SWEDEN ENDS HERE?
SOCIAL MOVEMENT SCENES AND THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

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This study examines social movement scenes—dynamic constellations of people and places—created by Swedish autonomous movements. Social movement scenes shape action, interpersonal dynamics among activists, and how activists see possibilities for social change. Autonomous movements reject representative democracy as a form of authority and, by extension, reject state institutions. This represents a radical departure from strict norms that characterize political and public life in Sweden in which political participation generally takes the form of party membership and/or activity with trade unions with strong ties to the state. Through ethnographic observation, in-depth interviews and analysis of artifacts such as newspapers, zines, flyers, and manifestos, I examine how and why Swedish autonomous social movements use "the Right to the City" as an organizing principle to create scenes as alternative forms of urban life in Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö. I find that gentrification and urban development shape the possibilities for social movement scenes in each city. At the same time, autonomous movements try to create scenes that will change the political, cultural and spatial landscapes of city neighborhoods. I conclude that staking territorial claims allows activists to shape the future of everyday life in urban neighborhoods.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Housed in a large brick building that used to be an ice cream factory, the activist café *Glassfabriken* sits in the heart of Möllevången, a lively, bustling neighborhood in central Malmö, Sweden. The political character of the café is evident everywhere. Large, colorful flyers inside the front door call on visitors to "Stop the Gentrification of Möllevången." Racks of magazines with titles such as *Direkt Aktion* (Direct Action) line the walls. The cash register is covered with stickers that read, "Love Animals, Don't Eat Them" and "These faggots bash back," mixing the messages of animal rights and queer activism. A library along the back wall contains anti-capitalist manifestos, *No Logo* and *The Shock Doctrine* by Naomi Klein. As I sit down at a table surrounded by mismatched chairs, I glance out the window and see a sticker on a nearby drainpipe that features a swastika surrounded by a red circle with a line drawn through it, indicating that fascism is prohibited in this neighborhood. Two women sit close together on a couch and pore over a political magazine. At the table next to mine, I overhear a group of four men discussing how social movements in the city need to "take up space." They appear to be in their late 20s and early 30s and wear all black clothing, the unofficial uniform of Swedish urban activists. One of them wears an insignia bearing the letters SUF, which stands for Syndicalist Youth Federation (*Syndikalistiska Ungdomsförbundet*), an anarchist, anti-capitalist group that produces the magazine *Direkt Aktion*.

I interrupt the men's conversation, explaining that I am curious to learn more about social movement places in the city and ask them to tell me more about the area. Eager to introduce me to what they know, one of the men, Fredrik, scribbles a rough map on a napkin. Then Fredrik draws a star with a circle around it: "this is Glassfabriken, where we are now," he explains. Each of the guys in the group take turns drawing stars and explaining places to me: Utkanten, a social center that is "mainly where anarchists hang out"; Kontrapunkt, an activist and artist space that is "more about the parties, but they want to be a social center too"; and Amalthea, "a radical feminist bookshop and café," all of which are located in or around the neighborhood Möllevången.

Glassfabriken is at the heart of a vibrant social movement scene in Malmö. A *social movement scene* is "a *network of people* who share a set of subcultural or countercultural beliefs, values, norms, and convictions as well as *a network of physical spaces* where members of that group are known to congregate" (Leach and Haunss 2009:260, emphasis in the original). In this case, the network of people consists of loosely-organized and ideologically varied networks called *autonomous social movements*. The ideological variety is evident in symbols that promote a wide variety of political issues and ideologies; this one location promotes anti-capitalism, anti-fascism, anti-gentrification, feminist, queer, and animal rights. As the men at the table discussed with me, the network of physical places that makes up the scene in Malmo are located in and around the neighborhood of Möllevången.

When I began this project, Malmö was not even on my radar. I expected to find the most vibrant social movement scenes in Sweden's largest cities, Stockholm and Göteborg (Figure 1-1). Despite a number of diverse social movement groups operating in the city, I was surprised to find that there was a fragile scene Stockholm. I quickly found that there were tenuous, if any,

connections among groups and that activities were limited and hard to find. There were attempts to take over space in Stockholm, but—like the groups that initiated these actions—they were sporadic and short-lived. Göteborg has a more visible and active social movement presence in the city, but the scene was difficult to navigate because it was concentrated around tight-knit activist networks and a single social center that was difficult to find. One had to be "in the know" in order to access the Göteborg scene. Of all three cities, Malmö had the strongest, most vibrant scene. The scene there enjoys more permanence because of its embeddedness in a central neighborhood.

Figure 1-1: Map of Sweden featuring Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö, the country's three largest cities.

This research shows how social movement cultures are shaped by urban environments as well as how they affect cultural and spatial change in urban neighborhoods. Social movement scholarship largely focuses on how scenes help movements. For example, how cultural spaces might foster mobilization, shape collective identities, influence organizational forms, and/or contribute to movement longevity (see Leach & Haunss 2009 for an elaborated discussion on each of these topics). However, these studies rarely consider how these cultural spaces affect change in the physical landscape and local neighborhood communities. Urban sociologists focus largely on scenes as constellations of amenities that corporations, entrepreneurs, and local governments use to attract middle-class professionals to urban centers (Silver, Nichols, and Rothfield 2006). These scholars emphasize the relationship between scenes and spatial change in neighborhoods, but less often include social movements as important actors in these processes.

Sweden is an interesting and appropriate national context in which to study social movement scenes for two reasons. First, autonomous movements represent a break from how people typically engage with politics in Sweden. Social scientists who study Sweden often measure political involvement in terms of electoral politics and membership unions and/or voluntary associations (Amnå 2006b; Olsen 2002; Trägårdh 2006). Autonomous movements reject representative democracy as a form of authority—as evidence by the slogan "Sweden Ends Here" that I saw spray-painted on the doors of autonomous places. Instead of seeking to gain state power, as many movements in Sweden, they seek to dissolve it, turning instead to everyday life as a realm for political engagement. In a country with a strong state, this represents a radical departure from how people "do" politics.

Second, social movement scenes develop in advanced welfare states because they are more structurally conducive to full-time political engagement (Leach and Haunss 2009).

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Throughout Europe, autonomous movement scenes benefit from structural conditions. High standards of living and a comprehensive welfare system in countries such as Sweden allow people to engage full-time in activities related to social movement scenes. These features "make it possible for unemployed and underemployed people to engage full-time in social movements that prioritize everyday life as an important sphere of political action" (Leach and Haunss 2009:270). When healthcare, for example, is not tied to employment status, people have more time and flexibility for engaging in social movements full-time without worrying about having access to social services.

1.1   EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT SCENES

Scenes allow autonomous activists to establish a presence in neighborhoods through physical places, symbols, and social interactions that are an expression of their political beliefs. Social movement scenes allow social movements to become part of everyday life in urban neighborhoods in at least three ways. First, scene places serve as prefigurative spaces that represent micro versions of the future activists envision; they are also places that draw on the social and political histories of urban neighborhoods. Second, the presence of a movement scene makes autonomous politics part of everyday life routines by confronting passersby and patrons with political messages and practices. For example, walking down the streets of the Möllevången neighborhood in Malmö, I was met with the words "IsoleraIsrael.nu" ("IsolateIsrael.now") spraypainted on the sidewalk. When I got home, I immediately logged on to the website to see what it was about. I discovered that it belongs to BDS Sweden, a network that "campaigns for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel [as] an effective and clear way of

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supporting the Palestinian struggle for freedom and justice" (BDS Sweden 2014). In this way, simply walking down the sidewalk became an experience in political awareness. Third, scene places are important for developing a sense of *gemenskap* (solidarity and community) not only in social movements, but in urban neighborhoods as well. This became particularly evident in Göteborg and Stockholm where temporary, fragmented, and disbanded scene places are paralleled by temporary, fragmented, and disbanded social movement groups.

Scenes are both prefigurative spaces oriented toward a future society *and* spaces in which people seek to preserve social and political histories. While scenes represent "new imagined spatial orders" (Martin and Miller 2003:147), they are also attempts to preserve old socio-spatial orders. Interviewees routinely discuss attempts to preserve what they perceive as authentic about a neighborhood or place—primarily working-class culture and the organization of cities around production (past) rather than consumption (present).

In Swedish cities, autonomous movements draw on the history of the labor movement (*arbetarrörelsen*) as part of their efforts to legitimize claims to space. In the case of Malmö, autonomous movements make claims on space in the neighborhood of Möllevången because of its history as a labor movement stronghold. They contend that it is a neighborhood built by workers and labor movements and therefore social movements should have an important place (both socially and spatially) in everyday life there. In the cases of Göteborg and Stockholm, movements have been priced out of similar neighborhoods (Haga and Södermalm), but still draw on the history of Swedish People's Houses—self-managed buildings that served as political and cultural hubs for labor movements—as they build their own places in areas surrounding the city.

The origins that they seek to preserve are not about the original inhabitants of a neighborhood or place but the spirit of the neighborhood or place as they imagine it in the past.

In other words, these efforts are aimed at recapturing a spirit of solidarity and anti-capitalism that they imagine once existed in the area. In this way scenes are an "experience of origins" (Zukin 2010:2-3), created by preserving historic buildings, discouraging amenities designed to attract middle-class residents, and talking about neighborhoods in terms of their histories to underscore their distinctive identities as places built by social movements.

Autonomous movements enact "The Right to the City" to challenge the social, cultural, and spatial organization of urban life—whether the movements were attached to scenes or not. The Right to the City consists of the rights to *participation* (in decision-making processes about how city space is used) and *appropriation* (taking over physical space). Right to the City projects get creative energy from and strengthen social movement scenes. Projects aimed at appropriating city space, whether public squares for protest or buildings for a social movement's activities, reinforce the scene by (a) strengthening relationships amongst participants and (b) accessing space that enables the proliferation of physical places that make up the scene. In Malmö, this is precisely the case. Right to the City actions are nurtured by a social movement scene and help strengthen relationships between people and places that make up the scene. In Göteborg and Stockholm, these actions are not nurtured by scenes; rather, they are sporadic, temporary events that are not connected by networks of people or places.

Scenes are an *expression of* and *reinforced by* Right to the City projects in several ways. In contrast to urban centers organized around consumption, autonomous movement scenes operate according to anti-capitalist ethos. As urban life becomes increasingly individualized, scenes emphasize solidarity and collectivity. In city centers that cater to middle-class aesthetics and tastes, scenes cater to ''the less 'desirable' denizens of urban life – the homeless, the skaters, the goths and punks, the kids hanging out – those, in general, who do not have consumerism as

their main reason for participation in the city'' (Chatterton 2002:2). The shared beliefs, values, solidarity, and collectivity of "outsiderness" that are expressed as part of the Right to the City serve to reinforce the relationships between people in the scene.

Claims over who has Right to the City have become increasingly important as Swedish cities promote themselves as "creative cities." The creative city thesis states that a city's economic success is tied to its ability to attract the so-called "creative class" (middle-class, white collar workers in creative, knowledge-based professions) (Florida 2002). To attract and retain the creative class (whose businesses, ideas, knowledge, and work will improve the economy in post-industrial cities), many North American and European cities invest time and money into expanding cultural amenities, improving quality of housing, and preserving historic architecture. By design, the city becomes the exclusive domain of an upwardly mobile middle-class—a trend that Florida (2013) acknowledges. Like many places worldwide, Swedish cities began to operate according to creative city models in the early 2000s (Tingali et al 2007).

People involved in autonomous movements oppose these changes. While they appreciate creativity and knowledge work, they oppose the notion of creative output as commodities. Autonomists engage in creative knowledge work to "actively engage in expressive resistance" and create "everyday rebellious practices," not for economic mobility (Morgan and Ren 2012:128). The cultural amenities designed to attract creative professionals clash with the grassroots, Do-It-Yourself (DIY) spaces that autonomists promote. By building the networks of people and places that comprise social movement scenes, autonomous movements attempt to "destabilize entrenched and unequal social relations, moralities, and economic power" (Morgan and Ren 2012:128). In other words, while the creative class is guided by the market economy,

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autonomous movements seek to offer alternatives to the competitive, individualistic, commercial centers of cities.

1.2   ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

In the next chapter, I introduce theoretical approaches to studying scenes, both as general social phenomena and in relation to social movements. I distinguish between scenes and subculture, arguing that the former connotes more movement and fluidity, while the latter is overly structural and stable. In relation to social movements, I argue that social movement scholars too often conceptualize culture as stable contexts where political activity happens. As sets of social processes that are always *in flux*, the theoretical concept of a scene seems more conducive to the study of social *movements*.

In Chapter 3, I describe my data collection processes, analysis, and issues of access and my identity as a researcher. Chapter 4 offers an overview of Swedish political culture and social movement histories in order to situate autonomous movements in national and historical contexts. In doing so, I trace the history of autonomous movements from their roots in neighborhood movements (*byalagsrörelser*) of the 1960s, aimed at preserving historic buildings, through their transformation into more confrontational movements associated with squatting, black blocs, and anarchism. Swedish autonomists challenge nationally accepted approaches to culture and politics by rejecting representative democracy and voluntary association membership, the cornerstones of Swedish political culture.

Chapter 5 looks at how social centers—often the cultural hubs of scenes—are both prefigurative spaces where people imagine a future society *and* spaces in which people seek to

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preserve the past. Social centers are prefigurative places where people are encouraged to make their own rules. This contrasts greatly with the formal, bureaucratic processes that characterize Swedish political culture. Represented by the slogan "Sweden Ends Here," activists seek to distance themselves from notions of "Swedishness" that emphasize order, bureaucracy, and conformity. At the same time, activists draw on the traditions of an Old Left that is distinctly Swedish as they build social centers. Labor movements of the late 19th century created libraries, cultural centers, educational institutions, theaters, and parks to serve the cultural, educational, and recreational needs of workers. This is a culture that contemporary activists admire, and they attempt to re-create a similar style of movement culture—albeit one infused with contemporary political issues and a punk rock aesthetic.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I look at the relationship between scenes and city space to consider how scenes become embedded as part of everyday life (as in Malmö) or fail to become part of the fabric of urban neighborhoods (as in Göteborg and Stockholm). In Chapter 6, I show how the the Right to the City is used as a vehicle for diffusing autonomous movement culture into a neighborhood more generaly. While walking down the street, one sees political messages spraypainted on sidewalks and anti-capitalist stickers on drainpipes. When buying a cup of coffee at the local café, one is confronted with symbols of feminist activism and animal rights. A land occupation takes up space in what was once an empty lot. The Right to the City—in particular the rights to *appropriation* of space and *participation* in decision-making processes about how space is used—is enacted through the projects and places of the scene in Malmö. This, in turn, reinforces the scene by strengthening bonds between people and spurring development of more autonomous places. These actions are partially enabled by the fact that Möllevången, the neighborhood in which they operate, is structurally conducive to the

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development of a social movement scene. The neighborhood is centrally located, making activism visible, and nationally recognized as a hub of cultural and political activity. The neighborhood remains relatively affordable and accessible to activists, artists and students (for the time being). There is a constellation of places that are in close proximity to one another, allowing for routine social interactions. Taken together, these attributes and efforts create a sense of durability for the scene in Malmö. Activists' efforts are limited in some ways, such as social control by landlords and city authorities; rising rents in the neighborhood that make accessing space difficult or impossible; and competing notions of what constitutes politics, culture, and protest. However—for the time being—the scene gives autonomous practices a visible, everyday presence in the lives of Malmö residents.

In Chapter 7, I turn to Stockholm and Göteborg to consider what happens when scenes are not as central, visible, or accessible. In the two larger cities, there are similar social movements as those in Malmö, but different social movement *scenes* have different effects in each city. Scenes in Stockholm and Göteborg coalesce around temporary spaces in suburban areas, which gives them a more fleeting character. These cases highlight the importance of physical space for bringing people together. In Stockholm, a lack of centrality, visibility, accessibility of places contributes to the lack of a sense of connection and community among activists. In Göteborg, there are dense activist networks, but they are difficult to find and access. While there are some factors that make Malmö structurally conducive to the development of scenes, that is not the case in Stockholm and Göteborg. Social movements in the larger cities operate primarily in temporary spaces, which has an effect on how activists see the future. Because they view places as lending durability and stability to a movement, they do not see temporary spaces as having future reach, thereby limiting their impact on social change. There is

one exception in Stockholm: Cyklopen, a social center that became a national (and European) sensation in 2008 when it was destroyed by arson (allegedly by a neo-Nazi skinhead group). Their quest to build what they called a "free cultural center" gave renewed hope to autonomous activists who seek to make their mark in urban landscapes.

2.0   SCENESCAPES

Beginning with the Chicago School in the early 20th century, sociologists have explored micro-worlds ranging from gangs to dance halls, punk clubs to discos, and jazz clubs to gothic music scenes. Scholars have used this concept to study expressive, lifestyle scenes, focusing on style, consumerism, leisure, and aesthetics (see Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004; Bennett and Peterson 2004; Hall and Jefferson 1975; Hebdige 1979; Irwin 1977; Lloyd 2006; Muggleton 2005; Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003; Straw 2004). In the 1990s, a small group of cultural studies scholars advocated a theoretical shift from studying subcultures, which they viewed as static and homogeneous, to a study of something more dynamic (see, e.g. Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004; Hesmondhalgh 2005; Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003). These scholars emphasize the ''socio-spatial aspects'' of scenes – ''allusions to flexibility and transience, of temporary, ad hoc and strategic associations, a cultural space notable as much for its restricted as well as its porous sociality, its connotations of flux and flow, movement and mutability'' – and made the concept more appealing for capturing the dynamics of these micro-worlds (Stahl 2004:53)

Using the concept of a scene as a starting point, sociologists Darcy Leach and Sebastian Haunss (2009:260) coined the term "social movement scene." Not all social movements develop scenes. Scenes are of particular importance to movements "for whom defending, creating, and/or promoting a marginalized, repressed, or countercultural way of life is an essential aspect of their political praxis" (Leach and Haunss 2009:273). In Europe and the United States, these include

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radical feminist, gay and lesbian, and anarchist movements on the political left and white power

skinhead and neo-Nazi movements on the political right.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of scenes research in sociology, urban studies,

history, and geography. I begin with a discussion of "creative cities" models of urban

development through cultural districts and consider how social movement scenes are both

challenges and alternatives to cultural spaces that are designed by city governments. In

particular, I highlight two dimensions of social movement scenes: place-based politics and

everyday rituals. For left-wing movements, the network of places that form a scene are often

(re)produced out of responses to increasing neo-liberalization and gentrification in urban

neighborhoods. Then, I discuss how scenes are (re)produced by everyday rituals (e.g. music,

dance, theater, direct actions) in addition to being places where these things happen.

2.1   SCENES AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Scenes have become a hot topic in urban studies as cities throughout the world—

including Sweden's major cities—have adopted "creative city" policies to stimulate economic

growth in the face of post-industrial decline. These policies take the form of anti-littering

campaigns, building renovations, funding cultural startups (e.g. art galleries), and renovations of

parks and public squares. These efforts, often led by city governments, aim to create attractive

urban neighborhoods and culture that will entice creative workers to the area, thereby helping to

improve the city's economy.

The creative cities model of urban development originated from Richard Florida's (2002)

book *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Simply stated, Florida's thesis posits that in order to thrive

economically, post-industrial cities need to shift their development strategies to reflect the consumerist character of the city center. A bustling street life and amenities such as cafés, galleries, and bars are what attract the creative class to a city. Despite Florida's recent (2013) acknowledgment that the creative cities model contributes to social inequalities, city governments throughout the world embraced the model. As a result, studies of scenes have become increasingly important to policy analysts who want to know how to attract the so-called creative class to their cities and what socio-economic effects this might have. Pioneering this thread of sociological research, Dan Silver, Terry Nichols Clark, and Clemente Jesus Navarro Yanez (2010:2302) define a scene as "a specific cluster of amenities constituted by the ensemble of meanings or value orientations offered to the potential consumer." They classify scenes according to dimensions of *theatricality* (scenes are places to see and be seen); *authenticity* ("scenes affirm a sense of rootedness" in a neighborhood or community; and *legitimacy* ("a sense of the right and wrong way to behave" (2010:2299, 2300). These authors astutely note that "cultural amenities are not only, or even mainly, sites of economic activity, and their attraction is not reducible to economic factors" (2010:2295), and they recognize scenes as networks of places. However, they still define scenes solely in terms of shared consumption patterns. They argue that scenes are "places devoted to practices of meaning making through the pleasures of sociable consumption," but do not address this in any specificity (2010:2297).

In an empirical elaboration of their project, sociologists Dan Silver, Terry Nichols Clark, and Lawrence Rothfield (2006) created a national database of approximately 650 amenities, sorted by zip code, to create scene profiles that are rated on the dimensions listed above. Using the "creative class" model as a starting point, they want to find what kinds of amenities draw creative knowledge workers to urban areas. Therefore, their primary interest is in "bohemian

scenes," which they define as expressive, artistic, elitist, hostile to corporate culture, affirming of local business and encouraging of ethnic heterogeneity. Using a "Bohemian Score" as a dependent variable, their regression analyses show that bohemian scenes "are stronger in locations with larger populations, increasing populations, more retirees, higher income, increasing numbers of college graduates, more crime, and fewer whites" (2006:2313). Silver (2010) uses this database to compare variations in scenes across the nation, regions, and in the cities of New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. His comparison shows that New York is more intellectual, urbane, and fast-paced (authentic) than laid-back LA, in which car dealers and suburban amenities, such as fast food restaurants, are more abundant (theatrical).

What these analyses do not show is variation *within* cities, a seemingly obvious omission given that they use zip codes to measure scenes. How might the scene profile of the Lower East Side of Manhattan compare to Harlem? What would these results tell us about the quality of life in those places, if anything? How do we know who participates in the activities of the scene (i.e. people who live there or people who come there to shop or dine)? How do we know if such scenes have positive or negative social consequences for their neighborhoods? One goal of these scene studies is to examine the quality of place for urban residents, but this begs the question: how does it impact quality of life and for whom?

This line of scenes research is limited. First, it assumes social cohesion and inclusion. The implication in these measures is that because these opportunities for consumption are available, everyone in the neighborhood avails themselves of the opportunity to consume. What happens when people do not want or cannot afford to participate in such a consumer culture? Second, these studies are based solely on American cities. As Silver, Nichols, and Yanez (2010:2317) rightly point out, American cities "differ from the European social democratic

tradition, where workers would reside in homes built near their factories, and social life was more driven by production [than consumption]." These differences are important to understanding neighborhood change in social democratic contexts, where consumer city centers are *not* historically the norm. Finally, these studies do not examine the political consequences of these economic and social changes, a question to which I will turn in the next section.

2.2   SOCIAL MOVEMENT SCENES

Social movement scholarship sometimes features rich historical descriptions of "coteries and social circles" (Blum 2003:164). Historians write about coffeehouses and taverns in accounts of political scenes, both of which remain popular scene locations in contemporary movements. In the mid-17th century, a time when (censored) newspapers were "still in their infancy," coffeehouses emerged across Europe (e.g. Vienna, Hamburg, London) as places "for free expression, where pamphlets were read and speeches given" (Mannheim 1956:138). In 17th century Britain, coffeehouses were "bustling and vibrant London centers of political discussion" for all types of people, "regardless of gender, social status, or political outlook" (Pincus 1995:818). French coffeehouses had such a striking effect on political opinion "that in 1675 an ordinance was passed to put an end to them" (Mannheim 1956:139). Similarly, Swedish authorities banned coffee drinking in the 18th century and condemned coffeehouses as "dens of subversion where malcontents planned revolts" (Oldenburg 1999:67).

In revolution era Philadelphia, neighborhood taverns each "had [their] own crowd of regulars and thus each constituted an informal community cell of the city" (Oldenburg 1999:68). Tavern meetings between regulars "provided the underlying social fabric of the town," and are

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credited with generating "much of the commonplace community development that preceded the Revolution" (Oldenburg 1999:68). In the 1920s, Moscow's trade unions ran workers' clubs, which served as educational centers, theaters, dance and music halls, and cinemas. Worker-activists often discussed important issues in tea rooms and taverns, creating competition between clubs and other places as the center of (male) worker sociability. Consequently, the legacy of workers' clubs brings "'hangouts and hangovers' to mind more readily than 'schools of communism'" (Hatch 1994:117).

Scholars of new social movements have described social movement cultures using terms such as "free spaces" (Couto 1993; Evans and Boyte 1992; Polletta 1999), "submerged networks" (Melucci 1989), "safe spaces" (Gamson 1997), and "cultural havens," among others (Fantasia and Hirsch 1995). Free spaces are "small-scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilization" (Polletta 1999:1). As Leach and Haunss (2009) point out, a social movement scene shares characteristics with these ideas, but there is little uniformity in how the structures of these cultural spaces are defined. Some analyses refer to single places (Chatterton 2010; Glass 2010), while others include cyber networks (Kahn and Kellner 2004), and/or informal parties (Simi and Futrell 2010). Leach and Haunss (2009:259) have written a lengthy discussion distinguishing scenes from these other concepts, particularly free spaces. They conclude that a scene can be described as "a network of free spaces that encompasses one or more subcultures and/or countercultures." This is what sociologist Walter Nicholls (2009:88) refers to as "places of resistance strung together to form a relatively coherent social movement space." According to these definitions, social centers, infoshops, and coffeehouses are individual free spaces. The

relationships, events, and activities that connect these spaces are what constitute a scene. Therefore, a single place would not constitute a scene. A scene must include several places that are in some way connected to one another and to social movements.

Outside of literature on new social movements, sociologists, geographers, and historians have produced much work about what we can call social movement scenes, using Leach and Haunss's (2009) definition. Historian Anne Enke (2007:38) argues that the American feminist movement of the 1970s lived in a series of "alternative community spaces" in American cities, including bars, bookstores, parks, and feminist institutions, such as health clinics and rape crisis centers. Although Hodkinson & Chatterton (2006:210) write specifically about social centers in the United Kingdom, they acknowledge that social centers are connected to "dozens of other self-organized, radical spaces." Historian Tom Goyens (2009:445) describes "seemingly ordinary places [that] were, in effect, a network, an alternative space carved in the dominant, capitalist space of the metropolis" by German anarchists living in New York in the early 20th century. Italian sociologist Vincenzo Ruggiero (2001:112) paints a clear picture of a scene as "participating in the same events and, at times, sharing specific places and spaces in the city…[including] small 'alternative' restaurants, coffee shops, bookshops, bars, [and] also just squares and junctions." Even though these scholars do not use the term "scene," these descriptions include politically like-minded people (autonomists, feminists, anarchists) who frequent a network of physical places that are in some way cultural "alternatives."

Leach and Haunss (2009) offer a compelling start to the study of social movement scenes, but they tend to paint a picture of a rather stable entity and focus on what functions scenes serve for social movements, such as fostering mobilization, providing a point of entry into a movement, and whether scenes help or hinder a movement's political and/or cultural influence.

While their definition of a scene as networks of people and places is useful and scenes may well benefit movements in the ways they describe, I propose that thinking of scenes as *processes* is more useful than thinking of them solely as stable contexts where political activity happens (Creasap 2012). The dynamic energy and movement evoked by the term "scene" is what prompted scholars to move away from models of subculture, which tend to be overly structural and insufficiently interactional, and toward a study of scenes (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004). Scenes are works-in-progress. They are never final, but always coming and going. The processes of "making a scene"—through challenges to who "belongs" in public (and in some cases, private) spaces, rituals like music and protest, and everyday practices—*are* political work. This is not to say that the scene is the *entire* movement; not all people who participate in movements necessarily hang out in the scene. Conversely, not all people who hang out in the scene identify as part of a movement. Scenes and movements *intersect*, but they are not one and the same (Creasap 2012; Haunss and Leach 2007).

2.2.1 Place-Based Politics

Leach and Haunss (2009:260) acknowledge that "the presence of a scene at some point entails a struggle over territory." This raises important questions, such as what the struggle is about, where the territory is located, and how a scene forms. Some of the most exciting research on scenes comes from cultural and human geographies, specifically "geographies of resistance" (Featherstone 2008**;** also Pile and Keith 1997), where scholars ask how scene places are created, structured, and maintained; how social movements intervene in urban landscapes and respond to processes such as gentrification; and what these places mean to activists (Chatterton 2002, 2010; Chatterton and Pickerill 2010; Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006; Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto

2008; Pickerill and Chatterton 2006; Ruggiero 2001). This strand of human geography draws

heavily on urban sociology, especially the works of French social theorist Henri Lefebvre, whose

books *Urban Revolution* (2003 [1970]) and *The Right to the City* (1996 [1968]) together form a

manifesto for urban social movements. Indeed, "the right to the city" is a refrain used by urban

social movements to make claims about everything from housing to urban planning to police

brutality (Attoh 2011). Geographer David Harvey (2003:941) is, perhaps, the leading

contemporary proponent of "the right to the city," claiming that "the active right to make the city

different, to shape it more in accord with our heart's desire, and to re-make ourselves thereby in a

different image" is more important than ever.

For left-wing movements, scenes are often (re)produced out of attempts to intervene in

the urban landscape in response to increasing neo-liberalization and gentrification (Mitchell

2003, Purcell 2008). In both European and American cities, the "right to the city" is taking on a

new importance, as a new wave of "urban redevelopment has removed the poorest residents from

central quarters to the distant edges of the metropolitan region, replacing them with tall office

towers, luxury housing, and large-scale cultural amenities" (Zukin 2009:544). In response,

social movements "oppose new concentrations and segregations that confine city space and

demand once again the right to the city" (Portaliou 2007:174). The production of scenes, where

"people desire to constitute non-capitalist, egalitarian and solidaristic forms of political, social,

and economic organization" pose direct challenges to the political, social and economic changes

brought about by gentrification in cities (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006:730).

Squatting is a one form of action that is particularly important to understanding

contemporary urban social movements' claims to space and place. The hearts of many European

left-wing movement scenes beat inside squatted social centers, places taken over by activists in

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response to housing inequalities, urban corporatization, and/or to the privatization of public space (Montagna 2006; Mudu 2004; Katsiaficas 2006; Leontidou 2007). From the 1970s until recently, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, and Berlin were home to vibrant leftist scenes that were largely concentrated around squatted buildings (Katsiaficas 2006). Today, city governments and police are cracking down on squatters as they clear the way for urban redevelopment projects. After 25 years as a cultural and social center, Ungdomshuset in Copenhagen, Denmark, was forced to evacuate in 2007 and make way for a Christian congregation who bought the building from the city (BBC News 2007). The eviction caused several days of clashes between activists and police, resulted in hundreds of arrests—and created solidarity with activists from all over Europe and the United States who went to Copenhagen to help their Danish counterparts defend Ungdomshuset (Connolly 2007). Amid protests in October 2010, Amsterdam police began evicting an estimated 1500 people from roughly 200 squats around the city as a means of enforcing a new squatting ban (BBC News 2010). In February 2011, one of the last former squats in Berlin was evicted, where it took 2500 police officers to remove protesting residents from the building (Pidd 2011).

Leach and Haunss (2009:270) note that "scenes are more likely to develop where conditions are conducive to squatting and/or where rents are low enough to support noncommercial initiatives." There is no doubt that cheap real estate appeals to activists, but the symbolic aspects of squatting are also important to understanding where and how scenes take shape. Squatters take space in protest of the "corporate city," which represents "the high end of growth, the cultural hegemony of finance and the standardization of individual desire" (Zukin 2009:545). The creation of scene places, including squats, represents a return to the "urban village…the low-key and often low-income neighborhood, the culture of ethnic and social class

solidarity, and the dream of restoring a ruptured community" (Zukin 2009:546). Squatters'

responses to gentrification and privatization of public space are both symbolic (a rejection of

corporate values) and practical (offering an affordable alternative to consumers or residents).

Squatters seek to create space—both literally and figuratively—for "the less 'desirable'

denizens of urban life—the homeless, the skaters, the goths and punks, the kids hanging out—

those, in general, who do not have consumerism as their main reason for participation in the city"

(Chatterton 2002:2). More than just finding a place to host parties or plan discussions, squatters

seek to "undermine the power-sustaining symbolism of the given order" by intervening in the

urban landscape (Bieri 2002:209). The point is not to create a context in which the "real" work

of a social movement can be done; the creation (and/or defense) of places *is* political work. Thus

we should not think of scenes as conscious constructions, but rather as "a process by which

shared emotions and intersubjective focus sweep individuals along" (Collins 2004:32). People

do not collectively *decide* what places or styles characterize a particular scene, but these actions

create a buzz that attracts people to neighborhoods and places.

The symbolism of urban neighborhoods is also important to where scenes are produced.

In Swedish cities, authorities have zero tolerance for squatting, which they regard as an

"undemocratic" form of protest, and squatters are typically evicted within a week or two. Aside

from being cheap, taking up space in these neighborhoods is viewed by activists as a means of

reclaiming (or protecting) de-industrialized, working-class neighborhoods from corporate

housing developers and/or governmental control.

2.2.2 Rituals & Everyday Life

Leach and Haunss (2009:275) claim that "scenes play an important role in collective identity processes by providing an infrastructure for bridging politics and everyday life." This paints a picture of scenes as places where movement activities happen. However, if we think of scenes as interactional, it is likely that scenes are the *product* of rituals (e.g. music, dance, theater, direct actions) and prefigurative politics as much as they are places where these things happen.

Again, scenes are not always conscious constructions. Rather, people exhibit "a situational propensity toward certain cultural symbols" (Collins 2004:32). The symbols toward which people are drawn are the products of ritual. Rituals in social movement scenes might include concerts, discussion groups, political demonstrations, or street parties. Collins (2004:7) defines ritual as "a mechanism of mutually focused emotion and attention, producing a momentarily shared reality, which thereby generates solidarity and symbols of group membership." In cities everywhere there are places that are "bustling" and alive with the sense that "this is where the action is" (Collins 2001:27; also Oldenburg 2001; Blum 2003; Straw 2004). This phenomenon is captured by Emile Durkheim's notion of "collective effervescence" and is described by social movement scholars as a sense of "participating in something bigger than you" (Jasper 1998:194) and "a collective feeling of unusual energy, power, and solidarity" (Goodwin and Pfaff 2001:289).

Rituals begin with "emotional ingredients" which are then heightened and transformed during the ritual, and produce more emotions as outcomes, including feelings of solidarity or belonging (Collins 2004:105). Anyone who has been to a demonstration, a concert, a spiritual ceremony, or various other large, social gatherings can attest to the "buzz" that is in the air. In

cities everywhere there are places that are "bustling" and alive with the sense that "this is where the action is" (Collins 2001:27; also Oldenburg 2001; Blum 2003; Straw 2004).

As Leach and Haunss (2009:262) point out, a key characteristic of movements that form scenes is "a commitment to a prefigurative praxis." A core value of such movements is "to create and sustain within the live practice of the movement relationships and political forms that 'prefigure' and embody the desired society" (Breines 1989:6). For example, in conversations with activists at autonomous social centers in the United Kingdom, geographer Paul Chatterton (2010:1206) finds that "anti-capitalism is constituted through activists' everyday local practices." These activities include serving meals to the local community for free, holding open meetings for making decisions, or providing and repairing computers for collective use. These actions are viewed by activists as direct challenges to capitalism and consumerist culture, which emphasizes individuality, hierarchy, and monetary exchange for services. These places are grounded in the idea that "the process [of resistance] is as important as the outcome of resistance" (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006:9).

Leach and Haunss (2009:259) acknowledge that "the boundaries of scenes are constantly in flux," which raises questions of how, when, and by whom symbolic boundaries are enacted to signify who is a scene "insider" or "outsider." They claim that a sense of belonging in a scene is "based on cultural markers," presumably clothing and tastes (260). However, it is the relationships and solidarity produced by rituals (making music, participating in direct actions) and prefigurative practices (cooking together, planning parties) that create a sense of belonging among scene-goers. Even if a person looks "out of place" stylistically, they get a warmer welcome to the scene if they have friends who are "core activists" (Katsiaficas 2006) than someone who looks the part, but is socially unconnected.

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In ignoring or minimizing boundaries and conflicts that arise as part of "making a scene,"
scholars may be a bit too optimistic about the potential of scenes as prefigurative communities.
For example, Chatterton and Pickerill (2010:475) argue that "it is through its everyday rhythms
that meaning is given to post-capitalism and it is this reconceptualization that makes post-
capitalist practice mundane, but at the same time also accessible, exciting, feasible, and
powerful." Scene hangouts can become places that function as "closed, private spaces or clubs
for activists and their friends," which also points to the importance of relationships as boundary
markers (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006:312).

Questions related to scene boundaries are difficult—at least for left-wing scenes—
because of the wide range of people who circulate through the networks of bars, cafés, and
bookshops of the scene. As social movement scholars Debra Friedman and Doug McAdam
point out, "a collective identity that is inclusive of a wide range of attitudes tends to make the
group *more* rather than *less* exclusive" because of the potential for conflict (1992, 164, my
emphasis). People often "do activism" without identifying as activists (Bobel 2007; see also
Chatterton 2010; Pickerill and Chatterton 2006). This may be a conscious decision, as to avoid
conflict and divisions between activists/non-activists *or* it may simply be that people don't
identify themselves in that way. Leftist scenes are made by people who identify in a number of
ways: anarchists, squatters, feminists, environmentalists, queers, musicians, artists, hipsters,
bikers, students, and so on. Another possibility is that some people involved in a movement
scene may not identify with the corresponding movement at all; they might consider themselves
music fans or artists who appreciate the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethos or the underground
aesthetics of the scene. These scene-goers—who most often find out about scene places through
word-of-mouth and friends of friends—may or may not be sympathetic to the movement, and

probably identify more as consumers in an underground or alternative cultural world than as pioneers of post-capitalist life.

2.3   CONCLUSION

Research in sociology, urban studies, and geography often focuses on scenes as collections of amenities geared toward the leisure pursuits of middle-class urban inhabitants. Social movement scenes challenge these modes of urban life and present alternatives to the scenes designed by city governments as part of creative city policies. Place-based politics and everyday rituals are particularly important for understanding how social movement scenes operate. These scenes are intimately connected to social movements—in this case autonomous movements—and the particular cultural environments in which they form. In the next chapter, I will present my methodological approach to studying these environments in Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö.

3.0   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In pursuing my analysis of radical leftist scenes, I engaged in a total of 12 months of fieldwork in Sweden from September 2009 to August 2010, with an additional month in Malmö in August 2011. This fieldwork built on previous research trips in the summers of 2007 and 2008, during which I established contacts with people and groups involved in or with knowledge of the autonomous left in Sweden. Initially, I had planned to compare two Sweden's two largest cities, Stockholm and Göteborg, so I based my research activities in those cities for 4 and 7 months, respectively. Through interviewing activists in these cities I came to learn about the scene in Malmö, which was, by far, the most vibrant scene of the three cities, so I made several trips there in 2010 (while based in Göteborg) and 2011, when I stayed in Malmö for four weeks to conduct additional interviews and further participant observation.

In this chapter, I first explain how I entered the three fields in which I conducted this research. Second, I explain the various methods of data collection in which I engaged for this project, including participant observation of scene places and events, interviews, and cultural artifacts such as newspaper articles and activist media (e.g. flyers, pamphlets, posters, stickers, zines, etc.) Third, I describe how I coded and analyzed these data. Finally, I end this chapter with a section on my identity and how it affected access to the groups I studied.

3.1   ENTRY INTO THE FIELD

I arrived in Stockholm in September 2009 and secured an apartment on the island of Kungsholmen, a western borough in central Stockholm. I quickly discovered that the Stockholm scene was spread out, hard to access, and organized around temporary spaces and gatherings about which one had to be "in the know" to find. I expressed surprise to activists that I interviewed about how difficult it seemed to be to find out about leftist culture in such a big city. From the wealth of information online, it seemed that Stockholm's scene was vibrant and alive. In reality, there were a few isolated and short-lived squatting projects and meetings of activist networks during my stay. With no social network, I found out about these events from newspapers and websites, which, in the case of squats, meant that police knew about and had raided them before I could make my way there to talk to people. Stockholm activists attributed the lack of a scene to the fact that they had no centrally located neighborhood or place in which to meet. Many lamented that Södermalm, once the home to left-wing and punk rock subcultures, was now a glittering, trendy commercial area.

After four months of spending hours at the most well-known left-wing café in Stockholm, Kafé 44, and not meeting many people, I decided to try moving on to Göteborg. I had been told by Swedish acquaintances that, as a working-class city, Göteborg had a livelier activist scene. I thought that perhaps once I met people in Göteborg, they could help me make contacts in Stockholm. Upon arriving in Göteborg in January 2010, I spotted a tent in the center of the city with a large banner that read "Protest the Iranian Regime." The protest was in response to the execution of anti-government protesters in Iran. I took this visible display of political protest as

an encouraging sign that I would have better luck finding people who were "making a scene" in Göteborg.

Indeed, Göteborg does have a large and active leftist community, both in terms of extraparliamentary and party politics, but while leftist political parties and organizations are visibly located in an area of the central city, the extraparliamentary scene is primarily centered around a single place, Kulturhuset Underjorden, a social center on the edge of the city. Additionally, the events surrounding the 2001 riots at the EU Summit had a significant impact on how I was regarded by radical activists in Göteborg. One such activist, Maja, claims that the events of 2001 have heightened activists' "paranoia" about police surveillance and continues to make activists feel as though they are being persecuted by police; "The cops think that every crime has something to do with us," she says. In Göteborg, therefore, it was not the lack of a scene that I discovered, but a very *closed* scene. The scene is centered in a single place, on the outskirts of the city, where people know one another very well. Even during public events or when I went there to meet people who worked in the social center, I felt the stares of other people boring into me. In general, few people were willing to talk to me, an outsider, and even fewer were willing to have our conversations recorded.

Activists in both Stockholm and Göteborg told me about Utkanten, a social center in Malmö. I got the impression that activists looked to Malmö—the smallest city in this study—as a model for activist and artistic culture and community. Upon arriving in Malmö, I understood why. Unlike Stockholm, the scene is visible, lively, and easily accessible. Unlike Göteborg, the scene is present in a number of places, centrally located in and around one neighborhood, and populated by multiple networks of leftist activists, artists, and neighborhood residents who were welcoming and willing to participate in my project.

3.2   DATA COLLECTION

3.2.1   Interviews

In total, I conducted semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A) with 38 activists and artists involved in leftist movement scenes (25 in Malmö, 8 in Göteborg, 5 in Stockholm). I recorded 30 of these interviews with a digital device and transcribed them later. I conducted 8 semi-structured interviews during which I recorded responses to questions by hand, including as many verbatim passages as possible, which I transcribed and reconstructed in as much detail as possible immediately afterwards. I conducted 5 of my interviews in Göteborg in this fashion, because people did not want me to record our interviews electronically. I conducted 3 interviews in Malmö by hand simply because they happened spontaneously, and I did not have my recorder on hand. Digitally and manually recorded semi-structured interviews lasted between 45 and 120 minutes, averaging about 60 minutes per interview. In addition, I conducted 20 informal interviews, which took the form of "remembered conversations" (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002:122) with groups and individuals during which I talked to and observed people going about their daily activities while writing down verbatim passages as we talked or taking notes as soon as possible after the conversation ended.

