DEMOCRATICITY

Democratic Opportunity and the Planning of Public Space

Jakob Danckwardt-Lillieström

**Chalmers school of Architecture,
Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering**

Examiner: Emílio da Cruz Brandão
Tutor: Joaquim Tarrasó

Master thesis from Chalmers School of Architecture 2018

Democraticity

Understanding and shaping the future of democratic public spaces in Gothenburg

Author: Jakob Danckwardt-Lillieström

Examiner: Emílio da Cruz Brandão

Tutor: Joaquim Tarrasó

Master Program in Designing for Sustainable Development

Chalmers School of Architecture, department of Architecture of Architecture and Civil Engineering, Chalmers University

CHALMERS
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

*DEMOCRATI*CITY

DEMOCRATIC OPPORTUNITY AND THE PLANNING OF PUBLIC SPACE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The healthiness of a democratic society can be observed through its public spaces. The freedom it provides or limits, the activity it allows or restricts, and the representations it contains. Public space is both shaped by and shapes the society it exists in.

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a broad perspective on the value of public space in a democratic society. Furthermore, it has the extended purpose of dissecting how contemporary planning practices might be part unintentionally in reproducing non-inclusive and mono-functional public spaces. It then aims to define and explore a power-critical approach to planning of public spaces, where the guiding principles are based on the uses and users that are often displaced or ignored in contemporary planning.

The research consists of three parts. Through literature studies and observations, a reasoning on how public space shapes and shapes society takes form. The political potential of planning practice is established, and the normative role of the planner is discussed. Furthermore, the connection between democratic values, public space development and distribution of resources is established. Following this reasoning, a planning approach that establishes public spaces as an essential part of democratic society is formulated. This approach is developed to be aware of the normative role of the planner, and aims to bring in new perspectives into how public spaces are shaped and developed.

This approach is then evaluated through testing on the shopping mall Nordstan, a space that is simultaneously public and private. Observations and interviews were then used to map out the public uses of the shopping mall and surrounding spaces, following the developed approach. A design proposal was created in order to both highlight the ideals that govern the planning of public space, and provide a vision for a public reclamation of the space. The results; both the approach and the proposal; makes clear the importance of accessible public space for modern democratic society, and asks questions on for whom public spaces really are planned and managed.

INTRODU

BACKGROUND

In the months leading up to this study, an increased number reports about lack of safety and of conflict within public spaces in Gothenburg surfaced in local media (Mediearkivet, retrieved on 2016-02-17). The problems were most clearly pronounced in the semi-public spaces of Nordstan, a centrally located semi-public shopping mall.

The response focused on further control of public spaces of the mall, as well as on repercussions on the individuals that were seen as the source of the problems. This encouragement seemed at odds with how a public space should function in a democratic society. The response begged to ask the question why. Why is this semi-public mall the focus of these restrictions; is it because it not seen as a public space? Is it the view of the people that are causing the trouble? Or is this part of a larger trend in the planning and development of public spaces, where restrictions and control are becoming a natural part of how we view our common areas?

Public space shapes society and is shaped by society. It can be said that public spaces act as a mirror of the values and norms of society. In addition; how public spaces are used, and the response to that use, plays a large part in defining how those same values and norms evolve over time. This happens not only in overtly political actions such as manifestations, but also through the everyday use of space by people. In recent years, the interest in the development of public space has experienced a renewed interest, where the attractiveness of cities central areas has become an integrated part of its market appeal in a global competition for visitors and new residents. Movements such as *New Urbanism*, or methods of public-private collaboration such as the development of *Business Improvement Districts*, are examples of that. Valuing public space in terms of what income it can generate for a city has led to a strong emphasis on controlling the use of public space; keeping it clean, safe and in order – often with the outspoken interest of enhancing the commercial values of public spaces.

In a democratic society, the equal opportunity of every person to take part in the shaping of society and its resources is a fundamental value. In the planning and

UCTION

development of contemporary Swedish cities, tendencies of the opposite can be seen. Through planning that prioritizes specific interests over the common, or planning that is aimed at enhancing spaces for specific groups while simultaneously excluding others; a trend of widespread *de-democratization* of public spaces can be traced. Much of the planning field is used to the idea of *best-practice* – the current best ways of achieving a goal. But, by the lack of a critical perspective on what effects contemporary planning practices might have, there is the risk of shaping cities where only the values and norms of those already influential is cared for. Best-practice planning hold the risk of constantly reproducing hegemony, and in this case, that can mean public spaces where there is no space for people of various needs or backgrounds, and in extension cities that are unable to live up fundamental democratic values. Even if that is the opposite of the intention of the planning goals.

In this thesis, a theoretical framework for understanding how the use of public space takes part in shaping society will be put forward. An explanation why planning only for

specific uses and users might be a danger to an equal and democratic society will be formulated through examples. Following this explanatory model, a framework of an approach that takes on a norm-critical approach to planning in an existing public space will be sketched out. That approach is then tested and applied to the semi-public spaces of Nordstan, where influence and control is already a major risk. The results are then evaluated. The aim is to challenge how we view and plan public spaces, providing example of how a critical yet pragmatic approach to planning could work; with the purpose of providing public spaces that further strengthen a democratic, just and open society.

So, in response to the questions asked at the early stages of the research, this thesis will not only try to answer the questions of why Nordstan became the focal point of restrictions on the public use of the spaces. It will also try and connect that to a critique of more wide-spread trends in the planning of public spaces, as well as provide pragmatic yet norm-critical ways to approach the planning of a public space.

PROBLEM FORMULATION

The introduction to this thesis mentions a number of problems and tendencies within urban planning, media usage, crime prevention and political action. The problems formulated in this thesis are all related to how we, as a society, use, understand and affect our public spaces. Depending on how you frame these problems, you could reach very different answers on how to approach the planning of public spaces. This research departs in the idea that public spaces are a resource within a democratic society, and therefore should be accessible to all people. The problem then, is that restrictions on the use of public spaces as a reaction to how they are used is limiting that access to certain, often underprivileged groups of people. By not planning and managing public spaces that can accommodate conflicts, or that are flexible in their usage that people can use them in different ways, the democratic value of public space is being undermined. The aim of the thesis is to provide a model explaining why and how this happens, and to provide an approach to planning that – if not solves – at least acknowledges these problems in the process. The purpose is to challenge the view of public spaces as free of conflict, and to the challenge the urban planning field into taking a power-critical approach to the planning of public spaces.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The problem formulation of the thesis is wide and encompasses several questions. In order to narrow down the research, the questions are focused on the specific goals of understanding planning tendencies, developing an approach to planning and evaluating that approach through the application on a specific site. The questions then are:

→ Are there tendencies in the development of public spaces that exclude certain groups or actions from those public spaces? And if that's the case, how does these tendencies look, and what motivations lie behind them?

→ Is it possible to develop an approach to the planning of public spaces that allow for norm-critical perspectives on the value of those spaces? If it is; how would such an approach work?

METHOD

In order to achieve answers to the questions asked in this thesis, a research method must be defined. As David Wang writes in *Diagramming Design Research*, it is important to distinguish between a research strategy and a research tactic. Strategies are ways of knowing how comes to be, such as understanding the correlation between rain and wet pavement. Tactics, on the other hand, are the ways information can be produced and evaluated. One such example is conducting interviews, or comparing statistics (Wang, 2007, pp. 36–37). In this thesis, a mix of strategies and research tactics are combined in order to reach for conclusions to the research questions. The main strategy of the thesis is a qualitative study, where logical conclusions from literature review, discourse analysis and statistics form the basis for a way of approaching the development of a public space. The developed approach becomes a way of analyzing the value of a public space from a specific perspective, and a way of formulating design criteria for developing that space in a specified direction. The approach uses observations, morphological studies, interviews and study of physical objects in order to produce data on the analyzed space. After this, a set of design criteria is developed and is used to test how a space would develop if these criteria were followed; a type of qualitative simulation. The results of that that change is then discussed, as a simulated case-study, following the approach developed before. In further research, the results of this case-study of the design proposal could provide the foundation for revision of the model developed, providing data on itself. At its foundation, this method combines several types of research strategies and tactics, with a qualitative research strategy providing the backbone – as both the data and the results is complex and requires interpretation. By critically analyzing planning tendencies and trends, and framing that in a theoretical explanative model, the possibility of developing a critical yet pragmatic design approach is created. Through that approach, a method of collecting and understanding data exists. By then simulating and testing that approach, further refinement of the planning approach is possible.

Part II. Theoretical understanding

Part III. Development of planning approach

THEORY

APPROACH
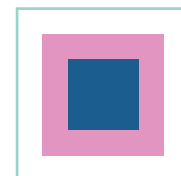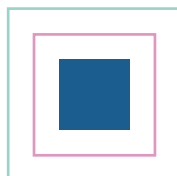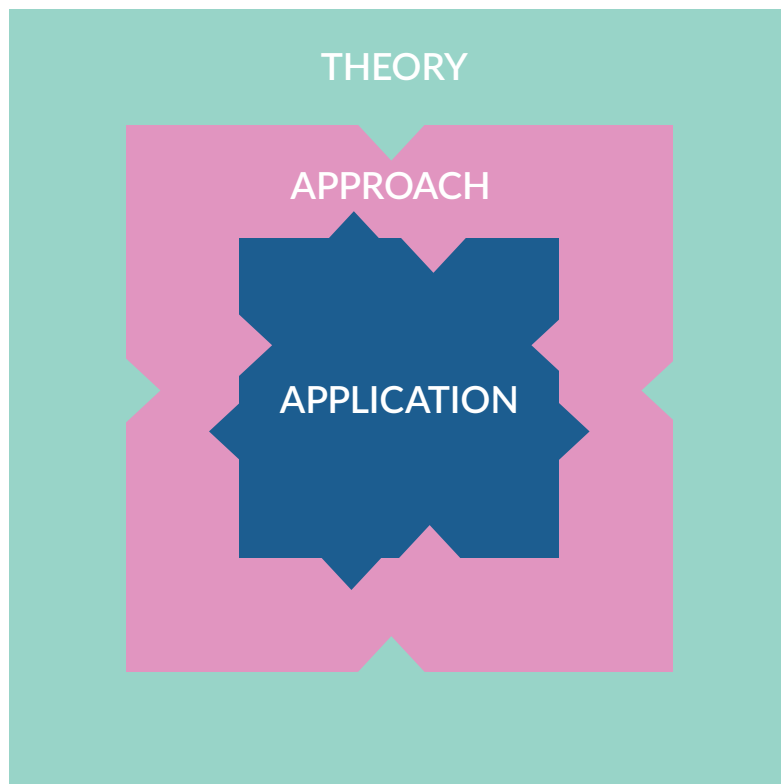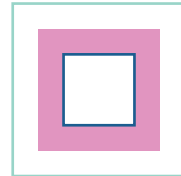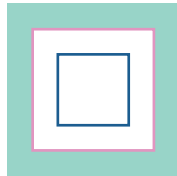
APPLICATION

Part IV. Application of approach

Part V. Evaluation of approach

DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Delimitations describe what the research does not focus on, even though it might have made sense in terms of the questions asked. The delimitations are defined by the approach, the method and the scope of the research.
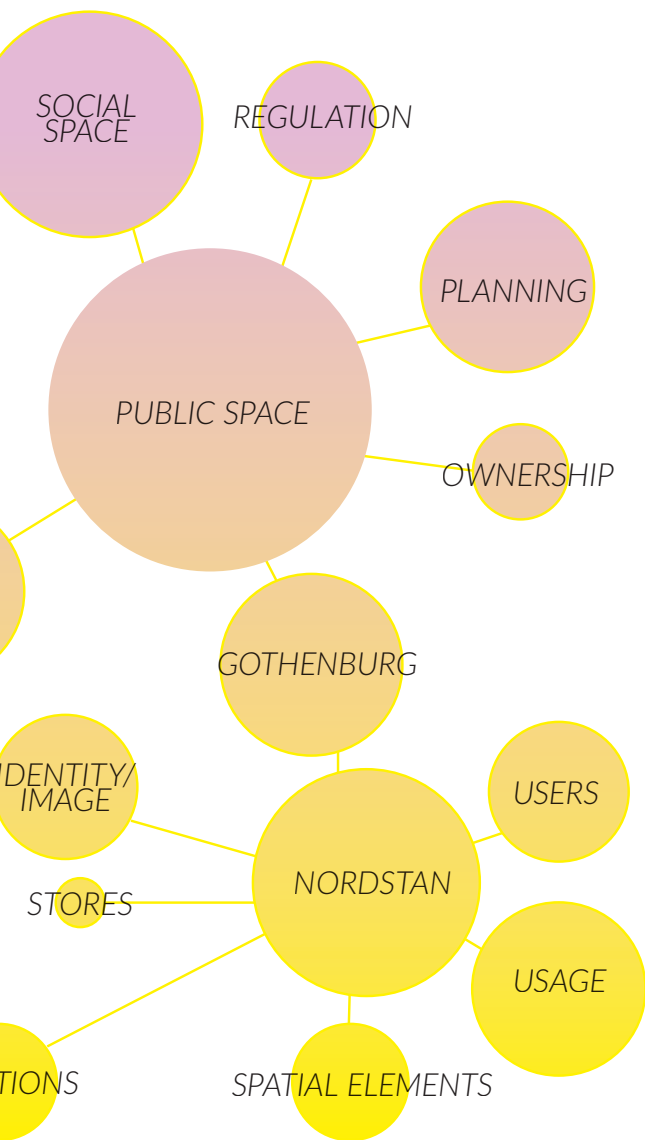
In this thesis, the description of public space is generalized in terms of its function, and does not go into describing the use of specific public spaces. The evaluation of planning practices is limited in scope to a few planning cases in recent Gothenburg history. In terms of Nordstan as an area of study, the analysis is limited to a general view of the physical attributes of the spaces. It does not consider the ownership of the spaces, how it is regulated in rules or law, or how it has developed in recent years. The connections to the surrounding spaces are understood as physical connections, leaving out associative or social connections. In researching how the spaces are used, only people from the groups that use the spaces for other activities are interviewed; framing the potentials of the space from only their perspective. In analyzing the results of the design proposal only the self-developed research method is applied, and no comparison to other ways of evaluating the results was made. The design itself only solves the design criteria laid out in the design approach, and does not consider how a proposal would be implemented. Furthermore, the scope of the research is limited to only one iteration of developing a planning approach and applying it – no further development or evaluation is made.

To evaluate the benefits of the chosen delimitations it is of benefit to evaluate other possible methodologies. One way could have been to interview different stakeholders and users of Nordstan and comparing their perspectives, in order to create a nuanced image of the usage of the mall. By using that information, a more neutral comparison of the values of the spaces for different groups have been made. However, in the case of this research, the value of the approach is to depart in a clear standpoint of redistributing resources across the city; this requires identifying and strengthening less privileged groups. In this case this means those with less access to resources. In the theoretical framing of the thesis it is made clear that the aim is to provide a planning approach that shifts the perspective from the mainstream usage to the less-seen values. Through this, the decision to only include the perspective of one group was made. Another limitation in this is that the design criteria developed from the approach was never evaluated and discussed with the stakeholders it was intended to strengthen. This can be motivated by the aim of the thesis, which is to provide a new planning perspective. The applicability of

PHYSICAL SPACE

FUNCT

SOCIAL SPACE

REGULATION

PLANNING

PUBLIC SPACE

OWNERSHIP

GOTHENBURG

IDENTITY/ IMAGE

USERS

NORDSTAN

STORES

USAGE

TIONS

SPATIAL ELEMENTS

The size of the bubble represents the importance of the subject in the research
Yellow: Spatial analysis
Pink: Socio-political analysis

the proposal results was never a main issue; it was mainly a way of further understanding the potentials of planning democratic public spaces. In further research, an evaluation of the planning proposal could provide potential for developing a more refined and widely applicable planning model.

The questions and aims, as well as the theory, framed in this thesis makes a number of assumptions. These are statements or ideas that are assumed true or self-explanatory, and therefore not further developed. As an initial listing, these assumptions include the following, but more might be part of the development of the theoretical ideas. Initially, as the frame of research is Gothenburg, Sweden, it is assumed that the political system in what can be defined as a liberal democracy. It is further assumed that this political system is considered wanted by the majority of the population, as well as by the elected politicians. In addition, it is assumed that humans are social being and that the reasons for people to act the way they do is complex and based on a number of social and behavioral patterns. To contextualize, the idea that people are solely rational and acting only out of complex reason – as *homo oeconomicus* - is considered to limited a description in the context of this thesis (Brown, 2015, pp. 80–85). Lastly, in the frame of this thesis it is considered given that society and the norms that shapes it are social constructs, created through the interactions of people in society. One of the fundamental points of departure for the method is the idea of discourses creating norms. That there might be norms or behavior that are not socially constructed is not considered within the frame of this thesis (Fredriksson, 2014, pp. 27–28)

PART II.

