



TO READ A BUILDING
Negotiating and Translating Value(s) of
Smedjan 12

Lisa Landgren & Edith Tamm
2026

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

LISA LANDGREN

WORK

Fall 2025 - Ongoing
Architectural Design Assistant, Anna Maria Indrio APS,
Copenhagen

Spring 2025 - Winter 2025
Internship KHR Architecture, Copenhagen

EDUCATION

2023.08 - Ongoing
Chalmers University of Technology, Göteborg
M.Sc, Architecture and Urban Design

Fall 2024

- Housing inventions 2 - ACE505, 15.0 hp
- Master's thesis preparation: Academic approaches and general structure - ACE 370, 5.0 hp
- Master's thesis preparation: Design approaches and narratives - ACE425, 10.0 hp

Spring 2024

- Building on building - ACE525, 15.0 hp
- Nordic architecture - ACE360, 5.0 hp
- Design systems - ACE445, 10.0 hp

Fall 2023

- Urban prototypes - ACE465, 15.0 hp
- Sustainable development and the design professions - ACE380, 5.0 hp
- Architecture in the anthropocene - ACE400, 10.0 hp

2020.09 - 2023.06
Umeå School of Architecture, Umeå
Bachelor of Fine Arts in Architecture, 180.0 hp

EDITH TAMM

WORK

2025.08 - Ongoing
Architectural Intern, FOJAB, Malmö

2025.02 - 2025.08
Architectural Intern, Lendager, Copenhagen

EDUCATION

2022.08 - Ongoing
Chalmers University of Technology, Göteborg
M.Sc, Architecture and Urban Design

Fall 2023

- Erasmus Exchange Semester, 30.0 hp,
The Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Oslo

Spring 2023

- Matter, Space, Structure 2 (After Building) - ARK132, 22.5 hp
- History, theory and method 2 - ARK595, 3.0 hp
- Architectural competitions - ARK153, 4.5 hp

Fall 2022

- Material and detail 1 - ARK338, 22.5 hp
- Sustainable development and the design professions - ARK650, 7.5 hp

2019.09 - 2022.06
Umeå School of Architecture, Umeå
Bachelor of Fine Arts in Architecture, 180.0 hp

Authors: Lisa Landgren & Edith Tamm

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Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering

Examiner: Daniel Norell

Supervisor: Naima Callenberg

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UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

ABSTRACT

Contemporary planning processes often favor the *already-built* as static objects of proclaimed heritage value or determine plans on residual land value and densification arguments. Preceding outdated planning frameworks are still being executed which favour *tabula rasa* - despite current local and global ambitions of preservation, transformation and 'sustainability goals'.

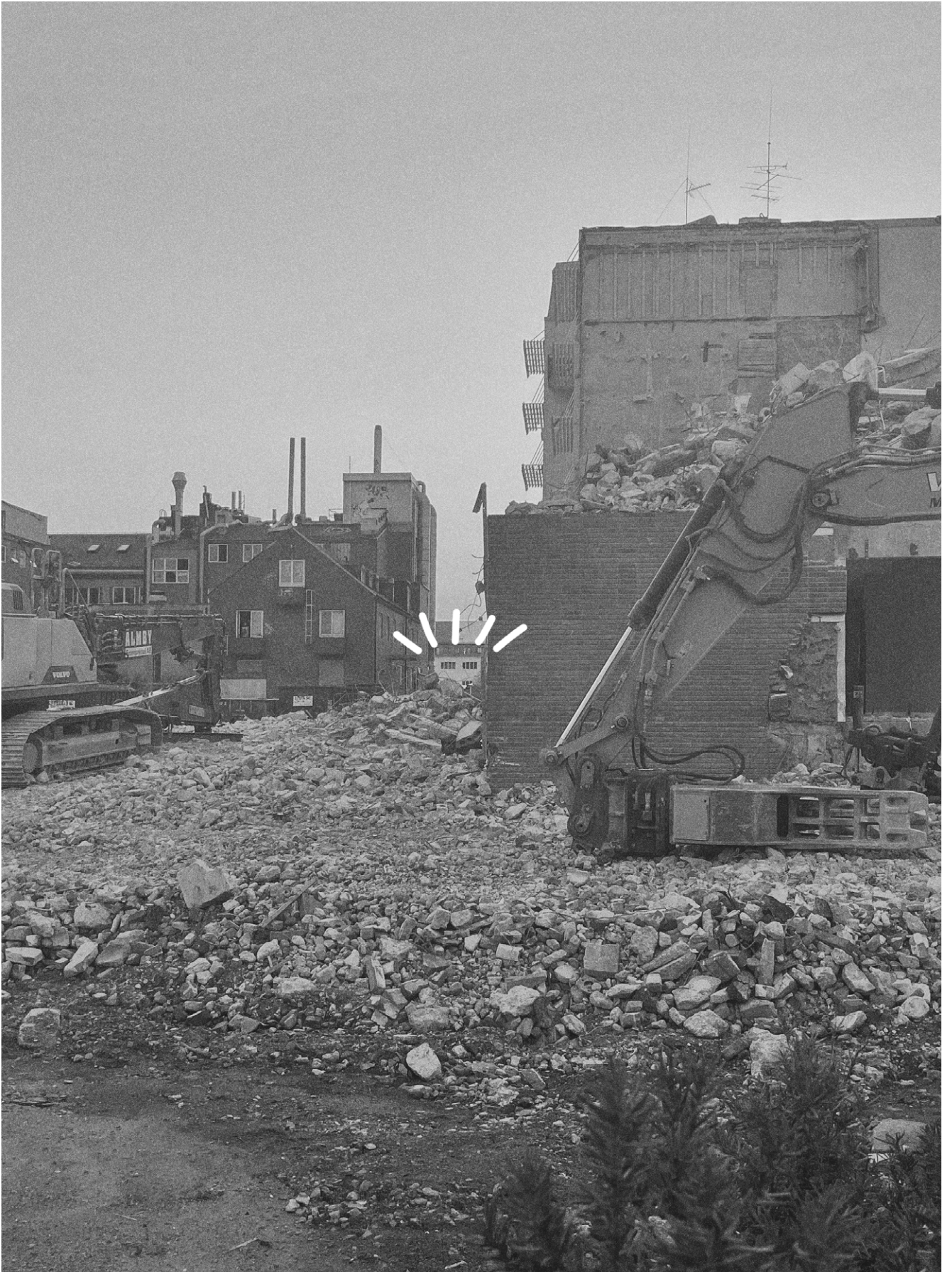
This systemic tension is evident in the urban transformation of Malmö's oldest industrial site, Norra Sorgenfri. Contextualizing the thesis within this area and the demolition-threatened building block Smedjan 12, *To Read a Building* emerges through the identification of a perception shift in previous cultural heritage assessments. A facade alteration is seemingly used as the main argument for extensive demolition. Furthermore, this raises questions relating to value, authenticity and perception(s) of our built environment.

This thesis aims to research whether adaptive reuse can be repositioned as a critical architectural act by evaluating complex realities. By considering multiple value perspectives, the thesis investigates whether a building can inform its own narrative, present-day agency and future relevance. Moreover, it investigates the architect's role as a mediator and negotiator in architectural transformation processes. *Which values are to be considered in favour or against a building's continuous lifecycle? How may the architect identify and negotiate between conflicting values?*

Discussing these questions through a value-based analysis and design iterations, the thesis addresses the following values: resource, emotional, heritage, exchange, social use and functional use. The purpose of the approach is to challenge established reasoning related to transformation. Additionally, evaluating the state of a building, not overlooking the existing condition and informalities within, provides room for varying conditions. This 'As Found' approach, coined by Alison and Peter Smithson in the 1950s, holds the potential to shift current perceptions and advocate for the *already-built*. Rather than striving for a static end-product, the thesis proposes a future scenario based on carefully curated interventions and a phasing strategy as an alternative transformation process for Smedjan 12.

To Read a Building makes room for the *already-built's* never-ending story, demonstrating that "more than any other human artifact, buildings excel at improving with time, if they are given a chance" (S. Brand).

KEYWORDS: Adaptive Reuse, Value, 'As found', Norra Sorgenfri, Phasing



[Figure 1] - Demolition Site, Östra Farmvägen, Smedjan 12 in Background (Photo: Olsson, 2022)

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[Figure 2] - Ongoing Demolition, Östra Farmvägen, Malmö (Photo: Authors, 2026)

01. BACKGROUND

01.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How can one challenge contemporary established value frameworks in transformation processes by uncovering the inherent logic of an existing building?

2. How can this 'inside-out' reading be translated into design guidelines for alternative adaptive reuse and phased transformation, thereby promoting a continuous value development?

01.2 AIM

This thesis aims to demonstrate that the most sustainable building is the one which continues to be in use, despite an ever-changing urban context. The intention is to shine light on how an existing building (Smedjan 12, Malmö) can be alternatively valued and subsequently transformed. This allows for an inside-out approach to emerge from the embedded values of our built environment. In turn, this approach may guide alternative future design and transformation processes.

Investigating the role of the architect as the observer, who locates and translates the embedded values, emphasizes the necessity of comprehensive analysis. This stands in contrast to forcing adaptation to externally imposed programs. Ultimately, the project strives to challenge notions of conventional top-down planning models which equate value with profit. It calls for a more critical awareness relating to the subjectivity of both external and internal value judgment.

The primary aim is to research how multiple values can be assessed in a transformation process through a site-specific design proposal for Smedjan 12. The thesis explores how adaptive reuse can support spatial heterogeneity and preserve a building's agency. By doing so, it enables transformation to be viewed as an ongoing, iterative process rather than a fixed end state.

01.3 SCOPE

Contextually, this thesis engages with contemporary critiques of the plans for Norra Sorgenfri in Malmö. However, the scope is confined to an independent analysis and design proposal for the Smedjan 12 building block. As such, the thesis adopts an introverted approach, focusing entirely on the immediate site rather than Malmö's broader urban framework.

While adaptive reuse relates to structural engineering, PBL/BBR, and financial feasibility, the thesis limits its scope to the spatial implications within the architectural investigation of value systems and design strategies/implementation. While acknowledging the risk of contamination within embodied materials - the thesis proceeds under the assumption that contamination readings yield negative results, allowing the project to focus purely on the building's continued lifecycle.

The design proposal does not aim to present a finalized, static building, but rather illustrate the early stages of the architectural process and speculate on future phasing as a continuous iterative transformation process.

While acknowledging that value is a multi-faceted concept, the thesis limits its scope to a specific selection of subjective values. By doing so, it accepts its own inherent bias and explicitly excludes additional valid value perspectives.

02. CONTEXT



[Figure 3] - Malmö, Norra Sorgenfri (Lantmäteriet, n.d.)

02.1 THE SITE: Norra Sorgenfri, Malmö

In the 2006 *Cultural-historical Documentation for the Planning Program*, Schlyter describes the historical development of Norra Sorgenfri, a district which transitioned from rural pasturelands to a vital industrial centre before experiencing late-twentieth-century de-industrialization. Named after an 1842 farm, the area remained largely agricultural until municipal land ownership catalysed its industrialization in the late 1890s (pp. 7–8). Initial developments prioritized public infrastructure, including a gas works, sanitation plant, and tram depots, which culminated in the formal designation of a factory district street grid in 1903 (pp. 7–8). Following the establishment of the first private enterprise, Malmö Oljeslageri, in 1898, the district saw rapid commercial diversification between the 1910s and 1930s, attracting a diversity of firms (p. 8). Sorgenfri peaked as a central employment and industrial centre for Malmö’s inhabitants by the mid-twentieth century and was fully developed by the 1980s; however, the 1990s marked a period of sharp decline characterized by the extensive demolition of aging industrial infrastructure (p. 8).

Norra Sorgenfri’s modern redevelopment has been well criticized mainly due to the contrast between the ambitious initial visions and the final outcome, which critics describe as a “lost opportunity” that resulted in an ordinary neighbourhood (Pries et al., 2024, p. 250). Although the original goal was to preserve the area’s industrial heritage and integrate the existing cultural life, artists, and small businesses, the municipal ownership was limited and struggled to enforce its visions against the profit-driven interests of private real estate developers (Baeten, 2024, pp. 130, 133; Pries et al., 2024, p. 257). Consequently, rising rents and the demolition of key industrial buildings—such as the large bus garages which were meant to become a vibrant cultural hub—forced the local cultural actors out in a process of gentrification (Örman, 2024, pp. 171–172; Pries et al., 2024, p. 250).



[Figure 4] - Property Division 2024 & 2007
(Jönsson et al., 2024, p. 8)

Additionally, the project has drawn heavy criticism for its failure to provide adequate green spaces and for its exclusionary social policies. The unplanned but valuable “urban wilderness” was erased, and planned parks were abandoned to make way for dense construction and industrial expansion (Jönsson, 2024, pp. 199–200). Furthermore, researchers argue that the strategy to build social sustainability and bridge city segregation simply by creating new pedestrian paths was a naive form of “architectural determinism” (Baeten, 2024, p. 134; Pries, 2024, pp. 109–111). Instead of fostering true integration, the implemented safety measures functioned as “soft exclusion strategies” aimed at

normalizing the area for the middle class, which led to the displacement of marginalized groups, most visibly through the forced eviction of a camp of vulnerable EU migrants in 2015 (Listerborn, 2024, pp. 150–151; Persdotter, 2024, pp. 219–220).

Norra Sorgenfri reveals the tension between ambitious urban visions and the complexities of transformation processes. Once an industrial district defined by layered use and productive diversity, it has become a contested landscape where heritage, speculation, and social ambition intersect. In its nature, the district exposes the limits of planning models that prioritize density



[Figure 5] - Photo of Informal Settlements, Norra Sorgenfri (Wessmann, 2015)

and market logic over existing spatial, material, and social conditions.

For this thesis, Norra Sorgenfri serves as both a warning and opportunity. The district demonstrates the consequences of failing to negotiate parallel forms of value, while underscoring the need for alternative approaches to transformation. Within this context, the focus shifts from urban policy to architectural consequence - where broader tensions materialize in concrete decisions of demolition, retention, and adaptation.

The selected plot situated in the district, Smedjan 12, further materializes the investigation as a test-bed for the thesis. As a building block facing extensive demolition and re-programming, it embodies the district's unresolved conflicts between heritage and development, continuity and erasure, offering an alternative lens for architectural transformation, value examination and translation.



[Figure 6] - Celsiusgatan toward Smedjan 12 (Authors, 2026)



[Figure 7] - Spårvägstorget and Smedjan 12 (Authors, 2026)

02.2 THE BUILDING BLOCK: Smedjan 12

Property Name:
Smedjan 12

Address:
Nobelvägen 135 / Celsiusgatan 29, Malmö

Year of construction:
1937

Architect:
Possibly Jan Nilsson (Tyréns, 2021)

Original Function:
Bookbinding-/printing workshops

Planned Function:
Partial demolition, residential mixed-use new development (Planbeskrivning, 2023)

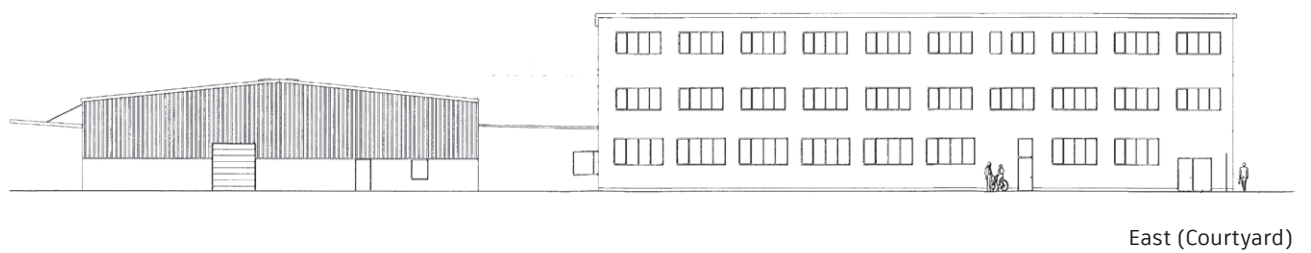
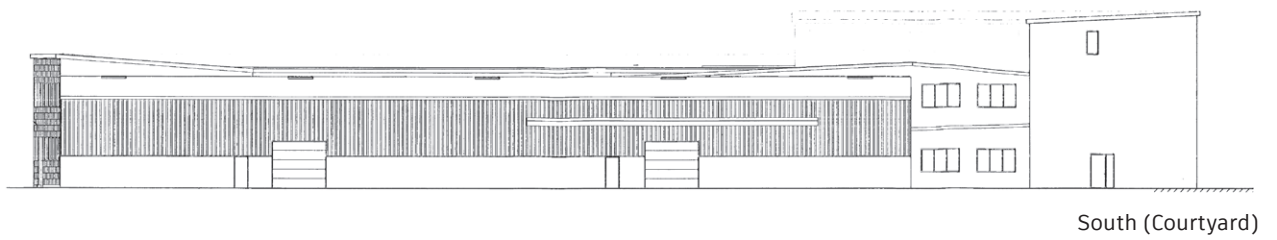
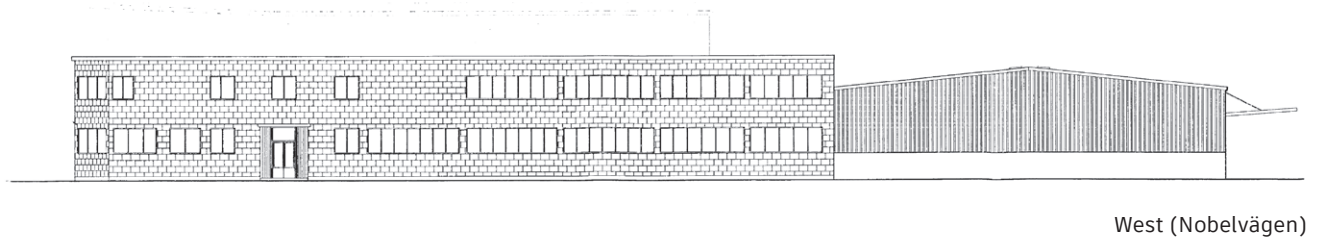
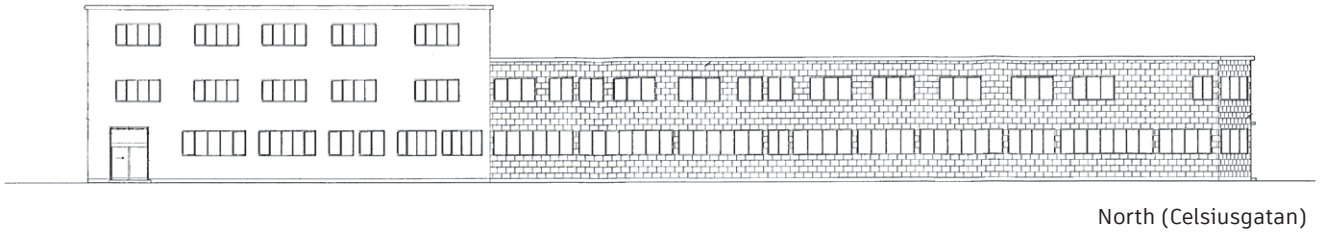
Description

The two-storey volume spans along Nobelvägen and Celsiusgatan, connected with a three-storey addition as well as an additional industrial hall built in 1977. The building frames and mainly covers its interior paved courtyard. The building features repetitive ribbon windows with a chamfered corner in an angle toward the street intersection.

The contemporary façade is clad with light-coloured ceramic tiles and plaster, resting on a base of red granite tiles. The main entrance facing Nobelvägen consists of a stainless-steel opening, framed with black-blue natural stone and stainless-steel vertical detailing. The roof is flat with visible copper detailing, mainly covered with roofing felt. The industrial hall addition rests on a base of concrete sandwich elements with a climate envelope clad in vertical metal sheets.



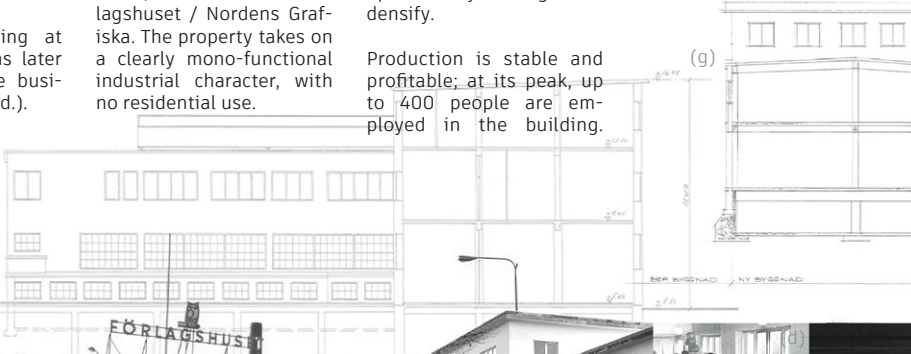
[Figure 8] - Smedjan 12, façade photo extracts (Authors, 2026)







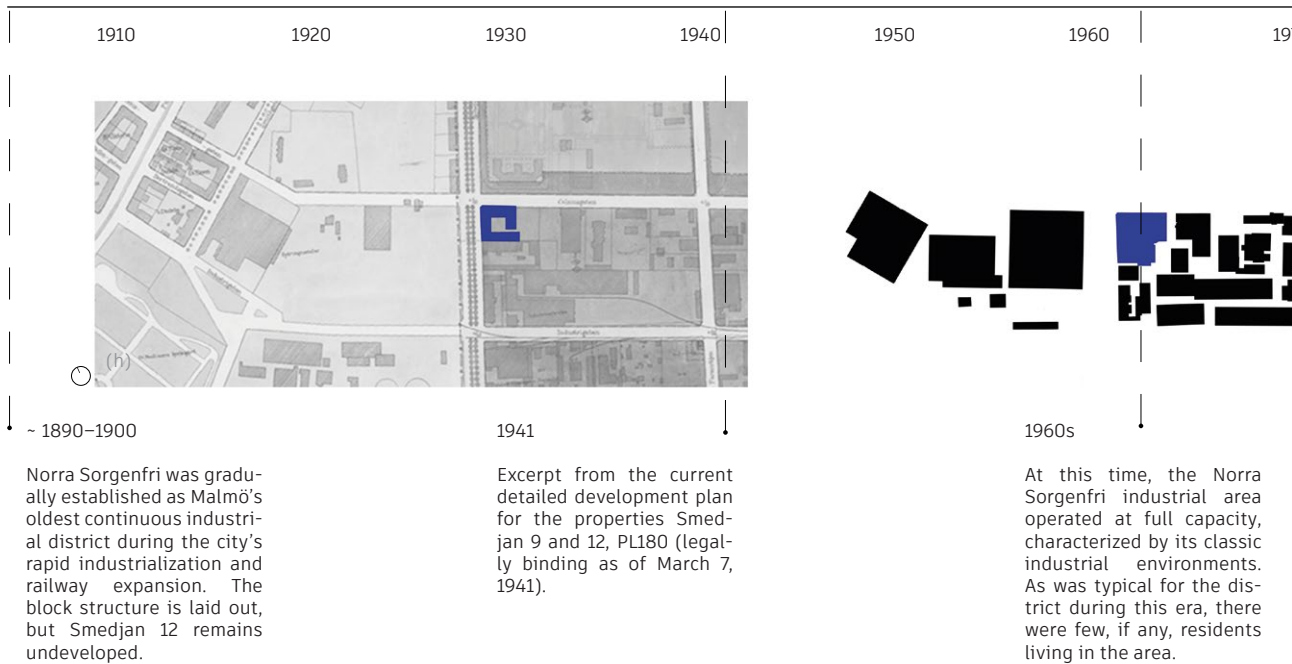
[Figure 9] - Contemporary Facade Drawings (Malmö Stadsarkiv, n.d.)

