



LUND UNIVERSITY

# Managing Otherness

Segregation, sociality, and the planning of  
a sustainable Helsingborg

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## **Abstract**

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The city of Helsingborg in southern Sweden has long been divided by its residents between North and South – first because of economic development, and later due to immigration. The City Planning Department hopes to address this division as part of an ambitious 25-year urban development project in the industrial harbour which borders the two central, divided districts of the city – Centrum and Söder. As segregation is a phenomenon existing within a physical environment, it is necessary to investigate the roles played by buildings, landscaping, infrastructure, economic development and the many people, objects and uses which inhabit spaces. As a social discourse, it is necessary to question what values underlie the choices that people make about where they will and will not go, and how these choices relate to the materiality of spaces. This study utilises a combination of interviews, resource and location mapping, and observation in order to locate discourses of segregation relevant to Helsingborg, and examines the role of spatial design and community and commercial resources in constructing these discourses. With this knowledge, the study aims to suggest relevant interventions for Helsingborg's current planning project, as well as contribute a unique combination of methodological and theoretical approaches which can inform the study of other locations where planning, perception and the emotional experience of spaces are implicated.

**Keywords:** city planning; cultural mapping; discourse analysis; Helsingborg; phenomenology; segregation; spatial practice;



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# Table of contents

<b>Abstract</b>	i
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	iii
<b>Table of contents</b>	v
<b>1. Introduction</b>	1
1.1 What makes a city segregated?	1
1.2 Aims of this study	2
1.3 Theoretical grounding	4
1.4 Fieldwork and methodology	6
1.5 Disposition of my thesis	7
<b>2. A bit of background</b>	8
2.1 A history of division	8
2.2 Centrum, Tågaborg and ‘the North’	8
2.3 Situating Söder	10
2.4 Heading south	12
2.5 Going eastward	13
2.6 The H+ project	15
<b>3. Locating the study</b>	18
3.1 “If you build it...”: structuring behaviours, identities and possibilities	18
3.2 Gentrification, culture and economics	22
<b>4. Method(ology)</b>	25
4.1 Rationale	25
4.2 Studying phenomena	27
4.3 Fieldwork methods	28
4.3.1 Interviews	28
4.3.2 ‘Go-alongs’	31
4.3.3 Direct observation	31
4.3.4 Mapping: social space as text	32
4.4 Problematizing methods	33
<b>5. Two cities: segregated infrastructure in Centrum &amp; Söder</b>	35
5.1 Deciphering discourses of self-segregation	35
5.2 Safety, boredom and belonging	37
5.3 Pedestrianisation: movement patterns and accommodating activity	38
5.4 How does one ‘use’ a square?	41
5.4.1 Mariatorget and Konsul Olssons plats	43
5.4.2 Gustav Adolfs torg and Mäster Palms plats	44
5.4.3 Trends	48

<b>6. Söder as foreign territory</b>	49
6.1 Söder and Centrum: comparing ‘conduits of sociality’	49
6.2 Feeling foreign through shopping	50
6.2.1 Being ‘out-of-place’	50
6.2.2 Conspicuous consumption: behaving ‘out-of-place’	53
6.3 Segregation and diversity as psycho-social phenomena	54
<b>7. Finding community: structures, options and limitations</b>	56
7.1 Community facilities and organisations	56
7.2 Youth	59
7.2.1 Students in Söder	59
7.2.2 Knutpunkten	61
7.3 Arts, culture and social life	65
<b>8. Where do we go from here?</b>	68
8.1 Considering the role of planning	68
8.2 City planning as colonisation?	70
8.3 The challenge: locating planning discourses in Söder	72
8.4 Opportunities: tactics and new ways of thinking about spatial use	74
<b>9. Considerations and conclusions</b>	77
9.1 Possibilities for an H+ future	77
9.2 City planning: refining its role	79
<b>References</b>	81



## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 *What makes a city segregated?*

Residents of the city of Helsingborg, in southern Sweden, have long talked of a divide along Trädgårdsgatan – where the historic city centre, or Centrum, gives way to the city's port and the historically industrial district of Söder. In Elisabeth Högdahl's (2007) book-length study, *På andra sidan Trädgårdsgatan*, she examines the historical development of the North-South discourse within the city, and how development patterns promoted economic segregation which persists to this day. In 2008, as a means of addressing this divide, the municipality initiated the H+ project, a 25-year development project with the aim of converting one million square metres of the city's industrial harbour, directly bordering Söder, into a new, socially, ecologically and economically sustainable community. The idea behind the project is “to create a more integrated city and interweave separated districts” by developing the area in a manner that is accessible to different kinds of residents and visitors, reflects the mosaic of cultures in the city, and addresses the barriers which currently segregate the surrounding neighbourhoods (Helsingborgs stad, 2011a, p. 7; Helsingborgs stad, 2011b, pp. 24-25).

Along these lines, the planners involved desire to balance the needs and interests of local citizens – particularly the residents of Söder, as their district contains the development area and is the physical connection between the H+ area and the city centre – in order to sustain and support their presence and ‘belonging’ in the area as it develops and attempts to attract new residents and new businesses – ‘the creative class’ and creative industries that have, up to now, chosen to locate themselves elsewhere in the region<sup>1</sup>, and which are becoming an increasingly important sector for economic growth (Landry & Bianchini, 1995, p. 4). For Helsingborg, which must attract business investment in competition with several other major cities in the Öresund region (Copenhagen, Malmö and Lund) this is an important sector to focus on for their economic sustainability. At the same time, city politicians and planners must balance the need to attract these industries with a respect for current residents and industries, seeing the H+ project as a way to integrate the two, and not create a ‘creative enclave’ that ignores its surroundings. Thus, the project is a question of attracting new investment in the city by making the area desirable, as much as it is a question of

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<sup>1</sup> Creative industries are “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.” (DCMS 2001, p. 04)”. Examples are architecture, design (industrial, software or fashion, for example) and advertising firms.

maintaining its current character by not pushing local residents out economically or psychosocially through gentrification.

Within the scope of these goals, I and a colleague from Lund University's Master's programme in Applied Cultural Analysis served as interns on the project between March 2010 and January 2011. The investigations we made encompassed three separate projects: (1) a study of the use and design of public spaces in the urban centre (Centrum and Söder); (2) a study of movement practices between the city centre and the neighbourhoods of Närlunda and Planteringen, which adjoin Söder and thus the H+ development area; and (3) a study of the various social and cultural resources in Söder and how they could inform cultural planning in conjunction with the H+ project. The study which follows takes from my own investigations within the scope of these research projects, focusing specifically on the issue of segregation which Högdahl brings up in her book. If spaces in the north or south of Helsingborg are so different that they warrant a book-length study of the city's divide, what is it specifically about the spaces that makes them mutually foreclosing? What is the 'materiality' of segregation in Helsingborg?

### *1.2 Aims of this study*

Asking these questions, my intention has been, on a practical level, to explore some of the context-specific challenges of this materiality – such as the roles which community resources, infrastructure and spatial design play in segregation – to take into consideration in order to offer suggestions applicable to the planning of the H+ project and how differing discourses can be supported to dwell in the same space. However, although the study is an exploration of the phenomenon of segregation in a particular material and discursive context – of specific spaces which are simultaneously conceived, perceived and lived – it is hoped that the methodological and theoretical approaches used to perform this study can inform the study of other locations where design, perception and the emotional experience of spaces are implicated.

All of this presupposes that desegregation – inasmuch as diversifying – an area is desirable. I suggest that yes, in concept, enabling spaces to welcome diversity and difference – in all its forms, whether a question of class, ethno-cultural affiliations, physio-functional hindrances, gender, sexuality or practice, generally – is a positive endeavour. All people are different from one another in some constellation of factors, and it is only through sustained

exposure to differences that we become acclimatised to them, therewith lessening the threat of difference or ‘otherness’ (cf. Arendt, 1958; Frug, 1999, p. 115-142). Desegregation, thus, is a psycho-social imperative, as the more that we are in contact with people different from us, and the richer the quality of this interaction becomes, the better we can identify with, or at least tolerate and accept, what we don’t agree with or experience in our own lives.

Segregation is sustained by dispositions which cannot tolerate otherness (cf. Fanon, 2008). I do not speak of intolerance in its more aggressive, bigoted connotations – racists, classists or purists whom are intolerant of those they consider ‘lesser’. Rather, think of intolerance here in its more naïve, often medical or psychological sense – as an inability to endure the pain, or hardship of unfamiliarity which may very well exert psychological, and psycho-somatic pressures. Segregation, thus, can be seen to arise from choosing familiarity and comfort, meaning that any attempt to breach segregation must develop strategies for familiarisation of the unfamiliar.

As segregation is a phenomenon which is both physically experienced and spoken about, the intention with this study is to investigate how it manifests in discourse and *in situ* within the context of a particular city – Helsingborg. As a phenomenon existing within a physical environment, it is necessary to investigate the roles played by buildings, landscaping, infrastructure, economic development and the many people, objects and uses which inhabit spaces. As a social discourse, it is necessary to question what values underlie the choices that people make about where they will and will not go. Why do people live where they do, and why might they refuse to even visit certain other locations? How do the contents, and context, of spaces invite or foreclose their use by different people?

Considering the role of municipal planning – to the extent that it strategises and implements alterations to a city’s physical infrastructure for the public good – in order to design possibilities for social inclusion and sustainability into physical structures, it is important to understand how segregation manifests itself in a given physical environment. Also, it is important to consider planning as a political will acted upon space, and to reflect upon the interests represented by planners in Helsingborg, as well as how political imperatives imposed upon planners and the social idealism of the H+ project can be mediated by an analysis of everyday cultural practices in the city. In part, this requires questioning one’s own biases and preferences and how they may conflict with the preferences of end-users. Also, as I will return to later, it requires having a clear understanding and appreciation

for why different interests should be encouraged to co-exist. It is from this perspective – that different interests should be promoted to co-exist – that this study aims to contribute to discussion of how such may be achieved practically, in specific contexts, in specific locations.

### *1.3 Theoretical grounding*

Promoting social inclusion is a key aspect of sustainable community building. It is “the purpose of community building...to increase the capacity of metropolitan residents to live in a world composed of people different from themselves” (Frug, 1999, p. 115). An important reason for this is its psycho-social ramifications. Numerous studies, some of which shall be discussed in Chapter 3, have pointed to the ways in which segregation, particularly as a means of establishing homogenous communities, not only furthers the paranoia, or vulnerability, of those who seek to impose segregation, but that it also promotes both inferiority and superiority complexes in those who are stigmatised by this segregation (cf. Fanon, 2008; Frug, 1999). Underlying such studies is an emphasis on the importance of exposure and interaction between people in order to reduce social tensions which develop from internal psychological conflicts.

As the redevelopment of the H+ area is to be undertaken by the City Planning Department (in Swedish, *Stadsbyggnadsförvaltningen* or SBF), it is impossible to ignore the role of city planning, both concretely and politically, in relation to the people that their work is directed towards – the citizens, the ‘referents of the discourse’ as Bruno Latour (1999) calls them (p. 30). As Michel de Certeau (1984) suggests, an official position – such as city planners have, being employed by the municipality to further directives past on to them by publicly elected representatives – is a position of privilege, being able to implement their work with the full force of the municipality behind them (provided their plans fit the constraints given them by municipal authorities, of course). Their work is “organised by the postulation of power” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 38). And, as Latour reminds us of the limitation and problematic of such a position, planners must implement generalised, abstract values upon concrete and complex realities – a particular problem considering that their values may not necessarily intersect with those of citizens affected by their projects (Latour, 1999, p. 30).

Not to be left out of a discussion of the urban, Lefebvre (2003) insists, “the human being cannot build and dwell...without also possessing something more than himself: his

relation to the possible and the imaginary. [...] If we do not provide him with [this possibility], he will create it as best he can” (Lefebvre, 2003, p. 82). Humans exist in relationships with other humans, with nature, with objects and with ideas, and create new possibilities, new products and new ideas to address specific needs. To this effect, it is essential to take into account how people interact with each other and with the sensory world around them, how each influences the other in a web of agency (cf. Latour, 1999). As discussed by both Foucault (2001), in his conceptualisation of governance, and Bourdieu (cf. Reed-Danahay, 2005), in his theory on *habitus*, multiple agents influence us – such as people, objects, and even the physical structure of spaces – by structuring how we perceive our environment and how we relate to it. A study of segregation, thus, must at least in part be a study of objects, spatial structuring, and people in inter-relation.

As a spatially-contingent phenomenon, a study of segregation must also be a study of the identities that spaces have in discourse, and the contexts in which these identities shift. Space is a social product to the extent that it embodies social relationships which are simultaneously perceived, conceived and lived (cf. Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 26-41). Space is conceived – or planned – in order to conform to, and represent certain (social) norms of usage; it is perceived in that it has a materiality through which users can decipher certain possibilities of spatial practice; it is lived – as a representational space – in the sense that emotional experiences are attached to spaces according to how they are perceived and conceived. In other words, conceived space governs use through the perceived possibilities it presents, within which certain discursive ‘spatial identities’ structure what it means to ‘live’, or ‘experience’, a space in the emotional, symbolic sense. Segregation, as a spatial phenomenon, is perceived in space, conceived through space (whether intentional or not) and lived in contact with space. Resulting from, and responding to, their social environments, spaces can be seen as stages for the performance of differing identities (cf. Butler, 2006). How might certain shops, products or public spaces lend themselves to certain ‘types’ of people in Helsingborg, while not to other ‘types’?

And what about the use of spaces by people, or in ways, that are unintended or unplanned? Where planning falls short of addressing needs on a strategic level, people will devise tactics to appropriate spaces to their needs, however effective or socially-desirable such appropriations may be (cf. de Certeau, 1983). One example could be the ways in which homeless individuals often converge upon heavily trafficked spaces, which perhaps serves

various needs for them (socialisation with others in the homeless community, spaces which are comfortable to sit or sleep, or better panhandling opportunities) which are not met elsewhere, but might put off other people from venturing to such spaces. Understanding some of the ways in which particular locations are perceived, conceived, and lived in Helsingborg is an entry point to understanding the challenges associated with social inclusion. By locating sites of ‘identity conflicts’ and the context of such conflicts, interventions can be devised to make locations more welcoming to more people.

#### *1.4 Fieldwork and methodology*

To study spatial discourses in Helsingborg, and their embodiment in phenomena, a diversity of fieldwork methods were employed. Between March 2010 and December 2010, semi-structured interviews were performed with 10 people, in locations chosen by them. The informants represented various attachments to the city – a teacher and various planners who did not live there, a first-time visitor, long-time residents, and those who had recently relocated – and were of various ages, genders and socio-cultural backgrounds. Two stationary interviews were supplemented by ‘go-alongs’ in the informants’ areas of residence. To better understand site-specific practice, observations were made in the various squares (13 of them), parks (2) and streets of the city’s urban centre (Söder and Centrum) during various times of day, days of the week, and weather conditions, taking note of users, uses, design and the objects found in these spaces. Finally, mapping of these squares and parks (including structures, furniture and other objects), and of the cultural resources currently present in Söder (in order to highlight what already exists around the development area) were undertaken. Each of the above mentioned approaches to my fieldwork will be discussed in detail later in the study (Chapter 4). Secondary to these, informal interviews and observations, and review of documents on Helsingborg’s demographics, history, and the H+ project have also been important for enriching the study and placing it in appropriate context.

With the material collected, the methodological intention of this study has been to combine discourse analysis and phenomenology in order to gain a perspective of the situation of Helsingborg, specifically Söder and the H+ development area, which considers the interplay of Lefebvre’s “triad of the perceived, the conceived, and the lived” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). By investigating ‘the triad’ through study of the everyday experiences of people and the operative discourses which inform their perceptions and use of spaces, an understanding

of segregation in this specific context – how it is constructed in space, existing in practice, and lives in the minds of people – can locate the specific challenges to overcome and, ideally, suggestions of how to address those challenges.

### *1.5 Disposition of my thesis*

The study has been organised as follows:

The proceeding chapter will give an overview of Helsingborg's historical development, as well as more detail about the H+ project and its specific actions. Particularly, I will use Högdahl's study, to discuss in more detail the city's northerly and southerly development, but I will also discuss the development of its easterly suburbs, a topic which the author touches upon later in her work. As I will discuss, there are differences of demographics and physical development which come forth sharply when we look across the many neighbourhoods of Helsingborg.

The third chapter will explore relevant theoretical foundations for the purpose of this study. As a multi-disciplinary approach, this chapter will draw from ethnology, psychology and urban studies among other disciplines. My intention here is to explain how the physical structuring of space affects users – how it divides them and how it can also bring them together, as well as why it is important to work towards social inclusion from a psycho-social perspective. From that point, my discussion will turn to the ways in which different *habituums*, or dispositions, arise in tandem with particular patterns of development. Finally, through reflecting on the fluidity of identity in a brief discussion of performance theory, I aim to elaborate how the contingent foundations of identity offer possibilities for development to alter discourses.

With these various theoretical and disciplinary traditions synthesised into a more direct line of questioning for the investigation, Chapter 4 will present and defend the fieldwork methods employed for the study in greater detail, in order to then present and analyse my findings in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. In the final two chapters, these findings will lead to a discussion of their implications for the H+ project, as well as suggestions for, and reflections upon, the project and possibilities for further study.

## 2 A bit of background

### 2.1 A history of division

In order to understand what segregation is in regards to Söder and the H+ project area, it is important to situate them within the city as a whole. Understanding what the present state of segregation is in the city, and how it came about historically – what forces have been at work in the city’s physical development, and the trends which have developed and discourses which have been operatively normative – aides in situating us within this context. As mentioned in the introduction, a notable aspect explored in Elisabeth Högdahl’s (2007) *På andra sidan Trädgårdsgatan*, is how Helsingborg has historically been divided by its own inhabitants between North and South. It is useful to begin with this division to see what it tells us about the city, and what makes the north and south so different, so easy for residents to define, or divide, in a certain manner. However, it is also useful to examine the city’s easterly development to see how it may parallel divisions between the North and South.

### 2.2 Centrum, Tågaborg & ‘the North’

Centrum is the oldest surviving part of Helsingborg. Already a city in the medieval period, the area became a centre of trade in the 17th century. A number of cottages which served as both homes and workshops remain from this period, side-by-side with townhouses and apartments built primarily during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Högdahl, 2007, p. 23). In the present-day, Centrum is dense with economic and leisure activities, as well as pedestrianised streets, numerous squares and a harbour-side promenade. It is a shopping and tourism district with shopping gallerias, designer clothing boutiques, historical landmarks (such as the medieval city ramparts, the castle-like city hall built at the end of the 19th century, and cottages which now serve as museums or conference venues and event halls), several municipal cultural institutions (the *kulturhus*,<sup>2</sup> city theatre and city concert hall), as well numerous nightclubs, restaurants and cafés. Centrum continues to have a residential population (particularly within its harbour-side luxury apartments) – though many of what were once living spaces are now offices, shops and restaurants. It is little surprise that this diversity of options attracts a wide cross-section of the city – my own observations having

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<sup>2</sup> literally: culture house; the *kulturhus* in Helsingborg houses an exhibition gallery, performance venues, a restaurant and conference facilities.



Figure 1: Centrum, the northern part of the city centre of Helsingborg, is characterised by its historical architecture, both grand and humble, such as large baroque-inspired structures (left) and smaller 17th century timber-frame ones (centre). It is also the site of more recent development, such as luxury harbourside residential and business spaces (right). Photos: Paul Sherfey

been that people of different ages, professions, cultural backgrounds and physical handicaps are present here – to skate, shop, eat, work or simply go for a walk.

