

Everyday spaces and visual narratives of Malmö

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Quite possibly like many non-Scandinavians, my relationship with Malmö was established via a rather extraordinary piece of television. From 2011 to 2018, the Swedish-Danish crime television drama *Bron/Broen* (*The Bridge*) gripped British audiences, who, watching it on the BBC over four seasons allowed the noir-tinted fragments of Malmö and Copenhagen to piece together in their minds a very persistent picture of Scandinavia — dark, cold, grey, and with very spectacular architecture. For most of this period of ‘Scandimania’ in the UK (Stougaard-Nielsen 2016), the Öresund region wherein the Nordic noir drama of transnational crime was enacted increasingly attracted international attention, not least due to the popularity of *The Bridge* (and its many localisations) as well as Copenhagen’s international status as the ‘capital of cool’ in a country that often ranks at the top of the list in the World Happiness Reports.

Malmö, the Swedish half of this transnational conurbation, is quite unlike its sibling Copenhagen whose cultural and political power tends to overshadow Malmö in the international consciousness. In what seems like a remarkably short period of time, the city has transformed from a largely blue-collar industrial area that housed one of the world’s most productive shipbuilding and manufacturing industries for most of the twentieth century to a multi-cultural, knowledge-driven city whose embrace of innovation and culture is marked by the shiny new architectural projects dotted around the city – the largest indicator being the Turning Torso and its immediate surroundings of the Western Harbour district. The skyscraper, designed by Santiago Calatrava who is a prime example of a global ‘starchitect’, projects a very particular

identity for the city and functions as brand icon and twenty-first century landmark to replace the Kockums shipbuilding crane that once served as the city's landmark. The Turning Torso is hard to ignore as one roams the city, the skyscraper's distinctive twisted feature calling attention to itself wherever one turns.

The Southern Swedish city has a particular history, having once been home to one of the largest shipbuilding companies (the aforementioned Kockums), whose eponymous crane stood tall as the world's tallest shipbuilding crane before being dismantled in 2002 and shipped to South Korea. Much of the city's wealth, population, and identity were inextricably tied to the Kockums shipyard. However, the economic recession in the 1970s put a strain on the city's most significant employer and led to the eventual closure of the shipbuilding yard in 1986, large-scale unemployment, and Malmö's decline as an industrial city (Andersen 2014: 12). Since the 1990s, Malmö has received large numbers of immigrants and refugees — many from Eastern Europe and the Middle East — that steadily increased the city's population and has especially built up Malmö's status as an extremely multicultural city that consistently has the highest proportion of immigrants compared to the rest of Sweden. In 2000 the Øresundsbron (Öresund Bridge) was officially opened, creating a new transnational European metropolis and further opening up opportunities for Malmö's inhabitants and businesses to live, work, and imagine in a cross-border region.

This brief historical sketch points to a city that has undergone much economic, spatial, and social change in a remarkably short period of time. While there is much to be said about city branding and Malmö's efforts to rebrand and recalibrate its urban identity (Listerborn 2017; Hospers 2006), this is not a dossier that dwells on these themes, nor on the spectacular landmarks of the city. Nor is this a dossier focusing on the umbilical link that Malmö and Copenhagen share as part of a larger transnational region in the global North. Instead, through this dossier we are focused on the particular, the specific, and above all, the 'ordinary' spaces and aspects of Malmö, referencing Jennifer Robinson's (2006) call to read cities in their peculiarity, complexity, and diversity. We invite the reader to wander around the peripheries of this semi-peripheral Swedish city, to gaze at its spaces and reflect on the

spatio-cultural discourses of specific sites. Ordinary, on the one hand, might refer to the everyday practices and experiences of inhabitants in the city, even the banal, that interact with specific expressions of state or commercial powers. In another sense, the ordinary may be construed as people, places, and practices that are marginal – such as neighbourhoods marginal to Malmö's city centre, the internationally lauded Western Harbour and its glistening Turning Torso skyscraper, or communities that function at the periphery of Swedish national cultural policy.

The work in this dossier emerges from an interdisciplinary collaboration on the topic of 'The New Urban Citizen', which brought researchers in Urban Studies, Planning, Scandinavian Studies, and Architecture at UCL and Malmö University together for two symposia in November 2015 (London) and in April 2016 (Malmö) supported by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (The Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences). At the gathering, scholars discussed topics relating to the new urban citizen's role in transforming the welfare state, participatory urban citizenship, of discourses and spatialities of social disintegration and cohesion.