02.3 THE BUILDING BLOCK: Timeline of Smedjan 12

<p>1904</p> <p>Nobelvägen was established</p>	<p>1921 - 1937</p> <p>The publisher Michael Thomas Hansen was born on September 17, 1890. After completing a commercial education, he moved to Malmö in 1921 and founded Baltiska Förlaget in 1924 (later Förlagshuset Nordens Grafiska).</p> <p>The company published books and printed materials.</p> <p>The original building at Nobelvägen 135 was later constructed for the business (Riksarkivet, n.d.).</p>	<p>1937</p> <p>The first building on the Smedjan 12 property is constructed. It is intended for printing and publishing activities, which will define the property for most of the 20th century.</p> <p>1937 - 1940</p> <p>The business is established as a printing house/publisher, later known as Förlagshuset / Nordens Grafiska. The property takes on a clearly mono-functional industrial character, with no residential use.</p>	<p>First Expansion Phase – 1940s and 1950s</p> <p>The first extensions are carried out. Additional building volumes are constructed facing the courtyard. The purpose is to expand production and storage space for the printing operations. The previously relatively open courtyard begins to densify.</p> <p>Production is stable and profitable; at its peak, up to 400 people are employed in the building.</p>	<p>1964</p> <p>A major extension is carried out. The courtyard buildings are further expanded. The inner courtyard is significantly reduced in size. The original freestanding industrial building begins to be perceived as a cohesive building complex.</p>
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[Figure 10] - Timeline Collage (Sub-images a-h, Assembled by authors, 2026)

1977

A new printing hall is constructed. Further expansion and restructuring of the building volumes take place. Parts of the courtyard space are effectively built over through connecting volumes.

Exterior alterations are added, such as new gates, new windows, rationalized façade openings, and technical installations.

In retrospect, these changes are argued to be distorted in relation to the 1937 building, but clearly legible as later additions (Tyréns AB, 2021, p 47).

1983-1985

The final major expansion phase for the graphic operations takes place. Additional complementary building sections are constructed. The property acquires its current overall volume structure. The inner courtyard is now significantly reduced and largely built over or covered.

2000s

Parts of the building begin to be used for offices and other activities, alongside remaining printing-related operations (M. Ohlsson, personal communication, 9th of February 2026).

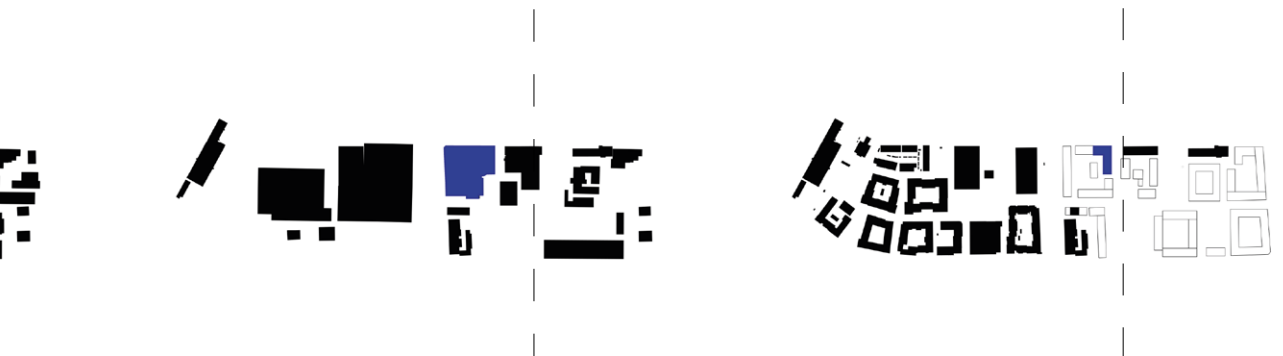
2010-TODAY

The property is owned by Riksbyggen. Smedjan 12 is managed as part of a larger development area.

The building is identified as carrying industrial heritage values, particularly linked to its printing history.

At the same time, it is noted that the property is characterized by successive additions, densification, and alterations, especially affecting the courtyard space (Tyréns AB, 2021, pp. 47-48).

Parts of the building are rented out to other businesses, primarily offices.



1990-2000s

Northern Sorgenfri undergoes a broader structural transformation, with the closure of many industrial businesses.

TODAY -

Ongoing planning process (DP 5846)

A transformation toward a mixed-use urban district is planned.

Smedjan 12 is included in discussions concerning preservation vs. transformation.

02.4 PERCEPTION SHIFT

Cultural Heritage Assessment Reflection

Smedjan 12 stands out in the area with its typical functionalistic expression, the beige facade and the low volume. The plan program from 2008 stated that the building is indispensable due to cultural and historical values (Malmö Stadsbyggnadskontor, 2008, p.50). A few years later all the windows were replaced. In 2011, the façade material was altered: The original travertine climate envelope was substituted with ceramic tiles and warm white plaster.

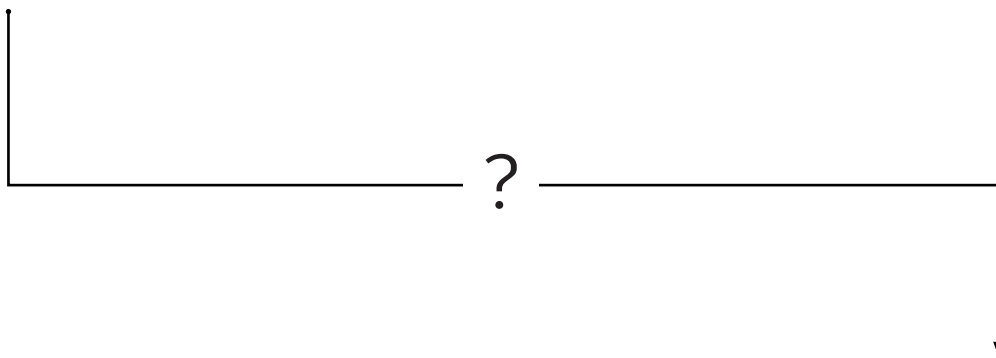
In a cultural heritage report from 2021 conducted by Tyréns AB on behalf of Riksbyggen, it is stated that the building should be treated with general caution, whereas the two neighbouring red-brick buildings on the adjacent properties represent parts of the expression of the national interest for Malmö and are assessed as “particularly valuable according to PBL” (Tyréns AB, 2021).

2023 it is stated in an updated plan program from Malmö Stad that *Förlagshuset* at the corner of Nobelvägen-Celsiusgatan, now is considered to have lost its indispensable cultural value due to ‘distortion’ (such as changing facade materials and windows) and is therefore not protected in the means of the new detail plan (Malmö stad, 2023, p. 60).

The contemporary consultation phase (winter 2025 - spring 2026) of the new detail plan for Smedjan 12 and 9 are addressing the new construction. The urban redevelopment plan for Smedjan 12 aims to transform the former industrial site into a dense, mixed-use enclosed block centred around a lush inner courtyard that accommodates potential town house developments (Malmö Stad, 2023, p. 7).

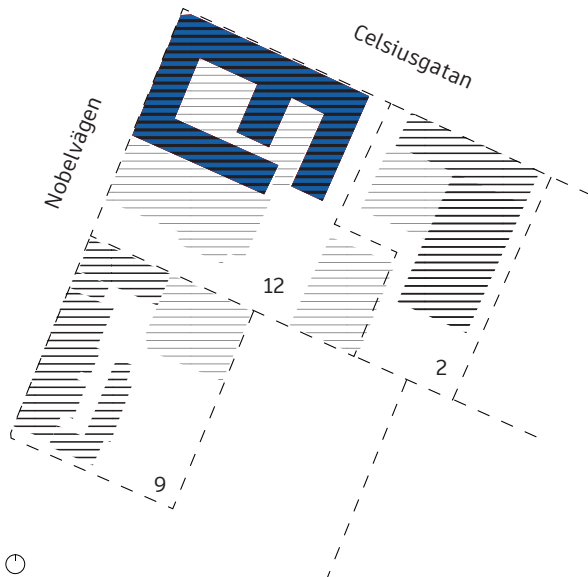
The plan seeks to balance modernization with heritage conservation; while the two storey volume of Smedjan 12 will not be protected, its 1944 three storey extension is labelled with ‘general caution’ (Malmö stad, 2023, p. 59).




▮ “Indispensable”



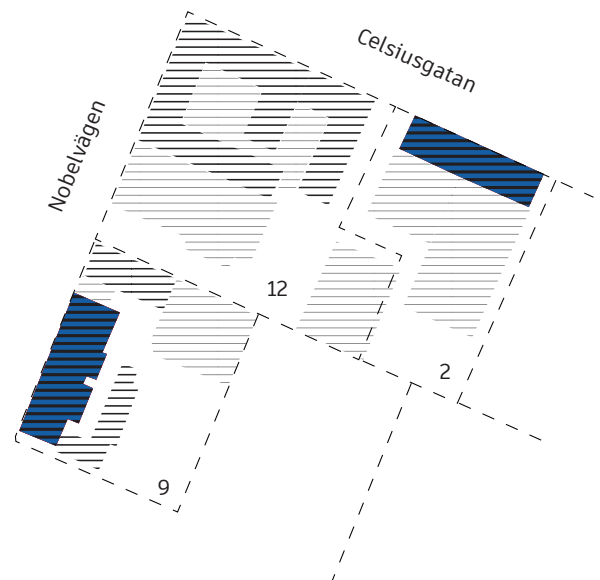
▮ “General Caution”




2008 (Planprogram)



-  "Buildings that are indispensable due to cultural and historical values"
-  "Buildings that are highly worthy of preservation due to cultural and historical values"
-  Not addressed

2021 (Kulturmiljöunderlag Tyréns)



-  "Buildings that represent the mixed business and industrial character of the neighbourhood. General Caution PBL 8:17"
-  "Buildings that represent parts of the expression of the national interest of Malmö. Assessed as particularly valuable according to PBL 8:13"
-  Not addressed

[Figure 11] - Analysis of Shifting Heritage Value(s) (Authors, 2026)

02.5 DENSIFICATION PLANS: Previous and Future Density

HISTORIC DENSITY ~1960

Norra Sorgenfri industry area was operating at full capacity at the time, and many classic industrial environments surrounded the area. There were few, if any, residents living in the district.



HISTORIC DENSITY ~1990-2000S

Northern Sorgenfri undergoes a broader structural transformation, with the closure of many industrial businesses.



CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

During the ongoing planning process (DP 5846) a transformation toward a mixed-use urban district is planned. Smedjan 12 is included in discussions concerning preservation versus transformation.

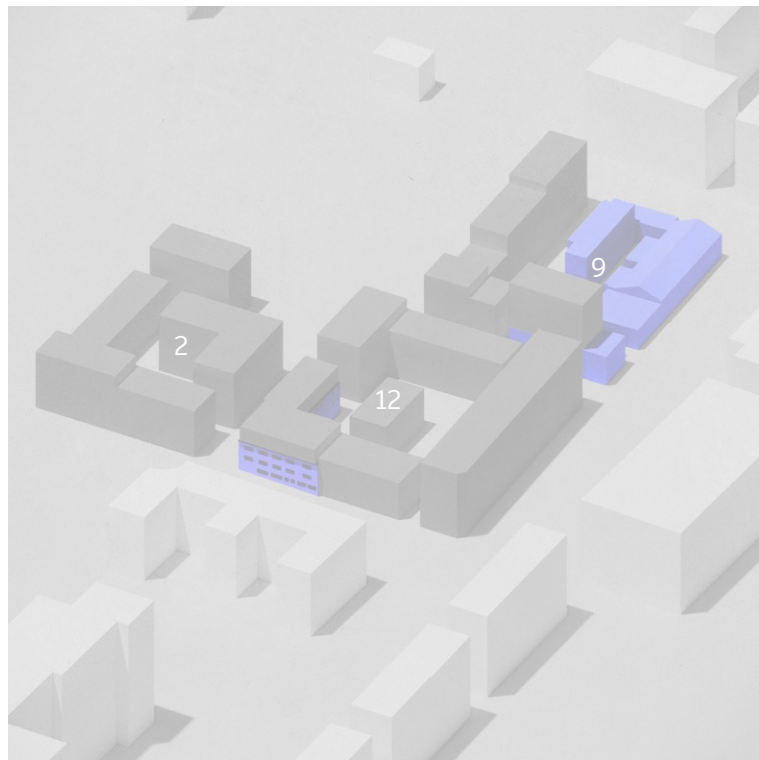


FUTURE URBAN DENSIFICATION VISION

The latest consultation document and development plan 5846 suggests that the surrounding plots' red brick facades are protected. Smedjan 12 will mainly be demolished and replaced with densified housing as well as public functions at ground level.

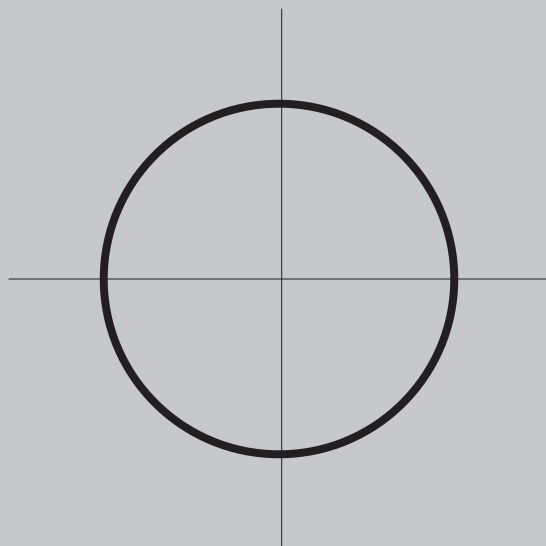


[Figure 12] - District Development (Authors, 2026)



[Figure 13] - Detail Plan Analysis: Future Densification (Authors, 2026)

03. DISCOURSE



03.1 POSITIONING

This thesis identifies a critical flaw in contemporary transformation practices: decisions about the future of existing buildings are often guided by isolated assessment frameworks rather than a holistic understanding of multiple values. Architectural, cultural, economic, and environmental considerations are frequently treated as separate categories, allowing one evaluation to outweigh the others in determining whether a building is retained, altered, or demolished.

At Smedjan 12, the shift in cultural heritage assessments between 2008 and 2021 illustrates how heritage value can be reinterpreted over time and how such reinterpretations can directly underpin planning objectives. What was once recognized as a coherent industrial environment of historic importance, is now subject to selective reclassification, resulting in partial demolition despite the continued presence of substantial structural, spatial and material capacity. This shift demonstrates that heritage evaluations are anything but neutral observations; they are utilized as active tools that dictate the future of the existing. The premise that a single facade alteration can initiate a building's perceived decline in authenticity raises critical concerns regarding how architectural value is ultimately formed and formalized.

Therefore, the dilemma is not only the assessments themselves, but the planning logic that allows a single category of value to dominate decision-making. When heritage significance is 'downgraded', other forms of value, such as embodied resources, spatial adaptability, social meaning, and long-term utility, stand at risk of being overlooked. This reveals a broader limitation within prevailing planning discourse: the absence of methods and resources capable of negotiating multiple, overlapping values simultaneously. As a result, transformation processes often default to simplified, binary outcomes of preservation or demolition, rather than engaging with the full potential of adaptive reuse.

Moreover, this thesis stands in agreement with recent urban critiques regarding the gentrification of Norra Sorgenfri. By designing standardized neighbourhoods that cater predominantly to the middle class, municipal and private developments are displacing the smaller, local actors that depend on unpolished, low-rent industrial spaces. To counteract this exclusionary practice and the wasteful erasure of built mass, a new architectural positioning is required in order to recognize a building's true, multi-layered capacity and value.

“The premise that a single facade alteration can initiate a building's perceived decline and authenticity raises critical concerns regarding how architectural value is ultimately formed and formalized.”

03.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: Deconstructing 'Value'

The question of value has become increasingly central to contemporary discussions on the future of the built environment. In a conversation with Malmö's city antiquarian, Olof Martinsson (personal communication, March 4, 2026), both Malmö and Sweden were described as standing at a turning point. Despite this shift, long-standing development processes that historically favoured demolition are still problematically being carried out. Within both planning and heritage practice, the focus is gradually shifting from demolition-led development toward transformation processes which actively negotiate multiple and sometimes conflicting values. This emerging, contemporary shift provides the context for examining how value is defined, interpreted, and mobilized within the built environment.

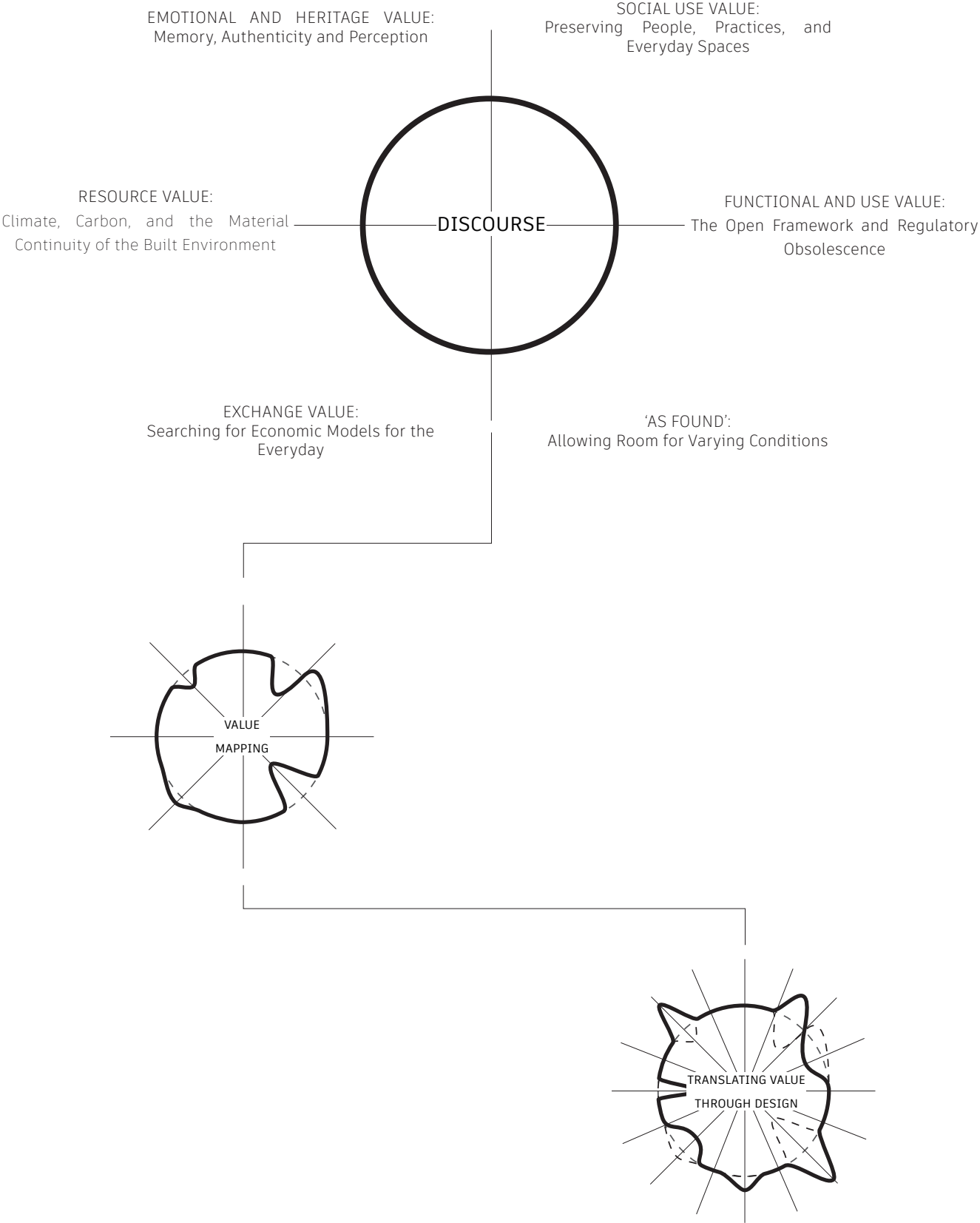
"Value" however, is a complex and multifaceted concept in architecture and other disciplines, extending beyond simple economic assessments. Within the framework of adaptive reuse, the act of transforming a building is described as a "process of revaluation" (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2019, p. 2). This involves establishing a new balance between diverse and often competing categories of value, moving away from a traditional focus on purely historical or conservational value methods toward more active architectural, societal, and economic values (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2019, p. 2).

This multifaceted understanding often draws upon the work of Alois Riegl, who categorized values into "commemorative values" - such as historical value and "age-value"- and "present-day values", which include "use-value" and "art-value" (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2019, p. 11). More recently, this discourse has expanded to prioritize "soft values", which encompass immaterial aspects such as atmosphere, narratives, and the "genius loci" (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2019, pp. 20, 90). By viewing heritage not as a static artifact to be preserved in its found state but as a dynamic resource, adaptive reuse seeks to activate the building's full potential for a future society (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2019, p. 2).

Building upon this discourse, this thesis challenges conventional, top-down planning models that inherently equate value with economic profit and discard existing building stock as obsolete. Once deemed outdated, these structures are often deprived of maintenance, initiating a self-fulfilling cycle of decay that ultimately justifies their demolition. In the urgent need for climate action, standardized practices often fail to simultaneously negotiate multiple values. By relying on isolated assessment frameworks, vital aspects of a building's true potential are seemingly lost in the process.

To counteract this limited approach, the thesis investigates how a multiplicity of values can be actively integrated into architectural practice. To provide a focused yet comprehensive discussion, five value categories are addressed as a point of entry: **resource value, emotional and heritage value, exchange value, social use, and functional use**. This specific selection serves as an analytical tool to expose both synergies and points of friction. While these categories occasionally align, they can at times stand in direct conflict with one another - and crucially, they represent the very dimensions most vulnerable to being overlooked or erased in standardized value assessments. Nevertheless, not to be considered as less valuable.

