



LUND UNIVERSITY

Assembling Paint, Parties and Toxins

A Cultural Analysis of two Cultural Initiatives
within an Industrial District

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TKAM01 – Spring 2023
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Abstract

Over the last decade, Swedish cities like Stockholm and Gothenburg have seen a decline in cultural events due to noise complaints, unsuitable locations, and changing demographics. Malmö, facing similar issues amid urban growth, introduced a 2021 planning program for the Sofielund industrial district, featuring a "cultural sound zone" to support cultural activities. This thesis builds upon prior work aiming to foster conditions for culture within Sofielund. It shifts focus from dialogue to the conditions shaping cultural spaces in the district. Through analysis of two cultural initiatives, the aim is to outline key factors influencing their roles and conditions in manifesting culture. The first case explores the conversion of an industrial building and adjacent area (The Hangar and The Steppe) into an urban art gallery. The second case explores the NGBG association who hosts events and an annual street party. The analysis incorporates interviews, photos, auto-ethnographic reflections, and online sources. Drawing on concepts such as assemblage theory, Henri Lefebvre's space production, Michel de Certeau's tactics, and Richard Schechner's performance, the thesis reveals the organic nature of these initiatives, emerging from and adapting to their surroundings. It underscores the influential nature of spatial and material aspects such as the buildings themselves and other elements, such as paint. Both cases illustrate challenges as well as opportunities posed by human actors and diverse motivations. Amid urban neoliberal trends, these cases contribute to broadening our understanding of culture beyond consumption and branding, emphasizing its role in producing spaces through use and performance - not as an overlay but woven into and created from the fabric of material surroundings. The insights presented in this thesis should offer guidance into challenges and opportunities when developing the district with a focus on culture. Additionally, these insights could prove useful when contemplating the role of culture in the revitalization of other urban spaces.

Keywords: Malmö; Sofielund; cultural sound zone; municipality policy; culture; urban planning; built environment; industry; graffiti; associations; community culture; cultural analysis; materialism; assemblage; tactics; space; terrain vague.

Dedication

I want to express my gratitude to

- all of you who in some way contributed your time to this study. This extends to each individual, even those not explicitly featured within this thesis but who I engaged with during my research interviews. Your unique knowledge and perspectives have not only been invaluable to this study but have also enriched my life and broadened my horizons.
- my supervisor, Professor Thomas O'Dell, for your guidance throughout this thesis and the entire programme. Your advice and encouragement reignited my motivation and enthusiasm whenever I was losing focus and instilled in me a renewed fascination for my research subject that I will carry with me.
- Malmö Municipality and Carolina Olsson for providing me with a valuable opportunity to gain insights into the municipality's approach towards culture and urban dynamics.
- Fede, for your persistent encouragement. And my family, for all your different kinds of support. Emily and Angelica for making these past two years so special. And Lisa for coming along the way.

Mina Planting Mollaoglu

Malmö, 2023-08-26

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1. Introduction

Over the past decade, journalists have highlighted the disappearance of live venues and cultural events in Swedish cities like Stockholm and Gothenburg (Dagens Nyheter, 2022; Sveriges Radio, 2022; SVT Nyheter, 2022). During the last ten years, a third of live venues in Stockholm have disappeared. The cause behind this trend is often attributed to complaints from neighbors or businesses about excessive noise, or decreased availability of suitable locations within the city centers, resulting in cultural activities either being forced to shut down or relocate to the city's outskirts, away from residential areas (Svenska Yle, 2019). Changes in demographics are also viewed as a contributing factor, as living in the city is becoming increasingly expensive, new residents - attracted by the cultural vitality of certain neighborhoods - move in. However, once settled, they realize that the noise at bedtime is annoying, leading to complaints and the closing or moving of activities making noise (SVT Nyheter, 2022).

In parallel, during recent years, the cultural life of the city of Malmö has been topic for debates and discussions concerning the availability of spaces dedicated to culture and the arts within its urban landscape (Sydsvenskan, 2020, 2022, 2023b, 2023a). As the city experiences growth and the urban fabric becomes denser with new housing and residential projects, various entities such as galleries, artist collectives, and studio spaces confront the looming threat of diminished room for their creative endeavors. This raises pressing inquiries about how to ensure that culture remains an integral part of the city fabric, rather than being relegated to the outskirts. Consequently, concerns have emerged about the future viability of cultural initiatives in the face of the city's ongoing expansion.

However, in 2021, the municipality of Malmö made headlines when presenting their planning program for the industrial district of Sofielund, located in the geographical center of Malmö. What sparked the interest was the introduction of a "cultural sound zone," which will work to ensure that "culture will be allowed to make noise" (along with industrial and transportation noise) and thus not be constrained by the noise regulations that apply to residential areas – by extension preventing urban development with housing in the areas where cultural events and activities are placed (Malmö Stad, 2021).

More than this, the planning program set objectives for the area to become Malmö's most important and dynamic cultural center by 2040 (Malmö Stad, 2021). From a "bottom up"

approach, this development is intended to be done gradually and depending on local initiatives and actors (ibid.). For the wider Sofielund, there is an interest on the part of both the municipality and local actors that the diversity of associations, cultural activities and leisure activities in this area should be able to remain and continue to develop.

The planning program for Sofielund was one of four that received nominations for the Plan Prize 2021, an honor granted annually for the finest planning programs by the Swedish architects' professional association, Sverige's Arkitekter. The judges said the following in the nomination:

The City of Malmö is breaking new ground in the planning of the Sofielund business area when it prioritizes cultural and industrial activities over housing in a central location. The program includes a cultural noise zone that protects the right of noisy businesses to remain and develop on their own terms. New construction is discarded in favor of retaining existing businesses and buildings. Saving existing industrial buildings will also be a way of providing low-cost facilities for local associations, businesses and groups that are otherwise often neglected in the planning process.

Development will be phased in on the basis of local initiatives, with a municipal pilot to support the planning and building permit processes. Developing Sofielund together with the area's residents may sound obvious, but it is a bold step away from traditional planning. This planning program is based on an innovative interpretation of the concept of a mixed city and is an inspiring example of how culture, associations and industrial activities can be given a more prominent place in the planning process. (Sveriges Arkitekter, 2021)

The 'municipal pilot' mentioned in the nomination refers to the new "Culture Pilot" – a service that was launched in the same year, which may be viewed as a mediator or consultant, with the aim of fostering relationships between the business and cultural communities and developing locally based, sustainable solutions for the cultural sector. The Culture Pilot service is a collaboration between the City of Malmö's Department of Economic Affairs, Department of

City Planning, and Department of Culture and strives to make the goals of the planning program a reality by putting a strong emphasis on the development of Sofielund's cultural life.

In the spring of 2022, I worked as a student employee with a municipal working group led by the Culture Pilot with the intention to develop a stronger contact, dialogue, and collaboration within the different administrations of the municipality and between the municipality and local actors in Sofielund, with the goal of creating a 'platform of collaboration' that could improve the conditions for culture to continue to flourish in Sofielund. My role in this constellation was to conduct a preliminary study on the challenges, needs and goals of local actors involved with culture in Sofielund, with the hopes of contributing to the creation of appropriate methods for dialogue and collaboration.

During the fall of 2022, I continued this work during a work placement with the cultural administration, proceeding to investigate how the municipality can foster dialogue and collaboration in the district, through the use of ethnographic methods. This thesis builds upon and extends the groundwork I have previously conducted in collaboration with the municipality of Malmö. In this current exploration, I direct my focus towards cultural activities that have organically taken root within the district and the different types of conditions and circumstances that have shaped their scopes of action and the cultural expressions they manifest.

A distinguishing factor of Sofielund is its relatively unchanged industrial landscape, unlike other parts of the city and the country. This stable backdrop has allowed cultural actors to establish long-lasting footholds. The municipality's efforts to uphold Sofielund's identity as a cultural space offer promising prospects for the future. However, despite the presence of a cultural sound zone to safeguard against noise-related issues and densification through housing, and notwithstanding the planning program's emphasis on the significance of existing cultural endeavors and small enterprises in the area, there is no guarantee that these activities and expressions will endure. Challenges rooted in financial constraints, divergent perspectives on culture, the influence one has over one's own space, and the fragility of local relationships and alliances all contribute to shape the development.

In this light, examining the conditions that have shaped cultural activities within Sofielund, alongside understanding the significance of their creative outputs, can provide deeper insights into the interplay between urban development and cultural expressions. This may contribute to a nuanced grasp of how culture intertwines with the urban environment and inform on strategies aiming to support the continuation of this district with a focus on culture.

1.1 Sofielund: Geography and Background

Sofielund occupies a position at the heart of Malmö, bordered by the district Möllevången to the northeast and Rosengård to the southwest. Möllevången, historically a working-class district, has become known for its pubs, bars, and restaurants, while still preserving much of its multicultural and working-class identity (Hansen, 2019). However, the district's growing popularity as a residential area has sparked debates about gentrification taking hold (Skånska Dagbladet, 2023). Rosengård, designated as one of Malmö's 'vulnerable areas', is characterized by its many million program buildings from the 1960s and 70s. It grapples with disproportionately high unemployment rates and a substantial population of young residents (Malmö Stad, n.d.).

In Sofielund, industrial activities are and have for a long time been a part of the area; older industrial buildings sit next to residential structures, schools, and other facilities. The district is unusual in that most of the original working-class and industrial setting has been kept after escaping the demolition craze of the 1960s and 1970s, when housing had to be modernized, which impacted many other neighborhoods (Malmö Stad, 2022).

Today, Sofielund might be considered a variation of the urban design principle known as "mixed use." Numerous diverse structures coexist in the neighborhood; residential buildings share space with former industrial buildings, tiny businesses and auto repair shops are situated close to nightclubs and large active industries.

The overall district can be described as having three parts – the southern Sofielund, the northern Sofielund and the Sofielund industrial area. In all of these areas, businesses, and activities with a focus on culture and leisure can be found. There are theatres, music studios, art galleries, cultural associations, co- working spaces for creatives, and more. Many of these have found their spaces in reappropriated older industrial buildings or former workshop spaces. Both the southern and the northern Sofielund is characterized by villas and apartment blocks built during the early 20th century, mixed with industrial buildings such as factories and workshops, many from the same time period.

In focus for this thesis is the Sofielund industrial area. This is also the part of Sofielund that is in focus for the planning program and the cultural sound zone policy. Originating in the 1930s, this industrial area emerged in the eastern part of Sofielund. Originally planned as a residential district, the landscape's evolution shifted course as an increasing number of industries needed

space. Consequently, the city's plan underwent revision, with the street Norra Grängesbergsgatan street emerging as its central axis. Throughout the 1930s, several industries were established here, predominantly comprised of companies that had grown up within Malmö's city center. With a need for larger manufacturing spaces and warehouses, these enterprises established themselves in Sofielund, supported by the municipality's commitment to cultivating a business-friendly environment (Dahlberg et al., 2006).

During the last decade, the industrial area and specifically the Norra Grängesbergsgatan has been described as places where crime and illegal activities have been significant issues. The street has been described as one of Malmö's most criminal streets (Expressen, 2018). Reports have been made on police operations (SVT Nyheter, 2021; Sydsvenskan, 2021), shootings (Expressen, 2016; Svenska Dagbladet, 2010) and illegal clubs (Aftonbladet, 2011; SVT Nyheter, 2020). But it has also been described as a meeting place and as a place for associations and youths and people engaged in arts and music (Expressen, 2018).

Norra Grängesbergsgatan is lined with auto mobile shops, restaurants, small businesses, and activities such as associations, rehearsal studios, a night club, and an independent movie theatre. The area sees a concentration of industry mixed with cultural activities and businesses in a relatively small area. Compared to the other parts, the industrial area has less housing and more industrial buildings, some structures no longer serving their original purpose, but some still highly active in producing various products such as for example bread or other food products.

The year 2018 witnessed the opening of a new train station in close proximity to the Sofielund industrial area, creating a vital nexus between Rosengård, Malmö center, and Copenhagen. This development coincides with the ambitious Amiralstaden project in this segment of Rosengård. This initiative encompasses the construction of approximately 2,800 new residences, 500 additional primary school spots, and 450 pre-school positions. Planned for completion by 2040, the project aspires to create an expanded spectrum of services and employment opportunities, fostering heightened interest in residing and working within the neighborhood, while also enhancing connectivity to central Malmö. In consequence, this development also accentuates the significance of the Sofielund industrial area, enmeshing it within the strategic framework of broader development goals.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

Due to its interesting dynamics for many different research fields, several studies and student theses have been drawn to the industrial district in Sofielund and the Norra Grängesbergsgatan street. Each of these studies has brought unique perspectives and themes. Some scrutinize the discourses surrounding the planning, others focus in on the sound aspect, while others delve deeper into the effects of narratives on development (see for example Andersson & Gredemyr, 2019; Schmidt, 2022; Wilén, 2019).

This thesis seeks to complement the current body of knowledge by closely examining the interaction between culture and the urban environment as manifested in both material and social elements. This is done through two cases of cultural initiatives within the industrial district of Sofielund.

Through appreciating the effects and agencies of both material objects, individuals, and surroundings as equally influential, the aim of this thesis is to outline some of key factors that have and may continue to influence their roles and their conditions in manifesting cultural activities in the district. To achieve this, an analysis will be conducted on the role of material and social factors that have influenced and characterized these initiatives, as well as their reciprocal impact on the surrounding environments.

Ultimately, the findings from this research should provide a better understanding of the material and social factors that shape the possibility of spaces for culture to take form, and thus inform on the district's further development with culture as a starting point.

To achieve this aim, the following research questions will be addressed:

- How does material and spatial qualities and conditions within the district stimulate and shape the present cultural initiatives?
- How does relationships and scopes of action delimited by outside actors and structures influence the development of cultural initiatives in the district?

1.3 Thesis Disposition

This thesis comprises seven chapters, each accompanied by its own set of subchapters. The initial portion of these chapters serves as an introduction, providing a backdrop and context for the foundation of this thesis, while the last portion is dedicated to a description and analysis of the chosen cases.

In the next chapter, chapter three, I provide a description and discussion of the methods and materials employed, which lay the groundwork for the forthcoming analysis. Following this, in chapter four, I outline fundamental theoretical and analytical concepts that guide my analysis throughout the study of the material. Moving forward, chapter four serves to provide an outline of some of the relevant ideas and concepts derived from literature concerning the role of culture within the urban context, with the objective to establish a context shaped by ideas.

In chapter five, the focus shifts to the presentation of the first case study: The Hangar and The Steppe. This chapter unfolds with the case's inception, followed by an analysis of its material attributes—ranging from the physical structure to the artistic elements. Subsequently, the chapter probes its political and ideological dimensions and concludes with an exploration of external influences, encompassing various intents and rationales that have steered the development of The Hangar and The Steppe, influencing its growth as a cultural space and either imposing limitations or enabling its development.

In chapter six, the second case study is presented and analyzed: The NGBG association. This chapter begins by describing the street from which the association derives its name, as well as the foundation for its activities. The exploration continues with a description and analysis of the scope of action of the association, examining the inventive approaches used to navigate imposed restrictions. An analysis of the street party organized by the association follows, investigating its implications for spatial utilization, cultural expression, and public space animation. The chapter concludes by delving into the social dimensions of the various actors involved in ensuring the association's functionality and cultivating the street as a cultural space.

Lastly, the thesis concludes with a summary of findings and a discussion about the implications these may hold for thinking about future planning endeavors within the Sofielund context as well as in the general context of culture within urban environments.

2. Methods and Materials

The approach I've employed in working with both methods and materials for this thesis can be described as a 'bricolage research method.' This term, borrowed from a French expression used to describe for craftsmen who repurpose materials from previous projects to create new objects, signifies a methodology that utilizes available tools and resources (Levi-Strauss, 1966 in (M. Rogers, 2015)). This stands in contrast to for example an engineering approach, which follows strict procedures with specific tools. In the realm of qualitative research, bricolage involves practices characterized by eclecticism, emergent design, flexibility, and plurality (ibid.)

In my work, this approach involves repurposing materials initially intended for another purpose – specifically, interviews conducted between March and October 2022 with 13 actors working or in some way engaged in the Sofielund district. Among these, eight were from the cultural and creative sector (cultural association, music studio, theatre, performance studio, co-working space for creatives, art gallery, dance school, and artists), while five were involved in property ownership, real estate companies, or industry (property owner's association, property owner, real estate company, and industry).

While my primary focus centers on actors linked to two specific cases within this thesis, I am incorporating all these interviews as integral components of my research material. While not all these interviews are explicitly referenced in the text due to the focused nature of my study, each interview remains a vital component of my research process. Together, they have significantly enriched my understanding of the district, its initiatives, and the interplay of conflicting, convergent, or complementary interests within this context.

Importantly, these engagements have functioned as a continuous feedback loop, where insights shared by various actors have informed new inquiries and guided discussions with subsequent participants. As a result, my prior experiences have guided me in formulating my current research questions and the overarching objectives of this thesis. This process was not predetermined or pre-structured; instead, it unfolded as the process went on, adapting to the recurring themes and perspectives that surfaced throughout the entirety of the research project(s).

In a similar way, I see my participation and the observations I conducted during my time as a student employee and during my work placement with the Malmö Municipality as a part of the

research material as it is part of the foundation that has led me to broaden my understanding of the research site. During this time, I attended several meetings with officials from different administrations within the municipality. I did go-alongs with my supervisor, the culture pilot, and observed her work. In this way, I gained insights into the areas of interest and challenges of the various administrations and their ways of approaching and understanding the challenges connected to culture within urban planning.

Through physical engagement with the surroundings within Sofielund, I have dedicated a lot of attention to familiarizing myself with the area. This approach translates into frequent, unplanned wanderings around the district where I contemplate the buildings and objects I encountered. This practice has proven valuable, as at the heart of my methodology lies a 'materialist' perspective. This viewpoint underscores my commitment to recognizing the agency and vitality inherent in nonhuman elements. In practical terms, this translates into placing emphasis on the materials and objects actively participating in shaping the environment and facilitating interactions and activities. By adopting this perspective, I wish to move beyond traditional top-down representations of the urban environment as displayed on a map. Rather, I intend to 'zoom in' into seemingly minor or background elements that nonetheless impact the overall landscape.

For this thesis, I have leveraged some of the material that was initially collected for the purpose of analysis and presentation to the municipality during my work with them. However, in line with what I call a 'bricolage' approach, I have approached this material anew, posing different questions to it through various theoretical lenses and for a new set of research questions and aims. As the process unfolded, new questions emerged, prompting me to interweave this existing material with other sources, including written documents and online resources as I saw new combinations of materials having the potential to enrich the original material with additional layers of significance. Moreover, I have conducted follow-up interviews with the actors engaged in the specific contexts selected for analysis within this thesis.

Echoing the sentiments of ethnographer and filmmaker Phillip Vannini (2012), this bricolage approach reorients the research from a point of "writing culture" and "explaining findings" towards a process of crafting - aimed at generating new stories that can hopefully work to broaden perspectives. In his book "Ferry Tales," Vannini shares his preference for what he calls ethnographic creation over representation, advocating for the creation of new stories rather than replicating existing ones.

These considerations also render the separation of methods from theory blurry, as they mutually influence each other. Based in the tradition of non-representational theory within cultural analysis, I focus less on codes, representations, and discourses, and more on practices, skills, sensibilities, feelings, and materiality. This framework necessitates shifting the analytical spotlight from "why?" to "how?". This may also warrant a certain amount of experimentation in aims to capture dimensions that might be challenging to articulate or put into words.

2.1 Photography as a Research Tool

In this endeavor, photography has been a valuable tool, enabling me to capture moments that catch my attention in spontaneously and providing the opportunity to revisit those images repeatedly. Alongside this, in my exploration of the study site, I've also employed video filming of the surroundings. This has granted me the convenience of revisiting specific environments while in the midst of the writing process.

Most of the photographs in this thesis are taken by myself, although I have supplemented them with pictures sourced from websites or other sources such as screenshots sourced from the websites or Instagram pages of the cases under study. Some of the pictures are screenshots taken from the videos I have filmed. I consider the photographs featured in this thesis to serve a dual purpose - as aids for both myself during analysis as well as for the reader. Through these images, I wish to provide the reader a glimpse into the environments that has informed my analysis. This is particularly relevant given my focus on the materials and objects within the research site.

In my use of photographs, I wish to acknowledge their intricate nature as more than reflections of a given scene. As articulated by American writer and philosopher Susan Sontag (1973), when we take a photograph, we are not just capturing an image; we are also embedding a perspective. This process aligns us with a specific way of viewing the world, and a sense of knowledge acquisition. While we seem to recognize that written accounts and handcrafted visual expressions like paintings or drawings are all interpretive, photographs, in our view, often seem to transcend mere statements about reality. Instead, they are seen to encapsulate small slices of reality, akin to condensed replicas. Even if an image does distort, it always rests on the presumption that the depicted subject existed in some form - giving photographs the impression of a more candid and authentic link to reality compared to other art forms (ibid.).

However, as Sontag points out - photographs wield the power to play with reality's scale; they can be resized, cropped, retouched, and manipulated. But more than this, photographs are affected by the photographers own personal tastes and consciences. In choosing how to frame a shot, in opting for one exposure over another - or choosing which version to publish – the photographer inevitably brings their subjective standards into the mix. Although cameras indeed capture a version of reality, they do so by interpreting it through a distinct perspective, much like paintings and drawings.

From this view, every photograph is inherently open to multiple interpretations, serving as an invitation to explore. It encourages us to go beneath the surface, to contemplate the reality that could lie beyond, a reality that would explain the image before us. In this sense, photographs do not deliver answers on their own; instead, they stimulate deduction, speculation, and the realm of imagination (Sontag, 1973).

Considering the insights of photographer and anthropologist Phil Byers and photographer-theorist Allan Sekula, artist and researcher Dona Schwartz (Schwartz, 1989) provides a similar viewpoint. Photographs, Schwartz explains, are often perceived as either artworks or as records. As works of art, they are seen to encapsulate the photographer-artist's personal concerns, spanning from aesthetic explorations to emotional expressions. Regarded as records, photographs are believed to replicate the reality they capture, presenting an unfiltered and impartial visual account.

However, as Schwartz notes – both of these viewpoints disregard the active role of the viewer in creating meaning, rather than merely receiving it. A photograph thus is not a single message but a canvas for a multitude of messages, each viewer constructing their unique interpretation. The photograph doesn't introduce new information; instead, it taps into pre-existing meaning within the observer (ibid.). Consequently, I see the method of photography as more than evidence or illustrations for sharing the context from which I derived my analysis. They are also an invitation to readers to forge their own interpretations of the image - and I encourage the reader to perceive the images as reflections of subjective and limited perspectives.

2.2 The Cases

For this thesis, I have chosen to focus in on two specific cases that will act as examples of the cultural landscape of Sofielund. These cases are both encompassed within the industrial district of Sofielund, as well as within the aforementioned planning program for Sofielund and the cultural sound zone planning.

The first case to be analyzed is what is commonly referred to as The Graffiti Hangar, along with its associated asphalted area, which I refer to as The Steppe, based on the local actors' term for it. I collectively refer to this area as The Hangar and The Steppe. This case revolves around the transformation of an abandoned factory building, now a work-in-progress activity center and urban art gallery. To explore this case, the material predominantly consists of interviews with the project initiator, supplemented by photographic documentation, autoethnographic reflections, and online resources.

The second case takes its roots from a cultural association with its headquarters on a piece of farmland adjacent to the industrial district's prominent streets, Norra Grängesbergsgatan, in short, the NGBG street. Named after the street itself, the NGBG association has since 2016 been part of organizing an annual street party on the NGBG-street and has members from the local artistic and musical community. Moreover, the association hosts a variety of cultural and recreational events in the area throughout the year. For this case, the analysis relies significantly on interviews with the chairman of the association, as well as other stakeholders dedicated to cultivating this specific street as a space for culture. The utilized resources also include photographic materials, autoethnographic accounts, and online resources.

These two cases were deliberately chosen due to their notable and tangible impacts. They enjoy substantial recognition, drawing in a diverse range of participants and visitors. Their cultural expressions are evident, and their influence on the surroundings is both profound and discernible. These cases notably contribute to the development of the area, serving as more than symbolic representations of a certain ambiance and culture; they actively shape the physical environment. This has rendered them ideal cases for a study within a condensed timeframe.

However, it is crucial to underscore that this area is home to numerous other stakeholders and material settings. While these might not be as visibly prominent, well known, or seen as 'cultural' in the common sense, they still actively contribute to the cultivation of this space as a space for culture and leisure. I want to highlight that there is a potential risk in spotlighting

already well-known elements, as it could overshadow other participants and activities that might lack equivalent social and cultural influence and the capacity to shape the physical landscape. With this in mind, I encourage the reader to bear in mind this dynamic as they engage with these cases, recognizing them as just two of several instances showcasing how culture and recreation intertwine with their social and material environments.

The thoughts and reflections shared within this thesis belong to distinct individuals, each of whom is identified by a pseudonym to safeguard a level of anonymity. I acknowledge the fact that while pseudonyms are employed, those intimately familiar with the context may still possess the means to ascertain their identities, since their roles and positions are described in order to provide important context. However, these individuals have permitted the utilization of their perspectives for research endeavors.

3. Analytical Framework and Theoretical perspectives

In this chapter follows an overview of the analytical framework as well as the theoretical perspectives and concepts employed to analyze the chosen materials, alongside discussions regarding their significance and impact.

3.1 Assemblages

As previously mentioned, my research draws inspiration from materialist perspectives that extends its focus beyond human and social factors to encompass the very environments themselves and their influential roles in shaping events.

The selected cases for this study are characterized by their dynamic and evolving nature, embracing innovative practices, and incorporating a diverse range of human – as well as non-human elements. Given this context, my intention has been to analyze these cases through a lens capable of accommodating both the social and material dimensions, while acknowledging the evolving nature of the urban environment in which these dimensions interact. For this purpose, I have found guidance in one of the key concepts of Deleuzian philosophy – assemblage theory. This theoretical framework serves as a foundational point of departure for

my analysis, offering a perspective that aligns well with the multifaceted nature of the chosen cases.

