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## Spatial and Temporal Modalities of Everyday Integration

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# SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL MODALITIES OF *everyday integration*

*A presentation of theory, method  
and eight instructive case-studies  
regarding the premises for  
everyday integration within and  
across the urban centers of the  
Oresund Region.*



DEN EUROPÆISKE  
UNION  
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Regionaludvikling



Interreg IVA  
ØRESUND – KATTEGAT – SKAGERRAK



LUNDS  
UNIVERSITET



DET HUMANISTISKE  
FAKULTET  
KØBENHAVNS UNIVERSITET



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*"Temporal and Spatial Modalities of Everyday Integration"*

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## PREFACE

***This publication is the outcome of a research seminar in the spring of 2011. The seminar functioned as a kick-off event for a joint exploration and consequent publication on the subject of spatial and temporal dimensions of everyday integration in the Oresund Region.***

The participants of the seminar were all selected graduate students in the program Master of Applied Cultural Analysis, who had previously been engaged in field studies relating to the topic.

Professors Mark Vacher and Tom O'Dell each gave a presentation on how various forms of everyday routines and notions of space are generated, and how these can be related to the question of integration. This, in turn, led to a plenary debate among the participants and the planning of a joint publication.

Professor Tom O'Dell and the participating students have subsequently composed individual articles based on their previous fieldwork, while Professor Mark Vacher gives a general theoretical introduction to the content of the publication.

Both seminar and publication are carried out in the context of the project Culture-driven Innovation. The project is sponsored by Interreg IVA, which is focused on encouraging and supporting cross-border cooperation in the southwestern part of Scandinavia (cf. [www.interreg-oks.eu](http://www.interreg-oks.eu)).







# INTRODUCTION: DIMENSIONS OF EVERYDAY LIFE AND EVERYDAY INTEGRATION

By Mark Ucher

*This publication, based on studies of everyday life in the Öresund region, presents some models that can contribute to improving everyday integration internally in the region, as well as minimizing the mental and physical barriers that exist between the Swedish and Danish sides of the sound. Each paper is a cultural analysis of everyday life, because this approach, combined with ethnographic observations and interviews, is able to reveal the central processes that comprise the conditions and possibilities for improving everyday integration.*

The first step in an investigation of this type is to define how we understand the concept of everyday. In a culture analytical perspective, the everyday can be defined as the practices that bind society and private life to one another. According to the Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad, these take the form of a comprehensive organization that "is about hours of employment, hours in school and the distribution of the work load as seen from the perspective of the home and family." With that, she means that everyday life is about "a cross section of society

based on the individual, the family, and the home." (Gullestad, 1989. 175)

Everyday integration, in other words, is about establishing a link between private and public life. This link does not come of itself, but includes people, systems, landscapes and objects that all make themselves available to one another and coordinate with each other in such a way that, through attitude and actions, they allow themselves to be "sewn together" into an integrated whole.



Integration is, in this way, the result of a long chain of collaborative practices and conditions that must be in place and must function. If they are not, differences, instead of similarities, become prominent, and localities and people are perceived (both positively and negatively) as being distant from one another and/or noticeably different.

If we want to understand which barriers and borders obstruct everyday integration in the Oresund region, it is a good idea to look more closely at what is required for a functional everyday life.

In a culture analytical perspective, everyday life is understood to be subjected to five fundamental conditions, namely those of time, space, movement, value and sociality. These conditions and their internal organization are crucial in order for everyday integration to take place.

## TIME

Firstly, the everyday is subject to a number of temporal premises. This is partly an expression of the organization of time (work hours, school hours, leisure time), but this organization also occurs withing a framework of limited and repetitive temporal units. Thus, we speak of the everyday. This is not to say that the everyday can only occur during the daylight hours. For some, everyday life is lived at night, but people with night shifts or late commuting times also have an everyday that is demarcated by a beginning and an end, followed by another everyday, a day off,

a vacation, retirement, unemployment or illness.

## SPACE

Secondly, the everyday is spatially demarcated. It often begins and ends at the same place, namely, the home. Meanwhile, for the majority of people (nursing homes can be an exception), the everyday requires that they move outside of the home. It means that the everyday is characterized by a journey through a landscape comprised of a number of more or less predefined localities. These localities can be more or less institutionalized (work, school, leisure time), more or less ritualized and routined (an alarm clock can be set to ring at six o'clock for the everyday and shut off on the weekend, one eats everyday food, has lunch breaks or recess, wears everyday clothes, buys everyday goods in a nearby supermarket), and, finally, more or less spread out (home can be in Sweden and work in Denmark, or the opposite).

## MOVEMENT

Thirdly, an everyday that is characterized by a journey includes movement between localities. This movement often requires an extensive apparatus of transportation and infrastructure which is crucial for the coordination and execution of the everyday. Likewise, it is a prerequisite that everyday localities function as destinations. This means they must be accessible, which includes not only that they are open or closed, but also that they must be coordinated in relation to the abstract



plan of timetables and transportation. If this is not possible, the localities cannot be incorporated into an everyday, which means that either the everyday cannot function or the locality must be excluded.

## **VALUE**

Fourth, the everyday is value-laden. An everyday, for example, which does not incorporate central localities is considered impoverished in comparison with an everyday full of many possibilities. Thus, the localities of the everyday form a value-laden hierarchy where some localities are placed higher than and influence. For example, children often attend a preschool because the parents must work, while the opposite is not necessarily the case. Furthermore, the everyday is also, as a whole, a value-laden concept. One can, in some cases, need to get away from the everyday, or, in others, either miss or seek the security of having an everyday. Some everyday is better than others, and some individuals' everyday is better than others. The characteristics of a good everyday are dependent on the individual, who is occupied with connecting society to his or her respective private spheres. The nature of the everyday and everyday integration are dependent on who these people are, their priorities, their resources and which localities they relate to.

## **SOCIALITY**

Fifthly, the everyday is social and culturally rooted. For most of the residents of Oresund, the everyday unfolds in a social landscape, incorporating relationships

to other people who are significant to its execution. That the everyday is social means that it includes elements of competition and conflict as well as exchange and division of labor. The way these conditions are expressed and managed are reflected in cultural forms and appearances. These can be imbedded in stable structures, such as national stereotypes, or be fleeting and have a more temporary nature. Depending on how these forms are understood and applied, they can constitute both inclusive and exclusive factors in Oresund residents' everyday lives.

The everyday can be thus summarized: people's relationship to existing places, and the connection and coordination of these. Everyday life and everyday integration are seen in light of dynamic and fluid conditions that constantly change. Therefore, the localities presented in the following texts do not represent the whole picture of everyday life in the Oresund region. The demographics change, people change, and neither localities nor their value are necessarily permanent.

The strategy for this publication is to present models based on eight empirical cases, that, in different ways, illustrate the correlation between everyday life and everyday integration in the Oresund region. These cases are cultural analyses developed on the basis of ethnographic field work, which means that they depict concrete examples of everyday life and real challenges associated with the region's everyday integration.







# 8 CASE STUDIES ON:

spatiality,

centrality

and everyday

integration in

the oresund

region







# MOBILITY AND THE STITCHING TOGETHER OF EVERYDAY LIFE EXPERIENCES IN THE ÖRESUND REGION

By Tom O'Dell

*The following chapter investigates the question of what it means to actually live the region, and to obtain a sense of being at home in it. In order to do this, it focuses upon the phenomenon of mobility, and the potential it might have in facilitating or impeding a sense of being at home and integrated into the Oresund Region.*

## MOBILITY AND THE STITCHING TOGETHER OF A REGION

The Oresund Bridge has worked in many ways as the symbol par excellence of the region: a grand materialized symbol of connection and unification. But more than this, it is a metonym of mobility: the means by which Swedes and Danes are able to more easily move back and forth between one national territory and the other. From the beginning, it was through this mobility that politicians and regional planners hoped that a new sense of regional belonging and unification would arise. Mobility, in this context, was presumed to involve the facilitated movement of capital, knowledge, and corporate alliances, but just as importantly, the flexible movement of the workforce. Without the morning and evening commute, and the movement of people back and forth through the region

on a daily basis that it implied, there could never be any true form of regional integration.

But having said this, we should perhaps briefly reflect upon some of the common meanings that are attributed to the word “integration” in relation to discussions about the Oresund Region. Speak of integration in relation to transnational processes of physical mobility, and one rapidly finds oneself embroiled in debates over the incorporation of immigrant groups into new labor markets, national settings, and local communities. Integration implies a movement from one cultural setting to another in which strings from the original point of departure are successively released and abandoned in favor of new connections and relations in a new “home” environment. In other words, at





the very least, integration implies a form of physical mobility leading from one cultural space to another and ideally concluding with some degree of embeddedness in the cultural space of destination. Integration involves, in other words, both the dynamics of mobility and the ultimate more static stability of anchorage in place.

In the case of the Oresund Region, the mobility involved in the processes of integration at hand has always been framed much less in terms of unidirectionality (and ultimately embeddedment), and more in terms of a stitching movement, in which the physical act of moving back and forth across the sound- through one space and back to another - has been presumed to bear with it the power of unification. The valorization of this form of stitching mobility is precipitated by a discourse of regional politics in which the region was constructed, not as a competitor to either the Danish or Swedish national project, but as

a complement to them. As the Oresund Bridge's consortium explains, "Fordelene ved en dynamisk Øresundsregion ville ikke

blot komme regionen, men hele Danmark och Sverige til gode" ("The advantages of a dynamic Oresund region will not only benefit the region, but thw whole of Denmark and Sweden.") (Øresundsbron og Regionen. 2009:4). As a result, regional integration has been framed less in terms of the processes of assimilation and localization that are expected of immigrants (particularly those coming from outside of the European Union) and more in terms of the routinized movement of Swedes and Danes. Mobility, when viewed from this perspective, was understood to be the basis for integration and a source of its stability and strength.

The movement of most Swedes and Danes in the region stands, in this sense, in stark contrast to the situation faced by non EU-immigrants. Rhythms of perpetual movement taken by non EU-immigrants are more often than not framed as a threat to the sanctity of national culture and an impending source of its contamination from without. Here we need to bear in mind that the moralization of mobility occurs very differently when applied to different



groups in society (cf. O'Dell 2004). The transnational movement of regional citizens – in other places I have referred to these people as Regionauts (O'Dell 2003 & 2010) and for reasons of simplicity, let me maintain this language) – is often (but not always) framed in positive terms, as a basis for integration. They stand for the movement of “kulturell stoft” (cultural material) within the region. And while the transnational mobility of non-EU migrants is all too often framed in terms of the corruption of a national culture, the Regionauts are draped in the political hope that they will function as the equivalent of diligent workers moving about within the colony and building it up in the process.

