

Urban Biopower Stockholm and the Biopolitics of Creative Resistance

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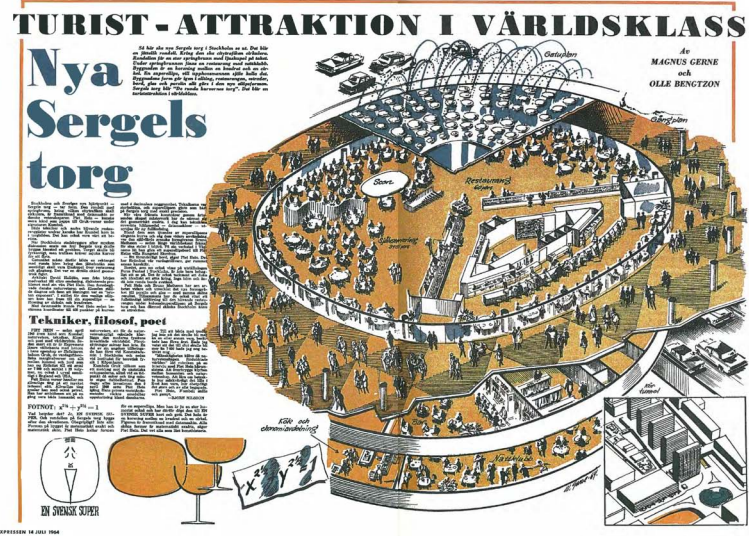


Fig. 1: Turistattraktion i Världsklass, 1964. Image originally published by Expressen Media Sweden, and featured in an Arkitektur och designcentrum exhibition catalogue *Sergels Torg*, Stockholm: Arkitekturmuseet, 1999.

¹ In fact, depending on which search engine you use, you will land at different points designating the centre of Stockholm: Map Quest locates the centre of Stockholm on the grounds of Klara Kyrka (Klara Church) <http://www.mapquest.com/maps?city=Stockholm&country=SE>; Google Maps lands on a building between Jakobsgränd and Fredsgatan, east of Akademigränd; Via Michelin maps lands directly on Sergels Torg http://www.viamichelin.com/web/Maps/Map-Stockholm--_Stockholms_lan-Sweden?strLocid=31NDF6eHcxMGNOVGt1TXpNeU9BPT1jTVRndU1EWTBPVFU9; as does the search engine www.eniro.se. [All sites accessed 01/11/2012]

Should you undertake an internet search for the cold northern city of Stockholm in preparation for a real or virtual visit, the pin is likely to drop on its commercial city centre, which goes by the name of Sergels Torg.¹ Since the mid-1960's Sergels Torg has taken on the role of representing the civic-commercial epicentre of Stockholm, mixing a network of commercial arcades with the impressive glass façade of the Kulturhuset [House of Culture]. Where Sergels Torg now stands, there was once the neighbourhood of Klara, all but obliterated when a post-war tabula rasa was excavated in preparation for a new central square and surrounding facilities. Unlike other European cities, Stockholm, unafflicted by the collateral damage of war, and maintaining an intact if aging built environment, required no post-war reconstruction or renewal. The clearing of the ground, the 'urban renewal' of Klara instead involved the mass demolition of existing homes and workplaces. Despite many protests at the time, the civic and commercial hub of Sergels Torg has been held up as exemplary, a vision of the 'world class' city. On the south side of Sergels Torg, the façade of Kulturhuset - purportedly an inspiration to the architects of the Centre Pompidou, Beaubourg, Paris - speaks the optimistic language of the transparency of democratic process. Large in scale, the Kulturhuset is a lone concession to culture, and otherwise, all around, as far as the consumer cares to wander, there is arranged a complex, highly articulated diagram of communication, shopping malls leading into department stores seemingly extending in all directions. There is an early image, dated 1964, of Sergels Torg graphically describing a layer-cake of circulating urban carousels and presenting this new vision of urban organization as a world-class tourist attraction [Turistattraktion

i Världsklass] (see Figure 1). The 1964 depiction of Sergels Torg expresses all the signifiers of funky late fifties to early sixties graphic design deploying a screen print or wood-block aesthetic to describe an urban vision in three colours: black for outlines and details, ochre yellow and teal blue for patches of highlight colour. There is the compelling message of a bright and optimistic future strangely reminiscent of Jacques Tati's movie *Playtime*, which was shot between the years 1964-1967, making these remarkably similar images directly contemporaneous.

