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The rôle of residential open space – spatial strategies for integration

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The Role of Open Space – Spatial Strategies for Integration

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Abstract
The role of urban open space is multi-faceted. Looking at residential open space you will find that it has specific qualities compared to other types of urban space due to the proximity to home. This paper discusses residential open space as arena for integration, taking this topological property as a starting point.

The paper is based on an ongoing study in the Swedish city Landskrona. The study is one of four forming the research project “Public urban spaces – potential for socially sustainable development”, which is linked to the cross-disciplinary research programme “Urban public space”, funded by the Swedish research council FORMAS. The investigation discussed in this paper is performed as a case-study of a pilot project in a municipally initiated housing revitalization project in the Swedish city of Landskrona. The potentialities of open space as a strategic resource have been recognized by the main house owners, the municipal housing corporation. The study maps the main strategies and tries to understand the role of residential open space for processes of integration.

Introduction
This much is true for place: we are immersed in it and could not do without it. To be at all - to exist in any way - is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place. Place is as requisite as the air we breathe, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have (Casey 1997, p. ix).

In a short time Sweden has become home to people from many cultures. The proportion of the population born abroad and/or born in Sweden to immigrant parents is nearly 25%. Swedish policy, since 1997, stipulates that “integration” is to be incorporated into all aspects of society that means that the situation of immigrants is to be mainstreamed into all policy areas. The government bill Sweden, the future and diversity – from immigration policy to integration policy also stresses that this is not possible without active work for change (Prop 1997/98:16). But what could this “active work for change” imply in spatial terms? How does integration concern planning and managing the physical environment? The paper considers this question to be of major significance with regard to a socially sustainable urban development. But the role of the concrete physical environment is often overlooked. The aspects are only vaguely in recent research on segregation and integration, owing to the disciplines that have dominated in that research. In research on housing segregation for example, mainly the underlying mechanisms are discussed.

But whatever we do – we do it somewhere. This philosophical notion, propounded by Archytas of Tarentum in 400 B.C. forms a fundamental point of departure. There is always a spatial context for our everyday life. The access to space, and the quality offered is a basic condition for our acts, activities and interaction with others. The main objective of this paper is to try to outline a spatial perspective on integration in this particular context including the concrete materiality of space. The discussion is based on the assumptions that integration, like many other social
Background
The dark image of the contemporary city expresses a growing gap between poor and rich. The Swedish commission of inquiry on metropolitan policy also displays an increasing segregation in Swedish metropolitan areas during the 1980s. And the follow-up inquiry shows an advancing economical, social and ethnic segregation (Prop1997:118, p. 3). Leoni Sandercock (2002) emphasizes not only the power of the economical but also the socio-cultural forces in the transformation of cities and regions. Migration results in greater population diversity and Sandercock points out the huge challenge of managing these “dilemmas of difference” in all their cultural, social and spatial expressions. Sophie Bessis (1995) emphasizes that economic exclusion also means social exclusion. Unemployment not only deprives one of an income but also of his status in society and represents “the loss of an individual’s link to mainstream society” (Charmes in Bessis 1995, p. 21).

At the same time town planning has been criticized for not coping with (or not paying enough attention) to these kinds of problems. Roman Cybriwsky (1999), for example, talks about the post-modern “landscapes of consumption” and calls attention to the lack of interest for social aspects. Generally the social focus in town planning has weakened, which could be viewed in the light of economical liberalization and the post modern turn amongst the built environment professionals. The post-modern interest in symbolic and aesthetic qualities represents a displaced focus. According to David Harvey (1989) there is a central distinction between the modern and post modern view of space. While the modernists were forming space on the basis of social objectives and space was consequently subordinated the social project, the postmodernists sees space as something autonomous that does not necessarily have to relate to comprehensive social objectives. The post modern stress on the communicative role of architecture also means a lack of focus on the use and functional aspects of space. But meaning and use are interrelated (cf. Kolb 1990, s. 146). Using space makes it meaningful.

What is then the predicament of contemporary urban space? It is often stressed that common access to public space is becoming more complicated. The privatization of public space stands out as a main cause. But there are other causes undermining a free and open access. Melissa Mean and Charlie Tims (2005, p. 12) also stresses the “increasing diversity of lifestyles and cultures” which is “splintering public space into a patchwork of specialized monocultural enclaves”. Uncomfortable feelings of insecurity are also often mentioned as a hindrance to free access of urban space.

