

# CHALMERS



## Creating Spaces of Possibility in Gothenburg A Tactical Approach

*Master of Science Thesis in the Master Degree Programme, Design for Sustainable Development*

ÁSGEIR SIGURJÓNSSON

Department of Architecture  
CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
Gothenburg, Sweden, 2014



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## A Tactical Approach

ÁSGEIR SIGURJÓNSSON

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Pictures on cover: Left: A child helps repairing a rammed earth wall built by Jordstad (Ásgeir Sigurjónsson). Right: A flower pot made of rammed paper, made by the author (Ásgeir Sigurjónsson).

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## Summary

Public spaces can limit people's behavior. These limitations can be physical, cultural, legal, real or perceived. I introduce Henry Lefebvre's concept of Heterotopia which is a space of "something different", a space of possibility that is foundational for the defining of revolutionary trajectories. I use Prinzessinnengarten in Berlin as a model, a common urban garden which used to be a neglected empty lot until it was transformed by nearby inhabitants.

I ask how outside actors such as professionals or institutions can apply tactical methods to create heterotopic places. To find answers to that question I engaged in tactical interventions individually as well as a part of a larger group. Individually I developed a method of making flower pots out of scrap newspaper. I placed the pots with flowers in them in low profile public spaces. Since I did not ask for permission it is called guerilla gardening.

The group intervention was about starting two different common gardens that included walls of rammed earth. The building effort was in the form of a building brigade (byggbrigad in Swedish), where volunteers engage in a non-commercial building project to gain skills in building and experience building as a social activity.

Through the individual interventions I brought to light a positive aspect of two different ambiguous, leftover, urban spaces. The fact that they were shown little care or interest made it easier to redefine them as spaces of possibility through tactical interventions. The interventions should be an inspiration for others to use the space creatively.

The group created a heterotopia by coming together and creating a different social situation around a common building project. It points to the fact that heterotopia is temporary like any social space. The outsiders plant the seed for the project to grow for the locals to carry it further.

Keywords: Heterotopia, tactical urbanism, urban tactics, urban farming, guerilla gardening, public space, placemaking, territorial production, Prinzessinnengarten, Stadsjord.

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# I Introduction

## Background

Picture an empty lot in a city which is then turned into a garden by nearby inhabitants. That would be a *tactical intervention*. The intervention would create a place, giving meaning and ways of orientating through the otherwise empty lot. That is *placemaking*. Picture the garden becoming a meeting place for the inhabitants, where people engage in "something different". That would make the place a *heterotopia*. In this imaginary sample (based on Prinzessinnengarten) the intervention is initiated and carried out by inhabitants, not planning authorities. It is a bottom-up process. What is interesting is the ability of the bottom-up processes to create places of possibilities.

My experience of working with Stadsjord, an urban farming company, has played an important role in opening up the research space and introducing me to tactics in urbanism. Tactical urbanism is a recently appropriated term in the field of architecture and planning. Similar terms are user generated urbanism and tactical interventions and they all describe a social production of space that is the result of creative use rather than initial design. I will use Michel Certeau's notion of tactics and Henry Lefebvre explanation of heterotopia to present a conceptual model.

There is need for research in this area because there is a big distance between the planners and developers and the eventual users. Typically planning and building comes first but after that the inhabitants and users ultimately create space (according to Lefebvre's theories about the social production of space). Inhabitants are sometimes brought to the "planning table" or asked for input but the process can still be seen as linear. If a planned environment does not become the place intended or not a place at all (according to Norberg-Schultz's definition that place allows one to dwell and orient oneself) placemaking can be applied as an afterwards fix. But apart from fixes there is need for more ongoing collaborative city-building processes.

## Aims and questions

The beauty of tactical interventions is often in their ability to widen the scope of what is possible in public space. "Think globally, act locally" is a well known saying that suggests a way for individuals to exercise more sustainable behaviors. But a problem arises if the means to act locally are restricted by regulations, cultural norms and perceptions.

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate methods of creating publicly accessible space that allow for a wider range of possibilities of action (as in acting locally) in regards to a more sustainable urban society. Those spaces, which are typically based on gardening, project an atmosphere of light green environmentalism and are open to new participants.

My research questions are: How can outside actors (e.g. municipality, property owner, architect, activist) apply tactical methods? How can they help and encourage locals to create their own local space? How can a local space be created in such a way that it enables and encourages pro-activity and becomes a heterotopia.

## Method

My approach to the subject is initially in a do-it-yourself manner. I made small interventions in the form of guerilla gardening using self-built plant pots. I became part of a planning group of a larger placemaking initiative where around 30 people worked for one week on two different sites in Gothenburg.

## Thesis outline

Following this introduction is chapter II: Theoretical Framework. The section called Movement identifies a drive for change in the form of a movement, referring to the writings of David Harvey. Also introduced is Lebbeus Woods' idea of change without resistance. The subsequent section is about tactics as a method of bottom-up change. The following section shows heterotopia as a space that allows change to take place. Since heterotopias are unconventional spaces they require unconventional methods to be created and sustained. Chapter III: Examples shows examples of tactical placemaking and presents a conceptual model. Chapter IV: Empirical explains the empirical part of the work, where I engaged in tactical placemaking interventions individually and in a group. In Chapter V: Reflections and Conclusions I will begin by reflecting on the whole work process and then answer the thesis questions.

# II Theoretical framework

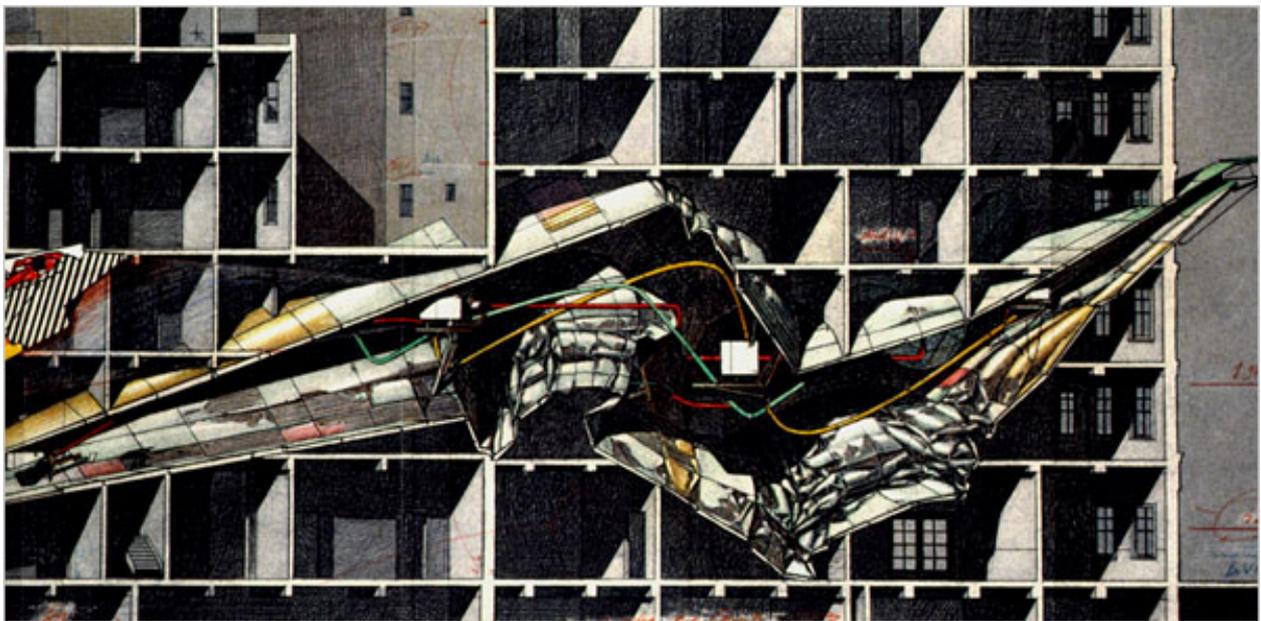
## Movement

A noteworthy potential of the places of possibility (as they are presented in this thesis) is in advancing light green environmentalism. According to writer Alex Steffen light green environmentalism advocates change at the individual level. Changes of everyday acts such as "shopping differently or making changes around the home" should eventually add up to larger transformations (Steffen, 2009). This point of view, of being a creative "user" will be brought up in the next chapter about tactics. Alex mentions two other shades of environmentalism. Those are in short: Dark greens, which emphasize the need to pull back from consumerism and advocate change at the community level, And bright greens, which put more faith in technical innovation. The reason I put special emphasis on the light green is not to favor it, but to suggest the spaces of possibility as geographical locations for this environmentalism to take place.

