



# Site Searching

TO NOTE AND VISUALIZE UNNOTICED LAYERS OF A SITE



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# Abstract

To investigate the site is for most architects the first move when starting a new project. To thoroughly understand a place is fundamental for the design process. The design often relates to physical limitations on site but more seldom, it reflects the soft and unseen values and conditions that make out the narratives of the site. By exposing a place's narratives one can begin to understand the historical and current function of it. We argued that those values are important to support the design.

We want different layers of a place to distinguish throughout a site study. Therefore, this thesis aims to translate the conditions of a site into visual material that can be used to inform architectural design. The conditions of the site are extracted through the method of mapping by usage of notations and collages. The images created, in turn, work as new foundations for searching new knowledge of the site. We call it Site Searching.

In today's image saturated society, it is important to be critical and to decode the values and ideas that are embedded in the images we are being exposed to. We are influenced by images daily and what we see impacts our emotions and actions. This thesis works with visual literacy to challenge the way we

communicate using images and to analyse our material. It aims to find out what conclusions can be made from the visual material we produce based on the investigations made on site.

The examination takes place at Skanstorget in Gothenburg, a place that provides the opportunity to explore both past, present and future development. The site is well debated but still it awaits transformation. The current status quo of the site triggers an interest to uncover its layers.

This thesis results in an archive that hosts some of the findings excavated during the process, displaying them as design informants. They are put to test in various design studies that question the potential of these designs affecting the site. The design studies are not supposed to supply answers, instead they further question the potential of design embodying layers of the site.

## Keywords

site exploration - narrative - archive  
- representation - design studies

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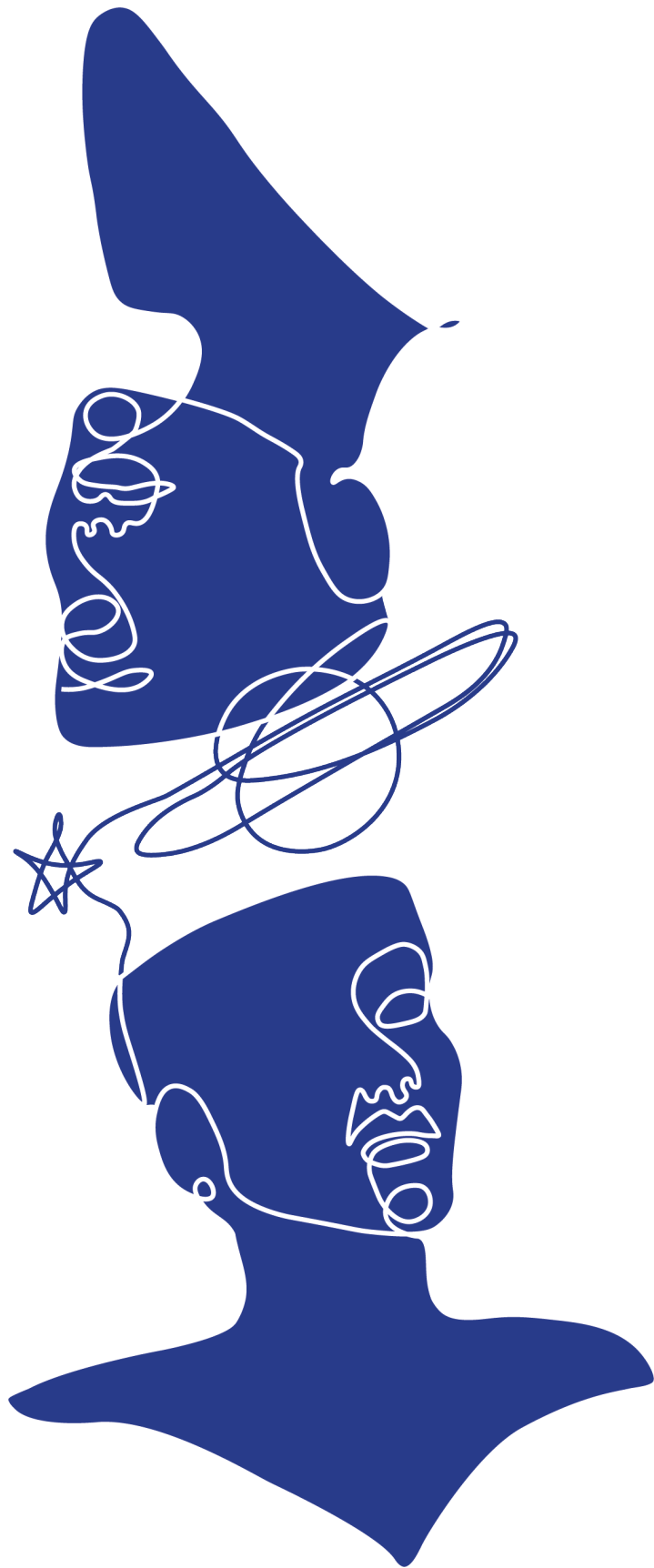
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# INTRODUCTION

Introduction • Us



Us

Introduction • Us

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*What is this place?* One might ask oneself as design work starts on a site. Architects often search for an answer to this question. But perhaps the question should be rephrased to: *Who is this place?* Understanding the complex and multifaceted identity of a place, we believe, is the foundation of a successful architecture.

It is common to start a project with a site investigation to lay out basic conditions that impact the design. However, a site investigation is often text-heavy, strictly fact-based to the current state of the site, briefly mentions important historical aspects and may only contain just a few images. Therefore, it may take a passive role as foundational information when the design process continues. We want to incorporate the site investigations more deeply into the design process, making it an active tool for design. We call for the joy of getting to know a new place and the possibilities a site investigation can bring forth. We call, above all, for visual representations that describe what has been found and how the findings have been interpreted and used.

One's skills of imagemaking tend to be used as representation of results, however the act of representation is even more powerful when used as a tool to drive processes. This,

we want to make use of in site investigations. How architecture can differ, depending on whether the elements of the designs are directly, or indirectly, excavated from the site by means of the process, adds an interesting dimension to the reading of the design.

In addition to the fact that we see the potential to evolve the site investigations, we also see a need to uncover different layers of a place – without interference of norms and bias such as high exploitation, enclosed block structures and mixed cities function as the only answer on how to develop a city. The layers we uncover in our site investigation come from collections of data combined with the experience of the place, which is partly based on our own senses.

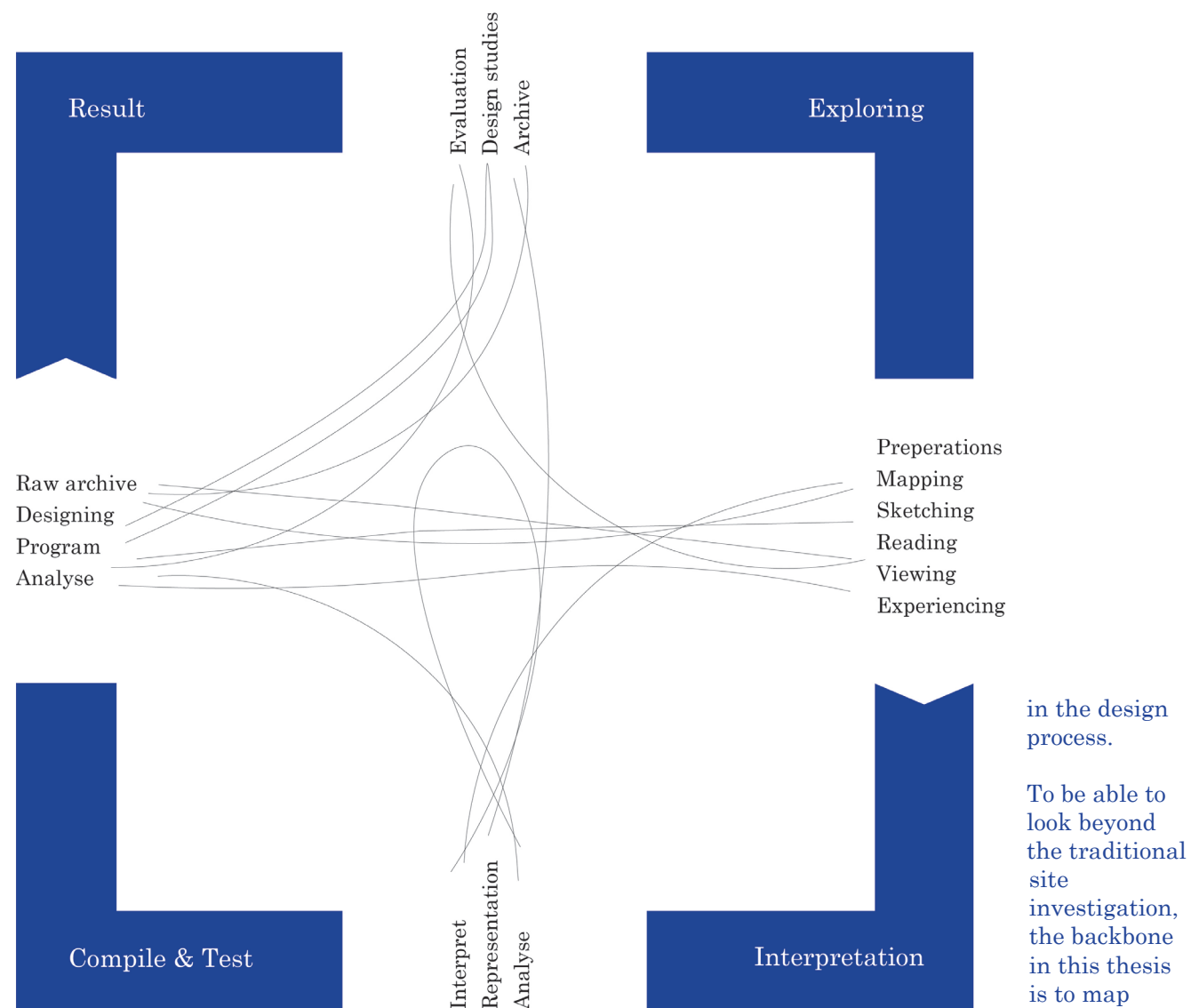
We can state that a place is not only a physical position, but then a question appears; *what gives a place its identity?* It is a composition of feelings, memories and physical qualities. It is also people's relationships with each other and relationships with other places and their identities. It is a matter of time, of history and historical layers, of weather and natural phenomena, of the built and the spatial interactions, of movement and meetings. To understand a place is to bring out its narratives.

# Background and aim

The purpose of the master thesis is to approach a place and its identity in a fun and exploratory way. This is a tool to challenge ourselves and loosen our habitual way of designing and analysing architecture. We have investigated how we can find a design language by interpreting a place's existence into design informants to reintroduce to the site, which highlights features that may be invisible to the naked eye.

## Thesis question

» How can we explore a place's unnoticed conditions and make them visual to work as design informants?



## Method

When making a traditional site investigation, there is often a given program to relate to and use as a starting point for the study. Depending on the program some conditions on the site are more relevant than others, however some of the general spatial features that usually are analysed are flows of people and vehicles, light conditions, important ecological factors, noise and hazards, topography and style of the built environment. The methods used to analyse can consist of observations, interviews and studies of maps and other data information, often generated from the municipality. The outcome is usually compiled into a report featuring mainly text, charts, maps and a few photographs from the site. The investigation is used as an underlay of information for the work to come rather than as an active tool

from other perspectives and make the outcome visible. To be able to map, both the seen and unseen, a combination of methods can be used. In this thesis we found our way of translating found information into visual material, and later into form, by studying, comparing and crossing different methods such as notation, sketches and Tracing inspired by Eisenman and Tschumi. The outcome of excavations can be manipulated by different collage techniques, as made by Pariwan Studio and Garcia and Frankowski, and by that be translated into design. By mixing reference methods we found our own methods to interpret and translate our findings into new knowledge.

We categorize the different mapping techniques as speculative or pure factual. One way to collect data is to use the element of time and notations, being at the site and

in the design process.

To be able to look beyond the traditional site investigation, the backbone in this thesis is to map different occurrences

# Method and process

## Process

We have organized our way of working by creating a frame for the process. It is divided into four different phases that connect and add on to each other.

The first phase is *Exploring*, where we collect information through various methods.

The second phase is *Interpretation*, where we convert previous findings into visual material and start to analyse it. We play with the material by distorting and interpreting the meaning of it. This phase is iterative and can go on forever, which makes it undetermined when to progress to the next phase.

We call the third phase *Compile & test*. Here we compile all our visual material into a raw archive from which we pick pieces to develop further into design informants. These are used to design architecture as studies that are placed back onto the site.

The last phase is *Result*, where evaluation takes place. An archive for the design informants is set up and design studies challenge the narratives of the site.

taking notes of what happens. The notations we made at the site came from photographing, sketching, writing and observing. By this, some information was directly visible while others needed an element of translation. The translations were done by collages, diagrams, drawings as well as by 3D models.

Further, to collect data such as historical functions and different usages of the space, we researched texts about the site. The same method applied to understand the contemporary plans for the site from the municipality.

To put our process and findings to the test, design studies were used as a method. By making design studies, the information drawn from the visualizations of the investigation of the site were evaluated on their values to act as informants to the design itself. The program for the design depended on our analysis of the site and was not predetermined.

By producing a guide on how to look at and analyse images, we challenged ourselves to read the images in new ways. And since we were two authors of this thesis, we actively worked with our own communication and questioned the way we communicated, not only through images but also verbally.



## Brains

We as humans experience a lot of the world visually (Hooker, 2017). Think about it, already as children, images are the first thing we learn to make and understand, long before we learn to use words and

even longer before we start to write them (Toledo Museum of Art, 2020). Why is this? Our brains are divided into multiple parts that help us decode images down to shapes and geometry, the understanding of what an image portrays, how space is configured and what we feel from

# Theory

looking at the image (Wujec, 2009). With these parts working together, we can extract meaning from the image (Ibid). In fact, thirty percent of our brain's capacity is allocated into decoding images, which is the biggest segment of our brain (Hooker, 2017). We might think we have come a long way since our cavemen days, drawing on rocks, but the lesson we learnt – the power of communicating through images – is still important in our modern society.

## Under the influence

Nowadays, we are exposed to a lot of images daily, whether it is on social media, in YouTube videos, on TV or by passing commercial signs on the street. The images we see impact how we think, feel and act as well as what we (think we) remember (Hook, 2017; Imonomy, 2017). Getty images performed an experiment; in 2007, the image most selected after searching “woman” was an image of a passive woman laying half naked under a towel on a massage table (Hook, 2017). By curating the supply of images portraying women, they changed the general perception of what images best portray a woman (Ibid). So, in 2017 the most popular image for the same search

of “woman” was now a fully clothed woman seen wandering a rocky landscape (Ibid). By changing the supply, they changed the demand (Ibid). There are countless examples of how we are affected by the images we are presented with, but one thing is common, whether it is making us detest wars, engage in movements or believe in conspiracy theories, one needs to know how to see deeper within the images.

## Visual literacy

Because we live in an image saturated society, and because we are affected by the images we come across, we all need to be visually literate. Visual literacy is the ability to read, write and create visual images (Hook, 2017). Practicing this is made the same way you practice literacy: read and write, but with images. Visual literacy gives the ability to interpret data from one image in lots of different ways, which enables us to be source critical when experiencing images (Toledo Museum of Art, 2015a). It also enables us the ability to accommodate multiple interpretations of an image and we are therefore more understanding of other people's reading of the same image (ibid). By this, being able to understand images we can better understand each other.

## Images as knowledge

In this day and age, images play a bigger part in our communication than words do (Toledo Museum of Art, 2017b). Not only can we use images to manipulate our minds and actions, and to gain understanding of each other, but we can also use them as carriers of knowledge. Images can be both direct and hold a deeper meaning: the sum can be greater than its parts. For example, pictures of single items might show just the item itself, but by putting them together in a collage, a story is told between them.

The Art of Seeing Art is a method developed by Toledo Museum of Art to guide visitors to read the images they exhibit by the stages of Look, Observe, See, Describe, Analyse and Interpret so that visitors are enabled to fully enjoy the pieces of the exhibition (Toledo Museum of Art, 2020c). On average, the museum visitor spends 17 seconds for each piece, but by spending time one can extract knowledge and gain understanding that things are not always as they appear at first sight (Ibid).

