

# ***SJÖBLADS VÄG 39.***

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**LUND**  
UNIVERSITY

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December 2017.

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Everyone who deserves a thanks already got a thanks.



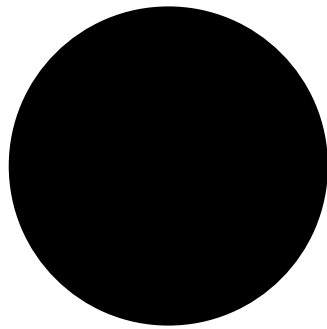
# ***SJÖBLADS VÄG 39.***

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# 1 The Starting Point.



The morning sun had just risen above the building in front of us. Beside me sat my three family members: Kana, Maiya and Mari. I met them in Tokyo two years ago and now we were sitting here, having a toast together, our first morning in our new home in Rosengård. The kitchen was slowly filling up with that thick golden light as the bread crunched loudly in my mouth. I looked down on the wooden table beneath me and saw a gathering of bread crumbs were casting tall shadows over each other. It looked like a little desert town in the break of dawn. Everyone was quiet. I raised my head to look out of the window, but the view was hard to make out because of all the light. Unsurprisingly enough, everything looked exactly the same as yesterday evening when we off-loaded the moving truck. The landscape was still flat. The tree crowns were still green and the tall brick buildings were still tall, and still made out of brick. I took another sip of my coffee. It was a damn good coffee. Although we had a ton to unpack, I had a really good feeling in my stomach. A new chapter of our lives was about to begin and I had no idea what to expect of it.

When I first told my parents that I wanted to move here, my mother forbade me.

-“I think it is pretty irresponsible Johan, to put your children in a situation like that” she said in a firm but caring tone.

As kind and open-minded as my mother is, the heavy connotations of Rosengård were apparently too strong for her to neglect, and I couldn't help admitting that a part of me felt the same way. What that “situation” meant exactly, neither of us knew, but we had seen the same news and heard the same stories. Headline after headline, decade after decade, the area had been painted pitch black by both media and hearsay. And there are some sad statistics to back it all up. According to *Malmökommissionen*, a government-initiated research group with the order to catalog the health of Malmö's citizens, inhabitants of Rosengård are feeling worst of them all<sup>(1)</sup>. The area has the highest child poverty, highest unemployment rate, the most overcrowded housing situation<sup>(2)</sup> and shortest expected life span<sup>(3)</sup> in all of Malmö. In many cases, worst in all of Sweden. Even though it all seemed conclusive enough, I wondered what all of this actually said about the neighbourhoods of Rosengård. Statistics and rumors are just numbers and words if one lack sufficient understanding of the circumstances.

-“Still, maybe this environment is not the best for my kids to grow up in after all.” I thought.

But as soon as I finished that thought, a very uncomfortable feeling arose. If this “situation” was unfit for my children to grow up in, what about the eight thousand children that live there right now?

I was embarrassed. Segregation is tearing our country apart and all I could do was to have some half-hearted guesses about it, mostly picked up from texts or seminars. To know about societal structures and mechanisms as crucial as segregation has to be the responsibility of everyone having a say over the built environment (or anyone at all for that matter). So I decided that my master thesis in architecture school had to be about this subject. I also decided that I didn’t want to read more books or listen to more lecturers about it. If I was ever to go beyond the mossy stereotypes of our collective unconsciousness and the washed out platitudes of the academic world, I had to do this by myself.

As it happened to be, the other three family members just got their permits of residence to live in Sweden as my last semester was about to begin. I had arrived some months earlier and as soon as I heard they were finally coming, I rushed to every apartment viewing I could find. As an unemployed couple with a family of four our price range was of course very limited, but there was no reason not to see as many apartments as I could while I was at it. Even though some of them were clearly out of our price range. What shocked my undeniably prejudiced mind was that the apartment here at Sjöbladsväg 39 was without doubt the best of them all. Regardless of price. It was the first time I was even in Rosengård and the sight of our yard was amazing. It was in the end of summer and the sun was gazing at the large nine-floor facades. Fifty kids who seemed to come from all over the world were playing all kinds of games together in the vividly green outdoors. The real-estate broker was a charming old lady who had sold homes all her life. This was the first time she sold one in Rosengård and she said she had never seen anything like it before. That might of course have been a selling phrase, but I had no reason not to believe her. And neither did I need any selling phrases to be convinced. I sent some videos to Kana from the yard and the light spacious interior and she agreed, it felt like we had found a hidden gem. Although it was the cheapest of the apartments I viewed we still couldn’t afford it. Which meant that, ironically and shamefully enough, I had to borrow money from my mother.

So there we came, straight from Azabujuban, Tokyo to Apelgården, Rosengård. With high debts and high hopes. I started to talk to my professors about my plan for this project. At first, my idea was to draw one building that somehow dealt with me and my family’s conclusions from life here. Simple enough I thought, and took out my pen with the eagerness of a child. But as the days went by and the pile of thrown sketch paper got bigger, I started to realize it wasn’t really that simple. Whatever I drew somehow felt strange. It felt like a statement claiming that things weren’t good enough as they are, when in fact we were all pretty much thriving. And the few ideas that seemed to turn out OK at first were often easily overthrown after some more weeks of life here. A new acquaintance, a new scenario or simply a new weather could be enough to contradict my assumptions. At the same time, things I drew felt insignificant, inadequate, or even silly, in relation to the gravity of this subject and the stigma that does in fact hover above this area. But most of all, no idea even remotely seemed to paint a fair picture of the new life we lived here and the wide array of experiences and emotions that came with it. As a place in the midst of troublesome segregating mechanisms, caused by all sorts of physical and psychological circumstances. But just as much as a place with an exceptional joy of life, in which I am more than happy to have my daughters brought up.

While continuing my meager attempts of drawing something meaningful enough, I started to write a journal about everything that happened to us. Happy or sad. Small or big. High and low. Pleasant or unpleasant. Unseemingly important or seemingly unimportant. Everything was scribbled down in the confused little file “*Möten och reflektioner1*”. After a while, this journal became an obsession. I felt like a squirrel hoarding nuts, in a sea of nuts. All this brown stuff had to be collected. Perhaps the squirrel knows what she is doing, but I had no idea. It just felt right. And soon it stood clear to me that “*Möten och reflektioner1*” was actually becoming my thesis.

I guess there are some questions in your mind by now. What is this text actually, and what do I aim to achieve with it? To put it simple, I want every kid in our society to be born with equal opportunities. Just like any other reasonable person wants, I hope. But as long as we have stigmatized areas, they are not. Sadly enough, my project will not fix this. What I will do is to share a year of my life. With me and my three family member’s lives as a backdrop, I will walk you through the social and spatial context of

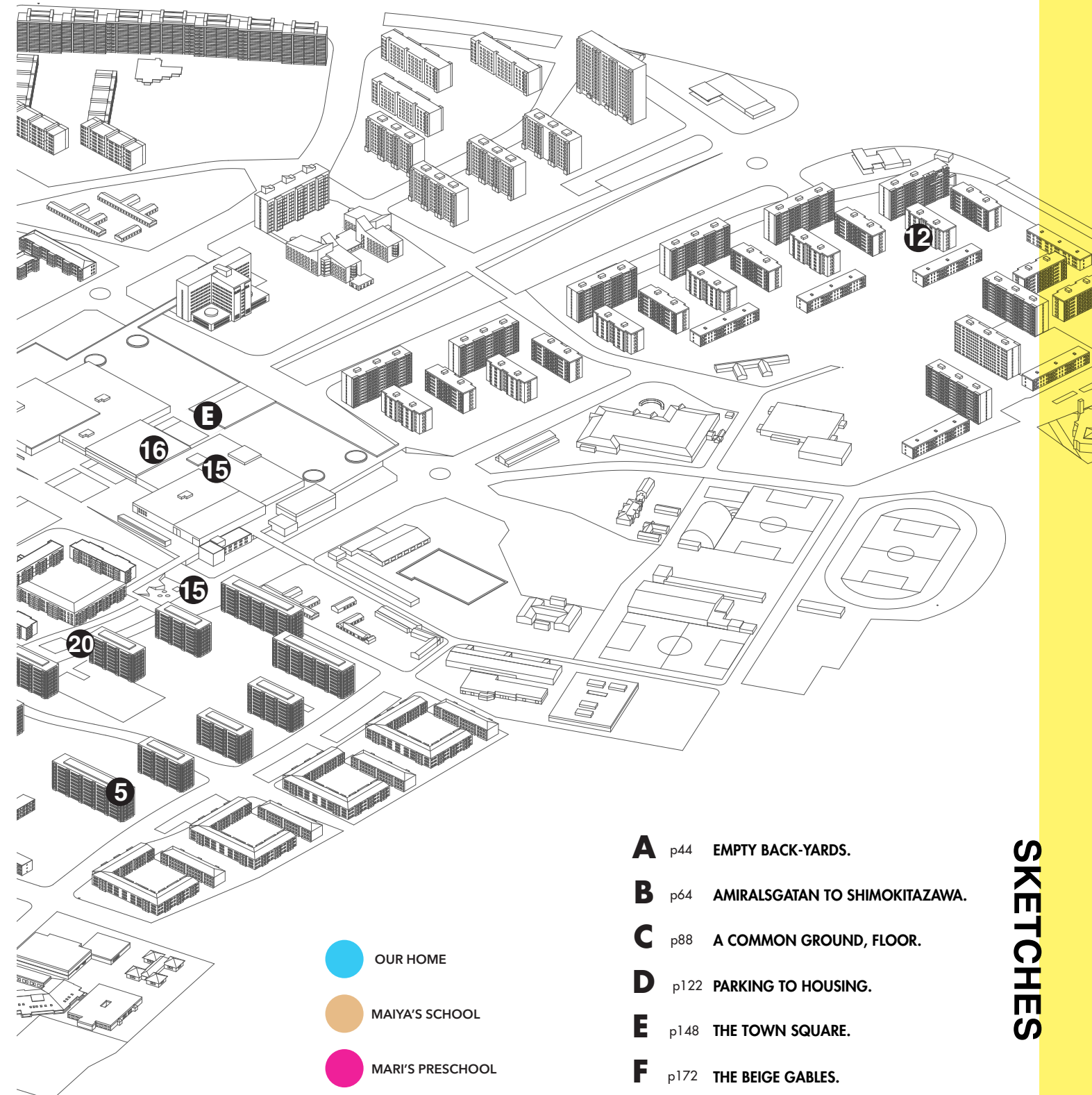
Rosengård as I have seen and felt it. Sometimes the chapters are accompanied by the drawings and ideas of improvements that stuck with me, while other chapters are simply just observations and reflections. In terms of my philosophical view point, this research adopts a constructivist ontological stance, together with an interpretative epistemological perspective. In plain English, it means that I aim to construct my own reality through my experiences in the search for understanding matters at hand, while also acknowledging that any other person's reality might be just as true as mine. As opposed to an objective stance, which aims to uncover one true reality. Instead, my mindset leads me to believe that the more subjective realities we collect, understand and emotionally relate to, the better equipped we are to deal with whatever needs to be dealt with. Like segregation.

You might also be wondering to whom I actually wrote this? First of all, there are some people that has to read these 21 chapters whether they like it or not. Namely, my tutor Jesús Mateo and my examiner Tomas Tägil, amongst others from Lund School of Architecture. But this project wasn't exactly written for them. Even though I believe that any planner or architect who is not accustomed to these areas and their qualities could learn from reading this text, the aim has instead been to keep it accessible for anyone with an interest in the subjects I touch on. Or better yet, anyone completely uninterested in the subjects I touch on. If a person like that finds and enjoys this, it would make me very happy. So, if you are expecting the usual academic structure of architectural theories being dutifully applied onto a current site and case, with flawless solutions lined up in a neat row, this text will probably disgruntle you. All I wish to do is to give you a sample of life from Rosengård. An approach motivated by the simple reason that our built environment in the end should be a servant of the lives we wish to live in it.

Enough of introduction. Here it is, our first year at Sjöblads väg 39, third floor to the right.



# SJÖBLADS VÄG 39.



SKETCHES

- A** p44 EMPTY BACK-YARDS.
- B** p64 AMIRALSGATAN TO SHIMOKITAZAWA.
- C** p88 A COMMON GROUND, FLOOR.
- D** p122 PARKING TO HOUSING.
- E** p148 THE TOWN SQUARE.
- F** p172 THE BEIGE GABLES.

- OUR HOME
- MAIYA'S SCHOOL
- MARI'S PRESCHOOL

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CHAPTERS

# CHAPTERS

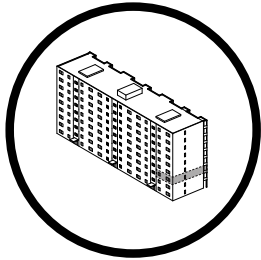
1 The Starting Point.



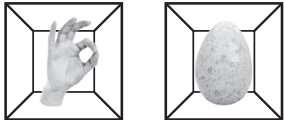
2 A Million New Homes.



3 Finding a place in Rosengård.



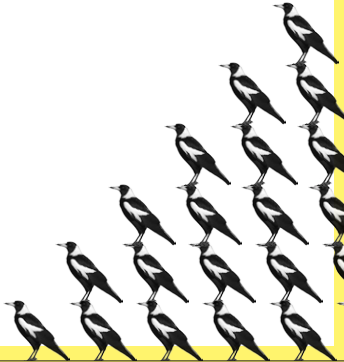
4 First Encounters.



5 The Two Ladies From Palestine.



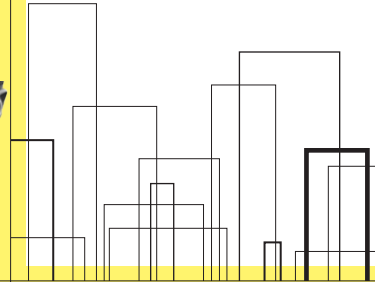
6 Magpies, Strange Queens and the Ying Yang of Cities.



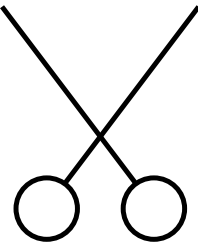
7 One Great Smile and Two Important Letters.



8 An Unintentional City Dweller.



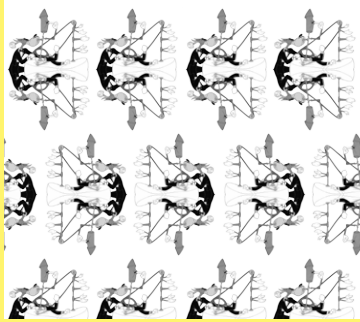
13 The Barber on Bennets Bazaar.



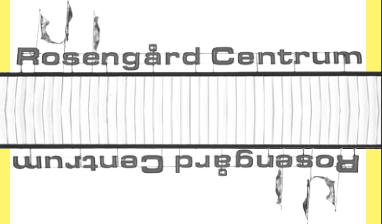
14 A Boy Killed on Amiralsgatan.



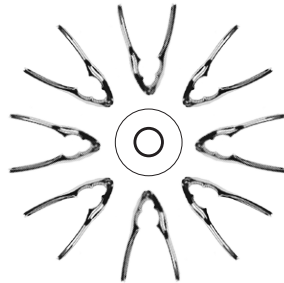
15 Being Seen and Being Heard.



16 Open House at Rosengård Centrum.



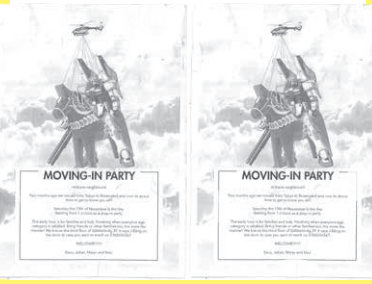
9 A Nut to Crack Within a Nut to Crack.



10 Hearing Is Believing.



11 My Daughter Shared Bunk-Bed With a Lady From Thailand.



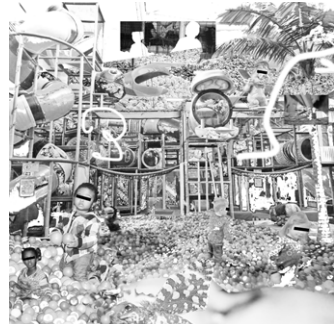
12 Kick-Boxing, Gods and Culture Casbah.



17 A Visit to Romania.



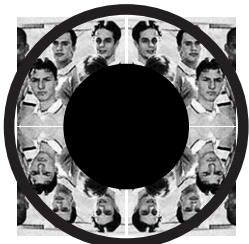
18 Maiya's Seventh Birthday Party.



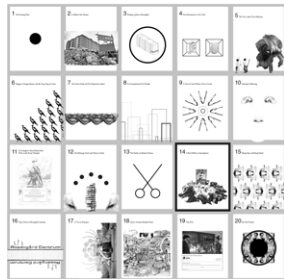
19 Tim Pool.



20 My New Friend.



21 The Final Critique.





# SKETCHES

**A** BEHIND THE BACK OF THE BUILDINGS.



?

Can these unused green spaces be of joy for someone?

**B** AMIRALSGATAN TO SHIMOKITAZAWA.



?

Could Amiralsgatan perhaps do more?

**C** A COMMON GROUND FLOOR.



?

?

Could we use the yard and the bottom floor in a better way?

**D** PARKING TO HOUSING.



?

Is this the best place to have a parking lot?

**E** THE TOWN SQUARE.



?

?

Can the most social place in Rosengård remain as a parking lot?

**F** THE BEIGE GABLES.



?

?

?

?

Can these gables be used in another way?



# DISTRICTS OF ROSENGÅRD

1 EMILSTORP

2 ÖSTRA KYRKOGRÅDEN

3 APELGÅRDEN

4 KRYDDGÅRDEN

5 HERRGÅRDEN

6 ÖRTAGÅRDEN

7 TÖRNROSEN

8 PERSBORG

9 VÄSTRA KATTARP

• These are the five districts that my stories revolve around. Mostly because that's where I have been, but also since they are more prone to segregation.

 OUR HOME

 MAIYA'S SCHOOL

 MARI'S PRESCHOOL







# 1 EMILSTORP



Emilstorp is one of Malmö's most recently built industrial areas. 1533 people work here and 8 people are registered as living here.



# 2 ÖSTRA KYRKOGRÅRDEN



The largest graveyard in Malmö, drawn by the renowned architect Sigurd Lewerentz in 1917. Inaugurated in 1921. Until 1969, Lewerentz was responsible for all buildings and additions to the facilities. Protestants, orthodox, catholics, muslims and jews all have their own separate burial grounds.

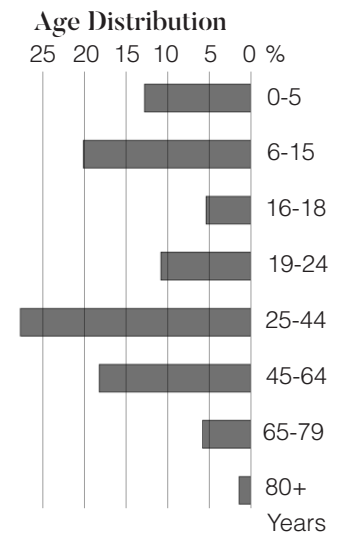
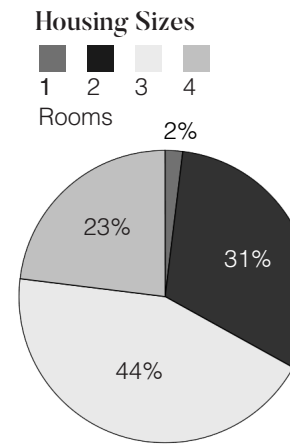


# 5 TÖRNROSEN



Also known as Old Rosengård, Törnrosen was the first district built in 1965.

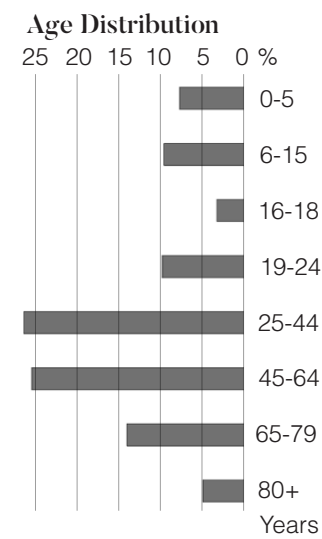
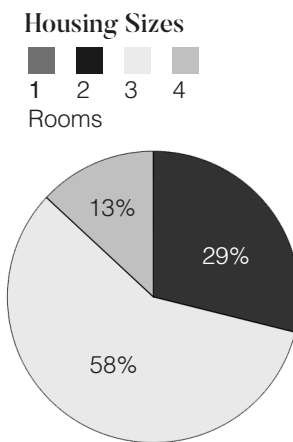
Apartments: 997  
Inhabitants: 3184  
Form of tenure: Rental 100% MKB



# 3 APELGÅRDEN



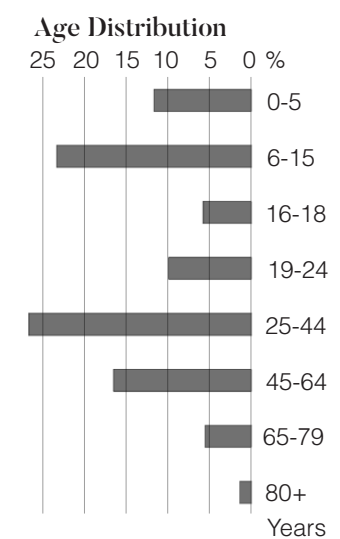
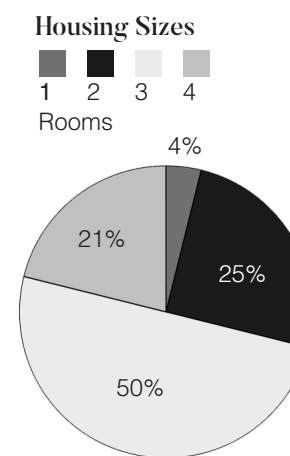
Apartments: 738  
Inhabitants: 3511  
With foreign background: 78%  
In the working force: 51%  
Cars per 100 inhabitants: 31  
Form of tenure: Owner flat 100% HSB



# 6 ÖRTAGÅRDEN



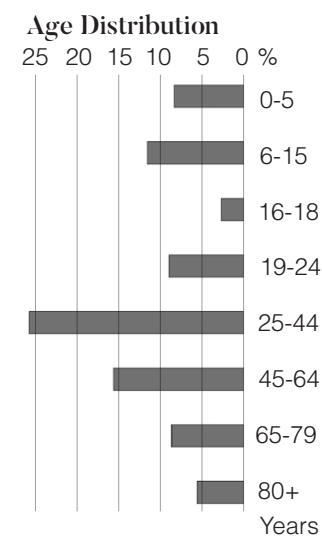
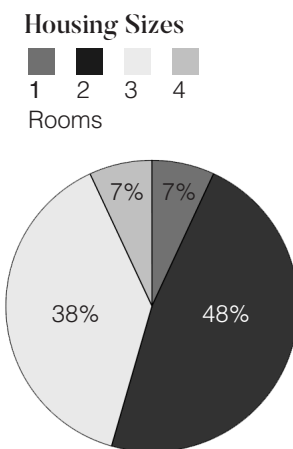
Apartments: 1422  
Inhabitants: 4790  
With foreign background: 92%  
In the working force: 35%  
Cars per 100 inhabitants: 15  
Form of tenure: Rental 100% MKB



# 4 KRYDDGÅRDEN



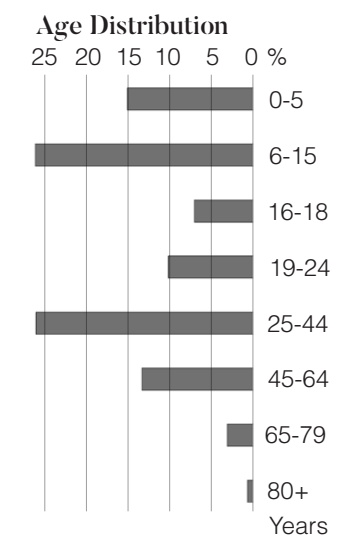
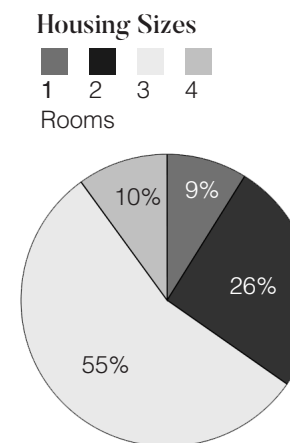
Apartments: 1037  
Inhabitants: 3803  
With foreign background: 83%  
In the working force: 35%  
Cars per 100 inhabitants: 20  
Form of tenure: Rental 69% Private, Owner flat 31%



# 7 HERRGÅRDEN



Apartments: 1375  
Inhabitants: 4448  
With foreign background: 96%  
In the working force: 15%  
Cars per 100 inhabitants: 9  
Form of tenure: Rental 88% Private, 12% MKB



# 2 A Million New Homes.



First, the background. If you are familiar with how areas like Rosengård came to be and how the current debate regarding them sounds, feel free to skip this chapter. But if you are not, stay tight.

Entering the post-war era. After years of horror and despair, fascism had finally been defeated and optimism was on an all time high. Sweden's neutral position and lack of military involvement in the two world wars had left the country with an economical advantage and money was rushing in. Industries were growing like never before and the population was increasing at a staggering speed. Sweden was experiencing what later came to be known as "the record years". But this upward spiral didn't come without side-effects. The housing market was not prepared for the urbanization that paralleled this growth. Not enough was being built and the houses that did exist were often lacking necessities like toilets, ventilation or even water. As the housing deficiency increased, the public opinion got louder and louder. Up until the point where the Social-Democratic government, then led by the late Tage Erlander, had to do something drastic. The solution was going to be what we today call *Miljonprogrammet*. From 1965 to 1975, a million new homes was to be built with governmental subsidies. In 10 years, no one would be without a home.

For reference, the total amount of dwellings in Sweden by November 1st 1960 was 2 675 095<sup>(2)</sup>. *Miljonprogrammet* therefore meant an increase of 37%. As you can imagine, cities couldn't just naturally evolve by more than a third of their size in only ten years, so to achieve this, Sweden adopted the ideas of modernism and its planning ideals. Efficiency was key. Building elements were standardized to lower the costs and building time. Hygiene and comfort was going to reach a higher standard for everyone. Functions were to be separated for everyone's convenience. You work at one place, you shop at another place and you sleep at a third place. The home was simply to become a place to rest when your working day was over. To get enough green areas around the multi-story houses, new districts often became enclaves in the outskirts of cities. This meant that a lot of transportation was going to be needed. Already in 1959, the Swedish parliament passed a plan called "Vägplan för Sverige" (Road plan for Sweden). An overall strategy which explains that roads were to direct the placement of houses and not the other way around, which was the norm before<sup>(3)</sup>. The car came to be a crucial instrument of daily life.



The wheels of industrialism kept spinning at a high pace. Especially in Malmö. Economically, politically and socially, Malmö was referred to as a model city<sup>(4)</sup>. In fact, it went so well that the whole political spectrum from left to right was united. With the economy going this well, a fairly low amount of tax was sufficient to supply the inhabitants with high standards of public services. The influx of workers demanded new housing districts to be built. Many of which were raised from scratch on farm fields around the city according to the afore-mentioned planning ideal. One of which was Rosengård. But then, the tides started to turn. Urbanization was replaced by ruralization, population trends faltered and economical forecasts did not yield the income that was predicted. Despite the success of the welfare state, the social division was now increasing and a new word to describe the situation was born. Segregation. In 1969, the prime minister Olof Palme, said this in a speech in regards to the situation in Malmö:

“Studies bear witness to a lingering poverty, the birth of an immigrant slum. From there we have received reports of a class divide on the cultural stage, tendencies of segregation in both housing and schools.”

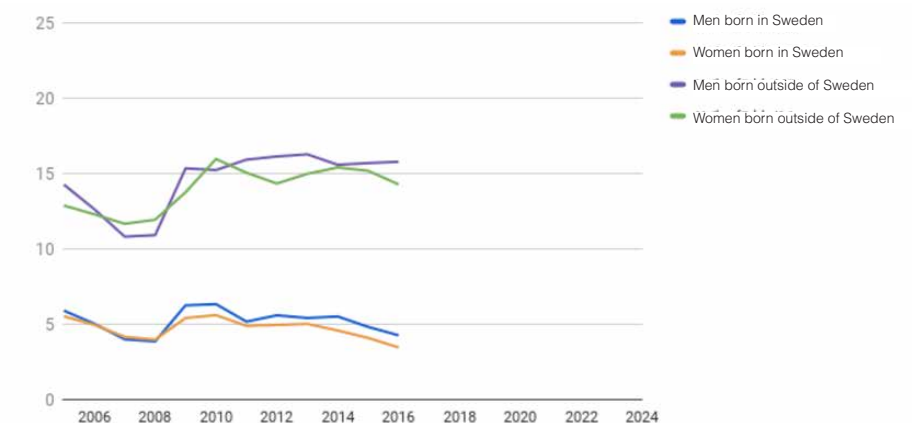
-Olof Palme

Although the politicians had realized that a million houses was no longer to be needed, the building industry was already in motion to complete the program. It was too late to go back and an overproduction was evident. Many apartments stood empty from the day they were completed. Years passed and the world kept on fighting. The Iranian revolution, the wars of Iraq, the Somalian civil war, the Bosnian war, the Palestine-Israel conflict and now the Syrian war are just some of the conflicts that made people flee their homeland in the search for safety. And since districts created in miljonprogrammet was lacking tenants, a physical and ethnical segregation naturally evolved. A tendency noticeable in many Swedish cities, but most prominently in Malmö since its geographical location as a gateway to the rest of Europe makes it attractive for refugees.

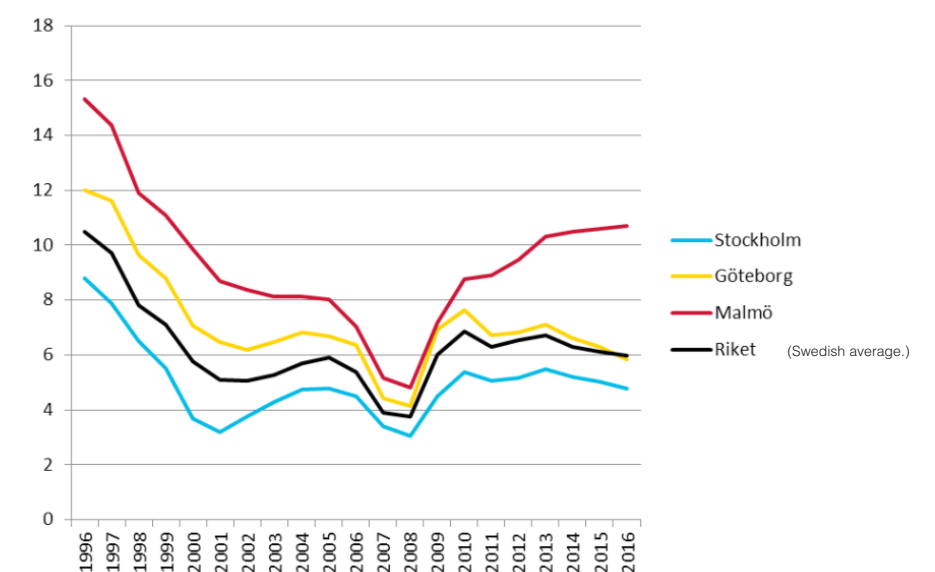
Today, these areas are where we find the strongest social unrest in Sweden. Whether this is actually because of how we designed our cities during the 60s or not is just one of the countless debates that has sprung out of the fact that Sweden is now seeing what

is starting to be referred to as an ethnic under-class. A social divide to a large degree, at least statistically, linked to whether you or your parents were born in Sweden or not. The unemployment rate of people with non-Swedish origin is outstandingly higher than the unemployment rate of people with Swedish origin. And as you can see on the graph at the bottom of the page, Malmö has a big struggle ahead.

Percentage unemployment 2005-2016. 20-64 years of age. By origin and gender.<sup>(5)</sup>



Percentage unemployment 2005-2016. 16-64 years of age. By city and country as a whole.<sup>(6)</sup>



Opinions regarding these issues are naturally many and scattered, and the debate is running at a high pitch. All the way from ruling politicians down to the everyday citizen. The debate is too wide to give you a full overview, but I hand-picked some of the most interesting and relevant viewpoints to have in mind as you continue reading the text.

First of all, I want to mention Per-Markku Ristilammi's book "Rosengård and the Black Poetry - A study of Modern Alternity", written in 1993. For anyone interested in Rosengård and the complexities of segregation, this is an important read. A gathering of thoughts and interviews handling historical and present political and psychological currents in regards to the area. In a chapter about the planning ideal that created Rosengård, Per-Markku says:

The people that had decided, planned and financed areas like Rosengård had, from their point of view, a hard time understanding the strong reactions. Rosengård was for them the end of a long struggle against environments that represented poverty and humiliation. [...] And this fight was fought with modernity as a weapon. It was not in their realm of possibilities that these areas could bring any sort of inconvenience. [...] The problem was that the modern aesthetics did not acknowledge the actual differences in societal classes. Reality did not align with the ideology. And since the houses were built with equality in mind, a crisis occurred as the architecture did not achieve this goal.

-Per-Markku Ristilammi, 1993.

"Rosengård and the Black Poetry - A study of Modern Alternity" p 90-91

Nowadays, densification is often seen as a natural way of developing these areas further. Especially in Malmö where the city-planning office has decided not to grow the outer boundaries of the city. In a competition aiming to rethink the future of Rosengård, the firms *Radar* and *Urban Innovation Lab* points to the UN Habitat guidelines as the path to follow<sup>(7)</sup>. These guidelines states that areas should have between 15 000 - 45 000 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> and that at least 40 % of the total ground floor constituting of business and other activities. Both values of which Rosengård is far below. Furthermore UN claims

that no form of tenure should exceed 50% of the total housing stock. To implement these goals, a vast densification plan is presented by the two firms.

But naturally, densification in these areas is not without its critics. Eva Kristensson from *SLU* high-lights the importance of the big green areas of miljonprogrammet<sup>(8)</sup>. They make up a very unique quality that is now being threatened, she says. Spacious and roomy outdoors is a provenly appreciated feature of a living area. And since these areas are already crowded, in ways our statistics can't prove, why should we densify them even more, she asks. Instead of trying to create a city atmosphere we should focus on what is already great there.

Jerker Söderlind, the architect behind *Stadsliv AB*, is of the opposite opinion. Claiming that it is exactly these vast open spaces and lack of city life that made these areas unpopular in the first place<sup>(9)</sup>. He suggests that new streets should be drawn all across the yards between the buildings to give them life. Businesses in the bottom floors will give the neighbourhoods a chance to survive economically. He goes even further by claiming that all apartments should be sold to the people living in them. In that way, people will likely care more about their homes and surroundings, while also giving them possibilities to renovate or expand their houses as they please. More governmental subsidies will not help, instead let the people show their own strength by handing over the power to them, Jerker concludes.

The architect and researcher Erik Stenberg points to the mental barriers as our biggest problem to overcome<sup>(10)</sup>. After hearing so much criticism being thrown at these areas in media he decided to move to Tensta, one of Stockholms most infamous miljonprogram-suburbs, to find out for himself. He has now lived there for over 12 years and says that the rumors couldn't be further from reality. The area is calm without the rush of city-life and all the greenery makes it beautiful, he continues.

"Ultimately, it becomes a matter of attitude. If someone says that this area is bad and ugly I can just laugh at them, but if a twelve year old hears this, how is that going to make him feel about it?"

Erik also brings up the technical features of the buildings and claims that they are actually built in a very flexible way. Meant to be redone over the years, although it was never

really taken advantage of. Since the facades often carries the weight of the buildings, the interior can be almost completely reshaped<sup>(11)</sup>. *Miljonprogrammet* was built for the nuclear family, two kids and two parents. Which means mostly two-room and three-room apartments. A size that doesn't match the family size of the current clientele. Instead of two three-room apartments, you can make a one-room and a five-room apartment. Or even a seven-room apartment. Re-planning the apartments is a crucial way of helping these areas, more so than any big-scaled intervention, claims Erik Stenberg.

Another voice in this discourse comes from the book "Ohälsosam Arkitektur" (Unhealthy Architecture). The doctor and stress researcher Gösta Alfvén argues that these areas create a constant underlying stress on its inhabitants. A lack of variation associated with this physical environment contradicts an inherent human need, which is curiosity<sup>(12)</sup>. For decades he has worked in Hallunda, a miljonprogram-area outside of Stockholm, and says the effect is obvious. He explains that all sensations and emotional reactions corresponds directly to the environment around us. The social, psychological and linguistic connections between us are essential for our wellbeing, which needs support from the architecture around us. Curiosity, joy and social bonding are three very important feelings that gives us an urge to explore and discover, Gösta continues. This creates dopamine and oxytocin, we relax our bodies. Memories and thoughts float freely. A scenario that seldom occurs when walking amongst the standardized concrete blocks of *Miljonprogrammet*, according to Gösta Alfvén. Fear and distress makes us want to fight, escape or hide. Some of the feelings which can be created by things like traffic noise, physical barriers and repetitious facades. Not to mention the social stigma of being forced to live in a place that the public looks down upon, Gösta continues.

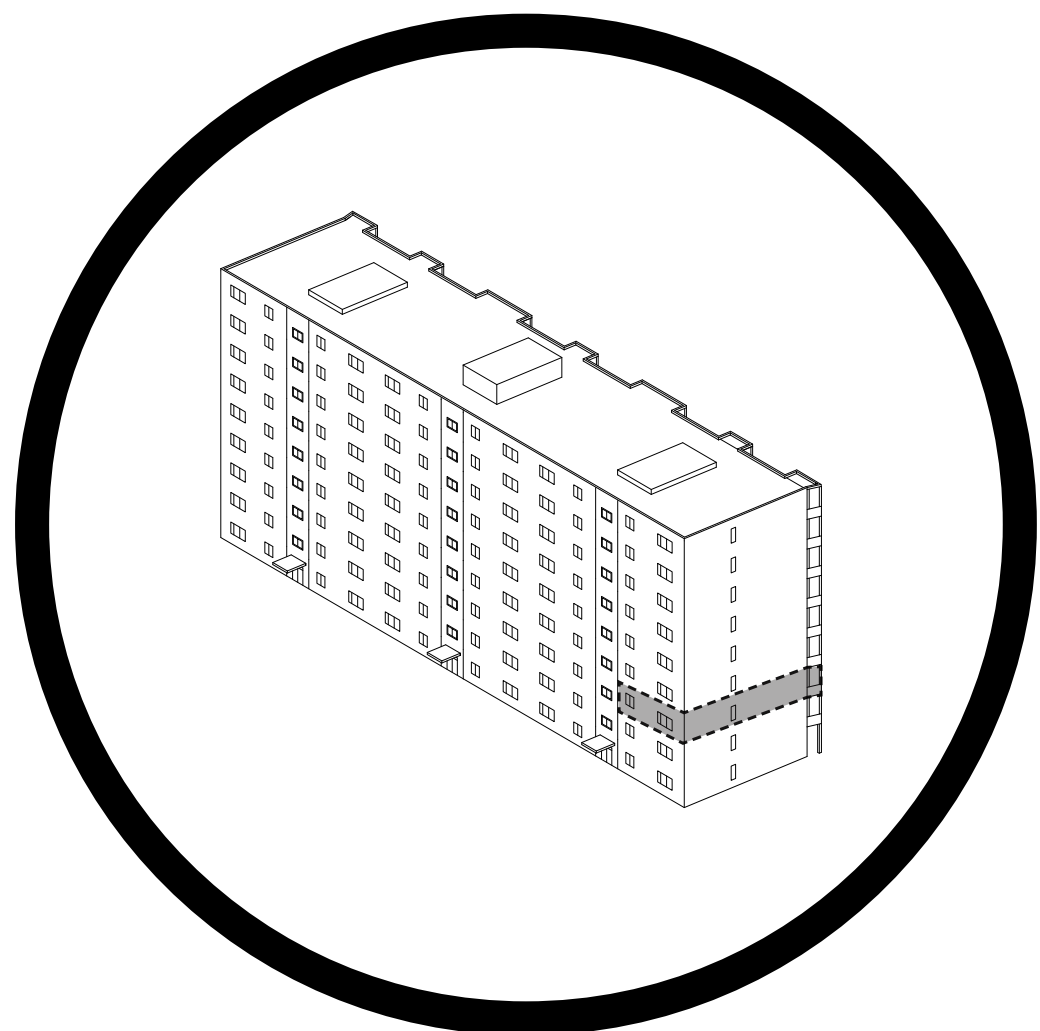
A project interesting to compare to *Miljonprogrammet* is *Pruitt-Igoe*<sup>(13)</sup>. A housing project in St. Louis USA, meant to rid the poor from crowded and unhygienic living conditions. "Finally, a bed for everyone" a former inhabitant explained delightfully in the film *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth*. But just as in Sweden, trends were misread, population declined and the city of St. Louis couldn't keep up with the maintenance costs of the 33 eleven-floor buildings. Elevators broke down, heating stopped working and soon vandalism had left *Pruitt-Igoe* in a state of chaos. Tenants who felt like they were purposely segregated and neglected by the people in charge of the city started to attack fire-trucks and law

enforcement coming into the area. "This environment is created by someone that doesn't like me", a tenant said. "We are not happy about this, and we want them to know it". Already in 1972, only 17 years after its conception, *Pruitt-Igoe* was demolished. Often seen as the demise of modernism. Although many circumstances makes this project very different from *Miljonprogrammet*, some are unpleasantly similar. *Rosengård* have seen periods where law-enforcement and fire-fighters were afraid to go there<sup>(14)</sup>. Car burnings is something that the area has suffered from through-out the years, and still is. In July 2016, 26 cars were burned within two weeks<sup>(15)</sup>. A newspaper talked to two men that had burned cars 10 years ago<sup>(16)</sup>. They say that the reason is the same now as back then. Kids have nothing to do. Frustration from lack of occupation. One of the guys, still in his late 20s, tells the journalist, "If they read my CV and see which street I live on, they are going to throw my job application in the trash right away".

