The Production of Space

An urban study of the Centrums of Rinkeby, Tensta and Husby

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part 01. the structure
The Stockholm Municipality has set inclusion at the core of its objectives for the city with its “Vision 2040: A Stockholm for Everyone” (Stockholm Stad, 2018). Acknowledging the divide between neighborhoods, the government has brought forward social sustainability as a key component to improve the fast-growing city. This research focuses on three of the most stigmatized neighborhoods of Stockholm: Rinkeby, Tensta, and Husby, where residents are predominantly of foreign background, to offer an alternative way of understanding inclusion. Specifically, this study looks into the public spaces at the center of these three neighborhoods in a comparative analysis of public life. The collaborative project presented here shows the importance of these centrum in supporting community life in the suburbs. Drawing from Setha Low’s research on public squares in Costa Rica, the following paragraphs suggest public space is not only produced by those who envision it, but also constructed by those who use it, through daily processes, behaviors, and habits. These observed patterns carry significance as they forge the character of a place, and address practices and emotions within a collective identity. The thesis puts emphasis on the dynamic nature of public space, the relationship between morphology and use, and the potential neighborhood centers have for becoming hubs of inclusion.
NOTE TO THE READER

For administrative purposes, this collaborative work has been divided into two distinct submissions. However, we sought to maintain the unity of this research in each of the two submissions to reclaim the significance of the theoretical framework proposed here with a spatial analysis that looks into the behavioral and the subjective experience of public space in Rinkeby, Tensta, and Husby.

This is the first part of the work, it incorporates an analysis of the historical background that produced these suburban centers, and their physical outcome. The second part pertains to the final work, and can be better supported with the annexed sections from page 110 to page 161 which look into the social construction of space through the study of public life.
Simón grew up in Chía, a city near Bogotá, Colombia. He studied Architecture at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, and co-founded alongside two of his colleagues, Ensamble de Arquitectura Integral, an architecture firm. With an anti-hierarchical structure at its core, Ensamble AI has been awarded multiple prizes and competitions. Simón has engaged in numerous projects around Colombia and Latin America, and enrolled in KTH to earn a Master’s in Urbanism Studies for his interest in public space.

Native of Mexico City, Sandra moved to Madrid, Spain, at the age of six and studied International Relations and Philosophy at the American University in Washington, DC. She worked in diplomacy in the United States, mainly with minority groups and migrant communities, and later pursued a Master’s in Government and Security. She enrolled in KTH M.S. Urbanism Studies to delve back into design, as a means to address the challenges faced by our contemporary cities.

Native of Montpellier, France, Ambre moved to Maputo in Mozambique at the age of nine. She studied Architecture and Physical Planning at the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, and later worked in Mozambique as an architect and planner for five years. She enrolled at KTH to pursue a M.S. in Urbanism Studies to gain further experience within the Nordic context, and identify urbanism practices that could contribute to social sustainability.
"It’s so cold, when is the summer coming?"
Nubia Manna asked, when she first came to Sweden.
"It’s already summer."

1. Framing the Narrative
INTRODUCTION

The present research brings a morphological and ethnographic analysis of three suburban centrums in the Stockholm Municipality. Bridging theories of power dynamics in space, and collective identity, this study combines two parallel levels of analysis to understand how space is produced and constructed through processes defined by human experience, behavior, and identity.

The first section offers insight on the structural factors that produced these neighborhoods and their centrum, looking into the socio-political and economic context that bred the design of these new urban spaces. Parallel to this historic background, the morphology, functionality, and spatial organization is examined. The second section seeks to study how public life operates within these existing spaces. It aims at understanding the sociological layers that are superimposed to the material structure, redefining spatial relations, and reconstructing space through human experience. This observative and ethnographic level of analysis combines multiple tools of research to observe, record, and categorize the use of space, and map public life in the centrum.

Combining these two sections, this research emphasizes the significant role that human experience plays in the social construction of space. It acknowledges that space is redefined by its inhabitants, becoming an expression of collective identity. In this research, space is limited to three specific open air public spaces that were envisioned and planned as the center of neighborhood life in suburban Stockholm.

“space is redefined by its inhabitants”
The distinct duality between center and periphery has become a characteristic challenge in numerous European cities. Far from echoing the suburban realities that have been critically examined in the U.S. context, the dynamic observed across the European continent is rather the consequence of a combination of factors that have accompanied major demographic transformations. As explored by Jennifer Mack in the Swedish context, the suburban developments that emerged during the post-war period have become the new ground for migrant communities.

The city center remains largely unchanged, new urban configurations emphasize the ways in which the periphery is redefined by its inhabitants. As we made our way into the city of Stockholm, the duality between the inner city and the periphery emerged as a characteristic element of the Swedish capital. This thesis intends to capture the nature of public life at the periphery. The suburban areas studied are enclaves of immigrant communities, proposing a crucial case study to understand how these centers have been transformed by its inhabitants also through time. Most importantly, time could have expanded our ability to create stronger bonds with the people that inhabit these spaces.

Acknowledging Our Biases & Limitations

The work presented in this written format is the final result of a transformative journey through Stockholm. Starting from a very different angle, this research is significantly driven by our observations and experiences as foreigners in this city. Capturing the different socio-cultural realities that constitute the city of Stockholm was a primary focus. As foreigners in Sweden, we fully acknowledge this research cannot fully grasp a national and cultural dimension that could offer a different reading of our behavioral and subjective analysis. Our inability to understand the local language not only limited the body of literature that we could incorporate into our work, but also our capacity to extensively communicate with the people that inhabit these spaces.

As with every capstone project, the considerable time limitations inevitably narrow the scope of this work. With greater time, this research could have evolved into a more comprehensive analysis of space, incorporating the indoor public spaces which are heavily used in these neighbourhood centers, particularly during the cold months. The morphological and structural section of this study would have included the transformations that have occurred since the last decades of the twentieth century, highlighting how these centers have been transformed by its inhabitants also through time. Most importantly, time could have expanded our ability to create stronger bonds with the people that inhabit these spaces. A considerable amount of time is necessary to be accepted by a community, and truly understand how people perceive and domesticate the space they inhabit. These centers have been consistently stigmatized by the media, and scrutinized for academic and governmental purposes. As a consequence, there is a negative sentiment towards researchers in these areas where inhabitants have grown accustomed to the outsider’s biases.

Motivation

“In suburbs across the [European] continent, the high-rise husks of the bright modernist past –monuments to a society of the future that never materialized – have become home to Europe’s most recent arrivals: immigrants, who are increasingly ontologically linked not only to their geographies (on the peripheries of major cities) but to the complicated, controversial discourses of architecture and planning that created them.” (Mack, 2017)
The body of literature that contributes to the theory of spatialization remains heavily conceptual and is difficult to apply to empirical research. From an ethnographic perspective, we sought to identify a field that would allow us to acknowledge both the processes that produce space and the daily life that inhabits space, which in turn constructs social space. As noted by Lefebvre, “space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations” (Lefebvre 1991: cited by Hayden 1995). An ethnographic approach to spatial analysis is crucial to understand the values and meanings in complex societies. Ethnographic research allows for an anthropological insight into the study of urban space. It bridges the localized discourse with larger political and economic processes.

The centrum, both conceptually and in practice represents the platform in which these two processes: the social production of space and the social construction of space are engaged and contested. The centrum morphology reflects a structural intention to make of these public spaces hubs of larger neighborhood areas. The multiple uses translate these built structures into actual fields where everyday life unfolds reflecting the subjectivity of space. The geographical area of this research relocates focus on a largely studied zone that has been heavily discussed by the Municipality and the Swedish media, notably after the Swedish police released a controversial report on raising security concerns in the so-called “vulnerable areas” in 2015, and later in 2017. The mapping of the security situation in different neighborhoods labeled “risk areas” Tensta, Rinkeby, and Husby in the Stockholm Municipality. As defined by the Swedish police, a “vulnerable area” is: “a geographically defined area characterized by low socioeconomic status where criminals have an impact on the local community. The impact is linked to the social context in the area rather than a wish to take power and control the community” (The Local, 2017).
The urban transformation that shaped the region of Järva has inspired a considerable amount of research. A vast amount of literature is centered around topics of segregation, housing inequality, and the aftermath of the Million House Programme. Roger Andersson’s research published in 1998 looks into the ethnic residential segregation of Sweden, highlighting how ethnic and race selective immigration has shaped ethnically partitioned cities (Andersson, A. 1998). Andersson’s combined methodology, theoretical and empirical, evidences the complexity of addressing segregation, and argues for the need to contextualize wider geographic realities. Andersson’s work acknowledges the relevance of race, gender and class in the processes that create spatial divisions. In 2003, Thomas Nesslein revisits the Swedish planning model, in a comparative assessment of the housing market in the U.S. and in Sweden during the post-war period. Nesslein’s study critically argues against rent regulations claiming the redistribution doesn’t ensure cheaper housing for those in greater need (Nesslein, 2003).
2. RELEVANT THEMES & THEORIES
"As an object of study, the building becomes a point of spatial articulation for the intersection of multiple forces of economy, society and culture. Further, the meaning of the built environment as revealed through its metaphorical connections and ritual practices constitutes an important but still incompletely explored dimension. (...) The analysis and interpretation of building decisions cannot be understood apart from social and economic institutional forces that continuously influence actors, nor can the interpretation of symbolic meaning be divorced from these forces or history."

(Lawrence & Low, 1990)
FROM SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF SPACE TO SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SPACE

The theoretical framework proposed for this research combines theories on space and power, and the spatialization of human experience, to offer an anthropological approach to the built environment. To juxtapose two layers of analysis, the focus on this research seeks to map the physical environment of the centrum - as a core element of public life in the neighborhood - and the social relations and practices that constitute the social nature of space. First, physical analysis provides insight on the structure, spatial configuration of these centrums, the practical functionality of the built environment, and their initial conception as part of the production of space.

