting point is the proposed buildings on the east side of Förstamajgatan close to citytorget. It could be strengthened further through building additions along the west side which would be possible with an altered safety distance to the power lines, and more stories could be added on top of the existing building in the southern marked area. Between Förstamajgatan and the tramway there are mostly grass surfaces with the character of unusable impediment. These could be transformed through landscaping - plantings and trees could frame the street and make it a more pleasant walk, connecting the north and south of Kortedala, opening up the possibility for further synergies between two well functioning squares.



EXISTING BUILDINGS

As earlier established, the buildings around the square need to be renovated. This is a proposal which aims to strengthen the 1950's character of the buildings through material and detail choices while also improving them. In several locations in the existing buildings on the square the original hardwood windows and other details are still in place, but in need of maintenance. These details should be kept and restored while some parts of the facades are in need of more profound renovations.

Some parts of the existing buildings need bigger adaptations than renovations to fully be able to contribute to an attractive and stimulating environment. To face both the sides of the buildings where most people move while continuing to face the square space some localities on the square need to be altered to have windows and entrances to all sides. This can change the very inverted character of the square, and lead to a stronger feeling of connection to the context as you walk by and to places where more people want to spend their time.



A REDESIGN OF THE CANOPIES AROUND THE ONE STOREY BUILDINGS ON THE SQUARE IS ONE EXAMPLE OF IMPORTANT IMPROVEMENTS

ILLUSTRATION SHOWING HOW A RESTAURANT IN THE SOUTH BUILDING ON THE SQUARE COULD FACE BOTH PASSING STREETS AND THE SQUARE

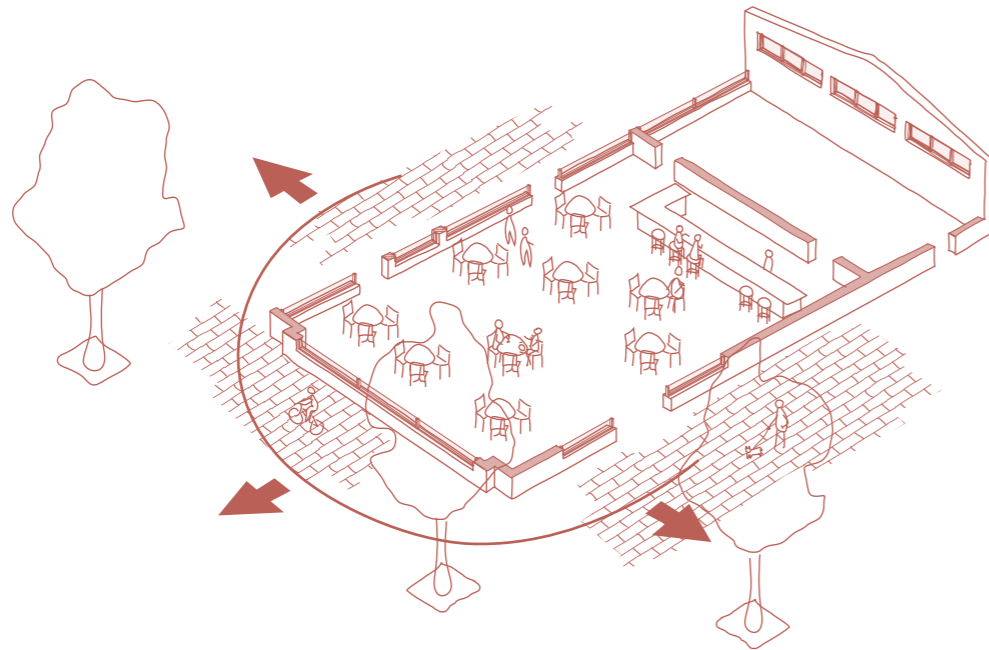
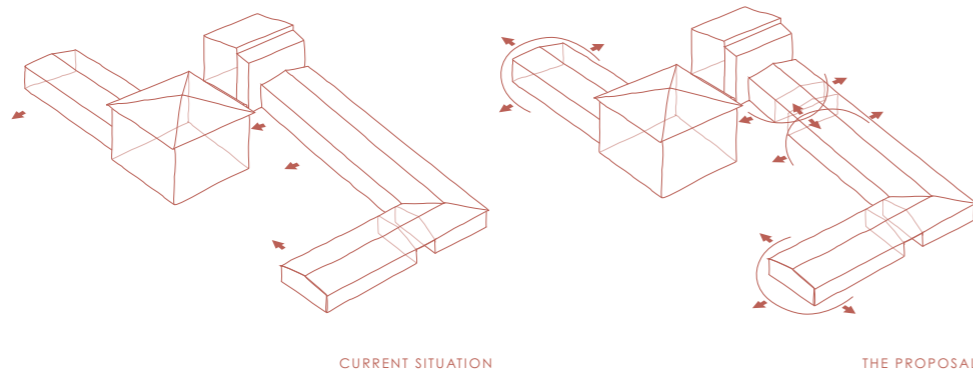