To this end, a review of the statistics over the number of passages made over the sound in the past decade would, at first glance, seem to indicate that some form of regional cohesion or compression was occurring. Whereas only approximately 3,000 people commuted over the sound to work in 2000, that number had risen to over 19,000 by 2009 (Øresundsbron og Regionen. 2009:3). Of these commuters, approximately sixty percent opted to use the train while the remaining forty percent traveled by car. But the numbers here were not evenly divided across the sound. Lower housing prices on the Scanian side of the sound had attracted a great number of Danes who worked in the Copenhagen area over to Sweden, and the strong service sector in Denmark had, in turn, functioned as an attractive labor market for Swedes looking for jobs. The stronger value of the Danish crown in relation to the Swedish crown only worked

to intensify the effects of these tendencies by the end of 2009. As a result, 94% of those making the commute across the sound at the time lived in Scania.

This was the economic and demographic context in which commuting took place in the Øresund Region. It was a context that would provide the commute with its particular rhythm of movement and cultural energy, which commuters would have to adapt to and learn to handle. But it was a context which would also present special challenges for the providers of commuter rail services in the region, as the movement of the Regionauts through the region was not evenly spread out over the course of the day and tended to be focused upon the movement into Copenhagen in the morning and back across the sound in the evening. Here was a world of small details and contradictions that commuters encountered on a daily basis, and which inhibited the development of a sense of seamless flow through the region: “Why do the coffee machines on the train accept Danish coins, but not Swedish?” “Why can't I use my Skånekort on the Copenhagen subways?” or “Why does the train stand still for ten minutes in the Malmö station...can it possibly take so long to detach a car or two?”

## **LUND – MALMÖ – COPENHAGEN: ALL ABOARD!**

But for the Regionauts, the commute to and from work was far from limited to the period of time spent on trains. As the number of people actually moving over the



sound increased from 3,000 in 2000 to 19,000 in 2009, a wealth of experience and knowledge about the nature of this particular transnational journey was accumulated. Like NASA scientists, most Regionauts worked to fine tune their journeys, perfect them, and eliminate as many bugs from them as possible. People learned that there was no need to get up and 6:00 AM when 6:08 worked just fine. It became increasingly possible to judge one's own schedule by the activities of neighbors: if my neighbor were getting his morning paper, then it was time for me to be clearing the breakfast dishes from the table. A glitch in the morning routine, caused by a child unwilling to get dressed according to plan or a misplaced house key, did not require a glance at a watch for people to understand where they stood in relation to a train that would be arriving at a local station in twenty minutes. It became increasingly possible to understand and feel this relationship intuitively. Clocks and watches increasingly offered fewer and fewer surprises, and worked instead to confirm what a well trained Regionaut already felt.

It was time to pick-up the pace. An endless multitude of morning strategies could be fine tuned in this way. But despite the breadth of possibilities, satellite imaging, had it been used, would have revealed a remarkable degree of conformity in the flow of people moving towards the train station from day to day. Involved here were thousands of disparate and individual projects, but their place in the morning flow of bodies followed a well established rhythm

that was ritualistically reproduced every working day.

This being said, however, it is important to remember that the Regionauts' relationship to their journeys were not permanently etched in stone, and neither were the characteristics of those journeys. A Regionaut traveling on the 8:30 train from Lund, at the tail end of rush hour on September 8, 2009, would, for example, face railway cars full of standing people all the way to Copenhagen. But at Østerport, a station lying just a few stops after the central station in the Danish capital, that same Regionaut would find herself/himself on a nearly empty train on its way north to Helsingør. And, without explanation, the language spoken by the conductor would shift from Swedish to Danish. The only thing remaining of the cultural energy of the first leg of the journey would be the heaps of abandoned Swedish newspapers, paper coffee mugs and sandwich wrapping paper. Rather than sitting on a commuter train whisking a transnational workforce to their places of employment, one now found oneself on the equivalent of a slow moving rural milk train, chugging its way through one village after the other, with elderly passengers and a handful of teenagers on their way to school lethargically stepping on and off the train here and there. The train may not have actually altered speed at all, but the ride felt slower and less tense.

The cultural energy of the trip changes, in other words, as the railway cars fill with passengers and successively begin to empty again. The meaning ascribed to



the journey shifts in a similar manner as it progresses. At issue here is something much more than the mere physical movement of people. What the Oresund train provides us with is the opportunity to see the manner in which the Regionauts attribute meaning to their mobility. And, here, it's important to distinguish between the concept of movement and that of mobility. As Tim Cresswell has pointed out, movement can be understood as a form of motion (akin to abstract space) still lacking meaning and specific content. But "mobility is the dynamic equivalent of place" (Cresswell 2006:3). That is, to the same extent that place is understood to be a bounded and defined space that has meaning in relation to other points and spaces, mobility is movement that is meaningful both in itself and in relation to other (potential and real) trajectories. Phrased slightly differently, we might be able to understand mobility as elongated meaningful motion in ever sequencing and interlinked places.

If we are to return to the question of integration, this understanding of mobility may help us shed new light onto the dynamics and potential of regional integration. As I argued earlier, integration in the Oresund region has been implicitly defined as a mobile stitching together of regional points. But if we understand mobility to be a dynamics of place, then integration in the region might better be understood as a stitching of Regionautic movement into meaningful and defined flows. Integration, in other words, is not simply an issue of the linkage of people and places, but, perhaps just as importantly (or more

importantly in this case), of the binding of people to structures of mobility - to defined and meaningful paths of interlinked places.

A problem here is that we are highly accustomed to discussing the Oresund Region in terms of its geographic territory, and a great deal of effort has been expended in defining and communicating its physical boundaries. To an all too large extent, this has been a cartographic project invoking aerial images, maps, and discussions of national borders. In this context, it has been all too tempting to fixate discussions of what it means to live in the region to analyses of events and practices occurring in local settings, or to specific places, such as the bridge. However, this might not be the best way to understand the significance many Regionauts attach to the region. The group we are focusing upon here is, after all, composed of people on the move. And although places (such as homes and businesses) are important to them, their interface with the region is intimately bound to the daily routines of commuting which they engage in on a daily basis. The question, then, is what types of understandings of everyday life are attached to - and generated out of - the mobility of the commute, and how can we better understand what routinized mobility might mean in regards to a sense of being.

Routines are rather important to the functioning of daily life. To the extent that they are invisible, they help provide a structure to daily life. We're not always





happy with all of our routines, and we may struggle to change them, or to develop new routines, but once they have become naturalized, they have the uncanny ability to function as embodied forms of knowledge, constantly informing us, below the level of consciousness, over the state of our lives and the constitution of our self-identities. In a very strong sense, we are at home not only in a place where we hang our hats, but very much so, in a corporeal understanding of who we are, via our daily routines.

### **EMBODIED EXPERIENCE AND COMMUTING ROUTINES**

Commuting - particularly rail commuting - is interesting in this context because it is a rather paradoxical cultural phenomenon. On the one hand, it has a reputation of symbolizing one of the drabest areas of everyday life. It is a daily routine which people are thought to engage

in grudgingly and out of necessity: the epitome of all that is boring in daily life. But when viewed from a slightly different perspective, commuting rapidly takes the form of a highly emotionally laden sphere of daily activity. Ask people about commuting, and one rapidly enters a world in which they are well prepared to speak quite emotionally about their activities in terms of such feelings as appreciation, frustration, fear, anger, and joy. But why the emotion, and how can we understand this in relation to commuting routines and the Regionauts' understanding of their place in the region?

An important source of the emotional energy being produced by the commute originates, I shall argue, in competing understandings of what the commute is. In Southern Sweden, the local commuter rail services are handled by two separate companies: Skånetrafiken operating solely on the Swedish side of the sound, and DSB First which manages the



Oresund's trains that move back and forth over the bridge. Both companies clearly view themselves as service providers; however, their relationship to commuters is somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, drawing upon a language with its roots in the hospitality industry, DSB First refers to its conductors as "train hosts", and Skånetrafiken, working with a similar hospitality based mind-set, speaks of the need to improve comfort and meet the needs of commuters - indeed they even go so far as to discuss the feasibility of opening daycare facilities at some of the larger train stations in the region, and thereby not only move commuters through the region, but even provide shelter for their youngest family members (Frågor och svar om framtidens kollektivtrafik 2009:19).

But when pressed on the shortage of seats on rush hour commutes, local rail service providers have been quick to point out that their only obligation is to transport people from one point to another. Seen from this perspective, the basic service they offer is a space of transportation - a standing space. But commuters do not simply exist in space, as I am arguing here, they create the space around them through their mobile practices. As Gil argues:

*Being in space means to establish diverse relationships with the things that surround our bodies. Each set of relations is determined by the action of the body that accompanies an investment of desires in a particular being or particular object. Between the body (and the organs in use) and the things is established a connection that immediately affects the*

*form and space of the body; between the one and the other a privileged spatial relation emerges that defines the space.. (Quoted in Thrift 2000:40).*

We come, in short, to understand the space around us as our body and senses reach out into the surrounding world and come into relation with it. And we come to understand these relationships through our "embodied knowledge" of them as we move about.

In relation to the mobility of the commute, embodied knowledge can be understood to include, at least in part, the intangible and highly ephemeral sense of how the commute is going - the gut feeling that things are proceeding as usual, or, alternatively, that something has gone astray. This is a sense of the commute that is not limited to the mind and realm of logic, but which may well first emanate up through the stomach and body.

Consequently, as the speed of any given Oresund train slows, the pitch of the wheels on the rails sinks, the vibrations in the carriages seats become increasingly muted, and long before any announcement of a delay is made, the stomach-mind has already provided commuters with the intuitive knowledge (or suspicion) that something has gone astray, and proceeded to orient the commuter's mind towards that which shall come. The facility of intuition, which is all too poorly understood as a form of knowledge, is highly important here, resonating out of this corporeal orientation, as the stomach-mind paves the way for



a cognitive understanding of the changing nature of the routine of commuting. Feelings such as frustration, anger, apathy, indifference, and apprehension, which Regionauts readily give expression to in interviews and letters-to-the-editor, are not logical cognitive responses made by them to their changing circumstances. They are the affect of the stomach-mind that informs consciousness in the half second before any logical response can be established, and which then has the potential to echo on into the future. It is the early warning system that lets commuting Regionauts know that an intruder has disrupted the order of the established routines in which they otherwise feel at home.

## **RESPECT ME, OR GET OUT OF MY HOME**

So why is this important? A central problem facing commuter service providers in their relationship to commuters in the Öresund Region is their total misunderstanding of the relationship to one another. DSB First provides its employees with courses to help them become better train hosts, and Skånetrafiken occasionally reacts to commuter complaints by reminding them that, when all is said and done, it is Skånetrafiken who has the right to define the nature and quality of the services they will provide on their trains – treating Regionauts as unruly and unappreciative guests.

Regionauts, for their part, are at home in their daily routines of mobility and the repetitive, ritualized practices that provide

their days with a sense of order and meaning. These are the people who complain loudest when their routines are infringed upon by delays, lack of seats, over full train cars, obnoxious fellow passengers, etc. Skånetrafiken and DSB First may own the trains and carriages which the Regionauts' bodies occupy, but the commuter service provider is not the host in this relationship. They are the guests. Commuters, such as the Regionauts, are not visiting trains on a daily basis. They are hosting Skånetrafiken in their lives and through the practices of their lives. They are willing to meet Skånetrafiken, DSB First and their employees hospitably, as long as those actors respect the rhythm of their home routines, but they draw the line when these service providers disrupt the rhythmic flow of routines to which they are corporeally anchored, and that shape their embodied knowledge and embodied perceptions of being at home.

