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Neglect, Social Movements, and Activist Planning: A Case Study of Kirseberg, Malmö

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Acknowledgements

Just over four years ago, I quit my history studies, wanting to pursue something different. Thanks to a pandemic soon after, and subsequent spare time, I discovered Urban and Regional Planning just in time for the application deadline. Little did I know then that I would end up submitting a master's thesis inspired by both fields, as I have tried to combine my background of studying history with that of being a planner in writing this thesis. Planning is a complex field, and as a planner, you should know a little bit of everything. These four years at NMBU have taught me more than I could ever have imagined, and I am thankful for the opportunity. I want to thank several people who have helped me and been invaluable to my work:

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Abstract

Through historical and contemporary analyses combined with a theoretical foundation, this thesis examines activist planning and social movements in the city. Using Kirseberg as a case study, an old working-class neighbourhood in the Swedish city of Malmö, it explores how historical neglect, in combination with broader historical events, influenced the emergence of what became a social movement in the 1970s. Through archival research, interview, newspaper articles and published sources, the thesis explains how the movement managed to change the city plan, which called for the complete redevelopment of the neighbourhood, with the movement's goal being the preservation of the old 19th century housing typical of the area. The movement applied a multitude of strategies, but as the thesis argues, their use of their own history of neglect in mobilizing and changing the official planners' stance played a key role in their success. The movement's work had lasting effects in changing the inside and outside perception of Kirseberg.

In the contemporary analysis, the thesis examines the ongoing redevelopment plans for the local prison, closed since 2015 after a century of operation. Through interviews and newspaper articles, it examines the ongoing efforts of a local group to purchase the prison, making a case for community power and the continued relevance of activist planning. The group, acting as advocacy planners, tries to mobilize the neighbourhood to realize their goal of developing the prison to and by the community.

Together, the two cases form a red thread through history, making an argument for using history as a strategy in planning and as an activist tool, as well as acknowledging and utilizing the resources found within a community. Furthermore, the thesis illustrate how neglect can affect a neighbourhood, and how citizens can counter it and foster community-led initiatives and development.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background and scope

In urban planning, understanding power dynamics is important to understand how we as planners can influence, and be influenced by, the different parties involved in a case. How planners wield their powers facing communities can have lasting effects, and it is crucial for planners and decision makers to understand how decisions affect the societies and communities they are made upon. Power wields itself in different ways, and different actors may use different tactics and strategies to gain power and influence on decision-making processes. When actors experience unfair or uneven distribution of power or influence, tactics that fall outside of the official process can be utilised. Such tactics can be utilised through activism, or activist planning, in its many different shapes and forms. Through a case study of Kirseberg, an old neighbourhood in the Swedish city of Malmö, this thesis examines a historical process of urban development and activism through a social movement, and a contemporary case, examining the ongoing redevelopment plans for a local prison. I make an argument for history being utilized as a strategy, and the importance of understanding and articulating the history of communities, as well as the power and knowledge they can obtain and utilize in planning processes.

Kirseberg, or “Backarna” (‘the hills’) as it is known locally, is a small neighbourhood with a long and somewhat controversial history as a place of social issues such as crime and poverty, with a narrative of being neglected by the city. In June 2023 I travelled to Malmö through an internship, as me and my then colleagues were searching for inspiration to use in our work (Andersen et al., 2023). While being guided around Kirseberg, a local planner described the area as “flourishing through neglect”, later stating that “Kirseberg is to Malmö what Malmö is to Sweden”, referring to the negative view Malmö has gained in relation to crime, immigration, and social issues (Andersen et al., 2023). He himself was an adamant defender of Malmö and Kirseberg, and the apparent contradiction between flourishing and neglect caught my attention. What he was referring to was what he perceived as a strong community, with an interesting history of neglect by city-officials and subsequent resistance and community-organizing by the locals. The

neglect was loosely described as systematic through the historical localization of perceived “bad institution” in the area, such as a prison, convict cemetery, mental hospital, slaughterhouses, slum-like conditions in the first half of the 20th century, and the threat of demolition and redevelopment in the mid-20th century. The threat of demolition was met with successful opposition from the locals who did not want their houses redeveloped, which although in poor condition, largely consisted of historical mid to late 19th century dwellings and industrial buildings. The social movement in which the opposition took shape would have lasting effects on the neighbourhood far beyond stopping the city plans for redevelopment. What I was curious about was how this process took place, what caused it, and how it has affected the neighbourhood. Was it so that the historical neglect had made the neighbourhood flourish? In what way? As I read more about Kirseberg I began to see a pattern, a red thread, through history, just as the planner I talked to had suggested.

More recently an old, closed prison, one of the historically “bad institutions” of the neighbourhood, has been a topic of discussion in the close to ten years since its closure in 2015. It has stood empty since closure, with plans for redevelopment into housing by its current owner MKB seemingly dragging out. In this vacuum a group of people, through a large umbrella social organization “Malmö Idella”, got the idea of buying the prison and developing it as a positive contribution for and by the community. Still in an early preliminary phase, the prison case illustrates how the community works with its history consciously, and how the history surrounding the social movement and resistance which occurred some fifty years ago still affects the development of Kirseberg. Further, it illustrates the continued relevance of applying activist planning strategies in influencing official planning processes.

This thesis is meant to be a contribution to planning theory and planning history. Together, the historical case of Kirseberg and the current development of the prison forms a single case of social movements in the city and of activist planning. It makes an argument for using history as a strategy in planning and how community power should be acknowledged and utilized.

1.2 Research question

In this thesis I examine how the purported neglect of Kirseberg lay the foundation for a social movement and positive urban development of the neighbourhood through activist planning. I examine if this neglect and activism is still visible and affecting development today. I do so through a single case study of Kirseberg, divided into three main chapters functioning as steps: theoretical (ch.3.0), historical (ch.4.0), and contemporary (ch.5.0).

This forms a red thread and provides the basis for answering and discussing three main research questions: How does neglect by decision makers affect development of a neighbourhood? What strategies can citizens employ to counteract neglect and foster community-led initiatives and development? How is activist planning relevant today?

Through the three main chapters I examine and try to answer several sub-questions necessary to answer the main ones. Chapter 3.0 provides a theoretical foundation for the subsequent analysis. How is activist planning and social movements described in the existing literature? In chapter 4.0 I examine the history of Kirseberg and the social movement which emerged in the 1970s as a response to an old city plan, the plan calling for the redevelopment of the neighbourhood. How and why did the activists achieve their goal of changing the plan? In chapter 5.0 I examine Kirseberg today through the ongoing early development phase of a closed prison, among it the local effort to buy the prison and develop it for the neighbourhood. Is the purported historical neglect still visible? And is there a connection between the social movement's activist work and the current development?

1.3 Map of Kirseberg

The old houses



Source: Author's image (12.03.24)

The prison



Source: Author's image (12.03.24)

The library



Source: Jin Zan (22.04.14)

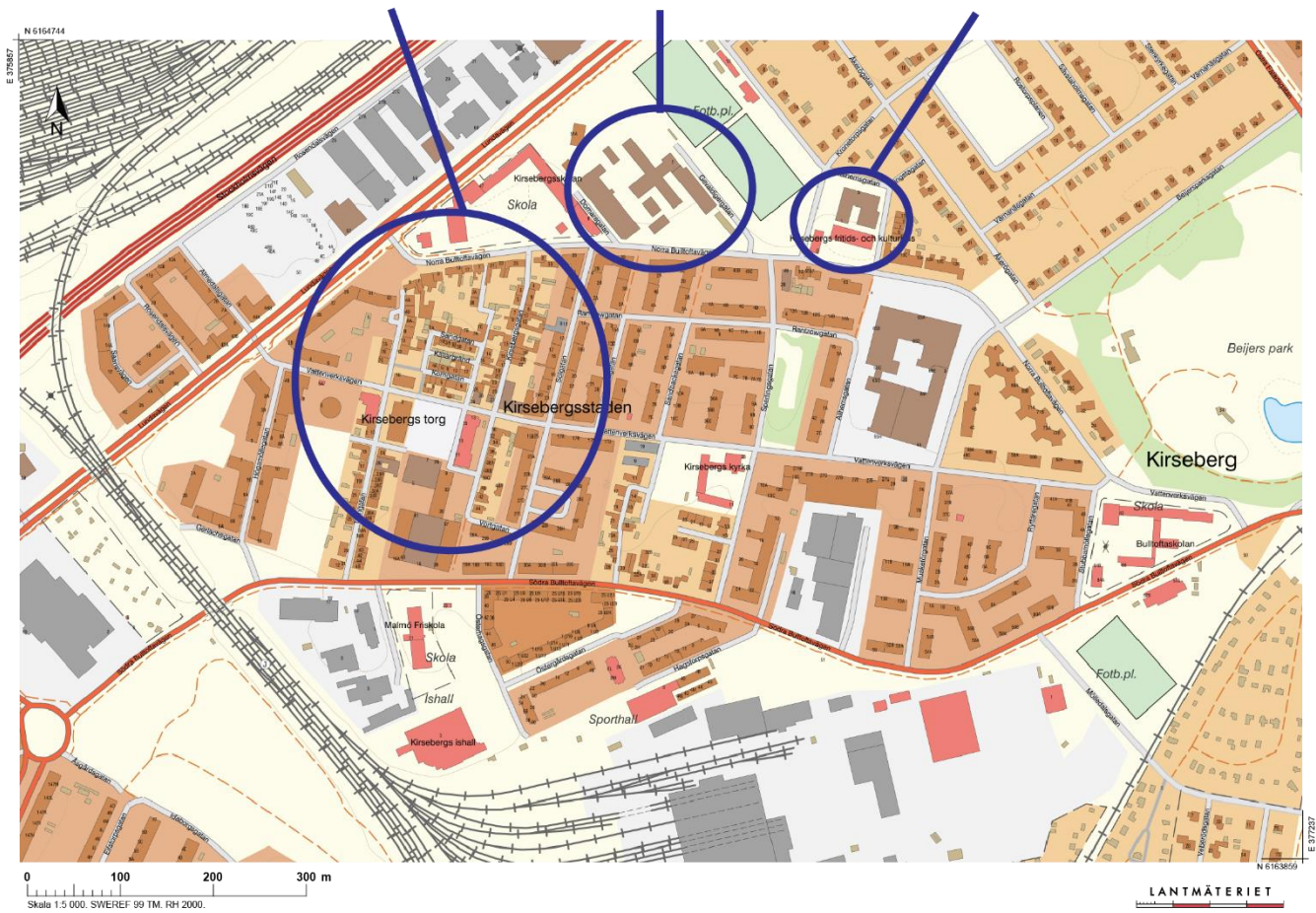


Figure 1: Map of Kirseberg

2.0 Methodology and limitations

As explained, I approach this thesis through three main chapters: theoretical, historical, and contemporary. These can be seen as steps, and each of these steps is necessary to understand how Kirseberg is where it is today and how current questions of planning are approached in and by the neighbourhood. The three steps are approached in different ways using different methods. The thesis is structured accordingly.

The theoretical framework, ch.3.0, is used to focus the investigation in the two following chapters. I include relevant literature on activist planning and social movements in the city, and drawing from scholars on the field it forms a basis for discussion of the case study. The parts on activist planning rely extensively on Sager's works (Sager, 2013, 2016, 2022), although I draw from other scholars and examples as well. In the parts on social movements in the city I use the work of Castells, and his theory on social movements presented in the 1983 book *The city and the grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movement*. The two approaches apply to different parts of the case. While the work on activist planning, and specifically on advocacy planning, is used to discuss both the historical and contemporary case, Castells' work on social movements is mainly applicable to the historical case. The chapter ends with a section explaining the Swedish social movement type "byalag" (it can be loosely translated to citizen group). I use the term byalag throughout the thesis, and I find it necessary to explain the concept in greater detail.

Chapter 4.0 and the historical analysis is the largest chapter and has five main sections. The first three presents key historical and contextualizing background events, and the fourth presents the social movement's history. The fifth is a summary and discussion. The first section (4.1) covers the historical background of Kirseberg and focuses on the history around the 1900s. Drawing from published sources and existing literature it gives an important context in understanding the later history. The second section (4.2) covers the 1939 city plan and subsequent development of the neighbourhood, which became the cause of the social movement and resistance. The third section (4.3) gives a wider historical context, briefly examining the Swedish housing program of the 1960s and the political and social climate of Malmö at the time. The fourth and main section (4.4) of

the chapter analyses the social movement in Kirseberg from 1969 until the 1980s. In this section I use a triangulation method where I apply published secondary sources supplemented by primary sources: interview, newspaper articles and unpublished archive material. This adds validity to the case, as it enables cross-checking information and multiple angles.

The contemporary analysis, chapter 5.0, is a case study of Kirseberg today and the ongoing prison development. Although it includes some historical background on the prison, it focuses on the events after its closure in 2015. I use interviews and mainly newspaper articles to examine the efforts of a small group to buy the prison from its current owner. It will be further explained on the following pages, as I find it necessary to explain the methods used for, and processes behind, chapter 4.0 and 5.0 in greater detail. There are some limitations and clarifications that needs to be made, in addition to them being more complex.

Further it should be noted that as this thesis is in English, I have had to translate several sources from Swedish. This includes some quoted books, all newspapers, and interviews. In some instances, I have changed the sentencing or a word for it to make sense in English.

2.1 Methodology and limitations for the historical analysis

The only published historical work on Kirseberg is a 2020 book by A. M. Thagaard, *“Backarna: liv och historia i en förstad”* (Backarna: life and history in a suburb), which is a rework of her 1985 book *“Livet på Backarna”* (Life in Backarna). The book presents valuable research on Kirseberg history which I have used when examining the early history the neighbourhood. The book also goes through the key points of the 1970s social movement and resistance towards the city plans. While the book presents a good overview of the social movement, it lacks in contextualizing the events and in explaining the processes behind the events that unfolded. This is not meant as critique, as the book is neither a theoretical work nor very large, but more of an introduction to the neighbourhood and its history.

Thagaard was herself one of the key figures in the social movement, which brings an important aspect to light: The historical (pre-1970) narrative of Kirseberg presented in

her book was first researched and presented by her and other activists as a tool in mobilizing the community and changing its course, as she herself states in her book. While there is little reason to doubt the pre-1970 history presented, as Thagaard has based it on interviews and archive research and reworked it since her 1985 publication, it is worth noting that the process was started with a clear agenda. This will be discussed in the historical analysis. This also applies to her presentation of the activism in Kirseberg which she, although she hardly can be blamed for it, cannot be viewed as an objective or neutral source. Without comparison and at the risk of being presumptuous, it is tempting to quote Churchill on the matter: *“For my part, I consider that it will be found much better by all parties to leave the past to history, especially as I propose to write that history myself.”* (Hansard, 23.01.1948 col 557). In addition to Thagaard’s book, I draw from several works and articles on Swedish social and economic history. As my search for primary sources revealed, it was necessary to widen the perspective and look at some broader historical context to understand the local one.

As a supplement to Thagaard’s book I got an interview with her in Kirseberg. The interview was semi structured and conducted over some three hours. It was recorded, and subsequently transcribed. I wanted to keep it semi structured, so there was an opening for her to give her own reflections and address points she felt relevant. My questions revolved around the organizing of the social movement and what I felt were omissions or unaddressed points in her book.

The interview, although I got some information which I refer to in the case, ended up being most useful in cross-referencing, or triangulating, with material from other sources. In addition to the interview, I spent a day in the local library archive. The library had kept a collection of old newspaper scraps, meeting journals, pamphlets etc. from the 1960s, 70s and 80s. The archive must be described as unsorted, but a large portion of the documents seemed relevant to the case. I scanned them, and the interview with Thagaard in combination with her book had given me enough information to draw a timeline of key events, and subsequently sort out the relevant documents and place them in time. I then used the documents to cross-check existing information where possible and as primary sources.