Another way to explore knowledge in images is to deconstruct and to then reconstruct the image (Toledo

Museum of Art, 2015b). This gives the opportunity to analyse each piece and by putting them together enable findings of new knowledge such as hidden connections, patterns and narratives (Ibid). By this, imagemaking can be used as a tool. To deconstruct and to then reconstruct is what happens when we interpret which is “To apprehend and represent by means of art” (Webster’s, n.d., Interpret). There is a high need of awareness when assembling images, since the execution can steer people’s emotions related to a place or event (Klein, 2010). We need to be aware that by making an image we act as interpreters and by that we decide what knowledge to include, and what knowledge to be left out (Ibid). The power of images as knowledge carriers should not be underestimated.



# Glossary

These are words used to investigate, explain and structure the process of the Master Thesis. The definitions of the words correspond to the specific way of how they are used throughout the booklet.

## Archive

– a repository for collections of knowledge or objects.

## Historical layers

– the different parts of what makes out the history of a place such as socioeconomic, political, physical and memorial factors seen over time.

## Interpret

– to apprehend and convert knowledge or meaning from one medium to another.

## Mapping

– to make strategically selected notations of both visual and non-visual information and then organize and interpret them into representations. The mappings can be divided into two categories: speculative and factual mapping.

## Narrative

– a representation of a story, told with selected sequences of events, settings and characters related to a selected order. It turns stories into knowledge.

## Representation

– a figure or image made to represent an idea, event or physical matter.

## Site

– a physical place where something is, was, or will be. It is limited by determined boundaries.

## Square

– an open public space in a city, town or village, often used for community gatherings and recreation.

## Trace

– an indication of something that has existed on, or has passed by, a site.

## Visual Literacy

– the ability to read, write and create visual images.

# Delimitations

The thesis work is delimited by different aspects in different parts of the process. To begin with, we base our work on one specific site, Skanstorget in Gothenburg, which serves as a base for the investigations as well as the site where our investigations take on new form at the end of the thesis.

The exploration is the main part of the thesis, why the design studies are used as a way to test the outcome of the process, rather than create building proposals complete with drawings for construction. The design studies are speculative ideas that emphasize form and space. The design can be either provocative or willing to compromise with the site's conditions. By not deciding a program in advance, we are able to focus on the outcome of the process. Therefore, there are no complete programs as foundations for the designs. Instead, the functions in the design studies vary depending on the design informants used from the archive.

The outcome of the mapping was analysed with help from our own developed tool, Visual Guide, a guide to visual reading. By this act we could control the analysis so that every image of the thesis material went through the same procedure.

Lastly, the thesis was shaped by our interpretations as well as by our wish to work with what is joyful. This worked as a way to limit the scope of how to visualize the unnoticed in the site investigation. The thesis means to explore options, finding *a* way to go about place investigations, not *the* way as if there were only one solution.



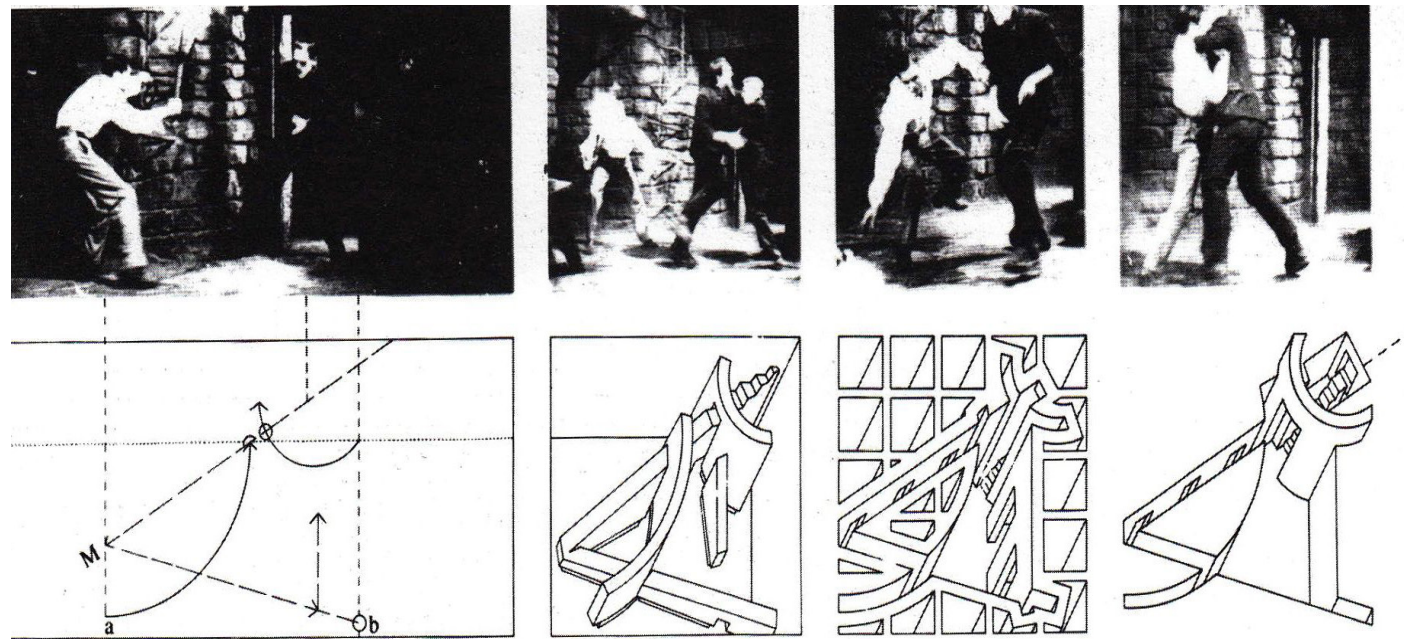


Figure 1

## Approach to references

To be able to understand a place in a broader way one ought to look at the different narratives of the site. To see these narratives, we believe there is a need to look at the place both from an overall perspective, but also to zoom in and take a closer look at the small details. These details might seem insignificant at first sight, but they add dimensions to the narratives and generate substance to form new ideas.

The references used in the thesis are all describing different narratives. They are using various methods to understand the narratives and to extract new meaning out of them. Some of the references work as pure visual inventories, while others interpret and distort the collected information.

### Bernard Tschumi The Manhattan Transcripts

In The Manhattan transcripts Tschumi extracts still images from films and creates spatial translations in drawings that serve as an architectural story. The drawings represent sequences, space and events rather than the function and form of the traditional architectural language.

The Manhattan Transcripts is interesting because its architectural drawings narrate stories rather than represent real projects. It is not too clear how the translations are performed, which adds another dimension to the reading. Tschumi explains that the conventional components are broken down and built up in new ways where movement, space and events relate to each other while standing independently. Tschumi's methods show how architecture can be used as a tool to interpret reality and movement through space.

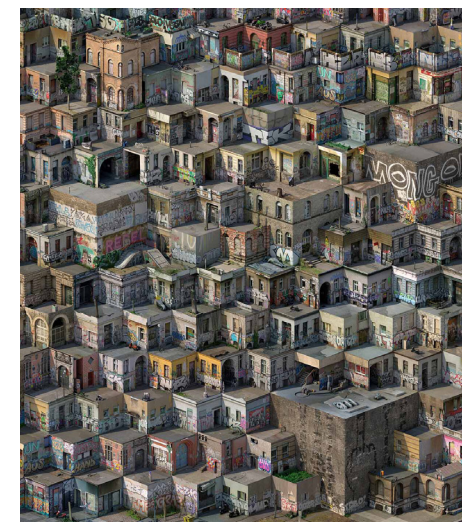


Figure 2

### Oddviz Inventory: Kreuzberg

Oddviz is an art collective working with scanning objects and locations using photogrammetry as techniques. They make digital replicas and present the work as collage images, physical 3D models, videos or installations. They visualize changes of destructive gentrification around the world.

Their way of working, with collections of different selections of urban spaces and things that are being put together as new images, form new insights and highlight certain concealed knowledge.

# References for methods



Figure 3

### Pariwat Studio The Big Street

The Pariwat Studio explores places by using photo collages. The exhibition The Big Street shows artwork where the diversity of culture impacts our society and our surroundings. Through the collages the societal pictorial-building blocks make out the beauty of each place.

The method unveils the experience of a place and we use the technique to explore our own site. Collages help us to focus on pieces of a place and thereby enable different ways to view it.



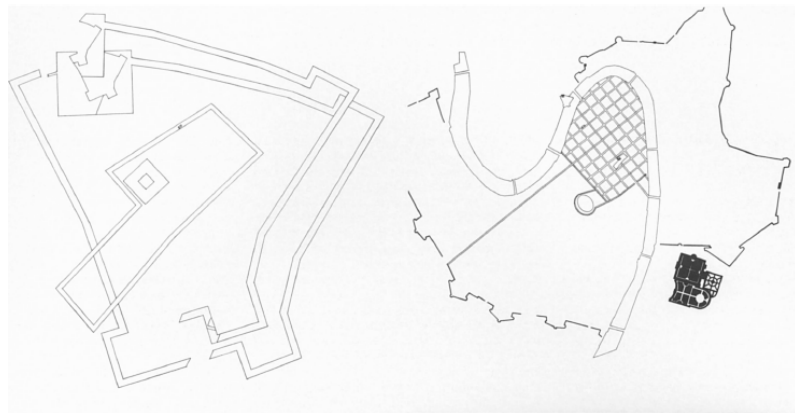


Figure 4

*Peter Eisenman*  
**Tracing Eisenman**

The book *Tracing Eisenman* contains all works by Peter Eisenman. They are represented by texts and with drawings showing the techniques used by him. One technique he used is called Tracing. An example of the method is an

act of layering maps from different eras and tracing their intersections and lines. He then uses the new strokes to work as a foundation to the new design of the space.

Tracing as an act to reveal the layers of history could be beneficial to inform the design as it crosses the information from the past with the present and the future. By tracing lines that are superimposed we can find ways to transform information. This way of working can loosen our habitual way of reading information which enables us to reinterpret it in new ways and work as a way to create design derived from its site.

*Garcia Frankowski*  
**Narrative Architecture: A Kynical Manifesto**

Cruz Garcia and Nathalie Frankowski present beautiful and strong material in the form of a Manifesto that suggests an architecture disconnected from norms, deadly serious ideologies and allegories. The authors analyse architecture and urban visions from the 20th century, by Le Corbusier, Team 10, Rem Koolhaas among others, and apply the critique that these visions bring to today's urban problems. They do not oppose any particular style or type of architecture, but rather a discipline with unreasonable opinions.

Garcia and Frankowski play with the word cynical, which they claim to not want to be, and write the "Kynical Manifesto" about telling the story behind the city's architecture and structure.

"To be a Kynical architect is to question the status quo, to challenge institutions, academic, and professional organizations. To be a Kynic today implies to deconstruct and retell history, to imagine the possibility of another history" (pp. 16).

By exposing the systems behind buildings, urban zones, power



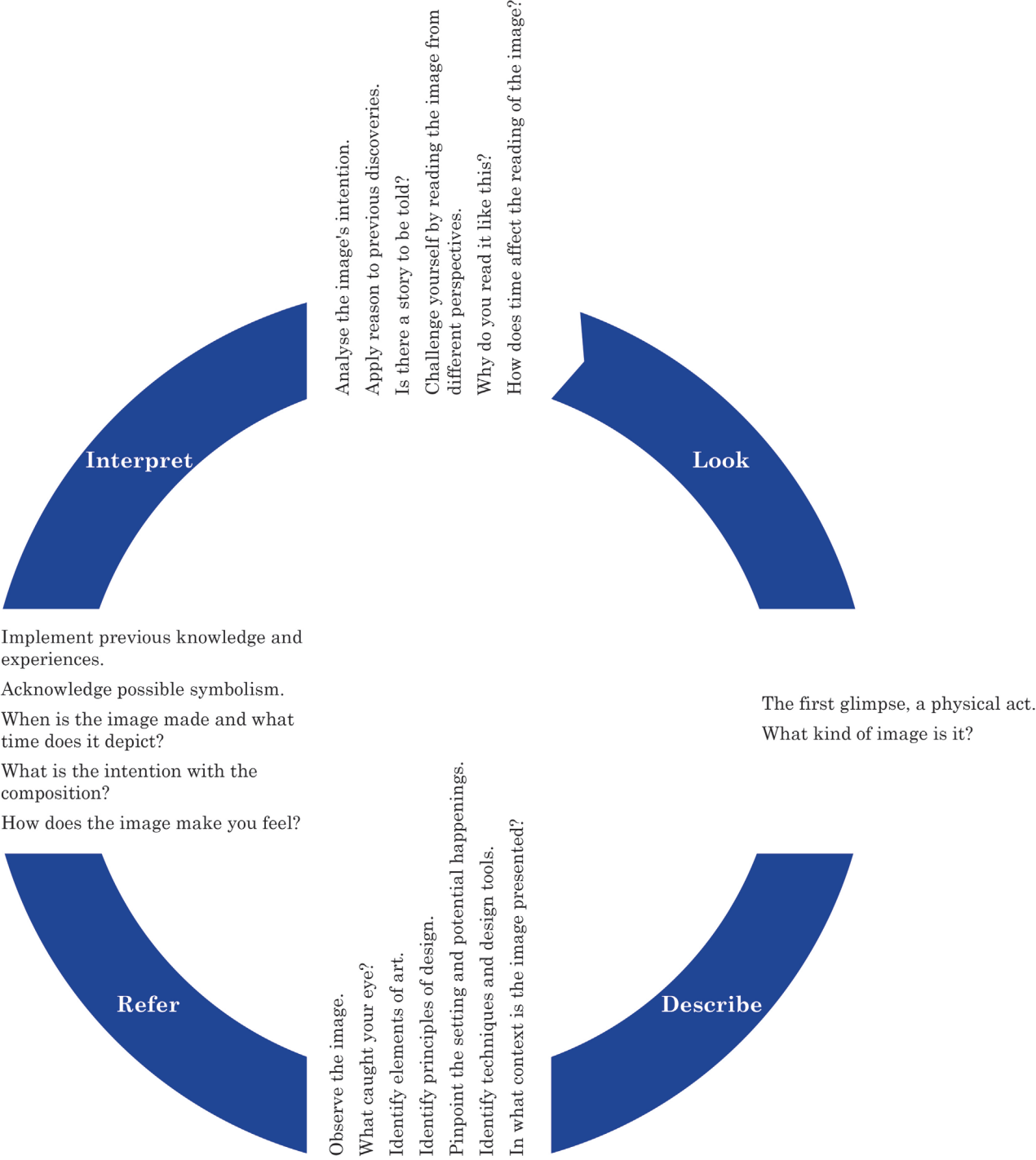
Figure 5

structures, gentrification or climate change one can start to picture a narrative.

"Reveal an honest architecture. And if you can't find it, write your own subversive story about architecture and the city." (pp. 102).

The collage technique used by the authors reveals that layers of history can be intervened with the present to tell a story. This brings new views upon both existing and historical features, spaces and forms. The collage technique can work as an interpreter of the layers of the site. By examining ideas, both today's and yesterday's, we can compare history and see which visions became real and which are still dreams of the future.

# EXPLORATION



# Visual Guide

The visual guide is our analysis tool to help look at pictures, places, spaces and things in different ways, to elaborate one's understanding of the observed. Our analysis is divided into four steps that add on to each other: *Look* sets the conditions from where the observer stands and what the observed item is. *Describe* builds the language needed to talk about the item. *Refer* adds previous knowledge and by this creates context and *Interpret* initiates the creation of new meaning and scenarios out of one's findings. The different steps make the user change roles between observer and creator which initiates knowledge making and awake questions.

The analysis is created as a circulation, as a never ending shape. Once you have gone full circle, the analysis can start over. The knowledge found will inform the new round. For that reason, the interpretation can never be the same as before and therefore it will give new perspectives and insights once again.

Throughout the chapter Exploration the Visual Guide is used to assist the interpretations of our different mappings. The outcome of the Visual Guide analysis is compiled into an archive.