A man we saw every day in Rinkeby, always seated in the same position

The second layer of analysis looks into the sociological dynamics that reflect the perception and intelligibility of these functional spaces. This additional level of analysis focuses on the interrelation between the built environment and human behavior. It looks into patterns that reflect inhabitants’ reading of the space, and ultimately the construction of public space by identifying and redefining function.

With this distinction in mind, we draw from Setha Low’s theoretical frame that defines the physical construction of space as the social production of space, relating to the historic, socio-economic, ideological, and technological factors that play a role in the physical planning of space. In Low’s view, the social production of space corresponds to the conscious design of space from a structural standpoint. It acknowledges the role of professionals, and governmental institutions in the conceptualization of the urban fabric (Low, 1996). In contrast, the social construction of space is understood as the phenomenological process of redefining space through social everyday life (Low, 1996). It deals with inhabitants’ experience of space, and seeks to understand the symbolism of the built environment.

“redefining space through social everyday life”
The social construction of space maps the subjective experience of space, identifying patterns of behavior, semantics, hierarchies, gendered spaces, and expressions of culture. According to Low, the social construction of space is superimposed into the production of space ultimately transforming and defining space through the social negotiation of exchanges, memories, images, and daily use. While the social production can be conceptualized as the design of a stage, the social construction of space represents the scenes and actions that unfold in the given space to adhere meaning and ultimately define space.

In both dimensions, the physical and phenomenological, Low recognizes the social component of spatial production and construction. This resonates with theoretical approaches to space that recognize the power dynamics in spatial organization. From Michel Foucault’s analysis of social control through space (1975), and Paul Rabinow subsequent analysis of political domination through form in French colonies (1982), the understanding on how architecture contributes to the maintenance of power from the state to the individual level has been continuously examined since the second half of the 20th Century. Further examined by David Harvey and Manuel Castells, the role of the state in the configuration of space reveals the control of dominant classes and planning elites, over the people through what Low calls the social production of space.

Proposing more subtle forms of power through everyday life, Lefebvre develops the discussion into the individual experience of space, recognizing the role of users in this spatial power dynamics. As quoted by Sharp, “different social groups endow space […] with amalgams of different meanings, uses and values. Such differences can give rise to various tensions and conflicts within society over the uses of space for individual and social purposes, and over the domination of space by the state and other forms of dominating social (and class) power.” (Sharp et al, 2000, 25-26). Individuals hold agency through the sole ability to use space, influencing behavior, experience, and understanding. Lefebvre vastly contributes to the understanding of space domination and resistance, defining the reflexive relation between domination and resistance. The power held by the users of space is not only evident in social movements as explored Martínez López in his research on collective urban movements (Martínez López, 2019), but also by the individual actor through its everyday usage. As theorized by Michel de Certeau in 1984, the lived experience of an individual or smaller group represents a resistance to these forms of control defined by the former academic works. In Certeau’s view, people produce culture and society through daily processes of behavior which are negotiated through the appropriation of space (1984). These practices, what Certeau calls “tactics”, can be identified in the everyday life of the urban scene. Walking, naming, narrating and remembering the city are processes in which Certeau recognizes the lived experience reassesses the discipline of urban planning. In other words, the individual creates and represents public space rather than being subjected to it. The process of legitimization of function through usage, and the gathering to form a collective are evident forms of power held by the users of space.

As Hannah Arendt writes, “human power corresponds to the condition of plurality to begin with” (Arendt, 1958). With this idea in mind, this framework brings together theories that spatialize culture and identity. Resonating with Certeau, Bourdieu’s spatialization of human behavior sees the correlation of socio-spatial order into bodily experience and practice (Bourdieu, 1970). This distinction between the subject and the object (or materiality of the environment) defines for Bourdieu agency versus structure. Similarly to Certeau, Bourdieu defines habitus as a system of perceptions, thoughts, dispositions, and behavior that reproduces the existing structures at a subjective scale. In this research, Bourdieu’s conceptualization of the subjective experience of being and using space highlights the reciprocal nature in the relation between the embodiment of corporal habits, and space. Habitus represents the empirical reading of people’s presence in space, reclaiming the material and symbolic meaning of space and woven by its user.
In Bourdieu’s paradigm, culture is embedded and reproduced by the interaction between field and habitus, and expressed in the participation of daily practices. Public life reflects, then, the dialogue between habitus and the field. According to Bourdieu, the dispositions that correspond to habitus encompass actions that occur beyond conscious control or awareness. In contrast with Certeau’s “tactics’ there is an element of adopted behavior that is part of the individual’s subconscious, and is shaped through the combination of experience and learned practices. There is an element of spontaneity in habitus, that reveals its connection to concepts of identity. In Bourdieu’s words, “Habitus reveals itself... only in reference to a definite situation. It is only in relation to certain structures that habitus produces given discourses or practices.” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.135). Practice is therefore “the product of habitus that is itself the product of the embodiment of the immanent regularities and tendencies of the world”.

Bourdieu makes a distinction between the source of power, or economic capital, and the nature of power as the ability to establish networks, or social capital. The latter defines power as the ability to find connections, and establish a sense of belonging. It recognizes the power in holding the rules of inclusion or exclusion in a certain space (network power that is also examined by Castells). In this sense, the inhabitants of a specific public space express the power to accept or reject other users of the space.

In this regard, Doreen Massey’s framework leads the way to connect discourse of power with identity. In her words, space is not “a container or a surface but rather the product of practices, relations, connections and disconnections” (Massey, 2006). In Massey’s view, space enables the multiplicity of simultaneous experiences and trajectories that reflect the distinctiveness of each individual. Her emphasis in understanding space as a process, that is in continuous production in both a physical and social sense, frames the connection between space construction and identity construction as two fluid concepts that interplay with one another. A leading figure in Marxism and feminism theories, Massey highlights the importance of unraveling the dichotomies of space, notably in terms of gender, and as related to center-periphery. These principles when studying space highlight the relevance of addressing identity.
Lefebvre argues that space is political and strategic, participation in public space is constrained by “gendered and racialized identities” (Ruddick, 1996, p. 133). On the other hand, socio-cultural identities and ethnic group membership is defined at large by two major criteria: language and the practice of a specific religion. According to Anderson and Barth, these two components take primacy in ethnic group identity for they represent the ability to communicate and a system of derived values (Anderson, 1983). As Barth suggests, these group identities are not static and can be permeated and changed through other factors, emphasizing the distinction between ethnicity and culture (Barth, 1969).

The experience of the built environment is internalized differently by each individual. Part of this subjective experience is subconscious, and conditioned by numerous factors that take into account the perceived, and felt identity. The understanding of the self is largely constructed by the surrounding society, and thus the ethnic identity of individuals mirrors the social self-referencing. However, different people have similar sources of identification as mentioned above in reference to Anderson, the use of language and practices or rites are crucial anchors of identification that provide the foundation for collective identity (Anderson, 1983).

Holst examines different models to approach identity construction, to offer a multilayered understanding of ethnicization defined as a process in constant negotiation. In this perspective, rational choice theory is applied while also acknowledging the embedded struggles for recognition within society. In Klaus Eder’s sociological approach, he claims that “leaders often get an intuitive sense of the value of collective identity constructions and can have steering effect on identity construction, but the process is structured by macro-factors and micro-situations in which actors communicate their identities” (Eder, 2002: cited by Holst). This distinction between macro-factors and micro-situations highlights the process of collective identity is shaped by larger political and economic forces, but also engrained in everyday life. This theoretical conceptualization of collective identity bridges the structural forces that create spatial organization, and the individual or group behavior that creates subtle forms of identification, and a sense of belonging. In Holst’s terms, the construction of certain societal sub-systems in which referencing to ethnicity has become unavoidable, is a manifestation of ethnicization (Holst, 2015).

This concept comprises the interrelation between top-down and bottom-up processes of construction of collective identity based on ethnic-membership. In the case of the suburban areas studied, whether in terms of statistical demographic reports, or in the prevalent narratives that describe these neighborhoods in the public discourse, ethnicity has become a characteristic element.

Frederick Holst examines the politics of ethnicity, highlighting the ambiguity of the concept of ethnicity when contrasted with race and culture, and looks into the fundamental role of ethnicity in identity construction.

“the understanding of the self is largely constructed by the surrounding society”
3. METHODOLOGY

There people like to go, they get served even if they have no money to pay.
- Mohammad
WEAVING METHODS & TOOLS

Studying the centrum of these neighborhoods gains importance from an ethnographic perspective. In this regard, prevalent methodologies consistently exclude the individual from its co-producing role in constructing space.

The methodology derived from these combined theories of social production and construction of space, and collective identity weaves together the impact of macro and micro-processes of the everyday life of these areas’ inhabitants. In a human dimension, the spatialization of culture emphasizes people have agency in the redefinition of space, and in turn their daily realities are engaged in the constant edification of identity.

These theories of spatialization provide a basis for this research to look into the link between experience, practice, and structure. The first level of analysis follows the historical production of the spaces and is brought forward to explain the sociopolitical ideologies and economic context that shaped these suburbs. This initial categorization frames the historical, sociopolitical, economic, and structural forces that generated the social production of space in the Northwestern region of the Stockholm Municipality. Following Elder’s perspective, the first section of the research delves into the macro factors that influenced the spatial organization of Tensta, Rinkeby and Husby highlighting the ideological concerns that shaped the development of these suburban areas. With careful consideration for the various elements that influenced the ethnicization of such areas, a statistical overview highlights the importance of addressing ethnicity when studying the social construction of space in these specific areas.
The methodology used follows the tools of analysis from contemporary public life studies merging Jan Gehl and Birgitte Svarre’s “How to Study Public Life” (2013) and Gordon Cullen’s “The Concise Townscape” (1995), into a comprehensive booklet. The centrums of Tensta, Husby and Rinkeby were subdivided into three smaller spaces to allow for deeper observations, and to grasp the entirety of the experience of these large public spaces. Each smaller area was then analyzed during different days, and times, following four distinct levels of analysis, as shown in the diagram of the previous page.