THEORET

UNDERST

TICAL
TANDING

INTRODUCTION

We can all easily understand that both so-cial relations and cities are complex sys-tems, where every is piece is connected and affecting all other pieces. The *whys* and *hows* of the use of a space is not static, nor can it be explained with simple models. The physical attributes of a space, the expecta-tions placed on its use, the connections to surrounding areas, its history – these are all crucial elements in understanding the val-ue of a space. This thesis is a work in the intersection between the fields of urban studies and architectural theory, bringing together theory and method from different disciplines. The aim of the research is to explain what contemporary Swedish plan-ning tendencies might lead to in terms of development of public spaces, as well as providing a power-critical approach to the planning of these spaces. When asking questions on not only how to achieve a planning goal, but also why and for whom it should be reached, there is a need to go outside the boundaries set by a more re-sult-oriented architectural field and delve deeper into critical social understanding, which is where the field of urban studies comes in. This also relates to that much of

architectural theory is based on the idea of finding a *better* way of achieving something, be it a method or a design solution. This leads to a theoretical understanding that is often inherently lacking in self-criticism (Fredriksson, 2014, p. 19).The theoretical field of urban studies, on the other hand, is often missing the pragmatic or "how-do-i-do-this"-perspective of the architectural field. The goal in combining both these fields is to provide a practical approach to planning that is both aware of what norms it reproduces, and at the same time can be a tool for development and planning.
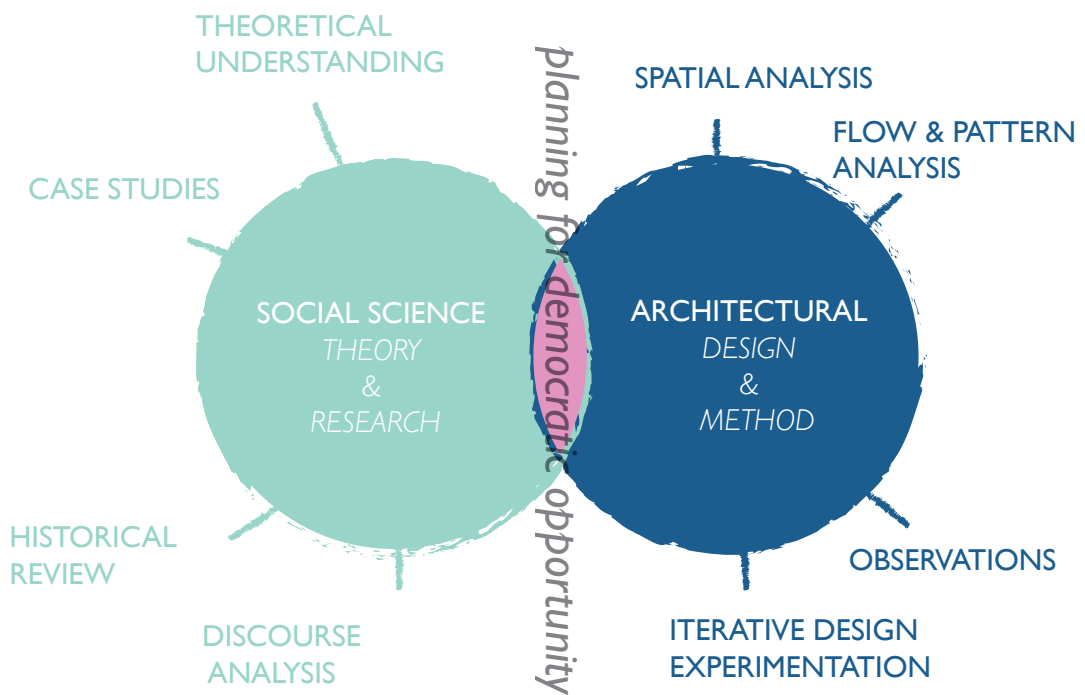
As described in the chapter on method, the research uses a way of logical reasoning and case studies to create an understanding of the role of public space in democratic society, as well as what issues and challenges the planning and use of public spaces is facing today, with a delimitation on central parts of Gothenburg, Sweden. Through this background and the reasoning, a planning approach is developed. That approach is then applied in a redevelopment of an area. This is done in order to test and evaluate the approach, and in addition to challenge the discourse on how planning problems are formulated and how solutions are applied.

In order to approach all of these questions, we need to take a few steps back. The development of the public space is contemporary with the development of the settlement. The connections between the private residences, stores and industries always had to be managed in a collaborative way. These spaces, ranging from squares and streets to parks and waterways, formed the backbones of villages and cities. Hosting commercial activities, recreation and transport, the value of public spaces became increasingly important. Coinciding the political developments of the enlightenment, the importance and association of public spaces with that of political action grew (Franzén, Hertting, & Thörn, 2016, p. 1).The development democratic systems and the idea of a just and equal society became closely associated with that of the public space. The development of the public sphere during the 18th century mostly took place within the new semi-public establishments of coffeehouses and the like, but the grand manifestations and visible political action became closely associated with the public spaces of the city; the streets and the squares (Fraser, 1990, p. 3). The democratic system is still the prevalent system in western Europe, and specifically in Sweden. The symbolic value of public spaces in the democratic system is often repeated, and is clearly visible in how many symbolic spaces are used for political action and manifestation, hosting demonstrations and rallies (Franzén et al., 2016, pp. 2–5). But the importance of public spaces for a democratic society is not limited to its symbolic value, and the symbolic value is not the main issue when looking at how public spaces are being changed and challenged today. In order to gain a deeper understanding on why public spaces are important to democratic society, we need to look at what the value of being *in the public sphere is*. We need to understand how space can be created, changed and understood from different spatial and social perspectives. We also need to understand in what ways democratic values and distribution of resources

can be seen as related to having access to that public sphere. After that, a description of how recent **neoliberal** planning trends- and tendencies are affecting the planning of public spaces in Gothenburg, as well as a model of why a critical approach to planning is needed. Lastly, connecting these descriptions and ideas on the importance of public space, how it created, planned and used, a case for why public spaces need to be able to accommodate different uses and accept conflict as an integral part of its use is made. These ideas all form the backbone of the critical planning approach that is developed as part of the research.

THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

FLOW & PATTERN ANALYSIS

CASE STUDIES

planning for democratic opportunity

SOCIAL SCIENCE
THEORY
&
RESEARCH

ARCHITECTURAL
DESIGN
&
METHOD

HISTORICAL REVIEW

OBSERVATIONS

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

ITERATIVE DESIGN EXPERIMENTATION

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Definitions of discourse, power, and the public sphere – a methodological approach.

As an introduction there are several concepts and points of departure that needs to be explained. These concepts are the backbone of the theoretical reasoning and explains how the development of public spaces is part in the development of broader societal structures. A discursive methodology provides an approach to understanding how norms and societal structures, in society, as a public sphere, but also in space, in how spaces are understood and shaped. This ties into an understanding of power being reproduced as part of a hegemony, that is; hierarchical orders in society is upheld by the norms and systems produced, intentionally or unintentionally, by social groups that hold positions of power. This concept is crucial in understanding how the planning of public space can tie into segregation and unequal division of resources, even if the intention is the opposite. These concepts form the analytical and methodological framework for the theoretical understanding of the research questions.

Discourse

This thesis takes on a discursive analytical and methodological approach in order to describe the phenomena and tendencies studied. It should be stated that the reference to discourse in not in the sense of a general discourse on a subject, but used in a wider aspect to define how societal order is created. The foundation of this approach is based on a social-constructivist perspective and the claim is that all social phenomena are constructed and disregards any social order as "given" or "natural" (Fredriksson, 2014, p. 22). How society is structured and arranged is subject to continuous change, and there is no "natural" states of social order. Social structures and the understanding of objects and spaces are never finished or fixed, but rather given meaning through language, use and interpretation (Tunström, 2009, p. 24). This means the social structures and meaning can be understood as constantly shifting, with one meaning or structure always gaining dominance over other possible structures. The establishment of a certain order is a political act, as it requires the exclusion of all interpretations not picked. As time passes, many structures become so fundamental to society that they are no longer contested, and new interpretations are laid on top it (Fredriksson, 2014, p. 29). Here, the term political act should be understood in the way that all choices are political in that they exclude other options, and not as a specific political system (Mouffe, 2005, p. 17).

In a discursive analysis context and delimitation is key - as the meaning of a concept would change in another time or in another context, such as the word "public" holding a completely different meaning in 2017 than in 1880, or the difference in the context of "public hearing" or "public space". Context becomes the subject of study when performing a discursive analysis, where the construction and change specific case of phenomena in a specific context becomes the area of study (Fredriksson, 2014, p. 28). Discourse analysis is often performed on language and how language is used; as it changes and context can be clearly studied after a certain order has been established. In this thesis, this analytical method is applied when researching what norms and tendencies lie behind planning tendencies and trends.

Power and hegemony

The line of reasoning behind discourse and how public opinion, ideas and norms are shaped tie directly into an understanding of how power is produced and reproduced in society. As discourse is shaped through the visible and invisible processes of interaction, certain norms and systems are continually upheld. Foucault was an early pioneer in this school of thought, introducing an understanding of power that was separate from that of state. Or as he put it:

"Political theory has never ceased to be obsessed with the person of the sovereign [...]. We need to cut off the King's head: in political theory that has still to be done" (Foucault, 1980, p. 121)

Interpreting this, it can be understood that Foucaults definition of power is not the institutions of the state, but the actions of these institutions. Dahlia Mukhtar-Landgren departs in this understanding of Foucalt when describing how power can be understood in two different ways. The first is the ability for action - in what ways does an actor gain the ability to action? The second is power by exclusion, through gaining the ability to take action, the direct consequence is that certain actions are excluded (Mukhtar-Landgren, 2012, p. 26). This is highly relevant when relating to planning practices, as these practices exhibit themselves as a manifestation of power both through the ability to take acti on, as well as through the exclusion of all possible ways of planning excluded. In political discourse, power is then reproduced by limiting the reasonable choices available. The political theorist Chantal Mouffe describes this as the establishment of a social order, as "every society is the product of practices that seek to institute an order in a context of contingency" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 17). This, she says, is the creation of a *hegemony*, which can be understood as the discursive understanding of a given practice as the "natural choice", which is futile to question. Mouffe describes this as a fundamental element in every social order, and not inherently problematic. It does however, as we will see later, become potentially problematic when the reproduction of hegemonic power becomes so natural that other alternatives are automatically discarded as irrational. Hegemonic values then become the values that are promoted by a leading social group or leading social order. (REF - foucault?) This creates a political climate where opposing views are seen as dangerous, rather than enabling. When discussing how and why best-practice planning can be seen as potentially reproducing non-inclusive norms, this understanding of power and hegemony will become relevant.

Spatial discourse – the spatial triad

This social-constructivist perspective on society can also be applied to an understanding of social and physical space, as well as to the interpretation and usage of space. As the sociologist Henri Lefebvre puts it;

"Space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 286)

This becomes highly relevant when analyzing and interpreting how space is constructed and given meaning. The discursive viewpoint of social order can here be applied to space, which means that space is constructed in the way a discourse is constructed. This understanding can be applied to physical space, the space we can understand with our senses, as well as social space, the space that is formed through our social relations. If language is the one of the means of analyzing how a discourse is created, spatial configurations is another one. This also means that the political actions that shape a social order can also be interpreted as shaping of social space, and by extension shaping physical space through planning. When interpreting how a physical space can hold varying meaning for different people, as well as when analyzing how re-development and planning efforts might reproduce norms and shape interpretations of space, this becomes understanding becomes highly relevant.

In order to structure the relationship between social and physical space, and how people create and relate to social space, Lefebvre organized the interpretations of space into an interconnected spatial triad. Spatial practices is the lived-in space, the space that can be seen or touched using the senses. Is it the physical organization of space, as well as the everyday usage of that space, often unreflective in practice (Degen, 2008, p. 18). Directly related to and intertwined with spatial practices is the representations of space. This space is how the abstract understanding of a space, the space of planners and real-estate owners. It is the space conceived in plans, drawings and text. As Monica Degen puts it; "It tries to define the ways in which a place will be felt and experienced by its users, from the texture of the pavement to the spatial movements of cars and pedestrians." (Degen, 2008, p. 19). This can be understood as the representations of a discourse, and often of a hegemony – the representations of power, of controlling how a space is used and how it seen. As mentioned, the representations of space are dependent on the spatial practices; how a space arranged and used defines what it can be, and vice versa.

Laying on top of this, and defining how people relate to a space, is what Lefebvre calls the representative space. This space defined the relationship people have to a space, what associations and values that are put into a space. It "overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). Together, these elements form a *social space*, a combination of physical space, usage of it, influence over it and understandings of it.

This discursive perspective on space gives a framework for analyzing and understanding planning as a discursive act, an act of influence and power. It is clear that a space can vastly different meaning and values for different people, and that this meaning is different that the representations of these spaces. It makes it possible to understand spatial action, how a space is used and interpreted (its representative space, different for different people), is a political action. The usage and understanding of a space is a negotiation on how space should and could be used, in the same way a discourse is shaped through decisions on interpretations of social order and norms. When interpreting public space as part of a political action, the acts of planning becomes an exercise in power – as it means a representation of a space takes precedence over other representations. Planning reproduces power. As we will see later, a large difference or ambiguity, on how a space could and "should" be used can lead to conflicts. Or as Monica Degen puts it "what is at stake in these contested views and practices of space stems from the clashing of two opposite spatial dimensions: the conceived vision by planners and politicians of what constitutes 'appropriate' activities and sensory experiences in public space and the actual lived practice of place by those using it" (Degen, 2008, p. 18).

SOCIAL SPACE

REPRESENTATIVE
SPACE

REPRESENTATIONS
OF SPACE
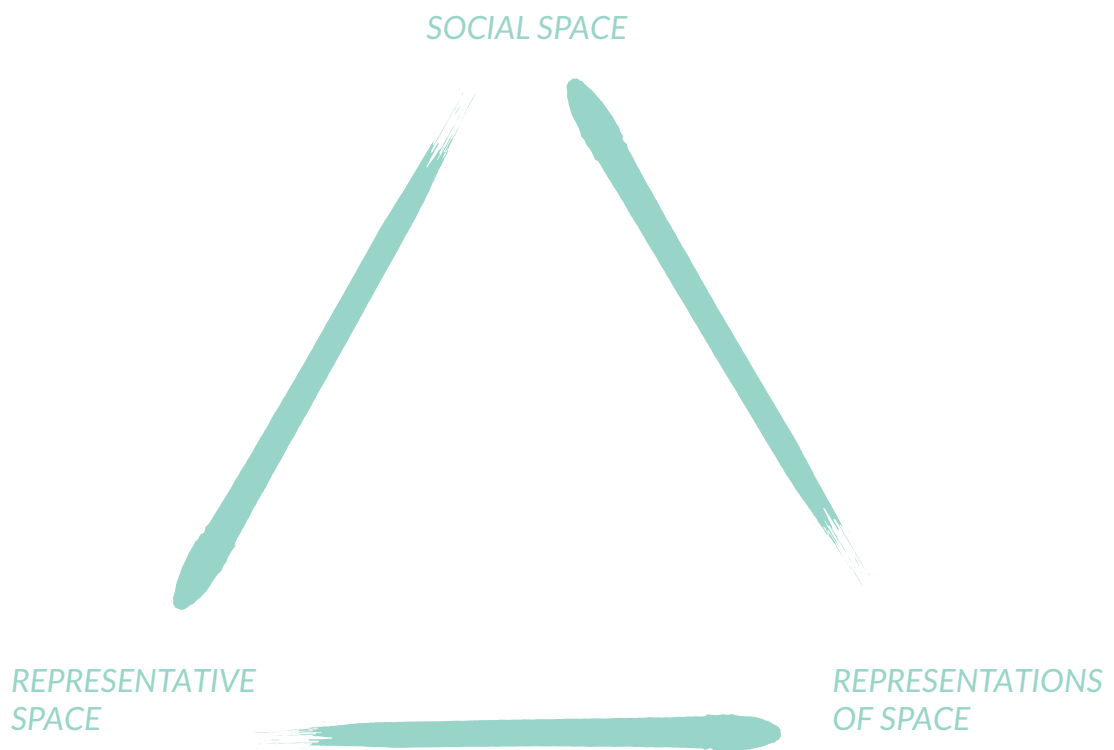
Democracy, public spaces and distribution of resources

The theoretical understanding of space, power and discourse is the foundation for understanding the relationship between democracy, public space and planning in modern society. The theoretical research part of this research is aimed at understanding how public space planning looks today, and what effects that planning has on the spatial practices and understandings of public space. The first research question of the research; if contemporary planning practices in some way act to regulate public space in ways that displaces or excludes certain groups of people, will be understood discussed and disseminated through a summary of research on contemporary planning practice and the effects of it.

As was established earlier, public space is important for democratic society to function in several different ways. Public spaces are arenas for interaction, for transportation and for recreation. In addition, in the early history of democratic society, squares and streets served as arenas for manifestation and political action in rallies and demonstrations. This value of public space is still relevant today, as political manifestations often take physical form in the streets (Franzén et al., 2016, p. 22). In addition, the value of public space for democratic society can be from two perspectives. Firstly, equal access to resources is a core tenet in a democracy. Public space of good quality is clearly a resource, and lack thereof within passable distance can be understood as a democratic problem. It can be argued that the unequal distribution of resources

in Gothenburg today, such as access to recreation (through economic imbalance, physical imbalance) has created a need to move these needs to new arenas or areas, further away from the home terrain (Legeby, Berghauser Pont, & Marcus, 2015, p. 4). Accessibility is key here, an equal society provides equal opportunity to access the resources to that society – such as recreation and service – and the connections within a city defines that distribution. This aspect highlights the importance of developing high quality public spaces in equal distribution in cities, as well as developing important social arenas to compensate for the lack of public spaces in other parts of a city. This last point should be stressed, as geographic economic imbalance is a common occurrence in contemporary cities (Franzén et al., 2016, p. 16).

As the second point, as was discussed in the section on discourse; being able to take part in public discourse and being seen is essential when interpreting society as a social construct, and physical being in a space and being heard is equal to being part in that discourse. The ideals and norms of a society is visible in how it creates its spaces, which gives society a spatial dimension. (Legeby et al., 2015, p. 2) Those that have access to public space are part in shaping the norms and ideas of that society, which in turn shapes those public spaces. This processes happens through language, through practice, through development and through interpretation (Degen, 2008, p. 20).

Contemporary planning practices and their effects

In order to understand some of the planning tendencies and practices in a swedish context, and how that can be read in a power-critical manner, a short summary of history and research on the subject is made.

The ideological development of urban ideas has been quite clear in the past 30 to 40 years. Since the big economic crises of the 70's, the development of urban areas has had gone from a managerial approach, where the governmental powers controlled development and other actors followed, to a governance approach, where the idea is to provide platforms for other actors to provide economic growth of a city. During the post-war era, the power of mass was dominant; mass production, mass consumption and mass media. After the oils crisis of -73 and succeeding political and economic reform, the values of inter-urban competition, "boosterism", urban governance and public-private partnership has taken over the urban regimen (Franzén et al., 2016, p. 45). From this perspective, creating a more attractive city with give the city economic growth through attracting visitors and residents, and in extension providing a higher tax base. Failing to provide for this would lead to the opposite (Franzén et al., 2016, p. 34).

