



TRANSFORMATIONS BOUNDARIES DIALOGUES

A perspective on Malmö in 2004

Mikael Stigendal

What is Malmö? Is there a particular meaning with Malmö? What does the word Malmö refer to? Obviously, a place to be, live and work in; a spatial entity demarcated by the sea and large fields. This spatial entity is in a process of profound transformation, however with a feeble support from the population, depending on the existing boundaries. Besides transformation, the word boundary seems appropriate in a characterization of Malmö.

The City Council has just recently launched a plan concerning the boundaries. It is supposed to lead to a dismantling of the boundaries on the basis of dialogues with the inhabitants and their representatives of various kinds. Dialogue is another word of the day.

It seems indeed possible to explain the present state of Malmö through these words: transformation, boundaries and dialogues. Although not theoretically elaborated, they can serve as keys to the opening of a wider perspective, yet with the main aim to answer the question about Malmö. What does the word Malmö refer to? And how could the key words transformation, boundaries and dialogues be used in answering this question?

In fact, these three key words could also be associated with places. Instead of theoretically defining them or replacing them with theoretically defined concepts, I will picture their content, providing opportunities for reflections on the main issue: What is Malmö?

This booklet has been written in connection to the 22nd Nordic Sociology Congress in Malmö, Sweden, August 20-22, 2004. It expresses my own view of Malmö based on almost 20 years of sociological research. I hope it will be helpful for anyone who wants to understand more about Malmö. I also hope it will provoke, stimulate and encourage the debate about Malmö, so much needed, also in a comparative perspective.

The picture on the front page shows the Öresund Bridge, the most spectacular expression of transformation, before it was completed in 2000. Or was it really completed? The picture of its incompleteness is quite representative of the present situation, characterized as it is by boundaries, not only to Copenhagen but also within Malmö. Moreover, the picture symbolizes the danger for those who try to bridge the boundaries through pursuing dialogues. Too often, they fall into the water and get drowned.

The picture on the back page shows some pupils from a school in Rosengård – hopes for the future.

Printed at print@soc, Department of Sociology in Lund. Feel free to download a copy from my homepage at Malmö University (www.mah.se).

Transformation(s)

The West Harbour area exposes the scale, scope and depth of transformations more than any other place in the city. At the left in this photo from March 2004, excavators tear down the former head office of Skanska, the building company that once started in Malmö 1874. For many decades, Skanska belonged to the core of capitalist companies in Malmö.



In a close co-operation with the Social Democratic leadership of Malmö's City council, Skanska built modern dwellings for the inhabitants of the city, while at the same time getting the opportunity to elaborate industrial building methods. This co-operation formed the engine of growth in the modern development of Malmö while it also provided Skanska with a competitive advantage. Today, Skanska is one of the leading building companies in the world. Left in Malmö is a monument in concrete.

In the right of the photo, the knowledge society is in the process of replacing industrial society. The new house constructed along the key side belongs to the Teacher Education, one of six faculties of Malmö University, established as late as 1998 but already having 1.300 employees and 21.000 students. The major part of the Malmö University is located to the West Harbour.

For many decades, the whole West Harbour area belonged to the shipyard Kockums, in terms of tonnage the largest shipyard in the world in the early 1970s. As Skanska, Kockums was one of the core capitalist companies in Malmö. To simplify it, the dominant part of the working class worked at Kockums, many of them lived in houses built by Skanska, a majority voted for the Social Democrats, who in turn secured the connection between wage-working and living by enlarging the city's infrastructure as well as creating new demands. Those were the decades of hegemony when Malmö appeared as almost a society of its own, indeed very organized, hierarchic and male dominated.

The decline of this locally based industrial society began in the early 1970s, leading to a moving out from Malmö. After rapid expansions during the whole 20:th century, Malmö

lost 35.000 residents during the 1970s and 80s. The City council reacted gradually and has since then assumed an increasing responsibility for growth, in particular during the last ten years. The building of the Öresund Bridge and the establishment of Malmö University, but also the exploitation of the West Harbour area are parts of this strategy to promote growth and expansion. The building of dwelling houses in the West Harbour started in 2001 with the European Housing Exhibition (Bo 01).