Directly to the north of Centrum is Tågaborg, a quiet, mostly residential neighbourhood which was initially developed in the late nineteenth century. The area has both large villas (enclosed by walls and fences) and smaller homes, as well as a number of apartment buildings. Tågaborg became the area of choice for the bourgeoisie of the city, most of them moving from the city centre after the turn of the last century (Högdahl, 2007, p. 52). It became a status symbol that one had the means to distance oneself from the social mix of the city centre, though until 1910 apartments were built in the area, allowing for a degree of socio-economic diversity to exist even in Tågaborg (ibid., p. 55). Located uphill from the city centre, its desirability was aided by the views of the sound that it offers, as well as its proximity to Sofiero Palace and Pålsjö skog, a large seaside forest surrounding the palace grounds. But, if in this context Tågaborg was seen as a better alternative to the city centre – a place to escape to – how is it that Centrum (literally, the centre) has become viewed as part of the north, which includes Tågaborg, and not the southerly part of the urban centre, Söder? What underlies this perspective?



Figure 2: To the north of Centrum, the neighbourhood of Tågaborg is primarily a neighbourhood of single-family homes, both small row-houses (left and centre) and large villas (right). The area developed in the late nineteenth century as people became eager to escape the increasing congestion of the city centre. Photos: Paul Sherfey

### 2.3 Situating Söder

*“På Söder ska vi arbeta, ha vår industri och tjäna pengar, och på norr ska vi bo, sade redan Konsul Persson”*<sup>3</sup> (Ranby, as cited in Högdahl, 2007, p. 3).

As the above quote (speaking of Consul Nils Persson, one of the city’s leading industrialists and politicians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries) illustrates, there was a certain intention at the time that development occurring to the south of Centrum should be industrial, and not residential, in nature – at least as far as those of means, such as the Consul, were concerned. This is understandable, as one would not necessarily want to live amidst the sounds and smells of the factories which were located there. But whether intended or not, Söder did become a place where people came to live, though it was sooner the labour migrants who came to work in the factories that resided there than the factory managers (Högdahl, 2007, p. 47). Although Söder incorporated both residential and industrial development, there was nonetheless economic segregation – as those who could afford to would move away from the area. Whereas Centrum and Tågaborg had always had a diversity of inhabitants due to the diverse trades which were practised in the areas and diversity of housing in each, Söder was built, specifically as an area for industrial professions, and the housing and services which developed in the area were primarily for industrial labourers.

But its historically ‘blue-collar’ character is not the only factor which distinguishes Söder from Centrum and Tågaborg. Even a cursory glance upon the area shows that it is ‘other’ than Centrum in its architecture and demographics as well. On the latter point, it is an area of diversity – approximately 47 percent of the people living in the area are of foreign background (that is, being immigrants themselves, or the children of parents who are both immigrants), whereas in both Centrum and Tågaborg this figure is around 16 percent (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2010). As concerns Söder *qua* structured space however, diversity is not likely to be a term employed to describe the area. Unlike the many medieval structures and generally historic character of Centrum, Söder’s development occurred much more recently. It was only as the city became industrialised in the late 19th century that it expanded

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<sup>3</sup> In Söder shall we work, have our industry and earn money, and in the North shall we live, [it was] said as early as Consul Persson (my translation).



Figure 3: In contrast to Centrum, where the built environment spans hundreds of years, and various sizes and styles, much of Söder is marked by large-scale office and apartment buildings built over the course of the 20th century, with much less diversity in the design of façades. Photos: Paul Sherfey

south beyond Trädgårdsgatan, where factories and housing for labour migrants came to dominate Söder.

During the first half of the 20th century, the area began to look as it does now. Around the turn of the century, the churchyard at the centre of Gustav Adolf's *torg* (the Swedish term for a public square) was paved, and during the 1930s a swim-hall was built upon one-third of the square. Throughout the district, small garden cottages were progressively replaced with multi-storey apartment blocks. Whereas a well-located district such as Tågaborg attracted those with means of upward mobility already established in the area, Söder provided a stark contrast as a place where outsiders, particularly those with less resources, started out in the city. Rather than a forest and palace near their neighbourhood, residents became neighbours with factories, a power plant and the city's port.

Söder borders – both in the sense of being connected to and being separated from – neighbouring districts via several of the city's primary motor-ways. Between Söder and Centrum lie both the city park and one of these arterial roads – Trädgårdsgatan, to which the title of Högdahl's book refers. Furthermore, to the west it is currently separated from the city's industrial harbour by rail-yards and the city's primary motorway, thus lacking access to the Öresund, in contrast to the north of the city, in which residents have direct access to beaches, parks and harbour promenades along the water. Across the motorway and railway from the residential and commercial area of Söder is the district's considerable industrial zone, containing factories, workshops, warehouses and the city's port. This is the primary area of the city which will be redeveloped under the auspices of the H+ project, as well as the neighbouring industrial area of Gåseback. Precursory to the current development plans, this area has slowly seen redevelopment through the remodelling of former factory buildings into a local campus of Lund University as well as businesses centres for corporations such as

IKEA. Because of its location close to the city centre and regional transportation networks, the area is seen to have a high degree of potential for attracting more corporate investment, particularly in creative industries (cf. Helsingborgs stad, 2010). Again, as mentioned in the introduction, it is because of its close proximity to Söder that H+ project planners see their project as an opportunity to promote development which strengthens the surrounding communities instead of simply creating a gentrified enclave in the south of the city.

#### *2.4 Heading south*

To the west of Söder, and continuing southward through the municipality, there remains a significant degree of industrial activity. Following the rail yard southerly, dominating the city's southern coast, are warehouses, factories, shipping and manufacturing companies, as well as numerous smaller workshops. Punctuating this industrial landscape are the communities of Planteringen, Miatorp and Högastén. Planteringen's north consists of large apartment towers, some built in the 1950s, others as part of *Miljonprogrammet 1965-1974*.<sup>4</sup> Views of the Öresund are punctuated by the many factory smokestacks along the shore, and two large thoroughfares to the east and west separate the towers from warehouses and workshops. Planteringen's southern half is in stark contrast, consisting entirely of a small number of detached homes surrounded by pine groves, which provide a visual and acoustic barrier from the nearby port and motorways.

As the demographics show, around 55 percent of the population are of foreign extraction in Planteringen (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2010), and this distribution is visible in the housing situation, as the homes are, from repeated observation, primarily occupied by 'ethnic Swedish' families, whereas the apartment occupants are largely more recent arrivals to Sweden. Though a small community, this area has a very clear boundary line, as the primary east-to-west road, Östra Tallgatan, visibly separates these two development styles, and demographic groups, quite sharply. The apartment community has some social service offices and a small grocery store, a pub and a barber, but little else. As my own observations found, most people from the apartments travelled by bus into Söder – the nearest location with considerable grocery options – as evidenced by the store names on their grocery bags.

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<sup>4</sup> Miljonprogrammet (literally, 'the million programme'), was a national project which aimed to provide affordable housing for all through the construction of one million dwellings in a ten-year period. Many of the structures built under this period, particularly multi-family structures, are notable for their monolithic, Corbusian utilitarianism.

As for house-dwellers, it was a challenge to observe if they as well went to Söder, or chose other locations, as their reliance upon private vehicles meant I would have to hunt after cars returning to individual driveways.

In Miatorp and Högasten, single-family homes are more numerous than in Planteringen, multi-family dwellings are not centralised in one area (but rather along the various arterial roads and industrial zones in the case of Miatorp), and the ‘immigrant’ population of each constitutes approximately 30 percent of the total (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2010). To the east are Ramlösa, a neighbourhood of single family homes largely from the late 19th or late 20th centuries, and Ättekulla, where mixed housing options border industrial zones as in Miatorp, Planteringen and Högasten. In these neighbourhoods, 13 and 25 percent of the populations, respectively, are of foreign extraction (ibid.). At the southern edge of the municipality is Råå, a district which was historically a fishing village, comprised primarily of single-family homes dating back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Demographically, it is notable for having the lowest proportion of immigrants in the city – comprising only 9 percent of the total (ibid.).



Figure 4: The two faces of Planteringen. In the south, Planterigen is a quiet community of small homes surrounded by groves of pine trees (left). In the north, it is a collection of six- to eight-storey apartment towers (centre), with views of smokestacks along the harbour to the west, and a wide, noisy motorway to the east. Photos: Paul Sherfey

### 2.5 Going eastward

Built primarily in the 1930s and after, Helsingborg’s easterly neighbourhoods must also be taken into consideration. Constituting apartment blocks in more central locations, and apartment communities and a mixture of tract and villa houses further east, they were developed to accommodate sharp increases in migration to Helsingborg due to the city’s economic growth. For a large part, they are neighbourhoods of *creatio ex nihilo*, planned and built as large-scale development projects. Further from city resources than areas such as

Tågaborg, they are more affordable, but are also attractive to those wanting to escape city life and have more play space for their children and be surrounded by more greenery, while still in close reach of an urban centre. In these areas, houses and other structures within a given neighbourhood are often of the same style, with only slight variations of colour or size. Vehicle traffic is the primary means of movement, leading to significantly less movement within neighbourhoods than movement to and from them. Groceries, pharmacies and schools can be found in most communities, but other retail shops, cafés and restaurants are generally fewer in number as one travels further east through Helsingborg's outlying districts - until one arrives at the Väla shopping centre, an expansive complex constituting both an indoor mall and various warehouse-sized retail chains, located near the northeastern boundary of the city, which is more friendly to car traffic than to public transit, cycling or pedestrians because of its scale and its extra-suburban location near several motorways.

Directly to the East of Söder are Högaborg and Eneborg. These districts are a continuation of the sort of large, plain-façade apartment blocks that are found in Söder, and while only a short walk from Gustav Adolfs torg, commercial activity is already visibly reduced. Beyond these are the neighbourhoods of Närlunda and Adolfsberg – both part of *Miljonprogrammet* – as well as neighbourhoods of single-family homes, such as Eskilsminne, Sofieberg and Gustavslund, and the neighbourhoods of Wilson Park, Fälatabacken and Elinberg, which have both single-family housing and apartment blocks and towers. Rather than commercial services, all of these neighbourhoods have a large amount of green space, with Närlunda and Elineberg being encircled by a dense green belt separating them from the railway and motorway to the west, as well as from the single-home neighbourhoods surrounding them. Much like was observed to the west, housing-type and immigrant population have a correlation in these areas. The populations of Närlunda and Högaborg are approximately 55 percent of foreign extraction, while in Eneborg and Adolfsberg, they are around 40 and 45 percent, respectively (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2010). In the mixed-development neighbourhoods of Elinberg, Fälatabacken and Wilson park, about a quarter of the population are of foreign extraction, while in Eskilsminne, Gustavslund and Sofieberg they constitute around 15 percent of residents (ibid.). Next to Fälatabacken are also the early 19th century villas of Husensjö, and the *Miljonprogrammet* structures of Rosengård – with figures of 17 and 34 percent, respectively.



Figure 5: While Närlunda is composed entirely of high- and low-rise apartment blocks, legacies of *Miljonprogrammet* (left and centre), neighbouring districts such as Fältbacken (right) and Eskilsminne are entirely composed of detached, single-family homes. Photos: Paul Sherfey

To the north and east of Centrum and Tågaborg, development is primarily villas and newly designed townhouses in the communities surrounding Pålsjö skog – Mariastaden, Norr, and Ringstorp – with immigrant populations constituting approximately 15 percent of the population in each (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2010). To the east, development in Stattena, not unlike Söder, occurred through the replacement of early industrial-period workers cottages with a variety of functionalist apartment blocks in the 1930s and 1940s, though the percentage of immigrants in the area resembles that of neighbouring Tågaborg, Ringstorp and Mariastaden – approximately 15 percent (*ibid.*). Olympia and Slottshöjden, both constituted of early 20th century villas with some more recent apartment towers, represent similar figures. However, further eastward are the more structurally homogenous *Miljonprogrammet* communities of Berga, Fredriksdal, Dalhem, and Drottninghög, where the proportion of individuals of foreign background jumps from 28 percent in Berga’s apartment blocks, to 46 percent in the apartment communities of Fredriksdal and Dalhem (similar to figures in the city’s southerly *Miljonprogrammet* structures) and to 68 percent – almost three quarters of the population, the highest in the city – in Drottninghög (*ibid.*).

### 2.6 The H+ project

Although the above is a rather brief summary of Helsingborg’s divisions and history, several clear distinctions can be drawn about the city’s development. Firstly, there are clear divisions between how the old town and its newer areas have been developed – residential, commercial and industrial spaces being more clearly defined from one another the newer and farther from the centre that the district is located. Secondly, most city districts, whether in the urban or suburban zones of the city, have rather clear distinctions between housing types, being either dominated by single-family homes and low-density luxury apartments, or by (sometimes towering) apartment blocks which intend to accommodate those of more modest means.

Thirdly, related to the type of housing is a distinction of cultural background – that is, the denser the housing is, the greater the proportion becomes of people who are immigrants, or the children of immigrants. Combined, these three points highlight that across Helsingborg, and not only in the centre, there are sharp distinctions between neighbourhoods. Segregation is not only economic, in the sense that the differing housing types tend to also have divergent costs, but that it is also visible through these differing structures and – as ‘immigrant’ population statistics illustrate – in the so-called ‘ethnic’ mix of different areas.<sup>5</sup>

It is in the context of these spatial distinctions that Helsingborg has initiated the H+ project. Located in the heart of the city, connected with both Centrum and Söder (as well as Närlunda and Planteringen), yet separated from each by infrastructural barriers (primary among these being the railway and motorway) it is important to the planning team that the project can integrate itself into its surroundings both physically and mentally – conceiving a space which is perceived materially, and lived emotionally, as interwoven with its surroundings, and not as segregated from them (Helsingborgs stad, 2011a, p. 7). Thus, coupled with large-scale physical changes to the cityscape are planning initiatives aiming to de-segregate neighbourhoods around the development area – particularly Söder and Planteringen – which are notable both for the infrastructural barriers which separate them from other neighbourhoods, as well as class and ethnic profiles which puts them in stark contrast with much of the rest of the city. The idea is that rather than gentrify the H+ area, it can become more inclusive and more inviting to people of different walks of life, and more accessible to people with less financial means, as well as helping to improve the perception that many have of Söder.

But what of this idea of de-segregation? Who is segregated from whom, and how? Taking a cue from the development and history of the city, it is necessary to frame perspectives on how segregation can come about through physical and discursive means. For the moment, this means considering that whatever the exact nature of segregation in Helsingborg’s spatial development may be, that it involves not only differences of physical development, but also social differences (age, culture, financial situation, etc.). Thus, it is

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<sup>5</sup> Just six national backgrounds (out of the forty reported as representing more than 100 residents) – the former Yugoslavia, Denmark, Iraq, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Poland and Lebanon – account for about 50 percent of the immigrant population, with significant representation of people from other Western Asian (primarily Iran, Syria and Turkey) and Southeast Asian (primarily Vietnam and Thailand) countries, in addition to those from various European countries, rounding out much of the other 50 percent (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2011, p. 8).

important to reflect on the nature of city development, its social and psychological implications, and the ways in which identity categories such as class and ethnicity can be seen to operate, in order to develop a perspective through which the city may be investigated.

### 3 Locating the study

#### 3.1 “If you build it...”: structuring behaviours, identities and possibilities

As the preceding chapter illustrated, there are clear distinctions between the way people live in Helsingborg, not simply between Söder and Centrum, but between many of the neighbourhoods throughout the city, as housing types are often clearly separated, and along with this separation there is a marked separation in one’s likelihood to be neighbours with immigrants. Considering these particularities of the structuring of inhabitants’ physical and cultural surroundings, it is worthwhile to further consider the relationship between locations and the people using and inhabiting them.

As conceived space, a neighbourhood can be seen to permit, encourage, or discourage particular behaviours – either physically (through their perceived materiality) or through discourses which surround them (the lived, emotional, or imagined responses one has to said materiality). The cost of a home (due to factors such as its size, material composition and land value) versus that of an apartment encourages a economic separation of people, for instance. However, as social discourse goes, there are preferences – the calm of suburbia or the thrills of the city – which also affect one’s choice of location. In this manner, it is important to consider the role of location, resources, and social discourse in governing a person’s spatial choices. “To govern...is to structure the possible field of action of others” (Foucault, 2001, p. 341); so, how then, might a neighbourhood – its squares, street, or other public spaces – be said to govern people in manners which segregate them?

In order not to suggest that structures interpellate subjects and deny them agency, Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of *habitus* – as the disposition, or perspective, from which one experiences and engages with the world – is useful here. A person’s disposition, like governance, is seen to structure his or her response to, and behaviour within, spatial contexts, but is at the same time more nuanced – a way to conceptualise the way in which a social environment structures one’s practice, but without determining practice (cf. Reed-Danahay, 2005, pp. 99-112). *Habitus*, in this manner, “immediately reveals a hope or ambition as reasonable or unreasonable, a commodity as accessible or inaccessible, a particular action as suitable or unsuitable” (ibid., p. 106). Structures of socialisation create and delimit a perspective from which one operates with some degree of agency, and it is the unpredictable nature of human behaviour, which operates from this agency, which opens the potential for change. The cityscape, and locations therein, may promote intended uses or users, but there is

no guarantee that people will faithfully interpret or follow intentions. As segregation is concerned then, it is one's *habitus* – seen as one's social conditioning – which might be said to reflect integration as unsuitable or threatening. But it is the agency which co-exists with one's social conditioning which has the potential to undermine this very conditioning – given the right setting or opportunity. Creating, or facilitating the creation of such settings and opportunities is what the practical, applied aspect of this study aims to address. With the opportunity provided by the H+ project to invest in redefining the purposes and possibilities of a city district comes the issue of creating new spatial identities, as well as the challenge of rethinking of individual and social identities in Helsingborg.

The latter is a challenge because identity, whether of an individual or a location, is not a fixed, ever-reliable representation of reality. As put forth in *Gender Trouble* (2006), Judith Butler argues that the body is a site upon which an identity – for her argument, gender – exists as a performance, through the representation of signs upon its surface that are socially constructed and valued. “Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effect through its naturalisation in the context of the body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration” (Butler, 2006, xv). Identity, in this sense, is discursive, not inherent. The way we present our bodies – clothing, hairstyles, muscular definition or surgical alterations, for instance – reflect certain social conceptualisations of how we think we should present ourselves to elicit desired social responses (ibid., xxiii). Should one have cosmetic surgery to be more beautiful, his or her operative idea of beauty is but a particular social discourse – one among many ideas of what beauty is – and not a platonic essence. Seeing that “the very contours of “the body” are established through markings that seek to establish specific codes of cultural coherence”, I argue that any identity can be seen as performative, whether enacting that which is viewed as acceptable or reacting against it (ibid., p. 178). Even spaces, in this way, perform identities through their design, decoration and use – through the agency of individuals acting upon them to create certain ‘atmospheres’, using the social capital of certain material choices to attract a specific clientele. Themed restaurants or cafés are examples of this, as well as the use of landscaping to make a space feel ‘cozy’ or ‘majestic’. The performativity of spaces is relevant to this study because materiality is implicated in the identities which spaces perform, and by addressing how material culture influences the creation of uninviting or uncomfortable spatial identities, it is possible to determine relevant interventions.