"We don't need more police, we need opportunities"



# 3 Finding a Place in Rosengård.



Kana and the kids were still in Japan when I got a mail from the Swedish migration office saying that their Swedish visa was finally approved. They booked a flight right away and I was now on an urgent mission to find us a place to live.

During the second viewing, at Von lingens väg in Rosengård, something quite unpleasant happened. I came a bit early and therefore had some time alone with the real-estate broker. A self-content old man with a peculiar smile. He started to give me a tour. "This is great (...), that is great (...), this is great too", and so on. Right in the end of it, we went out to the little garden behind the house, weirdly placed in conjunction with a big parking lot. An old Swedish lady was out watering her plants next door. I waved to her and she responded with slight muttering. I thought I had heard enough of selling arguments for one day but there was one more to be heard.

- "And another good thing about this apartment is that you have a Swede as your neighbour. So it will be much more calm." he said with a convinced little laughter. I looked at him for a while without answering.

- "But come on, its the truth." he said with a laughter again, this time a bit more awkward. I was in a slight state of shock. How do one answer this? As if I came to Rosengård to spend time with old Swedish ladies? I decided not to say anything and did my best to escape this situation as fast as I could. As I left the apartment, an Arabic couple with a new-born baby passed me by the door. A slight shiver went down my spine as I heard him greet them welcome. I had just gotten a disturbing peek behind the curtain of a mind-set one usually only hears about, but seldom gets to experience in broad day-light.

At last we found our place. Sjöblads väg 39. A three-room apartment with a size of 83m<sup>2</sup>. The price was 9530kr/m<sup>2</sup>. Significantly less than the average price of apartments in Malmö, which in writing is 25522kr/m<sup>2(1)</sup>. That doesn't mean our apartment was in a bad state, quite the contrary. Apelgården, as this part of Rosengård is called, actually seems to be the most sought after place of the whole area. Something that the tenant-organization "BRF Ida" obnoxiously underlines on the first page of their website.

*Welcome to Ida, The beautiful part of Rosengård.*





Dropping stuff off by the nearest road.







Maiya realizing that she is going to get her own room.









Neighbour boy biking around in our yard.



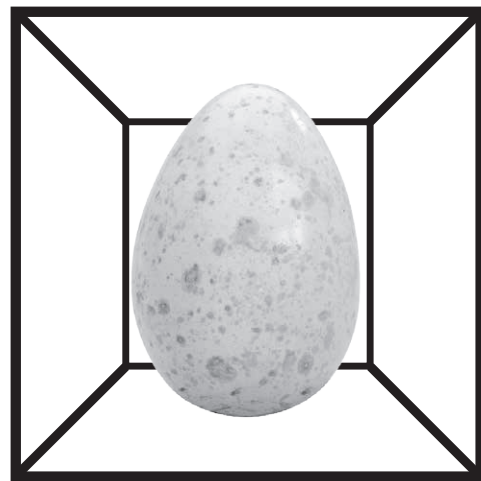
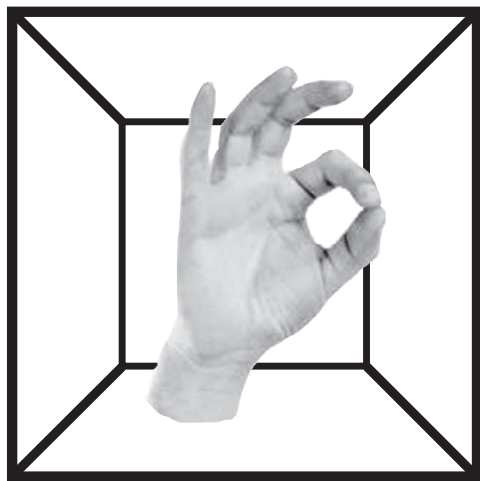




In 2010, Östra Greve Folkhögskola made the project *Sub Rosa* where art students were to decorate Törnrosen with installations. Some of them are still here.



# 4 First Encounters.



We drove from my hometown Karlskrona an early Saturday morning in September, with a full rental carriage bumping around behind the car. There was a slow kind of excitement in the air. We had been waiting for this moment quite some time now. Under normal circumstances, a partner-immigration like ours was said to take around 4 months. Due to the war in Syria, the queue was understandably longer. We had been waiting for about a year but now, we were finally on the last stage of the journey to our new home. I turned my head to see how everyone was doing in the backseat. All three of them had fallen asleep. Two and a half hours later, the woman in the GPS finally informed us that we had reached our destination. So far so good, but we quickly stumbled on a problem. The traffic separation of this planning ideal made itself known as we circulated for a while to see if there was any way to get the car in front of the entrance for unpacking everything. We couldn't find any, and settled upon walking some 50 meters to the door. I had only been here once before and the rest of the family had only seen pictures of it. A main factor in our decision to get this apartment was surely the yard since it was swarming with kids, and today was no different. We started to carry our brown boxes and furniture from the road to the entrance. As I came back from carrying my first round of stuffs, there was a little crew of giggling girls standing there.

-“Come out, come out! He is coming!” one of them shouted as I approached.

The most daring of them seemed to have ventured inside the carriage. She jumped out of it as soon as she heard her friend shout.

-“What were you doing in there?” I asked suspiciously, thinking that they were up to no good.

-“Just looking.” she said with a big smile. “What is that? And that? And that?” she continued before I had time to respond.

It took a couple of seconds to read the situation but I figured that if they were really intending to steal something, they would've probably ran off by now. As I started to talk to them, explaining what my everything in the carriage was, I felt bad that I first suspected them for being thieves. This was just a couple of curious girls, with manners I wasn't used to. After I was done explaining, they started to help us carrying everything to the door. It was adorable. By late noon, we were done. I thanked the crew of girls and hugged my dad goodbye. We were now inhabitants here. Living in this huge beige house from the 60s, in an area which everyone has an opinion about. It felt big and small at the same time.

The first days I had some more encounters that I wasn't used to. When waiting in line at the supermarket, a man from the middle-east in his 50s looked at me and saw that I had very few things in my shopping cart and said I of course should go before him. He had a massive amount of food in his cart.

-“Speak up!” he said. “Why are you so shy? You Swedes don't have to be that shy all the time! Bwa ha ha!” He continued with a very loud and warm laughter.

He continued the conversation by himself and before we got to the counter, he had more or less gone through his whole life. Where he was from, where he had worked, where his kids lived, what his pet bird was called and so on. That was an intense round of shopping, I thought to myself on the way back.

Early September was hot and the yard was continuously filled with kids. But kids were not the only people enjoying the outdoors. Every other day, on safe distance from the slides, the swings and the screaming youngsters, a group of about ten elderly people sat around a wooden table by a trellis in the shades of some bushes. They looked friendly enough so I approached them and asked if I could sit down. I got some nods, smiles and hello's and sat myself down next to a man in an electric wheelchair. A woman said she had noticed that me and my family were new here and welcomed us to the neighbourhood. The others joined in saying welcome and I thanked them all. It was a slow but comfortable atmosphere. These people had been friends for a long time it seemed. Some of them had even been living here for as long as Rosengård had existed. The most talkative ones started to tell me some stories. I was happy to hear the history about the buildings and the architect behind them. But I also got to hear quite a lot of complaining. They really disliked the school that had been built right next to the yard a couple of years ago, the one Maiya just started a week earlier. Since the yard has no physical barrier to the school, pupils sometimes come and annoy people living here, they said.

-“Such a shame that these boys here doesn't know how to behave”, said a firm lady with silver hair.

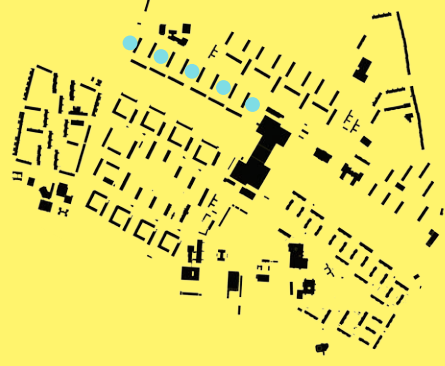
She told me about some incidents and it saddened me to hear them. But her unforgiving tone saddened me just as much. As if these young people not behaving right were already doomed to a life of indecency. And as if there was no bigger picture that might have been responsible for shaping the minds of them. I couldn't handle the discussion anymore and switched subject to something more graspable. I had noticed that the

yards on the backsides of these buildings were barely ever used, even though they were well-trimmed and had things like boule-courts and fire-places on them. An old man from Croatia agreed and said he only saw them used a handful of times the last decade. Strange, but understandable I thought. They were clearly left-over space, and with two nine-floor facades looming over you without as much as an entrance to connect them to human activity, an odd energy-consuming atmosphere made itself present. A feeling enhanced by the fact that the first floor windows are only frosted glass looking into storage rooms. Moving-boxes, old vacuum cleaners, broken bikes, inflatable boats, extra couches etc are piled up clearly visible for anyone outside. I told them what I thought of it and the gathering of elderly people agreed with the peculiarity of my observations. But it was not exactly a topic of debate. It seemed like they had lived here for too long to ponder such things. Things that just are the way they are.

What allows for this greenery on the backsides of the buildings in the first place is the fact that the parking has been moved to a huge underground garage right underneath the yard instead of being stuck overground. Many other buildings around here, or from this era overall, are cursed with having grey seas of asphalt and loads of parked cars right outside your window, and not a well-trimmed yard, which I am very thankful for. But still, it's almost as if they stopped half-way through the design process. Could we make better use of these back-yards now that we went through all the hassle of moving the cars underground? As Malmö City is growing by 5000 people a year<sup>(1)</sup> while also having decided not to grow the city outside of its current limits, a huge densification process is currently underway<sup>(2)</sup>. What follows next is a serie of simple volume experiments as food for thought in the discussion of how to perhaps go about densifying these lonely and underutilized back-yards or any yard with similar features.



**A** BEHIND THE BACK OF THE BUILDINGS.



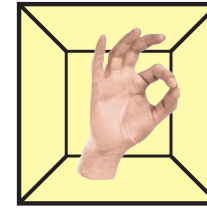
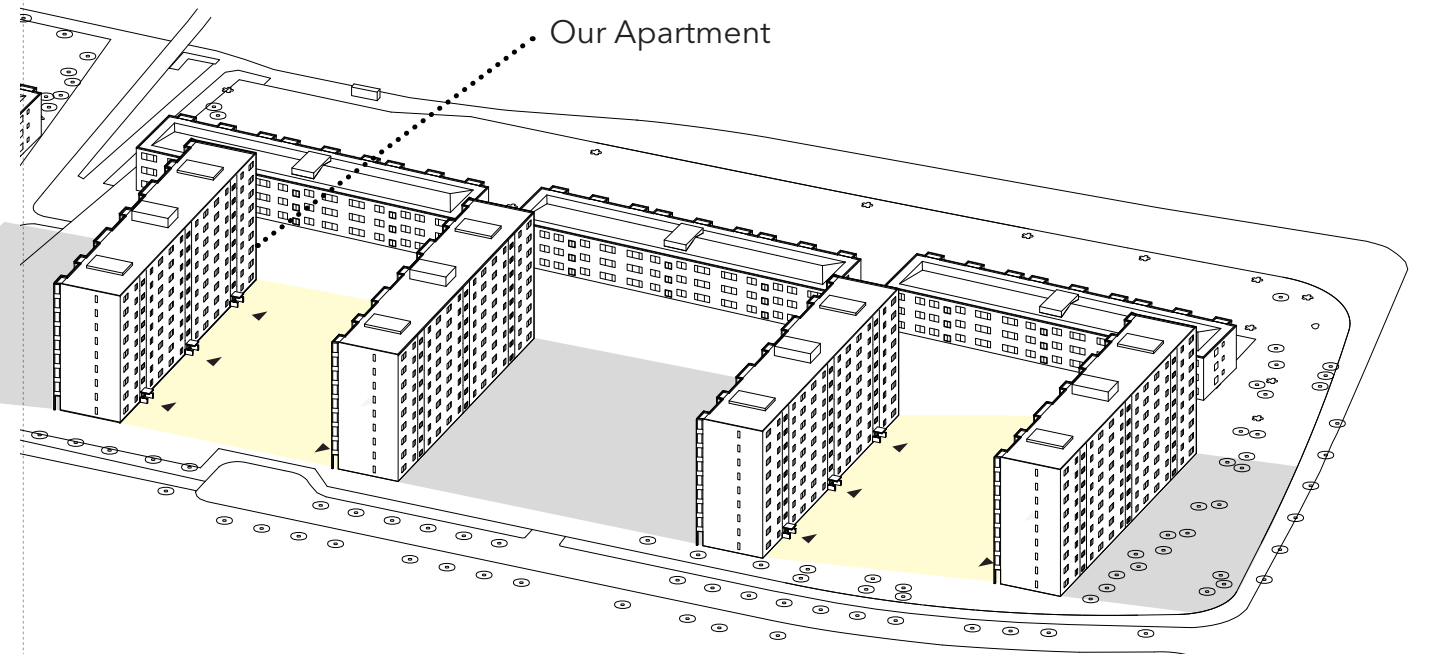
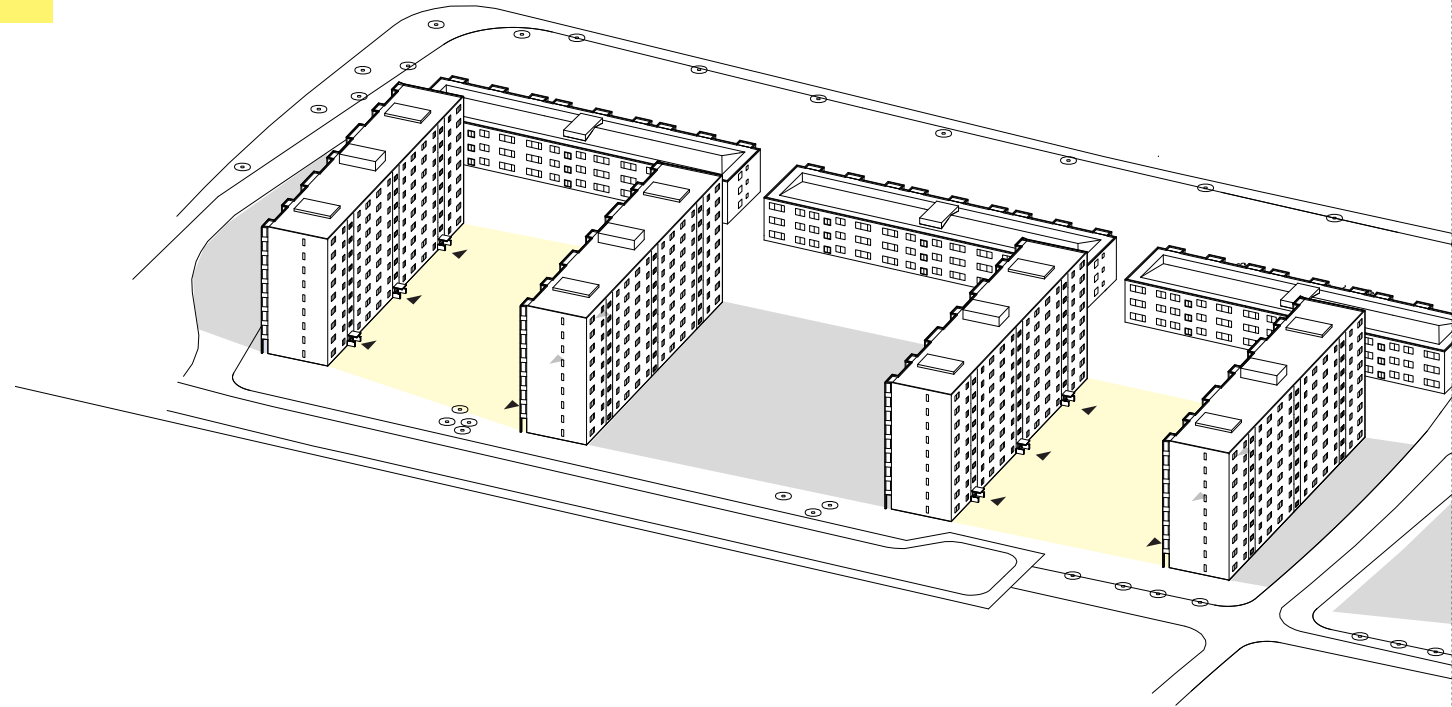
Can these unused green spaces be of joy for someone?



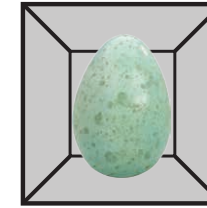
## Make use of the backyards?

Entrances are clearly the strongest factor when it comes to the activity of these yards. The ones without entrances, which are ironically even bigger, get no life. Since these huge green fields are more or less never used, there should be enough economical incentive to argue for an addition, since then there would be more households sharing the fee to Malmö town for the land.

Here follows 4 volume sketches of how to diversify housing in conjunction with the under-appreciated backyards. Adding my own estimation on the benefits and disadvantages of each volume study.



WELL  
WORKING  
SPACE



POTENTIALLY  
WELL  
WORKING  
SPACE



VOLUME STUDY NR 1

### Extend the first floors.

Building a set of housing protruding from the first floor in connection to the backyard?

- +**
  - Assigns the yard to someone.
  - Leaves it spacious still.
  - Gives the second floor garden balconies.
- - Makes the yard feel less public.
  - Tall buildings will throw shadows on them.
  - Not adding much aesthetic contrast.

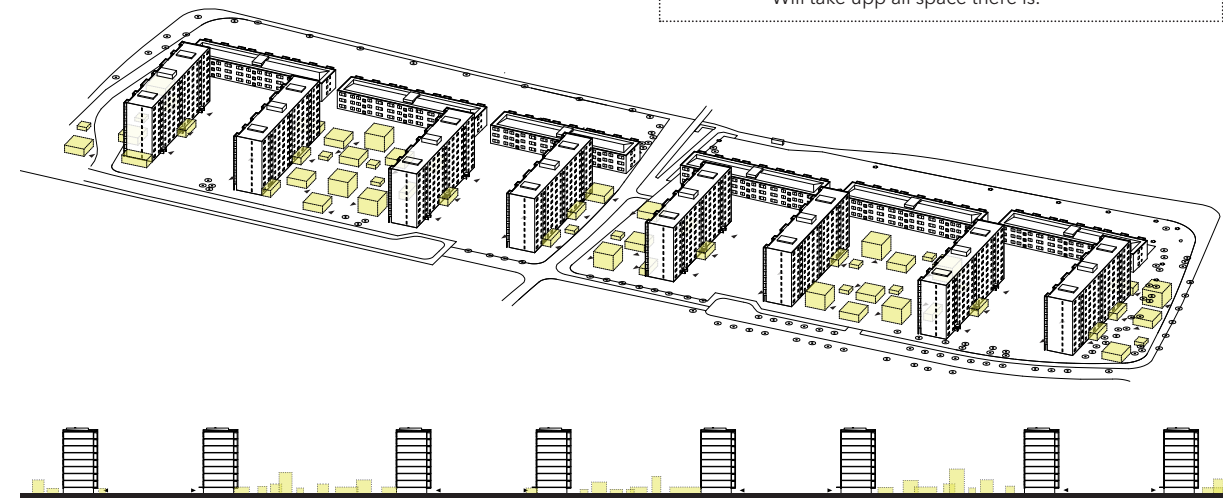


VOLUME STUDY NR 2

### Small units.

Add a mix of smaller houses in a variety of sizes and qualities?

- +**
  - Gives a variation in scale and expression.
  - Gives spatial contrasts.
  - Opportunity for unique housing and gardens.
- - Confusion between public and private space.
  - Do not blend in with surrounding volumes.
  - Will take up all space there is.

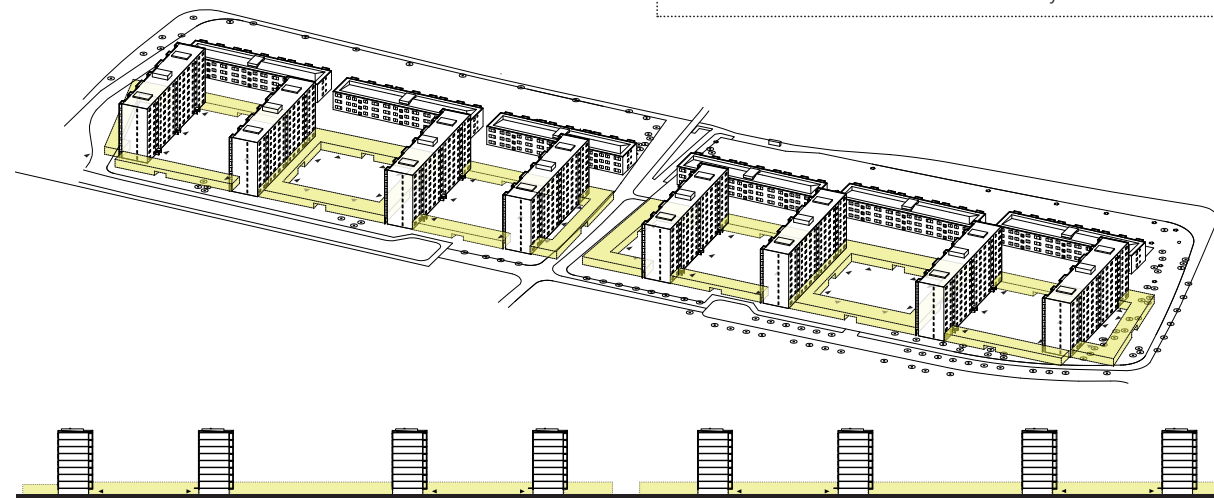


VOLUME STUDY NR 3

### Enclose the yards.

Adding one, two or three floors to enclose and define the space into courtyards?

- +**
  - Gives clarity about what space belongs to whom.
  - Can interact with the streets in a better manner.
  - Creates spatial sequences moving in and out.
- - Denies the rows of three-floor buildings access.
  - The taller we go, the lesser light the yards get.
  - Kids have less area to roam freely.

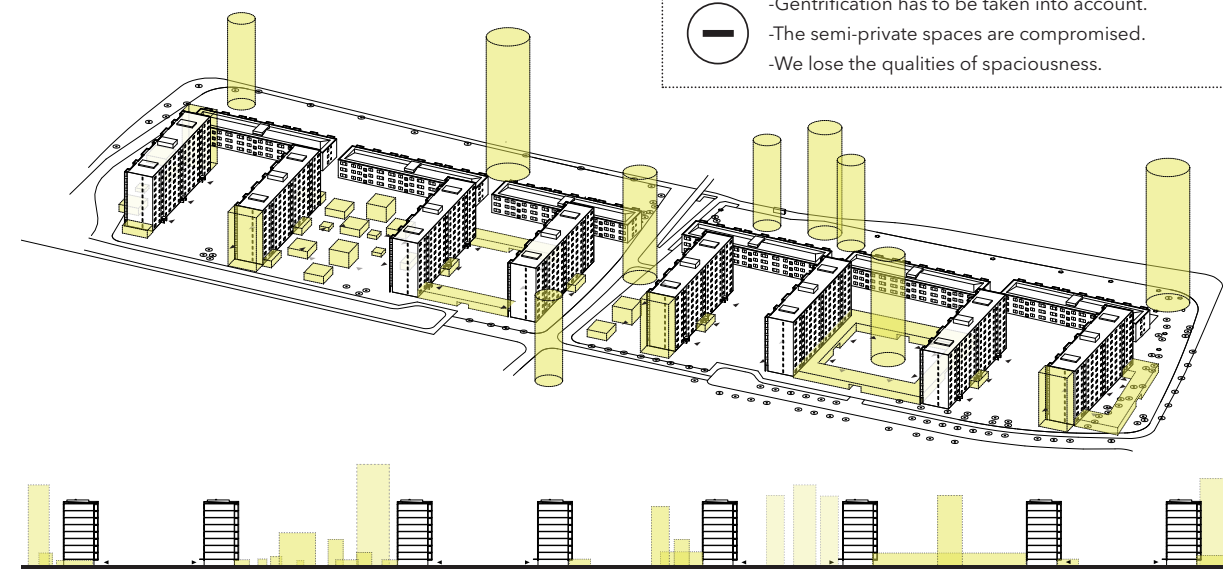


VOLUME STUDY NR 4

### The far future?

In 20 years, Malmö has grown by 100 000 people if we are to trust the current trend. Perhaps we have to prepare for something bigger. Will extreme densification be the case?

- +**
  - Divided development of land creates diversity.
  - Opportunity for economical self-sustainability.
  - Other tall buildings lighten up the hierarchy.
- - Gentrification has to be taken into account.
  - The semi-private spaces are compromised.
  - We lose the qualities of spaciousness.



# 5 The Two Ladies From Palestine.

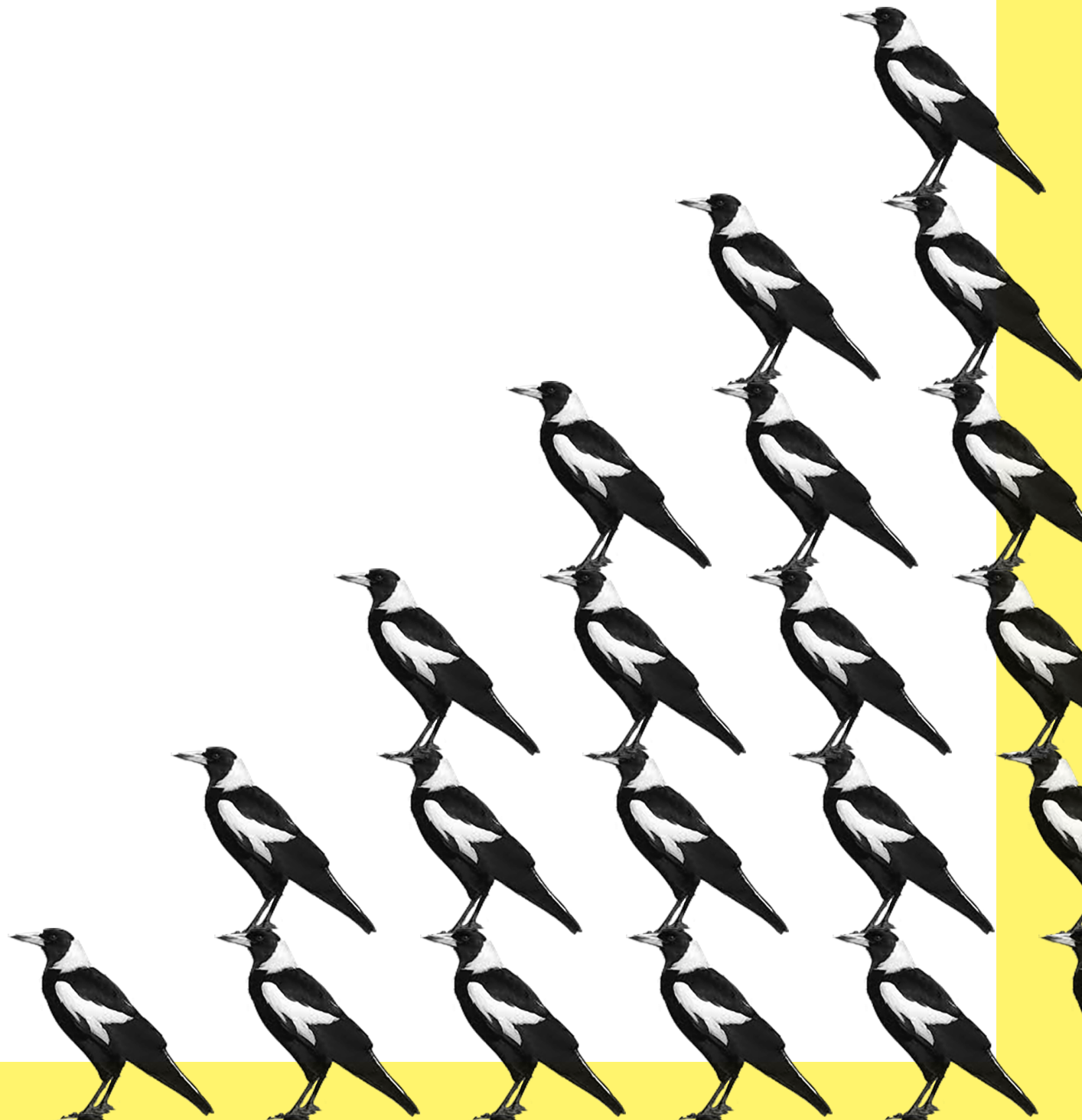


The first couple of weeks, I tried to walk around all the different areas as much as possible. One day I was in the area called Örtagården, the big one in the middle south of Amiralsgatan. Summer was still lingering on and I enjoyed every minute of the mild evening breeze. Passing around the corner of a big brown building, I saw two old ladies laughing and talking in a language unknown to me. They were pointing at the leaves of a plant. I felt a friendly atmosphere and approached them by asking if they had planted that flower by themselves. They had, and seemed very pleased that I asked. Every year they tried to plant new and different plants here. One of them gently snapped off a green chili-pepper and handed it to me. It was very spicy and not so tasty. We started to talk about Rosengård. They came from Palestine and had been here for 15 years now. A place I did not even know the location of, which embarrassed me. Luckily enough, they did not question my geographical or political knowledge of the middle-east, but instead continued to talk about their yard and how great it was to have a flower-bed right outside your door. They asked where I was from. I told them that I had just moved here from Tokyo and that I had lived in Malmö before, in the more central area called Möllevången. They looked shocked. Not because I had lived in Tokyo but because I had lived in Möllevången. -"How could you possibly want to move to Rosengård when you have lived in Möllevången" one of them exclaimed.

I was just as shocked to get the question. They seemed to see Möllevången as an upgrade to this place. They obviously never lived there. I remember my courtyard. It was hard, small and severely shaded. I used it twice in about two years. There was three kids from one family that played some football every now and then when the sun managed to lean over the rooftops with the right angle. But that was it. So far this week, my new courtyard here had been filled with kids every single afternoon. Playing football, water war, swinging the swings or sliding the slides. Maiya can't wait to finish her supper to go out and play. People are stopping by outside to enjoy the sun in the generous empty volumes between the houses everywhere. The encounter I was experiencing right now with these two charming ladies would definitely not have happened in Möllevången. Somehow this reminded me of the story about the emperor's new clothing. But reversed. Instead of a naked emperor with a crowd pretending his willy was covered, the crowd was now saying that the emperor was naked. Even though he was obviously wearing a beautiful dress. At least fit for the warmer season. Speaking of dresses, the ladies would really like more decor on the buildings, like in their home-town. Awfully dull facades here, they said.



# 6 Magpies, Strange Queens and the Ying Yang of Cities.



As you might or might not know, the magpie is a very common bird in Sweden. Kana, who just came from Tokyo where no magpies exist, absolutely loved it the first time she saw it. I couldn't understand it. The magpie? That boring old bird. I asked her why and she explained how the exotic and proud tail feathers reminded her of the tropics. How beautiful the simple black and white feathers were, shimmering in dark blue hues. It was interesting I thought, that I could probably have described it with a similar praise now that I hear it. If it wasn't for the fact that I hadn't seen thousands and thousands of magpies in my life. Due to the reduction of green areas in Tokyo, not much bird life is to be seen there at all. I guessed that she was starved for it. Taste is not really constant. What we appreciate often seem to depend on factors that goes beyond the preferences of our personalities. In this case, the frequency in which we had experienced the magpie decided that she was amazed by it and I was bored by it. Kana's newly found love for this bird reminded me of a word I stumbled on the other day.

Serendipity.

It sounds made up. Like some sort of strange queen from a magical land. But it is real, and means "The act of finding something valuable or delightful when you are not looking for it". A great word, isn't it? And when thinking about architecture, what a great attribute for a city, area or street to have. I guess you can add whatever content you want to that definition. As I read it in the context of architecture, it could mean everything from social encounters and activities to a variety of forms, expressions and spatial contrasts to indulge yourself in. Imagine choosing between a path full of serendipities to be expected and a path without serendipities to be expected. I don't know if you agree, but I dare to say that the average person probably prefers the path with serendipities. Humans do seem to possess a general demand for new experiences and impressions. It makes you wonder, why is this? Why can't we appreciate the magpie as it is, regardless of how often we see it? I am going to try to give you the biological explanation.

There is a reason why you are reading my text now. Another species would probably be more focused on not wasting valuable time. But you seem to be ok with losing an hour or two of your life reading a mediocre thesis with the hopes of maybe, just maybe, finding something that could potentially be of interest to you. Biologists explain that this behaviour stems from an evolutionary trait called neoteny<sup>(1)</sup>. A retention of juvenile

features, which practically means that our bodies and brains are partly stuck in a child-like state. For the human species, this was an metamorphic jackpot (or catastrophe, depending on how you see it). Like a kid facing an unknown world, neoteny makes us seek knowledge and experiences. Rewarding us for finding something new, which enables us to learn more or less to the day we die. In fact, you could say that adults are merely children with more experience. But the ability to constantly be able to learn comes with some notable side-effects. Undeniably, this curiosity also creates a certain thirst. Making us discontent if not quenched. One could even argue that this thirst is the root of greed and destruction, but I'll leave that for you to decide.

Every now and then, I try to imagine the human species without this curiosity. What would the world look like? How would we act and feel differently? How different would the built environment, or the demand for it, be? Would perhaps the apartment we live in now, in this safe, efficient and practical large-scaled housing block, have been more popular than the less spacious, less safe and less practical 19th-century apartments in the old town of Malmö? For example, if another kind of animal moved into an equivalently functional home as ours, that animal would probably never move out. No care left in the world. Maybe *Miljonprogrammet* would've been considered a huge success. A grand slam. Of course, in some aspects, I do feel like it still is. But simply judging from the lack of public demand back when it was built until this very day, we can conclude that this wasn't, and isn't, exactly the most sought after way of living. Sure, apartments stood empty because we overbuilt during *Miljonprogrammet*, and we can find several other factors as to why many of these areas aren't generally seeing demand. But a matter of fact is that if people preferred it to other ways of living, they would never have been empty in the first place.

Recently, I found an interesting old poem reflecting over the modernistic city-planning ideal dating back to 1945, when the first areas of its kind were being built in Sweden<sup>®</sup>. It's written by the renowned Swedish author Gunnar Ekelöf and I do apologize in advance to anyone offended by my honest but likely lackluster attempt to translate it. Anyway, here it goes:

### To *Folkhemmet*

For the sake of aesthetics and efficiency,  
the architects have made the clouds square.

A suburb extends itself over the desolate forests.  
High above the ridges, cubes of clouds are repeated,  
reflecting deep into the unsuspecting lakes.  
Impressive rows of empty windows glisten with the beautiful red  
neon of the sunset.

There, in reverently sheltered heaps of hygienic cumulus, play  
the children (never touched by a human hand). Mothers on strict  
salaries from the government hover over them with their rotating  
parasols.

Day becomes night and the genderless masses of workers, high  
on vitamins, come swarming home to their private dwellings.  
Svea, the queen of hormones. Warily guarded by trustworthy  
banishers.

The night is quiet. A waste helicopter leisurely hovers from gate  
to gate driven by an exile of the future, an anarchist and poet  
doomed to a life without fantasies. In the distance, it looks like  
a giant moth humming over a cluster of pink honeysuckle, high  
above the recreational forest tracks where no drifter will ever  
drift again.

-Gunnar Ekelöf. 1945



Gunnar Ekelöf looked at these ideological currents from the perspective of the outsider. Unfamiliar with the overly structured and sanitized way of living that these houses were suggesting. Uncomfortable with being choreographed from above by politicians deciding the best way for us all to live, as if the whole society was turning into a uniform machine. One that doesn't allow for the oddballs and eccentrics.

The doctor and stress researcher Gösta Alfvén goes as far as saying that large-scaled housing areas with indistinguishable and unvaried building units puts a significant toll on the human psyche<sup>(3)</sup>. That we develop actual stress from being surrounded by buildings out of the human scale and without features that we can relate to. He underlines the responsibility that architecture has when it comes to fulfilling the human need of curiosity. That the unappealing appearance of these buildings is actually one of the big causes of segregation. I believe this to be a simplification of problems much bigger than architecture itself, but I also can't deny from my own experiences that there has to be some profound truth in what Alfvén is claiming too. There is something admittedly strange with living in a copy pasted building like ours. One out of eight identical beige nine-floor buildings lined up after each other, surrounding four identical courtyards. The first month, I guessed our building and entrance wrong half of the time when walking home from the supermarket. That might say more about my insufficient sense of location perhaps, but still, it gave me an noticeable uncanny impression of our new home. Not far from the surrealistic atmosphere of Ekelöfs poem. Kana has expressed several times that she dislikes these buildings in a way she can't really explain. I could only agree, without being able to explain why I agreed either. Is it the scale? The repetitiveness? The lack of visual expression? The lack of outdoor activity during all but great weather conditions? The feeling of being enclosed or somehow controlled? Of having someone else planning my (and all of my neighbours') life? The fact that the mall is the only place I can get a cup of coffee?

My own opinion about our apartment changes as often as the mood of our three year old though. Sometimes I completely love the simplicity of it. Its calm and spacious. If I want activity and lots of people around, I can seek that by myself instead of having it inescapably right outside my door. It's a kids haven since there are no cars around us. The big road outside is bridged so we can even send our daughter Maiya to swimming

and taekwondo by herself. She even goes to school and home without us since it's so close, due to the actual density created by these large-scaled houses. The greenery is tremendous. Tall proud trees on big green fields. We see rabbits run around in Rosengård everyday. When the weather allows for it, social activity is abundant in our yard. The apartment has windows in every direction so we have both morning sun and evening sun. We even have a sun room about the size of the apartment we had in Tokyo. Everything with only 15 minutes to Malmö Central Station by bus or bike. But something is still missing.

