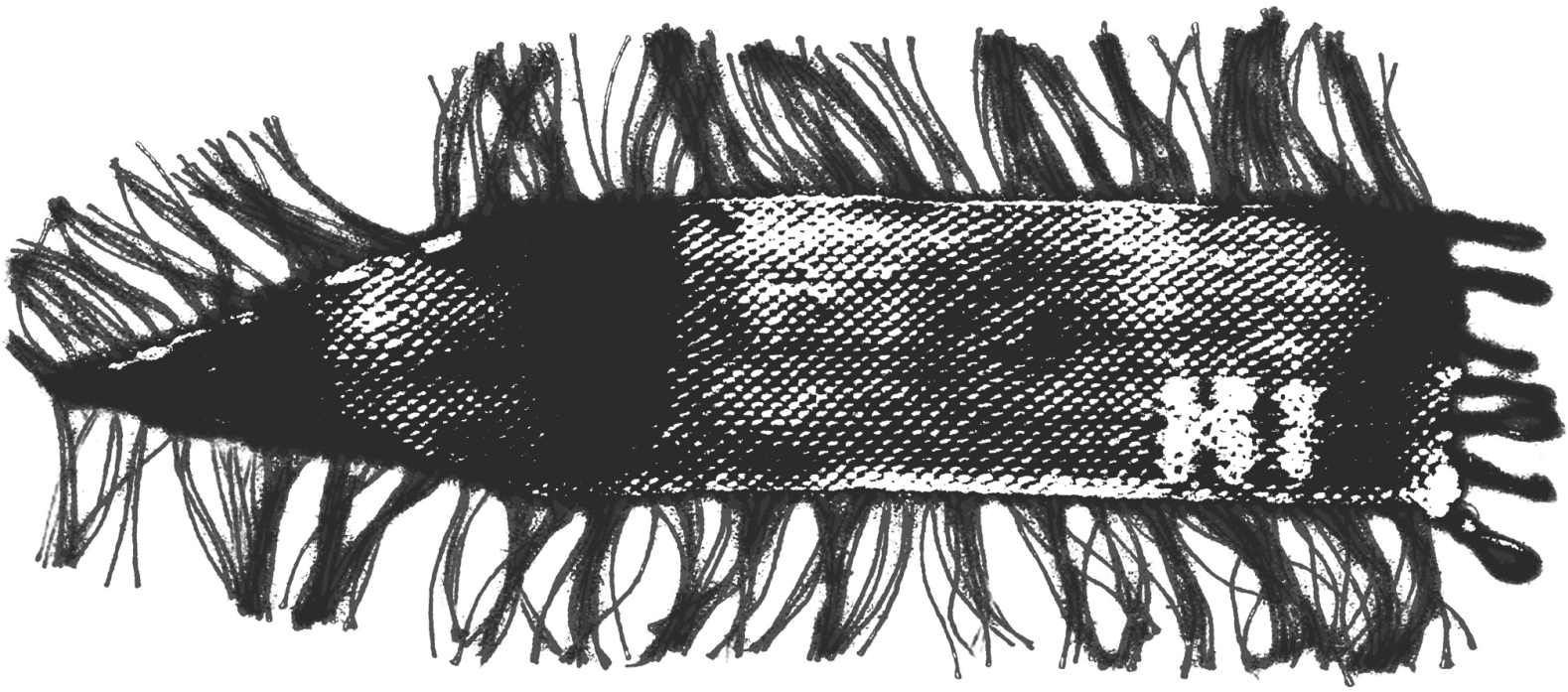


Futures that did not happen. A feminist public space is a movement more than a statement. Emily Nausner. 2026.

Master’s Thesis. Chalmers School of Architecture. Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering.
Examined by Kristina Grange. Supervised by Jessica Lundin.

Futures that did not happen.
A feminist public space is a movement
more than a statement.

Emily Nausner
2026

Chalmers School of Architecture
Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering
Master's program Architecture and Planning Beyond Sustainability

Society, Justice, Space
Examined by Kristina Grange
Supervised by Jessica Lundin



thank you

To Jessica Lundin & Kristina Grange
for your support & guidance.

To Eva Warberg
for your time to talk with me.

To Natalie Blom, Mercè Torres & Rikke Bogetoft
for the inspiring conversations & your eagerness to collaborate.

To Max Robinson
for your kindness and help.

To everyone who shared their thoughts, experiences & desires
for having a substantial impacted on this project.

futures that did not happen.

Futures that did not happen.

This Master's thesis critically examines the marginalisation of women from spatial agency in the urban environment of Gothenburg, Sweden since the early 20th century. As architecture was a male dominated field for centuries, European cities have historically been designed by men, reflecting traditional gender roles and gendered division of space.

The building on Storgatan 47 was one of many venues for female resistance and self-organised space-making in Gothenburg. Between 1941 and 1980, the Idun Women's Association inhabited this building and became the first women's association in Sweden to own its self-defined space.
What if the Idun Women's Association had not left the premises in 1980? This thesis is an attempt at using feminist critical spatial theory to develop a speculative scenario in which the ethos of Idun Women's Association did not leave its House but evolved into a contemporary feminist public space.

This explorative work addresses architecture and the spaces that emerge from it as power structures, nourished by enduring gendered, racialised and politically strategic hierarchies. Feminist critical spatial practices shift the focus from the architect as sole author of spatial design towards interdisciplinary approaches. They incorporate cultural history, art, maintenance, care, activism and climate justice. Feminist critical spatial practices, thus, ultimately strive for social justice and intersectional gender equity.

Central to this thesis is the process of practicing critically while anticipating feminist futures in architecture with a focus on materialism and ethics of care. New ways of spatial analysis and production that challenge heteronormative and patriarchal standards are tested in pursuit of more resilient spaces. The finality of this project is a range of tested methods that are dealing with past circumstances, contemporary action and user participation, imaginaries about the future and ways to weave the outcomes together.

By reclaiming a space once dedicated to women and imagining its continuation, this thesis advocates for self-organised and inclusive feminist public spaces that strengthen public spatial agency.

Keywords

Counterpublics
Ethics of Care
Materialism
Spatial Agency

A note on archival sources and copyright

Several primary sources consulted during the research for this thesis originate from the KvinnSam archive at Gothenburg University and from the City Planning Office. These sources are photographs, architectural drawings, letters, inventory lists and other internal documents of the Idun Women's Association. Upon enquiring about publication rights, both institutions confirmed that while these documents are accessible as public records, they retain copyright protection.

For the majority of the archival sources used in this thesis, it was not possible to identify the copyright holders, making it impossible to obtain the necessary permissions for reproduction. To situate the argument without reproducing protected content, the shown archival material that was central to the research process is heavily edited and labled as such:

(source retains copyright protection).

A note on marginal annotations

Throughout this thesis short clarifications appear in the margins of the text. They are reading companions and clarify the current state of the process. They are indicated as:

reading instruction.

A note on cross-referencing

This thesis is structured as a cumulative process where each phase builds upon the previous one. To reflect this, cross-references throughout the work provide context, validation or additional information.

When a section draws on or continues developing a concept, this is indicated as:
//page title/page number//

Cross-references to related visual material are indicated as:
//fig.00//

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Scope & delimitations

what?

Building upon past feminist acts of resistance

This thesis is speculative and reflective, exploring a scenario where the ethos of a self-organised, feminist space introduced by the Idun Women's Association never left their building but rather developed and evolved. The speculative scenario is not only concerned with the exploration of the historical site itself but uses it as a vehicle for demonstrating the creative tools that women have always used to support one another. These tools advocate for shared commons that build that support into the urban fabric while restoring women's spatial agency. Using a historical venue for feminist action in Gothenburg, Sweden as an example, this thesis imagines possible futures asking what feminist architecture could be – not just as a finished space, but as an ongoing, caring process.

Feminist spatial theory

The applied research methods are drawn from feminist critical spatial theory and practices and enquire about feminist public spaces. To enable conciseness in the approach, defined aspects of feminist spatial theory are focused on: materialism and the ethos of care. Other avocations such as the fight of intersectional hierarchies within feminism are acknowledged and influence the process but will not be elaborated on as deeply.
The tested methods are subversive. They embrace the process, allow subjectivity and controversies, lines that are not straight, and spatial settings informed by situated knowledge. The outcomes are strategies, snapshots, fragments of perspectives as feminist spaces are aspirational projects without a master plan, rather resisting the claim of mastery. (Kern, 2021)

The process of spatial production

Feminist critical spatial practices explore facets of architectural design that are often neglected such as prioritising the process of spatial production over the final product, care over form and collective knowledge over individual authorship. Therefore, no finished spatial program or a complete set of architectural drawings are produced as there is no finality in this process (Rendell, 2018). The outcomes of the tested methods are not evaluated according to fixed criteria, rather, the role they played in the entire process and the quality of their findings is assessed.

Feminist spaces in Gothenburg

Starting from 20th-century Gothenburg, the project maps sites of female emancipation to establish a historical chronology up to the present, demonstrating the value of self-defined, third spaces in cities. Rather than attempting a comprehensive history of all local feminist movements, it focuses on specific physical locations to identify spatial patterns. It nevertheless recognises comparably smaller-scale feminist spaces and acknowledges the growing significance of digital feminist landscapes today.

Purpose

why?

Due to historically rooted urban layouts, contemporary planning processes that reproduce systemic forms of discrimination as well as the effects of being socialised as a woman, women have less freedom and spatial agency in many urban public spaces (Hartmann, 2022). Intersectional social inequalities embedded into streets, homes and neighborhoods result in women struggling every day with problems created by cities built by men. (Kern, 2021) While there have been feminist spaces dedicated to female emancipation emerging in Gothenburg in the past, most of them eventually declined. New feminist spaces are often digital while physical feminist spaces that reflect female spatial agency have become rare (E. Warberg, personal communication, January 27, 2026). An awareness of past struggles helps to see what is at stake and encourages asking how more just and sustainable urban environments could be built.

Aim

for what greater goal?

This thesis aims to foster an architectural practice that realigns its methods to a wider set of values including care work, equity, justice and collectivity, while addressing modern discriminatory spatial practices.
Depicting the futures that could happen this thesis aims to contribute to the discourse of feminist publics in cities and advocates for a gender perspective in the production of space.

03

Use of Keywords

Counterpublics are an alternative typology in reaction to the dominant, man-made public sphere and aim for new ways of being together in public spaces. They are third spaces in which the experiences of gender, domestic labour, bodily vulnerability, and ethics of care become the basis for public, collective life instead of being relegated to the isolated private sphere (Warner, 2010).

Spatial Agency describes the capability of individuals and groups to actively participate in shaping space. Through diverse knowledge, intentions, voices and activities, space becomes situated, appropriated by its users and resists the authority of the architect as sole actor of spatial design (Claesson, 2017).

Ethics of care as approach allows spatial practitioners to transgress their roles as architects by applying methods that develop a sensitivity to the small gestures and activities of urban caretaking. Qualities and values such as interdependence, responsibility, empathy, respect and solidarity are emphasised (Brolund de Carvalho & Linna, 2017, pp. 256-262).

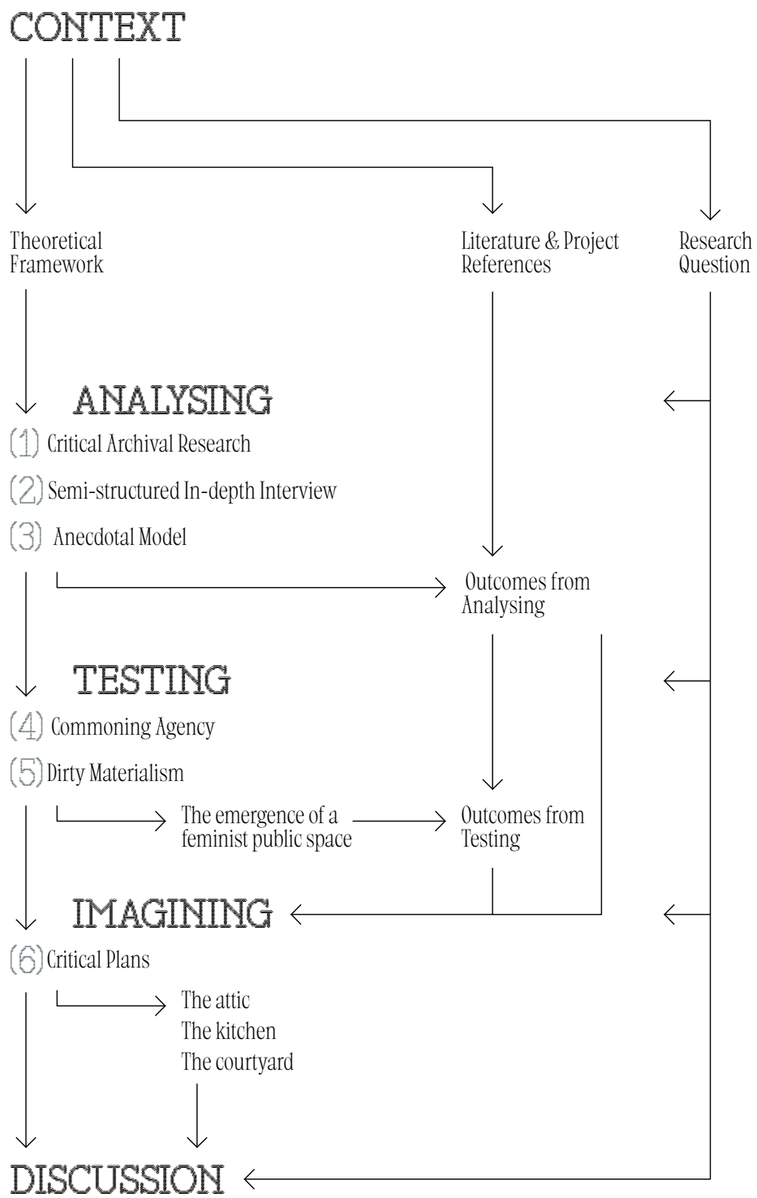
Materialism

Feminist architecture acknowledges that space is not just observed from a distance but experienced through the body (Rawes & Spencer, 2018, p. 154). This project considers how the material world shapes social life, politics, human experiences and reflects on what defines materials value beyond their exchange value.

Structure

how?

01 *Process diagram.*



Position the thesis in relation to the current discourse.

Find relevant literature & project references & formulate research questions.

Analyse the historical background & the exploration site.

Test applying the theory in a real local setting.

Explore how the Analysing & Testing outcomes can be translated spatially at the exploration site.

Reflect on the outcomes of the process & contribute to the wider discourse.

Research Question

How can
feminist critical
spatial practices
be employed
as methods
to explore the
futures of a
feminist public space
that did
not
happen?

Theoretical Framework

founding on what knowledge ?

Feminist Critical Spatial Practices

Feminist critical spatial practices (FCSPs) understand the discipline of architecture and the spaces that emerge from it as power structures, nourished by enduring gendered, racialised and politically strategic hierarchies. They praise more interdisciplinary approaches that incorporate cultural history, art, maintenance, care, activism, climate justice, political ecology and many more disciplines. Feminism is defined in FCSPs as a method, rather than solely as a topic. It is a way of creating more just and sustainable ways of producing, representing and inhabiting space.

Literature references *

The following mapping of concepts that constitute FCSPs is based on critical literature research and is inspired by Roberts' and Aiken's "Feminist Spatial Practices, Part 1" (2023) //theoretical framework/p.12-13//.
The mapping highlights concepts on which this research project is founded upon but does not offer a holistic definition of FCSPs. The authors and editors of the considered literature form an international network of feminist architectural research that addresses questions of gender, power, equality and critical space production in theory, practice and activism.

Project references

The project references specified in the margins are inspiring the research along all its phases. The KvinnSam archive, Kvinnohus, Kvinnofolkshögskolan and Regnbågshus situate the research in local feminist history and are examples of self-organised space-making in Gothenburg. Feministhus in Trondheim, the data from Mappingdiversity.eu and the project Exclude me In by MYCKET evidence ongoing spatial discrimination and offer methods to oppose these.

Project Reference

↗

Project reference title.
Description and relevance for the process.