## Today

In the middle of central Gothenburg, in an open space between two hills, lies Skanstorget. The square is defined by Skansberget in the west with Skansen Kronan located on top, housing in the north and south and by Övre Husargatan in the east. Here, the four districts of Haga, Linnéstaden, Annedal and Vasastaden meet.

Today, the square functions as a parking lot but holds an opportunity and collective civic desire to become something else. The place is interesting from a cultural heritage perspective as well as from an urban perspective and it has played an important role in the city's history in terms of civic and democracy issues. The historical imprints are manifested in the varied architecture that surrounds the square and which, with its legible facades, speaks of previous building eras.

Today, in the beginning of 2021, the City Planning Office has begun to work on a new detailed development plan for Skanstorget. It is a debated issue with municipal politicians' ideas about exploitation on the one hand and the citizens' desire to preserve the square as a public place on the other.

## Yesterday

### 1600 –1700 Pastures alongside fortification

Skanstorget, in comparison with other squares in Gothenburg, is relatively young by its name, but as a physical place, it is one of the oldest in the city.

Gothenburg was founded in 1621 and the city was built on the inside of moats and thick stone walls. Outside the walls, the protection against the enemy was supplemented with fortifications and one of them was Skansen Kronan, built between the period 1687–1700.

In the 1820's, the building was disarmed to later be used both as a prison and emergency housing for homeless people in Gothenburg. The maintenance of the fort was neglected, but at the end of the century Skansberget had become a meeting place for the people of Haga and a place where children played (Stadsbyggnadskontoret [SBK], 2020).

The city district Haga was Gothenburg's first suburb and was first established in 1648 for those who had a long way to work inside the city walls. Queen Kristina gave her approval on the condition that the buildings would be low

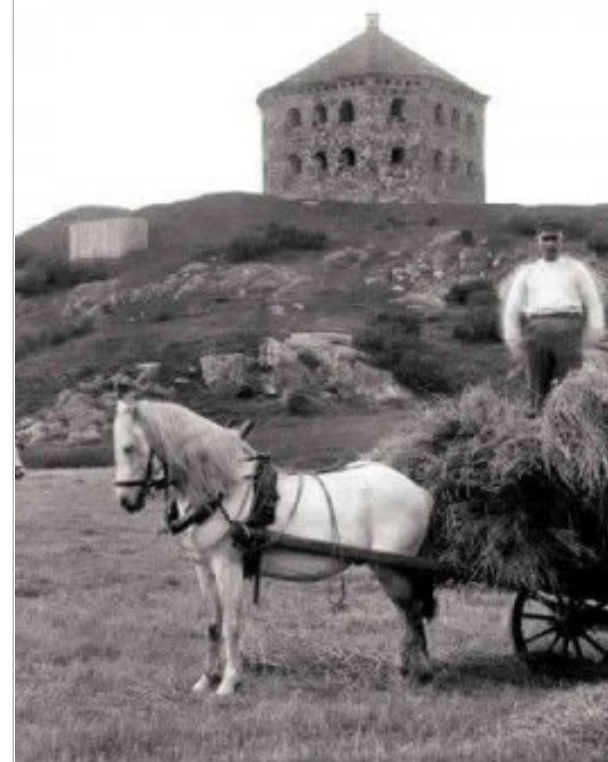


Figure 6

so as not to obscure the view from Skansen Kronan and could easily be demolished in the event of an invasion by the enemy (SBK, 2020). This meant that the houses built in the 17th century were of a temporary nature and therefore left no traces to our days.

Below Skansberget, on the field called Kommendantsängen, the border between town and countryside ran and the open space would remain for a few hundred more years to come. The land was owned by the crown, who leased it

to wealthy men in Gothenburg for agriculture (SBK, 2020).

### 1800 – 1900 Skanstorget is created and the city grows

The uses of the site have changed over the years from meadows and pasture land for cultivation in the 18th century to later be used as a cemetery in the early 19th century.

In the middle of the 19th century, gardener Åke Nilsson became the owner of the land around Skansberget. The land was named Nilssons Äng and the hill Spekeberget, east of our site, was renamed after him as well and became Nilssonsberg. Until the 1880's Nilsson's garden occupied a large area of the site (Peter, 2020).

As early as the beginning of the 19th century, the city walls around Gothenburg were demolished and the city began to expand and Haga was joined by districts such as Vasastaden and Majorna. The city's expansion led to increased pressure on Nilssons Äng, which eventually was divided in the middle with the laying of Övre Husargatan. Soon Nilssonsberg was also leased for development (Gillberg. 2012).

In 1885, the city bought Nilsson's property and three years later the open area to the southeast was

# Site



established as Skanstorget. The current city plan resulted in the first stone houses being built on what had been the commander's field which gave name to today's city block 'Kommendantsängen'. In this way, Skanstorget's boundaries to the south began to be defined (SBK, 2020).

The place below Skansberget functioned as a public marketplace from the very beginning of when Haga was founded. Soon after Skanstorget was established as a city square, a market hall was built which was popularly called 'Spottkoppen'. The new building, a circular hall with arcades, was inaugurated in 1889 and housed 23 shops and 24 basements. At the time there was a market every day of the week with the exception of Sundays. In time, the commerce gradually decreased and marketplaces such as Grönsakstorget and Kungstorget adopted the customers. In 1941, the market hall was demolished, but even until the 1990's, you could still buy socks and vegetables at the market on Saturdays (Gillberg, 2012).

Bertil Thorsson, who lived in Haga his whole life, told in the movie *Haga – Stadsdel i förvandling* (1986) how his mother would dress down to do her errands to Skanstorget.

»We had everything on Skanstorget. On Saturdays, my mother used to dress a little nicer and then we went down to Feskekôrka. We took 'Kalles Ferry' and then we bought a fish there and went up Skolgatan and home. And when we got home, she took off her coat and hat and put on a shawl and went up to Skanstorget to shop... (Kristensson & Hansson, 1986, Author's translation).

### 1900 – 1960 Skanstorget and its Role as a Political Venue

There was a rapid population growth during the 19th century, mainly due to industrialization, which led to an urbanization where workers sought housing in the city. New districts for workers emerged, such as Annedal in the year of 1872 and Landala a few years later in 1883. Haga's population grew from about three thousand in the 1850's to fourteen thousand in only fifty years.

In Haga, the inhabitants lived under poor conditions with overcrowding and with bad sanitary conditions. Diseases such as cholera and tuberculosis ravaged freely, and infant mortality was high. A twelve hour workday was everyday life (Hasselgren, 2019).



Figure 7

Located between the working-class districts of Haga and Annedal, Skanstorget had a strong connection to the labour movement, which grew around the middle of the 19th century.

The emergence of liberal ideas and the industrialization demanded greater freedom, mainly for bourgeois people. At the same time, it led to increased dissatisfaction among the workers and in 1890 the statutes of the Gothenburg Workers' Municipality (local Social Democrats) were formed. The same year a women's association was formed that demanded the same salary as men (Hasselgren, 2019).

The new associations needed a meeting place and bought a property at Skanstorget on what was then Bergsgatan 24 in 1899. It became Gothenburg's first People's House. The property consisted of two floors, with apartments and premises. It was renovated to make room for a café, a larger assembly hall and for the newspaper editorial office *Ny Tid*. With the growing number

of members, it was quickly decided that the premises would be too small and in 1907 they moved into the newly built premises at Järntorget (Hasselgren, 2019).

Skanstorget acted as a place for large assemblies where the labour movement shared space with the sobriety movement and the Salvation Army. When the market hall was demolished, the foundations for it were left to be used as a lectern until the 1940's and 1950's (SBK, 2020).

»The song rolls thunderously across the square and the union orchestra's instruments support with clattering brass and beating drums. Blood-red flags waved in the wind on either side of the food market's staircase, on which a speaker took a post, throwing out his rebellious sentences. It was a Monday night. (Gillberg, 2012, pp. 15, Author's translation).





Figure 8

### 1960 – 2010 Demolition and Cars

Between the 1960's and 1980's, large parts of the buildings in Haga were demolished as part of the major urban redevelopment plans that took place in several cities in Sweden. To protect against the demolition, Haga Group was founded in 1970 and their work to preserve the original architecture resulted in several houses being saved, including the wooden houses on the north side of Skanstorget. And once again Skanstorget became an important venue for the act of democracy.

East of Skanstorget, almost the entire old working-class district of Annedal was demolished during the 1970's and replaced by the new Nilssonsberg. As in many other places, the development of motoring required more parking spaces, and the cars gradually took over the area of Skanstorget. In the 1960's, a small circular park was laid out in the middle of the square. The shape of the circle was a way to link back to the old market hall (SBK, 2020).

After the introduction of the parking spaces in the 60's, not much changed on Skanstorget. One comment on what could be found on the site was:

»Today you can see a nice but oh so desolated little

green patch with a sandbox in the middle of the square. The market trade manages from time to time to grab some parking spaces for its stalls. But it could be better. (Gillberg. 2012, pp. 17, Author's translation).

In the early 1980's, there was a small Shell gas station in the square where the young boys used to pump their footballs. (Jörnmark, 2010)

Today's debate about Skanstorget is similar to the one from the 1970's. The sandbox and gas station are gone but the cars and the round public lawn remain. Small, less successful, efforts have been made to attract residents over the years. Jan Jörnmark (2010) writes in a gloomy column that today it is a toilet with a nice view for the city's dogs. He also recalls that around the year 2000 there was a halfpipe on the lawn, but the noise and motion it generated led to complaints from the residents around the square and the disturbing skate facility had to be removed.

### Tomorrow

There seems to be a collective agreement that Skanstorget is in need of change. But the question is how the city plan should be



further developed and who should be responsible for deciding its future. Politicians, experts such as architects and city planners or the citizens of Gothenburg? Can, or should, Skanstorget regain its role as a pronounced public space, or should the square be developed to emphasize the link between Haga and Annedal?

In 2009, the Building Committee commissioned the City Planning Office to establish a program for Skanstorget with the aim of studying how a supplement with housing and commercial establishments can be carried out to contribute to a lively square (SBK, 2020).

In 2018, the Property Management

Committee wanted to sell Skanstorget to build homes. But this was something that went against the City Planning Office's program from 2014 (Göteborgs stad, 2014). The Property Management Department announced a land allocation competition and the citizens of Gothenburg were allowed to vote on three selected proposals (SBK, 2020), all of which consisted of closed residential blocks with activities at street level. However, there was no opportunity to vote to preserve the square as a public place.

The proposals meant that the square as a public place would be transformed into private land. Mattsson (2020) calls the vote 'sham democracy'. In November 2018,



Figure 9



Figure 10

the proposal 'Haga hjärta Linné', designed by the architect office Okidoki, won the public vote (SBK, 2020).

At the end of 2020, the City Planning Office began to work on a detailed plan but has not processed the submitted proposal. The City Planning office says not to take position to the plan proposal. However, Skanstorgsgruppen with Caldenby and Mattsson (2020) claims that the municipal administration is against the proposal.

According to the City Planning Office's evaluation, the plan proposal has a negative impact on national interest with regards to both cultural-historical and spatial qualities (SBK, 2020).

For those seeking maximum profit, Werner (2020) explains, the democratic square is an obstacle, which means that democratic urban planning must be aware that it is threatened. It is in the voids that people become citizens.





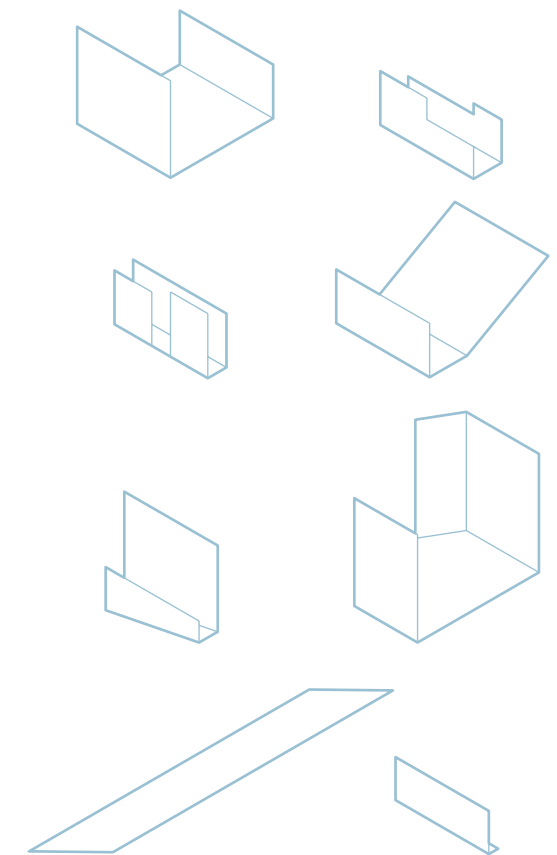
# Landscape and void

## Mapping

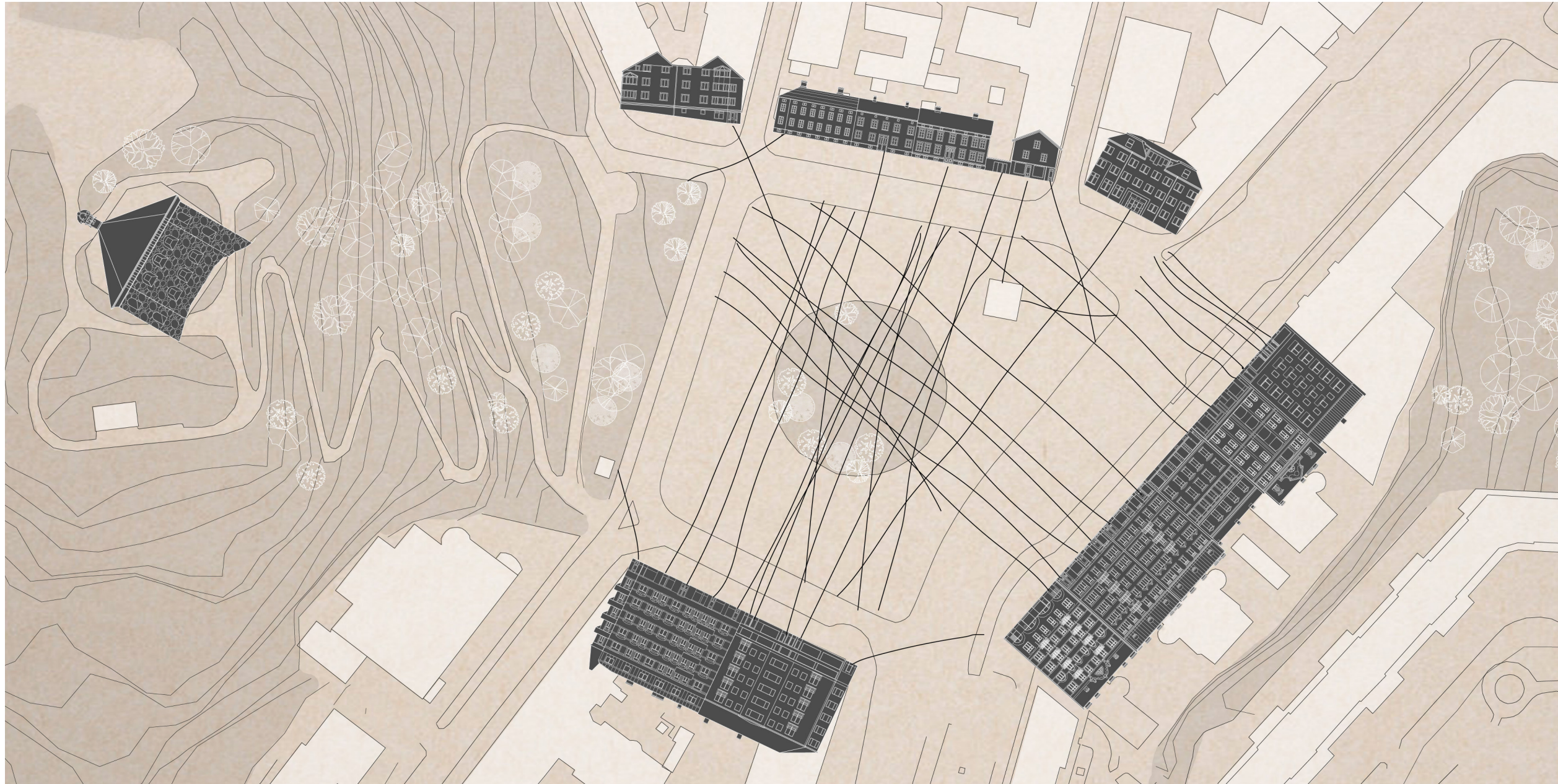
Wandering a landscape and entering a site from different entrances gives multiple experiences of the place. In addition to learning about the site by foot we made a site model in scale 1:500. The model is a simplification of the site which gives a clearer and neater appreciation of how the composition of building volumes, hills and voids come together. Given the fact that a model can work as a precise representation, the making of a model is in itself an exploration of the site.

