Aiming for Democratic Architecture
The exhibition "Aiming for Democratic Architecture" has been produced by Architects Sweden for the Swedish Institute, in collaboration with MYCKET – Mariana Alves Silva, Katarina Bonnevier and Thérèse Kristiansson

It is an attempt to open up a wider discussion of what democratic space can be and how to create it, what tools are available and how to develop them even further

Swedish Institute – Production and project management: Jenny Bergström
Architects Sweden – Curation, production and project management: Tove Dumon Wallsten with Julia Hertzman

Exhibition design: MYCKET – Mariana Alves Silva, Katarina Bonnevier and Thérèse Kristiansson

Exhibition films: Vindelfilm – Johan Palmgren and Lisa Gustafsson with Filip Hammar

Chapter texts: MYCKET – Mariana Alves Silva, Katarina Bonnevier and Thérèse Kristiansson

Translation: Rikard Lagerberg

English language editor: Stephen Croall, Lisa Bartfai
Exhibition sound: Stefan Nordberg

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Open societies require democratic architecture

Welcome to the exhibition Aiming for Democratic Architecture! It examines the role of architecture in a democratic society and gives examples of projects – schools, libraries, public squares – from all over Sweden.

Our country has a long tradition of creating open spaces that allow, involve and include. Democratic architecture can be interpreted as constructed environments that directly support a democratic system, issues of accessibility and equality, social and ecological sustainability, and diversity and culture as part of public spaces. The inclusive and permissive posture is a value to cherish and protect in today’s global political landscape. In many parts of the world there is a growing gap between the countryside and urban areas, and difficulties for young people, newly arrived immigrants and other groups to enter both the labour and the housing market.

Problems exist, but there are also solutions and new opportunities.

By combining solid urban structures with new tools and technologies we can progress, in exchange with others.

Louise Masreliez
President
Architects Sweden
The power of getting your hands dirty

In an early memory, I'm collecting plastic pellets and sanded glass shards on a beach by the Baltic Sea. They were treasures evoking my imagination about the people behind the "Iron Curtain". Contained in that place, on the other side of the sea, called the Soviet Union, which in my 1970s childhood had an almost mythological presence. I first visited the Baltic countries fifteen years later. It was the era of democratic independence movements, the human chain, the singing revolution and the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. At an abandoned Red Army air field close to Haapsalu in Estonia, I experienced the brute reality of Cold War architecture. But it also bore witness of the unfathomable power of the nonviolent uprising.

This quickly drawn image might seem hard in contrast to the architectures of the exhibition Aiming for Democratic Architecture. I wish to convey both the urgency of the topic and the material power of architecture. The built environment, the processes of planning and transforming our shared spaces are powerful means to create reality. It is not about crying out loud, it is about the architectures that touch you.

The idea of touching architecture is at the heart of our work in the art, design and architecture group MYCKET (Mariana Alves Silva, Katarina Bonnevier and Thérèse Kristiansson). It influenced the content of our work and the staging of the exhibition. Together with Tove
Dumon Wallsten and Julia Hertzman from Architects Sweden we created chapters that would trigger both practical and metaphorical ways of approaching the subject: Frameworks, Differences, the Right of Public Access, the ‘shoes off’ border. We matched these with a checklist and looked for architectural projects which covered a wide variety of aspects, such as, art, research, equality, rural and urban, to show in the exhibition.

We designed the exhibition to support and behave similar to the content. With small but influential means such as carpets, a ‘shoe off’ border and a low, horizontal arrangement of screens and posters, it proposes an embodied experience of the subjects at stake. For instance we wished to create one continuous space where the bodies of the visitors are present and not hidden behind standing modules. The visitors zigzag through the exhibition when they turn to face a screen or a poster. So, you might also be facing a fellow visitor looking at another screen. The same back and forth movement are created by the stools and benches you can sit on to look at the films. We imagine that this playful arrangement invites to interactions and conversations. Possibly even some new formulations and insights.

Architecture always carries an excess of meanings, its purpose and effect are never fully determined. Nevertheless the aim matters. MYCKET imagines architecture as materialized proposals were we might find answers for how to build a world where there is space for everyone. Time to dig in and get dirty.

MYCKET (through Katarina Bonnevier)

MYCKET consists of the designers, architects and artists Mariana Alves Silva, Katarina Bonnevier, and Thérèse Kristiansson.

Since 2012, they have developed their artistic research from intersectional perspectives such as anti-racist and queer-feminist theories. MYCKET’s practice is informed by the theatrical, the carnivalesque and political activism. Together they rummage through the borderlands of the lives we live, and the built environment that surrounds us.
Helen Runting

Helen Runting is an urban planner, urban designer, and architectural theorist. She is a PhD candidate in Critical Studies in Architecture at the School of Architecture at KTH. Her research operates across the fields of architectural theory and critical theory, and addresses themes of biopolitical discipline and control, real estate and property relations, and the regulation of aesthetics. Helen is a founding partner of the architecture firm Secretary.

Desire for Democracy

In order to orient ourselves towards something, we need to be able to discern its shape on the horizon, to recognise it from a distance. Such an orientation becomes difficult when that which we seek is amorphous, shifting, and constantly in process; it becomes harder when the medium in which we seek it is itself unstable, even disputed. There is perhaps some value then in briefly fleshing out the terms "democratic" and "architecture" before we engage in pursuing them.

