

THE COMMON THREAD

INTRODUCTION

As Borås has been shaped through modern history, the thread has been a major element in the city's development to prosper both in the industrial and post-industrial era. The thread can be seen as the city's fate; connecting the past, present and future in a complex urban fabric. In this fabric, the commons play a crucial role. The commons are fundamental parts in making a city democratic, liveable, vibrant and just. These are both the places where people may meet and use for recreation, as well as places where the basis for a modern, circular and shared economy can be founded. The common thread is a plan for Gässlösa that seeks to extend the urban fabric and create a NY881 integrated and productive part of Borås where people can live and businesses grow meanwhile the whole city gains and everyone is welcome in this area.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Gässlösa is an area with big potential to be a template for sustainable urban development in Borås. The area has a number of qualities that can be used in the future. As shown in the historical analysis, the area has grown from almost non-exploited to a cluster for mainly industrial activities. The industries have re-shaped the site through interventions in the natural landscape (such as a new path for the river) as well as providing the area with several high qualitative buildings - strengthening Gässlösa's identity.

The current use has provided the area with many work places and activities to serve the city's needs. However, it is quite clear that Gässlösa has a monofunctional land use with private estates that are hard to access. Still, the area has a very attractive location, close to both Viskan and large green areas that can contribute to great recreational values. There are also several residential areas nearby. During the last half decade, Borås has mainly grown in other directions, but now the construction of a new water sewage plant has allowed this area, strategically located just 1.3 kilometres from the central railway station, to be a mixed area with different functions.

CONCEPT AND DESIGN



There is a need to make an area in development liveable and attractive not just for the people that will have their homes there, but also for the whole city of Borås. In this concept, the commons are used as a driving force to make this happen. These strategies redefine the commons and embrace them in the design. Initially, the access to green and blue areas are crucial to make the area available for recreation. The green spine from S:t Sigfrids to S:t Birittas gets improved as well as the accessibility to the Viskan spine. Secondly, new development must be adapted to the local circumstances. This includes preserving valuable buildings in the built environment to keep an identity as well as develop a new plan based on different house types and blocks found in Borås.

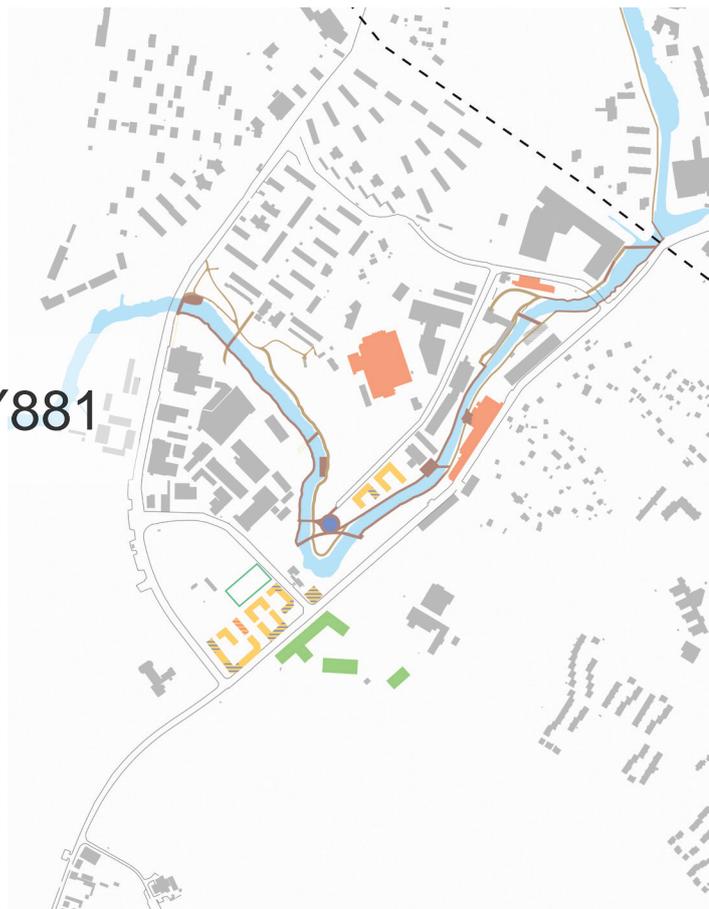
Furthermore, production is a major element in making Gässlösa more than just a residential area. Production can be seen in many ways, as producing goods, ideas or growth. These strategies focus on the production of handcraft and textile through small scale business, production of culture through accessible spaces for artists and local production of food as a way to both contribute to sustainability and a social activity that let people connect through a common activity.