**The first section** gathers a purely physical analysis of the studied public spaces, categorizing commercial activities, facade ratings, colours, textures, and sketches to represent the serial vision and contents conceptualized by Cullen (1995). In this section, the centrums are studied from a structural point of view. As a first layer of information, these spaces are given a morphological and functional context.

**The second section** draws primarily from Jan Gehl and Brigitte Svarre’s (2013) tools for public life studies to offer a behavioral analysis of these spaces. In this section, empirical observations serve to map movements, activities, and behavior, focusing on the subject rather than the object. It records the who and the what that inhabits these spaces. Observations over the course of different days and times note distinct behaviors in these three locations, and also identify patterns of behavior and usage that suggest symbolic meaning of certain spaces. Taking into account the influence of other factors that create inaccuracy in sociological analysis, such as weather and eventualities, this field research was conducted over the course of one month, with multiple visits at different times during the week and weekend. This sociological approach is superimposed to the structural frame to evidence the public nature of these neighborhood centers.

**The third section** brings forth the researcher’s subjective experience and personal perceptions, through observed interactions, perceptions and informal notes, into the fieldwork analysis. Incorporating the researcher's subjective understanding of the spatial dynamics acknowledges the symbolic meaning as a perceptive dimension that escapes the traditional tools of public life analysis. This idiosyncratic level is included as a collection of journal entries, dated and timed, to narrate personal accounts on the studied spaces. These short narratives are included to illustrate the experience of being present in these public spaces to observe, and be observed in turn.

Finally, **the fourth section** narrates interactions with inhabitants of the space. It offers the most subjective level of analysis, giving a voice to the inhabitants of the space and fulfilling this research’s motivation to relate identity with the social construction of space. Sketches, letters, drawings, photos, and short conversations are informally compiled into this last section.

With this final section the empirical analysis ties back to the theoretical framework on identity. It allows the reader to understand space through the individuals that read it, utilize it, inhabit it, and give meaning to it. The questions asked during the interviews were developed in the aftermath of field observations, combining the found patterns of activities and behavior with the theories mentioned above.

This final part of the research does not intend to reduce understandings of collective identity to the social construction of space, but rather hopes to combine both concepts in a single narrative. Collective identity and the construction of space are both defined as moving processes that are cyclically affected by each other. The attempt to bring forward concepts of identity is central to understanding space from the subjective experience of daily life in the public realm.

“collective identity and the construction of space are both defined as moving processes that are cyclically affected by each other”

**Critique of Public Life Study Tools**

Our methodology is also a critique to Jan Gehl, Birgitte Svarre and Gordon Cullen’s approach which remains disconnected from areas that are characterized by diverse demographics. Their priorities in understanding the use of public space remained too broad for our research as the evident character of public life in these spaces was neglected.
Emotional Map | Rinkeby

Serial Vision | Rinkeby

Serial Vision | Tensta

Conversations & Interactions

Serial Vision | Tensta
4. PRODUCTION OF SPACE

Rinkeby is home.
It is difficult, but it is home.
People here are like family, I know everybody who comes here.
- Nejo
The post-war period in Europe has been recognized as a turning point that dramatically increased the importance of urban planning. Increased demands for housing, damages during the war, the modernist movement, and socialist political ideologies shaped new spatial configurations that would redefine many contemporary cities. In the case of Sweden, Stockholm was heavily transformed during the second half of the twentieth Century. As reflected by Louise Nyström (2006), most of the work relating to the planning of Stockholm during the post-war period is concerned with meeting housing demands. At the core of planning decisions during this time, the need to expand Stockholm beyond the pre-existing limits motivated the design of new neighborhoods that could incorporate the ideals for effective, good quality living conditions.

On the other hand, the rise to power of the Social Democrats led to crucial legislative changes that proposed land policies that would grant the planning monopoly to the municipality. The 1947 Building Act allowed the municipality to decide on land development. Regulating loan interest rates, housing subsidies, and construction companies; the municipality became the central organism in the urbanization process. Where and what to build, and at what cost was all determined by the local governments. This power shift allowed for large-scale projects to be financed and implemented by the state, fueled by Sweden’s economic and population growth in the mid 20th Century. As examined by Gösta Blücher, practically all urban development in Sweden “has been governed by political decisions” (Blücher, 2013). Directly evidencing Harvey and Castells theory on power in the production of space, the legislative and executive power that the State and the Municipality have held in the planning and development of Stockholm during the postwar period is clearly described in the Building Act of 1947 and all consecutive amendments and bills that were passed during the following decades.
The 1947 Building Act also introduced concepts such as the generalplan which was conceived to design towns and settlements. Among the most important developments, the housing construction programs became instrumental policies to envision community planning in the 1960s. In that regard, the Swedish government introduced Bill No.100 of 1967 to set the basic requirements for housing. In it, the government stipulated the need to provide with “sound, spacious, well-planned, and adequately equipped quality housing at a reasonable cost.” (quoted by Blücher, 2013). In 1962, another reform sought to narrow even further the number of municipalities over the next decades, with the concept of communal blocks, or kommunblock. The main interest was to meet the demands of the public, and provide services “at a high standard, and at the lowest cost” (Anton, 1975).

During the later decades of the 1980s, new additions to the existing legislation diverted power from the state to the municipality (the Building Act of 1987), and resulted in more comprehensive development plans. The growth of housing production exponentially increased during the first three decades of the Social Democrats’ ruling, from the 1930s to the 1960s. With the Stockholm Exhibition in 1930 as its starting point, this development reached the highest housing production per capita in the world by 1974 (Grundström and Molina, 2016). From then on, the regulated Folkhem housing model moved towards de-regularization due to a housing surplus.

On the other hand, the ideals of neighborhood planning that characterized the first decades of the mid-twentieth century, following Lewis Mumford’s theory of creating social and cultural institutions at the center of these neighborhoods (such as the planning of Årsta, with a public library, a theater, a cinema, artists’ studios, and a music hall); were replaced by retail spaces, offering shops, cafes, and restaurants, as suggested by the Swedish Merchants Association (Nyström and Lundström, 2006). When the large-scale development plans of the Million Homes Programme took off in the 1960s, the small and intimate spaces initially given priority to were replaced by the priority of building quantity.

“The small and intimate spaces (...) were replaced by the priority of building quantity”

One of these projects was the development of Rinkeby, between 1969 and 1972, in a former military training ground, the Järva field. Predominantly rental units, around 25,000 dwellings were built in multi-family housing buildings. As part of the comprehensive development plans for the new towns, two underground lines were built to connect the northwestern region of the Stockholm Municipality to the city center.

The topography of Stockholm, and the planning ideals for sustainable urban development scattered these new neighborhood centers in between wedges of open and green space. According to the generalplan for the area of Järva at large (which comprised Akalla, Husby, Tensta, Hjulsta, and Kista), Kista center was envisioned to become the main center for the whole area (Nyström and Lundström, 2006). The other centrums, much smaller in both physical space and commercial activity, were not intended to attract people from the surrounding areas. They combined perceptions of the traditional city in terms of intensity and concentration or spatial organization, and the ideal aspects of suburban life in terms of greenery, spacious configurations, and lack of noise or hectic aspects of inner city life. Comprised of three “belts”, the physical structure of Rinkeby was produced to have a neighborhood central square, surrounded by offices and schools, and then housing compounds.

The immigration policies of the late decades of the twentieth century created the pre-conditions for these large developments to become quickly inhabited by the newcomers. During the 1970s, most of the immigrants living in Rinkeby were from Finnish and Turkish background. With new legislation that granted asylum to numerous refugees coming from the Middle East and North Africa, the ethnic population of Rinkeby quickly changed. The Stockholm Municipality statistical database highlights the diverse ethnic background in these areas, as well as the socio-economic characteristics that have made of these neighborhoods areas of concern for the government, with an income average far below the Stockholm average, and unemployment rates far above.
Inaugurated in 1971, Rinkeby Torg was open to the public before the underground line was finished four years later. Enclosed by two-storey buildings, with retail facilities in the ground floor facing the square, which has a central fountain and a street market. With five pedestrian alleys conducting to the central square, the plaza saw some commercial changes with the transformation of the department store into a grocery store, with smaller shops on the ground floor. In the 1990s, it was transformed again with a shopping mall, the Rinkeby Market, and the facade was opened to invite pedestrians into the enclosed public space.

Today the old department store has a Lidl downstairs, with numerous shops and a central cafe in the atrium, on the upper level. The Folkets Hus building outside of the Central Square was built in 1986, intended to become a cultural hub for the neighborhood, with a public library, a large meeting hall, a restaurant and with premises for other types of entertainment. It also became a meeting space for non-profit organizations. In 1999, another building, the Youth building (ungdomens hus) was built west of the Folkets Hus, designed for sports, dance, and a girls’ room for young teenagers to have a place to play.

The transformations of the Rinkeby square reflect the needs of its local population, which in turn has changed since the 1970s. Instead of the mainstream line of products present in the other neighborhoods and the inner city, the Järva region is characterized by a certain type of commercial activity, and products from a foreign background.
Along with Rinkeby, Tensta was established in the early 1960s when the Järva region was purchased by the state as part of the urban development project initiative called the Million House program. In 1965, the general plan was adopted for what became Tensta and Rinkeby. The Tensta Centrum was inaugurated in 1970, and in 1975 the subway station was put into service.

Tensta was envisioned to become an example for a new urban configuration inherited from modernist ideals. The high-rise buildings were envisioned to allow higher density, creating a greater number of dwellings.

Initially, roads were submerged and bridges connected different residential areas for the pedestrians. A central street functions as a backbone for the district, and smaller streets cut through with residential buildings. Tensta favoured higher density, leaving little land unbuilt.

Tensta Centrum initially was shaped by three independent one-storey commercial buildings, warehouses, and loading areas, with entrances from Taxingeplan and Tenstaplan. The elongated path in the center of the neighborhood had a characteristic texture in its concrete surface, a larger fountain, and a sculpture by Raimo Utirainen.

From the initial wave of inhabitants, Tensta received criticism for its lack of green areas, and poor communication with the city center. It quickly became a symbol of the modernist Million House program, and of the housing shortage of the 1960s.