Nonetheless, as it is structured from one's *habitus* – and thus socially constructed – identity is both a result and a response to the social environment. As Goffman informs us (1956), "an environment...is a place where it is easy or difficult to play the ritual game of having a self (p. 497). Identity, both existing and produced contextually – whether I am a man, a white man, a homosexual man or a man from the United States comes into question only within specific locations – I thus consider that it can be studied phenomenologically, by a focus upon praxis as a performance structured through a socially constructed *habitus*, and how this acts upon one's identity in a given context. As discourse in society shapes conceptualisations of what normative practice is, it must define itself just as much by what it is not (Jackson, 2005, p.19). To be an average resident of one neighbourhood may mean to be an immigrant with a blue-collar job, while in another it may be to a retired, local-born professional. In each such case, one can generalise certain commonalities of everyday life for 'the average person', and to be visible as 'other-than-normative' in a neighbourhood – imagine skateboarding teenagers playing in a senior citizen's apartment community – one is likely to elicit the attention of others because they are extra-ordinary. Sometimes this may be welcomed, and sometimes not so much – depending upon familiarity and comfort with the out-of-the-ordinary person, or people, in question.

Thus, an important component in the development of a particular social environment is the physical environment upon which it is grounded. How are differing publics, with differing dispositions, being created in space? Which publics use which spaces? What can spatial composition tell us? As the material nature of public space is concerned, architect and theorist Jan Gehl has done extensive study concerning how structure, materials, and the placement of diverse objects facilitate active use of public space. Emphasising that "the key to establishing lively and safe public spaces is pedestrian traffic and pedestrian activities", his work in the city of Adelaide, Australia, as well as London, Melbourne, Mexico City and Sydney has thus focused significantly on encouraging people to walk, sit and stay on the streets and squares of cities (as quoted in Neal, 2010, p. 207). A particularly favourite of Helsingborg's city planners, he addresses the theoretical import of pedestrian movement, activity and security, as well as the possibilities that structural features and furniture such as benches, awnings and landscaping represent (cf. Neal, 2010; Shaftoe, 2008).

While Gehl's research and work addresses putting public spaces into active use, what role might it play in actively integrating a segregated cityscape? As Hannah Arendt (1958)

discusses in *The Human Condition*, to regularly encounter and interact with difference creates relationships and impressions that are rather different than those we have of people that we ‘know about’ in the sense of having an awareness of their existence. “Everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity. Appearance... constitutes reality” (ibid., p. 50). The less that different people appear before one another, the less they are a part of one another’s reality – the information they have about each other becomes limited or based on hearsay or stereotypical media images, meaning that uncertainty and generalisations – which are dehumanising, by nature, as they contradict humane engagement between individuals – have more possibility to operate. As Chapter 2 illuminated, despite constituting a quarter of the city’s population, immigrants to Sweden are not distributed evenly across the cityscape, instead largely concentrated in Söder and the adjacent district of Högborg, Eneborg, Adolfsberg, Närlunda and Planteringen, or in the northeast in Fredriksdal, Dalhem and Drottningshög – all communities where multi-family housing (apartment buildings) are the norm. Most other districts are dominated by single-family homes with automobiles in every driveway, meaning that even if 15 to 25 percent of one’s neighbours have a different cultural background from them, they are only likely to encounter these neighbours unless they are in the same social circles or at local stores (if there are any), since traffic in these suburban neighbourhoods is primarily within the ‘bubble’ of private vehicles.

In the case of Helsingborg then, the question regarding *habitus* and governance becomes: if housing is spatially and demographically segregated in large sections of the city, how then are people disposed to react in everyday spatial practice? What exactly are the unreasonable, inaccessible or unsuitable qualities which encourage segregation? Where and how do people overcome this segregation, and what are some of the material qualities of such spaces? Answering these questions requires investigating a localised area to study material, perceived space and the possible experiences it provides people. It requires not only observing the people who come to Söder, but what they can do in the area, and what they must go elsewhere to do. In this manner, the lack or abundance of particular resources may signify why and how certain spatial discourses structure spatial identities which influence everyday spatial practice. By identifying some of the material choices individuals make – both in terms of the resources they search out and the aesthetics which draw them to certain spaces, there is potential for development which promotes the intersection of differing social

identities in order to facilitate the creation of hybridised, inclusive ones, through focusing on the junction of material needs.

It is easier to dehumanise those with whom we lack corporeal exposure and engagement, facilitating lack of comfort when confronted with ‘otherness’ because of a lack of information about, or knowledge of those others. If people of another class, culture, sexual orientation or age do not corporeally *appear* in one’s day-to-day life – unless these different realities have the opportunity to be perceived with frequency and in meaningful ways, one’s conceptualisation of them is more prone to vicarious influence. Unless residents of very ‘Swedish’ suburbs have reason to go to the more immigrant-intense neighbourhoods of the city, they are not likely to have significant day-to-day exposure to the differing languages, practices and products which distinguish cultures from one another, and their tolerance for, and understanding of these may be the worse for it. According to this line of reasoning, public spaces can defuse social tension with the co-requisite that such spaces attract a diverse cross-section of society, and thus de-mystify alterity. The challenge of this, and thus an object my study, is to find out how to create such spaces of common ground, where ‘otherness’ can become familiar.

### *3.2 Gentrification, culture and economics*

Whereas Gehl’s work addresses the import of the presence of objects such as street furniture to promote public interaction, the work of urban geographer Alan Latham extends this focus to explore the relationship of objects to different kinds of people as ‘conduits’ (in Latham’s terms) for sociality. Latham questions the relationship between a neighbourhood’s gentrification as an economic process, and its socio-cultural development. Exploring this relationship in his study of an inner-city district of Auckland, New Zealand, he concluded that “culture is not determined by economics but that the two are much more symbiotically intertwined” (Latham, 2003, p. 1718). Examining the development of the city’s Ponsonby district – an area, like Söder in Helsingborg, that is known for its traditionally working-class, male-centred, and immigrant culture – Latham shows how gentrification of the residential and commercial sectors of an area are not necessarily mutually guaranteed. He problematises the relationship between political economy and culture, arguing the connection between the success of specific commercial ventures according to how they reflect and support the emergent culture of an area.

While understanding the concern for the neo-capitalist overtones of ‘the urban renaissance’ by Marxist political economists such as geographer David Harvey – that is, the idea of the city becoming an entertainment zone of shopping, dining and the consumption of experiences for those with enough money – and recognising the troubling trends of increasing social exclusion and income disparities in cities, each connected with the political economics of gentrification as it pertains to housing price escalation, Latham insists that residential gentrification does not interpellate commercial gentrification (*ibid.*, pp. 1699-1706). He shows, instead, that what was once a male-dominated, strictly working-class urban culture in Ponsonby, dominated by its pubs, had become democratised – feminised and ‘queered’ – without eliminating the traditional culture, through the diversification of its hospitality culture to include bars, cafés, hybrid café-restaurants, and other spaces which, in the context of New Zealand and Auckland specifically, encouraged more diverse socialisation than before (*ibid.*, p. 1712).

To this end, Latham argues that “consumption is a potentially productive element in the creation of social relationships”, and that the nature of the ‘materials’ implicated – such as certain types of dining spaces or even the types of drinks (smoothies, beer, or lattes, for example) are not passive, but rather “key mediators and conduits of the sociality through which the new public culture is enacted” (*ibid.*, p. 1713). For Helsingborg, then, it has been useful, as I discuss in detail later, to understand what sort of products and services bring a cross-section of the city together in a common space. Are bars and cafés as important as in Latham’s examples, or are people looking for something else in Helsingborg? Although certain economic trends can create tensions in the city, we must also “have a pragmatic sense of what the ordinary everyday spaces of cities can do” (*ibid.*, p. 1719). In the case of Ponsonby, despite gentrifying economic trends in the housing market, particular socio-cultural trends led to an emergent culture of “benign tolerance, a minimal and usually good-humoured acceptance and occasional interest in the diversity of others” (*ibid.*, p. 1718). Having places where everyone can go for a pint or a latte with friends can be an important conduit for exposure to the realities of others in a familiar, safe and inviting environment.

While economic factors clearly influence access to services, products and accommodation, the role of money must not overshadow the importance of other materials and objects in terms of socio-cultural influence. Just because one does not have access to housing in a particular area, does not mean that they do not have access or interest in being

there – walking its streets, sitting in its parks, working in its offices or socialising at one or another café or community space. With regards to Helsingborg and Söder/H+, rather than focus on class discourses as such, this suggests that it is important to investigate the material nature of one's identification with an area. While ensuring a cosmopolitan housing market which reflects diverse economic situations can generally be addressed, to some extent, through a dedication to equitable housing development policies, understanding how public, social and commercial spaces can be developed to sustain diversity requires, as Latham's study, a very localised study of a neighbourhood's character and its context within the city around it. As such, with the case of Helsingborg, my study focuses on the district of Söder, as the site of the H+ project, and creating a more developed knowledge of the relationships that its 'users' and 'avoiders' have to the area.

## 4 Method(ology)

### 4.1 Rationale

Just as commercial options influence who will be attracted to 'be' in a location, the physical environment and other resources available in a community also work to structure the possibilities of interaction in those areas, emphasising some at the expense of others. Thus, I have endeavoured to ascertain with this study where and how different possibilities for interaction have been created in Söder – and to some extent other areas of Helsingborg – whether in commercial or public spaces. Understanding some of the choices that people make, the qualitative concerns that influence them, and the nature of the options available, informs us of both where 'best practice' exists and the specific opportunities that can be either developed by city planners, or at least encouraged and supported by the city through funding and cooperation.

As recommendations are concerned, this can provide 'practical knowledge' in two senses – providing both *knowledge of practice*, and *knowledge which lends itself to practical application*. While not providing statistical figures of the pedestrian use of a street, for instance, it provides an idea of the individual character and motivation of individuals who use the street – an idea of a community's qualities and discourses which affect people's decision-making. Are there spaces which appear structured to foreclose certain groups, but are in fact used by them? For instance, do youth play or 'hang out' in spaces which don't appear to be 'youth-friendly'? Where might there be opportunities for agency, or 'loopholes', "possibilities in the cityscape to do something other than the thought or planned" (Högdahl, 2009, p. 1051)? If such places can be located and studied qualitatively, we can learn new ways to approach the spatial needs of residents. To achieve this, however, we must question what induces people towards particular spatial behaviours or uses. Perhaps there are resource disparities which the city should address.

The intention is that by approaching the cityscape and its residents from such a perspective, planning can be brought closer to the people it affects, accommodating the extant tactics by which people engage with locations in the city by enabling the qualitative – visceral, everyday experiences – and not only quantitative data, to inform planners and the structuring in which they engage. To achieve this requires locating 'the referent of discourse', engaging with the people whom are to be served by municipal planners, and the spaces which must serve them in Helsingborg, to see how phenomena manifest (Latour, 1999, p. 30).

People “disclose themselves as subjects, as distinct and unique persons, even when they wholly concentrate upon reaching an altogether worldly, material object” (Arendt, 1958, p. 183). Whether for recreation, socialising, shopping or otherwise, people often have goals or influences which induce them towards specific locations. Even if one wanders in an ostensibly aimless manner, one is likely to make choices – based upon sensory and aesthetic preferences – to remain on one path or choose another direction instead. As such, the everyday occurrence – shopping for groceries, sitting at a café or riding a bus – discloses aspects of individuals and their relationship to their surroundings. With the example of grocery stores, for example, we have options of where we may go. By choosing a discount store, an organic market, an ‘ethnic’ market or a familiar supermarket chain, we express not only our relationships to food and our families (cf. Miller, 2001), but also sensory concerns. How are the shops we choose designed, aesthetically speaking? Why are we comfortable there? Because it’s large and open? Small and ‘cozy’? Who else shops there? What products can we find? What products cannot be found?

As they each exist in space, it has been beneficial to study how people, shops, products, and objects of the cityscape, as representatives of discourses, can be seen as factors contributing to the *Entstehung* (emergence) of certain spatial discourses, and modalities of governance, within particular spaces (cf. Foucault, 1977). Spaces which are developed for certain, intended uses and users tend to privilege some at the expense of others. A community of single-family homes is perhaps not the most likely place for a single college student to find accommodation, whereas a fifth-floor apartment in a building without an elevator is not likely the best location for a disabled individual. Similarly, if a space is segregated, there are likely very tangible, practical reasons (questions of resources) that accompany discursive ones (perceived threats). Through locating examples of such reasons, one can begin to understand how a location – such as Söder – through the discourses and governance structured by its materiality, can be both welcoming to some, yet at the same time an exclusionary space, through one’s sense of accessibility or their self-perception as ‘not belonging’.

To the extent that public interaction and engagement are necessary to diffuse social tensions and to breach the boundaries imposed by difference (cf. Frug, 1999), I have endeavoured to explore public spaces and community organisations, and how they function as conceived spaces for sociality in Söder and Centrum, and what perceptions and lived

experiences of these spaces can offer in the way of needs and opportunities for further development. For the purpose of this study, diverse fieldwork methods were employed to meet the needs of obtaining both discursive and phenomenological understanding of these spaces. A combination of mapping, observation and interviews – which shall be discussed in turn later in this chapter, have provided insight into user needs and guided the development of suggestions for the H+ project relative to meeting these needs.

#### *4.2 Studying phenomena*

To address the needs of an area, we must refine our knowledge of its culture – the practices, discourses and objects, which inform and are informed by one another – and allow suggestions to emerge from this knowledge. We must not only address the relationship of planning to public space, but also the relationships existing between socio-economic and aesthetic discourses, and how concepts of identity operate in a given context. Understanding that it is the users of Helsingborg's cityscape that determine the success of any planning initiative – that they will either embrace or shun (or, more benignly, accept or ignore) the process and its results – the approach I have employed has been to engage people in the practice of spatial use – that is, studying the actual use of space by actual users-of-space – exploring how they use the cityscape now, how they interact with it, and, importantly, the possibilities which extant city structures provide.

The social agent must act in space, and it is this “fusion of personal identity and physical environment...a byproduct of our everyday relationships – sensible, corporeal and imaginative – with and within the built environments we inhabit” which must be the centre of any study of the interaction of individuals and spaces (Jackson, 2005, p. 17). The social structuring of relationships and interaction – whether with people, objects, concepts or spaces – are reflected in the places that we live (O'Toole & Were 2008, p. 619), and as such “may not be studied directly but only observed in [their] effects on human actors” (Davies 2008, p. 22). Any study of a space, and the relationships people have with it, must work with an awareness of the manifold factors structuring the ‘modalities of interaction’ it enables.

Phenomena – such as those which arise through human and human-environment interaction – are spatially situated and contingent. They occur in particular locations and circumstances. Thus, a phenomenological study must take account that “public buildings, familiar streets, neighbourhoods, parks and squares become invested with the vitality and

experiences of [those] who dwell and work in them” (Jackson 2005, p. 17). Such a phenomenological approach provides occasion to study “experience in its immediacy, before it is subject to theoretical elaboration or conceptual systematising” because ours is “a human and material environment where meaning is created in a continuous activity” – a practical world in which we act in specific instances, which can be studied by first observing those actions, and then attempting to understand or explain them afterwards (Frykman & Gilje, 2003, p. 36). Although I must work from a theoretical perspective – it is a question of being receptive to the unexpected occurrences or comments which arise during fieldwork and being willing to explore the new directions in which fieldwork may lead me. For instance, rather than be limited by predetermined parameters – such as set, specific questions to ask informants – it is a question of allowing for open questions which facilitate a greater voice on the part of informants, and changing what is being observed as relevant to the course of fieldwork.

### *4.3 Fieldwork methods*

#### *4.3.1 Interviews*

From the moment I engaged informants in either formal or informal interviews, I strove, as Davies (2008) recommends, to “present the interview as a joint exploration of the topic of the research” (p. 121). I looked not for particular answers about ‘how things are’ in Helsingborg, but rather asked more open questions so that informants could express what was relevant to them on topics presented. One example was to ask for words they would use to describe the city, or Söder, and by following up on what such words meant to them to understand how they interpreted their own experience of the city. For example, several informants described Helsingborg as a ‘summer city’ – explaining this by the fact that the activities they find memorable in the city all occur during the summer months – the city festival and weather for going to local beaches and cycling to nearby forests – being some of the descriptions which arose. What this example highlighted, was that there was a significant opportunity for the city to focus on events and natural resources which could create memorable impressions throughout the year. There’s no reason rain, snow or wind must impede Helsingborg from being a ‘year-round city’ – it’s merely a matter of discovering new possibilities appropriate to other seasons and weather conditions.

In any case, letting ‘how things are’ for my informants to thus arise, allowed me to “direct the conversation with the research in mind, without imposing much structure on the interaction” (ibid., p. 105). I was thus able to abstract specific topics pertinent to the informants, as they occurred in conversation – rather than deciding what themes were important and structuring questions based upon such predetermined parameters. In total, 10 semi-structured interviews were performed, with both prepared and improvised lines of questioning. Half were pre-arranged, and half were spontaneous. As several interviews, particularly those with city employees, produced information which at times could border on criticism, in consideration of participant’s rights and interests, as well as the potential consequences of their statements (Ellis, 2007, p. 26), I employ pseudonyms for my informants, and withhold any personal information which might serve to identify informants. Mention of an informant’s background is only done as necessary to analyse particular discourses, but only non-identifying data. The only exceptions which arise in this are regarding the city planners with whom I spoke. For them, I have withheld names and descriptions altogether. As they are a smaller group of people, it would be too easy to identify them through any description. However, as they general have similar demographic backgrounds (as far as being Swedish, of similar age, education and socio-economic backgrounds). Some discussion of the planners as a ‘homogenous group’ arises later in the study.

The informants represented various attachments to the city. One, Sofia, was a secondary teacher in her thirties, who taught Swedish as a Second Language (to students whom are recent immigrants) and English. Herself the child of immigrants to Sweden, she provided both personal reflections based upon almost a decade of work in the city, while also relaying discussions and issues which arise with her students. Another, Amory, was an international student at Lund University (30 minutes to the south of Helsingborg), in his mid-twenties, whom I accompanied on his first trip to the city, discussing the experience and his reflections both in the course of ‘meeting’ the city and after the trip was over. His exposure to cultures beyond his own was somewhat limited before coming to study in Sweden. However, his experience of different economic and social circumstances was diverse, growing up in cities and rural areas, in both middle-class suburbs and working-class communities.

Rounding out the interviews I made with non-residents were the various interviews and discussions I had with six of the city planners working on the H+ project. All were in

their thirties or forties. None of them, (nor those planners whom I didn't interview, for that matter) lived in Helsingborg – most choosing the city of Malmö (one hour to the south by train) as their home. Further, only three of those I spoke with grew up – or at least went to university – in Skåne; the rest were from central and northern areas of Sweden. Unlike the other non-residents I interviewed, however, all of them could be said to be 'ethnic' Swedes – that is, all of them are from families that have lived in Sweden for generations – whose primary point of cultural reference is Sweden.

Then there were those who lived their daily lives entirely within Helsingborg. First in this group were a couple in their twenties – Bengt and Mira – working students who lived in Söder, just off the central square. Bengt, a so-called 'ethnic' Swede, had lived in the municipality – in various parts of the city and its outlying villages – his entire life. Mira, whose father was Swedish and mother Indian, grew up mostly in international schools throughout Asia before returning to Sweden for university. She had moved to Helsingborg three years prior, after living in Stockholm for a time.

