

The power of connections: on durability in inner city conversion

Joakim Forsemalm

joakim.forsemalm@ethnology.gu.se

Department of Ethnology at Göteborgs Universitet

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Introduction: technology and sociality in post-industrial city conversion

As a youngster with a vast interest in music, I every now and then went through the seemingly ever-stretching woods in the region of Småland, from my home town of Tranås to Hultsfred, home of Sweden's largest music festival, to work at different arrangements held at Hultsfred sports centre. About half way there along highway 33, is Ingatorp, one of many small places that are passed along the way. Here, a remarkable wood sculpture picturing a bull with a sulky face, salute the motorist welcome to the "pearl of highway 33". Back then, early nineties, road-sign salutes were unusual sights at the roadsides. Today, an increasing number of such welcome-signs are a sign of the times. In these signs, cities and places is wrapping the message, mediates the knowledge they want to sell to the surrounding world (cf. Berg, Linde-Laursen & Löfgren (eds.), 2000). At the highway gates of Göteborg, electronic signs tell the approaching visitor the up-coming events; sports, concerts or the current theme at the trade fair. Supporting the fluxing information at the LCD-boards is a slogan mediating the essence of the town: *Göteborg – alltid på G!* (Göteborg – always on the G(o)!)

The increasing number of welcoming signs is *one* example of how cities in an increasingly fashion works with visibility. These signs are part a growing phenomenon that in city redevelopment theory goes under the name of "place branding", that is about the marketing of places, cities and regions. The point of departure for this increasing phenomenon is *competition*, between cities about investments, job opportunities and tax bases. The competition narrative is the prime motivator for spectacular and costly redevelopment projects, and is frequently used at city-development conferences – with main objective being to help cities become *attractive*. In the discourse produced around competitiveness, *knowledge* and *entertainment* is two key words, key aspects that cities should focus upon in order to get - attractive. In Göteborg, these two key words are materialized respectively at one bank of the Göta River, both in a cluster-type manner (the hi-tech cluster at Norra Älvstranden and "Evenemangsstråket", the entertainment zone at Skånegatan).

Now, neither these catch-phrases, nor the idea of competition, are any news in the urban studies/city planning fields. Questions rarely put in these contexts though, which is to be focused in this article, concerns what in discourse theory are called "discursive outsides" (cf. Howarth, 2000). Using the welcoming signs to exemplify; in the production of meaning that is the making of a saleable message, something is framed in. But at the same time something is framed out. In these times of meaning-extracting to make cities more easily understood (e.g. more easy to sell), is there any room for "the other", for the alternative, for the odd? Or is it destined to be located further and further away from the city centres as the cities needs more space for materializing the "attractive"? If so, then what about societal goals such as the "diversity" policy? This article, which is a cut from an ongoing Ph.D., takes departure in the redevelopments that characterize contemporary Göteborg in a number of ways. At the time of writing, a public dialogue has just been launched concerning the content and configuration of

the southern river shore (Södra Älvstranden), an area that is to be “released” from its prison of traffic route, thus making the river accessible to the people of Göteborg. And hopefully to its visitors as well; here lies a potentiality in terms of programming the variable welcoming signs at the entrances to the city. Göteborg has undergone a couple of vast re-development projects the last couple of years, and there are still more big projects to come. It’s thereby a good example to study when the interest is the production of meaning in city transformation processes.

The saying “not in my backyard” express opposition, resistance and fear for the divergent, in what form it might be.¹ Something is threatening an experienced totality (a neighbourhood, an identity) and networking in terms of protest lists or rallies eventually puts enough pressure on the planners or politicians to keep the divergent away. Utterances for this phenomena connected to Göteborg could be the localization of housing for the homeless or the urgent need for a new forensic psychiatric clinic; two processes that has been ongoing for years without any progress, due to the “not in my back yard” phenomena. What I’m going to outline in this paper is another expression of this phenomenon. Adjacent to the scorching project that is the up-coming re-development of the southern river shore, is a district that seem to react comparably to the neighbourhoods that doesn’t want housing for the homeless in their surroundings. What we will follow throughout the following pages, is examples of the *construction* of the area *Långgatorna*. The question to answer in this paper is thus: *what is the consequence of different actors creating Långgatorna in terms of resistibility against the gentrification that is probable to affect the area due to its central location and vicinity to a spectacular and widely discussed re-generation project?*

Before we look into the makings of this district, a brief genealogy of the area is needed. First and foremost, though, a theoretical perspective needs to be laid down to get tools to discuss and try to understand the situations we’ll meet in the empirical material. For this, we turn to French organizational theorist and sociologist Bruno Latour, whose focus is set on the relation between the social and the material.