FCSP *

ethics of care

“On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species based activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.” Joan C. Tronto and Berenice Fisher , 1990 (Tronto, 2009, p. 103). Feminist ethics of care allows spatial practitioners to transgress their roles as architects by helping to go from a generic blindness to a growing ability to interact, through the development of sensitivity to the small gestures and activities of urban caretaking - focusing on qualities and values such as interdependence, responsibility, empathy, respect and solidarity (Brolund de Carvalho & Linna, 2017, pp. 256-262).

global struggles

FCSPs are aware of the immediate context of their action but also of the global context. That implies meeting challenges posed by climate change, economic crises and uneven global development that require immediate action by rethinking basic assumptions and concepts as well as practical skills and projects (Schalk et al., 2017, p. 14).

feminist

criticality

Projects become critical when the main principle of the research is to put forward questions. Instead of resolving problems, critical practices produce objects that critically rethink the parameters of the problem itself. (Rendell’s notion of ‘critical spatial practice’ in Schalk et al., 2017, p. 14).

commoning

Commoning is a collective practice in which a self-defined community creates solidarity and connectivity by way of sharing resources and knowledge. Such practices offer alternatives to capitalist structures, enabling more equitable and less exploitative ways of living together, including forms of reproductive commons that reduce dependence on wage labour and blur boundaries between private and public. (Wieger, 2018, p. 232) Examples of commoning show how individuals and groups transform through sharing activities, re-appropriating space and demonstrating resistance (Krasny & Schalk, 2017, pp. 139-143).

challenge heteronormative & patriarchal structures

Counteracting hegemonic power relations which make and maintain precarity, by designing housing and urban spaces that meet women’s needs without reinforcing oppressive roles. FCSPs aim to create safer, accessible, more supportive environments, particularly for women and marginalised groups and transgress historically constructed boundaries between home and work, care and employment. (Matrix Book Group, 2022, p. 36) As women tend to lay more importance on relationships with others instead of appropriating spatial territory, it becomes even more trivial to engage in space making that prioritises women and girls through gender-sensitive planning (Hartmann, 2022, p. 94).

critical

inclusive design

FCSPs are transformative approaches that broaden the understanding of who produces knowledge and space. (Burns & Brown, 2020, p. 2) To create self-defined spaces, one needs to establish, imagine and organise that space collectively where each individual is part of a wider multiplicity (Hartmann, 2022, p. 120). During these processes, inclusive design helps to bring the users’ experience into the heart of the design process. Inclusion allows a wider spectrum of people to access and interact with and within the built environment through visual but also through other sensory stimuli (Morrow, 2017, p. 82). Practices like Matrix Design Collective aim to create accessible, collaborative design processes, by creating shared languages of space. During workshops, they work with flexible, non-final drawings to overcome the feeling that once something is drawn it could not be changed, which further supports collective confidence and imagination (Matrix Book Group, 2022, p. 97).

reuse & maintenance

Feminist theory across disciplines has long pointed out that the separation of nature and architecture is not right and makes people incapable of responding in a caring and consistent manner to today’s trauma of climate change. Considering this crisis, care is needed for survival of an exhausted planet that is about to reach its breaking point (Hartmann, 2022, p.71). To give architecture its caring character back, demands opening walls when needed, but reusing the same bricks, wood, steel or concrete to build other structures and to not create any waste (MYCKET, 2017, p. 67).

new standards

By reappropriating spaces, reinventing structures and introducing new forms of space making, FCSPs need new categories, institutions, forms of management, spaces, and actors - an entire infrastructure that is both material and digital. Setting up this infrastructure is the creation of connections, a networking of ideas, tools and subjectivities. This networking should be itself a form of ‘commons’: accessible, fair, sustainable (Petrescu, 2017, p. 102).

critical reflection: diffraction

The concept of ’diffraction’, profiled by feminist theorists Donna Haraway and Karen Barad is a metaphor for a critical thinking methodology for a new feminist materialist toolbox. It is used to analyse how differences are produced and the effects they create, as opposed to simply observing or reflecting on differences. Diffraction leads to transformative processes, includes narratives and new interference patterns (Lykke, 2017, p. 30).

resilience

Resilience is understood not only as adaptation in changing circumstances, but as the opportunity for reinvention (Petrescu, 2017, p. 107). Resilience takes a political dimension when it relates to practices of commoning. Resilient subjects, seek to find common ground by connecting, sharing resources, counteracting violence and hegemonic power relations (Krasny & Schalk, 2017, p. 141).

activism

FCSPs advocate for activism that shifts from critique to reparation. Practices that work suggestively, imagine what is possible, rather than only exposing what is wrong. It takes courage to suggest, but new counterparts can sustain collective struggles and generate new forms of social agency supporting community activism (MYCKET, 2017, p. 65). Such activism relies on mutual support and environments as emancipatory spaces. It is less concerned with the formal characteristics of buildings than with forces related to their production, finance and power structures regulating the conditions of architecture (Mattson, 2017, p. 292).

valuing context

Drawing on Leslie Kern, the minor importance placed on the environment and context in urban design approaches reveals a colonial mindset that overlooks local environments, lived experiences, and contextual histories while prioritising technical, objective approaches and determining how people should live. (Hartmann, 2022, p. 73) A feminist approach emphasises the value of embodied, everyday experiences. These are often dismissed in conventional, technical frameworks where the quantifiable is treated as reliable while all other observations become curiosities or mere indicators (Brolund de Carvalho & Linna, 2017, p. 256). Incorporating narratives, memories and the intertwined nature of global and local relations leads to more inclusive planning that acknowledges power dynamics and diverse cultural expressions (Claesson, 2017, p. 43).

alterity: the otherness

The term "spatial alterity" refers to Doina Petrescu’s Altering Practices. Alterity acknowledges the role of aesthetics, as well as ethics, form, as well as function, in architecture. The focus is on the other, and on an understanding of those practices which aim to change, transform or alter. (Rendell, 2018) FCSPs develop an aesthetic expression beyond modernist and patriarchal constraints and demonstrate how easily we can provoke, take care of, and alter that which surrounds us(MYCKET, 2017, p. 67).

alternative materialities

A careful selection of materials and the invention of new ones bring a deeper sense of care to our environment as seen in innovations like using textiles to shape concrete or using bioregional resources. By narrowing the gap between representation and fabrication, architectural surfaces can express craft, care, precision, and intimacy, challenging the idea of construction as a mechanistic, anonymous process (Morrow, 2017, p. 82).

the process

FSCPs work with methods that highlight user participation in the design process. The design process is not an action that leads to the making of a product but rather becomes the scene of the product itself. This way of working emphasises the importance of collaboration and voicing a critique of architectural design methods that purely emphasise form and object making (Rendell, 2018).

new tools

Fieldwork methods like historical mapping, enactment, film, and conversation are emanating from care-focused values that help to find what is not easily seen from a planner’s perspective. They reveal overlooked, small-scale activities that sustain lived narratives and are necessary for building resilient communities (Brolund de Carvalho & Linna, 2017, p. 262). Methods that counteract the abstraction of the (male) text-and-image exhibits hanging flat on the wall are letting visitors interact with the exhibition, through direct action (painting, crafting etc.) but also by sensing spatiality by walking through 1:1 scale models (Mattson, 2017, p. 295).

intersectionality

Feminist theories and political practices are rooted in recognising how gender systems intersect with broader struggles for social justice. A global perspective reveals diverse yet interconnected feminist histories shaped by diverse liberation movements (Burns & Brown, 2020, p. 3). Intersectional feminism builds on this by aiming to eliminate all forms of discrimination without allowing race, class, and gender inequalities to be treated separately or being played-off against one another (Hartmann, 2022, p. 103).

spatial

reparation

Spatial practitioners can mend, care for, and bring out historical and social rifts and absences when investigating further into forgotten narratives. As archives are always incomplete in the way they tell history, feminist spatial processes can reconcile and restore through adding those realities to their projects (MYCKET, 2017, pp. 64-65).

interdisciplinarity

In order to better understand today’s complex world, architects must look beyond traditional, modernist training and embrace methods and forms of knowledge from other disciplines (Hartmann, 2022, p. 120). FCSPs exemplify this shift by working across disciplinary boundaries, valuing design processes as much as outcomes, and treating theory as an active mode of practice. (Rendell, 2018) Synergies among disciplines have generated knowledge that reformulates the ways in which space can be understood and combine creativity and social critique to address urgent global challenges. (Schalk et al., 2017, p. 15) They also promote a broader conception of architecture beyond the built environment, grounded in social relationships, collaboration, and the active participation of users (Petrescu, 2017, p. 102).

feminine subjectivity

The concept of feminine subjectivity that emerged in the 1970s emphasises a capacity for female subjects to allow themselves to be affected by different agencies at once and to create relations and be transformed by them. FSCPs can highlight feminine subjectivity by creating spaces centered around care and collaboration such as collective gardening. Women often take the lead in such initiatives because they recognise the ethical, political, and environmental value of such work. These projects generate creativity, innovation, meaningful collective engagement and teach the patience and attention of reproductive work (Petrescu, 2017, p. 103).

practices

Methods

(1) Semi-structured In-depth Interview

The semi-structured in-depth interview is conducted with a predefined set of written questions while still staying open to asking new spontaneous questions throughout the interview. It disrupts traditional, objective architectural researching methods by capturing the subjective understanding an individual brings to the analysis of space which is often excluded from architectural analysis (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007, pp. 115–118). Through a semi-structured in-depth interview with a key figure of past and contemporary feminist movements in Gothenburg, the process gets informed with anecdotes, subjugated knowledge of the diversity of women's realities, and individual lived experiences that often stay unarticulated in the description of space.

Tools: Audio recording, transcribtion and thematic analysis //fig.02//. The thematic analysis is inspired by the Data Structure diagram (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 21) and synthesises the interview by organising it thematically and supporting the individual notions with specific quotes from the interview.

→ 02 *Excerpt of the thematic analysis.*



criticality
ethics of Care
feminine subjectivity

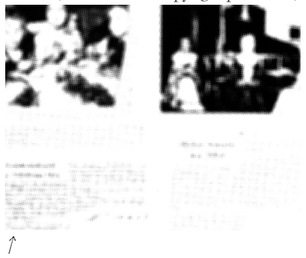
→ *applying this method contributes to a practice that is adressing these aspects of FCSPs:*

(2) Critical Archival Research

Critical archival research reveals detailed and anecdotal information about feminist places in Gothenburg. Working through archived primary sources, but also questioning what is archived, what is represented and what is missing. Through critical archival research, archives shift from neutral repositories into sites of memory and social justice. The processing and displaying the found sources not only document the past but reflect on ongoing struggles for equality in the present (MYCKET, 2017, pp. 64-65).

Tools: Analysing architectural plans, looking for reoccurring patterns in photographs and translating written text.

(source retains copyright protection)



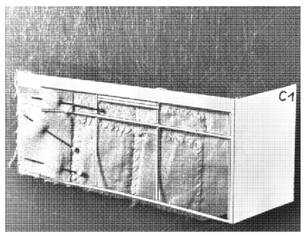
↑ 03 *Archived local newspaper articles about the Idun Association.*

valuing context
intersectionality
reparation

(3) Anecdotal Model

The anecdotal model reappropriates and subverts conventional model-making practices through altered materiality, scale and function, revealing what is “Other” to the dominant architectural narrative. The method of the anecdotal model is described by Lilian Chee (2011) in “Materialising the tiger in the archive”, where Chee advocates for an expanded, feminist approach to architectural history that values subjectivity, interdisciplinarity and experimental methods. The model depicts a lived reality, rather than a neutral building structure, as space is always more than just its material composition. It reflects on anecdotes as politically and genderedly charged and expresses what is otherwise suppressed or overlooked in spatial constellations (Chee, 2011).

Tools: Digital 3D modeling and sewing //fig.04//.



↑
04 *The process of sewing pieces of the model.*

→
applying this method contributes to a practice that is adressing these aspects of FCSPs:

alternative materialities
interdisciplinarity
practical activism

(4) The Commoning Agency

Commoning is the social practice of a community collectively managing, maintaining and sharing resources. Doina Petrescu explored that the act of commoning stimulates political and civic responsibility on the local level, by giving residents the possibility of appropriating space and defining it through daily activities. Through the method of commoning, architecture shifts from designing buildings to designing agencies shared with the users (Petrescu, 2017). In the Testing phase, the commoning agency method enables joining forces in the process of creating a feminist public space.

Tools: Mapping, discussing and writing notes //fig.05//.

commoning
ethics of care
the process



↗
05 *Setup where participants mapped and left written notes.*



↑
06 *Display of gathered materials and the material descriptions hung above them.*

(5) Dirty Materialism

Dirty Materialism, as a counterpart to “new” materialism, suggests a more honest and politically engaged framework for thinking about materials that we engage with in architecture. Drawing on the theorists Jennifer Bloomer and Donna Haraway, Frichot (2023) suggests that materials are never “new” or “neutral” but always entangled, contaminated with social, environmental and colonial histories which are expressed in dirty materialist spatial practices (Frichot, 2023, pp. 1016–1017).
A dirty materialistic approach enables one to reflect on what materials constitute our spaces – what entanglements, stories, symbols they bring with them and what influence they have on the space. The applied method aims to define what materials make up a contemporary feminist public space.

Tools: Written notes and a material assemblage //fig.06//.

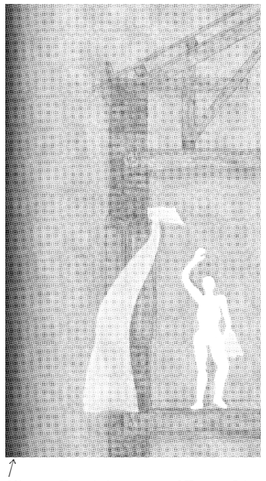
alternative materialities
ethics of care
alterity: the otherness

(6) Critical Plans

Critical plans question the status quo of architectural, standardised plans and visualisations that often rely on sterile drawings erasing the presence of the body in space (Claesson, 2017, p. 52). As a reaction, critical plans allow participation, embrace imperfections, visualise materiality and ultimately make plans accessible for a wider public, not only for spatial practitioners. The method of drafting critical plans incorporates tools, mediums and notations of parallel and related disciplines to provide new interdisciplinary and holistic ways of representing space (Weinthal, 2011).

Tools: CAD drawings, hand drawings, collages //fig.07//.

criticality
new standards
challenging heteronormative
& patriarchal structures



↑
07 *Hand drawing of House Idun’s building structure with an average-sized Swedish women for scale.*

Discourse

Historical Background

wide problem description

Project Reference

Stockholm	19.5%	Brussels	8.0%
Madrid	18.7%	Wroclaw	7.8%
Sevilla	17.2%	Chisinau	7.1%
Barcelona	15.7%	Rome	7.0%
Copenhagen	13.4%	Budapest	7.0%
Oslo	12.5%	Krakow	6.6%
Berlin	12.1%	Kyiv	6.3%
München	11.6%	Gdansk	6.2%
Lisbon	10.5%	Katowice	6.2%
Vienna	9.8%	Zagreb	5.6%
Warsaw	8.8%	Bucharest	5.6%
Paris	8.6%	Turin	5.3%
Lyon	8.5%	Milan	5.0%
Lodz	8.4%	Athens	4.5%
Genoa	8.2%	Prague	4.3%
Palermo	8.1%	Debrecen	2.7%

↑
08 *Share of streets named after a woman out of streets dedicated to individuals by percentage. Mappingdiversity.eu demonstrated the underrepresentation of women in the urban context by depicting the share of streets named after influential women out of all the streets dedicated to individuals in European cities.*

"Every street named that is named after a woman is an investment in the city's collective memory."
*-Petra Unger, founder of Vienna's Frauen*Spaziergänge (Women's walks) (Hartmann, 2022, p.78)*

Public//Private

As architecture and urban planning are disciplines that were dominated by men for centuries, European cities have been designed by men, reflecting traditional gender roles and gendered division of labor (Terraza et al., 2020). Cities have been carefully zoned in order to physically separate the feminine from the masculine, the space of production from the space of consumption and the residence from the workplace. This resulted in built environments that tied women more closely to the private, while men moved more freely and claimed ownership over public spaces (Matrix Book Group, 2022).

Discriminating public spaces

The gendered spatial division has increased women's experience of insecurity in the public realm today which is linked to their difficulty of securing an indisputable right to occupy public space (Molina, 2018, p. 30). Girls have an implanted fear of men, are socialised off the streets, women still experience open visibility in public spaces as a form of intimate vulnerability whereas men feel their masculinity confirmed by public presence (Warner, 2010). The built environment in public spaces further reinforces this exclusion of women through inaccessible infrastructure, a lack of public bathrooms, streets predominantly named after famous men //fig.08// and commercial logic that excludes those without purchasing power (Matrix Book Group, 2022).

Marginalising private spaces

This marginalisation also extends into the domestic sphere. At home, the rooms associated with women's reproductive labour such as kitchens, laundry rooms were historically positioned away from the representative outward-facing rooms of the house, hidden from the street and the public (Matrix Book Group, 2022).

Exclusion from planning processes

These patterns are not merely historical. Architectural high culture is still defined by spatial planning traditions that position sexist Western doctrines as the norm (Hartmann, 2022). Including women in design processes through feminist urban planning is regarded as something special, singular, as if women's perspectives were a specialisation rather than a constitutive part of any spatial practice (Ärlemo, 2018).

Marginalisation & Resistance in the 20th century

In the historically male-dominated port city Gothenburg during the early-mid 20th century, women were largely defined as housewives by society, dependent for their sustenance on the income of a husband, excluded from the political sphere and overlooked in the public sphere. Those women earning an income were often homeworkers, which allowed them to combine their chores at home with a financially lucrative activity but were even more marginalised from the public (Nilsson, 2015).

Despite their oppressed position in the public sphere, several movements of resistance and acts of space making took place on several scales // timeline/p.20-21//. Women founded social clubs, associations active for political activism, some gained financial independence through working as seamstresses, and some lived independently in a residential building for younger, single and self-supporting women. The socio-cultural arena of Gothenburg played a catalysing role for the performances of the women's movement that was the first and most vibrant women's rights movement in Sweden (Reimann, 2023).

In an urban environment that wasn't designed for women, spaces had to be claimed and appropriated. The venues for female cohesion in the 20th century were often hidden, unnoticeable in the urban environment; only a few associations like Idun, the Kvinnohuset in Gamlestaden //fig.10// or the "Föreningen för kvinnans politiska rösträtt" (FKPR) met in bigger, more public locations: they assembled in theaters, the Chalmers University lecture hall or demonstrated on the street // fig.09//.

situated problem description

Project Reference



↑
10 *Former Kvinnohuset Gothenburg. Corresponding to the second-wave feminist movement in the 1970s, the Kvinnocentrum Association had their own women's house in Gamlestaden. Mediating contact between individual women and various women's groups through self-organised activities, it ultimately aimed for a society free from gender and class oppression for women, men and children. Later the association moved into central Gothenburg and eventually developed into Kvinnofolkhögskolan in 1985. //interview/p.27//. (E. Warberg, personal communication, January 27, 2026)*



↑
09 *Demonstration for women's suffrage, Gothenburg, 1918.*

Historical Background

1919
Internationella Kvinnoforbundet för fred och frihet (IKFF)as part of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom gets founded.

1902
Foundation of the Association for Women's Suffrage in Gothenburg (FKPR).

1919
Women's suffrage gets accepted by the Riksdag.

1979
Foundation of the association Nordic Women's Building and Planning Forum, to work with questions on women's role in the building sector.

2021
The group changes its name to Alstra Byggforum.

1982
The first Swedish regulation on state grants to women's organisations' central activities comes into force.

2005
Suspension of the regulation on state grants to women's organisations' central activities.

futures that did not happen.

