

Social Transformations in Scandinavian Cities

Nordic Perspectives on Urban Marginalization
and Social Sustainability

Erica Righard, Magnus Johansson
& Tapio Salonen (eds.)

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Contents

Social transformations in Scandinavian cities	7
An introduction	
<i>Erica Righard, Magnus Johansson & Tapio Salonen</i>	

I

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND THE SCANDINAVIAN WELFARE STATE CONTEXT

1. The great transformation of our time	21
Towards just and socially sustainable Scandinavian cities	
<i>Hans Abrahamsson</i>	
2. International migration and the social-democratic welfare regime	41
<i>Erica Righard & Pieter Bevelander</i>	
3. Discourses of employment and inclusion in Sweden	61
Governing citizens, governing suburban peripheries	
<i>Magnus Dahlstedt</i>	

II

URBAN MARGINALITY IN THE SCANDINAVIAN WELFARE STATES

4. The necessity of socio-dynamic analyses of the city	83
The case of Malmö	
<i>Tapio Salonen</i>	
5. Trust and distrust in Oslo	107
Examining the relationship between the ideals of urban policy and the (re)actions of citizens	
<i>Bengt Andersen, Per Gunnar Røe & Oddrun Sæter</i>	
6. 'Ghettoization' and 'parallel societies' in Denmark	125
Public rhetoric and lived lives	
<i>Tina Gudrun Jensen</i>	

7. Invading our homelands	143
New beggars on the streets of Oslo	
<i>Ada I. Engebriksen</i>	
8. The production of deportability	161
<i>Klara Öberg</i>	
9. Inclusion and exclusion in a residential narrative of ‘us’ and ‘them’	181
<i>Anne Harju</i>	

III

INEQUALITY MANAGEMENT IN SCANDINAVIAN CITIES

10. The whole city or the city as a whole?	199
Questioning the conceptual assumptions of social sustainability in urban governance	
<i>Randi Gressgård</i>	
11. Segregation of living conditions in Nørrebro	217
<i>Iver Hornemann Møller & Jørgen Elm Larsen</i>	
12. Conflicts and meaning-making in sustainable urban development	233
<i>Magnus Johansson</i>	
13. Reflections on the right to health	251
<i>Anna Lundberg & Emma Söderman</i>	
14. Behind the line of disintegration	265
Practices of transborder citizenship among diasporan Kurds in Sweden	
<i>Khalid Khayati</i>	
Urban marginalization in Scandinavian cities	281
Conclusions and ways forward	
<i>Magnus Johansson, Tapio Salonen & Erica Righard</i>	
Acknowledgements	289
About the authors	291

Social transformations in Scandinavian cities

An introduction

Erica Righard, Magnus Johansson & Tapio Salonen

Globalization processes have been raising new questions, even new *kinds* of questions, about social inequality, international migration, and urbanization. As globalization intensified in the 1980s and 1990s, with unprecedented flows of capital and labour across national boundaries, cities have emerged as pivotal centres of social transformation. Political and academic debates have since increasingly considered the role and function of cities in the dynamic of social transformation. The consequences of growing inequalities between groups and places, the lack of political representation, and, not least, how this intersects with cross-border mobilities and ethnic diversification, are felt keenly in city life; in the everyday practices and experiences of a city's inhabitants and its particular neighbourhoods (Lefebvre 1984). This is compounded by the fact that today more than half of the world's population live in cities (UNDESA 2014); indeed, it is in cities that many contemporary social conflicts are being played out. This alone is good reason to examine the dynamics and consequences of social inequality in urban centres, which is typically the result of the restructuring of the economy and the labour market, as well as, at least from a western European horizon, the restructuring of the welfare state. This is what we aim to do, with an empirical focus on Scandinavian cities and from a comparative and interdisciplinary perspective, in this book.

Social transformations in cities

A general argument in the literature is that the development of urban polarization must be understood in its specific societal context. Social transformations in cities are complex and multi-scalar. Building on analyses of cities across the globe, the literature on social inequality in cities shows that while the dynamics and consequences of social inequality share certain features, it also unfolds in distinct ways in each locality (for example, Body-Gendrot 2012). In a more limited, Western view, the role of the state and state policies, not least social policies, is usually considered in these processes (for example, Body-Gendrot 1999; Dikeç 2001; Wacquant 2008; Glick Schiller & Simsek-Çaglar 2011; Fainstein 2010)—that is, urban marginality and social conflicts in cities must be understood in the light of the distinct demographic, geographical, and socio-political environment. Hence, it has been argued that just as the development of urban marginality and policy in France must be understood in relation to the republican tradition, so must the development in American cities be understood in terms of its liberal tradition (Dikeç 2007). Likewise, developments in Scandinavian cities should be understood in relation to the hegemonic position of the Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish welfare states.