## **A MODEL OF INTEGRATION THAT GOES BEYOND SPACE AND PLACE**

Integration as a product of Mobility and Affect

Routines, in short, are important here, I have argued, because they work to create and communicate the feeling of homeness and stability in us as we travel. In light of this, there exists a need for regional planners and commuter service providers to better appreciate the degree to which commuters in the Öresund Region can be understood as Regionauts, not at home, perhaps, as much in the physical



geography that is called the Oresund Region, as in the embodied practices of daily routines of mobility – at home in the region in neither the heart nor the head but in the stomach-mind of ex-foliated space. Their integration into this home is not free of problems, however. The space of mobility, of which they are part, is both a world of possibilities which they have chosen to explore, as well as a source of periodic frustration, laced with a sense that they are being infringed upon by Others, whom they cannot so easily extricate from their lives as travelers in the region. This may not be the form of integration regional planners have hoped for, but it is here in the realm of mobility that we find an important emotional bond between the people of the region and the region itself. But it is a bond which challenges us to rethink the manner in which competing notions and senses of ownership are understood (both mentally and corporeally) when submitted to cultural dynamics of mobility. When being at home means being on the move, new tensions arise over the rights of ownership that are tied to the space of the Regionauts' mobility – to one of the primary sources of their sense of being at home in the region. Indeed, it may very well bring about the need for politicians and commuter service providers to rethink aspects of regional infrastructure, in terms of co-ownership, that acknowledge both the rules of ownership bound to market logic and those emanating out of the stomach-minds of the region. The question, otherwise, is, can regional integration ever be achieved in any meaningful way for the



citizens of the region, if they perpetually feel that one of the most important avenues of regional integration is an intrusive foreigner in their lives?

## NOTES

For examples of discussing the Oresund Region in terms of its geographic territory and physical boundaries, see *Our New Region. Vår nya region. Vores nye region.* Copenhagen and Malmö, 1999, or the discussions in , Per Olof Berg, "Dreaming up a Region? Strategic Management as Invocation", in Per Olof Berg, Anders Linde-Laursen and Orvar Löfgren (eds.), *Invoking a Transnational Metropolis*, Lund,



2000 and Tom O'Dell "Traversing the Transnational" in Per Olof Berg, Anders Linde-Laursen and Orvar Löfgren (eds.), *Invoking a Transnational Metropolis*, Lund, 2000.

*For examples of commuters emotional relation to their travels, see: [http://sydsvenskan.se/skane/article199243ece?context\\_print](http://sydsvenskan.se/skane/article199243ece?context_print)*

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# READING FREE NEWSPAPERS - A NARRATIVE OF EVERYDAY INTEGRATION IN THE ORESUND REGION

By Ivan Korolov

## BOARDING THE TRAIN

Every time I board the train from Copenhagen to Malmö I quickly browse the cart for a newspaper to read. Only on rare occasions am I not able to find one, and, usually, the sheer vastness of the selection of different newspapers startles me. There must be at least ten different daily publications, not only from the two countries, each on their side of the sound, but from a number of different cities along the train's route. The assortment can leave an unseasoned commuter stupefied. Papers from Malmö, Lund, Copenhagen, Helsingborg, Landskrona and other cities share the same space on tables and seats on the train, and end up in the same bins, if not in the homes of commuters around the region. But what does it all mean?

The aim of this article is to explore how free newspapers aboard the Oresund train have a direct impact on our perception of the Oresund region, as well as the cultural processes that unfold in the everyday lives of its inhabitants. For this, a research project on free newspapers will be employed to serve as a concrete case

study to illustrate how enigmatic concepts, such as cultural process, are facilitated in everyday life, and how they actualize under our very noses. Additionally, I hope to show that an analysis of free newspapers can help illustrate the cultural morphology of this ever-changing border region.

## NEWSPAPERS AS SIGNS OF DIFFERENCE

When the newspaper is situated in its country or city of origin, it stands out as little as a single grain of sand on a mile-long beach - it is simply drowned out by the humdrum of other routine sights and experiences that surround it. But something different happened the first time I boarded the train from Lund to Malmö and found a Danish Metro on the seat next to me. Suddenly it became a sign, an almost personally directed injunction, that compelled me to name it a Danish newspaper which, at least in that instant, presented itself to me as the symbol of the entire Danish nation. I held it in my hands and thought - Denmark.



The same occurred in the reverse direction. Taking the Øresundståg from Copenhagen Central station to Østerport during my first days in the city, I came across a newspaper labelled City Kristianstad. In the setting of the bustling Danish capitol, it revealed itself to me as a different sign, which, at that precise moment, I perceived as inferring the very essence of a relatively small Swedish town. It is these experiences, as a newcomer to the region, that impelled me to study how other "regionauts" related to these newspapers.

## NEWSPAPERS AS SIGNS OF UNITY

In contrast to the personal experiences outlined above, the insights that came out of the research project illustrated that it was not different situational qualities that newspapers acquire, depending on what side of the sound they are on, that dominated peoples' relations to them. Instead, it was a revelation about how a prolonged exposure to these papers can change an individual's perception of them from signs of difference to signs of unity. This was observed through a process by which newspapers become objects of suspended centrality while in motion between various centers in the region. Suspended centrality refers to the state in which the newspapers exist aboard the Oresund train when it is in transit. It is a condition during which they are, at once, in

no place in the region and in every place in the region, where there are stops or junctions that enable the potential for the

newspaper to embark and disembark the train.

Suspended centrality is a situation whereby the whole array of different Danish and Swedish newspapers is unified in one simple fact: that they are displaced from their place of origin. This means that by being severed from their original geographical location, they become equal. Our fieldwork revealed that as passengers from both countries were going in different directions, to and from different destinations, the newspapers lost their singular/centralized status or function, as, for example, a Copenhagen newspaper has for a Copenhagener. Instead they were consolidated into symbols and objects of the entire region, and not just an individual country or city.

## USING FREE NEWSPAPERS

It is perhaps useful to imagine the train car as a waiting room where the interaction between passengers and newspapers is characterized by a temporal sensation, rather than spatial. In this waiting room, the geographical origin of the newspaper becomes secondary to its quality as entertainment or source of information. This was substantiated by the data collected through the fieldwork previously mentioned, where several informants, especially the most frequent commuters, claimed that they indiscriminately viewed newspapers from both countries as accessible 'easy reads'.

On the train we met a young Copenhagen resident reading the Lund paper just to relax, a Chinese student living in





Malmö studying a Danish paper in order to learn the Swedish language, an elderly inhabitant of Lund skimming a gazette from Helsingborg, and so on. Our research suggested that there was little, if any, real predilection for newspapers based on their city or country of origin. This phenomenon subverts the customary hierarchy of transnational regions, that, through a variety of measurements and standards, including preferences for newspapers, often places large urban centres such as Copenhagen at the top. No matter if the newspaper is from Landskrona or Copenhagen, the passengers still engaged with it in the same way.

## NEWSPAPERS AS PART OF A COMMON SPATIAL NARRATIVE

I would like to develop more fully the notion of junction in relation to the discussion about free newspapers in the Oresund region. It is a helpful concept when considering the physical movement of newspapers that are distributed at, and travel between, major junctions along the Oresund train line. The free-newspaper

stands, found at railway stations and adjacent bus terminals, are a common sight. The presence of the papers emphasizes the importance of these places as centers, or junctions, through which the region is organized and maintained. Once a passenger transports a newspaper from one junction to the other, a traceable link is created between the two places through the newspapers. It becomes an index of a trajectory that narrates a spatial connection between the newspaper, the location of the train, and the passenger. This process is constantly perpetuated aboard the Oresund train, where one often encounters newspapers from many different junctions in the region. It is these interactions between objects and humans that, to some degree, create the very notion of a region.

The region is defined by interaction between objects and humans in a specific place, which enable it to become a regional space, and newspapers are one of its constants. And, as these are organically diffused along the arteries and junctions





of the Oresund region, through both the users' human movements and mechanized travel, the region is unified.

### **SO WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?**

If this all seems too abstract to grasp, it can, again, be helpful to account for this process on a personal level. For instance, today, after having travelled between several junctions in the region multiple times, seeing a 'foreign' newspaper has, to me, become a strong sign of the connectedness of the region. Now it is perceived less as an abnormality signifying difference than as the natural flow of things - I bump into the same City Kristianstand paper on a journey within Copenhagen and think to myself simply that the train has passed that town, which is just an easy commute away from here.

Furthermore, when I board the train I now expect to find papers from all over the Oresund region. By having repeatedly encountered these free newspapers over the past year, I have unconsciously begun to read them as signs of natural trajectories that tie together the region. They have become part of the everyday story of the region. And the findings of our research project suggest that there are many others that have become both authors and actors in this regional narrative. Research projects, such as this one, can enable us to decipher this unique narrative that we, as inhabitants of the Oresund region, live out in our everyday life.



# AN EXTENSION OF HOME? MOTESPLATS LJUNGDALA AND THE EVERYDAY INTEGRATION OF THE LJUNGDALA RESIDENTS

By Gerardo Sánchez &  
Sergiy Matyushenko

## EVERYDAY INTEGRATION IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF LJUNGDALA

Integration is a complex and multidimensional notion, and so is everyday life. Both notions can mean different things in different contexts, and both have also experienced an extensive semantic evolution, with eventual bifurcations of meaning. Integration of a Somali is far from the same thing as integration of a Dane, even though both can be taking place in the same Swedish town. Thus, integration can both endow with and deprive of qualities at the same time. In this text, we present the concept of integration, both as strategy and as an analytical tool, to observe how everyday paths can be centralized in a crossroad.

Equally, everyday life, which was once related to a temporal polarity between the drudgery and the festival, now entails a quite reverse meaning: it is, first of all,

related to the private and to the home  
- the most sacred notion in the modern  
Western, and especially Scandinavian,  
model of life. Here, we build on the concept of everyday life by using the notion of routines to present it as a path of regular activities that can converge in a given centre.

Each of these concepts can be subject to research, and any attempt to integrate all of them exceeds the capacity of this article. Therefore, we shall try to present our vision of everyday integration, based on a recent research carried out in the neighbourhood of Ljungdala in the city of Hässleholm, to illustrate a process of integration taking place in the Oresund Region.

## KNOWING LJUNGDALA

Ljungdala is located in the northwest periphery of the city of Hässleholm in Skåne. It is



a large housing complex of around 3,400 inhabitants surrounded by roads. It comprises around one fifth of the whole population of the municipality. More than one third of the residents are not ethnically Swedish. The largest of these communities is Albanian with up to 300 families; Lebanese and Bosnian are other large groups.

Its urban distribution clearly manifests through a large contrast in housing facilities. The place is divided into a block with two-floor houses with parking lot and gardens, owned mostly by Swedish families, and the other block composed of public housing apartment complexes common areas (parking, recreational facilities, tables and benches), rented largely by immigrant families. On the map below you can see the Ljungdala area outlined in red with the apartment complex marked in green.