The most spectacular outcome of this exhibition is the 54 floors and 190 m high dwelling house, called Turning Torso. It looks new where it reaches up to the sky in its twisted unusualness, but it relies on old merits. It is owned by the cooperative housing company HSB, deeply rooted in the history of Malmö.



Back in the history of the 1940s and 50s, HSB was the answer to many workers' dreams. For a skilled worker with a family and some savings, the step from "darkness to light" went straight into a cooperative HSB dwelling with a well equipped kitchen, bathroom and refuse chute in the stairwell (a HSB invention). Also, HSB realized a kind of a socialist community, however circumscribed by the limits of the co-operative housing association and thus without posing a threat to the capitalist economy.

In the late 1940s, a battle took place within the Malmö labour movement between co-operativists and municipal socialists. The latter started the Council house company, MKB, in 1946 and forced through the building of the large housing estate Augustenborg, solely including council housing.

However, the battle was over in the early 1950s. The HSB co-operativists took power in the Social Democratic party and put the emphasis on co-operating with the core capitalist companies, above else Skanska. The co-operation led to the demolition of large parts of the inner city as well as the building of large and modern housing areas. Statistics show the results. 75% of all dwellings in Malmö have been built after the Second World War. Co-operative housing amounts to 34% of all the dwellings in Malmö, while only 14% belong to the Council house company MKB.



Once, HSB pioneered new ways of living and the initiator of Turning Torso Johnny Örbäck reminded about that in July 2004: "Brave and challenging as a formula 1 car, but inside the shell filled with utilities which in due time will be beneficial for all." However, at the time of the printing of the article, Örbäck was no longer manager of HSB. He lost this position during the spring 2004 when it turned out that the building was based on massive miscalculations and that only a few showed interest in buying one of the 150 co-operative – indeed very expensive – flats. At the end of May, HSB saw itself forced to transform Turning Torso into rentals. Ironically, this may help counterforce the – often criticized – tendencies that the West Harbour might become a segregated reservation for wealthy Swedes.

The Council and its associated organizations have aimed at creating an example of sustainable development. To be sure, the West Harbour area has won a series of different awards for being self-sufficient on renewable energy sources and having managed to create an ecological sustainability in a densely built-up city environment. However,



in referring to contemporary Malmö, Turning Torso, the West Harbour and Malmö University represents the one picture, in the first place characterized by a growth orientation and a striving for attracting wealthy taxpayers to the city.



There is also another picture. Contemporary Malmö is a very divided city. Roughly, the boundary coincides with the elongated park area in the middle of the city between West and East.

Boundaries!

The photo shows City Gross, opened in the fall of 2003, one of the largest supermarkets in Sweden, decorated with flags and displays in the Swedish colours of blue and yellow, however situated in the part of Malmö where 83% of the population has a foreign background. Obviously, City Gross wants to get the Svensson back to Rosengård, at least for some cheap food shopping.



Once, Svensson lived in Rosengård. However, Rosengård wasn't built even for Svensson, but more narrowly for the wage-earning consumer. Rosengård is a result of the Fordist heydays in the 1960s and early 70s, from which 38% of all the dwellings in Malmö stem. The how and where to build were mainly decided by profit opportunities. The inhabitants of the new areas were supposed to eat, watch television and sleep there, but nothing more. No or little space was given to small shops, restaurants, pubs and club localities. In return, the residents were given a very high material standard, perfectly suitable for a wage-earning consumer.

The lack of socializing opportunities in these newly built areas became apparent when the population no longer fulfilled the requirements of being wage-earning consumers. Mass unemployment affected Sweden – and Malmö – later than other countries, but became real in the early 90s. During the first years of the 90s, gainful employment slumped from 79% to 62% and has remained at this historically low level. During these same years, many immigrants moved to Malmö. The share of inhabitants born outside of Sweden rose from 16% to 24% in the 90s. Many of these are refugees from former Yugoslavia and the Middle East.