Democracy derives "from the image of an empty place"; art historian Rosalyn Deutsche borrows this statement in order to argue for the centrality of public space to democracy. In democracies, "power stems from the people but belongs to nobody," and much energy must be expended in making sure that the core of such societies remains empty of a singular sovereign power. The Queen must truly have left the building. The resulting void, like the project that it founds, requires continual reinforcement, renewal, renovation, and investment. Democracy thus finds itself bound together with procedures of maintenance, and it is precisely this notion—a democracy in perpetual process—that the title of the present exhibition, Aiming for

Photo: Karin Metz
a Democratic Architecture, hints at. To "aim for" is to fix upon an object that is tantalizingly out of reach, denying those doing the aiming the immediate gratification of occupancy by capture. At its most ballistic, this is an architecture capable of orienting us towards democracy—perhaps even capable of making us desire democracy. Thus conceived, a democratic architecture situates us within the field of what Chantal Mouffe describes as "the political," forcing us to face each other across the expanse created by "the image of an empty place," no matter how uncomfortable that confrontation might be.

What, then, are the structural or aesthetic qualities of such an architecture of confrontation and togetherness—how does this void take shape? Political monuments can appear hollow after the fact of their erection and grand urban squares are just as often empty as full. But whilst these are both "democratic architectures" of sorts, the category is far larger, far more distributed, and ultimately perhaps far more mundane than suggested by these archetypes. It is in the stuff of the everyday, on the subway from home to work, in the casual encounter or heated discussion on a street corner or on social media, in the visit to the gynaecologist or immersion in a swimming pool that we would be far more likely to encounter an architecture that orients us towards the democratic project or "the political" at large. Aiming for a democratic architecture cannot require that we land in a specific type of architectural expression, programme, or scale upon arrival; spectacular or banal, a democratic architecture forms the background to our co-existence—it makes up what Judith Butler refers to as a "supportive environment" that does not to differentiate between the bodies that it bears, encloses, and affects.

In response to the question, "Does feminism have any objects it could call its own?" theorist Nina Power concludes that asserting ownership over the concept of "nothing" could be a strategic move for feminism, as it would enable feminists to reclaim the "lack" that the feminine has traditionally been charged with (woman as not-man). In a similar manner, it could be strategic to think of democracy’s constitutive "emptiness" as a void that democracy can "call its own" precisely because this is a space that cannot be owned by any one of us. It is for this
Democratic architecture, then, is an architecture that celebrates the void. It is an architecture that must be capable of withstanding, denying, or deferring our impulse to become its owner and occupier, to have it and to fill it with ourselves and our things, to name it, and to thereby put an end to its capacity to draw us towards its horizons. It asks of us that we pursue it, but makes us promise that we will never come close enough to grasp it in our hands. It does this, I would like to think, so that it can maintain the space needed to hold all of us instead. In this lies an ethics of care.

Helen Runting
An introduction to the exhibition space

A warm welcome to a place of conversation about the city where you live, your school, your workplace, the square where you usually wait for your friend, the hospital where you visit your old relative or the preschool that the neighbour’s children go to every day.

A architecture affects how we live our lives, perhaps more than we are aware of. Rooms and places create the conditions for how we move about and socialise with each other.

A architecture can also contribute to a democratic and free society, since it links together our private spaces with what constitutes the public, the mutual and the national.

I t is not always clear what democratic architecture means. In this exhibition we mean constructed environments which directly support a democratic system. It may be a parliament building for popularly elected politicians or election halls that enable people to vote. But it can also be constructed environments that we meet in our everyday lives,
and how they are built, added to, or rebuilt
to be adapted to people and to all our various needs.

Democratic architecture is therefore also about
accessibility at hospitals, equality at the schoolyard,
diversity in the public space
and co-determination at the workplace.

In Sweden, many people are involved in the task of
creating open and democratic spaces for all.
Citizens have long been able to take part
and to question both ideas and decisions from those in power.

But we are also faced with challenges.
We see increased segregation and exclusion in big cities.
We see an increasing gap between investments in rural areas
and in cities.
We see difficulties for young people, newcomers and other groups
to enter both the labour and housing markets.

The constructed environment is constantly affected by use,
legislation, economics and politics.
Also, it is both permanent and changeable.
But this does not mean we should stop trying:
democratic architecture can be a goal and a vision. The principle of inclusion one that we, through this exhibition, want to protect.

In this place, in this room, we want to create space for meetings. Both meetings between people and meetings between ideas. We want to show examples of different democratic perspectives, and how they are expressed in Swedish architecture and urban planning. We hope they can inspire conversations about how different locations relate to these values and provide you as a visitor with the tools to look closely at the rooms and spaces that surround us.

We invite you to take off your shoes and feel at home. Welcome!
A change occurs at the ‘shoes off’ border. Either you are asked to remove your shoes and walk around in your socks or barefoot, or you are offered plastic covers to slip over your shoes. The purpose of shoes off partition is primarily to keep dirt from the street out of indoor environments. In Sweden, such limits are found in institutions such as preschools, libraries, health centers and hospitals, but also in private companies and homes. In homes, the boundary is invisible – there is a Swedish tradition to take off your shoes when entering a home. Perhaps it has to do with equality and showing respect for the person who does the house cleaning.

