



LUND UNIVERSITY

Framing Happiness

Cultural Analysis of Influencers' use of Place in their Digital Content

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Abstract

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As the use of social media is continuously on the rise in Sweden, and in the world, it is important to take a step back and see what it is we view as content. We sit with our phones or on our computers, scrolling through various social media platforms, viewing content often created by influencers that depict the world unfolding somewhere else. Delving into and deconstructing this creation of content with the use of spatiality is therefore important to help understand social media culture and in a broader sense, the digital world. Thus, this study aims to investigate how Swedish influencers use and relate to spatiality in their digital content creation. It fulfills this aim with the help of three research questions: *How* do these influencers portray places – where they are situated both physically and digitally – for their audiences? *What* role do objects play in the influencer's portrayal of places? That is, what objects are used in the staging of a place in the influencer content, and what things are strayed away from? *How* do influencers navigate their role as an influencer creating digital content out of space? The method through which the study has been conducted is digital ethnography. In turn, the material that has been created through that method is transcripts of videos and screenshots deriving from content created by Swedish influencers on YouTube and Instagram. This material has been analyzed with the help of an eclectic theoretical framework consisting of parts from Doreen Massey's perspective on spatiality, Erving Goffman's interactionism, Sara Ahmed's phenomenology, and Zygmunt Bauman's notion of the consumption society. The main findings of this study are that influencers can use spatiality to their advantage as they turn wherever they are situated into content – they create influencer places out of space which they frame to their audiences as paths to happiness. This study shows how the influencers construct, navigate, and commodify places as a means to cement their role as influencers. *Framing Happiness* helps to create a cultural analytical understanding of content creation as work and its part in the consumption society and digital economy.

Keywords: cultural analysis; influencers; digital ethnography; spatiality; place-making.

Svenskt abstract

Inramad lycka: Kulturanalys av influencers användande av plats i deras digitala innehåll

Edvin J. Leijon

I en tid när vi använder sociala medier mer och mer, både i Sverige och ute i världen, så är det viktigt att ta ett steg tillbaka och faktiskt se vad det är vi kollar på för slags digitalt innehåll. Vi sitter med våra mobiltelefoner eller datorer och scrollar genom olika plattformar och tittar på innehåll, ofta från influencers, som framställer en pågående värld någon annanstans. Att fördjupa sig i detta kan hjälpa oss att förstå både sociala medier som ett kulturellt fenomen och den digitala världen i stort. Därför är denna studies syfte att undersöka hur svenska influencers relaterar till och använder var de är situerade i sitt digitala innehållsskapande. Tre forskningsfrågor finns för att hjälpa studien i att uppfylla dess syfte, de är: *Hur* framställer dessa influencers platser, alltså där de är situerade både fysiskt och digitalt, för sin publik? *Vilken* roll spelar föremål i detta, av influencers, framställande av plats? *Hur* navigerar influencers sin roll som digitala innehållskapare som använder rumslighet? Metoden med vilken studien har genomförts är digital etnografi. Materialet som därigenom har skapats är både transkriptioner och skärmdumpar av bilder och videor från influencers innehåll på de sociala medierna YouTube och Instagram. Detta material har sedan analyserats med hjälp av ett eklektiskt teoretiskt ramverk bestående av Doreen Masseys perspektiv på spatialitet, Erving Goffmans interaktionism, Sara Ahmeds fenomenologi och Zygmunt Baumans syn på konsumtionssamhället. Denna studie visar på hur influencers är förmögna att använda plats till sin fördel. De formar var de är situerade till digitalt innehåll. De skapar influencerplatser från rum som de försöker rama in till sin publik som olika vägar till lycka. Studien visar dessutom hur influencers konstruerar, navigerar och kommodifierar platser som ett led i deras cementering av sin egen roll som influencer. *Inramad lycka* bidrar med kulturanalytisk kunskap kring digitalt innehållsskapande som ett arbete och som en del i konsumtionssamhället och den digitala ekonomin.

Keywords: cultural analysis; influencers; digital ethnography; spatiality; place-making.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Our lives are in part lived online. We document our everyday activities on different social media platforms, we upload pictures and write about what we last ate, for example.

According to the Swedish foundation “Internetstiftelsen”, which documents the internet use among Swedes yearly, 94 percent of the Swedish population used social media in 2023, and 84 percent did so daily (Internetstiftelsen, 2023). Our time has been called the “age of doom scrolling” (Rajeshwari & Meenakshi, 2023). That is, we get caught in endless scrolling on social media. It is an activity that has been integrated into our everyday lives and is part of “mundania” (Willim, 2017, p.57), meaning the blinded use of social media. Our doom scrolling is more often than not something we do almost unintentionally. What goes on behind the scenes that we scroll through and stop to see, is not something that is cared for. Therefore it is important to stop and zoom out and deconstruct what it is that we are looking at when scrolling through or viewing social media content.

The concept of influencers and their role in society is highly debated in Sweden. Around 2018 and 2019, they were frequently discussed in the media in relation to the climate crisis and flight travel. Anna Abenius (2018) wrote the following in an opinion piece for Metro, translated from Swedish: “I think it is time to make these actors (referring to Influencers who travel by airplanes) answer. Frenzy consumption and luxurious vacations lead to followers but also to hundreds of kilos of carbon dioxide emissions”. This is just one example of how influencers were heavily criticized and questioned. Another is the Instagram account called “Aningslösa influencers”, which translates to “Clueless influencers”. This account made it its mission to highlight influencers who did questionable things in regards to the climate. The perception of influencers is often harsh – Jan Guillou (2019), a famous Swedish author wrote a highly critical piece in the newspaper Aftonbladet in which he said: “what even is an influencer?”.

Influencers have turned the act of uploading into a profession. A lot of the digital world consists of their content, we follow them and view what they produce. In 2011, Freberg et al

defined influencers as a “third party endorser who shapes audience attitudes through (...) social media” (Freberg et al 2011, p.90). What the influencers create and upload, which is in turn viewed by an audience on social media, is done so with the intent of influencing the said audience to consume whatever it is that is advertised. That is one definition of an influencer, another similar one, is the one Van Driel and Dumitrica (2021) describe as a role between consumers and companies. Here the influencer can be interpreted as an “intermediary between advertisers and consumers” (p.65). But influencers are so much more. Nilsson (2024) discusses how influencers have made “a space for themselves as content creators in digital media are now increasingly transforming their private life narratives and self-representations into digital business”. The content that influencers create is a way for influencers to earn their money, but the content is also constructed as a means for creating a following, a social media presence consisting of themselves as a part of a career. This study views the influencer as such – someone who makes money by creating digital content, content which is clear advertisements at times, yes, but also representations of everyday life.

In the spring of 2022, I got the opportunity to work as a research assistant in an ethnological research project called *Influencer Lifeworlds*. My task was to do digital ethnography – to collect and create digital material with a perspective on consumption. A focal point was, specifically, how influencers create advertisements through, what they call, collaborations. This digital fieldwork consisted of me watching a lot of content on different platforms, for example, YouTube and Instagram. I flowed in and out of the digital field for a couple of months. While being in the digital sphere mentally I, most of the time, was physically sitting down in my armchair in my living room. This led my thought process and consequently my fieldwork to the perspective of spatiality. I pondered upon where the Swedish influencers I watched were situated when creating content, and how that affected their creation of advertisements. In a way, I too got to be there, with them wherever they were – all the while, I was still physically at home. With the identified need for slowing down the ever-running online engine, and deconstructing what it is a lot of us view there – I now thought of doing this through the lens of spatiality. This is a way of seeing beyond the surface of what we scroll through, into the cultural mechanics of how digital content is constructed by influencers. The role of the influencer as an actor which grounds itself in the digital sphere as well as in the physical, bridging the two as a means for content creation, now also emerges. Thus, we arrive at the aim of this study.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

This study aims to investigate how Swedish influencers use and relate to spatiality in their digital content creation.

How do these influencers portray places – where they are situated both physically and digitally – for their audiences?

What role do objects play in the influencer's portrayal of places? That is, what objects are used in the staging of a place in the influencer content, and what things are strayed away from?

How do influencers navigate their role as an influencer creating digital content out of space?

1.3 Overview of Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters, with subchapters. The first one is the introduction which you have just read consisting of a background and the aim and research questions of this study. The chapters that follow are:

Chapter Two defines and discusses the previous research that has been done on this or closely related subject(s), as well as what this study contributes to.

Chapter Three is a discussion of the methods, and in turn, the materials, that are the foundation for this research.

Chapter Four – a discussion of the theoretical framework that helps to analyze the collected material.

Chapter Five is the analytical chapter of the thesis. Within are five subchapters, the first being a contextualizing one and the other four are analytical.

And lastly, *Chapter Six* is the conclusion of this thesis where both the major findings are highlighted as well as the study's applicability and possible paths forward for future research around the same subject.

2. Previous Research on Influencers

The previous research is divided into three themes: *Spatiality and Social media, Influencers and their Role in Marketing*, and *Influencer Lifeworlds*. The first theme captures research that has been done with a focal point on how the digital world connects with the physical. The presented studies in this theme help to crystallize the context in which my study also exists as they help explain the mechanisms behind our digital society. In the second theme, the research has a focus on influencers and their role in digital marketing. A role that has been interpreted as an in-between – a mediator of sorts – for different socioeconomic and sociocultural actors. The third theme brings up the project, from which this study originates, *Influencer Lifeworlds*. That project and what it has produced, like this study, are ethnological contributions to the research field. In this theme, I discuss what sets my study apart from the project, and what it gains from the same.

2.1 Spatiality and Social Media

The relationship between social media and spatiality is researched by the geographers Leszczynski and Kong (2021) in *Gentrification and the an/aesthetics of digital spatial capital in Canadian “platform cities”*. By platform cities, they mean cities in which social media platforms, in some way or another, are visible in the urban landscape (p.9). Their methodological approach is a combination of statistical analysis and quick observations in three major cities in Canada: Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver and creates knowledge on how social media, i.e. platforms, find their way out into an urban landscape, which Leszczynski and Kong (2021) understood to be a process that is connected to gentrification. Through their study, they have seen how neighborhoods that are more gentrified, also have a more visible platformization (p.20). Thus, place-making, on a broad level as with how cities are made, is a part of this field of research. My study is of a similar process though the other way around – what is of interest is rather how a physical landscape of places finds its way onto social media platforms, specifically through influencers in their content.

In the book *The spaces of public issues: How social media discourses shape public imaginations of issue spatiality*, Stoltenberg (2024) employs a similar perspective, to that of Leszczynski and Kong, on how spatiality exists in the digital sphere. She discusses what she calls “issue spatiality”, a process that she means happens discursively online. “It focuses on how actors connect places to specific problems and debates” (p.5). Stoltenberg exemplifies

cases of how the online discourses of housing market issues in Berlin and Frankfurt take place on Twitter (p.65) and become “nodes” in a “space of flows” – around which social action is structured (p.12). Stoltenberg, as I interpret her, works with this notion to see how discourses around places become fixated in the digital sphere. They move from being out there, among people in the physical, through a fluid space to become these so-called “nodes”.

This work is a good example of research that tangents my study in the way that it focuses on how phenomena in the physical world move into the digital one. While Stoltenberg’s perspective is a bit broader, I too research how such a process occurs, albeit with a more micro view of influencers. Also, when Stoltenberg tries to create an understanding of how discourses connected to places around things such as the housing market move onto social media platforms – I study how the places themselves are portrayed by influencers in their content. Stoltenberg focuses on digital spatiality through political discourse, whereas I view spatiality through the content creation of influencers. Her methodological approach is quantitative and done through a macro-perspective. She uses a semantic discursive approach, collecting a lot of keywords appearing on social media, to then thematize those (p.70). That is in contrast to my ethnological digital ethnography, which studies influencers on the micro-level and more so what these actors with a social media presence do with space. Stoltenberg, as I interpret her, rather seeks to understand on a large scale how cities and their issues become digital spaces.

All in all, these two works capture a part of the field of research that explores physical spaces in their digital forms. There is knowledge of the interplay between the two, as Leszczynski and Kong (2021) and Stoltenberg (2024) respectively show two different cases of how that occurs. The former: is through looking at how platforms take place in cities and vice versa; how cities take place on platforms, and the latter: is through how issue spaces exist as a discourse online. However, knowledge of how such an interplay of spatiality is carried through by influencers has not been well developed.

2.2 Influencers and their Role in Marketing

Back in 2011 Freberg et al defined influencers as a “third party endorser who shapes audience attitudes through (...) social media” (Freberg et al 2011, p.90) – thus capturing the role of the

influencer in the marketing world. And it is upon this perception that previous research on influencers is built, as I interpret it.

The Dynamics of Influencer Marketing: A Multidisciplinary Approach is a fresh example of a rigorous book in which this theme is discussed (Alvarez-Monzoncillo 2023). This anthology gives different perspectives on how influencers are integral pieces to digital marketing. Hutchinson and Dwyer (2023), for example, discuss what they call the “platformization of cultural production”. A way of identifying how influencers often are a part of the production of, for instance, news content. They can be seen as actors who “constitute the flow of news especially across YouTube and Instagram” (p.124). Interesting here is how they describe platforms as “located at the intersection point of commerce, regulation, technology, and users” (p.126). Social media platforms can therefore be understood as a type of meeting place for these different fractions of society.

Van Driel and Dumitrica (2021) have researched the professionalization of influencers as they emerge as an “intermediary between advertisers and consumers” (p.65). Their perception of the role of the influencer thus lines up with the one Freberg et al (2011) present. Similarly to my study, they use netnographic material from their chosen research subjects’ latest Instagram posts, and interviewed influencers. Even though I create an understanding of the same role of the influencers as these authors, my focal point is on spatiality. Van Driel and Dumtrica (2021) rather focus on the professionalization process as well as the standardization of content which this leads to (p.77). Influencers find the best ways through which they can capitalize on their social media content. Certain types of content fit better with their role as an intermediary, in turn, the collective content that is put out on platforms is streamlined and fits into a mold, the authors find. Like them, I also argue for how influencer content is standardized to follow a certain format, but I do so through a spatial lens.

In *Curating a consumption ideology: Platformization and gun influencers on Instagram* marketing scientists Drenten et al (2024) provide insight into the rise of influencers promoting guns in the US based on a qualitative study where the authors have conducted digital ethnography. In specific, they discuss their method with the term “listening” which becomes a way of describing how they have immersed themselves with the digital content, as well as collected it (p.97). I find this concept interesting as a way of conceiving digital ethnography, which I will come back to in the methods chapter.

The result of their digital ethnography is an analysis of how, as I interpret it, gun influencers help both sell guns and construct sub-cultural digital communities in which conservatism with pro-gun politics can thrive (p.115). They mean that influencers exist in what they call a “liminal space between merely sharing personal preferences and peddling promotions for monetary gain” (p.93). The liminal as a way of defining the in-between role of the influencer follows the conceptualization as the ones laid forward by both Freberg et al (2011) and Van Driel and Dumtrica (2021). Drenten et al (2024) then show how these specific influencers make use of social media platforms and are used by others in a process of “platformization”. A concept which, as Hutchinson and Dwyer (2023) also discuss, can be understood as the practice “of creating, leveraging, or extending digital ecosystems in ways that mediate cultural systems and industries” (Drenten et al, 2024, p.94).

Another study that is methodologically similar to Drenten et al (2024) is Arnesson and Carlsson’s (2023) digital ethnography: *To see and be seen: Gynaepopticism and platform surveillance in influencer marketing*. By what they call “lurking” on different social media platforms – Arnesson and Carlsson have explored surveillance in influencer culture (p.68). I also perceive my role as an observer online as a lurker, which I delve further into in the methods chapter. What I also find interesting in this study is how they find the influencers to monitor themselves, in what they interpret to be similar to Foucault’s notion of panopticism (p.69). Yet, they also argue for a more fluid analysis, since they mean that influencers are also a part of a “top-down” structure of surveillance as well as a structure of gender. The term that Arnesson and Carlsson (2023) use instead to capture this intersectionality is “gyneopticon” (p.70). They mean that influencers are in a process of self-control that often has to do with gendered practices where women regulate women. And, that they are a part of “the gathering and storing of user information for commercial purposes”, for example (p.70).

Another micro-level perspective is provided by the linguist Fägersten (2017) who does a qualitative discourse analysis on YouTuber PewDiePie’s use of swear words (p.3). She argues that the abundance of cursing in his videos, she focuses on three of them, is a reason for his internet popularity – it draws attention (p.9). This work is an example of how influencers have been the object of study on a similar perspective level as that of an ethnologist. However, Fägersten’s focus on language is to understand how Felix Kjellberg performs his persona PewDiePie and how the discourse of this process mediates “para-social

relationships” (p.9). In my study, what the influencers say becomes an entrance into the spatial process of working as a content creator. Thus, I am creating an understanding of this culture rather than analyzing the language itself, as Fägersten does.

To sum up this theme of the research field we see how there are studies that explore the role of the influencer in many different ways. They are mediators of news media, commerce, gun culture, and political ideology. However, how they are a mediator of spatiality is yet to be deconstructed and analyzed, which is what my study hopes to contribute with.

2.3 Influencer Lifeworlds

The main ethnological and ethnographic contribution is of course Gabriella Nilsson and her project *Influencer Lifeworlds*. Nilsson’s broad framing of this project is to research the balance between work life and the private sphere for influencers. *Set in motion. Paradoxical narratives of becoming Swedish digital media influencers* are one of Nilsson’s (2023) products of said project. I will do a dive into this work and discuss my study in relation to it. In her article, a notion of motion is applied to influencers’ autobiographies which are then discussed together with newspaper articles based on interviews with influencers (p.4). Nilsson draws on Hartmut Rosa’s theorization of “social acceleration” to capture what could be seen as the motion of the influencers’ careers with the aim to understand “how influencers make sense of their career development” and why as well as how they, the influencers, use metaphors of for example motion to describe their careers (p.2).

While my study derives from the same scientific project as Nilsson’s (2023) article – something which I discuss more deeply in the methods chapter – they provide different perspectives on the research field. Our methodological approaches are similar in the way that they are ethnological and ethnographic. The main difference is in the material – where I interact with the influencers’ content on social media through digital ethnography. My analytical lens is more directed towards how influencers create this content, through the use of spatiality – an essential part of their work. To an extent, I also touch upon how they talk about what they do, which is where Nilsson’s (2023) focus lies. She discusses how the influencers talk of their careers as something in acceleration (p.345). What my study aims to contribute, could be understood as the influencers’ foundation for achieving such an accelerating career. The content they create drives their positions as influencers forward.

Spatiality helps to unveil the influencers' use of actual space, but could also be a metaphor for understanding where the influencers are in their careers. The metaphor they use themselves, which Nilsson develops further, is of course acceleration. But their careers sometimes reach a "plateau" (p.345), which as a spatial metaphor complements those that are more of the velocity kind. For, to maintain an influencer career one has to, as Nilsson shows, keep the pace up. This movement happens somewhere, in space and with space.

2.4 This Study's Contribution to Research Field

To summarize the previous research in the field, it encompasses both studies that explore spatiality in connection to the digital world, as well as research that delves into different perspectives of influencers and their role in marketing. I have also discussed how previous research employs various methodological approaches. There are studies out there that conduct digital ethnography on influencers. My contribution to this field, which I have discussed throughout this section, is that I connect spatiality and the digital with influencers. This study is an effort to see how places in the physical world move onto social media platforms, with the help of influencers. In turn, it explores how this spatial work helps the influencers. Furthermore, my study develops the knowledge about Swedish influencers in specific as it captures and deconstructs how their work – their content – is built up in space. It is done, on a micro-, everyday level – the level of the ethnologist (Löfgren 2014, pp.78-79).

3. Method and material

The method through which this study reaches its aim is an ethnological take on digital ethnography, or netnography, and has meant doing fieldwork online, on some of the different social media platforms where influencers work. This fieldwork will be discussed regarding ethical concerns and reflexivity, as well as its advantages and disadvantages. The chapter will also include a discussion of the material that the research method has generated and how that material has been analyzed.

