Karin Becker/Tema Q
2005-04-19

Art through City Space –
Proposal for an Arts-based
Research Project

KONST GENOM STADEN
ART THROUGH CITY SPACE

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Specific Aims

Art occupies a central place in the public life of the city. Today artists are using their work to further investigate and extend the meanings of the city for its inhabitants. In this project three artists develop works that address and engage the space of the city and its people in very different ways. The work will be carried out parallel to and in dialogue with a cultural research project investigating the making of urban centrality with a particular focus on the place of media. Located in the Department of Culture Studies (Tema Q) at Linköping University, the arts-based research project is planned as the first major effort in the department's newly established area of "Creative Processes in Culture and Media." The goal of the three-year project is through the network of scholars and artists to develop forms appropriate for reflecting on the creative processes of arts-based research and the knowledge they engender, focusing on the relationship of art to public space.

Survey of the field: Art and public space.

The role of art in public space has been increasingly under scrutiny and debate in recent years. This past fall the National Public Art Council (Konstrådet) and Swedish Travelling Exhibitions (Riksutställningar) initiated a series of discussions on the "Possibilities of Public Space" inviting artists, designers, urban planners and researchers to examine, critique and expand ways of thinking about the relationship between art and its publics, focusing on urban space (ORM 2005, see also Statens konstråd 2002, 2003). A series of questions was raised, many of which are relevant for the proposed project. A primary question is who is the "general public" in this age of diversity? In what ways does art in public space position its audience, and to whom does it speak? Related to this question is the right of self-expression in the public sphere of urban space, raised by the work of graffiti and street artists as well as feminist theorists, and challenging many of the established hierarchies of the fine arts (Massey 1994, Becker 2005).

The traditional concept of public art as heroic and commemorative monuments built to invoke history and to withstand the ravages of time and vandalism, no longer seems appropriate for the questions being posed today. In the emerging countries of the former East Block and elsewhere, statues are pulled

down in symbolic acts of re-writing history. What is the role of public art to be in times of permanent change? The "norm of publicness" that Michael Miles (1997) described as governing the display of art in public space is no longer relevant. Certainly the work of many contemporary artists confronts the old norms of public art (Stewart 2005). Is it possible to use public space to display work, for example that is ephemeral, performance- or web-based and interactive? Here we find artists working to maintain the flux between permanence and change, between past and present, that is central to contemporary city life. Is there a place for works, often made in collaboration with "non-artists", that challenge the concept of public consensus, with its received concepts of history and value?

Another issue is whether art can serve as a counterweight to the increasingly privatised and commercialised arenas of public life (Becker 2001). The mediatisation of public space, particularly through advertising, continues to expand. This is also relevant to the problematic relationship between centre and periphery, where again, media play a key role in assigning significance to these different spatial regions. On the other hand, new media forms and their uses broaden the concept of the public sphere. The physical space of the agora has been replaced by debate and exchange of ideas in virtual space. As artists engage with these issues, can their work be made available and accessible in forms that maintain their autonomy and engage their public(s) in new articulations of public space, both physical and virtual? Can art serve to illuminate the processes that divide public space into visible and invisible regions, without underwriting anew the values associated with the visible and powerful in the common arenas of public life?

A final question is whether art in public space can articulate both individual and collective aspects of experience in an era of constant change. This requires an artistic research that engages reflective thought on social processes, and that uses the past and its different histories as tools for considering the present. As Shalev-Gerz argues, « such articulations of remembering and forgetting is conducted in relation to two distinct poles: on the one hand, collective or public knowledge, i.e., everything stemming from public education, communication and information, such as the media, and, on the other hand, the personal relationship that we maintain with our past experiences and especially with our own present; however, these opposite poles combine to form a perpetual movement, a state of constant imbalance." How can art in public space engage with this imbalance?

