

REDESIGNING COMMERCIAL PUBLIC LIFE

design for urbanity beyond consumption



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Master Thesis in Architecture

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UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Redesigning Commercial Public Life:
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Master Thesis in Architecture
by Stina Nilsson
Spring 2021

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Acknowledgement

I would like to thank all who made the work of this master thesis an absolute joy.

Thank you Julia, for being a part of my team; supporting, sharing thoughts and knowledge. Thank you Kristina, for clever input and an inspiring attitude towards me and my work.

Thank you, my family; Fredrik, Lena, and Simon, for your never-ending support and help, and Luis, for bringing joy to my everyday life.

Thank you, Amanda, Sara and My, for being a source of inspiration and support throughout this semester. And thank you, all friends, and colleagues, for always being eager to listen and discuss work and life in general.



ABSTRACT

In current climate challenges, consumption is crucial. Shopping is everywhere; in museums, train stations, schools. Consumption has to be reduced to achieve sustainable development. The history of urban development is connected to commercial expansion, making it hard to imagine a city without it. However, current tendencies show how retail decreases in city centres. Smaller centres are being depleted, in favour of online shopping or external malls. Trends of environmental awareness indicate a change in lifestyle towards less consumption. The extraordinary situation of the corona pandemic displayed a new emptiness in shopping environments. There are several reasons to believe that future city centres will contain less retail, making discussions on how cities would look like without shopping relevant.

The aim of the master thesis is to highlight an architectural discourse about alternative developments, beyond commercialization of public space. Through literature studies, reference projects and on site-observations, the thesis investigates the notion of degrowth and sustainable urban development together with social functions of physical shopping environments. The objects of observation are a pedestrian street, a city mall, and a suburban shopping mall in the local context of Gothenburg. These sites set the scene for three speculative scenarios and design implementations.

The research shows that social qualities of shopping environments revolve around user diversity, atmosphere, and movement. The speculative design proposals intend to fuel discussions on alternative futures, with transformed social functions matching developments of degrowth. The goal with degrowth design is interpreted as increasing quality of life without the focus on economic growth. The importance of welfare, health, culture, social gathering, and creative expression are likely to increase. The first speculative scenario focus on flexible structures and transformative building processes; the second exemplifies local production and sharing of knowledge; the third illustrates a city where nature is given higher priority. The master thesis intends to set an example where architecture is being used to find opportunities and solutions in an era of climate emergency and social sustainability issues.

Keywords: public space, sustainability, shopping, degrowth, speculative design

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

EDUCATION

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Planning architect at the municipality of Mölndal (jan 2018- aug 2019, aug 2020 - current)

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I.

INTRODUCTION



TELLING THE SPECULATIVE STORY OF
DEGROWTH DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Our planet is in need of a change. Alongside global warming, natural disasters, social inequality, and planetary exhaustion we are trapped in an economic system in constant need of growth to avoid collapse. One could directly see the challenge, if not impossibility, to combine the growth-based capitalist system with the measures that need to be taken to recover earth and allocate resources in a fair way. It is well known that overconsumption is not only affecting us as individuals, but also the climate in a harmful way. To reach the Paris Agreement and a global warming of a maximum of 1.5 degrees (since the beginning of industrialism), each person's emissions must fall below 1 tonne per year before 2050. In 2015, the average Swede's consumption instead gave rise to almost 11 tonnes of greenhouse gases (Hagbert et al., 2018).

The unreflected trust in economic growth pose a threat to sustainable societal development. To stay within the planetary boundaries, a transition to more sustainable forms of production and consumption is required. Economic models show that awareness and political debate on these issues reduces the negative consequences of reduced growth. It is important to plan for future scenarios and the large conversion that needs to be done (Hagbert et al., 2018).

An increasingly large part of the public life is currently based on consumption with commercial profit as its initial goal (Kallis, 2018). Retail has evolved to focus more on branding, identity and belonging. This can be noticed in the physical space; in place-making and shopping friendly atmospheres. The materialistic embodiment of increasing consumption does not only affect our minds, but also our bodily experience and influence architectural expression and style (Kärrholm, 2012).

Architects need to take on the challenge of imagining a future of degrowth and imagining a city where the public life derives from something other than consumption. A risk when erasing retail in the public space is that these spaces instead will be privatized (Kärrholm, 2012). So how can we maintain the social function that shopping adds to public space today? How would these urban environments look if we instead focused on sharing, reuse, and circular economy? Or even more radical; a public life that does not revolve around consumption (reused or not), but instead leisure, human interaction, sharing, knowledge exchange and experience? And finally, what can we learn from the urbanity of these shopping environments today?

The master thesis starts with the position that the role of the cities' inhabitants as mainly consumers is not sustainable (ecological nor social). The master thesis will investigate the social impact that consumption has on the physical space, to be able to propose an alternative option of public space which challenges the norm of a consumption-based public life, while maintaining the social qualities that shopping space offers today.

PURPOSE AND AIM

The aim is to analyse how physical shopping and retail space perform as a social function today. This will be done through literature studies and observations of environments in Gothenburg. The second aim of the master thesis is to propose a conceptual architectural implementation, with arguments and notions found through the theoretical and practical research. The design proposal should answer to the critical question of how a sustainable urban landscape can be developed for citizens and not consumers. Thereby how a social “marketplace” could be designed without the elements of retail.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What could happen to the social function if we remove the act of consumption in the physical public space?
- How can the social function of shopping environments be transformed in a future of post-consumption?
- How can degrowth be embodied/exemplified in a design proposal?

DEFINITIONS

Defined by Oxford Languages:

consumption (*noun*): the action of using up a resource.

retail (*noun*): the sale of goods to the public in relatively small quantities for use or consumption rather than for resale.

shopping (*noun*): the action or activity of buying goods from shops.

Firstly, a distinction can be made between materialistic consumption and service- or experience-based consumption. Viewed from an ecological sustainability perspective one could say that materialistic consumption is not sustainable, but to eat at a restaurant or get a haircut is not the same problem. With that stated, all kinds of consumption are promoting a growth-based structure and could therefore be viewed as unsustainable, especially from a social perspective.

The master thesis will not answer the question if sustainability can be achieved in the capitalist system or not. The master thesis has its starting point in the widely established position that the current level of materialistic consumption in the western world is not ecological sustainable.

DELIMITATIONS

There is, of course, public space that is not commercial already today (see parks, libraries for example), but the master thesis focuses on investigating the public environments that today is characterized by retail and shopping. The master thesis' investigation will be limited to urban public space in city centres (and nearby suburb), and the limitation exclude external shopping malls or big box store areas. The observations are limited to studies of the social function of public space, not the political function.

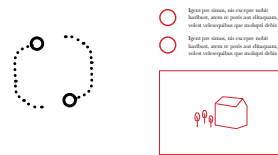
Reference projects and theory will not be geographically limited, but observation and implementation will be set in the context of Gothenburg. The observations are done by the author (Stina Nilsson) and the result may be affected by a subjective opinion. The observation was conducted through several site visits in March and April 2021 during the Corona pandemic, which is creating unusual circumstances. Regulations conducted by the Swedish government (to decrease spreading of the virus) prevent more than one person from each household to go into a store. Shopping is now no longer used as a leisure activity.

METHODOLOGY

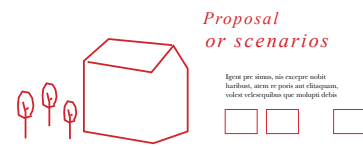
Literature and project studies



Observation



Speculative design



USED METHODS

The master thesis is developed in three parts. These steps were not dealt with in a linear process, but all played different parts in an iterative progress.

- *Literature and project studies*: Includes the study of former research, theory, and architectural projects, creating a descriptive theoretical framework which forms a base for positioning, background, method for analyse and context.
- *Observation and analyse of existing shopping environments*: Include theoretical and practical case studies of three shopping environments in the local context of Gothenburg. They were conducted through literature study, digital maps, site visits and observation. The purpose with the observations is to evaluate certain shopping environments' social function in the city, as well as conducting an architectural investigation of the experienced space and atmosphere. The master thesis analyses three different gradients of retail space: the central integrated city mall, the suburban integrated shopping mall, and the shopping street. The studied places are Nordstan, Frölunda Torg and Kungsgatan.
- *Speculative design proposal*: The specific method of the master thesis is speculative design (critical design). The scenarios are set in different futures where material consumption is not a part of the public activity or public space. The reasons for working towards a society of post-consumption is based on degrowth theory and tendencies spotted in present urban development. The outcome is narratives and architectural form displaying examples and becoming a base for discussion. Speculative design is a powerful way of discussing this urgent, but difficult, matter of limiting consumption and to imagine our role in this, both as architects and as citizens (Dencik et al., 2019, for the Oslo Architecture Triennale 2019, theme: degrowth).

ABOUT SPECULATIVE DESIGN AS METHOD

Why speculative design?

Speculative design is a critical design practice, with the aim to create critical discourse and dialogue through imagination and scenarios. By creating designed fiction, projects of speculative design can raise awareness, provoke, question or open discussions. This is useful when dealing with complex problems, in which not one right solution can be found or when we are forced to change mindset or values, like the problems related to climate change or the capitalist system (Dunne & Raby, 2013). Anticipating the future can help us to understand the world of today. By asking *what if*, one can examine potential changes, alternative possibilities of another reality. Importantly, we should not only do this through radical utopia or dystopia, but not least through scenarios anchored in reality and research. The difference between speculative design and science fiction (which also makes it a powerful and interesting design tool) is the anchoring in the contemporary everyday life reality (Mitrović, 2015).

The origin of speculative design practice could be placed with the radical Italian architects of the 1960's and 70's, as well as the avant-garde art movement of the same time. The main motive was then a resistance to mainstream modernist ideals and technological domination. The aim was to re-think the profession and practice, regarding political and social motives. The discussion of critical and speculative design has historically often been linked to technological and digital progress or inventions (with both utopian and dystopic outcome). Speculative design could be used to focus on concepts rather than the usual problem solving of traditional design. Therefore, speculative design gives the opportunity to distance practice from the commercial market and its demands, to instead engage with a broader social context (Mitrović, 2015).

Criticism towards speculative design have been about its Eurocentric and Western approach, as well as having tendencies of being reduced to solely focus on aesthetics. Speculative design (as well as radical architecture) may be viewed as a totalitarian top-down type of design, as one person's great vision. But when understanding the objectives of critical and speculative design, one could argue that the speculation, in itself, opens up the discussion to the general public, making the question a part of the democratic sphere. A main goal with speculative design is exactly this; the inclusion of the public in the re-thinking, and dialogue about the reality of a future scenario, (for example technological or digital inventions, new social relations or an alternative economic system.) Also, not to be forgotten, is that a proper speculative design project is based on research of a social context, which directs it towards the individual needs and desires (Mitrović, 2015).

The methodology and process of speculative design

A speculative design project can include one or several critical questions. Questioning either (1) the own design practice, (2) the macro-perspective of the design practice in general, or (3) the discourse of a social or political phenomenon (Mitrović, 2015).

What if-questions are commonly used, intentionally simplified, fictionalized, and provocative, to trigger imagination and speculate. To predict *the* future is not interesting (it is an impossible and pointless activity), but instead *possible futures*. Using them as tools to better understand the present and to discuss what kind of future we want and not want. A speculative project should, preferably, also describe a series of (believable) events that led up to the scenario, even if it's

fictional (not plausible) it gives credibility to the proposal and lets the viewer make a critical reflection of the situation (Dunne & Raby, 2013).

The process includes:

1. critical design research to define the context and object/space for re-design.
2. speculative concepts to articulate form and media for communication.

Speculative design is applied in many disciplines and practices, so it includes many different media and tools. Any methodology that is found relevant and appropriate could be used; like film, storytelling, pop culture, observational comedy etc. (Mitrović, 2015). Design could here, favourably, be influenced by media like cinema, literature, and art, which have a more natural speculative playfulness. Advocates of speculative design believe that the designer's role should be revalued and strive towards creating a pluralism of values and ideas within the field, and that this can be done through speculation (Dunne & Raby, 2013).

In the master thesis, speculative design is being used to question consumption's role in a sustainable development and to contribute to the discourse of degrowth. In the master thesis the *what if*-question will be focusing on *what if the future public life does not include consumption?* To define the context and object for redesign, research will be made on shopping environments today and different agendas (aims/motives) for another scenario.

DISPOSITION AND THEORY

READING INSTRUCTIONS OF THE MASTER THESIS

The first chapter, *I. Introduction*, describes the purpose and aim of the master thesis, as well as introduces the positioning, theoretical background and method on which conclusions and design strategies are based.

The second chapter, *II. Degrowth*, proposes critical aspects of a consumption-based society, along with a theoretical background on alternative future development. Through degrowth theory and the study of alternative projects, a vision beyond consumption and normative lifestyles is here being articulated.

The literature is taken from several disciplines; art, economy, urban planning, sociology, philosophy and architecture, with the main authors as Zygmunt Bauman (*Consuming Life*), Herbert Marcuse (*One-Dimensional Man*), Giorgos Kallis (*Degrowth*, 2018), Pernilla Hagbert, Göran Finnveden, Paul Fuehrer et. al. (*Futures Beyond GDP Growth*, 2018), Dunne & Raby (*Speculate Everything*, 2013), as well as contributions to the Oslo Architecture Triennale of 2019 (theme: degrowth).

