

The Public Realm and the Culture Centre

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Introduction

For as long as I can remember, I have been fascinated by Kulturhuset (the house of culture) in my hometown of Stockholm. Its strong architectural presence, with its long, horizontal glass walls suspended on a monolithic concrete wall, immediately affects you when walking out of the central station on to Sergels torg. What I have always found the most interesting however is what the building offers to the city. The vast majority of urban interiors in Stockholm City is commercialised but Kulturhuset functions as an extension of the street. For a substantial part of the year, Stockholm has a cold and inhospitable climate and such an extension is to me an invaluable addition to the interior of the city. When walking around in the interior of Kulturhuset one encounters people from every part of society. You find homeless people without a place to stay, teenagers sitting in group on the floor, families watching an art exhibition or at the children's library and old men playing chess.

In a lecture from September 6, 2012, Christophe Grafe announced that one of the reasons for choosing Kulturhuset as one of the case studies in his PhD was his own, subjective fascination towards the building. I saw this as a strong motivation to deepen my knowledge regarding Kulturhuset and culture centres that serve a similar, public interior role in the urban fabric. To be able to understand the role of this building type in the public space I must first define public space. I will do this through the theories of Richard Sennett and Marc Augé. I will then look closer at the concept of the culture centre and its role in the public interior through the lens of Christophe Grafe's and Mark Pimlott's writings.

What is public space?

Firstly, I will look at the idea of public space from the viewpoint of Richard Sennett and Marc Augé who both have written extensively on the topic and are both important voices in the development of a theoretical framework regarding public space. As with any academic theory there are arguments both for and against the ideas of Sennett and Augé but here I will use their definitions as a foundation for understanding the concept of what makes a public space.

Richard Sennett and the public realm

In the the essay *The Public Realm* from 1976, the sociologist Richard Sennett describes the public realm as a place where people without knowledge of each other meet. The family, where individuals knows one another in an intimate way is put as contrast to the public realm. Historically the public realm has been linked to urban physical spaces such as the town squares, major streets, cafes and lectures halls. Through advancements in technology, the public realm or the public space is no longer confined to physical space but can also be found in virtual space. Sennett describes the most important role of the public realm like this:

“Gathering together strangers enables certain kinds of activities which cannot happen, or do not happen as well, in the intimate private realm. In public, people can access unfamiliar knowledge, expanding the horizons of their information.” (website)

Meetings between strangers and the sharing of information and ideas is essential to the democratic society. The public realm also allows for anonymity and a way to leave your place in the social hierarchy. The ability to start anew and reform yourself in a context where

everyone is a stranger is a place for individual development and a way to leave social conformities.

The public realm is to Sennett connected to urban culture and consists, like any culture, of rituals. These can be rituals involving eating and drinking, how we greet or not greet one another, places where people gather in groups or places where people search for seclusion. These rituals and behaviours, or acts, is making the public space comparable to the idea of the theatre or the *theatrum mundi*¹. In his book *The Fall Of Public Man* Sennett writes:

“The classic ideal of the *theatrum mundi* attempted to convey one union of aesthetics and social reality. Society is a theatre, and all men are actors.” (Sennett, 1976, p. 313)

However, according to Sennett, there has been a decline in the public life or the *theatrum mundi* since the 19th century. Capitalism and the loss of religion created a void where people earlier had relied on religious rituals and transcendental beliefs of a human nature, present at birth. This void was filled by a belief that you could be the author of your own life. People retreated into the private and to the family to find meaning to their lives. The importance of the individual personality and to intimate relationships within the family grew ever stronger. The private realm increased in importance while the impersonal public realm lost its significance. The current view, according to Sennett, is that a close relationship between individuals stand for moral good while impersonality, coldness and alienation are regarded as regrettable situations that we should, at any cost avoid. However, the diminishing of the public sphere deprives of us of the personal growth and individual development that can otherwise take place here. When the ideal lies within close relationships and a focus on the self we lose the ability of making effortless and enriching relationships with people we briefly encounter in the public realm.

Sennett does not argue that we should go back to the religious past where rituals and the human nature gave us roles to play in the urban theatre. In today’s world, without fixed values we have to make up, and play our own roles in relationship to others. If we learn to play these roles better we can use the cities as it was intended:

“The city is the instrument of impersonal life, the mold in which diversity and complexity of persons interests and tastes become available as social experience” (Sennett, 1976, p.339)

Marc Augé and the non place

In his book *Non places, introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* from 1995, the French anthropologist Marc Augé writes about what he calls the supermodernity and the non space. In modernity a place is where the old and the new comes together as a whole according to Augé. He gives the exemple of the bell tower which, since the medieval days, has created both a spatial and temporal backdrop to the city and its inhabitants. In the modern era, these bell towers coexisted with the chimneys of the factories rather than being pushed out of significance. The architectural features, the marking of time and the evocation of ancient rituals all contributed in connecting the city of modernity to its continuous history. A place is where creative social life can be achieved in an organic way. A place, concerned with social life, history and identity is to Augé exactly that: a place. As a juxtaposition to place,

¹ *Theatrum Mundi* is a way of explaining the public realm as a stage and its inhabitants as actors, playing different roles in different social situations. The idea of *Theatrum mundi* has been developed throughout history, from Plato to theories by sociologists in the 20th century.

Augé puts the non place. To be able to explain the non place, he first gives an introduction to Supermodernity. According to Augé, supermodernity originates from three figures of excess which can be found in the modern world.

He refers to the first figure as an overabundance of events. In the world of today we are faced with an excess of information and events which we must interpret and give meaning. The second figure of excess is spatial overabundance. By technological advancements, the world is getting smaller and this is, at the same time, making the world more open to us. We can travel to every capital in the world in a matter of hours and through media we have access to the whole world, both real and imagined. The third excess is the individualization of reference. The information and events, experienced by the individual is interpreted as if it is meant for the individual himself. This third part can also be described as an excess of the ego.

“If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non place” (Augé, 1995, p.63)

Examples of non places are airports, motorways and places for retail such as the supermarket. In the non place, the visitor takes on the role of a passenger, consumer or a driver. Our personal identity is taken away and we all become solitary subjects to the place we currently inhabit. Augé distinguishes one important difference between modernity and supermodernity in its relationship towards history. While history plays an interwoven part in the fabric of modernity it is detached within the realm of supermodernity. In a supermodern perspective, historical buildings and monuments are seen as spectacles to be viewed from a distance when traveling between non places. History is regarded as a theme park with its physical manifestations acting as attractions. The time we spend moving through non places is taking up more and more of our lives and to Augé these spaces play an important role in our social existence of today.

Culture Centres as public interior

In his text *Retailising Space Architecture, Retail and the Territorialisation of Public Space*, Mattias Kärrholm writes about how the consumer society is changing our urban public space. Retail is continuing to gain importance in the public realm and is also gaining ground in places earlier deprived of shopping:

“Places like museums, workplaces and libraries have all become part of the commercialised space as well”. (Kärrholm, 2012, p. 1)

Within the context of an increasingly commercialised public space, culture centres have had, and continues to have a specific position and may play an important role in the society. Below, I describe culture centres by referring to viewpoints from Christophe Grafe and Mark Pimlott.

Christophe Grafe and the public palace

In his PhD, *People's Palaces Architecture, culture and democracy in two European post-war cultural centres*, Christophe Grafe studies the development of the cultural centres emerging in Europe between 1955 and 1975. During this time, a large number of cultural centres were being planned and built in different European countries such as England, Sweden, The Netherlands and France. Grafe focuses on western Europe and base his research on two case studies of Culture centres that have had, and continues to have, a big impact on their specific

urban context. These two buildings are The Southbank Centre in London and the Stockholm Kulturhus.

The origin of the culture centre is linked to the European post war, cultural and economical environment. The need for rebuilding Europe, and the emerging idea of the welfare state changes society and the built environments to a great extent. The democratisation process within the welfare system took physical shape in new retail areas, mass housing, subway systems for mass transportation etc. The idea of democratising new aspects of society was also extended to culture. Grafe writes:

“Both in Sweden and Britain cultural policies in the immediate post-war years relied on the assumption that it was the task of an enlightened state to provide culture.” (Grafe, 2010, p. 548)

The time of the culture centres was a time of immense urban and architectural experimentation and this building type became a popular object among designers and architectes to test new ideas and concepts. The idea that culture centres was an object for experimentation originated from the fact that the culture centres could include a broad, unspecified range of functions such as concert halls, libraries, cinemas, museum, galleries and educational facilities. Depending on the disposition of these types of spaces one culture centre could get a vastly different shape from another.