Even if the preconditions are very different, an interesting parallel is Tokyo, where I studied and worked for two years. A city to the brim filled with serendipities. Walking out from Shibuya station for the first time was a mad experience. A constant flux of lights, sounds, shapes, faces and strange things happening everywhere you look. I was completely amazed. The evolution of Tokyo is almost as diametrically divergent to Malmö and Rosengård as it can be. Here in Sweden, big chunks of government-owned land was developed at the same time to create big coherent areas with the goal of providing high living standards for a low price. A strategy that left large amounts of grass plots in the edges and corners of the houses, for the most part still left untouched. Necessary buffer zones and green breathing space for citizens and urban animals, or dead urban tissue doomed to eternal purposelessness; you tell me. But unused space of that kind is almost nowhere to be seen in Tokyo. There, land is divided into much more varied sizes, developed more independently. Creating an ever-shifting flow of scales and activities. From sky scrapers and huge crossings to small villa neighbourhoods and winding narrow roads. For good or bad, almost no area is left unprogrammed. However small or seemingly useless it might appear. Tiny, tiny buildings crammed in to fill every little void. The lack of space has even forced bigger functions to be combined in utterly strange ways. I walked by a warehouse with a tennis club on top of it. A high-way with a department store underneath it. A 330 meter long park on the roof of a car park. Football fields in high-way roundabouts. Noodle restaurants, computer workshops or fantasy-figurine stores strangely intermixed on upper floors of housing buildings. Since buildings of various qualities and sizes are constantly intertwined, a social mix is inevitably occurring almost everywhere. Even undeveloped plots were often appropriated by temporary users such as food trucks or small music festivals. Everything seemingly sprung out of some

pure innate sense of urgency. Everyone was doing whatever they wanted with whatever land and space there was. This was amazing to see, but something crucial was missing in Tokyo too.

I quickly discovered that Kana loathed living there. At first I didn't really understand her. I was just blown away by everything. But after a while it crept up on me. Having kids and trying to survive on low incomes, in a society where market forces are prioritized above everything else, life can become quite unpleasant. Through winters with 150mm walls and no central heating, since there are no standards to control it. Still paying more on housing a month than we do here in Rosengård, with less than a fourth of the living space (a money difference that simply went straight into the pocket of the private real-estate owner). When it takes you 40 minutes just to leave your kids at the preschool, pushing a baby buggy in chokingly dense crowds of people. When there is no yard and the closest playground is a tiny little swing under a monstrously noisy high-way next to a stream of brown water. You start to ask yourself, what's it all for in the end? And suddenly, all the serendipities in the world wouldn't make up for the loss of livability. Not to mention the ethnic homogeneity in Tokyo eventually resulting in the incident I will tell you about in the next chapter. In so many ways, Rosengård is a revelation to live in, in comparison to Tokyo.

As you can see by now, these two places possesses more or less exactly what the other one is lacking. Like the opposite sides of a Ying Yang symbol. I know, the qualities of these two places seem inherently impossible to combine.

But what if they are not?

After two pairs of pictures, I will give you a sketch of how Amiralsgatan could perhaps turn into neighbourhoods similar to the area of Shimokitazawa in western Tokyo. An exceptionally interesting and pleasant place to be. You wouldn't have to do it as literal as this, but using all the empty space along Amiralsgatan would be a nice way to add life without over-densifying and disturbing the great open yards around here.





Shimokitazawa, Tokyo<sup>6)</sup>.



Apelgården, Rosengård.





Disney cosplay woman I met in Harajuku, Tokyo.



Young mother of three me and Mari met in Törnrosen, Rosengård.



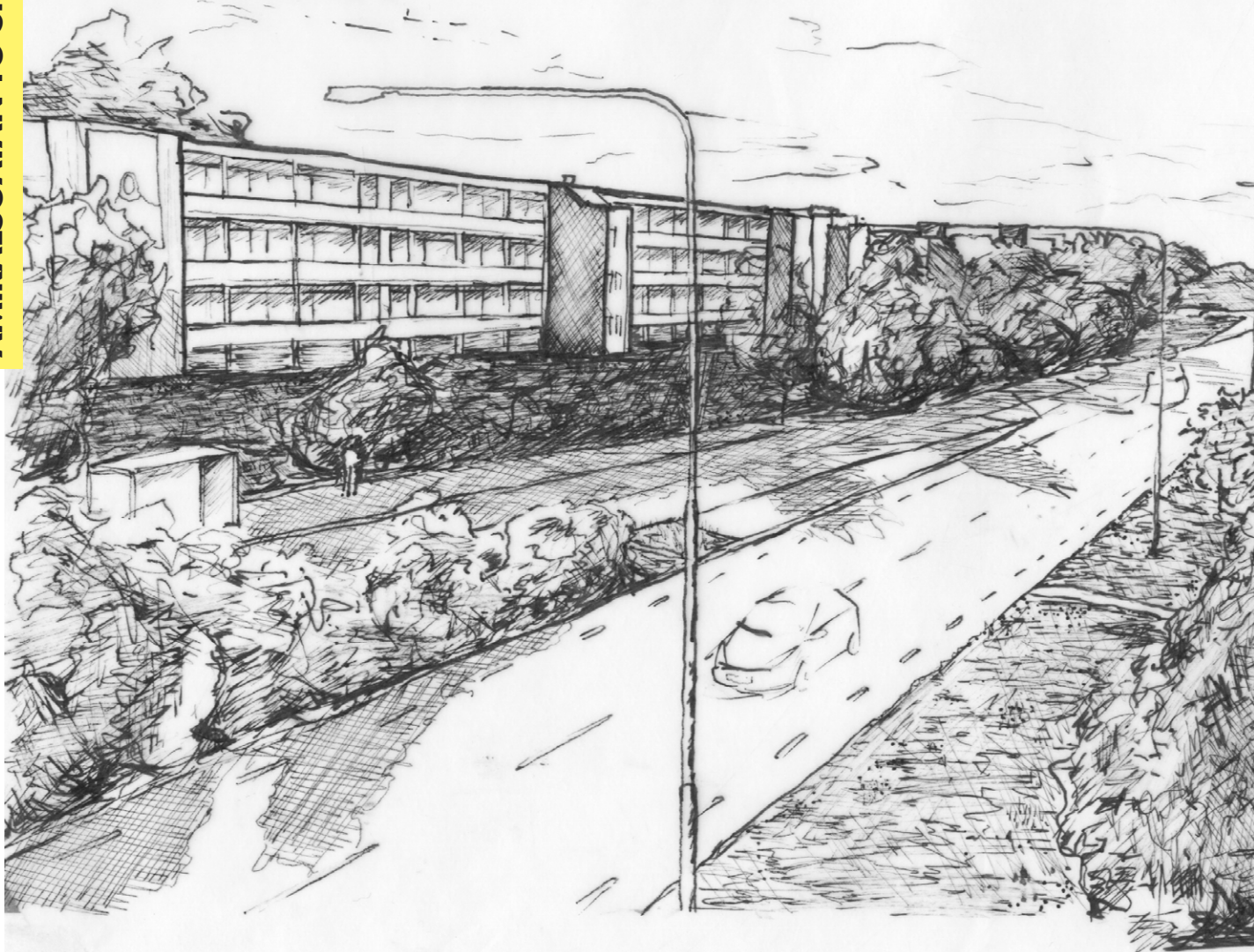
**B** AMIRALSGATAN  
TO  
SHIMOKITAZAWA.



Could Amiralsgatan perhaps do more?



The wet dream back when modernism was on its  
uprise. I wonder if many people still get wet from this.  
Spaciousness can be great of course, but is this really the  
place to prioritize it?





So much unprogrammed space. What happens if we slow this road down and make the human superior to the car for once?

# FACADE

AS SOON AS WE  
AMIRALSGATAN

WHEN THE ROAD

# TO FACADE

WE COME TO ROSENGÅRD,  
THE ROAD BECOMES 107m WIDE.

WHEN THE ROAD STARTS, IT'S ONLY 17m WIDE.

THIS PARKING CAN BE MOVED  
TO THE UNDERGROUND PARKING

# A BEATEN PATH

I SEE PEOPLE WALK  
HERE ALMOST EVERYDAY.  
OF COURSE YOU WANT  
THE SHORTEST WAY.

# UNUSED SPACE

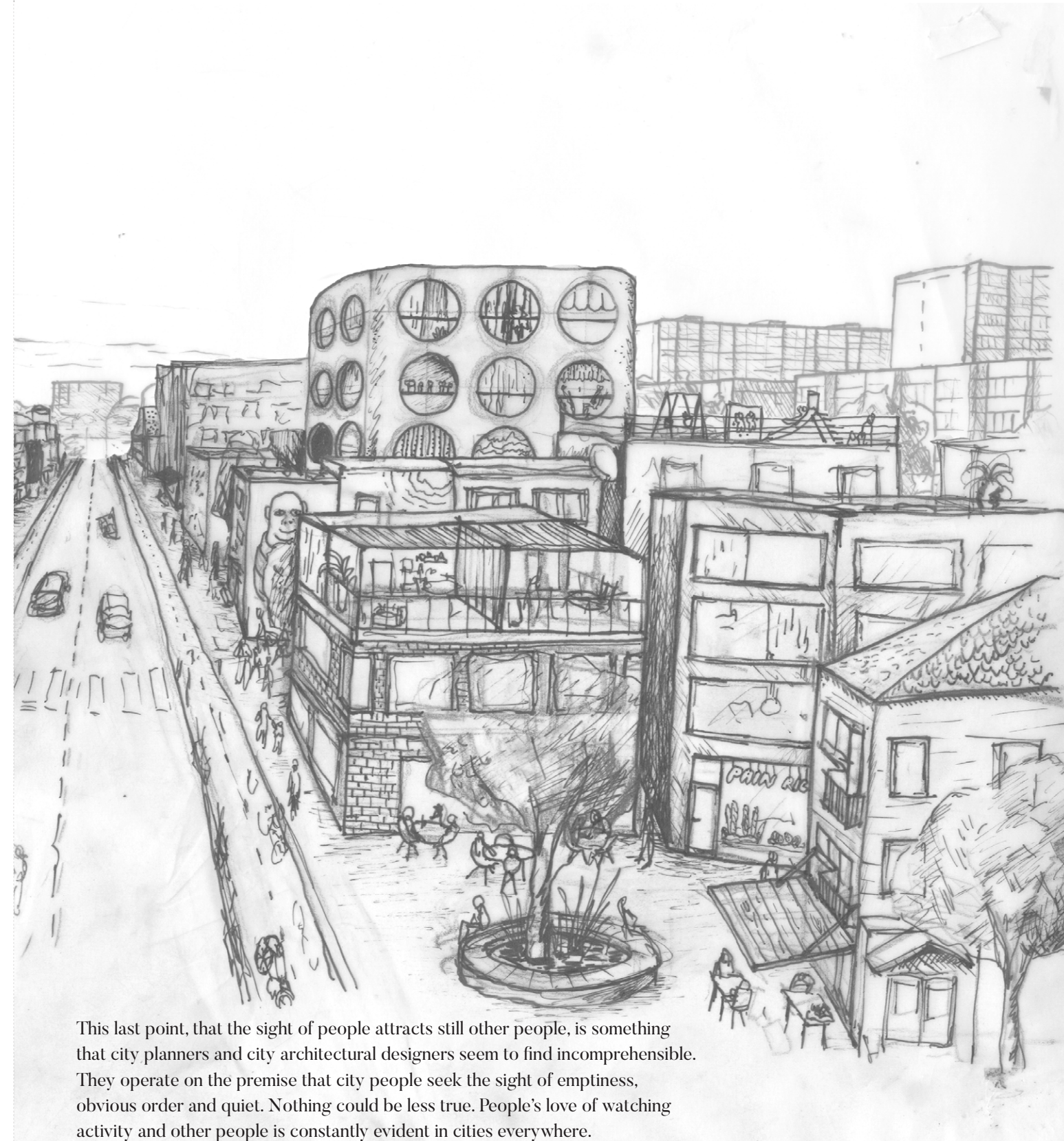
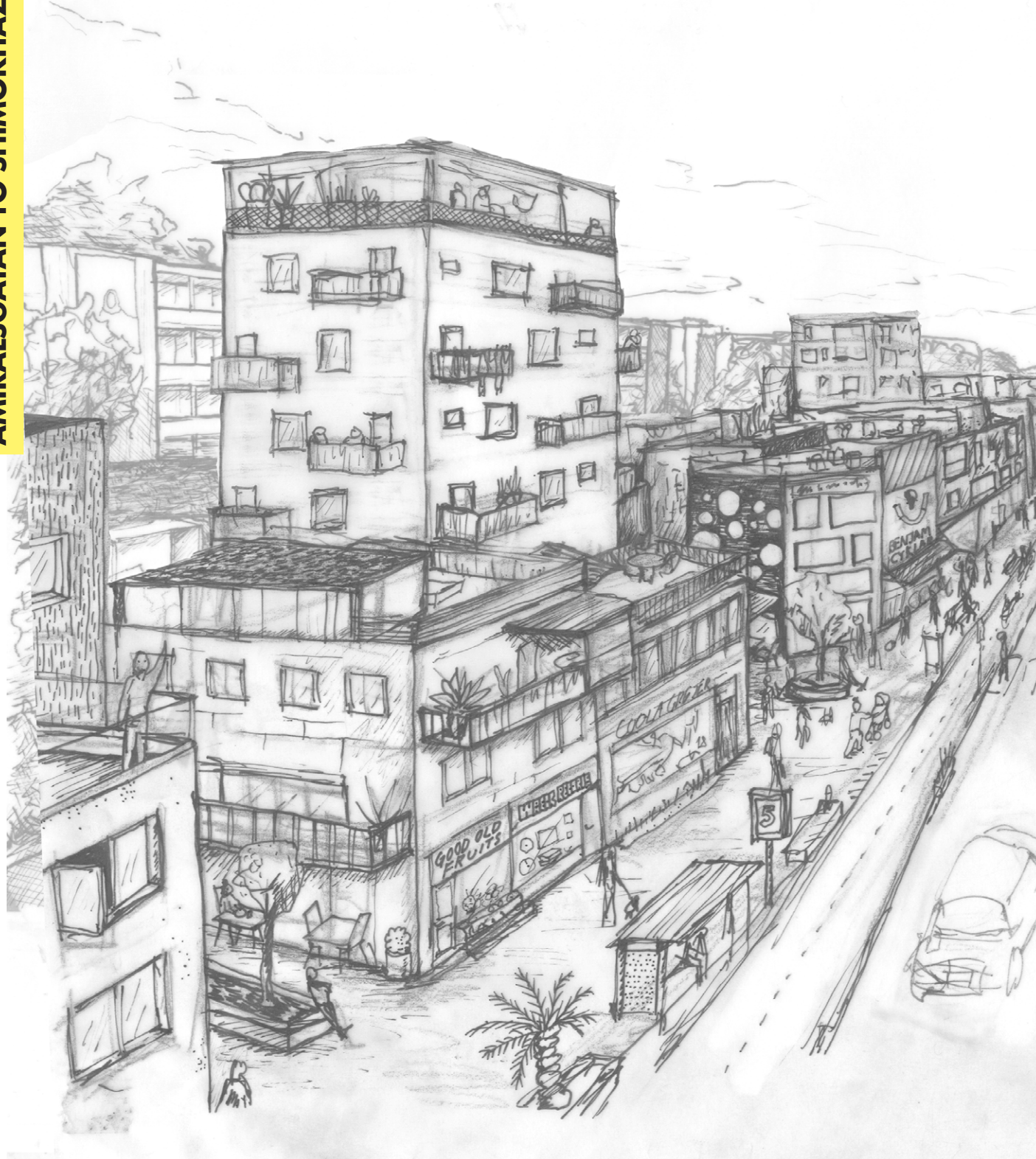
IF WE MAKE THIS A 40KM/H ROAD  
WE CAN MAKE IT NARROW  
THIS LEFT-OVER SPACE FOR

# SPACE

ROAD ALL THEWAY  
AND USE ALL  
SOMETHING ELSE.



A dense lively street would be the perfect contrast and compliment to the great spacious housing of *Miljonprogrammet*. Calmness when that's what you want and liveliness when that's what you want.



This last point, that the sight of people attracts still other people, is something that city planners and city architectural designers seem to find incomprehensible. They operate on the premise that city people seek the sight of emptiness, obvious order and quiet. Nothing could be less true. People's love of watching activity and other people is constantly evident in cities everywhere.



# 7 One Great Smile and Two Important Letters.



When I left Maiya at school today, a little boy stood by the corner as I came out. He was about six years old, with dark skin and big eyes. As soon as he saw me he started to stare at me. I was going in his direction and for several meters he just kept staring at me. I usually get some funny looks since I don't exactly look like Maiyas and Maris dad. But this was more than the average stare. I kept staring back. Almost like a staring contest. He didn't stop. As I was closing in, his lips carefully started to move.

-“He... is... Swedish...”

He was whispering to himself, but so slow that I could read his lips.

-“Yes.” I said as I passed him. “You are too, aren't you?”

He nodded, cracked a big smile and waved me off as I left the school yard.

If I didn't know it before, I knew it now. I am the odd bird here.

I wanted to stop for a minute and ask him some questions. Where he was from and how he liked it here and so on, but it felt awkward. Like Jungle George visiting the civilized world for the first time. Jumping around happily asking questions on a whim, ignoring all social codes. But the reason it felt wrong might also have been because of a viral video I saw the other day. It was made by SVT, our public service television company, and the concept of the video was that an immigrant was giving Swedish people advices of what not to say, ask and do to immigrants in order to not make them feel bad or uncomfortable<sup>(1)</sup>. Asking where they were from was one of the things he advised against. Isn't that the saddest thing, I thought to myself. Now that I stood there, somehow indirectly hindered by his defensive attitude. Why can't he be proud of where he is from and embrace anyone who is interested in his origin instead? But as I finished that thought, a sting of guilt came over me as I realized that this was of course only the naive reaction of someone who was never really treated bad for looking different.

The train of thought continued and all of a sudden, I was transported back to a warm afternoon in Tokyo. Maiya was five and I had just arrived at her nursery to pick her up, after the daily struggle of surviving the rush hour commuting. She was in a strange mood. Usually, Maiya was always very happy when I picked her up. But today she was not. We packed her things and started to walk home. I asked her what the matter was but she refused to say anything. To lighten her up, I tried to make her laugh, but without success.



From what I could gather, it looked like she was embarrassed somehow. Since she wore her jacket with the hood up even though it was clearly too hot to do so. Halfway home, she finally told me. A girl in school had told her she had ugly skin and ugly hair. To give you the background, Maiya's biological dad is of African descent and since Japan doesn't receive any refugees and almost no immigrants, she was the only one in her class with dark skin and curly hair. As we stood there on the pavement next to a loud elevated highway in southern Tokyo, in a crying voice, Maiya explained that she wanted to shave her head. It almost broke my heart.

The fact that we felt like outsiders in Japan and wanted Mari and Maiya to feel comfortable with the way they looked might have played a significant role for Kana and me when we decided to move to Rosengård, now that I think of it. Whether the fear of not fitting in elsewhere was legitimate or not isn't as interesting as the fact that the fear guided our decision. The same fear I believe I heard in the voice of the young man in this video. Even though segregation can often be derived from very straight-forward socio-economic factors, sometimes, simply how comfortable you expect to feel in the crowd matters just as much. For similar reasons, people seem to choose to live in specific areas because they are drawn to specific cultures and like-minded folks. Surrounding yourself with traditions and mind-sets you are accustomed to will of course give you a feeling of being home. Just like Swedes bundled up together in the mid 19th century when 1.5 million of us, about a fifth of our population at that point, fled to North America because of poverty in Sweden<sup>(2)</sup>, mainly gathering in Minnesota. This behaviour might come from either the attraction of the group you consider yourself to be a part of, or the repulsion of groups that doesn't seem to accept you. Either way, it seems to significantly direct our decisions. And as we all know, this is certainly not only a behaviour of immigrants but of everyone in a society, from every socio-economic segment. Rich old Swedes for example, also tend to attract each other in scenic parts of any given city.

From this perspective, both cultural and economical polarization of a population becomes a kind of natural process. Like a hive-mind, slowly churning and steadily directing the flow of people.

There is another naturally occurring mechanism that I would like to bring up, that in many ways seem to parallel segregation, since being an immigrant usually means that your economical position is weaker than the average Swede's.

In 2013, the French economist Thomas Piketty wrote a book he called "Capital in the 21st century". It handles the historic and current state of global economics. To make a very long story very short, the book revolves around a simple equation.

$$r > g$$

**r** = Return on capital.

**g** = Growth of the economy.

Through analyzing all data that exists of income trends from the last 200 years, Piketty proves that, with the exception of big events like world wars and other crises, capital has always grown in a faster pace than the economy as a whole<sup>(3)</sup>. That is, the average income of capital is bigger than the average income of labor. And since capital grows capital, the increase becomes exponential, with the inevitable consequence of concentrating wealth over time. Perhaps we all know this by guts already. But what Piketty manages to highlight, is that the accumulation of wealth is not in any direct sense derived from the greed of the top percentages of the capitalistic food chain. Instead,  $r > g$  appears to be coming from the naturally evolved mechanisms of the global economic itself. The fact that the annual return on capital has been growing on average around 5% in developed countries the latest century, while the global economy for the same period have been growing at an average rate of about 2% annually is not something someone decided. But something that just came to be. As long as these simple paces of growth are left unchecked,



inequality is always going to increase. Also working like a hive-mind, slowly churning and steadily directing the flow of money.

Some people don't mind this of course. But for those of us that do, Piketty proposes that a global wealth tax should be forced upon every country, so that no tax-havens could exist where this accumulation of money otherwise would end up. The details around this tax doesn't really belong here. Only the fact that we sometimes need to fight naturally occurring phenomenas and processes with artificial methods and solutions. Even if they look unnatural, and even if it's inconvenient for the process itself, and its devotees.

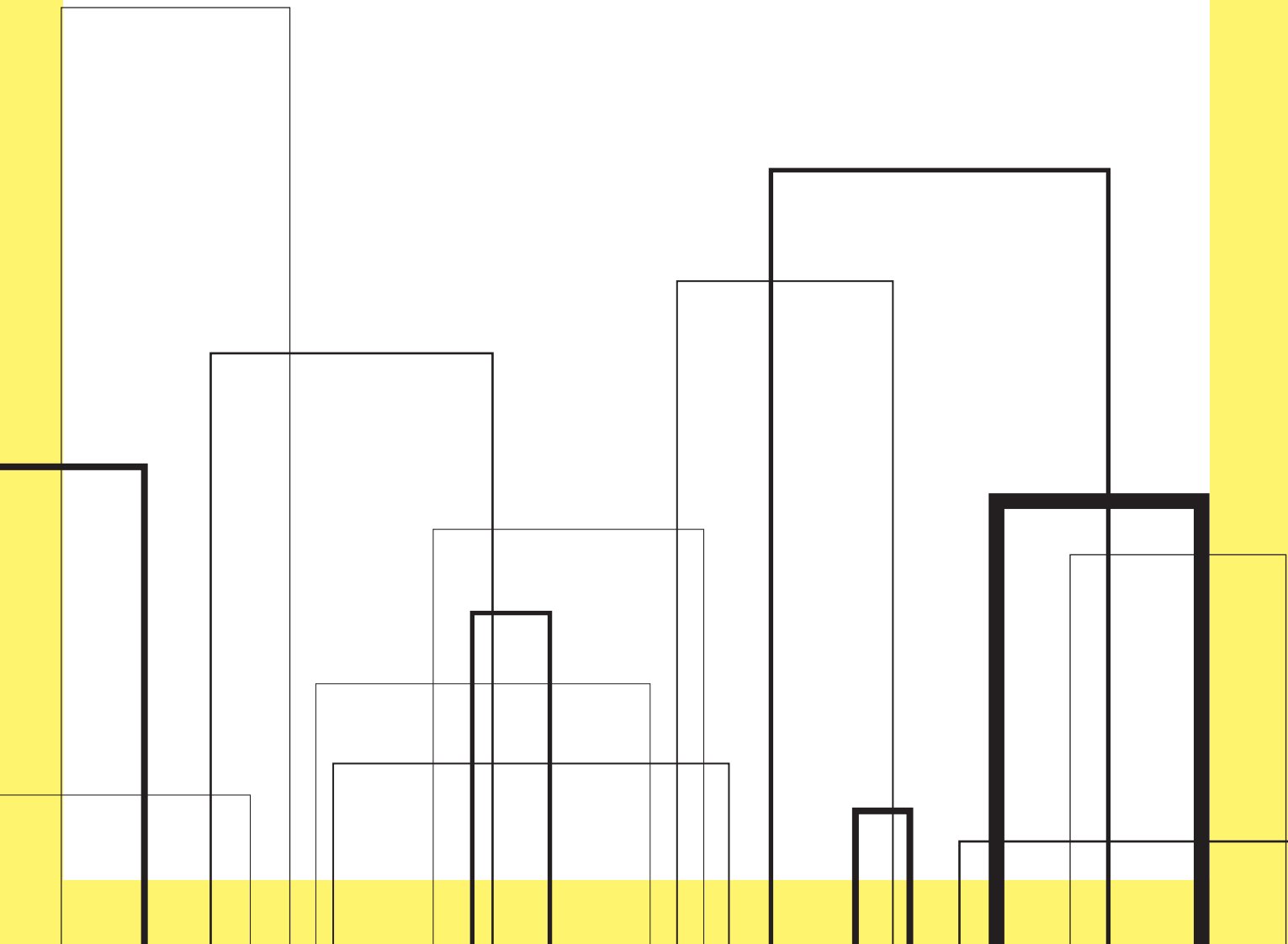
Comparing this to your choice of living area, it might sound like I don't want anyone to gather with their like-minded. Of course you should live wherever you are comfortable. But then, shouldn't we aim for a society where your level of comfortability isn't by any means bound to a specific area? If market forces in combination with our drive to gather with people similar to ourselves are left to decide how our cities turn out, I am afraid segregation will prevail.

"fuck SD!"  
The polarization of our society making itself known. SD, the Sweden Democrats, have become the symbol of reluctance against our immigrant population. Which obviously makes people here reluctant to SD.





# 8 An Unintentional City Dweller.



It was a warm Sunday afternoon and I was heading out into the bright outdoors with our two-year-old just to find a place to play. We stopped at a small courtyard right after the bridge over Amiralsgatan, in the area called Örtagården. The yard was squared, cornered by one straight and one L-shaped three-story building. Open and inviting but at the same time fairly intimate. A balance that can be hard to find since the more open an courtyard is, the less intimate it can feel. As usual, Mari ran off to the swing and I had no choice but to follow. Beside me was a young woman with a kid in the same age. Mari is always absurdly entertained by the swings, screaming of joy with every push, so the woman started to laugh. The atmosphere allowed for a conversation and I introduced myself.

Apparently, she was the bigger sister to child. Their family came as refugees from Tunisia when she was 5 and had now lived in Rosengård for 16 years. She loved Sweden, so nice and quiet she said. In Tunisia people were unfriendly to each other. And it was full of traffic. She liked Rosengård because its particularly calm here. Until they built Bennets Bazaar behind her house, that is. A densification project by the rental agency MKB of the local government, built in 2009 with eight premises for locals to rent and run with a square adjacent to the stores' facades. She did not like that at all. Nowadays its noisy with gangs of boys outside at night, she said. She had never experienced the smell of marijuana before they built Bennets Bazaar. But she still wanted to stay in Rosengård in the future. Preferably Apelgården or Persborg, but Augustenborg would be nice too, she said. To be able to enter University and become an economist, she was now studying to improve her grades. Our kids got bored of the swings and we had to say good-bye.

The conversation got me thinking. Since I moved here, I had always enjoyed Bennets Bazaar and thought of it as a very successful addition to the apartments and the area. We don't exactly spend much time there but we cross it every time we bike to central Malmö. Enjoying people enjoying themselves on the square. In architecture school, we are always taught that this type of gathering space is an undeniable quality. Something socially sustainable. Although the term social sustainability have gotten quite diluted and tedious over the years, I always agreed, and still do. But of course, very few things are universal truths. This young woman gave me an emotional counter-argument that I will keep in mind. To think that everyone wants an up-tempo and city-like atmosphere right outside your yard, which is almost becoming a consensus (at least in the academia), would be to deceive ourselves as city-planners.

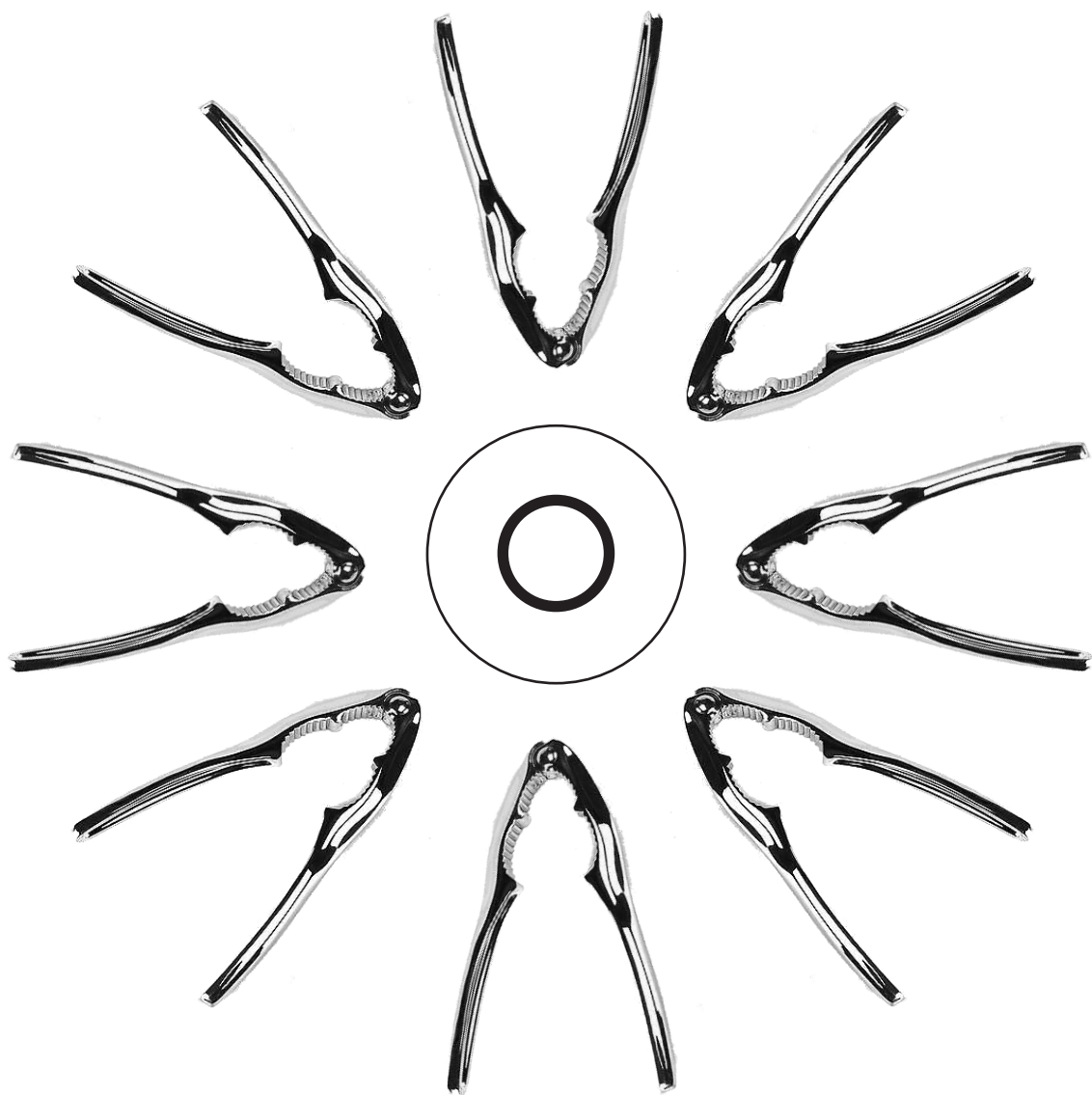




Outside Bennets Bazaar on a bike ride home from town. We thought something had happened but the police and fire departments were just out talking to the kids.



# 9 A Nut to Crack Within a Nut to Crack.



Kana and me were thrilled that Maiya had made her first friend in Sweden. Today, we had all been invited to a play-date at this friend's place. She lived only a couple of houses away, in a beige nine-floor building identical to ours. It was a cloudy Tuesday afternoon, and a soft autumn rain was slowly falling on the colourful tree crowns between the massive housing units. We rang their door and the two friends screamed of joy the second they saw each other. Our three-year-old did the exact same thing out of sheer confusion. Off they were, bouncing into the crispy light blue frozen-themed girls room with their arms in the air. The mom stood in the hall and welcomed us with a huge smile. Her atmosphere was a delight.

"Coffee or Tea?" she asked.

"Coffee would be nice thank you." Kana said for both of us.

We sat down in a big black Ikea couch. After a while the host came with our hot beverages. As we started to sip our coffee, we wandered off into the stories of our lives. She started off by explaining how she escaped the horrors of the Bosnian war during the 90s. Since she had come when she was only four years old herself, she said she felt more Swedish than anything else. At a young age, she got pregnant but the kid's father abused her so she had to leave him. Since then, surviving as a single mom. It was clear to me that I couldn't fully grasp the despair that this little family had been through. In Sweden, she had only lived in Rosengård, moving from different areas here until finally settling on Apelgården as the best place to raise her kid. Every now and then me and Kana answered some questions in return, but we quickly hurried back to her stories. Then, all of a sudden, the atmosphere turned very odd. She explained how she had worked for some years at a car workshop but quit recently, explicitly blaming the new boss for it. Underlining that he was from Greece. I didn't know how to answer that, so I tried to switch subject. I confirmed how fun it was that our daughters had found each other. Kana continued by asking if she knew any other kids or families around. Not so many, it seemed. She explained that she didn't want her daughter to play with Arabic kids, and many of the kids around the neighbourhood were Arabic. Again I didn't know what to say. The conversations continued like this. Over and over I found myself in subjects that were based on "truths" about people and I just didn't know how to continue the discussion.

A sad feeling was looming over my head as we walked home. Should I have talked back? The way she expressed these judgments about people from other nationalities and



cultures was so shameless. Like it wasn't even a question. I found it profoundly worrisome. I had no idea how many people felt and talked like this, but I could sense that it was an argot amongst people around her. I decided to see if I could find any other indication that a social friction resulting from the ethnic heterogeneity of Rosengård was as prominent as this meeting was suggesting and to my great disappointment, I found some rather disturbing data. The sociology professor Mikael Stigendal from Malmö University made a study with the goal of mapping segregation by looking at how opinions of people differ from one area to another. This was one of the questions. It's asking:  
*What is the worst thing about your area?*

**Tabell 77. "Vad är sämst i Din stadsdel?"  
(ämnesandelar i %)**

		C	V	L	R	K	
<b>C=Centrum</b>							
<b>V=Västra Innerstaden</b>	Etnisk sammansättning	3	0	0	36	3	Ethnical composition
<b>L=Limhamn-Bunkeflo</b>	Övr social sammansättning	9	10	5	28	5	Other social composition
<b>R=Rosengård</b>	Renhållning	12	10	14	18	7	Cleanliness
<b>K=Kirseberg</b>	Kriminalitet	9	2	3	13	5	Criminality
	Boendet	6	9	2	10	3	Housing
	Övr offentligt service	5	5	16	10	16	Other public service
	Socialt liv	19	6	4	9	7	Social Life
	Stadsmiljö	19	8	11	5	8	Urban environment
	Kommersiell service	5	7	21	5	22	Commercial service
	Missbruk	11	2	0	4	8	Addiction
	Oväsens	10	3	2	4	5	Noise
	Barnvänligt	2	3	2	4	3	Unfriendly for children
	Väld	1	0	0	3	1	Violence
	Trafik	46	42	21	3	28	Traffic
	Läge	1	0	6	2	7	Location
	Kultur	0	0	0	2	1	Culture
	Gemenskap	1	3	1	2	0	Community
	Kommunikationerna	1	3	15	1	9	Communications
	Aktivitet	1	1	3	1	3	Activity
	Inget	0	1	4	0	6	Nothing
	Nöjen	2	4	4	0	1	Culture
	Fritid	1	1	6	0	2	Spare-time
	Sjukvård	1	1	4	0	1	Health care

The fact that all other areas hate their traffic situation the most, while people in Rosengård doesn't, is interesting. And logical now that I have experienced it. But what of course grabs ones attention here is the fact that the ethnical and social composition is what people dislike the most here, and really nowhere else. In the free-text-answers of this study, unemployment is said to be the strongest reason for checking these boxes in the questionnaire, but I am guessing there were additional reasons not brought up. Either by the author or the respondents. We talk a lot about integration between Rosengård and the rest of Malmö due to racism present between ethnic Swedes and foreigners. But it sure seems like Rosengård has its own urgent internal problem of ethnic intolerance.

Then again, I don't wish to put myself up on any high horse. The history and relations between many of the nationalities here are far more complex than I can ever understand, and it humbles me to realize. It might not be so easy to befriend someone from a country that is responsible for killing your family or invading your country. Overall, people are in the majority of cases in Rosengård because of national conflicts of some sort. I have never experienced such conflicts. What that does to a person on an emotional level is beyond my comprehension. What is for sure though, however naive it might sound, is that we can't run around thinking that we know "truths" about people. Our society would get completely stuck if we carved stereotypes in stones and made them socially accepted. It's a hard and slow process, since many of our values might be contradicting at first. But we have no other choice than to be patient. For obvious reasons, kids play a huge role here. In the case of this family we just met, Maiya's friend is the first victim of her mother's mind-set, growing up with these "truths" hovering above her. My daughter is the second victim, since kids have a great influence on each other.

In this issue, architecture plays the role of setting the physical premises and rules for interactions and familiarity within a community. If I just take our own yard as an example, a common room in the dead bottom floor of the apartment-buildings we live in could be a good place to start. Ever since the weather has been getting colder, the whole atmosphere of Rosengård has changed. There is no longer people outside. When the weather was good and the courtyards were used, you could take a stroll anywhere and see how the vast spaces were enjoyed. But that is only for about a third of the year, at best. And only by the people comfortable sitting outside with every window facing you.



Now, when fall has come and people are hiding inside their homes under their blankets, a strange emptiness has appeared. Like a skeleton waiting for its body tissues to grow back.

To create a link between the seasons and the social life of the neighbourhood, you would basically only need two things:

- Neutral space
- Heating

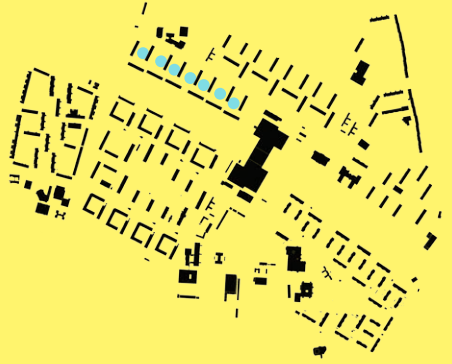
If the built environment doesn't allow people to meet and experience each other, in both large scale and small scale, I dare to say that xenophobia will probably never be dealt with. After all, according to psychology, the most efficient way of treating anxiety of patients with phobias is through exposure. Or, the second most efficient way, I guess. After completely avoiding whatever you have a phobia about. But then you would have to build a wall around yourself. Who would suggest something like that.

Here follows an example of how to perhaps go about reshaping the bottom floor of the building typology we live in.



C

A COMMON  
GROUND,  
FLOOR.



?



?

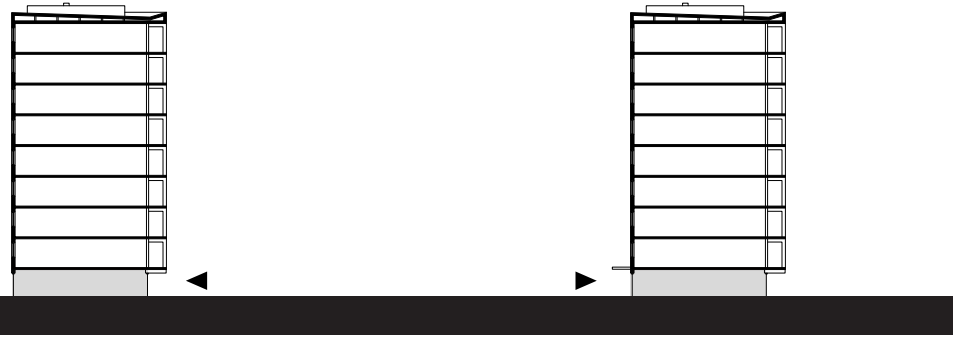
Could we use the yard and the bottom floor in a better way?