Three more interviews resulted from a visit I made to a local mosque when they held an open house. The men with whom I was able to develop interviews with – Mafouz, Sikandar and Madani – had different histories. Mafouz, a refugee from Lebanon's civil war in the 1980s, was in his 50s and had lived in Sweden for nearly twenty years. Beyond being active in the mosque's programmes, he was also connected to the local chapter of Ibn Rushd, a national Islamic culture organisation working to promote dialogue between Muslims and Swedish society at large through various initiatives. The latter two were both students at the local campus of Lund University – Madani having grown up in Helsingborg and involved in local youth initiatives through the mosque, whereas Sikander was an international student recently arrived from Pakistan.

The majority of my informants were found through visits to local organisations where they were active members. The fact that such places exist, with programmes and social activities that actively solicit the participation of people, made finding forthcoming informants a less daunting task, as these were social spaces where there was an expectation to welcome and talk to visitors, to inform them about their organisations. Finding informants beyond these establishments was a challenge, as approaching people on the street or in shops provided people who were generally less willing or prepared to be interviewed. In

community organisations, there was always at least one person to greet a visitor, allowing the informant to initiate discussion if they were thus predisposed.

#### 4.3.2 *'Go-alongs'*

“Places represent others, and our feelings towards them are based on their ‘interactional past’ and ‘interactional potential’” (Kusenbach, 2003, p. 474). Thus, with three informants – Amory, Bengt and Mira – formal interviews were supplemented by ‘go-alongs’. The point with these was to stimulate responses and reflection on informants’ surroundings by ‘being there’ in Söder. In the case of Bengt and Mira, this meant passing the locations that are part of their daily experience, which have memories and values attached to them. With Amory, this meant learning how he processed a new environment as it happened.

We should, as Labaree encourages, “actively question familiarity”, as it tends towards overlooking details that are considered ordinary to the familiarised eye (Labaree, 2002, p. 108). In addition to the nine interviews performed with current residents or employees in Helsingborg, two of them being go-alongs during which I followed the informants around places chosen by them, a third walk-along was done with an acquaintance whom I knew had never been to Helsingborg. As my time in the area, and the intensity of my focus on data, made me less sensitive to immediate impressions, the goal of this was to have an idea of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ discourses – Amory as a total ‘outsider’ without any attachment to the city, Bengt and Mira being ‘insiders’ to the extent they were residents living in Söder, and myself shifting back and forth within this continuum (as I was spending considerable time in the area for my research, but was not a participant in community activities or social groups) – about the space, and to see what came forth through these differing perspectives. By not having a history in the area – as Bengt and Mira did – or a vested interest as a researcher – as did I – the lack of connection to the city on Amory’s part could allow a ‘first impression’ based only upon ‘outside’ identity or category discourses, to see how a space can influence someone without the specific historical or cultural associations which a city resident, used to hearing such discourses, may have.

#### 4.3.3 *Direct observation*

While interviews allow us to gain a view of the “constructed realities that are wrapped up in the jargon of the respondent”, in observation we gain a “view of the experience on which the

respondent's language has constructed those realities" (Tjora, 2006, p. 430). The task of observation provides a look at the everyday interactions at play in such a constructed world. But whereas a discourse can be analysed through study of an individual's – or group's – statements, the social structure in which discourse is experienced and enacted "may not be studied directly but only observed in its effects on human actors" (Davies, 2008, p. 22), the social structuring of relationships and interaction being reflected in the places that we live (O'Toole & Were, 2008, p. 619). But how does lived experience become rendered into field-notes and analysed? To focus the study, observations were centred around the 13 squares and 2 parks of the city's urban centre (Söder and Centrum) during various times of day, days of the week, and weather conditions, taking note of users, uses, design and the objects found in these spaces. The logic with this was based upon such spaces as being open public spaces with easy visibility and access to transportation – spaces where people can gather or where they are likely to pass through on the way to other spaces, which also have concentrations of resources in and around them. By being as thorough as possible about the sensory qualities and resources existing in these spaces – as well as their uses and users – the idea was to see how different spaces are in relation to each other.

#### *4.3.4 Mapping: social space as text*

As a means of visually representing resource presences and disparities, cultural mapping provided a further layer to the observational aspect of the research:

*Cultural resources are here understood in a pragmatic way and include not only the arts and heritage of a place, but also local traditions, dialects, festivals and rituals; the diversity and quality of leisure; cultural, drinking and eating and entertainment facilities; the cultures of youth, ethnic minorities and communities of interest; and the repertoire of local products and skills in the crafts, manufacturing and service sectors (Ghilardi, 2001, p. 6).*

By creating such maps for the relevant development locations, planners stand to gain a greater awareness about the cultural resource-related challenges and opportunities of the H+ area, and as such, develop projects and spaces which encourage individuals to come together. Seeing that many locations could be categorised according to multiple purposes and uses, multiple maps were created. For instance, religious centres in Helsingborg were often found to provide secular activities as well – flea markets, craft groups and musical events, for

example. Furthermore, resources were grouped according to themes by which contrasts could be shown – for example, placing schools, playgrounds and youth centres on a single map to demonstrate disparities between the concentration of youth in an area and community spaces relevant to them. Each community was mapped *à pied*, accounting for the presence of businesses, organisations and outdoor structures (such as playgrounds, benches and outdoor markets). Further mapping was performed via the internet to account for organisations in the area which lacked ‘street presence’. Determining what was extant or absent in the communities assisted greatly in determining a community’s needs, as visualisation of resource gaps and barriers address “issues of access, equity, participation...and quality of life” (ibid., p.7). To this end, mapping was also done to reflect movement patterns between areas, as “city boundary lines...a central ingredient in people’s lives”, determine “which public resources are ours and which are theirs” (Frug, 1999, p. 115).

#### *4.4 Problematizing methods*

Determining the relevance of data, and the structuring and presentation of that data for analysis, bring up, as Davies (2008) refers to it, the “question of which standpoint to privilege” (p. 71), inevitably precluding certain possibilities of interpretation in order to create a text that is representative of and relevant to the study at hand. As “all social groups contain a variety of perspectives...the question of for whom one is advocating is sometimes problematic” (ibid, p. 38). How then can fieldwork methods address the problematic of representation? As Sunderland and Denny (2007) remind us, talk pre-supposes and performs, reflecting and creating a reality simultaneously (p. 178), and behavioural notations help us to explore the constructed reality thus reflected. “We can know [a] social reality because we are, or can become through our actions, a part of it” (Davies, 2008, p. 254). However, “studies of others must also be studies of ourselves in our relationships with those others” (ibid, p. 13). The more we engage with those observed, not just through the use of fieldwork methods to extract data, but through the egalitarian dialogue implied by making findings available to community critique, and through actively questioning and problematising our relationship to the community, can we become both more a part of the community and more reflexive of our role therein, thus becoming better equipped to reflect upon the nature, dynamics and needs of the community (cf. Ellis, 2007).

As such, my fieldnotes “are necessarily partial and reflect [my own] perceptions” (Davies, 2008, p. 256), encoded with my own “conscience, understandings and interpretations” (Tjora, 2006, p. 433). At best, I can describe what I perceive before me, and endeavour to frame it within the context of my understanding, but as “everyday experience transcends the here and now, as people weave previous knowledge and biography into immediate situated action” (Kusenbach, 2003, p. 478), I strive to continuously problematise such knowledge in light of informant feed-back and further observation. To this extent, the phenomenological, observational work is well complemented by the discursive aspects of interviewing and sharing observations with participants, in order to understanding the relations between practices and the discourses behind them.

## ***5: Two cities: segregated infrastructure in Centrum & Söder***

### *5.1 Deciphering discourses of self-segregation*

My first day of fieldwork consisted of visiting Söder for the first time, to develop my own impressions by being there, and to understand both how I myself ‘lived’ the area spatially and the materiality which I perceived most readily. I found that my own background had a profound impact on how I experienced and thought about Söder, as both my background and perception were in stark contrast to those of city planners with whom I spoke. In preliminary interviews, H+ planners insisted that the segregation of Söder was a key barrier to overcome in the development process. But what did this mean? I could not get a direct answer to this question, rather a general insistence that Söder was segregated from the city – and that this was a question of its division by the railway (to be placed underground), as well as social and economic factors. Were they hesitant to speak judgementally? Or not clear on just how to describe the segregation occurring? For the purpose of my work, it became important to define the nature of Söder’s segregation, as it was only through defining ‘the problem’ that the issue of appropriate interventions could be addressed.

After my first exploratory visit to Söder, I doubted the preoccupation with segregation that the city planners seemed to have. The area appeared full of people from all corners of the world, of different ages and levels of employment. As such, I was of the opinion that the city planners were being too eager to ‘do good’ and help out people they perceived to be in need. As it is all too easy to become paternalistic in top-down planning processes, I was sobered by Davies (2008) reminder that “[we] must give up attempts to find or create populations that are imagined to be circumscribed and isolated from other social forces” (Davies, 2008, p. 40). Thus, I was hesitant to consider Söder as a troubled city district. What planners saw as a marginalised, segregated community, upon my observations appeared as a thriving, inclusive community. People sat outside along the main shopping street at various cafés, pubs and restaurants. Buses passed every few minutes, their passengers criss-crossing Gustav Adolfs torg, where a produce market was filled with shoppers. Children ran after pigeons. Groups of men sat and chatted along the embankment surrounding the church. The activity of the area stood out to me, because I came to expect, in my briefings on the area, that social activity was lacking in the community.

For my part, being in Söder was the closest I had felt to being ‘home’ anywhere that I had been in Sweden because it was the least “Western European” space in which I had been

at that point. The reason for this was that, despite being of Western European descent, I grew up in a community in California where ‘white’, or ‘European’ people (as I would likely be classified due to my fair skin, blond hair and green eyes), were visibly the minority. The majority of my friends were either born elsewhere, or their parents were. Many had either immigrated from Mexico or were refugees from the Vietnam war. My parents were the only among my social group who spoke English as their mother tongue. In many ways, I was more acclimatised to hearing foreign languages, eating foreign foods and celebrating the holidays and festivals of foreign cultures than I was to the dominant, English-speaking, Christian, Western European culture with which my family and the majority of Americans identified. For me, the largest difference between Söder and my community back home was that Islamic culture and people from Middle Eastern and Balkan countries were more visible there than Latin American and Asian people, though I was familiar with the cultures in these regions, so I still found it familiar.

I soon realised that this feeling of familiarity made me something of an exception. Although the population was multi-cultural (as observable through the various languages spoken and used on signs and advertisements, as well as the culturally specific clothing of different groups), this did not necessarily mean that Söder was inclusive to many ‘native’ Swedes. As subsequent discussions with contacts at both the H+ offices and the City Planning Administration revealed, there was a sort of segregation occurring. One of the many female planners with the project related how friends living in the the north of the city – middle-class ‘ethnic’ Swedish mothers of similar age (early 30s) – felt uncomfortable in Söder, and refused to go there for fear of their safety – as did friends of Mira, an informant who herself lived in Söder. Furthermore, many planners working with the area, as far as I surmised from our conversations, did not spend much time ‘out in the field’, perhaps visiting the open-air market in Söder’s main square, Gustav Adolfs torg, once or twice over a year’s time. Unlike me, most, if not all, of those who were fearful of the area had not grown up in the sort of multi-cultural environment, like Söder, from which I drew my life experience. These points suggested it was worth questioning the directionality and causes of segregation. Perhaps it was not a matter of insularity – residents remaining in Söder – but the aversion of others to the area which created the segregation. While a diverse neighbourhood from the perspective of the national origins of its residents, it did not seem to be diverse when approached from the perspective of people as either immigrants or ‘ethnic’ Swedes.

This apparent divergence in my perspective and that of city planners only reinforced the need to “[let] one’s experiences in the field guide a study’s focus” (Wolfinger, 2002, p. 87), which in this case resulted in a reformulation in how I viewed the dynamics of the city and the potential of Söder to serve as an opportunity for city planning, and not a challenge. Instead of asking “Why is this area segregated from the rest of the city?”, the important question in my research became, “How, and why, have people in other areas segregated themselves from Söder?”

### *5.2 Safety, boredom and belonging*

Any number of factors can influence – or govern – one’s decision to remain in their neighbourhood or to choose certain locations for shopping, social gatherings and other activities – logistic concerns, prices, and the ‘atmosphere’ or identity of a place as ‘the place to be’, for example. As was suggested and upheld in discussions with planners, perceived questions of safety and experience of discomfort were relevant factors in some peoples aversion to Söder. As a counterpoint to this, I spoke with Bengt and Mira – who, as residents of Söder, could provide an ‘insider’s perspective’ of what daily life was like in the space, and how realistic concerns of safety actually were. They related that they felt safer there in the middle of the night than anywhere else in Helsingborg because there were always people about. This assertion was in line with Jane Jacobs argument in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), wherein she states that “there must be eyes on the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street” to provide self-policing which reinforces the sense of security in a neighbourhood (p. 35). Testing this assertion, I wandered the city centre on multiple evenings. These observations upheld that due to the pizzerias, falafel shops, two bars and heavy bus traffic through the square, there is a regular stream of movement which is absent in the city centre after its shops and offices close. The only exceptions to this were Södra Kyrkogatan and Norra Kyrkogatan, which connect Knutpunkten to Mariatorget, where the city’s main concentration of bars and nightclubs are found).

In contradistinction to the friends of my city planning informants, Bengt and Mira stated that they found no reason to travel north beyond Centrum, as there was “nothing but houses... nowhere to go” (Interview with Bengt & Mira 13/05/2010). Centrum, however, was a common ground for all my informants, the only place where everyone had a reason to go –

the only place none seemed to avoid – for its variety of shops, cafés and scenic places to walk. As the city centre, commercial activity all of types is more densely clustered in Centrum and Söder – most visibly so in Centrum, where nearly every street, rather than just two of them (Södergatan and Carl Krooks gata) – is lined with clothing boutiques, restaurants, specialty stores and other businesses.

This line of questioning suggested that Centrum met both the security needs and interest needs of those with whom I spoke. As interest was concerned, it became clear that variety was an important aspect in determining its presence. However, to myself it seemed that Söder provided a variety of options for people as well. Also, I could not determine what exactly might make Centrum a more ‘safe’ feeling space as opposed to Söder, especially considering that Centrum had significantly less people moving around after all the shops closed at 6pm. As such, I undertook to compare Centrum and Söder in more detail, looking at the differences between the areas through their streets – what was along them and how movement occurred – and squares – their design, use and context – as well as general trends that could be observed which might connect or differentiate the public spaces of the two districts. With this, the hope was that a more precise qualification of the plan-able factors of space as ‘conceived’, which govern use and aversion, in Söder and Centrum could be determined.

### *5.3 Pedestrianisation: movement patterns and accommodating activity*

Centrum stands out in the city due to its network of pedestrianised streets. With the exception of Järnvägsgatan and Storgatan, the primary routes of pedestrian traffic in Centrum are either fully or partially pedestrianised. Bruksgatan and Kullagatan are entirely pedestrian streets, whereas Storgatan, the most active part of the street, around Mariatorget, is a space where the road and sidewalk are not distinguished from each other. Instead, they are the same level, and bikes and people are more likely to be found in the middle of the street than automobiles. Järnvägsgatan provides a wide, tree-lined sidewalk as well as cycling paths



Figure 6: Kullagatan (left), the busiest shopping street in Helsingborg, is also the primary street for pedestrian movement in Centrum, connecting to a network of other pedestrian roads in the area. Photos: Paul Sherfey

separated from the street level, accommodating heavy traffic of both walkers and cyclists. Also, the squares and pedestrian streets of the area are marked by outdoor seating at the many restaurants and cafés in the area.

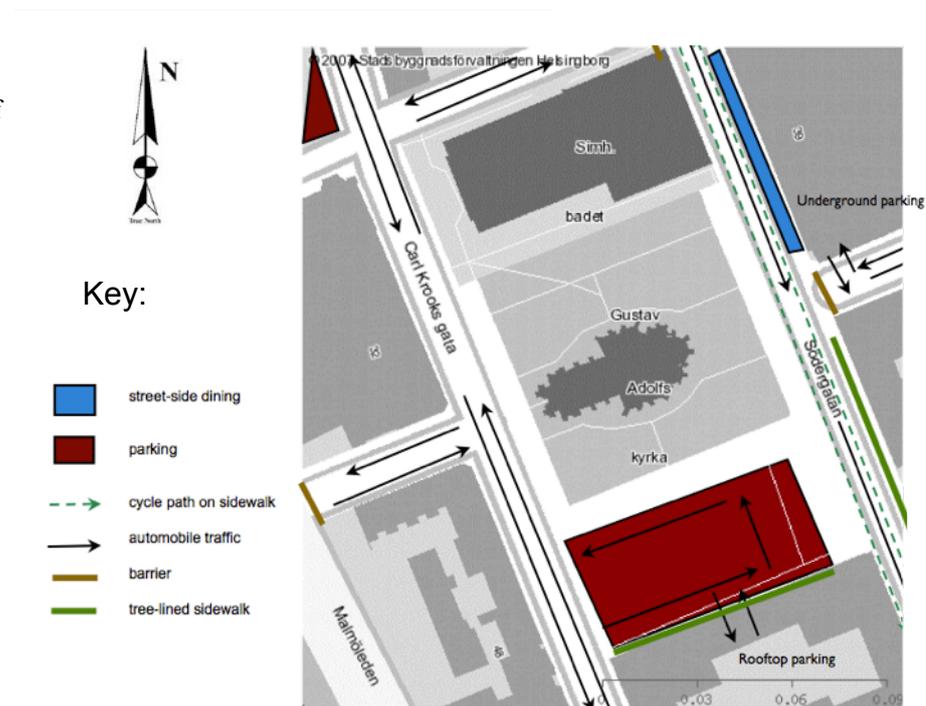
In Söder, primary pedestrian movement is along Södergatan and through Mäster Palms plats and Stadsparken, both to and from Centrum, during both day and evening hours. Carl Krooks gata and Furutorpsgatan, the other primary roads in the district have little pedestrian movement except around the bus stops along these street. The differences between Södergatan, with its predominately non-vehicular traffic, and Carl Krooks gata and Furutorpsgatan are significant. Södergatan is a one-way road, going only southward, and from Mäster Palms plats traffic is limited to buses. With a single lane of traffic, ample room is provided for sidewalks, benches, trees and bikes lanes along the length of the street, on both sides. Outdoor café and bar seating is found at about a dozen locations along the length of Södergatan between Mäster Palms plats and Gustav Adolfs torg. While Carl Krooks gata has a number of eateries, sidewalk space is barely enough for two people to walk side-by-side, much less accommodate benches, outdoor seating, trees, or separate cycle paths. Despite providing for two way traffic, the street is not used heavily by cars either, except to access the three parking lots and two parking structures which lie along its length. There are also significant portions of the street which are ‘dead spaces’ for activity – a long brick wall along the side of Söderpunkten, the parking lots mentioned above, as well as the western wall of the swim-hall.

Figure 7:  
The East and West sides of Gustav Adolfs torg (right) show stark contrast in how two of the primary streets of Söder are designed for use. While Södergatan (next page, left) accomodates a variety of uses along the street, Carl Krooks gata (next page, right) privileges car traffic over other potential uses.

Map: Helsingborg City Planning Dept.

Map Data: Paul Sherfey and Samantha Hyler

Photos: Paul Sherfey





As infrastructure is concerned, there is a sharp difference in terms of how Söder and Centrum are enabled for use – Centrum is designed for walking and cycling, with limited access for cars except along Järnvägsgatan, which itself functions as the primary arterial road through the city centre. Söder however, privileges automotive traffic, and lacks any pedestrian-only streets – despite noting rather light car traffic in the neighbourhood throughout my time in the field. It is only along the southern boundary roads of the area – Furutorpsgatan and Mälmoleden – that cars are regularly present, and not pedestrians – quite the opposite of the rest of the community.