By being spaces for democracy, culture centres also by default becomes public spaces. As a foundation for understanding public space Grafe stresses the importance of using theories from other academic fields such as philosophy, political science and social science. He mentions works by Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas and Richard Sennett as sources for this broader understanding and continues by briefly describing some of their key ideas. Arendt, a German born philosopher, originates the public sphere in the western society to Greek democratic antiquity and connects it to the concept of acting. In the public sphere, we are actors who, through different roles, present ourself to the people around us. To Habermas, another German philosopher, democracy and modern culture emerged in the 18th and 19th century in the cafes and clubs of cities like London and Paris. In these places, ideas of a modern, egalitarian society was discussed and to Habermas, the ideas later formed the society as we know it today. The physical, public space place plays an important role to the changing of society. Habermas means that the French revolution would not have taken place without these discussions around a table in a Parisian café. Richard Sennett is influenced by both Arendt and Habermas. His theories are described previously in this text.

The idea of public space was fundamental to the culture centres. Both the physical and social fabric of Europe was in ruins after 1945 and in almost every country there was a belief that bringing culture to the people would elevate people to intelligent citizens rather than being mere consumers. The idea was to develop the society and egalitarian ideals by giving people from different social backgrounds access to culture and education. The culture centres should:

Create a framework of culture that would allow people to be real citizens. To develop themselves, to explore themselves, to take on responsibility for the common good. (lecture by Christophe Grafe, September 6, 2012)

To live up to these ideals, the culture centres had to be able to host a large number of people and they had to convey a feeling of inclusiveness. This new building type was for everybody and not just for a specific group of people. It was even an end in itself that the form of these buildings should move away from the previous forms of earlier cultural buildings meant for the elite and the ruling classes².

Throughout the history of the culture centres, the architecture has been a balancing act between openness and the sense that culture is something special and outside of ordinary life. This balance act has not been made easier by the fact the concept of culture itself has been changing. The question the planners and designers of culture centres asked themselves is formulated by Grafe:

What is it really, that is the central value of culture... what is the central immaterial values of our society (lecture by Christophe Grafe, September 6, 2012)

Grafe argues that the architecture of the culture centre changed with the changing of the notion of culture. Between 1945-1960, the idea was to give the people access to high culture which was important for the democratic idea of the welfare state. Everybody should have access to the countries cultural heritage. From 1960 to 1979, culture instead became a way of questioning society and its conformities. Culture was also a mean for personal fulfilment and, in the extension, to become a complete citizen.

Mark Pimlott – the interior of the city

In his book, *The public interior as Ideas and Project* from 2016, Mark Pimlott reflects on the public realm from the perspective of the interior. The fundamental task of a building is to shelter us from the hazards of nature. Architecture expands the role of the shelter by linking interior space to the outside world. The interior space is disconnected, yet placed in its context. Pimlott argues that ideas and ideologies of societies manifest themselves in the interior. The public interiors, where we can exist as free citizens will function as a mirror of the larger prevalent ideas of the time.

“The interior, regardless of its scale, whether it is that of a dwelling, a temple, a settlement, a city or a continental territory, is informed and shaped by ideas” (Pimlott, 2016, p.9)

In his book, Pimlott lays his focus on the public interior. The public interior consists of interior spaces which are used by the public and can be both privately and publicly owned imposing different levels of limitations to the behaviour of people inhabiting these spaces. One such space can be the shopping mall where people can feel as they are moving through a public space but is at the same time restricted by the organisation, appearance and the staff of the space to behave in a way fitting to the will of the private owners. Pimlott continues by stating:

“The public interior realm as it is perceived is in fact in the control of a variety of agents, some serving the public interest more generously than others (Pimlott, 2016, p.10)

² Culture had earlier been regarded as something elevated from politics and economy. Culture buildings, such as theatres, opera houses and museums was often located in expensive residential areas or ceremonial centres and had strong architectural links to antiquity.

The book contains many brief examples of public interiors which are sorted into six categories. These are The Garden, The Palace, The Ruin, The Shed, The Machine and the Network. I will look closer at one example, relevant to my initial question, from the category of The Palace. Pimlott describes the idea of the palace as an apparently endless and complex series of grandiose rooms suited for every imaginable purpose. Such a building can induce a sense of excitement and feeling of exclusiveness to the visitor. Because of this splendour you would, however, not feel like you belong to the space. You would instead feel like an outsider:

“...whose presence was dependent upon the behest of the host, whose authority or power would be palpable, inscribed in the architecture of this exceptional residence, this palace” (Pimlott, 2016, p.59)

The spatial characteristics of the palace creates a line between owner and visitor. The building conveys a message of power and is meant to influence the behaviour of its visitors. According to Pimlott you get either humbled or nobled by stepping into a building belonging to this category. In the book examples of both real palaces and buildings sharing the same spatial or thematical ideas can be found.

Kulturhuset – A public interior standing the test of time

The Stockholm Kulturhus, mentioned in the introduction, is described by both Grafe and Pimlott. This will be a short overview of how they describe this particular building and why it has become important as a public interior.

Pimlott describes the function of Stockholm Kulturhus as a shop window of the welfare society. The design of the building is inspired by a book stack which manifests itself in concrete balconies connected to a wall which created a framework for Sergels Torg, the new central square of Stockholm. The location and the openness of the building was to symbolise the view of the public space and bring the culture to the city and the people. Kulturhuset was to be a building for the making of culture and where every strata of society could be a part. The flexibility and transparency was the quintessence of this building. Pimlott writes:

“... one saw registers if the theme of the palace as a container of significant cells, whose transparency proclaimed unlimited availability” (Pimlott, 2016, p.84)

Grafe puts Kulturhuset in the context of the strong economic growth of the 1950s and 60s when the material standards of ordinary people were increasing. Cars and TV- sets became available for common people and the housing situation was better than ever before. Sweden was at the time one of the richest and most well-functioning countries in Europe. There were at the time massive reconstruction of central Stockholm and Kulturhuset was to represent the importance of culture in the new society. The concept for Kulturhuset was according to Grafe, new and radical. The idea was that this new culture centre was to be opened 24 hours a day without any entrance fees. There should be no boundaries between, theatre, museum and library and people could become actors, and artists rather than passive consumers.

“This idea that culture itself becomes a way of questioning society is the central reason for the building” (*lecture by Christophe Grafe, September 6, 2012*)

When the building was completed it became a success in its role as a space where people could go to see a play or an exhibition or just spend time for no particular reason. The building offers the same possibilities today with the difference that a bigger part is devoted to cafes and bars where you have to spend money to sit. During the design phase of the building, the architect, Peter Celsing, made a series of sketches describing different situations which could take place in the building. These were situations, involving new types culture activities connected to bars and restaurants in way not seen previous. Kulturhuset, which was the only place at the time with a wide variety of international newspapers also became a meeting place for refugees from Latin America who wished to know about the situation in their home countries.

Grafe also puts emphasis on the importance of the architectural aspect of the building. He describes the architecture as narrative, wanting to tell a several stories through its design. One of these stories is the transparent shelves, mentioned by Pimlott, which shows the interior of the space to the city and vice versa. The careful detailing of the building is also important and expands the building from its social role as a house for everybody to an architecturally important piece in its own right. The quality of the architecture has contributed to making this building an essential part of its surrounding.

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The demographical and cultural situation in Den Haag

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Introduction

With a population of 520 000, Den Haag is the third largest municipality in The Netherlands after Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The city is the administrative centre of the Netherlands and it is the residence for both the Government and the Royal family. In the city, there is also a multitude of international institutes and corporations. It is moreover the home of the majority of the foreign embassies in the Netherlands and the International Court of Justice. More than half of the population of Den Haag has a different ethnicity than native Dutch and the population of the city is expected to grow by between 10% to 13% until 2030.

Den Haag is advertising itself as an international city with a growing and culturally diverse population. To be able to maintain an international image, the city need public spaces which can meet the demands of its citizens and visitors. Below, I present a brief history of Den Haag and an account of the current situation concerning demographics, how the city is expected to develop and possible consequences for cultural venues as public spaces.