1900 1925 1950 1975 2000 2025

Rise & Decline of Feminist Public Spaces

1978
Inauguration Kvinnohus at Gamlestadstorg.
//ref./p.19//

1985
Kvinnohus building gets sold.
Kvinnohus association develops into Kvinnofolkhögskolan at Masthugget.

1913
Inauguration of Hemtrevnad, housing for self-sufficient women.

1972
Gothenburg's Christian student residence Jeriko buys the building.

1985
Kvinnofolkshögskolan
//ref./p.27//

2022
Regnbågshus
//ref./p.40//

1971
Grupp 8 Göteborg was fighting for equal pay and free abortion and revived the celebration of International Women's Day on March 8.

1980
Slow decline of the association. No more documentation in the archives.

2018-2019
Statement festival.
A music festival for women, non-binary and transgender individuals.

rise
decline
continuation

1958
KvinnSam Archive gets established.
//ref./p.28//

1924
Idun Women's Association gets founded.

1941
Idun buys building at Storgatan 47: inauguration House Idun.

1980
Idun moves out of House Idun & into an apartment nearby.

the future that did not happen

futures that did not happen.

The Idun Women's Association

The Idun Women's Association was founded in 1924, at a time of growing awareness of social injustice and of the vulnerability of women in society. At first they took over the premises and furnishings of the "Women's club" on Kungsgatan, which had ceased operations. In 1941, Idun moved into the building located on Storgatan 47, becoming the first women's association in Sweden that had its own house (Att Ge Upp Har Inte Övervägts, 2021).

Purpose

The association was committed to providing members with a daily accessible shared gathering place for the city's women's associations and expressed hope that Gothenburg's women could collectively create a sense of "home" (KvinnSam, Gothenburg University library, n.d.).

Identity

Idun was a non-political, social association of women interested in culture across various fields. The association was named after the goddess Iðunn who is rooted in Scandinavian mythology and associated with youth, renewal and apples //fig.11//.

Organisation

In 1944, the association counted 306 members and four permanent employees: a housekeeper, a cook and two maids. Several historical reports state persistent financial struggles of the association over the years. On several occasions, its financial situation was at a critical state and was substantially supported by wealthy donors and shareholders of the AB Göteborgs Idun company which donated their shares to save it. To manage their building the Storgatan 47 Property Association was formed (KvinnSam, Gothenburg University library, n.d.).

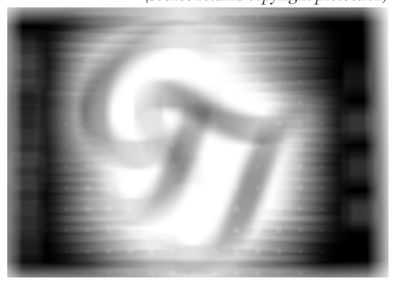
Criticality

The Idun Women's Association played a critical role in Gothenburg at a time when women were excluded from higher education and many professions by providing a space where they could gather to discuss and learn about intellectual topics on their own terms. Besides supporting women's intellectual needs, Idun was striving to provide shelter and support for those failed by the states' support system. Like in 1944, when the main hall in House Idun that was originally reserved for the association's members, was rented out to Danish refugees. Over the years, the originally intellectual association with high ideals was increasingly preoccupied with the task of financially surviving to keep on supporting people in need (KvinnSam, Gothenburg University library, n.d.).



11 *The goddess Iðunn.*

(source retains copyright protection)



12 *Logo of the Idun Women's Association.*

Location

The building on Storgatan 47 is a three-story stone house built in 1873 //fig.14//. It was constructed as part of the new Kalmarehus neighborhood, also known as the English Quarter, in the Lorensberg district of Gothenburg. It is today a listed building protected from demolition (KvinnSam, Gothenburg University library, n.d.).

Building

The English Quarter was built as rows of joined residential houses according to the English model, an unusual typology in Sweden at the time. The layout of the building is characterised by consecutive rooms and hallways arranged across three floors. Prior to moving in and converting this residential building into a communal one, the Idun Women's Association conducted thorough renovations and furnished it according to their needs (KvinnSam, Gothenburg University library, n.d.).

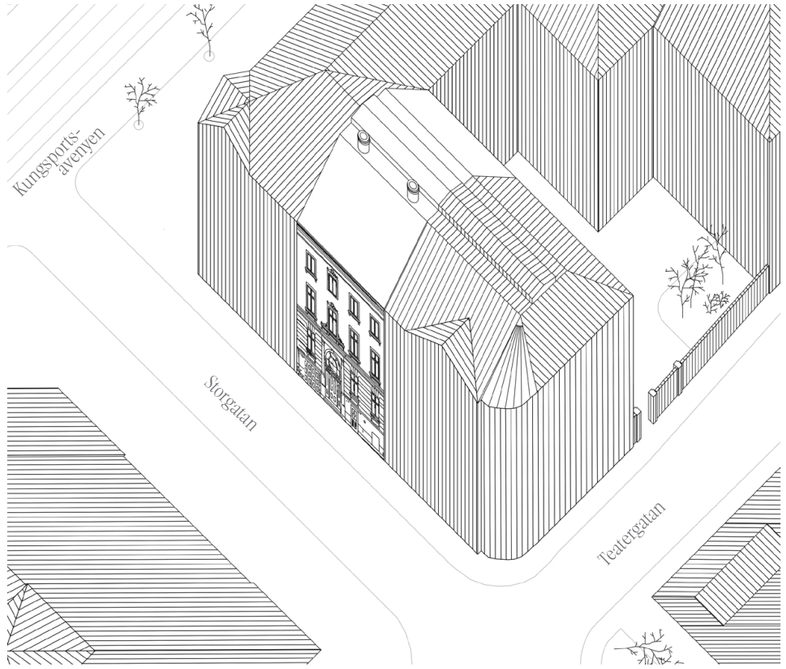
Room programm

With thirty rooms, House Idun included two salons, a kitchen, a library holding 1200 books in 1940, a restaurant and three rooms available for rent.

Activities

Activities at House Idun were wide-ranging and were generally focused on spreading knowledge and/or supporting social projects for people in need. The association organised lectures on science, art, literature and music, arranged study groups, held bazaars, fundraising and cultural events (KvinnSam, Gothenburg University library, n.d.).

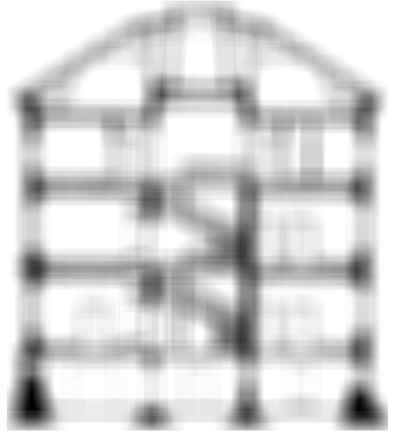
The House Idun



13 *House Idun and its adjacent buildings. Situation in 1980.*

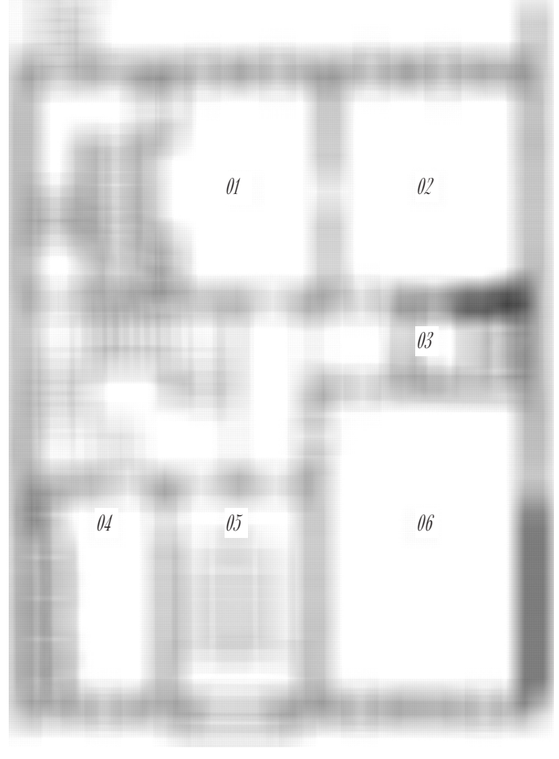
14 *Section of House Idun. Situation in 1873.*

(source retains copyright protection)



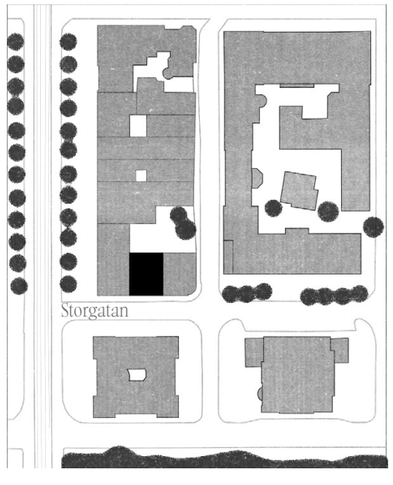
15 *Groundfloor of House Idun. Situation in 1980.*

(source retains copyright protection)



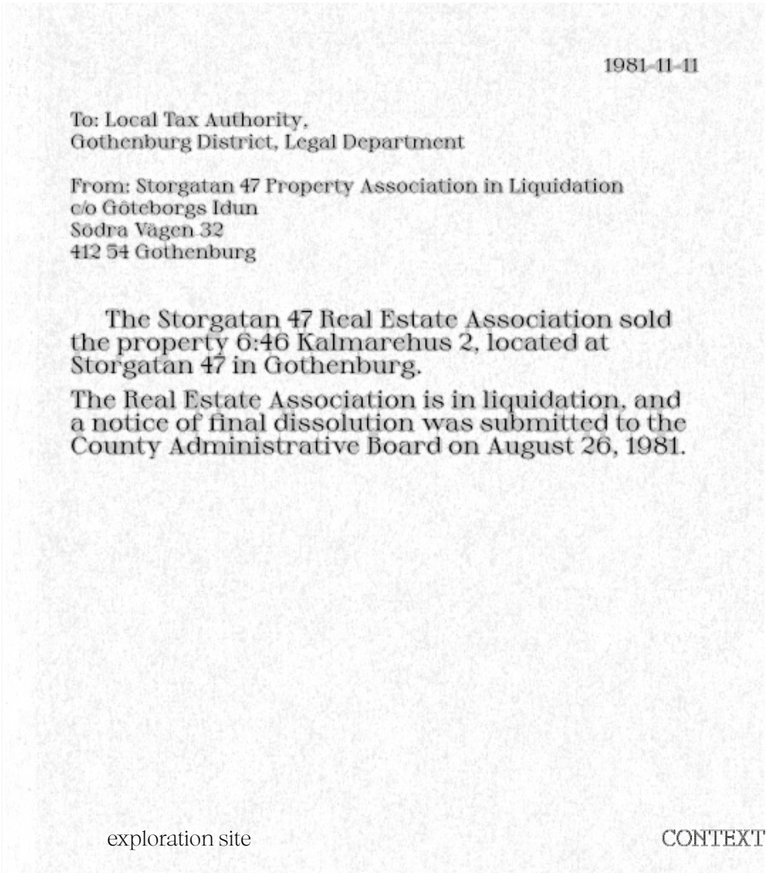
01 room
02 room
03 wc
04 reception
05 entrance hall
06 room

16 *Site plan. Situation in 1980.*



The House Idun

In 1980, the building was sold, the real estate association filed for liquidation //fig.17// and Idun moved to an apartment close by (Att Ge Upp Har Inte Övervägts, 2021).
Just like many other self-organised feminist places before, House Idun and the value it had for women and other marginalised people in Gothenburg eventually vanished.



1981-11-11

To: Local Tax Authority,
Gothenburg District, Legal Department

From: Storgatan 47 Property Association in Liquidation
c/o Göteborgs Idun
Södra Vägen 32
412 54 Gothenburg

The Storgatan 47 Real Estate Association sold the property 6:46 Kalmarehus 2, located at Storgatan 47 in Gothenburg.

The Real Estate Association is in liquidation, and a notice of final dissolution was submitted to the County Administrative Board on August 26, 1981.

↗ 17 *letter announcing liquidation and dissolution of the real estate association Idun.*

To imagine futures that did not happen of House Idun, a prior in-depth analysis about the House itself and of other local historical feminist movements is necessary.

ANALYSING

The Analysing phase represents the foundation of the research process. It grasps House Idun as a feminist space and situates it within the broader context of similar spaces of resistance in Gothenburg. The applied feminist critical methods centre the architectural research on what is otherwise systematically excluded and reveales attributes of historical feminist space-making strategies.

What spatial, social and political attributes characterise a feminist public space & what does House Idun's archive reveal about them?

futures that did not happen.

(1) Semi-structured In-depth Interview

The interview was conducted in January 2026 with Eva Warberg, a member of the Kvinnohuset movement and part of the group that initiated Kvinnofolkshögskolan //fig.18// and is since then teaching there.



↑
18 *Kvinnofolkshögskolan*
The Women's Folk High School in Gothenburg offers courses at primary and secondary school level as well as studies with a feminist focus. All activities take as their starting point the fact that women are politically, socially, economically and culturally discriminated against. Kvinnofolkhögskolan therefore actively increases awareness of society's gender power structures and creates scope for change.

futures that did not happen.

Outcomes_ Thematic analysis of the interview

1_Working together with politicians and other influencing stakeholders can facilitate claiming space.

2_Inclusion and social responsibility. Activities that happen at feminist public spaces reflect their users and their needs and sometimes fulfill a higher goal such as learning skills that help getting employed.

3_The furniture is a collection of found, repurposed objects. It reflects on the nature of claimed spaces of self-organised associations that have to work with what is contributed by members or cheapest due to financial restrictions. (feminist architecture collaborative, 2019)

4_A feminist public space is not a home. As women are not socialised to feel safe in public spaces (Kern, 2021), when appropriating space, women tend to make it feel like a comfortable domestic space. (Matrix Book Group, 2022, p. 99) A feminist public space should be the setting where they can learn how to create and feel safe in public spaces that do not resemble private spaces.

5_Feminist acts depend on their context. Providing childcare at a public space dedicated for women can be a feminist act, when it enables women to participate in activities outside their childcaring duties. Feminists do not support oppressive gendered roles, rather they find pragmatic solutions for problems that need to be solved in order to achieve a higher goal.

6_Handicraft as the start of a revolution. Textile handicraft and collective material practices function as acts of communing. They are asserting shared ownership, building solidarity, and staging quiet resistance within and against dominant spatial orders (Krasny & Schalk, 2017, p. 141).

7_Need for an intersectional feminist house. Uniting self-organised movements that are not dictated by institutional regulations but rely on mutual support in a physical space would strengthen the movements agencies.

8_A feminist public space is a movement, more than a statement. Communal space needs to be negotiated, shifting shape constantly and reflecting its users.

Quotes

1_"Working with politicians, telling them that it's important to have a place. An activist place – not only a women's center for women who were abused."

2_"They (at Kvinnohuset) had a course for unemployed women. It was a practical and theoretical course on rebuilding, renovating the house and on craftmanship. Fifty percent were Swedish women and fifty percent were women from other countries. It was also the idea that we have to mix women from different backgrounds with each other."

3_We still have that kind of tradition (at Kvinnofolkshögskolan). We take furniture from places who want to give it away, fix it up, paint it."

4_"Some students wanted to make their classroom more like a home. (...)Women's history is much more based from the home than the public space, what created an insecurity towards the public space. We wanted to make a feminist public space – not a home for lots of women."

5_"In the 1880s, and still, most women take more responsibility (for child care). It's because the city didn't provide it and men weren't there. There was demand in childcare. So it's also pragmatic. One has to solve things while they are. You can't say to them "It's okay, you can wait 10 years until we change, then you can become active.""

6_"Women have been sitting for centuries sewing and embroidering or knitting and I would like to hear what they talked about. I think some of the revolutions started there also. (...) And when I look at old embroideries, I think: "What feelings are within there when they sit? Sorrow or happiness?" I think it's quite beautiful"

7_"Today, it might be a kind of feminist house. Lots of feminists today are organized in different societal justice movements. They are separate movements, but uniting them would be much more intersectional."

8_"It should be shared, with a pluralistic perspective, because that's how it becomes a public space. It's an organic movement more than a statement. There's always antagonism between people. When transforming space togheter you agree that you disagree. Which is a form of democracy anyway, it's important to let the different voices be articulated."

(E. Warberg, personal communication, January 27, 2026)

(2) Critical Archival Research

The KvinnSam archive holds historical sources from the Idun Women's Association //fig.19//. It comprises various kinds of documents from the property association such as technical plans about changes made to the building on Storgatan 47, photographs, financial reports, letters, postcards, programs stating the weekly activities, lists of association members, furniture inventory lists, statements by the founding members and more. By analysing architectural plans, looking for recurring patterns in photographs and translating written text, House Idun and its appropriation by the women of Idun gets unravelled.

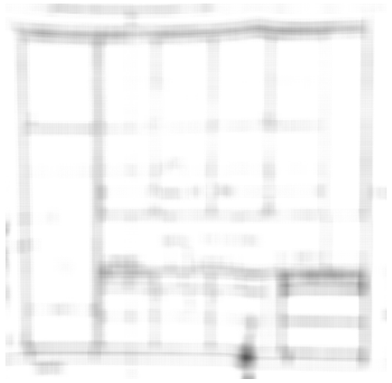
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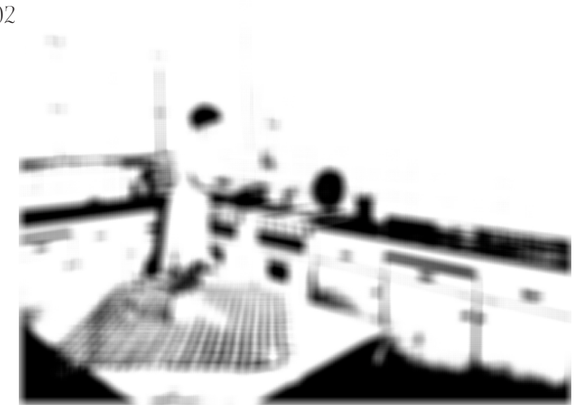
↑
19 *KvinnSam archive.*
KvinnSam is a specialist library and archive based in the University of Gothenburg. Since its establishment in 1958, it is dedicated to gender studies, women's history and feminist research.