The Scandinavian countries are generally associated with universal welfare states, high income tax, substantial welfare services, and relatively low levels of inequality. This picture is one painted in the very influential work *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* by Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990). In his analysis Esping-Andersen depicts the Scandinavian countries as examples of the most decommodifying type of welfare states, the social-democratic welfare regime type. Today this picture must be questioned. Inequality in Scandinavian countries has been increasing in the last three decades, increasingly so since the 1990s. This is visible in widening gaps in the population when it comes to poverty, employment, education, and health. As regards income inequality, whereas in the mid-1980s Sweden was a top-ranked nation, it now has a mediocre position by international standards. Income inequality has also increased in Denmark and Norway over this period, but at a slower pace, and, while they were never top of the rankings, their level of income

inequality is now lower than in Sweden (OECD 2011). Migrants are typically overrepresented in the groups lagging behind, and the patterns of inequality tend to overlap with residential segregation in cities. Moreover, in Scandinavian cities, as in many other countries, we also see social conflict and even violent unrest, as in 2008 in Rosengård in Malmö (Hallin et al. 2010), in 2009 in Landskrona (Salonen 2011), or in 2013 in Husby in Stockholm (de los Reyes et al. 2014).

These developments are intertwined, and require us not to limit discussions about social transformations to the local neighbourhood or to globalization in terms of flow, but rather to reimagine the global, national, regional, and local scales—the place categories themselves—and to chart the ways in which neoliberal globalization and the restructuring of labour, the economy, and state-led social protection and services at different scales intersect and unfold in people’s everyday lives in the city (Glick Schiller & Simsek-Çaglar 2011; Smith 2001).

Cities in the Scandinavian welfare state

The Scandinavian countries have much in common when it comes to geography, population, and the historical development of the welfare state, but there are also some profound differences (Arvidsson 2007). These similarities and differences can be seen in for instance national responses to international migration, the extension of social rights to foreign citizens living in the country, and in national and urban policy. Looking at immigration, Sweden is the Scandinavian country that has received the most migrants in the post-war period—in Sweden in 2012 the foreign-born population was 15.5 per cent, in Norway 13.2, and in Denmark 8.2 per cent—meaning that the proportion of foreign-born residents in Sweden and Norway reached the levels in ‘old’ immigration countries, such as the US (13 per cent) (OECD 2014). The migrants’ integration has been a major policy area in all three countries, with each developing in different ways. In a comparative study of national integration policy, Sweden has been depicted as inclusive, focusing on structural constraints on integration; Denmark as restrictionist, blaming the migrants’ culture for integration problems; and Norway as somewhere in between,

finding its own more moderate way of going about things (Brochmann & Hagelund 2012; see also Guilherme Fernandes, 2015).

In comparison with other European countries, urbanization came rather late to Scandinavia, and its cities are generally small. Each capital metropolitan area has 1–2 million residents. For a long time, the political and academic debates were more obsessed with the depopulation of rural areas than with urbanization. While a national urban policy was established in France and the UK in the 1960s, in the Scandinavian countries this did not happen until the 1990s (Schulman 2000), by which time increasing unemployment and poverty in immigrant concentrations in suburban areas had become a political issue that spurred the emergence of a state-led urban policy. The measures taken in the three countries had much in common with the welfare state approach.

Crucially, there is a distinction to be drawn between the concepts of ‘state politics’ and ‘local politics’ (Brenner 1999, 2004). The Scandinavian countries are usually characterized as state-centred societies; societies with strong ‘state politics’. This meant that urban policy was long associated with state-led policy implemented by the local authorities, instead of a locally anchored policy (Dannestam 2009); however, this has gradually changed over time. Moreover, while the conditions and driving forces were similar, urban policy as an area of political intervention developed in different directions in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden (Schulman 2000). All three are facing rising inequality married with rapid economic advancement. In spite of the commonalities, they are tackling the situation in different ways; as this volume gives examples of.

The argument and outline of this volume

The essays collected in this volume bring new understanding to the dynamics of urban marginality from a Scandinavian perspective. They highlight that Scandinavian cities share many of the problems and challenges that are well known from other countries, and how these unfold in Scandinavian cities and their social-democratic welfare state context. In this way, they challenge the standard view that Scandinavian countries are equal and peaceful.

The essays are grouped into three parts, bracketed by this general introduction to the scope of the anthology and a concluding essay discussing the main lessons learned. Of the three parts, the first presents the key theoretical perspectives in the field and introduces the reader to the questions of social sustainability and social disintegration in the Scandinavian context. The second part consists of case studies—qualitative and quantitative analyses of urban marginality in Danish, Norwegian and Swedish cities—while the third focuses on responses to inequality, both in public management and in civil society.

