Towards Sustainable Public Space in Global City

KTH Royal Institute of Technology
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Program of Sustainable Urban Planning and Design
Urban Design Track
Dedication

To my parents, Maria and Georgi.
Content

Introduction

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What is this thesis about?
The thesis considers questions and issues surrounding segregation and privatization of public space in a global city.

1. Can we balance the city’s identity while remaining inclusive to integrate diverse social groups?
2. Can the city resist the global economic forces of public space’s privatization?

Why this is important?
It is urgent to reconsider the public space of a global city in order to use its capacity to enable integration and promote democratic values. The contemporary discourse on segregation in public space has been focus on disadvantaged areas. This thesis addresses a gap in current knowledge by taking a representative space of national identity as a site of intervention.

What is the object of study?
1. Public Space: state of becoming
   “Contrary to the traditional static concept that identifies places with what does not change; their ‘sense of place’, ‘character’ or ‘identity’, I assume an operative definition of ‘place’ as state of becoming. (p.3)
   -Kim Dovey, Becoming Places: Urbanism / Architecture / Identity / Power, (Routledge, 2010)

2. Local Identity: People, Place, Practice
   Local identity is defined as 3P – people (who is there), practice (what activities are performed) and place (built environment).
   The main question that should be asked here is: Why a demographic group will move in?
   -Chapter 4 in Laura Tate, Brettany Shannon, Planning for AuthentiCITIES (Routledge, 2018)

3. Global City
   As Saskia Sassen points out the Global City is city, which is directly influenced by a network of international economic activity, rather than its belonging to a state. “These changes in the functioning of cities have had a massive impact upon both international economic activity and urban form: Cities concentrate control over vast resources, while finance and specialized service industries have restructured the urban social and economic order. Thus a new type of city has appeared. It is the global city. “
Design task

The city of Stockholm recently has become a place where global events show their local impact. The global brand Apple proposed to locate a retail building in the first public space in Sweden - the King’s garden in Stockholm. This example is part of a global strategy of the electronics giant Apple for locating retail stores with global brand identity on public spaces with strong local identity in key global cities: New York, Melbourne, Tokyo, Milan and others.

The design task is to propose an intervention that respects and enhances the local character of Kungsträdgården, while allowing for “other” identities to move in. The design intervention should respond to the contemporary challenge of privatization of public space by retail. The issues of privatization and segregation will be considered thought the five typologies of public space: the community center, the garden, the plaza, the waterfront and the street.
Chapter 1

Historical Analysis
The First Public Space in Sweden

The in-depth historical analysis of the transformations of Kungsträdgården addressed four key topics: space, society, practice and economics. This holistic understanding of the past and present was fundamental in the formulation of design strategy. In particular, the main concepts that informed my design strategy were the public space as dance celebrations, the leisure park the event park and the space of activism. I learned that since its declaration of public space the garden and the main building in its north part have served the public, not a private interest. Privatization by the global retail brand Apple would signify a return to a time when the park served the private interest of the monarchy.
Kungsträdgården Timeline

Part 1 The royal kitchen garden that became royal baroque park

Part 2 The royal dance and theater garden that became military exercise ground

1400 1630 1712 1823

Part 3

Part 4 The public event park, that became place for riot and commerce


Part 5 The Culter park that is in state of becoming ....

2014
Part 2 The royal dance and theater garden that became military exercise ground

Part 3 The public promenade park that became public event park

1866 1873 1953

Part 6 The culture consumption park that became an urban common

2020 2030 2050
Operative Table of Assembly

People

Space

Time

Part 1: The royal kitchen garden that became royal baroque park, 1400s & 1630s

Part 2: The royal dance and theater garden that became military exercise ground, 1712 & 1823
Chapter 2

Spatial Analysis
Spatial Analysis: Operative Cartography

Circulation and Accessibility: Between the city and waterfront
The circulation analysis of the site showed that Kungsträdgården is located between the main pedestrian high street of Stockholm in the north-west and the waterfront for ferryboats for the Stockholm archipelago in the south-east. The vehicles road along the waterfront is a high traffic street important for the service of the National Opera house. To sum up the analysis showed that the two main access points for Kungsträdgården are from Hamngatan in the north and Strömgatan in the south. Secondary points of accessibility are the small streets in the east running perpendicular to the length of the park.

Urban Fabric: The largest public space in a densely built down-town
The analysis of the urban fabric showed that Kungsträdgården is located between four key public spaces in a densely built central area of Stockholm. Each of the three other public space is dominated by a building: Berzeli park and the hotel, Sergels Torg with Kulturhuset, Normalstorg with Braserie Vau de Ville.

Program: Centrality in a network of national cultural institutions.
The program analysis of the site address three key topics: labour, consumption and culture. Reflection upon the results shows a typical characteristics of downtown high-end area. Firstly, high concentration of food and drinks consumerism followed by substantial retail of fashion and cosmetics. In terms of labour, Kungsträdgården is enclosed between the offices of the main banks in Sweden. Thus, the park is daily enjoyed by bankers in their lunch break.

The key finding that informed the design strategy is the third layer of program analysis – culture. By mapping the culture program distribution, it became evident that Kungsträdgården is located in the center of network of the most important national cultural institutions: the newly reopened and free National Museum, National Opera, National Theater, Philharmonic, House of Culture, Modern Museum and the historical site of the old town with the palace. This network informed my design strategy in the way I have reinforced the public space of Kungsträdgården as one of connection between institutions. This was achieved by providing free space in the middle of the garden and creating pedestrian connection with the existing streets in the east.

