Papers

Malmö: Towards a new social agenda

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Christer Larsson
is the director of Malmö City Planning Office in Sweden. He is responsible for, and has great knowledge of, the strategic development planning of the city, including the redevelopment of the Western Harbour site and the urban reconfiguration of Malmö. Christer is a member of the Governing Board of the International Urban Development Association, Chairman of Nordic City Network and a commissioner for a Socially Sustainable Malmö. Among other projects Christer is active in international architectural competition juries.

Göran Rosberg
worked as an Information Manager in Malmö from the end of the 1980s until 2012. His former workplace was the Department of Social and Economic Geography at Lund University. He has a clear understanding of the entire transformation process that the City of Malmö has undergone in the past 10–15 years, which includes the establishment of the university and the transformation of the development area of Western Harbour and the Bo01 area into a new sustainable city district. Göran followed these processes closely and has also presented the transformation of Malmö in international journals and conferences.

Abstract Malmö has endeavoured to achieve greater equity for its residents and to view them as a resource and as a form of social capital. The work has proved to be a tremendous asset and has generated greater awareness by the city’s target groups, but the city still suffers from social and economic imbalances. In order to succeed, a shift towards developing human capital through network solutions is being made through increased participation of the population as a whole. Some approaches discussed in this paper include how spatial organisation can strengthen social sustainability, culture and collective knowledge and processes that generate participation and trust. The paper also stresses the importance of internal work in the city council and the value of action programmes.

Keywords: Malmö, Copenhagen, Øresund Bridge, spacial reorganisation, social cohesion, social sustainability, consultation

INTRODUCTION

Malmö is the third largest city in Sweden with a population of 315,000 inhabitants. It is an expanding city, with its population rising for 29 successive years. It has a young population with an average age of 36. It is situated in the south of Sweden and, since the year 2000, has been connected to Copenhagen by a bridge (see Figures 1 and 2), which has started a new region, Copenhagen–Malmö, with a population of 3.8 million. Malmö is a multi-ethnic city with residents from 177 countries. The city has a new university with 24,000 students, and the UN World Maritime University is also situated in Malmö. Malmö covers 15,000 ha, and half of it is owned by the city. Over the last 20 years, the city has been run by a coalition between the Social Democrats, the Left Party and the Greens. The city is a close and cycle-friendly water city with 490 km of cycleways.

Malmö’s journey from ageing industrial city to the knowledge city of today, with
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Figure 1: The fixed link between Sweden and Denmark creating the new Copenhagen–Malmö region

ambitions of high sustainability, has impressed and inspired both neighbours and guests from further afield. Malmö has been used as an example in both the UK and China. Malmö is a role model for urban sustainable development in the world. Malmö’s urban development work has also resulted in a number of international awards, of which the UN Scroll of Honor is perhaps the finest (see Figure 3).

The starting point of this journey was a city in economic and social crisis after the dismantling of its traditional industries and major demographic changes. The city found it hard to compete with cities such as Copenhagen and Lund. Between 1991 and 1993, the city lost 27,000 jobs. This severe crisis made it clear that the city was in acute need of a long-term development strategy. Sweeping vision work in 1994/95 indicated that Malmö needed more qualified education and a more diversified housing market. In a short space of time, strong political leadership succeeded in creating a university and the Bo01, the International Housing Expo in 2001 at the former shipyard area of the Western Harbour (see figures 4 and 5), which had ambitious sustainability targets and gained international attention. In a decade, the city succeeded in turning a weak position into successful development.

After this remarkable change, the focus is now on social imbalance. The demographics and business community of Malmö today have completely different requirements in completely different basic conditions. It is a multi-ethnic city with a very young population. Over half the population are 36 or younger. New lifestyles, changes in jobs and the composition of the business community mean new planning conditions and challenges for the city. The diversified population offers the city both a challenge and potential.

The infrastructure investments, both the Øresund Bridge and the City Tunnel, have integrated and linked together not only the region, but also the city. Future transport initiatives, a metro to central Copenhagen and trams for local transport, will allow the creation of even better links between semi-central areas and the inner city. These infrastructure investments are essential to the continued development of the city in terms of attractiveness and sustainability. The city’s development strategy is to limit urban sprawl and, instead, concentrate the existing city within the Outer Ring Road. Building a dense, mixed city will also enable a reduction in transport work and improve the city’s qualities for residents and the business community.

After twenty years of bold work, the
Major initiatives are in place. Now it is time for the next step. In the ever-changing fabric of the city, the time has come to weave the new structures together with the existing ones. It is time to heal, densify and connect. There is now the opportunity to create a dense, mixed city with connections and meeting places between eastern and western Malmö, between new and old, between city and region, between Skåne and Zealand, between today and the future.

Malmö has already started the spatial reorganisation of the city by densifying and transforming the port and industrial areas for other activities. The master plan (see Figure 6), adopted in 2014, lays down guidelines for an increase in population of 100,000 in 20 years, which assumes continued densification and improvement of the quality of the city and further

Figure 2: Map showing Two Cities One Region: The Copenhagen–Malmö region

Figure 3: Technical visits at Western Harbour with the residential tower ‘Turning Torso’ in the background
improvements to public transport.

