

# Framing Varberg

Reinterpreting urban development through place identity



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Master Thesis 2023



**CHALMERS**  
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### Framing Varberg

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Master Thesis 2023

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates how urban development can be reinterpreted through place identity and genius loci, with a specific focus on the local context of Varberg and the transformation of the harbour.

Varberg municipality is growing because of its attractive geographical location along the Swedish west-coast and assets like closeness to the ocean, bath culture and the small-town feeling. To encounter the population growth the municipally initiated development project Västerport will extend the town to the water and make the private harbour an urban place. It is significant that the place identity of the site is protected, as a risk is that a place in transformation loses its connection to its past and memory to instead become a blank slate where a waterfront polished area can be built.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the local identity of the harbour and Varberg to form a suggestion for a transformation that includes the sense of place in its future vision. By bringing up the discourse on universalized architecture and place identity this thesis links the investigation of a local context to contemporary architecture, as well as the synergies between the architectural field and who we design buildings for.

Through a study of the past, present and future of Varberg genius loci perspectives guide the methodology of place analysis and the design exploration. By iterative processes the theory, design and place investigation has been ongoing simultaneously to let the research of all parts inform each other. Through the interpretation of the harbour and Varberg's identities, the process has merged the qualities found and used it for transmitting the sense of place, without copy-pasting and romanticising the past.

The thesis results in both a genius loci analysis of Varberg and a design proposal of an urban masterplan of Västerport phase 2. To give a depth in the different dimensions of place the design of the street, volumetric form, urban spaces and building's exterior have been explored and presented.

**Keywords:** place identity, genius loci, Varberg, urban transformation

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## Student background

### Masters programme

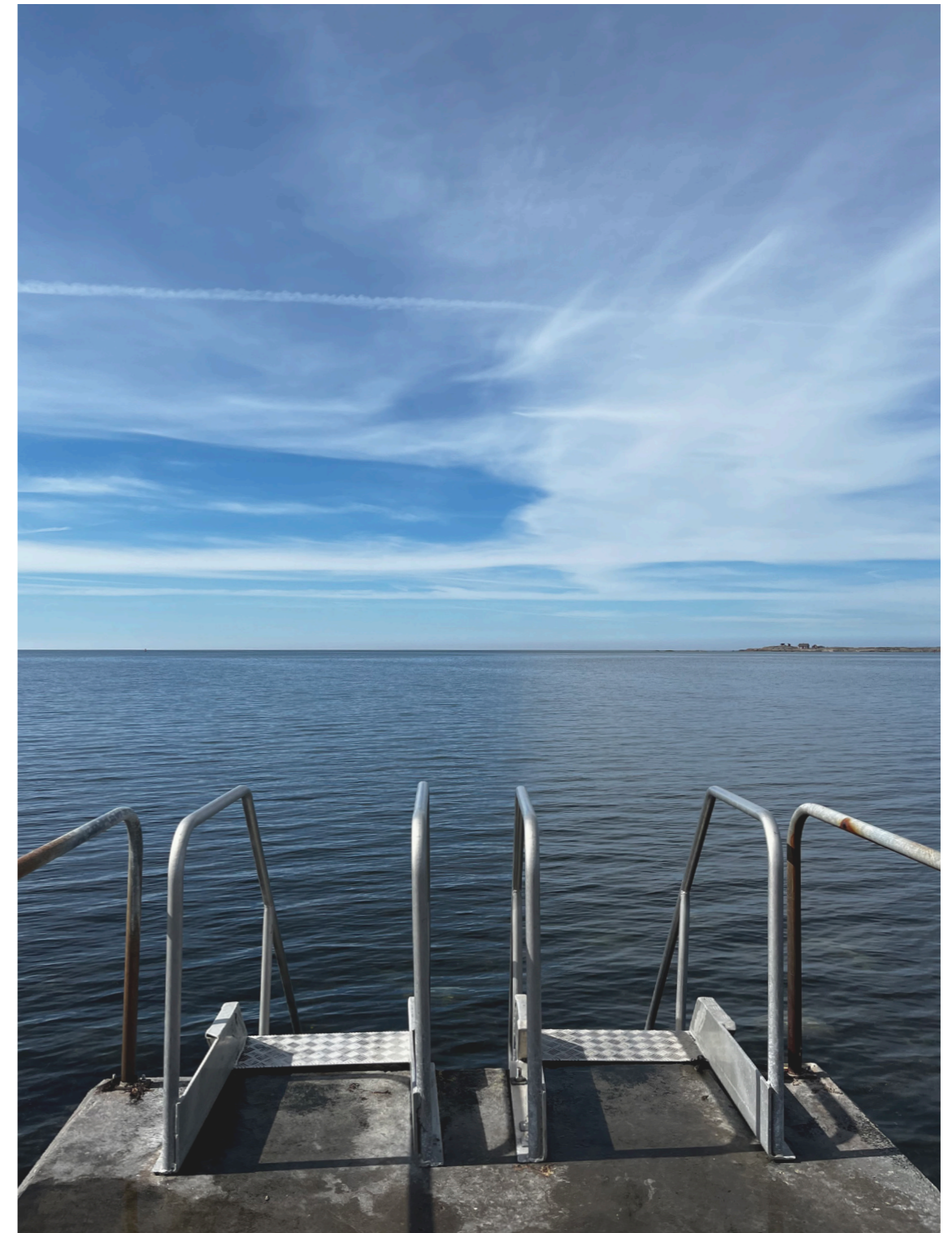
Architecture and Planning Beyond Sustainability  
Chalmers University of Technology  
2020-2021  
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### Internship

Arkkas Arkitekter, Varberg  
2021-2022

### Bachelor studies

Architectural programme  
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2017-2020



*Photograph of a bathing spot by the beach promenade in Varberg, from April 2022*

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## Reading instructions

### Chapter 1

**Introduction** introduces the background, discourse, context and scope of the thesis. The chapter includes the background, purpose, aim, thesis question, method, vocabulary and delimitations.

### Chapter 2

**Theory** includes the theoretical discourse connected to the subject of this thesis. Discourse is the first part of the chapter which is mainly gathered from literature and is concluded with reflections and takeaways of the theoretical research for the Genius loci investigation and design proposal. In the latter part, Reference projects, practice-based projects are described and analysed, with a reflection on relevance for this project.

### Chapter 3

**Local context** positions and relates the thesis subject in its local context. Presenting and describing Varberg, the site, the future transformation and the areas of cultural heritage environment for the genius loci investigation in chapter 4.

### Chapter 4

**Genius loci** covers the phenomenological exploration of the harbour and Varberg by an evaluation of elements found in 4 different areas within the town centre, to find the sense of place.

### Chapter 5

**Design proposal** is the chapter where the implementation and reinterpretation of the genius loci of Varberg and the site is presented. The design proposal is an example on how the urban plan and space can be designed based on framing the local identities.

### Chapter 6

**Discussion** summarizes the discussion and reflections of the process and outcome of the research. To finally conclude the project and to connect back to the thesis question and discourse.

# 1. Introduction

## Introduction

This chapter introduces the topic, discourse, context and scope of the thesis, through background, purpose, aim, thesis question, method, vocabulary and delimitations.



*Photograph from an arch opening in a stone wall of the fortress Varbergs fästning, framing the view of the harbour in the background.*

## Background

Globalization, development of technology, economy and modernism have been drivers for the trend of the universalization of our civilisation and architecture. Architecture has been impacted by the international spread of design concepts as well as new materials and efficient production chains for construction, which has led to a lack of identity or “placelessness” in our built environments.

Universal architecture is described by Björk et al. (2000) as a force that erases local connection and the national distinction. The need of maintaining the enrichment of human culture all over the world is emphasised, it can be done by connecting back to the roots by preserving and developing the local heritage and characteristic traditions.

The Norwegian architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980) works from the latter half of the 20th century derives from philosophy’s phenomenological theories, which he adapts to architecture by developing the ideas of phenomenological perspectives on place as well as the concept of Genius loci as a qualitative tool for place analysis. In his book *Genius Loci: Towards a phenomenology of architecture* Norberg-Schulz (1980) uses phenomenology and sense of place to bring in a new view on architecture as a reaction against the “placelessness” in towns and cities and the post war architecture.

Norberg-Schulz (1980) writes that every situation is local at the same time as it is general and that phenomenas in our life world differ place from geographical location, since a place that is affected by varying local conditions has its own specific identity. Genius loci and sense of the place is found by understanding the layers and dimensions of a place, the physical tangible and the invisible intangible values and their interconnections. An approach to preserving the genius loci of a place is about emphasising its local identity and reinterpreting it (Vecco, 2020).

From growing up in Varberg the industrial harbour area has always been present in its location in the town centre, something you see and pass by but cannot access. Because of its industrial character and being private land, it might not be seen as beautiful or as a space for people, though it is still important to understand it as a place that impacts its physical context, lives of people and sense of place.

With the current transformation from the harbour’s industrial landscape into an urban city development, called Västerport, the past and existing conflicts with the future. With today’s universalized building industry and its economical drive for efficiency, there is a risk that the physical and mental memories of the place are erased to create a blank slate where an ocean front development can be built. To prevent the industrial site from becoming a polished and placeless location, the place identity and its tangible and intangible values and characteristics need to be identified and interpreted to preserve the genius loci in the transition.

The harbour is also surrounded by its local context, and the relations between spaces impact each other. The new development of Västerport will be impacted by its context, simultaneously as the new transformation will influence the appearance and sense of place of the existing urban space of Varberg. Therefore, an investigation and understanding of the genius loci and place identity of the site and its context is needed, to let it be preserved and reinterpreted in respect of the history and future of a place.



*The Cold bath house and beach with the harbour in the background, taken in January 2022.*

## Purpose and aim

The purpose of this thesis is to question the universalization of architecture and the loss of connection to local context in contemporary urban developments. The aim is to explore the local identity of Varberg to form a suggestion for a transformation that includes the sense of place in its future vision.

## Thesis question

**How can the area of Västerport be transformed based on the local identity of the harbour and Varberg?**

## Method

### General approach

The overall general method for the project is research-by-design. With an approach of an iterative design process, where design, theory and local genius loci investigations have informed each other. The process has been an attempt to capture and understand a place while reinterpreting it through architectural design and planning.

### Theory

The theoretical research has been conducted by literature research and practice-based reference projects. Theories from both the discourse and reference projects have throughout the process been continuously used as input in the design process and genius loci analysis.

Discourse summarizes the literature studies, which dives into theories and discussion on architecture, genius loci and place. This is to give a wider perspective of past and current discussions on architecture and place that have led to today's issues and questions.

Reference projects gives a wider research background by incorporating practice based built examples, where the outcome of them have been analysed, used for inspiration and reflected on.

### Local context

The chapter is made of my own local knowledge and observations, maps and by gathering information from resources made by or requested by the municipality. This is to give a background to the areas of investigation, site, transformation and Varberg in whole and introducing the phenomenas that are part of Varberg's identity.

### Genius loci

The research is done from a genius loci perspective, where tangible and intangible elements are observed, identified, evaluated and presented. They were continuously in the investigation also interpreted and reinterpreted through the design proposal as the research on the Genius loci and the Design proposal was ongoing iteratively.

For every area investigated a collection of elements of the genius loci by photography, sketching, drawings, collages and text is presented. It is based on extracts from impressions and observations of the site and in its context, which are selected and curated by the author based on their qualities to the design proposal.

By the methods of site visits, photography, sketching and analysing physical space I have tried to capture the feeling of and physicality of the places. 3D-model and 2D primary data of Varberg town centre has been used as complimentary data.

Through 3 site visits in the end of January, the middle of February and the end of March a variety of impressions were experienced, as through the design and theory research between the visits deepened my understanding of place identity.

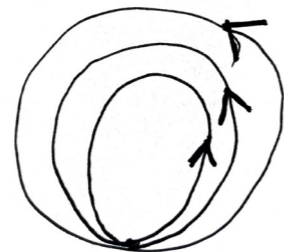
During the site visits the design proposal site, the harbour, have not been possible to explore in place because of it being closed off for its current industrial use, this is why the analysis is based on observing from the outside and maps. Also, part of the analysis was done by looking at material from the municipality such as the Genius loci workshop they have done (Varbergs kommun, 2020).

### Design proposal

For the design proposal the methodology have been using characteristics from the collection of elements in the Genius loci chapter in a reinterpetative synthesis in its specific context. From theory literature references and analysis of reference projects from architectural and planning practices has been feeding into the exploration and design process.

The design process has been informed by looking at and analysing qualities in the areas of investigation to continuously find and define and reinterpret the genius loci. When looking at different scales different qualities and details have been found to give a depth in the analysis of place identity.

Furthermore, the design is based on the investigations of the genius loci chapter, site analysis, design explorations in sketches and 3D-model, by analysis of the iterations and my knowledge of architecture and planning, as well as by learning from other examples. The design process has been a tool for investigation and evaluation of Varberg's genius loci, so the design proposal is not only the outcome but also part of the iterative exploration.



*Iterative process of theory, genius loci & design proposal*

## Vocabulary

### Character

A combination of qualities that are specific in a place or person which differs them from others, can also be something or someone with an uncommon and interesting quality (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d. (a)).

### Genius loci

The intangible experienced qualities of a material tangible place, that are experienced both physically and in spirit (Vecco, 2020).

### Pastiche

Architecture that intentionally copies earlier architectural styles and eras or is a mix of inspirations, it is seen as an artifice which then distances the architecture from fully being an imitation of something else (Nationalencyklopedin, n.d.(b)). Pastiche is within architecture a conflict of perception as it is often interpreted as something bad, though it can also be appreciated.

### Place identity

A description of the individual and specific qualities of a place, deriving from that it is more than an abstract location and that every place is unique.

### Reinterpreting

The act of using new ideas to create from something existing, interpreting something in a new way.

### Tangible and intangible

Intangible values are the soft and invisible layers of a place, how humans experience the space, meanwhile the material dimension of tangible values are the hard and visible layers (Vecco, 2020). They are interrelated as one affects how the other appears and changes.

## Delimitations

### Site

This thesis investigates Phase 2, see area marked out on figure 1, and will be the second phase of the municipally initiated central urban development project Västerport.

The detailed development plan for the first phase of the plan, Västerport Phase 1, is seen as the context and prerequisite for this project, despite the uncertainty if the detailed development plan will become legally valid. Phase 3 and 4 have been looked at as future urban developments and context for Phase 2, though it is unsure how they will be planned.

### Economy

Economy is recognised as an impactful factor for the design outcome in practice, therefore the demands and costs in the building sector and the floor area ratio of 1,5 decided by the municipality will be discussed and related to. Though it is not the aim of the design proposal to reach that floor area ratio.

Without diving thoroughly into the economic aspects and calculations a general overview and reflection on building methods, materials and details as part of the economics in the building industry today and in the past are touched upon in the discourse, design proposal and the discussion.

### Area of investigation

To limit the area included in the investigation of local identity in the Genius loci investigation, the selection of places for analysis is focused within the cultural heritage environment for the national interest (Riksintresse) marked out in figure 2.

The cultural heritage environment area for national interest (Riksintresse) in Varberg is motivated by the medieval fortress and its influence on the urban settlements deriving from it, especially the preserved 1600's Swedish urban plan in the town centre as well as the bath and health resort culture emerging in the area in the 1800's (Varbergs kommun, 2012).

Though acknowledging that the Varberg's urban fabric and local identity reaches further than that, the area of the cultural heritage environment is motivated by national interest as valuable to preserve and is here seen as the main core of the essence of Varberg's town centre. The four areas that are selected to find local identity are further explained and explored in the Local context and Genius loci chapters.

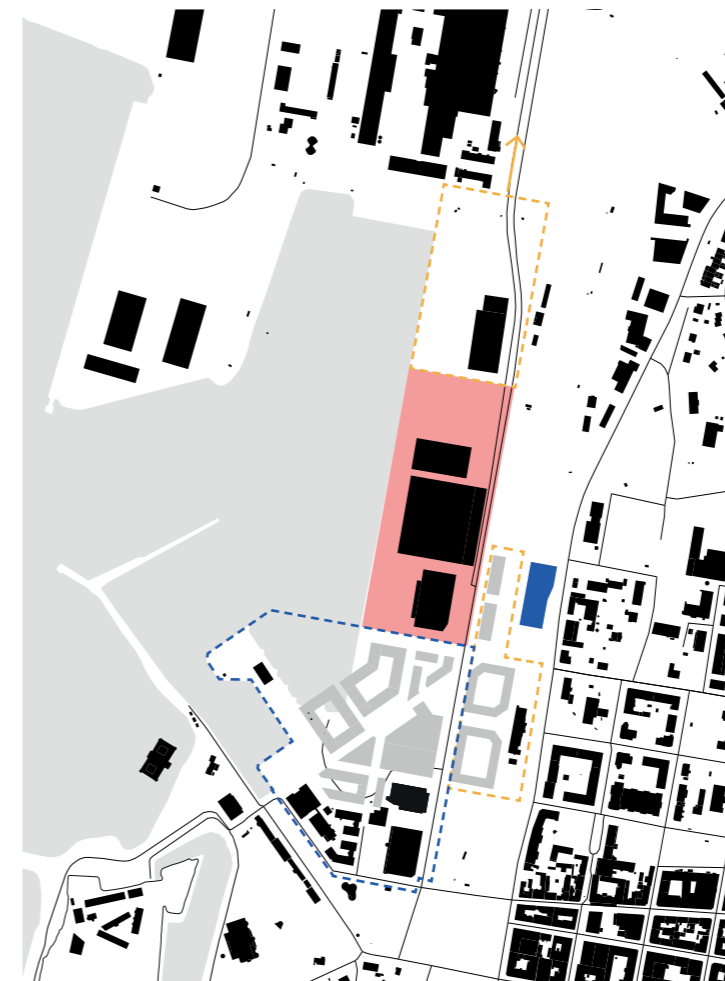
### Program

Functions and the program for the design proposal is partly taken from what Varberg's municipality has identified as needed and will be mentioned in the program for the design proposal.

This thesis does not include participatory processes in the research, instead the design proposal and program are based on theory research, material from Varberg's municipality and the authors own analysis and design process.

### Design proposal

The design proposal presents an urban masterplan and volumetric study of Phase 2, additionally to give a depth in the different dimensions of place examples for the design of the street, urban spaces and building's exterior are provided. The proposal will not investigate building plans in detail, because the thesis focuses on the local identity of Varberg, the urban space as well as the buildings relation to it.



- Site, Phase 2
- New train station
- New buildings Västerport
- Existing buildings
- Phase 1
- Phase 3 & 4

Figure 1 - Map of harbour and prerequisites for project, scale 1:10 000



- Genius loci analysis
- Cultural heritage
- Site, Phase 2

Figure 2 - Area of investigation of the local context, also the national interest of cultural heritage, scale 1:20 000.



# 2. Theory

## Introduction

This chapter includes the theoretical discourse connected to the subject of this thesis. The chapter starts with Discourse, which gathers the literature research and further explains the theory and current discussions connected to the subjects of this thesis, to then be ended by reflections and takeaways. In the latter part of the chapter, Reference projects, the practice-based projects used as inspiration are described and analysed.



