CONFIGURING IDENTITIES

PLACE IDENTITY AND INTERMEDIATE TOWNS

Akshaya Gopalakrishnan

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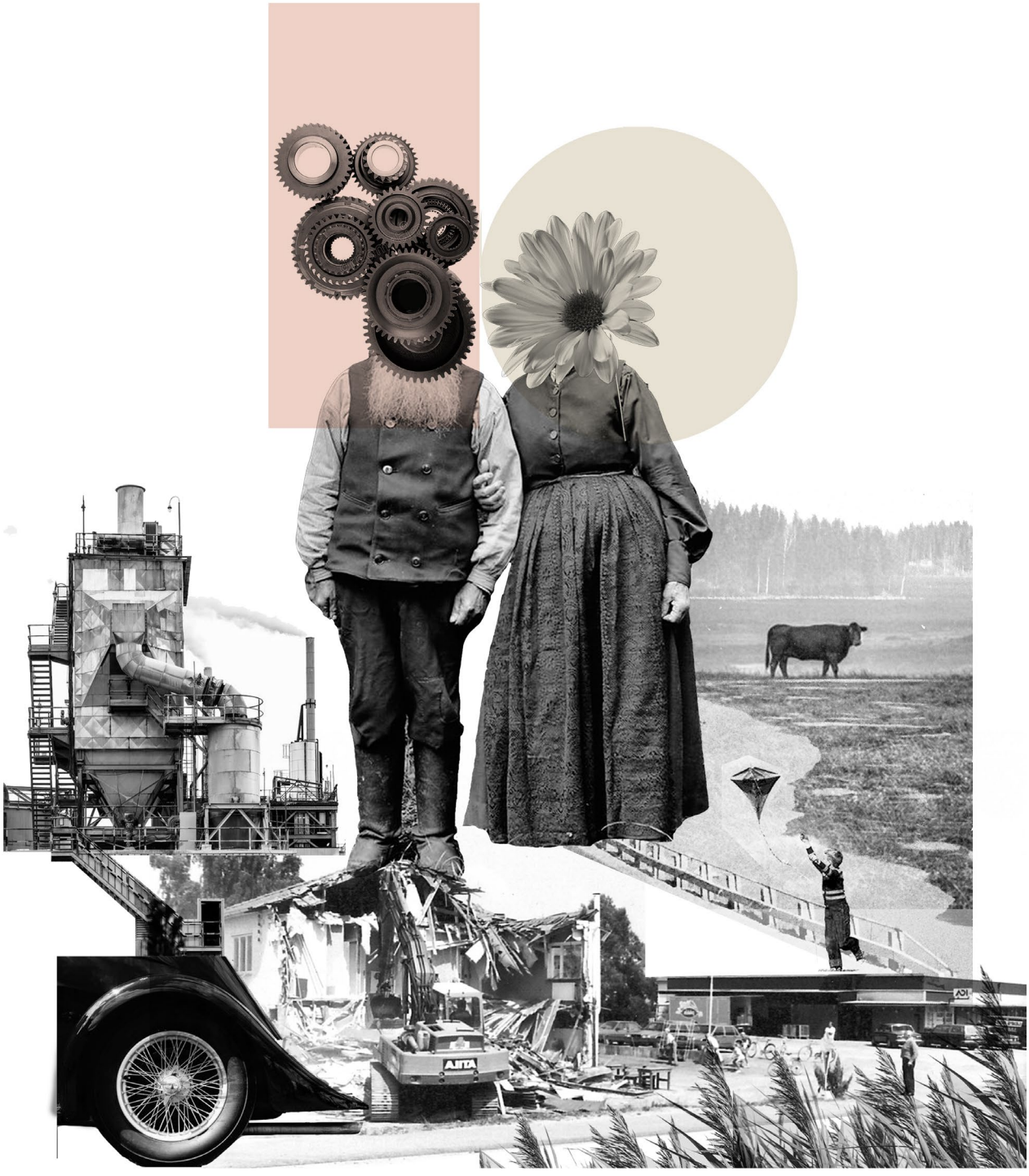

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abstract

Ongoing urbanisation trends have resulted in the expansion of cities, with people from diverse backgrounds aiming to reap the benefits. Under such circumstances, intermediate towns have emerged as front runners in the search for a common ground between rurality and urban development.

With the potential to provide comfortable living conditions away from the hustle of the city, these regions, due to the proximity of their location form an important interface between the two networks. While there has been immense research on the socio-spatial factors in rural and urban areas, how people identify with intermediate towns and their features is less explored.

The research focuses on the role of design in shaping the identity of intermediate towns and underlines important factors to be considered in the process. Hosting both resident and commuter populations, the Swedish town of Sandared was chosen as a case study for the research.

The study was conducted by interpreting the term "place identity" from three different perspectives- visual, social, and spatial. A theoretical framework based on these perspectives was then carried forward into the case by guiding the data analysis and design strategy for Sandared's town center.

Data analysis showed a disconnect between the town and the people on various fronts. From a system perspective, the town's current centre provided very less opportunities for people to interact and included several redundant and unoccupied spaces along with being perceived as decrepit and un-inviting.

With the aim of reconnecting the town with its people, the design proposal, through the introduction of inclusive social spaces, provides increased opportunities for interaction. By finding a balance between mobility and livability, the spaces foster the development of place identity by enabling engagement with social, spatial, and visual aspects.

When evaluated, the theoretical framework was found to align with the requirements of the case, making it a relevant approach for investigating socio-spatial relations in similar contexts. The research highlights how defining strong socially constructed place identities can result in the sustainable development of intermediate towns by accommodating urbanisation trends while retaining connections to local roots.

Keywords : Intermediate towns, place identity, inclusive social spaces

CONTENTS

READING GUIDE

Chapter 01: Introduction

A preliminary introduction to the background and discourse on intermediate towns and identity where the background, aim, research questions, and method of investigation are elaborated.

Chapter 02: Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the thesis with reference to place identity and social sustainability is laid forth in this portion of the booklet.

Chapter 03 : Investigation

The chapter presents data and inferences from investigations conducted in the case study town, resulting in the formulation of design strategies.

Chapter 04 : Design Implementation

This section illustrates the outcome of the thesis project through drawings, sketches, and visualizations, showcasing different aspects of the design informed by the findings from chapters 02 and 03.

Chapter 05 : Discussion and Conclusion

The final chapter elaborates on the main discourse, addressing the research questions and objectives stated in the first chapter, while also reflecting on the overall process and future scope.

Chapter 06 : References and Bibliography

References are listed in the APA style.

STUDENT BACKGROUND

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GLOSSARY

Space : " Physical dimension in which all things exist and move " *(Space_1 Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced American Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com, n.d.)*.

Local Identity : Refers to visual, social, and spatial features that create a recognizable image of a place that helps differentiate it from other places *(Shao et al., 2017)*.

Place : Geographical or physical space that is attached with meaning through interactions *(Hauge, 2007)*.

Place identity : Aspects of identity (both individual and collective) that are linked to a particular place *(Hauge, 2007)*.

Social identity: Identity that develops and evolves through social interactions *(Hauge, 2007)*.

Spatial identity : Identity that develops and evolves through the influence of physical elements of space and their configurations *(Kaymaz, 2013)*.

Visual identity : Identity that is established through the presence of visual landmarks and symbols *(Saleh, 1998)*.

Intermediate Towns: Townships that are located in between predominantly urban and rural areas with direct connections to both regions *(Roberts, 2014)*.

Social capital: The relationships that exist in society in the form of social networks *(Bijl, 2011)*.

01

INTRODUCTION

Background and discourse

1.1 : BACKGROUND

Architecture has always created opportunities for dialogue between humans and infrastructure. While people's perceptions can alter how built environments are defined, spaces themselves leave lasting impressions on their users.

This trend is visible right from the times of ancient civilizations. When people perceived some cities as educational centers because of the reputation of the schools and universities that were located in them, trade capitals of the world were designed for the ease with which goods and commodities could be shipped elsewhere *(Brill, 1989)*.

Even during the onset of the European Industrial Revolution in the early 1700s, major cities close to resources and mobility corridors that housed manufacturing units were widely perceived as 'industrial towns' *(Ödmann & Dahlberg, 1970)*.

Since the end of the 20th Century, globalisation has brought people closer through the extensive trade of goods and commodities, exchange of ideas and culture, strong transport links, and ease of migration *(Ödmann & Dahlberg, 1970)*.

As a result, several cities all over the world have evolved to become major hot spots. The economic opportunities concentrated within these urban centers have also resulted in a large influx of people into major cities in search of greener pastures *(Delgado-Viñas & Moreno, 2022)*.

Thus, with investments and opportunities pouring predominantly into urban areas, the divide between rurality and urbanization is only increasing.

In such circumstances, the development of intermediate regions situated in between urban and rural areas has emerged as a possible solution to narrow this gap *(Roberts, 2014)*.

Intermediate towns have the ability to house residents in close contact with nearby rural areas and major urban centers *(Roberts, 2014)*. They are sought after for their exclusivity from the hustle and bustle of the cities, close connections to nature, cheaper costs of living, and affordable land value in comparison to cities *(Cassel, 2008)*.

With their well-established road and rail networks they also serve as providers of essential amenities to passersby or the daily commuter population *(Roberts, 2014)*.

However, while rural areas are more conservative and traditional and urban areas boast a more global identity, intermediate towns tend to borrow either of the two identities. They are either seen as places in the shadow of large cities or small townships close to nearby villages.

Since intermediate towns are seeing an increase in both residents and commuters as a result of urbanisation trends, it is critical to explore the question of identity from the perspective of these towns. In the era of social sustainability and inclusivity, being able to identify with the space we interact with is of immense importance.

Therefore, there is great potential in studying existing perceptions and the factors that influence them in these intermediate towns.

1.2 : OBJECTIVE

While identity has been researched extensively from a rural and urban context, the same has been less explored from the perspective of intermediate towns. Hence, the project is aimed at understanding how architectural interventions can shape the perception of intermediate towns. The study uses elements of social sustainability and inclusiveness since it investigates what the town means to multiple user groups. The objective of this investigation is to address the following question :

What factors must be considered when defining the local identity of intermediate towns?

The research question is addressed by creating a theoretical framework from relevant literature on identity. The framework is further applied in a case study to arrive at design strategies for the conceptual design of the town centre of the Swedish town of Sandered. Results were then tablutaed to evaluate the relevance of the approach and framework in the context of intermediate towns.

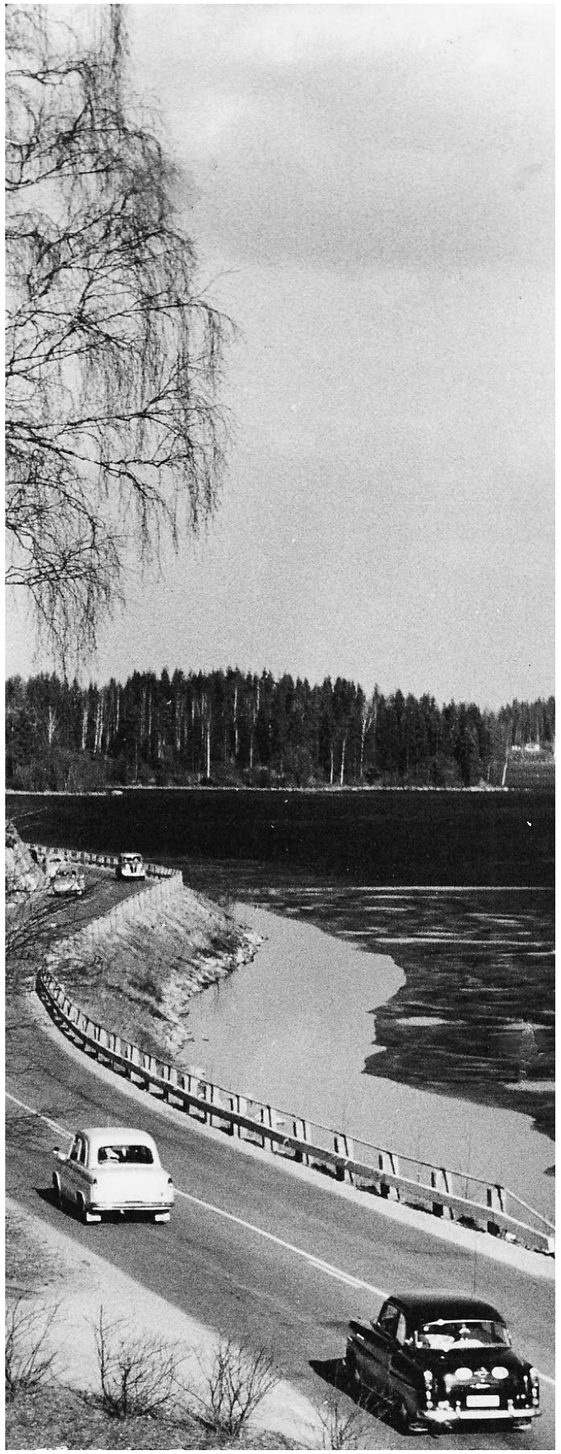


Fig 1.1 : Sweden in transit
Source : Sandareds Intressföreningen

1.3 : DELIMITATIONS

It is very important to establish stable boundaries for the research to ensure clarity in what the design addresses and to avoid diversion from the scope of the study *(Groat & Wang, 2001)*.

Although the project aims to look into the identity of intermediate towns, the scale of the project is not at a city planning level.

The investigation primarily focuses on designing the town centre of Sandered along the railway station and does not cover other public social spaces located in or near the town. Furthermore, the term identity used in this thesis is related to the place identity of the town. Here, place identity is addressed from three different perspectives- social, spatial, and visual identities.

Also, the secondary data analysis includes a demographic study of stakeholders where the only factor considered to classify the population is age. Other elements like economic status, ethnicity, culture, etc. have not been addressed.

With respect to sustainability, while addressing social and ecological factors of sustainability, this thesis does not elaborate on the economic aspect.

The final design presented as part of the case study is at a conceptual level and therefore does not go into detailed construction drawings.

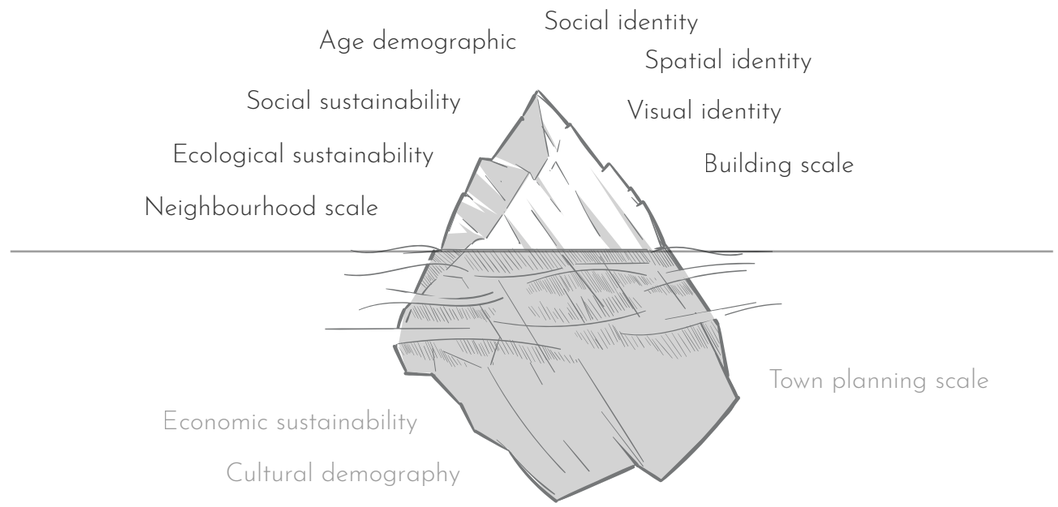


Fig 1.2 : Delimitations

1.4 : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The project was undertaken by applying a research-by-design methodology within a single case study *(Roggema, 2016)*. The Swedish town of Sandered was shortlisted as a suitable case since its population and location fit the characteristics of an intermediate town.

Ongoing discussions between the municipality and local residents regarding the construction of a new town centre and what it means for the townspeople further motivated the selection.

Due to the subjective and place-dependent nature of the term identity *(Hague, 2007)*, approaching the research question through a case study seemed appropriate.

In addition, the final design solution also provided an opportunity to undertake a higher discussion on whether the issues, principles, and strategies native to Sandered support the existing theoretical frameworks or contradict them. In order to substantiate the problem, data collection was done in the following manner.

Literature Review :

It is always crucial to establish a solid literary framework in the early stages of research to understand how relevant the problem is and to be able to create robust solutions that are based on facts rather than perspective-driven decisions.

In order to define this framework, relevant literature on topics like social sustainability, intermediate towns, and place identity, was reviewed in both international and Swedish contexts.

Reference projects from the international level were also reviewed to ponder upon whether such concepts can be adapted to a similar context.

Data collection :

When testing the theoretical framework in a case study, robust data is essential since the final result must address the gaps and difficulties between real-time design and the framework. Data was collected in two steps and classified as secondary and primary data collection.

Secondary Data collection :

Secondary data refers to the information collected by third parties that is used indirectly by the researcher in their study *(Groat & Wang, 2001)*. In the case of Sandared, the municipality, as a part of its strategic development plan had previously conducted some surveys to document the perspectives of the locals regarding new developments for the town.

Results from this survey, accessed from the municipality's website are referred to in this research since it covers a large number of respondents and gives a good idea about the town's interests. In addition, statistical data on demography, employment ratio, and development plans were obtained from municipal records.

Public transport timetables for the area were accessed from Västtrafik while data regarding car traffic was obtained from Trafikverket's online resources.

Furthermore, information about local history was gathered from books in Sandared's local library. Online resources including Google Maps and Lantmäteriet were used for geographical analysis and site mapping.

There were also informal discussions with representatives from the municipality's strategic urban planning department and the local residents' association.

However, these discussions are not reflected in the data analysis and were only undertaken to understand the history and pulse of the town.

Primary Data Collection :

Primary data refers to the information collected first-hand through direct interaction with the case *(Groat & Wang, 2001)*. Primary data was used in this case to cover qualitative aspects of the town. Site visits were performed on weekdays, weekends and holidays.

A fly-on-the-wall technique or covert observation was used in order to observe interactions in the town center, at what periods of time, and how they used the space *(Martin et al., 2012)*. This method was preferred over more interactive methods since the municipality had already performed a survey to establish a dialogue with the local population.

In addition, given the time frame and scope of the project, only a handful of people could be covered which would lead to the final design being based on individual opinions, leading to research bias *(Martin et al., 2012)*. On-site visits also included mapping the stays and flows of people, preferred movement paths, and activity distribution throughout the day by sketches.

