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“Dressed for success”: Entrepreneurial cities, sports and public space

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Changes underway in the global economy have changed the governance of cities where private and public partnerships plays a central role in planning the city. Cities must market themselves in order to attract investments, tourism and not least, the creative class. Public spaces in the city centres are increasingly seen as integral parts of regeneration strategies focused on developing positive images. One of the most obvious changes is the turn towards so-called cultural strategies that range from the promotion of cultural gentrification to the implementation of various “quality-of-life projects.” All of these strategies attach great importance to design and visual symbols. For former industrial cities bigger events such as for example sports championships play an important role in the transformation to post-industrial cities. This article discusses how public space of the city centre of Göteborg was used during the European Athletic Championship 2006 to market Göteborg as a city. The article ends up with a discussion of the meaning of public space in the age of entrepreneurialism.

Introduction

Today the city is once again emerging as a strategic site for understanding some of the major new trends reconfiguring the social order, and hence potentially for producing critical knowledge not just about cities but about the larger social condition. (Saskia Sassen 2005: 353)

/Cities/ have become sites on which often contradictory cultural, economic and political tendencies combine: a lens through which to view and to interpret wider changes around social inequalities, changing lifestyles, new working-time arrangements and consumption patterns. (Kevin Ward 2003: 200-201)

What seems to be a paradox is dominating the discussion on the city today. On the one hand researchers, urban planners and politicians celebrate an urban renaissance, where public space is re-valued and promoted as an important meeting place. City centres all over the globe are developed in order to endorse safe and friendly milieus for consumption and recreation. On the other hand the death of the city is proclaimed with the argument that public spaces in many cities are privatized and only accessible for a few, not for the many. Representing two different perspectives on the city, the arguments should not be interpreted as opposites but rather different sides of the same coin – cities becomes more attractive by upgrading the city centres and displacing that or those who do not fit into the image. These tendencies open up a structural possibility for a fight over the meaning(s) of public space where the same place can have competing and mutual exclusive significance for different actors. Taken together this brings to the fore questions such as: what is the meaning of public space, for whom it is public, how and by which means is it regulated what and whom can be seen and meet in this space? In this article I would like to put these questions into a context of entrepreneurial governance – a form of governing that has been the dominant response to the urban problems of post-industrial cities (Bélanger 2000, Jessop 1998). I will use an empirical case from Gothenburg, Sweden to illustrate and develop my arguments. In this article I will start with a discussion of entrepreneurial governance, the uses of culture and order and then turn to a discussion of how public space was used during the European Athletic Championship 2006 in Gothenburg. The article will end with a reflexion of what these changes means for the understanding of public space.

The spectacle of the city

The entrepreneurial turn

The global transformation of the political economy of cities involves a change in the governance of the cities, of many described as a change from government to governance (Fainstein 1994, Smith 2001). This means that rather than seeing urban decision-making as ruled from the top down this analyses stress that urban decision-making is not hierarchical and it is fragmented. Therefore when analysing the governance of the city the relevant question is not so much who governs but which actor(s) has the ability to act? In many cities, especially the former industry and harbour cities, this has meant a shift from urban “managerialism” to urban “entrepreneurialism” (Harvey 1989). Central to this development is, first, “a shift from the local provision of welfare and services to more outward-oriented policies designed to foster and encourage local growth and economic development” (Hall & Hubbard 1998: 2). These out warded policies include increased real estate development, applying for bigger sports events, building so called knowledge villages and entertainments parks. The politics tends to focus “proactive development strategies” in order to make the economy grow. It is a

process where cities both *act* as entrepreneurs and *narrate* their actions in entrepreneurial terms (Ward 2003).