Generally, most pedestrian traffic throughout Centrum and Söder, both day and night, occurs on a North-South axis. East-West movement tends to be minimal, most paths and roads on this axis being short, serving as connections between the larger, arterial roads. Also, most shops, offices and services are to be found along North-South roads, while housing is primarily on the East-West ones. What is noteworthy is that the most active routes of pedestrian traffic are not necessarily pedestrian-only streets, but rather those where rows of trees line the sidewalk.

There are many equidistant ways to travel between locations because of the grid-like pattern of streets in the city centre, but those most often chosen by pedestrians are the arterial roads. As the largest and busiest roads through Söder and Centrum, walking along roads such as Södergatan and Järnvägsgatan requires a significant amount of manoeuvring around fellow pedestrians and cyclists because of the number of people travelling the same route. Movement along lesser streets and alleyways is often sparse – with the exception of Kullagatan, the primary (and fully pedestrianised) shopping street in Centrum, although it becomes completely empty around 6pm due to the early closing times of its boutiques, and the lack of dining facilities along the street. Unlike Kullagatan, the major routes through the

city centre remain active for several hours into the evening, though to a lesser degree than during the daytime. Also, despite a large number of restaurants and shops throughout Centrum, the presence of people along most of the streets other than Kullagatan and Järnvägsgatan is sparse by comparison – half a dozen people passing every five minutes, as opposed to a steady stream of movement.

While much of this movement mentioned is that of students (as gymnasia are located both in Söder and directly to the East of Centrum), there are also many business people – as evidenced by their suits and briefcases – tourists and others passing through for any number of purposes. Although Knutpunkten and Gustav Adolfs torg are the two primary bus transit centres in the city, only one or two bus stops apart depending upon the line taken, and most every bus line stops at both locations, most of the passengers observed are coming from beyond Söder towards Knutpunkten. If boarding at Gustav Adolfs torg, they are most often riding north, beyond Knutpunkten, or they are elderly residents making a quick connection between Söder and Centrum.

Movement patterns appear to have a visible correlation to both practical concerns such as sufficient walking space and resources (places to sit, eat or shop), as well as aesthetic ones; trees, people, and other things to stimulate the senses seem to influence the choices made by pedestrians within the centre. Structure and resources along streets being similar, pedestrians are choosing landscaped, crowded streets over unadorned, calmer ones. The privileging of automobile traffic, itself sparse on all but Järnvägsgatan, minimises the space for pedestrian attraction to occur.

#### *5.4 How does one 'use' a square?*

Considering the pedestrian-friendly nature of Centrum versus automobile-friendly Söder, it is not surprising that the squares of each district have differing atmospheres as well. Much like Gehl discusses, the more active spaces in each district share the presence of pedestrian activities and outdoor dining opportunities (Neal, 2010, p. 207). However, the limited space given over to such activity in Söder plays a role in foreclosing the level of activity visible in Centrum. At this point, it is worthwhile to compare some of the primary public squares in the two districts. In so doing, we begin to see just how different the possibilities are.



Figure 8: Mariatorget is one of the more popular dining and drinking destinations in the city, accessible only by foot or bicycle. With a church at its centre, the square is surrounded by restaurants, cafés and pubs whose seats are regularly full, both indoors and on the square itself (top). The lawn of the churchyard also provides a tranquil and attractive setting for lunch breaks (centre). A small space, it is packed with activity around the periphery (bottom).

Photos: Paul Sherfey  
 Map: City Planning Department, Helsingborg  
 Map Data: Paul Sherfey and Samantha Hyler



Mariatorget



#### 5.4.1 Mariatorget and Konsul Olssons plats

With a centuries-old church at its centre, Mariatorget (Maria Square) is a historical focal point for the city centre. Having a single road on its eastern edge, the square is also invites walking, as the junction point of three pedestrian streets which have their terminus at the square – as well as a stairway leading up the hill to the east. It is a natural intersection which pedestrians in Centrum are likely to pass, whether meandering or commuting. Mariatorget is also a space for social life, dining and people watching – surrounded by restaurants, cafés and bars whose seating overflows from the buildings into the square. Even the lawn of the church is often used for picnics on the grass or groups of people eating lunch on the benches. It is a calm square – away from traffic one can hear the chirping of birds over conversations – and one which, due to the placement of buildings and distance from the harbour, is spared from the waterfront city’s rather windy weather.

Konsul Olssons plats, though without a large church as a historic focal point, finds similar use to Mariatorget. The square, located along the city’s shopping high street, Kullagatan, is only accessible on foot, and has several cafés and restaurants around it, which also furnish outdoor seating along the edges of the square. Within the square itself though, only half of the space is used – by a sausage and ice cream kiosk and its seating area. The other half of the square, bordered by a low boundary wall, is little used except by local workers who stand there for their smoking breaks – under a large wind shelter located in the southwest corner of the square, where Konsul Olssons plats is more exposed to strong wind gusts from the harbour.

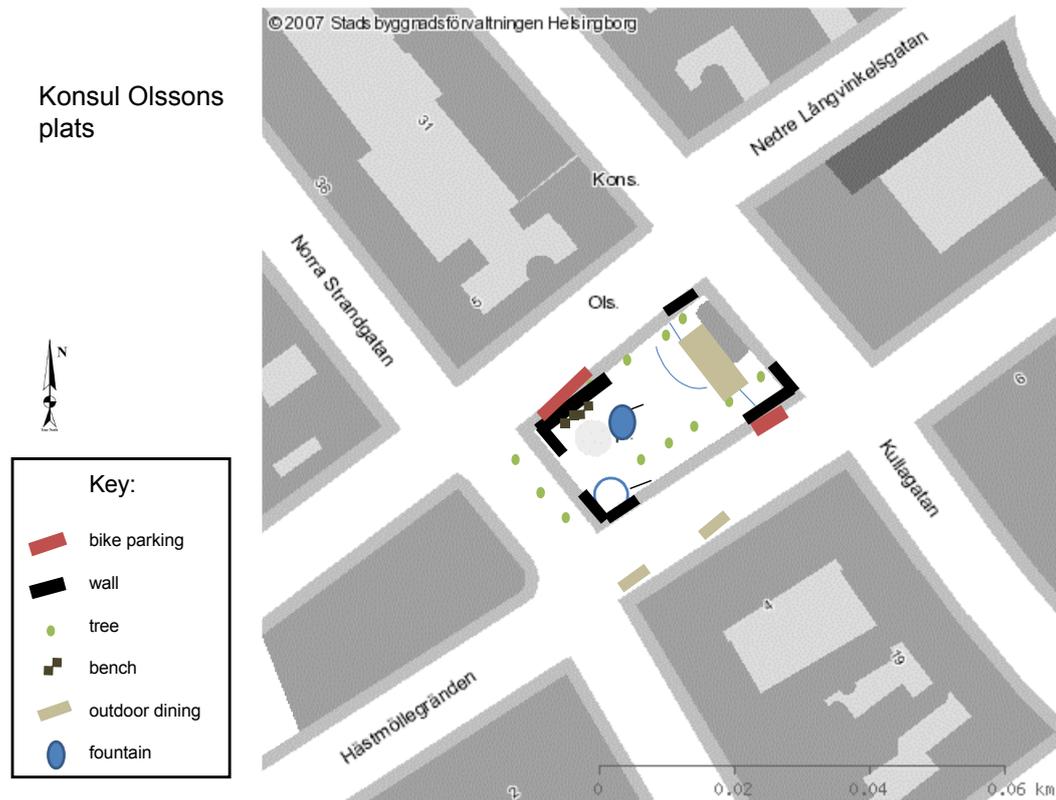
Figure 9: Like Mariatorget, Konsul Olssons plats is a place for dining, though to a lesser degree. Located along the busy shopping street Kullagatan, much of the space is left open, allowing shoppers to criss-cross the square on their way to other nearby streets (see map, next page).

Photo: Paul Sherfey

Map: Helsingborg City Planning Dept.

Map Data: Paul Sherfey and Samantha Hyler





#### 5.4.2 Gustav Adolfs torg & Mäster Palms plats

As the central square of Söder, and an important bus transit point for the city – second only to Knutpunkten – Gustav Adolfs torg has plenty of pedestrian traffic passing through. It is bound on both its eastern and western edges by roadways – a one-way bus lane on Södergatan, and two-way traffic (both bus and private vehicle) on Carl Krooks gata. Much of the pedestrian movement is between the bus stops on either side, and the outdoor market, grocery stores and apartments in the area. Given that Södergatan and Carl Krooks gata are designed for differing traffic use, it is not surprising that the possibilities available along each differ as well. The single lane of Södergatan – and its use only for buses and delivery vehicles – means that there is ample space for outdoor seating at the restaurants, bars and cafés along the road, as well as bike lanes and a line of trees in addition to walking space. People cross the street constantly at all points, and there is no crosswalk to direct their movement – likely due to the lightness of traffic.

In addition, the outdoor seating here, unlike in other parts of town, is more permanent – present until snowfall becomes too heavy. As several of the businesses have built awnings for their seating areas, people are out even in rather cold and rainy weather. Carl Krooks gata

also has restaurants and bars facing the square, but due to the rather narrow sidewalk, no space for outdoor seating is possible. Business tends to be a bit slower at these establishments, and despite rather light automobile traffic, there is little movement across the street – though where it occurs is usually away from designated crosswalks.

Most of the activity around Gustav Adolfs torg is either along Södergatan or at the open-air market alongside the church at the centre of the square. The north and south sides of the square are rather empty of activity by comparison. To the south is a supermarket and several empty storefronts, as well as a parking lot within the square itself. The north side is mostly a brick wall – the side of the local swim-hall, whose entrance is further down along Södergatan – though there is a rather ‘experimental’ playground where parents can occasionally be found chatting as their toddlers run about (from observation however, it seems that lacking typical activities like slides and swings results in reduced use compared to ‘standard’ playgrounds in nearby parks).



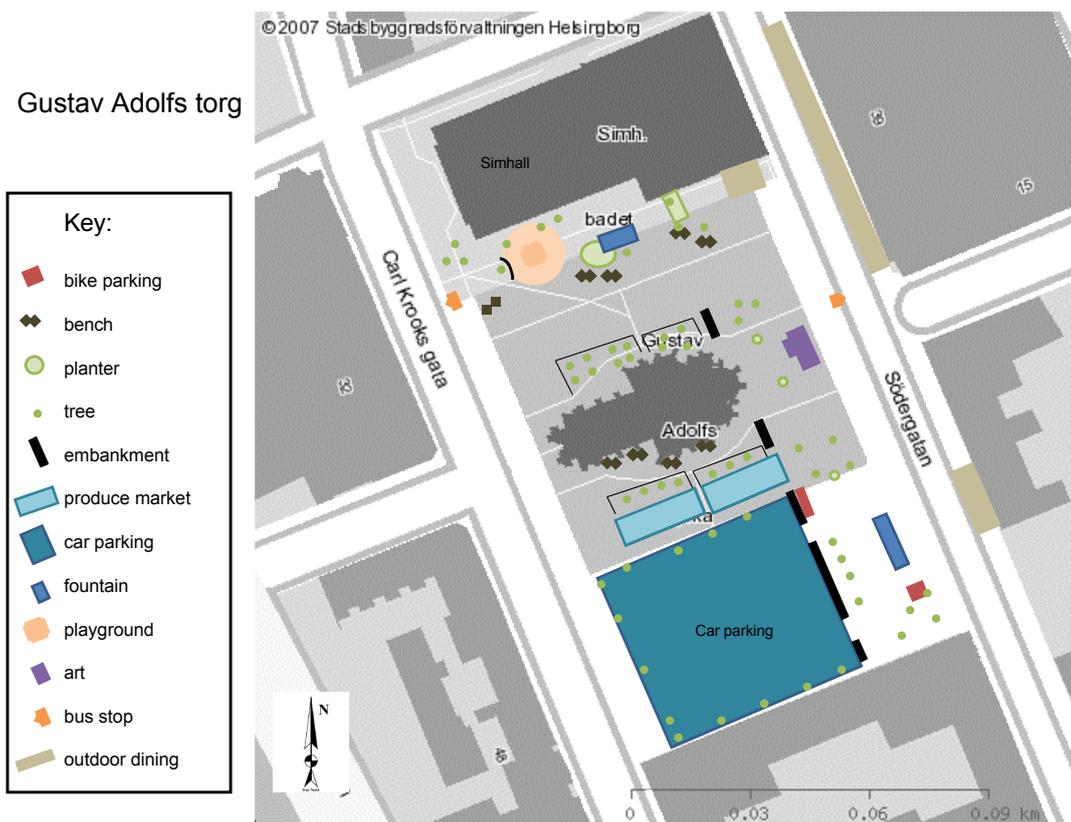


Figure 10:  
 As a rather large public square, the activity around Gustav Adolfs torg is primarily located around two areas: along Södergatan and the outdoor seating of its eateries (previous page, top left), and at the public market next to the church (previous page, top right). The north side remains largely unused except for people connecting to buses or using the playground (previous page, bottom left), while a large parking lot on the south side precludes its use for anything else (previous page, bottom right). Most of the seating available in the square faces the wall of the church or the back of the market stalls, precluding a view of the activity happening in the area (map, this page).

Photos: Paul Sherfey  
 Map: Helsingborg City Planning Dept.  
 Map Data: Paul Sherfey and Samantha Hyler

While the open-air market between the church and parking lot creates more ‘active’ pedestrian activity in the square, the rest of the square provides benches which either face the side of the church or the back of the market stalls, rather than the fountains, plant displays and movement of people along the street. For this reason, it is not surprising that there are always a number of men who sit together on the concrete barrier at the back of the church, from where they are provided a direct view of Södergatan – the main corridor of activity – while the benches remain largely unused. The square is windy because of its size and openness, but this also means that, despite being surrounded by five- or six-storey buildings, that sunlight reaches the square instead of covering it in shadows.

Located further north along the same two streets, Mäster Palms plats is significantly smaller, so that the height of surrounding buildings creates a shadow over most of the square.

The only benches that tend to be used are those along the streets, where the sun's light and warmth reaches unimpeded by shadows. The square is affected more significantly by the wind, its western edge without any building to impede the winds blowing in from the Öresund. The centre of the square is empty – only a space for passing through to other points. A bar on the north side provides outdoor seating during the summer only, while on the southern end there is only the wall of the shopping galleria which faces onto the square. Although being heavily trafficked, there are not the same sort of resources as found in GA torg, Mariatorget or Konsul Olssons plats which enable 'dwelling' in the location. That is to say, there is nothing 'happening' within the square itself – no specific attraction or activity, and only a single bar on one side which invites sustained presence. The square exists as a space between buildings, the primary activity being that of 'passing through'.

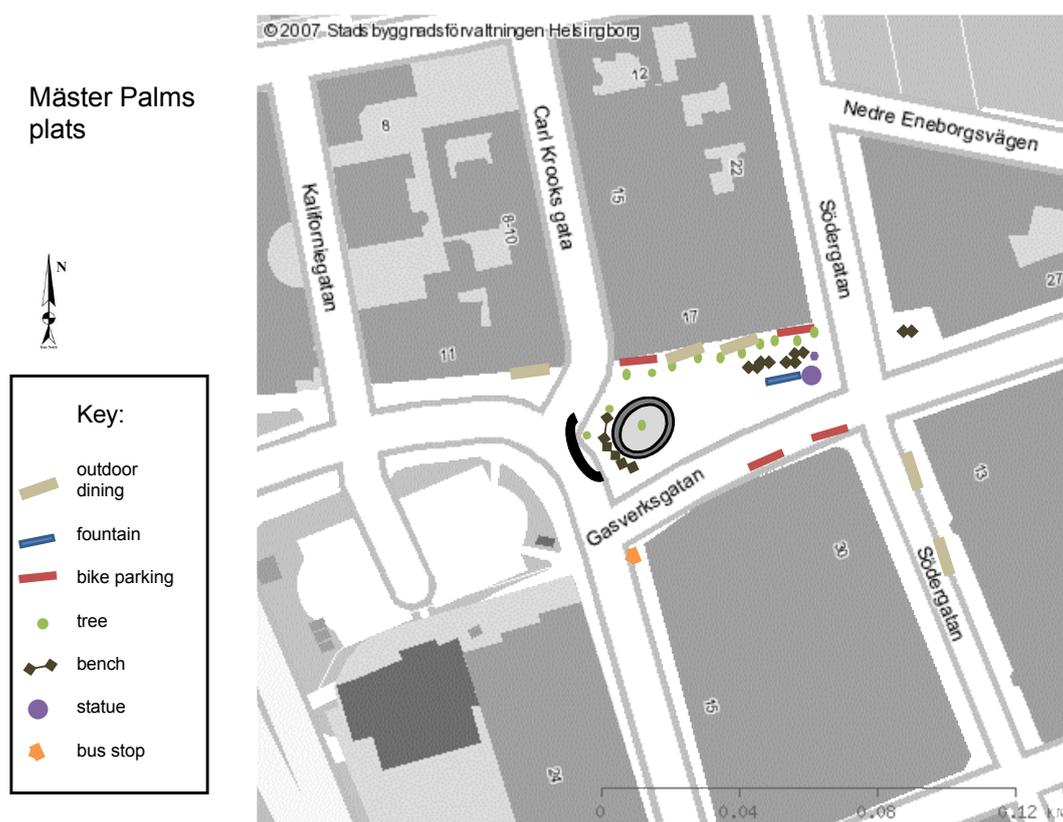


Figure 11: Mäster Palms plats, the other square in Söder, has considerably less stationary activity than Gustav Adolfs torg (map, above). A bar on the north side provides some outdoor seating, but due to the wind exposure people do not sit for long periods of time, functioning primarily as a space to pass through and connect between Södergatan and the other roads in the area (next page).

Map: Helsingborg City Planning Dept.

Map Data: Paul Sherfey and Samantha Hyler.

Photos: Paul Sherfey



### 5.4.3 Trends

Comparing the four squares above, it is not necessarily the degree of pedestrianisation which provides differences in activity in each, but factors such as their sensory attraction (providing possibilities to watch street activity or enjoy the weather) and the presence of eateries with outdoor seating – with the prerequisites that sufficient space exists, and that such businesses have developed therein. The role of suitable space is evident in Gustav Adolfs torg, where comparison of the two streets bordering the square shows similar economic activity but differing infrastructure. Overall, this role manifests in the increased activity where more space is utilised for dining or recreation: Mariatorget and Gustav Adolfs torg with more, Konsul Olssons plats and Mäster Palms plats having markedly less.

But what does this activity have to do with segregation? These public spaces are spaces of visibility, where the make-up of a community – in all its diversity, or lack thereof – has the greatest possibility of exposure. The more that they can attract the community to *use* them, the more the community's diversity becomes visible, and exposure to diversity becomes naturalised. On this point, it is important to consider who exactly is attracted to these locations, and why they are attracted to them. The level of commercial activity – both of dining and retail options – in Söder and Centrum is greater than in other, more residential parts of Helsingborg, but how does it differ between the two districts? How might this difference govern the 'types' of people who find each a suitable destination? This is a question of considering 'conduits of sociality' (to again refer to Latham's phrase), or the products and locations which bring people together, into contact – or at least benign, tolerable exposure with one another – in Helsingborg.