ILLUSTRATION SHOWING OTHER PLACES THE SAME PRINCIPLE SHOULD BE APPLIED



CURRENT SITUATION

THE PROPOSAL



ORIENTING VIEWS TO WHERE PEOPLE MOVE AND RESIDE CAN MAKE BOTH THE COMMERCIAL SPACE AND THE PASSING STREET SPACE MORE ATTRACTIVE



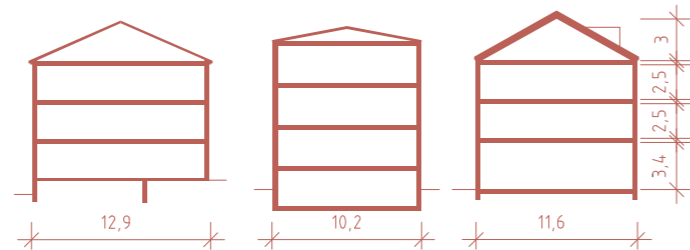
REPLACING SPACES FOR CARS WITH SPACES FOR PEOPLE CREATES A MORE OPEN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUILDING AND STREET AND ENABLES A STRONGER CONNECTION TO THE PLACE FOR THOSE WHO WALK BY AND INCREASES THE LIKELIHOOD OF LOW INTENSITY SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS - TO SEE AND TO HEAR OTHERS.

REFERENCES

NEW RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS



RESIDENTIAL BUILDING ON KORTEDALA TORG BUILT 2015



BUILDING ON KORTEDALA TORG FROM 2015

BUILDING SOUTH OF CITYTORGET FROM 1954

BUILDING PROPOSAL

The new residential buildings adapt to the already built in scale and expression. Three storey brick buildings with intricate brick details, especially around entrances, dominate the area and have served as inspiration for the new additions in this proposal.

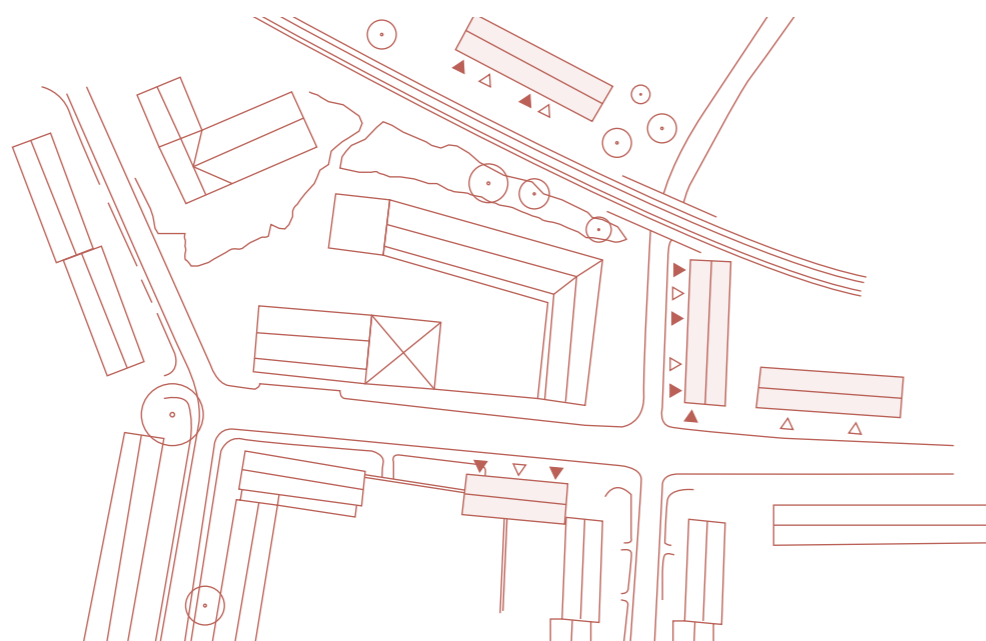
Plans and sections from neighboring buildings from the 50's as well as a new brick building of three stories on Kortedala Torg from 2015 has served as references regarding how the buildings can be divided into apartments while both adhering to modern regulations and blend in when it comes to scale. the proposal constitutes around 60 new apartments with sizes from 1 to 4 rooms and a kitchen.