² For the relevant excerpt from Jacques Tati's film *Playtime* see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCxTsK6NeFo>. [Accessed 29/04/2012].

³ In this recognition of the workings of the traffic carousel in Jacques Tati's *Playtime*, I am much inspired by Louise Mackenzie's research on 'Tativille' and the role of the circular boulevard or merry-go-round-a-bout, presented in the Architecture+Philosophy Public Lecture series in 2007, curated by Esther Anatolitis and Hélène Frichot, Melbourne, Australia. See <http://architecture.testpattern.com.au/2007.htm> [Accessed 01/11/2012].

The famous closing scenes of Jacques Tati's movie Playtime depicts traffic circling endlessly around a carousel in orderly slow motion.² Cars and buses are rendered harmless and exhaust-free, the modern city here is clean, organized and efficiently engineered across the built environment, which seamlessly incorporates the social fabric. Everyone in their place, everyone with a role to play, even if that role is to harmlessly disrupt this machinic assemblage with haplessly clownish antics such as those performed by Monsieur Hulot. Minor disruptions to the smooth workings of the urban machine merely show how well it recuperates its rhythm once the disturbance has been assimilated.³ A geometrically composed public garden and inoffensive spiraling public sculpture sit at the centre of the traffic carousel, and curtain-glass tower blocks frame the action on the street, with vehicular traffic being placed at the top of the traffic hierarchy. Pedestrians are to be discovered somewhat lower down in the order of things, securely located on the trottoirs. Street markets are lined up with their wares displayed in elegant arrangements, and supermarkets are articulated according to a highly legible spatial syntax. While perfectly kept, and immaculately maintained, the whole also operates according to a just-in-time logic, because, after all, the modern urban market place must be prepared to offer ever new experiences to its delighted and captivated publics. And so, fresh paint will not be quite dry when the restaurant opens, but you can be reassured that your evening of entertainment will unfold delightfully. It is exactly this scene of Tati's trafficked carousel that came to mind when I first set eyes on Sergels Torg, Stockholm, Sweden.

This optimistic image of Sergels Torg is spatially represented as a carved out axonometric peopled with busy urban consumers stacked on four levels, the top level being designated for vehicular traffic, which circles endlessly around a fountain. Peeping out of the lower right-hand corner of the image there is another underground car thoroughfare evidently designed for more rapid moving through-traffic desirous of circumventing the slower carousel above. In the left lower corner there is an explanatory 'concept' diagram of two sections cut through two cocktail glasses, which appear to designate the logic of the specific shape of the squared-circle or 'super-ellipse' that is Sergels Torg in plan. Sergels Torg is also patterned with a repeated triangular super graphic that resulted from the chance decision to retain the drainage notations from a site plan.⁴ The emphasis on salubrious entertainment and its associated urban economies pre-empts Pine and Gilmore's famous welcome to the experience economy of 1998,⁵ and clearly communicates an upbeat, modern notion of city

⁴ For a brief history, in Swedish, of Sergels Torg see the catalogue publication, *Sergels Torg*, (Stockholm: Arkitekturmuseet, 1999).

⁵ See B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy*, (Watertown, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999).

living and the unbridled, unproblematised consumption of city life as daily experience. The stacking and layering of activities describes a more complex diagram of urban circulation than the carousel of Tati's Playtime, but the emphasis on movement and delighted enjoyment is much the same. Except that a crucial distinction is at work between Tati's satirical message, and the serious intentions associated with the design of Sergels Torg, which eagerly claims membership status in the realm of what the philosopher and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari has called Integrated World Capitalism.



Fig. 2: Biopolitical Map 01: *The Electronic Eyes of the City*. Katla Mauríðóttir and Sara Brolund Fernandes De Carvalho have mapped all the registered commercial surveillance cameras across the central business district of Stockholm, discovering an urban field populated by a ubiquity of electronic urban eyes.