I interviewed both men (n = 26) and women (n = 12) who ranged in age from 18 to 37, with most interviewees in their late 20s and early 30s. All interviewees were white and Swedish, with the exception of three people, who came from Austria, Belgium, and the United States, but had five or more years of involvement autonomous places in Sweden. They self-identified in a number of ways: as anarchists, squatters, anti-fascists, feminists, or more often, simply activists

or artists—or some combination thereof. What all of them had in common was that they played active roles in autonomous places and spaces.

I selected interview participants primarily via snowball sampling. I found initial contacts through two methods: (1) emailing social centers, cafés, and activist networks and (2) asking colleagues in each city for help finding interviewees who were involved in autonomous scenes. From there, I asked each person I interviewed for the names of other contacts. Often, given their worries about surveillance by authorities (see section 4.4.1 below), it was difficult to get contact information. In most cases, I relied on my interviewees to make contact with one another, filling me in only when they had found someone who agreed to be interviewed. In a handful of cases, I used purposive sampling to select participants. In these cases, I deliberately selected people in order to yield data on specific events, places, or groups. For example, when I found out about the Anarchist Bookfair in Stockholm, I contacted the organizer directly to interview him.

I conducted interviews in English and "Swenglish," a combination of Swedish and English. I gave all Swedish interviewees the option to speak Swedish, and in a few cases, they took me up on the offer, speaking only Swedish with me. In those cases, I asked questions in English and they responded in Swedish so that both of us could clearly express ourselves and neither of us had a linguistic advantage (Marschan-Piekkari and Reis 2004). Most interviewees elected to speak English with me, but often switched to Swedish during portions of the interview in order to express themselves more clearly. I spoke English with the three international interviewees. Communicating with participants in Swedish and/or Swenglish was important for three reasons: it allowed interviewees to express themselves fully, helped me establish rapport, and enabled me to interpret their words in cultural and/or linguistic contexts (Tsang 1998).

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Each interview took place in a location chosen by the interviewee. We met in cafés, libraries, social centers, and, in a few cases, in participants' homes. I began each interview with questions aimed at getting a broad picture of the activist scene in each city, such as asking people to describe the scenes in their city and about their own involvement in those scenes. Most often, interviewees worked in a scene place or were part of one or more activist networks, so I asked questions particular to those places and networks. For example, while interviewing someone who worked in a social center, I asked questions about how the center operated, the degree of "openness" of the center (i.e. who was welcome there), how the social center fit into the surrounding community, the relationship of the center with other scene places and whether or not they had experienced any conflicts, either internally or with authorities or neighbors. Inevitably these questions led to discussions about urban space; these interview took place during the "squatting wave," so urban politics were on the minds of many activists. I asked them why squatting and battles over space had taken on renewed importance in Sweden at this particular time, and I elicited specific examples of changes in cities that affected their everyday lives.

3.2.2 Observation

Over the course of several research trips to Sweden, I engaged in ethnographic observation at scene places, including cafés, infoshops, and social centers, as well as numerous events, including meetings, film discussion groups, street festivals, demonstrations, parties, concerts, and an anarchist bookfair (see Appendix B for observation template). I found out about events by word of mouth from colleagues, acquaintances, and interviewees, websites, and flyers posted around town. I carried a small notebook in my bag at all times and would either jot notes if the place or event allowed it (as in discussion groups where people commonly took notes).

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Otherwise, I took notes at home as soon as possible after leaving the place or event. I transcribed all handwritten notes into more elaborate memos after each event.

My participation varied depending on the situation. I only attended meetings and discussion groups if granted permission by a group or if the meeting was open to the public. My participant observations took two forms: passive and active observation. *Passive* observation involved watching interactions between people in scene places. For example, I often spent time at Kafé 44 when there was not a special event going on there in order to see the everyday routines of the people in that place. I participated as a café patron, but did not always interact with other patrons. *Active* observation included participating in the activities or events of the scene. For example, helping staff move books at an infoshop or making dinner with groups of people at social centers.

3.2.3   Newspapers and Activist Produced Media

There is very little literature on autonomous movements in Sweden, so I spent a good deal of time collecting historical and contemporary documents in order to compose a comprehensive background on radical social movements in Sweden. I gathered historical data on radical left-wing movements in Sweden by looking at back issues of the anarchist newspaper *Brand*. As I detail in the next chapter, it is the longest running anarchist newspaper (now a magazine) in the world and all back issues are housed at the Undergraduate and Newspaper Library at Göteborg University.

I did comprehensive searches of major newspapers, including *Dagens Nyheter, Göteborgs-Posten, Svenska Dagbladet,* and *Sydsvenskan*. For all information that was more than 3 to 4 years old, I searched microfilm at the Undergraduate and Newspaper Library at Göteborg

University. For more recent information, I searched these newspapers via their websites. These searches resulted in more than 100 articles on urban protests, including squatting, since 1969 (the year of the first squatting protest in Lund), as well as articles on specific scene places. These sources were not only valuable for tracing the history of radical leftist culture since 1969, but also for gathering public interviews with activists and developing a picture of how autonomous actors and spaces are portrayed by the media and regarded by local authorities and politicians. In interviews, activists often talked about how they had been negatively portrayed by journalists and politicians—which sometimes made them suspicious of me as an interviewer, initially—and looking at news articles helped contextualize the stories and events about which they spoke in interviews and informal conversations.

Over the course of several visits to Sweden, I also collected a wealth of activist produced print media, including zines (independent, handmade publications), newspapers, flyers, brochures, manifestos, stickers, and books. I purchased most of these materials in scene places, particularly Kafé 44 in Stockholm and Glassfabriken and Amalthea in Malmö. If these places were sold out of something I needed, I ordered online. I picked up flyers whenever I attended events and took photos of stickers, graffiti, and posters that I saw around town. I also attended an Anarchist Bookfair in Stockholm in June 2010, where I bought a number of activist produced zines, newspapers, and books from all over Sweden. Three sources have been particularly useful for gathering public interviews and information about events, meetings, demonstrations, and groups to contact: *Brand,* mentioned above, *Direkt Aktion*, a quarterly magazine produced by the Syndicalist Youth Union (*Syndikalistisk Ungdomsförbundet)* since 1996, and the website *Motkraft,* a comprehensive source of "news from and about the extraparliamentary left"

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(motkraft.net).

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

I coded all data inductively and deductively using NVivo 8 qualitative data analysis software. I translated and transcribed my interviews concurrently, noting Swedish phrases and words when they were important or did not have an English equivalent (e.g. *Folkets hus* or "people's house"). Using NVivo, I also coded the audio files of interviews that I conducted in Swedish so that I could return to them later and listen to how participants worded their responses or to double check my translations.

My analysis involved both open and focused coding of notes, interviews, documents, and images. To create open codes, I read archival and print materials, fieldnotes, and interview transcripts "line-by-line to identify and formulate any and all ideas, themes, or issues they suggest" (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995:143). I began by inductively coding data, looking for any and all themes that emerged and could become categories of analysis. Open codes were broad (e.g. "organization" or "boundaries") and numbered in the hundreds. In the second stage of the coding process, I coded deductively, using concepts from my literature review as a guide. I re-read all data to search out passages that exemplified these deductive codes. Then, I cross-checked the inductive and deductive codes and wrote analytical memos on codes that emerged most frequently.

After developing both inductive and deductive codes, I began the process of focused coding using the "tree nodes" function in NVivo. This allowed me to create a hierarchy of focused codes with broader themes at the top and more focused themes at the bottom of the tree. For example, the broad theme "Swedishness," a term frequently used by interviewees, was at the

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top of a tree, while subthemes such as "order" and "bureaucracy" served as the branches of the tree node. I organized each "tree" by conceptual relationships, using just one concept per node. I printed these concept trees and kept them in binders organized by theme; as I wrote my analyses, I listened to coded audio and referred to the concept trees (and revised them) several times to develop the themes for which I had coded.

3.4   ACCESS & RESEARCHER IDENTITY

3.4.1   Access

Gaining access to networks of activists was extremely difficult for several reasons, not least of which is that scenes are not formally organized entities. Emails to scene places often went unanswered, and getting contact information for individuals was nearly impossible. Due to concerns about privacy of information, many contacts said, "I will ask my friends if they'll talk to you," but would not divulge their friends' contact information, leaving me unable to have any control over whom, when, or how they asked to participate. In a couple of cases, these logistics prevented me from being able to get in touch with people who *were* willing to let me interview them. In one instance, I emailed a bookshop and followed up by visiting in person. The woman working said, "Oh yes, there were two people who said they would talk to you, but of course I can't give you their contact information, so please write your phone number down for me to give to them again." Despite my persistent follow up visits and emails, I never made contact with the two potential interviewees.

Another difficulty was that in Sweden, strangers just don't talk to one another, even in the most public of spaces. When I told a Swedish acquaintance about my plan to simply

approach people in public spaces to ask questions as an observer, she looked horrified. "You can't do that here," she said, "people will think you're crazy." She went on to say, "people say that if you talk to someone you don't know in public, you must be drunk, crazy, or American." Unfortunately, she was right. Approaching people in cafés or bookshops to strike up an informal conversation or ask even basic questions raised suspicions, particularly among activists, about who I was and what I wanted to know.

Among activists who find themselves under surveillance by police or who are negatively portrayed by newspaper journalists, access was particularly difficult. When I asked workers at Glassfabriken, a café in Malmö, why there was a sign next to the cash register forbidding photos, they told me they just didn't like tourists taking photos. When I asked an employee about the sign in an informal interview, he said, "most of the people working [at Glassfabriken] are activists and they're paranoid about the cops taking surveillance photos in there." While my original research design included a photo diary element, this was simply not feasible given activists' concerns about surveillance.

In Göteborg, I posted a message on socialism.nu, an online discussion board where radical activists of all types meet. I posted a short note saying that I was a researcher looking for activists who would be willing to let me interview them about the autonomous movement environment (*den autonoma miljön*). I got a hostile response from a man named Peter, who wrote "Do not post here. We are *not* interested in being material for your study." The post did result in one interview, however, with a young woman named Lena who is involved in Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) and the network *Ingen Människa är Illegal* (No One is Illegal). From the start, she was very cautious with me, wanting to know about my background, where I lived, and asked "how do I know you're not a cop?" I answered all of her questions honestly—what I was

studying, where I was from, in what area of the city I lived, and so on. I sent her a link to my personal website so that she could check me out. I told her that I was not a journalist and did not have an agenda, but that I wanted to hear about her experiences for my dissertation. We attempted to meet several times, and she canceled 3 times before we finally met. She said she didn't want to meet in a café, but somewhere private where she could speak freely. We met in the basement of a university library that holds dusty periodicals. She sent me a text message one hour before the interview to say that she would not tell me her last name, adding, "I hope you understand." When we met, she confided, "My friends all told me, 'don't do it! Don't do it! She's probably a cop!' but I just had a good feeling about you"

Not all of my interactions were so clandestine. I found "gatekeepers" through a variety of channels: asking Swedish social movement scholars for interview contacts, emailing activist networks and scene places, and by telling everyone I met about my project and my need for contacts. When I attended an event or showed up to a scene location with a known activist, I was welcomed and people graciously answered questions and asked questions about me, but I still remained an outsider, both culturally and socially.

3.4.2   Researcher Identity

I remained a cultural outsider during my fieldwork for two reasons: I am an American who is not a native Swedish speaker. Elin, an activist in Malmö, pointed out that I might have trouble getting access because I am American. She said, "for better or worse, there are a lot of negative things associated with being American, so I'm sorry to say that that might be a reason why people—especially anti-capitalists—don't want to talk to you." "Wow," I said, "I've never heard

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that before. Usually people just say, 'I don't want to talk to you because you're a researcher.'"

"Well…that's easier to say," she replied.

Often, I found myself being a more passive participant than I would have been had I been in a similar situation in the United States because I was self-conscious about my language skills or did not think that I could effectively communicate what I wanted to say in Swedish. This was especially true at the beginning of my fieldwork, when I was getting my footing in a new culture. At times my Swedish, while fine for everyday conversation and one-on-one interviews, made it difficult to keep up with group conversations. While I felt that I could understand everything that people were saying, I sometimes had a difficult time expressing myself under the pressure of several people staring at me.

Being an outsider was not always disadvantageous; sometimes being an English speaker allowed me to see and hear things that insiders might take for granted. Since I am not a native Swedish speaker, I became very attuned to language and word choice, which sometimes revealed important analytical points. For example, in Malmö, I noticed that people used different terms to refer to city residents (*Malmöbor*) and residents of the neighborhood Möllevången (*Möllevångare*). As I describe in Chapter 6, this linguistic convention marks the neighborhood and its residents as special.

While I was a cultural outsider in some respects, I was also a cultural insider in ways that allowed me to build rapport with participants. As a white woman in my 30s with experience in feminist and queer activism and DIY punk rock cultures, I resembled many of the people I interviewed. Most participants assumed that my interest in them implied some kind of activist history. Upon my initial meetings with people, I was often asked, "what kind of activism have you done?" and I answered honestly. I do not identify as anarchist or autonomous, but my

involvement in feminist and queer politics allowed people to connect with me—and often

reassured those who were suspicious about my motives.

4.0 THE EXTRAPARLIAMENTARY LEFT AND THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

4.1 SWEDISH POLITICAL CULTURE

From the party's inception in 1889, Swedish Social Democrats (the architects of the welfare state) promoted a national identity based on ideas of collectivity, equality, and homogeneity. Today, the sense of a common national identity is being displaced by individualism, difference, heterogeneity, and political and economic internationalism (Trägårdh 2006). Autonomists are among the loudest voices challenging problems resulting from these changes, but do so using methods that are *not* traditionally Swedish. Sweden prides itself on the efficiency of its modern, bureaucratic institutions and long history of voluntary organization membership and strong electoral system (Amnå 2006b). Autonomists work *outside* the channels of representative democracy and *reject* hierarchical organizations. Although Swedish political actors traditionally favor consensus over conflict, autonomists take to the streets and confront authorities, often violently. In short, Swedish autonomists eschew traditional approaches to culture and politics.

In both European and American studies of Swedish society and political culture, sociologists generally put the welfare state at the center. The Swedish state, with its emphasis on "social citizenship and generous social benefits" in the realms of education, work, health care, and family life, has become "a primary example of the social democratic welfare regime" (Olsen 2002:125). Some examples of policies that are often heralded include: high-quality education

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from pre-school through university for all Swedish citizens; up to 18 months of paid parental leave for both mothers and fathers; and a high level of women's active participation in government, to name a few. It is not an overstatement to say that many sociologists regard the so-called "Swedish Model" as *the* most modern, progressive, and egalitarian democracy in the contemporary world (Amnå 2006b; Olsen 2002; Trägårdh 2006).

The fact that many sociologists and political scientists describe the Swedish welfare state as the most progressive in the world is precisely what makes Sweden an interesting place in which to study movements that seek to work outside the boundaries of representative democracy. In countries known for "massive systems of representative democracy and majority rule," extraparliamentary movements challenge "what is normally understood as political" by rebuking these processes (Katsiaficas 2006:6). This is especially true in Sweden, where political involvement is viewed by both the public and social scientists primarily in terms of party politics and there is a rich history of voluntary association involvement.

For many years, "Swedish politics was based on the assumption that social change could be accomplished through a specific political and administrative process" (Lindvall and Rothstein 2006:49). Recent debates on the meaning of "civil society" in the Swedish context are revealing in terms of how political involvement is measured. Swedish social scientists lament that, since the late 1980s, the Swedish public has become increasingly politically disengaged. They contend that these changes are being influenced from two directions: (1) "from above, by the growing fossilization of political parties and popular mass movements no longer able to capture and utilize the political potential of the public," and (2) "from below, by the average Swede's increasingly emaciated interest in direct political involvement" (Grassman and Svedberg 2006:147). What this demonstrates is that there is a tendency among Swedish social scientists to

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measure political participation in terms of political party activity, volunteer organization membership (or voluntary associations, as they are called in Sweden), and individual motivation.

Some Swedish social scientists acknowledge that perhaps political participation or interest is not lacking, but simply that some Swedes define what is "political" in new ways (Amnå 2006a; Grassman and Svedberg 2006; Sörbom 2005). Swedish sociologist Adrienne Sörbom (2005:19) points out:

> The traditional political sociologists' focus (like much political science research) on the parliamentary system cannot explain the trend of an increased engagement outside the traditional political arenas that happen simultaneously with decreased participation in political parties. In order to do that, researchers must look at activities outside the parliamentary system.

To accurately capture political involvement in contemporary Sweden, scholars must look more closely at how people are actually engaging with contemporary social and political issues rather than relying on traditional categories of analysis. Studying social movements in terms of scenes is one way that social movement scholars can move beyond the confines of traditional sociopolitical institutions to examine contemporary forms of social action and the meanings that people give to social and political involvement.

4.1.1   Uniquely Swedish: Popular Movements and the Welfare State

While my dissertation is about contemporary movements, the historical relationships between social movements and the Swedish welfare state are important for several reasons. First, the unique characteristics of early "people's movements" (*folkrörelser*), as they are called in Sweden, explain why Swedish political culture has developed in a way that is uniquely Scandinavian and incomparable to Europe south of Denmark. Second, the welfare state is inextricably connected to Swedish national identity. Third, popular movements actively

participated in creating the welfare state with the Social Democratic party in the 1930s. As a result, the concept of "civil society" as separate from the state is a relatively new and unfamiliar idea in Swedish culture (Trägårdh 2006). Therefore, people who participate in autonomous movements "defy the Swedish civil society tradition of being tightly connected with the nation state" (Amnå 2006b:588).

Popular "people's movements" (*folkrörelser*, in Swedish) were instrumental in creating Sweden's social democratic welfare state, a process which created the mold for, and continues to shape, Swedish political culture. The term "people's movements" generally refers to three movements with roots in the 19th century: temperance, religious revivalist or "free church," and labor. These movements and the voluntary associations that sprang from them "comprise a national treasure" in the Swedish imagination (Amnå 2006a:166). The legacy of the people's movements, particularly a strong labor movement, has given Sweden a reputation as "a land of popular mass movements" and a nation of politically active citizens (Grassman and Svedberg 2006:133).

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the "most important collective actor" in most European countries was the working class (Gundelach 1990:338). But industrialization came late to Sweden. In 1870, only 9 percent of Swedish workers worked in industry, compared to 43 percent in Great Britain (Korpi 1978). Being a mainly rural society until the 1930s, Sweden had two strong, but competing movements during this period: workers and peasants (Gundelach 1990; Hajighasemi 2004). This competition would prove to be an important factor in the development of Swedish national identity and the Social Democratic welfare state.

Swedish peasants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries occupied a "unique position" compared to peasants in other European countries at the same time. In Sweden, the peasantry

"largely escaped feudalism and even retained its rights to be represented as a separate estate in the *Riksdag* [parliament]" (Trägårdh 2006:29). There was an extensive system of local self-government and the peasantry was *aligned* with the crown against the nobility. As a result, the nobility were not as powerful in Sweden as they were in other parts of Europe. Rather than increasing or extending the rights of the noble classes, the Swedes favored a process of "eliminating rather than extending privileges and special rights" (Trägårdh 2006:29; also Rothstein and Trägårdh 2006).

In the mid to late 19th century, the temperance[1] and religious revivalist movements began to challenge the authority of the monarchy, the military, and the Lutheran state church. It was within the temperance and "free-church" movements that "the idea of social insurance began to grow and gain a foothold in local communities" (Olsen 2002:128). Both of these movements "supplied the labor movement with many cadres who brought with them the culture of popular movement into the trade unions—in particular the experience of organizing, educating, and transforming people and changing their lives and living conditions" (Hajighasemi 2004:94). The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (*Landsorganisationen i Sverige*, abbreviated LO) was established in 1898. Since its establishment, LO "has had strong links to the Social Democratic Party" (Landsorganisationen i Sverige 2007:13), giving it "an influential role in shaping government policy" (Agius 2006:589).

Under these historical conditions, the Social Democrats were able to use the peasant and labor movements to their advantage in creating the welfare state in the 1930s. The vision of the early *sossar* (Social Democrats) was that Social Democracy was "capable of unifying all the

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[1] In its earliest days, the temperance movement was "closely allied with the state church" but underwent a process of secularization that "transformed [it] into a popular cultural movement without religious anchorage" (Bengtsson 1938: 137).

'little people,' including workers, peasants, and the middle class" (Hajighasemi 2004:97). They envisioned a "strong state" that created a political culture in which "wide political majorities and the support of interest groups were thought to be of great value" (Lindvall and Rothstein 2006:49). The Social Democrats filled dual roles as "the party of the state" as well as "the voice of the people's movements." They were successful in bringing together a cross-class alliance of people, which allowed them to dominate Swedish politics from 1933 to 2006. This created a brand of statism with a strong state on one hand and "emancipated and autonomous individuals" on the other, thereby linking "social equality, national solidarity, and individual autonomy" (Trägårdh 2006:29).

Swedish national identity is inextricably connected to welfare state. As early as the 1890s, the Social Democratic party began using the concept of *folkhemmet* ("the people's home") as its main organizing principle. Folkhemmet envisions government "as a home that protects the nation's people as much as a family's home protects each of its members" (Agius 2007:588). Central to the notion of folkhemmet are "feelings and values of safety, solidarity and equality as well as homogeneity, similarity, localism and even provincialism" (Amnå 2006b:588). For many Swedes, the welfare state is more than a set of institutions, it is the realization of folkhemmet. The people's home is part of a "national narrative that has cast the Swedes as intrinsically democratic and freedom-loving, as having 'democracy in the blood' as the Social Democrats put it in the 1920s and 1930s" (Trägårdh 2006:27).

All of this set the stage for a very different relationship between "the people" and "the state" than we commonly see in Western Europe or the United States (Agius 2006; Gundelach 1990; Trägårdh 2006). In Sweden, there was not "a clear separation between state and society,"

as there was in other European countries (Agius 2006:588). State and civil society were not conceptualized as separate spheres. Swedish political culture developed in a unique way:

> The time-honored tradition of seeing the king/state as an ally against the upper classes mutated and deepened with the democratization of the political system and the rise to power of the workers' and peasants' parties. Instead of seeing "civil society" as the crucial repository of freedom and protection against the power of the state, the state was seen as having a legitimate and decisive role to play in eradicating inequalities and the remaining privileges of the upper classes (Trägårdh 2006:29).

Early social movements (in the form of voluntary associations) were in a friendly alliance with the Social Democratic welfare state from its inception. As a result, even Swedes who believe in a strong state tended to "celebrate the tradition of social movements as well as the longstanding practice of inviting and involving organizations in the long process of turning a proposal into a law or policy" (Trägårdh 2006:31). These voluntary associations do *not* have an oppositional relationship to the government, but have traditionally partnered *with* the government. This is important because, as I will argue later, the institutional/autonomous divide is what defines contemporary autonomous movements, making Swedish activists' defiance of tradition significant.

4.2   "DE AUTONOMA" (THE AUTONOMOUS)

4.2.1   Terminology

The most well-known autonomous movements in Europe are the Italian and German versions, known as *Autonomia* and the *Autonomen*, respectively. Autonomia developed from worker, feminist, and student movement strands of the 1960s and 1970s. Influenced by the autonomists

in Italy, sources of autonomous politics in Germany sprang from feminist, antinuclear, and squatter movements of the 1970s and '80s. Autonomous movements in each of these countries provided participants a way to "steer clear of the ossified thinking of the traditional Left" and to develop "a collection of self-managed institutions built up to serve the everyday needs of the movement" (Katsiaficas 2006:101-102).

Activists in Sweden began to use the term "autonomous" in the 1980s, picked up from the Danish BZ-movement, a movement with strong ties to squatting movements in Germany and the Netherlands (Mikkelsen and Karpantschof 2001). Often referred to simply as "de autonoma" (the autonomous) by journalists, the Swedish Security Service, and some activists themselves, the term is a collective umbrella that covers a multitude of political ideologies, most notably anarchism and anti-capitalism. As activist Salka Sandén (2007:9) points out in her novel, *Deltagänget*, through the years this political milieu has been referred to by journalists, scholars, and police by names such as "libertarian socialists, people's home terrorists, the black block, [and] the autonomous."

In an article from *Arbetaren*, an activist named Mattias Kåks explains that "we have started using the concept of 'autonomous' to talk about ourselves. It's a concept that's a bit freer than anarchist. In Europe, people have used that expression for a long time. The autonomous place themselves outside [of society]" (Wirtén 1988:15). Mattias notes that the term "autonomous" is "a bit freer" than the word anarchist. There is a sense among some activists (then as now) that one must agree with a particular, distinctly anarchist ideology if one identifies as such. Autonomy, some feel, allows for a less dogmatic way of thinking about and doing politics. Mattias also refers to Europe as a place separate from Sweden. Prior to membership in the European Union, Sweden was politically separate from the rest of Europe; given its Social

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Democratic culture, as I outlined earlier, it was incomparable to Europe south of Denmark. Sweden was also geographically separate from the rest of Europe and only accessible from continental Europe by boat or plane until the Öresund bridge connected Sweden to Denmark in 2000. Finally, a key element of autonomous movements of the 1980s was their opposition to mainstream society. Activists from this period often refer to the fact that autonomous movements position themselves "outside society."[2]

A manifesto titled "We Want a City for Everyone" by the urban action group Alarm Stockholm (2007a) is telling in terms of how activists involved in urban struggles identify. The collective writers of the pamphlet signed it with their names and descriptive titles, which include musician, leftist, journalist, concert organizer at Kafé 44 (a social center), film director, artist, or the names of direct action groups in which they are involved. Activists I interviewed did not use the term "autonomous" to describe their own identities; more often they referred to themselves as anarchists, anti-capitalists, or simply activists, without any ideological descriptor attached. They did, however, use the term "autonomous" in writing—and occasionally in speech—to talk about autonomous spaces and places. Referring to themselves and their spaces as "autonomous" is both a nod to earlier European autonomous movements that introduced the ideas of self-managed places as important to radical movements, as well as a definition of a space as self-managed and operated in a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) fashion.

I use the term "autonomous" to refer collectively to activists, as well as places and scenes because it best captures the nature of a movement that is ideologically varied. Autonomous movements, despite the particular political and cultural beliefs of individual activists, share some

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[2] It is worth nothing that, in Swedish, activists do not talk about themselves as feeling like social outsiders in terms of how *others* view them. Rather, they use active language (e.g. *att ställa sig utanför samhället*), denoting that they make conscious efforts to live on the margins of society.

defining characteristics. First, the term "autonomous" denotes that these movements operate independently from political parties and trade unions. Second, they seek to operate outside of capitalist systems as much as possible, which is evident in how they operate places that are part of scenes. Third, autonomy also refers to organizational practices of "self-managed consensus, making decisions independently of central leaders and implementing them according to their own self-discipline" (Katsiaficas 2006:17). Finally, the term "autonomous" refers to the feminist adage "the personal is political," reflecting the idea that changing the relations of everyday life are equally as important as overthrowing governments.

4.2.2 A History of Anarchist and Autonomous Movements in Sweden

So may it burn in towers and on walls,
On decaying fences and in crowded cages
A black-red flame in every house
Let it burn until the end.

Anarchist and syndicalist movements have a long history in Sweden. The quote that begins this section is the first stanza of an 1898 poem titled "Brand!" (Fire!) in a newspaper of the same name. The poem is a call to arms for youth in Sweden; in an attack on the state and church, the author urges youth to "burn society's wretched laws and preachers' lies about judgment day." The poem envisions the newspaper and the movement it represents—a syndicalist movement, as the "black-red flame" implies—igniting youth into a revolution that sweeps across the nation like fire. The poem appears prominently in the first column of the paper, alongside a feature article on French writer Émile Zola, whose letter, "*J'accuse,*" was making headlines on the continent (Figure 4-1). Advertised as a First of May (Labor Day) newspaper, *Brand* was initially written and produced by the Swedish Socialist Youth Association (*Svenska Socialistiska*

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Ungdomsförbundet), part of the Social Democratic party. In 1908, a revolutionary faction of the group split off from the party and took over running the paper. By 1934, in an article titled "*Brand* and the New Year," the newspaper calls itself the voice of an emerging anarchist movement: "*Brand*, as an organ of anarchism for the country, has a big task to fill. The anarchist movement's task is to fight all tyranny, with written and oral propaganda, [and] pave the way for a future society." *Brand* is still in circulation, in the form of a black and white zine (independently produced publication), making it the longest running anarchist periodical in the world. Famed among political scholars for its welfare state and old labor movement, the Swedish radical left is somewhat of a mystery both inside and outside Sweden.

Figure 4-1: Inaugural issue of Brand, the longest running anarchist periodical in the world (1898)

In Sweden, as in many other countries, the 1960s brought a shift in the organizational forms of social movements (Thörn 1999). The people's movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries were organized around formal voluntary associations (Gundelach 1990; Thörn 1999; Trägårdh 2006; Vandenberg 2006), such as those that ran *Brand* in its early years. Members of these associations often demonstrated "life-long individual political commitments" by taking leadership roles in organizations and/or structuring their social lives around them, making social movement membership "an essential part of defining individual identity" (Thörn 1999:453). However, the so-called "new social movements" of the 1960s (e.g. environmental, women's, peace, and student movements) embraced a shift toward increasingly fragmented, part-time, temporary participation in social movement networks (Della Porta and Diani 2006; Melucci 1996; Micheletti 1995; Thörn 1999).

In the early 1970s, a series of "neighborhood movements"[3] developed in cities as offshoots of environmental movements. Neighborhood movements were particularly active in Stockholm, as two major areas of the central city, Södermalm and Vasastan, underwent major redevelopment and spurred a series of protest actions. Neighborhood movements were originally organized geographically, with each neighborhood having its own group. The actions of these early groups were aimed at improving the everyday lives of people in the neighborhood, with goals such as building playgrounds for children, upgrading daycare centers, and creating common spaces, like courtyards, for residents in inner-city neighborhoods to "build neighborly activities among residents" (Stahre 1999:73). Neighborhood groups became increasingly politicized in the early 1970s and their organizational form is one that urban action groups still use today: "large, public meetings and direct democracy as the form of decision-making, no

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[3] In Swedish, these movements are called *byalagsrörelser*. The translation "neighborhood movements" comes from Ulf Stahre's (1999) comprehensive history of these movements in Stockholm.

recognized leaders, and community and cooperation in neighborhoods as the overarching ideal" (Stahre 1999:73). Over time, the concerns of these groups grew from the immediate issues facing neighborhood residents to a series of increasingly fragmented and politicized action groups— which were no longer organized geographically, but around particular questions—that emphasized anti-commercialism, critiques of urban development, and "striving for community and cooperation" (Stahre 1999:183).

In 1983, the syndicalist newspaper *Arbetaren* (*The Worker*) declared that "Anarchism Lives." In September of 1983, activists in Stockholm convened at an anarchist conference at The Black Moon, a bookshop and café in Södermalm. It was the first anarchist gathering in the city since 1979. The description of this gathering paints a picture of the movement that reflects its characteristics today:"A music group from Malung, a newspaper in Karlshamn, libertarian youth in Lindesberg, a printing cooperative in Stockholm, non-violence groups. The new anarchism is a broad movement and it exists everywhere. Now it is gathering" (Hallstan 1983:4). The anarchism of the early 1980s was spread out in towns and cities across Sweden. It found its home in music and writing groups, workers' collectives, activist groups, and youth culture. Many activists of this time were involved in peace movements and anti-nuclear movements that were popular throughout Europe at the time. One of the organizers of the event points out that what these seemingly disparate groups have in common is that they "are social outsiders" and "it's important that one connects with everyone who works on activities that are a bit 'outside' of the social norms" (quoted in Hallstan 1983:4). The gathering resulted in a contact list of anarchist activists from around the country, designed to promote contact amongst Swedish anarchists.

A 1987 report by the Swedish Security Service (Sweden's national intelligence service) comments that "a new and militant anarchist movement has begun to appear….Youth who were

previously active in squatting, etc. have begun actions against the USA" (quoted in Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2002:91). The report goes on to detail attacks against the American embassy in Stockholm, protests in response to an official visit from First Lady Nancy Reagan, and attacks on McDonald's restaurants and Shell gas stations as expressions of anti-American sentiments.

Autonomous movements of the 1990s were characterized by an increased interest in anti-fascism and militancy. In the late 1980s, confrontations between left- and right-wing groups escalated, leading to a desire among anarchist and autonomous activists to organize their networks in more structured ways. In response to annual marches of neo-Nazis and nationalist organizations, the first Antifascistisk Aktion (Anti-Fascist Action or AFA) network emerged in Stockholm in 1991. By 1993, AFA was a national network with local anti-fascist groups popping up in cities throughout Sweden; their militant, confrontational orientation was clear from the start (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2002). Central to their operation was to meet right-wing groups where they emerged. Throughout the '90s and early 2000s, AFA effectively mapped where right-wing groups operated by reading membership registers, right-wing press, as well as performing reconnaissance of private homes and nationalist gathering places.

In 2007, writer Salka Sandén published an autobiographical novel titled *Deltagänget* (*Animal House*), in which she tells the story of a young woman's development from a girl in the suburbs to a militant anarchist who confronts neo-Nazis, participates in squatting movements, and battles with police. The main character, she writes, is the political collective of which the young woman is a part. Though it is a novel, it accurately represents how radical political identities are formed (i.e. very informally and through the activities of everyday life), and offers an insider view of the development of anarchist and anti-fascist activism in Sweden in the 1990s.

4.2.3   The Göteborg Riots

Several of my interview participants mentioned the Göteborg Riots as a "turning point" for the extraparliamentary left in Sweden. Negative portrayals of radical activists as "hoodlums" in the newspapers, violent clashes with police, and long jail sentences for activists involved in the protests contributed to a sense of disillusionment about political institutions among leftist activists (see e.g. Granström 2002, Wennerhag et. al. 2006, Zackariasson 2006). In turn, this led to increased discussion about the importance of activist-managed places organized around Do-it-Yourself (DIY) politics, which promote direct action as a means of social change.

The Göteborg riots negatively influenced activists' attitudes toward social and political institutions whether they participated in the riots themselves or just heard about the experiences of others. The events of 2001 also changed the way some activist thought about Sweden as a whole; having grown up with an idea about Sweden as an ideal democracy, the violence and injustice they saw in the treatment of activists during the riots shattered their perceptions of Sweden as a democratic and peaceful country. In my interviews, the importance of the riots particularly stood out among activists in Göteborg and Malmö. In Göteborg, the riots led some people to leave movements, while others were drawn to Göteborg because of its new image as a radically left-wing city. In Malmö, where the riots weren't quite so close to home, the events surrounding the Summit galvanized activists and sparked discussions about self-managed spaces where activists could meet, socialize, and feel safe.

In June 2001, Göteborg hosted the EU Summit, an international meeting of world leaders to discuss economic growth, sustainable development, and the expansion of the European Union. The Summit included the first presidential visit from former American President George W. Bush, who was there to discuss the World Trade Organization and issues related to the Middle

East with EU leaders. According to government reports, the Summit drew roughly 50,000 demonstrators, 2500 police, and 2000 media representatives (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2002).

Drama surrounding the protests began at Hvitfeldtska Gymnasiet, a school. Göteborg's Action, an activist network, was given permission by the city of Göteborg to use the school as a convergence center and residence. At eleven o'clock in the morning on June 14, riot police surrounded and closed off the school. No one was allowed within one block of the school, and no one was allowed to enter or exit the building. None of the 400-plus activists inside knew what was going on. A large crowd gathered outside the police perimeter, as well. A stand-off between activists and police ensued, with activists demanding that they be allowed to go and join protests and police charging back with horses, batons, and dogs. As a result, some 240 activists were arrested on charges of "violent rioting" and the police received heavy criticism from protestors and other witnesses. The police later said that they had received reports that activists had potential weapons (e.g. cobblestones and baseball bats) inside the school—reports which proved to be unfounded. Protestors at the school saw the police action as a clear provocation. According to them, the police's actions "had no purpose but to scare people away from protesting" (Larsson 2001:35). The police chief said the action was a precautionary measure, without which he "could not guarantee the EU-meeting and police officers' safety" (Nandorf 2001:A6).

The events surrounding Hvitfeldtska Gymnasiet set the tone for the rest of the Summit protests. Street battles between activists and police occupied news headlines in every major Swedish paper, peaking on June 15. A cobblestone thrown by an activist hit a police officer in the head. In response, police fired on demonstrators, injuring three people. Two demonstrators

were shot in their legs and one caught a life-threatening shot to the chest. Later, police were sent to deal with "violent actions" (fights, fires, and thrown cobblestones or bottles) erupting in various parts of the city. People on the streets were reportedly asking journalists how to get home, not knowing how to safely navigate the city. The city hospitals, swamped with injured people, set off an emergency alarm around midnight and called all personnel to report to work.

Few people I met actually *attended* the protests in Göteborg. Nearly everyone I met, however, remarked on how the riots affected leftist movements—for better or worse. Hans, a squatter in Stockholm who was only 12-years-old in 2001, remarked that "the left took a real hit during those protests. A lot of people stopped being activists after that." For Hans, the riots negatively affected leftist movements because the police repression they faced during the protests caused some people to leave movements, thereby weakening leftist movements. For Maja, an activist involved in Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) and the asylum rights group "No One is Illegal" in Göteborg, it had the opposite effect. She was a child in 2001, but was on Avenyn (the main avenue in Göteborg), where the majority of violent clashes happened between police and activists. She attended with her parents who are active communists. Though she was not personally involved in rioting, Maja remembered thinking that it was "exciting and fun to be a part of something like that" and she credits the experience with awakening her interest in protest. Maja also claims that the events of 2001 "have made [activists] more paranoid about police," saying that "the cops think that every crime has something to do with us, and I think it's because they think badly about activists ever since 2001." Maja believes that since the riots, the police view activists as potential criminals, creating caution and suspicion among radical groups about who participates in their spaces.

Mattias, also in Göteborg, was one of the few people I met who *was* in attendance at the protests in 2001. He says that the riots contributed to Göteborg's image as a politically radical city, which had both positive and negative effects for the activist community:

> After the riots in 2001, a lot of people wanted to move to Göteborg it felt like, and get involved [in activism], which is both good and bad. It's a lot of people just wanting to get into it because it's a status thing, which is bad […] but many want to do political things and got interested in it because of [the riots], which is good.

The riots created an image of Göteborg as a city of activists, a radical city, a city where people broke rules—and laws. Mattias comments that the negative effects of this are that people were attracted to activism because it seemed exciting and cool, not because of any underlying political commitment. The positive, though, was that more people became interested in political issues after the riots.

4.2.4   Disillusionment with political institutions

Bored and frustrated by what they see as the lack of action and slow, bureaucratic processes of leftist political parties and formal organizations, the prospect of direct action and immediate change drew many people I interviewed to extraparliamentary politics. Creating self-managed spaces where people could engage in cultural and political projects that are outside the bounds of traditional Swedish politics (i.e. parties and formal organizations, "folk" culture) is exciting and interesting to autonomous activists because it allows immediate change in the cultural and political landscapes of cities.

It has been well-established by Swedish social scientists that the riots changed the way that left-wing Swedish activists view political institutions and democracy. Psychologist Kjell Granström (2002) found that after the riots, activists' beliefs in politicians, police, the mass

media, and the rights of demonstrators decreased as a result of what they saw as unjust actions by those involved in these institutions. As part of an ongoing debate over whether or not young people in Sweden are politically apathetic or simply engaging in politics in new forms, ethnologist Maria Zackariasson (2006) found that the Göteborg riots were meaningful to people who were involved in the riots as well as people who heard firsthand accounts from other people but were *not* present themselves. She also found a distrust of political institutions, but the activists she interviewed reported feeling even more propelled to action by the events of the riots. The injustices they spotted during the riots led them to want to take action—albeit outside the bounds of institutional politics. A survey of more than a thousand Swedish activists involved in the global justice movement found that 57% reported that their belief in the government decreased since the riots and 40% reported that they did not believe in political parties at all (Wennerhag et al. 2006). These findings were roughly the same for people who were in Göteborg during the riots and those who were not. The authors acknowledge that many of the people they surveyed did not hold a particularly strong belief in the institutions of representative democracy prior to the riots, but that the level of their beliefs still decreased further after the riots.

At the 2010 Anarchist Bookfair in Stockholm, I attended a panel discussion titled "What is anarchism? Why is it relevant today?" The panelists were an international group, representing Australia, the United States, and Sweden. In front of the table at which they sat was recording equipment that broadcast the session on internet radio. The room was small, warm, and crowded with participants. People spilled out of rows of folding chairs and sat on the floor, along windowsills in the back of the room, and stood crowded the doorway, craning their necks to listen in on the discussion. While radical left-wing communities are small in Sweden, the heat

and energy of this crowded room did not make this seem like a small subculture, but a vibrant movement. The comments made by the audience indicated that they were hoping to get an answer to the question "why is anarchism relevant?" Based on their comments during the question and answer segment of the panel, it seemed as though the crowd already believed that it was. For example, while discussing anarchism's relevance in contemporary political contexts, a voice from the front of the room piped up; from the back of the room I couldn't see to whom the voice belonged, but it was a young man who spoke. He commented that "anarchism is more relevant than ever in Sweden, since the fall of social democracy. I mean, ok, you could still vote for the Social Democrats, but no one believes they'll actually bring about a socialist utopia" Audience members snickered, laughed, and nodded their heads in agreement.

The comments of the young man at the Anarchist Bookfair are echoed in the words of activists I met in all three cities about their frustration with left-wing political parties, particularly the Left Party (*Vänsterpartiet*). Activists are frustrated by what they perceive to be a lack of action on the part of politicians and the slow, bureaucratic practices of government. Lena, an asylum rights advocate in Göteborg, says she used to be active in the Left Party (*Vänsterpartiet*) as a member of a youth organization, but quickly became frustrated because "*Vänsterpartiet*, they haven't done anything. They're just talking about it, discussing it, trying to cooperate with the [rest of the] left so *then* they can do something." What frustrates Lena is the lack of *action* that comes as a result of the slow decision-making processes of the established left and of the processes of representative democracy more generally. The Left Party has the fewest Members of Parliament in the government and has been part of a Red-Green Alliance since 2008, cooperating with the Social Democrats and the Green Party in opposition to the majority parties. Patrik, a squatter in Stockholm, says bluntly, "The parties are not actually doing

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anything….They're just taking it slow, and talking about things and, as we can see, it hasn't done anything." Like Lena, Patrik points out his perception that the parties "just talk" and don't act. He also adds that they "haven't done anything." It is not only a lack of action that frustrates activists, but the lack of change that follows. For these activists, action equals change. Talking about things equals immobility.

Many activists feel frustrated not only by a lack of action by political parties, but also by a lack of social change as a result. Elin, a squatter in Malmö, straightforwardly states that "parties don't do anything that leads to real change." Maja echoes this statement, saying,

> You can see that society hasn't changed to anything better, it's only getting worse. So the *right-wing* parties are doing something, obviously, but the left-wing isn't. Sometimes it's frustrating, you know? Because radical groups aren't so big that they actually can change everything.