Besides framing the streets and supplying the area with new apartments, the new buildings contribute with more localities enabling shifts in what business is situated where as well as enabling more businesses and services in the area.

60 NEW APARTMENTS

1 TO 4 ROK

ENTRANCES OF THE PROPOSED ADDITIONS



-  ENTRANCE FOR APARTMENTS
-  ENTRANCE TO COMMERCIAL SPACES/LOCALITIES
-  EXISTING BUILDINGS
-  NEW BUILDINGS WITH LOCALES AND APARTMENTS



NEW BUILDINGS WITH BOTH COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL ENTRANCES TOWARDS THE STREET CAN CONTRIBUTE WITH ACTIVITY DURING MANY HOURS OF THE DAY

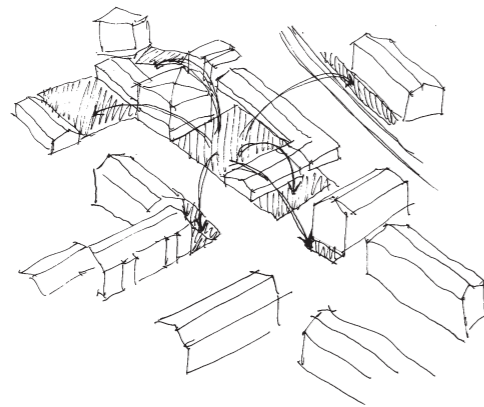
# DESIGN PRINCIPLES

## INTRODUCTION

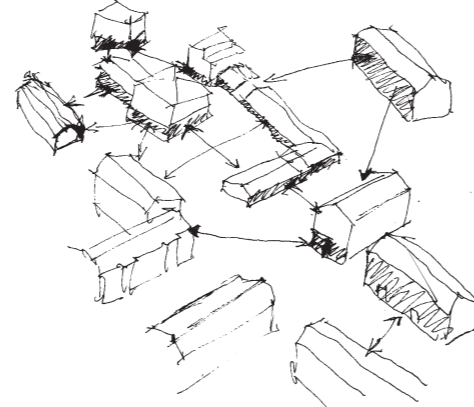
The design has taken shape in an iterative way based on the initial design strategies, insights from analysis of the site and conclusions from literature studies (see process diagram on page 53). During the process for the thesis, a number of conclusions and reflections regarding both what is important to include in the design as well as things needed for it to be practically possible were made, derived from the design work. Here they are summarised as principles for the design, and covers a much wider scope of topics than the initial strategies, and many of the principles could have a wider application than only Citytorget and Kortedala.

## INITIAL DESIGN STRATEGIES

I. EXPANDING THE SQUARE



II. FRAMING THE STREETS AND TURNING BACKSIDES INTO FRONTS



## THE PRINCIPLES

### 1. STRENGTHEN THE DESIGN AND ATMOSPHERE OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The first principle is the overarching principle which all other principles aim to contribute to. This principle takes precedence to the other principles since it is such an important precondition for the voluntary activities which make up the largest part of what is perceived as city life. The tolerance for a poor environment in regards to the necessary activities, such as going to the tram stop or visiting the grocery store is higher, but a stimulating and nice environment can also prolong the duration of the necessary activities, making it that much more likely that that specific visit to the square can constitute a social encounter for somebody else.

To contribute to the perception of the place, every scale matters. From the larger connections in the network of the city to the small details such as the state and detailed execution of facades. This is examined closer in the following parts of the design chapter.

### 2. TURN FUNCTIONS TOWARDS MOVEMENT

To turn functions, such as shop windows or entrances towards where people already move is important to strengthen the connection to the square, the experience of walking past the square as well as how attractive it is to spend time in and visit the localities on and around the square. In the existing buildings this can be done both through making localities double sided, and adding secondary entrances - countering the feeling that one side appears like a forgotten backside without creating a new one.