When researching the Kirseberg history I have found that the sources often stem from the social movement itself. Thagaard and her book is of course linked to the movement directly, but also the library archive. Although I cannot be certain, there is reason to assume that the documents kept were archived by members of the movement. The reason for this being that the library functioned as a headquarter, and that the staff were heavily involved in the activist work themselves. While pamphlets and meeting agendas is one thing, the library newspaper collection bears the risk of being biased, especially if they were only kept as memorabilia. While I have conducted wide searches in newspaper archives in search for more sources, many of the local newspapers are not publicly available or difficult to obtain. Further, I have not been successful in locating and interviewing people who represented the other side in the story, the city, one reason being that most of the planners and city officials were well into adulthood at the time and have since passed away. As such I am at the risk of having missed relevant sources and perspectives.

As the archive was less of a well-organized archive, and more an unsorted collection, it has given certain challenges in referencing. This is no critique of the local library, whom I am thankful to for keeping the material in the first place. Much of the relevant material consisted of old newspapers, of which only the relevant pieces were clipped out for keeping (see figure 2 of example). This means that the author, issue or even publisher, has not always been possible to be certain of. In most cases, I believe I have managed to find or confirm the relevant information, as most of the scraps had handwritten abbreviations for the newspaper name which I have worked out. In some few cases I have located a complete example in online archives making me certain of their origin. There is however a slight chance that some of the references have wrong issue date or publisher. In addition, many lack page number. In the many cases where the author is missing, I have simply referenced with the article title. Other material, such as pamphlets or notes, often contain little or no useful referencing information. These documents are referenced to by their title or subject and year if possible. In cases where I am certain, I also include the author. I do obtain copies of everything.



Figure 2: Three examples of material from the Kirseberg Library archive. Two newspaper scraps glued on paper in a folder, and a pamphlet. Although the date is added to the papers, and the abbreviation for the newspaper name is present on one, the condition of the material has made it difficult to be certain when referencing.

2.2 Methodology and limitations for the contemporary analysis

For the contemporary analysis in chapter 5.0 my original intention was to follow the redevelopment of the prison, believing that it would supply me with enough material and points of discussion to become a part-case similar in size as the historical one. While it has done that to some extent, I was hoping for more interviews and further progress than what turned out to be the case. This is not necessarily negative, as I believe the case as it stands is an interesting examination into an early-stage case of advocacy planning and urban development with the historical case forming an interesting background. Together they form a complete narrative, and without them both, an important argument of the historical backgrounds relevance today would be missed.

The methods used for the prison case are mainly interviews, supplemented by newspaper articles. I conducted two interviews with the group (“Backa Kåken”) working towards buying the prison, both conducted digitally as semi-structured interviews. They are referenced to in text as personal communication with Backa Kåken. I was also invited to join the group on an excursion to the prison, as well as to join meetings as an observer. The first has unfortunately not been possible to realize, as the group has yet to get the prison owner to find a suitable time. The second has not been possible due to the timeframe. In addition, I conducted street interviews with a random selection of ten

people in Kirseberg, asking them about their thoughts on the redevelopment process. I did this as I felt I lacked input and did not have enough material to understand the local point of view in the case. Of the ten people who I engaged in conversation with, only six wanted to express their view. Their answers were rather short, and I felt a somewhat scepticism towards my intentions. Many were mostly interested in why and what I was doing, questioning if I represented the city or the developers and not what I had stated. The approach was as such less of a success than hoped. Their six responses are included in the prison case chapter as well as some discussion on the apparent scepticism I met.

I tried to reach out to MKB, the current owner of the prison, hoping to obtain their angle and perception on the development. I was curious as to how they viewed citizen participation, the local community, the historical aspects, and their view on the efforts to buy the prison from them. I got a short response at the end of the writing this thesis, but their response only confirmed what I have obtained through other sources, primarily the media and the interviews. As MKB wanted to review any work containing information obtained directly through them, which there was not enough time for, I have not included their contribution.

2.3 Research ethics

There are some ethical questions that I have had to consider working with this thesis, especially regarding the interviews and interactions with the local community.

I conducted both interviews digitally and in person. Two of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The files are kept in internal restricted access folders and will be deleted after completion of this work. Through a consent form, as well as being explained beforehand, the informants were made aware of how the data would be kept, their rights in accessing it or withdrawing from the project, and how I aimed at using their contributions in my work.

Some of the informants were interesting to the case considering their organizations work, and not them as individuals. These are kept anonymous, as their recognition would not contribute to the thesis. One interviewee, Thagaard, consented to and is

named extensively. This because of her being an outspoken and published source on the subject, and in herself an important and central part of the historical case.

As to the archival research conducted at the Kirseberg Library, I was given consent to take copies of and use whatever I found in the files. There are however some considerations to be made regarding privacy. While the material obtained and used is around fifty years old, and mostly consists of pamphlets and newspapers, there are instances of private correspondence and internal organizational documents. Material of private or internal nature is made anonymous if necessary to use, and mostly only used for cross checking against other sources. The copies I obtain are kept on internal, protected, folders.

Both the historical and contemporary case are of great importance to many people. In working with this thesis, I have entered what inevitably is to many a personal and complex subject. Kirseberg is a neighbourhood that has had and still has its challenges, and I have done my best to respect the community. Despite the historical case being a story of positive development, I have done my best in not identifying figures who does not need mentioning (for example individuals quoted in newspaper articles). This because it is also a story of politics, people who felt neglected or challenged, and oppositions, which can be a sensitive topic. I have not had the opportunity or time to examine every source in detail, checking with individuals quoted some fifty years ago.

Finally, I want to address positionality and some considerations I must make working with a local case. When I started researching Kirseberg, I was curious and open-minded, wanting to learn about a case I knew little about. Along the way, I have grown to admire Kirseberg, its history, and its people. I must acknowledge that my admiration for Kirseberg may have influenced my perspective. Additionally, and as described, many of the sources I have used in this thesis come from the activists' point of view. I have done my best to give a fair picture, but it is worth keeping this in mind when reading. I have tried to be aware of my own potential biases while writing, making sure I approach everything with honesty and transparency. Any errors in this thesis are solely my own.

3.0 Theoretical framework

As the focus of this thesis is on neglect in planning and community responses, it is necessary to examine how power dynamics are managed in planning and how marginalized or neglected groups can be included in planning processes. Citizen participation can be achieved through various approaches, all aimed at ensuring representation and accommodation for all affected groups in the planning process. In theory, the most inclusive form of planning, which considers all actors, is communicative planning. However, this theory is criticized for its lack of realism when applied in real-world scenarios. In the following pages, I will briefly introduce the concept before moving on to more relevant theories that either challenge or complement the communicative approach, including advocacy planning. These theories all share an activist planning approach. Subsequently, I will discuss social movement groups, as they often emerge in response to neglect or marginalization.

3.1 Activist planning

The planning field has historically been professionalized, with a top-down structure, and as the case of Kirseberg will show, it has led to several forms of activist approaches by non-professional or official planners. The non-professionals, or non-planners, often take on the role of planners themselves. "The planner" may thus be an individual, a network-based organization, a public planner, or any other actor trying to influence planning processes. From the 1960s, several planning theories emerged, attempting to provide both professionals and non-professionals with ways of influencing planning decisions in favour of marginalized, unrepresented, and often overlooked groups or agendas.

Communicative planning has its roots in Habermas (1984), and his theory on communicative rationality which differentiates between two kinds of rationality, the emancipative communicative reasoning, and the strategic thinking: Social action can be either success oriented strategic action or understanding-oriented communicative action (Schaefer et al., 2013). What the communicative approach has contributed to planning is argued by Foley (1997):

“The communicative approach to planning has offered an alternative approach to practicing planners uncomfortable with an instrumental rationality that leaves values undiscussed or unspecified. By recognizing that all forms of knowledge are socially constructed it accepts that values are not predetermined but are established in the communicative process itself. The examination of what planners do has revealed the role that planners can play in facilitating or hindering such communication”. (Foley, 1997, p. 3)

Sager (2013) explains that communicative planning objective is to enhance deliberative democracy by exploring the feasibility of achieving widespread consensus on planning issues, ensuring that discussions are comprehensive and inclusive prior to making any decisions on planning matters. In practical terms, this means achieving more and better communication (dialogue) between politicians, planners, citizens, and other representatives. He views communicative planning as an open and participatory process, which involves a broad group (affected actors) in a socially and fairness orientated development. This in contrast to fulfilling the interests of a few stakeholders (Sager, 2013).

Sager’s critique of communicative planning theory lies in that the communicative ideal is often not enough facing stakeholders who employ power-based strategies. He argues that the ideals of communicative planning can be modified by instrumental motivation and action to counteract the pressure from non-deliberative stakeholders (Sager, 2013). The view that communicative planning fails in facing power-based strategies is shared by other scholars of the field, such as Flyvbjerg & Richardson:

“... communicative planning theory fails to capture the role of power in planning. As a result, it is a theory which is weak in its capacity to help us understand what happens in the real world; and weak in serving as a basis for effective action and change. ...” (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002, p. 3)

To deal with stakeholders’ power-based strategies, planners or other interested parties could be forced to employ power-based strategies themselves, such as manipulating the political transaction costs of the opposing parties. This can be justified, as only employing strategies as close to the ideal as possible is not optimal in non-ideal

circumstances such as stakeholders using non-deliberative power tactics (Sager, 2013). In other words, one can say the communicative/deliberative approach only works when all participants are equally positioned, and willing to engage in the approach. One way to deal with this problem, that is stakeholders using non-deliberative tactics, is to apply activist strategies:

“The more the deliberating parties depart from dialogue and the more they fall back on non-deliberative and coercive means of negotiation, the less hope there is that a fair agreement will emerge. Activism is needed because the internal actions of the planners – that is, the means they can use within the confines of the official planning process – may fail to curb unduly power-wielding stakeholders and fail to bring about a participatory, democratic process and a fair planning outcome in cases where a more activist-oriented planner role could do so. ... Sometimes forces more compelling than the better argument are necessary to establish fair and inclusive deliberation or the conditions that support such deliberation. When circumstances justify the use of such force for deliberative democrats, they become deliberative activists.” (Sager, 2013, p. 97).

Sager further describes activism as a *“vigorous practice or involvement as a means of achieving political or other goals. The activist advocates or opposes a cause or an issue through direct action.”* (Sager, 2013, p. 98)

Direct action he explains is:

“Politically motivated activity that takes place outside the institutionalized channels of political goal-achievement in the society, where the individual acts in the capacity of being a citizen, and outside the normal channels for reporting problems in the organization in which the individual is employed, when he or she acts in the capacity of being a professional.” (Sager, 2013, p. 98)

If planners want to alter the power-relations, increasing the stakeholder’s political transaction cost in the process is an efficient step. In doing so, one must take the activist route of action: ally with external organization (for example: community, interest organization, social movement) and apply pressure. The planner supports the ally politically outside the professional channels, and makes them push towards the

desired solution, in contrast to stakeholders' requirements. It is worth noting that the planner can be part of both the external activist organization, and the government organization, which blurs internal/external distinction. The activist group can apply pressure through direct action, declining to be an official or fully integrated part of the planning process. This pressure could then sway planning decision in their desired direction (Sager, 2013). One important aspect to note is that the planner in these scenarios does not have to be an official planner. The term can very well be turned around and applied to the activists themselves. The methods presented must as such be viewed as applicable to both official planners within the planning system and groups or individuals trying to influence the planning process (Sager, 2016).

In the context of this thesis, it is interesting to look at how power in planning is discussed in relation to marginalised or neglected groups, and how grassroots citizen movements appear and organize as response. As discussed above, communicative planning theory has its weaknesses and especially in dealing with different and unbalanced power-relations in real-world scenarios: the ideal circumstances rarely show themselves, and different stakeholders have different agendas and reasons for not wanting to engage in a "perfect" deliberation. When actors are not considered, neglected, or find themselves with less leverage and influence towards other parties or stakeholders, activism such as direct action is one way of creating the necessary leverage. Although Sager (2013) mainly discusses activist planning as a way of increasing the practical realism of communicative planning, and doing so from a planner point of view, he also presents an overview of different activist modes of planning and how one can alter political transaction costs facing stakeholders using non-deliberative and coercive means. One of these modes is advocacy planning.

Emerging in the 1960s, advocacy planning was in many ways a response to the professionalism and top-down organisation of planning in the 20th century, seeking to empower the marginalized and neglected groups by having planning professionals advocate on their behalf in planning processes. The role of the advocate planner would be that of informing, educating, and trying to influence groups and public agencies on behalf of the client-group (Davidoff, 1965). This could also mean organizing the community themselves (Sager, 2013). Unlike the communicative approach, where the

goal is to have all the stakeholders and affected groups voices heard and presented, the advocacy approach risks having the planner set the agenda, define the terms, and does not guarantee any real or proper representation. In one way the approach is at the risk of simply expanding the role of the professional planner and maintain the power structures (Sandercock 1998a:172 in Sager, 2013).

A practical example of activist advocacy planning can be found in a study by Power-Wolf (2008) of Brooklyn in the 1970s. She examines *STREET* magazine, a city planning-oriented magazine published in the early to mid-70s directed towards the local community, published by the Pratt Center for Community Development, and how it influenced community development and activist planning in said neighbourhood. The center was (and is) part of the Pratt institute, a private university in Brooklyn, and consisted of planners, architects etc. As such, their involvement in local development and the publishing of the magazine can be viewed as, although locally placed, a form of advocacy and activist planning. They used methods of direct funding and assistance of activist groups through the centre, support in the magazine-articles and organizing of citizen participation (Wolf-Powers, 2008). Wolf-Powers credits the magazine and the centre for doing groundbreaking work in bringing planning on the agenda in Brooklyn, forcing a broader cooperation between the city and the people, and being the birth of what is still several important activist planning institutions. Through articles and activism, they managed to stop demolition and renewal of what was by the city deemed slums, and they mobilized locals into refurbishing buildings themselves to counter the city (Wolf-Powers, 2008). Informing the public and making it aware of government policy and planning decisions was crucial, and as will be seen in this thesis, there are similarities with the historical case of Kirseberg in both timeframe and methods. Sager (2022) states on advocacy planning that:

“Some communities are unable to stand up to pernicious external interventions on their own. Such weak communities need outside expert assistance. The outsiders engage as partisans, not working from a public interest perspective, and need to make their values and goals clear. This makes the process potentially confrontational, as the activists must defend community interests against that of other stakeholders as well as public planners conceiving their

mandate as attending to the common good. An inclusive, fair and transparent process is thus crucial to find a path forward that is based on agonism instead of antagonism. However, even with laudable democratic procedures the problems of a poor and marginalized community do not vanish with the positive result of one single planning process, so broader empowerment of the community is required. For this purpose, residents must be mobilized through participatory activities, and the advocates' services must be organizational and capacity-building, not only technical.” (Sager, 2022, p. 1223)

In his article, Sager explores if advocacy planning met its expectations, and its relevance today, through several cases from the 1980s and onwards (Sager, 2022). He finds that advocacy is as relevant now as when it emerged, with the cases he examines showing positive outcomes in favour of the communities. One repeated argument against advocacy planning has been the possibility of client-advocate conflicts, as the advocate is themselves distanced from the community experiences as outsiders. Sager finds few to no cases of such conflict, and that most cases resulted in more empowerment and participatory processes than was foreseen by critical scholars (Sager, 2022).

3.2 Social movements in the city

While the above planning theory-perspectives are mainly from a planner's point of view, they also address the non-planners or can easily be turned around and used by non-planners. By “non-planners”, I refer to people who involve themselves in planning processes without initially being part of the official planning process. This can include activist organizations or individuals attempting to influence a process from the outside. They can be described as planners, as Sager (2022) argues, but it is necessary here to differentiate between those who are part of the official process and those who are not. The activist organization typically takes shape as a grassroots movement, social movement, or other similar terms, and can organize itself in various ways. Here, the focus is more on the fact that they are organized rather than on how they might organize, as this can take multiple forms. Through participation processes, these groups can be included in the official process. However, as has often been the case, the lack of such processes means such groups must resort to unofficial means of gaining leverage and

achieving their goals of influencing the processes. It is within in this frame the group turns activist. The following case in this thesis will describe one such group, but first, it is relevant to examine social movements in the city, and a Swedish type known as byalag.