3.1 Digital Fieldwork and Sampling

I conducted this digital fieldwork during the first half of 2022 as a part of the broader research project *Influencer Lifeworlds* (Nilsson, 2019) My role within that project, which all in all employed a "bricolage" of different ethnographic methods (interviews for example) –

was to help provide the digital perspective in that assemblage (Ehn et al, 2015, p.26). I set out to collect influencer material with a focus on consumption. It was through this lens that I both searched my way and was led by an algorithm snowball effect on the influencer material that is present in this study. Thus, I interpret this method's sampling as both "purposive" and "snowball sampling" (Bryman, 2011, p.392). That is, I was "emplaced" in this digital field of study, in which I moved around with researcher glasses on, looking for something ethnologically interesting. Simultaneously, I was drawn into different paths by the suggestions that social media platforms tend to give us. Through watching one video on, for example, YouTube, I found another, and so it went on. This was the "ethnographic place" where I did this fieldwork (Pink, 2008, p.179). Reflecting upon my placement in the field was also what led me to the premise of this study. While I was field working with a broad focal point of influencers and consumption, I thought of where I was situated physically – most of the time in my armchair. Yet, I was also there viewing an influencer's portrayal of where he or she was situated. Spatiality was now added to the lens of the fieldwork.

Thus, this digital ethnography was conducted as a method for researching the influencer content, which lives in the digital as well as in space. In line with Pink et al (2015), I had a "non-digital-centric" focus as I conducted digital ethnography not simply to create an understanding of something entirely digital (p.10). That is, this ethnographic fieldwork in the influencer's digital content as the field – has been done to create an understanding of their use of and their connection to spatiality outside of the digital. Then again, this ethnography is also deeply rooted in the digital, as it has purely been done with the digital as its field of research. It has been an effort to test out the limits of this method – to see how far digital ethnography can synergize with cultural analysis. This approach can be seen as an ethnological backdoor into a broader societal context. Through exploring this micro-level case and analyzing details of influencer material, the so-called "small but significant clues" (Ginzburg, 1989, p.282) – knowledge on consumption is created. By viewing these influencers from an ethnological perspective, I have tried to break apart and dissect a process that has become mundane to us. Following and watching influencer content on social media has been incorporated into our everyday lives and is what Willim (2017) would describe as a part of "mundania" (p.58). That is, we see the finished product, without putting much thought into how such content is produced. My methodological course of action is a way to dissect and shed a fresh light on how spatiality plays a part in the core of content creation – making what has been familiarized, "strange again" (Ehn et al, 2015, p.25).

The digital ethnography can also be understood as a “netnography” and it follows Kozinets (2020), who coined this term, in the way that it triangulates different forms of material from different social media platforms. This, Kozinets argues, is a key for good netnography (p.8). Just as it often is key for doing good ethnography. Thus, within the digital perspective, this method also has been that of a bricolage one (Ehn et al, 2015, p.26). The fieldwork has included collecting content from influencers that take the shape of videos, photographs, and text. What this netnography entails is therefore an active use of the internet and within it, influencer content on social media platforms, to create qualitative empirical data (Kozinets, 2016, p.19). The actual procedure of doing so, I would deem as a close combination of observation and transcribing. I have conducted active digital ethnography, not what, for example, Davies (2008) describes: as a means for putting out surveys or contacting informants (p.153).

3.2 A Reflexive Discussion of Digital Observations

Observation is a method that helps understand, as Tjora (2012) puts it “what people do”, whereas interviews, in contrast, study what “people say that they do” (p.35). And that is the foundation of this netnography, me observing influencer content to see how they create said content using spatiality. As this study is purely digital, interviewing the influencers who take part has not been done. Although, interviews have been conducted in the mother project *Influencer Lifeworlds*. An interplay between interviews and observation is otherwise a fruitful ethnographic approach, which Tjora shows. What makes up for the lack of interviews is the nature of influencer content which, either in text or in spoken words in videos, makes what the influencer says accessible. Observing influencer content thus caters to both of these perspectives.

The digital observation I have done is rather a method that can be interpreted as, “listening” which captures the aspect of how one comes close to a material. Drenten et al (2024), as seen in the previous research, draw upon Winter and Lavis (2020) and their understanding of what listening means in this digital ethnographic context. It is to the latter authors I also look to in my methodological approach. They discuss how the digital is a cultural landscape – a potential research field of its own (p.55). Something which, as you know by now, agree with and make use of. Winter and Lavis continue to explain how the digital in its beginnings was

textual but how it now rather is multisensory (p.56). It is because of this that listening as a method is important, it takes into account the multi-faceted nature of this digital field and goes “beyond an observation of text” (p.56). The listening that I have done, which is in line with what Winter and Lavis suggest, is what they call “active listening”; it is a form of observation that “attends to the polyphonia of voices that make up online spaces” (p.57). Meaning that I have not merely looked at influencer content that is just text, it is most of all pictures and videos. I have immersed myself, “emplaced” myself as Pink (2008) puts it (p.179), in this type of content. There, I have actively listened to what they say, and what they do, engaging with all of what is going on.

Observing influencers and their content is easier said than done. Observing, as Tjora describes (2006), can be hard to separate everyday activities from that which is to become research (p.430). The same applies to this digital fieldwork – it was tough to not fall into a relaxed viewing of, for example, a nice portrayal of a surf vacation on YouTube. Even though a lot of the content I observed was not the type I, in my private life, usually consume – the consumption of content on social media platforms is an act that is ingrained in my everyday life. It is a part of, again, what Willim (2017) puts as “mundania” (p.58).

To capture what I was listening to, I transcribed word for word things of interest that the influencers said in the video material. Together with that, I also took a lot of screenshots, some of which are present in this text. This method is also in line with actively listening to all that the digital field – influencer content – offers (Winter and Lavis, 2020, p.57). I also wrote field notes to capture what the influencers did, taking into account not only what I heard but also what I saw. Taking field notes, and transcribing, of course, are highly subjective practices. Tjora (2006) talks of field notes being “culturally slanted” (p.434) – that is, what I put down on paper is merely a representation of what has occurred, or what has been said. Still, being able to do so, while observing, was essential for this digital ethnography to work out. As a researcher I was, what Davies (2008) describes as a “lurker” I could sit on my own, yet simultaneously be able to engulf myself in the field of study. This without, during the observation process, making myself known to the study subject (p.156). Being a lurker thus helped with time, being able to observe and write down what I observed in a joint process. Something which aided in avoiding the problem that I described with Tjora (2006) above, with the material being altered when it moves through time and the researcher, onto paper.

3.3 Ethics

Important to emphasize is though that I did make myself known to the influencer, my role as a lurker was only temporary. Throughout the netnographic fieldwork I as a researcher have been visible under the alias “Influencerforskaren”. This is in line with a structure put in place for the mother project *Influencer Lifeworlds* (Nilsson, 2023, p.4). With this account, I liked the content which I collected and also left a comment leading to the accounts page through which the influencers could read what the research was about and back out of the process if wanted to. Their published content is to be regarded as public material and it is of course their work therefore they are named in the material and this study. This procedure was put in place to show these individuals that they were being researched. They were selected for the research not because of who they are, but for the content they create.

Walter Benjamin (1923/1997) discusses translation as a mode that should not be thought of as a way of entirely transferring an original to a different language. Instead, translation is a way for works to “fortleben”, by being translated they reach “the stage of their continuing life” (p.153). Previously, Tjora (2006) helped to see observational field notes as representations of what has occurred (p.434). I interpret Benjamin’s (1923/1997) view on translation as just that: constructing representations, rather than reconstructing the original (p.155). The ethnographic process is filled with these translative acts on different levels. The influencers in this study produced content for a certain audience. I, as a researcher, have translated parts of their context into a scientific context, for a different audience. As this study has been done of Swedish influencers, in a Swedish context, the material used in this text has been translated into English.

Then again, there was a lack of co-creation in the construction of this study’s material. This digital ethnography was not an interview situation, for example, where the interviewee and the interviewer together can construct empirical data (Ellis, 2007, p.21). Rather, I did fieldwork in an “asynchronous” sphere where the produced content I observed as potential material already happened – it was fixed in time and was when I viewed it, history (Davies, 2008, p.153). Therefore, it was impossible for me to fully merge the “ethnographic place” with the influencers’ content (Pink, 2008, p.179), thus I could not join in as a researcher to, for example, ask questions to the influencers, nor could they have a say in the creation of the research. Instead, my role can be understood as an unknown “third presence”, a tredje

närvarande in Swedish. This notion which, in an ethnographic context, has been developed by Oscar Pripp (2011), refers to interview situations and the future audience of the material (p.68). Bakhtin (1984/1963), from whom this notion derives, conceives of what he calls a third party when analyzing Dostoyevsky's poems. He discusses how characters, when talking to themselves or others, do so concerning a bigger context. While "addressing" someone or something, one "squints his eyes to the side, toward the listener, the witness, the judge" (p.237). When producing content, the influencers currently participating in this study did not address me as a researcher, but they unknowingly created content that would reach me as a sort of retroactive third party – as an unintended audience. They were not aware, at the time, that I would be observing them. Thus, it is I who shape a form of translated content towards an even further layer of a third presence, the readers of this study. Although, to highlight the influencers' agency, even if the power dynamic is, to say the least interesting – they are the ones creating all of the material on which this study bases its analysis. There lies their power. I have then selected and translated parts of it into a scientific context.

3.4 The Material and the Analytical Method

This study's material consists of content created by influencers, not because of who they are but because of how they create their content. They are the following: Bianca Ingrosso, Alice Stenlöf, Joakim Lundell, Louise Jorge, Hanna Olvenmark, Jennifer Andersson, Annika Sundin, and Flora Wiström. I have discussed the process of how these influencers were sampled in subchapter 3.1. A more thorough presentation of each influencer will be found in the analysis. Their content and how it has been used in this analysis is something I go through and discuss in the last part of this method chapter. How much they appear in the analysis varies, as well as in what shape. The content has been translated from their format on social media platforms into this text. In its original form, the content was either videos or photographs with added captions. In this text, it is visible as either transcribed quotes or screenshots.

3.4.1 Material Categories

The result of doing digital fieldwork is a material consisting of around 70 pages of transcribed text deriving from videos on mostly YouTube and some from Instagram, as well as 102 screenshots of posts on Instagram and of videos on YouTube. To each screenshot, a text has been written and these all together sum up to 22 pages. The type of content that has

been collected from YouTube is mostly vlogs, that is: video blogs that follow an influencer's everyday life in general, or a certain activity they are doing (Brott, 2023, p.281). Another type of content is a part of the material is so-called “hauls”, which refer to a type of video in which the influencer, in this case, displays clothes or other products that they have just bought or received through a collaboration with a brand (Jeffries, 2011, p.59). These hauls are either separate videos or integrated into the vlogs. Some of the material is also the “thumbnails” of YouTube videos, which are the “visual preview” one gets of a video, before playing it (Thomson & Bock, 2023, p.3). Another type of material is discount codes which are a part of explicit advertisements in influencer content. The influencer receives a code from the brand they collaborate with, which they then send out to the audiences of their content. Those who use the code will then get a discount on their purchase from the brand, in turn, the influencer gets some sort of economic compensation from the brand – either as a fixed fee or in the form of a commission. For, the brands, in their efforts to optimize their advertisements, can also track how much the codes are being used (Lee & Park, 2023, p.26).

The type of content that has been collected from Instagram varies a bit more, some posts are pictures of interiors in influencers' homes, and others are clear-cut advertisements displaying a specific product. Most of the Instagram material is regular pictures, albeit, a collection of a few Instagram lives and stories has also been done.

3.4.2 Analytical Method

The digital fieldwork, including observations, led me to transcribe influencer material. That has then been analyzed through a thematic analysis inspired by Braun and Clarke (2006). A method, as they describe it, “for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data.” (p.79). The themes created are on a detailed level, on particular parts of the material, rather than on the entire “data set” (p.83). What I have done is an ethnological analysis, rooting itself in the micro-perspective. This renders themes that are deep and nuanced and which have been dwelled on and shaped by me as a researcher for quite some time. It has been a back-and-forth process, where the empirical data has interacted with theory and with different perspectives. It is not a pure inductive thematic analysis, nor is it theoretically driven, which are the two sides of the spectrum Braun and Clarke present (2006, p.83). Rather, as said, the analysis has been done abductively (Aspers, 2009, p.5). The themes have evolved through an analysis being led by the empirical data, and theoretical perspectives.

Braun and Clarke (2006) continue by separating “semantic themes” and “latent themes”. That is, whether the focus of the thematic analysis is on what is explicitly said, or on what goes on “beyond”. This study does the latter as it analyzes the “underlying” perspectives in the material (p.84) – what the influencers do in their content, and how and why it is created in relation to spatiality. It does, however, also take into account what they say in their content, but the thematic analysis has not stayed on the surface level. Epistemologically, this thematic analysis is constructionist. The formation of the analytical themes is a social process in which, together with the material and theory, I as a researcher play an integral part (p.85). It all runs through me and my ability to interpret and, to draw back to Walter Benjamin (1923/1997), translate.

The actual procedure of this thematic analysis draws on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step procedure. Step one is to “familiarizing yourself with your data” (p.87), something which I did already while closing in on the material through the digital ethnography. By finding interesting content by observing and then transcribing, I immersed myself with the material and started to find patterns. I then, as step two suggests, started to “generate initial codes” (p.88). I sifted the material through theoretical perspectives – the material at this point all existed in one document. After some patterns started to form, I then color-coded the entire document, consisting of both transcribed text and pictures. Having divided up the material into these initial codes, more clear-cut themes soon started to crystallize, which is in line with Braun and Clarke's third phase of analysis (p.90). Here it is a process of zooming out and connecting the dots – the codes – joining them together in more overarching themes. Practically I did this by creating separate folders for text documents and pictures – so that the themes would be separated. The fourth and fifth steps that Braun and Clarke discuss: “reviewing themes” and “defining and naming themes” (pp.91-92) were for me more of a conjoined process. Here the abductive process of going back and forth intensified as I thought with different theoretical perspectives, saw the themes in new lights, broke them apart, and built new ones. From the initial themes which had a focus on consumption and influencers, the themes that took me into the last step of the analysis, writing (p.93), had much more of a spatial focus. Then again, this entire thematic analysis I would consider a part of a hermeneutical circle (Aspers, 2009, p.5) where I have gone back and forth, started over, and jumped between different ideas and versions of themes shaped together by me, the material and theories.

4. Theoretical Framework

To help me understand the netnographic material, I have eclectically put together a theoretical toolbox consisting of notions from Doreen Massey, Erving Goffman, Sara Ahmed, and Zygmunt Bauman. Massey helps to understand spatiality, and specifically, how one can conceive of space and place as well as digital spatiality. The tools that Goffman adds to the toolbox are his perspectives on social interaction and how those involved in one decide what is going on.

4.1 Massey's Notion of Spatiality

To unravel and understand the spatiality of an influencer's content creation – I have used human geographer Doreen Massey (2005). In her work *For Space* she takes a clear stand against what she calls “space-divided-up” (p.66). This divide often boils down to the differentiation between space and place, where the former is understood as a starting point (p.13) or by, for example, Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) as a room in which one can move. For him, and others, space is physical and can be claimed and filled with human experience and identity, to become a place (Tuan, 1977, pp.12, 183). Though Massey (2005) means, and it is her interpretation of spatiality I use in my analysis, that space is always there as a process, ever active and under construction. She sees space as a trajectory of change without a clear end, nor a “point of departure” (pp.11-13, 67). Space can therefore be interpreted as a fluid foundation, a foundation that is never quite set in stone. Even so, there are efforts to tame and fixate space as a place, which Massey (2005) regards as a process grounded in power and interaction. Those with a certain power can create or define a place. A space becomes a place when a group of people can agree upon it as a constellation of “uniqueness” (pp. 68). Massey (2005) stresses how space already consists of multiplicity and interconnections, “the social is constructed” in space (p.13). Though I interpret her as follows: in certain contexts, the social that is constructed is that of a defined place. To simplify these rather abstract notions of spatiality I interpret Massey as follows: it is possible for individuals or groups in a situation to together decide upon and define a place. The status quo, according to Massey, is that we as humans exist and move in space, which is never set and fixated. Although, we still try to do so – we try to form places out of spaces, places with certain qualities, centered around certain activities, for example. If everyone in a set context together reaches a consensus around a space as a place, it is a place for them.

One such context is the one in which influencers work. They move in and make use of a digital landscape, one that can be defined with the help of Massey as “cyberspace”. She describes it as follows:

It may be through the establishment of new power-invested spatial configurations, rather than simply through the conquering of distance by speed-up, that the challenging of certain characteristics of spatiality is potentially on the agenda. One of the things which 'cyberspace' most famously allows is instantaneous contact at a distance. This is, moreover, both networked and selective. The connections can be multiple and you can choose with whom you are in contact.

In the grand scope of things, cyberspace is a new spatial configuration. It throws off spatial norms such as distance and allows for a direct social interaction (p.93). It is in this interaction between spaces where the agreement of a place can occur. That is, influencers, in this case, have the agency to mediate the uniqueness of where they are to an audience, turning space into a performance of place. Massey continues: “What cyberspace (...) could potentially enable is a kind of disembedding into noncontiguous communities of people-like-us which evade all those challenges thrown up by what material spatiality always presents you with - the accidental” (p.95). Cyberspace allows for an interaction between spaces, an interaction that is “networked and selective” (p.93). Although, this does not mean that those who make use of this are in total control over spatiality, the accidental still happens. To exemplify, the place that is curated by influencers is done so to an audience that is out there, in cyberspace, with a multitude of agencies in regards to the interpretation of that mediated place.

Altogether, I deem Massey’s notions on spatiality useful in depicting and deciphering the influencers’ use of where they are situated in their content creation. But to understand how this portrayal of space, as a place, is put out as a part of a cyberspatial interaction – I will take the help of Ervin Goffman.

4.2 Goffman’s Interactionism

In *Frame Analysis* sociologist Goffman (1974) further develops his theories around social interaction. With the notion of “frame” he conceptualizes how social situations are constructed interpersonally. A frame in this context is that construct that is there for those involved in an interaction so that they can understand the situation (p.9). Goffman explains it

as follows: “I assume that definitions of a situation are built up by principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them” (p.11). A frame is there in a social situation to tell the participant what to do and how to act. It lays down the ground rules for how to perceive a context and it answers the question “what is going on here?” (p.44). However, the frame that answers this question is not something that exists out there, set and ready for whatever social situation one may enter. I would argue that it is, as Goffman also thinks of it – something that is constructed between people. Some social contexts, such as a university classroom, have more set frames well known to those who enter. There, those who are involved perceive the situation quite similarly and act accordingly. Going back to Massey (2005), the classroom could be understood as a place that is agreed upon (p.68). However, for the hybrid interaction of the digital and physical sphere that is influencer content creation – the frame is not as set.

In this case, it also becomes more clear how the frame is formed by some participants more so than others. Goffman (1959:28) defines social interaction as a performance in which some people are at the forefront of driving it forward, what he calls the “frontstage” (p.97). Those who are frontstage have a responsibility to maintain the frame of the social situation and to tell those who partake in the performance what is going on (p.25). In the case of influencers, their creating content perhaps even means providing the frame in addition to maintaining it. They propose a frame for how to perceive a space that they portray – they ask their audience to comply with this frame and in turn, then agree upon a place. “No audience, no performance” Goffman (1974) says (125). This study does not examine if the audience of influencer content complies – it focuses on the influencers’ efforts to keep the audience in agreement with the frame of a place, as well as what that framed place is.

When the frame is laid down, subjects with agency within the social performance can make efforts to steer the situation in certain directions. This procedure Goffman (1974) explains as “keying” (p.44). These keys are part of the frame and efforts for maintaining or adjusting it. I see this concept as important for understanding how influencers try to control how their content should be perceived. Goffman calls one type of keying “make-believe”, which he describes as an “activity that participants treat as an avowed, ostensible imitation” (p.48). An influencer creates content of the world in which they move that is portrayed to an audience out in cyberspace. This portrayal could be interpreted as just that – a make-believe performance of, for example, a place. Essential for the frame of social interaction in general,

and the ones influencers in this case provide – is the agreement of its construct. Especially so when the frame is structured around a make-believe keying. Goffman says: “the engrossment of the participants in the dramatic discourse of the activity (...) is required, else the whole enterprise falls flat and becomes unstable” (p.48). Influencer content creation and in turn their place-making is thus a vulnerable practice. Another way of constructing a frame is by “fabrication”, which can be interpreted as a keying that not only directs what is going on but creates a false belief of what is going on (p.83).

Relevant to this study is also what Goffman (1959) describes as a “facade”. That is, how one portrays oneself in a social situation – a portrayal that is then a part of and in relation to the frame of said situation (p.28). I interpret the facade as a type of keying that helps the influencer to construct what is going on. In their content, it is not only a place that is framed, but also themselves in connection to that place – as well as their role as an influencer.