In the following sections, Malmö’s work towards social cohesion, the citizens, the human capital involved in the development, and, finally, three current attempts to achieve broader participation by citizens are discussed.

VISIONS, ACTION PROGRAMME AND STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL COHESION

A number of programmes for social cohesion and reducing the gaps between people have been implemented in recent years. The vision work in 1994/95, which indicated the future direction of the city and was extremely important, was followed up with a new approach aiming to increase the welfare of socially and economically vulnerable groups. The action plan was called *Välfärd för alla — det dubbla åtagandet* (‘Welfare for all — the dual commitment’) and, as with the vision work, it was the city’s administrations that worked on these objectives in parallel with their

**Figure 4:** Aerial photo of Western Harbour with the European Housing Expo at the Waterfront

**Figure 5:** Historical photo of a part of Kockums Shipyard with the slipways and equipment quay
administrative work. At the same time, the city began an internal project called *Engagemang Malmö* (‘Commitment Malmö’) with the aim of educating all its civil servants about the city’s journey and the factors playing a decisive role, and gaining their commitment to it. The ‘Area programmes’ had the same starting point as ‘Welfare for all’, but the initiatives were now focused on a number of specially selected areas. The most recently completed action plan, *Kommissionen för ett socialt hållbart Malmö* (‘The commission for a socially sustainable Malmö’) aimed to study/identify differences in health and living conditions between different areas of the city.

**Welfare for all — the dual commitment**

All eyes were now focused on the imbalances (demographic, economic, business and educational) within different areas of Malmö, as a result of the action programme. A number of areas (work, education, housing, security, safety and meeting places) were designated, with special objectives for each area. This was an extensive, in-depth programme, which was completed in 2008 and achieved extremely good results for the various investment areas.

**Engagemang Malmö (Commitment Malmö)**

In order to succeed with the many strategic...
initiatives, it was also of major importance to ensure that all the people who worked in the City of Malmö shared the same vision and pulled in the same direction, based on common values. That is the reason why the action programme ‘Commitment Malmö’ was started. It was a joint start for the city’s approximately 1,000 managers, allowing these people to become catalysts for the further implementation of the values adopted among the city’s 18,000 strong staff. It was a gigantic pioneering and ambassadorial project, which echoed throughout Sweden.

**Områdesprogrammen (Area programmes)**

After the work on the action programme ‘Welfare for all — the dual commitment’, the city started a new one called ‘Area programmes’ (see Figure 7), a five-year investment (2010–2015) to improve living conditions, increase safety and create more jobs in the areas of Malmö where welfare was lowest. The decision on the programmes was taken on Malmö’s Municipal Executive Committee in 2010, and involves all Malmö’s administrations, making it a unique initiative. Another unique aspect of the programmes is that, instead of doing a few things in many places, the city is doing many things in a few places.

**Commission for a socially sustainable Malmö**

In the same year, the Municipal Executive Committee decided to establish the ‘Commission for a socially sustainable Malmö’ (see Figure 8). The main task of the commission was to assemble evidence and use it to propose strategies for reducing health inequalities and improving the long-term living conditions of the citizens of Malmö. The commission’s task was to propose evidence-based strategies for reducing health inequalities and improving living conditions for all citizens of Malmö, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in society. The continuing work for socially sustainable development is based on the commission’s 74 proposed measures and approximately 70 comments on them. The proposed measures include a number linked to urban planning, such as ‘The cities spatial impact on health’.

**HUMAN CAPITAL AND PARTICIPATION**

The city must work to achieve greater awareness of its residents as resources and how it makes use of its social capital. Malmö faces a big challenge in terms of energy targets. By 2020, the city’s buildings must use renewable energy, and by 2030, the entire city must use renewable energy. Work
in this field with four arenas — Västra hamnen, Ekostaden Augustenborg, Sege Park and Hyllie — has been a great asset, creating awareness among all target groups in the city. To succeed, a shift in values is needed from a more physical approach to developing human capital via alliances and network solutions. This could be expressed by seeking more value-based urban planning in which contents and values become increasingly important for the processes used to create sustainable, attractive urban environments: a form of increased participation throughout the population. An example of this is the ByggaBo dialogue, which was initiated by the government, in which new detailed development plans were prepared in a dialogue with construction companies, architects and consultants. This approach also continued to be used in other development areas in Malmö.

In order to proceed and take the next step, additional factors need to be clearly incorporated in the concept. These are climate and water management, how spatial organisation can enhance social sustainability, culture and collective knowledge as a driving force and, in particular, processes that create participation and trust. It is essential to the development of Malmö to create a socially balanced city with good living conditions for all. The urban space is important for good social development, as a shared place of contact for meetings between people and to stimulate democracy and participation. More meeting places need to be created, and safety and gender equality in the urban space need to be increased. Social and creative meeting places are a means of achieving balance.
Good public health is a precondition of positive development, welfare and growth. A reduction in variation in health in the city is a high priority. People who feel involved enjoy the best health and prosperity. The city is enhanced socially by citizen participation, and it is important to work concertedly in the area of physical planning to increase participation in change processes. This involves social mobilisation and participation in urban development, and is also a cornerstone of economic sustainability.