*Photograph of rocks and the pier that encloses the harbour on March 27, 2023.*

## Discourse

*Discourse covers the theoretical discourse from universalized architecture, building industry and the reasons for loss of place, to phenomenological and genius loci perspectives to again find local identities and ends with the Swedish contemporary discussions on architecture, pastiche, aesthetics and tradition.*

### Universalized architecture & loss of place

Universalization as a phenomenon has improved living conditions for humanity while simultaneously being the destructor of our traditional local cultures (Ricoeur, 1965). From the beginning of the 20th century the world civilization has been undergoing big changes, still today trends and technological development change our behaviours, buildings and settlements. The modern development has resulted in civilizations leaving their cultural past behind, Ricoeur (1965) writes that there is often a dichotomy of on how a place can go back to its roots and at the same time adapt to the modern development.

The spread of universalized modernized architecture has during the 1900's made some architects strive for the uniqueness of every building, with inspirations of popular culture, technology and other sources than architecture (Björk et al., 2000). In different parts of the world nationally distinctive and locally rooted architecture has been erased as this international architecture appeared. To maintain and evolve enrichment of human culture in all regions of the world, it is necessary to preserve and develop the local architectural heritage as well as characteristic traditions.

The modern architecture movement is also criticised by Koetter and Rowe (1999) for the buildings and planning's lack of connection to its context, because of the modernist eras future visions that were disconnecting from the past the urban space was negatively affected. Koetter and Rowe (1999) describes prophecy of the future and memories of the past as interconnected, therefore as actions they are dependent on each other and need to act together. To envision the ideal city, both the anticipated and the reflective processes needs to be included, gathering the novelty of the vision of the future and acknowledging the context it comes from.

### Historical & contemporary perspectives in the building industry

Materials used in buildings before the industrial revolution were made by hand and with human care, they were chosen for their physical properties but also for their social, symbolic and ritual values (Golden, 2017). The knowledge of handling material was passed down in generations and lead to the human identification with the traditional process of building. Since then, the technological development of construction has led to the systems dependence on

global supply chains and economies. With the evolution of the global and economic systems as well as the industrial manufacturing of new materials, such as concrete, glass and steel, the builder's relation to the site and materials have been deprioritized.

Economy and efficiency have been driving forces in many parts of the world to provide buildings for dwelling, work, cultural and social activities, which was made possible by industrial manufacturing. Within that development the post-war architecture was steered in those directions by the building processes and economical forces, which can explain the loss of feeling of identification, belonging and care in the architectural spaces that also is mentioned in the works of Norberg-Schulz that will be elaborated in the following parts of the discourse.

In the book *Building from Tradition* the author Golden (2017) investigates how traditional building materials and methods can be merged with contemporary practice in the building industry. After a long time of developing new technologies for efficiency and economy of our buildings the contemporary discussion in the building sector, affected by the needed turn towards sustainable development, is realizing the long-term potential in the combination of old and new practices.

Golden (2017) writes that using local resources and traditional methods is useful for more than their physical qualities for building, as they can also boost social engagement, knowledge, sustainable development and the persistence of local culture. As well as that the traditionally used materials often respond to the local conditions of a place, such as availability of material, protection against weather and the buildings relation to the ground.

When looking at the older buildings in a place, like Varberg in this thesis, their design has a multitude of reasons behind it. What we also can read into in buildings and place are the materials used that are selected because they were found locally and for their responsiveness and durability to local conditions. The authentic feeling of the materials can come from them being made by handwork and with care, and that is often appreciated by the people experiencing it. Materials and detailing can be seen as gestures for residents to feel that the space they dwell in is designed for their well-being, so with effort in the design the resident can interpret the environment as cared for and them being valued (Nylander, 1998).



*Photograph of houses in Varberg's town centre, from February 14 2023*

## Phenomenology

Within philosophy the concept of phenomenology is the individual's experience of "things" (Smith, 2018). In phenomenology the human experiences are defined as directed towards things from a first-person and subjective perspective. Different forms of experiences influenced by the first-person perspective are for example perception, thoughts, memory, imagination and emotion, that all form the meaning of a certain experience.

Within the direction of the hermeneutic perspective of phenomenology for instance Martin Heidegger and Paul Ricoeur were prominent (Nationalencyklopedin, n.d.). Where an understanding of the existence of the thing and its relation to the world and situation such as connection to historical tradition, socio-cultural environment and language were highlighted. When the "thing" is contextualised, it is no longer enough to just observe and describe them, the first-person view experience of the "thing" also needs to be interpreted.

The work of Christian Norberg-Schulz derives from the theories of Heidegger and his exploration of phenomenology, and in the book *Genius Loci* Norberg-Schulz (1980) develops the philosophical concept into an architectural phenomenology perspective of place and genius loci, which is described further in the following text.

## Place & genius loci

Christian Norberg-Schulz phenomenological perspective in architecture is a reaction against the "placelessness" in towns and cities and the post war architecture. Norberg-Schulz (1980) writes that the loss of place is an outcome of architecture's lesser ability to give character, to then develop his statement by describing how the new buildings and urban developments no longer form enclosure, density nor the appearance of streets and squares in the way they were, and therefore the new settlements do not achieve the "sense of place".

From the point of view of seeing place as a qualitative holistic phenomena Norberg-Schulz (1980) applies phenomenology to architecture to move from the abstractions in architectural theory and to return to the "things". The place as a holistic phenomena is based on the meaning of it as an entity that is not merely an abstract location. This definition leads to his idea of letting buildings and spaces take inspiration of the unique qualities of its place and local context.

The concept of sense of place and genius loci does not only include the tangible values as the physicality of a place such as spatial relation, as it is also defined by its intangible values as character or atmosphere (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). The physical environmental character of a place can be a collection or a total of tangible things that occur there, such as things, material, form, texture and colour that can be found in buildings. Meanwhile the human intangible experiences such as feelings also are a part of the place phenomena that distinct it from other places.

Norberg-Schulz (1980) highlights that every place has character, that is an outcome of its physical and formal construction and are a spatial combination of vertical and horizontal boundaries. A place's character is changed by time, one aspect being light changing as seasons come and go, the time of the day and different weather. This shows how places are constantly changing and their atmosphere and that the sense of place is not a static phenomenon.

The tangible concrete place is simultaneously intangible and includes character of many different dimensions that are a result of geographical, historical, cultural, architectural, economic and social coherence (Vecco, 2020). Genius loci shows itself in the tangible structure of place, the physical space, but as parts of that dimension is changed or removed genius loci can still stay in the memories of individuals or the collective. Genius loci is not intentionally created, because of its tangible and intangible dimensions it is a result of the connection between spatial and social processes.

**"Architecture means to visualize the genius loci, and the task of the architect is to create meaningful places, whereby he helps man to dwell"**.  
(Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p.6)

Norberg-Schulz (1980) means that the role of architecture is to create place identity, so forth the "loss of place" appears when the genius loci or identity of place is not present in buildings and the urban space. Though Norberg-Schulz also writes that respecting the genius loci is about finding a places identity and reinterpreting it in other ways, not reproducing copies of the existing and historical.

Norberg-Schulz's book *Genius loci* has later been criticized for romantic-nostalgia as well as for reducing and simplifying issues to a question of architectural form (Haddad, 2010). That his agenda was to against the modern movement use interpretation of genius loci to return to using vernacular architecture as the idealized model within a context of other new economic, social and political dimensions than of those past environments and reasons.

Wilken (2014) also mentions the critique of Norberg-Schulz work as a nostalgic idea of traditional architecture, spaces that derives from historical contexts of previous power relations, hierarchy and authority that today is seen as problematic. Another critique is how Norberg-Schulz presents the concept of genius loci in the book by photographs, captions and text as a narrative tool to support his arguments. With the author as a curator of the examples shown visually in the book it can be questioned how they are manipulated to show certain perspectives and leave out other parts of reality.

**"Only when understanding our place, we may be able to participate creatively and contribute to its history"**  
(Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p.202).

## Genius loci as a tool for cultural resilience

Since Norberg-Schulz developed the ideas of Genius loci within architecture the concept has developed in many directions. Genius loci as a meta-concept is a contemporary article on the topic where Vecco (2020) dives into the ideas of preserving and transmitting genius loci as tools for cultural resilience and creativity, that also applies to a human sustainable development perspective by letting human, social and cultural values guide processes.

Vecco (2020) highlights the importance of interpreting, protecting and transmitting place and its genius loci, and by interpreting their value and understanding how to support their soft values the spread of cultural resilience between places can happen. By intangible values the development and change of places can come from within, by the genius loci these spaces can become places that carry and rebuild the relations, bonds, culture and sense of belonging to a place.

## Swedish discourse on architecture, pastiche, ornament & details

Norberg-Schulz ideas of attempting to visualise the genius loci and designing meaningful places could end up as pastiches, even though his intention was not to copy traditional models. Pastiche is within architecture often seen as problematic, with connections to copying styles and putting on a fake envelope of buildings, as the traditional and vernacular are designed for other construction systems and lifestyles than of today. The architectural debate on pastiche and the question of the balance between using the traditional as inspiration or copy-pasting it is often brought up and discussed.

The Swedish "Arkitektupproret" started as a Facebook-group in 2014 with the aim of raising the discussion on bringing in a new classical architectural tradition into construction that they mean are wanted by the people (Kvint, 2019). The complexity of the question on traditional architecture is that the style and the appearance of built environments is liked by people, meanwhile architects see the holistic of what buildings today need to fulfil.

In the article *Vad folk vill ha* Kvint (2019) writes that the architect Petra Gipp sees the current discussion on architecture and "Arkitektupproret" as a reaction to that buildings are missing that real feeling, that often can be found in older buildings. Petra mentions that using history can be of help, but that pastiches and copy-pasting is the wrong way to relate to traditional architecture. By putting more effort into details, good materials and the craft of buildings could instead meet the wishes for another appearance and authenticity of buildings. The article highlights the contemporary struggles of meeting the demands of what the people want, the power of the builders and economical profit as well as the architect's responsibility for architectural values (Kvint, 2019).

In the article *Ornament och genombrott* Helgeson (2022) writes about a rising interest in ornaments in the last years, even though it is mentioned in the article as a loaded subject within the architectural field. New approaches, technological solutions and expressions are noticed in the contemporary ornamentation in building facades and interior design, where in some cases traditional styles are reinterpreted in more modern ways (Helgeson, 2022).

## Discourse reflections & takeaways

### Universalized architecture & loss of place

By letting the vision and the history of a context together lead the design process for a new development finding place identity can be a strategy to root new developments in its context. Future visions should derive from the mapping and acknowledging of a place, which can be done through the approaches of genius loci and phenomenology.

Connected to the vision of place it is also important to see the problematic in who gets to envision the ideal city, as it is often done by architects that have certain priorities, builders influenced by economic forces and municipalities with their drive for economic and population growth.

### Historical & contemporary perspectives in the building industry

“It is still possible for building practices to evolve from social and cultural needs, while continuing to lay the groundwork for what lies ahead.”

(Golden, 2017, p.219)

We cannot know what needs architecture will have to design for in the future, though by reconnecting to place identity there could be a shift in the building industry, buildings and planning. This could lead to an outlook that includes care for our environment and new perspectives on efficiency and economy that can derive from the social and cultural dimensions of place.

The post war architecture and industrialisation have been seen as reasons for the loss of place that Norberg-Schulz describes. Before the industrialisation of construction building material was more expensive than labour, when mass-production and new materials then were introduced the value of building material decreased and since then labour has become more and more expensive.

With environmental and economical sustainability in mind the value and idea of material again needs to be reconsidered to reduce the building sectors impact on the environment. Building materials that have less environmental impact in production, is local, is cared for and can have a longer life span can be a way too again reconnect to place or to give a sense of care in the architecture.

### Phenomenology

According to phenomenology every event in time or place is experienced by a first-person perspective, this makes the view of every person on the specific experience different. Architecture and built environment, where we dwell, affect how events occur and how they are experienced, therefore phenomenology can be useful to include in design processes. Additionally, in the process of investigating the places and the design proposal the interpretation part becomes important.

### Place & genius loci

Memories of and identification with a place is a first-person phenomena. When thoroughly discovering the tangible and intangible dimensions of a place to then identify qualities that can be reinterpreted, assembled and provided in new design people and the environment of place are respected. By implementing and interpreting genius loci the users of the space can identify with and feel a sense of belonging to new developments and transformation projects in their living spaces and surroundings.

Norberg-Schulz theories has a qualitative approach on place recognises it as being not merely the function and physical space. By describing the experience, atmosphere and feelings of places investigated in Varberg together with the physical space analysis a holistic picture of the local identity can be provided.

When using the genius loci approach it is important to acknowledge that caring for the identity of a place does not mean just copying the vernacular and traditional. This derives from recognizing that place and space exist in their own unique way than because of specific historical, cultural and socio-economical processes of their time, which are different to contemporary and future situations.

Awareness of how the narrative and representation of this thesis communicates one person's perspective by text and visual representation on the local identities of Varberg, therefore it does not show the true holistic perspective. This critical perspective is also needed against how economic and political forces, such as municipalities and architects, portrait certain images and visions for developments where the readers (people) perception could be manipulated.

Places character and atmosphere change through time. As the physical structure of place changes the memories of people still exist, how do we as architects make sure the memories and genius loci are cared for? This brings up the question on who should be the narrator of place, its memories and how it should be implemented in transformations and urban space. Who's vision and interpretation of place should prevail for the decisions on the use of space, new developments, the idea of the genius loci and forming place identities?

### Genius loci as a tool for cultural resilience

Identification and sense of belonging to a place are important from the understanding of place as a phenomenological and psychological function. To understand and know a place you need to experience it by being there physically, sensing and perceiving the intangible dimensions of its environment as well as its social and cultural perspectives.

Places are individual but they are not isolated from other places and influences, they are dynamic and change. As one place changes surrounding places will also be affected which calls for carefulness in developments and urban planning. Interpreting the value of places and their genius loci to be able to support them can be a catalysator for the spread of local cultural resilience, which can form and provide the identification and sense of belonging trough transition of spaces like Västerport.

### Swedish discourse on architecture, pastiche, ornament & details

By connecting pastiche to genius loci, the question on if looking to the traditional and context is copying of an ideal of the past or if it is about capturing qualities of invisible intangible and visible tangible dimensions that can provide new place identities that still give a sense of belonging and identification. Genius loci analysis could then be seen as a strategy to find architectural elements and tools that is known to work in their respective ways already, to design good new spaces for people. This needs to be done with a careful synthesis of reinterpretation and deep qualitative analysis of place and its context.

Ornaments and details are often appreciated and found interesting, and a new perspective on it might be discussed to be able to compete with opinions and economical aspects. In architecture there could be room for contemporary ornaments on buildings that attracts the gaze, creates atmosphere in the urban space and makes the built environment appreciated.

The exploration of combination of old and new practices in architecture can have long-term potential as ideas of efficiency and low cost is questioned in the building sectors discourse on sustainable development. Learning from both current and historical building traditions can be a way to design for social, economic and environmental sustainability by tending to good spaces for people and local culture that at the same time are durable and locally adapted in form and material choices. By finding new ways of incorporating the traditional methods and knowledge of materials with contemporary construction methods the use of the local and tangible values of place can be seen as an asset instead of pastiche.



Photograph of street space in the town centre of Varberg from March 27, 2023.

## Reference projects

These reference projects are a shortly summarized as some of the practice-based projects that have been used to inform the design process. This part of the theory chapter incorporates real tested examples by analysing, taking inspiration from and reflecting on them.



Photograph of Gamla Lindholmen, new buildings on the left and older house to the right.

### Lindholmen, Gothenburg

On an urban planning scale, the large industrial areas of the previous harbour and shipyards of Gothenburg and Lindholmen have been repurposed to places for mixed use neighbourhoods, campus and offices. By preserving the old harbour buildings and today using them for other purposes the history is represented, and the new built developments has been planned from the existing conditions.

### Reflection & takeaways

Though maybe not done to its full potential the place still communicates its previous identity within its industrial plan and spaces, it is also interesting to see how the architecture and urban planning must derive from other strategies than usual.

### Gamla Lindholmen, Gothenburg

Gamla Lindholmen is a less dense urban area in Lindholmen, Gothenburg between the old harbours and shipyards. Its older traditional buildings are preserved and in the last 30 years the area has been densified. The new buildings have been strictly designed to resemble the traditional housing in the area, that consist of quite narrow wooden lamella houses.

### Reflection & takeaways

The form and typologies of the historical context of Gamla Lindholmen seems to be working for the newer buildings as well, which have solutions for contemporary housing. Through the layout of the buildings and streets open spaces are created in between and the area feels like a semi-urban place. The developed urban layout and spaces of Gamla Lindholmen has reproduced at least parts of its place identity.

From this reference the strategy of using similar scale, materials and volumes of the traditional though with other design solutions to today's demands have been inspiring in both the building and urban scale.



Figure 3 - Kv Ciselören from street by Okidoki architects. From Kv Ciselören 1 [Photograph], by Thomas Zaar, 2021.

### Kv Ciselören, Eksjö

In the town centre of Eksjö a small block within the cultural heritage protected grid urban plan and wooden house area burnt down in 2015 (Okidoki, n.d.). To replace the building Okidoki designed the enclosed block to follow the footprint and shape of the previous buildings. The design idea was to playfully reinterpret the traditional to contemporary expression and details.

Within its historical context, the building is adapted to the local scale, material and details. The building balances its connection to contemporary architecture and building techniques while still referencing to the past and place. It is visible that the care and detail in the building comes from studying its context closely, and spaces like the small courtyard brings nice qualities. The integration of the historical references does by the detailing and using it as a concept throughout the design avoids the risk of becoming a pastiche and scenography.



Figure 4 - Kv Ciselören inner courtyard by Okidoki architects. From Ett hjärta rött [Photograph], by Thomas Zaar, 2021.

### Reflection & takeaways

What differs the context of Kv Ciselören and this thesis design proposal is my site's location in a completely different and industrial context. What I have taken with me to the design process is the studying of buildings and spaces in both Varberg and the harbour to be able to interpret the forms and details of the local architectural identity in the building scale. architectural identity in the building scale.

# 3. Local context

## Introduction

This chapter positions and relates the thesis within its local context by presenting and describing Varberg, the site, the future transformation and the areas of cultural heritage environment, which are later found in the Genius loci investigation in the following chapter.



*Photograph of the south side of the fortress on March 27, 2023.*

## Varberg

Varberg is a municipality on the Swedish west coast with a population of about 66 000 people (Varbergs kommun, 2021) and the main central locality is the coastal town Varberg. The region along the Swedish west coast is growing rapidly, and Varberg is following that trend.

With its geographical location on the west coast, see figure 5, Varberg is well connected with Gothenburg and Malmö, Sweden's second and third largest cities, as well as to Copenhagen in Denmark by train. Varberg and the Halland region is in a good position in between of the Gothenburg and Skåne regions, where the coastal line is in expansion (Varbergs kommun, 2018). The relations to the growing cities and Varberg's attractive qualities make it a place people want to move to.

For the early settlements and the founding of Varberg the harbour was of big importance, the land and coastline formed a convenient natural harbour and deriving from that the town has grown (Varbergs kommun, 2018). With the harbour and railway Varberg exported timber products, stone and other goods from the 1800's, and since the 1970's when a paper mill opened north of Varberg most of the trade through the harbour has been timber and pulp.

Varberg has a 'kurort', a health resort, tradition that started in the 1800's from the belief in the health promotive drinking water from wells and bathing in the ocean (Varbergs kommun, 2018). Still today Varberg is known for having many spas and beaches, so the kurort still is an important part of the town's identity. The area of where the fortress, parks, cold and warm bathhouses as well as the beach promenade are located are often seen as the core of Varberg, which is further described in the following texts about the local context under 'Heritage and bath culture'.