The contemporary city management is focused on this loop, specifically on what is often referred to as "inter-urban competition" (Franzén et al., 2016, p. 45). In this model of thought, creating a strong identity for the city is crucial and an important part of this is an attractive city core. The design and planning of urban spaces is as essential part of this development. It can then be argued, that from a development and planning perspective, the main function of public space is to create economic growth for cities (as well as, of course,

provide movement between spaces). This economic development is often described as post-fordist, marking the change from the mass-consumption and mass-production of the preceding fordist era (Franzén et al., 2016, p. 20).

As a result of this public spaces increasingly came into the spotlight of redevelopment efforts, especially in the city-centers – where their economic value and public use is becoming more and more intertwined (Franzén et al., 2016, p. 62). One example is the ideas of urbanity and economic growth being closely related. This is also visible in the processes of planning, where the collaboration of public actors, such as the municipality, and private, such as real estate owners, is increasingly common (Franzén et al., 2016, p. 120). What is sought after is often a certain amount of control over space in the form of regulation and redevelopment often comes out of a conflict of interests over the intended and actual use of a place. The interpretation of what a space should be is one of the planner, the representation of that space belongs to the planner. In contemporary planning discourse, the need to control how a space is used is often a result of influence from several different directions. Ambiguous relationships between private real-estate owners and public interests leads to a more constant struggle to control the use of public space (Franzén et al., 2016, p. 45). This control partly takes the form of redevelopment and planning. As these goals come from those with the power to change a space, it runs the risk of reproducing unequal norms. Privatization of the planning of squares and streets provides a greater possibility for control, possibly weakening the transparency in who and what a space is planned for

(Franzén et al., 2016, p. 60). As the planning of public space is part in reproducing norms through the power-position of the planner and owners of a space.

Another way in which planning runs the risk of reproducing norms is the strong focus of post-fordist planning approaches to rely on "best-practice" as a method of evaluating the viability of a chosen solution. Within the practice of architects and planners, the use of best-practice models of development is a common. The focus is often on finding the "best" method of developing a project, based on a "common understanding" within the professional field (Fredriksson, 2014, p. 19). These methods come in all varieties, and change over time. Contemporary best-practices tendencies in the west includes the use of enclosed residential blocks (to achieve a distinction between private and public spaces), remodeling streets and squares to prioritize foot-traffic and various methods to increase a sense of urbanity in city centers, such as to including spaces for commercial activities along the streets of re-developed areas. This approach to theory and method within the planning field can be interpreted as a result of a need to work towards set goals, such a more sustainable living environment. It can be argued, however, that an analysis of what ideals, structures and norms these practices produce and reproduce, is often missing (Fredriksson, 2014, pp. 19–20). Best-practice methods are by definition reproducing a certain hegemony, as other options or methods of development are by default

MORE TAXPAYERS

HIGHER TAX INCOME

A BETTER CITY(?)
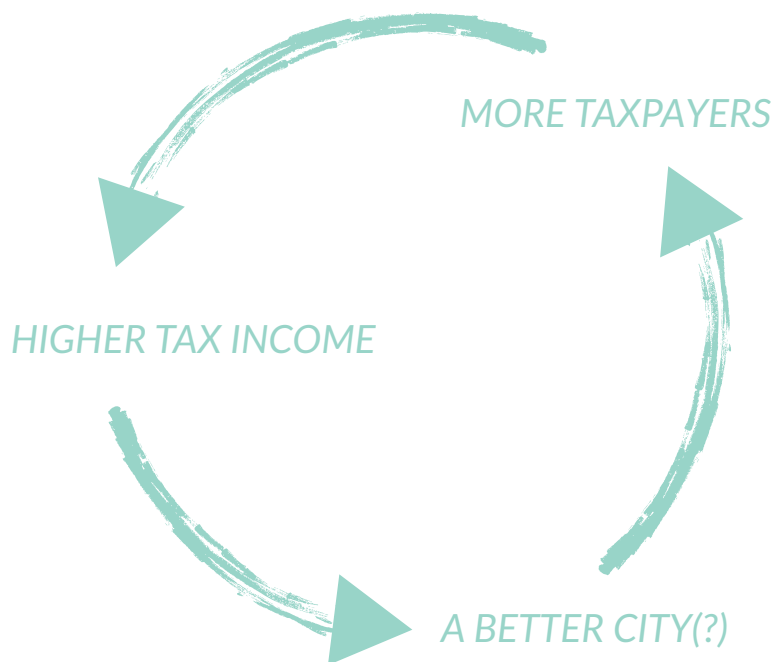
dismissed as unviable; "there is no alternative". This becomes especially problematic when the motivations and political agenda behind these practices are obscured.

This view of space as manageable and controllable seems to be a common tendency in contemporary planning discourse. One of the common approaches to the planning of public space is to further increase perceived values such as safety. Indirectly, this often means controlling the usage of a space, and by extension who uses it (Franzén et al., 2016, p. 94). This aim to control the usage of space is a combination of trying to influence the spatial practices of a space through changing its representations. Through challenging what a space represents for users of that space, and the practices they perform, a discrepancy between the "intended" usage of a space and the actual usage. If this discrepancy is understood as a source of a conflict, or as counter-productive to the what the space represents for those with the power to physically change its representations, that discrepancy can be the source of a wish to redevelop that space. One example could be the conflict between different uses of a space; two people using the same space in conflicting ways can lead to an open conflict of what that space is "intended" for. This is could lead to a wish to redevelop that area to accommodate a specific use.

This tendency, to try and eliminate conflicting uses through physically altering a space,

is directly connected to how a space is influenced. Through partnerships between official instances, with the legal power to plan, and those with an interest in a space, often real estate owners, a reduction of conflict often seems directly beneficial (Franzén et al., 2016, p. 20). It can, however, be argued that an ability to accommodate conflict in society is a foundation of a functioning democratic society. Through the term post-politics Chantal Mouffe introduces a common concept in a modern democratic society. In short, the term describes a political climate where consensus and streamlining is a core value, and where a difference of opinions are a problem (Mouffe, 2005, p. 20). Mouffe argues that society needs to find ways to accommodate difference in opinions, and to accept that differing views are not a problem, but a constructive way to reflect upon society. A society where conflict is seen as non-constructive is one where ideas seen as "the only alternative" become hegemonical, which is often the ideas that benefit privileged groups (Mouffe, 2005, p. 21). The same argument can be made when looking at public spaces. In order to accommodate a society where a difference in uses can fit in the same common areas, a core tenet of a democratic system, methods of managing complexity and conflict in public needs to be found (Franzén et al., 2016, p. 43). How this can be done is explored further in the development and evaluation of the approach in this research.

## Conclusions from theoretical framework and the way forward

This theoretical understanding had the ambition to take a wide approach to the value of public space, how it is planned, created and understood, as well as what to provide an image of what current planning tendencies might mean for the future of equal and democratic urban areas, here understood as the underlying values and ideas of democracy.

To summarize, we saw that much of the value in being part of a public sphere is essential in order to be part in shaping the norms and values that in turn shape society. We saw that even if that public sphere is not dependent on public space (as you can be public in a digital sense, or in private spaces), both direct political action and the act of taking part of common resources makes actual physical public spaces an essential component in the shaping of a democratic society. It is also clear how the act of using, interpreting and planning public spaces all are political acts of power. How public space is used, its practice, is directly related to how it is understood by different users, and the value different users see in these spaces vary with their perspectives. Planning, on the other hand, follows a clearer set of goals or norms, where a certain value or usage of a space is strived for. We also saw, through examples, how planning of public spaces today often emphasizes control of a space, not rarely with a commercial interest in the background. This is further strengthened by planning traditions and methods that focus on a "best" way of achieving a set goal; which in turn disallows the multitude of perspectives and values a

specific space might hold – both for society at large and for certain individuals. The lack of a critical perspective in planning can be argued to lead to a further de-democratization of public space, where public space as a common resource is being denied to people or activities that does not fit into the given norm. Additionally, the ability for these groups to question these norms is further reduced through the lack of access to public space. Lastly, we saw that the view of public spaces as strictly controllable disallows users of public space the ability to interpret and give value to these spaces. The idea of a "best" way of using a space came back here, where agonistic uses of public space led to further repression on the use of that space. Space is often interpreted as static and a container of activity, not as directly as being shaped by activity and use.

This theoretical reference is, as stated, wide in its approach. It touches on several different understandings of planning, space and people. Certain conclusions on the potential of public space for a democratic society can however be drawn. There seems to be a possibility to question how the planning of public spaces is approached, and to take a more norm-critical approach. The potential to change the perspective of the planner in a planning process seems to hold a potential. A shift in the view of public spaces as controllable and plannable, to one where the privilege of formulating the potential (or problem) of a space is not that of the planner but of the users. This approach would require a power and norm-critical perspective on the planning process, as well as an
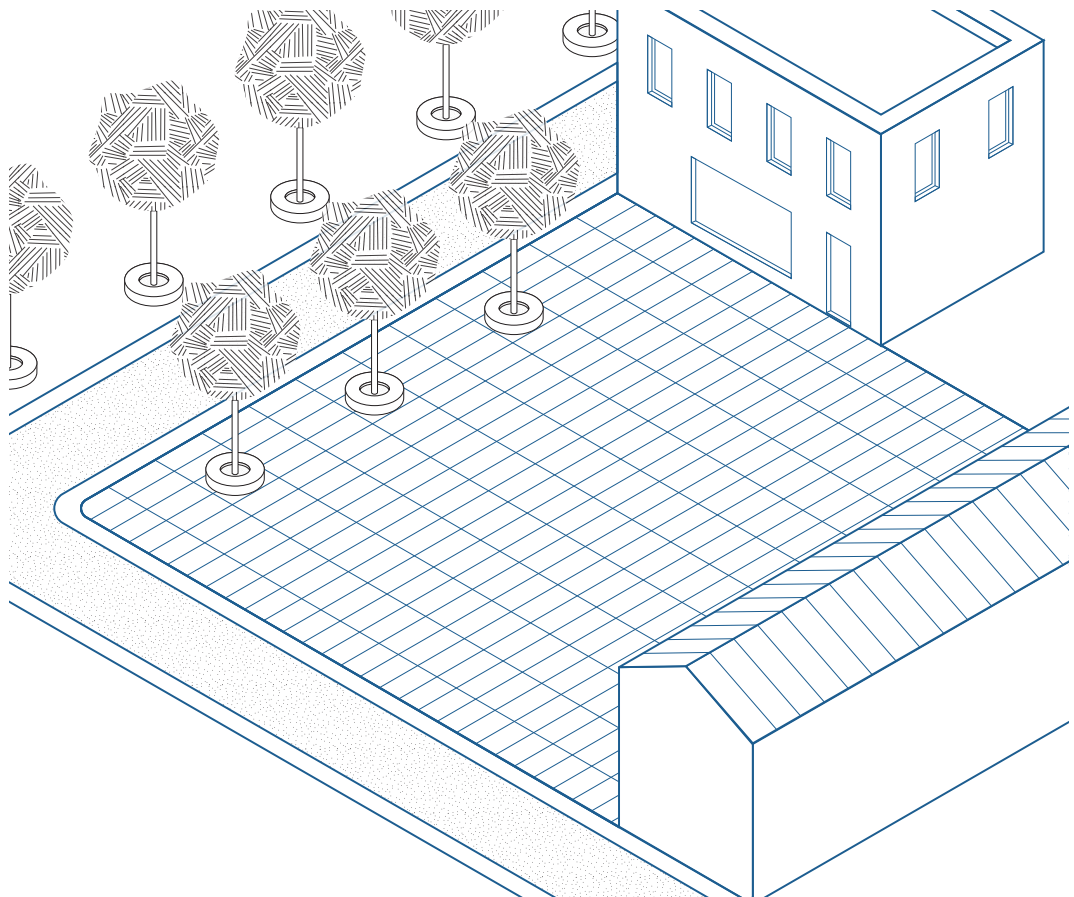
understanding of how public space could negotiate usage and activity between different users. From the perspective of equal distribution of resources in the city being essential for democratic, it would be beneficial to accommodate users that have less access to public space as the perspective used to frame the potential of a space.

In addition, the view of space as a static container of activity could be challenged through a perspective of public spaces as influential in shaping democratic society. Through planning for influence, where users can take part in shaping how a space is used and designed, spaces that allow for democratic opportunity could be created. An attempt at formulating a power-critical and activity based approach to planning is the second part of this thesis.

PART III.

DEVELOPM

OF PLANN

APPROACH

MENT
NING
H

INTRODUCTION

Following the historical and analytical conclusions of theoretical understanding, we saw an opportunity for challenging planning norms through testing a norm-critical approach to planning public space. The approach is an element in the aim to combine a contextual critical understanding of the issues at hand with a hands-on implementation approach, as a way of bridging the research fields dealt with in the thesis. The core element of such an approach would not be to redefine the planning practices- and organization of today, but rather to try and shift the perspective on the value of a space from the hegemonic perspective of the planner to that of other users.

In "conventional" planning- and design methodology, the planner merges an interpretation of the physical attributes of a space with internalized social norms and ideas, as well as with an idea of what the purpose of a space is. In this process, the planner (or the clients, politicians, owners or others with power to influence planning), has the ability to construct a vision for the development of space. The result of this evaluation, which often takes the shape of a design process, can be a development proposal, new legislation or regulation, or simply descriptions of the interpreted potential of a space (Tunström, 2009, p. 20). The common theme to this process is that the combination of norms and ideas of what a space represents, what it "should" be, defines what the development should achieve. In the context of public spaces,

multiple ways of understanding a space exists simultaneously and in parallel, as we saw in the theoretical descriptions. As we saw is common in contemporary planning tendencies, the planner often lacks a critical perspective on which understandings of a space that is reproduced. This means that the understanding of "what a space should be" that is the planners (the clients, politicians, media-landscape) understanding is the one that is reproduced. At its core, this might not pose a problem. However, in the contemporary context of public-space planning, we saw earlier that it might.

There have been many attempts at challenging how the value of space is interpreted and what discourse is reproduced in planning. The shift from looking at planning as a complete package, to one as an iterative process that should include the opinion of citizens that took place after the 1960's is one such example (Franzén et al., 2016, p. 45). However, those methods focus on participation in planning through dialogue, which means that the planner still holds the power to interpret the input. The value of participatory input is directly compared to other values, which often means that other influence is valued as more important. In many cases, this means that participatory input becomes a type of tokenism, without the possibility of changing the perspective on what values are important in a space (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217). In addition, as we could see in the study of contemporary planning practices, the value of a space

is often influenced and decided upon in a more obscure manner, where private and commercial interests hold a large stake in planning of public spaces. This, again, leads to a reproduction of discourse that, in specific cases, can lead to an unequal distribution of resources and public spaces with a weaker democratic function.

Instead, the approach proposed here is aimed at developing participation influence. It can be seen as a complement to methods of participation developed elsewhere, but is focused on the role and mandate of the planner. Through a norm-critical understanding of a space and its value, varying representations, uses and possibilities of a space can be mapped. Combined with allowing different uses and values of a space to influence and activate it, instead of controlling and regulating, an inclusive approach to public space can be taken. In this way, the privilege of formulating the problems and potentials of a space shifts from that of the planner, to that of the users. This approach, of course, can lead to several complications in the planning process, as well to the act of planning itself. In order to evaluate and test these complications, the planning proposal will serve an important role.

An Approach, not a method

This development is a way of transferring the theoretical ideas into a planning scenario. It should be seen as a way of approaching planning, not a checklist or a strict plan to follow. At this level of development, it's an attempt at shifting the perspective on how public spaces could be planned. Can be thought of as a mindset rather than a methodology at this point. Through evaluation and further development, a full-scale method could be developed. This is further developed in the chapter on methodology.

GUIDELINES
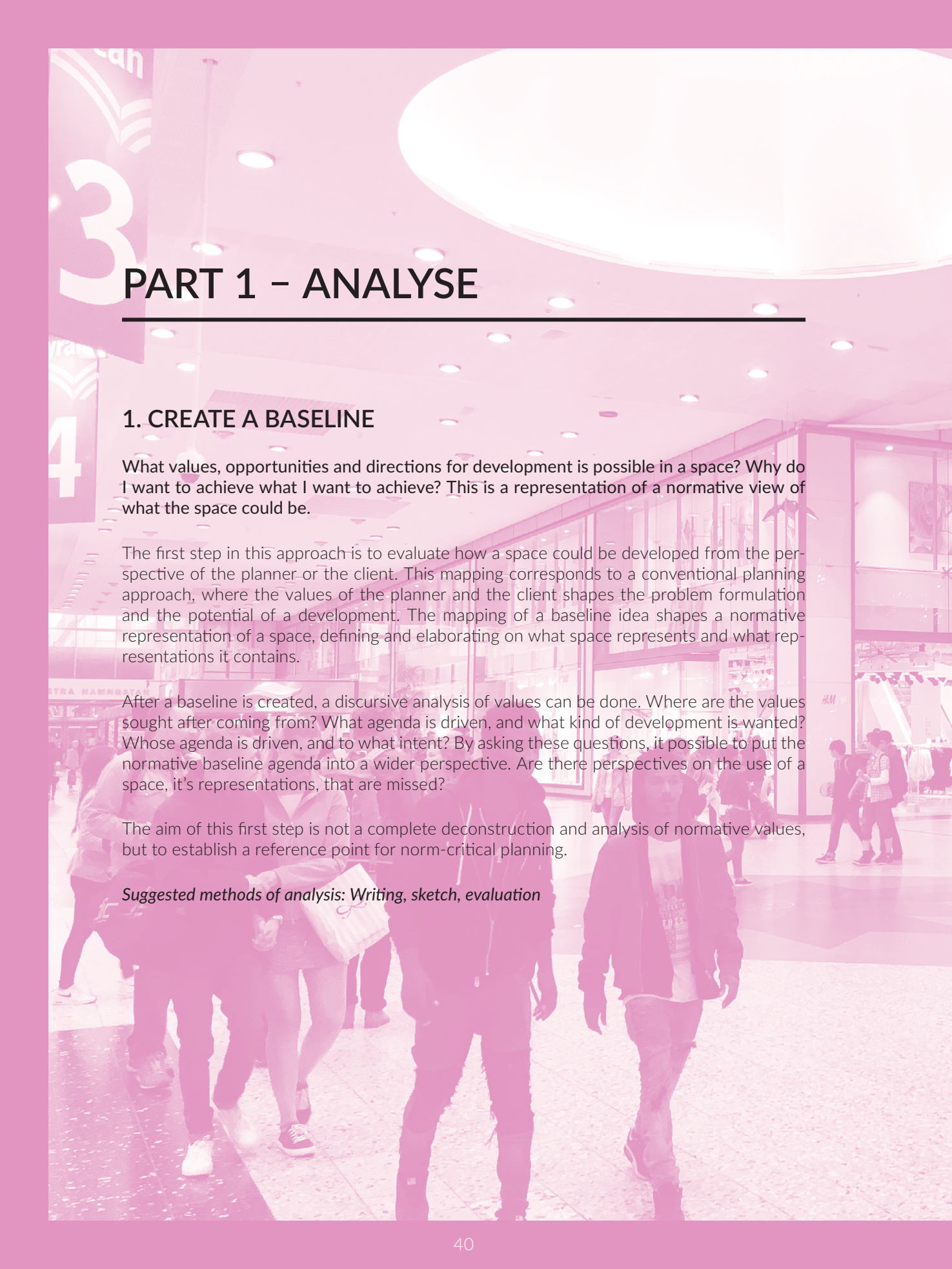
The main element of the approach is a self-directed critique of what norms and ideas that shapes the image of a space, as well as how repression and control is applied public spaces. It can be used to enhance the democratic function of a public space, as well as approaching the planning of public spaces from a power-critical perspective. It's an attempt at allowing the planner to delegate the formulation of what the problems and potentials of a space is to the perspective of the users that can be enhanced. The approach consists of two parts. The first is a framework for understanding expectations of space, how it's used and what it means for people that choose to use it, as well as its potential. The second is a way of approaching what can be done in the space, the foundation for formulating a vision and a planning program. Together, it creates the groundwork for understanding a from a norm-critical perspective and to create a vision. Building from this, a design or planning proposal can be created, as is done in the last segment of the thesis as part of evaluating the method.