So on the one hand statistics tells about increasing segregation, both academics and politicians is warning for a growing fear of “the other”, that produces more violence against people that are different in one ore another respect (cf. Sandercock 2000), and political debate stresses the need for dialog and “meeting places” where different groups could meet in order to get a better understanding for each other. And on the other hand urban theorists talk about “the decline of urban space” – the loss of space shared by everybody due to privatisation and other processes that is reducing the accessibility. This situation makes the social role of urban space an urgent matter for town planning professionals.
A spatial perspective on integration

“Integration” is a political keyword when approaching economic, social and ethnic polarization. The official Swedish definition of integration says that everyone who lives in Sweden should have “the same rights, opportunities and obligations, regardless of ethnic and cultural background”. According to Popoola (2002) the ambition to achieve a more integrated society seems to be directed to a mixed population where social cohesion, participation and trust or equality are distinguishing characteristics for the relations between the different groups in the society. She also discusses that integration policy and social policy share common ground. The main objectives in both fields of politics are about dwelling, work and education aiming to provide the basis for an independent life. In this paper the role of the residential sphere is focussed.

Housing segregation means that different groups in the society lives separated from each other, socially and geographically, the term also holds the processes and dynamism that maintain the separation (Magnusson 2001, p.14). A geographically uneven distribution of people is based on what is conceived as more or less attractive housing and that the options are strongly restricted for certain groups. Housing segregation is consequently produced by unbalanced movings to and from a certain area or part of the city. Housing segregation does not have to be problematic. But it becomes a problem when it produces negative effects for the society and for children and adults living in the segregated areas (Andersson 2001, p. 116). In poorer neighbourhoods people is often deprived of opportunities that are more frequent in more attractive neighbourhoods.

Where are the spatial perspectives? From the text above we can discern three approaches on the subject matter. Improving open space quality is widely regarded as a measure to make a particular environment more attractive and by that means reduce the gap between more and less attractive neighbourhoods, and thus effect segregation processes caused by the choices people makes when deciding where to live. Upgrading open space quality is also considered as a local welfare work, making the living environment more useful, appreciated and supportive, and in that way improve the living conditions. The third approach is to depart from the idea of “meeting places” and to try to create conditions conducive to a positive development in this respect.

The two following sections of the text will expound on the second and third approaches just described, where the second one is concentrating on the individuals and the third one on interaction between people. Both approaches focus on the arenas of everyday life, on their spatial qualities, on access and accessibility and how they are utilised by people. They are here represented by two concepts, considered as so called “sensitizing concepts” guiding the construction of the discourse. The first one, supportive environments refers to the supportive role of open space for individuals in their everyday lives. It also takes into account that meaningful, useful and easily available open space, just like many other type of resources, often is uneven distributed. Improving open space quality is consequently a kind of local welfare work. The second concept, the meeting-place, focuses on the role of open space as arenas for interacting with others. These two concepts have been developed in the process of analysing the empirical investigation.
Open space as “supportive environments”

The positive relationship between social networks and health has been clearly proven in an established research field. Social support is, for example, decisive when it comes to coping with severe stress. It is also clearly established that the absence of social support and of satisfactory networks both impact negatively on human health (Orth-Gomér et. al. 1993). The relationship between integration and health is often described as a reciprocal process. Mental health stressors can, naturally, have a complicating effect on the integration process (Haglund 2002). It is emphasized that well-functioning daily life is a key factor in immigrants’ ability to move forward in their new homeland.

But instead of being supportive the new residential environment sometimes burdens the everyday life, for example the new type of crowding that has appeared in immigrant-dominated districts in Sweden. In a study from the city of Malmö, Margareta Popoola (1999) discusses crowding and health problems and her findings highlight the link between the concrete physical environment and quality of life. Although her study did not include the significance of outdoor space, she did indicate that the problems have such spatial components. For example residential crowding restricts young people’s to spend time with their friends indoors, and so, figuratively speaking, they are pushed out from their homes and into the streets. According to Popoola, crowding may very well be one serious aspect of the problematic situation for young people in urban areas. The courtyard and other types of residential open space could enlarge the flat as an outdoor part of the dwelling.