The third chapter, *III. Shopping*, sets the contextual, political, and historical scene in which retail plays a vital part. To be able to understand the potential use of shopping and retail space, one must analyse these environments in its context; past and present. The chapter contains definitions of public space and analyse of how physical shopping elements affect the experienced room. Through the research three main topics are found (user diversity, atmosphere and movement), which are used to understand the mechanisms and architectural qualities of shopping environments and later on used as tools for analysing shopping in a local context.

The main literature of chapter III consists of authors Mattias Kärrholm (2012), Mats Franzén, Nils Hertting and Catharina Thörn (2016), Harvard Project on the City & Rem Koolhaas (2001) and Bosse Bergman (2003). Their academic background and disciplinary situation vary; Kärrholm is a professor in architecture and urban studies, Koolhaas is a practicing and writing architect with a background as a journalist, and Bergman was an urban planning historian, to mention a few. The authors are mainly from a European context, and even though the whereabouts and current situations are not explored, a clear Western perspective can be read into the material, and any result of the master thesis should be understood with this in mind. The statement that shopping and consumption is an unsustainable activity seems unanimous within the literature, but speculations on what part it will, can and should play in the future varies.

In chapter four, *IV. Referenced work*, utopian, conceptual or alternative projects are studied to find inspiration to design for degrowth. The studied projects deal with the topics of consumption,

degrowth, ecological and social sustainability in different ways. The architectural projects are by Constant Nieuwenhuys, Yona Friedman, atelier d'architecture autogérée (aaa) and Cedric Price.

Chapter five, *V. Context*, transfers the theoretical analyse of the first chapter to practical observations of the local context of Gothenburg. It also sets the scene for the upcoming implementations.

The sixth chapter, *VI. Implementation*, displays several possible scenarios of post-consumption, speculating on the future use of public space. The speculations revolve around the themes:

- Flexible and changeable; new functions and decentralized power.
- Production and knowledge; local resources.
- New status of nature and leisure; prioritizing ecology and culture.

Chapter seven, *VII. Conclusions*, concludes the found social functions and the transformation of these. The reflections are divided into three themes: the citizen, the city, and the method.

After the last chapter is an appendix, *VIII. Bibliography*, which contains the used sources and references.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

The studied theories and authors have different starting points and ideals. All theoretical perspectives or elements comes from specific historical and intellectual context, and I am aware of its limitations or objectives.

The Marxist philosophers and sociologists Herbert Marcuse and Zygmunt Bauman have, for example, a clear political intention when criticizing the consumption society and capitalist structure.

Mats Franzén, Nils Hertting and Catharina Thörn (“City for Sale”) are active in local urban development, engaged from a political perspective. They are emphasizing inclusion and democratic openness, but without engaging in any concrete solutions or practice.

Rem Koolhaas, on the other hand, is a practicing architect. He has had a clearly critical perspective in his practice, and he is questioning the power the architect and the architecture actually have or should have. (Alison 2007) Koolhaas’ practice could be viewed as a deconstructivist interpretation of modernism and the city, where he is positioning himself against the lack of history and respect for culture of the modernist ideals. He is instead interested in the correlation between architecture and the contemporary cultural situation. Emphasizing the importance of the current culture or historical context, not to be overrun by architectural vision or style (aiming some critique to colleagues within the field) (Nilsson, 1996).

II.

DEGROWTH



TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE FUTURE

THE STRUGGLE OF GDP AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Some argue that growth must continue, but in a greener form, for us to achieve sustainable development. Others believe that growth must be reduced (reduced production and consumption) to have a sustainable development. Declining economic growth tends to increase social gaps and lead to higher unemployment, but Gross Domestic Product (GDP) does actually not measure welfare. It measures the economic activity of consumption, investments, and export (minus import). In other words, the value of goods and services.

Growth forecasts from the OECD indicate that growth is likely to be lower than today's normal level in the future, due to climate change, less access to natural resources etc. (Hagbert et al., 2018) According to Giorgos Kallis (2018), a prominent author of the degrowth movement, and the authors of "Futures Beyond GDP Growth" a decrease of retail is not only a likely scenario in many city centres, it is also a must for planetary survival to radically decrease our material consumption. To tackle the problem with overconsumption we need to change our approach to material possession, and with that the physical conditions and design. So however, the case, a future with other economic conditions and a different view on wealth will always be relevant. The master thesis does not intend to answer the question if sustainability can be achieved in the capitalist system, but has its starting point in the widely established position that the current level of materialistic consumption in the western world is not ecological sustainable, and that other directions for development and alternatives must be sought and formulated.

DISCUSSION ON (DE-)GROWTH

Degrowth is a broad movement, with the ambition to understand the world but also to change it. The debate is interdisciplinary and operates both in academia and activism. Degrowth is a topic of both theory and practice, proposing an alternative future and studying present examples of alternative systems beyond the Western economy, capitalism, growth, and consumption. Giorgos Kallis is introducing degrowth in an interdisciplinary discourse, but from the discipline of ecological economics and political ecology (2018).

The discussion on planetary resource usage and the unavoidable limits of economic growth began already in the 1960's and 70's. The notion of degrowth started with the question if capitalism was compatible with "déroissance" (French term for degrowth) in material production (Kallis, 2018). The discussion was around the dangerous consequences of the modern growth-oriented society, with the publication "Limits to Growth" (Meadows et. al., 1972) as a prominent contribution. Radical ideas of societal transformation to anti-productivist lines were often overshadow and toned down by the official environmental movement. (www.degrowth.org) In 2008 the English term *degrowth* started being used. *Research and Degrowth*, an

academic association, was founded to raise awareness and contribute to research on the subject in a multi-disciplinary field and they coined the term degrowth. They write that:

“Sustainable degrowth is a downscaling of production and consumption that increases human well-being and enhances ecological conditions and equity on the planet. It calls for a future where societies live within their ecological means, with open, localized economies and resources more equally distributed through new forms of democratic institutions. Such societies will no longer have to “grow or die.” Material accumulation will no longer hold a prime position in the population’s cultural imaginary.” (www.degrowth.org)

Market economy is not something absolute, it is a manmade concept, and could therefore be changed or exchanged for something else. Market economy was born with the vision of a balanced self-regulated market, where supply and demand in balance would lead to maximized wealth. But in fact, capitalism market values encroach other social values. *Growth* is a concept from the 1930’s, which started being used with industrial capitalism. In fact, “the economy” is a concept no one talked about before 1930. Kallis, boldly, claims that growth always means exploiting someone, otherwise you would not have a surplus to begin with. Therefore, a growth-based economy can never overcome social injustices or meet the environmental needs. (2018)

”The faster we produce and consume goods, the more we transform and damage the environment” (Kallis 2018, p. 1)

Degrowth is not about negative growth (negative GDP), but about decreasing the “throughput” (material, energy, waste flows) while the welfare state improves. Which means a radical social transformation, beyond a new “economy”. A total societal reorganize is proposed, but the master thesis is limited to not go further into economic proposals or discussions of degrowth, but instead focus on the architectural discourse by viewing examples of degrowth within the discipline and focus on certain aspects that can be influenced by design. For example:

- Re-evaluating the view/status on leisure, play, material possession.
- Reuse and recycle.

The degrowth movement describes future utopias and scenarios, which can vary in the broad discussion, but always with a greater level of care and focus on leisure. In many projects and visions, nature and labour will be de-commodified, and people will work less and exploit nature less (Kallis, 2018; Hagbert et al., 2018). Later in this chapter, projects will be studied to see how architects and urban planners can contribute to manage this transition with design, not disaster.

DEGROWTH AND DESIGN

Futures Beyond GDP Growth and alternative economies

Economic growth is often seen as a goal in itself. This approach can be questioned, which is done in the research project “Futures Beyond GDP Growth” (KTH, 2018). In the project, the authors investigate the result and consequences of a shifted focus towards alternative economic systems, where wealth and well-being are based on values other than measured with GDP.

They find four different scenarios of future societies based on alternative economic systems (Hagbert et al., 2018).

In the *collaborative economy* we share, borrow, and rent things we need. This future is characterized by cooperation instead of competition. Private financial benefits are set aside in favour of human interaction and resource efficiency, all made possible by digitization, open data, and non-profit work. A society of *local self-sufficiency* is instead characterized by self-government, local power, local knowledge, open exchange, and active participation. The community live on locally produced assets and resources. Most people live in rural environments, sparser cities with space for cultivation, using simple and understandable technology (Hagbert et al., 2018).

In the scenario of *automation for quality of life* robotization enables reduced working hours. People instead have creative professions and manages social contacts, consumption is low with a focus on adequacy, and society is governed by direct democracy. *Circular economy in the welfare state* is about recycling and reducing waste, governed by the state. The economy is more based on service consumption, such as welfare, culture, and nature experiences. Status markers is no longer about material possession, but instead exclusive services and experiences (Hagbert et al., 2018).

The Oslo Architectural Triennale 2019

The issue of climate emergency and social inequality was tackled by the Oslo Architectural Triennale 2019, called “Enough: The Architecture of Degrowth”. In the festival’s description one can read how many architects aspires to combine social justice ad design, but the work practice often looks very different, and we plan for profit and infrastructure that supports consumption and fast growth. The festival explores possible urban consequences and opportunities of a future where social and ecological wellbeing is prioritized over economic growth. Through performance, design, and literature (among other) solutions and visions of degrowth are being explored, often through sharing resources, freedom to play, democratic education and imagination (<http://oslotriennale.no>).

A project exhibited in the Oslo Architecture Triennale 2019 is ”The Civic Laundrette”. The project aims to generate social activity around sharing economies and uses the function of a domestic chore to accomplish this. A structure of washing machines in the shape of a classic amphitheatre is placed in the centre of a community, just like a public square (Frearson, 2019).

Another contribution to the festival was the book “Gross Ideas: Tales of Tomorrow’s Architecture”, an anthology of speculative short stories, written by architects, engineers and sci-fi writers. Speculating on, more or less, dystopic scenarios in a close or in a distant future. The book is, above being entertaining, functioning as a discussion piece, letting the reader explore solutions of degrowth and the consequences of climate change (Attlee et. al. (Ed.), 2019).

WHY WE NEED TO REDESIGN THE CITY

There are several reasons to believe that the city centre will contain less consumption in the future. Firstly, it is a requirement to convert to an ecological sustainable urbanity. We can today see trends of environmental awareness, options for sharing or renting, and a change in lifestyle. Secondly, we can already see tendencies of how smaller cities centres are being depleted, often in favour to online shopping or external shopping malls. The trend of less physical consumption has been noticed for years (with more online shopping, experience, and service-based consumption etc.), but this trend exhilarated tremendously with the Corona pandemic, starting year 2020. The city's function as a meeting place has, only in a couple of years, changed dramatically.

The city can still be an attractive environment in the future, but it will need to shift its main function. Culture, health, and well-being is now outcompeting materialistic consumption. A major public health problem today is stress, partly caused by the failure of managing a satisfying everyday life and the so called "life puzzle", because of the focus on wage labour and a consumer society. A comfortable city with green elements will become more important. Let us try to use the catastrophic event of the corona pandemic as a springboard to rethink our societal values, and with that redesign our physical environment (Larsson, 2021). The city of Paris sets an example, where it has been decided that the Champs-Élysées will eventually become a green oasis with sidewalks instead of car traffic. The city is working towards a sustainable development with greener outdoor environment and exploring how the identity of Paris can affect or be affected by this conversion (Kax, 2021).

SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF CONSUMPTION BASED VALUES

Herbert Marcuse wrote in 1964 in the "One-Dimensional Man" how the capitalist society mould us into one-dimensional beings. The consumer society shape our dreams and desires. We only dream of achieving material goals, which do not really give us any "real" pleasure. Consumption affects what we think is fun and what we dream of, limited by labour (Marcuse, 1964).

Zygmunt Bauman have, in his book "Consuming Life" (2007), also described the social consequences of the consumer society. It has both individual and societal infliction. Bauman describes the rapid change, since World War II, of going from a production-based society to a consumption based. In the consumption-based society, we as citizens are defined as consumers rather than political citizens, and the society – and life itself – has assumed the form of a product.

In the consumer society, we are striving towards becoming “good consumers”, and we seek short-term satisfaction. We buy things and throw them away, to be able to buy more things; all to create the expected economic growth that is needed to maintain the consumer society. New things, new homes, new jobs, new identities, and new relationships. This short-term thinking and constant renewal are also inflicted in human relationships. Freedom of choice becomes more obligatory than a condition of well-being, and we, as individuals, need to sell ourselves and are transformed into brands. The only thing that the consumption society guarantees is a constant dissatisfaction. Bauman claims that this accelerated growth and consumerism dissolves the community/society, leading to isolation and makes us politically powerless. From citizens, to consumers, and eventually goods (Bauman, 2007).

SUMMARY

PHYSICAL INTERPRETATION OF DEGROWTH

To summarize and translate the research on degrowth into design implementations, a simplification and selection is made. With the starting point in the literature and reference projects 6 problems or critical aspects are articulated. The 6 abstract solutions (concepts) following are also interpreted and concluded from the collected research.