The area is patently segregated. One readily notices the almost physical borders between the two parts (sometimes coinciding with or, in a manner of speaking, highlighted by walking paths, hedgerows, etc.). Due to this, the creation of a "gathering point" in the locality represented a possibility for letting the people get know each other, hear each other's opinions and concerns, and share a communal life to promote integration in the everyday life of the residents. The community center Mötesplats Ljungdala (MPL), launched in December of 2010, is the latest of several projects within this particular area that have the goal of improving its social conditions.

## MÖTESPLATS LJUNGDALA, A COMMUNITY CENTER

MPL is located at the heart of the neighborhood of Ljungdala (as indicated by the blue dot in the map above, adjacent to the local secondary school). According to the staff, the center is intended to host a wide range of activities and events, based on what residents in the area want and need; the house seeks to be open and equally available to everyone, including adults, adolescents and children. These activities are organized in an array of different ways, from guided activities such as guitar lessons, Swedish lessons, drama and gardening, to spontaneous encounters such as card and board games, small concerts, reading newspaper or just casual chatting. The events are attended by people of various age groups: kids accompanied by their moms, seniors that attend some of the organized activities, and also some teenagers that just come by to hang out. However, in order to effectively accomplish the goals of the house, the staff also hopes to attract more adults and families, both Swedish and immigrant.

According to a member of the staff, the diversity of the population in Ljungdala and its manifestation in the urban landscape expresses the multicultural nature of present-day Sweden: "[Ljungdala] really reflects more of the real Sweden, as I have seen it, than a small town normally does, I think. ...It's a very mixed population here. It's some immigrants, some Swedes; it's a bit of everything." According to him, the aim of the center lies in its development





Privately-owned cottages



Map of Ljungdala



Rental housing

based on “democracy, participation and safety,” to “get people more integrated.”

## ON CENTERS, ROUTINES AND EVERYDAY PRACTICES

At this point we ask: what is the general character and purpose of a community center? The phenomenon has been well-known in Scandinavia for a long time. The “Forsamlingshus,” for example, is an indispensable part of every small village in the Danish country-side. It was a common effort: all locals donated resources (be it money, materials or time) to build such a building. It is worth noting the specific character of these centres: they were both properties and conditions of the social groups that created them – undeniably a distinctive feature of a rural community, but also an important factor for the community’s welfare.

The notion of “center” as a certain point or area, encompassed within the concept of “centrality,” as the characteristic or set of characteristics linked to this point or area, is only one of many possible ways to understand MPL. In our argument, we want to raise the term to another level, where center – a community center, in our case – is not only a location, but a junction.

But first, we need to more closely examine the related concepts of “everyday life” and “routines”.

Everyday life is the fundamental element in which all other concepts in our discussion are deeply embedded. It is in the everyday life that identities are created. Michel de Certeau sees everyday life as the process in which people individualize the surrounding culture by altering things (utilitarian objects, street plans, rituals, laws and language) in order to make them their own. This process usually has a repetitive or cyclical quality, in which the various practices are associated with the routines of the day or of the season (de Certeau, 1984). According to Marianne Gullestad, the notion of “everyday life” in modern Norway (and in other Nordic countries), implies a tangible distinction between the private and the public, where everyday life contrasts with the bureaucracy of the system, including its alienation, fragmentation and anomie (Gullestad, 1992). It is only during daily routines, at home or in well known places, with family, friends and neighbours, that one can one achieve wholeness and freedom.

“Routine” is derived from French, and literally means “small paths.”



It is a clever etymology, indeed: the character of the two processes is identical; series of repetitions create paths as well as constituting routines (Ehn & Löfgren, 2010). Often invisible in action, routines are marked by a sharp realization of their absence if they abruptly disappear. Routines belong to our workplaces just as much as they belong to our homes. They bring order and comfort into everyday life.

During our observations, we saw that some of the center's users had already appropriated the place by including it as a necessary stop in their daily paths. Not only do they regularly attend planned activities there, but appear also as seemingly uninterested but yet curious and frequent visitants. As one of the youth, who is a frequent user of the centre, mentions: "I come here when I don't study, stuff like that. And I play guitar and sing. So we sit out there and just gather children and start playing and singing. (...) So I'm here quite often (chuckle) (...) On Fridays and Sundays I come quite early and I stay till it's closed (laugh). Because we have so much fun, time just speeds by." For this young boy, the center, on the one hand, provides a space to perform his desired activities, in a familiar atmosphere which allows him to enjoy moments of easiness and freedom. On the other, his use of it also performs the repetition of a pattern generating a routine.

### **MPL AS AN EVERYDAY INTEGRATION TOOL?**

In this case study, integration is presented as a two-fold frame.

The first frame is integration as "strategy," conceived as a tool of intervention, stemming from a central power, to act upon a given reality and rationally modify it. Generally, this is manifested in public policies, campaigns, social projects, and other "planned" and "calculated" initiatives. In this frame, Greek sociologist Nicos Muzelis states: "growing socio-cultural differentiation along ethnic, racial, generational lines raises acute problems for educators, policy-makers and others, of how the differentiated parts should be linked up and integrated" (Muzelis, N, 1995: 6). In light of this, the character of the MPL community center's origin is inverted in a way: being an external attempt to create the conditions for enabling local community life, it is by no means a natural property of this community. In other words, it was not self-generated, but rather given to the community by the city. Clearly, we see a tool of social planning at work.

The second frame in which to think about integration is "analytical," and could be found as well in the tradition of everyday life studies on the level of: "sites in which people do (perform, reproduce, and occasionally challenge) social life, day to day" (Scott, S, 2009: 1). In this light, the concept of routines is also significant, since, by performing this practice, individuals integrate the sort of daily activities under determined conditions. As Birte Jørgensen also states: "Conditions must be handled from day to day." So the splittedness is addressed by sets of routines, created to manage, for example, the daily journey between home, workplace, kindergarten and shopping center. But it is also addressed



by attempts to integrate the fragmented experiences of the daily journey between different worlds, to create a subjectively experienced wholeness out of the splittedness" (Jørgensen, B, 1990: 21).

Hence, on the one hand, the division into "users" versus "non-users," immediately pronounced by the staff of the center, also indicates the strategy-oriented nature of the centre. Then, MPL can be seen as a manifest attempt to instill a practice (or a set of practices) upon the people by means of an artificial solution. On the other hand, the center also wants to attract the routines of the inhabitants and create a wholeness out of the splittedness, by means of organized activities.

In this light, integrating the everyday practices through use of an artificial center means to centralize the paths and practices of the inhabitants of the community. This centralization is manifested, for example, in the activities currently taking place in the center: the more attendance at the organized activities, the better.

However, is it enough to base the success of the center on this criterion? What about the non-regular users and the spontaneous activities that also take place?

We think that what will be decisive for the future of MPL is its capacity to reverse this situation: to go from being an artificial/alien intervention in the space, to becoming a natural/familiar appropriation of a place. It is important to consider the spontaneous and non-organized activities as key elements to integrate the everyday practices in a more natural way. To put it

metaphorically, it is crucial to view MPL as a "natural crossroad (center) of everyday practices and routines," carried out by the community, in order to accomplish social integration. That means not only a crossroad of many daily paths; on a larger scale, it can represent a crossroad between the public and the private. Seen through this prism, the practical objective of MPL will be the effective inclusion/integration of the center into the everyday destinations of the inhabitants of the locality (as it has already been achieved amongst some users).

More generally, MPL can be seen as an attempt to integrate fragments of experiences of their daily journeys through a "known place." And, also, to relocate some of the practices that unequivocally belong to the realm of the private (a part of home) to effectively create a "natural junction."

## **THE FUTURE CHALLENGES AND POTENTIALS OF MPL**

The MPL project faces many challenges in order to accomplish its goal. As an immigrant woman mentioned, referring to the long process of getting the asylum permit: "you can wait for a reply for several years, and you're outside the community all the time, and there are several people in Ljungdala in this situation." In this light, this project is essential in order to integrate those marginalised inhabitants in the community.

But it is also a success in many ways, as was evident in the testimonial of the young user above, who has found a place



in this junction. The expertise and the enthusiasm of the staff are also key ingredients; most of them are active members of local networks and are rooted in the community.

To sum up, this three-fold conceptualization of everyday life-routines-integration allocates the challenge of MPL as being a practice of naturalizing the artificial, that is, turning the alien into a familiar recognition of everyday experiences. In this process, the center appears both as a frame for and a product of this triple relation. While the center is formally intended to function as a communal gathering place, where people could have the chance to listen to and get to know each other, its real challenge is to become a center,

not only in terms of a mere location, but a crossroad/junction of multiple everyday practices and routines, a knot that concentrates the routes of people, turning an artificial and unfamiliar "intervention" into a place for users to dwell - as if it was an extension of their own living room.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study may also contribute to a large range of similar cases in the Oresund Region. The parallels are plentiful in terms of the discussion of everyday integration across physical borders, as well as boundaries based on the grounds of nationality and social groups, all of them crucial matters in the socio-cultural process in the Oresund Region.

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# THEY'RE TEARING UP THE SIDEWALK IN HUSUM

By Ditte Bjarnild, Helene Rendtorff og  
Ida Ravnholdt Poulsen

On a sunny spring day, we bicycle toward Husum, a district on the outskirts of the municipality of Copenhagen. We are going to interview two men from Bureau Detours, an association of artists involved in city development projects throughout Europe; they have invited us to their temporary work site in Husum. As we approach our destination, we primarily pass by apartment complexes, residential areas, car dealerships, large supermarkets and small businesses such as bicycle shops, styling salons and pharmacies. In other words, we get the impression of a typical suburb of Copenhagen, where there is no immediate obstacle to our journey. If a resident of Husum wishes to meet his or her neighbors, there are apparently only a few options: The bistro in Føtex, a couple of smokey bars or a bench on the corner of Frederikssundsvej and Husumvej.

But on a small square in Husum, near the large Føtex on Frederikssundsvej, there is something underway. Loud music drowns out the whine of a drill that echoes between two large gray dumpsters, and we catch sight of the two young men we have come to meet. With sawdust in their hair, they are working enthusiastically on

electric installations and wooden benches with built in boards for playing kalaha.

The men are named Keven and Benny and they have a plan:

A city renewal project, running from the beginning of May until the end of September 2011, has been jump-started. The men have been hired by the municipality of Copenhagen, so that they, together, can challenge the residents of Husum to become involved in their district and meet one another, regardless of age, sex, ethnicity and political views. Teenage boys on mopeds, the regulars at the local bar, retirees, families from the residential areas and the young students from the apartment complexes are to be lured out of their holes to meet each other in their own district.

But can they do it? Can one create a sparkling center of activity for the residents of Husum? Is it possible to create an urban space that gets the couch potatoes to turn off the TV, the boys on mopeds to park their bikes and the shoppers to interrupt their day's plans?