The concept of “supportive environments” was coined in the late 1980s and further developed at the WHO:s conference in Sundsvall, Sweden in 1991. It expresses the interrelationship between health, environment and social processes. The idea of supportive environments was presented as one of five strategies for promoting public health. It is a multidimensional concept, devoting attention to the arenas of everyday life (Haglund 2002). In this paper the spatial dimension of this concept is emphasized in a greater extent than is common and the concept of supportive environments is mainly a source of inspiration due to its transgressive approach on health. In this context supportive environments describes in what ways open space could be supportive for individual well-being, and thus strengthen the person in order to better cope with the challenges of everyday life.

Open space as “meeting place”

It is within the physical spaces of our towns and cities that people encounter one another on a daily basis and share experiences with people beyond their immediate circle of friends, family and work colleagues. It is where people are obliged to relate to others’ behaviour, ideas and preferences as they go about meeting their own personal needs. (Mean & Tims 2005 p.16)

Meeting places, arenas where people can meet and interact, is extensively used when integration is discussed. It sometimes appears as a main strategy, a medicine to cure the fear of “the other”. As a concept meeting place is more and vaguer than supportive environment. When used in the context of urban open space the connotations generally refers to central urban locations and places like squares and pedestrian streets. The meeting place is also often embedded in a vision of an urban environment of rather high density with teeming activity and crowds of people. The aim
here is to expound on this fuzzy expression as a tool for exploring spatial aspects of significance for promoting contact, social relations and ties. The definition used and argued for in this paper considers the meeting place as “a place of interaction”.

If “interaction” is the starting point we can begin by establishing that people interacts in most places, but especially when they are involved in common activities. So with the suggested definition the concept could refer to very different kind of places. This approach moves us from conceptions limited to central urban sites and places were many people comes together. Focusing on interaction, activities and direct collaboration means that we also have to take into account the significance of adequate space. We can imagine the wide-ranging potentialities for creating meeting places, but also the wide-ranging requirements these demand of spatial conditions. Good meeting places could for example have the form of so called community gardens or places for spontaneous sports activities.

An action-oriented approach

For the knowledge sought here is not directed at space itself, nor does it construct models, typologies or prototypes of spaces; rather, it offers an exposition of the production of space. A science of space or ‘spatio-analysis’ would stress the use of space, (Lefebvre 1991, p. 404)

The question at issue is multi-dimensional, because it deals with the intersection between the social and the material world and is embedded in an economical, political and socio cultural context. This means a need for at cross disciplinary approach. As Ali Madanipour (2005) claims a theoretical framework for analysing urban space requires a multi-dimensional approach, which can account for the multiplicity of the perspectives as well as the complexity of issues involved. Further on he claims that it is essential to have a “dynamic viewpoint”, i.e. to have capacity to move from one vantage point to another combining the context oriented understanding with a more overarching view of the framework. An important source of inspirations for a multi-dimensional approach is Henri Lefebvre’s concept of “social space”. Social space includes the full range of the so called conceived, perceived and lived space – the famous Lefebvrian spatial triad. The use of space is an important key to this concept. With Lefebvre’s vocabulary space is “produced” by the ways it is used and the meanings it is given by individuals and by the society. The approach to the subject matter expounded on in this paper is based on the “use of space” and is here described as an “action-oriented approach”.

The spatial context

The new interest in urban space displayed by professionals and academics engaged in town planning is mainly concerning public space. As is clear this paper is about the semi public, residential open space. But the attitude to this type of urban space could not be isolated from the trends recognized for public urban space just described. The public and the semi public space form together a substantial part of the urban open space structure and are thus interrelated. We can for example consider if the residential open space is not getting more important for the urban population due to the “decline of public space”. We can also consider if residential open space is not neglected in contemporary planning debate, due to a rather one-sided focus on public space.

Residential open space belongs to the neighbourhood. The new interest in the neighbourhood in recent years is mainly attributable to the role it has been given in urban revitalization projects in
post-war suburbia, where extensive local efforts are made (Urban 2002). The neighbourhood often forms the geographical unit in revitalization project, but the potentialities of the neighbourhood according to processes of integration are also stressed. The housing environment is often considered to have a significant role for human socialization and this includes all groups of the society (Magnusson 2001, p.16). This opinion seems rather obvious, due to the fact that the home is the centre of our daily lives. According to Magnusson (2001) it is, however, not very clear in what ways it is significant, as the international research about this matter is of relatively limited extent. But it is discussed. An interesting remark made by Irène Molina (1997) is that the housing environment could be of great importance in relation to language learning.