In other places, the no-shoes zone can also fill a different function: it creates a softer mood – it’s hard to be cocky wearing just socks. That’s why the shoes off limit has been used as a tool in anti-bullying projects at schools and workplaces. The shoe boundary is a symbol of a home-like environment; in a conveyed sense it can inspire an attitude towards the design of, for example, outdoor environments where shoes are, after all, worn.
Nötkärnan
Paradise is a place of timeless harmony

A simple flu in Somalia can often lead to death, and those especially vulnerable are infants and newborns. There, the infant mortality rate is amongst the world’s highest.

Sweden has a considerable population of refugees from Somalia, of which a significant number reside in Bergsjön, a suburb of Gothenburg. One private Health Care Centre has been especially successful in providing worried mothers fast care. They needed to expand.

The parking lot in front of the existing Health Care Centre provided the area for expansion, which was achieved with a new construction built over the parking lot. The site, a dull, built landscape of concrete elements, is a consequence of the Million Programme (Miljonprogrammet) and demanded a splash of color. The new building was designed as a gift, carefully wrapped in elaborate glass. By standing out, the new building bestowed the entire area with energy! Somalia is a very dry country and the idea of paradise is often envisioned as a flourishing garden, literally, the garden of Eden.

We decided to clad the Health Care Centre’s waiting room with four walls of thick, damp and, in time, rich vegetation, a rainforest. The outer walls are clad with unique sections of screen printed glass, with the inner glass characterised by a different pattern. When the two patterns cross each other they evoke the feeling of motion. A flag of colors slowly moving in the wind.

A celebration of color.

Team: Wingårdhs; Gert Wingårdh, Anders Olausson, Gunilla Murnieks, Peter Ejvegård, Liselott Jademyr, Tobias Fasth, Sebastian Olsson, Susanne Flinck, Peter Öhman, Madeleine Stoops, Ulrika Davidsson, Malin Mattsson, Viktoria Wallin, Jens Vilhelmsen
Film: Wingårdhs
Proceeding from the assumption that all students are unique and entitled to be seen, the architects have given the Landamäre school a distinctive form. The surrounding nature and topography inspired the shape of the building, which winds through the terrain. Transparency and openness were keywords in creating a school that adds value to the entire area by making both the premises and the surroundings accessible to the students during the day and as a gathering place for the whole neighbourhood in the evenings.

Landamäre school, Gothenburg

Team: Wahlström & Steijner; Jürgen Wahlström
Film: Wahlström & Steijner; Claes Norin, WN-media

wahlstrom-steijner.se

Photos: Åke E:son Lindman
Trädgårdarna
(The Gardens), a centre for the elderly

The design of The Gardens derives from a contemporary research, indicating that the well-being of the elderly in care facilities is increased by an attractive green environment and the access to social interaction. Important elements to the project were consequently identified as easy access to gardens and shared facilities, such as atrium courtyards and roof terraces. Further, large windows providing visual contact with the gardens, increases the sense of security and encourage the residents to explore the outdoor environment and interact with others.
New Brogårda school

A school is at the heart of a proud community that believes in the future. It is a source of knowledge from a child’s perspective, a second home and a box of tricks for learning and pedagogy. How can an architecture firm allow Brogårda skolan to become all these? Codesign approached this task by acting as Change and Learning Manager to support the municipality, whilst being both a facilitator to translate the needs, hopes and dreams of parents, teachers and children, and also architects to form a building that is functional, enjoyable and easy to use. It is being built as we speak.
Kista is both a densely populated residential area with a young population and a commercial centre with ICT clusters, which means there are good opportunities here for cooperation, development and multilingualism. Kista library has become a natural hub where visitors are offered everything from homework assistance, IT tutoring, programming courses to access to a makerspace (collaborative work space) for child performances and much more. Guided by the keywords ‘integrate, open up and permit’, Wester+Elsner Architects have created a library with bright and welcoming premises that instil a desire for reading.
Gender-balanced schoolyard, Skäggetorp school

The process started with a workshop at which local residents were asked to describe the area and make suggestions for improvements, these where formed into design principles together with the client. A key aim in the project was to highlight the right of children and young people to participate in processes relating to their environment. To engage the pupils, the architects asked them to work in groups to formulate problems and make suggestions as to how the schoolyard could be made more balanced in gender terms. The results were interpreted and turned into a draft that was later modified in dialogue with the students. The purpose was to create an understanding that collective wishes weigh more heavily than individual ones when designing a public environment.

The project is part of a programme by Sweden’s National Board of Housing, Building and Planning to promote a gender balance in schoolyards, landscape architects URBIO have focused on democracy and gender equality at Skäggetorp school.

Team: URBIO; Linda Pettersson, Emma Simonsson, Susanna Lundberg, Elise Eriksson and Åsa Holmqvist
Urban Utveckling: Johan Wahlgren, Anna Molin and Anna Vigström
Film: Urbio
Allemansrätten (Sweden’s Right of Public Access) is a unique statute that allows everyone in Sweden to move freely about the countryside, on both public and private land. It allows you to hike, pick berries and mushrooms, camp for a night, swim or kayak. It’s built on stewardship of nature and wildlife, and respect for landowners and other visitors. That is; do not disturb–do not destroy. There are certain exceptions to the law regarding, for example, endangered plants, national parks and bird sanctuaries. Moving respectfully through the terrain requires both knowledge and skill.

