

PROJECT SNÖSÄTRA

- Culture & nature area

1.1 Background

This chapter – that can be prolonged in a later stage – aims to give a short historical overview of the area and how it is relevant in the context of Stockholm and Sweden. Its emphasize on recent years reflects how this project takes its starting point in an urgency of today and want to carry out methods to deal with this. Also we here want to show the different recent processes leading up to the situation today.

Then and now

Snösättra stockpile area was created in 1958 through a new city plan. The land was, and still is, owned by the City and administrated by the office of exploitation (Exploateringskontoret) renting it out to landholders. The initial deal was that every landholder was committed to build a wall around their plot. 2009 the area hosted 34 landholders of which 22 was company's holding 175 employees in total. The occupations mostly lie within building and garbage disposal, but there is also a park building company, a truck service point and a recycling point for pallets. In recent years also artists what we can call hobby enthusiasts have started to appear.

Locally in everyday speech the area is called Snösättra industrial area. And indeed its typology is similar to a lot of areas, in different scales, in Stockholm that has or are about to be deconstructed¹.

In 2004 the city decides to phase out Snösättra and changed the leases into three months. The change of contracts, and the new attitude to the area, can be said to have created a negative spiral. This attitude was reflected in that no renovations were carried out anymore with the results that some of the more stable company's left for other areas with more stable futures. This has created a more precarious situation where less situated actors

¹ Just to mention a few: Lugnet was transformed into Hammarby sjöstad that was built 1994-ongoing, Liljeholmens industrial area now transformed into inter Alia Lövholmen with the construction start around 2020 and Slakthusområdet also being changed into an apartment area with the building start of the first stage 2018. The changes happen rapidly, and this specific typology is soon to be extinct in a Stockholm context.

started to move in, while at the same time what could be described as a creative boom has taken place. To understand this boom, and the double-sided situation

Zero Tolerance

2014, the same year as the strict zero tolerance was canceled in Stockholm, the area took an unexpected turn again and became a graffiti fame (a fame is a wall or building where a lot of graffiti is taking place, it can be both legal and illegal). This transformation should be seen in the light that the city of Stockholm conformed to the policy of zero tolerance in 2007. What makes this policy unusual on an international level, was that it also targeted legal graffiti, which for example Rudy Giuliani never did during the groundbreaking years for zero tolerance in New York during the 1990s. The authorities in Stockholm were for some years obligated, by any means necessary, to stop all aesthetic expressions made with a spray can².

Snösätra on the map

The appearance of an area with massive graffiti was for some years unthinkable, but yet it happened. The local enthusiasts Percy, one of the many second and third hand leases, together with Daniel, who is the owner of a small building company with a plot in Snösätra, took the initiative to talk to the other landholders about letting graffiti artists paint on their walls. The walls poor condition and the questionable future for the area was probably two important factors that made it come through. The area is today in constant change, closely monitored by Percy managing who has the rights to paint walls, and not one day seem to go by without an artist being present repainting a wall.

The graffiti fame and the big event "Spring remake", where the whole area during one weekend each year is painted simultaneously while 1000 of visitors are there, put Snösätra on the map. One can now find information about the area on visitstockholm.com and the big events has been covered both national and internationally.

² This was by itself not a new phenomenon, as it can be claimed that the same kind of moral panic has been a Swedish tradition during the modern urban history. One early example was authority's opposing the new jazz music resulting in regulations against dancing in restaurants without permission, a law that is still applied today. A later example is the stigmatization and criminalization of techno fans during the 90th resulting in a specific police force going under the name "the rave commission", a conflict that still seems to affect how the police deal with techno culture.

Simultaneously there has also been a growing dance scene in Snösätra, with mostly techno music. With its distance to neighbors and being somehow a crack in the city landscape the area became home to yet one other outcast culture activity. Different temporary clubs has taken place in Snösätra over the last ten years but recently Percy, an old techno fan himself, started to manage also this renting spaces to D.I.Y club producers. During a lot of weekends, it has been possible to see club kids from all over the city frequenting the remote park lanes on their way to dance the night away.