With a homemade map in hand, Benny and Kevin show us their idea for how Husum will look during in summer of 2011.









materialize their conception, but conceptualizing and planning are not enough to create an urban space. The French sociologist Henri Lefebvre maintains that space is a social construction, created through a three-part dialectic between, respectively, a conceptualized space (le conçu - representations of all theories of space, including the planners, researchers and, in some instances, the artists articulated [and staged] spatiality); a conceived space (le perçu - the unreflected customs of everyday that include human actions, sensuality and movement); as well as a lived room (le vécu - "the users" use and assimilation of the space through more or less connected systems of non-verbal symbols and signs).

The first part of this triad is primarily in Kevin and Benny's hands. They have a plan, a conception of what Husum can be. They create or change the framework for the perceived space by breaking habitual practices which will in turn, hopefully, create the possibility of changing the behavior of the residents of Husum so that they will increasingly meet in the urban space and together create something new.

With reference to Lefebvre's three-part division, the residents of Husum could, indeed, have a radically different perception of the temporary urban space than the boys from Bureau Detours. The residents' situations and concrete needs can be very different than assumed, and their reading of the urban space could paint a very



different picture of the square than first imagined. But the young men from Bureau Detours have considered this, and they have a distinct focus on involving the local residents in the development of a center in Husum so that they can have influence in how the urban space should be perceived and used.

The third element of the triad is the lived space, how the space is used and what it does that is central to determining how an urban space should be created. This is, thus, not Kevin and Benny's conception alone, but the residents' particular perception and use of the temporary space that is to become a center for Husum. Kevin and Benny realize that they cannot, alone, create a lively and buzzing center for Husum, and therefore appeal to the residents themselves to participate in the developmental process. The two idealistic young men hope that all the residents of Copenhagen will, in the future, take more notice of the city in which they live: "I believe in tearing out more slabs of the sidewalk to make people look where they're walking.[...] I believe in people being an active participant in their city." (Benny, Bureau Detours)

The plan for Husum is that Kevin and Benny will create the framework for a new temporary urban space. But when spring is over, they will retreat a bit and let Husum City Renewal and Husum's residents take over the project.

Three weeks later, we bicycle out to Husum once more. It is drizzling, windy and chilly. But we must go; it is the release-party

for the project. When we approach Frederikssundsvej, the previously boring businesses are decorated with balloons, and the nearer we come, the more life we see on the otherwise blank and uninteresting sidewalk in Husum. Our mood improves, and when we finally catch sight of the little square near the big Føtex, it is filled with people, rafts set on stilts, improvised benches and a stage that the residents of Husum can use. On the corner, a couple of girls are standing with a large megaphone and shyly calling an invitation to the astonished passersby, who are attempting to comprehend the change in the square. One of the rafts is occupied by the local backgammon club, and behind them a couple of Husum's louts are sitting and trying their best to sell homemade baked goods for five crowns. We pass the small stage, where a representative of Husum City Renewal introduces "Pigerne fra Smørhullet" (The girls from the land of milk and honey) who are ready to perform with street dance, and approach a couple of pavilions that provide shelter from the rain to local flea market vendors. They are selling used clothes, cans of soda, exotic food and everything else under the sun. The square is pulsing with life and enthusiasm—despite the weather, and a gathering point has been created—even if only for a day.

Kevin and Benny stand in the background and soon retreat into a well-earned beer at Husum Bodega, from which there is a good view of the square. The framework has been created, and now it is up to





Husum's residents to use and assimilate the space; give it life and make their mark on the new gathering point. Several of the locals have already included the meeting points in their summer plans, and one of the girls at the square remarks that "...it's nice with those cool benches where we can sunbathe and eat shawarma. And maybe we can meet lots of different people, and lots of stuff will happen."

Kevin, Benny and the rest of Bureau De-tours are already moving on, treasure map under arm, to find new fertile soil waiting to be transformed into attractive breathing spaces for the people of Copenhagen. Where and when will they strike next?

This type of project illustrates a will to revolt against the perception that social everyday integration is contingent on urban centrality. Social interaction and integration happen within a network of social nerve centers -socially produced urban oases where all sorts of people meet in the public space. The project in Husum is an example of how one can actively work to create a space in the city where residents can stop up, interact or merely pass by; and the temporary square shows that it is indeed the users of a place that are central to the development of a sustainable urban space. The fact that the

residents themselves are allowed to participate in and influence city planning is attractive, in that it creates a natural and authentic center that attracts the majority of people. For the time being, it seems as if the little square on the corner of Frederikssundsvej and Husumvej will, in the long run, create integration and social interaction in a otherwise unused space in Husum. The project makes it especially clear that there is not only one center in Copenhagen, but, rather, many small centers. The project is symptomatic of a new type of development; a development that is characterized by a network of many cultural and business centers within the framework of a larger region, instead of an urban development that stems primarily from the center of the metropolis.

Maybe the interim structure, as well as the project's dependence on residents' participation, are portentous of a new era in city and regional planning—one that is characterized by not actually being very planned.



# ON THE MARGINS OF SOCIETY - A REPORT FROM THE MARGINALIZED RESIDENTS OF A CITY

By Rune Röd

***The purpose of this article is to portray how daily practices of drug users and homeless alcoholics (as two of the predominant marginalized groups in Danish society) – influence and shape the appearance of public urban spaces.***

What will be apparent from the following analysis is the ways in which different social categories evoke different perceptions of public space, which could be taken into account when engaging in inclusive city planning and social work.

## CONTAMINATING SPACE - THE PUBLIC APPEARANCE OF THE DRUG USER

A primary finding in the present analysis is the fact that there is a significant divergence between the general perception of the lifestyle of drug users and of other homeless people, respectively, as it unfolds in the public spaces of Copenhagen.

As a drug user, one lives in a cycle of abuse that revolves around finding money or drugs and consuming the latter. This cycle is, for the most, part never-ending. Only on odd occasions does the user have the time and energy to deal with other

matters, such as his or her health, contacting friends and family, or managing personal finances.

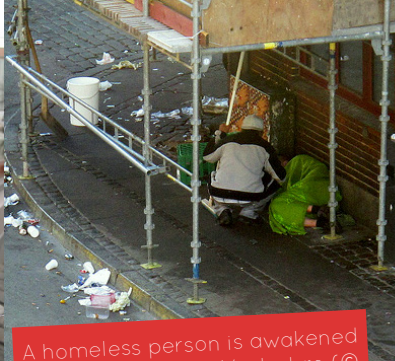
Nevertheless, a recurring theme among the users is the wish to live a relatively normal life and fit in to society as a whole. Many believe that this is possible if they have the means to maintain their drug use and their addiction. In contrast, if they are out of drugs, everything else will be set aside and neglected. Especially this last aspect has a considerable impact on their appearance in and use of public space.

The drug user lives a seemingly private and hectic life, which might be considered to have qualities that resembles that of captivity. He is caught in a cycle of abuse and keeps mostly to himself when he passes through public space, unless there is a dealer or a potential fix nearby. Even in these situations, the drug user is trying to hide his actions from the public eye.





An empty bottle of liquor left on the street in Vesterbro (© Risager)



A homeless person is awakened by a scaffolder on Vesterbro (© Risager)



"Halmtorvet" that is frequented by both café guests and homeless alcoholics (© La citta vita)

Many drug users take much care to limit their impact on the public space. The informants in the field study were very concerned about removing their "tools" after they'd had their fix. They did not like to fix in a stairwell, where children might find them. They were aware that it is not pleasant for others to witness their drug use and the consequent litter. In spite of these considerations and in spite of the public containers for the collection of needles, it is still easy to find leftovers from drug use throughout the Vesterbro district of Copenhagen.

In the area around Kødbyen (the meat packing district) og Hovedbanegården (the central station), it is easy to find used needles, cotton swabs, needle caps and blood residue. A social worker in the area argues that most drug users most likely do not intend to leave their tools, but as soon as one is intoxicated by the drugs, it becomes difficult to control one's body at all, let alone gather together one's equipment.

Drug use is illegal, and, therefore, related activities are often concealed and the drugs are consumed as privately as possible. As a consequence, most peoples' experience with drug users and their activities occur in the guise of unexpected encounters, intrusions and exposure.

Furthermore, drug use is considered dangerous and contaminating. The contamination includes objects related to drug use, such as syringes and especially needles, not only because they are used to inject a substance which is considered dangerous and toxic by many, but also because they penetrate the flesh of people who potentially suffer from HIV and hepatitis, become associated with lethal diseases. In this way, the danger represented by syringes and needles is transferred to the drug user as a person. He is regarded as being almost as dangerous as the drugs he consumes and the diseases he could potentially have. Because he is considered to be unpredictable, due to the drugs and dangerous because he is committing a crime by purchasing and consuming drugs, and because of fears of drug related crimes such as assault, theft and burglary, the drug user becomes just as taboo as the drugs themselves.

As a result, the drug user comes to represent unpredictability and contamination of public space. One might risk bumping into drug addicts when visiting a public toilet or when playing hide and seek in a public park. One might become the victim of drug related crime, and just the thought of





one used needle left in a public playground would likely make parents refrain from letting their children use this type of public space.

Even the fact that some municipalities have provided special containers for hazardous waste and organized special patrols removing needles, as is the case in Copenhagen, does not remove the contaminating effect on public spaces. As previously mentioned, intoxicated drug users are considered unreliable when it comes to removing traces of their use. Therefore, many citizens view the containers not only as waste receptacles, but also as indications of the possible presence of used syringes and needles in the area.

## CLAIMING THE PUBLIC - THE PUBLIC APPEARANCE OF THE HOMELESS ALCOHOLIC

Another group of marginalized people, categorized by addiction and abuse, affecting the constitution of public space, is the homeless alcoholic. However, the conditions of this type of homeless person are quite different from those of the drug users. For one thing, their social behavior is much more outreaching.

public space. Often this interaction happens by initiative of the homeless. During the field work for this study, a Greenlandic man came and sat on a bench next to the research team. He soon started to account for the various conflicts between himself and other Greenlandic persons. When he ran out of beer, he began ask customers at a nearby café for money. The café owner came out with the intention of putting a stop to it and began to negotiate with the homeless Greenlandic man. To ensure the comfort of his customers, the café owner gave him two beers. The Greenlandic man then returned to his bench next to the research team and continued to recount his story. After finishing his two beers he went back to asking customers for money. Shortly after, the police showed up and ordered him to stop begging.

This is an example of how the homeless alcoholic appears different from the from the drug user due to using strategies involving the public in public. Unlike drugs, alcohol can be negotiated, begged and bartered for with members of the public, even when the latter are reluctant to engage in interaction with the homeless alcoholic.

Another difference between the homeless alcoholic and the drug user can be seen in the traces they leave behind. Like drug



users, homeless alcoholics sometimes leave traces of their way of life in public places. One example is the fountain on the square, Halmtorvet, in central Copenhagen. Many homeless people use this as a bathroom, and one often finds razors and other sanitary items in or around the fountain. Unlike drug users, these traces rarely represent addiction or abuse. Due to the national Danish deposit system on cans and bottles, empty containers of alcohol represent a value which many homeless alcoholics exchange for money or commodities (such as beer). As a result, bottles and cans are most often seen in the possession of or nearby the homeless person himself.