Elin and Maja's comments are about changes in material conditions. "Real change" is change that you can see, hear, and feel. The changes to which Maja refers as evidence of "things getting worse" include the increasing economic and ethnic segregation in Swedish cities as a result of urban development projects aimed at building luxury housing and parking structures in formerly working-class districts. She sees these changes as victories of the "right-wing" parties.[4] She is not anti-government, but is disappointed by what she sees as a lack of action on the part of the left-wing parties, who could be potential allies to small, radical movements. While Maja believes in the power of radical groups' direct actions to change some parts of city life, she acknowledges that their small size means their potential for transforming society is limited.

Popular Swedish books about the contemporary extraparliamentary left written by journalists—which negatively portray activists as violent, criminal, and even anti-democratic--

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[4] Many activists use the term "right-wing" to describe everything from the Moderate Party to the nationalist Sweden Democrats. They use the term "neo-Nazis" to talk about extraparliamentary right-wing groups.

are undoubtedly shaped by the events surrounding the Göteborg riots. In his book *Extremister* (Extremists)*,* journalist Magnus Sandelin (2007) compares white power movements, jihadists, and anti-capitalists in broad strokes; they are all "extremists" who use violence as a political tactic. His chapter about "leftist extremists" begins with a story about Jonas, a young guy who set a bomb (which was later defused) in a Göteborg McDonald's, a demonstration of violence against the company as a representative of global capitalism. Sandelin includes examples of tactical violence, such as anti-fascist beatings of neo-Nazis or throwing rocks at police during demonstrations, to paint a picture of the entire anti-capitalist movement as one whose primary tactics are well-planned, violent attacks. Similarly, in her controversial book *Gatans Parlament* (Parliament in the Streets) journalist Anna-Lena Lodenius (2006:227) compares right- and left-wing violence. Lodenius is rather dismissive of radical leftists, who she characterizes as naïve, privileged, and "anti-democratic." With their focus on violence, both of these books paint a picture of a monolithic, violent, criminal movement comprised of privileged kids who don't have jobs and have too much free time on their hands.

Sociological studies of the radical left in Sweden are few and disparate. Sociologists Adrienne Sörbom and Magnus Wennerhag write about the global justice movement from a Swedish perspective. Their collective works find that young people in Sweden are increasingly leaving political parties to participate in extraparliamentary politics (Sörbom 2005); lifestyle politics are increasingly intertwined with social movement activism (Sörbom and Wennerhag 2013); and that activists in the global justice movement have become increasingly disillusioned with electoral politics (Wennerhag 2008). In Göteborg, sociologist Cathrin Wasshede (2010) shows how young leftists—who are highly critical of dichotomous ideas about gender and

sexuality—practice resistance to gender and sexual norms in their daily lives, finding that their performances create new sets of norms within activist milieus.

4.3   THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

Autonomous movements in Sweden are distinctly *urban* social movements. This is not only because they are located in cities, but also because they are concerned with questions about how city space is shaped and by whom. A shared interest in claims to urban life can bring activists interested in a variety of issues together, allowing them to "see their particular struggles as part of a shared struggle for a different kind of city" (Purcell 2008:89). This is partially due to their historical roots in neighborhood movements and squatting, but also because activists' efforts to create self-managed social centers in the mid-2000s coincided with increased social control in the form of evictions and city governments' decisions regarding the use of space. Right to the City movements become increasingly popular throughout Europe in the late 2000s as long-time autonomous squats and social centers were evicted by city governments to make way for ventures that would economically benefit cities.

4.3.1   Henri Lefebvre and The Right to the City

"The right to the city" and its variants have become popular catchphrases for urban social movements across Europe (for examples, see Attoh 2011; Gilbert and Dikeç 2008; Purcell 2002, 2008). In the face of activists' concerns about what they see as the "decline of democracy" in

urban centers, the work of French social theorist Henri Lefebvre has taken on a new popularity

amongst geographers and urban studies scholars who study these activists (Purcell 2002:100).

Elaborated in his books *The Right to the City* (1996 [1968]) and *Urban Revolution* (2003

[1970]), Lefebvre argued that the right to the city is

> a claim upon society for resources necessary to meet the basic needs and interests
> of members rather than a kind of property some possess and others do not…In
> terms of rights to the city and rights to political participation, right becomes
> conceived as an aspect of social relatedness rather than as an inherent and natural
> property of individuals (quoted in Gilbert and Dikeç 2008:259).

Lefebvre does not define the right to political participation in terms of national citizenship,

elected officials, or the structures of state and local governments; it is those who *inhabit* urban

communities—what he calls *citidins* (a combination of citizen and denizen)—who should have a

voice in all decisions that affect the production of urban space. Lefebvre does not explicitly state

that inhabitants should entirely and solely make decisions about their communities, but the right

to the city "would give urban inhabitants a literal seat at the corporate table" (Purcell 2002:102).

Lefebvre's conceptualization of the right to the city is decidedly optimistic, creative, and

oriented toward the production of space. In *The Right to the City* (1996 [1968]:103), he makes an

important distinction between *the city*, "a present and immediate reality, a practico-material and

architectural fact," and "the *urban*, a social reality made up of relations which are to be

conceived of, constructed or reconstructed by thought." It would seem that, in calling for the

right to *the city*—not the right to space or the right to the urban—Lefebvre is writing specifically

about taking up physical space (Purcell 2008).

This raises the question: what does "the right to the city" mean for inhabitants?

According to Lefebvre (1996 [1968]), they should have two main rights: the right to

participation in the production of urban space and the right to *appropriation* of urban space. The

former is relatively straightforward; city inhabitants should be able to participate fully in any decision-making processes that involve city space. The right of appropriation relies on Marx's distinction of use value versus exchange value, calling on inhabitants to prioritize a city's use value (satisfying human needs or desires) over its exchange value (a commodity for exchange). This distinction becomes muddied in the context of contemporary "creative cities," where culture and creativity—which are, to some extent, satisfying for human desires—become marketable (Florida 2002). Unlike previous well-known cultural districts (e.g. Monmartre in Paris, SoHo in New York), which "emerged spontaneously from currents of dissent, conflict, and collision," contemporary cultural districts are "sequestered in artificially-created zone[s]" by city officials (Leslie 2005:405).

Lefebvre argued that the city itself is an *oeuvre*, a work of art collectively forged by humans throughout its history; the "artists" are urban residents and their everyday routines. This view of the urban, Lefebvre argued, conflicts with the modern capitalist city, where "the corporate system regulates the distribution of actions and activities over urban space (streets and neighborhoods) and urban time (timetables and festivities)" (Lefebvre 1996 [1968]):68). In other words, the city is made *for* us, not *by* us. This critique takes on a new importance as 21st century cities "are engaged in efforts to more explicitly map out an urban imaginary, molding the structure and landscape of the city itself to conform to the idealized brand name city….The objective is for the city's identity to merge with its commercialized image and to be repurchased by consumers" (Leslie 2005:403).

Appropriation is not only taking over space or even physical presence in a given space; in a larger sense, the right to appropriation is also the right to a dignified way of life. Geographer Marc Purcell (2008) argues that appropriation includes access to short commutes, reliable

daycare, playgrounds and parks, and affordable places to buy food. To some extent, Swedish cities and urban housing were planned with these kinds of ideas in mind. For example, in an exhibit at Stockholm's Nordiska Museet in 2009, I learned that communal laundry rooms in apartment buildings were part of the Social Democrats' planning policies as early as the 1920s. This was part of the vision of the People's Home in which it was believed that, in an equal society, everyone should have access to a place to clean their clothing, which, in turn gives people a greater sense of dignity (Lund 2009).

Lefebvre defines this tension as one between *perceived space* (space as it is experienced in everyday life by inhabitants) and *conceived space* (technical conceptions of space associated with professional developers). In the capitalist city,

> conceived space, with its rational technical reduction of space to a Cartesian grid, occupies a privileged position…Conceived space facilitates the marketization of space, the reduction of space to a measurable entity to be valued as property. Resistance to capitalist urbanism…requires a spatial resistance to challenge the hegemony of conceived space and to imagine more fully human alternatives (Purcell 2008:93).

The concerns of inhabitants, in other words, come second to those of developers, urban planners, city authorities, and business leaders. The right to the city is a call for urban dwellers to demand that they have a voice in shaping the city because they are the ones who carry out their everyday lives there.

In Chapter 5, I detail how Malmö activists enact the Right to the City through neighborhood projects in the central district of Möllevången. The social movement scene is what gives life and creative energy to these projects. In turn, these projects, which included a street festival, a land occupation, and other actions, help strengthen the scene. For example, in 2011 local autonomists issued a statement on their website that reads,

> We want to strengthen local democracy, improve the comfort and security in the
> area, and promote greater community and self-esteem (*självkänsla*) of the
> residents in Möllan. We want to create opportunities for the residents as much as
> possible to influence and shape the local environment together
> (Möllevångsgruppen 2010c).

This statement includes goals that reflect both the rights to both appropriation and participation. Improving "comfort and security" as well as a sense of community are part of the rights to appropriation, while making it "possible to influence and shape the local environment together" reflects the right to participation (Möllevångsgruppen 2010c). These principles guide both Right to the City projects as well as the places that make up the social movement scene in the city. Many of these projects, for example, are conceived, planned, and carried out in the places of the scene.

4.3.2   The History of Squatting in Sweden

In the early 1970s, the Swedish government lifted regulations on rent, making rent negotiable between landlords and tenants. This change made it attractive for landlords to renovate their buildings and seek higher rents. Political strategies aimed at bringing families from the suburbs into cities also made renovations attractive, especially in working-class districts where buildings contained primarily classic "workers' apartments," many of which were just a single room, plus a kitchen and bathroom. These changes in policy and political strategy laid the groundwork for the gentrification of areas such as Södermalm in Stockholm—and protests against it (Franzén 2005).

Squatting was a sporadically popular political tactic throughout the 1970s, but the most famous squatting action in Swedish history happened in 1977. Activists today still refer to Mullvaden—the name of the 1977 squat—as an important historical moment for leftist

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movements because the group created an alternative way of living (even if only for one year) that generated public support. Moreover, the activists at Mullvaden, who were trying to save a block of buildings from demolition, thoroughly researched the structural problems with the buildings and proposed solutions, efforts that some squatters today thought was an admirable way of approaching the destruction of old buildings in cities.

Mullvaden was located in Södermalm (Stockholm), where more than sixty people squatted four buildings owned by Svenska Bostäder (SB), Sweden's largest housing corporation, from 1977-78. SB planned to tear down the buildings in the spring of 1977 on the grounds of foundational damage that was causing the buildings to sink and was too costly to repair. The building's tenants had been evacuated earlier in the year, but instead of moving out, a few residents stayed; however most of the new "tenants" were activists who joined previous residents. The goal of Mullvaden's residents was to use their rent money to pay for repairs and save the buildings from demolition. They cited SB's neglect as the reason for the building's disrepair and, after growing frustrated with a lack of action from the politicians with whom they met regularly, they claimed it was "time to go from words to action" (Sjöblom 1977).

While Svenska Bostäder claimed that the buildings at Mullvaden had no value, squatters and their supporters disagreed. Their action was not about the right to squat buildings; the action was, in part, meant to start a debate about urban development and what activists saw as a waste of resources. Photos from Mullvaden show banners with slogans such as "Plan for people, not for money" (Holm 1998:12). At first, Svenska Bostäder didn't appear to take them seriously, but as time went on, public support—and support from the local tenants' association—grew for the men and women at Mullvaden (Holm 1998:12-13). The Mullvaden residents conducted

independent inspections of the foundation and found an architect to draw plans for saving the buildings, which they claimed could have been done by reinforcing the existing foundations.

Over the course of eleven months, nearly 300 people moved through Mullvaden, where the residents staged theatrical performances and held parties "when things got too tough or too boring" (Holm 1998). Video footage shows residents singing happily as they wave from the window sills that they painted bright yellow (Sveriges Television 2010). Activists used theater to "blur the lines between spectator and actor, so that the public [felt] welcome to be part of things" (Sveriges Television 2010). Beyond the critique of economic wastefulness, Mullvaden embodied a vision of a way of life. Swedish actress Marika Lagercrantz, who was active at Mullvaden, says, "there was a vision at Mullvaden, a vision to live in a different way. Non-violence was important, the environment, the collective, taking care of one's city, opening up space for people" (Sveriges Television 2010).

The residents at Mullvaden stayed in their apartments for nearly a year before they were dramatically evicted during a two day standoff with police in September 1978. They barricaded themselves inside the building with boards and furniture. A crowd of supporters showed up on Krukmakargatan and applauded the squatters, but were kept away from the buildings by a long line of police (Öhman 1978). After the eviction was complete, Svenska Bostäder wasted no time in tearing down all the buildings on the block. The demolition began just ninety minutes after everyone had left the building; onlookers watched as police tossed the residents' belongings out the windows in trash bags. By 1981, new apartment buildings stood where Mullvaden had been. In a report marking the 20th anniversary of Mullvaden, journalist Johan Holm reports that the buildings that were completed in 1981 also began to sink by the early 1990s. They were

reportedly saved by reinforcing the existing foundations—the solution for which Mullvaden residents pushed in 1978 (Holm 1998).

Influenced by the BZ movement, a Danish squatting movement, squatting continued to be a popular tactic in Sweden in the 1980s and '90s. While squatting in the 1970s was aimed at saving buildings from demolition and renovation, in the 1980s and '90s, squatters drew attention to housing shortages in large cities. Squatters inhabiting a building on Skaraborgsgatan in Södermalm in 1985 wrote a flyer that reads,

> Housing policy in Stockholm is about deporting people out to the suburbs and making the city into an office- and consumption complex. Old buildings are consciously neglected so they can be torn down or turned into expensive housing co-ops…There are 100,000 people seeking housing in Stockholm and a terrible housing shortage that primarily affects us young people and people without fat wallets (quoted in Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2002:333).

The issues to which this group draws attention are a lack of housing options, particularly for young people without money, as well as an image of the city as a capitalist center. After discussions with local politicians about the possibility of small, inexpensive housing options in the city, the squatters left the building. However, such housing—nor further discussion on the matter—never materialized, so the following year squatters took over another building in Södermalm, this time on Luntmakargatan. In an editorial to the newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*, one squatter wrote "We are desperate. Politicians have fooled us. After the occupation on Skaraborgsgatan they promised that it would become inexpensive, small apartments [for us]. Instead, it became large luxury apartments" (Teleman 1990:5) Again, the focus is exclusively on affordable housing. The squat on Luntmakargatan was raided by police, who activists met with eggs, paint filled balloons, smoke bombs, and a burning tire (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2002:335). By the end of the decade, activists felt that squatting was a futile effort in the battle for fair and affordable housing. In a 1989 interview, one activist said, "We must find new

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methods and new paths. Squatting is a start but now we need to do something else. Squatting didn't result in anything" (Wirtén 1989:15).

In the late 1990s, autonomous movements shifted from conceptualizing The Right to the City solely as a critique of housing politics, as it has been in the '80s, to more Lefebvrian ideas about urban life and neighborly relationships. While squatting efforts continued sporadically in the early '90s, Reclaim the Streets (RTS) became a popular expression of "the right to the city" in the latter half of the '90s, shifting tactics away from squatting and toward street protests and parties. RTS emerged in London in 1995; with the catchphrase "streets for people," their goal was to disrupt traffic and create street festivals "inspired by a desire to reclaim the roads from automotive traffic—reclaiming a 'public commons' that had been hijacked by the motorcar (and, more to the point, by capital)" (St. John 2004:423). RTS emerged in Sweden in 1998, arranging street parties in May of that year and the next (Stahre 2004). Street parties (*gatufester*) are demonstrations—with banners and political slogans—that also include music, dance, street theater, jugglers, and/or outrageous dress (or what Swedish activists sometimes call *speks*, short for "spectacles"). In 1999, an offshoot group called Reclaim the City (RTC) formed in Stockholm and organized street parties in protest of car traffic to commercialization of city centers, which I explore in further detail in Chapter 6 ("The Right to the City"). The message of "housing for all" that concerned movements of the '70s and '80s remain important in the minds of some squatters and urban activists. However, the 1990s shift toward questions of how to create forms of urban culture that are not based on consumerism became more salient during this period, and it is those questions that inform activists' recent efforts to create social movement scenes.

4.3.3 A New Squatting Wave

After the 2007 eviction of Ungdomshuset in Copenhagen—a place that many Malmö activists knew intimately—demands for urban space, particularly in the form of squatting, and debates over who has "the right to the city" began to emerge throughout Sweden (Figure 4-2). A 2009 newspaper article from Göteborgs-Posten proclaims that, "a new wave of building occupations is sweeping over Sweden" (Grahn-Hinnfors & Hugo 2009). The article goes on to detail several squatting actions that took place between 2008 and 2009. The goals of the squatting actions are reminiscent of squatting movements in the past. Demands range from protests about lack of housing and class segregation(like movements of the 1970s and '80s) to stopping demolitions of buildings to gaining access to space in which to build social centers (like movements of the 1990s).

Because authorities take a zero tolerance approach to squatting, it is still not a viable tactic for procuring housing. Writing for the activist magazine *Brand*, the prominent Stockholm activist Mattias Wåg (2010:27) writes that "so far it has been a symbolic activist movement." Most squats in Swedish cities do not last for an extended period—often just a few days or a week—making it too unstable as a form of housing. Instead, contemporary Swedish autonomists engage in three kinds of squatting: political, conservational, and entrepreneurial. *Conservational squatting* refers to squatting that aims to preserve buildings or an existing urban landscape. (Pruijt 2013). This logic was more often used by earlier generations of squatters, like those inhabiting Mullvaden (Thörn 2012). However, this form of squatting is not only about physical space, but also about preserving a particular sense of place, as I discuss in Chapter 6; activists who take over buildings often do so in the name of preserving the *character* of the

neighborhood, not just the buildings. This is evident to some extent in the nostalgia that activists exhibit for labor movement culture in these neighborhoods.

Figure 4-2: "What a nice house [building]. We'll take it." Photo from an article titled "Squatting Wave Over Sweden" in the syndicalist publication, Direkt Aktion (2009).

More often though, the current generation of squatters use the logics of both *entrepreneurial* and *political squatting*. Entrepreneurial squatting refers to occupying space in order to create a social or cultural establishment. It is this form of squatting that is most central to attempts to create a network of places that form a social movement scene. Political squatting refers to the idea that squatting a building is not the goal in itself (Pruijt 2013), it is a tactic aimed at drawing attention to political issues, such as a lack of housing.

When asked directly, some squatters say that the political goal is to draw attention to a lack of affordable housing. Lena, a squatter and asylum rights activist in Göteborg says, "A

house is something everybody should have. Cultural places, that's something society can always bring out in some way, but a house is something more important because everyone should have somewhere to live." Lena engages in squatting to draw attention to a lack of housing in Göteborg because she believes that having a home is a basic human right, something to which all people should have access.

However, my data suggest that a combination of entrepreneurial and political squatting is most common in Sweden. As Rikard, a squatter in Stockholm, told me, "I think people have the need to have a social meeting place, where they can feel like they're taking a little break from the capitalist world […] in a place where people don't need to have money to be there, you don't have to buy anything just to be there if you want." Rikard points to the importance of squatting in order to create an environment where the purpose is socializing, not spending money. An issue of the syndicalist magazine *Direkt Aktion* reports that "squatting movements have focused on fighting to create 'autonomous space'...and demand to be able to use them or get access to other facilities from property owners in exchange, as self-managed community centers, so-called 'social centers'" (Ingman 2009:21). In this case, activists squat buildings to draw attention to a lack of available space in cities (political squatting) *and* demand space for social and cultural activities (entrepreneurial).

4.4   CONCLUSION

Swedish political culture developed in such a way that social movements developed a close working relationship with the state. The welfare state remains integral to Swedish national identity and to scholarship on Swedish politics and culture. Social movements from the 1960s

onward have rejected this close relationship between movements and the state. Autonomous movements, in particular, seek to operate independently of political parties and outside the boundaries of capitalist systems as much as possible. Activists in these movements are bored and frustrated by the lack of action they perceive amongst lawmakers in formal political institutions. By mobilizing around "the Right to the City," they seek to operate self-managed spaces in which the practices and relationships of everyday life become politicized immediately.

5.0   SWEDEN ENDS HERE? SOCIAL CENTERS AND PREFIGURATION

> *A building can be a whole movement's heart, a central point where people pulse through and gain power (Anarkistiska Studier 2008).*

Scenes are prefigurative *spaces*. Prefiguration refers to "the attempted construction of alternative or utopian social relations in the present, either in parallel with, or in the course of, adversarial social movement protest" (Yates 2014:1). As the "utopian" part of this definition implies, prefigurative spaces are oriented toward the future. For autonomous activists, the future appears uncertain and the possibilities for social change are shrinking, given strict rules and regulations that characterize public life. Scenes, with their connotations of malleability, expansion, and freedom, offer possibilities for experimentation and change.

Social centers, the subject of this chapter, are *places*. Place is what space becomes "as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (Tuan 2001:6; also Geiryn 2000). As I described in Chapter 2, scenes are abstract *spaces*, always ephemeral, shifting, and moving. Places are points located within that abstract field. We can think of a scene as "a loose aggregation of the qualities found in those different places" (Nicholls 2009:81). A sociological definition of *place* includes three elements of equal importance: geographical location, material form, and meaning or value (Gieryn 2000). Places are important to autonomous activists because they give a sense of continuity to social movements, linking the past, present, and future. Places "arrange patterns of face-to-face interaction" (Gieryn 2000:473) where activists experiment with forms of social

conduct informed by politics. Places "embody and secure otherwise intangible cultural norms, identities, memories and values" (Gieryn 2000:473) that are produced in place and inscribed on the built environment.

Places are where prefigurative processes take shape. Sociologist Luke Yates (2014:2) frames prefiguration as a series of five distinct but related processes: "experimentation, the circulation of political perspectives, the production of new norms and conduct, material consolidation, and diffusion." In prefigurative places, activists experiment with social, cultural, and political practices and perspectives that are in some way "alternative" to the society in which they live. These perspectives are then circulated within the scene via alternative media, discussion groups, protests, etc. The circulation of these ideas contributes to the production of new norms and values that characterize autonomous places. Norms, codes of conduct, and political symbols become inscribed on the physical environments of these places (how they are organized, built, decorated). Diffusion refers to the transmission of these norms, practices, and ideas both temporally (beyond the present) and spatially (beyond the walls of scene places) (Yates 2014).

Most scholars find that prefigurative places are oriented toward the future (Breines 1989; Epstein 1991; Maeckelbergh 2011; Portwood-Stacer 2012; Yates 2014). However, my data suggest that activist places also draw on the past, in particular on social movement histories. In the process of creating social centers—exemplary of the prefigurative processes that Yates (2014) outlines—Swedish activists simultaneously draw on traditions of the Old Left that are distinctly Swedish and distance themselves from notions of "Swedishness" that emphasize engaging in politics and culture via formal institutions and conforming to social norms. While rejecting institutions and conformity may be common in other European autonomous

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movements, my interviewees explicitly link these dimensions of autonomy to Swedish history and culture.

When the Social Democratic labor movement became Sweden's ruling party, the movement's cultural institutions (parks, cultural centers, libraries, etc.) also became formally operated by unions and/or the state. Since autonomists reject the state as an authoritative body, they also reject many of the cultural institutions of the former labor movement as they exist today. Yet they draw on the practices and values of the 20th century labor movement, which also prioritized building self-managed places free from state control.

As the quote that begins this chapter intimates, social centers are vital locations in the emergence and maintenance of scenes because they are hubs where people experiment with political perspectives and social norms, circulate their ideas, and diffuse these ideas to the places in the scene. I begin this chapter with a description of three social centers, each representing one city (Utkanten/Malmö, Kulturhuset Underjorden/Göteborg, and Cyklopen/Stockholm). I then discuss the "old" (labor movement) and "new" (rejecting "Swedishness") cultural frameworks upon which activists draw in creating, maintaining, and diffusing the practices and norms in scene spaces. Next, I use the processes of prefiguration, elaborated by Yates (2014), as an analytical framework for showing how social centers are hubs for experimenting with politics and culture, circulating ideas, producing new norms, and creating physical spaces imbued with political meaning. I return to the process of diffusion in subsequent chapters.

5.1   THE SOCIAL CENTERS

Social centers, while popular throughout Europe, have a unique place in Sweden because they break the rules of order that are typically a part of Swedish political and cultural life. In self-managed places people engage in cultural and political projects that are outside the bounds of traditional Swedish politics (i.e. parties and formal organizations). In social centers, activists encourage people to break free from existing political practices and experiment with new ones. In these places, activists prioritize a politics of everyday life with an emphasis on social relations; mundane acts such as washing dishes, showing films, and serving food take on political meaning in these places. These practices draw upon some practices of the early labor movement. At the same time, the Do-it-Yourself—or, as one activist put it, "Do-it-Together"—ethos by which these places operate is, for many, a welcome respite from the the "stiff" and "controlling" rules and regulations that activists say characterize public life in Swedish cities. These centers are central hubs from which information, practices, and norms circulate throughout the scene.

In the wake of violent protests in Göteborg in 2001, many Swedish activists' views on democracy in Sweden were dramatically altered (Wennerhag et al. 2006). For those who grew up during times of increased welfare retrenchment in the 1990s, the events in Göteborg confirmed their notions about how little the welfare state would do for them in the future. Several interviewees said that the negative media portrayal of Göteborg activists and violence in the streets created a need among activists to re-build a sense of community. In Malmö, Göteborg, and Stockholm, movements aimed at creating social centers—self-managed places used by

activists for cultural events, discussion groups, meetings, and community meals—emerged in the early to mid 2000s.[5]

The following sections describe social centers in each city. All three social centers emerged at around the same time (the mid-2000s) and hosted similar kinds of events and activities. While they were all forced to change locations for various reasons, they still exist in new locations/forms. This highlights the ephemeral qualities of scenes but also demonstrates that the practices of the scene persist, both temporally and physically, despite hardships and/or changes in locale.

5.1.1   Göteborg: Kulturhuset Underjorden (2006 – 2011)

To get to Göteborg's social center, *Kulturhuset Underjorden* (The Underground Culture House), I took a tram over the Götaälv bridge to a neighborhood north of the city center called Old Town. Riding over the bridge, it becomes clear why people describe Göteborg as an industrial city. The skyline is characterized by ships, massive, colorful cranes, low industrial buildings and copper roofs. As the tram travels northeast along the railroad tracks that lead to and from Central Station, it passes rusty rail yards, cement block buildings, dumpsters covered with graffiti, and empty shipping containers.

Underjorden is not easy to find—authenticating the word "underground" in its name and why Lena, an activist in Göteborg, described it as "really cool but at the same time, a mysterious place." I depart the tram in front of a large, brick building with clock towers, a factory that

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[5] During mass protests at the G8 Summit meetings in Genoa, Italy (July 2001), social centers offered information and free meals to activists. Some scholars claim that these experiences inspired people to create social centers everywhere from Australia to the United Kingdom during the early part of the decade (Starr and Adams 2003). It is possible that the Swedish case is another example of this, although activists more often referred to being inspired by the riots in Göteborg in 2001 and the eviction of Ungdomshuset in Copenhagen in 2007.

produces ball bearings for the auto industry.[6] Across the street, I enter a small shopping area dotted with ethnic grocery stores. Turning right, I pass under a sign that reads "Medborgarhuset" (citizen building), which includes a public library and, tucked away to the left, a former theater that houses Underjorden (Figure 5-1). The sign over the doorway is small and difficult to read and the bars over the doors make it appear to be off limits to passersby. Despite what interviewees described as its "mysterious" locale, the café was familiar to many young people I met in Göteborg who were not involved in activism. Some of them had been to the weekly people's kitchen, not for any political reasons, but because it was cheap to eat there. They are familiar with the autonomous politics of the people who run the place. As one person said to me, "Food that cheap must have an ideology behind it."

Opened in 2006, Underjorden was housed in what used to be the Göteborg Workers' Theater. As membership in the theater group declined, organizers from the theater reached out to local activist groups, including Spatt, an anarcho-punk collective. Rasmus, who was involved with Spatt, says, "we looking for a place to be, a place to have shows because we were moving around, renting spaces here and there and arranging gigs and stuff. So yeah, we'd been looking around for a few years." Spatt, which has strong ties to other anarchist groups, encountered the same problems that groups in all three cities have faced: lack of permanent space. Members of Spatt were also involved in leftist political groups such as No One is Illegal, an asylum rights network, and they reached out to these other groups as they built Underjorden.

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[6] Svenska Kullagerfabriken (SKF)

Figure 5-1: Entrance to Kulturhuset Underjorden

The inside of Underjorden was dark, owing to its previous life as a theater. The entrance opened right into a café area (formerly the box office), with mismatched furniture and bookshelves. To the left was a small kitchen that served coffee, tea, and light (often vegan and/or vegetarian) fare. Bathrooms were further back into the building and were plastered with stickers, flyers, and graffiti. To the right of the entrance was a doorway that opened into the large theater space, a large, open space with a round stage in the center of the room. Just inside the entrance to the theater were a set of metal stairs, leading up to an office area. The theater hosted film screenings and music performances, while the office area hosted smaller discussion groups or meetings.

In 2010, a discrepancy arose between the municipality that owns the building and the activists running the social center. In order to pay their bills—which, according to my interviews, run nearly $3000 per month for rent and electricity—they allowed bands and activist groups to rent the space from them for shows, parties, and events. In the summer of 2010, the municipality told activists that those practices were not allowed and they would need to find a new way to come up with rent money. Alex, who worked at Underjorden, reported that they had been meeting with the municipality to discuss possible compromises: "At the latest meeting they had a nicer tone towards us. But it still feels like they think that, since we don't have money there is no need for our activities and the place should close. We do not agree, it's super important to have free culture" (Nwachukwu 2010). Unable to pay rent or come to an agreement with the muncipality, Underjorden closed its doors in 2011.

5.1.2 Stockholm: Cyklopen (2007-2008; 2011-Present)
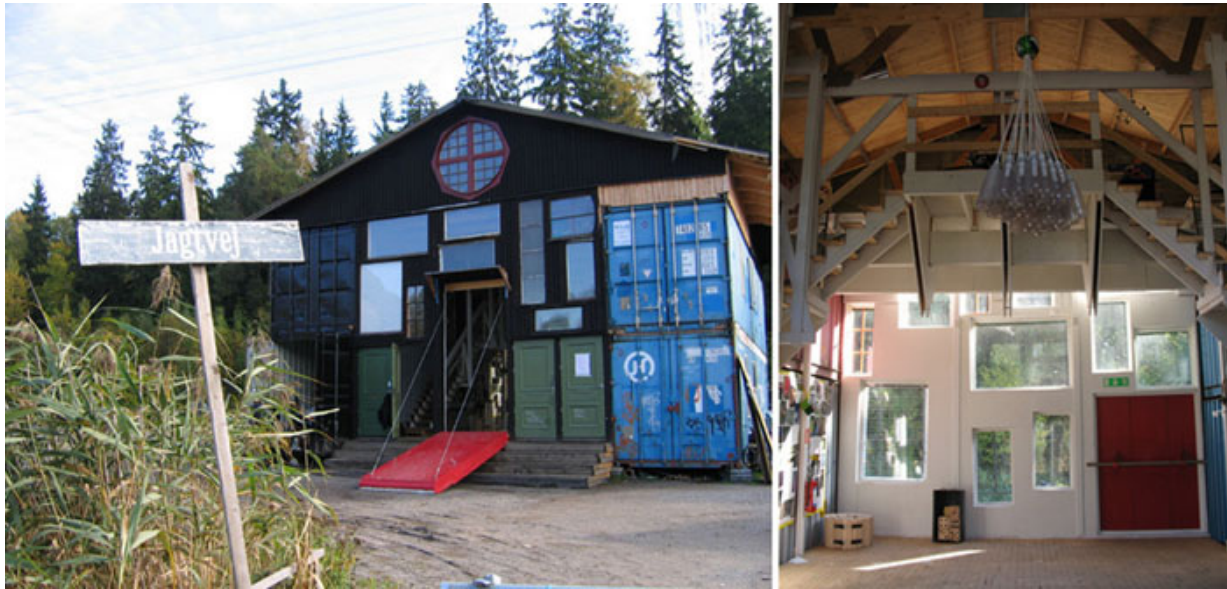
Figure 5-2: Cyklopen. The building was named "The Cyclops" because the single round window above the door resembled the eye of the Greek monster of the same name.Stockholm: Cyklopen (2007-2008; 2011-Present)

Cyklopen (The Cyclops) was a cultural center located in Högdalen, a suburb on the southern outskirts of Stockholm, from 2007-2008 (Figure 5-2). Unlike most social centers in Sweden, it was not rented, but built from the ground up by activists themselves. The goal of the project, according to one activist, was to "create a cultural forum that was not bound by cultural rules in any way. To be more free and flexible, non-bureaucratic." Cyklopen was a Do-It-Yourself space in the truest sense of the term, built and operated by activists who employed DIY principles in architectural design, the found building materials they used, and the kinds of cultural efforts they promoted. After it was destroyed by fire, editorial writers from Sweden's most conservative newspaper, *Svenska Dagbladet*, defended Cyklopen, calling it "a Swedish anomaly of cultural independence" (Sveriges Radio 2012). In Sweden, where culture and politics operate within formal, bureaucratic frameworks, Cyklopen represented a radical departure.

The use of available materials and innovative design are part of what made Cyklopen especially unique in Sweden, where buildings are ultra-standard. Two shipping containers stacked on top of one another formed the sides of the building. During the beginning of the building period, activists slept on mats inside the containers. Erik recalls that "every night someone, preferably two or three people, would sleep at the site. I remember waking up groggy as hell [and] climbing down the ladder to brew cowboy coffee at the fire pit." The containers served different purposes when the building opened; some were storage spaces, some held workshops and art space. The front door was a draw bridge, which was practical (for loading and unloading large objects, such as band equipment, into the space), functional (it sometimes served as impromptu stage), and theatrical (seeing the entire front of the building open up "was often a dramatic event," according to visitors). The main hall was a performance space where bands could perform. The loft was a lounge area for socializing and discussion group meetings. The open floor plan of the space discouraged privacy, instead encouraging collaboration, collectivity, and sharing among participants. In other words, the physical infrastructure of the building was designed to produce behaviors and norms informed by autonomous politics.

On the night of November 29, 2008, the Högdalen fire department arrived at Cyklopen to find it in flames (Figure 5-2). Activists gathered at the center, unable to do anything but watch years of hard work burn to the ground. A few days later, arson investigator Christer Söderheim told *Dagens Nyheter*, "We can state that the fire was arson. There is no electricity in the building that could have caused the fire and besides that our investigation shows that the fire started outside the building" (Bergbom and Öjemar 2008). Activists with whom I spoke were adamant that the motivation behind the arson was anti-leftist sentiment, possibly from radical right-wing groups, as the center had been a meeting place for anti-fascists. These suspicions have never

been substantiated and the arson remains unsolved. During my fieldwork, Culture Campaign was actively recruiting builders and looking for ideas about how their new social center—Cyklopen 2.0—should look. In 2011, building began on Cyklopen 2.0, the next generation of the social center. Funds poured in from supporters throughout Europe to help create the new building, which sits on a lot not far from the site of Cyklopen 1.0. The social center opened in its new location in September 2013, sparking a new flurry of autonomous activity in the southern suburbs of Stockholm.

5.1.3   Malmö: Utkanten (2008 – 2011)[7]

My introduction to the Malmö scene came on a cold, rainy day in June 2010. I was scheduled to meet Hans, an anarchist activist who was to be my guide for the day, at a bus stop. I stood shivering inside Pressbyrån, the ubiquitous Swedish convenience store chain that smells of cinnamon buns and coffee. Hans greeted me with a smile and a hug and we walked together to the autonomous social center *Utkanten*—one of several projects in which Hans was involved. We walked together for about 10-15 minutes, and along the way I asked him to tell me about the area of the city we were in. He said it was "a residential area and traditionally working-class neighborhood where workers from a sock factory used to live," referring to Malmö's former textile industry.

The neighborhood is characterized by the kind of solid, blocky buildings that one commonly sees in former working class districts in Sweden—concrete, heavy, and drably

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[7] Utkanten reopened in a new location in 2012, but my observations are from their previous location.

colored in shades of goldenrod, olive green, and brown brick. Hans told me that soon we would

cross into an industrial area where Utkanten is located, at the corner of the aptly named

Industrigatan (Industry Street). He explained that Utkanten began as a place called Aktivitetshus

(The Activity House), but changed its name and moved to this location in February 2008. The

landscape on Industrigatan changed dramatically and we passed into a maze of low, brick

warehouses that all look alike and are connected by concrete courtyards. As we entered one of

the courtyards, Nils said "we're here!" and I look around, confused. There is no sign marking

that the warehouse housing Utkanten is different at all, except for the graffiti on the metal double

doors to the building (Figure 5-3). "Welcome!" he said, as he flung the doors open for me.

Figure 5-3: Entrance to Utkanten, Industrigatan 20, Malmö. Photo by Johan Pripp

Hans gave me the full tour of Utkanten, an extensive network of rooms spanning two

stories. The ground floor included what he described as a "cinema," a large room closed off with

a dark, heavy curtain. It was filled with secondhand furniture and a projector that someone left there and never reclaimed. Hans said they sometimes showed films there, followed by discussions, but mostly people just brough their own movies to watch on a large white sheet that hung on the wall. There was a bike workshop, cluttered with bikes and tools, where a group met once a week to learn how to fix bikes. Bike culture is important to autonomous activists because "reclaim the city" politics includes a call for "car-free" inner cities. The ground floor also included a gym, equipped with weights and a "show space," with a large stage where musicians could play. He also showed me a space in the gym for a tattoo studio, asking cheerfully, "what kind of punk rock place would we be without a secret tattoo studio?"

From there, I followed Hans up a small set of metal stairs to the upper level, where he showed me a large "free shop," a room full of secondhand clothing that is available for trade. You bring a piece of clothing to leave in the shop and in exchange you can take one home from the shop. The shop also includes screen-printing equipment that can be used for creating everything from t-shirts to protest banners. The upper level also contains a large computer room where a hacker group called "The Research Department" meets weekly, an office where people can photocopy flyers and posters, a small library, and a "hang out space" that just contains furniture.

In November 2009, Utkanten was raided by police when its Research Department became the subject of investigation. In a statement to the regional newspaper *Sydsvenskan*, the lead police investigator said that the classification of offenses at Utkanten included breaking alcohol laws, fire hazards and explosive devices, preparation for aggravated theft, and hacking (Palmkvist 2009). Police seized the computers in the upstairs computer room to investigate their contents as well as two key copying machines, various locks, and lock picking equipment which

they interpreted as preparation to commit burglary. Representatives from Utkanten denied these claims. Activists were also charged with breaking alcohol laws because police found a substantial quantity of alcohol that they suspected Utkanten was selling illegally. Representatives from Utkanten say it was "backstage beer" for bands who play shows there and that the "explosive devices" seized by police were "legal fireworks" (Palmkvist 2009). When I first visited Utkanten in 2010, activists told me that their lease, which was up in March 2011, would not be renewed by their landlord, a move that they interpreted as an eviction based on their legal troubles.

5.2   PEOPLE'S HOUSES & SOCIAL CENTERS: SELF-MANAGEMENT & FREEDOM FROM THE STATE

The labor movement of the late 19th century created libraries, cultural centers, educational institutions, theaters, and parks to serve the cultural, educational, and recreational needs of workers. This is a culture that contemporary activists admire, and they draw on these histories to create a similar style of movement culture—albeit one infused with contemporary political issues and a punk rock aesthetic. They see the creation of social centers and other places as a means of producing continuity for social movements of the past, present, and (hopefully) the future.

Although activists in Sweden do not appear to have used the term "social center" until the past decade, social centers' earliest forbears were built by labor activists in the late 19th century. Physical places were of great importance to the early Swedish labor movement because they encountered "resistance from established society" when they tried to rent places for meetings and events (Karlsson 2009:76). Through connections with other labor movements in Europe, early

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socialist workers' groups began to discuss the idea of creating their own cultural centers, which they called *Folkets Hus* (People's Houses).[8] The name was chosen by the Swedes because it denoted that workers had a location that "they built, owned, and managed themselves in a collective fashion" (Ståhl 2005:21). The first People's House opened in 1890 in the southern city of Kristianstad and within a few years the idea spread across the nation. Today, there are approximately 530 People's Houses in Sweden (Folkets Hus och Parker 2013).

Contemporary activists do not see People's Houses as welcoming places because of their ties with the state. Erik, an activist and the lead carpenter in the building of the autonomous social center Cyklopen in Stockholm says,

> [In Sweden] we have the state owned culture houses, the *Folkets Hus*, and those places are descendent from the same train of thought [as we have] as far as spaces are concerned. Those were all built by workers' movements that wanted cultural spaces that weren't controlled by the state.

Jonathan makes a clear connection between People's House movements and contemporary autonomous movements, highlighting self-management and freedom from state control as shared ideological territory.

As the traditions of the labor movement became institutionalized when the Social Democrats took national power, movement places became state institutions. Alex explains that People's Houses "are incorporated into the state bureaucracy, the control of the government, so it's hard to use those spaces to create free spaces or autonomous spaces because they're controlled by the state." People's Houses and Parks are examples of how the state creates

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[8] Despite being associated with Scandinavian labor movements, the term *People's Houses* actually originated in Belgium, where the first People's House (*Volkshuis* in Flemish) was established in 1872 (Karlsson 2009). The burgeoning socialist movement in late 19th century Sweden had many connections to the Belgian labor movement, which gave them the idea to build a meeting place and cultural center for workers and their families.

boundaries on places that were originally intended to be open and managed cooperatively by movements. Viktor explains,

> Everyone who tries to organize an event at a Swedish cultural center, which is communal, will first see some kind of book with rules [about] what you could do or couldn't do […] We think it's important for a democratic society to have cultural centers that do *not* stand underneath the state or the municipality structure in any way.

Because People's Houses are state-owned institutions, they come with what activists call "rulebooks" for how they can be used. Autonomous activists are not only against the state's institutionalization of cultural places, but promote the idea that a DIY ethic is a more democratic mode of operating such places.

When I asked Rasmus, an activist in Göteborg, about the local People's House, he echoed Viktor's statement saying, "They have some rules for how you can use the place. Like, you have to be a formal group or association. It's also only certain types of culture that they approve of there, like folk dancing or music. They don't want a bunch of punks hanging around." The rule that only formal groups can use space excludes autonomous groups, which are informal, loosely-knit networks. Since People's Houses are a product of folk movements, they promote traditional folk music, dancing, and theater as acceptable cultural events, which contrasts with the often avant garde, punk rock aesthetics of autonomous movements.