Data Analysis and Design Strategy :

While reviewing both sets of collected data, it was very important to maintain neutrality and adopt a zoom-in-zoom-out approach to not lose sight of the bigger picture. Therefore, findings were established from both primary and secondary data to obtain a clear idea about the town. These findings were then compared with the theoretical framework created early on in the project.

By combining the on-field findings with theory, design strategies that highlighted the factors to be considered for a sustainable design solution for Sandared Centrum were formulated. Multiple design iterations were tested with respect to these principles using sketches and digital models, and the results were evaluated with respect to the primary and secondary data collected earlier.

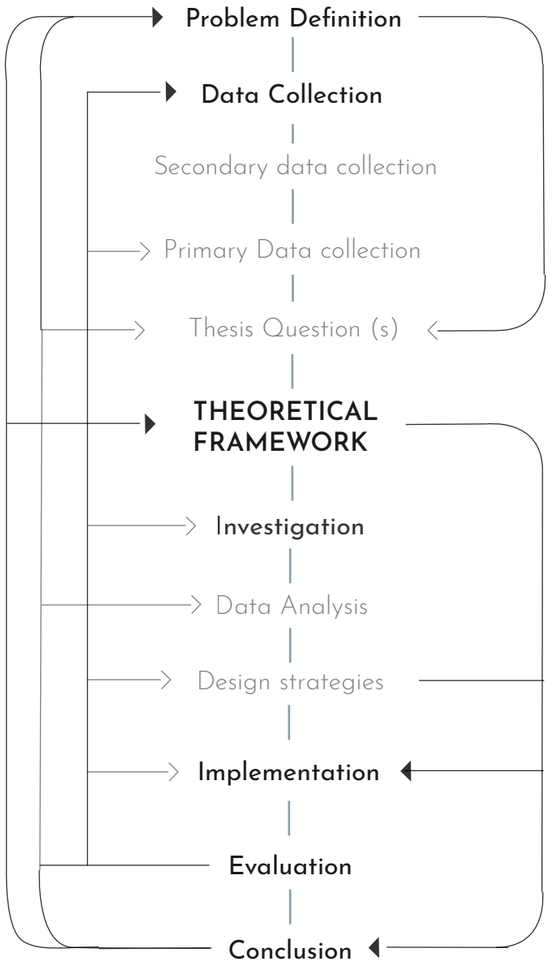


Fig 1.3 : Process

02

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

2.1: SUSTAINABILITY AND INTERMEDIATE TOWNS

The Social pillar of sustainability

While age-old traditions and ancestral lifestyles were centered around the concept of living responsibly with respect to resource exploitation, the first official usage of the term sustainability was associated with conserving earth's environmental systems *(Basiago, 1995)*.

Over the years, however, the term has been appropriated by different fields of research varying from biology to corporate management, politics, and so on *(Heinberg & Lerch, 2010)*.

By reviewing the term as an analytical tool instead of a guideline or protocol, Basiago, A. D. (1995) presents the four basic principles of sustainability as Futurity, Equity, Global Environmentalism, and Biodiversity *(Basiago, 1995)*. The same mindset can be seen reflected in the United Nation's definition of sustainable development, which is based on the three pillars of social equity, economic viability, and environmental protection *(United Nations, n.d.)*.

Of these, while environmental and economic sustainability cover fairly straightforward tangible concepts, the third aspect of social sustainability is directed more toward cognitive elements and therefore covers a relatively larger and ambiguous area of study *(Dubois, 2009)*.

In the context of architecture and urban design, social sustainability is multi-dimensional taking into account both physical and non-physical factors *(Bramley & Power, 2009)*. Where non-physical aspects include quality of life, social inclusion, culture, safety, and equity to name a few while physical factors take into consideration attractive public spaces, accessibility to people and resources, etc *(Dempsey et al., 2011)*.

Staying true to its ambiguous nature, the role of social sustainability also varies depending on the scale in which it operates, ranging from international and national welfare concerns, regional developments, and town planning to policy development and neighborhood networks *(Bramley & Power, 2009)*.

A common factor across all scales is equity or just access to social policies and resources *(Bramley & Power, 2009)*. At a neighborhood or community level, given the relatively more intimate scale, community sustainability or stability, achieved through social participation and interactions can be seen as an additional indicator of social sustainability *(Bramley & Power, 2009)*.

Meanwhile, other authors, such as Murphy(2012) and Cuthill(2010), highlight other frameworks within the social pillar like participation, social cohesion, awareness, social capital, social infrastructure, and social engagement in addition to social equity and strong community *(Murphy, 2012)(Cuthill, 2010)*.

Therefore, when broadly classified, social equity, social cohesion, and feeling of safety can be identified as the three main concepts of the social pillar of sustainability *(Ballet et al., 2020)*.

When further comparing these components to tangible indicators of sustainable development, social equity relates to the quality of life and liveability, social cohesion to participation and interactions, and feeling of safety to the level of trust, strong social networks, and interdependency within communities *(Kefayati & Moztarzadeh, 2015)*.

As the first step in manifesting these indicators, , it is important for socially sustainable architecture to understand and capture the local essence of the social context in which it seeks to intervene in order to ensure strong relationships between society and the built environment *(Lami & Mecca, 2020)*. As aptly stated -

" Before we prescribe, we must know how to correctly describe " *(Wood, 2008)*.

Spaces that respond to local culture, history, and social qualities and are informed through local views and perceptions can help generate a sense of identity, ownership, and belonging amongst its users *(Lami & Mecca, 2020)*.

A similar mindset is reflected in the United Nation's sustainable development strategy *(United Nations, n.d.)*. Of the 17 sustainable development goals adopted by the UN member states, Target 11.3 of Goal 11 - " Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable " *(Goal 11 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.)* , is described as following :

" Target 11.3 - INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated, and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries "

(Goal 11 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.)

This can be imbibed both in the process and the resulting built environment through social participation in all stages of design interventions *(UN-HABITAT WORLDWIDE, 2014)*.

While participatory design processes accommodate individual perceptions of stakeholders, the production of inclusive spaces paves the way for establishing strong identities.

Intermediate towns :

The rural-urban dichotomy has long been contested in various fields of research with differentiating factors ranging from population densities, economies, infrastructure development, agricultural cultivations, etc.,*(Roberts, 2014)*.

In recent times, advancements in diversifying economies, lifestyle changes, increased accessibility, and telecommunications, are blurring the fine lines differentiating these areas *(Roberts, 2014)*. It is in this discussion that intermediate regions with settlements and small towns, lying in between predominantly rural and urban areas come into play.

The definition of the term intermediate town in available literature varies depending on its location and It is this heterogeneity that makes it difficult to reach a consensus on its definition *(Bolay & Kern, 2019)*.

However, as implied by the context, the term intermediate town primarily refers to medium-sized towns or cities located between rural and urban areas while serving as a strategic interface between both networks *(Bolay & Kern, 2019)(Roberts, 2014)*.

Due to their proximity, it is common for these areas to take on a mediating role by providing necessary social, economic, and mobility services to connected areas while at the same time adopting characteristics from their rural and urban neighbors *(Roberts, 2014)*.

Bolay and Kern (2019) in their argument characterised intermediate regions based on the proximity of their locations and functional role as: regional capitals, economic hubs, regional markets, service centers, tourist centers, communication hubs, metropolitan peripheries, and national - international interfaces *(Bolay & Kern, 2019)*.

In contrast, Roberts (2014) defines intermediate cities as towns with populations ranging from 5000 to 100,000 people *(Roberts, 2014)*.

Simultaneously, Nordregio has chosen to publish regional maps based on geo-spatial data such as population density, travel time, proximity, and so on in order to categorize urban, rural, and intermediate areas in the Nordics *(Ubigu - Blog, 2022)*. In Sweden, rurality and urbanity are defined based on population, socioeconomic data, and accessibility to urban centers, with a population of 3000 separating urban and rural areas *(Official Definitions of Nordic Rural Areas* - Nordregio, n.d.)*.

Thus, the fact that they differ in numerous ways, from the country in which they are present to their position in the urban hierarchy when it comes to developmental strategies, place-sensitive and contextually responsive policies benefit these contexts the most *(Iammarino et al., 2019)*.

The importance of analysis and changes being rooted in an understanding of the local economic, social, and political landscape is multi-fold when compared to their urban and rural counterparts *(Satterthwaite & Tacoli, 2003)*.

Concentrating development ventures in already well-established urban centers runs the risk of unbalanced regional development trends *(Delgado-Viñas & Moreno, 2022)*, and developing intermediate towns as smaller urban centers to be an integral part of rural urbanization can address this imbalance *(Roberts, 2014)*.

Introducing essential services and infrastructure such as health and educational systems can improve accessibility and attract economic and social capital *(Roberts, 2014)*.

Intermediate regions have also been viewed as focal points for sociocultural interactions and spreading awareness in and around the region *(Sietchiping et al., 2014)*. It is this connection that they share with the regions around, with respect to social, spatial, and economic resources that often lead to their identification and regional definition based on the functions, services, facilities, and infrastructure they provide to the surrounding urban and rural areas *(Roberts, 2014)*.

With respect to sustainable development, the strategic location and connectivity that are native to these regions can be directly linked to target 11.8 of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11 -" - " Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable " *(Goal 11 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.)*

" Target 11.8 - STRONG NATIONAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Support positive economic, social, and environmental links between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning."

(Goal 11 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.)

Despite their potential in contributing to overall regional growth, the main developmental challenges faced by these towns are their heterogeneous and highly contextual nature, lack of visibility, and resource gap with respect to administrative affairs *(Rodríguez-Pose & Griffiths, 2021)*.

However, trends have shown a significant shift in the preference of people for living in such regions *(Rodríguez-Pose & Griffiths, 2021)*.

Intermediate towns today are sought after for their relatively affordable resources like the cost of living and land values along with calmer atmospheres *(Rodríguez-Pose & Griffiths, 2021)*.

With great economic benefits, their potential to offer a better quality of life and ensure the just distribution of the benefits of urbanization across regions make them assets and facilitators of sustainable regional development strategies *(Rodríguez-Pose & Griffiths, 2021)*.

2.3 : IDENTITY

Originating from the Latin word *"identitas"*, websters dictionary defines identity as

" the distinguishing character or personality of an individual" *("Definition of Identity," 2023)*

The term, which encompasses distinctiveness, has been widely discussed in a variety of academic fields in the context of an individual or oneself.

Place identity, on the other hand, includes a spatial and physical realm *(Kaymaz, 2013)*. While "space" is a common and quantifiable term in architecture referring to physical elements, "place" is defined by the meanings and memories that are commonly associated with a particular site or location *(Kaymaz, 2013)*.

It is our ability as humans to form connections that generate places that grow stronger with time *(Knox & Mayer, 2013)*. Formed as a result of socio-spatial interactions, place identity is unique to its context and shares a symbiotic relationship with individual identity *(Proshansky, 1978)*.

It is in this context that both Kevin Lynch and Edward Relph's arguments align on the open-endedness of identity as an aspect that is dynamic and socially constructed which cannot be imposed or directed *(Lynch, 1960)(Seamon & Sowers, 2008)*.

From an urban-design perspective, methods in which place identity is manifested result in the development of place image, or how a certain place is perceived *(Stanowicka, 2011)*.

According to Lynch (1960), imageability is visual and is " that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer." *(Lynch, 1960)*. Stanowicka (2011) adds another dimension to the inquiry by defining a town's identity as a combination of social and spatial characteristics *(Stanowicka, 2011)*.

Spatial factors include layout and amenities, and cultural heritage, historical links, and memories make up the social factors with town image being the perception of these variables *(Stanowicka, 2011)*.

Expanding on the literature, Cheshmehzangi (2012) discusses the dynamic character of urban environments, which result in shifting identities over time by identifying the "visual", "perceptual", and "behavioral" as the variables of urban identities *(Cheshmehzangi, 2012)*.

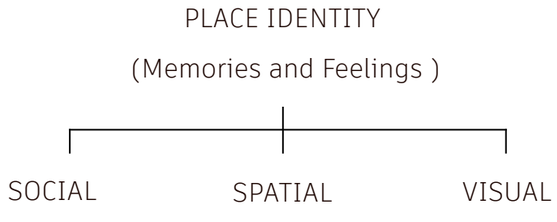


Fig 2.1 : Place identity and its components

SOCIAL IDENTITY

Guided by common experiences, there exists a direct connection between social identity or how one perceives oneself and the larger group one identifies themselves with *(Nezlek & Smith, 2005)*.

With identity being a dynamic aspect, social identity evolves through interactions and participation *(Nezlek & Smith, 2005)*. When evaluated together with respect to a particular space, over time, individual social identities result in the formation of collective identities. In other words, as described by Ron Eyerman -

"Collective memory provides both the individual and society with a temporal map, unifying a nation or community through time as well as space. " *(Jahanbakhsh et al., 2015)*

Developed on shared values, this aspect of collective identity thus exercises the power to bring together large groups, an aspect that can facilitate social cohesion in communities through active public participation, and revive social networks through opportunities for increased interactions *(Jahanbakhsh et al., 2015)*.

The concept of place is developed through similar circumstances, i.e. through shared experiences and memories but in relation to a physical environment *(Kaymaz, 2013)*. Drawing parallels, a direct relationship can be established between social identity and place.

This is further explored in the works of Proshanky (1978) and Berkwell (1996) who identify the multi-faceted role of place as one of the many components that define social identities *(Hauge, 2007)*.

Apart from place, the social roles adopted by people in society also have a direct influence on identity *(Hague,2007)*. The roles that we adopt on a daily basis like that of a friend, parent, student, etc are largely influenced by the rhythm of society around us *(Proshansky, 1978)*.

When comparing urban and rural environments from this perspective, the unpredictability and rapid changeability of physical and socio-cultural aspects in urban settings due to diverse demographies and fast rhythms result in different responses to place identity when compared to smaller towns *(Proshansky, 1978)*.

Due to a slower pace of life, the degree of changeability is much lesser in smaller towns and cities that inherit physical and socio-cultural characteristics such as their layout, historical building stock, population flows, social networks, and so on *(Knox & Mayer, 2013)*.

This familiarity and to some extent consistency of social interactions influence stronger place identities *(Belanche et al., 2021)*.

SPATIAL IDENTITY

In his book the image of the City, Lynch (1960) identifies structure as one of three factors that contribute to the imageability of a place *(Lynch, 1960)*. Structure in this context refers to the spatial patterns that are legible, distinct, and easily recognizable *(Lynch, 1960)*.

From traditional courtyards of Indian homes to the mall in front of Buckingham Palace, apart from being the structured organization of physical elements driven by logic and function, physical elements of spaces also influence perceptions by curating experiences *(Sailer & Penn, 2007)*.

" the relational structure of any built form, such as an urban grid or the layout of a floor plan, itself shapes patterns of human movement, occupancy, and individual experience." - Hiller (1996)*(Sailer & Penn, 2007)*

With a direct connection to place identity, space refers to the physical elements and qualities around which all other forms of self and collective identities are established *(Kadir et al., 2022)*.

The ability to evoke meanings and memories by providing a platform for both people-space and people-people interactions, the quality of spatial experiences directly contributes to the establishment of place identity *(Kadir et al., 2022)*.

At the same time, social and collective identities are manifested and physically represented in the space in which they are formed, indicating an interdependent relationship between the two aspects *(Kadir et al., 2022)*.

Spatial identity therefore can be understood as -

" how any space is identified in terms of cultural association, and how many cultural practices/streams can be identified within one particular space." - *(Choudhary, 2014)*

The physical elements of spatial identity can be expressed in the physical configuration like, form, material, construction, atmosphere, etc *(Kadir et al., 2022)*. However, the role of physical factors in place identity is often undermined with more importance being placed on the experiential aspect and memories associated with places *(Stedman, 2003)*.

Viewing physical settings that are not experienced as blank spaces with no value, ignores the functional and social roles of these environments *(Stedman, 2003)*. While space constitutes geographical and physical factors that are objective, in the context of perception, it takes on a subject role *(Torabi & Brahman, 2013)*

Since identities are formed through individual perceptions, it is possible for a single space to accommodate different places and generate multiple spatial identities *(Choudhary, 2014)*. The dynamic aspect of identity makes it susceptible to change and thus, is often reflected in spaces *(Choudhary, 2014)*.

When it comes to spatial programming, the development of shared identities can be encouraged through spaces that are inclusive and responsive to their users *(Nezlek & Smith, 2005)*.

" Place-related functions can be mobilized to achieve positive self-esteem and place can also act as a trigger for identities to emerge " *(Twigger-Ross et al., 2003)(Hauge, 2007)*

While past identities can be connected through inclusively perceptible physical representations, future identities can be enabled through enhanced longevity, overcoming socio-spatial barriers, and paving the way for sustainable growth and development *(Nezlek & Smith, 2005)*.

VISUAL IDENTITY

Visual communication is one of the strongest mediums when it comes to quickly influencing perceptions, be it that of food, clothes, or even towns and cities. From the pyramids of Giza to the Eiffel Tower in Paris or the Grand Canyon in Nevada, built and unbuilt systems with strong visual features that take on artifact-like symbolism influence the brand of a place *(Saleh, 1998)*.

As stated by Lynch (1960), this imageability of cities while being culturally significant, also shares a strong social role, with a direct relationship between the image of an environment and its observer *(Lynch, 1960)*.

He defines imageability as -

" that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is that shape, color, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment." *(Lynch, 1960)*

Even today, developing iconic public infrastructure is often used as a strategic visual tool to influence the desirability and place brand of a city with social, political, and economic agendas *(Cassel, 2008)*. Capitalizing on the socio-cultural aspect of architecture, different regions tap into local cultural, historical, and natural infrastructure and resources to establish distinct place images *(Cassel, 2008)*.

As carriers of meanings and memory, historical buildings, through familiarity and by contributing to cultural identity have positive impacts on the local identity, sense of place, and liveability in townscapes *(Cassel, 2008)*. In such contexts, while heritage buildings are marketed as museums to impart knowledge and connections to local history, unused industrial buildings that once were the economic backbones of regions are directed toward tourism and recreation *(Cassel, 2008)*.

Similarly, connecting the aesthetic and cultural values of the natural landscape to leisure and recreation establishes a direct connection with the regional image *(Cassel, 2008)*. Muñoz-Pedreros, 2017, highlights the different ways in which the distinctive visual features of local vegetation like the shape and colours of flora are perceived in different regions *(Muñoz-Pedreros, 2017)*.