Amidst such a scene of urban optimism what kinds of diverse social relations are at work, and how do subjectivities and their expressed points of view come to be co-constituted with their built environments? The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben has argued that the 'camp' conceived as the paradoxical space of permanent exception designed to exclude the non-citizen, has now entered the centre of the contemporary city where every citizen risks being unmasked as a stranger, or perhaps a worker who has lost his or her working visa. The biopower that organizes the invisible city-camp does so through the administration of the lives and deaths of its population, through subtle shifts in the social atmospheres of affect of belonging and exclusion, and through the ubiquitous use of electronic pass codes, which determine access to both physical sites as well as sites of information. In reference to the specific site of Sergels Torg, this essay will address key concepts such as biopolitics, biopower, and also noopolitics in

order to present collaborative design research undertaken by students in Critical Studies in Architecture, KTH School of Architecture Stockholm, in the Autumn term of 2012. As an initial task participants in the design studio were invited to imagine, through ficto-critical means, the aesthetic personae of urban subjectivities who promise to reveal the multiplicitous blind spots that emerge and subside amidst the otherwise optimistic inaugural visions of Stockholm's city centre. Interrupting the progression of this essay a series of voices will be heard, each attempting to situate their own point of view, each experimenting with how to express their subjectivity amidst perceived and real constraints.

I am Mes, my mom calls me "Messi". I'm a twelve year old boy. I am an outsider. I am on the run – not because I've committed a crime, but because I do not own papers; documents. These documents allow me to call myself a citizen, whatever that means.

I ran away because I'm trying to buy us some time. My mom and I will be deported. But we can't go back.

I am stressed about being caught. I feel like I'm being watched all the time, there are cameras everywhere, especially in the city center. But that's also where I get food and have access to toilets. I try to blend in, become invisible. Since I am considered a kid, I have to be extra careful where and at what time I'm seen. If I break from the accepted urban behavior I will blow my cover.

The Critical Studies design studio, generated out of the ongoing research and teaching-learning efforts of the group FATALE (Feminism Architecture Theory Analysis Laboratory Education), is engaged in how to critically analyse and creatively act into the micro-political power relations of the everyday.⁶ We are interested in how, as thinking-architects, we can create affirmative existential territories for different subjectivities. In the Autumn term of 2012 we posed the question: whose working body belongs where in the everyday, 9-5 context of inner city Stockholm? As the human geographer Nigel Thrift has pointed out, cities are "roiling maelstroms of affect. Particular affects like anger, fear, happiness and joy are continually on the boil, rising here, subsiding there, and these affects continually manifest themselves in events which can take place either at a grand scale or simply as a part of continuing everyday life."⁷ Affect entails a reciprocal capacity, the power to affect, and a receptiveness toward being affected. The affects that compose our subject positions determine how far we are capable of acting in a given situation. The city is an affective ecology, a machinic assemblage of so many bubbles of becoming on the boil, frothing and heaving and jostling each other across mental, social and environmental ecologies. Human and nonhuman actors brush up alongside each other, increasing and diminishing each other's compositions through the arousal of sad passions and happy affects.

⁶ See Meike Schalk, Brady Burroughs, Katja Grillner, Katarina Bonnevier, "FATALE: Critical Studies in Architecture" in *Nordic Journal of Architecture*, Vol. 2, 2012, pp. 90-96.

⁷ Thrift, "Spatialities of Feeling" in Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 171-197, p. 172.

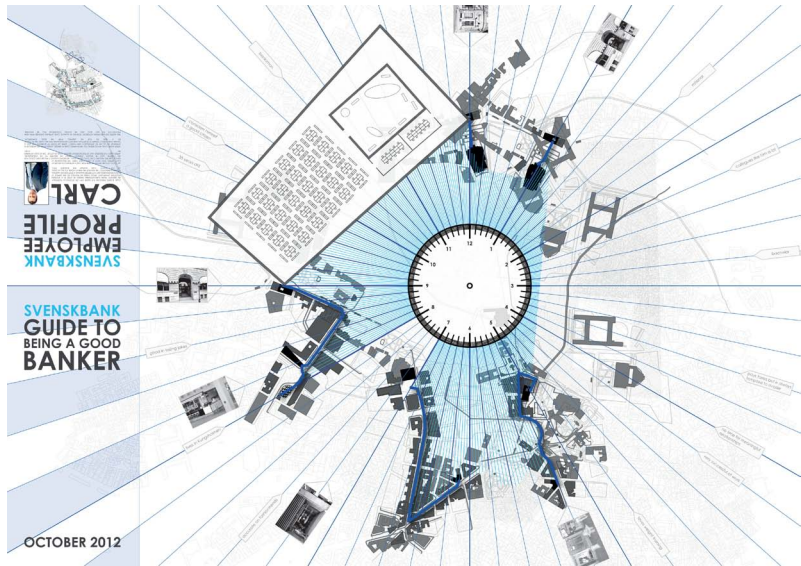


Fig. 3: Biopolitical Map 02: *Time is money for Karl the economist*. Alistair Nancarrow has created a map of Karl's working day where not a moment is left-over, but either consumed with effective economically productive labour or a work on the body to maintain its fitness as a legitimate, bio-powerful citizen.