The plan embraces the strategies and is set up by using the typologies found in the urban tissue of Borås. Blocks are developed around already existing streets and buildings which enables the plan to develop incrementally. The phasing of the implementation is schematically divided into three major phases:

PHASE 1

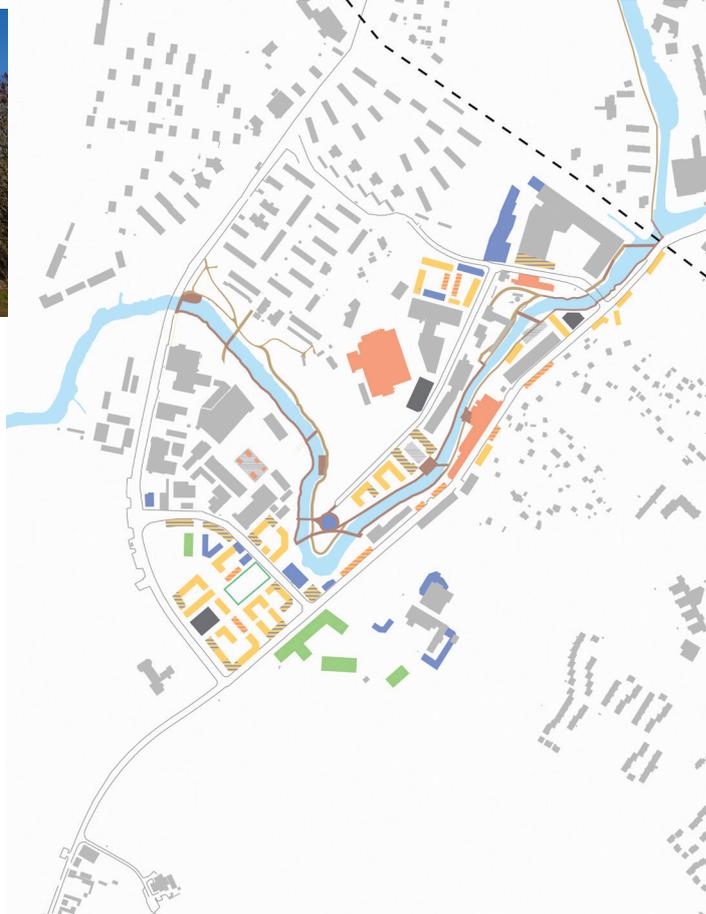
The first step in Gässlösa's transformation is to open up the area for all the inhabitants of Borås by improving the access to Viskan. A system of paths and boardwalks stretching over the river in a zig-zag pattern enables people to use the area for recreation and realise its' qualities. A new school is also built in the area and the first new housing units and businesses are established. Additionally, several of the old factory buildings start to open up for new activities. A key building in this process is Silverpopplen 4, that incrementally gets transformed to a building with workshops, makerspaces, cultural activities such as scenes, bars artist's studios and rehearsal rooms. This building's strategic location close to present areas will also invite more people to Gässlösa, and a rooftop walkway and terrace is constructed to further increase the accessibility. A last feature that strengthens the areas identity is a park made of the old basins of the sewage plant. Filled up with soil and additional concrete paths it enables both recreation and urban farming in the area.

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PHASE 2

The second phase in the development of the area increases the number of new dwellings and businesses in the Gässlösa while still keeping the area's identity. Development is mainly concentrated around Viskan, at the site of the old sewage plant and in the northwest. New units are introduced, such as the rowhouses with saw-tooth roofs that provide the possibility to combine a small workshop with a home. Furthermore, as some industrial buildings at the site become obsolete, their construction skeletons are preserved and make room for squares and areas to fill up with green houses and workshops that contribute to the local production at the site.



PHASE 3

The final phase of the plan's incremental implementation transforms the area to a new integrated part of Borås with homes for about 6100 people, services and businesses that contribute to a shared economy and high life quality. The rest of the site south of Viskan gets developed with blocks while keeping a green edge towards the river. However, as the design is based on keeping large parts of the site's streets and networks, several buildings are preserved to keep the thread from the past to the future.

Parking is solved through parking houses that reduce the high cost of underground garages, although the benefit of Gässlösa's proximity to the city centre is utilised with good paths for walking and biking as well as public transport. The commons are present with shared courtyards suitable for small scale food production, as well as the recreational spine along Viskan, that also gets fronted by cafés and bars. Workshops and cultural centres offer unique production that will attract people to the area.



A LETTER FROM A RESIDENT

Lastly we would like to convey the idea of the new Gässlösa by presenting a fictional diary entry by the lokal resident Kim - one of the people living in the new part of the city.

Today was a normal day. I woke up and had breakfast in the courtyard. I sat on the benches by the old industrial skeleton to get some shade from the sun. Robin came by and said hi before heading into the common workshop that is located inside the construction skeleton left after the old warehouses.

After my breakfast i rode my bike over Viskan to the old water basin - left over when the treatment plant moved to a different location. I grabbed some spinach and tomatoes for dinner from the allotment i have there. It's weird to think that it use to be one of the many basins where water was cleaned by the old treatment park.

I grabbed my bike and rode it back to my apartment because I really need to get to work on that proposal for Boppab that I have been putting of. But it's nice to start the morning with breakfast outside when you have a combined apartment and workplace as I do.

For lunch i met up with Alex and went to that new korean place that just opened in the old building with red bricks. We talked a lot about what it's use had been and why new buildings don't really have the same soul. Lunch was way to long and i had to hurry home to finish the proposal.

Work went really well so i could end early and meet up with Robin, Joni, Toni and Pim to have a beer right in Pims studio on the other side of Viskan. It was such a nice evening and I could not stop thinking about that i didn't know any of them before i moved to Gässlösa.

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