Initially, local families had moved into the area, with children. However, during the following decades from the 80s and 90s, an increased number of people coming from foreign background moved into the area.
Husby is part of the Kista district, along with Kista and Akalla. The area was a green field and formed the northern part of the Järva field, which was planned in the beginning of the 1970s, on the second phase of the Järva field development plan. Relatively larger than Tensta and Rinkeby, Husby was completed in 1975, at the end of the Million Project (Andersson et al, 2003).

The three neighbourhoods, Husby, Kista and Akalla, are connected by a central pedestrian pathway, along which all the major services are concentrated, such as commercial activities, health centres, schools, libraries, churches and metro stations.

Despite being a continuous feature, the character of this pathway changes along the neighbourhoods. In Akalla it is a wide pedestrian street, and in Husby it is a narrow and fragmented passage, that connects several small squares, where the commercial and cultural activities are located.

In terms of building morphology, Husby is mostly formed by right-angled units, with five-storey buildings arranged around courtyards. The central part of Husby is denser, with eight-storey buildings. While the majority of the units are owned by the municipality, a small percentage of them is part of a cooperative housing (15%), and some are rentals. During the 1990s, Husby saw a large expansion of its population, and with it came a demographic shift. In 1990, around half of Husby’s population was of Swedish background, but by 2000 that percentage had dropped to merely twenty-three percent (Bråmå, 2006).

Due to its proximity to Kista’s science park, Husby’s location is considered more favourable, when compared to Rinkeby and Tensta. However, this could also be negative, as funding might be harder to obtain.
In Rinkeby, one needs courage. Courage to speak up, to say things. It’s so beautiful when someone speaks up. Courage. And people listen, they listen. That’s why it’s important to gather the courage to speak.
The following analysis presents an assessment of the intensity, diversity and location of commercial activities in each of the Centrums, as well as the rating of the quality of its façades partially based on the criteria by Brigitte Svarre and Jan Gehl in “How To Study Public Life” (2013).

**Rinkeby**

Rinkeby has a thriving commercial activity, mainly located around the central square, stronger than the one inside the shopping mall. Open and predominantly active façades dominate the square, with most commerces, and the Islamic Culture Center, having their entrances directly on it. Others, such as the Lidl supermarket, are inside the shopping centre (Gallerian). The main commercial activities are composed by supermarkets, convenience stores and restaurants or cafés, which ensures a continuous and high flow of public activity.
Tensta, meanwhile, has its commercial activity clustered inside the enclosed Centrum, which is represented here, even though it is an interior space. The main commercial activities related to the outdoors public space are both the supermarket, which attracts a high number of people, and the fruit market. Some commerces are located along the street, in the otherwise inactive façades of the Centrum’s area. Another important space is Livstycket, a knowledge and design centre targeted at immigrant women, that occupies a whole block but does not interact with the street.
Husby does not have much commercial activity, which may be explained by the fact that it is at a walking distance to Kista’s commercial centre (Kista Gallerian). The commercial activity in Husby is spread out among the different public space units that make up the Centrum’s area, generating many inactive and dull façades along the way. The main activity centers are the supermarket and small convenience stores, mostly located near the northern metro exit, as well as the Folket Hus and the library.
URBAN MORPHOLOGY

The following pages present a spatial and perceptual analysis performed on each of the chosen Centrums, mainly based on the concepts and methods devised by Gordon Cullen in “The Concise Townscape” (1995), which seeks an understanding of the urban space as one which can be read and which generates physical and emotional reactions in the user and observer. Therefore, the spaces’ elements and characteristics can be analyzed individually and as part of a whole in order to understand this impact.

In terms of the morphology, these three centrums have very distinct spatial configurations. Rinkeby is a traditional square in terms of its enclosed structure that is framed by commercial activity, while Tensta is characterized by its main artery that works as a longitudinal pedestrian street and an enclosed commercial center that is an annex of the open centrum. Husby’s structure is more fragmented, with smaller squares that are connected through narrow passages that do not follow a straight axis.
PHYSICAL FEATURES
**RINKEBY**

Rinkeby Torg is an enclosed square that successfully achieves a human scale. It invites people to meet, gather, and provides a space for numerous activities. It has a characteristic ability to become a space to see, and to be seen. The surrounding furniture elements that frame the square, the distinct elements that create the spatial configuration of the space and the ability to grasp the full size of the it, are all central components that make of Rinkeby a unique expression of public life.

There are important physical elements that allow for smaller enclaves to occur throughout the square, such as the narrow or low-ceiling entrance corridors, the awnings that run along some of the square’s façades and the presence of public and commercial seating, such as the one at Nejo’s Café. These human islands reconstruct space adhering meaning through usage and habits. At the same time, a clear flooring texture creates a pattern that gives visual unity and measurability to the space, through uniformly distanced lines.
PHYSICAL FEATURES

TENSTA
**Physical Analysis**

**Contrasting façades & serial vision**
The contrast between the uniformity of the housing and the diversity of the centrum’s façades reinforces the separation of speeds and activities along the two strips of the space. Vegetation helps to visually and spatially separate the zones.

**Zoned Floor**
A simple, plain and functional square flooring is used in the most active area, sided by a textured floor that gives character to the area.

**A space of three zones and two strips**
Flooring, furniture, greenery and buildings contribute to the clear differentiation a central ‘square’ (b) as well as two less active areas (a). Lingering and circulation strips are also evident in the longitudinal axis.

**Market**
The market in the centre of the space creates a predisposition for areas of more or less activity, depending on its open façades.

**Fountain**
The fountain contributes to the perceptual separation between the area around the metro entrance and the square in front of the Centrum. It lacks a seating ledge.

**Tensta**
Tensta is a unitary space that could be read as subdivided into three areas. It is characterized by its longitudinal configuration which was conceived to work as a central commercial artery for the neighborhood. The various elements of Tensta work together to reinforce these three areas, through the textures of the flooring, the objects in the space (such as the fountain and the market), and the placement of trees and urban furniture.

The four-storey residential buildings that frame the northern part of Tensta maintain a relatively uniform level of legibility while crossing through the space. A linear perspective reinforces the axis of movement in the neighborhood, which is also enriched by singular elements that foster public life in the open space.

Even though the elements that constitute the spatial organization are similar to those in Husby or Rinkeby, the framing of Tensta is focused on a constant flux of movement. Rather than containing activity as Rinkeby Torg, in Tensta, smaller spaces of gathering appear at the corners of residential buildings, in the entrance of the garage, next to the market, or in front of the Mosque. There is a gradient of spatial elements that creates possibilities for different activities to unfold.
PHYSICAL FEATURES

HUSBY
PHYSICAL ANALYSIS

Different Floorings
Flooring texture and materials don’t give a unifying image to the whole area. These work at smaller scales, helping to create a place around the fountain or to define the walkway.

Scale
Dramatic variations in scale between the commercial platforms and the residential buildings create contrast along the path. This configuration doesn’t successfully engage with the squares, and becomes repetitive.

Lack of continuity
The fragmented sequence of spaces (square > narrow walkway > square, etc.) lacks anticipation and visual connection. The lack of perceived unity between the three squares creates long or narrow empty intermediate spaces.

Objects in space
Buildings and objects placed in the middle of open spaces create differences in the intensity of use and in the available space in the areas around them.

Furniture that creates enclaves
Benches arranged around the fountain create a place of refuge in the middle of an open space.

HUSBY

Even more elongated than Tensta, Husby is characterized by its fragmentation in terms of its physical attributes and spatial conditions. There is something disjointed about the sequence of small squares in Husby, that are linked by passages of low activity influx. In size, these open spaces are very apprehensible, yet their interrelation and distribution throughout the area counters the positive qualities of public life.

Legibility is impaired by the lack of open facades, continuity, texture, or transparency. Simultaneously, the lack of commercial strength throughout the area doesn’t invite to an increased use of this expanded public center.

The Market, located in the central square, is positioned backwards in relation to the fountain and the public seating, creating a backside to the main space that has the traditional qualities of an inviting square.

There is also a lack of cohesion between the different elements: spatial composition, scale, residential buildings, unifying axis, preventing the creation of a single narrative for this space.
We want places that are open at night where we can just be, stay.

6. TYING BACK TO THEORY & REFLECTIONS
TYING BACK TO THEORY

The socio-political context that led to the development of these suburban centers in the Järva field cannot be dissociated from the production of space as understood by Setha Low. The postwar period in Sweden brought relative prosperity in comparison with other European capitals, and the production of new centers became possible. The modernist ideology that characterized the second half of the 20th century was tested in these new urban landscapes that developed around the city center. Many conditions of the time, notably housing shortages in the city, and a newfound importance to the concept of planning, produced the suburban context explored by this research. Today, the focus on these areas remains relevant for its contrasting socio-economic realities that divide center and periphery. Defined as the social production of space, Setha Low’s argument is recaptured in this study through the historical analysis provided in the first section of this research.

Setha Low’s social construction of space, on the other hand, defined by the phenomenological experience of space, was supported by our observations. On one hand, the distinct behavior between different age groups, and gender are expressions of hierarchy in space. The embodiment of corporal dispositions which Bourdieu recognizes as an essential expression of space in experience and practice allowed us to identity patterns of behavior in space. Ultimately, the use of these suburban centrums has redefined these spaces which have drifted from their initial conception during the late 1970s.

The social construction of space is in constant negotiation, through daily exchanges and represents layers of meaning that are not evident to newcomers of the space. This subjective reading of space serves to understand how public space supports the life of these centrums. The distinct morphology of Tensta, Husby, and Rinkeby allowed us to note important differences in the way people behave, and their attachment to place. The other socio-cultural elements that we identified, such as the characteristic market in these neighborhoods, or the significance of the Mosque reinforce theories of identity, belonging, and collectivity in these centrums.
FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

How does the community in these neighborhoods use and redefine their centers? How are practices maintained, and patterns of behavior reinforced in public space? These observations in the Centrums of three neighborhoods suggests residents have appropriated space as an expression of their collective identity. These spaces are gendered, intimate, and contested by different groups. Some spaces have been claimed by specific ethnic groups (such as Nejo’s Cafe where Somalians hang out), or the bench where the Turkish men sit, or the corner where younger men smoke. The difficult socio-economic realities that have marginalized these migrant groups lie beneath the recurrent life in the open space. Unemployment allows these groups to gather at coffee shops, or street corners. The Nejo’s Cafe where we spent long hours is a place of gathering. People rarely eat or drink there, and during Ramadan men spend long hours reading or chatting.