To encourage outdoor life and make nature more accessible, municipalities, county boards, associations and private actors create viewing towers, BBQ grills, and trails with hard surfaces to roll along and walk on. For our fellow-creatures, high tree stumps, floating duck rafts and birdhouses are created. Post-industrial ruins are transformed into landscapes with flourishing fauna. Other places which combine nature and concrete, such as schoolyards and public squares, could adhere to the same principle of allemansrätten. These projects are based on research into how architecture can support the democratic pursuit of everyone’s freedom of movement.
Örebro is a city abounding Lake Hjälmaren. When the lake was lowered in the late 19th century, the resulting land gains proved not to be the fertile farmland that was hoped for. Instead, the area was transformed into the backyard of the city with a military training ground, landfill, industries and an oil port. In the 1990s, a decision was taken to transform the ravaged site into a recreational landscape for both humans and animals. Today, Örebro is once again a lakefront city, and a planned nature centre will soon tell the story of the great landscape transformation at Oset.
Sätra is 85 hectares of forest and farmland located 20 minutes away from the city of Västerås. ‘Colourful Sätra’ is a proposal that reimagines the planned development by strengthening and combining the site’s fundamentally resilient qualities and potential. The experimental neighbourhood is inviting and blends valuable forest, water, farmland, housing and cultural and recreational areas into an exciting patchwork of experiences.

Team: Mandaworks
Film: Mandaworks
Järvastaden’s school

Järvastaden’s school outside Stockholm has been developed based on the concept of ‘the neighbourhood school’, the aim being to make it a natural meeting place for everyone in the neighbourhood. The process started with a workshop at which local residents were asked to describe the area and make suggestions for improvements, these where formed into design principles together with the client. The goal was a school that functions as a self-evident activity centre at all hours of the day, an open social space with a restaurant, a crafts- and a music room – a democratic meeting place in the centre of the neighbourhood.

Team: URBIO; Landscape architects Linda Pettersson, Emma Simonsson and Susanna Lundberg
Comarc; Architects Frida Olsson (leader) and Linnea Mattson
Client: Hemsö/Raoul Wallenbergskolan
Film: Urbio
Väntans torg (The Town Square of Waiting)

The slide show is the result of an artistic exploration of Vasaplan, a town square in Umeå in the north of Sweden, that is planned to change. The public was invited for five days to make use of 400 wooden stools, designed and produced especially for the workshop. While people passed by the square, we learned how occurrences and physical additions can change the way we look at a place – and how citizens can physically and concretely participate in the city’s development. The stools’ movements across the square revealed people’s needs and desires, showing how the site could be used in the future.

Method: A survey is conducted as a workshop, on a chosen site. The survey and exploration should last for at least a few days. The activity may target a broad public or a selected audience, such as children or adolescents. Through gradual collective construction, in a process governed by the wishes of the moment and the participants’ desires, the stools open for creativity, conversation and reflection on the physical site, as well as on current urban development issues. The act of building creates curiosity and interest among visitors and bypassers. The stools are manufactured locally on site, and can be donated to an appropriate purpose when the workshop is finished.

Team: Nivå landskapsarkitektur
Artist: Beatrice Hansson
Film: Nivå landskapsarkitektur
Girl’s Room – Planning for Equality with Insights from a Girl’s Perspective

In gender-equal Sweden, boys and girls use playgrounds and other public spaces equally until the age of seven. Then something happens and the ratio flips to boys becoming the predominantly active users of eighty percent of public space. Even with this knowledge, few public spaces are designed for girls. This project develops a method to address the problem and creates a set of design examples.

To create rooms for girls, moving beyond normative behaviour was necessary for a successful collaboration. Our task as process leaders was to provide the girls a platform where they could be heard, thus changing the hierarchy of power.

Key process tools included employing a multidisciplinary team that brought a broad range of perspectives. The interactive play “Du vet Havsdjupen”, which decodes public space through the eyes of teenage girls, was used to attract and emotionally engage professionals. Girls from the Youth Council of Skarpnäck Municipality also provided their expertise as teenage girls. In our process we aimed to build self-confidence through respect, transparency and continuity, and co-create through an iterative process of dialogue and design.

Team: White Arkitekter; Angelica Åkerman, Rebecca Rubin, Anna Ågren, Sofia Palmer, Josefín Noren, Karl Tyrviänen, Niklas Singstedt, Erik Torven, Mariliis Männik, Sofie Weidemann, Medina Dzonlic
Unga Tur Teater; Siri Nyke, Moa Backman, Anne Jonsson, Rebecca Holmström.
Skarpnäcks ungdomsgrupp; Charlie Hansson Sillén, Kajsa Frisk, Lovisa Wallin, Ebba Strandberg, Erna Stintzing, Klara Grönberg, Evelina Kriisa
Stockholm stad; Moa Lindunger, Olle Halvars Franzén
Film: White Arkitekter
When people from broad social segments are united through their work for a common cause, a popular movement is formed. It is democratically organized and often non-profit, it can be to practice a hobby, pursue further education, or get involved in changing something that one perceives to be an injustice in society or the world.

The strong feminist movement in Sweden has, for example, since the early twentieth century been and maintained its vast significance through its commitment for gender equality and against injustice.

