

## Introduction

Cities are places of constant contradictions – on the one hand culturally rich and diverse places with interesting entanglements of social and spatial relations, on the other hand sites of inequality, segregation and conflict. There are obviously various and sometimes opposing understandings, narrations and representations of a city. From an urban history perspective, it is adequate to critically ask: how do history-making and representations of a city's past contribute to create cities and trajectories of urban development? To understand this, we need to pay attention to how urban phenomena are historicised, categorised, preserved and used in official history, and in urban planning. How cities are narrated and projected will influence what kind of city it is possible to imagine, what is understood as problematic, and consequently how and for whom cities are planned and developed.<sup>1</sup> This correlation between history and future-making places questions of power at the centre of urban history and development.

The question of *The Right to the City* has since the 1960s been widely addressed by urban activists, NGO:s, public institutions and academia. From Henri Lefebvre's radical concept expressed in 1968, as "a demand for a transformed and renewed access to urban life",<sup>2</sup> of rights to urban life for all; through acts of land appropriation by dispossessed citizens; human rights struggles for equal representation across class, gender, race and sexuality; to more moderate municipal inclusion agendas – *The Right to the City* concept has come to encompass a variety of intentions and perspectives on right claims, lately also seen reduced to a watered down slogan.<sup>3</sup> However, we think there are very interesting perspectives and insights to be gained from using the concept as a starting point for a renewed debate. Whether with an egalitarian or more distributive approach, questions of how rights relate to urban space are not fixed or uncontested but have to be constantly practiced and critically exercised to make rights matter, and to advance social justice.<sup>4</sup> We believe that the fields of urban history and cultural heritage need to be further included and problematized in such debates and inquiries. It is crucial to discuss how history-making and narratives of the past play

a role in the way perceptions and ideals of cities and citizens are portrayed, understood and legitimatised in the present. An obvious example of why this is important is the way populist movements use idealised and homogenised narratives of the past to forward a political agenda whose impact on democracy and justice can be disputed.

This anthology has its origin in the conference *Creating the City. Identity, Memory and Participation*, in Malmö, Sweden, 9–10 February 2017,<sup>5</sup> arranged by the Institute for Studies in Malmö's History (IMH) – a research institute affiliated with the Urban Studies department at Malmö University. The conference gathered scholars from various disciplines, such as history, anthropology, literature, geography, sociology, political science and media and communication; and practitioners as archive and museum professionals, urban planners, architects and artists. With a mix of Swedish and international participants, approximately 90 presentations were organised in thematic sessions. The anthology comprises of 38 texts (chapters), written in English or Swedish, each correlating to individual presentation at the conference.

The texts, we believe, all engage in urban history, life, politics and governance in ways that can be related to *The Right to the City* concept, even if the authors themselves do not use this concept. They do however interrogate related questions such as: Who are represented by a city's official history and mediated collective memory, and who are excluded? How are city identities created and marketed – and for whose benefit? What forms of struggles and resistance are created to challenge dominant histories, and whose dreams and utopias are expressed in municipal visions for urban futures? From different perspectives, the authors discuss and problematize these and similar issues, some through case studies of specific places, others through literature and document studies. Several authors interrogate and discuss power relations in connection to class, gender or racialisation. The examples in the texts are drawn from cities and towns in Sweden, Finland, United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, Israel/Palestine, Brazil and USA.

The 38 chapters are organised in seven thematic parts, correlating to different session themes at the conference. The first part is Authors Writing the City starting with the conference keynote speech

by Carolyn Steedman, Professor Emeritus in History at Warwick University in England. In her text, Steedman follows Mary Wollstonecraft's travels in the 1790s in Sweden and Norway, as well as Thomas Malthus' travels a few years later, discussing their respectively different approaches and observations, of towns and countryside they visit and of people they meet. Following is three chapters on working class literature, gender and the city, the first being Anna Williams who discusses how contemporary Swedish female novelists express gender and class in urban space. Catrine Brödje, in her study of four Swedish novels from 1910s, finds gendered differences in both the way the protagonists live their urban lives, and the way the four novelists depict men and women. Ewa Bergdahl sketches the life and authorship of Maria Sandel whose books are set in the time and environment of Sandel's own life – in an industrialised Stockholm in the beginning of the 1900s. The first part ends with Per-Olof Mattsson's text on how Swedish working class literature interacted with metropolitan modernism around the 1930s, showing how the industrial and modern city as a literary object were embraced by the author Arthur Lundkvist and several of his contemporaries.