Rasmus's statement that "they don't want a bunch of punks hanging around" refers to how he believes authorities perceive autonomous activists as a rag-tag group of punk rock troublemakers, not activists engaged in promoting democratic cultural initiatives. His comments are ironic, given the history of the People's House movement. In a history of People's Houses and Parks, Swedish historian Margareta Ståhl (2005:82) describes the music that people played during labor movement meetings as "confrontational" for the time period and aimed at

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convincing listeners to participate in the labor movement struggle and strengthening movement solidarity. With these insights, it would seem that Old Left activists and the "bunch of punks" to whom Rasmus refers might have more in common than meets the eye.

People's Houses in contemporary Sweden operate primarily as conference centers—in fact, some of their websites (Malmö Conference Center) refer to them as conference centers, not People's Houses. The Göteborg People's House also functions as conference center, but retains some connections to its past, housing a Social Democratic bookstore and several union-related offices. Activists' critiques of this operation strategy are that People's Houses are now places used primarily by international businesses. In an article that issues a call for more social movement places in Swedish cities, two anarchist writers assert that "folk movement spaces, such as People's Houses, began to be used for consumption based cultural activities rather early on. […] This paved the way for the later development in which People's Houses began to be rented out to corporations at market price—or sold completely" (Ariadad and Fleischer 2010: 45). Co-opted first by the state and then by capitalist enterprise, People's Houses, according to activists at social centers, are today primarily convention centers aimed at bringing corporate clients to cities.

5.3 "IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE SWEDEN"

In addition to the state operation of public cultural places such as People's Houses, nearly all of the autonomous activists I interviewed critiqued the formal, bureaucratic organization that characterizes cultural places in Sweden. When I arrived in Malmö, Erika, a self-described anarcha-feminist, greeted me at a bus stop with a friendly hug and took me back to her

apartment, which was comfortably cluttered with books and roller derby gear decorated with the anarchist circle-A. I told her I was in town for Möllevångsfestivalen, a street festival featuring local artists and activists. "Oh, you're going to have a great time! I love Möllan," she replied. When I asked her why, she replied, " It doesn't feel like Sweden there." This wasn't the first time that I'd heard some variation of the phrase "it doesn't feel like Sweden." On squats throughout Sweden one sees the words "Sweden ends here" (*Här slutar Sverige*) painted on the front doors. What is characteristically "un-Swedish" about these places? What aspects of "Swedishness" do people reject?

5.3.1 The Myth of Folkhemmet (The People's Home)

As I outlined in Chapter 4, the ideals of *folkhemmet* stress that all members of the nation look after one another as though they are family and that Swedes are democratic people. While activists draw on the history of the labor movement in the ways mentioned above, they also reject it as old-fashioned and out of date. For some, police violence during the Göteborg riots changed the way they see the Swedish state, police, and mass media. Others critique notions of Swedish exceptionalism that authorities use to explain policy decisions. Several activists point to their own experiences to explain their rejection of the *folkhem* ideal. Some have seen or experienced inequalities in their own lives that provide a contrast to the nation-as-family narrative. Others worry about the uncertainty of their future and do not believe that the welfare system will be there to help them. For this reason, taking matters into their own hands is important to these activists.

Police violence during the Göteborg riots shook some activists' views of Sweden as a model egalitarian society, whether they had attended the protests or not. Fredrik in Malmö talked

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to me about how police violence and negative portrayals of demonstrators in the media changed

his view of Sweden, saying,

> We grow up with lots of notions about Sweden, about how it is so wonderful here.
> […] We live in a good democracy. The media stands on the side of the weak and
> the police are fair. When one realizes that no, that is not so, then one's view of
> society begins to break down.

Fredrik points to how Swedish national identity is shaped by ideas about Sweden as an

egalitarian society and model democracy. He grew up with the ideas behind the concept of The

People's Home, that Sweden is a land of people who are "intrinsically democratic and freedom-

loving" (Trägårdh 2006:27). For Fredrik, seeing police harassing, beating, and, at one point,

shooting at protestors, along with the negative media coverage that referred to protestors as

"hooligans" and "thugs," shattered his ideas about Swedish democracy.

Hanna, an activist in Malmö, claims that any time the Swedish government does

something that generates national or international critique, it is presented as merely an exception

to the rule:

> [The government] likes to make us think that we're the best in the world. They
> say it: 'we are the best in the world.' Anything that happens—for example, when
> we send soldiers to war in Afghanistan or when we send asylum seekers back into
> dangerous conditions[9]—those are exceptions from us being the best in the world
> when it comes to democracy and human rights. Everything is just exceptions from
> us being really good. It's like the whole country is living a lie.

Hanna feels that the Swedish government perpetuates the ideas of The People's Home to

maintain its reputation as *the* most modern, progressive democracy in the world. Sweden prides

itself on being a peaceful nation, citing its neutrality during World War II as an example. Yet,

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[9] Hanna is referring to the deportation of 26 Iraqi asylum seekers in early 2011. The Swedish Minister of Migration,
Tobias Billström, stated that " you have to show an individual threat directed towards you as an individual asylum
seeker from Iraq," and that the conditions in Iraq do not automatically satisfy the requirements for asylum. The
decision met with criticism from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (CNN, 21 January 2011).

she says, Sweden has troops in the current war in Afghanistan and, in recent years, some immigration policy decisions have been met with criticism by the United Nations and Human Rights organizations. Rather than questioning these decisions or being critical of them, she believes that the public generally looks past them as "exceptions" rather than important points of debate.

Peter agrees with Hanna's sentiments, claiming that he often hears people compare Sweden to war zones, such as Afghanistan, as a justification for "how good Swedes have it," a comparison that he finds baffling:

> That's what Swedish people always use when you say something is bad here. People will say things like, 'we have it good compared to Afghanistan.' How is that an argument? Until our society is in the same state as Afghanistan's, we should just shut up and enjoy how things are? In that case, we can fuck up this society a lot before we start saying 'we don't have it so good.'

Like Hanna, Peter feels that, too often, Swedish people accept the ideals of the *folkhemmet* uncritically, believing that Sweden is the best in the world, and chastise those who point out social problems in Sweden. However, he finds the allusion to Afghanistan perplexing, saying that comparing Sweden to a fragile society in a war zone does not make sense. He raises the question: at what point is it acceptable to be critical of Swedish democracy?

People who grew up believing in the ideas of *folkhemmet* also found themselves disillusioned when they saw or experienced inequalities in their own communities. Anarcha-feminist Salka Sandén (2007:8) writes that in the 1980s,

> we were expected to embrace a picture of ourselves as happy products of a democratic welfare society, when all we saw around us was stagnation, quiet desperation, powerlessness, decaying schools and an adult world that had long ago stopped believing its own words.

Sandén points out the contradiction between the ideals of *folkhemmet* and the realities that she and her peers saw in their own neighborhoods. While the national narrative about Sweden casts

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its people as "happy products of a democratic welfare society," Sandén (2007:8) saw "massive unemployment, privatization, surveillance of public space, and individualism." She describes her generation as one caught between two systems: a post-war ideal that emphasized collectivity, common goals, and a secure future and the reality of the 1990s, which, in her world, included individualism, commercialization, and uncertain futures.

Jenny, who has been involved in squatting movements in both Malmö and Stockholm, also points out how growing up in the 1980s and '90s shaped her views of society:

> Many of us who are part of the squatting movement now were raised in the '80s and '90s and the whole time we were growing up…the welfare that had always existed [in Sweden] was being cut back. We have learned that one cannot trust that one is going to get anything because there isn't anyone looking out for us. One must either struggle individually or go and stir things up collectively.

Jenny's comments point to the discrepancies between the ideas of *folkhemmet*, which stressed the state's role in taking care of its people, and the realities of life in contemporary Sweden where some people feel they can no longer rely on the welfare state to meet their needs.

The decline of industrial economy began in the 1970s in Sweden, culminating in severe economic recession in the 1990s. While Sweden maintained low rates of unemployment compared to other Western European countries throughout the 1980s, impending economic crisis forced the Social Democratic government to begin reducing welfare benefits (Andersson 2009). Welfare retrenchment in the 1990s "represents a central turnaround in the Swedish national psyche and political consciousness, as the pride in being the most modern country in the world and the feeling of embodying modernity was replaced with a sense of disorientation and loss" (Andersson 2009:238). As a result, people growing up in the 1980s and 1990s faced an uncertain

future. Welfare retrenchment of the 1990s represented "a national trauma" that created a period of economic and social instability unparalleled in postwar Sweden (Andersson 2009: 238). The idea of *folkhemmet* —a state that took care of its citizens as if they were a family—began to seem unlikely to young people.

In the quote above, Jenny says that in order to be sure that people get what they need, they must make it happen themselves, collectively. People of her generation, who grew up in the 1980s and '90s "were confronted with a social reality their parents had never encountered. A generation who grew up in an era of steady welfare expansion was confronted with the end of welfare, or at least, with cutbacks rather than reform" (Andersson 2009:238). This is reflected in the written call to action that preceded a 2010 street party and protest in Stockholm called "Take Back the Welfare" (*Ta Tillbaka Välfärden*). Organized by numerous autonomous networks in Stockholm, the manifesto begins, "Welfare was built for a generation with steady employment, with life-long jobs, so that workers could manage temporary slumps in the job market. It does not look like that anymore. Our life situations do not look like that." (Ta Tillbaka Välfärden 2010a). In this statement, activists recognize that economic and social changes have created different living conditions for young people than those their parents faced.

These activists reject the notion that welfare is primarily about employment benefits and healthcare, saying it is also about a quality of life for the inhabitants of urban communities, including a need for local meeting places. By calling people to "take back welfare," activist groups challenge people to act collectively and redefine social welfare in new ways:

> We are taking welfare into our own hands. We do not see any difference between
> creating a local meeting point through squatting a building and fighting against
> the closure of a local health center. We do not believe that welfare consists solely
> of a safety net for the sick and unemployed. Welfare instead defines Stockholm
> for all of us: for our common use.

This is an excellent example of how activists combine old and new as they experiment with political ideas. Social welfare, a major victory for the labor movement, is redefined to address contemporary social issues. By calling people to "take welfare into their own hands," activists reject the state as a provider, instead calling on people to "stir things up collectively" to get something done. These efforts speak to the ways in which activists consider their work important for their own individual and collective futures.

5.4 SOCIAL CENTERS AS PREFIGURATIVE PLACES

5.4.1 Experimentation: "Sweden is a Very Controlling Society."

Social centers allow people to make their own rules. This contrasts greatly with formal, bureaucratic political processes of Swedish governing bodies. Many rules on the use of public places in Swedish cities are made by governing bodies like city and district councils, and activists involved in creating scene places are not entirely immune to dealing with such councils—much to their dismay. Activist places must still meet building code requirements and be free of fire hazards if they want to avoid visits from police. However, decisions about the everyday use of these places are made in public meetings that are open to anyone or on the spot by anyone who wants to use the place. In my introductory Swedish course, one of our handouts described Swedes as "punctual, law abiding, and respectful of rules and regulations." As an example of this, I was once scolded by a shopkeeper for exiting through the entrance door. He brought me back into the store and made me go out through the correct door while reprimanding me in front of the other customers. In the city park, there are rules about where people can hang

flyers and ride bicycles. In DIY places, on the other hand, "no one can tell you that 'you can't do this or that'…you don't need permission" (Utkanten Guide 2010). The message of DIY places is that you don't wait for someone to tell you what to do, you make the rules yourself.

The Utkanten Guide offers a wealth of information on the ways in which people can experiment in social centers. As part of its principle as a "free space" that anyone can use as they desire, Utkanten was never locked, allowing people to come and go at any time of day or night. The Guide includes a floor plan that introduces readers to each room in the building, including details such as what electrical outlets do not work (Figure 5-4). It also invites visitors to plan political and cultural activities: "Maybe you want to plan a political meeting? Play a [music] show? A film festival? Show your art? Have a dance group?" These activities--or any other "cultural, social or political activities" one can conceive of doing—are fair game at Utkanten. The Guide also notes in several places that there is a large public meeting (*stormöte*) every Saturday at 2pm. During this time, people are welcome to come pitch their idea for activities to a larger group in order to gain support of others.
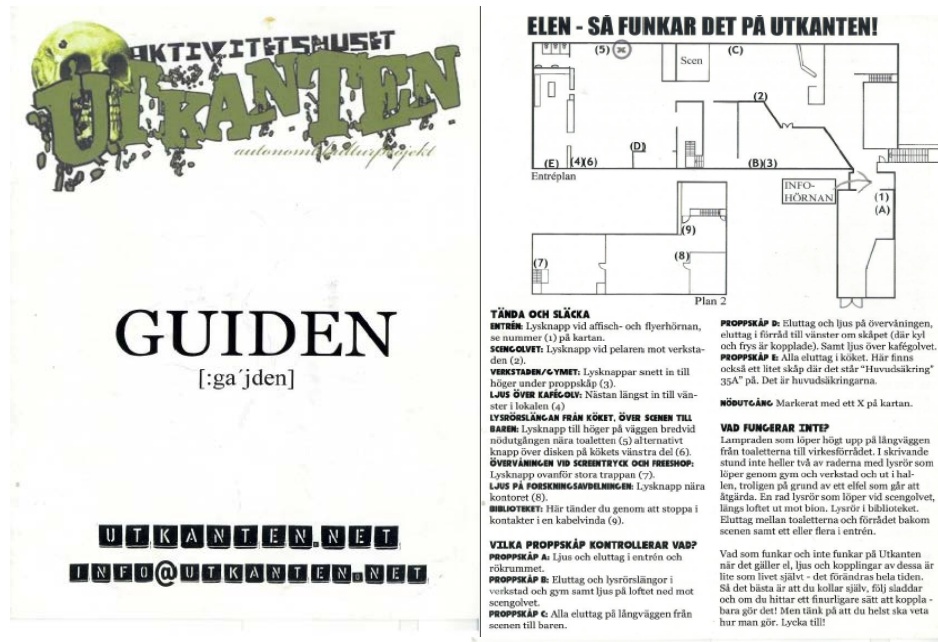
Figure 5-4: Utkanten Guide

In an interview with Milla, who is part of several activist projects in Malmö, she contrasted the ordered, procedural nature of Swedish culture with Spain, where squatted social centers are an established part of activist life:

> Sweden is a very controlling society. If you compare it to, for example, Spain. There is another way of life there, an alternative way of life. You can squat buildings and there is an informal economy, but Sweden is a very controlling society, so it's difficult to be alternative.

Using squatting as an example, Milla explains that pervasive economic and social control gets in the way of people being able to live an "alternative" or countercultural lifestyle.

Rigidity and conformity were common themes when people explained to me why they think leftist scenes break cultural norms in Sweden. I asked Lena, a young anti-fascist in Göteborg, to describe the local social center, Underjorden, and she expressed the idea that it was in some way un-Swedish:

It's like, 'Holy shit, do these things exist in Sweden?' […] Sweden is really…Sweden is…if you describe Sweden as a person, it's a blonde, stuck-up person with a stick up his ass. That's Sweden. Too stiff.

Lena expresses incredulity that a place like Underjorden exists in Sweden. For her, Sweden is "too stiff" and conformist. Her description of Sweden as a person highlights the stereotype that all Swedes are alike—blonde, stuffy, and snobbish. Underjorden, on the other hand, represents something else, an alternative form of culture where people let loose and can be themselves.

Christof, a young Belgian activist I met in Malmö, said, "In Sweden there is great pressure to conform. Those who dare to reject the social standards seem way out there. I thought Belgium was a conformist society, but I've never seen the same level of conformity [that exists in Sweden] anywhere else in Europe." Because of its history as a homogeneous culture, Sweden, according to Christof, is one of the most conformist societies in Europe. Social centers represent a break from the conformity and rigidity that activists feel characterizes public life in Sweden.

5.4.2   Circulation of Ideas: Graffiti, Activist Media, & Pirate Cinema

In his study of Spanish social centers, Yates (2014:14) points out that "the organization of seminars, debates, conferences and the production and provision of zines, pamphlets and alternative media encouraged participants to imagine, learn and play with ideological positions." This informs and is informed by cultural and political experimentations. The entrance of Utkanten (Malmö) was decorated with colorful flyers and pamphlets. Hand-drawn announcements about meetings and events hang on the wall over a small shelf of pamphlets about anarchism and flyers from the syndicalist union, SAC. Most of the flyers on the wall announce band performances and/or political meetings at Utkanten.

Like most autonomous places, political symbols cover every available surface at Utkanten as a means of imbuing the place with meaning. The café is furnished with secondhand tables, chairs, and couches and a piano sits in the middle of the room. Brightly colored murals cover the walls and are decidedly political in their themes. On one pillar, a cartoon pig with the word "homophobe" hovering over his head receives a blow to the face from a disembodied fist. On another wall, raised fists of varying sizes—symbols of unity and solidarity—are painted in blue, red, and pink. In the kitchen, a large skull and "crossbones"—made of a knife and fork—is painted on the wall next to the words "Eat the Rich," a clear anti-capitalist message (Figure 5-5).

The discussion groups, film nights, activities, and even mealtimes at social centers are educational experiences. Mia, one of my participants in Göteborg, drew parallels between the educational opportunities in social centers and the labor movement institution of popular education (*folkbildning* or "people's learning"). The cornerstone of *folkbildning* is the study circle in which a group of at least five adult learners choose a topic, read, and discuss ideas (Ståhl 2005). The practices of *folkbildning* were institutionalized in the form of educational centers and schools for adults.[10] Activists see discussion groups that follow films or are organized around books or social issues as forms of popular education. The Worker's Theater

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[10]Several adult education centers were institutionalized in the 20th century. The Workers Education Association (ABF) is the one to which activists often refer. I studied Swedish at *Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan*, which began as a series of informal study circles in the 1920s and were institutionalized as adult education centers in 1967. They are operated independently of the state, but are publicly funded. The curriculum is similar to American community colleges (Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan 2014).

that housed Underjorden was attached a public library, physically linking the labor movement and education.

Figure 5-5: Kitchen at Utkanten

A popular activity at Underjorden (Göteborg) was the "Pirate Cinema" (*Piratbio*)[11] a weekly film showing to which admission was free and open to the public. Every Tuesday evening the center would show a film—usually documentaries, often in English—followed by a discussion. On a flyer that listed the film schedule, organizers wrote, "Pirate Cinema Göteborg thinks that Göteborg residents have the right to several free spaces and social meeting places. [At Underjorden] you have the possibility to check out a good film, chat with your friends, and have

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[11] It was called "Pirate Cinema" because it disobeyed copyright laws by publicly showing films for free.

coffee at a newly opened cafe all in the same location" (Piratbion 2010). Examples of films include "After Stonewall," which details the history of the LGBT movement in the United States and "McLibel," a documentary about a British court case against two environmentalists who published a pamphlet that was critical of McDonald's.

Activists viewed these as both cultural and political events because the films were "more open than 'home theaters' but less anonymous than cinemas and with the possibility to incorporate the film into political discussion" (Ariadad and Fleischer 2010: 46). However, it was not only the framing of films in political discussion that activists considered political about these screenings; they also priortized these events as ways of meeting new people and "creating a sense of community," which neither home movie screenings nor public cinemas offer: "Pirate movie nights are political not only because they flout copyright laws, but because they create new spaces for film and new possibilities for collectives to gather" (Ariadad and Fleischer 2010: 46). Rather than going to a movie alone or with friends and not speaking to anyone around you, activists prioritized discussions of the film as a means of fostering relationships among people who did not previously know one another.

My observations revealed that informal activities, such as meals, often became educational experiences as well. For example, I attended a "people's kitchen" meal at Underjorden (Göteborg) following a Ship to Gaza protest. The dining area was abuzz with energy that the protest had generated. A few people at my table described themselves as having to "admit" that they really did not understand why or how activists from Sweden were involved in trying to break the blockade on the Gaza Strip. People at the tables around us began chiming in, answering questions and discussing the Free Gaza Movement that Ship to Gaza (a coalition of

Scandinavian activists) support. This informal occasion became a consciousness-raising experience.

5.4.3   "Do's and don'ts": production of norms and practices

Cultural experimentation, discussions, and debates contribute to "establishing new collective norms, which draw upon both experimental performances and political perspectives or ideas" (Yates 2014:14). My observations from Utkanten (Malmö) show that norms and practices are established and (re)produced by political signage, literature, and social interactions. In contrast to the drab brick façade of the building outside, the interior walls of Utkanten are covered in colorful graffiti. A jumble of tables and chairs lines one wall and red paper lanterns hang overhead. Just inside the front door, a list of "do's" and "don'ts" are painted on the wall. The lists reflect the politics of the groups that run the building (Figure 5-6). They read: "DO's: self-initiative, independence, respect, cooperation, solidarity, culture creating without boundaries. DONT's [sic]: racism, sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, violence." The fact that these lists are at the entrance lets visitors know right away what values and norms are agreed upon by people who work and socialize at Utkanten.

Figure 5-6: Do and Don't List, Entrance to Utkanten

The list of "do's" includes the words "independence," "self-initiative," and "creating culture without boundaries." This stands in contrast to the orderly, regulatory characteristics of Swedish society that activists see as confining. Utkanten's Myspace page elaborates on this idea in its description of the social center as an island of autonomy:

> In contrast to the rest of society—where everything is run from above, where we are fed prohibitions, rules, directives and threats of reprisal if we don't obey—we can do what we want [at Utkanten], build activities of our own initiative, work to build relationships with each other in order to counteract oppressive structures.

In this brief paragraph, activists at Utkanten offer a picture of social centers as autonomous oases in a society they feel is characterized by "prohibitions, rules, and directives." In contrast, they describe Utkanten as a place where people can imagine and build activities according to their

interests, develop relationships with others, and work together in activism aimed at "oppressive structures," such as sexism, racism, and heterosexism.

An experience that I found quite revealing of the norms at Utkanten happened one Monday night as I worked alongside activists in the kitchen in preparation for the weekly "People's Kitchen" (*folkkök*). The People's Kitchen, a free weekly dinner open to the public, is a common event at social centers. At Utkanten, all food is procured from the excesses of supermarkets (i.e. taken from dumpsters), a political act aimed at drawing attention to capitalist excess. The group making dinner this evening is an international team consisting of five people; the diners on this particular evening consisted of roughly 40 people, including French hitchhikers and a Canadian punk band who shared their beer with me.

Amber, a Canadian student who has been studying in Malmö for a few years, asks what I want to make. I reply, "I don't know...what are you thinking of making? What do you think will go well with the menu you all have planned?" She says, "it's up to you!" I froze, unable to think of anything to contribute. Being new to the group and an outsider, I was looking for direction from the kitchen crew, who laughed at my indecisiveness. Amber explained my uncertainty by saying, "sometimes it's hard for people to get used to the concept that this really is a free space. There are no leaders. Just do whatever you feel like." Feeling the pressure of the kitchen crew's smiling eyes staring at me, I said that I didn't have any creative menu ideas, so I would be happy to mindlessly chop and dice vegetables, which I did gladly. Amber and the others quickly incorporated them into a hearty and delicious meal. Having always considered myself an independent thinker, I found it disconcerting that I felt so unsure of how to behave without guidance.

As I washed my coffee cup in the sink, I noticed a handwritten sign hanging over the sink. It poses a question: "If you don't wash your own dishes, in practice you like the idea that certain people should live off others' work. Do you know what one calls a person like you in everyday speech?" The question has three possible answers with boxes next to each answer: Bourgeois Asshole, Comrade in Solidarity, or Anarchist. The first possible answer, "Bourgeois Asshole," is indicated as correct with a checkmark in the box beside it. This sign is an example of the idea that Utkanten activists promote when they write that one of the norms that they hope to foster is to "build relationships with each other in order to counteract oppressive structures." One of the "oppressive structures" they identify is capitalism. Washing one's own dishes is viewed by activists at Utkanten as an expression of anti-capitalist solidarity in that it shows that one does not expect to "live off of another [person's] work." This points to how the meaning ascribed to a place (in this case anti-capitalism) shapes action (washing dishes). The sign points to the politics of everyday life in an effort to make people think about their behavior and inscribe norms for everyday practices that are informed by political beliefs.

5.4.4   Physical Places: "Cyklopen is Building Future Politics."

Prefiguration includes "attempts to decisively inscribe or consolidate codes of conduct, their political messages and symbolism, and experimental origins" in the physical or built environment (Yates 2014:14). This may take shape in how people sit during meetings (in circle formations to promote equalizing effects); small libraries containing donated books on social and political issues, reinforcing the educational functions of the social center; and graffiti and printed material (stickers, flyers, pamphlets, zines, and manifestos) from groups such as Anti-Fascist Aktion and Revolutionary Front that cling to the bathroom stalls, walls, and tabletops.

The best example of inscribing places with political meaning is Cyklopen (Stockholm). For activist-builders there, questions of space and place were intimately connected to their political visions and goals. Place is "not just a compilation of geography, structures, and people, it is also a site of imagining. Places are brought into being in the mind as much as they are on the land" (Paulsen 2004:244). They envisioned themselves as "building the future" by creating a social center. As a physical manifestation of their dreams and imaginations, the building came to serve as an important symbol—locally, nationally, and internationally—of cultural freedom and a hopeful sign for the future of autonomous social movements in Sweden.

Since the early 2000s, members of Culture Campaign (*Kulturkampanjen*) had been squatting for short periods of time in buildings around Stockholm. Tired of being kicked out of building after building, they decided they needed a place of their own. Erik, who was centrally involved in building Cyklopen, explains,

> [Culture Campaign] had been squatting and had bad luck with that because of being evicted by cops, but also because of having problems with other squatters. They had been squatting this old metalworking factory or something and they were in there building spaces for cultural activities and other people were in there just wrecking shit and eventually the whole place burned down. So they were kind of exasperated by the squatting scene and were looking for other options.

Erik points out that it was not only police and authorities with whom the Culture Campaign were exasperated. He contrasts the members of the group, who were "building spaces for cultural activities" with "other squatters" who were "just wrecking shit." In other words, the members of the group were trying to create something new, while others were being destructive. The exasperation of dealing with places that were temporary, whether due to evictions or clashes between squatters, led the group to seek out other courses of action.

While many groups complain about the stringent rules enforced by Swedish authorities, it is necessary for radical groups to at least *attempt* to work with authorities during (and in some

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cases, before) squatting a building. As Erik explained, "everything [in Sweden] is really official and above-board, as far as places are concerned," so in order to create their own place from the ground up, it was necessary for the Culture Campaign to cooperate with local authorities. In fact, it was an administrator working in land delegation and zoning who first suggested to the group that they build their own place. In an essay about Cyklopen in the anarchist magazine *Rolling Thunder*, one activist wrote, "looking back, I can only imagine that this person was joking. […] I can't help but suspect that this suggestion, coming from the mouth of the beast itself, was the equivalent of Snow White's poison apple, intended to put this group to sleep forever" (Anonymous 2008:45). Some members of the group took the suggestion to be a joke. They suspected that the administrator who suggested they build their own center never believed that they could find land, do the necessary paperwork, and build, believing instead that the challenge would cause the collective to dissolve.

The challenge of meeting building code requirements in Sweden was a tall order for a ragtag group of activists and amateur builders. In the early part of the 20th century, Swedish social scientists did extensive research on household behaviors, which led to a host of Social Democratic policies on "everything from the height of a kitchen counter[12] to the number of toilets per square meter" (Anonymous 2008:43). As many activists pointed out, this standardization of space also standardized how people could *use* space. Though they were designed to make sure that renters would not be forced to live in squalor, strict building code policies were a detriment to people who wanted to create DIY places. Amateur builders and designers without the money, expertise, and legal knowledge to meet the codes would surely fail in their efforts to create new places.

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[12] The standard height of a kitchen counter was (and is) determined by the average height of 1950s housewives (Fieldnotes, Stockholm City Museum).

Nonetheless, the group took on the challenge. They located a piece of land in Högdalen, a working-class district roughly five miles south of the Stockholm city center. It was the corner of a gravel lot surrounded by forest, and the rent cost just six hundred kronor (less than $100) per month. The municipality owned the land, so the group needed to get permission to build there. Despite some initial opposition, the local zoning commission eventually granted Culture Campaign a building permit. This is when Erik entered the picture: "I met some people who were working on [Cyklopen], and at the time I was apprenticing as a carpenter, and I was learning all these skills that I wanted to use in activism. They seemed really serious, really on their game about it. So…they just kinda pulled me into it." Erik's impression of the group was not that they were a destructive, rebellious, ragtag team of activists, but a serious team of DIY builders and designers who wanted to create something new for culture makers and activists in the area.

Activists used DIY principles to build Cyklopen. They drove around in a van collecting building materials from construction sites and abandoned buildings rather than buying them. They relied solely on volunteer labor. By employing a DIY ethic, "we wouldn't have to compromise our vision by making everything commercial in order to meet costs, and the house would be built by the people who would later use it" (Anonymous 2008:49). The latter was something that Erik came back to a couple of times during our interview. He stressed the importance of DIY places as reflections of the visions and needs of the people who will use them. In describing his vision of an ideal DIY space, Erik commented that it should include "Stuff that is well-built, but obviously built by amateurs. Stuff that reflects a deep knowledge of building and construction but could never be mass-produced. Something that obviously took a lot of time and was laborious, but is functional and beautiful." Erik drew on a DIY ethic and anti-

capitalist politics when describing how a place should physically look. A DIY space should not be polished. It should exude a feeling of amateurish design and styling, while being built in a structurally sound way. Later in this interview, Erik commented on how there were "weird spaces all around [Cyklopen] because the design hadn't been thought all the way through." Rather than seeing this as a flaw, he saw it as positive; unpolished design imbued the space with a quirky character that a professionally built, "mass produced" building would never have.

Activists at Cyklopen thought about themselves as moving toward the future, perhaps even *building* the future. Before the first Cyklopen (Cyklopen 1.0) was even built, the place conjured dreamy, fairy-tale imagery. The first news article about Cyklopen ran in the national newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* in August 2006, when building was underway. The title of the article was "The Container Castle" (*Containerslottet*), referring to the shipping containers that formed the sides of the building (Forsström 2006). Another journalist called it a place where "Dreams can finally be realized. Activism combined with creativity and pioneering spirit. A perfect place for a fairy tale" (Borg 2013). The "Container Castle," wrote journalist Ivar Andersen (2008), was

> something reminiscent of a fairytale world. Where it stood on an industrial site in the foothills of Högdalstoppen, it seemed like something out of a fantasy, something that does not quite belong in the world to which we are accustomed. And Cyclops certainly was a fantasy, born out of a group of activists' dreams and assiduous work for a self-managed space for culture and politics.

These articles—and dozens of others like it—connote a sense of futurity in action by drawing on the realms of dreams, imagination, and fantasy. The odd setting was a combination of industrial and forested land, lending it a surrealist, otherworldly atmosphere. City zoning officials were cast as villains. And the activists who "combined creativity with a pioneering spirit," (Borg 2013) became the heroes, overcoming legal, political, economic, and cultural obstacles that stood between them and their dreams.

The fire that destroyed Cyklopen in 2008 "sent a shock wave through the country's extra-parliamentary left" (Borg 2013). Erik, who rushed to the scene of the fire, described feeling "an indescribable sense of loss. We watched so many years of hard work go up in smoke and there was nothing we could do about it" (Figure 5-7). But activists did not give up. After the shock of the fire wore off, Culture Campaign's mantra became "They can never burn down our dreams." When I was in Stockholm in 2009-2010, members of Culture Campaign were at every meeting and event I attended to solicit ideas—and builders—for Cyklopen 2.0 (Figure 5-8). When I met with Mads, the organizer of the Anarchist Book Fair in Stockholm, he said, "Hey, if you see anyone from Cyklopen, tell them that I have money for them." Apparently, he had recently been in Germany, where anarchist activists had collected money to help with rebuilding efforts.

Figure 5-7: Cyklopen after the fire, November 2008

Figure 5-8: "Do you want to have a free cultural center? Help us build it! Cyklopen needs you."

The suspicion that neo-Nazi groups were responsible for the arson helped Cyklopen get support from sources that surprised activists. Members of national and European parliament—particularly those in left-wing parties—created petitions, wrote about the social center on blogs, and encouraged people to offer financial support. Shortly after the fire, a newspaper editorial in *Svenska Dagbladet*, Sweden's moderate newspaper, called on readers to "help build Cyklopen again" (Gudmundson and Rayman 2008). The editorialists wrote:

> Today, when the Nazis march in Salem,[13] we put a five hundred crown note [about $70] in Cyklopen's bank account. We urge everyone who wants to see a free cultural life to do the same. That does not mean we agree with every word spoken within the walls, or that we believe that those who are active there will like ours [words]. But the years of work put into Cyklopen should not have been in vain.

The authors are clear: they may not agree with autonomous politics. But with this editorial, the act of supporting Cyklopen became a way of showing opposition to neo-Nazi groups, something that many people in Sweden could get behind. More villains are added to this fairy tale saga: neo-Nazi groups whose hate and destruction are countered by Cyklopen, a place that symbolized freedom.

The fire could not have been predicted, nor could the international outpouring of support—especially from unlikely sources. As these events unfolded, they shaped "a sense of what [was] collectively plausible" for people involved in Culture Campaign (Blee 2013:657; also Blee 2012; Kurzman 2005). Activists built a social center with no money, little knowledge about building, and multiple zoning and planning hurdles. The arson that destroyed it was decried nationally and internationally as a crime against freedom of culture and expression. For a group that began by getting kicked out of squat after squat, this would have seemed impossible from the start. Amanda, an activist builder says, "hopefully we can inspire others by showing that it is *not* impossible to realize one's ideas." Another builder, Johanna, writes that the project made her feel "enjoyment, motivation and a sense of power and resistance. Truly material resistance. A building is so much more and so different than an idea or belief. A building can accommodate a diversity of ideas and beliefs and additionally accommodate all their concrete expression. […] it can accommodate very many people : people who need to talk, listen and discuss together"

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[13] Since the year 2000, an annual march is organized by radical right-wing groups as a memorial to the death of Daniel Wretström, a 17-year-old nationalist and white power activist killed at a bus station near the town of Salem, Sweden.

(Berättelser om Cyklopen 2012). These statements highlight the sense of volition and power that people felt from creating something shaped by their political imaginations. The "material resistance" to which Johanna refers reflects a sense of reach and efficacy—the belief that the building will continue to foster the "enjoyment, power, and resistance" for people in the future.

Figure 5-9: Left: Cyklopen 1.0 (2007-2008) Right: Cyklopen 2.0 (2013)

With the aid of funding from all over Europe, building of Cyklopen 2.0 began in the summer of 2011 on a new patch of land in Högdalen, not far from the old location. The building itself is polished and wildly colorful, sided in transparent plastic sheets of green, yellow, purple, and fuchsia. Its futuristic appearance is a startling sight in the natural setting in which it stands. The abundance of resources is apparent in the new design, a stark contrast to the assemblage of found materials that constructed the first Cyklopen (Figure 5-9). The literal transparency of the building symbolizes the principles of a place as a "free cultural center" where "anyone that subscribes to the values of direct democracy and gender equality has a standing invitation" (Borg 2013). Practically speaking, it also makes it possible for anyone inside to see out, important given that the first building was attacked.

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People who worked on creating the building have different goals and hopes for Cyklopen 2.0. In a reflective blog post, a builder named Miriam wrote that Cyklopen 2.0 "feels like a literal and figurative redress. Towards the municipality and government agencies and [cultural] establishment, but also against those groups and individuals who clearly did not want to us to have a free cultural center" (Berättelser om Cyklopen 2012). For Miriam, the rebuild gave her a sense of vindication after being denied access to spaces and places for a decade. On Cyklopen's website (Berättelser om Cyklopen 2012), other activists write:

> I want more groups of curious and committed people to get to create something that is what they dream about. And I want there to be more space in which racism, homophobia and anti-feminism are condemned as severely as they should be. I wish for more room where you may be and think radically. Where ideas and dreams about a different kind of society are taken seriously. That's everything that I see in the Cyklopen and all that I hope it will be. - *Fanny*

> It gives me hope that the city is not just a frame around our lives but affects [us] and can be affected. It is constantly open to change. - *Anonymous*

For these people, Cyklopen represents the materialization of dreams and imaginaries about what how the city—and the world—could look in the future. The professional look and clean lines of Cyklopen 2.0 lend the building a sense of solidity and permanence in the landscape. Because the building represents a "place where ideas and dreams about a different kind of society are taken seriously," the strength and permanence of those "ideas and dreams" also become embedded in the landscape.

The story of Cyklopen highlights how the process of protest is equally as important as the outcome. During the building process, people learned new skills, exchanged information, built relationships, negotiated conflicts, and felt as though they were "building the future." One activist said Cyklopen was "probably the most gender equal construction site in history." One of the project's architect-builders added "our general principle has been that every individual shall

have the possibility to learn every moment in the building process. If it takes half a day to hammer a nail, so be it" (quoted in Borg 2013). The emphasis here is on process, not building quickly or hurrying to finish the project. However, the outcome of this work was equally as important because the process created something with the potential for long-lasting reach into the future. By creating a "free cultural space," people felt as though they were creating something straight out of their imaginations, something that did not exist anywhere else in the country. The process resulted in something material, making people feel as though their dreams had become reality.

Cyklopen represented a shift toward a new path that allowed activists to feel like what they were doing made a difference in the physical landscape, cultural landscape, and for the future of social movements. The way Cyklopen was built represented a radical departure from the way things are usually done. Social centers in Sweden are typically rented in industrial areas of cities. Cyklopen sits in a forested area of the suburbs and was built from the ground up by amateurs who used found materials. Not only that, it burned down, was re-built, and opened again five years later. The social center survived opposition from vastly different social groups, from neo-Nazi skinheads who were suspected of arson to zoning officials in the city who nearly refused to give them a building permit. At the same time, Cyklopen garnered support from some surprising allies, such as the city's cultural commission, moderate politicians, and the national news media—the very groups from which autonomous movements distance themselves. They also received financial support from autonomous networks all over Europe. What seemed like an impossible dream—a cultural "free zone" that was built, managed and operated independent of the state or landlords—not only came true, but they did it twice.

5.5   CONCLUSION

Social centers are prefigurative places oriented toward the future, but also places where people draw upon the *past* to theorize about that future. While activists admire the kind of movement culture that old labor movement created in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these places are now operated by the state. The state, they say, highlights folk culture in these places and, in operating them as conference centers, prioritizes capitalist enterprise over their beginnings as social movement places. They identify their creation of social centers as derived from the same ideals that these early movements held as important: self-management and freedom from state control. In creating social centers such as Utkanten, Cyklopen, and Underjorden, activists reject engaging in politics via formal institutions, conforming to social norms, and bureaucratic forms of organization that they link to "Swedishness." These places become the cultural hubs of radical leftist movements because they lend a sense of continuity to movement histories, cultural norms, and values.

Welfare retrenchment of the past has created anxiety about uncertain futures, inspiring activists to "stir things up collectively" in the hopes of creating better futures for themselves, both individually and collectively. Scene places are important in these efforts because they are where activists experiment with cultural ideas, norms, and practices that fall outside the boundaries of what they see as a rigid and conformist culture that foreclose possibilities for change. Ideas, norms, and practices are then circulated within the scene and inscribed on the built

environment. In these ways, the norms and practices of the movement become embedded in place, lending them a sense of durability that activists hope will carry on into the future.

None of these social centers exist in the same forms as they did when I was in Sweden, which exemplifies the shifting and ephemeral nature of scenes. Eviction, arson, and conflicts with authorities (e.g. police, local governments) have forced these places to move and find new ways to survive. This, some scholar-activists argue, "diverts a huge investment of activist time, energy and resources away from the real fight for public space" and leads to projects "built upon compromise, constrained by legal hurdles and enshrined in unnecessary bureaucracy (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006: 313). However, it also shows the enduring importance of place for autonomous movements. While none of these social centers are the same today, they still exist, whether in new buildings, temporary locations, or in the form of new scene places spawned by the ideas, norms and practices created in them. Despite the "hurdles" they face, activists persist in seeking out new places.

Additionally, the troubles activists encountered while creating and managing social centers gave rise to renewed efforts to claim "the right to the city," which I will detail in the next chapter. Instead of focusing their attention on accessing a single building, activists redirected their energy to appropriating urban space more generally by organizing street festivals, squatting buildings, and demanding their right to participate in the (re)development of urban neighborhoods. In this way, the ideas, norms, and practices that are produced in social centers are diffused to other scene places, such as cafes and bookshops, and—in the case of Malmö—to the neighborhood more broadly. These highlight the importance of place—with special attention to geographical location—for establishing social movement continuity, linking the past, present, and future.

6.0   "FIRST WE TAKE A BUILDING…THEN THE WHOLE CITY."

THE RIGHT TO THE CITY IN MALMÖ

On a sunny spring day in Möllevången, a neighborhood in central Malmö, I walked along the eastern edge of Folkets Park (The People's Park) toward the activist café *Glassfabriken*. Along the way I encountered graffiti calling for Palestinian freedom on the sidewalk, anti-capitalist stickers on drainpipes, and flyers for a squatting project on a wall bordering the park. As I entered the café, I noticed a bulletin board filled with colorful flyers, including one issuing a call to "Stop the Commercialization of Folkets Park" by "city politicians and private investors with dollar signs in their eyes." It was tacked next to a flyer for Möllevångsfestivalen, a street festival "for the people, by the people."

Inside Glassfabriken, I picked up the latest issue of the anarchist magazine *Brand*. The cover features a collage of three people in black clothing holding a cluster of buildings over their heads, one of which bears a white banner featuring the international squatters' symbol (see Figure 6-1). A section of the magazine is titled "First We Take a Building…Then the Whole City." The articles that followed focused on squatting as a protest tactic, not only as a means of accessing buildings, but as a means of articulating new visions of city life. For example, one article reads, "Politicians have a vision for cities. But what is included in this vision? The new wave of squatting happens in a context where [people in] neighborhoods have begun to fight for another [kind of] city" (Carlander 2010:39). This passage highlights several things. First, cities

are changing. Second, there is a discrepancy between city officials and residents over what form these changes should take. Third, city dwellers are engaging in urban activism to influence change over their cities' futures. This is illustrated in the cover image, in which activists collectively carry a group of buildings.
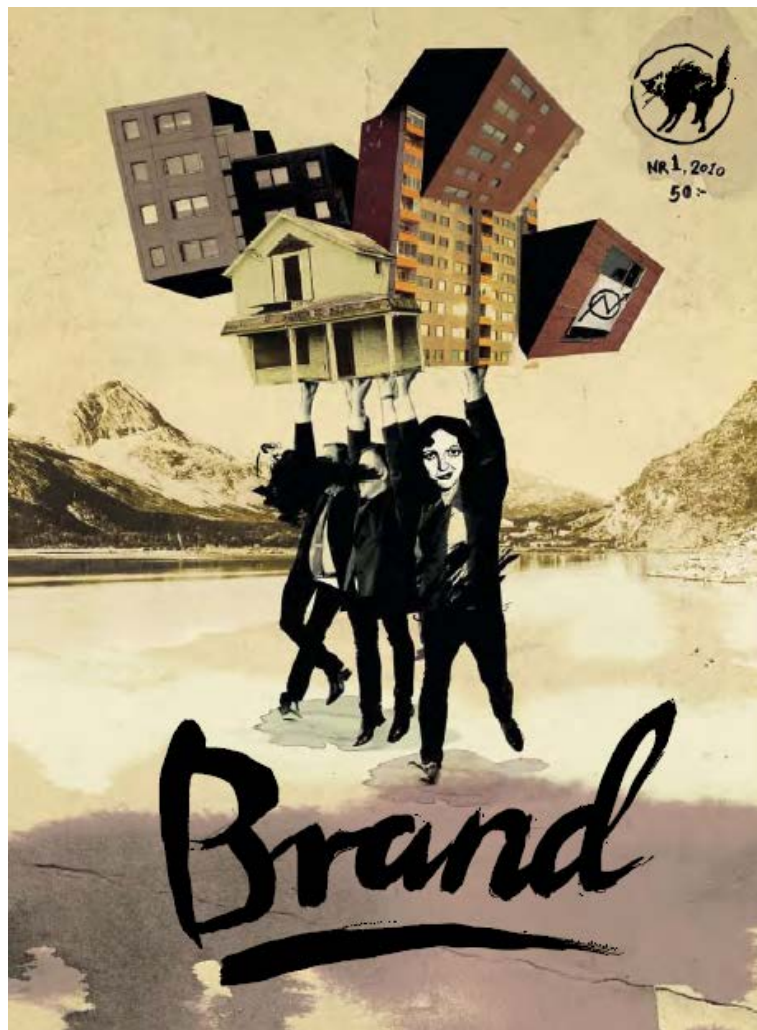
Figure 6-1: Cover of the anarchist magazine Brand (2010)

The political messages I encountered on my brief walk to Glassfabriken illustrate just a few ways in which autonomous politics are a part of everyday life in Möllevången. Drainpipes are plastered with anti-capitalist stickers. A land occupation takes up an empty lot. A

construction site becomes a place for protest. While the pursuit of more scene places, such as social centers, continues, these efforts become part of larger claims about the use of public spaces such as streets, parks, and vacant lots.