The importance of movements taking place in geographical locations is of much interest to geographer and social theorist David Harvey. He has recently written the book *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* that is based on the work of Henri Lefebvre. He describes the tactics of the Occupy Wall Street movement as:

*[...] To take a central public space, a park or a square, close to where many of the levers of power are centered, and, by putting human bodies in that place, to convert public space into a political commons—a place for open discussion and debate over what the power is doing and how best to oppose its reach (Harvey, 2012, pp.161,162).*

While David Harvey describes a revolutionary overthrowing of a faulty system, we can also explore a scenario of a different kind of overtaking. Lebbeus Woods is known for his architectural drawings that picture ambiguous tactical structures emerging out of a “normal” but obsolete urban landscape. Woods stated that architects can not preach resistance or join resistance movements. Instead they should create an "independent idea of both architecture and the world". (Lebbeus Woods, *By Way of Resistance*, lebbeuswoods.net, accessed 2013-09-16) It is apparent in his drawings that the emerging “new” very much defies the old opposed to fighting it, and being shaped by it.



In Lebbeus' book *Radical Reconstruction* he addresses the subject of rebuilding after crises such as war or natural disasters. There he states that:

*[...] governments and corporations cannot be expected to take the initiative in establishing new and multilayered societies, the impetus for their creation must come from below, from people who begin to build directly, without the sanction of any institutionalized authority (Woods, 1997, p.15).*

This perspective describes a different view on resistance and rebuilding than that of Harvey and Lefebvre. Instead of trying to gain control of a larger system, smaller systems should emerge, eventually comprising the "multilayered" whole. Another author who stresses bottom up city building, Nabeel Hamdi, will be introduced in the following section.

## Tactics

The interventions that I look at can be called tactical. The scholar Michel de Certeau is most famous for his distinction between the concepts of strategy and tactics. In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* he attempts to outline the way individuals unconsciously navigate everything from city streets to literary texts. In the chapter „Walking in the City“ he describes the governmental, corporational and institutional ways of creating a city as strategic. The individual, on the other hand, is tactical. He navigates through all the planned structures in his own way, taking his shortcuts and opportunities. The pedestrian completes what has been planned and built in the same way as a reader of a book creates the final form of the book by reading it (Certeau, 1984).

*A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper [...] The 'proper' is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing." Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities' (Certeau, 1984, pg 19).*

It is clear that Certeau's tactics happen outside of the sphere of planning and building. But can planning take tactics more seriously? Can planning encourage more creative interpretations of the city? According to Nabeel Hamdi, a known theorist and practitioner in participative planning, the two can complement each other. He says in his book *Small change: about the art of practice and the limits of planning in cities* that there must be a “[...]balance between the structures we must design (strategic) and those that must emerge (practical, local), working with both the elite of city authorities and the pluralism of the grassroots –not either/or.” (Hamdi, 2004). Here we have the concept of strategic vs. practical/local which can be seen as parallel to Certeau's notion of strategic vs. tactical. But while Certeau's view describes a very clear division between a writer/reader or planner/pedestrian, Hamdi's view describes an essential morph between the two.

The term tactical urbanism (as well as user generated urbanism or tactical interventions) has become part of urbanist discussion. Examples of studios that work with this concept are Atelier d'Architecture Autogérées (AAA) and Rebar studio. I asked AAA to explain what they meant by “urban tactics” and they explained how they built upon Certeau's definition of tactics.

*We were interested in De Certeau's definition of 'tactics' in relation to the practices of city users. He speaks about 'witty' forms of resistance to capitalist consumption through everyday life activities like dwelling, cooking, walking, reading etc., which are all tactical in their nature as they are improvised and take advantage of all opportunities afforded to them. We have added 'architecture' to these everyday life activities (which were in our case gardening, building, recycling, learning, etc...) and conceived a number of spatial devices to enable temporary*

*appropriations of underused space in the city. [...] The quality of these tactical devices resides in their mobility, temporality, informality, which enables a type of urban 'resistance' through techniques of infiltration and détournement. They empower minor cultures, minor languages and minor urban practices to validate local traditions and personal abilities to resist dominant forms of knowledge and prescriptive ways of living in the city (e-mail from Atelier d'Architecture Autogérées, 2013.28.8)*

First they describe the forms of resistance that have earlier been described as subjects of light environmentalism (dwelling, cooking, walking etc.). Then they introduce the basis of the AAA ideology which is expanding this frame of behaviors by adding architecture (as an act of living rather than a commodity).

A publication called *tactical urbanism* has been written by Mike Lydon. He is the principal of The Street Plans Collaborative, which is an urban planning, design, and research-advocacy firm. The main difference between the Lydon and AAA when introducing tactical urbanism is how AAA presents it more as a way of being while Lydon presents it as a procedure. According to his definition tactical urbanism is a deliberate approach to city-making that features the following five characteristics:

- 1) A deliberate, phased approach to instigating change;
- 2) An offering of local ideas for local planning challenges;
- 3) Short-term commitment and realistic expectations;
- 4) Low –risks, with a possibly a high reward;
- 5) The development of social capital between citizens, and the building of organizational capacity between public/private institutions, non-profit/NGOs, and their constituents. (Lydon, 2012).

## Heterotopia

The term heterotopia was first brought into architectural discussion by Michel Foucault. He describes heterotopias as "other spaces" which belong to different types. One type are crisis heterotopias for individuals in the state of crisis e.g. boarding schools or the places of military service for young men. Then there are heterotopias of deviation, e.g. rest homes, psychiatric hospitals and prisons. The garden, "a sort of happy, universalizing heterotopia since the beginnings of antiquity" has had a sacred function as a microcosmos in various societies. The garden is perhaps the oldest example of heterotopias that take the form of contradictory sites. Foucault did not offer a clear, scientific definition of these spaces and he was aware of that. But what all heterotopias have in common is that they distort time in some way as in the case of museums (time accumulates) and festivals (time flows). "The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time" (Foucault, 1984, p.7).

Another approach to heterotopia, which is more useful for this thesis, is that of Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre called for a revolution overthrowing the capitalist system but unlike other Marxist writers he put more emphasis on the urban environment's role in a revolution and the spaces that make revolutions possible. I will not go so far in this thesis as to suggest an overthrowing of capitalism. But instead, along the lines of Lebbeus Woods' resistance without overthrows, I suggest that the advancement of many important social matters such as equality, health, access to space all happen in space of any kind and can greatly benefit from public spaces where users are their active creators. Recently David Harvey has written a book built on Lefebvre's work called *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. Harvey describes Lefebvre's heterotopia as such:

*Lefebvre's concept of heterotopia [...] delineates liminal social spaces of possibility where 'something different' is not only possible, but foundational for the defining of revolutionary trajectories. This 'something different' does not necessarily arise out of a conscious plan, but more simply out of what people do, feel, sense, and come to articulate as they seek meaning in their daily lives. Such practices create heterotopic spaces all over the place. We do not have to wait upon the grand revolution to constitute such spaces. Lefebvre's theory of a revolutionary movement is the other way round: the spontaneous coming together in a moment of 'irruption', when disparate heterotopic groups suddenly see, if only for a fleeting moment, the possibilities of collective action to create something radically different (Harvey, 2012, p.17).*

Now Harvey speaks of the revolution that is the "other way around", and "irruption" which sounds more like the tactical approach that is rendered by Lebbeus Woods and practised by AAA. The heterotopia presented by Harvey and Lefebvre is more fleeting than Foucault's hospitals and gardens. It sounds as if they are not deliberately designed, but come and go (Harvey uses Occupy Wall Street as an example of heterotopia).

A good example of the type of heterotopia that Lefebvre talks about is People's Park in Berkeley, USA. In 1969 it was a muddy parking lot, owned by the University of California but was acclaimed by an alliance of students, community activists, and local merchants. The alliance's goal was to create a user-controlled park that would become a haven for those squeezed out by a fully regulated urban environment (Mitchell, 1995). The garden has a long history of struggle that still continues. The next section will discuss places being created as a result of unplanned events, and the subsequent one will discuss placemaking as a more deliberate activity.



