Citizen codesign leads to a vision of social intensification

Jenny Stenberg | Associate Professor | Chalmers Architecture | Sweden
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Applying the compact city concept to a Swedish large-scale housing area by integrating research, education and community outreach

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- explores the linking of research, education and community outreach
- asks how students can initiate and drive collaborative knowledge production processes to develop knowledge about locally relevant urban qualities
- discusses three potential positive outcomes of such linking of research, education and community outreach:
  a) the research activities themselves may improve;
  b) there may be a positive impact on student learning;
  c) better valorization of research may be achieved.
Compact Cities?
Exploring qualities, drivers and strategies for promoting mixed-use urban development

The project aims to contribute to a more precise and useful understanding of which qualities a compact city needs to include

• qualities
• drivers
• strategies

Research project 2014-2017

Jaan-Henrik Kain, Jenny Stenberg, Liane Thuvander, Marco Adelfio

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Compact Cities?
Exploring qualities, drivers and strategies for promoting mixed-use urban development

Urban density is studied in three cities:

**Barcelona**

- A very dense city:
  - + Culture, innovation and quality of life
  - − Air pollution and lack of public and green space

**Rotterdam**

- A densifying dispersed city:
  - + Many initiatives to vitalize the city
  - − Social and economic segregation

**Gothenburg**

- A still very dispersed city:
  - + Large green areas, great opportunities
  - − Social, economic and spatial segregation

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Design and Planning for Social Inclusion 2015

Fem grupper av arkitekt-, planerar- och landskapsarkitekt- och ingenjörstudenter från elva olika länder arbetade under kursen med olika projekt i Angereds område. Projekten ställdes ut och presenterades officiellt den 17 december 2015 på Folktets Hus vid Hammarkulletorget i Hammarkullen.
Nedan hittar du länkar till gruppernas utställnings material så som den blev presenterad i december.

Below you will find the exhibition material for the projects carried out by the five student groups in Angered, a suburban area in Gothenburg.

Group 1 – Bredfjällsgatan 2021 – A participatory design for renovation of a Million Programme area

Previously announced as:
SWE: Boendeinflytande i renoveringsprojekt på Bredfjällsgatan, Hammarkullen
ENG: Tenants influence in a renovation project in Bredfjällsgatan, Hammarkullen
Hammarkullen
is situated 15 minutes with tram from the central train station
Hammarmkullen

The area was constructed during the 1960s and 70s to respond to urgent housing needs and housing degradation in the city centre.

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The area is predominantly free of cars, which is greatly appreciated by the inhabitants. Buildings are sparsely placed, and the greenery is generous. The area includes large-scale housing, lower buildings, detached houses and villas. The public housing company owns all 2,200 rented apartments in Hammarkullen (they bought 900 from a private owner in Feb 2016).
Hammarkullen

The area has long been stigmatized, and there has been little interest on the part of developers in investing in much-needed refurbishment and densification.

It has a relatively high unemployment rate (15.5%) compared to the Gothenburg average (6%). The yearly gross income differs considerably from the average in Gothenburg, with 148,500 SEK in Hammarkullen versus 270,000 SEK in Gothenburg.

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Of the 8,200 inhabitants, 57% were born abroad. There are 84 nationalities, speaking over one hundred languages.
Hammarkullen

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Compact Cities?

Students’ contribution

Social Intensification | Jonathan Westlin, Jakub Dvorak, Siri Ersson, Luisa Sarvia, Caroline Sollerhed

Their task was to *in cooperation with inhabitants* seeking knowledge about what densification can mean in Hammarkullen – a suburb from the 1960s and 70s.

- *should* it be densified?
- *what* is it to be denser? physical environment? or something completely different?
- *and where* should it then be densified?

Board for citizen dialogue at the tram stop.
Using codesigning methods.

Results:

- Identified four layers as relevant to a densification strategy.
- Design proposals for two specific places.