A critical stand against the visual approach to defining a city's image argues how these strategies target external audiences while being very rarely socially beneficial for local communities *(Yun, 2019)*. The success of such ventures often depends on the context and how the visual factors of imageability resonate with local communities *(Yun, 2019)*.

Deploying a new urban aesthetic will require establishing new connections and varied perceptions whereas elevating local visually relatable elements as urban landmarks like local construction techniques, materials, colours, etc, through familiarity and cultural significance can establish place attachments that result in strong visual identities *(Mishra & Kolay, 2019)*.

While physical elements of urban environments including streets, paths, nodes, and landmarks are the more prominent and familiar visual features of a city's image, it is important to take into consideration the influence of these aspects on human emotions *(Nasar, 1990)*. Nasar (1990) in his book " The Evaluative Image of the City " proposes the use of evaluative maps to arrive at a comprehensive visual image of a city *(Nasar, 1990)*. Developed based on verbal dialogue with local communities, documenting perceptions based on the degree of likeability of a town's visual features helped identify a new resource for town planners *(Nasar, 1990)*. Thus, indicating that the visual identity or character of places is not personally directed by a designer's or planner's taste alone but are strong visual mediums that represent local values *(Manyiwa et al., 2018)*.

In conclusion,when addressing place identity from a social, spatial and visual perspective, the following points must be taken into consideration (Ref fig 2.2)

Theorectical Framework

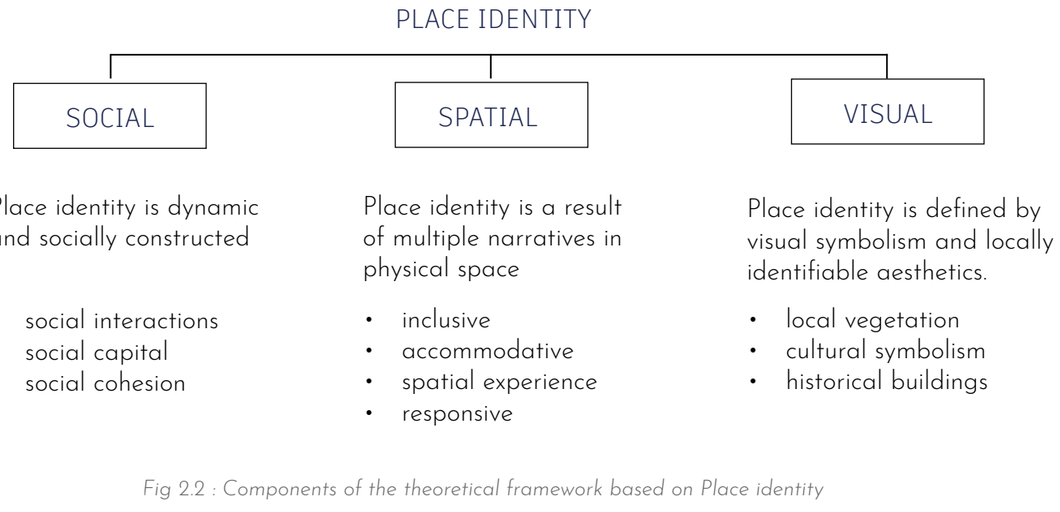


Fig 2.2 : Components of the theoretical framework based on Place identity

03

INVESTIGATION

In the context of an intermediate Swedish town

Sweden, in its composition with respect to land and total population was seen to have a sprawling layout with few concentrations in terms of urban and rural areas. Remaining regions are largely classified as intermediate regions, as depicted in the image on the right.

(Fig 3.1) Distribution of urban, rural and intermediate regions based on population statistics in Sweden.

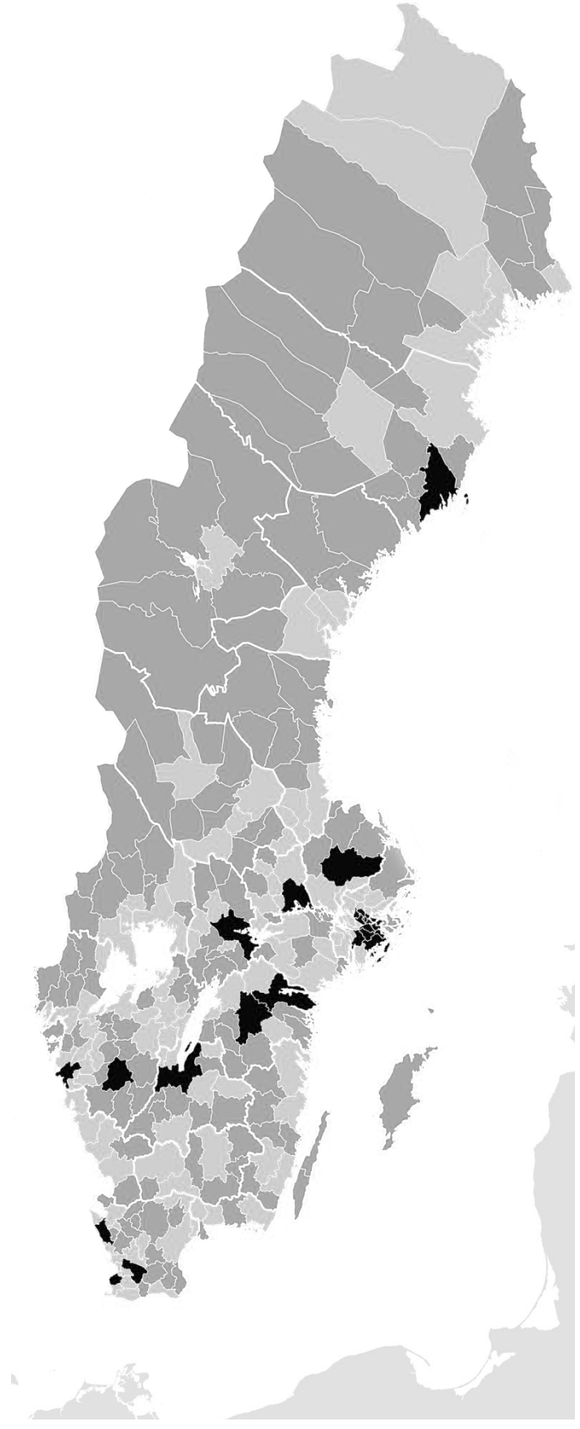


Fig 3.1 : Urban - Rural typology Sweden , 2018
Source : Eurostat and Nordregio

Urban regions *Intermediate regions* *Rural regions*

3.1 : CONTEXT

Sandared

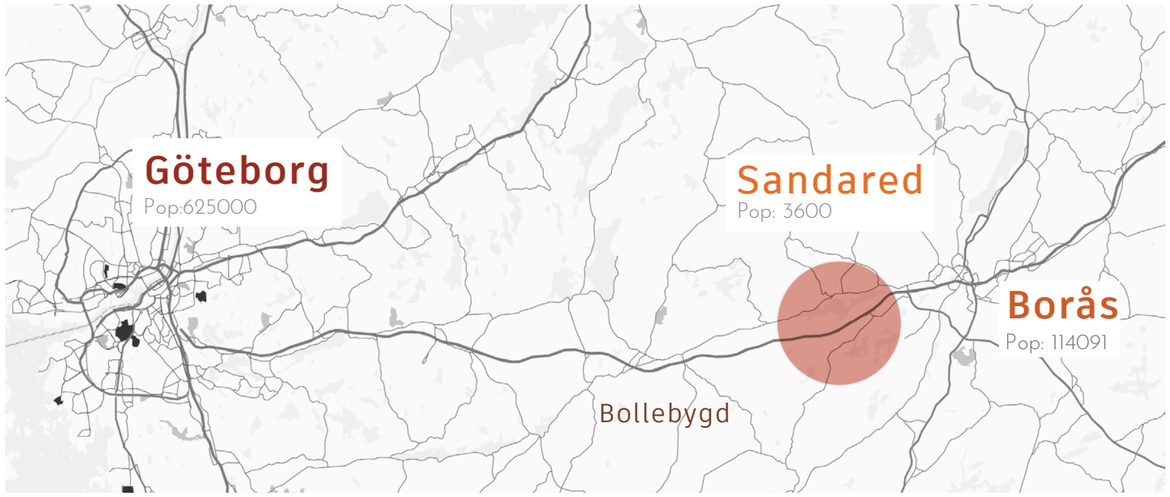


Fig 3.2 : Location - Sandared *Source: Google Maps*

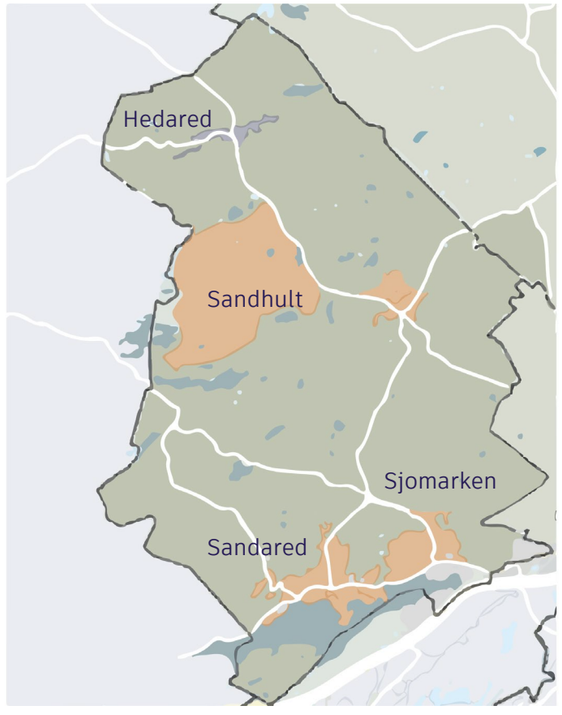


Fig 3.3 : Areas with access to services in Sandared
Source : Borås Municipality

The station town of Sandared, with a population of 3600 falls under the jurisdiction of Borås municipality. It is located 10km to the west of Borås main city and 55km from central Gothenburg.

The town can be accessed by both road and rail and shares connections with the neighbouring regions of Hedared, Sandhult, and Sjömarken. While Hedared is located 14km away, Sandhult is 7.5 km away from Sandared. It's closest neighbour however is Sjömarken, located 3km away and towards Borås main city. All regions are well connected by road and public bus services.

Out of its 3 neighbouring townships, analysis of historical maps indicates a slow but sure expansion of Sandared and Sjömarken towards each other, necessitating the need to consider Sandared in a larger context. Sandared has a larger share of amenities when compared to its neighbor, thus establishing an interdependent relationship and continuous flows between them. Nonetheless, both towns benefit from their proximity to Lake Viaredssjön and access to nature in abundance.

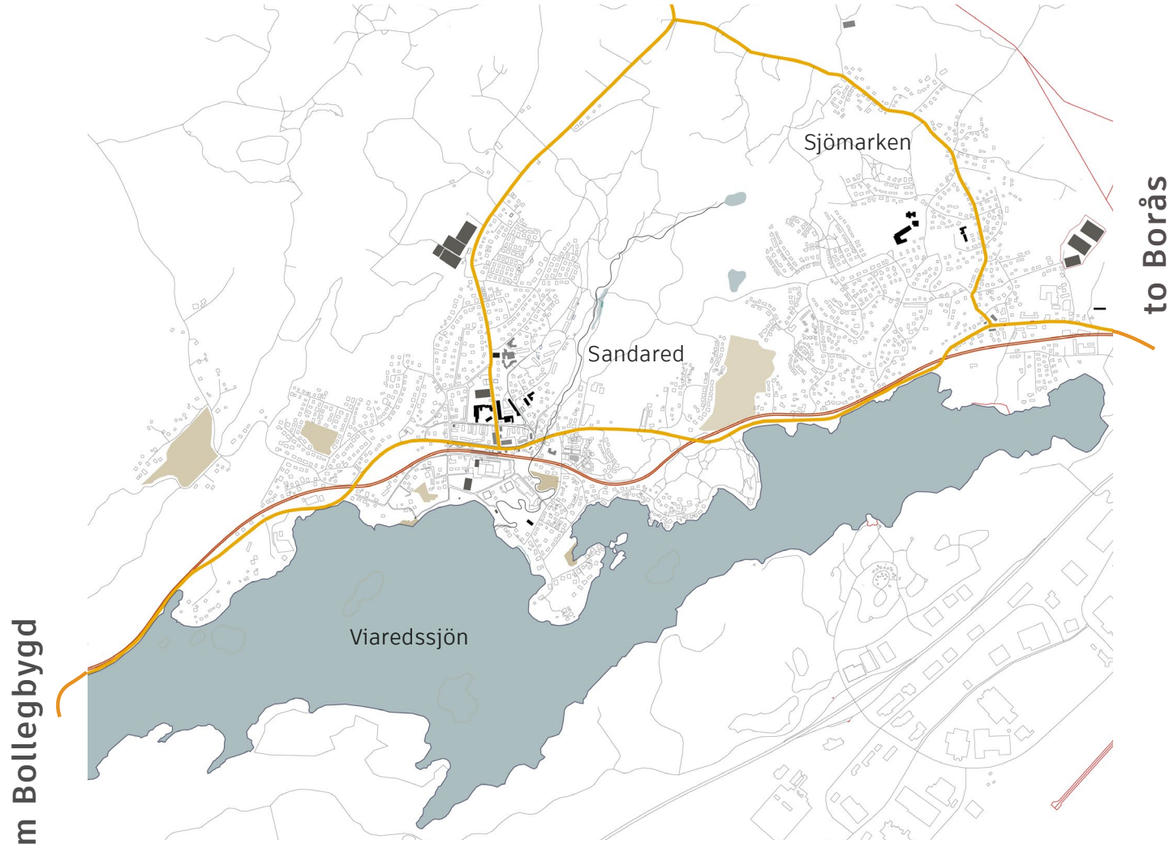


Fig 3.4 : Sandared and Sjömarken *Source : Lanntmäteriet*

Fig 3.5 : Viaredssjön *Source : Sandareds Intressföreningen*

Fig 3.6 : Green values *Source : Sandareds Intressföreningen*

While the Borås-Gothenburg railway and the Borås-Bollebygd road networks cutting through the town's geographic center, Sandared's notable features include adjacent natural forests and Lake Viaredssjön to the south. Viaredssjön's sandy shores and local forests are a popular leisure and recreation spot for both residents and visitors alike and are important assets to the town. Other local attractions include natural hiking trails and ski slopes. The region boasts thick vegetative covers and is surrounded by natural greenery. The presence of agricultural land is also noted in its periphery.

3.2 : HISTORY

Sandared

Fig 3.7 : Sandared from late 1950s

Source : Sandareds Intressföreningen

With evidence of habitation dating back to the Stone Age, the region was primarily agricultural farmland. Sandared is dotted with traces of its past like the old inn which was constructed in 1807 and is the oldest standing building today *(ThemeGrill, n.d)*. Although the region had long served as a rest stop for travelers, the construction of the Gothenburg-Borås road and railway in the late 1800s prompted development in the town *(Johanson, A. O. 1954)*. The town saw an increase in the population between 1920 and 1940 with people moving in due to increased ownership of automobiles *(Johanson, A. O. 1954)*.

The area's accessibility, workforce, and local resources began to draw in industries, which was followed by the construction of Sandaredskolan and other amenities *(Johanson, A. O. 1954)*. Amongst the various manufacturing plants, it was the ready made clothing and paper industries that were most prevalent, employing a predominantly local workforce *(Johanson, A. O. 1954)*.

The remains of the once-thriving industry buildings can still be seen in the town center as a part of Sandared's skyline.

1545

1800 - With frequent milestones put along the way, the route was frequented by travellers and horses

Sanderöd

Farming and agriculture were main occupations. With basket weaving and other village crafts of the day

1807

Sandareds Inn constructed

Food and Shelter provided to travelers and horses en route Göteborg or Borås

Fig 3.8 : Sandareds Inn

1808

1830

Gothenburg-Borås road

Fig 3.9 : Boråsvägen

Gothenburg-Borås railway

With an active train line, roads and pathways were overgrown with grass and weeds

1894

1895

Stationhuset

Built next to the railway line

Fig 3.10 : Stationhuset

Motorised transport

The decade saw an increase in cars and buses, clearing the roads.

1920

1930

Setting up of industries

Paper and ready made clothes were the flourishing industries with many employees

1940

Increased population

Fueled by industrialisation

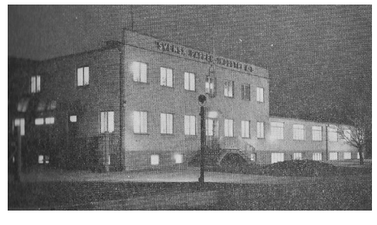


Fig 3.11 : Paper Industry

1950

- Sanddared skolan
- Magasin

The next few years saw a thriving residential town with many basic amenities

2020

Service town

?

Local perceptions about transitions in the local townscape was aptly captured by Anna-Lisa Ekelund, a resident of the late town of Viared. A collage was made based on the poem to express the transitioning identities of such contexts.

Fig 3.12 : Poem by Anna-Lisa Ekelund (Resident of Viared) - 1980s
Source : Collage - author,
Poem : (Museum of Viared, n.d.)

Så gör man en utflykt
i gamla spår,
om än i kvällstimman sena
och ser förändringens
djupa sår
och hur stad och bygd,
sej förena.....

Och flygfältet ser vi
har krymt ihop.
Där måste nån´
”Bitit i kanten”.
Man vill helst blunda
för nästa grop,
Fabriker för
hela slanten.

Vid badplatsen där,
uti ”Vi ckes” skog,
ligger samma stenar
vid stranden,
och albusken tycker
vi vuxit nog.
Vi känner på vattnet
med handen.

Så far vi tillbaka
och ser än mer,
hur allt är rivit och borta.
Vid ”Hagen” blott,
en allé man ser.
Ja, här kommer
bonden till korta.

Jo, vattnet är ljumt,
men svalkar så skönt
i denna kvällstimma, sena.
Vi vilar i gräset,
som trots torkan är grönt
och myggorna bits uppå bena´.

Hastigt vi packar,
ner baddräkt i bil.
Kvällsdopp är skönast
i världen.
Då sjön ligger stilla
och mjölk blivit fil,
den tar vi väl
med på färden.

“ Med vemod vi ser
på fabrik, vid fabrik
och parkeringar
i långa rader.
Man ser inte alls
någon väg som är lik,
den gamla.
-- Nån´måste fått spader!”

Vi söker ett sågverk
och hus för mission.
Men inte står de att finna
och där kolonilotter,
förr var passion,
där syns varken man
eller kvinna.

Så tar vi den kortaste
väg genom stan
och följer sen motorvägen.
Mot Ryssnäs och Boda,
och Viareds plan,
där förr jordbruksbygd,
var belägen.