Will they go to City Gross and buy their food? Doubtful. The very frank Swedishness expressed in the colours and the flags may serve as a boundary, offering assimilation as the only solution. However, the blue and yellow colours have obviously inspired the local pizza-kebab-sausage-dealer. Does that symbolize integration?



Rosengård does not reflect integration, in particular not the coherent part that consists of only rental flats. 12.838 inhabitants (5% of Malmö) live in these flats, whereof 65% borne in other countries. The biggest immigrant groups here come from Iraq, former Yugoslavia and Lebanon.

Only 24% of this population (age 20-64) take part in the most important context of system integration, i.e. gainful employment, compared to 64% in Malmö as a whole. Only 48% expressed their beliefs in Swedish politics by voting in the election 2002, compared to 72% in Malmö as a whole.



Yet, the area flourishes with life. Children amount to 40% of the population (age 0-15). 11% of all the kids in Malmö live in this part of Rosengård. What a force! What a hope for the future! However, not very well appreciated by society. After the nine years of compulsory schooling, 52% of the pupils (age 16) do not have the grades that allow them to continue studying. And yet, many of them have developed multicultural competencies, so eagerly needed

in society, but which schools fail to recognize as schools still adhere to a traditional system of marking and an obsolete approach to knowledge.



Moreover, the children grow up in often harsh conditions, i.e. poverty, bad health, numerous families in small dwellings and no place to study. Long-term unemployment may lead to a loss of male authority and self-confidence, but even to a revival of a patriarchal culture, supported by certain interpretations of Islam. Such cultures may foster young people to become violent opponents to the social inclusion of the Swedish society and also contribute to their engagement in social contexts outside the society's boundaries, in e.g. crime and drug dealing.

All this happens at a high cost for the city of Malmö. During the first 4,5 months in 2004, vandalism at the 10 most damaged schools in Malmö cost 1.469.00 SEK (160.000 Euro). 44% of this cost affected the four schools in Rosengård. Yet, the worst example occurred at the end of July, when 638 panes were smashed at the Rosengård School during one single night, at an estimated cost of almost 1 million Swedish crowns (110.000 Euro).



The renting flat area of Rosengård is part of a larger area in Malmö, characterized by social exclusion. 22% of the Malmö inhabitants live in this coherent area, which makes it the largest in Sweden as far as social exclusion is concerned. It corresponds to a similarly coherent and quite homogenous area, representing social inclusion.

Inclusion

34156 (13%)

9%

Denmark, Poland, Germany

78%

6%

23%

61%

85%

← Segregation →

Population

Borne abroad

Largest immigrant groups

Gainful employment

Pupils (16) without grades
to continue studying

Rental housing

Owner-occupier housing

Electorate turnout

Exclusion

57 911 (22%)

45%

Yugoslavia, Iraq, Bosnia

45%

35%

77%

2%

58%

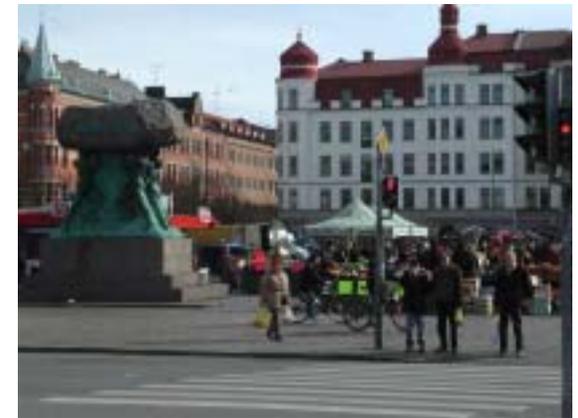


In the public statistics, there are no figures presented for these two larger and coherent areas. The presentations there are based on the boundaries of the 10 city districts, which were introduced in 1996. However, most of those boundaries don't have any correspondence to the life of the population. They hardly refer to identities or demarcate differences in living conditions. Primarily, the statistical boundaries serve administrative purposes and, in fact, makes segregation between social inclusion and social exclusion look lesser than it is.

However, the scope of social exclusion becomes visible in the figures for the whole of Malmö as well. Malmö has the highest percentage in Sweden of poor children. According to a study by Save the Children, 34 % of all the children live in poor families.