To sum up, Goffman and his concepts on social interaction provide a toolbox for understanding how influencers can use places in their content creation. To further help analyze how, as well as why this process occurs – I will now discuss first, Sara Ahmed’s (2010) phenomenological perspective on happiness, and secondly Zygmunt Bauman’s (1998) theories on consumption.

4.3 Ahmed and Happy Objects

Phenomenologist Sara Ahmed (2010) adds a lens that can further develop the understanding of the role of influencers and their use of spatiality. In *The Promise of Happiness* she theorizes happiness as a phenomena connected to a world of materiality – we orient ourselves, with our bodies, to objects that in different ways mediate happiness (p.24). Ahmed explains it further: “The promise of happiness takes this form: if you have this or have that, or if you do this or do that, then happiness is what follows.” (p.29). As I interpret her: happiness is a state of mind that permeates our contemporary society – she describes it as “world making” (p.29). What happiness is and how it is achieved, is highly subjective, and Ahmed does not presume to define it more than as: “happy objects could be described simply as those objects that affect us in the best way” (p.22). Happiness sits in objects with which we build our world, the objects promise the feeling and if we follow them we can reach it: happiness.

By objects Ahmed does not only mean physical things: “but also to anything that we imagine might lead us to happiness, including objects in the sense of values, practice, styles, as well as aspirations” (p.29). This distinction is relevant for this study as it can help interpret the influencers themselves as happy objects, as well as how they use happy objects to help frame a place. Ahmed exemplifies this interplay of happiness further with the concept of the “happy family” (p.45), which she describes as follows:

The happy family is both an object (something that affects us, something we are directed toward) and circulates through objects. The family photograph album might be one such object: the picture of the family as happy is one way in which the family is produced as a happy object.

Similarly, influencers can be understood to portray themselves as happy objects. Connecting back to Goffman (1959), a part of the facade they construct, is them being a happy object (p.28). Even if they do not use this wording themselves, they seem to want to be perceived as a provider of happiness. But to do so, they also relate to physical objects which help them make a place (Massey, 2005, p.68) – and frame that place to a social media audience (Goffman, 1974, p.9). Some objects are happy, but some are “unhappy” – which Ahmed defines as an “obstacle (...) being the thing that gets in the way”. She continues: “the promise of the object is always (...) ahead of us; to follow happiness is often narrated as following a path” (p.32). Thus, some objects are wanted in the “bodily horizon” of the influencers – in proximity to them and their bodies (p.24). Such objects promise happiness in the sense that they help the influencers create content that in turn helps them fulfill their role as a happy object, as an influencer. Other objects are a hindrance, they are in the way of the path, and they do not fit into the framing of a place, nor the construction of the influencer facade. The influencers can be interpreted as suppliers of the path to happiness, some objects help them in this matter, others do not.

But what is the happiness that the influencer promises? Even though happiness is a subjective state of mind – it can be interpreted through the influencer’s portrayal of it as something more tangible. Perhaps, it exists in the enticing places they illustrate in their content, or it is a part of the structure in which the influencers are situated. A structure that they also facilitate and strengthen and which Zygmunt Bauman (1998) can help to define.

4.4 Bauman and the Aesthetic of Consumption

As a way of enlightening what happens to the influencer in this spatial movement, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1998) gives a fruitful perspective. He discusses how the formation of social identity in the time of individualism has evolved from being related to one's work to instead being in connection to one's ability to consume. The change from a "work ethic" to "the aesthetic of consumption" is in line with Western societies' development from industrial societies to post-industrial, where in the latter Bauman means that individuals identified themselves with their work. Pre-industrial and industrial societies could be defined as production societies in which, as Bauman points out, identification with one's work was essential for this system to function and for the individual, the system meant that there was little time and room left for other identities (pp.32-33).

In our post-industrial, consumption society, the role that work had for identity creation, now is taken up by consumption. It is the ability to consume which defines us and our position in society. Bauman (1998) also stresses that contemporary identity is far less static – one consumes an identity, for it to slowly dissipate. And so the need to consume, and to consume identity, arises again (p.47). The influencer can, which I intend to develop in the later discussion, be seen as an integral part of the aesthetic of consumption. Consumption is at the height of their work, thus here the "work ethic" joins forces with "the aesthetic of consumption" as the influencer consumes to create content, which itself often promotes consumption. The created digital content then also is consumed by the viewer. Thus, an influencer can be seen as a tool that caters to this world of fluid identities. It is an actor that symbolizes and mediates "the aesthetic of consumption" (Bauman 1998). The multi-layered and in-between space where the influencer creates its content can be seen as a backdoor into an understanding of how consumption through the digital is constructed and upheld.

5. Analysis

The result of this study has grown into four themes, each theme is analyzed with the help of the theoretical framework as well as with previous contributions to the field. Before the four analytical themes comes a contextualizing section, where the influencers who have produced the analyzed material in this study are presented as *The Influencers Behind the Content*. Then comes the first theme, *Framing Places*, which is about how influencers, in their social media content, gaze both outwards in the world and inwards, to home, to capture places. The second

theme *Objects in Frame* discusses just that, how the influencers in the material relate to objects specifically in their homes when they have operationalized these for content creation. The third theme *The Influencer in Frame* explores how the influencers talk about themselves in relation to spatiality, in their content. It uses vlogging as an example of how the influencers conceive of being a part of their content. The fourth and last analytical theme *Stretching the Frame* discusses the use of discount codes as a way of negotiating control over what it is the influencers portray in their content. That is before the content moves into the virtual landscape and meets its audience.

5.1 The Influencers Behind the Content

While it is the content of influencers that is the study object in this research, I deem it important to contextualize who the influencers behind this material are.

5.1.1 Bianca Ingresso

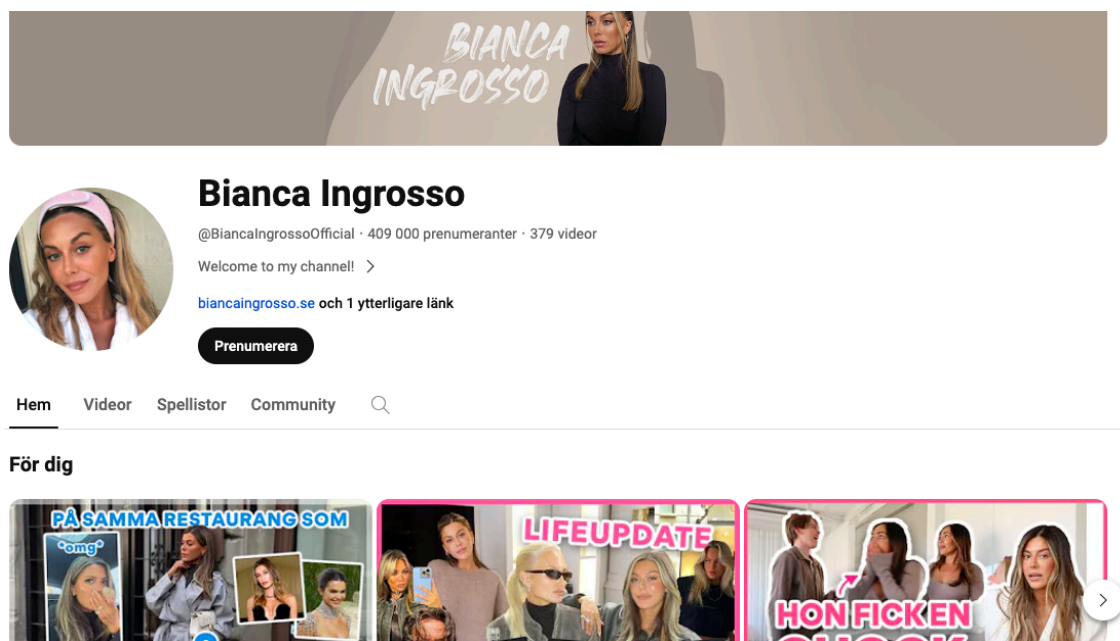


Figure 1 Screenshot taken by the author. Shows Bianca Ingresso's YouTube page.

Bianca Ingresso is one of the most famous influencers in Sweden, amassing around 1,5 million followers on YouTube and Instagram together (Göransson, 2024). She is part of a well-known family, where both her mother and brother are musicians and her grandmother is an actress. The TV show *Wahlgrens värld*, translated to Wahlgrens' World, captured Bianca

and her family's life for a national audience in Sweden (Elmevik, 2023). Together with being an influencer, Bianca Ingrosso has also founded a very successful make-up brand, CAIA. It has been described as a “make-up empire” (Silva, 2023).

The screenshot above shows the home page of her YouTube channel and it is content from there, as well as from her Instagram, that is a part of this analysis. This material takes the form of videos, which have been transcribed or screenshotted, and pictures, which also in this text are visible as screenshots and/or in a transcribed form. Ingrosso creates a lot of content around her everyday life in Stockholm, focused both on her work at CAIA and her private life.

5.1.2 Alice Stenlöv

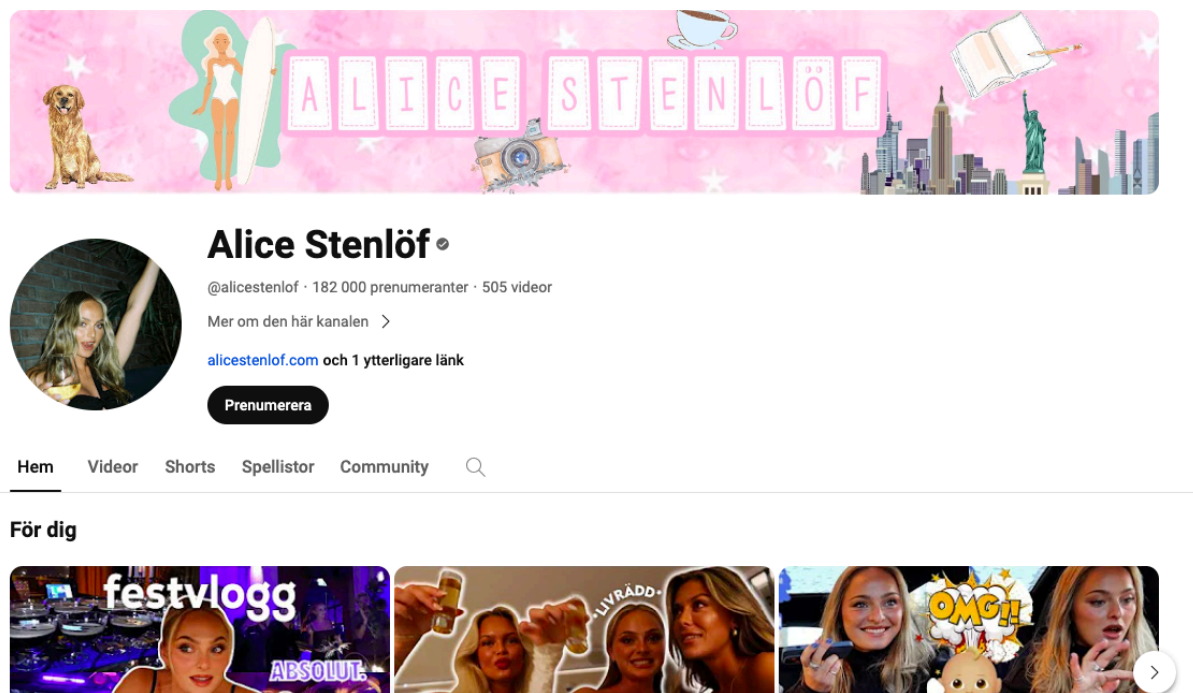


Figure 2 Screenshot taken by the author. Shows Alice Stenlöv’s YouTube page.

Alice Stenlöv is an influencer who has around half a million followers on Instagram and around 200 000 on YouTube – the two platforms from which the material in this analysis has been collected. Most visible in this text are transcribed text and screenshots from Stenlöv’s YouTube videos. Stenlöv is a friend of Ingrosso and the two formerly had a popular podcast together (Larsson 2023). She now stands alone in her influencer career which revolves around her life in both Stockholm and abroad, as she likes to travel a lot it seems. In this

study, we get to see how she portrays her life while on vacation in Costa Rica. Stenlöf, like Ingresso, has also founded a brand – hers is a clothing brand called *ADSGN*.

5.1.3 Louise Jorge

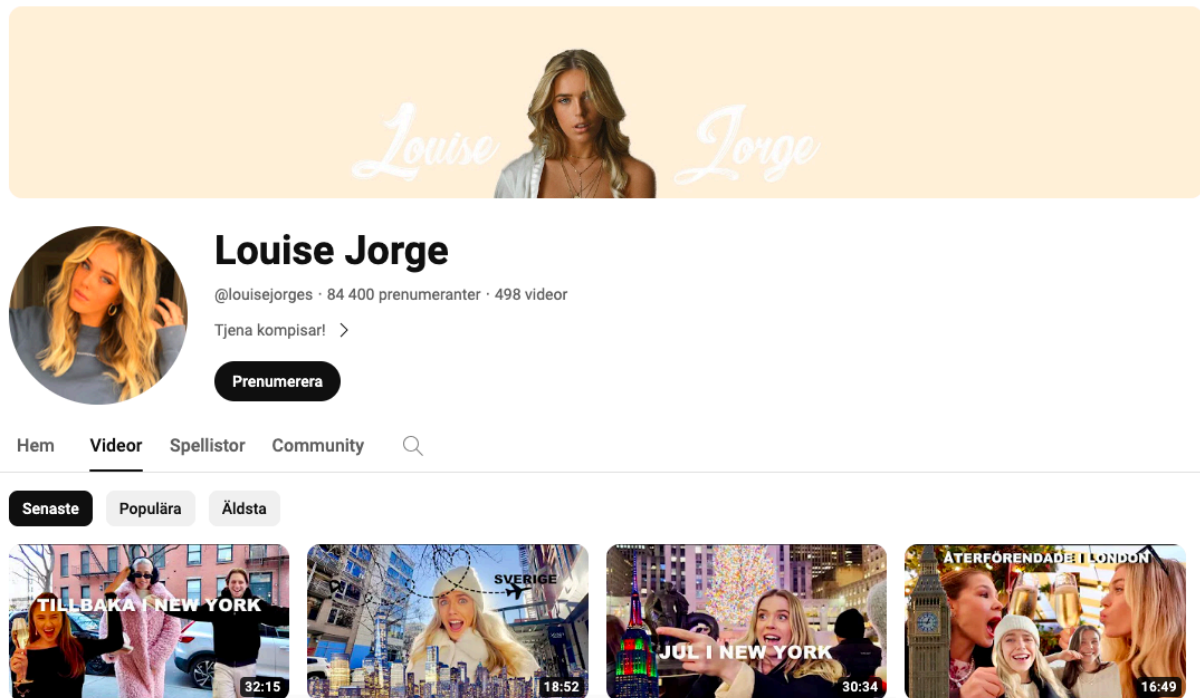


Figure 3 Screenshot taken by the author. Shows Louise Jorge's YouTube page.

Louise Jorge has around 100 000 followers on YouTube and Instagram together – channels on which she captures her life in New York. She is from Stockholm but studied in New York at the time when this material was collected. Her content encompasses Jorge brunching, shopping, partying, and dining – all in all, a life of flair and luxury. At the same time, she underlines her role as a student. Her living situation seems to be financed by her parents.

5.1.4 Joakim Lundell

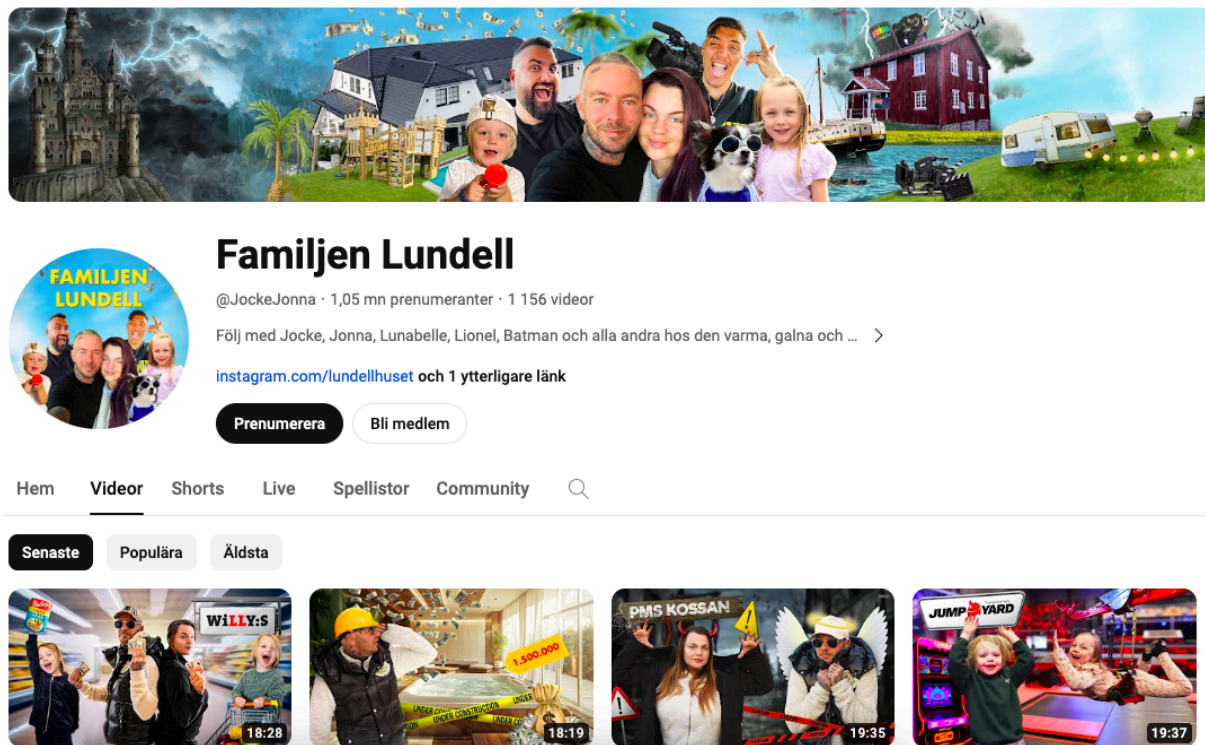


Figure 4

Screenshot taken by the author. Shows Joakim Lundell's YouTube page.

Joakim Lundell, formerly known as “Jockiboi” has been a celebrity in Sweden for quite some while. Starting as a scandalous participant in the reality show *Kungarna av Tylösand* (Meijer, 2018) in 2010, he later took to filming pranks on his girlfriend Jonna on YouTube. And it was as a content creator that he rose to his greatest success, reaching, as of today, around 2 million followers across YouTube and Instagram. What Lundell has focused on during his time as an influencer has changed, from pranks to a portrayal of a somewhat decadent lifestyle.

Especially his and his family's house, which they call “Lundellhuset” – has been a focal point in recent years. So much so that, apart from having its own Instagram as well as a TV series (Discoveryplus, 2024). A common theme throughout Lundell's content is, while showing off his wealth, pointing out how it all came to be. That he started at the bottom, so to say. His social media presence has also morphed from being him and his significant other as the centerpiece, into his family – as one can see in the screenshot above. In this study, Lundell's house will be discussed as well as what is in said house – the luxury he chooses to upload to his social media accounts.