Cities are the perfect arena for social movements to appear, as its size, density and diversity provide the basic elements for contention to develop. High density can trigger conflicts over space, and a large population can create large enough groups of people within seemingly small minorities. The diversity found in cities can lay the foundation for new ties, connections, and competition and contentions can emerge from the interactions between large numbers of diverse people living in proximity (Uitermark et al., 2012). Iveson (2013), in relation to the space, argues that *“the production of space is a contested process. The shaping and reshaping of urban spaces are a product of complex power-geometries, as different actors seek to determine who and what the city is for.”* (Iveson, 2013, p. 942). Social movements thus take shape when people organize themselves to collectively express demands, claim urban space or resources (Uitermark et al., 2012).

The phrase “right to the city” was first coined as a phrase by the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre in his 1968 book *Le Droit à la Ville*. In the context of the protests of 1968, the central idea is that the right to the city entails the capacity to remake ourselves by remaking cities, and it is meant as a Marxist critique against the capitalist and market forces in city development. The phrase is more used in the literature and to describe social movements, than by the activists themselves (Uitermark et al., 2012). Further, there is lack in defining “right”, other than meaning some sort of right by citizens to use and develop the city on their terms (Attoh, 2011). The context of 1968 and its consequences is interesting as the social movement described in this case took shape in this environment, and as a response to society at the time.

In his book “The city and the grassroots” (1983) Castells examines how cities serve as arenas for grassroots movements to emerge and thrive, drawing on case studies from various cities around the world. Influenced by Lefebvre, and like Iveson and Uitermark, he argues that the size, density, and diversity of urban environments provide fertile ground for social contention. He examines the tactics and strategies employed by urban

social movements, such as protests, occupations, and community organizing, and highlights the role of urban space in shaping collective action (Castells, 1983). As put by Miller (2006), the core of Castells' theory of urban social movements is quite elegant. Castells argues that urban social movements are "*not random expressions of discontent, varying from city to city, but that they bear, in their structure and goals, the stigmas and projects of all the great historical conflicts of our time*" (Castells, 1983, p. 319). As such, historical chance and urban change are intertwined (Castells, 1983). Castells introduces three basic goals urban movements are structured around, meaning "... *purposive desires and demands present in the collective practice of the movement.*" These goals must be collectively acted upon, and not just declared. Each of these goals opposes or contradicts another project (goal) in the city, and as such each goal "*defines an adversary whose power and characteristics will profoundly influence the movement*". Not every goal will be present, or necessarily acted upon (Castells, 1983, pp. 319-323).

The three are 1. *Collective consumption trade unionism*: this means use value, such as a goal of better public housing, preserving a historical building, or wanting more open space. 2. *Community*: by this referring to his cases where he found a search for cultural identity and the creation of or maintenance of autonomous local cultures (ethnically or historical), or what Miller (2006) more simply interprets as a defence of cultural-territorial identity. The 3. Castells (a bit confusingly) calls "*a citizen movement*". With this goal, the movement works towards increased power for local government, neighbourhood decentralization and self-management, in opposition to a centralized state with a subordinated local administration. Miller refers to this as "*local government as a target for political mobilization*". (Castells, 1983; Miller, 2006). As Castells emphasize: "*cities and societies are produced by the conflictive process of collective actors mobilized towards certain goals, that is, ways of structuring society and space. Therefore, a movement is first of all defined by its goals.*" (Castells, 1983, p.323). The point being that urban actors become movements when they mobilize and act upon such goals, which as Castells reminds us, are linked to general larger struggles. The movements are thus urban actors, defined by their goals and urban condition, and not in themselves a class, ethnic or gender struggle. As his cases illustrate, the social

movements consist of a wide spectrum of socially diverse peoples, making them multi-class movements (Castells, 1983).

In the case of Kirseberg and the social movement there, the question arises if these features are recognizable in what to Castells would have been a contemporary case. According to Mayer (2006), Castells (1983) lasting legacy is “*identifying the conflict lines along which, even today, the major urban contestations take place.*” (Mayer, 2006, p. 204). However, both Mayer and Miller notes that Castells point is a bit outdated in the modern setting of neo liberalism and globalization, as the actors have changed, and new actors appeared. By this, they are mostly concerned with privatization, commercialization, and surveillance (Mayer, 2006; Miller, 2006). Castells work also predicted the ongoing challenge to state power, which according to Mayer is evident not only in protests against commercialization and privatization but also in critiques of current civic engagement discourse, which tends to overlook the role of social movements in challenging state institutions (Mayer, 2006).

3.3 Byalag as a social movement

The social movement described in the Kirseberg case took shape as what the Swedes call a “byalag”. There is no proper definition that describes a byalag, as its form and purposes has varied and still varies from case to case. Common features include that they are not part of the official planning or other processes, and as such, do not have any legitimate power. They are usually formed by the neighbourhoods themselves as independent groups to advocate for and represent the neighbourhood in various matters. This encompasses everything from organizing festivities to resisting city plans. The exact boundaries are often blurred, with multiple goals and tasks being common. As the Kirseberg case will show, the byalag there started out loosely organized with resistance to city plans as their main activity. However, they also organized social events, renovations and so forth. A simple and broad definition of byalag could be “an organized citizen group representing and acting on behalf of the community and thus themselves, often towards the official decision-makers in questions on neighbourhood development”.

Byalag has its roots as an organizational and administrative term, stemming back to at least medieval times and widely used in the 17th-19th century, where it described

organized unions between landowners, farmers, citizens and so on, with certain rights given to them by law such as organizing fishing rights. It went under different similar terms, describing different forms of organizing depending on ownership forms (Langnes, 2016). A 1765 dissertation from the University of Uppsala, examining Byalag in a contemporary juridical context, gives a definition which might illustrate some the terms meaning today: *“When several farms are located together in a village [...] the “Bya-lag” arises, whereby all villagers are obligated to contribute to the community and household for the mutual benefit of each other.”* (Berch, 1765, p. 6).

Byalag can be said to have been reborn in the mid-20th century and, as was the case in Kirseberg, often a result of resistance towards city plans, a response to what was perceived as lack of understand or resources from government, or simply a desire to create better communities through organizing volunteer efforts (Ronnby, 1995). From the 1960s of, there was a significant increase in groups defining themselves as byalag, often due to a sense of neglect and in response difficult times. Rural villages experienced a decline in population as industry and farmland diminished, leading to a decrease in investment, resources, and services. Unemployment was rising in both rural and urban areas. A manifestation of this occurred in 1971 when unemployed workers went on hunger strike in Bläsjön, Jämtland, while the areas simultaneously experienced a significant increase in byalag and other forms of activist organizations (Ronnby, 1995).

A 1978 Norwegian study and report commissioned by the Ministry of Local Government and Labour to investigate the phenomenon of a rising number of activist groups looked to Sweden for comparison. In Stockholm, there was 4 byalag in 1968, 20 in 1960 and by 1976, 115 byalag had emerged (Kolbenstvedt et al., 1978). The report further describes how byalag transitioned from purely activist groups to more organized entities, with a common central¹ in Stockholm providing information to and connection between groups. Additionally, the report describes, with reference to a Swedish study, how

¹ Likely referring to “Samtal Arkiv”, an organization formed in 1969 and defunct in the mid-1980s. They archived and shared information about citizen movements, such as byalag, and connected them. See reference code SE/MSA/01381 at Riksarkivet (National archive Sweden) or: *Samtal Arkiv*. (1999). [Archive]. https://sok.riksarkivet.se/?Sokord=V%C3%A4ckels%C3%A5ng%2BArkiv&page=3&tab=post&flik=1&AvanceradSok=True&FacettLimits=mZ2r4Q%3A0&FacettFilter=arkis_aukt_huvudkategori_facet%24%C3%96vriga%3A&postid=Arkis+5E51823F-6614-4F96-AA9D-CF9602EBA158

byalag are largest in terms of member mass in the city's inner zone, where they often adopt a defensive nature, such as attempting to prevent the demolishing or redevelopment of housing. In contrast, byalag in outer zones tend to be more offensive, focusing on gaining investments and/or redevelopment (Kolbenstvedt et al., 1978). This can be explained by outer zones often having more abandoned industrial areas at the time, while the inner zones often consisted of historical city centres where preservation was a priority. The resistance to new housing projects was, understandably, greater in existing old communities than around abandoned industrial or lower density areas.

4.0 Historical analysis

The historical case of Kirseberg tells the story of how the Kirseberg byalag emerged in response to a 1939 city plan in 1970, managing to stop the plans through some 14 years of activism. To understand how the Kirseberg byalag came to be, and how the community stands strong in matters of development today, one must grasp the historical context of the neighbourhood. The first two sections of the chapter provide the local context, while the third provide some necessary broader historical context. The fourth covers the byalag movement from 1970 until the 1980s, while the fifth tries to bring everything together. The historical reputation of Kirseberg depicts it as a place of crime, poverty, and trouble, and the feelings of the locals have historically been one of being neglected by the decision makers. This has arguably led to a sense of unity and was used to rally support by the activists in the byalag. As will be illustrated, the history of Kirseberg combined with other activist strategies served as a backbone in organizing the community resistance.

4.1 Kirseberg, a place of neglect

Kirseberg, translated into "cherry hill", has historically been a place looked down upon, often being the area where Malmö's unwanted institutions was placed upon. What is today a neighbourhood park was in the 16th and 17th century the location of at least thirty-eight witch burnings (Thagaard, 2020). Through the 19th century, the park was home to a cemetery for criminals and poor soldiers from the Malmö garrison. A local, born in 1864, recalled about the park in later years:

“Here was a makeshift graveyard. City workers drove out the bodies. It was a common simple wooden box with a blanket over it on a cart. There were a couple of constables there. We, several boys, stood and watched. It was both quick and amusing, just down into a hole. There was no priest present.” (Thagaard, 2020, p. 48).

Up until the 19th century, Kirseberg was mostly poor farmland, but with the industrial revolution came the factories and an increase in industrial labour. In the 1880s, due to hard economic times, many emigrated to the United States, leaving vacant properties which in turn were re-occupied by breweries and slaughterhouses, the latter adding to the area’s poor reputation (Thagaard, 2020). A Malmö priest at the time described the dangerous areas of the city:

“The first danger zone included the eastern part of the city within the bridges. The second, more perilous, was between the canal and Värnhem. The third, the abode of deep darkness, was Backarna, but who dared to venture there?”
(Thagaard, 2020, p. 87).

Locals who lived in the area in the last decades of the 19th century gives a similar impression in later interviews and writings, describing the area as dangerous to visit, filled with troublemakers, thieves, and a lack of police who did not dare to patrol there (Thagaard, 2020).

As the neighbourhood entered the 20th century, it had infrastructural challenges, poor living standards, and a high crime-rate. Malmö’s population had risen from around twenty thousand in 1860, to over a hundred thousand in 1920 (Vall, 2007). In the early 1900’s, there lived around two thousand people in Kirseberg of which fifteen percent were categorized as poor, although that was not an uncommon statistic for Malmö neighbourhoods at the time (Bergman, 2020). Malmö had experienced a huge population growth during the industrial era and the first half of the 20th century, as most cities in Sweden did. Especially in the early part of the century, there was a lack of housing, and overcrowding and poverty became an issue in Malmö’s industrial areas, around factories and workshops (Vall, 2007). In Kirseberg there were no streetlights, which were complained by the locals on several occasions. The roads were mostly dirt,

and the construction of sewage and water connection were not started until the 1920s. Living quarters were cramped, and unemployment high (Thagaard, 2020). Yet, in the first half of the 20th century, Kirseberg was improving and living standards rising, as was the case for Sweden in general. Although the neighbourhood was struggling with crampedness and poverty, it seems to have been more of an outside view and prejudice towards the neighbourhood than what was the case, at least as the decades went by and one entered the middled half of the 20th century (Bergman, 2020).

When deciding location for a new central prison, completed in 1914, Kirseberg was seemingly chosen because it would not damage the already ill-reputed area. The same was the case when deciding location of a new mental hospital in the late 1930s, as well as social housing for alcoholics (Andersson, 2021). There was a long line of “unwanted” institutions being placed in Kirseberg, adding to its negative outside reputation.



Figure 3: Undated photograph from Kirseberg, probably 1920-1940. Source: Kirseberg Library Archive

4.2 The 1939 city plan and Kirseberg “Backarna”

“Backarna” is not an idyll. It is a neighborhood that leaves much to be desired otherwise. When the area has been sanitized, and the houses unsuitable for human habitation have been abolished, new residences have been arranged at rents that people can afford, the specific problems of children and youth have been addressed, and the communications have been satisfactorily organized, and the centuries-old cobblestone streets have been demolished, and proper roads have been laid, then even “Backarna” can become a beautiful and appealing urban area.” (Bostaden, 1946, in Thagaard 2020, p.18).

The excerpt from the 1946 article in Bostaden illustrates the view on Kirseberg in the mid-20th century, and the historical context gives some insight as to where it stemmed from. It was written as part of a debate on how to redevelop the area, following a 1939 city plan regulating large parts of the neighbourhood for total demolition and redevelopment due to the poor living standards. The plan was created without consulting the locals, and by a city office which, as we have seen, had a negative perception of the area. The area consisted of small dwellings from the early-mid 19th century, industrial cobblestone blocks, and some early apartment-buildings. Although the plan was created in the 30s, it would take some time before it was started. In 1954 it was decided to start the demolishing and redevelopment. While it went slowly, new apartments were built in the next decades (see figure 5) replacing the old houses with the 1939 plan still being active for most parts of Kirseberg today (Thagaard, 2020). However, a large section of the neighbourhood was saved through the following resistance and got a new conservation plan in 1984 (figure 4), which will be discussed later.

Figure 4: The top map shows the 1984 plan replacing the 1939 one, which covers most of what remains of the old houses today. The max building height is set according to existing (1-2 floors), and all the gardens are protected. Any redevelopment must be “adapted” to existing buildings and aesthetics (Malmö Stad, 1984, PL1524).

The below map shows the original 1939 plan. It covers a larger area (where it is still active), but I have clipped out the area that was succeeded by the 1984 plan. The original plan effectively swaps out all the houses and industrial buildings, with 2-5 stories apartment blocks (Source: Malmö Stad, 1939, PL179).

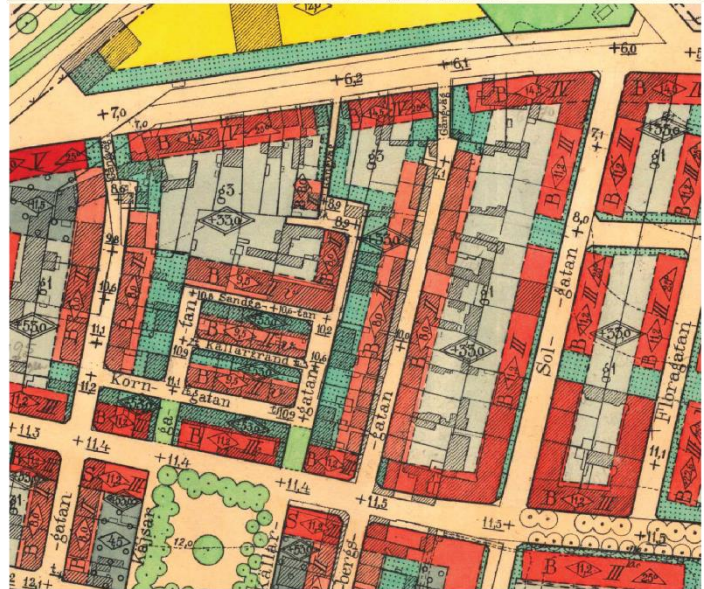
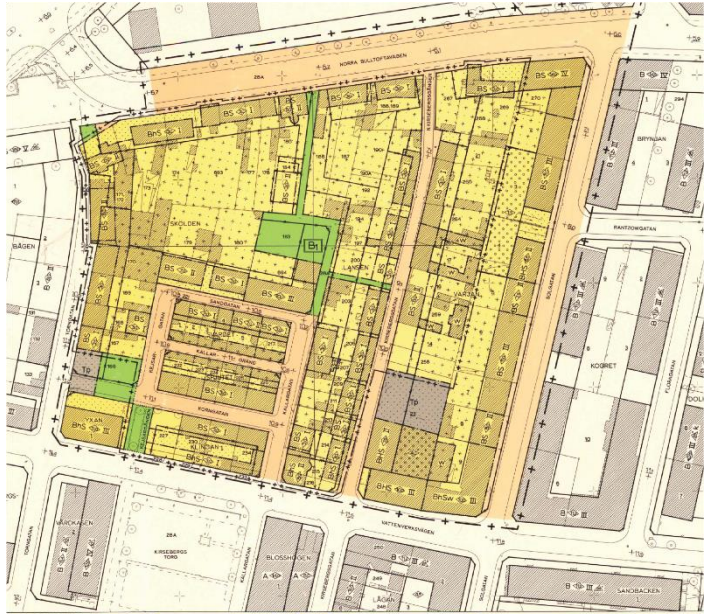


Figure 5: The aerial photographs show little change to the neighbourhood at first glance. They are taken ten years apart, 1963 (top) and 1973 (below). This was a pivotal moment in the area's development, as the protests towards the redevelopment took shape. If one takes a closer look, one can see several small houses being gone, replaced by apartments- or parking lots. I have circled a few instances. Of the larger buildings on both photos, some are built post-war, and some are old industrial cobblestone buildings or older pre-war apartment buildings, in many cases social housing, stemming from before the 1939 plan (Source: Lantmäteriet).

