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The change of a district

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Abstract

The municipality of Malmö is going to invest in city planning, for example constructing new buildings, both dwelling-houses and official buildings such as cinemas, theatres, galleries and shopping malls. The aim of the municipality is to through new planning integrate earlier obviously separated districts. In this case the focus is on the district of Sorgenfri which is situated close to the district Rosengård which is isolated from the city centre because of the thoughts that permeated the economical conditions of the sixties. It is important for students to be involved in authentic tasks concerning public discussions of social problems and to present their conclusions in a shaping way which arise new questions.

Introduction

The municipality of Malmö is investing in city planning in order to integrate previously separated districts, involving the construction of new buildings (dwellings, official buildings, public facilities such as cinemas, theaters, galleries and shopping malls). In this case the focus is on the district of *Sorgenfri* which is situated close to the district *Rosengård*. This part is isolated from the city-center because of the thoughts that permeated the economical conditions of the sixties.

As it is important for students to be involved in authentic tasks concerning public discussions of social problems and to present their conclusions in a shaping way which gives rise to new questions, we have developed a task that allows our students of Teacher Education to do this. Previously students looked at the northern industrial district of *Sorgenfri*, however, the municipality already have plans in place for this district, so for 2009 focus is on the district of *Värnhem*.

Our experiences from last year are that the students expressed great interest with questions concerned to integrate the district of *Rosengård* to the center of Malmö. *Rosengård* district is situated three kilometres east of Malmö. Many of the houses were built during the late sixties and are part of the 'million programme'. Characteristic for this programme, all over the world, is that the buildings were planned to be mono-functional with housings and places of work separated and with a special service and commercial centre. During this period the demand for apartments was huge because of a heavy number of people moving into the metropolitan district. Even today the million programme areas are situated like isolated islands in the city. *Rosengård* as a district is difficult to approach because the area is surrounded by very obvious barriers and the connections out from the district are few (Gehl Architects Urban Quality Consultants, Copenhagen, 2007). Only one road leads through the district and the others are dead-end streets. To manage to move between the different parts of the district you have to use the motorway outside the district or use small paths in the district.

When you look at the map covering districts from *Rosengård- Norra Sorgenfri – Värnhem – St Pauli church – Triangeln – the Central station – and the Western Harbour* you realize that the distance from *Rosengård* to the Western Harbour is very short but the people seem to live in different worlds. The municipality of Malmö wants to make links between districts that can result in less segregation and increased integration.

Northern Sorgenfri

The northern industrial part of *Sorgenfri* began in the late 19th century. The railway was built 1898 and was very important when industries were established in the area. During the beginning of the 20th century more private industries were established. The municipality of Malmö owned a great part of this land which resulted in that many public institutions were established such as gasworks, tramway and bus station (<http://www.malmo.se>). Today almost all of this land is owned by private property owners with their own expectations and ambitions. The whole area Northern Sorgenfri is a part of a project run by the City Planning Office and The Real Estate Office and the aim is to amalgamate parts of the inner city which connects eastern Malmö with the city center. This is a vision and long term work and it will transform the physical structure where older industries, businesses will be born in new shapes, functions

and buildings. As earlier mentioned a plan was made for this area in 2008 and it consists of guidelines for streets, buildings and properties in the area and stress small-scale operations and increased integration in Malmö (Planer och strategier för Norra Sorgenfri).

Rörsjöstaden och Värnhem

Rörsjöstaden has one of the oldest city plans in Sweden. The area has dwelling-houses in 1920 classicism, with facades that are tight and ordinary and with opened and light courtyards. In 1930 the ideal of functionalism was very popular and the most interesting dwelling-house in this area is Malmgården Malmgården (1934-1935). The flats built during this decade were of a high standard with well equipped kitchens, fireplaces and safes. The building complex also has a tennis court inside the yard. The stairwells were richly adorned. The dwelling-houses close to the city centre in Jugend architecture form a sharp contrast to most of the other houses in the district (Malmöguiden 2007).

Today this area gives a heterogeneous impression if you look at the buildings and dwelling-houses. The closer you approach the square of *Värnhem* the more obvious the heterogeneous signs are. The square is rebuilt several times to make it more attractive as a node. Around the square you can see dwelling-houses from 1940-1960-2009. This heterogeneous environment gives an unstructured impression. The model of Kevin Lynch stresses that when you investigate a district “have the objects size, colour, smell, sound and reciprocal positions a stronger or weaker image-edifying result” (The Image of Berlin ur Geografisk Årsbok 1981).