Den Haag – an international scene

The history of Den Haag goes back to around 1230 when the first settlement was built where Binnenhof, the seat of the Dutch parliament, can be found today. Over the centuries, the city developed as a centre for government and in 1588 it became the official seat for the ruling power of the newly formed Republic of the Netherlands. Den Haag had the status of a village until 1806, when Louis Napoleon, king of the Netherlands declared it to be the third city of the kingdom.

In 1851 all villages and cities in the country were changed to the status *gemeenten*, or municipalities. Den Haag became the Royal residency and together with being the seat of the government, the city started to attract embassies. The big number of embassies is one aspect of the international scene of Den Haag still present today.

Due to the industrial revolution, Den Haag continued to grow rapidly. The growth of the population continued in the 20th century. From 1900 to 1960, the city went from having 200 000 inhabitants to having over 600 000. During the 1970s and 80s there was a general decline of the urban population in The Netherlands. During this time the population in Den Haag diminished drastically to around 440 000. Since the year 2000 and the population has grown steadily and is now around 515 000.

In the 20th century, the city also became known for its involvement in peace and justice hosting international conferences dealing with the topic of conflict resolution. In 1922, the Permanent Court of International Justice was founded. This court later developed into the International Court of Justice which is the main juridical body of the United Nations.

Currently, there are 160 international organisations and institutes in Den Haag. These organisations are involved with topics such as international law, nature and sustainability, water management and education and employs more than 14 000 people. There are also 300 international companies which have their base in Den Haag. Two of the biggest companies with head offices in the city are Shell and Siemens. Every year, Den Haag receives around 20 million visitors.

Demography

Since around year 2000, the population of Den Haag has grown substantially. Since 2000, the population has grown from 441 000 to 520 000 in 2016. Between 2010 and 2025, the population of Den Haag is expected to grow by 55 000 people. Den Haag shares a quick growth with the other larger cities, such as Amsterdam and Utrecht, in The Netherlands. There has been a shift in population from the more sparsely populated areas of the country to the cities. The Randstad region, where Den Haag and Amsterdam are located, has seen a faster grow than elsewhere. This has largely to do with the fact that immigrants are exceeding the number of emigrants which results in the population growing. The migration is both domestic and international in nature. More people move from the countryside to the cities like Den Haag where there are better opportunities for work and education. This movement will result in a growth of the part of the population between the age of 20 – 65, also known as the potential labour force. However, overall in The Netherlands the population is getting older. In 2011, 16 % of the population was over 65 years. In 2025 this number will be 22%.

The age of the population of Den Haag is as follows: 119 773 or 23% is between 0-19, 327 614 or 62,9% is between 20 to 64 and 73 310 or 14,1% is 65 years old or older. As of January 2016, Den Haag had 261 319 households. Of these 47% was single-person households, 22% was shared households without children, 21 % was shared households with children and 10% of the households was made up by single parents with children.

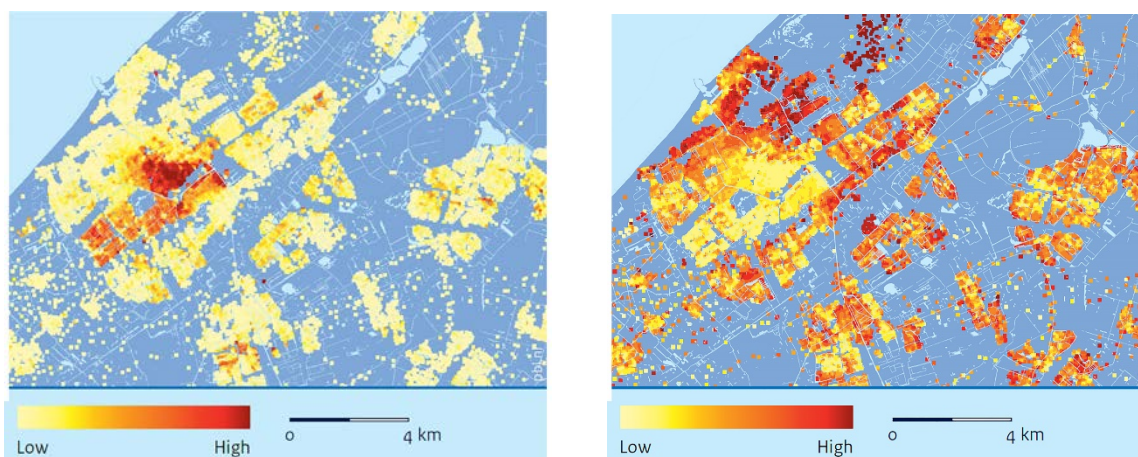
There will also be a continuous increase in the arrival of non-western immigrants. Around half of the population in Den Haag has another ethnicity than native Dutch. According to *Den Haag in Cijfers* By Gemeente Den Haag the division between ethnicities in 2016 was as following: 12 623 Antillians, 249 670 native Dutch, 18 244 Indonesians, 30 391 Moroccan, 25 963 Eastern European, 54 110 Other non- western minorities, 43 617 western minorities, 46 533 Surinamese and 39 546 Turkish.

The Dutch colonial heritage is present in these numbers. There is a large Surinamese and Antillean community in Den Haag. When Suriname was divided from The Netherlands in 1975, almost half of the population left South America for the Netherlands. In the years between 1945 and the mid-sixties, around 300 000 people moved from the Indonesia to The Netherlands. During the last three decades, the Muslim population of Den Haag has grown rapidly. The two largest countries representing this community is Turkey and Morocco.

In Den Haag, there is correlation between areas with a high population of non-western immigrants and lower income.

“The Hague still displays the traditional “sand and peat divide” where affluent neighbourhoods, such as Duinoord, Statenkwartier and Archipelbuurt, occupy the high sandy ground near the coast” (*Cities in the Netherlands*, p.22)

The non-western population is, to a large extent, living in areas near the city centre, like Schilderswijk, Stationsbuurt and Transvaal.



Share of population with a non-western background (2010) *Income level per person (2008)*

(Source Cities in the Netherlands, facts and figures on cities and urban areas)

Health and life expectancy in the bigger cities of The Netherlands, such as Den Haag, is not as good as in smaller towns and rural areas. The reason is that there is a higher number of people with a low income living in the cities. A lower Socio-economic status is connected to health issues and a shorter life expectancy.

The unemployment rate in Den Haag is higher than the countries mean rate. In 2015 the Netherlands had an unemployment rate of 6,9%. The same year, 10% of the population in Den Haag did not have paid work. In the Netherlands, there is a difference in the unemployment rate between natives, western immigrants (mainly from Germany, Belgium and Poland) and non-western immigrants (mainly from Turkey, Morocco, Surinam and the Antilles). In the first quarter of 2013, the unemployment rate among natives was 6,5%. Among western immigrants it was 8,2% and for the non-western group it was 19,2%. The higher rate of unemployment among non-western immigrants is still present today but has lowered to 15% according to the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek.

Demography and public space

The changing demographics of Den Haag with immigration by native Dutch from the rural areas of the country and an increasing number of non-western inhabitants creates a rising number of both older and younger citizens which creates new demands on public space. The socio-economic division in the society between the western and the non-western population partly due to the employment rate is another issue that puts a demand on the public space. When a large portion of the interior public space is privatised and devoted to retail and shopping it might exclude the part of the population with less economic means.

In this context, the plans for development of Den Haag becomes interesting. Below, I address how the municipality of Den Haag presents ideas on how the city will develop until 2040.

The future expansion of Den Haag

In the text, Agenda Ruimte voor de Stad (Space for the City Agenda), the municipality of Den Haag presents ideas on how the city will expand until 2040. The city acknowledges that while the city has grown by 20 000 people since 2010, the amount of jobs has diminished by 10 000. At the same time, there are structural changes in terms of the job market. The amount of employments in traditional service industries such as banking, insurance and administration within the government is shrinking. The new economy sees a rise of the demand for entrepreneurial knowledge in fields such as law, tourism, security and sustainable development.