Då vägen bär utför,
mot Västersjön,
vi ser kära ängar och diken.
Vi ser åker och äng
och vid nästa sväng,
ser vi sjön,
med den vackra viken.

Och flygfältet ser vi
har krymt ihop.
Där måste nån´
”Bitit i kanten”.
Man vill helst blunda
för nästa grop,
Fabriker för
hela slanten.

3.3 : TOWNSCAPE

Sandared

Fig 3.13 : Aerial view of Sandared *Source : Lantmäteriet*

Sandared's geographic center lies at the intersection of Göteborgsvägen and Alingsåsvägen. The junction is marked by the old station house, originally built in connection to the railway network along with partially occupied industrial premises in the backdrop. Existing land use is primarily residential with all basic amenities like a grocery store, schools, medical facilities, public transportation networks, and an active railway junction positioned along these corridors.

Historical maps have documented the region witnessing growth and expansion over the years.

Fig 3.14 : Sandared 1890 - 1897

Source : Lantmäteriet

Fig 3.15 : Sandared 1960

Source : Lantmäteriet

Fig 3.16 : Sandared 1975

Source : Lantmäteriet

Fig 3.17 : Areal view of Sandared center *Source : Borås Municipality*

Single-family villas are a recurring theme in the residential landscape with the tallest building located close to the station house being 3 floors high. There are no high-rise constructions and the town's skyline is characterized by single or double-storeyed buildings with gable roofs and large horizontally spanning industrial facades.

3.4 : DATA ANALYSIS

Research Documentation

Population :

Sandared's population was divided into the following groups for the study (Fig 3.18):

01. Ages 0 - 5 (infants and toddlers)
02. Ages 6 - 17 (school-going youth)
03. Ages 18 - 64 (working adult population)
04. Ages 64 and up (pensioners and seniors)

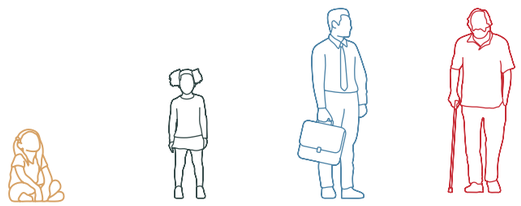


Fig 3.18 : Population division

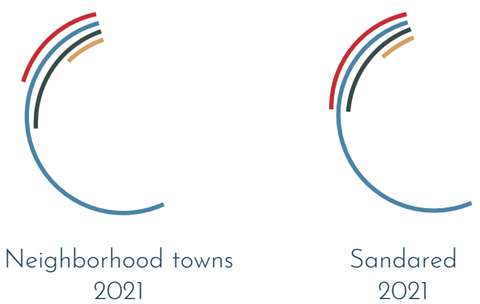


Fig 3.19 : Population distribution (Borås Stad, n.d.)

Analysis revealed that 53% of the total population belonged to group 3 (Ages 18-64), followed by group 4 (Aged 64+) as the second biggest group (Fig 3.19). Furthermore, a closer look revealed that within group 3, people aged 45 to 64 made up 27% of the town's total population.

A combined population analysis of Hedared, Sandhult, and Sjömarken yielded similar results, with group 3 dominating the graph (Fig 3.19)

A comparison of the population over the last ten years from 2012 to 2022 from the municipality's records revealed a steady growth with group 4 accounting for the highest percentage of increase at close to 30% *(Borås Stad, n.d.)*.

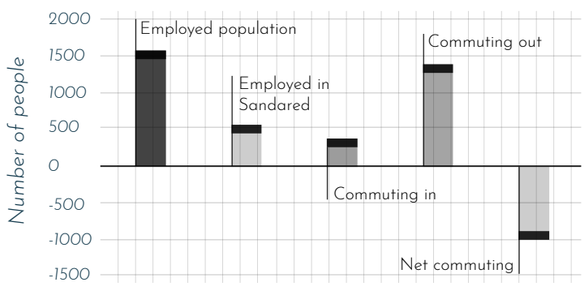
Cultural demography :

Although this study will not be focusing on cultural demography, it is important to note that of the total population, only 332 people were born outside Sweden with the same number being 253 in 2012 *(Borås Stad, n.d.)*.

Employment :

Statistical data from municipal surveys indicates that 60% of the resident population aged 16 and up is employed with jobs in and around Sandared (Graph 3.20).

Without taking into account groups 1 and 2, 953 people in Sandared are unemployed, with 80% of this population being pensioners based on the age group split. While some people work within the town, records show that approximately 50% of the total population commute to work, with the majority belonging to group 03.



Graph 3.20 : Employed population(2020) (Borås Stad, n.d.)

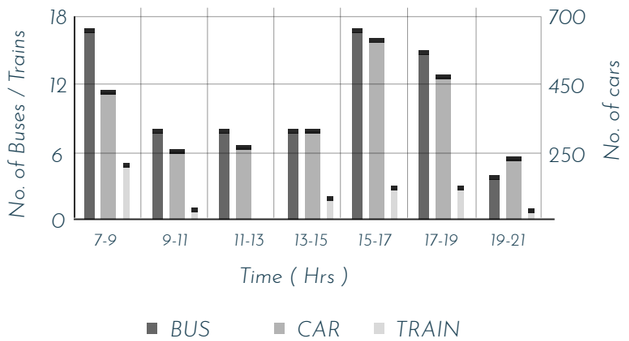
Transit :

Sandared can be reached from the nearest town by train, bus, car, or bike and is connected with public transport networks.

Analyzing traffic data from Traffikverket's data base moving through the town's main roads, namely Alingsåsvägen and Göteborgsvägen helped identify peak traffic presence in the area during the course of a day *(Trafikverket, n.d.)*.

Trains to and from Bollebygd, Borås, and Göteborg stop at Sandared station and are currently operated by both SJ and Västtågen, while public buses are operated by Västtrafik. Analyzing different train and bus timetables also helped arrive at an understanding of traffic presence *(Travel Planner, n.d.)*.

To draw inferences, data concerning the movement of cars, trains, and buses in the area were overlaid. The process revealed that transit stops are activated between the hours of 7-9, 15-17, and 17-19 and that moving car traffic along the routes follows a similar pattern. Although not completely devoid of traffic otherwise, there is a relative increase during the previously stated hours(Graph 3.21).



Graph 3.21 : Transit Traffic (Trafikverket, n.d.) (Travel Planner, n.d.)

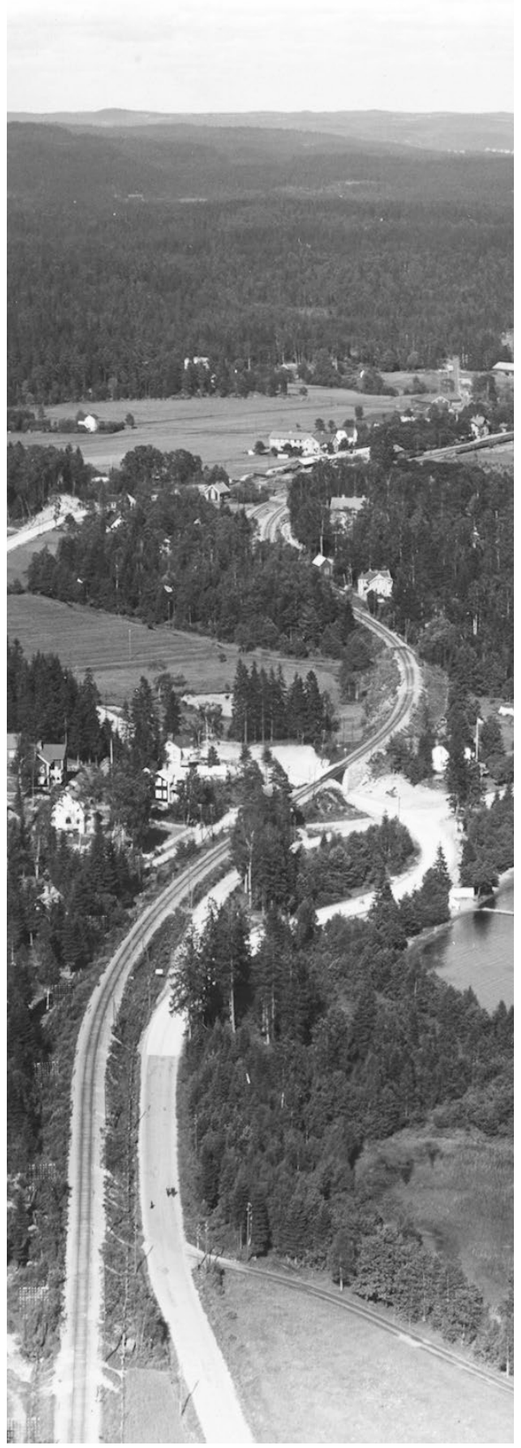


Fig 3.22 : Sandared 1942
Source : Sandareds Intressföreningen

Fig 3.23 : Routes to City center (Borås Stad, n.d.-b)

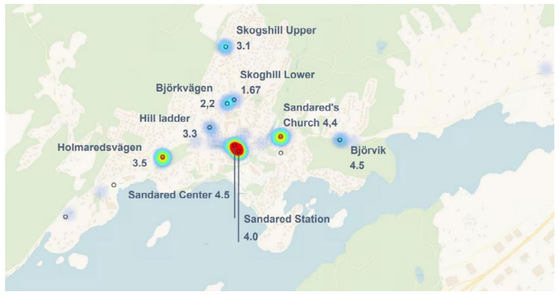


Fig 3.24 : Preferred transit stops (Borås Stad, n.d.-b)

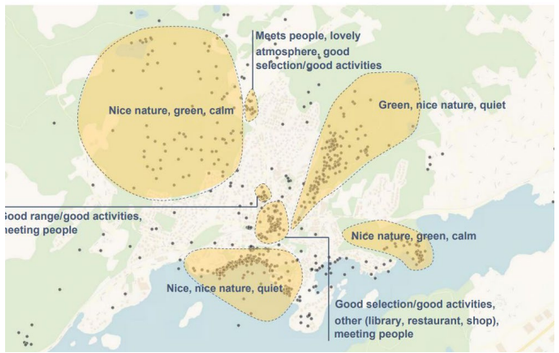


Fig 3.25 : Preferred areas (Borås Stad, n.d.-b)

Fig 3.26 : Sandared described in 3 words (Borås Stad, n.d.-b)

Local perceptions :

Borås municipality conducted a survey in December 2020 using a common questionnaire, and while it was mostly answered by local residents as the main stakeholders, inputs from secondary stakeholders including visitors who use the town's services were also documented. A total of 400 responses were recorded *(Borås Stad, n.d.-b)*.

With a collection of flows, the area marked by the old industrial premises and station house at the intersection of Alingsåsvägen and Göteborgsvägen can be identified as Sandared's centrum (Fig 3.22) (Fig 3.27)

Of all public transportation stops, the bus stops at Sandared Centrum are the most frequented (Fig 3.24)

The area referred to as the Centrum is both liked and disliked by residents. It is liked for its connectivity and amenities but disliked due to its lack of engagement and activity (Fig 3.25)

When asked to describe SANDARED in 3 words, Nature, Calm, and Water stand out the most (Fig 3.26). A variety of requests and opinions were recorded regarding what features or activities would be desired in the area and the most frequently requested items were a cafe, restaurant, meeting places, social activities, and greenery *(Borås Stad, n.d.-b)*.

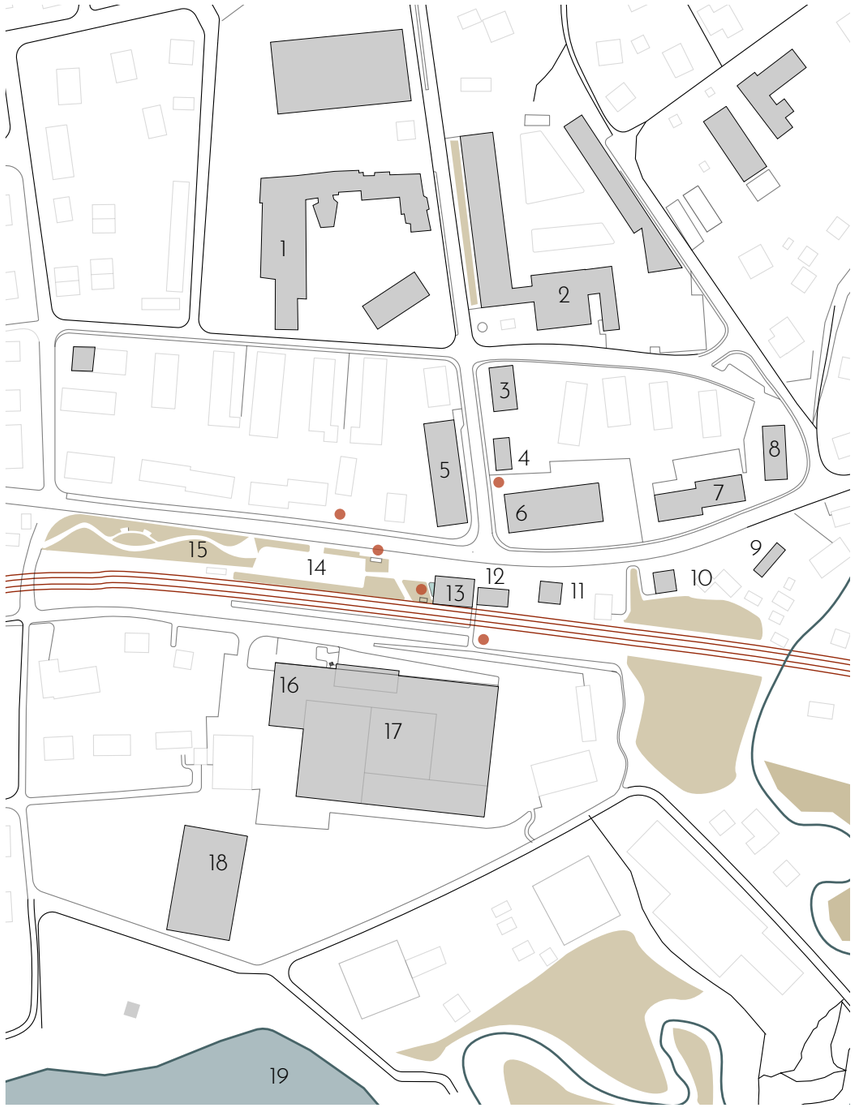


Fig 3.27 : Land-use and amenities at Sandared Centrum *Source : Lantmäteriet*

01. Sandaredskolan
02. Sandgärdskolan
03. Frisör
04. Pizzeria
05. Candy shop, Bakery , Senior center
06. ICA Maxi
07. Apoteket
08. Blommor
09. The Old Inn
10. Restaurant
11. Pizzeria
12. The Old Stationhouse
13. The Old Storage shed
14. Parking Lot
15. Sandaredsparken
16. Training center
17. Industrial Premises
18. Tennis club
19. Viaredssjön

Railway track

Bus and train stops

Fig 3.28 : Stationhuset
Source : Sandareds Intressföreningen

Fig 3.29 : Senior center
Source : Sandareds Intressföreningen

Fig 3.30 : Magasin
Source : Sandareds Intressföreningen

3.4 : DATA ANALYSIS

Mapping stays and flows

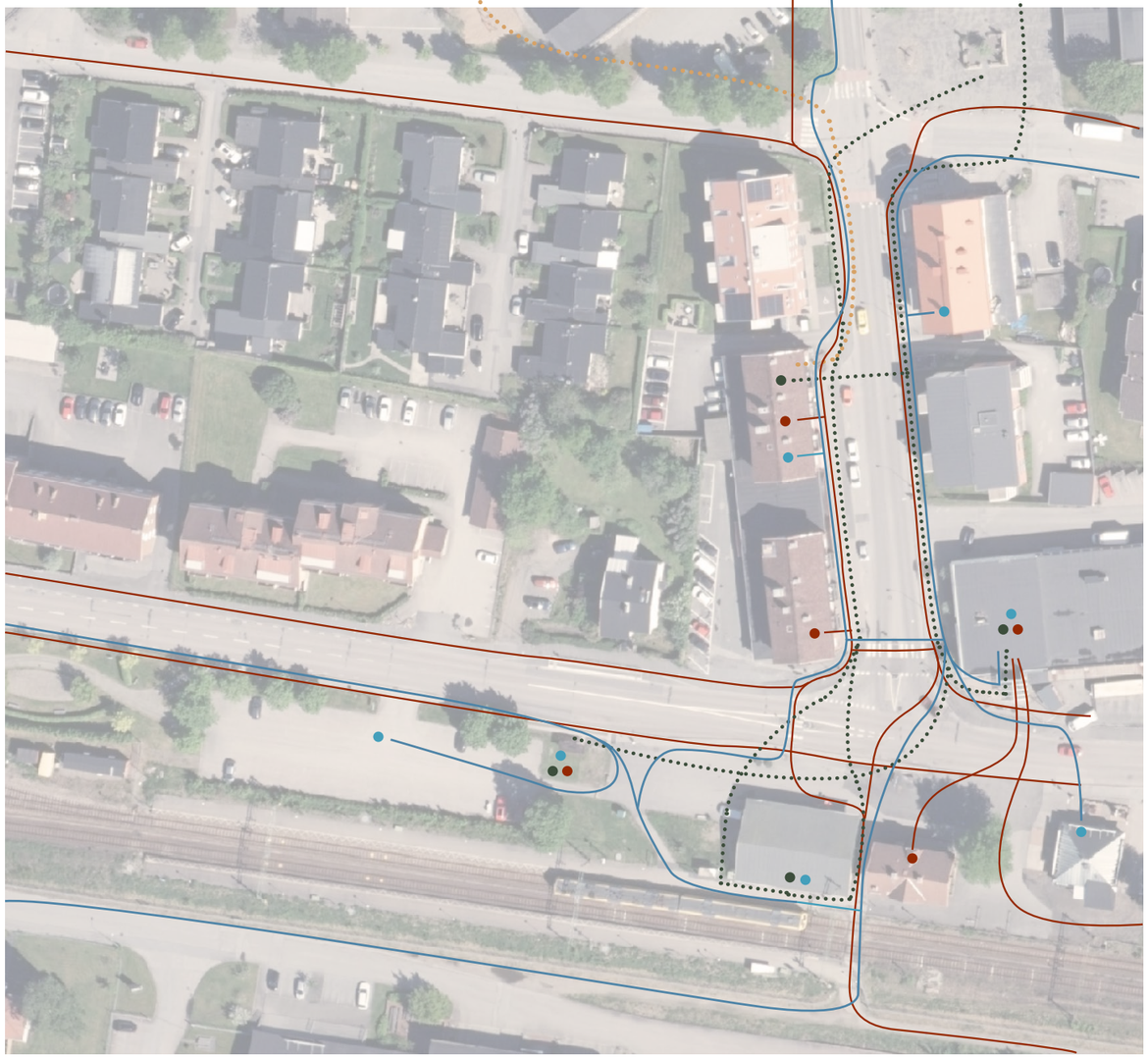


Fig 3.31 : Stays and flows at Sandared Centrum

Based on the data analysis, Sandared Centrum was recognised as the core of the town's socioeconomic activity, and the area around the central junction was identified as the region for further investigation for the thesis project. As a part of the qualitative analysis, stays, movement flows, interaction patterns (or lack thereof), key attractors, and so on in the area were noted (Fig 3.31).