I am Maria, a 60 year old street musician without legal documents. I pretend to be an drug-addict in order to not draw too much attention to the fact that I'm a so called healthy starving human being in Sweden – a non-citizen.

I play the accordion on the streets of Stockholm, mainly on Drottningsgatan, for two reasons: because a fairly large amount of people pass by here every day, and because I like to feel like I am part of a busy cosmopolitan setting. I used to live in a city much larger than Stockholm and I miss the intensity, that feeling of disappearing into the crowd and being a part of it: To belong to something even if it's for just a short moment. I like it when someone smiles at me – when they like my music. Even if some smiles are out of pity – they are smiles and that means that I'm not yet completely invisible.

I know some of the other street musicians that hang around in the center. Most of them are Swedish or legal migrants, but there are two others like me with whom I share the accordion. There are also others that hang around Sergels Torg that are homeless, drunks, drug addicts and some just like me...those with no future.

I go to Klara church every day to pray for the safety of myself and for my family back home. I thank God for keeping me alive and for not letting me starve. Volunteers from the church come every day to Sergels Torg with a small wagon with food. They have offered to help me, but they can't give me what I really need, and that is legal documents that would make me untouchable and lift me up from the streets.

We have commenced from the centre of Stockholm city at Sergels Torg in order to map the everyday trajectories of working bodies – broadly defined – and to explore to what extent biopolitical acts of creative resistance can be used to disrupt the modulated control of the city-camp, assuming that such a structure exists in our midst. This requires the examination of displaced bodies; disrupted flows of migrant labour; the workless; the homeless; as well as those privileged citizens who make the city their own through their rhythms of work, leisure and consumption. All these diverse subjectivities own a reciprocal relation with their architectural environments determining where on the spectrum between city and camp a contemporary city can be perceived to be at any given moment. We want to ask, what kinds of micro-acts of creative architectural resistance can enable us to rethink our occupation of the city as working embodied subjects?

Thrift has warned that the atmospheres of affect we occupy as urban dwellers are increasingly open to political manipulation; “the discovery of new means of practicing affect,” Thrift asserts, “is also the discovery of a whole new means of manipulation by the powerful.”⁸ Power in relation to affect suggests a greater capacity to act and to achieve self-determination, but the powerful also have their own blind-spots, whereby their habits of life make others invisible.

⁸ Thrift, “Spatialities of Feeling”, op.cit., p. 173..

I'm Karl, a man of habit. My workday has started before I've even arrived at Sergels Torg. With the systematization of time as my ally, I've used the train journey to organise my daily tasks, right down to the last nanosecond. Perhaps that's why I'm such a good economist, because I use my time effectively. Today will be very, very productive.

I'm greeted at Sergels Torg by the familiar sounds of peak hour. There is an energy here that motivates my pace. My passage down Hamngatan starts swiftly as usual. I stop only for my morning coffee. This morning I am frustrated when my journey is interrupted by an elderly gentleman. I recognise him vaguely; he often plays chess at Kungsträdgården. His pace is so slow, what purpose does a pace of this speed have? I side step him hurriedly and continue briskly to the office.

As expected, the workday is a success. I've accomplished much. I love my job and it is very well paying. My path back to Hötorget Metro takes me past Stureplan and along Kungsgatan. The buildings here are beautiful. For a moment they occupy my thoughts and I wonder if the streets behind are lined with the same striking

architecture. Had I more time I would like to explore them, but I see of Stockholm only what I need to and as I reach the Metro my thoughts slip subconsciously back into the realm of economics and I am left to organise the tasks of tomorrow, which will undoubtedly be as productive as today.

As part of our process we have, through ficto-critical means or by way of fact-ional admixtures of news reports, testimonies, conversations, urban myth, fiction and the powers of the imaginary, depicted profiles of urban workers. These have emerged as the aesthetic personae of: shoplifters, economists, paperless refugees, the homeless, retirees who play chess, street musicians disguising their paperless refugee status, children, the desire lines of urban wanderers and itinerants. The urban worker manifests in many forms, and we have sought to follow his or her wanderings by way of certain non-human actors, which we have explored by way of the spatial archetypes of: urban gateways; cells; foyers; and office landscapes. We propose that via each of these aesthetic personae, human and non-human alike, certain carriers of significance or key affects can be identified that manifest through very specific points of view upon the city. Through these points of view we acknowledge that any vision of the city is partial, fragmented, deeply interested (never disinterested), and composed somewhat like a fragile existential bubble or precarious umwelt.⁹

⁹ Uexküll uses the term 'umwelt' or environment-world as a way of describing the intimate, even 'dovetailed' fit between an organism and its environment. See Jakob von Uexküll, "A Stroll through the Worlds of Animals and Men" in Claire H. Schiller, ed., *Instinctive Behaviour*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1957), pp. 5-76, p. 11.