CRITICAL ASPECTS	SOLUTIONS
1. Production lines are not ecologically sustainable or socially resilient.	1. Locally self-sufficiency, community resilience, local production, connectivity.
2. Materialistic consumption is not <i>ecologically</i> sustainable.	2. No consumption: Sharing, reusing.
3. Materialistic consumption is not <i>socially</i> sustainable.	3. No consumption: Leisure, experiences, culture.
4. Top-down approach: Forgetting the social functions of the citizens (when prioritizing economic and ecological sustainability).	4. Decentralisation: Community driven small-scale development, sharing knowledge.
5. Hard to predict the future needs and conditions.	5. Build and plan for temporariness, flexibility, and changeability.
6. Ecological and animal needs.	6. Plan for different kinds of nature/habitats throughout the city

CRITICAL ASPECTS
SOLUTIONS
 urban design elements

The critical aspects and possible solutions concluded (from the researched literature and reference projects), are here followed by examples of brief and concrete design operations. It should be stressed that these suggestions are simplified examples of possible ways to deal with the subject. A way to find concrete means where architecture and design can operate towards degrowth.

1. PRODUCTION

SELF SUFFICIENCY

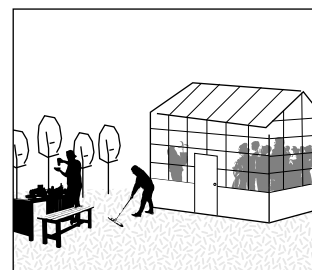
nearby supply of resources is made by urban farming.



4. CITIZENS' NEEDS

DECENTRALISATION

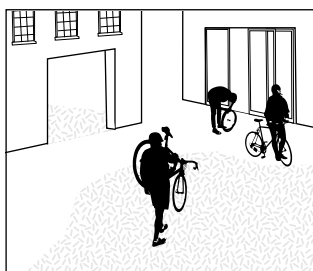
co-production, self-management, sharing knowledge: community gardens, shared workshop, citizens dialog.



2. ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

SHARING

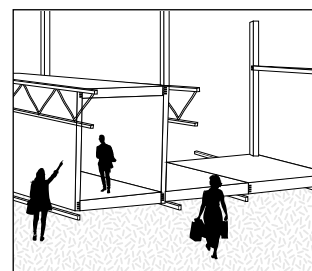
infrastructure for sharing and reusing; library of things, different types of rental transportation.



5. FUTURE NEEDS

FLEXIBILITY

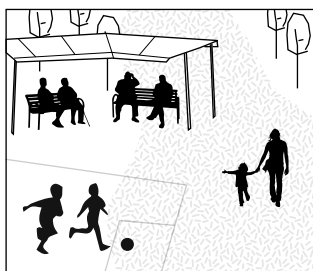
smart constructions that are easily re-used (modules, grid systems) or structures that can be re-used without rebuilding (general rooms or moveable parts).



3. SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

LEISURE & CULTURE

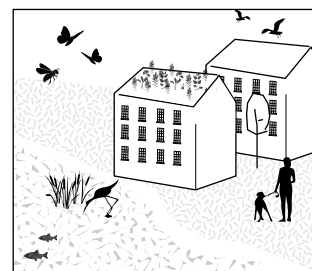
outdoor/indoor activities and meeting places; sport fields, parks, classes, and gatherings.



6. ECOLOGICAL NEEDS

GREENERY

green connectivity: nature reserves, parks, canals, pocket parks, roof tops etc.



III.

SHOPPING



UNDERSTANDING CONSUMPTION IN
THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

THE PUBLIC CONTEXT OF SHOPPING AND RETAIL

THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF PUBLIC SPACE

Public space can be defined as a co-presence of strangers, officially open to all kinds of people, even if sometimes only accessible to a certain category (Kärrholm, 2012). The design, the activities and where in the city it is located control how the public space is used.

The authors of ”Stad till salu” (*translated: “City for Sale”*) emphasise the importance of the public space’s function as a tool for democratic expression. The democratic room should be open and attractive for various groups, and through that enable democratic expressions (demonstrations etc.). This makes societal differences and conflicts visible. This is (one of) the main purposes of the public space, which needs to be protected (Franzén et.al., 2016). But public space, in addition to the political function, also has a social function. Which is where shopping operates, and the aspect the master thesis mainly focuses on.

The social function of public space revolves around accessibility and the possibility to gather and engage in social constellations (Gabrielsson 2006). Shopping has contributed to that public life has become more liberal and informal, making it more accessible to more people, characterized by everyday life and simplicity even far from the own home. Shopping has also introduced elements of unpredictability and impulse to the social function of the city, with advertisement and unpredictable social encounters (Bergman, 2003).

SOCIETAL CHANGES: FROM PRODUCING TO CONSUMING THE CITY

To understand the mechanisms of urban landscape and public space, one must look at the urban politics in its context. The 1960’s and 70’s was, in Scandinavia, an era of *fordism* (combined capitalism and welfare state), characterised by functionalism, mass-production, standardisation and traffic separation, among other.

Around 1973, the economic crisis led to a shift in politics, urban planning, and lifestyle. *Fordism* led to *post-fordism*, and in the society of postfordism standardized goods were no longer passable. Instead people requested identity-creating consumption, like brands, style markers and services. The public space became a scene where you could display your lifestyle and doing this mainly by the act of consumption (what you buy and where you buy it). At this time, the institutions’ and state’s power started to decrease, in favour to globalization and more independent municipalities. The old variegated and motley city, that modernism before had criticized would, ironically, again become the solution to what was now considered as monotonous buildings and neighbourhoods. This led to refurbishment, gentrification, and the

start of *entrepreneurial urbanism*. The municipality joined forces with property owners and traders to work towards a common vision, to "put the city on the map" in a global world (Franzén et.al., 2016).

The next economic crisis of the 1990's sped up the process of entrepreneurial urbanism and led to increased marketing for tourism and competitiveness between cities. To sell the city as an attractive city with a specific niche (for example IT clusters, diverse culture, exclusive shopping etc.) did now become even more important, in order to accelerate growth and attract investors. Many city centres did undergo fragmented change and pointwise refurbishment, which leads to exclusive environments that, with subtle design expressions and atmospheres, control which social groups experience accessibility. Entrepreneurial urbanism can (today) be hard to distinguish because this process of city centre development has become so common. Private and public actors come together and work towards a common vision, through place marketing and city branding. Development is done with small means, not to be noticed as a big collective effort, with the intention to withhold the urban development of the city centre from the political debate as much as possible. Exclusive redesign of city centres could through subtle control exclude people and intrude on the democratic function of the public space, but because of its point by point progress it often goes unnoticed. Entrepreneurial urbanism means creating specific places where urbanity is something that can be consumed, where we go from being citizens to becoming consumers (Franzén et.al., 2016).

RETAIL EVOLUTION

A prominent part of the development and context of urban landscape is consisting of retail history. It is discussed however shopping space is truly public, compared to e.g. a square or a street which also has the political function (Gabrielsson, 2006). Retail space is often privately owned space, which (almost always) faces public space and welcomes the general public. Through this action, it becomes a part of the public space (even if only for a limited time) and public space becomes retail space (Franzén et.al., 2016). The effect of retail stretches further than the actual store space. Advertisement is one constant reminder in the city, which is making the whole urban landscape into a possible "shopping space".

Shopping is nothing new (see marketplaces from the middle ages e.g.). In the 19th century retail was connected to cities with urban markets laws and regulations. It was simply not allowed to operate retail business outside of the city gates. This changed, and today retail is more autonomous from the old urban centres. The revolution of Swedish consumption began after World War II, but the new phenomena of 1980's and 90's is the focus on identity making and branding (Kärrholm, 2012). If we go back in history, the introduction of retail and shopping in the public space actually worked as a way to democratize the space. It made it accessible to multiple groups, and (almost) everyone now has a reason to reside in the public. The innovation of iron and glass made it possible to create these big open display windows. It was then described as a democratization of the street life because it was possible for all to get a glimpse of the latest fashion items (Franzén et.al., 2016).

The process of separation between retail and city centre have been a gradual process from marketplaces to shopping streets to small city centres to remote shopping malls. Contradictory

tendencies can be seen today, where the renewal and pedestrianisation of urban city centres is in motion, but also the increasing profit of “big box store” areas outside of the cities and regions increasing in sizes. Today, a big part of the development of retail space is mostly planned through initiatives from the private sector, as described through the entrepreneurial urbanism, and in that case focused to the characteristic city centre. So, despite retail’s historical role as a democratic factor, the effect can today be seen in another perspective. Through branding and exclusivity, retail space can actually limit the public space’s openness and social diversity. The more private; the less available and urgent for political gatherings, and more appealing for private consumption (Franzén et.al., 2016).

INDUSTRIALIZED
STANDARDIZED GOODS AND
MASS CONSUMPTION

FORDISM
1950

The first pedestrian street Lijnbaan was realized in Rotterdam 1951-1953. To flaneur became an element of the urban movement.



Fig. 5: The Lijnbaan, 1953

THE CITY BECOMES A SCENE
FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

POST FORDISM
1970

The society of postfordism standardized goods were no longer passable, instead people requested identity-creating consumption, like brands, style markers and services.



Nordstan 1970's (postcard)

Department stores (that did not offer the variety the consumers sought) were instead turned into malls or arcades.

URBANITY IS SOMETHING
THAT CAN BE CONSUMED

ENTREPRENEURIAL URBANISM
PRESENT



Contradictory tendencies can be seen today, where the renewal and pedestrianisation of urban city centres is in motion,



Sisjö shopping area

but also the increasing profit of “big box store” areas outside of the cities and regions increasing in sizes.

SUMMARY

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS AND SPATIAL QUALITIES OF SHOPPING

What social functions can be found in shopping environments?

What qualities and typical features can still exist in a future of degrowth?

USER DIVERSITY

ACCESSIBLE ACTIVITIES

multiple target points,
overlapping activities



ATMOSPHERE

SHELTER & COMFORT

weather protection, indoor
environment, climate control,
large open spaces



MOVEMENT

EFFORTLESS & ACCESSIBLE

flaneur: passing through the
city with something to look at



The facilities for shopping have clearly evolved a lot and are in constant change and evolution. By understanding how retail and shopping spaces are structured and experienced today (and historically) one could find key aspects to use and transform, to create attractiveness in a future scenario. To further understand how retail and shopping affects and influence the public space, three headlines have been found. They are a result of the research (literature studies and on site-observations), working as concepts and limitation to further discussion. The headlines are: user diversity, atmosphere, and movement.

The headlines are a chosen selection of aspects in shopping environments that affects its social function. The purpose with this research is to understand what disappears, through degrowth, and how the social functions can be transformed in this alternative future. Because these shopping environments already exists, and constitutes a big part of the public space, it is important to utilize the physical conditions and qualities of these structures. The result is an open reflection, which raises questions that ends in implementation and conclusion. What happens to these characters when we stop consuming?

III. SHOPPING



SHOPPING AND SPACE: USER DIVERSITY**Promoting diversity and safety or excluding people? (territorial complexity)**

Jane Jacobs wrote that you can't get people to use a street if they have no reason to do so. So to create an attractive and safe public street or place it must contain necessary or desirable functions, or lead to necessary or desirable functions. "Eyes on the street" and clear boundaries between private and public creates safety, and also importantly, the feeling of being safe (1961).

By creating a variety of target points and functions, diversity can be accomplished. The room needs to be arranged in moderation to promote diversity (both in areas of use and groups that use it). To achieve this effect the public room should not be too open nor designed too specifically. Mattias Kärrholm describes how territories defining how we use and experience space (2012). Territorial co-operation can exist and different territorial productions in the public sphere can be enabled through flexible material design. Overlapping territories creates a territorial complexity and also therefore accessibility.

A shopping mall, for example, usually only contains one or a few territorial productions which means less possibilities and less accessibility. This can lead to exclusive and one-sided environments, which lack superimposed territorial productions (Kärrholm, 2012). Shopping environments therefore risk to exclude people of certain socio-economic groups, for example. But shopping could, at the same time, add functions and create territorial complexity, if targeting different groups (Franzén et.al., 2016). This is why shopping can reduce the political function of the public space, while increasing the social function.

Claiming a place (territorial appropriation)

Who is "claiming" it and how the materiality and design does define the territoriality. Power and space, inclusion and exclusion are sensed in subtle ways, through subtle types of spatial power. Materiality also produces territorial effects. Territories varies over time and can exist simultaneously, they are never static. The territory is always a material phenomena, but it is the effect of socio-material relations and not an object itself (Kärrholm, 2012).

So, how does retail territorilise public space? Enclosed shopping environments, like mall or galleries, can through privatisation create exclusiveness; desirable for some and excluding for others (Franzén et.al., 2016).

But the notion of territorial production can also be a tool for diversity and complexity. It is typical for pedestrian precincts to attract other activities than shopping and walking, if the conditions are right. Informal territorial productions could for example be territorial appropriation of a corner, bench, restaurant table, festival spot etc. Territorial productions can be planned through strategies, such as outdoor cafes, shops, market stalls, fountains, bicycle stands (Kärrholm, 2012).

