

The impact of urban regeneration processes on segregation and stigmatization in Rosengård, Malmö.

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Bio

I wanted to look at this community since my whole family is from, and many still live in, the southern-most county of Sweden, Scania, which is where Malmö is located. It can be very disheartening to see the racially motivated stigma that exists in the country and the rapid rise of national populism. The case of Rosengård is particularly interesting and important due to the amount of media attention it has received. The current efforts made by the municipal and city authorities to alleviate segregation through regeneration processes merit a thorough analysis as it has been noted by scholars that these can easily turn into gentrification processes if the local population is not properly and genuinely involved in the development of the project.

Abstract

This community briefing looks at the neighbourhood of Rosengård in Malmö, Sweden. The city district has a complicated history of immigration, segregation, and stigmatization. Although Rosengård is often portrayed as a problem area, many important social and cultural networks exist in the community which are highlighted in this briefing. Some recent regeneration processes undertaken by the city of Malmö (Malmö Stad) in Rosengård are evaluated in terms of their utility and value for the current residents. Some worrying signs of displacement have been reported in the area surrounding the current urban regeneration process, *Amiralsstaden*, as well as a general lack of connection with the project. The process is also examined in the broader context of a general move towards the marketization and privatization of public housing stock, and public-private partnerships, in the Swedish public housing system. This points to a changing role for the Swedish municipal housing companies, *Allmännyttan*, and calls for stronger tenant organization and cooperation. Three recommendations are provided, which consider the current needs of the community concerning housing, language barriers and building back better after the COVID outbreak. These should serve as inspiration for the community to think of ways in which they can work together to improve their situation.

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Background on the city of Malmö

Malmö has become one of the most culturally diverse cities in Sweden due to both historic and more recent immigration patterns. Although Sweden has historically been an ethnically homogenous country, immigration in recent years has been marked by an increase in refugee and asylee populations. This has resulted in a shift in the racial, religious, and ethnic makeup of many urban areas, especially in the metropolises of Malmö, Gothenburg, and Stockholm, which has, in some cases, led to increased tension and stigma. One of these areas is Rosengård which has a complicated history of immigration, segregation, and stigmatization. Malmö could also be described as ‘post-industrial’ as it was home to a world-leading shipbuilding industry possessing a masculine working-class identity. However, the industry collapsed in the 1970s and Malmö went through a period of de-industrialization and out-migration (Gustafsson 2021).

Since then, the public housing legal structure has changed drastically, and the city has seen multiple regeneration efforts as well as being re-branded as a ‘knowledge city’ (Smedberg 2019). I will look at some past and current regeneration processes, explore their value for the current residents and how they fit into a worrying trend towards the privatization and financialization of the Swedish public housing system. I value qualitative and subjective research as well as interviews and personal accounts above any other in this briefing since I believe that feelings and memories are valuable sources of information when investigating a community (Mack 2021).

Introducing the Community



Figure 1. Rosengård from the east. Source: Fred J (Wikimedia Commons)

In English, Rosengård translates into ‘Rose Manor’. It is a city district of Malmö which is home to about 23,865 people, of which about 88.5% are first- and second-generation immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, Turkey, Syria, Somalia, among other countries. The mean yearly income is about 80,000 Swedish crowns (approx. £6,800) less than the Malmö average, and significantly lower than any other city district (Malmö Stad, 2020). In a survey conducted by Derakhati and Baeten (2020) it was also found that most households were generally of a larger size. 48% of the respondents declared that their household had four other people and 42% said they lived with two or three other people.

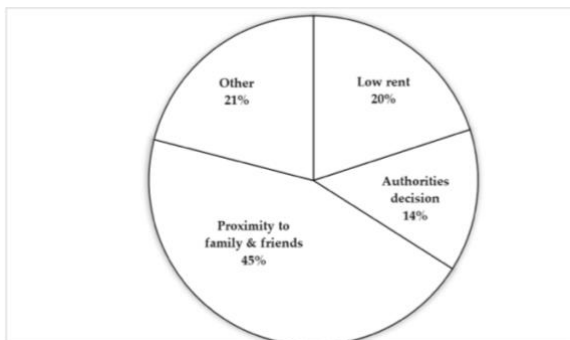


Figure 2. Reasons to live and stay in Rosengård.