Analysing architectural plans

The kitchen interior which was designed and built in 1941 by the architect Gustaf Alde is represented on architectural plans and staged photographs. It was situated at the second floor of House Idun, in a room facing the courtyard, distanced from the common rooms and only connected to the secondary staircase leading to the attic which was the staff accommodation.



01



02



04



03

20 *Figures 01.-09. on this spread: Archived material from the Idun Association.*
(sources retain copyright protection)



05

Looking for recurring patterns in photographs

In the photographs, an omnipresence of fashion, fabric and textile handicraft comes to the fore. The most represented rooms are salons, living rooms and the kitchen. The living rooms, which were used as gathering spaces, were all furnished using the same elements: carpets on the parquet floor, white walls ornamented with frames, curtains, furniture with eclectic upholstery fabric and flowers in vases.

Translating written text

Translated reports stated the condition of the building when Idun moved out in 1980. The building structure was described as in desperate need for renovation. Inventory lists revealed that furniture at House Idun was reused and originated from diverse donors.



06



07



08



09

02____The kitchen embodies the historically attributed role of women performing the reproductive care work (Frichot et al., 2018, p. 6). At House Idun, it was used by staff that prepared food for the association's members, making it further entangled in structural gendered schemes and social hierarchies. Even in a space such as the kitchen that is almost exclusively operated by women, the architectural components were still dictated by men which reflects on architecture as a deeply masculine discipline.

05____The attributes of the rooms emanated a strong domestic atmosphere. This was partly due to the furniture being donated by members who probably had those at home. Supposedly also because public spaces established by women are designed to feel comfortable, almost like home, which is a strategy for women to overcome a feeling of not belonging in them (Kern, 2021, p. 98).

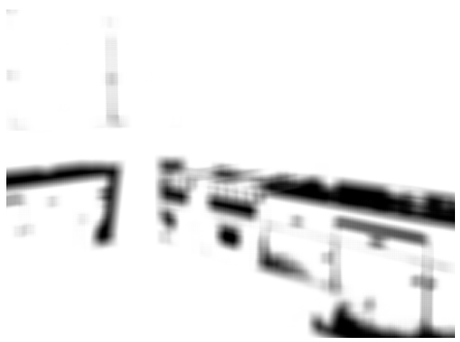
07____Anchored in the legacy of women performing textile handicraft as a female activity, working with textile at House Idun was not used as a source of income but rather as an act of commoning, sharing knowledge and supporting caritative purposes.

08____The reused furniture reflects on the nature of spaces claimed by self-organised associations that are often financially restricted and that rely on what is already there and what members can contribute.

The sources about House Idun preserved at the archive reflect a substantial but fragmented portrait of the association. What is archived is predominantly administrative records that testify the association's efforts to maintain ownership of the building and keep a respectable image towards the outside world.
What the archive misses to capture are the everyday and embodied dimensions of the association's life. There is very little informal documentation of all the activities and events that happened in the House over the course of 40 years. There are no records of what was spoken during the workshops, no accounts of disagreements within the association and almost no photographs from the non-representative rooms. There are no testimonies from the employees who worked there or from the refugees who temporarily lived at House Idun. Just like feminist theory states that archives are never neutral repositories but sites of selection, power and concealing voices (MYCKET, 2017), the preserved material about Idun reflects the hierarchies it originates from. It preserves the association's leadership and its image while rendering its marginalised members invisible.

21 *Figures 02.-09. on this spread: Archived material from the Idun Association.*
(sources retain copyright protection)

02



A new kitchen interior was planned and built by the Architect Gustaf Alde for Idun in 1941.

03



04

ANALYSING

5



A new fireplace was planned and built by the Architect Gustaf Alde for Idun in 1941.

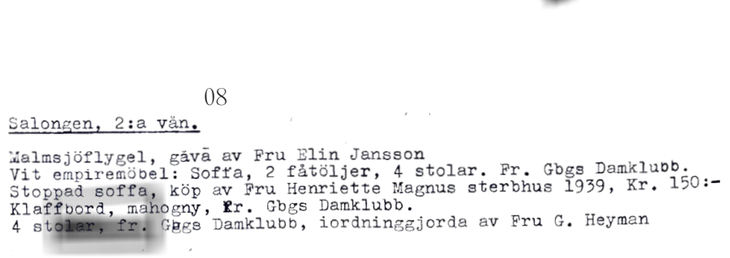
06



07



08

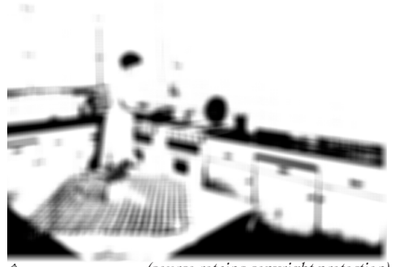




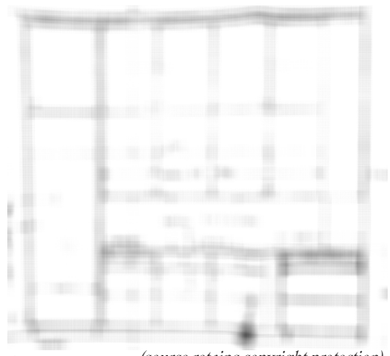
The furniture at House Idun was exclusively reused. The origin of each piece and/or who donated it was written in inventory lists.

09





↑ (source retains copyright protection)
23 *Photograph of Idun's kitchen.*

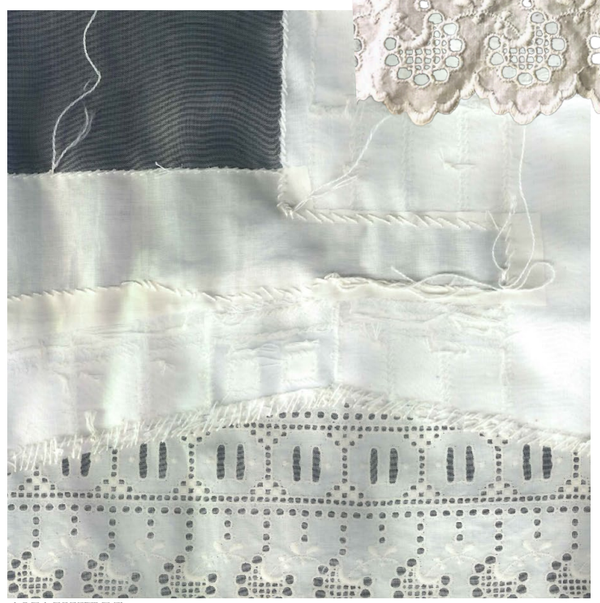


↑ (source retains copyright protection)
22 *Elevation of Idun's kitchen by the architect Gustaf Alde, 1941.*

(3) Anecdotal Model

At House Idun the kitchen, as arguably the most feminine space in the house, was planned and built by a male architect which is a conflict rooted in gendered inequalities. However, by representing it as a textile model, the medium that played an omnipresent role at House Idun, it gets reclaimed by its users.





Digital 3D modeling

The plans of the kitchen //fig.23// were photographed at the KvinnSam archive and digitalised to obtain a complete 3D model. It is shown from an eye-level perspective to capture the point of view of the user.

Sewing

The kitchen interior is represented as a textile collage sewed on a curtain. The fabric used is vintage white linen, gathered from several generations of women. The hand sewing took time, was meticulous and allowed reflection.

24 *On this spread: Process documentation of crafting the anecdotal model, by the author.*

Outcomes_Anecdotal Model

The kitchen embodies the historically attributed role of women performing the reproductive care work (Frichot et al., 2018, p. 6). By depicting the kitchen as representative of House Idun, the anecdotal model addresses the controversy of the Idun Women's Association dedicating a space for women, in a building that is planned and built by men.

The textile collage challenges the standard materials used in architectural model making and reflects on the capacity of women to claim spaces using textile handicraft and embellishment. The sewing emphasises the importance of the process and advocates for dedicating time and attention to creating something intricate and beautiful as a feminist act of resistance against fast-paced, efficiency-driven environments (Stratford, 2007, p. 139).

"Women have been sitting for centuries sewing and embroidering or knitting and I would like to hear what they talked about. I think some of the revolutions started there also. [...] And when I look at old embroideries, I think: "What feelings are within there when they sit? Sorrow or happiness?" I think it's quite beautiful."

–Eva Warberg (personal communication, January 27, 2026)

↖ 25 *Anecdotal model of House Idun's kitchen.*

Outcomes from Analysing

What spatial, social and political attributes characterise a feminist public space & what does House Idun's archive reveal about them?

★

A feminist public space is a movement, shaped by its users and their contributions; physical or intellectual, they give the space meaning.

It is a venue for acts of commoning and resistance against dominant social structures.

It is a public common, not a home.

It is aware of the history of its space and working with its resources.

It is political, claiming and appropriating space outside institutional regulations.

It is democratic, has a social responsibility and addressing intersectionality.

It is celebrating handicraft. ★

TESTING

Drawing on the past of House Idun and critically reflecting on the Idun Women's Association, the Testing phase aims to translate its ethos to contemporary demands towards gender equality in the city.

What values, materials and activities constitute a feminist public space today?

The Research Platform

For two weeks in March 2026, the Galleri Résistance in Gothenburg became a public research platform for imagining a contemporary feminist public space. Drawing from FCSPs, the subjective lived experiences of local residents are considered as legitimate source of spatial knowledge and determine the attributes of a contemporary, local feminist public space. The gallery enabled visitors to participate, share opinions, indulge in discussions and physically shape the emerging feminist public space //fig.27//.

Methods of the commoning agency and dirty materialism involved local residents and investigated values, activities and materials that shape feminist public spaces by addressing questions such as:

What are existing feminist public spaces?

What are feminist materials?

How can an ad hoc feminist public space be set up?

↓
27 *Sign put up in front of the gallery to welcome in passers-by.*





↑
26 *Flyer inviting local residents to participate. The flyers were hung in public spaces and shared on social media.*

Discussing

Visitors of the gallery were invited to express their experiences and opinions about feminist public spaces that they know of, describing them and arguing for why they are perceived as feminist spaces. This was done by putting forward questions such as “What constitutes a feminist public space?”, as a core belief of the research over the aim to resolve problems. New questions came up such as “Who are feminist public spaces for?” and “Why can’t I think of any place in the city?” which critically rethink the parameters of the problem itself (Schalk et al., 2017, p. 14) and aim to activate a desire for commoning and rebuilding collective spatial agency.

Writing

Visitors wrote down their reflections and displayed their notes for other visitors to read //fig.28//. These notes were later analysed to assess which spaces, activities, materials and descriptive words were used based on subjective spatial perceptions.

Mapping

A map of Gothenburg invited visitors to pinpoint feminist public spaces in the city //fig.30//. The physical map served as a visual bridge that facilitated thinking of previously experienced spaces. It also served as public display of a collection of feminist public spaces and was later analysed to determine spatial logics behind the location of the cited spaces //fig.31//.

What are existing feminist public spaces?

↓
28 *Feminist public spaces written by participants on notes.*



Project Reference



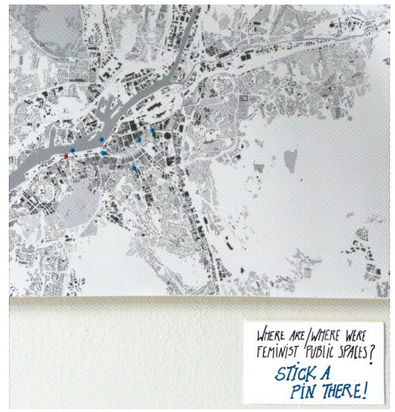
↑
29 *1 of the 32 cited feminist public spaces: Regnbågshus.*
The Rainbow House in the Amerikahuset in Gothenburg is a safe space dedicated to and organised by the local LGBTQI community. All activities are aimed at the LGBTQI community or aim to spread knowledge about LGBTQI issues.

To get an overview of the variety of the stated feminist public spaces, they were clustered in six groups according to their dominant function and characteristics:

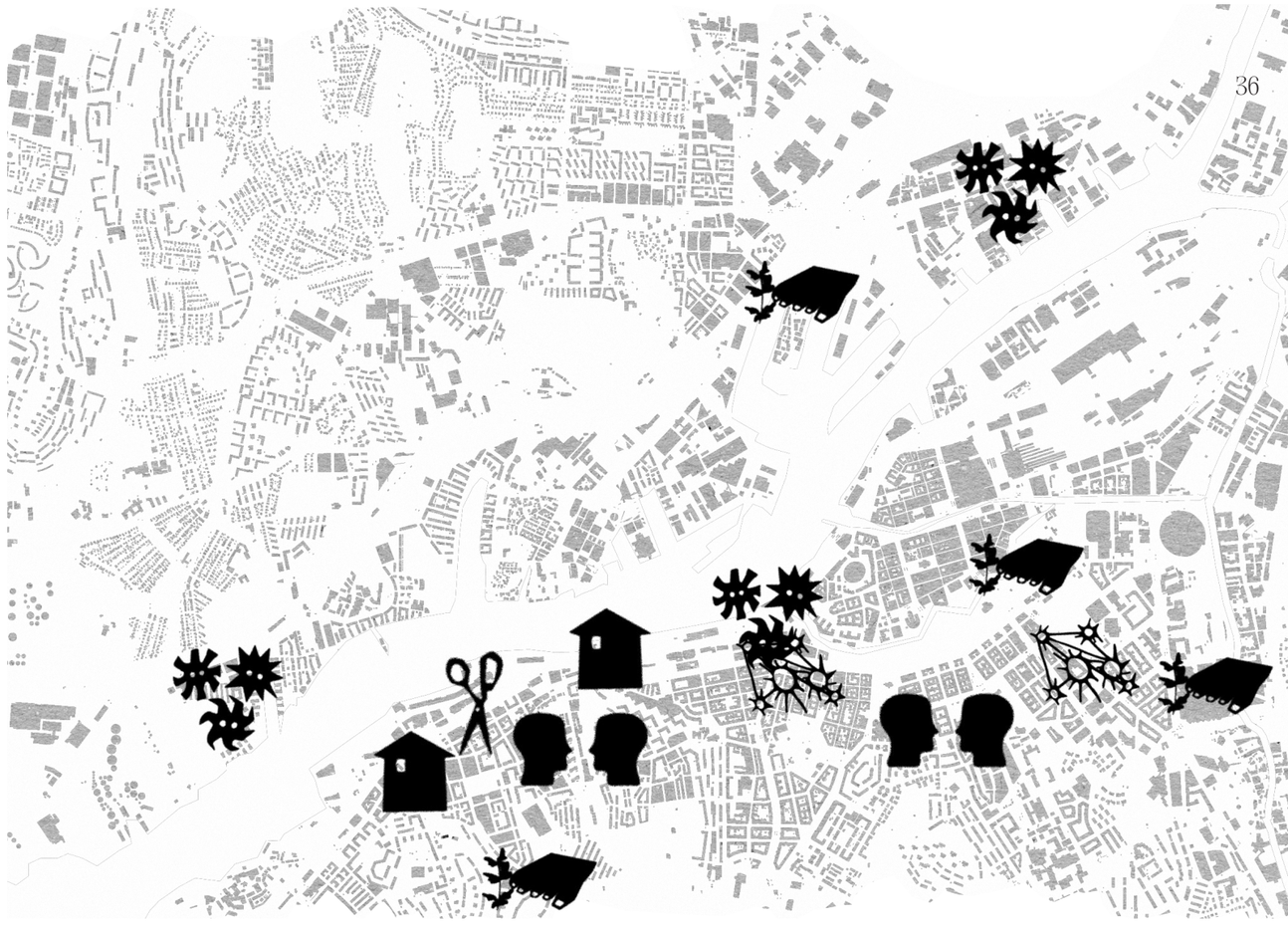
Nature
Knowledge
Handicraft
Shelter
Agency
Community

What are existing feminist public spaces?

↓
30 *Feminist public spaces in Gothenburg mapped by participants.*



↓
31 *Analysis and categorisation of the mapped feminist public spaces in Gothenburg.*



↙
32 *90 most cited words when visitors described feminist public spaces.*

8feel/feeling
7women free
5safe/safety open feminist/feminism
4activities everyone community
3together/togetherness sauna/bastu walk library good swim
2green/greenery sport study support things garden girls café lesbian public city sharing accessible sit friends meet talk naked need
1children baring responsibility courtyard street neighborhood restricted staff checked slots hang artist playground avantgarde precarious home repair advice use nature protected ponds laughing peeing panicking crying allowed welcome gender-neutral toilet aged different mix love demolished inside outside relax intimate everyday basin evening warm changing food consume meals cheap bar queer day bank water appreciation conversations paths small human-scale

Outcomes_The Commoning Agency

Analysis of the written notes and the map.

The cited spaces and the words used to describe them //fig.33// reveal patterns and repetitions but also contradictions. Opposed cited terms, such as inside/outside, evoke that feminist public spaces rarely conform to a binary system. Rather they are inherently varied, diverse, intermingling spatial configurations, as rigid binary systems fail to account for the complexity of gendered categories. (Warner, 2010, p. 35) These binary preconceptions sometimes lead to “paradoxical spaces”, when places are designed for a faulty imagined version of women and are then reclaimed and adapted by the users (Molina, 2018, p. 30). The evoked spaces are all free, or very cheap to use, it does not require visitors to consume, participate or justify their presence and they welcome people in vulnerable, difficult states of life.

Nature

The changing room in Valhallabadet, the Frihamnen Sauna, Kungsparken and a little, hidden garden on a hill next to Slottskogen stand for feminist public spaces that free the body from the disciplinary device of modern spatial envelopes. Donna Haraway proposes to reconnect with natural environments, through the “dance of relating” to restore the body’s autonomy from rigid, man-made structures (Reisinger, 2018). Elke Krasny argues that a feminist approach responds in a caring and consistent manner to surrounding natural environments as opposed to modern western architecture operating on a “tabula rasa” claim (Hartmann, 2022, p. 71).