In the second part, *History Writing and Narrating the City*, the authors analyse and discuss how historical data, mediated texts, and architectural descriptions become official city narratives. The part begins with Heiko Droste's text on creating and maintaining chronicles and myths of a city, with the town halls of Stockholm and Lüneburg as examples. Kerstin Gunnemark has focused on a more peripheral urban phenomenon, and studied historical awareness and local concerns amongst residents in a 100 year old suburban area of detached family houses in Gothenburg. Peter Olausson shows how narratives of the past are used in the marketing of Karlstad, and how history and myths are maintained in urban space through public signs and symbols. Following is two chapters on history making with Helsingborg as example, the first by Elisabeth Högdahl and Anja Petersen on critical analysis of gendered norms in reiterations of city narratives. In the next chapter, Karin Gustavsson shows how the influential work "*Svensk stad [Swedish City]*", published in two volumes 1950-1953, have impacted on

understandings of Helsingborg's history, and discusses the work's influence on perceptions of spatial divisions in the city. In following chapter, Olga Zabalueva presents official and countering narratives of Russia's political history, and the role of Moscow as a place for national commemorative practice. Zabalueva gives example of both revisionist museum representations and grass roots' memory initiatives. In the last chapter of this second part, Cloe Wells discusses young Finns' feelings of loss in relation to Vyborg in today's Russian Karelia – a city that through territorial struggles has alternately belonged to Sweden, Finland and Russia since medieval times.

The third part, *Transforming the City – Planning and Redevelopment*, focuses on what role depictions and representations of a city can play in urban planning, building and regeneration. First is Johanna Overud's study of how gendered and racializing representations of the mining town Kiruna's history are passed on in the making of new Kiruna, as the town is moved a few kilometres (due to major cracks in the rock beneath the city). Eva Dahlström Rittsél shows how conceptions of preservation and cultural heritage in the context of inner city industrial areas have changed since the 1970s, with examples from redevelopments in Stockholm. Gabriella Olshammar has studied the Ringön harbour in Gothenburg, and elaborates on its present and future relevance and resilience using the concept "urban glue", and an image of "the end of the world". In next chapter, the three archaeologists Mattias Öbrink, Ivonne Dutra Leivas and Christina Toreld describes their pedagogic work alongside their excavations in Nya Lödöse – the medieval town underneath eastern parts of present day Gothenburg – in conjunction with a large infrastructure transformation. This part ends with a summary of a text by Ingrid Campo-Ruiz, who has studied notions of "equality in death" when Malmö Eastern cemetery was built in beginning of the 20th Century.

The authors in part four, *Counter-Narratives and Spatial Practices for Change*, present studies of strategies and approaches to disseminate or challenge public city narratives, in relation to citizenship and distribution of urban space. In the first chapter, Ann-Catrin Kristianssen analyses Israeli narratives of Jerusalem, as they appear in statements of Israeli policies, public affairs and

visionary documents, and in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Christina Hansen follows with a chapter on local activism in Möllevången, Malmö, where she studied what activism might mean for migrants' emplacement in a new place, like activities of challenging an anti-immigrant rhetoric in public discourses on migration. In the next chapter, Erik Hansson and Maria Persdotter discuss a recent (and still ongoing) "begging-debate" in Sweden about so called EU-migrants' right to beg in public urban space. Hansson and Persdotter show how the debate exposes paradoxical moral positions in Social Democratic politics and in discourses of the People's home (Folkhemmet) and the Swedish Model concerning citizenship and solidarity. In the following chapter, Dominika V. Polanska sketches the history of squatting in Sweden from the 1960s until today, with examples from various towns and cities. She presents a typology of motivations for squatting, and discusses how these motivations have changed over time. Hereafter follows the poem "Stockholm" by Jenny Wrangborg, who gave much appreciated recitations in the evening of the conference. The next two chapters concern politics and practices of graffiti. The first by Anja and Thomas Örn on how graffiti may appear in, and reinterpret, "in-between spaces" in Stockholm, Kiruna and Luleå. The second by Eric Hannerz and Jacob Kimvall on the role of open (legal) graffiti walls and negotiations of urban space, exemplifying with an open wall in Malmö. This part ends with an ethnographic study by Vinícius Zanoli and Rubens Mascarenhas Neto, who have explored processes of place making and identity production in Campinas in Brazil. Zanoli and Mascarenhas Neto discuss how a black LGBT community group give new meaning to urban places through drag performances, while simultaneously challenging what "black culture", "LGBT culture" or "favela culture" might mean.

The fifth part called Museum Work – Top-Down and Bottom-Up Perspectives gathers four texts, all by museum professionals. It begins with the conference keynote speech by Carlos Tortolero, President and Founder of the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago, USA. With esprit and humour, Tortolero gives accounts of the work and joy of managing and developing the museum since the start in the early 1980s. This involves being strongly embedded

in the local Latino community, establishing national and transnational partnerships, and overcoming discriminating hinders. The focus is on making exhibitions appealing to all and not just to a cultural elite, and always having free entrance. The following chapter is by Fredrik Elg who describes the municipal process of establishing a new National museum in Malmö – The Museum of Movements – which will focus on democracy and migration. Various stakeholders as NGO:s, activists, heritage experts, politicians and researchers have been invited to the process. Thereafter Karin Carlsson and Rebecka Lennartsson present a project at Stockholm City Museum on gendered space and gendered representations in museums. They discuss how to contextualise documents, photos, film, and objects to make data and historic contexts multidimensional and accessible to both the public and to researchers. As examples of gendered urban space, they discuss kitchens, cafés, brothels, storefronts and parks. Lars Hansson ends this part with a chapter on the Museum of Migration in Gothenburg, focusing on the museum’s pedagogic challenge of communicating knowledge and experiences of migration. At the core of the museum is a commemoration of the migration of one million Swedes to USA from Gothenburg (which was the largest emigration port in Sweden) around the turn of the 19th Century.

