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Rhythms of public eating at Värnhemstorget in Malmö

Somebody has left a half full beer can on the stairs. A man picks it up, shakes it easily, looks around, takes a sip and keeps on walking. I don't think it was originally his.

Tuesday 27th of March, 2012, 11.00

In many cities temporal aspects of city life has risen on the agenda of policy makers, temporal activities have become popular in planning, attention has also been pointed to time as an indicator of wealth, some people have more time than others, one can buy time, in the form of, for example, house hold services (Mückenberger, 2011). In the field of urban design the focus over the past years has been on events and temporary use as a planning tool for activating or boosting urban areas, but the knowledge on how the physical environment relate to temporality in everyday life and also how the everyday affect the physical environment is less researched. The aim of this paper is to trace informal architectures, temporarily assembled in specific situations, and produced in direct relation to public life in cities. One activity that relates both directly to public design but also to the changing temporal landscapes of the city dwellers is public eating which can be seen as a mediator that helps reveal situations where the temporal aspects of architecture become visible. Eating is deeply connected to rhythms, both internal, biological such as feeling hungry or thirsty as well as cultural and social rhythms connecting, for example to when and where we eat.

The theoretical point of departure for this study is rhythmanalysis as introduced by Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 2004), coupled with Actor Network Theory (Latour, 2005), and the empirical investigation is mainly focused on the square Värnhemstorget in Malmö, Sweden. Värnhemstorget has a local character connected to the neighbourhood it is situated in and was chosen for this study because it holds many different rhythms, public transport, commercial activities and leisure to name a few. It is a bus hub that connects local and regional buses. Facing the square is the entrance of a shopping centre that since it was opened in 2009 has been on constant decline and is already being rebuilt to try and spark commerce. For this paper networks of eating/ food, trash and animals have been selected

for deeper study because they present moments where the relations between the body, the built environment and society materialize and open up for various questions, matters and relations. These networks show how rhythmical sequences interrelate and create reappearing architectures that are, what Bataille would call formless, and compared to formalized architectural projects, authorless or of more informal character. The reappearing architectures, or *rhythm architectures*, consist of different architectural elements that recurrently work together. The rhythm architectures are produced through the interaction between formal and more informal practices such as **between the stairs, the beer can and its second owner** as accounted for above. This way of discussing architecture as something informally produced and reproduced in specific situations is interesting because it never clears architecture of its social life and opens up for discussing architecture without focus on ownership and authorship.

Latour, B (2005). *Reassembling the Social, An introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press

Lefebvre, H (2004). *Rhythmanalysis, space, time and everyday life*. London: Continuum

Muckenberger, U (2011). Time abstraction, temporal policy and the right to ones own time. *KronoScope* 11.1-2: 66-97