This narrative – from industrial area to blooming cultural hub – resemblance what almost all cities try to achieve today. But still everyone is not happy, and conflicts has occurred in relation to the new situation for Snösätra. For a short overview the main complaints could be described as follow:

- Neighbors complaining about the clubs disturbing their sleep.
- Local environmental groups that points out how the area leaks pollution into the surrounding wetland nature.
- Police pointing out the negative impacts of the techno parties taking place in Snösätra as well as how the graffiti can attract unruly elements
- Dog owners and other gadabouts are critical of the big piles of rubbish being dumped in the area directly to Snösätra industrial area

Citizen's proposals

2018 the politicians governing the city of Stockholm (the red/green/pink block) rushed the decision to make the whole area into a nature reserve, before the election the same year. That could have ended with the definitive demolishing of Snösätra industrial area, but the local politicians (the city part Enskede, Årsta & Vantör) had an alternative agenda since they saw how a promising – but a bit rough – cultural scene emerged. But still they didn't want to suggest keep the area – with the risk of being criticized – and a somehow non-conventional decision emerged. The local council reached out to local cultural organizations and asked for a citizen's proposal demanding for the area to be saved, and furthermore to suggesting how to transform it in line with it becoming a vital culture area. The challenge was accepted, and dates was set for further separate discussions between the groups.

One of this local groups was the self-built and self-managed cultural center Cyklopen. Participants in the collective, backed up by Marx arkitektur, engaged in the process, and soon got the role of negotiating with the other groups and local interests involved. The main question for everyone was how to transform it and still keep it as impact as possible, but how and in what extent was discussed in detail, which was reflected in the two and not one citizen's proposals sent in.

Investigations

In May 2018 the city took the decision of creating a new nature reserve but cutting a hole in the middle leaving the north part of Snösätra becoming a "west Berlin" in the nature territory. The south part of the area would here disappear while the north was saved at least for now. The politic chamber of Stockholm also initiated a work group consisting of the landowner (Exploateringskontoret), the local authority's (Stadsdelsförvaltningen) and the planning department (Stadsbyggnadskontoret) with the aim of investigating the circumstances of creating a cultural area out of the north part of Snösätra.

At the same time Marx arkitektur looked for a way of continuing the investigation of the Snösätra industrial area and how to proceed after the citizen's proposal. The fear was that the city authorities lacked the knowhow how to transform the area without destroying its originality.

Marx arkitektur therefore reached out to ArkDes and the architecture school at KTH with the hope of them being interested in the matter. It was decided on performing a research study. The ambition is not to oppose the authority's own investigation but rather to collaborate and compliment it with other methods.

During September and October 2018, the research team met with the cities workgroup and the first steps was taken for a joint collaborative process to hopefully occur.

1.2 Context

Snösätra industrial area has been described as becoming a Stockholm "Meat packing district", but there is one big difference. The meat packing district in New York, as well as Köttbyn in Copenhagen or similar areas that embodies this postindustrial turn, are all part of the inner-city structure. Snösätra, however, is located in a forest 15 minutes by foot from

the closest suburb and metro station Rågsved. With 25 additional minutes with metro from Rågsved to Stockholm inner city. Therefore, it's important to understand the local context and this chapter briefly describes the surrounding.

Built environment

The surrounding areas Rågsved, Högdalen and Fagersjö are all suburbs dominated by apartment complexes, with a substantial degree of public housing. There exist some other typologies like row-houses and smaller villas nearby, and since the last 15 years the areas also host a portion of condominiums. Even though with prices that could be considered as cheap compared to the Stockholm average. The population has a wage below the average in Stockholm, as well as there is more people with foreign background.

Close to Snösätra industrial area is an invisible municipal border dividing Stockholm from Huddinge. In Huddinge on the other side the character of the housing starts to change. A new area with villas is being built called Högmora, and in the neighboring area Myrängen we can see how summer cottages has been transformed into villas. The inhabitants are here wealthier and meeting places and contact between this area and the other surrounding ones seems absent.

Nature

The nature around Snösätra industrial area goes under the name Rågsveds friområde, now a nature reserve, is an area part of the Stockholm green structure called the green splices (de gröna kilarna) that was planned during 1950s to create a bridge to the nature surrounding the city. The new nature reserve consists of different types of nature; wetland, open grassland, oak vegetation and mountains covered with old pine forest. Also, the area has a tradition of cultivation hundreds of years which creates a genuine cultural landscape. The area is important to different prioritized batrachians, insects and birds (during spring one can hear the nightingale and with some luck find more unusual birds as reed bunting and bearded tit). The area also has an important function in cleaning surface water running through the area.

The activities here are many: exercising, walks, birdwatching, cultivating in the two big allotment gardens as well as other recreational activities.

New inhabitants

Over the last ten years the forest area has become home for a varying amount of poor people from mostly Rumania who built up small informal townships. The destruction and repairing of the entitlements have created a debate locally, and what angers inhabitants the most is the garbage the townships ditch in the area. We can also see extreme far right tendencies and during several times people attacked the camps and the inhabitants with people getting seriously injured.