The most inhabited public space was the centrum in Rinkeby, which has also been the most criticized and stigmatized neighborhood in the Swedish media. Despite the heterogeneous character of these neighborhoods in terms of ethnicity, culture, religion, education, or lifestyle, their perception as non-Swedish or “migrant” has a more significant impact in the way they relate to one another, and to their neighborhood. As demonstrated during the interviews, residents expressed a strong sense of commitment towards other people in the neighborhood. Despite differences in background, there is a sense of attachment to the neighborhood, shared concerns, and difficulties.

As outsiders, we felt noticed in these centers, particularly in Rinkeby, where residents seemed more aware of being surveilled by authorities. We were asked what we were doing while sitting in the square, which denotes public space in this neighborhood has a strong intimate character. In a way, it has become a more private space where outsiders rarely come, and residents grow accustomed to each other.

In reference to the literature cited in this work, Rinkeby emerges as an expression of power from the bottom-up. There is a sense of control that is maintained by the inhabitants of the space. Its scale and spatial configuration allow the usual inhabitants to sit and observe what happens at the square from any corner. The spatial configuration of Husby loses this ability that Rinkeby expresses to empower public life through a common place. There is no actual square in Husby that functions as such, it is rather a combination of smaller independent spaces that lack an effective connection to encourage public life. In Tensta, there is a greater sense of freedom for the outsider not to be seen. The norms of inclusion and exclusion are less evident than in Rinkeby, it is a space that is more public in that sense. The open space is unified but its scale is too large to create an intimate space for gathering. The market plays a crucial role in activating the space, and reducing its scale.
The facade study as proposed by Gehl and Svarre (2013) highlights the better qualities of Rinkeby as a square. In contrast with Husby, which has a fragmented facade sequence which doesn’t incentivise public life at the center. The facade is rarely transparent, creating a concrete limit with the open space at the center. There is a repetitive pattern that denotes the lesser quality for the facade, the lack of vibrant volumes, recreates bleak public life, in which people passing by never turn their heads towards the structures that frame the space. In Rinkeby, the ability to grasp the entirety of the square, and the vibrant character of many facades, with transparency, hybrid spaces, and terraces, encourage life at the center. While Rinkeby offers an enclosed space where visibility is key, Husby is a more fragmented space, when one cannot grasp the whole space at once.
Even though we didn't come to these spaces expecting to see a very obvious distinction of how spaces are gendered, we observed a very clear distinction in gender in various aspects.

In terms of people counting, there was always (regardless of day and time) more men in the public space than women. The patterns of movement were different between the two genders, women usually adopting routes in close proximity to the facades, corners, or limits of the open space. In contrast, men tend to take the open space at the center, denoting a higher degree of comfort in the public realm. In addition, men tend to remain in the open space, in a blasé attitude, either sitting or standing, often smoking or drinking coffee. Women rarely linger in the open space, they are mostly engaging in an activity, walking towards the market, buying groceries or clothing, commuting, or taking care of their children.

Tying back to the theory presented in this research, this suggests that the legibility of the physical structure is interpreted through a gendered lens. In Bourdieu's terms, habitus is adopted behavior that is part of an individual's subconscious and is shaped through the combination of experience and learned practices.

As observed during the field work, there is an element of repetition in the way the spaces are used, the same groups of men gather in the same places. These corporal expressions in the public space are inevitably linked to gender. Patterns in behavior are fundamentally different among men and women.

These centrums are important meeting places for men. In front of the coffee shop, the mosque, in the exit of the metro, or by the convenience store. By night, the difference between genders becomes more evident as almost only men inhabit these spaces. In the way men gather and behave, there are observed patterns that denote distinct habits among different migrant groups and age groups. Physical conditions in the space are inseparable from these smaller enclaves of men, the corridor in Tensta, the corner of the square in Rinkeby, and the coffee shops have been redefined by these dynamics, adhering meaning to these spatial hubs. This implies that the users of the space negotiate the rules of engagement and norms of behavior which are strongly related to gender. The observations conducted emphasize the hierarchy of gender in space.
AGE

Teenagers and young adults stay in specific areas, that offer some kind of refuge. In Rinkeby, this happens in the back street or in front of the restaurant, in Tensta, in front of the Turkish café, and in Husby in the narrow street in the back of the secondary metro exit. There is a significant hierarchy in terms of age, as with gender. Echoing the gendered habitus, age adds another layer of bodily experience that is learned through the pattern of practice. Beyond the domination of space by men, there is a higher hierarchy in terms of age.

Men in the public space are predominantly in their fifties or sixties, and inhabit the same spaces on a daily basis, adding to specific areas an added meaning. In terms of behavior, this demographic group takes greater ownership of the space by remaining there longer, and usually sitting and people-watching.

Younger men are instead standing in peripheral areas, lingering in the open space less time than the former group. As noted during our interviews, there is a sense of respect that the younger population feels towards the elderly men. This is particularly true for the Muslim community in these areas, as there is a strong familiarity among residents.

We noted a significant increase of younger children and kids in Husby, which we did not expect initially. In Husby, despite the fragmented physical structure, the children often play alone either with a ball or cycling, suggesting parents in the neighborhood feel the area is safe, and community-oriented. The characteristic presence of the fountain in these neighborhood centers often draws children in to play with the element of water. This distinctive feature that adds character to these areas is an important object to observe when looking at behavior in the public space.

“there is a sense of respect that the younger population feels towards the elderly men”
The entrance of the shopping centre Gallerian in Rinkeby

RELIGION

The demographic background of these areas attest to the predominance of Islam, but beyond the statistical reference, the expression of religious tradition and practice is also legible in the public sphere. As theorized by Barth and Andersson, the practice of a specific religion is one of the main anchors of collective identity. These practices rather than occupying the personal private space, take shape in the public realm. Through behavior, and clothing Islam is reflected as an important collective identity in these centrums. Even more so as our field research in these neighborhoods was conducted during the month of Ramadan. We were not fully aware of whether or not the religious holiday was going to have an impact on the way public life would unfold in these areas. Yet we noticed in Rinkeby for example, people ate and drank less in the public space, the main cafe was not as crowded and people sat outside to chat but did not drink or eat. During our conversations, Ramadan often came up as an explanation for why the square was less active than usual, or why people were not eating outdoors. During our night time observations, we could witness all activity in the square in Rinkeby was related to the Mosque, and the Iftar prayer. Men would gather outside the Mosque, and gather to converse afterwards. In Husby, similarly, the entrance of the Mosque was the only meeting point in the third and less active zone of analysis. Other interviews reflected on the importance of Islam for the neighborhood life, in the way young men respect the elderly, or how women are most often out to carry out a specific activity, and do not occupy the space of the square.

People in the area have grown accustomed to recognizing the background of their neighbours. Islam plays a major role in gathering people from different countries, and across languages, in these areas. It is undoubtedly an identity marker that creates a strong sense of belonging and collective identity in these neighborhoods, despite other tensions among groups. In terms of the physical spatial organization, the placement of the Mosque in the central square of all these suburban areas acknowledges the significant role the Mosque plays as a place. It serves as a cultural center, and a meeting place, much like the Folket Hus which is in contrast an expression of Swedish culture. During our conversation with Muhammed Mohamed and other locals with Somalian background, we learned Swedish security often visits the Mosque undercover, to gather information about the activities that take place inside the religious establishment. Our interviewee seemed to make fun of this fact with his colleagues, as they all recognize Swedish security easily, and have become accustomed to this covert activity that the Swedish government carries out to monitor these areas.
The market in Husby

Socio-cultural

The diverse demographics that characterize these areas are expressed through different dimensions. On one hand, these areas are extremely heterogeneous, and are home to people from all continents. On the other hand, these areas are homogenous for their otherness in character, meaning they host a population that is predominantly from a foreign background. The non-Swedish character has helped shape a monolithic understanding of these areas as migrant neighborhoods.

Observations conducted on the field can relatively illustrate this dichotomy. As explored by Doreen Massey, space should be understood as “the product of practices, relations, connections and disconnections”. In Massey’s proposition, space is continuously changing in both the physical and social dimension, it should therefore be examined as a process that is negotiated and internalized by the inhabitants of space (Massey, 2016).

In a physical way, the transformations that occurred in physical structure of the Rinkeby square are a direct reflection of the needs of the people of these neighborhoods. The construction of the market, and the presence of informal vendors in the corridors illustrate Massey’s conceptualization of space as a process. On the other hand, there seems to be indeed a strong sense of cohabited space among people from different countries. There is a collective identity that is assumed through the experience of otherness (Holst, 2015). Our interactions with people in these spaces highlighted this observation, as the people we interviewed emphasized the family-like attitude that people adopt in these neighborhoods. There is a strong sense of community, and commitment towards other inhabitants of the space. People in these areas feel a collective responsibility for what happens in the neighborhood, and seem to care for one another. There is a significant link with the socio-cultural values that accompany the national background of most of these groups, but this behavior can also be tied back to other studies on how the experience of otherness plays into the construction of a collective. The presence of the market in these neighborhood centers is not only an expression of collective identity as recognized by Alexander Danzer’s research (2009), but also a significant component that redefines the spatial configuration and movement in the square. In the market, despite its location at the center of the open space, women gather to shop for food, talk to each other, and interact with the workers at the market (all of them, men). It is also interesting to highlight the semantic meaning of the market as a whole, and the products within it as symbols of the people that inhabit these spaces. The market is in itself a major component of public life and an expression of collective identity, as it echoes the cultural habit for most of the people that have settled in these areas.
REFLECTIONS

This research was a beautiful journey for us, and as a group it has been an essential part of this study to discuss the transformative nature of our process. Beyond the findings of the empirical analysis, we were drawn to the feeling of community and belonging in these areas. We felt a stronger sense of identification, but also understood we were always perceived as an outsider—notably in Rinkeby. In this position as researchers, we felt often uncomfortable as these neighbourhoods have become accustomed to being the subject of study. Towards the last weeks of our field work, we noticed how people grew distant towards us, and became more reluctant to converse with us. We had become more of a nuisance, and were not perceived as part of the community.