The notion of assemblage, closely linked to concepts like apparatus, network, plurality, emergence, and indeterminacy, was introduced by French political philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in 1987. It revolves around ways of understanding the dynamic process of creating provisional constellations from various elements (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Since its introduction, the concept of assemblage has been used in different ways, reworked, and developed by scholars from different fields such as anthropology, political science, sociology, philosophy, urban studies and more.

Within the realm of assemblage theory, I find myself particularly drawn to the perspectives of American political theorist and philosopher Jane Bennett (Bennett, 2010). What strongly resonates with me is her emphasis on the material, objects, and things – recognizing them as potent actants capable of producing effects and engaging in relationships on par with humans. Bennett characterizes assemblages as ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, attributing agency – the capacity to initiate action, effect change, and generate outcomes – not only to humans but also to a spectrum of vibrant materials. According to Bennett, assemblages are not governed by any central head; no material or human element has sufficient competence to determine the trajectory or impact of the group. Each component of the assemblage is said to possess a certain vital force, but the assemblage itself also has a specific effectiveness as an entity, referred to as its 'agency'. Their amalgamation can give rise to novel effects, intrinsic to the collective grouping; Bennett refers to this as the agency *of* the assemblage. Within this context, the assemblage isn't solely formed by humans and their interconnected social, legal, and linguistic structures; it encompasses non-human elements as well.

To be more specific, in the scope of this thesis, I perceive the material components within these cases as being equally impactful as the human participants and their social dynamics, concepts, and strategies. I envision a relationship between humans and non-human elements, functioning collectively – where the material elements are regarded as potential 'actants' capable of instigating change and prompting action just like humans. Coined by French philosopher and sociologist Bruno Latour, the term "actant," as described by Bennett (Bennett, 2010), refers to a source of action that can be both human or nonhuman. In essence, it describes anything capable of effectiveness, agency, and the ability to enact change. This can span from executing

actions and yielding effects to shaping the trajectory of events. This might include substances like paint, structures like buildings, or surfaces like asphalt.

More generally, in the framework of this thesis, both material and human entities are referred to more as elements. While each individual element might exert an influence on its own, as per assemblage theory, the distinctive effects specific to the ensemble, or the assemblage itself, emerge when these elements interact. Their agency then, their ability to operate, depends on the totality, the working together of the different elements and their combinations.

In thinking of the cases from the lens of assemblage theory, the materiality of Sofielund as a space for culture should not be underestimated; from the practical ways in which physical buildings house creatives and the streets where parties and exhibitions can take place, to the more subtle ways in which the cityscape or surrounding objects and materials can be shaped to produce space for creative activity and innovation. The significance of the material goes beyond the practical; it can speak to us in a more subtle way, creating an aura or atmosphere, or conveying certain messages or notions. An analytical framework must therefore consider the influence that our material surroundings have on us, and how it works in the assemblage. In Bennett's understanding of assemblages, she stresses the dynamic role of non-human materials in the public sphere. She proposes the idea of 'Thing Power', which refers to the “strange ability of ordinary, man-made items to exceed their status as objects and to manifest traces of independence or aliveness, constituting the outside of our own experience.” (Bennett, 2010, p. 16) This way of exploring the elements of the research area allows me to recognize the capacity, impact, and meanings of material things - not simply as the backdrop for human action, but on par with human actions and intentions.

The concept of 'culture' in this context is primarily centered on aesthetic, creative, and artistic production, and consumption. However, adopting an assemblage perspective encourages us to perceive "the cultural" alongside social and economic dimensions, not as predetermined categories rigidly classifying specific human activities and attributes. Instead, 'culture' can serve as a lens to observe a range of material practices and configurations involving interactions between both human and non-human elements. While not every practice and arrangement necessarily fit the explicit "cultural" label, they may draw on the notion of "culture" to structure themselves and attain a distinctive identity, or even acquire a "cultural" aspect due to their close ties with other elements. When I refer to a "space for culture" or a "cultural space," I am not merely pointing to a location where expression and consumption of aesthetics takes place.

Instead, I'm indicating a space that sets the stage and foundation for these kinds of activities and interactions to unfold.

Lastly, I want to mention here that I see the assemblage analytical framework as more than just a tool for dissecting material. It is also a way for me to understand my own position in the context of study, among different people, ideas, motivations, and strategies. Looking through this lens, I see myself as an element of this assemblage, transferring certain information and ideas between me, the local municipality, and the community stakeholders. This perspective departs from the stance of a distant observer or someone advocating for an "objective truth" from a distance. I realize that my personal engagement, shaped by subjectivity—much like that of others within the district or any involved parties—holds the potential, to varying extents, to shape perceptions, influence thoughts, and foster relationships. This signifies that I'm not merely an observer from the periphery; instead, I am also a part of the research context. In recognizing this influence, I'm also acknowledging the responsibility inherent in my role, prompting the need for a reflexive research approach that transparently incorporates my own position.

When I interact with individuals within the research setting, I may inadvertently spark certain ideas or introduce new ways of thinking. This highlights the nature of social research and the potential for active participation on my part. This dynamic underscores a fundamental aspect of research: the researcher, especially within social and cultural contexts, is not a detached entity. Rather, they are often immersed within the very environment they are studying. Research is not conducted in isolation; it resonates with the surroundings it explores, impacting the environment and the individuals involved.

3.2 Additional concepts

In likeness to my approach to the material and methods, my method of analyzing the material can also be likened to bricolage approach. What this means is that I employ the lens of assemblage theory as a foundational framework for analysis, while also incorporating a patchwork of other perspectives when engaging with the material, depending on the specific themes and questions that the material evokes. My use of assemblage theory is primarily geared towards offering a descriptive framework to capture the essence of the situation at hand, while the incorporation of additional concepts assumes the role of problematizing and analyzing

specific aspects. In this way, I have strived to work fluidly and to be open to the various possibilities that the material offers. Following is an outline of some of the more prominent concepts that informs my analysis.

Since this thesis is centered around questions concerning the making of place and space for culture, I have wished to apply perspectives that can describe and problematize the nature of our surroundings. For this purpose, I have found guidance in French philosopher Henri Lefebvre's (1991; 1996; 2002; 2003; 2014) view on space as something that we produce. This notion entails that space is not a passive backdrop but a product of human actions and interactions. In turn, Lefebvre's understanding of space also entails the notion of space as reproducing social relationships and dynamics. This perspective aligns with my exploration of cultural activities and their interaction with the physical spaces in Sofielund. Through this perspective, I recognize that space is dynamically shaped and produced by the practices taking place within them. In practical terms, Lefebvre's notion of the production of space elucidates that space is not merely a static setting but rather a dynamic outcome of various social, cultural, ideological, and material forces. This aligns with my exploration of the cases, where the spaces themselves play a pivotal role in shaping the cultural activities and interactions that unfold within them and vice versa. This understanding reinforces the interconnectedness of space and cultural expressions, providing a lens through which to comprehend how the cases are not isolated occurrences, but rather the products of relationships between various elements – that together produce space in certain ways.

Another perspective that I have found helpful in order to understand and describe the way actors navigate their contexts is the ideas of French philosopher Michel de Certeau (de Certeau, 1984). De Certeau theorizes how actors, distinct from influential entities like governments and corporations, employ so called 'tactics' to navigate a constrained context, making the most of what they have and finding innovative ways to work within the confines of a system created by others. In contrast, for de Certeau, so called 'strategies' pertain instead to actions undertaken by powerful institutions or actors that are able to control their own spaces. This perspective is used in order to describe how specific conditions may prompt actors to develop ways of working that 'work' despite challenges imposed from an outside system.

Furthermore, an important aspect that comes up in the context of culture within public space is the idea of performance and play, which I refer to in discussing how certain activities act as highlighting and showing specific ideas. Here I draw on amongst others, American performance

studies professor Richard Schechner (Schechner, 2013), Canadian-American anthropologist Erving Goffman (1956) and (Turner, 1986), who all put forward the idea of performance as not only putting on a show in the common sense of the word, but rather as any activity which serves to influence others in particular ways – illustrating in some ways what might be possible and what is worth showcasing. On this theme, I also discuss the concept of play as something more than simply playing a game, but as something that can challenge and offer other views in relation to standard norms and conventions. I find this perspective is useful in understanding cultural activities as something more than merely recreation or entertainment, but also as something that may communicate to us a message about the order of things in society.

4. Culture in the urban context

With this thesis I add to a very broad and varied field of studies concerning the place and space, the role, the caring of - and the use of culture in urban contexts. While there exists a multitude of perspectives to explore, I wish to highlight here some of the ideas and concepts that provide a backdrop for the motivation driving this thesis.

According to British urban studies professor Elsa Vivant (Vivant, 2009) culture now stands as one of the key elements of strategies employed by cities in times of globalization and inter-city competition. In this sense, culture is utilized as an image, allowing cities to market themselves as innovative, creative, and dynamic places. As an industry, cultural activities generate considerable economic value, creating direct value and employment while also attracting visitors and improving the tourist industry.

A driving force in this particular understanding of the meaning of creativity and culture for urban planning can be traced back to the influence of American urban studies theorist Richard Florida (Florida, 2002) and his notions concerning what he calls “the creative class”. Florida's ideas have significantly shaped the understanding of culture as catalyst for urban revitalization and in many ways, cast culture in the light of economic contexts and financial advancement.

In his work “The Rise of The Creative Class” Florida introduced the notion of the creative class as a driving engine for both economic expansion and urban progression. This collective encompasses individuals engaged in creative and knowledge-intensive professions spanning

technology, arts, design, and research. According to Florida, these individuals value things like autonomy, creativity, openness, tolerance, and a vibrant urban environment. To quantify this, Florida introduces the Creativity Index, a metric that gauges the concentration of these kinds of elements within a city or region. His belief rests on the premise that locales boasting a higher Creativity Index are poised for economic growth and a surge of innovative endeavors.

Central to Florida's stance is the pivotal role of place in attracting the creative class. He advocates for cities and regions to cultivate environments that embrace inclusivity, diversity, and cultural vibrancy, since according to him, these elements resonate with creative professionals. His contention is that urban centers adept at luring and nurturing the creative class stand to reap the rewards of urban renaissance and financial expansion as the infusion of creative minds not only fuels innovation and entrepreneurship but also augments overall economic activity. Culture and creative industries are seen as an instrumental backdrop that will attract educated labor, knowledge workers and investors. The implication is that cities must conform to the ideals and social norms of the creative class.

Florida's thesis has sparked extensive debates, as critics cast doubts on the model's ability to foster balanced and inclusive growth across varying socioeconomic levels (see for example Peck, 2005). Central concerns have emerged, questioning whether an overemphasis on attracting the creative class might inadvertently exacerbate challenges like gentrification and the uprooting of established communities (ibid.).

According to German sociologists Volker Kirchberg and cultural distribution and organization researcher Sacha Kagan (Kirchberg & Kagan, 2013), Florida's focus on the creative class has been tainted by its demands for an unsustainable urban development. They argue that his insistence on observing the success of cities in terms of economics alone ignores the risks of the assumed infinite growth of a few successful cities. Moreover, they argue that the highly mobile 'creative class' prefers (re-urbanized inner city) communities that all seem to be attractive according to the same factors, such as 'lifestyle', 'social interaction', 'diversity', 'authenticity', 'identity', or 'quality of place' (Florida, 2002: 224ff). As a result, the ideal 'creative class' urbanism will be shaped similarly everywhere with the same features (e.g., Starbucks, bicycle paths and juice bars) that imitate an 'indigenous authenticity' but provide the same urban homogenized 'plug-and-play' environment everywhere. (Kirchberg & Kagan, 2013)

British cultural economy professor Andy C. Pratt (Pratt, 2008) has expressed criticism towards

Florida's thesis in regard to it assuming a causality between the creative class and urban change that is difficult to qualify. Furthermore, Pratt (ibid.) argues that the idea that the competition among places to attract mobile investment is a zero-sum game. This implies that if one place gains, another must lose. In the context of Florida's thesis, it could mean that while some cities might benefit from attracting the creative class, others may suffer due to an outflow of resources or talent. Pratt also points out that Florida's thesis tends to separate and reify the relationship between production and consumption. This means that the process of creating something (production) and the process of consuming it (consumption) are treated as distinct and isolated from each other. This separation might not accurately represent the complex interplay between these two aspects. Furthermore, Pratt argues that Florida's concept of the creative class, along with their associated values, is overly simplistic and limiting as it reduces people to their occupations, ignoring the broader diversity and complexity of roles and skills within the creative field.

Per Möller (Möller, 2021), a Swedish researcher in cultural politics, has discussed the impact of leveraging culture for economic advancement and enhancing urban identity, specifically within the Swedish and Malmö contexts. He speaks of a "culturalization of capital and production," or more commonly known as the creative economy, to describe the process of employing culture for political and economic objectives. He highlights a paradox arising from this phenomenon. On one hand, culture is expanding its role and gaining centrality in the economy. On the flip side, culture is being exposed to heightened economic pressures. He clarifies that this dual trend is especially conspicuous at the local and regional political echelons, where cultural policies often align with broader strategies for economic growth.

According to Möller, the prevailing consensus that cultural resources and events contribute significantly to forming an alluring city brand signifies more than a mere shift in political direction post the welfare state era. He suggests it can be interpreted as an ideological construct that co-opts and shapes the concept of culture. This interpretation frames culture primarily in terms of its experiential and attractive attributes, tightly intertwined with the notion of the city-as-brand. In effect, this reframes culture within politics and urban development, valuing it based on its capacity to enhance the urban experience and attractiveness. This dynamic is described to pose the risk of disconnecting culture as an autonomous aesthetic expression from its direct link to the cultural sector. This since within the project of "branding the city", the concept of culture gets broadened and is conflated with various attractive elements, including events of

differing cultural relevance such as conferences and sports events. Möller calls this a kind of "cultural spillover."

He contends that the concept of a "culture-bearing urban space" fosters an appealing image of a city abundant in experiences. However, he also posits that this enticing urban ambiance is frequently tailored for markets beyond the city's immediate confines in a wish to attract national and international attention, which becomes a metric not just for success but also for overall well-being and prosperity. For Möller (2021), these shifts collectively signify a commercialization of social life within the context of late capitalism. In a similar way, the terms 'experience' and 'attractiveness' have undergone a process of marketization – where these concepts, once intrinsic use values for individuals, have now evolved into fully-fledged economic categories. This commodification of culture and social life lays the groundwork for the widespread transformation of cities into commodities, a global trend evident today. Urban spaces as well as their social dynamics are packaged and marketed as tourist hotspots, appealing destinations for innovative enterprises, and centers for mobile creative professionals (ibid.).

In the context of Sweden, this marks a shift from how the cultural sector have been understood and governed from a state and municipal perspective. Traditionally, Swedish cultural policy has been closely connected to social welfare objectives which has meant a significant public engagement in cultural life. This approach has encompassed the wish to safeguard freedom of expression, enabling cultural participation, promoting decentralization – and to isolate certain realms (such as culture, education, healthcare) from the economic demands of the market. However, Möller observes that this ideological boundary between public governance and market dynamics has been increasingly blurred since the 1970s. Current trends underline the importance of collaboration between the public sector and the market for societal prosperity. In sync with the contemporary political landscape, the cultural sector, much like education and healthcare, is shifting towards a more diverse ownership and governance model, encompassing both public and private spheres.

In these processes, while activities within the cultural and creative sectors are perceived to be significant in themselves, at the same time the focus is not so much on the sectors mode of operation, production, and circulation of cultural artefacts such as works, concerts and performances, but rather on its capacity to generate value through consumer-focused consumption of experiences. According to Möller, quality in the material sense of performance, function and utility is thus overshadowed by a concentration on the staging value of the product.

This means that the transformation from ideal to real exchange value, and thus the transformation of the added value of culture into material capital, takes place outside of the field of culture. Thus, capital does not go to the producers of culture but is primarily realized within the 'municipal whole', benefitting cultural life only through the trickle-down effect, with the money spilling over to the cultural sector in the best-case scenario.

Culture thus according to Möller has been given a function as a localization factor, in close connection with the tourism industry and site-specific branding, which is intended to attract the interest of the media, tourists, investors and potential new residents. In urban planning then, culture is used as decoration, and as a distinguishing feature in the construction of new, or the refurbishment of older, residential, and commercial areas, where cultural expressions are seen to add touches of authenticity and 'spice'. In these ways, culture becomes a prominent element in the production of a symbolic economy in the sense that it is made up of immaterial categories such as image, feeling, attractiveness, etc. But at the same time, according to Möller, it involves a series of material conditions and practices of an economic, political, productive, and spatial nature.

However, he underlines that this symbolic economy isn't isolated; it is firmly rooted within economic, political, productive, and spatial realities. To illustrate this concretely, he offers an urban planning example; areas where artists' studios and cultural endeavors have secured affordable spaces for operation, subsequently boosting their appeal due to the perceived extra value they bring. This surge in appeal then triggers the revitalization of older residential and industrial zones. According to Möller, this revitalization almost invariably leads to escalated property costs. Paradoxically, those who initially catalyzed the value upswing find themselves priced out. In this trajectory, as the artists and cultural actors depart, so does the value they once generated, highlighting a fleeting nature to this cultural augmentation.

While acknowledging that some might argue that this process has been managed, even refined, Möller contends that this situation still presents a significant challenge, not just on the local scale, but also on a grander scale encompassing entire cities. This is because exploiting the 'cultural' added value poses an inherent threat to its own sustainability. In the worst scenarios, the very creativity that initially contributed to attraction is eroded as urban development progresses. Möller's analysis extends to questioning the endurance and historical uniqueness of 'autonomous culture', in this context, encompassing both conventional, narrower cultural and artistic aspects, as well as the more distinct genres. Within this framework, the concept of the

"imagined city", shaped by branding and centered around immersive allure, encounters formidable challenges when confronted with tangible realities. The argument suggests that while this conceptual framework might foster a sense of progress and influence, driving projects that benefit the entire city, its seamless integration into actual circumstances is not guaranteed. According to Möller, this risk lies in these constructs potentially becoming disconnected from the political realities and the lived experiences of the city's inhabitants.

In light of these discussions, I wish to shine a light on some of the real conditions and circumstances for actors and activities within the cultural landscape of Sofielund. The aforementioned notions underscore that comprehending culture's role in urban planning isn't a one-size-fits-all paradigm.

Even though the 'creative turn' and the focus on culture in urban planning has been ongoing for some time, there is no single unified approach to how municipalities or governments should work with supporting culture in cities. Instead, it necessitates an exploration into how culture becomes a part of the district in terms of social interactions, physical surroundings, and individuals' perceptions. I argue that this necessitate a shift in focus, moving away a bit from the notion of a perceived added value, and instead directing attention towards the tangible use-value and immediate significance of cultural expression within the local context. This shift can work to enhance our understanding and preempt the risk of our notions about culture becoming detached from actual realities. Exploring how culture has organically taken root in the district through social, material, and ideological dimensions, could prove advantageous to all stakeholders invested in the district's cultural aspirations.

5. The Hangar and The Steppe

During my project with Malmö Municipality, I met up with some friends and acquaintances in a bar on Möllan. When I told them what I was working on, one of the women in the group asked; Haven't you met with Affe? He has this big hangar with all this graffiti and murals, and he knows a lot of people in Sofielund. I'll give you his phone number."

Approximately three weeks after this, I had the opportunity to visit Affe¹ in the offices situated next to the Hangar, where he and the rest of the team responsible for the urban art gallery process were based. Upon entering the Hangar, I was struck by its size, rectangular in shape, with lofty ceilings and walls covered with vibrant art in a range of colors and aesthetics. The exterior of the Hangar was equally striking, covered in a patchwork of distinctive art pieces. Outside of the Hangar is what Affe calls The Steppe, an area roughly twice the size of the Hangar covered with asphalt, but with grass and flowers growing in the crevices.

A graffiti artist active since the 1980s, Affe has been the initiator the process of transforming the once derelict space into an urban art gallery and activity space. With long roots in the graffiti and urban art sphere, he describes himself as one of the first belonging to the Swedish Hip Hop Generation in Sweden. In my conversations with Affe, as well as with other cultural actors in the district, I often found myself in discussions revolving around the built environment and the spaces within. The relatively low cost of rental space that the district has offered historically, which is becoming increasingly rare across Malmö, was depicted to me as a major factor in the emergence of cultural actors in this area. This, in combination with the unique characteristics of various industrial buildings, seemed to create ideal conditions for those looking for a space to bring their artistic visions to life. High ceilings, large spaces, durable and rough materials, and in some cases, an aura that speaks to the historical purposes and events associated with the space, can foster a vision - and allow it to grow.

¹ Pseudonym.





Figure 1: a) Inside the Hangar. b) The Steppe and the outside walls of the Hangar. Photos: The author, 2022.

In this chapter, an analysis of the distinctive characteristics of the Hangar and the Steppe will be presented, shedding light on their operational mechanisms shaped by both material and spatial considerations. It examines the ways in which they come into existence, including the roles played by external actors and the inherent limitations they bring or assistance they offer.

To achieve this, the chapter starts with an exploration of the historical roots and evolution of the Hangar and the Steppe. Building upon this foundation, it then applies Bennett's theories of materialism and assemblages to these contexts and continues with an analysis of the concept of 'emptiness' and its active role as a dynamic force within urban landscapes. Subsequently, the chapter delves into a discussion of the concept of 'emptiness' and its dynamic role as a driving force within urban landscapes. Moving forward, Lefebvre's perspectives on spatial production are incorporated, thereby highlighting the intricate dynamics that underpin these types of spaces. The chapter concludes by summarizing the processes and phenomena that urban planners and actors engaged in making space for culture can learn from in order to better understand how culture can (and perhaps cannot) be intentionally planned and cared for.

5.1 “You could never do this in Uppsala”

In his own words, Affe had been obsessed with abandoned environments during the last five years. Available and free, no one else cares or takes advantage of them. It is not difficult to find these places. Once finding such a place – the walls can become a canvas. Affe estimates that he has made some 400-500 paintings in various neglected environments, in both Sweden and other countries. During those years, he thought that it would be fun to discover a place where no other painter has been before. But that is not always easy as these places are popular spots for painters – and rumors spread quickly. However, in 2013, he was commissioned to paint a mural for a music video to be filmed in Malmö for a song by the Swedish rap/hip hop group Looptroop Rockers. At that time, he was working as an artist and had a studio in another part of Sofielund. The music group wanted a large mural of their mothers as the backdrop for their performance. They had found the perfect spot – in the industrial area of Sofielund, there was a huge wall on the inside of a large empty structure. Upon seeing the – untouched – walls of the large industrial building they had found as the setting, he was amazed. In an email conversation, he describes the feeling he had:

The first time I walked through the little green door and saw the entire inside of the Hangar, I just thought “WOOOOWW!” Unbelievable. And only 500 meters from my studio. God leads, and I follow. What a place! And deserted and huge.

A few years earlier I had read Gerald Richter’s book “Everyday practice and painting”, where he describes his studio as so big that he needs a bicycle inside. “We need a small car here,” I thought when I saw the size of the Hangar. It was not just what is now called the Hangar, it was several times as big back then with all the, at that time, open side rooms. (Affe)

As I have mentioned, the Sofielund industrial area, where the Hangar and the Steppe is located, is home to a number of industrial buildings, many of them large in size. The area experienced continuous expansion of its industries until the late 1970s and early 1980s, at which point several industries ceased operations or relocated elsewhere. Regarding the Hangar, while it may resemble an airplane hangar in size, its previous usage was quite different—the building had been utilized as a warehouse in connection with a nearby tin can factory that operated in the adjacent buildings and took up the whole quarter. For this purpose, it had to be big. Plåtmanufaktur Malmö (PLM), the company operating in the premises, was the first to produce beer cans in Sweden in 1954, which were exported to the USA (SVT Nyheter, 2015).

When seeing the sheer size of the structure, it sparked an urge in Affe to keep painting here. It did not take many minutes before he asked the man who had let them in, the caretaker, if he could have access to the property to paint. After a week’s consideration and the caretaker’s assessment of the quality of the mothers he had painted, they shook hands on it – never signing any contract. The caretaker handed over the keys, informing Affe he could paint for up to fifteen years, after which the building would be demolished. There was a hardware store in the adjacent buildings, Optimera, storing some of their materials in a section of the structure, but nothing else. Homeless people also used the premises, using the electricity outputs available to charge their mobile phones.



Figure 2: a) Archive image showing the production of the cans that were once stored in the building. Photo: Malmö Stadsarkiv. Date unknown. b) and c) Screenshots from the music video "Aldrig" by Looptroop Rockers, published in 2013.

Affe comments on the event of being given the keys to the Hangar as something that would not have happened in other cities, highlighting what he perceives as a distinctive mentality present in Malmö, something that sets it apart from other Swedish cities.

“Something like this would never have happened in Uppsala, where I’m from!” he laughs – telling me that the City of Uppsala (where both of us coincidentally grew up) is much stricter in terms of rules and regulations. “I have never asked the question in this way before because it is so extensive. However, I have asked about a small wall surface here and there and received varied answers. [...] There is a spirit of freedom in Malmö in a different way, even in Stockholm or Gothenburg, there would be no tolerance for this kind of thing”, he tells me in an email conversation, and continues:

I think, at least in the past, in Malmö, there has been a welcoming attitude to make room for all constructive suggestions. Malmö, my early perception of the city, has been characterized by tolerance and openness. Do you want to do something? You are welcome. After all, this is basic hip hop. ⇒ I have many different examples of this over the years. If you want, we can write a book about it. That is, what could be done in Malmö, but never in Uppsala, Gothenburg, and Stockholm. (Affe)

When it comes to graffiti and urban art, Sweden has upheld a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of painting on public surfaces since the 1990s. This stance has been accompanied by a prevailing discourse that categorizes urban art as criminal acts, demanding decisive action from municipal authorities.