PART 1 - ANALYSE

1. Creating a baseline

2. Mapping and analysis of democratic possibility

3. Study of collective practices

4. Critical analysis and definition of possibilities

PART 2 – PERFORM

1. Problem formulation

2. Program & concepts for democratic possibility and open-ended collective practices

3. (Proposal development/ creating a vision)

PART 1 – ANALYSE

1. CREATE A BASELINE

What values, opportunities and directions for development is possible in a space? Why do I want to achieve what I want to achieve? This is a representation of a normative view of what the space could be.

The first step in this approach is to evaluate how a space could be developed from the perspective of the planner or the client. This mapping corresponds to a conventional planning approach, where the values of the planner and the client shapes the problem formulation and the potential of a development. The mapping of a baseline idea shapes a normative representation of a space, defining and elaborating on what space represents and what representations it contains.

After a baseline is created, a discursive analysis of values can be done. Where are the values sought after coming from? What agenda is driven, and what kind of development is wanted? Whose agenda is driven, and to what intent? By asking these questions, it possible to put the normative baseline agenda into a wider perspective. Are there perspectives on the use of a space, it's representations, that are missed?

The aim of this first step is not a complete deconstruction and analysis of normative values, but to establish a reference point for norm-critical planning.

Suggested methods of analysis: Writing, sketch, evaluation

2. MAPPING AND ANALYSIS OF DEMOCRATIC OPPORTUNIY

How is a space configured, legally, socially and physically? How is it accessed, what possibilities for using does it provide? Can it be considered safe and comfortable? What role can it serve to enhance democratic action and provide space for people?

The second step is to study and analyze the opportunities for a public space to enhance democratic possibilities. Democratic possibility is an umbrella term encompassing the core functions of a public space. Each of these aspects relate to each other, are independent but connected, and increasing the one might decrease or increase another. This can be interpreted as a measure on how public a public space is, as well as a way describing what direction a democratic public space development could take. These aspects are not always possible to enhance simultaneously, as providing better conditions for one aspect might be detriment to another.

The aim of this step is to map and understand how a public space relates to a wider context in terms on function and potential. Through analyzing and understanding a space from these perspectives, the potential of a public space is relativized and the contribution of public space to the democratic functions of a city is made clear. As could be seen in the previous theory, the potential value of a space is often isolated to that specific space and not what it potentially could bring to a wider city context.. That means that each of these aspects needs to be understood and mapped in context, as well as in varying scales.

Suggested methods of analysis: Observation, statistics, study of planning documents, morphological analysis, people flow models.

ASPECTS OF DEMOCRATIC OPPORTUNITY
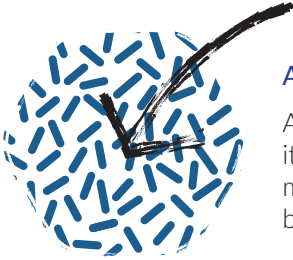
ACCESS

Access to a space is a fundamental part of what makes it public. How accessible a space is defined by how many people can get to and from it. A private space is by definition less accessible.

→   Ability to get to a space

→   Connections to other areas

→   Opening hours

→   Rules and regulations on usage and access

→   Flows and communication of
       people, goods, vehicles

→   Which actors that have access to the space
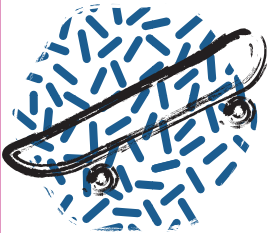
THE POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTIONS

What is possible and not possible to do in a space is an indicator on how regulated or allowing it is. This is regulated by rules as well as local restrictions and physical limitations. Increasing the possibilities for private initiatives can be more democratic, but can also create conflict of use, where a space is reserved for activities that by definition are reserved for a few.

→   Possibility of using a space in
       novel or unexpected ways, things
       that weren't planned for.

→   Leaving marks on a space

→   Holding events, concerts etc.

→   Identifying with a place, feeling
       like it's partly yours.

SAFETY

Safety is essential in public space, but is hard to define and understand. A space can feel unsafe but only because of its reputation, but the most talked-about places are often not the most dangerous. A lack of safety in a place can often lead to less people wanting to spend time there.

→   Experienced safety

→   Actual safety, risk of crime

→   Observing/possibility of being observed

COMFORT

Being able to relax and be comfortable in a public space is crucial to its function and people perception of it. A space that is comfortable is often perceived as very accessible and enjoyable.

→   The possibility of relaxing, being comfortable within a space

→   Heat, protection from elements

→   Possibility of finding quiet/calm spaces

→   Sitting down/resting

→   Access to services - bathrooms, washing facilities, childcare, food etc.

3. STUDY COLLECTIVE PRACTICES

What conflicts in representations and practices exist in the space today? What does the space mean for people, and how to they use it? Are these representative spaces in conflict, and it that's the case; how?

The term "collective practices" is a description a combination of spatial practices and how the different meanings and values a space contains for different people shapes those practices. Putting into more everyday terms, it can be said that people will interpret what a space should and could be used for through what it means for them. Someone that often meets their friends at a street corner will understand that space as one of waiting, and will, as an example, make use of rain cover or seating. Someone that only passes by that same space will interpret it as one primarily of transport; of passing through. Here, the physical configuration of the space will mean less, unless it's directly hindering the agenda of that person.

Collective practices can be understood from the perspective of Lefebvre's spatial triad, where representations (such as the media/planning image of a space), the physical configuration of the space, and what it means for people are all interlinked and together shape these collective practices (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). This means that collective practices are subject to constant change, and can be redefined through changing the social, physical or regulatory preconditions of a space. It also means that different practices might be in conflict. Re-using the example from above, the use of space for waiting might take up the same physical space as the one for passing through. This can lead to direct conflict over what the space should be used for – waiting or moving by. These conflicts also exist on a social, or political, level. The interpretation of how a space should be used (its representative space) can lead to certain behavior or use of space being seen as wrong or faulty, even if no actual conflict over physical space might occur. Youth spending time on a square that is otherwise seen as mainly for transport might be one such example. These conflicts are rarely manifest in actual, open, interpersonal conflict, but rather one of regulation and redevelopment to encourage and discourage certain behavior, as we as in the earlier parts of the research.

The aim of studying collective practices is to gain an understanding of who uses a space, to what purpose, as well as what that space means for them. The last part is of crucial importance. Gaining that type of knowledge is not simple, as what a space represents is not easily put into words, but requires a certain level of interpretation. The last part of the step is to map out physical and social conflicts of representations and use that are occurring, or might occur. It's also highly beneficial to put these understandings into a wider context, where for example the lack of certain spaces in other areas of a city might lead to people searching for new platforms.

Suggested methods of analysis: Interviews with users, Observations on use
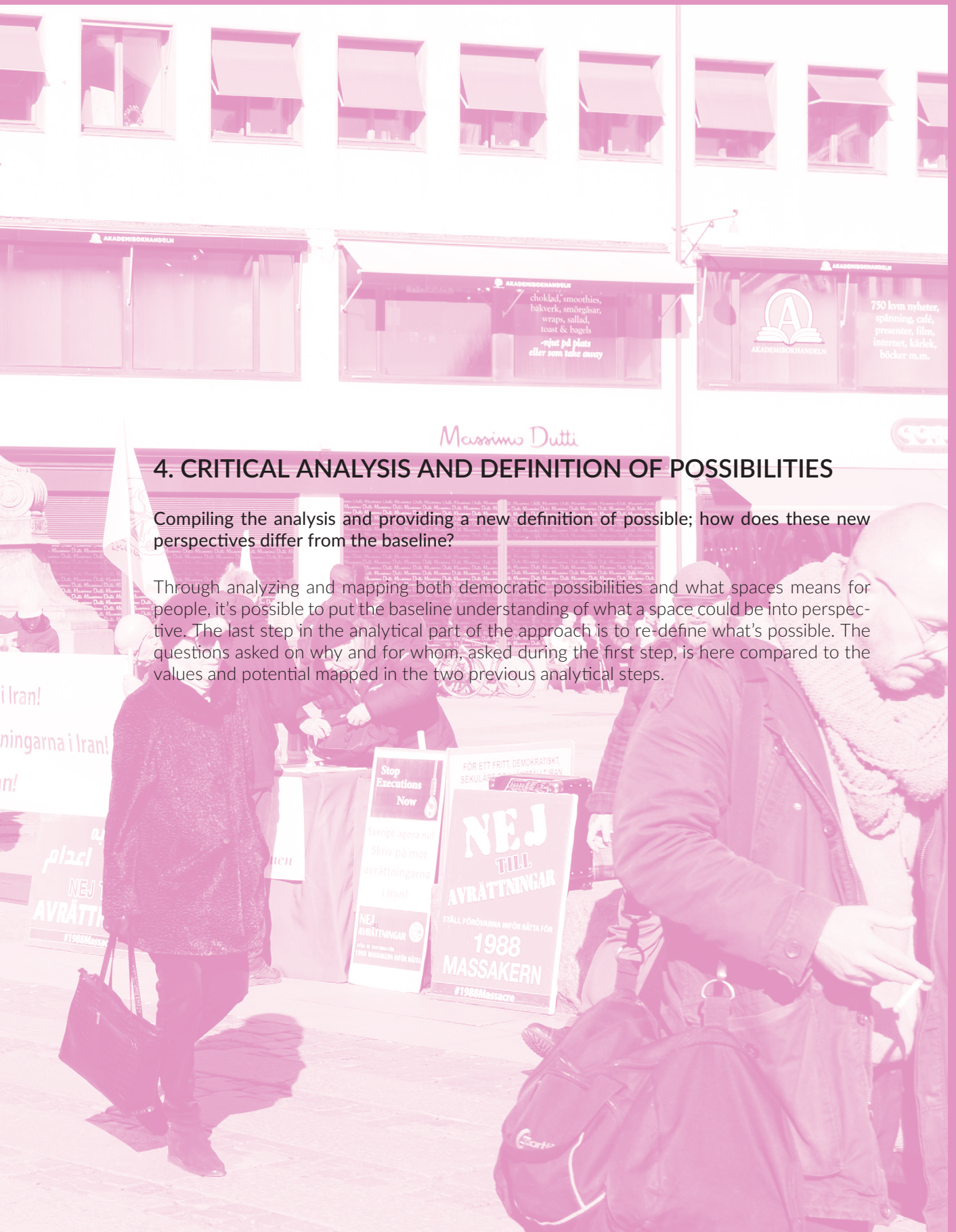
4. CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND DEFINITION OF POSSIBILITIES

Compiling the analysis and providing a new definition of possible; how does these new perspectives differ from the baseline?

Through analyzing and mapping both democratic possibilities and what spaces means for people, it's possible to put the baseline understanding of what a space could be into perspective. The last step in the analytical part of the approach is to re-define what's possible. The questions asked on why and for whom, asked during the first step, is here compared to the values and potential mapped in the two previous analytical steps.

PART 2 – PERFORM

The second part of the approach takes the analytical conditions and collects the different perspectives on the space into a program or a concept, that can be used as the foundation for creating development or re-development plans for a space.

1. PROBLEM FORMULATION

Define a problem formulation based off negotiation between collective practices and enhancing democratic possibilities.

As the results of the first part of the approach is a collection of perspectives on what a public space is, what it can be and what it means, the possibilities of creating a nuanced problem formulation greater than before. The problem formulation is central in defining what a development is trying to solve or provide in terms of giving value to a space. As we saw earlier, the perspectives on what can be done is often normative, as they are the perspectives of those with power and knowledge of planning. The aim of this step is to change the privilege of formulating what should be done from the planner/client to that of the user.

As the foundation of this approach is that of creating public spaces that enhance democratic public access and rights, define if any these possibilities, or other, exist:

→　Basing redevelopment on the value and use of specific groups that might be lacking access to facilities/spaces – creating directed development

→　Creation of a clear definition of boundaries between private influence and public space. What is allowed in public space is interpreted as different than in private.

→　Creating space for taking action in public space. Can spatial configurations that allow for demonstration, for comfort or for appropriation be created?

These possibilities are only a reference based on changing the perspectives on what can be done with a space. Other problem-formulations are possible.

2. PROGRAM & CONCEPTS FOR DEMOCRATIC POSSIBILITY AND OPEN-ENDED COLLECTIVE PRACTICES

Define a program or concept that strengthens the democratic possibilities in spatial configurations, and allows for different users to negotiate on how a space could and should be used.

The last step in defining the potential of a public space is to define what it should contain. This is, in effect, the creation of new representations of the space. Here, the goal should to develop a simple program or design concepts that strengthen the democratic possibilities of the space. It should strive for clear and open access, connections to other public spaces, and provision of comfort and a safe environment. These values might all be neutral and "good" in and by themselves, so the crucial part is how they're interpreted by the planner. By understanding the perspectives of different users, as well as how these democratic possibilities relate to each other, it's clear that it might be impossible to achieve all of these values simultaneously. This prioritization becomes a political act, as certain ways forward are discarded in favor of other. As the aim of this approach is a power- and norm-critical approach to planning of public space, the program should strive to follow the problem formulation and provide value to groups that lack that value in other cases. This is possible by understanding the perspectives mapped in the analytical part of the work.

In addition, the program or concepts should allow for agonistic use, creating spaces where conflicts mapped in analysis does not force away certain use through regulation or redevelopment. In effect, aim to create spaces that allow for negotiating between different practices and representations of a space. The goal is to allow multiple ways of using and understanding a space to exist in parallel, and therefore both increasing the possibilities for taking action in a space, and shifting the perspective of how conflict of use is managed in

3. PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

Taking the problem formulation and a program or concepts, it's possible to develop ideas and a proposal for the development or re-development of a public space that can strive to enhance democratic possibility, while simultaneously challenging how public space is planned. In this research, applying this approach and evaluating it is the next step.

APPLICATI
OF PLANN
APPROACH

ON
NING
H

DEFINING THE AREA OF APPLICATION

Approaching Nordstan

The development of an approach is a way of contextualizing planning theory and attempting to create a way to develop open, inclusive and democratic public spaces. As much of planning theory is focused on method and application, evaluating the approach through application is a good way to discuss and elaborate on the potential of norm-critical planning. In the frame of this thesis, this application becomes crucial in order to contextualize the planning tendencies described, and to study if a more critical approach is viable.

In this thesis, the application will be on the semi-public spaces of the shopping mall Nordstan, in central Gothenburg. The reasons for this are several. As we saw earlier, the distribution of public space and service in a city can be considered a democratic resource. Nordstan is popular with people from all over Gothenburg, making it a strong social space. We also

NORDSTAN

saw that private interest in development of public space is becoming more and more common, and Nordstan is a prime example of a space where the lines between private influence and public space is ambiguous. The mall is erected over former city blocks, and the former streets are still legally public space, while the blocks, or stores, are private space. For this reason, the question would be that if Nordstan was a public space, what would it be? Lastly, Nordstan is interesting as a site of application as it is controversial in how it should be used. What Nordstan is, should be and what it's problems are has been widely discussed in media and in political debate in the months preceding this research. A common trend is the willingness to regulate the space further, in order to limit and restrict how the space is used. In the context of this approach, where the access and use of public space is crucial in order to secure its role in a democratic society, the reasoning behind restriction and control of public space becomes highly relevant.

Nordstan and its immediate surroundings are a good example of how a singular narrative of a place has become the dominating understanding of that space. Through understanding and enhancing the interpreted social values of Nordstan, there is a possibility of creating a new narrative where collective practices shapes a shared democratic space that can serve as a catalyst for incrementally developing more democratic public spaces in Gothenburg.

→   Valuable social space

→   Ambiguous private/public

→   Conflict-filled.

→   Centrally located

It must be noted that in the frame of this application, it's not considered that the mall is the problem. Specifically not the private areas, the stores, as spaces for consumption can be said to be valuable for a city in multiple ways (Chiodelli & Moroni, 2015). The choice of Nordstan comes down to it being an example of unclear boundaries between private and public, which, as has already been stated is a tendency in contemporary planning in liberal democracies. It is interesting as what types of influence can be exercised over Nordstan is unclear, while the image of it creates a clear image of that it should be contained regulated further.

The choice of Nordstan as a site of application is, of course, also problematic. As the planning approach developed is aimed at public space in general, the choice of a space that is both public and private makes it harder to evaluate. But, simultaneously, it's extremity in this regard might also make for clear results. In addition, Nordstans' extreme importance as a social space creates a good platform for analyzing and evaluating how conflict exists in public space. The choice of Nordstan might be an edge-case, but the stories it might tell about the future are makes it a good case for a simulation application of the approach.