**An anti-social bottom floor.**

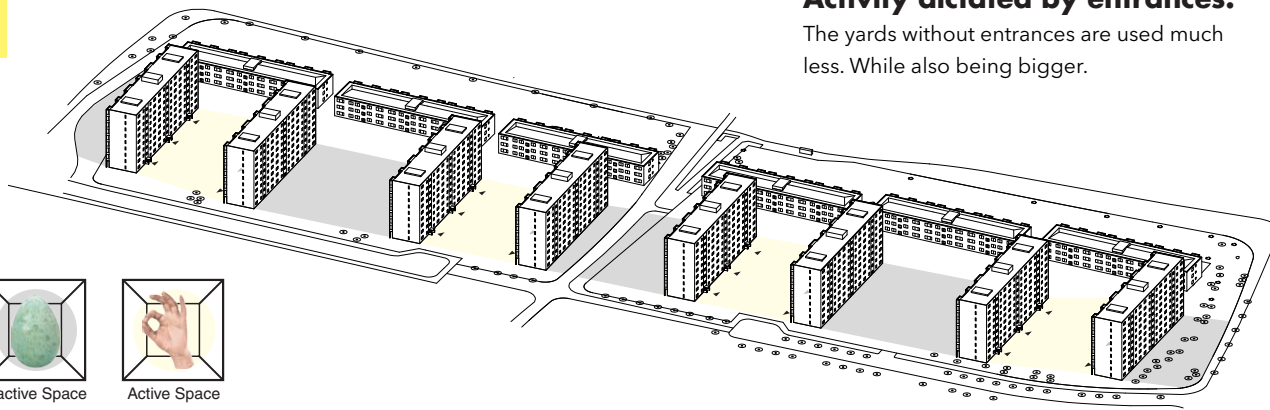
Disconnects the apartments from the ground.

And people from each other.



**Activity dictated by entrances.**

The yards without entrances are used much less. While also being bigger.



Inactive Space



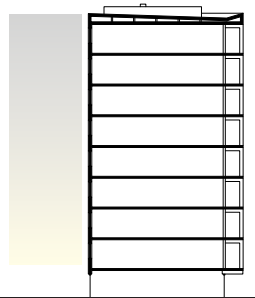
Active Space

**Less contact the higher up.**

Having contact with people on the ground or taking care of kids is harder the higher you live.

Harder to keep contact.

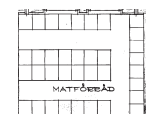
Easier to keep contact.



**Useless Rooms.**



MATTUGNINGSRUM // RUG SUCTION ROOM  
When was the last time you sucked a rug? Always locked and no one knows how to get in there.



MATFÖRRÅD // DRY FOOD STORAGE  
Perhaps a left-over from the cold war. Also always locked.

- Rug suction room
- Dry food storage

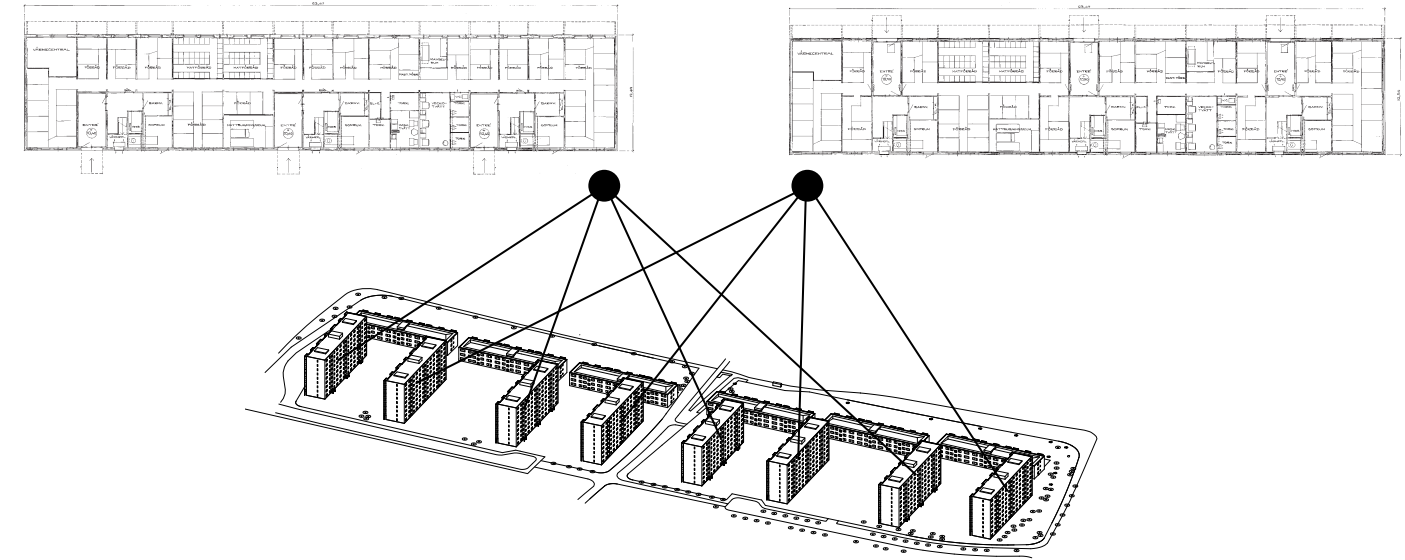


- + Common room
- + Passage



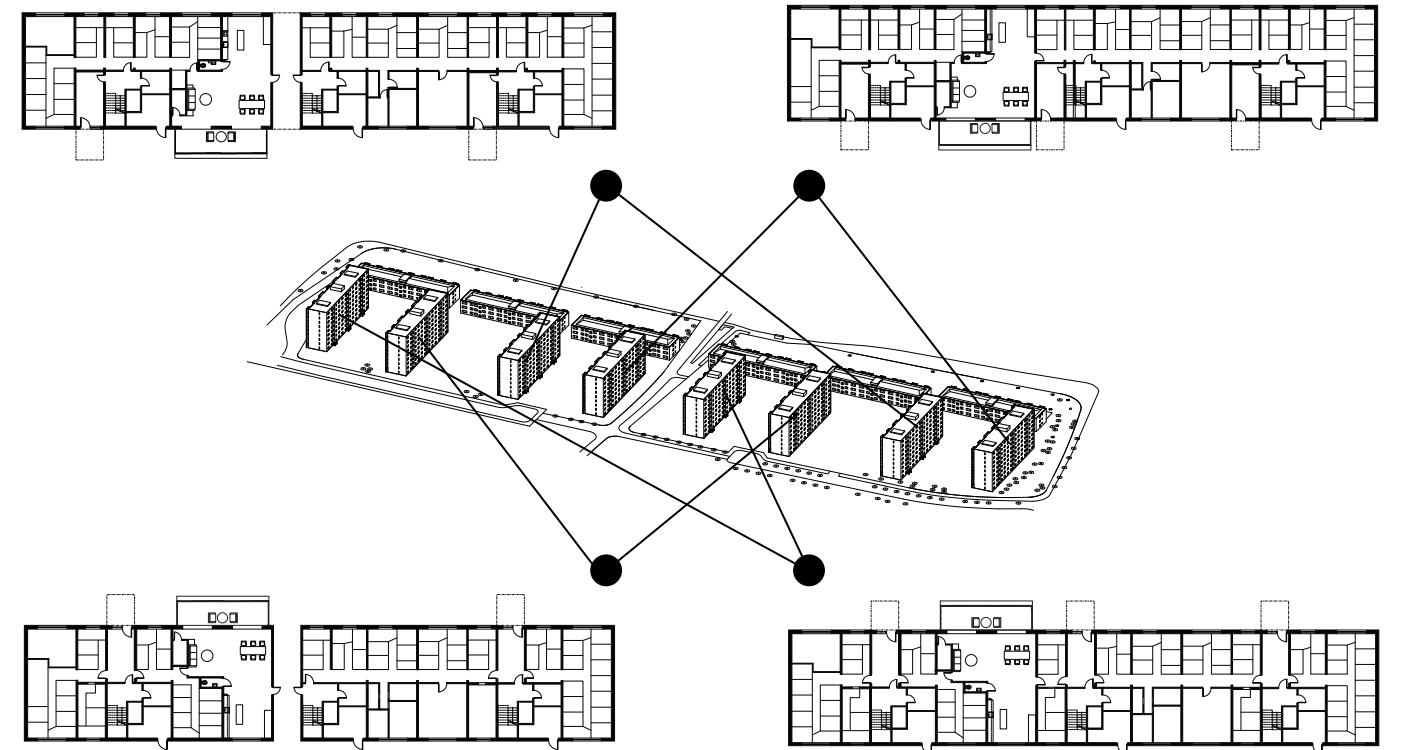
**Existing Ground-Floor Plans.**

Only containing storage, recycling rooms and washing rooms.



**New Ground-Floor Plans.**

Now a passage way through to the dead backyard, as well a common room to connect the building to the yard. As well as the people to each other.





**A COMMON GROUND, FLOOR.**

In a climate protected space, kids can play anytime. Families from the upper floors could come down and dare to have their kids playing in the yard, now that they would have supervision. Maybe we could even start taking turns watching the kids. During summer you get some shade in connection to the yard too.





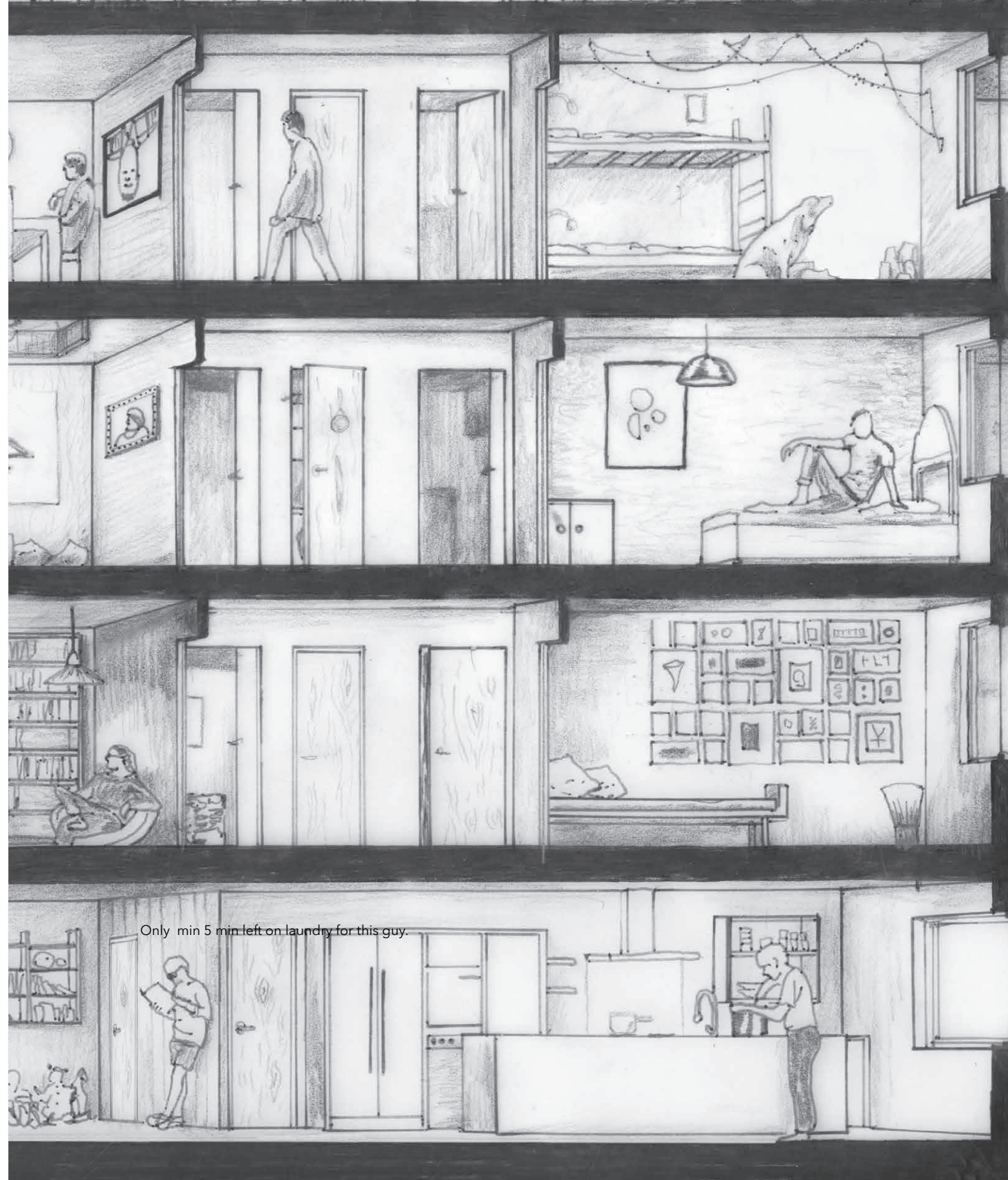
**A COMMON GROUND, FLOOR.**

This extra space should work like a second living room, which seems especially important for the larger families in these buildings. Like our down-stairs neighbours for example, who are six people in only three rooms. It would also be nice to get to know them a bit.



Contact to the street and the yard.

Parents could spontaneously meet while watching kids, or waiting for laundry.



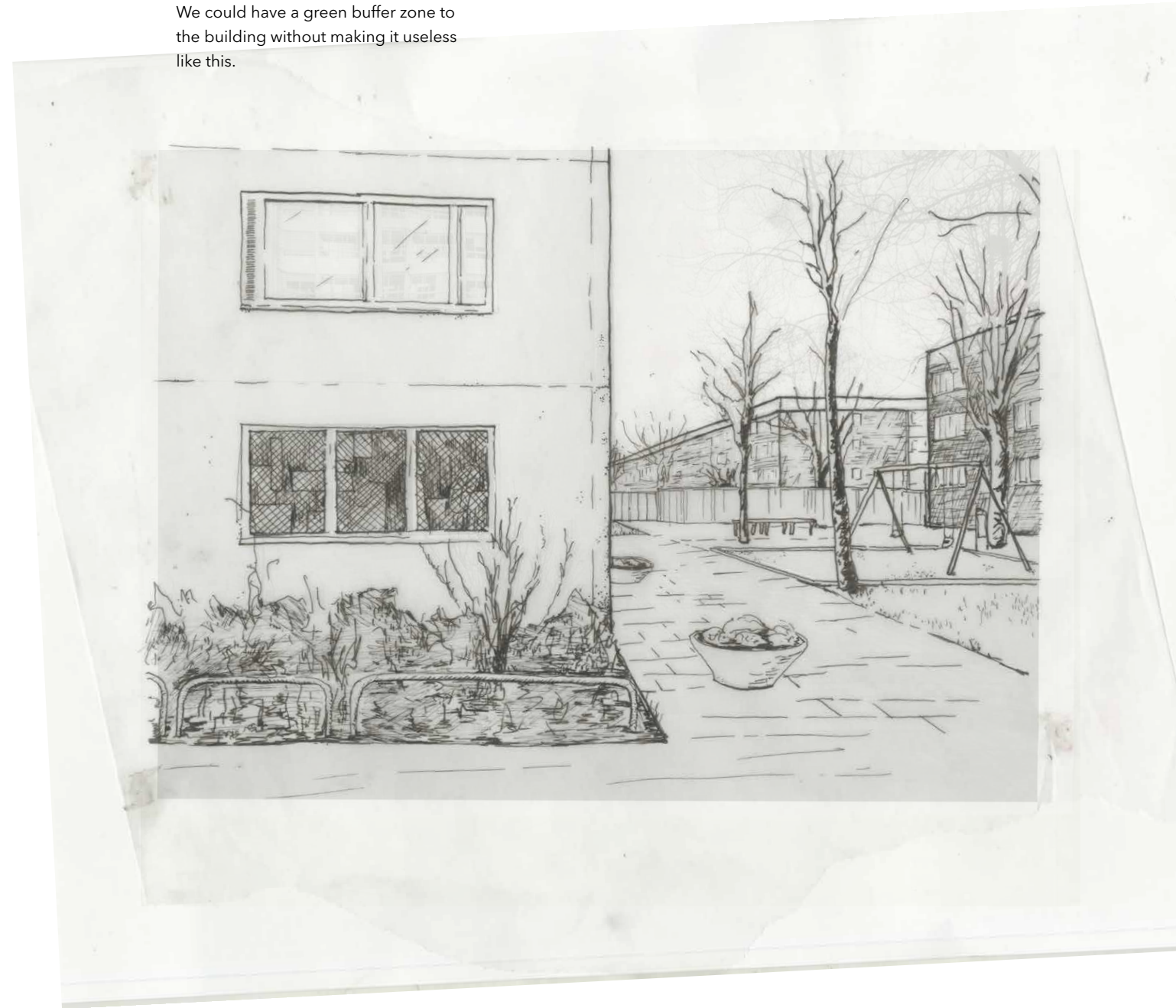
Only min 5 min left on laundry for this guy.



Also, the joint between building and yard can be done smoother.  
Look at all this junk in the building-trunk.



We could have a green buffer zone to the building without making it useless like this.





If we are not in need of light for the bottom floor storage anyway, can't we make it nicer for the yard? A lush greenery that is also interactive. I would like to imagine myself sitting under a nice bush of ferns when watching Mari play.



SOFTEN THE EDGES OF THE YARDS





# 10 Hearing Is Believing.



Parents meeting at Maiya's school today. We live only fifty meters from it, so of course we arrive late. A motley crew of parents had gathered in our kids' class room. Walls were full of colourful cut-out pictures of dogs, bunnies, letters and numbers in Comic-Sans typefaces. Coffee with cinnamon buns were served and we all sat down to listen to the presentation by the teachers. They explained what the following school year was going to include and how they aimed to work pedagogically, making an overall competent and ambitious impression. Rumors of how terrible the schools in Rosengård were supposed to be had of course reached my ears before I moved here, but I felt a great sense of relief when my first impression did not align with my preconceptions. To my great satisfaction it turned out that Maiya loved going to school. She learned fluent Swedish in less than two months with the help of extra teachers sent in just for her. Our positive experience goes for Mari and her daycare too. She likes it so much that she begs to go on weekends too. For their Christmas party, her class had learned a Japanese song only to welcome her. I was almost moved to tears when I saw all those small Santas, ginger breads and Lucias lined up in a row trying to pronounce all the phrases of the Japanese *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, just because of our Mari. Apparently they do that whenever a new kid from a new country comes and it was the cutest tradition I ever saw.

To know that the schools of Rosengård suffer from heavy and unjustifiably bad rumors expressed about them, I started to investigate the concept of rumors. A report in *Social Psychology Quarterly* written by Prashant Bordia and Nicholas DiFonzo explains the behaviour behind rumors as a coping strategy. An attempt for humans to reduce the anxiety of uncertainty through a process of sense-making<sup>(1)</sup>. We have a need to know (or a need to think that we know) what is happening around us. Faced with a new input on something we know little of, we tend to lean on the closest collective explanation to decide what to think. An imaginary logic that gives oneself a short-cut in the search for conclusions. Since you then give yourself a new argument that underlines what you already thought you understood about the subject, the process becomes self-reinforcing. Lets say that two contradictory statements are made about a subject. Whichever statement fits better with the collective explanation or opinion is likely to overshadow the other. Lets take the schools of Rosengård as an example. If one person says they are good and another person says they are bad, the average person is probably going to pick the statement that goes along with the general opinion about Rosengård. Even though the



roots to that general opinion might have nothing to do with schools what so ever.

Paired with this, the human mind also possesses something called a "negativity bias"<sup>(2)</sup>. To survive through the ages, humans have had to be wary for disasters. Thus, the human brain developed an instinct to exaggerate the bad over the good. Negative impressions, views, conclusions and predictions have a stronger impact on our consciousness and behaviour than their positive equivalent. Estimations says that it takes about five strong positive impressions to overshadow an equally strong bad impression.

No one can deny that Rosengårds overall reputation is struggling, and much of it is due to a perceived high rate of criminality. But what does the actual numbers say? The Swedish police wrote a report about Rosengårds crime statistics compared to other Swedish cities<sup>(3)</sup> and the most surprising fact is that if Rosengård would be a part of Stockholm, it would be the district with the second least crimes per citizen, only Bromma having less. The report continues by illustrating the way media coverage can skew the picture of an area by always reporting about the sensational crimes and not really give you an overview of crimes. Death shootings of course being the most sensational of the bunch. Sadly enough, a crime that Rosengård have been an frequent victim of. Although shootings are evidently a big reason for the struggling reputation to linger on, this doesn't really explain it either. Central Malmö still has about double the death shootings, and three times the crime rate per citizen than Rosengård has <sup>(3)</sup>.

To add a voice in the discourse about rumors, I would like to introduce something I call a reputation-buffer. As we all know, areas are prone to have public opinions being expressed about them. Some created and reinforced by media but most of them just from the way we talk to each other. The more people experiencing an area, the more opinions are being made and spread. Consequently spread further and stronger the wider the social networks of the individuals are. Created by people either living, working or spending leisure time there. Since most everyday experiences obviously have nothing to do with death shootings in lets say central Malmö, the area can build up a positive buffer for when something negative occurs. One can say that it is a constant struggle between positive and negative events, controlling the reputation of an area. If too

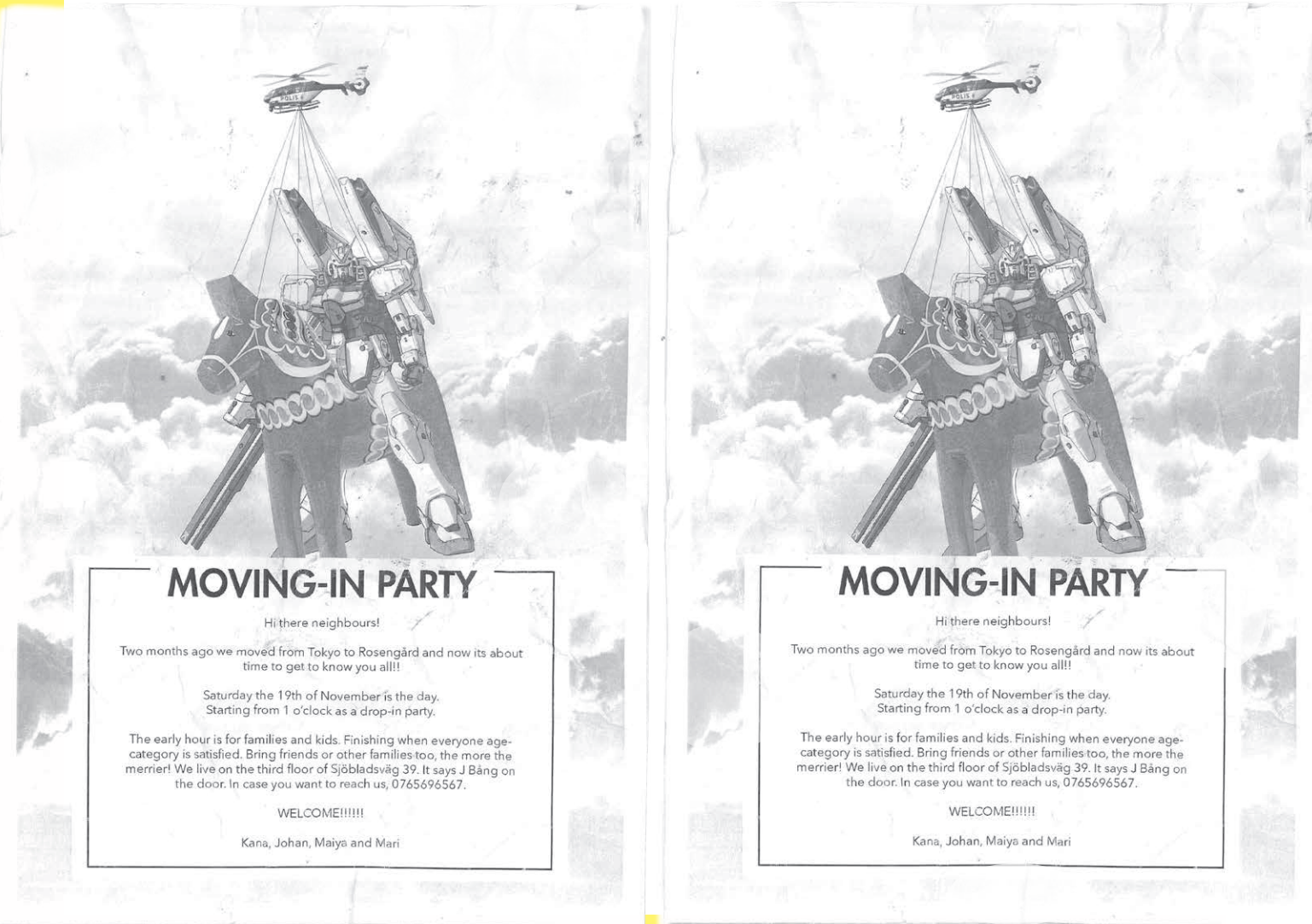
many shootings were to break out during a short period of time, the buffer might not be enough and a bad reputation might arise even in central Malmö. If we then look at areas like Rosengård, which has a much smaller flow of people going in and out with an overall shorter social network regionally, its buffer becomes smaller. And the smaller this buffer is, the more fragile its reputation is. If the average person spends little to no time and have friends that spends little to no time there, the only source of information one can use to form an opinion is the one given by media. But we have to have a better strategy than telling media that they are doing it wrong. Every individual need to be aware that every little gesture they make is a part of a bigger motion which in turn controls our collected unconsciousness.

As I invited my mother home some months later, she still seemed quite apprehensive to come. The pictures from the news reports still vividly flashing in her subconscious I suppose. And I don't blame her, that was all she knew. Seeing her here now, chit-chatting away with my neighbours and playing with our daughters and their new friends in the playground outside our apartment felt great. All these ordinary things that media of course have no business reporting about. I can only hope that when she talks to her colleagues or friends about Rosengård next time, the conversation will not revolve around fear of crime.

Last note on the subject of rumors. Maiya came home the other day and asked if Coca-Cola was really made out of spider blood. Whoever came up with that rumor is a genius.



# 11 My Daughter Shared Bunk-Bed With a Lady From Thailand.



It was time to get to know our neighbours a bit more so we decided to have a party. I made a flier and we handed it to parents at Maiyas school and to every mailbox in our entrance-floor. Even in all the other entrances connected to the yard. It is always exciting to host parties and this was certainly no exception. Days went by and our friends and family members were all dutifully confirming their future presence. But not even a single message or note had come from any of our neighbours. We were getting a little worried. What if not even one neighbour would show up? That would be a failure for sure, I thought. The day before we went to shop food and drinks. With the optimistic mindset one has to have as a party host, we decided to buy goods as if everyone invited would come. Maybe they all just wanted to surprise us?

The day arrived and some friends started to drop by. As usual with moving-in parties I guess, and probably even more so with architecture students as guests, there was a lot of talking about the apartment for starters. People thought I was joking when I told them what we paid for the place. It really is remarkable what a location can do to the price of an otherwise well-planned and well-preserved apartment. Anyway, still no neighbours. We kept looking down on the yard to see if anyone was on their way to us. They weren't. All we could see was two boys playing in the cold windy sunset. In pure desperation for some neighbourly love, we went down to ask them if they felt like coming up to the party. One of them said yes right away. I asked if he should perhaps ask his parents if it's okey first. -"Naa.. I only have my grandmother here, she wouldn't mind." He answered. -"So where are your parents?" I asked. -"Still in Lebanon, we don't know if they can come." My party-vibe stumbled for a moment as this boy's harsh reality crashed into mine, but since he looked so happy to be invited, I was happy too. The second boy also wanted to come but had to check with his mother. After a while he came back and said that his mother wouldn't let him. Why? I thought. What could possibly be threatening with going to a party inside the same house as your own. The mother could've just come down to speak with me if there were any concerns, but apparently decided not to for some reason. The fact that we had also stolen this little boy's only play-buddy made the whole scene even worse. Oh well, the show must go on. We walked up to our house and I started to ask him some more questions about his family situation. A combination of communication problems and bad timing to talk about problematic and emotional subjects made me



stop. We gave the boy we had just kidnapped some potato crisps and soda. An animated movie was playing and he sat himself down on the floor to watch next to our daughters. It completely absorbed him. When it was over, I offered him some food but he politely declined with a smile and said he had to leave.

The party was fun but the little boy was the only one from the neighbourhood attending. Were we too aggressive in the invitation? Was it strange of us to invite people in the first place? Would it have been easier with a common room so that the space felt more mutual? Or does this have something to do with the area we live in and a possible lack of trust for each other?

Maybe I am being delusional but a while afterwards I started to sense that people in the building and in the yard were nodding and greeting us in a friendlier way than before. Not that they were unfriendly before, but still. The mother in the Bosnian family living across the hall from us even looked like she was with-holding a little laughter everytime we met in the stairs. Her smile made it feel kind and warm and not mean, but I can't know for sure. A couple of weeks later there was a strange knock on our door at 10 o'clock in the evening. Reluctantly, and slightly worried, I went up from the sofa. Through the peek hole, I saw small dark haired lady only wearing a white t-shirt and slippers. She was shaking a bit so I hurried to open the door.

-“Hi there.. ehm... I.. I accidentally locked my key inside my apartment and my clothes are locked into the washing room”, she said with a shivering voice.

I didn't really grasp the scenario yet but I invited her in so we could figure out a solution. Apparently her apartment has an auto-lock and somehow she managed to leave the key in her apartment and her clothes in the wash at the same time. Making her stuck half-ways almost naked. As hilarious as that may sound, the only spare-key was with her husband and he was in Gothenburg working night shift. We called him but no answer. Then we called the tenant-organization but they had no spare-key. Lastly, we called the lock smith. Right when we were about to send a smith to our place, the husband called back and said he would come home with the key right away. Wow. That's about 6 hours by car back and forth, what a hero. The lady of course had to wait at our place until he came, and the only place we had left for her was the top bed of Maiya's bunk-bed since Mari doesn't want to sleep alone yet. I gave the lady a blanket, a glass of water, tucked her in and said good

night. She thanked me and said good night back. It all felt very absurd. Not only had I found two daughters in Tokyo, but now one in Rosengård also.

The next day the bunk-bed was empty. For a second I didn't know if it all really happened or not. Later that night though, the lady and her husband came knocking. They brought a huge flower, some chocolate and said they wanted to invite us for dinner as a token of gratitude. We gladly accepted. The dinner was delicious. Although we were all very different in every sense of the word, it was all cozy and heart-warming. The husband started to talk about the flier we sent them some weeks before. He said they were very tempted to come, but in the end they didn't really dare. I understood them.

-“Maybe it was a little strange.” I said.

-“Yes, the husband said. But it shouldn't be. We appreciate that you tried.”

I thanked him. The girls needed sleep, time to go home. We said bye.

The Thai lady seemed to really like kids. Days after the dinner she repeatedly came up to us just to give Maiya and Mari chocolates and toys. She even insisted that she should take care of them so that me and Kana could go out and have a good time. An offer we used to go to a music concert one night. Another great thing: the husband had all the tools in the world and was very glad to lend them to us. We could finally drill the concrete walls and hang Kana's plants. As I pondered our unexpected friendship with this middle-aged couple and the circumstances around it, I felt so thankful that she locked herself out that night. Even though I was annoyed and uncomfortable at first. It took such a small thing to start the friendship and the cost was so little. It also made me think of how people generally, including me, usually try to avoid this kind of inconvenience. That night in the sofa, if I would've been given the choice of having or not having someone knocking at my door and demand something from me, I would probably have chosen not to. Is this bonding inconvenience perhaps something that architecture can help to set up? To create a setting where people naturally have to help each other out, even though it seems annoying at first? *Architecture of Inconvenience*. Hmmm. I agree, not a very compelling slogan.

Three weeks later the lady knocked again. She had locked herself out, again. This time it was more urgent than last time since she had food cooking at her stove. We had to act



fast and decided that the best way would be to go through her balcony. I went to get our ladder, but we didn't reach. Oh no. Is our building going to burn down because I didn't buy a longer ladder? We decided to try to find something to have underneath it. We lifted every stone and every bush. I didn't even know what I was looking for. A secret magical hole filled with perfectly sized ladder extensions? As you can hear, we were desperate. But all of a sudden my neighbour's friend yelled at me.

- "Johan, I found it!!"

I ran towards her. It wasn't a magical hole but something almost as good as whatever you can find in magical holes. Industrial pallets of wood. We stacked them and I jumped inside her apartment. Stove off. Phew.

We decided that she should either give us a key by now or change her door.









# 12 Kick-Boxing, Gods and Culture Casbah.



Today, we were invited to Herrgården by the father of Maiya's class-mate. This area has an unemployment rate reaching up to nearly 90%<sup>(1)</sup>. They lived on Ramels väg, arguably the most infamous road in all of Rosengård. I had been walking around here several times before, so I had already gotten an impression of it. Or several impressions rather. One early warm September evening, the yards were crowded with people. Crowded in the best way possible. Almost like a festival atmosphere, on a regular weekday afternoon. It looked amazing to me. A spontaneous public life, that didn't revolve around shopping or even an event of any kind. What other area has that, I thought to myself. Families brought chairs, pick-nicks and water pipes. A woman gave me some snacks. Our kids found friends to play with within seconds. It was great. One other time, slightly later in the evening and when the weather had turned grim, I had the opposite impression. People were nowhere to be seen except a group of three young men smoking outside an entrance. As I passed them I overheard their conversation. One of them was bragging about a fist-fight he had been in. In a very exhilarated way, he explained how much blood was gushing from the other guys nose as he beat him down. One of his friends laughed a little while the other friend didn't look impressed. I was trying to read them to see if I could find something behind that macho facade, but it was hard. I was wondering how their average week looked. Who their role-models were. Who their role-models could have been.

Now we were heading back to Herrgården with the whole family this Sunday afternoon. I was very curious. Excited to finally get to know people from this area and hear their stories. But I would be lying if I said that I wasn't the slightest apprehensive. Mostly regarding how it would go socially, perhaps. We rang the bell and the dad opened for us. He was much younger than I expected and looked very casual. A slight beard and very soft clothes, all cotton. With a super fit body. He greeted us welcome and directly tried to help us place our baby buggy in the hallway. His every move was quick and snappy, almost like a lizard. The girls screamed of joy when they saw each other and were off playing right away. The rest of us sat ourselves down in the kitchen.

- I am going to fix you some amazing coffee! He said very enthusiastically. Apparently a Lebanese specialty of some sort.

We started off with some small chat. He had never seen a person from Japan before, except on TV, and seemed pretty amazed to meet Kana. His energetic vibe rubbed off and we also started to feel pretty amazed to meet him. A big picture was hanging on the



wall, portraying a bearded man with a turban in a room with scripts on the walls and a grey telephone from the 80s. I asked him who it was and before I knew it, he had started off an intense monologue. This was an important subject for him it seemed, to say the least. We dived deep into the politics of the middle-east. He explained how his country had been invaded and that the man on the wall was going to conquer the invaders. Then he explained the difference between the Sunni and the Shia muslims. After that, how he is constantly trying to argue with the ISIS-sympathizers in Malmö. The stories kept coming and soon he was telling us about his escape to Sweden through Norway. He was 17 and competing in a kick-boxing championship. After the tournament he sneaked over the border. Since then he had lived in more Swedish cities than I had. He found a woman in Växjö and they had a baby girl. My head was spinning. So much to take in. I took a sip of the very sweet coffee. I liked it. He continued by explaining how the mother couldn't handle her marijuana addiction so he had to leave her. Now, alone with the baby, he moved to Malmö to set up a new life. After some rough years he had finally found himself a full-time job. He seemed to love it in Rosengård.

The door opened and in came his new partner. Nice with a pause, both me and Kana needed to rest our heads for a second. The woman took her jacket off, and introduced herself. After grabbing a cup of coffee, she joined the conversation by explaining a bit about herself. Born on a horse farm in the country-side of Småland County, she was now working as a boss over another company in the same building as this man. They had found each other about a year ago, in their common entrance hall. Love at first sight they said, almost simultaneously. They were both very religious and told me that the day before they met, they had both prayed to their god that they would find someone. It warmed my heart to hear. I asked how she liked it in Rosengård and it saddened me to hear that she wanted to move out. She said she was tired of being asked why she lived in Rosengård by all of her friends. The apartment wasn't big enough either. Especially if they would get a new family member, she said smiling at her boyfriend, who smiled back at her. When talking about moving, he emphasized how many friends around the neighbourhood he had and expressed a certain will to stay, but also agreed that maybe they probably had to move soon.

It had become dark outside and we all had school and work the next morning. It was time

to go, although I felt unfinished with our conversations. However joyful it was to get to know this family and their newfound strength, it saddened me to further get accustomed to some of the problems that Rosengård is facing. From my humble and admittedly not yet experienced enough point of view, I would still like to put a couple of thoughts in this matter on paper. As far as I see it, this meeting underlined two apparent problems. One external and one internal. The external being the judgmental attitude of people from outside Rosengård affecting the people inside. We first-handedly witnessed the effects of stigmatization when this woman said that, as her first reason for moving, she couldn't stand her friends looking down on her choice to live in Rosengård. I understand it. We are social beings. Whether we like it or not, we usually care what others think. A way to not care what others think revolves around distancing oneself in one way or another. A very common defense mechanism to deal with being looked down upon. And here I think we arrive at one of the cornerstones of segregation.

The internal problem relates to the actual design of Rosengård. One of the founding architects of this planning ideal in Sweden, Uno Åhrén, once said that if a neighbourhood were to have a reasonable chance of success on a social level, it was crucial that people were from the same economical class or social group<sup>(2)</sup>. In practice meaning that apartments within an area should be of similar quality, size and price. What a gruesomely sad strategy. So now, when this family I just got to know is finally up on their feet and standing tall, they can afford another kind of housing and will therefore probably move away. Further reading shows that Herrgården has actually been prone to the highest rate of housing continuity in all of Malmö<sup>(3)</sup> (the rate in which people are moving in and out). Considering the current socio-economic status of this area, this data suggests that Herrgården is likely a case of *human capital flight*. A mechanism that, for one reason or another, results in certain people fleeing away. The constrained physical setting might be resulting in a constant drain of whoever manages to rise above poverty. My guess is that we need to find ways to get these people to stay inside the neighbourhood in order to make it grow by itself and from within. *Malmökommissionen*, the government-initiated research group who investigated the health of Malmö's citizens says the following about this matter:



It is obvious that the housing stock available for big families with low resources clearly doesn't meet their demands, even though social services provides a large percentage of their rent. [...] We have calculated the ideal amount of apartments needed to deal with the overcrowding and reached the conclusion that a considerable amount of 4-5 room apartment are needed, as well as six room apartments.<sup>(4)</sup>

Let's say we add housing or adjust some apartments so that some number of families doesn't move out as soon as they get up on their feet. Good for them, but one can still ask what this would really do for the area as a whole. For, let's say, the families that are still not yet up on their feet, living in the cheapest housing available without enough rooms. Then, adding houses of higher qualities might only sound like an attempt to help the statistics, rather than actually dealing with a problem. But here I stand to disagree, with the simple argument of something called the neighbourhood-effect. Research shows that the kind of neighbours and the lifestyles they possess have a significant impact on how a kids life will turn out<sup>(5)(6)</sup>. This is not understood best by looking through numbers, of course. But by simply imagine the distrust built up in a kid raised in a neighbourhood where perhaps 9 out of 10 adults around him or her are without jobs and lacking a good relationship to the society. It stands painfully clear that this scenario will probably not result in an especially bright perspective on the future. When talking about the kids that are victims of these circumstances, the term "learned helplessness"<sup>(7)</sup> is often used. It describes a state of mind in which a person, consciously or unconsciously/direct or indirect, is taught by the environment that nothing he or she would do could change the outcome of his or her life. If we want the next generation of kids from these areas to not follow the same footsteps, we need to present them with a variety of positive and reachable future scenarios they can relate to. Sure, we have Zlatan. No wonder he became such a strong symbol for the neglected suburban kid. That's great and all, but I don't think role-models always need to be that spectacular. They just need to be there.