In this way, beer bottles and cans are not leftovers in the same way as used needles, but are rather part of an ongoing activity. Furthermore, alcohol is not illegal and can be consumed publicly. This makes the activities of the homeless alcoholic part of a territorializing practice (drinking on and occupying public spaces like benches), rather than contaminating waste.

## **FUTURE SOLUTIONS TO THE INCLUSION OF MARGINALIZED PEOPLE IN PUBLIC SPACE**

Compared to the drug user, the homeless alcoholic appears less contaminating, less surprising and less dangerous. On the other hand, they often appear as visible, audible and annoying invaders, threatening the public order and the public life of many other citizens.

Drug users, however, are perceived in an entirely disapproving and fearful manner,

as they are practitioners of an illegal and toxic activity that contaminates public space.

As seen from the comparison between homeless alcoholics and drug users, the nature of addiction and consumption influences other peoples' sensation and perception of public space. Therein lies a challenge for urban planners, as well as various social authorities, involved in the inclusion of marginal groups and improvement of public life in the city.

A strategy for overcoming this challenge lies beyond the scope of this short analysis. What should be clear, however, is the way in which the insights provided by qualitative research and cultural analysis can benefit the integration and regulation of different social groups.



# PLACES IN THE ORESUND: A MATRIX OF CONNECTIVITY

By Samantha Hyler

Photo: Helsingborg's distinct identity currently includes strong segregation between north and south. A divided city is visible immediately upon leaving Knutpunkten, Helsingborg's central transit station. The south lies to the left in this photo, and the north to the right. Photo: Samantha Hyler.

For it is still the case that no one lives in the world in general. Everybody, even the exiled, the drifting, the diasporic, or the perpetually moving, lives in some confined and limited stretch of it - 'the world around here.' The sense of interconnectedness imposed on us by the mass media, by rapid travel, and by long-distance communication obscures this more than a little. So does the featurelessness and interchangeability of so many of our public spaces, the standardization of so many of our products, and the routinization of so much of our daily existence. The banalities and distractions of the way we live now lead us, often enough, to lose sight of how much it matters just where we are and what it is like to be there. The ethnography of place is, if anything, more critical for those who are apt to imagine that all places are alike than for those who, listening to forests or experiencing stones, know better.

(Geertz, in Feld, S. and Basso, K. H. 1996, p. 262)

Whether a city square, plaza or piazza, or a public monument, building or landmark, or simply the landscape in which one makes one's livelihood, this is where we consummate our identity as something more than a random aggregate of individuals; this is where we objectify ourselves as a community, a civilization, a nation.

(Jackson 2005, p.19)

For whom is the Oresund Region being developed, if not for those who live there? After the Oresund bridge was built between Copenhagen and Malmö in 2000, the Oresund Region has experienced an ever-increasing mobility between the cities and an overall tightening of the region as 'one' place or destination. Through this process, a new identity has emerged - an Oresund regional identity. City renewal projects, such as Helsingborg's H+ project, have the potential to move the center of the region northward from the current center between Copenhagen and Malmö. This article focuses on Helsingborg as a distinctive place in the Oresund region, through understanding the matrix of connectivity that layers culture, people, and places, both within cities themselves and between other places in the region.

The word 'integration' has strong social implications, but what does it mean in the context of the Oresund Region?





Helsingborg's distinct identity currently includes strong segregation between north and south. A divided city is visible immediately upon leaving Knutpunkten, Helsingborg's central transit station. The south lies to the left in this photo, and the north to the right. Photo: Samantha Hyler.

Helsingborg's long-term city renewal project, called H+, centers on these very questions. "The Tolerant City" was chosen as Helsingborg's new city model through an architectural competition in 2009. In many ways, 'The Tolerant City' model places social questions and people at the very center of the H+ project. These kinds of 'people-centered cultural planning' practices are becoming more common in Western cities. However, the H+ project is split between at least two major stakeholders: their own city identity and residents, and the potential of Helsingborg in the growing Oresund Region. In this way, the H+ project is focused on renewing the

industrial harbor and developing a strong living and working city center. In doing so, the project aims to place Helsingborg, located in the northwest region of Skåne, Sweden and the northeast of the Oresund Region, firmly into the identity of the region. But how?

Culture should be understood as an adjective, not a noun, pointing to the pattern and organization of everyday life through meanings, symbols, and practices, not to the thing or place in itself (Sunderland and Denny 2007, p. 49). Public and private spheres foreground the conceptualization of cityscapes, as these



are densely populated areas that become arenas for negotiating public and private. These questions further break down public space in terms of cultural rules and behavior, and are best answered through localized investigations, which seek to understand culture in the everyday from the individual perspective of the user. People, as users of public spaces, are interacting with the inanimate and animate aspects of a space and affecting it with their presence and use, creating places in their own ways. In this way, people create particular places with distinct cultural identities through interactions with them.

Walking and talking with people afforded me, as an ethnographer, insight into the particular cultural identity of Helsingborg as a place, through their relationships with local places within it. "There is no knowing or sensing a place except by being in that place, and to be in a place is to be in a position to perceive it" (Casey 1996, p.18). By being there and walking with people, I was able to understand the matrix of connected places within Helsingborg itself and the particularities of how these distinct, place-bound identities in Helsingborg exist as experiences "grounded in an inherently sociable engagement between self and environment" (Lee and Ingold 2006, p. 68). By walking through the city together, we were mapping everyday routes and exploring places in the city 'on the ground.' These dialectical relationships, or identities constituted from

the relationship between a particular person and a particular place, comprise and connect Helsingborg's distinct urban

identity, both as a city and with the other places in the region.

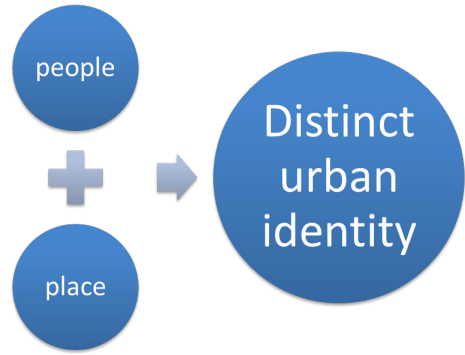
Walking and talking with Navid, for example, a resident of Söder and long term resident of Helsingborg and self titled 'urban guy,' demonstrated his relationship to the environment in the central areas of the city. Here, 'being in places' is important to the formation of identities from the dialectical relationship produced by the interaction of people and environments. His 'being' in the city, or 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger 1996), is constituted by his experiences and 'imagined' sphere, as the places he pictures himself to be part of, and demonstrated to me on our walk of the city. Trädgårdsgatan, an east-to-west street that segregates the north and south of the city, is an important geographical point in the experiences that he relates to his identity. His activities take place on either side of this mark, but are experienced quite differently. His interests and desired activities primarily exist across the 'invisible' line, in Centrum, while his home is in Söder, creating a continuous movement and desire to be across the Trädgårdsgatan line. "Perception remains as constitutive as it is constituted. This is especially evident when we perceive places: our immersion in them is not subjection to them, since we may modify their influence even as we submit to it" (Casey 1996, p.19). Walking with people, and understanding their experiences in and of places, affords an understanding of space and identities created by this dialectical relationship. Many residents, like Navid, choose spaces which reflect not



only the kinds of activities they want in their lives, but an identity which is based from this dialectical relationship. Thus, Navid's experiences in places constructs his identity as much as he contributes to the construction of the place itself. The mutual shaping of place constitutes its particular identity and the identity of those within it. My walk and interview with Navid has shown that his experiences are directly tied to the places he is in, and, in turn, his lived experiences contribute to the constitution of those places. As Casey puts it, "lived bodies belong to places and help to constitute them" (1996, p. 24). It is through an understanding of this that a picture is created of the distinct 'urbanness' of the lived experiences of the communities of Helsingborg.

Integration, then, is an inherently social question with an array of implications to the rhythm of daily life in the region, both now and in the future. The movement of people and the layering of identities existing in the region create a complex matrix, which connects underlying cultural elements regarding the unique 'urbanness' of different places - such as a home, city park, neighborhood, or entire city - in the region. But it is not the place in itself that should be questioned, but, rather, how it comes to be as such (Heidegger 1977). How have regional developments affected Helsingborg as a place, and will the H+ project change the Oresund region in the future?

An element of competition underlies the cities in the region, competing to be 'livable' and 'creative' cities, where people



want to work and tourists will want to visit. These competing city models, within the region and with other European cities, often focus on unmediated concepts such as 'creative cities.' Cities are complex matrices of people and communities, events and actions, architecture and places. 'Urbanness' includes the identities being created and recreated in everyday life, on the streets and in the homes, producing a resulting 'urban' environment (Jacobs 2010, p.20). Overall, this constitutes a city's identity, character, and atmosphere. Creative city models often focus on creating a competitive city model (based in image branding, economics, and attracting people and talents), which may or may not understand and support the potential individual narratives and communities already present in their cities. The individuality of the city is important in distinguishing Helsingborg from other cities, and in basing the city models on the same basic images and ideas from the region. Indeed, both regional and local factors are now important in supporting strong social sustainability and integration in Helsingborg, as a city interconnected with the region. Helsingborg, layered with people, lives, narratives, experiences, and communities,





"Car boot sale, every Sunday 11-15" Sense of local community and event spaces can be felt through this hand-made sign in Söder, Helsingborg. Photo: Samantha Hyler

has its own particular 'cultural DNA,' its own distinct identity and characteristics which distinguish it from other places (Ghilardi 2001, 2009). A strong understanding of Helsingborg's distinct identity, a unique cultural layer formed through the relationship between people and places, is necessary to integrate a competitive regional city model with the existing communities, without homogenizing Helsingborg as another 'creative city,' or even merging all cities in the region as the 'same city.' City models that attract people also repel others, as a basic cause and effect model, and the region should be aware that the effect of creating a new Oresund identity could also be the displacement and

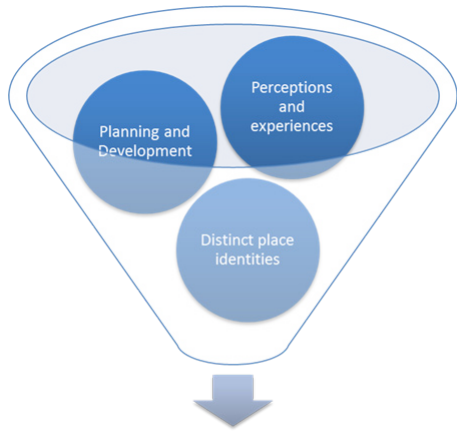
replacement of existing cultures in the process.

Places are more than just physical; they are also imagined, perceived, and experienced. As Jan Gehl's work in urban studies has developed - building upon Heidegger's concepts that explore ideas of dwelling and being in spaces - 'cities for people' should respond to what already exists in spaces and enhance it as a distinct place. This can happen on many layers of locality, from very small street corners to larger neighborhoods. Social development projects in urban planning, like that of H+, should enable structural development around existing people and communities, focusing on the space in between buildings and emphasizing life



first, and buildings and space as secondary constructions around existing social conditions (Gehl & Gemzøe 2003, 2004). This is a useful model for approaching development and integration in Helsingborg as well as for the region.