Theoretical perspective: actor-network theory

In the Latourian actor-network theory, people are “*actors, not patients*” (1998:44.). The line of argument departs in a power analysis, where power is “productive”. It isn’t something someone *has* and exercises, it is created through people networking, making bindings: “*power isn’t a characteristic in one [of these] elements by them selves, but in a chain*” (ibid: 154). These “chains”, or programs, as Latour also calls them, is created through “translations”, i.e. in that actors take in a statement, an object or an order (“*let us call it a symbol*”) that someone “throws out” in one way or another. The actor - a person, a group of persons or a structure - either increase or decrease energy in the movement of the symbol: “*Instead of a passive medium trough which power is exercised, there are active members that forms and changes the symbol as it moves*” (ibid.45). In this constructivist theory, there are no “beings”, only “becomings”; the symbol is in need of energy to be maintained and it’s never the same since every conveyance of energy makes it - no matter how slightly, still - different.

Now, programs (which basically is *strives*) isn’t just people connecting to other people. The durability of a program won’t be long if the social relation is all there is to it, says Latour. To clarify this line of reasoning, he uses the example of the hotel receptionist that wants the guests to leave the key when leaving the hotel, due to an extensive loss of keys – which is trying on the hotel economy. When the verbal message “please leave your keys when leaving the hotel” doesn’t reach a satisfactory result, technology is introduced to the program. First as

1 “NIMBY The acronym for Not-In-My-Back-Yard, an attitude typical of individuals resisting the siting of a source of negative externalities next to their homes and campaigning for its location elsewhere” (out of Dictionary of Human Geography, p.554).

a sign on the counter, stating the same message as the verbal one, which meet the objective to a somewhat better extent, though still not enough. The next step is adding a weight on the key in a more literal sense; an iron lump, that creates the effect that the guests suddenly longs to loose the key in the hole in the reception desk, is added on. The “program”, the strive to keep the keys on the premise, is made durable, reaches a tolerable level, when technology is introduced in the chain.

Returning to the initial example of this article; the programming of a city – which according to the reasoning laid out here is actors making bindings and thereby creating meaning – needs technology to get durable messages as much as the next program. The welcoming signs are *one* example of strives for durability; websites and other branding material, are of course other ones. Through the adding of technology in the chain, or program, the objective of visibility – in prolongation an action to maintain, or obtain, investments, create jobs and a steady tax base – hopefully will be reached. To summarise and to reconnect to the problematic for this paper: in the post-industrial economy, cities are occupied with place marketing, which to the theoretical perspective presented here, is a power practice. There *is* no Göteborg to be represented – it is *created* trough a (vast) series of translations. The program we now turn to hasn't got flashing signs as tools, but there are other technology, other “weights”, being added to create durability.

“Långgatorna”: the making of an inner city district

As I've hinted above, the area of study is in the midst of a process. *What* kind of process is a matter of definition and perspective. The actors I've studied - via qualitative methods such as interviews, observations and focus groups as well as through studying policy document and debate materials – in their speech departed from the presupposition that there *is* a gentrification process that awaits the area. Petter, inhabitant in the district, who we will meet further later in this paper, and whose co-operative is leasing the shop-level space to Seven-Eleven, talked about what's happening in the district: *“You don't say no to 150-160000 extra per year. No, you don't do that, because you can't do that basically, with the regulations you have in a tenants society, you can't do that, because then you would basically commit malpractice.”* Jan, real-estate owner in the district, connects to the same problematic: *“We see more and more people with solid economy moving in there”*. Just as Petter, Jan doesn't position himself as an actor in the events that's about to converse the district. There seems to be no ways to empower an alternative development: *“Should I exercise charity work?”* Presuppositions as these are the prime reason for the causes of action actors we soon will meet take.