The purpose of the discourse is to firstly establish a theoretical understanding of how these value categories apply to the built environment, and secondly, applying them practically to the analysis and design of Smedjan 12. Through this lens, the thesis asks: What values are already deeply embedded within the inherent logic of the building? Which values can the architect negotiate and carry forward during a transformation? Ultimately, it explores how the selection and balancing of these values can actively generate design principles and spatial strategies. Furthermore, to break the cycle of decay, this thesis explores how architects can intervene through careful phasing strategies, allowing a building to be reactivated and adapted over time.



[Figure 14] - Theoretical Framework Diagram (Authors, 2026)

03.2.1 RESOURCE VALUE

Climate, Carbon, and the Material Continuity of the Built Environment

The accelerating climate crisis has fundamentally challenged the traditional model of architectural production that relies on new construction. Architectural transformation is increasingly adopted as a new normal and method, actively challenging the previous standard-practice of demolition and new construction.

Globally, the construction sector is responsible for a significant share (~37%) of global carbon emissions, not only through operational energy but additionally through the extraction, production, and transport of new building materials (UNEP, 2024). According to Boverket (2025) the Swedish construction industry's carbon climate impact derives from the construction processes (21%). Whereas the operational energy consumption in Sweden of heating housing and service structures is 40% of the country's total energy consumption (Energimyndigheten, 2025). As operational emissions decrease due to 'cleaner' energy grids and production, the embodied carbon from the manufacturing and management of building materials in the construction phase itself is the primary climate challenge in terms of Sweden's new production.

However, simply isolating material as well as operational data cannot fully explain why certain buildings are preserved while others are demolished. In many cases, buildings are lost not due to structural or operational failure, but because of "fluctuating land values" and the pressure of "up-sizing" to achieve higher density (Li, 2017, pp. 8,11). To combat this, architects are adopting strategies such as the reclamation audit, which systematically inventories the "reuse potential" of materials before any demolition occurs (Smeyers et al., 2022, p. 14). By reframing existing structures as "built matter" rather than disposable commodities, we can maintain the "annual rings" of the city's development and reduce the environmental cost of new construction (Lindberg et al., 2024, pp. 14,44).

Since existing buildings - particularly those constructed from concrete and steel - represent significant embodied carbon, urban mining strategies and reclamation audits offer a pathway to avoid the structural downgrading of the built environment. Nevertheless, the storage of reclaimed building components presents a

logistical challenge that requires comprehensive urban planning and phasing strategies. In response, concepts such as viewing the "building as a material bank" (BAMB) and prioritizing on-site reuse are gaining traction as vital methods to bypass the environmental and spatial impacts associated with transportation and storage.

As a direct physical manifestation and response to concepts such as 'on-site reuse' and 'building as a material bank' Pihlmann Architect's Thoravej 29 exposes the potential whilst managing to retain and repurpose 95% of the existing 1960s industrial structure (Pihlmann Architects, n.d.). Whilst energy is still expended on compressing material into interior furnishing, the main return lies in the re-animation of structural components rather than becoming discarded or structurally downgraded.

Yet, even with these material arguments, the decision to retain a building often hinges on something less quantifiable: our capacity and willingness for emotional connection to the already-built.



[Figure 15] - Thoravej 28, Site Visit (Photo: Authors, 2026)

03.2.2 EMOTIONAL AND HERITAGE VALUE

Memory, Authenticity and Perception

Historically, discussions of heritage have centred on preservation and conservation of listed monuments, where new approaches are emerging. While resource value frames a building as a material reservoir, it is often memory and meaning that determine its survival. As Plevoets and Van Cleempoel (2019, p. 17) argue, adaptive reuse is an interpretative act where historical and cultural meanings intersect with contemporary needs. Yet when a building - such as Smedjan 12 in Malmö - is argued to lack heritage value ((Malmö Stad, 2023, p. 60), the challenge lies in reshaping this perception. If a structure's future is judged through such narratives, a counter-argument is necessary to avoid demolition.

The conversation with Malmö's city antiquarian Olof Martinsson (personal communication, March 4, 2026) touched upon this issue and led to a simple conclusion: we need to find ways to create emotional connections to the buildings we currently overlook. What people feel connected to, they are more likely to care for. By acknowledging concepts such as ordinary heritage, everyday heritage, and continuous use, emotional value can recognize buildings which lack official listed cultural status and still carry histories and everyday narratives. Heritage value does not only reside in what already exists within a building - it can also be something architecture actively helps to create and maintain.

On an urban scale, ambitions for "mixed cities" and less homogeneous environments are widely desired. In former industrial areas, the diversity of structures has a value in development processes. However, Malmö (like other cities) has a tendency to favor age-value, reflected in a romanticization of red industrial brick envelopes, as illustrated in Malmö's Plan Program (2023, p. 11), where neighbouring brick buildings at Smedjan 9 and 2 are designated as indispensable.

A similar approach can be observed in the redevelopment of Varvstaden in Malmö, where a majority of the industrial brick heritage buildings have been integrated into a new urban district. This increasingly influences both preservation arguments and new development, and risks becoming the dominant architectural interpretation of a city's heritage and identity. This observation highlights how emotional and heritage values are not fixed qualities but are shaped by trends, time, and subjective interpretation.



[Figure 16] - Varvstaden Visualization (Peab Bostad, n.d.)

03.2.3 EXCHANGE VALUE

Searching for Economic Models for the Everyday

In relation to top-down planning, fluctuating land values and the pressure of ‘upsizing’ to achieve higher density (Li, 2017, p.p. 8,11) further complexities arise in contemporary relations between investors, developers, and municipal coordination. Is the role of the architect to strategically position oneself by “disproving the demolition myth”? This approach is exemplified by practices such as Lacaton & Vassal who utilize the retention of existing structures not just as a spatial preference, but as a rigorous economic critique (Lohtaja, 2022). Their two projects Tour Bois-le-Prêtre and Grand Parc enable both tenants and the buildings to remain without fueling the gentrification machinery.

Locally, developers such as PEAB and Balder in Varvsstaden, Malmö, have demonstrated that redirecting the standard practices of tabula rasa toward circular, on-site retention can successfully challenge the normative development model (PEAB, 2024). Furthermore, implementation of detailed building stock analysis may enable phasing and “slow building” as the new norm. This in turn can possibly facilitate an organic introduction of a diversity of actors in property and facility management.

However, adaptive reuse is not immune to economic market pressures. A critical tension exists between preserving industrial heritage and subjecting it to extensive aesthetic refinement. This over-polishing risks creating a commodified ‘premium’ product that drives up market rents and gentrification, ultimately allowing exchange value to disproportionately dominate. This contemporary trend of over-sanitizing or conserving certain historical structures which are deemed relevant based on trends within heritage raises a critical question: **How can the preservation or utilization of the ‘ugly’ genuinely maintain affordability, rather than promoting new aesthetic trends of ‘ruination’ that fuel the commodification of industrial adaptive reuse?**

To achieve this, programmatic mixed-use can rely on cross-subsidization, establishing frameworks where high-yield programs financially protect the social use value of lower-yield spaces. Ultimately, deliberately challenging conventional notions of preservation focused on aesthetically “refined” or iconic buildings may create space for a broader range of building typologies which support low-rent programs. Rather than treating architectural value primarily as an aesthetic or commodified attribute, this approach re-frames less polished or non-iconic structures as active resources within an inclusive urban and economic strategy.



[Figure 17] - Grand Parc Bordeaux (Lacaton & Vassal, 2016)

03.2.4 SOCIAL USE VALUE

Preserving People, Practices, and Everyday Spaces

Urban transformation is typically dominated by two opposing approaches: the preservation of aesthetically refined or monumentalized buildings, and the tabula rasa model driven by densification and land exploitation. Between these two extremes, however, there is room for a third alternative. This approach acknowledges the need for housing and urban growth, while recognizing the importance of affordable spaces, existing cultural practices, and the social ecosystems which enable everyday urban life.

Such an approach is particularly relevant in districts such as Norra Sorgenfri, where former industrial areas are undergoing rapid transformation into new residential environments. In these contexts, less polished or non-iconic structures should not be dismissed as obsolete, but recognized as active resources within an inclusive urban and economic strategy. A relevant precedent exists in Malmö's Sofielund district, where the city, as the first municipality in Sweden, established a designated *Kulturljudzon* (Cultural Sound Zone). This initiative created legal and spatial conditions necessary for cultural production and nightlife to co-exist with the urban fabric (Malmö Stad, n.d.). Such a strategy exemplifies successful urban planning that moves beyond conventional preservation frameworks, protecting not only the physical buildings but also the activities and communities they sustain.

The need for such spaces has also been repeatedly emphasized in visions for Norra Sorgenfri. Early planning ambitions for the area explicitly rejected the large-scale logic of modernist urbanism, instead promoting small-scale, interconnected projects developed by multiple actors in order to preserve diversity and human scale (Baeten, 2024, p. 133). Public dialogue further highlighted local desires for affordable places where culture could grow within the rhythms of everyday life, rather than through overly spectacular or image-driven attractions. Good conditions for small businesses were envisioned at street level, while unplanned activities and user-generated projects, such as self-built skateboard ramps, were seen as assets to be retained rather than erased (Baeten, 2024, p. 136).

These ambitions reveal that social and use value in urban transformation cannot be reduced to the provision of housing alone. Densification may be necessary, but not at the expense of the social life already present, or the forms of collective activity which future residents will depend upon. Cultural preservation, in this sense, should not be understood solely as the protection of individual buildings, but as the safeguarding of people, practices, and spaces of everyday interaction. The example of areas such as Norra Grängesberg in Sorgenfri further reinforces that urban culture emerges not only from architecture, but from the conditions which allow human activity to take root and evolve over time.

03.2.5 FUNCTIONAL AND USE VALUE

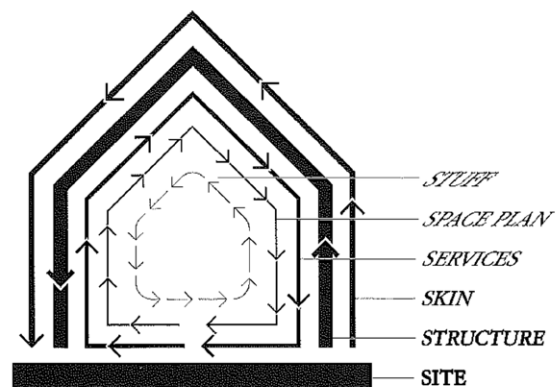
The Open Framework and Regulatory Obsolescence

If exchange value reflects external economic pressures placed upon a site, functional value refers to the internal capacities of the building itself. It concerns the relationship between spatial configuration, structural systems, and the potential for continued use. Functional value is not fixed, but rather emerges through the interaction between building and context over time. As Stewart Brand argues, architectural design must shift its focus toward questions of plan, use, maintenance, and future adaptation, asserting that “more than any other human artifact, buildings excel at improving with time, if they are given a chance” (Brand, 1995, p. 11).

To understand a building’s functional value is to read its inherent capabilities. The historical flows of an industrial space, its robust structural grid, and its deep spans should not necessarily be viewed as obsolete constraints, but as enabling conditions that actively inform future programs. By applying Brand’s concept of Shearing Layers, the slow, over-engineered structural frame (Structure) can be decoupled from the faster-changing spatial layouts (Space Plan) and everyday uses. This spatial flexibility allows the building to act as an “open framework” - capable of absorbing entirely new programmatic mixes without losing its core physical and spatial identity.

Furthermore, functional value is connected to the user’s perspective and the continuous act of care and maintenance. As explored by Angelika Fitz and Elke Krasny (2019), designing buildings that can easily be maintained is also an act of care, requiring an open design that invites adaptation and appropriation. When a building functions and adapts to the everyday needs of its inhabitants, this maintenance perspective transforms functionality into a relational practice, fostering a sense of ownership, care, and attachment.

However, the inherent capacity is frequently threatened by regulatory obsolescence. In a contemporary Swedish context, rigid building codes - which dictate strict, standardized daylight and thermal insulation requirements - often fail to consider the already-built environment’s need for adapted requirements (Lindberg et al., 2024). This renders deep, heavy industrial buildings “obsolete” on paper, blinding top-down planning to their immense structural and spatial lifespan.



SHEARING LAYERS OF CHANGE. Because of the different rates of change of its components, a building is always tearing itself apart.

[Figure 18] - How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They’re Built (S. Brand, 1994)

03.2.6 'AS FOUND'

Allowing Room for Varying Conditions

Within this value-based framework, the concept of “As Found” becomes central. It refers to an approach developed in the work of Alison and Peter Smithson in the 1950s, describing both a philosophical attitude toward existing buildings and a method for architectural transformation (van den Heuvel, 2002, p. 54). Rather than treating a structure as a tabula rasa, the approach accepts existing material and spatial conditions without idealizing or erasing them (Kozminska & Plevoets, 2024, p. 382).

Ethically, “As Found” aligns with a resource-conscious perspective by resisting unnecessary replacement. Aesthetically, it acknowledges the value of the ordinary and the mundane, even buildings considered “ugly” by contemporary standards. This resonates with Theodor W. Adorno’s argument that art, and by extension architecture, must **“take up the cause of what is proscribed as ugly”** in order to reveal the conditions that produced it (Van Acker, 2020, p. 2).

Importantly, As Found does not imply freezing a building in time. Instead, it frames transformation as a dialogue with the existing condition. Architectural intervention becomes an act of interpretation rather than imposition, allowing the building’s future to emerge from the layers of its past.

By reflecting on Sala Beckett and Flores & Pratt’s approach to ‘as found’ and palimpsests: they are able to allow the building’s merged material history to dictate a new architectural, functional narrative (Flores & Prats, n.d.).

Furthermore, this perspective connects to the broader discussion of emotional and heritage value. The As Found philosophy offers a methodological foundation for engaging with the built environment, ensuring that the existing condition is documented, interpreted, and treated as an active design element rather than grounds for replacement. In this sense, it offers a framework for evaluating, cataloguing, and designing with the existing. Functioning as a complementary perspective, it unites material, historical, and emotional values within a single analytical framework, thereby sustaining the continuous narrative of the built environment and fostering a more sustainable approach to transformation.

DESIGN TERMINOLOGY

Bricolage:

As found often adopts an attitude of bricolage, a concept described by Claude Lévi-Strauss as working with “the means at hand” (Stone, 2019). Here the architect improvises with existing materials and structures, treating unforeseen conditions and contradictions discovered during construction as opportunities rather than problems (Plevoets et al., 2023).

Subtractive Practice:

Transformation may also involve selective removal, or what Stone (2019) describes as curated partial demolition. By carefully subtracting elements, hidden spatial qualities or material layers can be revealed.

Phenomenological Reading:

From a phenomenological perspective, it focuses on reinforcing the experiential qualities of everyday architecture. Through careful attention to atmosphere and spatial “attunement”, the aim is to achieve maximum experiential impact with minimal material intervention (Plevoets et al., 2023).

03.3 METHODOLOGY: As Found as a Method

Operating as both a theoretical position and an active method, the 'As Found' approach guides the analysis and future transformation of Smedjan 12. It is especially relevant to the case study, as the prerequisite value assessments failed to recognize the site's varying conditions and alternative values. Consequently, this method intends to convey the vast architectural potential found in recognizing the ordinary and the mundane.

This approach incorporates what Stone (2019) describes as a *monographic analysis*, enabling Smedjan 12 to be read and decoded as a complex, multi-layered artifact. Rather than starting with a predefined design proposal, the architect(s) investigates the building by identifying the traces and immaterial narratives embedded within the structure.

Practical investigation of value applied to the context and building includes analysis of planning documentation, archival material, conversations with found users and continuous discussion between the two authors. Utilizing architectural tools such as drawings and visualisations aims to translate the discourse reading of the building for further negotiation.

VALUE MAPPING

As Found Reading:

- The building and its context are documented through site visits, archival research and photography, which attempts to catch the phenomenological reading. At this stage, the aim is to observe rather than evaluate, establishing an understanding of existing conditions, narratives, and relationships without imposing premature conclusions.

Value Inventory:

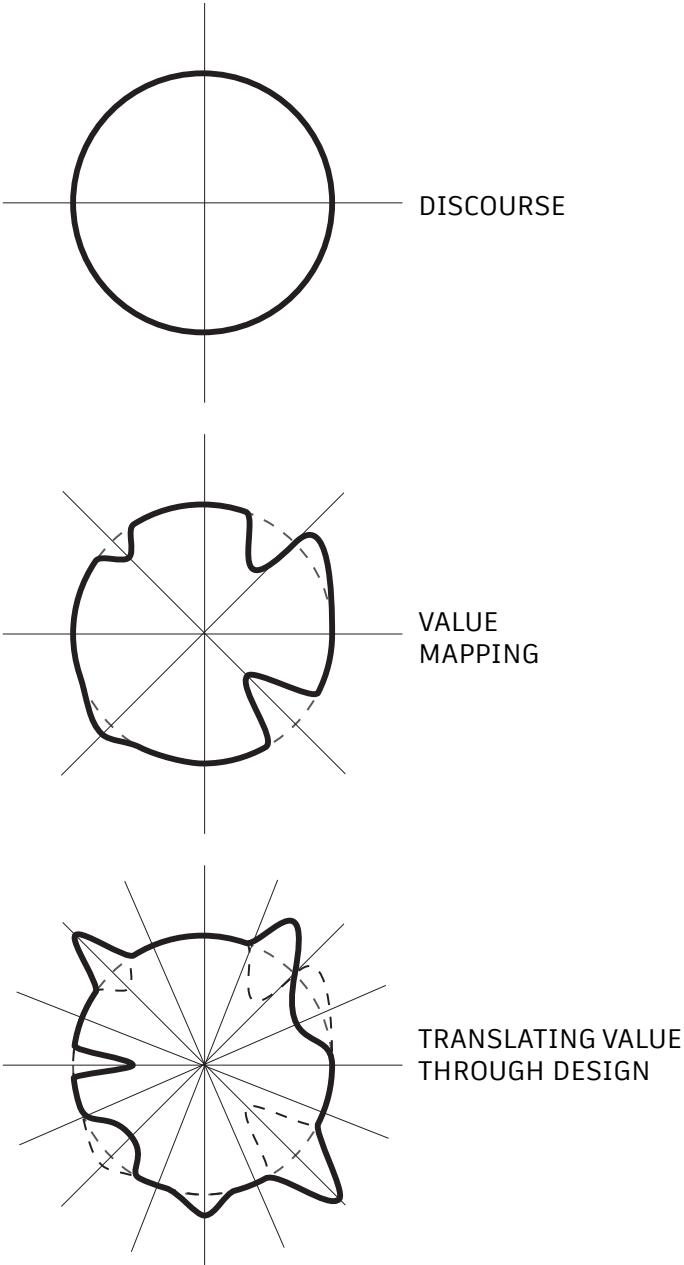
- An inventory of value readings in accordance with selected categories is generated, revealing synergies and tensions between contrasting forms of value.

Value Negotiation:

- An inventory of value readings in accordance with selected categories is generated, revealing synergies and tensions between contrasting forms of value.

TRANSLATING VALUE THROUGH DESIGN

- Design guidelines are established as a framework for translating analytical value findings into architectural intervention. This informs the selection of design strategies that respond to the building's identified values and capacity in evolving over time.
- The resulting design actions are developed, drawn, and represented within the thesis as a basis for further discussion and speculation on value development and potential outcomes for the proposal.



[Figure 19] - Method Diagram (Authors, 2026)

03.4 DESIGN APPROACH: References

The selected projects manage to demonstrate the efficiency and relevance of non-normative transformation approaches. They are in direct contrast to normative construction and transformation practice and illustrate what emerges when other values are prioritised.

“KOSMOS HARDWARE / SOFTWARE. STADTHOTEL TRIEMLI: RECONSTRUCTION OF BRUTALIST TOWERS IN ZÜRICH”
(KOSMOS Architektur & Design GmbH, 2023)

The concept of Hardware/Software in Architecture is described with the following:

- Building is a state of matter of a material.
- Any function is temporary.
- To cope with constant changes without demolition, we have to design architecture-that-can-adapt.
- Buildings should be considered as two systems: **HARDWARE**, the permanent, function-free structure that remains for ages; and **SOFTWARE**, that is easily removable, reusable and easy to change. It allows the building to adapt to the new program, context, users or other changed conditions.

This perspective aligns with approaches which read buildings as adaptable systems rather than fixed objects, emphasizing function, flexibility, and resource efficiency, and supporting the idea that the most sustainable building is one that remains in use. It is relevant to Smedjan 12 and this thesis due to similar structural prerequisites and succeeding design strategy. Additionally, the project successfully captures scenario-based representation showcasing flexible usage over time.



[Figure 20] - (KOSMOS Architektur & Design GmbH, 2023)

“RESOURCE CONSUMPTION PATTERNS DURING THE TRANSFORMATION OF VARVSSTADEN”

(Varvsstaden AB, Wingårdhs, & Circue, 2025)

The research project utilized automated digital screening to map material weights and climate impact, identifying an embedded saving of 1,757 tons of CO2 alongside questioning tectonic and cultural values (pp. 20–21, 26). These findings directly influenced 1:1 physical prototypes that test a “system for handling Varying conditions” (pp. 37, 41). This methodology enables the upcycling of non-standardized construction waste, such as gypsum and lightweight concrete from the site, by using flexible assembly techniques like wooden strips to secure varied resources (pp. 44, 49).

Addressing re-use aesthetics and the search for a continuous as well as historic identity aligns with the ambition of this thesis, despite being contextualised in a structure recognized with ‘age-value’. Furthermore, the research project generates reflection on resource usage in relation to concepts of permanence and temporality.