Georges Perec rather witty defines neighbourhood as “that part of the town you don’t need to go, precisely because you’re already there” (Perec 1974/1997). The neighbourhood is not only easy to reach; it also becomes a familiar landscape based on everyday experiences. Hosting the private domain it is also an interface between the private and the public spheres and the courtyard forms a transitional zone between private space and public space. This is an aspect of great importance when discussing the role of both the neighbourhood and the courtyard as arenas for integration. In the neighbourhood there are many potential arenas for interaction such as at the day nursery, the playground, the shop. The courtyard is used collectively, it is shared space, and this condition is of decisive importance for the courtyard’s potentialities as meeting place.

The courtyard

Home is the most important place in our lives (Gifford 1997, p. 194).

The case – Juno in Landskrona

The problems that need to be cleared up concern the recruitment of new households to the
central area, the social unbalance, maintenance and operation of buildings, the standard of the public environment, the school situation, and the image of the central area of Landskrona as seen by the surrounding world (From a municipally programme document, “Living Centre – the continued work”, dated January 2003).

The city of Landskrona is situated by the west coast in the south of Sweden. As many other European cities Landskrona are facing the transition from the industrial époque and during the last decades it has been suffering from the restructuring of the shipbuilding industry. The shipyard in Landskrona shut down in the beginning of the 1980s and the crisis gradually became worse as the Swedish economy entered a period of recession in the beginning of the 1990s. After a decline in population the number of inhabitants started to grow again in 1999. With a Swedish perspective it is a medium-sized city. The municipality of Landskrona has about 40 000 inhabitants. The district of East Side (Öster) is considered to be the most problematic part of Landskrona. As described in a municipally document from 2003 this parts of the city showed various kinds of problems including an over-representation of households dependant on welfare, flats that didn’t fulfil basic requirement for quality and that part of the district were experienced as shabby and deserted. Suffering from general deterioration the need of upgrading and revitalizing included both houses and open space. The document also discussed lack of security and increasing hostility towards foreigners.

Different efforts have been directed towards the area. During the period 2003-2005 the process was intensified by the three years long “East Side Project” coordinated by the municipal housing corporation Landskronahem Ltd. A pilot project in order to develop the approach was carried out in the residential block of “Juno”. The project started with Landskronahem purchasing 103 flats, i.e. half of the number of dwellings in the building block, from a private estate owner. This was done in 2001 and was considered to be a necessary measure in order to carry out the programme. The houses bought are three storey high and of different age, ranging from early 20th century to the 1970s.

In the study interviews have been used for both analysing the tenant’s utilisation of the courtyard and for mapping the strategies and the measures directed to the building block. This dual approach makes it possible to discuss the mediating role of the courtyard to carry out the strategies of the revitalization project. The research findings are preliminary since the study is not yet completed. There are still more interviews to be done.

**Strategies**

- We [the housing corporation] demand *compassion* from our staff.

- We demand *tolerance* from our tenants. And it doesn’t only include tolerance towards the refugees, but towards all tenants. Today people are more vulnerable, lonelier, so you have to show more tolerance.
-We actively fight hostility towards foreigners, both among tenants and among the staff.

(The project leader of the East Side Project)

Landskronahem Ltd has been the dominating operating actor in the East Side Project. The idea of using the municipal housing corporation as a tool for this project enjoyed widespread support from the different political parties. But stakeholders from private real estate management, the municipal labour and social welfare service, the municipal cultural and sports services, schools, sports associations and tenants have participated in the collaborative processes. When interviewing the project leader and other employees of the municipal housing corporation both strategies and more concrete measures stand out. The strategies include regular activities of the housing corporation as well as more special measures directed to the East Side and Juno.