Background, what is Nordstan?

Nordstan, centrally located in Gothenburg, is one of the most visited shopping malls in Sweden with about 35 million visitors annually. It was finished in 1974 following the demolishing of existing residential and commercial buildings (Fritz, 1997, p. 11).

It is located next to the central station, the city's main tram stops, the inner-city shopping areas and the main thoroughfare through the city. The mall consists of several blocks with streets between. It is an important social space for large groups of people, most importantly for youth that have few other central meeting places. The streets of the mall are regulated in city code, with the opening times of the mall being part of the detail plan of the area. (Göteborgs Stad, 2010)

BRIDGE TO HISINGEN

OPERA

TRAIN/BUS STATION

RESIDENTIAL/SHOPPING/
OFFICE AREA

SHOPPING/OFFICE AREA

Central Gothenburg

PART 1. ANALYSIS

1. CREATING THE BASELINE

As the value and potential of Nordstan is often discussed, the concluded baseline development potential of Nordstan is focused on safety and security, as well as integrating the mall into the city. The large mass of the buildings and its central location gives a great potential to integrate the streets into the surroundings, in order to enhance the flow of people in the area. A larger flow of people would also mean more eyes on the streets at more hours, which could increase safety. Removing the roof and the doors would also integrate the mall better into the city. This is the baseline, the starting point of a problem formulation. This will now be challenged by applying the planning method.

2. MAPPING OF DEMOCRATIC OPPORTUNITY

PHYSICAL STRUCTURE, BOUNDARIES AND CONNECTIONS

Nordstan consists of a collection of blocks, six of which are following the same block structure as was there before the mall was erected. All buildings are owned by different actors, and the largest building to the north is used a garage. Between the blocks there are public streets. They are also following the same grid pattern as the surrounding area. The streets are covered for the most part, with entrances on every street. The main entrance is to the south, as well as towards Centralstationen and Lilla Bommen. The streets are covered under a roof, maintained by an organization of the building owners of Nordstan. The streets themselves are municipal ground, and the opening hours of the streets are regulated in city code, having them be open between 06:00 and 00:00 every day. To the north the exit is cut off by the on-ramp to the bridge to Hisingen, creating a movement to and from the main entrances, not through the mall. A rarely used bridge crosses the car on-ramp from Nordstan to the north.

MOVEMENT INTO STORES

LARGE FLOWS OF PEOPLE

MEDIUM FLOWS OF PEOPLE

SMALLER FLOWS OF PEOPLE

PEDESTRIAN MAIN MOVEMENT/ ENTRANCES

TRAM STOP
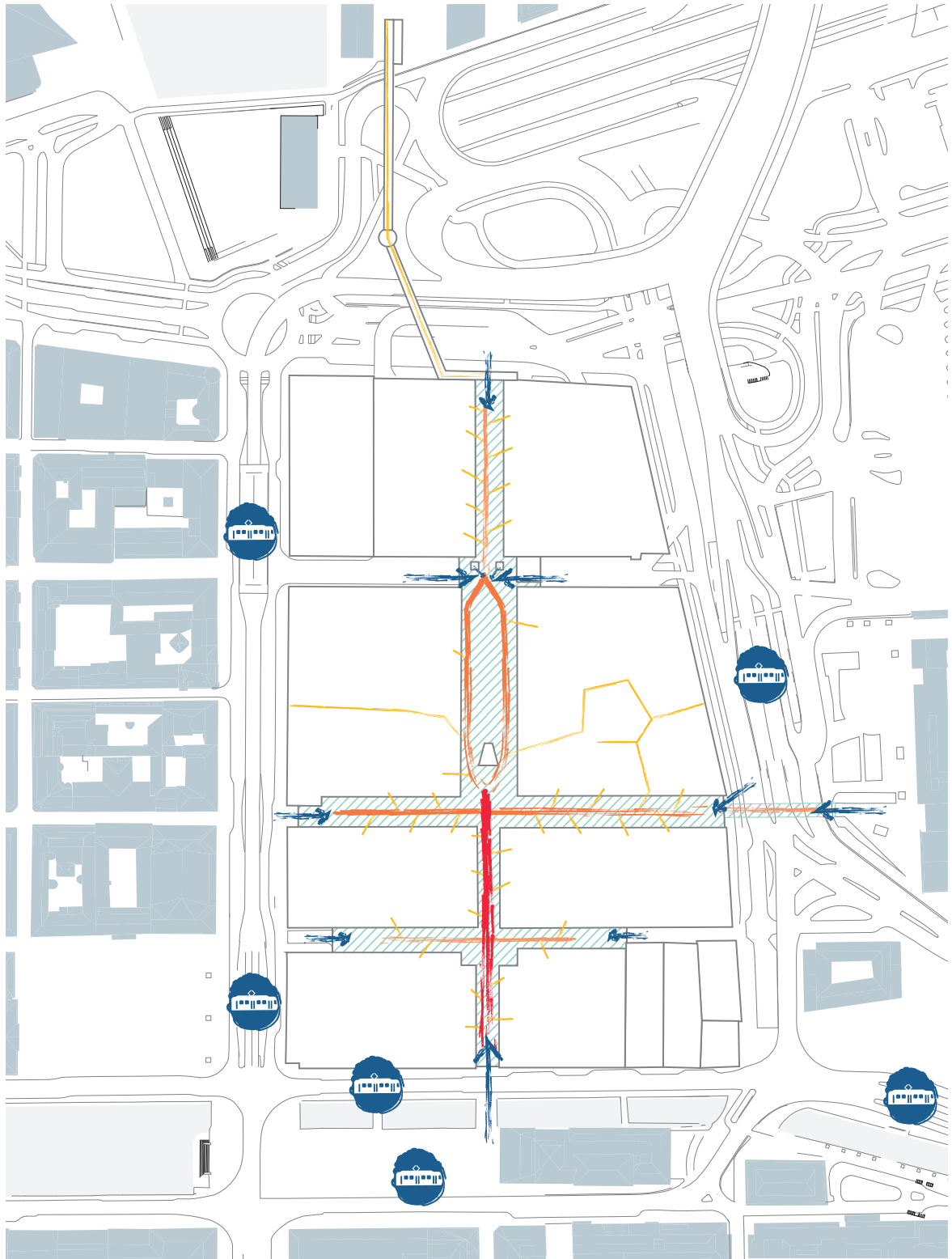
ACCESS

Access to the public areas of Nordstan is regulated through the opening hours, the design and placement of the entrances and the connections to public transport and streets surrounding it. It is a very connected space, laying in the middle of the city, which was an important aspect that came up in the interviews. It is however regulated and made "feel" more private through being enclosed, while the generous opening hours makes it more public as it is open after the stores closes
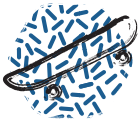
POSSIBILITY FOR ACTION

Nordstan is heavily regulated through rules and enforcement. It being both private and public, guards are patrolling and keep a close eye on informal activities such as singing, hanging out outside seating areas etc. Observations show that those activities are however tolerated to a larger extent than could be expected in a more private space.

SAFETY

Nordstan is both safe and not. A search through the Swedish printed and online press shows that the space is severely affected by an image of a dangerous space, especially at nighttime. The main problem with safety in Nordstan seems to be the perceived sense of safety, not security.

COMFORT

In terms of accessible resting places, Nordstan is lacking. However, it hosts a large number of cafés, making it easy to be comfortable if you can pay, something that those that shop there often do. For those that use Nordstan as an informal gathering space, the comfort of it being indoor is more important.
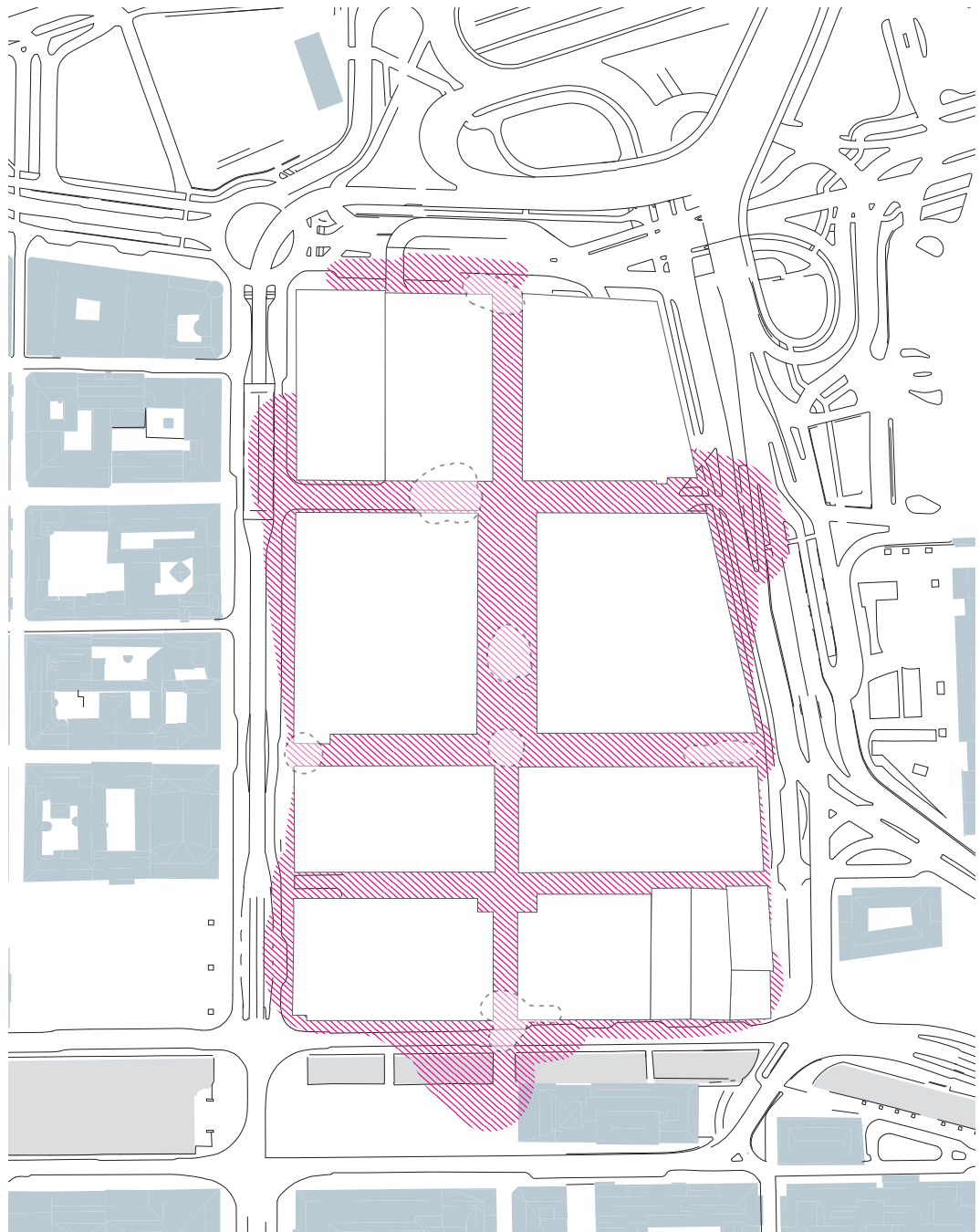
INFLUENCE OF NORDSTAN AS A PUBLIC SPACE	EXISTING BUILDINGS
AREAS WITH STRONG SOCIAL FUNCTION	NORDSTAN

3. COLLECTIVE PRACTICES

Nordstan serves a number of different uses for different people. A large majority use the space for shopping, either to satisfy needs or for recreation. The convenience of the proximity of the stores and the enclosed space is the most common cited reason for being there. Apart from that it is an important social space for groups that do not primarily shop. These groups are not homogenous of course, but the common denominator is an interest to spend time with other people outside of their normal home terrain (for different reasons) and to have access a social arena for new interactions. From interviews, it becomes clear that Nordstan becomes important for these groups through its location in the city, it's image a place with a large amount of service and the comfort levels an indoor space provides.

Conflicts of use arise on several levels in the space. The most abstract one is the conflict of Nordstan as a space for consumption and one for socializing in a more informal sense. These uses co-exist in clearly defined setting, such as cafés, but when they public spaces are appropriated the image of the space is disrupted. Another more physical level of conflict is the spaces where people hang out, and others pass through. This is most defined in the entrance areas of the mall.
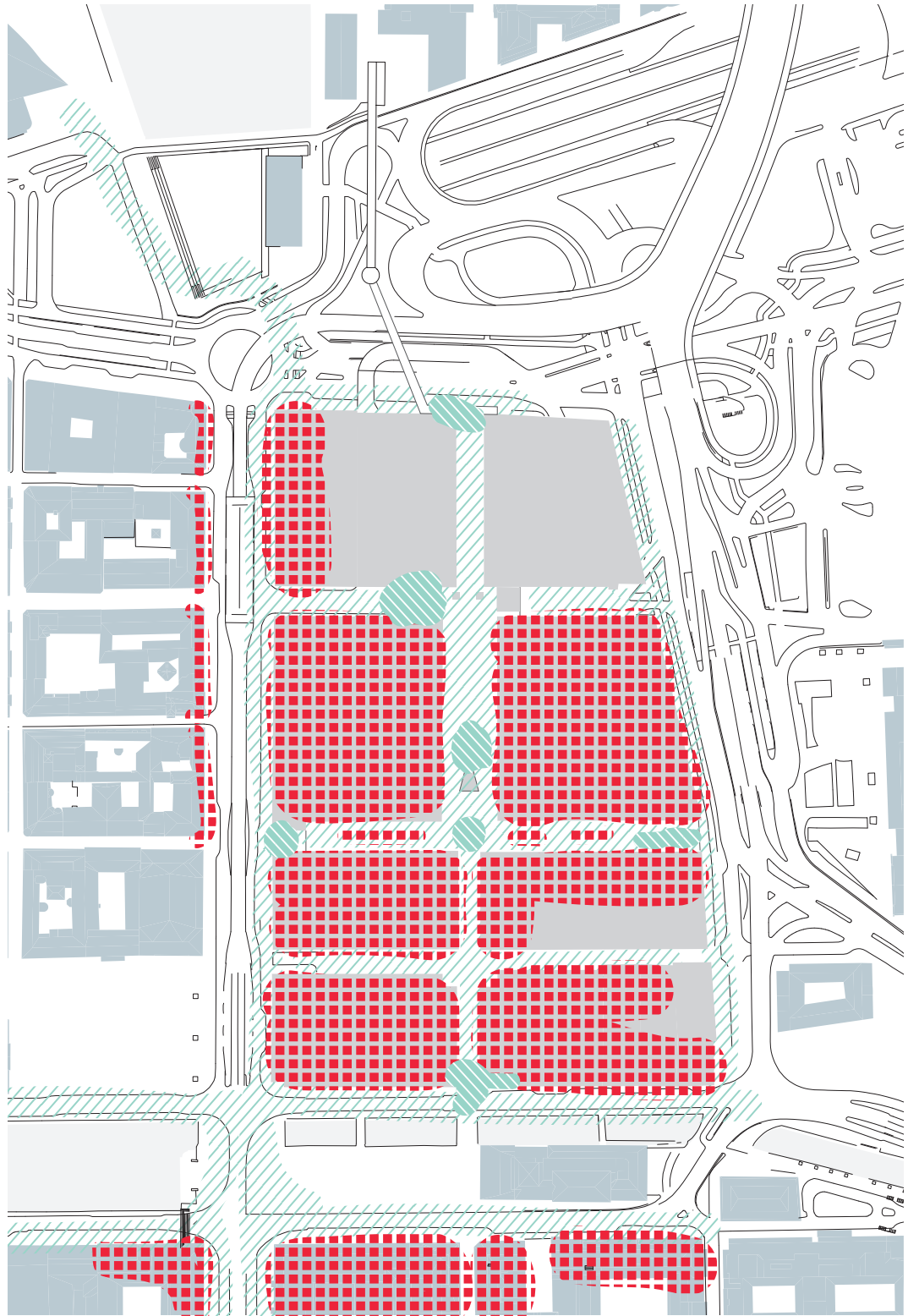
SOCIAL CONVERGENCE AREAS   MAIN USE: MOVEMENT   MAIN USE: SHOPPING

CONCLUSIONS FROM ANALYSIS

The analytical tool is used to understand how one space can hold different meaning for different people, depending on what these spaces represent and the spatial practice. When interpreting public space as part of a political action, the acts of planning becomes an exercise in power – as it means a representation of a space takes precedence over other representations. If planning is not aware of how different representations, it reproduces norms and strengthens a hegemony. Also – the conflicts of how a space should be used is clearer in ambiguous scenarios – where the possibility of control is greater. This is highly relevant when describing why Nordstan becomes an arena for conflict. The conclusion is that being able to accommodate different representations and spatial practices into representations is a way of negotiating these conflicts, but it also means changing the perspective of the planner.

Looking at Nordstan, one conclusion from this analysis can be that Nordstan is both private and public. It is clearly a very closed, controlled and private space in its function, being a mall. At the same time, it is also a clearly public space, with the streets being open long into the night and being part of what is legally public space. The "controversy" of being present in Nordstan but not consuming (instead loitering, playing music, watching etc) must be seen from this perspective. This contrast between expectations of how Nordstan "should" be used and is used results from that can be controlled, but at the same time can't.

The conclusions from the analysis are used to develop a new problem formulation and design question. When the developing a proposal for the development of Nordstan into a public space, the following potential is taken into consideration:

→   Basing redevelopment on the value and use of specific groups
      that might be lacking access to facilities/spaces – and thus
      creating directed development aimed at these groups.

→   Creation of a clear definition of boundaries between private influence and public
      space. What is allowed in public space is interpreted as different than in private.

→   Creating space for taking action in public space. Can spatial configurations
      that allow for demonstration, for comfort or for appropriation be created?

PART 2. PERFORM

Design question

How can Nordstan be transformed into a public space that allows for democratic opportunities, enhancing the value of the space for people that otherwise have restricted access to the public sphere?

Points of departure:

Nordstan is more important as a public space than as a mall.