[Figure 21] - (Varvsstaden AB, Wingårdhs, & Circue, 2025)

“TO REPURPOSE THE UGLY”

(Lindberg et al., 2024)

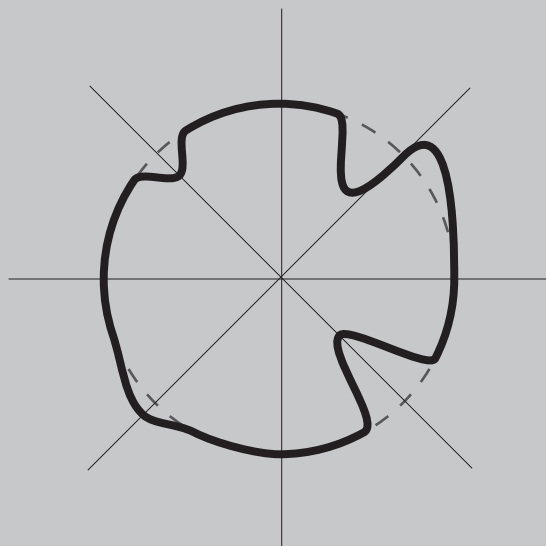
The project “To Repurpose the Ugly” investigates the transformation of 1960s and 1970s industrial buildings into housing to counter the prevailing “demolition attitude” in urban development (p. 4–5). It primarily prioritizes resource value by treating existing structures as vital energy and material depots that should not be wasted (pp. 5, 9). Additionally, the project emphasizes functional value, utilizing the robust and flexible nature of these buildings to create new living environments regardless of their perceived aesthetic worth (pp. 15, 20, 43). The study concludes that this approach is increasingly necessary for climate goals and can be more economically advantageous than demolition (pp. 45, 145).

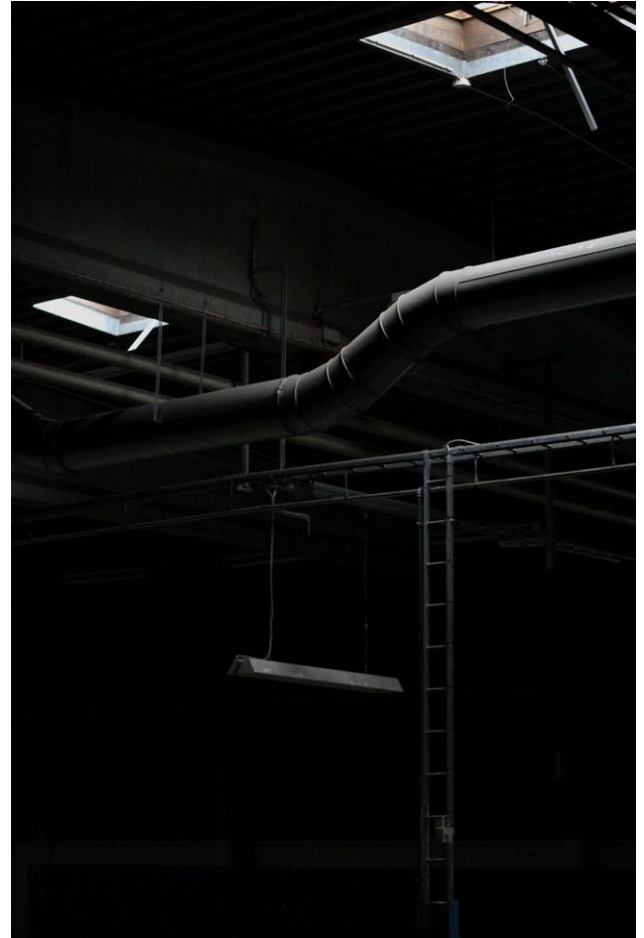
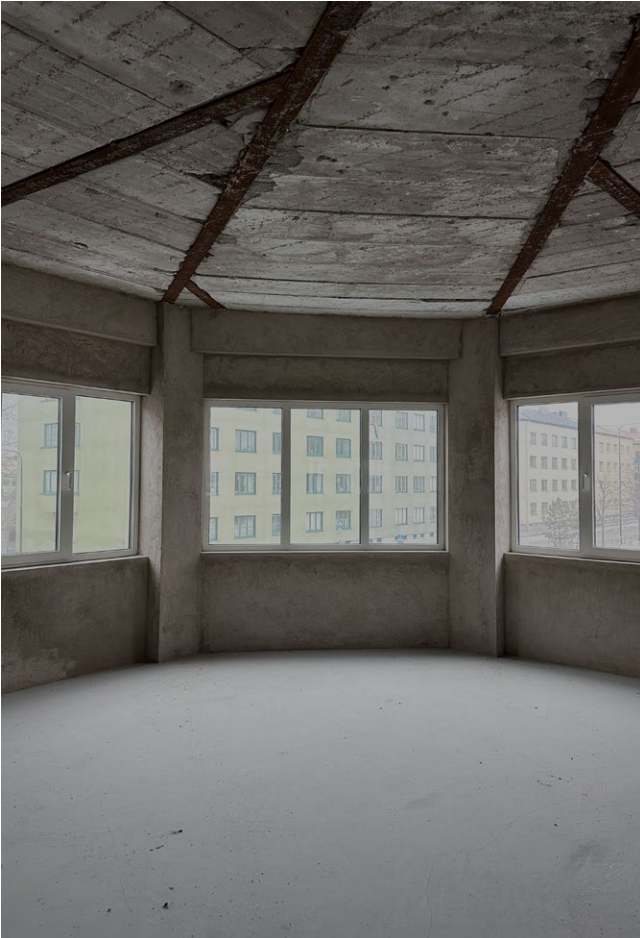
The thesis acknowledges and adopts this insight as another argument underpinning the necessity of re-assessing the value and preservation of flexible structures. Programmatically, “To Repurpose the Ugly” addresses the housing crisis where “To Read a Building” is less defined programmatically in order to prioritise flexibility and bottom-up processes rather than top-down planning.



[Figure 22] - “To Repurpose the Ugly” (Lindberg et al., 2024)

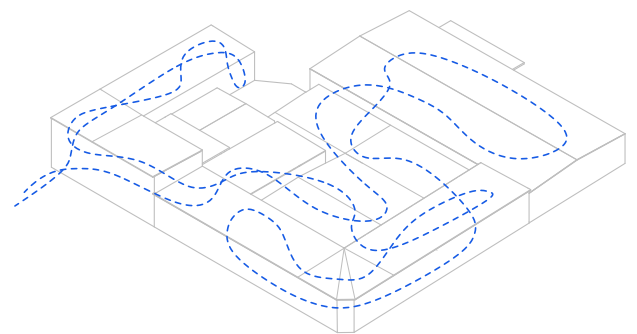
04. VALUE MAPPING OF SMEDJAN 12





Applying the method onto Smedjan 12, the ‘as found’-reading establishes an observation of existing and previous conditions, narratives, and relationships and avoids to impose premature conclusions. The inventory includes the entire complex, especially covering spaces accessible during site visits. The phenomenological reading as part of the methodology will include the following:

- ‘As Found’-reading
- Value Inventory (Extracts)
- Value Negotiation

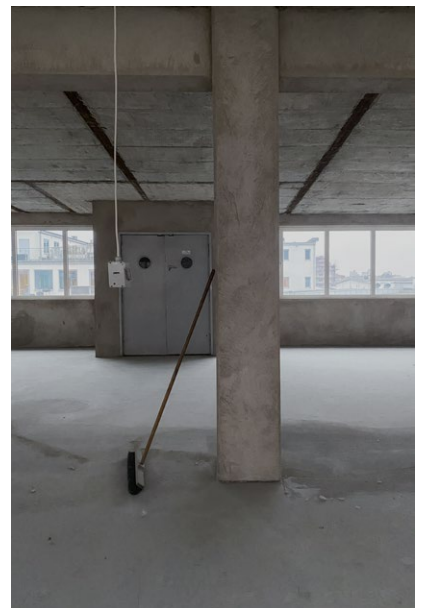


[Figure 23] - Site Visit Movement Diagram + Contrasting conditions visible in Smedjan 12 (Authors, 2026)

04.1 'AS FOUND'-READING: Value Overlaps

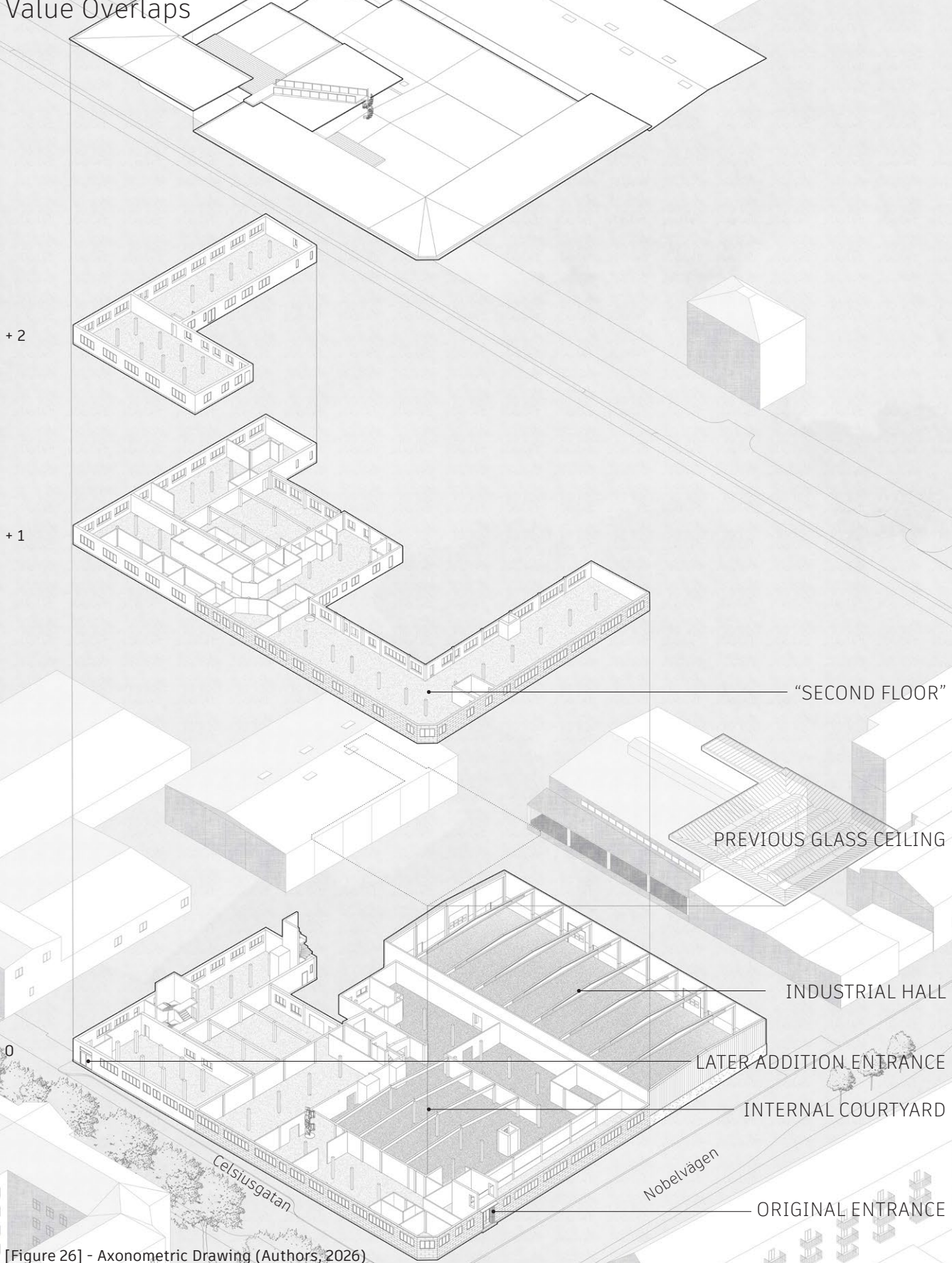


[Figure 24] - Usage Remnants, Industrial Hall (Authors, 2026)

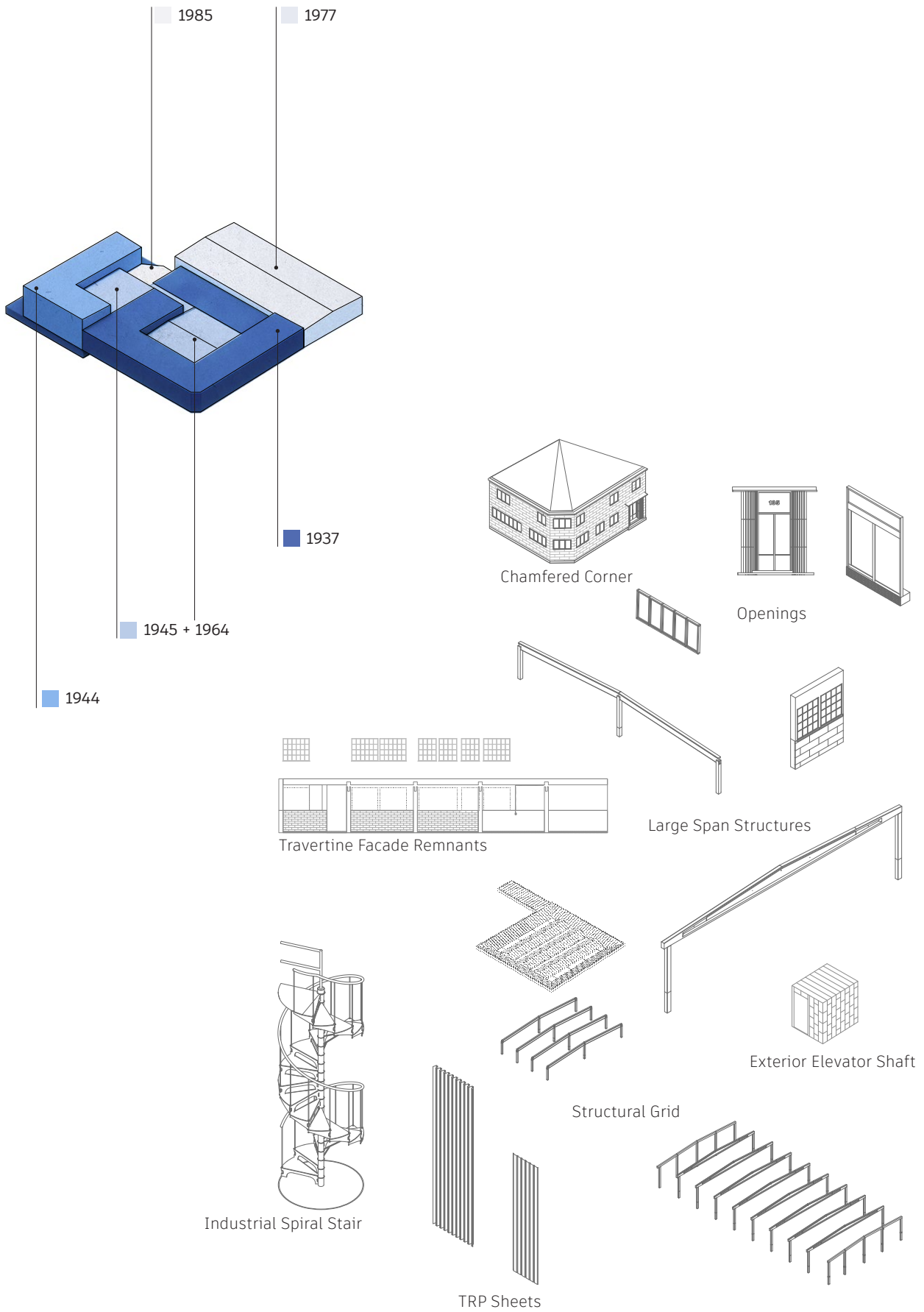


[Figure 25] - Site Visit Extracts (Authors, 2026)

04.1 'AS FOUND'-READING: Value Overlaps

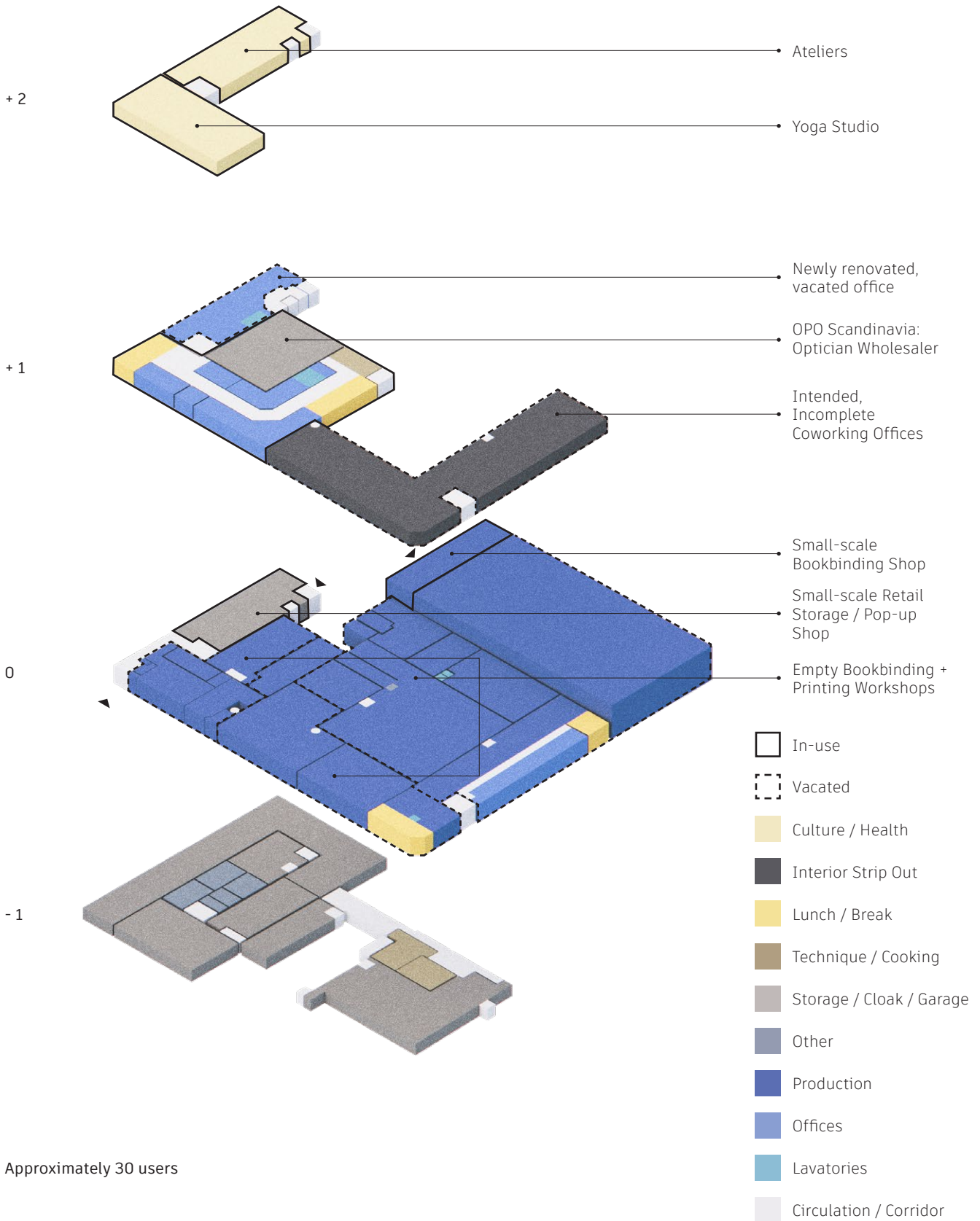


[Figure 26] - Axonometric Drawing (Authors, 2026)



[Figure 27] - Mapping Extracts (Authors, 2026)

04.1 'AS FOUND'-READING: Tenant Distribution (2026)



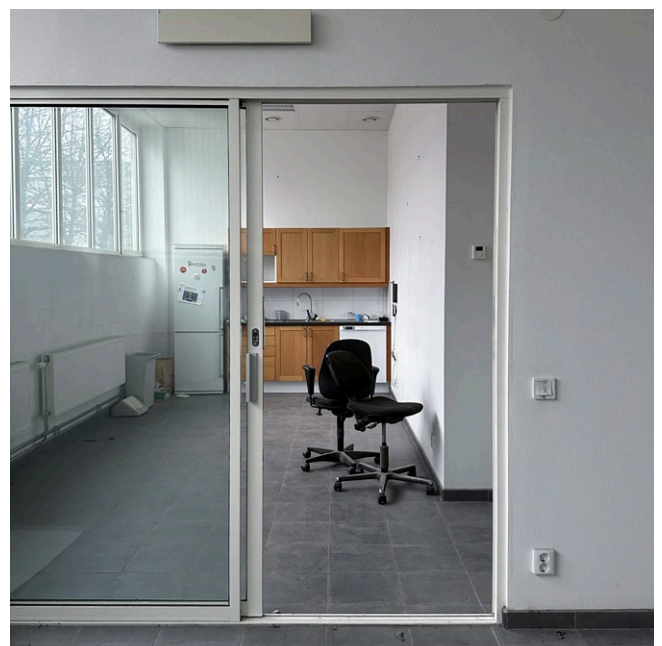
Approximately 30 users

[Figure 28] - Contemporary Use + Non-use (Authors, 2026)

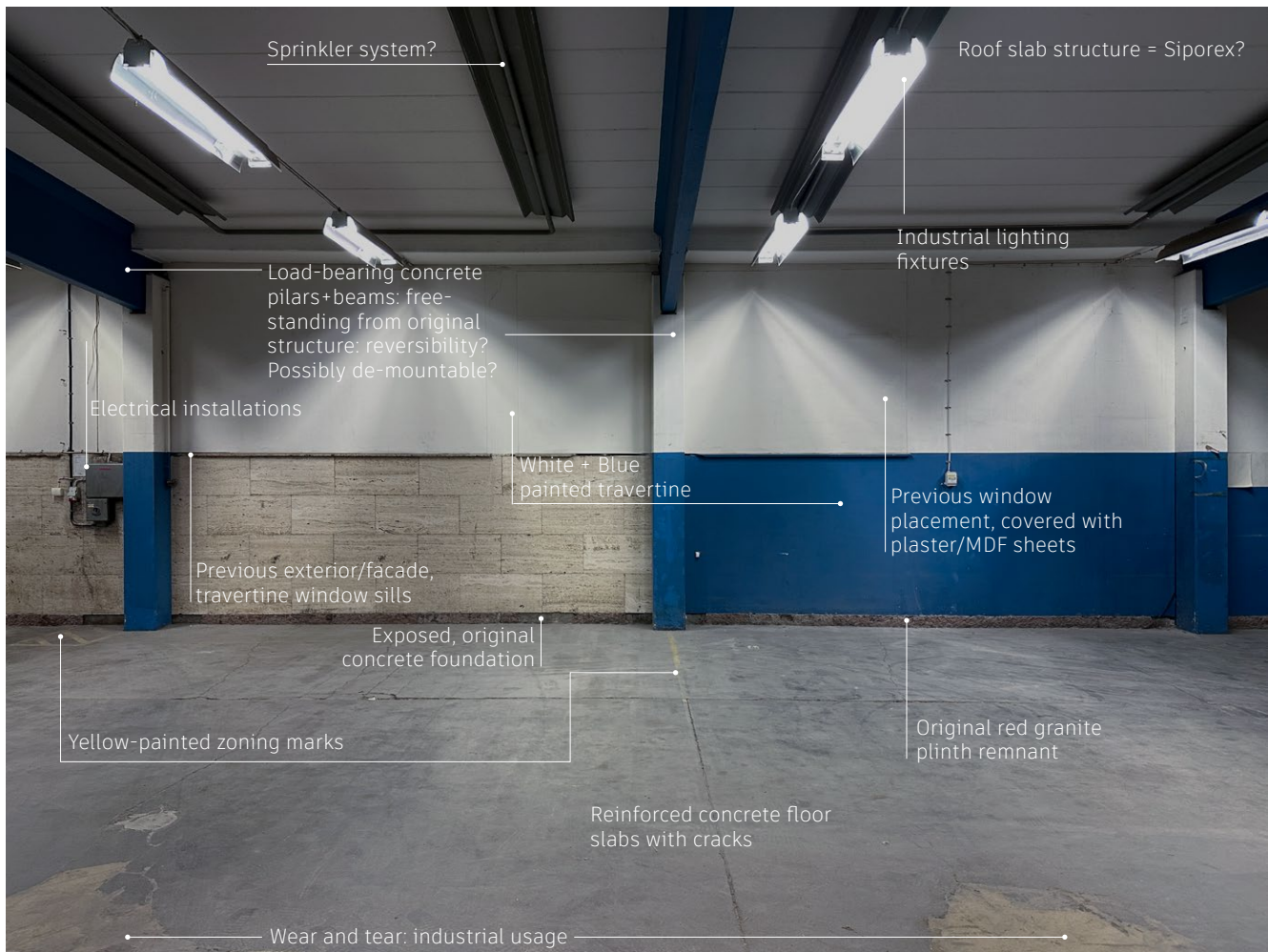


Office space located on the third floor is recently renovated and in good condition although generic identity. In need of a new tenant. Relating to use value, what is the impact on use(r) with long-term vs. short-term leases?