Earlier revitalization projects had been carried out on the outskirts of the city not in the city centre. According to the project leader there are two major differences between Juno and earlier projects. In Juno the housing corporation just owns the building site where the houses stand not the surrounding ground. Consequently the project demands joint efforts between different stakeholders in a much larger extent than earlier projects and this condition means that the corporation had to start several collaborative processes. The other condition is due to the higher density in the more central location of the district of East Side. That means that Juno is less spacious. The scarcity of space makes it important to improve what is present and it also implies for supplementary space, for example for older children’s play. Despite these two conditions, the programme for Easter Side is mainly based on the experiences made from the earlier upgrading schemes, especially from the revitalization of the corporations largest housing area, built during the period of the 1960s and the 70, when an extensive part of the post war housing in Sweden were produced.

But according to the project leader there is a vital new component in the pilot project of Juno in respect to the earlier revitalization schemes. A new management policy has made its breakthrough in this project. In the “living-environment-management-perspective” the tenant is in focus of interest unlike in the more common “estate-management-perspective” which is concentrating on the buildings. With this living-environment-perspective you have to be equally engaged in a woman beaten by her husband as in a broken window, according to the project leader. The project leader considers this displaced focus to be the most important element in the pilot project of Juno. To the policy is linked the conception that you can’t implement processes of change without active cooperation from the people concerned and participation have to be encouraged. Another strategy linked to the living-environment-management-perspective is the involvement in the tenant’s position on the labour market. Put in a somewhat incisive way the project leader regarded the lacking ability to earn one’s living amongst the tenants to be the greatest threat to a good housing environment. It is not bad houses; all of their buildings have a relatively high standard. Consequently he thought the housing corporation should be engaged in this matter and make use of its role as employer in trying to provide jobs for tenants with a weak position on the labour market. This strategy has been used by other municipal housing corporations in Sweden.
Special measures
The social problems in the block of Juno were considered to be severe in the beginning of the project. A special measure used in Juno was to handpick the staff, demanding high quality work, social competence and compassion to this particular assignment. There are other special measures used in the pilot project of Juno, the main ones will be described in the following sections of the text.¹

The Juno school
In 2002 pre-school and school activities started up in the Juno block. The premises of the school were integrated in the building block and the children share the courtyard with the tenants within the block. The school is prepared for up to 60 children from four to eight years of age, and the children lives in the block and in housing estates close to the block. The school staffs emphasize the advantages with the small size and the location near the children’s homes. The children feel safe in their home environment and the school staff has good contact with the parents. These qualities are considered of particular importance for the more vulnerable families in the building block. The school is the result of cooperation between Landskronahem and the municipal Children and Youth Board. The purpose of this large investment in the building block made by the housing corporation is to provide families living in Juno with a supportive school situation for their children.

Activities for the children
In 2002 also the activities for children started up in the Juno block. Two girls, at that time only fourteen years old, were employed and paid by the housing corporation. The first year the activity went on only in summertime. The second year the activities were extended to all school vacations. The girls planned and carried out a programme to activate the children living in Juno a few hours per day, five days a week. In the beginning the girls visited all families with younger kids living in Juno to inform about the programme. The girls are supervised by municipally employed recreation leaders and the programme is carried out in collaboration with activities in the adjacent Dammhag School, where the supervising recreation leader works.

The purpose of this activity programme is manifold. Firstly it is a kind of service to the tenants, a part of the upgrading scheme, secondly it is meant as a support especially for children in families with problems and thirdly it is a way of controlling the behaviour of the children in order to oppose that other tenants are feeling disturbed. The housing corporation is in many ways trying to prevent a “white-flight” from the area (cf. Andersson 2001).

Housing environment course Juno
The housing environment course in Juno was a training course that took place in the home environment and was based on an individual validation of unemployed tenants with a poor knowledge of the Swedish language. The objective was besides language learning, also personal development and to prepare for getting a job. The course could for example serve as preparation for trainee posts in the housing sector. The project was carried out as a joint effort between

¹ An important source to the portrayal of the Juno school, the housing environment course, the activities for children and the self management is the document “Action Plan, The New East Side 2003-2005” made up by the project leader at Landskronahem Ltd.
Landskronahem, the municipal adult education (KomVux), the municipal labour and social service and other stakeholders.

The courtyard was considered as a resource for the housing environment course. The participants were during the practical training engaged with improving their own environment, so to say. Themes like open space maintenance, refuse collecting, laundry rooms, issues of safety and security were discussed. The course also included elements directed to personal development as learning to swim and to cycle. Two of the persons that attended the course have later on obtained permanent employment at Landskronahem as caretakers and work partly in the block of Juno.