Second, the city is governed by public and private partnerships where real estate owners and commercial companies play important roles in the development of the city. Thus the entrepreneurial city is described as “one where key interest groups in the public, private and voluntary sector develop a commitment to realising a broadly consensus vision of urban development, devise the appropriate structures for implementing this vision and mobilise both local and non-local resources to pursue it.” (Parkinson and Harding 1995: 66-67). Many researchers has stressed the notion of consensus either by portraying entrepreneurialism as a distinctive *political culture* (Graham 1995) or as elaborated by Quilley in his analyze of the “Manchester script”: a vision of Manchester as a reborn post-modern, post-industrial and cosmopolitan European “premier league” city which “acts to demobilise opposition and deny discursive space to any alternative script” (Quilley 1999: 205).

Third, public spaces in the city centre are increasingly seen as part of regenerations strategies where the focus is on developing positive images of the city centre as “attractive and safe” in order to attract investments and tourism. This process of “urban imagineering” involves both refinements of the physical environment as well as the imagined spaces of identity (Short et al. 2000). And lastly, culture plays a central role in the transformation of previously productive cities into “spectacular” ones. Sharon Zukin has argued that one of the most obvious changes in civic politics during the last decades is the turn towards what have been called *cultural strategies* (Zukin 1995). These manifest themselves in various ways – from cultural gentrification to different “life quality projects”. Common to these strategies is the importance accorded to *visual symbols*. Sharon Zukin argues that:

...urban landscapes have slowly been reclaimed by vision – the power to frame spaces as aesthetic objects. The progressive democratization of vision enables all groups, in all areas of the city, to challenge each other over the power to frame public space with their own visual symbols. (Zukin 1997: 206)

In her book *The Culture of Cities* Zukin argues that cities use culture as an economic base for the symbolic economy of the city. That is, culture can both attract capital and be used as means for framing space. The production of space therefore is also a production of visual representation. That means that in order to market the image of a city – the city space must be framed in an attractive way to lure foreign investors and tourists to it. Tourism as an industry therefore has come to alter the social, as well as, the built fabric of cities.

A key element on urban regeneration is the issue of security. Ensuring that new urban spaces are seen as safe are on of the priorities for regeneration programmes (Raco 2003). The awareness on commercially attractive public spaces among politicians and businessmen creates a need to regulate and control the city centre. The presence of obviously homeless people, street crime and graffiti are not only viewed as potential threats to the credibility of the image of the city marketed by those in power but also seen as symbols of decay and insecurity. The consequence is the emergence of various public and private initiatives to “clean up” city centres. There are several examples today of this increasing awareness in Sweden. The proposed prohibition of begging in Stockholm a few years ago; the police’s zero tolerance experiments; the suggested reconstruction in Stockholm of Sergels Torg, a square notorious for its narcotics trade; and the creation of a *Innerstaden Göteborg* in the city centre of Göteborg to reinforce shop-owners’ interest in a commercially attractive city are just some of them. At the turn of the year 2004 it was also decided to increase the penalties for those who “scribble”, and the police have been given the right to carry out what is called “preventive body search”, i.e. the right to search without previous suspicion of committed crime. Common to several of the proposals is that their point of origin is crime prevention. Crime – or threats against the

order of public space – should be prevented before being committed. Roy Coleman argues that control today in cities is “strategically entwined with, and organized around, visualized spectacles that promote ways of seeing urban space as benign, ‘people centred’ and celebratory” (Coleman 2005:132).

Designing public space in a way that facilitates the supervision of them is one way of maintaining control. Oscar Newman (1997) coined the concept of “defensible space” to describe and analyse how crime can be designed out and order created. Central to this perspective is the quest for real and symbolic borders that define an area as well as enhance the possibilities of surveillance. Shopping malls are examples of spaces open too many, but not to everybody, and their borders are controlled by private security guards. They are examples of a domestication of public space, which reduces the risks of unplanned social encounters and promotes social homogeneity (Jackson 1998). Design can also work through zoning, where places in the city are designed for different purposes. Many concepts have been developed to describe these spaces such as *purified space* or *interdictory space* (Flusty 2001, Sibley 1988) which all point out places that are designed for a single function, often consumption. The growth of preventive strategies should be understood in the context of dismantling of the welfare state. According to Franzén (2001) it is not so much about reducing crime as *redistributing* them in space.