Figure 1: C., Steve. (1969) *People gardening at People's park*. At: [http://www.peoplespark.org/1969\\_Planning\\_a\\_Park.html](http://www.peoplespark.org/1969_Planning_a_Park.html) (Accessed on 23.10.13)

## Acknowledging place

As my bachelor's project I did a study on what the town Höfn í Hornafirði meant to tourists (Sigurjónsson, 2009). Most of the tourists only visited the place to enjoy nature and did not put much attention to the town itself. To understand the town better as a place I asked locals to name a handful of place names that they thought represented the town. One of the more common ones was the deserted farm Horn. The farm that is right outside of the town has been much photographed with the mountain Eystrahorn in the background. The buildings speak about the future as much as they speak about the past. Accumulated time is visible in the weathering of materials as stone becomes sand. I am sure that this farm has no special status at all in the city plans. Perhaps it represents the townspeople's image, being different for living remotely, challenging powerful natural forces such as weather, glaciers and volcanoes. It has become a place by a way of looking at it.



Figure 2: Joelsson, Hreiðar. (2006) *Eyðibýli við Höfn í Hornafirði*. At: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/hreidar/307891276/> (Accessed on 23.10.13)

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/hreidar/307891276/> 2013.4.16

### Personal experience: Territoriality in a different culture

I lived temporarily at the campus of the University of Oradea, in a small city in Romania. I generally went for groceries at a near by strip mall. At the parking lot outside the strip mall there was a food vendor with tables placed around it and families sitting there eating. This moment made me realize something about cultural variations in appropriating spaces. Romanians are better at behavioral placemaking and territorial appropriation than Icelanders (I am from Iceland). I have indeed seen similar vendors in Reykjavík where I live and people sitting outside by such parking lots but they look more as if they are alienated by alienating environment. They also look more as if they are passing by even though they are sitting still. They are not dwelling. My use of the term "appropriation" in this context is inspired from the writings of Mattias Kärrholm about territorial production. The term human territoriality has been described by geographer Robert David Sack as the way people "organize themselves in space, and how they give meaning to a place". In that way, territorial production corresponds to the creation of *place*. Kärrholm presents different forms of territorial production using previously introduced notion of strategy and tactics in contrast to one another.

	Impersonal control	Personal control
Intended production	Territorial strategy	Territorial tactics
Production through use	Territorial association	Territorial appropriation

Figure 3: Kärrholm, Mattias. (2005) *Forms of territorial production*. In: *Territorial Complexity in Public Places: a Study of Territorial Production at Three Squares in Lund*.

### Animals playing a role in the production of place

Like all Romanian cities, Oradea has a number of urban stray dogs which are called *câini maidanezi* which literally means wasteland dog or *câini comunitari* which means community dog. People are nice to them and they seem well behaved. They appropriate their own spaces

in the city where they do not clash with everyday behaviors of people, such as in the middle of a roundabout or at the edge of the city. Once I saw a stray dog wait on a red streetlight like the people around it before crossing a street. The dogs in the private gardens on the other hand are not as nice. They bark at passers by. They are acting territorial (in the most commonly used meaning of the term, of animal behavior) on behalf of their owner and the owner is territorial through his animal. The contrast in behavior in stray dogs and domestic dogs is striking. I am sure that someone that knows much about dog behavior could explain to me this difference. It is also possible that there is no difference of behaviors but that the angry street dogs are killed and the quiet domestic dogs go unnoticed. But I can use this scenario to talk about territoriality. The nice street dogs are just as territorial as any other dogs or humans (in the meaning of territorial as used by Sack). They negotiate their spaces of dwelling and moving about with people and other dogs on a daily basis. This happens in a way that seems quite smooth and conventional. The domestic dogs claim their gardens by barking. It is no dialogue and no negotiation. They are not free, they are locked inside. Their natural impulses of territorial behavior are suppressed. They are spoiled in the sense that they did not have to pro-actively appropriate the space in which they are situated which might cause insecurity about whether they actually belong there. In general language territorial behavior is associated with barking dogs rather than those moving around peacefully. But we can also say that the domestic dogs territorial behavior is being impaired and causing it frustrations and insecurity. I want to talk about territoriality that is just as well associated with a peaceful appropriation of spaces as in the case of the street dogs.



Figure 5: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2011) *Nine dogs dwelling on a roundabout*



Figure 4: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2011) *A stray dog appropriates a phone booth*

## Creating place

Many urban spaces have a weak sense of place and tend to be experienced as something in-between other places. They can feel meaningless, confusing, alienating and depressing. The practise of placemaking will typically address those conditions. The concept *sense of place* is known for being described phenomenologically by architect and writer Christian Norberg-Schulz. In his book *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* he says that "*Architecture means to visualize the genius loci, and the task of the architect is to create meaningful places, whereby he helps man to dwell.*" And to dwell is in this case not bound to happen within a home or a shelter. „*Man dwells when he can orientate himself within and identify himself with an environment, or, in short, when he experiences the environment as meaningful.*“ (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p.5)

The term placemaking can be used in various ways but one worth mentioning is the way of Project for Public Spaces who use the term placemaking to describe a method of participative planning processes on a local scale, or in their words:

*[...]a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Put simply, it involves looking at, listening to, and asking questions of the people who live, work and play in a particular space, to discover their needs and aspirations. This information is then used to create a common vision for that place. The vision can evolve quickly into an implementation strategy, beginning with small-scale, do-able improvements that can immediately bring benefits to public spaces and the people who use them (www.pps.org).*

Their definition is from the planning point of view (strategic) and involves including local people. But in my opinion, placemaking is no less applicable from the tactical perspective, from bottom up.

### **Acknowledging the users creative role in placemaking**

Urbanist discussion normally focuses on the quality of the physical environment. We talk about different spaces and how they allow for whatever to happen thanks to their qualities. I want to argue that extraordinary things can happen in any no-place but immediately when that happens the no-place becomes a place deriving it's qualities from the event that is happening (this might be true for people's park which was mentioned earlier). I want to acknowledge individual and cultural pro-active behavioral traits that allow for appropriating spaces and thereby defining them as place.

If we say that people's ability to appropriate spaces is an underacknowledged aspect of the creation of places, which should be more deliberately worked with, how should that affect

planning and design? Participative planning methods usually assume people sitting down at a common drawing board. But can more be done „out there“? Is the site in focus perhaps appropriated (or assumed to be appropriated) by people that would not be likely to attend collaborative planning meetings? Is the meeting perhaps to develop the place to look more like an extension of the meeting-goers' habitat so that the negotiation does not have to happen face-to-face, but is manifested physically to eliminate any on-site territorial frictions? I suspect that collaborative planning methods often focus very much on what a site *should be* but less on what sense of place might be found on the place already. We need spaces that allow for “something different” but cities tend to be designed around the activities that are taken for granted as standard or proper.

*[T]he geometrical space of urbanists and architects seems to have the status of the “proper meaning” constructed by grammarians and linguists in order to have a normal and normative level to which they can compare the drifting of “figurative” language. In reality, this faceless “proper” meaning (ce “propre” sans figure) cannot be found in current use, whether verbal or pedestrian; it is merely the fiction produced by a use that is also particular, the metalinguistic use of science that distinguishes itself by that very distinction (Certeau, 1984, pg 100).*

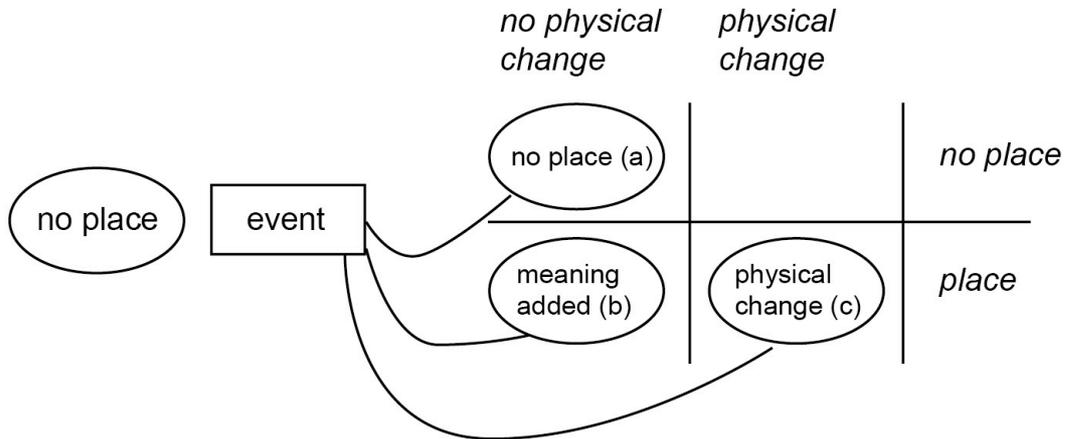
By doing new/different things on the tactical level we call for a different design from the strategical level. This is echoed in Deleuzes concepts of the nomad versus the state.