Occupancy: A space for all
Based on my frequent observation studies from January until April complemented with interviews with users of the park and studying the social media of the user of the Royal Garden revealed several types of occupants in different time periods from different demographic groups: children, elderly, teens, families and touris.

Character: The historical garden and the monument
The character is combination of two types: historical gardens defined by highly curated nature in the south and monumental public spaces defined by sculptural elements in the north.
Spatial Urban Analysis
Program: Centrality in a network of national cultural institutions

Spatial Analysis of Program: Labour

Spatial Analysis of Program: Retail
Spatial Analysis of Program: Consumerism

Spatial Analysis of Program: Culture
Spatial Urban Analysis

Urban Fabric: The largest public space in a densely built downtown

Pedestrian Accessibility * Pedestrian streets, public squares, public green parks

Circulation Pattern
Inverted Pedestrian Accessibility * Public space as free space in context of congestion

Inverted Nolli map: Void as form
Mapping Circulation Flows connecting National Cultural Institutions' journey vs. destination

Urban Strategy* System of Connecting National Cultural Institutions through public space
Mapping a System of National Cultural Institutions
Operative Plot Analysis
Design Logic and Cartography of Elements
Current
Infrastructure of Memory

Current
Accessibility Circulation Pavement

Current
Architectural Elements

Current
Public & Private Infrastructure of Seating
Chapter 3

Design Proposal
Design Proposal

What is adequate for the site?
A complete redesign of the historical garden was deemed inadequate. Instead a combination between old and new with complete preservation of existing nature was chosen.

Design Strategy
The main design strategy is to improve the entrance points to the King’s garden from the city and the waterfront. Secondly, this project will reconsider the existing typologies of community building, garden, promenade alley, free space, pedestrian street and waterfront in order to cater to different demographic groups and promote integration. Third, an infrastructural system of common objects related to culture, play, nature and hygiene will be introduced to cater to different

Project Goals
1. Between generic and contextual: Respect the local context’s historical heritage, while remaining open for other identities to be integrated.

2. Resist attempts for commercialization of the public space.

3. Activate marginalized social groups by a set of targeted spaces.

4. Create spaces for different types of social situations: from private conversation, to leisure sunbathing to concerts and demonstrations.

5. The community center hosts international exhibition and dialogs in relation to right to the city.
Design Strategy
Diagrams

1. Preservation

2. Accessibility and Circulation

1. City/Garden
2. Alleys
3. Free Movement
4. Secondary Streets
5. Preserved Circulation
6. Waterfront Circulation

House of Sweden/UNIQLO shop
Volvo Flagship Store
Church
National Opera

1. Linden & Cherry Trees
2. Historical Gardens
3. Historical Buildings
3. Program

1. Community Center
2. Garden
3. Free space
4. Seasonal Pedestrian Street
5. Urban Beach

4. Infrastructure

1. Alley Light
2. Water Fountain
3. Nature
4. Movable seating
5. Civic Stage
Design Proposal
Design Proposal
Axonometry

Community Center with Garden and Lawn
Urban Beach with Summer Pedestrian Street
Chapter 4

Design Implementation
How can ideas and vision be implemented?

Design Principles
1. The community house: two pavilions united by roof, shaping main entrance to the garden. Create a community building that becomes an entrance to Kungsträdgården.
2. The garden: An infrastructural systems of objects promoting the visibility of “otherness”.

Preservation
Preserve existing the main logic of the space defined by four distinct “rooms” framed by two alleys. Two of the rooms are completely preserved with their layout of historical gardens. All of the existing nature is preserved.

Program
The design strategy will afford programs for a diverse set leisure, culture and activism situations. From private conversation and play in the garden, to large ground gathering in the lawn, to sunbathing and taking a swim, to enjoying the sunset view over the old city.

Accessibility
Improve accessibility from the north and south side of the garden.

Occupancy
The intervention remains open to new occupants by removing from the pedestal the existing statues of military man from the center of the public space and replacing these monuments with civic stages. The main design principle is to use local materials and techniques to create a free space for public life to emerge.

Character
Each intervention has unique character that reflects its fundamental qualities.

The garden design reinterprets the classical elements of nature, water and seating in a new configuration that affords diverse variation of spatial combinations. In particular, the infrastructural elements cater to the needs of different demographic groups as the goal is to facilitate their visibility and interaction. The chess sets become an informal place for senior citizens share his passion with his granddaughter. The temporal exhibitions by art students becomes a way to empower young voices and provoke discussions. The flower pots are fundamental for creating a peaceful and aesthetically pleasing

The free space caters to the idea of event park by providing space for large groups to gather for concerts, culture festivals, demonstrations. It can as well host a variety of informal activities like playing large groups playing volleyball or Frisbee.

The waterfront is a separate element with focus on leisure activities for an urban beach. It provides a completely different atmosphere than the lawn, the garden and the community building.
Design Implementation
Detail Axonometry

1. Community Center
2. Connection between Urban Beach and Summer Pedestrian Street
Design Implementation
Detail Infrastructure Elements

Chess Tables
Exhibition Case

Infrastructure of Electricity
Infrastructure of Play

Public Toilet
Drinking Water Fountain
Conclusion

Design Outcome
In conclusion, I see the sustainable urban habitats of the future as the ones which can balance their national identity while remaining open to integrate diverse social groups. Secondly, I believe the sustainable future cities will be the ones which resists the global forces of privatization of public space as this is fundamental for the democratic society.

Tomorrow is the demonstration Fridays for Future which was initiated by the Swedish teen Greta Thunberg last year. Greta was sitting in a public space in front the parliament of Sweden every Friday to advocate for better measures of ecological crisis. The movement has become a global force sustained by local groups across Europe, Australia and the US. The demonstration will take place in this very space.