The challenge of 2009

With focus on the district of *Värnhem* the students undertook the following task.

Physical community planning

The Plan and Building Law says that physical community planning has to be made together with the citizens. The intentions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are supposed to permeate all decisions in Swedish society where children are involved. A delegation for Children’s Security started their work in January 2002. Their main points were “listen to the children and youth in the society planning” and the delegation had three suggestions:

- * The approach to children’s security and development should be cooperative
- * Children’s and young people knowledge should be used in community planning
- * Social differences in figures should be paid attention to.

We know that there are big social differences concerning socio-economic circumstances such as: traffic accidents, cars with different security, accidents in homes because of lack of knowledge and lack of security (no protection for the stove, no childproof lock etc) and children playing in the streets. To be injured as an unprotected road-user there is 20-30% more chance for children from environments with limited resources compared with children living in environments with great resources. It is important that CRC is in focus and that children know about their different rights. Different communities have ‘children checklists’ so the interest of the child will be looked after when decisions are made. It is also necessary analysis consequence for children when decisions are made. The children’s representative has an important role to play as a promoter if the intentions of CRC are to be met. A very important question is what is the current state of play with respect to the influence of the citizen concerning community planning.

The task for students on the course Ethnography / the development of the city.

The following perspectives are included in the task

1. The social perspective in the official room:
 - Movement / pattern in the city
 - Security – insecurity
 - Gender
2. The economic / political perspective:
 - Development processes in the area in a historical perspective
 - What has been given priority to and what is given priority to today?
 - Why? Who lives here?

3. Physical community planning:
What has happened in a historical perspective?
Architecture, style, material and ideal

The students were divided into groups. All three perspectives in the task had to be included but the students might focus deeper on one or two perspectives. We stressed that it was very important that the connections between the different perspectives would come to light.

The account

Each group presents both orally and visually. Besides that each group has to submit a shorter text from their experiences mostly in two pages. In the oral as well as in the visual and the written accounts appropriate wider reading must be demonstrated. This text will be the start for the student's individual home examination.

The students started by crossing the area individually during the first day. They needed to have their senses wide opened. To their help they should use Kevin Lynch five elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. These elements were supposed to help the students to get a structure of the area, the physical room. The elements may be defined as:

Path

Paths are like channels along which the observers move. It can for example be streets, walkways, canals, railroads. For many people these paths are very dominant elements in their image. It can be the street you use to go from your home to your work every day.

Edge

Edges can for some people be seen as boundaries that separate two areas from each other. An edge could be a railway, a motorway, a canal. For some people an edge could be seen as paths.

District

Districts can be homogeneous for example dwelling-house districts from the same period, bank districts or shopping districts. Districts can also be or heterogeneous. Homogeneity gives a more calm impression to the observer.

Node

Nodes are points which an observer can enter. It can be a church, a railway station, a bus stand.

Landmark

Mostly you do not enter a landmark. They are external and physical objects for example buildings, stores, hills, mountains. Some landmarks you can see in a distance from many angles and you can use them as a radial references. Some landmarks are very local, being visible only in restricted localities. (Lynch, Kevin 1960 The image of the city)

Ethnography

To invest an area and to take ones time to find out in what way people use a place you need a suitable method as ethnography. When the students had to document this special area during some weeks they tried to work as ethnographers. They collected material in many different ways and used camera, sketch-block and minidisc. They also went into shops, restaurants and cafés and talked with people sitting on benches. They tried different ways to reach participants and utilized various resources. You start with open questions and run parallel with reading facts and theories and in the end you have an empirical material that you have to sort out and present (Kullberg 2004).

The task involved a moment within the presentation that had to be in a visual way. We feel that it is important for students to work in a multi-modal way and they have to be aware of different models of training. They had to think about creating a visual material to engage the audience that was original and interesting. In the practical process, together with others you develop new knowledge. Knowledge of facts translates during the process into new text form, visual language. The visual language is also multimodal and offers many different possibilities.

Modern urban life

In this course we wanted to point out the changes in modern urban life but not lose the historical perspective. Society today is about information and the communication often goes on in symbolic ways through media. Malmö is a typical old industry town which has developed towards a post-modern one, focused on knowledge, education and network. There are according to Johansson & Sernhede (2007), three important circumstances connected with this development: post industrialization, globalisation and migration. Within these changes, in the well-fare society we have become new forms of poverty and social exclusion. Today the middle-classes are the strongest if you talk about it in an economic, social and political way. This group also leaves their imprint on the inner city through boundaries inscribed that affect the lived-experiences of immigrants and the poor, and through processes of gentrification.