*Deleuze introduces an agent called ‘the nomad’, unknown to Marxism, who runs counter to ‘the State’ in the sense that the nomad is aggressively creative, while the State plays the more passive role of consolidator: the State thrives by capturing nomadic innovations and transforming them to fit its own needs, precisely in order to consolidate a certain state of affairs. On the other hand, every consolidated state induces renewed nomadic aggression and inventions that the State must absorb and adapt to its consolidating tissue, which, thus enriched, opens up paths for amplified nomadic action, and so on (Marcussen, n.d.).*

Using the terminology that has been introduced so far the nomad's "aggressive creativity" would be tactical interventions which the State must constantly react to.

### The notion of place as temporary

If a certain event makes a place out of a no-place there are three general outcomes possible. A) The event might end and the place returns to its normal state, no-place. B) The event might end but live in people's memories so even though the area stays the same physically it has become a place. C) The third outcome, which can possibly follow the second, entails the area being physically altered in relation to its meaning as place.



From a city planning perspective placemaking is attempted through physical means. This is natural in the sense that it has applicable tools that affect the physical dimension. The aim is then to affect the behavioral dimension through the physical. If that happens as planned, a planned place has been created. Using Lefebvre's terminology to describe this is that the city planning has an intended production of a territory which it can only hope that will be appropriated in the intended manner. If the people then make the intended association about the nature of the place and appropriate it accordingly, a planned place has been created. This approach of placemaking requires reactive behavior to succeed. Since it is dependent on reactive behavior it is reasonable to believe that it will assume and even encourage reactive behavior. I believe this can be detrimental to the cultural and individual ability to pro-actively appropriate spaces and therefore be detrimental to behaviorally generated placemaking in general.

# III Examples

## Urban growing interventions

*New projects and networks, often with loose organization structure have appeared in our larger cities and municipalities [...]. In these cases the commitment and awareness of gardening as means of community development is currently what makes the big difference and points out the recreational gardening's development potential (Björkman, 2012, pp.13-14).*

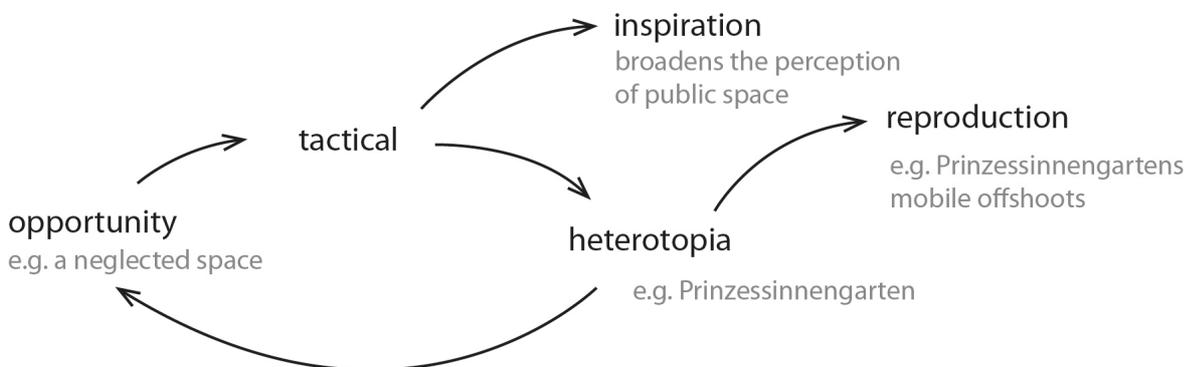
This quote is from a recent report from the Swedish National Organization for Recreational Gardening. It describes urban growing interventions that are tactical. This chapter will provide examples of such projects.

### Nomadic Green (Prinzessinnengarten)

Nomadic Green (Nomadisch Grün) stands for mobile gardening. It was created around the user initiated and user driven garden Prinzessinnengarten. Plants are grown in boxes and bags which makes it possible to transport them and start new gardens in the same spirit. Building sites, car parks and roofs are thus transformed into “urban farmland and green meetingplaces”. The garden is used by different social groups in the area. No artificial fertilizers or pesticides are used in the garden.

Robert Shaw, one of the founders had his inspiration from the urban farming culture in Cuba, where he had experienced gardening as a social function which creates urban living-, working- and meeting places (prinzessinnengarten.net). Prinzessinnengarten has itself been an inspiration to Stadsjord and På Spåret in Sweden which will be described later.

The strength of this “mobile garden” concept is that the space of possibility can grow and create other spaces of possibility. It is important to use existing experience to repeat the act of negotiating land for such creative public use since it is rare event in a competitive capitalist environment.



This diagram shows tactical placemaking being sustained and replicated. Robert was inspired by Cuban gardens and saw opportunities with a neglected space in his home city. With a do-it-yourself approach he engages in a tactical intervention and the lot is turned into a garden. The do-it-yourself methodology continues into the everyday maintenance of the garden. It is a space of something different, a heterotopia. The place thus offers a wider range of possible actions than other more strictly defined public spaces. People apply tactical solutions in the gardening, they garden in boxes and bags and build structures of available materials such as a café and a stage for events. Now a loop has been closed in the diagram and the heterotopia sustains itself. The arrow pointing out of the loop towards reproduction represents the mobile function of the garden. Plants in boxes and bags can be moved to start other gardens elsewhere. The arrow pointing to inspiration represents how the tactical approach can be of inspiration to others to start new gardens or join similar events which other people have started.

### Stadsjord

I was involved in Stadsjord's work during summer 2012. It has been an experience and inspiration that I build upon in this thesis work. Stadsjord was created out of a collaboration between different religious groups in Gothenburg that lead to an allotment garden being formed by the church of the Högsbo neighborhood. The name Stadsjord translates as City Earth which as a term was historically used about governmentally owned land which was assigned for city dwellers to grow crops. Stadsjord has gotten a lot of attention for using pigs to prepare the land for gardening. The pigs tear up roots and fertilize the soil. After the establishment of the garden at Högsbo Niklas Wennberg took the lead of Stadsjord and developed new ways of replicating and sustaining the process. Stadsjord now has a reputation for unconventional urban gardening in the name of sustainability and food culture ([www.stadsjord.se](http://www.stadsjord.se)).



Figure 6: (2012) A vertical garden by Brunnsparcken At: <http://www.stadsjord.se> (Accessed on 14.3.2013)

## **Project for Public Spaces**

A network dating from 1975 that works according to a concept of placemaking with the mission of helping citizens bring new life to their neighborhoods. It is inspired by urbanists William H. Whyte and Jane Jacobs. The organization is quite big. It has worked in over 2.000 communities in 26 countries and trains over 10.000 people a year. They talk about the necessity of local heroes, or zealous nuts, for improving communities. According to Fred Kent, founder and president of PPS, people lost their power to shape their public spaces in the middle of the 20th century. PPS works with municipalities, developers, neighborhood organizations and NGO's ([www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)). Of the examples presented in this chapter, this network is clearly the one most institutionalized.

## **Green Thumb Program**

GreenThumb provides programming and material support to community gardens in New York. It forms a quite extensive network, supporting over 500 community gardens.

Edie Stone, director of the Green Thumb community garden program in New York has pointed out that a community gardens autonomy from the municipality strengthens the members group dynamics and develops it's individual's problem solving skills. The gardeners create a network of contacts among garden-supporting individuals, businesses and institutions in their neighborhoods (Stone, 2009). This reinforces the idea that user generated, bottom-up processes can create quality social spaces.