We continued using our site model as a tool for mapping the different entrances of Skanstorget, using papers and scissors to create sketch models. To continue the exploration of the entrances we modelled them in 3D and after being analysed they became part of the archive.

To broaden our appreciation of the site we created a situation plan which showcases both the details of the surrounding houses and the shape of the square. Using this, we continued to explore the entrances from the buildings to the square by drawing lines that highlight their directions and connections. A pattern emerged that shows the building entrances' intersections instead of the usually drawn relationships between streets and paths.





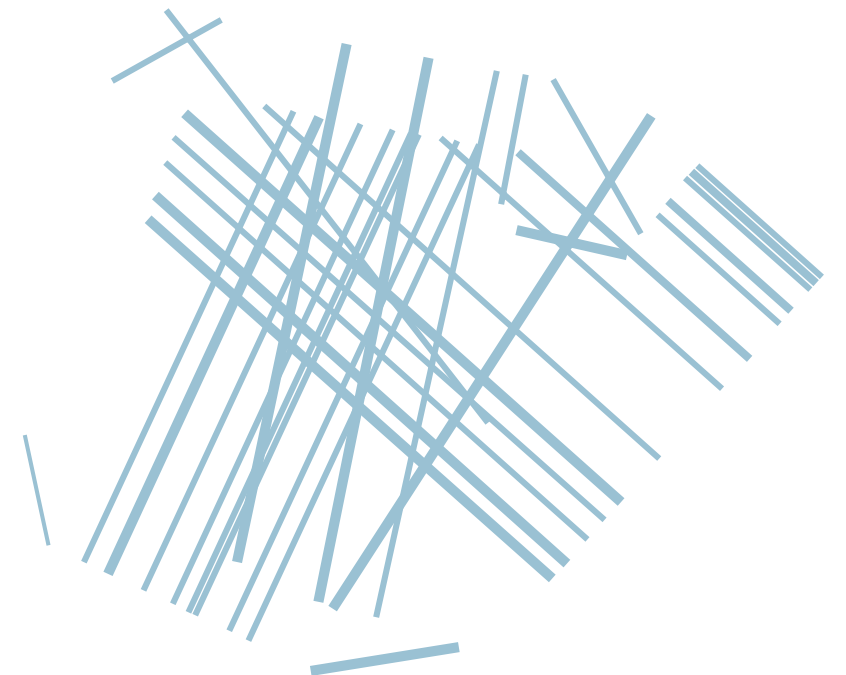


▲ Situation plan of Skanstorget showing the mapping of building entrances, scale 1:1000  
Pattern from entrance directions ►

### Analysis through Visual Guide

When looking at the sketch models disconnected from its original source it is nearly impossible to know what they represent. That makes it easier to imagine new purposes and functions. The fact that the model pieces are all made in the same material and colour makes them appear even more neutral. The sketch models hold different spatial qualities because of their different configurations and different degrees of openness. Combined they could make out an entire floor plan with different functions.

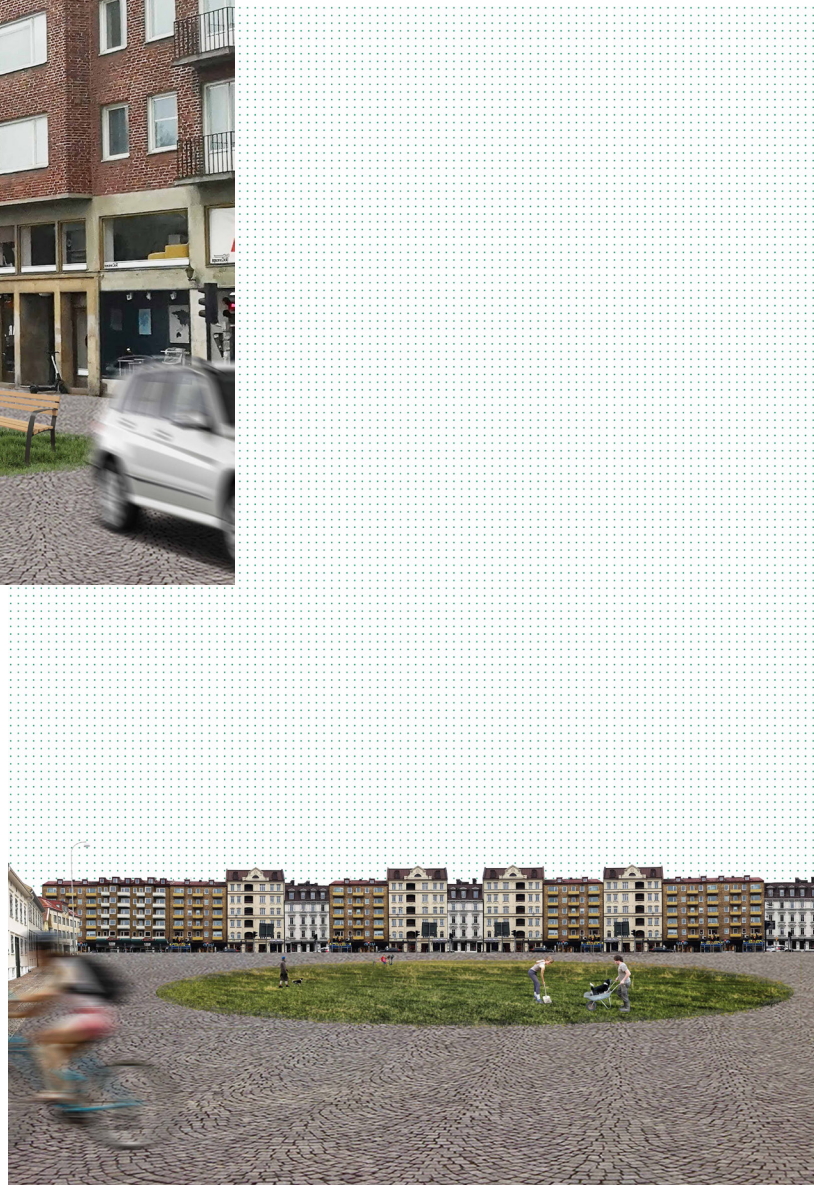
When adding knowledge of the sketch models originating from Skanstorget we can make out the different heights and widths as representations of different city planning ideals from throughout history.







◀ Skanstorget as a petite square  
▼ Skanstorget as a grand square



## Mapping

Usually, one finds out the size of a site by using metric measurement or by making comparisons to other surfaces such as football field sizes. We wanted to investigate the scale by using other comparisons to see if that could tell us something different about the space. We decided on using statues.

To connect Skanstorget to the city, we chose some of Gothenburg's famous statues to use as measurements. We made two mappings using both big and small statues to test the size of the square. To further understand the scale, we made collages showing how this could be experienced walking around the site.

Images impact how we see the world and we wanted to question what we see as a big or a small space. Therefore, we manipulated images to picture Skanstorget as a grand square and as a petite square.

## Analysis through Visual Guide

Looking at our collages we realized we had become manipulated by our own images. As an example, we see the square as static as a result of the statues being implemented in the image. Also, we question our initial experience on site regarding the size after we have been exposed

to the images displaying the variations of the possible scale of the square. If only the images were to remain through time, we believe that the knowledge about the actual size would be lost.

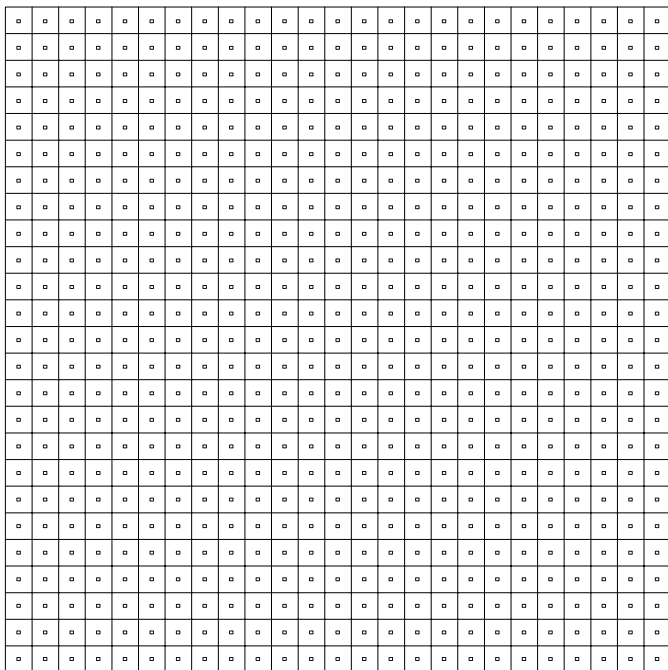
By studying the images and their compositions we could make out a few different principles. One of these principles consists of the layout creating broken lines of sight. Some of the principles made their way into the archive.

We perceive a symbolism in the statues as human representations. They sprung from royalty and power, yet in this constellation they are played down by their numbers. It is apparent that the experience of power depends on the sizes of the statues. We did get the feeling of community and it awakened curiosity for the people of history.

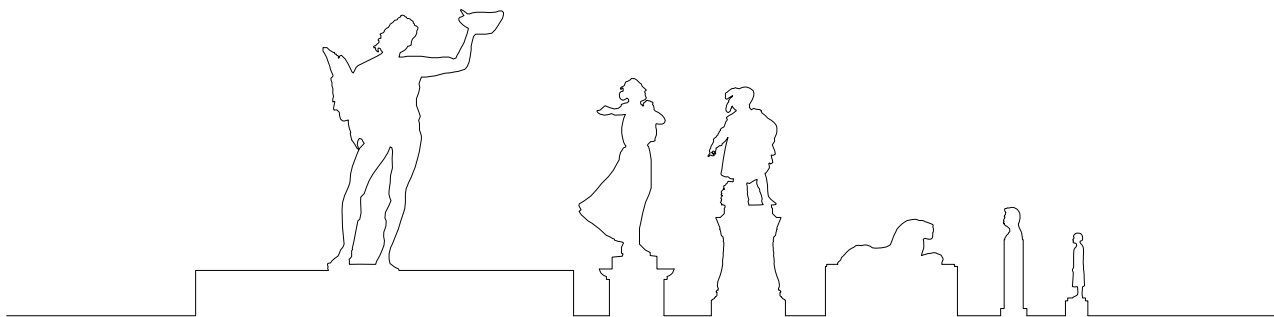
While analysing both sets of images we became influenced by the interpretations and emotions we could make out, which sparked a lot of questions and reasoning of how we feel when entering different spaces. When do we feel included? What do we read as public or private? Where lies the difference in size for when you perceive the square as more of a destination than as your local square where you feel at home? What size would be perfect to make everyone feel welcomed and engaged?

# Scale



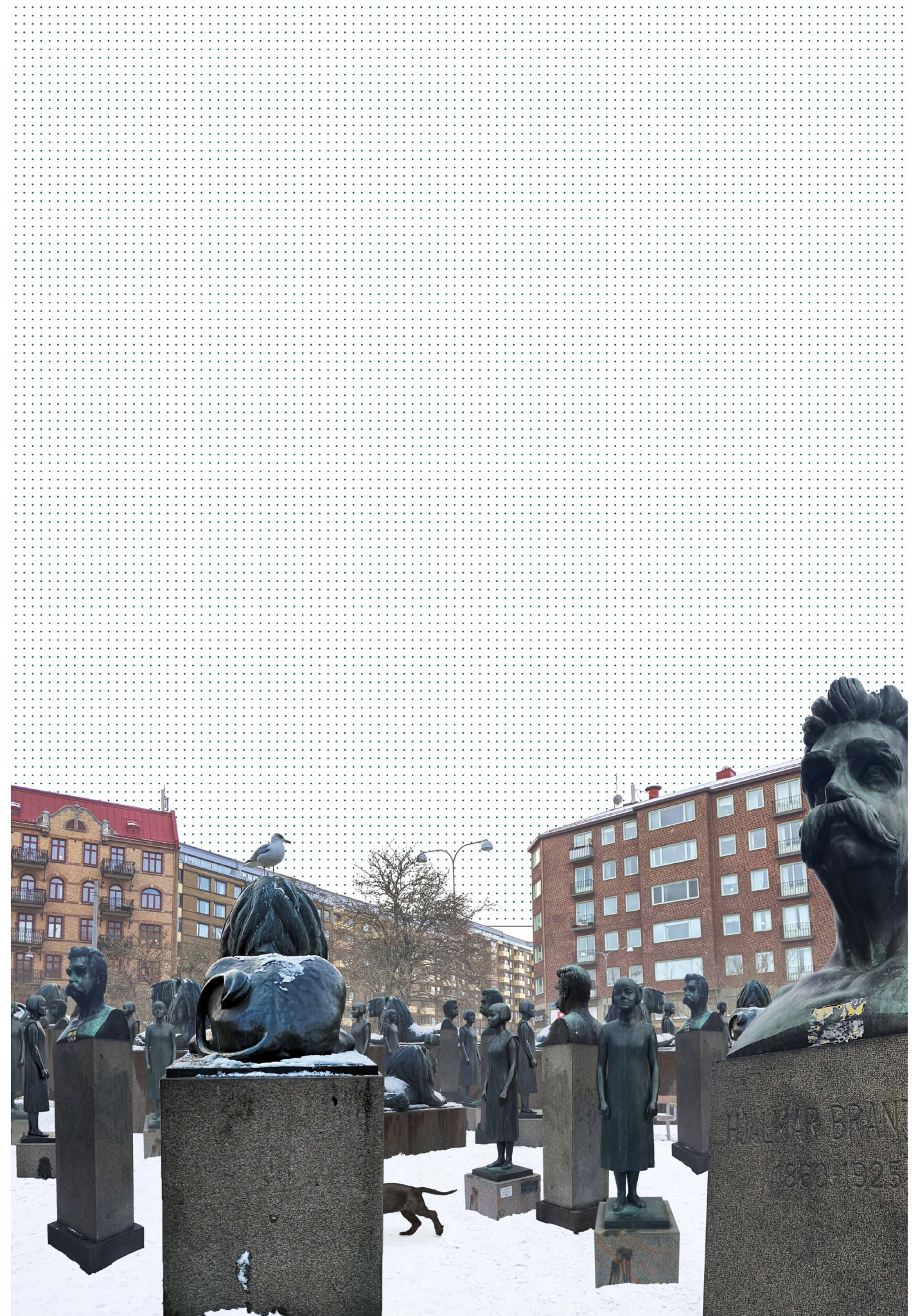


▲ Statue Karin Boye, 625 pieces, 1:4000

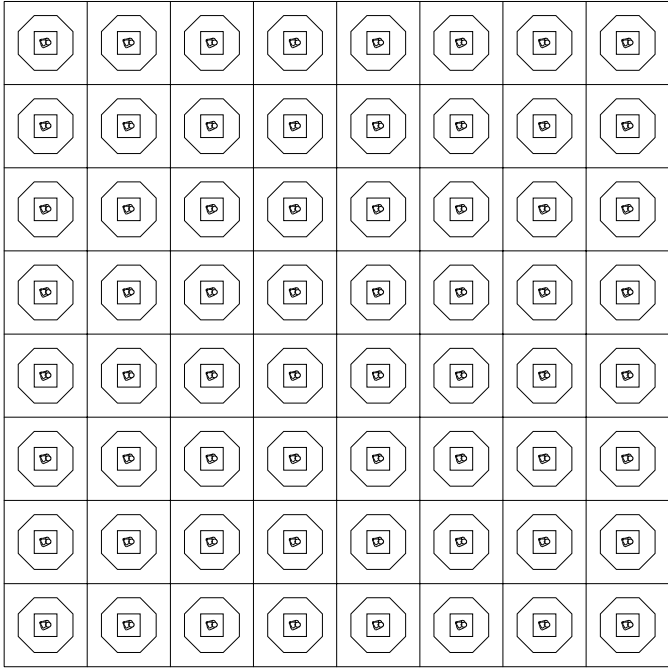


▲ Statue Silhouettes, 1:200

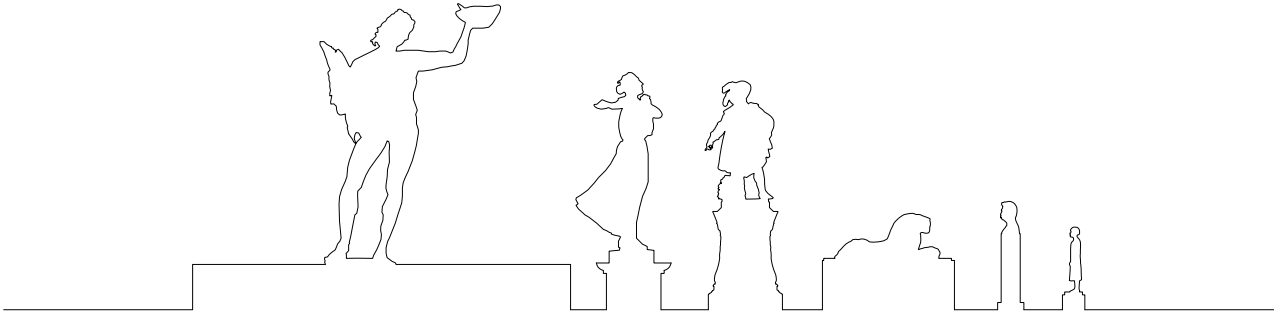
Statues covering Skanstorget, view to south ▶