A grass root is a symbol for an ordinary person as opposed to those in power. It’s about ground-level initiatives that make a difference to many. Popular movements, like grassroots movements, are based on collective action—where many people come together and many are affected—and work performed by civil society. In Sweden, there is a long tradition of popular education through associations and reading groups. In the 1950s and 60s many publicly funded places and spaces for meetings were erected: buildings with auditoriums, stages and seminar rooms, gymnasiums and dance halls that the public could reserve for their own use. Through recent policy changes, there has been a diminishing availability of these rooms, and as a result popular and grassroots movements have initiated and funded their own ideas and construction projects.
The purpose of the preliminary study that Codesign undertook for ABF (Workers’ Educational Association) was to understand the current usage and requirements, as well as to clarifying how the ABF Building on Sveavägen would best be used in the future. The study indicated that the building itself has got a very strong identity, but didn’t allow for people from different groups to meet and interact. Departments and courses were segregated. The idea behind the concept "Different Meetings" was to create as many opportunities as possible for people with different interests to meet in unexpected ways.
The GoDown Arts Centre

In the late 1990’s, The GoDown grew from the need for Kenyan and East African artists to come together in a creative hub, manifested in a physical space in 2003. Places for creative production were scarce, exhibition venues even more so. Today, The GoDown is incubating an ambitious vision to develop a new Arts Centre representing its diverse practitioners, audiences and communities. Through workshops and conversations, ideas and wish lists were generated from The GoDown community. The resulting programme includes valuable public services that anchor the building in community life, add vitality to the street life, and through community-building activities, ensure an actively democratic space.

A key achievement has been the establishment of meaningful relations with diverse Nairobi communities through continuing engagement, as well as enhancement of singular and cross-cultural activity. White Arkitekter has been a driving partner in the participatory process, including a proposal for urban development in 2014 and a design vision in 2017.

Team: White Arkitekter; Ulrika Stenkula, Marta Bohlmark, Filip Sudolsky, Ulrika Wallin, Dirk Noack, Jan Wijkermark, Viktoria Walldin, Erik Kiltorp, Angelica Åkerman, Yara Hormazábal Cortés, Johan Dahlberg
The GoDown Arts Centre, Nairobi; Joy Mboya – Executive Director, the GoDown Staff
Team Planning Systems Services Ltd., Nairobi; Henry Musangi, Stephan Bekhor, Jackie Kairu
And numerous other stakeholders; artists, city officials, creatives, academics, the local community etc
Film: White, The GoDown, Moi Moi
The old freight train depot west of Malmö Central Station was no more than a roofless shell when two siblings, Nina Totté Karyd and Martin Karyd, bought it in order to create a market hall. In 2013, Wingårdh Architects was commissioned to transform the ruin into a market hall for about twenty vendors and restaurateurs. The initial intention was to add a similar volume onto the existing oblong brick building, but the plans changed when several layers of underground utilities were discovered on the site, reducing the buildable area of the lot.

The solution was to allow the addition to imitate the gable silhouette of the existing building, but only occupy the portion of the site where the conditions were right. A gap in the roof between the existing building and the addition brings daylight to the old brick façade. The area surrounding the Market Hall is being redeveloped quickly, but the façade cladding of weathering corrugated steel still provides an echo of the industrial character that has dominated the district for so long. The façade’s rust red color also serves as a backdrop for the vegetation that will one day grow over the lattice that covers them. That vegetation also fills the narrow space between the Market Hall and the adjacent parking structure.

Malmö Saluhall (Market Hall)

Team: Wingårdhs; Gert Wingårdh, Joakim Lyth, Maria Lyth, Ulrika Davidsson, Erik Holmgren, André Pihl, Gustaf Wennerberg
Film & Photography: Wingårdhs; Fajer Wennerberg, André Phil
Self Build City

Self Build City explores self-build as a tool to create prototypes for affordable housing and inclusive neighbourhoods. Refugees receive both skills training and affordable housing by erecting an energy efficient three story apartment building in wood. Inspiration comes from the Swedish "Egnahemsrörelsen" (the own home movement) that started 100 years ago to counter mass emigration from Sweden to America. Self Build City is a collaboration between the independent art foundation Färgfabriken, KTH School of Architecture and the municipal housing developer Knivstabostäder.

Where the historic "Egnahemsrörelsen" built single-family homes, Self Build City is more urban, aiming for low-rise density. The first house is a prototype for an inclusive mixed-use city district. The house will be built by refugees who receive on the job skills training - as well as affordable housing. The building could also be a future source of income for residents. Flexible ground-floors and small sheds can be residential, educational or commercial.

Team: Architects Per Franson, Khalid Dawari, Jan Rydén
Project partners: Färgfabriken, Knivstabostäder, KTH School of Architecture
Illustration: Gabriel Nordbäck
Film: Per Franson, Jan Rydén, Klirr, Otto Andersson, Patrick Svanberg
Commoning Kits

The exhibition Commoning Kits suggests how new meeting places can be created to generate community feeling and positive development in a neighbourhood. It highlights elements needed in a viable city, such as farming, recreation, local democracy and play. We urgently need meeting places. As people, as a society and as a culture. Where we can participate, talk, learn more about each other and create the mutual values that we call urban life and identity. Something shared. Meeting places where we come together to create a city, and in extension – a society.

The exhibition, an initiative by architects Kjellander Sjöberg, represents both an investigation and a basis for discussion. It presents innovative prototypes or toolboxes designed for use in different cities and contexts. Behind the proposals are some of the Nordic region’s most creative architectural offices.