In the summer the population of Varberg municipality is doubled, because of its summer town image it attracts a lot of visitors and has been a popular destination for many years (Varbergs kommun, 2018). The town is also a Swedish node for coastal culture and water sports such as wind-, kite and wave-surfing. Bikes and biking are also a part of the town's identity, both from the previous local production of bikes and it being commonly used as an easy way to move around.



Figure 5 - Map showing location of Varberg and Halland.



Map of Varberg town, scale 1:20 000

## Context

In the following pages different areas around the site of Västerport and within the cultural heritage area are described, see figure 6.

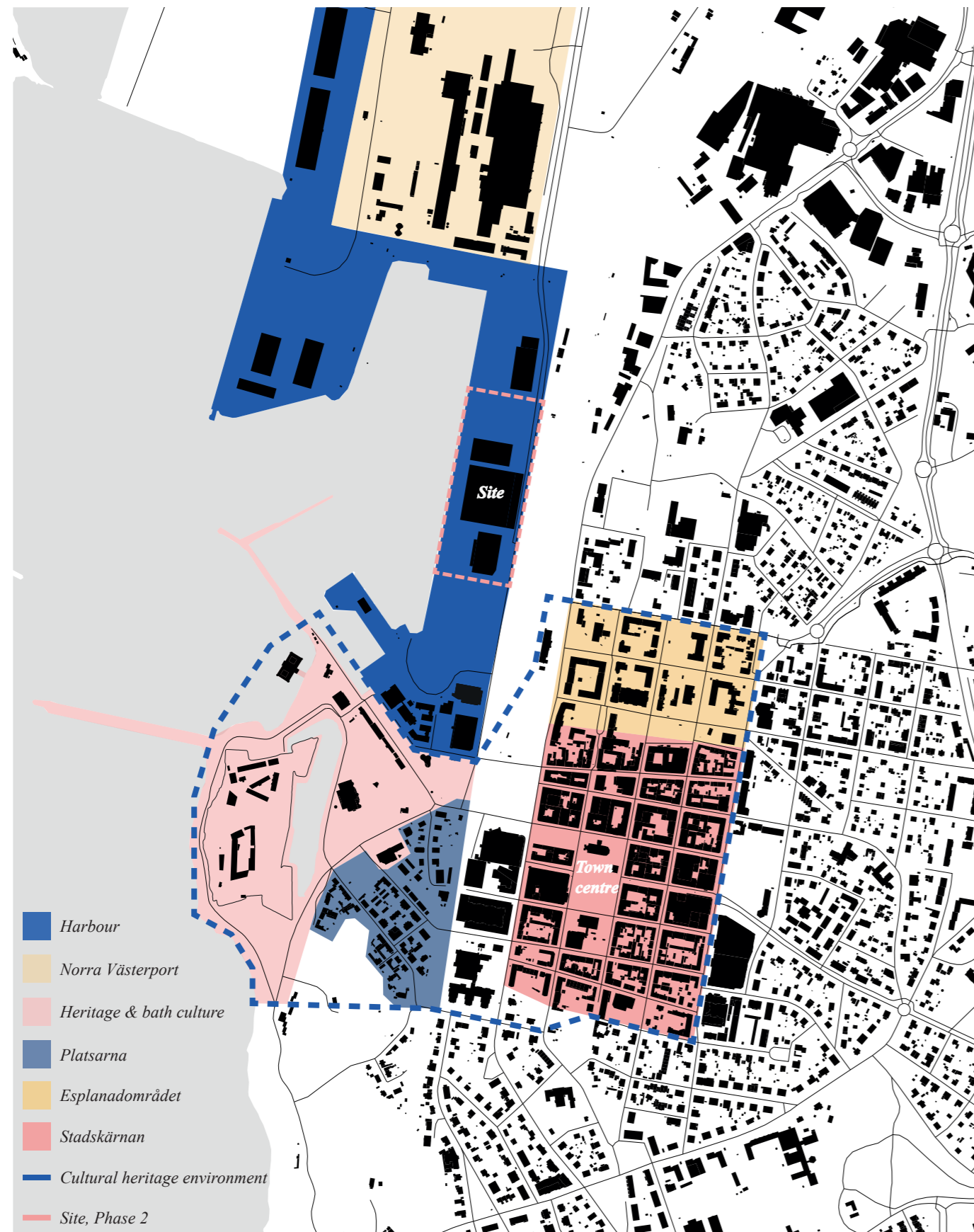


Figure 6 - Map of areas described in the following pages of the Local context chapter. Scale 1:10 000

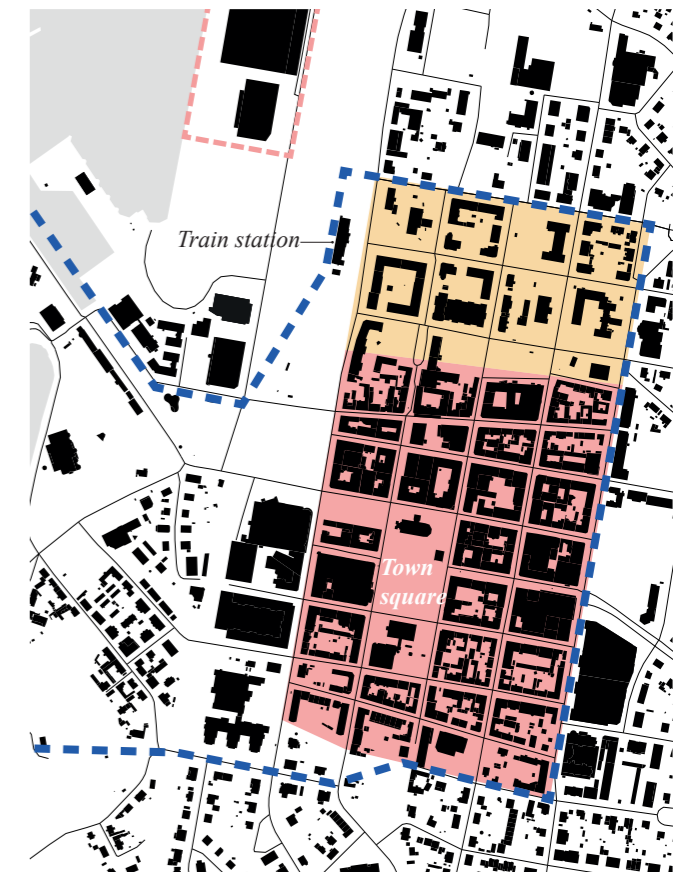
## Stadskärnan

Varberg's town centre has a preserved grid plan structure from the 1600's urban plan with quite small blocks and a regulated street system, other common characteristics are the low scale of building volumes and small plots (Varbergs kommun, 2012). The system of narrow plots and main buildings attached to each other, placed along the streets enclosing the block created a tidy urban environment, and because of the preserved urban structure the character of the architecture becomes varied and interesting.

The square is in the middle of the inner town, and many of the main streets have been continued further out of the town centre to the later neighbourhood developments. When looking to the west from the streets in the town that are perpendicular to the fortress, which makes it a landmark that is always a part of the background in the inner town. Originally when the city plan was designed the sightlines were a strategy for defence from the fortress (Varbergs kommun, 2012).



Photograph of street in Stadskärnan



Map of cultural heritage area; Stadskärnan & Esplanadområdet

## Esplanadområdet

To the east of the harbour and existing train station, is the esplanade area which was a late 1800's extension of the town. From the existing train station, the streets follow the grid structure of the inner old town, though the environment is differing itself from the 1600's plan the esplanade area streets are wider and boarded with trees (Varbergs kommun, 2012). The plan of the esplanade blocks was of a more open layout pattern with detached houses and independent institutional buildings. Though today the urban form does not follow the intentions of the initial plan and is of a mixed character, as a result of renovation of buildings and densification of the area in the 1900's and 2000's.

The Esplanadområdet area is described here as the context and part of the cultural heritage area. Though it is not further explored and evaluated in the Genius loci chapter, because the area was through the analysis not seen as useful to the design proposal even if it has spatial qualities and carries a part of the identity of Varberg.



Esplanade street in Esplanadområdet



## Platsarna

The area of Platsarna was in the early 1600's the earlier town formation, when it burned down in the 1660's Varberg town was formed in the place where the town centre is today (Lennartsson, 2012). It was not until the late 1800's that the place was built on again, and the main characters of its cultural value today are the wooden houses from the time of the development built based on the old street grid from the early 1600's.

Platsarna is on a higher topography than the rest of the town centre and from the main streets of the neighbourhood the sightline is directed to the fortress, just like from the west-east streets of the Stadskärnan. On the southwest side of Platsarna there is a steep edge created from the old stone quarry.



Photograph of Platsarna on the edge of the stone quarry.



Map of cultural heritage area; Platsarna & Heritage & bath culture

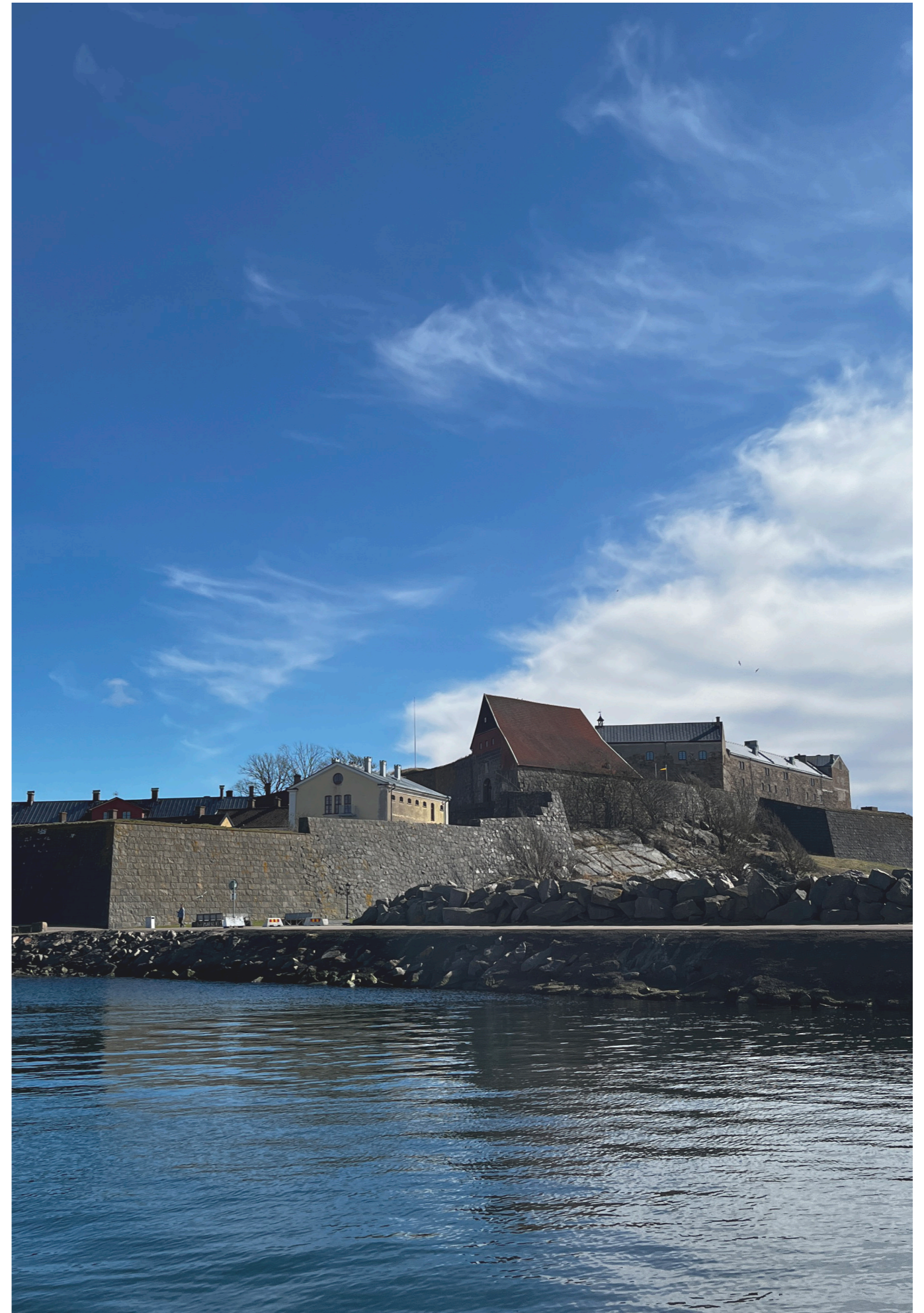
## Heritage & bath culture

Within this area is the fortress, the cold and warm bath house, parks, buildings for service, a beach and ocean baths. The open free space in this area is frequently used for leisure by locals and tourists especially in summertime. The old buildings on the fortress are today used for housing, hostel and museum, and Societetshuset is still in use as a restaurant, nightclub and for entertainment events. The older harbour buildings in the area that were previously used for warehouse and customs house are preserved but have other purposes today, such as an exhibition hall and handicraft workshops.

The building antiquarian Britt-Marie Lennartsson (2012) describes the fortress as the main landmark of Varberg, which is also the oldest built environment in the town and has been of both Danish and Swedish ownership and of different use since its construction began in the medieval times. The bath culture of Varberg is a big part of the identity, and the place as a seaside resort origin from the 1800's and has contributed to the built structures with architecture of Moorish and Gothic styles such as the cold bath house and Societetshuset.



Photograph of the Cold bath house



Photograph of the fortress from north-west in March 27, 2023.

## Harbour

Varberg's coastal location has impacted the towns expansion and design through history, Lennartsson (2012) describes the harbour, ocean, bath culture and communication as an early driver for the local economy and growth. Because of the harbour Varberg became a place for trade, fishing, export of stone and agricultural produce. From the middle of the 1800's the harbour also became a part of marine routes between places on the Swedish west-coast, to Denmark and Germany, which increased the number of visitors from other places that could travel to Varberg that then evolved the local bathing tourism.

Today the Varberg's harbour is Sweden's leading harbour for forest export (Hallands hamnar, n.d.), as an increased amount of timber products are shipped to the rest of the world. Much of the buildings and the space are used for transporting goods and storing the timber products as well as paper that is also exported by ships. In the buildings in the south of the area that are from the second half of the 1900's there are services, hotel and other functions and in the southwest corner in the newer buildings Varberg's campus are located.

## Norra Västerport

North of the site the harbour and industrial area continues, some of the area is though in the future planned to be a continuation of the urban development of Västerport. In the area big warehouses and industrial structures are found, and they house a variation of businesses, such as a caterer, harbour industry and offices. Big parts of the unbuilt space are now used for storage of earth and stone mass that are dug out from the railway tunnel project as well as structures for storing cement for the concrete used in the transformation processes.

On the other side of the road in the north of the industrial areas a wetland nature reserve for birds and a Naturum is located, and to the west the road leads out on the peninsula Getterön that is kind of a rural place with baths and beaches, a camping, summer houses and a nature reserve area as well.

This area is only described here as context for the site and is not explored further in the Genius loci chapter.



Photograph of harbour warehouses and sightline towards the water.



Map of the Harbour & part of Norra Västerport



Photograph towards Norra västerport and Östra Hamnvägen.



Photograph of the site in the harbour March 27 2023, showing ships for export of forest industry products.

## The Västerport transformation

The full urban development project is a combination of part of the existing harbour being moved north-west of its current location and as the railway going through the town is moved into a tunnel underground a lot of space is freed up (Varbergs kommun, 2018). This is making it possible for the town centre to expand towards the water, at the same time the area for the expansion and transformation is becoming an attractive location close to central functions and the travelling node of the new train station.

Top-down processes are decisions that are taken by few in an authority position, and not by the people whose life's and living environment will be affected by it (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d. (b)). This is common for architecture and planning in many municipalities and other countries, which is also the case in the Västerport project as the municipality owns the land that the development will be built on, and the initiative derives from the municipal city planning office and politics.

Citizens have been included in the design of different stages of the process (Varbergs kommun, 2014), though to economic reasons some of the outcomes of the dialogues might be hard to meet. With economic requirements for the new development as a floor space ratio of 1,5 to get back money invested in groundwork (Varbergs kommun, 2018) and an average of 5 floor buildings, to also meet the demands of 2500 new dwellings for Västerport, different interests compete against each other.

Varberg Municipality (2014) in the report *Tillsammans skapar vi världens bästa Varberg: En sammanfattning av medborgardialogen 2014* describe finding the balance between small town and big city as a challenge. Another challenge identified in the report is between renewing and preserving, as the municipality wants Varberg and Västerport to be a modern inspiration at the same time as being careful with the older town, history and heritage environments.

### Local discourse

In the spring of 2022 the detailed development plan of the first phase of Västerport was stopped by Mark- and Miljödomstolen (the land and environment court) after the Hembygdsföreningen Gamla Varberg, a local history society group, had appealed against the municipality's plans for the area (Hentschel, C., 2022). The main complaint was of the over 50 meters tall hotel building in the plan and its impact on the cultural heritage environment of Varberg, specifically on the fortress as the landmark in the imageability of the town and the visual link between it and other historical places.

Kvint (2022) writes about sketches of an alternative proposal for Västerport presented by Varbergspartiet, a recently formed local political party. With Nyhavn in Copenhagen as inspiration and a lower number of floors and short spans of facades is suggested, with an island for apartments in the harbour that would accommodate for a bit of the loss of income when the buildings are lower.

