Introduction: Narrating the City and Spaces of Contestation

By Ragnhild Claesson & Pål Brunnström

While nation states have a disputed status in a globalised world, cities are often regarded as sovereign and global actors. Along with de-nationalising processes of increased privatisation, supranational governing and networks of transnational corporations, city administrations have developed new capabilities of orientation and governing in a global context (Sassen 2006). Inequality, poverty and segregation are some of the pressing issues that city administrations are grappling with – issues of local challenge with global relevance and repercussions, and vice versa. We wonder, if city administrations also address cultural issues that traditionally were of national concern, as fostering and narrating a sense of identity and belonging? If so, we think this shift needs to be further inquired, as we know that narrating and uses of history are not innocent practices. Rather, these are activities which consciously and unconsciously can push developments and futures in specific directions (Sandercock 2003). Further, narrating and history-writing have a spatial dimension and a performative force which may manifest in the physical environment, making changes, or sustaining status quo (De Certeau 1988, Hayden 1997 and Massey 2005). A critical engagement in the making and use of history in urban space is needed to disclose power relations and constructions of categories, such as gender identities (Scott 2011), and to problematize bias perspectives on cultural heritage and an "authorised heritage discourse" (Smith 2006). Processes of narrating the city in urban development and regeneration are often processes where not only urban history, but also urban futures, are negotiated in a very concrete and physical sense.

How to understand the role of cities in a globalised world is largely debated. There are approaches which seek to contextualise and problematize "the urban question" holistically. For example, understanding cities as places where the local and global are mutually constitutive – a local-global constellation of often conflicting trajectories stratified by inequality and power relations (Massey 2005); as an urban-rural interdependency and an ongoing "planetary urbanisation" which

effect all people unevenly and impacts the whole environment (Brenner & Schmid 2017); or as a practice of "worlding" (Roy & Ong 2011) – a perspective which involves a shift of focus from the *subjects* of world cities and systems to that of the *doing* of world cities, to "worlding" as activity. This latter approach does not neglect scrutinising capitalist or post-colonial systems. Rather it strives to capture not only the way these systems are manifested or challenged, but also goes beyond to recognise a multitude of activities, for example informal practices in the global South. This approach involves a continuous reformulation of the urban question itself (Roy & Ong 2011).

In this theme issue we take a closer look on some of these "new capabilities" of city administrations that Sassen (2006) speaks of. We are specifically interested in how images of the past and future are integrated in urban development. Notions of identity and belonging are recurring when historic contexts are included in city planning, often as a way to legitimise a specific course of direction. Narrating the past and future can be a way of "worlding" – of connecting local urban development to larger contexts of time and space, framed within global discourses of for example economic growth, sustainable development and cultural diversity. The thematic section also addresses how various citizen groups and social movements respond to narratives of urban development, and engage in urban space through counter-narrating.

It is clear that rivalry between cities at the mercy of global competition is one prominent narrative, real or imagined, of contemporary urban development. The idea that city branding is a necessary strategy for cities to thrive, has been commonplace and a standard in municipal administrations, along with gradual and continuous implementations of neoliberal governance strategies (Harvey 2000). Even if place marketing actually have a much longer history, it has seen "a massive worldwide growth" since the 1970s (Ward 1998). Branding strategies usually narrate a city identity and designates selected places, events and specific urban life styles as representative of a city. Even if the basic idea is to attract new investments, tax-payers and tourism to the city, branded identities will inevitably be sending also a message internally, to the citizens. An element of a "we", implicating a "they", means that some social groups and life styles may be excluded when city images are remediated (Syssner 2012). When branding includes historic events, it will logically select those that corroborate with a selling identity. In that sense, the branding contributes to create a historic backyard of a city, of not "successful" stories. However, contemporary city branding strategies may actually address social challenges, like inequality and racism. But as some of the contributing articles in this issue show (especially by Hudson & Sandberg and Overud), these attempts can instead have stereotyping effects, because the problems are too simplified or there is a lack of will to actually solve them. To use culture instrumentally in plan-

ning fits well into governance rationales which been gradually implemented in urban planning – a shift from hierarchical steering to governing and a change of focus from institutions to process and innovation (Brown 2015). As discussed by Brown (2015), governance processes risk to dissolve distinctions between state, business, non-profit, and NGOs, because power relations are reworked so that politics (and in our context especially cultural policy in urban planning), become reduced to a matter of management and administration.