Dialogues?

Across the street in the photo (Bergsgatan), Malmö residents once went to a better life. Möllevången became a working class stronghold where many prominent labour movement leaders have lived and grown up, among them the Swedish Prime minister during the Second World War, Per-Albin Hansson. At Möllevången, the first People's Park in Sweden was built, a centre not only for working class recreation but also for social integration. The first daily newspaper of the Labour Movement in Sweden saw its light at Möllevången and retained there until its sad closure in the fall of 2000. The football club Malmö FF, in 1979 second in Europe, started at Möllevången.



But the history of segregation in Malmö began at Möllevången as well, or more specifically with the building of the large co-operative housing estates in the surroundings of Möllevången during the decade before the Second World War. In these areas, the turnout



peaked at 92% and 76% voted for the social democrats. The inner-city areas left behind by those who moved on turned gradually into a slum, inhabited mainly by unskilled workers who couldn't afford to buy a flat in the co-operative housing associations. Later they moved to the Fordist housing areas built during the 60s in the outskirts of Malmö, whereof Rosengård became the largest one. At the same time, large parts of the

inner city were torn down. However, not most of Möllevången. Its labour movement legacy and that fact that it survived massive and hysteric slum-clearances make Möllevången quite unique in Sweden.

Nowadays, Möllevången is part of the large and coherent area characterized by social exclusion, mentioned earlier. However, popular culture flourishes at Möllevången. During the last 15 years, the number of pubs and restaurants around the square has increased dramatically, also serving food from all over the world. The music house Jeriko attracts

lovers of world music. Kulturbolaget arranges around 220 concerts every year and has through the years hosted celebrities such as Bob Dylan. Inkonst arranges concerts, theatre, exhibitions, youth activity and seminars.



In addition, many popular events take place in the large People's Park, including the labour movement May Day parade and also the well-attended second-hand market in one of its corners, opened most of the days.

Groups of young people appear to make use of the rich radical legacies of Möllevången. A most recent example is the Möllevången group, which has arranged many activities, including festivals and guided tours to people's homes, over the past 10 years. And the homes are not always rented. Möllevången and its surrounding areas also consist of many co-operatively owned dwellings. In some, residents have realized the democratic and empowering potentials of the co-operative form of housing.

So many meeting places. Such extraordinary opportunities for dialogue and integration. And integration does occur, perhaps particularly at the schools. A study of three nine-year compulsory schools in the neighbourhood revealed a strong ethnic integration among the young people, expressed in various opinions of the school, TV-habits and music favourites. There are vital lessons to be learned from young people on how to succeed with integration. But it's not recognized. It doesn't even get much attention.

Bridging the knowledge gaps

At Malmö University, the Nightingale project offers students the possibility to become the mentor of a child in the age group 8-12 at a school in an area marked by social exclusion. Student and child meet one afternoon a week. The child gets to know about the existence of Malmö University, also associated with the friendly relation to the student, which may nurture a wish to become a future student. The student learns a lot about the living conditions of the children

(Good example from the URBACT programme).

During the last 10 years, Malmö residents' taking part in the public sphere has increased quite dramatically. It's not only visible at all the rapidly increasing amount of restaurants, cafés and pubs, but also at Malmö stadium. Throughout the 90s, MFF had an annual average crowd at the home games of around 6.000. In 2003, the annual average reached the fabulous level of 18.715. And many of the players have foreign background, the most famous being Zlatan Ibrahimovic from Rosengård, now playing for Ajax.

The Malmö festival use to have around 1.4 million visitors during its eight days in August, of course not all living in the city but according to the festival web page, 75% of the Malmö



residents use to visit the festival. It started in 1985 and still has a vital support from numerous associations selling food and arranging events.

In spite of all this community, dialogue and integration, the boundaries between different areas and groups of people still exist. There doesn't seem to emerge any new popular unity of Malmö residents, nor a common understanding

for what it means to live in Malmö or a joint sense of responsibility. Perhaps it couldn't. Is contemporary Malmö bound to be imprinted by divisions and boundaries? Is it possible to bridge the gaps and dismantle the boundaries? Could a new meaning with Malmö be developed, possible for a majority to feel a part in and nourished by all the communities, dialogues and integration that unquestionably exist?