Good morning, my name is Marcello and I live in south Stockholm with my cat Bella. The apartment is rather small but I like it and I've been living here for a really long time. I rent one of the rooms out to a student, since my pension is very low. The first time felt strange, 20 years ago, but now I enjoy it – the students keep my mind younger and I learn about how youngsters think today.

On those days I don't spend time with my granddaughter I take the metro to the centre of Stockholm. I cross Sergels Torg from the exit of the metro to go into Kulturhuset, where I go straight to the chess corner to see if some of my friends are there. I spend time in the chess corner, playing chess, looking at and discussing the games of others and also chit-chatting about what has happened since last time we met.

I really like this part of Kulturhuset. It is a kind of foyer in the middle of the building, close to the communication core. We can see a lot of people coming and going, and they can see us. Another good thing is that it costs nothing to be here. We don't have to pay or buy anything, we simply have to behave according to the rules of Kulturhuset.

There are a few other spaces like this nearby, which I sometimes like to visit. For example, Strömmen, on the waterfront. Here some friends of mine go fishing on sunny days, or whenever they want, this is also a free activity, everyone is allowed to fish here, as long as they follow some rules.

The city can be conceived as a camp, as Agamben argues, in that it is regulated by implicit and explicit rules, and the way the architectural environment is organized supports this systemization of our behavior. Architecture in this way is inherently ambivalent, the best of intentions can produce the most oppressive effects. Despite occasional appearances, architecture is also inherently conservative in that its primary task is to conserve life, to keep life sheltered. Architecture conserves life making society itself sufficiently durable, but as a result it also holds the power to impose forms of life on a politics as it can both curtail or augment our affects, increasing or decreasing our capacity to engage in our existential territories.

The history of Sergels Torg reveals its own inaugural violence, being the result not of post-war attempts to modernize a war stricken European city, but instead the outcome of planned demolition, a clearing of the historical ground of the district of Klara toward the installation of a new vision of what a city centre as public forum and place of gathering could be. As Walter Benjamin has argued in his essay *The Critique of Violence*, processes of law making and law preserving, which, for the purposes of this essay can be seen to be at work in the determination of public space, often shelter at their inception violent upheaval.¹⁰ It is in this context too that Benjamin introduces the important concept of ‘mere life’, which influences Agamben’s extended meditations on the figure of homo sacer or ‘bare life’.¹¹ A Saturday morning visit to Sergels Torg reveals diverse groupuscules practicing their fleeting or more resilient collective enunciations: An Iranian protest rally; hens’ parties expressing varying ethnicities; a Justin Bieber fan club; and my own 4 year old child speeding around in swooping arcs across the super-graphic paving on his scooter. It is across this otherwise innocuous, utterly arbitrary pattern of elongated triangles that Stockholm’s exemplary site of political protest and fleeting unrest comes to be periodically staged.

Sergels Torg was originally designed as a 24 hour hub, but as a studio group we came to question the implication of such a desire for tireless activity, and its inherent suggestion of a 24 hour around the clock workshop toward the normalized construction of subjectivities. Together we reflected upon how public space is inherently ambivalent in its function, and is composed of as many blind spots, mute cries and invisibilities, as visibilities, recognizable statements and icons.

I am a shoplifter. I am very lonely.

I don't trust the people around me. They could be a civil guard. Even though they look nice, with a white down west and a shopping bag made of thick shiny paper. Even if they are standing at the bus-stop. In a suite, scrolling on their cellphone. I don't trust anyone on the street.

¹⁰ “For with mere life the rule of law over the living ceases.” Benjamin, “The Critique of Violence”, p. 297.