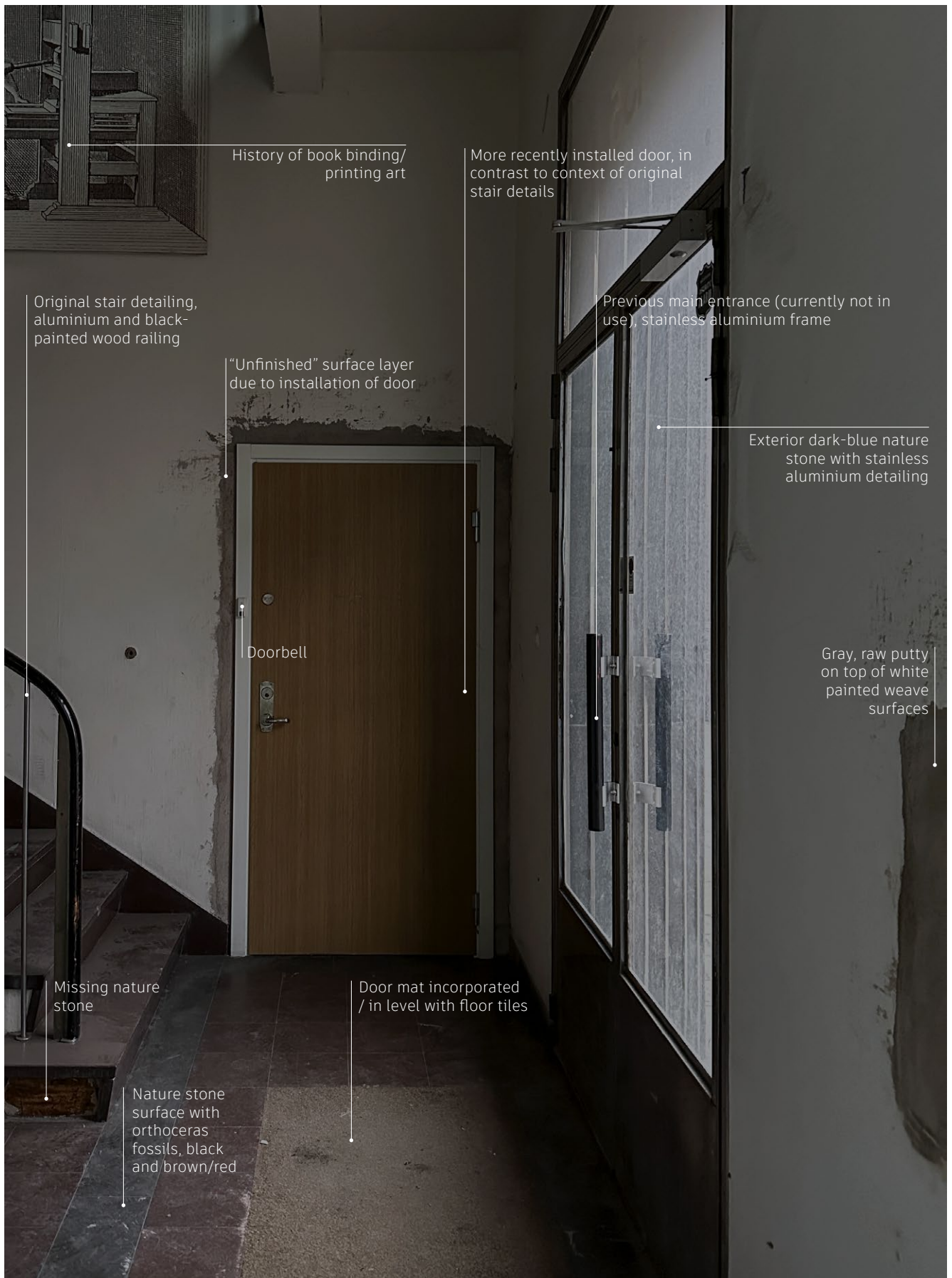
Kitchen and staff area located on ground floor in connection to production space, functional yet generic identity. Should this later addition stay 'as is' (hyper functional and 'temporal'), or is one to adapt a holistic renovation process which conflicts with 'as found', functional, use and resource value?



[Figure 29] - Interior Views (Authors, 2026)



[Figure 30] - Interior Views (Authors, 2026)



[Figure 31] - Interior Views (Authors, 2026)

04.1 'AS FOUND'-READING: Mapping of Existing Conditions

When walking through the former production spaces with the previous owner and manager of Förlagshuset Norden AB, we asked whether it felt nostalgic to return to what had once been his office and production spaces. His answer was immediate: “No, not at all.” When asked about the blue overpainted travertine façade in the courtyard hall, he explained that there was little thought behind it—it was simply “painted blue because that had always been the company’s colour”.

The conversation reveals how many of the building’s alterations were driven by practical needs rather than symbolic or sentimental meaning. Yet these same changes now contribute to the perception that the building lacks heritage value, influencing the narrative that frames it as expendable. This is especially visible in the stripped out interior of the second floor. The previous owner’s intention to convert the space into coworking offices resulted in removal of original detailing similar to the staircase ceiling. Realising ‘what once was’ encounters the question of identity, exposing the value conflict between recreating the past or building on the ‘As found’ reading.

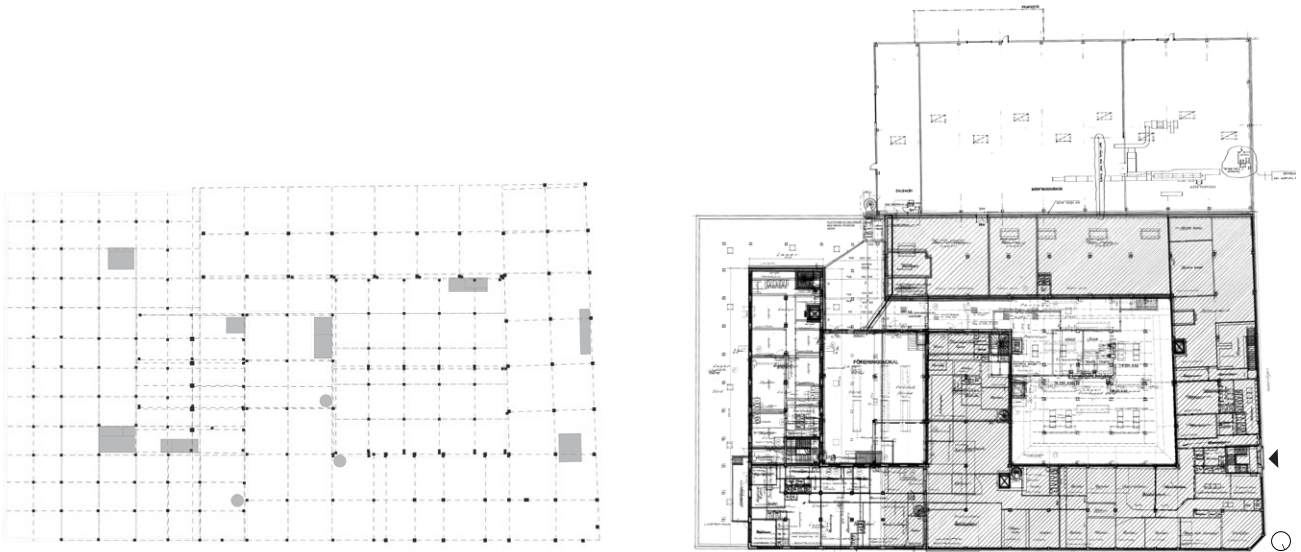
Within the As found approach, such traces of use and alteration become important material for interpretation. Through photographs, sketches, and observations of wear and tear due to adaptations, the mapping documents the building as it exists today. At the same time, this approach requires caution: valuing roughness and decay can easily slip into a romanticized aesthetic of deterioration, often described as ruin-porn, associated with curated industrial atmospheres in processes of gentrification. Rather than aestheticizing “neglect”, the intention is to understand the building’s existing layers as a starting point for future transformation.

“...we asked whether it felt nostalgic to return to what had once been his office and production. His answer was immediate: ‘No, not at all.’ ””



[Figure 32] - Interior Views (Authors, 2026)

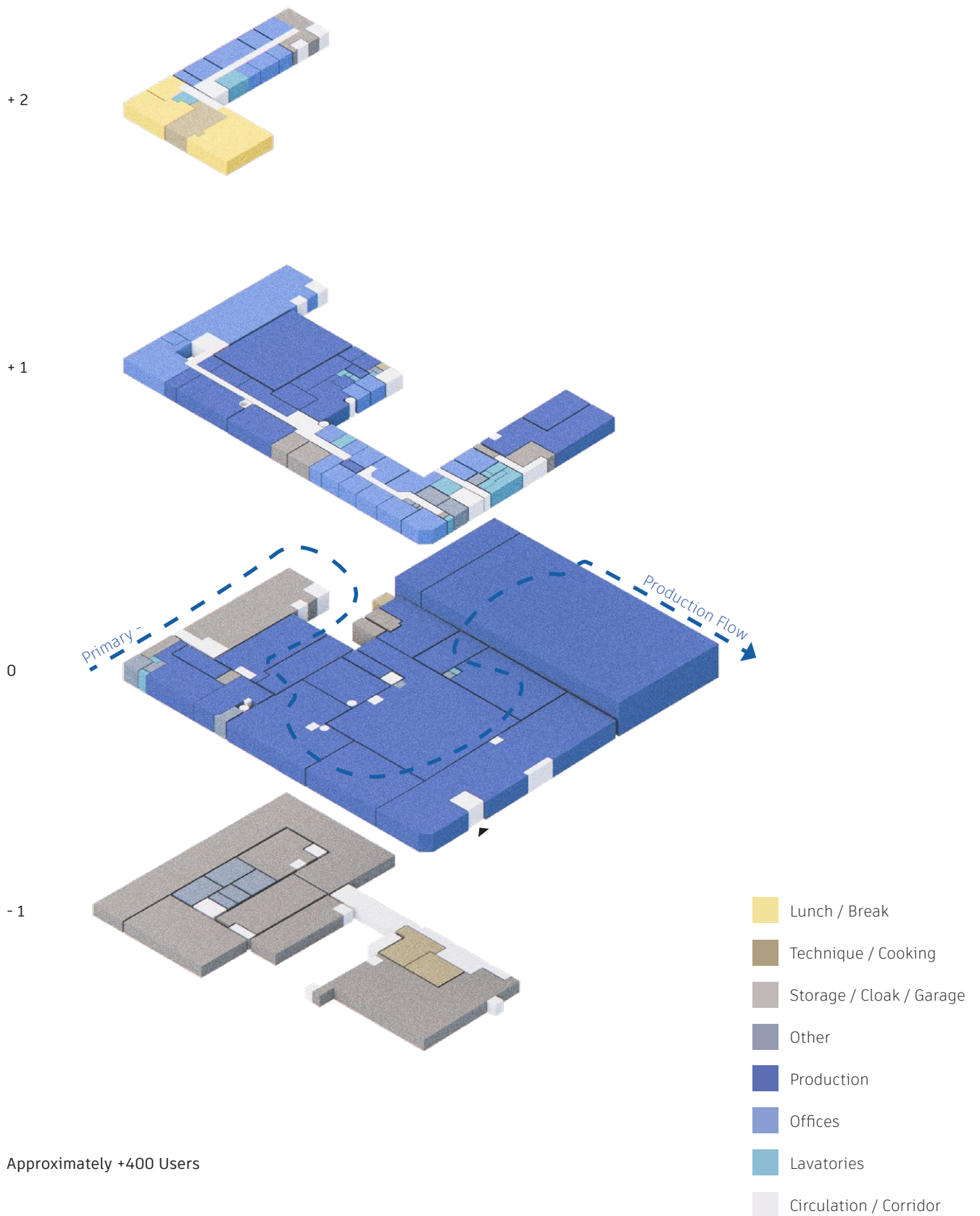
04.2 VALUE INVENTORY EXTRACTS: Heritage, Resource and Use Value



Reading original drawings and later alterations showcase a seemingly intact structural grid, new additions are free-standing from the original structure which imply possibility for reversibility. However, as the condition of the later additions function well, the urge of arguing in favour of heritage and restoration methods seem irrelevant.

The alterations have all been executed to cater to the functional and economic necessities of its original founder and producer, Förlagshuset. From an emotional reading, one can argue that these alterations expose industrial heritage development. The original design catered to on-site production, where all necessary functions and flows fit under one roof. Interestingly, the original space plan layout does not vary to the contemporary configuration which include a variety of tenants and functions.

[Figure 33] - Structural Grid and Plan Overlays (Authors, 2026 & Malmö Stadsarkiv, n.d.)



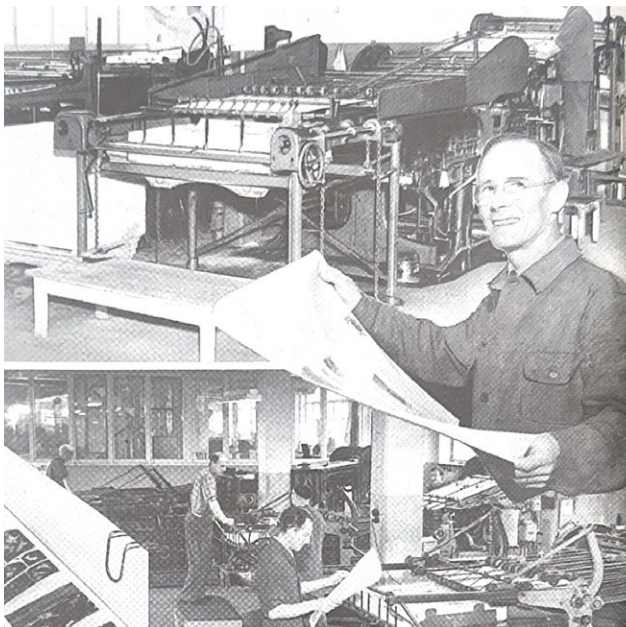
[Figure 34] - Original Owner "Förlagshuset" and Usage 1930s-1970s (Authors, 2026)



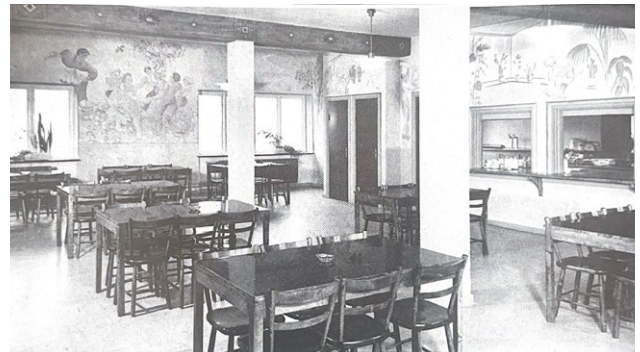
[Figure 35] - Förlagshuset Photo (Andersson, 2015)



[Figure 36] - Scanned Image (Från Bokskogen, 1954, p. 28)



[Figure 37] - Scanned Image (Från Bokskogen, 1954, p. 12)



[Figure 38] - Scanned Image (Från Bokskogen, 1954, p. 28)

Upon conversation with the previous owner of Förlagshuset, a Newsletter Magazine 'Från Bokskogen' was retrieved. Previous archival research did not manage to locate any stories from the past. 'Från Bokskogen' portrays everyday life with archival photos, personal interviews and showcases a historic appreciation of all employees.

This appreciation was readable in the care and selection of original materials and interior detailing which belonged to the spirit of Förlagshuset.



[Figure 39] - Original Ceiling Remnant, Main Entrance from Nobelvägen (Authors, 2026)



Since initial observation of heritage assessments claims that the lack of authenticity is the main argument for demolition, the architectural urge was therefore to envision 'authenticity' by revisiting the past. The speculation is based on original drawings and leads to the realization that restoration, thereby prioritizing heritage value, is in conflict with resource, use and functional aspects.



Comparing the contemporary 'distorted' travertine (ceramic tiles) to its original the conflict of sentimentality arises: Is the ceramic tile comparable to its original and in good condition: therefore considered valuable and to remain as is?

[Figure 40] - Nobelvägen Entrance Photo and Render (Authors, 2026)



Contrasting contemporary photography of one of the industrial spaces, without its intended user or usage with a render speculating on the atmosphere of the same space when covered with a glass ceiling in 1945. The urge of portraying nostalgic phenomena was an early attempt to revisit Smedjan 12's original use, while searching for identity and subsequent design strategies.



[Figure 41] - Industrial Hall Photo and Render (Authors, 2026)

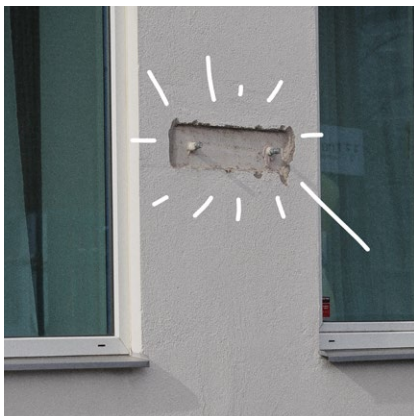
04.2 VALUE INVENTORY EXTRACTS:

Resource vs. Heritage Value: Covered Travertine Facade ≠ Demolition

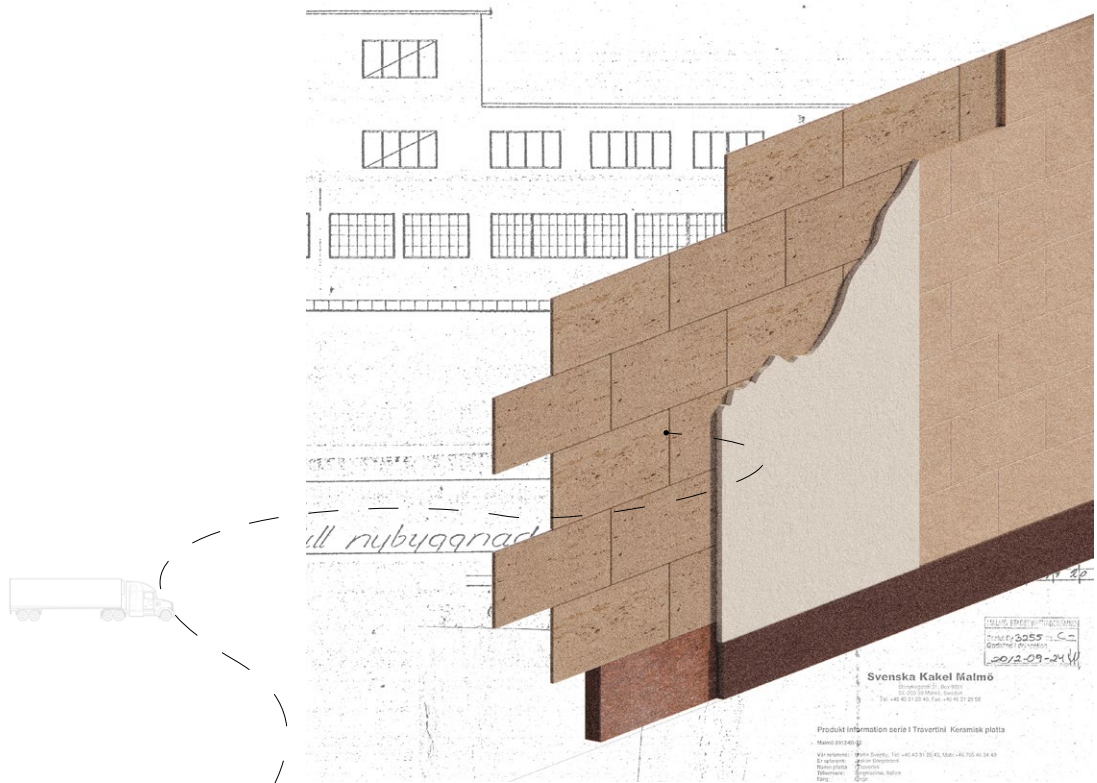
The facade has been repeatedly discussed, does it carry the historical integrity of the previous Förslagshuset or is it widely considered as distorted? Early model extracts based on original travertine fragments from an interior courtyard intended to activate this discussion.

The original exterior travertine facade is concealed behind the ceramic tiles and plaster additions. Presuming that this alteration was executed due to the poor condition of the original facade, one can question whether this could have been avoided. Speculating on scenarios that could enforce care instructions or conservation programs for less age-valued buildings may be appropriate to avoid the 'distortion' which, in the long run, leads to demolition. What does the lack of care instructions imply regarding the value of contemporary building stock?

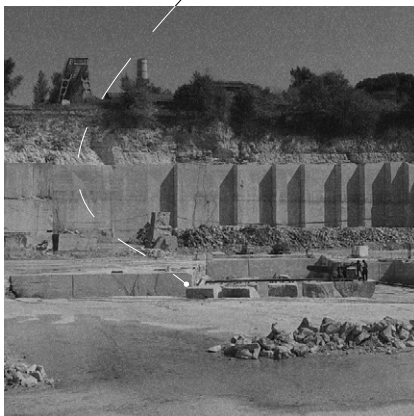
Arguing from a resource- and function-conscious perspective, the original travertine is nevertheless concealed behind fixed mortar and plaster. Additionally, the existing climate envelope is highly functional and in good condition. Considering all historical layers - including the initial point of extraction, transportation, and labour - the current structure represents a massive amount of embodied energy.