## 6 Söder as foreign territory

### 6.1 Söder and Centrum: comparing 'conduits of sociality'

Not unlike Latham's discussion of the divergence between residential and commercial gentrification, my conversations with Bengt and Mira upheld that the social capital of an area as a living space did not necessarily correlate to its social capital as a space for socialisation. Despite an abundance of eateries in walking distance of their apartment, both would sooner choose locations in Centrum for dining. From this insight, it seemed useful to investigate the differences in dining, drinking and *fika*<sup>6</sup> locations between Centrum and Söder, in order to see what opportunities existed for people to come together in Söder, and why they might be less attractive even to local residents. As this process made clear, Söder's offerings are a stark contrast to those in Centrum. Whereas in Söder the shops are primarily independent grocers, fast-food (kebab, pizza, noodle boxes and falafel) and low-price barbers, Centrum is filled with clothing boutiques, day spas, specialty shops, restaurants and cafés. As my informants made apparent, Söder is a space for the everyday – "a giant food-hall" as Mira remarked – for grocery shopping and a quick kebab or burger, while Centrum is for the special occasion – full of spaces to relax and see people. Aside from some of the imported groceries available at the supermarkets – which are uniquely found at these grocers – other staple foods, and the salons, fast-food and clothing chains which dominate the streetscape can be found in Centrum (amongst a greater variety of choices) or other parts of Helsingborg. Thus if one is not interested in buying particular imported products – or after the lower prices of the outdoor market – they are not as likely to have a particular need to come to Söder. And even if one preferred Söder for everyday living, it didn't mean dining preferences were in line with residential ones.

However, there are notable exceptions, such as Tasty House and Pistachia – the latter evolving from the former to replace it during the period of my study. Both are purveyors of Lebanese-style pastries such as baklava and semolina cakes, as well as candy, coffee drinks, dried fruits, nuts and ice cream – the current incarnation also serves sandwiches. First as Tasty House, and now as Pistachia, this business model has expanded to multiple locations

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<sup>6</sup> A Swedish term whose closest approximation in English would be coffee break, *fika* is an important social institution in Sweden, and can vary from being a quick break at work or a coffee-shop date to being a gathering of a group of friends, though coffee, cake and conversation are the norm in any case – whether at a café, office, home or elsewhere. Not surprisingly, cafés and bakeries serve an important social function in relation to *fika* – providing both the space and products requisite for such an occasion.

within Skåne, being at once cafés and candy shops, selling familiar and foreign fare, and attracting diverse clientele. While unique among other café or candy chains because of its combination of offerings and the specialty pastries it serves, what differentiates Tasty House/Pistachia most from other places in Söder is the investment in the design of the space, its larger shop size, and that it is one of the few places where young girls, of both Swedish and foreign descent – and not middle-aged men of Middle Eastern descent – are the ‘face’ of the business (that is, the employees whom are actually seen). While the products and novelty of the enterprise draw people in, the staff and setting are potentially somewhat more familiar than the other cafés, restaurants and other businesses where men are often talking loudly to each other in Arabic, Kurdish, Dari, Turkish, Bosnian or Serbian while watching satellite programming from their home country between serving customers. At Pistachia, only Swedish is heard behind the counter, and popular Swedish and English-language music is playing through the sound system. These are perhaps small details, but can make a significant difference in how accessible, familiar or comfortable a person finds the space.



Figure 12: Pistachia is an exceptional space in Söder – offering a diversity of snacks, both familiar and foreign, to a diverse clientele (above). In contrast to the more modest spaces of the area, the investment in design seems to have benefited the company, as their large seating area is full day and night, in contrast to many of the other cafés in Söder. Photos: Paul Sherfey

## 6.2 Feeling foreign through shopping

### 6.2.1 Being ‘out-of-place’

As accessibility and familiarity seemed so important to the development of a feeling of comfort in an area, I wanted to understand how comfort, or discomfort, was experienced by someone on ‘the outside’ of local discourses. To see how Söder appeared to an outsider with

no knowledge of the area, I enlisted the services of an acquaintance, here referred to as Amory, whom had never been to Helsingborg. The intent with this was that his impressions of the area would not be influenced by any knowledge of it, but only by the discourses which colour how he came to view certain building, social and other practices. Following his lead, our walk took us from the train station into Söder before venturing north through the city centre and the northern harbour. Little was said as we passed the city park and city library. However, upon reaching Gustav Adolfs torg and taking a moment to take in the area around the square, Amory stated flatly that “it seems very working class”.

Rather than ask how he defined working class, I asked him what made it look working class to him. He mentioned how shops displayed, in their windows and on the street, rather ‘everyday’ items – laundry detergent, juices and such – instead of specialty products (as one would see in the boutiques, delicatessens and chocolatiers of Centrum). Of course, this was because the stores around the square, and beyond it, largely sold everyday items, and not ‘high-end’, specialty products as did shops in Centrum. He mentioned how it was interesting how rather than fancy and artistic displays in windows, the emphasis was instead on practical, everyday items – basic needs, which as he expressed after visiting Centrum was quite the opposite, which gave the area its particular character, which for his part he expressed as working class. What’s important here is not how it is defined – i.e. as working class – but the qualities (basic, bare, practical) that, under this term, Amory pointed out as defining, or representing, the area to him. If others saw Söder this way, as a place full of basic necessities, it seemed there would be little inducement to venture there if one had all the basics one needed near one’s home. As I observed during my research, people travelled from Planteringen and Närlunda to shop in Söder because, with the exception of one small grocer in the former, it was the closest area with basic goods – a 10 to 15 minute walk from either neighbourhood.





Figure 13: Street and windows displays. While the stores of Söder focus on everyday and novelty items (previous page), the stores of Centrum focus upon designer and specialty products (left).

Photos: Paul Sherfey

Before travelling onward, we explored two of the three supermarkets at Gustav Adolfs torg – Alfo Gross and Özen Allfrukt. The third was an ICA market and thus had a standard assortment of products which would not differ from any other ICA. The other two however, were local stores with rather different offerings, the former a market with a primary focus on products from Lebanon and the Balkans with a kebab restaurant connected to it, while Özen was notable for its large assortment of Turkish products and fresh produce, as well as carrying much of the standard Swedish products one would find at an ICA market, but for notably lower prices. Through our shopping excursion, I came to discover an interesting perspective on what it means to feel one doesn't belong. As he told me:

*“it can be overwhelming to walk into so many shops with new and different foods... and you have absolutely no idea what to do with any of it...it's a bit intimidating. There's nothing wrong with it...it's great...but none of it exists in your knowledge of the world...you don't know what to do with it” (Go-along with Amory 10/05/2010).*

To Amory, the concentration of the unfamiliar was not viewed as something negative – on the contrary – but his words were a reminder that it is important to appreciate how stressful it can be to expose oneself to a new environment. Foreign-ness is not necessarily a danger *per se*, but a discomfort – a threat in the sense that it throws one from his or her comfort zone.

“When we can no longer trust or manage the macrocosm in which we locate ourselves, we are thrown” (Jackson, 2005, p.18). While new experiences increase our capacity to cope with change and difference, too much of the unknown can overwhelm (cf. Frug, 1999).

Considering that it is in Söder – more than any other district of the city – that otherness, in the form of foreign cultures, are most visible – not just in physical presence, but also through

food and other products – it is not surprising then that the area can be intimidating for someone otherwise unexposed to much foreign-ness of this nature.

### 6.2.2 *Conspicuous consumers: behaving 'out-of-place'*

Taking this line of intimidation further, this sort of discomfort appeared corroborated by observations of product selection, and general behavioural trends I observed within the three grocery stores around Gustav Adolfs torg. ICA Oj! had no trouble to attract 'ethnic Swedes' – ICA being perhaps the most familiar supermarket chain in the country. By contrast, few 'foreign' people were observed to shop there. Customers took their time wandering the store, buying large amounts of groceries. If I so much as stood in the same aisle as someone, they would glance from the corner of their eye and move onward in the opposite direction. In Özen Allfrukt the same individuals constituted half the shoppers at any given time, though they tended to search after select produce and familiar Swedish brand names – both of which could be found in ICA, but which were cheaper here – and moved quickly from place to place, looking around often at the other shoppers. If they happened to catch the eye of myself or a fellow shopper, they quickly moved to another area of the shop. In Alfo Gross the same people were altogether out of place, looking about themselves more frequently, going after staples such as milk, bread and meat – all located around the edges of the shop, rarely venturing into the aisles of imported products in the centre – and went quickly to the cashier. In all locations, shoppers of so-called 'foreign' extraction were less sensitive to the presence of others, focusing on their shopping and not on who might be looking at them. With the exception of ICA, with its predominately fair-skinned clientele and employees, and Özen Allfrukt, with a mixture of fair- and darker-skinned Swedes, languages such as Arabic, Turkish, Serbian, Vietnamese and Farsi were more likely to be heard in the area than Swedish, itself coming into use as a *lingua franca* among the diverse cultures.

By comparison to shops in the nearby Centrum, employees at Özen and Alfo Gross were more chatty with customers and each other. In the cafés and restaurants, the volume of conversations were noticeable higher, and the body language of people more animated. Finally, the employees of the smaller businesses of the area were predominately men of Middle Eastern descent, and the employees of shops were generally more likely to make direct eye contact than individuals observed elsewhere in the city – something which for myself reflected sociality and friendliness, but for a female colleague of mine was perceived

more uncomfortably (due, as she herself reflected, to the male-ness of the space and her culturally-specific familiarity with staring as sexually-charged).

While for some people, such as Mira and Bengt, the sociality I mention above, and the diversity of the area are what make Söder welcoming – “warmer...more out-going...more social” behaviour, it can be perceived otherwise – as a shock, in fact – for those whose lives are otherwise completely removed from exposure to such practices, products and dispositions. For those whose greatest exposure to the ‘otherness’ of foreign cultures is when shopping at a Turkish market or eating at a Chinese restaurant, such intense immersion into a space of foreign “mannerisms, transported practices, and immediately apparent physical differences” can be too much to process (Pred, 2000, p. 43). With differences in *habitus* appearing so strikingly in Söder – where, as Bengt and Mira commented: “It feels like you’re in another country” – segregation or avoidance can easily be engendered through feeling “ignorant, out of place, lost for words and unable to cope...losing one’s ontological security” (Jackson, 2005, p. 23), effects which are unable to be mitigated if opportunities do not exist to bring people of varying backgrounds and interests together.

### *6.3 Segregation and diversity as psycho-social phenomena*

The historic industrial identification of Söder is coupled with other factors which find prominent manifestation in the district – Corbusian apartment blocks, a density of grocers and discount stores, and also those characteristics which may be called ‘foreign’ (languages, clothing, body language, and other markers of one’s being from a land other than Sweden). To reside, work or otherwise pass time in this area is to be in contact with these factors. But to be located elsewhere in Helsingborg is to encounter rather different sensory stimuli. Although first and second-generation immigrants comprise a majority, or at least a sizeable portion, of some districts’ populations (as discussed in Chapter 2), in Söder their visibility is more pronounced due to significant economic presence. Also, there are many neighbourhoods (such as Råå, Ramlösa, Mariastaden, Norr and Ringstorp), where foreign-born citizens have a significantly lesser presence. If people in these neighbourhoods, far from Söder, have no reason to go there and experience its diversity, they are more likely to only live amongst and encounter those who are more similar to themselves, foreclosing exposure to ‘otherness’, thus shaping their relations to it, and discourses about it, as threats from which they must protect themselves through aversion (cf. Arendt, 1958; Frug, 1999, pp. 115-142).

As Richard Sennett's work *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life* argues, the choice to live in a 'purified' – or homogeneous – community stems from a desire to wall off dissonance and the unpredictable, "in the effort to protect oneself from vulnerability", an effort which "paradoxically increases vulnerability to those aspects of life" (as cited in Frug, 1999, p. 120). Thus, mixed communities promote what Sennett calls "ego strength", a capacity to cope with difference, as "they are repeatedly exposed to a variety of cultural and social practices" (ibid., p. 127). This extends much more broadly beyond encountering other people, as being able to cope with the unpredictable – that which makes one vulnerable – is an important skill which, more generally, provides "the experience needed to develop a capacity to deal with problems as they occur" (ibid., p. 120). By this line of reasoning, the goal of social inclusion need not be so idealistic as to aim for harmony among different people, but can aim for the more humble goal of reducing social tension by encouraging exposure to otherness – which may be threatening to those who do not encounter it. In this manner, it is not a matter of acceptance, or embracing, of difference, but becoming acclimatised to it.

## **7 Finding community: structures, options and limitations**

### *7.1 Community facilities and organisations*

Two important ways in which people integrate into a community are via involvement with social groups and the use of shared facilities. Thus, aside from public spaces and economic activity, which can at least bring people into similar space and expose them to each other (depending upon their appeal to different groups), community facilities – such as libraries, community centres, and sporting facilities – can provide possibilities for interaction through the activities and events which they provide. To this extent, the focus upon mapping of cultural resources, as explained in Chapter 4, was to see what facilities existed in Helsingborg, and whom they served, in order to identify opportunities for development in cultural planning.

So far as community facilities are concerned in Söder, the primary choices available are religious institutions, ethnic and cultural organisations (Greek, Balkan, Slovak and similar societies), schools and sports centres (see figure 14, following page). Though each attracts people from elsewhere in the city and surrounding villages, and each offers beneficial resources for those they serve, they tend towards exclusivity, largely reserved for very specific user groups – religious believers, members of a national or ethnic group, sports enthusiasts and students. Nor are many in use as often as they could be – such as Gustav Adolfs Församling (Gustav Adolf's Meeting House), which hosts a flea market, music recitals and café afternoons among other church events and meeting groups, but is only open when these specific events are going on, and only has a small notice-board outside of the building to make one aware of these events. Finally, and perhaps most notably, despite the strong youth presence in the area – due to the presence of Lund University's Campus Helsingborg as well as a high concentration of secondary schools, there is nothing beyond sports and playground facilities that reflects youth culture in the area, except for the youth centre Kalifornia, although it is first and foremost a resource centre for youth to receive work and educational counselling beyond that which they may receive in school.

In my search for community organisations, I became particularly interested in what brought young people together in and around Söder – aside from sports, video games and eateries. I came upon Ahel al-sunnah, a mosque in Miatorp (located several bus stops to the south of Söder), where I met and spoke with several regular visitors and people active in the centre's programmes. I met Sikander, a university student and resident of Söder, whom, as I



Figure 14: Although there are a large number of community organisations –religious, political, and ethno-cultural – there are few spaces which are do not specify an intended users along such lines.

Map: Helsingborg City Planning Dept.  
 Map Data: Paul Sherfey and Samantha Hyler

discovered, chose to travel to this, the farthest mosque from his home (a couple are in walking distance of his residence), because of the greater sense of community that it had by comparison. Speaking with him and fellow student Madani – as well as Mafouz, one of the mosque's elders – over two and a half hours, I discovered that what they valued so much when mentioning the religious fellowship, the youth group, the daycare and the opportunity for non-Arab Muslims to learn Quranic Arabic, was in fact that “so many people from so many different places come...even who live outside of Helsingborg...and with different interpretations of Islam” to perform daily religious observances (Interview with Sikander 25/04/2010). Mafouz, who worked with some of the programmes the mosque offered, pointed out that “you meet so many people” and that part of the feeling of community is the informal social opportunities which arise when one comes and prays (Interview with Mafouz 25/04/2010).

The space was in constant use throughout the two hours in which we sat and talked, people coming and going, praying and striking upon conversations, while children ran about playing. It was a space where families would come together and come in contact with each other, even if they came for different activities beyond prayer. As a social space, the mosque offered the support of a community coming together. It is “only where men live so close together that the potentialities of action are always present can power remain with them” (Arendt, 1958, p. 201). It is not only a willingness to engage one another, but proximity and the availability of structures within which to engage, which strengthens a community. Mafouz, reflecting upon his concern for Muslim youth in Helsingborg, underlined that “they need strong legs to go out into this world...a firm foundation” (Interview with Mafouz 25/04/2010). In bringing people together in the same space under religious observance, the mosque also offered facilities and opportunities to be together in other ways, strengthening the community through the mutual involvement of its many members.

However, as a religious organisation, there are limitations to its efficacy in community building and cohesion. Mafouz did not see Swedes as a problem – from his experience he found that they were interested in learning more and open to interaction. Rather, he was concerned that Muslim youth were not willing enough to engage with others outside of their religious community, feeling apprehensive of the majority culture – that it was inaccessible or unsuitable to their disposition(s). But as his own use of the terms Swede and Muslim – as

though they were exclusive categories – underlined, cohesion that is limited to a specific group can undermine a sense of belonging in the greater community as identities focused within homogenous groups<sup>7</sup> “lack a sense of common identity” (Frug, 1999, p. 116). If one is too dependent upon the collective self-image of a homogenous group – what Frug terms a ‘purified community’ – it can isolate them from other people, increasing their vulnerability to cope with difference, robbing them of “the experience needed to develop a capacity to deal with problems as they occur” (ibid., p. 120). The limitation of a religious organisation, even if it creates a strong sense of community, is the exclusive interest upon which it exists. As I saw in this case, the tendency to rely too much upon a community of mutual interest meant that some Muslims were unable to see themselves as part of Swedish society. Although Mafouz informed me that an inter-faith discussion was done as part of the city festival each summer, I found no information to suggest that other initiatives to reach across religious or interest groups on an on-going basis were occurring. It is very possible that more was being done, but from our discussion, and my own research, it appeared that it was not being widely advertised, or accessible, if so.

## 7.2 Youth

### 7.2.1 *Students in Söder*

Despite being the site of numerous secondary and tertiary schools, Söder is only in heavy use by youth during the day, their presence outside of institutions appearing largely restricted to bus stops (heading home to the edges of the city) or *en route* to Knutpunkten and the city centre by foot or bike. The few exceptions to this appear to be the local sporting centres – Jutan, Rönnowska and the swimming hall at Gustav Adolfs torg – the computer gaming centre and the laser tag facility (refer to figure 15, following page). However, each is a space for performing specific activities, where youth will come in contact with those interested in the same activity, and not every young person will necessarily be interested in organised sports and computer games. Also, expendable income plays a factor in participation at all of these locations.

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<sup>7</sup> While the diverse backgrounds of mosque attendees by no means makes them a homogenous group, I employ the term homogenous in the sense that all attendees – and thus the mosque’s community – are brought together by a shared interest – a shared religious faith.