Project description

The overall aim of the project is to develop arts-based research that explores how public space can be used to address different aspects of city life, using a range of media and approaches. The problematic issues of art in public space are central to the work of the three artists in the project. Project leader Karin Becker has an extensive research background in visual media and culture studies, has previously led projects on arts-based research and pedagogy, and has been an active participant in the current debates on the role of art in public space. Her role is to coordinate the three projects, and to bring them into dialogue with each other and with the ongoing research on urban centrality in the Department of Culture Studies, Linköping University. The first project, carried out by photographer Johan Berglund, builds on his experience documenting everyday life in strife-ridden regions, and the questions it has raised about representations of difference. The second project, carried out by artist Jonas Dahlberg in collaboration with Göran Dahlberg, extends their previous examination of "invisible" cities into new regions and media. In the final project, artist Esther Shalev-Gerz, continues her explorations of collective and individual histories, of remembering and forgetting, in the face of continual social and political change. Here the three individual projects are presented, followed by a brief description of the project implementation including a budget summary, and the network in which the project will be carried out.

Project 1: 8h[eight hours] (Johan Berglund)

Nothing shapes our view of the world to a greater extent than the media. Media put a premium on shock-value over identification in their use of pictures from conflict. This creates gaps in society and increases our distance from those pictured in the press. It lets us think that the world consists not of people like ourselves, but rather of victims and perpetrators with whom we have nothing in common and therefore to whom we cannot relate. This is not how people from our own part of the world are portrayed. Instead we are shown pictures in which we can identify aspects of our own experience. We are shown lives that we can relate to and therefore we care.

The media, and the press, usually explain their ways of representing conflict by claiming that the further away, the more we have to be shown simplified facts of the conflict and the parties involved. However this seems to only hold true when the people don't look like our neighbors. Reporting from the Zimbabwe elections in 2002 clearly show this fact. As long as the story dealt with the plight of the white farmers we were shown pictures of families on a close and personal level. As soon as the focus turned

to the black population they were reduced to a stereotypical mass of dark Africa.

In order to understand the horror of events where thousands of people are killed, we need not to see simply pictures of swollen bodies in rivers but pictures of persons and families who go on living. Focusing on the personal and everyday is a powerful way to illuminate its contrast, the magnitude of destruction. We need to be allowed the insight that there are people living in conflict, being killed, with whom we might have liked to sit down and share a drink and a conversation. We need to see that this is our world, that we are part of it. It is our right.

Photography is a powerful means of conveying this, but its documentary impact is too often reduced to stereotypes and conventions that make events easier to grasp, at the same time more distanced from our own experience. The project 8 h confronts this problem in two ways. The first is through the photographs themselves and the ways they reverse the conventions of photojournalism from distanced clichés, introducing new ways of looking at people and events. Photojournalism has in recent years been embroiled in debates about the need to renew and revitalize its "visual language" by changing its professional structure and editorial practices. Berglund has accomplished this through his noteworthy

images, often from places and tragedies that have been the focus of the news media (PFK 1999). Through his way of working, however, he goes around and behind the received images taken by the majority of photographers on the spot. His photographs succeed in capturing a sense of daily life in the midst of conflict.

The second aspect is to introduce these photographs into public space, on a huge scale. By placing these images, each 2950 square feet, on building facades in central Stockholm, Berglund's work confronts the news images the public meets in the press and on television (cf. Berglund 2003). The events that are part of public knowledge, but that take place at a great distance are suddenly in our midst, in the city centre where we carry out our daily lives. The exhibition is therefore an examination of public space and the pictures that figure in it. As advertising grows ever larger in scale and scope we are bombarded with visual communication that tries to make us desire something. What will be the reaction to a project that uses these same spaces in an effort to inform, educate and engage us in a debate?

In the first phase of 8 h project, funding has been obtained to exhibit 22 pictures, each 2950sqft, on building facades in central Stockholm in August 2005. The exhibition will then travel out into Europe during the summer of 2006 and to the US 2007. During

2006 a range of pedagogic projects are planned as part of "Art through City Space", to examine the impact and meaning that these images generate in the public arena. These include, in addition to seminars and lectures, a book of 50 photographs to be published in a first edition of 10.000 copies. A free quarterly magazine printed in 50.000 copies is also planned, which will also be published online. The magazine will represent the results and experience of the exhibition, and separate funding will be sought for its production.