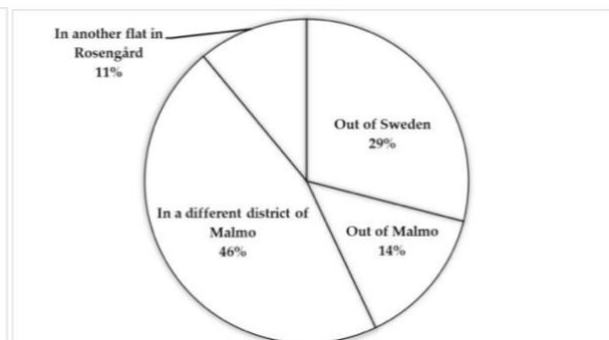


Figure 3. Previous place of living before moving to Rosengård.

Source: Derakhati and Baeten, 2020.

The study also shows that many residents in Rosengård have lived in the area for a long time and want to stay. 45% of respondents said the reason they want to stay in the area is the proximity to family and friends while 20% named low rent as the main reason (Figure 1). It 'revealed that the concentration of immigrants does not just happen on its own' (15) through highlighting the important social networks and self-supportive systems that have formed between the residents. Notably some residents' ability to have their needs met without having to learn the Swedish language. 46% of respondents moved to Rosengård from a different district of Malmö and 11% had previously lived somewhere else in Rosengård (Figure 2). Another aspect that makes Rosengård unique is its cultural diversity. 29% of respondents reported having previously lived outside of Sweden (Derakhati and Baeten, 2020).

In terms of education levels, Rosengård also ranks lower than other parts of Malmö. 30% of adult residents have only finished elementary school, 38.5% have a high school diploma, and 23% pursued higher education, as compared to the Malmö average, which shows 12% of adults as only having finished elementary school and 48.5% pursue higher education (Malmö Stad, 2020). In a study made up of conversational-style interviews with immigrant youths in urban areas in Sweden, the term 'Swedishness' is used in the context of a pressure young migrants feel to 'perform' or 'act' in a Swedish manner, especially in school. This pressure is closely tied to language which imbues the Swedish education system where students are taught to think, speak and read in Swedish, reinforcing the 'otherness' of the migrant category. Other aspects of this 'otherness' that were identified and understood to affect the life choices young people make are the territorial stigmatization of areas such as Rosengård and the disadvantaged position of immigrants in Swedish society (Johansson and Olofsson, 2011).

Swedish Public Housing: A Quick Reader

The Swedish public housing system started developing during the late 1940s under the Socialist Democrat government as part of their 'Folkhemmet' (the 'people's home') project. It was based on the principle of providing affordable, good public housing for all citizens, and placed the responsibility of this provision mainly on the municipalities. The State still had a central role through shaping housing policy for 40 years, in conjunction with housing subsidies, the regulation of loan interest rates and the use of highly regulated municipal housing companies (*Allmännyttan*). During this time, the Million Program, with the aim of building one million houses in 10 years was created. By the early 1970s, the housing shortage ended and the overall housing standard in Sweden was high (Grundström and Molina, 2016).

Since then, Swedish housing policy has started to veer more towards deregulation and privatization notably due to the economic crisis of the early 1990s. The right-wing government began dismantling the previous governments' housing policy and introduced a strong focus on marketization by abolishing real estate taxes and replacing it with a lower municipal fee (Ionescu et al., 2019).

In 2011, a new law regarding *Allmännyttan* was introduced stipulating that these companies should operate along 'business principles'. This law essentially removed all the regulations prohibiting the municipality to run the company for profit alongside other private housing companies and it removed their rental management role (Allmännyttan, 2021). Consequently, it has become harder for municipalities to keep rents affordable (Ionescu et al., 2019).

Segregation and Stigmatization in Rosengård.