Landscape architect Emma Paulsson (Paulsson, 2016) sheds light on Malmö municipality's approach to graffiti and urban art. Paulsson, who conducted interviews with municipal officials as part of her research on Graffiti in Malmö, found that the city has embraced a dual perspective, combining elements of zero-tolerance with an alternative recognition of these practices as creative and innovative, capable of revitalizing public spaces. In August 2009, the Public Works Department inaugurated a legal graffiti board at Folkets Park. This initiative allocated a 75-meter stretch along Norra Parkgatan, running adjacent to a pedestrian and bicycle path, for graffiti and other artistic expressions. Paulsson (ibid.) found that officials spoke of a "permissive approach" when it comes to how residents utilize public spaces in the city. The foundation of this approach lies in recognizing and embracing how people currently engage with and shape the city's spaces. It is seen as an informal proposal to the street office,

acknowledging the desires and preferences of the inhabitants. In her research, that was published in 2016, Paulsson notes that the head of urban environments emphasized the city's ongoing efforts in developing its brand, envisioning Malmö as "The permissive city with a focus on excellence" (ibid.).

Paulsson (ibid.) suggests that Malmö's permissive approach to graffiti and street art is shaped by the intersection of two prominent discourses in urban planning. The first discourse revolves around citizen dialogue and user democracy, highlighting the importance of engaging residents in decision-making processes. The second discourse is rooted in marketing strategies that emphasize the role of creativity and innovation in urban development (see, for instance, Florida 2002). In a similar way, sociologist Erik Hannerz and art historian Jacob Kimwall (Hannerz & Kimwall, 2019) shed light on the establishment of open walls and legal graffiti spots during the late 2000s. They argue that these initiatives were not only seen as platforms for artistic expression but also as powerful tools for attracting the creative class to specific areas. This underscores the recognition of graffiti and street art as significant factors in urban revitalization efforts.

However, the historical connection between urban art and the city of Malmö predates the 2000s. Affe reveals that the concept of an urban art gallery was partly inspired by existing legal graffiti walls in the city, such as the Anna car park (P-huset Anna). Sweden's first legal graffiti wall was established on the lower section of this car park, which was constructed in 1979, even before the arrival of hip-hop graffiti in the country – although spray cans, graffiti, and brigade painting were already in existence (Paulsson, 2016). The architectural firm Sten Samuelsson, responsible for the car park's design, collaborated with artist Leif Svensson to conceive the idea of a wall where people were allowed to paint. Svensson explained in an interview with *Skånska Dagbladet* that the inspiration struck him when he was asked to create surfaces that were resistant to scribbling, to which he responded that such surfaces did not exist, especially when people had access to spray cans. Instead, he proposed, "let them scribble, and we'll frame it instead." As a result, two of the car park's four walls were smoothed and painted white to facilitate public scribbling and painting (ibid.).

The sanctioning of legal graffiti can be seen as a way for decision makers to steer the public into one spot and avoiding them painting where it is not designated (cf. Paulsson, 2016). But as earlier mentioned, another function of allowing for urban art to adorn the city is because it can attract creativity and innovation, leading to urban revitalization and attracting the so-called

creative class. The real estate company and the landlord of the building that Affe calls the Hangar is Briggen. In 2014, Briggen, the real estate company and the landlord of the building, discussed the reasons for allowing it to be used for painting in their own magazine, Briggen M.fl., Camilla Steén, the company's director, elaborated on their reasoning:

This is not just a case of social responsibility. We have a lot to gain by contributing to the development of a positive urban climate in the cities where we are active. Cities with sustainable social and economic growth are those which can offer interesting and varied cultural scenes and attract people with creative ideas and entrepreneurial spirit, creating a positive feedback loop which benefits everyone. Therefore, it is important for companies to step out of their comfort zone and challenge their traditional perceptions if they wish to remain successful in the long term. (Briggen M.fl., 2014)

This statement is in line with the idea of Richard Florida (2002), who argues that attracting the creative class is a key factor in promoting regional economic development and growth. He hypothesizes that creative people are the driving force behind regional economic growth, and these individuals prefer places that are innovative, diverse, and tolerant. Florida's idea focuses on the underlying factors that shape the location decisions of these people, rather than simply stating that regions are blessed with certain endowments. This belief, that culture can be used to augment urban economic growth has been incorporated into the new strategies that cities utilize to remain competitive (Cf. Miles & Paddison, 2005). Briggen's decision to support urban art in the Hangar echoes this broader understanding of the vital role that creativity and cultural vibrancy play in city marketing, urban revitalization, and economic prosperity.

Although Affe's presence in the Hangar might not have been driven by Florida's ideals or urban development goals oriented towards economic gains, a convergence arises within the context of the Hangar, resulting in an initially symbiotic outcome, allowing for Affe to develop his own vision of what the space might become.

For Affe, the Hangar was seen an opportunity to embark on a life project, one that began with painting but had the potential for much more. As a trained artist, painting comes naturally to him, but he was more eager to explore the artistic aspects of society which are often overlooked or denied a platform for expression. He expressed that he recognized that this project was an opportunity to foster a kind of basic democracy, where everyone could be given a voice. This

has been the driving force behind the transformation of the Hangar into an Urban Art Gallery. Drawing inspiration from Malmö's energetic street art and public art culture, and the legal graffiti walls in the city, he thought this could serve as an extension of these spaces, for those wishing to paint for longer periods of time and for the paintings to remain for longer, since on the legal graffiti walls, the paintings are quickly painted over.

Over time, the Hangar has undergone a metamorphosis, transitioning from an abandoned space to a solo painting venture by Affe, and eventually - as I will demonstrate in a moment - evolving into a collaborative space where numerous artists have come together and left their marks. By 2017, the entire interior of the Hangar had become a vibrant display of urban art, showcasing the contributions of around seventy painters, ranging from amateurs to professionals, from Sweden and beyond. Affe soon realized that it had begun to function as an art gallery – with people visiting, intrigued. He had put small notes with “graffiti critiques” labelling the works for visitors to read. He gathered a team and they set up an association, CFUK (Centrum För Urban Konst – Eng. Center for Urban Arts) to start working towards realizing this as a real concept.

Today, the Hangar and the Steppe invites youth and children, providing them with an opportunity to engage themselves in artistic endeavors and experimentation. On weekdays, the hardware store Optimera swings open the hangar doors, granting passers-by the chance to observe both completed pieces and works in progress, free of charge. Anyone interested in creating their own artwork can get in touch, so that space can be made available on the walls while respecting the existing pieces. As one's gaze wanders along the Hangar's walls, a kaleidoscope of styles and subjects greets the eye, ranging from meticulously detailed photorealistic paintings to more expressive, surrealist, or naïve expressions, and even evocative words and poetry, giving voice to thoughts, feelings, messages. As Affe explains, there are no rules in place regarding who can paint and how, except for one: one must paint all the way from the floor up to the ceiling. This rule has resulted in each individual producing their unique artworks in a mega-format.

Numerous elements played important roles in the emergence of the Hangar as what it is today – in the process (or already being) of becoming an urban art gallery – including the serendipitous event of the painting of the four mothers, Affe's visionary perception that transformed walls into canvases, the underlying discourses surrounding urban art and its relationship with the city of Malmö and the ideas put forth by Briggen. However, at the heart

of this narrative, the building itself emerges as the protagonist. As pointed out by Bennett (2010), agency finds its locus in the interplay between human and non-human elements. Through the lens of the Hangar and the Steppe's evolution, we witness a portrayal of material objects transcending their status to become active actants in materializing concepts. In this case, the champion in this story is the building itself – working as a container in which ideas could take form.

In the next section, I will relate Bennett's theories with unfolding occurrences within the Hangar and on the Steppe. While doing this, I will turn to some questions surrounding the effectiveness of the building – the 'how' behind its transformation. This in order to shine a light on the meaning of that which is not always prominent or obvious in the urban landscape, but nonetheless may hold significant value.

5.2 “A Very Inspiring White Cube”

On a rainy day, when no one was there but myself, I walked across The Steppe, inspecting the different shades of paint on the large structure, the asphalt was wet and shiny. I could see all the small details, and read the poetry weaved into the artworks. The emptiness and me being there alone gave an ephemeral vibe, with the buzzing sounds from industrial trucks shipping bread from a factory close by.

Another time I was there was at the yearly Malmö Gallery weekend, which is organized by the arts association Konstfrämjandet Skåne with the hope of making art accessible. This weekend sees numerous galleries, art institutions, and temporary artist-run initiatives open their doors to the public, offering special events and extended opening hours. As I walked from the city center towards Sofielund at night, the streets became progressively quieter, leading me to wonder if anything exciting was really happening in this area. Until coming closer, I started hearing the aggressive bass beats streaming from the Hangar. Inside, there was a myriad of people, art works, sounds echoing in the large building. The artworks were lighted and seemed more dramatic, bigger.

In these different situations, a common thought struck me. I started wondering how the building had managed to bring together so many things – people, objects, artworks, and words. Not long ago, it was just a naked structure. While Affe's hard work clearly played a big part in making

this happen, I also thought about the qualities that had made the building susceptible to this transformation.

It's a feature of our world that we can and do distinguish . . . things from persons. But the sort of world we live in makes it constantly possible for these two sets of kinds to exchange properties. (Bennet, 2010, p. 10)

As spoken by Bennet, our understanding of the world entails a clear separation of things from persons, living things with intentions and goals and dead matter, subject to our wills as people. However, the origin story of the Hangar and the Steppe reveals the agency of the building and the asphalt, in the sense that the building can do things, although not by itself, but in collaboration with the people in and around it (Jönsson, 2017).

Seen this way, the Hangar and its adjacent Steppe are actants. Following Latour and Deleuze, Jane Bennet (2010) describes an actant as neither an object nor a subject, but an “intervener” – or a “quasi-causal operator” – something that by virtue of its particular location in an assemblage and the fortuity of being in the right place at the right time, makes the difference, makes things happen and becomes the decisive force catalyzing an event.

This ability of objects to make things happen is what Bennett (2010) refers to as Thing-Power: the ability of everyday objects to transcend their object status and display traces of independence or vitality, expanding our own experiences. The creation of the Hangar as an urban art gallery was not a premeditated plan; it emerged from a fortuitous encounter with the building itself. This highlights the challenge of intentionally designing for “cultural outcomes”, as the convergence of innovations and the manifestation of Thing-Power may instead be unpredictable occurrences. They can arise when different elements in our environment unexpectedly combine, leading to unforeseen and novel developments in terms of timing, form, and duration (Bennett, 2010; (DeLanda, 2019).

The significance of this type of phenomenon gains additional depth when examined through the lens of Henri Lefebvre's (1991) concepts on space production. In the words of Lefebvre (1991), in the modern era, spaces are conceived before they are lived. What he means by this is that planners, decisionmakers and architects envision, draw and model space before it is used and inhabited. Lefebvre (1991) coins the term "abstract space" to describe this homogenized

and uniform field of space created by the amalgamation of modern technology, capitalism, and state control, a space that lacks a sense of place or identity. While not all instances of “planned from above” space may be described as harshly as Lefebvre suggests, this perspective sheds light on a form of space characterized by and reduced to the efficient movement of people, goods, and consumption. This can be observed in various examples such as highways, shopping centres, corporate office buildings, airport terminals, suburban housing developments, hotel chains, and parking lots. They are designed, regulated, and maintained by a central authority, flattened out on a map, and divided in straight lines, categorized for different (surplus-value) purposes. Drawing on Lefebvre, Sociologist Vincent Miller (2006) argues that when conceptions precede a space that is “fully lived” – when everyday life is interfered with from above through the use of space, it can be described as form of "colonization of space." Lefebvre (1991) himself maintains that this kind of designed, regulated, abstract space can be seen as a representation of the established societal order, containing hierarchical statuses, localized norms, and roles and values that are bound to particular places.

What happens then when something breaks free from the confines of this structured framework? What occurs when action precedes conceptualization? Abstract space can never be flawless; and when something breaks free from this framework of abstraction, when action precedes conceptualization, gaps and openings emerge – challenging the preconceived notions of how spaces should be conceptualized and utilized. Urban landscapes, in particular, exhibit an intensity born from the multitude of objects, events, and individuals present. This brings about unpredictability and interconnections that escapes modelling. Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 2003) describes the urban experience as "a place where people wander, encounter piles of objects, experience the entanglement of their activities to the point of becoming unrecognizable, and give rise to unexpected situations". These circumstances challenge the notion of abstract space and its rigid boundaries. Moreover, the logics of economics and surplus value production are perpetually vulnerable. When a factory ceases to be productive or rent prices surge due to market shifts, it can leave behind a void in abstract space.

This void can be harnessed by those seeking to create alternative spaces, drawing new elements into it, redefining the way the space is utilized and produced. In this context, new elements may encompass people, animals, and a myriad of activities that accompany them.



Figure 3: a) and b) The Steppe during daytime on two different occasions. Photo/video: the author, 2022/2023.



Figure 4: a) b) and c) The Hangar and the Steppe during the Gallery Weekend. Video: the author, 2022.

During my visits to the Hangar and the Steppe, I observed various people and animals. On the Steppe, I see rabbits and birds in the absence of people. At other times, I notice individuals cycling across the vast expanse or pausing to admire the artwork, some walking across, stopping to take out their phones to capture a photo. I see someone practicing tennis, bouncing the ball against the wall as their training partner. Inside the Hangar, some pigeons have made themselves at home amongst the roof beams.

In my conversation with Affe, he shared his own observations of the visitors and activities taking place at the Steppe, the expansive asphalt plane. In fact, he had compiled a list that he shared with me.

From the birds and rabbits that I had seen myself, to birdwatching enthusiasts, the list of Affe's observations encompass and illustrate the attraction of a diverse range of individuals to this space. It serves as a canvas for graffiti painters, muralists, and other artists who showcase their creativity, but also people coming to paint – not on the walls – but instead bringing their own easels. Furthermore, independent exhibition activities focused on street and urban art make use of the setting. Dogs and their owners frequent the area for agility and training exercises. The Steppe becomes a training area for various sports, from South American and Mexican ball sports and other that may lack their own dedicated spaces. It hosts ball jugglers showcasing their skills. Visitors of all kinds, individuals, and groups, stroll across the Steppe, appreciating the art. Cyclists, from ordinary commuters to skilled trick-cyclists, utilize the asphalt ground. Various forms of martial arts, including historical practices like Middle Ages Sword fighting but also laser sword fighting, find a place here. Fire acrobatics take advantage of the openness of the plain. The Steppe serves as a backdrop for photography, filming, music video production, TikTok's, and rehearsal space for dance, music, and scenography. Dancers practicing K-Pop, breaking, popping, street, salsa, and more. People engage in creating art installations, constructions, and Tifos. Affe also notes the presence of less categorizable individuals he refers to as "inspiration seekers," along with those he calls "selfies-people", "chillers", "poets and proclaimers" and even those seeking a meeting spot or a place for romance.

What is the allure of an asphalt plane and an old industrial building adorned with graffiti? Reflecting on the Hangar and the Steppe, an intern who worked with the association provides her perspective in an interview published on their website. When asked about her thoughts on the spaces, she describes them as "empty" yet "big-ass areas even though there's stuff there".

She continues: “like a very inspiring white cube, despite all the graffiti. You want to do things here.” (CFUK, 2023).

This description, coupled with the list provided by Affe of his observations, reveal how individuals seem to be drawn to the Steppe out of their own volition, driven by their personal desire to engage in a diverse range of activities. This self-motivation and active involvement unveil the hidden potential within what may initially appear as a void or emptiness—a residue left behind by the mechanisms of production, a rift in the abstract fabric of space. It evokes the image of a black hole, exerting a gravitational pull on other elements. This emptiness allows for transformation according to citizens' desires. It is an exception to the planned, owned, and structured nature of modern cities.

This phenomenon can be described in terms of what architect, historian, and philosopher Ignasi de Solà-Morales (Solà-Morales, 1995) terms 'terrain vague' - a French phrase that denotes a piece of land in its undeveloped state, yet which is still defined by certain features. The term 'terrain vague' originates from the German 'Woge', meaning 'sea swell', which implies notions of movement, instability, and flux. Its Latin root 'vagus' suggests an indeterminate, imprecise, and uncertain nature, conveying a paradoxical message of mobility, roving, leisure, and freedom (ibid.).



Figure 5: Sword practicing on the Steppe. Screenshot from YouTube-video published on the CFUK Instagram page, 2023.

Solà-Morales argues that places like abandoned industrial spaces, railway stations, ports, and unsafe residential neighborhoods exist outside the effective circuits and productive structures of the city. They do not generate revenue and are not controlled by outside structures in terms of their intended purposes. Instead, they exist in a state of mental exteriority within the physical interior of the city—a foreign presence within the urban system, critiquing it and offering a potential alternative (Solà-Morales, 1995). In essence, when the city emphasizes clear place identities and homogeneity, these spaces defy categorization. They remain imprecise and in constant flux, challenging the imposition of limits, order, and standardized forms that make things recognizable, identical, and universally categorizable. They resist the organizational and rationalizing forces driven by notions of productive efficiency.

The Hangar and the Steppe can serve as prime examples of such spaces. No longer utilized for production, they have been excluded from the economic circuits of the city. From an economic perspective, they may represent the absence of the city itself. However, this absence creates an opportunity for something new to emerge. Solà-Morales argues that the interplay between the lack of use or activity and the sense of freedom and anticipation is key to unlocking the potential of these spaces. The emptiness they embody holds evocative potential, symbolizing a realm of possibilities and expectations. By embracing the inherent possibilities and anticipatory qualities of these abandoned spaces, we can begin to reimagine their purpose and significance. They thus provide a blank slate for new narratives, experiences, and creative engagements to unfold, free from constraints of predefined functions.

This notion of the terrain vague finds resonance and added meaning in the perspectives of cultural geographer Kevin Hetherington and education studies professor Nick Lee (Hetherington & Lee, 2000). In their exploration of the functionality of blankness in the social order, they draw inspiration from philosopher Michel Serres. Hetherington and Lee liken the concept of the "blank" to the joker in a deck of cards—an element that holds neutrality and multivalence, undetermined by itself but capable of assuming any value or identity within the surrounding system it finds itself in (Serres, 1991, in Hetherington & Lee, 2000)

The joker, as the most powerful card in a game, has the potential to disrupt established and expected orders, challenging the stasis, and creating change. It also holds a significant place as a key figure in various rituals that work through establishing order by embracing disorder and facilitating social renewal. Hetherington and Lee argue that the ambiguity of blank figures is not derived from people's interpretations but is an inherent property they possess autonomously.

It is precisely this underdetermined nature that enables blank figures to bring together heterogeneous elements and serve as a starting point for transformative processes (ibid.).

Viewing the Hangar and the Steppe as *terrain vague*, we can understand how the passage of time, following the cessation of their industrial use, transforms them into blank figures akin to the joker. This transformation allows for the removal of practical and semiotic values from the asphalted surface and structure. Without a stable identity, these spaces become indeterminate which introduces the possibility for alterity. This may explain their appeal as spaces where people are drawn to engage in diverse activities and actively participate in shaping them.

It not only became "empty" in its semiotic meaning but also devoid of clear guidelines regarding movement and usage. This characteristic has been maintained even after Affe's appropriation and the transformation into an art gallery. The absence of limitations of movement and explicit expectations of behaviour may allow visitors to experience a sense of unrestraint. Unlike traditional museums, art galleries, or activity spaces, there is no personnel guiding the entrance, no entrance fee. When passing by or stepping inside the hangar, one is likely to contemplate its nature: What is it? Who created it? Can I explore it? While Affe makes clear that people are not allowed to just paint over the finished art works – they have to ask first and then they can make space for it – this is not something that seems to happen a lot, and there is no sign proclaiming it.

According to Geographer Ash Amin (Amin, 2008), spaces that embrace unrestricted movement and interaction without clear guidelines provide fertile ground for emergent phenomena to occur - offering a multitude of relational possibilities, giving rise to endless novel rhythms and experiences. He calls this a 'situated surplus' – a place of many different activities, people, things, without a firm overarching or predetermined structure. Although intentional efforts to introduce new uses in public spaces can contribute to this, the emergence of unexpected phenomena within spaces characterized by a situated surplus is primarily an unpredictable process. The emergence occurs when various elements come together fortuitously, resulting in unforeseen and innovative outcomes (DeLanda, 2006, in Amin, 2008). On the Steppe, 'novel rhythms' manifest tangibly. Visitors bring speakers, turning it into a backdrop for dance rehearsals or music video production.

Karen Franck (2006), a researcher in architecture and urban design, refers to spaces that are used differently to how they were originally intended - as "loose spaces". She defines "loose spaces" as geographic areas that are unstructured, open, and not fully determined – areas that

seem to attract and accommodate a variety of both human and non-human activities. This includes abandoned areas - such as industrial ruins - that have lost their fixed purpose, such as a ruined factory, or never had one at all, such as near railway tracks. When people recognize the possibilities in these places and make use of them for their own creative ends, through their activities, these spaces become 'loose'. Franck (2006) states that in contrast to the desensitized and sterilized outside world, where structures and techniques are designed to control pedestrian circulation and where noise, movement and self-expression are constrained, in a loose space, the body is encouraged to improvise and to move towards a more expansive engagement with the surrounding environment. She notes that this can allow adults to recapture the sense of playfulness associated with childhood: "a somatic disposition which recalls the long-forgotten sensual memories of childhood play".

The concept of a "loose space" can highlight the attractiveness of spaces such as the Graffiti Hangar and the Steppe and their ability to draw people in to engage and make creative use of them. This looseness stands in stark contrast to the regulated and disciplined spaces commonly found in cities, with their rigid grids and organized zoning of places and people. Rather than exhibiting the "purification of space" as outlined by Sibley (1988 in Franck) – in which categories are kept separate and the urge to keep things apart is the primary motivator, weakly classified spaces possess blurred boundaries. Here, activities, objects, and people can mingle without restriction, which she argues can lead to increased self-governance, expressiveness, and varied encounters (ibid.). Franck contends that far from being "wastes spaces in which nothing happens", industrial ruins are connected with local practices and that is precisely the lack of surveillance and regulation, the chaotic aesthetic, and unfamiliar sensations they evoke, that helps these dissident, transgressive pursuits to survive (ibid).

Transitioning into the realm of urban planning, especially when viewed in relation to a paradigm of harnessing culture and creativity to fuel urban expansion and economic prosperity, the concepts of vacant spaces, emptiness, and the "vague" present intriguing challenges. How do these kinds of spaces align with the discourse on culture as a catalyst for attraction and enhancement? The "vague" or empty might not swiftly align with the view of culture as entertainment but rather as culture as "doing" through the vitalization of these kinds of spaces. The process could be gradual and unpredictable the results may remain uncertain. While the strategy of leaving all abandoned spaces open for potential individual initiatives might not be financially or pragmatically feasible, this example still prompts us to consider the equilibrium

between proactive intervention and organic evolution. Perhaps, then, the best thing one can do is to cultivate a keen sensitivity towards how these distinctive spaces are getting used.

If the intrigue is the vague and the loose, how does one keep and care for it - in order to maintain its potential? This was a subject of conversation between me and Affe – as he expressed that they had given serious consideration on how to “work spatially”, as he called it. He explains that there seems to be a fine balance in trying to improve it and ruining the qualities that makes it intriguing.

To shed light on this issue, we can turn to how architectural and urban critic Kim Dovey (2010) describes how to think about place as an assemblage. He does this with the help of food metaphors, and through drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) distinction between two kinds of multiplicities: extensive and intensive. An extensive multiplicity is exemplified by a bag of jellybeans, as it is defined by its spatial extension and is unaltered by the addition of more elements. What this means is that each jellybean retains its individual flavor, no matter how many beans are added to the bag. An intensive multiplicity, on the other hand, is analogous to a soup, with each new ingredient altering the overall flavor of the mixture. Dovey (2010) proposes that houses, neighborhoods, and cities constitute an intensive multiplicity – a soup -, as the introduction of new people, buildings, or rooms will transform the larger sense of the place.

If you throw a ball there, it will affect it.

I think you can keep that uniqueness, that there's a big empty space.

(Affe)

In this quote, Affe uses the example of throwing in a ball on the big, asphalted surface – even such a small thing will affect how people use and perceive it – all of a sudden, maybe it's a football field? More akin to the soup than the bag of jellybeans in Dovey's metaphor, this entails working with a light touch in order to maintain the qualities that makes it so intriguing.



Figure 6: The Steppe. Video/photo, the author, 2022/2023.

In a similar vein as Dovey's soup metaphor, Bennett (2010) argues that assemblages possess an agentic capacity due to the vitality of the materialities that constitute them. She likens this to what is within the Chinese tradition known as Shi. With roots in military terms, Shi is used to describe the energy of an event or circumstances that a general is able to tap into and capitalize upon in a successful manner. Bennett (2010, p. 35) describes how the concept of Shi can help to “illuminate something that is usually difficult to capture in discourse: namely, the kind of potential that originates not in human initiative but instead results from the very disposition of things.”. We can relate this concept to the Hangar and the Steppe. The ground, big surfaces, its

cracks, the gates, fence, the structure of the hangar and its walls can be said to create its own special 'Shi' – something a little bit raw and unrefined, open, and unfinished - something that Affe, with his projects, and the paint he began to put up onto the walls, inviting others to join, could tap into.

How then to keep working with the Hangar's Shi while continuing to develop it as an urban art gallery? Affe tells me that that they had hired a young architect to envision how an urban art gallery may be formed, since they are working with ideas on how to develop The Hangar spatially. A young architect working with the association did a couple of drawings on his own initiative. Affe shows me the drawings and explains:

What has he done? He just made the ground very smooth and nice. And then, these can just be moved (points to boxes and bases in the picture). But there were some other examples, in some there was maybe a bit more vegetation, maybe some walls. But the whole area is just empty. And maybe you can imagine that there is a nice little lamp here. But you just let it be. Imagine this plain with perfect ground, like a floor. It would probably work with just that. (Affe)

After this, the young architect was commissioned to further work on the vision. He brought in some more senior colleagues from his work – and they were tasked to develop some ideas for the spatialization of an urban art gallery in collaboration with young people who would be the target group. After finishing their work, they presented the results to the association. Affe was not pleased with the result. There were no kids, no art. Even though the group had been given a list of the people who uses the Steppe, the same I was shown, these kinds of people were nowhere to be found in the results. According to Affe, it looked like a regular public park you could find in any city. “They had done their own gentrification of the place without anyone asking for it”, he remarks and explain that it did not look like “a free urban artistic space where anyone can come and do anything”.