This chapter looks at the dependencies and interactions between scenes, social movements, and urban neighborhoods through the process of diffusion. Diffusion refers to the transmission of ideas and practices from one context to another (Wood 2012). If the goal of prefigurative politics is to create social change beyond the boundaries of social centers, demonstrations, and meeting halls, diffusion is important. Diffusion is the process through which ideas and practices of social movements travel to other social contexts.

Most social movement studies focus on diffusion from one movement to another (McAdam and Rucht 1993; Strang and Soule 1998; Tarrow and McAdam 2005; Wood 2012). I emphasize diffusion from social movement scene to neighborhood, highlighting the context in which ideas are transmitted, actions that serve as channels of diffusion, and the character of these actions. Because this is a small community, I emphasize the role of *relational diffusion*, the transfer of ideas through routine patterns of interaction, but I also show examples of *non-relational* diffusion, such as media reports (McAdam and Rucht 1993; Tarrow and McAdam 2005).

In Malmö, activists use projects organized around the Right to the City as a means of transmitting the ideas and practices of scene places to the neighborhood in which those places are located. Autonomous movements demand "The Right to the City" in Möllevången by appropriating urban space (squatting, spraypainting the sidewalks, street festivals) and calling for local participation in decision-making about changes to the neighborhood (the "commercialization" of the local park). More than organizing a single place according to the

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principles of self-management and participatory democracy, activists in Malmö want their entire neighborhood to operate in a similar fashion. Projects such as street festivals and land occupations illustrate how the ideas and practices of scene places spill out into the streets, parks, and squares of the neighborhood Möllevången.

Right to the City movements have proven important for spurring the development of new scene places. In the last chapter, I discussed how physical places are important to autonomous networks because they give a sense of continuity to social movement norms, practices, and histories. Infrastructural changes, increasing rents, and the influx of new residents to Möllevången puts autonomous places at risk of closing or being forced to move—and many have had to do just that. Because this network of places helps make politics an everyday part of the neighborhood, the possible effects of these closures would not only change the autonomous scene, but the character and way of life of the neighborhood. For activists in Malmö, much more is at stake than losing access to buildings. They worry about losing these places because it would be tantamount to losing "their" neighborhood entirely.

I begin with descriptions of the neighborhood Möllevången, located in central Malmö, and.the autonomous movement scene that has taken shape in the neighborhood since 2001. Then, I turn to a discussion of the changes that activists and neighborhood residents see as destroying the fabric of the neighborhood. The neighborhood has been conducive to the presence of a movement scene because it is centrally located and affordable. Over the past several years, infrastructural, demographic, and aesthetic changes in the neighborhood have begun to make it inhospitable and unaffordable for autonomous groups. In the final sections, I show how the idea of The Right to the City—in particular the rights to appropriation of space and participation in decision-making processes about how space is used—spills out of scene places and into the

streets, parks, and squares of Möllevången. The temporary autonomous zones created by these projects underscore the need for more lasting, durable movement places. However, these efforts are also limited in several ways, such as social control by landlords and city authorities; rising rents in the neighborhood that make accessing space difficult or impossible; and competing ideas of what constitutes politics, culture, and protest.

6.1 MÖLLEVÅNGEN

Malmö is Sweden's third largest city with a population of 313,000 residents. Part of Denmark until the mid-17th century, Malmö became an important port in northern Europe in the 1850s and home to major textile industries around the turn of the 20th century. Owing to its history as a major industrial center, Malmö proclaims itself home to the robust Swedish labor movement. An economic recession in the mid-1970s hurt the manufacturing industry in the city and a decade later, the Kockums shipyard—one of the largest in Europe—closed, marking the beginnings of industrial decline in the city. In the mid- to late-1990s, the city began to revamp its image as a center of creativity and knowledge, due in part to the opening of Malmö University in 1998. Today Malmö markets itself as a creative city, boasting "everything from a wide range of major shopping malls to hip neighborhoods with small retro design shops" (Malmö Stad 2014).

The part of the city to which Malmö activists are claiming their right is Möllevången, located in the Southern Inner City District (Figure 6-4). Like many of the streets in Malmö, the streets of Möllan are characterized by a mix of ornate 19th century buildings and blocky, brick apartment buildings in dull shades of brown, beige, and goldenrod—a familiar style of post-war housing in Scandinavian cities. The neighborhood's primary public gathering spaces are

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Möllevångstorget, a public square and market place on the western edge of the neighborhood, and Folkets Park (The People's Park) at the heart of the neighborhood. The multi-ethnic character of the neighborhood is evident from the several Middle Eastern and Asian grocery stores (Figure 6-3), the plethora of falafel stands, and the accented Swedish of the men working at the daily farmers' market in Möllevångstorget.

Figure 6-2: Ethnic grocery stores in Möllevången.

The social democracy for which Sweden is famed developed out of the labor movement in Malmö at the end of the 19th century. Möllevången (referred to affectionately by Malmö residents as "Möllan") has been the center of left-wing life and culture in the city ever since.[14] As I discussed in the previous chapter, the culture of the labor movement is something that

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[14] It is worth noting that the majority of Möllevången voters (roughly 60%) cast their ballots for the Socialist and Left Parties in municipal elections in both 1998 and 2006 (Malmö Stad 2000, 2010).

autonomous activists admire. An essay in the syndicalist publication *Direkt Aktion* summarizes this feeling: "there couldn't be any doubt about Möllevången's political affiliation […] In excursions to Folkets park, in meetings at the People's House, in the cooperative Solidar's corner shop. The neighborhood personified the ideal. […] It is impossible to escape the labor movement's influence on Möllevången" (Larsson 2008: 14). The history of the neighborhood is important to activists because they see themselves as continuing the legacy of Möllan by making social movements an embedded part of the neighborhood. For example, as I mention later in the chapter, the land occupation project *Stad Solidar* took its name from the early 20th century labor movement cooperative *Solidar* (Soliarity). In the early 20th century, the cooperative managed a bakery (*Solidarbageriet*) on the same corner as the occupation project (Yngveson 2005).

There are physical reminders of Möllevången's labor history, primarily in the form of public art, that dot the neighborhood. For example, the main landmark in Möllevångstorget is *Arbetets ära* (Labor's Glory), a bronze statue depicting the twisting bodies of men and women holding up a large boulder to which a bronze relief of factory smokestacks—representing the city—is affixed (Figure 6-4). The statue depicts working-class laborers as the foundation of society, and marks Möllevången as an historically important place for those laborers. In Folkets Park, there are busts of social democratic heroes, including Per Albin Hansson, a prominent figure in the Social Democratic Party for more than 20 years who coined the term *folkhemmet* ("the people's home"), a concept that has shaped Swedish national identity for nearly a century. The park is also home to a commemorative plaque in memory of former social democratic Prime Minister Olaf Palme.[15]

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[15] Olaf Palme is something of a folk hero, especially among older Social Democrats. (Among younger leftists, he is not a reference point, as he died in 1986 when they were either children or not yet born). He was openly critical of US foreign policy and marched with students against the Vietnam War during his first term as Prime Minister. He offered financial support to anti-

Figure 6-3: Labor's Glory, Möllevångstorget

Malmotown.com, the city's official tourist website, describes Möllevången in the
following way:

> [Möllevången] is the most colourful district in Malmö. The market trade is lively here
> and the shops and restaurants have roots all over the world. Möllevången was the first
> planned, large-scale working class neighbourhood in Malmö and the result of the
> growing industrial city in the late 19th century. The labour movement gained tremendous
> influence here. The worker's newspaper *Arbetet* and the cooperative association Solidar
> were founded in Möllevången, which was also the site of the first Folkets Park
> ("Community Park") in Sweden.

This places Möllevången's working-class character in the city's industrial past, rooted in the 19th

century. The social democratic newspaper *Arbetet* folded in the year 2000 and the organization

Solidar "now operates according to capitalist principles" (Nilsson 2010:14). The English

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imperialist movements, supported the Cuban revolution, and was vocal in his opposition to apartheid in South Africa. In 1986, he
was assassinated on the street in Stockholm while walking home from the movies with his wife. He was the first victim of
political assassination in modern Swedish history. His murder remains unsolved.

translation of *Folkets Park* (literally The People's Park) to "Community Park" dilutes its political origins, distancing it from its leftist past. In contrast to its political—and decidedly working-class—past, the new, post-industrial Malmö is characterized by multiculturalism and diversity, the term "colorful" a thinly veiled reference to the ethnic heterogeneity of the area. In these rhetorical constructions, the City of Malmö "constructs cultural difference as the city's fundamental organizing principle, while confining the category of class to the city's (industrial) past" (Nilsson 2010, p. 10).

Some interviewees also talk about the neighborhood's working-class history as just that—history—but they still characterize the neighborhood in political terms. Martin described Möllan as "first and foremost an old working-class area. From the '60s and '70s onward, leftists, politically active or engaged, environmentally conscious people live here." He recognizes the working-class character as "old" but says that a spirit of political protest has been alive in the neighborhood since the 1960s. Contemporary symbols that denote the political character of Möllevången take the form of graffiti, flyers, and stickers that decorate sidewalks, drainpipes, and telephone poles. This is a relatively uncommon sight in other Swedish cities, as "clean spaces are associated with safety, and city authorities argue that the presence of graffiti, for example, creates an image of a public environment that is not cared for and therefore presumably unsafe" (Thörn 2011: 996).

While all interviewees in Malmö acknowledged the political character of the neighborhood, many people I met in scene places also talked about feeling emotionally connected to the neighborhood.[16] Elsa, a student working at Utkanten, says,"Möllan feels...those

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[16] Interviewees were mixed in terms of how long they had lived in Möllan. There were a few native residents, but most interviewees living in Möllan had been there for five or more years. Most interviewees, however, were former residents of the neighborhood who felt they were priced out in the few preceding years.

who live here feel like 'oh, I live in Möllan.' It's something special to live here." The "special" feeling that Elsa mentions is reflected in the language people use to talk about residents. In newspaper articles about Möllevången, journalists and interviewees make linguistic distinctions between city inhabitants and neighborhood inhabitants. While people living outside the neighborhood speak on behalf of "people who live in Malmö," those who live in Möllevången spoke in collective terms ("we" or "our community"), regardless of how long they had lived there. Both journalists and interviewees distinguish between Malmö residents (*Malmöbor*) and Möllevången residents (*Möllevångare*) by using different words for them, marking the neighborhood—and its inhabitants—as unique. Kristina, an artist involved with the social center Kontrapunkt, describes "a relaxed, it's-okay-to-be-who-you-are feeling" in the air in Möllevången. Jenny, an anarchist with whom I stayed in Malmö, described Möllan as having "soul in the streets."

6.2 THE AUTONOMOUS SCENE

At the time of my fieldwork, the autonomous scene was situated primarily in and around Möllevången. The neighborhood is structurally conducive to the presence of a scene because it is centrally located, relatively affordable (though that is changing), and has a significant social movement history. The scene consisted of *Glassfabriken*, an activist meeting spot and a café; *Utkanten*, the social center I discuss in Chapter 5; *Amalthea*, a self-described "feminist book café"; and *Kontrapunkt,* an art space and social center that was getting ready to move and expand in size. Temporary autonomous zones, such as a street festival (*Möllevångsfestivalen*) and a land

occupation project (*Stad Solidar*), were also important spaces at the time (Figure 6-4 is a map of

the scene).
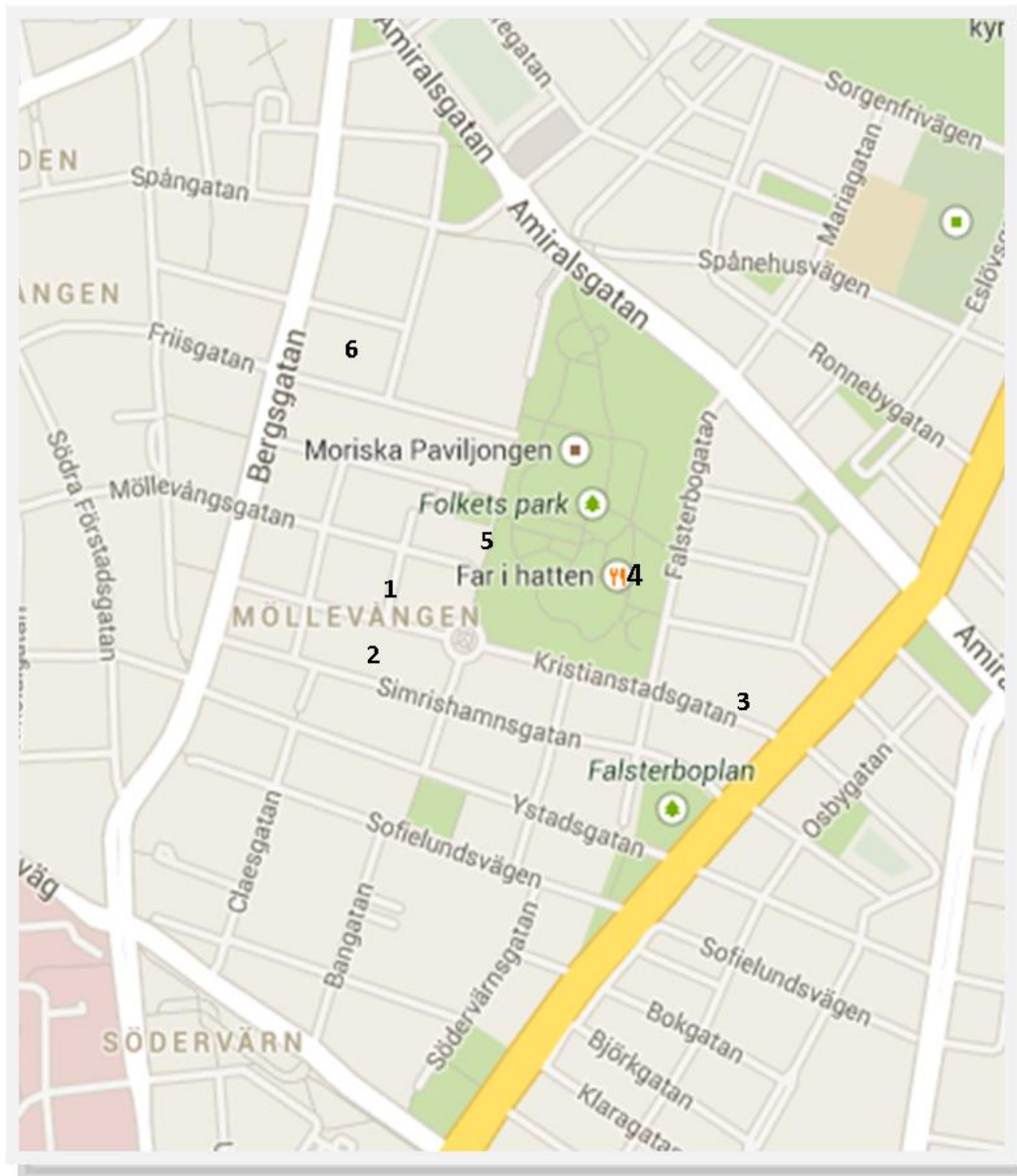
Figure 6-4: The autonomous scene in Möllevången. In chronological order: 1. Glassfabriken, 2. Möllevång Festival, 3. Amalthea Feminist Bookshop and Cafe, 4. Place in the park that activists tried unsuccessfully to access, 5. Möllevång Group office, 6. Site of Stad Solidar

The emergence of the current autonomous scene in Malmö can be traced to opening of the activist café and meeting place *Glassfabriken* in 2001. When I asked Nils, the first activist I met in the city, about activist places, he says,

> Have you been to Glassfabriken? It was the first place in Malmö. It opened in 2001. It's a café, and they have discussion groups and films and political meetings there….After the riots in Göteborg some people started discussing the need for a place where activists could meet on a regular basis.

Nils explains Glassfabriken's importance by saying that it was the first activist-operated place among the current constellation scene places. He links its inception to the Göteborg riots, emphasizing continuity and community. Sara also talked about Glassfabriken in relation to the Göteborg riots, stating that "Glassfabriken opened in 2001, which is the same year as the riots in Göteborg….People felt this need for continuity, a regular space where people could meet and plan and discuss, but [that could] also be open to the rest of the community." In fact, nearly every interview with Malmö activists began with interviewees asking me, "Have you been to Glassfabriken?"

Literally translated, *Glassfabriken* means "the ice cream factory"—an obvious choice of names as it is, in fact, housed in a former ice cream factory. *Glassfabriken* was the first self-managed space in the current autonomous scene, and it laid the groundwork for the formation of the rest of the scene. Just as Nils described it, it is a café and meeting place located in Möllevången, a neighborhood in central Malmö. Opened in October 2001, Glassfabriken's website describes the place as "a non-profit organization that strives for a democratic, gender-equal, ecological, and economically equal society" (Glassfabriken 2011). Their goals when opening the café were that

> One wouldn't need to be one of the insiders in left-wing circles in order to feel welcome. Wouldn't need to know all of the acronyms and internal jargon. [One wouldn't have to] have the right clothes in order to avoid being suspect. It would

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be a café that was appreciated as a cozy café but with events run by Malmö's stone-throwing crazies from hell (Glassfabriken 2012).

In referring to themselves as "stone-throwing crazies from hell," the founders of Glassfabriken link themselves to media descriptions of autonomous activists during the riots while simultaneously saying that one needn't be a leftist in style or ideology to enjoy the café. Glassfabriken's origin story also mentions that "those who were jailed in Göteborg got free *fika*"[17] (Yelah 2011). Even this early example shows evidence of linking autonomous politics with life in the neighborhood.

Glassfabriken is not only important because of its position as the first scene place in Malmö, but also because it was the starting point from which the scene developed. When I asked Ulrika, a filmmaker and activist in Möllevången, to describe the activist scene in the city, she described a series of places, including a bookstore, a neighborhood group, two social centers, and an annual street festival. She explained,

> Glassfabriken was there first and they're very much a café and lecture place and have workshops. Most people from Kontrapunkt [a social center] came from Glassfabriken and they also organized Möllevångsfestivalen [the street festival] […] you know, they're all different places, but they're very tightly connected and people know each other very well.

Ulrika points to Glassfabriken as a vital location in the scene not only because of its history as the first place, but because it was the starting point from which other places and projects emerged as the result of the relationships formed there.

Just down the street from Glassfabriken is the feminist bookstore Amalthea. The store boasts a wide array of political material, including literature, comics, magazines, pamphlets, clothing, stickers, and postcards. They also serve inexpensive coffee, vegetarians/vegan snacks,

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[17] *Fika* is a Swedish social institution. It refers to a break in the work or school day (or activist meeting) for coffee, food, and socializing.

and offer free internet. Although they do not claim allegiance to any particular group, most of the people who work in the shop identify as anarchists or socialists, identifications that are evident in the kinds of material they sell. The first time I visited the shop, a copy of *Urban Revolution* by Henri Lefebvre had a prominent place on one of the shelves. I sat on comfy red couch and drank tea while I leafed through it. The book prompted a man on his way out to tell me that there was a discussion group happening down at Glassfabriken the following weekend. The discussion topic was "the importance of meeting places for anarchist groups."

When I showed up for the discussion the next weekend, I recognized the man I had met at Amalthea. He was sitting at a table with three other men who all looked to be in their early 30s. They were the only people who turned up to the discussion, so I took the opportunity to ask them what they thought about the current meeting places in Malmö. They had the most to say about *Kontrapunkt*, the most recently opened scene place in town. Thus far, they said, it had mainly operated by putting on parties to gain money, but had aspirations of becoming a social center. On their website, Kontrapunkt is described as both a cultural and social center. As a cultural center, they support "free and unestablished cultural life, with particular emphasis on being an underground scene for subculture with local and global roots." As a social center, they aim to "unify and strengthen existing grassroots movements locally in Malmö [to] start building on options for a more equitable society" (Kontrapunkt 2013).

Malmö activists often work in several different projects at once, making the scene places "tightly connected." I visited Kontrapunkt in the summer of 2011 when it was still under construction.[18] I met with activists, filmmakers, and artists who were creating the center and most of them had been involved in at least one (but often multiple) other autonomous projects

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[18] It opened to the public in the autumn of 2012.

and places. Fredrik was involved in the Möllevång Group, Möllevång Festival, and Kontrapunkt. Jessica was also involved in these three projects and had worked at Glassfabriken. Christof, one of the men with whom I cooked dinner at Utkanten, was a builder at Stad Solidar. When activists from Utkanten were searching for a new location after their lease ran out they moved into Kontrapunkt's building temporarily. This enabled me to learn about multiple projects/places from the people I interviewed as well as the connection between projects and places.

6.3 "MÖLLEVÅNGEN IS CHANGING"

A city loses its soul when this continuity is broken. It begins with little changes you suddenly notice in your own neighborhood.…These changes are not only visible, they reshape our everyday routines (Zukin 2010).

Walking through Möllan on a Sunday morning, one sees empty wine bottles, smashed beer cans, and boozy pools of vomit on the streets, leftovers from party-goers on Saturday night. The few people on the streets are either early risers or people in their Saturday night best who haven't gone home after a night on the town. Fat pigeons from Folkets Park roam outside the park gates, scavenging among the party wreckage. Fifteen years ago, people tell me, Möllan was not a place for young people to party. In 1996, the national newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* reported that "regular Malmö residents are moving out of Möllevången…Those who have moved in are mostly addicts" (Malmö City Library). The area's reputation then became that it was "dangerous, criminal, and full of drugs" (Malmö City Library) and in 2001 surveillance cameras were installed by the city around the main square, Möllevångstorget, to discourage crime. In the ten years that followed, infrastructural changes in Malmö, including a new bridge and tunnel system,

coupled with efforts of an active neighborhood association and a thriving cultural scene, began to change the look and feel of Möllevången.

Gentrification is "a gradual process, occurring one block or one building at a time, slowly reconfiguring the neighborhood landscape of consumption and residence" (Pérez 2004:139). Many scholarly studies focus on the effects of gentrification, such as displacement of poor and working-class residents (Betancur 2011; Freeman & Braconi 2004; Levy, Comey, and Padilla 2006; Newman & Wyly 2006; Pérez 2004), changes in housing tenure (Cameron 2003; Hedin et al. 2012; Watt 2009), or adaptive reuse of old buildings for upscale commercial places (Wang 2011; Zukin and Kosta 2004; Zukin et al. 2009). Fewer studies examine how people who live in gentrifying neighborhoods experience neighborhood change in their everyday lives (Brown-Saracino 2010; Cahill 2008; Freeman 2011) or how they resist these changes (Gin and Taylor 2010; Hackworth 2002; Keith and Pile 1997; Pearsall 2013; Robinson 1995).

The process of diffusion requires "attention to the larger environment, to the way cultural models condition behavior, and to historical context and change" (Strang and Soule 1998:268). The gentrification of Möllevången is important because it provided the impetus for Right to the City movements. For example, in 2010, activists created a land occupation on a vacant lot near the park to protest changes in housing tenure. The lot was the former site of an apartment building consisting of rental units and the future site of a co-op building. Activists framed the project as an "art project" that drew on the history of the neighborhood in order to garner as much support from local residents as possible. Urban Planning expert Lance Freeman (2011:2) notes that scholars of gentrification tend to treat indigenous neighborhood residents as "bystanders who are victimized by the gentrification process." Via Right to the City projects, the

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residents of Möllevången demanded a voice in how their neighborhood was changing. But before discussing these actions, it is important to understand the environment in which they operated.

6.3.1 Infrastructural and Demographic Changes

A 2002 short film titled "Möllevången – farewell?" (*Möllevången – adjö?*) chronicles neighborhood residents' views on how the neighborhood was changing at the time. Signs of neighborhood change pointed out in the film include difficulty finding an apartment, higher rents for merchants in the area, plans for the City Tunnel, and "more large property management companies, fewer small ones" (RåFilm 2002). In the film, we meet Kerstin, a member of the Möllevång Group, the local neighborhood association, as she stands in Möllevångstorget, the main plaza and market place in the area. She says, "Möllevången is a very unique neighborhood. It's a nice area to live in and it's special. But the city is changing" she says with a concerned look on her face while looking out over the square. Agnes, a resident of Möllan for 8 years says,

> I'm afraid that [Möllan] will become high rents and segregated and 'oh let's go down to the corner and have a cappuccino.' That would make me puke, make me go crazy because Möllevången is such a special place in Sweden and a special neighborhood because it's so mixed. So many social classes living together is unusual and it's about to disappear, I think.

Agnes emphasizes that Möllan is a "special" place in both the city and in Sweden because unlike class-based and ethnic segregation found in other large cities, people of different ethnic backgrounds and social classes inhabit the neighborhood. In her view, the changes in the neighborhood portend high rents, segregation, and posh coffee bars, which she believes would destroy the character of Möllan.

These processes were already underway during the making of this film. The filmmakers interview local shopkeepers who say that their rents increase yearly, going up by roughly

$285/year. When they ask the owner of a kebab shop "How do you think it'll look in Möllevången in 10 years?" He replies, "10 years? Catastrophe." A local owner restaurant says his rent went up nearly 7000 kronor ($1000) in a one and a half year period. These changes, the members of the Möllevång Group contend, create exclusionary displacement of neighborhood residence as they can no longer afford to rent property in the area.

In the 2002 film, the former CEO of MKB, the largest property management company in the city, Lars Birve, says that "if Malmö changes more quickly and is revitalized, finding people to run businesses and culture and develop Malmö, naturally it will be better for everyone who lives in Malmö." Birve emphasizes how the city's transition to an economic and cultural center will benefit *all* of the city's residents, a statement that reminds one of the ideals of the People's Home—changes will benefit the common good. However, Birve follows this statement with one that is critical of such notions:

> Swedes have such a perception that everything should be fair (*rättvisa*). 'No one should live better than I do.' […] We should accept that different people live differently, prioritize differently, want different things and know different things. Not everyone can sing as well as another or run as fast as another, they're different.

While the local residents in the film feel that they are losing their place in the city, Birve tells them to accept that inequalities may result from economic and cultural changes of Malmö. By comparing housing to the abilities to sing and sprint, Birve places the onus on individuals to live and "prioritize" as they want, while ignoring how changes in the local infrastructure may impact individual's choices. By juxtaposing his interview against the interviews of locals worried about whether or not they can afford to stay in their neighborhood, filmmakers make this point clear.

The City of Malmö began making efforts to revamp its image following the opening of the Öresund bridge in the year 2000. The bridge stretches 2.5 miles over the sound between

Malmö and Copenhagen. Peter, an activist I met at a party in Malmö, said, "Until that bridge was built, Sweden was basically an island, separate from Europe. People in Sweden still talk about Europe as somewhere separate." Indeed, during my first visit to southern Sweden in 1995, the only means of transportation from Copenhagen to Malmö was ferry or plane. Anna, a member of the Möllevång Group, remembers "a sense of anticipation and hope that the bridge would turn Malmö into something." In the years since the bridge opened, Malmö has gone from being a rusty industrial center to a hub of cultural activity. When I asked Ulrika, a filmmaker and activist living in Möllevången, how she thinks the city's identity has changed, she said, "I think it went from being a bit ashamed of itself, as being the little brother of Copenhagen, to being proud of Malmö."

The city's connection to Copenhagen initiated a marketing campaign to establish the Öresund (*Øresund* in Danish) region as a creative hub in northern Europe. Just before the bridge opened in the year 2000, "the Danish and Swedish governments proudly presented a common plan for the future of the cross-border area under the promising title *Øresund—A Region is Born*" (Hospers 2006: 1024). Employing a "creative class" strategy (Florida 2002), a committee consisting of politicians and bureaucrats from each country began a branding campaign to attract business investors, tourists, and creative professionals to the region (Hospers 2006). One economic study claims that "next to London and Paris, the Øresund [region] has gained recognition as one of the top three 'hot spots' in Europe in the youthful branch of the knowledge economy" (Hospers and Pen 2008:267). However, for its residents "[the region] is artificially created by a group of politicians and does not reflect the feeling the majority of the inhabitants have […] that it is an 'imagined space,'" not something to which they feel a sense of belonging (Hospers 2006:1028).

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In December 2010, the link between Sweden and Denmark stretched even further into Malmö when the City Tunnel opened. The City Tunnel is a rail line linking Copenhagen and Malmö, and includes a new station called Triangeln (The Triangle), located just a few blocks from Möllevången. According to a 2012 report about economic development in the city, the Öresund bridge "has played an important role in the growth of the Öresund region" and "the City Tunnel is projected to have a similar role in [developing] a competitive wider region" (Malmö Stadskontoret 2012). A report called "A City in Transition" outlines current and future projects aimed at further economic development in the city. These projects include the Emporia shopping center (three floors, containing 200 shops, cafes, and restaurants), a new structure housing a convention center, concert hall, and hotel, development of the university hospital, future plans for a metro line between Copenhagen and Malmö and the rebuilding of three existing shopping centers, including one at the Triangle (Malmö Stadskontoret 2012).

Most of the activists that I interviewed expressed concern about how the new station at the Triangle will impact the neighborhood. Tanja says, "I think the biggest change now is the station here [Triangeln]. It's a big change because then the neighborhood becomes attractive to a whole other kind of people and the cost of living here will probably go up." When pressed about who the "other people" are, she said, "people who think that huge shopping malls and more parking spaces are good things." This was not the first time I heard a variation on the phrase "other kind of people." Hans, for example, said, "soon this area will be all students and people with money." Ulrika says, "the City Tunnel will change who lives and works in the neighborhood. Soon, a lot more professional types will probably live here because the station will make it easy to commute to Copenhagen for work. They also plan on building a bunch of offices around [the Triangle], so that will make it attractive to professionals, too, because they

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can walk to work." Indeed, the plans to rebuild the area around the station include 190 new apartments, a four-story office building, a two-story mall, a parking garage, and bike paths. The plan for this development is clearly laid out on a placard outside the north entrance to Triangle Station.

The population of Möllevången grew by just 6% between the years 1998 and 2008, but the average disposable income of residents increased by 23% (Malmö Stad 2000, 2008) and the total number of households receiving government subsidies decreased by 48% between 2000 and 2007 (Malmö Stad 2000, 2008). In an interview with the local newspaper, *Sydsvenskan*, geographer Eric Clark says that the areas *surrounding* Möllevången are where incomes have risen even more markedly (Höök 2012). Since Möllevången has become a desirable area in which to live, locals refer to the surrounding areas as "real estate Möllevången" noting that real estate agents list buildings as part of Möllan in an effort to attract potential clients, even if the building sits outside the official borders of the neighborhood.

A few interviewees mentioned the founding of Malmö University in 1998 as an influential event in neighborhood changes in Möllevången, as well. Ulrika, who grew up in a small town near Göteborg, moved to Malmö—and Möllevången—just after she finished high school in the mid-1990s. Her friends at home found it unthinkable that she would move to Malmö rather than nearby Göteborg:

> If you compare it to Stockholm and Göteborg, Malmö was always the outcast and nobody wanted to come here. When I first moved here in the mid-1990s, [my friends were] like, 'Oh, it's so boring. There's no clubs.' People thought it was weird that I'd want to move here….People didn't even come here to study because the university was in Lund. Then we got the uni[versity] here as well and it started to be more interesting to young people. When the university came, then the clubs started to come and now we have more clubs than we can even go to.

Ulrika's characterization of Malmö as an "outcast" among Sweden's major cities was common among people I interviewed in the city. Its reputation was that of a "boring," industrial city surrounded by countryside. Lund, 13 miles north of Malmö, is home to one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in Sweden, so if young people moved south, they moved there[19]. The opening of the university in 1998 gave young people a reason to move to Malmö—and gave the city and local entrepreneurs a new population to which to appeal. On its website, Malmö University (pop. 24,000) describes itself as "located in the center of the city" and takes credit for "playing a [*sic*] important role in the transformation of Malmö from an industrial town to a center of learning" (Malmö University 2013).

Some activists see the influx of students as having a detrimental effect on the neighborhood. Fredrik, an activist involved in several local projects, explains that "Möllevången, in the past couple of years has very much shifted from a place where it was a tight community to a lot of young people who come here to study for 2-3 years and then move on, which disintegrates our community." Born in the early 1980s, Fredrik grew up in Möllan with his parents who were activists involved in local politics. He implies that prior to the influx of students into the neighborhood, people in the neighborhood knew each other, whereas the transience of student life disrupted those connections among neighbors. He also maintains that activism is a way of life in the neighborhood, so students who only live there during their studies because it is an affordable location represent the "disintegration" of the area. He continues,

> I get that students need a cheap place to live and, until now, Möllevången has
> been affordable.[20] New people moving into a neighborhood is inevitable. But it's

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[19] In the 1980s, landlords in Möllan desperate to attract tenants offered commuter train passes to Lund as incentives to sign leases (Höök 2012).

[20] Housing in Möllan consists primarily of small apartments. Sixty-two percent of apartments in Möllan are either classic "worker apartments" (one room and a kitchen), while 39% are one bedroom apartments (Malmö Stad 2008).

about being *engaged* in what's happening here. So, it's cool if you're new to the area or only come here for 3 years, but you should at least *do something* while you're here. Come to the Möllevång Group meetings to find out what's going on. People should be engaged with what's happening where they're living no matter how long they're living there.

It is not the transience of students that Fredrik finds problematic; rather, it is the lack of community engagement that he sees on the part of new residents moving into the area. Engaging in local politics is part of "what people do" in Möllevången. It is part of the neighborhood's character historically and part of Fredrik's own experience as a lifelong resident.

6.3.2 Cultural and Aesthetic Changes

The Möllevång Group (Möllevångsgruppen or MG) is a neighborhood association formed by residents of Möllan in 1994. The group's website describes the neighborhood at that time as "a well-known area with major social problems such as littering, irresponsible landlords, an environment that was not child-friendly, and widespread criminality" (Möllevångsgruppen 2010a). For several years the efforts of the group focused on improving the neighborhood's cleanliness and safety. The original goals of the group were to create "comfort and community in the neighborhood," while activities focused on "housing questions, children and youth, integration and cultural and environmental questions" (Möllevångsgruppen 2010a). For example, the group undertook a campaign to "create more pleasant courtyards" in the neighborhood. During this campaign, "a bunch of enthusiastic architect and landscape architecture students surveyed the neighborhood courtyards in Möllan, made suggestions for improvement together

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As of January 2012, 75% of these apartments remained rental properties, but since 2004, rental properties are increasingly being converted into co-operatives (Höök 2012).

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with the tenants, and managed, in some cases, to persuade property owners to implement the plans" (Möllevångsgruppen 2010a).

These neighborhood improvement projects had major effects. All of the people I interviewed in Malmö cited visible, aesthetic changes as evidence of social changes in the neighborhood. Visible changes in the commercial landscape of a city block or area—"enhances the quality of life of the new urban middle class" while making others uncomfortable (Zukin et al. 2009:48). Theo says, "the grimy bars don't exist anymore. Now it's all cocktail bars, like that place Metro […] all the bars around here feel so…posh. More people with money live here now. It wasn't always so 'nice' to live in Möllevången." Theo's comments are about the visible changes in the landscape, but also about feeling like an outsider in one's own neighborhood where "people with money" live. Visible changes in the landscape create a sense of displacement not as "a spatial fact"—many people I interviewed still live and work in the neighborhood—but as "a loss of a sense of place" (Davidson and Lees 2010: 403). Population statistics support these anecdotal claims. While the number of residents in the neighborhood has not increased dramatically over the past 10 years, the average income of residents has increased (Malmö Stad 2000; 2008).

Metro, just off of the main square in the neighborhood, is a restaurant and club where a vegetarian dinner runs around $25, more than twice the cost of the vegetarian fare served up at Glassfabriken, the activist-run cafe down the street. Visually, it stands out in Möllevången. On my first day in Möllevången, I wrote, "visually, my host's description of this neighborhood clashes with what I'm seeing. She described it as 'charming,' but the buildings are ugly, blocky, post-war apartment buildings, there's trash all over the streets, and empty beer bottles in the gutter." When I last visited the neighborhood, commerce in Möllevången was, for the most part,

still characterized by "gold merchants, delis with whole animals, cheap hair salons selling pink hair gel, knicknack shops, and convenience stores with stacks of soda and heaps of cheap vegetables" (Höök 2012). With its slick, brightly lit sign and neat cafe tables and chairs outside on the sidewalk, Metro—and other new bars, cafes, and restaurants like it—appear out of place.

Following the creative cities model, the City of Malmö began to promote Möllevången as the city's creative enclave to attract professionals to town in the early 2000s. To put it into terms he thought I would understand, Tomas, a Möllan resident working at a local flea market said, "Malmö used to be Sweden's Detroit. Now the creative scene attracts people from all over Scandinavia." A business report from the City Planning office describes much the same process: "The city of Malmö is engaged in a series of economic development initiatives regarding development, creative environments, and meeting places for entrepreneurship" (Malmö Stadskontoret 2012: 26). Hans, an activist involved in several local scene projects, says,

> Malmö has slowly—well, not slowly actually--pretty quickly gone from an
> industrial city to being marketed [by the city] as a very creative one where a lot of
> young people move to work. And it's been like that for the last 5 years or
> something. Ten years, really, but even more in the past five.

Kerstin, a member of the Möllevång Group and involved in several projects, concurs: "Over the past 5-10 years, people move from all over Sweden to Malmö. And most of them want to live around this area [Möllevången] 'cause this where the cultural life is most active." Changes in the commercial landscape, combined with the neighborhood improvement initiatives marked the area as desirable for people moving into the city as well as for "commercial investment that will upgrade services and raise rents" (Zukin et al. 2009:48).

The Möllevång Group's efforts to clean up their neighborhood, combined with the influx of new populations looking for affordable housing, began to change Möllan's image from a dangerous neighborhood to a desirable one. The City of Malmö recognized Möllan as a symbol

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of community spirit and cultural vitality and began promoting it as a "colorful" cultural district. Current members of the Möllevång Group acknowledge that the group's activities have had unintended effects. By employing a "Do-it-Together" approach to making the neighborhood cleaner, safer, and more lively, they also made it a desirable place to be—and impossible for some residents to afford. Fredrik, who was born in the neighborhood and is a current member of the MG, says, "in the beginning, [the Möllevång Group] started in order to get rid of the feeling of not being safe, they wanted to make the neighborhood a little nicer. But I don't think they saw the consequences that would come with those changes. People started leaving, people who *were* Möllan in some way."

6.4 THE RIGHT TO THE CITY: CHANNELS OF DIFFUSION

In response to the changes outlined above, Malmö activists began to mobilize around The Right to the City in 2006 with a street festival called the Möllevång Festival (*Möllevångsfestivalen*). These efforts picked up steam in 2007 following the eviction of the autonomous social center Ungdomshuset in Copenhagen (see Chapter 4). In addition to the geographic proximity of Malmö to Copenhagen, several Malmö activists had personal connections to Ungdomshuset. The Malmö-based social center, Utkanten, also had a relationship with Ungdomshuset, sharing resources, ideas, and storage space. Given the changing landscape of Möllevången (culturally, economically, and geographically), it is not surprising that Malmö activists saw the eviction of Ungdomshuset as foreshadowing their own futures.

As I discussed in Chapter 4, The Right to the City consists of the rights to *appropriation* and *participation*. Appropriation is not only taking over space, but also the right to a good

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quality of life. Participation gives local residents a voice in decision-making processes about how their neighborhood develops. Despite the fact that many movements use "the right to the city" as a catchphrase, relatively little research has "systematically elaborated just what the right to the city entails" or how movements translate it into action (Purcell 2008:91).

In the following sections, I present two projects through which activists enacted the Right to the City in Möllevången. The first is The Möllevång Festival, an annual street festival between 2006-2010. The second is Stad Solidar (City Solidarity), a land squatting project that took place from 2010-2011. Both projects are examples of how the ideas, practices, and norms of the autonomous scene were diffused to the wider neighborhood—even if only temporarily. Like the social centers in the last chapter, these projects encouraged neighborhood residents to participate in shaping the built environment, creating "unestablished" culture, and fostering collaboration while appropriating public space. The difference between these projects and social centers is that the projects appealed to a much wider group of people. While autonomous activists, artists, and young people are the primary participants at social centers, these projects appealed to a widely defined group (local inhabitants).

6.4.1 The Möllevång Festival (*Möllevångsfestivalen*)

In 2006, autonomous activists began to plan the first annual Möllevång Festival, a street festival in the heart of the neighborhood, that took place every summer until 2010. The goals of the festival were to get neighborhood residents involved in local cultural events and to assert a "right to the city" through both *participation* and *appropriation* of space. This is clearly articulated in the goals of the festival:

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> Möllevången residents play the central role in the work of the Möllevång Festival and they give weight to the festival if they engage in and develop the events into a festival of streets, courtyards, and squares. This commitment is the seed of a greater local democracy in the area where people take a greater part in the design of both the physical and social environment. (Möllevångsfestivalen 2010).

By calling on the inhabitants of the neighborhood to expand the festival beyond its official boundaries by taking over "streets, courtyards, and squares," organizers of the festival advocate appropriation of public space. This is a clear example of how the norms, values, and ideas that characterize the scene are transferred to the public spaces of the neighborhood. The call for inhabitants to "take a greater part in the design of both the physical and social environment." Similar to the organization of social centers that I discussed in the last chapter, the festival encourages participants to shape the built environment. Taken together, they argue, appropriation of space, participation in the festival/neighborhood, and diffusion of the festival's mission are "the seed of a greater local democracy." One way in which activists accomplished this was by placing living room furniture on the streets of the neighborhood during the festival and encouraging other local residents to do the same. In doing so, activist and non-activist residents changed the patterns of everyday street life by making interactions between neighbors central rather than car traffic.