The greatest focus on social outdoor life. New buildings should thus contribute to social life.
Compact Cities?
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Place 1

Proposed space for leisure activity areas at the gravel yard behind Bredfjällsgatan.

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Place 1

Proposed extensions for cultural activities and entrepreneurs at Bredfjällsgatan.

By activating this more or less empty space our hope is to create new meeting places with focus on activities, but also to make the area around Bredfjällsgatan safer and more vibrant. With a more visible Hammarkullecerkneval an important part of the identity of Hammarkullen is highlighted.

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The square:
Proposed new housing makes the square more spatially confined and creates more social life.
Proposed new housing makes the square more spatially confined and creates more social life.
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Proposed new housing makes the square more spatially confined and creates more social life.

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Our approach to analysing the students’ results was:

- action oriented
- involving methods such as participant observations of meetings and activities
- and analyses of text and drawings

Our paper discusses three potential positive outcomes of linking of education, research and community outreach:

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a) Quality of research
- extra time resources for studies based on dialogue with inhabitants and other local actors
- new knowledge input from recently educated professionals with a »young« critical perspective
- the inhabitants guided the students towards putting the social perspective as a starting point for urban densification
- enabled a better understanding of what social aspects to focus on
- the locations at which these social problems could best be addressed through physical interventions
- developed design proposals for how the physical structure could be improved – any proposed buildings must contribute to social intensification outdoors
- making the research more relevant
- lead to identification of more pertinent questions for future research
b) Student learning
• by integrating research and higher education, students had access to researchers’ knowledge and the latest research findings
• by integrating learning and community outreach, students gained socially relevant knowledge
• through reality-based studies, they learned how to apply transdisciplinary methods in quite challenging situations
• working with a topic that was still undefined because it was part of on-going research was both challenging and educational
• learned to think about the compact city and its values in different terms – critically assess what aspects actually should be densified
• showed how the design professions could be developed in a new direction – to handle »wicked« problems or complex urban issues
• identified the need for a systemic change in praxis – to make it socially relevant to face present and future urban challenges
c) Valorization of research results

• relevant to the larger research project on compact cities, and for municipal planners currently densifying Hammarkullen
• local management influencing the assignments and acting as extra supervisors
• students have been employed locally to further develop their work
• however, valorization of research results higher up in the hierarchies has not been as easy: they had obvious difficulties understanding what the students had done.

→ their perception of themselves as experts in spatial design/planning hindered them from learning from inhabitants

→ experiential knowledge of inhabitants is as valuable as their own expertise
c) Valorization of research results

- relevant to the larger research project on compact cities, and for municipal planners currently densifying Hammarkullen
- local management influencing the assignments and acting as extra supervisors
- students have been employed locally to further develop their work
- however, valorization of research results higher up in the hierarchies has not been as easy
- potential for opening up the minds of young people with immigrant backgrounds towards the university and possibilities to pursue higher education as well as for bringing the universities closer to parts of our society where they are currently absent – widening participation is a governmental directive
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Topics for future research
• research on the compact city needs to have a strong social focus in parallel with its focus on other aspects
• particularly interesting to investigate further in stigmatized large-scale housing areas built in the 1960s and 70s, because planners’/developers’ and inhabitants’ perspectives on what adequate densification actually entails seem to differ radically
• education and research have different rationales and time frames – a need to bridge these to avoid leaving students in the position of being too self-sufficient and vulnerable
• the apparent mismatch between what planners say and what they do, emphasizes the need for a better understanding of how the planning system can coproduce urban knowledge and action with other stakeholders, including citizens
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Master’s students: Jakub Dvorak, Siri Ersson, Luisa Sarvia, Caroline Sollerhed and Jonathan Westlin, and Emilio Brandão, examiner of the course.

Global Dwelling: Sustainability – Design – Participation | Third Oikonet Conference | 23rd Sep 2016 | Manchester UK