▲ Statue Sjömanshustrun, 64 pieces, 1:4000



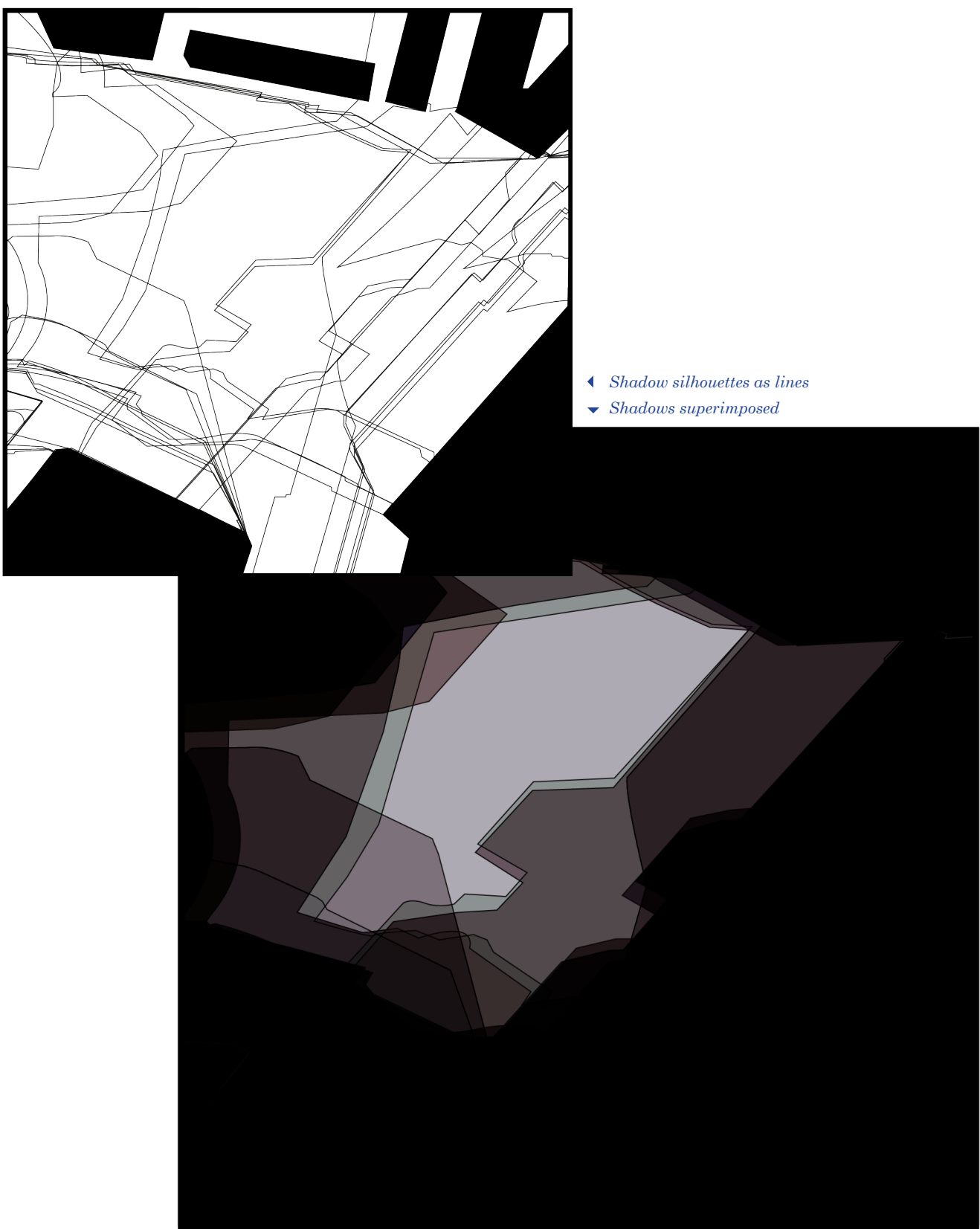
▲ Statue Silhouettes, 1:200

Statues covering Skanstorget, view to north ▶





# Shadows



## Mapping

Instead of the traditional sun analysis, often used in regular site surveys, we have mapped the shadows on the site. To be able to generate the shadows we created a 3D-model and simulated the movement of the sun. The silhouettes of the shadows were collected from different times a day, every month of the year. By tracing the shadows edges we got a jumble of lines and faces to work with.

## Analysis through Visual Guide

The vast amount of shadow surfaces facilitate many different categorizations which enabled us to explore them using different systems. One of the patterns was created with the delimitation of only filling surfaces that connect, but do not touch each other. A guiding system that limits choices can support creativity.

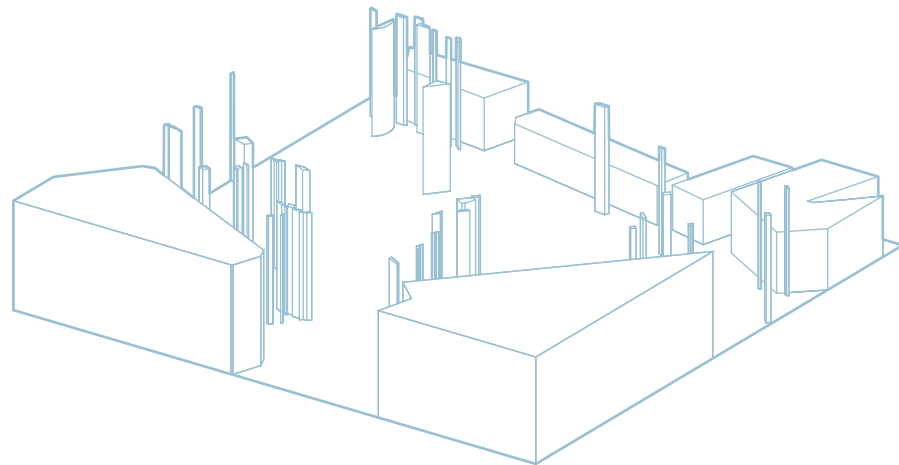
Tracing has in this case led to some intersections being explored in new perspectives and by that creating new spaces and dimensions. An imagined view of this landscape triggered us to make up a scene, especially when objects like people were added to the image.

By tracing a second time around, we evolved the hard lines into soft ones.

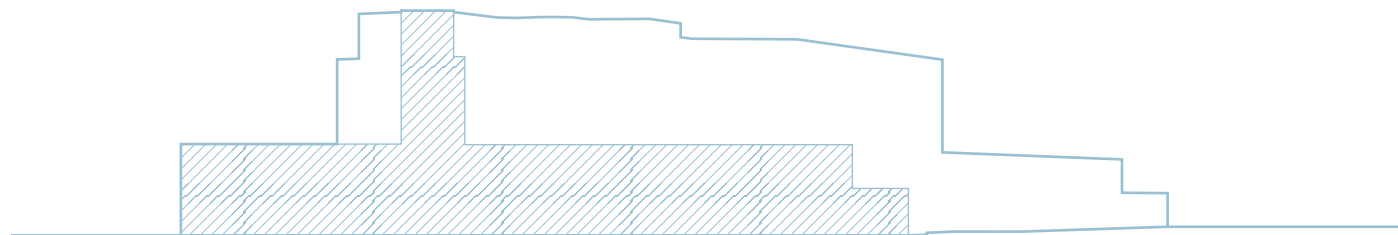
This changed the design language of the shapes, making it something completely different than its origin.

When the shadows were converted into volumes it created something we read as new topography or buildings. It is intriguing to see the original shadows casting new ones. What would happen if the new shadows generated shadows of their own? Could this go on forever?

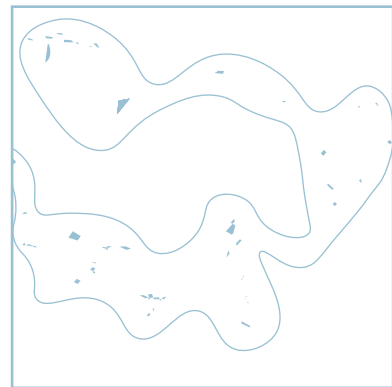
The images make us question what kind of shadows are wanted? Their values go beyond protecting us from the sun; the phenomenon can create aesthetic experiences when used as architectural elements.



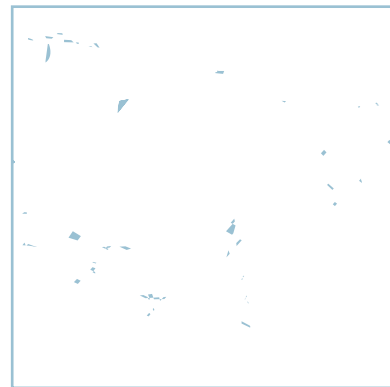
▲ Pillars generated from intersection, on site



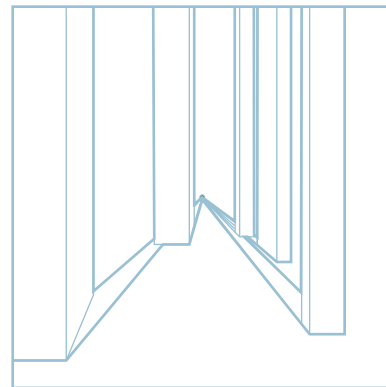
▲ Section of shadows as volumes.



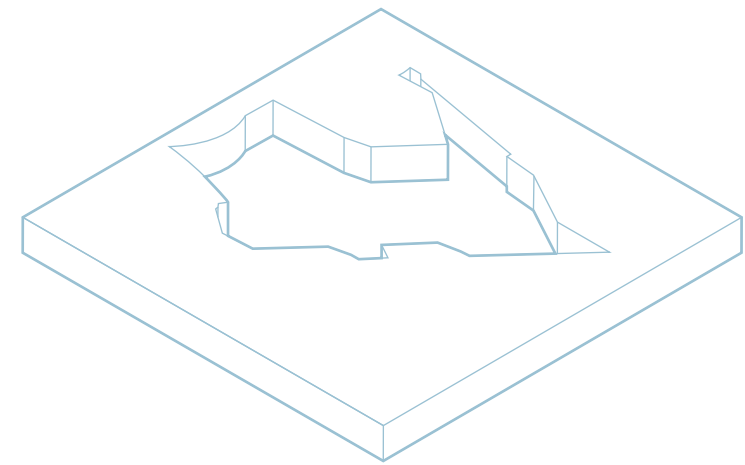
▲ Outlined pillars from intersection



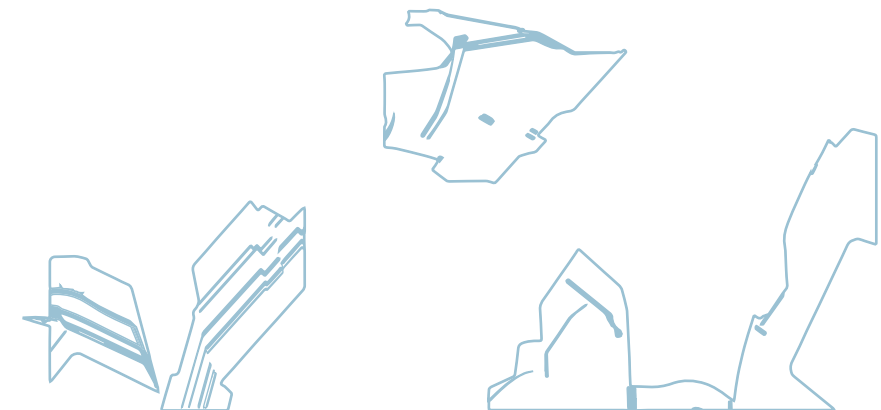
▲ Pillars from intersection



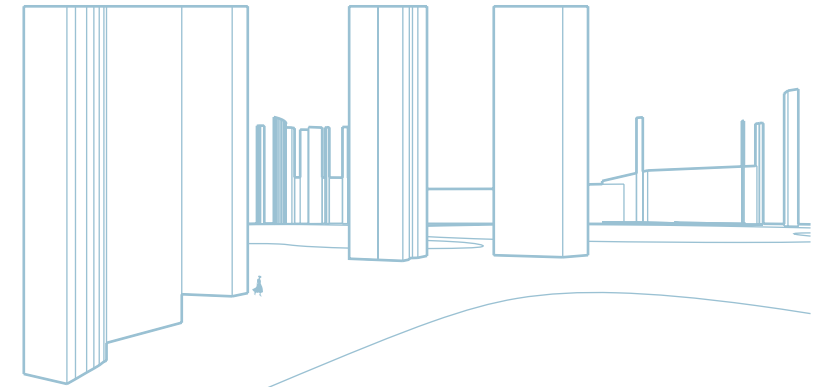
▲ View among pillars from intersection



▲ No shadow in May



▲ Stacked shadows give new shadows.



▲ Landscape of shadow pillars.



▲ Cars mapped on different times and days, later compiled into a moving GIF.

# Cars

## Mapping

Skanstorget is today, more or less, a parking lot. Because cars make out most of what happens on the site, notes of the cars' presence were made. That included where they were parked, which colours they had, if any spots were unoccupied and if any cars were parked outside the designated area for parking. Cars come in all shapes and colours, however most cars share similar hues. Therefore, colour categories were made to make out the most common colours and sorted the cars accordingly. The cars' shapes were ignored and rectangles representing the stall were used instead. The layout of the square was simplified to enhance the parking lots organisation. The digital outcomes were compiled into two moving gifs.

## Analysis through Visual Guide

When analysing the moving digital outcome of the mapping, one must note that the name of the images work as a big clue to what the images represent. Without the name, the observer might not be able to tell as much from the mapping.

Analysing the moving colour version alongside the moving black version exposed some differences in what they reveal. When decreasing the

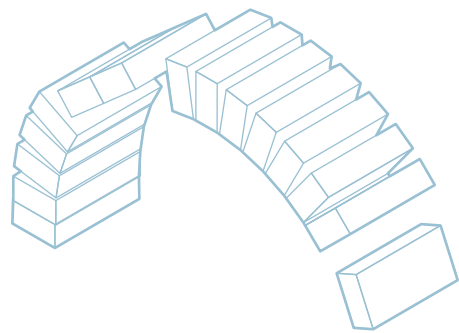
amount of information, by removing the colours, other information is more easily accessible, which is just what makes Nolli maps efficient.

When we observed the images, a feeling of being unsettled appeared. It is as if one waits for the image to stop moving and by that reveal its true self and make out a finished image instead of being divided into some sorts of pixels. By continuously moving, the image holds on to some secrecy.

