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## ► To cite this version:

Mattias Kärrholm. A territorological study of time-space production at Stortorget, Malmö 1977-2013. CIST2014 - Fronts et frontières des sciences du territoire, Mar 2014, Paris, France. Proceedings du 2e colloque international du CIST, pp.245-250, 2014. <hal-01353467>

**HAL Id: hal-01353467**

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Submitted on 11 Aug 2016

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# A Territorological Study of Time-Space Production at Stortorget, Malmö 1977-2013

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## RÉSUMÉ

Nous avons assisté, ces dernières années, au développement d'une approche plus relationnelle de la territorialité. Cette perspective, qui se concentre sur les événements plutôt que sur l'espace, permet aussi d'ouvrir vers une élaboration des aspects temporels de la production territoriale. Dans cette étude, j'enquête sur la place centrale, Stortorget, à Malmö, Suède, dans le but de développer une discussion sur territorologie urbaine spatio-temporelle. En 1978, Korosec-Serfaty a exécuté une étude précise de la place, observant ses activités quotidiennes. Notre étude compare les productions territoriales sur la place centrale de Malmö à celles d'aujourd'hui. Les résultats indiquent une modification de la production spatio-temporelle dans laquelle la durée des appropriations et tactiques territoriales temporaires a tendance à se raccourcir, alors que le nombre de stratégies territoriales temporaires et à grande échelle augmente et que leur rôle devient plus important. Elle souligne également le besoin d'approcher l'usage de l'espace public comme un système relationnel et interdépendant plutôt que comme des relations bilatérales génériques entre échanges matériels et activités sociales.

## MOTS CLÉS

Événements, territorialité, usage temporaire, espace public

## ABSTRACT

In recent years, we have seen the development of a more relational approach to territoriality. This perspective, which focuses on events rather than space, also opens up for an elaboration of temporal aspects of territorial production. In this study, I investigate the central urban square, Stortorget, in Malmö, Sweden, in order to develop a discussion of urban time-space territorology. In 1978, Korosec-Serfaty performed a thorough study of the square, observing its everyday activities. The present study compares territorial productions at Malmö's Main Square during the 1970s to those of today. The results of the study indicate a change of time-space production in which temporary territorial appropriations and tactics tend to become shorter in duration, whereas the number of temporary and large-scale territorial strategies has increased and the role of these become more important. It also suggests the need to approach the use of public space as a relational and interdependent system rather than as the generic bilateral relations of materialities and social activities.

## KEYWORDS

Events, territoriality, temporary use, public space

Territoriality has traditionally mostly been dealt with as a socio-material phenomenon, focusing on space and power, and famously defined by the human geographer Robert David Sack as the "attempt by any individual or social group to affect, influence, and control people, phenomena and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over

a geographical area” (Sack, 1986:19). In recent years we have, however, also seen the development of more process-based and relational *territorology*, often inspired by thinkers such as Deleuze and Guattari or Latour (Brighenti, 2010a; Kärrholm, 2012; Palmås, 2013). Here, the focus is on territory as an act rather than a space, and on territoriality as spatio-temporal processes rather than as spatial strategies. Brighenti states, for example, in his proposal for territorology as a general science, that: “Territory is not defined by space, rather it defines spaces through patterns of relations” (Brighenti, 2010a: 57). Territories are thus events, expressive and boundary-producing power relations, and as such not defined by a certain land or area (although always dependent on materialities). Furthermore, this take on territoriality also manifests itself in an increased interest in the goings-on of everyday life, rather than focusing solely on the intentions and strategies of obligatory passage points.

One advantage of defining territory as an act or event is the possibility of opening up for a more elaborate discussion on a temporal perspective on territoriality –a perspective that has hitherto been quite neglected. Just as territory “defines space through patterns of relations” (as described by Brighenti above), it should be acknowledged that territories also define times and temporalities. In fact, time and space have always been deeply entangled in territorial processes –from the rhythms of the animal patrolling her territory to the muzak setting the pace of a shopping environment– but even so, in territorial discourse, space has always been prioritised more highly than time.

Planche photographique 1. Stortorget, Malmö, April 2013 (photo by M. Kärrholm)



Time-space territories can be produced deliberately through tactics or strategies, or result as a consequence of use, as through associations and appropriations (Kärrholm, 2012). Territorial strategies indicate deliberately scheduled and striated landscapes where certain moments are marked and controlled by rules or different kinds of institutions. Strategically produced time-spaces could thus include the opening hours of shops, parking, the operating hours of factories, the Christmas advertisement campaign of retailers’ associations or shopping malls, etc. There are, however, also situational and more spontaneously produced territories, *i.e.* more unofficial or informal tactics, marking a time-space in a public space as a part of an ongoing social situation. This might range from micro-situations such as the emission of certain phatic utterances (“ehhh...” or “well, well”), intended to stall for time and keep one’s audience quiet and attentive while attempting to finish