## **Green Guerillas**

The Green Guerrillas date back from 1973. They started with guerilla gardening and throwing "seed-green-aids" over the fences of vacant lots. Eventually they created the Bowery Houston Farm and Garden, the first community garden in New York, and sparked a movement. (Green Guerillas, 2013) In 1986 the garden was dedicated Liz Christy's Bowery-Houston Garden, in memory of of Liz Christy, a founder of the Green Guerillas. (City of New York, Parks and Recreation, 2013)

## Park(ing) Day



Figure 7: *Park(ing) Day* [Web page banner] At: <http://www.parkingday.org> (Accessed on 6.9.2013)

Parking day is an example of a heterotopic space that is reproduced by the help of the internet. It encourages people to go out on a specific day of the year and transform a parking place into a space of something different.

*Our Park(ing) project transformed a metered parking spot into a temporary park. This simple two-hour intervention—made into an open-source meme with a free how-to manual—has catalyzed a global event called Park(ing) Day, where people worldwide claim the parking space as a site for creative social expression, activism, and participatory public art (Mohsen Mostafavi, 2009, p.351).*

According to the Park(ing) Day website the event has evolved into a global movement where organizations and individuals create new forms of temporary public space. (parkingday.org). This take on tactical urban behavior echoes the 'witty resistance' that Certeau wrote about and the resistance without resistance presented by Lebbeus Woods.



Figure 8: *Parking place heterotopia* In: Lydon, Mike. 2012. *Tactical Urbanism: Short Term Action, Long Term Change*

## Plantera Staden

A network formed in spring 2008 with the aim of making Gothenburg a more enjoyable and vivid place. It wants to inspire the city's inhabitants to engage and participate in the development of public spaces. At the same time call for more collaboration with inhabitants in planning processes. The network has driven three different projects. In may 2008 they made a "green oasis" out of a rather dull open space outside Världskulturmuseet (The World Culture Museum). In September 2008 they held the seminar Plan(t)era Staden (Plan(t) the City) in collaboration with Gothenburgs Parks. The theme was visions on the city's future, with gardening in public spaces as a core element. In June 2009 the group worked with the Syrian Orthodox assembly in the Tynnered neighborhood of Gothenburg. That project enabled older Assyrian's to grow vegetables in association with their church.



Figure 9: Castell, Pål. (2008) *The intervention inbetween Världskulturmuseet and Universeum*

## **Trädgård på spåret**

A nonprofit organization that grows vegetables on an abandoned rail track in Stockholm. The plants are grown in raised beds made from transport pallets. The organization puts an emphasis on creating a meeting place, enjoying gardening and sharing knowledge. In 2012 the Folkuniversitetet, an adult education school, conducted courses on the site. During the growing season there is a plant market on weekends. In summer 2013 there was a café with a library and a gardening school for children. Although the garden is a spontaneous intervention it is meant to demonstrate a socially, ecologically and economically sustainable way of using the area. The organization envisions a green promenade along the rail track, from Norra Hammarbyhamnen to Södra Sjukhuset. It envisions a space for educational gardens, greenhouses, markets, catering and cultural events, maintained by non-profit organizations. The garden draws inspiration largely from the High Line in New York and Prinzessinnengärten in Berlin ([pasparet.org](http://pasparet.org)).

## **IV Empirical**

This part contains the empirical part of this thesis. This explains how I engaged in tactical interventions as an individual, as part of a group of three and finally how the group became part of a larger building project involving around thirty people.

### **Paper as a tactical building material**

Since I am promoting tactical methods and a do-it-yourself attitude for the production of spaces of possibility I felt that the best way to get insight to that method was to go out and do it myself. I made a paper pot and put a flower in it (an African margherita) and placed it by a sorry looking bench outside my school entrance. The positive outcomes were that the place looked a bit nicer. I showed it to people and talked about it and the connection to my theses, tactical methods and places of possibility. But maybe more important were the effects that it had on myself. I felt more connected to the place. While it was essentially a space that was confusing, maybe even a bit unnerving as such placelessness can be, I experienced a connection to it, which was beautiful, perhaps even more so because of the contrast of the individual, personal act opposed to the faceless institutional surface.

I developed a special technique to make the flowerpot which I describe as tactical. Material was tactically acquired as I took the newspapers I used from the garbage sorting room of my student housing. Then I whacked the paper in water with a motorized rotary blade until it became like porridge. Newspapers can be whacked right away, but heavier papers may have to be kept immersed in water for some time before whacking them. To the porridge I added gravel which was taken from a heap nearby. It was the gravel that covered the walkways during winter to

prevent pedestrians from falling. The gravel was thus a local material, “native” to the surrounding environment. Also it will give the finished product some interesting texture. It awakes a sensory experience of soft-hard and weak-strong. After adding the gravel the porridge was squeezed inside a linen cloth, removing most water to achieve a dampness that is optimal for ramming. The mold was made of two buckets of different sizes, filling up the space in between them, ramming the material layer on top of layer. I took the pot out of the mold right after finishing ramming and let it dry for a day before filling it with plant soil. Drying made the pot shrink which did not cause any cracking since it has a round profile. Some distortion became visible in the form of a faint curve from top to bottom, which I believe added character. A brick shape was also produced which showed cracking on corners and the visible distortions did not seem to complement the form aesthetically as was the case with the conical geometry of the pot.

I was surprised so see that the pot withstood rain quite well. When it rained the material became soaked. It did not become soft, but weakened and easy to break. I see more in the fragility than just a weakness. I think it is a reminder that the interventions that we make in the city space are always fragile as they are dependent on being accepted by the people around. Objects in our environment should not maintain their form because they are impossible to demolish but because they have the respect and acceptance of the people around. Also, the use of a less permanent material brings to light that materials are in constant transformation and ideally, circulation. An object can end, and in fact, should end, when it is not needed any more. The material it is made of, on the other hand, should still be usable.

As an alternative to ramming the paper, which is quite laborious, I have tried using the paper as daub. A more wet mix which I attached onto the outer surface of a bucket. It was somewhat easier than the ramming but it took much longer to dry and was not strong enough to be handled while still wet. Therefore I also tried a variant that is reinforced with textile net (a ribbon that is meant for the intersections of drywall plates) which allowed the structure to be much thinner. The daub method had a more rough character and it bread much fungus, probably because of less density of the material and a rougher surface.



Figure 10: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *The texture tells a story*

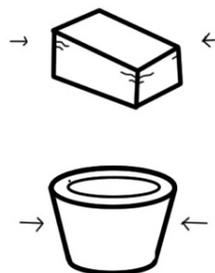


Figure 11: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *A round shape is strong and does not crack from shrinkage*



Figure 12: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *A rammed paper brick. A box shape tends to crack at the corners.*



Figure 14: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *A rammed paper pot by a bench at Chalmers Johanneberg Campus*



Figure 13: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *Paper daub, reinforced with textile net*



Figure 15: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir (2013). *A paper daub pot on Johanneberg hill*

## Placemaking scenario with paper

Close to my dwelling at the time in Johanneberg, there is a forest-grown hill with beautiful views over Gothenburg. The top of the hill has a concrete base in ruin, presumably from a military structure. There is a lot of trash around: cigarette butts, bottle caps and food packages. In that sense it is not “nice” and it indicates that it is a getaway from the rest of the city. The only people I have stumbled upon there were three teenagers coming to smoke cigarettes and drink beer. But why did I take interest in this place? It’s obvious qualities are the view and a peaceful moment amongst the trees and bushes. The trash is a downside. But the trash also indicates that this is a place that is left alone. It is a place of possibility. The teenagers come there to try out a new behavior: cigarette smoking and beer drinking. Of course this gives the place a bad image. But I put my paper pots there. They bring out the quality of the place. They point out that it is a place of possibility rather than a place of secret smoking. The paper daub that I used

weathers quickly and becomes infested with different mushrooms. This gives the intervention a timeless appearance and brings to mind the distortions of time that take place in a heterotopia.



Figure 16: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) Gardening intervention at Johanneberg

## Earth Lab

Over the time of writing the thesis I was part of Earth Lab, a small research group of masters students, formed in autumn 2012. The other members of Earth Lab were Shea Hagy and David Martinez. We wanted to pursue our common interests in alternative ecological building techniques and self building. Soon after forming, Earth Lab aimed for launching a workshop in earth building during summer 2013. David had much knowledge about the technique as he was writing a masters thesis on rammed earth in Swedish climate.