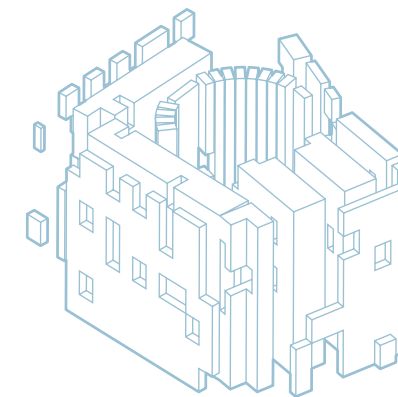
Time has a great impact on the images. If one only knows the site by this image one could get the perception that the place is busier than it in fact is. If the looping was slowed down, this would probably tone down that experience. Also, the colours do enhance the feeling of business while the black version keeps it milder, which one can link back to the black version containing less information at the same rhythm. By observing the image longer, more patterns occur and the different rhythms of the spaces, voids and colours can be made out.

The different squares moving and changing places hints to some sort of flexibility. By that, it inspires one to think about flexible floorplans and module systems. What could be found by exploring the qualities of the shifting?

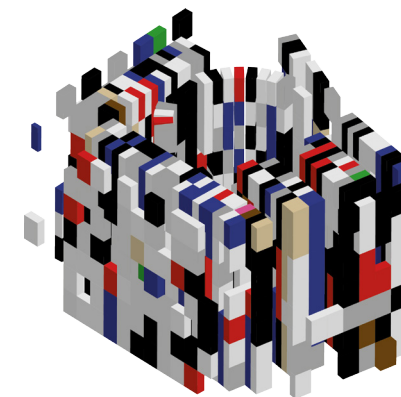




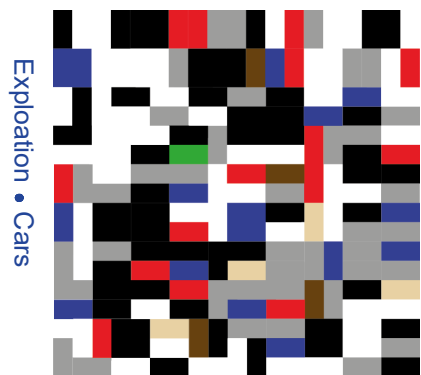
▲ Vaulted parking lots.



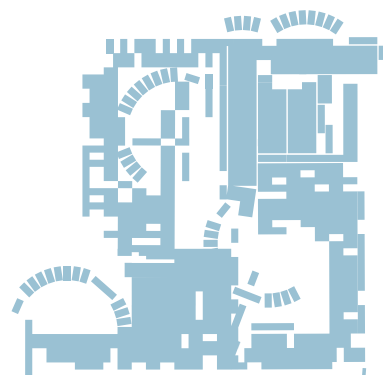
▲ Outline of days stacked



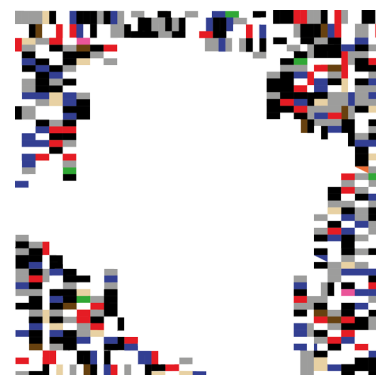
▲ Coloured days stacked.



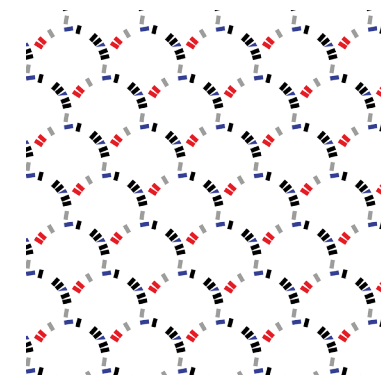
▲ Variation in a Monday.



▲ Pattern of four days



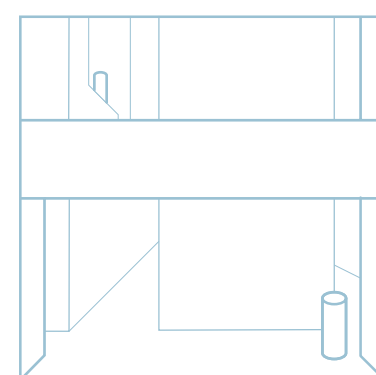
▲ Four days in colour.



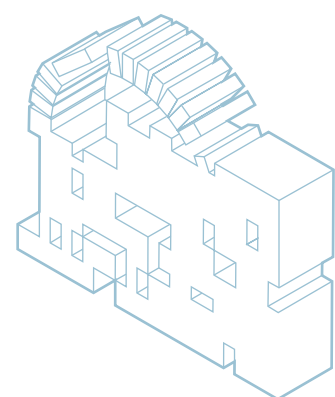
▲ Part of a Wednesday as a pattern.



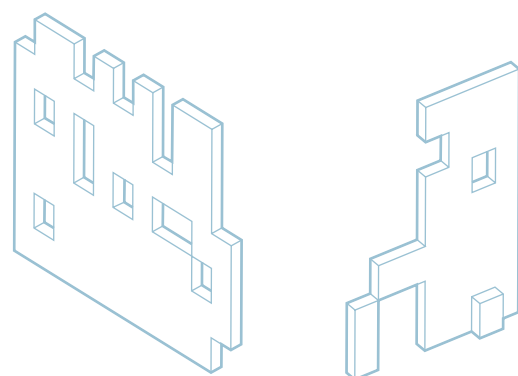
▲ Tuesday morning as a pattern.



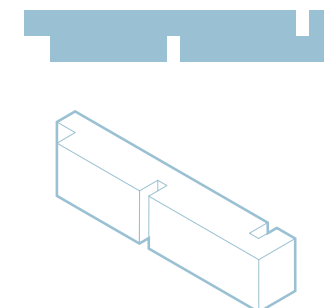
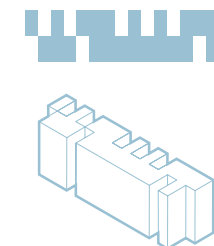
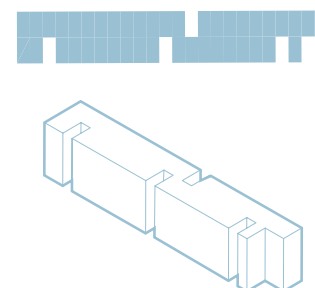
▲ View into days stacked.



▲ Exposed gaps in a remodeled Thursday



▲ Selected elements of days stacked



▲ Puzzle pieces of some days.





# Narrative

## Mapping

Depending on who tells a story, different pieces and perspectives come to light. The usual site survey mainly describes history through text, complemented with some historical photos. We wanted to test how images could work as storytellers and how the site's history over time could be visualized.

After gaining knowledge about the history of Skanstorget we started to categorize the findings into three groups: food, building and women history. As a form of speculative mapping, we made collages containing objects that are freely interpreted to fit the narratives. To emphasize the feeling of storytelling and to separate the objects from the site's physical appearance of today, we used painted landscapes as background to hold the objects.

## Analysis through Visual Guide

Through our analysis of the narrative collages, we were able to make out many different shapes. To fit the archive, we made simpler versions or new interpretations of these shapes.

When looking at the images, especially collages like these, we discovered that the more time

spent to analyse, the more details you start to notice. After spending some time analysing the images, we became aware of the hardship of placing the images themselves in a specific time in history; is it happening in the past, the present or in the future? In some way the historical threads are woven together to tell the tale of tomorrow.

How is it possible that we can get manipulated by the images we created ourselves? We found ourselves adding personal references and by that starting to tell new stories and add meaning to the images. This could be because, the less clear of a message the images display the more you try to fill the voids to make it understandable.



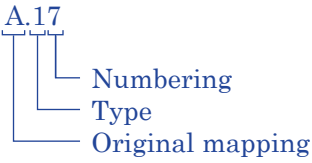


▲ Buildings



▲ Women





Type  
1 *Principle*  
2 *Form*

Original mapping  
A *Landscape and void*  
B *Scale*  
C *Shadows*  
D *Cars*  
E *Narrative*

Archive

Explotion • Archive

Explotion • Archive

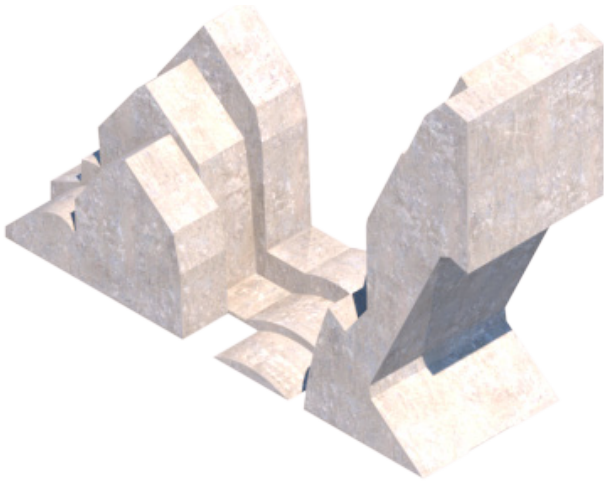
The archive is compiled by selected findings excavated throughout the process of mapping. It consists of both principles and shapes that are neutral in their aesthetics and scale to distinguish them from their origins. The archive serves as an important step to conclude the excavation phase and to start the design process.



E.11



D.21



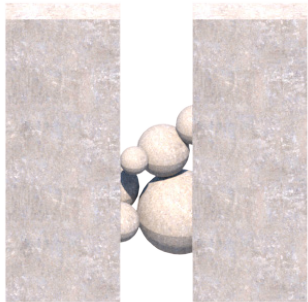
C.21



E.22



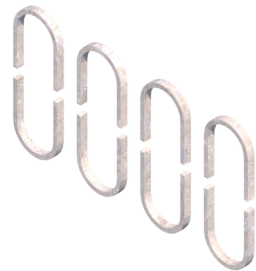
E.12



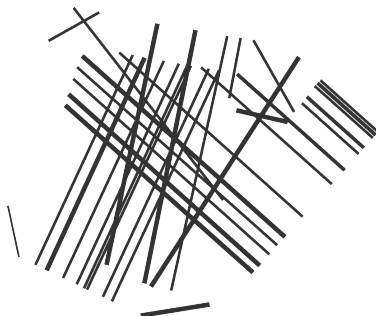
B.11



B.12



E.21



A.24

D.22



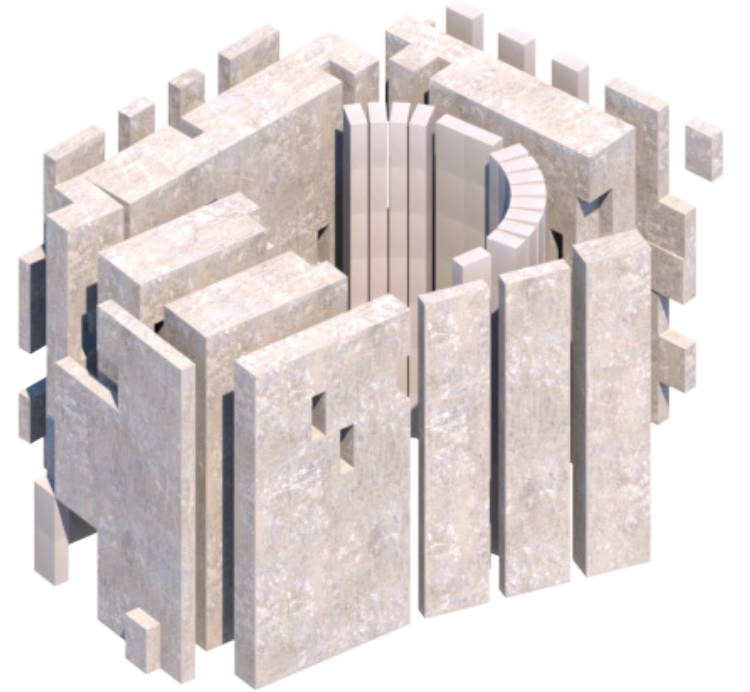
C.22



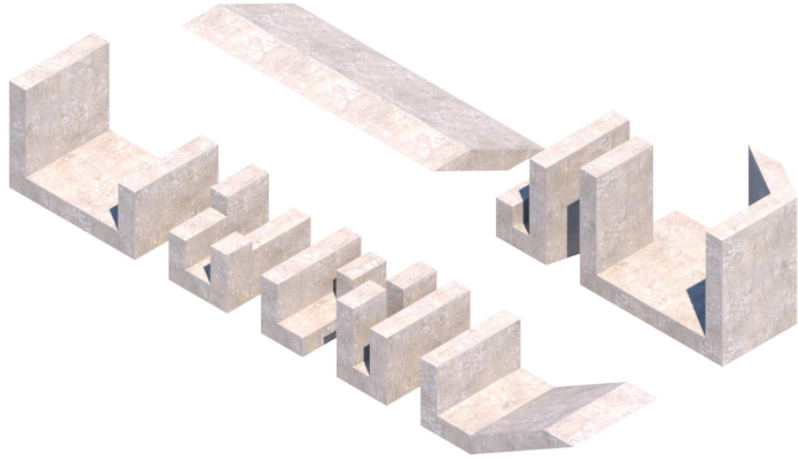
E.23



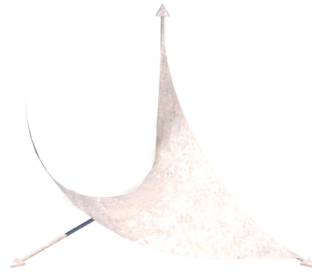
D.23



A.21



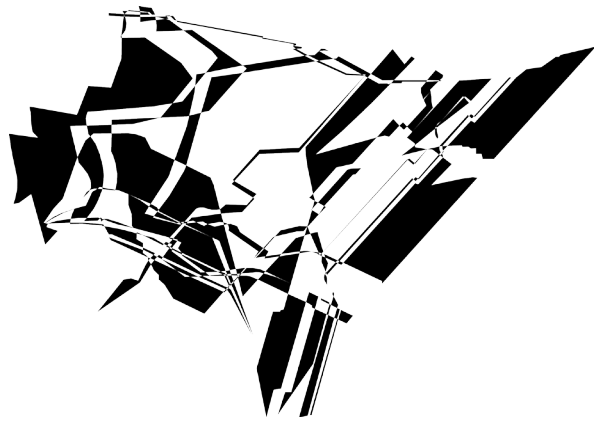
B.13



E.24



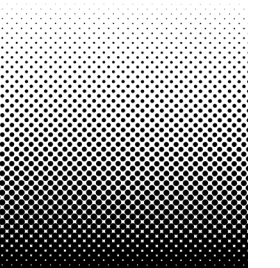
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B.14