The increased interest in these centrums stems from a stigmatized understanding of the Stockholm periphery. On the other hand, ongoing projects in these areas allude to the municipality’s interest to improve life in these communities.

Tensta Konsthall, for example, is an interesting case study to analyze the importance of certain public institutions. As noted during our interviews, libraries, mosques, and other public facilities operate in numerous ways to help newcomers in their transition to life in Sweden. Although this research focuses on the outdoor public spaces defined by three centrums, the significant role other public spaces play in establishing a collective identity should not go unnoticed. In this regard, it seems crucial to ask whether these institutions are conceived for the needs of the people who inhabit these areas, and whether they are understood for the right purpose by the users of space. It seems important to bridge the production of these spaces, with their social construction.

The negotiation of how spaces are used and read can suggest certain changes are needed. In the case of the Tensta Konsthall, we noted missed opportunities in the way the space could cater to women, mothers, or younger children. Instead, it seemed like a museum for people who live outside of the Tensta neighborhood. The Folket Huset, on the other hand, represents a crucial meeting point for many different groups, young girls, teenagers, or women.
The scope of this research did not allow us to focus on other structures where public life unfolds, and has an important role in defining identity.

On the other hand, a deeper understanding on how space is influenced by, and influences behavior and identity requires a genuine effort to build relationships with the users of space. Public spaces in the city center can be more generic as they are used by a vast array of people that either live nearby, visit, or work in the area. The Stockholm suburbs studied here are primarily used by the inhabitants of these neighborhoods, and play a greater role in the way these neighborhoods can achieve a sense of community or belonging. During our ethnographic study, we established a few connections with some inhabitants. Their genuine interest in our perceptions, and their willingness to share their own narratives has not only enriched the human dimension of this work, but greatly contributed to our understanding of the paradoxical realities that characterize life in these areas.

Ultimately, Rinkeby became the most interesting center to study, and the one that had the strongest sense of collective identity. One of the most meaningful interactions resulted in a close bond. We asked Nubia Marina, a woman that has lived in Rinkeby for a decade, to share with us what Rinkeby meant to her, and what she hoped for her neighbourhood. Her care, connection, and interest in her neighbourhood was expressed through her involvement in our project. She shared with us a letter, and a conceptual model to explain her perception of the square. Through her, we drew further reflections that go beyond the spectrum and purpose of this research.

We understand the stigmatization of these areas serves as a tool to diminish the economic capital and land value of these suburbs. The importance of Tenants Association in these neighbourhoods is essential to fight and maintain rent control of the units owned by the municipality. Beyond the open spaces of the center, other public spaces are essential in the construction of identity and reinforcing a sense of belonging.

Some of these spaces, such as the library is perceived and understood as the place where people seek advice and help to settle in Sweden. As explained by Nubia Marina, the librarians hold a fundamental responsibility in responding to the needs of the newcomers inhabiting these suburbs. They have to know about banks, housing, translate letters, and help with IT or language skills. These cultural institutions are also meeting places for the youth, and important hubs to connect to the internet. This not only highlights the idea that space is redefined through the process of giving meaning by its users, but also that the state should understand the added role these institutions have in the shaping of life in these communities.
It’s been a memorable experience to share it with our colleagues who’ve become an extended family throughout these months together.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When we embarked into this project, we were unsure of what the final result would look like. It was an incredible opportunity for us to remain open-minded without a strict format. We are very grateful to the Urbanism Studies program at KTH for allowing us to take part on this journey, and welcoming creativity in research.

We hope this research can suggest different ways to look at public life studies, in which we can empower the users of space.

To the guidance and mentorship of Erik Stenberg, who encouraged us along the way, reminding us of the importance of stepping away from the researcher's role to not only take but give something on the journey. His insight and direct experience as an inhabitant of Tensta has been a source of inspiration for our work.

To Nubia Marina, the soul of Rinkeby, thank you for opening your heart and home to us. The subjective dimension of this research was immensely shaped by your genuine interest in our work. It helped us better understand life in Rinkeby, its homes, gardens, schools, libraries, and associations. Ultimately, your wish for your own community has allowed us to reflect on future projects to improve life at the periphery.

To Tigran Haas and Ryan Locke, thank you for granting us the opportunity to embark on this journey, and support our work along the way. It’s been a memorable experience to share it with our colleagues who’ve become an extended family throughout these months together.

Finally, thank you to Coisas Mais Lindas for the most meaningful friendship.
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8. ANNEXES
NOTE TO THE READER

For administrative purposes, this collaborative work has been divided into two distinct submissions. However, we sought to maintain the unity of this research in each of the two submissions to reclaim the significance of the theoretical framework proposed here with a spatial analysis that looks into the behavioral and the subjective experience of public space in Rinkeby, Tensta, and Husby.

This is the first part of the work, it incorporates an analysis of the historical background that produced these suburban centers, and their physical outcome. The second part pertains to the final work, and can be better supported with the annexed sections from page 110 to page 161 which look into the social construction of space through the study of public life.
Here in Rinkeby people are loud, they call each other in the square, laugh, and greet one another from far away. But when we go to other places of the city, we behave differently. We adapt.

- Muhammad

8.1. BEHAVIOURAL ANALYSIS
Based on the methodologies brought forward by Gehl and Svarre (2013), the mentioned booklet included an analysis of people movement and stationary activities through mapping and counting. During the booklet’s realization and later, during the actual observations, it became evident that several of the categories and activities of Gehl’s and Svarre’s methods were not entirely relevant for a demographic and physical context such as the ones of the studied areas. Subsequently, for example, additional activity categories were added, and religious and cultural elements were taken into account. The summarized results of the behavioural analysis are shown on the following pages.
Gender was a defining factor in the findings of the behavioural analysis. In the case of tracing, which maps the movement of people in a space, there is a clear differentiation between the way men and women move through a space such as Rinkeby Torg. As well as having a higher numerical presence in public space, men tend to dominate it by using its more central spaces and moving more ‘freely’ in it. Women, meanwhile, generally seek to walk along the space’s borders and its more active and commercial façades, generating some highly defined tracing patterns. The Tunelbana exit is the main source of people flow.
The elongated and narrow character of Tensta Centrum’s space makes it harder to differentiate movement patterns related to gender. However, there is still a clear tendency: whereas both men and women use the main circulation corridor (alongside the parking lot and, again, the main commercial areas), only men consistently use and move alongside the opposite façade, which is significantly less active and contains other uses, such as the Turkish cafe. The most important patterns of movement are, again, closely related to activities such as the supermarket, the metro entrance and the paths towards residential areas.
Similar patterns occur in Husby, with women constantly moving alongside the borders of the spaces. The varying character of Husby’s space means that these trends are more evident in the open squares that conform the Centrum’s area. As in Rinkeby and Tensta, there is a higher number of men than women in public space. While in the day the numbers are more balanced, at night there is a steep rise in the proportion of men.
The analysis of how people remain in public space reinforces the idea that men have more presence and agency in these neighborhoods’ public spaces. As seen, men dominate stationary activities, mainly through seating and/or conversation in enclaves such as the Café, the area around the Mosque, the seating areas in front of the Gallerian and even the backside of the square. The central areas of the square serve more as fleeting meeting spaces. Women, meanwhile, roam around the metro exit and the fruit market, while their main permanence space is the informal flea market that takes place in the street in the corner of the Gallerian, in the periphery of the square’s main space.
Stationary activities in Tensta show, again, how there is a marked difference in the way men and women stay and use these public spaces. The open and central areas of the spaces, such as the zone in front of the metro exit, are mainly used by men to stand and converse. There are also clear enclaves of strictly-men presence, such as the Turkish Cafe, or the small corners and hideouts that the residential building’s façades form. From them, they have a clear panorama of the space around them. Women mainly stay close to highly active borders, such as the supermarket, the metro exit and the shops at the start of the strand.
Husby echoes the same patterns: women are mainly present in the areas close to the more active and commercial metro exit, fruit market and main squares while, as activity fades towards the Islamic Centre area, women’s presence falls steeply. Analyzing the micro-scale of the specific squares that conform Husby’s Centrum, similar tendencies are found, as open areas and also small corner enclaves are dominated by men. Elements, such as the seating around the fountain or awnings in front of the metro exit are popular meeting and waiting spaces for both genders.
The analysis of the different ages present in public spaces also sheds some light to this study. Middle aged people (mainly men, as seen) are the dominant age group in Rinkeby Torg, populating the previously identified enclaves and the central areas. Younger people, such as teenagers and young adults, are “relegated” to more peripheral areas of the square. The fountain, meanwhile, serves as the main attraction and focal point for children, mainly when there is water present, in the spring and summer months.
Children’s patterns are very similar across the different Centrums. The fountain is again the main activity and permanence spot for children, as water and the animal statues and other elements present around serve as an attraction for them. Additionally, they generally follow the movements of their mother, as women are the main group carrying and accompanying children. Schoolchildren were observed as a group too and the enclosed shopping centre provides a space where children are more at ease and unsupervised. Middle-aged and older men dominate the space, mainly from the previously mentioned enclaves such as the Turkish café or the seating areas on the side of the fruit market. However, the areas in front of it are mainly used by middle-aged and older women. Distribution and use of space across age groups is more balanced in Tensta.
Despite its fragmented nature, Husby Centrum has the most diverse and balanced age group presence of the analyzed Centrums. Children have a strong presence, mainly on the most active areas around the metro exit and the intermediate square. Once more, the fountain area and the seating around it provides the most attractive enclave for children and families to meet and stay. Their presence fades towards the other end of the Centrum, as with the previously studied presence of women.