The first exhibition and book will also provide a springboard for further photographic documentation. Trips are planned to Africa and Asia during the second year of the project, in order to extend the project into previously unexplored areas. Is it possible to combine Lifestyle with Depth, from Monaco to Angola? How is identification established? Can images that portray everyday life be used in public space as a bridge between popular culture, literature, the arts and documentary reporting of existence outside our own frames of reference? The aim is covert activism, to use images not to play on guilt but as a catalyst for feeling part of the world and doing something.

Project 2. Secret Cities (Jonas Dahlberg in collaboration with Göran Dahlberg)

Today, we often speak of new mega-cities or megalopolises that grow faster and faster and generate new conditions for urban living. Sometimes, we talk of rural areas and their depopulation, their insufficient or excessive funding. But we rarely talk of the in-between cities. The ones that just exist, and keep on existing. Cities so big that you can spend your entire lifetime in them without having any reason to move somewhere else, and yet so small that it is hard to remain unknown. There are – according to a survey based on statistics by "Citypopulation" in *Invisible Cities* (Dahlberg, 2004) – more than 14,000 of these invisible cities in the world today. 14,000 cities that hardly anyone outside the city limits knows about. The first part of this project represented Sweden in the Sao Paulo Biennale 2004 and will be shown at Moderna Museet in Stockholm in autumn 2005. The project "Secret Cities" is an extension and deepening of the invisible city project, as well as a transformation from city to place.

The first step is to open up and distance the project and process from the traditional exhibition space, by producing a web site representing the invisible cities. The web is a medium well suited to the research based artistic approaches; one is able to collect and

adapt a vast material, in different media forms and formats, and the results are able to grow and change continuously, like an archive. The interface of the website works as an open format where the artists, researchers and other users are able to collect and present information. In accordance with case studies in social sciences or the strategy refined by the Italian writer Italo Calvino, peripheral cities are examined to reveal more or less general characteristics of a city, and at the same time to uncover aspects of the concept of "city" (Calvino 1972/1974). In this way the Dahlbergs investigate the conceptual changes in a person's way of relating to "place", to visiblilty and invisiblility, but also to secret spaces.

The communicative backdrop of the website is the glittering image of the nighttime lights of the world, where you can see the cities visible from a satellite at night. This black world map with small glowing white dots can be approached as a skeleton map where it is possible to get information on the invisible or secret cities (or places) of the world. You are obliged to search and describe what you cannot see.

"It's not even on the map", we sometimes say. As if the map was more real than reality, as if there were things that only become visible through representation rather than by direct experience. Parallel to the work with the web site we proceed with the research

of the secret cities. These are cities that for some reason are not shown on maps. An obvious example is the secret cities in the former Soviet Union. There were once around fifty of them and an estimated fifteen cities of this kind are still not on the map. Today around two million people live in these previously secret cities. They are beginning to appear on maps, but they are still exempt from many of the rights and obligations of democratic society. Analogous cities have also existed for example in the USA and in Great Britain. Modelled on the Garden City, these cities were to a great extent planned to satisfy the anticipated needs of the workers and their families.

In *Invisible Cities* the Dahlbergs established contacts with researchers in the fields of sociology, urban planning, architecture, social anthropology from different parts of the world, contacts they will pursue and develop in the new project. Some large scale research programs are also relevant, like the German-based "Shrinking cities", which analyses more than 8,000 cities around the world (Oswalt 2002-2005)

In this attempt to make use of the "and" in the combination of art and research the Dahlbergs sponge upon different kinds of models: the conceptually precise literary and artistic strategies, the widening e-mail surveys, the narrowing linguistic and historical

studies, the stressing statistics, documentary approaches, architectural models, photographic location studies etc. An important part of this project is to document the process of locating some of the secret cities in Russia, as well as the actual cities and the journey in and out of there. They therefore aim to visit several of them, for example the "atomic" city Seversk (also known as Tomsk-7 or Tomsk oblast), or the high tech specialist city Zheleznogorsk (also known as Krasnoyarsk-26 or Berezovskiy). For a post cold war comparision they will also visit the famous and nowadays quite visible former secret cities in the USA, for example Los Alamos. The study will also contain material from historical secret cities and cities in other parts of the world. Like in *Invisble Cities* the visible will describe the invisible. The question of how the secret places relate to the visible and the invisible is the main focus of this study.