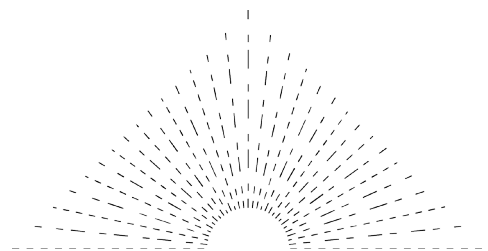
E.13



D.24



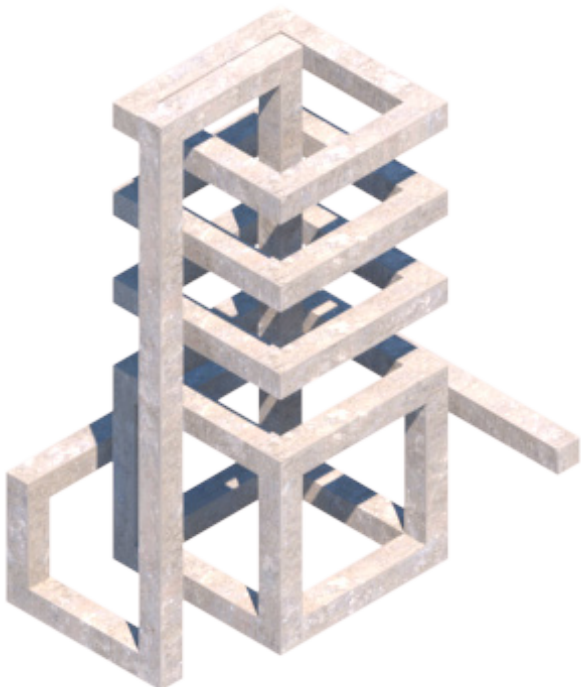




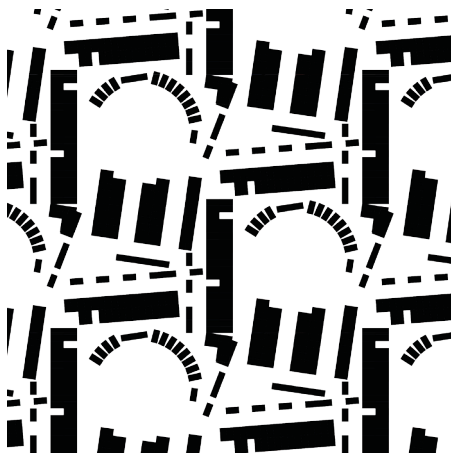
E.14



E.25



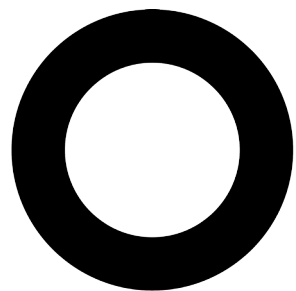
E.26



D.25



E.27



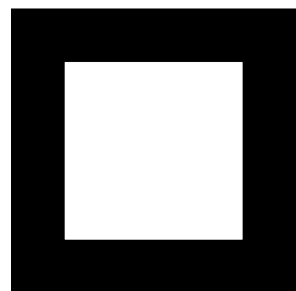
A.22



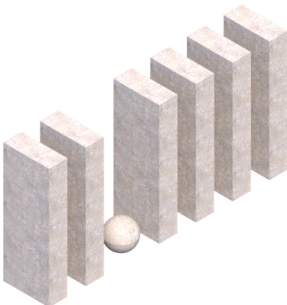
B.15



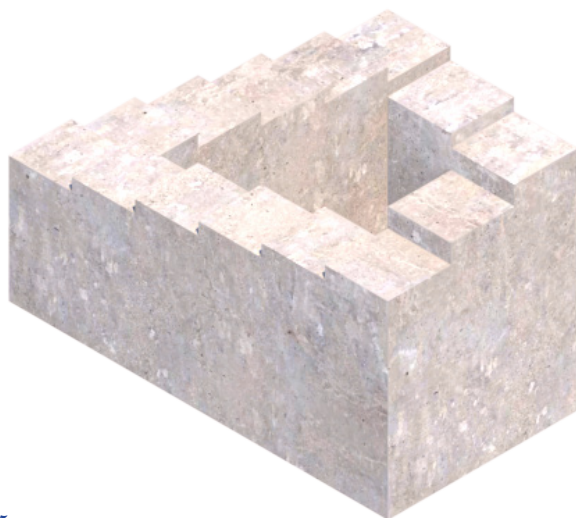
E.28



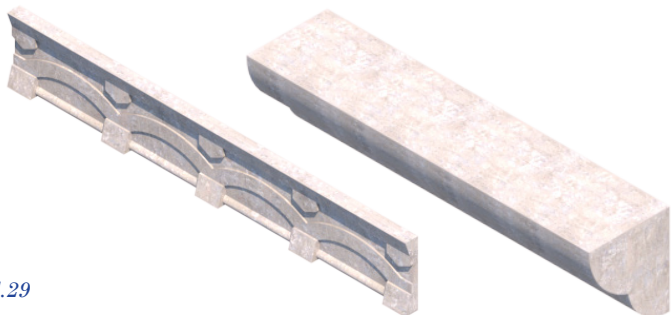
A.23



B.16



E.15



E.29



▲ Visualization that symbolize the core of our process; elements from our time challenge the image of a historical landscape

# Design Studies

As a final test in the Site Searching process the archive is utilized in various design studies that place the findings back on the site. The design studies work as comments, questioning the exploration of the site. They raise questions regarding how big of an impact architecture should make. It also highlights the tension between public and private exploitation as well as if architecture should provoke or resign to its surroundings.

The inventory of the archive has been merged in various combinations and have been adjusted to fit the site. Knowledge from the early investigations has been added to the discussion when choosing functions for the studies. Each design study has been given a short text that further develops the understanding of the study as well as open up for new questions.

When looking at the following design studies we encourage the observer to use the Visual Guide (page 18) to ask questions of what the reality of Skanstorget is and should be.



Imagine a narrative that goes back to days when the site contained a public building for trade – a market hall. A geometric marriage between the square and the circle creates a seemingly reasonable building that hides its tangled contents with sharp contrasts between narrow corridors and sumptuous round rooms.

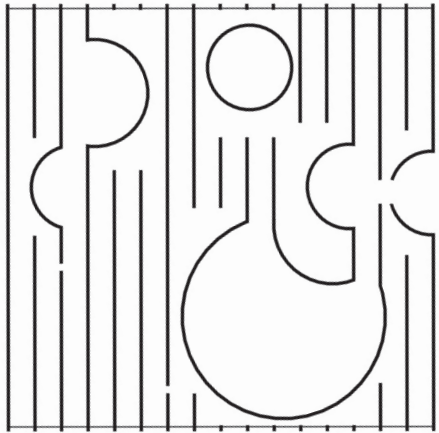
The walls are bare and cold, but its content is the opposite. When wandering between the aisles, you feel the heat from boiling pots,

the scents from the bakeries and charcuteries blending with spices that are reminiscent of places from far away.

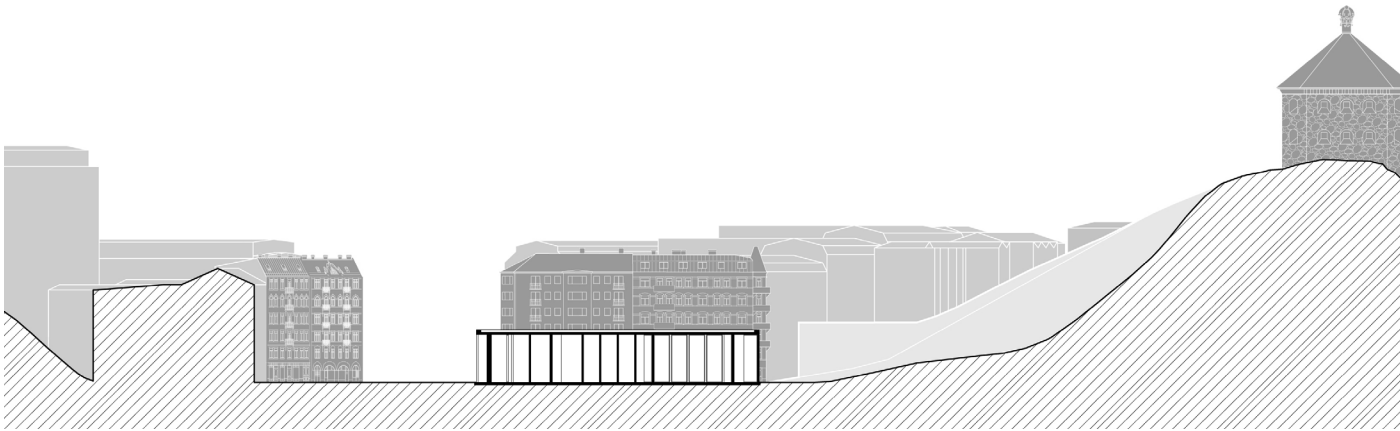
But is there a need for another marketplace in the city? Or is the dream of reviving Skanstorget to its glory days only a vain nostalgia? Maybe the illogical configuration of the space goes against using it as a market hall. Perhaps the odd design is what makes it interesting enough to stand out among other public buildings.



▲ Perspective of the building's corner



◀ Plan, 1:1000  
▼ Areal view from north-east



▲ Section, 1:1500

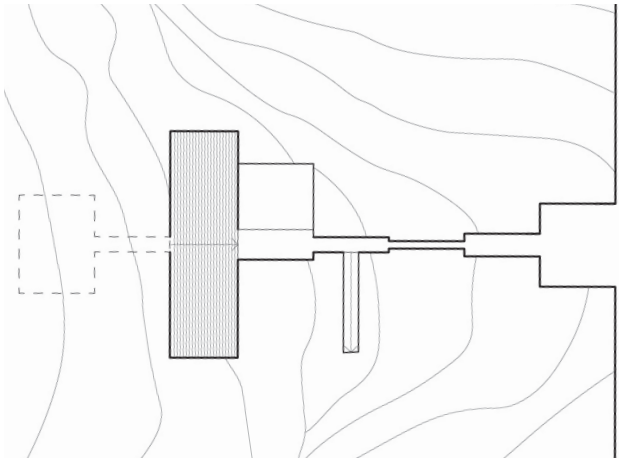


The mountain is part of the square. Yet, is the square part of the mountain? Suppose that bits of the mountain with its greenery erupts like a liquid mass over the square. It is a major intervention. How can architecture be flexible to work sustainably over time and in collaboration with nature? Who should control the ground, man or nature?

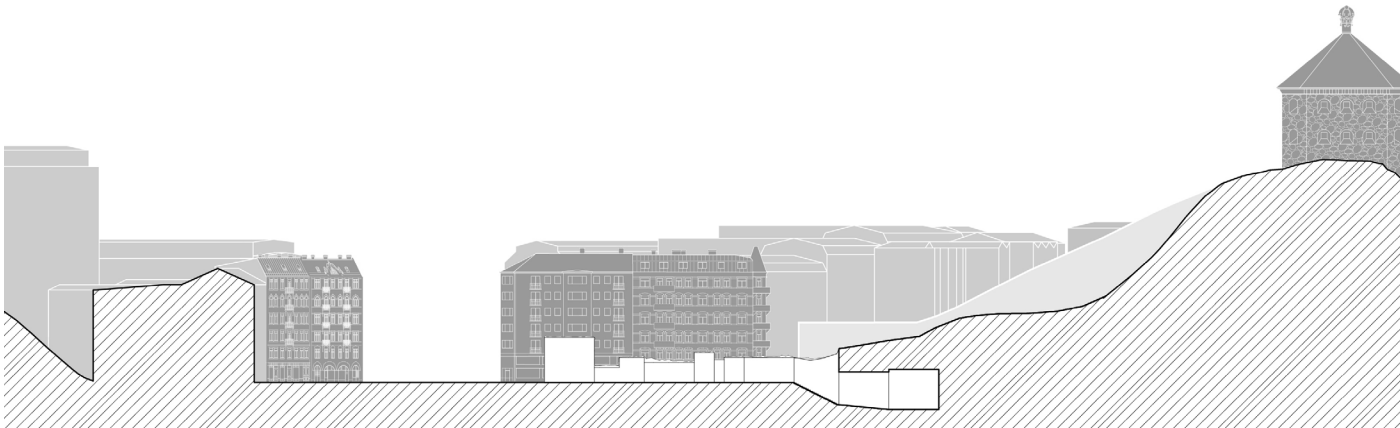
In this scenario, architecture illuminates the mountain and its massiveness by creating a long and reverent entrance into its darkness. A mountain room at the far end acts as a gallery for temporary exhibitions.



▲ Perspective from entrance



◀ Plan, 1:1000  
▼ Areal view from north-east



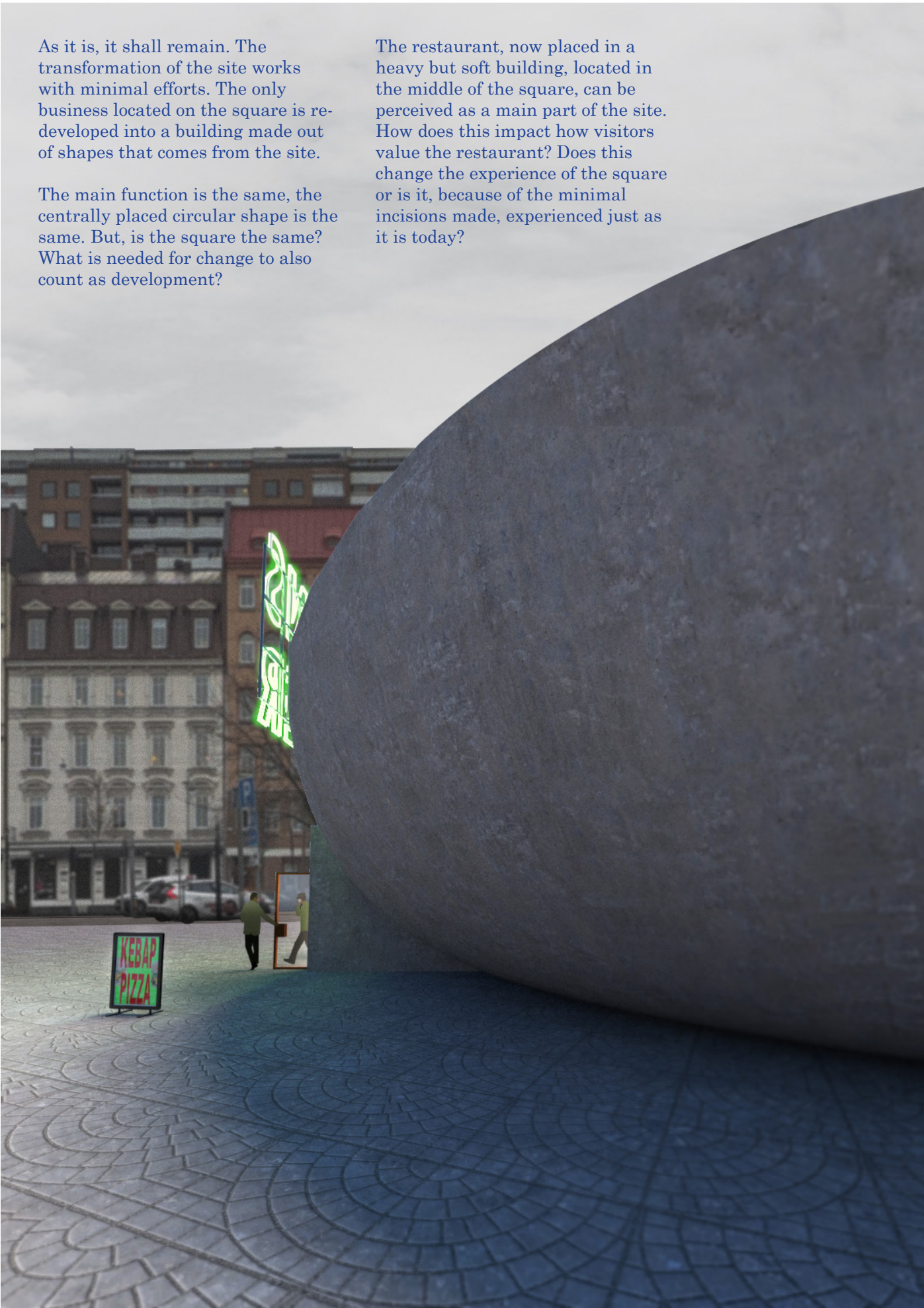
▲ Section, 1:1500



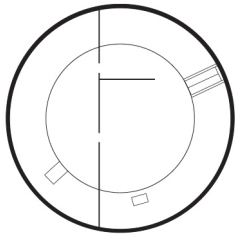
As it is, it shall remain. The transformation of the site works with minimal efforts. The only business located on the square is re-developed into a building made out of shapes that comes from the site.

The main function is the same, the centrally placed circular shape is the same. But, is the square the same? What is needed for change to also count as development?