This example and my previous discussions highlight that in these kinds of spaces, it may be worth to rethink traditional ways of working and thinking about what a space for culture and recreation looks like. A free urban artistic space in this case might not be structured or even “welcoming”, with signs and benches. There may not be the need for signals on how it should be used or how one may move through the space. Maybe it just feels more like a blank page with some (or a lot of) scribbles (however beautiful or elaborate) on it rather than a finished

framed painting in a museum. Serving as a “blank page”, individuals can fill in the content themselves, be it through intentional activities, observation, or aimless movement.

In conclusion, the Hangar and the Steppe provide an illustrative example of how 'leftover' spaces can lead to new and inventive practices that often lie beyond traditional planning approaches and conceptions of urbanity. In doing so, they demonstrate the power of the empty and vague in providing inhabitants with the opportunity to shape culture and recreational activities within the urban landscape. It underlines the need for stakeholders and decision-makers engaged in the future of the district to recognize the allure of what is unstructured and open-ended.

This also involves considering that the most rewarding contributions of so-called cultural actors may not always be clearly illustrated in advance and that their most compelling features could come from what is indeterminate and vague. In contrast to abstract space, the Hangar and the Steppe can be viewed as examples of spaces where practical engagement, and “doing” are central (cf. (Miller, 2006)). In the following section, I will offer an analysis of the implications arising from this "doing" within these types of spaces.

5.3 Poiesis of Paint

In the previous section, I discussed the Hangar and the Steppe as something in terms of emptiness, void, and vagueness. Nevertheless, alongside the vague and unstructured characteristics that the "left-over" structures and environments offer, there exists equally important element that fosters the emergence of the Hangar and the Steppe as spaces for culture and recreation; the act of painting and the consequential symbolic imprints it leaves, exerting an influence not only on our perception of the building but also on the surrounding environment.

In this context, paint assumes an agency as it has capacity to affect. Furthermore, the paint in a very concrete way symbolizes the act of appropriating and taking over something that was not intended for public use. This notion leads us to consider how the act of painting this structure can be seen as an alternative way of producing space, a new type of space. By delving into this discussion, we can gain insights into the factors that shape the environment for cultural pursuits and leisure in our cities.

Since the first time Affe came into contact with it, the Hangar has gradually been transformed in an aesthetic sense – first slowly, with a few paintings – and then even more, until the walls were completely covered from floor to ceiling. As the walls started getting filled in with paint, the activities in the Hangar also increased. Affe describes how people come to the Hangar, interested and curious, taking pictures and exploring the space. New activities wanted to be located next to the Hangar, such as urban sports activities:

Everyone who wanted to have activities in the area wanted to go into what is called “the Graffiti hangar. All the businesses that have come here have been attracted by it, but then moved into adjacent premises. Parkour, climbing center, roller derby. They've followed, inspired by this environment. (Affe)

It was empty, but with the paint came people, and with the people came more activities. This concept can be understood through the lens of "Thing-Power," which recognizes the potential of objects and materiality to shape human actions and the social world. In this context, paint goes beyond its physical presence and issues a call to action, producing effects and making things happen, it becomes an actant. The building and the paint can be described to have agency in that it is capable of drawing in new elements and activities into their presence. While it is the human hand that wields the spray can, the paint itself carries its own transformative power, continuing to bring about change once applied to the wall (cf. Bennett 2010).

Affe has observed this phenomenon since appropriating the Hangar and the Steppe, witnessing the emergence of new ideas and activities. He believes that this is due to the space not merely being a passive viewing area, but rather one that invites and urges active participation:

Every day new ideas about activity emerge. Why? The Hangar is unlike any other institution or space in that the vast majority of people do not come here simply to be entertained or to watch art. The paintings make people want to be creative and do things themselves. Not least physically and in groups. It is usually several different groups at the same time and there are expressions that often have no other place. (Affe)

According to this perspective, the agency of paint resides in its ability to inspire action and “doing” within individuals. The diverse styles and motifs found in the paintings also imply that this space embraces something that defies specific categories or predefined boundaries. This

agency possesses the potential to add to the use of the area as a space for culture and recreation. Within this context, paint can be seen as something that carries a promise.

When I strolled across the Steppe one day, I almost stumbled upon a rock. Looking down, I saw it was a light green color. Was it intentionally placed there or a remnant of a painting session that had been relocated? Entering the Hangar, I noticed not only the finished artworks on the walls but also by the visible traces left behind. Tables marked with dried paint and paint particles that had strayed beyond their intended borders leaving their marks all around on the floor. Someone has traced a spiral with a crayon on the asphalt floor.

These observations sparked contemplation regarding the significance of the different traces of paint that can be discovered in various locations surrounding and within the Hangar. What does it communicate to us? Perhaps they suggest, "Someone left their mark here—you can do the same".







Figure 7: Traces of paint and activity. Photos: The author, 2022/2023.

In thinking about the paint as capable of producing such effects, feminist writer Sara Ahmed's (2010) perspective on objects and affect is particularly relevant. She describes objects as being “affective”. According to Ahmed, being affected “in a good way” involves our orientation towards perceiving something as good or positive. Objects, through their presence and qualities, can stir up emotions and compel us to evaluate them, directing our attention not only to the object itself but also to the conditions surrounding its arrival. This means that the affective quality of an object is not solely determined by its physical attributes but also by the context in which it is situated and the associations we have with it. Furthermore, Ahmed emphasizes that our engagement with affective objects involves movement and transformation. We are moved by the objects, both literally and metaphorically, and in this process of being moved, we actively engage with the world and create meaning. To perceive an object as affective or captivating is to direct our attention not solely towards the object but also to the surrounding environment and the conditions of its existence, what is around or behind that object – both physically and conceptually (Ahmed, 2010b). “To share objects, or have a share in objects” she writes, “might mean simply that you *share an orientation toward those objects as being good*. [...] What passes is the promise of the feeling.” (Ahmed, 2010b).

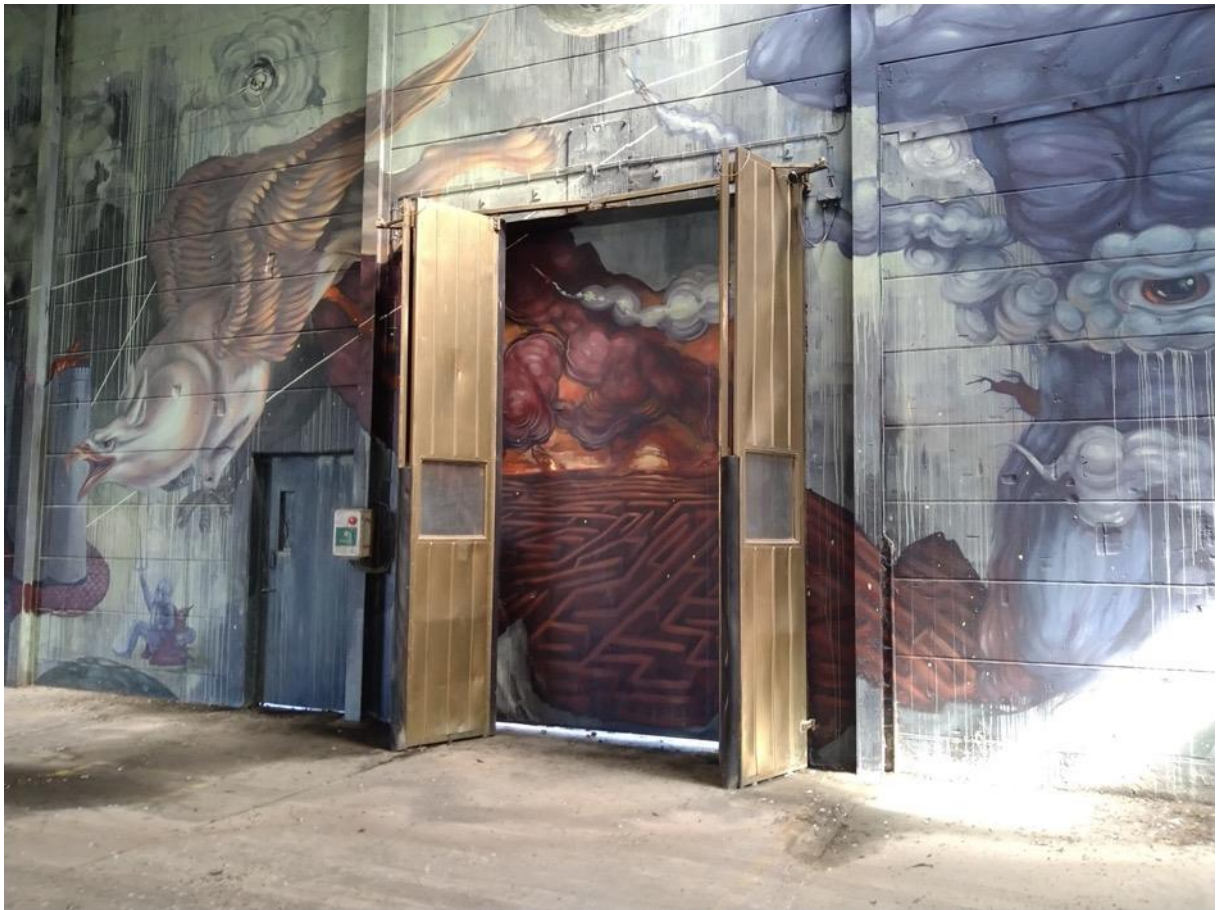
In this vein, paint can be perceived as a “trace” of activity that becomes a promise of something - with the ability to stir particular emotions or elicit distinct reactions. Just as the paint's mere presence can motivate us to take action, it also possesses the capacity to convey meaning and influence us based on the historical evaluations it embodies.

The act of painting on walls and objects in the urban environment, such as graffiti and other urban art forms, have a rich history of challenging societal norms and resisting conformity

within established urban contexts. Geographer Tim Cresswell (Cresswell, 1996) describes how these art forms subvert the authority of urban spaces and serve as a "tactic of the dispossessed," embodying fluid and transient meanings that embed themselves within the gaps and intricacies of the city's formal spatial structure. Graffiti and urban art in the public sphere have often been viewed as illegitimate, leading to their removal and lack of recognition as legitimate art forms.

This can be understood through Mary Douglas' (1992) concept of dirt as "matter out of place." It is not the object or matter itself that is considered "wrong," but rather its context and placement, which disrupts the ordered relations and contravenes established norms. Traditionally, art has been confined to museums, homes, and public commissions, reinforcing a specific system of classification, and rejecting alternative forms of expression. However, by transforming the Hangar into an urban art gallery, the context changes, allowing the art to become more "in-place" and establishing new relations and an alternative order. This creates a frame of discourse for an "urban art gallery" that acknowledges the legitimacy of graffiti and urban art.

The appropriation of the building, through the paint, can be understood as a form of "spatial poiesis," as described by communication design researcher Samantha Edwards-Vanderhoek. This concept refers to the transformation of conventional geographies, where painting on walls in the public sphere renews and reshapes a place by adding new layers of meaning. Through the interpretation and retelling by individuals, the purpose of these painted walls can shift or expand. As Edwards-Vanderhoek (2013) suggests, the potential for painting on walls lies in its capacity to alter the material and semiotic value of a place. Whereas the walls may previously have been viewed primarily as a barrier or something to divide, to keep in or out, they now act as an invitation, communicating a message to those who observe them. Similarly noted by graffiti researcher Christine Dew (2007) : "When we read the writing on the wall, the meaning of the wall changes. It says something else apart from 'keep out' or 'stay in'."



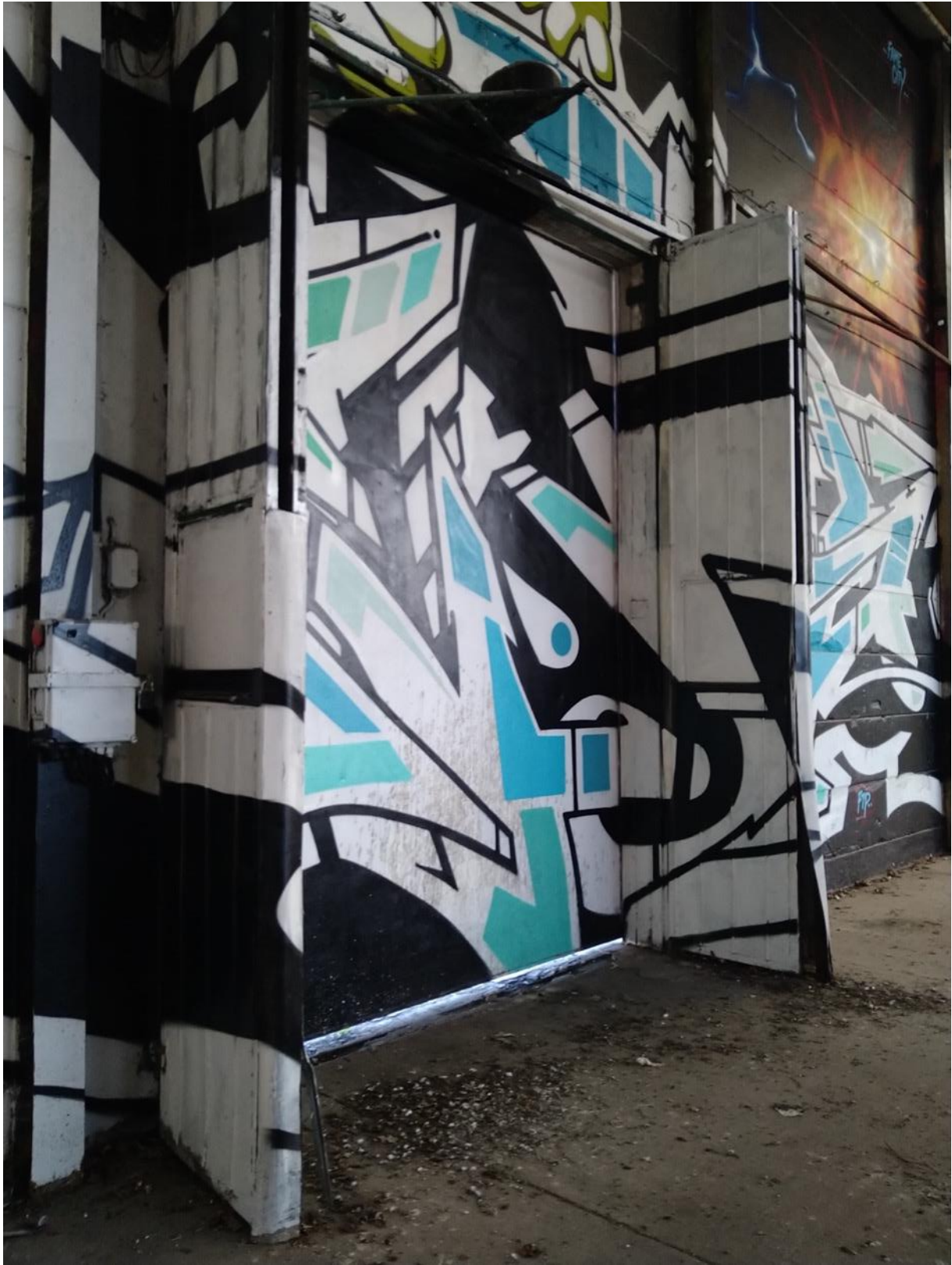


Figure 8: Walls and doors - more than barriers between two spaces. Photos: The author, 2022/2023.

This may also create an avenue for the emergence of the political. Bennett (2010), drawing on French philosopher Jacques Rancière's definition of the political, describes how events and things may be seen to be political to the extent of what effect is generated by their presence. A political act, for Rancière is not only disrupting in itself, but it disrupts through changing what people can “see”. This expanded understanding of the political allows for the incorporation of non-human elements, including inanimate objects, natural elements, and artifacts that possess the ability to provoke a shift in perception, where what was once regarded as trash may assume significance, instruments may become active participants, and the seemingly rigid becomes intense (ibid). From this vantage point, Bennett argues that we can observe how various entities, including animals, plants, minerals, and in this case – paint - can sometimes catalyze a public or a process of events.

The building itself, along with the asphalt, possesses a charm characterized by its blank canvas-like qualities, capable of attracting individuals and serving as a force that incites engagement. However, with the paint and the promises it may convey in terms of creative action can give rise to what can be described as a new kind of space outside of “the economic circuits of the city” (Cf. Solà-Morales, 1995).

Inside the Hangar and on the Steppe, more than the people coming here on their own accord to sword fight or bird watch, activities span from the team purposefully inviting children and young adults to create, setting up workshops with dancing and painting and performances with music and performance art shows.





Figure 9: Workshop with painting in the Hangar. Screenshot from YouTube-video published on the CFUK website, 2023.

With the addition of nearby sports and urban activities, the area may now be regarded as emerging as something in terms of an urban center. Affe asserts that this kind of spirit has, in some way, shaped the neighborhood for over a century. He specifically highlights the presence of the association Enigheten (eng. Translation: The Unity), founded in 1892, which is primarily a sports center, but has also embraced art within its premises. However, there hasn't been a concerted effort to proactively develop this concept beforehand; instead, things have unfolded organically, he notes. Despite the presence of Enigheten, he believes that there has been insufficient focus on culture in the area, and especially in relation to the youth who lives and moves through the district. It is in this regard that he feels there is untapped potential. What initially began with paint has evolved into a realization that there is ample space for much more to be explored and cultivated.

The choice to involve others in creative endeavors resonates with Affe on a personal level. Reflecting upon his experiences as part of Sweden's first hip hop generation, he recalls encountering significant resistance. While arguing that the hip hop movement continues to face opposition even today, he acknowledges this new generation's adeptness in navigating such challenges, given the increasing popularity of hip hop. Nonetheless, he believes that the resistance they have encountered, while occasionally valuable as constructive criticism for emerging movements, has often exceeded reasonable bounds. In his view then, the creation of a space that allows for creativity can be perceived as "a form of retribution, not for me personally, but for future generations."

As an artist and cultural creator, Affe underscores the importance of integrity, acknowledging the difficulties inherent in maintaining it within the world of art when frequently confronted with inquiries like "can't you do something else?". For Affe, exhibiting in an art museum or in an art gallery brings with it feelings of restriction. This was what he wanted to move beyond, creating a space where such sensations are absent. Here, he argues, the purpose transcends mere socializing or commercial pursuits, offering an environment where individuals can actively participate and bring their own ideas to life. This concept finds expression through a prominent artwork on the exterior wall, stating, "Create a space for others to breathe."



Figure 10: "Create a place for others to breathe" Photo: the author, 2023.

In an email conversation, I asked Affe to describe the Hangar. He answers:

“A cathedral. Or something sacral? The feeling of the Hangar. Maybe it's the big window high up on the roof ridge? Or all the small cloudy and broken plastic windows in the crumbling roof? Or the holes in the walls that let in light and form a starry sky. Actually, so do the skylights. Large-scale starry sky. It is fairly large-scale here. A place where the whole of Malmö can develop a form of art and culture special to us. When the sun shines in, the dust, sometimes mixed with spray dust and paint particles, forms pillars of light from ceiling to floor. The sound of the silence and the tangible feeling of all the hundreds of people working here in a heavy industry, mixed with the wings and movements of the pigeons. The peacefulness here. It is empty here. Few people pass by. There is space and plenty of time for proper reflection, contemplation, and construction of something else. It is welcoming here. And deeply inspiring. Here you get power, will and energy. An ecumenical cathedral. Not hierarchical. Or politically correct. It is sacral. No matter what faith you carry with you. Sacral is also part of the spine.” (Affe)

In Affe's words, the Hangar and the Steppe is a space for building “something else”. Through my interviews with Affe, I came to understand that this ‘something else’ is something that ideally should stand in contrast to the commercial sphere of economic value production and the institutionalized, sometimes hierarchical, world of art and culture.

Thinking with Lefebvre (1991), we can also understand this idea of ‘something else’ in relation to the production of different types of spaces. The diversion and reappropriation of space are of great significance”, says Lefebvre, “for they teach us much about the production of new spaces” (Lefebvre 1991, p. 167). Lefebvre's work can be used to interpret the process of how Affe's actions have produced a new type of space, a space that can challenge the notion of and provide an alternative to traditional art institutions, sports places, and cultural centers and the system in which they function. It is through collective appropriation that a subversive space is produced.

According to Lefebvre (1991), the abandonment of land and property by capital interests or the state, such as the case with the Hangar, creates a potential for challenging abstract space. When a space outlives its original purpose and becomes vacant, it becomes susceptible to diversion,

reappropriation, and a completely different use. Lefebvre refers to this as "differential space," as it accentuates differences and stands in contrast to the homogenizing tendencies of abstract space. For Lefebvre (1999), there is always a contradiction in the clash between a consumption of space which produces surplus value and one which produces enjoyment - and is therefore 'unproductive'. He argues that abstract space in itself contains specific contradictions; in part derived from the contradictions created by historical time as well as completely novel contradictions that have been brought into existence, which could potentially lead to the destruction of abstract space. This is attributed to the reproduction of the social relations of production within this space, which in turn is affected by two opposing forces: the dissolution of older relations, and the generation of new ones. Therefore, he argues, despite its negative aspects, abstract space harbors the potential for a new kind of space: 'differential space'.

These spaces diverge distinctly from the meticulously planned and hierarchically organized abstract spaces that established norms dictate. Instead, they arise from the unexpected intersections of social dynamics, the unforeseen chances that arise, and the opportunities that unfold through the abandonment of land and property due to market-driven logics. From this vantage point, spaces like the Hangar and the Steppe take on the role of challengers. They question and diverge from the norms that prevail within traditional art galleries and institutional spaces, such as art museums. Moreover, they challenge the overarching paradigm that places importance on economic gains and unchecked expansion. Within this, these spaces present an alternative that emphasize values and priorities that diverge from both the spheres of art and urban advancement.

Affe explained to me that the encounter with the Hangar revealed to him the potential for fostering a form of basic democracy, where everyone could have a voice. It presented vision of engagement that diverges from the hierarchical thinking and limited autonomy often found in cultural institutions. This understanding aligns with urban scholar Michael Leary-Owhin's (2020b) Lefebvre-inspired concept of "spaces of difference," which according to him can be brought about through spatial coalitions or social movements that run counter to established projects. These spaces oppose the orderly vision of the city, emphasizing difference, disorder, and spontaneity in everyday life. They prioritize inclusiveness and use value over the exchange value of abstract space (ibid.). This concept draws of Lefebvre's framework known as the "Right to the City." Underpinning this framework is Lefebvre's argument for a fundamental entitlement of ordinary citizens to actively participate in, lay claim to, and reimagine spaces.

Lefebvre (1996) presents the right to the city as superior form of rights, encompassing a spectrum of dimensions including freedom, personalized social interactions, habitation, and occupancy. Implied within this overarching right is also the right to the 'oeuvre' – the liberty to participate and appropriate – facets that distinguishing it from mere property rights.

Geographer David Harvey (2012) discusses this framework as more than individual or group access to urban resources. For Harvey, it becomes a right to collectively change and reinvent the city according to our own desires, signifying a collective exercise of power over the process of urbanization. From these perspectives of abstract space, differential space and *The Right To The City*, the transformation of the Hangar and the Steppe – from vacant storage space and empty asphalt surface to a meeting space imbued with meaning, art, culture, expression, and openness – is not a trivial process, but rather an example of non-conforming desires and practices being enacted in urban space, in spite of the commodification processes associated with capitalist development (Cf. Foster, 2020).

The reclamation and activation of spaces for public use beyond the confines of official planning and development processes stand as a tangible exemplification of Lefebvre's (1996, p. 167) argument that a "space of play" has coexisted and continues to coexist alongside spaces specifically designated for exchange, circulation, politics, and culture. According to him, this coexistence persists despite the pervasive influence of industrialization, which has championed commodities and enabled the near boundless expansion of exchange value. Goods have transcended their role as mere connectors between individuals; they've evolved into a language, a logic, and an entire realm. In this process, the primacy of use value has been overshadowed by the dominance of exchange values. However, Lefebvre (1996, p. 167f.) asserts that within urban society, a persistent struggle between subordination to exchange value and resistance in favor of use value has been orchestrated by the 'users' of spaces, rather than being dictated by capitalist speculators, builders, or technicians. This very concept finds further illustration through the lens of spaces and projects that runs counter to normative ways of space-production – and the physical world of quantity, homogeneity, power, private entities, and profitability. Lefebvre's (1991: p. 381f.) articulation sheds light on this phenomenon:” When a community fights the construction of urban motorways or housing-developments, when it demands 'amenities' or empty spaces for play and encounter, we can see how a counter-space can insert itself into spatial reality”.

Through the use of paint – the structure is appropriated – opened up – and made to invite. This allows for people to contribute to the shaping of the space while denying hierarchical structures and working outside of the commercial sphere.

In this way, the Hangar and the Steppe can be seen as operating in a prefigurative manner. Political anthropologist Marianne Maeckelbergh (2011) has described this approach to social change as distinct from theories that require an analysis of the current political landscape, the creation of an alternative model, and the devising of a five-year plan to transition from the current state to the proposed model. Prefiguration, instead, is a ‘direct theory’ that theorizes through action, through doing (ibid.). This type of politics eliminates the temporal distinction between the struggle in the present and a goal in the future; instead, the struggle and the goal, the real and the ideal, are combined in the present, creating the future in current social relationships without deferring change to a later date by demanding reforms from the state (ibid.).

Affe echoes this notion of a ‘direct theory’ by highlighting the uniqueness of the city of Malmö, which rivals only New York in terms of its diverse range of nationalities. For him, it is not about adhering to a predetermined theory of multiculturalism but rather about collaboratively creating a culture within the present context. Drawing inspiration from the fundamental principles of hip-hop culture, he underscores the notion that one's identity and origin are inconsequential; what truly matters is the collective action taken together in the here and now.

As this initiative grows, it becomes a dynamic space that engages visitors in diverse activities that surpass traditional modes of art and culture consumption. Such developments signify a demand for spaces that challenge established norms, characterized by their unrestricted access, absence of financial barriers, and absence of exclusionary markers. This example carries implications for the approach to planning for culture not only within the specific context of Sofielund but also in a broader urban context. The concept of space production through organic, direct action and use stands in contrast to meticulously planned endeavors. It demonstrates the capacity of material elements to mobilize individuals beyond passive consumption and involve them actively in the production of space itself.