This point of departure is crucial in the argument for what Nordstan could be, and is an element in a transformation of the representations of the space. It says that the public space characteristics of Nordstan dominates the mall characteristics of the space

Map out conflict surfaces and create space to negotiate these

This is based on the ambiguity of Nordstan today and the values people find it, and finding ways of managing that instead of specifying one use as more problematic.

Let the public usage decide the direction and the shape

The foundation for a redevelopment should be how the public uses Nordstan today and the values they see in it. The physical representations of these values should not be removed but rather enhanced and become the starting point for a new development.

Enhance the public values of Nordstan, and working with the four aspects of access, safety, comfort and ability to appropriate

This is based on the idea of creating a more democratic public space by looking at public space from different viewpoints, and through that understanding that some ideas and goals might contradict each other.

Reclaim the streets

The private influence over Nordstan and its surroundings in the form of regulation, control, cleanliness and signage is both a important factor and a hindrance to the idea of it being a public space. Give more space to the public functions, and zone the private ones into the buildings, in order to create a clearer demarcation of what is possible and what's not possible.

Explore the ambiguity in a simultaneously public and private space

What Nordstan is today is ambiguous and unclear. This leads to people not understanding how it can be used and what rules apply, and they negotiate it by testing and through social control.

Let the changes within Nordstan become a framework that can affect its surroundings.

Nordstan is part of a network of public spaces. If the idea is for changes to Nordstan to be a testing site, it should also include of the changes affects the surroundings.

These points of departure, rather than describing a problem with Nordstan in itself, is what defines the vision for Nordstan as a critical architectural approach. The approach is to avoid the hegemonic pitfalls of listing the problems of Nordstan as it is today. Instead it's the potential of what it could become that becomes to focus.

By using the conclusions on the values of public space and the use of Nordstan today, map out the potential conflict-surfaces of today, and then create design criteria that takes take its foundation in creating the possibility to negotiate the use of these spaces, to manage conflict in directly in the space.

Using the approach to democratic public space as comfortable, safe, accessible and with the ability to appropriate it, the visions attempts to enhance Nordstans qualities as a public space, rather than follow the logic of the mall. The understanding of the space comes from the previous research on the use and functions of the space. The aspects are the underlying logic from which different proposals and ideas are evaluated, through asking questions on how a certain change would affect the different aspects and what implications it could have.

The vision is drafted through an experimentation-based sketch process where ideas based on the goals are drafted, and then evaluated to the criteria and the varying aspects. Through this a vision combining experimental architectural implementation is combined with a real-world understanding and enhancement of the values of Nordstan and its surroundings for its users and visitors.

NORDSTAN REDEVELOPMENT DESIGN SPECIFICATIONS

Reprogram

Nordstan is a public space; the streets and squares should be experienced and treated as such. A new roof and new entrances allow for the current qualities of Nordstan, while creating a more transparent character of the spaces.
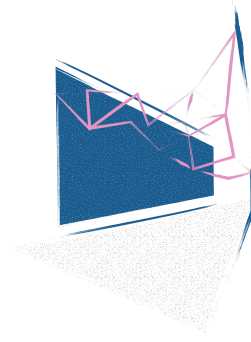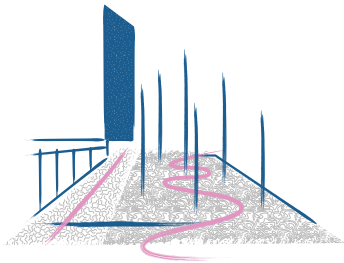
Zone

The commercial influence is drawn back from the streets and into the buildings, with the creation of new arcades. In the spaces between the arcades the streets are transformed from spaces of walking to spaces of interaction. The ground-cover is varied and reflects the speed and possibility of the space.

Connect

The streets of Nordstan are an integrated part of the streets surrounding it. By transforming the entrances and the entrance-zones, and by letting the appropriation possibilites extend out from Nordstan, the area gains the opportunity to enhance and be enhanced by what takes places in it's surroundings. It also serves to increase the flow of people using Nordstan as a route.
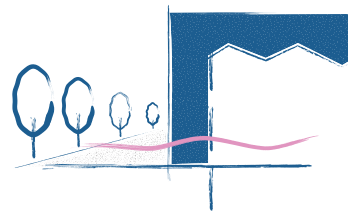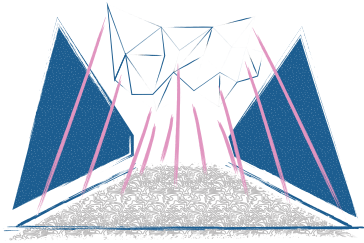
Grow

Originating in Nordstan, a system of columns and pillars define the structure of the enhanced public spaces of Nordstan. By mapping the areas most valued by people that use Nordstan as a social space, the columns are organized in to create spaces of varying social possibility. They also hold the roof, and create a visual and physical connection between the outside and inside. In addition to that, they also serve as the framework for creating different types of activities and installations in the spaces.

Spill out

Surrounding Nordstan are other public spaces of varying character and use. The re-appropriation of Nordstan spills over to these areas, creating different opportunities depending on the space. This helps shape these spaces, and mentally and visually connect them to the spaces within Nordstan – the area is sewn together.
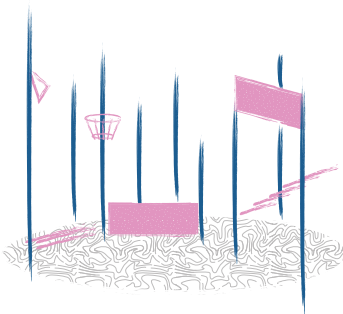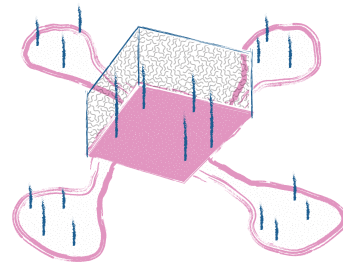
Take over

The columns have the opportunity to serve as tools for appropriation and social interaction. They are modular and can be used to attach both seating, screens, roofs and other protective elements, be it playground or stage or other. The use and usage cannot be planned, but opportunity can be created and specified, to facilitate democratic negotiation of space. It also allows for appropriation of the less social spaces in and around Nordstan, usch as giving opportunity to claim parts of the parking garage for public activities.
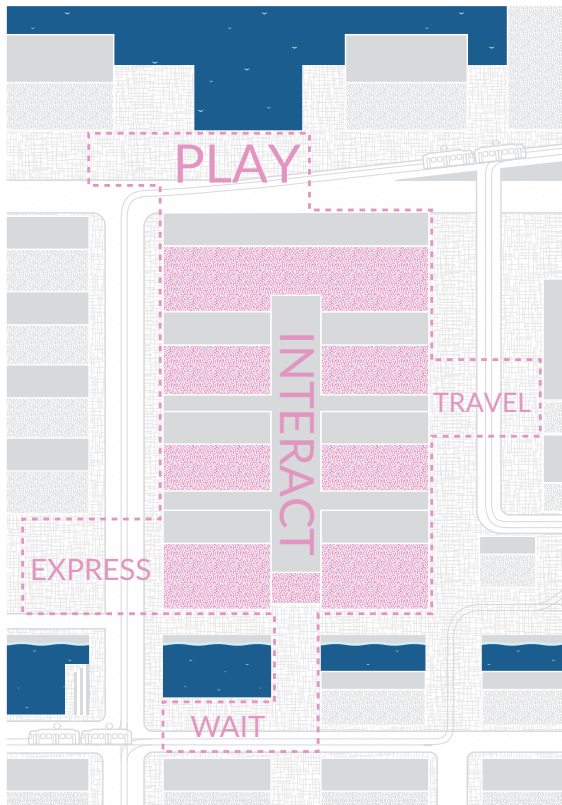
TAKING OVER

Each one of the areas relating to Nordstan has specificed characteristics, defined from the reserach and the collective practices of the spaces. These practices defined how the forest of columns is organised and how it helps define these spaces, as well as relate them to the public spaces of Nordstan.

1. Kanaltorget - *Playing*

2. Path to centralstationen - *Traveling*

3. Brunnsparken - *Waiting*

4. Gustav Adolfs Torg - *Expressions*

5. Inside Nordstan - *Social interation*

A

G

B

F

C

1

3

4
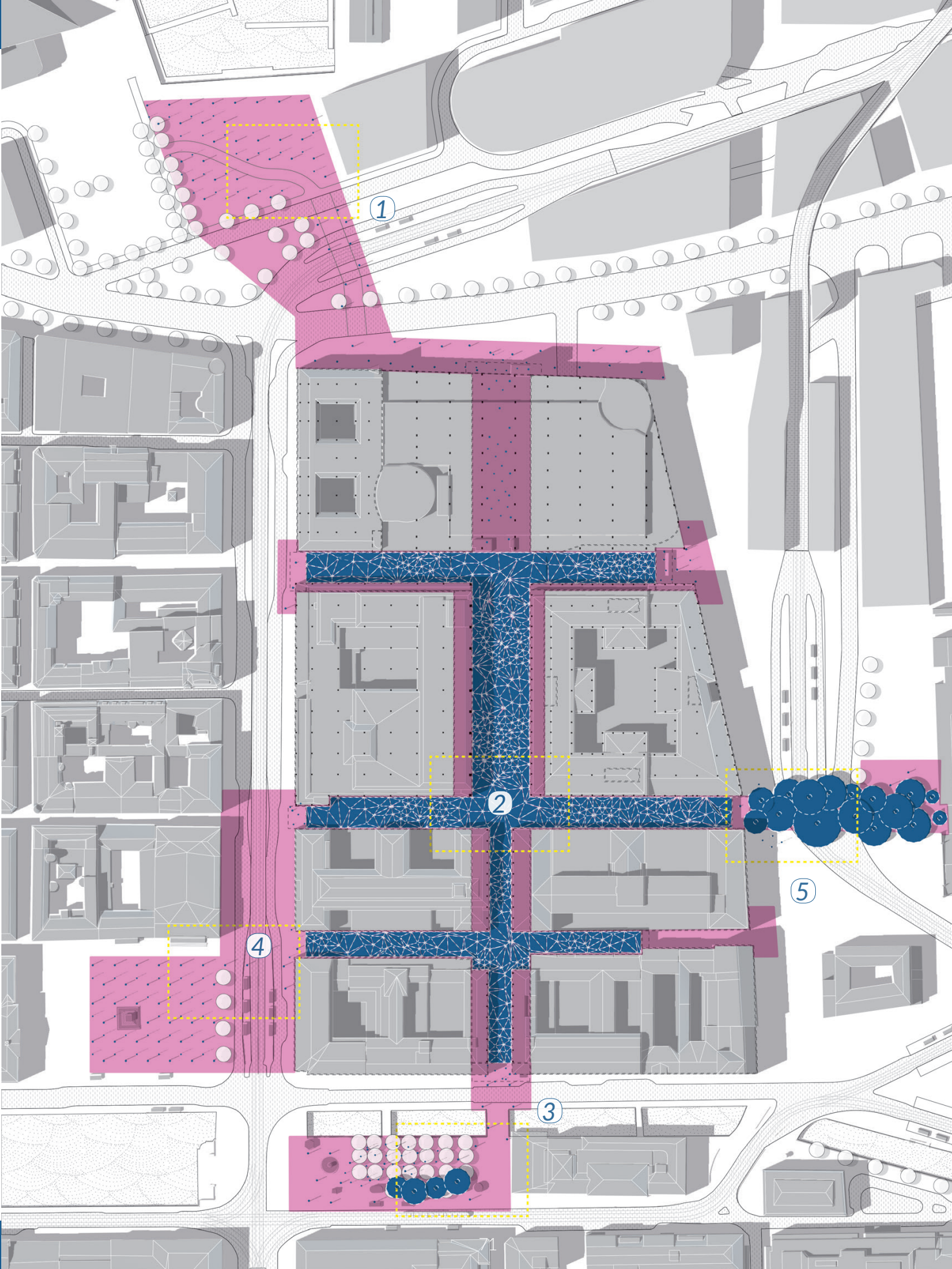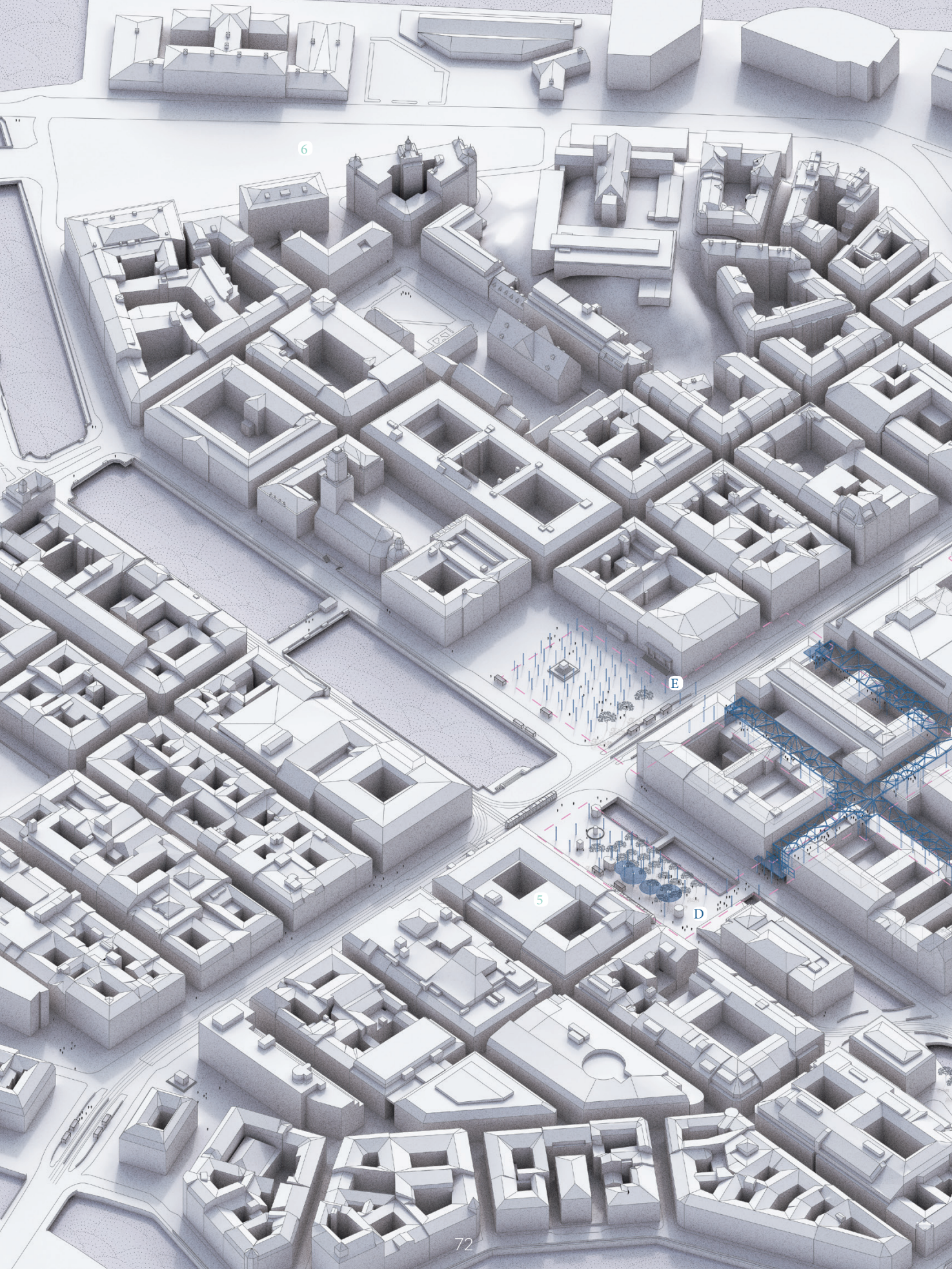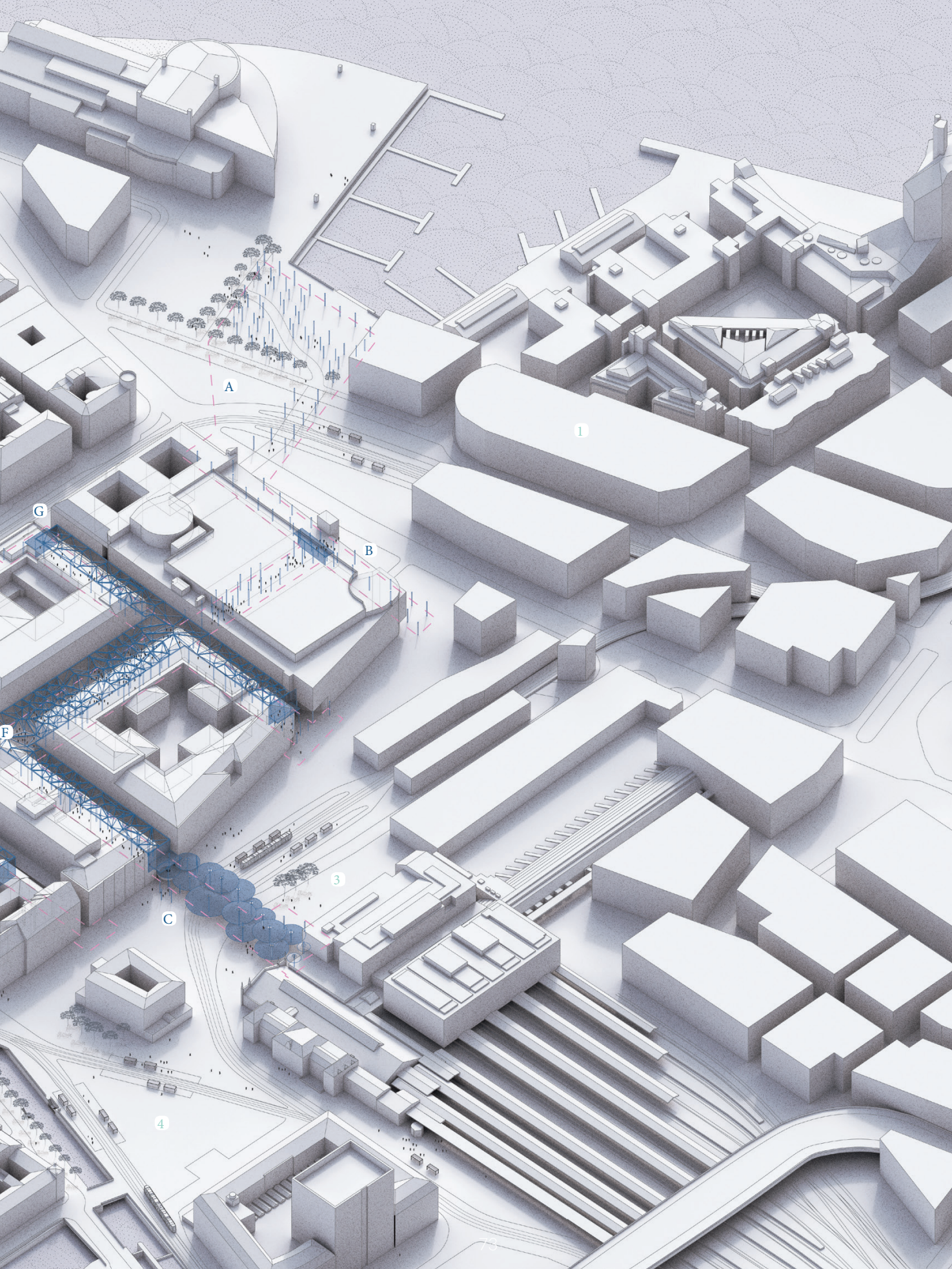
EXISTING AND PLANNED FEATURES

1. Buildings planned to be built in the coming 10 years.
2. New bridge to Hisingen, finished ca. 2021
3. New square, part of the new bridge development.
4. Drottningtorget, re-developed according to municipal plans.
5. Existing buildings
6. Re-developed road, connected to new bridge and other municipal development.