III. SHOPPING



SHOPPING AND SPACE: ATMOSPHERE

The indoor climate of retail

In the article “Shopping” (in “Mutations”), written by the Harvard Project on the City and Rem Koolhaas (2001), the evolution of urban comfort and its relation to retail and shopping is described. The built urban environment has historically been modified through key inventions to induce consumer activity. From the bazaar to the arcade to the shopping mall, an increase of climate control has created a gradual liberation from exterior conditions. Inventions like air condition, artificial illumination and the escalator made new depths and heights of interior space possible. They are important elements in creating a comfortable environment and effortless movement, which enables longer time spent in the public, expansion, and more shopping. This comfort also creates an opportunity for visitors to reside and socialize.

Shopping malls, with realms of interior spaces, are divorced from the outside with its weather and unpredictable nature. The concept of creating artificial conditions and artificial “nature” is making the connection to the outside (and the window) obsolete (Harvard Project on the City, 2001). Weather protection is of course a quality that appeals to some people (and even more during the cold season in Scandinavia). This kind of artificial climate is primarily seen in commercial spaces, but can also be found in public institutions, like for instance museums and train stations which to some extent today can be seen as semi-commercial, and therefore something to explore with other functions (Harvard Project on the City, 2001). The act of losing connection to the outside could be used contentious when designing.

Enchanting atmosphere and Bigness

Koolhaas, and the Harvard Project on the City, seem to find a kind of enchantment in the shopping environments that were previously not considered a part of the “fine culture”. A shift in attitude towards commercial architecture and design had admittedly already begun in the 70’s, with the publication of *Learning from Las Vegas* (Scott Brown, Venturi, Izenour, 1972), and slowly began to find a place even in the prestigious architecture. Although Koolhaas in recent days expresses scepticism about the prominent role of consumption, he expresses, together with the Harvard Project on the City, that it seems inevitable and unthinkable to see public space without commercial elements (2001). How can we, instead of just renouncing indoor shopping space as unsustainable or “uncouth”, instead use it, modify it and see the potential?

When architecture reaches a certain scale, *Bigness* arises. Something that was only made possible due to technical and constructive modernity and inventions. The elevator and other similar inventions have made the classic (classicist) discussion of scale, proportions, details, and disposition obsolete. Architecture can no longer be considered an object and can no longer be influenced by one or a few architectural gestures (Koolhaas, 1994). Could this atmosphere and comfort be seen as accessibility? That add something more than just the ability to shop longer and more.

III. SHOPPING



SHOPPING AND SPACE: MOVEMENT

The interesting promenade of the pedestrian street

Mobility and shopping are closely linked. Historically, have the movement through the city shifted. The first pedestrian street Lijnbaan was realized in Rotterdam 1951-1953. To *flaneur* became an element of the urban movement. The pedestrian activity's status increased when cars and trains became common, and walking was not a necessary means anymore. This led to a territorial division between movement of different speeds with the pedestrian street and SCAFT planning (i.e. the separation between different modes of transportation) The 70's was the epoch of the pedestrian street (*Swedish: "gågatuepoken"*). 1970-1975 was also the peak of the department store era (with stores like Domus and Tempo/Åhléns) (Kärrholm, 2012).

In the 1980's a counteracts to the modernist traffic separation and suburbanisation planning of the 60's and 70's led to an urban renaissance and pedestrianisation of the urban landscape. People now had more money and free time which made it possible to use shopping as a leisure activity and identity maker. After 1975, department stores (that did not offer the variety the consumers sought) were instead turned into malls or arcades. The typology called the "category killer" or "big box store", which focuses on a broad variety within on category, began to spread. These stores are located outside of the city, only easy to reach by car, and benefits from being in clusters with other stores. Big box retail landscapes have been accused to initiate the death of small-scale city centres (Kärrholm, 2012).

In the 1990's pedestrian streets were evolving to pedestrian precincts and a new urban life began in Scandinavia. The shopping street were not only used for transportation but became a space to reside in itself with outdoor servings and so on (Kärrholm, 2012).

The promenade through the city is today characterized by storefronts, always claiming our attention. This is making it interesting, but also creates a feeling of public accessibility. To flaneur is clearly an act of leisure and democratisation of central public space. How could this act work without the element of shopping?

The effortless flow of the shopping mall

By making the movement of shopping almost effortless, more shopping can be managed without having to stop or rest. The escalator offers smooth transitions, coherence, and flows, and is converting virtual space into retail space. This type of movement makes you lose sense of scale or radicality; blurring the borders of spaces and activities. Airports becomes shopping centres, malls act like museums and so on (Harvard Project on the City, 2001).

This is of course an act of marketing (to increase profit), but could it also be a desirable part of the central mobility and leisure? How would it look if the effortless movement would be used as a feature even in a future of post-consumption?

IV.

REFERENCED WORK



FINDING INSPIRATION FOR DEGROWTH

FINDING INSPIRATION

To imagine a future scenario, one can find inspiration in other radical and visionary predecessors. Architects constantly reinvent the city and the building, to be something else.

THE BIG IDEAS OF THE 1960'S

The New Babylon project and its context

It is hard to research anti-capitalist projects without coming across the biggest of them all; “New Babylon”. The project is from before the time of the debate and notion of *degrowth*, but the discourse in the 60's and 70's was a starting point to today's degrowth movement. The debate on limits of growth and the critics on individualistic/materialistic lifestyles is thus not a new phenomenon, and the relevance remains.

The idea of a society free from consumption, with a higher status on leisure, was discussed already in the late 1950's. One of the most prominent voices was the Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys, as a part of the Situationist International, a group of writers and artists formed in 1957, and one of the founders of the Cobra movement. They were critical of the existing social structures within art and architecture and believed in the need of a radical rethinking of society. Between 1956 and 1974, Constant devoted himself to the utopian project of New Babylon, an urban proposition on a planetary scale, with the idea of automation and “unitary urbanism”. The project consisted of a series of various media (paintings, drawings, models etc.) which presented an anti-capitalist city, based on freedom and creativity (Alison, 2007).

With this global meta-city, he displayed inhabitants that were always on the move. In New Babylon land is owned collectively, work is fully automated, and the time is dedicated to collectively, leisure and creative play. The project displays the architectural form of this freedom. The term “Homo Ludens” (man at play) is used in this context (Kunstmuseum Den Haag, 2016). The idea was for New Babylon to be designed, constantly transformed, and reconstructed by the inhabitants and their needs. This fact made it impossible for Constant to anticipate functions and actually give form to it all. He constantly redrew and created new structures, to erase the static features of his previous creations, and open up to multiple options of urban development and imagination. The main idea is the movement; drifting through huge labyrinthine interiors, networks of platforms raised in the air and traffic passing underneath the built structures. Connected to this concept is also artificially controlled climate (light, air etc.), as well as the liberation from labour in favour to creativity and art. Everyone is an artist, and no one is an artist (Jorgensen & Wilson, 2017).

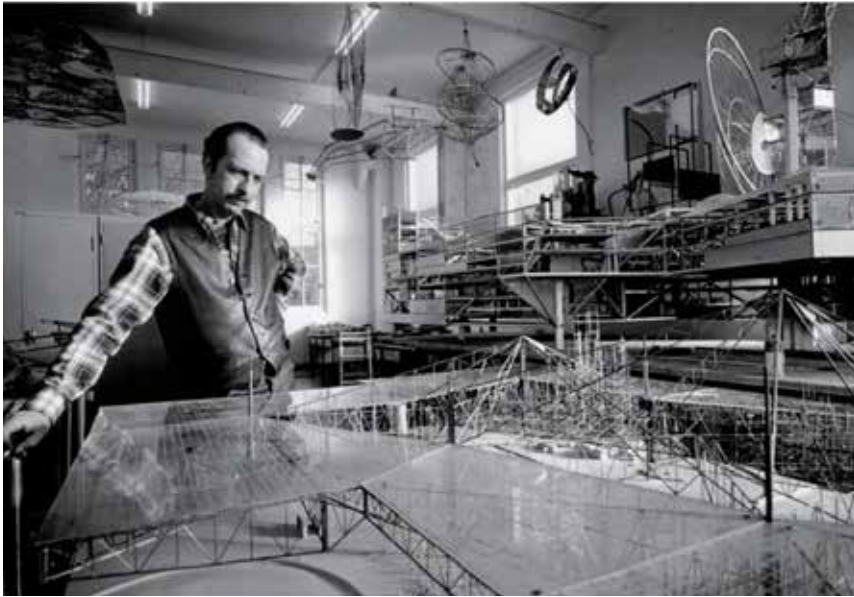


Fig. 1

**NEW BABYLON,
CONSTANT NIEUWENHUYS**

With the idea of a society free from consumption and a higher status of leisure, New Babylon's structure is covering the earth, hovering above ground and constantly changing.

REFERENCED WORK //

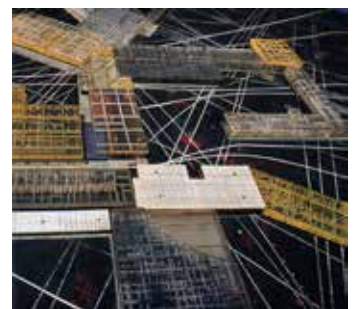


Fig. 2

SPATIAL CITY,
YONA FRIEDMAN

The aim of Spatial City was to design habitats and structures that could be transformed by the inhabitants, in a structure that could grow unlimited over otherwise unavailable sites.

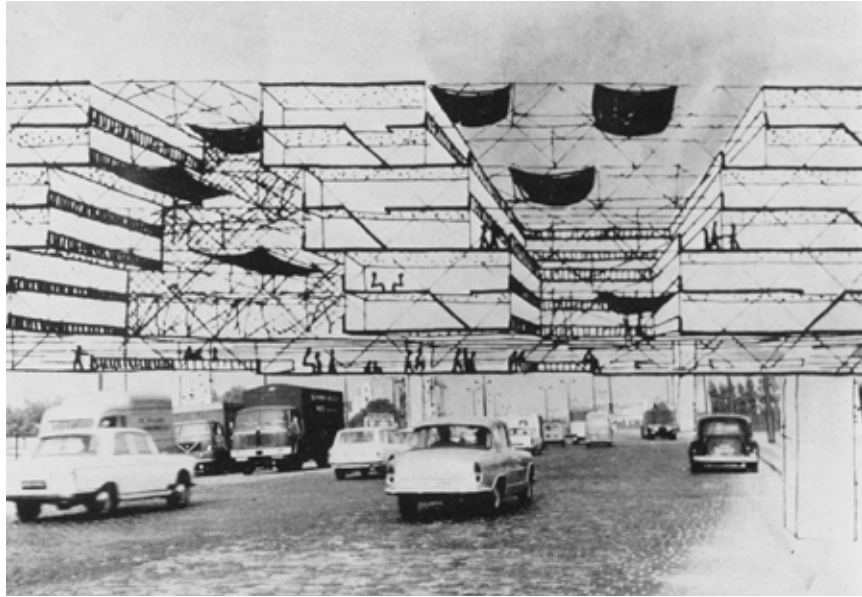


Fig. 3

R-URBAN,
ATELIER D'ARCHITECTURE
AUTOGÉRÉE (AAA)

R-Urban implements bottom-up strategies for a new urbanism. It is about spreading knowledge and resources for citizens and existing networks.



Fig. 4

DUCKLANDS,
CEDRIC PRICE

Instead of urban regeneration Price suggested a large nature reserve, a wetland in the centre of Hamburg, as a resting place for migratory birds.



The 60's was a time when utopian projects and big ideas flourished, and New Babylon seemed perfectly possible to realize. In Constant's case, this dream faded in the 70's and his project became more of a conceptual art piece. He witnessed that people did not use the (now somewhat realized) automation to free time, but instead to create surplus of energy and capital.

In the 80's Constant observed furthermore how the relevance of New Babylon and its utopian lifestyle had disappeared, or at least been postponed (Jorgensen & Wilson 2017). In the 80's, a lot of the design became hyper-commercialized, leaving the trend of radical design behind and making it harder to promote a political agenda and create design that you couldn't "sell" to the public, and with that also harder to speculate about the future. Some political reasons for this was the fall of the Berlin wall and the end of the Cold War. It was clear that market capitalism had won, and it was difficult to imagine an alternative economic system (Dunne & Raby, 2013).

The social mobility of Spatial City

Another project from the same era is the project "Spatial City" (1958-1960), published by Yona Friedman in his first manifesto called "Mobile Architecture". Focusing on the users' mobility, also described as social mobility, his projects and concepts became inspiration to the projects of Archigram and the Japanese Metabolists of the 1960's and 70's. Friedman constructed other projects, in the 1970's, of do-it-yourself-constructions using local materials, to produce affordable housing (Alison, 2007).

The construction of Spatial City contains inhabited volumes, raised on piles. They are easily broken down and moved. The aim of Spatial City was to design habitats and structures that could be transformed by the inhabitants. Friedman promoted a new type of citizen, similar to the one imagined in New Babylon. This citizen was able to control and change the environment. Spatial City consisted of freely distributed dwellings that created a three-dimensional homogenous network. A structure that could grow unlimited over otherwise unavailable sites; above swamps, water or existing cities, creating an "artificial landscape" (Alison, 2007).