Some of Rosengård's housing complexes were built in the 1970s as part of the Million Program. The de-industrialization of Malmö in combination with middle-class populations moving to newer suburbs led to a rapid decline in the demand for Million Program housing and soon many apartments stood empty. Rosengård was especially scrutinized by the media as it had initially been praised as the future of modern living (Parker and Madueira 2016). These housing areas have been dubbed 'betongförorter' (concrete suburbs) and their Modernist look has generally been discussed pejoratively in the media (see Figure 4). On top of this negative public perception, many of them are now in need of repairs. There has been much debate over how these buildings, which are built all over Sweden, should be maintained. Although 'many residents consistently argue for minor maintenance and routine repair—for care—yet answers have come through either [as] complete neglect or extensive renovations.' (Mack 2021, 3).



Figure 4. Million Programme housing in Rosengård. Source: Ella Holttinen

The ‘stigmatization [of Rosengård] has complex roots. It seems in part a self-perpetuating process whereby stories may be seen as more newsworthy as they relate to previous stories’ (Parker and Madueira 2016, 594). In 2017, a report was released by the Swedish Police titled ‘Vulnerable areas – social order, criminal structure and challenges for the police’. This report located different urban areas in Sweden and classified them as ‘especially vulnerable areas’, ‘risk areas’ and ‘vulnerable areas’. Rosengård along with Södra Sofielund in Malmö were classified: ‘especially vulnerable areas’. The report gained widespread public media attention and the areas were often misrepresented as ‘no-go zones’ in right-wing nationalist media all over Europe. As such, Rosengård has gained the reputation of being a dangerous area characterized by localized forms of social order, such as gangs and Islamic extremism. Consequently, some rather extreme securitization and policing methods have been adopted. Between 2015 and 2017, two security cameras were installed in Herrgården by the Police which

marked the first time security cameras were allowed in a residential area in Scania (Fritze 2015). In 2019, the Malmö police started the ‘Sluta Skjut (Stop Shooting)’ project, inspired by the US ‘Group Violence Intervention’ method (Polisen 2019). It has been noted that ‘[r]eports from unrest in Rosengård tended to accentuate an ethnic dimension but often failed to see causes related to the labour market, housing market and media itself’ (Parker and Madueira 2016, 595).

A brief history of Racism, Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Sweden.

The Swedish Democrats, a nationalist and right-wing populist party with its roots in Swedish fascism and white nationalism, are now the third largest party in Sweden, securing 17.5% of the vote and 62 seats in parliament in the 2018 elections. Negative sentiments toward foreigners are not a new phenomenon in Sweden, however.

The first immigrants from countries and areas with a strong Muslim tradition came to Sweden in the early 1960s, mainly from Turkey and former Yugoslavia. However, it was not until the beginning of the 1970s that Islam started to hold a more permanent place in Swedish society due to the growing need for mosques, prayer rooms and the establishment of new Islamic organisations (Borell 2012).

During the 1980s, highly organized white power organizations committed many physical attacks against refugees, immigrants, religious groups, and queer people. These groups would also methodically harass ‘the most prominent representatives of antiracist movements and politicians, including constant telephone harassment, demolition of private property, graffiti, and physical assaults’ (Bunar 2007, 168).

Despite these areas continuously being portrayed pessimistically in much of national media, many residents feel a strong connection and attachment to Million Program housing and its green affects (Mack 2021). The area of Rosengård is also famously the birthplace of the famous Swedish football player, Zlatan Ibrahimovic. It houses the ‘Zlatan Court’, the football court where he learned how to play growing up (see Figure 5). A notable characteristic of the area is the availability of many Islamic cultural places and mosques which not only serve as places of integration and worship but have contributed to building an interconnected cultural network (Derakhati and Baeten 2020).



Figure 5. Zlatan Court. Source: Planet Fotball



Figure 6. The Bokals in Rosengård. Source: Johan Wessman, News Øresund (Flickr)

Regeneration (or gentrification?) processes in Rosengård.

Parker and Madueira (2016) identified five broad public housing management strategies that have been used to address socio-economic problems and unattractiveness in stigmatized and segregated housing estates: restructuring, upgrading, service-partnering, socio-economic empowerment, and image building.

1. Restructuring.

‘Attempting to transform an area by means of demolition, reconstruction and transforming forms of tenure, often with the stated aim of social mixing’ (591)

Projects with this approach have historically led to gentrification and the feasibility of the concept of ‘social mixing’ for fostering social interaction has also been discredited. Rather, it can have the adverse effect of breaking up important supportive social networks that have been formed within less advantaged communities.