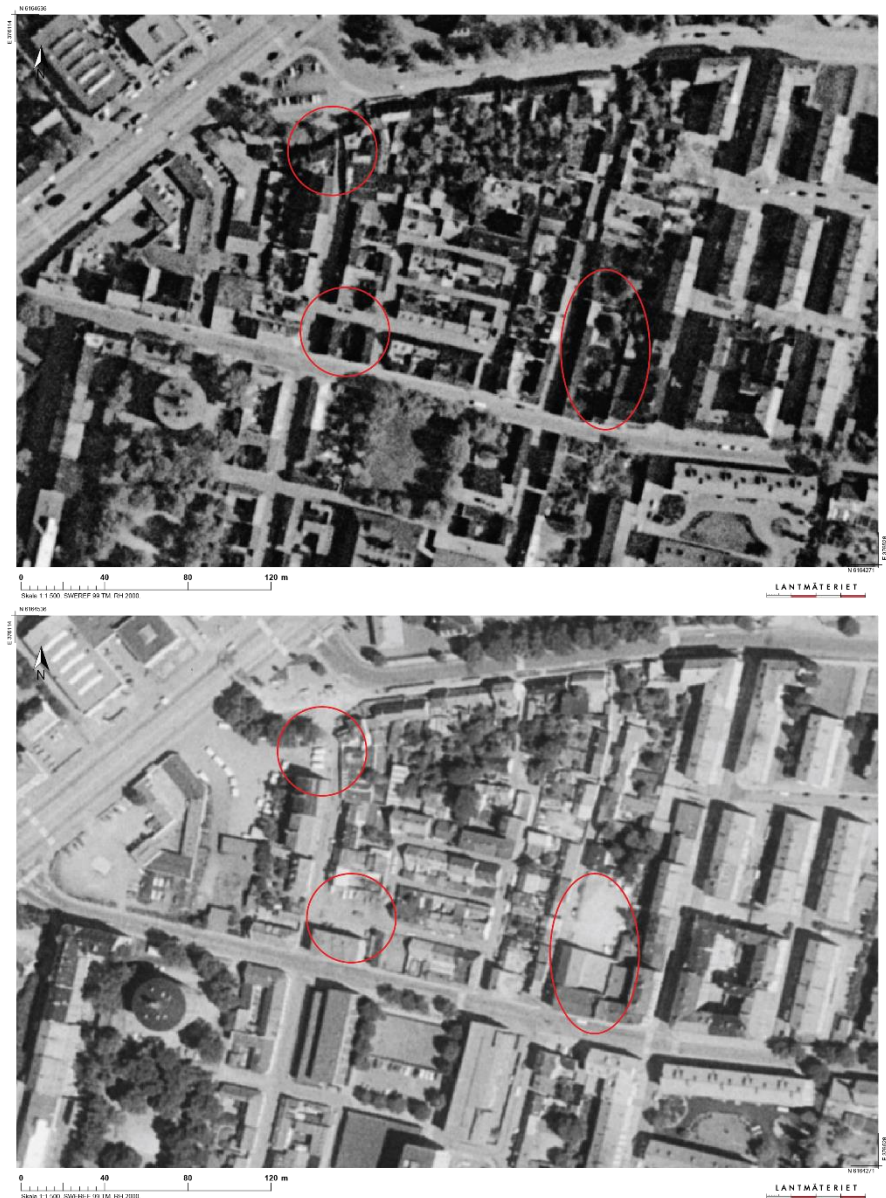




Figure 6: **Top left:** Mid-19th century houses. **Top right:** In the foreground mid-19th century houses, followed on the left by late 19th and early 20th century cobblestone buildings. Further down the road a 1970s housing block. **Bottom left:** mid 1800s houses in front and in the back across the park ca 1960s apartment blocks- **Bottom right:** The park and former location of witch-burnings and cemetery (Photo: Author’s images, 12.03.2024).

The city wanting to redevelop the area must be viewed considering the overcrowding and poor housing conditions, and the general need in Malmö for more housing in the 20th century (Vall, 2007). Further, in the post-war era, Malmö was experiencing a transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy, yet still growing fast, creating unemployment and a larger need for housing. The development of the welfare state also meant the government more genuinely was looking for ways to improve conditions, and the removal or redevelopment of what was deemed “slums” was part of that (Vall, 2007). Further it must be viewed in the context of the Million Houses Program and the large-scale development of new housing taking place in Sweden from the mid-1960s, with government initiatives and investment into new projects, as will be discussed in the following section.

4.3 Malmö post-war, “The Million Homes Programme” and unpopular redevelopment

Entering the 20th century Sweden was behind comparable western nations in terms of development, industry, and social questions, with unemployment being high and emigration to America heavy until the 1920s. However, from the mid-1920s the country managed to build heavy industry, growing its economy, and expanding its welfare model significantly (Lundberg, 1985). In the post war years, Sweden was lacking housing due to intense urbanization and a demand for higher standards. As Sweden remained neutral during the Second World War, there was no need to rebuild destroyed cities as was the case in many European countries. Instead, the need for more housing was in many ways a purely social democratic endeavour to accommodate for a late but rapid urbanization (10% lived in cities in 1900, while 50% lived in cities by 1950 (Lundberg, 1985)) and to upgrade living standards in a time where Sweden was growing economically and the welfare state being in the centre of “the Swedish model” (Hall & Viden, 2005). The 1920s and 1930s had seen the rise of modernistic ideas, and with the inspiration from people like Ebenezer Howard and Le Corbusier there was also in Sweden a drive towards “building people out of poverty”, which the 1939 plan for Kirseberg was a clear example of (Holgersen, 2019). With a rapid growth both economically and in population, there was a rising political will to get rid of the industrial-era housings of low standard, replacing it with modern quality buildings (Holgersen, 2019).

While there was an extensive construction of houses post war, by the 1960s there was still not enough, and several hundred thousand households lacked their own accommodation (Hall & Viden, 2005). Further, landlords and property-owners speculated in housing by letting the houses deteriorate, the goal being making more money of total demolishing and redevelopment. Approximately 6000 Malmö apartments were demolished between 1965 and 1975 (Holgersen, 2019). To the social democratic government, the lack of proper housing became a real issue as living standards were a cornerstone of the welfare model. As a result of this the Swedish parliament decided that one million new homes were to be built between 1965 and 1974 (there was only three million homes at the time), which was achieved: by the 1970s Sweden had a housing surplus (Hall & Viden, 2005). Most of the new homes were built on previously unbuilt land, with 66% apartments blocks and 33% single family homes (Hall & Viden,

2005). The architecture and share scale of the projects would however meet criticism already in the 1960s. Large concrete housing complexes and identical large-scale neighbourhoods of row-houses were met with concerns: lack of identity, lacking services, poor common areas and so on. The criticism was not as much against the program itself, but rather the quality of it (Hall & Viden, 2005).

While most projects were targeted at unbuilt land, there were also multiple cases of demolishing of existing areas for redevelopment. This was a common policy for old working-class neighbourhoods, deemed slums; areas of poor housing quality, communal housing, poverty, and cramped quarters was to be redeveloped (Vall, 2007).

In Malmö, there were rising protests towards the social democratic management of the city, which was thought to be both paternalistic and authoritarian. The demolition and redevelopment of the “slums” as part of urban renewal was particularly unpopular (Vall, 2007). One manifestation of this was the City’s refusal to refurbish an old theatre in the early 1970s, threatening with demolition unless the administration was replaced by one supported by the Social Democrats. It was saved when it was occupied by activists, and the city government backed down (Vall, 2007). The largest redevelopment project in Malmö at the time was the old neighbourhood gamla Öster including Carolikvarteren. In the neighbourhood, located between Kirseberg and the city centre, 35% of the buildings were categorized for demolition and redevelopment. Despite objections, and while a city committee investigated the matter and the real need for it, demolition started, and the construction of new houses went underway before any plan was approved. While ongoing, a report from the Swedish government in 1970 showed that 64% of the people living there wanted to remain in their old houses, with a majority also wanting to remain in what was deemed the worst quality housings (Holgersen, 2019). Malmö author Jacques Werup describes the redevelopment of his childhood neighbourhood “Lugnet”, which also saw redevelopment in the 1960s and 1970s:

"Lugnet was a working-class district in Malmö, with narrow streets, verdant courtyards, and craftsmen in every nook. Surely, it was impoverished and demeaning once upon a time, the small brick houses could surely be dreadful, hovels for large families and drafty in the harsh Skåne winters. But to bulldoze this entire unique environment in favour of new squares in glass and concrete -

for properties that could have been anywhere - new parking garages, office complexes, and unaffordable expensive and cramped housing modules should have warranted the responsible Social Democrats a lifetime of forced labour. My youth in Lugnet, in various unheated apartments without hot water and toilets, I wish upon all youths." (Werup, 1981 in Holgersen, 2019, p. 77).

The criticism towards the city government can be viewed considering the protests of 1968, and the general cultural upheaval seen throughout the western world at the time. In the context of the Swedish welfare system, the social democratic government with later prime minister Oluf Palme as minister of education had concerns about the declining use of the nation's free libraries. While this probably seem unrelated, the following inquire would surprisingly lead to a citizen movement in Kirseberg, and affect the city plans for redevelopment.

4.4 The social movement 1970-1984

When talking to locals in Kirseberg today it becomes clear that the local library means a lot to them, a story that began in the 1960s and stands as the backbone of what would become a social and activist movement. Built in the 1960s, the local Kirseberg library was decided to be part of an official government inquiry "Statens offentliga utredningar", or Government Official Reports- (SOU), called the "Litteraturutredning", translated Literature inquiry. It was ordered by the department of education in 1968 and published through 1972 in different SOU-publications, such as the «*Försök med bibliotek: Litteraturutredningens biblioteksstudier*» which translates to "Library experiment: The literature enquire's library study", and the "*Läs- och bokvanor I fem Svenska samhällen: Litteraturutredningen lesvanestudier*" translated to "reading and book habits in five Swedish communities: The literature enquiry reading habits" (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1972a, 1972b).

The goal of the enquiry and studies was mainly to examine the distribution of books, the usage of libraries and how to get more people to use them in a time where book publishing was struggling in Sweden, as well as examining the sociological role of libraries (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1972a). Five local libraries were chosen, with the Kirseberg library as one of them. The "experiment" as it was called was to last one year through 1970.

What was largely an overlooked, and looked down upon, part of the city suddenly gained the attention of the government and thus the city officials, and their will do fund activities and initiatives increased (Swedner, 1971). With locals noticing this and actively being encouraged to use the library, several groups and activities would emerge with the library as starting point. In a January 1970 information pamphlet from the library, they announce the beginning of the experiment, stating that:

“The exhibitions and general program of the Kirseberg library will be intensified. “Kirseberg as it was, is and will be” is to be the topic of several debates and exhibitions this year. In particular the local environment and planning-questions will be discussed [...] an exhibition by the local youth will be presented [...] the Black Panthers will visit, and the Gorilla-theatre will play every Friday [...]”.
(Ahlgren, 1970)

The library, with increased funding, was suddenly able to host and initiate a multitude of activities. It is worth noting that this took place within the mentioned context, with many political events unfolding and as previously briefly discussed a general dismay towards the city government. The library staff and many of the people involved with the experiment had a clear leftist and activist leaning, as illustrated by the visit of the Black Panthers (presumably a Swedish support organization of the American counterpart). This leaning was also evident in the general themes of the theatre plays, which included issues faced by immigrants, social challenges, and so on (Thagaard, personal communication, 2024). The "Gorilla-theatre" was subject to the city withdrawing its funding after a year, which is interesting considering the previously mentioned case of the theatre being threatened with replacement of its administration by one supportive of the city government, occurring simultaneously (“Öppet brev till Malmö stad” 1971).

It is within this frame that attention was brought to the city plans for Kirseberg, and it is not by chance that one of the topics was city-planning. With the city actively trying to remove what was deemed slums, and with the million homes program ongoing, Kirseberg was no exception. The 1939 city plan was being realized and it called for a demolition and rebuilding of Kirseberg.

The plans for exhibitions on the area's history and future caught the attention of A.M Thagaard and other locals. A newcomer to Kirseberg, studying architecture in Copenhagen, she became central to the activist work and is now the primary author on Kirseberg history. She volunteered and assisted in creating the exhibitions, developing an interest in the city's plans for Kirseberg. The exhibitions with the umbrella name “To live at Backarna” went underway and the ideas of creating a citizen neighbourhood group emerged (Thagaard, personal communication, 2024). While everything happened more or less simultaneously, it is necessary to divide the different elements of the process, to gain a clear understanding of what occurred during and in the wake of the library experiment before discussing them together. As such the next three sections are divided into:

1. “A common history”, covering the historical aspect and the creation of a uniting narrative. (4.4.1)
2. “The today and the future”, how the focus was directed at the city plan for Kirseberg. (4.4.2)
3. “Byalag and 14 years of activism”, the creation of the byalag and their efforts to stop the plan. (4.4.3)

4.4.1 A common history

The exhibitions in the library were created and expanded over time, being a semi-permanent endeavour. The historical part of it was motivated by a need to unite and lift the spirit in what was a neighbourhood that felt neglected had social challenges. Thagaard and the others involved asked themselves: can one affect a neighbourhood's development through exploring and bringing its history to life? (Thagaard, 2020). Finding historical sources on the area was not the easiest task, but there was some building history available. In addition, they conducted interviews with elderly residents who were born in the 1880s and later and obtained private photos. When photos were exhibited, and elderly locals (and former locals) were drawn to the exhibition, the library staff would interview and takes notes of stories, as people would often recognize photos, stories and elaborate on them (Thagaard, personal communication, 2024). As such the exhibition and material grew, and in time Thagaard would write her books on the area. With this process of making the history visible, there became a sense of community and

consciousness of the past. While the reputation of Kirseberg was mainly negative and created by outside forces through time, this gave the locals ownership of their history. The later government report examining the library experiment wrote that:

“Backarna and the people there have long been subject to mythmaking in the rest of Malmö. There has sometimes been talk with a mixture of horror and wonder about the tough “Backa-life”, and there still exists, in the rest of Malmö, a predominantly negative perception of Kirseberg. This has in turn led to a rather unusual local patriotism, with a strong sense of pride for one's own neighbourhood and its values.” (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1972a, p. 61).

What was a small, neglected neighbourhood, started to gain a stronger community. The organizing of exhibitions on local history created a narrative, which although historically correct, was not present in peoples mind before, as no one had written it. People who were ashamed to be from “Backarna”, which had negative connotations in Malmö, now started to feel different. Further, the showcasing of the historical Kirseberg gave life to the old buildings (Thagaard, 2020). It turned out to be an effective way of creating a stronger community feeling which in turn it can be argued helped gain leverage through unity, when faced with questions of development. Further, the documentation of the old buildings would help in arguing for their preservation, as outsiders including the planning authorities gained interest in them.