Project 3: Remembering Imagination (Esther Shalev-Gerz)

Taking up various forms of official histories, Shalev-Gerz' work discloses the normalised expectations of written remembrances, of historiography, in the face of more or less permanent social change. Using representations of the past, including documentary texts and images, which aid remembering, her work investigates the construction of memory. In this project she addresses the question:

What is the portrait of a city? Is it the city today or is it both what it is today and what it could have been? Seeking to shed the lens of history in order to closely examine particular historical moments defined by a compulsive longing for categorical purity, she examines the past in the context of the present and the future. Her goal is the production of new language, new names for categories and disciplines within social histories.

The imperatives of war that normally effect architecture and war's inevitable aftermath of destroyed cityscapes, are both absent from the Swedish cityscape. Instead of armed conflict, civic decision-making in response to other kinds of events has determined the current face of many Swedish cities. A spectrum of interests and experiences, chance and accident, all unavoidably inflected civic planning processes. A populace's understanding of reality governs its will to construct or destroy its built environment. Drawing from city archives, locating and re-presenting documentation of buildings that were proposed but never built or, alternately, that were built but later destroyed, *Remembering Imagination* will reveal a parallel realm of possibility -- a possible city, an imaginary architectural vision comprised of actual and imagined buildings (Shalev-Gerz 2004c).

This project responds to the dynamics of history and change. It reflects the relationships between places and peoples, between conscious decisions and the semblance of chance. It attempts to work in two modes and in two directions at once. In one mode it questions certain types of historiography, and in the other it pushes the boundaries of both virtuality and reality, reaching for new possibilities. The aim of the project is to create a model of a specific city centre, including buildings that were proposed for construction and never built, or that were destroyed by human decision, natural disaster or accident. The proposed project will juxtapose the unaccountability of history and the limitlessness of possibility. Extracted from history -- the sum of chance, accident and aesthetic, moral and civic decision-making -- taken directly from the materials of an imagined reality preserved within the city's archives, a complementary reality is brought forth. The virtual becomes real and the real assumes other dimensions enhanced by imagined memories.

The architecture of a place can determine our response to it. Shalev-Gerz' aim is to introduce potential alternatives and parallel realities in contrast to the actuality of the present. Taking the proposed or actual locations of historical buildings documented in the archives, and representing them in model form, she will superimpose the city's imagined and previously actualised past on its existing features. The missing buildings from the real city are the memory of the local people's desire, creativity and imagination. This is when desire becomes memory. As in her previous works, she will exploit architecture's emotional impact and its ability to shape and colour our understanding of reality. Her objectives are to locate, identify and reveal the possibilities for social and architectural complementarities.

Like earlier projects, including Deadalus, in Dublin's Northern Inner City, the proposed project will (re)constitute an urban location (Shalev-Gerz 2004b). In that work, photographs of local building fronts were projected onto other architectural facades within the neighborhood, creating both displacement and discovery. Additionally, an overlay of images from the past and present constructs a visual text, a palimpsest of and about place, which invites anticipatory memories than can enhance one's sense of belonging. Both the meaning and the creative processes of the Daedalus project relied on the active participation of individuals within the community and depended on negotiations with residents. The present project will similarly involve engagement and collaboration with local inhabitants.

In her works in the public realm, a space is constructed for memories activated by participation, that is to say, the moment when the supposed spectator becomes a participant by writing his name, using his voice or sending in his photo. Thanks to the traces left during these acts, these participants keep the memory of their own participation in the work's procedure. This also bears witness to their responsibility to their own times, even if the work itself is transient or disappears, mirroring the exigencies of contemporary life. As in Shalev-Gerz' previous projects, such as the Monument against Fascism (Shalev-Gerz 1986, 1994), the production actualisation process relies on disturbing the conventional relationship between the producer and spectator, on the utterance of words, and on a memory constructed and transformed through participation. Her approach invites an enactment of agency, creating a memory, a remembrance (the "I was there") signifying the commitment of people to the(ir) world.