Considering the planning of spaces for culture, this perspective bears practical implications for planners and decision-makers. It necessitates a shift away from conventional metrics of success, such as tourism or branding, and prompts an understanding of the significance of community

engagement in cultural contexts. Instead of focusing solely on economic indicators, these spaces offer an opportunity to cultivate a relationship with art and culture that transcend the confines of traditional institutions like art museums or galleries.

Looking ahead, if we aspire to integrate these dimensions and facilitate such processes, it goes beyond merely granting the right to create noise; to some degree it also involves safeguarding the right to produce space. Can we imagine delineated zones within urban landscapes where space can be produced through use in alignment with artistic pursuits and community-led initiatives? Might these areas be permitted to organically evolve, liberated from the confines of preconceptions and predetermined outcomes?

Engaging in urban development in this manner does not come without its own challenges, which needs deeper understanding. Diverse interpretations of what a space for culture might mean, financial limitations, bureaucratic red tape, and the task of finding sustainable funding models could potentially cast shadows on the long-term feasibility of such spaces. In the next and last section of this chapter, I will use the example of the Hangar and the Steppe to outline some of these obstacles.

5.4 Playing Chess

Despite being considered a "terrain vague" or a "differential space," the Hangar and the Steppe are not exempt from having landlords and facing various forms of control that influence their activities and development. In this final section, I will shift the focus of the discussion to the processes that have run parallel to their physical and ideological evolution. As not only an assemblage of materiality – but also a social assemblage consisting of the wills and logics of different types of actors.

From the moment Affe received the keys from the caretaker, the Hangar and the Steppe has been subject to varying degrees of influence from different actors. As highlighted in the earlier sections, the previous landlord, Briggen, supported the concept of an urban art gallery as a means to transform the industrial structure, recognizing its potential to enhance the social and economic aspects of the area.

However, just two years after Affe's initial encounter with the Hangar and the Steppe, a new landlord came into the picture, as Briggen decided to sell. The public real estate company, MKB, purchased the property from Briggen and gained building rights for the land. As a public housing company, MKB's primary objective lies in providing and constructing residential properties, rather than prioritizing artistic and cultural expressions within the city.

In an interview published in 2014 on property and construction news website Fastighetssverige, MKB CEO Terje Johansson discussed the company's plans for the properties and land in Sofielund. Referring to the City of Malmö's 2012 Comprehensive Plan, which outlined a mixed urban development for the area, Johansson explained that their long-term vision involved converting the area to a more diverse usage, potentially constructing housing on a large scale. Johansson emphasized MKB's responsibility to build new rental housing, and the acquisition in Sofielund provided them with land in a strategic location near planned transportation stations, such as the Rosengård station. However, he acknowledged that these plans were still a decade or more away, and in the meantime, the properties would be managed as they were (Fastighetssverige, 2014).

During this interim period, Affe describes that MKB recognized the popularity of the Hangar and the Steppe and allowed for the other activities that were drawn to the space, such as the roller derby, parkour, and the climbing center, to have their activities in the neighboring premises. As previously noted, the area had been evolving into something like an urban center. Although this trajectory was not planned beforehand, according to Affe, during this time, there were discussions among the municipality, MKB, and these activities about formally planning for this area as a center for urban activities, since they saw the growing potential for such a space here.

However, nothing was clearly decided and there were no guarantees, as the housing development goal was still a part of the objectives. Even without demolishing the Hangar, housing in the adjacent location could potentially impact the activities opportunities to operate as there is a potential conflict between the priorities of peace and quiet in residential areas and the freedom of expression, noise, and music in the activity spaces. This began to concern Affe and in 2020, he contemplated leaving his studio in Sofielund and relocating to a more centrally towards the city. Engaging with The Hangar and the Steppe was a fun project, he thought, but it was bound to end. This could have been the end of the story.

At the beginning of 2021, while working in his studio having the radio on, Affe heard on the national news that Malmö Municipality had initiated something called a cultural sound zone in Sofielund. This unexpected development changed his perspective and renewed hope for the Hangar and the Steppe's future. He did not realize it straight away, but a couple of days later it struck him – the Hangar is a part of the zone. He read all about it and thought – again – that this is Malmö at its best – he felt there was “an understanding of what the people want to do – and a will to ‘do’”.

Pondering how this development might alter the perception of the Hangar and the Steppe's significance and subsequently impact their future, Affe tells me that it became evident to him that constructing housing on this site was no longer a feasible option. Even the property owner, MKB, recognized this new reality, he explains. And while Affe acknowledged the generally positive and cooperative relationship with MKB during their tenure as the property owner of the Hangar and the Steppe, he also tells me that it became clear that their mission was still to build housing - as he later, in 2021, learned that they had sought exemption from the cultural sound zone and initiated discussions about building housing after all.

At the time I interviewed Affe, it was not entirely clear what was going to happen to the property as there were competing logics within the municipality – one part that embraced the idea of the district as a center for culture and trying to abide by the cultural sound zone, and another – MKB, who wanted to build housing. The question remained: Would MKB be exempted from the policy, and if not, would they still wish to retain ownership of the premises, even if they were unable to pursue their primary goals there? If they sell, would the next property owner possess an understanding of the Hangar and the Steppe that aligns with its current users and the visions of Affe and the team of making it into an art gallery?

When I met Affe during an event for new paintings being created on the structure and on the inside of the Hangar, while still in the progress of writing this thesis, he tells me that they still find themselves in what he describes as a strange position. “We are playing chess!” he tells me, likening the situation to a game requiring thoughtful deliberation before each move, responding to other players. He explains that the event I was attending, in the park next to the Hangar and the steppe, was supposed to have taken place inside of the Hangar. However, due to restrictions imposed by MKB, they were unable to formally invite people into the space. Consequently, Affe explained that they had to create the illusion of a midsummer party outside in the park,

officially hosting the event in the park outside, even though the essence of the event revolved around the Hangar and the new urban art being created within its walls.

Affe's characterization of this situation as a "chess game" can be likened to the concepts delineated by French philosopher Michel de Certeau, who theorizes the notions of tactics and strategies. This analogy holds true as each participant in this game approaches from distinct positions with varying capacities to influence the course of action. According to de Certeau, the actions we take in relation to others, whether involving our goals, targets, or perceptions of threats, can be seen as either strategies or tactics, depending on our position and ability to act. A strategy emerges from a vantage point where there exists a distinct "own place" – a defined space from which interactions with others occur. This notion of strategy involves the manipulation of power dynamics and becomes viable when a subject possessing will, and influence (such as a business, army, city, or scientific institution) can be isolated within a delimited space. This isolated space serves as a foundation for managing external relationships. Strategies find their potency through the establishment of a certain degree of power, which can be either physical, like property, or conceptual, as seen in knowledge, systems, and discourses. Additionally, strategies pertain to the capacity to arrange physical spaces where forces can be distributed. In this realm of strategies, we can think of property owners, housing companies, and municipal structures. Each of these operates within its own established sphere, guided by predetermined rules and objectives, and wields a certain measure of power. This power takes on a dual nature – it asserts control over property rights while simultaneously shaping and engendering knowledge, a process that inherently defines the contours of this knowledge. As de Certeau (1984, p. 36) notes, "It makes this knowledge possible and at the same time determines its characteristics. It produces itself in and through this knowledge." As they craft discourses, nurture knowledge, and fashion regulations, these entities fortify and magnify their sphere of influence.

However, while strategies provide a structured and planned approach to action, they also set the stage for the emergence of counterforces. These counterforces arise in the form of tactics, which operate within the constraints and gaps of established strategies. De Certeau (1984) characterizes tactics as actions stemming from a space that is bound by an imposed and externally organized terrain. Lacking the luxury of distancing itself, tactics must operate within the constraints of a designated field. Tactics navigate through opportunities and are contingent upon them. This inherent reliance on opportunity gives tactics a certain mobility, but a mobility

that must accept the "chance offerings" as they present themselves and capitalize on possibilities as they arise (ibid). De Certeau describes how wit and a certain amount of "trickery" arise within the space of tactics as last resorts - crosscuts, fragments, cracks, and lucky hits in the framework of a system. These tactical choices, often fueled by necessity, manifest as creative solutions that leverage existing structures.

Originating as a personal endeavour and subsequently evolving into an association to expand its reach, the wish for an increased engagement within the Hangar and the Steppe necessitates alignment with the prevailing order as shaped by these external influences. As a result, the Hangar and the Steppe find themselves navigating within the confines of these two realms, neither wholly part of the municipal structure nor a purely private entity. While originating as a personal pursuit, their evolution requires them to coexist within a space shaped by external dynamics. Establishing an autonomous identity through internal activities proves elusive, and complete autonomy beyond existing boundaries remains unattainable. Instead, their effectiveness is intrinsically linked to their capacity to engage with and respond to the external forces at play.

In Affe's depiction of their journey he tells me that even before securing a budget to cover the most basic materials, such as A4 papers, he perceived that external stakeholders viewed him and the Hangar and the Steppe as influential entities within the district. However, this perceived influence is still reliant on and intertwined with external circumstances and the happenings of chance – they must make strategic use of the spaces left within the crevices of the overarching structures. This underscores the inherent vulnerability of the Hangar and the Steppe's situation, even if seen as significant player.

I have argued that the paint used on the Hangar acts as an extended invitation, encouraging people to engage and take action. And even if many are drawn to the Hangar and the Steppe on their own accord, Affe and the team has made deliberate choices to try to engage people into the space – and especially youth. Affe sees this as important since he feels that there is a lack of focus on the youth in the areas surrounding the Hangar and the Steppe.

However, the act of inviting and opening up the space for public use has not been a straightforward task. Being neither a commercial space nor created by the municipality, the Hangar and the Steppe constantly navigate a delicate balance between different logics and

regulations that surround them. Its full potential as a space where everyone is welcome to engage with the space is hindered by the limitations they face.

Affe explained to me the issues they encounter in wanting to engage but having to contend by the presence of the owner of the property. According to him, when people come here and do things, the property owner have a degree of tolerance – giving a certain acceptance or permission – even if Affe notes that the property owner may not agree with this depiction. If individuals choose to invest an entire day creating a music video or working on a project, a sense of leeway is extended. However, issues emerge when they want to formally invite. Affe argues how this is about things like safety and hazard risks, which he understands, and that is something they seriously consider, trying to think ahead.

In the past, the organization's only public event has been the gallery weekend, which they have successfully organized five times with no budget. Despite the limited resources, these events have proven to be incredibly valuable according to Affe, facilitating meaningful connections with a diverse range of individuals and driving the project forward in various ways.

Initially, Affe had reservations about participating in the gallery weekend, questioning whether the location was too remote from the city center and whether people would actually attend. However, to their pleasant surprise, not only did people attend, but there was also a significant level of engagement. Participants demonstrated keen interest in curating exhibitions and performances during the event. This enthusiastic response birthed a new concept: "Why not formulate a citizens' proposal to establish an urban art center in Malmö?" Encouraged by the turnout, they successfully gathered around 500 signatures.

Yet, a degree of uncertainty enveloped the execution process, as they were unsure about the recipients of the proposal and the appropriate administrative body to spearhead such an ambitious initiative; should it be directed to the street office, cultural administration, or leisure administration? To address this, they submitted the proposal to all three administrative bodies, seeking the suitable entity to ensure the proposal received consideration and eventual action.

A citizen's proposal ensures that all initiatives with more than 100 signatures will be taken up and dealt with by the relevant political committee. During my interview with Affe in 2022, he told me that the proposal had reached the cultural administration long ago, but that the process had been sluggish. Few meetings with municipal officials had taken place, and information

regarding the proposal's status was lacking. He tells me that they would learn about things through news articles, relying on journalists to inform them of developments. He describes a lack of follow-up and strategic planning. And while Affe believes that citizens' proposals should be handled promptly, he questions the meaning of "prompt" in the municipality's context, asking "what does 'soon' mean according to the municipality? It could be 100 years. I don't know what 'urgent' means. If we receive a response in 10 years, perhaps that is considered urgent when compared to Stockholm or Uppsala, I don't know."

I previously described the Hangar and the Steppe in terms of a kind of differential space – a space that diverges from the planned and hierarchically organized abstract spaces dictated by established orders, making room for something new. In an earlier discussion, I characterized the Hangar and the Steppe as a form of differential space – an entity that diverges from the regimented and hierarchically structured abstract spaces dictated by established norms, thereby creating space for novel developments. In light of this, the sluggishness that Affe perceives in the municipality's actions could be seen as both hindering the project's progression and, intriguingly, potentially enabling its endurance as a differential space. This could be viewed as the reverse side or even a positive outcome of creating an entity akin to a differential space. In this particular context, the slow pace that Affe discerns within municipal proceedings has a dual effect. On one hand, it hampers the project's development; on the other hand, it might also bolster its continuation as a differential space. While Affe may prefer streamlined operations, this 'sluggishness' could paradoxically contribute to the Hangar and the Steppe's sustained differentiation. Consequently, the space persists as an environment that evolves more in line with spontaneous citizens' utilization, and to some extent sidestepping the rigid confines of a predetermined plan or ideas coming from the outside, not anchored in the production of the space through use, but through outside conceptions.

In fact, Affe reveals that there have been some concerns regarding potential plans for the Hangar and the Steppe that may diverge from their current trajectory. During discussions with the municipality, Affe perceived a lack of awareness about the establishment's current status. He underscores the significance of sustained engagement and dialogue to bridge this knowledge gap. He recounts how the leisure administration presented several proposals during a meeting, leaving Affe impressed by their collaborative spirit. Nonetheless, an underlying unease arose when Affe observed certain ideas from the municipality that equated an urban art gallery with something akin to a circus. This uncertainty was sparked when a municipal official stumbled

over words and inadvertently referred to it as "The Circus Hangar," triggering doubts about undisclosed plans.

The Hangar and the Steppe have achieved a noteworthy level of popularity, visibility, and distinctiveness, rendering them a recognized and influential presence within the district. Their allure attracts both individuals and new endeavors, solidifying their impact. Yet, despite this influence, Affe characterizes their role more as that of observers, standing on the sideline and witnessing the unfolding developments.

Alongside the introduction of the cultural sound zone, a sense of anticipation for the future emerged. Affe, reflecting on this, articulates, "It's an incredibly thrilling process. There are certain agreements in place now. It is now designated as a cultural sound zone. But what does that mean? What will it look like?"

One pressing concern for Affe is that someone may come along and dismiss the significance of an urban art gallery or equating 'culture' to something entirely different, like a padel arena. Such a perception could jeopardize everything they have worked towards, he says.

The questions raised by Affe concerning the form and true meaning of the cultural sound zone – in combination with the need to harmonize various perceptions, strategies, and tactics underscores the central focus for successfully implementing the cultural sound zone and the evolution of Sofielund as a space where culture thrives.

I have put forth the argument that the unique quality of this space lies in its evolution from use-value. In line with this, I suggest a measured distance from the municipality in terms of characterizing the type of culture manifesting within and delimiting preconceived notions of its potential. To maintain the space's evolution in alignment with its use value, as a differential space – which I argue is what has made its appeal so strong – a balance needs to be struck. While necessitating supportive measures regarding property rights and financial support, the approach of "arms-length" distance is vital, both in terms of the physical structure and the environment but also pertaining to the idea of what the Hangar and the Steppe is and could be.

A great deal also hinges on who will own the property and what their understanding of the space is. This can be boiled down to what their understanding of what culture is, what it needs, and what it is good for. Briggen, the former landlord, embraced creative development - seemingly for its potential social, cultural, and financial dividends. Conversely, MKB acknowledges the

Hangar and the Steppe's potent presence and growth - but must adhere to more rigid organizational objectives. Should MKB remain, a deliberate strategy for progressing is paramount, respecting formal regulations while accommodating the Hangar and the Steppe's participant welcoming. If MKB's tenure should end, the next property owner's sensitivity to how the space can or should develop is vital.

Here, the cultural sound zone may act as a powerful deterrent against housing development, but it cannot dictate how different stakeholders perceive culture. This concern should not be overlooked, encompassing not only the Hangar and the Steppe but also the broader district development with a cultural emphasis. The fundamental questions emerge: Whose culture? What culture? As Affe notes, culture for some might embody a Padel arena. If planning should align with existing actors and elements, one key issue here is to communicate the value of culture produced 'loosely', through use, and in tandem with its environment to existing and potential new stakeholders.

However, the notions surrounding culture and what it needs may also need to some degree be able to travel across several perspectives. This dynamic is again exemplified in the juxtaposition of Briggens' perception of culture as a possible "instrument" for urban development and potential economic expansion at the initial stages of the Hangar and the Steppe's development. This stands in contrast to MKB's standpoint, which, despite expressing support and a certain degree of acknowledgment for the potentials, is hindered by their inherent role in housing provision. Although Affe's long-term goals may not necessarily mirror Briggens' viewpoint of creativity as a catalyst for urban or economic growth, their pathways toward achieving their respective objectives intersected at the right time and in the right place - in a mutually advantageous way. Simultaneously, while MKB acknowledges the potential and showcases a level of comprehension, their level of commitment remains confined by their specific role and responsibilities. This places 'culture' at the center of negotiation and highlights dynamics underpinning mutual benefits, suggesting that if mutual agreements are to be reached, all parties might also need to have a real stake in the outcome.

6. NGBG

A short walk from the Hangar and the steppe brings you to Norra Grängesbergsgatan, or as I will call it, the NGBG street. Approaching the street, the scent of one of Malmö's most popular falafel places, Baghdad Falafel, wafts from a small and always-crowded kiosk. On the street, two-lane traffic passes by, with some of the cars stopping to visit the many auto repair and car wash shops to get service for a good price. Seated outside of these, mechanics take their breaks to chat and smoke, watching people walk by. Occasionally, bigger trucks pass by on their way to or from one of the industries in the area.

There are signs everywhere, with the most common one reading "99 crowns for a car handwash" in various bright colors and sizes. "Iraqi bread sold here" or "50% sale on home furniture and gifts" are other proclamations that adorn the buildings. Carpet shops, furniture stores, hair salons and auto mobile shops are frequent, while restaurants, bakeries, and catering companies offer falafel, shawarma, kebab, baklava, and the Iraqi bread. Buildings facades are made of brown or yellow brick or metal sheet in different colors. These buildings are quite run down, and many are covered with graffiti tags – in contrast to the Hangar and the Steppe, the spray paint here is mostly in text format, rather than motives or paintings.

Walking along the street, you smell burnt rubber, gasoline, and freshly baked bread from the bread factory Pågen's close by. Various door signs adorn the buildings interspersed between shops and auto repair garages. One can discern the names of associations, rehearsal spaces - and halfway down the street, a blue metal-faced building housing a small movie theatre, with the only indication of its purpose being a door sign reading "Biograf Hypnos".

Further down the street lies a side road, containing a nightclub and concert venue. During the day, one may not be able to guess its purpose, as the entrance is hidden between a driver's license school, an upholstery company, and a brewery. On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights however, the venue is often crowded with people in line or smoking outside, taking part in events such as concerts featuring punk, metal, electronic music, funk, house, wrestling shows or drag shows.



Figure 11: At night on the NGBG street. A) auto repair shops. B) Bicycle parking lot and partygoers outside of the night club. Video: the author, 2022.



Figure 12: a), b) environments captured through Google Maps, 2022.

On one of the side roads connecting to the street, the one that leads to the Rosengård station, in the midst of all the brick, asphalt, stoney, or metal surfaces, there is a small piece of untouched grass land with old linden trees dispersed in the garden. Here stands Annelundsgården, a circa 300 square meter gable roof and whitewashed farm building. Surrounded by a metal wire fence topped with barbed wire, the site may appear to signal 'private poverty'. However, this is far from the truth as this space is welcome to anyone who wants to visit events housed here, such as houses daytime raves, comedy nights or outside movie screenings. The farmhouse and garden also offer music rehearsal studios and works as the headquarters for one of the cultural associations in the district, the NGBG association, whose name is an abbreviation of the street name Norra Grängesbergsgatan.

In one of my conversations with Affe, he had told me that when it comes to cultural expressions, the most important thing is the dynamics. It is about what results from the mix between different types of people and things. As an example of this, he made a reference to this particular association. He told me:

I think that the dynamics is what characterises the work that NGBG is doing, and what they have done with their street party. It's quite an odd mix that they manage to get, coming and interacting. And we need that, because Malmö is an odd mix, an internationally odd mix. The question of how to do that is very utopian and naive, but it still needs to be given a chance. (Affe)

To date, the NGBG association has circa 500 members, ranging from different types of artists or musicians but also people living in the neighborhood or people from elsewhere who wants to take part in the activities they arrange. Since 2016, the association has actively engaged in collaborative efforts with the property and street office, as well as local residents and various other actors to orchestrate the annual NGBG Gatufest, a non-profit street party unfolding along the street. Over the years, the street party's scale and attendance have witnessed an exponential growth. During last year's edition, the street party drew 1,300 participants, featured 257 performances on 24 stages, and garnered an audience of circa 30,000 people. For reference, these figures align closely with the attendance at Justin Bieber's Malmö performance that same year.

During the rest of the year, the association works to create spaces for culture, leisure, and a playful atmosphere in the street, whether it be through providing studio spaces, organizing music events, dance nights or bicycle festivals. The culture of the street can even be experienced from a physical distance, through a virtual recreation of the neighborhood on a Minecraft server created by members of the association, containing art exhibitions and concerts.

The NGBG street, in which the association operates within, has been described as a “non-street”, a “beautifully ugly street” (Ponnert, 2022), but also as a street that characterizes “criminal Malmö” (Pripp & Plath, 2020). But it is also a street where notions about culture and community competes in the narrative. There are approximately 200 rehearsal spaces connected to the street, and various factories and producers which all produce a great deal of noise, although in different manners. This has placed the street in focus for the policy on the cultural sound zone, which encompasses the entire street. Positioned between Rosengård and central Malmö, and characterized by a diverse array of cultural components, this street can be described as possessing a pivotal role in the visions for both the Sofielund and Rosengård projects as it is a physical link in shaping the environment that bridges Rosengård and the inner city.

In this chapter, we delve into the case of the NGBG association. Their actions serve as an example of how creative spatial utilization has been harnessed within the district, showcasing how a non-curated, non-exclusive, and diverse expression of culture has integrated into the local landscape. The NGBG association shares several parallels with the Hangar and the Steppe. They share an acute awareness of the significance of their physical settings and a dedication to optimizing available resources.

While the previous chapter was largely focused on the meaning of the material structures and production of space – the NGBG association and their activities offers an opportunity to further explore the realm of partnerships, relationships, and ideologies. Through collaborative efforts with various stakeholders and a resourceful approach, they have trampled up a path that defines the NGBG's operational approach. This approach, in turn, exerts an influence on their immediate environment, manifesting in both tangible changes and evolving social dynamics. The chapter aims to shed light on how culture on this street and through the association is tactically enacted, organized, and arranged. By considering these factors, the future development of Sofielund can capitalize on the existing strengths, nurture its cultural vitality in working towards a sustainable growth that aligns with the needs and aspirations of the existing actors that are involved in the shaping of the street.

The chapter begins with a revisit to the concept of tactics introduced in the previous chapter, in order to explore how the association harnesses existing resources and immediate circumstances. This exploration aims to shed light on the challenges they confront and the guiding principles shaping their initiatives.

Continuing, an analysis of the street's transformation during the annual street party is presented, using the event as a lens through which we can comprehend the meanings attached to this kind of enactment of 'culture' - showcasing different ideas and messages and effecting the development of the street as a space for culture. This exploration draws upon Lefebvre's notions of the right to the city, as well as concepts of performance and play as conceptualized by Schechner and Turner.

In the final section of this chapter, our attention shifts to the social dynamics and relationships that underpin the activities of the association and the collaborative efforts that operate "behind the scenes," playing a pivotal role in advancing the association's objectives and steering the street's trajectory. This takes shape through a lens of Deleuze's and Bennett's concepts of assemblages in combination with philosopher John Dewey's theories on the formation of publics.

6.1 "We are Hyper Local"

During a conversation and public hearing on culture in Malmö and the future of the Sofielund district, held during the 2022 NGBG street party, Finn², the chairman of the cultural association organizing the event, shares the stage with politicians from four political parties. As they discuss the district's future and the role of culture in the city, Finn takes the microphone and expresses the association's stance:

Our aim in NGBG is not to commercialize culture. Instead, our goal is that anyone should be able to create and present their cultural expressions, not that they should be sold somewhere where you can buy a lot of beer. I think it will be difficult if, as it happened in Möllevången, things change in order to make them prettier. We have 25 stages today and not one of

² Pseudonym

them can be described as “neat and clean” and they will never be that.

(Finn)

The challenge lies in achieving this aspiration within a context where culture and recreation are frequently elevated as central elements in urban settings vying for prominence through their cultural offerings, immersive experiences, and distinctive branding. In the midst of this competitive landscape, recognizing the importance of "smaller" actors and understanding how they navigate within their constrained spheres of influence becomes pivotal. While larger entities like for-profit music festivals and state-funded art museums operate within different market dynamics and media influences, individual actors and smaller associations play an equally pivotal role in shaping our cities as vibrant spaces for creative expression and meaningful leisure. In urban development focused on culture, it becomes imperative to acknowledge the range of action within which these diverse players operate and to understand the driving forces that shape their decisions. Within this context, the concept of tactics and innovative strategies emerges as a significant factor, which I will return to.

A few months after my attendance at the public hearing, I had the opportunity to meet Finn on the farm. The recent rainfall had left the lawns muddy and damp. The garden was adorned with large letter signs of various colors, chairs, and benches. Brightly painted metal barrels, topped with wooden boards, along with cable drums, stand ready to be used as tables during the upcoming parties and events. Despite the association's recent arrival, prominent signs, vibrant hues, and repurposed objects have filled the space. During the initial summer, the farm hosted an array of events, including outdoor movie screenings, HBTQ+ gatherings, reggae, metal, and world music concerts, DJ sets, seminars, handicraft sessions, picnics, and barbecues.