[Figure 42] - Visible Travertine (Authors, 2026)



[Figure 44] - Original travertine facade collage, covered with plaster, and ceramic tiling (Authors, 2026; Malmö Stadsarkiv, 2011)



[Figure 43] - Travertine Quarry Photo (Fratelli Pascucci, n.d.)

04.2 VALUE INVENTORY EXTRACTS: Resource Value and Embodied Carbon of Parts

Mapping the embodied resource value of Smedjan 12 aims to communicate the quantity, diversity, and physical reality of its existing materiality. An initial assumption in this reading is the inherent potential for demountability, enabling both off-site and same-site reuse through subtractive architectural practices. Realizing that enforcing this value alone is conflicting with previously addressed value categories.

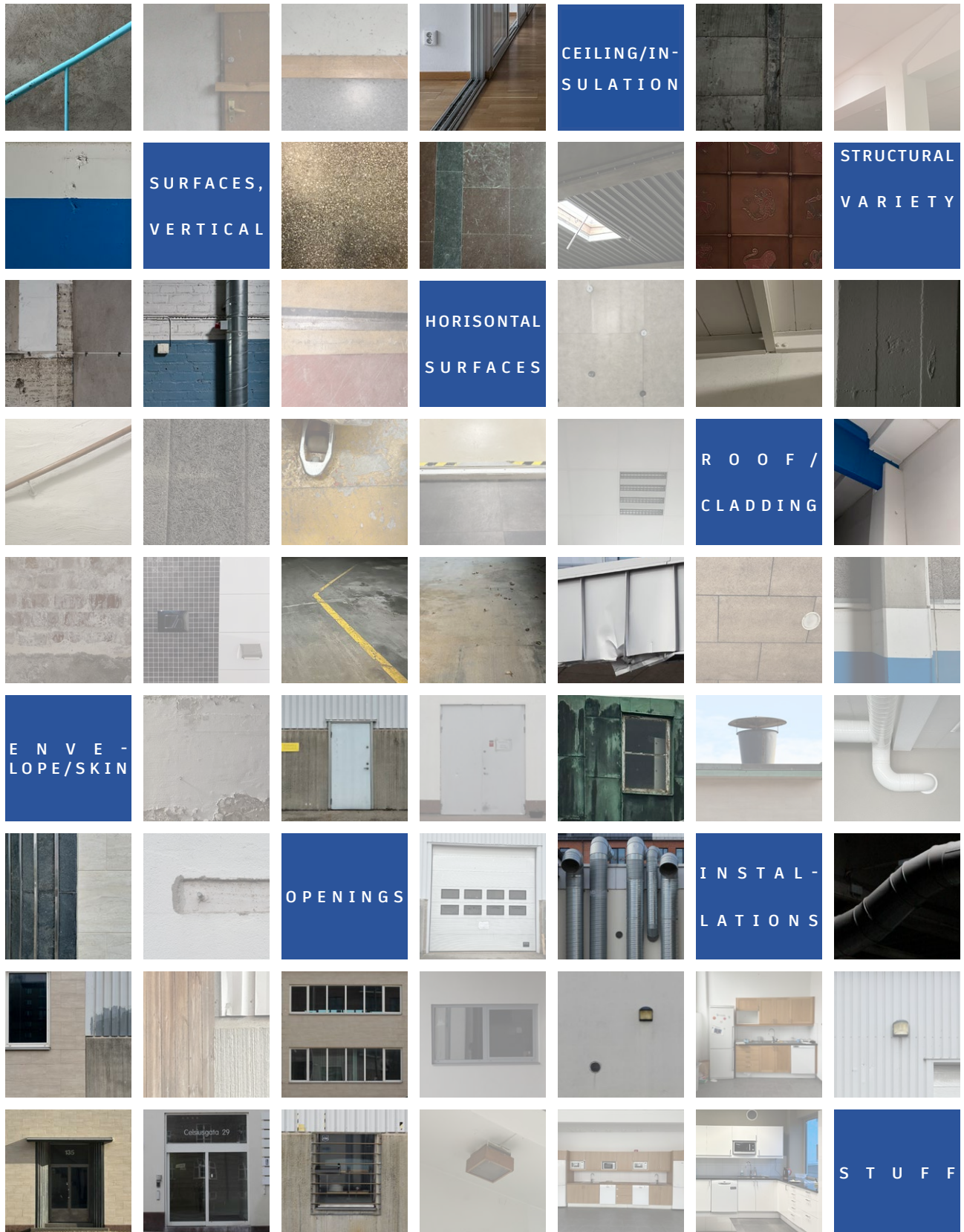
However, given the vast volume of concrete present on-site, the building constitutes a major accumulated embodied CO². Acknowledging this carbon debt argues for continued usage, not only from a spatial preference, but an absolute ecological necessity. Furthermore, this resource value is deeply embedded within the building's structural prerequisites. Originally engineered with robust slab elements and reinforcements for heavy machinery, the framework possesses a latent capacity for spatial flexibility, allowing for smaller interventions. Failing to fully utilize this inherent capacity constitutes a form of "structural downgrading". Instead, this over-engineered capacity should be recognized as a distinct architectural value. It may present a potential for future densification, by being capable of carrying new structural loads without demanding extensive new material additions.



[Figure 45] - (Malmö Stadsarkiv, n.d.)



[Figure 46] - Disassembly Visualisation (Authors, 2026)



[Figure 47] - Photographic Inventory of Parts and Varying Conditions (Authors, 2026)

04.3 VALUE NEGOTIATION: Searching for Design Strategy

To conclude and condense the value negotiation the discussion culminates into a hierarchy to be further evaluated through design. The value inventory highlights conflicts and complexity related to objectivity in initial readings. However, by applying a broad value categorization, the thesis investigation has been forced to re-evaluate its own initial perceptions, allowing a new, more nuanced hierarchy to emerge. Through this negotiation, value is revealed as a deeply multifaceted concept. While the process requires narrowing down the scope, it simultaneously acknowledges that a deliberate selection of subjective readings is necessary to drive the design forward. By taking this stance, the methodology accepts its own inherent bias, explicitly recognizing that prioritizing certain values inevitably excludes other valid perspectives.

Ultimately, this negotiation highlights that the most critical values embedded within Smedjan 12 to be further considered are the following:

- **Capacity for functionality, flexibility and open-ended use:**

Smedjan 12's primary functional value lies in its profound spatial flexibility. It relies on a robust, open structural grid that fosters an adaptable, multi-scalar environment capable of evolving alongside the needs of the district's contemporary and future users (Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet, 2025). This inherent spatial and structural logic argues for the potential of subdivision of space(s) and a diverse mix of activities across varying scales.

- **Resource and Structural Value Prioritized In Situ:**

The embodied energy within both concrete and other materials possesses the potential for demountability. However, relating to the contemporary lack of systematic infrastructure enabling off-site component relocation and structural reuse makes such a strategy problematic. Therefore, the value negotiation argues for maintaining the structural load-bearing capacity intact on site and avoids structural downgrading. In this hierarchy, same-site reuse of non-structural elements is prioritized over off-site relocation.

- **The Envelope as an Urban Contrast:**

The building's envelope, with the concealed layer of travertine tiling, ribbon windows and low overall volume holds significant value when placed in dialogue with its immediate context. Surrounded by higher-density new developments, preserving Smedjan 12's public facade creates a deliberate contrast. This juxtaposition actively elevates the building's heritage value, anchoring its historical presence against a rapidly changing urban backdrop.

- **The Internal Phenomenology:**

The internal dark cores operate as both assets and problems. The internal courtyard with traces of travertine, informal alterations and original window placement holds significant heritage, emotional and 'as found' value. The light conditions can be argued to be part of the overall phenomenological reading as well as limiting the functionality - a dual condition that the subsequent design process must actively navigate and balance.

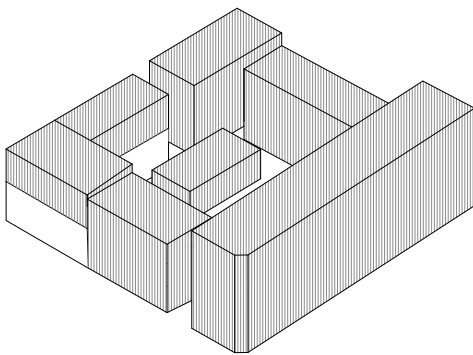
- **The Valuation of Heterogeneity and Irregularity:**

A core outcome of this negotiation is the valuation of heterogeneity. Distorted, irregular alterations and conditions are treated not as flaws but as assets due to their apparent functionality. For instance, 'temporal' additions such as employee kitchen/facilities are to remain until the end of their life-cycles to later influence new usage potentials.

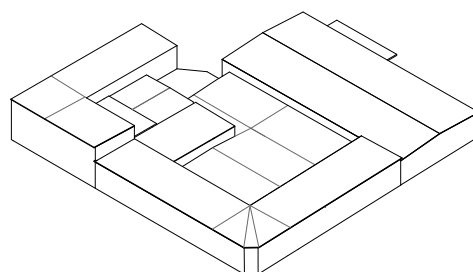
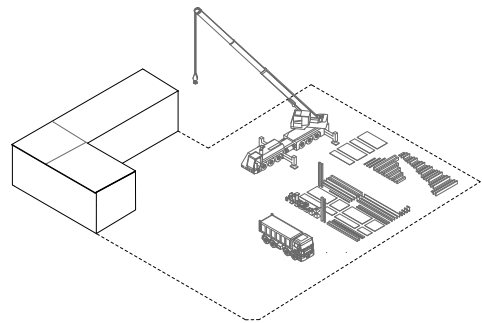
Ultimately, reading the inherent logic of Smedjan 12 uncovers a critical position regarding contemporary, conventional transformation plans. The process actively questions the authors' initial impulses of densification and the treatment of embodied components solely as urban mining potential. As a result, this value negotiation culminates in an alternative, carefully selected design strategy.

This strategy treats value not as a static concept, but rather as a dynamic one, aligning with Plevoets and Van Cleempoel's (2019) view that adaptive reuse "seeks to activate the building's full potential for a future society" (p. 2). Ultimately, the reading of Smedjan 12 demonstrates that the building possesses both the embedded value and the spatial capacity to realize this future.

DENSIFICATION IN ACCORDANCE TO
DETAIL-PLAN



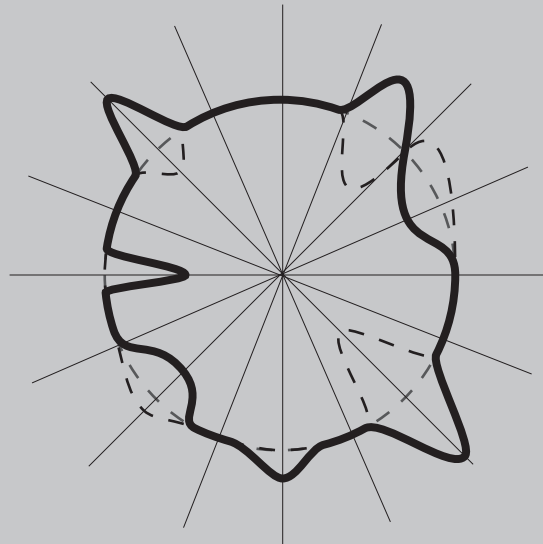
PARTIAL HERITAGE VALUE +
BUILDING AS MATERIAL BANK



AS IS, DO NOT DO ANYTHING, LOCATE
SAME PRODUCTION PROGRAM

[Figure 48] - Diagram (Authors, 2026)

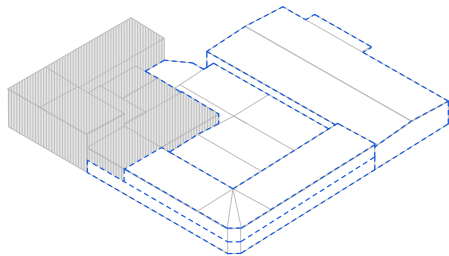
05. TRANSLATING VALUE THROUGH DESIGN



05.1 TRANSLATING VALUE THROUGH DESIGN: Overview

Rather than prescribing a fixed program, this proposal adopts an open framework - paralleling Kosmos's Hardware/Software methodology (KOSMOS Architektur & Design GmbH, 2023) - that prioritizes adaptability over permanence. As the value mapping indicates, the building's capacity for continuous, flexible transformation outweighs the utility of predetermined, static uses. This strategy directly responds to the shifting demographics of Norra Sorgenfri. Although current populations are predominantly students and the elderly (SCB, 2025), the ongoing development of the area necessitates a speculative public space capable of absorbing continuously evolving social needs and future reinterpretations.

Spatially, the design translation is delimited to the ground and second floors of the original two-story volume, the industrial hall, and the courtyard. The basement is excluded to focus the exploration, alongside the three-story volume, which already functions successfully with active tenants.



DESIGN GUIDELINES

- Keep loadbearing structure intact
- Prioritize same-site reuse
- Utilize existing functionalities, facilities and existing conditions in initial phases - *relating to 'As found' and resource value*
- Design for programmatic flexibility and future sub-division possibilities - strategic alterations relate to functional value where the movement flow is improved with additional access points

DESIGN STRATEGIES

- PHASING: will be used as a step-by-step implementation strategy that enables transformation to occur gradually over time.
- BRICOLAGE, SUBTRACT AND REPURPOSE: Prioritize same site reuse as a means to foster a sense of care, resourcefulness and a new interpretation of identity and heritage - *relating to emotional, heritage, 'as found' and resource value*
- STRATEGIC NEW ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS: Considering carefully motivated additions in relation to climate zoning, access points, and daylight conditions. Investigating temporal and permanent additions with selection of materials, striving to avoid generating waste.

DESIGN ACTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

- Speculating through design, investigates the outcome of a variety of actions such as moving and exposing artefacts, same-site reuse caused by subtraction or obsolescence.

[Figure 49] - Diagram (Authors, 2026)

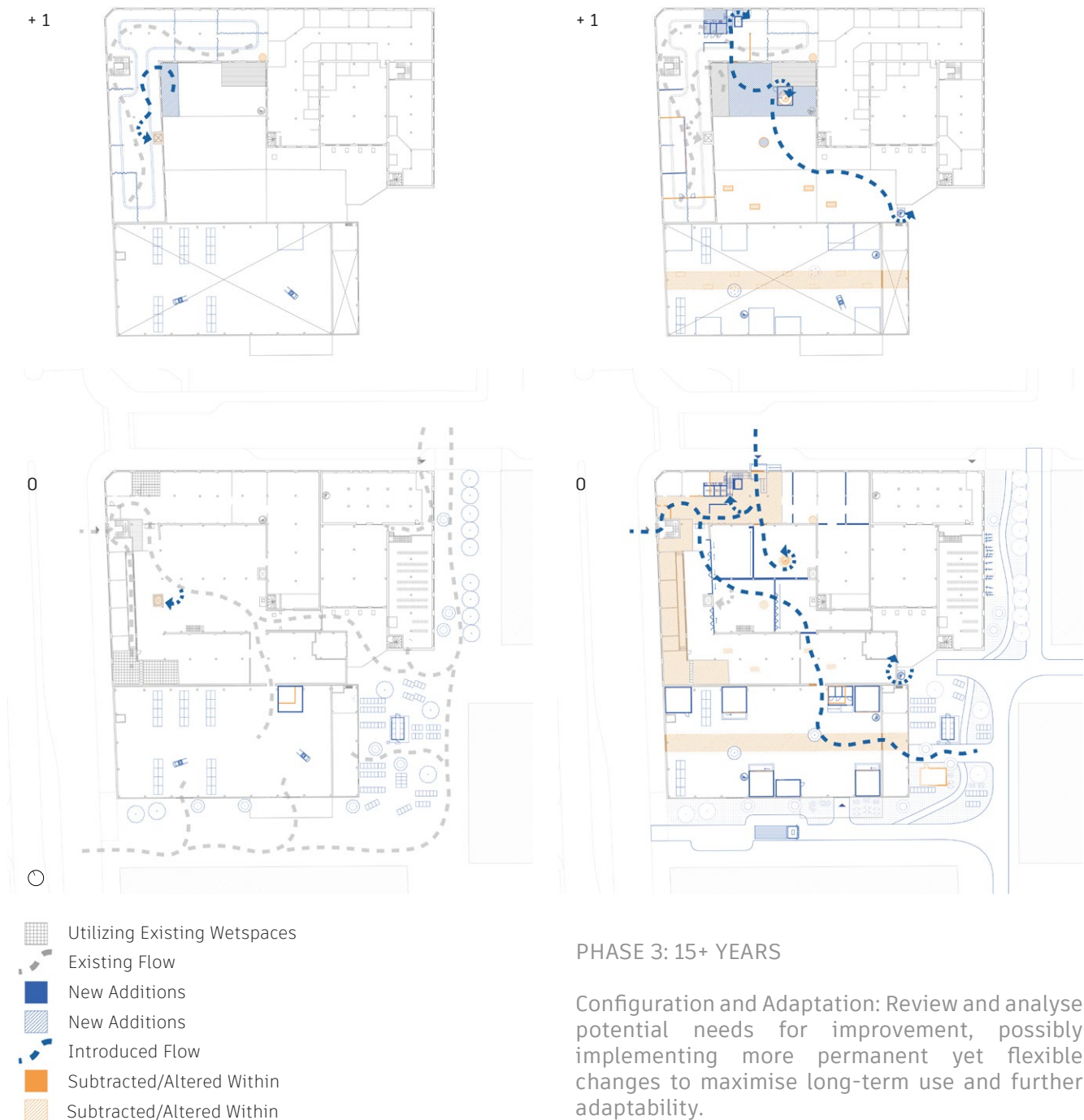
05.2 DESIGN STRATEGIES: Phasing and Extracted Material

PHASE 1: 1-5 YEARS

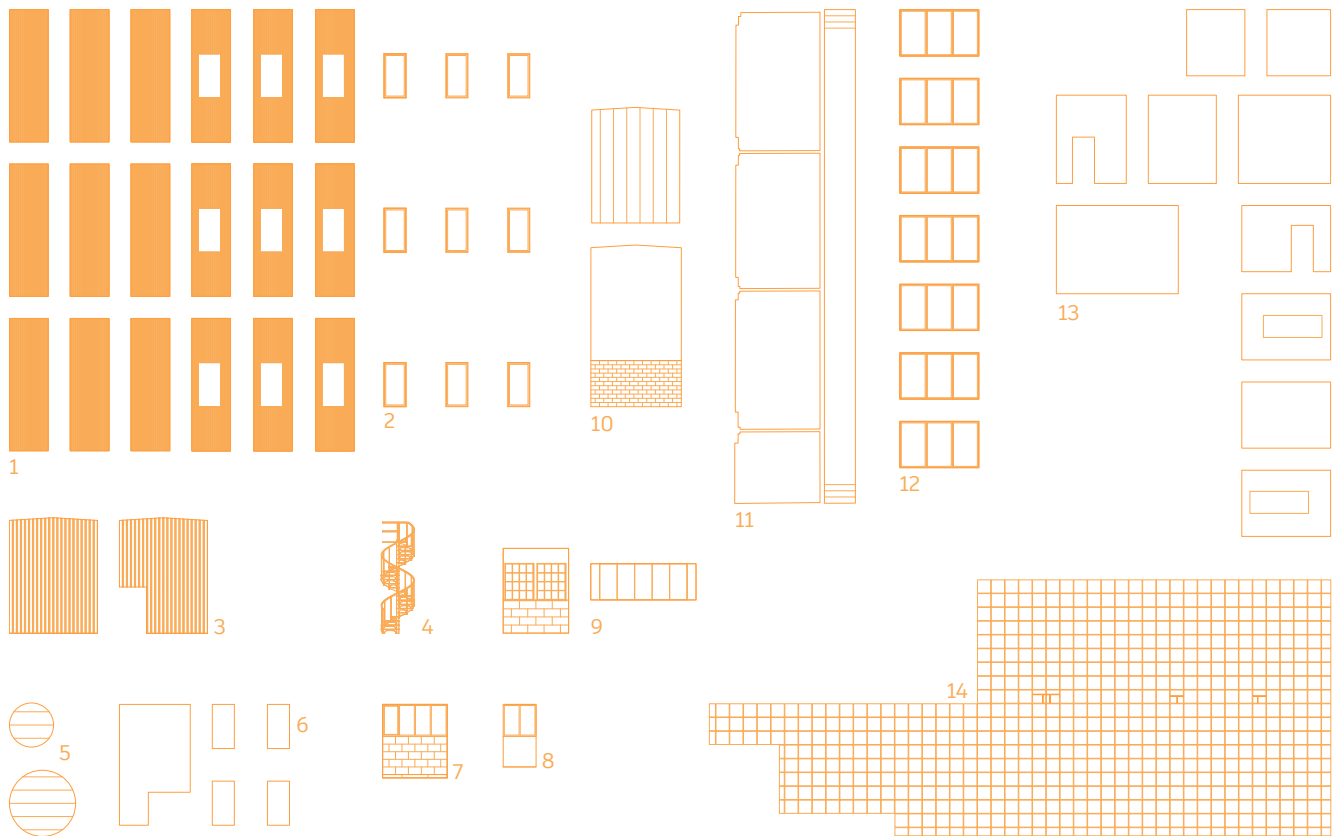
Basic Needs: Addressing minimum requirements through as-found conditions and immediate measures to ensure usability.

PHASE 2: 5-15 YEARS

Spatial Interventions: Introducing additions such as vertical movement and improvements for universal accessibility as well as flexible usage including new openings, flows and improved light conditions.