Self-management
The self-management model was introduced in Juno as a result of the course. The operational areas are the courtyard maintenance, the stair cleaning, taking care of the laundry rooms and the so called environmental houses (where the refuse is sorted for recycling). The tenants participate in the self-management on a completely voluntary basis. The participation is rewarded with just over 500 Swedish crowns per month, which represents the costs per apartment if the corresponding job was to be performed by professionals.

Upgrading of the courtyard
The courtyard has been upgraded and this is a still ongoing process. There have been different objectives with the efforts, according to the project leader. The intention was not only to make the courtyard more pleasant and usable for the tenants but also to upgrade the symbolic value of the housing block. The improvement of the outdoor environment was expected to help bringing a better status/reputation to Juno and to make the open space something for the tenants to be proud of. The improvement also included a more careful maintenance of the courtyard. The project leader considered the tenants to be a major force in creating a beautiful and pleasant environment. He also regarded the tenant’s involvement and participation in improving the outdoor environment as a strategy for integration. “When people with different backgrounds and ages meet for positive common objectives in the near environment, many good new relationships is usually created”.

Giving priority to the upgrading of existing open space was also due to the fact that there is less of public open space, play facilities and also private gardens in this part of the city due to the higher density in the central location.

The courtyard as social space – some impressions
The courtyard is completely surrounded by houses as they form a traditional building block. The size of the courtyard is 7500 m², which equals 36 m² open space per flat. There are many beautiful trees, there is also grass, parts are paved and there are seats and play facilities in the courtyard. In front of the entrance to the school there is a patio for the school including benches and tables. Visiting the courtyard you can experience different groups of tenants on the site, children of course but also young people, women and men. When asking “who” is using the courtyard I got the answer “everybody” several times. Although this probably was an exaggerated estimation, according to other ones, you sometimes find a rather teeming activity in the courtyard. At most there have been about fifty children at the same in the courtyard attending the children’s activities programme.
Some women living in Juno told me about the group of women that were seeing each other in the courtyard almost every evening when the weather permitted this activity. They are using a special part of the courtyard, where there are a few benches placed. According to Olsson et al (1997) the courtyard has spatial qualities that are advantageous for this kind of use. They consider the courtyard as a “neutral arena”. It is not as private and intimate as the flat. Joining a group of people in the courtyard is a much more informal act, than inviting people to your home. In the courtyard you can more easily come and leave as you wish. Different elements of the “women’s meeting place” appeared in the interviews. There is of course the concrete physical space that the courtyard provides. But the housing environment course was pointed out as the origin of the meetings in the courtyard. It was as participants of the course some of them had learnt to know each other. There was also an important cultural element in the meeting place. As I was told the Swedish language dominated the time together, because of the different nationalities represented in the group. The women helped each other translating. With the Lefebvrian vocabulary you can say that the women “produce” the meeting place when they are seeing each other on that special spot in the courtyard, communicating in the Swedish language and helping each other to understand what is the subject of the discussion.

Next to the women’s meeting place there was another one produced by a group of girls of about 13 to 16 years of age. Sometimes they also used the same benches as the older women if the seats weren’t occupied. One cause to the rather frequent use of the courtyard by some of the female teenagers, suggested by one of the girls, was that the freedom of movement was more restricted for some of the girls than for boys of the same age, due to traditional gender roles. The courtyard provided the girls with an easily accessible meeting place outside the flats. Also this group represented different nationalities.

The Swedish language is also the standard in the children’s activities. This programme is not just for fun it also has pedagogic objectives. Talking Swedish is one and the aim is both language learning and to share a common language when playing, so to avoid that children feel excluded. The children also visits places outside the building block to get to know the neighbourhood and the city better.

When visiting “Ingela”, the housing corporation’s local administrator, in her office in the building block, she can suddenly leave the desk in order to ask a child to pick up some litter just thrown in the courtyard. She considers this kind of work, to convey and enforce some rules for the coexistence in tenement housing and to introduce new tenants with no earlier experiences of how to live in a block of flats, as a very important part of her work as local administrator.