2. Upgrading.

This approach addresses the maintenance of the physical environment through the creation of amenities and public spaces. It could lead to gentrification if these are geared and marketed toward middle- and upper-class citizens.

3. Service-partnering.

This refers to government departments, organizations and/or individuals working together to provide service delivery. Of main importance here is the focus on greater citizen involvement and it implies a changing role for both the residents and the municipal housing companies. This approach is promising in theory, but it may be difficult to produce results, especially without

genuine bona fide community outreach. A bottom-up example is ‘co-production’ which requires a higher degree of community organization.

4. Socio-economic empowerment.

These are strategies that seek to empower people to become more involved in society e.g., information services for newly arrived migrants.

5. Image building.

This approach is a double-edged sword – improving the image of a stigmatized area might be beneficial though it may also distort or obscure the social challenges that are present.

Often, regeneration processes will include elements from a number of these strategies.

In 2009, MKB Fastighets AB (Malmö’s municipal housing company) started offering rental units that were a fusion between residential and commercial, ‘bokaler’ (after the Swedish words for dwelling (bostad) and facility (lokal) – a dwellity if you will). The idea is to promote and harness the entrepreneurship that already exists in Rosengård. This approach fuses all the above strategies together. Some examples that have been realized since then are a greengrocer, a florist, a hairdresser, a travel agency, and a fast-food restaurant. The idea has now been replicated in other Swedish cities (Mäklarsamfundet 2020). The creation of the Bokal, could be seen as marking the beginning of MKB’s move away from mainly socio-economic empowerment strategies to other public housing management strategies (Parker and Madudeira 2016).



Figure 7. Amiralstaden Map. Source: Rosengårds Fastigheter AB.

[From left to right: Rosengård station (train station), Törnrosen (housing district), Örtagårdstorget (town centre), Rosengård centrum (shopping district)]



Figure 2. Rosengård station. Source: Jin Zan (Wikimedia Commons)

The main focus of Malmö Stad's (Malmö's municipal government) current social sustainability plan in Rosengård is the urban regeneration process 'Amiralsstaden'. Although the plan concerns other city districts as well. The aim is to create an open and inviting, green pathway lined with cafés, stores, and green spaces going from the east to the west of Rosengård and linking

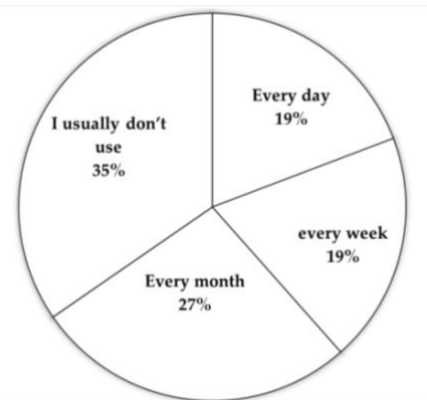


Figure 3. Survey on how much residents use the new train station. Source: Derakhti & Baeten, 2020, p.14

it to the center of town. The overarching vision is creating a dense, green, and mixed-function city district (Malmö Stad, 2021). The hallmark stage of this process was the inauguration of Rosengård station in 2018. The opening of this new trainline (that cost 155 million Swedish crowns – approx. £13.3 million) would 'bind Malmö together'. However, in a reportage, a journalist spoke to residents in the nearby apartments of Törnrosen and found that no one he asked said they used the trainline (Orange, 2019). Derakhatu and Baeten (2020) found similar responses in a 2019 survey as more than a third of respondents claimed they usually don't use the train station.