**INCREASED PARTICIPATION FOR CITIZENS**

Below are three examples of how the city has worked on increased participation for its citizens in its planning.

**Case I: 2012 master plan**

The conventional consultation procedure was supplemented with outreach work in which new methods were tried out. This included making a short film on the master plan to make it easier to communicate with all target groups about the role of the plan. Another method used to spread the message about the plan was an information text to Malmö residents’ mobile phones when they passed various locations in the city. Educational material and a mobile exhibition unit were prepared for upper secondary schools. In addition, a special reference group was created, in which young people were involved in work on the master plan. Interest was also focused particularly on young people by creating a forum in which they had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the master plan work and submit their views.

The idea was for the young reference group to contribute their perspective on the city’s development and have the opportunity to conduct a dialogue with the civil servants responsible, and possibly also with politicians. For several reasons, young people are a priority group when the city’s long-term plans are formulated. This is partly because it is the young people of today who will be most affected by how the city develops in the longer term, and partly because they belong to one of the groups that participate more rarely in traditional
consultation processes. The young reference group consisted of a group of young adults aged 20–30 with an interest in the development of Malmö, without any requirement for formal expertise in urban planning. The Urban Planning Department also prepared educational material with an educationalist for use in social science and geography teaching at upper secondary schools.

Case II: UngBo 12

UngBo was a communication project initiated by the City of Malmö in partnership with the construction industry to provoke a debate among young people about the shortage of housing. With an ideas competition, a competition for architects and the first homes exhibition for young people in Sweden, the operators on the housing market were brought together to take shared responsibility for increasing construction for young people as the target group. The Web-based ideas competition involved young people aged between 18 and 30 submitting proposals for how they want to live in the future and ideas on what can be done about the housing shortage. The project has therefore created a new form of citizen participation, with young people being involved in urban development on their own terms and without any need for prior knowledge. A process has been kick-started with UngBo, and the project has generated knowledge capital that requires management.

UngBo’s homes exhibition for young people resulted in an UngBo initiative. The initiative stipulates a number of responsibilities that the various operators on the housing market can assume separately and/or jointly to contribute to more homes being built for young people. It is hoped that the initiative will start the machinery turning and put pressure on national housing policy so that more municipalities choose to follow in the footsteps of the City of Malmö.

Immediately after the homes exhibition, UngBo announced a land allocation competition with the focus on homes for young people. The entries to the competition had to be based on the proposals, concepts and ideas submitted in UngBo’s ideas competition, which challenged prevailing construction rules and standards in many ways. ByggVesta was the winner. This means that 11 dwelling units...
will be built on Spårvägen in Norra Sorgenfri in Malmö. These will be affordable dwelling units with the focus on social and environmental sustainability, entirely in the spirit of UngBo.

UngBo 12’s ideas competition resulted in as many as 350 proposals (see Figure 9) being submitted, and created a new type of participation process, with young people being involved in urban development on their own terms. The competition can also be seen as an extensive market survey of young people’s preferences. This material has enabled several clear trends to be distinguished. They can be summarised as follows: flexible housing; green; collective; car-free; more than just housing.

**Case III: Modern consultation**

The City of Malmö is also working to develop forms of dialogue and consultation with citizens in its everyday planning work (see Figure 10). The municipal consultation work is being carried out for democratic reasons to ensure the quality of the city’s development work and to enhance the integration of gender equality.

A survey of the public involved in previous consultations confirms the profile of predominantly older men in the target group. To reach women and young people, the City of Malmö tested a new form of consultation with a different method in different places, approaching upper secondary school pupils and hospital staff, among others. The experience from these projects showed that it is important to define what citizens can influence. This also increases involvement in the issue. It is important to state that early participation in the process increases the opportunity to exert actual influence.

To reach the groups that normally do not volunteer opinions, it is necessary to incorporate outreach activities and go to places where people are, e.g., a shopping centre or a preschool, with information material. To reach young people, it is possible to invite participation from local schools, preferably from classes that are not normally invited and have a heterogeneous composition. The Web is also an important information channel. A FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) has been published instead of just uploading a pdf with material from the consultation report. Unconventional advertising on media such as Facebook or Blocket is another way of reaching more than those who subscribe to morning newspapers.

**CONCLUSION**

The city will continue to develop the ways in which it collaborates with its citizens. The journey of involving citizens has begun and also has achieved greater collaboration with various providers and organisations. With the same curiosity and creativity as the city has had and has with its environmental work, Malmö will create further participation among its citizens. When Malmö writes the next chapter in its work towards change, it will proceed largely from the residents, and their relations with the city and knowledge of how the city organises its space, combined with a major focus on the environment. The future belongs to those who work courageously and proactively on energy, climate and social issues. Not all initiatives need to come from the city; its citizens should initiate and implement measures: the city should be involved, but primarily play an intermediary, co-financing role.

**Further reading**