Initiative and idea: Kjellander Sjöberg and Form Design Center Malmö
Team: Stefan Sjöberg (partner in charge), Ola Kjellander, Johan Pitura, David Ottosson, Karin Sundberg, Saki Azodi, Monika Jachimowska, Jérôme Malpel, Desiré Apelgren, Jakub Jílek
Imagine All the People

How can architecture and architects prevent segregation and polarization – two of society’s major challenges today? Could a classic state organization create social engagement?

Architectural firm Tengbom imagines a mandatory civil service, organized by a new state agency (MYSA), the aim being to connect people of diverse backgrounds and interests. The service would include all 19-year-olds, who in return for their efforts during one year are provided with accommodation, employment and a general education in civic organization.

Similar in form to national service, recruits live and work in regiments and engage in projects divided into three categories: strategic (infrastructure, environmental care, research), everyday (schools, care for the elderly, youth activities) and emergency (environmental disasters, reception of refugees).

In order to connect the recruits with local society, they are organized and recruited regionally. The regiments therefore differ depending on their location. Three case studies describe how these regiments could be designed and interact with society in various places: in a city, in a small town and in the countryside.

The project came second in a national competition entitled Imagine Open Skåne 2030.

Team: Tengbom; Annica Fagerberg, Sara Peny, Jenny Lindelöf, Joakim Bergqvist, Evelina Öberg + stadsbyggnadsstudion in Stockholm
Film: Tengbom
...through frameworks

Framework is a Swedish pun. A framework is both the actual wooden base of a building, the weight bearing support of the walls, which hold up floor and ceiling. The skeleton of a house. A framework is also the system of regulations, laws and codes that govern construction. These address things like health, safety and cultural values.

The Swedish Planning and Building Act (PBL) has a democratic obligation ensure equal opportunity for all. The entire motley crew that constitutes society must be given space. The Act counteracts physical and mental barriers, thereby challenging unwritten norms about which bodies are assumed in physical planning. By law, citizens have to be consulted before a decision on a building proposal is reached. Everyone concerned should have the opportunity to comment. In the case of a newly built environment open to all, for example, a child impact assessment must be carried out. In this way, laws also govern that which doesn’t yet exist.

Buildings are more than the material they are made of; they are expressions of rules, values and normality. They color the lives lived there. It is easy to imagine that laws and rules are carved in stone, when in fact they are alterable. Sometimes rules change after buildings are completed, something that is built with a temporary construction permit becomes permanent, standard regulations yield unexpected results.
The right to the city: walking paths and architecture tie neighbourhoods together to make people feel at home in their place of abode. The right to health: available and quiet patios are created to promote well-being. The right to be oneself: spaces are created for families of all kinds where each and every member can be challenged and can grow as a human being. Right to housing: innovative single-family houses are created on small plots outside the metropolitan area. The right to life without obstacles: accessible housing with smart dimensions facilitates people’s everyday existence through all stages of life.

Living in Sweden

Team: Sweco Architects; Anna Markström, Kajsa Crona, Jack Lindgren, Jonas Kjellander
Film: Sweco Architects
Vallastaden

Vallastaden in Linköping is the result of an architectural competition won by architect firm OkiDoki in 2012. OkiDoki’s main concept was to create a mixed urban area focusing on social sustainability while counteracting building monotony and urban sprawl. In five years, the project has developed from an idea into a fully functioning multi-use neighbourhood filled with tenants. Its variety of developers, small scale and free form combine to create a varied environment where personal desires and aspirations are expressed side by side.

Team: Okidoki! Arkitekter; Rickard Stark, Martin Nordahl, Christina Silfverhielm
Film: Okidoki! Arkitekter
Sjöterrassen – Fittja Terraces

This lakeside terrace constitutes the Stockholm suburb of Fittja’s first new production of condominiums (tenant-owned units), and is a welcome addition to the existing rentals completed in the 1970s. It offers alternative form of housing in terms of size, price and quality, and strives to create opportunities for a local housing career. The broadness and diversity are created through focusing on small apartments, bigger houses with many rooms for large families and possibilities for multigenerational homes in the area. The developed area establishes a clearly integrated path full of life between the city centre and nature. The environment is a small-scale urban extension focusing on variety and diversity in housing types and sizes. The overall goal is to create local living conditions offering long-term socio-economic opportunities and a vibrant urban space.

Team: Kjellander Sjöberg
Film: Kjellander Sjöberg
Situated half an hour from central Stockholm, Sundbyberg is one of Sweden’s fastest-growing municipalities. Space Odyssey is an imaginary vision for the transformation of its central area following the burial of the local railway line. This line has always represented a barrier to the city’s urban structure, but it has also become a catalyst for urban life. By reversing the process, the traditional planning notion of buildings first, public spaces later, is challenged. Here, public spaces come first and the buildings later, moulding around three-dimensional voids.

Team: Mandaworks, Stockholm
Film: Mandaworks, Stockholm
Jubileumsparken (Jubilee Park)

The Jubilee Park in Gothenburg is a unique project. Here, methods are investigated using the common space, both physical and relational, as a starting point. The Frihamnen area is growing up around Jubilee Park. By building it in place and allowing it to evolve over time – in dialogue with residents – questions about responsibility and opportunities can be discussed in the planning phase. In the process, new and alternative ways of working can be investigated and developed, while residents become co-creators of their own city.