Conceptualizing places as aggregates of individual narratives, communities, and interactions is an important factor in seeing the Öresund Region strongly, as a network of individual spaces with layers of individual and potential places. Thus, a network of interconnectedness, between places, cities, destinations and their offerings of jobs, living, education, and tourism, is developing in the region. This matrix of connected places is connecting across the sound and tightening the stitches of the region, creating a larger, transnational place. But this must not ignore the diversity otherwise inherent in each place, including, for example, migrant communities, minority cultures, and other forms of diversity. The model should see integration beyond Swedish and Danish, and realize that the transnationality is happening even more with the attraction of other foreign cultures to the region, in addition to those minority and sub-cultures already existing. Thus, the cities in the region, Helsingborg included, can be understood within a matrix of connectivity, layering people, cultures, and places.



## Öresund Regional Identity

The Matrix of Connectivity: A Model

The layering of distinct place identities and the communities and individuals therein, combined with perceptions and experiences of places in the region and planning and development processes, forms the matrix of connectedness in the Öresund identity. The establishment of an overall regional identity emerges from increased connectivity, centralizing and integrating the region culturally. Further developments to places in the region, such as Helsingborg's H+ project, will change the regional identity from the ground up, beginning with the unique relationship between people and their environments, and spiraling outwards through the matrix of connected places.

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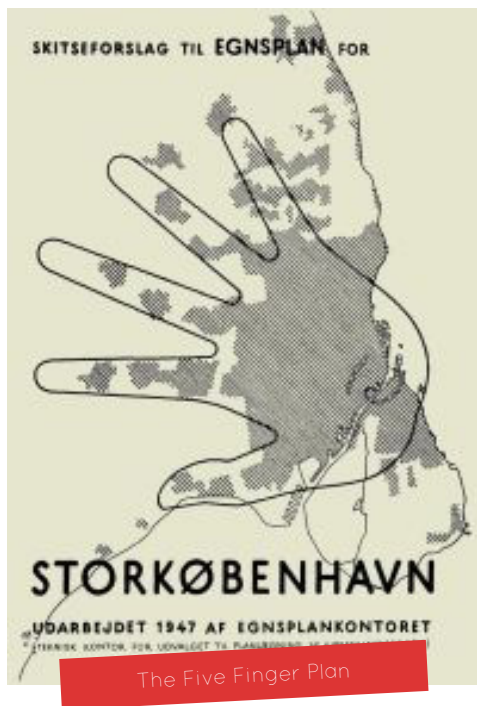
# WHAT CONSTITUTES A PLACE; WHAT MAKES A REGION INTEGRATED?

By Ditte Tellgren, Marlene Paulin Kristensen & Mette Kamille Ipsen

## ON URBAN AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

The integration project of the Danish-Swedish borderland into the Oresund region is a multifaceted process, where a variety of practices and perceptions of space and time unfold simultaneously. Using the case of the divided Municipality of Brøndby in Greater Copenhagen, this article focuses on how built-in borders in a given area can be overcome in order to create everyday integration, and thus forward a positive urban development.

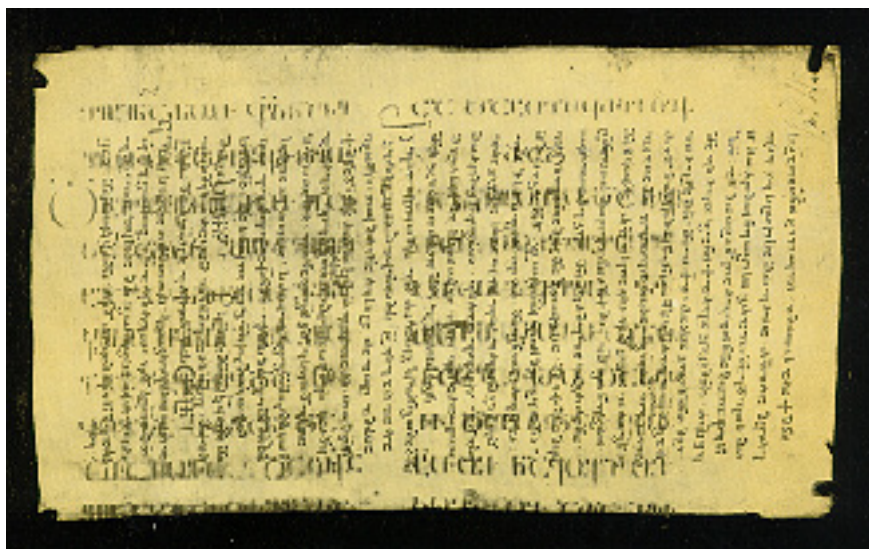
Just as in the Oresund region, the municipality of Brøndby contains a natural border dividing the area. Brøndby's three boroughs are split by a vast area, measuring approximately five kilometres, composed of a main road, fields, forest, meadow, golf courses, and football fields. The municipal politicians and administration wish to promote integration of the three boroughs, as an element of local city planning, in order to forward positive dynamics of centrality within this urban area.



## LAYERS

The natural border within Brøndby is called The Green Wedge. This extensive green area was originally designated as recreational space by the





Five Finger Plan, the grand urban planning initiative of 1947. Running through The Green Wedge is a part of the old Western Rampart of Copenhagen, built as an almost already outdated military defence system between 1888-92 and abandoned again in 1920 due to the major technical advances of the 1st World War. The rampart is still there, standing in the midst of the ideas of the well-planned social democratic welfare state, with its modernist social housing and public institutions, in the space between the thumb and index finger intended to provide fresh air and green views to benefit the working class. Today, the rampart is intersected by major highways leading commuters back and forth from their 1970's single-family houses in the provincial cities further away. Thus, different times and their diverse constructions, as well as ideas and ideologies, co-exist in the landscape. This also applies to the architectural expression of the municipality: a fragmented palette of old thatched farmhouses, single-family

houses, concrete apartment buildings from the 1970's, and more modern, upmarket apartments and houses in Brøndby Strand.

Alongside these larger historical narratives, a set of micro-scale narratives inhabit the landscape: the narratives of everyday life, of personal life and of the family histories of the citizens going about their everyday business. A place, such as the cityscape of Brøndby, can thus be conceived of as layered. Different personal stories and glimpses of the larger cultural context are intertwined within the physical surroundings, unfolding as we go about our everyday practices.

Contact with the physical environment evokes memories of past interactions with people and places, and is understood within the framework of the national and local identity we have been raised with, through education, media and primary socialisation. In this way the past - the need of an earthwork to defend the outskirts of Copenhagen, the grand idea of a well-planned and healthy suburb for



the working class, as well as our own personal encounters with friends, family and foes – can be brought into the presence of the consciousness when we re-enact relations with familiar places. As put so precisely by the French philosopher Michel de Certeau:

*“Every site is haunted by countless ghosts that lurk there in silence, to be “evoked” or not. One inhabits only haunted sites [...]” (de Certeau, 1985)*

### **A MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING MULTIPLICITY IN TIME-PLACE RELATIONS**

To illustrate the co-existence of different times and identities in a cultural landscape, the example of the palimpsest can be advantageously employed (Crang & Travlou, 2001). A palimpsest is a parchment on which an older writing has been effaced and replaced with a newer text. As time passes, the old writing may or may not reappear.

Likewise, the landscape is imbued with fragments of history as well as personal narratives. The different layers of handwriting on the palimpsest illustrate this multitude of narratives, co-existing and ready to be evoked by the everyday practices of citizens in a given region. If a certain landscape or region is viewed as a palimpsest, a positive process of integration can be promoted, because it elucidates the endless process of the “becoming with” of a certain place, i.e. the continuous interaction of a motley group of historical as well

as contemporary constructions, narratives and practices.

As with the landscape of Brøndby, the region of Oresund rests on reminiscences of the past, a past where practices of integration were not foreign. The region was part of the same kingdom for more than 500 years, and Copenhagen and Lund evolved as some of the most influential urban centres in this unified region. During the Middle Ages, goods, politics and education crossed the “the narrow waters of the gravelly beach,” which is the etymological meaning of the word “Øresund”. Striving for further integration of the Oresund region, the palimpsest can be helpful when exploring how layers of common history can be evoked into the minds of the present inhabitants of the Oresund region.

### **PRACTICES MAKE UP PLACES**

One of the many narratives that existed in Brøndby was one of disintegration. Many people told the story of how citizens from the different boroughs did not interact. They expressed that people from Brøndbyøster (one of the three boroughs of the municipality), did not orient themselves towards Brøndby Strand (another borough) and vice versa. Instead, the citizens told tales of mobility in other directions – towards the neighbouring municipalities. The area between Brøndby's boroughs was indeed conceived of as an intrinsic border that could not easily be overcome. These locals found it exhausting to travel from one end of the municipality to the other, and they tended to





overestimate the actual distance through The Green Wedge.

However, different narratives were present among those citizens engaged in activities in the area. They did not perceive the area dividing the boroughs as an impenetrable border, but as an asset. To them, the area was a meaningful place that allowed activities such as attending football matches, visiting the nature school and Medieval village, practicing Nordic walking, playing golf and strolling in the forest.

Analysing these different conceptions of the same area can help reach an understanding of the processes of everyday integration. When seeking to promote positive dynamics, it is crucial to consider how citizens move and navigate through their daily surroundings, and acknowledge the fact that belonging to a place is dependent upon meaningful activities in the various settings of the place. This furthers a practice-oriented notion of place - any geographical point, even a bridge crossing national borders like the Oresund Bridge, can become a vivid and evocative place for people if they have something to do there, a practice to carry out, and memories of past activities in the same place. Thus cross-border, or cross-barrier integration, one might say, is indeed possible, but,

as all cultural processes, it takes time and effort, in as much as it depends on familiarization - continuous practice and recall

of earlier experience as well as historical context. Using this perspective, the continuous act of commuting back and forth between Copenhagen and Malmö, for example, becomes a familiar ritual that transforms the space from an unknown national border into a familiar part of an integrated region.

### **WAYS OF CREATING A SENSE OF BELONGING**

Infrastructure and city planning will not necessarily make the citizens of the intended region travel more within the region. Needless to say, the above mentioned factors are, if not prerequisite to, then at least significant in the development of integration in a given area. Nevertheless, a sense of belonging is created over time as practices create narratives and attachment, and as one's everyday surroundings become a space for identification. Integration is as much about cultural practices and conceived places as it is about actual facilities. Following this perspective, the hindrance for integration in Brøndby was not a lack of fast transportation. Instead, the issue for a large number of the inhabitants was that the other boroughs simply did not unfold as articulated places of possibilities. Negative narratives (e.g. narratives about poverty, crime and violence) were associated with the other areas of the municipality, creating a spiral in which everyday practices across The Green Wedge were not desirable.