4.4.2 Today and the future

The other focus of the exhibitions was "today and the future," creating a thread connecting the past to the present and future. Development plans for Kirseberg were presented, along with explanations of how planning processes proceed, who holds responsibility, and how one can influence decision-makers (Thagaard, 2020). What the



Figure 7: Historical photographs exhibited at the library, 1970. Photo: A. M. Thagaard

library and individuals like Thagaard did was create and facilitate a form of public participation. By presenting the 1939 plan critically and showcasing other examples of city development, they raised awareness among locals about the plans and actively involved them. In the exhibitions there was, for example, a poster with the text "Warning about the future", which showcased plans for the neighbourhood and encouraged citizens to get involved (see figure 8.) On another board, headlined "Citizen Participation", one could read: "The development is so fast that politicians cannot master it. Therefore, you must step in. Your knowledge about your environment is important!". (Thagaard, 1970.) On the opening day of the exhibition, a cultural historian from the university of Lund also held a small lecture on the planning history of Kirseberg and the 1939 plan, arguing for the preservation of the neighbourhood.

The exhibition gained positive comments in at least one newspaper the following day, stating that it had drawn a lot of interest ("Kirsebergsutställning väckte stort intresse", 1970).

The library hosted several meetings as an integrated part of the exhibitions, all possible through volunteer work and public funding through the library-experiment. In a march 1970 invitation pamphlet (figure 8), there were four meetings planned, as part of the



Figure 8: Top left: "Ask the politicians: What happens with Kirseberg, Bulltofta etc.?" Poster inviting to a panel debate. Photo: A. M. Thagaard, 1970.

Top right: "Warning about the future" with the 1939 plans. Photo: A. M. Thagaard, 1970.

Bottom: "Do you want to live like this? Come and say your opinion." From pamphlet inviting to meetings and exhibition. Source: Kirseberg Library archive.

exhibition, to be held on Monday evenings. The meeting agendas give a good insight into how they organized the effort. The first meeting on the 9th of March was called “*why does your neighbourhood look the way it does?*”, where city planners would “*explain why things are as they are, and we [locals] explain ourselves to them*”. The second meeting was called “*What is good living environment?*”, where experts would join in discussion on the topic. This was followed by a meeting where the neighbourhood in general was discussed. The last meeting in the series was on the 1st of April 1970, called “*ask the politicians*”. This meeting was meant to give the citizens access to the decisionmakers, with listed topic of debate being the plans for Kirseberg (“Vill du bo så här? Kom och säg vad du tycker?” 1970).

The final meeting gathered over two hundred locals and was covered quite extensively in the local and regional newspapers. Officials from the city government, mostly from the planning departments, were present. What was written in the newspapers shows tension and a great deal of engagement from the neighbourhood. On April 3. the newspaper Skånska Dagbladet printed the headline “*Heated in the Kirseberg library when Kommunalpamper² met the people*”, with highlights from the debate. Concerns about the potential demolition of the old houses, and the power the real estate owners had if properties were sold were discussed, but also the social challenges and how the locals felt neglected by the city government:

“After a few questions the debate suddenly heated. – Is the government going to work to even out the social differences between the city neighbourhoods? Why did you place the public housing for alcoholics in Kirseberg? And why have you approved such an ugly building by the town square? It is better now than twenty years ago, but that’s not to the credit of the authorities! – The ringing applause that followed was changed to booing and condescending laughter when Arne Lundberg [Municipal commissioner] explained that if the locals had it worse in Kirseberg, it was only because they were walking around thinking it, dismissing any differences between the neighbourhoods.” (Bladh, 1970).

² In Swedish, "kommunalpamp" refers to a local political leader, often with connotations of corruption or misuse of power. The term "kommunal" means "municipal" and "pamp" is a slang term for a boss or leader.

In the newspaper Kvällsposten the day after, one could read:

“Yesterday evening saw the fourth and last round in the match on Kirseberg’s future. It is the library who has organized this endeavour. It has mobilized a lot of people, who has clearly expressed their engagement in conserving Kirseberg [...] Earlier the locals have met, preparing for the meeting with the politicians, but it seems a long way to a proper public participation process. – All we can hope for is that you do not forget what we have said, complained one.” (Persson, 1970).

Another attendee stated to the newspaper that:

“We feel one must try save the old houses in Kirseberg [...] therefore we fight for a new city plan. The 1939 plan allows 3-4 stories apartment blocks on the properties now containing the old houses. If these are bought and demolished, they are going to build as high as possible. Then the character of the area is disturbed. But to get the attention of the politicians seems difficult.” (Persson, 1970)

The article ended with:

“The will to gain influence is strong. The next step is to form a neighbourhood group, which can work more efficient towards the authorities than what the congregations of individuals did yesterday when meeting with the politicians.” (Persson, 1970)

An article some days later declared that individuals had no real way of influencing planning decisions, referring to the Kirseberg meetings. In the article, an interviewed city official stated in response what he thought was the reason for the discontent:

“The biggest challenge [with participation processes] is that we do not know who is to live in the areas we plan for. We cannot ask people in the already developed areas what they would like in the new ones. They are not likely going to live there” (“Enskilda personer är utan möjlighet”, 1970, p.16).

The statement is interesting for several reasons. Either it is simply case of avoiding the issue, referring to other cases of development on unoccupied land, or it is an acknowledgement of the possible consequences a redevelopment could have, those

living there now not affording it after redevelopment. Either way, it illustrates a lack of understanding or willingness in engaging in participatory processes. While the library experiment had reached newspaper attention earlier, the meeting on April 1st, 1970, put the city plans and the local wish for conservation of the houses on the agenda, the above examples being only a few of the articles in the press the following days. The Kvällspost article (Persson, 1970) illustrates the beginning of the organized social movement, the byalag, and the intensified efforts to stop the city plans. Further, the articles illustrate a clear dissatisfaction by the locals when it comes to the lack of participation processes, the feeling being that they were not taken seriously.

4.4.3 “Byalag” and 14 years of activism

As the library experiment was to end after a year there was a need to keep the activity going without it, and the idea to create a byalag emerged early on. The first months of organizing meetings, debates and exhibitions had gained attention from the locals and the will to stop the plans and preserving Kirseberg seemed strong. Thagaard and the other key people in the movement decided to create a “byalag”. As previously discussed 1970 was in a period where byalag emerged all over Sweden. In Malmö, resistance towards the city-government in general was strong, and the resistance towards the architecture and scale of the million homes program was emerging.

“We [the byalag] were a very mixed group in terms of age, outlook, and education, exploring new paths outside of old party and association forms. We were passionate and idealistic. Some of us were very young.” (Thagaard, personal communication, 2024)

The byalag was formed in April 1970, shortly after the last debate of the library experiment. It was the same people, library staff and locals like Thagaard, who took the initiative (Thagaard, 2020). The plan was to become more organized and united in stopping the city plans, and they would do so by a wide range of activities. Already in April, they organized a clean-up action “spring cleaning” around some of the already demolished redevelopment lots (see figure 9.). One of them, filled with car wrecks and scrap, was cleaned by the owner after the byalag said the press would arrive and cover the action after first “terrorising” the firm by phone (“Byalagsstrid mot skräptomt: Telefonterror gav seger”, 1970).

The byalag was not to be an organization in terms of having paying members or a board. It was organized as a forum, and expenses was to be shared voluntarily when necessary. Meetings were held every 1-2 weeks, and they usually used the library as location. On average around 30 people would attend meetings, with lots more showing up for activities, whether festivities or actions like the “clean-up action” (“Öpplysningar om Kirsebergs Byalag,” 1970). Although the turnout for meetings were low, compared to

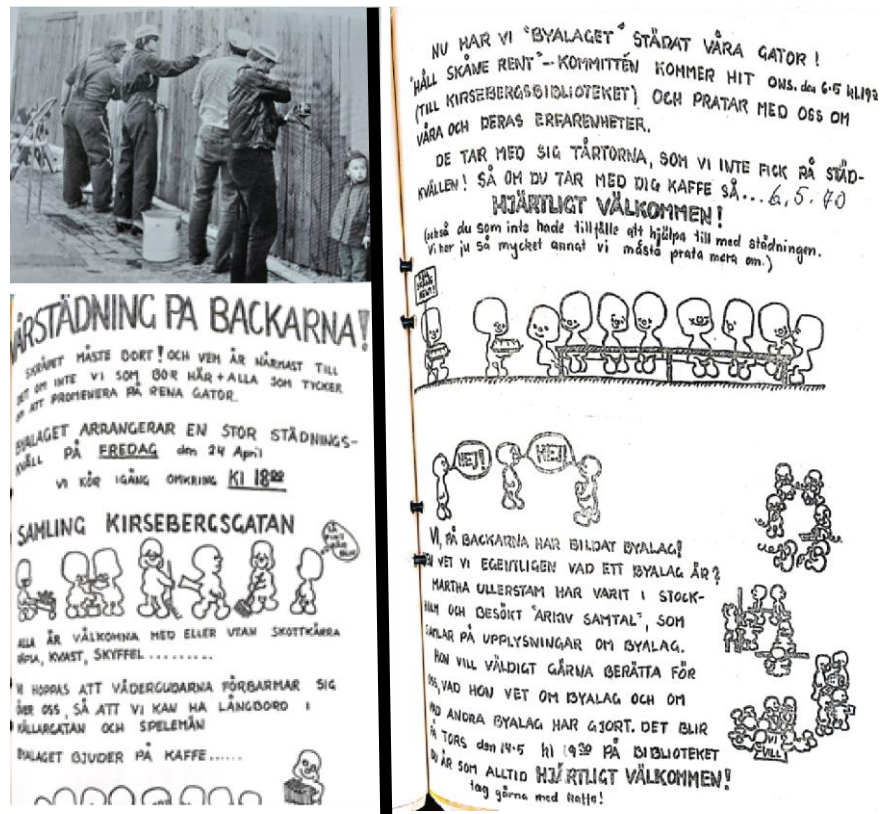


Figure 9: Top left: Picture from the clean-up action (Photo: A.M. Thagaard, 1970).

Bottom left: “The scrap must go! And who’s going to do it if we who live here + all who like clean streets won’t?” Poster promoting the clean-up action, 24th April 1970 (Kirseberg Library archive).

Right: Pamphlet describing the agenda for the next meetings in May 1970, including a presentation on byalag and how they work. (Kirseberg Library archive).

the thousands who lived in the neighbourhood, there was a lot of different people who showed up depending on meeting agenda. Small-house owners were naturally the most active, as the main cause was preservation of their houses (Thagaard, personal communication, 2024). Due to the previous debates and exhibitions in the library, the newspapers were eager to write about the local cause. When the byalag started actions like the above mentioned, and kept going with action such as painting, cleaning, and generally brushing up the area, it was written about in the press (Thagaard, 2020).

Another interesting consequence of the publicity was an increase in newcomers. The papers picked up on that some of the properties were uninhabited, and that some locals (house-lords and self-owners) wanted to sell since they could not afford refurbishing or taking the risk of doing so. Swedish law at the time was such that you could not get a lone to renovate if the property was inconsistent with the city plan, which they had not been since 1939 (Thagaard, 2020). Despite this there were still people willing to take the risk of buying houses or putting their own money into renovations. A point stressed by Thagaard as important:

“Those who dared to buy houses here [were important]. They were cheap and in poor condition. They helped. The municipality had started buying with the intention of redevelopment, and construction companies too. There were some advertisements in the papers after the debates and byalag-actions: "Here you can buy a house for thirty-five thousand kronor." The process was drawn out, and even though it took 14 years before the preservation plan, the drawing out helped. [...] There were more people buying, and more people putting their own money into renovating the would-be redevelopment sites, and then gradually it also turned from the politicians' side. But there was a concern that we would attract people of a completely different kind, speculators and so on. That people would buy, and then not stay. And you can't be like that, snobbish, here. That's not how this neighbourhood is.” (Thagaard, personal communication, 2024)

The first months of organizing the byalag went into just that, organizing and gaining support. There were invitations to meetings, planning and carrying out of renovation work. One member of the group travelled to Stockholm to meet with “Samtal Arkiv” and presented her findings on a meeting in late May 1970 (“Hej!,” 1970). Samtal Arkiv, which

was mentioned in the Norwegian report on citizen activist groups in previous chapter, was an organization founded in 1969 and gave out information, helped organize and to put different groups such as byalag in contact with each other (*Samtal Arkiv*, 1999). The Kirseberg byalag engaging with the outside actors such as Samtal Arkiv or other byalag was common in the beginning as they wanted to learn the best ways of gaining leverage and influence as well as to find ways of gaining further local support. The initial organized group was quite small, and one of the tactics was to give the impression they were larger and better organized than what, perhaps, was the reality (Thagaard, personal communication, 2024). They wrote articles and got them published in newspapers, such as one by Thagaard in May 1970. The article criticizes the 1939 plan, stating that it only encourages decline of the houses and lacks any real planning:

“In the past thirty years, 1/5th of the small houses has been demolished, as well as several old industrial buildings. By this account, it will take a very long time before the whole plan is realised. In the meantime, new tall functionalistic housings will stand next to 1800s small houses. This is not a good plan. What we need is a conserving redevelopment plan, a plan that will complement the existing neighbourhood.” (Thagaard, 1970)

The article further discusses the problem of the new apartments bringing more traffic on the small roads and ends by criticising what she deems the newest abuse of Kirseberg: a car dealer buying a house, tearing it down, and setting up barbed wire along the road (Thagaard, 1970). A letter sent from the library in June 1970 to a government bureaucrat involved with the library experiment gives a short account of these actions, with focus on the byalag efforts on renovating, and explains how the byalag emerged following the unsuccessful attempts of stopping the 1939 plan through the initial debates. The letter also argues that any leftover money from the experiment fundings should be given to the byalag to print pamphlets and technical reports on the houses, to help locals renovate (Andgren, 1970). Whether they were allowed this is uncertain, but it further illustrates the close link between the experiment and the creation of the byalag as well as illustrating how their activities were gaining attention.

In mid-1970 Thagaard got an internship at Malmö Stadsingenjör Kontor (the City Engineers Department) and was set to work with Kirseberg by her own wanting. Through

this, she was able to do a lot of mapping of the area and enquiries in the neighbourhood all financed by the department, which became useful in influencing city policy and gaining knowledge on and influence in the neighbourhood. According to Thagaard, a form of “light” infiltration (Thagaard, personal communication, 2024). Having one on the “inside” was made a point out of in a meeting invite in September 1970, hinting that the city now was on board in trying to find other alternatives to the 1939 plan but that the byalag still needed to maintain its pressure and “gain information, influence the city, and stop speculators from buying property” (“Detta är Kirseberg byalag: vad kan Kirsebergs byalag göra?,” 1970).

The opposition towards the 1939 plan slowly became clearer to the city officials, who in time also became more positive to change. In 1971 the byalag hosted a meeting where a professor in architectural history from the University of Lund presented their suggestion to the City Planning Office, Department of Cultural Heritage, that the old houses in the neighbourhood should be protected (“Vad Kirsebergs Byalag tänker göra våren-71 ”, 1971). They had become aware of the byalag, their efforts to change the 39-plan and taken interest (Thagaard, personal communication, 2024). In September 1972 the newspapers reported that the city was in the process of creating a new conservation plan, with the preservation of the Kirseberg houses as part of it. Although the exact scope and details of the plan was unclear, the tide had turned in favour of the byalag (“Ny bevaringsplan räddar Kirseberg”, 1972).

Continuing their meetings and work, the byalag kept involving themselves in different matters the following years. A demolished lot was illegally occupied and turned into a town square, “Backa-torget”, with great success. The town square name was however questioned by the locals; “Backarna” had been a negative term used on the neighbourhood. The success of “Backa-torget” arguable helped in changing that feeling (Thagaard, personal communication, 2024). More exhibitions were made, and the general activity in the neighbourhood was high (Thagaard, personal communication, 2024). In 1975 they went to action in support of a local, who’s house was to be expropriated and tore down. The arguments for this were that the house was a hinder for new development planned, and that it as it stood was not according to the 1939 plan, even though it was known a new plan was in the works. What was happening was what

the byalag had warned about since they started their work in 1970. The family living there had spent a lot of money renovating the property and would lose a lot if it was forcefully sold. The byalag got involved, and with several protest letters, meetings, and media coverages, it culminated with victory in the administrative courts of appeal, and the house was saved (“Grannar ger stöd I kamp mot byggjätter.”, 1975).