### Reflection & takeaways

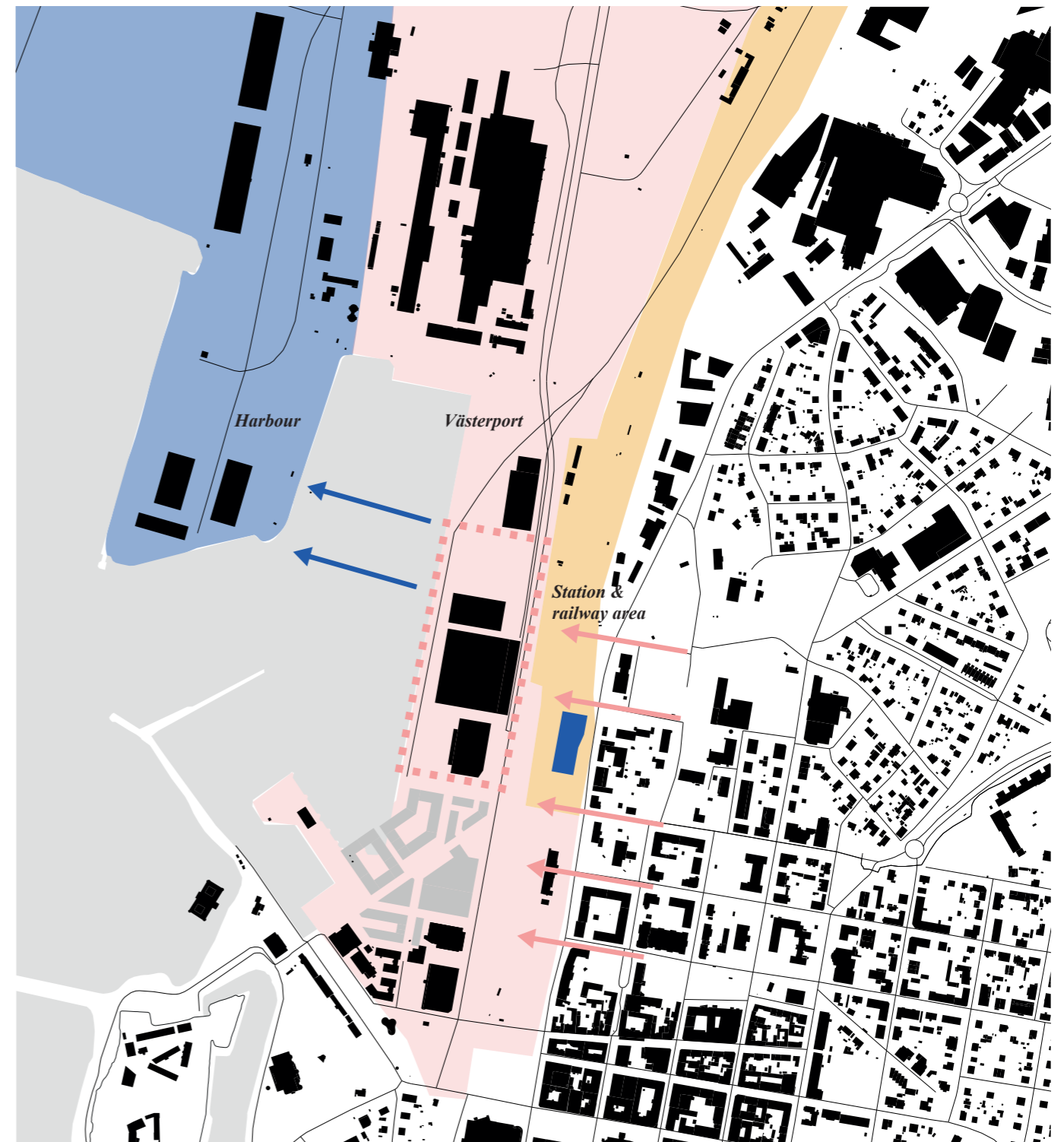
Connecting back to the earlier discussion in the theory chapter on pastiche and copy-pasting of previous architecture in the theory chapter, using the place identity of Nyhavn in Varberg is something that could be seen as pastiche. Though with its narrow plots, restaurants and cafés in many of the ground floors along a harbour and pedestrian promenade there could be some qualities that could be appreciated in other local contexts.

As a result of the stopped detailed development plan the process of the development is slowed down, which affects the amount of time the Västerport Phase 1 will stand empty and will increase the years before the rest of Västerport can be developed. Having a building site in such a central location becomes an obstacle in the life of locals and affects visitors experience of Varberg, and the site becomes yet inaccessible.

This raises the question of how to work with a place in change and its relation to the people. How can the bond between the people and the future place be promoted while the area is in transformation?

The height and scale, as well as gross floor area needed for the exploitation of the new area will differ a lot to the existing town of typically 1-4 floors. The balance of designing an extension of the town as a new annual ring of Varberg, without making it a new "island" in its context with its own identity. While at the same time not making it a copy-paste of the historical town centre.

The annual rings that are a big part of the urban space with variation of buildings of different eras, today with sustainability in mind we design for our buildings to be able to last longer. Västerport will be executed within the same time span so much will have been an outcome of the same contemporary era, styles, economy, technology and societal context. It is important to make a varied environment of character just like the existing town, and not a homogeneous place. Plot divisions and building on plots in different stages can be ways to create a heterogeneous space as well as make the process easier for the town and people to gradually adapt to the new neighbourhood.



Map of harbour, the transformation and prerequisites for project, scale 1:8000

- Site, phase 2
- New train station
- Future development
- Existing buildings

# 4. Genius loci

## Introduction

This chapter shows a collection of elements of the place identity found in the different areas selected to find Varbergs and the sites genius loci and DNA. It starts by describing the site visits, time perspective of place as well as seasonality in Varberg.

The place identity of Stads kärnan, Platsarna, Heritage & bath culture and Harbour are evaluated by the tangible and intangible values of the place, to find and analyse its genius loci. Genius loci is understood as a holistic entity of the intangible qualities of physical place. So, the research is divided into aspects that present the sense of place and many dimensions of the different areas which are perceived both physically tangible and spiritually intangible, as in feeling and atmosphere.



*Genius loci collage of facades in Varberg town centre*

## Site visits



January 26, 2023  
Cloudy & clearing up



February 14, 2023  
Cloudy



March 27, 2023  
Sunny

All the site visits for the genius loci and place explorations were done during the winter months, though with my own relation to the place I also have the experience of the place in other seasons and throughout time. As Norberg-Schulz (1980) writes about how the phenomenological experience of a place changes with weather, seasons and time of day.

The atmosphere and feeling of the harbour and the town centre are different in daylight and in the evening, during winter and summer, on a cloudy and a sunny day. As well as how the perception of space and behaviour of humans in it also is affected depending on how windy it is, what you can smell or if it's raining. The time aspect of day and night as well as the seasonality of high summer season and low season during winter are also important to have in mind in both the mapping and design process.

The colourful palette on the wooden facades in the town centre appear different with sun or cloudy days. On a sunny day the streets that go west-east are often shadowed, meanwhile the perpendicular long streets get more light. The contrast of sun shining on the street and some facades and shadow on other surfaces give another atmosphere than on a cloudy day where everything is equally light.

The ocean that frames the west side of the town also changes its appearance and colour depending on sunshine or cloudy, winter and summer, and if it is raining or windy.

Photographing as tool for capturing the space as well as representation can and should show different scenarios, and not only frame Varberg as a summer town with sunshine, as rain and wind are also conditions that alter place.

## Seasonality

The diagram in figure 7 is an estimation of how common activities and events are during the year in Varberg, how much different spaces and functions are used in a seasonal perspective. Clear from the diagram is that many of the activities and things happens during the summer, though for example the bath culture and surfing are still happening in the autumn, spring and winter.

### Hallands kulturhistoriska museum, the museum on the fortress

Open all year around Tuesday to Sunday, but is open every day and mostly visited during the summer.

### Torghandel, square market

All year around Wednesdays and Saturdays are market days

### Strandpromenaden, the beach promenade

Is appreciated and used for promenade or biking all year around, though the biggest flows occur during summer.

### Restaurants, pubs and entertainment

Many places are open all year around, but from April to September seasonal directed restaurants are open as well.

### Kallbadhuset, the cold bath house

Open a few times a week all year where people can sauna and cool of in the ocean even in the cold months, though as a landmark it becomes more visited by tourists in the summer.

### Bath season

There are possibilities for taking baths all year around, but in the warmer summer months it is more common for locals and visitors to spend time at the beach and swim.

### Tourism

As mentioned in the description of Varberg in the Local context chapter, the tourism makes the amount of people double in the summer.

### Surfing

Surfing is common in the summer, but as winds and waves can be better during the autumn, spring and even the winter this is an activity that happens all year around.

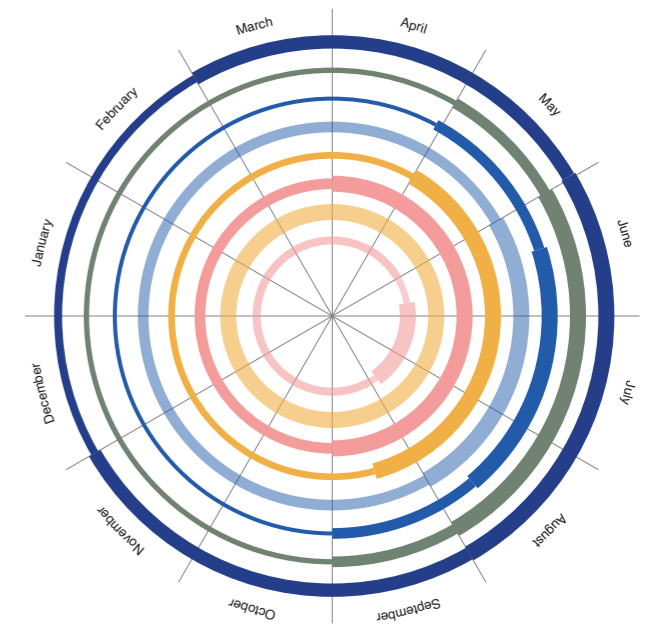


Figure 7 - Seasonality diagram made by author to show the when activities and spaces connected to Varberg's identity are mostly used.

## Reflection

Being aware of the changes in the pulse of a place and incorporating it into the design can make a place more resilient both economically and culturally by providing a variation of activities for the different seasons.

The perception of place changes through human activities and natural phenomena as weather.

## Stadskärnan

urban life, human scale, grid, variation, pulse, calm, private -public, open - enclosed

### Feeling & atmosphere

Building height, width of streets, pavements and variation in facades gives the town centre a feeling of a small human scale. The enclosed blocks protect from wind, while in the open streets it passes through. Rhythm of shadow and sun. Protection from the rain underneath canopies and cantilevering roofs of commercial ground floors.

Through the year, day and week the balance of pulse and calm changes. On Wednesdays and Saturdays the square is activated by the market and is full of people, the other days it is a big empty space. Urban life, commercial and culture.

### Urban form

Stadskärnan is the most dense urban space of the areas investigated and it is structured after a strict urban grid with blocks that are enclosed which frames the street spaces. What is not always visible from the street are the densified inner courtyards of the urban structure which reduces private open space in the city centre.

The square is surrounded by the church, bank and other earlier institutional buildings. Streets have different hierarchy and purposes depending on their relation to the square and where they connect to.

### Spatiality

The main pedestrian street is Torggatan, which goes west-east and crosses the middle of the square. With its central location the buildings on the street are taller than the average building height on the other streets. Through the relation of width and height spaces along the streets change their balance between public and private and feeling of scale.

Plot sizes are varying depending on the centrality of the block, the smaller plots allow for a rhythm and vertical variation that enhances the experience of the street space. Buildings for housing often have an elevated ground floor from the street with a high base and stairs to the entrance, meanwhile public buildings often have entrance in street level.

### Form

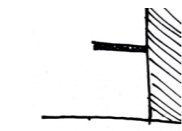
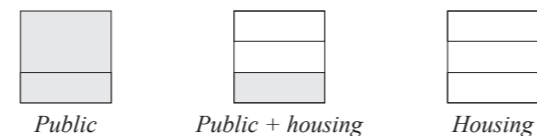
#### Materials

#### Geometry, ornamentation & details

See deeper analysis in collages on the following spread.

### Typologies

Public, public ground floor with housing on the top floors and housing only.



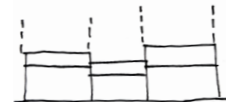
Canopies to hide from the rain

### Colour palette

Light, rustic colours and traditional Swedish colours



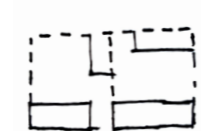
Width & height relation depending on centrality



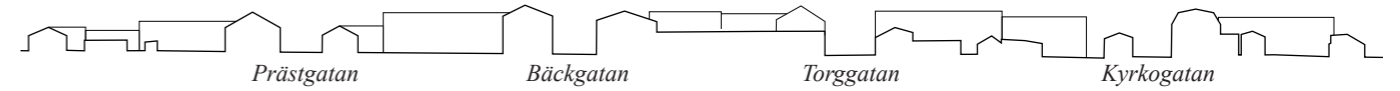
Rhythm & vertical variation



Building entrance with high base and stairs from street



Placement of buildings on plots



Section north-south through Stadskärnan, 1:2000

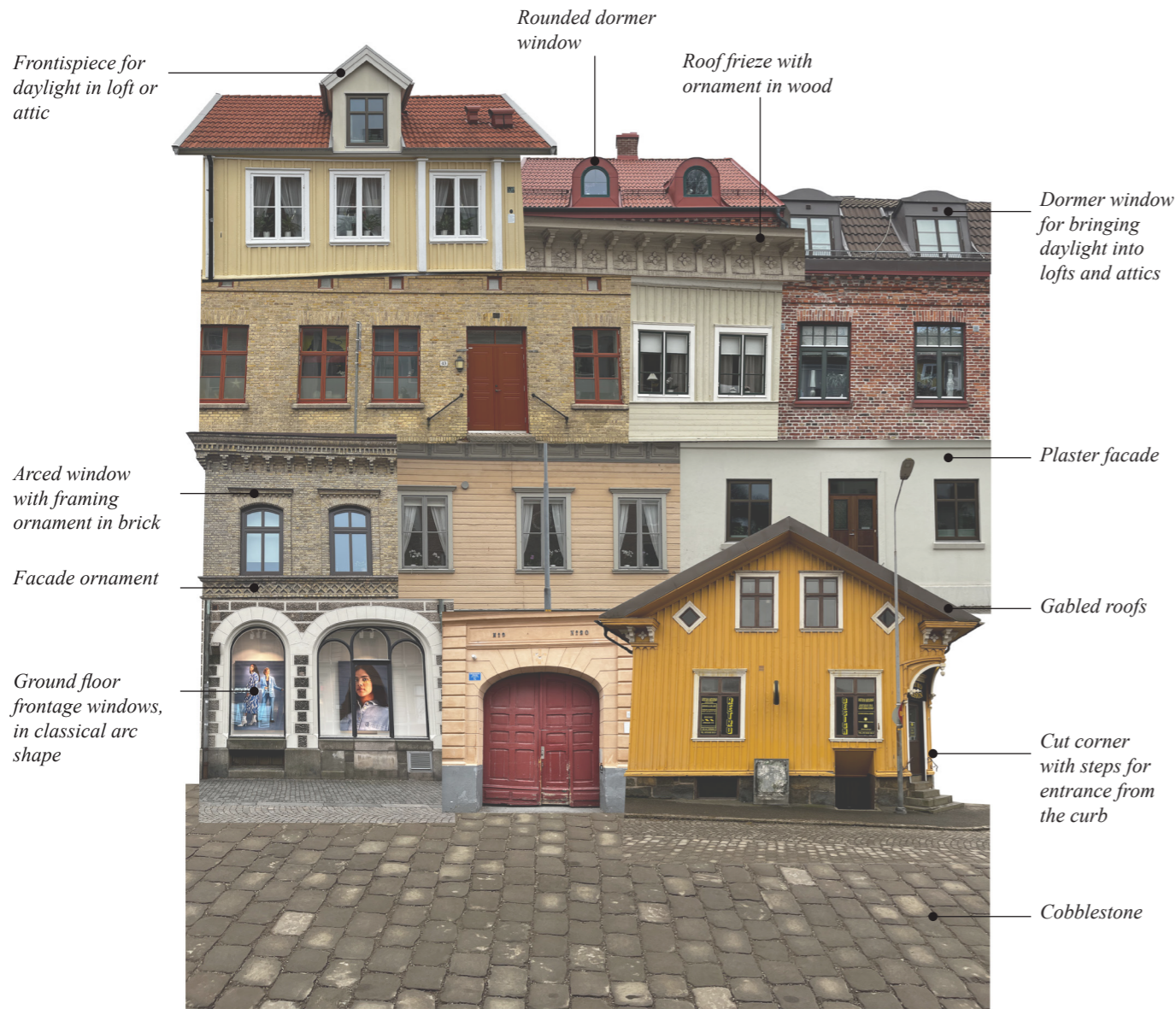


Genius loci analysis of Stadskärnan presented in plan, scale 1:2000.

# Stadskärnan

## Collages

As an explorative tool to look into the building scale of Varberg photographs of facades of Stadskärnan were put together in these 2 collages.



Collage of facades of mixed functions in the town centre.

The collage as a strategy is commonly used in architecture that can speculate in the future and gather the present, merging and putting images or ideas that is normally not in the same image. Koetter and Rowe (1999) describe how the collage can be used as a method that acts through its irony and that can be presented but still be doubted. The collage can be a tool for speculation without having to accept the image fully and can hence be a tool to provoke and direct change.

These collages of facades show a selection of examples of different colours, materials, textures, ornaments and typologies found in the town centre. By putting together pieces of the city the collage gives an idea of part of the physical environmental character of a place.

Though of importance to note is that facades are not the only element that creates a space, and that this selection does not present the full picture or genius loci of Varberg.



Collage of facades of dwellings.

## Platsarna

calm, private, views, elevated, topography, rhythm, openings



Genius loci analysis of Platsarna presented in plan, scale 1:2000

### Feeling & atmosphere

Calmness and open yet still private. The traditional buildings materials, proportions and design give a small scale human feeling.

The hill elevates the place and gives views of the town, the fortress and the ocean.

### Urban form

Platsarna is a less dense urban area than Stads kärnan placed on a hill. Two parallel roads that go along the topography with connecting roads and calm alleys in between.

The quite small buildings are placed directly towards the pavements and the natural landscape and topography of the place lifts this area up from the open spaces in Heritage & bath culture and the more urban Stads kärnan, which reduces the flows and activity.

### Spatiality

The sightlines between buildings into gardens and courtyards give a more private feeling of the space, which makes it a place you move through but do not stay in.

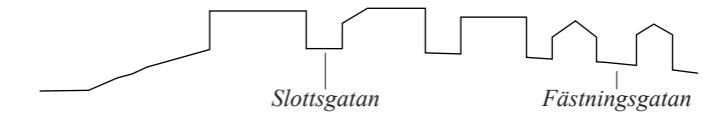
As the buildings are distanced from each other they let sunlight through to the street, the short spans of facades and openings gives a variation of impressions and the experience of a nice street.



Buildings and openings



Rhythm & vertical variation



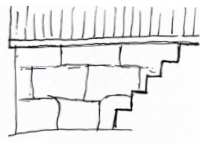
Section Platsarna, 1:2000

### Form

Traditional housing with gabled roof with 2-3 floors and common with frontispiece towards the street. Many of the buildings have an elevated ground floor from the street with a high base and stairs to the entrance.



Gabled roof & frontispiece



High base & stairs

### Typologies

Housing

### Materials

Wood, brick, render, stone base, roof sheet metal, brick roof tiles. Asphalt, cobblestone.



Wood facade & stone base



Brick facade



Render & metal sheet roof

### Colour palette

Light, rustic colours and traditional Swedish colours



### Geometry, ornamentation & details

Frontispiece, dormer windows, window lining details, board and batten and regular wood facades.



Frontispiece & ornamentation



Wood ornamentation



Board & batten panel and ornamentation



## Heritage & bath culture

ocean, salt water, open, wind, bath, stone, cliffs, leisure, heritage, monument, public

### Feeling & atmosphere

Openness, seeing the ocean, breathing the fresh air and feeling the saltwater breeze. The fortress provides shelter from strong winds in some spots.

Free from traffic and the urban pulse. During good weather and summer larger flows of people, with the sound of laughing and talking.

Sand from the small beach has moved with the wind and ends up in piles on the asphalt of the walkways and roads. Sounds of seagulls, waves and wind.

### Urban form

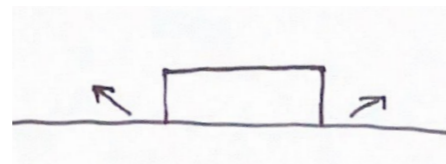
This area is the least dense urban area in the town centre. The buildings are located with long distances in between which allows for big open spaces of parks and open lawns allow for a variety of activities, such as festivals, concerts and events by different communities.

As the most distinct heritages are in the area, they really characterise the place as well as Varberg. The fortress, the adjacent harbour and natural landscape forms the open spaces that in different spots either protects from the coastal weather or sometimes enhances it.