Due to the population growth, there is an estimation that 2000 to 2500 new homes have to be built each year. In the period between 2016-2025 the municipality therefore need to build 25 000 new homes in the city. To be able to handle the changes in the job market and an increasing requirement for housing the municipality is planning to develop different areas of Den Haag.

The central part of the city is to be developed as a pedestrian area with better routes for walking and cycling with a stronger focus on shops, restaurants, culture facilities and work spaces. The Spui quarter and the museum quarter has traditionally been regarded as areas attracting many people and these, as well as the connection between these two areas, are supposed to be strengthened.

The Central innovation district or CID, is an area with a strong presence of businesses, governmental organs and institutes. This makes it an economically important area and much of the focus for the development lies in strengthening the conditions for economic growth through housing for young professionals and improved communications etc.

The Binckhorst area is an industrial area southeast of the city centre which has gradually seen an increase of office spaces. There is a plan for Binckhorst to be developed into a mixed residential and commercial area as well as further strengthening of the environment for creative businesses. One such project is the reuse of the Caballero Fabriek which went from a factory to an office complex where a multitude of small creative businesses works in close proximity.

The area around the central station is currently surrounded by large scale infrastructure and there is a wish to strengthen the connection to the surrounding parts. There is also plans for a future development and modernization of the royal library and to strengthen the building as a public meeting place.

Scheveningen and the coastal areas play a traditionally important role to Den Haag in terms of economics connected to the port and to tourism. There are plans to further strengthen the tourism in the area by developing the port and the infrastructure, reusing vacant buildings and renovating as well as adding new culture facilities.

In 2016, Den Haag had around 15% of vacant office space. The number of empty office space for the country was on average 17%. This has largely to do with the economic crisis in 2008, an overall ageing population and companies adopting more flexible workspaces which requires less area per employee. More than half of the office space of the Netherlands is found in the Randstad region and there is also here where the vacancy is the biggest. The vacant office buildings are often owned by large investors. For large

investors, each property is of less important than to a smaller investor. The larger companies is therefore willing to hold on longer to vacant properties. Den Haag has marketed vacant office buildings of shifting size for reuse. The buildings are however not owned by Den Haag but by private parties.

Thus, the plans for a future Den Haag will change the preconditions for how public spaces will create opportunities for people to meet. Parts of the city will develop with economic growth and entrepreneurship in focus, whereas in other areas housing will be the main priority. Regardless of focus, and not the least since the financial crisis in 2008, economic considerations play an essential part for future development which means that some areas are prioritized, while others are not.

Den Haag and the shifting cultural environment

Following the financial crisis of 2008, the Dutch government decided to drastically lower the countries budget towards culture. Halbe Zijlstra, the state secretary for culture the minister of culture announced in 2011 that the culture budget was to be cut by 200 million euro or 25%.

Over the recent years, the Dutch government has made serious cuts in the funding of culture. Between 2012 and 2013 the subsidy for arts dropped 22 % or by 238 million euro. Several public institutions of Den Haag have been forced to make cutbacks and some, such as the Netherlands music institute have had to close. There is view that the Dutch cultural life of today is under serious threat and in need of help.

Also in Den Haag, there are extensive cut-backs for cultural purposes. Between 2009 and 2013, the budget for culture was lowered from 63 million euro to 49 million and several community centres and libraries had to close. Due to cuts in the budget, hundreds of libraries and community centres had to shut the doors. Several orchestras and other music institutions also lost funding and had to downsize. At the same time, it was decided that a new, 181 million euro, culture centre hosting the philharmonic orchestra, the royal conservatorium as well as retail areas, was to be built in the middle of central Den Haag. This triggered a debate which first halted the project. Later, however, the building was decided to be built for the new, slightly lower budget of 176 million euros.

To counter the dismissed support from the government, philanthropy and entrepreneurship was to play a bigger role in the funding of culture.

The cultural scene in Den Haag today

Den Haag is marketing itself as a city rich in music tradition. In a report, showing the culture policy of Den Haag between 2017-2020 it is explained how culture will play an important role in connecting people and strengthen the city economically. At the website *music city the hague* one can read:

“But besides striving to promote justice around the world, the city also distinguishes itself through another remarkable characteristic. A unique specialism, in which The Hague aims to join the ranks of the leading international players: pop music!” (*music city the hague*)

Den Haag has a long tradition of pop and rock music. In the 50's and 60's several famous bands emerged from the city; the most renowned of these perhaps Golden Earring. In the 90s Anouk started her career in Den Haag and the city continues to take pride in its pop- and rock

scene. According to Music City Den Haag there are currently over 1000 bands and musicians active in the city. There are 15 venues designated for live music and 20 festivals annually.

There are several larger spaces for rehearsal in and around the city centre such as Hague Pop Centre, Musicon and Het Koorenhuis. The area around Grote Markt is called the PopHotSpot. Here bars and clubs are collaborating with the larger venue Paard van Troje which has two concert halls with a combined capacity of an audience of 1300 which hosted a total of 96.645 visitors in 2014. Supermarkt, a smaller venue at the Grote Markt had to close in 2015 partly due to the absence of subsidies.

In 1826, King Willem I founded the Royal Conservatory which today is an important part of the classical music as well as the jazz scene in Den Haag. Of the around 1000 students attending the conservatory, half come from abroad.

Another important part of the classic music in Den Haag is the Residentie Orkest or the Philharmonic Orchestra which was founded in 1904. The orchestra had its main venue in the now demolished Dr Anton Philipszaal which in 2014 was visited by around 140 000 people.

The Royal Conservatory also plays an important role in the jazz scene of Den Haag. New jazz musicians are educated at the conservatory and also plays at smaller venues and bars around the city thus contributing to a versatile music environment.

A major blow to the jazz music of Den Haag was struck in 2006 when the city lost the North Sea Jazz festival. Since 1976, the festival has been one of the world's leading jazz festivals attracting an impressive amount of world famous musicians. Currently, the festival resides in Rotterdam and is the largest indoor music festival in the world. The festival takes place at thirteen different stages with more than a thousand attending musicians.

In 2001, the venue for the festival was sold to a private developer that later changed the layout of the space, making it impossible to host the festival there anymore.

In Studio Loos, Den Haag also has an important venue for the development of electronic music. Studio Loos is located in the multidisciplinary building DCR, where graphic art is combined with theatre and music. Loos is describing itself as:

“It is a workspace, laboratory and public presentation place for research, experimentation, development, innovation and production of interdisciplinary electro acoustic music, sound art & audio art, improvisation and composition, monomedia, bimedia, polymedia and hypermedia” (Studio Loos, 2015)

At the DCR, Studio Loss has a artists in residence program with workspace and studios for musicians. There is also space for public performances such as lectures, presentations and concerts.

Thus, there are many more organisations, music groups and institutions of different size in Den Haag involved in classic music, jazz, pop, rock and avant garde music. Since the downsizing of the culture budget, these organisations have gained a rising demand in funding themselves and to make profit in order to be self- sustaining. There is, however,

still funding from the government and moreover from municipality which is essential to many of these organisations.

The funding comes from different parts of the governmental body of the Netherlands. The central government gives out 16% of the subsidies. The biggest part, or 38%, of the funding comes from the local governments. The rest of the funding comes from other sources such as entry fees, hiring out space and private donors (9%). When the amount of public funding decreases, the need for new initiatives is required. The Dutch government implemented the changes in such a way that many organisations did not have the time to adjust to the new and economically harsher environment. In their report *A Paradigm Change: The Case for Private Philanthropy in the Arts in Germany, the Netherlands, and France*, Laura Broer Hagood and Robert Bosch Fellow writes:

“The Dutch example is hardly a happy story. Many arts organizations were taken by surprise and unable to mount fundraising campaigns that could ensure their survival on such short notice... .. Time will tell whether a more competitive, more market-based environment will, in fact, yield stronger arts and culture for the Netherlands.”
(Broer Hagood & Bosch Fellow, 2016)

Broer Hagood and Bosch Fellow end their report by stating that it is worth bearing in mind that the political environment can change quickly and unexpectedly for the worse. Vulnerable organisations and institutions that have difficulties showing their value to potential stakeholders will have a difficult time surviving in such an unreliable, political environment.

The present project in relation to demography, development and economy

Den Haag acknowledge the importance of a rich and varying cultural diversity. As of today, you can find art centres, theatres and musical venues for differing requests. In the future to come, it is more uncertain how spaces for music will develop, and indeed if they will be able to meet the expectations of future inhabitants and visitors.