### 3. SWITCHING UP THE VENUES

For this to work and achieve the desired effect regarding how the environment is perceived, there are a number of locations on the square where it is important that windows remain open in all directions and are not covered by for example plastic films or curtains. In these locations there need to be businesses renting the venues for which the most important quality of the localities is not the number of shelf metres, and therefore some businesses need to change localities, some new businesses need to be added and new localities need to be built to enable these shifts.

### 4. A COHERENT BUILT ENVIRONMENT

To create an environment which feels coherent and whole, the building additions need to follow the same structure, scale and general appearance of the already built. There is room for pauses and divergence, but the square itself and the buildings surrounding it already constitute that and should be the focus in this environment, not the added residential buildings.

### 5. THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS TO DEFINE SPACE

Not only buildings can define the scale or character of space. The height and scale of buildings and the shape and typology of a block are only a few of very many tools to create street space in a human scale and to define something as clearly private or clearly public.

A brick wall or a hedge can separate private from public and a row of trees can reduce the scale of the street space while keeping the character of the already built.

### 6. A COORDINATED PLANNING

The area subject to this design has many different stakeholders having responsibility and authority over different parts of the area. The holder of the property lease of the square, different administrations within the municipality, the board of the condominium and their members and business owners. To redesign the area with a sense of coherence a significant effort would be needed to coordinate the planning between the different actors.

### 7. READABLE SPACE AND CLEAR SIGHTLINES

There are already plenty of winding paths full of surprises in Kortedala, but that is not what is needed here. Here it is important to make paths more directly linked to connecting streets and opening up sightlines to make space more readable and to make paths feel both safer and shorter.

### 8. STRENGTHEN AND EXTEND CONNECTIONS IN THE LARGER SCALE

Distance can both be measured and experienced and the measured and experienced does not always correspond. A lot can be done through design to both shorten actual distances, and redesigning stretches to make them feel more pleasant to walk along and make it clearer where they are going and thus making them feel shorter.

### 9. REAL PUBLIC PLACES

It is not a requirement for space to be truly publicly owned to be public domain, but it could safeguard the public function and give the citizens a democratic possibility to affect the program and quality of their square. If the property boundary corresponded with the facades, it could also give the property lease holder better economic preconditions to take care of the buildings without needing to finance extensive landscaping which is perhaps not the core in the business. The same could be relevant for all the surrounding properties, where the property boundary extends beyond the buildings without being used, leaving much of the streetspace feeling forgotten.

### 10. LEAVING PARTS OF THE DESIGN FOR OTHERS

Since the focus of this thesis project is mainly to utilise existing flows of pedestrian movement to create a sense of city life around the square, the square space itself has been consciously left a bit under-designed. While it is necessary to have open public space on the square to allow for planned events and spontaneous activities, the square could also be designed to give it a greater power of attraction, compensating for the lack of paths going through it. To achieve that however, a much larger work with citizen involvement than the scope of this thesis could do justice would need to be carried out.

## 5. DISCUSSION

## DISCUSSION

In this thesis, the main aim has been to investigate how Citytorget can be redesigned to showcase the potential of the local urban square as a catalyst for city life and social encounters. The importance of public space to create a stronger community and to counteract the effects of segregation is highlighted in the thesis and constitutes an important foundation for why the specific site needs to be reimagined through design.

While there are many general ideas and prejudice regarding what locations in the city can harbour city life, how they look, how dense they are and what shape they have - an important starting point for this thesis was to question the general undervaluation of more peripheral locations, their citizens and their will to participate in a local public life. What appears most often in the debate about the salvation of the dormitory suburbs is density, density, density with a touch of closed quarters and a grid plan - but that strategy fails to adapt to local preconditions and indispensable existing qualities in the current structures. Furthermore we risk losing the great diversity of living environments the city has to offer, if every location which is set out to be developed is shaped in the very same mould.

There are examples of this in Gothenburg, where places which are developed may become better than before - and I do not advocate leaving the city as a museum - but they are set out to become such a generic model of the modern urban city that you could basically have been anywhere. This raises concerns for other places which in municipal strategies are set out to be developed, such as Kortedala torg, and how the very large-scale planning and strategies risk missing crucial qualities and potentials. We need to expand the view on what the intermediate city can become, and challenge the notion that it needs to look like the city centre to be a successful development.