The area was observed from 8:00 - 18:00 on two separate weekdays and one weekend. Observations were noted during the winter and the area in front of ICA facing the junction was chosen as the main vantage point,the results of which have been visually represented in the figure to the right (Fig 3.32)

Sandareds Centrum witnesses a fluctuating presence through the course of a day, dominated by different age groups (Fig 3.32) A buzz of activity among all age groups can be seen in the mornings after which the area is occupied by the senior population with students from the local school being present at intervals for short durations. Lunch hours between 12 and 1 show an increase in activity, with adults visiting local food joints and taking breaks to enjoy the sun and fresh air (Fig 3.32).

An overall lull is observed during the hours following lunch with activity picking up again in the evenings as the commuter population returns to town (Fig 3.32). While stays and flows were mapped with respect to the time of the day, motivations for said flows and presence were also documented.

Bus stops are the main areas that foster prolonged stays and verbal interaction, with people arriving 10 - 15 minutes before a scheduled bus (Fig 3.31).
Another common attraction is the nearby grocery store (ICA at the intersection. Similarly, while bus stops cater to people of all ages, some shops and facilities in the area attract specific age groups (Fig 3.31).

The senior center caters to the senior population while the local candy store is dominated by school students (Fig 3.31). Similarly, the local bakery next door is rarely visited by children, whereas seniors and adults frequent it throughout the day (Fig 3.31).

The old Stationhouse, which is currently a salon and a massage parlor, is visited occasionally, and the area around the old storage shed is frequented during short breaks by both students and adults (Fig 3.31). The pizzeria near the railway track is popular for take-out, whereas the pizzeria next to the school is a local favorite that is open during the evenings and hosts social events.

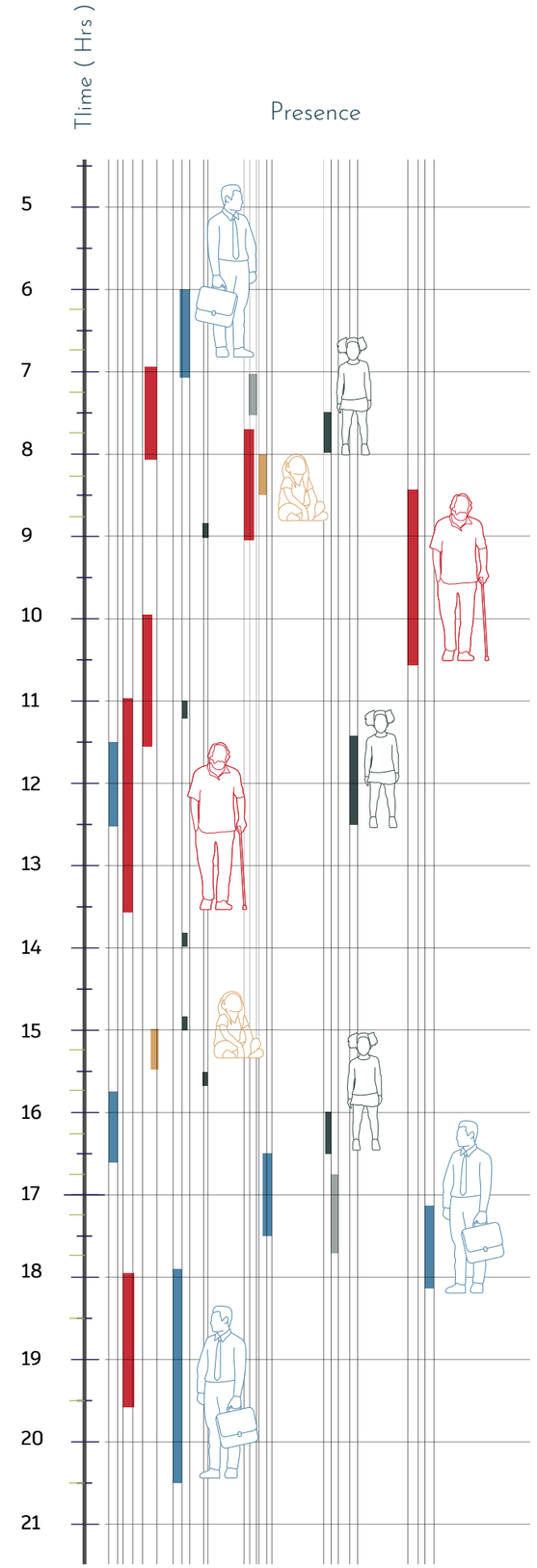


Fig 3.32 : Social presence at Sandared Centrum

3.5 : FINDINGS AND INFERENCES

In reference to the theoretical framework

With a population predominantly native to Sweden, Sandared in the last few years has witnessed an increase in the senior population. The steadily rising population and multiple interest groups and on-line forums unique to the town indicate the presence of a strong and active community with participation, opinions, and interest in the town's development.

The statistical data aligned with first-hand observations which showcased a varying social presence in the area over the course of a day.

Owing to the town population's commuting trends, while a large section of the adult population commutes out of Sandared for work, children, youth and the senior population compensate for the lack of social presence in the town during work hours.

On non-working days and holidays, however, it is reasonable to expect more members of all groups to be present. While various age groups occupied the area at different times of the day, and although there were overlaps, little interaction was observed among them. This goes against the people's opinions from the survey which indicated an increased desire for interactions in the area. Thus indicating the lack of adequate opportunities for social interaction at Sandared Centrum today.

In terms of experience and perceptions, the community shares a common connection and pride in the area's natural greenery, lake, and calm values. The strong visual presence of the Stationhuset with its historic significance and iconic red and yellow facade renders a strong visual identity for the area.

Situated adjacent to this, the old storage shed with its distinct form and colour is equally identifiable due to the town's industrial history. The same can be said for the old industrial premises with its unique yellow brick facade and windows that form the backdrop for the area in general.

The old inn of Sandared, a short distance away from the center has retained its original form and although pushed back from the main road, contributes to the overall visual landscape. However, the area in general is viewed as decrepit and boring with a lack of engaging activities by its residents. The visual importance of the Stationhuset is overshadowed by its private program, thus unable to establish a strong connection with the entire population.

The same goes for the storage shed that despite its central location is used as a private store room. Although located in close proximity to the lake and lush green woods, Sandared Centrum by itself does not have a visual connection with these elements. The general view is dominated by car parks and asphalt instead. Frequented by both local residents and commuters, the area in general lacks a landmark aesthetic that visually conveys the town's local values.

The busy road and intersection significantly influence the spatial experience of the area. Combined with the presence of the railway station and its long platform, the area is functionally programmed to cater to mobility and transit. This is also reflected in the centrally located car park next to the storage shed.

The continuous stretch of road and railway track create an automatic spatial divide in the movement with busy road traffic during peak work hours corresponding with the average Swedish workday from Monday to Friday.

Current functions in the area are user-specific, exclusively targeting specific age groups. With a high presence of both pedestrian and vehicular flows at the Centrum, movement in the area is predominantly goal-based and the daily activity graph can be directly attributed to train timings, bus schedules, and local school hours.

Additionally, the larger proportion of commercial and retail premises when compared to public services and amenities also influences the presence (or absence) of people in the area. For example, the large number of associations and interest groups in the town lack community spaces and common areas to gather.

Transit stops like the bus stop and railway station along with commercial and retail outlets are key points of prolonged stays. Sandared's Park, occupying a considerable stretch of land, while introducing greenery is largely unprogrammed.

To summarise, tying back to the theoretical framework identified in chapter 3 (Fig 2.2), collected data can be categorised under social , spatial and visual factors.

Results from the exercise are illustrated in the figure below (Fig 3.33)

PLACE IDENTITY

	SOCIAL	SPATIAL	VISUAL
Theoretical Framework	Place identity is dynamic and socially constructed • social interactions • social capital • social cohesion	Place identity is a result of multiple narratives in physical space • inclusive • accommodative • spatial experience • responsive	Place identity is defined by visual symbolism and locally identifiable aesthetics. • local vegetation • cultural symbolism • historical buildings
Data Analysis	Lack of inter-generational social interactions Varying social presence Low social connect due to commuting population	Exclusive and user-specific programming Goal-based and transit oriented movements Lack of community spaces	Presence of historical building stock unique to the region Low representation of natural elements local to the town

Fig 3.33 : Data tabulated against theoretical framework

3.6 : DESIGN STRATEGY

In reference to the theoretical framework and case study

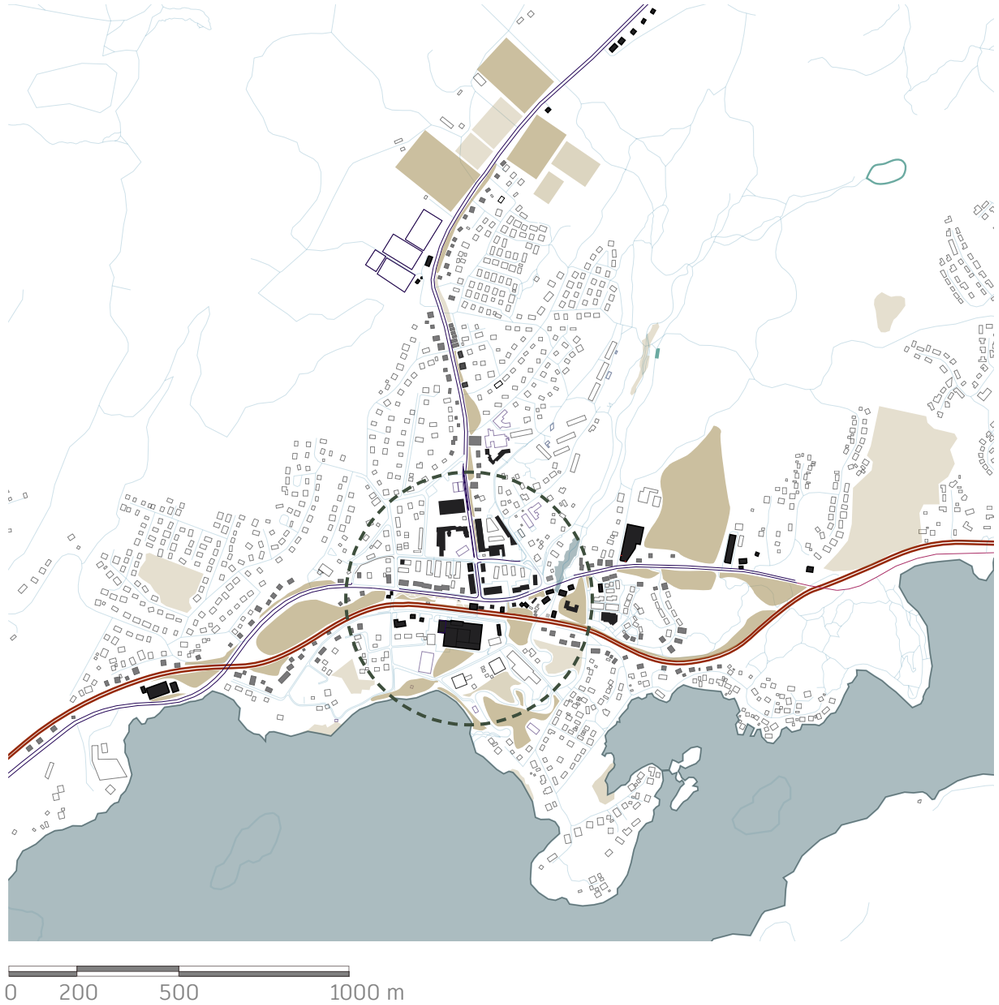


Fig 3.34 : Sandared as visually perceived by commuters on rail and road.

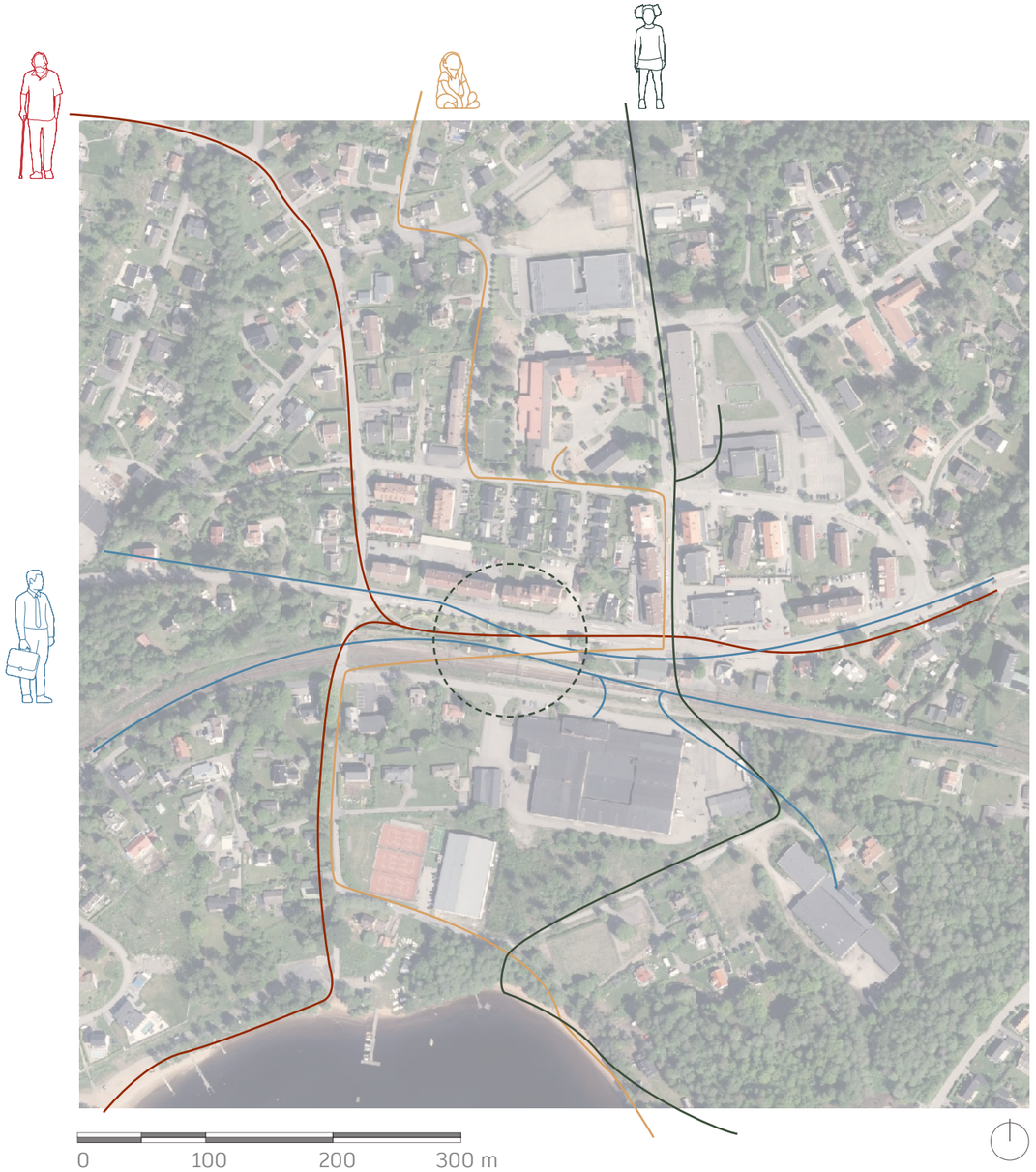


Fig 3.35 : Sandared Centrum to be used as a common attraction for all stakeholders resulting in modified movement flows and increased opportunities for social interactions (both planned and unplanned).

It is evident from the data analysis that there is a social, spatial and visual disconnect between people's aspirations and the current configuration of Sandareds Centrum. Using Identity as a tool to bridge this divide can result in a resilient and inclusive solution to the problem in the long run. Given that Sandared can be classified as an intermediate town and borrows attributes from both its rural and urban neighbours, it was therefore important to find the right balance between the two to resonate with its direct and indirect stakeholders. In response, design strategies were formulated and categorised as follows -

Social :

Interventions in the area must accommodate different levels of sociability by ensuring both individual and collective social opportunities. This can be achieved by channeling movements to maximise chance interactions and increase opportunities for social exchange among both residents and passerby crowds *(Perrault et al., 2020)*. The town's unbalanced social presence can be addressed by motivating increased and prolonged stays by introducing inclusive, intergenerational, programmed and un-programmed spaces.