Another similarity between the visions of Friedman and Constant was the belief that increase of leisure would change society, and the inhabitant would through this become free and equal. The cities should be adapted to this. In Spatial City this was made through a megastructure hovering above the old city, like a grid with as small environmental interaction and impact as possible (Alison, 2007).

Transferring the vision to contemporary development

New Babylon is a project full of paradoxes. Firstly, the largeness of space and feeling of being outside contradicts the completely artificiality and disconnection from outside. Secondly, the project rebelled against the domination and power of architecture to then become a structure at the same size as the whole earth. New Babylon is, nevertheless, trying to be an architecture for the people. With the aim of creating peace, inclusion, and social relation through hyperconnectivity and liberation of art, time, and creativity. The same goes for Friedman's Spatial City; the ruthless megastructure actually is an attempt of creating sensitive and precise addition on top of existing structures/cities, without damaging or disturbing the landscape underneath (Wigley, 2015).

Constant's New Babylon foresaw many tendencies of the 21st century. The project anticipated both global communication and connectivity through networks (similar to the internet) and the fact that everyone is both an artist and curator of their own life exhibition through their phone (camera, social platforms). But even though these things came true, the world is not the paradise Constant dreamt of (Wigley, 2015). Individualist society and global connection (internet) shifted the visions from mega-utopias created by an elite to multiple mini utopias created by everyone (Dunne & Raby, 2013).

The discussion on social interaction, freedom and mobility is still relevant today. Today we can see, what global interaction can be about, more than physical interconnection.

CITY DEVELOPMENT WITH THE INHABITANTS IN FOCUS

The R-Urban project and sustainable co-production

Going from utopian grand narratives of the 1960's, contemporary projects can seem a bit "small", but also even more rooted and respectful. To understand our role as humans in the Anthropocene, where we have a significant impact on Earth's geology, ecosystems, and climate change, we should rethink and create new processes of urban production. Many sustainability measures that are taken are driven in a top-down process, which creates difficulties in accounting for social, ecological, and economic interest of the citizens. Co-production instead creates inclusion, justice and resilience in creation, governance, and maintenance of the built environment (Petrescu et. al., 2019).

The project "R-Urban" (started in 2011), by Atelier d'architecture autogérée (aaa), is a long-term project that implements bottom-up strategies for a new urbanism. It is about spreading knowledge and resources for citizens and existing networks to develop and manage hubs for agriculture, recycle, eco-construction etc. The architects stress the importance of co-production between architects, planners, and citizens to achieve urban resilience (Krasny & Fitz, 2007). aaa is working to include multiple disciplines and professions (i.e. transdisciplinary design practices/transdisciplinary knowledge). They address the struggle and opportunity with architecture being both a practical profession and an academic discipline (Petrescu et. al., 2019).

The project includes aspects for living, producing, and consuming which tries to overcome the division between rural and urban (Krasny & Fitz, 2007). aaa is doing research and developing design tools for the local context and community, further than participatory design and instead through an *equal partnership* and self-management. They claim that technological progress, invention, and eco-friendly buildings are not enough for creating sustainable communities. There is a need to understand the stakeholders (who they are and their interest) and the market conditions in which the practice/project operates. Their work and projects aim to develop sustainable and resilient urban communities, and here social resilience is spoken of in terms of empowerment. Central in all aaa's projects is flexible and reversible space, characterized by mobility and temporariness, and with an aim to create urban diversity that supports a coexistence of many lifestyles. They have a micro-political approach, talking about acting instead of planning, and do this through *tactics*. A reinvention of public space through everyday life activities, like dwelling, cooking, walking, reading. Everyday acts of spatial practices and architecture like gardening, building, eating, recycling (Petrescu et. al., 2019).

PRIORITIZING NATURE

Another vital aspect of a sustainable development is the ecological health, biodiversity and wellbeing of plants and animals. Nature (wilderness and animal habitats) should be given another status in the urban development. Nature can be used as recreation, but also as a goal in itself. Humans and our built environment do not always have to be priority number one.

Cedric Price's Ducklands

For a redevelopment of the Hamburg Docklands, Cedric Price proposed the project "Ducklands" (1989-1991). Instead of urban regeneration the project suggested a large nature reserve, a wetland in the centre of Hamburg, as a resting place for migratory birds. Ducklands challenges the idea of development, renewal, and profitable creation. It intends to provide a "breathing space" in the rapid development, as a comment to potential greed seen in the urban densification process, which often is at the expense of cultural values and nature.

As a part of the design proposal was flexible paths carefully planned and made in stages of soil taken from the riverbed. The walkways were designed as mobile in order to be adjusted to the needs of the wetland and the birds. They were not supposed to give you direct access to the wetlands, but provide opportunities to view the birds, and pass through only if you wanted to. Suggesting a co-existence of birds, people, river, and city (Doucet, 2020).

V.

CONTEXT



UNDERSTANDING CONSUMPTION IN
GOTHENBURG

GOTHENBURG CONTEXT

IDENTITY

Gothenburg has a history of being an industrial city, with a prominent harbour and many successful companies. This is deeply rooted in the cultural identity, also later joined by the identity of the event city. The economic crisis of the 70's led to the closure of a big part of the city's industry and shipyards. The city then shifted to market itself as "a city for events", which actually was an earlier used tactic, and the brand Gothenburg City is trying to establish deeper today. Already in 1923, Gothenburg hosted a big 300-year jubilee, and landmarks like the Botanic Gardens, the culture institutions of Götaplatsen, Liseberg, and more, were built. Other buildings, more temporary inventions, and ways to "clean up" the centre has been strategically done as preparation to events. Some have later become permanent changes to the city centre and characterizes the environment today. An example is the ban of political polling huts (*Swedish: valstugor*), which before could be seen in central parts around political events (Franzén et.al., 2016).

The economic crisis of the 1990's ended the ongoing city sanitation; when the demolish of old central parts no longer were economically viable, the potential of the existing buildings re-appeared. This led to an urge to refurbish the centre with the aim to attract investors, and the entrepreneurial urbanism was starting to be established in Gothenburg. An early example of this process is Vallgatan; which went from a "boring" street, mainly used for the deliverance of goods, to an "interesting" pedestrian street with designer stores and trendy boutiques. The first step here was to remove the cars, and later to upgrade the physical environment to more exclusive materials, but most importantly, to attract and introduce stores with identity-creating products. The whole area around Kungsporsplatsen followed this development, and 2007 the Avalon Hotel was built (with a transparent overhanging pool) almost as an entrance to the shopping blocks (Franzén et.al., 2016).

The example of Vallgatan and Kungsporsplatsen displays what is characterizing for the entrepreneurial urbanism, as well for Gothenburg today. Namely, the view on the city as a tool for economic and regional growth. It is important for the city to be attractive and competitive, in relation to other cities. One can today see a strong collaboration between the private and public sectors, where contractors and property owners control the planning development together with the municipality. Refurbishment and identity-creating shopping environments is still taking more and more place in the city centre.

Vallgatan; which went from a street, mainly used for the deliverance of goods, to a pedestrian street with designer stores and trendy boutiques.

Vallgatan,
Gothenburg city centre

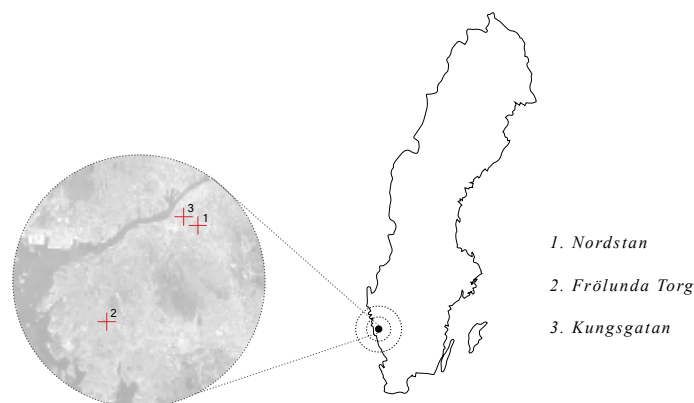


FUNCTIONS AND FUTURE

Gothenburg city has a low proportion of dwellers (2 %) compared to Stockholm (12%) and the average Swedish city (8%). The low amount of population during the day affects the preconditions for a vibrant urban life. During the pandemic, when most are working from home and refrains from shopping, the city centre becomes extraordinary empty (Larsson 2021). The stores suffer great economic loss, and worst affected are the big chains. This trend began already with the *postfordism*, but it is now very clear that consumers seek unique and identity-creating goods and experiences. To visit the city centre, you need to find something that cannot easily be purchased online. For the city to be attractive, also in the future, new target points and attractions needs to be explored.

In the article “Corona will change the city centre – forever” (Larsson, in Göteborgs-Posten, 2021) several of Gothenburg’s municipal councils have been asked how they see a future development of the city (with the focus on rebuilding the welfare after the corona crisis). The city planning director Henrik Kant, the architectural researcher Ann Legeby, the expert on retail and city centres Mattias Karlsson and others have also been interviewed. All of those interviewed state that a greater mix of retail, housing and culture is needed in the central parts of Gothenburg to be able to recreate urban life after the pandemic. They predict a boost for cultural institutions, leisure/recreational activities, meeting places and that greater demands will be made on workplaces. We can already see that more residence are being planned in the centre, and upper floors are being reconverted from retail to housing. Through this development, space for preschools and schools often becomes a problem, and this reversion can take time (Larsson, 2021).

Mattias Karlsson still believes that the city will have an attraction after the pandemic, but a new focus is needed. An increased focus on health and well-being is a likely scenario. Ann Legeby calls for a continuity between districts. During the pandemic, people tend to stick to their neighbourhood (if it has all the services needed for everyday life), and that trend is likely to continue. It becomes important to plan for convenience and services close to the own home. Therefore, the isolation of districts needs to be avoided, and shared functions between neighbourhoods (Larsson, 2021).





1. INTEGRATED CITY MALL

NORDSTAN

Backström & Reinius 1972

THE CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF NORDSTAN

Entrance west,
Nordstan

Nordstan is a shopping mall in the centre of Gothenburg, physically connected and well-integrated to the fast movement of the central station and transportation hub of Brunnsparken. You can access the mall from all sides, and the facilities are facing both the surrounding streets and streets inside the indoor mall. The mall itself consists of 8 buildings, which have been altered and expanded a few times and is today over 300 000 m². The ground floors consist mostly of retail, and the upper floors of other functions like offices and hotels (www.wikipedia.se).

When the indoor malls, in the city and suburbs, first were built it created a new and different environment. The city mall is something between a street and a department store. They are public buildings in the sense that they are part of the city's network and connections, but privately owned and managed. Nordstan is an exception, where the glazed indoor streets constitute a public environment on private ground. The streets inside Nordstan are public, which is unusual for shopping malls, and which makes them open for people to use all day and night. Social life has here the characteristics of the public sphere, but framed with commercial interest, rules, and regulations. (For example, no bikes allowed, the need of certain permits and surveillance etc.). Bergman describes this social situation as "a regulated public street" (*Swedish: "en reglerad gatuoffentlighet"*) (2003).

V. CONTEXT



Safety issues

Almost all people living in Gothenburg have an opinion about Nordstan, and we have all visited it for both quick errands or more loose strolling and window shopping. The debate has mostly been about the criminal activities (like drug dealing) taking place inside and around the mall, which contributes to an unsafe feeling for many people. Semi-public streets and spaces have created unsafe areas and feeling. Proposed solutions are for example to add monitoring by guards and security cameras.

Accessibility and diversity

Beside the fact that some groups claim certain places for drug related activity, observations show, how there is a territorial complexity and a lot of different groups engaging in different activities.

100 m

NORDSTAN
OBSERVATIONS

Nordstan offers a variety of atmospheres and functions. Some characteristics are the broad public streets, a central square, with surrounding balcony structure, and elevators.

2.



3.



4.



1.



4.



1.



USER DIVERSITY

1. By entrance west, Lilla Bommen

2. Public street, inside Nordstan

3. Central square/Femmanhuset

3. By entrance west, Östra Hamngatan

V. CONTEXT



2. INTEGRATED SUBURB SHOPPING MALL

FRÖLUNDA TORG

Klemming & Thelaus 1966

THE CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF FRÖLUNDA TORG

Entrance west,
Frölunda torg

When Frölunda Torg was built in the 60's it was the biggest mall in the Nordic countries (today it is not even the biggest in Gothenburg). The mall has big entrances from parking lots and the tram stop, and the facilities are entered from inside the mall (with a few exceptions) (<https://frolundatorg.se/>).

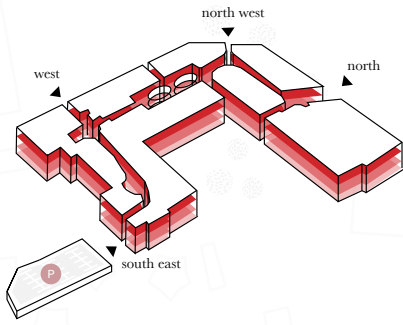
Frölunda Torg offers a special variant of the indoor square; a rectangular square room with shops on several floors along the sides. The spatial relationship between shops and public areas differs from a simple glazed hall. The stores are deep, and they often extend all the way out to the street, which provides an opportunity to market the store from the outside as well. The narrow width of the shops instead gives many shops the opportunity to be seen along the facade. Frölunda Torg can be described as semi-external, as it is very integrated in different networks of different modes of transport (public transport, pedestrian, etc.), and not only by car.

