Örebro Market hall – A second chance at a new life
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Hillevi Robertsson Quinn

Studio 7, supervised by
JOHAN CELSING
CARMEN IZQUIERDO
JOSEF EDER

hillevi.robertsson@gmail.com
Historical background

The early market hall
The history of the farmers' markets reach far back in time to the beginning of society. People have always had the need of exchanging goods and services and the market has been the center for these kinds of exchanges. Everything from meat, fish, vegetables and dairy to craftsmanship, services and cattle has been sold or exchanged at the markets. Farmers and craftsmen would meet in the city centers where these exchanges and sales happened and the market became and still is one of the biggest meeting points.

The market itself looks pretty much as it has for centuries; long and straight rows of manufacturers and producers trying to display their products. These straight rows are still the ground form of the markets today although the markets today have been adjusted for reasons of hygiene and efficiency. Constructions of roofs and thick stone walls created effective shells that kept heat, wind and pests away. The early farmers market increasingly started to move in to these types of structures and the market hall became an important building that solved many of the sanitary problems.

In bigger cities the architecture of the market hall got clear guidelines which resulted in tall hall buildings with great light and space.

The market hall came to Sweden during the 19th century with the first one in Karlskrona 1831. Around 20 market halls were built during the beginning of the 20th century. The decades around the turn of the century was a time of mixed architecture and this could also be seen in the architecture of the market halls.

The market hall today
In Sweden, fifty-two market halls were constructed until the year of 1982 but only a few of them survived. About thirty to forty years ago it looked like the market hall would not survive at all in Sweden because of the Americanized development of the trade. Although, today we have found a new way to use the old market hall; what was earlier the place to buy or trade fresh vegetables and groceries has now become a market for luxury products where small companies can flourish. In today’s Sweden we rarely see the old type of dedicated market halls with many different fish and meet traders, today the market halls are extended with food courts and cafés. You don’t just buy your groceries there anymore, you sojourn. It is a place to watch and to be watched at.

Earlier different fish and meet traders crowded under one roof, and this still applies in other European countries, but in Sweden it has decreased to only one fish trader and one meet trader per market hall. The supply and demand for luxurious foreign delicacies and organic and locally produced products has grown while weekly grocery shopping has decreased. Today people in the cities have more money and are living in small households which allow to more engaging shopping.
How does one restore the original life and program to a building that has been repurposed several times over the preceding decades? In the 1950s, Örebro had a fine market hall with great light and spaces. In the 1970s a supermarket took over the space, and the old roof with its skylights was demolished, but the original construction remains today. Reusing the old structure while adding new elements, I am giving new life to the old market hall and bringing back open spaces and natural light.

Context
Örebro is a city in the midst of a development boom. The city university attracts many new inhabitants and many of them are staying in the city to settle down after their studies. Örebro is increasingly becoming a major city and the earlier small scale is clearly changing. Residents are beginning to expect updated infrastructure, and they are starting to request businesses and products which you can find in bigger cities like Stockholm or Gothenburg. Examples include more locally produced products, more sustainable planning and improved local traffic, to name a few.

The inhabitants of Örebro have been longing for a market hall since the last one closed during 1974. Although, a new one opened in 2013, people are not completely satisfied. The new market hall is squeezed into the ground floor of a newly built residential building on a side alley, with no possibilities of natural light. It’s obvious that the inhabitants appreciate the new selection of products and food courts but the facilities themselves are unsatisfying. The dark and enclosed facilities inhibit the experience.

The former market hall
The former market hall opened in 1952 and was built specifically for the purpose. It was flourished for many years but in 1964 Domus opened right next to the market hall, which may have had a hand in its demise. In 1974 the market hall closed and a supermarket opened up in the facilities. When the new and modern grocery store opened they made a few changes with the old building. They demolished the original serrated roof and with it took away all possibilities for natural light. Today the building is still used as a supermarket and the original ground structure remains with its beams and pillars.
First drawings of the old market hall year 1950
Exterior picture of the block where the old market hall was situated
Exterior and interior pictures of the old market hall
Plan 1:200 of today's grocery store
I propose an addition to the original construction to create new open spaces and to bring back the natural light which the building had before the roof was demolished.

The old market hall was situated in the city center right next the Stortorget which is the longest square in Sweden. There is a lot of activity at this square; farmers markets, election campaigns, concerts etc.

On the other side of the old market hall building, is Örebro’s oldest surviving block “Gamla Stan”. Here you can find small wooden houses from the 18th century. A passage has grown between the old block and Stortorget and it passes by the entrance of the old market hall.

Most people choose to walk this passage instead of the street which is situated half a block north of the passage - this is because the inner courtyard of the old block has got a very picturesque feeling, but when you’ve passed it the passage turns into a parking lot in front of the market hall. I see a lot of potential in this passage and want to give it a new life while reprogramming the old market hall.

The old structure has an interesting rhythm with a distance of 8 and 5.6 meters between the pillars in one direction and a continuous 8 meters in the other direction (this is not shown in the first drawings from 1950). Using this rhythm, I can easily play with the height of my arches which I have taken advantage of. I am aware that my modern addition is flirting with the old forms of the basilica type, which is my intention and one of the reasons why I have chosen reinforced concrete as the material for my addition. I considered other materials for my addition such as steel and wood but have chosen concrete because I really like the heavy and monumental feeling it brings. With this choice of heavy material I am working with a fairly slim construction to keep the weight load down as much as possible without taking away the monumentality of the material.

The main circulation takes place in the alley with the higher arches while the stalls are installed among the lower arches.

When I started my thesis project I wanted to focus on construction, natural light and material. These three elements have been the guidelines throughout the project. I have been searching for a balance between construction and ornament which is why I chose the repeated arch. While it works as a load bearing construction it also helps reflect the light from the tall windows. I believe that if the natural light has a surface to reflect against, it will appear stronger and give a more present impression.

It has also been important for me to work closely with the material in the building, not only the material for the structural part but also for the interior parts such as floor patterns in terrazzo stone and colors and materials in the stalls. My color palette includes rich colors such as indigo blue, emerald green and mustard yellow.

The program
In my project I aim to create a welcoming space with a lot of light. A meeting point, a space for trading, a space for experiences, a space for reflection. I also aim to give life to the current parking lot and to transform it to an extension of the passage.

I believe that the existing market hall at Kungsgatan lacks the proper characteristics for a market hall and I propose the the supermarket currently occupying the old market hall space move to the current market hall so that the market can flourish once again in its original facilities.

The current market hall holds ten small businesses, five of which are food courts, the other five are stalls for vendors. I am creating space for another seven businesses as well as a new restaurant and a caterer.

My program will include:
- 10 countertops for assorted sales
- 7 smaller food courts
- A bar and restaurant
- A caterer
- A store house/inventory
- Toilets/nursery room for visitors
- Toilets, dressing room and a break room for the employees
- Office
- Seating area for food courts

In my project I am trying to work where the old meets the new. It has been important to not see the addition as something pretending to be old but to view it as a convincing and a natural addition. The old structure with the pillars and the beams, are made out of white painted concrete. To highlight the separation of old from the new I will paint the old structure in an indigo blue color and leave the addition natural as raw concrete.
Site plan 1:400 for new proposal
Exterior perspective
Terrazzo floor pattern
1:50
Site model 1:400
Material board