The notion that a social mix might be important for an area is nothing new for politicians, planners and architects. It has become more or less a consensus by now and the municipality of Malmö is indeed working hard to implement it. A new densification project called *Culture Casbah* was recently voted through by the local politicians (of the

existing eight parties, only the left-wing party *Vänsterpartiet* and the far right-wing party *Sverigedemokraterna* were against the project<sup>(8)</sup>). It consists of a 22-story skyscraper programmed with an emphasize on cultural activities, 200+ apartments, several schools and about 30 business facilities. Planned to be built in *Örtagården*, in the south-western part of *Rosengård*<sup>(9)</sup>. But striving for a socio-economic mix is not without its consequences. Since the new-built housing is going to be more expensive, people with higher income are going to enter the area (provided that they get sold, which is likely due to the housing deficiency in Sweden at the moment). If the area then picks up in popularity, surrounding houses will inevitably become increasingly in-affordable. The process commonly known as gentrification. The whole dilemma though, is that the two strongest effects of gentrification stand against each other. We want to higher the status of the area to break segregation and stigmatization, but we don't want the prices that comes with this higher status to force vulnerable families out. Those families are of course the reason why we want to destigmatize the area in the first place.

One can feel an instant aversion by the thought of solving problems in a very top-down created project, as *miljonprogrammet* arguably was, with another big top-down project. That some tower of sprinkled boxes is going to solve everything in a flash. But judging from the static physical conditions the planning of *Rosengård* created, and how deep the stigma seem to be, maybe we don't have any other choice than doing something of this magnitude. Looking at the tower itself, drawn by the danish firm *Lundgaard & Tranberg*, there are some interesting features that does seem to fit very well with the public purposes of the project. Instead of being enclosed like most tall buildings, the stairway is designed to be open, therefore function more as a vertical outdoor street than a regular indoor zone for transportation. Meaning that going up in the tower doesn't mean going into the tower, which will hopefully succeed in making it more attractive to the public since you don't have to have any reason to go up the vertical street other than just exploring it. This might all seem very trivial in comparison to the dangers of gentrification. And I can agree to that. But how sad wouldn't it be, if we all just concluded that inventive and unique architecture can never have a place in our poorer neighbourhoods? Then we are really showing that *Rosengård* and the people living there are not worth as much effort as other areas and other people.



In an interview with Marianne Dock from *Malmö City Planning Office*, I asked her about the issue of gentrification in regards to Culture Casbah. She expressed a concern for it but assured me that MKB, the publicly-owned rental company which owns all surrounding rental apartments, can control rents so that residents will be able to stay. The added houses were to contribute to the positive effects of gentrification through a social mix, while the controlled rents on the existing houses were to prevent the negative effects of increasing prices. But she didn't touch on the fact that there are many private rental agencies around Rosengård who are likely not going to hesitate raising their prices if they get the chance. Even MKB actually needs to follow the price trend due to the Swedish regulation system, which forces public companies to act under "business-like-principles" in order to not skew the competition of the market.

That interview was also before MKB decided to join forces with three private real-estate companies, Balder, Victoria Park and Heimstaden, to go through with Culture Casbah<sup>(10)</sup>. A unified company called *Rosengårds Fastigheter* is to be created, in which each stakeholding company owns an equal 25% of the stock. The main reason is said to be that a shared risk is preferred due to the experimental and expensive nature of this project. According to the Social Democratic party, *Socialdemokraterna*, who pushed this through city council, another reason to team up with the private sector is to add a legitimacy for other private enterprises to dare starting up businesses in Rosengård<sup>(7)</sup>. If the publicly owned MKB would do it all by themselves, the risk would be that it would only look like one big social project, which would likely scare off private enterprise which in turn is needed to get Rosengård up and running by itself, according to the local politicians. In this merging deal, MKB is also selling 1660 apartments to this new company (half of everything they own in Rosengård). To compensate for this, it is also agreed that MKB will hold the chairman position of the board and that the sold apartments are still to be rented out with the ethical standards of MKB. What this means for the current tenants still remains to be seen. After all, 75% of their house is soon to be privately owned. A majority of stock usually implies great power over a company, but it's hard to know how this unique constellation is actually going to function.

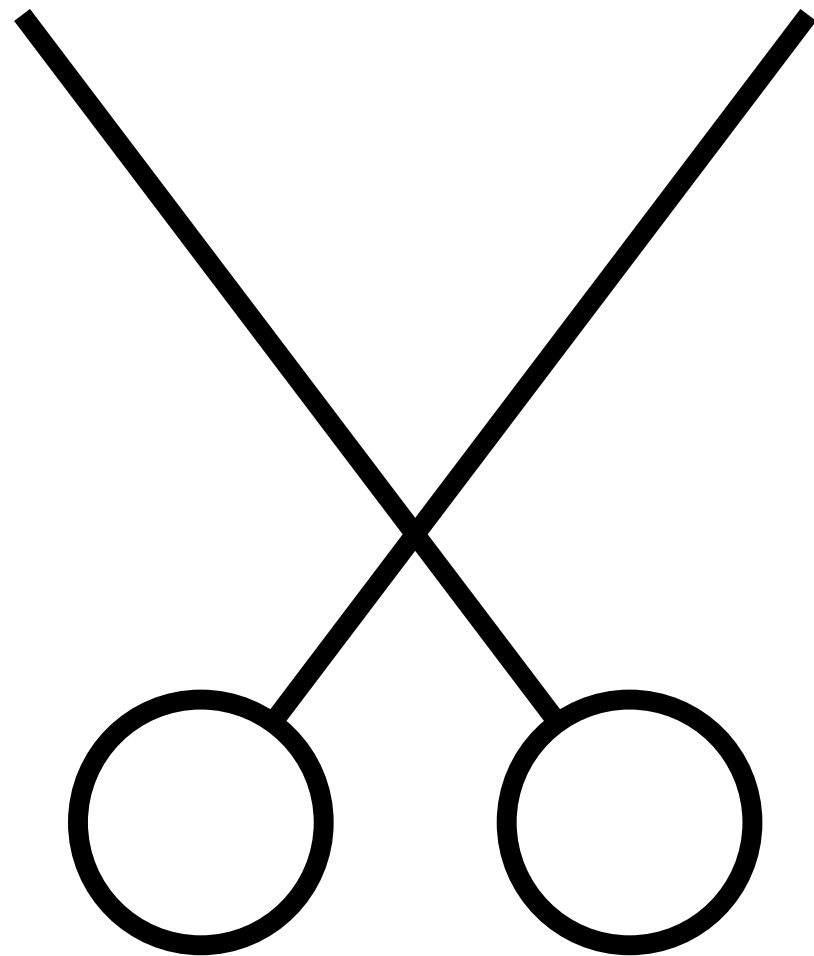
What this all means for Rosengård as a whole is even more unclear. But surely, I don't want to get overly suspicious. My gathered impression is still that this project and overall

compromise is done with the heart in the right place, and not with monetary gain as a main driving force. I hope I will not have to eat my words. At the time of writing, feelings of excitement and concern fluctuates as this radical transformation is about to unfold itself upon Rosengård.



# 13

## The Barber on Bennets Bazaar.



New years eve was coming and we were invited to a dinner. My hair looked like it had grown out of a skeleton in the desert, so I figured I needed someone to have a look at it. The closest barber shop was right after the bridge over Amiralsgatan, in Bennets Bazaar. It was finally time to use the shopping street that MKB had made. We walked over the windy bridge and into the over lit little salon. The three barbers seemed too busy to notice us. Furthest in, there was a couch with a man wearing a blue-tooth headset on his left ear. He rose from the couch and presented his seat to me with a smile. The man was apparently the owner and told us to wait for the next free barber. In the mean time we started to chat. He was from Iraq and had lived in Malmö for more than 20 years. I asked him if he liked it here. Disappointedly, he shook his shoulders and told me it wasn't great. I continued asking him what he did here all these years. A little bit of everything it seemed. School assistant, plumber, taxi driver, grocery merchant and now barber shop owner. Then all of a sudden he lit up. In a very proud voice, the owner explained that he just got his sixth kid. Six kids.. I was impressed. I can barely handle two. But then I wondered, how does that family even fit here? Rosengård only has 1-4 room apartments, and you have to live above the shop to run a business at Bennets Bazaar. If everyone is living at home, which I assumed since his oldest boy was only a teen, this family should be at least 8. Harsh. I wanted to know more about his situation, but it felt rude to go deeper into the matter. I asked him about what he thought about *Culture Casbah*. He loved it. We need more activity here, he said.

After an hour we were done. We paid 440kr for all four of us. It took two barbers two hours to get the job done. Could that really be profitable? I thought. Plus equipment, rent, taxes etc. Even if they seemed busy, the profit margins couldn't possibly earn these people much more than to just stay alive. And then feeding a family of eight on that salary? This visit reminded me of my privileged position compared to some of my neighbours here. It's easy for me to walk around having opinions about beautiful yards on a cheerful whim, but the stakes are quite different for others. There simply has to be more housing options for bigger families here. A family like this would of course run away from their current housing if they started to earn enough to afford a couple of more rooms somewhere else. Then Rosengård would lose this greatly driven person.

Maybe we could let people build other kinds of houses on the parking lots here. Since we have far too much parking underground, we could free up some space on the ground. Here comes a suggestion.



**D** PARKING TO HOUSING.



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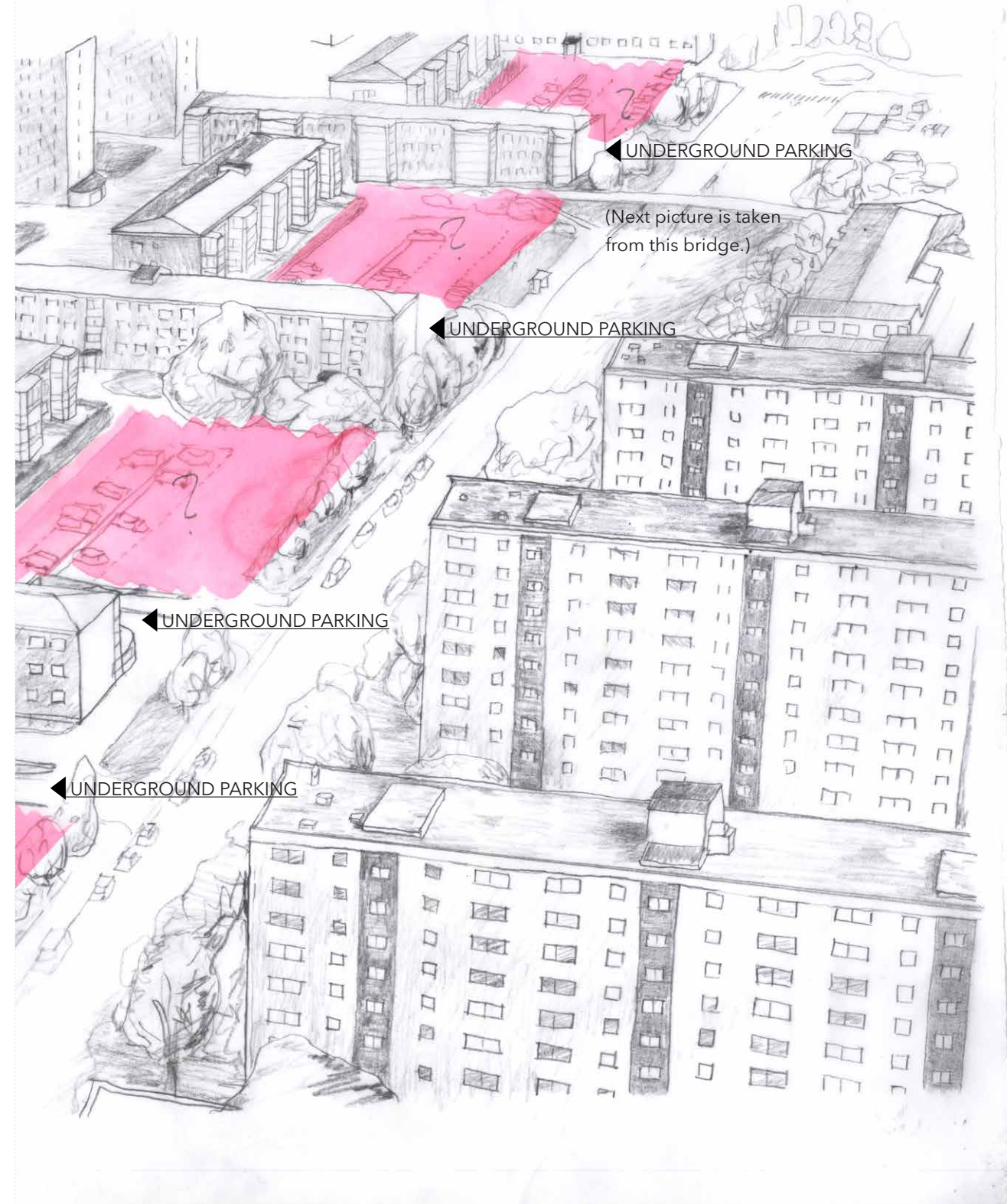
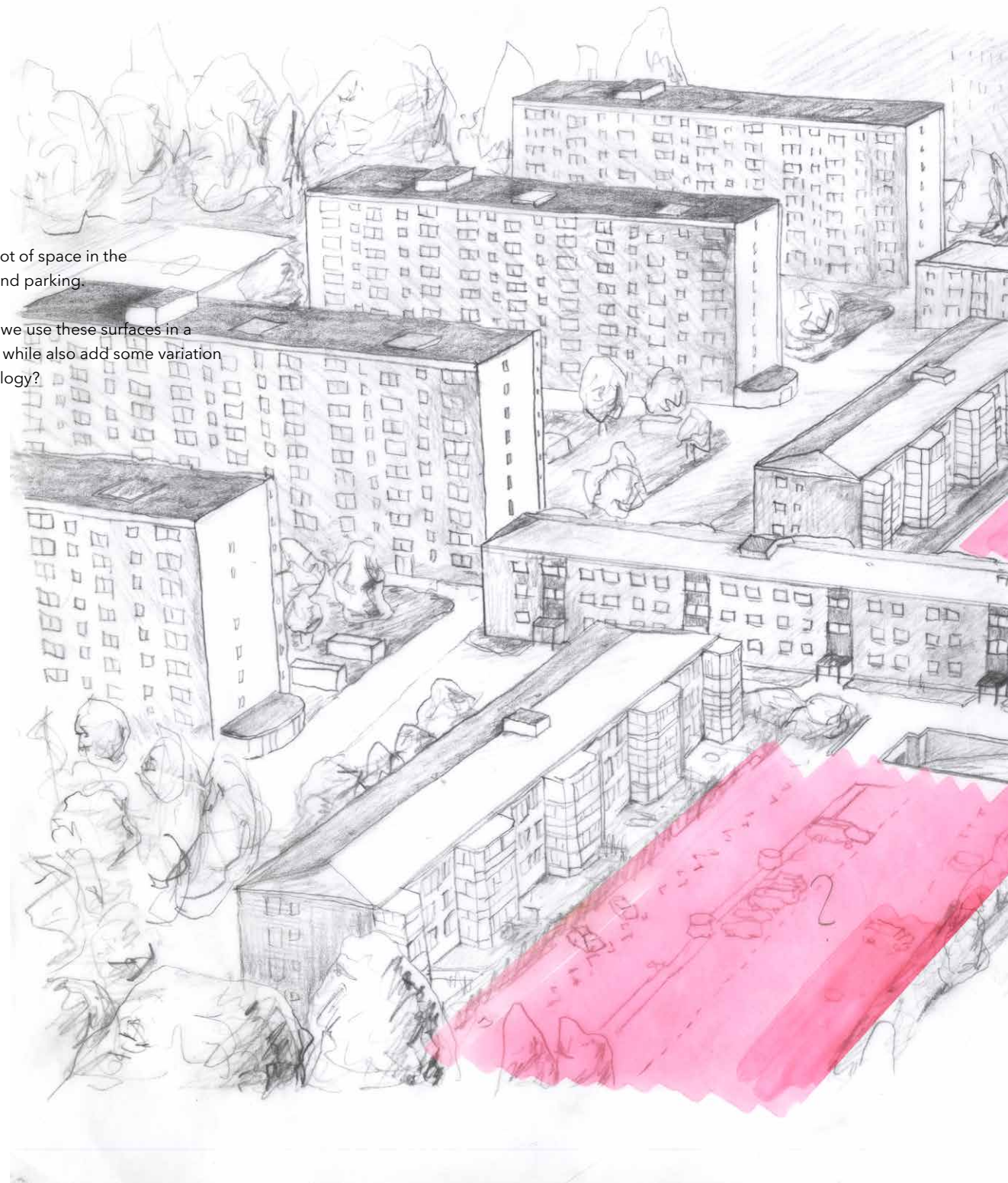




# VON LINGENS VÄG

There is a lot of space in the underground parking.

Why don't we use these surfaces in a better way while also add some variation in the typology?





**PARKING TO HOUSING.**

I find it sad to see the parking meet the street like this.





**PARKING TO HOUSING.**

First, we need to place all the cars underneath.





## PARKING TO HOUSING.

Then we can build something.

Adding housing of another scale would add to the atmosphere of the neighbourhood as well as giving inhabitants of Rosengård more alternatives when choosing housing.

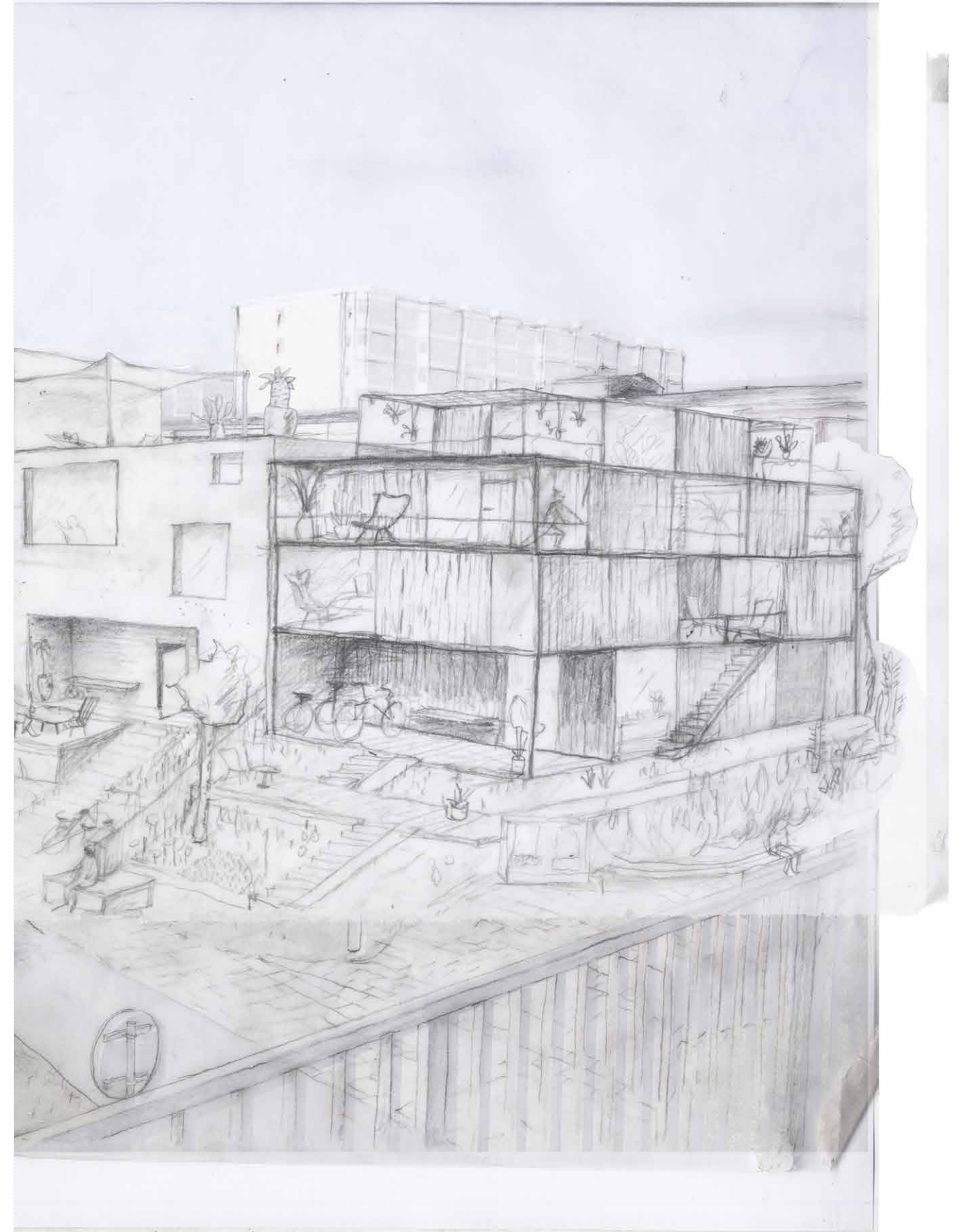
Some could become big housing for a single family.

Some could become shared housing units between several families.

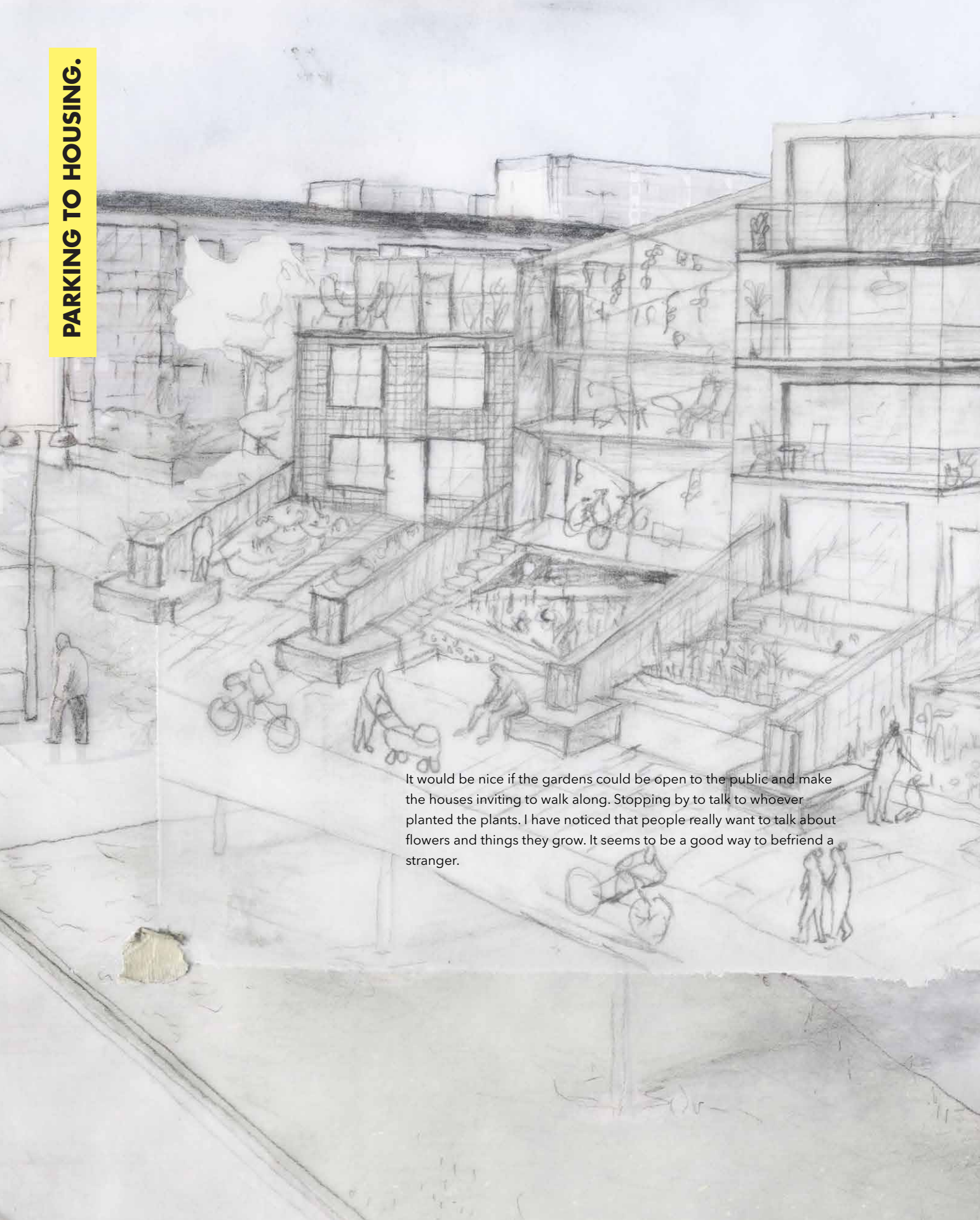
Some could become smaller apartment buildings for the student or the young adult.

To mix different forms of tenure and ownership would also be of help when we want to reach a true social mix. Similar to the way students can lend money to study, an option for families of the lower socio-economic to buy their first apartment could be one way of giving them a fair chance on the housing market.

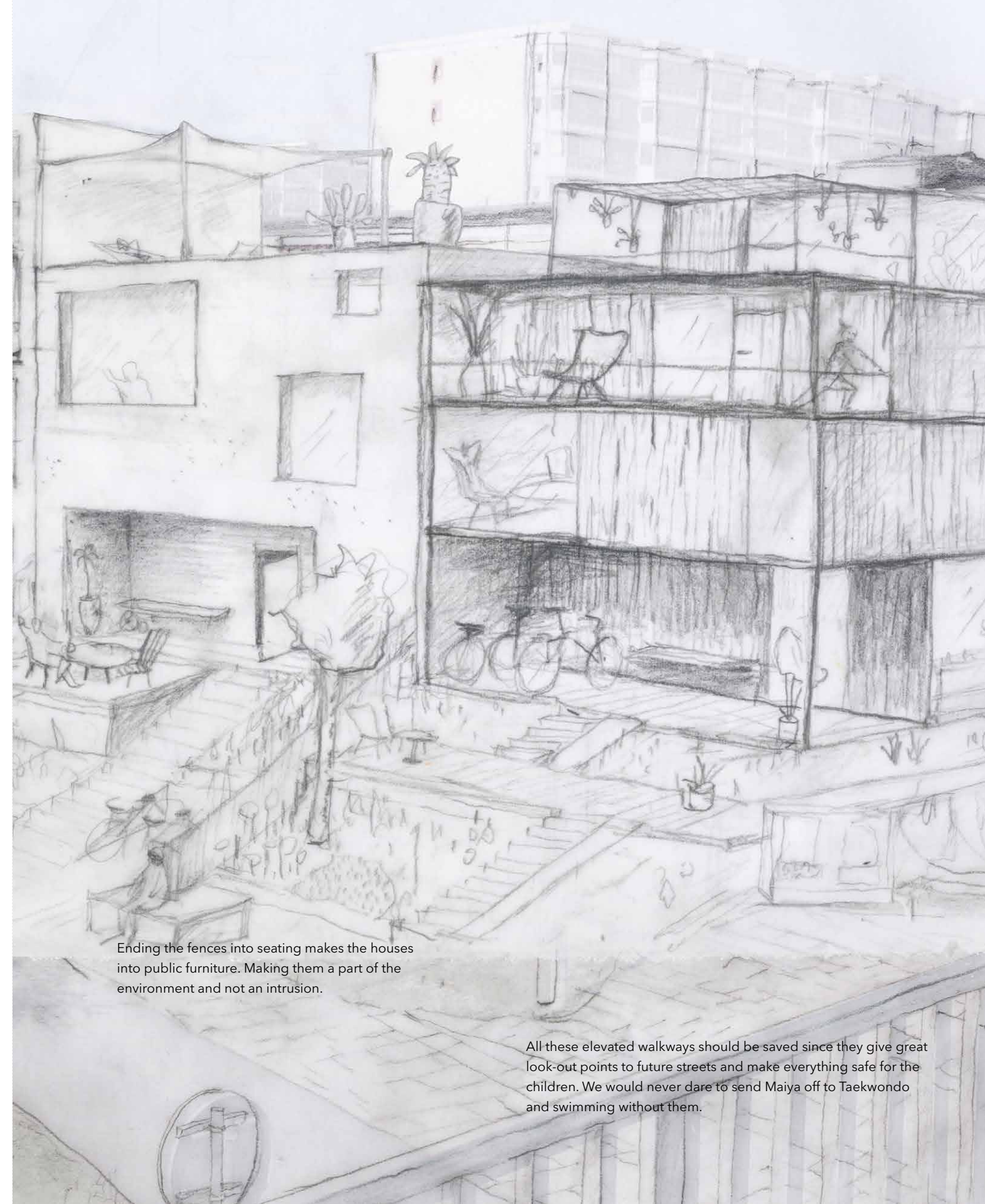
Basically, let's diversify the housing!







It would be nice if the gardens could be open to the public and make the houses inviting to walk along. Stopping by to talk to whoever planted the plants. I have noticed that people really want to talk about flowers and things they grow. It seems to be a good way to befriend a stranger.



Ending the fences into seating makes the houses into public furniture. Making them a part of the environment and not an intrusion.

All these elevated walkways should be saved since they give great look-out points to future streets and make everything safe for the children. We would never dare to send Maiya off to Taekwondo and swimming without them.



# 14 A Boy Killed on Amiralsgatan.



Last night was a night we will remember. At seven in the evening, a sixteen year old boy got shot right by the bus stop outside our apartment. The blue light from the police cars were flashing on our facade as we were trying to go to sleep. Suddenly everything felt very real. I could distinguish three powerful emotions.

Confusion. This was a situation I had never been in before and I didn't know how to handle it. To see your own everyday environments in news coverage of a murder is an absurd feeling.

Fear. The bus stop where it happened is the bus stop we always use. At seven in the evening I could have been there waiting for a bus with my family. An unbearable thought.

Aggression. I wouldn't consider myself an aggressive person. But this event stirred up a remarkable and disturbing sense of primitive anger in me. In a way, I could understand how crucial this feeling would have been for my survival if I was living 30 000 years ago. A claiming of my territory. It was almost humiliating. Someone completely disrespecting the boundaries and rules of our territory. What "our" meant I did not know exactly. But I could definitely feel it.

The days and weeks after the murder went by as if nothing had even happened. Sure, the media was all over Rosengård again, and you couldn't miss the flower bed in front of the bus stop. But life in the neighbourhood just kept on going. Everyone still nodding to each other in the stairway, kids playing the same games in the yard. Better than an hysterical and panicking atmosphere I suppose, but there was something admittedly disturbing in the air. This event had somehow created a involuntary wariness in me. As if a new disaster could be around any corner. Everything made me nervous. People coming from behind, someone looking suspicious in the distant, sudden moves or gestures. Even a bird taking of from a tree could be enough to make me twitch. Almost as if my muscle memory had been reprogrammed. Suddenly I saw my surroundings differently, even though it looked exactly the same.



Time for reflections at  
Rosengård bus stop.



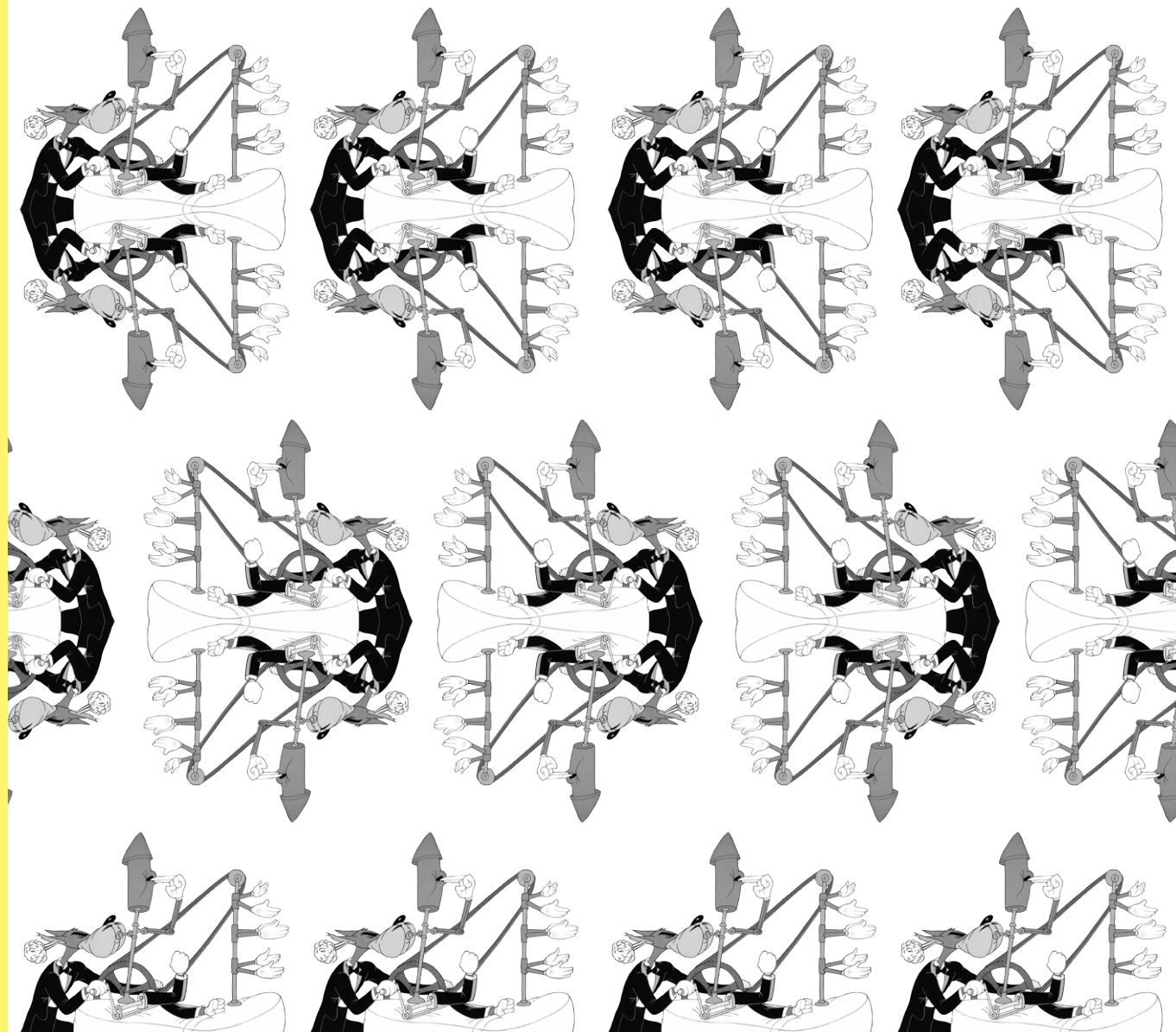


The Bridge over Amiralsgatan. Down the stairs to the left is where the boy got killed.





# 15 Being Seen and Being Heard.



Ever since we got here, we had heard loud booming sounds from areas around us. Like a distant artillery soaring in the periphery. Unsettling, but usually so far away from us that we never really cared. This afternoon though, one of these booms came from right underneath our house and it was so strong that the whole building shook for a second. Kana was just about to go out with Maiya for a dance lesson but stopped in the door as soon as the floor trembled. She was terrified. Her eyes had a slight shiver in them as she looked at me. A very disturbing look. I read it, *What kind of place did you bring us to.* And in that moment I asked myself the same question. With everything else that had been going on here lately, I started to doubt my eagerness to move here.

Who would fire off such a thing right in the middle of a housing area? What was it even? For all I knew, it could have been a grenade or bomb of some sort. As the adrenaline rushed I put my jacket on and went out. I had no idea what had happened but a line had been stepped over and I couldn't take it. I can't say I wasn't scared. A person who is capable of stepping over one line might be ready to step over other lines. But enough is enough. If we are to stay here, we can't be afraid of the place. I came out of the front door and headed to where I heard the sound, which was towards Maiya's elementary school, *Apelgårdsskolan*. A little gathering of young teenagers stood by the parking lot. Three boys and three girls. I approached them and asked if they saw the person who made the sound.

-“Yeah, we saw a guy. He ran behind the building over there.”

As the boy finished his sentence I could sense something was not right. He had a strange sinister smile on his face.

-“So, behind that building? To the right or to the left?”

I asked, to get more clues.

-“I did it.”

Another boy stepped forward. He was slightly shorter than me, wearing a hoodie over his head and a thin fuzzy teenage mustache on his upper lip.

-“What are you going to do about it?”

He continued. I could see that he thought he was very cool. It seemed like he was the leader of the crew.

-“Yeah, you know, things like this happens in Rosengård.”

Another boy said with a nervous laughter, instantly turning to the girls to see if



they giggled. Such a sad phrase to hear. As if that was a justification. Or, as if he felt unconsciously responsible to uphold this perception. Even though the atmosphere was tense and frustrating, a sense of relief came over me as I realized that it was not exactly hardened criminals I was up against here. Then I remembered that the boy that got shot was probably around the same age as these kids.

But the fact that excessive violence has crept lower in age recently couldn't stop me now. I was determined to somehow get through here. The tricky part in this situation, was to handle the specific role that the teenagers were in at this moment. As you know, we all step into psychological roles depending on the circumstances, which willingly or unwillingly directs our behaviour. We are in a way schizophrenic by nature, although as adults most often in control or at least aware of the roles we play. These teenagers were not. Right now, they all seemed to be in a kind of "mating dance"-role. The girls seemed the most interested in whoever was the most cocky and daring, so the guys were of course all trying to be cocky and daring. Which in this case meant firing off a stupidly loud firecracker in the middle of an housing area.

"Why did you do that?" I asked.

"Because they are mine, and I can do whatever I want with what is mine" he answered. "I bought them for my own money even."

The small crowd cracked some smiles. In the spur of the moment, I figured that if I was to get through here I couldn't just tell him what he did was bad with a stern voice and think that he would listen. I decided to go with a complete lie.

"You know what I got upstairs in my apartment?" I said. I could feel my face slightly shaking. I am not used to encounters like this.

"No." He said.

"A two year old baby hiding under her blanket and crying her eyes out. Just because of you." I lied. Mari was actually three, and at daycare. I could have said the truth, that me and Kana were the ones scared out of our panties. But it probably wouldn't have helped the strange giggly atmosphere. Mari was the most relatable thing I could think of, and I wouldn't be surprised at all if some kids in her age reacted that way.

"And?" He answered arrogantly. Still holding his tough face. My lie didn't bite. I started to think that this effort was all for nothing.

"And what? You think it's right that she is up there crying her eyes off just because

you wanted to fire that stupid fire-cracker in the middle of our neighbourhood?" I said pointing up to our apartment. He said nothing, just looked away. I noticed that I was starting to turn some of the others over.

"Don't you have a younger sibling?" I asked him. No answer, so I asked one of the others and it started to pay off. They were getting uncomfortable and awkward.

"He won't do it again, he promises." Said a girl and a boy.

"Come on, just say sorry" Another girl told him.

He repeated that he can do whatever he wants with whatever is his, and turned his head again. Too much frustration came over me and I decided to give up. This wasn't going anywhere.

"Ok, I need to get up to my daughter and comfort her some more. I hope that this will be the last time I have to do that because of you."

As a matter of fact, it was five o'clock and I had to head over to Mari's day-care. I jumped on my bike and took a detour just to avoid the teen crew. They could've easily called my bluff if they saw me bike away.

As usual, Mari wanted to stay at day-care instead of coming home with me. She is very fond of her teachers. Especially an old lady from the Skåne countryside who talks with a very extreme dialect, which Mari hilariously enough is starting to take after, with her little Japanese touch to it. At last I got her on the bike. The bike paths are usually very empty, except in the morning rush hour, so I cruised home through the winter breeze with ease. Suddenly, a figure was walking towards us from the distant. I recognized him right away. It was the cocky teen from ten minutes ago. My heart jumped. I had no idea what to expect. Last time we saw each other we were enemies.

"Hey you! Come over here for a second." He said. I didn't know what kind of voice to use in my answer. But when in doubt, always be friendly, I learned somewhere.

"Hello!" I said and stopped my bike right next to him.

The tension in the air was thick. Was he going to punch me with Mari on the bike? Would he really go that far?

"I just wanted to say.. Sorry.." He said, with the most sincere of tones.

My jaw dropped. For a second there, it felt like the sky had opened itself. What a strong person. I know how hard it can be to switch between roles and admit mistakes, especially in that age. I don't think I was capable of doing what he just did when I was a teen.



Oh those teenage years. The tornado of hormones that rumbled inside. The search for an identity. The search for someone to be loved by. The search for a purpose. Everything mixed up in a gloriously gooey mess of acne and premature ejaculations. I don't have to paint this picture to you, we both know how it felt (and still feels sometimes).

-“Thank you for saying so.” I said to him and reached out my hand. “My name is Johan, what is your name?”