**Preliminary conclusions**

The rather far reaching responsibility for the tenant’s welfare that is displayed in this project could be seen as an expression of the withdrawal of the welfare state. New stakeholders and modes of partnership between different social actors are produced in order to approach the empty place left. The traditional role of a housing corporation is far extended in the pilot project of Juno, and the new role is transgressing traditional conceptions of the provision of social welfare service. In this context it becomes obvious that the significance of the housing environment can’t be discussed only in terms of traditional housing qualities but have to be considered also in terms
of quality of life, social cohesion and integration. As shown in the limited portrayal of the pilot project the courtyard stands out as a point of intersection where different objectives merge. It also shows that residential space could be a powerful strategic resource in a renewal process.

**Local strategies**

It seems rather clear that the project leader at Landskronahem Ltd. have had a major influence on the design of the project. There are some keywords that could be used to describe his way of thinking. The project leader emphasized the housing corporation’s role as “problem-owner”. This conception suggests that you have to deal with a multitude of things that all contribute to a good housing environment, although many of the “things” formally are not only, or not at all, your responsibility. To have this more or less holistic perspective, induces the need for joint efforts with other stakeholders. Another keyword used by the project leader was to consider himself as an “enabler” in his occupational role. Using a large personal network in the municipality and the region he made a lot of things take place, without participating in all processes. The two keywords describe the basis for an important feature of the project, the multitude of efforts made in order to upgrade the housing environment of Juno.

We can consider these different efforts as “things” that are feeding the process of revitalization. Hence you can’t evaluate them one by one without considering their common context, i.e. the revitalization process and how they contribute to the progress of the process. For example the housing environmental course could not be evaluated only in terms of individual’s progress in language learning. As described the housing environmental course also affected the social space of the courtyard, by producing relationships between the participants of the course living in the building block, by preparing for the self management of the courtyard and by preparing two of the tenants for their permanent jobs as caretakers in the building block.

Applying this way of thinking about the project, i.e. as a process fed by many different kinds of efforts we can recognise the spatial perspective as embedded in situations including other aspects. The spatial perspective is one element of many working in a situation, although it is an essential one, according to the Archytas perspective presented in the beginning of this paper. Anyhow this condition makes the refining of the spatial perspectives more complicated. Considering the women meeting in the yard, this “spatial practice” includes besides the physical aspects also social and cultural aspects.

The two sensitizing concepts earlier introduced in this paper had shown to be of help analysing the information gathered in the study. From the preliminary findings it is reasonable to suggest that the courtyard has good potentialities to provide a supporting environment and also to serve as meeting places and by that means be supportive for processes of integration. In Juno the courtyard provided an arena for play and leisure activities. It also served as an arena for both children and grown ups to practice the Swedish language. The courtyard could also be considered as a spatial arena for socialization; an interface to the Swedish society, where the teachers of the school, the local management administrator and other tenants shows the rules and norms of the Swedish society.

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2 This term was borrowed from Michael Burbidge, Department of the Environment, London, used at a conference 1991.
The assignments of the courtyard

If we more generally discuss the role of the courtyard we can consider that planners have always delegated tasks to the physical environment. The street takes care of the cars and the pavement of the pedestrians, etc., etc. The courtyard could be described as an innovation in modern planning. As was the case with the public park, the courtyard was considered an instrument for improving the industrial city of the nineteenth century. The links between public health and urban green has deep historical roots. A green and spacious town setting was the opposite of the congestion of the industrial town and a manifestation of the new ideas of hygienism. This attitude was reflected in the Swedish post war building standards for open space in residential areas. Based on the psychological significance of play to children’s development, ample space stands out as an essential prerequisite for a good environment in these quality criteria’s. In my thesis I argue for the concept of “folkhemsgården” (a green yard as a self-evident aspect of housing in the construction of the welfare society) to describe the “ideal form” of the courtyard that could be extracted from the quality criteria reflected in the building standards (Kristensson 2003). But by the late 20th century, however, this conception where redefined.

Based on the preliminary conclusions presented here I suggest that a discussion about contemporary assignments for the courtyard, this semi public residential type of open space, should take into consideration the potentialities of the courtyard to meet the challenge of today’s urban problems as discussed in this paper. The courtyard could play an important role in housing revitalisation programmes with social ambitions. Perhaps we shall reconsider the contemporary conceptions of urban life and include the kind of urban life that evolves in the semi public sphere of the towns and cities. In my opinion the conception of urban life is too limited if not.
References