**Team:** Göteborg Stad – Jubileumsparken with Akay and E.B Itso, Atelier Le Balto, BSK, Charley Kåberg, Esencial, Mareld, muf architects, MVRDV, MYCKET, Passalen, Raum labor BERLIN, Spridd, Selgascano, Topotek1

**Film:** Göteborg Stad – Jubileumsparken
The Block by Block Foundation uses Minecraft to empower communities to turn neglected urban spaces into vibrant places that improve quality of life for all. The foundation, a collaboration between Mojang, Microsoft and UN-Habitat, funds and activates public space projects worldwide, mobilising communities and influencing policy in the process. Block by Block centres on Minecraft as a powerful tool for visualisation and collaboration, actively engaging neighbourhood residents who typically lack a voice in public projects.
...through the government machine

The state apparatus in a democracy can be viewed as machinery. Through political reforms and budgets, the machine tries to move the country in the direction its citizens voted for by considering the campaign promises and the values represented by various political parties, as well as the administrative authorities that steer the state apparatus toward various destinations. It can also establish grants and invest in socially, ecologically and economically sustainable places and spaces.

A starting point in Swedish politics today is that gender equality furthers democracy. That’s why, for example, the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning operates according to the national objective of gender mainstreaming in community planning. It allocates funds to projects that support this issue through new development or restorations of public spaces, parks, squares and streets. Or by designing tools for the everyday transformative work, e.g. jamstall.nu, a database with films and other material about gender equality in urban planning.

The state machine can create conditions for project development, innovation and research. It can support art and cultural activities in disadvantaged residential areas by, for example, financing community and cultural centers. It can provide monetary contributions or introduce tax breaks so that municipalities or private property owners can create and manage public environments that consider the needs of particularly vulnerable groups.
Commissioned by the municipality of Umeå with support from the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, part of the Seasons Park in Umeå has been turned into a ‘Free zone – an equal meeting place’. This is a public outdoor environment where the design has focused on the needs of young girls. The goal was to create a place where all can feel safe and free from expectations and observation. After discussing with young girls in the municipality, Tyrén, in close collaboration with the artist Kerstin Bergendal, developed ideas and designed an inviting meeting-place in gender balance.

**Team**: Tyrén;
Carl Arnö,
Annica Forsberg,
Stina Svensson (landscape architecture), Lina Färje, Eva Persson (lightdesign), Peder Eriksson, Kristian Nilsskog (construction)
Umeå kommun;
Frida Hammar,
Annicka Cettner, Linda Gustafsson,
Anna Flatholm

**Artist**: Kerstin Bergendahl

**Foto**: Andreas Nilsson

**Film**: Umeå kommun, Tyrén

**Frizon (Free zone)**

[Images of the 'Free zone' area in Umeå]
House of Words

House of Words (HoW) consists of an architectural structure and an art work involving storytelling and a shared meal. The building is designed by architect Santiago Cirugeda and his studio, Recetas Urbanas, and was built through a collective process with more than 70 participants. The space is activated by artist Loulou Cherinet, the aim being for individuals and communities to appropriate this platform and engage in storytelling through a roundtable session. Everyone who wishes to take part in the conversation and appropriate the space of HoW is welcome.

Team: Santiago Cirugeda, Loulou Cherinet,
Statens konstråd, GIBCA 2015
Film: Statens konstråd, Loulou Cherinet
Imagine a residential building that adapts to your life – instead of the opposite. Where you don’t have to move even though you need a different housing size and other features. Where housing costs may be lower if you share something – for example a room, a space, a tool or a service.

Elastic Home, partly financed by Vinnova, Sweden’s innovation agency, is a future model for increased elasticity in housing that allows people to adapt their homes when new needs arise. This is possible by “unlocking” resources and making them visible – spaces, equipment, knowledge – for easier sharing and more efficient utilization. The ambition is to handle societal challenges in relation to how we live, such as physical and mental illness, segregation and unsustainable lifestyles.

Several social trends are combined in one concept: increased digitalization, sharing and circular economy, civil society involvement, interest in shared housing and sustainability issues. The model will stimulate sustainable development together with new business models adapted for the housing market and offer an attractive business in three bearing levels: for Individuals, Housing Developers and Society.

Team: Kod Arkitekter; Åsa Kallstenius, Pernilla Ivarsson, Leif Eriksson, Johannes Folkesson Forss, Sanna Hederus + all employees at Kod Arkitekter

External interdisciplinary team: Experts in health, sharing economy, digitalization, sustainability and cooperation culture

Film: Kod Arkitekter, Rebecka Tiselius, Lina Nilsson (drawings in color)
During an intense sewing circle session, 19 people taped, cut, sewed, unstitched and drank coffee to produce these pavilions – castles in the air – held in place by constant air pressure. All material has had an earlier life, scraps are turned into castles. Different temperaments and skills are visible in the parts that make up the whole – a social body. That’s how cities and villages should be built: together in big jam sessions, where different groups can join in, repair, construct and reinvent, perhaps even be reconciled with each other.
The new design of Biblioteksplatsen (the library place) in the Rosengård district of Malmö in southern Sweden is a result of the active involvement of hundreds of local kids and teenagers. Landscape architects Disorder have been working with the site for more than two years, mostly in collaboration with the local library and the Tegelhuset youth centre. Methods included appropriation and temporary architecture, as a result of which usage of the site has altered drastically. Biblioteksplatsen is part of the large-scale urban development process Amiralstaden. The project was in part financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

Team: Disorder; Karin Andersson and Johanna Bratel
Film: Disorder
Fundamental to the goal of democratic architecture is the creation of environments where a variety of different perspectives interact. Sometimes it’s about gathering and getting along under one roof, as in travel hubs or cultural institutes for dance, theater, exhibitions, libraries and education. Sometimes it’s about adding perspectives to a homogenous environment by, for example, making room for intergenerational families in a residential area planned only for nuclear families with two adults and two children.

