



Remaking the People's Park: Heritage Renewal Troubled by Past Political Struggles?

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Abstract

This article explores how a series of heritage-driven renewal plans in the Swedish city Malmö dealt with a landscape deeply shaped by radical politics: Malmö People's Park (*Folkets Park*). Arguing against notions of heritage where the past is essentially considered a malleable resource for present commercial or political concerns, we scrutinise plans for the People's Park from the 1980s onward to emphasise how even within renewal attempts built on seemingly uncontroversial nostalgic readings of the park's past, tensions proved impossible to keep at bay. This had profound effects on the studied development process.

Established by the city's social-democratic labour movement in 1891, the People's Park is both enmeshed with historical narratives, and full of material artefacts left by a century when the Social Democrats had a decisive presence in the city. As municipal planners and politicians targeted this piece of land, the tensions they had to navigate included not only what present ideas to bring to bear on the making of heritage, but also how to deal with past politics and the park as a material landscape. Our findings point to how the kinds of labour politics that had faded for decades became impossible to dismiss in urban renewal. Both political representations and de-politicising nostalgic representations of Malmö People's Park's past provoked (often unexpected) resistance undoing planning visions.

Keywords: Urban planning, cultural heritage, socio-material landscapes, Malmö, People's Parks, urban politics, political movements, historical geography

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Introduction

For the 20th century's first six decades, the People's Park (*Folkets Park*) was arguably *the* destination for entertainment acts and artists visiting Malmö, a then rapidly growing industrial port town in southern Sweden (Billing and Stigendal 1994). But, established by Malmö's budding socialist labour movement in 1891, the park was also a regionally important political meeting place. 12,000 people gathered here for suffrage protests in 1902. 10,000 people visited the park each day during the 1909 general strike, and 20,000 people assembled here to protest the death sentences given to Italian-American radicals Nicola Sacco and Bartholomeo Vanzetti in 1927 (Ståhl 2005:66-68).

The first of about 700 People's Parks established nationally, the Malmö park spearheaded the Swedish labour movement's attempts to construct co-operatively owned green spaces as sites for political experimentation decades before democratic reforms opened up the state to socialist influence (Andersson 1987, Ståhl 2005). But when the social-democratic labour movement lost some of its former momentum towards the end of the 20th century, and new cultural forms had come to dominate, Malmö People's Park was (like most People's Parks) increasingly regarded as a derelict remnant of a dying political and popular culture.

In this article we focus on how municipal actors thus strove to reshape or 'revive' this park, accounting for two decades of intense and sometimes contentious redevelopment attempts following the renewal visions issued after a centre-right electoral coalition's municipal election win in 1985 (the first time since 1918 that the Social Democrats were not in power in Malmö). We seek to uncover how renewal plans anchoring future visions in past processes were continuously troubled by the park's intensely politically charged landscape. In doing so we seek to contribute to two debates.

First, we shed light on how local concerns with Malmö's urban renewal relates to historical narratives. The literature on Malmö's post-industrial transformation tend to emphasise neoliberal policies enacted by *both* social-democratic and right-wing politicians through narratives of rupture with the industrial era underwriting post-welfarist policies (Baeten 2012, Dannestam 2009, Holgersen 2017, Mukhtar-Landgren 2012). Renewal plans for Malmö People's Park were however more politically contentious than more abstract visions of city-wide rupture and rebirth. Here, conflicts thus tend to follow party lines, partly troubling the emphasis on Malmö's late 20th and early 21st century development as one of relative consensus around a common project of leaving the old, industrial city behind.

Second, we study plans for the People's Park in dialogue with scholarship on heritage and historical landscapes, arguing that heritage-based renewal of sites with vivid political pasts' risks inviting contradictions into planning that renewal narratives seek to play down or even silent. We do not claim that the past's politics

always troubles present plans. Rather, we underscore the precarious work of urban planning operating through a heritage discourse that demands that future visions are anchored in material artefacts and cultural practices left by past processes. We thus underscore the role of the material landscape in the struggles over the People's Parks politically charged past.

In making sense of the People's Park's redevelopment, our emphasis lies on how the past provided both problems and opportunities for renewal plans, and the consequences this presence of the past in planning had within attempts to reshape or remake the park. We thus explore two interrelated sets of questions about planning and urban heritage. First, how did various renewal plans marshal different periods and different remaining material artefacts to bolster different narratives, and how did this allow cultural and material remnants of the past in the landscape to shape the renewal plans? Second, how did tensions between the heritage narratives deployed in planning play out, how did these tensions articulate with political conflicts in the present, and how did this influence the ability for renewal plans to realise their visions?

In the next section we anchor our account to recent debates on heritage utilisation and the morphology of landscapes (i.e. how landscapes are shaped, see Mitchell 2012) before providing more background on Malmö People's Park and the nationwide People's Park movement in section three. Thereafter follow five sections where we account for how planners' and politicians' attempts to reshape the People's Park were troubled by the past they mobilised. In the conclusion we summarise our account, and what it tells us about politically charged pasts in urban renewal projects seeking to marshal cultural heritage.

The article, the first product of a collaborative project on the People's Parks movement in Sweden, is based on intensive archival work on Malmö People's Park by one of the authors. The article primarily draws on primary sources uncovered in Malmö municipal archives. The Swedish constitution (through the *offentlighetsprincipen* section) states that that all public authorities must retain and make publicly accessible records of not only formal decisions, but also all documents used to make decisions including memoranda and letters. While not always followed to the letter, this legislation enables very detailed archival research on urban planning. The different elected municipal councils (*nämnder*) that make decisions before they are debated in City Hall (*stadsfullmäktige*), and to a lesser extent respective administrative departments (*förvaltningar*) that prepare proposals for the council and have the responsibility to implement decisions, often have very complete files. In this article we study how cultural heritage figured in Malmö People's Park based in the different archives of Malmö City Council, the Technical Council (*Tekniska nämnden*) and the Planning Council (*Stadsbyggnadsnämnden*) from 1985 until the present. In addition, material from temporary cross-departmental

renewal groups, whose fragmentary archives have been uncovered in temporary, informal folders at Malmö Municipality's main building, is used. Since these documents themselves are a direct product of the processes we trace, they enable a close reading of how renewal work grappled with the park's politically loaded past. Combined with a strategic use of secondary sources (primarily public debates on the park in local papers, during moments of important decisions), the quality of these primary sources opens for detailed analysis of the issue that we seek to home in on.