In 1976 a new plan was put forward, and unlike the processes in 1939 the locals were invited to several meetings discussing it. Although the exact details of the plan have not been possible to obtain, some understanding can be gained from the newspapers. The first suggestion presented in spring 1976 was a conserving plan met with general positivity: the last years had been spent refurbishing and trying to improve the old houses by those who lived there and the byalag, and it seemed the city had paid attention. However, the plan still called for the demolition of seven houses, all refurbished and in good condition at the time, to make a parking-garage. This was promptly written about in the newspapers, and heavily protested at the open meetings with the planners, and it paid off (“Hennes hus fick stå kvar”, 1976, p.18). A planner stated to the paper:

“We were perhaps a bit provocative. We wanted to show which problems existed in the area, and how difficult it is to solve the parking-situation. There has been a goal to increase the population of the area significantly. This demands a better standard, such as more parking. Now we know we won’t reach the population increase we hoped for. There are other arguments, such as environmental ones, that suggests we should go forward with care when it comes to the development of Kirseberg.” (“Det lönar sig delta i planering”, 1976, p.19).

Almost a year after, an edited plan was presented and exhibited at the library, inviting the locals to study it and give input (“Ny chans att studera planen”, 1977). The plan preserved the old houses, and some three hundred new housings were to be built mainly by using existing buildings such as an old water tower as well as some free unbuilt or already demolished lots. One of the architects behind the plan stated before the presentation that:

“Kirseberg will be preserved as a living neighbourhood, but not as a museum [...] Kirseberg’s old character will be preserved. That has been one of the main principles for the plan. Then it’s not just a question about preserving the houses. The old roads and layout are almost more important. In the plan three large areas are preserved and put under cultural heritage protection. In reality, it means almost all the old houses are to be preserved. [...] The houses are of some mixed standard, but the owners have refurbished many of them.” (“Nya större bostäder fick stå kvar”, 1977).

A newspaper headline later that year stated that “Kirseberg will be good” (“Kirseberg blir bra”, 1977). There is a large contrast to the first meetings with the planning officials seven years earlier. The planners were listening to the locals, and they actively sought to obtain their input through participation processes. Further, the historical significance of the buildings was recognized, and it seems there was a greater respect for the neighbourhoods’ character, citizens, and history. It was only thirty years earlier when the 1939 plan was discussed in a newspaper, and the neighbourhood was characterized as both ugly and “unsuitable for human habitation” (Bostaden 1946, in Thagaard 2020). The final plan was put forward and approved in 1984, preserving what remained of the small houses, 14 years after the byalag was created.

When the 1984 plan was approved, the byalag had succeeded in their original quest. This did not mean that their role was over, as they now represented an important body of leverage and influence from and in the neighbourhood. In 1985 the first book on the neighbourhood’s history, *“Life in Backarna”* was published by Thagaard and one of the librarians, Ribbing. The book was created through the interviews with old residents of the neighbourhood, and brought the exhibitions held through the library experiment into printed form (Thagaard & Ribbing, 1985). As the byalag did not exist as formal organization, this was changed in 1985. The main mission of stopping the 1939 was successful, and the focus shifted towards the other cultural and social activities. As such “Vi på Backarna” (We at Backarna) was founded as a cultural organization for the neighbourhood, organizing events such as carnivals and other social gatherings. The organization is still, as of 2024, an important contributor to the neighbourhood, with its events such as “the Backa-night” being held every year (Vi på Backarna, n.d).

The point to be made by this, is that in addition to achieving their main goal of stopping the planned redevelopment of the neighbourhood, the byalag and their efforts lay a foundation with effects still being seen some fifty years later. The library experiment should get the credit for setting a spark, but it only lasted a year. The effects of the community organizing to influence planning decisions was huge for the neighbourhood, and clearly established a sense of community and community-initiative still seen today.

Kirseberg as a neighbourhood has of course seen change as most places do, yet the neighbourhood maintains some of its reputation and soul, for good and worse. A newspaper article in 2023 called Kirseberg “*Malmö’s only worthy winner*”, and the writer sums up the spirit of the neighbourhood quite well, although failing to bring up my point of argument, that taking ownership of the history was a conscious tactic by the activists: the portrayed “soul” was not (as) present before 1970:

"Things are different in Backarna. Here, for example, there is a long tradition of turning high bourgeois holidays into public celebrations. On national day, hundreds of “Backabor” in bast skirts dance towards Beijers Park where thousands wait with picnic blankets in front of the live bands that take turns on stage. On Walpurgis Night, the park fills to the brim to kickstart May Day with speeches and revolutionary songs. At Mässingshornet [local pub], it’s always a carnival, except for the evenings when there’s a quiz, blues, or rock festival.

There’s something special about Kirseberg, and I think I know why. For many hundred years, the neighbourhood has been used as a social dumping ground for everything undesirable in the city. Alcoholics institution and mental hospital, children’s home, and prison. Here lived the murderer in Sjöwall Wahlöö’s “The Laughing Policeman” - albeit fictitiously. Here lived the old gangster Lars-Inge Svartenbrandt for real, albeit in a cell at Kirsebergsanstalten. [...] Kirseberg is a cross-section of Malmö, with all that entails. Here is Sweden’s ugliest square but also some of the most beautiful street-house alleys, flanked by hollyhocks and cherry trees. Challenges are not lacking, as the latest safety survey showed. But I still want to argue that the history of exclusion among them has created an inclusion that I haven’t seen elsewhere in Malmö. Here, odd characters are not props, as in other gentrified and formerly rough areas that suddenly do well on

the housing market. Here, the protests are not as large as in other areas when a new low-threshold residence opens. Because here, tolerance is greater. So, what is Kirseberg's X-factor? How about a soul." (Mikkelsen, 2023)

4.5 Summary and discussion of the historical case

In discussing the historical case it is worth restating one of the sub-questions which has driven the research. How and why did the activists achieve their goal of changing the plan? As a social movement, which the byalag must be seen as, one can draw on Castells (1983) theory as discussed previously. If one is to identify the goals, at least Castells two first can be easily identified. When it comes to *collective consumption*, the main goal of conserving the old houses speaks for itself. The byalag was created with that as its main goal, when the first debates during the library experiment did not seem to be enough. The second goal of *community* is similarly evident and used also as a strategy by the byalag. Through exploring (or searching for as Castells put it) the history of the neighbourhood they strengthen the community and managed to change the public perception of the neighbourhood. The third goal is a bit vaguer, but it can safely be argued that there was a battle for increased self-management or influence, or at the very least less top-down management from the local government. Further, Castells argument that social movements are "*not random expressions of discontent, varying from city to city, but that they bear, in their structure and goals, the stigmas and projects of all the great historical conflicts of our time*" (Castells, 1983, p. 319) can be recognized, if perhaps toned down a little. The movement in Kirseberg was clearly a product of its time, and involved remnants of class struggle as well as being, partly, a consequence of post-industrial politics in the context of the 1960s cultural turmoil.

The case shows how citizen power can turn the tide, and in the case of Kirseberg the engagement started around 1970 between city planners and locals and ended in 1984. In this timeframe a stronger neighbourhood emerged, changing their own view on the area as well as the planners. What was to be demolished and redeveloped, was largely preserved.

There are some pivotal moments, factors and actions that led to this. **Firstly**, the neighbourhood was a neighbourhood of neglect. At the turn of the century, it was looked down upon due to its status as an area struggling with crime, poverty, and slum-like

conditions. This led to the 1939 plan, which was a complete redrawing of the area that possible would have led to what we today would call gentrification. The neglect was both the view on the area, as well as the plan itself, which tried to solve the situation by simply demolishing it. **Secondly**, when the plan started to be realized in the late 1950s and 1960s, the general economic and social standard in Sweden had changed dramatically. While the living standards in Kirseberg were low compared to other neighbourhoods, it was not nearly like it had been fifty years earlier. Large scale social projects, like the million homes program, was underway. At the same time, there was a cultural upheaval and rising criticism towards the Malmö city government, which can be seen as part of the 1968 protests. Within this frame, Kirseberg was chosen for the discussed library-experiment. The experiment, thanks to resourceful locals, went far beyond its intention and created room for discussion and debate on the future of the neighbourhood. This again led to an exploration of the neighbourhood history, and public awareness of the 1939 plan which threatened it. **Thirdly** the creation of the byalag brought the effects of the library experiment forward, with a clear cause of stopping the planned redevelopment. The activities of the byalag helped increase the resistance, and at the same increased the self-esteem of the neighbourhood by uniting its citizens: the neglected did not want to be neglected anymore. **Fourthly** this led to the city officials slowly changing their view on Kirseberg and its needs. Through the 14 years it took from the library experiment launched, until the new plan was completed, there is a clear change in how the planners approached the matter. While the 1970 debate ended in more or less ridicule, with booing from the audience, illustrating a clear disconnect between the locals and the city officials, this had changed in 1977 when the new plan was proposed. From the 1930s until the late 1970s the discussion evolved from a top-down view to a participatory process where the planners slowly adopted the arguments of the locals as their own: the planners stance went from “unsuitable for human habitation” to arguing for its historical importance, the local character, and in general being on the same page as the byalag.

If the library experiment had not been initiated by the government, it is uncertain whether Kirseberg would have been preserved. That is at least the view of byalag activist Thagaard: *“The experiment lay the foundation and initiated the process. Without the*

efforts of the librarians, and the creation of the exhibitions, the following resistance to the plans would not have emerged” (Thagaard, personal communication, 2024).

Thagaard’s involvement in the library experiment and the following creation of the byalag should not be overlooked though. When examining the newspapers writings and byalag pamphlets, it clear that she had a pivotal role in facilitating the resistance. As a student of architecture with an interest in city planning, she took the role of a planner on behalf of the byalag. Her getting employed at the city engineer’s office gave valuable insight to the activists. It is clear that she functioned as an “expert” on the matter when addressing the plans, acting as a planner and advocate. Furthermore, she is responsible for writing and publishing the history of Kirseberg, preserving, and continuing the historical awareness created by the exhibitions at the library.

The activities of the byalag in the 1970s and 1980s can be seen as fundamental in changing the view on Kirseberg. Its popular name “Backarna” has changed from being negative to positive. Continuing the debate after the library experiment ended, and working on refurbishing and maintaining the old houses was important in changing the planner’s view. Activist actions, such as the creating of a town square on a demolished lot, or simply organizing social events, brought the attention of the newspapers.

According to Thagaard, one of the biggest victories was that the newspapers changed their stance when writing about Kirseberg: they went from writing about crime and problems, to writing about the activities of the byalag and other, positive, local happenings. This drew new people to the neighbourhood, gave a lifted spirit to those living there, and clearly had an influence on the city planners (Thagaard, personal communication, 2024).

5.0 Contemporary analysis

This chapter covers the ongoing redevelopment plans of the prison in Kirseberg. The first four sections briefly cover the history of the prison and its closure, while the fifth examines the ongoing redevelopment plans, and the efforts of Backa Kåken to buy the prison from MKB. The last section is a wider discussion of the case.

5.1 The prison history

The prison, which goes by several names but “Centralfängslet” and “Kirsebergsanstalten” being the most used, was built in 1914. At the time there had been planning for a prison for some time, with several locations suggested. The Malmö stadsingeniør (city engineer) at the time Anders Nilsson actively sought to move the location to Kirseberg, after another location was decided at first. The reason for this officially being that if placed on that side of the city outskirts it would be easier to receive prisoners from all of Sweden. The distances are however short, and some kilometres to and from would not matter much in receiving prisoners from the rest of the country. The other possible reason, although hypothesised, is that the location was changed to Kirseberg because of its history. As previously discussed, Kirseberg had a tradition for being a place of punishment and burial of criminals. In addition, a brand new and modern prison could send a message to the people in what was deemed a dangerous and bad place of low status (Wallin & Schlyter, 2015). The building of a mental hospital in Kirseberg some years later was chosen because of the neighbourhood low status. The plot chosen for the prison was mostly unbuilt and bordering to the densely built neighbourhood of small houses. Figure 10 shows the lot, nr.



Figure 10: Section of a Malmö map from 1912 showing Kirseberg. Nr.20 was chosen for the prison. (Source: Lantmäteriet)

20, on a city map from 1910. The prison was operational until 2015 with a capacity of around 250 prisoners (Wallin & Schlyter, 2015).

5.2 Prison closure and different plans

After more than a hundred years in operation, the prison was closed in 2015 for renovation. The idea at the time was not to close it permanently, but rather renovate it for further use. However, in May 2016 it was announced that The Swedish Migration Agency would take over the operation of the complex and use it as temporary international centre for the enforcement of deportations. This was met with criticism both

nationally and local, mainly because of the potential symbolism it could mean using a prison for this purpose. In Kirseberg, there was a protest attended by some two hundred people. The plans were however scrapped, and in 2017 it was announced that that MKB would buy the prison with plans for housing-development (Hermansson, 2017). MKB is a large public housing company owned by the city of Malmö, with a politically appointed board. They own some twenty-six thousand apartments in the city, around a thousand commercial premises, adding up to over 30 percent of the rental market, with close to seventy thousand residents. It was established in 1946, and is behind several large-scale Malmö development projects, including many in and around Kirseberg (*Om MKB*, 2024).

MKB was looking for potential properties for housing-development in the eastern sides of Malmö and buying the prison “would strengthen their position in the area”. The plan was to build approximately 250-400 rental units, and at first a total demolition of the complex was presented but this was declined, as the buildings are of cultural value (Hansson, 2019). In the time passed since MKB has bought the prison, little has been done. The response of one local when asked by me about his thoughts on the development was simply “what development?”. There have been some writings in the newspapers in the six plus years since they bought it, but little have emerged to the public on the process. In 2023 a headline in the newspaper *Sydsvenskan* stated: “Unclear when and how Kirsebergsanstalten [the prison] will become residential properties.” The article refers to issues with waste management, as the buildings are filled with problematic materials such as asbestos (Lovén, 2023).

5.3 The buildings and historical heritage

There is no need to discuss the historical heritage of the prison in detail, but it is worth noting that it has some significance in relation to the larger questions of its development. The prison is an important landmark in Kirseberg, having stood there for over a century. The complex has an architectural-historical significance, documented, and published in a report made by The Malmö Museum Kulturarvsenheten (the cultural heritage department) The report recommends that most of the buildings are preserved, with some guidelines as to how one can adapt new development to the existing buildings. The arguments for preservation can be summarized to revolve around the

complex being the last prison in the region from the time period and is as such an important piece of social history (Wallin & Schlyter, 2015). I would argue that the prison also stands as monument to the old Kirseberg, representing one of the inherently “bad” institutions the neighbourhood has been known to host. As a former symbol of power facing what was deemed as a low-status area, its symbolic value is something that can be utilized.

5.4 Let's buy the prison!

With the prison standing empty, and plans for development going slow, there is a seemingly increasing restlessness among the locals. Having stood there as a dominating figure in the landscape for over a hundred years, it still occupies a large section of the area, but abandoned and closed off.

Although MKB is trying to figure out what to do with the complex, there is a clear notion that people want something to happen sooner rather than later. Mid-2023 the newspaper Skånska Dagbladet could report that Malmö Ideella wanted to buy the prison and develop it (Lindblom, 2023). They are an umbrella organisation that states that it *“works for the opportunities and power of associations and non-profit organizations - for a sustainable Malmö.”* (Malmö Ideella, 2024).

The people involved with the prison plan and Malmö Ideella would later form an own independent organisation for the endeavour, “Backa Kåken”, which today (2024) is carrying the plan forward (*Backa-Kåken!*, 2024). The organization has a board of six, with a membership of around 30 individuals (Backa Kåken, personal communication, 2024). Still in an early and uncertain process, what is interesting is why they want to purchase the prison and how they plan to achieve it. The information is collected through interview and conversations with board members of Backa Kåken, as well as published information in the news media. The historical line back to the byalag and if and how the idea itself is linked and even possible because of it will be discussed.