Over the weekend March 20th - 21st, Earth Lab members went on a course in rammed earth building conducted by Michael Thompson in Norfolk, England. The project was to build a small wall with openings. This course provided us hands on experience with rammed earth and an insight for conducting a course of our own. Also we got to know other people with different plans for rammed earth projects. The travel provided a good opportunity for Earth Lab to sharpen it's focus and plan the next workshop which would become part of a larger project called Jordstad, which will be described in the following chapter.



Figure 17: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *Rammed earth workshop in Norfolk*



Figure 18: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *Earth Lab preparing a workshop during Norfolk trip*

## A larger collaboration: Jordstad

Shea Hagy got in contact with Eric Berg from Byggbrigaden and discussed the idea of making a common project with Earth Lab. Eric was involved in forming Byggbrigaden in Lund year 2006. Byggbrigaden's vision is to re-organize the everyday in a better way. The ideology is that the individual should be better equipped to shape his everyday environment with a building know-how as well as the ability to work collectively. As the world around is becoming more complex but is presented to the individual by large scale organizations the individuals ability to affect or understand it is minimal. Byggbrigaden is about maintaining contact with the concrete world around and experiencing how it can be affected directly. In this context Byggbrigaden organizes educational construction building projects. The participants get a practical and theoretical training in how a building works, how to build and how the built environment affects oneself.

Eric had also started discussing a common project with Stadsjord (described earlier in this thesis) and with Martin Livian and Jens Zackrisson. Martin and Jens were in the process of formulating a masters thesis topic.

The discussions took the shape of more regular meetings. According to meeting notes a total of 10 such meetings were held between 17th of January to 25th of June. The meetings were attended by minimum 6 and maximum 10 people. The planning group consisted of: Erik Berg, Shea Hagy, Martin Livian, David Martinez, Åsa Riestola, Emma Romild, Ásgeir Sigurjónsson, Viktoria Viklander, Niklas Wennberg and Jens Zackrisson.

At the first documented meeting the participants had come to a common goal of engaging in "placemaking" for the benefit of "the common good", using, and promoting, methods of "natural building" and "self building". The project would draw on the resources of it's members. Byggbrigaden had the ability to gather builders and tools. Stadsjord was an established name and had it's network of possible land owner collaborators. The Chalmers students had knowledge of different natural building methods. Some examples of the activities that the place/s would allow for were: Temporary greenhouse on a construction area, "Another

Kvartersodlat" (see description of Stadsjord), "National Centre for Urban Primary Production", "Architectural graffiti", and a public compost library.

The group discussed various sites in Gothenburg as possible to work with. To decide upon sites to pursue further we used a grading method which Niklas had used for Stadsjord. Each site was given a grade for its different aspects: The publicity that the site will give our work. Infrastructure such as water, electricity, waste disposal, road access. Someone willing to take care of the site. The need for our interventions at the site. And UP (explain UP). This gave us a handful of sites in which we developed intervention concepts and pursued stakeholders. The sites eventually chosen, Fyrklövern and Kvilleorget will be described later.

As we introduced our project to different stakeholders we realized the need for a name and a logo that represented ourselves as a group. Through a brainstorming session that had an atmosphere of the witty wordplay that Gothenburg is known for we settled on the name Jordstad (meaning Earth City or Soil City). The name is witty as it can be read as an inversion of the name Stadsjord and it almost rhymes with Nordstan which is ironic since Nordstan is the central shopping mall of Gothenburg. While Nordstan (as a place) acquires meaning through consumption, Jordstad's places acquire meaning through productivity.

I designed a logo for Jordstad. It highlights the spaces in between the letters as Jordstad seeks to highlight the potential of spaces that are in between more formal spaces. A "horizon" divides the graphical form in two sections, showing the "under ground" as an active area contrasting inactivity above the surface. This represents the ground (soil, earth, space) connecting the individual elements on top of the surface (households, institutions, companies). The logo is also made to function as a stencil. The colored areas can be cut out from a thin piece of material. By placing the sheet against a flat surface and applying spraypaint, the logo can be replicated easily. The graphical language of the stencil refers strongly to the tactical action as in the art of Banksy or the famous stencil of Che Guevara.

Since Earth Lab was acquiring experience in the rammed earth technology the Jordstad group became interested in using rammed earth as a building method in its placemaking interventions. Earth Lab arranged a rammed earth workshop which most of Jordstad's members attended as well as some people from Byggbrigaden. The tutor at the workshop was Ulf Henningsson, which works with ecological building techniques and conducts courses. He is also active in the Swedish Clay Building Association (Lerbyggeföreningen i Sverige). David had initially planned the workshop with Ulf as part of his thesis work with a handful of people attending. But because of much interest from Jordstad and others, it was re-planned to include fifteen participants. The workshop thus served to prepare leaders that would teach the technique to additional participants during the interventions.



Figure 19: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *Workshop at Chalmers with Ulf Henningsson*



Figure 20: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *Jordstad logo*

## Building

The Jordstad interventions were built during the week June 30th - July 7th. The building week was arranged in the form of a Byggbrigaden brigade. Also counting the steering group there were 20-30 people participating. Some people came to participate from outside of Gothenburg and they stayed in a common apartment. A special food team was assigned for each day that prepared food for the rest of the group during the day.

Stadsjord's site by Vågmästareplatsen served as a base during the building week. It included a greenhouse that served as a place for meetings and lunches, a container for preparing food and a toilet. Additionally a tent was raised for mixing clay and a tool shed was added. Tools were either owned by Byggbrigaden or Stadsjord or borrowed from participants or bought during the project. A car was used to transport tools and materials from the base to the working sites. Kvilleorget was in short walking distance but to get to Fyrklövern participants used bicycles.



Figure 21: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *The clay mixing tent*



Figure 22: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir (2013) *Powderizing Gothenburg clay inside the mixing tent*



Figure 23: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir (2013) *The woodworking area*



Figure 24: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *David and Viktoria get clay from a truck driver*



**Figure 25: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) Stadsjord's greenhouse served as meeting place**

## Fyrklöverområdet

One of the two Jordstad building interventions were by Fyrklövern, an area of apartment buildings owned by the Stena housing company. Niklas Wennberg and Victoria Viklander from Stadsjord approached Stena and got an agreement for Jordstad to establish a garden in the south west end of the area. Stena had said that they would finance Jordstad's work on this particular site. What makes this site special is that it is on the boarder of a villa area and an apartment building area and it is closely surrounded with walk paths.

### The proposal

Jordstad's proposal was a place comprised of three elements: 1. Gardening (greenhouse/growing beds). 2. Outdoor cooking and eating (coal grill, table, benches) and 3. rammed earth wall (creates a microclimate for plants and people, frames in the area and gives it character). The three different elements also roughly represent the division of responsibilities/phases. First is the rammed earth wall and greenhouse which are a responsibility of Jordstad. But there was no greenhouse built during the building week and the design of the wall was altered slightly. Second is the gardening, which is a responsibility of Stadsjord and has been started. Third is the grilling area which is Stena's responsibility and has not been started.



Figure 27: Martinez, David. (2013) *Fyrklövern site and rendering*



Figure 26: Martinez, David. (2013) *Fyrklövern rendering*



Figure 28: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *Intervention at Fyrklövern*



Figure 29: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *Fyrklövern site drawing 1:2000*

### Working at Fyrklövern

The Jordstad concept is as much about the way of doing things, as it is about the outcome. It is volunteer driven and it should also be accessible to those that want to take part. Before the building week there is a formal registration for volunteers that want to take part. This is in the spirit of previous Byggbrigaden projects. But the building site itself should also be open to people that want to learn about what is taking place or if they want to help.

When I was working at Fyrklövern I was frequently approached by people. They were mostly curious about what this was that we were building. Then they were curious about the rammed earth technique, especially about how long it would last. I answered honestly that I did not know for sure, but I expected it to last many years. Usually people were positive towards this effort. I only met one person that wanted to start gardening there, which I think is fine, since the proposal does not assume a big garden. I could imagine that up to ten people might exist in the area that might want to garden there. But that can depend on how well Stadsjord presents the idea in the neighborhood.

Children were also curious. Most of them were well behaved but there was one kid that was especially unruly and he could start playing with the tools, even though he was asked not to. This could be a bit frustrating. I did my best to involve the kids in the work by discussing with them what I was doing and letting them help. I believe that by involving the children they will feel more ownership of the work and be less likely to demolish anything at the place.