As for a very brief genealogy of the district in question, Långgatorna is four “long streets”, stretching from the political left hub of Järntorget to Masthuggstorget, about 800 meters out west. For a long time it's been characterized by left wing party politics and pornography/sex shops. The presence of the latter is stemming from the area's proximity to the river. When Göteborg still had harbours in it's more inner parts, Långgatorna and Järntorget was crowded with sailors, dock workers and stevedores, which attended the bars and sex shops in the area. Both these elements – sex shops and left wing party politics - still contributes to the character of the area, but in the last couple of decades this picture has been made broader. During the focus group I held with Göteborg planning authority in connection to the on-going planning procedure (that was due to a updating need of an almost 60 year old plan that wasn't sufficient to give building permits from), two district inhabitants described what they thought of as the characteristics of present day Långgatorna:

Louise: I experience the streets as, you know, when you enter Långgatorna, you feel that you get a different feeling, I get a more relaxed feeling because...you feel freer

there, I do, somehow. I don't really know why, but I guess you could reflect upon that.

Petter: I think dynamic is one of the keywords that I think about straight away when I think about Långgatorna compared with other such small communities in the city. It's all there, I mean, the porn shops throngs with quite good restaurants and, the collective housing isn't there in the same extension as before and there are pretty, well, maybe the most exclusive housing in Gothenburg at the moment, at least the recently built property. So, everything throngs in the same district, it's just a couple of hundred meters we're talking about. So, there is an enormous span, you know, both economically and from the most aspects that forms a room. Or that forms an urban environment.

Louise: Yeah, that's right, both in terms of retailing and enterprises that are also there, the politics are there too.

Petter: And it's a society from below, what evolves there isn't something that has been planned. At least that's what you experience, you get the feel that most of the enterprises sort of has grown organically, you can't create that artificially.

There is a comparatively high level of self-employed and independent business (perhaps the spirit of enterprise, that's been and still is characterizing the district, originates from the political-left heritage that has characterized Långgatorna/Järntorget historically (cf. Lökken 2002) in the district, As of today, a vast variety of designers is located in modest offices and studios in the area. Some of this design is being sold in the retail shops facing (foremost) Andra (2nd) Långgatan. The presence of these one-person company retailers, or, of more importance, the merchandise they retail, is a significant reason for the creation of a buzz about the area. Via media and word-of-mouth, Långgatorna and the area around Järntorget in this way has become the opposite pole in more than the political way. It could nowadays be said to be the opposite pole to the franchise biased inner city retailing, or at least so the retailers themselves argue. And at the other side of Järntorget, a significant number of actors in the media- and cultural production branches, as we will see, create another opposite pole – to the media/hi-tech cluster on the northern river bank. In 2002, there was a large amount of actors from different standpoints creating speech about this district, a speech that created the paradoxical situation of producing the assumed idea of an approaching gentrification – since this historically has been the fate of areas alike – as well as, as we shortly will see, opposition against such a change.

Turning to the empirical study; we will first look at the retailers in the district. Their presence, as just hinted, is significant for what the district is (or becomes, to be consistent with the theoretical perspective in this paper), according to a lot of the material concerning the planning of – and buzz around – it. The second part departs from a lobby group, a more explicit “programmer” of Långgatorna that emanates from the media- and cultural production cluster right on the edge of the southern riverbank area. In the third section, we move to the planning part of the programming and look at how actors in the focus group talked about the area and how this talk, as well as other programming, effects the eventual district plan.

The shop floor network: programming through retail

During a calm early summer day walk along Andra Långgatan, I'm being called in to Carl's store. The door is as usual wide open and tones from the French sound creator Colleen is

floating out on the street. Carl is a designer; he foremost makes clothes, mostly t-shirts, sweats and jackets with pretty conventional design but with abstract prints. After working in Indonesia for a couple of years with design and retailing t-shirts, he got an offer he couldn't refuse five years ago: a share in a studio in central Göteborg. Homesickness and a craving for a more permanent base for his business made him make a decision. Not long after the return, he and a business partner went searching for premises for a combined studio and retail shop. When a premise in the neighbouring district of Majorna fell through due to high rent costs, the search continued at Långgatorna:

While we were thinking, and I asked people around me, everyone said, 'do it at Långgatorna instead!'. I was pretty familiar with the area and had been buying records there for quite some time, hung out in the cafés and my sister was involved in Ung Vänster [Left party youth group]...so I had been here before, when it was another café down there. So it was pretty natural.