5.1.5 Jennifer Andersson

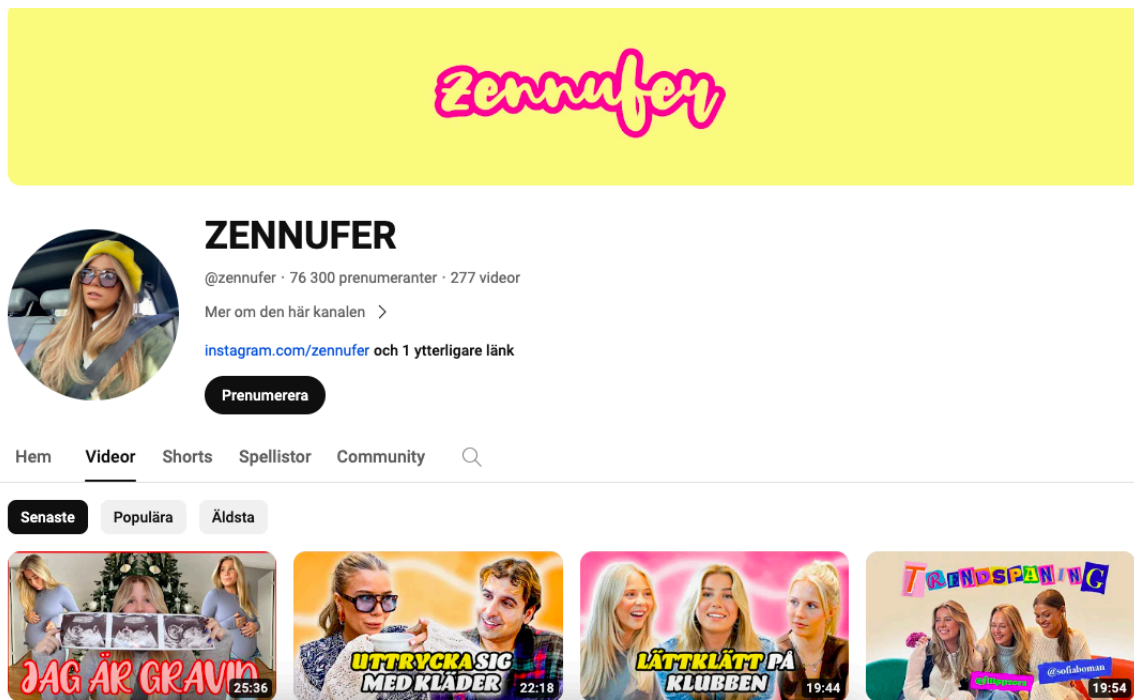


Figure 5 Screenshot taken by the author. Shows Jennifer Andersson's YouTube page.

Jennifer Andersson, or as she is known on social media, Zennufer, is an influencer from Stockholm who uploads content on her Instagram and YouTube page circled around her everyday life. She creates vlogs capturing day-to-day basics such as getting food or doing errands. Intertwined with that, Zennufer showcases outfits or clothes in general for brands that she collaborates with. Often, she films at home, which will be delved into further in this study – that is, how she manages working as an influencer at home. Zennufer's following is around 120 000 people.

5.1.6 Annika Sundin

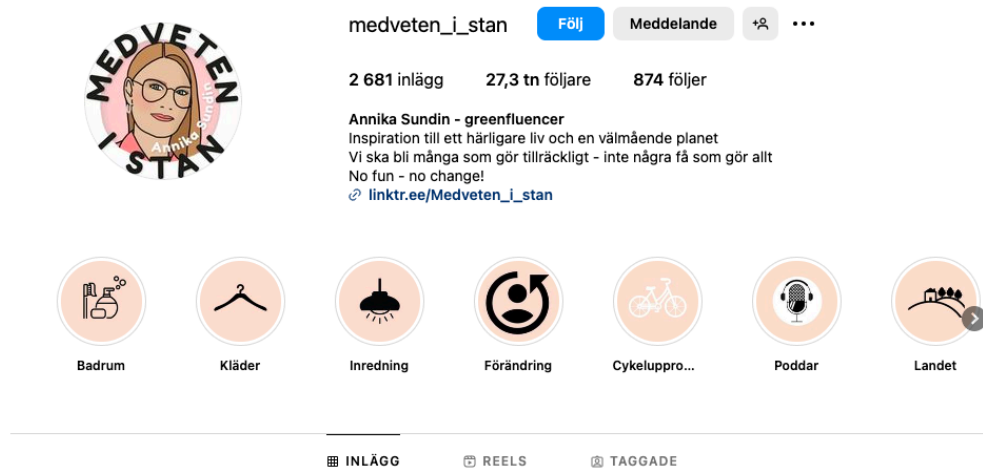


Figure 6 Screenshot taken by the author. Shows Annika Sundin’s Instagram page.

Annika Sundin, or “medveten_i_stan”, which translates to “aware in the city”, is an influencer based on Instagram (as seen in the screenshot above). She has a clear agenda with her social media presence as she promotes a sustainable lifestyle with a focus on circular consumption of clothes and interiors. Sundin calls herself a “greenfluencer” and creates content with tips and tricks on how to follow her example of being more environmentally conscious. She often showcases different flea-market finds or recipes with locally farmed ingredients. The former is what will be the focal point of the material that makes it into this text, which I will discuss later. When collected in the fieldwork for this study, Sundin was part of a category with which I wanted to contrast the more luxuriously living influencers that I have gone through above.

5.1.7 Hanna Olvenmark

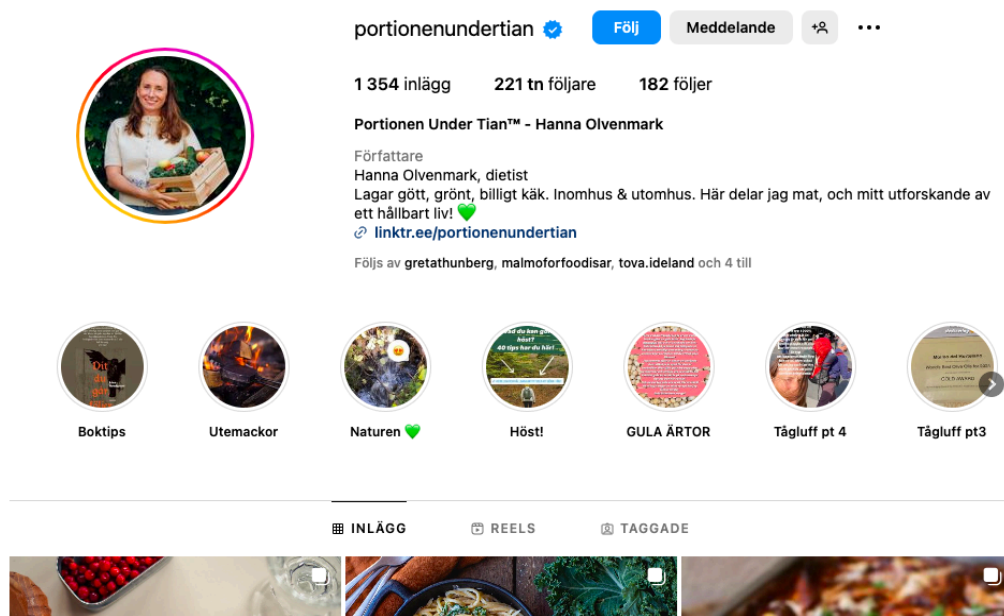


Figure 7 Screenshot taken by the author. Shows Hanna Olvenmark’s Instagram page.

Hanna Olvenmark follows Sundin in being what can be called a sustainably driven influencer. With the account “portionenundertian” – the portion under ten crowns – she pumps out mainly recipes on cheap and environmentally friendly dishes. She has around 200 000 followers to whom she also promotes a lifestyle close to nature and, like Sundin, a circular consumption pattern. She has also written recipe books on the same theme (undertian, 2024), if you look closely at the screenshot above, followed by famous environmentalist Greta Thunberg, for example.

5.1.8 Flora Wiström

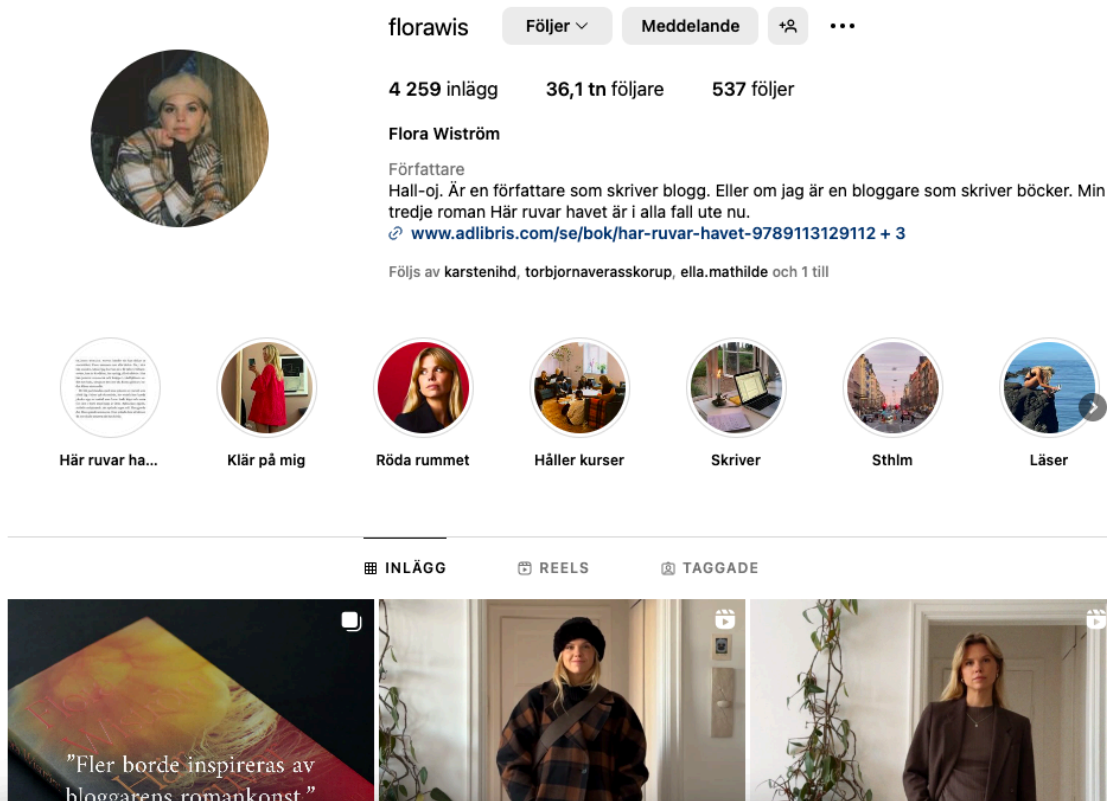


Figure 8

Screenshot taken by the author. Shows Flora Wiström's Instagram page.

The third “greenfluencer” whose produced content is analyzed in this study is Flora Wiström. She describes herself as “an author who writes a blog or, if she is a blogger who writes books”. Explicitly, she is not as out there as Sundin or Olvenmark with her sustainably driven influencership, and she is not as frequently uploading influencer content. A lot of what is on her Instagram, which is the platform from which I have collected material, is things about her books and the writing courses she teaches. But, when she does advertisements, those are portrayed as environmentally conscious. All the while, she also portrays an aesthetic and trendy Stockholm lifestyle for her approximate 40 thousand followers, which is quite luxurious. In that sits a tension which is interesting and which I will come back to.

5.2 Framing Places

In this first part of the analysis, I will focus on how influencers use places in their content. The chapter thematically starts with examples of how influencers look outwards in the world in the content creation to, for example: Costa Rica, New York but also the Swedish woods. That is followed by how influencers look inwards and home as they create content. This direction inwards includes how the influencers both relate to home as a feeling in their framing of place, but also how they direct their gaze and cameras to their actual homes. Goffman's (1974) theoretical concept of "frame" how social interaction is created within a joint understanding of what is going on will be explained and highlighted as central in this influencers' place-making practice (p.9). Drawing on Doreen Massey (2005, p.68) and her understanding of place as something that can be defined and agreed upon in certain contents – will also aid the analysis of the empirical data. Ahmed (2010) and her notion of happy objects are also used as a lens to see how the influencers use a portrayal of places to cement their role as mediators.

5.2.1 Looking Outwards

Alice Stenlöf, who I have introduced to you before, is an influencer living in Stockholm, but she does a lot of content centered around different trips.

When you see this video (...) I will be on my way to the adventure of my life. I am on my way to Costa Rica where I will be living for three and a half months, alone. No family, no boyfriend, no best friend. It is I. (...) But do you understand? I have talked about this adventure for years. I mean, for years I have talked about this as a dream to go to Costa Rica and surf for months and live that life. Now that is my reality, how crazy is that? (...) I have said it before, but it feels like we are doing this together. And it feels like you are as hyped for this as I am (Stenlöf, 2021a).

As the quote above reads, we now get to follow her on the "adventure" of her life. She is going surfing in Costa Rica for three and a half months and she feels like her viewers on YouTube are doing it with her. The video posted after is titled "I will never come home", which you can see in the screenshot below. Stenlöf has now arrived where the supposed

adventure of her life will take place – Costa Rica – and she starts up her vlog capturing this vacation swiftly. In the video, *JAG KOMMER ALDRIG HEM*, Stenlöf goes on about the beauty of Costa Rica and the happiness she feels being there. This screenshot also exemplifies what is often the visuals of her Costa Rica videos: a beautiful beach. A stark contrast to the grey and gloomy Sweden where I write from, but which is also where Stenlöf otherwise resides and relates to.

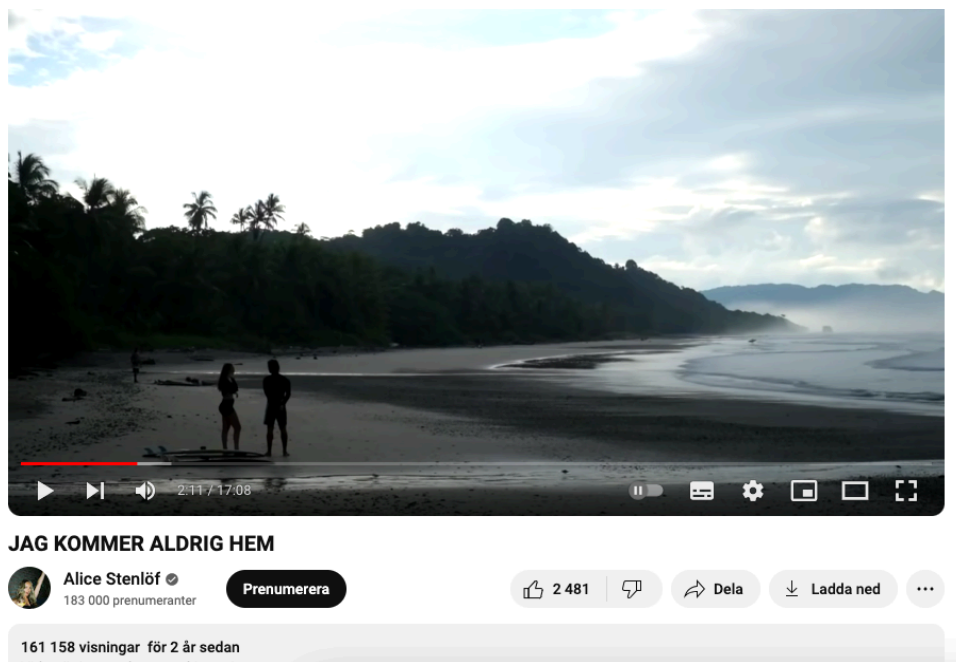


Figure 9 Screenshot taken by the author. Depicts a YouTube video created by Alice Stenlöf.

Around two minutes into the video which you can see above, Stenlöf showcases the Costa Rican nature, accompanied by soothing music. As an influencer, Stenlöf often creates content in which she portrays her life and where she is situated in a vlog format. She films herself and what she does for a couple of days, edits it, and puts it out on YouTube. In this case, where she is situated, Costa Rica, seems to be an easy sell. The frame (Goffman, 1974) that she hands to her audience to accept is a subjective portrayal of Costa Rica, it is Stenlöf's eyes on what of her vacation it is that she wants to upload to her audience. While it is subjective, her portrayal is very enticing, Costa Rica does seem like a dream vacation spot, which her videos on the matter never cease to emphasize. This portrayal comes with a reason behind it, as Stenlöf in the role of an influencer aims for her video to be seen, and be interacted with by her audience on YouTube. Here Stenlöf has the power to build the frame of this interaction, but as this analysis is based on a material of the influencer's side, we do not know if the audience accepts the frame or acts according to it. What is of interest here is how the

influencer lays down the rules for how they want their viewers to interact with the content they create. That is, Stenlöf steers what it is her viewers are going to interact with. She frames Costa Rica, encapsulating a vast and fluid space into something fixated and curated – a place (Massey, 2005, p.68).

The following quote helps to deepen the understanding of how Stenlöf frames Costa Rica. She, being physically situated in Costa Rica, is telling a story about a place she does not want to come home from. This quote exemplifies how she talks to her viewers at home:

I honestly think that for you who wonder at home having never been here, it is something about being here that makes you shift mentally. It is obviously beautiful, it is obviously tropical, and nice. But there is something about the energy here that makes you peel off all the unimportant thoughts about everything that is really superficial (Stenlöf, 2021b).

The frame that Stenlöf produces for her viewers, as a guide to what it is they should perceive Costa Rica as – is a place of tropical beauty. According to her, the energy makes not only her but also her viewers if they were to come there – “shift mentally”. Thus, within the framing of Costa Rica as a nice place, Stenlöf adds a key, as Goffman (1974, p.44) would call it, in the prospective understanding of Costa Rica as a place for inner transformation. She adds another layer to her portrayal of this vacation spot, other than it being a surfing paradise with nice beaches, Stenlöf plays into what one would feel if one would come there. Even if she, as she told her audience in the first quote of this chapter, feels as if they already are there with her – she talks to them “at home”. It is all very enticing, which seems to be the purpose – Stenlöf offers a framed place for her viewers that she means is feasible for them to experience just as she has (Goffman, 1974, p. 9; Massey, 2005, p.93). Not only through viewing her on YouTube, but she wants them to physically travel here. What is sold through her content is the framed place itself – her perception of Costa Rica as an escape from home; where one can experience a physical and mental shift is the product that Stenlöf pushes to her viewers on YouTube. But why? Well, this performance of place is not just Stenlöf sharing her genuine feelings about her vacation. The framing of the space where she is situated – into a place that is sold, is a form of advertisement. It is her work. The why becomes clear in the following quote, also from a video capturing her stay in Costa Rica:

Now we are back home. Home is, in other words, at Lapoint (a surf camp in Costa Rica). I am here in collaboration with Lapoint and it is the third time I am here (...) I am obviously obsessed. (...) I cannot recommend it enough. (...) If you book with Lapoint they will solve everything (...) they will get you a (surfing)board, they serve breakfast, lunch and dinner (Stenlöf, 2021c).

This vacation in Costa Rica is in collaboration with the surf camp “Lapoint”. Thus, her framing of Costa Rica as a place is intertwined with an advertisement. If the viewers want to fully accept the frame that Stenlöf has laid forward, the key to doing so is by booking a trip to Costa Rica with Lapoint. To strengthen the sense of what Goffman (1974) would call “what is going on” she reconnects to the homes of the audience, (p.44) by framing the surf camp as her home. She even takes it as far as to say that she is “obsessed” with what Lapoint offers. The reason as to why Stenlöf has framed Costa Rica the way she has seems to get prospective customers traveling to Lapoint. Again, just capturing Costa Rica and its nice beaches, for example, would probably do the job of selling it as a vacation spot. But to sell Lapoint and their surf camp in specific, Stenlöf wants her audience to have what she has had. She sells this vacation through her and her perception of the place. Additionally, the consequence of what she produces is also the possibility for her viewers to consume this place through the digital representation of the place that she has given them. Similarly to what Leszczynski and Kong (2021) describe as “platform cities” (p.9), the place Stenlöf has framed now exists digitally. She helps mediate this dynamic in which a portrayal of Costa Rica, becomes available as content on the platform YouTube.

It is apparently fashion week here in New York now, so our guy friend hit us up and asked if we wanted to come with to a fashion week party which apparently is going to be very big and cool and fun. (...) We might as well (...) I will update you tomorrow because apparently there will be a lot of fun people there. Then we can talk more about it tomorrow. Apparently the same people that were at the Met Gala after party last autumn will be there. So, maybe I can share gossip depending on what happens at what we do (Jorge, 2022a).

Louise Jorge is a luxury-consuming influencer who focuses on vlogs portraying her life as a Swedish student in New York City, USA. The quote above is an excerpt from a YouTube video of hers in which she talks about New York Fashion Week. Jorge and her friends have been invited to a party and talk about how she will update her audience on any good gossip.

This captures a lot of what Jorge does in her vlogs, she experiences New York and different activities that she portrays as enticing in one way or another.