Theoretical anchoring: Heritage, landscape, politics

At the heart of our account of Malmö People's Park's renewal sit two seemingly opposite ways of understanding heritage and the production of urban landscapes, read in dialogue. On the one end heritage signifies contemporary practices adapting a seemingly completely malleable past, aptly summarised in Tunbridge and Ashworth's view of history as "what a historian regards as worth recording and heritage [as] what contemporary society chooses to inherit and to pass on" (1996: 6). In line with this approach, prominent heritage scholar Rodney Harrison argues that "heritage is primarily not about the past, but instead about our relationship with the present and the future" (2013: 4).

To Ashworth (2009:107), that heritage is constructed makes it "ideal for place-product differentiation in search of unique selling point, or unique associations, of the place-product or place brand". Heritage can thus underpin and legitimise calls for planners and decision-makers to simply *chose* what to preserve as "urban heritage" operating "in synergy with cultural industries" to "reinvigorate socio-economic growth" (Bandarin & van Oers 2012: 118). Scholarly accounts presenting the urban landscape as nothing but a malleable resource to be exploited as heritage are, moreover joined by transnational actors in development work seeking to impose such a view, with the World Bank's *Physical Cultural Resource Safeguard Policy* perhaps the most evident example (Fleming & Campbell 2010). But while we will chart different attempts, sometimes by opposing groups, to remember specific aspects of Malmö People's Park's past and embed it in historical narratives according to present concerns, we want to move away from a position that equates heritage planning with bureaucratic memory work shaping the reception of an essentially malleable past.

Partly this is about rendering audible narratives beyond those emphasising place-marketing to thereby enable scrutinising the *struggles* shaping the histories told and the different, indeed sometimes opposing, present needs and desires such histories articulate. Such an understanding mirrors a trend of highlighting power and conflict in the writing of histories. This scholarship has primarily taken

on spatial concerns in the analysis of “memory sites” and their important role in creating national memory cultures since the late 19th century (See Schwarz 2010). Similarly, aspects of the past are actively purged from the present through the way that historical narratives single out specific elements. One example is anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s (1995) account of how key events shaping the Caribbean are muted by both public and professional histories, making power dynamics in the historical production of geographically specific silence his key concern. Closer to our particular concerns with urban heritage is David Harvey’s (1979) account of how an almost 150-year-long bitter struggle between progressive and conservative forces after the 1871 Paris Commune is contained, albeit hidden in “sepulchral silence”, at the *Basilica de Sacré-Coeur* on top of Montmartre. Harvey uncovers how struggles between republicans and monarchists over whether the Basilica should be built and what it represented permeated its construction, and how political conflicts have flared up at and around the Basilica intermittently thereafter. This points both to the importance of dominant narratives, and the difficulty to completely eradicate the afterlives of intense political events (see also Ross 2015). Constructivist understandings of heritage as essentially made by historical memory-work along these lines may thus enable critical scrutiny of how hegemonic forces, despite being enmeshed in conflict, shape our understanding of the past through narrative management of space (E.g. Hammami 2012).

Undoubtedly, social-constructivist readings of heritage have much to offer, illuminating the ongoing discursive work required to establish heritage, and the conflicts that can arise within such memory work. But, claiming the world is always a text does not mean that it could ever be *only* text (Harvey 1996). In order to grasp attempts to refashion the People’s Park we will thus combine constructivist perspectives on memory and history with conceptualisations that emphasise the inescapable entanglement of stories and material spaces. Against depictions of the past as resource waiting to be utilised stand accounts of heritage that are “as much about an inherited material form as about discursive connotations” and about “a present perpetually preconditioned by past processes” (Jönsson 2015: 310-311). As Lefebvre remarked in his epochal *The Production of Space* “no space ever vanishes utterly, leaving no trace”. Rather, previous spaces “still enshrine the superimposed spaces [...] that have occupied them” (Lefebvre 1991: 164).

Conceptualising heritage in its more traditional meaning, as inheritance (Graham et al. 2000, see also Smith 2010), this framing follows an acknowledgement of the landscape as a “concretization or reification of the social relations that go into its making” (Mitchell 2003: 240). Accordingly, landscape is best conceptualised as a socio-material relation, a “morphology” produced by numerous actors and groups struggling to create the kind of material landscape they desire, or need (Mitchell 2012). If constructivist accounts of heritage emphasise memory work

and historical narratives as the key way through which heritage is created, landscape-geographical perspectives insist that socio-material inheritances disturb any notion of heritage as simply the product of narratives.

Though made in the present, heritage renewal's reliance on historically produced material landscapes has certain implications. Planning bureaucrats might make heritage by drawing on hegemonic narratives, but this happens in circumstances existing already, not so much transmitted as text as inherited as material legacy. In studying the many failures of the heritage-driven renewal for Malmö People's Park since 1985, we will illustrate how heritage planning became destabilised in the struggle to contain past politics, present in the uses and artefacts of landscape, in its historical narratives.

Malmö, the emergence of social democracy, and the People's Park

Malmö People's Park might today easily be read as a relatively commonplace public green space. The meticulously well-maintained park, located on the periphery of Malmö's city centre in the old working class *Möllevången* district, is certainly well-attended on sunny summer days. As of fall 2018 the park contains several large playgrounds, a food truck area, a book exchange, a children's theatre scene, a science centre, an events centre, two pubs with beer gardens, and a nightclub/concert venue, that together draw large crowds on weekends. But still

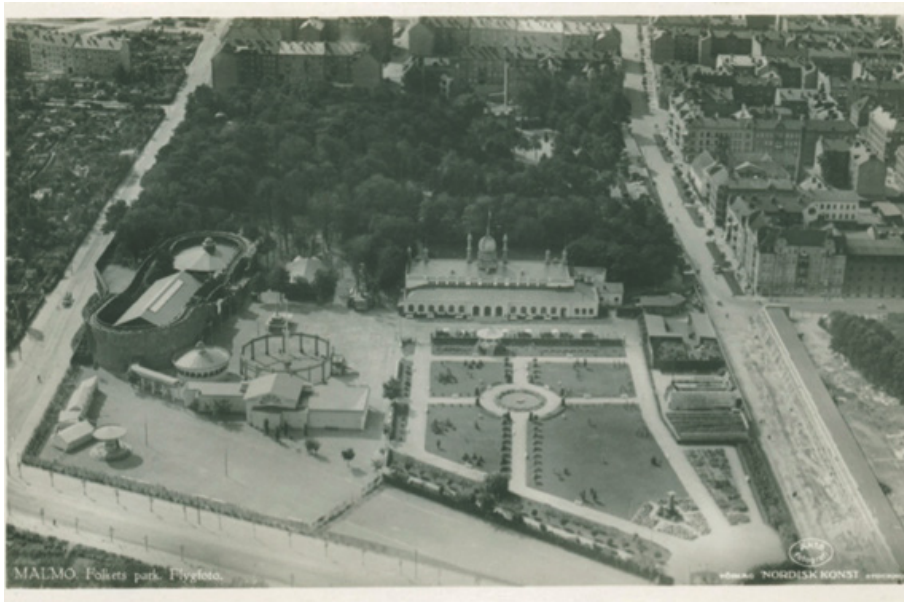


Fig. 1 Malmö Folkets Park, seen from the North, 1932. Photo courtesy of Malmö stad (The Åke Jarleby Collection).

the park appears far less remarkable than it did a hundred odd years ago.