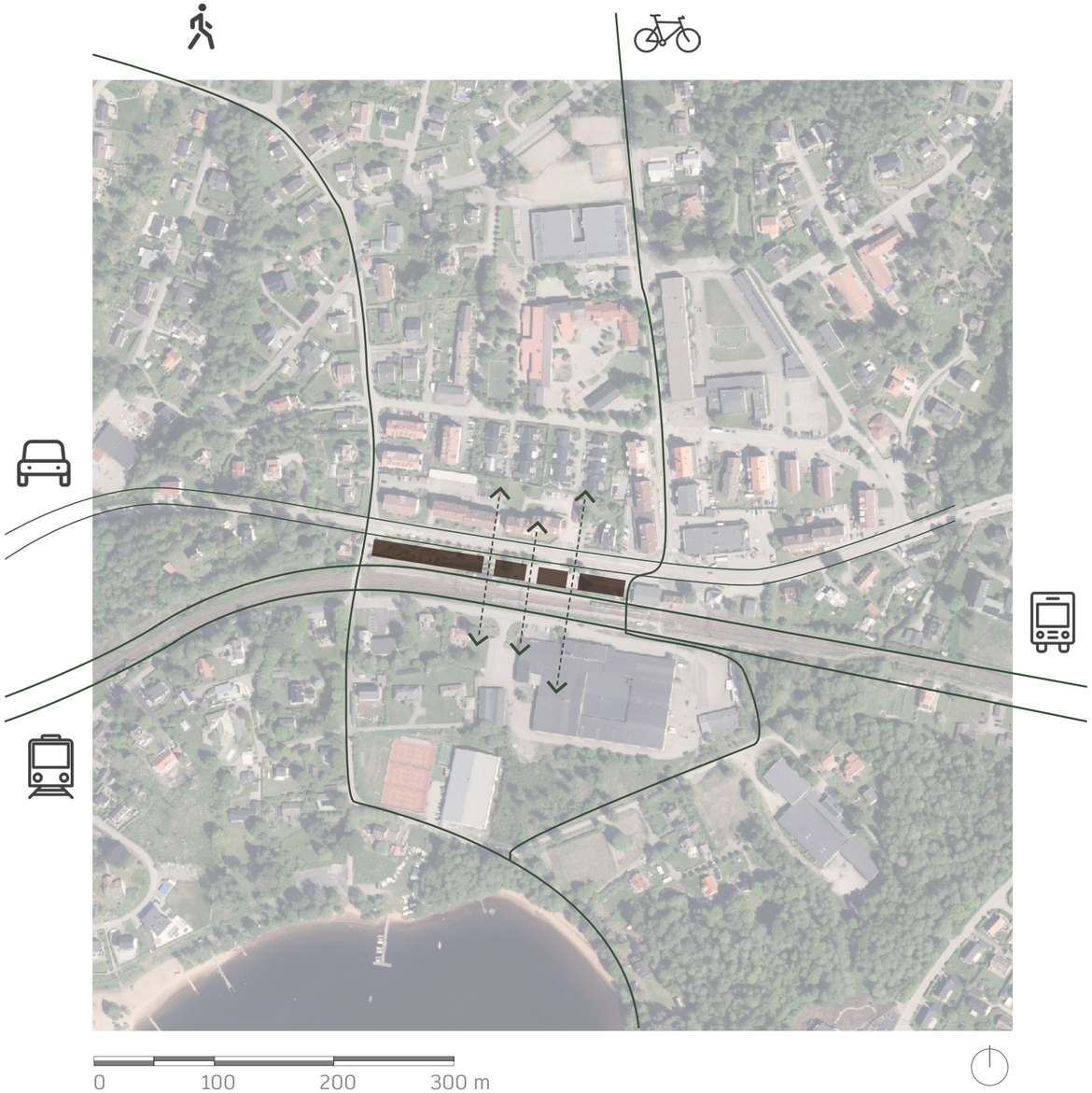


Fig 3.36 : Spatial configuration of Sandared Centrum to respond to the varying needs of the different user groups and mobility networks of varying speeds. The Centrum is also used to bridge the existing spatial gap between the two sides of the road and railway line

Fig 3.37 : With a high visibility due to its location ,the visual aesthetic of Sandared Centrum can incorporate local greenery and water as a reflection of the town's strong connection with the lake. Aesthetic elements like the structural form, material and colour to be adopted from the Stationhuset and Magasin.

Spatial :

In response to the town's varying social rhythm, opportunities for both long and short engagements can help capture both moving and resident crowds by bringing in a balance between mobility and liveability.

This can be achieved by introducing adaptable and multi-purpose spaces that can cater to a larger variety of user groups through optimised space allocation and user appropriation. A balance of open and closed spaces can help with this, ensuring activity and a vibrant atmosphere throughout the day.

Visual :

Although the area has its fair share of visual markers and landmarks, the degree of likeability and perceptions of locals must be taken into consideration (Nasar, 1990).

A familiar visual aesthetic can be established by retaining and re-purposing existing cultural and historical markers to connect past identities while also enabling future aspirations. For this, locally inspired resources including both built and unbuilt values are considered.

Fig 3.38 : Sandareds Centrum
Source : Sandareds Intressföreningen

Strategies and responses were then classified and tabulated against the theoretical framework and data collected (Fig 2.2)(Fig 3.33). A summary of the same has been illustrated in the table to the right (Fig 3.39). In line with the theoretical framework,introducing a framework for stakeholders to engage with social, spatial and visual elements could result in a greater sense of belonging and ownership of the area in question. Methods to further implement these were then tested through a design proposal.

	PLACE IDENTITY		
	SOCIAL	SPATIAL	VISUAL
Theoretical Framework	Place identity is dynamic and socially constructed • social interactions • social capital • social cohesion	Place identity is a result of multiple narratives in physical space • inclusive • accommodative • spatial experience • responsive	Place identity is defined by visual symbolism and locally identifiable aesthetics. • local vegetation • cultural symbolism • historical buildings
Data Analysis	Lack of inter-generational social interactions Varying social presence Low social connect due to commuting population	Exclusive and user-specific programming Goal-based and transit oriented movements Lack of community spaces	Presence of historical building stock unique to the region Low representation of natural elements local to the town
Design Strategies	Provide opportunities for social participation at both individual and collective levels. Channel movements to increase opportunities for chance interactions.	Introduce responsive spatial interventions that can be appropriated by local communities Introduce spatial configurations that support both long and short stays Provide inclusive spaces accommodating different age groups	Retain and re-purpose existing historical markers of built and un-built stock Use local culture and history to represent the past, support the present, and enable the town's future aspirations.

Fig 3.39 : Tabulated design strategies with respect to theoretical framework

04

IMPLEMENTATION

Designing Sandared Centrum

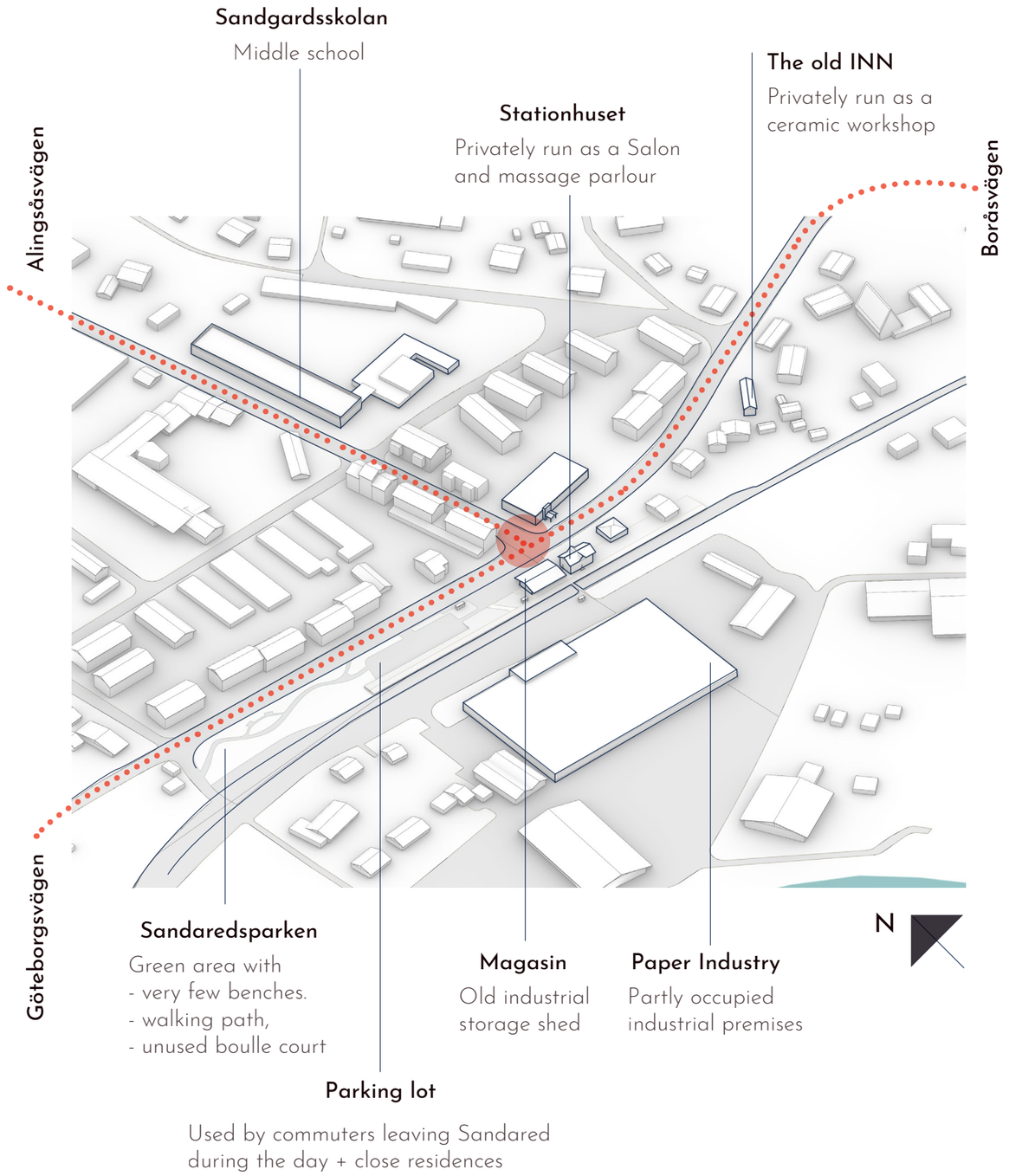


Fig 4.1 : An overview of Sandared Centrum today

4.1 : SITE STUDY

Physical factors

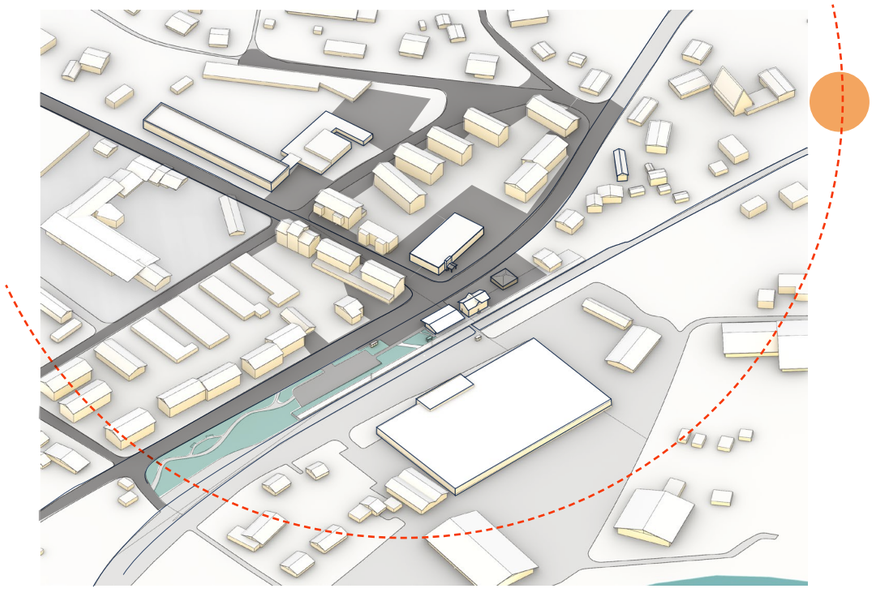


Fig 4.2 : Sun study and materiality

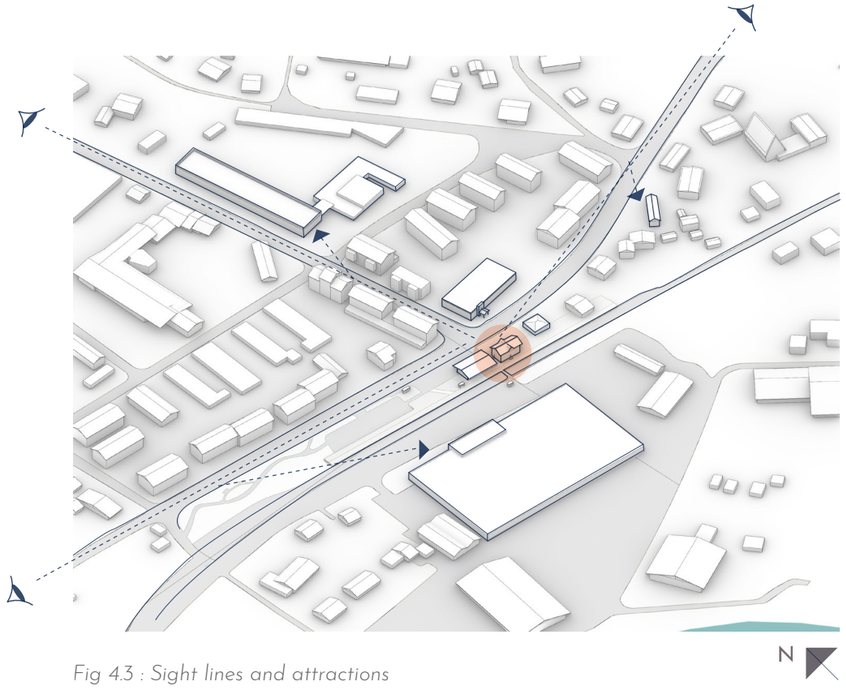


Fig 4.3 : Sight lines and attractions

Fig 4.4 : View of the existing Stationhuset and Magasin from Boråsvägen towards Göteborgsvägen.
Source : Borås Municipality

Fig 4.5 : Aerial view of the selected site *Source : Lantmäteriet*

Fig 4.6 : View of the partially occupied industrial premises and railway track as seen from the railway station.
Source : Borås Municipality

4.2 : DESIGN PROPOSAL

Sandared Hjärta

Fig 4.7 : Aerial view of the proposed design intervention

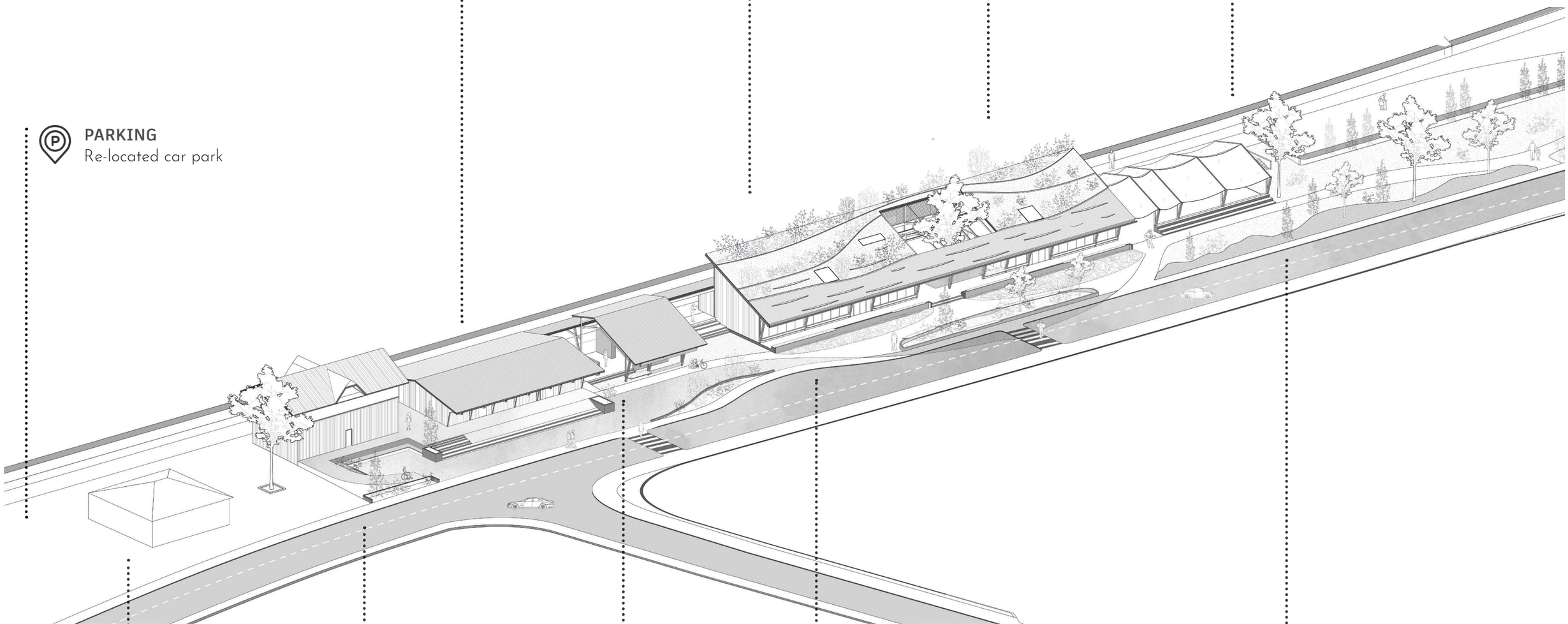
PARKING
Re-located car park

MEETING SPACE
Magasin re-purposed as a common meeting space for the community

FRITIDSGÅRD + CO-WORK
Structure with dynamic green roof as an activity space for all age groups

LUNCH KITCHEN + PUB
Structure with dynamic green roof as a common pub and lunch kitchen

MULTI-PURPOSE STAGE
Semi open area with a retractable roof to host events such as markets , school fairs etc.



PIZZA HOUSE
Existing Pizzeria

CAFE
Stationhuset re-purposed as cafe

REST STOP
Rest stop with services and waiting areas for transit

RE-LOCATED BUS STOP
Existing bus stop moved and integrated with the waiting area for the train

LANDSCAPE BUFFERS
Bio -swales with integrated seating form a buffer towards the busy road

The design considers the linear strip of land sandwiched between Göteborgsvägen and the railway track (Fig 4.5). The proposal uses a transformation strategy to preserve existing structures and pathways while also introducing new connections and reinforcing current ones.

To this extent, in addition to the Stationhuset, Magasin, and Sandaredsparken, four additional structures have been conceived for the area. Following existing aesthetics and from a sustainable perspective, wood is chosen as the main material for construction.