The eight articles in this theme issue engage in topical discussions on how urban development relates to global discourses of economic growth, sustainability and cultural diversity. In February 2017, the authors all presented their studies at the conference "Creating the City. Identity, Memory and Participation" which was arranged by the Institute for Studies in Malmö's History, at Malmö University. By contributing with historic dimensions and critical perspectives on current discourses of identity and regeneration, the authors address narrating and narratives in visions and planning documents, in bids for new architecture and investments, in media, as well as in the actual physical environment. The articles problematize how narratives as social and spatial processes may be (re)created, legitimatised, sustained, contested or resisted in urban space. They address questions like: How do contemporary policies and politics invest in history and discourses of belonging? How do history, narratives and notions of identity play out and manifest in urban space and the built environment? Where and how are histories challenged and transformed through counter-cultural and counter-narrating practices, or organisational efforts and resistance? The authors study the city from various disciplines; media studies, history, heritage studies, anthropology, gender studies, political science and geography. Even if they all connect history, identity or narrating to urban space by use of different theories and concepts, they all understand space and social life as reciprocal processes. This means that dominant powers as well as resistance may have corresponding spatial expressions, and consequently that space can be used to enforce change.

The first two articles engage in how city branding promotes selected narratives to build a specific city identity. Dagmar Brunow shows in "Manchester's Post-punk Heritage: Mobilizing and Contesting Transcultural Memory in the Context of Urban Regeneration", how mediations and remediations of a post-punk culture are integrated into strategies of branding the city of Manchester, England. Brunow applies the concept "transcultural memory" as translations of cultural practices not only across spatial borders, but also as a translating process through different discursive frameworks within the same geographic space. Brunow follows how a post-punk culture is being translated into place-making processes and city branding strategies of placing the city on a global cultural arena. Memory practices are here constructing spaces - when remediations of pasts are mapped onto space

they simultaneously premediate futures, creating psychogeographies which eventually become "mnemotopes". Brunow emphasises that even if post-punk is remediated as a subculture with emancipatory power, it does not mean that the remediation itself has a corresponding emancipatory force. On the contrary, Brunow finds the post-punk narrative dominating other memories, as feminist, LGBTQ and migrant memories, which are having difficulties finding and sustaining spaces in Manchester.

The second article on city branding narratives are Christine Hudson and Linda Sandberg's "Narrating the gender-equal city – doing gender-equality in the Swedish European Capital of Culture Umeå2014". The study is situated in Umeå, a northern Swedish city, which won the 2014 bid for The European Capital of Culture (designated by EU) with the theme "The Gender Equal City". Hudson & Sandberg show how the year's program of events exposed various approaches and understandings of gender equality. They found that stereotyped gender norms were affirmed in the events, and that gender equality became much of a counting of numbers – of an equal distribution of male and female bodies in spaces and activities. However, they also found examples of problematisations of gender as category in some of the events, and also conflicting understandings of gender in art and in urban space. Building on the events of the year and Umeå's history of feminist activities, Hudson & Sandberg discuss the future of Umeå as a gender equal city.

The two following articles present cases where history and preservation of particular urban sites have been part of extensive debates, visioning and municipal planning strategies. In "Maintaining Urban Complexities. Seeking Revitalisation without Gentrification of an Industrial Riverfront in Gothenburg", Gabriella Olshammar discusses the future of Ringön – a small industrial harbour in Gothenburg, Sweden, adjacent to the otherwise heavily gentrified riverfront along the Göta River. She follows different actors' notions of futures and pasts, and their steps taken to promote – or adjust to – either a large or low scale regeneration of Ringön. Approaching various understandings of the harbour's past and future as narratives, Olshammar discusses possibilities for regeneration without gentrifying the small scale industrial character of today. Referring to what Nigel Thrift calls "urban glue", she found that current industries and activities at Ringön have reparative qualities – as recycling, specific knowledges of the marine world, and craftsmanship for restauration. Olshammar argues that these qualities correlates to the city's overarching goals of sustainability and resilience.

Erik Jönsson and Johan Pries have studied The People's Park (*Folkets park*) in Malmö, Sweden, in the article "Remaking the People's Park: Heritage Renewal Troubled by Past Political Struggles?". They present the park's strong connection to the Social Democratic party and the labour movement since the park's inaugu-

ration in late 19th Century. Through detailed accounts of urban planning debates and political decisions, Jönsson & Pries show how negotiations of the park's preservation and regeneration created conflicts, but eventually also shared interests, between local left and centre-right party politics in 1980s to 2000s. Questions concerning the value of the working class history of the People's Park on the one hand, and the market value if privatised and turned into a commercial amusement park on the other, became objects of the political conflict. Jönsson & Pries argues that the park's political history had endured through citizens' everyday use of the park – a use which established a socio-material pattern and landscape of the park which in the end became politically impossible to dismiss from the regeneration plans.