In the opening essay, Hans Abrahamsson provides an overview of the profoundly transformative processes of urbanization, international migration, and globalization. Maintaining that society is undergoing a ‘great transformation’, he argues that we are faced with a restructuring of social relations. The new economic geography and the changing role of the welfare state have together affected the most vulnerable sections of the population, and, in certain places, led to social upheaval and violent outbursts in urban areas. He proposes a model in which social sustainability seeks to strike a balance between security, development, and justice. He also calls for a shift from urban policy towards urban governance, with increased partnership and co-creation on the part of decision makers and citizens on important policy choices. This is what will determine whether cities descend into social conflict or become nodes of global governance. The two other essays in this part of the volume look at the implications of the national context. While there are many similarities in experiences of immigration and how state policy has responded to this, there are also considerable differences, and hence Erica Righard and Pieter Bevelander present figures that illustrate immigration and labour market integration among different groups in the populations of Denmark, Norway and Sweden over the last half-century. They also discuss the sea change in the social-democratic welfare regimes’ responses to cross-border mobility and its consequences for access to state-provided social protection and services for different groups, demonstrating that this has led to the inclusion of certain migrants, but equally the exclusion of others. With his specific focus on Sweden, Magnus

Dahlstedt in turn outlines how the basic characteristics of the Swedish welfare state have changed, the early 1990s being the turning point. With a particular focus on labour and urban policy, he shows how the ideal of active citizenship has become a recurrent theme in public discourse, not least in relation to multi-ethnic areas in Sweden's cities. While the policy of activation is libertarian, it is at the same time disciplinary, and largely concentrated on getting the suburban population to solve their own problems. As he argues in his essay, it is against this background, in combination with the lack of opportunities, that we should understand the social movements that are fighting for equal social rights in certain urban areas.

The second part of the volume shifts focus to the immediate context, and a number of case studies of urban marginality in Scandinavian cities. While the essays describe how tensions are manifested and reproduced in cities and neighbourhoods, together they also illustrate how this unfolds differently in different places. Public discourses reproduced in politics and the media are influential, as are the lived experiences in everyday encounters. In his essay, Tapio Salonen demonstrates the need for socio-dynamic analyses of the social transformation of the city that can fully capture its exogenous, and not just its endogenous, dimensions. While the former place the city in its relevant context, the latter contribute to the understanding of relations and tensions between different spaces in the city. Furthermore, these internal and external aspects are intimately intertwined in the socio-dynamic fabric of the city. Salonen's empirical focus is Malmö's socio-dynamic development over the last two decades, linking the city's role as a node in global and regional migration to the city's differentiation—its spatial segregation and social inequality. Bengt Andersen, Per Gunnar Røe, and Oddrun Sæter then analyse socio-economic and ethno-racial residential segregation in Oslo in an essay that combines several empirical materials, showing, firstly, how the contemporary division between the affluent western and disadvantaged eastern parts of the city has historical roots that go back to the fifteenth century. Secondly, they show how the dividing line between the two parts of the city is maintained by media discourses and property developers'

strategies. Thirdly, they show how interviewees, though they might aspire to the ideals of an inclusive city, in their everyday practices actually reproduce the city's divisions.

Tina Gudrun Jensen's essay takes the discourses of 'ghettoization' and 'parallel lives' in Denmark's public debate and contrasts them with the narratives and practices encountered during field studies in a mixed neighbourhood in Copenhagen. It explores the ongoing negotiation of identities and relationships in a certain multi-ethnic neighbourhood and how these relate to and interact with those public discourses. Cultural complexity, based on understandings acquired in everyday interactions in the multi-ethnic neighbourhood, presents a different image of multi-ethnic neighbourhoods than that conjured up by essentialist cultures and the polarization envisaged in the assertions of 'ghettoization' and 'parallel lives'. Returning to Oslo, Ada Ingrid Engebriksen's essay focuses on poor newcomers to the city. Using conversations with Romanian Roma begging on the city streets and reactions to this, she shows how place is being contested. By turning public spaces into 'mobile homes', the Romanian beggars challenge the production of safe neighbourhoods consisting of reliable social subjects. The public debate is dichotomized between those who want to help the beggars and those who want to ban begging, with the government seeking to maintain its image as a humanitarian state while at the same time controlling and limiting the possibilities to beg. Klara Öberg, in her essay on the dynamics of Sweden's informal labour market, charts the restructuring of the Swedish welfare state and its implications for labour market relations. Describing the everyday experience of asylum-seekers and irregular migrants working in Gothenburg's informal economy, matched with the employers' view of the situation, she pinpoints the vulnerability that deportability involves and the precariousness these workers experience. Anne Harju then examines how the inhabitants of the post-industrial city of Landskrona in southern Sweden respond to the narratives of 'Swedes' and 'immigrants' currently circulating in the city. Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, she identifies distinct narratives of 'old' (economic) immigrants, 'new' (refugee) immigrants, and persons with a Swedish background, and shows how these stereotypes are reproduced by representatives of all three