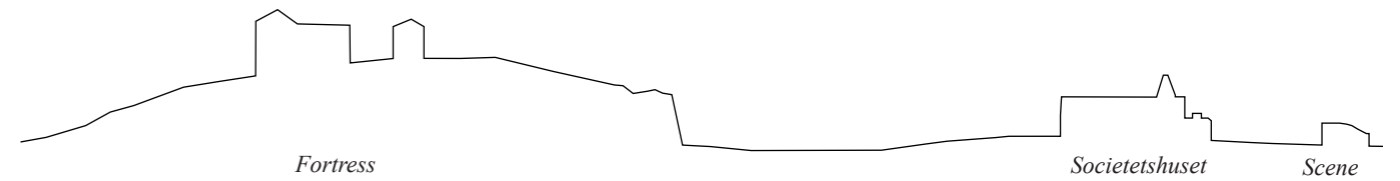
### Spatiality

The openness of the area allows for views of the ocean from almost all places. The fortress' monumental scale becomes a unique volume and form in Varberg that stands out, and in contrast to it the space around it is open unbuilt ground.

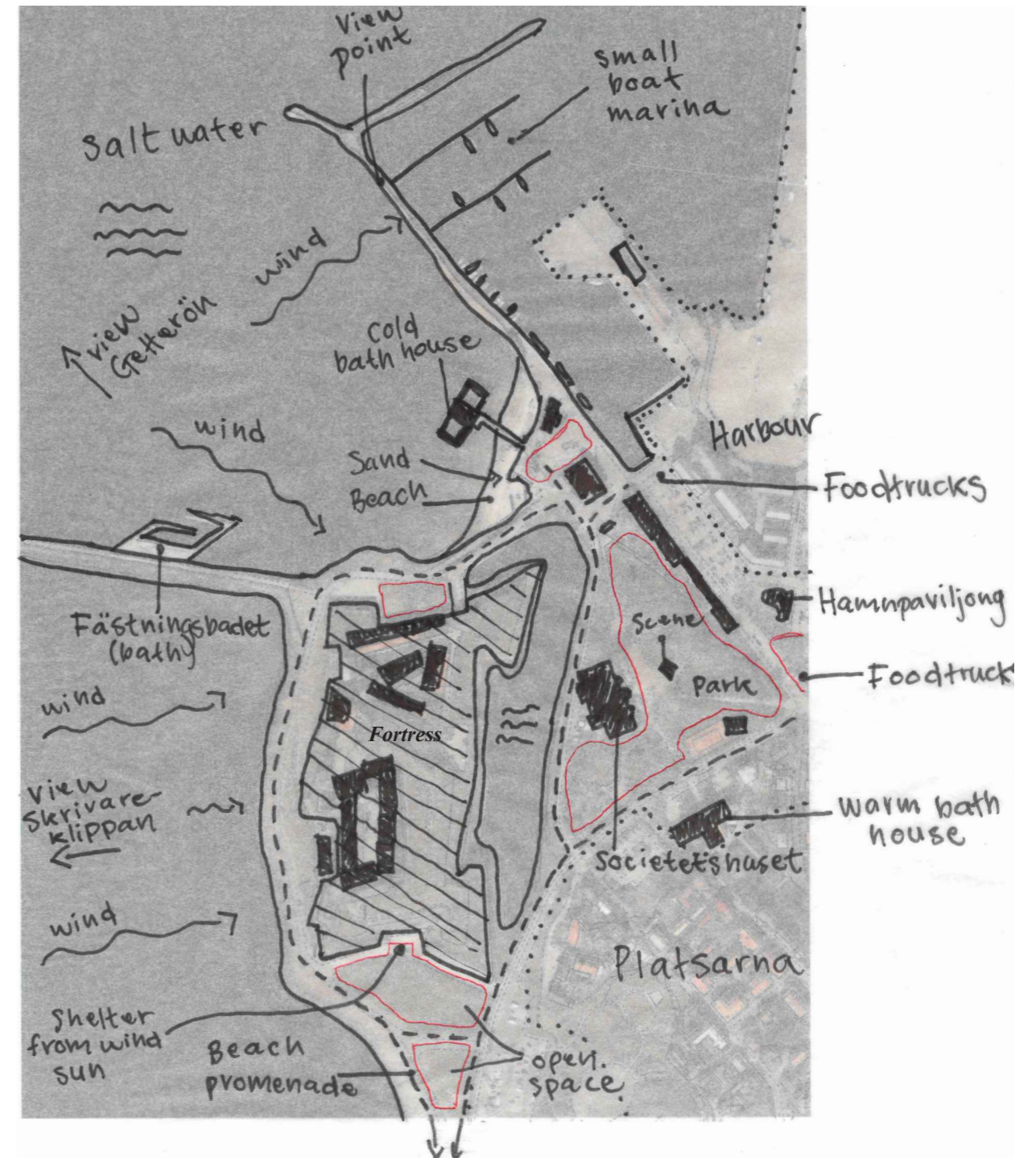
The beach promenade is a wide walking and biking lane that follows the coastline south from the heritage and bath culture area. The strip of land closest to the water is an important part of Varberg as a public and non-commercial space for movement and that links to places for sports and leisure, as well as the baths.



Open with few buildings, long sightlines



Section through fortress, Societetshuset and the scene, 1:2000



Genius loci analysis of Heritage & bath culture area presented in plan, scale 1:5000.

## Form

Many of the buildings or volumes in this area are unique, though the Cold bath house and Societetshuset share similarities in style and expression. The other buildings close to the harbour as well as the buildings on the fortress are of traditional form of narrow rectangular volumes with gabled roofs.



*Cold bath house*



*Fortress*



*Societetshuset*

## Typologies

Public, (with a few exceptions)

## Materials

Stone, lime render, wood, brick, metal sheet roof. Sand, grass, cliffs, stone and asphalt.



*Wood*



*Brick*



*Render, stone & metal sheet roof*



*Sand & water*

## Colour palette

Wood and brick in light colours, lime render in rustic colours.



## Geometry, ornamentation & details

Arc gates, windows and doors. Masonry details. Rich ornamentation of the cold bath house and Societén.



*Societetshuset*



*Cold bath house*



*Arc door*



*Photograph of the castle buildings on the fortress*

## Harbour

industrial, wind, water, robust, barrier, bold, temporality, form follows function

### Feeling & atmosphere

Open space yet inaccessible and unwelcoming because of the fenced barrier. Industrial and robust feeling with hard surfaces and objects, a place for machines and vehicles, not for people.

Smell of salt water, tar and boat and machine fumes. Breeze from the ocean, noise of seagulls and waves. Noise of the traffic and the movement and loading of things in the harbour. People walking and biking.

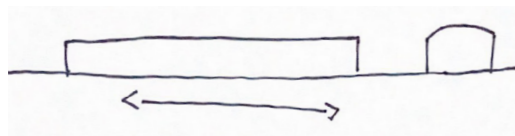
### Urban form

The plan of the harbour is designed after the harbour's activities, form follows function where through history the different products and machines have formed the volumes as well as their location. The temporality and dynamic ability of the place is visible when looking at the place today compared to the historical aerial photos from the 1960's and 1970's, see figure 8 and 9, different from the very strict urban grid that Stadsjärnan follows.

With large open spaces the big warehouses and the railway as well as the roads for transport of materials form its own industrial logic. With big footprints on another scale and proportions than the urban areas of Varberg this is a place and atmosphere which the human is not used to relate to.

### Spatiality

The big footprints of warehouse buildings create long spans of facades without much variation. In between the long facades as well as the stacked materials you can get glimpses of the water, and in the long distances between openings the buildings shield from the wind.



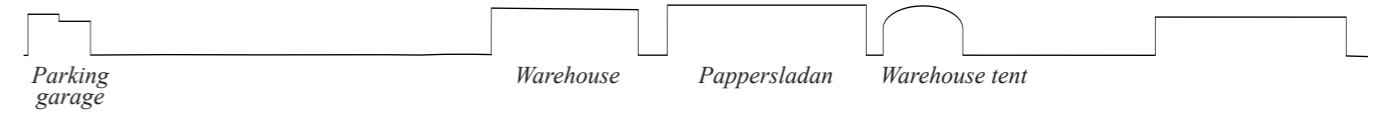
Long spans of facades, openings between



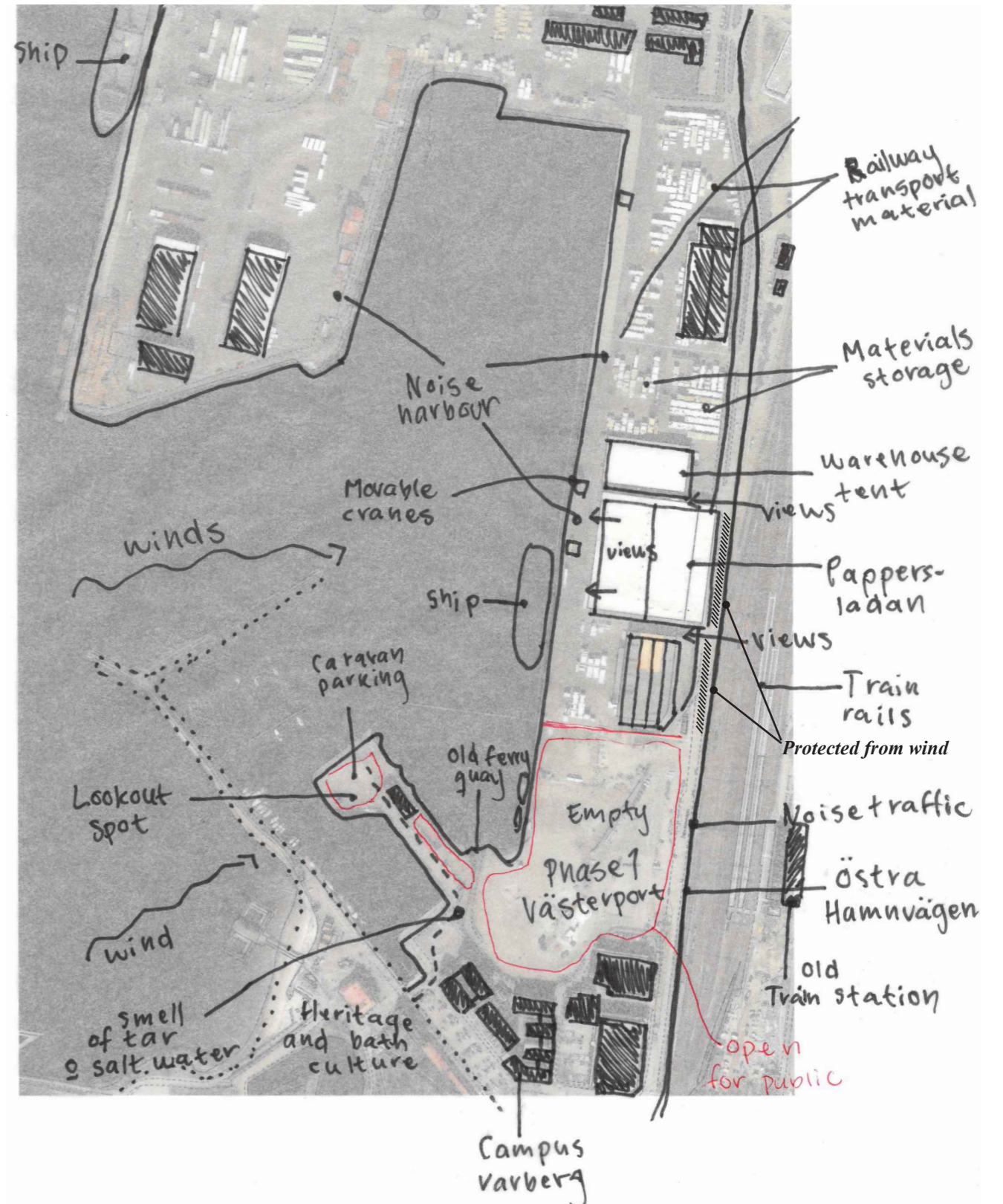
Figure 8 - Aerial photo of harbour around 1960, ©Lantmäteriet



Figure 9 - Aerial photo of harbour around 1975, ©Lantmäteriet



Section through the harbour, 1:4000



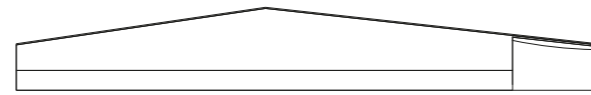
Genius loci analysis of the harbour presented in plan, scale 1:5000.

## Form

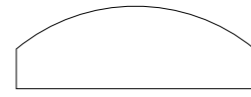
The buildings today are built as big span structures with a shell to protect against weather, for storing materials and products. Warehouse buildings and big tent structures seem like temporary structures and that they can be disassembled and moved from the site.

Larger and repeated gabled roofs as well as the arc shape are unique for this place and not found in the other areas of the genius loci investigation. The height and length proportions with closed facades is also a characteristic of the harbour.

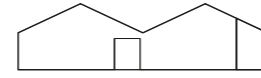
Cranes, boats, ships, machines and stacked materials are things that appear on the site that are temporary and movable, they are also part of the place.



*Pappersladan, gable roof & 100 meter long facade*



*Arc shape roof of warehouse tent*



*Repeated gable roof*

## Typologies

Private industry

## Materials

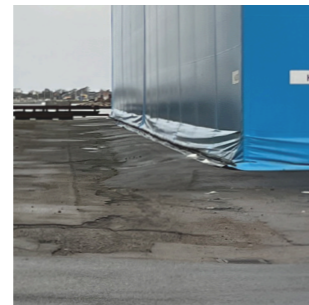
Metal, asphalt, wood, plastic



*Metal*



*Wood*



*Asphalt & plastic*

## Colour palette

Bold and strong colours



## Geometry, ornamentation & details

Rectangular, gable roofs, arc shaped roofs, visible structures



*Mixed colours*



*Fence & structure*



*Dock*



*Hoken with arc roof*



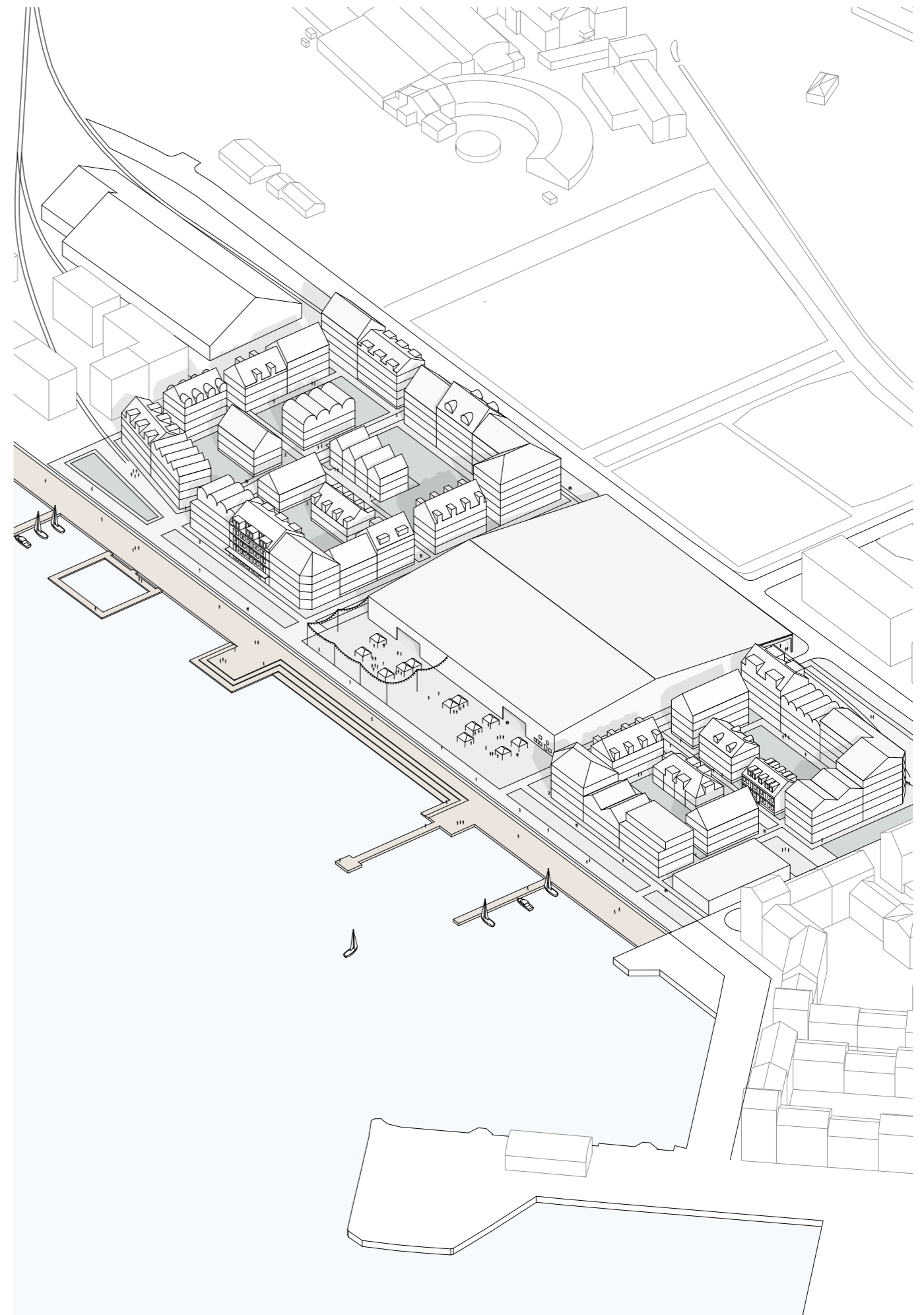
*Photograph of the site with a sightline to the water in the background inbetween Pappersladan to the left and warehouse tent to the right.*

# 5. Design proposal

## Introduction

This chapter presents the design proposal of the urban transformation of phase 2 of Västerport that is based on the local identities of Varberg.

The chapter starts by site analysis of the site and introduces the program for the design proposal. Followingly the overview of the proposed urban plan design is introduced and described, to in the end of the chapter zoom in on 3 examples of spatial situations.