The (semi-external) shopping mall

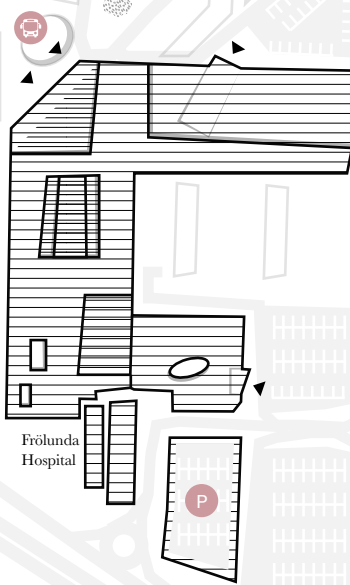
The advancement of car traffic and the functionalist urban planning of the 1960s, with satellite cities, became a starting point for external trade and the large shopping centres. These clusters of shops (malls) are located along or near major traffic routes and function as regional centres, with a large customer base. The ideals of neighbourhood planning now instead gave way to large-scale, efficiency, densified urbanity, and service structure. Inspiration came from the USA, where Victor Gruen's first shopping mall had led to many similar buildings in the mid 50's (Bergman, 2003).

The design of these buildings is large-scale, often centred around one or several squares, sometimes covered with glass roofs. Inside the shopping mall, the signage and display windows are not as important as along a shopping street, there is instead a bigger focus on commercial and information boards. The possibility to have a direct view inside the shop is also important (Bergman, 2003).

V. CONTEXT



Frölunda Culture centre
Frölunda Library



Frölunda Hospital

Västerleden

There are elements in the shopping mall to create a comfortable environment and effortless movement, which enables longer time spent in the public, expansion, and more shopping. This also creates an opportunity for visitors to reside and socialize (Harvard Project on the City, 2001).

The social function of unpredictable encounters

The stairs and escalators have a central and representative role. The shopping centre consists of many possible connections and roads to take. This branched network and selections splits up the traffic and creates multiple points where people can meet, be surprised, or walk around each other. In comparison with an open square or clear centre, you can “accidentally” come across someone you know. Historically, this trait made the greeting rituals now even more informal (compared to the formal bourgeois promenade). This contributes to a feeling that you do not need to be prepared, but it also has the opposite effect; when you constantly need to be prepared. The spatial character of the shopping mall has therefore contributed to a change in the social function of the public space, through unpredictable and temporary encounters.

100 m

FRÖLUNDA TORG
OBSERVATIONS

How to orient in the mall have for me always been a bit of a mystery, and possible roads to take and escalators to go up and down with seems almost endless. Observations also show that Frölunda Torg is creating the feeling of being in a living room, making people reside there for a longer time.

1.



2.



ATMOSPHERE

1. By entrance west, Frölunda torg

2. Central square, Frölunda torg

3. Entrance north, Frölunda torg

2.



2.



1.



3.



V. CONTEXT

Kungsgatan (east),
Gothenburg city centre

3. SHOPPING STREET

KUNGSGATAN EAST

from 1621

THE CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF KUNGSGATAN



Kungsgatan (east),
Gothenburg city centre

Kungsgatan is the oldest shopping street in the city, approximately 930 meters long and today filled with stores and restaurants. It is, according to Gothenburg City, formerly the city's main street (goteborgsstadsmuseum.se). Kungsgatan stretches between two squares (Esperantoplatsen and Harry Hjärnes plats) and goes past the Gothenburg Cathedral. Along the street many famous pieces of architecture from different eras remain, even if the store fronts and display windows are most prominent and eye-catching. In the middle of Kungsgatan, next to the church, there is a tram and bus stop which generates a lot of people and movement. The central location of the street also makes it a natural path to take moving through the city, or to reach the street as a goal itself.

All of the movement on Kungsgatan is happening outside, and all of the shopping is done inside the stores, all with its own entrance from the street. People move in a constant flow in the pedestrian street, only briefly stopping to view display windows or enter/exit the facilities. People are here during the weekend or after school/work. During the evening, the street is almost empty. An exception in the movement pattern is around the more park-like area by Domkyrkan, which creates a breathing space in the otherwise hectic street. People use the benches to sit down and chat, have an ice-cream or walk their small dog in the sparse greenery surrounding the church. People use the street to flaneur and shop as a leisure activity, to run errands and to seek recreation.

Renaissance city plan

The Gothenburg inner city area is mainly located in the old parts within the moat, which is also where Kungsgatan is located. The old part of the city, where the eastern part of Kungsgatan is located (east of Kungshöjd and Ekelundsgatan), is characterized by the original Renaissance city plan from the 17th century. A grid city built on flat ground, surrounded by harbour canals. The canals have in some cases been culverted (Västra and Östra Hamngatan).

V. CONTEXT

Operan

facing Kungsgatan:

- 14 shops (RF Visconti, Yarin Konfekt & Souvenir, Tächt, Phone Hero, Adlibris, Flying tiger, Apoteket, HiFi-klubben, MM Sports, Mixfix Souvenirer & Konfektyr, Nisses, Stefanel, Science Fiction Bokhandeln, Haglöfs Brand Store, Lloyds Apotek)
- 4 restaurants (PizzaHut, Super Sushi, Tandoori Kitchen, Targaz bar & restaurang)
- 2 café (Espresso House, Kopps)
- 1 hairdresser (Salong Fringe)
- 1 gym (Fitness24seven)

floors above:

housing (?), offices, beauty centre clinic, barnmörska gruppen

facing Kungsgatan:

- 21 shops (Arket, Lindex, Nilsons shoes, Twifit, Weekday, Ecco, HoppAhl, Dressmann, Alberts Guld, Hallbergs Guld, HM, BR, Din sko, MQ, Carlings, Grand Parfymeri, Stadium, Idrottens Bingo, Monki, Vagabond) + the entrance to Grandpassage which is a gallery
- 1 café (Espresso House)

floors above:

hair dresser, offices, law firm

facing Kungsgatan:

- 2 shops (Tre service centre, In-Ex)
- 2 grocery store and other (Lidl, 7-eleven)
- 1 office (Vasakronan)
- 1 gym (Fysiken)
- 1 youth health centre
- 1 kindergarden
- 1 restaurant (Nonna)

floors above:

offices, health centre, chiropractor, housing

facing Kungsgatan:

- 12 shops (Almedals Magasinet, Indiska, Synoptik, Apoteket hjärtat, Åhléns, Specsavers, Yves Rocher, Gina tricot, Kjell & Company, Ströms)
- 1 ice-cream stand (Pozzetti)

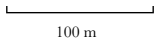
floors above:

shops continue, offices



● Functions

The map is showing what functions that can be seen and experienced from the street. Information collected through observation (and may vary).



Big chain stores

The east part of Kungsgatan is mainly for shopping and the stores is all big chains (“mainstream” products, compared to Vallgatans more exclusive ones). The older buildings, with a small-scale properties structure, is and have been easy to convert and refurbish with the agenda of entrepreneurial urbanism (compared to larger buildings of the 60’s). So even if the property structure is small scale, they are owned by a few large companies (Vasakronan, Hufudstaden, Platzer, Balder, Bygg-Göta Göteborg and Catellum) (Franzén et.al., 2016). The study is focused on the east part of Kungsgatan, since the west part is characterized by smaller older properties and varies more in character and expression (different building epochs). The west part has a greater variation of functions; restaurant, smaller shops, housing, and offices which gives this part of the street another atmosphere.

The pedestrian shopping street

The shopping street contains functions like shops, cafes, and cinemas. It promotes free strolling, without determination and with a searching gaze. Important elements along the shopping street are the shops’ signage. Signs and shop windows face the street and, through their large open glass sections, make the goods become part of the street space (“open display”). Much attention is directed from the facade and towards the ground floor. Signage in older buildings has historically been made through, more or less extensive, renovation and addition. In functionalist and later buildings, the retail facilities and design of the ground floors often become distinctive, as the remaining facade lacks decoration. Design elements such as double ceiling height, recessed ground floor, screens and large glass sections are common (Bergman, 2003).

The informal promenade of shopping

Historically, when the new phenomena of the shopping street first occurred, it came to compete with the formal promenade, park roads and boardwalks. The illuminated display windows of the shops attracted spectators and made the street more eventful, and less formal. The public life became more folksy, and less bourgeois. Peoples’ gaze is directed towards windows and their displayed contents, rather than at the people passing-by. This allowed a new kind of anonymity. To avoid unwanted meetings, and the greeting rituals that belong to the bourgeois promenade, now became possible. The working class and youths, who previously did not use the street for social activities, could, in the shopping street, take part in this public life (Bergman, 2003).

**KUNGSGATAN
OBSERVATIONS**

The experience of Kungsgatan could be divided into two different characters: the west part and east part of the hill of Kungshöjd, and Ekelundsgatan.

MOVEMENT

2.



1.



- 1. Kungsgatan west part
- 2. Kungsgatan/Ekelundsgatan
- 3. Kungsgatan mid-east part
- 4. Kungsgatan east of Östra Hamngatan
- 5. Harry Hjörnes plats

4.



3.



5.



VI.

IMPLEMENTATION

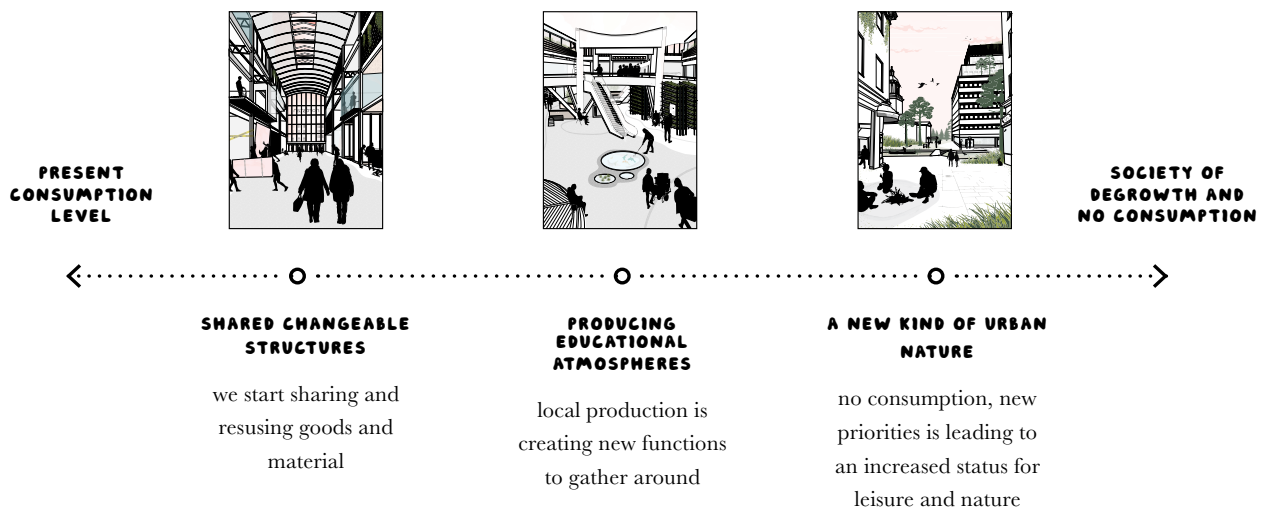


HOW WE CAN REDESIGN THE CITY

SETTING THE SCENE OF POST-CONSUMPTION

The goal with degrowth design is here interpreted as a pursuit of increasing quality of life, without the focus and measurement of economic profit or growth. Mobility, welfare, health, culture, social gathering, and creative expression are all aspects which importance are likely to increase. The design implementations intend to reinforce positive aspects, on an otherwise so sombre issue of climate emergency and social stress. The intention is not to make a visionary proposal for a new urban landscape, but instead a change or addition to the actual city. In one way be realistic, while working with big conceptual strokes, with the focus on the everyday life-part of the project.

The proposed scenarios set the scene for the design implementation. They become the context, with the question: What if the future public life does not include consumption? How could a future sustainable society, that does not build on economic growth, look like? And the design, in extension, tries to answer: How can the public space (today designed for retail) be re-designed?



Preface/Narrative: To tell the speculative story of a degrowth development, an abstract timeline is used, also working as a scale of degrowth. Events possibly occurring after each other are placed on the timeline in a fictional scenario. Selected strikes are being illustrated to show examples on how design implementations could look in each particular narrative and targeting the spaces separately.

FUTURE SCENARIO:

SHARED CHANGEABLE
STRUCTURES

SCENARIO

This scenario is characterized by self-built and self-managed, bottom-up initiatives. It is set in a future where we have started to understand that an uncertain future requires flexible solutions. Decentralisation of the building process empowers the community and offers a solution for people to themselves adjust the environment to the current needs and desires. Flexible modules and changeable structures that can change according to need, creates an environment in constant transition. Reuse and sharing are key factors.