-“Benjamin.”

Then he turned to Mari. I could sense that he had a younger brother or sister because he had a perfect way with kids.

-“Sorry for making you cry so much before.” Benjamin said as he tickled her stomach a bit. I almost felt bad for lying in the first place, but I guess I couldn't have hoped for a better outcome.

-“Mari, can you say ‘It's okay’ to Benjamin?” I said. Mari had of course no idea what we were talking about, but it didn't seem to matter that much to her.

-“Okaaay..!” She said with her puffy smile.

The emotional connection and positive energy towards my area that I had lost from recent events had now been restored. I have seen Benjamin a couple of times after this and it always warms my heart a bit. That day, I also realized what a powerful weapon Mari is. A couple of weeks later, a little moped crew was chugging around the playground in the yard outside our door, scaring away everyone else. All I needed to do was to go out with Mari and put her on the slides. After a while they all got uncomfortable and went away.

These recent events made me ponder the notion of territories. I guess we all know what “territory” means, but the term comes with so many nuances that I found it hard to define, even to myself. The first picture that comes to mind is a lion urinating on a dry tree in the savannah. *You don't cross here. If you can smell my piss, you are in the wrong place.*

Regarding non-human animals, an interesting consensus that researchers seem to have reached is that territorial behaviour is innate. Shaped over the aeons of evolutionary time, rather than learned within a life-time<sup>(1)</sup>. What is evolutionary or culturally derived behaviour amongst humans in this matter can be debated to some extent, but it stands clear that the latter plays a bigger role for us than for other animals. Even though places that smell like urine still scare us away, the territorial piss is more of an abstract concept when it comes to humans. We can sense where we belong and where we don't

belong. What we can do in certain places and what we can't. Evaluated consciously or unconsciously with regards to the physicality around us and emotions within us. However abstract this sense might be, in the end, there is always going to be reasons as to why a person feels comfortable entering a space or doing a specific thing within a space or not. As for these young boys and girls, my guess is that they are in the search for spaces to make their own. Probably a part of the mating dance I just referred to (but don't quote me on that). And since the “ownership” of the yards outside our housing units are not so well defined due to things like a disconnected bottom floor and a lack of physical indicators of boundaries, it seems logical that this place's “ownership” gets questioned. This might simply be one of the prices we pay for having nicely big and open yards. Or, we can try to tune the yards in a way that will make them less confusing. Boundaries might be possible to apply without compromising the openness. Although, this comes with the risk of scaring spontaneous visitors off. Benjamin and all his friends should feel extremely welcome to come anytime. As long they keep their fire-crackers and mopeds at home.

At the end of the day though, I don't think that cities can avoid mating dances. In less vulgar words, I believe it aligns with our simple need to be seen and heard as humans, which becomes painfully evident from a teenagers perspective. The generous but anonymous spaces feels like they are made for those who are already settled down. Retired people and families with small children all thrive, while everyone that doesn't enjoy the sandpits and swings nor the tree crowns and birds, are left more or less empty handed. Perhaps, every area just isn't supposed to be for every age. But that's hard to tell Benjamin.

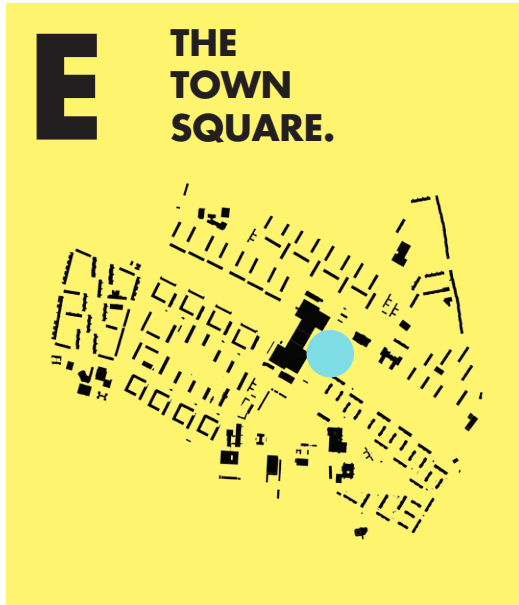
Outdoor space for the youth of Rosengård has to be an important cornerstone of working towards a stronger community. But too often, planners tend to focus only on boys and the activities that would interest them, and not girls. Football fields, basketball courts and skateboard ramps are the usual go-to elements of recreational outdoor spaces for the young. Probably out of habit, and lack of debate regarding it. But in 2010, Malmö city did a project in Örtagården called *Rosens röda matta* as an attempt to counter this trend. A parking lot was to be transformed into an active outdoor space and instead of copy pasting a basketball court onto the plan, a group of young girls were invited to be a part of the process. Rather than sports, the direction became more focused on dance



and music. A scene along with permanent speakers were installed and the area is now the home of the yearly *Rosengård Festival*. Me, Kana and the kids went to the festival this year and it was great. The wide array of cultures here made themselves known with performances and dances of many kinds. Artists from all over Sweden came, mostly from areas with similar reputation as Rosengård. I never saw this many people from other parts of Malmö in Rosengård before, and it was a good sight. We need more of this.

Another outdoor space that could definitely serve a more energetic and social purpose in Rosengård would be in front of *Rosengård Centrum*. It's the local mall, and the biggest commercial node in the area. The only place with supermarkets, shops and restaurants, which means that it's more or less the only place with a steady flow of people all year around. Outside of it, there is a gigantic parking lot. Underneath that parking lot is another parking lot. And next those two parking lots, are two more parking lots. The parking is so over-dimensioned that even on a good day at a good time, it's not even half-filled. Even though this ocean of asphalt next to the mall looks completely misanthropic, there are still enough visitors attracted to the active atmosphere that the exterior walls and entrances are often completely filled with people. I wonder what could become of this place. Here follows three suggestion.





Can the most social place in Rosengård remain as a parking lot?

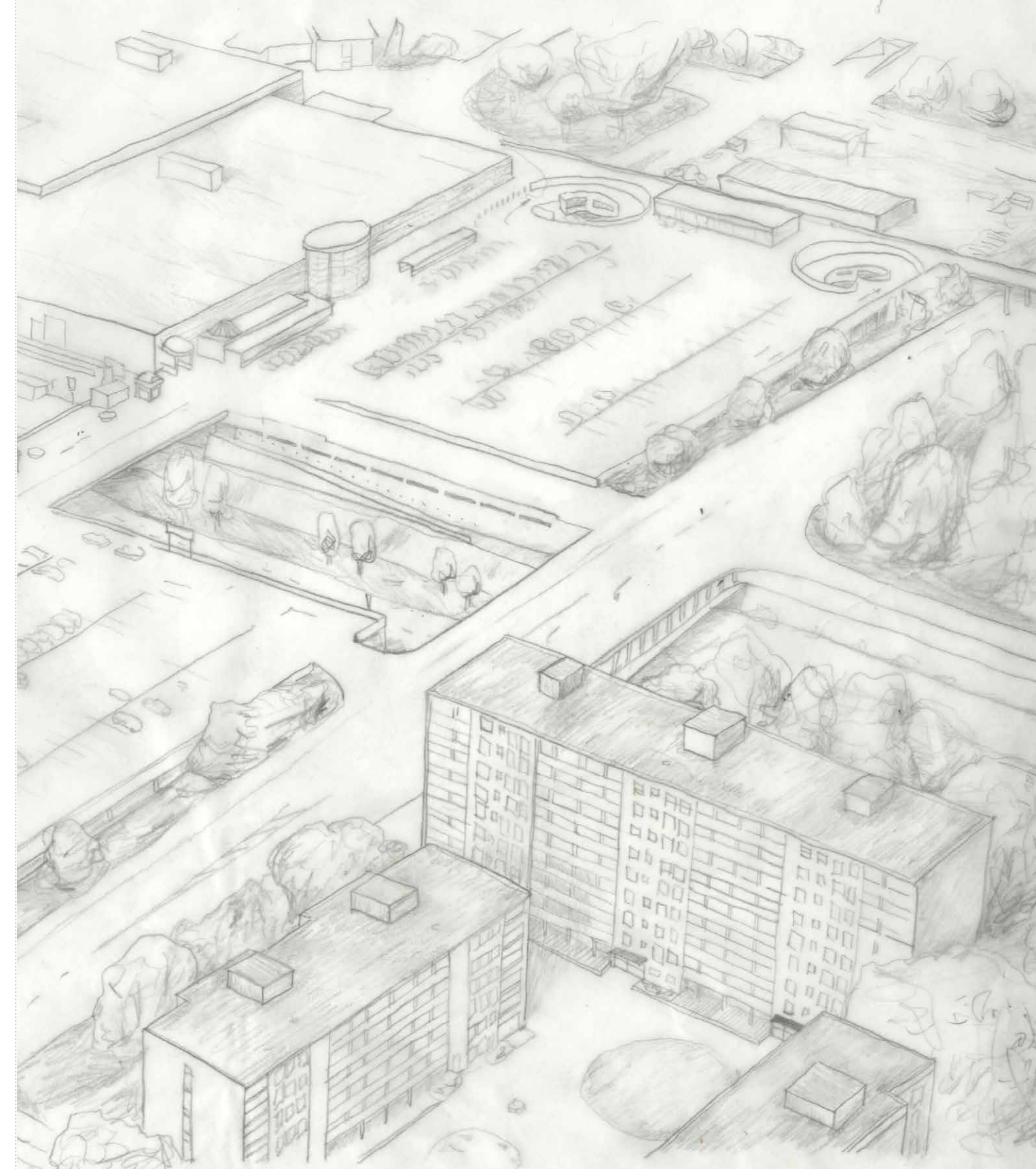
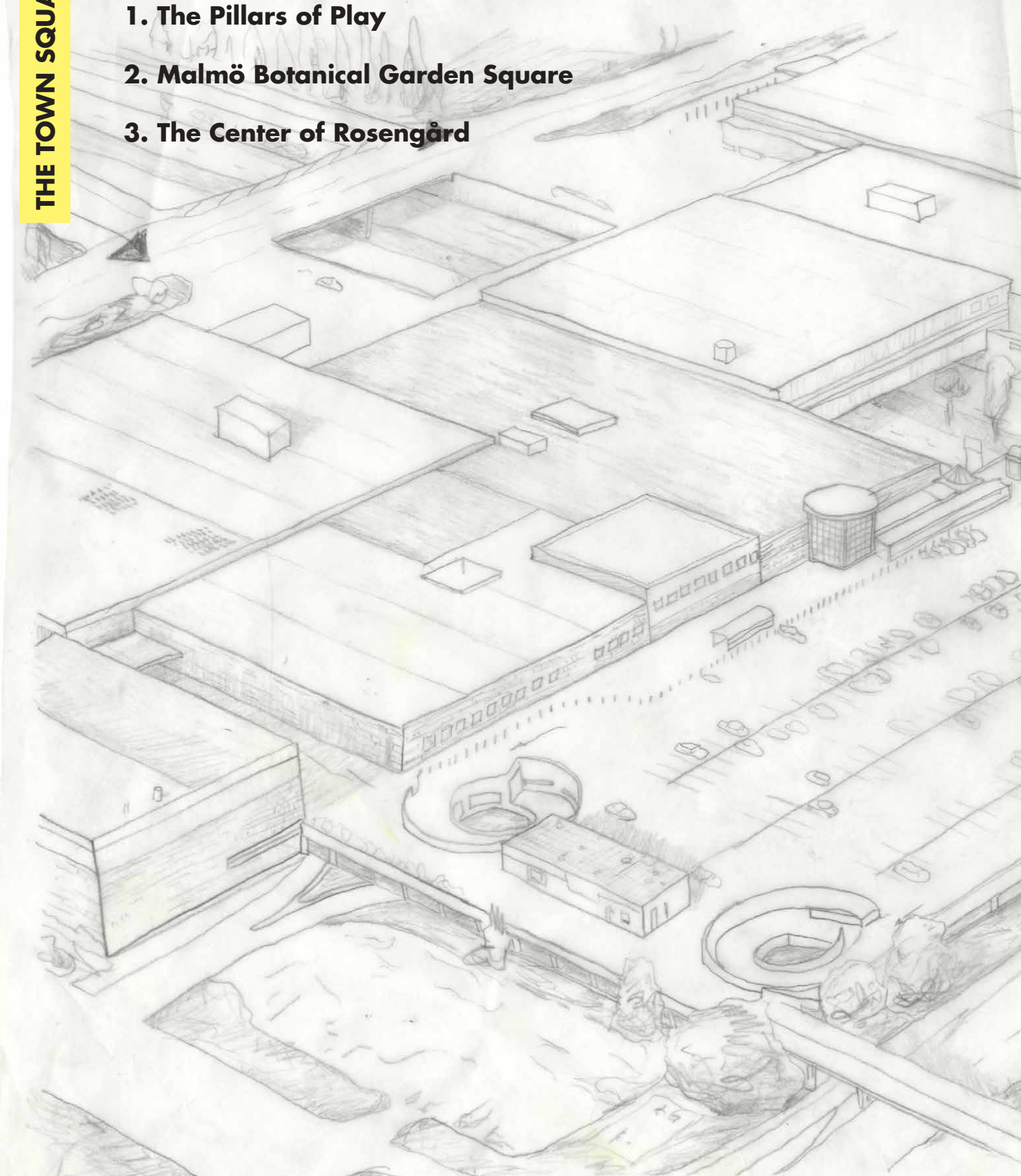


Here I want to present three different ideas in initial stages.

**1. The Pillars of Play**

**2. Malmö Botanical Garden Square**

**3. The Center of Rosengård**







All of them assume that we free up the two greatly oversized top parking lots on top, which are never used fully anyway, and use these bottom-floor parking lots instead.

This is the southern one of the two and it's not even open for use.







And all of them assume that there is public life just waiting to happen. Around this little playground, you can see what a social place this actually is. Still, mostly men, asphalt and cars..

What if of them became something real? A square? A park? A collection of cozy streets? A district centre and meeting ground worthy its inhabitants?





# 1. The Pillars of Play

Fill the open spaces with flexible pillars. Can be used for anything the mind desires, almost.

Marketstands  
 VÄGGAR OCH TAK  
 -Marknader  
 -Rumsavgränsning

Hammocks and resting places  
 URBANT MÖBLEMENT  
 -HÄNGMATTOR  
 -BANKAR  
 -BELYSNING  
 -NIVÅSKILLNAD

Net structures for climbing and playing  
 NÄTSTRUKTUREK

Build tree houses  
 -LEKPLATSER  
 -BYGGA KOTTOR

Art projects  
 KONSTPROJEKT

Other installations  
 "THE TRAPPED BANANA"  
 "A THOUSAND HANGIN THINGS"

Electricity up and down for any kind of activity  
 ELUTTAG  
 Möjliggör fler aktiviteter

Start small and let it grow as people start to use them

ET steg i höjd

200mm

~ 300mm

Lamp on top

LIPIPA PÅ TOPPEN  
 ELUTTAG  
 UPPE

3000m

Spe fat  
 Ma

BYGGA KOTTOR

Böja med en halv

Mirabolan

HYR kumposter  
 att tygg höj

UTDRING

TRÄ

BETONG

BETONG? STÅL?

Armering

Movable or not movable?  
 Divided in segments or not?

SLIKA HÖJDER?

Reducera pelare

REP & VAJRAR & NÄT

STÄNGER

Ropes or bars, depending on what you want to do

Kops och tråd

Farkverk för större projekt

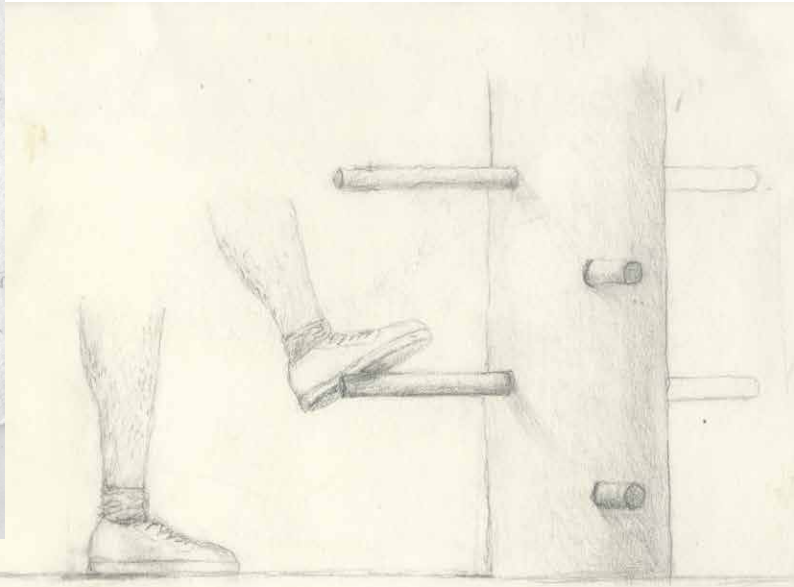
Stulet skruvas på i slutet

Komponenter skruvas in i varann



**Aufstieg der Begabten - Rise of the gifted**  
 Inspiration comes from the photographer Friedrich Seidenstück, who captured these adventurous children exploring their physical surroundings.

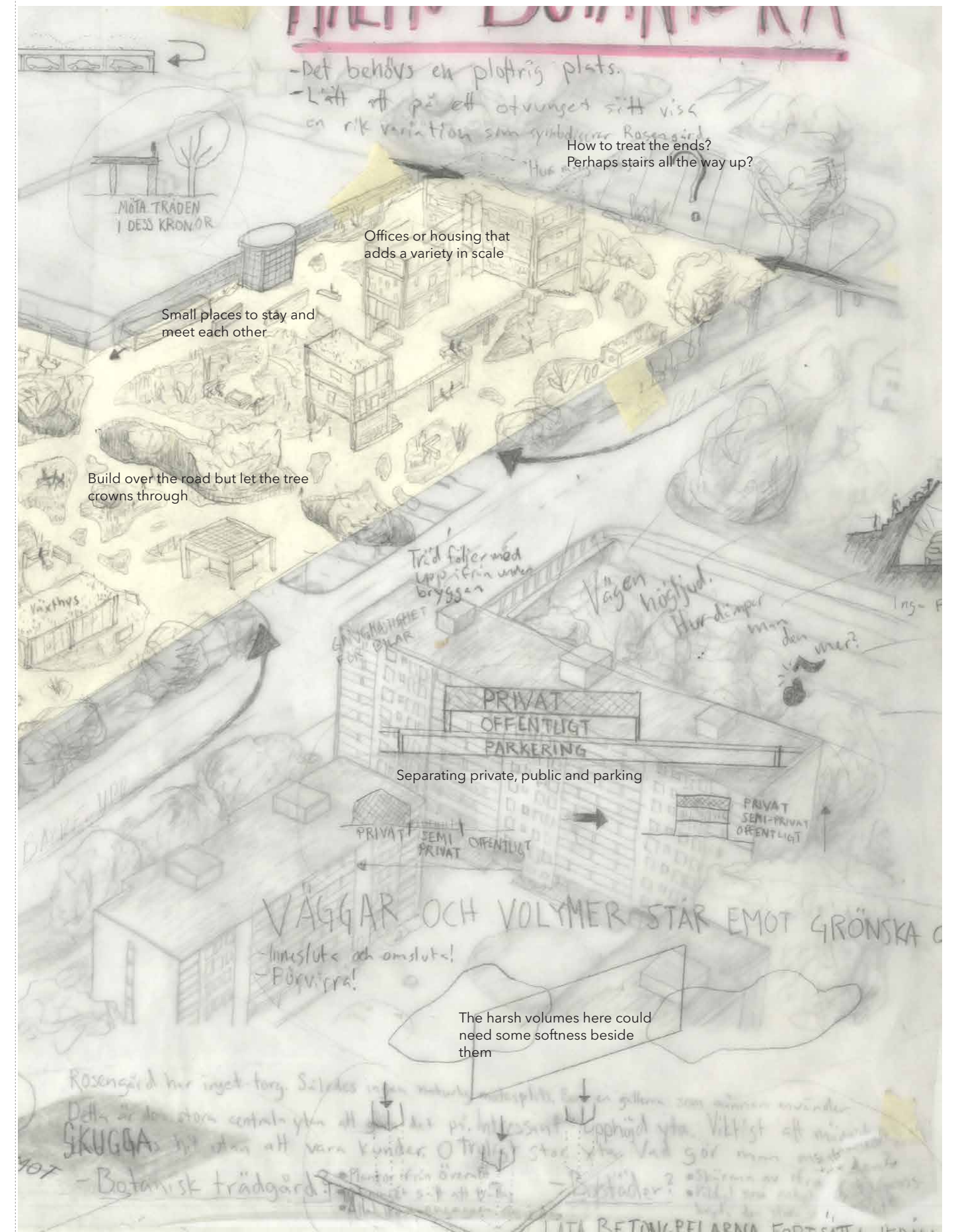
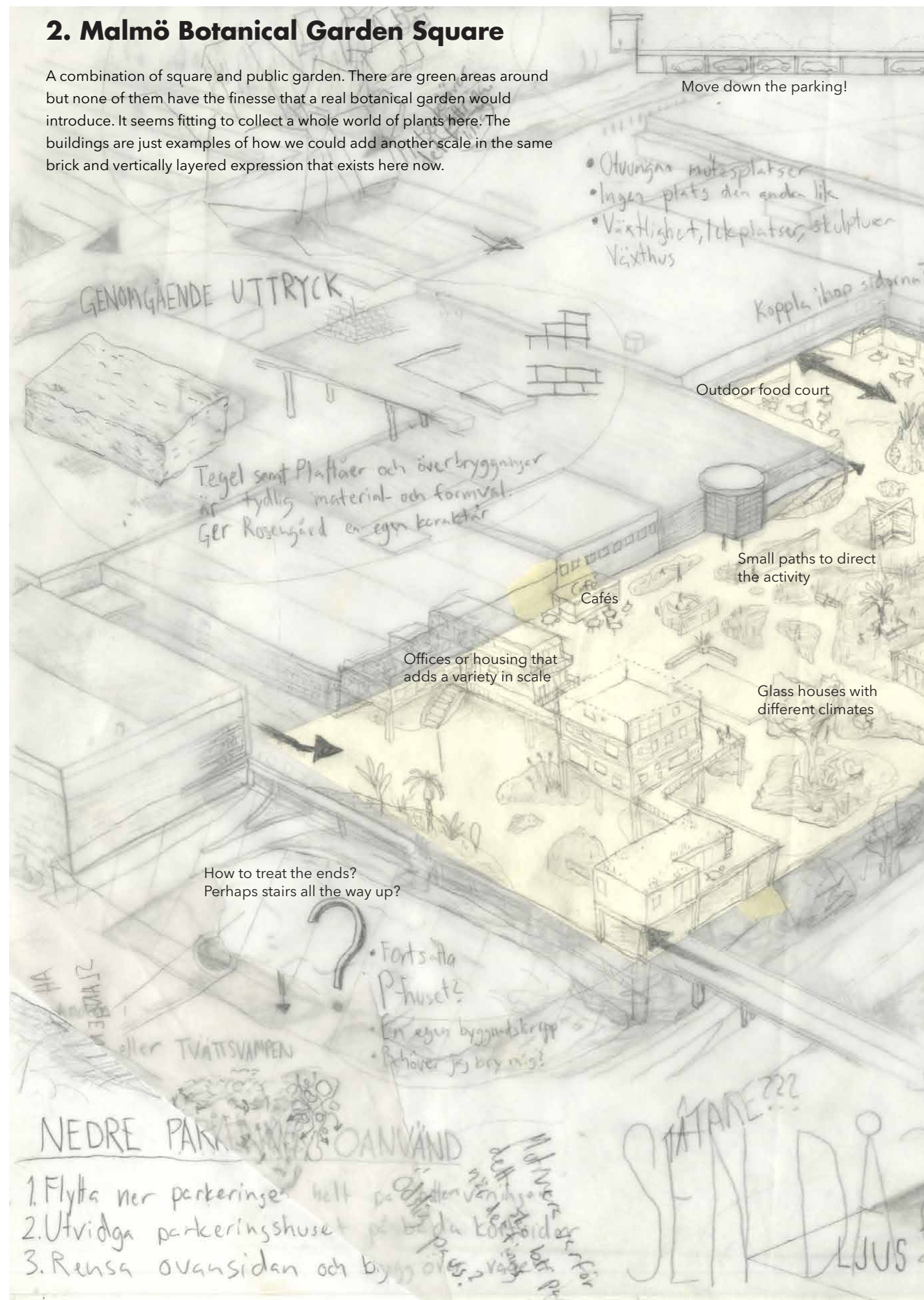
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## 2. Malmö Botanical Garden Square

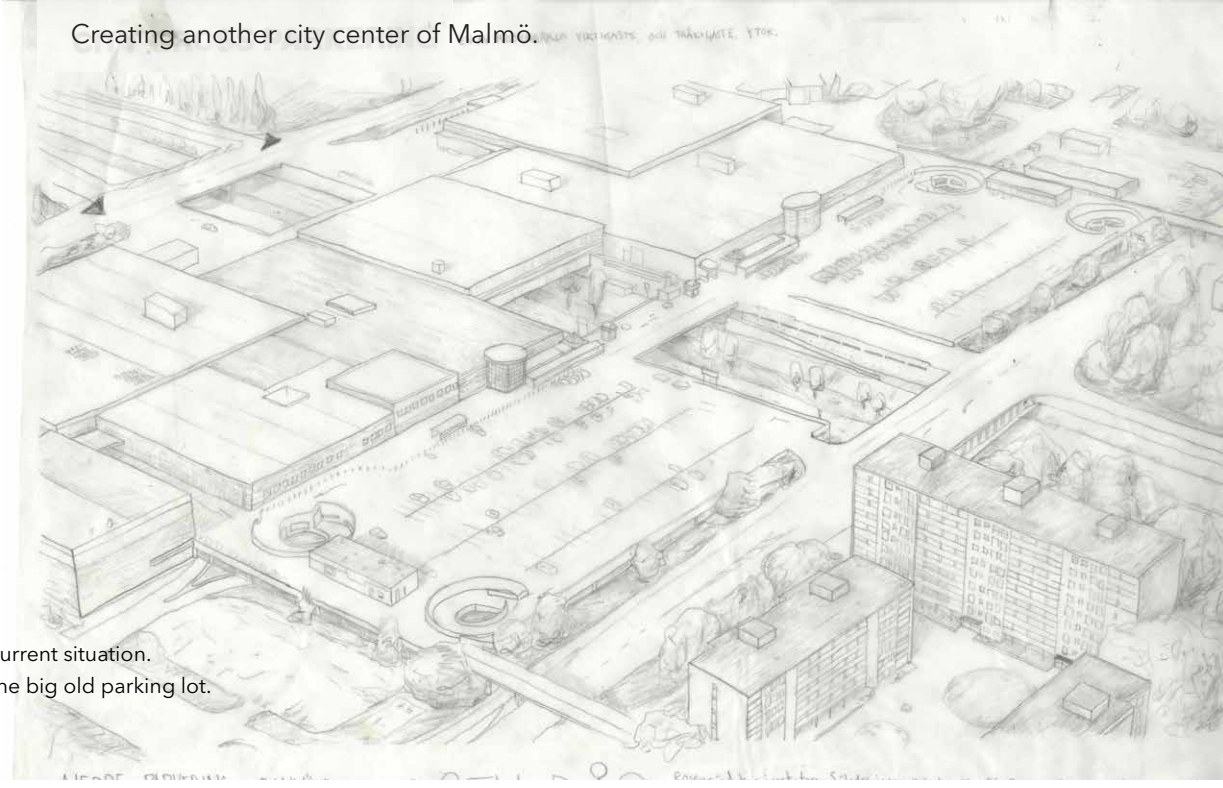
A combination of square and public garden. There are green areas around but none of them have the finesse that a real botanical garden would introduce. It seems fitting to collect a whole world of plants here. The buildings are just examples of how we could add another scale in the same brick and vertically layered expression that exists here now.



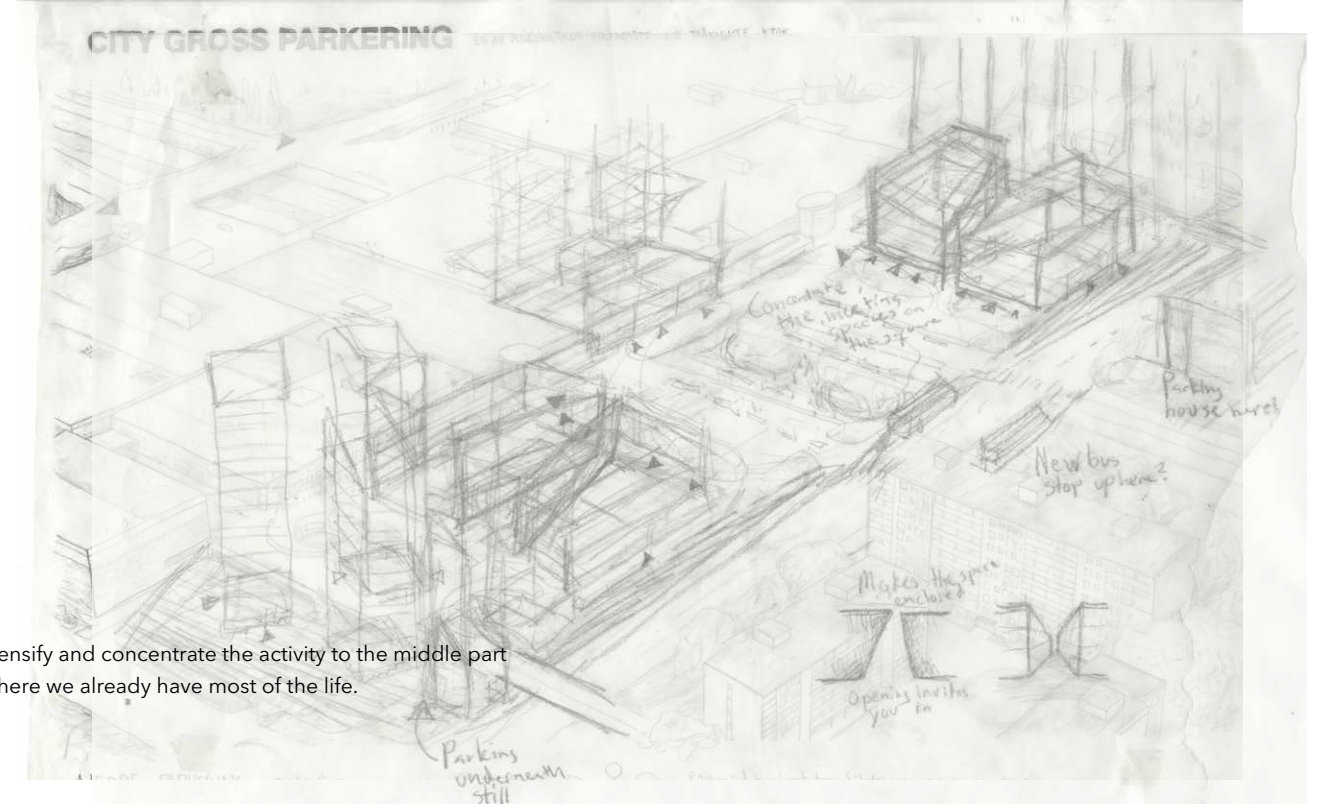


### 3. The Center of Rosengård

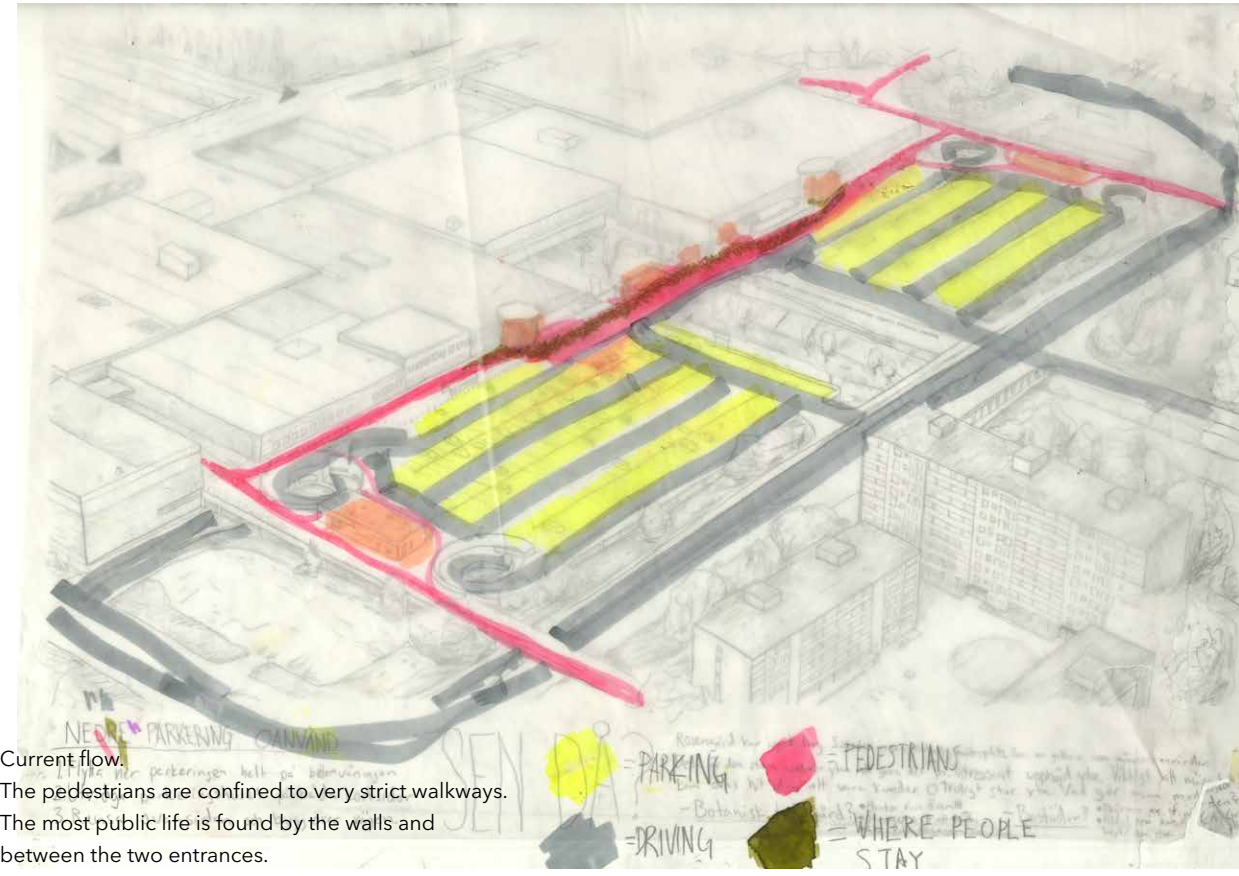
Creating another city center of Malmö.



Current situation.  
The big old parking lot.

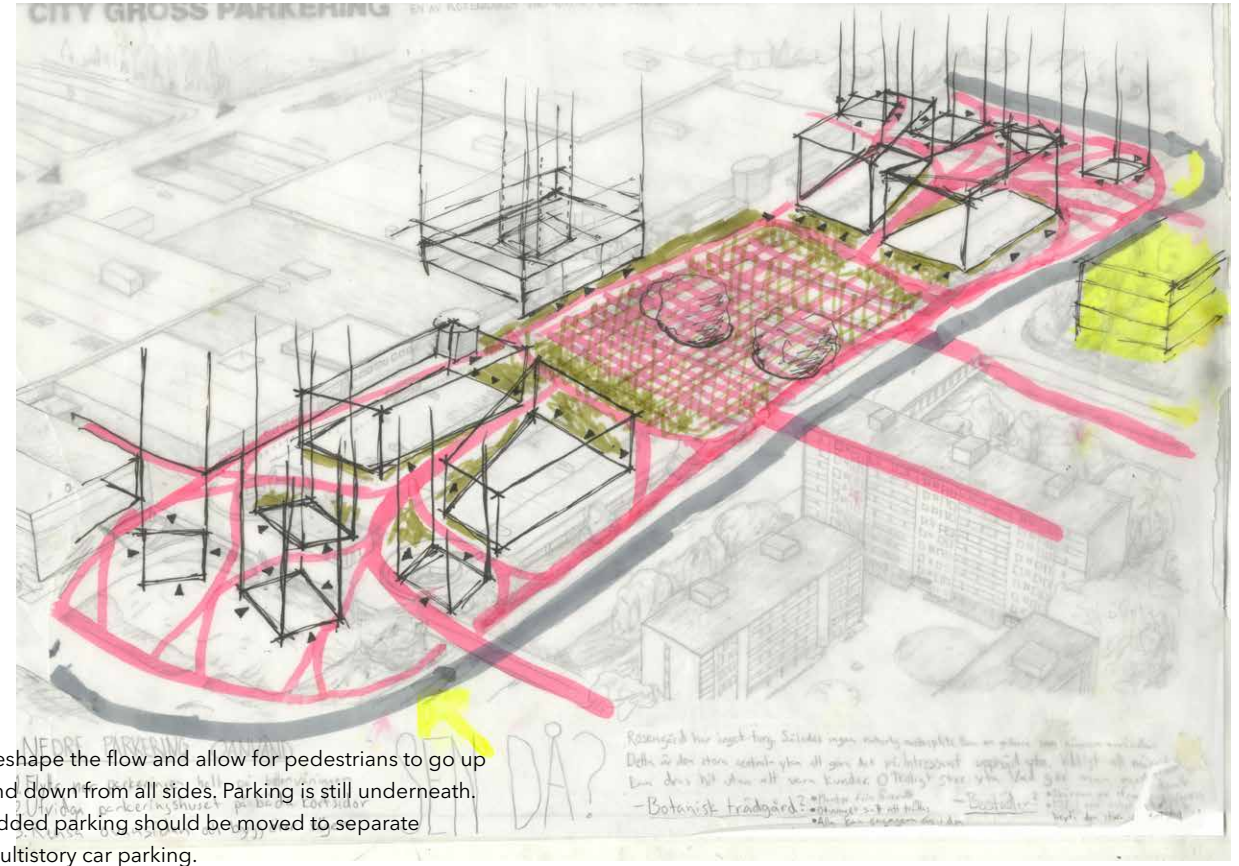


Densify and concentrate the activity to the middle part where we already have most of the life.



Current flow.  
The pedestrians are confined to very strict walkways.  
The most public life is found by the walls and between the two entrances.