Project implementation

The project framework includes regular internal seminars where the artists and researchers from the Department of Culture studies meet to discuss their ongoing work, comparing their work processes and preliminary results. The double aim of these seminars will be first, to illuminate similarities and differences between the different forms of research and second, to discuss the results of each investigation as it progresses. The seminars will be documented, and a web site established to maintain an internal dialogue between the project meetings.

During the project's final year an open seminar will be held, with invited guests from the broader project network. This will be followed by a report in book form, presenting the results of each of the arts-based research projects and a critical reflection over the collaboration.

The *budget* includes 3 years funding of Becker at 20%, (with Linköping University supporting half of that amount during 2006) and of a project assistant at 15%. Berglund is funded at 20% and J. Dahlberg, G. Dahlberg and Shalev-Gerz at 15 % throughout the project. Literature and materials (film, video, developing costs) to support the three arts projects and document the work come to 156kSEK (2006), 126kSEK (2007) and 48kSEK (2008) = 330kSEK. The cost of the website in Dahlbergs project is estimated at 11kSEK (cost of domain) + 60kSEK (coding & layout) + 20kSEK (continual updating with new material) = 91kSEK. The realisation of Shalev-Gerz work (2007) is estimated at 250kSEK. Travel costs + hotel & per diem for Dahlbergs' fieldwork in Russia (2 weeks) and the US (2

weeks), Berglunds fieldwork in Africa and Asia (6 weeks), plus Shalev-Gerz travel, hotel and per diem comes to a total of 523kSEK for the 3 years. The costs for translators/guides during Dahlbergs' and Berglund's fieldwork (2006-2007) is 37kSEK. Information (documentation and project reports) and the project web site are estimated at 130kSEK for the 3 years.

The project environment

Tema Q – the Department of Culture Studies – and the newly established area of "Creative Processes in Culture and Media" is an ideal environment for this path-breaking collaboration between cultural and arts-based research. The department pursues interdisciplinary research and offers a postgraduate programme, contributing to knowledge about culture in a wide sense and its significance to society. Tema Q together with the Department of History, the Centre for Local History, the Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden (ACSIS), and the East-Sweden Municipality Research Centre (CKS), make up the Department for the Study of Social Change and Culture (ISAK). Tema Q also has close contact with KSM (Kultur, samhälle, mediegestaltning) that includes artists and researchers in undergraduate and masters programs. At the Institutionen för datakunskap (IDA) researchers and designers collaborate on a range of development projects. Tema Qs cross-departmental contact net has been further enriched by recent efforts to establish "visualization, visuality and visual culture" within Linköping University's research profile, with collaborations planned across the three faculties of science, medicine and the humanities.

Tema Q also has extensive external networks in many relevant subfields, including Nordic networks for the uses of history, collaborating national and European institutions for cultural policy, transnational networks for cultural studies, and the sites developing new forms of study on the borderline between artistic and academic work. *ACSIS* in particular serves as a hub for external networking and is a national resource for strengthening interfaces between disciplines, research areas, universities and countries in the cultural studies field. Its experiences and routines for visiting scholars and other kinds of co-operation across borders will be of great use for the project.

The project can further build on previous collaboration in several interdisciplinary research networks as well as networks connecting research to agents and organisations within the cultural sector: The Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs (Kulturrådet),

Swedish Traveling Exhibitions (Riksutställningars), National Public Art Council (Konstrådet),The National Heritage Board, (Riksantikvarieämbetet), The Arts Grants Committee (Konstnärsnämnden) and The Swedish Joint Committee for Artistic and Literary Professionals (KLYS Konstnärliga och litterära yrkesutövares samarbetsnämnd). Collaboration is also developed with The Knowledge Foundation (Stiftelsen för kunskap och kompetensutveckling), which has been active in funding applied research in the experience industries, and with The Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research (NORDICOM).

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