

Motions in the city – activity and mobility in a segregated city

Author: Karin Book

Institution: Malmö University

E-mail: karin.book@mah.se

Aim

The aim of this paper is to, with basis in three residential areas with different spatial and socio-economic characteristics in Malmö (Sweden), increase the insight regarding *adolescents' geographical/territorial range in connection to physical activity*. Moreover, the aim is to map the *places used for physical activity* and, finally, to discuss the *planning of places and spaces for physical activity* based on my findings.

The three residential areas of the study are:

- Bunkeflostrand: a wealthy middle-class suburb with a wide range of different places for physical activity.
- Hermodsdal: a low-status area containing multi-family houses and a very high share of people with a foreign background.
- Möllevången: a dense inner-city area with a mixed population but a relatively low socio-economic status.

Theoretical background

Several researchers, including Book (me), have studied the influence of built environment and socio-economic factors on physical activity behavior (for example Handy et al 2002; Saelens et al 2012). A lot of the studies focus on adults and a North American context. The Swedish context is a bit different with a long tradition of a strong Sport Movement today being contested and questioned, an overall high standard of all areas now showing a growing divergence in status and opportunities, and a fairly homogeneous population becoming more and more heterogeneous. The departure is taken in the existing body of knowledge and literature but has chosen a different theoretical framework mainly based on a time geographical perspective, developed by Hägerstrand (1974). Within this perspective activities are taking place, or not, dependent on a number of constraints: capability constraints, authority constraints, and coupling constraints. These are used to analyze the different space and activity patterns of different residential areas. Another central concept being problematized in the study is geographical/territorial range (Matthews 1992). Finally, the planning perspective is being illuminated by different planning studies and examples.

Methodology

To fulfill the aim a survey (n=358) and interviews (n=14) while walking around in the neighbourhood have been conducted among pupils at three schools located in the selected areas. Moreover, interviews with urban (landscape) planners in Malmö and field studies in the different areas have been carried out. The results have been mapped to illustrate the patterns and compared to other

studies as this study is quite limited in size. Based on the results from the three areas I have moved on to discuss how planning could or should be organized, inspired by some good examples, in order to meet the desires, needs and restrictions of the adolescents.

Results

Unless type of residential area, there is a lot of self-organized physical activities going on and most activities are carried out in the local area. More than 84% of the adolescents in all three areas are active. The definition of physical activity is however a bit vague as the adolescents may interpret it differently. Play-oriented activities and strolling are included. In a study made by Swedish National Institute of Public Health (2010), 75-80% of the adolescents in the age-group of interest are physically active at least 3 days a week, most of them more often.

When it comes to organized activities (in clubs) the activity in the middle-class suburb is the largest. Also, the geographical/territorial range is larger among the adolescents in the middle-class area, while the other two areas show a higher degree of geographical constraint. The time geographical concepts of restrictions are useful when trying to explain differences in the use of places and participation in activities outside the residential area. The restrictions are fewer among the middle-class youngsters who have better access to resources like money, a family car, information, networks etc. One of the most interesting findings was that those being the most satisfied with their own area were the adolescents in the dense low-status with the lowest geographical range/mobility and a poorer supply of places than the middle-class suburb. The inner-city area offers the fewest activity places.

The pattern appearing in this study, which has included looking into different planning solutions for physical activity, indicate that in order to open up the city for different groups, new ideas, new ways of planning and new types of cooperation between for instance the municipality and the sport sector are necessary. In Sweden, we can't rely on the Sport Movement to meet the needs, as we have done for a very long time. Non-organized or self-organized physical activities must be valued as much as organized activities and recognized within sport-space planning.

References

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