a thought (De Certeau, 1984:98 f.), to setting up one's tent for the night, e.g. personally claiming a certain time-space in a public park. Besides intentional strategies and tactics, territories can also be produced in a more indirect manner. The time-space territories of our cities are not only deliberately marked and produced, but could also be the result of unintended collateral effects, the uncertainty of duration, or the simple fact that things take time. Time-spaces might be temporarily appropriated by a certain group or person, for example, a gang that converges on a particular street corner every Friday night. Appropriation often includes a territorialisation "through time", and appropriations are most often associated with groups that have a lot of time on their hands –youth, the unemployed and the elderly. Finally, there are also time-spaces associated with a certain behavioural regularity: activities such as smoking a cigarette, walking a dog or going to the toilet are often connected to a certain spatial and temporal extension. A lot of spaces in the city are associated both with a specific use and an approximate or "proper" duration of that use, whether it is the pedestrian crossing or the table of an outdoor café.

In this study I investigate territorial time-space production and changing consumption patterns at the central urban square in Malmö. The square, Stortorget, was inaugurated in the 1530s, and was then largest square in Northern Europe measuring 131 x 145 meters. The square has a long history and is an important and emblematic space for the city of Malmö (a city situated in the South of Sweden of approximately 300,000 inhabitants). In 1978, Korosec-Serfaty (1982) did a thorough study of the square observing its everyday activities. Malmö was in the late 1970s an industrial city in crisis with a declining population. Perla Korosec-Serfaty study of Stortorget in Malmö, *The Main Square, Functions and Daily Uses of Stortorget, Malmö* (1982) –also published in French as *La grand' place : fonctions et pratiques quotidiennes de Stortorget à Malmö* (1986)– summarizes a large empirical work made by "Study group on public squares" in 1978. This was around the time that the pedestrianisation of Malmö inner city started (Kärholm, 2012). Today Malmö is a growing city and it is part of a large and growing European urban region. Comparing Korosec-Serfaty's results with how the square is used today (2013), 35 years later, shows some interesting differences when it comes down to territorial production. The comparison is based on four studies:

- newspaper studies (comparing articles mentioning Stortorget in the local press during 1977 and 2012);
- analyzing ground floor activities in the buildings surrounding the square (comparing 1977 and 2012);
- observation study, made peak hour and off-peak hour during seven days (each day of the week) and from three different locations on the square (made in June 1978 and April to August 2013) <sup>1</sup>;
- photographic study made peak hour and off-peak hour during seven days (each day of the week) and from five different locations on the square (made in June 1978 and April to August 2013) <sup>2</sup>.

The most striking difference is perhaps the proliferation of planned large-scale events. In 1977, most of the (167) newspaper articles reporting from the square mentions political

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1 The investigation from 1978 observed 901 clusters of people and the one from 2013 observed 2,079 clusters of people.

2 The photographic study of 1978 counted/classified 6,806 people from 840 photos and the one in 2013 classified 13,798 people from 840 photos (taken from the same locations).

gatherings and activities on the square (26%) followed by official activities (17%). In 2012, the articles (119 all in all) tend to focus on collective celebrations (23%) followed by crime and safety (19%). The new collective celebrations tend to be quite large scale week-long events such as *Malmöfestivalen* (the city festival) and *Musikhjälpen* (a fund-raising event), with concerts and cultural performances. A study made by the municipality of Malmö in 2008 shows that this eventalisation of the square also seems to be welcome by the inhabitants (Malmö Stad, 2008). In line with the process of eventalisation, a lot of the stores that were on Stortorget during the 1970s (selling everyday things) have disappeared or given place to cafés and restaurants. Although the pedestrian precinct with hundred of shops starts here, the square itself has today just five shops (but fourteen in 1978). Perhaps this can be seen as signifier of how the square, once an old market space of mixed uses, now quickly is being turned into a specialized space for events.

Looking at clusters of people (from the observation study), the ratio of women walking alone has changed from 18 to 29 percent (between 1978 and 2013), although the square is still somewhat dominated by male presence. The number of children has also increased, and the percentage of clusters including at least one child is more than three times higher in 2013 than in 1978. From these numbers it might look as if the square has become more heterogeneous, but it should be reminded that the comparison of clusters and gender does not account for the fact that certain groups and activities might be quite rare or even excluded from the square. Already Korosec-Serfaty noted that Stortorget had become a kind of museumized space: “the Main square is conspicuously exhibited because it conceals another urban reality, a different social life” (Korosec-Serfaty, 1982:70). This has been enhanced by the last decades of intense retailisation of the city centre (Kärholm, 2012), and it is also confirmed by recent studies, for example, by Sixtensson who has shown that the city centre was actively avoided by some groups of Muslim women (2010).