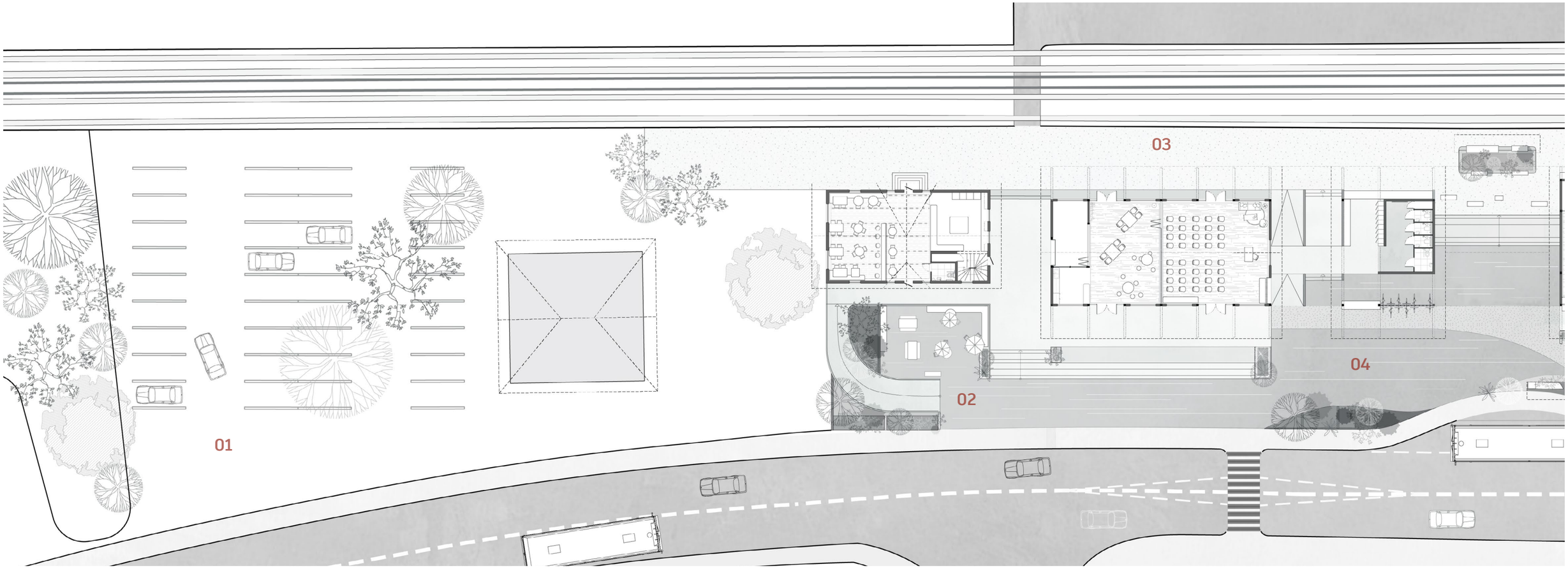


Fig 4.8 : Part Site Plan (1) - Sandareds Hjärta

01. By altering existing buildings and orienting newly proposed structures towards both the railway track and road network, the design ensures direct sight lines and accessibility between both sides of the town.

The existing parking lot in the middle of the site is moved closer to the pizzeria, accommodating more centrally located public activities.

02. The station house's previous salon and massage center is relocated to the present senior center across the street, making room for Sandared's first cafe. Through this, the iconic image of the station house is preserved while catering to a frequent and more diverse user base.

While a grander staircase and access ramp mark the entrance to the otherwise modest structure, outdoor seating and benches allow for spillover on warm and sunny days. Changes in flooring material allow the space outside to be used even when the cafe is closed, creating a vibrant outdoor setting.

03. The design sees potential for the centrally located Magasin which is currently used as a private storage facility to better serve the local community. Re-programming the space to function as a flexible meeting space, and opening existing doors on both sides strengthens connections and creates a more extroverted framework.

The addition of a common platform connected to the newly proposed cafe improves both accessibility and visibility.

04. Next, a rest stop connected to the Magasin through a common roof and directed at the commuting population is proposed.
Following a similar architectural language, it houses essential services such as public toilets, lockers, and bike racks. The space also functions as a common transit stop for both the train and bus passengers on opposite sides. Creating appealing transit stops and providing bike racks in the vicinity enhance sustainable mobility choices, thereby encouraging the use of public transportation. Connected by a common roof, the enclosure is flanked by open spaces which retain connections to both platforms and include seating options, stairs, and access ramps.

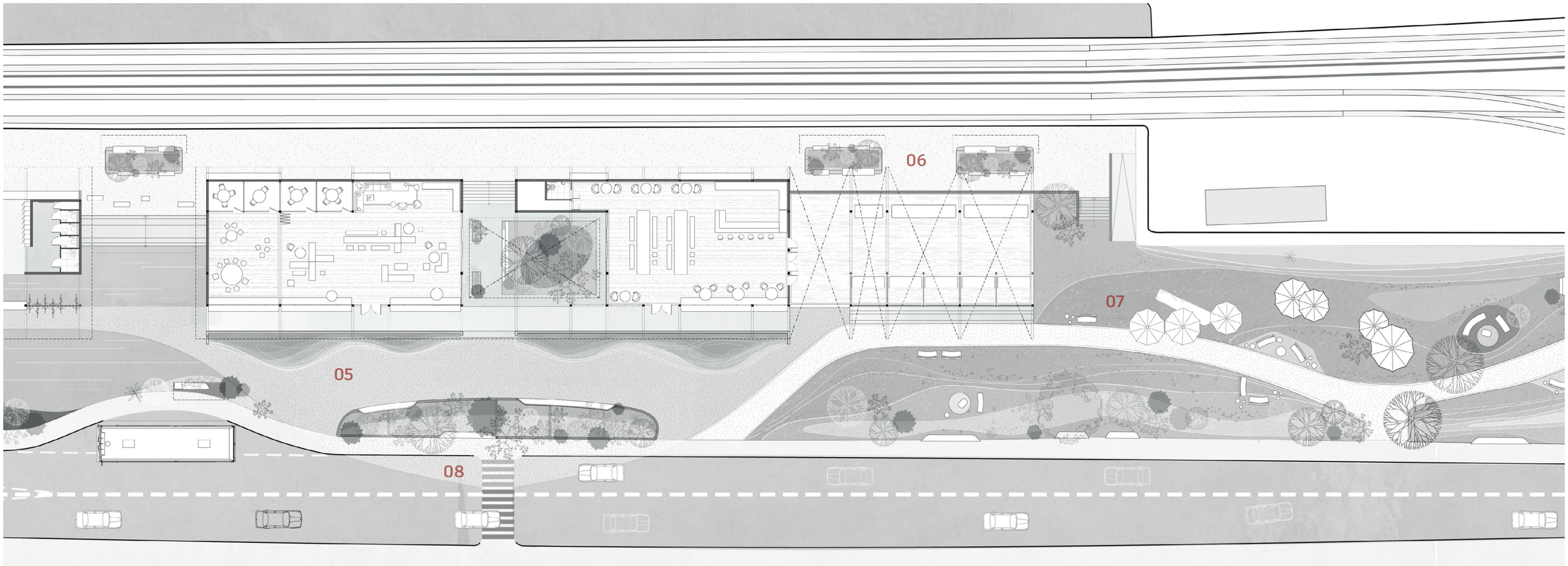


Fig 4.9 : Part Site Plan (2)- Sandareds Hjärta

05. At the center of the intervention lies the main structure that houses a co-working space that doubles as a Fritidsgård for all age groups, a lunch kitchen, and a pub while also defining a grand outdoor space. While the facility serves as a co-working space during regular business hours with a mix of open and closed workspaces, it also serves as a recreational space with the possibility of conducting workshops and other group activities.

The two programmed enclosures are linked by a common roof and share the same architectural language as the Magasin and rest stop. While the extended roof runs continuously along the railway platform, it is broken at strategic points towards the main road. Incorporating locally distinct natural elements, a dynamic green roof is proposed that channels rainwater into catchment areas along the central square.

Finding a balance between open and closed spaces, the structure, through a common central courtyard, ensures a direct connection to the railway platform.

06. Adjacent to the structure, a retractable roof connected to the pub forms the ceiling for a multi-purpose platform. The space has no permanent walls and with direct access from the pub , allows for extended outdoor seating. Apart from this, the space doubles as a community stage for music events, markets, open workshops, fairs, and celebrating other local talents and festivities. It also offers the option to be used as a play area by kids and the youth of the area.

Lastly, connections to Sandaredsparken are strengthened through the addition of new public social spaces in place of the current car park.

07. Original walkways and flora are preserved, with the addition of landscape buffers that create noise and traffic barriers from the road to ensure safety. Similarly, landscape buffers and bio-swales are introduced along the length of the busy road to capture storm water run-off while at the same time defining the spaces within.

08. Traffic calming strategies are applied through pavement treatments that are extended over some parts of the existing road along with the introduction of a new zebra-crossing. Different types of stone pavings used for pathways within the space introduce a sense of dynamism while also doubling as way-finding tools.

05
RESULTS
Sandared Hjärta

The design proposal, through its combination of open and closed, active and passive, formal and informal, programmed and un-programmed spaces tries to seek a balance and provide opportunities for increased social interaction and social capital that is inclusive of different user groups. In this process, it creates a framework that enables the local community to define the local identity of Sandared by interacting with its social, spatial, and visual qualities. The framework, in its capacity, aims to represent the town's past, support its present needs and accommodate future aspirations.

Evaluating the design proposal against the theoretical framework and design strategies identified earlier, the following outcomes were noted -

SOCIAL FACTORS

In contrast to the current salon and massage parlor, introducing a more public function in the Stationhuset allows a more diversified user group to interact with the premises. With an active program that runs throughout the day, the cafe not only attracts the commuting workforce during peak hours between 7-9 and 17-19 but also local residents. It serves as a meeting point and fika stop for passers-by and local communities. The combination of outdoor and indoor seating options allows for varying degrees of sociability, all of which enable social identity.

The configuration of the Magasin as a meeting space provides a common platform for different interest groups to engage and encourages the formation of new ones, thus enabling a strong social capital. Similarly, the combination of formal and informal social spaces in the main structure gives all age groups a chance to participate and engage under one roof throughout the day. To that end, housing a co-working space motivates commuter crowds to stay back and establish stronger connections with the town and its people. The same idea is carried through to the bar and kitchen, which comes alive in the afternoon, catering to the local working population, and then functions as a pub in the evening, offering a space for socialising and relaxing.

Fig 5.8 : Interior view of the Fritidsgård that enables adaptability and accommodates multiple spatial identities through different spatial configurations. The wooden modular structural framework enables flexibility.

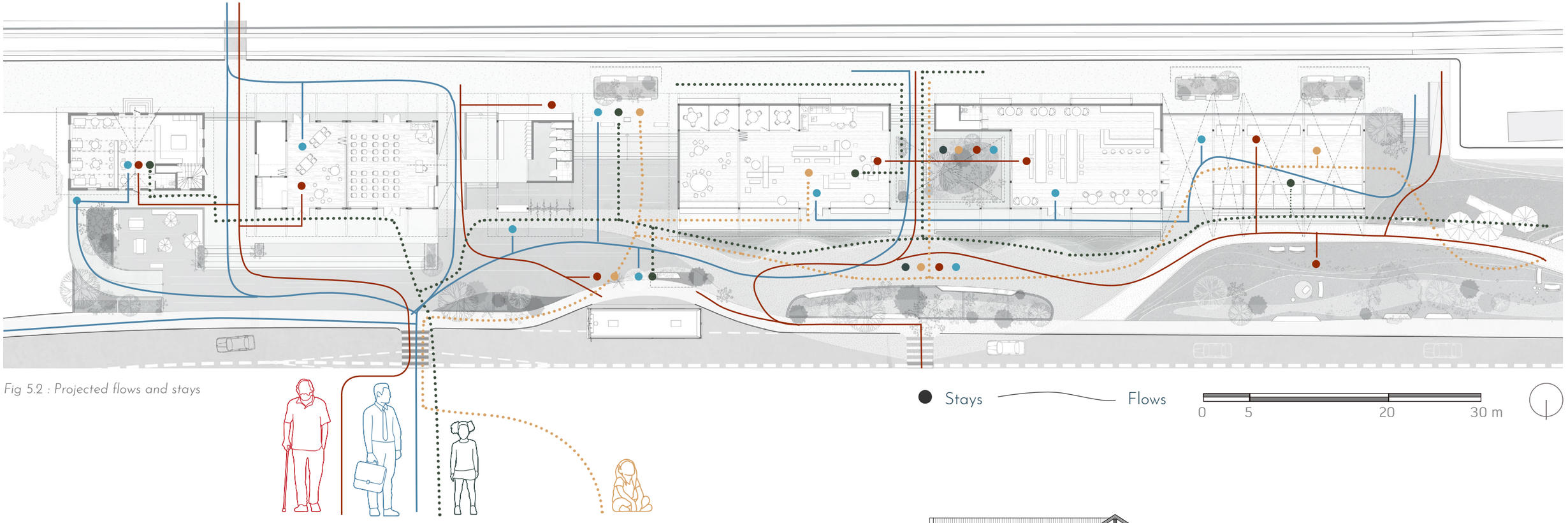


Fig 5.2 : Projected flows and stays

Fig 5.3 : Proposed section through the existing Stationhuset re-purposed as a cafe. The section highlights the extension provided, thus accommodating a good balance of open and closed spaces.

Fig 5.4 : Proposed section through the existing Magasin re-purposed as a meeting space. Extension of the platform creates an inviting space with increased opportunities for interactions.

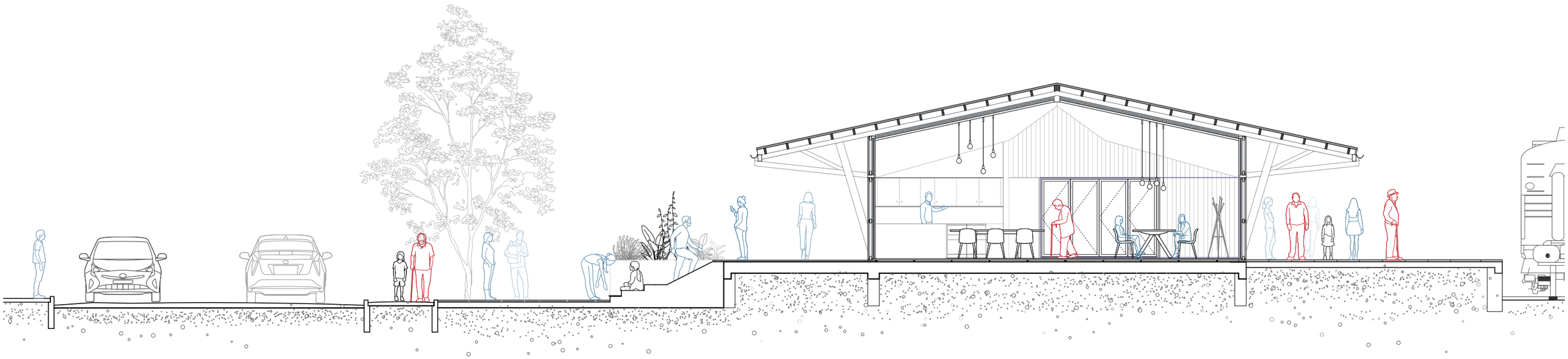


Fig 5.5: Section through the residual open spaces ensuring connections between the railway station and bus stop.

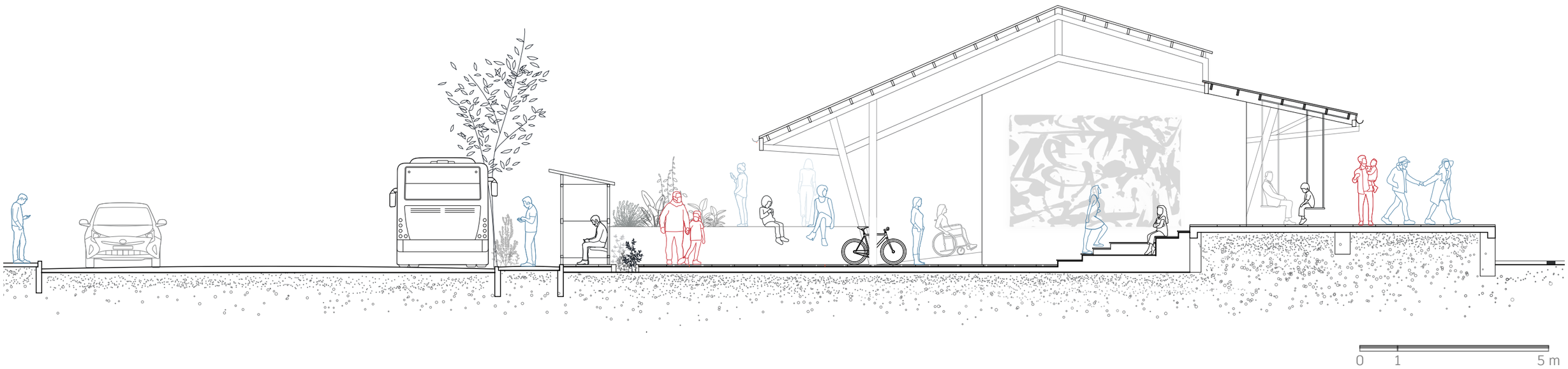


Fig 5.6 : Section through the main structure with the Frtitidsgård, pub and lunch kitchen. The dynamic roofscape and resulting water collection becomes an interesting visual connect for users in the space.