Before further telling the story of this park, a brief introduction of Malmö and the strong position of the Social Democrats therein is however in place. Like many port cities Malmö grew rapidly around the turn of the 20th century. Primarily this was the result of a booming foodstuff industry turning the produce of the fertile southern Swedish plains into consumer goods. Thereafter textile mills followed, before large-scale factories around the *Kockums* shipyards came to dominate after the second world war (Billing and Stigendal 1994). As in many other growing cities, Malmö was home to a heterodox leftist milieu of unionist radicals, republican revolutionaries, and pre-Marxist socialists. In the 1880s it however became the hotbed for a more “German” kind of socialism that sought to build new kinds of unions linked to social-democratic party politics (Edgren 2016). It was in Malmö that August Palm in November 1881 held what is generally considered the first social-democratic speech in Sweden. It was here that the Social Democrats first started a major daily newspaper, *Arbetet*, and it was here that both the country’s first People’s House and first People’s Park were established. Malmö was also the birthplace of Per Albin Hansson, social-democratic party leader 1925-1946, Prime Minister 1932-1946, and generally considered one of the most important Swedish politicians ever. And, as we noted above, Malmö municipality was dominated by the Social Democrats for almost seven successive decades between 1918 and 1985 (Billing & Stigendal 1994, Holgersen 2017).

This is the municipal context wherein we can place Malmö People’s Park, a park that immediately after its 1891 opening became both a key resource for the city’s left and a popular destination for workers from across the region (Billing 1991). Here political gatherings could continue uninterrupted despite the lack of freedom of assembly in late 19th century Sweden. Here working class families could spend their Sundays (Billing 1991, Ståhl 2005). The park, previously the leisure garden of one of Malmö’s most prominent merchant families (the *Suells*), was initially rented in secret by the workers’ movement through a front man. But after a widely successful first year, raking in money by providing cheap access to an outdoor picnic space and through selling coffee from an improvised cart, the workers’ movement decided to use profits thereby made to form a stock company and buy the park (Billing 1991). With this deal the Swedish worker’s movement had acquired its first own urban green space.

Malmö People’s Park was not only an important site in terms of being the spark that ignited a nation-wide People’s Park movement. The site was also deeply connected to the socialist labour movement’s ambitions of becoming the dominant political and cultural force during the city’s early 20th century transformation into a major industrial port town. Herein, the park soon became a key cultural space for challenging Malmö’s elite’s hegemony. Political meetings were thus com-

bined with an increasingly elaborate cultural program. The first restaurant opened already in 1894. Thereafter followed theatre stages, dance halls, a large cinema, a small zoo, and a large fun fair. The People's Park thus became *the* entertainment destination in Malmö, linking almost all forms of popular culture to the Social Democrats' struggle for urban and national hegemony (Billing & Stigendal 1994, Billing 1991). The park however began to lose ground with the increasing sway of mass youth culture in the 1960 and 1970s. Already in 1965 plans to transform the Moorish Pavilion (centre of Fig. 1) into a conference centre linked through a mall to a hotel to be built next to the park were discussed (Haraldsson 2017:86). In 1976 the, then still comfortably social-democratic City Council, decided to aid the park through acquiring a minority share in the stock company owning the park. In return, the municipality promised to care for the park's landmark buildings and use municipal workers to maintain park grounds. Thereby the park was transformed from a social movement space into a curious kind of private-public park partnership. The park now simultaneously functioned as a public space, as a living historical heritage, and a commercial enterprise through the private firms leasing park buildings (Billing & Stigendal 1994, Malmö kommunfullmäktige 1976).

Ten years later a small group of young, ideologically driven neoliberals had seized control of Malmö's branch of The Moderate Unity Party (*Moderata Samlingspartiet*), Sweden's main centre-right party (see Pries 2017 for a longer discussion). With the help of a fragile electoral coalition including liberals and far right regional populists (*Skånepartiet*), The Moderates ousted Malmö's Social Democrats in the 1985 election (Billing & Stigendal 1994). The new political majority immediately set to work, seeking to inaugurate "new times for Malmö" (Ollén 1985). This struggle to change what had for 67 years? been a social-democratic city was fought on many fronts. But one of the high-profile projects launched in the fall of 1985 was new plans for the municipality's role in the People's Park.

1985: Nostalgia for entrepreneurial Social Democrats

Importantly, the Social Democrats' opponents were not only targeting stories told about Malmö, but the very physical landscape that functioned as a manifestation of social-democratic Malmö (see Mitchell(2008) for a discussion on landscape and ideology). Already before the 1985 election conservatives, liberals, and far right populists had criticised that public funds were used for a project including conservation efforts in attempts to find new uses for the struggling park. One example was the right's resistance to budgeting 5 million SEK for renovating the park's footpaths, drainage and lightning (Malmö Kommunfullmäktige 1984). Another example was resistance to plans, successfully introduced by the Social Democrats, for refurbishing and converting the aging 1903 wood-frame Moorish

Pavilion restaurant into a municipally run “multifunctional meeting space” (Malmö Kommunfullmäktige 1985). Would-be-Mayor Joakim Ollén thus had several examples to marshal when he in the 1985 election pamphlet targeted park preservation efforts as illustrations of an unhealthy relationship between the state and civil society in Malmö, enabled by decades of unbroken social-democratic rule (Ollén 1985: 34). The People’s Park had for decades been a resource for the Social Democrats’ hegemonic ambitions (Billing & Stigendal 1994). But by 1985 the need to funnel municipal funds to maintain the park as an accessible public space infused in political heritage had clearly become a liability for the Social Democrats, eagerly exploited by Malmö’s right.