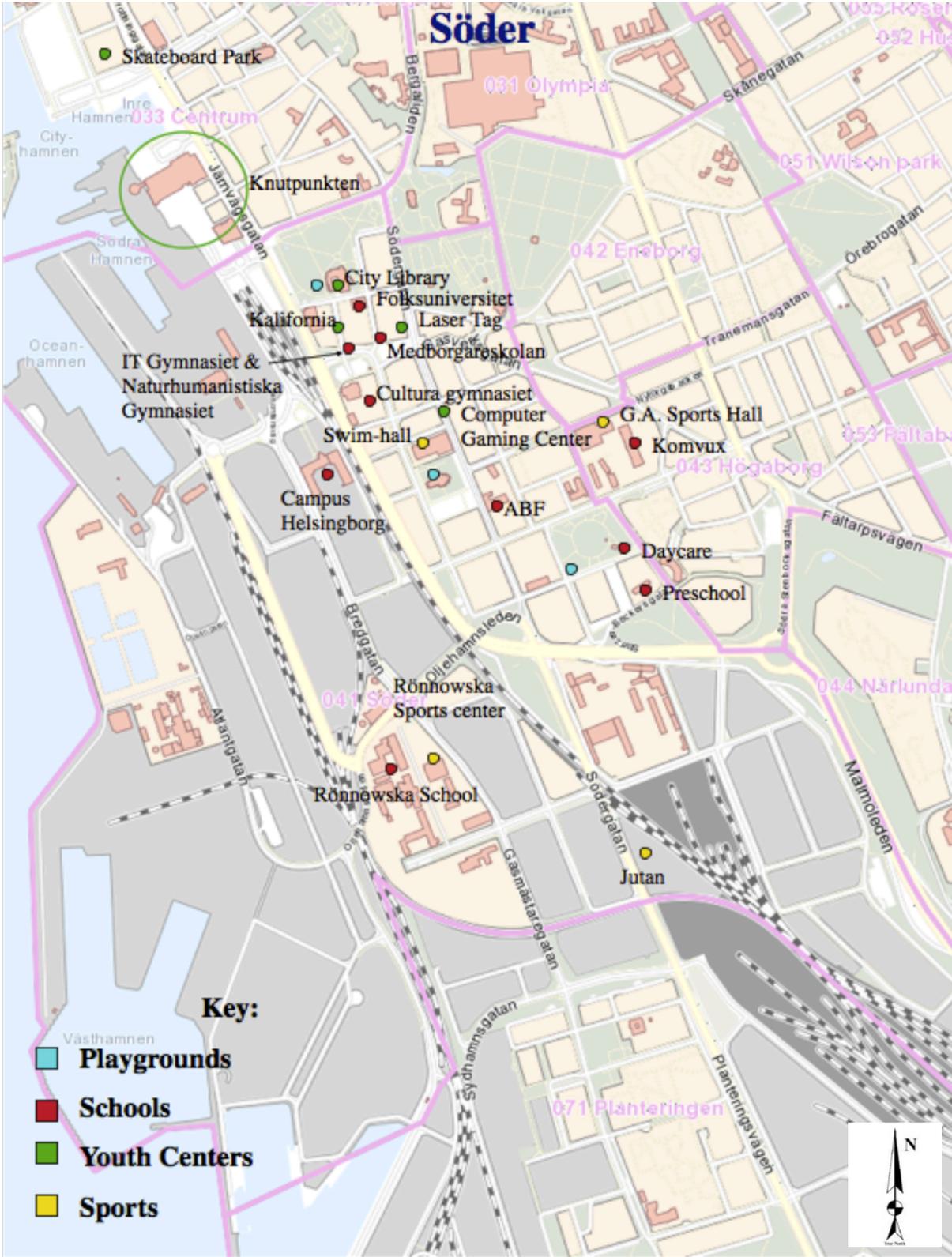


Figure 15: Despite a large number of schools in Söder, there are few facilities which are geared towards youth, aside from sports facilities and computer gaming centres.

Map: Helsingborg City Planning Dept.  
Map Data: Paul Sherfey and Samantha Hyler

Where youth could be found in the largest numbers, aside from wandering the streets of Centrum, were places not intended for any singular mutual interest group: Knutpunkten (the city's primary transit terminal, in the heart of the city centre) and Stadsbiblioteket. And in neither case was use limited to youth usage – both served as the single largest spaces where people of all sorts came together in one manner or another. Both spaces were indoors and characterised by open plan architecture and use of natural light through atrium roofs.

Stadsbiblioteket (the city library) was the one space where a cross-section of Helsingborg could be seen to use the same space for extended periods of time. Active and full of conversation, those who did not wish to be social were found in alcoves in the building. In the café area, students studied and chatted and businesspeople took lunch and talked business. In the spaces behind, children sat and read books to each other. On the mezzanine, students sat working at their laptops. Also, the library organised, or provided space for, various groups, classes and cultural programming, such as concerts, children's theatre, knitting groups, and Swedish-language practice for immigrants – something for most every group. Stadsbiblioteket provided both privacy and publicity, activity and relaxation in a space designed for use by a range of people for a range of purposes.

### *7.2.2 Knutpunkten*

Whereas the city library was a space intended to bring people together, through its literacy and cultural programming, and repository of books and other media, Knutpunkten, as a transit terminal, has a very different purpose: providing an efficient connection between modes of transit. As a train station, bus depot and ferry terminal, Knutpunkten – like the city library – brings together a cross-section of people, primarily commuters and tourists, for whom the hub serves as a way-station and is likely the starting or ending point for their time in Helsingborg. As for the allotment of space in the structure, there is a train station, bus and ferry terminals, multiple business offices (with separate entrances along the street), food and convenience services, a parking garage, and a parking lot above the bus terminal. The nature of goods provided in the commercial spaces reflects the transitory nature of commuters and tourists – everything is targeted towards one who is 'on-the-go' – with the exception of the pubs and cafés.

Commuters pass through the space quickly, as the primary function of a transit hub is to facilitate movement to other places – work, school, home, etc. Having selected various

individuals to follow as they arrived at the site, it appears that most stop only long enough to take a snack. The food services of Knutpunkten address this need, and do so in the brief amount of time to be spent within – between three and thirty minutes for those observed, depending if food is taken ‘to go’ or they remain long enough to consume it on site. Some remain longer, utilising the cafés and pubs not only to have a meal, but also informal meetings and working lunches. In this manner, the services appear to provide leisure and opportunities for socialisation. However, beginning in the afternoon, youth come to dominate the population, generally congregating in groups of five to eight, and are not quick to leave the structure.

Though primarily a commuting space, there are possibilities to remain at Knutpunkten: at McDonald’s, a café or restaurant, one of several bars, or seated upon benches near the taxi roundabout. Characterised by affordable eateries and alcohol, as well as late hours and opportunities to stay without spending money, it is not surprising that a transit terminal such as Knutpunkten also be a space for socialisation. However, unlike the activities planned by the library, and spaces designed for group meetings, at Knutpunkten there is nothing aside from food and drink to attract people to do more than pass through the structure. Food and drink can be found most anywhere in the city. Thus, Knutpunkten’s primary advantage over other public or social spaces is that it is free to enter, covered, open around the clock due to its transit role, and has cafés and bars which remain open late into the night.

But despite its late hours, almost every person with whom I spoke said they made a point of avoiding Knutpunkten at night. This was especially true of the bus terminal, because of the youth who ‘hang out’ there. One woman in her mid-twenties, a student who commutes several times a week, said she would take a taxi from a station outside of Helsingborg if she returned too late in the evening because the station was too “loud, messy and full of young gangs.” Another woman, in her thirties, who commutes to Helsingborg on a daily basis described making sure to leave before 11pm to avoid all the “young, drunk teens”, as it was after this time that they really started to cause trouble. Both men and women, tourist and commuter alike, had heard stories about drugs, violent attacks and other dangers by word-of-mouth and made a point not to stay around and witness such things.

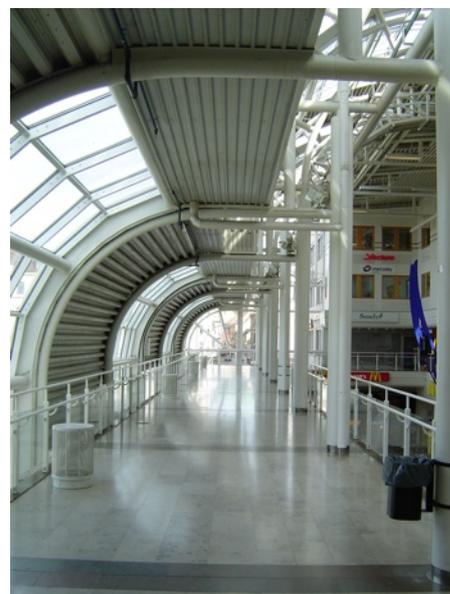
Once commuting hours had passed, the average age of those at Knutpunkten dropped considerably. Most appeared to be between 15 and 20 years of age, and tended to concentrate in a few locations. With little else open beyond commuting hours, McDonald’s and the pubs

were the primary interior locations where youths congregated. McDonald’s, occupying the largest commercial space at the site, appeared busier at this time than during lunch. The size and informality of the restaurant suited the size of groups and the shouting and laughing that characterised conversations. Beyond the interior, many congregated in the bus terminal and a smaller number in the parking lot above. In both areas, smoking is prevalent and it is not uncommon to hear slurred speech or to witness alcohol consumption among male-only groups in the parking lot. In the bus terminal, girls and boys appear fairly evenly distributed. Both spaces are visually similar in their poor lighting and numerous alcoves, affording some degree of privacy for these groups.



Figure 16: More than any other single location in the city centre, Knutpunkten appears to attract a large number of teenagers and young adults. While many congregate at the large McDonald’s restaurant on-site (top left), many can also be found passing time on the many benches within the building (centre left) or smoking in the darkly lit bus terminal (bottom left). Within the structure, there is ample unutilised space for installing activities or developing positive, safe alternatives for the youthful energy which appears to enhance public safety concerns at this time (bottom right).

Photos: Paul Sherfey



Whether intended or not, these various spaces are satisfying a need for social space, and at times a need of privacy. Despite a lack of activities to stimulate or engage youth, many stay around for extended periods because it is a space where they *can* be. As a local teacher explained, some of her own students could be found at Knutpunkten because:

*“it’s a place for them to go and not have to go home. A lot of the kids there are in crowded apartments where either their parents can’t handle them being around except to sleep, or they feel too crowded in...or its the only place where they can see their boyfriend or girlfriend” (Interview with Sofia 15/04/2010).*

Thus it is not surprising that Knutpunkten has a reputation for youth causing trouble, since a “lack of stimulation produces a longing for variety, surprise, mystery, excitement, adventure” (Frug, 1999, p. 121), and one will fulfil these needs one way or another. If creative and positive outlets are lacking, the combination of alcohol (cheaply and easily obtained at Knutpunkten) and peer pressure can lead to more harmful or aggressive means of such need fulfilment. All it takes, as was mentioned to occur, was “one kid in a group calling someone in another group a ‘slut’ or a ‘darkie’. Some kids cause trouble because they have nothing better to do” (Interview with S.J. 15/04/2010).

The group nature of youth activity suggests a relation to the needs of some youth in the area not being address by existing services and resources. They are creating a space of inclusion at Knutpunkten because they cannot, or do not want, to be elsewhere. The fact that many are below the age limit to smoke and drink suggests an eagerness to actualise their needs for freedom and identity, attempting to perform maturity through such ‘adult’ behaviours (Max-Neef et al., 1989). When we consider that the links between alcohol and/or drug use and impaired judgement are well established, reports of criminal aggression – such as the stabbing which occurred the first day of my observations there (*Helsingborgs Dagblad*, 10/09/2009), or the figures on rape and assault posted in the bus terminal’s waiting area – it is all the more necessary that interventions are made to assure that if youth feel they need to come to Knutpunkten, then the site should provide for their needs better to deter them from personally and socially harmful behaviours.

### *7.3 Arts, culture and social life*

Where cultural events are concerned, no informants mentioned attending events in Helsingborg – beyond visiting Dunkers Kulturhus as part of school excursions. “Helsingborg spends more money per person on cultural organisations” I was told by one planner, “but most of it goes to traditional institutions” – the city theatre, the concert house and Dunkers being the ‘big three’ in the city. But for many, it seemed, the music, street art and theatre groups of Malmö and Copenhagen were more relevant to the younger population and to people wanting more international and intercultural entertainment. And while the ‘big three’ are located in the North Harbour, few traces of culture – high or low – could be found in Söder, aside from the city’s primary movie theatre, located along Södergatan, and the city sports archive. Bengt and Mira stated that they were more inclined to travel one or two hours for a concert, exhibit or event in Malmö or Copenhagen than to attend anything offered in their own city. As one informant reflected, “the city centre has plenty to attract bored, white, middle-class couples...but Söder is working-class...and international” (Walk-along with Amory 10/05/2010). Although it would require another, focused study to determine if it were true, and compare the offerings between cities, it seemed at least through Bengt, Mira, Sofia and others I spoke with that Helsingborg was out of touch with the cultural interests of its own youth.

On the other hand, however, Centrum did attract plenty of socialisation, particularly at the many cafés and restaurants in the area – which according to my own time-lapse observations of multiple locations, tend to have more people remaining to dine than the primarily take-away service of much of Söder’s cafés and restaurants. And, as I found out from the couple I spoke with, Bengt and Mira, there are Söder residents who prefer to frequent locations in Centrum, even if it is more costly for them.

And it was through discussion with them that the divergence between what people say and do was particularly apparent. As residents of Söder for several years, and despite saying they love the working-class and multi-ethnic character of the area which makes them feel ‘at home’ (especially Mira, who as the child of a Swedish father and Indian mother saw herself as more Swedish than Indian, had lived most of her childhood in various Asian countries), they seem unaware of local activities, and when asked about their choice of location for social occasions consistently refer to the cafés and restaurants of the city centre. Despite an abundance of cafés in their area, and saying they feel that they benefit the community by



Figure 17: The arts and event spaces in Söder are largely interest-group specific, centering upon the church, the sports archive, or local bars and nightclubs with live music nights of various genres. The movie theatre is an exception to this. Farther south, however, there is a music rehearsal studio with a small performance space.

Map: Helsingborg City Planning Dept.  
 Map Data: Paul Sherfey and Samantha Hyler

creating more places “where younger people can ‘hang out’ in Söder”, Mira and Bengt go where more people go, where their friends who don’t live in Söder – and whom they say don’t feel safe there – prefer to go, and where more cuisine options exist (Interview with Bengt and Mira 13/05/2010); in short, Centrum. Also, despite having several pubs in the area,

they go for drinks in Centrum because the local pubs are “full of *vardagsalkoholister*”, working men whom, according to Mira “get drunk everyday” and promote a depressing atmosphere in the pubs. From my own observations of these bars, there were the regulars who seemed to fit this description, but there were also plenty of other people – men and women of various ages – whom frequented some of Söder’s bars, suggesting that this was more an impression than anything else, a question of her own comfort, or considering the design of places she mentioned frequenting, one of personal taste.

There can be a gap between one’s conscious discourse and the subconscious one which informs actual practice. Although a resident may speak happily of Söder, he or she may, as Bengt and Mira, discriminate against it in practice, seeing it as a place of residence, but not a place for one’s day-to-day, out-of-the-house activities. Despite wanting the ‘idea’ of the different character which Söder provides them, they act against this difference by searching out community and social networks in Centrum or in other cities, looking for other settings for consumption and entertainment – shopping gallerias, trendy cafés and nightclubs, and arts and cultural venues. This is a tension which needs to be addressed in order that residents of a neighbourhood can integrate and take part in the life of their surroundings, especially so if a neighbourhood such as H+, as an extension from Söder, intends to be a community where people come together in their differences without feeling they don’t belong. Centrum is the centre of social life for many in Helsingborg, and it is important to devolve its centrality by developing other areas – as H+ intends to set an example – in ways that promote more inclusive forms and forums of socialisation. The materiality, and thus the ‘lived’ experiences which are conceivable in Centrum’s venues, are different, and are often more relevant or more comfortable, to a greater variety of people, and thus better conduits for non-threatening sociality to occur.

## 8 Where do we go from here?

### 8.1 Considering the role of planning

If the products and services of Centrum are in fact more relevant to more people than what currently exists in Söder, it would seem logical to duplicate their success by transposing something of it the H+ development zone. However, to do so would ignore important challenges that would be thus created. To simply transpose apparently successful business models, structural designs or aesthetic qualities does not necessarily equate to a solution for social concerns. Rather, the latter may be exacerbated, or merely displaced, by the former should such a path be pursued. Firstly, their current location may play a part in their success, and a physical space cannot be transposed. Secondly, catering to one demographic is likely to exclude others.

A challenge inherent in planning processes exists in how the work itself is structured and conceived. To the extent that particular business models, such as that of Pistachia, or certain community spaces, such as the library or Knutpunkten, present ways to address segregation, they do so through their applicability to business development and physical ('city') and cultural planning strategies, which are each areas in which the municipality and its planners have a key position to affect what happens to the city's development. The role of planning, thus, is important, as the act of desegregation in Helsingborg is intended to be made possible via the strategic intervention of the city through planned initiatives. However, with the possibilities of intervention also come the limitations and challenges of what it can achieve. One challenge, or limit, is reached through the delineation of assumed users or use.

Martin Heidegger's (1971) oft-cited book *Dwelling, Building Thinking* reminds us of the rather simple, logical foundation of building – that is, there is always a 'someone' towards which the work of building is directed. Though directly, or indirectly, referred to in many a treatise on architecture, city planning or urbanism, a brief consideration of his work is nonetheless useful for re-locating "the referent of the discourse" that is urban planning (Latour, 1999, p. 30). Simply put, "we build...because we dwell" (Heidegger, 1971, p. 146-147). There would not be a purpose to build squares, streets, motorways, sewage pipes and similar if we did not have use of them. Infrastructure is built to be used, by people. People, however, have differing needs, interests and values, so the challenge is to know the 'best' way to develop infrastructure in a given context – that is, determining which factors are most necessary and worthy – demographic, infrastructural or social concerns. Should we

widen the motorway or improve the quality of outdoor recreational facilities? The problem that comes into play in choosing one over the other that each becomes a value judgement. The questions we must ask to be aware of a project's challenges and limitations, thus, are "whose values are being used to make these decisions?" and "whose are being ignored?".

It is important to acknowledge that even the admirable, or at least well-intended, effort to undo segregation within a space is not an innocent act. While it intends to benefit marginalised demographic groups in a city, what can a city planning project hope to achieve to these ends, and at what costs? As in many municipalities, planners are given a mandate based upon the interests which an elected municipal council forms based upon (supposed) public interest. The public is often invited to comment upon proposed plans, and it is possible that this shapes the ultimate form a project takes. Plans tend to be problematic to change once set in motion, which is also one reason why it can take years to settle on a plan and get from the planning phase to actual construction. The planners working with H+, however, realise that a set plan for development is not a guarantee of success, as it is difficult to gauge how a plan will work as the city changes over time (demographically, physically or economically). It is thus that have they dedicated themselves to experiment with what is termed "open-source planning", whereby planning is to be done inclusively, actively encouraging the equal participation of different stakeholders for better informed planning outcomes, organising frameworks which can be adjusted and adapted as necessary – rather than establishing a rigid plan – since the H+ project is a long-term one, and the social changes which may occur during this time cannot be predicted. Strategy in this case is not fixed, but as open as needed.

However, the question with this is how the public can best inform the process in the most beneficial way, without expecting undeliverable results. Perhaps the best approach would be one in which the entire framework of the development process posits a new relationship between public, politicians and planners, in order to give voice and power to marginalised groups through a greater degree of public input in the process. The implications of this study, as such, suggest a need to rethink the framework of urban governance as it is currently practised. But as an ethnological study – and not a fully developed political treatise – my intention at this time has been to address how the current system in practice in Helsingborg can be more well-informed about actual people and lived reality in conceptualising solutions. Specifically, how can segregated development practices, such as can be observed in Helsingborg, be altered to promote interaction between groups of people

who tend to be separated from one another by the present cityscape? There are certainly challenges, but the process of identifying them also helps to locate where opportunities, or ‘loopholes’ within the system might exist. This is why it is important to study the discourses arising and phenomena occurring in the daily lives of individuals. To ensure that the interventions which planners develop intersect with the needs and values of residents, planners must be able to question and investigate how locations are perceived and experienced, and define an understanding of how these concerns relate to location design.