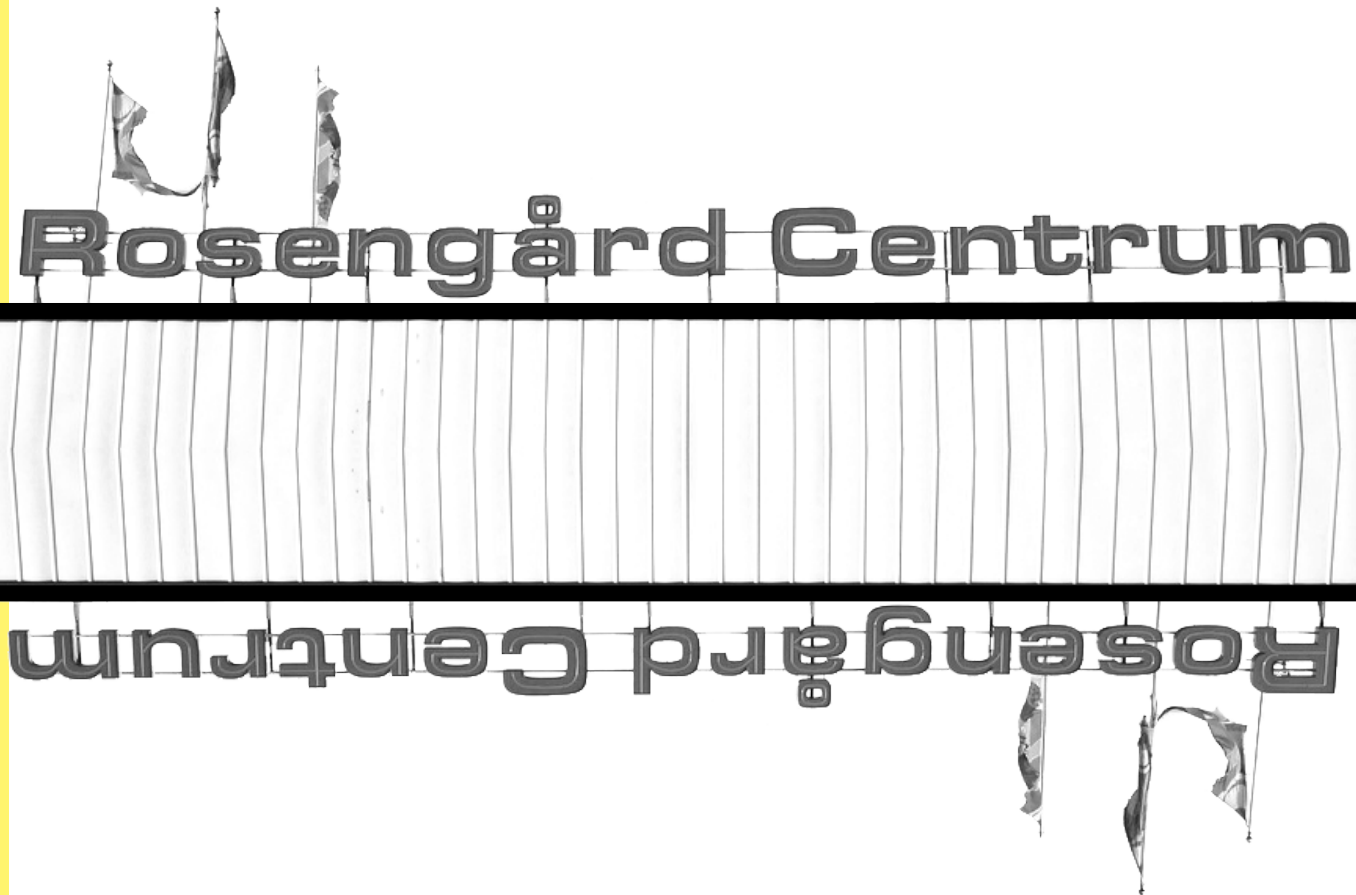
■ = PARKING  
■ = PEDESTRIANS  
■ = WHERE PEOPLE STAY  
■ = DRIVING



Reshape the flow and allow for pedestrians to go up and down from all sides. Parking is still underneath. Added parking should be moved to separate multistory car parking.



# 16 Open House at Rosengård Centrum.



Right before me, Kana and the kids moved here, a real-estate company called Trianon bought the mall *Rosengård Centrum* and its surroundings.

-“We want to be here for the inhabitants of Rosengård and develop a central area adapted for their needs”, said Olof Andersson, CEO of Trianon, in the end of 2016. Today, in their newly renovated mall, Trianon held an open-house seminar together with Malmö city-planning office. Citizens were invited to come and have opinions about *Culture Casbah* and other proposals for further development of Rosengård as a whole. I spent this day mingling the room, trying to gather as many thoughts as I could. Opinions were thrown wildly around and I soon discovered that the dialogue with citizen doesn’t exactly make it easier to grasp the complexity of developing an area. There was very little consensus to be found.

“Don’t touch our parking lots!”

“Good that you fill all the ugly parking lots.”

“The tower sticks out too much..”

“Wow, what an interesting tower.”

“About time, why didn’t you build this long ago?”

“Build for the poor instead!”

Yeah, this ain’t a piece of cake. Often people even contradicted themselves (which I am pretty sure that I am doing in this text at least a thousand times too, just to be clear). One guy first explained how northern and southern Rosengård were isolated from each other by *Amiralsgatan*, then a while later exclaiming that *Amiralsgatan* should go up from a 60km/h road to a 80km/h road, or more. Oh my.. Of course it’s easy for me to sit here and point out things that seem obvious to me, but they might understandably not be that obvious for someone who is perhaps discussing city-planning for the first time. An apparent challenge when it comes to citizen-dialogues. How much background knowledge of city-planning correlations should citizen-dialogues actually provide to give discussions an adequate depth? I mean, even I, who has studied this subject for some years now, feel like I am almost not even knowledgeable enough to discuss these matters on a deep enough level.



I moved on and found an interesting Somalian lady to talk to. She was disturbed by the fact that *Rosengård Centrum* was always filled with men and men only. She couldn't sit there because of the looks she would get. She said she would even get ugly rumors spread about her if she tried to sit there.

-“There should be a separate area somewhere in the mall, meant for women and children only.” she said.

I replied by asking if it wouldn't be better to do our best to have rooms where everyone can feel comfortable instead.

-“We shouldn't allow these men to push you away in the first place.”

I said, although realizing that my comment might have sounded naive in relation to the many cultural layers of this issue that I am not aware of. She just shook her head. Either she didn't understand me or she didn't agree with me, I couldn't tell which. But I guess she thought that what she proposed was radical enough. And perhaps she was right. Even though I strongly dislike the thought of separating public space by gender, perhaps this suggestion was a necessary middle-step to get women like her out into the public realm. From there, the step to unite the gender-separated public spaces would be smaller than if women wasn't even in the public realm in the first place. We smiled to each other and said bye, at least with some kind of mutual understanding, I think. The way planners and architects generally see and create public space in Sweden might not be as true and applicable as they want it to be in the multi-cultural present we now live in, I thought to myself as I walked away from the Somalian woman.

I continued looking for more people to discuss with and it didn't take long until the issue of gentrification was brought up once again. Somehow, gentrification is kind of the pink elephant in the room when it comes to city-planning. Especially when discussing areas with social problems. This elephant is staring at us with those big eyes, shimmering with happy renders of kids holding balloons and dogs being walked. But you can somehow sense a strange smell in the air. For starters, no one even has a dog in Örtagården. And what kind of kid walks around with balloons all day? As I was looking at these overly saturated posters, two landscape architecture students came up next to me and we started to talk. They were going to have a workshop with some local teenagers about the proposals later on that day. I asked what they thought of it all and they really hated it. Saying that the people of Rosengård will be worse off with a big project like this. That

it only benefits real-estate owners and people of the middle-class, while the ones worst off are forced out of their homes when rents are getting higher. Looking at these dog-and-balloon-kid posters I nodded. The possibility of an outcome like the one they just explained is horrible. That the whole population of Rosengård would simply be replaced by people with a thicker wallet. But what if things are not that black and white? Don't we have to higher the status if we are to break the stigma and its consequences? As I started to debate with them, stating potential positive effects of an increase in the status of Rosengård, they quickly turned against me with a superior tone. Almost as if the point of my argumentation was to actually make vulnerable people homeless. A strangely polarized attitude that I had stumbled on quite a few times before. It saddens me to be treated as an enemy, since I believe myself to be on the same side as them in regards to prioritizing the exposed and vulnerable parts of the population.

-“How would you treat segregated areas suffering from low status then, if this is so wrong?” I asked them.

They didn't have an answer. And to be clear, I am not claiming that I do either. But no one can deny that something has to be done, and quickly too, if we have areas where nearly 90% are without jobs. So if you don't sit on a great answer to that, I suggest you keep an open mind to whatever argument comes your way. We will not reach any conclusion by sitting on high horses poking each other with sticks.

Another big problem regarding this discussion comes from the struggle to gather a critical mass of proof or positive/negative examples to defend any point of view. Or to even make up your mind for that matter. Areas, projects and surrounding factors are so unique that research is hard to conduct and draw conclusions from. The aforementioned report by *Malmökommissionen* is a strange example of this. Both me and the two landscape architects used it as an argument, but for opposite statements. The report, made by twelve social researchers, statisticians and economists, argue that a district developing project like *Culture Casbah* should be followed through to ensure a better social status, health and employment chances for Rosengård's citizens over time. But since it doesn't have actual examples of projects and areas that underwent a similar enough project, you might as well use it as an argument against *Culture Casbah*. Which they reasonably enough did. And I agree, if there are no clear examples of successful predecessors, the project starts to lack in credibility. But as we can all figure out, it's



impossible for every project or idea to have predecessors. Then nothing new would ever be done.

I met Marianne Dock again. One of the leading characters of Malmö city planning office. I hadn't met her since MKB decided to sell 75% of their housing stock and I asked her what her thoughts were regarding the fear of rents going up. She said that it's hard to predict, although admitting that creating the new train station is surely going to have a distinct effect on real-estate prices and therefore rents. That made me think about the discussion I just had. When even a train station have a gentrifying effect, should we refuse that too then, if this mechanic is to be hindered at all costs? It's interesting to compare our discussion with a more general gentrification discussion. When talking about this phenomena, we are usually looking at areas that have made a gradual gain in popularity. In USA for example, the debate can sound something like this:

"Of course, it stands to reason that those who can afford to stick around as an area gentrifies are richly rewarded. But even if this were the case across the board, we should be concerned that the most dependable way to ensure economic and infrastructural investment in struggling, low-income and, most importantly, black neighbourhoods (such as Anacostia, Deanwood and Columbia Heights) is to have white people with money move into them."<sup>(2)</sup>

This is quite upside down from the *Culture Casbah* discussion. In this example, the struggling areas seem to be looking for the investments to be made to their neighbourhoods, only to realize that it only happens when rich white people start to move in there. In our case, the critics want to refuse investments with the hopes of not having wealthier people move into Rosengård. I am actually not sure what to make of that.

A couple of weeks earlier I had a debate with some members of *Vänsterpartiet*, active in *Malmö Municipality*. They were of the same point of view as the two landscape architects I met today. That this project was without doubt undeniably bad for Rosengård and all of it's inhabitants. I asked them the same question.

"What do we do then, if something like *Culture Casbah* is not right?"

They claimed that schools, health-care centers and refurbishing the current housing

stock would be a better route to take for Rosengård. I couldn't disagree on the obvious importance of these factors. Even though schools and health-care centers in Rosengård already get a bigger than average share of money<sup>(3)</sup>, they might need even more financial and strategical help to be able to give the struggling kids and families adequate help. As for the refurbishment of apartments, we are starting to tread into deeper waters. Refurbishment costs money, which reasonably enough would result in a higher rent, which would then result in the same gentrifying effect that was the problem in the first place. The head of Malmö city-planning office, Christer Larsson, expresses a cautious attitude towards over-refurbishment of cheap apartments and the inherent displacement effect it could result in<sup>(4)</sup>. I would've loved to hear a proposal of how to go about reshaping the apartments in a more thought-through and delicate way, like the aforementioned example of the architect Erik Stenberg who joined together apartments in Tensta to suit families' need for space better (a strategy I was inspired by in the idea that you will see after this chapter). But no further explanation was given than just "refurbishment".

However important schools, health-care and refurbishment still might be, I don't believe these factors alone are addressing the roots to the problems. I might bite off more than I can chew here, but I let you be the judge of that. Here is an attempt to summarize the three main causes of how I believe segregation is maintained:

1. Unemployment; Finding a job is a crucial part of getting into the society. As we are social creatures and therefore strongly affected by our peers, if a majority of your neighbours are without jobs and can't speak Swedish well, there is of course an overhanging risk that the slope towards finding motivation and learning the language becomes steeper. I have met relatively young adults that has lived in Rosengård for more than 15 years by now, without speaking Swedish yet. I don't think that's good for anyone. Also, ethnic discrimination on the job market is extremely high in Sweden. If people from higher socio-economic segments, who are likely the employers, live in areas that do not possess the same multi-cultural richness as for example Rosengård, the unfamiliarity they might feel towards people from different cultures might skew their judgment when comparing applicants.

2. Perception; Mental barriers. No one should feel like their adress is affecting their ability



to get a job. No one should have to excuse herself or himself for living in a certain place. Again, this is especially hurtful for the young who are about to shape their self-image. A self-image that to a large degree can be dependent on where you live. Even more so if that place is prone to have strong opinions expressed about it. If areas are perceived as different from each other as they are now, we are showing that it does matter where you live. A fundamental error in city-planning.

3. Inability to grow within; Rosengård shows a tendency to drain itself of people that rises from poverty. The area can't develop if it doesn't possess the physical conditions for people to develop themselves within the area. Adding a more diverse field of housing and premises could make inhabitants want to stay longer, which has to be a crucial part if we want Rosengård to grow as naturally as possible. While perhaps at the same time attract people from other parts of town.

With the physical premises set as they are now, I have a hard time seeing that a change in any of these three core issues would happen by itself.

-“So, you think that if some rich Swedish people came, all problems would be solved?” A guy from *Vänsterpartiet* snapped back rhetorically at the seminar.

Oh no. That got ugly pretty fast. Not a very constructive question perhaps, but it emphasizes another great problem with this discussion, which makes it very hard and uncomfortable to have it in the first place. However good I believe my intentions are, talking about the lives of people that are worse off than myself will always run the risk of having an awkward, smug and uncomfortable ring to it. What is interesting about this counter-question though, is that apparently the number one thing that citizens of Rosengård are asking *Malmö Municipality*, is why there aren't more Swedes living here<sup>(5)</sup>. I find it so sad that identity politics end up making a discussion as important as this unproductive and without nuance.

I attended another seminar at *Rosengård Folkets Hus* right after MKB suggested to sell their housing stock in Örtgården and Törnrosen to afford *Culture Casbah*. This gathering didn't exactly have room for a nuanced discussion. And rightfully so. People were furious. MKB had sent out a cryptic mail to everyone living in an apartment that were to be sold,

and you could barely understand what was going on from reading it. On top of that, the decision seemed rushed through to the city council without any discussions with or explanations to the tenants whatsoever, which made it seem even more fishy. Looking at the people in that room, I could sense a lot of fear in their eyes. The fear of not being in control of your life. Couldn't MKB have done this in a smoother way, I thought. After talking to Marianne Dock from the city planning office about this, I felt more or less confident that they were going to stick to the low rents so that no one had to move. But why didn't they say so in the letter then? Why didn't they make sure that everyone affected knew this? Now that the private sector is involved, perhaps the rules changed. It made me suspicious. I asked the woman who held the gathering, the angriest of them all, if she was against the actual project of *Culture Casbah* or if it was only because of the selling of her and her neighbours' apartments. She said she was actually very happy about the project. If only MKB would still own her apartment by themselves and not together with the three private companies, she continued with said with a shaking voice.

The catch is that it wouldn't have been possible to go through with the project without the help of the three private companies in the first place, according to *Socialdemokraterna*. The financial risk would be to grave for MKB. All in all, the decision to merge with the private sector was made to create economical sustainability, which in turn is needed to create social sustainability, they continue to explain in their official documents. That sounds reasonable enough on paper perhaps. But I dare any politician, architect or city-planner to come and explain to these people how economical or social sustainability are the reasons for them to potentially be driven out of their homes. It doesn't take much general understanding of our capitalistic system to deduct that the absolute best case scenario for the private sector is to have as wealthy tenants or customers as possible. From a purely economical point of view, any investor would likely wish to replace the majority of inhabitants in Rosengård with a richer tenant. A quite dystopian scenario, to say the least. With that said, and however uncomfortable it is to say in this context, I don't think we can underestimate the benefit and power of a private sector actively investing and caring for the future of our neglected suburbs. It's hard to deny that the public sector simply can't supply the same amount and diversity of jobs and opportunities that the private sector can. As long as we find ways to keep their hearts straight and their profit hunger in check. But how do we do that? Will this new merging strategy prove itself



capable of achieving this?

I needed to know more. So I wrote a long mail to the Malmö city-planning director Christer Larsson describing what I had experienced in Rosengård and that I wanted to talk a few things over. His answer was simply a time, a date and a place. No fussing around.

The date arrived and the address led me to a charming old café in the city centre. We both had an earl grey with a cookie and sat down by a round off-white little table. Since I figured that I didn't have much time with him, I jumped straight to the point. Discussing the sale of apartments due to the financing of *Culture Casbah*, he seemed troubled that the inhabitants hadn't gotten better information.

"We should have had people there," he said with a concerned voice. "We should always have people there in times like these."

I agreed. He continued the subject by giving me some example of how dangerous private companies can turn out to be for exposed and vulnerable areas. There were specifically two prominent nightmare-scenarios. Either a risk-capitalist buying into an area to drastically renovate it so that existing tenants can't afford staying. Or they buy areas just to leave them unmaintained, knowing that people have no place else to go anyway and will stay no matter the conditions. Both scenarios fueled by our current market situation of both extremely low interests (which makes it easy to get capital for investments) and extreme housing-deficiency (which makes demand for housing very high). But also because of the way we regulate rents.

"Too little refurbishment is needed to higher the rents with disproportionation amounts." Christer Larsson said with a shaking head.

Going back to *Culture Casbah*, Christer seemed certain that we were no way near those scenarios. He was very enthusiastic about it all, to say the least.

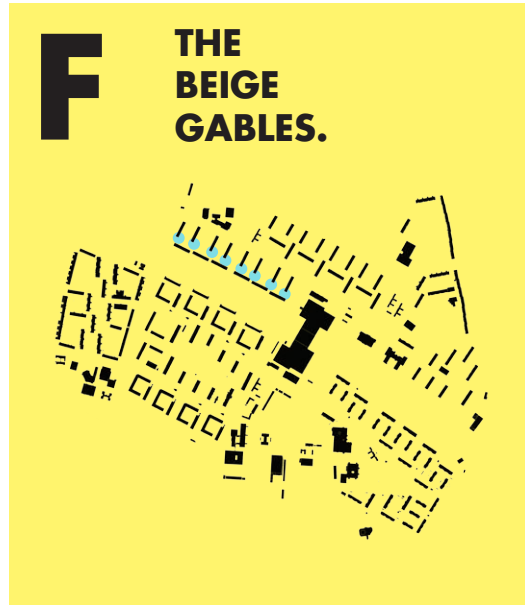
"It's a new thing we never tried before but I really think it will turn out great!" he said with an optimism hard not to get carried away by. But I had to ask.

"What about the majority in ownership that the private sector has? Owning 75% of the stocks should make them win every board decision they want, shouldn't it?"

He admitted not knowing the details regarding this not so small detail, but was sure that some kind of safety-vent would be established in the contract so that MKB is unable to slide out of power. I would've hoped for a clearer answer, but I figured that I probably have to turn elsewhere to find it. I also wondered, if such secure safety-vents did exist, wouldn't MKB have said so by now?

For the rest of the meeting, Christer talked about the importance of not over-renovating old housing stock when adding new housing stock. As old houses are generally always cheaper than new or newly renovated housing, this becomes our strongest tool to keep lower socio-economic segments within areas that are being developed. His views on gentrification was more nuanced than what I had stumbled on lately, expressing how it can be needed to initially evolve an area. At the same time, it has to be held back at some point so that people have time to grow with it, and to ensure that an area contains all socio-economic segments simultaneously. This made perfect sense to me. But it leaves us with the question, will this be the case? However much I wish to be swept away by these hopes and dreams of a better Malmö and Rosengård, there is still a fishy smell in the air. And that smell is going to stay until we are assured that all people regardless of income will be welcome in Rosengård all the way through and beyond the completion of *Culture Casbah*. If we look at this project in ten or twenty years and see that all struggling families have had to move away, it would be a complete disaster.





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Can these gables be used in another way?





**THE BEIGE GABLES.**

**SOCIAL INCENTIVES**

Rosengård is filled with large families. Bigger housing is needed. Other types of housing than what exists now might also attract people that wouldn't otherwise have come to live in Rosengård, which would diversify it in a new way.

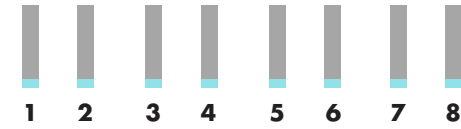
**ECONOMICAL INCENTIVES**

2 toilets means that we don't need new ones even if we extend with additional rooms. No need for further transportation surfaces, plumbing or ventilation either. All we would pay for is more actual living space.



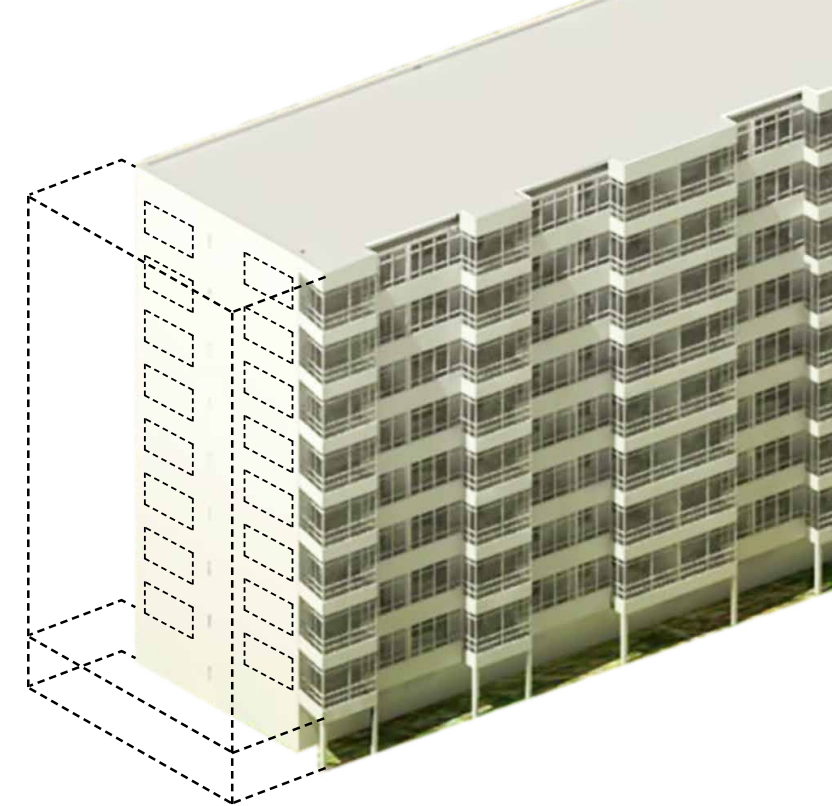
**ADDITIONS TO THE END APARTMENTS!**

**ALL DIFFERENT ENDS.**

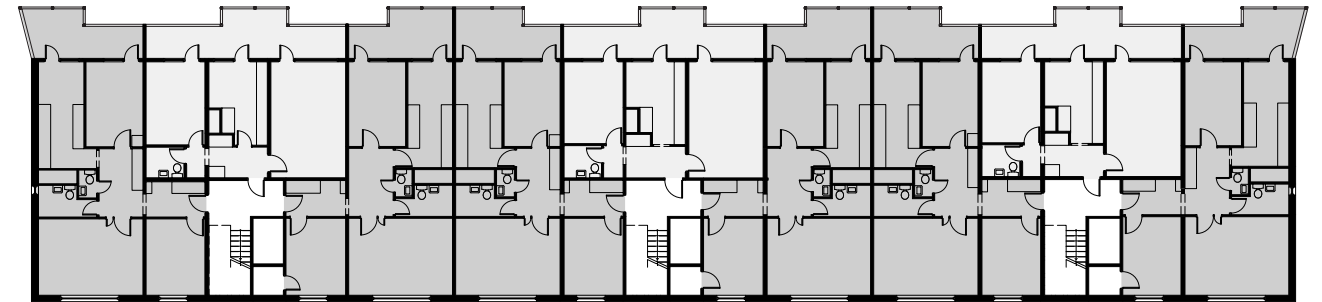


**PREMISES FOR ADDING**

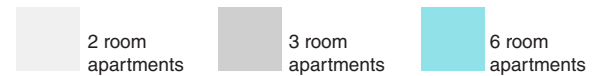
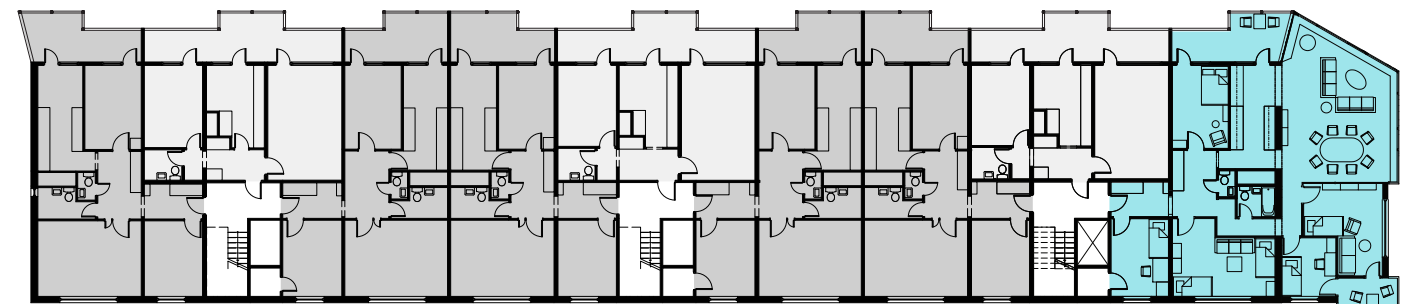
- Keep installations such as kitchen and toilets intact.
- Only break walls on predestined measurements.
- Add 2-4 rooms to each floor.
- Add interactivity on ground level.



**Original plan for floor 2-9. Only 2-3 room apartments.**



**Example of addition. A family bigger than 4 people can now live here. Maybe the other end too?**





The golden evening sun, straight into the beige facade.





Let's use these facades to make the existing apartments better!





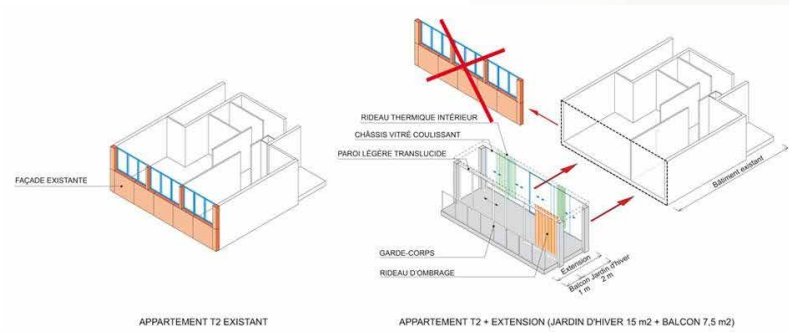
Reference Project

**Transformation of 530 dwellings at Grand Parc, Bâtiments GHI**

“The general economy of the project is based on the choice of conserving the existing building without making important interventions on the structure, the stairs or the floors.

This approach on economy makes possible to focus the energy on generous extensions that are, according to us, the key to enhance in a lasting way the dwellings quality and dimension. These extensions widen the space of use and the evolution of the dwelling and give the opportunity, as in a house, to live outside, while being home.”

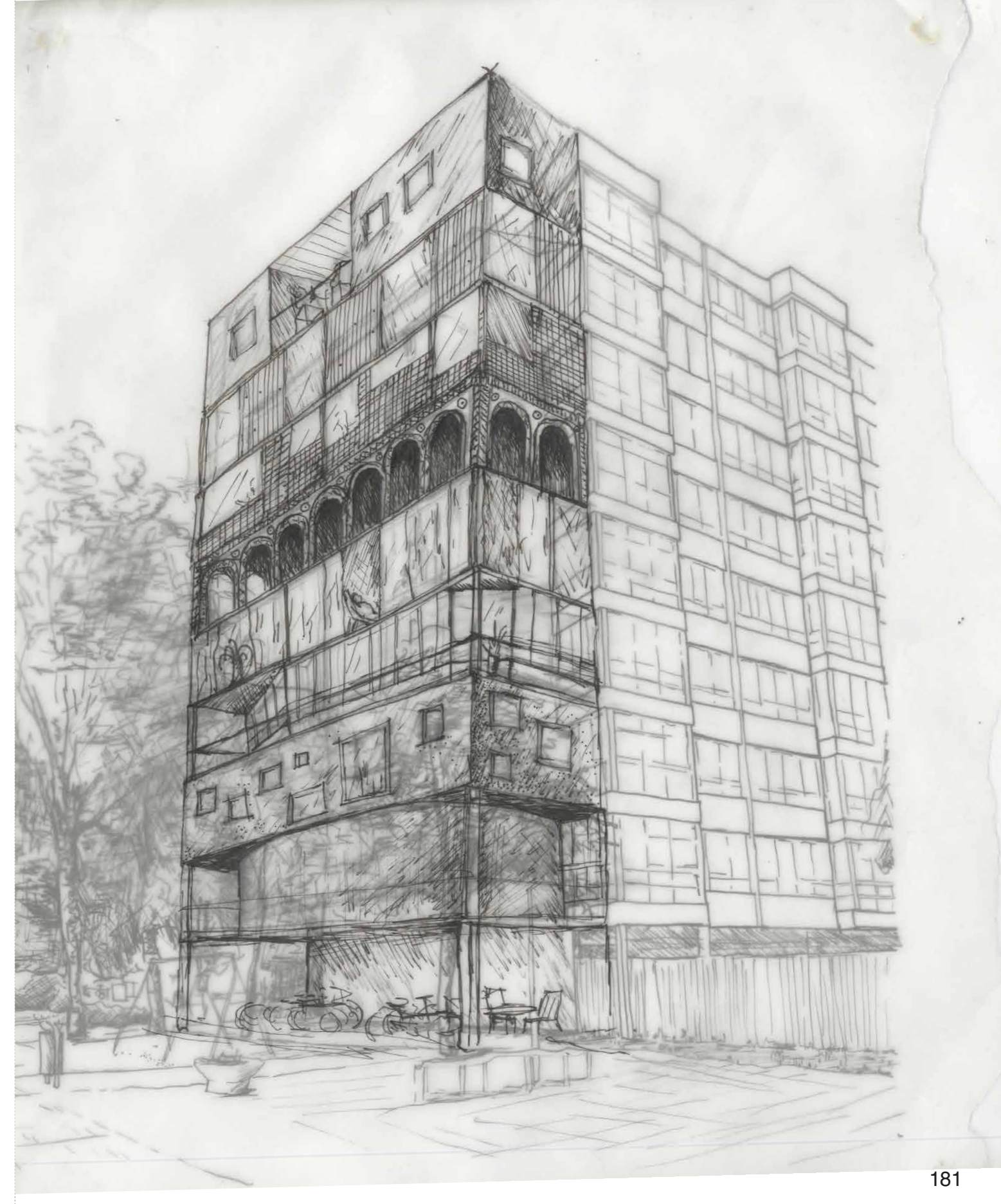
-LACATON & VASSALS



Pictures by Lacaton & Vassals.

Adjusting these ends according to a more diverse field of inhabitants can be seen as a natural evolution of the area. To have more sizes and qualities of housing within the same building and neighbourhood is likely to make the environment for a kid growing up more socially resilient.

Also, to have the gable of these eight nine-floor giants independently designed becomes a symbolic and powerful gesture by itself, both because of its visibility and its statement.





# 17 A Visit to Romania.



I just got home from a trip to Romania. As I am a tutor to the first and second year students of Lund School of Architecture, I got to follow them on their study trip. And it was a confusing one, I have to say. Differences and similarities between our countries unfolded themselves as we discovered everything from urban landscapes and building traditions to political systems and public mentalities. Even though Romania has come a pretty long way since the revolution of 1989, in which the communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was overthrown and executed, the country is still facing some rather intricate problems. The fact that corruption does not seem to be disappearing is the cause of Romania's most recent public turmoils. In late January 2017, streets of Romanian cities all over the country were filled with over 700 000 protesters. This was due to a law that the top politicians were trying to push through, which, amongst other things, would relieve them from investigations of transactions beneath 40 000\$<sup>(1)</sup>. The law was fortunately not ratified but the absurd struggle between the Romanian people and the politicians elected to represent them goes on.

Not unlike us, Romania (and I guess most countries in the world, except the Vatican perhaps) also faces social challenges. The duality between extreme wealth and extreme poverty is very evident here. Over-sized castle-like houses on one street and mossy ramshackle apartment blocks on the next. But walking around like any random tourist only gives you so much insight. Lucky enough, I got to meet a teacher of the Bucharest School of Architecture who was about to challenge my own perspectives and opinions in the matter of socio-economical struggles and ethnic segregation. The teacher gave us a walk-through of their school and a lecture about the history of Bucharest. That evening, me and the other teachers from Lund sat down with her for dinner in a cute little colourful café in the middle of the historic city center of Bucharest. You might already have guessed it but I can assure you that mingle dinners between teachers of architecture includes a lot of talking about architecture. After many mandatory monologues about old obsolete architects and countless noddings to each others' washed-out platitudes, something interesting finally happen. When the Romanian architect brought up a project dealing with a segregated neighbourhood, I started to sense that we were not coming from the same perspective. Her tone implied that a society doesn't have any actual responsibility over areas or groups that faced segregation and poverty. It might sound naive, but I was shocked. Since problematic areas or struggling minorities are a part of society, I find



it implied that it is society's problem if these people are not doing or feeling well. The teacher from Romania did not see it like this. When I brought my project up and explained some of my thoughts and conclusions, she did not seem convinced at all. She rather saw it as if I was intruding in someone else's way of life.

-“What if they chose their way of life and don't want to change it, it's up to them isn't it?” She exclaimed.

Her reaction perplexed me. As if it really was a choice to begin with. As if babies in families suffering from unemployment and socio-economic segregation popped out of their mothers' bellies and was presented to some kind of life-choice genie.

*“Hey lil fella! Genie-of-crucial-life-decisions here. I got a question for you. It's quite an important one so you better think twice. Ready? Ok here we go. Do you prefer a life in poor conditions with less opportunities or a life in good conditions with more opportunities? Scream once for poverty and twice for no poverty. That was a long scream. Are you sure about your decision? Okeydokey, poor conditions it is!”*

But as I examined my own reaction, I felt strange. We are in fact talking about adults. Why is my first reaction to refer to them as babies? I sound ridiculously patronizing. Who do I think I am? Everyones' dad? The genie in this stupid metaphor? I didn't like it. But it's not so hard to figure out why. I have been raised in the most Swedish of ways. In a middle-class family living in a middle-sized villa outside a middle-sized town. With a middle-sized dog, a middle-sized Volvo and a middle-sized sister. Like most people, I'm just a product of my environment. There is no denying in that. And since the modern Swedish society has always been imbued with an excessively patronizing aura, I seem to be shouldering that exact aura. Ironically enough, the aura that *Miljonprogrammet* in many ways appears to be the actual crystallization of. A mind-set that surely would've needed some questioning before it was allowed to completely overrun Sweden, creating the physical setting for areas we now see struggling the most.

Back to the café in Bucharest. The Romanian teacher continued by telling me the story of an attempt from the Romanian government to integrate Romani people living in tent settlements. Big apartment blocks were built for them, but instead of moving in, they scraped the apartments of anything with value and moved back out in tents again. Since

the project was paid with tax-money, it seemed like an event that had left a bitter taste in the mouth for many people. The teacher continued her argumentation by saying that even if it seems odd to me or her, some cultures actually choose, and enjoy, to live their life in a certain way.

-“Is it right then, to force, or even suggest that these people should live, think and behave like you?” she asked me. “It sounds like you are moving there to make everyone become like you.”

The story and her question startled me a bit again. I had to pause for a second to gather my thoughts. Then I continued.

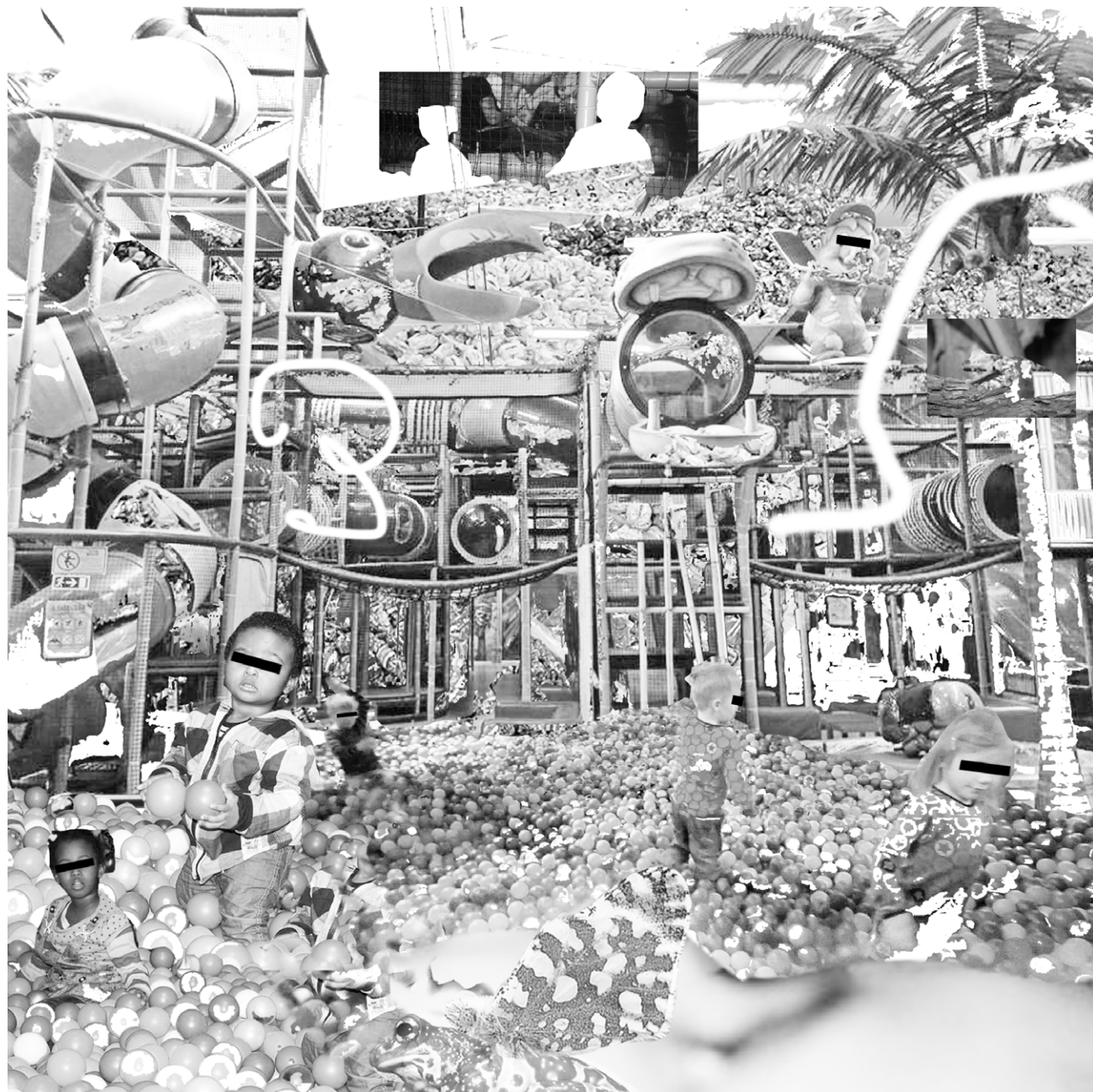
-“If I wanted to live with people like me, I wouldn't have moved to Rosengård in the first place. There are many places where everyone is like me, but they are usually quite boring. Letting people live their own lives the way they want shouldn't mean that we can accept areas and standards deteriorating with widespread unemployment and kids growing up in hopelessness.” I tried to conclude.

The discussion slowly faded away after that. Both of us seemed to have said everything we wanted to say. Or we just chose to be quiet for the sake of our dinner companions. Either way, the night came to an end and so did our trip to Romania. A while after we got home, I noticed that her questions lingered on in my head. At first, they made me frustrated. If one convince oneself that ethnic minorities with social issues just live the way “they want”, I guess it's easy to not care anymore. But hearing her questions also created a strangely refreshing sense of guilt. What if she was more right than I was willing to admit? That I am too blinded by my own righteous perspective of what life and society should be that I unconsciously believe that everyone should conform to it? Is that what I really want, a Rosengård full of me? A vision of twenty five thousand middle-blond people parking their middle-sized cars and walking their middle-sized dogs flashes before my eyes. What a horrific scene.



# 18

Maiya's Seventh Birthday Party.



Maiya turned seven and insisted that we should have her birthday party at an gigantic indoor playground. That place is intense, I can tell you that. But we couldn't exactly say no to her. The day arrived and we met up with all the friends of Maiya and their parents outside the entrance. Kana and me were so thrilled that so many came. Apparently all kids love this place. We had met most of the parents before at some gatherings with the school, but some we had never seen. The kick-boxing dad (from chapter 12) came, he is always a pleasure to have around. We all headed into our designated birthday celebration room. Maiya had chosen the *Ice Princess Room*. She sat down in her little throne of ice and they all started to shove their little hamburgers into their little mouths as quickly as possible so they could jump out and play. The parents were more hesitant. After building up some courage, we finally ventured into the rainbow hued war-zone.