But at the same time it has also formed groups with the ambition to create solidarity with the new inhabitants. One is the organization "HEM" (home) that was formed at Cyklopen 2013. The organization teaches Swedish, collects cloth and even organized people to move threatened encampments to new locations.

New culture

When the suburbs were built around Stockholm they followed an idea called ABC-suburbs. A is for work, B for living and C for center in the meaning of commerce and culture. All of the parts was meant to be present. The actual results have been discussed and criticized in length, not least for the lack of culture. But at least in Högdalen and Rågsved the culture has started to bloom over the last yeast.

Except the new cultural activities in Snösätra the cultural center Cyklopen was inaugurated in 2013 in Högdalen, the outdoor stage Pärssons betong in Rågsved is frequently used during summers, Fria teatern has an ongoing program in the centre of Högdalen where they are neighbours with Studieförbundet and Kulturskolan and in Rågsved an old community center has been reinvented with a new management.

Maybe the old thoughts of an ABC-suburb start to make sense again, and in any way we can see how Snösätra is surrounded with cultural actors in different scales.

2. Project description and aims

Through an interdisciplinary take and different methods within artistic research the project will gather and produce material and knowledge about the present situation of Snösätra Industrial area as well as possible futures of the area. Since the project started through a citizen proposal process between different organizations in Vantör one central aspect for the project is how to take care of the local knowledge and specificities. Guiding questions is: Can

changes in Snösättra have a positive effect regarding the social environment in the nearby areas? What changes is resilient enough to not destroy the areas peculiar nature? What design methods is there to solve the pollution problem without destroying the industrial area? And what culture – content and forms – should the area consist of that develop its unique character and public dimension?

The main aims for the project are:

- 1) a deepened knowledge of the potentials and problems of Snösättra industrial area and there by support a correct decision being made about the future of the place. The determination is not to produce “the thru only path” of the area, the aim is to produce a deepened know-how what path might succeed.
- 2) to try new methods for citizen’s influence and participation
- 3) to inspire future urban planning processes to become more poetic and vital. This is our good intention. The future will tell if we manage to create an inspiring outcome.

3. Outcomes

Along the way visual material and objects will be produced to become discursive exhibitions that works as support structures at different venues that host seminars, mapping workshops and talks. These events will be recorded and together with the visual material and interviews become a final exhibition at ArkDes as well as a catalogue.

4. Process and methods

Rather than being definitive this should be seen as a start, since we have to be open towards what processes and methods will gain the project in best way. Still our hope is that the methods below communicates possible trajectories for the research.

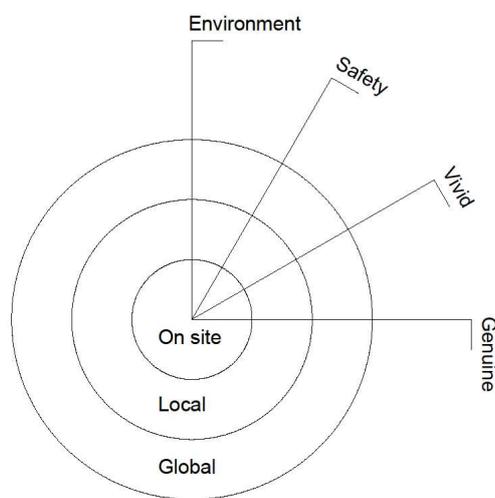
Pilot research

During the fall 2018 the master course Urban Ecologies at KTH school of architecture are doing a pilot research study on the area. The students – introduced to the area by Victor Marx – are analyzing the area from different perspectives and will use visualization to open up new thoughts on the subject. The results are presented in an exhibition that hopefully

will take place locally, somewhere in Vantör, to bring on new discussions in the local community. The students work will be the stepping stone for the research project to come.

Research collaboration: Marx arkitektur, ArkDes & KTH

This research will start up in the beginning of the spring 2019. It is going to be organized in three different circles which all inform each other and together creates an ecosystem: On site, Locally and Global. Moving through the circles are focus areas for the study cutting through all scales. These are yet to be defined and the ones in the diagram, being sketched beneath, are examples.



On site) The work follows the ideas of action design where the research team will be present on site. In this method the researcher is impacting the circumstances on the site producing knowledge through the process. The impact can be done through a physical change, a workshop or a happening in the urban space. In the case of Snösättra it might be temporary structures where cultural activities related to the area's future can be tested, debated and analyzed. The local authority's, part of the city's workgroup, presented their first report during September 2018 where they wrote that temporary structures for cultural might be the answer to how the area is going to be transformed. They claimed this could be achieved already to the summer of 2019. The local newspapers were quick to report that the new cultural area would open the summer of 2019. It is unlikely, and probably unwise, for the process to be that hasty. But maybe it is possible to pick up on the idea and test it during our

process. This would at the same time serve to milder the disappointment of the process moving to slow.