[Figure 50] - Phasing Strategy (Authors, 2026)



1. TRP (SELF-SUPPORTING TRAPEZOIDAL) ROOF SHEETS
 With cut-outs: # 9
 Without: # 9

2. SMOKE ROOF VENTS
 1*2 m: # 9

3. TRP (SELF-SUPPORTING TRAPEZOIDAL) FACADE SHEETS
 ~38 m²

4. SPIRAL STAIRCASE,
 Industrial remnant

5. SIPOREX ROOF SLAB CUT-OUTS
 Ø 2 + 3 m

6. CONCRETE FLOOR SLAB CUT-OUTS
 ~14 m² allowing new vertical movement + ~8 m² re-purposing smoke roof vents

7. FACADE EXTRACTION, GROUND FLOOR
 4-pane window + facade ceramic tiles + wall structure

8. FACADE EXTRACTION, 2ND FLOOR
 2-pane window + facade plaster + wall structure

9. SURFACE EXTRACTION, INTERIOR COURTYARD
 Original travertine + windows
 + Plaster boards uncovering original windows

10. INTERIOR SURFACE EXTRACTION, INDUSTRIAL HALL
 LECA (Lightweight Expanded Clay Aggregate) blocks, ~8 m², + Balloon Frame + Plaster + Troldtekt Acoustic Panels ~20 m²

11. 3-STRIP OAK PARQUET, IN NEED FOR MAINTENANCE
 ~120 m²

12. ALUMINIUM SLIDING DOORS
 # 7

13. INTERIOR SURFACES:
 OSB, wood panels, Plaster, balloon frames
 ~ 120 m²

14. SUSPENDED ACOUSTIC CEILING, IN NEED FOR MAINTENANCE OR HAS REPURPOSE POTENTIAL
 600 * 600 components, ~240 m²

[Figure 51] - Extracted Material (Authors, 2026)

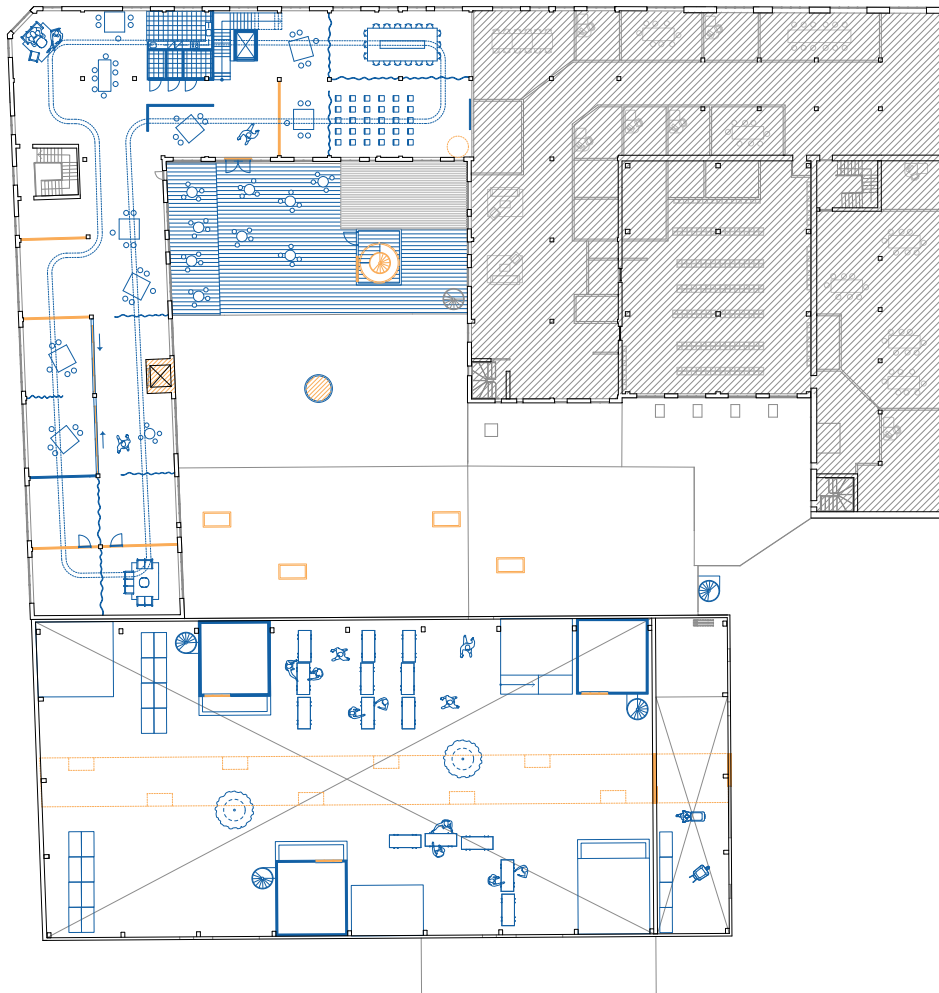


[Figure 52] - Second Phasing Strategy, Ground Floor (Authors, 2026)

At the urban scale, the plans of the second phase emphasize functional value by maintaining existing vehicular access, preserving the capacity to support future production flows if necessary. Consequently hinting to an adaptive urban landscape which enables exterior use value for both the building's users and the district's residents.

Internally, the plan leverages the building's inherent capacities by upgrading existing wet-space facilities and enabling the strategic subdivision of large-span areas.

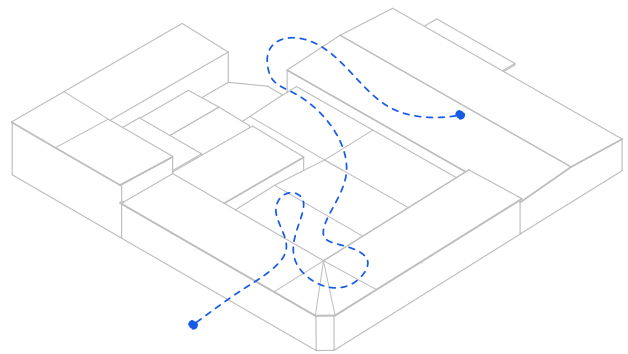
These interventions are designed to introduce flexible spaces for both spontaneous gathering and formal use. Crucially, the proposed floor plan illustrates a heavily public-facing program that deliberately conflicts with conventional, profit-driven land utilization. In this sense, the layout does not attempt to present a realistic market scenario, but rather operates as a spatial thought experiment - testing the building's ultimate capacity for social and communal value.



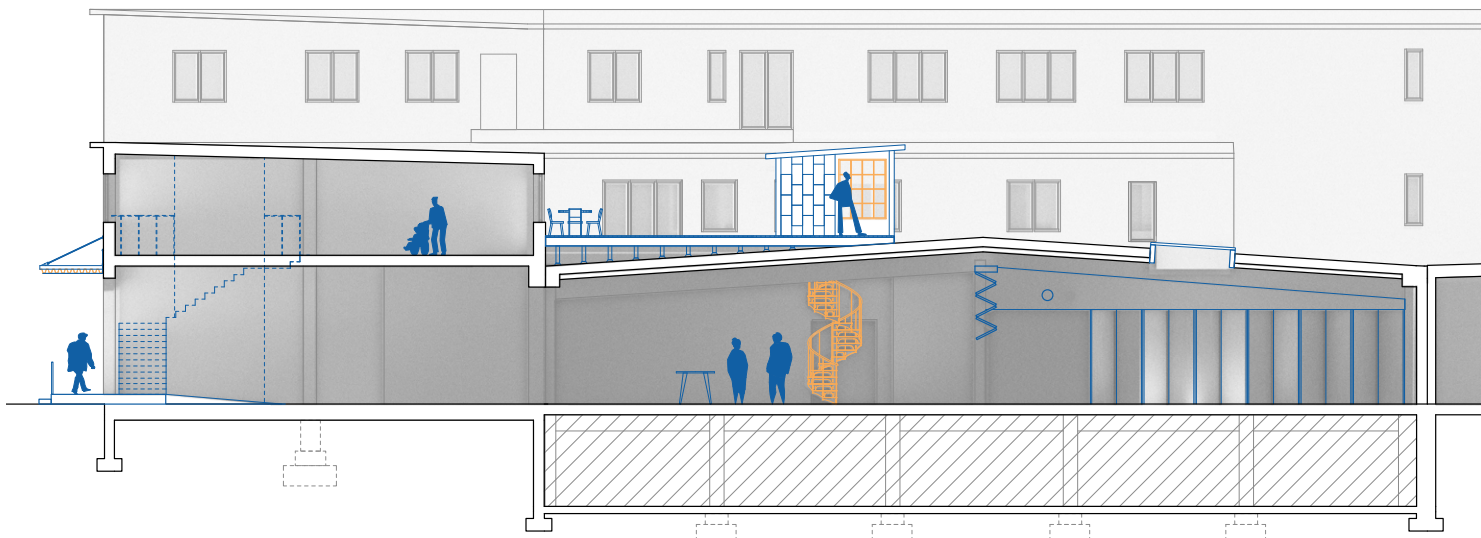
[Figure 53] - Second Phasing Strategy, Second Floor(Authors, 2026)

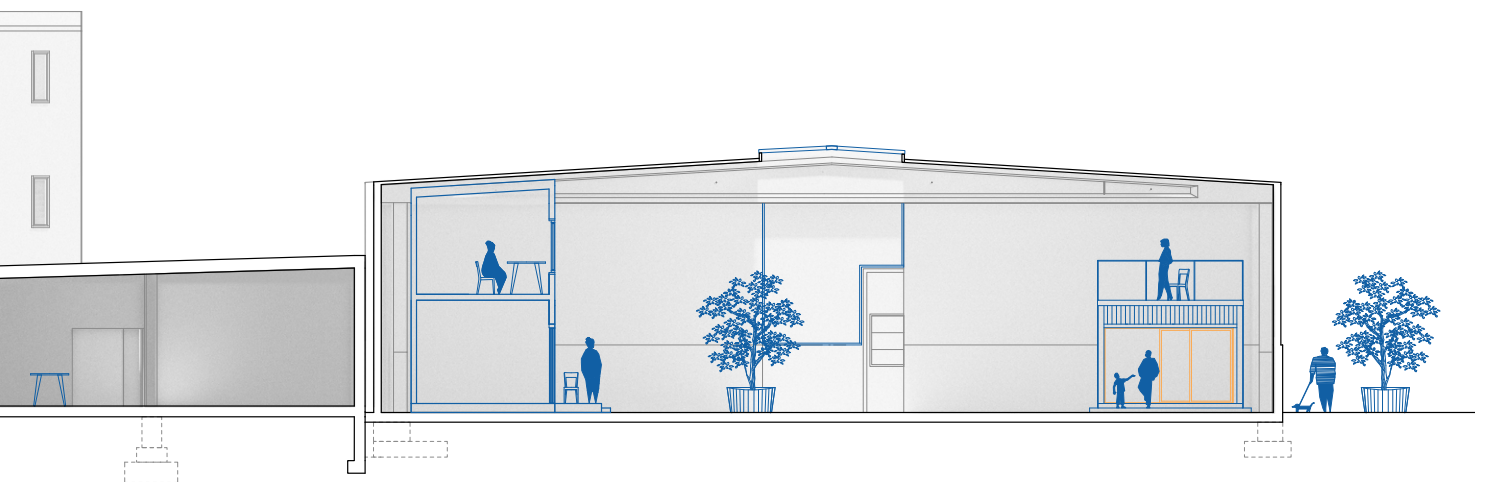
05.3 DESIGN ACTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION: Promenade Narrative

This narrative cuts through the building to reveal one of the possible movement sequences. The journey begins at the new entrance along Celsiusgatan, acting as an open invitation to the public. Moving inward, the route offers a gentle choice: one might wander forward into the internal courtyard, or ascend vertically toward the daylight of the second floor, stepping out onto the terrace. The narrative leads out into the exterior courtyard, before re-entering the building into the industrial hall.



[Figure 54] - Promenade Narrative (Authors, 2026)



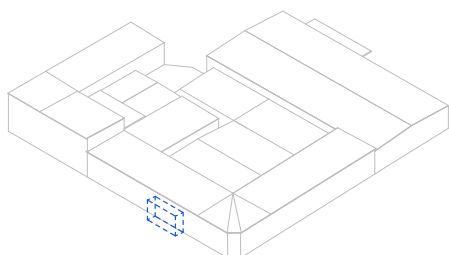
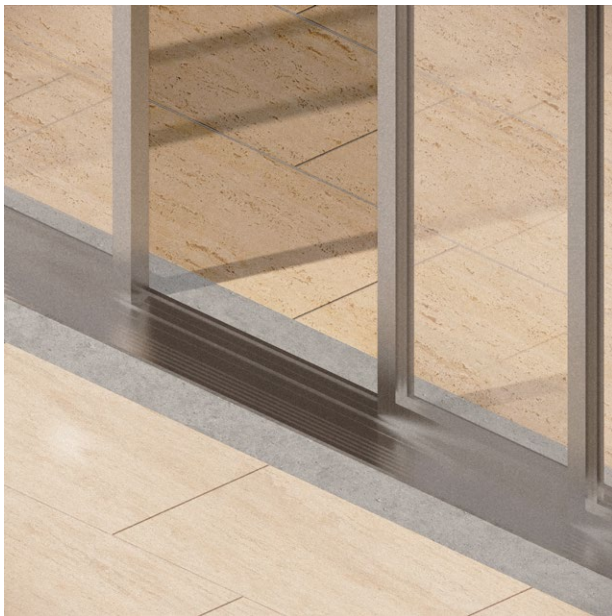


[Figure 55] - Phasing Strategy Section (Authors, 2026)

05.3.1 PROMENADE NARRATIVE: New Entrance

Addressing functional, heritage as well as resource values, the strategically positioned new entrance introduces a new spatial flow into Smedjan 12. The deliberate contrast between the original travertine and the new ceramic tiles physically illustrates the thesis's reading of the building.

This intervention speculates on the varied potentials of reuse: either by downgrading dismantled components into aggregate for new surfaces, such as terrazzo, or by retaining the material's inherent load-bearing capacity to act as a new horizontal shelter.



[Figures 56+57] - Entrance Illustrations (Authors, 2026)



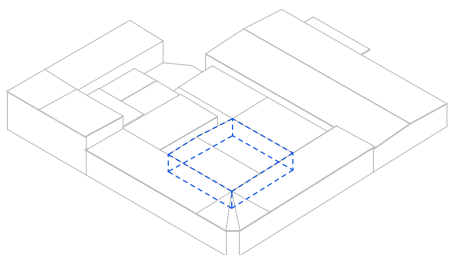
[Figure 58] - Entrance Celsiusgatan (Authors, 2026)

05.3.2 PROMENADE NARRATIVE: Internal Courtyard

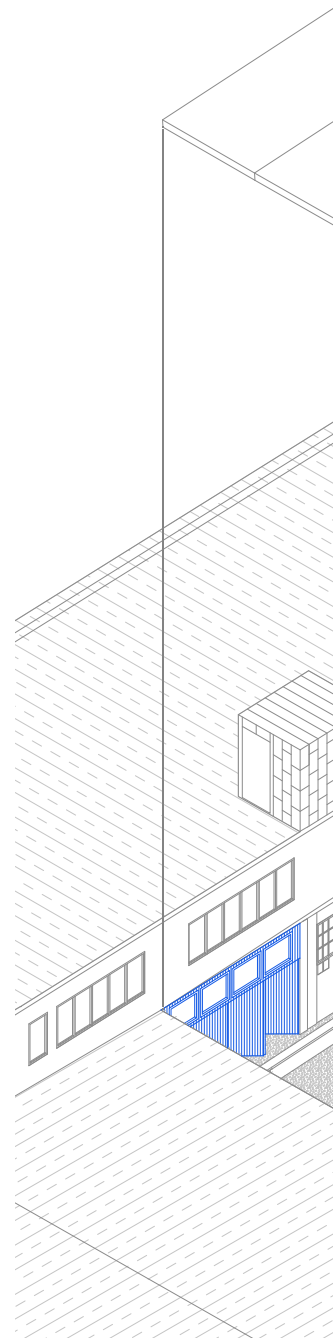
Read through the 'as found' lens, the value inventory embraces the internal courtyard's traces of heritage and its contemporary state of 'neglect' as spatial assets. By positioning this courtyard as a central node, the design establishes a dynamic core capable of diverse social interactions, where space is subdivided through flexible and introduced partitions. Above, the exterior upper floor is developed as a continuous sequence, promoting outdoor access for the building's users.

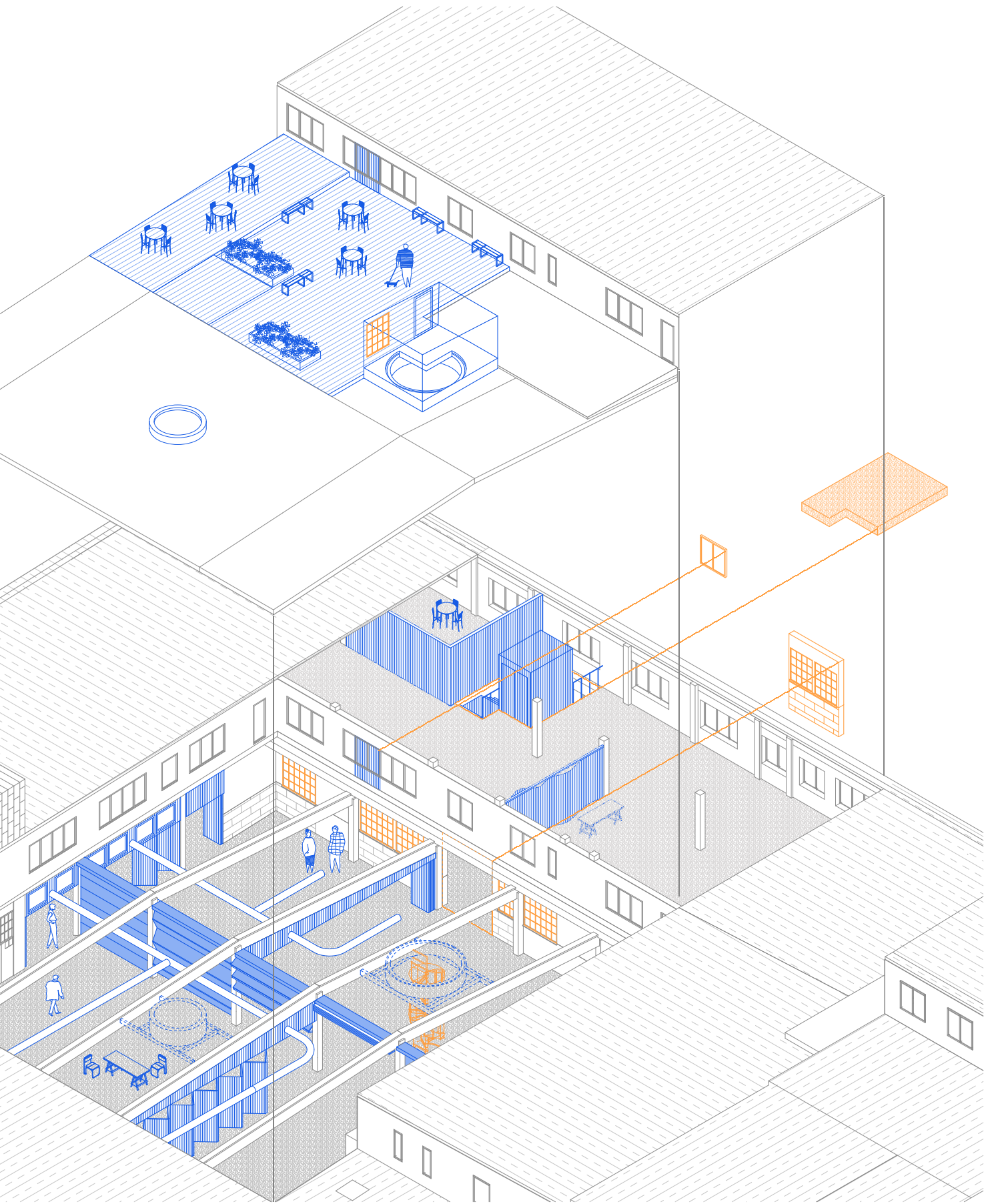
Ultimately, accommodating a potential for public mixed-use programs, required a deliberate spatial negotiation: using subtractive practices to remove material and draw essential daylight into the building.

An initial architectural impulse was to fully open the core by removing the ceiling and introducing a glass roof, thereby transforming the space into a light-filled courtyard. However, following the 'as found' reading and subsequent design guidelines, an alternative concept has been developed.



[Figure 59] - Internal Courtyard (Authors, 2026)





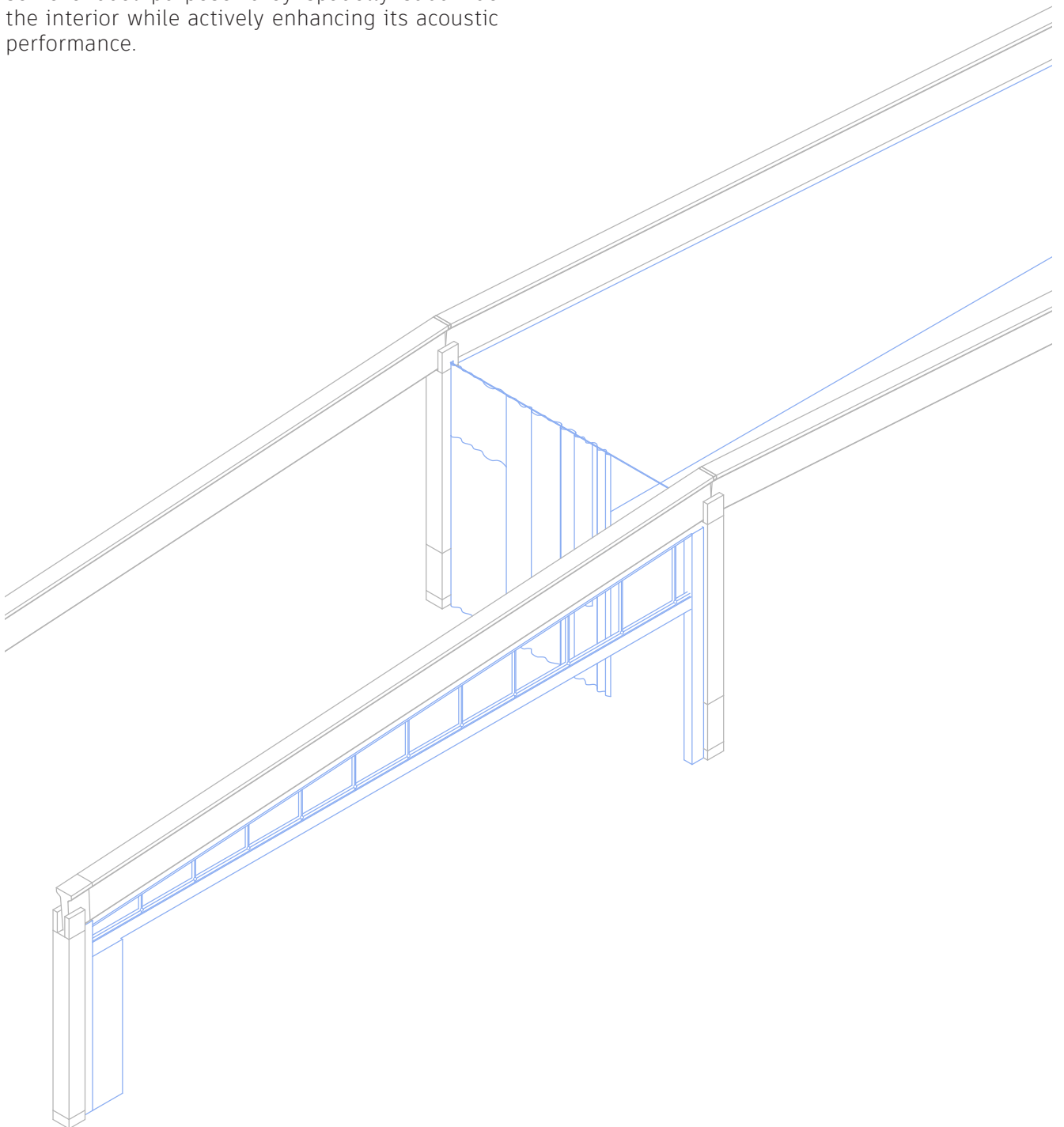
[Figure 60] - Second Phase, Scheme (Authors, 2026)



[Figure 61] - Internal Courtyard (Authors, 2026)

The newly introduced light conditions make a final heritage statement, drawing focus to the relocated spiral staircase which commemorates the industrial past of the building.