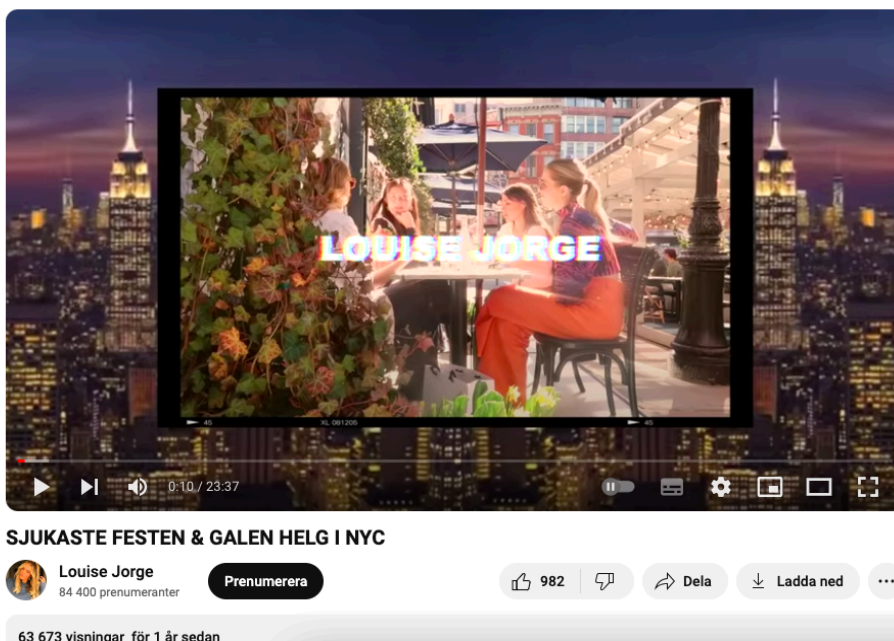


Figure 10 Screenshot taken by the author. Shows a YouTube video and its intro created by Louise Jorge.

In the figure above we see the intro to a YouTube video of hers. Starting with the title to this particular video which I now translate: “SICKEST PARTY & CRAZY WEEKEND IN NYC”. A title that both plays on the city that Jorge is in, but also what that means to her and by extension, her viewers. Together with her name, herself, and her friends, as well as the New York City skyline in the background, the framing of the place has already begun before the video starts. Just like Stenlöf, Jorge also draws her viewers in by using spatiality. She sells the place that she frames – A New York where one can partake in crazy parties. But what is produced by Jorge as content to her viewers, is not only a frame of place where the place in itself is the focus – in the framed place the spotlight is also directed to Jorge. She is, together with the place that she frames, the center of attention in her content. This I interpret as Jorge being on what Goffman (1959) describes as the “frontstage” (p.97). An example of this is visible in the picture, where the intro to her video is not only New York, but it is her in New York, sitting in a restaurant with her friends. In the center of the video, her name glows in capital letters. Thus, on the one hand, New York as the place she frames works as a backdrop for her. By drawing people in through the place, she gains attention. On the other hand, Jorge

as an influencer supplies a frame through which she mediates New York as a place to her viewers (Massey, 2005, p.68).

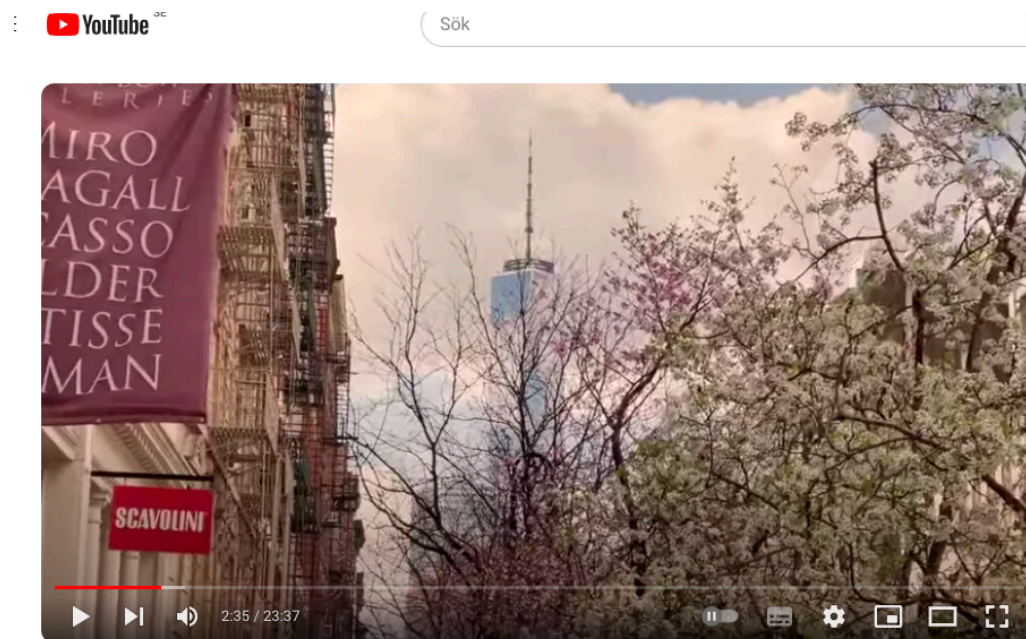


Figure 11 Screenshot taken by the author. Depicts a YouTube video created by Louise Jorge.

Further into Jorge's video, she continues to capture New York for her viewers. She seems aware of the potential that her content has to provide a frame for perceiving New York. As the picture shows, the video lets its viewers see New York through Jorge's eyes, or rather, her camera lens. The mediating of a place for her viewers is a conscious choice in her content creation. Jorge starts the video above by saying: "Hey friends and welcome to a new vlog here in New York City" (Jorge, 2022b) – a phrase that frames this spatial interaction, where her perception of New York as a place is the focal point. This is an example of what I understand as a specific meeting place that the influencer attempts to construct to keep up a unique relationship with her viewers (Massey, 2010, p.68). Her viewers are referred to as her friends and are welcomed to New York. Material from Jorge that highlights this even further is the thumbnail of the same video, not to be confused with the intro that I have discussed above. Rather, it is the wrapping of the video one sees before having clicked on the specific video, either on Jorge's page on YouTube or in one's feed. The thumbnail looks like this:

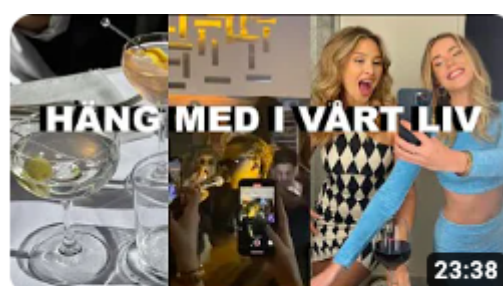


Figure 12 Screenshot taken by the author. Shows the thumbnail of a YouTube video created by Louise Jorge.

It says: “Come along in our life”. Already from the get-go, Jorge’s aim of having her viewers join in on her experience of New York is emphasized. Without actually being there with her, she still constructs a frame by using keyings “Come along in our life” to control the shared concept of reality, and create a sense of belonging where the viewers are there, in New York with her. She is a facilitator of this special dynamic, which can be interpreted with the help of Ahmed’s (2010) “happy objects”. Jorge facilitates the possibility for her viewers to be transported into a place through her content. She solidifies the frame of what is to be perceived and interacted with as the place: her New York. The key to doing so is through her. Thus, she portrays herself as what can be interpreted as a happy object. Ahmed puts it as follows: “objects would refer to not only physical or material things but also to anything that we imagine might lead us to happiness” (p.29). Jorge can thus be seen as a “happy object” in the sense that she is someone who provides a path to happiness. The portrayal is that if one orients oneself after Jorge, that is if one watches her content on YouTube – one can reach the place she has framed. Here Goffman’s (1974) “frame”, Massey’s (2005) notion of “place” and Ahmed’s (2010) “promise of happiness” join together to help explain how Jorge, and influencers in the material, promise, not happiness per se, but a place that is framed as happy. A place one can reach as long as the influencer becomes one's happy object, as long as you “come along” with Jorge and her friends.

If we go back to Stenlöv in Costa Rica, we can see the same phenomenon:

Now we are going to see our first sunset here. And you guys who have been here know that the sunsets here are the best on this planet. I want you all to experience this. I mean, I think this is paradise on earth. We have dogs on the beach, we have surf, we have the most amazing waves here, we have sun, we have a bunch of nice locals, we have SUCH good food and it goes perfectly hand in hand with being hungry all the time when you surf four hours a day. (Stenlöf, 2021d)

Costa Rica, as a perfect paradise is portrayed as reachable, as something Stenlöf wants every viewer of her video to experience. This could be interpreted as Stenlöf providing a path to the place that goes through her. She represents herself as a happy object between the viewer and the framed place. If Stenlöf is successful in defining the situation, (Goffman, 1974, p.9) she manages to create the impression of two places in one. Either one books the same vacation as Stenlöf with Lapoint, or, one joins the virtual representation of a place. Both versions are beneficial for the influencer, but the latter can be the most important. This version strengthens their role of being a happy object, keeping up the interest of the followers. The framed place works as an enticement for keeping the viewer there, with the influencer as a happy object in the viewer's "bodily horizon" (Ahmed, 2010, p.24). That is, one orients oneself after objects, or subjects that promise happiness. Those are kept within a physical or imagined reachability. At the same time, one could argue that the influencers also, to a degree, are breaking the initial frame. That is, going to Costa Rica or New York, may most of all be a part of an agreed "make-believe" (Goffman, 1974, p.48), meaning that Stenlöf and Jorge make it seem as if it is easy to experience what they do. To just pack and leave for Costa Rica to surf for three months, or to live in one of the most expensive cities in the world – New York. It is not as easy as it seems and if the followers realize that the real physical place is not in reach for them, the influencer takes a risk of losing their shared understanding. Stenlöf and Jorge want, as the quote above gives an example of, their audiences to accept the make-believe, as it is from that the profit. But this framing of a place is vulnerable (Goffman, p.48), and in turn, so is the self-construct of the influencer as a happy object.

The power over the place-making does not lie with the influencers alone. Louise Jorge exemplifies how her content creation is impacted by what she thinks her viewers want to see. The following quote is from a vlog on YouTube in which Jorge gives her reasons as to why she filmed one thing but not another:

Hi friends, it is Saturday, the day after and I stopped filming yesterday. It was sort of a conscious decision, sort of not, because I feel that I do want some variation on my channel. I don't want it to be only luxury and flair and yesterday we had dinner, which you have seen before, at a restaurant, which you have also seen before. Then I was like: no, I can't film this. (Jorge, 2022b)

In the middle of a vlog in which she is portraying a couple of days of her life, she explains why she stopped recording the day before. With a fear of being repetitive, she deemed a restaurant visit not relevant to include in the vlog – all because she had filmed it before. Jorge is in New York, situated in this space, which to Massey (2005) can be understood as construction (p.11). But she moves in this fluidity, with her content-creating glasses on, in an endeavor to fixate and frame a place for her viewers (p.71). That is, for her vlog, she wants to portray herself and New York in a way that makes both good content and advertisements for whatever brand she collaborates with. Jorge directs what can be understood as a place-making ability towards, for example, restaurants that she has not filmed before because of a fear of creating content that is not enticing. Thus, it is clear that the framing of a place is not solely in the hands of the influencer, nor does it happen in a vacuum. This facilitating role sits in between the space that Jorge is situated in, in the physical world: New York – and the digital world. She is in the physical world, in space, taking out snippets of it in a framing of a place for a digital audience. An audience is needed for Jorge's performance of herself in a place (Goffman, 1974, p.124). The power of framing a place lies not only with the influencer herself, at least that is how Jorge seems to perceive it. She is responsive to this, which can be interpreted as a method for her to maintain her role as a happy object for her viewers (Ahmed, 2010, p.32). That is, Jorge wants to continue facilitating a place – a portrayal of New York – that entices her viewers and keeps them with her, as a following she can build her influencer career on.

I have now discussed how two influencers, Alice Stenlöf and Louise Jorge, can construct and define places in their content. They are out and about in the world, in space, and with the ability to frame their interactive content to their audience, they fixate places. These influencers are decelerating what can be connected to Stoltenberg's (2024) interpretation of a "space of flows". Their capture of space, as place, is similar to the construction of "nodes". That is, Stoltenberg, as I interpret her, works with this notion to see how discourses stemming from cities move from one node through a flow of space to then again become fixated around

another node in the digital sphere (p.12). The influencers try to construct the nodes around which they can sell themselves. The nodes work as another word for what Massey (2005) perceives as place (p.71). Places that are found and formed when the influencers are looking outwards from Sweden, where their target audience is situated. Therefore, the path that they provide to these places, even if they are portrayed as feasible to follow, is not quite so. In contrast, there are influencers in my collected material that provide a more feasible path. One example is Hanna Olvenmark, who runs the Instagram account “Portionen under tian”, the portion for under ten crowns. Olvenmark promotes affordable and sustainable food, recipes, and an overall eco-friendly lifestyle. In her place-making efforts to create, she also gazes outwards – though not as far as Costa Rica or New York, but to the Swedish woods:



Figure 13 Screenshot taken by the author. Captures an Instagram post created by Hanna Olvenmark.

In the caption to this post, she writes (translated from Swedish):

“Advertisement for Naturkompaniet. TASTY OUTDOORS FIKA: FRENCH TOAST WITH BLUEBERRIES with a storm kitchen. Now you will get a tip on a really easy, very tasty and cozy little outing. Namely, to pick blueberries and then sit down and cook a magical little sandwich. Something I actually enjoy with everyday life becoming more of a routine again is that I appreciate outings even more. It is such a welcomed break between work, pick-ups and drop-offs, cooking and laundry and they (the outings) do not have to be particularly long or

complicated to make wonders for the soul. I really like this time right now, when it is both summer and fall at the same time. In this collaboration with Naturkompaniet I want to push you all to seize just that and make a simple little tasty thing. Namely really super tasty french toast with blueberries (that you pick yourself on your outing). I mean, it is so good! The batter is plant-based and you prepare it easily at home. Cook on a stovetop kitchen and top it with blueberries and cream cheese. I was out for about an hour, got such a nice experience and I just feel like: how I love these small moments. More of that please! (Olvenmark, 2021)

Above you can see Olvenmark, out in the woods and giving her followers the tip to do the same: to go out on a little excursion and make french toast with one's self-picked blueberries. This, she writes is a: "really easy, tasty and a cozy little outing" (Olvenmark 2021). The place she portrays here is an experience she urges her followers to join in on. In one way they already do – by consuming this content, which is central for accentuating the influencers' role as a happy object (Ahmed, 2010, p.24). When Olvenmark as an influencer offers a place for her viewers, which they could reach through her – they stay with her and add to her social media following. The more feasible path makes her frame easier to believe in. So, in one way, Olvenmark wants to frame the place as something that should be consumed digitally, which strengthens her influencers' role. In another way, she constructs herself with an agenda of sustainability, as she also wants her viewers to follow her path to a sustainable lifestyle. It is her promise of happiness. She captures this in the caption to her post, as follows:

Something that I actually really appreciate is that with everyday life being a bit more routine, I find excursions in nature even more enjoyable. It is such a welcomed break between work, pick ups, drop offs, cooking and laundry and they do not have to be very long or complicated to do wonders for the soul. (...) In this collaboration with Naturkompaniet I want to push you all to seize that. (Olvenmark, 2021)

If one does follow her tip to go outside and experience the woods, one can get a break from a monotonous everyday life. Here she throws in another key into the framing (Goffman, 1974) where she moves the focus to another context, the dull everyday routine, that all followers could relate to (p.44.) By adding this keying and thus defining the consequence of her outing proposal, she tries to strengthen the value of the initial frame. Olvenmark's framing of this place continues as she adds a layer of what this outing to the forest will give you (Goffman, 1974, p.9; Massey, 2005, p.93). With this quote, yet another goal with this place-making, appears. That is, even if the path to reach this place is more feasible than for example

Stenlöf's Costa Rica or Jorge's New York – Olvenmark also has a requirement as a part of the frame (Goffman, 1974, p.9). To actually experience what she is experiencing, to fully join this place, one has to buy products from Naturkompaniet. Olvenmark wants to: “push you all to seize that”, that is, to go out in the woods and escape everyday life. She uses a storm kitchen when she makes her French toast and it is this product in particular that is advertised. This is similar to how Stenlöf points to Lapoint as the key to Costa Rica, in her case. For Olvenmark, the place-making as a whole is also what is in collaboration with Naturkompaniet, it is an advertisement that is, at a minimum, a part of why she frames a place as a part of her content creation. She surely wants to continue collaborating with this company, as it generates money for her. Therefore, she is not only asserting herself as what can be interpreted as a happy object for her viewers, so that they can reach the place she frames (Ahmed, 2010, p.32). Olvenmark is also a happy object in relation to the brand she advertises, Naturkompaniet, as the place is constructed for them as both an idea of sustainability that is sold together with them – and as a backdrop to the specific product.

5.2.2 Starting to Look Home

Stenlöf, Jorge, and Olvenmark look outwards into the world to frame places in their content. They use Costa Rica, New York City, and the Swedish woods to frame a place and themselves as influencers for their audiences. The search for places to portray in content is also a practice that is directed to the influencers' homes. Both to the idea of a home and to their actual homes. We now start to move in said direction with the help of Bianca Ingrosso, perhaps one of the most famous influencers and TV profiles in Sweden. Ingrosso does most of her influencing in Stockholm. In the following example, she is in a brand-created event space which she refers to as the “Nelly House” – a space constructed merely for having influencers come there and film their advertisements. She reflects upon a haul she will soon begin to do, which is a video format in which an influencer shows off different sponsored products that they have received from a brand (Jeffries, 2011).

Do you see where I am? Of course you do, because Nelly (a clothing brand) is branded everywhere. This video is in collaboration with Nelly and they have this Nelly House. It is like we are in L.A. (...) I have the opportunity to be here on my own and record a haul for you. (...) You see what I am sitting in (shows off her pajama dress and the pink room in which she is sitting). This will be a haul that you have never seen before. (...) If I ever become an influencer that loses it, I will have a house like this that changes themes in each room – for

my hauls. (...) Right, Nelly gives us this opportunity. (...) With code “BIANCA30” you will get thirty percent off on your purchase. (Ingrosso, 2022a)

The brand, Nelly, is the one that can be understood as handing over a frame for how this space is to be perceived, both by the influencer and by the audience (Goffman, 1974, p.9). They want the building’s different rooms to be used as backdrops in videos created by influencers. Ingrosso is there to accept and interpret this frame and deliver it further to her viewers, and meanwhile, to act within this frame – which together transforms this brand-created space into an influencer-mediated place (Massey, 2005, p.71). Acting within the frame means that Ingrosso will use it as a backdrop for her upcoming haul of products from Nelly and simultaneously promote the brand as such a nice collaborator who provides this space. She emphasizes that the haul will be one “that you have never seen before” and that “it is like we are in L.A.”. Ingrosso creates a frame of different layers, combining a relation to both Sweden and LA. When Jorge and Stenlöf were situated in the exotic that contrasts with Sweden, New York, and Costa Rica – Ingrosso picks out and highlights the same in a more artificial space. At the same time, when she frames the Nelly House as a place for her viewers, she also makes use of the quality of the space as part of the content, not only as a backdrop. The portrayal of this house as a place is that it is the perfect tool for an influencer – with qualities that Ingrosso would like to have in her own home if she ever became “an influencer that loses it”.

Ingrosso, and the other influencers in the material, look for spaces to make into places. Either, they, the places, are what is sold in themselves through a promise of happiness, (Ahmed, 2010, p.32) or they are used as a backdrop for, for example, advertising specific products. Often, the constructed place is used for both, which in all cases help the influencers to commodify themselves – to further cement their role as an influencer. In the last quote, Ingrosso reflected upon what if she made such an influencer place in her home. It seemed too far of a stretch, at least if she were to add all the qualities of the Nelly House to her own home. In a video where another haul is to be recorded, Ingrosso finds that her home cannot be used as a suitable recording space. Instead, she has taken into to a hotel:

I am at Sparrow (a hotel in Stockholm) because Philippe (her boyfriend at the time) is at home sleeping. So I am staying at a hotel in order to show you my favorite pieces from “AIMN” (Ingrosso, 2021a).

Ingrosso has to look outwards again to find the perfect space to turn into a place for content creation. A space that she deems as fitting for using as a backdrop when she shows her viewers some new clothes from the brand “AIMN”. Her own home does not cut it, as her boyfriend is there sleeping. This is an example of a fluid space that is always under construction (Massey, 2005, p.13). Her home can be interpreted as a space that has already been turned into a place of a different sort. It is a home with all that it entails. It is not a space that is as easily up for grabs to make into an influencer place, as the ideal Nelly House for example – or the hotel room at Sparrow Hotel. It is a conflict within home as a space, between home as a place and influencer-placemaking. Thus, Ingrosso takes her escape to a hotel room, which makes for a great backdrop that she can use to frame her content to her viewers (Goffman, 1974, p.9). But what if one takes the hotel qualities and brings those into one’s home? Would that make the home more catered to influencer content creation?