The combination of narratives highlighting Malmö’s Social Democrats’ close connection to the park and the need to use municipal resources to preserve and make this site publically accessible created a symbolically salient object for Ollén’s election campaign rhetoric. But the park proved a less easy target for renewal. Ollén’s first attempt to remake the park was marked by his campaign’s outright antagonistic attitude. In a highly publicised move he led an attempt to wrestle control over the curiously private-public entity that the park had by now become by appointing a new board of directors. Notwithstanding rhetorical flair and threats of legal action this tactic failed spectacularly. The Social Democratic partly retained control of Malmö People’s Park by pooling its representatives on the board as direct shareowners *and* as Malmö’s largest minority party (Hallencrutz 1985a, Hallencrutz 1985b, Hallencrutz 1985c, Jönsson 1985).

Despite loudly threatening to ignore the contract stipulating that the municipality should cover the park’s maintenance cost, the center-right coalition did not take an expected hardline approach. Instead of cutting municipal funding once attempts to exercise full control over the park had failed, the new majority instead opted for large-scale renewal. The exact reasons for this remain unclear. But cutting maintenance and forcing the already struggling park to close would have created a symbol for how the new majority allowed a fondly remembered social-democratic ‘memory site’ (Schwartz 2010) to fall into ruins. Though such a move would perhaps be in line with the more aggressive roll-back neoliberalism of the 1980s Anglo-American New Right (Peck 2013: 22-36), inaugurating their term by actively turning the park into a monument of insensitivity to Malmö’s past would not be in line with Malmö’s neoliberals over-arching argument that reforming the welfare state would not (despite what left critics argued, see *Socialdemokraterna i Malmö* 1991) spur the collapse of the city’s social and cultural fabric. Already in this development one can sense how decades of intense use and labour movement activities had political consequences for how the site could now be managed. And already in this move away from the threats of closing the park, one encounters how Malmö’s first democratically elected centre-right City Council had inherited

a material landscape that made particular demands. As Mitchell (2003, 2008) underscores, history matters partly through how the physical landscapes past processes produced are frequently expensive to alter.

Unable to abandon the park, mayor Ollén came to personally co-sponsor a redevelopment plan designed by a newly appointed park director to free the park from its reliance on public funds by making it compete on the market as a commercial amusement park (Söder 1986). While Malmö Municipality was cutting costs by firing employees and privatising its extensive real estate holdings (Pries 2017: 71–72), the right thus began to pour public money on social democracy's perhaps holiest ground. The new administration signed large loans for the People's Park's new rides with the silent approval of the social-democratic minority, adding up to a complete revamp of the park (Malmö kommunfullmäktige 1986).

While there certainly was a passive-aggressive hostility towards some elements of the park's past at work in these plans, the vision was not completely unmoored from history. The commercial private-public redevelopment underscored a particular facet of the park's past by re-launching the site as an amusement park. Future visions presented in early 1986 were thus steeped in a nostalgia for 1950s social democracy, seemingly recreating scenes from this moment of popular mass-entertainment helmed by the labour movement at its absolute peak of political and cultural power. This was the past now to be remembered. While Malmö's neoliberals were doing their best to break with the social-democratic welfarist tradition of government, the only option they saw for the People's Park was to spend considerable sums of public money to re-animate one element of this legacy.

This re-articulation of the past within a particular redevelopment vision was highly selective. It was the commercial and popular aspects of mass entertainment that was understood as an untapped potential. The political aims of the park's past operations was explicitly purged in a number of ways, most provocative perhaps by the park itself being rebranded "The Park of Malmö" (*Malmöparken*). Indeed, the park's new executive director Jan-Olof Nilsson publically made it clear that there would be "no more waving with red flags and [that no one] would check you party book" at the gate (Söder 1986).

The renewal's selective, explicitly de-politicising, re-articulation would be crucial for its later undoing. In leveraging one facet of the park's past so openly against both representations of the place tied to the labour movement and against more mundane lingering uses and attachments, the plan alienated both the core constituency of long-time park users and undermined stable cross-party support. Despite massive efforts to attract paying visitors to the park and three years of snowballing municipal spending on a succession of spectacular rides, nothing near the numbers needed for this commercial private-public venture to break even ever materialised. Instead the park's annual losses rapidly escalated, from a

few million SEK budgeted for maintenance to over 10 million SEK for publicity, wages, and carousel leases by the time the Social Democrats regained power in Malmö after the 1988 election (Folkets park AB 1990: 4). With nothing resembling the vision of a de-politicised and profitable version of 1950s mass entertainment realised, the Social Democrats prepared to drastically cut public funding. Neither the popular interest nor the political will to press on existed.

Throughout this sequence of events legacies of Malmö's People Park had been at work. Particularly interesting is how the park's solid political connotations made mobilising the site tempting for the city's centre-right political majority, but also exerted certain pressures on how this past could be used to inform future visions and their anchoring in heritage narratives. Every attempt by Malmö's first neoliberals to leverage one aspect of the park's past opened for responses emphasising forgotten aspects. Attacking the park openly in the election campaign was perhaps a way of powerfully posing the present against this symbolically salient past, but it also obliged the new administration to act. Despite furious threats to do so, allowing the park and its already aging building stock to decay further risked opening up the new administration to calls to be insensitive to Malmö's, labour-permeated, history.

While the funfair plans' use of heritage narratives certainly re-articulated the park's commercial past, what to neoliberals seemed like its most innocent aspect, this created conflicts. To make this selective use of the park's past as heritage the narrative had to be explicitly posed against the park as a living landscape still inhabited by political uses and artefacts, as the new Park Directors provocative remarks made clear. The resoundingly unenthusiastic response to a bland recreation of the park's past had several causes. But how the park's politics were ruthlessly purged by a sanitised cultural heritage renewal plan, alienating the park's still large group of supporters and visitors, is certainly one of these. Renewal sanitising the park of its strong historical link to left-wing politics as part of a contemporary conflict moreover made it easier to pull the plug on renewal schemes once the Social Democrats regained power in Malmö. This is what we turn to now.

1989: Market solutions meets cultural heritage

Though the 1985 plans for redeveloping Malmö's People's Park were sanctioned by a fragile centre-right City Council majority, they were formally the product of Malmö Folkets Park AB stock company's board of directors. There are therefore very few traces in terms of archived public records concerning these plans. How this venture came to an end, and the plan proposed to replace it, can however be found in the minutes of a temporary meeting group. Also in this work the park's accumulated uses and attachments came to figure in ways that did not allow re-

newal to proceed smoothly, again illustrating that embedding future visions in a landscape saturated by historical significance continued to prove problematic.