Identity and belonging are created in the new urban landscape, both physical and imaginary. Parts of the town re-load and are connected with new values, lifestyles and social groups. One reason for that is the media-landscape. The more a town grows the more signs of new social formation become visible. When we talk about the contemporary town we often think about security, safety and control.

One obvious phenomenon is that shopping-centers arise both in the city but also in the boundaries among dwelling-houses. This fact also has to be discussed and there are some interesting things to dwell on concerning gender and shopping. In earlier urban life churches, cultural institutions and shops were an integrated area for meeting people, to see one another and to be seen (Ganetz 2005). Further, Ganetz argues that the birth of the stores belongs to the birth of the woman consumer. In the stores there are cafés, restaurants, wardrobes and toilets, a safe and secure place for a woman to be on her own. If you look back in the history some people, women and workers, didn't have access to many official places. Women could visit the church alone and in the late 19th, when we got the first stores, these places were an extension of the official room for women. Shopping is a social activity for women and in advertisements shopping-centers express leisure time, pleasure and desire.

The result

The students were divided into four groups. The task was realized over nine days in which the students had lectures, received tutorials, and conducted practical work in the district. The groups used different tools and materials to account for their experiences.

Group 1 used a model of the Kevin Lynch five elements. They stressed important discoveries through enlarging different concepts.

Group 2 used the concept "mental map" which directed them to produce three collages. They focused on the economic perspective.

Group 3 used a model formed like a time line from 1890 to 2009 using audio recordings and photos from different environments. Through this they looked at changes in society with particular focus on gender.

Group 4 chose to produce and show a film. They used four typical characters which were coupled with socio-economic content.

Common signs in the accounts from the task

The three perspectives in the task appeared to be integrated as the summary below of the student accounts shows.

All groups stressed that the district is very heterogenous concerning the inhabitants, dwelling-houses, architecture ideal and social life. All groups mentioned, for example, that families with children and people with drug problems strolled around in the same area. For that reason discussions about security and insecurity became intensive. Group three founded a strong female perspective by means of own experiences and literature. The students showed this through emphasizing the changes of the society pointing out the freedom of the women in the official room. In the film made by group four the relation between identity and housing was stressed. In the modern society, for some people, it's very important to present an acceptable life-style and that includes 'good living'. All groups pointed out the socio/economic limits which are difficult to see for an outsider but easy for an insider. These phenomenon were discovered by the students during their stay in the district. When the students looked at the statistics they noticed that the majority of the inhabitants are between 20 – 40 years old and are well educated. But they have lower average income and the students suggested it is because of that the inhabitants are students or newly qualified.

One thing that the students indicated was that when they tried to interview people in the street it was very difficult to get an answer because many of them didn't live in the neighborhood. The square of *Värnhem* is a node as many busses pass the suburbs. Therefore, Group two interviewed tradesmen, café owners, brokers and people at athletic centers, as representative of people who live and/or work in the area.

The district of *Värnhem* has gone through great changes both related to the inhabitants and living conditions. Gentrification is obvious in the area. The students noticed that many of the former small flats nowadays are inhabited by younger people with good economy. The content of the film focused on this.

A hot topic was the content in an article about women and shopping and a newly built shopping center named *Entré*. The municipality of Malmö wanted by building this shopping center to create an inviting meeting-point for people coming into Malmö by car but also remake this part of Malmö to become more attractive. All groups commented on this shopping center but from different perspectives. What did the students see from a gender perspective? They could establish that the shopping center was constructed in the same way as the research literature shows and analysed how design would create an environment in which women would lose-out.

We asked the students to comment the task, the method ethnography and the way of working. All students were very satisfied and pointed out the importance for students to be involved in authentic tasks concerning public discussions of society questions. To walk around in a district irrespective of if you live in Malmö or not and to learn to use all your senses develop a critical way of thinking. They also noted that to work in a group, when it functions, means that you learn from each other and that all voices are listened to and that when you get impressions in many different ways you also ask for and need different ways to express yourself. The students had to use different visual ways and we encouraged them to work in multi-modal ways. This resulted in accounts that were original, interesting and different. The students appreciated the process which consisted of a web of knowledge of their own experiences, theory and practical work.

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