His shop mainly sells the garment he designs, but lately the selection has been expanded to include records with music that isn't sold anywhere else in the city. Carl smiles while telling about what seems like a great business decision; the estimated rate of 10 LPs a month turned out to be 180. The purposeful work with making the shop something more than clothes retailing is paying off.

So we started to trot around Andra Långgatan and after declining the old porn cinema 'Blue Video' due to a probable enormous renovation cost, we suddenly noticed that this tobacco shop had been closed for four-five days in row and with mouldy fruit laying in the window. It looked totally emptied.

After calling the shopkeeper up, offering a quick deal, Carl got access and the renovation work soon begun. During the three months it took, he realized what a good move he'd done. *"Because it was about then [late summer 2001] that people started to talk about the area, and that the newspapers wrote about it.* Carl has a very active attitude toward the area; he keeps check on what's happening there, especially when it comes to retail spaces. This particular day, he tells me about Lenny, that is about to open a street/hip hop-ware store a couple of blocks up the street. At another occasion, he tells me about a combined advertising agency/art exhibitionist that had got hold of another space in the street; both these enterprises are examples that fits well in the area, says Carl. In fact, his networking has been crucial to both these enterprises getting localized at Andra Långgatan. In Carl's mind, these two are far from enough:

And it would be great, I think so, if another [clothes] shop opens here, then others will follow (...) If there is a guy that wants to check a sweater here, the other guys doesn't tag along, if they're down town. But, if there are already five shops, of course the other could grab a coffee at Publik [neighbouring café] and check up all five, you know what I mean?

There isn't any outspoken agreement on what's ok or not to retail, but there seems to be tacit understandings founded on an idea of "in every-ones best interest". Carl talks about how the area needs a constant freshness, that the concepts could be evolved by themselves, to create a good entity for the area. Even if there isn't a formal network between the different shop owners, there are informal chats about opening hours, or about various arrangements:

Some of us talks a lot and some of are very committed, I think. I think the majority, the majority of whom I know that works here in the street works a great amount of hours every week. And it is often really alternative stuff, and there are no support from above, no-one is financed from outside. The majority is pretty hard working.

That there is no “backing” is one reason for helping each other out. But there is also the question of sharing creativity and knowledge. Lenny, who’s only been situated in the area for half a year when we talk, gives a picture of how different businesses in the area are being “cross-fertilized”:

Lenny: [about why his business is situated in the area] Because I like the people around here a lot, and I know a lot of people, um...because there are cheaper rent, of course, but also because...I don’t know. It has gotten to this that people are helping each other out. I don’t know if it’s just my luck, with the people I’ve met. And, also, it’s fun to represent something in some way, an area. It’s like making a mark on the map. And, though I guess it’s just unconscious, but now when I sit here and narrate [laughs]. I haven’t really thought about it myself.

Joakim: But when you said that you’re helping each other out, do you have any good example of that?

Lenny: Thousands. Everything, well, now Otto went to China and I’m looking after his business somewhat. The people in here in the backyard, with the design collective, I’m doing their website, and they sell there stuff in my store. (...) I’m going to play at Ralf’s club. There is a plentiful.

But is this networking particular for these specific retailers? What separates retailers at Långgatorna from others? Carl’s reasoning about this, as we saw above, highlighted how none of the shops in the area are part of a franchise, which creates a bigger need for communication; the composition of shops separates the area from other shopping passages. In the city, there are smaller need to share knowledge and information, since there are corporations and manuals backing up. Yet another retailer at Andra Långgatan, Willy, gives Carl the role of webmaster in an “unspoken network”:

Willy: But Carl, you talk to him about this and that and try to keep the doors open for different things and at the same time everyone’s working a lot of hours; it’s hard finding time for those things. We’ve [Willy’s business] been, like, we tag a long and make our contribution when something surfaces. We don’t take that many own initiatives.