The meeting group for finding a permanent solution for the People's Park, appointed by the social-democratic majority, begun their work in secret in September 1989. Led by a financial consultant, this group consisted mostly of municipal bureaucrats. Having done extensive research on the fiscal state of the park, and uncovered the astronomical debt generated by the failed 1985 rebranding attempt, plans were made to drastically decrease public spending. The group discussed a range of possible ways to move forward that were all concerned with closing down the amusement park. Most radical of these were proposals to demolish the park's two biggest buildings – the already disused 1903 Moorish Pavilion restaurant and the 1939 *Amiralen* dance hall – to decrease maintenance costs and make space for commercial real estate renewal (Quist Utveckling AB 1989).

This quick-fix squarely addressed the park's immediate (debt-accumulating) past, but was unconcerned with the significance of early 20th century labour movement activity. The plan would undergo two revisions, shifting attention from the park's recent to more distant past. These revisions illustrate how the park's accumulated uses, attachments and representations as public history – and the way they were aligned with politics – forced themselves on the planners' agenda, allowing groups to confront renewal by introducing notions of the past's significance.

The park's symbolically loaded history forced revisions already within the working group's memos. Despite being fairly advanced, with a real estate contractor selected and a bank having done preliminary calculations on real estate values, initial plans to demolish key buildings and sell off the vacant lot to cancel the stock company's debt had to be scrapped. As the group's meeting minutes noted, the park's rich history of use had created a "strong connection" for "many Malmö residents" to these buildings. The uses and attachments made and remade during decades, rather than buildings' aesthetic or historical values, were, once represented in bureaucratic form, a kind of heritage that did not allow the wholesale transformation of the park's landscape according to the entrepreneurial vision of the consultants' calculation. After introducing notions of historically strong attachments to parts of the park, the working group continued its work in a slightly less casual manner, yet along the same approximate trajectory. The *Amiralen* and Moorish Pavilion buildings would not be demolished and this land would not be sold to developers, although this decision was noted had "no commercial" basis. But still, 6,7 ha elsewhere in the park was slotted for sale at a price of about 71m SEK to pay for debts largely generated by the failed amusement park venture, while "a large real estate company" was involved in drafting architectural sketches for "new buildings along Amiralsgatan" (Quist Utveckling AB 1989).

Someone however continued to disapprove. Through leaking information about the secret renewal plans to redevelop parts of the park as a commercial mix-used property to local newspapers, the kind of “strong connection” that many locals indeed had to the park became even more evident. The group’s minutes after this scandal broke reveal a tone of panic. The group could no longer control which parts of the park that were – like Amiralen and the Moorish Pavilion – framed as worthy of preservation and which parts could be slotted for redevelopment. Any sense of an overlap between the sites that the group was willing to designate as historically significant and sites where intense attachments were enacted in everyday use conditioned by the park’s past, was gone. The practices of historically grounded place exceeded the planners black and white division between historically interesting and developable space, causing a mismatch that threw the entire renewal project off course (Quist Utveckling AB 1989).

The working group responded to this new terrain by completely surrendering to the idea of the park as cultural heritage once they understood that social-democratic grassroots seeking to preserve the park would fight for every inch of land. To the economic calculations on land sales one had to add the political costs of possible (or probable) heritage preservation struggles between the City Council’s social-democratic majority and its own grassroots. The idea of selling off parts of the parks thus slowly faded, and seems to have been completely scrapped by the time the group reported their proposals to the People’s Park’s board of directors (Quist Utveckling AB 1989).

What little remains of the working group’s minutes after this moment instead reveal inklings of an alternative plan that later formed the basis for a formal proposal for the municipality to buy the People’s Park and designate it a public “community park”. This work was led by a newly appointed, enthusiastic, City Head Gardener: Gunnar Ericsson. His plan departed from the point raised by other members of the redevelopment group about specific sites worth preserving, instead claiming that the park’s *entire* landscape had unique values. Ericsson’s plan also emphasised the park’s architectural values, making the large Moorish Pavilion the central feature of the plan and thus anchoring the vision of a “park of feasts” to legacies of the park’s past. Another crucial element was Ericsson’s detailed attention to the park’s physical environment. By focusing renewal work on the park as a public green space his plan hoped the park would become a center for the rapidly growing urban environmentalist movement, thus tying “this new popular movement” to the park (Malmö Gatukontor 1989).

Unlike plans to sell off parts of the park, which had hinged on confining the heritage value of particular artefacts and the lingering everyday practices, to particularly important sites like the Moorish Pavilion, this plan actively attempted to grasp how uses related to the entire physical landscape. By drawing on a recently

commissioned poll, the City Head Gardener sought to show that while the amusement park had not created the expected flow of consumers, Malmö People's Park remained more well-attended than comparable municipal green spaces (Quist Utveckling AB 1989, Malmöparken 1989). Decades of intense use created a landscape made up of everyday uses, historically prominent buildings, and accumulated greenery that was to be the basis for the third version of a renewal plan under the 1988-1991 social-democratic administration.

Also this third attempt to solve the mess the park was in, seeking to embed future visions of the park in the park's actual landscape, would have to navigate inherited tensions amplified by present contradictions. This is most evident in how this vision, presented in Malmö City Council in May 1991 as an official municipal plan for buying the rest of the shares of the People's Park stock company and formally making it a public park, sparked heated argument (Malmö kommunfullmäktige 1991a, Malmö kommunfullmäktige 1991b). Social-democratic, Green and Left Party representatives in the council did their best to underscore that, as the country's first People's Park, the park was worthy to preserve for posterity not only for the city, but also the country as a whole (Malmö kommunfullmäktige 1991b). This appeal to historical legitimacy as rationale for using public funds to cancel the park's snowballing debts was met with fierce criticism from the right. It was however not, as one perhaps might expect, that neoliberals were critical of turning this failed private-public partnership into a publicly owned urban common. In fact, all political parties seemed to rally behind versions of such a renewal vision.