A lot of content creation does go on in the influencer’s homes. Stenlöf, who used her vacation in Costa Rica as a content opportunity, also films for her YouTube channel in her apartment in Stockholm. She gives her audience a tour of her home, which has been newly renovated after her exact preferences:

This was actually the bedroom before also (films her bedroom) and it is a very big room, but I made it a bit smaller – it was even bigger than now. And I made the bathroom bigger, so I took space from this room and gave it to the bathroom. This is also a dream, this room (the bedroom) is magic. I have lowered the ceiling and put led-lights around and curtains so that it looks like a hotel room. And on the other side of this room we have my closets, because I am a person with a lot of clothes. Storage is really important to keep a home clean (Stenlöf, 2021e)

Stenlöf points out that the look of a hotel room is something she has aimed to achieve in this renovating process. The hotel and its cleanliness is something Stenlöf strives to have in her home. It is even something she describes as a dream of hers – which has led her to lower her ceiling and put in LED lights in her bedroom. The hotel-like qualities are thus brought into her home, and so is her influencer place-making. Stenlöf views her home as something to make content out of. Thus, she creates a place out of her home that is not only her home but an arena for her work as an influencer. Stenlöf operationalizes her home following a hotel as

an ideal. The hotel, as we have seen with Ingrosso above – also carries the function of being a good backdrop for content. What the hotel offers from the perspective of an influencer seems to be a blank canvas for content creation. As we sense with Stenlöf and Ingrosso – it is a space that is void of interruption from others, like the boyfriend sleeping. It is also aesthetically appealing as it is less dense with interior than a home. Here, Stenflöf acts within the spatial conflict and reinstates her home as a space under construction where she strives for it to be an influencer place (Massey (2005, pp.13,68). Inspired by the qualities and uniqueness of a hotel. There almost seems to be an awareness from the influencers of the fluidity of space and the power they have to control it, to turn it into place. Construction of space as a sort of joint meeting place requires sorting what should be, or not be, present in the frame. I will now delve into what objects are put in the frame to make up a place.

5.3 Objects in Frame

As the influencers move their content creation into their homes, the home is what they produce a place out of, a place fit for being content. Thus, what goes into the place – what should or should not be in the frame – is what this chapter will discuss. In specific, it is the objects that will be in focus, the objects that are either wanted in the frame or discarded and put out of the frame. I will argue for how objects are a part of what makes up an influencer place, both a place as a backdrop and a place that is content itself. As you can see, this chapter aligns with the last chapter and will build further on the theoretical foundation with Goffman and Massey which was laid there. Though, I will further develop the of Sara Ahmed (2010) and her notion of “happy objects” (p.24) as well as Bauman’s (1998) concept of “the aesthetic of consumption”. The latter is Bauman’s way of interpreting how consumerism binds our society together. In an insecure world, consumption puts an aspect of certainty and comfort back into the consumer’s hands. Identities are in part built through consumption (p.47). The chapter starts with the example of Joakim Lundell and his home “Lundellhuset”, the Lundell house where the focal point of discussion is the objects he chooses to put in a frame. Then we come to Annika Sundin, “medveten_i_stan”, who does a great job herself of untangling the place that is her living room and the objects within. Followed by her, Zennufer becomes an example of the unwanted objects that the influencers put out of frame.

5.3.1 Putting Objects in the Frame

Joakim Lundell is a good example of an influencer who has operationalized his home as a place for content creation. He has created an Instagram account dedicated to his home which he calls “Lundellhuset”. Additionally, a lot of what he puts out on YouTube is centered around the house and there is even a TV series about its lengthy renovation project (Discovery Plus, 2024). In the following picture, we can see Lundell’s walk-in closet.

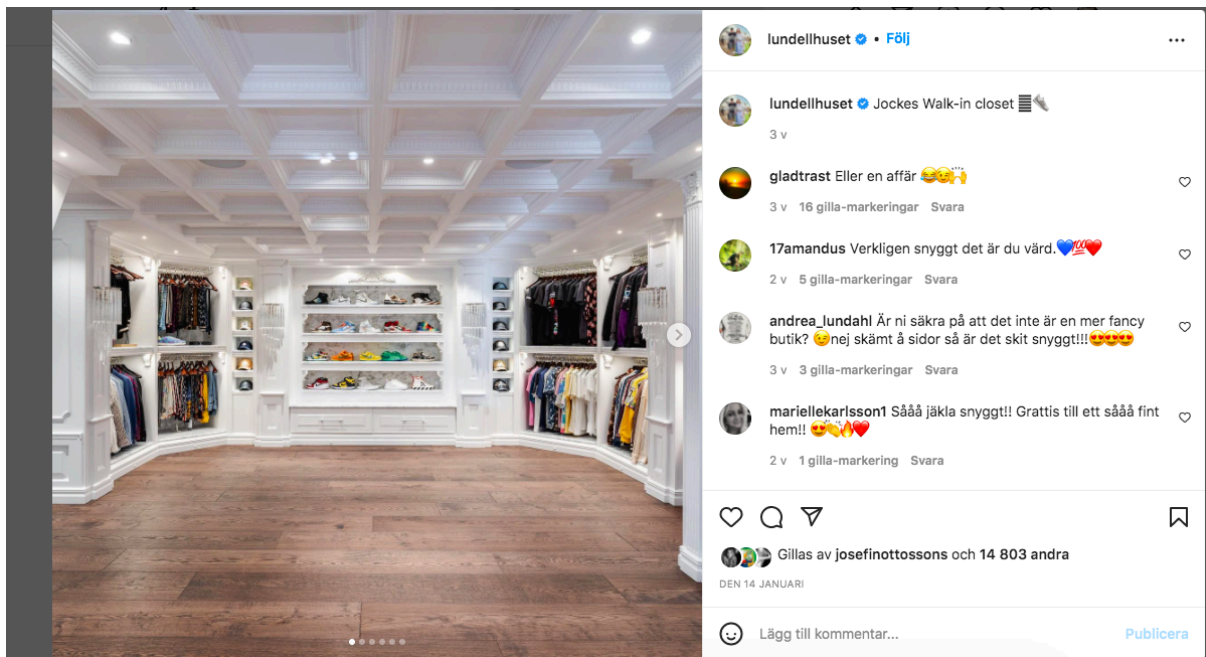


Figure 14 Screenshot taken by the author. Shows an Instagram post created by Joakim Lundell.

The closet has an impressive size and does, which a commenter to this post says, look like a “store”. This room is a well-orchestrated part of Lundell’s, as said, operationalization of his home as content. It is well-lit, with the clothes and shoes neatly presented almost as if this closet is meant to be shown, which we know from this post that it is. Lundell’s content is driven by a focus on luxury, both in the form of clothes and shoes, but also in the house itself. In a vlog on YouTube, which he has named *The big house tour part seven*, Lundell interacts with his cameraman. Together they go through the current state of the house and its renovation and Lundell uses his cameraman as a type of sounding board that confirms his reflections of what he sees:

Joakim: Now you have to have to say it is starting to look like something!

Cameraman: Actually, it is starting to look like a fucking palace!

Joakim: We will always be satisfied with that grand piano, this piece makes the whole room. (...) My room here I forgot. Here I had a painting before but now I have put up a lot of bags instead (Lundell 2022).

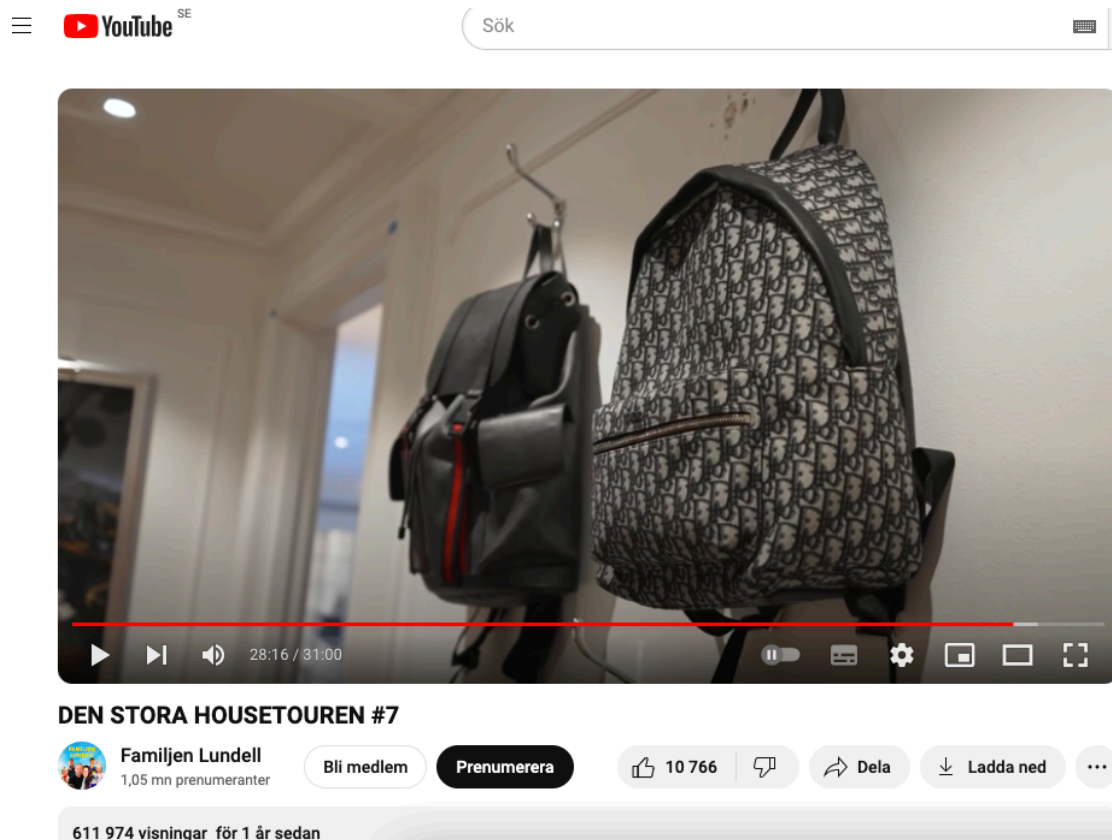


Figure 15 Screenshot taken by the author. Shows a YouTube video created by Joakim Lundell.

This conversation about Lundell's house turning into a palace is not far from the truth. It is very much a tour of a house that has the feeling of a bragging project, a way of showing off his accumulated wealth. Not only though, because the house and the process of turning it into a palace can also be interpreted as the process of turning into the ultimate backdrop of future content. Thereby, Lundell makes an effort to realize what Bianca Ingrassio's reflections of the Nelly House exemplified in the last chapter. He seems to want his house to be, when it is finished, a place that he can use to record content. Thereby, Lundell makes an effort to realize. The picture of his walk-in closet is one such example of a finished room, fit for content creation. Lundell is turning his home into what can be understood as an influencer place, which can be interpreted by Massey (2005) as a place of "uniqueness" (p.68). What is

a space very much under construction, will turn into a mediated place, something Lundell then can frame as content (Goffman, 1974, p.9). Although what is interesting here is also how Lundell very much makes use of the renovation process, it is around it that he also creates a lot of content.

As the house starts to look like a palace, which Lundell and his straight-guy cameraman emphasize – Lundell also hints to a certain focus when it comes to objects. He talks about a grand piano that he seems proud of, but more importantly, is his choice of replacing a painting on his wall with Gucci bags. They are objects that he orients himself after and which help to create his home as a place with a luxurious aura. Simultaneously, the bags are props that are in focus in his content, when Lundell picks them out to have them join him frontstage (Goffman, 1959, p.97). They are objects that he prefers on his wall rather than a painting, and they are objects that he chooses to include in the video that he has uploaded to YouTube. Perhaps the bags stand for something that he wants to portray – wealth or luxury or he just thinks they make a good decoration. They are evidently “happy objects” to Lundell (Ahmed, 2010, p.24). He orients himself after them and they help him create his palace – his influencer home. In the previous chapter, I discussed how the influencer as a person can be understood as a happy object (p.29), here I instead analyze the actual objects that the influencers relate to as happy.

Now, let us go back to Lundell’s walk-in closet to further understand how he as an influencer relates to objects in his home when he creates content. In a vlog he goes through what the closet consists of and counts its worth:

The other day I went through some receipts from clothes I had bought and came to a pretty scary revelation. That fucking hell how much money I have put on what is in my closet. Then I thought about what is the most common question I get, which is: how much is the content of your closet worth? (...) And I think we should find out today. We shall see how much my closet is worth. (Lundell, 2021)

Lundell reflects upon the sheer abundance of luxury products that his closet consists of. He seems upset about this, though, in the same breath he sees an opportunity to create content. The closet in question is the one that he has also posted on his Instagram, which you can see in the screenshot above. Even if Lundell is aware of the staggering sum his closet is worth, he

orients himself towards it as a happy object (Ahmed, 2010, p.32). Or rather, perhaps it should be deemed as what I call a happy, yet anxious object. For, Lundell sees how he can, through a portrayal of his wardrobe, create and frame content out of his house. A part of the frame is his anxious contemplation over all of his luxury products. Something that could indicate an attempt to come off as more relatable, which also makes Lundell and the place he films as content – seem more reachable. An important “keying” in his framing here, is what can be interpreted as a sort of transformative act (Goffman, 1974, p.45). Lundell wants the frame of how one should perceive him and his house to not only be an astonishment over his wealth but also an appreciation for his self-awareness.

I conceive the duality in Lundell’s relation to his objects as what I call: consumption by proxy. Lundell facilitates not only a place but also the objects – the products – within. Lundell purchased the luxury contents of his closet so that his viewers did not have to. At least that is how he portrays it: the experience of going through this abundance of luxuries is something his viewers can join in on without feeling the bittersweetness of it. This could be connected to Goffman’s (1967) “fancy-milling” – when people enjoy luxury and interact with prestigiousness (p.197). Goffman talks about actual consumption, whereas Lundell facilitates the same “thrill” through consumption by proxy.

Now I will delve into another example of how objects are used in content creation and the place-making that follows. In contrast to Lundell, this Instagram account “medveten_i_stan”, translated as “aware in the city”, run by Annika Sundin is an example of an influencer who incorporates what she seems to see as merely happy objects. The following picture shows how Sundin relates to objects in space – with a clear goal of framing a certain place:

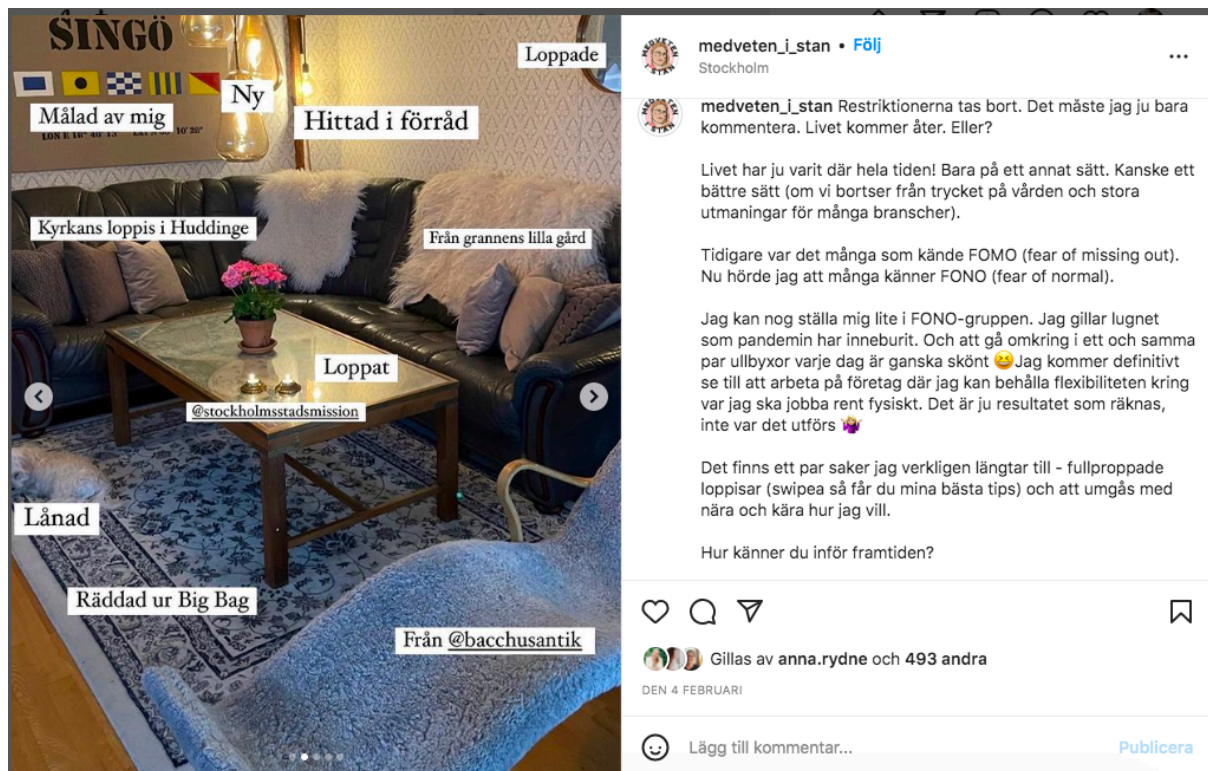


Figure 16 Screenshot taken by the author. Shows an Instagram post created by Annika Sundin.

In this post Sundin reflects upon the pandemic and the societal restrictions that followed, being removed in Sweden in the beginning of 2022. In the post, she says: “there are a few things I really long for – crammed flea markets” (Sundin, 2022). What is even more interesting for this analysis is what is portrayed in the picture, her living room, and the objects that it is made up of. On the different furniture and interior pieces, Sundin has put tags describing where they come from. For example, her sofa is from “the church’s flea market in Huddinge” and the candles on her table are from Stockholms Stadsmission. Sundin highlights how these objects are, what I interpret as happy objects for her (Ahmed, 2010, p.24). They make up the interior of her living room because of their second-hand origin, the furniture therefore are happy objects for Sundin since they align with her sustainable identity. That which seemingly steers the construction of her home, but also plays a major part in her social media influencership. Sundin here creates content where she emphasizes the objects and their sustainability – a process that can be interpreted as a deconstruction of the “throwntogetherness” of her living room. A place made up of a co-existence of materialities and her opinions of an ideal consumption (Massey, 2005, p.140; Löfgren, 2014, p.81) – which she now breaks apart and explains. Sundin disentangles her living room and its objects, to show how it all came to be. Thus, this deconstruction of her room is how she wants it to be

perceived, it is a way to control the framing of this content and how she wants it to be interacted with (Goffman, 1974, p.345). The sofa from a flea market in Huddinge is there because Sundin has put it there for its sustainability qualities, which she is very upfront about. This is a highly curated place and an effort to frame content that should inspire her viewers to perceive second-hand furniture as happy objects (Ahmed, 2010, p.32). She prompts her followers to not only consume by proxy but to consume sustainably in reality as well.