Empowering parents

At the Hermodsdal School, a parental education was organized during the spring term in 2003. The main purpose of the altogether six meetings was to increase the parents' knowledge about the school and the Swedish school system. The content wasn't decided from above. Instead, at special meetings arranged during the autumn 2002, parents as well as staff were asked about it. Thereby, an interest for participating in the education was awakened as well. During the first educational meeting in January 2003, only about 20 parents turned up, but the interest grew quickly and during the last meeting in May about 150 parents participated. At that meeting a parental association also was founded. Thanks to the parental education, the interest for a parental association was able to grow and increase gradually. That way, the parental association was not founded because of an initiative from above, but from a broad and common engagement.

(Good example from the URBACT programme)

The meaning of Malmö

For some, the meaning of Malmö is about being biggest and highest. There's certainly a basis for such a view. In the early 60s, the former building worker Hugo Åberg, inspired by the skyline in Chicago, had Kronprinsen built, a 26-storeyed house which was said to be the highest dwelling-house in the whole of Europe. The famous crane at the Kockums shipyard, finally shipped away to South Korea a few years ago, was the largest of its kind. And then, of course, Turning Torso, will help maintain this tradition of being highest.

It's an important part of the old Malmö identity to claim superiority, however not to brag about, but just take for granted. This claim to superiority is treated as normal, like a natural law, inscribed in the body of Malmö itself. Instead of a bragging, it's expressed in a lack of impression. "Ah, vadåå?" is a well-known Malmö expression for this. Take for example the new big wheel in the People's Park. It simply just happens to be the highest in Northern Europe.

The claim to superiority certainly depend on a long-lasting state of tension with the Swedish capital Stockholm and its powers. Thus, it was such a triumph when the football club Malmö FF secured its first Swedish championship in 1944 by beating the



Stockholm club AIK in the last away game. Since then, Malmö FF has won 14 championships, equalled only by IFK Göteborg.



However, the claim to superiority is mainly grounded in the decades of hegemony, manifested in the elections, at least from the 30s to the mid 70s when more than 50% of the electorate voted for the Social Democratic party, supporting the transformations of the city. Furthermore Malmö bears the legacy of being the cradle of the Swedish Social Democratic Labour movement in the

1880s. In fact, Malmö was once referred to as the Mecca of Swedish socialism. Ironically, during the last decades Malmö has become a Mecca for Scandinavian Muslims, because of Islamic Centre, including the mosque, built in 1983 and a precursor in Scandinavia.

But what about the contemporary support for the party? In the last election (2002), the social democrats (SAP) maintained its political power in Malmö. A victory, but yet it wasn't. The social democrats did one of their poorest results in over 80 years. The turnout was even worse. It hasn't been as low since 1938, only 72%. Of all that are entitled to vote, only 61% voted for one of the established parties. When the dramatic success in the local

Changing school structures

At the Kroksbäck School, a study workshop for pupils with another mother tongue than Swedish, was started in 2001. Six trained teachers with the mother tongues Arabic, Albanian and Pashto were employed, combining a competence of altogether nine different languages, i.e. enough to be able to communicate with the majority of the pupils and their parents in their mother tongue. The pedagogical method used focuses on normalizing the bilingualism. The pupils' knowledge in Swedish and other subjects is to be strengthened through offering education in their mother tongues, also on favourable social conditions, emphasizing close and confident relations between teacher and pupil as well as dialogues with the parents. The study workshop has now been made a permanent part of the Kroksbäck School, bringing about a profound structural change in terms of organization, approach to knowledge, pedagogy as well as social relations.

(Good example from the URBACT programme)

election 1985 of the newly established Scania party put an end to 67 years of uninterrupted social democratic rule, yet 78% of all the entitled voted for one of the established parties. Is Malmö now approaching a political meltdown?