5.4.1 The why and the who

The idea to purchase the prison was formed in the wake of another project, “Malmö Tillsammans” (“Malmö together”), of which Malmö Ideella was a central actor. It lasted from 2021-2023 with the goal of *“engaging more Malmö residents in the city's development, through supporting initiatives and ideas from Malmö residents, and*

testing and developing methods and tools for sustainable local development” (Malmö Tillsammans, 2024). Among the sub-projects was a “medborgarbudget” (citizen’s budget) in Kirseberg which is a process where citizens are directly involved in deciding how a portion of public funds should be spent. It’s a form of participatory budgeting where residents of a city or community can propose, discuss, and vote on projects or initiatives that they believe will benefit their community. It is aimed at increasing citizen engagement in local governance and decision-making processes (Roodro & Qvarfordt, 2023). The project was a success and led to several initiatives, ideas and activities in the different neighbourhoods involved, among them Kirseberg.

Not stemming from it directly, but due to connections being formed, the idea to purchase the prison emerged. As mentioned, there is a dissatisfaction among the locals on the (lack of) development of the prison, and the potential use of the landmark is, as one local stated to me, “obvious to anyone who visits: a large, solid structure in the middle of Kirseberg”. As such, first through Malmö Ideella and then as Backa Kåken, the idea to buy the prison emerged. During the festival “Backa night” organized by “Vi på Backarna”, the organization the byalag evolved into, the idea to buy the prison was presented (Backa Kåken, personal communication, 2024). In their articles of association, Backa Kåken describes themselves as:

“a nonprofit, non-religious, and non-partisan association. The association’s main purpose is to facilitate a collectively anchored local purchase, operation, and development of the former prison building in Kirseberg, Malmö, in order to create a social, creative meeting place for various activities, gatherings, and culture. The aim is also to contribute to, and enable, sustainable, inclusive urban development based on social and local perspectives that create value for the local community.” (“Stadgar för den ideella föreningen Backa Kåken,” 2023)

5.4.2 The how: a case of advocacy planning

When talking with locals in Kirseberg, the view was that something should be done with the prison, and that it takes too long. Further, there is a sense that the process dragging out is a form of neglect and that the prison should be developed for the community. I asked a random selection of ten people in the streets and bars of Kirseberg what their general thoughts on the prison was. Six people wanted to make a comment, while the

others were more hesitant, did not want to participate or did not have any opinion. The responses I got of relevance were:

Senior female:

“When MKB does nothing with the prison, we locals feel disappointed. It makes us want to do something ourselves.”

Adult male:

“It just stands there, rotting. It’s a nice building, and they should do something to make the area available.”

Young adult, female:

“It feels a bit scary, like a haunted house. It would be cool if they built something for the community.”

Adult male:

“I hope something is done soon. It’s been empty and abandoned for years now. Either tear it down or use the building for something”.

Senior female:

“They tried to house refugees there. Imagine using a prison for that, the symbolism, you can’t do that to refugees. But giving it back to the community, they can’t get around to do that”.

Although a small selection of interviewees, there is a clear sentiment that something should be done and a discontent with the development as it stands today. This represents the void of which Backa Kåken is in the process of filling. Among the people, there was a scepticism towards my intentions, with some questioning if I represented who I said I did, or in fact represented developers or the city. This response was interesting, and suggests a protectiveness in the community, perhaps based on previous negative experiences with outsiders trying to influence local matters.

Some members of Backa Kåken has former experience from the neighbourhood, having involved themselves in several activities and projects, with one having participated in

panel-conversations together with Thagaard at the library, discussing the historical activism and future development of Kirseberg (Backa Kåken, personal communication, 2024). How Backa Kåken operates, and who they are, makes a case for them being advocacy planners. As outsiders with experience on the field, they try to facilitate and initiate a local process to benefit the community, their goal being a community-driven process.

MKB's plan is to build housing on the premises. They are however struggling with how to deal with the main prison building, as their redevelopment would require a complete plan for the area (Backa Kåken, personal communication, 2024). There are a lot of unbuilt land on the property, and they could for example build housing around the main complex, but it still leaves the main building. It has as previously discussed a cultural and historical significance, as well as challenges with how to deal with waste. According to Backa Kåken, MKB sees them as a possible solution to this problem, as getting rid of the responsibility for the prison building would leave them with the surrounding area for housing. As such, Backa Kåken believe they are taken seriously in their dialogue with MKB, although the process is dragging out. They also experience positive feedback from the city planning authorities (Backa Kåken, personal communication, 2024).

Local support is important, and they are planning to mobilize the locals in their support to gain leverage. In 2023 they had an open meeting in Kirseberg presenting the project, and they were met with positivity. In our interview, they stated that it's important that they "are not perceived as outsiders, and that the project has a clear local anchorage" (Backa Kåken, personal communication, 2024). To achieve this, they are planning several open meetings, workshops and are actively promoting the project at local events with the activity increasing in early summer 2024 (Backa-Kåken!, 2024). Although it is too early in the project to say anything concrete about the financial aspects of buying the prison, they draw inspiration from a Hamburg development project called FUX. FUX is an old army barracks complex, that was deserted and was in much the same state and situation as the Kirseberg prison. In the early 2010s the City of Hamburg gave different actors five years to come up with a plan of use, and to finance a purchase. In 2015, the barracks was bought by the cooperative FUX eG, who since has refurbished it under strict preservation laws, while housing several activities, cultural events, and

venues: as of 2024, there are over 200 people involved, and it has become hallmark in the neighbourhood (FUXeG, 2024).

The need and wanting for local support are present for two main reasons. Firstly, a type of project like that of FUX needs people willing to invest both time and money. This is more achievable if managing to gain the interest and willingness to invest by locals, who (probably) has a personal reason to invest. Locals, by default, has an interest in seeing their neighbourhood gain new services and investment. Further, a large part of the motivation is to create something for the benefit of the community.

Secondly, Backa Kåken take the history of Kirseberg seriously. The prison's history is in many ways that of Kirseberg, and its neglect the last years can be seen as reflection on Kirseberg as a whole. It was placed there because of neglect towards the neighbourhood in the first place and is itself neglected now. One can argue that the neighbourhood is neglected when the prison is: promises of development for years, but nothing happening. Further there is a clear link between the prisons history and how it can be used to something positive. Taking a "bad" institution, and turning it into something good for the neighbourhood, can give the locals a feeling of ownership. Like Kirseberg's other name "Backarna" has gained a positive meaning through byalaget's efforts, a locally anchored development of the prison can do the same. Backa Kåken sees this and can use it to rally the neighbourhood in their support.

5.5 Summary and discussion of contemporary analysis

The initiative to buy the prison started out as an initiative through Malmö Ideella before moving on to become its own organization, but with the same people involved. The organisation working within a wide range of areas can in this role be seen as advocate planners. Malmö Idella has a long history of involving itself in questions of social development and urban planning, as the presented background for the project illustrates (*Malmö Ideella*, 2024). The newly formed Backa Kåken can in many ways be seen as a means-to and end organization, as they want to take inspiration from the FUX-project and needs some sort of organization to both buy and organize the prison-development in the future. They are however outsiders, as they state themselves, trying to gain local support in order not to be so. Their agenda is to improve Kirseberg through the project, and as non-locals they (try to) take upon themselves the role of a type of

advocacy planners acting on behalf of the community facing MKB and the planning authorities in Malmö.

Although the prison projects success remains to be seen, it shows the relevance of advocacy planning in a contemporary case. Kirseberg has as illustrated in the historical case a tradition for activist planning. While the byalag had elements of advocacy planning tactics, they employed several different activist planning strategies to successfully stop the city plans. The question is if the development of the prison can take a similar approach if Backa Kåken manages to rally support. This is an open question without any clear answers, but as previously stated Backa Kåken is very much aware of the Kirseberg history and its potential, making a good foundation for further development in the case.

In the introduction I asked if there was a connection between the historical case and the contemporary one. I would argue there are several ways one can find a connection between the two, although time has made them a bit obscured. Firstly, there is a point in time where the two crossed paths, which was right at the beginning of the “lets buy the prison” project. As illustrated, the byalag ended up contributing to the neighbourhood in many different ways in the process of changing the 1939 plan, and as locals they would not simply vanish once “mission complete”. With the creation of the cultural organization “Vi på Backarna” in 1985, active to this day, the spirit of the byalag is still present. One of their main reoccurring events is the Backa night, a festival held in the neighbourhood every year, and it is at this event the idea of buying the prison was first shown to the public through a public stand outside the prison. Backa Kåken’s mission stands in a tradition of community-led development in Kirseberg, as their goal is to create something to and by the community, taking the history of the prison and Kirseberg into account. And, while Backa Kåken is hardly a social movement, it could in theory become one. The goals, to use Castells’ (1983) theory are similar as those of the byalag. The first, *Collective consumption trade unionism* can in both cases be seen through the wanted preservation of a historical building. Castells second goal, *community* is present with both as well, albeit in some different context. While the byalag searched the history of the neighbourhood to strengthen it, Backa Kåken states that their purpose is to “*facilitate a collectively anchored local purchase*” of the prison,

with a further aim to contribute to a development based on *“social and local perspectives that create value for the local community”* ("Stadgar för den ideella föreningen Backa Kåken," 2023). The apparent similarities lie within the local community, and how they wanted to and want to contribute to it through their work.

There is an argument to be made that the prison case is a continuation of the history of neglect. Although, in time, it might turn out to be developed in favour of the community, as MKB are seemingly positive to the project, the process dragging out with nothing happening falls into a long historical line of unappreciated development processes. That it has stood unused since closure, giving the time and room needed for an organization like Backa Kåken to take interest, is a testament to continued neglect of Kirseberg from the city. The argument made by the Malmö planner in the introduction that Kirseberg flourishes through neglect is illustrated by this: when the city does nothing, the local community acts.

6.0 Conclusions

On the outset of writing this thesis I wanted to examine and answer how the purported neglect of Kirseberg lay the foundation for a social movement and a positive urban development of the neighbourhood. As I was told by the local planner, the neighbourhood “flourished through neglect”, but the story lacked some explanation and context. As this thesis illustrates, the neglect is historical although arguably still present to some extent. It is the history surrounding the byalag, and the around fifteen years of activist work by them, that explains the “flourishing”, which was caused by neglect. The “neglect” is explained by what they fought: a city plan they did not want, in combination with top-down attitudes and being looked down upon by city officials and outsiders alike. In short, the answer is that the neglect of Kirseberg by planners and city officials in the 20th century, in combination with surrounding events, lay the foundation for the byalag who turned the tide towards a positive urban development. They did so by using the history of the neighbourhood together with a multitude of activist approaches strengthening the community facing the outside forces. In doing this, the byalag changed the inside and outside perceptions of Kirseberg: “Backarna” lost its negative connotation. The prison case illustrates what might be a story with similarities, where

once again a form of neglect has created the foundation for a community development process.

While this thesis has three main chapters, the historical case and current case of Kirseberg provides the answers to the empirical sub questions, while the theoretical chapter provides a necessary understanding of activist planning and social movements. As I have discussed the sub-questions in the last section of the case chapters, I will here try to bring everything together in discussing the main research questions in relation to the case: How does neglect by decision makers affect development of a neighbourhood? What strategies can citizens employ to counteract neglect and foster community-led initiatives and development? And how is activist planning relevant today?

6.1 How does neglect by decision makers affect development of a neighbourhood? Neglect as a driver for change.

The question of neglect in this case is interesting, as its consequence can be difficult to get a grasp on. There is little doubt that the area can be described as neglected by decision makers up until or around when the new city plan was approved in the 1980s. From witch-burnings in the 18th century, to the slum-like conditions of the pre-war era, with the neighbourhood gaining a reputation of both dangerous and problematic, the decisions made upon Kirseberg was of little benefaction to those who lived there. The localization of the prison in 1914 was a consequence of this reputation, and the 1939 plan was made to solve the slum-like conditions. Yet, the 1939 plan would of course not solve much for those living there, as tearing down their houses was the first step. When, in the 1960s, the neighbourhood was -although still in poor condition- hardly a slum, the insistence by the city to see the plan through can be seen as a form of neglect. Neglect by decision makers in making good decisions, obviously leads to poor or unappreciated planning as seen. Further the community itself suffers from lacked recognition as a community. However, the initiative of the library experiment can be seen as a contrasting event where a government initiative, although fairly unintentionally, brought a much-needed incentive to turn things around for the locals. Yet, the neglect felt by the neighbourhood was publicly dismissed by the city officials at the following debates, with them only turning after years of activism by the community.

There is an argument to be made that the neglect itself was the driver for change, or rather a driver for the needed initiative to make the change. The evidence for this is largely found in the discussed newspaper excerpts covering the early debates held through the library experiment. They describe a tense situation where the locals brought up questions on Kirseberg's lower status and social issues, compared to other neighbourhoods, which were met with denial by the city officials. It was after these debates seemingly went nowhere in terms of positive results that the locals decided to create the byalag to further their cause as a social movement. The emergence of byalag all over Sweden at the time, many with similar agendas, the million homes program underway with an increase in large-scale development projects, and the general increase in cultural activism surrounding the 1968 protests, played a role in facilitating and setting a stage. In line with Castells' argument that social movements are not random expressions of discontent but structurally and in terms of goals a produce of the "great historical conflicts of our time" (Castells, 1983, p. 319), the byalag can be seen as a product of its time, and as a response to contemporary social and political developments, with remnants of class struggle; Kirseberg's history as a poor neglected working class neighbourhood playing its part. Without the neglect, would the community have become as strong as it did? Probably not, and that would in itself be a good thing, as the need for it getting stronger and united was because of something inherently bad. Without this process though, without romanticising it, and if one looks away from the main goal of changing the city plan, a lot would have been lost which makes Kirseberg the apparently strong community it is to this day. The byalag was in the larger picture a direct consequence of the neglect and became a force of initiative and change.

The history of neglect communicated by the byalag arguably played a major role in uniting the community and bringing some sort of pride to the neighbourhood still visible today. In the 2023 newspaper article quoted earlier, the journalist explains the current soul of Kirseberg with its history of neglect but misses the point of how the neighbourhood has managed to take ownership of this history, a success that must be credited the byalag.

While the history of neglect played a key role in the development of the neighbourhood in the previous century, it is a bit more unanswered and unclear what role neglect plays today. The prison case helps explain this and gives two answers. Firstly, the historical neglect still plays a role in how people think about the prison. The ideas of giving it back to the neighbourhood suggests something was taken, and the prison do represent one of the undesirable institutions placed in Kirseberg and stands as a monument of the neglect they experienced: give them a prison, then tear their houses down. As Backa Kåken is working towards buying the prison, they are conscious about the historical backdrop, considering what type of neighbourhood they are working with and its history. This historical consciousness is as seen present in how the neighbourhood is written about as well. The second way to approach this question is to look at how the development of the prison is dealt with by the professionals, meaning the owners MKB and the city who owns them. As the, although small, responses from the people I asked about the prison development showed, there seems to be a feeling of drawing out and lack of effort. While it seems MKB is positive to Backa Kåken and their idea, having an ongoing dialog, it appears to be a process dragging out. Further the initiative is from Backa Kåken, and while MKB is positive, this development has just been around for under a year, while MKB bought the prison in 2017. Before MKB bought the prison, the previous owner wanted to rent it out as an internation centre for deportations, facing backlash and resistance from the neighbourhood. As the question of what to do with the prison, and how to do it, has been an ongoing process for close to ten years, the solutions (might) end up coming from a third-party group, Backa Kåken. Depending on the outcome of the process, it has arguable been one of neglect, where the largest, most historical, building in the neighbourhood has not been dealt with appropriately. Viewed alone, it is perhaps not an uncommon process with a project of such complexity but viewed in the context of Kirseberg and its history, it might be more problematic, or at least an understandable cause of felt neglect. The neglect has non the less created a void, filled by Backa Kåken, being a driver for change. Both the historical and contemporary case suggests that when a community experience some type of neglect over time, it creates opportunities for initiative from within the community itself. Further it illustrates how that neglect can be turned around and used to mobilize the community in two ways. Firstly as a goal of changing the situation, secondly as a unifying history.