This is just one early approach thought.

The important outcome is that new knowledge is being produced when the physical activity is performed on the site. Observations of the social interactions and documentation of the aftermath is rebuilt to useful and site-specific knowledge.

Locally) The wider context is here being researched. The work will probably include interviews, mapping workshops and later on discursive exhibitions. The interviews are thought to be carried out with people from the civil society as well as with local authorities (such as the police) with the ambition of gather local knowledge and what people are longing for, what would create security, what is needed to create a including environment etc.

The mapping workshops has the same ambition and will take place at Cyklopen as well as other venues in the area. The mapping exercises are meant to involve groups, in the local society who the normal methods of citizens dialog do not reach, like kids, teenagers, oldies, immigrants etc. This will together with objects build on site and other material result in the discursive exhibitions that also take place in unexpected places around in the area where the discussions are recorded.

Global) Relevant reference projects will here be analyzed and field trips might be taken. The focus here is to map projects where industrial areas has been transformed to cultural hubs and look for methods how to avoid gentrification and also to look for design strategies. Here interviews also will be done with experts in cultural planning, art and sociology. One possibility is also to invite them for lectures that can be held at both ArkDes and venues in Vantör, and then also do tours in Snösättra that might both be public and not. This is probably the starting point for our research project where we can find inspiration to what methods is the most relevant.

1:1 Architect school workshop in Snösättra

During the project the possibility of creating a 1:1 full-scale workshop, run by the architect school (KTH), in Snösättra will be researched. The possibilities of realizing the architect

school's presence is initially seen as a heavily important part for the stability of the new cultural area. Also, it might work as a generator for other stable actors to be established. The possibilities of achieving this and the important of it to happen will be clear during the process. Disregarding the gain this would give Snösätra, the workshop is also something that the architect school searched for some years. Their aim has been accomplishing this on the KTH campus, but in not having any success, this might be a solution.

Actors and methods

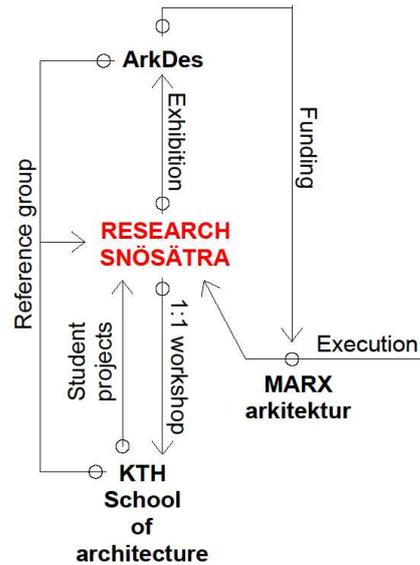
The main actors will be part of all these circles while other actors (being found along the process) will be part of just one. The same goes with methods where some will be part of just one, while some – as visualization – will be integrated in all.

Organization & management as we understand it right now

The main actors in the management of the process is now:

- Marx arkitektur: Executing and organizing the research process.
- ArkDes: Financing the research, hosting seminars and final exhibition as well as being part of the reference group taking part of the research process.
- KTH, School of Architecture: Students are doing pilot research during fall 2018 and the schools is willing to give input and resources with the aim on creating a 1:1 full-scale workshop in Snösätra. Faculties from the school are also part of the reference group taking part of the research process. Hopefully there are studios also during the spring 2019 that would be interested in staging workshops in Snösätra.

The aim is to create a reference group where they all are represented. Regular meetings will be carried out during the process to enable knowledge exchange, input and insight.



Exhibition

The work will result in an exhibition 2019. The work with the research will be carried out with the help of visualizations, mappings and designs as important tools. The exhibition is not meant to be produced after the process is finished, rather is the aim that the exhibitions content is produced running along the process and also support it. Rather than communicating conclusions, the exhibition should open up the process and open for critical conversation on both the area and the possibility of citizen’s participation as well as new ways to work with urban planning.

An exhibition catalogue can complement with interviews and transcriptions from the seminars along the way and can hopefully work as inspiration for upcoming urban planning projects and end up on some writing desks as inspiration belonging to “important people”. The exhibition is meant to be the actual delivery of the research to politicians and civil servants as well as to citizens with different background knowledge’s. The aim is to reach the public to create a new interest in democratic ways of develop the city.

We are here very interested in a close collaboration with the staff at ArkDes to see how the exhibition could come around in best possible way.