We start to fix, borrow, reuse, and recycle things and building materials, with a clear **circular thinking**. This creates an economic freedom as well as a shift in the structural power of the building process. A first step away from the building process governed by big construction companies. This building process of change is also a part of the daily social interaction. This is a time of transition; consumption is not yet excluded, but the ecological and social benefits of sharing are becoming more clear and economic growth is no longer in charge of the city's development.

The city is a total mix of functions and activities. The clustering of people and functions, often in the form of cities, are attractive because they offer an opportunity to borrow things, and the trend of urbanisation continues.

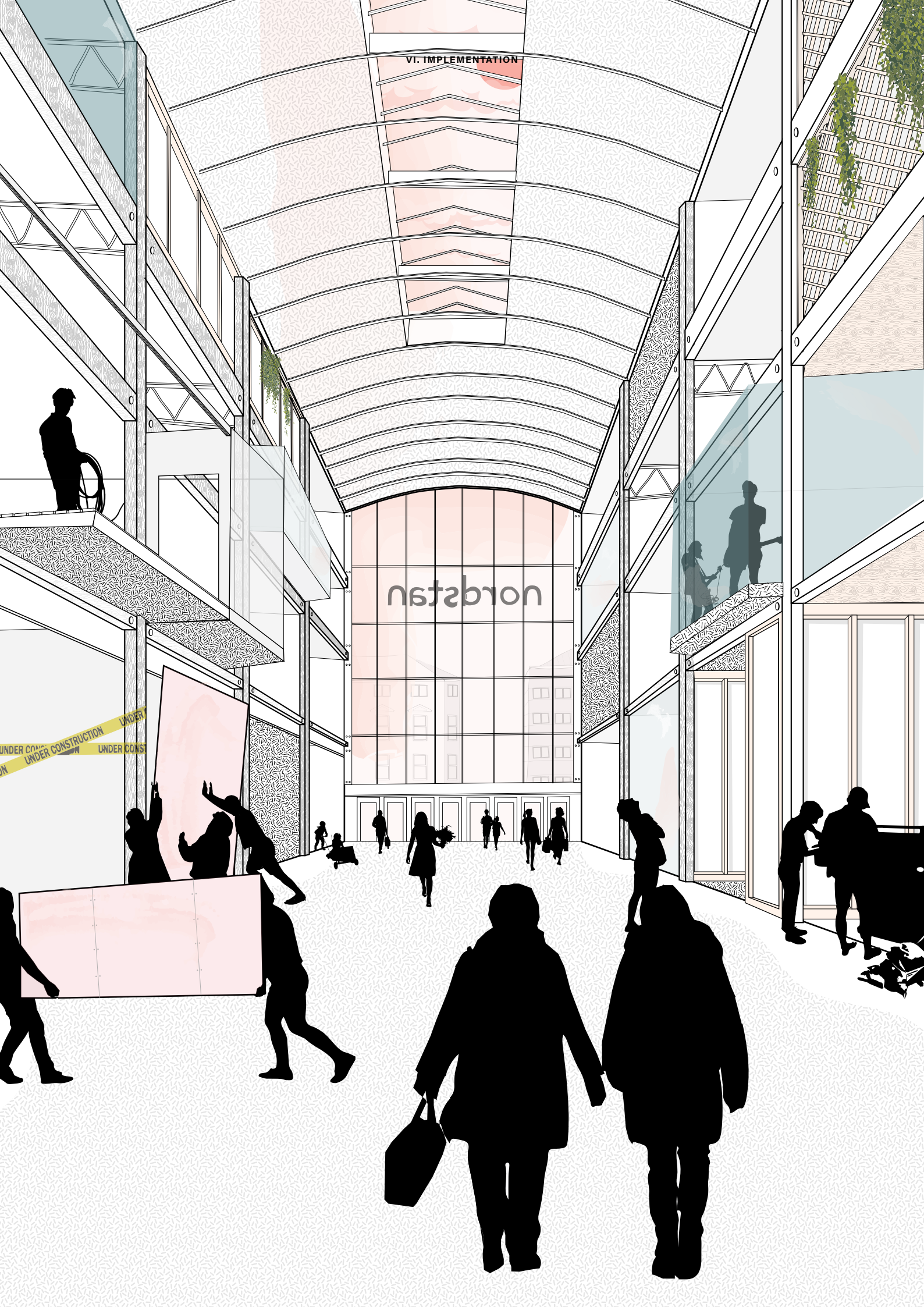
DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION

Nordstan is the object for redesign. The illustration shows a conceptual example where the whole structure has been modified into a structural grid, free to be filled with whatever modules/ cubes/pods that is desirable. Smart constructions make it possible to reuse building parts in an easy way. A myriad of functions and activities, creating user diversity and overlapping territories.

In the architectural discourse, circular economy can be about recycling building material and striving towards a construction process without waste, but it can also be about enabling or promoting a certain behaviour and lifestyle. The changeable modules are not only circular in material aspects but also in how the facilities are being used and shared, where day activities and evening activities can share the same space.

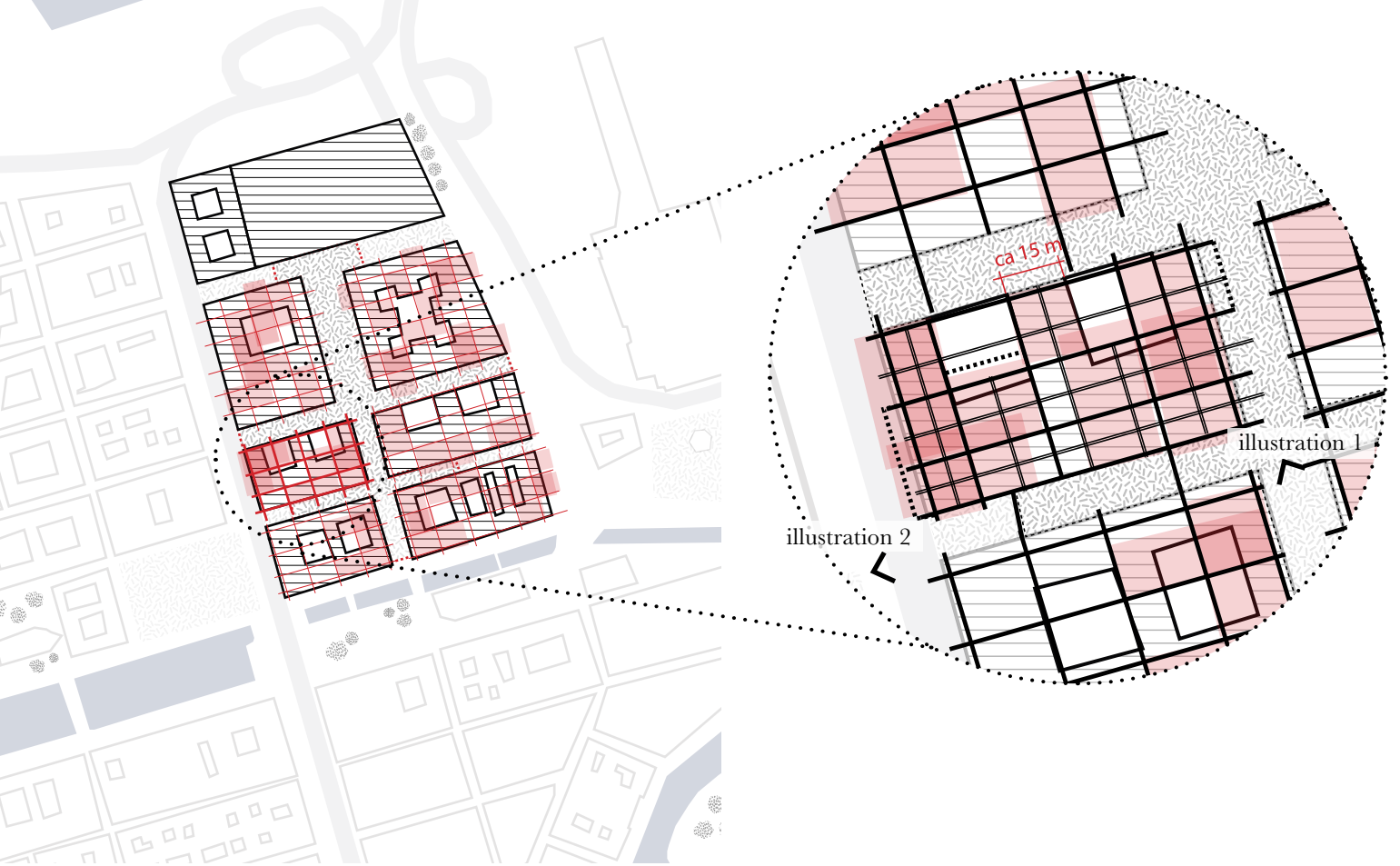
”Flexible modules and changeable structures that can change according to need, creates an environment in constant transition.”

VI. IMPLEMENTATION



nstabron

UNDER CONSTRUCTION UNDER CONSTRUCTION UNDER CONSTRUCTION



PRECONDITIONS

context



NORDSTAN
CITY SHOPPING MALL

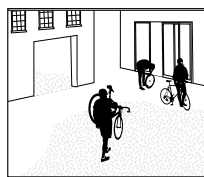
shopping quality



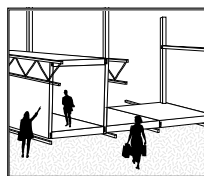
USER DIVERSITY
ACCESSIBLE ACTIVITIES

GOAL

degrowth



2. ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION
SHARING



5. FUTURE NEEDS
FLEXIBILITY

The changeable structures in this scenario is also a mean for spreading knowledge within the community, through the building process. Reuse and recycle are creating meeting places.

The structure of the buildings in Nordstan are emptied to create a constructive grid; that can be filled with modules, vertically and horizontally. Facilities for shopping are extraordinarily suitable for this approach, because of their unusual emptiness and large open spaces. When the interior furniture related to shopping (shelves etc.) are removed, there is not much left separating it from the constructive grid. The module system is therefore a way to utilize the physical structure of shopping malls.

The illustration shows how the building's constructional grid structure enables a variation of changeable space.



FUTURE SCENARIO:

PRODUCING EDUCATIONAL ATMOSPHERES

SCENARIO

The production of food and goods is an increasing global problem. Decentralisation continues even further, and we are starting to become more self-sufficient. We find new functions to gather around. Like production, self-management, and self-built environments. It is creating a strong community, and local self-sufficiency. The local community is important, and the central parts of Gothenburg are no longer superior in attractiveness.

This scenario is set in a future where materialistic consumption is no longer a leisure. Restaurants and services consumption are still relevant, but **all from local resources**. The city centre is not the most attractive place, but instead several smaller centres throughout the city.

DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION

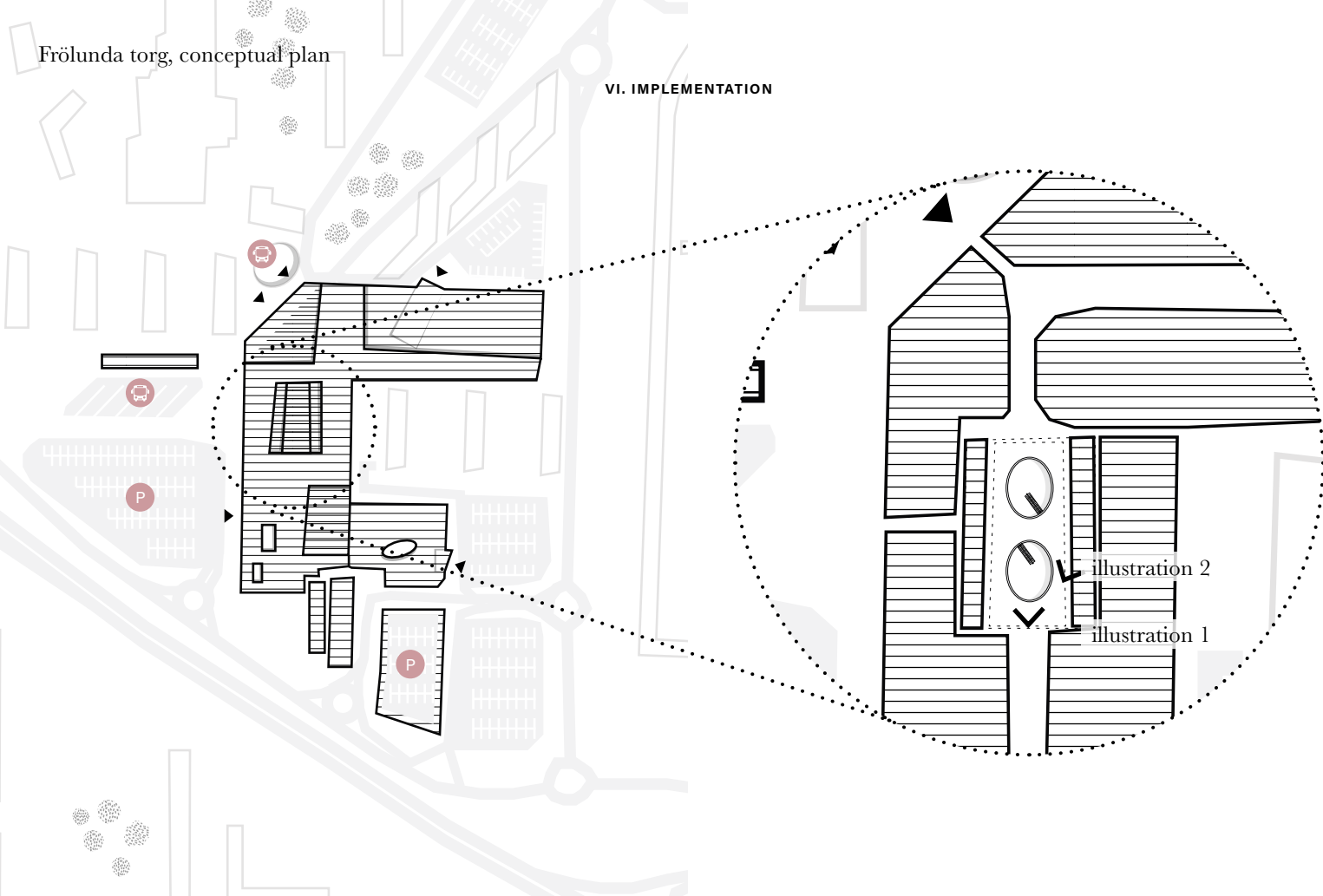
Frölunda Torg is the object for redesign. The indoor environment is still an important gathering point in the Swedish climate. Shopping malls no longer have a commercial role but are converted into meeting places characterized by creation and knowledge sharing. The artificial climate of Frölunda Torg makes it a suitable place to create a comfortable environment for social and educational gathering.