Knowledge

The city’s library, the Bibliobox in Vienna and the Kvinnostudion in Kungshöjd are spaces that emphasise the right to learn, to discuss politics and to share knowledge. They are often institutional, and appreciated because they represent “commons of knowledge” which are spaces where knowledge is produced outside of profit-making motives (Monteagudo, 2019).

Shelter

By offering protected spaces, *Huldas Hus, a gender-neutral embassy and the gender-neutral toilet* are described as places one can go to when other places failed them. Infrastructure becomes a fundamental right in manmade environments that are “empathically unsupportive” where feminist spaces must step in to provide support systems that make “life liveable for everyone” (Frichot & Runting, 2018, p. 142).

Handicraft

The Fixotektet, Götaverkstaden and the café at Återbruket connect feminist values with material practice. Through sharing tools and skills, repairing objects and making things by hand, these spaces resist a throwaway culture and reclaim the making process from anonymous mechanistic production that meet technical specifications but fail human specifications (Morrow, 2017, p. 82).

Agency

Ringön, lesbian bars, Skogen in MAsthugget and Folkteatern are described as spaces of resistance against structural restrictions in the city. They are spaces of freedom, self-determination and visibility where women can become “transformative subjects” who alter society’s perception of that space by inscribing their own stories into it (Krasny & Schalk, 2017, p. 142).

Community

An attribute shared by most of the cited spaces, such as *Regnbågshus, urban garden lots and a courtyard between residential units* is the capacity to host, bring people together and create a sense of togetherness. Shared dinners, collective sport and other communing activities, transform the identities of the participants and create a community of performed connection where differences become less obvious and set roles and hierarchies are challenged (Trogal, 2007, p. 173).

Material Catalogue

The material catalogue consists of written reflections by participants describing materials that in their opinion belong in a feminist public space //fig.34//.
The analysis is interested in how participants described the materials/objects //fig.35//. What adjectives they used and what attributes they judged as being worth mentioning. Is the price of the material mentioned? Its colour? The feeling it leaves on your skin?

Material Assemblage

Participants were invited to donate materials and objects that according to them, belong in a feminist public space. The collected materials and objects form an assemblage which is then analysed to find repeating physical attributes //fig.36//.

What makes materials feminist?



↑
33 *A gallery visitor cataloguing a material.*

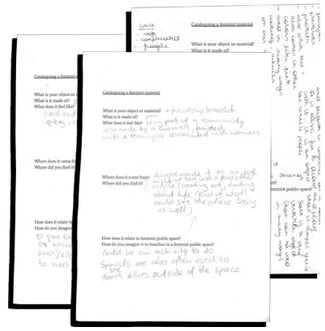
↙
34 *85 most cited words when visitors described feminist materials.*

14 wome(a)n
9 nature
8 paper
7 feminist soft
5 safe open
4 fabric gift
3 clothes comfortable natural canvas kind metal find protects family public knowledge object strong world lace soil
2 connections thoughts sauna book plastic processes patch cardboard personal free small lives everyone sex art home generations harvest history together salt white rituals mix grandmother's rough linen hair versatile used old creative purifies preserves
1 snows cooking pink reminder feeling nostalgic room lightens simple play draw fun cover ritual caring closer flow majestic cleaner cities whole moon ocean important perform

35 *Assemblage of feminist materials. Collected over the course of two weeks, black graphics are materials that were catalogued, but not donated.*

What makes materials feminist?

Analysis of the material catalogue entries through a dirty materialist perspective.



↑
36 *Material catalogue entries.*

Outcomes_Dirty Materialism

The most mentioned terms across the 15 catalogue entries define the backbone of feminist materials: they are understood in essence through their relationship to the body and to the natural environment, not through their industrial fabrication or market value, rejecting the habit in modern architecture that treats matter as a passive, mute substance to be shaped by a masculine “form” (Frichot, 2023).

Provenance

Feminist materials are valued in regards to where they come from. They were handed over by the earth, a grandmother’s hands, a friend, a mother’s nightstand. Feminist materials are traceable, honest and are valued for their embodied specific stories. Reclaiming the origin of materials is an ethical act of following the material, which requires understanding the global journeys and working bodies involved in their production (Frichot, 2023).

Symbolic value

Feminist materials embody subjective values by evoking openness, safety, rituals, art and nostalgia. They are generative, carrying meaning and participating in ceremonies of care such as cooking, dressing, bathing (sauna). Elevating mundane objects into significant tokens of care, gives new value to reproductive care work and repetitive daily rituals (Frichot, 2023).

Sensory qualities

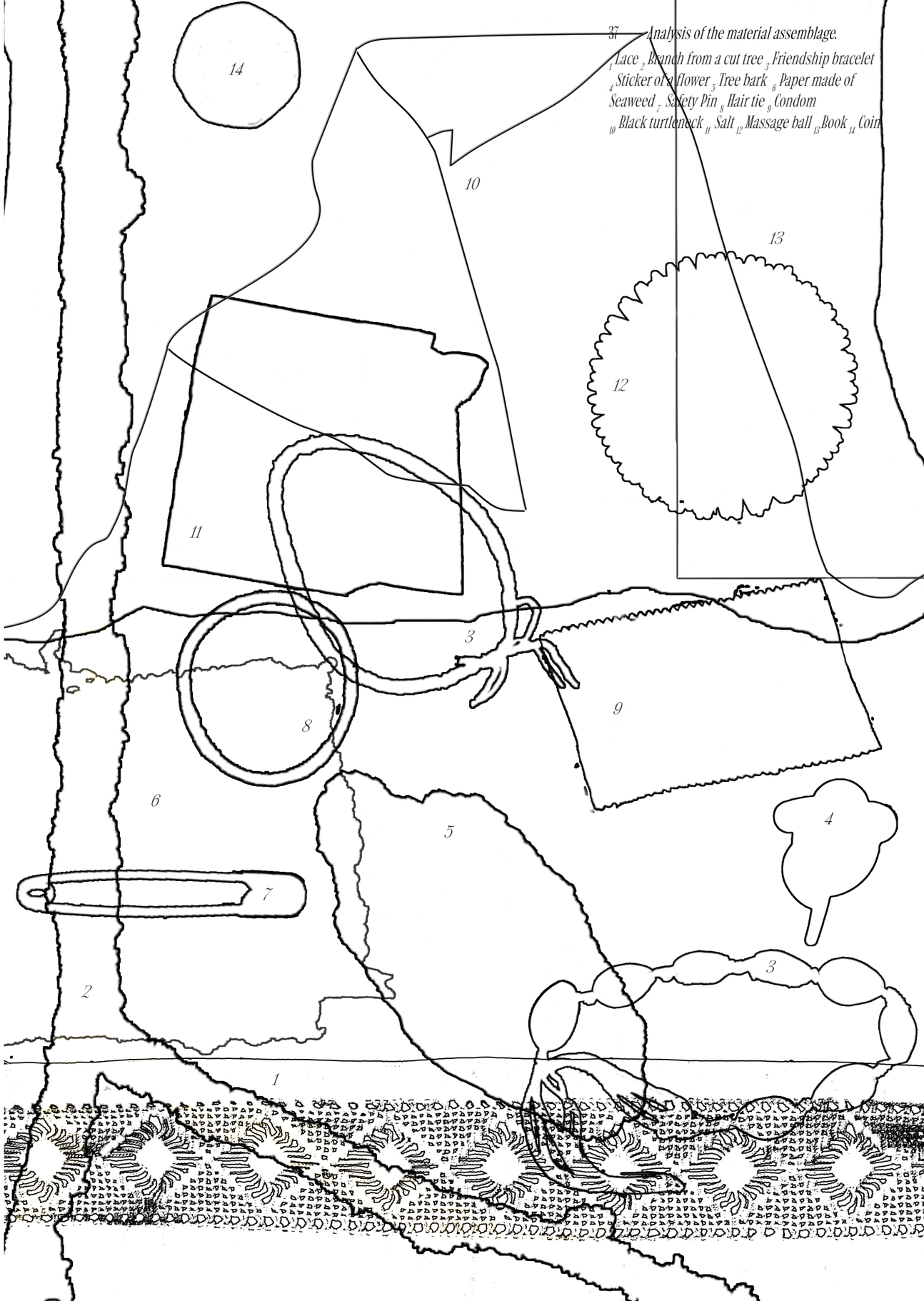
Feminist materials are not looked at from afar, they are touched, used, worn and emphasise the significance of sensory stimuli beyond the visual, allowing a wider spectrum of people to experience and interact with the built environment. Imperfections, wear and unusual sensory experiences are features not flaws as they reflect the trace of the hand and the reality of the material’s presence (Morrow, 2017, p. 83).

Agency

Feminist materials are active. They cover, patch, protect, purify, resist any imposition of predetermined form. Their actions are acknowledged, dignified and reflect their ethics of care (Frichot, 2023).

Social relationship

Feminist materials trespass the individual ownership logic by circulating between domestic and public spaces, marking relationships, facilitating commoning activities and being vessels for social exchange rather than isolated commodities (Wieger, 2018, p. 232).



37 *Analysis of the material assemblage.*
1 Lace 2 Branch from a cut tree 3 Friendship bracelet 4 Sticker of a flower 5 Tree bark 6 Paper made of Seaweed 7 Safety Pin 8 Hair tie 9 Condom 10 Black turtleneck 11 Salt 12 Massage ball 13 Book 14 Coin

The Emergence of a Feminist Public Space

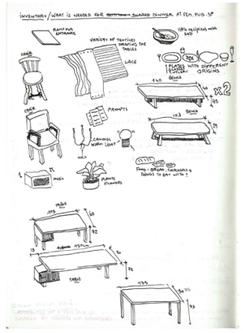
How can an ad hoc feminist public space be set up?

1_Applying feminist critical spatial practices

Feminist critical spatial practices (FCSPs) were used as a framework for testing how to create a feminist public space at the Galleri Résistance. The social, material and spatial measures taken were acts of practicing differently and focused on ethics of care.

2_Designing an ad hoc feminist public space

For one evening, the gallery became a feminist public space by applying outcomes from the research and testing how physical elements, activities and actors influence the space.
The evening aimed at fostering a new collective subjectivity amongst the users; one that is local and relational. That feeling of collectivity was enhanced by shared experiences, users taking active positions and giving meaning to the common spatial infrastructure (Petrescu, 2017).





↑
38 *Written reflections and documentation during the research at the gallery.*

the process



↑
39 *Cleaning and taking care of the gallery amenities.*

reuse & maintenance



↑
40 *The artist Rikke Bogetoft introducing rituals for queer resistance.*

interdisci-plinarity



↑
43 *Visitors are invited to reflect critically on materials and the built environment.*

criticality



↑
44 *Often overlooked materials are studied and commented on.*

alternative materiali-ties

↓
45 *Study of a flooring sequence at the gallery.*

valuing context



↓
42 *Creating a space focused on sharing and collectivity.*

taking this measure contributes to a practice that is adressing this aspect of FCSPs: commoning



↓
41 *Creating an alternative third space.*

alterity. the otherness



↓
46 *Photographic documentation of the space changing over the course of two weeks.*

taking this measure contributes to a practice that is adressing this aspect of FCSPs: ethics of care





Feminist materials that were catalogued: //dirty materialism /p.44-47//



Characteristics of feminist spaces that were catalogued: //the commoning agency /p.40-43//



Sharing skills.

Crafting.

books

Mismatching objects symbolising continuous additions and changes to the space.

flowers & branches

textile

furniture & objects found in the space

Sharing food & drinks between everyone.

vegetables

candleholder

A single, long table reuniting everyone.

Performing a ritual for a resistant space together.

salt

Users actively shaping the evening.

Accomodating everyone that wants to join.

47 *Documentation of objects and activities that supported the ad hoc feminist public space.*
The elements were put in relation with previously identified dominant characteristics of feminist spaces //the commoning agency/p.43//:

Nature
Handicraft
Shelter
Community
Knowledge
Agency

futures that did not happen.

TESTING

futures that did not happen.

Outcomes from Testing

What values, materials and activities constitute a feminist public space today?

★

A contemporary feminist public space is free to use and does not demand consumption or justification of presence of its users.

It functions as a shelter, a space of togetherness and resistance.

It celebrates connection to nature and the body, sharing skills and knowledge, hands-on material practice, spatial agency and expression.

It is defined by materials that are valued for their provenance.

Its materials carry symbolic weight and actively participate in rituals of care.

★

IMAGINING

The Imagining phase makes use of the outcomes from the Analysing and the Testing phase to translate them into spatial scenarios.

How can feminist critical spatial practices help imagining the transformation of three historically hierarchical spaces within House Idun into a contemporary feminist counterpublic?

futures that did not happen.

House Idun as a Feminist Counterpublic

House Idun was an important feminist space for female emancipation in Gothenburg in the 20th century. Prolongating its legacy, it now gets imagined as a space that evolved towards a feminist counterpublic. Just like Feministhuset in Trondheim //fig.48//, House Idun aims to be a third space for everyone, while putting forward feminist struggles and acts of resistance.

Imaginaries as analytical tools draw on what is already known and conceptualise alternatives. By imagining futures that did not happen through critical plans, discriminatory systems that keep women from feeling like they belong in urban public spaces are addressed and opposed (Sandberg & Rönnblom, 2016, p. 1753).

Project Reference



↑
48 *Feministhuset in Trondheim, Norway. Feministhuset is a nonprofit organisation, financed by the city of Trondheim and is the only permanent feminist house in Norway. Its aim is to create a safe space that strengthens women's work for women's rights and offers a physical space for established and emerging feminist and women's organisations to meet.*

futures that did not happen.

(6) Critical Plans

For the imaginaries, the building on Storgatan 47 is taken from the point at which it was left in 1980 when the Idun association moved out of the building. Three distinguished spaces of House Idun were chosen as focused sites of exploration as they were deeply embedded in restricting norms of spatial order. The kitchen, the courtyard and the attic. Drafting critical plans reveals how they can become part of a feminist counterpublic. Inspired by MYCKET's map of queer geogragraphy //fig.49//, the critical plans aim to bring out histories that are overlooked by adding the dream of what could have been. The plans depict what is otherwise hidden in architectural visualisations such as movement and the use of spaces, materiality and layers of the past. The plans deliberately omit conventional scale notation. Rather than using a tool historically tied to objective, technical architectural representation, a dimensional string foregrounds the embodied, lived experience of space by including the size of an average Swedish woman (1,67m) as a valid measurement unit.

0 0,5 1 1,67 2m

Project Reference



↑
49 *"Exclude Me In". A map of queer geography. The map is part of a project re-enacting and exhibiting a queer feminist carnival in Gothenburg. The project was based on the carnival which took place in Gothenburg from the beginning of the 1980's to the early 90's where primarily straightness and patriarchal values were represented. Through their mapping re-enacting of the carnival as a queer one, MYCKET adds the dream of what the carnival could have been while bringing forward stories and futures that could have happened (MYCKET, 2017).*

House Idun as a Feminist Counterpublic

Identity
House Idun keeps its name, as a sign of continuation, building on the efforts of the historical feminist movement Idun. The logo and the space itself change as a sign of constant renewal and evolution, just like the goddess Idun //the association idun/p.22//.

Location
The Lorensberg district where House Idun is situated, is known for prestigious buildings, restaurants, cocktail bars and landmarks that evolved over centuries from the influence of Gothenburg's wealthy bourgeoisie. This environment stands in conflict with what is understood as feminist urban areas such as the industrial edge of Ringön that is described as the only part of the city that feels rebellious and open for appropriation //the commoning agency/p.43//. House Idun aims to disrupt the polished and restrictive image of its surrounding and to offer an alternative counterpublic.

Building structure
In 1980, the building was declared as in desperate need for renovation //critical archival research/p.29//. For its new purpose, House Idun's building substance needs to be adapted while renovating and caring for the original structure. Questioning the hierarchical systems embedded in the spatial layout and adapting it to the needs of a feminist counterpublic, the building is reworked, components are relocated, some are dismissed and added elements harmonise with the original substance.

Materials
The materials and objects that constitute House Idun are natural, personal, second-hand or used, donated by members, re-used from the building substance and/or just beautiful objects. They are active, can be touched, used, are shared between the users of House Idun and are used in rituals and activities //dirty materialism/p.46//. They reflect on the materials and objects that constituted the House Idun in the 20th century such as textile, carpets, domestic furniture, flowers in vases and pictures on the walls //critical archival research/p.30-31//.

Criticality
House Idun was embedded in restraining societal hierarchies, emphasising clear hierarchies reaching from the leaders of the association to the service staff that lived in the attic //critical archival research/p.28-31//. House Idun reflects on the evolution from the base of an exclusive association to an inclusive counterpublic.

Purpose
*A public space that addresses underrepresented groups and people who are affected by patriarchal discrimination. House Idun defines inclusion in terms of values rather than gender, nationality or wealth.