Originally, the farm served as a market garden, and the NGBG street was constructed in 1932 on what used to be its farmland. Presently, the remaining land constitutes a mere fragment of its original size (Foroughanfar, 2022). For Finn, this history holds significance, and he expresses a meaningful connection in the fact that, amidst the rapidly evolving world, the farm has retained much of its original characteristics. In contrast to the changing cityscape, the farm stands as a testament to continuity, offering a sense of constancy:

Those trees are over 200 years old. At least the house is. It's from 1818 or something like that. So, it's being in a place of stillness in a rapidly changing world. This place has remained the same. Since 1860 though, the entire city has totally transformed, and this place is still pretty much what

it was, and it can become a similar kind of thing again. We could even start growing fruit and trees. Not as a market garden, but as a culture garden. I think it's currently a better thing, but if you're aware of the history of the place, I think it does something to how you use it. (Finn)

Finn highlights the environment of the farm as having an influence on the culture that emerges. This goes beyond merely considering the historical aspect; it also involves adapting activities to the changing seasons to fully capitalize on the farm's potential. During the summer, they can utilize the garden and outdoor spaces, but as fall and winter approach, they must adapt and find alternative ways of utilizing the space. He contemplates how different it would be if they were housed in a cellar underneath a building. The farm's connection with the seasons and the availability of open outdoor space encourages them to operate in relation to the changing environment. According to Finn, this interaction with their surroundings fosters an organic development of their cultural activities, shunning rigidly written policies in favor of allowing ideas to take shape through practical experiences:

This seasonal thing, I think it has an impact on our approach. We prioritize developing things organically rather than writing down policies. We deal with the issues first, and then wait and see what the policy is when you've had to deal with the question first a couple of times in different ways. (Finn)





Figure 13: a) and b) the NGBG association headquarters, the farmhouse, and the garden. Photo: the author, 2023.

Finn's portrayal of how the environment shapes their work processes and its associated implications casts the house and the farm as actants, capable of generating a specific milieu that influences a particular culture. This underscores once more the agency in the material realm, mirroring my perspective on the Hangar and the Steppe as actants capable of catalyzing the creation of distinct concepts.

When describing the functioning of the association to me, Finn likened it to a piece of grass that, after having been trampled by enough people, has formed a path. This metaphor conveys the concept that the work is organic and not dictated by a preconceived structure; rather, it is the members that together create the collective path. This path can widen considerably, reflecting the diverse interests of the members:

We are trying to find a way to operate freely... On the terms that our members set for us, we're 522-523 members now. And we want them to decide how we do things. It's very broad, we have an Arabic film festival, then we have 50 members who like Arabic film. We have 50 who like reggae. We have hard rock, punk, rave. And I don't want to be bought up

by the municipality or commercial interests. [...] Just let people walk on the grass and you see where the path is. You make rules around what is happening. (Finn)

While this internal perspective strives to maintain an organic nature, when faced with the external structures that exist, the association must conform and maneuver within the specific frameworks that envelop them. In essence, they find themselves making rules that align with the unfolding circumstances – around what is happening. This viewpoint resonates with de Certeau's framework, which underscores the distinction between how tactics function in relation to the broader framework and other actors who employ strategies. Tactics rest upon the shrewd exploitation of various elements – time, emerging opportunities, and the element of play that interjects into the bedrock of power dynamics. In this, tactics embody a resourceful approach that embraces ingenuity, seizing moments to their advantage (de Certeau, 1984).

An illustrative example arises within the funding system, where state or non-commercial funding typically caters to short-term, pre-formulated and planned for projects, thereby limiting the possibilities for Finn and the members to fulfill the wish for spontaneity, organic growth, and the exploration of ideas over undecided or indefinite periods of time. This means that despite their inclination toward non-commercial approaches, they have somewhat relied on financial support from commercial companies for the organization of the street party. Nevertheless, Finn underscores his preference for financial assistance from the city itself rather than from commercial entities, as he believes their initiatives encapsulate the essence of "Malmö cool" rather than "Älmhult cool" - referencing Ikea:

We get some funding for the street party from Oatley, Gränges, Ikea. Because they think we're cool. But we're not here to sell "cool" to companies. If we have to sell "cool" I would rather sell it to the city hall. Because this is "Malmö cool", not Älmhult cool. But we are prepared to do what we have to do. But I would prefer to be honest and say "we want to do this - we have a project that is this. (Finn)

As a result, Finn acknowledges the necessity to adapt and make use of available opportunities, even if they may not perfectly align with the association's activities. They find themselves in a position where activities must be "made to fit" within the existing system to uphold their overall goals. Finn reveals that sometimes they have to create what he describes as "pointless" projects to gather resources, in order to sustain the overall mission of the association. This pragmatic

approach enables them to achieve their broader objectives while navigating the constraints imposed by external structures, even if it falls short of the ideal model:

I have to come up with a completely pointless project in order for the project I'm actually working on - this one³ - to work. It's always been like that. But we gather resources, we gather networks and things that are for the local people. (Finn)

Furthermore, The NGBG association's open-ended and organic approach to cultural and leisure activities presents questions relating to the categorization of culture within a bureaucratic context. In my conversation with Finn, he expressed his frustration with the limited structures surrounding culture and leisure, which often fail to accommodate more experimental and interdisciplinary endeavors. These structures, like grant applications, tend to push cultural actors into either the category of amateur or commercial culture, leaving little room for those who fall in between:

The problem for me is that everyone in the district falls between the concepts of amateur-culture and commercial culture, we are asked to be one or the other. Because of this, and the type of grass-root movement that we are, we aren't eligible for cultural policy support. It feels like we work in the gaps between these definitions that they have. We are definitely not amateurs. We have done Malmö's biggest event. It is not amateur in that class. But we are not commercial, we sell t-shirts, we sell beer - but we do it to survive, the point is not to make the whole organization rich, it would be impossible to pay all the members. (Finn)

Finding a designated place within existing frameworks is a challenge when many activities defy easy categorization. Despite this challenge, the association's endeavors to activate the street through cultural and leisure activities have resulted in successful street parties and a growing number of members over the years. Moreover, the introduction of the cultural sound zone and the planning program for the area has brought the municipality's interest in their activities and the street's cultural offerings to the forefront. Yet, Finn maintains a cautious sense of optimism regarding the future. While he acknowledges the strides made, he tempers his long-term

³ By "This one" he is referring to the general engagement of the association, keeping it active and developing it as a meeting space for community and culture.

expectations. He suggests that the goal of improving the district as a prominent cultural site by 2040, as outlined in the planning program, could potentially lose focus unless local actors are able to effectively turn the area into an attractive destination for not only Malmö but also the entire region, even Copenhagen, he remarks with a touch of irony.

But Finn envisions the street and the association as more than just a tourist destination; he expresses the goal to establish a space for experimental culture. He draws inspiration from Christiania, acknowledging that replicating it in Sweden would be challenging. However, through the street party and the association's presence on the farm, he expresses the wish to create a different kind of cultural space, one that is open, democratic, and challenges the conventional approaches to city development – “where structures are different”. Rather than chasing acceptance within external norms or standards, Finn articulates that the association's trajectory should align with the diverse interests of its members.

In our conversation, Finn openly acknowledges that their operational approach—referred to as organic—may occasionally appear somewhat disorganized. Nonetheless, he strongly contends that this unstructured and seemingly chaotic methodology bears significance. The very ‘chaos’ holds meaning: “As soon as all of the policies are in place, there's no need to do it anymore, then you become interchangeable,” he asserts. The aim isn't to be a part of a culture, but many, he asserts.

This results in a diverse array of interests encompassed in the activities. According to Finn, many of these not being viewed as legitimate expressions of culture. For example, he argues that things like making stickers or t-shirts is often undervalued compared to other forms of culture by funding agencies and municipal organizations. Furthermore, he perceives that Reggae, Rock, and Punk music, are viewed negatively, leading to those who participate in these forms of culture not being taken seriously, he argues. Furthermore, electronic music is stereotypically linked to notions of drug-use, he argues, and notes that the act of dancing has gone from being seen as “popular to being seen as a ‘cultural enemy’”. This predicament highlights how the association, and the culture it produces collectively must consistently navigate a broader framework. The perceived value of their manifestations, and potentially even their avenues for support such as funding, become contingent on the landscape shaped by external structures and prevailing ideas.



Figure 14: Inside of the farmhouse. a) a creation by one of the association's members inside Finn's office space. b) Movie room.

Engaging with cultural expressions that can be labeled as 'alternative' or 'underground,' a description fitting many of the creative endeavors within the NGBG association, presents a duality. While these expressions may face disdain from some external perspectives, they also possess an intriguing allure, as evidenced by the large number of people coming to enjoy the street party – as well as the growing number of members engaged in the association. Another side of this coin is that this allure also may make them susceptible to co-optation by capitalist logics. As Finn described to me, while rather “selling cool” to the city, they get funding from companies such as Oatley.

Urban studies professor Elsa Vivant (Vivant, 2009) has observed this trend. She argues that on a general level, places and cultural scenes that are seen as alternative or underground may be susceptible to processes of absorption into capitalist frameworks and city branding, looking to turn these expressions into tourist attractions. She argues that these kinds of manifestations may become integrated into cities' images and experiences in the search for the creation of an intriguing city image, lending them to become part of touristic itineraries, like exploring the cultural heritage of San Francisco's beatniks and hippies, Copenhagen's Christiania, or Berlin's underground nightclubs (Vivant, 2009). In a similar vein, urban geographer Kate Shaw (2005) points out the paradox that the 'authentic,' when not displaced by gentrification, becomes a target for market appropriation. This dynamic reveals the challenge of preserving authenticity and resisting commercialization within contemporary urban contexts. It highlights the delicate balance that the NGBG association must navigate to maintain their unique and non-conformist identity while also seeking recognition but avoiding co-option by market forces.

According to Finn, transforming the district into a destination for tourism could potentially lead to an increased commitment to the current planning program - a program that would prove beneficial to their ongoing endeavors since it focuses on preserving the district's culture - the right to make noise, and avoiding housing construction in the area. At the same time, to become a tourist attraction is not the goal for the association – and it is essential for Finn to maintain the ability to operate independently, without overt commercialization or control from external authorities - preserving possibilities for other structures of urbanization and culture to grow.

In the context of external structures potentially exerting influence over their trajectory, the role of tactics emerges as a critical avenue for action. In this context, a key approach takes the forefront as a sturdy foundation for success. In our conversations, Finn repeatedly stressed the

association's hyperlocal character. By this, he meant that the association flourishes through physical proximity, cultivating robust social bonds and achieving visibility within the district, thriving on face-to-face interactions. Hyperlocality then, can be seen as a tactical approach in the midst of a limited scope of action in terms of funding and external support.

With their heart of operations – the farm - physically close to the street and all of the actors who are present here, the association actively fosters connections and visibility, allowing opportunities to arise organically, and effective strategies for addressing challenges to naturally present themselves. The proximity to the street enables them to establish effortless connections with local inhabitants and businesses, granting access to valuable resources that would otherwise go to waste.

For instance, during one of my visits, I witnessed some association members heading to a nearby store to inquire about leftover paint. When I asked Finn about this practice, he confirmed that the locals are well aware that they can turn to the association first if they have something to discard, creating a beneficial resource-sharing dynamic:

People on the street know that if they want to get rid of stuff, they can ask us, because we are hyperlocal. I mean, I talk to everybody in our area. It's not communication by e-mail or even telephone and certainly not through social media. (Finn)

While the association has been a part of the community since 2016, the acquisition of the farm has provided them with a dedicated physical space directly connected to the street that bears their name. This proximity to the street party area grants them the capacity to organize events throughout the year, maintaining a visible presence close to the street and its actors.

This situation can be likened to the concept of 'localization economies,' as theorized by researchers, describing the advantages that may arise from the geographical proximity and concentration of activities and actors, forming a vibrant information and communication ecology. On this topic, Geographers Harald Bathelt, Anders Malmberg, and economist Peter Maskell (2004) explain how 'buzz,' 'noise,' or 'local broadcasting' characterizes certain milieus where many dynamic and useful activities take place simultaneously. In such an environment, perceptive local actors continuously contribute to and benefit from the diffusion of information, gossip, and news, leading to unintended learning processes and strategic information sharing by simply 'being there'. This local buzz doesn't require deliberate seeking of specific

information but is instead automatically shared by those located in the same environment, surrounded by a concoction of rumors, impressions, recommendations, trade folklore, and strategic information (ibid). In the case of the association, this also involves material resources, such as left over paint and other materials.

However, as highlighted by Bathelt et al. (2004), the concept of intensive local buzz transcends mere co-location, with certain types of buzz being more relevant and effective for firms and organizations involved. This effectiveness hinges on the structure of social relations between local actors, their history of interactions, and the level of trust among them.

In the case of the association, these aspects evidently work well as it has enabled them to heavily rely on what we might call a local buzz and face-to-face contact instead of extensive marketing campaigns or PR efforts to draw people to their activities and gain support and resources. Finn shared with me that they have encountered repeated suggestions to implement structured marketing policies, but they have chosen not to pursue that route. Instead, they have found success through word-of-mouth recommendations. For example, Finn explained that the engagement for the street party seems to spread naturally through personal recommendations:

Imagine someone sitting in a café or a pub saying, 'Have you been to that place down there?' And their friend replies, 'Yes, I've been there, and it was great.' That's how the street party is marketed. It's easy when you're targeting people who live within a 1 or 2-kilometer radius of the street party site. These are the visitors, performers, volunteers, and the entire community that makes the street party happen. (Finn)

Finn's description of the approach he calls 'hyperlocality' sheds light on the NGBG association's utilization of their surroundings and active engagement in the local buzz of their environment. More than a mere marketing strategy, this approach represents a resourceful strategy for harnessing available assets within a constrained budget and limited scope. Working within financial limitations, the association's primary sustenance arises from membership fees, which empower them to orchestrate events and maintain a consistent street presence. Amidst these boundaries, the concept of hyperlocality serves as a catalyst, affording them access to resources and garnering recognition. The emphasis on nurturing local ties and cultivating relationships to foster mutual aid and resource exchange can thus be understood as a tactical choice harmonizing with their overarching commitment: safeguarding autonomy from commercial

influences and diminishing reliance on external funding channels, encompassing state subsidies and contributions from external parties. This may also aid them in transcending the perceived confines within the cultural arena, where entities often grapple with pre-established rules and structures, like vying for project funding, securing sponsorships, or procuring various permits.

In this section, I have highlighted how the association operates within a confined scope of action, navigating resource constraints and engaging with, yet resisting, market forces. In this context, the concept of tactics assumes paramount importance, encapsulating the association's approach of leveraging the immediate environment to the fullest. This approach helps them in their wish to maintain autonomy from external influences while valuing the diverse cultural expressions represented by their members. Through the tactical lens of hyperlocality, a closeness and interconnectedness with other entities possessing diverse attributes and strengths come into focus.

Moving forward, the following section will offer an analysis of how these elements coalesce to create the street party. This examination aims to explore the street party's impact on the street, its role in cultivating the street as a space for play and culture, and the implications this has for shaping our understanding of culture within the realm of urban planning.

6.2 Party, Play, Performance

In September of last year, I had the chance to experience the NGBG street during its annual street party. As I walked towards the street, I began to sense the rhythmic vibrations of bass and drums. Upon my arrival, I was met with a wall of diverse sounds – a mix of various rhythms and noises converging. The street had undergone a remarkable transformation, with spots that I recognized now serving as stages, bars, and makeshift dance floors.

Amidst the crowds, I detected a subtle blend of scents – a mix of burnt rubber and the aroma of grilled meat. Someone was in the midst of cooking a whole lamb right in the middle of the street. Electronic music emanated from one of the auto repair shops, where car tires were still present from their usual operations. Nearby, a man had set up a compact DJ booth, crafting a unique blend of what I could only describe as alarm-like sounds. Just beside him, a food truck offered a selection of organic food. Continuing down the street, I encountered a group of people engaged in Lindy Hop dancing. Later, the melodies of accordion, tuba, trombone, and trumpet

filled the air as a klezmer music band took to one of the stages. I saw people of all ages and throughout the street party, I noticed that children were donning earmuffs, protecting them from the elevated noise levels.

In order to examine the factors influencing cultural expressions in the district through the perspective of the NGBG association, we may go beyond considering the association's methods and approaches but also to delve into its interaction with the physical street itself. This exploration prompts us to contemplate the street's role within the cultural context and how the presence of NGBG affects and reshapes it, while also being influenced by it. This dynamic encourages us to assess our perspective and perception of this specific street – but also to contemplate the broader concept of what a street can represent and embody.

During the annual street party, the aforementioned tactical approach of hyperlocality becomes amplified. For this event, there is no big budget for elaborate stages or expensive equipment, nor are there paid professional marketers or street party staff. Instead, the association uses the street as their base, manipulating and diverting what is already there and involving the people who are present. Any area that can accommodate performances, dances, or bars is exploited, with containers reconfigured into stages and the automobile repair shops alongside the street transformed makeshift bars, dance floors, and stages, while the street and side roads become the sites of a wide range of activities and performances.





Figure 15: Spaces are made to fit the street party during the 2022 edition of the street party. Photo: the author, 2022.

This puzzle-like approach forms the foundation for organizing the street party in resourceful manner. Instead of selective curation, the street party opens up for participation to whomever who wishes to join and contribute in different ways through music, performances, food, dance, et cetera. To accommodate these performers or contributors, the association works to create or convert existing spaces. This creates a structure to the planning process which works in reverse from more traditional methods – rather than starting with the number of venues and adjusting the number of performers to fit, an effort is made to maximize the space available in order to accommodate the people who want to perform or in any other way be a part of the street party. More than simply a tactical decision to make use of what is near and at hand, the decision to not curate the performances is also deliberate one that aims to reflect the desire to showcase the multifaceted culture of the city and, more specifically, the street. This practice resists the urge to evaluate which forms of expression are suitable, fit together, or complement each other. Through these conditions and ideas, the street party produces a mix of different performers,

styles, and sounds which may not normally be seen in the same setting taking place across multiple spots on the street and in different types of locations.

During my visit to the farm to meet Finn, a heart-shaped sign captured my attention. Positioned at the base of a tree trunk, the sign spelled out "Your Street; Your Culture.". This declaration in some ways echoes Henri Lefebvre's perspective on "the right to the city," which fundamentally advocates for the active engagement, claim, and redefinition of urban spaces by ordinary citizens. Going beyond simply property rights, it encompasses the broader aspects of citizen's rights in terms of their freedom to express themselves, the ability to individualize through social interactions, and the right to shape one's habitat (Lefebvre, 1996). Within this framework, the right to the oeuvre, participation, and appropriation of urban spaces empowers individuals to actively participate in shaping and transforming their city. Urban environments, seen from this view, are not just static places of residence and commerce but rather dynamic, inclusive social arenas where people have the agency to shape their cultural expressions and identities. Here, the space of the street takes on significant value.



Figure 16. "Your Street – Your Culture". Photo: the author, 2023.

In Lefebvre's (2003) words, the street is "a place to play and learn". It is a space of "disorder." In the street, elements of urban life that that may be fixed and redundant elsewhere are free to flow and interact within, creating an alive and vibrant disorder may both inform as well as surprise us. "The disorder is alive. It informs. It surprises" (Lefebvre, 2003, p. 18). While Lefebvre underscores the historical role of the street as a communal gathering place, he acknowledges that this role has undergone challenges and transformations over time. The process of commodification and reimagining has gradually shifted its identity, relegating it to the status of a mere thoroughfare for pedestrians and vehicles. This transition is marked by predetermined circulation patterns driven by market-oriented objectives (ibid.). The street's function as a communal space has thus eroded, replaced by its increasing designation as a transit route or a venue for observing consumer goods through storefront windows. Lefebvre highlights that this shift has diminished the street's societal significance, rendering it primarily a space for leisurely consumption and passage. Nevertheless, within the street persists a latent potential for it to serve as a platform for interactions, movements, and social learning. Acting as a convergence point for diverse individuals from various directions, the street can easily be reimagined as a communal gathering place where citizens come together, thus reclaiming its intrinsic communal significance.

As previously mentioned, for the street party, performances or contributors are not curated, instead, space is 'made to fit' the participants who want to contribute. This stands in contrast to many other types of cultural expressions such as more mainstream or commercial cultural events or artistic showcases, where expressions are often selected based on the target audience or current trends. The result is a mix of elements that might not typically coexist. Affe's previous observation captures this dynamic: "it's quite an odd mix they are able to get."

The "mixing" and the idea of non-curation that the street party is grounded in can be seen as something more than a performance in its aesthetic or artistic sense, but it can also be seen as an enactment of what 'culture' represents and can potentially be. Performance studies professor Richard Schechner (2013) poses that the notion of 'performance' encompasses more than just putting on a show, be it a play, dance, or concert. For him, it extends to encompass any kinds of activities that aim to illuminate and illustrate "doing" – what Schechner terms "showing doing." Similarly, anthropologist Erving Goffman (1956, p. 8) defines performance as "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence any of the other participants in any way." From this view, when thinking about what the street party "shows"

through “doing”, we may think of it as a demonstration of the possible ways of culture, society and urbanity can be presented to the public. As a performance, we can see the street party not only changing the street into a space for entertainment and leisure, but also into something like a stage for showing a version of culture – how it can look and feel when it is not chosen and curated through a preconceived vision but jumbled together through a blend of chance and the interactions of individuals – determining who finds their place where and who wishes to participate. The result may be seen as a kind of “play” with culture where the combination of different genres, sounds and expressions are combined and tested out in different configurations. In this view, the notion of play can also be more than what we usually think of it, as lighthearted or juvenile activities. It extends to the idea of play as a tool for communication and transformation, encouraging creative exploration and breaking away from rigid structures. According to Schechner, play represents the continuous process of off balancing, loosening, bending, twisting, reconfiguring, and transforming the underlying energy and mood that exists below, alongside, and behind our focused attention (Schechner 1993: 43). This concept of play finds expression in bodily practices like dance, which encourage the discovery of new configurations and twists of ideas and experiences (ibid.).

Play is the supreme bricoleur of frail transient constructions, like a caddis worm or a magpie’s nest. [. . .] Its metamessages are composed of a potpourri of apparently incongruous elements. [. . .] Yet, although “spinning loose” as it were, the wheel of play reveals to us (as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has argued [1975]) the possibility of changing our goals and, therefore, the restructuring of what our culture states to be reality. (Turner, 1986, p. 31)

Through this quote, Turner suggests that play possesses the capacity to challenge and reconfigure the accepted cultural reality. It offers the opportunity to rearrange goals and establish unexpected connections among disparate elements. He likens play to the ingenuity of a caddis worm, which assembles its protective case from an assortment of available materials, and a magpie's nest, constructed from an assortment of found items.

This concept of play as a form of reconfiguring and putting together, akin to the work of a caddis worm, comes to life as an array of elements and individuals converge. Seemingly disparate genres, such as jazz, punk, orchestral music, and electronic beats, merge alongside

diverse culinary styles, each possibly also representing differing ideologies ranging from veganism to whole grilled meat and halal options.

Akin to the caddis worm or magpies' nest - by utilizing what is readily available and within reach - the street party can incorporate original elements of the urban landscape, such as the industrial and workshop-style locales, mechanical equipment, and car tires, with other elements that might be traditionally considered as more conventional 'cultural' elements. Through this bringing together of diverse elements, the party amplifies and showcases what is usually present but often hidden in the city's fabric. Ordinarily, the music and dance found in the street are confined to rehearsal studios or clubs, cultural associations cater to specific groups within their designated locations, and various food options are scattered across different restaurants and bakeries. However, during the street party, these distinct elements converge and interact. The result may be seen in terms of simple enjoyment but can also be viewed as way a playing with the perception of culture itself. This can be seen to embody a performance of non-curation, leading to reconfiguration of established notions of compatibility – what goes together and what does not – what is similar and what is not.

It can be further described as an assemblage, where no single materiality or actor possesses enough influence to consistently determine the trajectory or impact of the collective. Instead, the effects generated by this assemblage, the atmosphere, are emergent properties that result from the interactions and interplay among diverse elements. Each element of the assemblage contributes with its own vital force, but it is the collective grouping as a whole that exhibits its own agency, giving rise to an experience with a distinct energy (Cf. Bennett, 2010). Furthermore, as Bennett (2004) states, understanding something involves comprehending its capabilities and effects, as well as its capacity to interact and merge with the effects of others. In this case, the association and the street party can be seen as not only agents that organize events and activities but also shape the communal space and cultural landscape of the district. This might mean that in assembling diverse elements together, they are affected by each other. That which is not normally seen as 'cultural' may take on a cultural significance in our perceptions. By transforming into spaces for music, dance, and other activities, the elements lining the street, auto repair shops, and industrial surroundings become as culturally significant as the events taking place within them.



Figure 17: The NGBG street party. a) visitors are beginning to fill the street. b) dancefloor and bar in one of the auto repair shops. Photos: the author, 2022.

Moreover, Turner's concept of "meta language" and "meta messages" sheds insights into how play may function as a tool for reflecting on and commenting on the social order. By operating in the realm of "as-if," play enables contemplation of ideas, ideologies, institutions, and social structures beyond the confines of existing reality (Turner, 1986). From this perspective, as a meta-message, the street party stands as an alternative to more curated and commercialized cultural events like festivals, dance clubs, or exhibitions. Unlike these tightly controlled gatherings with entry fees, select performers, and specific target audiences based on age or social markers, the street party offers an opposite approach.

In this context, the street party can also be interpreted as a manifestation of prefigurative politics. Similar to the Hangar and the Steppe, which operate in a prefigurative manner by theorizing through action and practice, the street party challenges the traditional trajectory of change. Prefigurative politics intertwines current struggles with future aspirations, fostering a dynamic coexistence of the actual and the ideal within present social interactions. It dispenses with the reliance on petitioning the state for reforms or relying on intricate transition plans for deferred change. Instead, it directly embodies the envisioned future within its ongoing activities and relationships (Maeckelbergh, 2011). For Finn, this envisioned future entails forging new structures and embracing a more open approach to comprehending and engaging in culture and recreation. As such, the street party can be perceived as an experimental performance, effectively demonstrating through action how a 'non-curated' culture can be envisioned and actualized. This becomes especially significant when considering the street's history, its associated struggles, and the discourses that have portrayed it as a place of criminality, dirt, and difference. In contrast, the street party presents an alternative image, transforming the street into a space of play.