*Isometric drawing of design proposal.*

# Site analysis

## Flows



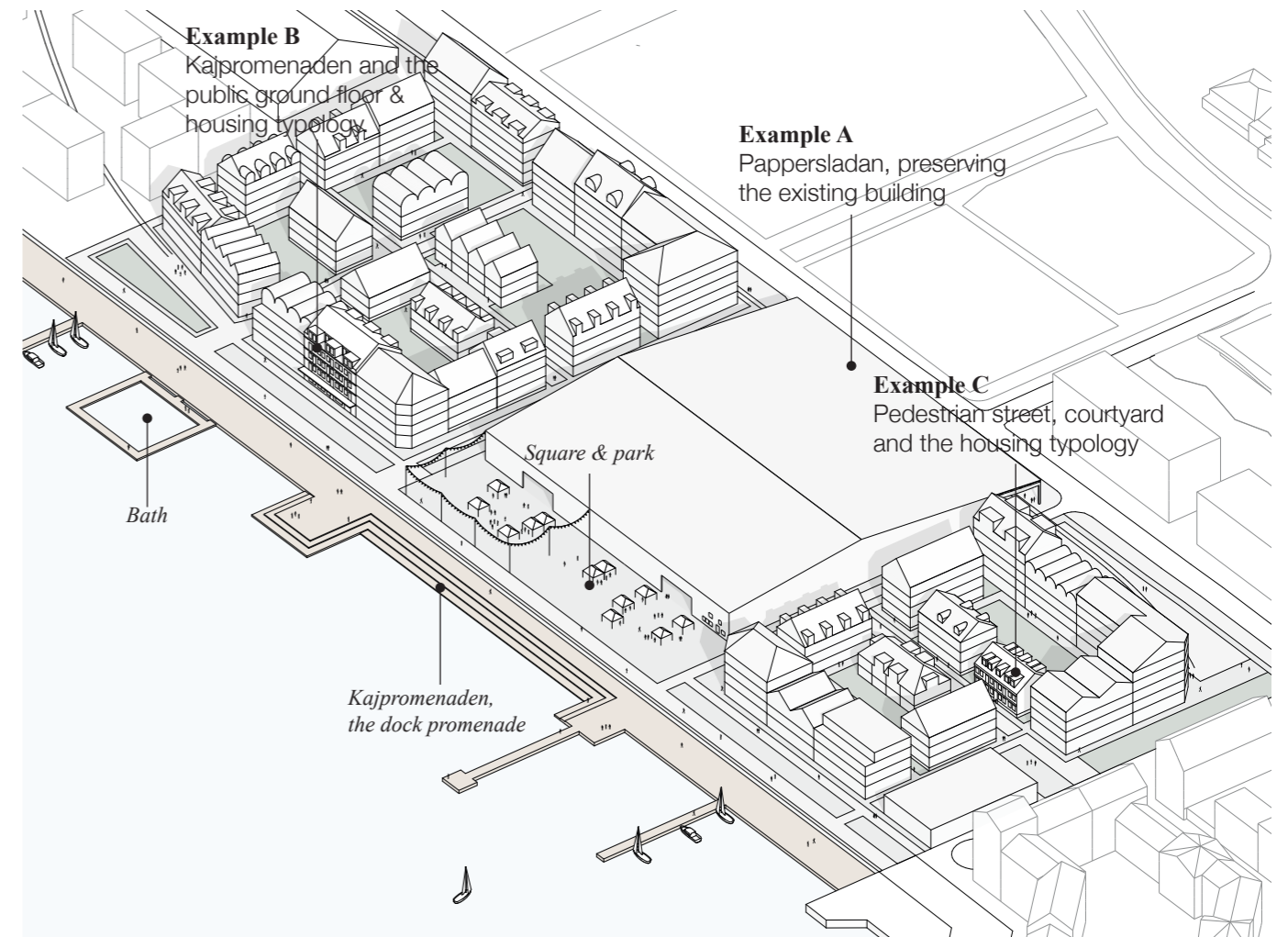
— Existing flows  
— Future flows

Figure 10 - Site analysis, scale 1:10 000

## Wind & noise



Figure 11 - Site analysis, scale 1:10 000



Isometric drawing of design proposal

## Program & genius loci implementation

### Program

The program content is extracted from the material of Varberg's municipality (Varbergs kommun, 2018, 2020), that apply to Phase 2 and are selected to delimit the design proposal.

#### Selected program:

- Mixed-use; housing, work, service, commercial
- Active ground floors
- Park & square
- Kajpromenaden, continuation of the beach promenade

### Floor area ratio

Varberg's municipality have decided on a floor area ratio of 1,5 (Varbergs Kommun, 2018).

Because of the identified small and human scale of Varberg in the Genius loci chapter the design proposal has prioritised spatial and atmospheric qualities before fulfilling the floor area ratio. This is evidently something that changes the economy of the project.

### Genius loci in relation to the other areas

The strategies for the design proposal from the findings in the Genius loci chapter are interpretations of Varberg's local identity. This design proposal is just one of many ways to which elements and criteria can be synthesized and put together, as well as how they can be understood.

From the Genius loci investigation elements that create certain atmospheres and physical space where the intangible can be experienced have been drawn out and interpreted to use in the design proposal.

The architectural design and implementation of the genius loci is further presented in the following pages of the chapter. By the legend underneath this text the use of inspiration from the different areas of Genius loci are highlighted throughout the design proposal.

#### Legend: Genius loci areas

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <span style="color: red;">■</span> Stadskärnan | <span style="color: lightcoral;">■</span> Heritage & bath culture |
| <span style="color: blue;">■</span> Platsarna  | <span style="color: darkblue;">■</span> Harbour                   |

# The harbour identity

## Traces of the harbour

The tangible and intangible elements of the harbour is seen as the conditions for this design proposal. By letting the industrial landscape inform the design like a natural site would do the scale of the building volumes, their footprints as well as the railways previously used for movement of goods have been used as framing the spaces.

Respecting memories of the existing and history of the harbour, where industrial buildings, machines and storage, loading of and on goods on the quay has had other footprints and morphologies than the logics of the urban planning in the town around it is a way to transmit the genius loci.

By preserving Pappersladan, that is explained in the zoom in Example A, the central block keeps its large structure where space for public use during the process can be provided. For the south block the rail track and the warehouse are used as footprints that create an open space towards the new train station area that is shielded from the winds from the ocean. In the north block the rails are seen as boundaries that also informed the placement of buildings and lead the pedestrian flows. In the next diagram the layout of the blocks is explained further.

Other traces of the past are the interpretations of the arc and repeated gable roofs found in the genius loci analysis and the dock edge where the dock promenade, Kajpromenaden, is suggested.

Harbour

## Irregular plans

In the harbour the plan and form has followed function and the flexibility to adapt to new futures is a big part of the place. Incorporating the more dynamic and less strict urban structure can lead to resilience in the future neighbourhood as it allows the place to change for future needs.

The different scales, forms and placement of buildings have created spaces not seen in our urban living areas, this interpretation of the harbour as well as the fortress can spatially be a way to be flexible but at the same time preserve the sense of place of the Harbour and the Heritage & bath culture area. The 3 bigger blocks forms other types of spaces within them as well as around them compared to the typical enclosed strict grid that Västerport phase 1 and many other urban development projects in Sweden uses.

Harbour Heritage & bath culture



Diagram highlighting the traces of the harbour, scale 1:5000

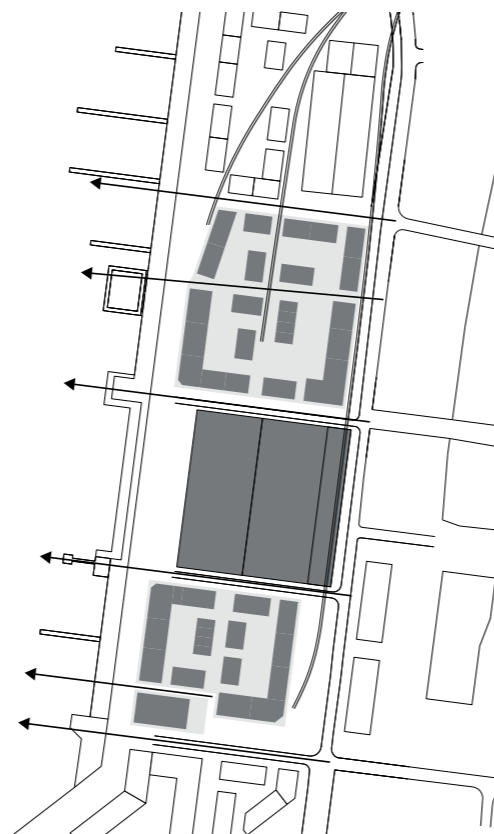
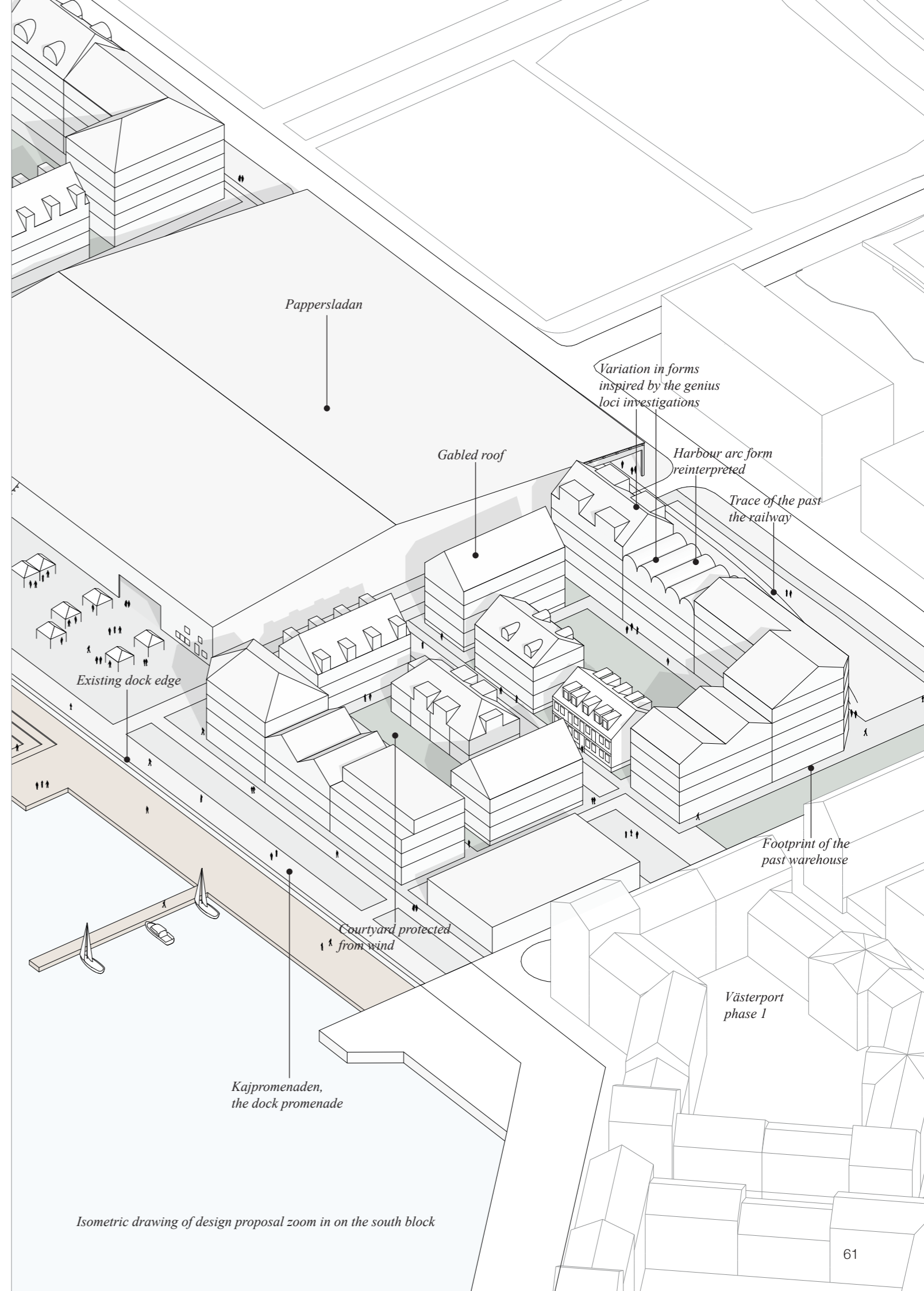


Diagram of block, buildings and sightlines, scale 1:5000



Isometric drawing of design proposal zoom in on the south block

# Masterplan

## Block structure

The enclosed blocks inspired by the enclosed urban grid of Stadsjärnan and are used on the sides towards the higher movement flows and is as well a barrier to wind and noise. Using the buildings towards east and west as a barrier provides more privacy within the blocks for the housing and courtyards, dividing public and private.

On the south and north sides of the blocks the buildings are structure with some openings to let in light and openness in the courtyards as well as give a depth and sightlines from the calmer streets, this is inspired by the spatiality of the urban form of Platsarna. Smaller building volumes within the block densifies the area but with a more open layout for a more open feeling in the courtyards, these kinds of densification are found within the blocks of Stadsjärnan and Platsarna.



Platsarna houses and openings

■ Stadsjärnan ■ Platsarna

## Plot division

As seen in the masterplan to the right the blocks are divided into different sizes of plots, though all with a quite short sides towards the streets to create shorter spans of facades and to provide variation from different property owners. The smaller plots also allow for the development to happen gradually in steps. This could make the new neighbourhood grow in a slower pace to make the area more heterogeneous and for the town and people to bit by bit adapt to the change.

## Pedestrian street & flex zone

The streets crossing through the blocks is divided to a main pedestrian street space with flex zones on each side of it closest to the buildings and courtyards. A flex zone can work as a front yard or sidewalk, where the residents can take ownership of the space without fully privatising the urban street space. This is inspired by the idea of the pavements in Stadsjärnan as a space where entrance stairs come out to the street space and where an immediate closeness to the buildings are achieved.

By planning for a flex zone and small fringes in the masterplan it can contribute to interactive streets and a small scale feeling, where life of the residents and people passing by can give potentials for the urban space on their terms. The flex zone becomes a soft edge between public and private.

■ Stadsjärnan ■ Platsarna

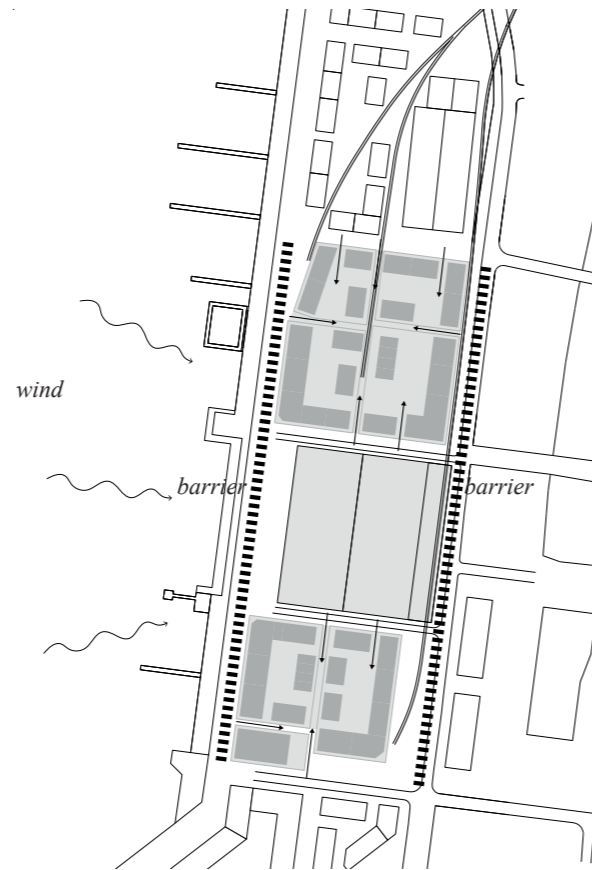
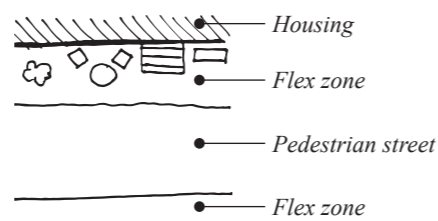


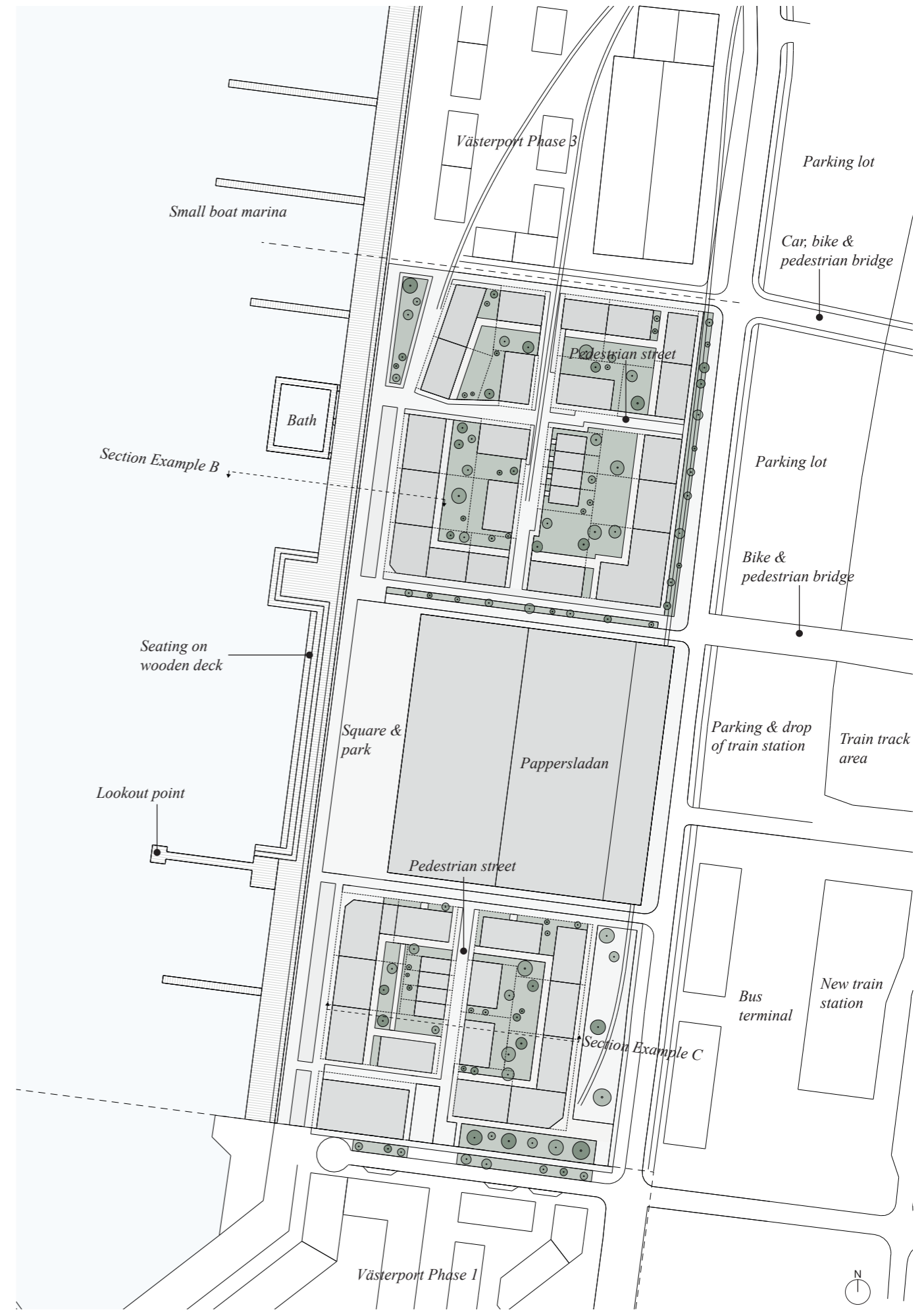
Diagram showing the block structure, scale 1:5000



Plan of pedestrian street with flex zone.



Example sketches of scenarios of the flex zone



Masterplan, scale 1:2000



# Movement, urban typologies & human scale

## Movement

Around and within the blocks the hierarchy of movement and communication have informed and been informed by the surrounding future context and the identified hierarchy in the areas of the Genius loci chapter. Based on the street hierarchy the public ground floor typologies and housing typologies are placed out depending on their need for big flows or more privacy.

The main flow will be Östra hamnvägen which is an existing road for pedestrian, bike, car and public transport. The road will be connected to by new crossings over the train track and station areas from the east of the site. The other high flow Kajpromenaden, the dock promenade, is car free and is prioritizing pedestrians and strolling as a continuation of the beach promenade.

The crossing streets are mainly for pedestrian and bikes, but also for cars and deliveries. The street in between Phase 1 and Phase 2 will have the highest flows of these streets because of it being an elongation of Magasinsgatan. Within the blocks the movement is mainly for pedestrians and bikes, but for access reasons there is space for cars.