## TOPOPHILIA

For a majority of the citizens, The Green Wedge itself seemed to constitute an obstacle to integration; a natural barrier in the middle of the municipality, so to speak. Open landscapes run the risk of being perceived this way because they often lack possibilities for activities binding people to the physical environment, thus becoming obstacles to cross as quickly as possible.

Only when going to a given place for a specific reason are memories and feelings about the place created. For instance, we all feel the difference between remembering being caught up in a traffic jam when crossing a national border and going on a cosy trip with friends or family. The memories we have turn into narratives, or stories, of our lives, and are grounded in the physical places we have visited. In this way, we become acquainted with the physical settings in which our lives unfold. Over time, places can become familiar to us, and people can actually have an intimate and emotional relationship to a place. This process of creating belonging is referred to as toponophilia (Tuan, 1974). When memories of meaningful activities are turned into narratives, an open landscape holds the potential to be transformed into a welcoming place.

The citizens of Brøndby who took part in activities in The Green Wedge shared this kind of toponophilia for the area. They related to the area in a positive way, as it reminded them of good times, whether it was intense football matches or pleasant walks with friends. A successful integration

of the Oresund region can be promoted, insofar as the citizens relate to the regional spaces in an affective way.

## NAMING

Language can also further a sense of belonging, in that language can create new meanings by naming places. Naming can draw links to the past, initiate a break with the past, create social collectivities or be divisive. In the case of Høje Taastrup, a neighboring municipality to Brøndby, an extensive city planning project was carried out in the beginning of the 2000s. As part of the project, the name of the central road was changed from the anonymously sounding Køgevej (Køge being a bigger town more than 30 km away) to Taastrup Hovedgade (i.e. "Taastrup Main Street"). The connotations of the two names are very different: Køgevej draws the attention to a destination far from Taastrup, making it only a city to pass through in order to reach another destination: Køge. The new name, Taastrup Hovedgade, is more likely to be associated with older Danish villages, whose main streets were scattered with bakers, butchers, and grocer's shops, and were often called the "Hovedgade." The renaming of the street was intended to create a new center that attracted the periphery's attention, in contrast to the previous impression of Taastrup as consisting of dispersed housing, old as well as new, oriented toward different centers outside the city.

Naming and creating new conceptions through language involves yet another dimension



when it comes to the Oresund Region: two similar yet different languages, Swedish and Danish. An example of a way to overcome the differences and create a common sense of belonging through language can be seen in the logo of the Oresund Bridge. Choosing the invented spelling "Øresundsbron" (as a mélange of the Danish "Øresundsbroen" and the Swedish "Öresundsbron") establishes a new, common language for a region that should be both Swedish, Danish and at the same time a hybrid because it is something different: it is the Oresund region.

## **NARRATIVES OF EVERYDAY INTEGRATION**

To summarize, practices and shared narratives play a crucial role as stabilizing links for everyday integration, as illustrated in the case of Brøndby. This approach can be applied comparatively to ongoing integration processes taking place in the Oresund region, which can, furthermore, be regarded as an empirical example of how different uses and practices often seem to coexist. While some people in the Oresund region might identify

themselves as Oresund citizens, due to everyday transnational movement patterns, others might stay on one side of the strait and seek a more confined and nationally-bounded center for their everyday practices. For these people, crossing the bridge might be thought of as something extraordinary, e.g. connected to childhood memories of a visit to Tivoli, recreation in a Swedish summer cottage, or even as a tiresome and difficult outing.

In this manner, the distance between Denmark and Sweden, as well as the distance between the northern and the southern part of the Municipality of Brøndby, can seem interminably long, adventurous or just as a path in one's regular daily routines. Highlighting the various practices and differing historical and personal narratives being told in the region can lead to a greater understanding of the convoluted nature of places. From a planning perspective, it can also help generate some valuable ideas for looking at traffic junctions not merely as convenient gateways, but as cultural palimpsests. Which stories do we want to encourage in order to create everyday integration in the Oresund region?

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# MOBILITY IN EVERYDAY COPENHAGEN - AN IMMERSION IN A BIKING STATE OF MIND

By Matteo Marasco

## BEING PART OF THE TRAFFIC

Each day in Copenhagen, when hopping onto your bike seat and starting to pedal through the streets, you find yourself projected over a tangled web of directions. You will meet thousands of citizens with their tasks to accomplish and destinations to reach. Perhaps, if you are also heading to your daily destination, you might even notice some familiar characters: the same guy with that same funny winter-hat or the slow old lady with her basket full of groceries: same time, same traffic light, ever-surprising weather (or not surprising at all...).

This article will focus on the practice of biking in Copenhagen, and is based on a research project conducted for a client in the tourism sector during the spring of 2011. The goals were to identify the various barriers which prevent tourists from using a bike to get around the city, and to elaborate a set of solutions. A study of locals' biking patterns and behaviors helped define biking as a culturally embedded practice, while tourists' feedback on what it takes to become a part of the biking

traffic offered cues for further reflection. What emerges out of the city's impressive bicycle infrastructure? This aspect will be explored below, with the purpose of highlighting the premises for a new definition of integration in the Oresund region.

## SETTING THE RHYTHM OF THE CITY

In order to enter the city's sphere of sounds, smells and motion, we would need to get on a bike. According to the claims of most tourist respondents, the most outstanding features of Copenhagen include the impressive number of bikes you can see piled up here and there or parked outside every front door and the wide network of bike lanes which allow you safe access everywhere. Locals, on the other hand, do not point out any aspect of the practice of biking as being exceptional.

As Trine, a Danish student, says: "It's not a special thing. It's not like, oh, I want to take the bike today! I take it because it's like washing your hands," Carla, a Copenhagen-  
ner as well, defines her daily





Cyclists making their way through Copenhagen



Majas illustration of her regular biking routes in Copenhagen



biking purely “as transportation [...], just to get from one place to another.” She continues: “I wouldn’t be able to move around without it at all. It is far too expensive to use public transportation.” These examples illustrate how locals refer to biking as both ordinary and indispensable.

Since bike lanes make up a big part of Copenhagen’s cartography, city maps were used, as a compromise, to start uncovering the characteristics hidden in locals’ daily itineraries. Informants, instructed to ‘think aloud,’ picked out a daily commute on the map (see an example in Fig. 1) and described it as if riding their bike at that very moment. That way, by providing the researcher with information about the environment in an informal way, they could not avoid describing their way of biking from an insider perspective (Breddam and Jespersen 2010: 20).

When asked to draw her return route from the university, Maja answered: “I always have a lot of options when I have to go home. But I always change my route a little bit, according to what mood I’m in. Sometimes I feel like going one way, and sometimes I feel like going another way.” To demonstrate one of the behaviors that may arise in the course of a bike journey, Julie refers to a sort of competition: “We want to catch the green wave. I mean all the green lights. [...] Not competing against each other but just to see if we can get a green wave all the way.”

By pointing at a specific location on the map and drawing some circles around it, Carla showed the spots along her route that make her think of how close she is

to her approaching destination: “It’s really weird, because when I go home, I feel that I am almost there when I go over this bridge.” Referring to neighborhoods, she adds: “People drive more carelessly on Nørrebro than Østerbro. Østerbro is like a place for children and old people. So the bikes ride more nicely and there are people walking.” The examples above are only a few excerpts from a much larger study, which brought into focus the richness of the city’s underlying codes, references, indexes, behaviour patterns and specific attitudes. Everyone who bikes in the city seems to know the right time to slow down or speed up, to strategically get some rest or skip that tricky traffic light, to engage in secret competitions with people you know and people you do not, and to choose a shortcut or a relaxing route, according to the day, the mood and the music to which you are listening.

On the basis of these observations, biking, as an everyday practice in Copenhagen (and other parts of Denmark and of the Oresund region), turns out to be extremely ‘localized,’ a word used here to indicate the set of learned local skills and the attitudes they generate: itineraries do not just serve as origins and destinations, but, rather, as Ruth (a tourist from USA in her 30s) puts it – a practice that makes “you feel part of a group” (Ruth and Brad, 30.04.11).



## BIKING TRAJECTORIES AND SOCIAL INTERSECTIONS

In an ethnographic study of daily walks in Scandinavia, researcher in folklore Österlund-Pötzsch maintains that 'walking' could be seen as a way to produce lived and practiced space (Österlund- Pötzsch 2010: 25). Does the same apply to biking?

By listening to Lasse, one of the respondents who referred to the rules of the biking traffic code, "there are so many people biking in Copenhagen that you really have to stick to the rules. And if you don't, people are like 'damn what are you doing here?'" Accordingly, one could infer that the rules are a set of contractual notions that allow a closer contact with the city and make people feel a little more like belonging to it. However, rather than representing an exotic sphere that is accessed only by learning 'the rules,' Copenhagen allows bicyclists to produce and trace their own trajectories. Assuming that a place becomes a portion of space when it is practiced (Augé 1986: 102), then, those who travel and move around the city are somehow transforming the geometrical bike lane. Therefore, a biking trajectory, rather than being a simple itinerary, projects the skills, the creative individual responses to habits and boredom, the shared social codes, and the individual goals, and produces lived space. Maja explains that "you're social but you're also distant at the same time. Because you go a little faster than everybody [who is] walking. So, you're watching the city from your own very special point of view." On the other hand, Maja continues,



Keeping to the bike path (© Sarah Larsson)

biking "brings people a little closer together. Because there is a little more life in the streets[...] You know, you always can see on everybody's face how they feel and what the weather is like. You know, if the sun is shining, everyone smiles. It just makes you happy."

These examples help to emphasize *that movement and mobility through landscape are premises for integration: assuming that a shared vocabulary and common experiences create community, even though trajectories are individual, they also intersect in a wider scale.*

## BIKING IT UP...

This short article aims to explain how Copenhagen can be seen as an arena where intersections between mobility and territory take place. It also highlights the role of its bike lanes as platforms of integration, which channel the flows of mobility. In fact, to 'bike up' a city or a region is a domesticating and space-making practice, a process of territorialising, i.e. a "behavioral phenomenon associated with



the organisation of space into spheres of influence”(Soja 1971: 19).

What comes off as the uniqueness of the city goes beyond the bicycle infrastructure: other than itineraries, people are drawing 'biking trajectories'; urban life transforms the bike lane into a trajectory of lived space. Moreover, compared to other means of transportation, such as trains and cars, biking implies skills which are local; it is tied up with processes of learning strategies. It is a practice that helps to attach meaning and belonging to the city's *streets and corners*, which changes the way one faces one's daily tasks, starts one's day, gets to know the city and interprets its map.

To conclude, if to perceive means 'to inhabit' or 'to conjugate' in a subjective way, and if the bike, as a mediator, can change the perception of what surrounds locals and tourists, its role as a mere means of transportation should be rethought. The thousands of bikers that daily cross and travel around the city of Copenhagen could be seen as more than a positive outcome of mobility plans. Biking is a practice that domesticates space and leaves its traces outside the bike lane; a "biking state of mind" transforms public space into lived space and opens up the hidden possibilities of everyday interaction and everyday integration in urban life.

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