Again, younger adults and teenagers tend to group in peripheral areas of the Centrum, such as the Tobak shop behind the furthermost metro exit, or the areas behind the main supermarket of the Centrum. Middle-aged and older men and women seem to use the space in a more balanced way.
To complement the mainly quantitative observations of the previous diagrams, a more descriptive approach was undertaken and is presented in the following pages. It shows, in a more literary and specific way, the fine grain of activities observed in the analyzed spaces, providing the previous observations and tendencies with a background, confirming and, sometimes, contradicting them.
Arabic reigns over this sweet night in Rinkeby
RINKEBY

On the second floor facing towards the plaza, one can discern a studio, with large volumes of golden leather illuminated from the inside. A man prays, facing Mecca. You can only see his torso, curling over towards the floor and straightening back up, in a rhythm dance that disconnects the body from the mind to elevate the heart of the believer.

The night comes slowly, softly. The deep blue sky is clear. The calmness of the central plaza is welcoming. People are speaking Arabic, in groups of four, six, or seven. Men gather to smoke, to chat. They stay on the edge of the open space, at the corner facing Barwaado, the Restaurant that opens after the fast.

In the center, a turquoise Falafel & Shawarma food truck occupies a large part of the space that is used up by the market during the daytime. In front of the supermarket, six men in small separate groups smoke and talk. A family of four is taking a stroll, two generations. Passersby greet each other in Arabic. Arabic reigns over this sweet night in Rinkeby.

Full of life. Rinkeby is bustling with activity on this cloudy Saturday that has just freed itself of the glacial wind. The central plaza is surrounded, from all corners, with groups of men that converse and observe the life around them. An accordion greets the afternoon, and its rhythm, so similar to Mexican rancheras, transported me for a moment to the central plaza in Coyoacan. People walk around, in no hurry, pausing under the stare of a stranger. Conversing and praising their children, they’re free to play here. A man has just arrived and he’s gathering tin cans for the woman sitting next to me, who’s waiting for spare change. The street merchants are all friends, and they chat about the passersby. A man fiddles with his key chain, twirling it around his fingers, and producing a metallic clicking that is lost in the sound of the rusty wheels of a stroller, and of a bike that someone has unchained. I can hear Arabic. There are lots of pigeons, and lots of children also.

The fountain and water as a meeting point. The sound of water serves as a backdrop for everyday encounters. The language is indiscernible to me, but resembles other encounters back home. They greet each other, sit in the breeze and in the sun to talk. Point here and there. The water runs towards where the chairs and the gazes are formed. What would come of us without its calming effect?

“The sound of water (... as a backdrop for everyday encounters)”
It’s cold outside and Tensa Centrum is crowded. Children play near the entrance. Men sitting and standing chat in Arabic, two different generations. Women sit on the other side and also converse in Arabic. Shoppers, passersby, women with strollers, and elderly with walkers.

In the same area where children were playing earlier, a group of six adult men has gathered, all standing and discussing their day. Woman sits on the other corner.

Athir comes from Iraq. He owns the market here in Tensta and he picks the best fruit for the neighbourhood. He draws: he has a drawing of the market that is at the Tensta Bibliotek. Tomorrow he will bring me a photo of it.

The men’s corner is a whole other place. One almost wonders what came first, the meeting of men around this club of mystery, of cards, tea and who knows what else; or the space that receives it, with its timbered decks. They speak languages of the near Orient, they smoke by the pack, their voices dominate the sound landscape of the center of Tensta.

One of them looks at me suspiciously, coughs, spits. They organize themselves into small groups. It is a space that seems forbidden for the female gender in this testosterone arena.

“testosterone arena”
Quiet afternoon in the square in front of the mosque. It’s so peaceful, with its tree with dropping branches in the centre.

No one stops, people just walk by, hurrying to the metro, women with groceries, teenagers cycling up and down.

When the time of the afternoon prayer comes, the square comes to life momentarily. Men, teenagers, fathers with their sons, all rush to the mosque.

When the prayer starts the square empties.

There are children everywhere here.

Mothers, fathers, children play

Alone. Passersby greet each other.

Independent children, siblings that care for one another.

They sit on a bench and await their parents.

They play, they cry, they throw tantrums.

Teenagers exiting the metro in Husby
If you retract, if you start backing off, they will take the space you leave, until you have no space left and you have to go.

The more you give away, the more they take.

So I don’t retract. I go into the space, and I take.

- Nubia Marina
ENCOUNTERS & INTERACTIONS

A backstreet in Rinkeby, where many teenagers and young adults stay in groups.

It has become a central component of the Stockholm municipality’s objectives to approach urban planning projects from the lens of inclusion. From its branding of “Stockholm for all,” to the detailed projects in transport infrastructure expansion, or public areas, the government explicitly recognizes inclusion as a priority.

This research focuses on suburban neighborhoods as important spaces of belonging that are central to fostering community participation. A large component of this research relies on the subjective experience of space.

Specifically it seeks to grasp how users of the centrum in Rinkeby, Tensta, and Husby read, use, and feel towards the space.

While we conducted research to map behavioral patterns, we sometimes had brief and spontaneous encounters. Other times, we openly sought to meet with inhabitants of the space, in order to converse and share perceptions. Some of these interactions have been recaptured through narrative to give an insight into the phenomenological aspect of our research.
We met Mohammad at Nejo’s café, thanks to Nejo, the owner, who introduced us.

“Here in Rinkeby people are loud, they call each other in the square, laugh, and greet one another from far away. But when we go to other places in the city, we behave differently. We adapt. In T-Centralen, for example, I would never yell- they would think I’m crazy.

People in Sweden are distant, closed, cold. We here are from everywhere in the world. We come from warm lands. We are open.”

“We come from the warm land. We are open.”

“Why do you like Rinkeby? Not Sweden, I know Sweden is boring, but Rinkeby? You like it here? Rinkeby is my home. Here I feel at home, I know everyone in this coffee shop, I often come, most people here are like me from Somalia.”

“Rinkeby is my home. Here I feel at home”

Muhammad told us about Ramadan and asked if we could eat and drink inside as people around the square are Muslim and are fasting.

His memories of the square are Mostly bad memories.

“The market used to be in front of the cafe, on the opposite side. Also there used to be a street where the Somali restaurant is located. People like it there, they get served even if they have no money to pay. It’s a very popular restaurant, but now it is Ramadan. During this month, we cannot drink, or eat, or smoke, or say bad words, I usually eat or drink inside the cafe.”

He offered to buy us something to eat, “take the chance it’s not every day that someone in Rinkeby will buy you breakfast”, he said.

“Sometimes when there is football, they bring a car with a big screen and we watch the games here in the square. I am Milan fan, yes, not their golden time but we will come back, don’t worry. I think Liverpool will win the Champions League this season.”

“In the beginning there was no Lidl, they had to dig down the old department store to build a Lidl in the bottom floor.”

“A lot of people from Somalia left in the 90s fleeing the war, and they moved to other countries where they speak Arabic, so Somalis here speak Arabic too. Most people here speak Arabic, a lot of people come from Eritrea as well, there are people from all places. Even from Colombia, I have a friend, Boris, he is from Colombia.”

“I go every year back to Somalia, I have two sisters and my mother we took her back there. It is dangerous there...a lot of shootings, and suicide bombers... but also here, nowhere is safe. I like Somalia, my country is beautiful, but it’s not safe. I work here and save money to go back. I stay for two months and help my family.”

He arrived when he was 14 years old in 1992. He lived in Jarva, and moved to Rinkeby 19 years ago.

He likes football, AC Milan.
Nejo worked 6 years in Valhallavägen in a kebab store and he has been working for 19 years at Nejo's cafe. It is a family business and he always goes back to it, “Rinkeby is home. It is difficult, but it is home. People here are like family, I know everybody who comes here.”

When we went back inside, we sat in the right-end corner of the coffee shop, next to Neo the owner of Cafe Nejo. His other friend was sitting on the other side, filling out some documents, he was fasting apparently. He called his friend and told us that while we were sitting outside he heard his friend talk on the phone and say - *Muhammad is speaking English!*

He came to greet us and sat in the neighbouring table to know who we were and what we were doing. He was convinced he had seen Ambre and Sandra somewhere else a day earlier, and that we were Swedish investigators, or police. He was a bus driver, and Muhammad explained to us that he is used to seeing police showing up in the neighbourhood. He explained they often ride the bus undercover and show their badge to him, as the driver. Sometimes undercover policemen go to the Mosque, and they say they are Muslims coming to pray, but everyone knows they are detectives. Nejo had also seen those cops the day before, and confirmed it was not us. “You wouldn’t be police anyway, because they don’t have the time to waste to come in here and hang out”, Muhammad laughed.

Another friend came over, from Somalia, who moved to Sweden at 14 in 1991. He was captivated by Ambre, and recalled his journey through Mozambique by truck. He had come from Nairobi to Zambia, and remembered how beautiful Mozambique was. Muhammad said that all people fled the war from Somalia, and went everywhere, through Africa, to escape.

This man of vivid eyes with a yellow cap over his head had studied agronomy in Sweden. Muhammad told us then that he had worked in Kista in ÖoB as a cashier and putting things in the shelves. He told us they used to have beers of 3.5% alcohol content but that he noticed how kids would steal them and so he told the manager and they stopped selling them.

Muhammad told us he met Boris because he is his neighbour and he would be smoking outside and see him with his kids. He had called Boris the day before because he missed his call.

Simón said he was from Bogotá, and they asked about the other capital of Colombia, to which Simón answered Medellin. Ah Medellin, yes! “What’s the name of that guy?”, said Muhammad pointing his fingers like a gun, “aah Pablo Escobar!” We all laughed, the infallible reference to Colombia... Sorry Simón.