We found ourselves a sheltered spot right underneath a sliding tube and started to sip on the complimentary coffee we had just received. It was a perfectly strange little gathering of people. Everyone was from different places. Jordan, Tunisia, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Serbia, Japan, Nigeria, Britain and Sweden. We started to talk about each others cultures a bit. How easy or hard it was to adapt to Sweden. Most of them had been here for a couple of years by now, some having a harder time to adjust than others. But overall, they all seemed to like it here by now. As I am of course very interested in housing, I brought the subject up as soon as I could. It saddened me to hear that many of them were planning to move out from Rosengård. The woman from Afghanistan missed having her own garden and wanted to move because of that. The Lebanese kick-boxer and his new girl-friend were finally having their own baby and said they needed something bigger. The lady from Jordan was moving for a similar reason. She just got a job and also felt like she could afford something bigger for her family now. Oh well. That's the way the cookie crumbles I guess.

A story I hadn't heard before came from a Swedish woman married to a Serbian man. Her story surprised me in many ways. She had grown up in Rosengård but had moved from there in her teens. As she got more successful at her job, she was eventually able to move to Limhamn, one of Malmö's most expensive and prestigious places to live. After a while though, she couldn't stand it and decided to move back to Rosengård. There was no people around her, she said. In contrast to Rosengård, where all the neighbours made her



feel like home. But the decision to move back was mostly because of her kids. She said she didn't want them to grow up in such an ethnically and economically homogeneous population as the one in Limhamn. Calling it the actual most segregated area of Malmö. That's one of the best ways to breed an intolerance for minorities, she pointed out sarcastically.

Just a couple of weeks earlier, we got to experience an attempt by Malmö Municipality to tackle this double-edged segregation. A project designed to bring kids from all over Malmö together. Seven-year-olds from hand picked schools were joined to form a choir with a band of professional musicians and song-writers. Maiya and her class went to practice with the other classes once a week for a couple of months and after a while we got a note home telling us to come to their concert, held in Malmö's new concert hall. Five minutes before the show we entered the great wooden hall and it was completely packed with people. It all felt very nice. The setting, the atmosphere and the initiative overall. On a big screen, perfectly naive drawings of fairy tale figures and dream houses were rolling. Older or younger siblings were making noises from every corner of the room. An employee of the establishment suddenly appeared and asked us which school our kid was from. We told her Apelgårdsskolan and she quickly directed us to our seating. Maybe it was more practical to separate the schools like this, but somehow it felt strange. The consequence was apparent in just a moment. Looking out over the sea of parents, you couldn't miss it. A compact version of Malmö's segregation. Some islands in this sea looked like sand dunes of blonde hair, while other islands were made out of the cloth from the Muslim mothers' veils. At least we were here together now, I thought. And the concert was great. The kids enjoyed it very much.

Almost as much as this fantastically crazy place where we were currently stuck in. The parents continued to chat along while simultaneously trying to see where all our kids were. Occasionally a parent needed to leave our sheltered spot under the sliding tube to make sure his or her kid was still alive. Then I discovered a significant perk of being here. The last parent that had went out before could say exactly where they were with the help of all the specific things that catches ones eye here.

-“They are by the purple triceratops.”

-“They are by the pirate flying on a parrot.”

-“They are by the huge Michael Jackson face on the wall.”

-“They are by the alien astronaut riding a horse by the tea cups next to the minotaurs.”

You knew right away and it was very convenient, and fun, and I thought, how great wouldn't this kind of visual communication be in Rosengård or similar repetitive large scaled areas? Or any area for that matter. Usually when I tell someone how to come to my place and which building I live in it sounds something like this:

-“Yeah, it's the third beige nine-floor building counting from west.”

Instead I could say something like:

-“Yeah, it's the building with a gigantic mutant butterfly frog on top of it.”

Much easier to find, much more fun to explain and much nicer to have some mutant butterfly frogs around you in your life, rather than just beige plaster. To accompany this stupid idea, I want to give you my favourite page from *Learning From Las Vegas*, written by Denise Scott Brown, Robert Venturi and Steven Izenour in 1972. (It's on the next page.)



For the architect and urban designer, comparisons of Las Vegas with others of the world's "pleasure zones" - with Marienbad, the Alhambra Xanadu, and Disneyland, for instance - suggest that essential to the imagery of pleasure-zone architecture are lightness, the quality of being an oasis in a perhaps hostile context, heightened symbolism, and the ability to engulf the visitor in a new role: for three days one may imagine oneself a centurion at Ceasars Palace, a ranger at the Frontier, or a jetsetter at the riviera rather than a salesperson from Des Moines, Iowa, or an architect from Haddonfield, New Jersey.

However, there are didactic images more important than the images of recreation for us to take home to New Jersey and Iowa: one is the Avis with the Venus; another, Jack Benny under a classical pediment with Shell Oil beside him, or the gasoline station beside the multimillion-dollar casino. These show the vitality that may be achieved by an architecture of inclusion or, by contrast, the deadness that results from a too great preoccupation with tastefulness and total design. The Strip shows the value of symbolism and allusion in an architecture of vast space and speed and proves that people, even architects, have fun with architecture that reminds them of something else, perhaps of harems or the Wild West in Las Vegas, perhaps of the nation's New England forebears in New Jersey. Allusion and comment, on the past or present or on our great commonplaces or old clichés, and inclusion of the everyday in the environment, sacred and profane - these are what are lacking in present-day Modern architecture.

*-Denise Scott Brown, Robert Venturi and Steven Izenour. 1972.  
"Learning From Las Vegas". p53*

Back to the party. As we sat there under the sliding tube, the kids had started to come and try to make us play with them. It felt like a trench war. Dull adults against fun kids. Like doomed skeletons, hiding in the shadows, tirelessly attacked by the rebels of the magical forest. Or something. You know what I mean. Maybe not. But I soon choked on my lackluster war metaphor. The Serbian husband to the woman who moved back to Rosengård was just about to embark us upon a very real journey.

In the early 90s, the war in Bosnia had broken out as a result of the fall of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. This led to a power struggle between the three biggest ethnic communities of the Balkans. The Muslim Bosniaks, the orthodox Serbs and the catholic Croatians. Vengeful fighting for land and beliefs had been going on for hundreds of years. But in the spring of 1992, a boiling point had been reached when the Bosniaks filed for independence. This man was caught as a prisoner of war, enduring hardship and torture until he was finally set free in secrecy by one of his enemies. More than 100 000 people had been killed and about 2.2 million people had fled. From those, 70 000 was granted permit of residence in Sweden<sup>(1)</sup>. One of which was our new acquaintance. He met this Swedish woman on a blind date before he could even speak the language and now they got two kids together. Based on the story of his life and heritage, the Serbian man wanted to add an argument in the discussion about segregation. If we don't break it early, it will escalate.


- "Just see what happened in the Balkans." he said in a dry voice.

He meant that if minorities keep gathering with each other and not mix with others, they will eventually build up their own communities and try to break free as a unit. I guess it doesn't sound that likely in the case of Sweden, I thought to myself. But then again, who am I to say that.


The playground was closing. We said good-bye and hopped on our bikes. What a day.





# 19 Tim Pool.



**INSIDE A "NO GO ZONE" IN MALMO, SWEDEN**

Tim Pool  [Subscribe](#) 114K 735,618 views

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Published on Feb 25, 2017  
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First it is important to know that there aren't any official "no go zones." This is a term used colloquially by many people but not most and it

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My dad called me when I was riding the bus home from school one day. He had heard on the radio that an American journalist called Tim Pool was visiting Rosengård. It was right after Donald Trump had performed his infamous "Last night in Sweden"-speech where he paints the picture of Sweden in complete decay due to us receiving so many refugees and immigrants. After that, the right-wing radio host of *infowars.com*, Paul Joseph Watson, offered 2000\$ to any journalist who dared to go here.



**Paul Joseph Watson**  [@PrisonPlanet](#) [Follow](#)

Any journalist claiming Sweden is safe; I will pay for travel costs & accommodation for you to stay in crime ridden migrant suburbs of Malmo

RETWEETS 694 LIKES 1,519

12:03 pm - 20 Feb 2017

So Tim Pool took the money and came. Before my dad called me, I had never heard of this guy. So I looked him up and discovered that he somehow seems to be the poster boy for "new journalism". Using drones, smart phones and social media, he made himself a name by live-streaming critical events such as "Occupy Wall Street" in New York, "Gezi Park protests" in Turkey and the "NONATO protests" in Chicago. It was a long-shot but I could at least try to see if he was interested in a visit to our home. I mailed him on facebook and he responded within a minute. He even wanted to stay over for the night. Since a lot of his donations had come from right-wing sympathizers, I wanted to find out if he was biased. But it turned out to be quite hard to define him as anything. All I had time to gather was that he seemed interested in critical events revolving around societal issues and showing them from a kind of anti-establishment perspective. His warm-up talks on his youtube-channel preparing for this trip all seemed to have a tone of not jumping to any conclusion before finding out things by himself, which made me relieved to see.



Tim told me it was a good thing to have a chat before starting to film. It sounded reasonable. I can't deny that I was nervous. This could turn out in so many strange ways, I thought. What if he tries to twist my words around? What if I get enemies from the far-right claiming that I am sugar-coating the situation? What if I get enemies from the far-left who thinks I am making the issues worse by even participating? What if I get enemies from my neighbours who feel like I am putting words in their mouths? What if I get enemies from immigrants who feel like I shouldn't even live here in the first place? Or, no one would care. I decided that I was ok any of these outcomes.

We met up at his hotel that evening. Hotel Savoy right by Malmö Central Station. Tim bought me, himself and his camera woman Emily a lemon-flavoured soda water in the hotel bar. To break the ice, Tim started to talk about the health benefits of lemons. I politely nodded, although slightly confused by the choice of topic. But it didn't take long for us to approach the real matter at hand. What a tipsy-turvy world we have entered, we all agreed. Trump says whatever he feels like and whoever wants to believe him does so. And anyone with a contrary opinion says whatever he or she wants and everyone that wants to believe that person does so. The concept of truth is becoming as uncertain as the consistency of our three-year-olds poop. All we really know for sure is that it's always going to be a mess. I knew the truth-situation was bad in America, but what Emily was just about to explain almost blew me away. Apparently, a big part of the anti-Trump liberal-left seems to be in complete denial that anything bad is happening in Sweden at all. Claiming that even the murder on the 16 year old boy outside our apartment was a fake-news story from the far-right. What is going on?

Tim ordered an Über. As we were waiting for it, they filmed a short prelude to the interview with me. No doubt, I was going to make a complete fool out of myself, but I was starting to be okay with the thought of that. Once arrived, he asked if they should restrain from filming the path leading to my apartment. I hadn't thought about that and the question made me nervous. Yes, I guess so, I said with an insecure voice. We started filming in front of my living room window and it was all over in ten minutes. The questions mostly revolved around how safe I felt here. Although safety is very important, I was hoping for a little more depth. Through some kind of solution-based discussion at least. At the same time, it felt like a relief to not get myself too deep into this spectacle. In the

morning they ventured off to Stockholm for some other interviews and investigations. Even though I find it hard to take this ridiculous cross Atlantic scandal-seeking honky tonky mish mash of over-combed insanity seriously, it was indeed very interesting to follow Tim and Emily's journey. They didn't find the extreme violence they were sent here to look for. Instead, the videos are portraying Sweden as a country in a kind of active denial of a situation worse than what we expected when we decided to welcome this many refugees and immigrants. Emily and Tim unfold how our politicians are covering up facts and urgent indicators of a non-working integration system, while a large part of the Swedish society has developed a very intolerant and politically correct attitude towards any kind of criticism of our immigration policies, which in turn is said to paralyze the debate. Although interesting to see the current state of our country analyzed through new eyes, in the end, these conclusions were not exactly ground-breaking. I am guessing that few Swedes would be surprised of what Tim Pool is saying, even without looking at his video series. And maybe, that is exactly the problem.

For what it's worth, I am going to give you my two cents on the matter. If you would do me the honor, I would love to hear yours too.

As for starters, one obvious reason for the established political parties to potentially attempt to withhold negative information about immigration has to be because the debate is already unbalanced. Media has in fact for a long time been overly clear about problems regarding our suburbs, which in turn has lead to an increasing stigmatization and social friction. A stigmatization that evidently prolongs the integration process, which in turn adds more friction, prolonging the integration process and so on and so forth. Spiralling into a vicious polarizing circle that we are constantly seeing the results of. To at least slow this media approach down a bit doesn't seem that irrational to me. In Tim's videos, I found it very problematic that this perspective was not brought up.

One can then argue that in any way withholding information for this reason is a patronizing strategy, implying that people are not capable of dealing with the truth, seeing the bigger picture by themselves and making up their own minds about their society. I agree. But how can we expect the average person to be able to make up his or her mind regarding segregated areas and the people in them in a neutral and open way if



he or she doesn't know much else than what the headlines are reporting? That's the very core of this issue. How a segregated and secluded area creates an almost parallel world. A world in which the rest of the society have very little insight. Our debate would of course look very different if we would have been better at integrating immigrants the last 50 years. But as it stands now, people without much contact with certain cultures and areas are going to take media literally. Simply because they don't have enough input saying otherwise. That's how we work. As I have mentioned before, the human sense-making behaviour is a coping strategy to deal with the anxiety of uncertainty (see chapter 10). We jump to conclusion because it is much more comfortable to have reached a conclusion, than to be uncertain. Combine that with our negativity-bias and we will have a very lopsided discussion. This is exactly why we have to work much harder and faster to break segregation and stigmatization. So that the average person can have reasonable and well-balanced discussions about problems much more nuanced than a headline.

When I told my girlfriend Kana about authorities trying to withhold information, it surprised me that she wasn't surprised at all. The only thing she expressed was gratitude. Being an immigrant herself, she suspected that if people were showered with statistics only showing the ills of non-Swedes, public opinion would turn on all immigrants, including the ones that are trying their hardest to become a part of the society. This, I believe, leads us to Tim Pool's second point. Why a lot of people developed a sense of intolerance towards criticism of immigration. At this point, there is such a huge part of our population existing of immigrants that most of us have vast amounts of friends from among them. Friends that we want to protect by all means necessary. From this defensive point of view, anyone even slightly insinuating that immigrants don't belong here almost becomes your instant enemy. I have felt that myself many times. Even meeting people with very reasonable arguments against parts of our immigration policies can quickly build up an anger inside of me. It seems right in that moment, since I feel like I am protecting my loved ones. An attitude that can turn quite ugly, which I can become quite ashamed of in hindsight. I can't speak for anyone else but I don't think I am the only one feeling and acting in this way. Which in turn creates an unreasonable polarization of the debate climate. Either people get too angry at each other, or they don't talk about things at all.

This is admittedly very harmful since some issues purely connected to certain cultural behaviour of immigrants are very worthy of thorough discussions. To name one topic, we have honor crime. A culture that leads families to ostracize or even kill daughters that chooses partners unapproved by the elder men of their family. To claim that such a culture is not a public concern but a free choice of the family in question is to me a heartless, ignorant and cowardly stand-point. These girls are citizens that needs to be protected both physically and mentally. A foundation created to honor victims of honor crime states that about 70 000 young girls in Sweden are restricted in their choice of partner<sup>(2)</sup>. 8500 of them are about to get married against their will. A public fear of sounding racist should never prevent us from speaking up against ill views on women. Sadly enough, we have seen some grim examples of this in Rosengård coming from certain cultures where values on women tend to differ from what you would call the norm in Sweden. Not to say that ethnic Swedes and our society as a whole isn't of course still struggling with this issue also. The fight towards gender equality seem to have a long way to go still, and we have to keep fighting on every frontier. Regarding this problem, I believe our neighbourhoods bear a big responsibility to quietly show healthy social codes. When on this subject, I want to tell you about a compliment I got the other day. I have no interest in bragging, so I do hope that you don't read it as such (as I am just a product of my environment like anyone else). But the encounter just felt so nice and positive that I had to tell you about it. A neighbour and father of three came up to me in the yard only to tell me how great he thought it was to see me spend so much time with my kids. It was unusual for his culture apparently, since the mother and not the father had the caretaking role. But from now on he was going to do the same as me, he proclaimed. It made me very happy to hear.

The next story I am about to tell you is a lot darker. I was unsure whether or not I should even include it, but I figured that giving you full disclosure while discussing difficult subjects is more important than pretending that everything is fine. You know as well as me that I can't sit here writing this text without mentioning the social friction that does indeed occur. Neglecting it will probably not favor anyone, and even if it's a very specific incident, the fact that it even happened is in my opinion reason enough to bring it up. But I'll let you be the judge of that.



Spring had just arrived and our daughters, Maiya (7) and Mari (3), had finished school for the day. They were out playing in the yard with some of the neighbourhood kids when suddenly we heard them running up the stairs with loud screams and cries. Kana and me were shocked and asked what was going on. It was hard to distinguish Maiya's words through her sobbing but finally we got her version of what had happened. An eight year old girl living right across the yard from us had started to question Maiya if she was a Muslim. Maiya, who hardly even knew what a Muslim was, told her no. She continued to question Maiya why she didn't believe in god. Then, something very strange happened. Together with her two smaller brothers, around the same age as Mari, the eight-year-old started to throw sand and stones at Maiya. Then at Mari also. As if it couldn't get worse, the three siblings started to kick my daughters. I couldn't believe what I heard. Ever since we got here in September, this girl and our girls had been playing perfectly. She was often outside in the yard, so I had grown accustomed to her cheerful greetings as I came home from school in the afternoon. All that was about to come to an abrupt end. A mix of sadness and anger arose in me. Not an anger towards these three siblings of course, but to whoever taught them this aggressive and intolerant behaviour. I went down to the yard and approached the girl and her brothers. I kneeled down to their level and asked her to tell me her version of the story. She confirmed what Maiya had said. With the addition that Maiya kicked back. I didn't doubt that. Before I could continue asking questions she interrupted me.

-“So, you are you not a Muslim either?”

-“No”, I responded.

-“Then I am not your friend either”, she said while turning her head away from me.

I was so shocked that I almost couldn't gather my thoughts.

-“Who said that you shouldn't be friends with people that aren't Muslims?” I asked her.

I then got a strange incoherent explanation of why god exists, which she apparently had learned in school. A private school only for Muslims, she said. Suddenly I heard a shout. Standing across the yard from us, their dad had just come out. Instead of approaching us to talk about why our daughters had fought, he just waved his kids inside with another loud authoritarian shout. Quite shaky after this disturbing incident, I stumbled my way back up to our apartment.

For a couple of weeks after that, Maiya and Mari were afraid to go out in the yard. The incident felt so hostile that Kana was even considering if we should move. I told her we shouldn't blow this out of proportion, but I can't deny that I also had my serious doubts. It was remarkably unpleasant. To our relief, that family stopped going out in the yard. We later heard from some other kids that they had moved. Although I was happy to see my kids play in the yard with all their other friends again, the face of this girl had etched itself onto my mind. Her eyes were so convinced. Who was she going to become? What was the goal of whoever is teaching her this? And most importantly, how can we avoid kids learning anti-social behaviour like this?

We told our friends what had happened and the ones most affected were of course our Muslim friends. A Syrian mother of a class-mate of Maiya went down on her knees and frantically hugged and kissed Maiya as soon as she heard the story. She was almost moved to tears. When we discussed the matter she underlined the importance of making a difference between how Islam is expressed differently depending on which culture you are from and what upbringing you have had. Saying that this is not even a matter of religion but of certain cultures. The incident of course became a sad addition to our gathered experience of Rosengård so far. But it can not be taken out of the context. If you have read the whole story and gotten yourself the wider picture of the otherwise enjoyable life we live here, I sincerely hope that you are more prepared to handle a story of social friction like this than if you knew nothing else of life here. Moreover, I would say that one of the biggest perks of living here in regards to this discussion is the fact that you actually get to see some of the real nuances of cultural expressions. Not to mention the deep sense of gratitude people express towards being allowed to come to Sweden when their own country was falling into pieces. Both of which are understandings that makes it harder to pigeonhole anyone or anything. If these things were truly felt by the people who sympathize with the *Sweden Democrats* for example, I believe the discussion would look completely different. To strive for better social mixes in neighbourhoods everywhere is without doubt a way to vaccinate against this issue.

As a final note, I want to talk about a question that came up several times in Tim Pool's videos. Whenever he wanted a straight answer from someone, he tended to ask something similar to this:



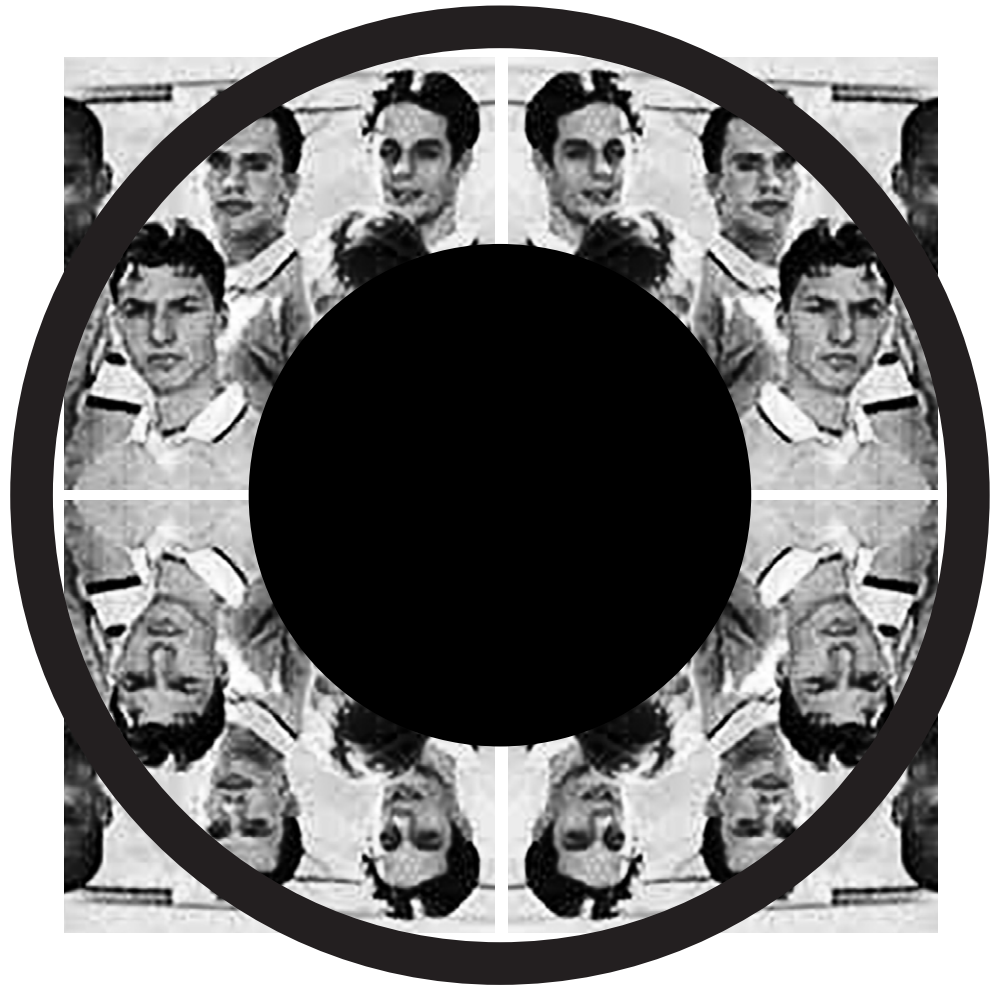
-Would it be good for America to receive refugees or not?

Isn't this rich? It baffled me every time. First of all, how great isn't that irony, when the country in question more or less solely constitutes of immigrants? Secondly, the fact that America is most often the main reason refugees are refugees in the first place makes the question almost tragicomic. Lastly, the way that sentence is constructed expresses an annoyingly ego-centric view of the world. As if every decision a country takes should always revolve around the well-being of itself and nothing else. There is no doubt that receiving refugees initially puts a toll on a society. Both economically<sup>(3)</sup> and socially. It's a simple cause and effect, that new-comers without the necessary language skills and knowledge about our specific culture are likely to be less attractive on the job market. Which equals a time and cost to establish them. But this is a cost that economies like Sweden and America should be able to handle. It's just a matter of wealth distribution, patience and humility. In the case of Sweden, it's even proven that to handle our aging population, we are in need of the averagely younger immigrant population to eventually close the age gap in our work-force, according to OECD, the Organisation for Economical Co-operation and Development<sup>(4)</sup>.

But whether immigration is lucrative or not should of course not even be the point. It would be under our dignity to let the discussion derail from the real reason of receiving refugees. A new family just moved into the house next to ours. They have a six year old daughter who lost her left arm in Syria. Why is no one talking about her?



# 20 My New Friend.



Today I made a new friend.

It was a sunny Saturday morning in July and we had just had our breakfast. Mari recently got a new bike and insisted that we should go out and practice. I would rather have been lying on the couch and let the coffee in my stomach trickle down for a moment, but she was so eager I didn't dare to say no. As we came out of the door, the guy living above us on the fifth floor was outside assembling a bike. We never really talked before, even though his son and Maiya are in the same age and go to the same school. Me and Kana had always talked about how we wanted to get to know this family but a moment to do so never came naturally.

-“Hello!” I said while Mari ran off to the slides with a joyful growl. The sight of the slides was enough to make her forget about why we came out in the first place. “You bought a new bike for your son?” I continued.

-“Hiya! Yep! I promised him that if he did all his homework on time, I would buy him a bike. He did so I had to buy him a bike.”

-“That's great.” I said impressed. Both by the promise and the fact that he was assembling the bike by himself.

-“So how is it going with the bike?” I asked, in lack of a better question.

-“Hmm.. Yeah. I am not sure actually. I might look all handy and stuffs here but I don't really know what I am doing, to be perfectly honest. I think some parts are missing. Or I just lost them.”

I laughed a bit. This guy seemed funny. We introduced ourselves and he asked what I was doing. Through-out this year, I always felt a slight reluctance to talk with my neighbours about why I moved here and that I am writing this text. I've been afraid that it would create some sort of distance between us. But I decided to tell this guy and to my great relief he seemed happy to hear about it. I could tell he had a really strong and affectionate relationship to Rosengård. I asked him how long he had lived here.

-“More or less all my life. I grew up over there, in the same yard as Zlatan actually.” he said, pointing over Amiralsgatan towards Törnrosen.

-“Oh really?”

-“Yeah, we played together all the time, every day. Following each other up to MFF even.” he continued.



That's *Malmö Fotbollförening*, one of the top football clubs in Sweden and one of Malmö's greatest prides.

-“Wow, how great!” I responded.

-“Yea, but I'm a little sad I didn't turn pro though. Now I work at a warehouse instead.” he continued with a shrug while trying to find some missing parts.

He must be a very good player, I thought. I asked some more questions about the whole thing but my interest in hearing his views on the area combined with my lack of interest in football made me switch subject.

-“How would you say that this place has changed from when you were a kid?”

-“Oh it's much better now I think. You can feel it all around. The problem is all these unruly boys of course, but people dare to speak up more nowadays. I teach football to my kid and his friends so I see all of this, many of them are just lost. They have no idea what they're doing. You just have to show them the way, you know.” he said with emphasis.

Then he paused for a while. “Yeah, I think I want to stay here. These yards are just magical for the kids, aren't they?”

A kind of fuzzy feeling came over me. Rosengård should be very thankful to have this guy around.

-“So you like art and stuffs then?” he asked me all of a sudden.

-“Yes, yes. I like art a lot.” I answered.

-“I HATE that shit ha ha! Couldn't care less. My wife just got into an art school here in Malmö but I just can't get it.”

I giggled.

-“I know what you mean. I feel like that sometimes too.” I admitted. “Bad things can happen when people take themselves too seriously. But I wouldn't consider what I am trying to do as art.”

-“What do you do then?” he quickly asked.

I explained to him how I am mostly just writing about ordinary things here, but also that I look for connections between peoples' lives and how the actual buildings are working. I told him about my idea to extend the short-end facades with a couple of more rooms for the end apartments.

-“I would invest!” he exclaimed. “Right now we have enough space I guess, but I don't know, sometimes you just want to have more.”

I was guessing he said this just to be nice to me. Since after all, they only have one kid.

They can't possibly need more than three rooms. Or, perhaps they were expecting to add more family members, I thought to myself.

-“You know there are just a few four room apartments here in *Apelgården*, but they are never for sale.” he continued.

I didn't know that they were never for sale. But judging from my time here, I would've guessed so.

-“Hey Johan, we should all get together sometime.”

-“We should!” I answered.

-“It's hard to find time though, since we have relatives coming over all the time, but let's work something out. All these god damn relatives...” he said with a smile and shook his head.

We had been standing there chatting for some time when I realized that I couldn't see Mari anywhere. I said bye to my new friend and went looking for her. I found her in a bush picking the feathers off of a dead bird, and stuffing them into her pocket. I sighed.

-“Let's wash those hands and go get ourselves an ice cream, shall we?”

An offer she couldn't refuse. The closest place to buy ice cream is at *Bennets Bazaar*, so after the hand-washing we took the bridge over *Amiralsgatan* and stepped inside *Dana Livs*. A dirty but charming little convenient store right in front of the *falafel* place where a group of teenage boys always hang around. We bought a twister each, plus 10 buns. They have an incredible deal where you get ten buns for 12kr. Usually they sell out very quickly but today we were lucky. As we came out of the store and started to walk home, one of the boys came up to me.

-“Hey there man, wanna buy some kush? Or something else? Whatever you want man, I got it.”

In just a couple of seconds, all my energy had been drained. This young man, probably not even 16 years old, was in fact trying to push drugs on me in broad day-light. Right in front of my three-year-old daughter. Without as much as a hint of shame in his eyes. I felt sincerely insulted by his complete lack of boundaries. At the same time deeply jaded by the thought of being in his shoes. The perfect end to this whole story would've been for me to put my arm around him, sit down on a bench and talk all day long. Teaching him everything I know and send him off with a jolly good smile and new perspectives on life. But of course that didn't happen. I stopped for a second and stared into his eyes.



I thought about what to do with this moment, but in the end I just couldn't do anything. It was too intimidating. How was I supposed to respond? What would my neighbour have said?

This day reminded me of a paragraph in Per-Markku Ristilammi's book "Rosengård and the Black Poetry - A study of Modern Alternity", it goes as follows:

There is an apparent paradox regarding the relationship between the critique of the suburb and the romantization of it. On one hand we find the damaged and oppressed people with whom we should feel solidarity, on the other hand the honest, direct and powerful people from whom we should gather inspiration [...]

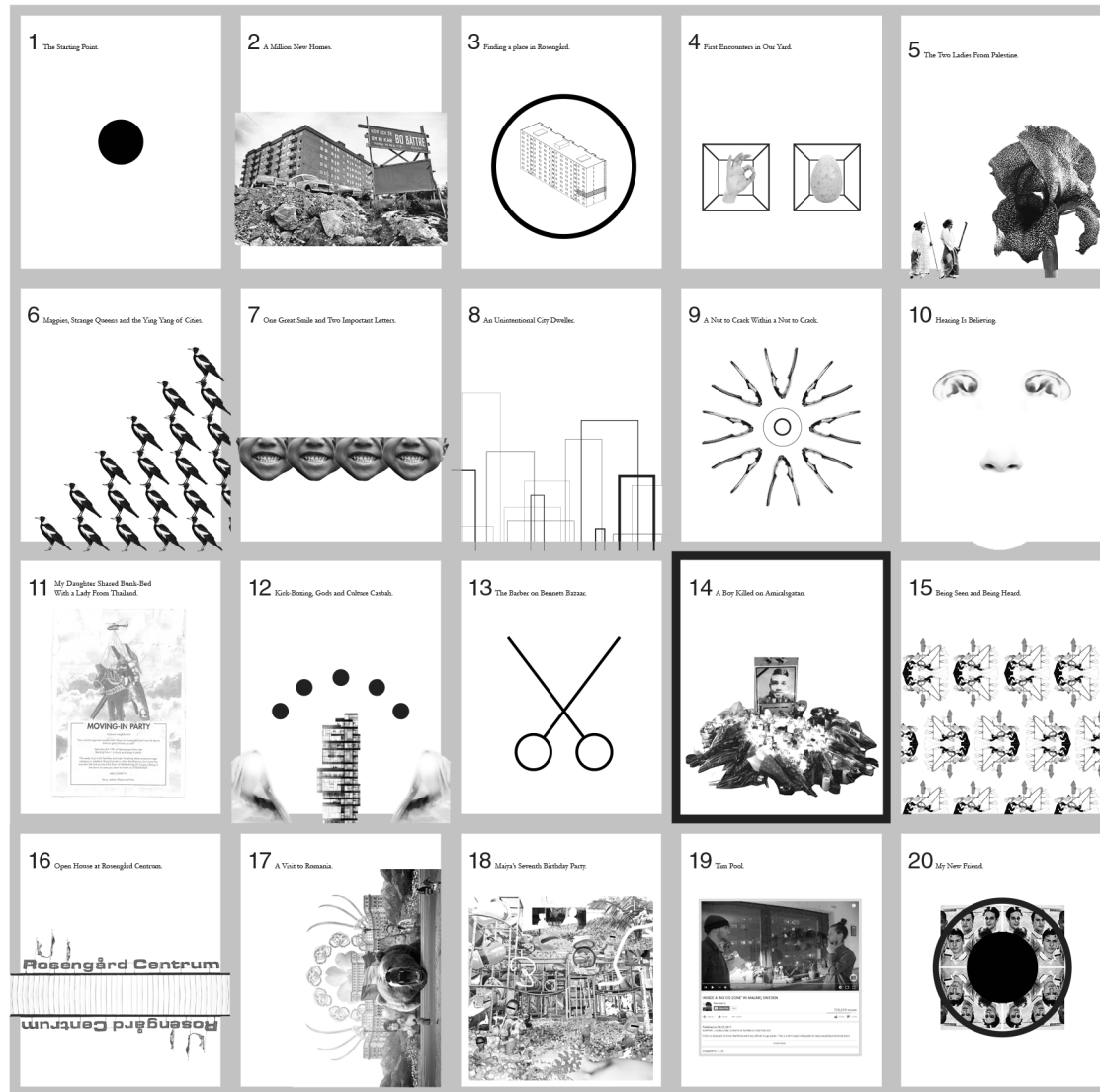
*-Per-Markku Ristilammi, 1993.*

*"Rosengård and the Black Poetry - A study of Modern Alternity" p 112*

I would say it's as easy to get inspired by the refreshing honesty and spirit of my neighbour, as it is hard to feel solidarity with this seemingly remorseless young drug dealer. Still, both of them are equally good reasons for us all to take part in the future of Rosengård.



# 21 The Final Review.



The first question I got when I was done with my shaky 20 minute presentation was:

-“Are you still living in Rosengård?”

-“Yes.”

The second question I got was:

-“Do you intend to stay in Rosengård?”

-“Eeeeh, yes. ”

Both came from Emma Nilsson. Assistant professor at Lund School of Architecture. Although she seemed pleased with my work, she needed to know this since to her it defines the tone of this text. If I had moved or wanted to move right away, the project would run the risk of looking like a facade. I felt uncomfortable having to answer such dramatic questions about me and family's future in front of an audience. It was also uncomfortable since it suggests that I would be different from anyone else living here. To ask a random person in Rosengård the same thing would be weird, and I of course don't want to consider myself different from anyone else living here. Still, I definitely understand the reason she asked. There are undeniably some inherent contradictions regarding an auto-ethnographic study like this. Moving to a specific place to learn from it does imply an awkward kind of distance to begin with. What is so strange about it though, is that the bigger the distance I might have felt towards Rosengård in the first place, the bigger the reason would be for me to do this. At the same time, the longer that distance is, the more suspicious it might appear. I even heard a metaphor comparing the method to a scientist who would do tests on lab-rats by transforming him or herself into one, only to comfortably return back to human form again once the study is done. You are of course free to interpret the words in this text in any way you want. They are what they are now. But I can't help feeling, aren't the rats instead the ones creeping around having opinions about people and places they know nothing about? To tell you how much I learned and developed from living here would only sound stupid. Who doesn't learn from life. What I can tell you is that I see things very differently after this year. In regards to the role as a father, neighbour and citizen of Malmö. As much as for the role as an architect and designer of the physical environment.

Which leads us to the second critic at my review, Christer Larsson, Malmö city planning director. While Emma took a more theoretical stance, Christer Larsson wanted to focus on



practical implementation. He would've liked more drawings than text it seemed.

"To work as architects, we cannot only observe. We have to transform what we observe into something else. That is our role. That is supposed to be our expertise."

True enough. But to my defense, this isn't exactly like drawing for any random context. An equally bitter and refreshing realization I had at an early stage of this project. If he would've seen what this presentation would've looked like if I had followed some of my initial ideas, I don't think he would even have attended this review. I know I wouldn't. Except from reminding me of my bad ideas, Christer's statement also made me think of the original proposal from the architects behind Culture Casbah, Lundgaard & Tranberg. I saw it before I had even visited Rosengård and apart from the troublesome discussion regarding forced gentrification and private real-estate companies investing in segregated areas, the proposal itself was beautiful and seemed to make perfect sense. Some months later, I found myself sitting in Örtagården watching Mari queue for the slide in a big playground completely swarmed with kids, only to realize that it was exactly here they had proposed a wide funky zig-zag road. More or less eliminating all surfaces for kids to play in that yard. Fortunately the proposal has since been revised for the better, but I couldn't help feeling that perhaps getting to know a place properly before proposing something on it has its benefits. Whoever drew that road might at least have taken it into account if he or she saw what a hot spot for slide enthusiasts and other enthusiasts that place was.

This of course doesn't make Christer's statement less true. Being too careful and not dare to propose anything has apparently not been a winning strategy when it comes to dealing with our segregated suburbs and their social unrest either. An argument I have brought up from time to time at various occasions, but it tends to always get the same reply: *What can architecture really do? Or similarly: Is architecture really to blame?* The number of people more capable of answering these two questions than me is probably incalculable, but I have to say that this year has given me some reasonable hints. As the physical framework is obviously a significant factor in the choice of residence for any person, I don't think we should underestimate the role of architectural efforts. Especially the size of apartments. People want to fit in their homes. If they can't, they will of course move away when they can afford to do so. Which causes a drain of human capital for areas with large families and low incomes, as stated in chapter 12 and 16. If our goal is to alleviate

the stigma and reach a social mixture where kids can grow up with role-models from all income segments and ethnicities (which goes for both ends of the economical spectrum), we have to allow bigger families to fit as well as letting the areas become attractive for people that starts to earn a bit more too. As banal as it may sound, people simply earn differently. And to as high degree as possible, our areas should probably reflect that diversity as much as any other diversity. Undeniably this will result in gentrification, but what it all boils down to then is: How do we mitigate the displacing effect of gentrification so that struggling families can still stay and reap the benefits of living in an area relieved from stigma? The families who are the main reason for our efforts to be done in the first place. And here, I believe we are floating away from the realm of architecture. Entering the realm of political means and wills. As explained in chapter 7, the market itself will likely not interfere with displacing and segregating effects. Quite the contrary. Some would then argue that we are only to accept the market as it is, since it works best if not touched. But the market doesn't exist for its own sake, does it?

As for the ideas I did present, Christer Larsson seemed to enjoy the one called F. The extension of apartments through the gables. His reason being that a collaboration and incorporation of the inhabitants' ideas seem like a good way to build up trust when developing an area. With the recent communicative short-comings between MKB and the people of Rosengård regarding Culture Casbah in mind, I couldn't agree more. However good the intentions of the planners might be, it doesn't matter if people can't feel it in their guts. But how do we do that? How do we actually make everyone feel seen and heard? Judging from the experience of citizen dialogue I've had so far, it stands clear that it's not only the wills of the financial stake-holders that might stand in contrast to the wills of inhabitants, but the contradicting wills of the inhabitants themselves.

So, how do we make everyone in our cities happy? An utterly naive question, to say the least. Although that doesn't make it any less important, I can't exactly end my paper in such a cliché. What I do believe we should ponder is: Which questions can we derive from that question? If these pages gave you any clues, I would love to discuss it further.

You will find me at Sjöblads väg 39, third floor to the right.



## 1. The Starting Point.

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## 2. A Million New Homes.

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