Figure 30: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *Fyrklövern building site*



Figure 32: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *Sign by Fyrklövern*



Figure 31: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) *Children help with clay plaster*

### Understanding local perceptions by Fyrklövern

Viktoria Viklander works with Stadsjord and is part of the Jordstad planning team. She is Jordstad's contact person and that is mentioned on the sign by the garden in Fyrklövern. By the end of summer she has been contacted by "three to four people" about this area specifically. They have asked for information and said that they liked the project. Two to three people have asked if they can grow vegetables there, but they would rather want to start next growing season. Viktoria says she has found general interest from the people around while working in the area.

Knowing that the place has support from the locals is vital to its survival. How can I know if the place is a heterotopia? I asked a person living in one of the apartment buildings but he did not understand what I meant when I tried to explain the term heterotopia. I therefore asked if he thought that the place was being used more creatively than before our interventions and he claimed that it was.

I wrote a letter to the inhabitants in the area (see whole letter in appendix) where I explain briefly how I have been researching urban spaces that generate local cultures as alternatives to a global system that is too much driven by concentrated money and power. Those spaces I describe as "spaces of possibilities". Then I ask a) How do you feel about the place and what is your experience of it? and b) Do you think it can be a "space of possibilities". I printed the letter in forty copies. Around two thirds I handed out passers by in the neighborhood and about one third I put into mailboxes. The handing out the letters generated a few discussions but only one person, Venecia, answered my letter in writing. Venecia explains how she was introduced to the garden one day by her eight year old daughter who brought her vegetables from the garden. She says that the initiative has inspired many of the people around to start gardening and that she shall start gardening for the first time next summer. She believes it can be a space of possibilities.

Why were there so few that answered? From the discussions that arose from distributing the letter I realized that many did not know about this garden since they never pass this area because the bus stops and car parkings are on the other side of the apartment building site. Regarding the inhabitants of the villas, they tend to show little interest as they feel that the garden is only for the inhabitants of the apartment buildings.

When going to the Fyrklövern area to talk to people the subject is sometimes perceived quite differently than I had intended, and the conversation takes an unpredicted direction.

*a) People starting talking about how it could have been done better, like being placed elsewhere and having more functions.*

This can feel as a really harsh reaction. Two thoughts arise. Firstly, they live there and have experienced the place as such and the comments they make are based on their existing desires. But we did not take the approach of asking them what they need and then trying to fulfill those needs (which may be various and even contradicting). Instead we decided beforehand a need to fulfill and then went searching for a space that was suitable and available. We are very well aware that in many cases there might be few people that will actively garden in these spaces, but we believe that the gardening creates the core of those public spaces. Secondly. Our view is that there was "nothing" there before but now there is something. And we created that something with our own initiative.

*b) "They" (referring to Stena, the strategic caretaker) are behind this.*

It was also very strange to get the reaction that “they should put up a light there as well” or “they should have had two opposing benches so people can face each other when they talk”. In fact I had thought of my self as representing Jordstad and therefore expected to hear the words “you should” instead of “they should”. This brings to light a quality that the heterotopia should have: it should be a place where people say "we should!".

*c) The question is about things (wall, gardening boxes), rather than a space or place.*

A problematic arises when I try to refer to a place that has not acquired a name yet. I want to have a name to refer to, but instead I must use words like “the little garden” and “ the earth wall” which describe *things* rather than a place. It is possible that people see this as a placelessness so that there is simply no place to speak of (yet?). This problematic might also have to do with different personal histories. To me, the Hill (as I could call this place to myself) and the intervention are one, since I have experienced the Hill completely on the account of the intervention. A local, on the other hand, would have a different experience of this Hill (or lack of experience) and therefore see (or ignore) the same old Hill, despite what new things have been built on it.

In the case of Fyrklövern there was a small number of people that wanted to be involved. The future of the project depends on them carrying it onwards. If they start shaping the place in a do-it-yourself, tactical manner, they can make a visible contrast to the generic common outdoor space. That would make it easier to identify the place as "something different". To sustain such a place is a dialogue between the strategic actors (Stena), the active caretakers (Local heroes, as PPS calls them) and everyone else (locals and passers by). The most active caretakers have to convey openness, and everyone else has to be able to interpret the place as open.

## **Kvilleorget**

It is a fairly big square close to Hjalmar Brantingsplatsen. It is a bit hidden, not visible from the main traffic channels in the area, giving it a character which is more quiet and local. Roughly half of the square is covered with yellow sand, where there is a playground, a fountain and benches. The southern end of the square is covered with asphalt. The placemaking intervention is about extending the functionality of the square and encouraging discussion about food, work and building through physical activity. Like the one in Fyrklövern it is composed of rammed earth walls and gardening boxes. The site was chosen based on criteria such as accessibility, visibility and local cooperation. FCH (Fastighetsägare Centrala Hisingen) offered Jordstad access to an office by the square where during the building week participants had access to toilets, electricity and water.

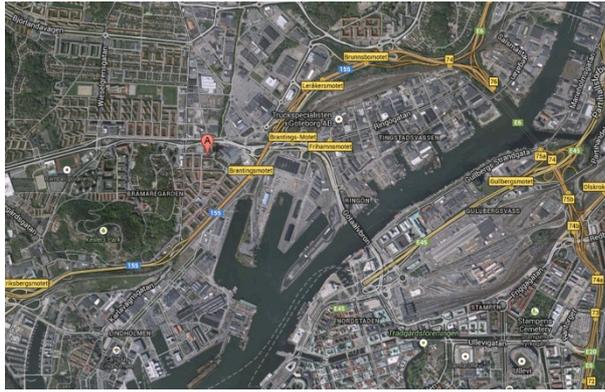


Figure 33: Google earth image showing the site

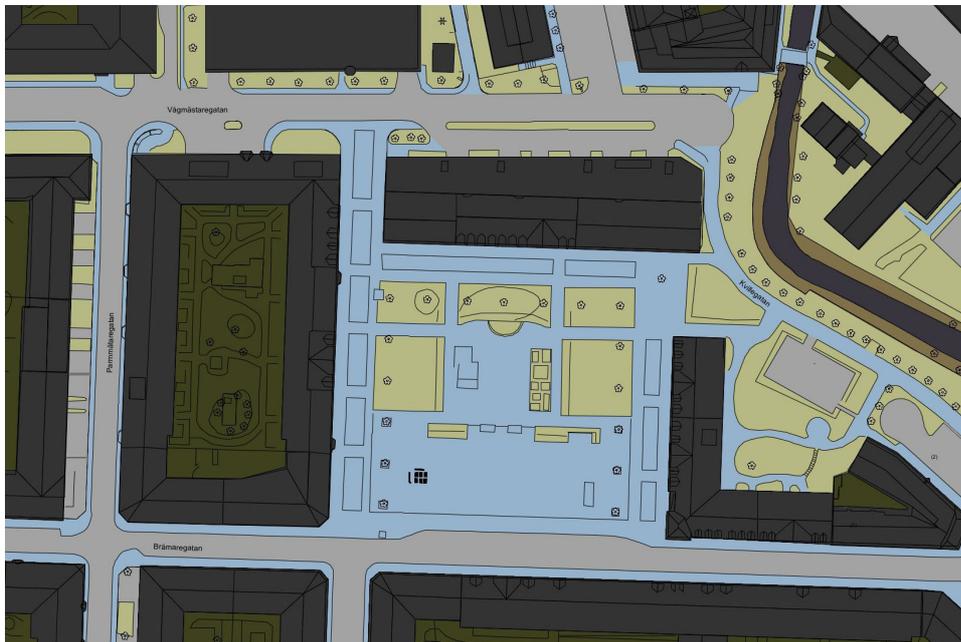


Figure 34: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) Kvilletorget site drawing 1:2000

### Working at Kvilletorget

While working at Kvilletorget I was approached by various people that were interested in what we were doing. I realized that it is a bit difficult to explain our vision in such a situation. And since I was also working and wanting to finish in time, I often had to give quite simplified answers, simply saying that we are making a vegetable garden for anyone that wants to grow. And that the walls are of rammed earth and they create a microclimate in the garden, they are cool during the day, but release heat during night. Unlike Fyrklövern, children do not approach as commonly, as they are there with parent supervision, but instead there were quite a few day drinkers that came to talk.



Figure 35: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir (2013). Working at Kvilletorget



Figure 36: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir (2013). First rammed section.