Constructed of robust, upcycled, and biodegradable materials, these flexible partitions serve a dual purpose: they spatially subdivide the interior while actively enhancing its acoustic performance.

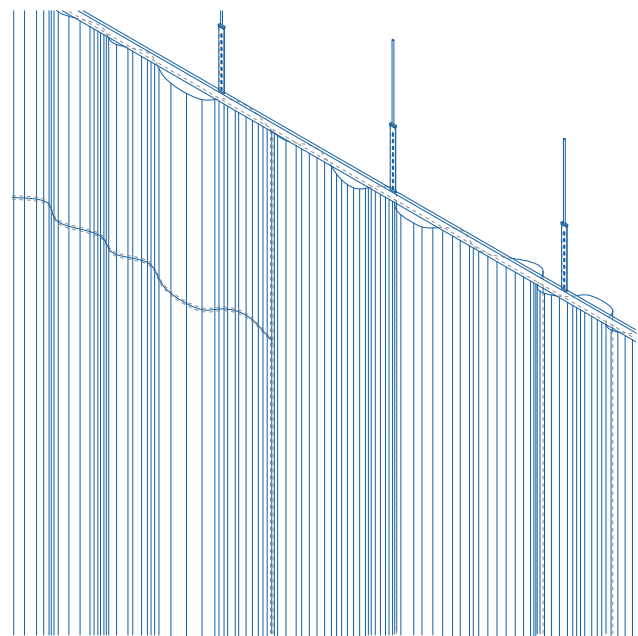


[Figure 62] - Internal Courtyard Pocket-wall Iteration (Authors, 2026)

05.3.3 PROMENADE NARRATIVE: Second Floor: The Search for (Im)permanent Identity

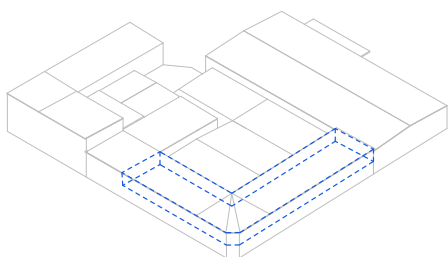
Contextualizing the approach within the framework of resource consumption patterns seen in Varvsstaden (Varvsstaden AB et al., 2025) this sequence explores the balance between flexible usage and an (im)permanent identity. The transformation relies on a phased material strategy. Initially, interventions are stripped back to the absolute minimum required for the space to function. Lightweight, transparent plug-in partitions are introduced first, acting as a speculative framework to test future floor plans. Over time, as specific needs solidify, 'upcycle walls' are constructed to provide a greater sense of permanence.

Assembled from partially reclaimed on-site components - such as obsolete suspended ceiling panels, salvaged sliding doors, and aged timber surfaces - these walls physically manifest the concept of adaptable space-making. Ultimately, benefiting from generous daylight conditions, the space is equipped to support a wide variety of configurations. However, designing for temporality introduces an inherent risk regarding continuous tenant adaptations and material waste. This proposal actively raises a critical spatial negotiation: how much distinct architectural identity does a temporary tenant require compared to the needs of a long-term user?

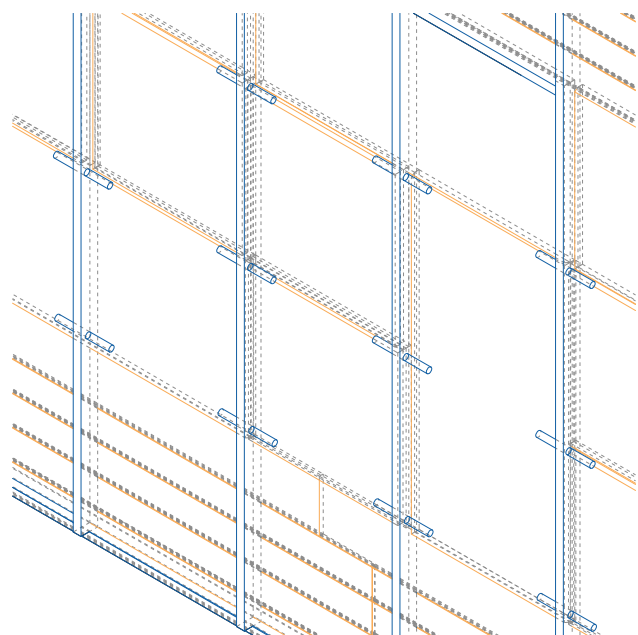


UPCYCLE WALL ITERATION:

Speculating on demountability of obsolete acoustic panels in temporal subdivision of interior spaces.



[Figures 63+64] - Second Floor Adaptation (Authors, 2026)





[Figure 65] - Upcycle Wall (Authors, 2026)



[Figure 66] - Second Floor First Phase (Authors, 2026)

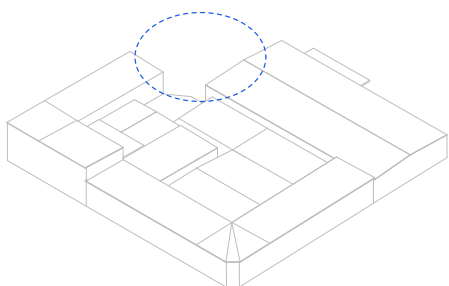
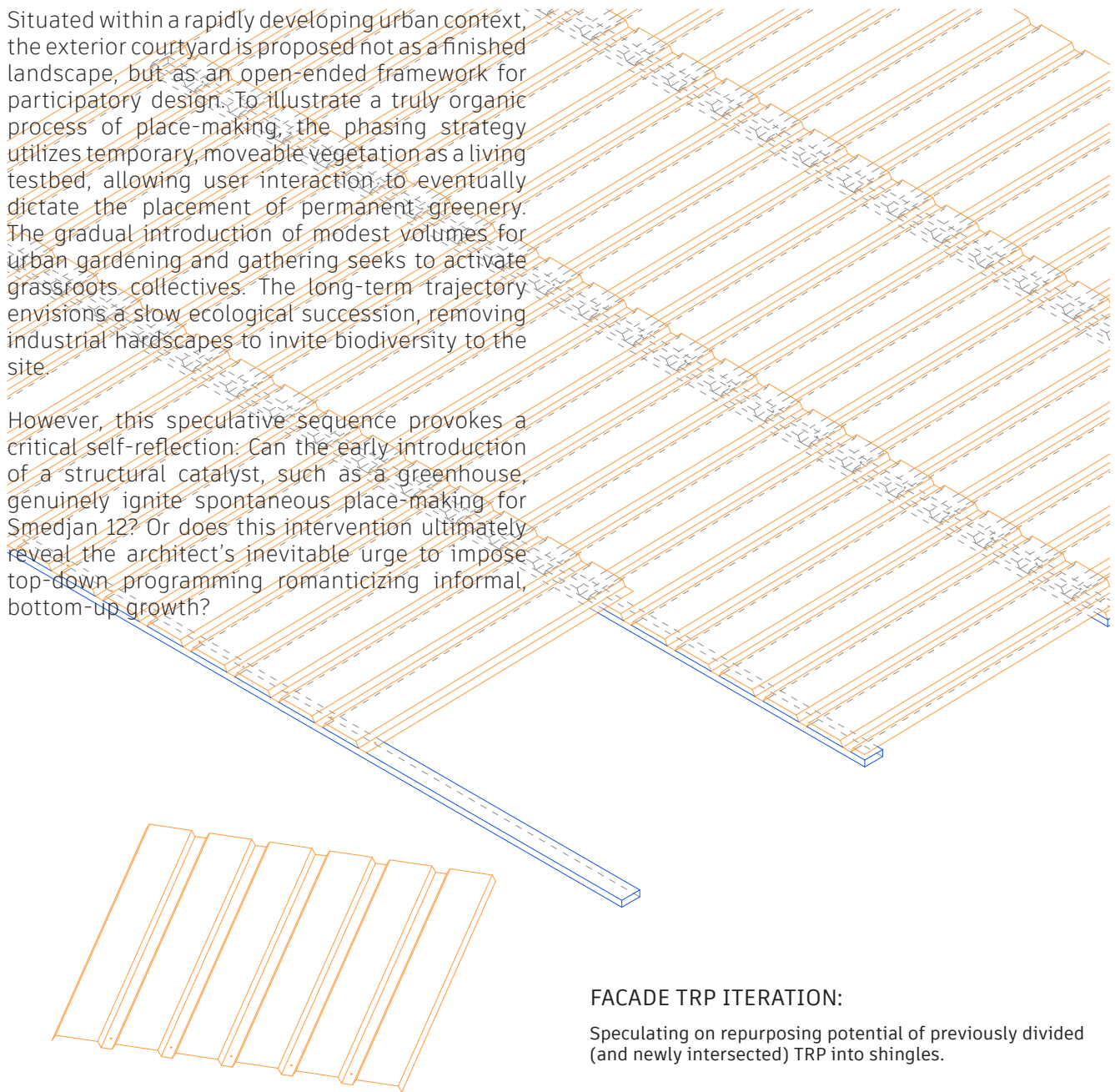


[Figure 67] - Second Floor Second Phase (Authors, 2026)

05.3.3 PROMENADE NARRATIVE: Exterior Courtyard

Situated within a rapidly developing urban context, the exterior courtyard is proposed not as a finished landscape, but as an open-ended framework for participatory design. To illustrate a truly organic process of place-making, the phasing strategy utilizes temporary, moveable vegetation as a living testbed, allowing user interaction to eventually dictate the placement of permanent greenery. The gradual introduction of modest volumes for urban gardening and gathering seeks to activate grassroots collectives. The long-term trajectory envisions a slow ecological succession, removing industrial hardscapes to invite biodiversity to the site.

However, this speculative sequence provokes a critical self-reflection: Can the early introduction of a structural catalyst, such as a greenhouse, genuinely ignite spontaneous place-making for Smedjan 12? Or does this intervention ultimately reveal the architect's inevitable urge to impose top-down programming romanticizing informal, bottom-up growth?



[Figure 68+69] - Exterior Courtyard (Authors, 2026)



[Figure 70] - Exterior Courtyard Second Phase (Authors, 2026)

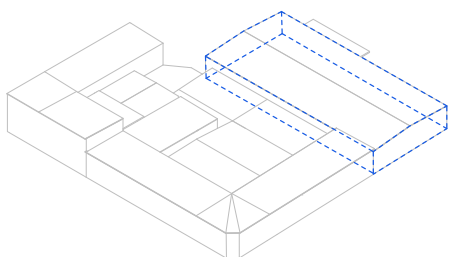
05.3.3 PROMENADE NARRATIVE: Industrial Hall

As the most recent volume on site, the 1977 industrial hall exposes several conflicts between inherent value and design strategy. An initial impulse was to dismantle the entire hall for either off-site relocation or on-site component harvesting. However, this approach was quickly dismissed; it would result in a severe structural downgrade, directly contradicting the established guidelines regarding functional and resource values. Moreover, while the hall’s visual expression might conventionally be labeled as ‘ugly,’ the methodology embraces the critical stance of “To Repurpose the Ugly” (Lindberg et al. 2024, pp. 5, 9). By recognizing the necessity to re-evaluate functional structures regardless of aesthetic worth, the architectural approach to the hall was adjusted.

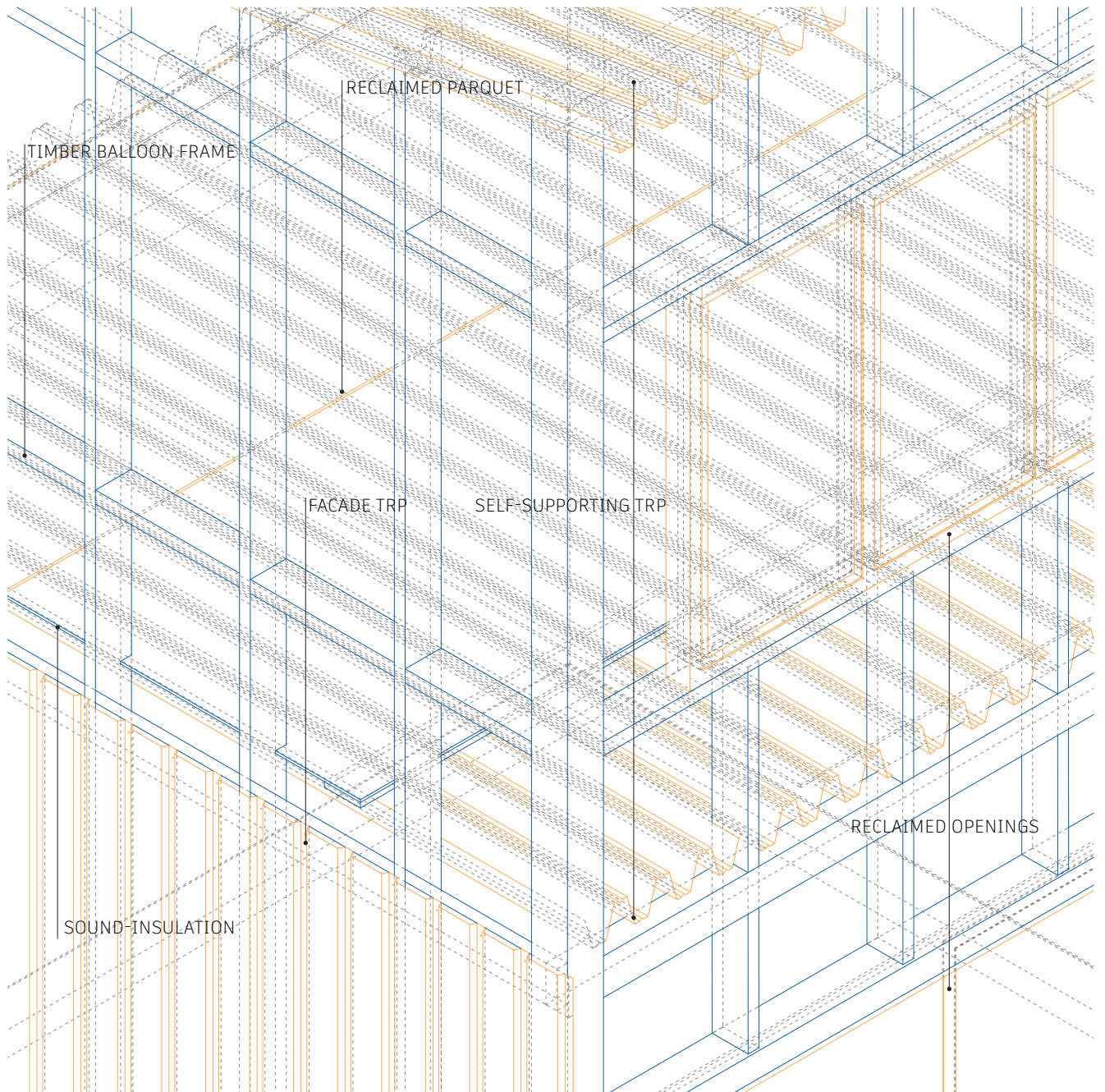
Recognizing its uninsulated yet highly capable envelope, the proposal seeks to balance its original production capacity with new spatial uses. This is achieved by introducing light conditions and employing the subtractive strategy. By inserting acupunctural, insulated box-in-box additions, the proposal increases usage potential while carefully preserving the building’s original flow and capacity for reversibility to a production space. Simultaneously, harvesting trapezoidal sheets (TRP) from the facade and roof structure drives a new investigation into circularity. Utilizing these elements as both cladding and structural components, the design tests the multifaceted, spatial potential of recovered industrial materials.

“BOX-IN-BOX” ITERATION:

Speculating on repurposing potential of subtracted TRP as horizontal structure and interior facade cladding.



[Figure 71] - Industrial Hall (Authors, 2026)



[Figure 72] - Industrial Hall Box-in-box Iteration (Authors, 2026)



[Figure 73] - Industrial Hall (Authors, 2026)



[Figure 74] - Industrial Hall, Second Phase (Authors, 2026)

06. REFLECTION

06.1 CONCLUDING REMARKS

ARCHITECTURAL AGENCY OF A NEW GENERATION

What we hope to have demonstrated through this thesis is that the existing building stock contains far more value, capacity, and potential than contemporary planning frameworks are able, or even allowed, to recognize. We might belong to a generation of architects navigating a new, necessary self-awareness: constantly questioning when to take space, and when to give space back. This leaves us with a profound desire to “do more with less”, navigating the paradox of trying to remain relevant and contributing meaningfully within an industry that largely drives the global climate crisis.

Through this work, we have found that expanding one’s perspective does not dilute architectural intent. Instead, depending on how one utilizes a diversity of viewpoints, it can actively strengthen rather than diminish one’s own architectural agency. By embracing this complexity, the architect gains the critical argumentation tools necessary to act as both an interpreter and a translator - generating a broader, more empathetic paradigm for evaluating our existing building stock.

Situated within Malmö’s ongoing densification, this thesis rejects the remnants of outdated *tabula rasa* approaches still visible in the visions for Norra Sorgenfri and to some extent Smedjan 12. Instead, through a combined methodology of discourse, value mapping, and value-driven design, this research demonstrates how architectural transformation can shift towards a more dynamic practice.

METHODOLOGY REFLECTION

Navigating a broad perception of value introduced a core complexity to this thesis. Our initial strategy of dividing ‘value’ into distinct categories was intended to provide a universally applicable

mapping framework. However, the situated reality of Smedjan 12 quickly demonstrated that these value boundaries are deeply intertwined.

Applying the ‘As Found’ reading effectively challenged our initial design intentions. For instance, an early strategy impulse was to utilize conventional restoration practices to restore the perceived heritage value for the building to remain. Restoring the facade was ultimately outweighed by the resource-consciousness of the ‘As Found’ method and the building’s functional value. Translating these readings required continuous negotiation, resulting in the conclusion that functionality and flexibility are the true heritage of Smedjan 12. The ‘As Found’ method is our direct response to the question:

How can one challenge contemporary established value frameworks in transformation processes by uncovering the inherent logic of an existing building? (RQ1)

Reflecting on the contrast between academic ideals and market realities, advocating for comprehensive, early-stage value mapping requires significant upfront resources. Prioritizing a broad early-stage analysis challenges a profit-driven market that demands predictable end-products. Furthermore, an introverted “inside-out” reading has limitations when confronting larger contexts and systemic urban synergies. For an ‘inside-out’ reading to be truly effective, it must be anchored in a wider value discourse that includes the broader urban context. Ultimately, it is only through this combined approach that a comprehensive value discussion can take place and effectively challenge linear processes. This project demonstrates that value conflicts should not be avoided; they should be actively negotiated to motivate resilient solutions.

DESIGN REFLECTION

The design outcome of this project embodies our value negotiations into strategies and concrete spatial actions. We established a clear link between the theoretical value discourse, our analysis, and the resulting design guidelines. Through acupunctural interventions, such as adjusting light, improving flows, and enabling spatial sub-division, we aim for strategic impact using minimal material means. Complementing small-scale interventions and adaptive reuse intends to raise questions relating to material and spatial identity.

Our design implementation specifically aims to highlight the complexities of fostering “*continuous value development*” (RQ2). From a resource-value perspective, continuous development implies that needs are ever-changing; spatial configurations shift, and components eventually degrade or become obsolete. Consequently, “flexibility” must operate across multiple scales. It involves discussing the introduction of durable materials meant to last, while simultaneously addressing the life-cycle and repurpose potential of said components.

However, physical longevity and flexibility are not solely material issues. To truly sustain a building over time, there must be a cultivated “sense of care” that spans from the developer down to the individual architectural component. This relies heavily on emotional value: users must experience relatability and a sense of ownership to actively maintain and care for these spaces. This realization introduces a critical, self-reflective paradox. Our overarching principle of “designing for flexibility” cannot be fully validated without specific users to act on this sense of care.

Valuing flexibility as a standalone concept risks reducing it to an isolated, utopian idea. We must critically question whether the ambition to design without users in mind is a viable future scenario, or merely a speculative notion un-anchored from situated contexts and actual needs. Consequently, answering exactly how our design principles promote continuous value development remains intrinsically difficult, as the emotional value required to sustain it cannot be fully tested without the presence of the users themselves.

FUTURE APPLICATION

Addressing the concept of value development, this proposal explores the potential of utilizing an essentially empty building like Smedjan 12 while it awaits subsequent planning stages. Smedjan 12’s uncertain future, driven by economic fluctuations, illustrates a recurring phenomenon where structures are left vacant over time. Reacting to this, the thesis intersects with notions of permanence, phased transformation, and the activation of vacant structures. Ultimately, it proposes a successive introduction of spatial interventions as an exercise in ‘slow building’ and continuous value development. Therefore, it could be further applied to and developed for vacant structures in need of place-making, structures with the potential to remain.

THE ROLE OF THE ARCHITECT(S)

We consider comprehensive, early-stage value analysis to be a fundamental necessity for the future development of architectural transformation practice. While a wider analysis captures a more holistic view of the existing environment, it inevitably forces the interpreter to subjectively select which specific values to prioritize in the subsequent design phase. This selection process highlights the inherent subjectivity of defining ‘value’. Consequently, the implementation of a defined, alternative framework proves highly difficult; the multifaceted nature of value dictates that any framework cannot be universally prescriptive but must rather serve as a subjective interpretation.

Ultimately, this thesis has largely been a journey of positioning our own architectural voice whilst negotiating and translating value(s). *To Read a Building* reflects our willingness to embrace multiple perspectives in the search for agency, constantly questioning how to make room for the already-built’s never-ending story.

Thank you for reading!

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USE OF AI:

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PROCESS PHOTOS:
Paper Model, Smedjan 12



1:400 (Authors, 2026)



1:400 (Authors, 2026)

OPEN SEMINAR: Exhibition



Exhibition Space (Authors, 2026)