Joakim: But do you feel any responsibility to maintain what’s attracting customers, or, are good for the retailers here?

Willy: I haven’t defined it that way, but by tip people that has business that would fit in here, I think I take responsibility for everybody’s interest, it’s not something others would argue against.

Joakim: But...do you think that there is anyone that would lose on there being a network?

Willy: No, I don’t think so. No, I think that everyone that’s a part of it, if you could say so, thinks that, I think Jim and Carl says that ‘this would be good for Willy too’, without them going around and asking all the time. We have a feeling what would be good or not.

Joakim: But how do you get to such a feeling?

Willy: Well... we've just gotten to it because we like each other, I think it's through that, you know. It's not at all that we sat down to discuss it, had an agenda, talking through what we really think about stuff.

It's a seemingly small and loosely knit network that, none the same, creates an important "weight" on the Långgatorna program, making it more durable. The area to a great extent *becomes* through the presence of businesses like Carl's, Lenny's and Willy's, an idea quite a lot of the material, not least the media articles and the planning documents, supports. There is a network that stems from identification with a partially common, but not always explicit, program. You help out to keep the program durable; when spaces are being released to let, a phone-chain is created, to ensure that the content in the area is maintained – or even better, evolved. There might also be more activities in the area that would be another way of "adding weights" to the program: Lenny told me about happenings and joint advertisements, as well as an "Andra Långdag" ("Second [referring to it being the second of four *long streets*] Longday") that is sketched out. Time, again, is the problem for these happenings happening. Willy still thinks that something will happen in a not too distant future: *"It should be more of that here; I think it should work, more events. I think there are work on this in each and everyone's kitchen. But there will soon come a day when this gets co-ordinated"*. Co-ordination is the key word for the next section, another programming of Långgatorna. At the other side of Järntorget, there are a number of actors, that in comparison to the retailers here, founded a more formal network, and from more explicit agendas.

The explicit network: programming through lobbying

It is a combination of the up-coming re-generation project on the southern riverbank and the updating need of the Långgatorna district plan, which worked as catalysts for the production of speech and action at Långgatorna and its surroundings. Järntorgsgruppen, an informal network consisting of "representatives of cultural institutions and NGO's, i.e. important democracy carriers" (Järntorgsgruppen presents themselves and their agenda, in GöteborgsPosten 030221) wasn't originally founded as a response to these transformation issues. It was rather a question of strengthening the media cluster in the area, a media cluster that had its centre in Lagerhuset², an old dock warehouse near the Göta River. "What could be done with the cluster around Järntorget?", Business Region Göteborg (BRG) asked itself, and sent an employee to sort the question out. Järntorgsgruppen was thus founded through an initiative to support the evolution of the small scale and independent media company cluster accommodated at a municipality owned property situated right between two city planning projects. Pretty soon focus change towards the possible/probable change of the area prerequisites and it was from this problematic that the first public appearance this assembly of actors – adult educators, movie- and theatre producers, freelancing writers, independent publishers and actors – departed. A polemic article was written, that aimed to raise awareness of the businesses and activity that is localized in the area surrounding Järntorget, businesses that the actors assert as valuable. In these businesses, an "alternative" Göteborg exists, the article stated. The article was one of several moves the group made in its first year, and, returning to the theoretical framework again, it was a way of adding weight to the program: the action taken departed from an anxiousness regarding the future of the area. A platform was settled during one of the early meetings and stated there, besides from the programming

2 Located in the far right upper corner in the square at the map (see appendix at the end of this paper).

of Järntorget and its surroundings as one of Göteborgs most vital areas, was the need for a more formalized structure for co-operation between actors with a common interest:

When Götatunneln [the tunnel under the southern river shore] is ready; the area is going to be more attractive than it is today. This involves a possibility, but also a threat to the organizations that is dependent on low rent costs. A higher pressure of exploitation poses a risk to chase away many of the actors with limited resources that is situated around the square [Järntorget]. These organizations thus have a **common interest** in watching and possibly influence the exploitation plans for the southern riverbank. (Emphasis in original)

