

Architectural consultant for children and youth

by Mie Svennberg



My name is Mie Svennberg. I'm an architect, and for the last couple of years I have been working as an architectural consultant for children and young people for the City of Gothenburg and the Västra Götaland Region. My task is to encourage teachers to work with architecture and urban design in schools. To help me, I have a vast network of cultural coordinators from Gothenburg and the Västra Götaland Region. They meet teachers and others in the municipalities to spread information. I work with five or six architects who visit schools and carry out projects with children, young people and teachers. The more work we do, the more schools are interested in joining us. Examples of projects can be to make proposals for restoring schoolyards and playgrounds, together with the children.

I am a member of the Swedish Association of Architects and we have a group that works on questions concerning children and architecture. This group investigated how to get architecture onto the curriculum in schools in conjunction with the Swedish School Department. We are slowly developing better contacts with institutes of education and, last autumn, we had a small road show, which visited some institutes in Sweden and held seminars and workshops. At the moment I work with Chalmers Architecture and the Gothenburg Institute of Education, planning a course for architectural students and teacher trainees.



One of the projects that I'm involved in right now is a waterfront area in Gothenburg. A three-kilometer tunnel is being built in the heart of the city to reduce through traffic and create contact with the water. The leading politicians in Gothenburg have decided to try to get an in-depth dialogue going with the citizens. My task is to encourage children and youngsters to give me their visions for the area.



Three architects are working in 12 schools in Gothenburg this spring. In the autumn, groups consisting of experts and laymen will be formed to work with these visions. In spring 2006, the visions will be realised and from them, plans for the new Gothenburg waterfront will be made. I believe that it is important for children and youngsters to have the opportunity to become involved in discussions about their own surroundings. It is a question of democracy to be aware of the potential for influencing society in different ways. But politicians, planners and architects have much to gain from listening to kids who are experts on their own environment and how they use it. But democracy demands knowledge, which is something I hope I and the architects I work with can inspire the kids and their teachers to go out and seek.

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