



Henrietta and Anoscha

This is one of the canals in Göteborg. Why are there canals in our city? Who built the city? Dutchmen did as they were good at it. But why build in a place that needed so much work to be done? It was a very strategic place, a small piece of land to reach the North sea etc. Who lived in the city centre in the 1700 century? Do many people live in the city centre today?



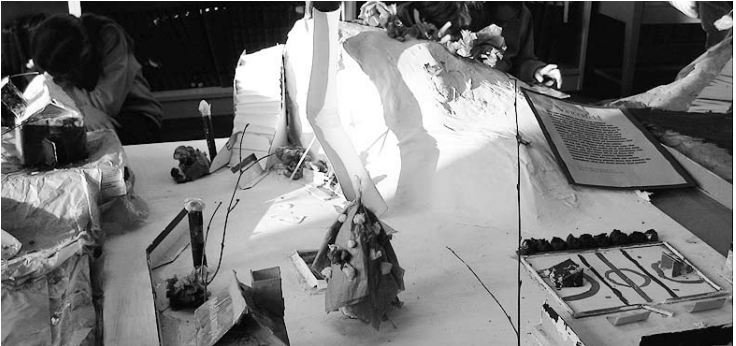
Mie Svennberg

DEMOCRACY IN PRACTICE: WORKING WITH ARCHITECTURE IN SCHOOLS

Architectural advisor for children and youth

Of course architects before me have been working with architecture and children in Göteborg and Sweden but it is not until recently the City of Göteborg and the Region of Västra Götaland decided to employ an architectural advisor which means that there is a platform within an institution, *Arts and Cultural Affairs*, to work from.

As an architectural advisor my main task is to encourage teachers to work with architecture and urban design in schools, where an important aspect is the question of democracy. If you have knowledge about architecture and planning processes you are also able to participate in discussions about the public environment. If children and youth discover architecture early and get tools to interpret it, they have possibilities to affect their own surroundings like schoolyards, playgrounds or neighbourhood squares. Children possess unique knowledge of the environment they live in, and it is vital that this knowledge is taken seriously and weighed up in the decisions that are taken. The City of Göteborg has decided to work actively together with Agenda 21, one of the priority issues of which is to increase the influence of children and young people on decisions concerning their future.

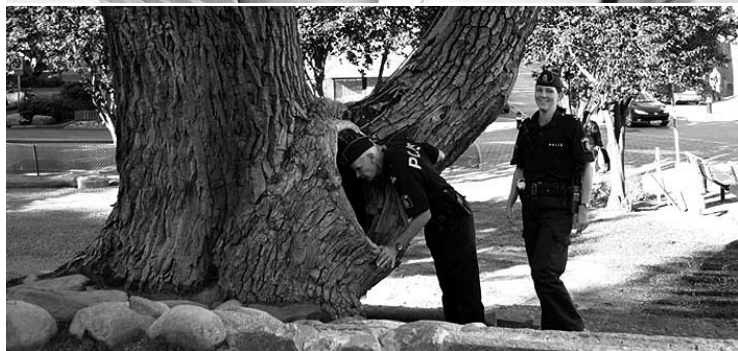
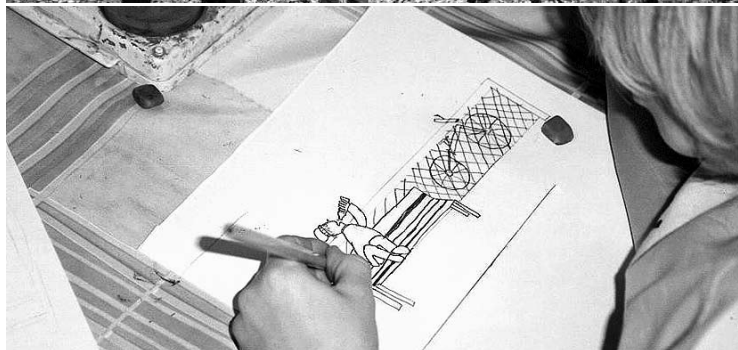


At the *Arts and Cultural Affairs* we are 6 persons who work (one full time and five part time) with culture concerning children. To reach schools, teachers, children and youth we have to our aid a network of cultural coordinators from Göteborgs 21 districts. We meet the coordinators once a month and they in their turn meet teachers and others interested out in the districts to spread information. This network is a very important one as through it we reach almost every school and pre school in Göteborg. To reach all the children, as a starting point of our work, is also a question of democracy.