Rather, the formal plan's rather cavalier gloss of the politics of the park's past, presenting it as a historically important site, was interpreted as a provocation by the right, which very well knew how powerful the park was as a symbol of social democracy and labour activism. The social-democratic majority insisted that most of the area should be listed as a historical preservation site with The Swedish National Heritage Board, and that strategies should build on the park's legacy by using it as an "internationalist centre" for civil society groups. The centre and rightist parties were critical of formal preservation designation, which would have rendered future redevelopments even more cumbersome. But most on the right could at least agree that "the park itself" was "of historical interest", as a Liberal Party representative argued. They also seemed to be largely sympathetic to her argument that the large 1930s modernist yellow brick buildings by the park's main entrance was "nothing to keep" and could be cleared to "renew the area" (Malmö kommunfullmäktige 1991b). However, unlike the centrist's limited but sincere engagement to protect "the park itself", the regionalist populists called the park an important "symbol of socialist oppression of humanity". Their spokesperson Carl P. Herslow argued that "all signs of the rampage of socialism, like in Eastern

Europe, [should] be erased” in the park, suggesting that both historical representations and the practices and artefacts of this place belonged to a past era (Malmö kommunfullmäktige 1991b).

Despite protests from the political minority, the plan to buy the park and to integrate it within Malmö’s municipal park administration was approved by the City Council’s centre-left coalition. Little however came of the Social Democrats proposals to move forward with a cultural heritage listing, although a group of administrators led by a landscape historian did some studies in preparation for a listing process in the late 1990s that in the end came to nothing (see Malmö kulturmiljö 2008). The only part of the formal deal that protected the park was a clause in the contract that made it difficult for a future City Council to commercially redevelop it (Malmö kommunfullmäktige 1991a). The Social Democrats retreat from the politically costly attempt to safeguard the place as historical heritage had thus left it potentially open to future renewal plans. And with the center-right again seizing control over Malmö City Council just a few months later, this unclear status opened for the park’s past to again become part of the planning process.

In none of the three late 1980s plans for Malmö’s People’s Park could the past be contained by the tactical silences of heritage narratives (cf. Trouillot 1995). When visions ignored present remnants of this past, a mere mention of the strong lingering historical attachments and everyday uses forced redevelopment plans off track. When planning visions instead sought to limit these attachments and uses to buildings framed as intimately entwined with the city’s history through treating these as cultural heritage the heated public response made the planners’ sharp distinction between historical sites worthy preserving and land that could be redeveloped collapse along with the entire renewal scheme. Finally, even a vision built on a much more complex rendering on the presence of the park’s past acknowledging historically conditioned patterns of use and attachment, the built environment, and the park’s accumulated green space opened planning to contestation that limited proposals to preserve the park as a formal heritage site. Once the plans were up for political debate in the Malmö City Council, they were unable to fully expunge the struggle and desires of politics from this past from its heritage narratives.

1991: Public space silencing particular pasts

With a center-right coalition led by Malmö’s Moderates once again in majority after the 1991 municipal elections, any notion of cultural heritage as cornerstone of municipal plans for the People’s Park were foiled. Instead, the few remaining planning documents for the park’s first few years as a municipal “community park” bear witness to a much more humble approach. The park’s two biggest buildings,

Amiralen and the Moorish Pavilion, were already rented out to a large restaurant and entertainment firm (Quist Utveckling AB 1989). But the lease, constructed in the desperate moment seeking to stave off the sale of the park, had set extraordinarily low rents. This meant that the firm had little pressure to use buildings beyond low-risk one-off events with prepaid dinners, such as conferences. Adding to a sense of neglect, this meant that the two large buildings loomed empty much of year. The Social Democrats attempt to reinvigorate the use of these buildings as semi-public meeting spaces, and hence also the use of the park itself, by spending large sums renovating them during the 1980s had thus reached a dead end. With the amusement park sold off and the largest buildings in the hand of private interests, the Streets Department's Park Division, now in charge of the park, focused their attention to mundane maintenance, like fixing walking paths and benches and tending to broken drainpipes.

This approach matched a wave of austerity unleashed by Malmö's new political majority, and the subsequent necessity to manage the park at a "minimum of administration and at a low cost" (Malmö Gatukontor undated). But, this approach clearly also drew on the Moderates' vision of developing the park as a public green space, articulated against the Social Democrats' concern with using cultural heritage to subtly revisit and reinforce the lingering effects of the park's past political role. It was thus locals, particularly "children and the youth" in the neighbourhood, that the new management focused their meagre resources on (Malmö Gatu- och trafiknämnd 1994). While the few sources documenting the Streets Department's working on the park during the early 1990s in fact mentioned "cultural history" as important, their budgets focused completely on maintenance of the park as a public green space (e.g. Malmö Gatunämnd 1992, Malmö Gatu- och trafiknämnd 1994).

Gone was City Head Gardener Ericsson's ambitious 1989 plan for creating a green space steeped in architectural heritage, despite the very same person being in charge of the renewal plans. Re-imagining the park as an urban commons and public green space didn't then only mark a rupture with 1980s amusement park plans. It was also shaped by the, again dominant, political right's desire to create a new sense of place unmoored from the longer, political history of the People's Park's movement. The financial constraints of austerity probably was the main cause of this step away from the new management's initial renewal plans to make the most of the park's architectural heritage. These plans were also certainly in line with the centre-right's desire to preserve this heritage site in the most low key way possible, thereby not having to grapple with narratives that invariably made their opponents the historical subjects. The fragile political majority did, moreover, certainly not want to be caught in the unavoidable local protests that any renewal risked unleashing. Again the traces of a politically charged past was an important

element, shaping how urban planners shifted from a vision of heritage-focused renewal to a much more mundane focus on public green space.

1995: Discovering the development potential of a lingering past

When the Social Democrats once again regained control of Malmö City Council in 1994 a window of opportunity opened for revisiting how the park's past could inform renewal. This can first be noted in discussions about formally returning to calling the park "Malmö People's Park", rather than the "Park of Malmö" brand that had been used for the 1986 amusement park misadventure. Johnny Örbäck, the Social Democrat who wrote the motion suggesting the return to the original name framed his arguments through a lengthy narrative of the park's history, underscoring how everyday use remained shaped by this past and that the new name was not used by locals. The planners at the Streets and Parks department could not but agree, stating that the name was a "question of cultural history". The Park of Malmö brand was viewed as a "historical parenthesis", whereas "in everyday speech" the "People's Park has remained used". This old name should therefore be "introduced to new generations" (Malmö Gatu- och Trafiknämnd 1994).

These arguments were all referenced when the issue was settled in Malmö City Council. Further, Örbäck drew on the Urban Planning Department's argument that it was not only "important to preserve the People's Park in every way", but that there were "no records showing any official decision to change the park's name" to the Park of Malmö. Furthermore, official maps used the older name. With the park's initial name persisting both in everyday vernacular and in official presentations, Örbäck argued that it was time to adjust formal policy to "reality". Malmö City Council could thus agree to not even vote on the matter, but simply notify the Real Estate Department to "take down the sign" that said The Park of Malmö (Malmö kommunfullmäktige 1995).