This kind of utilization and modification of the urban environment has a deep connection to issues surrounding values and beliefs. Environment and natural resources professor Patricia A. Stokowski (2002) argues that "each effort to create place becomes an elaboration of the beliefs and values of some collection of people, expressed and fostered in their promotion of a preferred reality." This means thinking about the physical surroundings and our efforts to intervene, change our appropriate them as something that expresses our desired (individual or collective) urban reality (ibid.). In this context, the street party - as well as other activities engaged in by NGBG - can be seen in terms of what professor in recreation and leisure studies Troy D. Glover (2019) describe as 'animation practices', referring to deliberate employment of for example

festivals, events, programmed activities, or pop-up leisure that works to transform, enliven and/or alter public spaces and stage urban life. The animation of public space “enables people to not only envision change but to help create it” (Glover, 2019). According to Glover, animating public space can hold far-reaching potential as they represent an opportunity to enable urban inhabitants to lay claim to their right to the city by giving rise to a more just and democratic city through their various efforts (ibid.). These kinds of practices may be seen to assert a claim over space, through the staging – or performance of - urban life. As Glover (ibid.) puts it: in animating public space, we *do* public space.

Glover emphasizes that animation practices harbor inherent possibilities that hold the potential for both transformation and emancipation. However, it is crucial not to view them as a universal remedy but to recognize their multifaceted and far-reaching impacts. While initiatives like transformative placemaking can empower urban residents to assert their "right to the city" and shift greater control to them, thereby fostering a novel urban landscape and imbuing public spaces with new functions and meanings, the enduring effects of such practices are interwoven with local power dynamics and distinct social nuances unique to each context (Glover, 2019). The introduction of new uses for public spaces offers initiators the means to redirect attention towards their own interpretations of urban life and culture, forging new concepts of community that contribute to the (re)definition of a place. This process also prompts a potential shift in the discourse surrounding public spaces. An illustration of this dynamic may be seen in how the street party has potentially played an important role in elevating this district's prominence – possibly catalyzing or advocating for subsequent policy endeavors like the planning program and the establishment of a cultural sound zone.

The realm of animation practices holds a dual potential – not only for fostering a more democratic and inclusive city, but also for its converse. These practices have often been linked to gentrification processes, whereby the embellishment of urban spaces with aesthetics catering to an audience possessing elevated cultural capital can inadvertently perpetuate exclusivity (Glover 2019). This phenomenon capitalizes on the allure of what is deemed "urban cool." Taken to its extreme, this form of animated public space can engender exclusion, particularly when orchestrated by dominant groups and geared towards niche markets like hipsters or food enthusiasts (Cf. Glover 2019). This viewpoint raises vital questions into whether 'culture' itself might unintentionally turn into a catalyst for undermining the street's authenticity, inadvertently promoting displacement and gentrification.

These questions are not unfamiliar to the context of the NGBG street party. In its early years, discussions emerged concerning the potential ramifications of the initiative on the district. The first edition of the street party, supported by the street and property offices as well as BID Malmö, a partnership of property owners, businesses, housing associations, and the city, encountered critique. Among those expressing reservations was another cultural association called 'Kontrakultur', which was active with their own cultural and social center adjacent to the NGBG street. Their concerns revolved around the prospect of new initiatives for the neighboring Rosengård district and their potential impact on Sofielund. They apprehended property owners' plans to enhance the district's allure and thereby displace residents and other actors. The NGBG street party was viewed as an element of this feared transformation of the area. Confronting their own difficulties with their landlord, Eroom, one of the members of BID Malmö, who had increased their rents, they ascribed the planning of the street party to them. In an interview featured in the newspaper *Fria Tidningen*, a Kontrapunkt member elaborates:

We are in a neighborhood in Malmö that lies between Möllevången and Rosengård. An industrial area that has looked the same for a very long time. But now the municipality and the city want to transform the area as part of Malmö's new prestigious "Amiralstaden" initiative. This includes transforming the area we are in. Our property owner Eroom is very active in this, and as part of increasing the attractiveness, he organized the street festival NGBG," (*Fria Tidningen*, 2017)

During my fieldwork, I encountered similar concerns voiced by a local artist who resides in proximity to the NGBG street. She passionately described how the street serves as an ongoing source of inspiration for artists and creators. The diverse array of shops, people, and even car washes contribute to a vibrant cultural atmosphere. Despite recognizing the positive aspects of promoting culture in the district, the artist shared apprehensions. She worried that an excessive emphasis on 'culture' by influential actors like the municipality could inadvertently displace the very elements that make the street authentically inspired and truly unique.

This theme also emerged during my conversation with Finn. He argued that many people, including researchers, have been quick to categorize their activities on the street and the street party as a typical instance of gentrification. Finn strongly believes that such labeling is premature and neglects to consider the distinct context of the street and how their initiatives operate within it.

While acknowledging that the animation and activation of public space can have significant consequences, it is equally crucial to consider the specific social and cultural relationships in which these activities function. On the one hand, the street party and the activities held by the association has the potential to attract a specific crowd interested in culture, music, and food, offering them a reimagined view of the street. There are possibilities for the positive image and popularity of the event to lead to the attraction of new and more affluent residents to the area, viewing it as an appealing lifestyle option. As highlighted by Glover (2019), in areas perceived as trendy and attractive by new residents, the original production of space can undergo changes. As new residents mobilize around their consumption practices, repeatedly patronizing desirable products in sought-after venues, the spatial landscape transforms. This process of gentrification benefits the new residents, but it can lead to the displacement of the very people who originally made the neighborhood cool and attractive. The result is a disruption in the original production of space, where the "others" (the original residents) no longer feel like they belong, despite the fact that the new residents sought to replicate the lifestyle that initially drew them to the neighborhood. Glover (ibid.) argues that this covert process of space production revolves around consumption practices rather than overt divisions based on social class, ethnicity, or race. As a result, it can be more widely accepted, masking the underlying gentrification taking place in the area.

However, I posit that while this concern holds merit, there are multifaceted dimensions to this context that warrant exploration. Rather than solely attributing culture as a potential driver of gentrification, it is imperative to delve into the distinct manner in which space is produced during the street party. Rather than undergoing a radical reimagination into something entirely divergent from the backdrop where people conduct their daily activities, the animation of the street operates within and relies heavily on the existing material and social infrastructure. This orchestration, characterized by a method where space is "made to fit," hinges on the collaborative efforts of various actors, including those engaged in the various businesses along the street. The 'organic' approach to arrangement necessitates the involvement of multiple stakeholders, where negotiations become paramount for its success. Rather than a unilateral imposition or overlaying, a process of dialogue and coordination is essential. This methodology may inherently contribute to a more equitable footing for all existing participants.

In this context, the oversimplified dichotomy of culture versus inhabitants or local actors, coupled with the notion of cultural entities as potential 'gentrifiers' that disrupt the status quo,

fails to encapsulate the intricate complexity of the scenario. A more nuanced perspective is indispensable for comprehending how the existing cultural fabric of the NGBG street party and the ambiance it fosters are interwoven and interdependent with the preexisting elements of the street. Within such a framework, cultural activities hold the potential to cultivate connections between elements conventionally deemed 'cultural' and those that may not be labeled as such. Through transforming the street by amplifying what already exists, rather than introducing something entirely new, it utilizes the existing material infrastructure and involves the current actors on the street, including those who work there. Because of this, I argue that the street party in itself - even if supported by property owners who may have their own visions of the street - is unlikely to give rise to potential negative outcomes like gentrification or displacement. On the contrary, I believe that the way the street party is organized and performed means the potential to elevate and showcase novel combinations of actors and elements, fostering a more equitable and inclusive social environment on the local level.

In light of this, I argue that the street party itself – even when supported by property owners with their own visions for the street – is unlikely to engender adverse outcomes like gentrification or displacement. On the contrary, I propose that the manner in which the street party is orchestrated and executed holds the potential to magnify and display inventive combinations of actors and elements, fostering a more inclusive and equitable social fabric at the local level.

However, it is equally important not to dismiss the concerns raised earlier. While I argue that the street party has the potential to yield positive outcomes on a local scale and may not directly contribute to displacement and gentrification, its broader implications could potentially exert other influences. It is evident that the street party, in conjunction with the initiatives of the NGBG association, has enhanced the street's visibility, drawn substantial crowds, and introduced it to new audiences. While refraining from attributing their efforts to intentional gentrification strategies, it remains crucial to at the same time acknowledge that the allure and appeal of the cultural experience showcased during the street party could also attract new residents or stakeholders. These newcomers might initially be drawn to the street's authentic ambiance, but their presence could gradually reshape the established landscape as they introduce their distinct consumption practices and visions of urban aesthetics. This coupled with the recent focus on the cultural sound zone, the planning program, and the municipality's aspiration to transform Sofielund into a dynamic center for culture and recreation, there is the

potential for attracting individuals or enterprises seeking financial gains or viewing the district as a lucrative space for tourism and commercial activities. Such a scenario could precipitate a shift in the district's focus, in the long run potentially displacing existing actors or material elements. In light of these considerations, a balanced perspective is essential when thinking about how to care for the district as a space for culture.

Within this context, adopting an assemblage perspective can offer valuable insights. This perspective delves into the intricate interactions among various elements, characterized by nonlinearity and contingency. Even slight modifications in one element can trigger significant shifts throughout the entire system (Cf. DeLanda, 2019). From this standpoint, each element within the NGBG street—whether human participants or material infrastructure—holds equal significance and wields the potential to profoundly impact and influence others, regardless their “cultural status”. Within this understanding, safeguarding extends beyond aspects like sound. It becomes important to also address the potential attraction of actors who may see the district as an opportunity for commercial activity and tourism activities as well as new residents with new consumption practices which in turn could lead to a shift in terms of residents, workers, and the original surroundings. While the cultural sound zone may work to avoid housing developments, it does not avoid new residential patterns or businesses from coming in. Communicating the value of the existing environment to influential actors with the power to shape the built environment, such as landlords and property owners, becomes crucial in this context. Even if the municipality understands and values these elements, commercial interests may ultimately take precedence. Working against such interests gaining excessive agency over the street's businesses is a concern if the wish is to preserve that which has made the street attractive and unique in the first place.

Viewing the street party as a form of 'play' and recognizing it as an assemblage of diverse elements, 'culture' should be regarded as an amalgamation not only of aesthetics but also of other material and social elements that work in tandem to create a whole. Within this perspective, the notion of the street party as both performance and play accentuates its significance beyond mere entertainment, as performance – a “showing doing” of, and playing with - culture, crafted from a mix of diverse elements. The elements that add to this performance are not mere background or setting; they are active components that play a crucial role in shaping the cultural expression of both the NGBG association as well as the street. The municipality's focus on engaging and supporting existing community culture within the context

of the cultural sound zone and the planning program for Sofielund is commendable. However, there is a potential risk of overlooking the significant role played by a multitude of actors who are actively involved in shaping the street's cultural landscape. However, a potential peril lies in underestimating the substantial contributions made by a myriad of stakeholders who are actively instrumental in shaping the cultural landscape of the street. Among this diverse ensemble of participants are businesses that may not necessarily align with conventional notions of "culture" pertaining to visual aesthetics or the production of arts and music.

While I posit that the street party in itself is unlikely to generate adverse outcomes such as gentrification, but instead stands to enhance value and cultivate new combinations of actors and elements, thereby engendering a more harmonized social environment among those partaking in the street's activities, it remains crucial to recognize the broader susceptibility posed by the allure and magnetism in the cultural experience that the street offers. This situation unveils some of the intricate nuances entailed in the development of Sofielund with a pronounced cultural emphasis. Such an endeavor prompts a comprehensive approach when fortifying the intrinsic 'community culture' ingrained within the street and district. In the pursuit of a culture-centric development, it remains imperative to consciously encompass a diverse spectrum of actors, even those not conventionally affiliated with the cultural domain, yet who wield significant influence in shaping the overarching "cultural fabric".

Mechanics, bakers, and shop owners, for example, despite their departure from conventional cultural archetypes, exert considerable impact upon the cultural landscape. As such, it becomes pivotal to actively incorporate their voices into dialogues concerning the vision of Sofielund as a center for culture and recreation. Identifying their needs and potential obstacles assumes importance in the pursuit of a district development that genuinely seeks to build upon the existing foundation. However, more than the actors and things that come together and are made visible during the street party, there exists other elements that play crucial roles in the formation of this street as a space where culture can take stage. The forging of alliances and connections among seemingly disparate elements assumes a pivotal role within this context. The formation of these and their significance will be explored in the following and concluding section of this chapter.

6.3 “An Unholy Alliance” – Does Culture Need Toxins?

In the previous section, I explored how the street party animates the street and discussed how this activity may inform us when contemplating the district's future prospects. Now, let us shift our focus from the street activities to the behind-the-scenes dynamics that influence the NGBG street as a space for culture. We will transition from the sidewalk to the factory floor and then onward towards the realm of a municipal actor in order to explore how the association's activities are intertwined with a broader context of the development of the district.

This last section aims to shed light on the vital role of co-functioning, alliances, and interactions across various domains in shaping the district's development with culture as the focal point. More importantly, we will consider how alliances in this context come to be in the first place and their prospects for the future. First, this transition prompts a brief consideration of the broader urban context and different ideas on how to plan for urban districts.

Urban studies scholar Guy Baeten (2012) contends that Malmö has become a frontrunner in the neo liberalization of urban Sweden. What he means by this that a hasty privatization of land that began during the social-democratic era has empowered developers in tandem with political regime to proactively supported a strong role for private stakeholders in urban development. This in turn has led to a reduced impact of planning and planners. This risks that profit seeking development, short term creation of urban wealth and a socio-cultural revival of the city comes before what can be considered “good” and “just” in terms of long term social and environmental factors.

According to Baeten (*ibid.*), this kind of transformation is evident in urban interventions like The Western Harbor waterfront development project, launched in 2001, which Baeten describes as "Sweden's most high-profile neoliberal urban experiment," featuring the towering landmark Turning Torso. This project embodies a top-down planning approach, emphasizing spectacular architecture, attracting wealthy residents, and privatizing city-owned land. Subsequently, these practices have been institutionalized and normalized, as seen in newer projects like the expansive Hyllie project, one of the largest Nordic urban development undertakings, comprising a new railway station, two towers, an ice hockey rink, a shopping mall, and 7,000 dwellings (*ibid.*).

However, the intentions and ideas surrounding the planning program for Sofielund and the cultural sound zone takes on a different approach, focusing on preserving existing qualities and emphasizing a wish to avoid top-down planning or extensive housing initiatives or new construction. It is about safeguarding and developing what is already there through considering and building upon the interests of current actors, companies, and organizations in the district, with an emphasis on embracing and supporting the existing “community culture”.

The vision described here aligns with the concept of an 'experimental logic' increasingly embraced in the public sector, as highlighted by landscape architect Lina Berglund-Snodgrass and political scientist Mukhtar-Landgren (2020). They point to an increased incidence of stakeholder collaborations and urban experimentation which to an increasing extent has been shaping planning processes. Amongst other things, they trace this logic to an overarching discourse on the complexities of today's societal challenges, often referred to as "wicked problems," which are seen to demand new innovative governance approaches. This experimental logic involves ideas about municipalities involving a range of different stakeholders in achieving public goals - facilitating their participation rather than imposing regulations. This approach is geared towards co-producing knowledge and activities in conjunction with private actors and stakeholders, reflecting a desire for more distributed authority. Such a mindset reshapes the dynamics between planners and stakeholders, underscoring the importance of collaboration (ibid).

The essence of this 'experimental logic' also resonates with my prior work, where the municipality tasked me with investigating methods for fostering dialogue and communication between local actors and the municipality. Through my interactions with various stakeholders, I discovered instances of what could be termed as "dialogue fatigue." This phenomenon encapsulates a sense of weariness stemming from frequent encounters in meetings, discussion panels, and seminars where extensive discussions take place, yet tangible actions remain elusive. Moreover, some individuals expressed a sentiment of appreciation for municipality engagement; however, they also conveyed a sense of frustration regarding the time and resources constraints that cultural actors contend with, making it challenging to participate in these kinds of engagements and offer information to the municipality without compensation.

In the context of wishing to build from the ground up and engaging with the local community, the NGBG association emerges as a key stakeholder and influential voice. Other actors, such as the industry in the district also play significant roles.

However, other actors, particularly the long-standing industry in the district, also play significant roles. Challenges may arise in working towards making the vision of the district becoming an influential center for culture and recreation into a shared goal for various actors, especially in engaging property owners who may not prioritize cultural and recreational development over economic interests. Property owners cannot be compelled to maintain low rents or provide beneficial contracts to individuals or groups aiming to initiate or sustain cultural and recreational initiatives. This situation requires an understanding of how differing objectives and sets of beliefs can be combined. It also involves the question of what the concept of culture can be said to symbolize for different people.

Through going “behind the scenes” of the activities of the NGBG association, a concrete example of alignment between various operational domains became apparent. Along the NGBG street, strategic alliances have already assumed a crucial role in shaping the district's trajectory even before the implementation of the planning program and the cultural sound zone initiative. Notably, these implementations may to some extent be owed to certain proactive actors who were already deeply engaged in the street's development prior to any formal planning initiatives taking effect.

The NGBG association's role in animating the street and infusing it with cultural significance has involved the engagement diverse stakeholders working together behind the scenes in order to secure space for culture in the district. As already mentioned, businesses and actors lining the street have actively participated in the planning of events like the street party. Relying on face-to-face contacts and the local buzz present in the neighborhood, the concept of hyper locality serves the association as a tactical approach, enabling them to navigate the constraints posed by bureaucracy and financial strains. In this context, certain allies have proven instrumental in supporting their efforts.

One of these can be found nestled on one of the side roads along Norra Grängesbergsgatan in the shape of a factory continuously emitting grey smoke from its chimneys. This factory's roots trace back to the 1940's when it was initially established in the Möllevången district. As its operations expanded, the factory found its home in connection to the NGBG street, where it still stands today. It produces ingredients used for food, but beyond this, it also wields a significant influence on the context that shapes the street as a space for culture. Notably, the Farm, serving as the headquarters for Finn and the association, belongs to the agricultural co-operative owning the factory. The farm had been in their possession since the 1970s, and it

underwent renovations to accommodate office spaces for their staff. But since a few years back, it had been standing empty. In 2020, the decision was made to allocate the farm to the association. The association was given a lease on the land for a forgivable sum, allowing them to develop it as a cultural center for a duration starting with five years. Finn emphasizes that this has brought forth an array of new opportunities in terms of developing the area with culture and recreation as a focal point.

Now, the factory is both landlord and neighbor to the NGBG association and the actors who come to the farm for dancing, music rehearsals, or exploring new creative concepts. But the association's relationship with the factory predated the decision to allocate the farm to them. This connection was established when Finn and the technical director of the factory Lennart⁴, first crossed paths during the planning phase of the inaugural street party in 2016. Their communication became essential in addressing the temporary closure of factory deliveries during the party, ensuring an undisturbed space on the street for cultural performances and gatherings.

Involved in the planning for the first street party was also Henrik⁵, a municipality representative from the property and street office, who has since been integral in the work with the street party. Finn explained to me the vital role Henrik plays in navigating the complexities of rules, regulations, and problem-solving. During the planning of the street party, Finn and others handle aspects like arranging stages, booking bands, and securing agreements with garage owners. On the other hand, Henrik's expertise lies in handling matters such as authorization, ensuring the provision of basic amenities, security guards, electricity, and sound systems necessary for the event.

In one of my conversations with Finn, he shares that despite these three actor's different backgrounds and competencies, he, Lennart, and Henrik has found a common ground in their shared desire to promote culture on the street. Finn humorously points out that while culture may not necessarily want factories per se, it certainly welcomes craftsmanship, job opportunities, educational establishments, and recycling centers – and as long as the municipality supports the endeavor and keeps residential projects at bay, Finn believes that these various elements can successfully collaborate. According to him, the relationship between

⁴ Pseudonym

⁵ Pseudonym

these actors was spurred by the shared recognition that certain problems are too significant for any single organization, association, or company to tackle alone. This analysis of the situation can be described in terms of an assemblage of social relationships that spans across different ways of thinking and operating.

Gilles Deleuze's (1987, p. 69) definition of an assemblage is particularly fitting in this context. Deleuze (*ibid.*) emphasizes that an assemblage does not derive its unity from the likeness of its elements; instead, it finds unity in co-functioning—a symbiotic "sympathy" that spans *across* different natures. It is not about filiations, successions, or lines of descent, but about forging alliances, creating alloys, which Deleuze likens to “contagions”, “epidemics”, or “the wind”.

The actors involved share a common goal of promoting 'culture' on the street, but their coming-together is not contingent on having identical worldviews or approaches. Rather, it requires working across different schemes of functioning to foster new relationships and alliances. Moreover, the reasons behind their shared goal of 'culture' may stem from various perspectives and beliefs about what is truly at stake in terms of the development of this particular street.

This situation can be described in similar terms as to how American philosopher John Dewey describes the formation of what he terms a 'public'. In her work on assemblages, Jane Bennett (2010) delves into Dewey's political philosophy, which emphasizes the interconnectedness and collective action within the context of political endeavors. According to Dewey, a 'problem' serves as the impetus for the creation of "a collection of individuals who come together not necessarily by choice, but due to an experience of harm that evolves into a 'problem' over time" (*ibid.*). This amalgamation of individuals is what he calls a public. Importantly, a public is not preexisting but rather emerges in response to specific problems and is characterized by its ephemeral and adaptable nature. Different publics are continually forming and dissolving as new challenges and issues arise. Members of a public are described as inducted into it rather than consciously volunteering to come together with others: “When diverse bodies suddenly draw near and form a public, they have been provoked to do so by a problem” (Bennett 2010, p. 100). Applying these ideas to the context of NGBG we can describe the different involved parts in the shape of an assemblage coming together prompted by specific problems, akin to how Dewey describes a ‘public’.

Finn and the association find themselves drawn into this constellation due to a pressing problem posed by the city's growth. As the city expands, the risk of losing access to affordable and

centrally located spaces becomes a threat for people engaged in culture, handicrafts, startups, associations, and clubs. Their goal is to preserve the area's unique architecture and its cultural and social heritage. To achieve this, they must work towards preventing new housing from encroaching upon the street. They express the need to "explore new methods for cooperative urban regeneration" (NGBG, n.d.) to protect the street's identity and character. Furthermore, as described earlier, they face challenges in navigating external structures, such as the funding situation, and seek to create a model where financial aid is provided without imposing a narrow view of culture and its experimentation. Another critical challenge revolves around space, both having adequate space to conduct activities and securing long-term stability to develop new ideas.

Harmed by the actions of others or even by actions born from their own actions as these trans-act; harmed bodies draw near each other and seek to engage in new acts that will restore their power, protect against future harm, or compensate for damage done—in that consists their political action, which, fortunately or unfortunately, will also become conjoint action with a chain of indirect, unpredictable consequences.

(Bennett, 2010, p. 101)

In this quote, Bennett's (2010) draws on the ideas of Dewey to illustrate how political action, which can also become conjoint action, can be spurred by perceived harm. This may be caused by the actions of others or even by actions arising from the consequences of one's own actions. This leads us to consider the role of the factory and how it found culture as an ally, as well as the kind of harm that may have motivated the factory to enter this assemblage.

As a member of BID Malmö - the partnership between property owners, businesses, the city, housing associations, and other associations that was mentioned in the previous section – the factory is featured on the BID Malmö website through an interview with Lennart. In this interview, he candidly expresses the desire to alter the factory's reputation:

[We] have an old and undeserved reputation as a dangerous business. We want to change that. One way to do this is to invite the outside world so that people can form their own opinion of what we do. Another is to actively participate in making the society around us better. (Lennart)

In response to the problem of being perceived as harmful to the local community, the factory finds a formidable ally in 'culture.' By actively engaging with and supporting cultural initiatives on the street, the factory can work to dismantle the negative perceptions that have haunted its reputation. Embracing culture presents a promising avenue to dispel the metaphorical "grey smoke" that shrouds its image, allowing the factory to cultivate a more positive and welcoming identity within the community.

Within this context, the role of toxins plays a significant part in compelling it to respond creatively to the effects it experiences. This concept aligns with Bruno Latour's idea of an "actant," a source of action, be it human or non-human. Actants are neither strictly objects nor subjects; instead, they are "interveners" that, by their particular location within an assemblage and the fortuitousness of being in the right place at the right time, become decisive forces that catalyze events (Bennett 2010, p. 9). In the case of the factory, these toxins become actants spurring the factory to be drawn towards culture, illustrating how the urban fabric is an assemblage of interconnected elements that constantly influence and prompt others to adapt to changes or affections they undergo.

In the pursuit of embracing culture on the street, a notable achievement by the factory has been their decision to allocate the farm's land to the NGBG association. During my visit to the factory, I had the privilege of conversing with Lennart, who told me about their proactive involvement beyond the land allocation. He revealed that how they have been actively championing the establishment of the culture sound zone, lending their vocal support to the implementation of these plans, and trying to get people to support the idea.

As cultural initiatives in the NGBG association find support from the factory, and the factory responds to the modifying effects of toxins, a dynamic interplay is set in motion. The cultural sound zone stands as a practical manifestation of this relationship, offering advantages not only to cultural events but also safeguarding the factory's productivity. It highlights a potential interdependence between these two fields. The noise generated by cultural events and the waste products and toxins from industrial processes act as deterrents, keeping residential housing at a safe distance and allowing both culture and industry to maintain their space.

In this particular case, economic considerations also play a role in shaping their relationship. During my conversation with Finn, he explained that the decision to offer the farm to NGBG was, to some extent, driven by practical financial factors. The cost of heating the house and

maintaining the garden prompted them to explore a cost-neutral solution since the board members were committed to preserving ownership of the property. Additionally, Finn pointed out that the historical value of the farm is expected to increase over time, further reinforcing their decision to retain it. As a result, Finn and the association were able to secure the space for a low rent, enabling them to pursue their cultural initiatives for the coming years.

While visiting Finn at the Farm, I had the opportunity to engage in a conversation with Henrik, who was present at the moment. In our conversation, it became evident that he perceived 'culture' and the activities of NGBG, including the street party, as a response to an additional set of problems.