PROPOSAL ELEMENTS

A. Playground and park at Kanatorget

B. New entrance towards Kanaltorget, re-defined by the new bridge and hightened and widened path.

C. Covered ath between Nordstan and Centralstationen, passing by new tram stops. The old tunnel is removed.

D. Tram traffic at Brunnsparken moved to one tramstop. New seating, lights and cover to facilitate waiting and connecting to Nordstan.

E. Modular column-structure with lights and attachment points on Gustav Adolfs torg. Facilitates markets and manifestations on the square.

F. Paths in Nordstan widened and the a new square with public-private functions and possibilites for action, as well as a new glass roof covering more of the streets.

G. Entrances to garage moved to the north side of the building. The former garage entrances are covered and made part of the new public spaces inside and outside.
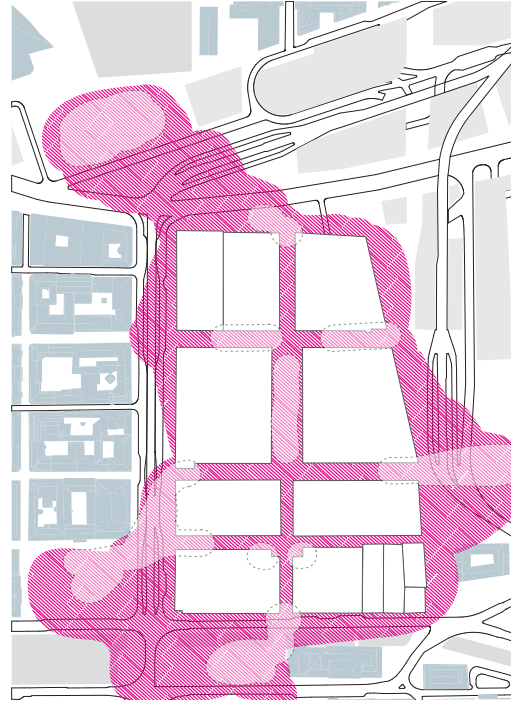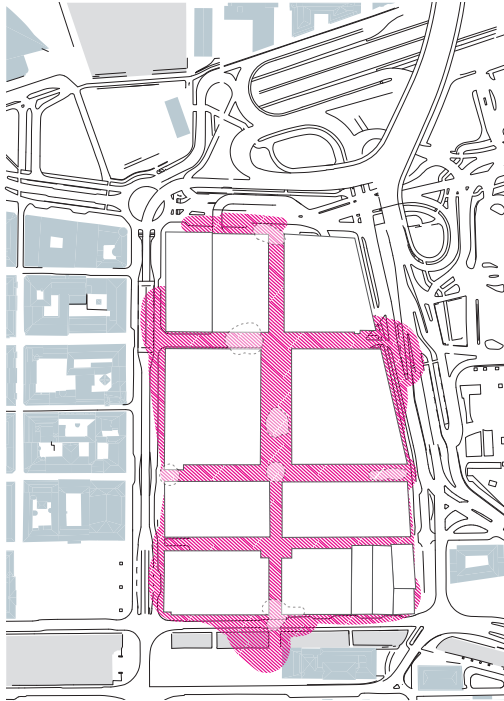
PRESENCE AND SOCIAL FUNCTION

The aim of the proposal is to strengthen Nordstan as a public space and enhance its social functions through a strong presence in the area. This diagram shows how it's presence expands to the surrounding areas in identity, function and social possibilities.
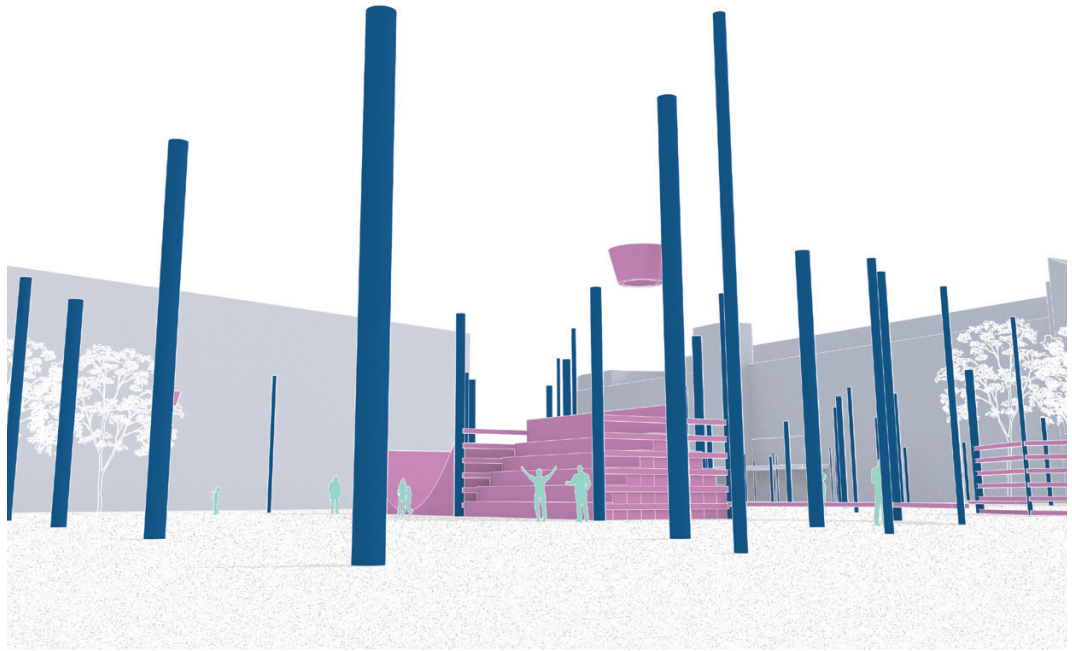
INFLUENCE OF NORDSTAN AS A PUBLIC SPACE

AREAS WITH STRONG SOCIAL FUNCTION

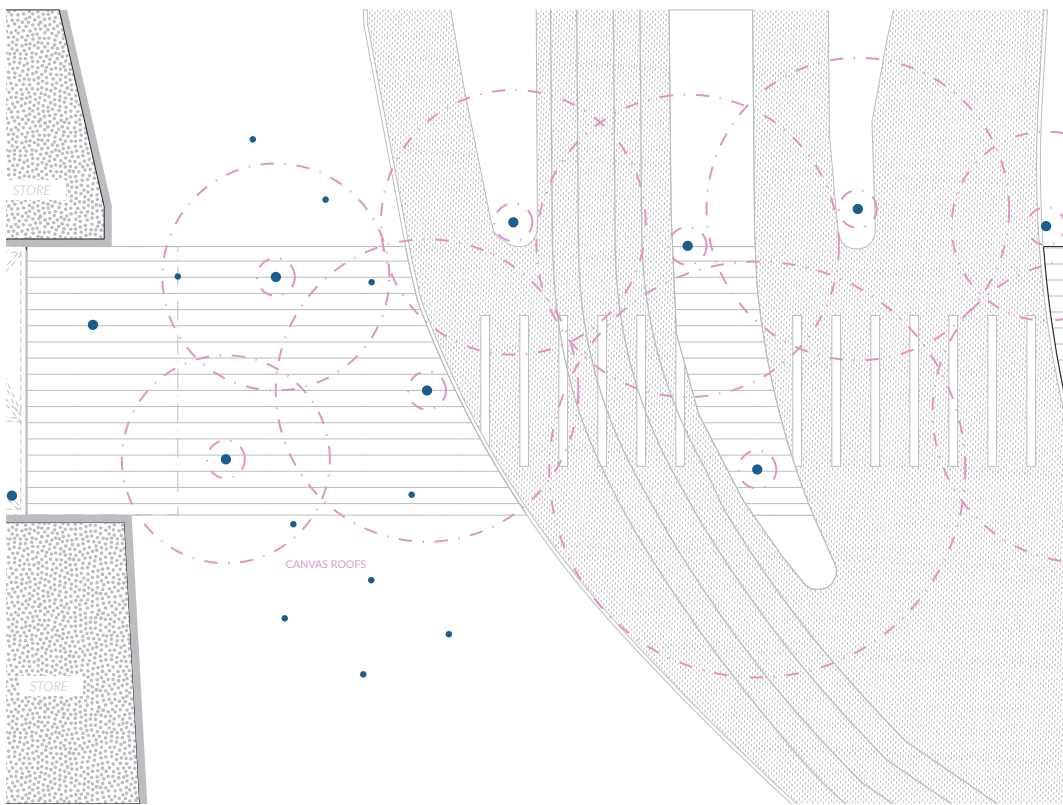PLANNED BUILDINGS
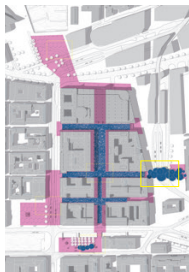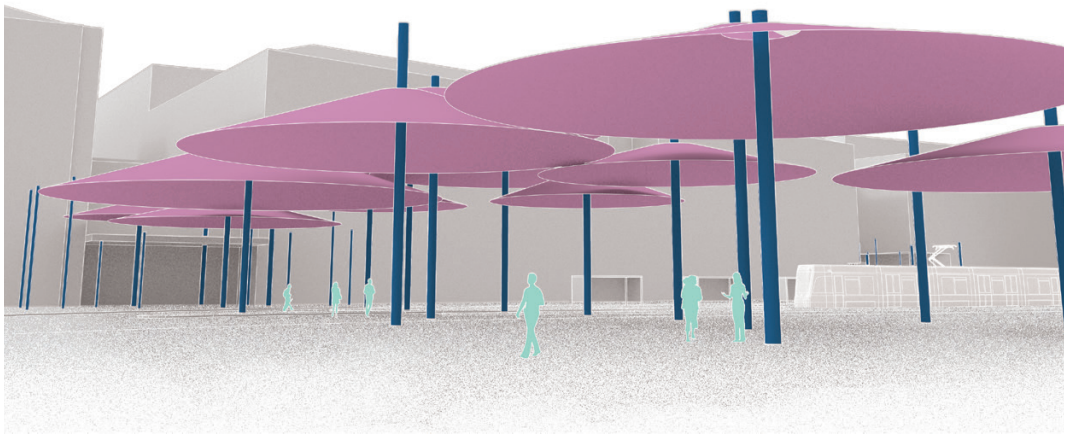
EXISTING BUILDINGS

NORDSTAN

1.KANALTORGET

SPORTS COURT

MULTI-LEVEL SEATING

SKATE RAMP

SEATING

NEW BUILD

PLAYGROUND
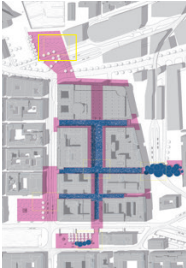
1:400

PERSPECTIVE

2.PATH TO CENTRALSTATIONEN

STORE

CANVAS ROOFS

STORE

1:400

PERSPECTIVE

3.BRUNNSPARKEN

SEMI-PRIVATE
SEATING AREAS

SEATING

SEATING

CAFE TABLES

KIOSK

RESTAURAN

CANVAS ROOFS
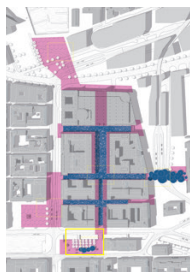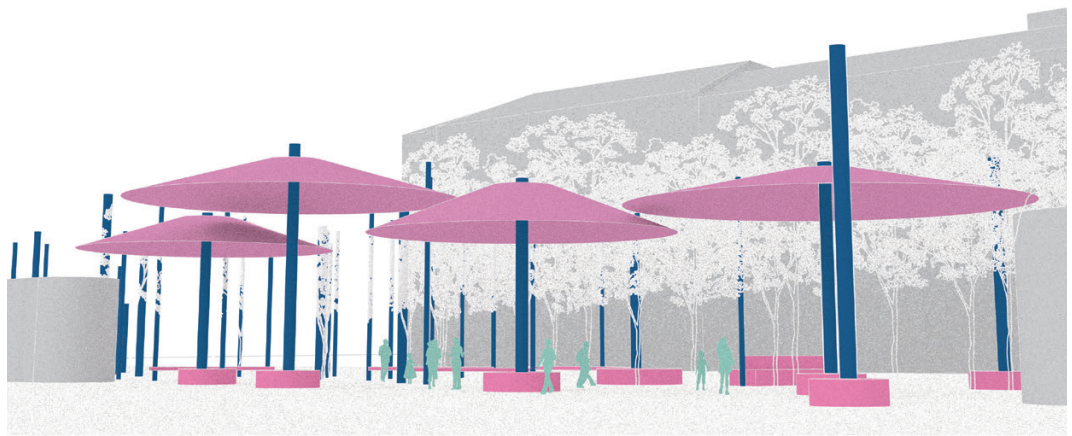
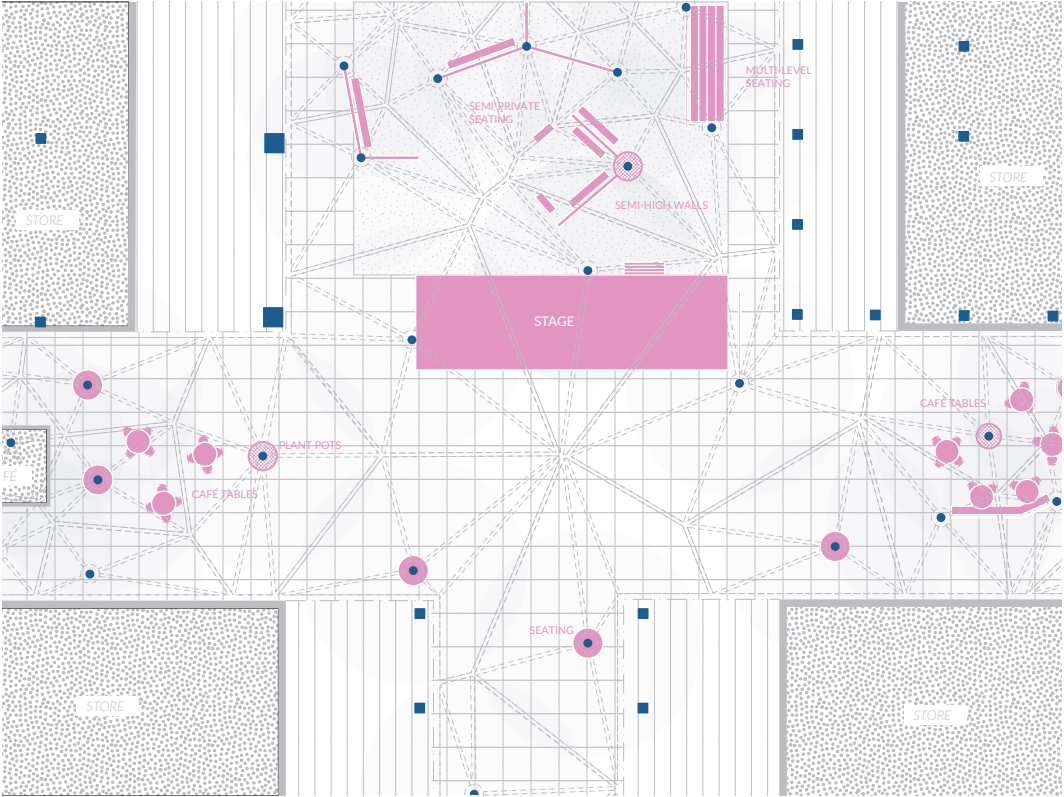*PERSPECTIVE*