¹¹ Agamben takes Benjamin’s ‘mere life’ and calls it ‘bare life’, also translated as ‘naked life’. This term designates the life that is paradoxically included in the determination of the law by its very exclusion, and even its sacrifice. Bare life is at the same time excluded by and included in, or captured by the political order, including the means by which the polis comes to be defined. The non-citizen, who is not protected by the laws of a nation-state (or polis) can be seen as an exemplary expression of mere, or bare, or naked life. The laws of a nation-state exclude this body, but by this exclusion further asserts the customs, rituals, laws and boundary conditions by which the nation-state distinguishes itself. This similarly can be applied to an analysis of the city. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 8-9.

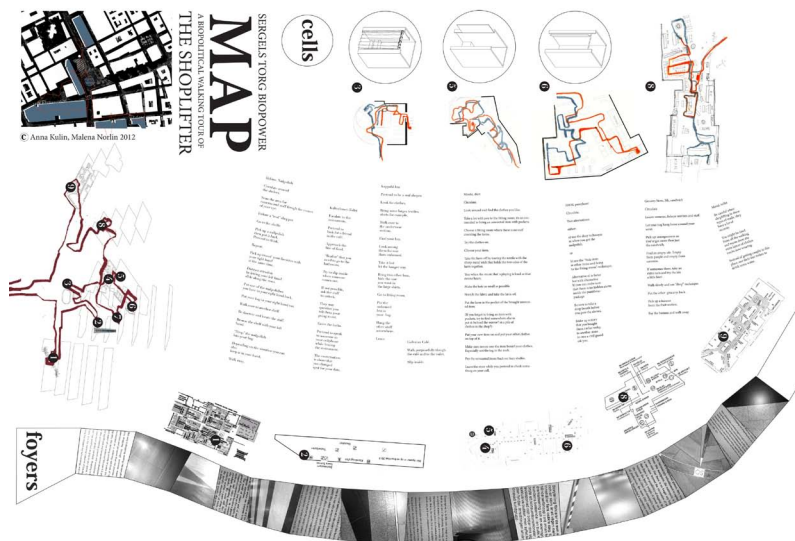


Fig. 4: *Shopping Cells and Places to Hide my Kleptomania*. Malena Norlin and Anna Kulin have sought to compose the city from the precariously constructed subjective point of view of the adolescent shoplifter.

I often look over my shoulder.

I sit down on a stair made of stone, not in the corner where the dogs pee, but in the middle. And I have a smoke. If someone moves in my direction my heart starts to race.

All the colorful stuff in this store. I want all of those colors in my home. I want all of those colors in my soul. I put all of those colors in my bag.

I'm paranoid, even though they only took me three times out of 3 million.

I feel persecuted all the way home. Sometimes the feeling goes away when i enter the subway train and the doors closes behind me, but mostly it takes til I get home.

I lie to my mother about all this. She must think that it's sale all year around and that my friends are very bountiful. I also tell her that I get stuck in doors often, that 's why many of my t-shirts and pullovers have holes in them.

My first boyfriend cut a hole in his backpack, he said he was inspired by me. The hole was a long thin slot against his back. So he could come along on my shoplifting tours and put expensive cheese in his backpack through the hole, his arm turned in a strained motion and we walked out in the streets and it stank cheese in a cloud around us.

It happens pretty often that I don't remember all the things I've taken when I get home. I pick up surprises from my bag. Sometimes these surprises makes my stomach hurt.



Figure 05: Malena Norlin, A Tree in Segels Torg, photomontage (2012) Malena responded to the final stage of the Urban Biopower Stockholm design studio project by reflecting on the famous battle of the elm trees in Kunsträdgården on May 11 and 12 1971. The elm trees were threatened by the construction of a metro (TBana) station. The protesters won the battle, many of the trees were saved, and the metro station was relocated. As a commentary on the right to protest in the city, and as an experiment in forms of creative resistance that can be exerted to stake a claim on public space, Malena proposed a elm tree inspired intervention at Sergels Torg.

I don't want my mom to ever get to know this, I would rather kill myself allmost, I feel so ashamed. But I feel proud in front of my boyfriends. They call me ganster bitch and I love it. They tell me I'm brave and cool.

My second boyfriend didn't want me to shoplift when he was around. When we were at home he argued that it's nothing morally wrong with shoplifting and his arguments are well substantiated with political theories. I never read those theories because I don't know where to find them and if I did it wouldn't matter because I'm not good at sitting still.

One thing I like about shoplifting is that it keeps my mind off all the other stuff going on inside me. I have to stay very focused. The feeling of stress when I pass the alarms in the entrance of the store puts a layer around all the strong feelings I already have inside. It's like wrapping feelings in several plastic bags. They help me (although they are transparent).