One reason for uncertainty is that Den Haag has got a changing demography. There has been a big immigration of people with a non-Dutch background and there are reasons to believe that inhabitants with a non-Dutch background will a prominent role in future Den Haag and will furthermore have specific requirements of cultural venues.

Simultaneously, a big proportion of the inhabitants do have a Dutch background, and if the plans of developing areas for economic growth and entrepreneurship are full-filled, there is a need for cultural/musical public spaces to also meet the requirements for these.

There is, at the same time, an abundance of vacant office spaces in the central parts of the city which is withholding valuable space from the citizens. By using one of these buildings for a public culture centre, new possibilities is opened up in the already densely built city centre.

Another reason for the uncertainty is that there has been substantial economic cut-backs to culture and music from government and municipalities for a decade. Consequently, there is a need to find new forms for financing and cooperation to make musical venues and institutions sustainable. One way of doing that might be to create public places that can reduce administrative costs. In other words, a possible way may be to create

buildings that allows different musical orientations and institutions to use, yet under a joint administrative umbrella.

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Background for a New Public Culture Centre in Den Haag

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Introduction

On the first of January 2013, the Dutch government completely stopped its subsidy to the Netherlands Music Institute (NMI) and consequently terminated its operation as an institution for collecting, maintaining and distributing the Dutch musical heritage in the form of thousands of musical prints such as scores, notes and manuscripts. The Dutch composer and pianist Louis Andriessen stated that the Dutch government had declared war on music and that the fascists regimes of the 20th century respected music more than the Dutch government of today. The well-known composer and organist Ton Koopman called it a shame and the loss of an important institution and meeting place. Louis van Gasteren, film director and artist, declared the severity of the situation by saying that Dutch culture, both contemporary and that of the past, was flushed down the toilet.

The diminished support from the government is not exclusive to NMI. Between 2010 and 2012, state secretary for culture Halbe Zijlstra decided to lower the support for culture by 25%. Many culture institutions in Den Haag have been affected by these dramatic cuts with organisational changes and downsizing.

Culture, and the spaces hosting it has traditionally played an important part in the public urban interior. When the prerequisites for culture changes, so will the culture buildings and with them the public space. In a country like The Netherlands where the outside, public space is cold and inhospitable a large part of the year, the urban interior is of special importance.

In this report, I look at the situation in Den Haag regarding shifting demographics as well as music organisations and institutions and see how they have been affected by the current political environment. With a point of departure from the current situation in Den Haag and aspects of why certain culture buildings have been proven successful, I formulate a public, culture space for the future Den Haag. I also present the research of two public culture buildings which have played, and continues to play, an important role in the respective urban context which they inhabit. By understanding what makes these buildings successful as public spaces I can later use this information in my own project.

Research

The research for the project, presented below, has been divided into two parts which together will form the basis of my project. The first part is a report on my findings about the situation regarding music organisations and institutions in Den Haag as well as the reason for my chosen site.

The second part is a study of two culture centres from the 20th century which still function as successful public spaces today. I look at the ideas behind the buildings and see why they still are important to their cities and its inhabitants.

By combining my findings concerning the two parts of my research I formulate a program and a site for my project.

Den Haag – the context of my project

To be able to create a new space for music and a new public building in Den Haag I first had to understand the current situation. My research is directed towards the music scene of the city and what kind of organisations and institutions operating today. There is a wide variety of music related groups, institutions and organisations working in and around Den Haag. My

initial focus was directed towards organisations and institutions combining music with different types of public roles. I have then looked at all the music related organisations and music foundations applying for grants from the municipality of Den Haag to be able to further understand the music situation in the city. With a knowledge of what the music scene of Den Haag needs to continue to contribute to a living cultural city I formulate a program for my project.

To understand the needs and prerequisites for a new public interior in Den Haag I also need to understand the demographic situation as well as ideas on the future expansion of the city. In my second report, I look closer at these topics.

To gain a background and to be able to find a definition of public space I used parts of my first report to look at the ideas of Richard Sennett and Marc Augé. They are authorities in the field of theorising the public realm and I use their ideas to understand what the public space in my project can be.

My research of the different music organisations and institutions in Den Haag has been divided into site visits to the different buildings, by going to the city hall to retrieve drawings of the spaces, by reading and by interviewing people involved. The organisations are involved in different types of music and by combining these under one roof new meetings between musicians and styles can take place, thus creating a foundation for a more creative environment. The different organisations and institutions are also involved in different types of activities ranging from music rehearsal to having a public role for the citizens of Den Haag. In my research, I have gone through many organisations and institutions. By labelling them with different symbols I have been able to easily see which kind of function they are serving and how they overlap. These functions are:



Stage



Library/Archive



Education



Rehearsal



Restaurant/bar/café



Unprogrammed
public space

Figure 1. Symbols for functions of present music organizations and institutions of Den Haag.

The following list of organisations and institutions is a selection that I find as potential parts of a new Culture Centre. The role they might play in a new culture centre are different. The roles may be small or big, and it can involve parts or the whole organisation in question.

Haags Pop Centrum (HPC)



Den Haag Pop Centrum (HPC) is located in the west part of Den Haag close to the tram stop of Burgemeester Hovvlyaan. It is a 20-minute tram or bike ride from the central station to get here.

The pop centrum has been an institution for mainly rock- and pop music in Den Haag for over 30 years. The 4500 m² facilities provide, 15 rehearsal rooms of varying sizes, a small stage and a professional recording studio.

There is also a bar and café but it is mainly open during concerts.

Otherwise it is used by musicians taking a break from rehearsal. It the bar and café are not spaces that are always accessible to the public. Due to its rather dark design and the peripheral location of HPC it offers a limited attraction as a public space used throughout the day.



HPC is used for band rehearsal, music education and as an administrative space for the staff of HPC. Recently HPC has been struggling from new competition of rehearsal spaces emerging in different parts of the city. Many of these are however smaller spaces without the social and public areas provided in the HPC. This social space is important to musicians for providing a space for social and informal meetings with other musicians. The facilities of HPC, is old and not originally built for music practise which result in a problem with noise leakage. In 2010, HPC together with Musicon, another similar institution, had serious plans for a new, more modern and better suited venue in Laakhaven. The financing however fell short and the project was cancelled. The organisation of HPC relies on volunteers for events taking place in the building. By working one shift in, for example in the bar during a concert, you can get one rehearsal session free of charge.

More modern and centrally located facilities, connecting HPC to the city is a possible way of improving the institution. A “dream project” for one of the leading voices of HPC is the Q factory in Amsterdam. The Q factory is serving a similar role as the HPC but in a modern building more suited to its purpose. For HPC, the ideal new building would consist of 20 rehearsal spaces for bands of different styles as well as dance. A more open and accessible café and a restaurant containing a stage with a capacity of an audience of 200 – 250 people is also important. In a more practical note, substantial facilities for the storage of instruments and possibilities to unload and load instruments 24 hours a day is requested.

Bazart, an institution, connected to HPC with the aim of promoting live performances in alternative and heavier rock music had a small space of its own until 2013 when it had to close. The organization instead saw the city as it’s stage but there was a sense the Bazart had lost its “home”.

The Rockart museum



The Rockart museum is a small museum of around 400 m² located in Hook van Holland about 17 km from Den Haag central station. The current location is an un-accessible industrial area and there are political forces wanting to move the museum into Den Haag to strengthen the city as a centre for pop and rock.

Supermarkt



Supermarkt was a venue for live performances promoting a wide variety of music such as rock, ska, jazz and soul. The space was located centrally, in the heart of Grote Markt, one of the main places for bars and restaurants in Den Haag. After the concerts, the Supermarkt turned into a club also promoting the DJ scene in Den Haag.

In 2015, Supermarkt had to close down due to low profits and a high venue rent. One of the key persons behind the venue, Marco Bijsterbosch, states the importance of Supermarkt in promoting new bands and bringing unknown artists to the surface. He believes that its absence will leave a hole in the pop-scene of Den Haag. After the closure, the people behind Supermarkt have been looking for a new, similar sized venue. The space should be able to host around 250-350 visitors and the organization would prefer to be around the Grote Markt because of the busy nightlife. However, the rents in this area are high and an organization with limited resources like Supermarkt will have difficulties to manage financially in such an area.