groups. She maintains that the prevalent figurations and power relations are very much a case of the established and the outsiders, as in Norbert Elias's work—the established having a more favourable position in relation to the newcomers.

The third and final part of the book looks at how local authorities and civil society respond to urban marginality, with three essays on different aspects of urban strategy to manage tensions and achieve social sustainability in Malmö and Copenhagen, and two essays on civil society, focusing on activism in Malmö, and citizenship practices across borders respectively. Thus Randi Gressgård analyses the assumptions behind the concept of social sustainability in Swedish urban governance and Malmö's urban strategy—a strategy in which 'the whole city' seems to drift towards 'the city as whole', invoking a unifying notion of one future for the city as a single entity. Gressgård warns that if diverging representations of the city and conflicting policy goals are neglected, there is a risk that the strategic framing of social sustainability will reproduce the status quo and thus contribute to the further marginalization of targeted populations. Iver Hornemann Møller and Jørgen Elm Larsen then take us to Nørrebro, a historical locus for immigration and today one of the most immigrant-dense districts in Copenhagen. The essay outlines how Copenhagen City Council's integration policy over the last decade has diverged from the national integration policy, becoming more inclusive and less repressive as regards ethnic and religious pluralism in the city. Relying on survey data, they argue that in spite of large income and health discrepancies between Danes and immigrants and their descendants, there is a high degree of interaction and recognition between different groups of inhabitants in Nørrebro. This means that while Nørrebro to some degree is an instance of social sustainability, at the same time it is threatened by several tensions born from inequality and the reproduction of public and media representations of division and conflict. In his essay, Magnus Johansson discusses a case of value conflicts in an urban regeneration project in Rosengård, a disadvantaged, immigrant-dense housing district in Malmö. As part of the regeneration project, the local authorities and property developers met, together with a number of other actors, in a series of structured workshops in order to design an action plan

to achieve a sustainable neighbourhood. During the workshops, it became evident that it would not be possible to combine socially guided development projects and market principles. In the end, the property developers walked out and the initiative came to nothing. The lesson to be learned is that where value conflicts exist, they will be too complex to be solved in a finite number of workshops. This also raises the question of the extent to which sustainable urban development should be a consensus- and expert-driven process, or whether it would gain more from being practice-oriented.

The two final essays in this section direct our focus to civil society. Both bring up examples that challenge the national boundaries of belonging: the first by looking at undocumented persons, the second by considering transnational dynamics of belonging. Anna Lundberg and Emma Söderberg start from the experiences of undocumented young men who arrived in Sweden as unaccompanied minors, and ask questions about their right to healthcare in Malmö. The essay outlines the national and local regulation of healthcare rights for undocumented minors, and, using qualitative fieldwork, describes attempts to exercise those rights. While the local regulations in Malmö are more inclusive than the national ones, much remains before these young people feel they have the right to have rights. In the final essay, Khalid Khayati considers the dynamics of transborder citizenship among Swedish Kurds. Transborder citizenship refers to identities and practices of belonging that are simultaneously anchored in the countries of settlement and origin—in this case, Sweden and Kurdistan. Drawing on long-term fieldwork among Kurds in Sweden, in principle people with political and cultural authority in the Kurdish diaspora, Khayati argues that the Swedish welfare state, and not least its system of grants for associations, has contributed to the building of a strong Kurdish diaspora in Sweden. This has brought political and cultural mobilization, for instance through political manifestations and the production of Kurdish-language publications. The essay illustrates how international migration and national contexts intersect, and, in varying ways, sustain globalization processes in the people's everyday lives and in organizations at the local, national, and transnational levels.

The essays in this book together provide a theoretical and empirical

analysis of how the lived experience of migration, urban inequality, and residential segregation intersects with official policy, unfolding in urban landscapes in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Much of the literature on social transformation in the cities of western welfare states has concentrated on western Europe and North America, and in particular the US and France. Interestingly, the Scandinavian context of social transformation in cities has been less studied—far less in a way that cuts across national, disciplinary, and methodological boundaries, as we do here. In the conclusive discussion we position these Scandinavian experiences in an international context.

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