The following two articles discuss makings of gender, identity and ethnicity in relation to urban space. In "Memory-making in Kiruna – Representations of Colonial Time in the Transformation of a Scandinavian Mining Town", Johanna Overud takes a look at how Swedish colonialism plays out in an urban development context. The mining town Kiruna in the North of Sweden was built in late 19th Century as a model town around an ore mine. The land was populated by the indigenous Sami people, and Overud shows how a masculine mining culture and ideas of Western progressivity colonised the Samis and their land, Sápmi, when Kiruna was established. Currently, the whole mining town is about to move some kilometres away from the mining area due to cracks in the ground – a dramatic transformation and planning challenge which has attracted a lot of national and international attention. Some of the local planners and museum staff are aware of the masculinist bias in the history of Kiruna, and see in the transformation a chance to bring in alternative perspectives into representations of the town. Overud has analysed such an attempt, where enlarged historic photographs are displayed in a new park. They depict Sami people as well as early mining settlers with families. Overud discusses how these photographs rather cement than challenge patriarchal and colonial patterns in Kiruna. She argues that the photographs stall a colonial time in Kiruna, as well as ideas of a "Kiruna family", revolving around the male miner as breadwinner. Overud sees how the discriminating narratives continues to have impact and are being passed on to the new Kiruna.

Vinícius Zanoli and Rubens Mascarenhas Neto's study "Black, LGBT and from the Favelas: An Ethnographic Account on Disidentificatory Performances of an Activist Group in Brazil" engages in how a Black, LGBT organisation in Campinas, Brazil, organises drag performances in public places. Zanoli & Mascarenhas Neto discuss how the performances contribute to alter the meanings associated to these places. Most members of the organisation come from favelas and the periphery of the city, thus the performances also challenge ideas about who has the right to access and shape more central places of the city. From an anthropological

perspective, Zanoli & Mascarenhas Neto show how the cultural activities of the organisation are processes of identification and dis-identification which alter spaces, as public buildings, squares and stages, through de- and re-territorialisation. They also sketches a social movement context of how Black and LGBT movements in Brazil have developed since the 1970s, for example by supporting each other and being inspired by movements in other countries.

The last two articles address evictions and squatting in housing policies. Dominika V. Polanska and Åse Richard identify in "Narratives of a Fracturded Trust in the Swedish Model: Tenants' Emotions of Renovation" a lack of tenants' stories in the contemporary housing debate in Sweden. They especially miss voices of tenants who are victims of "renoviction" – i.e. strategic evictions as part of regeneration of residential areas, where radically increased rents force low income tenants to move. Polanska & Richard's study is set in the neighbourhood Gränby in Uppsala, Sweden, currently subjected to large renovations and increasing rents. In the context of Swedish welfare policies, they discuss how an aggressive housing market is disrupting people's long trust in the state as provider of shelter and safety. From a series of interviews, Polanska & Richard understand the emotions expressed by tenants as loss of meaning and control, anxiety, and anger of injustice. The emotions were often connected to steps taken by the real estate companies – as demanding consent to renovation, increasing the rents, or being generally difficult to contact. Emotions were also connected to spatial changes in the near environment, as emptying of flats and scattering of friends and neighbours, as well as drastic changes inside their home when new and (too) expensive kitchens were installed.

Vacant and abandoned property have been scenes for struggles over right to a home, as well as struggles for making a space for cultural activities. Miguel Martínez discusses in "Good and Bad Squatters? Challenging Hegemonic Narratives and Advancing Anti-capitalist Views of Squatting in Western European Cities" narratives of what squatters are and do, as mediated through media, political statements and jurisdictional verdicts. The role squatters play to, on the one hand, open up redundant urban space for art, entrepreneurialism, social encounters and, eventually, full gentrification, are by many welcomed or at least accepted. On the other, squatters as "trouble-makers" opposing injustices in housing policies, real estate markets and the capitalist system itself, is regularly depicted as a "bad squatter", along with notions of criminality, bad manners and even terrorism. With examples from European cities such as Amsterdam, London and Paris, Martínez shows how different squatters may have quite different aims and self-understandings, and play different societal roles. He also sketches various squatting environments, such as run down residential buildings, empty industrial buildings, shops and office stores.

The various articles in this theme are concrete examples of how "new capabilities" (Sassen 2006) of city administration since late 20th century have influenced the course of urban development. The issue thus give a glimpse of a culture *in* contemporary urban planning, as well as how culture may be addressed or instrumentally used in planning. We also show how citizens, citizen groups and social movements struggle over planning issues, resist gentrification or biases in cultural or political heritage. Understanding the productive, and not only reactive, role of various actors helps us see the dynamic process that practicing or *doing* the city is. The articles reveal complexities of social-spatial management, interaction and struggle, and how power relations and (disputed) formulations of identity and belonging can be played out and actually materialise in urban space.

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