4.GUSTAV ADOLFS SQUARE

COURTHOUSE

EXHIBITION
SPACE

SEATING
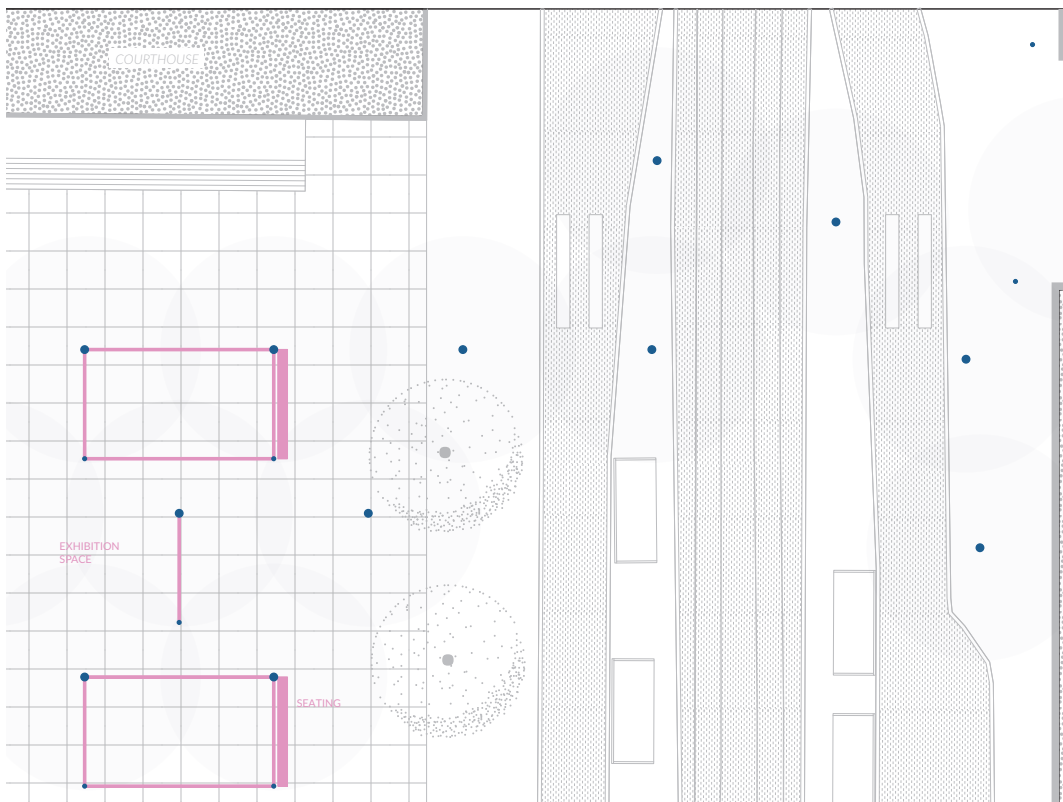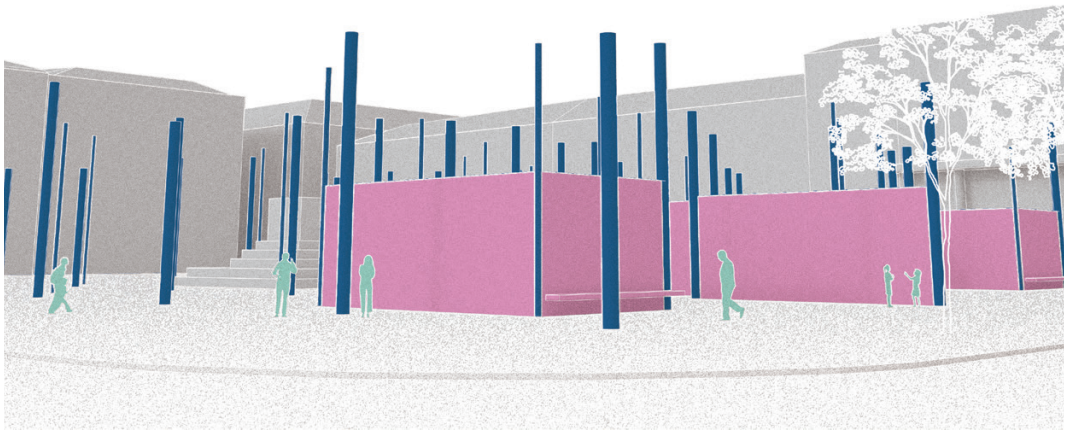
1:400

PERSPECTIVE

5.INSIDE NORDSTAN

STORE

SEMI-PRIVATE SEATING

MULTI-LEVEL SEATING

STORE

SEMI-HIGH WALLS

STAGE

CAFÉ TABLES

PLANT POTS

CAFÉ TABLES

CAFÉ

SEATING

STORE

STORE

1:400

PERSPECTIVE

FIXED/
ARCHITECTURAL

STRUCTURING

ORDERING

APPRIATING

USING

INTERACTING

CHANGING/SOCIAL
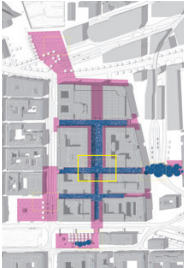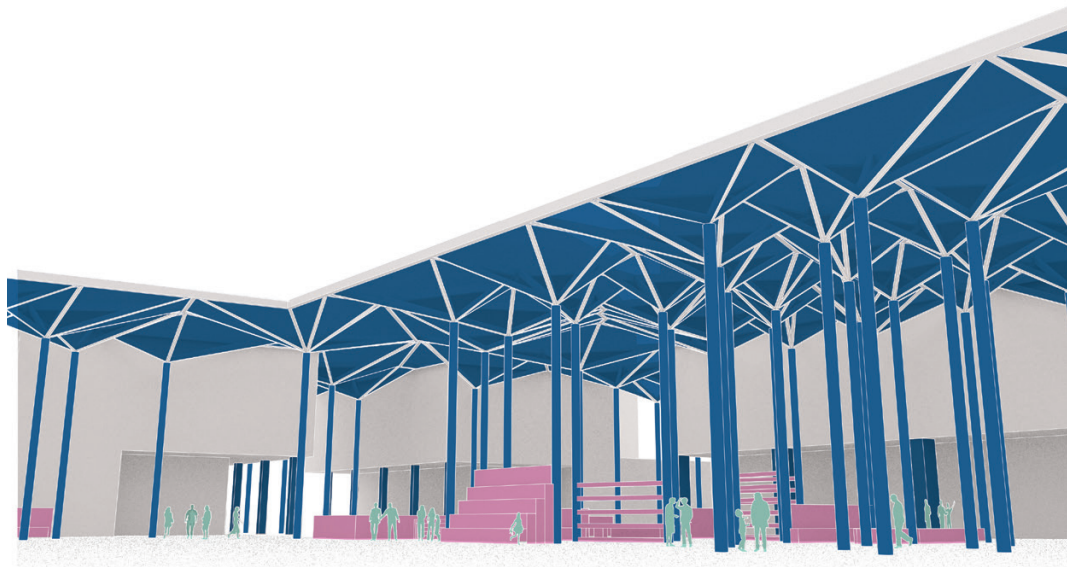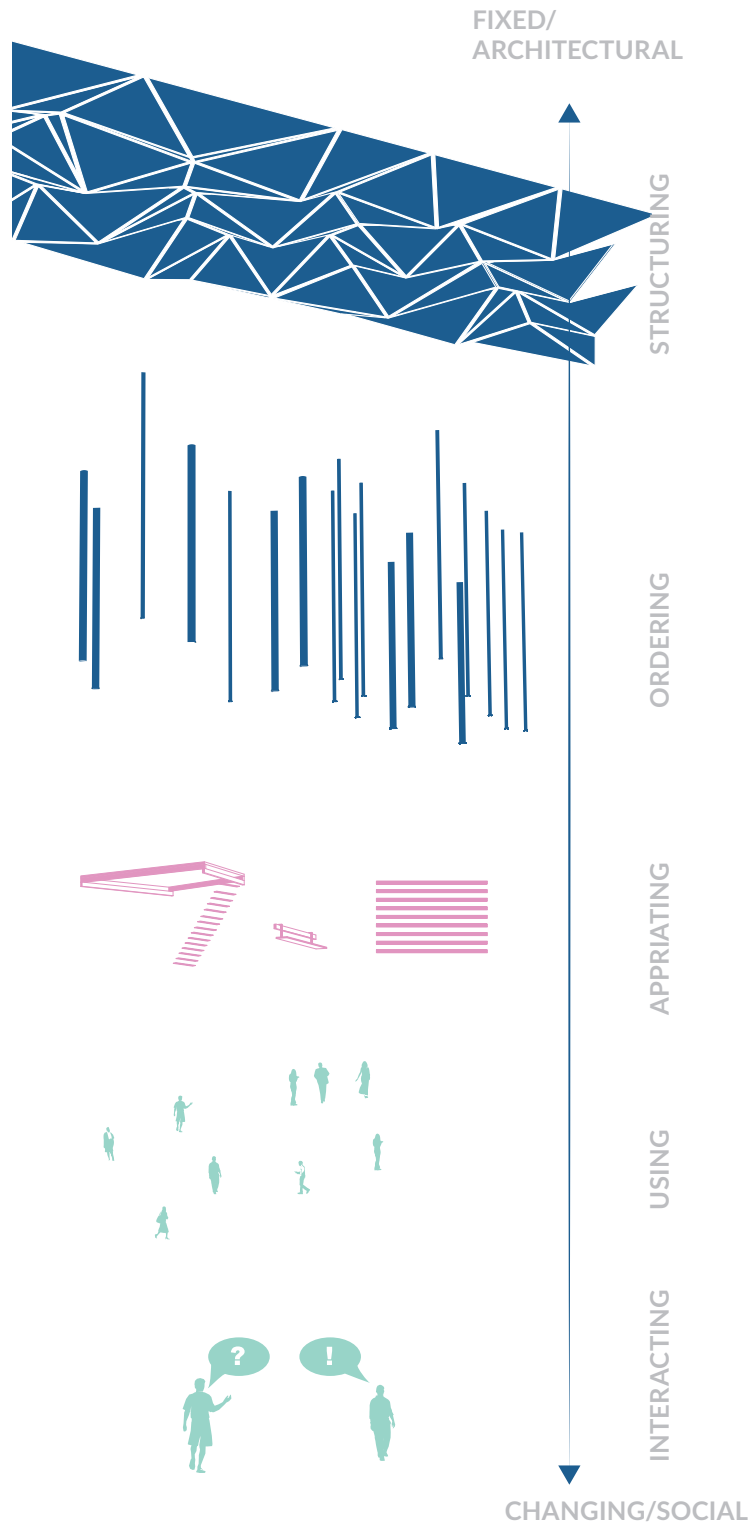
FIXED/FLEXIBLE LAYERS

The proposal consists of several layers. The architectural structure is fixed and planned, with a forest of columns a and a new roof attaching to it. Onto this a flexible layer i attached, consisting of the possibility of using the structural elements of the columns to attach furniture, protection and lights. These can be planned but can be changed in a more much shorter timespan. The most flexible layer is the social interaction and the use of the elements, constantly changing the image of the space.
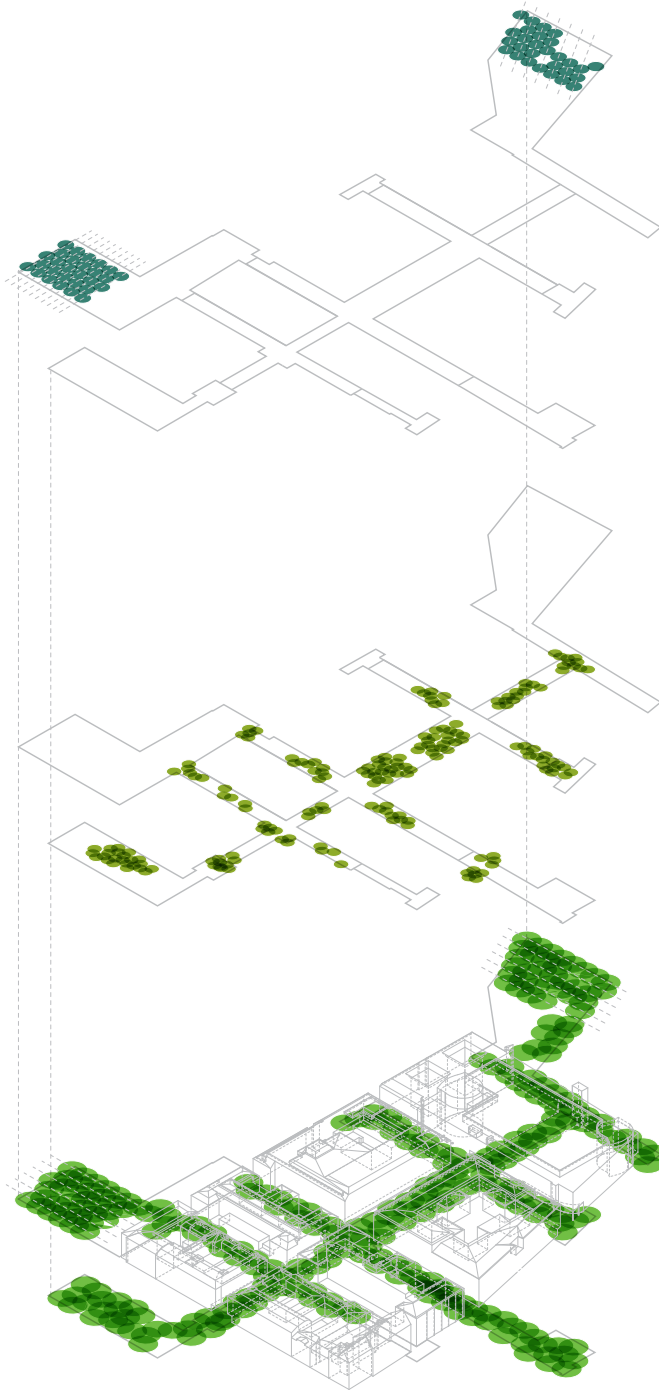
Modular
Distance: 5m

Ordered and based on grid, to allow modularity and variation in function - marketplace, changing playground, manifestations

Density
Distance: 3m

Columns close to each other ordered around social hotspots, to allow for semi-private interaction in public space and break of flow.

Density & modular
Distance: 9m

Columns physically connecting Nordstan with surroundings, density allowing large scale activities while breaking up private influence.

COLUMN DISTRIBUTION

The forest of columns connecting and re-imagining Nordstan as a social public space is an essential part of the proposal. The distribution and density of the column is based on three principles. The first is a public order, with at least 9m between each column, either ordered or spontaneous depending on use. On top is a dense, more private order, creating small clearings where people can gather and use. The third layers is a structuring, grid-based, layers, created where changing furnishing and uses are more important, such as the playground on Kanaltorget and the marketplace on Gustav Adolfs Torg.

Distance to closest column

9m - Public   *3m - Semi-private*   *5m - Modular, public*

CONCLUSI
AND REFLI

ONS
ECTIONS

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The main result of the research is the development of an approach to planning public spaces, as well as an application and evaluation of that application. Reflections on the evaluation works as a way of evaluating the approach that is created from the theoretical model. The results strive towards fulfilling the aim of the research through providing a critical perspective on the planning of public space from, as well as providing nuance on what values can be found in public spaces for different user groups. These results can be seen as part of larger discussion on why and for how we develop public spaces in cities. They take into consideration many aspects that are often missing within the planning field, such as the lack of critique on who benefits from development of public spaces.

The application of the planning approach shows a potential in taking on a power-critical approach to planning of public spaces. Through developing the space from the perspective of enhancing the democratic opportunities of public space, the formulation of the problem with a public space such as Nordstan takes on a new shape. Instead of developing a proposal based on eliminating what makes Nordstan specific as a public space, this proposal provides a different perspective on what a public space can be, if seen from the perspective of a democratic society and the potential of the people using it today. Through integrating the spaces with the city, strengthening the ambiguity and providing opportunity for taking action while simultaneously negotiating conflict, the proposal outlines a new platform for democratic opportunity. It also provides insight on the potential of a power-critical planning approach, and its viability as a method.

Concluding the research, one reflection is that the architectural field clearly is in need of

planning theory that is simultaneously critical and pragmatic. Through combining theoretical criticism, an awareness on how planning and design reproduces norms is shaped. It's also evident in this research that this not necessarily a necessity – these values can be challenged by challenging the mindset and process of the planner. A further development of this research could be to study planning processes in greater depth. In addition, the approach developed in this research could be developed into an actual method, rather than simply a framework. The method of evaluating the approach through the development of a proposal could benefit from greater depth in its application, as the concept of the simulated case study would hold greater depth. It is important to note that the application is not a thorough development proposal, but rather the application of a theoretical model. Many of the design elements are conceptual, but it would be possible to develop these concepts further.

Overall, this research reaches the conclusion that the relationship between people, their actions and the spaces they inhabit are strongly interlinked. By developing tools to understand this, as well as understanding his or her own power, the planner or designer can be part in developing a democratic society that is more just, equal and fair than that of today.

Continued research within this topic could include development of the approach into a self-reflecting method, further research on the normative role of the planner, as well as further development on how to plan for complex and conflicting use in public space.

REFERENCES

Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder Of Citizen Participation. Journal of the American Planning Association, 35(4), 216–224. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225

Brown, W. (2015). Undoing the demos. Neoliberalism Stealth Revolution (1st ed.). New York: Zone books.

Chiodelli, F., & Moroni, S. (2015). Do malls contribute to the privatisation of public space and the erosion of the public sphere? Reconsidering the role of shopping centres. City, Culture and Society, 6(1), 35–42. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2014.12.002

Degen, M. M. (2008). Sensing Cities, (June), 225. Retrieved from http://books.google.com/books?id=N1g3OIXWL_sC&pgis=1

Foucault, M. (1980). Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972- 1977. (C. Gordon, Ed.). New York: Pantheon Books.

Franzén, M., Hertting, N., & Thörn, C. (2016). Stad till salu. Entreprenörsurbanismen och det offentliga rummets värde (1st ed.). Göteborg: Daidalos AB.

Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy. Social Text. https://doi.org/10.2307/466240

Fredriksson, J. (2014). Konstruktioner av en stadskärna. Den postindustriella stadens rumsliga maktrelationer. Chalmers Tekniska Högskola. https://doi.org/978-91-7385-975-2

Fritz, M. (1997). Nordstan. Från gårdagens vision till dagens affärscentrum. Göteborg: Tre Böcker Förlag AB.

Göteborgs Stad. (2010). Detaljplan för Nordstan och Hotell Eggers, 1480K-II-5081.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). The Production of Space. Oxford: Blackwell.

Legeby, A., Berghauser Pont, M., & Marcus, L. (2015). Dela[d] stad - Stadsbyggande och segregation. 1. Perspektiv och utgångspunkter (No. 1). Stockholm.

Mouffe, C. (2005). On the political. London: Routledge.

Mukhtar-Landgren, D. (2012). Planering för framsteg och gemenskap. Om den kommunala utvecklingsplaneringens idémässiga förutsättningar (1st ed.). Lund University, Lund.

Tunström, M. (2009). På spaning efter den goda staden. Örebro Universitet. Retrieved from http://oru.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:241251/COVER01

Wang, D. (2007). Diagramming Design Research. Journal of Interior Design, 33(1), 33–43. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-1668.2007.tb00420.x