**MOHAMMAD’S MEMORY OF THE SQUARE**

“About five years ago, in the square, by the tree, there was a man that was killed by his son. There were around fifty people that saw it happen that day. Muhammad ran to try and stop the stabbing, but a second man pulled out a gun on him. The story says that the man that was killed that day was Turkish and he had gotten his girlfriend pregnant and left her. She had promised to raise his son so one day he would kill his father, and when the man was 18 he stabbed his father in the middle of Rinkeby Square.”
Simón met Nubia Marina by the fountain. She is wrapped in baggy clothes of earthy tones. Her skin is dark and dry, her eyes are lively, and announce the personality of someone who speaks her mind and doesn’t hide anything.

She wears a yellow scarf -Colombian yellow- and a poofy green beanie. From her ears hang two folkloric puppets, “cholo y su chola” she said.

“speaks her mind and doesn’t hide anything”

Here I met Nubia Marina. Originally from Cali, capital of flavor. She came to Sweden so long ago that she does not dare say when. Fortuitous encounter, forged by the infinite chance of he who, on the one hand, takes care of his possessions with that Latin American sixth sense, and of she who on the other, decides to paste her stamp with water from a fountain rather than with their own saliva.

“Whenever I meet someone who means something to me, it starts with a fight”

And so it was, for she protested, saying that in Rinkeby no one was going to steal from me. Stumbling, I tried to explain to her that I was from Colombia and, upon hearing her answer, I assumed a joke. But it was not.

With that familiar accent, she admired the maps on our booklet and told me about her taste for architecture (more the traditional than the landscape one), her wonderful Swedish teacher, her KTH orientation course, her astonishment at knowing that she shared my mother’s name (apart from the “n”), of her excitement to speak like this, with that Latin familiarity, after such a long time.

“her excitement to speak like this, with that Latin familiarity, after such a long time”

She likes living in Rinkeby, it’s a good life, she says. Here are all the nationalities and foods that one can imagine!
We sat by the fountain while we waited for Nubia Marina. We had agreed to meet at ten in the morning, on a Saturday. We had gotten used to being on time, and for a few minutes we feared she wasn’t coming. She came from behind us, with a glass of coffee half full in one hand, a black leather handbag, a couple of books in a plastic bag, and a large colorful umbrella on the other. She jumped and burst into laughter, she would’ve wanted to scare us but Simón saw her first.

She was wearing a colorful scarf with tones of yellow, orange, and red, and it hung loosely from both sides of her shoulders. Her boots were only halfway tied, the tab hanging folded downwards, and her pants were tucked inside. She was wearing the same grey coat, and dark green beanie that covered her hair the first day we met her. We began walking together, towards the four storey housing complex that surrounded the central square. There was something loose about her whole appearance, relaxed, unconstrained, generously flabby—her movements accompanied an unbounded character.

She stopped a few passers, some of them she knew, others not. At every encounter with other morning risers, she jumped with such enthusiasm that she made us laugh.

She spontaneously explained briefly who we were and what we were doing in Rinkeby. We spoke to a Greek man, Avram. He was riding his little scooter around the neighborhood. He was part of the tenant association for Jarva, the Hyresgästföreningen Kvarndrängen, a union that seeks to maintain rent control in the area. He explained the units surrounding the square were owned by the municipality, the kommun, and despite having lived there for 40 years, he did not own his property, and had to fight along all other tenants against price inflation to keep their housing.

Nubia Marina wanted to show us the neighbourhood, the smaller spaces where people gathered and sat. As we made our way into her usual walk home, she greeted her neighbours. A tall and older Turkish man, that joked about the weather, a Finnish Kale woman walking her dog. She talked enthusiastically about her street, and how she had recently found a harmonic order in how the trees lined up, and how the buildings, plants, and smaller spaces worked together creating a cozy atmosphere. She talked about the Elementary School in front of her apartment, which had a yellow metallic facade she strongly disliked.

She took us into the inner courtyard of the neighbouring housing complex so we could see a community garden that other tenants had cultivated to plant their own vegetables. She instructed us about what each plant was, and told us many people in the community couldn’t have access to the community gardens that were down the road. Apparently a developer is looking into building that land near the football field.

As we walked, she changed her mind and decided to invite us into her apartment, warning us about the very messy situation inside. We walked up to her home, and quickly found ourselves in between car tires, books, posters, artwork, plants, boxes, clothing, and paper. She showed us her studio, where she invited us to look into her art. We went into the balcony where she had planted tomatoes, physalis, and was hoping to grow corn.

Nubia Marina in her balcony, showing us her plants
She proudly showed us her favorite painting, a large canvas with different tones of blue. It was an oil painting of a shell and a chestnut. There was something in movement, she found in it a beautiful naive feeling that reminded her of a younger self. She had learned to make paper, and showed us the wet fibers with onion peel that remained on a large pot in her kitchen. At every corner, there was something heaped, piled, framed, or thrown. Plants in green plastic pots, dirt with eggshells, posters, cut-outs, magazines, letters, notices, books, clothing. Yet she knew where everything was, and made her way into her home with confidence.

As she saw us there, surrounded by her world, she shared with us she had been through a difficult time, she had drifted away from people, and us being there signified a new beginning. She looked strongly to us, stern.

We left her apartment and walked back to the central square, she wanted to remain quiet and observe us walking up her street- with “your expert eye, so you can see for yourselves,” she said. Walking a few steps behind us, she let us lead the way back to the place where we had met earlier that morning. She noticed how people used different routes, how they moved in the given space, as if she had learned from us a different way of reading the space. We talked about how people inhabit the public square, and accompanied by her expressive gestures, she explained the private spaces where small, apartment units are not made for the large families that inhabit them.

Closing her fist, she showed us how the narrowness of spaces pushed people cut into the public space. But there are tensions, she told us, which make them push each other, and as children observe, they learn.

We asked her about the lack of women sitting in the square, and if there was another area where they spent time in the public space. She didn’t know, but she answered that she sits wherever she likes. “I don’t care!” She replied when I asked if she ever felt uncomfortable in the space dominated by men. She came closer and said, “let me explain to you something, if you retract, if you start backing off, they will take the space you leave, until you have no space left and you have to go. The more you give away, the more they will take. So I don’t retract, I go into the space, and I take it.”

She told us about her program in Uppsala, her studies in Landscape Architecture, she shared with us her admiration for her professor, and her tutor. She told us that sometimes people react surprised when she says she lives in Rinkeby: “Where they burn cars?” “Yes! When I leave the classroom I go back and I join them I burn cars, it’s really fun! And we throw rocks too.”

Still holding her Swedish-Spanish dictionary in one hand, she took Simón’s pen and wrote down what he commented about the space. He had noted how the scale of the square permitted the pedestrian to grasp the full spectrum of the square, he used the words contained, enclosed, to capture the cozyness of Rinkeby Torg. Nubia Marina wrote it all down, and at the bottom of the page (which was the backend of her new dictionary) she wrote down our names, and our fields of study. Her writing was sturdy and large, without inhibitions or anticipating to leave room for further writing.

She told us about her program in Uppsala, her studies in Landscape Architecture, she shared with us her admiration for her professor, and her tutor. She told us that sometimes people react surprised when she says she lives in Rinkeby: “Where they burn cars?” “Yes! When I leave the classroom I go back and I join them I burn cars, it’s really fun! And we throw rocks too.” She made us laugh, she has a fun and loud laughter. She said she wished people would never be ashamed to say they live in Rinkeby, she wishes children in Rinkeby will someday be proud of the neighborhood in which they grew.

Before we left, we asked her if she could write a letter to Rinkeby, to its people, to her home.

“apartment units are not made for the large families that inhabit them”
When Nubia Marina arrived in Sweden, she asked, “When is the summer coming?” and they answered ‘it’s already summer’

Rinkeby’s greatest treasure is its children and youth.

“Here I am. I walk, I take my place. Yes, they stare at me, but I seat. Some women stare at me and laugh, but it’s their problem, not mine.”

Where can one go dance and listen to music? (in Rinkeby)

“In my block, something is happening that kids have become aggressive. Some time ago the children would play like theater, they would dance, and make-up stories. Now they don’t do that anymore, they’re with their phones, and they say ugly things, they say Shut up!”

“How does someone expect an adult to be? Not like me!”

“I noticed he had greeted me because he thought I was a man, but I didn’t give it too much importance. I dress like this, you know, with my boots, and pants. I have to do so because I am on my own. A woman has to leave some femininity behind in order to take space. I cover myself, I layer my body, to be in peace.”

“In Rinkeby, one needs courage. Courage to speak up, to say things. It’s so beautiful when someone speaks up, when a man says to another man- let her be. Courage. And people listen, they listen. That’s why it’s important to gather the courage to speak.”

“It’s important to be kind, but also to know where to trace the line. The limit.”

“Islam is important in Rinkeby. Islam is beautiful.”

“Each group criticizes the other. There is animosity among them. It used to be against the Finnish, then the Turks, now it’s those from Somalia. But I like the people from Somalia, they are a strong community, they stick together. They protect themselves. Rinkeby is a treasure.”

“Rinkeby has a beautiful square. We come to the square for shopping, to sit in the fountain and to watch the pigeons. The pigeons come to the square. In Spain, the visitors of the square are encouraged to feed the pigeons. Rinkeby Torg has no parking spots. There are many old squares that have been converted into parking lots in Stockholm. What we Swedes need is to bring the Rinkeby People’s Festival back and to move away from americanization. We have the library, where the librarian must know about banking services, insurance, social security, housing rental organization, literature, the education system, etc. Rinkeby is a prairie that we need to take care of, for us to be able to keep enjoying the open landscape. How do we take care of Rinkebyvangen/ The prairie of Rinkeby?”

- Dina, librarian

“We want places that are open at night where we can just be, stay.” - Ahmed, Erik, Mario, Peter and Ibrahim

“Stop systematically forcing Rinkeby parents to unemployment, to confinement in an impenetrable bushland. Sorry! I mean in groups without hope in the future.” - Nubia Marina

“Where can we go to dance, listen to music and take part in the richness of Rinkeby, Village of the World?” - Dina

Greetings from Rinkeby, Sweden’s capital city.

Nubia Marina