Since I started at *Arts and Cultural Affairs* a lot has happened. More and more schools and pre schools show a growing interest in working with architecture. I now work together with 6-7 architects who visit schools and make projects together with children, youth and teachers. The architects present project ideas in a Culture for Children and Youth -catalogue that *Arts and Cultural Affairs* publishes every year. A project can for example be to make proposals for remodelling schoolyards and playgrounds together with the children. The schools pay and are able to apply for funding for half the cost for the architects.

It is important to realise that we are not consultants who come to draw a new plan for the schoolyard but we are architectural advisors who work together with the children to, for example, create an inspiring and functional proposal for the schoolyard. It is also important to bear in mind that we are not actually pedagogues either. We are architects who come into school with our competence and meet the teachers with theirs. The role of the teachers is very important since it is they who really know the children.

I am also a member of The Swedish Association of Architects where we have a group that works with questions concerning children and architecture, The School Group, which has existed for more than 20 years. One of its main tasks of is to collaborate with the institutes of education. From autumn 2006 *Chalmers University of Technology* and *Göteborg's Institute of Education* are giving joint courses for architecture and teacher students. Architecture is possibly becoming a compulsory subject in all technical upper secondary schools.



Architecture in schools

I guess we all agree that different fields of architecture and urban design easily fit into many of the school subjects. My opinion is that architecture as a subject of its own is not the best way to present it in schools. Instead it is important to work with architecture as a cross-curricular theme with subjects such as social studies, arts, maths, technology, languages, history etc. This is of course an extensive pedagogical matter. My experience of schools is that schoolwork sometimes seems fragmentary and that working in projects can give the children opportunities to see the world as a whole. I also think it's possible to work with architecture and urban design with children of all ages and it's an inspiring challenge to workout different methods to use. As an example I will now describe three different ways of how we work with children and architecture in schools. I will start with a museum lesson that opens up the city as a museum and inspires teachers to use the city as a classroom (*Arts and Cultural Affairs*) administrate almost all of the museums in Göteborg and have a commission from the cultural committee to offer museum lessons to all children in Göteborg). I will continue with a project that concerned improving a square in Bergsjön suburb in cooperation with the local school and end with a projects that creates ideas for future Göteborg.

The city as a classroom with Anoscha and Henrietta

In Sweden most children in the third year of primary school study their home district. This can now happen with two characters they can meet and take a walk with. *Henrietta Istory*, *H Istory* is a professor of history who thinks that everything that's old is good. She does not want to demolish anything. She is really a reactionary person. *Anoschka Rapuntzel Chitect*, *A R Chitect* is the other way around and excessively positive. Both are real clichés and showing the city their way, reasoning with the children about how the city has been and how it should be built and eventually at the end arriving at some kind of consensus.

Anoschka and Henietta visit some of our finest buildings in Göteborg like the townhall by Erik Gunnar Asplund, Sweden's most famous architect. They explain to the children that when Asplund added his new building to the old townhall in the 30's it was a big scandal. It was written in the papers that it looked like "a youngster in a



training suit next to an old distinguished gentleman in his finest suit". Anoscha and Henrietta also talk about the function of the building. They say that there is one pleasant and one less pleasant reason for coming here: to get married or to get judged before the district court. They also talk about the main stairs. It's said that Asplund wanted people to walk the stairs in a dignified way which would happen if they calculated the number of steps at the same time. Anoscha and Henrietta test the procedure with the children and continue their story. We also visit Göteborg City Planning Authorities where new plans for the city are being showed. After explaining briefly about planning processes, Anoscha and Henrietta stress out that the children and of course also the teachers should be aware of the location of The City Planning Authorities, since it is here they have the opportunity to show their opinions about the environment. The group gathers around a big photo over Göteborg from which everyone can point out their own houses, their school, their favourite playgrounds etc. The lesson ends in the tower of Gustavi Cathedral to take in a view over Göteborg.