This rather undramatic way of re-embracing the park's social-democratic past was followed by a more contentious struggle concerning what to actually do with the park. Just over a year after the 1994 election a committee discussing the park's future began to meet. It was however not the Social Democrats, perhaps still shook from the trauma of selling the park to the municipality in 1991, that initiated the process that would again bring heritage to the fore in a renewed nostalgic visions. It was instead the Real Estate Department that had crunched the numbers on rent revenues and maintenance costs. With particularly the park's largest buildings hemorrhaging money, a more business-minded renewal strategy, again geared at real estate sales, offered an untapped potential for capping maintenance costs (Malmö Gatukontor 1995a).

While the Real Estate Department's calculations were untroubled with heri-

tage, or even the park's use as a public green space, other municipal bureaucrats seized this moment to push their respective agendas in ways that not only opposed commercial renewal but again brought the park's past into the planning process. One such actor was the representatives of civil society interests still entrenched in the park (*Kulturföreningen Folkets Park*), complaining that the park was under-used by both the public and the large disinterested commercial leaseholders. Instead these veteran grassroots pushed for ramping municipal spending on culture to turn the park's buildings into hubs of movement activities with cheap offices and meeting rooms for labour, migrant, community, and other cultural associations. This would contribute to a vision of a "cultural park" of the future informed by "a more than 100-year tradition as meeting place for entertainment, recreation, and community" (Malmö Gatukontor 1995b).

Meanwhile, City Head Gardner Ericsson used this window of opportunity to return to the ambitious late 1980s plan that unintentionally had laid the groundwork for the humble 1990s "community park". Like the civil society representatives, the Head Gardener painted a picture of the People's Park as a largely abandoned public green space. Despite a head start in terms of a regional pattern of visitors going back to its previous glory days, the kind of everyday use by those living in the vicinity that might have been expected was absent. But by referencing a fresh poll, the City Head Gardener showed that a lingering sense of place stemming back to the People's Park for decades having been one of the city's most important places for popular culture continued to colour people's perception and uses of the park as a regional meeting place (Malmö Gatukontor 1996a). It was in order to draw on this untapped potential of nostalgic visitors travelling from outside the neighbourhood to visit the park, that the City Head Gardener suggested that the municipality should not only start thinking about a comprehensive renewal plan for the park's worn down outdoor environment, but also make plans for making better use of the parks several sizeable buildings as cultural venues (Malmö Gatukontor 1996b).

The Real Estate Department's strictly commercial plans were foiled by the alternative visions' way of arguing for a more heritage-sensitive renewal process firmly entrenched in representations of everyday uses that went back a century, again showing how the park proved tricky to turn into a narrative asset for renewal plans (cf. Ashworth, 2009). Yet, no one seemed willing to fund any of the cultural projects that underpinned nostalgic visions of the People's Park returning to its roots as a site for popular mass entertainment. The more recent past, of the 1980s funfair debacle, with big empty lots where the massive roller coasters stood cast a shadow over the park, pointing to yet another way that remnants in the landscape undid planning visions enmeshed in heritage narratives. And while the working group's plans thus petered out in the late 1990s, the visions they had articulated would inform the next round of planning.

2001: Politicising heritage through commercialisation of public space

The park's civil society association representatives did not abandon the idea of moving away from the only just materialising community park through mobilising visions informed by the park's past. In 2000 they again tapped municipal authorities, asking for a strategic renewal plan focused on finding uses for the park's key buildings in line with the park's past. The result was, again, a temporary renewal group including the same parties as in the 1990s, but this time led by a consultant. Their work was presented in February 2001 and, with a revised foreword, again in December the same year (Malmö Tekniska nämnd 2001a, Malmö Tekniska nämnd 2001b).

While the civil society representatives, and the City Head Gardener, at this moment sought to re-ignite visions for drawing more visitors to the park in order to inject it with a richer cultural life, the problem of wrapping it in the language of fiscal responsibility demanded by the Real Estate Department remained unsolved. The consultant leading the group however managed to defer this contradiction. In contrast to how opposing factions in the previous planning group posed a return to popular culture *against* a development strategy concerned with private real estate renewal, she saw these strategies as complementary. The park's lingering uses and attachments should be the basis for a strategy that drew on heritage to boost commercial mass culture *and* public spending in a private-public partnership, all wrapped in nostalgia for the park's 1950s glory days (Malmö Tekniska nämnd 2001a). In line with Ashworth's (2009) emphasis, heritage was now fully embraced as place-marketing resource.

The consultant arrived at this conclusion by mapping the patterns of use associated with the park's different venues and sites, and through repeatedly retelling the story of the People's Park's movement to show how her vision fitted therein. But unlike the early 1990s visions of drawing on the legacies of the past to create a viable public space or a grassroots culture centre, this plan saw this landscape as heritage that could be mobilised in a plan otherwise primarily concerned with creating "attractive space" through turning it over to market forces. If this vision sought to mobilise the place and history by wrapping up future visions in a coat of nostalgic heritage, it was the Real Estate Department's vision of seizing a development opportunity that was at its core (Malmö Tekniska nämnd 2001a). In a way, this was a plan that repeated the 1986 "Park of Malmö" turn to public-private entrepreneurialism, but utilising a broader range of lingering attachments, everyday uses and artefacts than the 1980s narrow focus on re-articulating the park's past commercial against its political past and informed by 15 years of work integrating neoliberal ideas with Malmö's more social planning tradition.

Again plans were however disrupted by how tensions of past politics unleashed by the planners turning to heritage provoked conflicts articulating with present tensions. The political right strove to undermine the plan by arguing that the kinds of everyday residual use as an entertainment site that plans were premised on did not hold up, and that the People's Park in fact looked more like a disused and "closed-down amusement park" which hardly could be imagined to become the region's next "experience centre" (Malmö Tekniska nämnd 2001c). Most fiercely, however, the right criticised plans for seeking to reintroduce what they saw a political facet of the park's history belonging to its time as movement space before the 1991 buy-out.