Figure 37: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) The garden in use



Figure 38: Photograph. Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. (2013) An information sign on site

## Continuity

After building the rammed earth walls it was Stadsjord that initiated the gardening by growing vegetables in three pallet collars. A person was on site at Wednesdays from 16:00 to 18:00 and talked to those that were interested and offered help to potential gardeners. I believe this has added much value to the place and the concept as a whole. People can have a pallet with a collar from Stadsjord for 200 kronor, for as long as the garden will stay, which will be a decision of the municipality. By August 16th there were three additional people that had started gardening in three different pallet collars. Comprised of six pallets the garden was already fairly big compared to the proposal drawing that showed eight pallets, and more gardeners might start the following season.



Figure 39: Sigurjónsson, Ásgeir. *Garden at Kvilletorget.* (14.8.13)

## Erika

I talked to Erika, one of the new gardeners at Kvilletorget. Erika visited the garden every Wednesday to check on her plants and talk to the others about the next steps in the gardening. She would also go on Sundays and meet Emma, who she had gotten to know through the gardening. Emma was also a member of the Jordstad planning group. Erika said that she was interested in becoming part of "something like Kvartersodlat". She said that it felt exciting to go against the mainstream and grow in an unusual place. Many are pessimistic and think that everything will be destroyed at a place like that, but she was delighted to prove that it was not so bad and that the plants received some respect. Emma Romild posted Erika's reflections on the Byggbrigaden's Facebook group:

*Min idé med att odla var inte bara att få egna grönsaker utan också att få ett större kontaktnät och att bli mer aktiv när det gäller vad som händer i mitt närområde. Det är kul att se hur en lite odling som denna kan skapa intresse bland de som rör sig på torget. Det kommer nästan alltid fram någon och pratar när man står och pysslar. (Dunge, 2013)*

*Author's translation: My reason for gardening [at Kvilleorget] was not just to reap my own vegetables, but also to enter a bigger contact network and to become more active regarding what happens in my near environment. It is fun to see how small scale growing like this can create interest among those who go around the square. There is almost always somebody that comes to talk as you are working.*

In relations to placemaking, Erica represents an "optimal user" for two reasons. First she holds a certain ideology, that of acknowledging the added social value of growing vegetables in a public space. Second: she recognizes this ideology in the intervention so she decides to join it.

I believe that the size of the garden is very much dependent on the number of those optimal users in the area. Therefore a garden serving an area of many inhabitants can still be a small one, since these potential optimal users might not be so many (at that time). But the garden and it's gardeners have the added purpose of introducing themselves, thus creating new optimal users by spreading the ideology to people.

## **V Reflections and conclusions**

### **Reflections**

A significant thread that lead me to write about this subject was my attraction to the old Swedish allotment gardens "koloniträdgårdar". Many of them are different from the allotments that I have seen in Iceland (where I lived until I moved to Sweden two years ago) because they have cottages for living in. I wondered if those could serve as experimental zones for sustainable living.

I found out that there was a period when they were in fact seen as laboratories for exemplar society, as well as social improvement tools. So my idea wasn't at all that far fetched. But as I started getting to know them better I saw that they are more conservative than experimental. Using the vocabulary that I have acquires since then I would say they are more like little isotopies than heterotopia.

There is a growing interest in urban vegetable gardening and I think that is a sign that people want to know their food better and experience a culture of production that goes beyond consumerism. But as waiting lists for allotment gardens get longer and the prices of the cottages get higher following the increasing demand it brings up the darker picture of urban development as the borders of the allotment gardens start to be a divider between have and have-nots.

When talking to people that did not own a koloni patch I sensed how these gardens are less public in reality than they are in theory. The experimental zone for sustainable living that I was thinking of would have to interact more actively with the rest of the environment and integrate with the urban fabric as a public space. I decided to leave the allotments and search for the progressive spirit elsewhere. The allotment gardeners were quite content with business as usual.

Guerilla gardening is an example of where the will to garden precedes the limitations implied by the environment. It has the ability to break up the isotopy and reverse the perception of its totality. When the contrast is strong it can be witty and inspirational. It is tactical and creates heterotopias “all over the place”.

I started to see that in a way the “experimental zone for urban living” is essentially without a fixed location. This rhymes with Certeau’s notion of the tactical, it does not have a fixed place.

Guerilla gardening is what it is, essentially purely tactical. But I am interested in the intersection of the tactical and the strategical. Like the moment when the green guerillas initiated an allotment movement in New York. How to replicate such moments? Perhaps it is never completely possible, but what can aid or encourage it?

I am interested in how to sustain what is initiated. Jordstad did a great job in building rammed earth walls. But then it leaves. Will the locals take over the places? How so? It is ultimately the users that will produce the space, day by day.

The locals that I have talked to are generally positive about the interventions. I have been told that people often choose to stay by the site in Fyrklövern. And that they are using the space creatively.

## **Conclusions**

In the beginning of this thesis I ask how outside actors (e.g. municipality, property owner, architect, activist) can apply tactical methods. In the case of Jordstad it was a mixed group of different actors with similar ideas but different roles in society, roles such as student, researcher, architect, entrepreneur, craftsman, activist. The group had a vision of places around the city where people are more active and cooperative in regards to a physical public space. This type of place is a heterotopia, a contradiction to a generic urban fabric. The tactic was to scout for the sites where this different kind of place could happen, talk to stakeholders, get permission and access resources.

The next question is how they (the outside actors) can help and encourage locals to create their own local space, and if so, how that can be done. In the case of Jordstad we built the walls, started gardening and invited people to come and garden. Stadsjord had the role of starting up the gardening to show example and help locals to start. At Kvilleorget a few locals started

gardening. They can be seen as those people that carry on the process. At Fyrklövern a few people showed interest in starting gardening next season.

The third question was how local space can be created in such a way that it enables and encourages pro-activity and becomes a heterotopia. The aesthetics certainly play a role, picture gardening in boxes, DIY looking structures, stencils. Erika, who was already familiar with Stadsjord put meaning into these aesthetics and saw them as an invitation to commonly create new spaces. In Venecia's case it was her daughter who introduced her to the garden, who has probably helped a bit and gotten to know that it was open for anyone to participate.

# Appendix

## Letter to inhabitants by Fyrklövern

(This letter was handed out in fourty copies around the Fyrklövern area September 23rd.)

Hej

Jag är student på Chalmers, på ett masterprogram som kallas *Design för hållbar utveckling*. Jag jobbar nu på mitt examensarbete. Jag var också en av planerarna och byggarna av den lilla köksträdgården med den stampade lermuren på kullen bredvid fotbollsplanen i Fyrklövern. Jag skulle vilja be dig att hjälpa mig med min forskning.

Min forskning handlar om urbana rum som ger förutsättningar för skapande av lokala kulturer (mat, konst, hantverk, teknik, sociala gemenskaper osv.) som eventuella alternativ till ett globalt system som styrs för mycket av koncentrerad makt och pengar. Jag tror att det är viktigt eftersom många ohållbara händelser, såsom utsläpp av växthusgaser och exploatering av arbetskraft, är en följd av detta system. Jag kallar dessa „rum för möjligheter“ (spaces of possibilities).

Nu vill jag gärna veta vad du tänker om eller känner för den nya trädgården på kullen vid fotbollsplanen. Jag vill gärna veta:

- a) Vad du tycker om den och dina erfarenheter av den
- b) Om du tror att den kan vara ett „mellanrum av möjligheter“ som förklarats ovan

Var snäll och skicka ditt svar till [asgeirs@student.chalmers.se](mailto:asgeirs@student.chalmers.se)

Med vänliga hälsningar,  
Ásgeir Sigurjónsson



**Answer to letter to inhabitants:**

Hej! Mitt namn är Venecia och bor på fyrklöversgatan.

Jag skriver till dig för att du ville veta vad jag tyckte om trädgården på kullen vid fotbollsplanen.

Min erfarenhet av det, visste jag inte mycket vad det var, men min flicka som är 8 år berättade att någon hade planterat där, hon kom hem en dag med lite grönsaker som du hade planterat där.

Dem smakade mycket gott.

Och jag tror att det kan vara ett mellanrum förr alltid, du har inspirerat många här förr att plantera.

Vi själva har ute plats, och vi kommer också att plantera, vi har inte gjort det ännu, förr att det är inte lätt att börjar.

Underbart jobb du har gjort.

MVH Venecia Saldivia.

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