Taking action to improve a local square in Bergsjön suburb

I find it important to implement reality in the projects or processes when working in schools. One succesful project from this point of view started as a part of "Storstadssatsningen", metropolitan initiative that was about sustainable growth, creation of new employment opportunities, ending social ethnic discriminating segregation etc. in the 23 vulnerable suburbs of the three biggest cities in Sweden. The processes I was engaged in were based on an investigation where the inhabitants were asked what the most important topics were to work with in the suburb of Bergsjön. Among subjects like unemployment and segregation, people were concerned about unsafe tram stops, unpleasant and not well-kept meeting places like squares.

As a result of the research one of the Bergsjön squares, Komettorget, was to be restored and my task was to engage the nearest school in a decorating process. The decoration was mosaic concrete slabs to be put on the surface of the renovated Komettorget.

Me as an architect and two local artists worked with eight classes with children between 9-13 years old. It was cooperation between the school, the municipality (through A 21 office), The Traffic &



VÄLKOMMEN PÅ VERNISSAGE 24 MAJ PÅ STA

Under denna här talade skolan för en gång skolelever i Göteborg. Han gick på skolan med sina vänner som Sofia Åkesson, den skoleleven. Skoleleven gick på skolan ett par dagar och ett par dagar till skolan med sin familj som Sofia Åkesson och sin familj som Sofia Åkesson. Under denna här talade skolan för en gång skolelever i Göteborg. Han gick på skolan med sina vänner som Sofia Åkesson, den skoleleven. Skoleleven gick på skolan ett par dagar och ett par dagar till skolan med sin familj som Sofia Åkesson och sin familj som Sofia Åkesson.

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Public Transport Committee (that administrates the place) and the local artists. 63

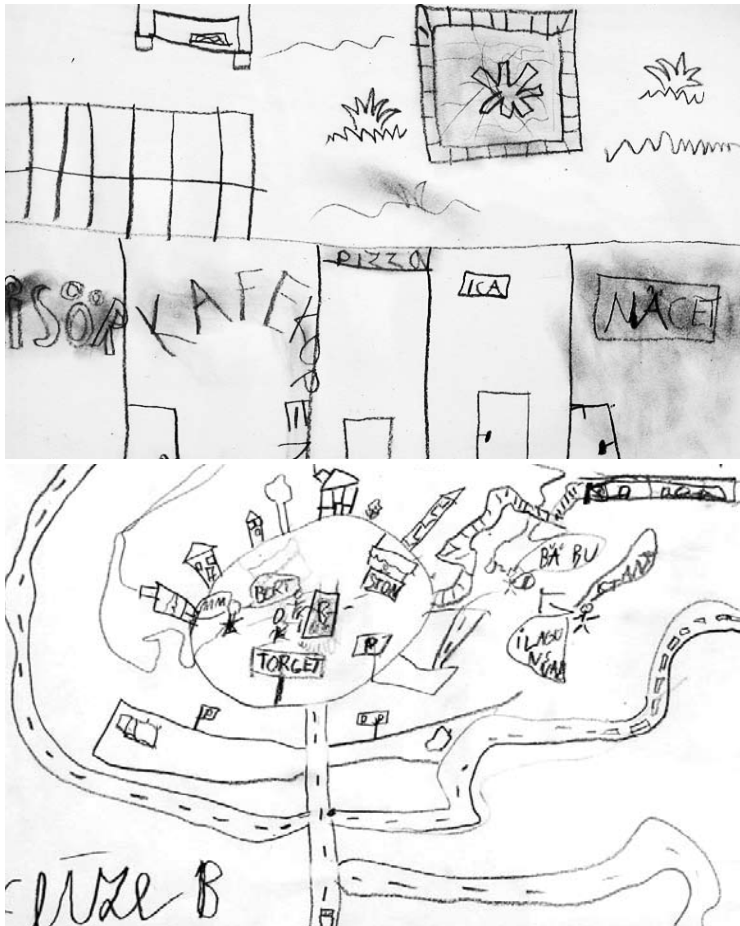
At first we had an inspiration and information meeting with all the teachers that were to be involved. Then we started to work with the classes. We walked around Bergsjön. The children showed me their houses and places and we discussed why Bergsjön looks like it does. We studied maps and compared different parts of Göteborg. We looked at public art, discussed materials and interviewed the workers who were rebuilding Komettorget. We built cities with blocks. What do you need in a city? The artists worked with patterns as the children were to make mosaic slabs. The children each created their own pattern, and then we cast the slabs together. We had also an opening of the newly renovated Komettorget where the head of the district board, together with one of the boys put down the last slab. Local associations had made food, performed music and dances – we celebrated!