Another of the festival's goals was "to serve as a platform for the local cultural life, with particular focus on unestablished [*oetablerade*] culture" (Möllevångsfestivalen 2010). When I asked Fredrik what "unestablished culture" meant to him, he replied,

> We didn't want to book the big artists, just local bands in the area, but they didn't get paid. Everybody worked for free, from the coordination group to the volunteers to all of the bands, everyone was the same. We told the bands, just because you're playing on stage doesn't mean you're getting a VIP room and beer and all that stuff. Ok, ok…we bought them a few beers [laughs].

Unestablished culture means that the artists are local inhabitants who work for free out of a desire to be part of the community rather than benefit financially. The idea that "everyone is the same" was important to festival organizers because the larger goal of the festival was to create a sense of community among residents of the neighborhood. The desire to create a sense of community is reflected in the slogan of the festival "by the people, for the people" (*av folket, för folket*), which appears on all of the festival's promotional materials as well as banners flying over the streets. "The people," in this case, are the inhabitants of Möllevången. Cultural expressions ranged from bands, as Fredrik pointed out, to artists selling their wares, to theater performances, all performed by local residents.

In the same spirit as the social center movement, "unestablished" also meant that the festival operated outside the boundaries of formal city regulations. Tomas, a resident of the neighborhood who was working at the festival explained it this way:

> We've created a festival that people actually liked, in some cases better than
> Malmö Festival [an annual festival organized by the City of Malmö] 'cause with
> the city, everything is by the books, everything is order and everything is in rows.
> There's no atmosphere that feels like you're just living. It's very structured.

Aside from cleaning up after the festival and keeping the noise levels down after a certain hour, festival organizers were not held to any formal regulations by the city until 2009, when they shared space with Malmö Festival in the People's Park. Newly imposed regulations, says Jonas, "took an extreme amount of energy. There were *so* many demands about noise levels and safety [and] we bent over backwards in order to meet those demands" in order to have a presence in the park (quoted in *Skånes Fria*, 24 June 2010). Ultimately, the demands and costs associated with following the city's regulations were partially responsible for the festival ending in 2010.

The festival occupied roughly 10 blocks of the neighborhood on the southeast edge of the People's Park, from the main plaza, Möllevångstorget, to Jesusparken, a small park designated as

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a "family area." I attended the festival in 2010. Intended as a festival "by the people, for the people," the attendees reflected the inhabitants of the neighborhood as people described it to me. Activists on the streets ranged from an older man with wild, white hair and a long beard passing out flyers to support Ship to Gaza to a young woman with bright green hair, chipped black nailpolish, and the anarchist circle-A emblazoned on her tank top representing Amalthea. Barefooted hippies with long dreadlocks and loose-fitting clothes carried their guitars and skateboards across the main plaza. Hipsters in tight jeans, plaid shirts, and oversized glasses perused wares at the market. Teenage boys in sunglasses spat on the sidewalk and slugged back gulps of orange soda at one of the festival's many music performances. Old men speaking Arabic smoked cigarettes and chatted at outdoor cafés. Young families gathered around a stage under a circus tent and watched performances for children, while their pink "Möllevångsfestivalen" balloons blew in the breeze.

The festival's main areas were called the Marketplace, Green Street (denoting environmentalism), and Red Street (denoting leftist politics). The Marketplace streets had the feeling of many North American art festivals where local artists and vendors sell their wares—jewelry, textiles, street food—and engage in small talk with passersby. The Green Street consisted of "music, workshops, and conversation about an ecologically sustainable city and world" (Möllevångsfestivalen 2010). The street was lined with tables staffed by people from organizations such as Greenpeace and the Society for Nature Conservation (*Naturskyddsföreningen*). There was a "snack stop" offering fresh produce at a table encouraging people to "go vegetarian" and a blender powered by a bicycle on which festival-goers could make a smoothie simply by pedaling. The Red Street "focused on political and social questions through information, film, music, and conversation" (Figure 6-5). Large banners hung over Red

Street proclaiming "we are all anti-fascists" and urging locals to "work together against the gentrification of Möllan." The street—like all of the streets—was lined with tables shaded by tents under which activists sat on couches and chatted with one another and passersby. I stopped at the tent for the urban action group *Allt åt Alla* (Everything to Everyone) to greet some people from Utkanten.

Figure 6-5: The Red Street, Möllevång Festival 2010

An excellent example of diffusion during the festival was the use of living room furniture—sofas, chairs, coffee tables—in the streets (Figure 6-6). It began as something festival organizers did, but the practice caught on with local residents who eventually pulled their own couches and chairs out into the streets. The festival organizers initially put the furniture on the streets as a strategic move intended to "reclaim the streets" in a creative way that reflects the character of the neighborhood. Alex explains:

> During the whole festival we tried to make [the streets] like a living room—
> 'cause it is our living room. Most people living in Möllevången, that's where we
> meet people, just through open windows, talking, meeting in the streets. […] And
> so we filled the streets with sofas and chairs and carpets and tried to make it nice.
> […] *This* is the right to the city, just to show that this is a part of my home. It's
> not just a place where cars should drive and I should walk on the sidewalk, but
> we're taking some control of the city in a way.

Fredrik envisions the neighborhood streets as an extension of residents' homes, a social space where people meet and greet one another on a daily basis. Similarly, Erika said "we really wanted to focus on [creating] atmosphere and feeling. We wanted people to see the festival as a big living room where people can meet and spend time together." The organizers of the festival are residents of Möllan and, through this action, they hoped to bring others from the neighborhood together in the streets.

Figure 6-6: Living room in the streets, Möllevång Festival 2010

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Hanna explains that, while festival organizers staged furniture in the streets initially, it inspired other residents to follow suit: "People [attending the festival] thought it was the people living on those streets who had taken their furniture out of their apartments, which it wasn't, but once we put out furniture, they took out theirs, too, to support what we were doing." This action and reaction, say Alex and Hanna, are examples of how the festival organizers hoped to get their neighbors to "take a larger part in the design of both the physical and social environments" (Möllevångsfestivalen 2010). Placing their furniture in the streets is obviously an appropriation of physical space, but it also shapes the social landscape by giving the interactions between neighbors center stage.

The use of living room furniture in the streets was an important tactic for diffusion from movement to neighborhood. Hanna points out that

> That was one of the ways that we mean by thinking outside the box. Lots of groups have had 'reclaim the streets' or 'reclaim the city' parties, with a truck blasting punk music from the back, and occupying the streets. But only certain people go those protests and they only last a few hours. If you're not an anarchist or listening to punk music, why would you go? We wanted *everyone* living in the neighborhood to come to the festival.

Hanna's comments point to how street protests organized around the reclaiming the streets/city can be exclusionary for people who do not identify with particular ideologies or cultural movements. The goal of the festival, on the other hand, is to bring neighborhood inhabitants together in the streets, downplaying ideological or cultural differences.

While this represents a unique approach to enacting the right to the city relative to other forms of appropriating space, such as squatting or street protests, the idea of the city as living room is "common in Swedish planning discourse" (Thörn 2011: 998). Swedish sociologist Catharina Thörn (2011:998) uses the example of a city campaign in Göteborg called "THINK –

Take Care of Our Common Living Room" to discuss how public space-as-living room is represented in the city's campaign:

> In several advertisements published in Gothenburg's major newspaper, the CBD [Central Business District] is depicted as a private living room. On one of the images a middle-aged, well-dressed couple greets a guest into their elegant home captioned with 'Welcome to Our Home.' The woman holds a tray and glasses of champagne in her hands, yet the floor of the living room is littered with cans, paper, old food, etc. The adjacent text reads that 'it is time to think about what the streets look like when tourists come to town' and ends with the catchphrase 'Take care of our common living room.'

Both activist and urban planning notions of city-as-living room resonate with notions of the People's Home, though their goals in drawing on this familiar idea are different. The Möllevång Festival organizers use public space as an extension of inhabitants' homes in order to make them feel empowered by shaping the landscape—even if temporarily. Advertising campaigns like the one quoted above tell inhabitants to "think about what the streets look like when tourists come to town," taking focus *away* from city inhabitants. Instead, such campaigns reinforce "perceptions of public space as commodities and the importance of creating consumer-friendly environments" (Thörn 2011: 998).

6.4.2 Stad Solidar (City Solidarity)

In October 2010, four months after the Möllevång Festival ended for good, a self-described "loose network of neighbors and residents of Möllevången" built a small city of huts (*kojor*), which they dubbed *Stad Solidar* (City Solidarity). Stad Solidar is described on its website as "a political art project that is equal parts an interactive art installation and an act of civil

disobedience and protest against gentrification of Möllevången, specifically against the planned building of cooperative housing[21] on the empty lot by Möllevång School" (Stad Solidar 2010).

Again, local labor history plays an important part of the project's formation and location. In naming it "Stad Solidar," activists draw upon political history as well as contemporary campaigns aimed at the right to the city. The project took its name from the early 20th century labor movement cooperative *Solidar* (Soliarity), which operated a bakery (*Solidarbageriet*) on this particular block beginning in 1916 (Yngveson 2005). When the bakery was torn down in 2005, there was resistance from some local curators, who saw it as an important landmark and part of Möllan's position as "the cradle of the Swedish labor movement" (Yngveson 2005). This symbolic significance is described in Stad Solidar's manifesto, as well. It reads, "Near the People's Park and beside Möllevångs School sits Möllevången's only vacant lot, a bit of historic land where the Solidar bakery once stood and, among other things, provided strikers with bread during the great strike of 1908.[22] Today the bakery is gone and its place is vacant and overgrown" (Stad Solidar 2010). In creating the vision of their ideal city, the activists in Stad Solidar drew on both the history of the city block as a labor movement landmark as well as the language of the right to the city.

Now the lot is owned by Peab, one of the largest construction and civil engineering companies in the Nordic region. Their plan for the block was to build co-operative housing on the site. Stad Solidar argued that building properties for purchase rather than renting means that

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[21] Housing co-operatives can be created in one of two ways. Either a group of tenants can form a co-operative and offer to buy their building from the landlord *or* a real estate company will build and sell apartments to individuals. Once all the apartments are sold, the owners form a co-operative and take responsibility for the building. It is the latter to which Stad Solidar is opposed.
[22] Malmö dock workers went on strike in 1908, demanding better working conditions. Their employers brought in British men to break the strike, which provoked greater agitation. Three workers bombed the British ship, the *Amalthea*, that brought the strikebreakers to Sweden and they were sentenced to the death penalty. Their case created much public debate and pressure from international labor groups and, as a result, they were pardoned in 1917 (Höjman and Cubas 2012).

only people who can afford to buy apartments will be welcomed to the neighborhood. These changes in housing tenure, they argue, threaten current residents of the neighborhood, who can't afford to buy apartments.

The political goals of Stad Solidar were clearly stated in a manifesto as well as on signs and banners hanging in and around the huts. Their demands were threefold: (1) build rental apartments instead of co-op buildings on the block in question; (2) rental apartments should be available at "fair prices," which they calculate at a max price of 57 kronor ($8) per square meter (10 square feet). (3) "the gentrification of Möllevången shall be disrupted" (Stad Solidar, "Manifest" 2010). The first two points are very concrete goals aimed at Peab, the company who owns the land on which they built, while the third point is rather broad. They point to the opening of the City Tunnel and the commercialization of the People's Park as examples of the changes in the neighborhood, along with changes in housing tenure, that "contribute to increasing economic interest in the area" (Stad Solidar 2010). In response to these changes, they propose Stad Solidar as a prefigurative community. Their manifesto ends with the following sentences: "Stad Solidar reflects a vision of a city that is built from below, by the people for the people! It is time to fight for the right to the city." The Right to the City emerges as a theme in which the people of the neighborhood are invited to participate in creating a "mini-city" that reflects their desires. This is depicted in the group's insignia, which pictures a single building on a grassy knoll with a city skyline behind it, indicating that it is both a part of and in some way separate from the city. Instead of a roof, the building features a clenched fist rising toward the sky, a symbol of solidarity and resistance on a single city block (see Figure 6-7).

Figure 6-7: Stad Solidar insignia

On the group's fourth day of building, the Stad Solidar blog invites readers to "admire constructive and beautiful activism, have a chat with those of us who are there, or build your own version of a dream society" (Stad Solidar, "4e dagen" 2010). Similarly, Lina, an artist involved in the project, described it as a "society in miniature." By creating such a project, Stad Solidar not only critiqued the lack of available avenues for participation in city planning—especially when many of those decisions are up to construction companies, not the City Planning office—they also created possibilities for people to participate in shaping how city space is used. The group's blog reads, "Sometimes one gets tired of nagging, rhetoric, and buzzwords like 'democracy' […] It can be really great to take a hammer and hit a nail in the name of what one believes in" (Stad Solidar, "Sista Byggdagen" 2010). As a form of direct action, Stad Solidar created opportunities for the "right to participate" as an inhabitant of the city.

Stad Solidar also created a vision of a new way of life for some participants. Lefebvre (1996 [1968]:155) writes that this is a part of the right to appropriation, that it is not solely about physical space, but "could also include the way of living in the city and the development of the

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urban on this basis." In a particularly lyrical description of this kind of vision, one activist writes about her evening at the site as a kind of urban imaginary:

> Fires burned in several places. I could hear laughter, music, and the sound of hammers. Dear friends and acquaintances hung out in the shadows and I got a hug here and a kiss there. Warmth spread both in my heart and my stomach. Imagine if it could always be possible to be met by this when one comes home after a full day at work.

This description of her evening at Stad Solidar is not about the physical appropriation of space but about being part of creating a place in which she was surrounded by sounds of creative endeavors (music, building), happiness (laughter), and friends who greeted one another. This example mirrors activists descriptions of the neighborhood, in some ways (e.g. as a place where people greet each other on the street and through the windows of their homes) and elicited in this participant an emotional response to an urban imaginary in which this kind of experience was part of daily life.

Building took place over one week in October 2010, beginning with an opening ceremony that included the sounds of "saxophone fanfare, speeches, and the feminist choir's camp songs." Looking at what kinds of places activists built as part of Stad Solidar gives one a sense of the kind of "miniature society" that represents the Right to the City. For example, the first building was a People's House that served as a local meeting place. It contained flyers on the project and local action groups, as well as informational materials on the Möllevång Group. On Stad Solidar's blog one activist writes, "While I stood by the fire, two girls came by and wondered if it was okay to put up a banner in the People's House? 'Of course,' [I replied] it's the People's House!'"(Stad Solidar 2010). While activists see People's Houses as important places in cities, in Stad Solidar they are not controlled by the state, but are shaped by everyone who uses them—which, in principle are all inhabitants of the city. Other buildings included an "infirmary" for the practice of alternative medicine, an art gallery where anyone could display

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their art work, and a structure for musical performances, all undertaken without a plan, but on the initiatives of anyone who came to the site.

Builders at Stad Solidar devoted considerable time to creating outdoor spaces as well as buildings. They planted flowers and herbs and made park benches from tree trunks, a small pond, walking paths, a playground, a recycling station, and a skate ramp enjoyed by adults and children alike. These creations could be interpreted an alternative to the neighboring People's Park. In the Stad Solidar Manifesto, the "commercialization of the People's Park" is listed as a force that activists believe is having negative effects on the neighborhood. In their miniature city, therefore, the "planners" of Stad Solidar are sure to create spaces where people can simply relax and enjoy being outdoors without having to spend any money.

Stad Solidar essentially became an open-air social center in the neighborhood, but had wider participation than social centers typically do. Interview data and Stad Solidar's daily dispatches reveal the number and variety of people engaged in the project. Jesper, an activist with Möllevångs Group and Stad Solidar, told me, "kids from the school would come out on their lunch breaks and make their own cardboard houses. They were so excited!" Stad Solidar's blog tells readers about Hilda, a 7-year-old student at the school next door, who came by the lot every day. After five days, she brought her mother and a friend to and they built a golden cardboard house, inhabited by stuffed Santa Clauses and bumblebees. Her school picture adorns one of the windows, next to which she wrote "From Hilda to Stad Solidar." On Stad Solidar's Facebook page, Bodil, a 45-year-old Möllevången resident writes,

> I am a 45-year-old Swedish woman who has never lived in any other way than on the poverty line. I am one of those who will be forced to move somewhere else if Möllevången and vicinty become 'nicer.' I am one of those who drag down the status of the area.[…] Even though you [Stad Solidar] see the cold hard truth and

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> the major injustices and inequalities that are growing [in the neighborhood], you
> have used a constructive, creative, and inspiring strategy for making visible what
> is happening. THANK YOU!

In her long and heartfelt message to the group, Bodil points out that one thing she likes about the neighborhood is its mix of people of various ethnic groups and social classes. She foresees her future in the neighborhood as limited because people living on the poverty line "drag down the status of the area" in its transformation to being an entertainment area for upwardly mobile middle-class families. What's more, she applauds the group's use of creativity as a means of raising important questions about the future of the neighborhood and its current residents, thanking them for putting a spotlight on these issues. Markus, another "builder" at Stad Solidar told me, "Even senior citizens walking past would stop and comment that this was a very good initiative—which is a very tough group to appeal to—but they understood it straight away. We didn't have to have much discussion about gentrification and so on, they just got it."

From young school children to middle-aged working class residents to elderly passersby, Stad Solidar felt encouraged by the attention they got in the neighborhood. The group's blog reads:

> I promise that you will find at least one of everyone among us who build and who
> can sign our manifesto: rich and poor, Smålänning, Skåning, Iranian, Latino,
> Stockholmare.[23] Born and raised in Möllan. With dreads and blonde hair. Hippies,
> punks, role-playing game enthusiasts, and people injured in wars. Academics, hip-
> hop fans, unemployed, students, entrepreneurs, disabled, stay-at-home dads,
> addicts, doctors, cultural workers, teachers…so who do you want to talk to?

By all accounts, the participants in this project were representative of the inhabitants of the neighborhood. Commenting on the variety of people involved in the project, Lina says, "If we had called it an occupation, the classic kind with hardcore activists in black clothes and punk

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[23] Smålänning, Skåning and Stockholmare refer to people from different parts of Sweden (Småland, Skåne, and Stockholm, respectively.)

music and language, the reaction would have been totally different. We never would have managed to get big support in the community." These examples show that the project met its goal of gathering a large base of support in the community that was diverse in age, ethnicity, occupation, social class, and gender.

Newspaper reports and editorials about the project were mostly critical. Journalist Julia Svensson (2010) criticizes the group for being naïve, writing that their protest against gentrification is "egotistical," arguing that they merely "wish to preserve authenticity as a backdrop for [their] alternative lifestyles [but] it is a privilege to rent an apartment in the inner city." Like many commentators, Svensson argues that co-ops are the norm in most central city districts, so the residents of Möllan should be grateful for the rental properties that exist. The overall tone of Svensson's article gives the impression that Stad Solidar is a bunch of spoiled children whose only concerns are their own subcultural interests.

While they do exhibit nostalgia for labor movements of the past, participants in my project do *not* believe that they have the power to stop the march of urban development and return to a time more like that of the early 20th century. Jesper, for example, says

> You cannot change development. It's happening and it's a strong force to be reckoned with […] We just want [politicians] to open up the process of deciding what happens. We know the city is gonna change, it's inevitable. But open up the doors. Make [the decision-making process] more transparent.

While Stad Solidar's manifesto demands the "disruption of gentrification," participants recognize that *stopping* urban development processes is not always possible. Disruption refers to an intervention, not a complete halt. Here, Jesper makes that distinction a bit clearer: a person can't stop urban development, but the decision-making processes behind development can be more democratic and inclusive. Similarly, Jonathan says,

> That this part [of the city] becomes more lively is not bad, but it's important that the people who live or work in this area are a part of that development, so it's not a plan that comes down like 'this is how it's gonna be, so you, you, you, you, and you: get out.' That's an artificial construction of society.

Like Jesper, Jonathan does not believe that development is necessarily a bad thing. The methods of development should include "the right to participation" in Lefebvre's terms. Rather than urban planning offices telling inhabitants "this is how it's gonna be," Jonathan believes that the city and construction companies should involve residents in the process more fully. This reflects the place character of Möllevången as a neighborhood in which politically engaged citizens collectively make decisions about urban spaces.

Anders Rubin, a member of the Socialist party and head of the City Planning office, told the newspaper *Skånes Fria* that "the fate of the vacant lot is something that the municipality has no say in because the municipality doesn't own the land […] If people choose to pay increasingly more for co-ops, it's not anything we have control over" (Olsson 2010b). While his comments appear sympathetic to Stad Solidar's project, he does not openly support their actions. His "tips for influencing city planning" include things like seeing exhibits at the Form & Design Center and leaving suggestions in the suggestion box and sending your ideas for new initiatives to the City of Malmö. In other words, he asks readers to send their thoughts to the City—but leave the action up to them (Olsson 2010b). This is an example to which Jesper points during an interview: "They [the City] like people to be passive. They're like, 'we know what we're doing. You don't have to do anything about anything. We'll take care of it and do what's best for you.'" Similarly, Markus says, "This city is big on suggestion boxes. They take *suggestions* but that doesn't mean they use them. In the end, they make the decisions. I mean, is that really a very democratic way of running the city?"

In an editorial that prompted much community response, journalist Mona Masri calls Stad Solidar "middle-class children playing poor" and advises them to "move to the ghetto" if they are dissatisfied with the influx of restaurants and coffee bars in Möllan, which she sees as an improvement (Masri 2010). While she can support that they want rental properties instead of co-op buildings, she cannot understand why they think gentrification is a negative process for the area. Masri, like other commenters who are critical of the group, point out that people in the group "have roots" in other parts of Sweden, implying that they are not "real" Möllevångare. Masri (2010) brings up activists' backgrounds to ask the question "would they have even set foot in Möllevången 15 years ago?" The Möllan they want to preserve, she argues, is a product of the process they profess to hate.

This article generated passionate responses from longtime residents in the neighborhood, who took offense at the suggestion that anyone who is against the changes happening in Möllan is simply "playing poor" and should "move to the ghetto" if that's how they want to live. One reader named Vivian responded in a way that was common among those who responded to the article online. On Stad Solidar's Facebook page, Vivian writes,

> Oh my God, I have been involved in Möllevången since 1994. I became involved because I found hypodermic needles on the playground, the laundry rooms were in bad shape, there was no school, my yard became like a swimming pool when it rained and my kids couldn't play there. […] I became engaged because I wanted to have a better living environment and we have succeeded with that, but what happened then? Many apartments have become co-ops, and I don't have the ability to buy my apartment. SO I SHOULD MOVE TO THE GHETTO? WHEN I HAVE FOUGHT YEAR AFTER YEAR TO CREATE A BETTER NEIGHBORHOOD?

Vivian's comment on the article became more and more impassioned as it goes on. She describes becoming involved in the same neighborhood improvement projects that inspired local residents to start the Möllevång Group. The way she sees it, the neighborhood residents and their actions

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are the reason that the neighborhood is a great place to live, not the amenities, such as cafés and bars. If and when her building becomes a co-op, she writes that she won't be able to afford to buy her apartment, which will force her out of the neighborhood in which she has invested years of her time to improve.

In response to critical editorials, another journalist, Stefan Bergmark (2010), asked why the class backgrounds of the participants are important:

> While I haven't been keeping tabs on the campaign's class composition, I think we can conclude that none of them are high earners. Of course, that is precisely what the struggle against gentrification is about. That those who are not rich should not have to move away because of capitalist interests. […] Obviously it's a hip neighborhood. In some circles. But how does that reduce the authenticity of resistance to housing inequality?

While Masri (2010) and Svensson (2010) imply the activists engaged in Stad Solidar are in some way insincere or inauthentic in their efforts because they are "middle class children playing poor" (Masri 2010). Bergmark says that this is irrelevant. No matter what kind of families they came from, the bottom line is that people in the neighborhood can't afford to buy apartments and worry about having to leave their homes.

These debates raise questions about who counts as a real or authentic resident of the neighborhood. According to some activists, people who have lived in the neighborhood for a long time are real Möllevångare. But how long is long enough? For other activists, authenticity is defined by being engaged in local politics. Bergmark (2010) seems to agree, prioritizing resistance and sincere interest as conferring authenticity. Masri (2010) critiques activists who have roots in other parts of Sweden, implying that only people born in Möllevången are "real" residents. At the same time, she asks, "would anyone have set foot in Möllevången 15 years ago?" implying that people who have lived in the neighborhood since it was labeled dangerous qualify as authentic neighborhood residents. My interviews included a diverse group in terms of

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how long they had lived in Möllan—ranging from native residents to those who had lived there for five or more years. I also interviewed several people who had lived in Möllan at one time, but were priced out of the neighborhood and therefore lived in other parts of the city. So, while they were not *current* residents, they still felt an affinity for the neighborhood as former residents.

Despite cold temperatures and roofs that caved under snow, Stad Solidar lasted through the winter, until March 2011 when it was torn down by Peab's bulldozers. The newspaper report (Anjou 2011) paints a dreary picture of the destruction:

> Different kinds of waste laid in piles in different places, crushed glass was everywhere. Shattered furniture was piled next to clothing that had been left behind, soaked by rain water. Some dumpsters stood in a parking place waiting to be filled. A handful of huts were still standing and looked to be inhabited

One member of Stad Solidar says that at least one of the huts was inhabited by a homeless man until just before Christmas. Markus expresses surprise at the quick destruction: "It's too bad that Peab tore them down without warning about it or those who live in the huts. I haven't heard if Peab even has a building permit [yet]. They could have taken it a little easy." In response, Per Wickström, the project development leader at Peab, said "we are required to keep the site in good condition. The artwork and some buildings have already been taken away by the group. Only some of the outlying huts are left" (Anjou 2011). Building a new co-operative apartment building began on the site of Stad Solidar in the summer of 2011.

6.5   OUTCOMES

The Möllevång Festival and Stad Solidar—both projects organized by people involved in the Möllevång Group—were clear manifestations of the right to the city, but they were only

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temporary. Each of these projects aimed to bring inhabitants of the city together to appropriate space and participate in decisions about how they use city space. Activists felt that they had accomplished these goals by raising public debates about gentrification and enabling local residents to actively participate in shaping public space. What was lacking was a sense of continuity or durability after the festival or land occupation ended.

Organizers of the Möllevång Festival say that it simply was not permanent enough to reach its goals. Fredrik says, "We got very busy with creating the tool instead of using it. It became a lot of work for a two day festival, but the work didn't continue throughout the rest of the year." Similarly, Hanna says, "You don't want to work to only create the platform, you want to be able to use it for something. And that's why we stopped doing the festival. The festival was great, but it was just that: a festival and we weren't able to use that towards something more." In the end, some activists felt that the goals of the festival were limited because it only lasted for two days. It was exhausting, temporary, and discontinuous.

The same is true of Stad Solidar. Activists were pleased that they had raised public awareness about the processes of gentrification—a word rarely seen in Swedish newspapers— and generated debates about local democracy and urban planning. Debates surrounding the project included not only neighborhood activists and residents, but also city politicians, business leaders, bloggers, journalists, and urban development professionals. Jessica commented on the media attention as beneficial, even if the content was negative, saying,

> People are discussing it. They are for it or against it, but they are discussing the gentrification of Möllevången. Before it was, like, one article in the newspaper or some anti-yuppie campaign that happened 10 years ago, and just small, isolated things. But now people are discussing it for real.

In keeping with its reputation as a neighborhood of politically active citizens, Möllan has seen some "isolated" activism around the issues, Jessica says people are taking it seriously and

discussing it "for real." This could be interpreted as a means of creating a more participatory society in itself. One of the goals of Right to the City projects is to create opportunities for greater participation in decision-making processes about how city space develops. By generating public debates over the effects of gentrification, Stad Solidar drew people all over Sweden into discussions about the meaning and effects of gentrification. This in itself was something that activists saw as valuable.

While these outcomes were viewed positively by activists, they did not see these as enough because the festival and Stad Solidar lacked continuity. Physical places are important to autonomous networks because they give a sense of stability to social movement norms, practices, and histories. In the next sections, I discuss three ways in which temporary Right to the City projects impacted autonomous movements and scenes. First, these projects created discussion—and in some instances, fractures—in social movement networks about the relationship between politics and culture. Although there were disagreements about how to best combine political messages and cultural expressions, activists did so in a way that fostered collaboration between "political people" and "cultural people." Second, as an extension of this first point, Malmö activists established Kontrapunkt, a "cultural and social center" that houses a dozen social movement and cultural groups. Third, autonomous activists became a more active part of the Möllevång Group, the neighborhood association that has been the "voice" for Möllan since 1994. Through establishing places where politics and culture can come together on a regular basis, activists feel as though the work they accomplished with the festival and Stad Solidar will become embedded in the social and geographical landscape of Möllevången for several years to come.

6.5.1   Autonomous Politics & Culture

The Möllevång Festival and Stad Solidar strengthened social movement networks consisting of people with various political identifications and cultural interests—indeed, all of the people I interviewed in Malmö were involved in multiple projects at one time. But there were conflicts along the way. During the planning phases of both the Möllevång Festival and Stad Solidar, there was concern among some activists—particularly those in anarchist circles—that the festival had the potential to become like any other arts festival and that the diffusion of political ideas would be lost on attendees. The balancing act between politics and culture manifested itself in a divide between "political people" and "culture people." The "political people" wanted to make the political messages of the events explicit and confrontational, using familiar tactics (e.g. protests, squatting). The "culture people" wanted to use culture as a means of expressing political ideas more subtly, fearing that traditional protests or confrontational tactics would alienate and exclude some residents.

Kerstin, who was involved in organizing the festival for 4 of its 5 years, says, "In the beginning [of the Möllevång Festival], we tried to engage with Aktivitetshuset—which was Utkanten, before it was Utkanten—and they were like 'no, we don't want to deal with culture' so they didn't want to be part of things." At first this struck me as odd, given that, when I visited Utkanten, music, art, and film were important to activists there as a means of engaging with political questions. I ask Kerstin about this, to which she responds "For the last festival [in 2010], they said 'ok, we'll do it [but] there's not enough about politics, so we're having a red street. There's a green street so we want a red street.' It was like, 'ok, *do it*!' That's what we wanted from the beginning." Activists from Aktivitetshus (later Utkanten), she says, thought that explicit political content was lacking and that the cultural performances and artistic wares took

focus away from the political questions about urban space to which the festival should draw attention. Therefore, they were the key organizers behind the "red" (political) street. Festival organizers welcomed of this, as part of the mission was to get locals involved in all aspects of planning the festival; if "political people" wanted to have their own street dedicated to questions about housing, segregation, and commercialization, they were welcome to do it.

As I moved through the streets of the Möllevång Festival, I thought about how the festival might have been different without the Red Street—an openly political zone. While festival organizers saw the organizing process as a form of participatory democracy and the festival itself as an appropriation of public space, that might not be obvious to the casual festival-goer, who could potentially read the festival as a socially-conscious community or arts fair. The fusion of politics and culture is what made the festival so unique and effective. The cultural approach to protest (e.g. living room furniture in the streets) coupled with the banners calling on people to "stop gentrification" made the message of the festival loud and clear while still being welcoming to a diverse population.

A similar division emerged in the planning stages of Stad Solidar. Like the planning of the Möllevång Festival, drafting the description of Stad Solidar proved to be contentious as activists discussed how to balance art and politics. As a self-described "cultural activist," Jessica describes this tension:

> We actively chose not to call it an occupation of the land, we called it an art project. And we had some discussions with the more 'political' activists before—they didn't want to call it an art project. We were like 'but if we *call* it that, then even if it's not, we can *say* that it is and get more support.' And that's what happened. Everybody wrote about it as an art project and we built huts. It was *not* an art project, it *was* an occupation, but we called it that and used art and culture in that way to get more support.

On their website, as I noted above, Stad Solidar (2010) is described as "equal parts interactive art installation and an act of civil disobedience and protest against gentrification." This description clearly includes both political (civil disobedience and protest) and cultural (art installation) language, reflecting the composition of activists who initiated the project. It also highlights that the project is "equal parts" art and protest, indicating that one is not prioritized more than the other.

Calling Stad Solidar an "art project" was a strategic move to frame the project in a way that activists thought would gather support from more residents of Möllevången and news media. In much the same way that Hanna talked about "reclaim" protests as "alienating" to people, framing Stad Solidar as a land occupation would not win them popular support. The word "occupation" connotes illegality, an "art project" is non-threatening. Indeed, at first glance, it simply looks like a fun place to be, with wooden structures painted in bright colors, bright, patterned fabrics draped around doorways, and a skateboard ramp where kids from the neighboring school play.

However, the project also created local and national debates over the effects of gentrification. This increased attention to urban social issues, says Lisa, won over the activists who were against calling Stad Solidar an "art project":

> I think it opened eyes of the more 'political' activists, too. They were there and
> they defended it. They were still complaining about it being called 'an art project'
> but still…they saw it was a good thing that that it raised the gentrification issue
> into public debate in Malmö—and even nationally.

Although they were skeptical about framing the project as art rather than protest, Lisa says that those who were against it came to see it as a positive project because it drew attention to important political issues. Jenny, an anarcha-feminist who could be considered "one of the more

radical activists" to whom Lisa refers, says, "This was a successful way of mixing art and politics. It got a lot of attention in the media and around town."

As Lisa pointed out, if the group had called it a squatting project, "the classic kind with hardcore activists in black clothes and punk music and language, the reaction would have been totally different." Some of the "political" activists thought that softening the language and calling it an art project instead of a squatting action betrayed the goals of the project. Despite their disagreements, the "political" and "cultural" camps collaborated on the Right to the City projects, bringing together social movement networks with different tactical approaches. This highlights the ways in which "strong ties and solidarities built up in particular places over time contribute to enhancing the collective powers of social movement activists" (Nicholls 2009:82). Together, the scene and the Right to the City projects consisted of "multiple contact-points" where activists with different visions came into contact with one another, "permitting the flow of new ideas and information between diverse activists" (Nicholls 2009:82-83).

6.5.2 Kontrapunkt

The collaboration between self-identified political and cultural groups during the Festival and Stad Solidar created a desire among activists to create a place where this collaboration could continue throughout the year. Jesper points out that the festival was great, but "even though a lot of good things come out of it, we felt like it wasn't filling all the needs we thought we needed in the movement, in Malmö." One of the "needs" that was not being met by any other groups, in his view, was "to bring the cultural people and the political people together." The collaboration that worked so well for the Right to the City projects is one that activists hoped to foster more continuously. So, according to Kerstin, "the idea came up to have a place where we'd bring the

cultural groups and the political groups, where we could raise money for different projects…yeah, where we could satisfy the needs of different groups and to share resources." The impetus to create a new place was not only to keep the spirit of the Festival going all year, but to foster continued collaboration between the "political" and "cultural" groups in the city.

The new locale, located in a warehouse district just south of Möllan, is called Kontrapunkt. The word *Kontrapunkt* (Counterpoint) is a musical term referring to voices that are woven together to create a composition. In a similar fashion, the cultural and social center of the same name brings together different cultural and political groups to create a collective entity. When I arrived at Kontrapunkt in 2011, building materials lay in piles in every room and the sounds of hammering echoed in the halls. When I entered, a few people greeted me, and I was offered a cup of coffee and seated on a couch—one that had sat on the streets during the last Möllevång Festival.

There I met Ulrika, a filmmaker working with a film collective that meets at Kontrapunkt. Other "house groups"—that is, groups that have an affiliation and/or meeting space at Kontrapunkt—include: the "Research Department" (the hacker group formerly housed at Utkanten); *Klädoteket*, a "clothing library" that operates a free shop; Isolera Israel, the Palestinian solidarity network that spraypaints their web address on the sidewalks in Möllan. These are just a few of the dozen groups that are associated with the place, but they represent the diverse interests of Kontrapunkt, both political and cultural.

Markus explained that anarchist social centers of the past have been temporary and perhaps a bit exclusionary:

> There have been different, similar places in Malmö, but most of them have been
> very anarchist, punk type places and most of them have lasted maximum, maybe
> one [or] two years. Some have been just a few months and it's been the anarchist

movement that's done it.

Kontrapunkt is "similar" to places like Utkanten in that it is a social center that aims to bring together a diverse range of social movements. However, he points out that they lack continuity, much the same as the Möllevång Festival. His comment about social centers being "anarchist, punk type places" implies that perhaps these places might not appeal to people who do not identify with anarchist politics. After all, one of the goals of Kontrapunkt is to bring "synergy" to a variety of people and groups. Similarly, Kerstin says,

> When we started Möllevångsfestivalen, which are a lot of the same people that are
> involved in Kontrapunkt, the idea was to, like, reach a broader target audience
> than just political groups […] to make it a little bit more accessible for people
> who may not be politically aware or have that interest.

It's not only activists to whom the people at Kontrapunkt hope to appeal, but also to a "broader audience" of people who may not identify as activists—or politically interested at all. Although Kontrapunkt is part of the autonomous scene in the city, they hope to keep diffusing the ideas and practices of the festival to a wider audience beyond activists.

By calling themselves a "cultural and social center," activists and artists at Kontrapunkt continue the theme of Möllevång Festival and Stad Solidar by trying to bring together culture and politics. Jesper says that—once again—this created some skepticism among some political activists about wanting to get involved with Kontrapunkt:

> In Sweden, people are very locked in a kind of…square way of thinking. Even if
> you're politically active, people have trouble seeing alternative ways of thinking.
> The means you have demonstrations or manifestations or some kind of action.
> […] People are just repeating the actions of previous movements. There's no step
> forward. So we hope, and the idea of Kontrapunkt, is to step up the ambition and
> get people to organize in a more creative way.

Like many people involved in autonomous milieux, Jesper points to how social movements in Sweden sometimes operate within a very limited idea of what constitutes political action.

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Namely, social movements engage in demonstrations that look and feel very much like the demonstrations they had previously. Markus says, "We don't want to go out there and say, 'this is what Kontrapunkt is going to be.' […] We want to leave it open. We're working on it slowly and we want to get people to realize the values of this place for their own lives." As organizers and builders, the people I met at Kontrapunkt were very wary about attaching any particular identity to the place in order to keep it open to people and possibilities for action.

On the other hand, they do fulfill some of the same roles and encourage the same kinds of activities of the social centers I describe in Chapter 5. For example, in a pamphlet titled "Kontra Bygg" (Counter Build), the building plans include a kitchen, office spaces for photocopying, a bike workshop, a library, meeting rooms, stages with sound systems, an exercise room for dance and theater troupes can practice, and much more. The very title of the pamphlet—Counter Build—hints using countercultural or "alternative" values to build something new. The place's website, they list their goals in the following way:

- To strengthen and develop grassroots social movements
- To create strong, active, and creative social engagement using culture as a tool
- To be a cultural platform that furthers free and unestablished cultural life
- To transmit knowledge, competency, and resources to and between local cultural and collective activities.
- Through meetings, collaboration and exchange promote multi-culturalism, integration, and community between people from different backgrounds and social groups (Kontrapunkt "Om Kontrapunkt" 2012).

These goals bear some resemblance to those of the social center Utkanten that I discussed in Chapter 5. For example, Kontrapunkt's interest in developing collaboration, cultural independence, and collectivity are similar to Utkanten's emphasis on independence, self-determination, and "creating culture without boundaries." Unlike Utkanten, however, their goals speak to the process of diffusion, by aiming to "transmit knowledge, competency, and resources

to and between local cultural and collective activities" from Kontrapunkt to the wider community. Additionally, they define that wider community as "people from different backgrounds and social groups," something that reflects the composition of the neighborhood and its transition from old to new.

6.5.3   The Möllevång Group (*Möllevångsgruppen*)

Another avenue that activists pursued in order to establish a more continuous presence in the neighborhood was via the neighborhood association, the Möllevång Group. Though the group formed in 1994 to address littering and beautification, its goals changed as the neighborhood changed. The core organizers of the Möllevång Festival were part of the group already, but the year after the festival ended, autonomous activists became a more vocal and active majority in the group. By becoming a vocal and active majority in a long-lasting, established neighborhood group, activists secured a durable position in the neighborhood, both in the form of a physical place (the MG office is located on the edge of the park – see Figure 6-4) and by becoming "the voice" of the neighborhood in its dealings with the City of Malmö.

In 2011, the goals of the group took on a decidedly political tone. Described on the website only as "a new group of enthusiasts," their statement begins, "We want the Möllevång Group to become a vibrant social center in Möllan, open to everyone but for left-wing movements and local associations especially." In this opening line, they explicitly locate MG within in the autonomous left scene by expressing the desire for the group's meeting place—located on the edge of the People's Park—to be a social center. They further specify that they are *especially* welcoming of left-wing activists and local association members.

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The social movement character of the revamped group is further underscored when they describe their approach as "a grassroots perspective, i.e. we see things from below, from the residents' point of view. We pursue the questions that the residents feel are important." In order to use the MG meeting place to show a film, have a meeting or discussion group all one has to do is show up to one of the group's public meetings, which are held every Monday evening. These meetings, they write, are open to everyone—including anyone who is "just curious" about the group (Möllevångsgruppen 2010b). In this way, the practices and policies of the MG offices have essentially become a new social center.

Jesper, who has worked with the group on a few projects in the past, says "I want there to be more public engagement [in Möllan]. That's what the group hopefully will do now, go out in the streets, invite people in, get people engaged. [What happens in the neighborhood] should be based on what they want." Although the group's site—and Jesper's comments—say that anyone and everyone are welcome, they suggest that there are boundaries when they draw specific attention to left-wing movements and local associations.

In the group's written materials, as well as my interviews with group members and neighborhood residents, it is clear that changes in the composition, goals, and tone of the group mirror the social and cultural changes happening in the neighborhood. In a statement titled "What do we do?" the group writes,

> Möllan has changed a lot since Möllevång Group's start, from being a neighborhood afflicted with problems into a thriving neighborhood with a vibrant cultural scene and active community engagement. Möllan today is arguably Malmö's most popular district as a result of this transformation. But as the district has become more and more attractive rents have risen, rental housing has disappeared and the shops that characterized Möllan have found it hard to stay here. The dreaded gentrification has the neighborhood in its grip. That Möllan will change is inevitable, but what Möllevång group now fights for is change based on the ideas and desires of Möllevången's residents themselves. Get involved today, tomorrow may be too late!

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The group recognizes that the neighborhood's transformation follows a similar, "inevitable" trajectory of many gentrifying cities: local efforts to clean up a neighborhood make it more attractive to students and young artists. The demand for bars, cafés, restaurants, music venues, and galleries make it attractive to real estate developers and new residents, which creates higher rents, fewer available rental properties, and new kinds of cultural spaces. By calling on inhabitants of the neighborhood to act, they issue a call to demand the right to the city. They do not call for gentrification to stop. Rather, they ask local inhabitants to be part of shaping the changes that will inevitably happen in the neighborhood.