Koninklijk Conservatorium



The Koninklijk, or Royal, conservatorium is one of the most important music institutions in Den Haag for classic music and jazz. The diversity of the music life in Den Haag is increased by the gathering of students and teachers who are involved in the field of classic music and jazz as well as innovations within the field acoustics and electronics. The jazz students of the school are playing around the city in bars and clubs while the classically oriented students are involved in both internal and external orchestras. By creating a culture centre where musicians of different styles can meet, both formally and by accident, there are further possibilities of a creative mixing of music styles.

In 2019, the Conservatorium is moving to a new, large culture building next to the city hall in the Spui quarter. This building will host both the conservatorium and the philharmonic orchestra connecting the student to the professional world. There is also to be public space and retail areas in the new building. In an interview with staff of the conservatorium some concerns were discussed. Due to the demolition of the old concert hall and the dance theatre the number of concert halls used by the Conservatorium and the philharmonics are diminished from four to two. The concern is that there might be a shortage of performance space for the students during the time they have graduation concerts. The library at the school is not included in the new building but instead moved to the library in the city hall. A new

culture centre where the academic world of the Conservatorium can meet the rock and pop scene of Den Haag could be an interesting addition to the new grand hall in the Spui quarter.

Netherlands Muziek Instituut (NMI)



As previously mentioned, the music archive, operated by NMI had to close its doors in 2013 following the decision of the government to stop its subsidies. The archive was saved by funding from the municipality of Den Haag and could later open in a diminished form in the general archive in the City hall. The original archive held a 400 m² area of the royal library in Den Haag. Here, some of the material were on display and there were opportunities to consult the staff. After 2013, six out of ten of the staff had to go and the archive today is undermanned. To be able to see a part of the collection, you have to book a meeting in advance and the staff will bring it up from the archive. Artists and musicians has given harsh criticism to the government for the treatment of the National Dutch music heritage.

There is also a large collection of music instruments in the city, currently kept in depot in the Gemeentemuseum. Between 2002-2004 around a thousand instruments was on display in the museum but this is not the case today. Parts of the collection came from the privately owned Scheurleer Museum. The museum was instigated and kept by the wealthy banker Daniël François Scheurleer (1855 – 1927) who had an interest in early instrument from non-western cultures. The museum existed in different forms between 1905 and 1935 when the collection was moved to the newly opened Gemeentemuseum. NMI has been involved in ideas of new national music museum but the financial situation has halted the plans.

A new culture centre can be an interesting opportunity to revive the archive and parts of the museum in a new way and show the Dutch music heritage to the public again. The previous archive was deemed by the government to be of little public interest. To be an interesting space, the idea of the archive would have to be redeveloped and modernised. In the Netherlands, there is a big influence of different cultures from around the world today which could also influence a new museum and exhibition space. There could for example be temporary exhibitions, highlighting different music culture from around the world. An interesting reference to a contemporary exhibition space for instruments is the Sonorous museum in Copenhagen where different rooms are acoustically customised for specific instrument groups. These different rooms can also function as classrooms and interactive spaces where music comes alive.

From my analysis of the different music buildings in Den Haag, there is a lack of unprogrammed space (the symbol of the question mark previously shown) where the public can go throughout the day without paying or without having to do a specific activity. A working music environment could also benefit from having the public present in the building. More people might see or hear the work of the musicians which can provide valuable advertisement.

Organisations without a place

There are also smaller organisations such as orchestras and music groups in Den Haag which sometimes have difficulties getting funding for a lack of a clear financial plan for the future. When less money is provided by the state, a strong financial strategy is more important. De Mix Wereldsmuziek is a foundation aiming to create a platform for world music and dance and theatre. The municipality decided not to give the organisation funding for the period 2017-2020 because of the lack of a long-term vision. Another group, deprived of funding in

2017 is the classic ensemble Ciconia Consort. The municipality decided to not give a grant to the ensemble on the basis that it lack cultural entrepreneurship. Organisations, ensembles and groups like Mix Wereldsmuziek and Ciconia Concert can be sensitive to a shifting cultural and political environment as in The Netherlands today. By combining them under one roof in a new culture centre they can collaborate and strengthen each by cooperation. The culture centre becomes in this way a consolidating project for organisations and institutions who might have difficulties making it on their own in a cultural environment which more and more relies on skills in entrepreneurship.

The site – The location of a new culture centre

Den Haag is expanding in several directions and new residential areas and business districts are planned to meet the demands of a growing city. Public culture buildings will be essential for creating new lively urban areas. There is, however an opportunity to expand the public realm within the already densely populated city centre. There are several vacant office buildings in the city centre which the municipality wishes to reuse.

These are office spaces which no longer suits the companies supposed to inhabit them. The growing amount of creative businesses in Den Haag look for new, creative spaces such as The Caballero Fabriek. The municipality is positive towards the reuse of vacant office spaces and is even promoting privately owned buildings as potential objects for transformation. During the 20th century, culture centres were often placed in central parts of the city, where there already was a large presence of people. There is therefore an idea to look for such a centrally located office building as a site for my project. By placing a culture centre in an unused building there is a possibility to revitalise the city centre.

One potential building that I have found is located at Oraniebuitensingel close to central station and among large governmental buildings. The office buildings was built in 1982 and has a floor area of 3200m². Its central location makes it interesting for a potential culture centre.



Culture Centres as public space

Culture centres have, in different forms, played a role as interior public spaces in many European cities during the 20th century and continue to do so today. As a step to learn more about the traditions of culture centres I looked closer at different centres presented in the *People's Palaces Architecture, culture and democracy in two European post-war cultural centres* by Christoph Grafe from 2010. One of these culture centres, the Stockholm Kulturhus, is part of the main topic of Grafes text and is gone through in detail. Another building, The Akademie der Kunste in Berlin, is mentioned as another examples of a western European Culture centre from the 20th century. I partly decided to choose these buildings because of the possibility for me to visit them in person. A real-life experience of these buildings was a crucial part of my understanding of the spaces they provide to the city. Another reason for choosing these centres was that they are still successful in their role as public interiors. The following pages is a presentation of the characteristics that has made these buildings last as important part of the urban fabric which they inhabit, and then transform these characteristics into my project in Den Haag.

Akademie der Kunste – Berlin

The Akademie der Kunste is an over 300 years old German institution involved in different forms of art. Today, its main role is to function as a space where artists and those interested in art can meet, debate and being involved in cultural trends. There is a social agenda behind the exhibitions, readings and concerts hosted by the academy:

“These [the different ways used to convey art to people] are based on the firm belief that the freedom of the arts is not a luxury, but an unerring benchmark of the liberality of the society which facilitates it”

The idea of spreading culture to a broader part of the population was perhaps the primary idea of the culture centres of the 20th century described by Mark Pimlott and Christophe Grafe. In Akademie der Kunste this idea was not limited to culture but also to democracy in a very direct way. In a speech at the Akademie in 1960, the German Social democratic politician Adolf Arndt stated:

“Should there not be a correlation between the principle of publicness of democracy and an outer as well as inner transparency and accessibility of public buildings?” (Grafe, 2010, p. 149)

The Akademie der Kunste building, by the architect Werner Düttmann, was built in Tiergarten between 1959 – 1960. The building was to function as a building for the academy containing workspaces for artists, exhibition halls and space for the public. The idea behind the design was to use the unprogrammed public space to connect three volumes containing different functions such as lecture halls and exhibitor space. The connecting space is made out of a large foyer, corridors and smaller spaces. The open and public layout of the building of the building was typical for the culture centres of its time.

The building is located in the park of Tiergarten in central Berlin. When going to the Akdemie by the U-bahn you first encounter a rather spectacular building by Oscar Niemayer

located among the trees at the edge of the park. This, and other buildings, in the area was a part of housing exhibition in 1957 known as IBA 57. These experimental buildings, combined by the lush park environment sets the tone of the context to where Akademie der Kunste plays an important part as a public space. One may regard the placing a culture institution among buildings which was to showcase the future of mass housing, as a connection between a new democratic way of living and a new way of experiencing culture.