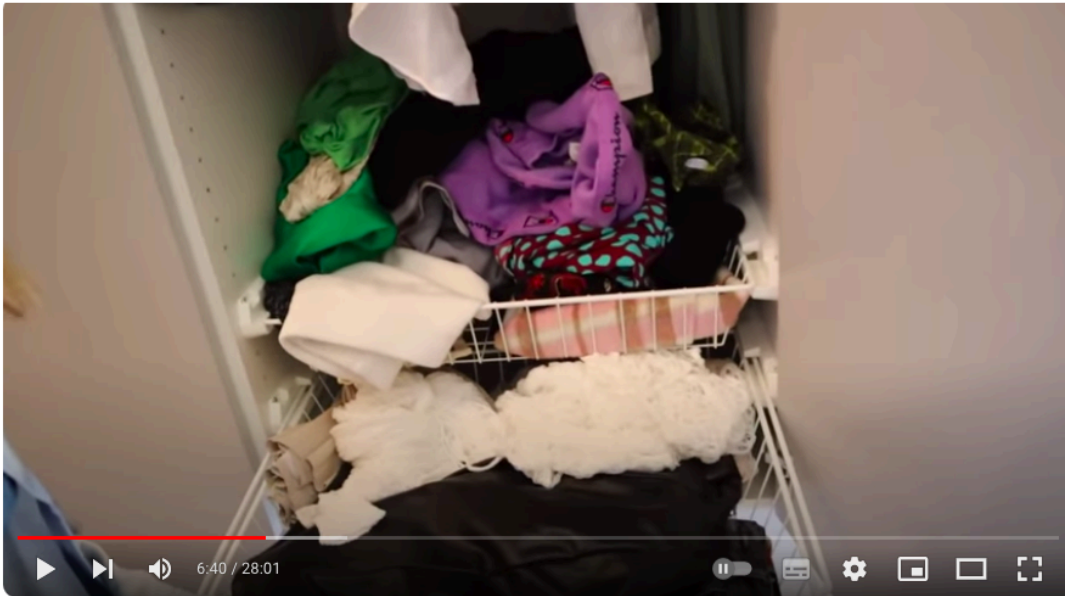
5.3.2 The Unwanted Objects

I have now discussed how influencers such as Joakim Lundell and Annika Sundin create a place for content in their homes by using objects. The materialities that have been in place-making action for them, I have interpreted as happy objects, though with a bitter aftertaste in the case of Lundell. The following discussion will focus on Jennifer Andersson, better known as “Zenufer”, who exemplifies an influencer's relation to objects that are not only happy but unwanted for the framing of a place. That is, the following example shows how materialities such as clothes that were once displayed products in a haul, for example, can also become an overflow and messiness. Zenufer has uploaded a vlog with the title *STÖRSTA GARDEROBRENSNINGEN NÅGONSIN* or “the biggest closet clean-out ever”. In this video she is organizing her closet and reflects upon the experience of having an excess of clothes and various stuff as an influencer:

I am seriously nervous because you do not know what it looks like. My closet is... I mean, I feel bad everyday when I get dressed because I have no organization at all. I can not organize, I don't know... It is not easy to access my clothes and I am afraid that even if we clean stuff out, it won't be any easier. I think we should start with showing what my closet looks like. Do not judge, or, by all means, do. I do it. I love clothes, I get clothes with collaborations and everything. Also, I have such a big interest in clothes but do not, at all, take care of them. I mean, I just throw them in. NO, I don't dare to show it. (Andersson, 2022)

Zenufer expresses much concern over the number of clothes she has and what effect that has on her closet. She is an influencer who is focused on clothes and visual appearance, which leads to a lot of products. Either, as Zenufer describes, one receives, for example, clothes through collaborations, which is an essential part of the work. Or the influencers buy clothes on their own. In both cases, these products are influencer objects, if you will, that take up

space in the influencers' lives. In this lies a part of the spatial conflict. When the influencer creates content, it often frames a place of happiness for its audience, as I have discussed earlier (Massey, 2005, p.71; Ahmed, 2010). For this place to exist, it has to be filled with something, an integral part of that is products, just as Zennufer describes. She mediates consumption either by probing her viewers to buy the products which she advertises, or to consume by proxy, through her as an influencer. To do so, Zennufer has to consume the products or be gifted them, in the first place. This can be understood with Zygmunt Bauman (1998) and his notion of where society as a whole is heading. He means that what binds our existence as humans together with the structure of society is our ability to consume. Our identities as individuals rely on the same ability, so much so that they too are consumable. This societal driving force, Bauman calls the "aesthetic of consumption" (p.47). Influencers, such as Zennufer, seemingly play an integral part in maintaining Bauman's interpretation of our contemporary societal paradigm. They facilitate consumption, and they do so by creating content in which they frame places for their viewers. To do that, they also have to consume. The influencer objects, the clothes that fill up a closet, for example, can be understood as happy objects in this content-creating process (Ahmed, 2010, p.32). They are objects that the influencer wants and needs: to work, to influence, and to capitalize on.



The screenshot shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top left is the YouTube logo. A search bar with the text "Sök" is visible. The video content shows a close-up of a closet filled with various items of clothing, including a green top, a purple top, and a white top. The video player controls at the bottom show a progress bar at 6:40 / 28:01, a play button, a volume icon, a mute button, a settings gear, a full screen button, and a share button. Below the video player, the title "STÖRSTA GARDEROB RENSNINGEN NÅGONSIN" is displayed. The channel name "ZENNUFER" is shown with a profile picture and "76 300 prenumeranter". A "Prenumerera" button is present. To the right, there are icons for likes (247), comments, share ("Dela"), download ("Ladda ned"), and a menu icon.

Figure 17 Screenshot taken by the author. Shows a YouTube video created by Jennifer Andersson.

Although, playing this key part in the aesthetic of consumption leads to an abundance of objects. They start to make, for example, Zennufer's home cluttered and unclean – the clothes or products that are otherwise happy and useful objects become unwanted and anxious. They become objects that Zennufer wants to orient herself away from (Ahmed, 2010, p.32). As the picture above shows, her closet is overflowing with once-happy clothes – pieces that she either bought herself or received from brands to both use in her private life or for content creation. Now, instead, they are a hindrance for her, as the sheer amount of things become hard to handle. As Ahmed (2010) puts it, an unhappy object is an “obstacle (...) being the thing that gets in the way” (p.32). That is, they get in the way of the path to happiness, as in this case the clutter and mess makes it hard for Zennufer to create content. Connecting back to Ingrosso and Stenlöf, who both related to and used hotels as both a content-creating place and an ideal for how a home should look – Zennufer experiences not that. Also, these objects carry over the workspace into a leisure space. The overflowing closet, for example, is a result, as Zennufer explains it, of her work which affects her home. This intrusion shows how the influencers have a hard time escaping the front stage. Even when they are “offstage” (Goffman, 1959, pp.97,120), in their homes, their work is hard to escape. And even if they want to use their home as an arena for influencing, the objects stand in the way of an optimal content creation place (Massey 2005, p.71). Therefore the influencer tries to sort out unwanted objects from their place (Ahmed, 2010, p.32). As Zennufer puts it in her vlog: “today is cleaning day”.

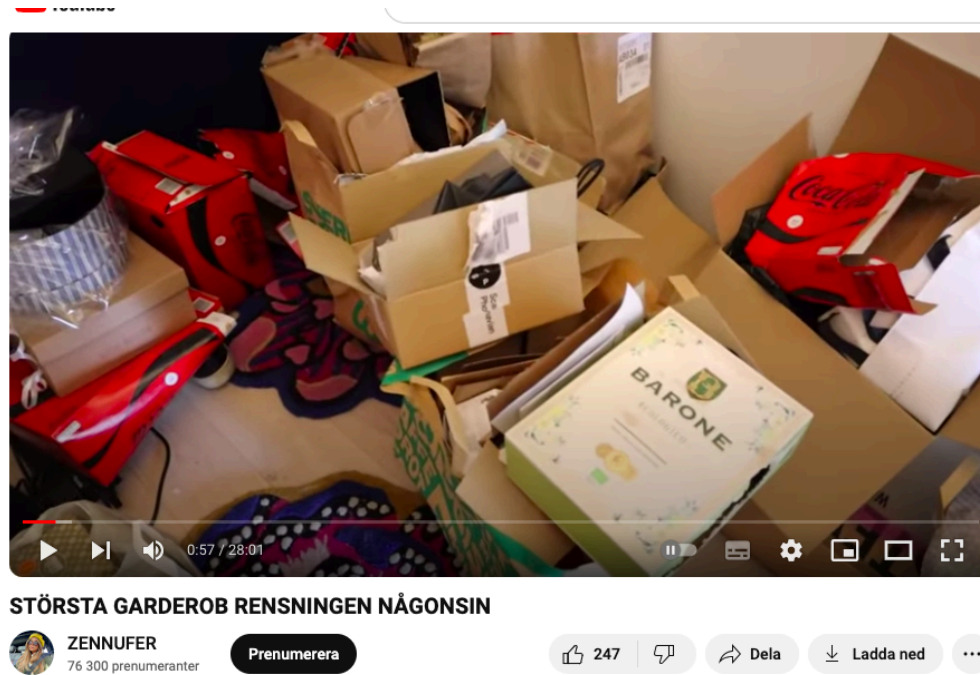


Figure 18 Screenshot taken by the author. Shows a YouTube video created by Jennifer Andersson.

On the other hand, these objects, products such as clothes that the influencers buy or get from advertisers, sort of travel in a circle. By this, I mean that they are happy objects as material that are the focal point in content such as hauls or unpacking videos. Then when they have played out their role they just take up space, the same goes for those objects that never make it to the spotlight. At this stage, they are superfluous and unwanted, together also with the additional objects that the products generate, such as cardboard. This stage you can see in the picture with the overflowing closet and the picture above, showcasing cardboard all over Zennufer's floor. But what she does with these unwanted objects, is to turn them back into being wanted, happy objects (Ahmed, 2010, p.32) That is, they are still a materialization of abundance and uncleanliness, but Zennufer intentionally moves the frontstage of the content creation (Goffman, 1959, p.97). She puts the unwanted objects into the frame again as she constructs a sort of meta content. She makes use of the mess and collaborates with a secondhand company: Plick, which this whole video is an advertisement for. Here the before unwanted objects thus become wanted again and the circle is complete.

This chapter has discussed what happens when three influencers operationalize their own homes as content – when they turn their homes into influencer places. I analyze how they relate to and sort in and out objects which are constituents of the constructed content. I

theorize in interaction with what these influencers say and how the objects are related to as happy, happy yet a bit anxious, unwanted. The materialities, on another level, clothes for example, are used as tools for constructing a certain influencer place, a luxurious palace for example. They are also used as props when the influencer portrays the place that they have constructed and at some points, the objects are commodified themselves as they are what is up for sale in a certain advertisement, for example. I have also shown how the relationship to the objects is circular, they travel from being needed, happy objects, to being unwanted and parts of a messy home, to then be contextualized and happy again. This is when, for example, Zennufer creates content in collaboration with a second-hand brand when she cleans out her overflowing closet.

5.4 The Influencer in Frame

This third chapter of the thesis will discuss the subject in frame, the influencer. The focal point is how the influencers in the material portray themselves in relation to the place that is created. While the last chapter dealt with how the influencers navigate the influencer place they have constructed with objects, this chapter analyzes how they navigate it with an in relation to themselves. They are a part of the frame. The entree point to this analysis is the practice of vlogging, which Louise Jorge and Bianca Ingrosso help us get into. I move from a discussion on how the influencers gaze at the world in search of potential places fit for content creation – to how, for example, Jorge and Ingrosso are intertwined with this practice that has an inherent spatial conflict. I take help from Goffman's (1959) “frontstage” and “backstage” to interpret how the influencers position themselves within this (p.97). His concept of “facade” also helps the analysis in deciphering the influencers’ portrayal of themselves in connection to the frame (p.28). This chapter then also goes into a problematization of Bauman’s (1998) “aesthetic of consumption”, which the influencers in the material can be seen as mediators of (p.47). Because, for example, Joakim Lundell’s portrayal of himself as an influencer also includes a relation to what Bauman can help us interpret as “work ethic” (pp.32-33).

5.4.1 Hard to Escape Content

I have analyzed how influencers create and make use of spatiality in their content creation. I discuss how they gaze out into the world, to exotic beaches and skyscrapers, but also to their own homes in what I have interpreted as the practice of framing places for their social media

audiences. But together with a place, the content also consists of a portrayal of the influencers themselves. As I touched upon in the first chapter, all content creation is a subjective act, what one sees on a social media page is something that has been filtered by the creator of that content – in this case the influencer. The analysis that now follows will be of material in which influencers reflect upon their content creation, specifically vlogs, and themselves in vlogs. Thus opening up to their role in the portrayal of places and how that act in turn affects the portrayal of themselves. In a vlog, Bianca Ingrosso is in Stockholm, home from a trip to Ibiza. In this video, she talks about the video that is being created on the material that she captured during the trip. It is a reflection of a vlog in a vlog.

So then, the Ibiza-vlog will be out late and that I apologize for, I have no idea how that video turned out. We took so many pictures and were so much... At the same time we were not in the moment because we took so many pictures. (...) It was absolutely no vacation, just taking pictures, which is a job for us. So, while we tried to be in the moment when we did not take pictures, the vlog was forgotten. (Ingrosso, 2021b)

Ingrosso captures the hardships of moving between work as a content creator and having a vacation. More specifically, expresses what can be interpreted as a difficulty in being somewhere without turning it into content. Ibiza, a vacation spot for most, was a place of work – a place for content – for Ingrosso. The vlog was a work activity and a tool for framing a place in her content, the result of which I have focused upon in the earlier chapters. But what Ingrosso emphasizes is also how the vlog was deprioritized for taking pictures, also a way of working as an influencer. The actual vacation came at the last step in this hierarchy of Ibiza activities. Ingrosso apologizes for the vlog thus being late and almost dismisses the option of actually having time off. This showcases how hard it is for the influencer to not constantly be working. The last chapter showed how their content creation – which includes their place-making – followed them into their homes (Massey, 2005, p.71). Now, Ingrosso shows us how this work as an influencer is hard to ever escape – it follows her around. She seems always ready to operationalize the power to frame a place for content, which means that it is rare for the influencer to be offstage or even backstage (Goffman, 1959, p.101). That is, moving back, and relaxing while creating content, being backstage, seems hard. Moving outside of the frame that is the constructed role of being an influencer – seems even harder. I have described this role as being a happy object, facilitating the promise of a place for the ones who view the influencers' content (Ahmed, 2010, p.32). To fulfill this role as an

influencer, Ingrosso for example, has to have her place-making glasses on when she moves around in space so that she can turn, for example, Ibiza into content, and underline her role as an influencer. It is a continuous maintenance of the framing of places and the framing of herself – intertwined (Goffman, 1974, p.9).

In contrast to the last quote, Ingrosso reflects upon when she does have time off from work, in another video on YouTube:

I really have not been in vlog-mode. I barely know how to vlog anymore because I have not vlogged for like two weeks. I mean, I am the world's worst influencer really. I never take any pictures, I never make reels, I never do tiktoks, I never do IGTV:s. I am so, excuse my language, fucking bad at being a content-inspiring influencer. (Ingrosso, 2021c)

She explains how she has not been very active, according to her standards. As she says, she has not been in “vlog-mode”, which can be interpreted as her being offstage (Goffman, 1959, p.101). But, being offstage and out of the framing process which content creation is, seems to mean to her that she is not fulfilling her role as an influencer. Ingrosso, in a bit of a rant, takes as far as saying she is “the world’s worst influencer”. What she has trouble maintaining is her “facade” as an influencer. Specifically, when she is not actively creating content, she is not successfully maintaining her role as an influencer. Facade is a notion from Goffman (1959) that I interpret as one’s portrayal of oneself in a social performance (p.28). The facade in this context is a part of the frame that the influencers in this study hand to their audience through digital content (Goffman, 1974, p.9). Namely, how they want them to perceive a place (Massey, 2005, p.71) – and how they want to be perceived as influencers together with said place. The facade of the influencer is therefore intertwined with place-making, which Ingrosso exemplifies here. If she turns off her place-making, that is – if she does not vlog or produce content in other ways – there is nothing to upload to her social media channels, in turn, there is nothing to be framed. And without a basis for a frame, it is hard for her to maintain the facade of being a good influencer. To keep that up, she seems to think she has to be active, create content, and work hard.

In a video in which Louise Jorge explains to her audience why she has taken a break from vlogging over Christmas – she also expresses how much she likes to film herself and whatever she does:

I was thinking: Oh, I will vlog on Christmas Eve, oh I will do that. But then I felt like, no I have vlogged so much as of late. (...) And I vlog so much in New York so I felt like I deserved a vacation. You are just like: you have done so much (ironically). But I have missed vlogging so unbelievably much. I feel totally handicapped without vlogging. (Jorge 2022a)

Without vlogging, recording herself, and uploading that material to YouTube, Louise Jorge expresses that she feels “handicapped”. Which in itself seems like a somewhat extreme statement – though it symbolizes something interesting. It seems like Jorge misses being frontstage and putting her facade of being an influencer out there, online (Goffman, 1959, pp. 97, 28). She is so used to filming herself and where she is situated, a practice through which she cements her role as an influencer. The facade she constructs exists through the medium of content – it is in interaction with her viewers she defines herself as an influencer.

Furthermore, being active and creating content is the only way she can maintain her perceived role as a happy object for her viewers. Without any new content, there is nothing that she can promise to her viewers (Ahmed, 2010, p.32). Therefore, she has to keep uploading to keep being relevant from the perspective of drawing more people into her social media profile. The similarities to what Ingrosso expressed in the last two quotes are striking. The essence of how they view vlogging as a practice that needs to be kept up with is the same. However, it differs with Jorge emphasizing how much she misses it all when she takes a break. This is perhaps a bit of a cynical analysis, nonetheless, it could be what Jorge’s feeling of loss is a symptom of. She stresses how having a vacation is not what she prefers – what she likes the most is to create content, to work as an influencer.

The influencers of this study are what can be seen as happy objects for the aesthetic of consumption (Ahmed, 2010, p.32; Bauman, 1998, p.47). What they practice: the content they create and the places they frame, make them mediators of the digital economy. They advertise products or facilitate what I call consumption by proxy. This I have discussed before, and the facade that the influencers construct for themselves as a part of the frame they put out online is in line with this role. They seem aware of their part in the aesthetic of consumption.

Although, the facade also includes another narrative of themselves (Goffman, 1959, p.28). Both Jorge and Ingrosso hinted at this above, where Ingrosso for example underlined how much she worked when she was supposed to be on vacation and how bad of an influencer she was when taking a break from creating content. She relates not perhaps to the “work ethic”

that Bauman (1998) presents (p.33), but rather a work ethic. That is, Ingrosso does not put herself together with those in the industrial society who were permeated with work and working hard in a more Lutheran sense. Instead, it is a working ethic that consists of what can be interpreted as dreaming big and working hard to achieve one's goals.

5.4.2 A Facade of Hard Work to a Luxurious Place

Joakim Lundell ties into a similar story when he constructs his facade. His content creation and in it, how he portrays himself and where he is situated – is often about emphasizing how hard he works. In the following quote, he explains why how he came to the position he is a today: where he can purchase luxury products for his extravagant house, or his dream car:

I did get very proud over being able to do it.. going there and NOW being able to buy whichever car I want. Because it shows that hard work pays off. And you get like this, well, almost a bit teary eyed. So like this: the journey from a staircase to being able to choose the car I want now. That really shows that if you work hard all the time and never give up...
(Lundell, 2021b).

Lundell underlines how proud he is of being able to buy this luxurious car, a green Lamborghini. Tying back to the last chapter, this car is a happy object for him. Not only as a prop used in his content creation – but also as a sign of his wealth and achievement. It is both an object which helps him construct and portray a place for his audience and it helps him construct his facade. The latter he points towards here as he proclaims that this car is the result of hard work and commitment. The facade Lundell constructs is therefore also something that relates to a work ethic. Being an influencer, for him, is work and it is through hard work that he has achieved success and, in turn, a luxurious lifestyle. Meanwhile, as a part of that work – he creates content with a frame that pushes consumption and consequently maintains his part in and the aesthetic of consumption as a whole (Bauman, 1998, pp.33,47). The content is a portrayal of a place where green Lamborghinis are obtainable merely from hard work. Yet, Lundell's framing here is a bit contradictory. With Goffman (1974) this can be interpreted as a frame where the keying is both make-believe and not (p.48). In one breath Lundell pushes a work ethic as the means towards luxury, and in another, he says: "I actually could have bought this car even earlier, but now I had to work hard for years instead", indicating that the key to these privileges is to consume an application called "Anyfin". The video which the quote above derives from, is an advertisement with that company and the

service they provide is said to help persons with their private economy. In this example, Lundell constructs his facade with the help of a luxury object. In turn, this facade and its work ethic qualities help him frame the place of luxury which he continuously tries to portray in his content. Him pointing out this work ethic is him explaining the luxury.

Lundell seems to seek affirmation for being a hard-working influencer. He emphasizes that to be an influencer is to work. One can imagine influencers as being a group who have come further than most in society's process of changing into something fully ruled by the aesthetic of consumption. That is what is to come if one believes Bauman (1998). They play an integral role in a fluid consumption economy, yet they strive to fixate their influencer existence, their facade, as work (Goffman, 1959, p.28). They relate to an audience that, most likely, are people with relatively more traditional working lives. The influencers in this study try to control the fluidity of how they could be perceived. And much of what they do, as I have discussed, is an attempt to control the fluidity of space.