In the platform, four different work fields that the group was to focus on, was laid out; meeting-point, marketing, knowledge production, and political pressure. The urgency of the get-going planning processes in the area, pretty soon steered focus on to the latter two (although it's hard to make clear distinctions between these four; for instance, political pressure and knowledge production could both be seen as ways of marketing if marketing is interpreted beyond the economic correlations). The polemic article – from the Latourian perspective a materialization, thereby a “weight” - that was produced, programmed the area in the matter of articulating its content and values. With this ground laid, consideration on a proposal (for the Långgatorna planning process) – another weight added - was put together, and the “political pressure”-field was covered. The result of the polemic article didn't exactly meet the expectations of the group: as a reply to it, an editorial in GöteborgsPosten seemed to restrict their room to manoeuvre. It stated that the group's agenda was blurry, as well as protectionist: *“Järntorgsgruppen is conservative and doesn't believe in planning”*.

To keep the work going, the activity turned to the third field of work in the platform: knowledge production (and in this, the first “field” got covered as well): *“The self-interest was channelled trough, for instance, Erling Fossen [Norwegian “city doctor”]. Somebody else gave suggestions”*, Frank, one of the founders of the group says about how they thought after the editorial. A seminar series, which was originally thought of as support for the media articles, was put together. The seminars also had the function to increase the group's own knowledge base; these were not actors with city transformation as field of knowledge, as Frank put it. After the editorial critique, the seminars became the primary channel for the groups work. During a handful of winter nights in 2003, the audience listened to, amongst others, already mentioned Fossen, to Les Back, English urban scientist, and to planners and researchers from Manchester, that had a “best practice example” in its “Northern quarters”. The seminar series also produced a handful of new media articles, now in form of a series of independently written articles and polemics by architectural critics and city/urban scientist, commenting and/or reflecting upon the issues discussed at the seminars presented by Järntorgsgruppen.

The actions taken by Järntorgsgruppen, that I give a couple of examples of here, are a palette of construction of meanings, of the *programming*, of Långgatorna. Both the media debate and the seminar series worked as “weights” to the program, something that also goes for the consideration to the planning process. The lack of a clear agenda didn't seem to be a problem, even though both the group themselves and, as we've seen, other actors thought so. The group quickly became a force to be counted on, to respect and take into account, and despite its dormant state, it still is a potential “threat” to the transformation process (that after a longer while of ticking due to uncertainties in the planning work procedure again is on the get-go, as mentioned earlier). What from the start wasn't suppose to be about opposition at all, but to find forms of developing a media cluster, soon took a more (explicit) political turn and thus creating a variety of translations of the same kind.

Thickening the plot: the planner translation

The district plan for Långgatorna, to which Järntorgsgruppen supplied a consideration, took influence from the work discussed in the previous two sections: the different bindings between actors of different backgrounds create a program, “Långgatorna” (i.e. its *meaning*, not the administrative borders). Järntorgsgruppen were but one of a vast number of actors doing *translations* of this program. The discussion in the focus group I held in connection to the planning process literally sometimes existed at a gutter level – a level that evidently is more than just paving. In this excerpt from the focus group, the participants talk about the possibility of making adjustments to Andra Långgatan in order to strengthen the “shopping character”, that is, as been discussed in previous sections, one of the districts most important features:

Louise: (inhabitant): It’s almost better with a residential area street³, because then there will be no cars there.

Anita: (city planner): Yes, there will be no parking that way.

Petter (inhabitant): No car parking at all?

Anita: No, you could stop and deliver and pick up goods to and from the retail stores, but you can’t...I think there has been some experiment, I think, where you have parking lots as well, I’m not sure how that’s carried out.

Petter: But how do one for example, I mean, the porn shops won’t survive such a crisis, because it will be a crisis for them, you could almost say that with certainty. Because they live that much on car traffic. And that’s obvious, it would be much cosier on Andra Långgatan, with pavement cafés and restaurants and what not. But then you will lose that and then other things will disappear as well, the synergy effect will create other effects when that disappears and, well, if you think about rents and such. (...) But I think that they’re needed. They’re there. It’s surely really degrading for women, but now they’re there.

Jan: (real-estate owner): But they’re not that dominate, as presented in the papers, that Andra Långgatan is a porn-street...

Petter: No, that’s bullshit!

Jan: I don’t think they’re that dominating.

