

Index

Malin Pettersson Öberg THE MODEL ARCHIVE

Who builds the city and for whom? How do we organize our lives together? The miniature world invites us to dream, Bachelard writes in *The Poetics of Space*. "The cleverer we are at miniaturizing the world, the better we possess it. But in doing this, it must be understood that values become condensed and enriched in miniature. Platonic dialectics of large and small do not suffice for us to become cognizant of the dynamic virtues of miniature thinking. One must go beyond logic in order to experience what is large and what is small." But surely must dreams and visions – this ability to look at the world from above and move around its parts – entail a certain responsibility?

A housing inquiry from 1895, represented in the book *Storstockholms bebyggelsehistoria*, shows that every fourth person in the working population at the time lacked proper accommodation, and that seventy percent were estimated to lack the proper "air space per person" which, from a medical point of view, was considered minimal. That is, fifteen to twenty cubic meter or a floor space of five to seven square meter. Eight years later, the housing shortage had worsened and rents had increased with approximately thirty percent. A new inquiry showed that the air space per person in the newly produced apartments at Östermalm exceeded one hundred cubic meter. But despite the difference in space, the rent levels of the small apartments were considerably higher: 3,95 SEK compared to 2,92 SEK per cubic meter; "That is, the most expensive flats are the cheapest."

In the Stockholm City model archive, nearly five hundred models are stacked on shelves, in drawers and in cupboards. A Stockholm in miniature unfolds in front of our eyes, a city whose parts can be moved around. Can the archive as a space, in its capacity of model world, time capsule, storage space – for realized as well as unrealized "visions" – become a tool in comprehending the city and why it looks the way it does?

Ola Andersson describes modernist city planning and the reconstruction of Stockholm in his book *Vykort från Utopia*. The architects' obsession with giving the city a new shape, modernist facilities and function separated zones. What do they do to life in the city? What characterizes urbanity and how can the city facilitate those exchanges between people that he considers being its most important function? "Any airport that is not a centralized facility, following predetermined routines and programs, is a nightmare" he writes. "But a city is not a large house and a house is not a small city. The difference between buildings and cities is not a difference in scale but a typological difference. No facility can achieve a dignified or functioning environment for urban life, or create the space of unpredictability that only an urban structure can offer."

In *Species of Spaces*, a sort of inventory of the rooms and locations that surround us, Georges Perec describes what he perceives as uninhabitable spaces. "The architecture of contempt or display, the vainglorious mediocrity of tower blocks, thousands of rabbit hutches piled one above the other. The skimmed, the airless, the small, the mean, the very precisely calculated. Shanty towns, townships, the hostile, the grey, the anonymous, the ugly. The corridors of the Métro, public baths, hangars, car parks, factories, barracks, prisons..." The list continues.

Index

Perec never mentions the word modernism in his text and the city he departs from is Paris. But do we not recognise ourselves? Who would really want to live in a modernist facility?

An equally critical, but perhaps more hopeful, image of the modernist project – in Sweden – is given by Yvonne Hirdman in her text *The Happy 30s – A Short Story of Social Engineering and Gender Order in Sweden*. She describes her fascination with the nearly utopian idea which formed the basis of the Swedish Welfare State and "The People's Home". The idea that it is the duty of a society to produce happiness for its members. But what happens when the few are to define "happiness" and "a good life" for the others? Abuse is inevitable, Hirdman claims. In her dissertation, *Att lägga livet till rätta*, she writes: "When people were to be arranged under norms and concepts of 'how it should be' there were risks for abuse. When politics were unfolded over previously 'dark' areas there were risks for abuse. This also goes for unintended consequences of the good society's 'gifts' that transform citizens into children, clients, 'users'. It is about how people are viewed – from above and down."

To create a form. To press it down over a mass, to make an imprint. To look down over a city and decide which buildings to keep. To create a pattern – perhaps a hand fan – which is only perceivable from above, from bird's eye view. To never, ever, dwell at worm's eye view. To zoom out, scale down, enlarge, scatter. To surveil, intervene, withdraw, observe.

The model archive of Stockholm's Urban Planning Department got its current shape in the sixties, when the city switched from fabrication of models in scale 1:1000 to 1:500. The models became twice as big and the plan was to construct blocks that could be assembled into one large model of Stockholm, like a giant puzzle. The system was never completed and six years ago a huge cleaning was conducted, when approximately twenty tons of models were thrown out. Employees at the Model Unit fear that the "five hundredth city" is next in line. It is nonetheless nearly museumlike – a historical relic, having lost its function. When does an artefact transcend from "utility" to the museum's "graveyard"? In this gradual transition, how can we defend an artefact's value and right to remain, despite a different purpose?

In the 1930s, Walter Benjamin writes about collecting in his unfinished *Arcades Project*: that it is distinguished by objects that have been detached from their original context in order to enter into another – a typology of objects with similar qualities. "Collecting is a form of practical memory and of all the profane manifestations of 'nearness' it is the most binding." He describes how a new piece arises from the sea like an island, to enter into the completeness of the collection. In a cupboard with only churches stands Engelbrektskyrkan on a round platform. The original has been painted blue, to be distinguished from the white copies. Almost everything in the archive is white and somehow elevated from its surroundings.

Haifa, London, New York. Kvarteret Kolonisten, Brevbäraren, Flygmaskinen, Filmen. The names open associations and tell of their time. In Frihamnen the blocks were named after other cities in the world, with whom trade was taking place. Block names have lived a protected life – many people do not even know the name of their own block. Street names create more interest, and have carried many of society's important functions. In 1920, after a name revision by the late 1800s with purpose to bring order among the city's names, The Place-Names Committee was established. It became part of the vision to construct a modern society and a rationally organized, well-functioning city.

Index

At the entrance level of Stockholm's Urban Planning Department there is a sign with a paragraph from the Planning and Building Act. It says: "In this act there are regulations about planning of ground and water and construction. The regulations aim at, with regards to the freedom of the private individual, promote a societal development with equal and good social living conditions and a good and long term sustainable habitat for the people of today's society and for future generations."

Future time. Past time. Dreamtime. How does the shape of the city relate to the shape of our lives? Considering the hierarchies that seem to have formed the emergence of Stockholm – visible in the scale of models, in where and how the city has been demolished, planned and built, and by whom, in the obvious division between center and periphery – it is difficult to take the paragraph seriously. When will we be part of building a city that does not sort its citizens into compartments, or push them further and further out in a periphery? In the Swedish model society, when are we invited to dream?

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The Model Archive has been filmed in the Stockholm Urban Planning Department's archive of architectural models, located at Fleminggatan 4 in Stockholm, during the spring 2017. The film has been produced in collaboration with Index – The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation and The Model Unit at the Urban Planning Department, City of Stockholm. Thank you Axel Wieder and Nathalie Åhbeck (Index) and Harri Anttila, Kristian Rosengren, Annica Isacovic, Peter Magnusson, Cecilia Medin and Thomas Stenberg (The Urban Planning Department). Thank you also Ingela Johansson, Camilla Larsson, Malin Zimm and the artists at Slakthusateljéerna in Stockholm.

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