A part of shaping the planning program for the district and the accompanying cultural sound zone, Henrik is a potent force in terms of the development of the district in general – with a role that can be described as a mediator between local stakeholders and the municipality. He refers to himself as a 'facilitator', a role that took part in forging what he himself humorously refers to as an “unholy alliance with the industry”, referring to the factory and other actors within the industry, trying to get them on board with the idea of promoting culture in the district.

If on the one side of this alliance is the industries, on the other side are individuals engaged in culture. One of the key challenges Henrik identifies in this setting is the bureaucratic obstacles faced by those working with culture in a “grassroots” setting. For Henrik, being a facilitator means stepping away from the traditional bureaucratic role of a municipal representative and instead, collaborating with people on their own terms to help them achieve their objectives. Leveraging his network and knowledge, he has the ability to guide them through the necessary processes, understanding whom to approach and how to navigate the paperwork.

He questions how to effectively support grassroots culture when the costs associated with obtaining building permits, ensuring fire safety, ventilation, and other requirements can amount to a staggering 1.7 million SEK for a small punk concert. This predicament is compounded by the fact that these subcultures often hold a strong opposition to capitalistic practices. As Henrik ironically puts it, there arises a paradox, where the financial burden implies that to be an opponent of economic structures, one must first be a capitalist with considerable wealth.

The engagement of Henrik within this context takes on another level of meaning when he explains why this kind of work is important. For Henrik, working with projects like the street

party and grassroots culture goes beyond mere entertainment; it involves creating opportunities for people to occupy what he calls the 'grey spaces' in between the legal and bureaucratic side of Malmö and the black market, the criminal side. He believes that measures like police raids and surveillance cameras or shutting down businesses and auto repair shops based on suspected illegal activity, do not truly address the problem. Instead, he contends that when culture and leisure can fill these gaps, it reduces the potential for criminal activity to take root. This is where the municipality's role becomes crucial, as they have the power to either shut down these 'grey zones' or help transform them into something else. He explains:

We are the ones with power. We are the ones who have the capital, we are the ones who put up walls and can make it difficult for what we can call the grey zone. On the other side is the completely black economy. The grey zones are so damn important because if we shut them out, there are always others on the other side who are eager to use their businesses to launder money, sell drugs, or whatever. We can't be walking around with our white gloves and say "we don't want dirt on us" while on the other side there are other people who don't care. And the more people we exclude from our society, the bigger the black sector will become, so that's why I say that we have to win the battle for the grey zones and in that way, we can also marginalize and take shares from the black economy. (Henrik)

According to him, the actions taken through the street party and the striving to spread culture in the street have a wider meaning as an instrument in the battle for the 'grey zones', the spaces, or actors operating in-between 'legal' and 'illegal'.

According to police, the NGBG street has been a place where open drug trafficking has taken place and there have been explosions and shootings. It is a business-dense area and while the majority of businesses are law-abiding, there are, according to police, also companies that do not follow the rules and laws that exist (SVT Nyheter, 2021). The police have conducted planned operations and raids in the areas and surveillance cameras were put up in 2019 (Sydsvenskan, 2019). In addition to these measures, other perspectives have emerged on how to address these challenges.

A more drastic view was put forth by the right-wing political party, the Sweden Democrats, in 2020. They proposed that the Malmö Municipality acquire the properties on Norra

Grängesbergsgatan, arguing that many of the activities in the area were connected to criminal elements in Malmö, including money laundering and environmentally hazardous activities. They believed that “starting over” by acquiring the properties and demolishing them would pave the way for a new future and elevate the status of the area (Pripp & Plath, 2020)

Subsequently, in 2021, when the planning program for the district was open for comments, the Sweden Democrats agreed that certain properties in the district had value and should be preserved, but they still advocated for the demolition of specific properties, including those along NGBG street, housing auto-repair shops, hairdressers, restaurants, and bakeries. They argued that these buildings "held no higher value" and called for all existing businesses to be inspected by the Malmö Municipality to address what they described as illegal basement mosques, illegal housing, and premises that did not meet official environmental or fire requirements (Pripp & Plath, 2020).

Within this context, Henrik's perspective on working with culture and leisure in the grey spaces offers an alternative approach to the use of police surveillance and targeted operations. He seeks to engage and transform these areas rather than resorting to forceful measures such as property acquisition and demolition, as proposed by the Sweden Democrats. The Sweden Democrats' stance, if realized, would effectively erase the what the culture signifying the NGBG street is today, since it is a part of and cannot be seen as something separate from the actors and the buildings who inhabit the street.

By aligning Henrik's actions with Dewey's philosophy of how 'publics' emerge in response to problems, we gain an understanding of the assemblage that forms in relation to the NGBG street. Henrik's comprehension of the problem and its solution highlights the role played by Finn and the association as essential components, creating a unity that transcends mere likeness. Instead, this unity can be described as a "sympathy" that spans across different natures, potentially bridging the bureaucratic and cultural realms.

The assemblage of these actors is not merely a product of individual choices but rather emerges in response to certain problems and the specific contexts in which they find themselves, uniting various actors who collectively navigate the challenges they face. Understanding this broader context allows us to appreciate how the collective agency of the actors, alongside larger contextual issues, converges. However, an initial coming together through different motivations does not guarantee a functioning and lasting relationship.

We can think of the situation as an instance of different 'fields' and 'capital' combining. As presented by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1984, 1993). According to Bourdieu, a 'field' represent a realm with its own distinct themes, issues, logic, and value systems, encompassing the production, distribution, and acquisition of various elements such as items, services, knowledge, or prestige. Sociologist David Swartz (1997) highlights that these fields also encompass the different forms of capital held by the actors within these fields. What is meant by capital goes beyond mere financial wealth and includes cultural, social, symbolic, familial, religious, political, moral, and other forms of capital, that allow individuals to navigate within their respective fields. Capital can also exist in an embodied state in the form of actor's abilities to handle the challenges and problems within their field and in their knowledge of past and present struggles in their field (ibid.).

From this perspective, we can think of different fields overlapping. For Henrik, knowledge of the municipal system, conduct, rules, and regulations regarding streets and planning practices represents essential capital, enabling him to engage with these systems effectively. On the other hand, for Finn and the association, their knowledge of the local social network in the street and relationships with cultural actors who are members in the association present another set of capital, allowing them to navigate and mobilize resources within the cultural realm.

Finn, in turn, acknowledges the vital role Henrik plays in navigating the complexities of rules, regulations, and problem-solving. This is exemplified in the organization of the street party. While Finn and the association take charge of arranging stages and bands, as well as making agreements with garage owners, Henrik's expertise lies in handling practical aspects such as ensuring the provision of basic amenities, security guards, electricity, and sound systems needed for the event. As a municipal representative, his involvement may also lend the association a certain capital in terms of authority and legitimacy.

In this way, the different fields and capitals can complement each other. However, sometimes, different logics between actors may even be conflicting in nature, but still find ways to work.

During my fieldwork in Sofielund, I came across numerous individuals involved in arts and culture, and a common challenge many faced was the insecurity they faced in regard to their spaces. Securing a long-term space with reasonable rents and assured security can be a challenge and some expressed apprehension about their ability to remain in their spaces for the

long term, given the potential for rent increases and renovations. Short-term or vague contracts further hinder their ability to plan for the future and expand initiatives.

My conversation with Finn confirmed this view, as he emphasized the often-imbalanced power dynamic between landlords and cultural actors, which can leave the latter feeling powerless. However, for Finn, the current situation appears to be different. Finn explained his perspective on their relationship with the factory, stating:

We are not powerless in relation to our landlord like many other cultural actors. Our landlord is a factory that knows well that culture has the ability to shape the debate when it is balanced between actors. Then culture can act as a bridge between the city and commercial activities. (Finn)

According to Finn, Lennart's personal involvement has made a difference, setting them apart from other significant players in the district, such as Pågen, a bread factory. Trust has been built through frequent contact and as Finn points out – “sometimes you have to have a beer together”. While Finn expresses a lack of trust with most other private or public actors – he feels that the relationship with the factory and Lennart is different, since it does not feel like they are being used for commercial purposes. “They don’t ask me to be in pictures or in the newspaper, they don't ask me to host events or for any of it.”, he told me.

In my conversation with Lennart, the relationship is described as a "joint learning" experience, where mutual assistance and knowledge exchange are a part of the relationship:

We try to help them with what we are good at, for example security issues. And then they can help us understand - what is culture? I don't understand what culture is because I'm not that involved in it. I'm interested, but I don't see this space that culture needs to express itself - and we've learned a lot there, and we do it with big ears and big eyes. (Lennart)

Meeting each other is about humility, says Lennart: "It's about listening, listening, listening.” According to him, through their association with the cultural association, they have gleaned valuable insights about culture, moving beyond mere the image of noise and music performances. He points out that through the relationship with the association, they have also come to understand that culture involves creating new kinds of expressions and experimenting, which, in turn, demands an essential element: space. According to Lennart, this requires

collaboration where both parties collaborate, share ideas, and envision new ways to utilize and reimagine space. More than stopping with the farm, this newfound understanding of the need for culture to have space that Lennart describes has led to new ideas about how unused, mostly empty spaces could benefit cultural and recreational activities in the future, however, as of now, nothing has yet to be decided.

This can be understood in how of cultural distribution and organization researcher Sacha Kagan (2011) what he terms "autoecopoïesis". Drawing from Niklas Luhmann's concept of "autopoiesis" as a social system's ability to continuously reproduce and maintain itself, Kagan (2011) introduces the idea of "autoecopoïetic" openness and flexibility, allowing a system to not only reiterate itself in the same manner but to learn from its environment. A system that is autoecopoïetic remains creatively open and responsive to environmental influences, even unexpected ones, co-constructing itself and adapting to its environment, collaborating with other systems. This plasticity enables the emergence of new qualities and logics within the system, driving unpredictable processes in both nature and society, what Kagan (2011) terms as "emergence." When in contact with 'culture,' the factory incorporates new types of logics, particularly the idea of culture needing both space and time for experimentation.

However, this emergence goes beyond introducing new qualities; as Kagan (ibid.) suggests, it also involves suppressing certain qualities, reshaping them within the constraints of emerging structures. Additionally, emergence does not eliminate the existence of rich and complex tensions between different parts and within the whole system.

In the relationship between the factory and the cultural association, potential tensions are evident. A stark contrast arises between a factory and a cultural association due to their inherent differences in nature and operational principles. Describing them in terms of distinct fields, the factory and Lennart operate within the domain of commercial production and efficiency, where productivity and financial gains take center stage. During my conversation with Finn, he emphasized this duality present in their collaboration, where divergent structures and hierarchies define each entity. He pointed out the prevailing perception of the factory as "evil capitalists," seemingly providing assistance to the "non-profit positive forces" represented by the cultural association.

As humorously described by Lennart, the operational style of the factory inadvertently creates a culture-free environment, where decisions are more or less dictatorial and delegation occurs

downwards. This starkly contrasts with the way the cultural association operates, where participatory and inclusive processes are key. Operating in distinct manners requires a conscious effort to avoid imposing one's own methods onto the other. Being a commercial entity, the factory possesses resources that could influence and shape the association's development according to its practices:

When seen as an assemblage with the potential to yield specific effects—such as influencing the street's planning and its role as a space for culture —each element within the assemblage can be regarded as possessing distinct agency. However, the efficacy of this agency is also intrinsic to the collective assemblage itself, arising from the combined interactions. This notion resonates with Bennett's (2010) concept of assemblage agency. According to her, as each element maintains an “energetic rhythm” slightly deviating from the assemblage, it avoids becoming a rigid and fixed entity, remaining an open-ended collective — a "non-totalizable sum." Consequently, an assemblage not only possesses a unique history of formation but also exhibits a finite lifespan, or at the very least, remains in a state of flux.

During my conversation with Lennart, this concept resonated. He emphasized that while the progress made so far is promising, almost appearing too good to be true, he also recognized the inherent vulnerability within this arrangement and the aspiration of placing culture at its core. Lennart argued that in order to fortify this process, increased support is essential. He stressed the significance of cultivating a robust base of individuals who share a common understanding of the district's development to create a stable environment. This entails engaging many people who can carry the concept forward and uphold the notion of culture within the district and the cultural sound zone:

As it is now, too much depends on too few people. If someone leaves here and someone leaves there, and someone new comes in who doesn't have the history of the area with them, it all falls. [...] The municipality has a huge role in securing it, because if one person leaves, 20% of this idea falls away and then something else comes in and fills that space with something that maybe pulls in a different direction—and then you lose it, and then you sit here, and no one remembers why this was a cultural sound zone.
(Lennart)

In a similar vein, at the start of this chapter, I highlighted Finn's cautious optimism about the development, which he argued to some extent hinges on the potential for the district to become a popular destination. For the association that aims to stay aligned with their values, this alliance empowers them to navigate the systems imposed from the outside.

From Dewey's (1927) perspective, certain issues have motivated and brought this constellation together. While I argue that there may be a certain balance stemming from the overlapping of different fields and the convergence of 'culture' as an answer to different kinds of problems, this constellation is not a given. As Lennart pointed out, the structure is vulnerable, as it relies on carrying the established concept of the district's development forward and communicating it to actors who may not share the history and may not have participated in the local "buzz"—they may not even have the motivation to align with the development desired by these actors.

This example of how diverse actors come together may enhance our understanding of co-functioning in a setting where relationships between private, public, and other entities are increasingly common. By recognizing the toxins as actants and understanding the economic factors influencing their decisions, we see the notion of culture becoming filled with different motivations and goals. This interplay of factors reinforces the idea that meaningful partnerships require an understanding of the motivations that drive actors to join forces.

This situation transcends mere co-location in the district or a philanthropic gesture on the factory's part (although these elements may also be present). Instead, the context is characterized by an awareness of potential harm and mutual benefits, laying the foundation for a meaningful convergence of culture, industry, and municipality. This example prompts us to consider how various actors are incentivized to collaborate, bridging what may appear as divergent interests. It challenges the simplistic notion that merely assembling individuals in the same space and encouraging dialogue will inherently foster collaboration. The alliance is effective but remains fragile, contingent upon the continued involvement of existing actors, but also on the dissemination mutual understanding and motivation to other actors.

7. Summary and concluding remarks

As cities continue to grow, we often hear about live venues, cultural events, and creative spaces being shut down or pushed to the outskirts. To counteract this trend, initiatives like the cultural sound zone in Sofielund, Malmö, have been introduced. However, a question remains: what else does 'culture' require, and first off, what even is the culture in this district?

In this thesis, my goal has been to shed more light on this. By treating material objects, individuals, and their surroundings with equal importance and recognizing their significant roles in the development of the two initiatives I have studied, I have aimed to uncover some of the crucial factors that have and will likely continue to shape their contributions to culture and leisure in the area. To achieve this, I examined the impact of both material and social factors on their evolution, and in turn, how they influence the surrounding environment. In terms of that which is non-human, I looked to the spatial and material qualities that stimulate and shape the initiatives. For the human realm, I explored how relationships scopes of action delimited by outside actors and structures influence their development.

In the context of the first case study involving the Hangar and the Steppe, I analyzed the building's attributes, its environment, and the mechanisms driving its operation—shaped by both material and spatial considerations. This exploration delved into its inception and the diverse roles played by various elements, spanning human and non-human elements. Notions parallel to Richard Florida's ideas concerning creativity's role in urban expansion, along with Malmö's perceived "free spirit," may have contributed to the favorable conditions that facilitated subsequent developments. By emphasizing that the concept grew from initial contact with the building, I underscored its agency – or Thing-Power - in initiating action and catalyzing change, and in evoking the idea of what it is in the process of becoming, exemplifying how “leftover” industrial spaces can be seen as gaps within Lefebvre's "abstract space," diverging from planned surplus-value generation. Instead, these gaps may give rise to loosely formed, use-inspired constructs, forging unconventional cultural and recreational realms. Through analyzing it as a terrain vague, or a void, I argued that it acts as a pulling force on new activity and engagements and highlighted the value in what we may otherwise consider to be empty or lacking. Moreover, through the example of the Hangar and the Steppe, I contended that the act of painting further drives this development, transforming the semiotic significance of the

structure into an invitation for others to engage in producing "differential space" and attracting new elements and activities, fostering the growth of the surrounding area as well.

Based in these findings, I highlighted that while these types of "vague" or vacant space holds enticing possibilities and adaptable utility, they present challenges in practical planning. I advocated for a considerate approach to the utilization of spaces that are left over by the economic circuits of the city, acknowledging their intriguing essence and a striving towards permitting their organic evolution through usage. Drawing from the evolution of the Hangar and the Steppe, I underscored the significance for stakeholders and decision-makers to comprehend the value of unstructured, open-ended environments. This involves recognizing that the most impactful contributions by cultural actors may arise from that which may seem unstructured and open, rather than from predefined concepts and firm guides for interpretations.

Acknowledging the ideological and material implications inherent in these spaces is crucial for stakeholders seeking to foster a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of cultural expressions. Furthermore, I argued that in order to integrate the value of space production through use and direct action, conceptualization needs to be extended to not only encompass the permitting of noise, but also the right to produce space. I asked how zones within urban landscapes where space can evolve in alignment with users could be imagined.

Lastly, I outlined some of the challenges and obstacles within the human realm of different types of logics. Here I highlighted how a challenge lies within the diverging scopes of actions for different actors with different roles to follow and also maybe different insights into what culture is and can be. I highlighted the limited scopes of actions for someone like Affe, who even though perceived as influential, comes from a point of less power in relation to actors like property owners or municipal actors. This leads to a use of tactics – of trying to get around the limited “rules” imposed from outside structures and a “game of chess” dynamic.

I argued that to ensure the space's evolution harmonizes with its use value—producing it as a differential space that contributes to its allure—a balance must be established in terms of outside involvement. This necessitates maintaining a certain distance while trying to offer support, in terms of characterizing the unfolding culture from an outside view and in terms of notions about its potential. Furthermore, I highlighted that the existing or potentially new property owner's comprehension of the space hold substantial influence. This understanding translates to their view of culture, its needs, and benefits. The cultural sound zone's role as a

deterrent against housing encroachment is significant, yet it can't dictate diverse cultural perceptions. This concern extends beyond the Hangar and the Steppe to broader district development with a cultural emphasis, raising questions about the essence and ownership of culture. I underscored the necessity to communicate the value of culture produced through use and through the environment to both existing and potential stakeholders – but I also highlighted how the notions about what culture is and what it is good for may have to be able to travel across different perspectives and objectives. Through this discussion, I argued that ‘culture’ becomes placed in a space of negotiations - where it may boil down to genuine mutual benefits for those involved.

In the case of the NGBG association, I set out to understand how the association operates within a constrained realm, encompassing financial, bureaucratic, and cultural limitations. I highlighted that drawing inspiration from the farm environment and aspiring to function organically, the association navigates through emerging opportunities and evolving circumstances. I contended that this organic approach yields a multitude of interests, many of which are often labeled as 'alternative' or 'underground'. Within this notion of culture, a dual nature emerges; it both adds to the captivating essence of their activities and, simultaneously, renders them susceptible to co-optation by market forces. Emphasizing the tactical dimension of this approach, I underscored the central role of hyper-locality. This concept centers around utilizing resources readily available and nearby. This tactical approach also ties into how the association leverages their immediate surroundings on a social level, relying on the local buzz and dynamics of the district to thrive within a space shaped by external structures.

Additionally, I turned my attention to the dynamics of the street during the street party. Within this context, I proposed that Lefebvre's concepts surrounding the right to the city could serve as a lens to interpret the street party as an endeavor to reclaim the street's intrinsic communal value as a space for interaction and play. On the note of play – and performance – I discussed how beyond merely creating a space for leisure, the street party assumes a broader role as a metaphorical stage on which a multifaceted cultural, societal, and urban performance unfolds. In this context, I highlighted that the street party's organizing structure, which is inherently uncurated, results in a performance that presents and embodies a distinctive version of culture. This mix brings together and displays different elements that wouldn't typically coexist. I suggested that adopting the perspective of assemblage theory allows us to recognize how this

might make us perceive the environments where these performances occur with the same cultural significance as the aesthetic or artistic elements they encompass.

I underscored their dual potential as animation practices: they can foster inclusivity by revitalizing spaces, yet simultaneously they might inadvertently contribute to exclusion and displacement of original elements. However, I contended that due to the inherent organization of the street party, which necessitates the engagement of diverse participants and locations, the risk of exclusion may be mitigated to some extent, though it remains an aspect deserving attention. Moreover, I asserted that there are valuable lessons to be gleaned from this operational approach. By adopting an assemblage perspective, we can discern the impact of factors that might not conventionally appear cultural in the aesthetic sense but nonetheless play a pivotal role in creating the conditions for cultural development. I advocated for the importance of communicating this expanded notion of value to stakeholders.

Concluding the analysis of NGBG, my focus shifted to exploring the behind-the-scenes dynamics that have played a vital role in shaping the NGBG street into a space for culture. This involved investigating the roles of alliances and co-functioning that have been woven into its development. By looking to the involvement of various actors – the cultural association, the factory, and the municipal actor - I argued how this collective effort could be attributed to distinct sets of challenges and the corresponding solutions they sought. Within this context, culture emerged as a shared solution, essentially forming an assemblage or a concept akin to Dewey's notion of "publics." I held that pivotal relationships, such as the one between the association and the factory, as well as with the municipal actor, have been instrumental in shaping the NGBG street's trajectory. By tracing the factory's history, the emergence of toxins from its production processes emerged as a significant actant that instigated a cultural shift for the factory itself. Conversations with the municipal actor unveiled criminality and the struggle over "grey spaces" as key factors driving change. I contended that these actors, situated in different 'fields', can be perceived as complementary in some respects. Building on these findings, I reiterated the importance of having vested interests in the realm of culture. I underscored the need for critical examination of the efficacy of dialogue, particularly when motivations inherent to the respective fields are lacking. I maintained that this constellation of actors and influences is fragile and far from assured. To sustain its trajectory, additional elements – actors with motivation and knowledge - are required to reinforce and fortify this network of relationships and activities.

Exploring these two cases offers insights into recurring phenomena in how these cultural initiatives develop and function within their material and social contexts. A common thread that emerges is the organic nature of both initiatives. They both eschew rigid hierarchies and predetermined plans in favor of adapting to visitor engagement and community involvement. Both of them manifest a way of operating sometimes outside of, sometimes around, and sometimes within what can be seen as the limitations posed by outside structures of economy and notions of culture.

The reliance on the material environment is a shared factor, shaping the concepts they embody. This is a key factor of what inspires and guides the concepts taking shape. For example, in the case of The Hangar and the Steppe - its status as a cultural initiative grew out of an encounter with the physical structures themselves, which served as the starting point for the subsequent concepts that unfolded. The spatial dynamics inherent to these spaces play a key role in the production of an environment that is open, flexible, and conducive to diverse interpretations. Similarly, the development of the NGBG association finds its foundation in the unique environments of both the Farm and the street itself. These settings act as catalysts for an "organic" operational approach, as the association assembles a diverse set of elements sourced from the street and capitalizes on the local buzz generated within this landscape. Thus, in both cases, the interplay between the physical surroundings and the organic operating style plays a pivotal role in shaping the initiatives and the resulting spaces for culture, demonstrating the significance of a responsive, context-driven approach. This also underscores the difficulty of establishing clear boundaries, preconceived definitions, and inflexible categorizations when attempting to provide support or improve conditions for such initiatives, since both of these endeavors emerge through adapting and responding to unpredictable circumstances and usage patterns, rather than conforming to a predetermined notion of what culture should or should not embody.

This perspective invites us to expand our perception of how 'culture' evolves in relation to the environment – it might not have a fixed timeline, and it might not adhere to pre-calculated ideas or fixed concepts. Furthermore, both of these cases demonstrate the vulnerability and contingency related to the field of human actors and the different motivations and understandings of culture - as an answer to a problem – or as a means to an end – which in extension can make or break the opportunities for these types of initiatives to evolve and develop. In the case of the Hangar, the pivotal human actor was the caretaker who handed Affe

the keys. After this, the faith of the development of this space has been a negotiation of different kinds of logics and understandings encompassing either practical limitations pertaining to the objectives and roles of actors – and to understandings of what culture may be good for. In the case of the NGBG association, we saw how the notion of culture was framed as an answer that could travel between different fields, which crucially influences the trajectory of both the association as well and the development of the street itself as a space for culture. These insights should shed some light on what may be needed when aiming to align the interests of diverse actors and fields with the aim of cultivating spaces for culture. While effective communication is crucial for fostering understanding and knowledge, the process may also require tangible incentives or stakes that could take the form of either economical, ideological, or practical factors.

In the backdrop of urban spaces increasingly becoming targets for neoliberal interventions, especially in former industrial cities like Malmö, the focus has shifted towards service, knowledge, information-based industries, and the so-called experience economy. This aligns with the concept of the "creative class" by Richard Florida, which has been both embraced and criticized. However, these cases offer a different way to think about what 'culture' can mean, one that goes beyond an economy of experience and highlights 'culture' as a way of producing space through use and performing visions of what culture, society and urbanity can look like. As not a culture of simply "looking at" but also of "doing" as well as "showing doing". As Malmö continues the transformation from its industrial heritage to a city placing greater emphasis on intellectual production and cultural engagements, these cases can represent a departure from views of 'culture' as a commodity for consumption or as an embellishment to enhance the city's reputation. Instead, these cases offer a way of thinking about 'culture' not as an overlay on its surroundings but rather as woven into and created from the very fabric of the material surroundings, rooted in the "hyper-local" sphere, and intimately linked to the use of individuals.

Through the lens of assemblage theory – putting different elements on par with each other in terms of their potential influences, I have hoped to highlight the many different elements, ideas and things that are involved in these cultural initiatives. Returning again to the sentiments of ethnographer and filmmaker Phillip Vannini (2012), I have wished to orient this research from a point of "writing culture" and "explaining findings" towards crafting – putting together bits and pieces of different kinds of materials and concepts – to generate new stories. In doing so,

my wish is that these two stories can contribute to a broader understanding, useful when approaching the challenges and opportunities in this district when aiming to developing it as (or keeping it as) Malmö's most dynamic center for culture and recreation. My wish is also that they could serve as points for reflections when considering the role and integration of culture in the revitalization and growth of other urban spaces.

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