For instance, the centre-right representatives in the Technical Council that dealt with the proposal protested vigorously, arguing that "in the early 1990s the City Council decided that the People's Park should be run as community park" (Malmö Tekniska nämnd 2001c). While this interpretation was not exactly true, it was clear that for those previously involved in the 1991 deal that the plans now discussed entailed a re-appraisal of the park's *political* past as the heritage narrative used to market the renewal project. That it was this context, rather than any principled rightist criticism against the city embarking on yet another entrepreneurial private-public partnership with new commercial firms in the park, was made evident by another protest from a Moderate politician in the city's Recreational Council. Similarly angered with the proposal, he instead leaned towards more commercial interests in the park. Since "the Social Democrats have already allowed 'the money-changers back into the temple'" by "allowing all kinds of actors to make money from this once historical and non-commercial land" there was no need for the public to take a leading role in the public-private development partnership. It was instead to be up to the market actors if they wanted to invest heritage renewal or develop the site in less historically sensitive way (Malmö Tekniska nämnd 2001d).

If conservatives and liberals tried to mark a distance towards the park's past, both in terms of a lingering sense of place and the periodisation of historical narratives, there were plenty of responses that instead used this opportunity to more firmly anchor the present to this political past. Of the 27 stake-holder responses to the 2001 renewal plan, at least nine were organisations aligned with the Social Democrats (Malmö Tekniska nämnd 2001b). This illuminates how the People's Park's past attachments were still considered a legitimate source for speaking about the park's future and claim stake-holder status. All these letters were positive to the plan, with several noting that a turn away from a modest community park was in line with the site's history as a regional hotspot for entertainment.

The social-democratic responses were however not entirely uncritical of the plan, and the contradictions articulated were, just like the right's criticism, related to the park's past. Several of Malmö's municipal councils, dominated by the Social

Democrats, took a stance against the plan's reliance on commercial actors at this historically sensitive site. Most fierce in its criticism of plans' commercial aspects was the Swedish Pensioners' Association (*Sveriges Pensionärsförbund*), specifically arguing against any limitations to access that commercial actors might lead to, and the Swedish Confederation of Trade Union's local branch (*Landsorganisationen*) that also wanted the plan to shift away from anything that would "compete" with commercial interest and instead pleaded for focusing on providing a "PEOPLE'S Park" (Malmö Tekniska nämnd 2001e, Malmö Tekniska nämnd 2001f).

Unlike those that sought to keep the past at bay through maintaining the park's present status as a community park, these groups not only understood heritage to be a substantial resource for renewal but also in terms of history and lingering uses of space that commanded a certain sense of respect. Heritage again turned out to be as much a problem as a resource. Inviting the park's past politics into the planning process provoked reactions from all sides, and made what could have been a fairly straight forward renewal plan into a highly contentious issue.

In the end the social-democratic majority caved in, and essentially purged the plan from the ambition to introduce more commercial forces, while emphasising that the park should both be a public space, the kind of cultural destination that echoed its past and contribute to the municipality's increasing planning focus on marketing itself to "desirable residents" through the production of "attractive space" (see Pries 2017). This meant that many of the key visions and much of the institutional infrastructure that have framed Malmö's People's Park various development up into the present had been put in place. The stage had been set for new variations of how the park's past was articulated with present concerns, both in terms of historical narratives and remains in place.

Conclusions:

As mentioned above, Malmö People's Park is today a well-maintained, popular, community park that embeds heritage in more mundane kinds of use. But our account shows that this has not always been the case, and that the recurrent attempts to develop this site has provoked fierce conflicts over how to handle remnants of a once highly politicised space as cultural heritage. Thus we have accounted for the often thorny problems arising as a succession of liberal-conservative and social-democratic municipal majorities have since the mid-1980s striven to reshape or retain the perhaps holiest ground for Malmö's social-democratic labour movement. In so doing we illuminate how narrating the city is best understood as a socio-material process not only about telling and retelling particular stories, but also about reshaping or retaining the social, cultural and material landscapes entangled with these. In striving to usher in "new times for Malmö" (Ollén, 1985),

the first non-social-democratic coalition steering Malmö since the introduction of universal suffrage in a rather palpable way strove to etch their ideological visions and their take on Malmö's history into the very fabric of the People's Park (see Mitchell, 2008). In hindsight we can see how this re-etching failed, but how it was simultaneously a kind of starting point for a now almost 30 year long process where Malmö's various municipal majorities have experimented, and still continue to experiment, with the kind of stories to be told about and through the People's Park.

Importantly, these redevelopment attempts came after Malmö People's Park had experienced decades of decline. At the onset redevelopment visions could therefore depict the park as a run-down landscape that *something* had to be done about. Unlike in many other renewal plans for Malmö, from the mid-90s onwards usually framed by a political consensus emphasising a narrative rupture with Malmö's industrial legacy (Holgerson 2017), plans for the park's renewal were here all concerned with explicitly mobilising (particular parts of) the past as cultural heritage. The past should in other words not be abandoned, but rather selectively marshalled as resource (Ashworth 2009). Hence, planning visions essentially had to address and make sense of the remaining elements produced by past processes, be they material artefacts, everyday uses or lingering geographies of attachment and representation. Usually the park's less overtly political role as Malmö's key place for popular entertainment during the early twentieth century was taken up in heritage narratives, no matter if renewal plans were primarily initiated by bureaucrats or politically elected decision-makers, and regardless of the city's political majority's alignment.

But despite attempts to marshal de-politicised nostalgic framings of the past, the park proved problematic to mobilise as heritage. The park as a complex socio-material landscape, with lingering practices and artefacts *in place* enmeshed with historical narratives *of place*, time and again articulated with contemporary political tensions. Social-democratic attempts to more gently de-politicise the park while protecting it as heritage, for example, opened for tensions around how important aspects of the park's lingering past was neglected – as happened both in 1989 and in 2001. When the right instead sought to break with the past by *only* emphasising the park's commercial past, this instead sparked tensions around how aspects of the park's history were explicitly erased – as happened in 1985-89 and in 1991-94. In both cases the contradictions that this attention to the past invited led to the complete break-down, or serious revisions, of renewal plans.

Legacies of the labour movement's leftist politics, such an important part for many decades, proved impossible to purge from Malmö People's Park's. Hence, rendering the park a "mere" cultural heritage propping up renewal attempts, time and time again opened up spaces for conflict seized by politicians of all kinds as

well as civil society groups. It seems to us that the ways that the past thereby entered planning-processes was crucial for provoking political tensions that made planning unstable and unpredictable. What perhaps caught planners and politicians most off guard was the silent endurance of patterns of everyday use from the park's more overtly political period. Just as the landscape has many "authors" (Mitchell 2012), "contemporary society" (Tunbridge & Ashworth 1996: 6) thus proved less of an actor and more of a cacophony of voices tugging at heritage-centred renewal attempts, itself haunted by the contradictions of past politics..

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