New technology and advanced aquaponic farming are making the indoor environment a perfectly suitable climate to grow vegetables. Food production takes place in indoor green houses and vertical farms, and is functioning both as a food source and educational tool. The space is flexible and reversible, to support a coexistence of different activities.

”Food production takes place in indoor green houses and vertical farms, and is functioning both as a food source and educational tool.”

VI. IMPLEMENTATION





PRECONDITIONS

context



FRÖLUNDA TORG
SUBURB
SHOPPING MALL

shopping quality



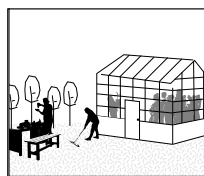
ATMOSPHERE
SHELTER &
COMFORT

GOAL

degrowth



1. PRODUCTION
SELF SUFFICIENCY



4. CITIZENS' NEEDS
DECENTRALISATION

Knowledge is important to make the most of the local resources. Every resource in society is a part of a cycle, and the knowledge to utilize and produce things has a high status. Skill development and classes (cooking, bike repairing, fixing clothes, study circle, library, growing vegetables etc.) is now not only necessary but also a way of socializing. A high level of communal knowledge enables bottom-up initiatives and control over the production line. This leads to increased urban resilience and empowerment in the local community.

**ILLUSTRATION:
ARTIFICIAL CLIMATE FOR
PLANTS**

The illustration shows how flexible facilities can be used for combining food production and social functions.



FUTURE SCENARIO:

A NEW KIND OF URBAN NATURE

SCENARIO

The scenario is set in a future where no kind of consumption is happening in the city (not material nor services). Basic goods, like food and medicine are produced together in the community or provided, other necessities and objects are shared and lent. This welfare is based on volunteering and communal responsibility, without focus on private ownership. The focus is qualitative housing, free social activities, and democratization of the public room. **Outdoor activities** and **cultural experience** attract people to the city centre.

Nature is roaming free in the city. Play is not limited to playgrounds and nature experience to certain trails. Nature is free, wild, and the movement in it is limitless. When economic growth and profit no longer is a priority, central plots stop interesting investors, and the city buys back the buildings and plots in the central area. It does not have to be exploited as much (before for economic reasons) and central parts can be used as a nature preserve. Creating a breathing space for animals and insects, contributing to vital ecosystem-services like pollination. Humans get more knowledge about flora and fauna and know how to respect the habitats of other species.

Mobility solutions can now be prioritized. Connectivity and an even network of basic service makes people move on foot, by free rental bikes or with free public transport. Cars are banned from the city centre. Paths occur organically from the need of movement, through a natural and wild landscape.

DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION

The west part of Kungsgatan is the object of redesign. The illustration shows an example of when nature is prioritized in the central parts of the city. Different kinds of nature are created; parks, camping and leisure areas, wild nature for animal habitats. The culverted canals are re-opened. This offers habitats for seabirds, insects, and fish.

When Kungsgatan was a shopping street, it was a street where a lot of physical and social exchange was happening. It provided the quality of a promenade between display windows and interesting objects to look at. When the shopping and display windows disappeared (became mostly housing), we needed something else to look at during our promenade through the city centre. The west part of Kungsgatan becomes a sculpture park.

”Different kinds of nature are created; parks, camping and leisure areas, wild nature for animal habitats.”

VI. IMPLEMENTATION





PRECONDITIONS

context



**KUNGSATAN
SHOPPING
STREET**

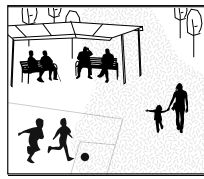
shopping quality



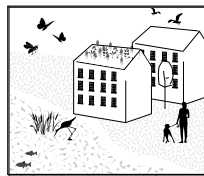
**MOVEMENT
THE PROMENADE**

GOAL

degrowth



**3. SOCIALLY
SUSTAINABLE
CONSUMPTION
LEISURE & CULTURE**



**6. ECOLOGICAL
NEEDS
GREENERY**

The street retains its functions as an important street to provide the basic services and needs, to keep the feeling of accessibility. Everyone has a reason to stay there and feel comfortable. Play is free; no spatial restraints, no economic costs. Kids can use the whole city centre as a playground. Adults can enjoy culture, sport, nature and social activities without entrance fees or the demand of consumption. The city is experience based, with a new view on labour and leisure. The urban activities are now:

- Culture and sporting events and practicing: enhancing cultural buildings, watching, and participating (e.g. theatre, music, art, sport)
- Nature experience: wild nature for other species, parks, camping, knowledge about flora and fauna, outdoor classrooms.

The existing buildings are reconverted, maintained, and taken care of to last long. There is a focus on tactility and sustainable materials, and all new built additions are made in local materials, like wood, rammed earth/mud, and straw.



ILLUSTRATION: NEW STATUS ON LEISURE

The illustration shows how a sculpture park and playground is combined to create a free environment for play and art.

VII.

CONCLUSION



WHAT TO LEARN FROM SPECULATION

CONCLUSION

What would happen to the social function if we remove the act of consumption in the physical public space? A risk, I see, when erasing retail in the public space is that these spaces instead will be privatized, because of economic reasons. Therefore, I see degrowth as an option to maintain social functions, even without retail. We need to find new functions to gather around, and we need to redefine the role of the citizen and the role of the city.

The master thesis has investigated the social function of shopping environments. I have, through literature studies and observations, found that these environments can provide a sense of accessibility through the creation of **user diversity** (territorial complexity), and more concrete through the addition of multiple functions which are targeting different groups. This is creating the feeling that one has a reason and justification to be there. It can, paradoxically, also create the opposite feeling, of exclusion, if one is not the targeted group (often people without socio-economic means). Shopping can also limit the political function of space, by privatizing it. Nordstan is an example of a public place with complexity, where the same space has different purposes and uses, and where both commercial and political activities take place. This may be because the streets in the mall are public streets, and therefore officially open for all. One can see, how many different groups of people feel welcome to be there and “hang out”, which creates a cultural and social richness and makes societal conflicts visible. Through the motion, of welcoming everybody, it also welcomes people that for some are “unwelcome”, and makes other people feel unsafe. How the public environment can be open to all and yet maintain the feeling of safety, is a far from simple problem.

I have also found how shopping environments provide a special social function through its **atmosphere**. This is often in the shape of a sheltered indoor environment, creating comfort and a place to socialize. Frölunda Torg provides this atmosphere and observations show how it becomes a place to gather for many groups (both youths and elderly for example). Artificial climate was a part of Constant’s New Babylon and, to some extent, Yona Friedman’s Spatial City. They believed that the future was comfortable.

Shopping environments also provide a social function through the **movement** it enables and the liberating functions it has. To promenade through the city was historically a bourgeois activity, but when shopping was introduced to the public streets, the working class could access this social activity as well. Kungsgatan is an example of a shopping street where different groups can use it in different ways. The movement in the shopping mall, and its indoor climate, extended the informality of how we move through public environments. It also introduced variation and unexpected movement and encounters. This phenomenon is both liberating and stressful (impulsive, unpredictable).

The following reflections will be divided into three headlines: the method, the citizen, and the city. This is to be able to reflect on the development of this master thesis and choice of method, on the role of the citizen (today and in an alternative future of degrowth), and last on the changing function, attractiveness and role of the urban city.

THE METHOD

I can see a clear trend among my fellow classmates to use fiction and critical or speculative design. Maybe the reason can revolve from the catastrophic state the planet is in (started in the 70's when discovering that there was a planetary limit to the growth), which according to Dunne & Raby (2013) led to the downgrading of our dreams to hopes. We then start to speculate, to search for positive aspects or possible solutions in a world that is becoming far too complex to deal with in one visionary proposal.

Through this master thesis, I can see, that speculative design is the appropriate option when raising this question, of degrowth and the future of shopping environments. To propose one vision or solution here is not possible, or even interesting, because of the question's uncertain nature. But instead, to take on the challenge of imagining a future of degrowth and imagining a city where the public life derives from something other than consumption. Here architects can have a central role and contribute to the development with their trained capacities to imagine, formulate and design concrete alternatives and futures not yet thought of.

THE CITIZEN

Work vs. play

Throughout the research and exploration of the scenarios, I have noticed how the notion of play and leisure is vital to the discussion of a development beyond consumption. Finding pleasure and entertainment in new functions, not materialistic happiness. Common for the discussions and studied projects is that an urban future of degrowth, is dynamic and transformative with a big focus on collective responsibility and FUN (leisure and experience). The two extremes, where the technological development goes in different directions, would be:

1) Advanced "high" technology is creating automation and liberates people from labour. This is based on a smaller group of elitists developing the technology. One can see how Constant's and Friedman's concepts and ideas are revived or reinterpreted by more contemporary project like "Futures Beyond GDP Growth", where they all deal with automation and digitalization to free citizens from wage labour, to focus on social interaction, creativity, and experiences. Feeling of meaning and responsibility is now connected to creative expression and social activity.

2) Simple "low" technology is making it accessible to all to use and create. This is based on the idea that everybody should be able to understand and manage the technology. Everybody is together responsible of the collective work and production. The society is based on a clear civic responsibility and volunteering, as well as high level of knowledge within the community. R-Urban (aaa) is an example of the search for collectively and communal belonging, which also creates a more personal freedom (but within the community).

The need of change

As Bauman described, through the consumer society we seek constant renewal. This is also a topic in both Constant's New Babylon and Friedman's Spatial City; the constant transformation and letting the environment obey to our every instant need. Maybe it is a question of changing our attitude and settle with the things we have, and the way things are, but maybe there is a

profound need to be able to change our local environment? To then create an environment that lets us do this without using up more resources could spare the environment a lot of harm. Instead of consuming more things, we can alter what we already have around us, and be sensitive to the landscape around (urban or nature).

THE CITY

Scenarios and implementations

I, once again, stress that the design implementations are a simplification and does not consider all of the complexity and basic needs and functions that a society provides. However, despite this limitation, they can be fuel for discussion. Through the implementations I want to raise three main topics:

- *Flexibility* is needed to be prepared for all futures. Flexible structures and building processes can create a democratic use of the city and efficient use of our resources. We can also provide change without consuming more.
- *Production* needs to become more local and small scale. Through education, awareness can be raised and create the best use of the collective knowledge.
- *Nature* needs to get a higher priority in our cities. Ecosystem services, human and animal health and leisure. A lot of the social meetings today cost money, which is commoditising social gathering, but nature experience has a great potential of offering an alternative in a future of degrowth.

The changing identity of Gothenburg

Gothenburg has many qualities related to its heritage and identity of industry and cultural diversity, but the entrepreneurial urbanism is widely established, and too much attention and power is given to the big companies and their economic interest. The city centre needs to become more diverse in its functions. The observations made during the corona pandemic becomes a good argument (“sneak peek”) on degrowth and its new conditions. In a future without economic growth as driving force, entrepreneurial urbanism does not have power or meaning. The city does not have to compete or be “sold in”, at least not with the purpose of profiting on consumers, but instead for culture, pride, or identity. The city can focus on solving the needs and desires of its inhabitants and not to attract investors. Degrowth can therefore be seen as a solution to entrepreneurial urbanism and gentrification.

New Babylon suggested the creation of *one* global city. Maybe that is a bit radical, and I can see the benefits of having different gradients or differences between cultures (urban and rural etc.). I believe that the end of measuring growth, and thereby cities competing (within the entrepreneurial urbanism) would bring more attention and priority to the citizens and environment, and in extension lead to a more free development cities’ specific identity. To achieve this, we need to speculate and design new scenarios for the future. We need to redesign the commercial public life, and form the built environment to support an urbanity beyond consumption.

VIII.

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Figure 2: Yona Friedman's Spatial City (drawing)

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