Not being pointed out specifically in development strategies could perhaps with this background open up both possibilities for development which is more free from the restraints which come with a pronounced goal of reaching an urban character but it could also constitute risks. Perhaps the major concerns for the specific site of the project, which is not named in present development strategies, is not being

developed at all, or that the current obstacles for development lead to projects which cannot contribute as much to the sense of coherence that is needed to improve the site and unlock its full potential.

To overcome this obstacle it is crucial to acknowledge the potential of Citytorget as a catalyst for city life, and that this potential exists without replacing the entire structure with something new. It is important to realise that city life in this location would not automatically appear by developing the area merely with the aim of reaching a density of population closer to the density of the inner city - something which is made clear in the site analysis and highlighted even further through the design proposal. There is also a need to challenge the limited view on city life as being only how it appears in the city centre, and that it needs to have the exact same intensity as the city centre to be worth striving for.

In the area around Citytorget it is much more about utilising the existing flows and pedestrian movement than adding density and a lot more people - both due to the fact that there already are a lot of people moving and living in the area, and because as Gehl (2003) states - three people staying in public space for an hour can contribute as much to city life as 30 people staying for three minutes.

The focus of the design of the area of the square is to both get those already moving in the area to be willing to stay longer, to attract visitors who are now reluctant to visit the square due to the poor environment and to make the movement and the dwelling contribute to each other, to strengthen the self-reinforcing effect of life between buildings. The overall impression and coherence of the built environment is important to create an environment which is meaningful to its inhabitants and to create a place where inhabitants truly can feel in the centre of their own context. This coherence and continuation of the built environment spreading to frame the square also allows the scale, shape and placement of the existing buildings on the square to be what stands out in a positive way rather than feeling like a part of a hole, a gap in the environment. To achieve this the street space is framed in a clearer way and connections between the streetspace and square are enhanced so that

movement past and through can occur without encountering barriers or spaces which feel like forgotten backsides where you are not supposed to move. This is also an important starting point for bridging barriers on a larger scale and can constitute important connections between different parts of Kortedala which are lacking today. However, to fully reach the social benefits Legeby (2013) discusses in her research in relation to countering the effects of segregation, there are reasons to investigate matters of marketing and communication alongside spatial aspects. In early stages of a development this could be used to somewhat compensate for a lack of physical connections and natural movement and promote meetings between inhabitants of several different neighbourhoods.

Further, redesigning the existing buildings to strengthen the visual connection between the main paths and the interior of the localities, as well as exchanging parking space for pedestrian space where it constitutes an obstacle for pedestrians, can both make the paths feel safer, lower the threshold to visit the businesses on the square and make being inside the venues more attractive as you can see people walk by and feel that you are somewhere where things happen. These qualities may sound banal but should not be underestimated, and redesigning the square so that people visiting the localities see people move by and so that people who move by see people in the localities or people who for other reasons are dwelling on the square or in the street is one of the principles in the project I truly believe cannot be compensated by any other measure.