Ingrosso, as I have shown above, portrays herself as a hardworking influencer. Although, contrastingly, she also portrays herself as someone who just uploads whatever to her social media accounts:

I am the kind of person that just uploads things to Instagram and I don't think it through. And I won't be someone that thinks too much cause fuck, how boring to follow those who are predictable and not just like blablabla (Ingrosso, 2022b).

This reflection of hers can be interpreted as a move to be perceived by those who view her as carefree and relatable. It can also be translated as an expression for maintaining power. More specifically the power over how she moves in space. The image of being carefree when uploading could mean a freer everyday life for her, an existence without having to orient oneself after potential objects or spaces that could make great content (Ahmed, 2010, p.32; Massey, 2010, p.71). A process that I have previously emphasized is essential for maintaining the work as an influencer and the part they play in the aesthetic of consumption (Bauman, 1998). However, Ingrosso does not escape this, nor do any of the influencers I have analyzed. They all fall into the format and what Ingrosso uploads as her content is highly thought out to both her viewers and whatever she advertises. Also, in contrast to what I have seen in Ingrosso's content before, she strays away from what can be understood as her being a part of

a work ethic (Bauman, 1998, p.47). She does not define her doings as something structured and work-like, which she has done before, but rather as something happening on the fly. This reasoning is further developed in another video by her, where she states:

I really am the kind of entrepreneur that does not analyze that much or follow structures and make a bunch excel files and a bunch of calculations (...) I rather follow my gut feeling and I have actually, if I say so myself, a pretty good gut feeling when it comes to sales, marketing and running a company (Ingrosso, 2021c).

Her work, as an influencer and owner of the makeup company CAIA, which she also refers to here, is something she is successful at, she says. Not because of working with a clear and structured analysis, for example, but because of her gut feeling. This can be interpreted as a way of lowering the threshold of what is needed to become successful, to enter the luxury place that Ingrosso frames, and to achieve the happiness that she has reached, which she also promises (Ahmed, 2010, p.29). One just has to go with their gut feeling and as she says in another video “take some steps, go in a direction and things will happen” (Ingrosso, 2021d). Even if this perhaps contrasts her, and Lundell’s, earlier constructing of their facade as hard working, it is still what can be interpreted as a type of work ethic. It is about dreaming big and manifesting – a work ethic that takes its shape within the aesthetic of consumption, or perhaps joins together with it. Ingrosso and the other influencers' success and maintenance of a luxurious lifestyle are built upon their role as mediators of the aesthetic of consumption (Bauman, 1998). They frame places that are put in their content, content that is permeated by advertisements following a certain format (Goffman, 1974, p.9; Massey, 2005, p.71). Ingrosso is no exception:

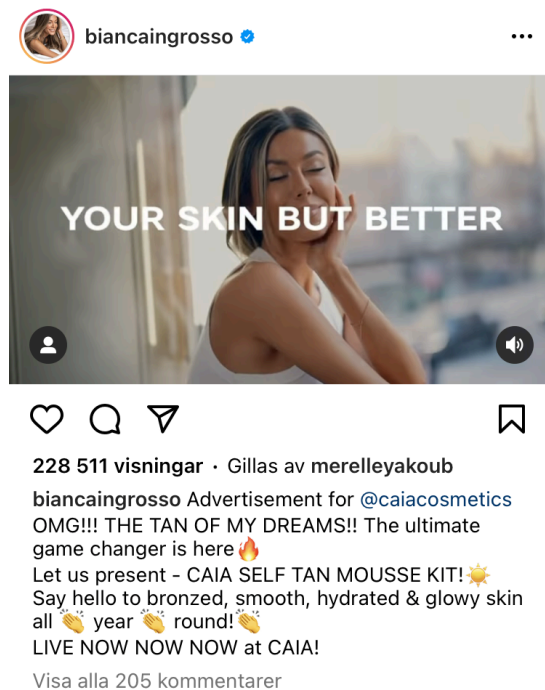


Figure 19 Screenshot taken by the author. Captures an Instagram post created by Bianca Ingrosso.

In this post on Instagram, she does an advertisement for the company she started: CAIA. In the forefront is also herself, in a glowy picture, looking satisfied with the overlining text: “YOUR SKIN BUT BETTER”. The caption to the picture is filled with superlatives and emojis emphasizing really how fantastic Ingrosso portrays this new product, which is a “self tan mousse kit” that gives Ingrosso the “tan of her dreams”. This post is a stark contrast to the framing of herself as carefree and spontaneous when it comes to what she uploads to her social media. Instead, this post seems to be thoroughly structured and actively targeted towards her thought audience. She has put herself on the front stage as she is the focal point of the picture (Goffman, 1959, p.97). Thus, the facade she constructs of herself is intertwined with the place that she frames (1959, p.28).

Hanna Olvenmark, someone who also portrays herself as a sustainable influencer, not only frames places as sustainable content, which I have discussed before – but also reflects upon advertising itself. In a video uploaded as a live stream on Instagram, she says the following:

I am not against advertisement, I just think we should be very careful with what advertising we do. We, being influencers. I do think so. But I do not take responsibility for what other

influencers do. One should also know that if one consumes any influencers' material, then one is probably a part of that business model (Olvenmark, 2021).

Here she underlines the importance of doing careful advertising, something she indicates that she is doing. Olvenmark has figured before in this text, as she created content around the experience of making French toast outdoors. There she advertised a storm kitchen by Naturkompaniet. Here, she develops her facade as an aware influencer, connected with issues of sustainability, for example. Even if she has an agenda, she is clear about how her work is deeply connected to and dependent on advertisements. Yet, she shows how framing places of sustainability is a possibility as she performs and suggests a lifestyle that is in stark contrast to that of, for example, Alice Stenlöf or Bianca Ingrosso. All the while, what she does is not that different from what the others do. Her practice is also what can be interpreted as a framed interaction with her viewers, she assembles the same tool. And as Olvenmark herself highlights – she and the other influencers are part of a system. A structure, a “business model” as she says, that is made up of what can be understood as a dynamic between those who consume influencer material, the influencers themselves, and the brands they advertise for – all joined together by, and made possible through cyberspace (Massey, 2005, p.94).

That is – the digital sphere in which all of what these actors create, end up. Through it, it is sent out to their audiences, be it to the ones they have intended, including the brands they collaborate with, or to others more unknown. Meanwhile, all of the influencer content exists in this digital in-between, the spatial message that they have created – a framed place – is received through the use of cyberspace. Because it, as Massey (2005) puts it, allows “instantaneous contact at a distance.” (p.93). However, the influencers’ message is not only meant to be received, and thus the frame of a place accepted – which in itself is not obvious when the subjective and curated meets the open cyberspace – but also to be carried out on the other side by the audience. This leads me to the next chapter.

5.5 Stretching the Frame

In the previous chapter, I have discussed how influencers, in different ways, use spatiality in their content creation. I have analyzed how they go out in the world to capture and portray places for their audiences – and how they move their content creation into their homes, changing that place into something different. Then I have problematized what happens in

those homes in relation to objects, which objects fit into a content place and which do not. In the chapter before this, I directed the analytical lens toward how the influencers portray themselves in connection to their spatial content creation. To help understand the empirical data, I have throughout this analysis been helped by Massey's notion of spatiality, Ahmed's phenomenological view on objects, Bauman and his effort to capture the direction of Western society, and Goffman and his tools for understanding how human interaction takes place. This last chapter will focus on a part of influencers' explicit advertisements – their discount codes.

In the middle of a vlog in which Alice Stenlöf talks about how she is going to spend the winter in Costa Rica, a video that has been up for analysis earlier in this text – she reminds her audience that she is doing an advertisement for the clothing brand Chiquelle:

This video is also in collaboration with none other than Chiquelle. Before I wear this bikini for the rest of the winter, I thought I should show you some of the news from Chiquelle that they have got in. And with my code “ALICE25” you will get a 25% discount which applies to everything except products on sale and beauty products and the code is active for five days. (Stenlöf, 2021a)

Together with showcasing some of their pieces, a bikini for example, she hands her audience a discount code consisting of her name and the percentage one gets if one uses the code – “ALICE25”. In the content, influencers, as I have previously discussed, offer a frame for how a place could be perceived (Goffman, 1974, p.9; Massey 2005, p.71). The framing happens in an interaction with an audience out there on the other end of cyberspace. This study focuses on the influencer's side of things. This frame is not something fixed, rather, it is under constant negotiation (Goffman, 1974, p.345). The parties of the negotiation, the influencers, the audience, including the brands invested in the influencing, are not fixed either. Additionally, the thing that is being framed, content portraying a place, is not at all something fixated as space is always an ongoing process, according to Massey (2005, p.13). What the influencers do is that they try to fixate space into a place of set qualities and definitions and they do so by framing how they perceive this place should be interacted with. I have shown you how this process transpires before, but with the discount codes, such as the one Stenlöf presents us with above – we see how the framing of place moves into cyberspace. How the influencers try to stretch the frame.

Anyway, this video is in collaboration with Björn Borg. (...) Partly because I love Björn Borg, I love what they stand for and I love their workout clothes which I am going to show you. Björn Borg have such a healthy picture of what they want to promote when it comes to training. It is not about being the strongest or fittest but about feeling as good as possible and being your healthiest you. And that is really how it is. There is so much about training that is more than moving. It is such a key and has been such a key to health for me. At some points more of a salvation even. (...) ALICE20 gives you a twenty percent discount on the pieces I will show you. (Stenlöf, 2022)

Here, Stenlöf does an advertisement for the Swedish clothing brand Björn Borg, named after a famous tennis player. She relates to her audience as if they were there with her. She talks to them, trying on clothes, and suggests to them that they should purchase the same. At the same time, Stenlöf showers Björn Borg and their clothing pieces with love. As she says: “I love Björn Borg, I love what they stand for and I love their workout clothes”. This explicit advertisement then ended with her discount code “ALICE20”. This is a clear example of how influencers want to stretch the frame. By this, I mean that Stenlöf, in this case, wants to ensure that one important thing carries over to her audience through her content. That is the discount code, which she wants her audience to use for her gain. Through it, they get a discount on Björn Borg’s clothes, and she gets paid by the brand. The aim of the frame for Stenlöf here is not only for her audience to watch her video and thus enter into the frame that she presents, but also for them to act according to the frame. To, as Goffman (1959) puts it “control the conduct of the others” (p.343).

Now, use the code BIANCA20, then you’ll have twenty percent off for a whole week, use this! AIMN very rarely has discounts. So, this is.. It’s once in a lifetime. I really call myself AIMN-girl (...) And they have such nice things, I mean, you see how nice I look. I never get as many compliments as when I wear clothes from AIMN. (Ingrosso, 2022c)

Ingrosso also stresses her audience to use a discount code in a video in which she does a haul of clothes from the brand AIMN. She emphasizes how rare it is for this brand to have discounts and thus, how she offers her audience a “once in a lifetime” type of deal. It is clear how she wants her audience to use the code and thereby follow the frame she lays forward. These explicit discount advertisement pieces of influencer content are always a part of something bigger, very often so – a portrayal of whatever the influencer does and wherever they are situated. The discount code can therefore be seen as the seal to the frame, the last

stamp before the message in the influencer content is sent out into cyberspace. It is an effort to control the frame in an uncontrolled environment. Ingrosso furthers the process by identifying with the brand, as she names herself “AIMN-girl”. She constructs the facade of herself as interlinked with the brand (Goffman, 1959, p.28). Using her code “BIANCA20” is not only a way of getting a discount but also a way to follow her path: to become an “AIMN-girl”. At least, it seems, that is what Ingrosso hopes to do to keep her control over her framed content, when the framing process is no longer in her hands (Goffman, 1974, p. 345).

Even influencers that create content permeated with a more sustainable agenda resort to using discount codes as a way to try and make sure their frame comes across as they want to. However, here it is not the most trustworthy content.



Figure 20 Screenshot taken by the author. Shows an Instagram post created by Flora Wiström.

Author and influencer Flora Wiström here makes a perfect example of where the sustainable identity coincides with the influencing format. She advertises in a post on Instagram, the electric scooter company TIER. Together with a picture in which she leans on a scooter of the brand, with a happy grin – she also writes an advertisement piece in the caption. There she plays on the meaning of the word “tier” which is animal in German. Wiström suggests that we all should move like animals to protect our environment – a good way to start is to choose an electrical vehicle, for example, TIER’s electric scooters. The post is then ended with a

discount code. Wiström frames an idealistic place in which we all would be kinder to the environment. To attain this, she suggests to her followers that they should be consumers of TIER. Contradictory, together with other electrical scooter companies, these scooters have been under scrutiny in Sweden as a vehicle taking over the public space, cluttering it, and making it less inclusive. Wiström's post could be interpreted as framing consisting of make-believe keyings (Goffman, 1974, p.48). The frame of what she portrays is a suggestion that is seemingly easy to pick apart. It is not a very successful make-believe performance, one could say it is almost more of what Goffman (1974) calls "fabrication" – Wiström creates a false belief of what is going on (p.83). The somewhat idealistic post with her happily leaning on the scooter, is easy to see through. Instead of the discount code being an aid in the framing of the content, it here instead clashes with Wiström's message and makes it less trustworthy. It points out how vulnerable the frame is and instead of giving Wiström further control, it helps to "break the frame" (Goffman, 1974, p.83). Even though it does not fit with her overall agenda, Wiström does an advertisement and tries to make it hold together. She, too, wants to keep control over her content as it reaches a virtual landscape where it is not clear how it will be received. To capitalize on her influencers' ship, her content needs to follow this certain format. It is a part of the process of standardization that Van Driel and Dumitrica (2021) have shown to be occurring in influencer content (p.77). Her content falls in line with a pattern of commodification – the use of discount codes. Perhaps, therefore, it is instead with cyberspace where the power over the content lies as it is to that she has to adapt when creating content (Massey, 2005, p.93). Moreover, the power lies with the brands that hand out the discount codes and through that, pay the influencers – and with the audiences holding it all together.

It is a structure in which the influencers sit in the middle. They mediate places and themselves with the help of cyberspace to their audience, for their brands. They try to fixate a place, all the while they exist in both a physical space that is fluid, and in a digital space that is the same. The discount code, consisting of the name of the influencer and the amount of discount the person who uses the code gets – is all of this boiled down. It is the concretization of the purchase of content, bought both by the viewers and the brands. Through the code, the influencer can put their last effort of framing a place in, before their content is taken over by cyberspace.

6. Conclusion and Applicability

This study has aimed to investigate how Swedish influencers use and relate to spatiality in their digital content creation. The following questions have been asked to achieve the aim: *How* do these influencers portray places – where they are situated both physically and digitally – for their audiences? *What* role do objects play in the influencer’s portrayal of places? That is, what objects are used in the staging of a place in the influencer content, and what things are strayed away from? *How* do influencers navigate their role as an influencer creating digital content out of space?

This study shows that when the influencers in the material create their content, they do make use of where they are situated. These Swedish influencers use, navigate in, and commodify space and they do so by trying to construct places. Their content consists of the portrayal of places – efforts to fixate spaces with certain qualities. I have discussed how this process can be interpreted as a framing practice. Influencers move around in the world, operationalizing space and trying to turn it into place for their gain. They portray places in ways that help them think will help them gain traction online, they form what I call influencer places. For instance, Alice Stenlöf uses Costa Rica and a well-known perception of how great of a vacation spot it is as a means to facilitate her role as an influencer. The place that is presented is used as an argument for, in part the influencers themselves, and in part whatever they advertise for. They try to cement their role as a happy object for their audiences and those who pay them directly – various brands. Through mediating a place of certain happy qualities, the influencer thereby also facilitates a path to happiness for their audiences. It is often stressed how they too should experience what, for example, Stenlöf experiences in Costa Rica, or what Louise Jorge lives out in New York City.

Furthermore, I conclude how the same process of creating content by using a portrayal of place is directed towards the influencers’ own homes. First I explore how Bianca Ingrosso reflects on an artificial influencer space as an ideal place for content creation. Something she ponders upon as an ideal that could be transferred into her home. However, she does not act upon that – instead, she finds hotels to have the qualities she needs. Stenlöf then exemplifies how the hotel's cleanliness is something she strives after in her own home, for it to be optimal as an arena for content creation. This research then shows what happens in the homes of influencers when they are turned into content. Here I find the sorting of objects to be integral,

some objects the influencers want and need to be able to portray the place they want – to uphold the frame. One example is the luxury bags Joakim Lundell has hung up on his wall, another is the second-hand furniture in Annika Sundin's living room. They are happy objects, through which they can create content. Other objects are unwanted and they are the overflowing closet, or the waste cardboard on the floor from unpackaged clothes, for example. However, an important conclusion is how even such objects, unwanted at first, can become happy. They travel in a circle where it is up to the influencer and their ability to frame that decides the outcome.

Another important finding is that I conceptualize consumption by proxy. The places and the objects within that are portrayed to an audience, seem to be perceived by the influencers as reachable through them. That is, one can consume a luxury object or travel to Costa Rica, without actually doing so. Instead, the influencers want their audience to watch them do the consuming.

There is also an evident focus on the influencers themselves as they present different places. This study shows how they express hardships with coming to terms with both handling being in the content creation and in turn the portrayal of places and how they present themselves in the same content. For, these efforts to frame places are subjective. The subject also takes place in the content. In vlogs, for example, the influencers reflect upon how difficult it can be to so often be recorded. It is a construction of a facade that has a lot to do with always being active, in fear of losing the role as a happy object. The facade also includes a relationship to hard work. The analysis reveals how these influencers in their content either conceive of their roles as hard work or the places they can portray as results of hard work.

To end, the dissection of the discount code shows all of the influencers' spatial content creation boiled down. It shows how the influencers try to stretch the framing of their content – how they wish it to be perceived – out into the digital landscape. These influencers work in a dual context and try to maintain a role of connecting both – the physical with the digital. This research shows how they think they can control the portrayal of themselves and a place to an audience that is out there, on the other end of the digital landscape. The discount codes are to be perceived as this last stamp put on the message in the influencer content before it is sent out into cyberspace. They are a key component in the influencers' practice of commodifying space.

6.1 Applicability

Applicability-wise, this study is a deconstruction of influencer work. It emphasizes just how much work is behind the content one sees on different social media platforms. It gives agency to influencers and meat to their bones in relation to a contemporary debate on how little effort it is to be an influencer. The knowledge produced here applies to both influencers themselves if they need help in arguing for the construct of their work. It offers a critical lens for those, like me, who watch influencer content in their everyday lives. It explains how influencers make use of spatiality in their content, thus giving the reader of this study help in how to, in the future, think of the multitudes of influencer content they may come into contact with in the future. Likewise, the study is also something that brands that are looking into influencer marketing can make use of. It offers a basis for the mechanics that go on within influencer content creation, something that could be of great help to those who want to use this mechanic for advertisements.

This study is to be seen as a collected slice of an always ongoing process. It is written as a way to stop and think about a process of change that we are in the middle of. By analyzing through an ethnological lens, I have been able to deconstruct and think critically of this contemporary phenomenon which is soon to be history. It is an effort to catch an ever-evolving process to further help the understanding of it in the future, as well as now.

Furthermore, *Framing Happiness* is an academic contribution not only in what it analyzes, which I have given a conclusion of above, but also with the method through which this analysis has come about. This research is to be considered an effort to test the limits of what digital ethnography as a method can offer to cultural analysis. I conclude that it has been a fruitful strategy for this study – to root itself in the digital and to see how these influencers conceive of the digital sphere, which in many ways is their working place.

6.2 Further Research

However, incorporating a bricolage of ethnographic methods could be the next step to take in researching the spatiality use of influencers. I would help with a broadening of perspectives, as qualitative interviews, for example, with the influencers themselves could add a lot of what goes on behind the scenes. Also, gathering the voices from the audience, which in this study is something the influencers relate to, but a perspective we really cannot get to because of the

nature of the material – would be very interesting to add. Thus, one could see if the portrayals that the influencers present and frame to their audiences are accepted by those on the other end of the social media platforms.

Additionally, venturing further into the perspective of sustainable influencers would be possible in future research. That is, to develop the discussion of their place in a highly consumption-oriented space and to explore how, for example, narratives of contributing to a circular economy are constructed while at the same time maintaining the role of an influencer.

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