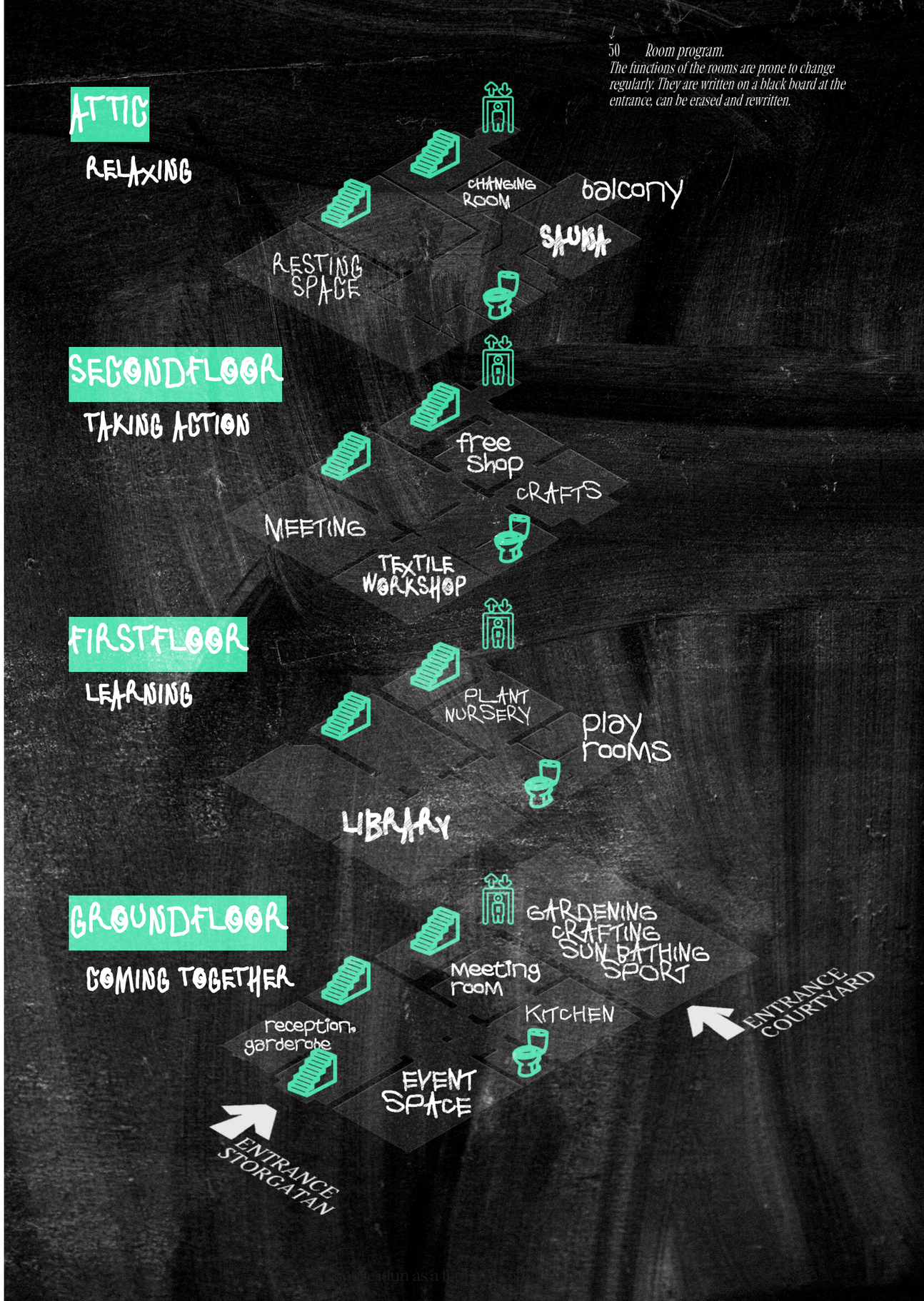
*Communicating and supporting feminist struggles by hosting feminist organisations and supporting their agenda //interview/p.27//.

*The House does not carry services, rather a clear political position: claiming space. It aims to create a space of resistance against structural restrictions in the city, rebellion, self-determination and visibility //the commoning agency/p.43//.

Organisation
To be free of constraints, House Idun is not institutionalised, or owned by the city but remains self-organised, led by volunteers and relies, just like the historical House Idun, on donations. It is free to use for everyone, and the users share the responsibility for it.

Room program
The room program //fig.50// defines how rooms are furnished and therefore what activities can take place there. The room programming is motivated by what activities users want to engage in and is voted for as House Idun needs to be negotiated and representative of its users //project references// and //the commoning agency/p.40-43//.

Activities
The activities at House Idun are organised by the users, can be solitary or include a wider public and can last an hour or even several days. They are creating supportive environments that are welcoming and socialising domestic work such as cooking, childcare, repairing, taking care of the building etc. (Matrix Book Group, 2022).
While in the mainstream public sphere, participants are expected to put their identity aside and behave as neutral private persons, House Idun embraces embodiment and lived experiences. Activities are open to emotion and expression, enabling one to move from isolation to shared perspective (Warner, 2010).
Examples of activities are: chess classes, meeting local feminist associations, art exhibitions, crafting posters for a demonstration, concerts, movie screenings and similar social activities.



50 *Room program.*
The functions of the rooms are prone to change regularly. They are written on a black board at the entrance, can be erased and rewritten.

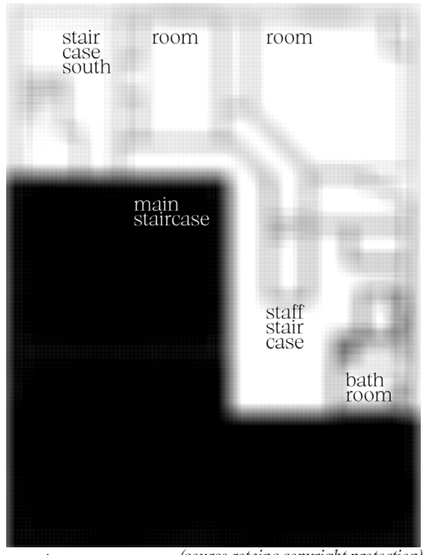
The Attic

1980

The courtyard-facing half of the attic served as staff accommodation for House Idun, consisting of two rooms and a bathroom //fig.51//. It was accessible only via the secondary staircase of the house connecting it to the service areas below, such as the kitchen on the first floor.

imaginary

Once marked by social hierarchies and concealed from communal life, the attic is now reimagined as a space dedicated to community, bodily autonomy and rest. It houses a sauna, a terrace and complementary spaces such as two changing and sanitation rooms that follow the historical floor plan.



↑ 51 *Floorplan of the attic. 1980.*
The area used by the employees is shown in white.

(source retains copyright protection)

Accessability

The main staircase is extended to reach the attic, and an added elevator makes what was previously hidden now accessible.

Rituals

Water poured over the body on the balcony drains down to water the plants of the nursery and the courtyard, connecting rituals to other natural cycles of the House.

the futures that did not happen

Bodily vulnerability

The textile draping on the balcony allows a space of relaxation and reconnection with one's exposed body while protecting it from external glances, mediating between vulnerability and comfort //cited feminist material// dirty materialism/p.48//.

Sauna

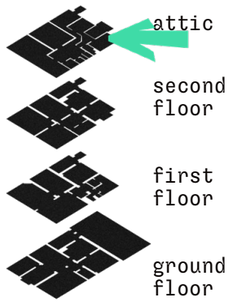
The sauna stands for a space that reconnects one's body to its surroundings while also being a space of social exchange and collective unwinding. The balcony invites visitors to cool down in between sauna sessions //cited feminist spaces/ the commoning agency method/p.42//.

The luxury of being alone

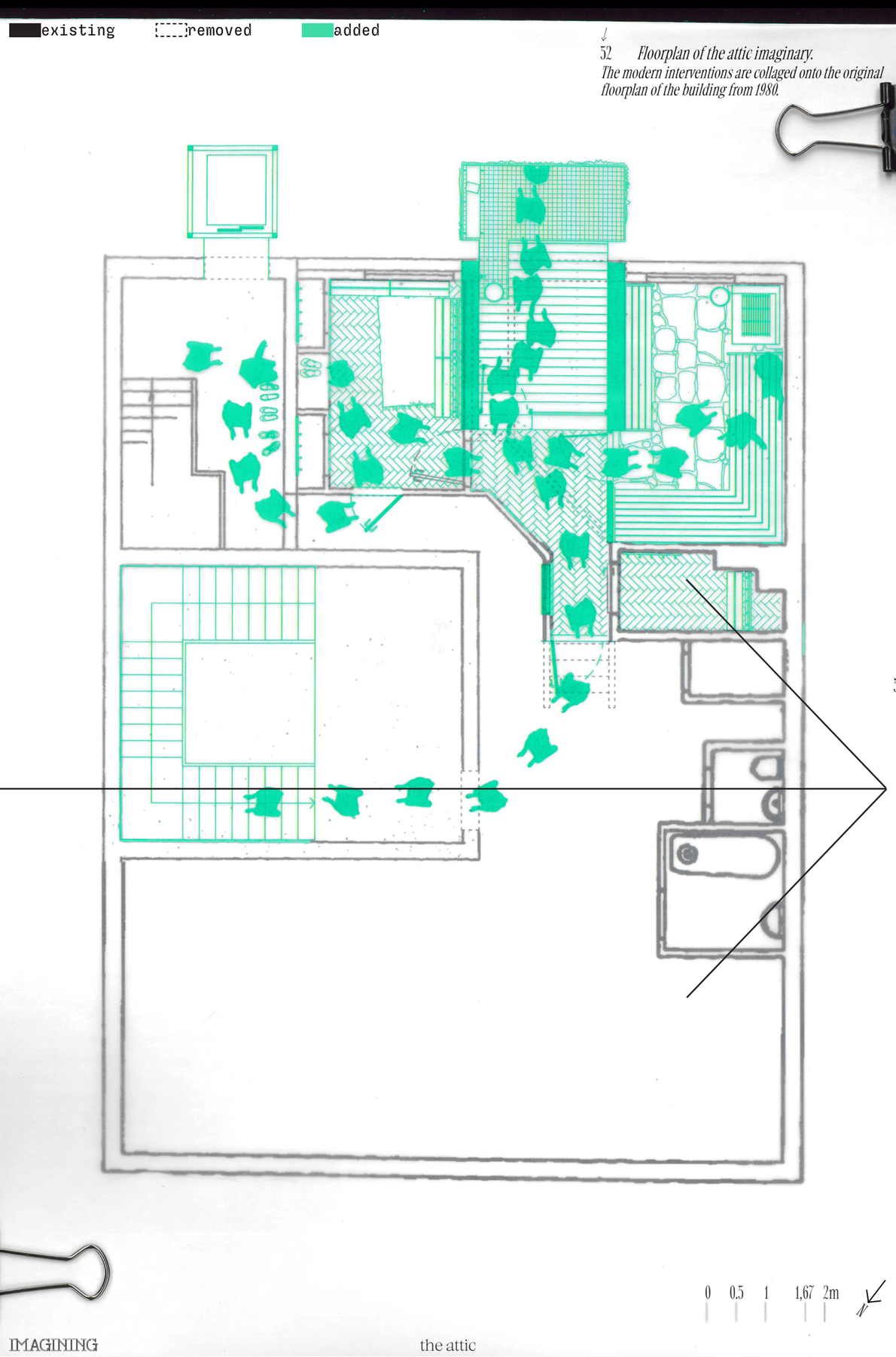
Women are experiencing gendered expectations around child-rearing, domestic labor, relationships, care work which often withhold them from solitary moments of relaxation. (Kern, 2021, p. 97) A quiet room adjacent to the sauna offers space to be alone and to unwind.

Appropriating & adapting built structures

The historical room division of the attic is kept, and the staff staircase is removed. The balcony expands the interior to the outside and is facing the courtyard. Emphasising gestures of reusing and unhiding, the balcony is built using primarily elements removed from the existing structure and reveals the original timber roof structure. The interior has been adapted to meet the new functions using local materials with strong sensory qualities such as wood, granite, steel and textile //cited feminist materials/dirty materialism/p.48//.



futures that did not happen.



↓ 52 *Floorplan of the attic imaginary.*
The modern interventions are collaged onto the original floorplan of the building from 1980.

futures that did not happen.





←
53 *Perspective section of the balcony.*
The lightness of the modern interventions in galvanised steel and textile contrast the heaviness of the sustained, original building structure.

←
54 *Reminiscing about the curtains at House Idun and reintroducing them in the imaginary.*
//critical archival research/p.28-31//
(source retains copyright protection)

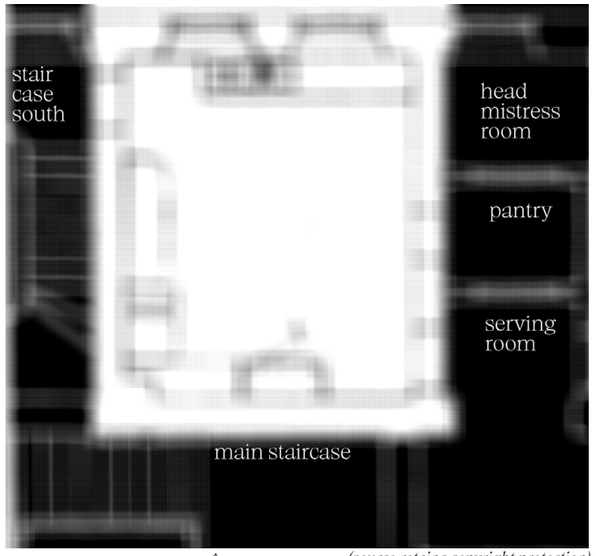


↑
55 *View to the balcony.*
The main changing room is to the left and the sauna is to the right.

The Kitchen

1980

The kitchen in House Idun was separated from the representative community rooms facing the street. It was situated on the first floor, oriented toward the courtyard and accessible solely via the secondary staircase leading to the staff accommodation in the attic. It's position in the House therefore physically inscribed the devaluation of reproductive labour into the building, reinforcing hierarchies of both class and gender //anecdotal model/p.32-35//.



↑ 56 *Floorplan of the kitchen (in white). 1980.*

(source retains copyright protection)

imaginary

What was once a space symbolising the restrictive, hidden nature of reproductive care work in the kitchen, now celebrates it by housing a plant nursery. The interior is preserved to showcase its history while being adapted to new functions. The room is well connected to the new kitchen on the ground floor, supplying it with fresh herbs, and to the courtyard to which it hands over seedlings that are ready to be planted.

Ethics of care

Drawing from ecofeminist perspectives, tending plants is a slow, embodied and tactile act of care. It directly contradicts the devaluation of care work in patriarchal social structures and offers an alternative to high-stress productivity horticulture while also contributing to food production of the House.

Sharing skills

Located adjacent to the children's playroom and the library, the plant nursery is a space for sharing seeds and horticultural knowledge. Caring for plants is a collaborative act, forging social connections that actively counter social marginalisation.

the futures that did not happen

Reproductive common

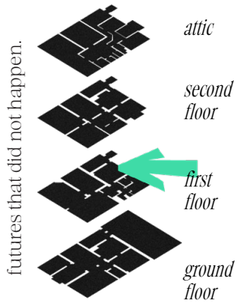
To integrate domestic labour into the shared life of the House, the kitchen infrastructure gets relocated to the ground floor where it is adjacent to the community spaces and closer to the courtyard.

The gardening agency

The dirty materialism method //p.44-47// revealed that natural processes and elements are perceived as inherently feminist materials. Following Petrescu, the act of nurturing plants functions as a driver of "gardening agency" turning passive visitors of the house to active stakeholders. A space dedicated to this practice contributes to a feminist counterpublic by bringing together care, agency and community in ways that quietly resist dominant social norms. (Petrescu, 2017, p. 103)

Working with existing resources

Care for context and resistance to resource depletion //theoretical framework/p.12-13// are expressed through the retention of the kitchen's existing interior from the 1940's. The original teak wood, stainless steel surfaces and ceramic tiles are preserved. The two stoves are replaced by countertops, and cabinet doors are removed. The tiles are replaced gradually only as they become damaged, and the space is completed with furniture made in the in-house workshops alongside other found pieces.



futures that did not happen.



↓ 57 *Floorplan of the plant nursery imaginary. The modern interventions are collaged onto the original floorplan of the building from 1980.*

futures that did not happen.

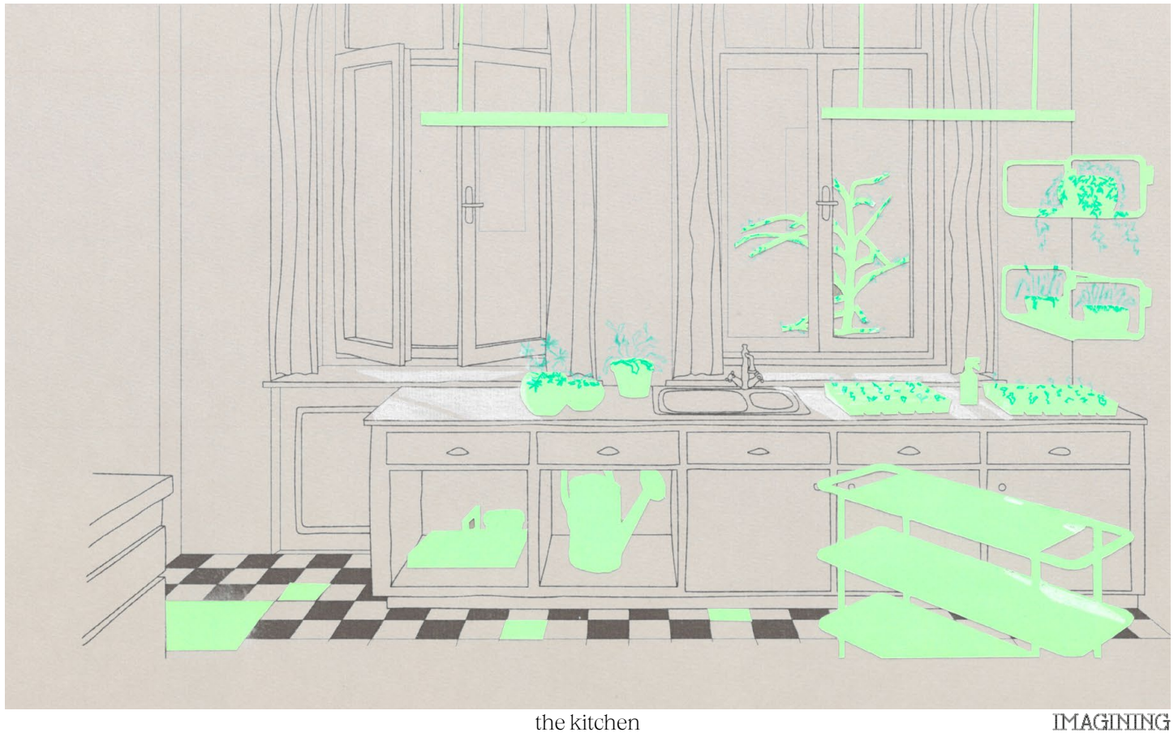


←
58 *Facade of the plant nursery.*
The raingutter connects the attic, the kitchen and the courtyard. A punctual outlet on the gutter directs the excess water to the flowers .