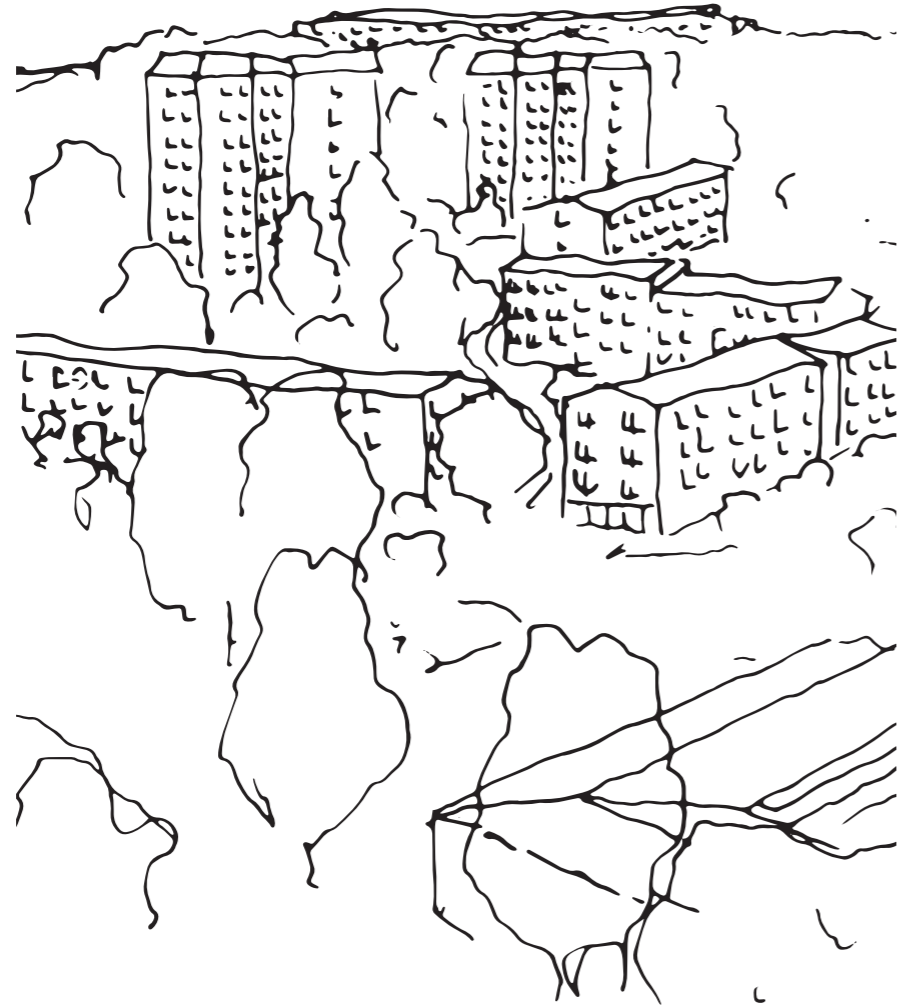
The design proposal is to be seen as part of the discussion regarding what potential this place has to be a catalyst for city life rather than the final answer to it. For me it has been important to highlight the possibility for a type of city life many deem as impossible in suburban settings. There are of course aspects regarding commercial and non-commercial activities, who is able to participate in a public life and what businesses attract which target groups and if some groups even could get excluded. I believe however that it is an important function of a square and a centre, and an important part of city life to have commercial activities - but that combining these with for example public seating and playgrounds as well as having a diversity of businesses is what

can unlock the potential of this place to be public domain and not only public space.

While this design project first and foremost has been a spatial investigation regarding how the spaces can be designed to fulfil the aim, there are of course other preconditions which would need to be studied to realise the project. Ownership of the square and street space is touched upon but could be studied deeper, removing responsibility for that space from a commercial actor could be key to shape spaces which fulfil a larger public purpose which in turn could also contribute to the attractiveness of the commercial property. Details in the design would of course also need further investigations - the scope of this thesis has not allowed thorough investigations into for example exactly what pavement should be used or what species of trees should frame the streets. These are, however, details which can have a great significance, and if the project were to be realised several professions would need to cooperate.

Another aspect worth studying could be how the local community could be involved in both the practical work with renovating and rebuilding the square and in the financing and how different ways of involving the local community could increase the feeling of ownership of the space, and how likely it is that people would use it and visit the businesses in the area.

Getting the local community involved to create a connection to the square is crucial for the long term survival and financial stability of the project since without visitors there will be no businesses and without businesses there will not be much of a square. This places a lot of responsibility on the property lease holder, to gain the trust of the community, to find and support businesses which contribute to the general attractiveness of the square and to get to know the local context to know what would actually work and not base this on general prejudice about the area. Because just as it would be naive to think that everything would be solved just by reaching a higher density of population, it would be naive to think something else than that reimagining Citytorget spatially would only be the first step towards a place which can truly be a catalyst for city life and social encounters. I think, however, that through this thesis it is shown just how important of a first step this can be.



## ENDING WORDS

It has been very interesting to through this thesis explore my own local context, a context which before I moved here nearly three years ago had quite little knowledge about, and felt very little connection to. This has of course changed and I find myself caring deeply for the context and the people living here in what I now identify as my home. With this background it has throughout the work been a constant struggle between wanting to showcase all the existing qualities and focusing on the identified issues and how these can be solved. Only focusing on qualities would of course have made a very different master's thesis, even though that would have also made an extensive investigation. Trying to capture all the existing social networks and meeting places, beautiful nature, intimate and green street spaces or how in some places buildings remind more of a river meandering down the mountains than anything else, is a full semester's worth of work, all on its own.

I hope, that by proposing a vision for how some shortcomings can be dealt with while recognising the worth of the existing environment I can contribute to the future development of Kortedala. Hopefully this thesis can influence some to expand their general perception of what potential Kortedala in general, and Citytorget in particular has to offer.

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