I have a large bag without a zip, the handles are long and it's easy to drop unalarmed items into it. The alarmed stuff has to go with me into the fitting room. I wear nice clothes and I try to look like an ordinary person. I cannot be myself.

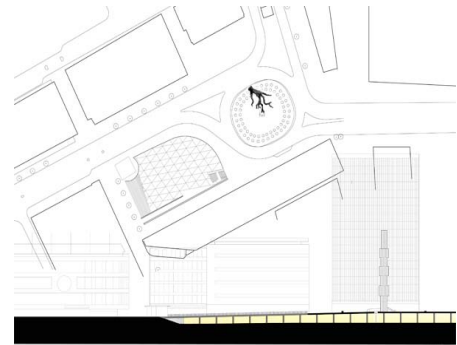


Fig. 6: Malena Norlin, *A Tree in Segels Torg*, photomontage (2012)
A ladder leads down from the elm tree intervention and fountain into the arcade below.

Fig. 7: *A Tree in Sergels Torg* Malena Norlin (2012)
Plan and section through ficto-critical elm tree intervention at Sergels Torg

To explore how power relations produce varying atmospheres of affect in the urban centre, we have borrowed a perhaps controversial terminological distinction from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, a distinction they draw out between the concepts of ‘biopower’ and ‘biopolitics’. In *Commonwealth* they argue that where biopower suggests a power over life, and how a population is administered according to its life and death, biopolitics is instead the “minor current that insists on life as resistance.”¹² Such a distinction is not necessarily clear in the work of Michel Foucault, where concepts including biopolitics and the rise of governmentality from the 18th century and their correspondence with the rise of Capitalism have been genealogically mapped.¹³ The distinction has helped us dramatise the heterogeneous effects of power relations and related circulations of affect across a spectrum between emancipatory and oppressive effects, which could also be tentatively described as a spectrum extending between the imposition of capital ‘P’, Power from above, as distinct from the emergence, self-organisation or mobilization of power relations from below.

Generally, biopolitics and biopower are used interchangeably, and this makes the task difficult. Thomas Lemke explains with respect to biopolitics that “The objects of biopolitics are not singular human beings but their biological features measured and aggregated on the level of populations.”¹⁴

¹² Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 57.

¹³ See Maurizio Lazzarato, “From Biopower to Biopolitics”, in *Pli*, 13, 2002, pp. 99-113, p. 99.

¹⁴ Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*, (New York: New York University Press, 2011), p. 5.

Biopolitics can be registered as a specific political knowledge, and has impacted on the development of such disciplines as statistics, demography, epidemiology, and biology, that is, disciplines through which populations can be managed via practices of correction, exclusion, normalization, disciplining, therapeutics, and optimization. Following Hardt and Negri, and also Maurizio Lazzarato, we distinguish this definition of biopolitics as ‘biopower.’

Maurizio Lazzarato, like Hardt and Negri, subtly draws out the distinction between biopower and biopolitics in the concluding lines of his essay, *From Biopower to Biopolitics*. Biopower, Lazzarato explains, is the management of life at the scale of populations, and is the means by which the conditions of existence of a population are reproduced, constrained or regulated.¹⁵ Importantly for our critique, it is about the “harnessing of life’s forces for work.”¹⁶ Nevertheless, it is important to stress that biopower is by no means monolithic, and that the power relations through which biopower is organized are, as Lazzarato explains: “virtual, non-stable, non-localizable, non-stratified potentialities”, which can become actualized, for instance, in the form of the statements and visibilities of institutions of the nation-state, or of neo-liberal market capitalism. Power relations can become progressively more stabilized or stratified, capturing bodies, and organising assemblages of working, laboring bodies. Biopolitics, which we would prefer to reserve for creative modes of resistance, suggests that amidst such stratifications of power there is always a little room to move, perhaps even an opportunity to enunciate the ‘I would prefer not to...’, or to slow down a little, or else to speed up suddenly. Perhaps it would be better to identify a dynamic field, ever in flux, of biopolitical relations, emerging from immanent material admixtures of bodies of all kinds, and then to suggest that at crucial junctures across this field biopower coagulates, or else, biopolitical relations remain fluid, finding the means to redefine themselves. The spaces where there is sufficient room to move are what could be identified as the blind spots, the spaces that have not yet been overwritten, the generative spaces where creative resistance can still emerge. This resistance, which emerges where there is sufficient play (or room to move) in the system, facilitates the very condition of possibility of power relations, that is to say, ‘resistance comes first’. Here, rather than imagining the blind spot as that threatening locus of non-seeing or invisibility, the blind spot may exactly delimit those locations where new and unexpected forms of existence can emerge. Modes of creative resistance may need to carve out blind spots that are “vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers” so that control can be eluded.¹⁷