### *8.2 City planning as colonisation?*

If the values and expectations of municipal authorities and the publics they represent do not coincide, the work of city planning is compromised in its legitimacy to represent the public good. The organisational structure and municipal political process of strategic planning aside, the nature of such work – its location politically, in a more general sense – presents certain challenges from an ethnographic perspective. As discussed earlier, strategies are ‘modalities of action’, which “seek to create places in conformity with abstract models”, through the production, tabulation and imposition of the intentions of architects and planners onto a location in order to define a space” (de Certeau, 1984, pp.29-30). City planning, to the extent that it is a science of optimising logistical (traffic, sewage, energy) and other concerns, “construct[s] representations that seem to push [the world] away, but also to bring it closer” (Latour, 1999, p.30). That is to say, planners must create plans based upon abstract values which are abstracted from lived experience, this process of abstraction both allowing them to bring the world closer in allowing them to perform the task of planning, while concurrently pushing ‘reality’ away through its abstraction into generalities. ‘Oversight plan’, a phrase commonly placed upon the cover of many project documents, is a fitting term because it refers to “at once looking at something from above and ignoring it” (ibid., p.38).

The act of abstraction of a local population, and reference to them as a generalised entity with shared interests and needs, bares an interesting parallel to colonial practice. To speak of a public in the singular – *the* public – “reproduces and forecloses colonialist structures: sanctioned ignorance, and a refusal of subject-status and therefore humanness” (Spivak, 1999, p.167). It not only denies the fact that the public is comprised of different people with differing interests, but assumes that those who engage in planning somehow know what all of these different people, summarised in a single grouping, need.

Furthermore, it refers to the fact that they have a position of relative power and institutionalised support from which to act in what they consider to be the interest of these individuals, silenced in the act of their abstraction. This however, is not a “nefarious plot”, insists Edward Said, but a “distribution of geopolitical awareness” of aesthetic, economic, sociological and historical differences, projected forth into “a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different world” (Said, 1979, p.12). In short, a disposition, whether conscious or not, to make a new territory (perhaps Söder?) welcoming for new settlers who resemble themselves (middle-class Swedes). And yet to do so, with a sense of paternalistic concern, for the sake of ‘the natives’ (local residents, immigrants).

Thus, while the planning of a space in this manner can be done in reference to its end-users, it can only refer to users, not represent them, as their uses of a spaces cannot be abstracted or generalised – how people drive on streets, walk on sidewalks, or use public squares are diverse and changing, existing only *in situ*. However, by on-site presence, one can develop an idea of how a certain street or square may differ from any other one. Detached from such a reality (in the case of Helsingborg, none of them live in the city at all, much less in Söder), unexposed to these ‘others’ of Söder in any meaningful sense, urban planners then find themselves in the position of being well-meaning ‘do-gooders’ wanting to help and lift up an area they perceive as challenged or sub-standard according to their own conceptualisations of how a community should be. A planner’s assessment of Söder reflects his or her own biases rather than any so-called reality ‘on the ground’, thus without being part of a community connected to the space in daily life, the planner’s representation of Söder must be seen “as representation and not as natural depiction” (Said, 1979, p. 21).

For planners given the task of strengthening social cohesion and desegregating an urban area, their role is not only one of developing physical structures which enable certain possibilities of use, but by extension, structuring discourse from which particular conceptualisations are made possible. The manner in which spaces are structured affects how they can be used, thus how people relate to them, whether intended or not in planning processes. This can refer to behaviours within the space – which itself includes avoidance of a space as a behaviour (one of aversion) – as well as how people see, feel or think about the space – in short, conceptualisations of space. How different people exist in relation to one another affects the meanings and valuations which they represent for, or communicate to, one

another. As Hannah Arendt underlines in *The Human Condition* (1958), it is through the resources of a space that possibilities are made for how people experience difference: “before men began to act, a definite space [has] to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent actions [can] take place” (p. 194). Interaction can only occur where it is enabled.

A danger is that the work of planners can tend to privilege a view of constructed objects only as things and not also as the relations to which they refer, thus ignoring the dynamic nature of use-in-practice (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 77). To build public spaces is to build spaces of creation – of identities, memories and friendship, as much as fear, boundaries and alienation – not simply a result (Lefebvre, 2003, p. 28). We encounter others in spaces, and we encounter objects in space. Whether these encounters are comfortable or uncomfortable, in a psychological sense, affects the nature of the relationships we establish. The streets and squares of the city are media – locations of potential energies that need only be activated. It is a ‘place’ of dialogue – a structure to enable its ‘letting-dwell’ – that must be created to activate the potential energies of the city and its residents, to thus allow non-threatening interactions to take place.

### *8.3 The challenge: locating planning discourses in Söder*

As Homi Bhabha (1994) elaborates in *The Location of Culture*, the tension between the exigencies of planning and its imperative of application for the ‘good’ of residents, reflects a relationship of ambivalence wherein city planners (in role of well meaning, ‘civilising’ missionaries) identify with, and yet resist, a local population. While wanting to help them, they come to do so by reacting against the current reality of the area and the lives created around it. Instead, they aim to turn it into something more ‘in their image’. It is this which Bhabha refers to when he speaks of mimicry, a “desire for a reformed, recognisable “other”, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (p. 86). The only way for Söder to become like other neighbourhoods would be to efface and replace those qualities which make it what it represents to various people. By renewing the area, imposing an “oversight plan”, it is likely to ‘beautify’ the area by camouflaging those aspects which make it off-putting to outsiders, familiarising it according to normative aesthetic trends, for the ‘good’ of the district and the city at large. That which represents Söder to its residents is both in need of love *and* reviled, and “it is around the ‘and’ ... that the ambivalence of civil authority circulates as a ‘colonial’ signifier” (p. 97). The planners whom I have spoken with

honestly want to improve the area for the sake of its inhabitants, but by assuming what needs improvement (or that it requires their involvement), the need for improvement is presupposed by personal value judgments. However, rather than suggest that planners are removed from and unaffected by Söder, as Bhabha's exploration of hybridity makes clear, in the very act of engaging with a space or people, they become influenced by them. What this hybridisation leads towards is ambiguous however, as the way in which one reacts to this influence depends upon individual, contextual responses to any number of stimuli (p. 207). For my work, then, it has been important to emphasise that city planners are no more expert at city planning than residents. It is only that the expertise of each is in different spheres, the city planners being trained in technical planning, and residents on the practical experience of living in the city.

But how might planners bridge their knowledge with that of residents? They can do so by investigating and addressing resources, access and interest in the manner which I have attempted to illustrate in this study. It is a question of investigating the qualities needed to create and enable reasons to share space. To desegregate Söder is to make it attractive for people who do not come there currently and ensure that those there now can remain as they wish, while inversely making spaces elsewhere more accessible economically, both in terms of housing costs as well as the shops and services available, enabling movement in both directions, diminishing the separation of economic otherness. This is a challenge. As 'improving' the profile of an area too easily leads to gentrification, it is necessary to focus on how it can attract those with higher incomes, without progressively foreclosing working class individuals from their own neighbourhood.

But wouldn't making Söder more attractive to its non-users be akin to making it more like those areas where these potential users now are found? There is the risk of economic or aesthetic colonisation, what Levinas refers to as 'imperialism of the same' (as quoted in Young, 1990, p. 14), wherein the interests and values which planners bring to their work are prioritised in planning, rather than the interests of local residents, in order to infuse the space with their economic and social capital. If planning and development processes only make Söder more attractive and 'safe-seeming' to outsiders – the people who don't feel comfortable, safe, or interested in the area now – it will do so at the cost of the area's current character, creating and maintaining a more benign order by extending it from other parts of the city into a district which, in perception and discourse at least, threatens this order. If

planning does not provide for different economic groups and objects and images of difference to be able to inhabit the areas in and around Söder, whether through rental thresholds or cultural planning means, those with more fiscal mobility have greater chance to erase or sanitise the working-class and multiethnic culture, at best packaging it for the consumption of potential new investors and residents. The construction of ‘up-market’ housing and encroachment of more expensive shops and restaurants into such an area – taking advantage of lower property values and rental pricing to reap larger revenue – can build a foundation from which economic interests slowly dispossess residents of access to their own community, whether through the rising cost of products and services or through the financial inaccessibility of housing, both of which come to serve the immigration of those with more financial leverage.

#### *8.4 Opportunities: tactics and new ways of thinking about spatial use*

How then, might knowledge of the exclusivity of spaces and identity conflicts in Helsingborg inform more inclusive redevelopment? Sites of conflict and exclusion are sites of possibility. But the development of relevant ideas which realise possibilities is assisted by understanding how identity conflicts manifest – that is, responses, activities or behaviours which resist their structures, contexts or surroundings. As Michel de Certeau (1984) explains, this is a question of strategies and tactics, and how to increasingly reconcile the two.

Strategies are “modalities of action”, which “seek to create places in conformity with abstract models”, through the production, tabulation and imposition of the intentions of (in this case) architects and planners onto a location in order to define a space (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 29-30). This physical production of space is confronted with an intangible production, which occurs in the consumption of space through the production of ways of interacting with space, what de Certeau refers to as ‘tactics’, whereby “the consumer cannot be identified or qualified by [that which] he assimilates”, there being “a gap...opened by the use he makes” (ibid., pp.31-32). Strategies can be seen as the planned and intended – the imposition of a form by planners – while tactics are that which people respond to, or against, that which is intended or planned. Tactics are adaptive and contextual, and thus provide insight into how a space can be adjusted to reflect its use. And it is through tactics, which “can only use, manipulate, and divert spaces” (ibid., p.30), that the ‘consumer-of-space’ will attempt to do

so in order to fulfil one or another need which the 'strategic' planning of the space has not considered, but nonetheless enables.

Considering that people have agency in the choices they make, it is not surprising that unpredictable phenomena occur. These unpredictable phenomena, which stand out or perhaps even appear out-of-place in a context, appear so because they resist strategised, normative expectations. No matter how a space is planned, no matter the intentions of use, people will, to lesser or greater extent, use it otherwise. What has been put for in this study is that by developing an increasingly complex understanding of who uses spaces, and how, space and use can be brought into greater accord. This can begin from observing how people react to others behaving 'out of place', or listening for what is described as 'not belonging'.

One example of such tactical use of space which I observed was the use of the cityscape as a skateboarding-scape, particularly in Sundstorget – the large, ceremonial square in front of Dunkers Kulturhus. Although there is a small skate park a short walk from the square – complete with ramps and other surfaces – this park is in light use. Sundstorget, along the main artery of the city – Järnvägsgatan/Drottningatan, is central, open and visible. Despite being a thoroughfare for pedestrian traffic, the only day-to-day use that is focused in the square is skateboarding – most people passing through are accessing the grocery store on one side of the square, or the cultural house and the activities it houses indoors. The youth who skateboard here, and through the city park – create new, localised uses for these spaces. They fashion the city into a skatepark in a sense, taking advantage of open spaces, various inclines and street furniture to perform tricks and stunts. Just because a skatepark is designed for their use, does not mean that it meets their needs – while the 'loophole' they've found in an underused space has allowed them to suit the cityscape to reflect a need. This sort of tactical use can teach us – or planners – other ways to look at the spaces in which we live, and see new ways to work with them. The cityscape can be seen logistically – the movement of people and goods – but can also be seen as a potential 'skate-scape'. Developing the skateability of the city can make it feel more inclusive and welcoming to those who skate.

Another 'loophole' observed was in the use of Stadsparken (the city park) as an evening-time, 'no leash' dog park. Having found no dedicated dog park anywhere around the city centre, I regularly observed families arriving from the direction of Centrum, Söder, and Olympia (directly to the east of the park) with their dogs – often very large breeds – to let them run free in the park as the sun set and the evening commute died down. The park served

an important evening purpose as many working families would come together and socialise with each other while letting their dogs run (needing such a space after being indoors all day, seeing that houses and apartments in Centrum or Söder do not have yards), and the location was central and easily accessible to several districts via arterial roads. At the same time, the lack of enclosure, and the heavy traffic in the area pointed out that a more suitable solution would be best in long-term planning in order to avoid any accidents from dogs running into the street or potentially attacking passersby. Nonetheless, the use of the park as a dog park was a tactical use of ‘the best space possible’ because of the gap in provision of a dedicated space by the municipality. With both this example and that of skateboarding, what arises through observation of actual spatial use can illuminate gaps in resources, as with the dog park, or novel ways of approaching the work of infrastructure planning, such as giving greater consideration to skateboards as an alternative form of transit.

## 9 Considerations and Conclusions

### *9.1 Possibilities for an H+ future*

As the examples of tactical use, given at the end of the previous chapter, illustrate, it is the manner in which we engage or disengage with ‘things-as-they-are’ – that is, the phenomena of daily life and human experience, each tied to the spaces in which they occur – that we create ‘things-as-they-can-be’. Working from what already exists means understanding what extant people and resources can offer for their own area to more closely reflect their needs, values and interests. Thus, in this concluding chapter, I wish to offer practical suggestions, which in the case of Helsingborg can utilise existing resources, and what they tell us about Söder and its environs – in ways that address the challenges of overcoming segregation through the development of the H+ project.

As the discussions I had with individuals at the mosque implied, there is – at least with some of its members – a feeling that they do not belong beyond their community, religiously speaking. With others, such as some of the planners, discomfort with difference seemed a likely barrier that kept them from venturing into Söder. For Bengt and Mira, it seemed more that disinterest in the services in their own community was the greatest barrier to keep them from choosing Centrum for their needs. Each area has its services which meet day-to-day needs – such as grocery stores, bakeries, cafés, barbers, etc. What appeared to bring my informants to other parts of town tended to be recreational options – sports facilities in Söder, hiking in Pålssjö skog to the north, or cycling to Råå, located at the southern edge of Helsingborg – but infrequently and dependent upon the season. Alternatively, the high number of interest organisations – religious and ethno-cultural, primarily – in Söder brought people who may live in other areas of the city, but only brought them to be with people similar to them – i.e. other Christians or Muslims, or other Greek or Balkan people, or other skateboarding and swimming enthusiasts. While it is important for people to have this sort of community, what is lacking are opportunities for people to be together which are not so divisive and exclusive.

As such, one of the most basic opportunities which became clear was the need for cooperation and dialogue. While any of the many organisations or individuals can take the initiative to make this happen, the municipality – through its offices, administrations and policies – can take a key role in facilitating more events beyond the city festival in the summer, in order to create greater awareness and visibility of the diverse cultures which are

part of Helsingborg. By actively liaising with community leaders, and providing funding, resources, consultation or meeting and event locations (of which it is in no short supply), city officials can, as stewards of public well-being, resist planning for others, and instead support the assertion of community-based cooperation which is all the more likely to serve their needs and reflect their values and interests because solutions are self-made. Also, considering the proliferation of small, special-interest organisations and community centres, a specific action that can be taken is to look into more inclusive, generalised community centres – which, like the library, are not intended for a specific, ‘ideal’ user, but instead strive for variety and diversity – of activities, users and events. With the redevelopment intended for the H+ project area, there is perfect opportunity for investment in developing dedicated, public, community spaces, whether in existing properties or through making use of vacant space in the area. Determining relevant facilities for such spaces would require further study, working closely with various groups to determine what would draw them together.

Creating these spaces could address safety and comfort by creating familiar spaces and familiar activities, which can also be achieved through promotion of economic development projects that integrate various consumption interests in familiar environments or forms. To this extent, the Swedish *saluhallen*, or foodhall, could be seen a potential setting for increasing awareness and interest in non-traditional cuisine and ingredients, or for encouraging the development of cross-over businesses like Pistachia – which offer familiar fare in a ‘standardised’ retail environment, but distinguish themselves through specialty products.

On an infrastructural level, the integration of Centrum, Söder and the H+ area as physical spaces should, as the primary movement between Centrum and Söder already demonstrates, prioritise pedestrianisation, greenery and space for outdoor seating in high-traffic areas. This should not just be seen as important for the H+ area itself, but that these features are more fully developed in the adjoining districts, to create continuity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the development of a dedicated dog park would address the need for a safer setting. For skateboarders, detailed study of the features of spaces where youth skate now could inform the better development of future skate parks, or more ambitiously, the development of pedestrian spaces which actively encourage and accommodate skateboard traffic in the ways that many accommodate bicycles. Finally, as the popularity of, and problems with Knutpunkten as a youth space illuminate, so long as youth continue to

frequent the location, the location has an interest in developing activities and resources which channel their energy in safer ways, in the interest of public safety.

### *9.2 City planning: refining its role*

Returning to city planning, and the problematic position in which it finds itself – creating generalised solutions for a population which is not ‘generalise-able’ – there are clearly limits to what it should intend to do, but limits can also serve as boundaries within which creative solutions can flourish. As such, the preceding suggestions resist *creatio ex nihilo*, rather encouraging a way of thinking about economic and physical development, as well as cultural planning, as responses to social needs and not merely logistical and economic concerns.

While physical planning can address logistics, it is through watching spaces, learning about motivations, and contemplating existing resources and disparities that physical needs can be better addressed. As far as cultural planning and business and economic development are concerned, the same methods can inform new programmes and projects for the funding and support of public-based, bottom-up solutions, rather than the municipality taking upon itself the task of solving problems for its residents. To study the conceived, perceived and lived as discourses and phenomena – not just structures – requires going beyond asking the typical survey questions of how one ‘feels’ about certain places, people or ideas. It is a question of investigating the motivations behind these feelings – of what exactly are these feelings composed? What do different people perceive when they see the same space? Once these questions are investigated, planning can go forth better informed to address the challenges found.

Action “always establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries” (Arendt, 1958, p. 190), but “before men began to act, a definite space [has] to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent actions [can] take place” (ibid., p. 194). This space can be seen both as physical locations (cafés, community centres, dog parks) or within the ‘space’ of community and business development programmes or initiatives. This can be factored into spaces in how they shape individuals and their behaviour – whether they use the space in particular ways, or whether they use it at all depending upon who they are. To the extent that desegregation can be a goal, realisable and able to be factored into planning initiatives, it is not a matter of integrating ‘otherness’ into familiarity, changing one for the sake of the other, but should

rather be seen as a process of mutual incorporation, different people incorporating exposure to and awareness of each other into their everyday experiences.

As a final note, I'd like to return to Bhabha's notion of hybridity as the process whereby different individuals become influenced and changed through contact with each other. This process of mutual incorporation is not unlike the idea of desegregation – as promoting tolerance through exposure to otherness in non-threatening manners – which I have discussed in this study. I posit that encouraging desegregation, or hybridity, cannot be seen as simply a goal of planning processes. Rather, the processes themselves must be desegregated from the people they affect. It is at “the margin of hybridity where cultural differences ‘contingently’ and conflictually touch”, resisting binary oppositions between ‘Swedes’ and ‘immigrants’, or planners and lay-persons (Bhabha, 1994, p. 207). Planning can only breach physical and social boundaries by also breaching and redefining what the work of planning involves. It is at the margins, where oppositions act upon each other, that the work of urban planning can go beyond traditional power structures and the limitations of its institutionalised authority. Making this possible is a matter of developing spaces and structures which accommodate possibility, and this is made most possible by taking into account, and involving, those who have a stake in what comes, as experts of their own experience and needs, in order to explore how exposure and awareness of one's own self, and of others, is currently realised. By questioning the actual spatial practices, actual spatial discourses, and actual feelings in space – the conceived, perceived and lived space – of actual people in specific settings, planning can adapt itself to changing circumstances and therewith redefine its possibilities.

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<sup>8</sup> This does not include interviews with city planners, which were ongoing throughout the study's duration.

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