The Agenda 21 office extended the project to include decorating all the tram stops by engaging children in three other schools working with architects and artists. The project was so successful that several schools in Bergsjön now have concrete casting in their timetable and have signed a five year contract with the administrator responsible for such work. The school ensures that pupils are given opportunities to cast concrete slabs together with an architect and artists every year. The Traffic & Public Transport Committee pays for the material and takes responsibility for the stones being put into place. We have seen that with the little money they put into this process they get a lot back. For example vandalism has decreased and the children feel more responsible for their environment. At Komettorget it has become a tradition to have a party every year when the new slabs are placed.

Creating ideas for the future Göteborg

The waterfront area, the south river bank, in Gothenburg is going to face some big changes. A three km long tunnel is being built in the city to get rid of the traffic and to create contact with the water. The City Executive Board of Göteborg has decided to try to create an in-depth dialogue with the citizens about what they would like to happen with the site when the tunnel is finished.

At first the City Museum created a meeting place with exhibitions and information to engage all the citizens to give their opinions and



visions for the future south river bank. The process is being led by NUAB, a city developing company owned by the City of Göteborg. I was commissioned to engage children and youth to share their visions of this area. Three architects worked in 12 schools with children and youth between 5 and 19 years from different districts of Göteborg. All these young peoples' visions and ideas were shown in a big exhibition at the City Museum. At the opening day the City Museum was filled. Many of the decision-makers and senior teachers from Chalmers University of Technology were also there.

The next step was to choose 6 teams, that consisted of experts (mostly architects) and citizens together, to work with something

called "parallel city analysis". The teams were supposed to consider as well the ideas and visions of the citizens as well as all the other background material such as plans from the city planning office. One of the teams consisted of children and youth the most interested ones from different schools that had already worked with us before. I was the project-leader of this team together with three other architects. Our main task was to work with the children and youth perspective. In November 2005 we presented our work to The Building Committee of Göteborg and in spring 2006 these visions were visualized. And it is from these visions the plans of the new waterfront of Göteborg hopefully are to be made. For us this represents both a very exiting and important way to make decision makers listen to the young ones and also building a method to work with children in city planning and urban design processes.

Children and youth are experts of their everyday environment

As a summary I would say that it is most important: (1) to use your own enthusiastic spirit when inspiring teachers to work with architecture, (2) to inspire kids to become conscious of their environment and who makes the decisions, (3) to work through existing networks, (4) to work both with schools and preschools to reach all children and youth, (5) to cooperate with municipal administrations in order to realize the kids, proposals if possible and (6) be straight with the children from the very beginning about what the outcome of a project will be.

My believe is that it's important that children and youth get the opportunity to become involved in discussions about their own surroundings. It's a question of democracy to be aware of the different possibilities to influence the society. Politicians, planners and architects have a lot to gain listening to kids, who are experts of their environment and the way they use it. But, democracy also demands knowledge which initiated architects hopefully can inspire the kids and the teachers to seek.



Students working with primary school pupils in Sheffield, developing design proposals for a new seat and shelter for their playground.

Design proposals: students worked with children, parents and allotment holders to design and construct an allotment resource building in Sheffield.