Diagram of movement flows, scale 1:5000

Stadskärnan Platsarna Heritage & bath culture

## Typologies

### Public ground floors & housing

Public ground floors are a strategy for mixed use neighbourhoods as well as a common typology in Varberg city centre, especially in the area Stadskärnan. These spaces can house restaurants, cafés, shops, offices, health centres and other services. They can also be used for bike storage, laundry rooms and common rooms for residents.

### Housing

To avoid many empty ground floors the only housing typology can be placed where there is less movement and activity. This typology is found in Platsarna as a less dense area and in the streets of lower hierarchy flows in Stadskärnan. Here the design of the buildings to provide privacy for residents is important.

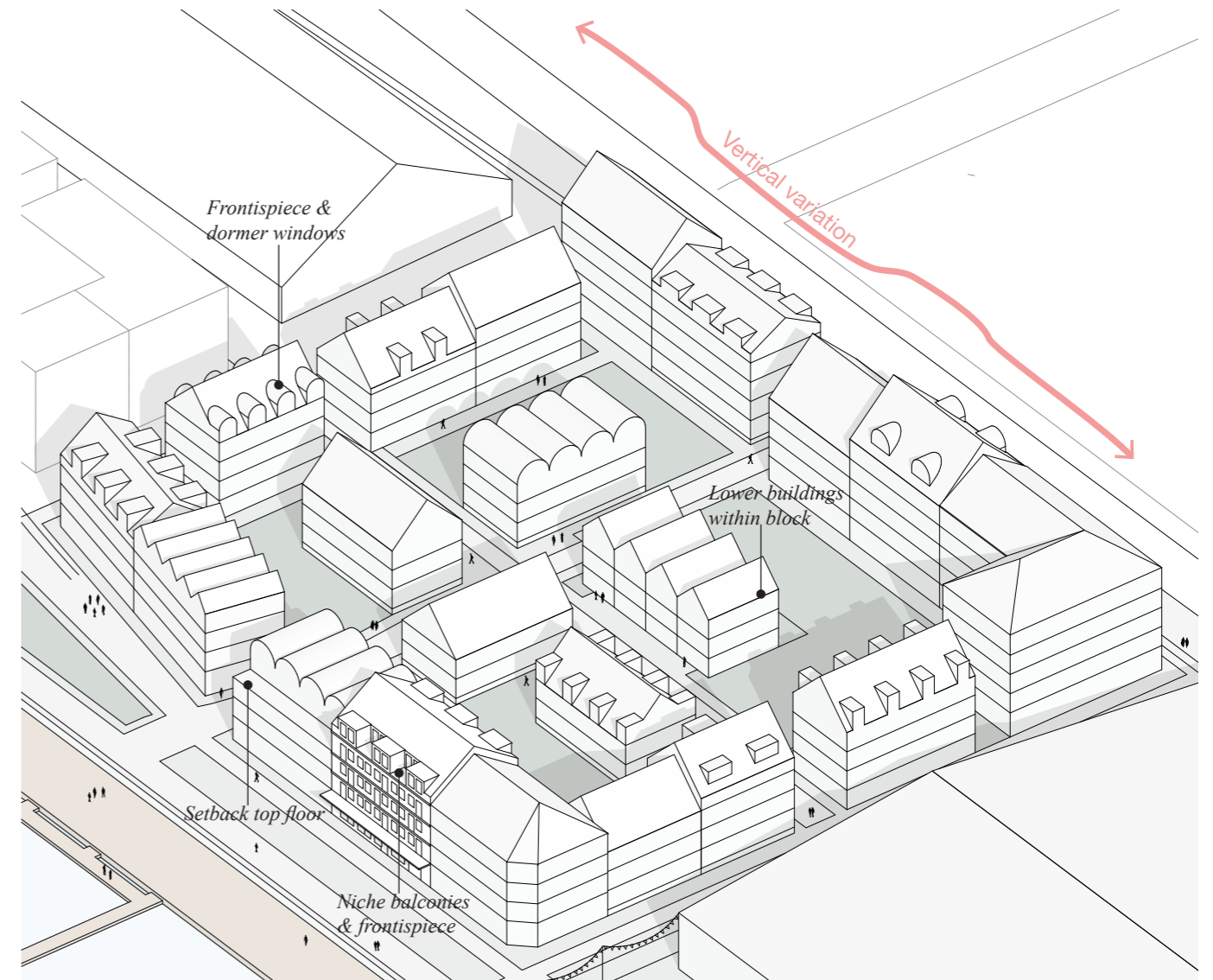
### Public

Pappersladan is in this urban plan suggested to be preserved to house public activities. The other fully public volume can be used for activities, events or services. In Stadskärnan buildings for only public use are identified by the main flows of people.



Diagram of typologies location in plan, scale 1:5000

Stadskärnan Platsarna Heritage & bath culture

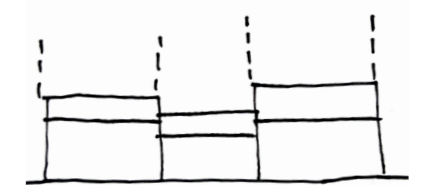


Isometric drawing of design proposal zoom in on the north block

## Human scale

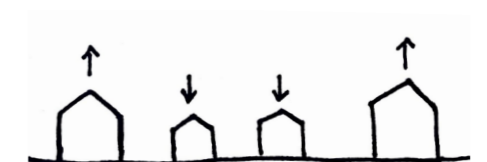
The process of the design has been to aim for the demands of more housing and floor area ratio for economic reasons, but without losing the sense of human scale that is found within the genius loci of Stadskärnan and Platsarna.

With shorter spans of facades as well as a vertical variation in height the block gets a division to give a sense of human scale as found in Stadskärnan and Platsarna, see sketch on rhythm and vertical variation to the right and isometric drawing.



Rhythm & vertical variation

Smaller building volumes within the blocks towards the calmer pedestrian streets, and on the enclosed outer edges of the blocks the buildings are the highest towards the big street and a bit lower facing the dock promenade, see sketch on variation in height depending on location and the isometric drawing.



Variation in height depending on location

As shown in the isometric drawing setbacks, niches, dormer windows as well as frontispieces are also used to bring down the experience of the height of buildings.

Stadskärnan Platsarna

## Example A

### Pappersladan - Preserving & repurposing

The warehouse, Pappersladan, is still in use for storage of paper in the middle of the site and is a large structure with a metal shell as climate shelter.

By keeping a building, the area is designed from the existing and the site does not become a new blank slate. From the genius loci perspective this would show that the site has history and respect the memories of the place. With its scale and proportions Pappersladan is a unique space in such a central location in Varberg. If kept permanently or just throughout the first step of the development of Phase 2 this building could be an a large indoors urban public space.

This space can become a destination while the area around it is being built, providing a relation for the people of Varberg and for visitors to form a relation to Västerport. Pappersladan could be a space for markets, culture and events. With restaurants, art exhibitions, concerts, temporary festivals and other activities.

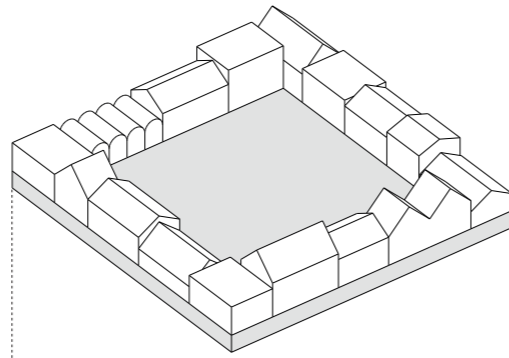
In the last 20 years many industrial structures have been repurposed meanwhile urban developments were planned and built in the areas, this is a strategy to keep a memory of a place and use the possibilities of the spaces left empty when its earlier purpose is moved. Amongst many projects are Slakthusområdet in Stockholm, Lindholmen Street Food Market in Gothenburg and Papirøen in Copenhagen.

In the centre of Copenhagen, the Papirøen area was used for storage of paper until 2012, and then the planning for a new urban district was started (Papirøen, n.d.). Meanwhile the earlier industrial area was opened to the public to host the food market Copenhagen Street Food in 2014 and after that other temporary programs were incorporated, which made the area a popular destination for locals and visitors. Today the old industrial storage buildings of Papirøen are removed and the new city neighbourhood is being built with the hopes of it becoming a centre for culture, food and recreation.

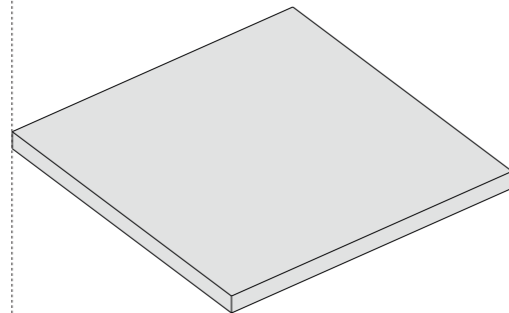
### Reflection & takeaways

Keeping Pappersladan can be a tool for activating the area that also gives locals a relation and sense of belonging to the site. Though it changes the planning process of what happens afterwards, that is also a question of economy as the large space that the building occupies will then not be made profit of by new buildings with a higher floor space ratio.

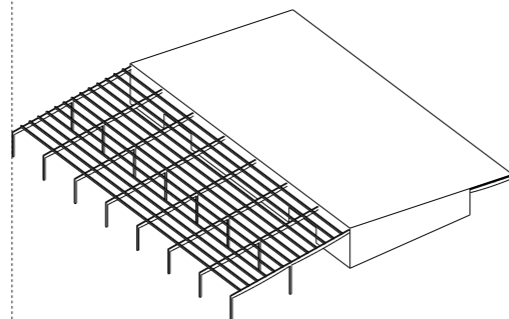
By providing public spaces on the site people could take part in the process to affect what will come and be part of the gradual development of the area, to make the transformation a part of Varberg and locals lives.



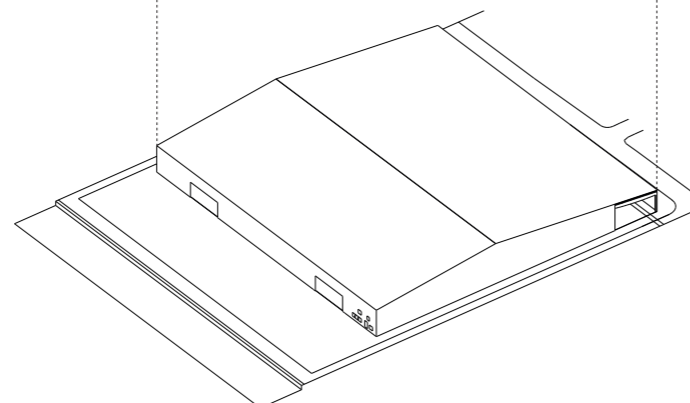
4. In future scenario the ground floor is rebuilt to provide public indoor space, with housing built on top of it.



3. In future if the building is torn down the space it provides should be recreated.



2. For providing more outdoor space for the square or park next to it, half of the Pappersladan could be opened.



1. Use the space that is unique in its scale and proportions compared to other buildings and places in the town for public use.



Map showing Pappersladan's size in the town centre and the plan of the new proposal in its context, scale 1:10 000

# Example B

## Kajpromenaden

The beach promenade in Varberg goes along the shore from the fortress, the city centre, and continues for about 5 kilometres south, passing Varberg's most central baths and beaches. By providing the public space along the water Kajpromenaden, the harbour dock promenade, becomes a continuation of the beach promenade though with other characteristics. Open space along the water as well as not privatising that land is a gesture towards the people and the coastal place identity.

This north extension, Kajpromenaden, becomes a space for activities and relaxing. A walk by the water, places to stop, to gather, sit in the sun, watch the boats or sunset, feel the wind or to have a have a bath.

### Dock promenade

The different spaces for movement, greenery and pause are designed with the inspiration of the spatial division of Torggatan and other pedestrian streets in the town centre. Benches, plantations, outdoor seating for cafés and another nuance of cobblestone in the ground are used to slow down the pace of pedestrians and bikes.

### Water and wind

The closeness to water is a strength of Varberg, the coastal winds is not always appreciated but are a part of the genius loci.

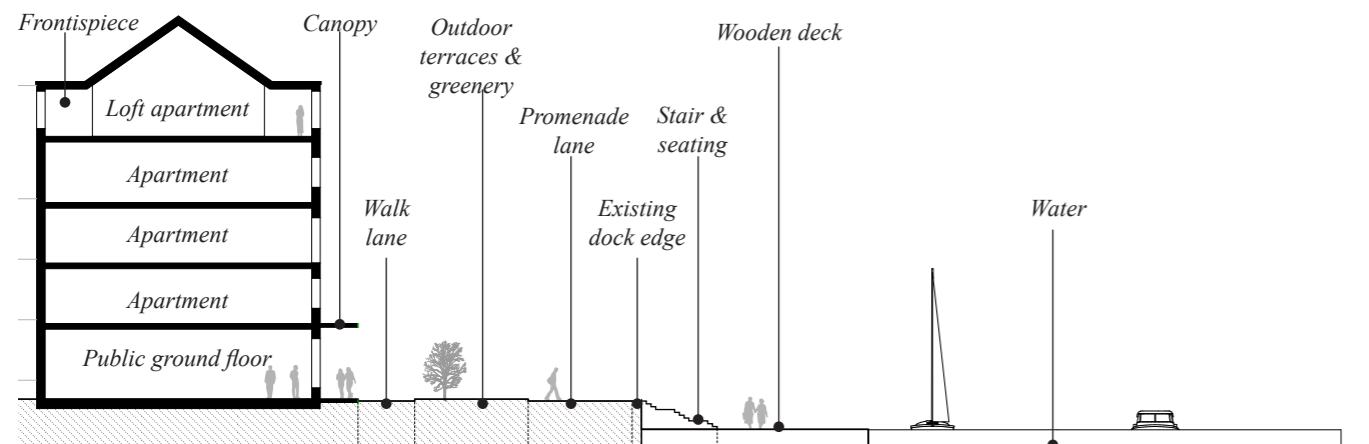
### Wooden deck

To get closer to the water, baths and spaces to sit.

### Outdoor terraces & greenery

Spaces where cafés and restaurants can expand with outdoor seating and terraces during the warmer months and can also be space for food trucks. Some of the plots in this part of the promenade can have greenery and plantations that withstand the harsh climate.

■ Stadskärnan
 ■ Harbour
 ■ Heritage & bath culture



Section through building with public ground floor and housing, scale 1:400

## Housing with public ground floor

### Human scale

In the facade and section, it is exemplified how reducing the feeling of height and achieve human scale can be done by niches and frontispieces on the top apartment and band ornaments in brick by the division of every floor like found in Stadskärnan gives variation in the facade.

### Active and public ground floors

The ground floor level has a taller room height than the other floors to be able to house a variation of functions, with windows and entrances out towards the promenade.

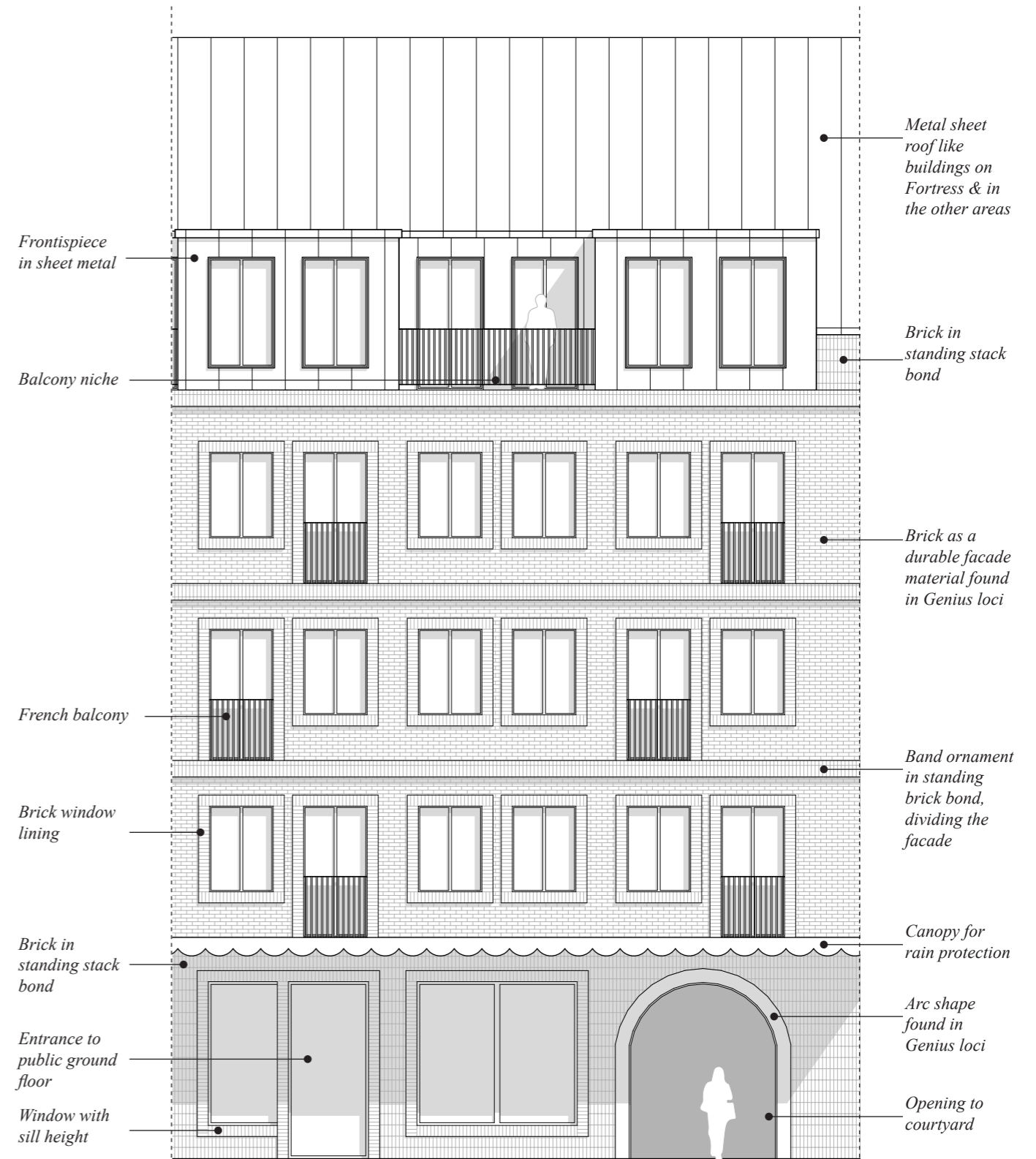
### Canopy

Identified in Stadskärnan are cantilever canopies along facades of ground floors with commercial functions. In this example building the canopy can protect against rain as well as work as shading for the inside of the ground floor. When passing by near the facade it will also make the scale seem smaller.

### Brick

In this example brick is the main material for the facade, it is a material that gives a sense of robustness and durability and at the same time it can feel warm and soft. Brick and masonry can be done in many different bands and details without necessarily using more material or time for labour.

■ Stadskärnan
 ■ Platsarna



Partial elevation of building Example B, scale 1:100

# Example C

## Small pedestrian street

### Elevated floors

Bases and floors elevated from the street level is identified in the Genius loci chapter, it can provide a variation in material and privacy as windows of housing are higher up to avoid sight into the apartments.