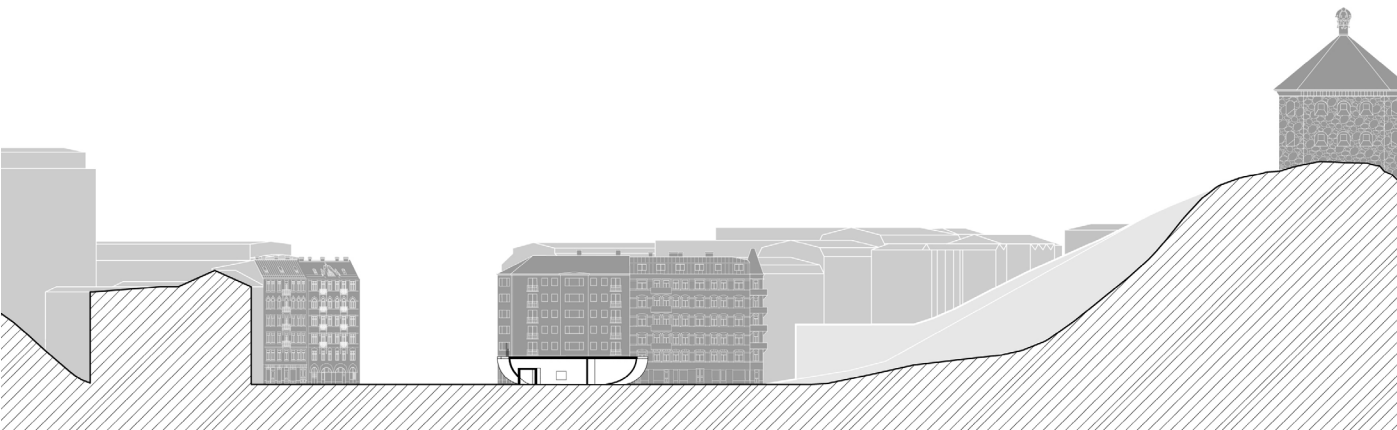
The restaurant, now placed in a heavy but soft building, located in the middle of the square, can be perceived as a main part of the site. How does this impact how visitors value the restaurant? Does this change the experience of the square or is it, because of the minimal incisions made, experienced just as it is today?



▲ Perspective when approaching the building



▲ Plan, 1:1000  
▼ Areal view from north-east



▲ Section, 1:1500

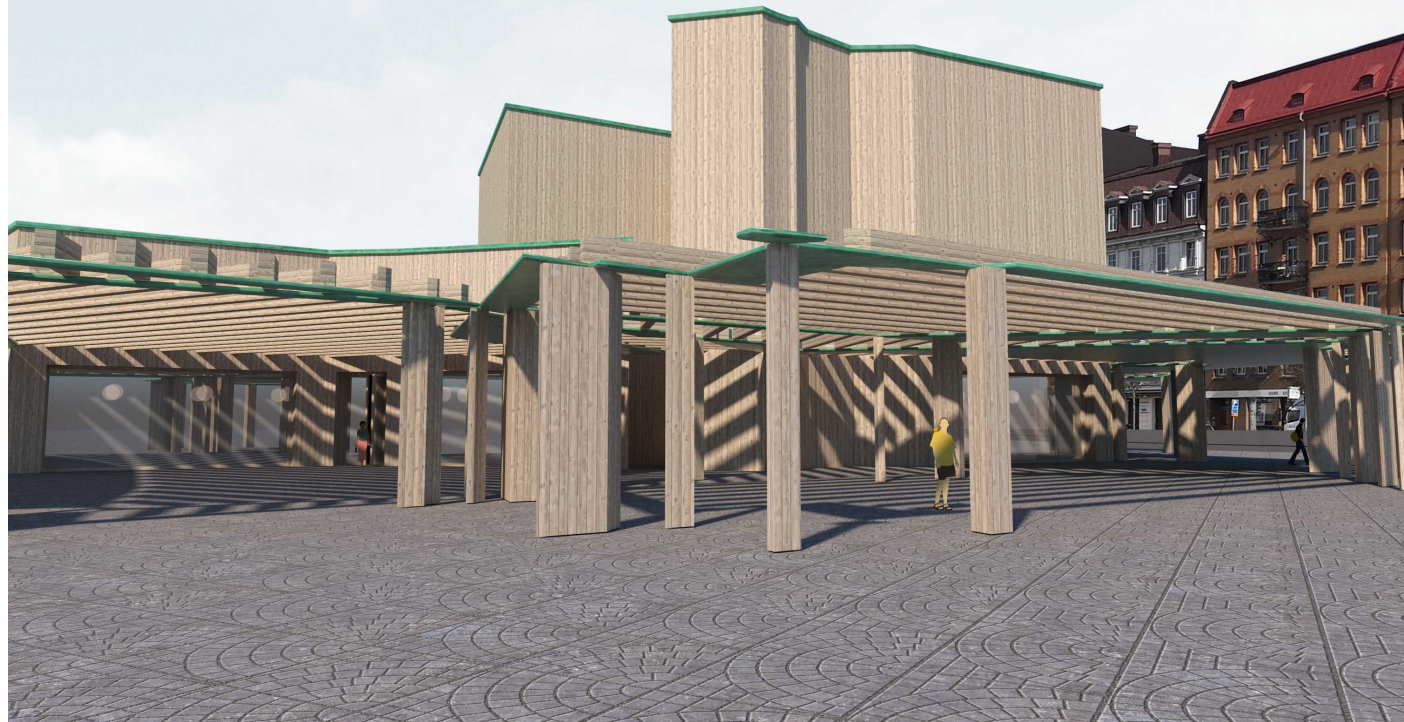


This building derives from time and notions-of-shadows. A meta transformation occurs when the notions turn into masses and in turn creates new shadows that play on the ground.

The design is directly derived from the site. However, does it fit in? What does it mean for architecture to belong to a site? Should the design and its origin be explained for the visitors to understand its purpose? A bond between architects

and users might form when the visitors are trusted to make out their own understanding of the architecture.

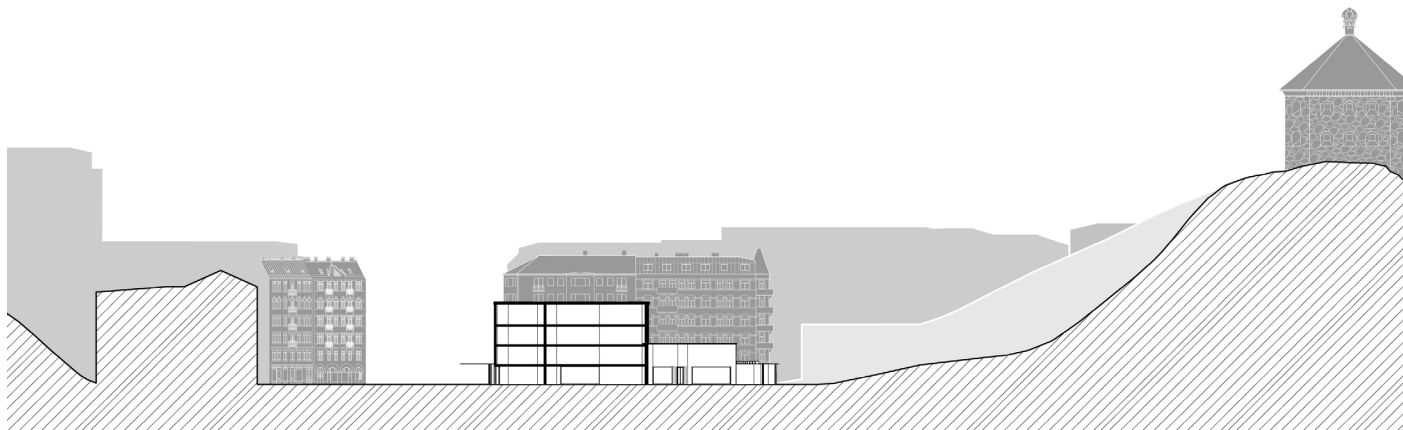
Once upon a time, Gothenburg's first People's House, was once located on Skanstorget. Maybe this building could recreate the solidarity scene that can host activities and work as a foundation for people in the city to come together.



▲ Perspective in under the pergolas



◀ Plan, 1:1000  
▼ Areal view from north-east



▲ Section, 1:1500



Imagine swimming in the sky, with a view over the city. What looks like infrastructure is in fact a residential building with a two lane swimming pool on top. Every detail of the building's composition has a link to the site. It portrays the place through design principles and forms from the archive as spolia.

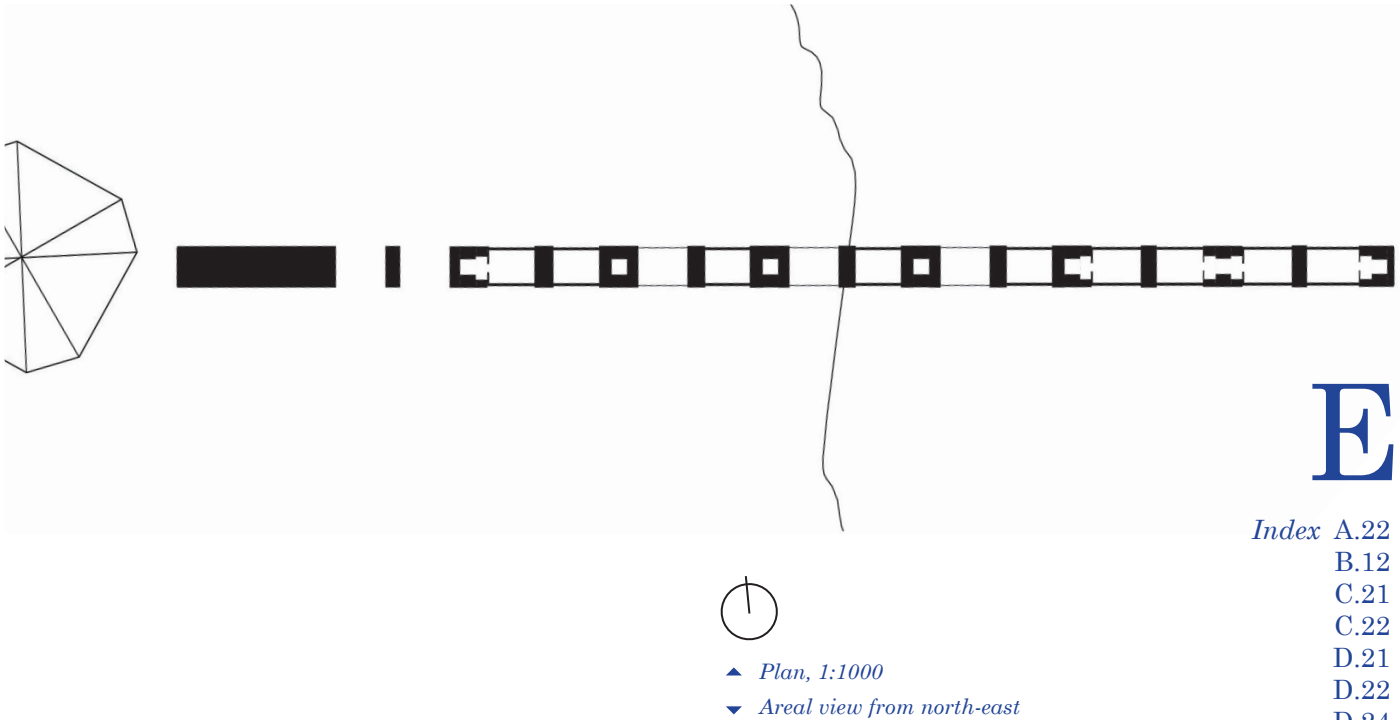
To build a few small rental apartments in one of the city's most attractive locations can be controversial. What would the

people of the city think about Skanstorget being exploited? On the one hand, a residential building with affordable rental apartments could invite new groups of people to the area. On the other hand, it might diminish the publicness of the space around it.

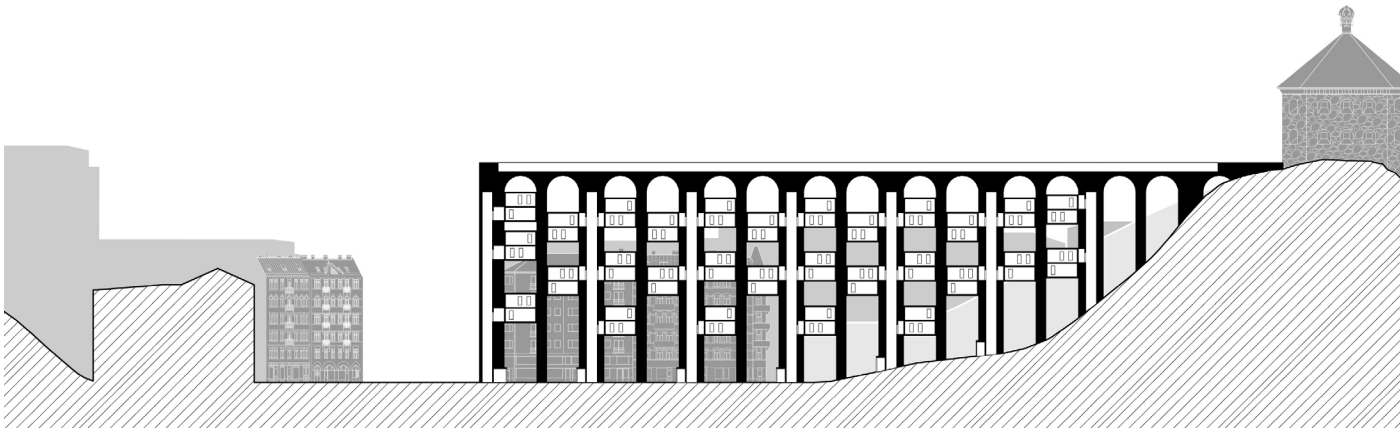
The building highlights the tension between public and private exploitation as well as question if architecture should provoke or resign to its surroundings.



▲ Perspective from the ground



▲ Plan, 1:1000  
▼ Areal view from north-east



▲ Section, 1:1500



# CONCLUSION

When starting this master thesis, the imagined outcome appeared blurry but bright. We knew that we needed a distinguished process to help carry us in finding new ways to explore a site, but we did not know how. The process acted as a framework that helped us along the way, at the same time, the path led us in different directions depending on what we found and how we came to value it. To not know what the next turn will expose has been both exhilarating and necessary.

It is complex to base an investigation mainly on personal values because one is eager for the satisfaction of finding a right or wrong answer. One can easily feel lost when there is nothing to hang on to, more than the will to explore. However, for us it has been a rewarding and satisfying way to develop this project.

Throughout this thesis, we have asked ourselves to what extent people need to understand the transformation of the information. We wonder when architecture derives from a site and when it should be labelled more as a source for inspiration. For us, this question does not have a clear answer, nor does it need one. We believe that good architecture is made when the creator, on a deeper level, understands and finds inspiration in the narratives of the place. If the

architecture is good, there should be no need for explanations.

Looking back, this process has led to development of new ways to approach a site. It has opened our eyes to different ways to see a site, and by that finding new forms and principles for design. It has enabled us to start to challenge narratives. Further, representation has also proved itself to work as a powerful tool to drive processes.

The process used in this thesis can work as a complement to site analysis and design developments in future projects. These methods can be applied as both individual tools and together as a toolbox. As an example, the Visual Guide developed to facilitate the analysis of the visual material can be used as a standalone tool. It could work as a starting point in a site analysis or as a way to deconstruct the meaning of an artwork. We found the Visual Guide effective to start to unlock the way we see and analyse items and representations. However, we do anticipate it being even more eye-opening when used to analyse things that are not created by ourselves. We are excited to have recaptured images as tools by actively including them in the design process. We hope that images that contribute to the development of architecture will be broadened to include more poetic images as well as space for

## Discussion

interpretation. Creation of images filled with meaning, atmosphere and history serves as a very good communicator in architecture, which is something we appreciate and want to work more with. When images interact with memory and aspiration, it awakens a deeper commitment.

In conclusion, through this thesis we have proved that by using

notations and representations it is possible to uncover unnoticed layers of a site and that this information can be distorted into design informants. Architecture can emerge via an archive, containing design informants, which have been demonstrated through the design studies. This process has been a fun and useful way to push ourselves to think outside the box when working with architecture.



◀ Photographs from the past leave traces, not only of the events and characters of the era, but also patterns from movements and in the built environment



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Figures

Photographs and representation courtesy of the author unless stated otherwise.

Frontpage background painting

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Figure 1

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Figure 2

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Figure 3

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Figure 4

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Figure 5

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Figure 6

Hay harvesting at Kommendantsängen (1896). [Photograph]. Retrieved from: <https://samlingar.goteborgsstadsmuseum.se/carlotta/web/object/330716>

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Figure 7

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Figure 9

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Figure 10

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