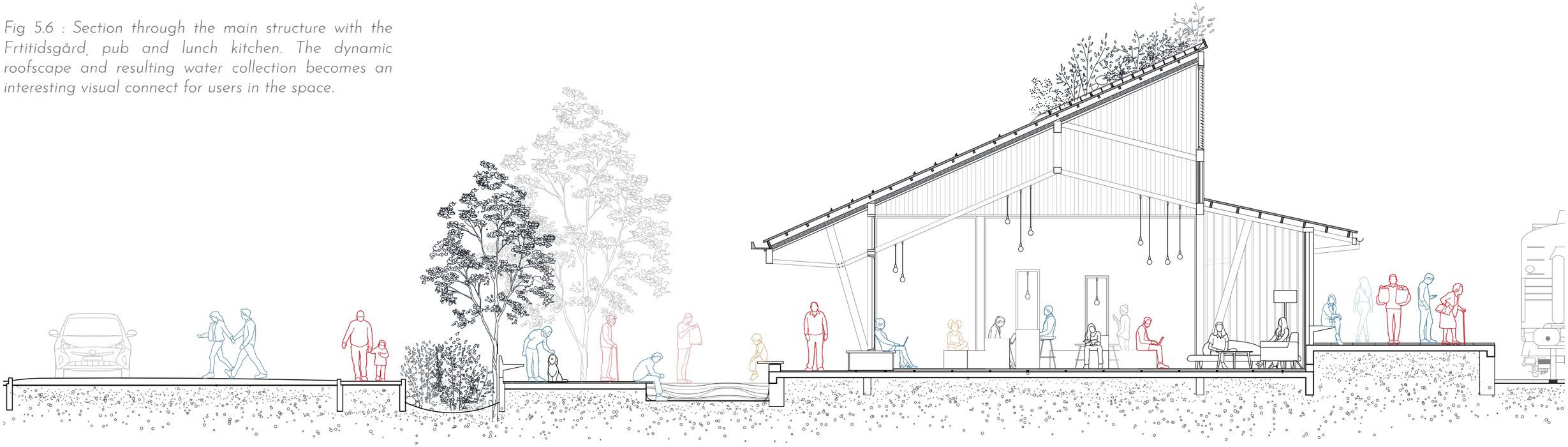
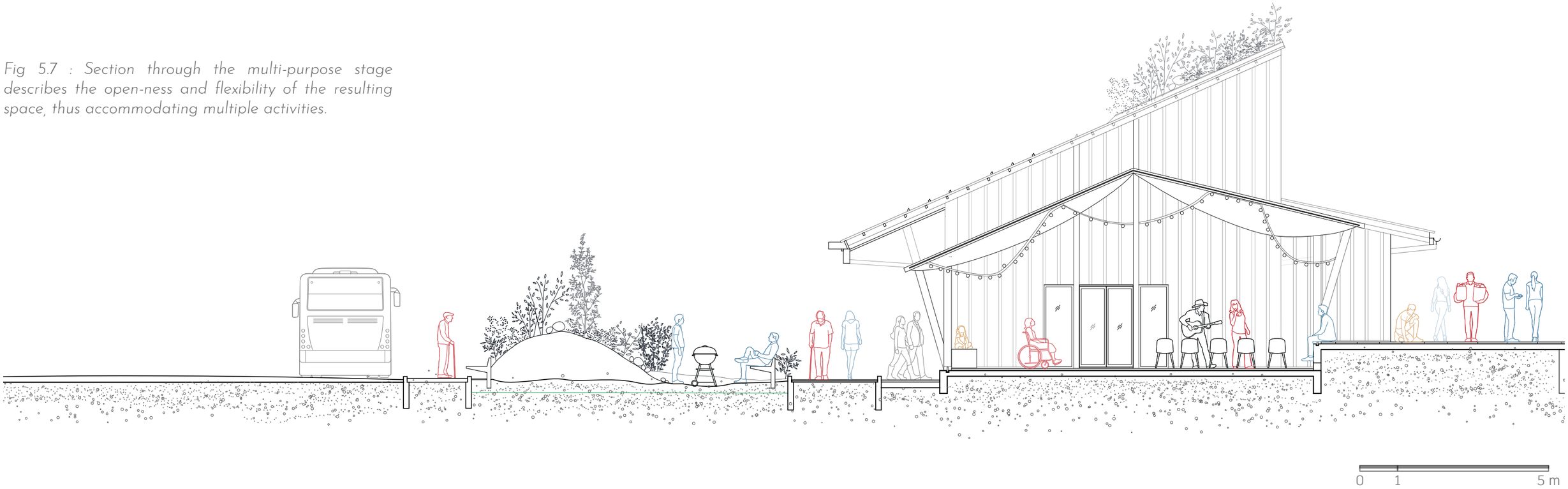


Fig 5.7 : Section through the multi-purpose stage describes the open-ness and flexibility of the resulting space, thus accommodating multiple activities.



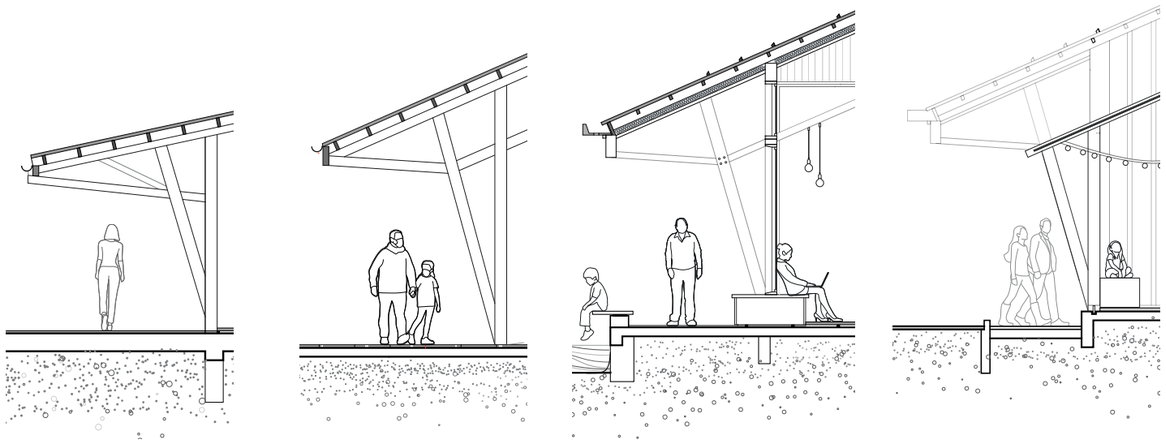
SPATIAL FACTORS

The different spatial experiences designed result in inclusive spaces that can be used simultaneously by different users. The multi-purpose and flexible characteristic of the meeting space with foldable partitions enables strong spatial identities by responding to multiple requirements.

The rest stop, by retaining visual connections between the bus and train stops creates a sense of open-ness and safety, both of which are vital in public places and encourages people to use the space.

With functions that enable quick stops and interactions, the essential services establish spatial identities with respect to the commuter population.

Residual spaces, being open and un-programmed accommodate different functions based on the context. Similarly, the open layout of the main structure, along with movable partitions, provides for a wide range of flexibility through furniture configurations. Furthermore, the common language used by the entire structure allows for walls and roof coverings to be easily altered, thus accommodating future transitions.



Original modular framework of the Magasin

Framework adapted for the rest stop

Framework adapted and modified for the dynamic roof

Framework adapted and simplified for the retractable roof

Adaptation of the existing structural framework throughout the design enabling flexibility and adaptability for current and future uses.

Fig 5.1 : Perspective of the connecting space between the pub and fritidsgård highlighting how spaces accommodate different activities while still maintaining connections with the railway platform and road.

Fig 5.9 : Perspective of the multipurpose stage and platform with direct connections to the pub allows flexibility through its open plan

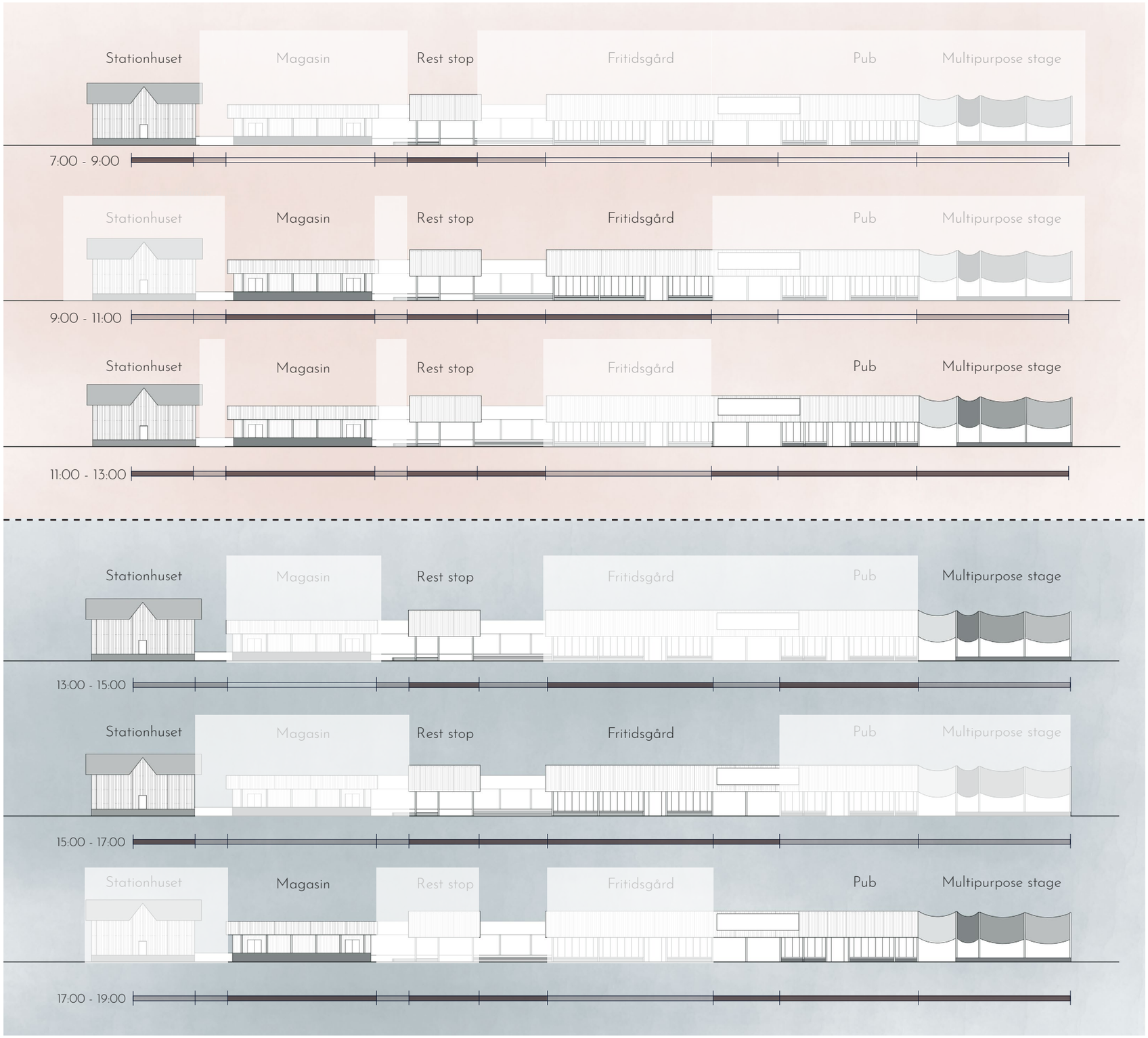


Fig 5.10 : Spatial analysis in terms of active hours during a day

Mornings
(09:00 - 13:00)

Sandareds Hjärta ---- Active hours

Evenings
(13:00 - 19:00)

Active Hours

An overall spatial analysis of the programming with respect to active hours mimics a pattern similar to the town's rythm in terms of both movement and presence. Multiple spaces cater to the various user groups of different age groups and residents, visitors, and commuters while also functioning as a single facility whose various components come alive at different hours, ensuring a vibrant and attractive environment at all times.

VISUAL FACTORS

The historic station house's interior and exterior are both retained, preserving and enhancing the familiar connections and image that local residents and passers-by have with the existing town centre.

The cafe's public nature allows access through opposite sides, establishing strong sight lines. The Magasin, like the Stationhouse, has been a recognized visual feature in the neighborhood for decades. Maintaining and extending this familiarity through the structure and its original yellow wooden exterior would only assist in establishing a stronger visual identity for the town centre.

By connecting to the local architecture in its form and material, additional layers of green and blue values were introduced to the roof of the main structure, rendering it unique and distinct in its visual language

Acknowledging the importance of water in the visual landscape of the region, which is Sweden's rainiest area with 280 days of rain in a year along with Sandareds strong connection with nature, a dynamic roofscape is proposed.

Through its design, the roof creates a distinct identity for the place that is not only aesthetic but also experienced as the seasons change. The slope directs rainwater and comes alive during rain, presenting a visually appealing element that encourages movement and engagement outdoors.

With seating provided close to the shallow pools of water collected in front of the building, water functions as a prominent visual factor and becomes a common artifact, initiating curiosity and participation amongst all age groups.

The angle of the roof also ensures good visibility and gives the town a distinct visual identity while still being connected to its local roots. Natural elements are also incorporated through the introduction of bio-swales along the length of the road, displaying local vegetation and contributing to the visual identity of the junction.

Fig 5.11 : Perspective of the re-proposed Stationhuset and Magasin. Extended platforms and seating spaces make for an inviting public space at the traffic junction. Familiar aesthetics are retained and made stronger through more public functions.

Fig 5.12 : Perspective of the dynamic roofscape that channels storm water, resulting in an attractive natural installation that varies seasonally. By visually representing Sandared's connection with water and greenery, a strong visual identity is created.

EVALUATION

When the different design interventions proposed in response to the contextual needs of the case, based on data collected and identified design strategies were evaluated, the theoretical framework was found to align with the requirements of the case. Thus, validating the approach as relevant in the context of intermediate towns. The results of which have been illustrated in Fig 5.13.

Fig 5.13 : Final results tabulated with the theoretical framework

	PLACE IDENTITY		
	SOCIAL	SPATIAL	VISUAL
Theoretical Framework	Place identity is a dynamic and socially constructed • Social Interactions • Social Capital • Social Cohesion	Place identity is a result of multiple narratives in physical space • Inclusive • Accommodative • Spatial experience • Responsive	Place identity is defined by visual symbolism and locally identifiable aesthetics. • Local vegetation • Cultural symbolism • Historical buildings
Data Analysis	Lack of inter-generational social interactions Varying social presence Low social connect due to commuting population	Exclusive and user-specific programming Goal-based and transit oriented movements Lack of community spaces	Presence of historical building stock unique to the region Low representation of natural elements local to the town
Design Strategies	Provide opportunities for social participation at both individual and collective levels. Channel movements to increase opportunities for chance interactions.	Introduce responsive spatial interventions that can be appropriated by local communities Introduce spatial configurations that support both long and short stays Provide inclusive spaces accommodating different age groups	Retain and re-purpose existing historical markers of built and un-built stock Use local culture and history to represent the past, support the present, and enable the town's future aspirations.
Design Concept	Additional outdoor seating spaces Multi-functional public spaces Formal and informal meeting places Leisure based services like cafe, lunch kitchen and pub Designing attractive and engaging walkways	Addition of essential services like bike parking, toilets and lockers Flexible and adaptable spaces Multi-purpose spaces Open and closed spaces that cater to preferences of users Calming traffic through paving treatments.	Adaptive re-use of the old Stationhouse and storage shed. Modular wooden framework following the same aesthetic of the storage shed. Representing natural elements as visual markers on the roofs, courtyard, and street.

06

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Final thoughts and reflection

The full potential of intermediate towns and the extent of their role in bridging the urban - rural divide is yet to be explored.

Using the social, spatial, and visual factors of place identity as a framework in analysing such contexts provides a deep insight into the nuances and subtle traits unique to intermediate towns.

Their verification, through the design of a town center in the intermediate town of Sandared revealed the unique position these towns hold, not just in terms of geography but also in terms of their socio-spatial networks. Although the framework adopted for the project exquisitely addressed the social, spatial and visual as independent factors in defining place identity, the design proposal iterated that the borders differentiating these aspects are not as evident in reality. They work hand in hand and where one lacks, the other compensates.

Applying the same concept to social networks, encouraging social interactions and participation through inclusive approaches can result in social cohesion and a robust social network. Both of which, by being rooted in collective values are important contributors to place identity. (Jahanbakhsh et al., 2015).

It is only likely that intermediate towns will undergo homogenization due to the continued expansion of cities in their proximity (Rodríguez-Pose & Griffiths, 2021).

While these towns need to keep pace with urban development, this needs to be balanced with the preservation of local heritage and culture (Roberts, 2014). Exploring the connections people have with the space they occupy, beyond the physical realm forms an essential element of sustainable development.

The result of the thesis project also brings into the discussion the role of public social spaces in intermediate towns and how they can serve as a tool for encouraging social constructs of place identity.

Architectural interventions rooted in the town's heritage can not only shape people's perceptions of the town and instill civic pride but can also serve as a great tool for people from other localities to gain awareness about its history and local values.

Observing existing spaces firsthand and mapping social activity from an unbiased perspective provided a deep insight into social patterns in these contexts like the quick transitions in the town's pace moving in direct relation to the neighboring city's business hours. Thus reinforcing the fact that the influence of urban cities and urbanization extends beyond their geographical limits (Delgado-Viñas & Moreno, 2022). However, it is also necessary to acknowledge that covert observation alone would not have sufficed without the support of relevant statistical and secondary data in the initial phase.

From a critical perspective, since the town was observed during winter, activities in the area during other seasons and external conditions have not been taken into consideration. Although current results are based on realistic assumptions with respect to engagement levels, the seasonal characteristics of the site have not been considered which could affect the final result.

Having casual conversations and chats with people on site like the baker and grocery shopper, although biased and coming from personal opinions, provided another dimension to understanding the context.

This combination of methods helped extract relevant data and arrive at a more informed decision for the final design proposal by evaluating trade-offs between what was desired from a lived perspective versus what was observed and perceived from a third perspective.

For example, while resident opinions leaned toward demolishing existing building stock and introducing new buildings in the area, there was good scope to re-purpose and reuse existing structures.

The possibility also fell in line with aspects of sustainability and reducing carbon footprints by re-purposing existing spaces and giving them new meaning.

Similar trade-offs evaluated through the process also brought into question the balance that is required in inclusive design practices. Where does one draw the line? Should there be a line?

It is the high degree of visibility of town centers that makes them impactful in influencing people's perceptions and experiences(Madanipour, A.,1999) However, in comparison to larger urban areas, this impact or influence is felt more strongly in smaller intermediate towns due to their smaller scale and longer reach.

Observations made during data collection and subsequent design exercises demonstrated that, in order for public social spaces in intermediate towns to be socially inclusive and vibrant, they must not only accommodate different functions for various user groups but also modulate their use throughout the day due to the highly fluctuating social presence.

The theoretical framework for the thesis project helped arrive at a contextual design proposal for Sandared's town center while also experimenting with a new approach to architectural interventions. The process in this thesis project was, however, not linear.

Site visits and literature reviews were conducted simultaneously to arrive at a framework that would be relevant to test in the case study site. Evaluated results from the design proposal however aligned with the theoretical framework, thus reinforcing its relevance as a possible approach in investigating the socio-spatial relationships in intermediate towns

Touching on the larger discourse of the role of place identity in architecture, I believe the approach can be applied in different contexts as well.

That being said, while this particular project took into account social, spatial, and visual aspects as the variables and factors in defining place identity, taking into account other factors such as demography, economy, education etc may yield different results.

Given that identity is dynamic and subjective the possibilities and influences on architecture are endless and it is this aspect that makes it an interesting topic for future research. Diving deeper and exploring them in a specific context can help extract hidden perceptions and values that are otherwise overlooked.

Intermediate towns are slowly cementing their position in the larger urban-rural discussion (Delgado-Viñas & Moreno, 2022). While the quality of life is subjective, developments in these areas that do not jeopardize local qualities, while also promoting positive infrastructure growth can help achieve a balance between mobility and liveability.

Providing opportunities for social participation that accommodate diverse user groups, with good visibility can help retain local populations while also attracting visitors and passers-by to engage and interact, thus increasing social capital.

A value that can grow multi-fold through increased social activity and participation. It is this balance that the thesis project argues for and encourages that can elevate intermediate towns by capitalizing on the potential of their intermediate rhythm. With respect to mobility, liveability, and social presence.

07

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Final thoughts and reflection

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CONFIGURING IDENTITIES

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