Exclusion can also take place through gentrification and renewal. Decaying industrial or working class neighbourhoods are converted into residential zones for the middleclass. Often this also means a change of residents as well as a transformation of the area with the habits of the middleclass. In a study of the regeneration of Raval, Barcelona Monica Degen uses the concept *sensescape* to capture the transformation of the area. She argues that “who or what is seen, heard, touched, tasted and smelled is connected to questions about what is included and excluded in the experience of public space” (Degen 2002: 22). Regeneration means, according to Degen, a transformation of the sensescapes that is expected to substitute existing spatial practises of a place with new ones. In Raval a new urban design created has gradually changed the area and created new spatial geographies. A Museum of Arts has attracted tourist from Las Ramblas into Raval with the consequences that local shops have been replaced with restaurants and designer stores for tourists and rebuilt houses have replaced former poor tenants with new ones. She argues:

New public spaces are emerging that are fostering new forms of public life, qualitatively different to modernity. Exclusion or inclusion of these spaces are fostered through the sensuous regimes in the place, and the imposition and control of new practices are often disguised as leisure and culture. /.../ Hence, power no longer works by altering individual behaviour, but instead manipulating our everyday surrounding structures. (Degen 2003: 879)

Sharon Zukin calls this process a “pacification by cappuccino” when public spaces are revitalized by upgrading the status and expanding its uses for consumptions (Zukin 1996). The results are most often not only a displacement of former working class tenants but also a change of publics. But in Raval as in many other places regenerations does not work without resistance. Degen argues that during night time excluded people reclaim their space. Homeless people take over the square, North African men meet in the corners and new graffiti is painted onto the walls. All of them are gone in the morning. Degen argues that what can be seen in Raval is an increasingly “temporal and spatially segmented public life” (Degen 2002: 33) where a temporal layering of activities and groups result in that they actually never meet.

Performing the city

Göteborg as an entrepreneurial city

Göteborg is the second biggest city in Sweden with half a million inhabitants and it is situated on the west coast of the country. Historically the base for the economy has been the harbour and industries but Gothenburg, was as many other cities, affected by an economic industrial crisis in the 1980s. During the 1980s and 90s privatisation and de-regulations made Gothenburg known for its innovative way of handling the shift from an industrial to post-industrial city through successful partnerships between local government, business and voluntary sector. For Gothenburg the transformation of the economy has meant a shift from harbour and industries to the branding of the city both as “knowledge city” and as an “event city” capable to be host for bigger events. In many respects the governance of Göteborg is entrepreneurial governance. For a long time a political culture of consensus has governed the city. In the early 20th century this political culture was centred on the different political parties who governed and developed the city with the goal “for the public good” (Åberg 1998). In the 1970s and 1980s this political alliances broke down and today the consensus culture is rather centred on the social democratic party who rules the city and the business and trade industry. Known as “Göteborgsandan” (the spirit of Göteborg), this consensus culture is devoted to develop a business friendly climate in order to adjust city politics to globalisation. The close relationship between city council and business community has resulted in a relatively fast redevelopment of the city and the reputation the “things get done”.

One important aspect of the branding of cities is the renewal of the waterfront of many cities, including that of Göteborg. As part of the transformation from an industrial city, the waterfront represents not only a new area for economic exploitation but also a new urban iconography that can represent the identity of the city. Many waterfront redevelopment projects over the globe are also significant in the way they are planned and governed – many times in conflict between public and private interests (Harvey 2001, Lund Hansen et al. 2001). The global trend is that waterfronts are planned as a thematic, highly choreographed and branded form of place-making where there is a blurring between private and public space (Goodwin 1993, Evans 2003). In a analysis of the transformation of the waterfront in Melbourne Kim Dovey reveals how the understanding of the public changed during the process and became equalled with economic interests and public debate was replaced by advertising and slogans about the new “innovative city” (Dovey 2005). During the last 25 years a major waterfront area, Norra Älvstranden in Göteborg, has been redeveloped from harbour and shipyard to an exclusive housing area as well as a science park. In a study of the governance of redeveloping Norra Älvstranden, Åsa von Sydow argues that the redevelopment strengthened the power of an already established elite in the city, which outruled other actors as well as other concerns than growth creation. So at the same time as Göteborg has been praised as a growth machine for west Sweden:

...critical voices are raised regarding the financial priorities made by the City (events and growth before welfare), values prioritized by the city (markets values before preservation) and the way in which politics is carried out (in tight networks, behind closed doors rather than in public debates). (von Sydow 2004: 131)

Different public and private partnerships concerning the image of the city centre has developed the last few years. One of them is *Safe and Beautiful City* which is a partnership that involves different city authorities, real estate owners and shop owners. Their vision is to make Göteborg a safe, comfortable and beautiful city through a joint partnership where different actors work together for the same goal. Another is *Innerstaden Göteborg* which is

collaboration between different actors based in the city centre – with the purpose to redevelop the city centre. Both of these partnerships are financed through the City Council and private interests. One visible outcome of these partnerships concerning the visual landscape of the city is a zero-tolerance against graffiti and illegal posturing. All graffiti and illegal posturing are to be removed within 24 hours in the city centre and reported to the police.

The event city – European Athletic Championship in Göteborg 2006

In order to successfully transform and brand Göteborg as an event city Göteborg & CO was founded in the beginning of 1990. It is a company that is owned by the city and local business industry together and they work to market and brand Göteborg in order to attract tourism, congresses, business meetings, trade fairs and bigger events. Their business concept is “to be a leading platform for collaborative work on destination development in an international context.” This means that they take initiative and are responsible for collaborative work on the local level around these issues. Their vision is to make Göteborg: “One of Europe’s most pleasant and attractive urban regions to live in, work in and visit” (www.goteborg.com). This vision is going to be achieved by an investment in cultural, entertainment and sporting events which “is an essential component in generating growth and making Göteborg even more attractive and is also important in strengthening the Göteborg brand” (Göteborg & Co 2005: 3).

The fact that Göteborg has chosen events as an important component in the new economy is no coincidence, on the contrary, especially sports events is an important factor for many entrepreneurial cities (Bélanger 2000, Smith 2000). Bigger events such as the Olympic or World Championships do not only give cities economic benefits they also give the possibility to enhance the city image which is important, in particular for former industrial cities. In the post-industrial urban economy the legacy of heavy industries evokes unfashionable images and communicates a series of negative words such as unemployment and poverty. Therefore the staging of major sport events is not only a mean to generate visitors, tourism and consumption it is also a way to symbolising the transformation of the city economy. According to Andrew Smith:

The media coverage devoted to sport, its intrinsic popularity in contemporary culture and its supposed positive connotations have therefore resulted in the adaptation of sporting initiatives by industrial cities as a means of image enhancement. (Smith 2001: 128)

In order to succeed as an event city the city has to brand itself as promote its advantages over other cities. As a relatively small city Göteborg has brought to fore the advantages of being small and therefore offering a unique environment as a venue:

- › attractive and internationally competitive facilities
- › the concept of proximity, i.e. the city’s major event facilities are located in the heart of the compact, vibrant city centre within walking distance of hotels, restaurants, shopping, and cultural and entertainments facilities
- › extensive competence in organising and arranging events
- › strong programmes for turning arena events into city events
- › unique and well developed co-operation between authorities, local authorities departments and companies, trade and industry, organisations and politicians
- › considerable interest in culture and sport among the city inhabitants
- › and a clean, safe and beautiful city (Göteborg & Co 2005: 21)

In 1995 Göteborg was host for the World Athletic Championship and already at that point a decision was made to apply for being the host of the EAC 2006. In 1999 a Bidding Commit-

tee was established and three years later, in 2001, Göteborg was assigned the Championships. Göteborg & CO was responsible for the marketing of Göteborg and EAC, and for planning, co-ordinating and carrying out events and activities in the city. Even though Göteborg & CO had the responsibility the event was planned and carried out in collaboration with local actors such as authorities and public-private partnerships.