In part six, *Inquiries and Collecting – Methods of Understanding the City*, the authors give accounts of methodologies and methods to approach and investigate social life in an urban spatial context. First out is Tiina-Riitta Lappi and Pia Olsson who describe their process of making a research design for the project “Shared Cities” – an ethnographic study of how “inter-ethnic encounters” interact with urban space in Helsinki and Vantaa in Finland. Following is Fredrik Egefur’s chapter on the labour movement’s archive in Skåne, and the project and challenge of collecting material from activist groups who themselves have no routines of archiving their material. Anneli Kurttila presents the Stockholm County Museum’s initiative of a “place workshop” – a platform for dialogues on place, history and urban planning, where citizens, heritage professionals and local associations can meet. Kurttila exemplifies with a place workshop in Märsta, on the outskirts of Stockholm. Lia

Ghiraldi discusses cultural mapping and planning as participative tools for engaging local communities in urban development. Alda Terracciano presents an experiment with digital mapping for capturing memories and sensory perceptions in relation to urban space – a work that she has elaborated on in Golborne Road in London. The last chapter in this part is by Birgitta Witting who describes the documentation project “Homeless in Helsingborg” which she conducted at Helsingborg museum in 2015, resulting in an exhibition. The photographer Anna Bank was part of the project, and some of her photos are reproduced in the chapter, for which we are very grateful.

The seventh and final part, Non-Profit Associations and Patrons as History Making Actors, consists of three authors who discuss the influence of local non-governmental groups, patrons and their alliances, for the development of Malmö and the surrounding environment. The first chapter by Inger Lindstedt describes the development and relevance of Malmö Förskönings- och Planteringsförening (the Society for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage and Green Parks), established in 1881 and still active. In following chapter Kjell Å Modeer gives an account of patrons in Malmö and Copenhagen from the late 19th to mid 20th Century, focusing on their investments in culture and publishing enterprises in the Öresund region. This final part ends with a text by Göran Larsson, former director of Malmö Museum. Larsson reflects on the activities and importance of the independent Malmö Kulturhistoriska förening (Malmö’s Association for Cultural History), established in 1909. The association has since contributed to the making of Malmö’s official history through forwarding collections to the municipality, publishing a local history journal, and arranging actions for the preservation of historic buildings.

The way the 38 texts engage in urban history and making of cities are of course not limited to the theme of each part. On the contrary, the texts all present and discuss topics and perspectives touching upon several of the themes. We believe the dynamics of the conference regarding scholarship, profession and language, as well as perspectives, theories, methods and scopes, comes through in this

collection of texts. In particular, we want to highlight the contributors' critical perspectives on urban history and urban development, and how they engage in equality, justice, democracy and public participation. Our ambition is to encourage further discussions on how urban history relates to contemporary urban social life, politics, planning and development, and to aspects of *Creating the City* – as it is expressed in the title.

Finally, we hope these texts taken together demonstrate the fruitfulness of meeting in conferences, seminars and workshops across disciplines and professions, where practitioners and scholars can meet to reflect on each other's work. One aspect of *creating the city* can actually be to create opportunities like these, for interrogating mutual and complex challenges of urban history and urban futures together.

Pål Brunnström and Ragnhild Claesson  
Malmö in February 2019

## Notes

1. Massey, Doreen (2005) *For Space*. London: Sage. Sandercock, Leonie (2003), "Out of the Closet: The Importance of Stories and Storytelling in Planning Practice." *Planning Theory & Practice*, 4 (1):11-28.
2. Lefebvre, Henri (1996 [1968]) "The Right to the City", Kofman & Lebas, *Writings on Cities*. Cambridge: Blackwell
3. Harvey, David (2009 [1973]), "The right to the city", *Social Justice and the City*. Athens: University of Georgia Press. Mayer, Margit (2009), "The 'Right to the City' in the context of shifting mottos of urban social movements". *City* 13 (2-3): 362-374.
4. Mitchell, Don (2003), *The Right to the City: Social justice and the fight for public space*. New York: The Guilford Press
5. See conference programme: [https://www.mah.se/upload/Forskningscentrum/IMH/creating-the-city-program\\_final.pdf](https://www.mah.se/upload/Forskningscentrum/IMH/creating-the-city-program_final.pdf)

## References

- Harvey, David (2009 [1973]), "The right to the city", *Social Justice and the City*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
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- Mitchell, Don (2003), *The Right to the City: Social justice and the fight for public space*. New York: The Guilford Press
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