Even in urban planning and on a national level can considerations for different perspectives be a basis for new architecture like, for example, buildings for any of Sweden’s five officially recognized minority groups such as the upcoming Sami parliamentary building in Swedish Sápmi. The concept democratic architecture is quite literal in this case since it is referring to a house of representatives.

All these examples should support difference and changing needs, which is quite tricky. The longing to belong can collide with the desire to be surprised. There are widespread differences in our need for accessibility, stillness, disorder and togetherness. When successful, the composite space becomes so much more than the sum of the individual parts.
Stockholm House of Culture & City Theatre

Located right in Stockholm’s political and commercial centre, Kulturhuset Stadsteatern (Stockholm House of Culture & City Theatre) is also a public space. The vision of award-winning architect Peter Celsing was to create a space that could accommodate all art forms. He wanted to design a new kind of institutional building: a centre with ‘the atmosphere of the street and the opportunities of a workshop’. The glass front of the building facing Sergel’s Square enhances the concept of a shared space, and at night offers a transparent view into the interior.

Team: Peter Celsing, Ahrbom & Partner Arkitektkontor
Film: Vindelfilm; Johan Palmgren, Lisa Gustavsson, Filip Hammar
Tenstas första våning
(Tensta’s first flat)

The housing of the Million Program Era during 1965–1974 was the most well-studied and functional part of what is known as Folkhemmet (The People’s Home) in Sweden. Today, the majority of people living in the large scale housing areas from this time period have multicultural backgrounds. Diversity is the norm. During 1998–2006, architect Erik Stenberg restructured a total of seven apartments in Tensta, a Stockholm suburb and the largest housing areas of the Million Program Era, with the aim of strengthening the area from the inside out. The flexibility and structural capacity of the original housing system S66 by Ohlsson & Skarne was utilized to design new apartment layouts for the current residents. One example is the two apartments that were merged to become one five bedroom flat of 166 sq.m. The film presents part of the story of how Tensta began, of the ambitious flat reconstruction, and the family that lives there now.

Team: Erik Stenberg, architect, KTH Architecture School
Film: KTH; Erik Stenberg, Amir Mehdi Rezaei, Hannes Hagstrand
The winning proposal of the international architectural competition for a new Swedish Sami parliament building is called Badjáneapmi, “awakening” in the Sami language. It marks the final Swedish recognition of the rights of the Sami, members of a Scandinavian transnational indigenous society. When built in the northern mining town of Kiruna it will house Sametinget – part government agency, part elected assembly – the organisation tasked with promoting Sami language, culture and industry.

The design is partly inspired by the Lavvu, a round tent covered in reindeer skins traditionally used by the Sami. Forming a tapered crescent, the building embraces an outdoor space with a central open fireplace, emphasising the cultural importance of the hearth as a gathering point, a place for dialogue.

The curved facade opens to the view of the surrounding landscape, the town and the distant Kebnekaise massif. The re-development of Kiruna is an ongoing project, as the Kirunavaara mining operation undermines the structural foundation of the current town centre. Several existing buildings are to be moved or demolished and the town centre is to be relocated 3 kilometers to the east, where a new site has been chosen for the parliament building.

**Team:** Murman arkitekter; Hans Murman, Helena Andersson, Andreas Klesty
Landscape; Ulf Nordfjell, Tiina Henning
Structural engeneer; Peter Karlström,
Technical Installations; Lars Kjellgren,
Joakim Nordemo
Model; Mårten Ubbe
**Film:** Murman arkitekter; Johan Malmberg
Fittja People’s Palace

The Fittja People’s Palace was a winning entry in the 2013 competition Nordic Built Challenge. It comprises a scalable model and a process for the sustainable renovation of a social housing area in the Stockholm suburb of Fittja dating from the early 1970s. The pilot project is now realised and has set the standard for the rest of Fittja. The approach it takes highlights the inherent flexibility in the existing, largely rational system. Subtle additions strengthen the urban environment and create space for new activities.

Team: Spridd; Klas Ruin, Ola Broms Wessel
Film: Spridd
Haparanda Tornio travel centre

The travel centre connects two countries. Haparanda–Tornio is a region that reaches across the northern border between Sweden and Finland. The cities of Haparanda and Tornio have grown together through measures such as coordinated public transport. Large shopping centres and parking areas dominate the border area. In their midst, the travel centre occupies a unique position as a brilliant symbol of integration and cooperation, a bilingual hub for bus and freight traffic. The limited budget was part-financed through EU contributions.

Team: DANA arkitektur, MAF arkitekter
Film: Miriam Gullbring
Brink school experiences

Different people experience their neighbourhood in different ways. To create a well-functioning school where students enjoy themselves, a variety of rooms are needed. After the Brink school in Täby was opened, the architects wanted to find out how the students experienced it. One class marked places that they either enjoyed or were not happy in. The results show clear similarities as to which environments are appreciated the most and the least. At the same time, individual differences exist. A school for everyone must also offer rooms for everyone.

Team: LINK arkitektur
Film: LINK arkitektur

Photos: Hundven-Clements Photography
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