When approaching the Akademie building, you first encounter the theatre and lecture hall, which dominant feature is the bright green copper roof that transforms into inclined walls extending down to the ground. Outside the main entrance the building presents itself with a solid and horizontal façade made from concrete with set, unpolished chips of marble. The façade is weighting down on the glazed ground floor below. When entering the building, you pass under the solid wall extruding from the open ground floor. The extruding form continues to the inside, forming the ceiling of the public space below. The public space, which you can enter without buying a ticket for an exhibition begins outside the main entrance with a sunken plaza (*image 1*). This space gets sunlight from the south and west and is used by visitors for a large part of the year (in mid-November, during my visit the tables and chairs were largely occupied).

The outside plaza is connected to the foyer (*image 2*). on the inside by a glazed wall. The foyer makes up the main part of the public, unprogrammed and here one can find a shop and café. Through narrow, quite dark corridors you can find glazed and almost “living room-sized” spaces (*image 3*). The main stairs, close to the entrance, extends the foyer to the second floor where there is an outside sculpture garden with a pond. From this space, you can also enter the exhibitions spaces.

The interior materials give the building a sense of quality and enhances the solid character given by its horizontal and almost cave like spatial quality. The floors are made of slate stone which, despite its dark palette, reflects the light entering the building. The walls are shifting between white plaster and red brick while the columns consist of rough concrete reminding of an industrial context.

In the book, *The Eye of the Skin*, the Finnish architect and theorist Juhani Pallasma argues that the role of today’s architecture too often only is meant to please the eye and derived of tactility. To create meaningful spaces to which we can feel connected we have to give special importance to the materiality but also to the play between light and dark. According to Pallasma, buildings of today are designed to let in a maximum amount of light to its every part.

”Homogenous Bright light paralyses the imagination in the same way that homogenisation of space weaken the experience of being, and wipes away the sense of place.” (Pallasmaa, 2005, p.46)

The architecture of the Akademie der Kunste tells a story in the way it creates a journey between light and dark as well as between narrow and wide spaces. The detailing and materiality helps to emphasis this narrative throughout the building. The rough industrial pillars tell one story while carefully crafted wood and brick details tell another. In a lecture from 2012 (further developed in Report 1, *The public realm and the culture centre*). Christophe Grafe argues that the narrative in the architecture of a culture centre like the Akademie der Kunste is important in the sense that it extends the qualities beyond the social ideas behind its creation. The architectonic quality has therefore helped the building to stand the test of time.

There are several aspects of why the Akademie der Kunste building is interesting to bring into my own project. The scale of the interior spaces is relevant as they have a smaller more intimate character than other culture centres. The Akademie der Kunste building has a smaller scale while buildings like Stockholm Kulturhus and the Southbank centre in London are very large urban institutions that stems from a time of extensive social and infrastructural changes. A more compact scale may fit the situation of today in the wake of the financial crisis and with decreased state funding. If one considers smaller scale and limited funding, empty office buildings might be a possible alternative for cultural spaces. In Den Haag, there are several vacant office buildings in the central parts of the city. By being unused and by their central location they are creating a viable framework for a culture centre. The size of these buildings while therefore also set the terms for the size of a potential new culture centre.

The narrative in the architecture of Akademie der Kunste is also something that I want to include in my own project. The dark, narrow passageways opening into wider rooms, lit by large windows letting in daylight, create an interesting journey throughout the building (*image 4*). It also evokes the idea of the palace and its endless succession of different spaces described by Mark Pimlott (2016). The visitor's curiosity is raised by the fact that you never can see all the spaces at once. Sightlines hinting what's going to be around the corner makes you interested in what awaits behind the next corner.

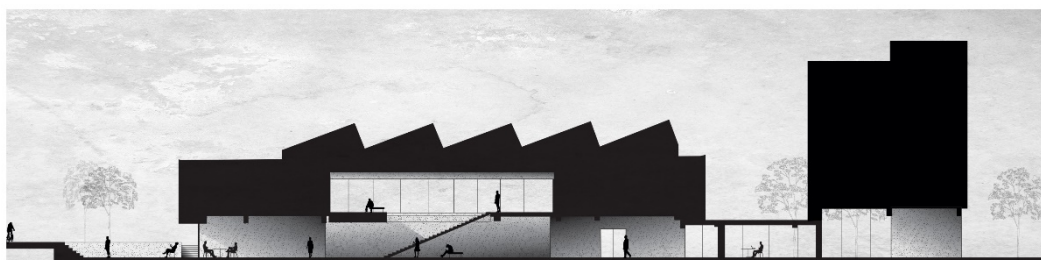
The richness in materiality is also of great importance as an idea for my project. Well-crafted, tactile materials telling different stories both by view and touch can be related to ideas by both Grafe and Pallasma. The narrative is important to make the architecture interesting and it must be tactile to connect us physically to the spaces we inhabit.



Plan showing the building (in red) in its urban context



A diagrammatic plan showing the unprogrammed public space in connection to the sunken plaza outside the main entrance and the surrounding park



A diagrammatic section showing the spatial composition of the unprogrammed public space in the building. The black areas consist of spaces requiring a ticket or workspace.



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4

Stockholm Kulturhus

Being from Stockholm, I have a long-standing fascination of The Stockholm Kulturhus. This uncommercialized and public space, located in the absolute centre of Stockholm, takes up several blocks of a highly attractive retail area and is creating a public interior where the inhabitants of the city can stay at their own terms.

Kulturhuset was planned and built between 1966 – 1970 as a new cultural centre in the major deconstruction of the inner city of Stockholm. The architect, Peter Celsing, together with the art director of the modern art museum of Stockholm, Pontus Hultén, formulated the ideas behind the building. It was to be a cultural living room with the rhythm of the street combined with the opportunities of the workshop.

The redevelopment of Norrmalm (Norrmalmsregleringen) was a result of plans to modernise, and sanitise a large part of central Stockholm. This part of the city was an area with old buildings and blocks which did not fit into the idea of the welfare state with clean and healthy housing for everybody. The introduction of the private car also reshaped the city with new roads, tunnels and parking garages. In this new environment, culture also was deemed important for creating enlightened citizens. The plan was to revolutionise culture and that it was to take place in Kulturhuset.

Today, Kulturhuset has more commercialised spaces than originally intended but a large part of the building is still uncommercialized space for people who wish to get away from the cold weather and talk, relax, or just do nothing. The building has a defined front towards Sergels Torg, or “Plattan” as it is called locally. The building was intended to be an interior public square and the glazed ground floor connects Sergels torg with Kulturhuset.

However, parts of Sergels Torg, has over the years been known as an unsafe place used for drug trade. Consequently, the square has by many been seen more as a passage than a place to stay for a longer time. A new design involving an expansion of the shops in the area and new flowing shapes in the architecture, thus eliminating dark corners and spaces, was a step to make the area around the square a safer environment.

The ground floor of Kulturhuset was also recently renovated to become more transparent and open. Here as well, an expansion of retail spaces was part of the reconstruction. The dominant presences of retail spaces in the vicinity of the Kulturhuset makes the interior areas free of retail a unique presence free for everybody to use, regardless of monetary situation and place in society. In Kulturhuset, you find people without a permanent roof over their heads, groups of teenagers, parents with children using the children’s library as an interior playground, people who want to see exhibitions and lectures or just somebody who want to sit in the comic book library reading magazines and comic books. All of these activities are connected to the surrounding urban context through the glazed façade. Richard Sennett (2010) refers to the public realm as a theatre. In Kulturhuset, this theatre and exchange between people are taking place in the interior but also the city itself becomes a stage. The visual connection between interior and the ever shifting surrounding of Sergels Torg and beyond is crucial to the atmosphere of the building.

Kulturhuset consists of three volumes. One of these volumes consists of a huge concrete wall on to which floors or “shelves” is attached. The shelves are the central area for the unprogrammed public space of the building. The concrete walls create a solid wall while the opposing facade is glazed and directs the view of the visitors towards Sergels torg. According

to Grafe (2010), Celsing is successful in transforming what could be a dull and dematerialised glass façade into interesting architecture by creating a variation between the glass of each floor. The mullions in the windows are placed in varying rhythms on each floor and the glass is either protruding or recessing on the different floors.