The crucial point we have attempted to mobilise in our collective design studio work, which Lazzarato draws attention to, and which Gilles Deleuze has discussed at length when reading Foucault’s work, is that creative resistance comes first, which is only apparently paradoxical. As Foucault insists “so, resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the

¹⁵ Lazzarato, ‘From Biopower to Biopolitics’, p. 179.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972-1990*, (Martin Jouguin trans., New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) p. 175.

¹⁸ Foucault cited in Lazzarato, "From Biopower to Biopolitics", op.cit., pp. 104-105.

¹⁹ Lazzarato, 'From Biopower to Biopolitics', op.cit., p. 107.

²⁰ Maurizio Lazzarato, 'The Concepts of Life and the Living in the Societies of Control' in Martin Fuglsang and Bent Meier Sorensen, eds. *Deleuze and the Social*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006, p. 186).

²¹ Sven Olof Wallenstein, "Noopolitics, Life and Architecture" in Deborah Hauptman and Warren Neidlich, eds, *Cognitive Architecture. From Biopolitics to Noopolitics. Architecture & Mind in the Age of Communication and Information*, (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2010, p. 54).

other forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance. So I think resistance is the main word, the key word, in this dynamic."¹⁸ Lazzarato in turn elaborates this curious and seemingly paradoxical formulation (how can resistance come first if by definition it surely must be resisting something?) by stressing that power comes from below (so in fact we should be extremely wary of models that oppose top down to bottom up in our emerging societies of control). Lazzarato writes "power is an integration, a coordination and determination of the relations between a multiplicity of forces" and "the emphasis should be placed upon relations not terms."¹⁹ To create and to recreate is to resist, as Foucault insists. And yet this is not just to do with the expressions of bodies, and how their data is collected, and their behaviour adapted, but also on how thinking is channeled, and cognitive ability shaped. To complement biopolitics, and biopower, Lazzarato introduces a further term, noopolitics, derived from the ancient Greek word nous, for mind or intellect. This is the ensemble of techniques of control exercised on the brain, and especially on multiple brains operating in unwitting collaboration.²⁰

Reading Lazzarato, the Swedish philosopher, Sven Olof Wallenstein explains that contemporary capitalism "no longer bases itself on labour, the factory, and the institutions that regulate the relations between them, but on a 'collaboration of brains.'"²¹ The globally integrated organization of capital increasingly exploits the collective intelligence of our cognitive facilities, as we come to be trained as docile minds, fed by media, plugged into our screens, feeding and being fed information by our smart phones, exporting our self-reflective capacities into our external hardware. Wallenstein concludes his essay by arguing that critical theory itself needs to be rethought, rather than discarded wholesale, to grapple with the implications of this augmentation of biopower through noopower. And this has been part of our ongoing challenge in the Critical Studies Design studio.

To rethink power relations at the nexus of the embodied mind, across biopower, biopolitics and noopolitics, a labour Foucault began, and a work elaborated by thinkers such as Maurizio Lazzarato, Gilles Deleuze, Giorgio Agamben, Judith Butler, Rosi Braidotti, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, enables at least a small arena for the possibility of a creative and critical response to the problems we perceive in our urban contexts. This traffic in ideas also lends itself to the deployment of what we have called feminist design power tools, which include: the use of ficto-criticism; an emphasis on minoritarian voices; a sensitivity to the reciprocal affective relations that circulate between subjectivities and (architectural and urban) environments; moments of parody; and modes of mapping that attempt to 'follow the material' at a micro-scale. Through the specific practice of ficto-critical projections, we follow the intricate imbrication of formations of subjectivity whose points of view express diverse visions and modes of inhabitation of the constructed environment. The voices enunciated above

²² Lazzarato, “From Biopower to Biopolitics”, op.cit., p. 110.

are necessarily limited, a small sampling of a larger murmur and hum of voices that express the life of a city. If we commence as architects by mapping the diversity and conflicting positions these constructed points of view offer, we might explore what it means to follow the fractured line between resistance and creation.²² Then through minor, sometimes incidental actions of everyday creative resistance new styles of life might be allowed to emerge, rather than being repressed and homogenized into dull refrains, sound-bytes and platitudes.