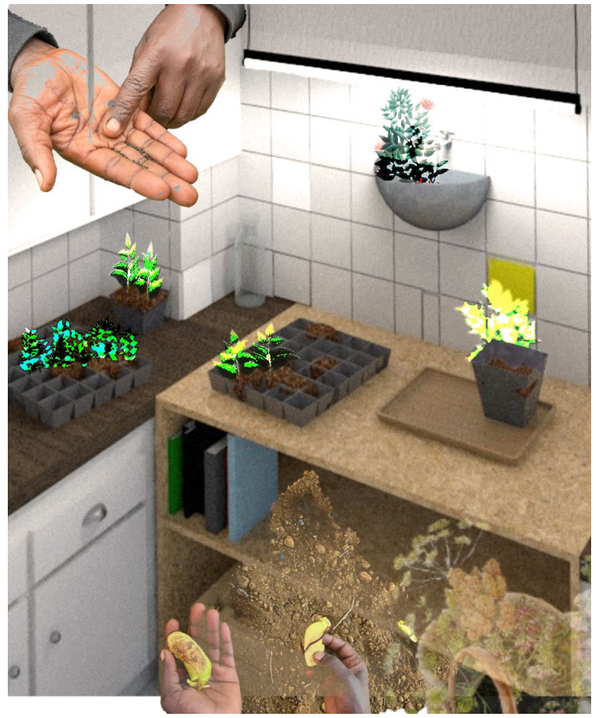


←
59 *Reminiscing about the flowers at House Idun and reintroducing them in the imaginary.*
//critical archival research/p.28-31//
(source retains copyright protection)

↓
60 *Perspective of the plant nursery.*
Newly introduced elements are collaged onto the existing kitchen interior.



IMAGINING
the kitchen

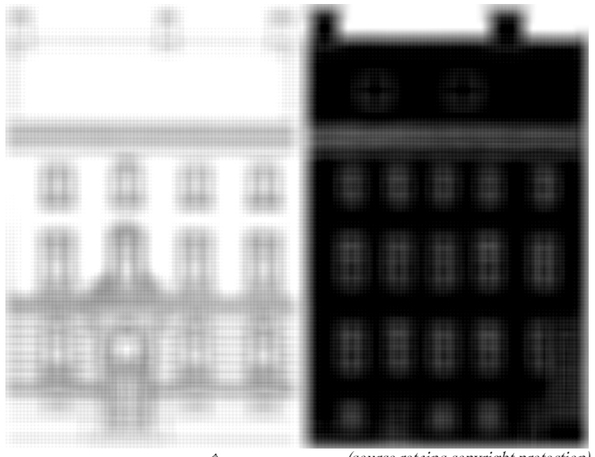


↑
61 *Segment of the plant nursery.*
The stoves were replaced by a simple sideboard made in the workshop area in the courtyard. The wall tiles get progressively replaced when damaged.

The Courtyard

1980

House Idun had a clear orientation toward the street: representation rooms and an ornamented facade faced the public front, while more private, hidden rooms faced the courtyard, where the facade was kept deliberately simple //fig.62//.



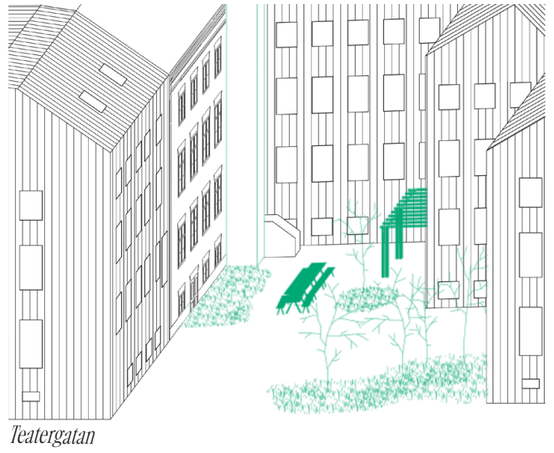
↑ (source retains copyright protection)

62 *Elevation of the street-facing facade (in white) and of the courtyard-facing facade (in black).*

imaginary

In the contemporary, feminist, counterpublic House Idun, the former backside of the building becomes the main space of the House. It brings together three important pillars of contemporary feminist space making: nature, social networks and taking action //fig.63//.

existing removed added



↑

63 *Diagram. Programming and connection to the street.*

futures that did not happen.

Working hands

The courtyard stands for a place between the small-scale family and the large-scale society by offering an outdoor collective space for tactile, bodily and experimental activities such as building, crafting, sports, or gardening, using communal resources (Krasny & Schalk, 2017, p. 295).

Urban nature

//cited feminist spaces/the commoning agency method/p.42// Introducing permeable flooring, bird perches, urban gardening and planting trees, roots the courtyard in an ethics of care for natural cycles, non-human species and the undervalued reproductive labour of food production (Petrescu, 2017, p. 103).

Stance in the neighbourhood

In the surrounding Lorensberg district, where spaces are reserved for those with sufficient financial needs, the courtyard offers an alternative public space; one that demands nothing in return from its users, has no expectations and just lets one be //house idun as a feminist counterpublic/p.58//.

the futures that did not happen

The semi-public courtyard

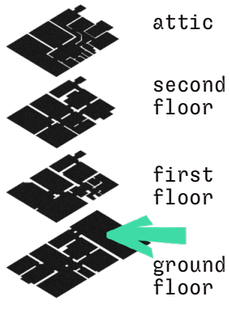
The typology of the courtyard recalls the domestic backyard as essential public place for women's speech, gossip, solidarity and social networks alternative to the nuclear family (Kern, 2021). Mothers could let their children play in courtyards which were outdoors but protected by surrounding walls, publicly accessible from the street but attached to enclosed domestic space //cited feminist spaces/the commoning agency method/p.42//. This semi-public threshold space can be used as outdoor space by the users of House Idun while occasionally hosting more public events such as flea markets.

Available resources

As an act of care for resources and a symbolic gesture of interconnection between the areas of the House, spilled water collected on the balcony is redirected through a drain to water the plants on the nursery facade and is gathered for irrigation in the yard. Bricks removed from the building structure during renovation are used as raised plant beds reinforcing material continuity between the old building and its new functions.

Claiming urban leftovers

Overlooked spaces such as urban interstices as Petrescu argues, are possible territories to be collectively reappropriated as a specific form of social, cultural and environmental urban commons. Because these spaces, such as the courtyard are often deemed unproductive by the market, they provide a grey area where individuals can have spatial agency without the pressure of institutional requirements (Petrescu, 2017, p. 102).



futures that did not happen.



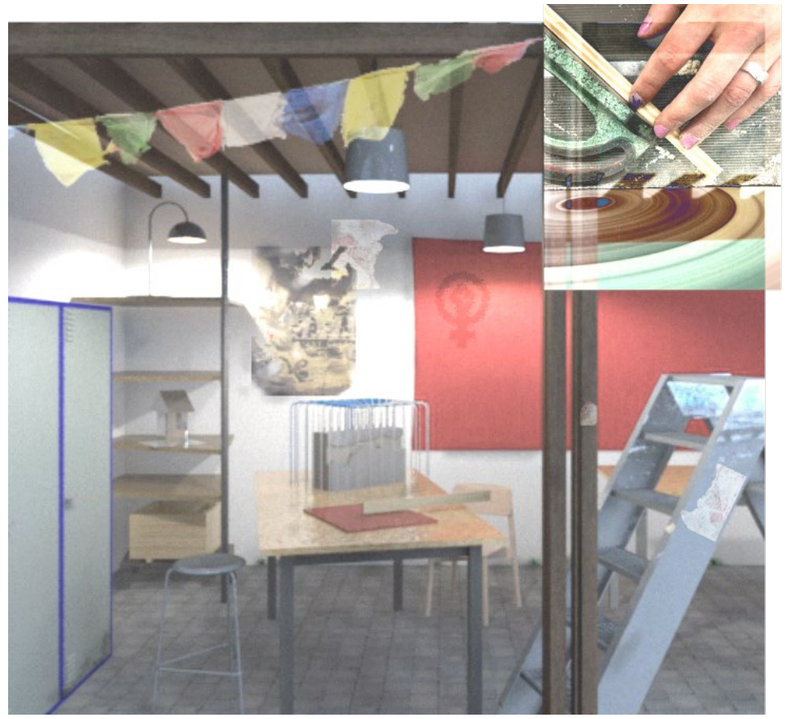
House Idun's flag

As a traditionally feminine craft, weaving embodies a legacy of female skill and patience that has historically been underdervalued. The flag is a symbol of the right to call a space one's own. Making one through feminist material practice disrupts structural norms that decide who may speak and be seen and functions as a mark of collective resistance (MYCKET, 2017).

↖
65 *House Idun's flag, woven by the author.*



←
64 *Reminiscing about the pictures on the walls at House Idun and reintroducing them in the imaginary.*
//critical archival research/p.28-31//
(source retains copyright protection)



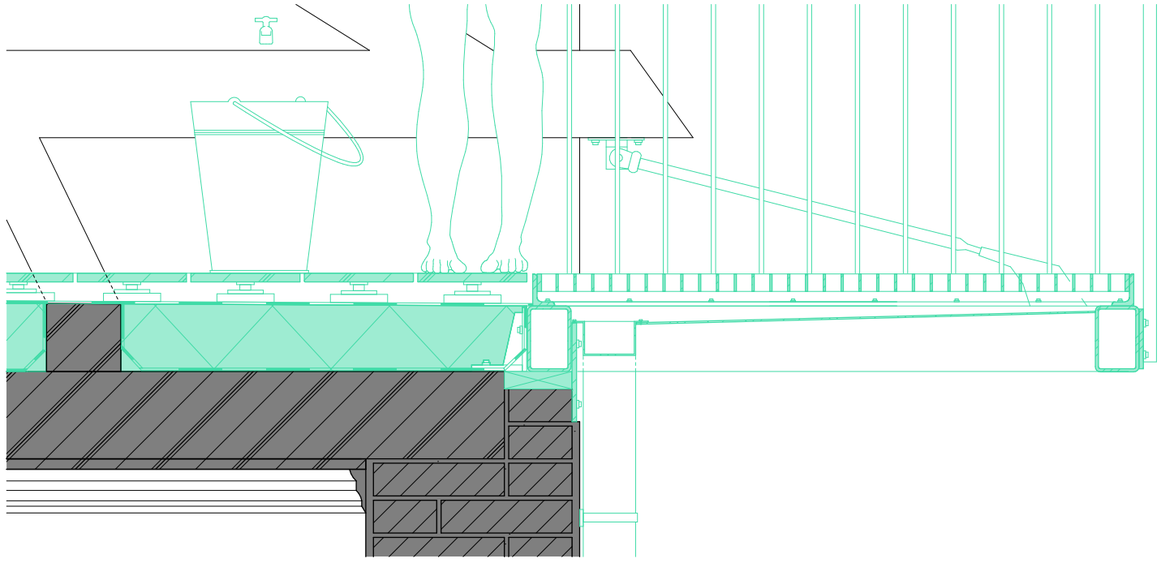
futures that did not happen.

↓
66 *Courtyard perspective.*
House Idun reintroduces the typology of the courtyard as a space for social gatherings and a connection to nature.



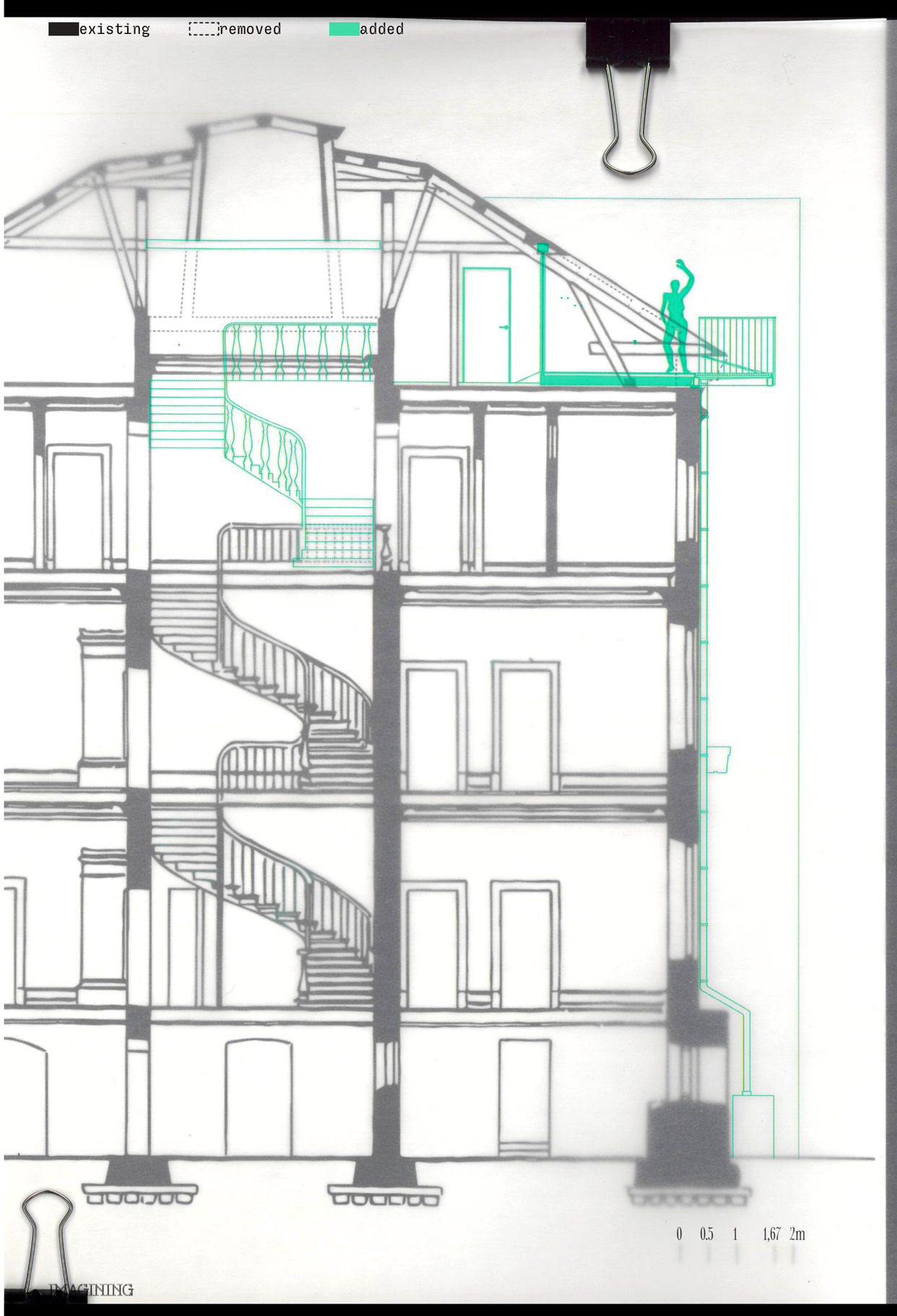
futures that did not happen.

↑
67 *A covered space in the courtyard serves as a common workshop.*

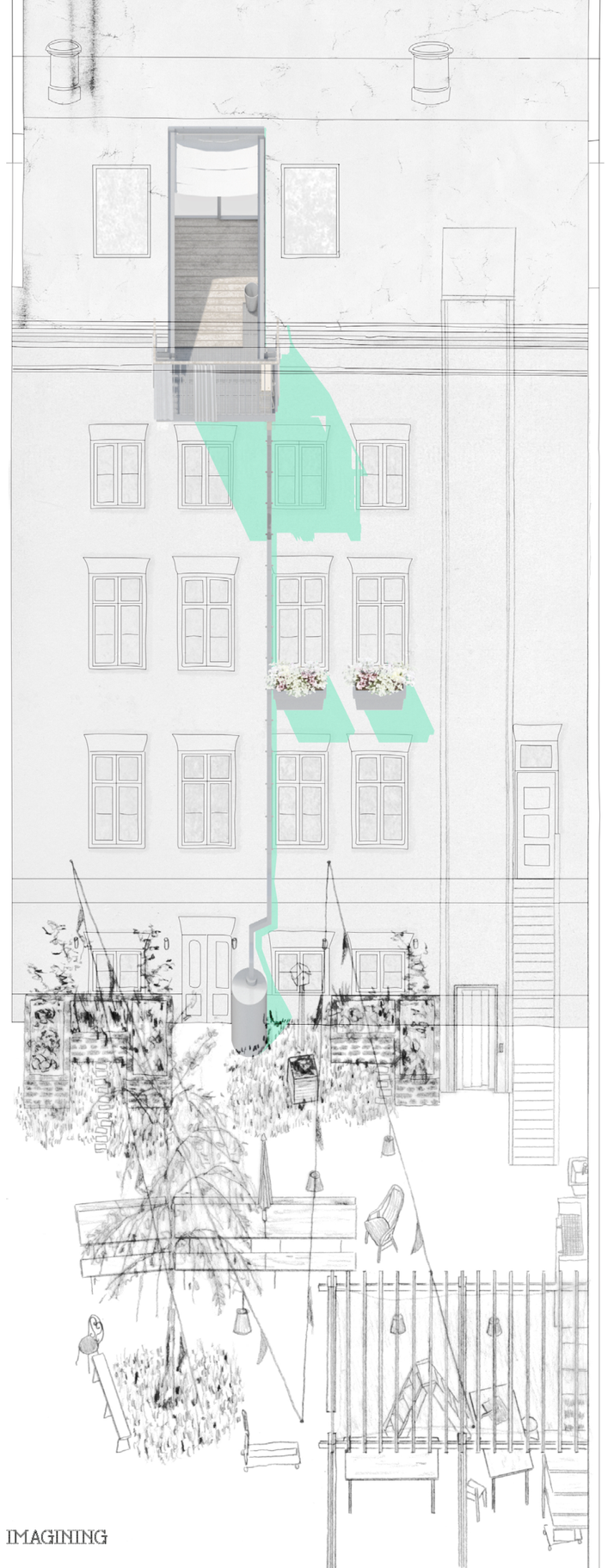


↖
69 *Detail section of the balcony.*

↗
68 *Cross section.*
The modern interventions are collaged onto the original section of the building from 1874.



futures that did not happen.