The transparent side of the building faces Sergels torg and the entrance to the Stockholm central station. One of Stockholm's busiest shopping streets, Drottninggatan, is bordering the west part of the building. To the south, the solid concrete wall is a strong presence in the urban fabric and creates, with the help of the neighbouring buildings, two squares. These squares are today, in contrast to the interior of Kulturhuset quite unsuccessful as public plazas and mainly used as passages and shortcuts.

The second volume, made by shiny, industrial looking metal plates and connects to the first volume by a bridge, is the theatre hall. In this report, I will focus on the public space facing Sergels torg and leave out the theatre space since my project will not contain a large-scale theatre.

The Swedish central bank building is the third volume. Though spatially separated it was made by Celsing as a part of the urban composition also involving Kulturhuset and the theatre. The façade of this building is different from the other two and consists of rough basalt stone. Celsing used varying material throughout the three volumes to create narratives in the architecture by evoking memories from different times and places in history. The materiality of the building is, according to Grafe, essential for its success:

“Celsing's project is informed by an interest in employing an enlarged repertoire in a search for layered architectural meaning and a synthesis of apparently contradicting gestures.” (Graafe, 2010, p. 536)

You enter Kulturhuset either from Sergels torg which is sunken below the surrounding street level, or from the street level itself. You move to the different floors (or shelves) through escalators which were absent in the original building. During the years since its construction the buildings has faced many fates such as demolition and reuse as commercial event space. In 1989 a series of escalators were added which reduced the public, unprogrammed floor space considerably.

Currently, the escalators are creating a spatial divider and the surrounding sofas and benches are often full of people (*image 1*). The columns supporting the open floor plans also aid in creating spatial divisions in the otherwise open areas. You can find people sitting on the floors, creating a space of their own between the interior walls the pillars and the glazed façade (*image 2*). The space between the concrete wall in the back and the escalators has however been reduced to passages.

In both ends of the long volume there is spaces for lectures, exhibitions, libraries and shops. These are sometimes open to the public without a ticket and sometimes reserved for ticket holders. They are also more or less transparent which creates interesting and layered visual connections (*image 3*) that can catch the curiosity of the visitors.

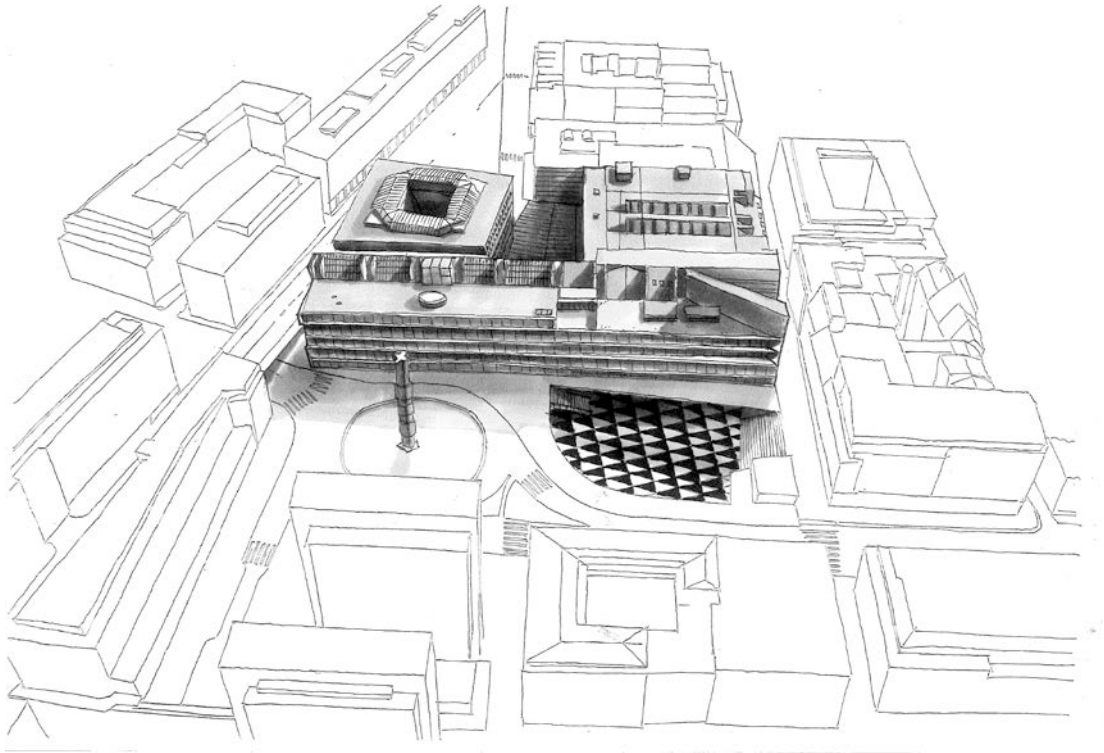
According to Richard Sennett (1976), people of today are prone to value privacy and individuality not only at home but also in the public realm. In Kulturhuset, this isolation between people is often broken through interactive exhibitions, free of admission that engages people and bring them together. People (almost exclusively men) also come from the

whole of the greater Stockholm area to play chess. During my last visit to the building I talked to two elderly men who had been coming to the building for many years and used it as a social space. They were both from the suburbs and Kulturhuset served as good place for meetings. One of them was originally a Latin American refugee who, in the 70s came to read the newspapers described by Grafe (*image 4*).

There are several aspects of Kulturhuset that I want to bring into my own project. The visual connection to the city is very important in this project, both as a social idea but also for creating the sense of being in space where you can look at the city as an ever-changing urban theatre. You can be a part of this theatre while at the same time being protected from the elements and where you can act as a social being in your own terms. This idea correlates with Marc Auges (1995) theory of what is making a place rather than a non-place. A space like Kulturhuset, where people come from different places for social meetings or engage in lectures and exhibitions is also a foundation for creative social life which can be achieved in an organic way.

Another aspect of the building that I want to bring with me is the interesting layering of spaces between unprogrammed to programmed. Between and on the floors (shelves), you move through the unprogrammed space, free of charge. There are several levels of divisions between these spaces and the areas where you must pay. These divisions can be a very loose visual border to the cafes and restaurants (*image 5*) to the very clear physical border of the red theatre doors leading you into the dark space behind the concrete wall and evoking memories of old time theatres.

Grafe states the importance of narrative in the creation of lasting architecture. The variety of materials, telling stories of different times and places is important in the storytelling of a building and an interesting idea to bring into my project.



Kulturhuset in its urban context with Sergels torg in the foreground.



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4



Image 5

Conclusion

What make The Akademie der Kunste building and Kulturhuset Stockholm important point of departure for my project on designing a public, cultural space, in Den Haag can be summarized as follows.

- A rich and diverse, yet coherent materiality, telling stories from different times and places.
- Spaces shifting from narrow to wide as well as from light to dark creates an interesting journey throughout the building
- An interesting visual connection to the urban surrounding
- Interesting variations in layers between unprogrammed and programmed spaces, both visual and physical
- An interior space with physical and visual separations which enhances the theatre of everyday life where people can see and be seen. A tactile wall or column can for example be used as a spatial divider which strengthens the sense of a space of own.

However, the construction of The Akademie der Kunste building and Kulturhuset Stockholm cannot be immediately imported to the situation in Den Haag. The buildings were designed in an era with another demography and in another economic situation. Den Haag, as other European larger cities, faces a situation with a changing demography, concerning both ethnic background and age, and changes in financial preconditions for culture and public spaces.

In an increasingly privatised urban and cultural environment and with a highly diverse and growing population there is a need for a public culture space which can meet the demands of the new city. As a contrast to the shopping malls and retail areas in the city centre, there is room for a public, unprogrammed space where people can go just to be themselves or get in engage in social and creative activities. By also adding different music functions to the building such as rehearsal space and performance venues as well as exhibitions and an archive, there can be an interesting mix between the public and a living music environment. Such a building can also have a consolidating function for musicians and music organisations which have encountered difficulties in the wake of the economic crisis and the cutbacks in culture funding. By placing a public culture centre in a vacant office space in the city centre an unwanted void in the urban fabric can be filled by new life and creativity. Culture centres like Akademie der Kunste and Kulturhuset have stood the test of time, partly because of their architectural qualities in terms of narrative spaces and well crafted, tactile materials. Architectural qualities such as these are therefore of great importance in a new culture centre if it is to last over time.

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