The revamping of the Möllevång Group allowed activists to take the goals, methods, and efforts of the two day Möllevång Festival and institutionalize them in the form of a physical place that has had a continuous presence in Möllan since the mid-1990s. The "new" MG group is representative of how the Right to the City projects help spur the development of new social movement scene places. Activists take the ideas of the scene, diffuse them into the neighborhood, and then use the momentum from those projects to establish new scene locations. In this way, autonomous values, as expressed by the Right to the City, are further embedded in the neighborhood landscape.

6.6   CONCLUSION

With its strong social movement history, inexpensive residential and commercial places, and heterogeneous community, Möllevången has been symbolically important and accessible to autonomous movements since the 1970s. This began to change in the early 2000s as the local infrastructure shifted in response to the economic expansion of the Öresund region. These

changes created demographic, cultural, and aesthetic shifts in the neighborhood that make Möllan increasingly less affordable for longtime residents of the neighborhood. Since the autonomous scene takes shape in this neighborhood, consisting of several movement places, autonomous activists worry about losing their place in the neighborhood, both literally and figuratively.

In 2006, autonomous movement networks organized projects around the Right to the City in response to these changes. They used these projects to diffuse the ideas, norms, and practices of autonomous movements into the neighborhood. During the Möllevång Festival, residents of Möllan appropriated space by extending their living rooms into the streets, making the interactions between neighbors the central focus of the neighborhood. Stad Solidar created an opportunity for Möllevången residents to participate in creating a miniature city on a vacant lot. The project encouraged participatory democracy in an effort to give inhabitants of the neighborhood a voice in how city space is developed. As a result, these projects increased public debates over social inequalities in cities and brought together activists with different approaches to protest. The collaboration fostered by these projects helped bring activists together in less temporary efforts and places: the neighborhood association and a new social/cultural center, Kontrapunkt. These places lend a sense of durability to Right to the City projects, allowing them to become embedded in the urban landscape in the hopes that they will shape local action more continuously.

7.0 FRAGILE AND CONCENTRATED SCENES IN STOCKHOLM AND GÖTEBORG

A social movement scene is a network of people and physical spaces that are in some way connected to a social movement (Leach and Haunss 2009). In Malmö, there is a *strong scene*; tight-knit autonomous networks have created a diverse network of places that are in close proximity to one another, geographically central, accessible to both activists and the general public, and are located in and around a neighborhood to which people feel an emotional attachment.

The scenes in Stockholm and Göteborg looked very different than the one in Malmö. In *Stockholm*, there was a *fragile scene* consisting of loosely-knit network of activists and a network of places that was geographically dispersed, in the suburbs, and primarily formed around temporary spaces and single events. In *Göteborg*, there was a *concentrated scene* consisting of a tight-knit network of autonomous activists that primarily formed around a single social center and actions that were difficult to find and socially "closed."

Differing configurations of social movement scenes are partially shaped by the social movement histories and structural conditions of the cities in which they form. As the last chapter highlighted, Malmö activists felt emotionally connected to the neighborhood of Möllevången because of its unique labor movement history, carefree character, rich cultural life, and socio-cultural heterogenity. The threats posed by gentrification provided energy to autonomous

movements. Their efforts to create places were efforts to solidify their place (as residents and as activists) in this unique neighborhood that they loved. In Stockholm and Göteborg, analogous neighborhoods (Södermalm and Haga, respectively) gentrified decades ago. Social movements no longer have a place in the physical and social landscapes of urban neighborhoods in Göteborg and Stockholm. While activists in Malmö work to maintain their place in the neighborhood, activist networks in Stockholm and Göteborg struggle to find places at all.

Comparisons of the strong scene in Malmö and the concentrated and fragile scenes in Göteborg and Stockholm highlight that certain features and qualities of place lend both social movement scenes resilience over time. These features include proximity, centrality, visibility, and accessibility. *Proximity* refers to the nearness of scene places in relation to one another. *Centrality* denotes a place's location in relation to the city center and/or its location in relation to where a large number of activists live and work. *Visibility* refers to the visible presence of a social movement scene in a city. *Accessibility* concerns both geographic location (how easy or difficult is it to physically find or get to a place) and social boundaries (how easy or difficult it is to become part of the social life of a place).

As the case of Malmö/Möllevången showed, proximity, centrality, and accessibility all worked together to create a strong autonomous scene. Place-making is "an iterative, evolutionary process of defining not just boundaries or territories, but the rules and norms against which socio-spatial practices are understood" (Pierce, Martin and Murphy 2010:58). Therefore, having a range of places or "contact points" is important, but the proximity and centrality of those points makes social interactions in these places "frequent and routine" (Nicholls 2009:85). Making activism part of everyday life in a neighborhood helped activists in Malmö diffuse the ideas, norms, and practices to a wide variety of people. Consistent face-to-face interactions also allow

diverse activist networks to become more cooperative, communicative, and open to new ideas, as the example of the "political vs. cultural people" in the last chapter illustrates.

The scenes in Stockholm and Göteborg differ in density of activist networks and spatial dimensions. In Stockholm, activist networks are loose and disconnected. In Göteborg, activist networks are dense to the point of being inaccessible to outsiders. These scenes also differ spatially, along the dimensions of proximity, centrality, visibility, and accessibility. Spread out over a large area in the southern suburbs, the scene in Stockholm is geographically diffuse, peripheral, not visible, and *socially* accessible but *geographically* difficult to find since it coalesces around temporary spaces and events. In Göteborg, the scene has relative proximity but is peripheral, not visible, and both socially and geographically difficult to access.

These fragile and concentrated scene configurations have different outcomes for social movements and urban neighborhoods than strong scenes. In Malmö, actions were geared toward securing a future in the central city, in the hopes of giving the movement—and scene—resilence that would secure their place in the neighborhood and move them toward a newly imagined future. In Stockholm, the fragile scene reinforced the loose networks and fleeting relationships between activists, thereby limiting their potential to move forward collectively because of a lack of collective energy and affective bonds. In Göteborg, the concentrated scene produced exclusivity, limiting their movement by making it difficult for new actors to access.

Most activists in Stockholm and Göteborg were not focused on momentum for the future, but on the challenges of the present. Therefore, they engaged in actions that served immediate needs: getting people together in one place (Stockholm) or trying to get new people to join their movement (Göteborg). They did so primarily through squatting actions and single events (e.g. Anarchist Book Fair), actions that had temporary effects. The lack of routine, consistent

interactions that are fostered by a scene with a variety of places that have proximity, centrality, visibility, and accessibility limited their momentum and possibilities for the future.

In the next section, I present the history of two neighborhoods (Söder/Stockholm and Haga/Göteborg) with similar histories as Möllevången in Malmö. All three were working-class enclaves and home to labor movements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, making them attractive to autonomous social movements that admire labor movement culture. The urban processes that have shaped neighborhood change are also very similar to those in Malmö/Möllevången, but the transformations in Söder/Stockholm and Haga/Göteborg happened decades ago. Therefore, while there has been a continuous social movement presence in Malmö, social movements in Stockholm and Göteborg struggle to find their places in the city—both literally and figuratively. This will set the stage for the next section, in which I describe the social movement scenes in each city, highlighting the dimensions of proximity, centrality, and accessibility.

Then I turn to the autonomous spaces and places in each city. I begin with a description of Kafé 44, an anarchist cafe, info shop, and concert venue that has been operating in Stockholm since 1976. This place is important as a reference point for autonomous movements in both Stockholm and Göteborg. A radical institution, Kafé 44 is critiqued by activists for its established" character; they seek to create something different. In the final sections of the chapter, I turn to the outcomes of the scenes in both Stockholm and Göteborg. In Stockholm, activists described a lack of collective energy and affective bonds as a result of a lack of proximate places in which to develop such dynamics. In Göteborg, activists worried about the exclusivity and "closed" nature of the scene as a result of the tight-knit social networks and coalescence around a single place.

7.1   URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS IN STOCKHOLM AND GÖTEBORG

At a community meeting in November 2009, members of the urban action group Alarm Stockholm passed out a pamphlet titled "Stockholm is Ruined," which points to Södermalm, the neighborhood in which the meeting took place, as an example of what they see as negative urban change:

> Södermalm has undergone an extreme change from having been a working class neighborhood with a strong left-wing and alternative character to quickly adapting to the needs of an affluent middle-class (Alarm Stockholm 2007b).

The story Alarm Stockholm writes about Södermalm/Stockholm is strikingly similar to the story that Möllevången/Malmö activists tell about their neighborhood. In this passage, the group points to Södermalm as a working-class, leftist, enclave that is now a middle-class, apolitical neighborhood catering to the newly arrived "creative class." High rents as well as expensive bars and boutiques make the borough undesireable (and uninhabitable) for leftist groups similar to those that inhabited the neighborhood in previous decades.

Haga, a central neighborhood in Göteborg, shares a similar history. Once the home of labor movements, Haga—like Södermalm/Stockholm—was marked for demolition as a "slum area" in the 1960s. Artists and young students moved into the district, lending the area a countercultural ambiance (Thörn 2012b). In the early 1970s, neighborhood movements[24] (*byalagsrörelser*) began to organize in response to building demolitions in both Stockholm and Göteborg. Young urban activists and older, working-class residents of the neighborhood launched a campaign in the 1970s to save Haga from destruction on the grounds that it was a "historically valuable old working class neighborhood" (Thörn 2012b:161). Haga activists—like

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[24] For a history of these movements, see Chapter 4.

those in Malmö—contributed to the reversal of the neighborhood's place identity from a slum to a creative and trendy area.

In both Stockholm and Göteborg, historic neighborhoods associated with working-class pasts became important places worth "saving" for leftist movements from the 1970s to the 1990s. While partially interested in conserving the physical landscape of these neighborhoods, activists also tried, in varying degrees, to establish some sort of leftist culture. These histories laid the groundwork for contemporary autonomous communities in each city today. In Stockholm, where a radical political scene never really established itself in Södermalm during this time, activist groups lack connections and communication. In Göteborg, where an autonomous movement scene declined after the transformation of Haga, activist networks operate in temporary, often underground places on the outskirts of town.

7.1.1   Stockholm: Södermalm and the Southern Suburbs

Stockholm is Sweden's largest city and capital, with a population of roughly 800,000. The city is situated on 14 islands where Lake Mälaren meets the Baltic Sea and consists of three major areas: the city center, south Stockholm, and west Stockholm. The city center is made up of four major boroughs: Norrmalm, Östermalm, Kungsholmen, and Södermalm (which includes Gamla Stan, the oldest part of the city). Neighborhoods in Swedish cities are class-bound. The closer one lives to the *centrum* or city center, the wealthier one is likely to be. As one moves further away from the city center, the socio-economic and occupational statuses of residents drop, precisely the opposite of many American cities (Popenoe 2001).

Similar to Möllevången/Malmö, Södermalm ("Söder") was an industrial zone and working-class borough from the late 19th century to the 1970s. When families began to leave the

inner-city for newly developed suburbs in the 1960s, students and artists—many of them politically leftist or anti-establishment—began to move into Söder due to the availability of cheap housing. In the early 1970s, rent regulations were changed by the city, giving landlords power to negotiate rents and incentive to rebuild or modernize their properties. As a result, many apartment buildings in Söder were slated for demolition. These conditions made the neighborhood attractive to New Social Movements, as "there were many cheap dwellings, attracting particularly students. For many of them, politically leftist or just anti-establishment, Söder's popular and radical tradition was an extra asset" (Franzén 2005: 63).
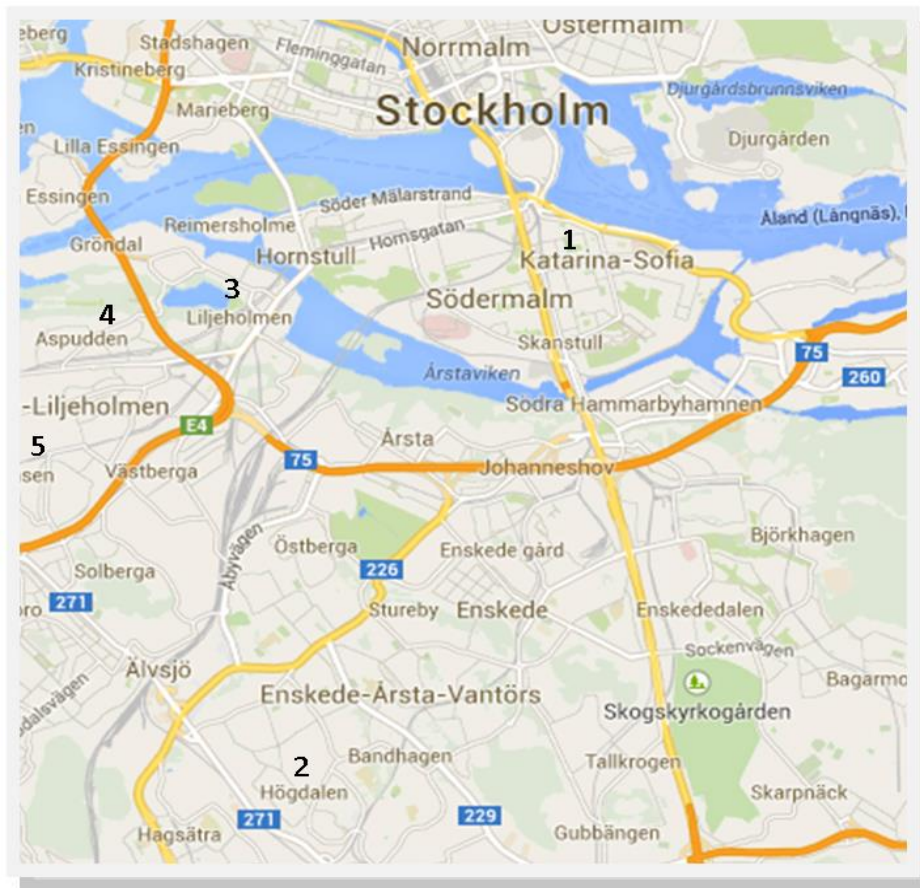

Figure 7-1: Map of Stockholm Scene. 1. Kafé 44, 2. Cyklopen, 3. Squat in Liljeholmen, 4. Squat in Aspudden, 5. Anarchist Bookfair

The New Left—particularly environmental activists—engaged in occasional street actions and squatting, but more importantly, they joined forces with the borough's tenants' association (*Hyresgästföreningens Södermalmsavdelning* or HFS). Throughout the 1970s, the infusion of autonomous politics into the tenants' association led to support for autonomous political projects, such as the squatted block Mullvaden (see Chapter 4) and an annual street festival called Söder Festival (akin to the Möllevång Festival in Malmö, only 30 years earlier) (Franzén 2005).

The primary focus of the tenants' association was preserving old apartment buildings and defending the rights of tenants, *not* appropriating space and creating autonomous places. In the long run, these movements did not establish themselves as part of Södermalm's place identity. Sociologist Mats Franzén (2005) lists three reasons why this is the case. First, there was a lack of available space. Södermalm/Stockholm deindustrialized slowly, with factories closing one by one. The city was efficient in turning those places into housing or administrative buildings at a steady pace, leaving no available space for alternative movement cultures. In other cities, where many factories closed at once, there was an abundance of available space that was largely viewed by property owners as useless—and therefore ripe for squatting.[25] Second, the message of the movement was one of preservation, not change. Specifically, due to the focus on tenants' rights, their message was about keeping the buildings, people, and neighborhoods as they were, not opening up possibilities for new initatives. Third, as I have written previously, the Swedish system of government is relatively closed to outside actors. Since many of the buildings in

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[25] It is also worth noting that following World War II many European countries recognized squatters' rights, given the level of destruction to available housing during the war. Since Sweden was neutral, this was not the case there.

Södermalm were owned by the municipal government, they decided what to do with them—without input from local groups.

In Chapter 4, I described the active squatting movement in Södermalm during 1990s. Activists—particularly those from Alarm Stockholm—talk about those days nostalgically. Anders from Alarm Stockholm says, "We [people in Alarm] used to hang out in Söder[malm] a lot. There was a thick layer of dirt on the windowsills on Götgatan [a major street in the neighborhood] and there were lots of second hand music stores and stuff. Today Götgatan is full of expensive shops." In their manifesto, Alarm Stockholm (2007a) writes, "It's unavoidable that a city has a center and we in Alarm have not given up on the inner-city—the center of a city belongs to everyone." The group draws on the past in attempt to provoke action in the central city, particularly Södermalm, which they see as a neighborhood for social movements, given its history as a labor and squatting movement zone.

Today, Södermalm is arguably Stockholm's trendiest borough. According to the Stockholm City website, the area is characterized by "a rich cultural life," "trendy and unusual boutiques," pubs, restaurants, and "strong social engagement among residents" (Visit Sweden 2013). The district has gained international recognition since the success of Stieg Larsson's best-selling *Millenium* series of novels, which have been adapted into films in both Swedish and English. The main characters of the series reside in Söder, making it a popular tourist destination—so popular, in fact, that the Stockholm tourist bureau offers maps for a Stieg Larsson Millennium Tour, a walking guide based on the novels (Visit Sweden 2013).

A special issue of the syndicalist magazine *Direkt Aktion* titled "City for Everyone" (*Stad för alla*) (Nyman 2009:9) comments that, "Söder in Stockholm is romanticized and seen as an alternative to the bourgeois inner-city. [But] there are no special people who live there, there's

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no special culture any longer. We must stop romanticizing and create politics from our current situation." These comments suggest that left-wing activists talk nostalgically about Södermalm as the home of alternative cultures, when, in fact, "there's no special culture [there] any longer." Alarm Stockholm writes that they "have not given up on the inner-city," but *Direkt Aktion* suggests that maybe they should. Rather than longing for how the neighborhood *used to be* and focusing on the past, these comments suggest that activists "create politics" in the present.

Many activists I met in Stockholm talked about the suburbs to the south of the city as the next frontier (Figure 7-1). In 2009, activists issued a call for a community meeting at a coffee shop in Södermalm to discuss possible Right to the City actions. For many people in attendance, "the link between the city and the suburbs is becoming an important question because now that the inner-city is gentrified, development will start outside of the city center." Just as activist networks of the past responded to urban development projects in Stockholm/Söder, contemporary activists are responding to them in the suburbs using the same tactics: squatting and discussion groups. During my fieldwork, there were squatting actions in Lilljeholmen and Aspudden, suburbs just south of Södermalm. Cyklopen, the city's social center, is located in Högdalen, further south of the city center. Recently, the action group *Allt åt alla* held a week of discussion groups titled "Sideways City: City Struggle in the Southern Suburbs." The goal was "a transfer of knowledge between the southern suburbs," an effort to bring together disparate groups over the planned building of new highways that would connect them geographically (Allt åt alla 2014).

What these efforts lack are *centrality, accessibility, visibility,* and/or *proximity*. Squatting actions happen outside the centers of cities or even suburban communities, often in industrial areas that do not get a lot of foot traffic from residents or neighbors. Squats are often raided by

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police shortly after they become publicized, making them difficult to access if one is not an activist insider. All of these projects take place in the southern suburbs, but are spread apart so that there is no connection between them—geographically or in terms of activist networks that enact them.

While Alarm Stockholm fights to hold on to the central city—and social movement histories—other activist networks look to the southern suburbs as the site for the next wave of protest. In part, this move is influenced by the past. The processes against which social movements protested in previous decades are now taking shape in suburban areas, not the inner-city. Therefore, activists see the future of those areas as inevitable, but they seek to intervene in those processes. Some groups do so using similar tactics (squatting), while others suggest seeking out new forms of action to "create politics from our current situation." These comments recognize a future that is "not simply a possibility, but is something which is already present in the configuration of the game" (Adkins 2009:8). These calls for action recognize practical action based on the present as the best road forward.

7.1.2   Göteborg: From Haga to Gamlestaden

Göteborg is Sweden's second largest city, with a population of approximately 500,000. The city has a long history of trade and shipping, beginning with the East India Company in the early 18th century. As a result, the city was once home to a large shipbuilding industry, until the 1980s when it went into decline. Today, automobile manufacturing is an important industry in the city and Volvo is the city's largest employer. Though trade union activity is widespread throughout Sweden, there is a long history of labor movement activity in Göteborg, which has long depended on manufacturing jobs to drive its economy.

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Like Södermalm/Stockholm and Möllevången/Malmö, Haga was an important place to leftist social movements of the past. Located just across a canal that defines the city center, the neighborhood's history as a working-class enclave began in the 1840s when new industry emerged in Göteborg. In the 1920s, the neighborhood became "a stronghold for the workers' movement," (Thörn 2012a:199), a legacy that is evident today only in the close proximity of the local People's House. In the 1930s, local Social Democratic groups called for the demolition of Haga, which "represented a part of working-class history that was shameful—a 'slum' associated with poverty and disease" (Thörn 2012a: 204). In the Social Democrats' sweeping urban renewal efforts of the post-war period, Haga was slated for demolition by the municipality. Due to plans to demolish the area, Haga was "a rundown inner-city area impaired by long-term physicial neglect" by the 1960s (Holmberg 2002:63).

In the early 1970s, a movement emerged to "save Haga." These efforts were led on two fronts: by the municipal museum and the Haga Group (*Hagagruppen*), a neighborhood group. These groups are partially responsible for establishing Haga's place identity as a "workers' district." Building conservationist Ingrid Holmberg (2002) notes that the municipal museum's guidebook describes Haga as a "worker's area," but then goes on to explain how the neighborhood was rather socially mixed, historically. While the images in the book show factory workers and seamstresses, the text says that the neighborhood was also home to middle-class inn-keepers, grocers, and homeowners. A museum official says the overall goal of renovations in the area was to "maintain the impression of a worker's area from the turn of the century, so there remains a possibility to imagine aspects of the hard and poor life that was lived there" (quoted in Holmberg 2002:69). These examples illustrate that the museum played an important role in

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establishing the place identity of Haga as a working-class enclave of historical importance in Göteborg—a city that takes pride in its working-class history.

From the early 1970s to the late 1980s, social movements also played an important role in reversing Haga's reputation from a slum to a place of historical value (Thörn 2012b). Artists, students, and hippies began moving into Haga in the late '60s, attracted by cheap rents, which began to change the neighborhood's reputation. Influenced by the work of Henri Lefebvre, neighborhood movements formed, consisting—as in Södermalm/Stockholm—of students in the social sciences, architecture, and urban planning. By linking up with "official political discourse of historic preservation" (as exemplified by the museum), activists helped to (re)define Haga's identity as an historic working-class enclave worthy of cultural preservation (Thörn 2012b:161).

In the late 1980s, a new generation of squatters moved into the neighborhood. This generation—resembling the punk rock, anarchist aesthetic of today's squatting movements—switched the emphasis away from conservation and toward creating communal living spaces. Despite differing political goals (conservation of buildings vs. alternative living), the newcomers were welcomed by the older generation of activists because they breathed new life into a dying leftist culture in the neighborhood. These groups wanted to preserve both the physical landscape of the neighborhood and a countercultural way of life in Haga.

In 1988, a group of squatters moved into a building across the street from Haga Church. They called themselves *husnallarna*, a term chosen for its double meaning as "teddy bears in the house" (symbolizing their commitment to non-violence) as well as "those who snatch houses" (squatters) (Thörn 2012a). The goal of the *husnallarna* was to create communal forms of living. A journalist from the national newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* visited the house, which she described in the following way: "The stairways smell like cat urine and the building is, simply put, a real

dump. [However,] the apartment is a little gem. [Squatters] have furnished it with finds from dumpsters and flea markets. It is simple, but beautiful and tidy" (Berglund 1988: 32). The description contrasts Haga's image as a slum with "the new Haga" that presses on outside the building. As one squatter puts it, "'the new Haga' [is] beautiful, attractive, expensive, and for a *whole different kind of people*" (Berglund 1988: 32, emphasis added). The "different kind of people" are middle-class gentrifiers, attracted to the historic charm of Haga's working-class past.[26] By the early 1990s, both the historic preservationists and countercultural activists were history, too.

Today Haga retains its historical charm with the mix of old brick and even older wooden buildings, as well as cobblestone streets and sidewalks. It is an expensive residential area and home to several small boutiques and cafes along the main drag, while smaller side streets are oddly quiet, even in the busy summer months when tourists flock to the area. Nearby *Järntorget* (iron square) remains a busy meeting place and transportation hub, surrounded by symbols of the area's labor history (Folkets hus, union-related educational organizations, and the Social Democrats' bookstore) as well as global capitalism (Burger King).

Like their counterparts in Stockholm, contemporary autonomous networks in Göteborg have begun to turn their attention to areas outside the city center (Figure 7-2). The social center Underjorden was located in the industrial area Gamlestaden, northeast of the city center. As I described in Chapter 5, Gamlestaden is an industrial area organized around a factory that makes ball bearings (SKF). Tomas described it as "not really the suburbs, but it's not the center of the city either. It's in between, it's very mixed." Tomas describes the neighborhood as "mixed," referring to its mix of residential and industrial, city and suburb, and mixed housing tenure.

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[26] It is notable that the phrase "attractive and for a whole different kind of people" is a verbatim description of Möllevången in the early 2000s, given in Chapter 6 by Ulrika, an activist in Malmö.

Figure 7-2: Map of Göteborg Scene. 1. Haga, 2. Gamlestaden (Underjorden), 3. Sites of Kampen om Göteborg, 4. Squat at Kviberg

In March 2010, flyers began to appear around Göteborg for a weeklong series of actions called the Battle Over Göteborg (*Kampen Om Göteborg*, Figure 7-3). The flyer is a good example of the mixed messages that the Battle over Göteborg produced. It reads, "Save Kvibergs Marknad [a local flea market]. Autonomy from Below. Not one more co-op!" This flyer highlights three urban issues: the sale of the flea market to a private individual, autonomous self-management, and changes in housing tenure. The action blog included the following description:

> Gamlestan and Kviberg [a neighboring borough] are undergoing a clear
> gentrification process. During this week, we will conduct an exhibition
> and discussion tour in public places throughout northeastern Göteborg,
> including organizing a concert, holding workshops, conducting a

demonstration and more. All with one goal: to show that there is a
resistance to the changes people are trying to make in the district and other
ideas about how the city should develop.

This description is, in many respects, similar to those written by activists in Malmö that call for

the Right to the City. The gentrification process is provocation for protests, which took the form

of arts, music, and discussions in public places about making urban development processes more

participatory. However, these actions also differ in important ways. First, the Battle Over

Göteborg is a *battle*, creating a boundary of us vs. them. Malmö activists made inclusivity a goal

for their actions. Second, it is unclear who "we" and "they" are. Göteborg activists by-and-large

do not reside in Gamlestaden or Kviberg. Third, the series of actions were not limited to a clearly

defined, central area. The blog highlights Gamlestaden and Kviberg as the sites of the actions,

but the actual events happened in different neighborhoods each day. In Malmö, Right to the City

actions were limited to a single neighborhood. In Göteborg and Stockholm, suburban protests—

like the suburbs themselves—were spread out over a much larger area. Finally, the message of

the action was mixed. In Malmö, the messages of Right to the City campaigns were clear: we

want a voice in our neighborhood. Battle over Göteborg tried to address too many issues at

once—housing, self-managed spaces, and privatization. Although these are all expressions of the

Right to the City, they did not clearly connect, conceptually or with residents.

Figure 7-3: Flyer for Battle over Göteborg. It reads "Save Kviberg's Market. Battle over Göteborg. March 1-7. Autonomy from Below. Not one more co-op!"

Activists in Malmö were able to diffuse the practices of the scene into the neighborhood more broadly using the Right to the City because the scene and individuals were part of the neighborhood. In Göteborg and Stockholm, activists have not had a continuous presence in any particular neighborhood. Helena, an activist from the social center Underjorden in Göteborg, says, "we've had some problems at Underjorden. We're not very liked by everyone in the area because we've had parties and we've been noisy and there have been some clashes with the neighbors." The activist presence in Gamlestaden was viewed by neighbors as a nuisance, not an embedded part of the neighborhood. Helena also adds, "It's hard to tell if the area can become like an activist zone because people still live all over town." As she points out—and my data reflect—activists don't live in Gamlestaden, but "all over town." Whereas the scene in Malmö coalesced around a tightly-knit community of people and places in close proximity, that is not the case in Göteborg.

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7.2   SOCIAL MOVEMENT SCENES

7.2.1   Stockholm

On a dark evening in the winter of 2009, I attended a meeting of activists at Café Hängmattan, a Brazilian themed cafe in Södermalm. This meeting was not advertised, but convened via word of mouth. The small room that had been reserved for the meeting was packed with people, and I was surprised, given the lack of action I had seen during my first few months in the city. Activists gathered to discuss possible squatting actions, city space, and the importance of self-managed social movement places. The mix of people was diverse in age, interests, and experience. Some people spoke nostalgically about Reclaim the Streets actions in the 1990s. A member of Culture Campaign said they were soliciting volunteers and suggestions for what people wanted to see as they moved forward on rebuilding Cyklopen 2.0, the next generation of the social center in Högdalen. Another person talked about the squatting action at Aspuddsbadet, a bathhouse in the southern suburbs. Finally, a member of the autonomous action group Alarm Stockholm gave an impassioned speech about the importance of focusing on urban issues such as commercialization of city centers and diminishing public space in the city. This meeting was emblematic of the Stockholm activist community. People took turns speaking about their groups and activities, but there were no plans by the end of the meeting. While all of these projects are vaguely connected in that they all deal with how city space is used and by whom, there were no concrete directions for action that resulted from the meeting.

Autonomous scenes in Stockholm consist of affinity groups—loosely-knit networks of activists that organize around a single campaign and then disband and gather again for the next project. During my fieldwork, there was only one autonomous place in Stockholm, Kafé 44,

which I will discuss below. Cyklopen had burned down in 2008 and Culture Campaign, the group behind the social center, were looking for locations and builders. Most activists in Stockholm attributed the lack of a lively activist scene to the fact that it is the country's largest city, both in population and in land area, making people more spread out and less likely to bump into one another as they do in Malmö, for example. But this factor alone fails to explain why scenes thrive in cities much larger than Stockholm.

When I asked autonomous activists in Stockholm to describe the social movement scene in the city, their comments spoke to a lack of connection, visibility, and centrality. Tobias, an anarchist I met by spending time at Kafé 44, says, "[O]f the political contacts I have, few have really led to friendship or anything like that. We meet at political meetings and events, but it doesn't really go further than that. I don't understand what the reasons are for that, but…it's tough." Tobias makes a distinction between the kind of distant, in some cases fleeting, relationships that he has with fellow activists, few of whom become friends. While they engage in activism together, their relationships never develop more.

Mariska, an activist involved in several anarchist initiatives in Stockholm, says that it's not only a lack of interpersonal connections that are missing, but a lack of visibility for activism in the city as well:

> It's actually kind of weird because if you look around, look out there at the internet and the projects going on, there seems to be quite a lot [happening in Stockholm]. Living here? It feels like there isn't. You don't meet those people very much; you aren't confronted with any kind of radical political culture in everyday life in [Stockholm].

Mariska's comment speaks to a lack of visibility and routine interaction among activists that she attributes to a lack of being "confronted" by "radical political culture." This highlights the

importance of central places that facilitate routine interaction between people as an important component of scenes.

What Mariska describes was the exactly the quandary I found myself in when I arrived in Stockholm and began searching for people to interview and places to visit. Having done abundant internet research before leaving the U.S., I was prepared to find more radical political culture in Stockholm. As Mariska points out, there seemed to be several projects going on in the city—but where were they? Similarly, Mads, one of the organizers of the Anarchist Bookfair in Stockholm, attributes this to a lack of communication among groups:

> A lot people are doing their own projects here and there, but I think if they were better connected and worked together, the overall presence of that scene would be a lot stronger. A lot of it seems to happen out of the sight of…well, pretty much everyone.

Mads acknowledges that there are groups doing activist work in the city, but that they are isolated from one another, contributing to the lack of visibility of the scene and movement. Mariska says that one is not "confronted with radical political culture" and Mads points out that "a lot of [projects] seem to happen out of sight." These comments suggest the importance of social connections and visibility for the production of a social movement scene.

Several people pointed to Cyklopen as having a major impact on the social movement community because it became a central point where people could meet, dream, and feel like part of something greater than themselves. Cyklopen's website includes a page called "Stories about Cyklopen" for which people were asked to share "a memory, a feeling, [or] a reason why places like [Cyklopen] are important" (Berättelser om Cyklopen 2012). In response, people wrote passionately about "feeling like part of something bigger than oneself" and "meeting other individuals, with other experiences, but who share a common goal" (Berättelser om Cyklopen 2012). These comments point to how "geographic stability enables activists to engage in frequent

face-to-face ritual interactions which charge newly established connections with strong emotional power" (Nicholls 2009:85; also Collins 2004).

For others, building at Cyklopen was their first foray into social movements. One woman's narrative, for example, recounts how she moved to Högdalen (the suburb where Cyklopen is located) after leaving home. She and her friends "had heard talk about a culture center in the forest where they had super cool parties—parties without a closing time." Going to Cyklopen gave her a feeling of freedom—being away from home, staying out late with her friends, not having her parents tell her what to do. She continues,

> A few years later, when I heard that the building had been burned down it came as a shock. Then when I heard about the authorities' lack of action (and sometimes pure malice) regarding getting a new building, I got angry. Really angry. And began to think politically. The fact is that the events surrounding Cyklopen have laid the groundwork for many of my understandings of society and politics. It has helped me understand what a public space is and how important such spaces are.

This narrative describes the importance of Cyklopen as a point of entrance into activism. The feelings of freedom that this writer first experienced at Cyklopen created an emotional attachment to the place itself. The "events surrounding Cyklopen" (the fire, the negotiations to secure a new patch of land) became a way for this writer to learn about local social and political issues alongside others.

7.2.2 Göteborg

When I arrived in Göteborg in late January 2010, I walked out of the train station, pulling a heavy suitcase through the snow. As I approached Gustav Adolf's Square, I saw the peaks of two white tents rising above protest banners that read "Protest Center AGAINST the Iranian Regime"

and "No to Execution" (Figure 7-4). With city hall in the background, Gustav Adolf the Great, the 17th century monarch who founded the city in 1621, points to the protest center, commanding passersby to look. Activists handed out flyers and talked to interested onlookers about the executions of two protestors who had been arrested during Iran's national elections in 2009.

Figure 7-4: Protest Center in front of Göteborg's city hall

Within my first five minutes in the city, I saw more visible protest activity than I had in weeks in Stockholm. I was reminded of Mariska's comment that "You aren't confronted with any kind of radical political culture in everyday life in [Stockholm]" and was surprised by the very different message that I was already getting in Göteborg. All around the city center, one sees evidence of radical politics. A flyer titled "DIY-Sunday" is plastered on tram stops, inviting the public to "come and hang out!" at a "people's kitchen" and a music show at the local social

center *Underjorden* (see Fig. 7-5). The lettering on the flyer is cut-and-pasted and handwritten, creating an aesthetic that is reminiscent of punk rock zines—not that surprising given that the group organizing the day is Spatt, an anarcho-punk collective. A hand-drawn image of a bound-and-gagged Hitler sends a clear anti-fascist message.

Figure 7-5: DIY Sunday Flyer advertising a "people's kitchen" and several bands.

The diversity of protest tactics (squatting, anti-fascist dinners, protest centers) is matched in the diversity of activist identifications. Alex, who is part of the anarcho-punk group Spatt, say, "You have everything from the very hardcore anti-fascists to the really pacifist anti-military people and animal rights and feminists and the queers and everyone's very...we have all of these different groups. But they still get along quite well!" Unlike in Stockholm, where people seemed unsure of what other activist groups existed or what they were doing, Alex suggests that not only do people in different groups know each other, but they get along. When I ask Lisa, who is

involved in anti-fascist and asylum rights groups, how she sees the differences between

Stockholm and Göteborg, she replies,

> I think because in Stockholm it's more…it's more…people aren't that close in
> Stockholm or in other cities, like they are in Göteborg. […] Yeah, I think it's
> because people are closer to each other. It's a big city, sure, but it's really small
> for being a big city, so people are really close here and relaxed and trust people
> more than in Stockholm.

These comments reinforce the idea that connections between people are what support and

nurture a scene, making Göteborg feel "really small for being a big city." Feelings of trust lend

Göteborg's community a sense of connection, while in Stockholm, she suggests, people do not

share those emotional bonds—a statement that is supported by activists' comments in

Stockholm.

Similarly, Sara, a squatter in Göteborg, tells me that there is cooperation among

Göteborg's activist networks, despite their different goals or issues:

> We cooperate a lot with other groups too. I know that No One is Illegal does some
> things with Revolutionary Front and Antifa too. Even though we have different
> opinions about stuff, we're more together and doing stuff together, so we trust
> each other more than people do in Stockholm, for example. […] People here are
> closer to each other, I think.

In Stockholm, interviewees pointed to a lack of communication and coordination among activist

groups. Sara, however, points out that activist groups dealing with issues such as anti-fascism

(Antifa), asylum rights (No One is Illegal), and squatting (Revolutionary Front[27]). She points to

events such as music festivals, parties, and protests—all of which are temporary autonomous

zones—as places that foster close relationships among activists. Organizing events and spending

time together reinforces a sense of trust and camaraderie among people in the community.

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[27] Revolutionary Front is a militant organization that also promotes anti-fascism, among other leftist causes, but was
actively promoting squatting at this time in Göteborg.

Activists in Göteborg pointed out a few places that they saw as important, but highlighted that they were temporary and fragmented. Sara said, " It has a lot of potential to, like….if people get more connected and work more together, we could have a lot of good stuff." Her answer is representative of several activists I interviewed in Göteborg, who talked about the "potential" for there to be a thriving activist scene in the city, but cohesion and access to places were lacking. Tomas, for example, says,

> We have this place, Kulturhamnen, which is down by the harbor. I heard that they're closing down now because they can't pay rent, which is sad [because] they've also been trying to make a political place for happenings and such. Then we had Truckstop Alaska. They're not outspoken politically, but they're also a collective arranging gigs who have a big place. They're also an autonomous space, a place where you could arrange gigs, [No One is] Illegal has had support gigs there. They're also a nice group of people, and it's an alternative place to go to, even if they're not outspokenly political. Otherwise, I dunno.

Tomas, who was active in squatting, Underjorden, and the punk rock music scene in Göteborg, points out a couple of places, but notes that Kulturhamnen, an attempt at creating an autonomous place, was forced to close and Truckstop Alaska was more of a music venue than a social movement place.

Many people in Göteborg commented on how difficult it was to find the social movement community in the city and that more centrally located places would help new people and potential activists access the scene. Lena, for example, says that it's quite scattered:

> It feels like there are these small places around, like spread out, but it's hard to find if you don't really know about them. There needs to be something. It would be good to have a central meeting place that's cheap and open for everyone, but still has political information that's a very political place.

Lena highlights that the openness and affordability of places like Truckstop Alaska make such places more accessible, but that they should still have a political quality in order to help the social movement community in the city grow. This sentiment is echoed by Rasmus who told me

that he and some friends had been considering starting a queer feminist bookstore in the city

center:

> Me and some friends are talking about how we need more political spaces, so
> we've been talking about starting up a café and we want to be quite central in the
> town because that's a little bit missing, to have a central place where people might
> just pass by and go in randomly, for people who are not politically active or want
> to be politically active but don't know how.

Rasmus points out the need for "more political space," Like activists in Stockholm, both Lena

and Rasmus point to the importance of visibility and centrality for making the social movement

community more accessible for people as as means of becoming politically active. While it is not

difficult to find signs of protest in the city, access points to the social movement community are

more difficult to find.

7.3   KAFÉ 44: A RADICAL INSTITUTION

When I began my fieldwork in Sweden in 2009, nearly everyone I met directed me toward Kafé

44, an anarchist cafe, info shop, and concert venue in Södermalm. Named for its address

(Tjärhovsgatan 44), Kafé 44—just "44" to locals—is a radical institution. 44 has been a hub of

radical left-wing activity in Söder since 1976 when a group of artists and architects turned a

bottle cap factory into a collective working space. The collective, Kapsylen (the Swedish word

for bottle cap), is still alive and well in Söder after nearly 33 years.

To get to Kafé 44, I exited the metro at Medborgarplatsen, a major transportation hub in

Söder. Tjärhovsgatan is a narrow, quiet street that runs parallel to Folkungagatan, the major

thoroughfare in area. Mirroring the fashionable district of SoHo (South of Housten) in New

York, some people refer to this area as SoFo (South of Folkungagatan). Folkungagatan is lined

with high end furniture boutiques, chain stores ranging from Indiska (a Nordic clothing store chain) and Pizza Hut. Based on its trendy appearance, one would never guess that this area was once referred to by some locals as "kniv-Söder" (knife Söder) for its reputation as a place of criminal activity. One block south, the buildings lining Tjärhovsgatan are old and painted in pastel colors, giving the street a charming, old-fashioned feeling—a reminder of what the neighborhood movements of the 1970s succeeded in preserving. Compared to the bustle of Folkungagatan, this street was always quiet, with only the noises of distant traffic and leaves crunching underfoot.

Kafé 44 is on the ground floor of the Kapsylen factory (Figure 7-6). As I approached for the first time, I saw a black metal door standing open, revealing a bumper sticker that read, "Don't vote…it just encourages them" in English. Walking through the front door off the street, I entered INFO, a small radical bookshop in which the walls are lined with shelves of books on anarchism, anti-fascism, feminism, etc. A single person typically staffs the shop from a small card table in one corner of the room. From there, I went down a small flight of well-worn wooden stairs and enters the seating area of the café. I spent many winter days at the café, working, meeting friends, and conducting interviews. On an average day, music by Leonard Cohen or The Clash will play (sometimes loudly) from the speakers overhead. The tone is generally calm, with a few people hanging out, drinking coffee, or eating lunch.

The cafe definitely promotes autonomous politics, evident in the symbols that cover every surface in the place, but I never saw the discussion groups, fundraising parties, or activist meetings that were common in social centers. In addition to the books in the bookshop, one can buy anti-fascist calendars and pamphlets. Virtually every surface of the cafe (including the bathroom) is covered with flyers, stickers, or graffiti with political messages. An anarchist "A"

decorated a chalkboard on one wall. Next to the honey, sugar, and milk, I found flyers for

upcoming demonstrations, zines about environmental issues, and postcards advertising

alternative commercial venues in the city. A black poster on the wall by the kitchen reads

"Stateless . No leaders, no nations, no borders."

Figure 7-6: Entrance to Kafé 44

The places has been a popular hangout for leftists since the late '70s. It retains a sense of

enchantment among young activists and punk rock fans looking for a place to go. When I spoke

to Lena, an activist involved in Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) in Göteborg, about Kafé 44, she was

obviously enamoured with the radical mystique of the cafe:

> My friend lives close to Kafe 44, and I told her that I'd heard about this café and
> that a lot of radical activist people go there […] The first person I see sitting
> outside is Mattias Wåg. For all the Antifa people, he's like God. […] I was so
> shocked at seeing him as the first person in that café. I was sitting there next to

him and two guys came in and they looked like normal, 17-18 year old guys, but Mattias was like, "they shouldn't be here" and he just stood up and went up to them and said, "get out" because he thought were Nazis. [Kafé 44] is more 'their [anti-fascists'] place.' They can kick people out if they want to."