↖ 70 *Integral perspective.*

Emphasising on the interventions added to the historical facade. The raingutter ties the three areas of intervention (attic, kitchen, courtyard) together.

DISCUSSION

This thesis strived to find answers to the question:
How can feminist critical spatial practices be employed as methods to explore the futures of a feminist public space that did not happen?
Aiming to challenge dominant power relations embedded in spatial design and to contribute to a spatial practice that creates more equal and inclusive environments, the research question implied two core inquiries:

To delve into speculative feminist spaces, demands the use of special methods that do not conform to the mainstream architectural practice.
1_Feminist critical spatial methods and their contributions.

To investigate the decline of the mentioned feminist public space, shifts the scenario that did not happen from being a gap to being a spatial argument.
2_Futures that might still happen.

DISCUSSION

1_Feminist critical spatial methods and their contributions.

This thesis was interested in shifting feminist theory from being the subject of architectural research to being its method through feminist critical spatial practices (FCSPs). To accomplish a rich set of layered findings, six methods - semi-structured in-depth interview, critical archival research, anecdotal model, the commoning agency, dirty materialism and critical plans - were applied in three cumulating project phases: Analysing, Testing and Imagining.

Response to the research question.

1_1_1_Analysing_FCSPs uncover undisclosed stories and voices

Feminist critical research and analysis methods were not seen as techniques for gathering neutral data to reconstruct the past but rather to expose what is systematically missing from it. As architecture is a historically male-dominated field, female voices in the act of spatial production were often overheard and left undocumented. The applied methods aim to reconstruct their voices and to build upon them.

Critical archival research revealed the material traces of House Idun that are preserved at the KvinnSam archive. What is archived are records that testify the association's efforts to maintain ownership of the building and keep a respectable image towards the outside world while it was in fact struggling to meet the financial demands of being property owners. What the archive misses to capture are the everyday and embodied dimensions of the association's life that would emphasize the impact it had on thousands of women over the years.

FCSPs are interested in contributing to spatial justice by shifting from objective documentation to collective imagination. Just like many other feminist histories, Idun's legacy was never officially recorded and the sources preserved at the KvinnSam archive originate from two women donating them in 1972 and 2001. Developing the memory of feminist histories demands activating counter-archives by collecting oral histories and private documents. The interview with Eva Warberg - a founding member of Kvinnofolkshögskolan - was therefore emphasising her perception of what it feels like to claim space, what makes a space feel safe and what substantial difficulties hinder feminist public spaces to develop in Gothenburg. Key subjective knowledge as such could not be provided by the archive.

The method of the anecdotal model aimed to read space for what it was designed to exclude, whose labor, presence was spatially suppressed and acting as a gesture of reparation. FCSPs praise interdisciplinary tools to provide a more complex description of space. House Idun was depicted through its importance of being a venue for the legacy of female craftsmanship while also addressing the controversy of claiming spaces built by men. Textile handicraft - historically confined to the female domestic sphere - is here subverted into a tool for gaining access to the exclusive discipline of architecture.

1_1_2_Analysing_process assessment

The interview with Eva Warberg gave a substantial, founded context to this thesis project. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the interview produced partial and situated knowledge, rooted in Eva's perspective within the Kvinnohuset and Kvinnofolkhögskolan. There were several attempts by the author to contact different contemporary feminist movements that failed because of various reasons. Talking with other present feminist movements would have achieved a more complete epistemology of feminist spaces and emphasised the urge to build upon past feminist struggles.

1_2_1_Testing_FCSPs highlight situated knowledge

The Testing phase translated these historical insights into questions regarding contemporary space making processes by opening the research to collective participation in a public venue. There, FCSPs were employed as a live methodology that invited others to collectively produce knowledge.
The feminist critical method of reflecting on materials as being dirty, entangled and never neutral, addressed the questioning of what materials would reflect a feminist space today. While

involved in the method, it became clear that not the materials themselves donated by the participants, but rather the way they perceived feminist materialism was important. Having them define feminist materials helped shape a feminist public space that is rooted in the local needs.
The method of the commoning agency indicates that the act of space making belongs to its users, their voices, opinions, experiences while the architect serves as transmitter. Through their contributions and acts of commoning such as sharing food, crafting, performing rituals together, they actively shaped their space by giving it meaning. Just as stated in the interview with Eva, feminist acts depend on their context. They are pragmatic and are defined by their goal. By asking visitors during the Testing phase, this was proven by the variety of perceived feminist public spaces that were cited.

1_2_2_Testing_process assessment

The greater goal of the Testing phase was to extract situated desires, needs, attributes that a local inclusive feminist public space might have. It is however acknowledged that the context of the research platform was already excluding certain actors, their voices and participation to some extent. The gallery in the Stigberget district that was used as the research platform, is prone to attract visitors that are likely educated, culturally engaged, already sympathetic to feminist discourse or have been personally invited. The written notes and material donations must be treated as only representative for the voices of that specific demographic circumstance. Even though the Testing phase couldn't accommodate a heterogenous cultural milieu, the thesis still acknowledges that feminist public spaces must address intersectional hierarchies of race, class and ability.

1_3_1_Imagining_FCSPs are interested in more than just the aesthetic built structure

The Imagining phase translated the findings from the previous two phases into architectural critical plans of three spaces within House Idun that were embedded in restrictive spatial hierarchies. Through FCSPs, the spaces could be reimagined without erasing their histories but actively working with them through mostly minimal interventions. The built structure was deliberately barely touched, rather altered or renovated as a claim that context-aware architecture sometimes demands not building anything. The critical plans did not aim to speculate a finalised feminist public space but rather investigated the process of becoming one, without either romanticising or treating it as pure fantasy.

1_3_2_Imagining_process assessment

Imagining the futures that did not happen as stated in the research question might be a productive architectural act supported by feminist spatial theory, but that doesn't make it unambiguous. As imaginaries draw on what is already known (Sandberg & Rönnblom, 2016), they are drawing from past events but also influenced by the researchers positionality, cultural references and blind spots. The imagined futures should therefore be read as one possible way of treating the unrealised space as a resource for present action - one possible scenario that is shaped by one feminist perspective operating within a specific academic, cultural and geographic context.

Imagining a contemporary feminist public space through critical plans also revealed some contradictory elements that were difficult to accommodate. For instance, there is no productive way to design safe spaces as safety is a subjective feeling that affects everyone differently (Kern, 2021). Just like one element that will contribute to one's personal feeling of safety will disturb another person, an uninstitutionalised House Idun as proposed in the imaginary will include some, while excluding others just by its nature of being self-organised. Self-organised spaces that rely on voluntary contributions risk excluding those already marginalised that do not have the time and energy to volunteer. The imagined future is therefore conflicted between keeping the important attributes of being independent from structural regulations and reproducing the financial precarity that is assumed to have originally led to its decline in 1980.

2_Futures that might still happen.

Lastly, a brief look into how this thesis can contribute to a wider discourse and address the missing future by paving the ground for possible futures.

Contribution to the discourse.

2_1_Within architectural methodology

To practice architecture as a feminist is an ongoing commitment to working differently. FCSPs have the capacity to be transformative methodological frameworks in the architectural practice by suggesting ethical, honest, slow, collective modes, which are deeply informed by the specific project site. The six tested feminist critical methods demonstrated how practicing otherwise can lead to challenging the authority of the architect as sole author of spatial design. For instance, focusing on preserving the interior architecture of House Idun, the simple act of shifting the focus from the front facade to the back facade, adding a garden in the courtyard, deliberately rejecting construction and enhancing what exists means representing a controversial stance in architecture.

2_2_Within the urban planning discourse

House Idun, as a counterpublic imagined in this thesis, offers a transformative, democratic public spatial model that rethinks whose experiences are included in spatial design.
Contemporary attempts to creating more gender equal urban environments often manifest in the act of adding a female consultant to a planning committee or in actively feminising spaces. Feminised urban spaces, "soft" environments like pilates studios and artisan coffee shops aim to convey a feeling of safety and neatness. However, by making safety and care monetarised commodities, these spaces centre on the preferences of privileged white women while excluding marginalised groups and reinforce gentrification (Kern, 2021).
Gender equal cities demand a fundamental rethinking of whose labour is made visible and whose sense of safety and belonging is treated as a design requirement. The imagined House Idun attempts to respond to this demand by dismantling restraining power structures in the built structure, foregrounding reproductive labor, making space available for collective appropriation and refusing to demand justification of presence from its users.

2_3_Within the feminist movement

A physical feminist counterpublic such as House Idun, makes a claim on urban territory that is legible, embodied and hard to ignore in its neighborhood. As women tend to lay more importance on relationships with others instead of appropriating spatial territory, it becomes even more pivotal to engage in space making that prioritises women and girls through gender-sensitive planning (Hartmann, 2022, p. 94). While online space offers reach, accessibility and a sense of protection from violators, the decline of physical feminist spaces in Gothenburg is a loss of presence and replicates the invisibility that feminist spatial theory is fighting. Presence in the urban fabric is political, and the prerequisites of presence are symbolic. All feminist public spaces and spaces of resistance that were studied during this thesis, were spaces that had to be claimed, appropriated and adapted; none of the spaces were built for the purpose of being a venue for feminist acts of resistance. The LGBTQI+ community fought for a long time for a community safe space in Gothenburg. Since 2022, the city finances their use of the fourth floor in the old harbour building Amerikahuset. Its use is strongly inflicted with specific house rules and application of the city's regulations which shape the space, define how and when it can be used. The staff testifies that there is a desire of the community to change location as the current one is too restrictive and not representative of the community (staff at Regnbågshus, personal communication, February 26, 2026). Recovering physical feminist and inclusive spaces is urgent, even though the conditions under which they can survive financially, institutionally, politically remain conflicting.

The ethos that House Idun carried still persists. It lives in the conversations that take place over shared meals and textile handicraft, in the acts of commoning that turns a gathering space into something collectively owned and the quiet acts of care that feminist spatial practice rely on. This thesis tried to make that persistence visible and imagined what it could look like in a public space.

The futures that did not happen are not failures but unfinished arguments. House Idun is one of them. As long as women and marginalised people continue to navigate a city that was not built for them, the argument continues. Asking questions and experimenting with unusual architectural methods provokes a dialogue to open within the profession of architecture, through the built space. It is about how the grounds can be prepared for this communication to happen.
For citizens to take their undisputable space in the city and for more just environments.



POSTSCRIPT

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_ATP Architects and Engineers, Intern, Wien, 2021 (sep)
_Nonconform Architects, Intern, Wien, 2020 (sep)

↖ 71 *The end of an evening at Galléri Résistance.*

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All drawings and images are by the author unless referenced here.

03 Archived local newspaper articles about the Idun Association. Archived sources from the Idun association Source: Nausner, E. Reproduction: KvinnSam, Gothenburg University Library
08 Share of streets named after a woman out of streets dedicated to individuals by percentage. Source: European Data Journalism Network, CC BY 4.0 licence, http://mappingdiversity.eu
10 Former Kvinnohuset Gothenburg. Source: Brochure from the Women's House at Gamlestadstorget in Gothenburg. https://www.kvinnohistoriska.se/kvinnans-plats/kvinnojour?locale=en. Credits: Gothenburg University Library
09 Demonstration for women's suffrage, Gothenburg, 1918. Credits: by Anna Backlund (1865-1920) - This file was made available to Wikimedia Commons by the Nordiska museet as part of the collaborative project "Edit-a-thon on the theme of Fashion and Dress History" with Wikimedia Sweden., Public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.
11 The goddess Iðunn. Source: Idun and the Apples (1890) by J. Doyle Penrose. James Doyle Penrose, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Edited by the author.
12 Logo of the Idun Women's Association. Archived sources from the Idun association. Source: Nausner, E. Reproduction: KvinnSam, Gothenburg University Library. Edited by the author.
14 Section of House Idun. Situation in 1873. Historical building permit plans of the building on Storgatan 47. Source: Stadsbyggnadsförvaltningen Göteborgs Stad. Edited by the author.
15 Groundfloor of House Idun. Situation in 1980. Historical building permit plans of the building on Storgatan 47. Source: Stadsbyggnadsförvaltningen Göteborgs Stad. Edited by the author.
17 Letter announcing liquidation and dissolution of the real estate association Idun. Archived sources from the Idun association. Source: Nausner, E. Reproduction: KvinnSam, Gothenburg University Library. Translated by the author. Photo credits: Textur Fabrik
18 Kvinnofolkshögskolan (Credits: Showman, CC BY-SA 3.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>, via Wikimedia Commons
*19 KvinnSam archive. Credits: By B****n - Own work, CC BY 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5991234*
20 Figures 01.-09. on this spread: Archived material from the Idun Association. Source: Nausner, E. Reproduction: KvinnSam, Gothenburg University Library
21 Figures 02.-09. on this spread: Archived material from the Idun Association. Source: Nausner, E. Reproduction: KvinnSam, Gothenburg University Library. Edited by the author.
22 Elevation of Idun's kitchen by the architect Gustaf Alde, 1941. Archived sources from the Idun association. Source: Nausner, E. Reproduction: KvinnSam, Gothenburg University Library
23 Photograph of Idun's kitchen. Archived sources from the Idun association. Source: Nausner, E. Reproduction: KvinnSam, Gothenburg University Library
32 90 most cited words when visitors described feminist public spaces.The data was evaluated with the web tool FreeWordCloudGenerator.com (https://www.freewordcloudgenerator.com)
33 A gallery visitor cataloguing a material. Credits: Mercè Torres
34 85 most cited words when visitors described feminist materials. The data was evaluated with the web tool FreeWordCloudGenerator.com (https://www.freewordcloudgenerator.com)
35 Assemblage of feminist materials. Massage ball. Source: Pixabay (https://pixabay.com/photos/massage-balls-hedgehog-balls-3741097/) Pin. Source: Pixabay (https://pixabay.com/photos/pin-safety-security-protection-2293/) Condom. Source: Pixabay (https://pixabay.com/photos/condom-contraception-protection-59639/)
37 Analysis of the material assemblage. Massage ball. Source: Pixabay (https://pixabay.com/photos/massage-balls-hedgehog-balls-3741097/) Pin. Source: Pixabay (https://pixabay.com/photos/pin-safety-security-protection-2293/) Condom. Source: Pixabay (https://pixabay.com/photos/condom-contraception-protection-59639/)
42 Creating a space focused on sharing and collectivity. Credits: Mercè Torres
39 Cleaning and taking care of the gallery amenities. Credits: Max Robinson
41 Creating an alternative third space. Credits: Mercè Torres
47 Documentation of objects and activities that supported the ad hoc feminist public space. Photo credits: Mercè Torres and Emily Nausner
48 Feministhuset in Trondheim, Norway.Photo Credits: Kjersti Lie – Eget verk, CC BY 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=153704823
49 "Exclude Me In". A map of queer geography. Photo credit: MYCKET (Mariana Alves Silva, Katarina Bonnevier, Thérèse Kristiansson), NBC (Annika Enqvist) and Maja Gunn. Map produced for the journal Glänta, #2-3, 2013. Source: (MYCKET, 2017, p.72)
50 Room program. Credits: Icons: Elevator by koi from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0). Toilet by Oleksandr Panasovskyi from Noun Project (CC BY 3.0). Stairs by Fina Uswania Noun Project (CC BY 3.0) Black board by Noita Digital from Unsplash, 2021
51 Floorplan of the attic. 1980. Historical building permit plans of the building on Storgatan 47. Source: Stadsbyggnadsförvaltningen Göteborgs Stad. Edited by the author.
53 Perspective section of the balcony. Credits: Textures from Architextures, 2026 (https://architextures.org)
54 Reminiscing about the curtains at House Idun and reintroducing them in the imaginary. Archived sources from the Idun association. Source: Nausner, E. Reproduction: KvinnSam, Gothenburg University Library
56 Floorplan of the kitchen (in white). 1980. Historical building permit plans of the building on Storgatan 47. Source: Stadsbyggnadsförvaltningen Göteborgs Stad. Edited by the author.
59 Reminiscing about the flowers at House Idun and reintroducing them in the imaginary. Archived sources from the Idun association Source: Nausner, E. Reproduction: Archive B 27, IDUN Gothenburg Föreningen, KvinnSam, Gothenburg University Library
62 Elevation of the street-facing facade (in white) and of the courtyard-facing facade (in black). 1980. Historical building permit plans of the building on Storgatan 47. Source: Stadsbyggnadsförvaltningen Göteborgs Stad. Edited by the author.
63 Diagram. Programming and connection to the street. Credits: Textures by Texture Fabrik (https://texturefabrik.com)
64 Reminiscing about the pictures on the walls at House Idun and reintroducing them in the imaginary. Archived sources from the Idun association Source: Nausner, E. Reproduction: Archive B 27, IDUN Gothenburg Föreningen, KvinnSam, Gothenburg University Library.
70 Integral perspective. Credits: Textures by Texture Fabrik (https://texturefabrik.com)
71 The end of an evening at Galléri Résistance.Credits: Andrea Hofschneider

artificial intelligence usage documentation

The use of artificial intelligence was limited for the purpose of: identification of relevant academic literature, translation of archival primary sources, explanation of theoretical concepts and definitions and refinement of written text. All AI-generated outputs were critically assessed by the author and, where relevant, verified against other sources before being included in the work.
Tool used: Claude Sonnet 4.6 by Anthropic, accessed through the web interface (https://claude.ai)
Period of use: January–April 2026