6.2 What strategies can citizens employ to counteract neglect and foster community-led initiatives and development? An argument for using history as a strategy.

The historical case illustrates how a community can organize themselves facing outside forces. Further it illustrates how such resistance can bring with it a multitude of other positive outcomes. The goal of the byalag was not in itself to counteract neglect, although I argue that the 1939-plan and the work of implementing it was a form of neglect, but they ended up turning the historical trend of neglect non the less, the processes being intertwined. Many of their tactics were of typical activist nature, and although they are relevant, the most interesting and perhaps most important one was a non-typical tactic: using history actively as a strategy. The prison case illustrates the early stages of what could become a community led effort initiated by advocacy planners, and a potential for applying history as a strategy like the byalag did.

Several strategies or tactics were used in achieving the goal of stopping the 1939 plan. Direct action was important in gaining the media's attention, who seemingly took the locals side in their cause, the newspaper articles from the time giving the impression of an underdog versus those with power situation. The use of direct action is also what made them activist planners. Their actions were directed at giving something to the neighbourhood, such as the creation of a town square, but also key in gaining the attention of the media and through that the city officials. The early debates on the plans through the library experiment was not enough, and the subsequent creation of the byalag and their actions helped gain leverage. As illustrated, there was a large increase in similar groups at the time, with governments actively looking into how to deal with the influx of activist groups, illustrating the potential of such social movements in influencing decision making. Further the attention also created sympathies and awareness from outsiders, such as the academics from Lund university advocating for the preservation of the houses in the meetings leading up to the new plan.

A reoccurring point of discussion in this thesis has been how history has been used as a tool or strategy. Through the library exhibitions and then through the byalag itself, the activists wanted to alter the neighbourhood's development through exploring and bringing its history to life. This strategy is mentioned by Thagaard as important, but it

was on the outset of writing this thesis a bit unclear exactly how it influenced the process. I identify two goals or approaches in the strategy. Firstly, documenting the history of the buildings could be an argument against demolition by managing to turn the view around from the old housing being poor-conditioned, slum like objects, into a view that they were old working-class dwellings, unique and culturally important. This they succeeded in, being confirmed by the new plan basing the preservation of the houses on their historical significance. Secondly, as Kirseberg had a bad reputation, the nickname “Backarna” having bad connotations by locals and outsiders alike, the history could be used in bringing the neighbourhood together. By documenting and showcasing, and in the end writing and publishing, the history of Kirseberg, the locals got a common history uniting them. The history, not being a very bright one, created a narrative of the neglected facing top-down attitudes from the outside, made acutely relevant with the 1939 city plan being realized, creating a common cause. There had been a feeling of neglect, and now there was somewhere to direct that dissatisfaction. This strategy worked well and is illustrated still in how Kirseberg is written about today. “Backarna” is not a negative phrase anymore, but when written about there is usually mention of the historical background. Instead of being bad however, the history is given credit for the positive sides of Kirseberg. Further, fifty years after, the work of the byalag is part of that history, creating a complete narrative of neglect, resistance, unity, and success.

Creating – and making people aware of – a narrative, which is what the byalag essentially did by exploring and documenting the history of Kirseberg, is not something all that unique in society. On a larger scale, nations, peoples, cities, and institutions use history as a tool in creating unity, as a basis for arguing and justifying actions, or to gain sympathy. It’s use as a strategy is not uncommon at all. However, I would argue that it is a bit more uncommon in such a local and confined case as Kirseberg, and that this case illustrates how it can be used actively in urban planning by activists and planners to counteract negative effects of neglect and to foster community-led initiatives. History can be used as an argument, and it can bring people together, helping in gaining a needed leverage, power, in a given situation.

The prison redevelopment case is interesting regarding this research question as I argue that the ten years of nothing happening with the prison is a form of neglect towards the community. Yet, the response to this is not really from the community but rather from outsiders looking to create and facilitate a community-led and locally anchored development. It is as such not quite yet a community initiative, but more a case of early-stage activist advocacy planning. This is evident by how Backa Kåken was initiated and how they work towards their goal. Although the people involved have connections to Kirseberg, and has been involved in different projects there before, they act as outside experts trying to help the community. By having open meetings and workshops and bringing in the locals, they initiate and facilitate local development, in line with Sager's argument of the advocates needing to mobilize through participatory activities, with their services being organizational and capacity building (Sager, 2022, p. 1223). The idea of buying the prison being born through Mamö Ideella further illustrates this, as their mission is reminiscent of the advocacy approach. As described briefly, their work involves bringing different groups and organizations together in sharing knowledge and competence, involving themselves in a multitude of projects. Backa Kåken employ several tactics like those of the byalag, including reaching out to the media and building on the local identity. While they are conscious and aware of the neighbourhood history, it remains to see if they use it actively as a strategy. As I have argued, the prison history can be seen as intertwined with the Kirseberg history of neglect, and using this history can be a power tool in gaining community support and increasing local anchorage.

6.3 How is activist planning relevant today? An argument for community power.

As Sager argues in his work, the communicative ideal in planning is lacking in its realism. In real life planning-cases the division of power and influence is uneven, and actors use what leverage they have in achieving their goals. As such simply creating processes of deliberation where every actor and affected party participate risks neglecting the ones with less power. Using activist methods is one way of altering this uneven balance in one's favour, as was the case for the byalag and Kirseberg. What they achieved in Kirseberg in the end through the activist approach was deliberations on more equal terms. The city planners changed their opinions on how to plan Kirseberg over time in adapting many of the same arguments as the byalag, but they also

approached the neighbourhood in a very different way than what they did initially, by having more and better participation processes. The reason for this is arguably the power the byalag had obtained over time, especially in gaining media attention. The byalag effectively increased the transaction costs of the city: ignoring the byalag, or going forward with the 1939 plan, would likely mean protests, poor media coverage, and have a general negative effect. This potential was apparent already during the first debates, before the byalag was created, where the media coverage was less favourable towards the city officials.

Bringing this history into the present looking at the full story, with the prison case included, makes an argument for how community power should be acknowledged and utilized. Through the prison case this is illustrated by how the solution to the standstill is presented by a third party who wants to utilize the community in achieving their goal. This has caught the attention of MKB, who has not done so themselves. It illustrates a somewhat disconnect between the big established developers and the community, of which a group like Backa Kåken manages to connect. Backa Kåken's work can by large be described as advocacy planning and stands an example of its relevance today, over fifty years since its theory emerged. Together the cases illustrate two examples in one neighbourhood of how the solution to a problem ends up coming from not the official planners, but people external to the official process, and how it is achieved through activist tactics.

What the presented case of Kirseberg illustrates is the powers that lie within a community. In the end, I take it that this is what the Malmö city planner meant by Kirseberg "flourishing through neglect." The repeated neglect of Kirseberg enabled or kickstarted a process in the community, leading to them influencing the local development in their desired direction. The prison case could end up becoming a similar story. These powers should not be ignored or resisted by planners, but rather utilized and put to work. This is not always the case, as the initial development of the prison and the background for the byalag illustrate. In many ways, it is an argument for professional planners to take a step back and let the community decide. Very often, they have knowledge worth listening to, and the will and initiative to get involved.

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Figures and images

Figure 1: Map of Kirseberg. Edited by author. Background map from Lantmäteriet. Retrieved 30.04.2024 from: <https://minkarta.lantmateriet.se/>

Images, first two from the left: Autor's image, 12.03.2024. Third: Zan, J. (22.04.2014). "The Kirseberg Library". Wikimedia Commons. Retrieved 30.04.2024 from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kirsebergs_bibliotek_-_2.JPG

Figure 2: Examples of Kirseberg Library archive material, from right to left:

Byalagsstrid mot skräptomt: Telefonterror gav seger. (25.04.1970). *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*

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Figure 3: Photography of Kirsberg. (ca. 1920-1940). [undated, uncredited photography, Kirseberg Library Archive].

Figure 4: City plans, Kirseberg. Edited by author. From the top:

Malmö Stad. (1984). Stadsplan PL1524. Retrieved 03.04.2024 from:
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Figure 5: Lantmäteriet. (1963[top] and 1973[bottom]). [aerial photographs], Lantmäteriet, retrieved 20.04.2024 from: <https://minkarta.lantmateriet.se/>

Figure 6: Author's images (12.03.2024).

Figure 7: Thagaard, A.M. (1970). [Two photographs of historical photographs exhibited at the library exhibitions]. Private collection.

Figure 8: From the 1970s exhibitions.

Top: Thagaard, A. M. (1970). [Two photographs. First of a poster inviting to meeting, second of exhibition material]. Private collection.

Bottom: Do you want to live like this? (1970). [pamphlet inviting to meetings and exhibitions. Kirseberg Library Archive].

Figure 9: Image, poster, and pamphlet:

Top left: Thagaard, A.M. (1970). [Image of the clean-up action]. Private collection.

Bottom left: Vårstädning på Backarna! (1970). [Poster inviting to clean-up action. Kirseberg Library Archive].

Right: «Nu har vi «byalaget» städat våra gator». (1970). [Pamphlet describing the agenda for the meetings in May 1970. Kirseberg Library archive].

Figure 10: Lantmäteriet. (1912). *Historiska kartor*. [historical map of Malmö, edited by author]. Retrieved 26.02.2024 from
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Appendix

1 : Semi-Structured Interview Guide - Development of Kirseberg Prison (translated from Norwegian- interviews conducted in Norwegian and Swedish)

Introduce myself and the project/task's theme -

I have some specific questions, but I'm also interested in hearing general reflections. Several of the questions are very open-ended.

The interview will be recorded electronically but will be transcribed as soon as possible after it is conducted. Then, the audio files will be deleted. The written document will be kept in accordance with current regulations and then deleted.

The interview will last up to one hour.

Questions:

- What is your/your role in the project?
- How and why did you/they become involved in the development of the prison?
- Why do you see a need to ensure local control over the prison, rather than the existing development plans?
- The project was part of Malmö Ideella, but is now becoming an independent organization. Can you tell us a bit about this?
 - Can you tell us a bit about the organization's structure and organization?
- What specific goals do you wish to achieve by acquiring the prison?
- The development of the prison engages the local community here. How would you describe local support for your initiative?
 - What measures are you taking to increase engagement?
- What has been the response from the owners of the site and the municipality?
- What measures are you taking in dealing with the planning authorities and landowners (actors/stakeholders)?
 - How has the dialogue with the other stakeholders been?
 - Have you encountered resistance?
 - How do you face resistance?
 - Resistance from whom?

- Historically, I perceive that there is a tradition in Kirseberg to resort to activism in dealing with authorities and other stakeholders, such as during the redevelopment attempts in the 50s to 80s.
 - Do you have any reflections on this project in light of historical activism?
- Kirseberg has historically and still has a reputation as a troubled neighborhood. -- has described how the outside world sees the neighborhood like this: "Kirseberg is for Malmö, what Malmö is for Sweden". It has also been described that the neighborhood is neglected by the authorities, and that local needs and desires are not taken seriously. This is one of the reasons for the activism that arose from the 1960s onwards.
 - Do you have any thoughts on how this is today, and if this is a trend/attitude you encounter in your project?
- Do you have anything you would like to add or tell us more about?

2: Semi-structured interview guide for Thagaard interview (translated)

Introduction and explanation of project, sign consent form, explain recording and data handling. (I have several questions but is mainly interested in letting her do the talking, elaborating as we go).

- Could you tell me about the background for the byalag, and how it all came together?
- How did you organize and mobilize?
 - Follow up: numbers, locations, plans, tactics.
- Could you elaborate on some of the actions you conducted? (ask about the creation of the town square)
- Did you think of yourself as activists?
 - (follow up on strategies)
- What was the most important factors and or strategies that contributed to the byalag being successful?
- How was the communication between the byalag and city officials?
- In your book you make a point out of using the history as a tool. Could you elaborate?
 - The history of Kirseberg was described to me as one of neglect, and when written about in the media that seems to be the case as well. Do you credit the byalag (and yourself) with documenting and writing this history?
 - Was it a plan from the beginning to use the history as you did in mobilizing the community?
- How do you view the history of Kirseberg today if one includes the byalag history?

3: Consent form (In Norwegian).

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

Masteroppgave Kirseberg

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å samle informasjon som skal benyttes i masteroppgave om historisk aktivisme og utviklingen av fengslet i Kirseberg, Malmö. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

En masteroppgave i by- og regionplanlegging, NMBU.

Et historisk case-study av Kirseberg Malmö. Hvordan har bydelen utviklet seg gjennom tid, i møte med historisk neglisjering fra myndighetene. Aktivisme som en respons fra lokalsamfunnet.

Undersøke utviklingen av det lokale nedlagte fengslet, og lokalsamfunnets pågående forsøk i å kjøpe det opp i lys av dette.

I forbindelse med oppgaven, ønsker jeg å gjennomføre intervjuer med relevante aktører i den pågående utviklingen av fengslet samt relevante personer knyttet til Kirsebergs historie (eks. aktivismen, historien rundt Bylaget osv.)

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Fakultetet for landskap og samfunn / institutt for by- og regionplanlegging.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

1. Intervju: Som part i utviklingen av fengslet i Kirseberg, og deltaker/medlem/engasjert i foreningen som ønsker å kjøpe opp fengslet, ønsker jeg å intervju deg for å innsikt i prosessen.
2. Observasjon: Jeg ønsker å delta på møteaktivitet som observatør for å få innsikt i arbeidsprosess og fremgangsmåter. Det vil bli tatt notater.
3. Som person knyttet opp til eller med kunnskap om historien til Kirseberg, Bylaget, og aktivismen, ønsker jeg å intervju deg.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

- Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet gjennom intervju, innebærer det at du besvarer spørsmål gjennom intervjuet. Intervjuet vil være semistrukturert eller ustrukturert som en samtale, enten elektronisk eller fysisk etter avtale, og spørsmålene vil (hvis om fengslet) omhandle organiseringen, din rolle, virkemidler som brukes, lokalt engasjement, og møtet med andre aktører i prosessen. Intervjuet vil vare ca. 1 time. Hvis intervjuet gjelder overnevnte punkt 3, vil intervjuet/samtalen dreie seg om aktivismen, organiseringen m.m
- Intervjuet kan tas opp som lydopptak. Opptaket vil transkriberes snarest, før det slettes. Transkriberingen vil oppbevares i henhold til gjeldene regelverk, og vil bli slettet når prosjektet er ferdigstilt.
 - Hvis det ikke er ønskelig med opptak av lyd, kan det ved forespørsel bli tatt notater istedenfor.
- Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet gjennom observasjon, innebærer det at jeg får observere møteaktiviteten og ta notater.
 - Jeg vil notere informasjon om strukturering og fremgangsmåter.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrevet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- *Informasjon vil være tilgjengelig for meg som student, samt veileder ved behov.*
- *Navn og kontaktopplysninger vil være lagret adskilt fra lydopptak. All data vil behandles på en sikret enhet.*
- *Personer vil være anonymisert i oppgaven, med mindre annet er særlig avtalt.*

Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?

Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes når oppgaven leveres i mai 2024. Etter prosjektet vil personopplysninger slettes.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg? Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Fakultetet for landskap og samfunn / institutt for by- og regionplanlegging ved NMBU, har Sikt – Kunnskapssektorens tjenesteleverandør vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Fakultetet for landskap og samfunn / institutt for by- og regionplanlegging ved NMBU ved (student): *Ulrik Randsborg Lie*: tlf. 004745885830 / ulrikrl@gmail.com. Veileder: *Timothy Richardson*: tlf. 67231230 / tim.richardson@nmbu.no
- Vårt personvernombud: *Hanne Pernille Gulbrandsen* Mobil: 004740281558 E-post: personvernombud@nmbu.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til vurderingen som er gjort av personverntjenestene fra Sikt, kan du ta kontakt via:

- Epost: personverntjenester@sikt.no eller telefon: 73 98 40 40.

Med vennlig hilsen

Prosjektansvarlig
Timothy Richardson

student
Ulrik Randsborg Lie

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet Masteroppgave Kirseberg, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i *intervju*
- å delta i *observasjon*

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)



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