Maja: (shop-keeper): No, they’re not. But these discussions, that it is positive, is going on amongst us too, that it is good for keeping the rents down. Not all kinds of shops are locating to Andra Långgatan as long as they’re there.

3 “Gårdsgata” in Swedish, which is a pedestrian street (Gågata in Swedish) but with cars permitted – though on the pedestrians and bicyclists terms.

Jan: Yes, that's right.

Maja: So, that discussion is going on amongst us [shop keepers].

Petter: Even though you sell feminist literature?

Maja: Yeah, but of course I think it's disgusting. But they have an important function for the street, you know.

Petter: If they were to disappear, what happens to the street then? I think a lot would.

What initially is thought of as a manoeuvre to increase the attractiveness of the district, hopefully with the synergy effect of increasing the incomes of the retailers at Andra Långgatan, would thus possibly be a counterproductive act – counterproductive (to use Latourian terminology; it would be an “anti-program”) - in relation to the “program” that the different actors I've presented in this paper are making. To return to the theoretical framework for this paper again: the “weight” that is the contents in the shops facing foremost Andra Långgatan could lose its significance if other weights – paving stones⁴ – is added to it. Even the seemingly “uneconomic” density in the area in terms of un-used building permits (plain one-storey buildings is located on a handful of such lots) is a weight of “right kind”, or, seen from the other angle, the full usage of these building permits (thereby constructing new buildings) would be a weight on the “anti-program” – that in this case is economy (disguised as “gentrification”). The varied heights are another important feature, according to the focus group participants. This knowledge, as well as other statements about Långgatorna, both from the focus group and from the vast amount of pleas in the planning process and in the media debates around it; all these different ways of programming Långgatorna, different ways of connecting sociality and materiality, influenced the planning document:

In the views that have been received during the consultation, one can see a clear consensus in certain issues. (...) The Långgatorna district has a clear identity that is important to protect. The special character depends to a great extent on the varied meaning, and on the mixed content of retail shops, restaurants, workshops, housing, etc. That the area has evolved during a long time span has great importance and it should be allowed to do so even in the future.

Conclusion

The area of Långgatorna is seemingly on the verge of gentrification; it has most or all of the classical prerequisites – high density of designers of varied sorts, subversive/independent stores (records, books, clothes), an increasing amount of co-operative flats as well as a reputation of being one of the most interesting and creative areas in the city. And, above all, its vicinity to an in Göteborg strategic area of re-development, would be a probable cause to create a domino effect and a final push towards an unwanted change. As the brief examples I've discussed shows, there are programming being made, there are sociality and technology being tied together to make the chain, the program, “Långgatorna” durable in relation to this probable change. The lesson learned through this example of different actors being active in (a probable beginning of) a redevelopment process concerns *productivity*. What I want to

4 Which very often is the material used in pedestrian residential-, or pedestrian streets.

stress through these examples is that there is no such thing as “inevitability”. Meaning is *produced* via actors making connections to other actors. The empirical examples in this paper illustrate how such actions could be expressed, and what the outcome could be. The planning document – the guidelines for how to meet requests from developers of different kinds – in this particular case stated that the scope for change is limited; there simply are too many actors “translating” the program in the same way. The plan *itself* thereby became a weight in the programming of Långgatorna.

Returning to the post-industrial city context that opened this paper; the “competition” – that of course is real in the sense there *are* businesses re-locating to low-wage countries and that there *is* need for western cities and countries to find new livelihoods – *creates* speech and materializations. Some of these materializations I opened up this paper by giving an example of; the welcoming signs are *one* example of weights, technology, being added to a program in order to make it durable. The speech connects to, and creates, an idea of fate, that the movement in city transformation could only go in one direction, a direction where the space for the “other”, the odd, the affordable or independent in central (or, as with the example of housing for the homeless or the forensic psychiatry centre, *any*) locations is impossible to maintain. The productivity is thus shown in the empirical examples in this text: there *are* other possibilities – if there are actors creating durable programs. I believe that the way of studying planning/city conversion processes as presented here, departing from the idea of these processes being power practices and connections between sociality and materiality, is a productive way to deconstruct the problematic “truths” that works as restraints for the reaching of societal goals as social inclusion and integration.

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