Central to this process is the Culture Casbah, a Transit-Oriented Development – which will '[transform] Törnrosen and Örtagård to a vibrant, urban and green part of Malmö' (Malmö Stad 2021) – through densification and building a multi-story, mixed-use building which will include residential, commercial, cultural, institutional and entertainment services. The project was met with some resistance and there were some protests against its construction in 2016 (Derakhati and Baeten 2020). The former CEO of MKB, Terje Johansson, stated that MKB's tenants cannot stand for the financing and risks involved with the project and that collaboration with private actors would be essential. Thus, in 2016 MKB, quite controversially, sold 1,650 of their apartments in Törnrosen and Örtagård to a new company, Rosengårds Fastigheter AB,

of which MKB, Victoria Park AB, Heimstaden AB and Balder AB all would share equal ownership (Sydsvenskan, 2016). In March 2020, the five CEOs wrote an opinion piece in the Scanian newspaper *Sydsvenskan* putting forth the idea that Malmö's new art museum should be placed in the Culture Casbah. At the heart of this project lies the belief that 'social mixing' will counteract segregation and that improving the 'image' of Rosengård will counteract stigmatization.



Figure 9. Culture Casbah – designed by the Danish architecture firm Lundgaard & Tranberg which earned them the 'Best Futura Project' prize at the MIPIM-event in Cannes in 2013. Source: nosegregation.tilda.ws

‘[S]trategies of social mixing are basically ignoring that people choose to locate close to people that they can identify with, and that the intention to create heterogeneous housing areas is more of a planner’s myth than a socially-credible or desirable reality’

(Parker and Madueira 2016, 591)

Increasing the feeling of safety is often used as an argument for restructuring Million Program housing. The paradoxical nature of this aim has been pointed out, as it can in many cases increase feelings of housing insecurity – producing stress and anxiety – for those who already live in the urban development area (Westin & Molina 2011). Derakhati and Baeten (2020) made some worrying discoveries in their study on the Amiralstaden project area. Local residents were asked about their thoughts on the Culture Casbah and reported a general skepticism and weak connection to the project. Some evidence of displacement pressure was also found as tenants reported serious unresponsiveness on behalf of the new landlords in addition to care services being cut off in certain cases. This has led to feelings of fear and anxiety about the uncertainty caused by the new development. More than 60% of respondents claimed that they would not afford rent increases. Mack (2021) has commented on the general reluctance of Swedish municipalities to incorporate residents’ views and opinions when they deviate from the expected answer, choosing not to hear them. It appears Malmö Stad is trying to operate the Amiralstaden process through a network governance approach, however it lacks in transparency and has a questionable approach to public participation. Although the municipality has claimed that one of the central aspects of the process is building ‘knowledge alliances’ and improving the democratic process through early public involvement, the reality has been somewhat different (Smedberg 2019).

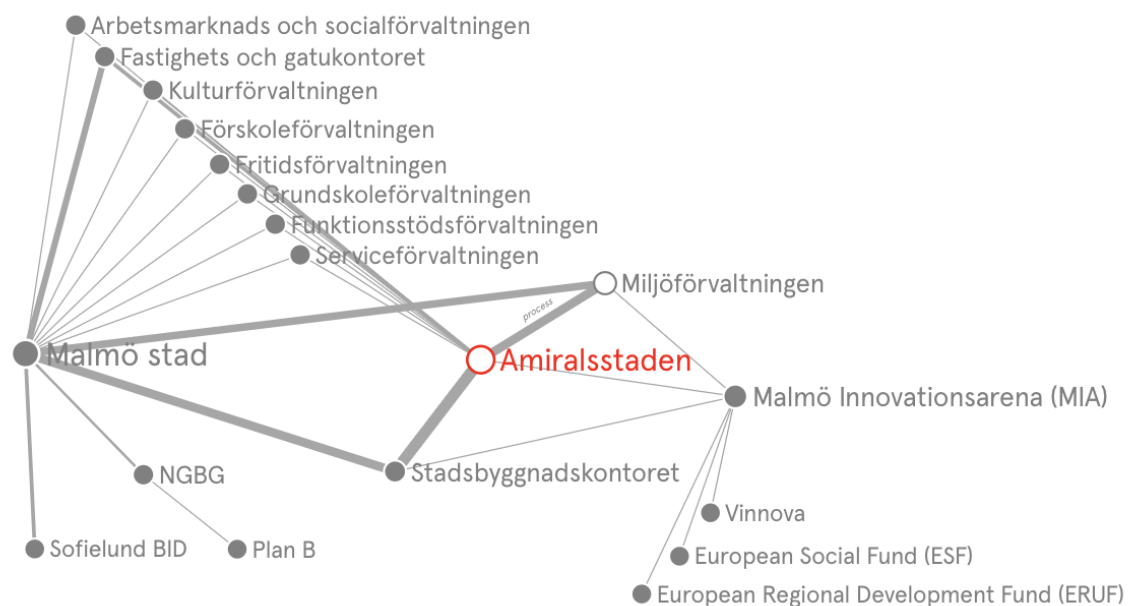


Figure 10. Governance of Amiralstaden. Source: Ionescu et al. 2019.