This collection of essays makes no claim to fully explain the city nor to make pronouncements on the current state of Malmö today. Rather, these essays trace subjective, affective, and specific interventions in placemaking and each of them represent different modes of understanding the multi-layered visualities of the city. They are critical instantiations of what Michel de Certeau describes as street-level 'tactics' (1984) in engaging with different spatial imaginaries, taking particular urban- and art-political narratives of the city's spaces and examining these discourses to understand what other narratives emerge or are being negotiated. If 'narrative' refers to the ordering of events in a text, then the essays presented in this dossier attempt a re-ordering or reveal several re-orderings of the visual narratives of Malmö.

The themes of this dossier are an interesting departure from *Scandinavica's* usual focus on literature and history, drawing the reader to urban planning, cultural studies, and architectural lenses on everyday places and spaces in a particular Scandinavian city – in this

case, the residential neighbourhood of Norra Sorgenfri, the liminal space of Nydalatorget, and a state-sponsored art project in a residential area constructed as part of Sweden's ambitious *Miljonprogrammet* (Million Programme) public housing programme. Each of the articles critique different narratives of the respective places (a planning document, visual ethnography, and art-cultural policy), while adopting a distinctive lens through which to interrogate contemporary Malmö's myriad urban concerns and visualities. Hoai Anh Tran and Yvonne Rydin present a discourse analysis of the planning document or 'vision programme' for Norra Sorgenfri in 'A New Formula for Sustainability Planning? The Vision Programme for Norra Sorgenfri, Malmö', critiquing the official representation of the area that intends to impose a regeneration process that neglects the neighbourhood's inhabitants and original character. Norra Sorgenfri, a former industrial area, is a part of the Hyllie area in Malmö that is undergoing a large-scale transformation into a transport hub and residential development designed and built on principles of sustainability, a key aspect of Malmö's 'new' identity. Tran and Rydin analyse the planning of this transformation (materialised in a 'vision document' drafted by city officials) and the complexities of how it employs a particular interpretation of 'social sustainability' that ignores the need for greater inclusion and desegregation in favour of conventional — and problematic — forms of urban regeneration for a middle-class populace. The authors suggest that, in its revisioning of Norra Sorgenfri, the vision document omits the 'ordinary' category of inhabitants and creative industrial activities that already exist, instead aiming for a more trendy and fashionable type of ordinariness.

Jorge Martín Sainz de los Terreros spent a week in Malmö in September 2017 photographing his way through the city while dwelling on the possibility of producing a visual representation of an ordinary Scandinavian city. The result is presented in the photo essay and critical visual ethnography, 'An Attempt At Visually Exhausting A Place In Malmö'. His work adopts an actor-network methodology in following 'actors' in an image and their connections to other actors in the urban space. This exploratory approach has allowed Martín Sainz de los Terreros to uncover unseen or marginalised narratives of the city nestled between the iconic and the ordinary aspects of Malmö.

Nydalatorget (Nydalä Square), located in the southwestern part of Malmö, is the focus of his socio-materialist ethnography which reveals how material elements in the square act as a window to other images, histories, and architectures of the city. Four paintings found in the square depicting scenes in and around Malmö provided the first frames through which he began his visual trail across the city. This account of an ordinary square in a typical neighbourhood is remarkable not only in the visual narratives that Martín Sainz de los Terreros has drawn via his photography and ethnography, but also in the act of raising questions about how parts of the city materially and imaginatively relate to each other while working to revision and envision certain narratives of Malmö.

The final essay by Berndt Clavier and Asko Kauppinen, 'Art and the Management of the Racial Archipelago: What is *Äga Rum* in the Million Homes Programmes in Malmö?', dwells on the technologies of governmentality in localised art projects supported by the state, focusing on the application of the *Äga rum* (Taking Place) cultural programme in two *Miljonprogrammet* public housing districts in Malmö. The authors explore how the issues of race, ethnicity, and cultural difference are intertwined with contemporary Swedish cultural policy. As signalled by its name, the *Äga rum* programme aims to initiate cultural activities in specific housing areas through different instruments and agendas. This is a state-sponsored intervention in fostering democratic participation in Swedish society through art and cultural activities, targeting particular areas that have low voter turnout which very often have a high percentage of immigrants. The authors followed and analysed one of the *Äga rum* projects running in a housing area in Malmö that promised to promote local culture and local stories – 'local' here referring to the residents' own ethno-cultural milieux. Interviews with the various participants and organisers highlight problems with the intentions and execution of the project, which Clavier and Kauppinen link to racialising practices in Swedish arts and cultural policymaking.

In these essays, one can glean a sense of the disconnect between representations (whether political, aesthetic, or architectural) and their referential objects. It is in this tension and liminal space of exploration

and critique that this dossier is positioned, wherein the three essays speak to each other in ways that highlight how the visibility of ordinary spaces can register stark identity and political narratives about the city in critical ways. Read in its entirety, the dossier thus seeks to index some of the multifaceted qualities that Malmö presents as a case study that draws attention away from its other, more high-profile narratives.

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