Seeing an anti-fascist hero throw suspected skinheads out of the cafe confirmed Lena's beliefs that Kafé 44 was a place for radical activists. She found this impressive, a sign that Kafé 44 was an exclusive club for people who shared her political views.

Most people I interviewed share Lena's views that Kafé 44 is a socially closed activist institution, but do not share her view that this is positive. Rasmus, from Göteborg, says, "I tried to go to Kafé 44 one time, and I was stopped at the door like, 'Hey! You can't go in there, it's a separatist party.' And I never tried to go there again. [laughs]" Similarly, Jakob from Stockholm told me that he experienced Kafé 44 as a "closed" place:

> The organization of the café is really closed. It's really hard to get involved there. The place is really bureaucratic. […] I've tried to get in there and do some things before, but you have to book the place way far in advance. You kinda have to know somebody who works there to get anything done there, which is a bummer.

According to Jakob, the café is "closed" in terms of organization (bureaucratic), time (booking in advance) and social boundaries (knowing someone). Similarly, Tobias in Göteborg says,

> I've heard lots of good stuff about Kafé 44, but it seems like they're a very established place. […] I don't really know much about how they run but it seems to be like an institution almost. What I've heard they do really good stuff and they have lots of good happenings there, and when I've been in Stockholm at different happenings, they're always at the center of what's going on, but it's very…established.

Tobias uses the words "established" and "institution" to describe the café. While he acknowledges that perhaps they are central to the activist and party scenes in Stockholm, they operate in a more formal fashion than Underjorden, the social center where he worked in Göteborg.

Erik, one of the builders from Cyklopen, told me that he found the closed nature of 44 frustrating and that it was something activists from Culture Campaign wanted to avoid when building Cyklopen:

> When we started Cyklopen, people were reacting to that, to the closed café. […] At 44 you have to jump through a bunch of hoops. You have to wait until they have their consensus meetings. You have to present your idea to the group and then they have to talk about it. They may only have those meetings once a month, so that's a long time. One month to present it and one for them to talk about it, blah blah blah whatever. It's very…it just takes all the energy out of it.

Erik contrasts the openness of Cyklopen with the closed nature of Kafé 44. At Cyklopen, all one had to do is show up at the center and ask for a key. At Kafé 44, there is a lengthy decision-making process that Erik sees as overly bureaucratic and unnecessary. This is probably a practical necessity for the volume of requests the café receives, as a popular place that has been operating for more 35 years. But for Erik and others I interviewed, the decision-making processes "take all the energy out" of whatever a person might want to accomplish.

Despite being a radical institution that everyone venerated for its longevity and political history, several activists viewed the decision-making processes at Kafé 44 as slow and prohibitive of action. By becoming "established" and "an institution," people saw it as an exclusive club for activists rather than a place where new possibilities for action could unfold. Nonetheless, it still served as a reference point as new spaces and places were formed. While contemporary activists rejected the slow, bureaucratic procedures for decision-making, they also emulated them in some respects. The "consensus meetings" (*stormöte*) that Erik mentions are the same kind of decision-making process that social centers use. It is also clear that, while activists may find the institutionalization of 44 annoyingly sluggish, they seek to establish similar places themselves.

7.4   STOCKHOLM AND GÖTEBORG: THE LIMITATIONS OF SQUATTING

One challenge for scene building in Stockholm and Göteborg is the use of squatting as the primary tactic for attempting to gain access to places. Between 2008 and 2009 there were 65 squatting actions throughout Sweden, from Malmö to Umeå, lasting anywhere from 1 to 62 days. A map from the anarchist magazine *Brand* indicates that squatting was more prevalent in Göteborg and Stockholm than Malmö during this period (Figure 7-7). My observations from 2009 to 2011 support this as well, as I visited and read about more squatting actions during my time in the two larger cities.

Figure 7-7: "Two years of squatting in Sweden." Map of squatting actions, 2008-2009

For some people involved in squatting actions, the temporary quality of squats is not a problem because they see it as a symbolic protest tactic geared toward drawing attention to issues of space and place. In a brief essay, Stockholm based activist Mattias Wåg (2010:27) writes, "squats have become short-term, the police raid them within just a few days. But the squatting movement has learned a lesson—you fight for self-managed places, not a specific

building." This passage emphasizes the difference between places and buildings, implying that place is a more abstract quality. It also highlights that squatting is not about conservation of buildings, but about a quality of place (self-management). Just as the squatters at Mullvaden said in 1977, their battle with the city was not about the buildings they fought to save, but about the way of life those buildings represented (see Chapter 4). Similarly, squatters today are not squatting to save buildings, but to create a space—temporary or not—for a way of life that is informed by their political beliefs.

Wåg (2010:27) goes on to write that "it was something more than just squatting for the sake of squatting—it became a way for local society to work together and create resistance." With this statement, Wåg points out that the squatting movement is more than a symbolic movement aimed at preserving a way of life; it was also a means for people to come together and "create resistance" locally. The temporary quality of the squats is not important because the action or process of squatting brings people together. The process of protest is equally as important—or perhaps more important—than the outcome of the protests. This possibilities of squatting as a protest tactic became even greater when people considered these actions as a means of diffusing movement ideas. Wåg (2010:27) continues his essay by writing, "what happens if this method [squatting] spreads again? If squatting suddenly becomes a reasonable action to take when an area is threated by privatization and gentrification or sale of public space. Imagine if everyone began squatting?" Jenny, a squatter in Stockholm, said something similar when she told me about her experience squatting at Aspuddsbadet, a bathhouse in the southern suburb of Aspudden: "Of those who were there from the beginning I'm probably the only one who had squatted before. I think it was a big step for quite a few to go in and occupy a building that was not their own. Now it feels as if that step is much smaller." These musings imagine a

future in which squatting becomes a common practice. Jenny points to the beginnings of this at the squat in Aspudden, where most people had not participated in such an action before. She says now that they've done it once, they might not hesitate to do it again, to make it a commonplace way for making demands.

As I discussed in Chapter 4, my data suggest that activists squat buildings to draw attention to a lack of available space in cities (political squatting) *and* demand space for social and cultural activities (entrepreneurial). While the people I interviewed saw the points that Wåg makes about the symbolic importance of squatting and its potential for creating connections among activists, none of them viewed squatting as an effective strategy for gaining access to places that social movements could use to develop a cultural scene. Their reasoning was that squatting actions are too short lived and have little *reach* in terms of establishing a place for themselves in cities.

Rikard, a squatter in Stockholm, said that "you can't really squat to live or to get a place [*lokal*] in Sweden. They just don't last long enough." Similarly, Rasmus in Göteborg, says, "There've been lots of things—occupying, trying to occupy houses , but they only last for like two weeks or something [laughs] so it's not really a basis for building up something." Lena had been part of a squatting action in Kviberg, the northeastern part of Göteborg, in March 2010. When I asked how she would describe what went on there, she replied,

> There was a room where people were drawing graffiti and playing football and there was another room that was a café, people were reading books. In another room, we showed political films and we had a lot of info tables where Revolutionary Front put their flyers and No One is Illegal had their flyers there too.

These observations show that the activities of the squat in Kviberg—and most others—mirror the kinds of activities that happen in social center: cafés, libraries, games, circulation of movement

ideas. This is similar to a squat that I visited in Liljeholmen, in the southern suburbs of Stockholm. The building had been evacuated by the time I arrived, but signs that the building had been squatted still remained. As I approached, I could see a large banner bearing the international squatters' symbol draped on the side of the building. The front door had the familiar refrain "Sweden ends here" spray-painted across the door in red (Figure 7-8). On the same door hung a sign that read:

> In this building an occupation is taking place. We are tired of not having anywhere to be and since politicians have consistently refused to help us, we have taken things into our own hands. In the building activities are happening every day, including: workshops, concerts, "people's kitchen," film showings, tattoo studio, art workshops. Please drop by and see how things are going and participate. Everyone is welcome.

In their welcoming statement to visitors, the squatters in Liljeholmen write that they are "tired of not having anywhere to be." Having a place to be is important enough for them to break the law and take over a building, even if it only lasted for five weeks. In other words, having a temporary place to be was better than nothing. The sign on the front of the squat in Liljeholmen is reminiscent of the "Do and Don't" list inside the entrance of Utkanten, the social center in Malmö. Squats are temporary social centers in cities where social movements are not part of the fabric of urban neighborhoods. Squatting a building provides a temporary solution to an ongoing problem.

Rasmus mentions that squats are ineffective for "building up something." The sign on the door refers to "taking things into our own hands." When I asked Jenny, a squatter from the house in Liljeholmen about the kinds of rules I had observed at squats and social centers around the country, she said "of course we want these spaces to be DIY, but there has to be some kind of rules so that we can actually get some things done rather than just have a big house where people can play." In reference to the squatting action at Kviberg in Göteborg, Lena described "a room

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where people discussed why they're here and what they think, and how can we develop this action more, how can we actually change something? Instead of just occupying this house, how can we take this further?" These comments speak to the lack of *reach* that squatting actions have for the future. In the present, they allow people to "take things into their own hands," "get things done," and "discuss how to take action further." Taken together, these comments demonstrate that the present is a first step, but activists are thinking about the future. They want to feel as if they have social influence, that what they're doing matters. When a squatting action takes months to plan and then is raided in a few weeks, it deflates their sense of efficacy for shaping their environments, lives, and futures.

Figure 7-8: Squat at Liljeholmen, south of Stockholm. "Sweden Ends Here" (left), Welcome sign, enlarged (right). It reads "In this building an occupation is taking place. We are tired of not having anywhere to be and since politicians have consistently refused to help us, we have taken things into our own hands. In the building activities are happening every day, including: workshops, concerts, "people's kitchen," film showings, tattoo studio, art workshops. Please drop by and see how things are going and participate. Everyone is welcome. Photos by Björn Holm.

7.5   OUTCOMES

In Malmö, the temporary character of Right to the City actions prompted activists to look for ways in which they could make their mark on the landscape in an effort to make their scene and movement more durable, showing an orientation toward the future. The differing configurations of the scenes in Stockholm and Göteborg had consequences for both the internal dynamics of the scenes and their potential to affect change in their cities. In terms of internal dynamics, the fragility of the autonomous scene in Stockholm reinforced fleeting relationships and loose networks. If autonomous movements had more visible, central, accessible places that were in close proximity, the relationships, excitement, and affective bonds that were generated during squatting and other direct actions could be sustained, creating momentum for the future. In Göteborg, the concentration of the scene produced exclusivity and inaccessibility, making it difficult for the movement to grow or develop. A wider variety of places that were visible, central, and proximate would, perhaps, increase opportunities for a wider variety of people to become involved in autonomous politics.

These fragile and concentrated scene configurations have different outcomes for social movements and urban neighborhoods than strong scenes. In both Stockholm and Göteborg, the spatial dimensions of the scene had effects on how autonomous activists thought about the future. When people are spread out geographically and identify in a number of different ways, they need a central location where they come together, forge relationships, and hopefully plan actions together. Temporary spaces (anarchist bookfair, squats) bring people together, but do not last beyond a few days or weeks. Most activists I interviewed in Stockholm and Göteborg are focused on the present and immediate future because the challenges they face in the here and now are most pressing. In Stockholm, the fragility of the scene made finding ways to come

together an immediate concern. In Göteborg, the concentration of the scene made finding ways to bring new people into the fold a priority. These immediate concerns took precedent over long-term impact. Again and again, their narratives about the future highlight the importance of place for meeting others, grounding actions, and imagining themselves as having influence on their cities.

7.5.1   Stockholm: Fleeting Relationships and *Gemenskap*

Social movement scholars acknowledge the importance of collective emotions and affective bonds for reinforcing solidarity among activist groups. In Stockholm, activists talked about the fleeting character of these collective emotions as a negative effect of the fragility of the social movement scene. Activists routinely linked the fleeting character of these emotions to place. While temporary spaces bring people together and create a sense of excitement in the moment, when those spaces disappear, so do the collective emotions. This points to the importance not only of places that have reach into the future, but also raises questions about how to maintain the affective bonds and sense of excitement that events and temporary spaces generate.

The concept of *gemenskap*[28] emerged in my interviews as "the emotional energy…of people who see themselves as in some way connected" (Gould 2001:147). This shares many characteristics with Durkheim's (1995 [1912]) concept of "collective effervescence," excitement and emotion that creates a sense of unity among people in social gatherings. Durkheim (1995 [1912]:218) writes, "The very act of congregating is an exceptionally powerful stimulant. Once the individuals are gathered together, a sort of electricity is generated from their closeness and

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[28] This is the Swedish version of the German word *Gemeinschaft* (Tönnies 2001 [1887]).

quickly launches them to an extraordinary height of exaltation." Although Durkheim was writing about religious gatherings, any ritual gathering in which there is a shared focus can generate these feelings of connectedness. During a squatting action or street festival, activists feel the "electricity" that courses through such events. But once they end, so too does the excitement and feeling of being part of something larger than themselves.

Most activists describe *gemenskap* as a shared emotional bond or "a way of feeling close to other people." Elin, an activist in Stockholm, describes *gemenskap* as "a connection, you feel that you're part of a community. It's like a chain, like you feel like one of the links in the chain all connected together. That's a very visual idea of gemenskap." Elin's image of *gemenskap* is one of emotional bonds between people who are individuals, linked together to form a collective. Similarly, Lena describes it as a familial kind of bond: "When you feel *gemenskap*, you feel familiarity, a kind of extended family feeling."

Other narratives point to *gemenskap* as something required to collectively move toward the future. The anarchist publication *Brand* explains that "*gemenskap* emerges when people find one another, when they work together, and collectively decide on a *common path forward*. […] It is the joy in a meeting that *survives its expected end*" (Anonymous 2010a:14, emphasis added). This points to the importance of *gemenskap* not only a sense of collective emotional bonds, but also as a collective journey—"a common path forward" in an attempt to keep the collective energy moving toward the future. An interview with Sanna (Anonymous 2010b:33), a squatter in Stockholm, reveals how many activists I interviewed link *gemenskap* with place:

> **Interviewer**: The *gemenskap* that emerged during the [squatting action] must have been almost as important as the place. Will that *gemenskap* survive?
>
> **Sanna**: I don't think so. *Gemenskap* does not survive without meeting places. It feels so fucking bad. There needs to be something [in this area].

The interviewer comments that a recent squatting created a sense of *gemenskap*, which may be "almost important as the place" itself. Sanna disagrees, saying that these shared bonds cannot "survive" without places where they can grow and develop.

One attempt to generate lasting connections among Stockholm activists was the first annual Anarchist Book Fair in June 2010. Activists originally planned the book fair as part of a celebration for the 100th anniversary of the Central Organization of the Workers of Sweden (*Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation* or SAC), a syndicalist union with anarchist ties. The SAC owns a building in Stockholm where they publish their magazine *Direkt Aktion*, so organizers thought this seemed like a good place and occasion for book fair. The building needed renovations, so the location fell through, but organizers continued with the idea of the book fair anyway, settling on a location in the southern suburbs called Midsommargården (a social and community center).

As I emerged from the subway station and neared Midsommargården, I began to hear music and in the distance I saw a food tent and a large black banner that read "Anarchist Book Fair" in white lettering. As I approached the building, large groups of people milled around outside, eating and chatting in the sun. There were several families present and their young children ran around in front of the building, laughing and playing. Just inside the entrance, there was an information table with flyers for an anarchist book fair in London, things to do in Stockholm, city maps, and Stockholm's Free Paper (*Fria Tidning*). Upstairs the hallways were lined with tables that were stacked with books, newspapers, glossy magazines, and handmade zines. Writers, editors, publishers, and activists invited passersby to stop and take a look at their publications. In the meeting rooms, there were panels and discussion groups on various topics. I bumped into Mads, one of the Fair's organizers, who I had interviewed several months before. I

commented that despite our conversation about the lack of a scene in the city, they had an excellent turnout at the Fair. "I know!" he exclaimed, "There are so many people here! Of course they're from all over Sweden and the Baltic region, but…maybe this will help get things going around town."

During our conversation some months before, Mads had been critical of the lack of communication between activist groups in Stockholm. He said that "one motivation [for organizing the book fair] was the lack of communication here [in Stockholm] among activist groups." The major goal of the book fair, he said, was to facilitate connections between activist groups who might be geographically separated and/or unknown to one another. At the book fair, I saw many familiar faces: Mathias Wåg, editor of the anarchist magazine *Brand*, staff members from both the INFO bookshop and the café at Kafé 44, activists from Alarm Stockholm, people from Cyklopen, and even a couple of regulars from Glassfabriken in Malmö. If one of the goals of the book fair was to get people from a variety of groups to show up in one place, it was a success.

However, there was not any evidence that the Fair helped "get things going around town," as Mads had hoped. It is possible that it fostered *relationships* that could lead to collaborative action in the future, but that was not visible to me. I attended a panel called "What is anarchism? Why is it relevant today?" The panelists of them talked about anarchism as a set of practices rooted in everyday life, highlighting concrete everyday actions, including creating temporary and permanent spaces and places for people to come together. The variety of opinions in the room about what constituted an anarchist space (open vs. closed, cultural centers vs. service-oriented places, activist-only or public) reinforced what I had observed in the activist community in Stockholm more generally: it was comprised of a variety of voices, opinions, and

backgrounds that did not come together to form anything concrete. While I saw many familiar faces at the Anarchist Book Fair, I did not see any evidence that these people/groups connected or collaborated with one another on anything after that day. The Fair brought people together in one place and had the potential to foster collaboration among disparate activist networks in Stockholm and Sweden, but there was not any evidence that this actually happened. The *gemenskap* generated by the event was as temporary as the event itself.

7.5.2   Göteborg: Exclusion and Lack of Variety

The concentration of the scene in Göteborg had different outcomes than its counterpart in Stockholm. First, in stark contrast to Stockholm, activist networks in Göteborg were tight-knit, producing an exclusive activist scene that was difficult for outsiders to access. Second, while the Stockholm scene coalesced primarily around a series of temporary spaces and events, the scene in Göteborg revolved around one place: Kulturhuset Underjorden, the social center I discussed in Chapter 5. The social center was difficult to access both socially (due to tight-knit friend groups) and geographically (due to being off-the-beaten path in a peripheral part of town). Taken together, these elements of concentration served to create an insular, activist clique without much impact on the community or city.

In Göteborg, people wanted the social center Underjorden to serve as a central "hub" for bringing people together, which it did—but only to a certain extent and for certain people. Tomas, an activist who worked at the social center, says,

> That's been a big mission for Underjorden also, to get all these people to meet each other. I mean because maybe they're just working in their separate groups, they might feel that they have a lot of differences, but when they meet face-to-face they're actually quite similar and have the same ideas and can get along,

even if they choose different ways to do political activism.

Like activists in Stockholm, Tomas points out that places serve an important role in reinforcing relationships among activists. Unlike Stockholm, which lacked durable meeting places after the arson of Cyklopen, Underjorden served to bring groups together. Tomas points out that people "work in their separate groups," which may lead to feelings of isolation. Bringing them together, he notes, helps to dispel the idea that just because groups work on different issues or use different tactics, instead hoping that they find common ground—literally, in the form of Underjorden.

Nearly everyone I interviewed in Göteborg talked about it being a difficult place to access because of the social boundaries between insiders and outsiders. It was clear upon entering Underjorden, whether during quiet daytime hours or large, raucous post-demonstration parties at night, that not everyone was welcome. One of the founding activist networks was Spatt, an anarcho-punk collective, so the place had a clear punk rock aesthetic. Anyone whose appearance did not fit in was met with suspicion, derision, and/or simply ignored. In my case, it was the latter. Despite visiting several times and having contacts who worked there, the line that defined me as an outsider never blurred or softened. Although I never mentioned feeling like an outsider at Underjorden, a few interviewees commented on it themselves. Tomas described the exclusionary nature of Underjorden to me with some hesitation:

> I've heard a lot of people who said that they *want* to be involved [at Underjorden], but they don't really know *how*. They want to know about the activist networks, how to get involved with them, and when they come there it's like…we who have been there, it's hard for us to see this maybe, but we know each other very well and if new people come who don't look like they really fit in, then people aren't very…I mean, it's quite hard to…you have to work really hard to get into the place, to get into the community. Some people make it, but they work quite hard for it. The people who aren't maybe that social or don't have a lot of self-confidence might have a hard time getting into it.

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Tomas is halting in his explanation of the difficulties that people face when trying to gain access to Underjorden. He identifies the strong ties of people working and having an appearance that "doesn't fit in" as potential barriers for gaining the acceptance of others. He pauses several times and is almost apologetic when he says that the people working at Underjorden are perhaps unable to see how difficult it is for others to feel welcome. In an effort to welcome more people and bolster activist connections, the organizers at Underjorden tried to open up a daily café for people to come hang out, drink coffee, and get to know people. Hanna explains that "because people feel that others at [Underjorden] have a hard attitude toward new people, the café has been a good way to get new people into the place." My observations supported this, as I frequently visited the café for a "people's kitchen" dinner on Sunday and they were well attended by people who were marginally or not active in social movements. Organizers saw this as a success because it helped to draw people into a social movement environment in an "easy" way that did not require much effort.

However, the café only lasted temporarily, limiting its potential for a number of reasons. Rasmus, another person involved at Underjorden, explained that they had to close the café for two months over the summer for renovations, which had a negative impact. He continues, "This spring [the café] started to be bigger and bigger and more people started to come, but *then* it was closed for two months and now, it's back to the thing that it was before, where no one knows about it or no one thinks it exists." The lack of continuity once again limits the potential for community-building because there is little to no follow through. Second, Rasmus points out that "no one knows about it," pointing to the importance of visibility and centrality. If the place were in a more central, visible location, more people would know about it.

The example of Underjorden speaks to the fragility of a scene as a *network of places and people.* When a scene coalesces around one place, if that place closes, the scene falls apart. In Malmö, by contrast, the social center Utkanten has existed in multiple locations but was able to persist because it was supported by other people and places that are part of the scene. Part of the problem at Underjorden was limited staffing. Tomas says, "It would be good for the environment in the city if it was a place to go in the summer also. But mainly because it's too few people working and keeping the whole thing running, it doesn't work." This speaks to the small, tight-knit group of people who form the core of the Göteborg scene. When one person takes time off or the place has to close, the scene fragments or falls apart. Like the Anarchist Book Fair, the café at Underjorden was intended to be a place for creating connections among disparate, disconnected individuals and groups in the city in order to inspire collaboration for the future. A tight configuration around a peripheral, underground location and a small group of people contributed to the concentration of the scene in Göteborg.

7.6   CONCLUSION

Creating more resilient autonomous places is important because they give movements further "reach" (Mische 2009:699) or extension into the future. For Malmö activists, the impetus to create movement places came from a frustration and anxiety about engaging in actions that only had a short-term impact. Their orientation toward the future was shaped by the structural changes happening in the neighborhood, already having established places in the neighborhood of Möllevången, and a tight-knit community that help foster more long-term planning.

The spatial configurations of scenes in Stockholm and Göteborg were partially shaped by the structural conditions of their respective cities. Neighborhoods with social movement histories gentrified decades ago, leaving social movements without a place—metaphorically and materially—in the larger cities. The dimensions of proximity, centrality, visibility, and accessibility are lacking in the Stockholm and Göteborg scenes. These elements are important because they foster collaboration and connections among activists and wider audiences and enable social movements to become embedded as part of a neighborhood or area.

Autonomous activists in Stockholm and Göteborg also relied primarily on squatting and singular events to gain access to city space. Squatting is not a viable method for accessing places and one-off events only last for a day or week. Although one of the goals of these kinds of actions is to foster relationships and create solidarities that may last into the future, there is little evidence that this is actually the case. Instead, the fragility of the scene in Stockholm reinforces loose-knit networks and a lack of *gemenskap* or collective emotional bonds among activists. The concentration of the scene in Göteborg produces exclusivity and a lack of variety in the scene, limiting the movement's potential for making their mark on the urban landscape.

8.0   CONCLUSIONS:

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, URBAN SPACE, AND SOCIOLOGY OF THE FUTURE

Studying social movement scenes reveals how the spatial configurations of social movements play crucial roles in shaping action, relational dynamics, and how activists see possibilities for social change. Operating according to a prefigurative logic, autonomous movements reject traditional ways of "doing politics" and try to create alternative ways of life in their neighborhoods and cities. In Sweden, activists see this as a rejection of "Swedishness," as signified by the slogan "Sweden Ends Here" that I saw spray-painted on the doors of squats throughout the country. At the same time, activists draw on the traditions of the Old Left because they see early labor movements as a unique and important part of Swedish history. Place-making—"the material, practical, and symbolic construction of place" (Paulsen 2004:244)—is an important part of their efforts because it gives movements a sense of continuity and resilience. By staking territorial claims on urban space, activists see themselves as creating the basis for a movement that has lasting effects on the future of everyday life.

Place is more than a stage where action unfolds; it is "a structure that guides actions (Giddens, 1984), making some [actions] more or less likely than others" (Paulsen 2004:259; also Pred 1984). For autonomous movements, place-making is not only a means to an end, but an important process in its own right. The social center Cyklopen is an excellent example of how the process of making places is an important goal in itself. The building process was meaningful

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to people because they learned new skills, built relationships, and exchanged information. The goal of Cyklopen was not only to build a free space where "real" activism could take place. Activist-builders saw the building process as equally important because they were "building the future" by carving out space for themselves in the urban landscape—culturally, politically, and geographically.

Scene places are also important for relationship building among activists. Activists in Malmö described increased collaboration and connection among people as they built new social movement places, crossing the divide between "political" and "cultural" approaches to activism. In Göteborg, autonomous activists attribute the close working relationships they developed at Underjorden as an important reason for seeking out more places in the city that could bring people together. Similarly, activists in Stockholm felt that more social movement places would benefit activist networks by serving as points of connection for the loosely-knit community in the city.

The unique spatial configurations of social movement scenes have effects for how, when, and where solidarities are produced. The solidarities among activists in Möllevången/Malmö were not a product of simply living in the same city or neighborhood. The proximity, centrality, visibility, and accessibility of the scene ensured consistent, frequent contact among people, promoting greater collaboration and cooperation on projects. Their embeddedness in the neighborhood also enabled activists to diffuse the norms and practices of the movement into the neighborhood more broadly. In Göteborg and Stockholm, where scenes are more diffuse and peripheral, they did not have as much influence.

8.1   SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

What do scenes do for social movements? This study suggests that scenes are important for social movement momentum and vitality. The concept of a scene connotes malleability, flux, and flow (Stahl 2004). This fluidity is part of what appeals to activists as they create their own spaces and places. The flexibility of scenes gives activists a sense of hope that they can create alternatives for living, working, and relating to others. At the same time, the contingency of these spaces creates a desire for a sense of durability and continuity, a sense that what they are doing matters. While strong scenes and movement places lend autonomous movements a sense of resilience, this does not make them permanent. These places "*seem* durable to the people who recognize and experience them, but they are nonetheless constantly being recreated and subtly changed" (Pierce, Martin and Murphy 2010:58). In this way, scenes lend social movements a sense of multiple possibilities for the future, but also ground their work in ways that makes what they do seem meaningful and durable.

Social movement scholarship primarily focuses on the functions of scenes for social movements without considering how the spatial configurations of these structures affect urban landscapes. My research highlights the importance of widening the lens around activism, zooming out to examine how movements are socially, culturally, and geographically situated in their local environments. Based on a case study of the autonomous scene in Hamburg, Germany, Leach and Haunns (2009:272) suggest that "due to the greater density of social ties, geographically concentrated scenes […] are likely to generate more insular norms of interaction and discourse, limiting their scope of influence." My data on Malmö show the opposite effect; dense social networks and geographic concentration enabled activists to *expand* their influence in the neighborhood. It was not only geographic concentration that made this possible, but also a

combination of other factors, such as changes in the neighborhood that made their message welcome to the public and tactical innovations that enabled broad participation. This underscores the importance of looking at social movements and scenes as part of broader contexts and how changes in the local environment shape and are shaped by activism.

Social movement scenes—social centers in particular—serve as laboratories where autonomous activists practice prefigurative politics. These places can be the foundation for diffusing the ideas fomented in those spaces into neighborhoods and cities more broadly as they were in Malmö. Alternatively, these places can become insular activist cliques—as they did in Göteborg. In that case, autonomous movement scenes might have little effect on society today, but still serve as important repositories of social movement norms, cultures, and histories that could become influential in the future (Whittier 1995).

Using the concept of a scene to study a broad variety of groups, networks, individuals, and spaces shares commonalities with the concept of a social movement community (SMC) (Staggenborg 1998; 2013), but differs in important ways. Like SMCs, scenes are conceptually useful for "look[ing] for movements in a wide variety of places" (Staggenborg 2013:141). The conceptual distinction between SMCs and scenes is an emphasis on territoriality and spatial dynamics. SMCs are "not necessarily territorial, but [involve] human relations, which may be maintained through social networks rather than physical locale" (Staggenborg 1998:182). For Swedish autonomous movements, place is deeply important for structuring social interactions, relationships, and social movement action. Part of how they understand their collective identity is as inhabitants of a neighborhood or city, so territorial claims are vitally important to their movements. The concept of a social movement scene, which includes a network of places as a

fundamental element, allows scholars to attend to the effects of the spatial arrangements of social movements.

Scenes also share some features of "abeyance structures" (Taylor 1989), but not always. Abeyance refers to "a holding process by which movements sustain themselves in nonreceptive political environments and provide continuity from one stage of mobilization to another" (Taylor 1989:761). This idea applies in the case of Stockholm, where activists talked about needing places to sustain the collective energy generated in temporary spaces and at events. But in the case of Malmö, the idea of an abeyance structure doesn't fit. The idea of a "holding process" between mobilizations assumes that public challenges to authority (e.g. demonstrations, legislative challenges) are what constitute activism. Autonomous movements operate under the assumption that creating new ways of everyday life constitutes activism. This was especially the case in Malmö, where the scene helped movements make activism a part of everyday life. In this way, scenes facilitated *ongoing* activism, not only a structure that facilitated mass mobilizations or provided a means of being involved in a movement between periods of protest activity.

Scenes "serve as a kind of living archive that helps movement identity and cultural practices" (Leach and Haunss 2009:274). In movements with no central or hierarchical organization, scenes become important sites for how information, tactical innovations, movement histories, and symbols are shared (Staggenborg 1998; 2013) and transferred from one generation of activists to another (Leach and Haunss 2009; Whittier 1995). This is evident in the ways in which Swedish activists draw on the histories of leftist movements, from the 19th century labor movement to the neighborhood movements of the 1970s.

This study supports the idea of scenes as "retreat structures" (Leach and Haunss 2009) where activists or people interested in activism can maintain contact with social movements with

little to no commitment. Leach and Haunss (2009) write about this in terms of people who get burned out after a long period of activism. Scenes offer people a way to stay involved following a period of intense commitment to protest without necessarily requiring a lot of time or effort. As I described in Chapter 4, some activists view scenes as "a little break from the capitalist world," so I suggest that we can also think of scenes as "retreat structures" in relation to other social structures, such as capitalism or electoral politics. For some people, simply participating in everyday life within scenes is a "retreat" from the social structures of which they are critical. These have important consequences for longevity because scenes provide easy ways for current activists to maintain participation over long periods of time and opens up easy paths to activism for people new to movements.

8.2   URBAN SPACE AND PLACE

*How are social movements shaped by urban environment*s? Comparisons of social movement scenes in three cities highlight how structural changes in cities influence the development of social movements and scenes over time. Autonomous networks are forced to leave inner-city neighborhoods as these areas gentrify and become increasingly expensive. Sometimes this takes the form of direct expulsion, such as when the social center Utkanten's landlord did not renew their lease or when police raid squatted buildings. At other times these moves are more indirect, such as when rents become too high for activist networks to sustain, as was the case with the social center Underjorden in Göteborg. In Möllevången/Malmö, infrastructrual, demographic, and cultural changes affecting the neighborhood provided the impetus for Right to the City

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movements. Their actions were motivated by fears about social movements losing their place in the neighborhood and thus created more scene places in an attempt to solidify their place in Möllevången. In Stockholm and Göteborg, social movements were priced out of analogous neighborhoods decades ago, making their movements—and scenes—more scattered and disconnected as they seek to find their place.

How do social movements affect change in the urban landscape? Many Right to the City campaigns (in Sweden and elsewhere) coalesce around issues related to gentrification processes: changes in housing tenure, the influx of upscale commercial businesses, displacement working-class residents, increasing commercialization of city centers. However, literature on gentrification rarely focuses attention on groups that oppose these changes, instead focusing on displacement of individuals as victims of gentrification (Betancur 2011; Newman and Wyly 2006; Pérez 2004) or on middle-class gentrifiers (Saracino-Brown 2009).

My research shows that social movements are important collective actors in the gentrification process and that activists often occupy dual positions as both gentrifers and displaced residents. On one hand, autonomous movements bring cultural vitality to neighborhoods in the form of public art, music shows, protests, and other cultural activities. This contributes to creating a "buzz" in a neighborhood that makes it attractive to others. Activists in Malmö recognized themselves as part of the gentrification process because the Möllevång Festival contributed to the image of their neighborhood as a desirable place to be. On the other hand, the more desirable the neighborhood becomes, the less affordable it becomes for living or doing activism.

Attention to the spatial dynamics of social movement scenes also shows how social movements carve out space in the urban landscape, whether temporarily or permanently (or

somewhere in between). Movement action is shaped by the local environment, but social movements also shape the landscapes of which they are a part. In Malmö, organizers of the Möllevång Festival changed the landscape by turning the streets into an extension of people's living rooms. In doing so, they made the social interactions of neighbors central instead of traffic. Extending the living rooms of residents into the streets can have reverberating effects in shaping the character of public life in the neighborhood. In this way, they shaped not only the physical landscape, but the social landscape of the neighborhood as well.

8.3   SOCIOLOGY OF THE FUTURE

How do the spatial aspects of social movements shape activists' visions for the future? The scene in Malmö highlights the interplay between structure and agency as a means of creating possibilities for the future. As infrastructural, demographic, and cultural changes unfolded in Möllevången/Malmö (structure), social movements were constrained by rules and regulations, evictions, and lack of resources, but enabled by a changing social context that helped them appeal to broad audience. As they engaged in projects aimed at the Right to the City, activists diffused the ideas, norms, and practices to the neighborhood more broadly (action). In turn, this helped them create more places in the neighborhood to serve as a structural basis for future actions.

This understanding of agency is intimately linked with the temporal orientations of activist groups (Blee 2012) and places. The linkage of the past, present, and future is a thread that runs through activist narratives about place-making and movement vitality. In these narratives, they "reconstruct their view of the past in an attempt to understand the causal

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conditioning of the emergent present, while using this understanding to control and shape their responses in the arising future" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998:966; also Blee 2012). In Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö, activists drew upon the past as they created scene places, citing the culture of the labor movement and "People's Houses" as sources of inspiration for their own efforts. Part of what they found appealing about that cultural history was its emphasis on self-management and freedom from the state. Activists talked about welfare retrenchment, for example, as a reason to "stir things up collectively" in the present and create a more secure future for themselves without relying on the state. A problem cited by activists in all three cities was that occupying temporary spaces, such the Anarchist Bookfair or Möllevång Festival, had temporary effects. Part of the appeal of a brick-and-mortar manifestation of their goals was that it lends their movements, goals, and visions a greater sense of resilience.

Whether or not imagined futures actually come true, they do shape action (Blee 2012; Mische 2009). My research suggests that spatial dynamics are crucial in these processes. Place-making shapes how activists think about the future, which then impacts their actions. The resulting "cascading sequences of actions" have important consequences because they form the paths that activist groups take in their efforts to create social change (Blee 2012:35). The paths that activists take may "stifle the range of possibilities they consider," (Blee 2012:136) as is the case in Stockholm and Göteborg, where activists rely primarily on squatting as a means of accessing places, despite its ineffectiveness. On the other hand, activists sometimes shake up their usual routines, like the activists at Cyklopen who broke the mold for autonomous movements all over Sweden.

With the emphasis on space and place, my study highlights three dimensions of futurity—reach, contingency, and volition. Activists viewed place-making as an important way

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of creating *reach* or the extension of movement goals and priorities into the future. An emphasis on reach was not only about creating longevity for a particular place, but also for what those places represented: visions, goals, and dreams for how society could be in the future.

Contingency refers to "the degree to which future trajectories are imagined as fixed and predetermined versus flexible, uncertain and dependent on local circumstances" (Mische 2009:700). Activists in Malmö talked about the march of gentrification as an inevitable process of change, but demanded to be part of the decision-making processes regarding how city space was used and by whom. Their view of the future as inevitable shaped how they responded to these changes. They did not claim to want to *stop* the processes in the neighborhood, but they did seek to intervene and become part of the conversation. Activists at Cyklopen, on the other hand, saw the future as much more contingent, given the unpredictable circumstances they encountered when their first social center became the target of arson. A series of "cascading events and actions" (Blee 2012:33), such as the arson, support from unlikely sources, an increase in resources and expertise, allowed activists at Cyklopen to see the future as open to all kinds of possibilities for change.

The dimension of contingency is linked to *volition*, the "motion or influence that the actor holds in regard to the impending future" (Mische 2009:701). If a group sees the future as inevitable or predetermined, they may likely feel as if they have less influence over that future. This may explain why activists in Malmö sought to become an embedded part of the community via establishing places in the neighborhood. Since they saw the future as marching toward them, they sought paths for establishing themselves as part of the neighborhood via securing more places in that neighborhood. Activists at Cyklopen, on the other hand, saw the future as more malleable and uncertain. Given the great odds that they overcame in realizing a place that

represented their visions for the future, they felt a greater sense of volition. As unlikely events unfolded in the creation of Cyklopen 2.0, activists felt a greater sense of possibilities for social change that were grounded in the place that they created collectively.

8.4   FUTURE RESEARCH

This study leaves open several avenues for future research on scenes, space and place, and the future. Because scenes are contingent, fluid, and always changing, one path for future research is how scenes change over time. Scholars have begun to theorize the growth, disruption, and decline of scenes and free spaces (Anderson 2009; Culton and Holtzman 2010), but little is known about the lifecycle of scenes. Where do scenes originate? Under what conditions do fragile scenes become strong or vice versa? What happens when scenes decline? Can scenes die or do they morph into something else? What effect does the lifecycle of a scene have for a movement or neighborhood?

Second, scene scholars might engage with questions of scale. Are scenes strictly local phenomena or is there such a thing as a national scene or even a transnational scene? For example, does the network of squats in Europe constitute a sort of continental scene?

Third, I suggest more focus on the relationship between futurity and action. How people imagine the future has an effect on what they do, which, in turn, impacts the series of events that unfold from those actions. More research that investigates these processes would allow sociologists to see a host of internal group dynamics (how groups form, change their course of action, fizzle out) that might otherwise be invisible (Blee 2012). Futurity studies that attend to

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questions of place, as well, can illuminate how communities can both shape and be shaped by these actions.

A final set of future research questions emerges when considering the importance of space and place for social movements. The Right to the City is a slogan used by social movements throughout the world, yet little empirical research has examined how movements use this slogan and to what ends. The Right to the City refers to "changing the city more after our heart's desire," (Harvey 2003:941), a vision of the future. Studying how, when and where social movements use this slogan can show us how people envision the future and how and to what extent their visions are constrained or enabled by their local environments. Scholarship on the Right to the City is dominated by political economy theory (Harvey 2003; Purcell 2002; 2008) and would benefit from more cultural analysis. When people make a claims about their city or neighborhood, they are not only making claims on improved material conditions, but also on the kind of everyday life they want to preserve or enable. Moreover, recent research suggests that the "virtualization" of social movements has important consequences for their spatial and temporal dimensions (van Stekelenburg and Roggeband 2013). How might the importance of place be affected by the "virtualization" of movements? What kinds of interactions exist between virtual and real world movement spaces (Gerbaudo 2012; Simi and Futrell 2010)?

In 2011, movements throughout the world took to the streets, parks, and plazas of their cities—aided, in part, by virtual communities (Gerbaudo 2012). Occupy protests, the Indignados of Spain, and the Arab Spring uprisings demonstrate that space, place, and territoriality matter for social movements. These movements drew much attention to the politics of public space (Castañeda 2012; Dahliwal 2012; Rabbat 2011; Sassen 2011; Shiffman et al. 2012), highlighting the ways in which the intricacies of place shape and are shaped by social movement action.

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Movements such as these bring space and place to the center of analysis, raising new questions and debates about the relationship between place and democracy.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

*Off tape***:**
Date/ Time Interview Began:
Location of Interview:
Demographic information (age, gender, race):
Where is this person from? How long have they been in (city)?

On tape:

Warm up:
- Can you tell me a little bit about [the projects/places/movements] you're working?
- How did you get involved in [social movement/place/project]?
- What do you like about it? What are the biggest challenges?

Questions about the city:
- How would you describe (city)?
- What are the biggest changes you've seen in the city since you've lived here?
    o What changes do you think have been the most important?
    o [How] have you seen social movements responding to those changes?
- How would you describe the activist scene in (city)? [people, places, overall feeling]
- In what parts of the city is there the most social movement activity?
    o How would you describe those neighborhoods/areas?

Questions about scene places:

- What are the most popular places among people involved in autonomous politics? How would you describe those places?
    o What is the relationship between those places?
- What do you think is special about (city)?
- Are there places that are part of the scene that you *don't* like? Why?
- How are decisions made at (place)?

- What are the biggest challenges facing (place)?

Conclusion of interview:
- Is there something that I should have asked you but didn't?
- Do you have any questions for me?

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION TEMPLATE

Date and time of observation:
Physical address:
Description of space:
Number of people there at time of observation:

1. Physical Boundaries: (What marks the physical and social boundaries of the place? Is it a self-contained space? Is it "known" to be a space for radical political actors? Does anyone look out of place? Why (not)?)

2. Establishment's purpose: (Summarize the establishment's/space's purpose. Attach observational evidence to substantiate.)

3. Location in the city: (What is this area of the city called? What are its characteristics? How do people get to this area? Is there a public transit stop nearby? Is the establishment in a known "dangerous" part of the city?)

4. Describe the signage (if there is any): (Is it clearly visible from the street? How do you think people initially find out about the space?)

5. Activities: (What are people doing here? What *can* people do here? Is there any evidence of upcoming events? What are they?)

6. Interactions: (What kinds of interactions do you observe? Chatting with one another? If so, what are they talking about? Exhibiting physical affection? Can you tell if people know each other? Do you see the same people here on a regular basis?)

7.   Overt prohibitions/formal rules: (Are there signs posted that prohibit or encourage certain behaviors?)

8.   Informal rules: (Are people speaking softly? Avoiding eye contact with others?)

9.   Evidence of political significance (symbols, graffiti/stickers, newspapers, flyers for political groups, activities, or events – Are these things posted clearly? Do people look at them?)

10.   Employees (Who works here?):

11.   Clientele (Demographics and description of what they look like):

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