The process is led by Malmö Stad and the city planning office (*Stadsbyggnadsnämnden*), along with nine municipal departments (*förvaltning*). Some EU funding for Amiralstaden is granted through the Malmö Innovation Arena (MIA) – which was created for this very purpose – pointing to either the increased need for flexibility in urban regeneration processes or to the ‘projectification of usual public services to efficient use of the tax money’ (Ionescu et al. 2019). The process is still somewhat unclear though and it has been hard, even for scholars, to establish in what order smaller projects have been realized (Smedberg 2019).

‘[P]articipation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the powerholders to claim that all sides were considered but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the status quo’
 (Arnstein [1969] 2021, 216)

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The following recommendations have been formulated with the current signs of the gradual privatization of the Swedish housing sector in mind. As discussed above, the municipal housing companies used to be bound by stronger regulations concerning rent-setting and tenant protection, and therefore operated while keeping the community's best interests in mind. The responsibility of taking care of the community now lies with the community.

Preserving community

Improving community organization

The creation of a Rosengård Tenants' Association could improve the political leverage of Rosengård's residents in negotiations with different actors. Additionally, the mobilization and organization of tenants would facilitate organizing a rent strike and amplify the community's voice. It could prevent, or at least highlight, the increasing number of housing shares that are sold to private companies with a stronger interest in the area's 'image' and profitability, than the people who live there.

Integrating community

Social entrepreneurships as a model for social and cultural integration

A social entrepreneurship is an economic approach which can be taken by groups or individual entrepreneurs to develop, fund, and implement solutions to social issues. It can be organized in many ways with organizations varying in size, aims, and beliefs. In 2009, the social entrepreneurship Yalla Trappan was founded with the goal of capitalizing on existing knowledges of migrant women, such as cleaning, cooking, and sewing, thus creating employment for those who tend to be furthest away from the labour market (Yalla Trappan 2021). It is a successful example of combining service-partnering and socio-economic empowerment approaches. The entrepreneurship recently signed a deal with Rosengård Fastigheter AB to provide general maintenance and cleaning for the up-coming renovated housing.

As mentioned earlier, social networks that exist in the community are threatened by potential rent increases brought on by the restructuring project (Parker and Madueira 2016). These invaluable social networks should be preserved. Therefore, creating a social entrepreneurship with the purpose of providing language and translation services could make use of some of the existing knowledge in these communities. This has great potential for the inclusion of young people and cooperation with the educational system through providing mentorship programs and employment references. Services could include translating official documents, writing sessions and public classes.

Re-building community

Strengthening community relations

The biggest challenge for the community right now is recovering from the COVID-19 outbreak. Rosengård and similar urban areas in Sweden were particularly affected and it highlighted a lack of communication between some of the populations and the authorities. In a segment of Aktuell (Swedish news report), ‘In the tracks of the Pandemic – Rosengård’, Nicolas Lunabba, from the youth organization Hela Malmö, says that:

“Early on, we started talking within the organization of this Corona-language – keeping distance or staying home from work – that, for many people in the service sector or people with insecure jobs, hourly employment here and there, don’t have that privilege. They’re recommendations that we can’t follow. And then that leads to, of course, more cases because the social mobility implies that we put ourselves at higher risk of being infected.”

(SVT Play 2020, own translation)

He also interviews an imam who criticized the government’s lacking communication and information to the members of their mosque. The mosque had delivered information to their members in multiple languages. These informal, yet essential, social networks and relationships must be preserved. I propose to organize ‘Post-COVID Comfort Walks’ and ‘Post-COVID Mourning Walks’ for anyone that has gone through loss or isolation during the pandemic.

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