### Pedestrian street & the flex zone

A calmer pedestrian street in the middle of the blocks is for residents and people walking by to avoid the wind of the Kajpromenaden and the noise of the big road. The sidewalks closest to the buildings can work as a buffer space but also for walking on.

### Entrances towards street

Entrances and stairs directly to the street is often occurring in the town centre, as found in the genius loci which gives a sense of human scale and variation in the street space. With more entrances towards the street the space gets more flows and is experienced as more active and safer. With smaller widths of plots there will also be more entrances along the blocks.

### Courtyards

The inner courtyards of the blocks can be elevated or in street level depending on height differences on the site. Elevated courtyards can also be a way to accommodate parking garages underneath the blocks.



## Housing typology

### Local materials

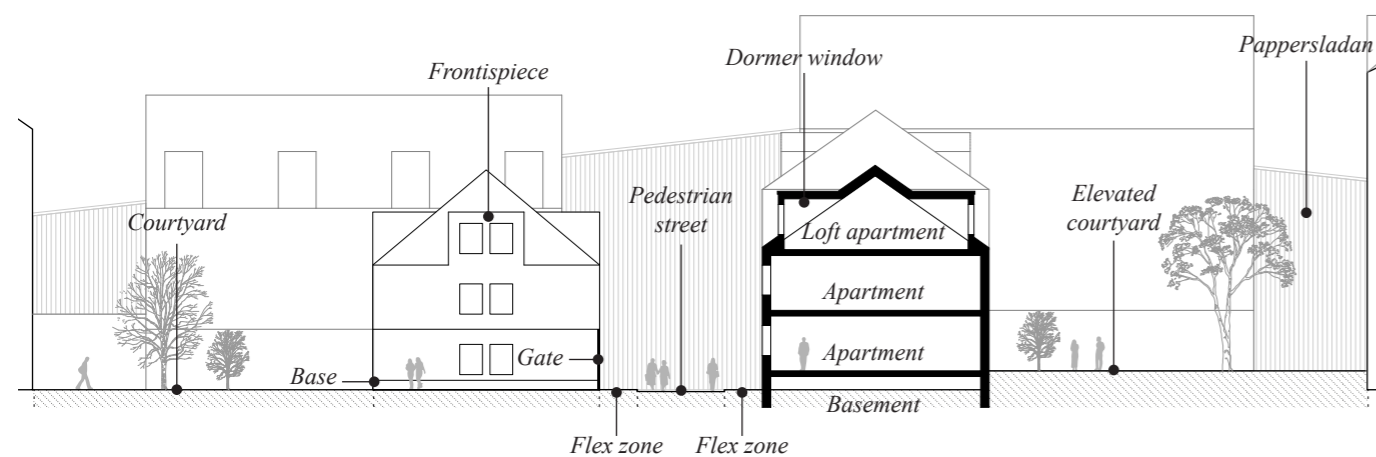
Wood and timber are local materials that can work both in building's construction and in façade cladding. As earlier mentioned in the Local context chapter the forestry exports are a big part of the business of the current harbour and for the future modernised harbour Farehamnen next to Västerport (Hallands hamnar, n.d.). Within Varberg's municipality the big wood industry companies Derome is based, as well as Södra Timber Värö and Södra CLT factory are based (Derome, (n.d.), Södra (n.d.)). This means there are good opportunities of using local expertise and material in the buildings, with new and traditional ways of using the local materials.

### Wood

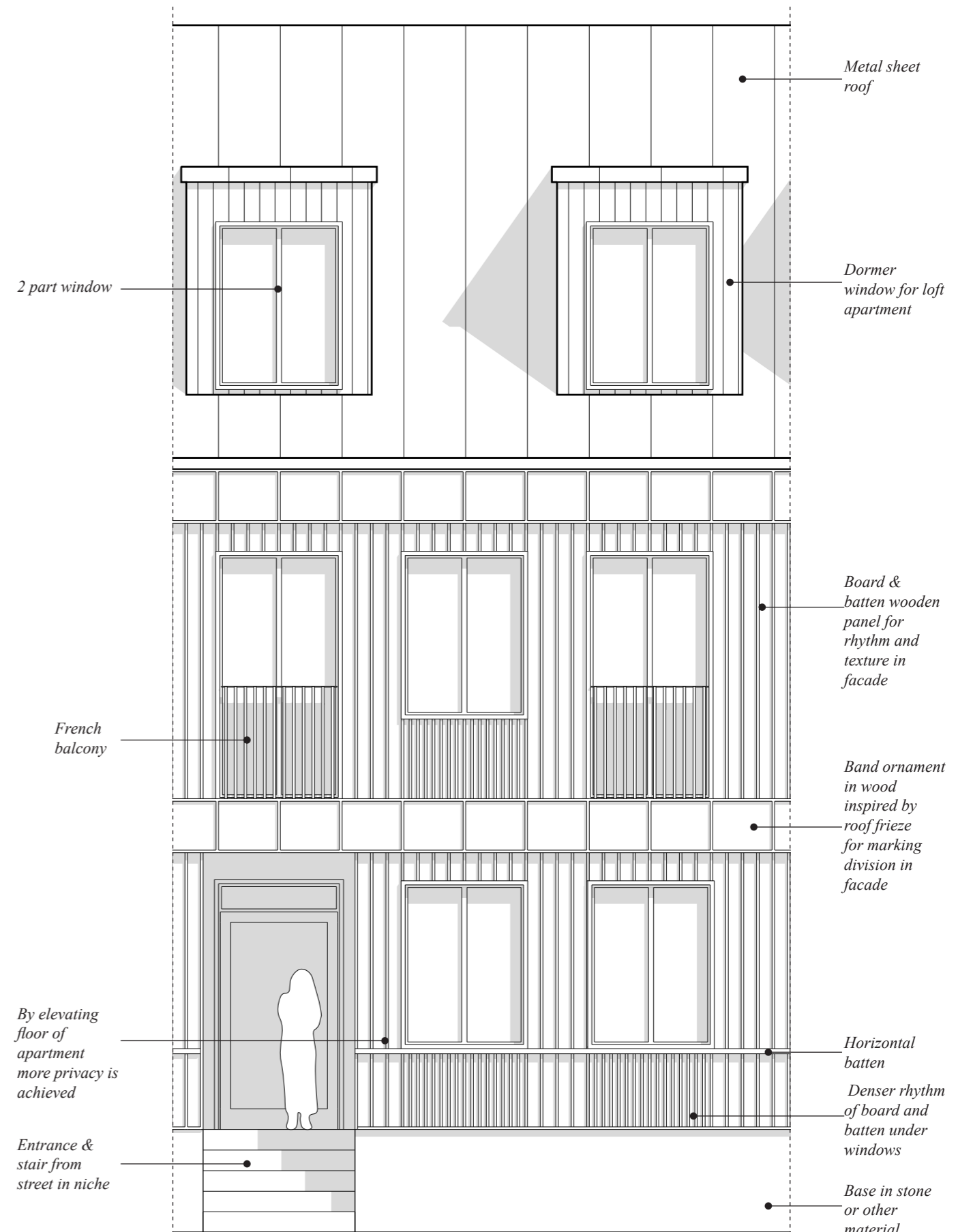
In Västerport and Varberg's coastal location the buildings will be exposed to strong winds, rain and salt water which requires durable materials, but as the building in Example C is placed within the block it is more protected and therefore wood is selected for this façade. Wood is a material that can be used in many ways for the design of facades, not only in their traditional appearance and it is a common material in facades in Stadskärnan, Platsarna and the heritage buildings Societetshuset and the Cold bath house within the Heritage & bath culture area. Wood is a material that with different paint can appear very different, though it is a material that feels natural and warm.

### Wooden details

Bands, a variation of vertical and horizontal battens and board and batten are ways to vary the facades to give them a genuine feeling and texture. Facades are what encloses the street space and by adding care in the design of them the street space can be experienced differently.



Section through courtyards, pedestrian street and housing, scale 1:400



Partial elevation of building Example C, scale 1:50

# 6. Discussion

## Introduction

This chapter summarizes the discourse of and reflects on the process and outcome to conclude this thesis as well as answering to the thesis question.



*Photograph of railway track and facade of warehouse in the harbour from February 14, 2023.*

# Discussion

## How can the area of Västerport be transformed based on the local identity of the harbour and Varberg?

To answer the thesis question the structure has been to conduct literature studies to get an understanding of the theory and discourse on the relation between architecture, place identity and the historical and economical situations that has affected our living environments in different ways. Furthermore, to be able to design an area based on its local identities the Genius loci and place analysis have been an important part of relating to the thesis question. Additionally, to directly address the aim and question of the thesis the design proposal has been used as a method to explore place identity and how it can inform a transformation project of a harbour in Varberg.

With the different perspectives and methods used this thesis presents one of many possible alternatives on how Västerport phase 2 can be designed based on the identity of its site and context. I acknowledge that the question of place and genius loci in architecture is a wide area, consequently my investigation and methods have only covered parts of the harbour's and Varberg's holistic identity. Through the process of the thesis the question, purpose and aim has come to touch upon a lot of different aspects that will be discussed and reflected on in this chapter.

### Theory

The purpose of the thesis was to bring up the relation between universalization of architecture and the contemporary urban development's loss of local connection which since the industrialisation of building construction and materials has been affecting architecture and planning. The theories and discourse within architecture, construction and place identity in this thesis lays as a base for the understanding of important aspects as the connections between globalised systems, technological development of construction and materials, place identity and the architectural role in how buildings and environments are designed.

In the writings on loss of place (Koetter & Rowe, 1999, Norberg-Schulz, 1980, Riceour, 1965) modern architecture is seen as the reason for buildings and urban space losing important qualities. From material being highly valued and having local connections to building techniques, form, resistance to climate and connection to landscape the industrialisation made material cheap and quick to produce and transport further to anywhere. The economical drive for growth, de-localised modern construction systems and materials, efficiency, building regulations, political visions and top-down processes have impacted the shape and form of our places and its tangible and intangible dimensions.

By including phenomenology and genius loci the new development visions in our urban places can be informed by a place's history, present and future potential. Sustainable transformations cannot happen when designing for economic growth and ideal visions but ignoring the place and its context. The built environment and architecture are the tangible spaces where experiences and events happen, where we dwell, and by including the intangible values in the design process we can design new places that preserves and transmits cultural and social values.

### Genius loci & place analysis

Place identity and genius loci is in this thesis understood as the intangible invisible qualities of concrete physical space, but it also includes its tangible elements. It is a holistic phenomena that has its own unique characteristics. To be able to investigate the place the theory on genius loci and place was needed to understand its dimensions and how it appears, additionally by the framework of the design proposal the process led to the analysis on different scales and spaces in both the tangible and intangible dimensions. By the criteria's of place identity in the Genius loci chapter different tools were found to be able to observe and examine the place, these criteria were found partly by theoretical concepts and by the needed input for the design proposal.

In the start of the process the first site visits and analysis my impressions and findings where much based on the tangible and physical aspects of the place, which may be because of my background and knowledge of architecture. As the literature studies and sketching on the design continued simultaneously a deeper understanding of place theory, Varberg and the site the analysis was deepened. A challenge has been to on my own go deeper and discover intangible elements such as atmosphere and to reflect on it without being able to directly discuss and evaluate the experience with someone else.

I believe this difficulty to deeper observe dimensions of place also is a result of my personal connection to Varberg from growing up there, as there is much that I know and think of the place as well as my memories of it, which for me is obvious but in this process has had to be communicated. But by also having the local knowledge and feeling of belonging to the place I have had the ability of recognizing phenomenas and places in relation to time and the seasonal perspective of Varberg as a summer town that varies during the year.

To present the research on place identity as well as the design photographs, sketches, drawings, collages, maps and text has been used. As tools and methods used to find and visualize the outcome of my research, they have been good in combination for expressing and exploring both tangible and intangible values and to communicate the process and outcome of the project. Though it is important to critically think of how a place is presented and the intentional narrative by the author and curator of the material.

I have been aware of the representation of place and tried to capture it from different perspectives to not only show the ideal image of Varberg. Through the research being done in low season of Varberg where many places are empty, windy and where the seasonality affects the atmosphere and feeling. As the weather, time of day and seasons change photographs will capture different atmospheres and characteristics. The maps and sketches try to show the spatial form as well as the felt experiences of place that was also tested and interpreted in the design.

The narrative and representation of this thesis is communicated from one person's perspective by text and visual representation of the local identities, which is why it cannot show all parts of the true holistic perspective of the places investigated. This critical perspective is also needed to reflect on how economic and political forces, such as municipalities, builders and architect's portrait certain images and visions of places and for developments where the receivers (readers and people) perception could be manipulated or directed in wanted directions.

Memories and identification of a place is an individual phenomenon, therefore for social sustainability the local society of different groups and perspectives should be the initiators and actors of preserving and transmitting the genius loci. To get a more holistic analysis of Genius loci of Varberg and the places investigated the important dimensions of place as social relations and different human perspectives would be needed. Due to the need of delimitating the thesis this was not included but when reflecting on the design proposal and the genius loci analysis, participatory processes is something that would have made the result transmit local identity of Varberg into the transformation on deeper levels.

Even though there are many advantages of using genius loci for learning and understanding a place for letting developments be designed in respect of the existing and support the continuation of place identity of towns and other environments, there are other aspects of our places and life's that this research does not pick up on. For example, by observing a place by genius loci you will find the outcome of how it has been influenced

of the past and therefore it might not accommodate for what is missing in a place or what will be needed in the future. What could Västerport provide that does not only strengthen the identity of Varberg, but that also brings in new qualities to the municipality and the Swedish west coast? Other tools for finding and improving the social, cultural and architectural dimensions of place are needed to be able to attract and meet the needs of people of different ages and backgrounds, to make Varberg a more diverse place.

### Design proposal & the genius loci implementation

From analysing the place identity of the selected areas Stadskärnan, Platsarna, Heritage & bath culture and the harbour their differences and similarities were found. By their different density, urban layouts, spatiality's, design and forms as well as the atmospheres and feelings experienced different aspects could be selected and interpreted in the design proposal.

The harbour, Västerport phase 2 and its closest context are places of industrial character that are used for storage and transportation. In contrast to the surrounding urban context it is open, empty and will during the transformation of Västerport be a construction site. I have seen the site as a challenge because of that its surrounding future urban plan is not yet decided or built and there are many possibilities of its design.

The design process and the genius loci investigation increased my understanding of the qualities and importance of the site, harbour and its place identity. By seeing it as a place with intangible and tangible values that should persist in the new use of it, the site is seen as the conditions or industrial landscape to design from. By finding elements that can inform the architecture by the size of blocks, letting the existing railway tracks guide flows and keeping buildings and footprint as the memory of the place the harbour genius loci is merged with the identities of Varberg's town centre. However, more discussion and questioning are needed on what it means to select keeping certain elements and not others, which maybe should be based on opinions through participatory processes. The preserving of things and buildings in a context can also be discussed from an economic and spatial point of view where the development could risk not becoming profitable or not creating good urban spatial values for its users.

When looking into the design of the building and façade examples within the urban plan the inspiration was to look at the buildings in the investigated areas of Varberg. The vernacular and historical is often seen as genuine and connected to local identity and is appreciated and preserved. Buildings constructed when the material was more expensive and time consuming than the labour expresses care and characteristics that are appreciated, such as ornaments, textures, patterns and natural materials. Local form and materials have been used for long times and are connected to place, as tangible concrete spatial parts that have shaped certain intangible dimensions as atmosphere and feeling of belonging.

Pastiche is a discussed subject within architecture and the balance between copying or taking inspiration from the vernacular or historical is often the question. When copying previous styles on contemporary buildings their façades can be seen as scenography for a made-up narrative. But when using local elements, genuine materials, ornaments and using them to contemporary interpretations they could be a positive impact on the atmosphere of space. By investing in labour, good materials and methods for construction the buildings can become more durable with longer life spans. While also becoming more appreciated by people dwelling in the environments, as it can create a feeling that the spaces have a sense of care over them.

By experimenting with scale, proportions and urban layouts of the context into a contemporary setting meanwhile also incorporating today's planning principles I think the outcome of the design of Phase 2 gets its own place identity that merges the genius loci of the harbour and the surrounding urban context. This design outcome can still stand up to demands of the contemporary systems of architecture and buildings, but maybe not fully meet the drive for economic profit and surplus. Instead the design proposal is providing a new local identity in Varberg that includes the harbour's and the contexts sense of place.

It is yet again important to highlight the question of who's vision and idea of the place that should prevail. Who should be the narrator of place and its memories as well as how the genius loci is experienced, understood and implemented in transformations and urban space. How can the architecture field find better ways to include the people in more stages of the design process, to let their opinions and ideas of place form the future built environment.

The issue with Västerport is also that it is an area that not many people in Varberg have been able to visit and experience, therefore it is also hard for the public to grasp what the visions of the municipality means. The size of the development of Västerport is large in comparison the town, which demands for carefulness and maybe would need a gradual process even within the phases of the development. Perhaps initiatives like Pappersladan and activating other areas of the site during the process of the transformation can let the harbour's place identity transition through the social and cultural processes as well as uses of the place by the people. How this gradual process could be done in steps through the design and legal aspects in masterplans and detailed development plans is something that would need more investigation.

### Conclusion

To conclude, architecture and planning can still be adapted to its specific place to enhance genius loci, not by going back to vernacular methods but by using today's technology and local qualities to provide good living spaces for current and future lifestyles and needs. Place specific architecture that respects and adapts to existing physical space is significant, as well as caring for the human social and cultural relations that are unique and should not be exchanged by urban norm ideas and concepts.

By using phenomenology to analyse Varberg and the harbour like I have had the opportunity to do during this semester it has advanced my understanding of the importance of place, its structure of tangible and intangible values as well as its relation to time, historical, social, economic and cultural conditions. These perspectives and how to care for the genius loci are, amongst with others, useful strategies for sustainable future developments that include human perspectives and place identities within architecture, planning and the building sector.

The place identity within architecture is a wide subject and something I have only covered a small part of. As the research has been limited to being done by one person and my own perspectives there are many qualities, phenomena's, experiences and aspects that are not represented in the genius loci observations neither the design proposal. Going more into depth in design, place analysis, social and cultural perspectives, different spaces and scales would be needed to really frame Varberg.



Photograph of Platsarna March 27, 2023.

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## Figures & images

Figure 1  
Map by the author based on geodata from ©Lantmäteriet and primary data from ©Varbergs kommun.

Figure 2  
Map by the author based on geodata from ©Lantmäteriet primary data from ©Varbergs kommun.

Figure 3  
Zaar, T. (2021). From *Kv Ciselören 1* [Photograph]. Arkitektur.se. <https://arkitektur.se/projekt/ett-hjarta-rott/attachment/kv-ciseloren-1/>

Figure 4  
Zaar, T. (2021). From *Ett hjärta rött* [Photograph]. Arkitektur.se. <https://arkitektur.se/projekt/ett-hjarta-rott/>

Figure 5  
Map of Varberg's location and geographical context made by the author.

Figure 6  
Map by the author based on geodata from ©Lantmäteriet primary data from ©Varbergs kommun.

Figure 7  
Seasonality diagram made by author.

Figure 8  
Aerial photo of harbour around 1975, ©Lantmäteriet

Figure 9  
Aerial photo of harbour around 1975, ©Lantmäteriet

Figure 10  
Site analysis over orthophoto from Varbergs kommun.

Figure 11  
Site analysis over orthophoto from Varbergs kommun.

Other maps are based on geodata from ©Lantmäteriet's geo-database as well as primary data and information provided by Varbergs kommun.

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