When the social democrats regained power in the 1995 election, after three years with a neo-liberal regime led by the Conservatives, an attempt was made to revitalize democracy. At the 1 of January 1996, the City Council established 10 City districts, with their own councils and administrations, decentralizing a substantial share of power. The City district reform

aimed at strengthening democracy, but also to break down boundaries between council bureaucracies. The City districts became responsible for pre-school activity, the nine-year compulsory school, elderly care, care for disabled, social security, local leisure activity, libraries and local culture. The largest one is Fosie with 39.294 inhabitants and smallest Oxie with 10.848 inhabitants (1 Jan 2004).

However, the City districts were not introduced on the basis on dialogue. According to the study on living conditions in 1997, 66% did hardly know about it and only 10% of them that knew at least something about it believed it would give more influence to ordinary people.

Since then, the regime has put a lot of efforts and resources on spatial transformations. Malmö has managed to attract multi-national companies like the Japanese company Toyota that chose to site its entire car import operations for the Nordic market in Malmö, being the largest investment in the history of the port of Malmö. Also, the spatial transformations brought about have managed to attract many new residents. During the last decade, Malmö has expanded rapidly, surpassing in 2003 the old record from 1970 and having 267.171 residents at the 1 of January 2004.

Youth power

The old brewery factory was closed down in the early 90's, but parts of it was 1997-98 rebuilt into a skate park, probably the biggest inside construction of its kind in Europe. The rebuilding was made by a group of skaters that in the mid 90's had nowhere to go. They were skating in a garage, but local storeowners protested and in the newspapers the skating appeared to be a growing problem. The solution came to be called the Brewery association.

The skate park is open for everyone that wants to skate or simply meet like-minded. In average, the Brewery has about 1000 visitors a week. Also, the association has arranged various educations, above else an IV-programme. Behind all the skating the Brewery has a vision of developing democracy and the possibilities for youths to get their voices heard.

(Good example from the URBACT programme)

At the same time, the wishes about revitalizing democracy by the City districts have faded. The people simply haven't turned up at the district council meetings, empowering its local representatives. Instead, the City district reform empowered the administration officials, leading to more of top-down solutions.

Of course, efforts have been made to deal with segregation and social exclusion, the main ones by support from the EU and the state. Malmö hosted an URBAN programme during 1997-2000, which was followed by the government's metropolitan policy. Also, the City council has launched various efforts to promote health and a

good living. Recently, the National Institute for Public Health appraised the Malmö City council for its well-organized work on public health. Yet, the cleavages have deepened and boundaries become almost insurmountable.

Against this background, a new politics has recently been launched, called the 'Welfare Provision for All' programme, initiated by the chairman of the Council board, Ilmar Reepalu, on the basis of what he describes as twin obligations, in the first place ensuring a fairer distribution of welfare resources and secondly acting in ways that make Malmö sufficiently strong in order to function as a powerful and decisive engine of growth in Scania and in the Öresund region as a whole.

The 'Welfare Provision for All' programme will carry through a transformation of the City council itself in its dealing with the boundaries, aiming at bridging the gaps and healing the whole. The Council eagerly stresses the need of building on dialogues, trust and the inherent resources of the population. Will it succeed?

Obviously, that depends on the depth of the dialogues and if people could feel that they take part. It also depends on the extent to which the Council is prepared to build on the already existing good examples instead of imposing top-down solutions of its own. In my view, the biggest challenge consists of the claim to superiority, not only visible in always those high heights, but also constituting a lingering culture of the Council itself, aggravating dialogue and initiative from below. However, the programme has started with a promising declaration, never heard before, made by the city management: "We have failed!" That's a good sign.

And good examples do exist, like the ones summarized in the text boxes of this booklet, all of them presented within the EU programme URBACT, where Malmö is leading a project called "Young people – from exclusion to inclusion". These good examples underline the needs of empowering the young people, strengthening social relations, changing the structures of the schools, developing the approach to knowledge and co-operating with the local community.

However, a very fundamental problem, lurking beneath the surface of the well known and ingrained, needs to be thoroughly discussed and debated. It concerns the relation between transformation, boundaries and dialogues. Given the context of the global economy and the EU superiority, what kind of transformation is possible to achieve in a city like Malmö, that builds on dialogue with the residents and dismantles the boundaries?