The Athletic Championship was marketed as “more than a sport event” and included a festival in the city centre with concerts, theatre for children, art exhibitions, European styled street-food etc all with free admission. This arrangement made it possible to “catch the spirit” of the event all over the city centre:

Over the past 20 years, Göteborg has made its name as the city where major sporting, entertainment and cultural events take place. Göteborg’s large arenas, loyal audiences and carefully planned strategy have made the city a leading events venue. When there is something big on, the whole city joins in the party. (www.goteborg.com)

The idea was to market Göteborg as an attractive city through the Championship. At the same time as international media reported from the contests they would also broadcast images from the city as well. The official posters from the event reflected this ambition. Four posters portrayed six of the best athletes in Sweden – placed at important sights of city.

In contrast to usual procedures during Athletic Championships the opening ceremony did not take place at the sports arena but on Götaplatsen which is a square in the central part of the city. Here, the Museum of Art, the City Theatre as well as the Concert Hall is placed. The choice to place the opening ceremony here was *strategic* as well as *symbolic*. The stage that was built was transparent so visitors as well as TV cameras could spot the buildings around the stage. By doing this the event was communicated as not only a sport event but also a cultural festival. This mixture of sport and culture was an important part of the festival and the branding of the event. According to Andrew Smith a major advantage with sports events that cultural events might lack is both broad and popular audience as well as cultural capital. Whereas sport historically used to be associated with working class culture, today sport events can attract people from many different classes, represent both popular and high culture at the same time and thereby gain a broad legitimacy. At the event in Göteborg sports was deliberately mixed with popular culture as well as high culture and succeeded in attracting a broad audience. The last day the marathon took place in the city. The athletes passed all important cityscapes – the main street Avenyn, the Opera house, the canals, Järntorget and ended at Götaplatsen.

Before the festival started the city centre was literally transformed. Streets vendors, graffiti and cheap food stands were moved from the city centre and replaced by clean facades, flower arrangements and a carefully selected taste of Göteborg cuisine. A few people were paid to fish in the canals in order to get good pictures to broadcast and during the event it was possible to spot policemen on bicycles, something which is not ordinary seen on the streets of Göteborg.

At the time of the European Athletic Championship Sweden went into election campaigns where both government of the nation as well as the governments of cities were to be elected. A central part of Swedish election culture is “valstugor” – small cottages that are placed in city centres where all political parties give information about their ideology and political programs. In Göteborg the politicians decided to postpone the election campaign until after the event. All “election cottages” and political posters were forbidden during the Championship. A social democratic politician explained to media that:

Mainly, this is about not to give a messy impression. Unfortunately there is a tendency that people are tearing down political posters and scribbled on. (Det handlar väl

framförallt om att det inte ska vara skräpigt, tyvärr finns det en tendens att valaffischer rivs ner och att det klottras på dem. (2006-05-23 www.sr.se)

One important issue that needs to be addressed is that bigger event can be used both to promote a new image of the city as well as well as gaining legitimacy for a transforming of the city space. Historically spectacles have been used in order to create social loyalty to a place. In her analysis of the Olympic Games in Barcelona, Mari Paz Balibrea comments that The Olympics were constructed as a project “by all and for all”, and an event which everyone could participate in and benefit from. Therefore: “invoking the Olympic Games as a pretext, streets were widened, ringroads were built, hotels went up, cultural and sports facilities proliferated” (Balibrea 2001: 198). As bigger events tend to trigger investments for changes in infrastructures and images, events can change the both the spatial geography of a city as well as its cultural and social dynamic for a long time. The important questions to analyse are *how* these changes are brought about, *who* benefits and *whose* interests are being furthered (Silk & Amis 2005: 285)

The politics of public space

In these concluding remarks I would like to return to the initial paradox about public space and the remarks that cities can be seen as strategic sites for gaining greater understanding about the social conditions of our times. Reading research on regeneration and entrepreneurial governance one theme and a set of metaphors seems to haunt many writers: that of public space as a battleground, as a place or constant struggles or war. In 1994 Manuel Castells argued that cities in Europe constitute a nervous system for both economy and political systems and that we:

...will be witnessing a constant struggle over the occupation of meaningful space in the main European cities, with business corporations trying to appropriate the beauty and tradition for their noble quarters, and urban countercultures making a stand on the use value of the city. (Castells 1994: 23-25)

Historically though, fight for space in the city is not something new, so how can we conceptualise what is happening in cities today in relation to an idea of public space? Cities have always worked as a central meeting point for different populations. The Greek concept of agora catches a basic outline of public space in the city, as a place for assembly, a marketplace and a place for spectacle and entertainment. A fundamental difference though is that today public space is defined against private and capitalised space that did not exist in ancient Greek.

Fundamental to ideals of public space is that publicness in itself – as belonging to the public – is something good. This is the basis the consequential differentiation of public space from private, exclusive space. At the same time public space has never been fully inclusive – historically the use of urban public space has always been contested by different social groups with different interests. Historically these processes and struggles have taken different shapes. Today the struggle stands between on one hand an urban renaissance where public space as a meeting place is re-valued and promoted, and on the other hand in order to maintain this, in the name of security and safety, public space is also highly controlled and regulated (MacLeod 2002).

In contemporary research the literature on public space and public sphere tend to occupy different domains in spite of the similarities of the two concepts. The literature on public sphere emphasises how media, institutions and practices generate “the public”, “publics” or “public opinion”, theorized within a framework concerning the state and the transformation of bourgeois social relations (Habermas 2001, Frazer 1990). The research on public space tend

to be explicitly spatial focusing how social, economical, political and cultural processes make public places and how these in turn are contested (Low 2000, Lees 1998). To bridge this gap public space can be said to be created *through* the tension between physical place and the heterogeneity and seeming placelessness of public sphere. Henri Lefebvre argues in his influential work *The Production of Space* (1991) that space is produced through the interactions between spatial practises, representations of space and representational space. Representations of space refer to conceptualised images of space, often by city planners or politicians while representational space refers to the space in use, the appropriated space. In the reading of Lefebvre Don Mitchell (2003) argues that public space often originates as representations of space but when used by people it turns onto a representational space. Therefore Mitchell concludes public space should be understood as “socially *produced* through its use *as* public space (Mitchell 2003: 129). Based on this outline, public space is defined as a space produced and structured by its conflict over that space, through the struggle between inclusion and exclusion. By this definition the legal aspect of who owns that place is put aside and more relevant is questions about how it is used, controlled, regulated and challenged.

With the general trend towards entrepreneurial governance urban politics and the responsibility for regenerating inner-city areas becomes to a greater extent the responsibility of public and private partnerships which have little or none public accountability and operate largely independently from the political system (Silk & Amis 2005). The result is that political decisions about the look and feel of a city are taken by actors with a certain economic interests. In this article I have discussed and given examples of how the symbolic economy that dominates the discourse and practice of regeneration impose a certain vision of public space that alters the perception of that place and its publics. As the Göteborg case shows public space was *transformed* before the Championships but also *performed* during the contests. In this performance public space as a spectacle was prioritised before its function as a public sphere which that ban of election cottages obviously shows. The problem is not events in itself but the way they are governed and pursued. If entrepreneurial governance is guided by a consensus culture, or script, among an economic and political elite where image and representation is prioritised this governance do not only risk hollowing out the public sphere, when decisions are taken by closed networks, but also the ideal of public space as the materialisation of public sphere. And even though there is no such thing as an ideal public space open to all it is vital to regard public space as a space for democracy. And as democracy requires visibility – visibility also requires material public space (Mitchell 2003:148). With this perspective the public space of the city becomes a not only a meeting place and a space for consumption but also a place where the conflicts and inequalities of society are struggled for, acted out and represented. And even though entrepreneurial governance works to create a representative, orderly and neat space the control and homogenisation of public space can only be partial and there will always be attempts to transgress, contest and subvert that order.

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