Table 1. Activities on Stortorget according to the photographic study in percent and numbers

Activity	1978						2013					
	Peak hour		Off-peak hour		Total		Peak hour		Off-peak hour		Total	
Walking	46%	1 167	46%	821	46%	1 988	56%	4 439	54%	3 125	55%	7 564
Sitting	43%	1 096	40%	717	42%	1 813	24%	1 917	17%	956	21%	2 873
Pausing	10%	249	13%	231	11%	480	17%	1 381	24%	1 358	20%	2 739
Playing	1%	18	1%	24	1%	42	1%	70	2%	97	1%	167
Biking	0%	11	0%	5	0%	16	1%	108	1%	60	1%	168
Working	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	30	3%	166	1%	196
Other	0%	2	0%	0	0%	2	1%	63	1%	28	1%	91
Ration P-OP	59%	2 543	41%	1 798	100%	4 341	58%	8 008	42%	5 790	100%	13 798

Last row shows the ratio between peak and off-peak hour for each year. 1978 data comes from Korosec-Serfaty (1982:64 ff).

From the photographic study one can see that there are a smaller percentage of people sitting on the square today as the ratio of sitting people has gone from 45% to 21%. A higher percentage is walking and also a somewhat higher percentage is taking shorter breaks on the square. It seems as if people were spending shorter time on the square on a regular day: people take shorter breaks (most of them talking on the phone, texting or taking photos), but tend to sit less and walk more. Although people certainly spend a lot of time on the square during the large and planned events, one could argue that it has become increasingly rare for larger groups to temporarily appropriate the square for

non-official uses. In fact, the role of the temporal qualities –rhythm, salience, scale, and pace– all seem to have undergone changes. Korosec-Serfaty noted Stortorget transformation from a place of everyday activities to a representational square of official activities (Korosec-Serfaty, 1982:43).

Today, this salient territorial association of the square as a place of official activities would appear to have given way to the square as a place of events. The dominating role of the rhythms of the industrial city –including the role of male-dominated workplaces, retired people on their benches, busy weekday rush hours and calmer weekends– have, to a certain extent, been replaced by rhythms more strongly associated with consumer society. Stortorget thus seems to have found its role as a specialised place within the pedestrian precinct of Malmö. With a decreasing number of permanent activities, a faster pace and shorter pauses from temporary activities on the one hand, and an increasing frequency of prearranged temporary events on the other, Stortorget has come to play a double role. The square facilitates movement to, from and through the pedestrian precinct. Sometimes, during large events, it works as a strong and highly accessible if temporary magnet, but otherwise it acts as a facilitator of movement to other places than the square itself. The duration and ratio of temporary appropriations and tactics seem to have decreased since the 1978 study; instead, a larger ratio uses the square purely for thoroughfare movement. Furthermore, the temporary stays that do take place tend to be made more by individuals and less by groups (ratio of “single walkers” changing from 54% to 64%), less by residents of the city centre and more by tourists, visiting shoppers and those eating lunch. The general pace has changed as well; and the activity during the working week tends to be more intense, its timeframe undergoing expansion with a colonisation of evenings and weekends. All these territorial changes are traceable at different temporal scales. The number of small artefacts and objects moved about and used on Stortorget has also increased, and these seem to affect the temporary use as well as how visitors temporarily claim space by way of tactics and appropriation on the square; for example, pausing while standing rather than sitting down. On a larger temporal scale, the role of territorial strategies in the form of advertisement campaigns, outdoor restaurants or large-scale events lasting up to weeks at a time have increased.

Even if the material design and outline of Stortorget is fundamentally the same today as in 1978, the role of the material figures on the square has undergone transformations as human behaviour has changed, and new artefacts have come into play. For example, the statue becomes more important for eating, the Town Hall benches for resting with bags, and the fountain for pausing with cell phones and cameras. The built environment of Malmö’s Main Square might thus look the same today, but the timescapes produced here do not. Counting territorial productions, it is perhaps impossible to discern a greater variety today, *i.e.* when it comes to the range of different time-space territorialisations. However, territorial complexity has decreased due to the increasing dominance and stabilisation of certain types of territorial productions (people walking by, scheduled events, etc.) and also to an increase in verticality, where certain territorial strategies are made to manage a series of others.

In this paper, I have noted some of the important changes in the temporary use of Stortorget. I have investigated the time-space productions of the square, produced through temporary territories of different scale and salience, following or induced by

different paces and rhythms. The square is in this sense a pulsating and transforming assemblage, mirroring contemporary culture and the city of Malmö in interesting ways. One of the main points of my approach in this paper is not to see public space through a fragmentary logic of means and ends (“the number of sitting persons depends on the number of seats”, etc.), but more as a complex, sensitive and transformative ecological system. One must thus take more generic recipes for public space design with a grain of salt. The material figures of Malmö’s Main Square are largely unaltered, but their actor roles change as they get new associations. A thorough development of a time-space territorialology might be one way of studying public space use as a complex system, acknowledging that the territorial production of time-spaces are never static or independent, but always relational, interdependent and entangled in transformative processes.

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